

Summary of provisional results for GCSE, Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate and selected level 1/2 and level 2 vocational qualifications in Wales



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Statistician: John Fuery
01633 373 250
statistics@qualificationswales.org

Media enquiries: Alan Morris
01633 373 216
comms@qualificationswales.org

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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 |
|---|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| GCSE | Entries | 328,658 | 302,576 | 295,690 |
| | A/7(%) | 28.7 | 25.5 | 18.4 |
| | C/4 (%) | 73.6 | 73.8 | 62.8 |
| | G/1 (%) | 98.5 | 99.6 | 97.2 |
| National / Foundation (KS4) Skills Challenge Certificate | Entries | 26,704 | 28,377 | 27,544 |
| | A* (%) | 5.7 | 5.6 | 2.7 |
| | A*-A (%) | 19.0 | 19.9 | 14.0 |
| | A*-Pass (%) | 97.5 | 99.5 | 98.5 |
| Selected level 1/2 and level 2 vocational qualifications ⁽²⁾ | Certificates | 45,564 | 58,124 | 49,372 |
| | Top grade (%) ⁽³⁾ | 14.1 | 9.9 | 6.6 |

Source: JCQ (GCSE), QW data collection from awarding bodies (KS4 SCC, selected VQ)

- (1) For GCSE 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 1/2 and level 2 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. 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 1/2 and level 2 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

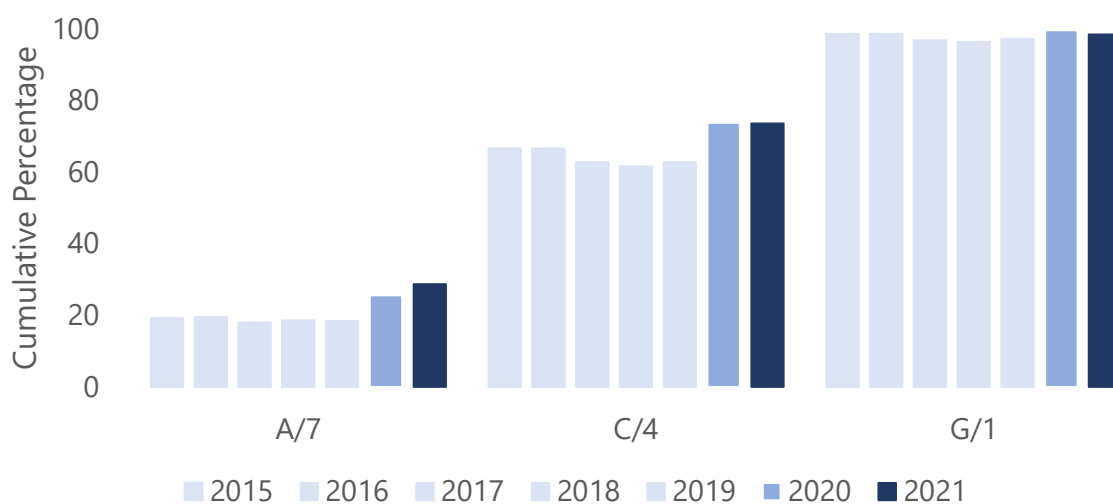
4.1 GCSE

GCSEs designed for use in Wales use the A*-G grade scale. In England, reformed GCSEs use a 9 to 1 grade scale, with 9 being the highest grade. A small number of learners in Wales sit GCSEs that use the 9 to 1 grade scale. Regulators remain committed to anchoring grade standards of qualifications at key grades (A/7, C/4, G/1), so these are reported here.

4.1.1 All learners

In 2021, 28.7% of GCSE grades were at least A/7, up 3.2pp from 2020 and up 10.3pp from 2019. 73.6% of GCSE grades were at least C/4, down 0.2pp from 2020 but up 10.8pp from 2019.

Figure 4.1.1.1 GCSE outcomes in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



