

Background Notes – Equalities Analysis

Purpose and coverage of this release

This release presents an analysis of the impact of GCSE, AS and A level results in 2022 on specific groups of learners, compared to changes seen in recent years.

Due to the different assessment and awarding arrangements that took place, results in 2020, 2021 and 2022 are not directly comparable to each other or to results in previous years. Limitations on comparability should be kept in mind when interpreting changes in results.

Data Source

For results by gender, the published JCQ figures have been used as this is the most complete data available. For other analyses, GCSE data for 2021 and earlier is from the Welsh Examination Database (WED) and Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), provided by Welsh Government. GCSE results data for 2022 was collected directly from awarding bodies and linked to PLASC data to obtain pupil characteristics. AS and A level data for 2021 and earlier is from WED, PLASC and Lifelong Learning Wales Records (LLWR). AS and A level results data for 2022 was collected directly from awarding bodies and linked to PLASC and LLWR data to obtain learner data for analysis by Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). WIMD analysis was carried out by linking learner postcodes to an overall WIMD decile using the [2019 WIMD index](#).

WED data includes maintained schools, including special schools and Pupil Referral Units. LLWR data includes further education providers. Historic data is not available for private and independent centres so these are excluded from the WIMD analysis and analysis of GCSE attainment gaps, except for gender which includes all learners.

Information relating to special educational needs provision, free school meal eligibility and learner postcode is not available for all learners. With the exception of analysis by gender, all analyses in this report include only learners for whom characteristics data was available.

External influences

In 2022, summer exams went ahead for the first time since 2019. Alternative arrangements were used to award grades in summer 2020 and summer 2021 because exams were cancelled due to the pandemic. To reflect the impact of the pandemic on learners, changes were made to assessments and the grading policy in order to ensure, as far as possible, that the results in summer 2022 were fair for learners. Results in summer 2022 were awarded broadly midway between summer 2019 and summer 2021.

Statistical methods

We focused the analysis of attainment gaps on the main age group for each qualification: 18-year-olds for A levels, 17-year-olds for AS, and 16-year-olds for GCSE. Age groups are based on the age of learners on 31 August in each year. This removes the effect of resitters and make the comparisons in the analysis as valid as possible. The GCSE analysis includes all full course GCSEs and double award science, unless otherwise stated. Double award science grades have been counted as two separate grades. The AS and A level data includes all single award qualifications. Due to unavailability of age data for all learners, the analysis by Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation includes all ages.

Attainment gaps are calculated as the percentage point difference in percentage results between categories of learners at each grade. So, for example, the gender attainment gap at grade A* to A is calculated as the percentage of total grades awarded to female learners that were A* or A, minus the percentage of total grades awarded to male learners that were A* or A.

This report includes charts which show attainment gaps by JCQ subject grouping. To make sure the information in the charts is reliable, these charts only include subjects which meet a minimum threshold of grades awarded in each characteristic group in each year. This has been done because small sample sizes can often produce percentage point gaps which look extreme but are actually due to a very small number of grades, and so are unreliable. For GCSE the threshold is 100 grades, and for AS and A level the threshold is 30 grades. Data for all subjects, including the subjects which are not in the charts, is available in the data tables published alongside this release.

Limitations of the data

There are usually differences in results by learner characteristics, with bigger differences for some learner characteristic groups because of smaller sample sizes making the results sensitive to changes for a small number of learners. The statistics in this report describe outcomes in results in 2022 compared to previous years by learner characteristic groups. These statistics do not explain why differences have occurred. They may be a result of changes in the ability of learners in the characteristic groups from year-to-year, or taking a particular subject. These sorts of factors can influence differences in the centre assessment grades as well as standardised results.

Where the characteristic group is binary (e.g. eligible for free school meals or not) differences in results are expressed in percentage points (pp). A 10pp change in a characteristic group with results at 50% represents a different magnitude of change to a characteristic group that had results at 90%. When considering the differences in

results, or attainment gaps, it is important to note that these differences can change due to results of either, or both, groups varying. Statistical analysis linked to characteristics protected in equalities legislation is constrained by the availability of data measuring the characteristic.

About us and our statistics

[Qualifications Wales](#) is the independent organisation responsible for regulating general and vocational qualifications in Wales

The [Official Statistics \(Wales\) Order 2017](#) names Qualifications Wales as one of the bodies in scope of the [Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007](#). This release is published as official statistics, in compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Quality assurance

Details of how we quality assure this data are covered in our [Interim Statement on Statistical Quality and Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Sources](#).

Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Revisions

Once published, data on the general qualification grades awarded is not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or correct an error. More information can be found in our [Revisions and Corrections Policy](#).

Rounding and Confidentiality

In accordance with [Qualifications Wales's statistical outputs policy](#), figures fewer than 5 but greater than 0 are replaced with a *. This is to ensure that data does not reveal an individual candidate. All figures for the number of centres are rounded to the nearest 5. All percentages are based on unrounded figures. Figures have been rounded independently and therefore may not sum to the total.

Useful information

A [glossary](#) of terms is available on our website to help you interpret this release. You can find information about future publications on the [Welsh Government website](#).

The [QiW database](#) gives information on approved and designated qualifications which are eligible for public funding in Wales.

Related statistics and publications

[Ofqual published statistics on GCSE and A level equalities analysis for England](#).

[Research and Statistics published by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment \(CCEA\)](#).

[Statistics published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\)](#).

[Statistics published by Eurostat.](#)

Users of these statistics and feedback

Qualifications Wales uses these statistics to monitor the qualification system. These statistics are also likely to be of interest to Ofqual and other qualifications regulators, awarding bodies, centres (schools and colleges) and the Welsh Government. We welcome any feedback on these statistics which can be provided by email to statistics@qualificationswales.org.

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