

Summary of provisional results for A level, AS, Advanced SCC, and selected level 3 vocational qualifications in Wales



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2 Headline statistics

The 2021 data is provisional and subject to change.

Table 2.1 Headline statistics, all learners, all boards, summer only⁽¹⁾

Qualification		2021	2020	2019
A level	Numbers sat	35,867	31,316	31,483
	A* (%)	21.3	16.3	9.1
	A*-A (%)	48.3	41.8	27.0
	A*-E (%)	99.1	99.9	97.6
AS	Numbers sat	42,820	46,545	39,646
	A (%)	37.1	29.5	20.3
	A-E (%)	96.7	98.5	90.0
Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate	Numbers sat	12,762	11,853	11,918
	A* (%)	8.8	8.5	4.6
	A*-A (%)	30.0	28.7	21.6
	A*-E (%)	96.9	99.3	97.8
Selected level 3 vocational qualifications ⁽²⁾	Certificates	11,169	12,756	11,418
	Top grade (%) ⁽³⁾	23.3	24.0	24.6

Source: JCQ (A level, AS), QW data collection from awarding bodies (Advanced SCC, selected level 3 VQ)

- (1) For A level, and AS the 2020 figures used are those published by the [Joint Council for Qualifications](#) (JCQ) and so may not match exactly the figures published by QW in 2020
- (2) Includes only level 3 vocational qualifications (VQ) which had at least 150 certifications per year in Wales in recent years, and were category B1 or B2
- (3) Graded qualifications only; excludes pass/fail VQ qualifications

3 Introduction

On 10 November 2020, due to the COVID pandemic, it was [announced](#) that exams would be cancelled and alternative assessment arrangements would be put in place. Subsequently, following the announcement that schools and colleges would not re-open for face-to-face teaching after the Christmas break, the Minister [directed](#) us to use a centre determined grading approach which we agreed to. We worked in collaboration with the Design and Delivery Advisory Group, WJEC and other stakeholders to establish the Centre Determined Grade (CDG) approach. Guidance describing the arrangements, including those for private candidates, is available on our [website](#). Centres made holistic grading judgements based on evidence of the attainment of learners. Those judgements were subject to internal quality assurance procedures and those procedures were themselves subject to external quality assurance procedures.

This overview contains statistics on summer series results. In 2020, the final results awarded to learners were arrived at in a different way to the 2021 approach. In 2020, learners received the best of the Centre Assessment Grade (CAG) or the Standardised Grade. Additionally, at A level, learners received the grade they achieved in their AS (in the same subject) if it was higher than the CAG or the Standardised Grade. The CAG was a prediction by teachers of what the learner would have achieved had they sat their exams in summer 2020. The Standardised Grade had been calculated using data. Caution needs to be exercised when comparing the results in 2021 to 2020, and to 2019 and before. The results in 2021 have been awarded using a different assessment approach in different circumstances to both 2020, and previous years. The 2021 national results are therefore not directly comparable in a statistical sense to results in previous years.

Data for 2021 is provisional, as the planned completion date of the WJEC appeal review process is after the publication of this document. Analysis by ethnicity will be published as an Official Statistics in October. Data is mostly sourced from JCQ and so 2020 figures may differ to those published previously by QW. This is because the QW published figures in 2020 used data collected at a different point in time to the JCQ data. Data for level 3 vocational qualifications (VQ) was collected for VQs which had at least 150 certifications per year in recent years and were in category B1 or B2. That is, for B1 qualifications learners would receive a grade based on a Teacher Assessed Grade, for B2 qualifications learners would be expected to sit assessments, but if they could not safely access an assessment, they may have received a Teacher Assessed Grade. This document contains information about outcomes by centre type, more information about variation by centres themselves will be published as Official Statistics in September, as there will be substantial variation across centres too.

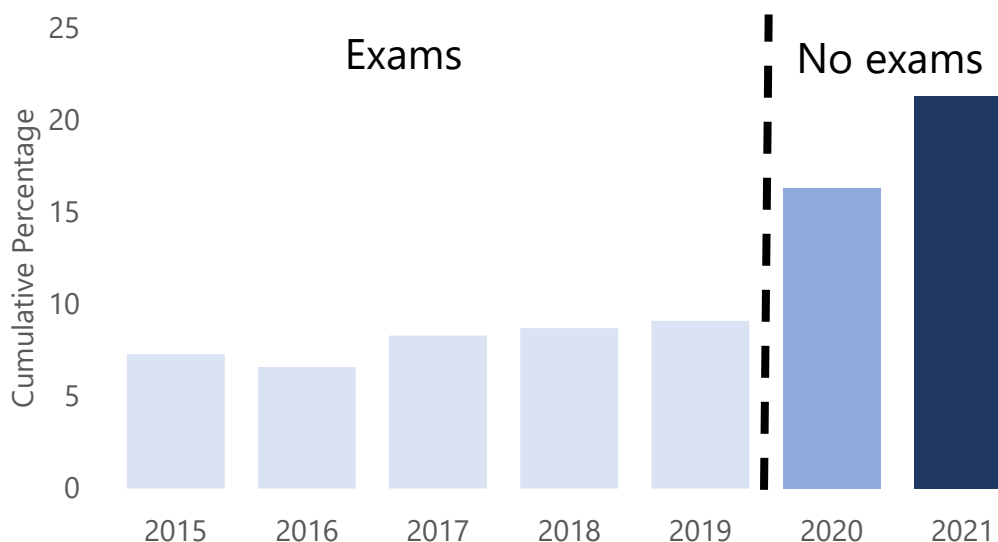
4 National results

4.1 A level

4.1.1 All learners

In 2021, 21.3% of A level grades were A*, up 5.0 percentage points (pp) from 2020 and up 12.2pp from 2019.

