



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

Levels of highest qualification held by working age adults: 2022

Presents statistics on the highest qualification held by adults of working age in Wales for 2022.

First published: 18 April 2023

Last updated: 18 April 2023

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Main results](#)

[Level of highest qualification held, by characteristic](#)

[Notes](#)

[Quality information](#)

[Contact details](#)

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Introduction

All of the data in this report is sourced from the [Annual Population Survey \(Office for National Statistics\)](#). The questions in the Annual Population Survey that relate to qualifications have been updated as they were previously based on an outdated qualification framework. The statistics presented here for 2022 are not comparable with previous years as a result. More detail on this is provided in the [quality information](#).

Main results

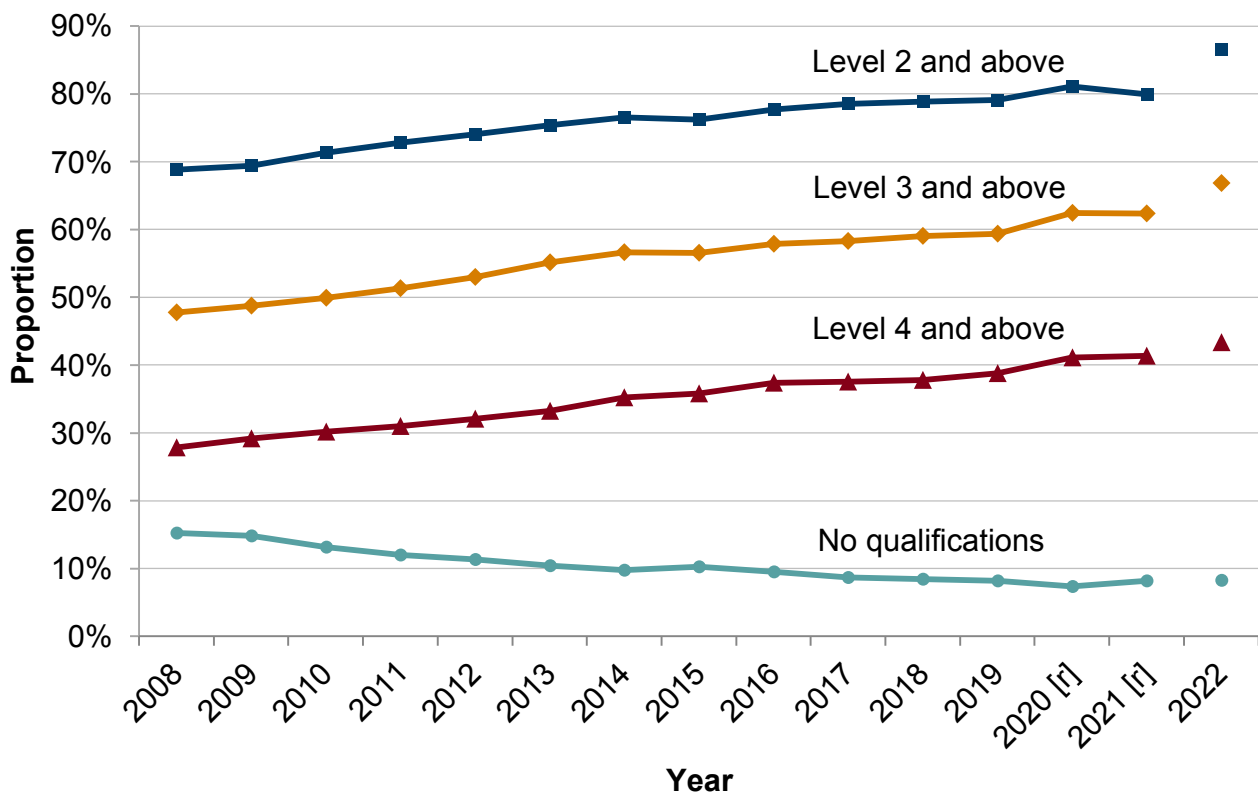
- An estimated 8.3% of working age adults in Wales reported having no qualifications in 2022.
- 86.6% of working age adults in Wales held at least level 2 qualifications, 66.8% held at least level 3 qualifications and 43.3% held at least level 4 qualifications.
- A higher proportion of males had no qualifications compared to females.
- The proportion of adults with qualifications broadly decreases as age increases.
- Qualification levels are higher for the UK as a whole compared to Wales.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Figure 1: Highest level of qualification held by adults of working age, 2008 to 2022 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 1: Qualification levels in Wales have steadily increased since 2008, though there is a break in the series between 2021 and 2022 due to comparability issues.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults by year and qualification (StatsWales)

[Note 1] Estimates for 2022 cannot be compared to previous years following changes to the questions on qualifications in the Annual Population Survey.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

[r] Previously published estimates for 2020 and 2021 have been revised following a reweighting of the Annual Population Survey.

This release contains data for one of the **national wellbeing indicators** (8: percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework).

