



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Education in Wales (Census 2021)

Census 2021 data on highest level of qualification held, school children, students and others in full-time education in Wales.

**First published:** 10 January 2023

**Last updated:** 10 January 2023

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/education-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

# Contents

**Introduction**

**Main points**

**Schoolchildren and full-time students**

**Highest level of qualification obtained**

**Highest level of qualification obtained by local authority**

**Quality and methodology information**

**Contact details**

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/education-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

# Introduction

The **Office for National Statistics (ONS)** has published Education in England and Wales: Census 2021. This statistical bulletin summarises this data for Wales. It covers estimates of the percentage of the population aged 16 or over who have obtained academic, vocational, or professional qualifications, as well as the number of schoolchildren and full-time students.

## Main points

- There were 588,000 schoolchildren and students in full-time education (aged 5 years and over) in Wales on census day. This represents 19.9% of usual residents aged 5 and over.
- 31.5% (807,000) of usual residents aged 16 or over in Wales reported that their highest qualification was at level 4 or above (for example Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree and post-graduate qualifications).
- 19.9% (510,000) of usual residents aged 16 or over in Wales had no qualifications whilst 5.6% (143,000) stated apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification.

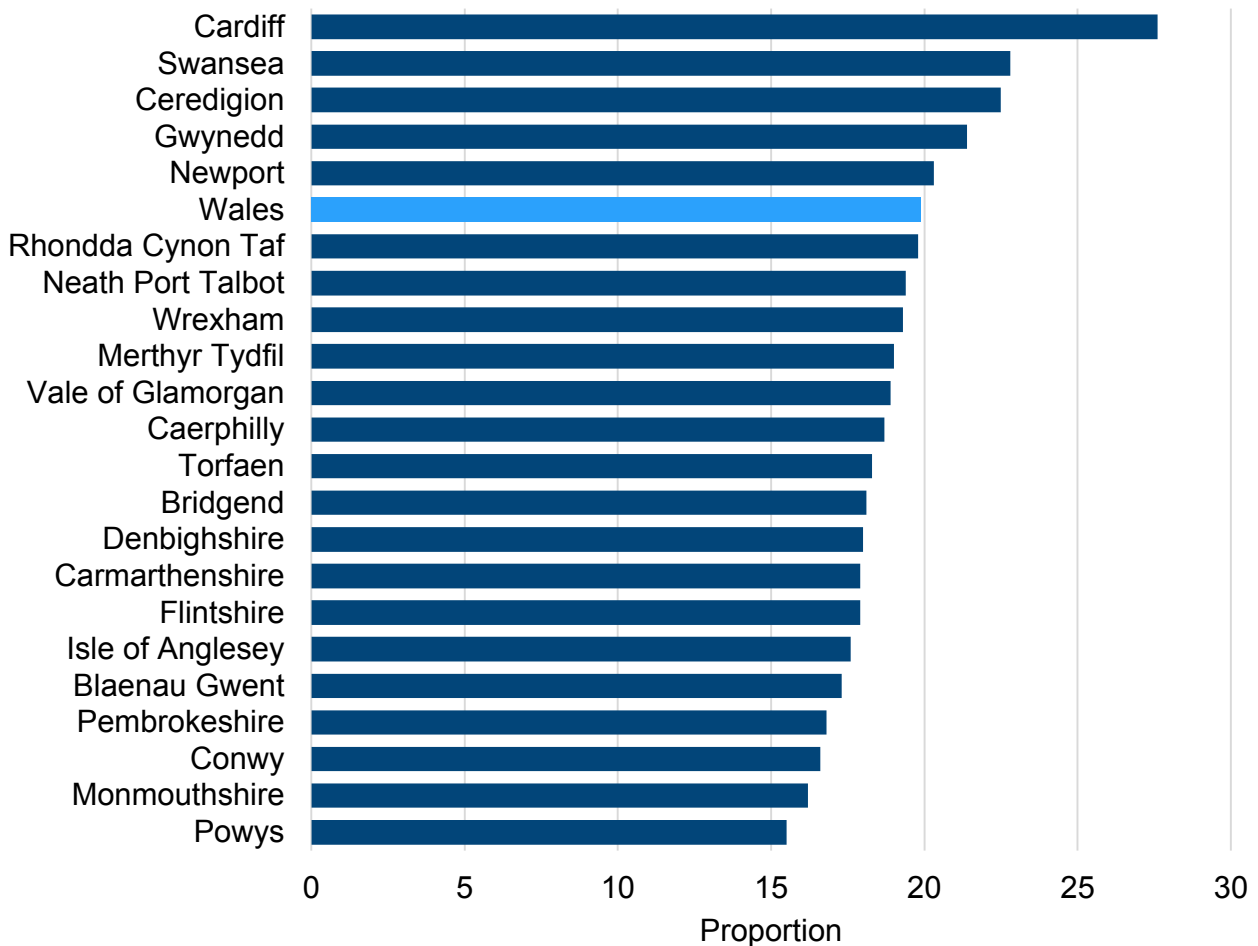
## Schoolchildren and full-time students