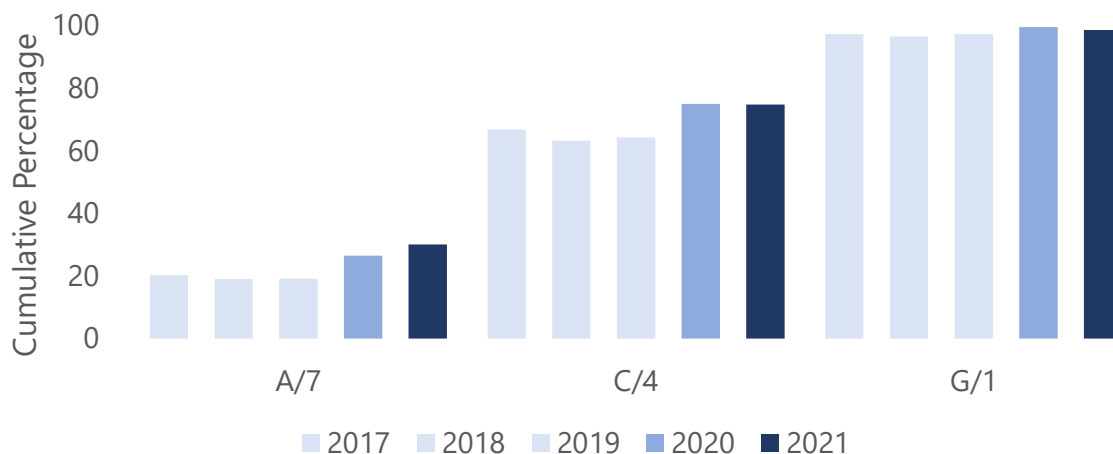
Source: JCQ

- (1) 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.
- (2) All learners, all awarding organisations, summer only.

4.1.2 16-year-olds

In 2021, 30.0% of GCSE grades for 16-year-olds were A/7, up 3.5pp from 2020 and up 10.9pp from 2019.

Figure 4.1.2.1, GCSE outcomes in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: JCQ

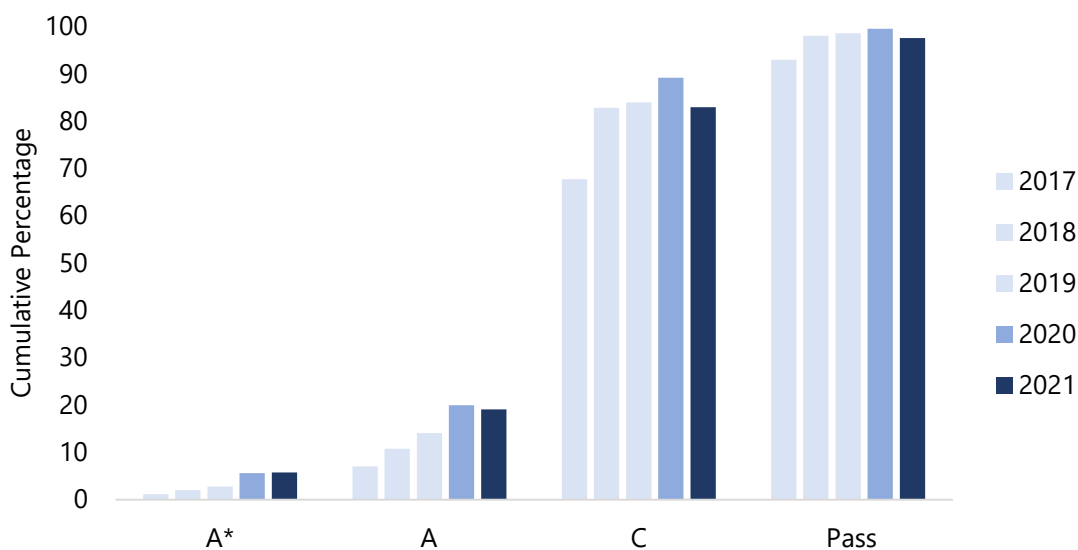
- (1) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.
- (2) 16-year-olds, all awarding bodies, summer only

4.2 National/Foundation KS4 Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC)

4.2.1 All learners

In 2021 5.7% of KS4 SCC grades were A*, up 0.1pp from 2020 and up 3.0pp from 2019.

Figure 4.2.1.1 KS4 Skills Challenge Certificate outcomes in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

