[Subject choice crisis hits early school leavers hardest](#)

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The dwindling number of subjects pupils are able to take hits those who wish to leave school at an earlier age the hardest, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Speaking in a debate in Holyrood today, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said there had been a huge increase in the number of schools who were now restricting the number of courses in S4 from the traditional eight down to six.

She pointed to statistics showing 57 per cent of schools only offer six subjects for children in S4 to take.

In 2013, that figure was 28 per cent.

And it means those who choose to leave school before sitting Highers will do so with fewer qualifications to their name than ever, hampering their chances of employment, apprenticeships or a college place.

The debate took place as part of Scottish Conservative business, and followed leader Ruth Davidson raising the issue with Nicola Sturgeon at First Minister's Questions last week.

The fact there are 3400 fewer teachers from when the SNP came to power has also been blamed for a lack of subject choice.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"Few decisions are more important to any young person at school than those they make about subject choice.

"However, we've become concerned – along with parents and teachers – about evidence which points to the range of choices at S4 level being restricted.

"This impacts everyone, but particularly those who want to leave school at the end of S4 or S5 who will now do so with fewer qualifications than would otherwise be the case.

"There is a marked effect on many young people attending schools in disadvantaged communities – something about which we should all be very

concerned in terms of widening access.

"One key part of this is teacher numbers.

"We cannot hope to offer effective subject choice if we have 3400 fewer teachers in the system."