There were 588,000 schoolchildren and students in full-time education (aged 5 years and over) in Wales on census day. This represents 19.9% of usual residents aged 5 and over. Compared to 2011, the total number of school children and full-time students in Wales increased by 7,000. However, as a proportion of the population there was a slight decrease from 20.1% of usual

residents aged 5 years and over in 2011 (down 0.2 percentage points). In England the proportion was 20.4% in 2021, down slightly from 20.5% in 2011.

The percentage of usual residents aged 5 years and over who were schoolchildren or students in full-time education varied from 27.6% in Cardiff to 15.5% in Powys. Most local authorities saw a decrease in the proportion compared to 2011 but in 5 local authorities there was an increase. The largest increase was in Cardiff where the proportion increased by 1.8 percentage points to 27.6%. Ceredigion saw the greatest decrease compared to 2011, down 3.8 percentage points to 22.5%.

**Figure 1: Percentage of schoolchildren and full-time students (aged 5 years and over) in 2021, by local authority**



The bar chart shows the proportion of schoolchildren and full-time students varies across local authorities from 27.6% in Cardiff to 15.5% in Powys.

# Highest level of qualification obtained

Usual residents of Wales aged 16 years or older were asked to record any qualifications (including academic, vocational, and professional qualifications) they had ever achieved in Wales or elsewhere, even if they were not using them now. This can be used to calculate the highest level of qualification using the following categories.

- No qualifications: No formal qualifications.
- Level 1: 1 to 4 GCSE passes (i.e. grade A\* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate, or equivalent qualifications.
- Level 2: 5+ GCSE passes (i.e. grade A\* to C or grade 4 and above), Intermediate Welsh Baccalaureate, or equivalent qualifications.
- Apprenticeships
- Level 3: 2+ A Levels, Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, or equivalent qualifications.
- Level 4 or above: Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications
- Other qualifications, of unknown level.

Out of a total of 2.6 million usual residents aged 16 and over in Wales, 807,000 (31.5%) reported that their highest qualification was at level 4 or above. 19.9% (510,000) had no qualifications. 17.2% (441,000) reported that their highest qualification was at level 3, 14.4% (367,000) had a highest qualification at level 2 and 8.7% (223,000) had a highest qualification at level 1.

Apprenticeships were the highest qualification for 5.6% (143,000) of usual residents aged 16 and over. Other qualifications accounted for the remaining 2.7% (69,000).