There are two national milestones associated with this national indicator, one of which is '75% of working age adults in Wales will be qualified to level 3 or higher by 2050'. An estimated 66.8% of working age adults in Wales were qualified to level 3 or higher in 2022. This figure is likely to be higher than it would have been otherwise, following the changes to the questions on the Annual Population Survey to reflect the current qualifications framework.

Further information on the national indicators, national milestones and the Well-being of Future Generations Act is provided towards the end of this release. Analysis related to the second national milestone – 'the percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below in every local authority in Wales by 2050' – is included in the section on geography.

Level of highest qualification held, by characteristic

Sex and age

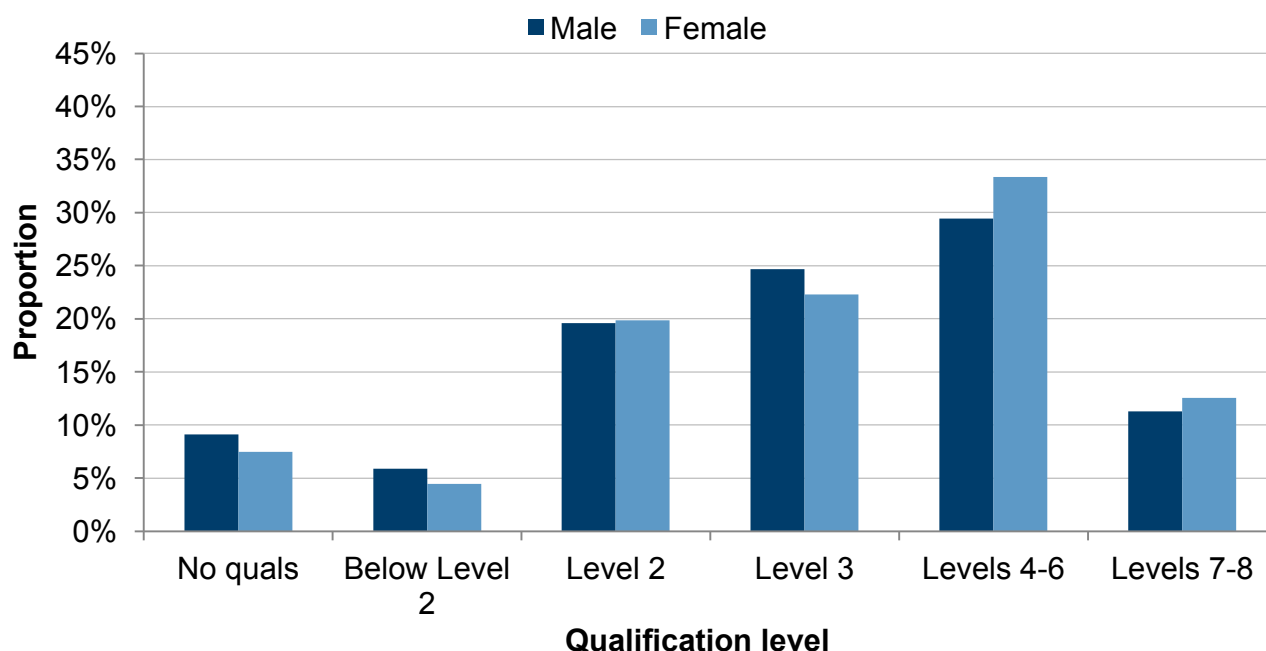
The qualification profile is shown for all ages alongside that for those aged 18 to 24 and 60 to 64.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Figure 2a: Highest level of qualification held by adults of working age (18 to 64) by sex, 2022



Description of Figure 2a: Overall, an estimated 9.1% of males held no qualifications in 2022 compared with 7.5% of females. Females are more likely to hold qualifications at or above level 4.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults by sex, age and qualification (StatsWales)

There are higher proportions of males than females with no qualifications in age groups up to and including 35 to 49 year olds. A higher proportion of females hold no qualifications in the 50 to 59 and 60 to 64 age groups. The proportion of adults with qualifications broadly decreases as age increases.