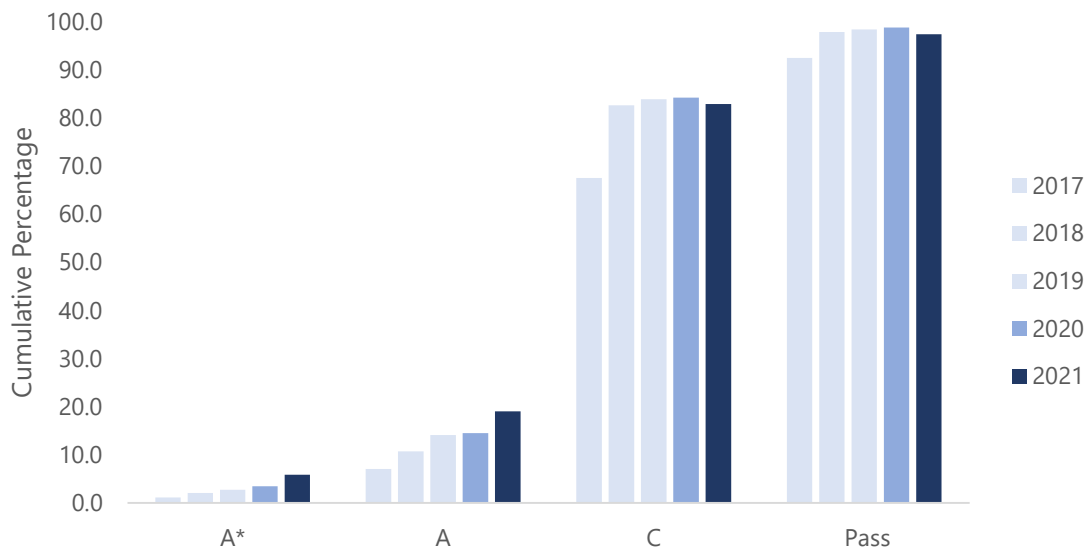


Source: QW data collection

- (1) 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.
- (2) All learners, WJEC, summer only

4.2.2 16-year-olds

Figure 4.2.2.1 KS4 Skills Challenge Certificate outcomes in Wales⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

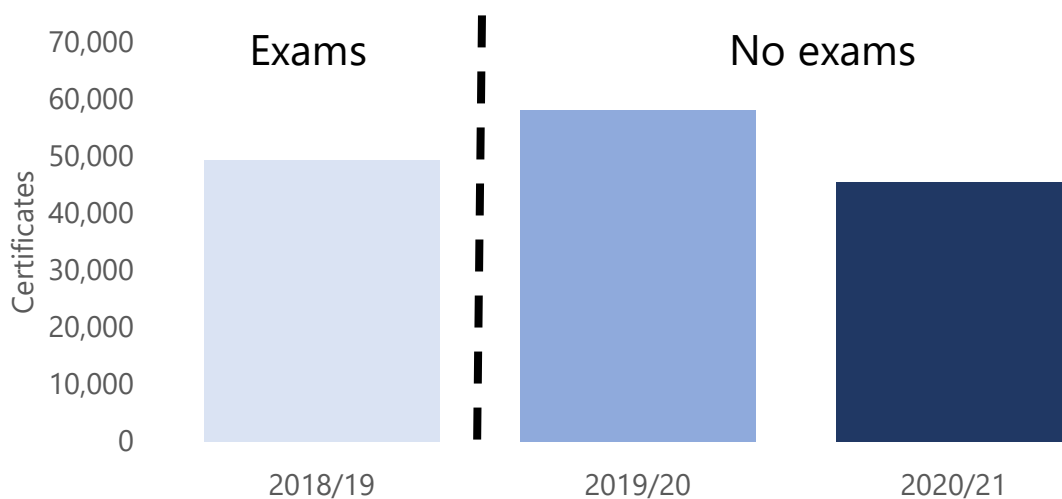
- (1) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.
- (2) All learners, WJEC, summer only

4.3 Selected level 1/2 and level 2 vocational qualifications

Data for level 1/2 or level 2 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 56 of the 1,214 level 1/2 or level 2 vocational qualifications with certificates in 2019/20 and accounted for 51.3% of the certifications of all level 1/2 or level 2 vocational qualification certifications in 2019/20.

Certificates awarded decreased 21.6% in 2021 following the increase of 17.7% in 2020.

Figure 4.3.1 Certificates for selected high entry vocational qualifications by academic year⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

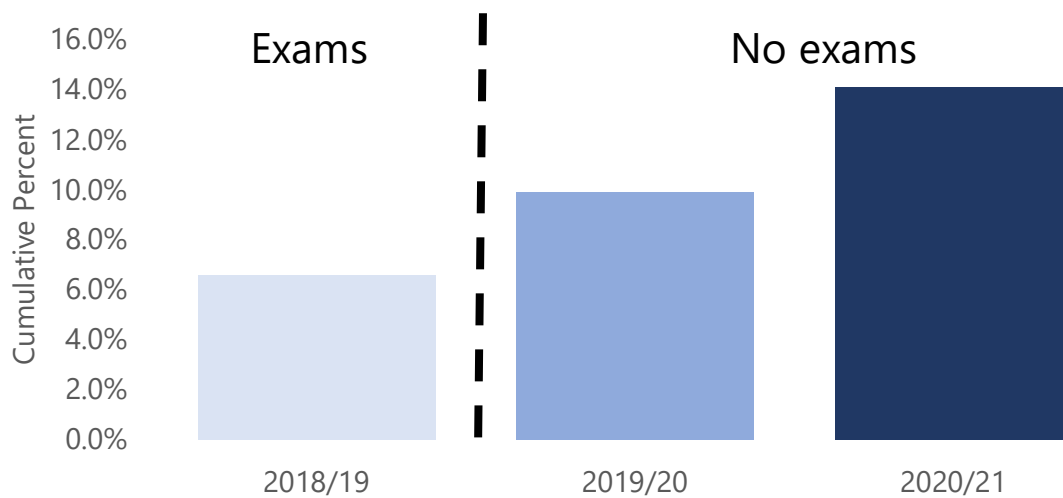


Source: QW data collection from ABs

- (1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, level 1/2, or level 2 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

The top-grade (excluding pass/fail qualifications) rate was 14.1%, up from 9.9% in 2019/20.