Figure 4.1.1.1 A level A* grades in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



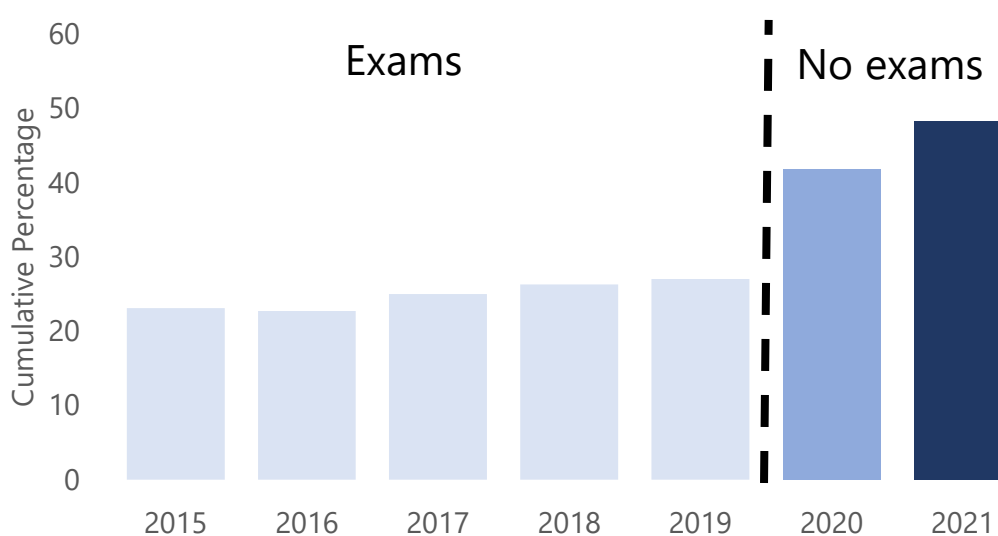
Source: JCQ

(1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, all single award A levels

(2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

In 2021, 48.3% of A level grades were A* or A grades, up 6.5pp from 2020 and up 21.3pp from 2019.

Figure 4.1.1.2 A level A*-A grades in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: JCQ

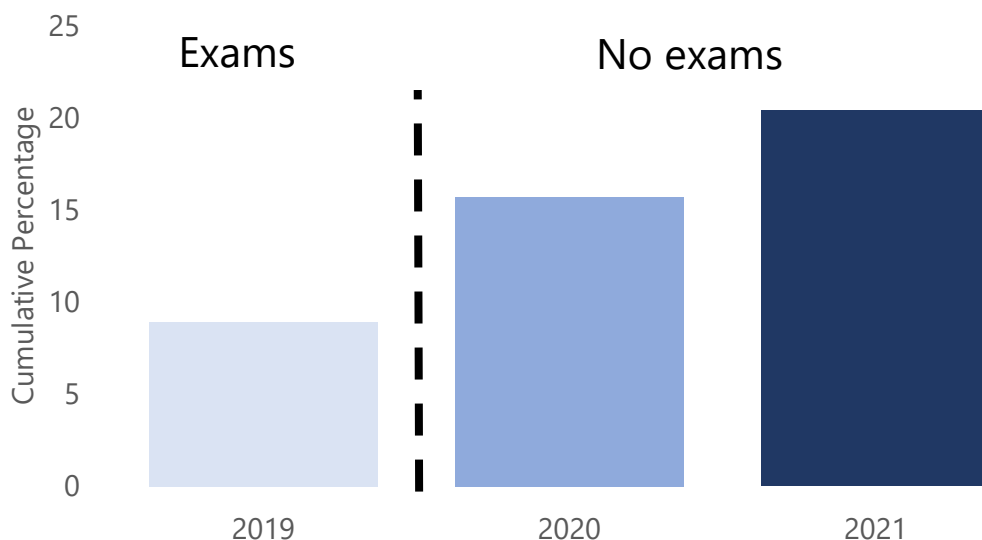
(1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, all single award A levels

(2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

4.1.2 18-year-olds

In 2021, 20.4% of approved A level grades for 18-year-olds were A*, up 4.7pp from 2020 and up 11.5pp from 2019.

Figure 4.1.2.1 Approved A level A* grades in Wales for 18-year-olds⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

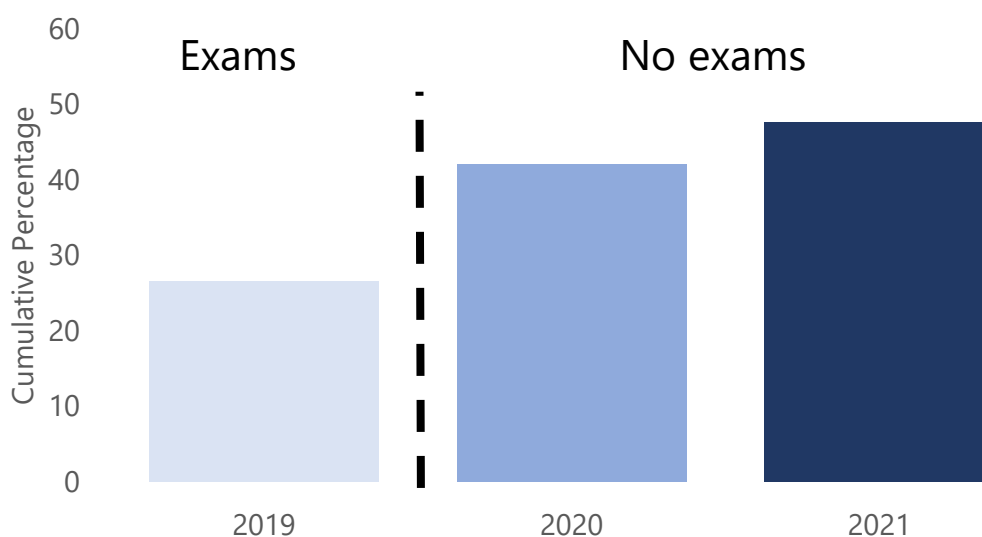


Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, approved single award A levels
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

In 2021, 47.6% of approved A level grades for 18-year-olds were A*-A, up 5.5pp from 2020 and up 21.1pp from 2019.