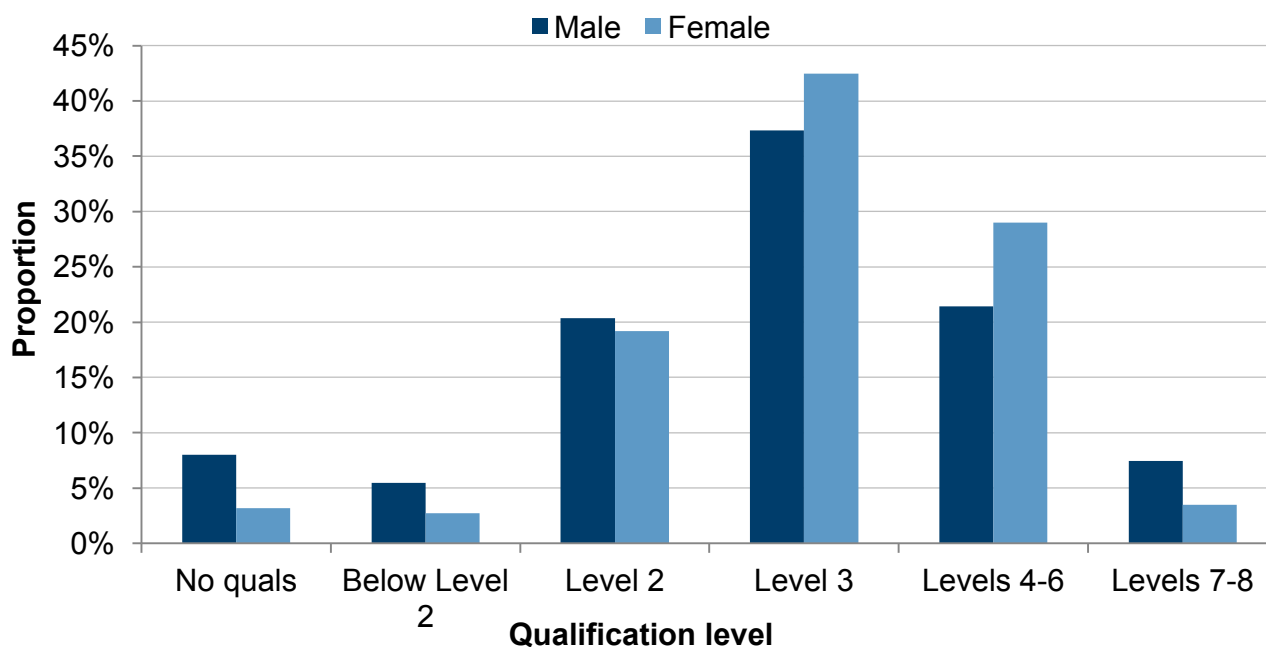
Figure 2b: Highest level of qualification held by adults aged 18 to 24

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

by sex, 2022



Description of Figure 2b: The highest level of qualification held was most commonly at level 3 in the 18 to 24 age group. A higher proportion of females held qualifications at levels 3 to 6 but a higher proportion of males held qualifications at levels 7 to 8 and below level 3.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults by sex, age and qualification (StatsWales)

The proportion of working age adults qualified to at least level 2 was highest in the 18 to 24 age group. This group also had the second highest proportion qualified to at least level 3 across the age groups, slightly below 25 to 34 year olds.

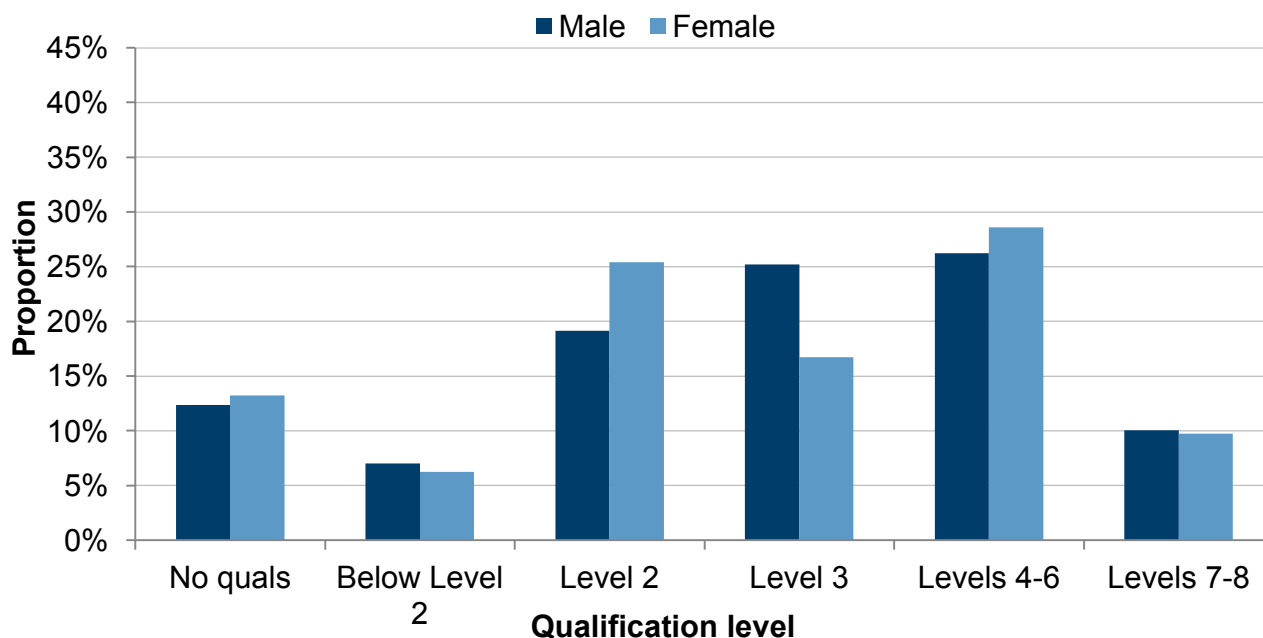
Figure 2c: Highest level of qualification held by adults aged 60 to 64