Figure 4.3.2 Top grade rates for selected high entry vocational qualifications by academic year⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from ABs

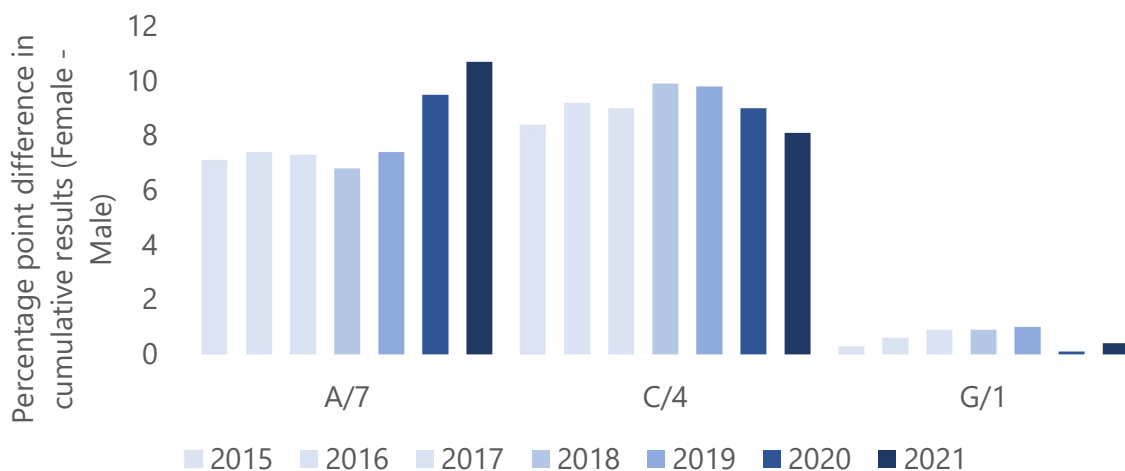
- (1) All learners in Wales, all awarding bodies, level 1/2, or level 2 vocational qualifications in category B1 or B2 and with at least 150 certifications each year
- (2) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with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

5 Attainment gaps by gender

5.1 GCSE

In 2021, relative to males, females achieved 10.7pp more A/7 grades, up from 9.5pp in 2020 and up from 7.4pp in 2019.

Figure 5.1.1 GCSE, difference (female – male) in outcomes in Wales ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



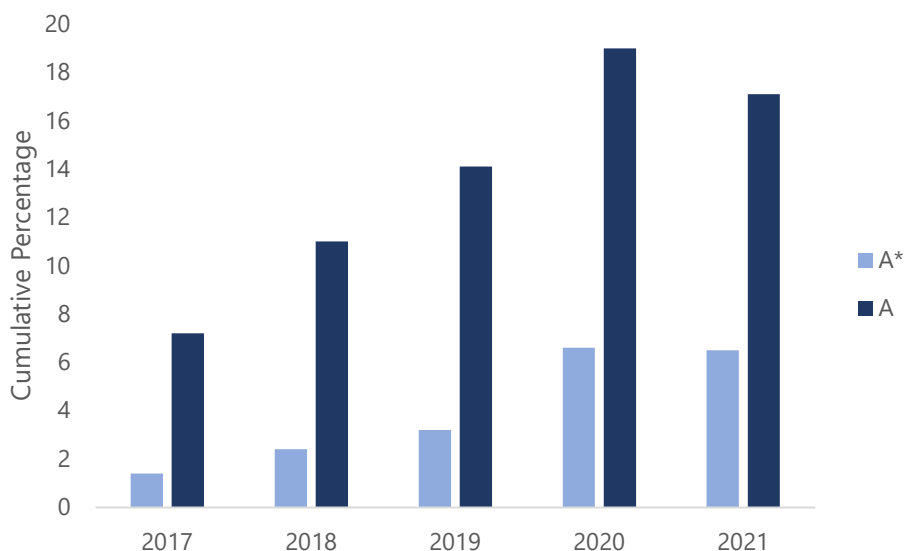
Source: JCQ

- (1) 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.
- (2) All learners, all awarding organisation, summer only

5.2 KS4 Skills Challenge Certificate

In 2021, relative to females, males achieved 3.2pp fewer A* grades, down from 6.6pp in 2020 and down from 6.5pp in 2019.