Figure 4.1.2.2 Approved A level A*-A grades in Wales for 18-year-olds⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

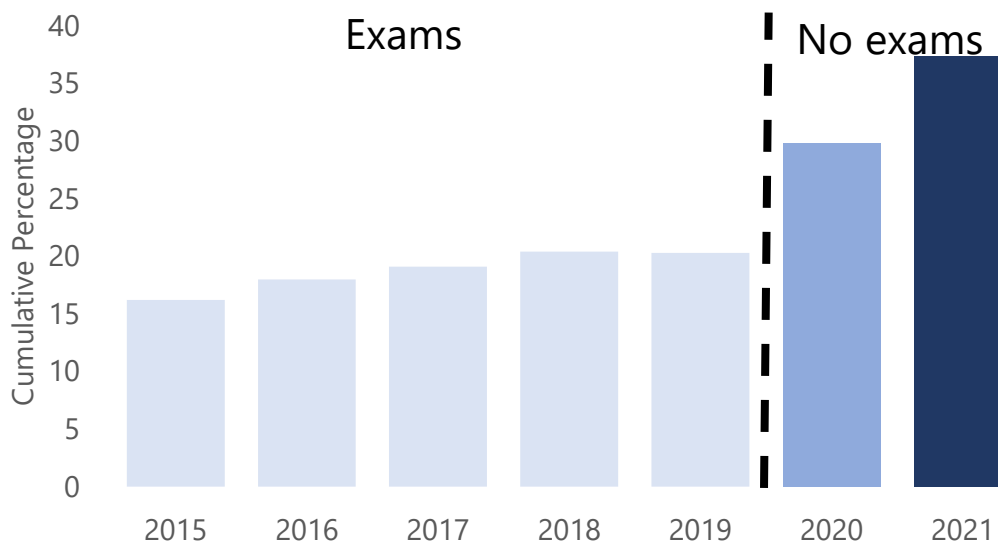
- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, approved single award A levels
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

4.2 AS

4.2.1 All learners

In 2021, 37.1% of AS grades were A, up 7.5pp from 2020 and up 16.8pp from 2019.

Figure 4.2.1.1 AS A grades in Wales ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: JCQ

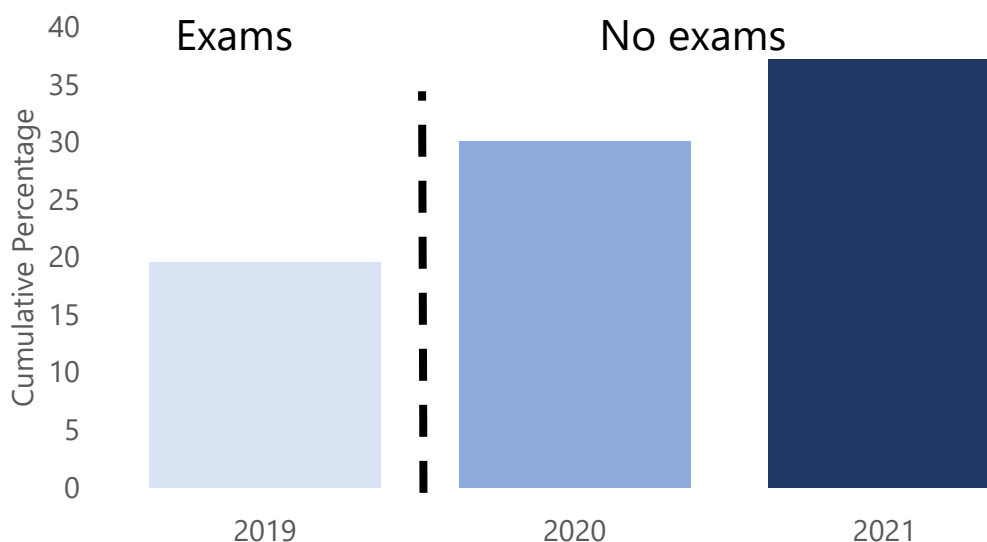
(1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, all single award AS

(2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

4.2.2 17-year-olds

In 2021, 37.2% of approved AS grades for 17-year-olds were A, up 7.1pp from 2020 and up 17.6pp from 2019.

Figure 4.2.2.1 Approved AS A grades in Wales for 17-year-olds ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

(1) 17-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, approved single award AS

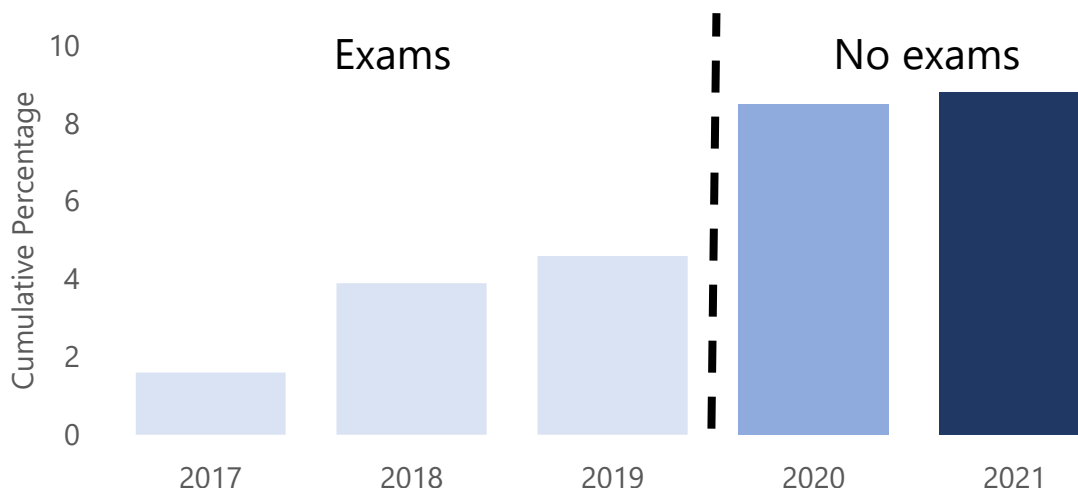
(2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

4.3 Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC)

4.3.1 All learners

In 2021, 8.8% of Advanced SCC grades were A*, up 0.3pp from 2020 and up 4.2pp from 2019.