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

by sex, 2022



Description of Figure 2c: The level of highest qualification held by 60 to 64 year olds was more evenly distributed than in younger age groups. The highest proportions for both males (26.2%) and females (28.6%) was at levels 4 to 6. There is also less of a clear pattern between the sexes. The proportions of males and females holding no qualifications, qualifications below level 2 and level 7 to 8 qualifications are similar. A higher proportion of females held a highest qualification at level 2 and levels 4 to 6 but a higher proportion of males held a highest qualification at level 3.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults by sex, age and qualification (StatsWales)

The 60 to 64 age groups contains the highest proportion with no qualifications across the working age groups. This group also has the lowest proportion qualified to at least level 3 and the second lowest qualified to at least level 4

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

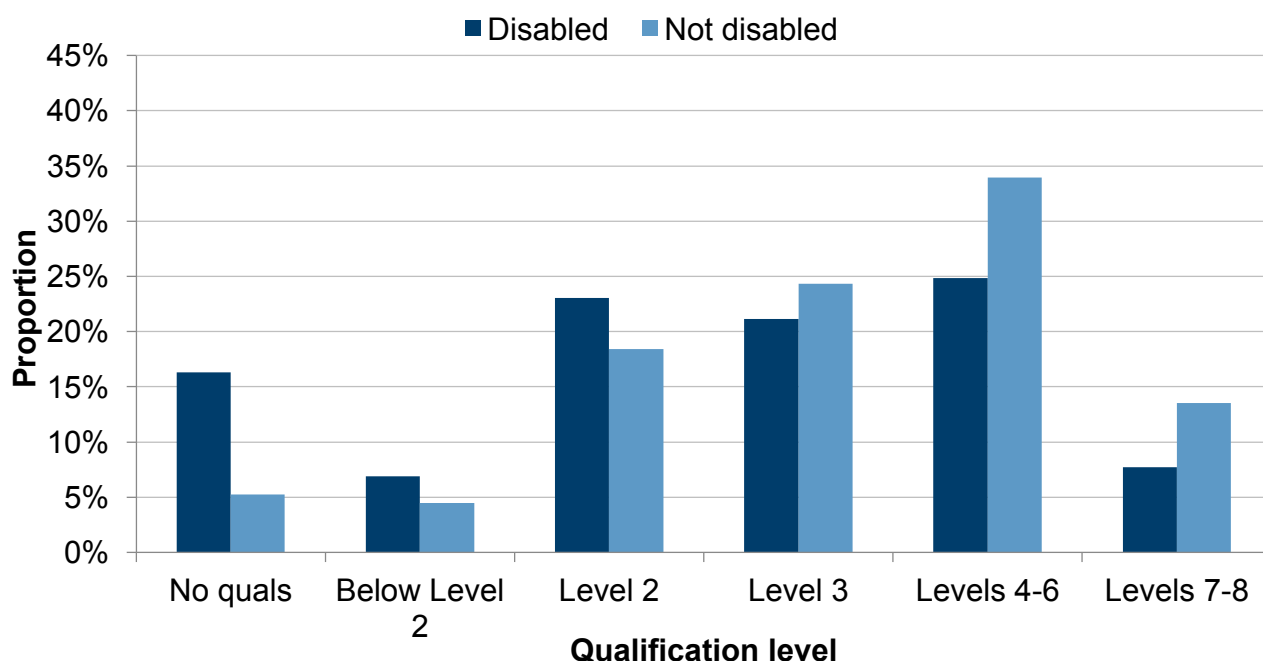
Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

(behind 18 to 24 year olds).

Disability

Figure 3: Highest level of qualification held by adults of working age by disability, 2022



Description of Figure 3: Disabled people (16.3%) are more likely to have no qualifications than non-disabled people (5.3%) and are less likely to hold qualifications above level 2.