Figure 5.2.1 Gender attainment gap (female – male) in KS4 SCC cumulative outcomes in Wales ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from ABs

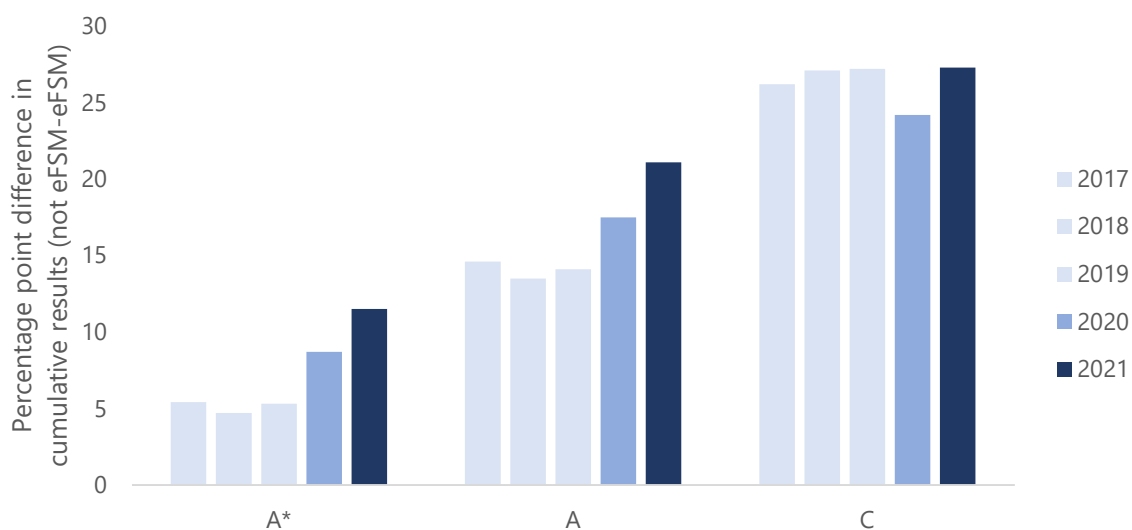
- (1) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.
- (2) All learners, all awarding organisation, summer only

6 Attainment gaps by eligibility for free school meals (FSM)

6.1 GCSE

In 2021, relative to those eligible for FSM (eFSM), learners not eligible (not eFSM) achieved 11.5pp more A* grades, up 2.8pp from 2020 and up 6.2pp from 2019. A similar pattern was observed at A*-A. At A*-C the attainment gap widened in 2021 after narrowing in 2020.

Figure 6.1.1 Differences in cumulative percentage outcomes in Wales, not eFSM – eFSM (1)(2)



Source: QW data collection from ABs

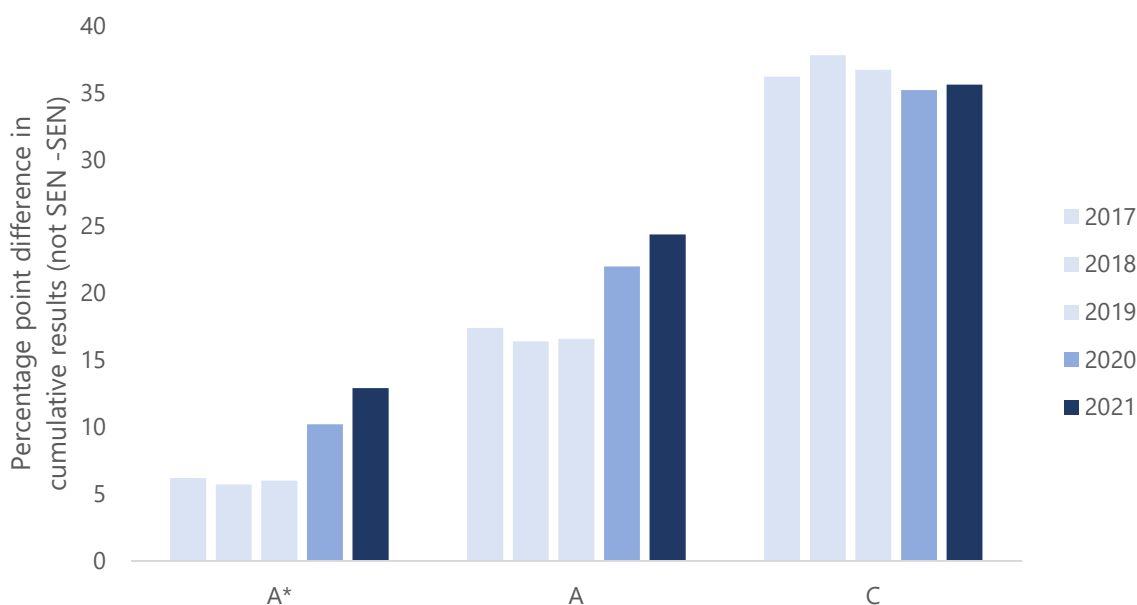
- (1) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.
- (2) Year 11 only, WJEC, summer only, all full course single award A*-G GCSEs (including double Science)

7 Results by special educational needs provision

7.1 GCSE

In 2021, relative to those having special educational needs (SEN), learners that were not categorised as SEN (nSEN) achieved 12.9pp more A* grades, up 2.7pp from 2020 and up 6.9pp from 2019. A similar pattern was observed at A*-A. At A*-C the attainment gap increased slightly in 2021 after narrowing in 2020.