England had a higher proportion of usual residents aged 16 and over who

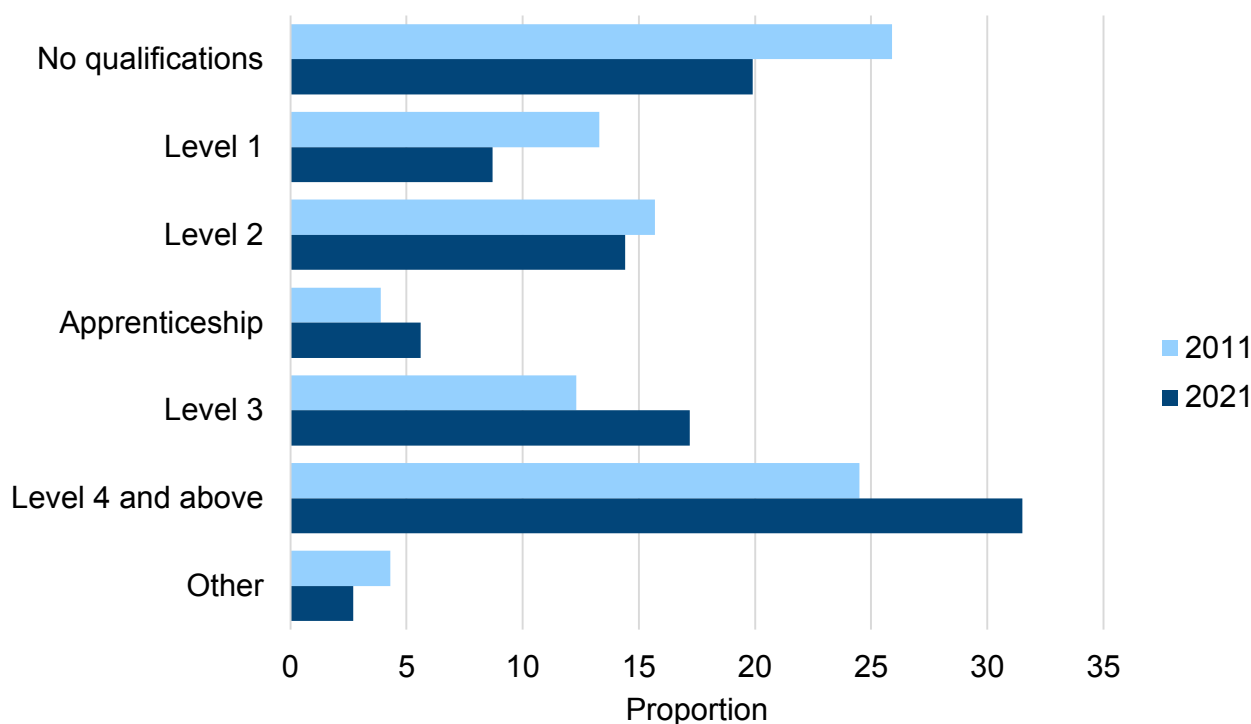
reported that their highest level of qualification was Level 4 or above (33.9%, 15.6 million), compared to Wales (31.5%, 807,000). Wales had a higher proportion who reported having no qualifications (19.9%, 510,000) than England (18.1%, 8.3 million).

Although highest level of qualification is broadly comparable between 2011 and 2021, there are caveats. The categories remain the same as they were in 2011 and are derived in the same way, however, the way the questions were structured changed substantially from 2011. For more information, see information [published by the ONS on the qualifications question development for Census 2021](#). These changes to the collection methodology mean that a reasonable proportion of respondents will have identified a different qualification level than they did in 2011, even though they still hold the same qualifications. Therefore, any change in qualification levels when compared to 2011 will in part be a result of the methodology changes and partly be indicative of real change. As such, changes should be interpreted with caution and users should avoid drawing conclusions from them or using them to inform planning or evaluate policies. 2011 data has been included in figures 2, 3 and 4 for reference purposes only.

Welsh Government publishes regular statistics on [levels of highest qualification held by working age adults](#) in Wales, sourced from the Annual Population Survey. These statistics are not directly comparable to those presented in this bulletin but do enable comparisons to be made over time.

Whilst there are comparability issues between 2011 and 2021 Census data, the general trend of an increase in qualification levels, and corresponding decrease in individuals holding no qualifications, is also observed in the statistics sourced from the Annual Population Survey.

**Figure 2: Highest level of qualification obtained, 2011 and 2021**



The bar chart shows the most common response in 2021 was for Level 4 and above qualifications followed by no qualifications.