Ethnicity

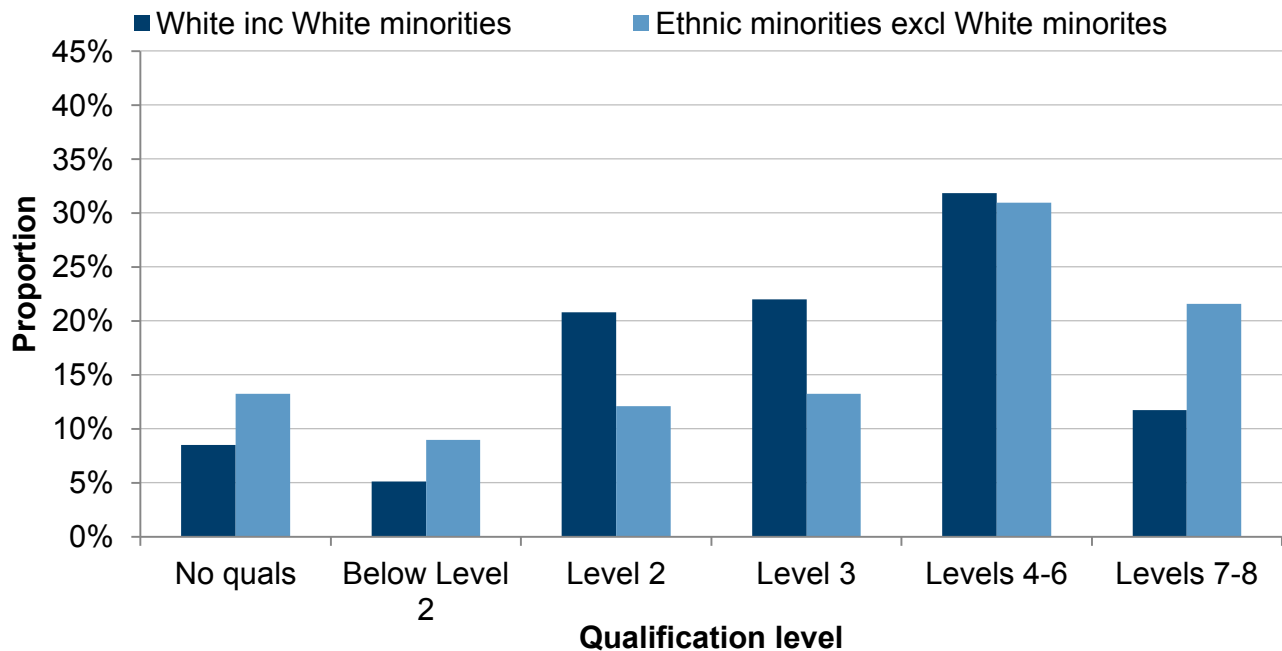
Figure 4: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

by ethnicity, 2022



Description of Figure 4: Working age adults from ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities) are more likely to hold qualifications at levels 7 and 8 than White (including White minorities) working age adults but are also more likely to have no qualifications and qualifications below level 2.

Welsh language

Higher qualification levels are reported amongst Welsh speakers than their non-Welsh speaking counterparts. The proportion of non-Welsh speakers with no qualifications was 9.9% compared with 3.6% of Welsh speakers.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Geography

The proportion of working age adults with higher education level or equivalent qualifications (Level 4+) was highest in Monmouthshire (61.3%), Ceredigion (55.7%), and Cardiff (53.3%). This proportion was lowest in Merthyr Tydfil (24.3%) and Blaenau Gwent (26.8%).

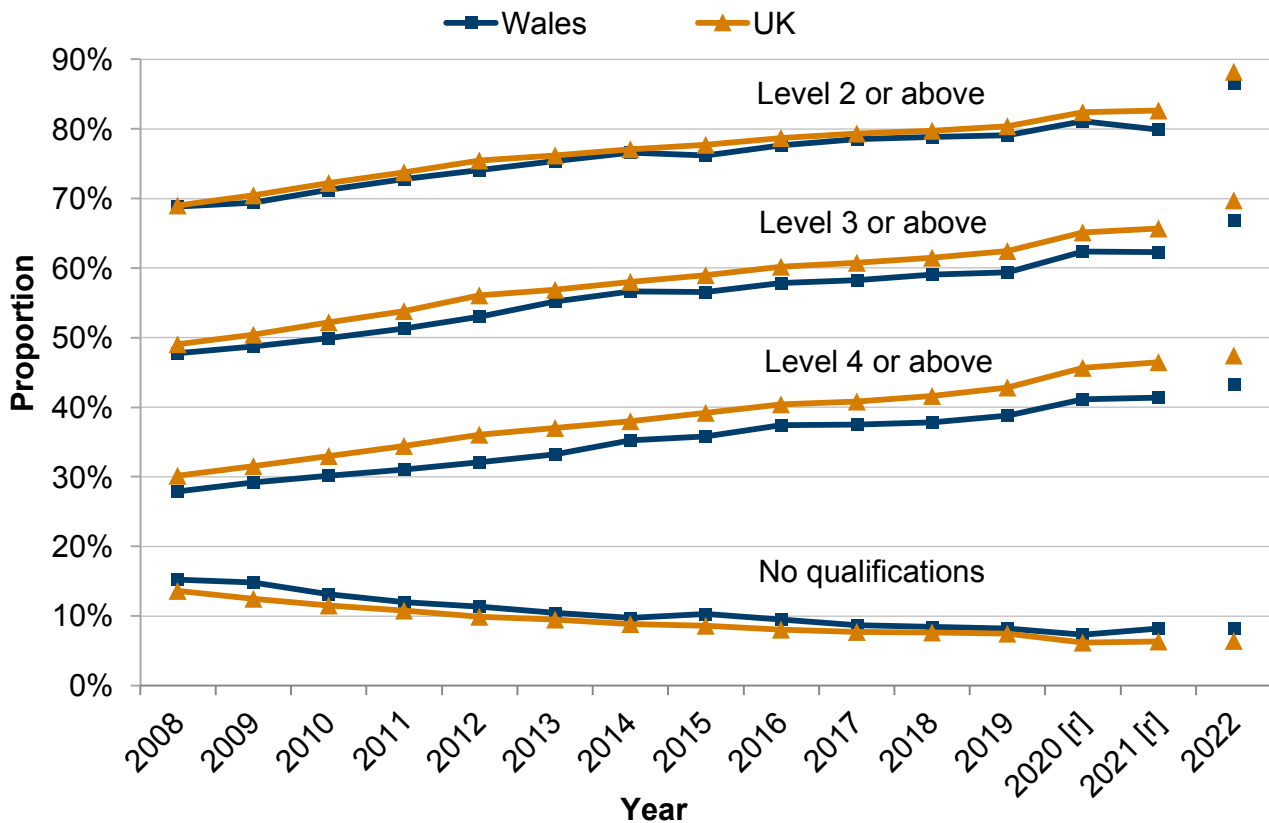
The proportion of working age adults with no qualifications was highest in Blaenau Gwent (15.5%), Merthyr Tydfil (14.9%) and Torfaen (12.4%). This proportion was lowest in Powys (3.3%) and the Vale of Glamorgan (3.8%).

