



## Examination results in schools in Wales, 2021/22

6 December 2022  
SFR 234/2022

### Changes to the production of these statistics

#### Suspension of performance measures

Due to the disruption to schools as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the [Minister for Education confirmed](#) that the Welsh Government will continue not to calculate or publish performance measures in 2021/22 for both Year 11 and sixth form cohorts.

The analysis presented in this release is based on GCSE grade distributions similar to information released by Qualifications Wales and the Joint Centre for Qualifications (JCQ) (see definitions and note below on coverage). These grade distributions allow the results to be interrogated at a finer level and show results at both the upper and lower ability ranges.

#### Examinations and centre assessed grades

The 2022 examination period was a transitional year, where relevant qualifications sat by Welsh pupils returned to written examination. This was not a complete return to pre-pandemic examinations. To compensate for any disruption to the school timetable, pupils who sat exams in 2022 were given a wider choice of questions from the syllabus, with Qualifications Wales setting results broadly midway between 2019 (the last time examinations were sat) and 2021 outcomes.

Pupils that were awarded a qualification during the 2020 and 2021 summer periods were awarded grades based on a [centre determined or centre assessed grade](#) model. Grades were determined by schools and colleges, based on their assessment of learners' work, using a range of evidence (including non-examination assessments, mock exams, and classwork).

#### GCSE grade distributions

The values in the graphs and figures in this release show the percentage of entries awarded at each individual grade, broken down by selected pupil characteristics. For example, in Chart 2, the first light blue bar on the left (value 6.8%) represents the number of A\* grades awarded in 2018/19 as a percentage of all entries in 2018/19.

These results represent the data that was available to awarding bodies as on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022. They may differ from results published earlier by either Qualifications Wales or JCQ. This statistical release focuses on pupils in year

### About this release

This statistical release is an update to provisional statistics published in October and provides an analysis of external qualifications awarded to pupils in Year 11 (KS4; aged 15) or pupils in sixth form (KS5; aged 17 at the start of the academic year) in schools in Wales in 2021/22 and previous years. For more data and detailed analysis, see the [supplementary tables](#).

### In this release

#### Year 11 pupils (KS4)

[Grade distribution](#) 3

[Results by pupil characteristics](#) 6

#### Pupils aged 17 (KS5)

[Grade distribution](#) 10

[Results by pupil characteristics](#) 13

#### Annex

[Definitions](#) 16

[Notes](#) 16

11 in maintained schools in Wales and includes the results of successful appeals up to 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Data published by other organisations may include grades awarded at other centres and to students of other ages. Data published earlier than the date of this release will include fewer successful appeals. Further information can be found in the notes section.

## 1. Key results for 2021/22

### Year 11 (Key Stage 4)

- In 2021/22 the percentage of GCSE entries awarded A\*-A, A\*-C, and A\*-G grades decreased from 2020/21. The largest decrease was in the A\*-C range with a decrease of 5.0 percentage points.
- The percentage of entries awarded at each individual grade at A\*, A, B and C was lower in 2021/22 than the previous year. The percentage of entries awarded at each individual grade between D and G was higher than the previous year (chart 2).

The results by selected pupil characteristics show that:

- The gap between boys and girls narrowed over the last year at grades A\*-A and A\*- C and continues to be negligible at grades A\*-G, with girls achieving better outcomes than boys in all three grade ranges (chart 4).
- The gap widened at A\*-C and A\*-G grades between pupils eligible for free school meals and those not eligible and narrowed at the A\*-A grades. With pupils not eligible for free school meals achieving better outcomes than pupils eligible for free school meals at all three grade ranges (chart 5).
- The gap between White British pupils and Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils widened at grade ranges A\*-A and A\*-C, with Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils achieving better outcomes than White British pupils. The gap at A\*-G was negligible (chart 6).
- Pupils with an Indian background achieved the highest outcomes at GCSE, with 57.8% of entries achieving A\*-A

### Aged 17 (Sixth Form)

- In 2021/22 the percentage of A level entries awarded A\*-A, A\*-C, and A\*-E grades decreased from 2020/21. The largest decrease was at A\*-C, with a decrease of 7.6 percentage points.