Figure 4.3.1.1 Advanced SCC A* grades in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

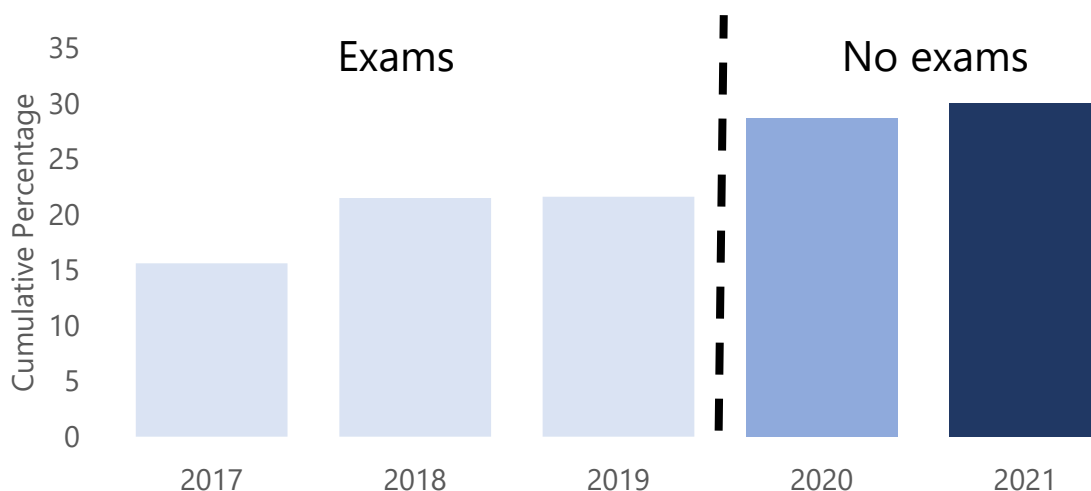


Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) All learners in Wales, WJEC, all Advanced SCC
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

In 2021, 30.0% of Advanced SCC grades were A*-A, up 1.3pp from 2020 and up 8.4pp from 2019.

Figure 4.3.1.2 Advanced SCC A*-A grades in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



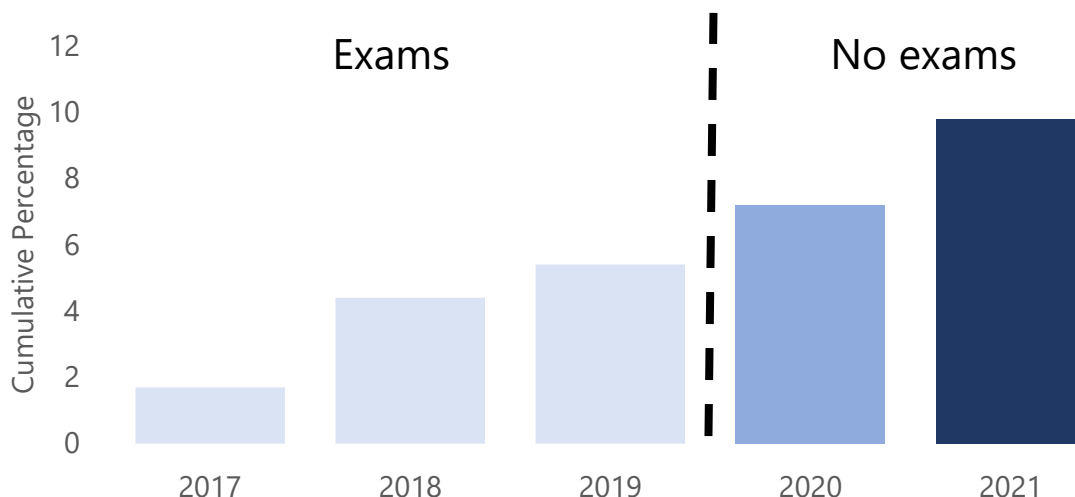
Source: WJEC

- (1) All learners in Wales, WJEC, all Advanced SCC
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

4.3.2 18-year-olds

In 2021, 9.8% of Advanced SCC grades for 18-year-olds were A*, up 2.6pp from 2020 and up 4.4pp from 2019.

Figure 4.3.2.1 Advanced SCC A* grades for 18-year-olds in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

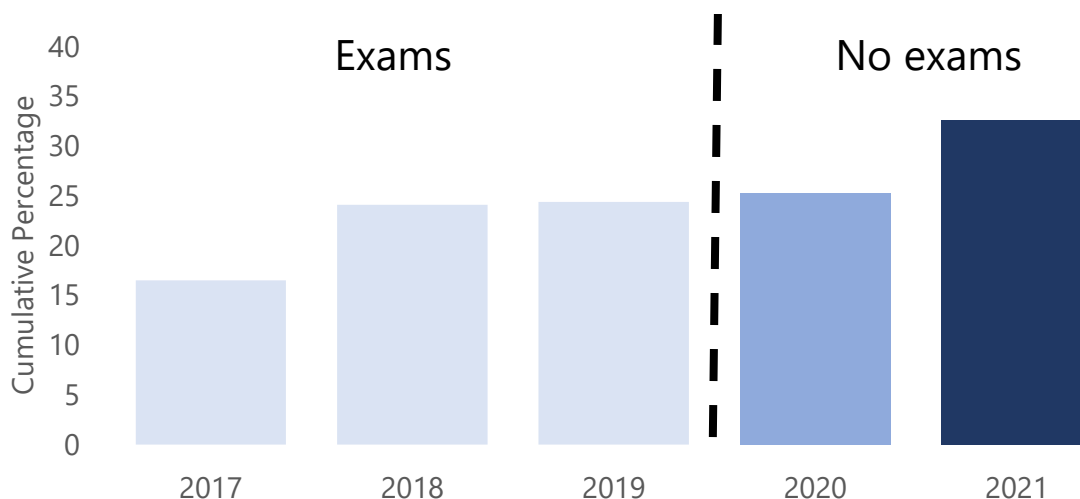


Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all Advanced SCC
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

In 2021, 32.6% of Advanced SCC grades for 18-year-olds were A*-A, up 7.3pp from 2020 and up 8.2pp from 2019.