Figure 7.1.1 Differences in cumulative percentage outcomes in Wales, nSEN – SEN (1)(2)



Source: QW data collection from ABs

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11, WJEC, summer series only, all full course single award GCSEs (including double Science)

8 Results by region

8.1 GCSE

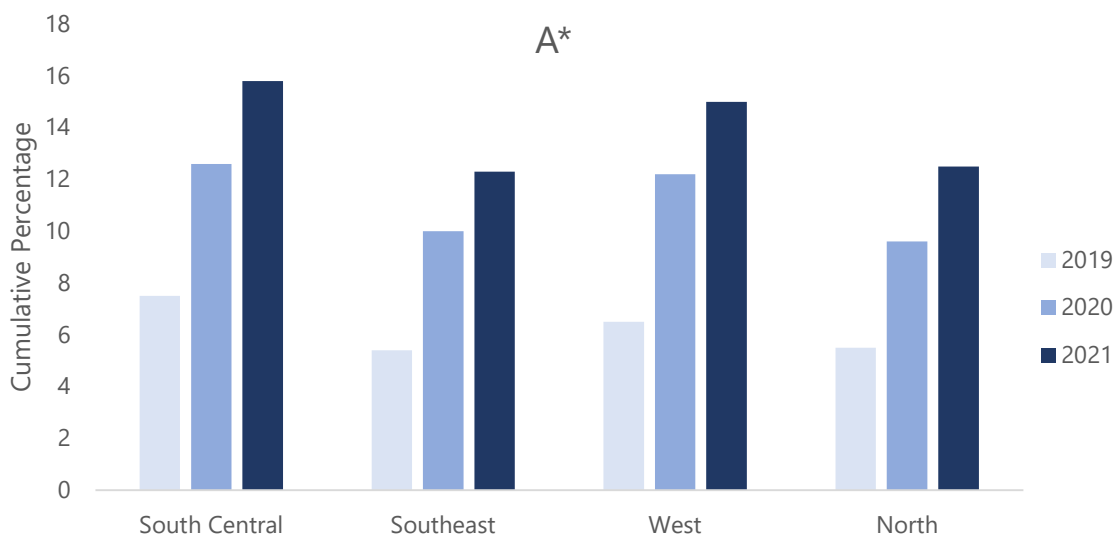
The region analysis groups local authorities as detailed in table 8.1.1. This grouping is purely geographical, this data includes centres which are not controlled by local authorities. The results shown by region are for year 11 learners taking Wales-only A*-G GCSEs.

Table 8.1.1 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 | Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, and Wrexham |

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

Figure 8.1.1 GCSE A* grades in Wales for Year 11⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

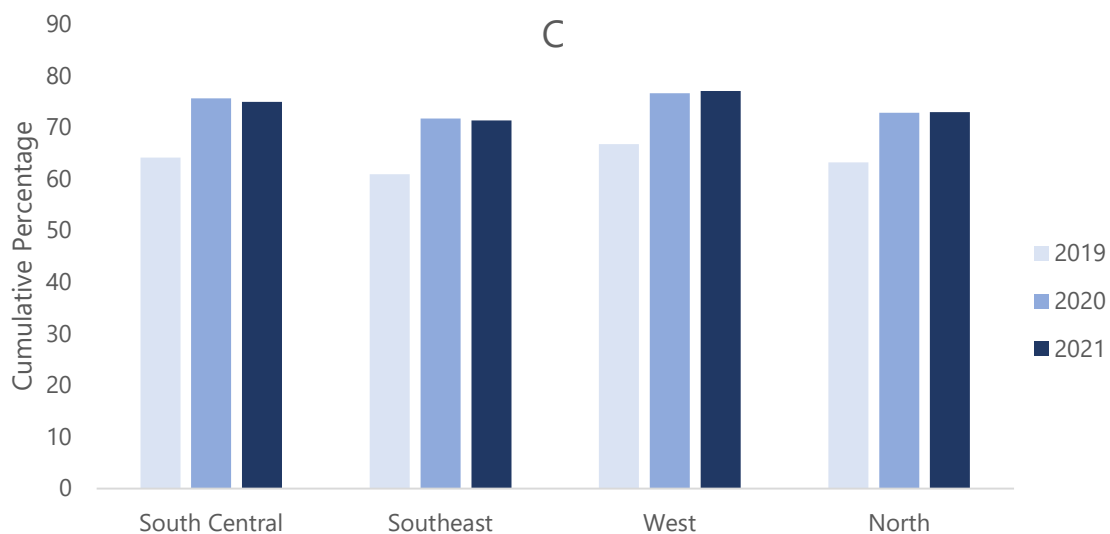


Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11, WJEC, summer only, all full course single award GCSEs (including double Science)