## Highest level of qualification obtained by local authority

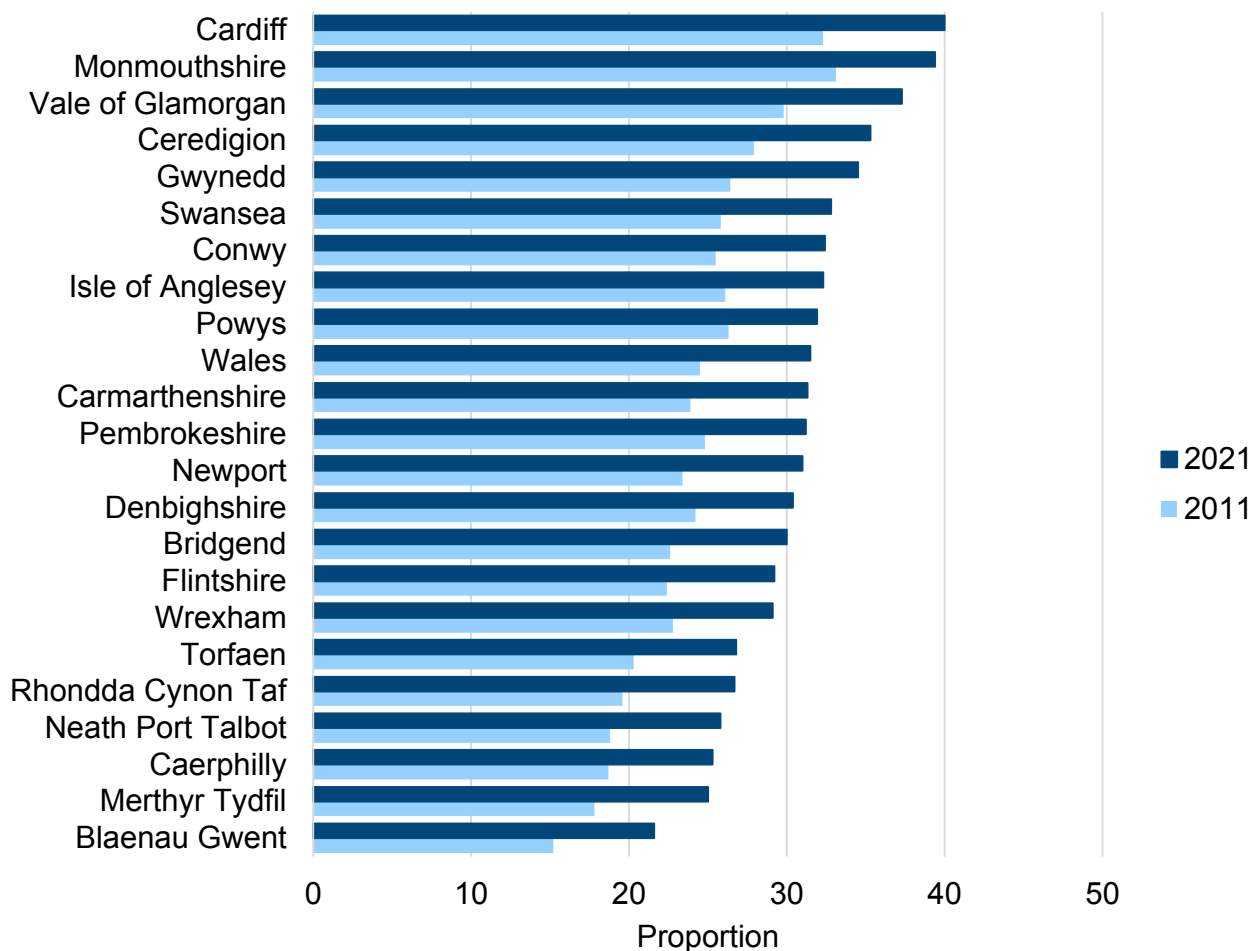
### Level 4 qualifications or above

The local authorities with the highest proportion of respondents reporting that



their highest qualification was at level 4 or above were Cardiff (40.0%) and Monmouthshire (39.4%). The local authorities with the lowest proportion were Blaenau Gwent (21.6%) and Merthyr Tydfil (25.0%).