Figure 4.3.1.2 Advanced SCC A*-A grades for 18-year-olds in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: JCQ

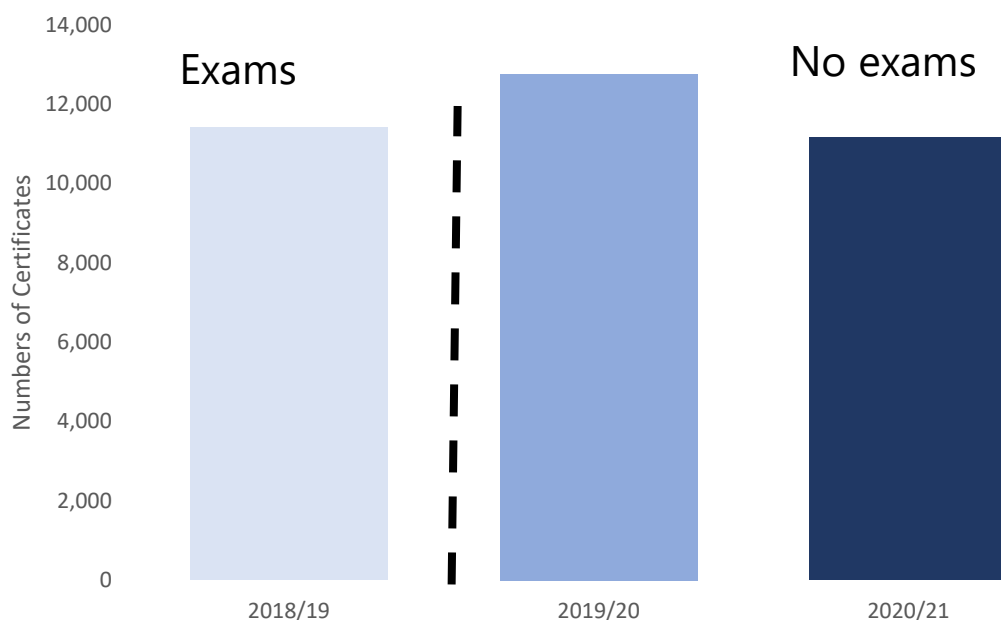
- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all Advanced SCC
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

4.4 Selected level 3 vocational qualifications

Data for level 3 vocational qualifications (VQ) was collected from awarding bodies for VQs which had at least 150 certifications per year in recent years and were category B1 or B2. That is, for B1 qualifications learners would receive a grade based on a Teacher Assessed Grade, for B2 qualifications learners would be expected to sit exams or assessments, but if they could not safely access an assessment, they may have received a result based on a Teacher Assessed Grade. This data included a range of qualifications, including some BTECs. Data was collected for 33 of the 1,072 level 3 vocational qualifications with certificates in 2019/20, and accounted for 19.1% of the certifications of all level 3 vocational qualification certifications in 2019/20.

In 2020/21, 11,169 certificates were issued for the selected qualifications, down 12.4pp from 2019/20 and down 2.2pp from 2018/19.

Figure 4.4.1 Selected level 3 VQ certificates in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

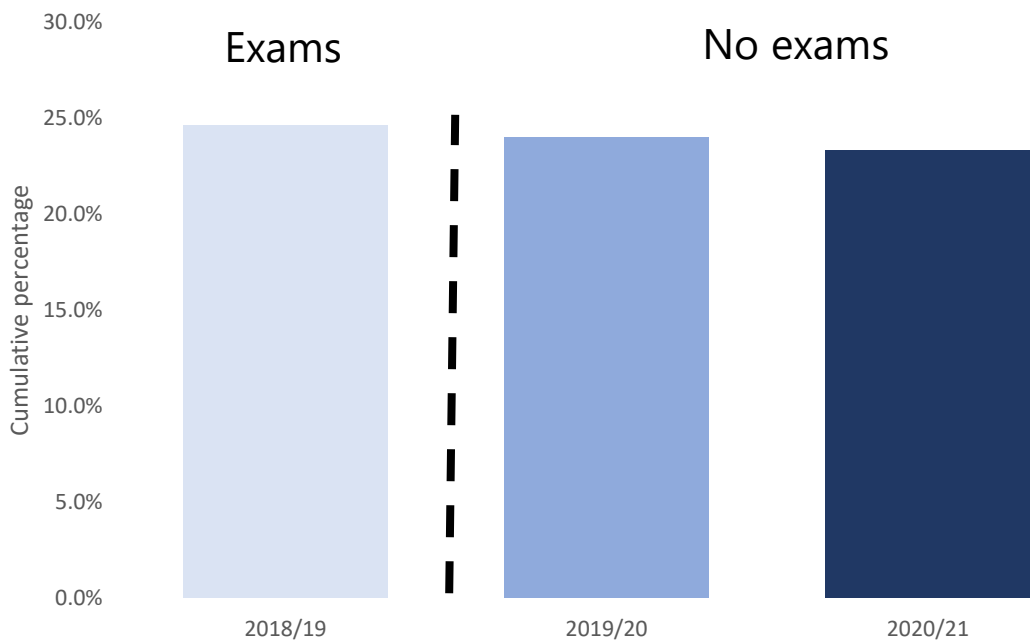


Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, level 3 vocational qualifications in category B1 or B2 and with at least 150 certifications each year
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

For qualifications where a top grade is available (i.e., they are not pass/fail), the top grade was awarded in 23.3% of cases in 2020/21, down 0.7pp from 2019/20 and down 1.3pp from 2018/19.