The second national milestone associated with the **national indicator** included in this release is ‘the percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below in every local authority in Wales by 2050’. There are currently three local authorities where the percentage of working age adults with no qualifications is below 5% - Powys, the Vale of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.

Further information on the national indicators, national milestones and the Well-being of Future Generations Act is provided towards the end of this release.

Qualification levels in Wales were lower than in England, Scotland and the UK as a whole but were higher than Northern Ireland and some English regions.

Figure 5: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age Wales and UK, 2008 to 2022 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 5: Qualification levels across the UK as a whole have consistently been higher than in Wales since 2008, with a slightly lower proportion holding no qualifications across the UK as a whole. Again, there is a break in the series between 2021 and 2022 due to comparability issues.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults by UK country, region and qualification (StatsWales)

[Note 1] Estimates for 2022 cannot be compared to previous years following changes to the questions on qualifications in the Annual Population Survey.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022.html> for the latest version.

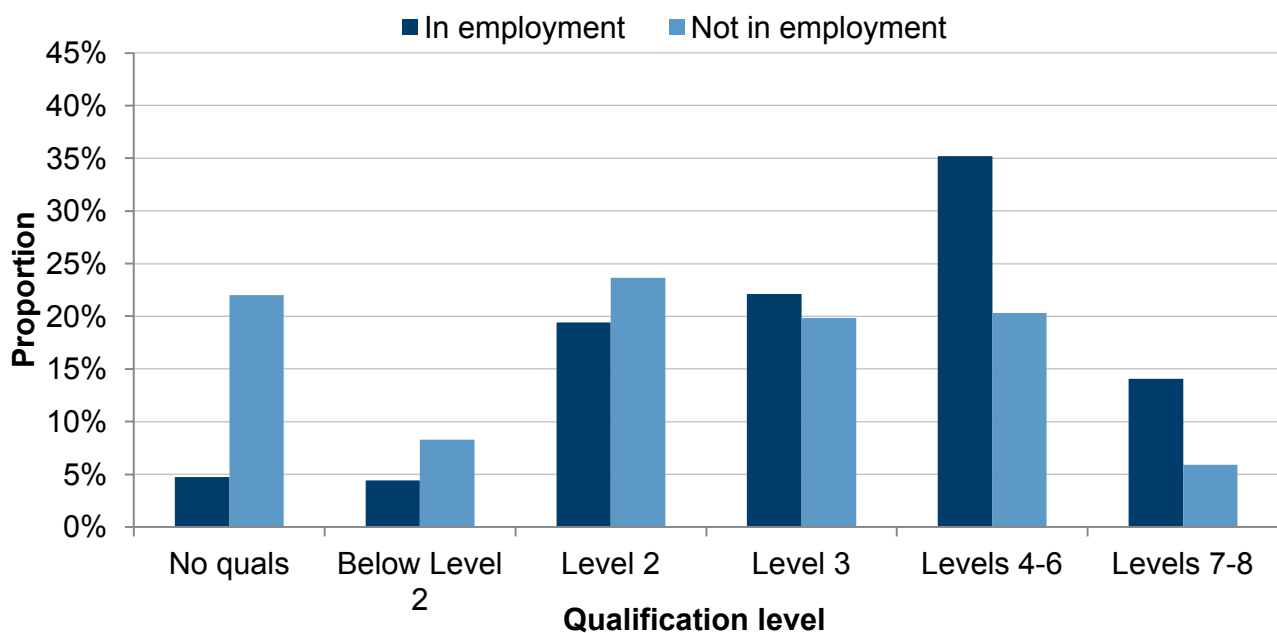
Get [information on copyright](#).