**Figure 3: Percentage of usual residents aged 16 and over with highest qualification at level 4 or above, by local authority, 2011 and 2021**

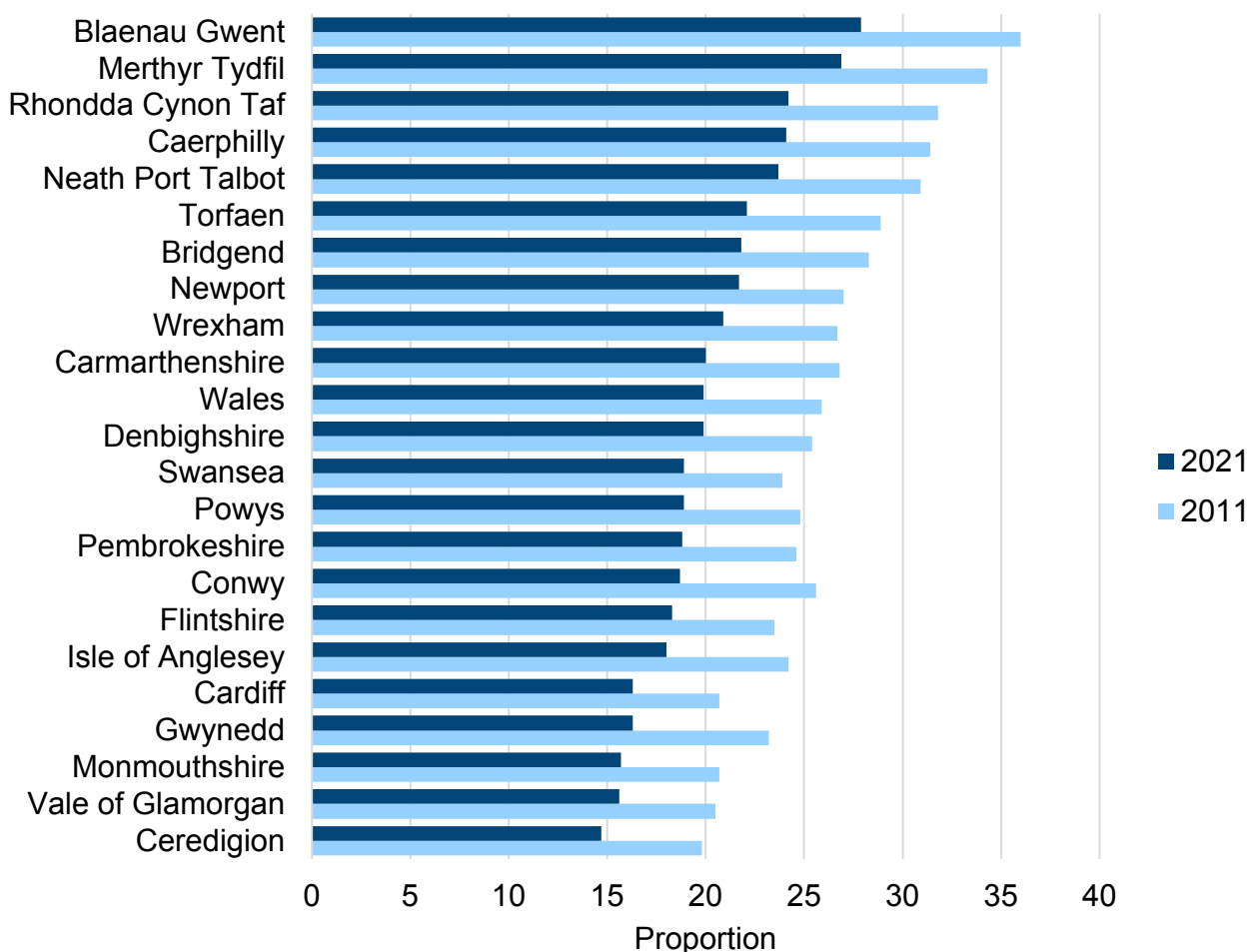


The bar chart shows that there is variation across local authorities in the proportion of respondents with level 4 or above qualifications.