Figure 4.4.2 Selected level 3 VQ, top grades in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

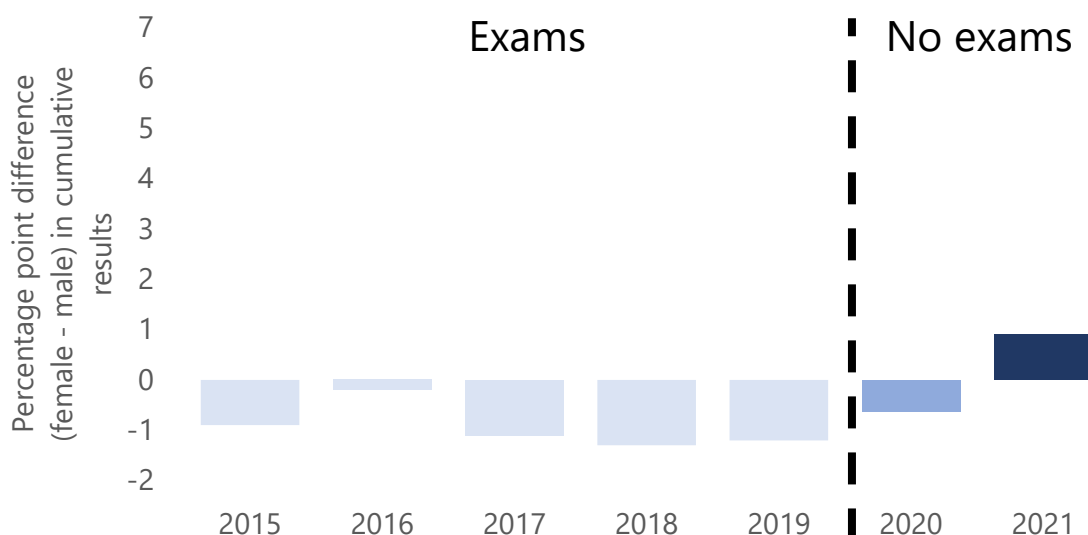
- (1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, level 3 vocational qualifications in category B1 or B2 and with at least 150 certifications each year
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

5 Attainment gaps by gender

5.1 A level

In 2021, relative to males, females achieved 0.9pp more A* grades at A level. This reversed the attainment gap seen in previous years, where males achieved a higher percentage of A* grades than females.

Figure 5.1.1 A level A* gender attainment gap (female – male) in Wales ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



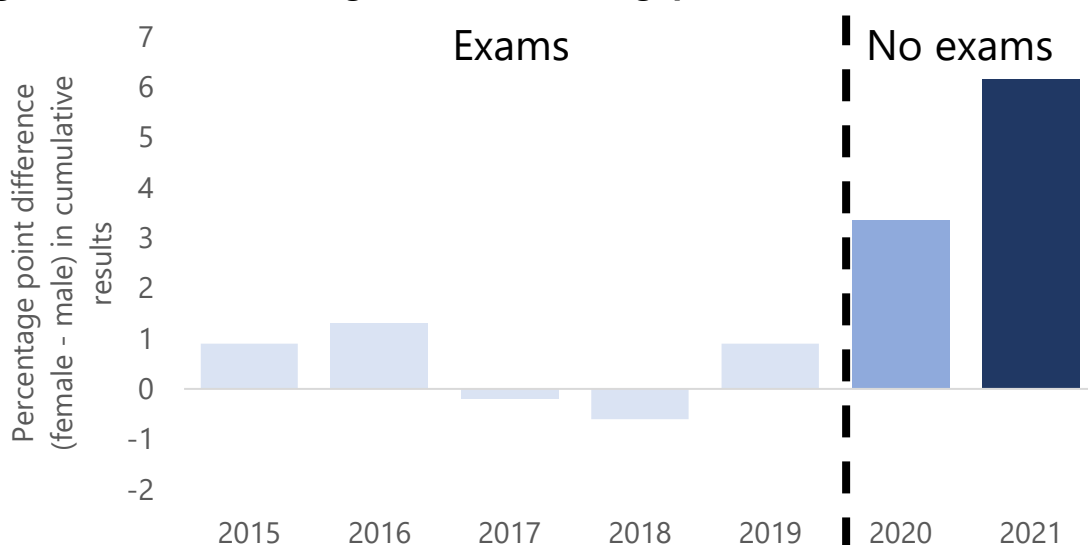
Source: JCQ

(1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, all single award A levels

(2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

In 2021, relative to males, females achieved 6.2pp more A level grades at A*-A, up 2.8pp from 2020 and up 5.3pp from 2019.

Figure 5.1.2 A level A*-A gender attainment gap (female – male) in Wales ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: JCQ

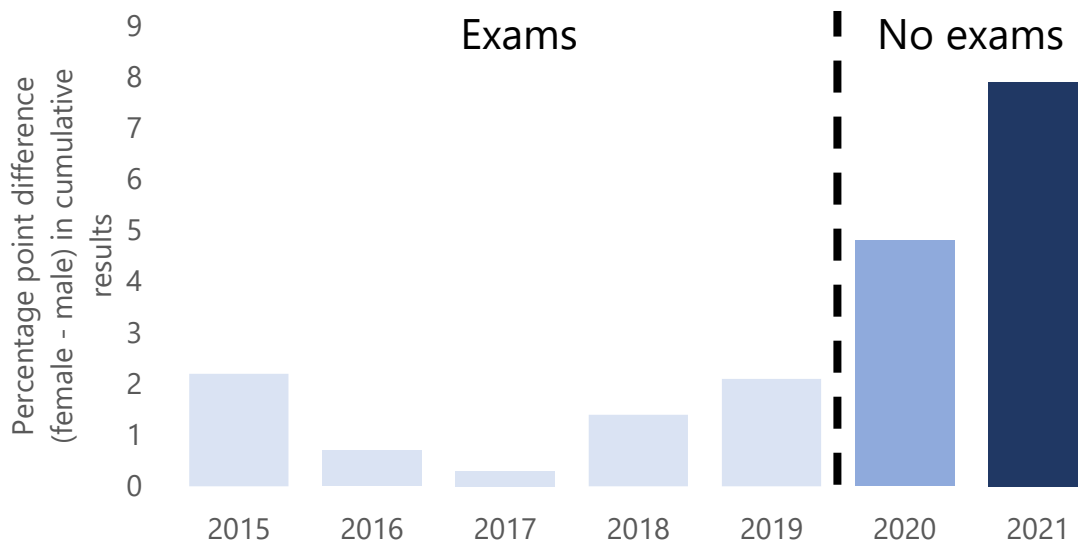
(1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, all single award A levels

(2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

5.2 AS

In 2021, relative to males, females achieved 7.9pp more A AS grades, up 3.1pp from 2020 and up 5.8pp from 2019.