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

Figure 8.1.2 GCSE A*-C grades in Wales for Year 11 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

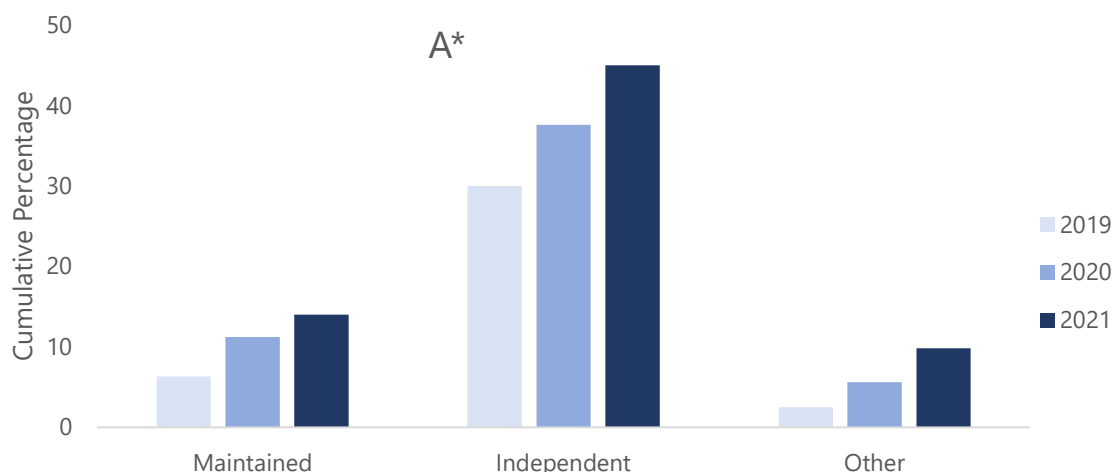
- (1) Due to different awarding arrangements and no standardised national exams, 2020 and 2021 are not directly comparable either with each other, or years in which exams or other standardised national assessments took place.
- (2) Year 11, WJEC, summer only, all full course single award GCSEs (including double Science)

9 Results by centre type

9.1 GCSE

The centre type analysis groups centres using agreed JCQ groups. The results shown by centre type are for year 11 learners taking Wales-only A*-G GCSEs. There were 273,914 entries in maintained centres, 2,910 in independent centres and 6,030 in FE centres.

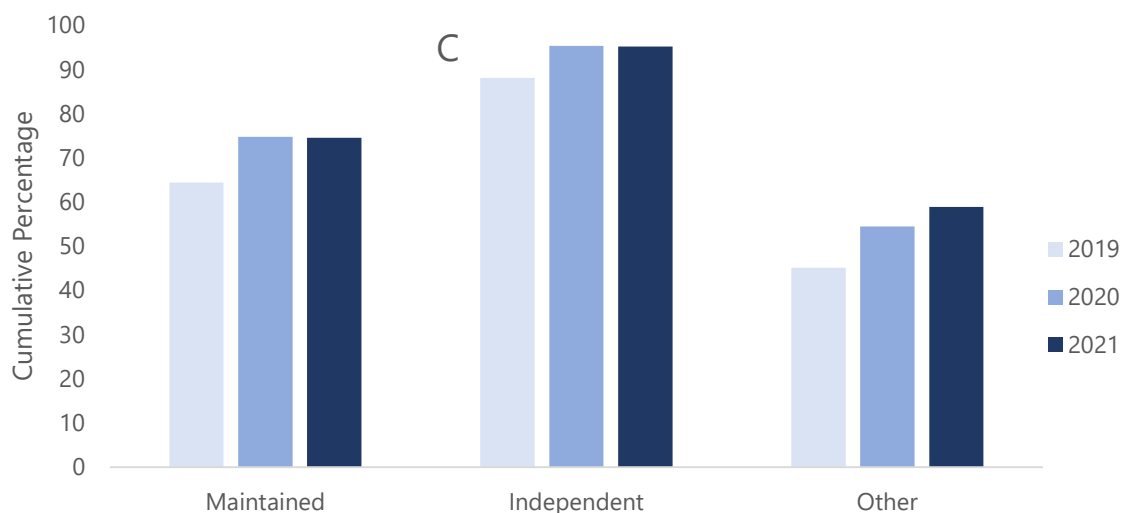
Figure 9.1.1 GCSE A* grades in Wales for Year 11 (1)(2)



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11, WJEC, summer only, all full course single award GCSEs (including double Science)

Figure 9.1.2 GCSE A*-C grades in Wales for Year 11 (1)(2)



Source: QW data collection from awarding bodies

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11, WJEC, summer only, all full course single award GCSEs (including double Science)

10 Appendix 1 - GCSE further analysis

These data tables have been published in response to requests from stakeholders following results day.