## No qualifications

The local authorities with the greatest proportion of residents holding no qualifications were Blaenau Gwent (27.9%) and Merthyr Tydfil (26.9%). Ceredigion (14.7%) and Vale of Glamorgan (15.6%) had the lowest proportion of respondents with no qualifications.

**Figure 4: Percentage of usual residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications, by local authority, 2011 and 2021**



The bar chart shows there is variation across local authorities in the proportion of respondents with no qualifications.

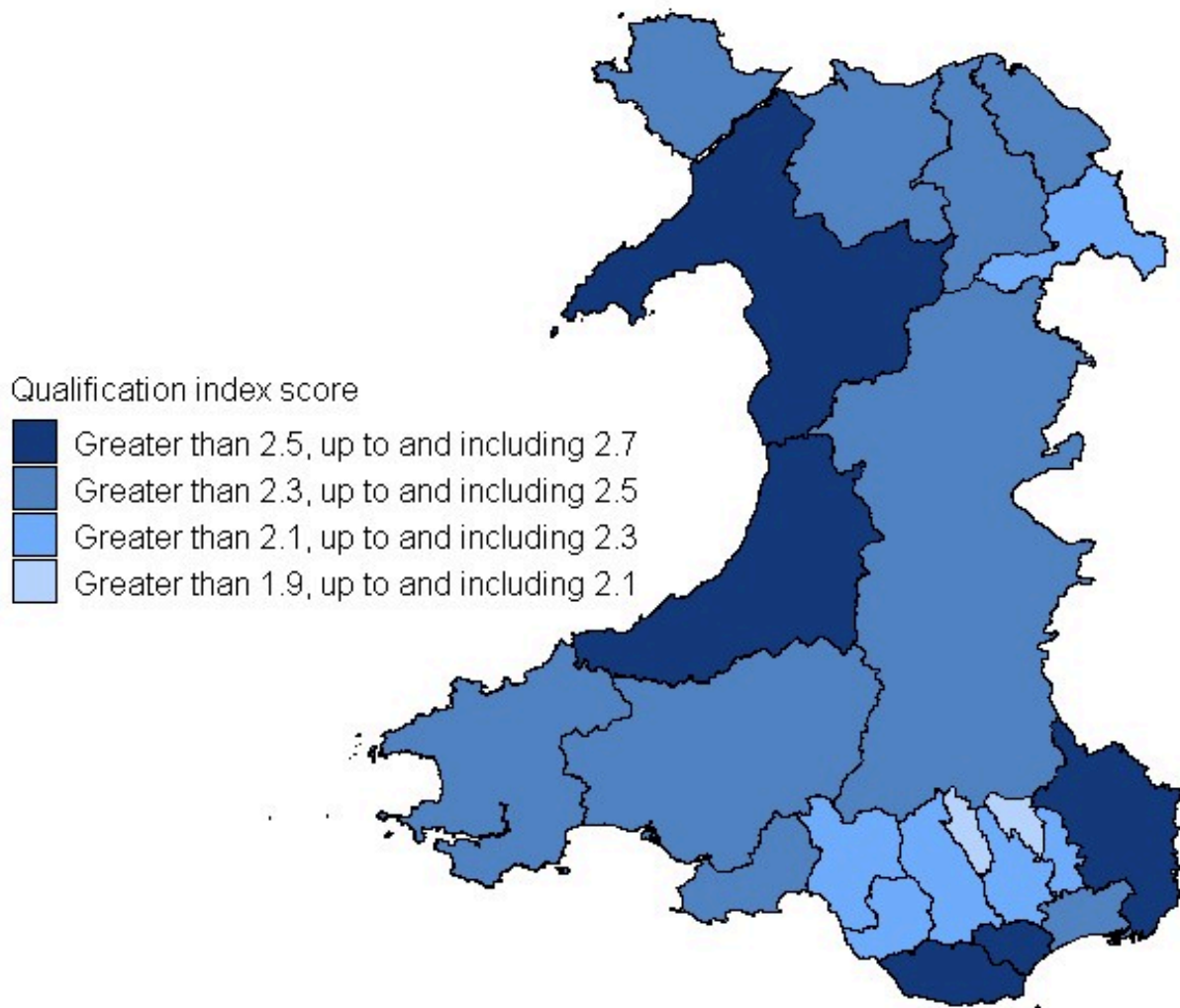
## Apprenticeships

The proportion of respondents with an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification was greatest in Flintshire and Isle of Anglesey (both 6.6%). The proportion was lowest in Cardiff (3.9%), followed by Rhondda Cynon Taf, Monmouthshire and Newport (all 5.1%).

## Qualification index score

The highest level of qualification index score is a summary measure which can be used to compare how highly qualified population groups are. It assigns every individual aged 16 years and over a value based on their highest level of qualification, excluding those whose highest level of qualification was unknown. The index score is then the average value of all individuals in the selected area with a higher score indicating a more highly qualified population. The qualification index score should be used alongside the percentage of people in the area who reported each of the different highest level of qualification categories for the full picture. The [ONS statistical bulletin](#) Education in England and Wales: Census 2021 contains a fuller explanation of how the qualification index score is calculated.

**Figure 5: Qualification index score, by local authority, 2021**



The map shows the variation in the qualification index score. Higher scores are seen in some areas of south east and west Wales, with lower scores seen in the south Wales valleys area.

# Quality and methodology information

For full quality and methodology information please visit the [ONS' quality and methodology information report](#).

More detailed data and analysis of education will be published by the ONS in the coming months, alongside the release of multivariate data. This will enable breakdowns of education variables by other census variables, such as age, sex and labour market characteristics. Read more about the [ONS' education analysis plans](#) and its [release plans for Census 2021 \(ONS\)](#) more generally.

The Census counts students at their term-time address. There was some evidence of changes to the term-time population resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. [Read more about how the ONS ensured an accurate estimate of students at their term-time address](#).

## Rounding

The numbers quoted in this bulletin have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Percentages and percentage point changes are quoted to one decimal place and are calculated on unrounded numbers.