Figure 5.2.1 AS A grade gender attainment gap (female – male) in Wales ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: JCQ

- (1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, all single award AS
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

6 Results by region

The region analysis groups local authorities as detailed in table 6.0.1. This grouping is purely geographical; this data includes centres which are not controlled by local authorities.

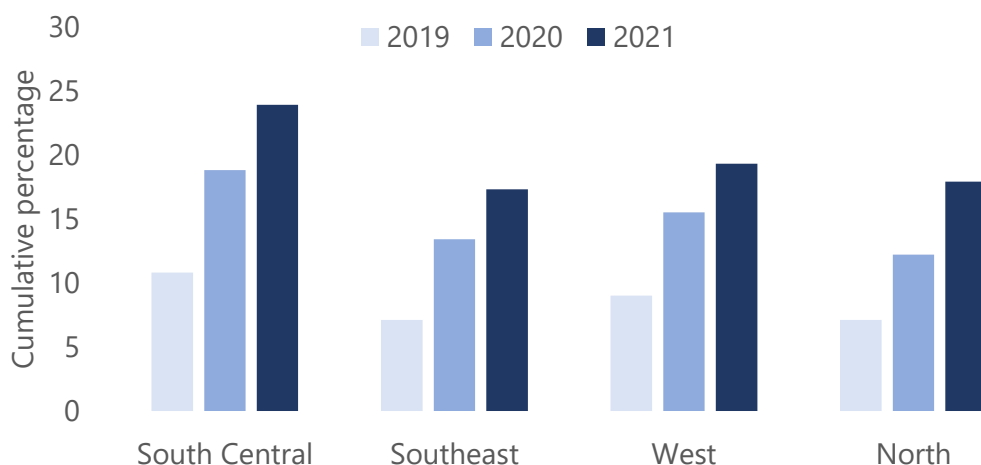
Table 6.0.1 Grouping of local authorities for regional analysis

Region	Local Authorities
South Central	Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Vale of Glamorgan
Southeast	Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen
West	Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, and Swansea
North	Isle of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, and Wrexham

6.1 A level

Results at A* increased in all regions between 2019 and 2021.

Figure 6.1.1 A level A* grades in Wales for 18-year-olds ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

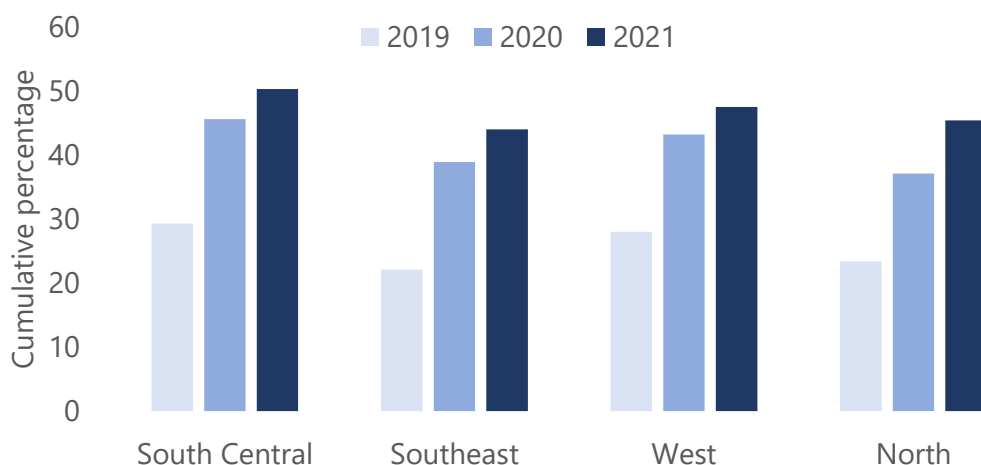


Source: WJEC

- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all single award A levels
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

Results at A*-A increased in all regions between 2019 and 2021.

Figure 6.1.2 A level A*-A grades in Wales for 18-year-olds⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



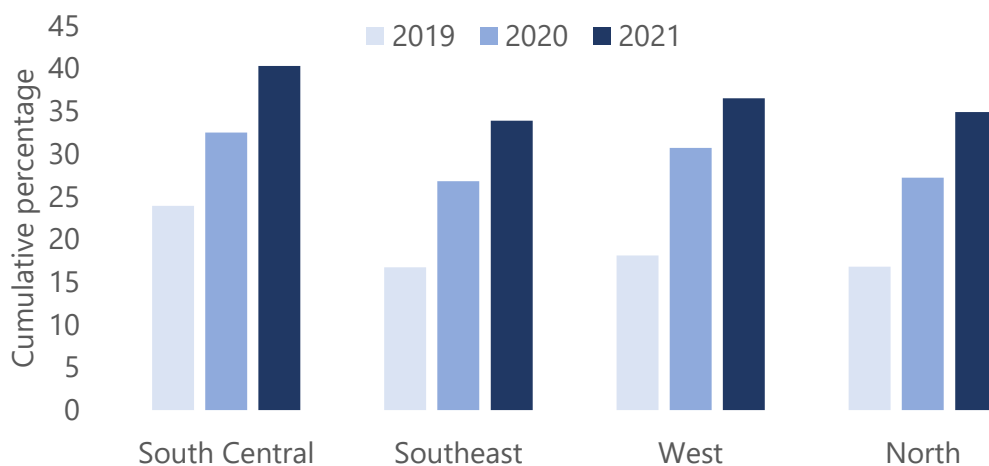
Source: WJEC

- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all single award A levels
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

6.2 AS

Results at A increased in all regions between 2019 and 2021.