[r] Previously published estimates for 2020 and 2021 have been revised following a reweighting of the Annual Population Survey.

The gap in the proportion of working age adults with no qualifications between Wales and the UK was 1.9 percentage points in 2022 (Wales higher than the UK). The UK had a higher proportion of working age adults qualified to at least level 2 (1.6 percentage point gap), at least level 3 (2.9 percentage point gap) and at least level 4 (4.1 percentage point gap).

Employment status

Figure 6: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age by employment status, 2022



Description of Figure 6: In 2022, 22.0% of those who were either unemployed or economically inactive reported having no qualifications. This compares to 4.8%

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022.html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

for those in employment (excluding those who were in full-time education). A much higher proportion of those in employment held qualifications at or above level 4 compared to those who were either unemployed or economically inactive.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults by economic activity and qualification (StatsWales)

Occupation

Persons employed in professional occupations are more likely to be qualified to at least level 2 than those in other jobs. In 2022, 98.6% of persons in professional occupations were qualified at this level.

Highest qualification levels of working age adults in employment by occupation and qualification (StatsWales)

Notes

Policy and operational context

This statistical release presents the annual snapshot of qualification levels of the working age population in Wales.

The statistics are used within the Welsh Government to monitor trends in qualification levels. This release contains data for one of the **national indicators** (8: percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework) and two related national milestones.

These statistics, along with the national indicator and national milestones are specifically included within **Stronger, fairer, greener Wales: a plan for**

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

[employability and skills](#).

Background to the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey

The statistics presented in this release are based on the results of the Annual Population Survey (APS) for 2022. Further information about the data used is presented in the [quality information](#). Data from the Annual Population Survey, a household survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is available from 2004, and prior to this comparable data are available from the annual Local Labour Force Survey for Wales for 2001-2003.

Data in this release are presented for working age adults aged 18 to 64 according to their age at the start of the academic year. Between April 2010 and November 2018, the state pension age for women gradually increased from 60 to 65. Accordingly, the series has been amended to a working age definition of 18 to 64 for both males and females, rather than its earlier definition of 18 to 64 for males and 18 to 59 for females.

Estimates on this basis are only available from 2008 onwards and figures within this release are therefore not directly comparable with those based on the previously used definition.

Headline figures on the previous working age definition (18 to 59/64) are available on [StatsWales](#).

Since the previous publication of these statistics, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has recalibrated the weights of Annual Population Survey datasets from January 2020 onwards. Previously published estimates for 2020 and 2021 have been revised following this reweighting.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Definitions

Ethnicity

For the analysis of qualifications by ethnicity, people in full-time education have been excluded. This change has been made to remove the impact of international students who attend higher education in Wales and thus inflate the proportion with Level 3+ qualifications.

Disability

The Welsh Government accepts the social definition of disability, in which it is recognised that barriers in society act to disable people who have impairments or health conditions or who use British Sign Language.

The Annual Population Survey, which is the source of data for this release, captures data using the medical definition of disability used in the Equality Act 2010 (“a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term impact on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”). Figures within this release are not comparable to those within releases prior to 2015, which reported those reporting DDA current disability or work-limiting disability.

Qualification framework

From January 2022 the questions on qualifications in the Labour Force Survey/ Annual Population Survey were updated to be based on the **Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)**, replacing the previous questions based on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The impact of this change on the comparability and coherence of these statistics is explained in the **quality**

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

information.

The '**Mapping of highest qualification to RQF levels for statistical analysis**' document lists the qualifications specifically included in the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey questionnaire and provides details of the RQF level to which they have been assigned for the purposes of statistical analysis.

The RQF has three entry levels followed by levels 1 to 8. In Wales the relevant framework is the **Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales** (CQFW); a meta framework designed to provide greater clarity on the qualifications system in Wales. The CQFW maintains links with the qualification frameworks of the other UK nations. The CQFW levels align directly to those used within the RQF for England and Northern Ireland. Alignment of the CQFW to other frameworks ensures that qualifications can be compared and recognised, thus offering portability and transferability for learners and workers.

Quality information

Relevance

Key users of these statistics include:

- ministers and Welsh Government officials
- members of the Senedd and researchers in the Senedd
- other government departments
- students, academics and universities

Accuracy

As the data come from a survey, the results are sample-based estimates and

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

are therefore subject to differing degrees of sampling variability, i.e. the true value for any measure lies in a differing range about the estimated value. This range or sampling variability increases as the detail in the data increases; for example local authority data are subject to higher variability than regional data.

Proxy response

If the respondent is not available at the time of interview, questions may be answered by proxy through another member of the household. For information on highest qualifications, around 62% of responses have been derived from a respondent's own answers. 26% were obtained from a spouse or partner whilst 12% were obtained from another proxy.