## Comparability with Census 2011 data

Census 2011 data on schoolchildren and full-time students was published on the basis of those aged 4 years and over. Where comparisons have been made with 2011 in this bulletin, the 2011 figures have been recalculated on the basis of those aged 5 years and over.

There are comparability issues with the highest level of qualification data

between Census 2021 and Census 2011. These are explained in the section presenting statistics on [highest level of qualification obtained](#).

## Comparability with other data sources

Welsh Government publishes regular statistics on [levels of highest qualification held by working age adults](#) in Wales, sourced from the Annual Population Survey. These statistics are not directly comparable to those presented in this bulletin. As well as the different data collection modes, the regular Welsh Government statistics are based on working age adults (aged 18 to 64) whereas those presented here are based on all usual residents aged 16 and over.

The national indicator, and associated national milestones, based on qualification levels are sourced from the regular Welsh Government statistics based on the Annual Population Survey. There is more information on the national indicator and milestones in the [section on the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#).

## National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether

the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed to the ONS in June 2022 following a **full assessment against the Code of Practice by the Office for Statistics Regulation**.

## **Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing

goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

There is a national indicator based on qualification levels, namely:

- (8) Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework

There are two national milestones associated with this indicator:

- 75% of working age adults in Wales will be qualified to level 3 or higher by 2050
- the percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below in every local authority in Wales by 2050

Both of these are measured using the regularly published Welsh Government statistics based on working age adults (aged 18 to 64). The statistics on highest qualification levels presented in this bulletin (on the basis of usual residents aged 16 and over) should not be used to measure progress against the national indicator or national milestones.

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

## Contact details

Statistician: Jonathan Ackland

Email: [post16ed.stats@gov.wales](mailto:post16ed.stats@gov.wales)



Media: 0300 025 8099



SB 3/2023

**This document may not be fully accessible.**

For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/education-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).