Figure 6.2.1 AS A grades in Wales for 17-year-olds⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: WJEC

- (1) 17-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all single award AS
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

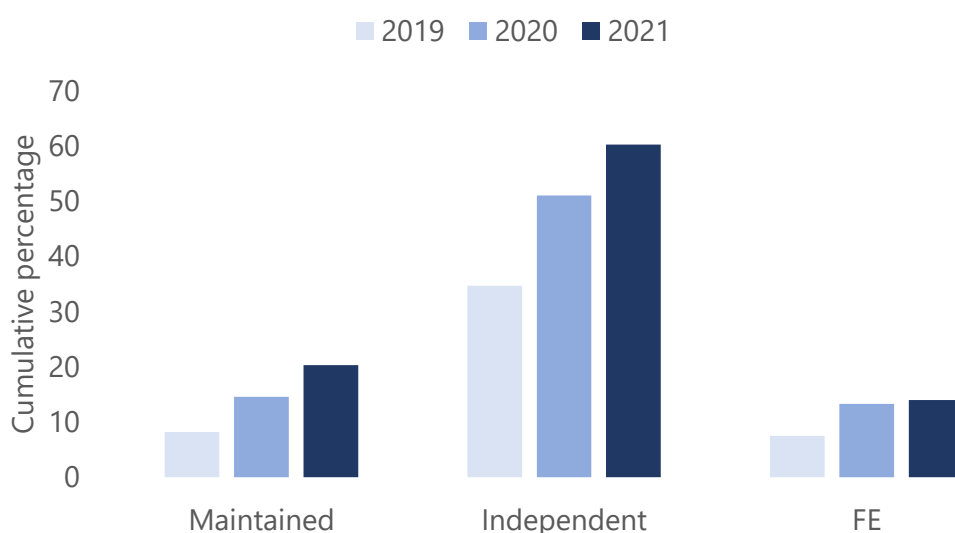
7 Results by centre type

7.1 A level

The centre type analysis groups centres using agreed JCQ groups. There were 21,680 entries in maintained centres, 1,229 in independent centres and 7,226 in FE centres.

A level results at A* increased for all centre types between 2019 and 2021. Increases in results in maintained secondary and independent schools between 2020 and 2021 were larger than increases in FE colleges.

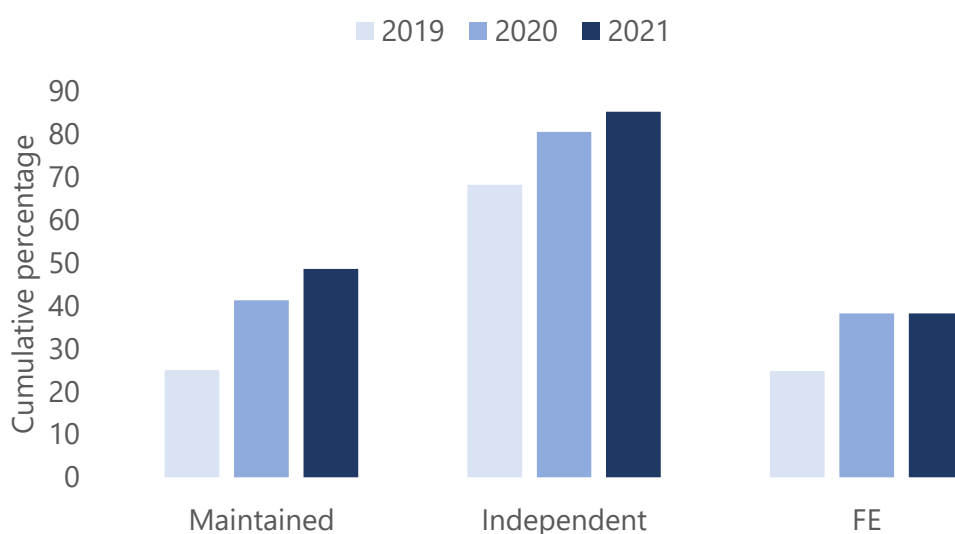
Figure 7.1.1 A level A* grades in Wales for 18-year-olds⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: WJEC

- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all single award A levels
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

Figure 7.1.2 A level A*-A grades in Wales for 18-year-olds⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: WJEC

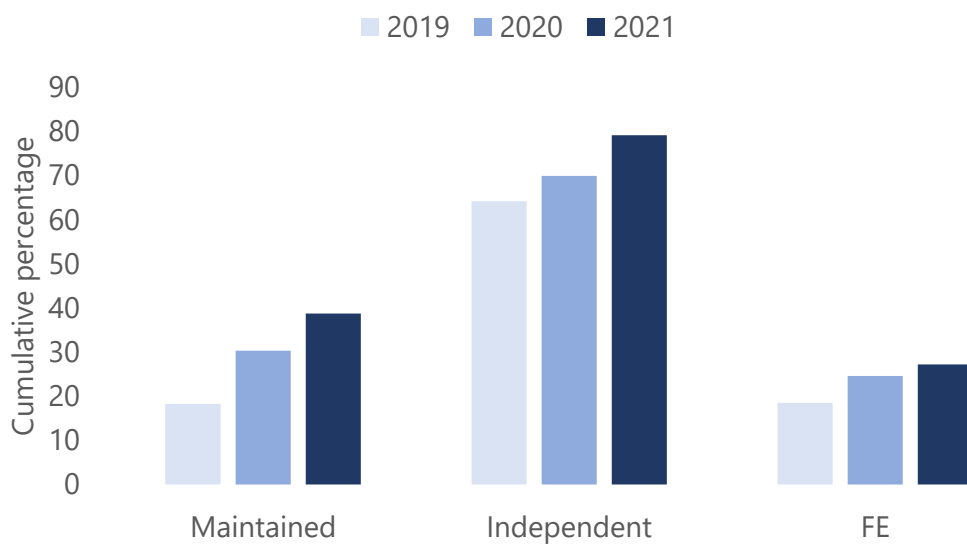
- (1) 18-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all single award A levels
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.

7.2 AS

There were 28,212 entries in maintained centres, 1,251 in independent centres and 9,936 in FE centres.

AS results at A grade increased for all centre types between 2019 and 2021. Increases in results in maintained secondary and independent schools between 2020 and 2021 were larger than increases in FE colleges.

Figure 7.2.1 AS A grades in Wales for 17-year-olds ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: WJEC

- (1) 17-year-olds in Wales, WJEC, all single award AS
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.