Section 11 of the [LFS User Guide \(ONS\)](#) Volume 1, 2011 presents findings from a follow up study to test the accuracy of results from proxy respondents.

The results for highest type of qualification held show nearly two thirds matching with significant net error from proxies understating qualifications. However, there was wide variation in the standard of proxy response. This variation is both in terms of the relationship of the proxy to the subject (parents were much better than spouses or children) and by the level and type of qualifications held. Reporting was much better for those subjects holding degrees (80% matched) than for those holding lower or vocational qualifications (30% matched).

Non-response

Information on highest qualification is derived from several questions in the survey. Overall, the highest qualification was unknown or unable to be derived for 4% of respondents. These respondents have been excluded from the analysis in this release.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Allocation of 'other' qualifications

Whilst questions in the survey are used to allocate qualifications to RQF levels as far as possible, for 'other' qualifications (those not explicitly identified and mapped to a level in the survey) the responses are distributed into levels using proportions that have been fixed for many years. These qualifications are apportioned across RQF levels Below Level 2, Level 2 and Level 3 in the ratio 55:35:10. This is a continuation of an aspect of the methodology used prior to 2022 where a number of other qualification types where the level was unknown were also apportioned across various levels. The proportion of responses in this category (3%) is in line with previous years.

Timeliness and punctuality

This statistical release is published annually in April and covers the preceding year ending 31 December.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics & Research website of the Welsh Government. All underlying data for this release as well as other years are available on [StatsWales](#).

Comparability and coherence

The statistics presented here for 2022 are not comparable with previous years due to the changes to the qualification questions in the Labour Force Survey/ Annual Population Survey. The questions have been updated to reflect the current qualifications framework (RQF) for England and Northern Ireland and

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

new types of qualifications that were not previously captured. The Office for National Statistics made changes to these questions through consultation with the devolved administrations and other government departments through the Labour Force Survey Steering Group.

The changes may result in the identification of a different highest qualification for an individual than if the old questions had been asked. Changes to the mapping of qualifications have also impacted on these statistics. For example, under the questions based on the NQF, one A level or 2-3 AS levels would have been categorised as level 2. Under the current questions based on the RQF these are now categorised as level 3. These changes have led to a noticeable difference in the proportion of respondents with a highest qualification at levels 2 and 3, in particular.

Statistics presented in this release, particularly for 2020 and 2021, may have been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Examination and assessment arrangements, and therefore the awarding of some qualifications from Summer 2020 onwards, were affected by the pandemic. The statistics presented here cover working age adults aged 18 to 64, many of whom may not have been working towards achieving qualifications during the pandemic. Any impact is likely to be greater for younger age groups.

The figures may differ to those published from statistical publications by other government departments due to a slight difference in source and/or methodologies for deriving levels of qualifications. Also, other tables may be based on all persons of working age (16-64) whilst this release is restricted to those aged 18-64 (adults of working age).

Data is also available from the Census of Population on highest qualification levels. We have published summary data for Wales from the most recent Census in [Education in Wales \(Census 2021\)](#). The statistics presented in this release are not directly comparable to those from the Census. As well as the different data collection modes, these statistics are based on working age adults

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

(aged 18 to 64) whereas those from the Census are based on all usual residents aged 16 and over.

The biggest benefit of the Census data compared to these statistics is that it is not based on a sample survey. This provides the ability to analyse data within local authority, down to community level, and in cross tabulations with small subgroups of the population not possible through the APS.

More detailed data and analysis of education is available via the [ONS's create a custom dataset tool](#). A series of analysis reports based, at least in part, on Census 2021 education data are also planned. Read more about the [ONS' education analysis plans](#) and its [release plans for Census 2021 \(ONS\)](#) more generally.

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 our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

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.

If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly.

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained and reinstated when standards are restored.

These statistics last underwent a **full assessment** against the Code of Practice in 2011. Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Brought forward the annual publication timetable to a full release of data in April;
- Made more underlying data available through StatsWales;
- Published data according to the new adults of working age population definition (18 to 64) but continue to make the longer time series of data available on the old definition (18 to 59/64) through StatsWales.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being 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 Well-being 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 and this release includes one of the national indicators namely:

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

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

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

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

As a national indicator under the Act they must be referred to in the analyses of local wellbeing produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing in their areas.

The Act states national milestones must be set that “...the Welsh Ministers consider would assist in measuring whether progress is being made towards the achievement of the well-being goals.” In doing so Welsh Ministers must specify how we know that a national milestone has been achieved and the time by which it is to be achieved.

National milestones are not performance targets for any individual organisation, but are collective measures of success for Wales.

In this release indicator 8 - percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework – corresponds to two milestones:

- 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.

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 well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to post16ed.stats@gov.wales

Contact details

Statistician: Jonathan Ackland
Email: post16ed.stats@gov.wales

Media: 0300 025 8099

SB 32/2023



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/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).