Figure 10.1. GCSE attainment gaps by eligibility for free school meals (cumulative percentage point neFSM - cumulative percentage point eFSM)⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

| Year | A* | A*-A | A*-B | A*-C | A*-D | A*-E | A*-F | A*-G |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2017 | 5.4 | 14.6 | 24.2 | 26.2 | 21.3 | 14.5 | 9.2 | 4.4 |
| 2018 | 4.7 | 13.5 | 23.4 | 27.1 | 23.2 | 16.9 | 11.0 | 5.8 |
| 2019 | 5.3 | 14.1 | 23.9 | 27.2 | 23.2 | 16.8 | 10.5 | 4.8 |
| 2020 | 8.7 | 17.5 | 25.0 | 24.2 | 17.5 | 10.8 | 5.9 | 1.0 |
| 2021 | 11.5 | 21.1 | 28.9 | 27.3 | 19.8 | 12.5 | 7.5 | 2.9 |

Source: Qualifications Wales data collection from Awarding bodies

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11 only, WJEC only, summer series only, all full course single award A*-G GCSEs (including double award Science).

Figure 10.2 GCSE outcomes by centre type (cumulative percentage points)⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

| Centre type | Year | A* | A*-A | A*-B | A*-C | A*-D | A*-E | A*-F | A*-G | Numbers sat |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Maintained | 2019 | 6.3 | 18.7 | 39.0 | 64.4 | 79.1 | 88.3 | 93.7 | 97.4 | 253,030 |
| Maintained | 2020 | 11.2 | 25.9 | 48.8 | 74.8 | 87.6 | 94.0 | 97.3 | 99.6 | 256,111 |
| Maintained | 2021 | 14.0 | 29.3 | 51.8 | 74.6 | 86.1 | 92.7 | 96.1 | 98.7 | 273,914 |
| Independent | 2019 | 30.0 | 53.7 | 72.6 | 88.1 | 94.2 | 96.8 | 98.1 | 98.8 | 2,067 |
| Independent | 2020 | 37.6 | 61.6 | 82.8 | 95.4 | 98.0 | 99.4 | 99.7 | 99.9 | 2,511 |
| Independent | 2021 | 45.0 | 66.5 | 84.4 | 95.2 | 97.7 | 98.7 | 99.3 | 99.9 | 2,910 |
| Other | 2019 | 2.5 | 9.1 | 22.5 | 45.1 | 61.1 | 73.8 | 83.1 | 92.5 | 5,938 |
| Other | 2020 | 5.6 | 14.0 | 30.8 | 54.5 | 72.6 | 83.8 | 91.9 | 99.1 | 5,307 |
| Other | 2021 | 9.8 | 19.5 | 36.9 | 58.9 | 74.1 | 85.4 | 91.6 | 96.4 | 6,030 |

Source: Qualifications Wales data collection from Awarding bodies

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11 only, WJEC only, summer series only, all full course single award A*-G GCSEs (including double award Science).

Figure 10.3. GCSE attainment gaps by special educational needs provision (cumulative percentage point no special educational needs provision - cumulative percentage point special educational needs provision)⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

| Year | A* | A*-A | A*-B | A*-C | A*-D | A*-E | A*-F | A*-G |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2017 | 6.2 | 17.4 | 31.1 | 36.2 | 30.0 | 20.4 | 12.7 | 5.6 |
| 2018 | 5.7 | 16.4 | 29.6 | 37.8 | 33.6 | 24.3 | 15.8 | 7.7 |
| 2019 | 6.0 | 16.6 | 29.5 | 36.7 | 31.9 | 23.3 | 14.6 | 6.4 |
| 2020 | 10.2 | 22.0 | 34.3 | 35.2 | 25.2 | 15.2 | 8.1 | 1.3 |
| 2021 | 12.9 | 24.4 | 36.2 | 35.6 | 26.5 | 16.7 | 9.7 | 3.0 |

Source: Qualifications Wales data collection from Awarding bodies

- (1) 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.
- (2) Year 11 only, WJEC only, summer series only, all full course single award A*-G GCSEs (including double award Science).