The results by selected pupil characteristics show that:

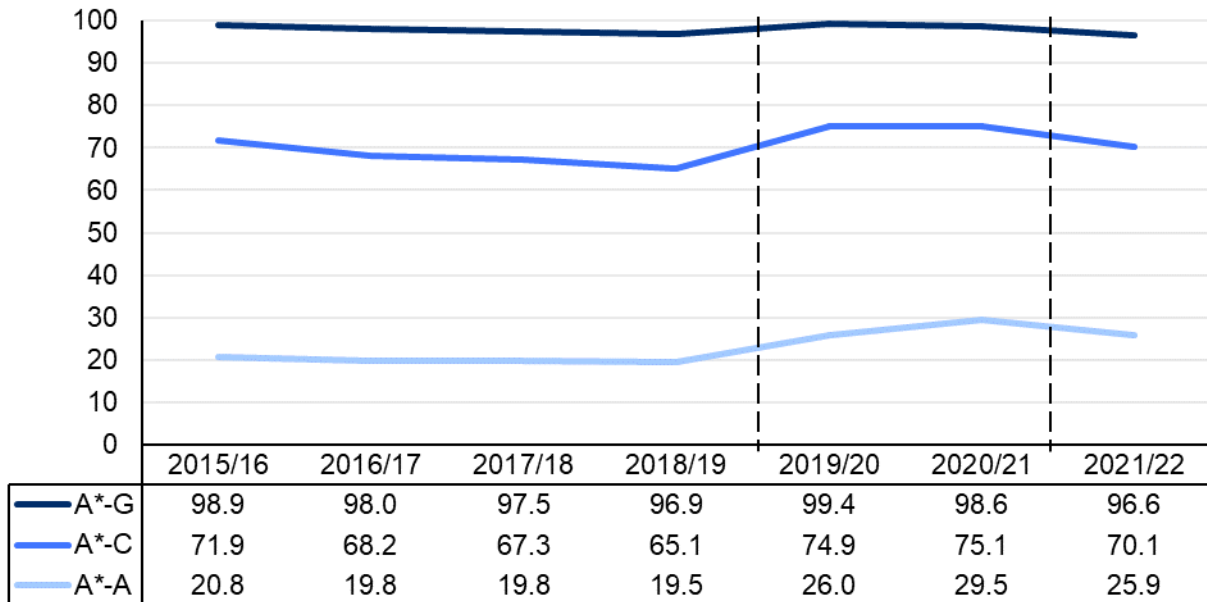
- The gap between boys and girls narrowed at A\*-A and A\*-C grades, with girls achieving better outcomes than boys at A\*-C grades. The gap at A\*-A and A\*-E was negligible in 2021/22 (chart 11).
- The gap between White British pupils and Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils widened at A\*-A grades, with Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils achieving better outcomes than White British pupils. The gap at A\*-C and A\*-E was negligible (chart 12).

- Pupils with an Indian background achieved the highest outcomes at A level, with 57.7% of entries achieving A\*-A

## 2. Year 11 pupils (Key Stage 4)

### Overall GCSE grade distribution

**Chart 1: Percentage of GCSE entries by grade range in all subjects**



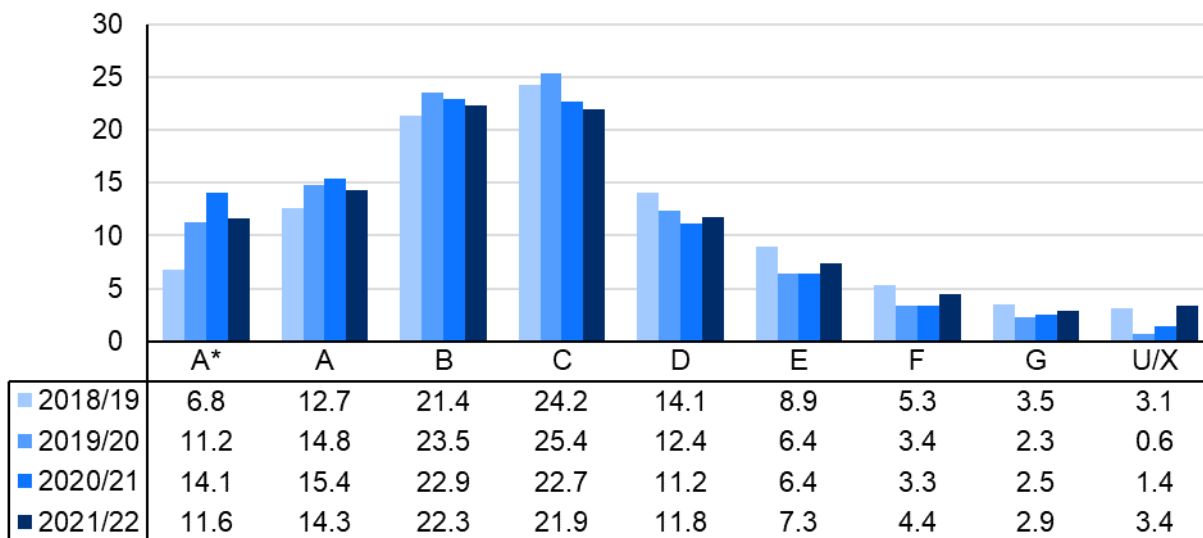
Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the percentage of GCSE entries awarded in each grade range decreased. The largest decrease in that period was a 6.8 percentage point decrease in the A\*-C range.

In 2021/22 the percentage of GCSE entries awarded in all the grade ranges has decreased from 2020/21. The largest decrease was in the A\*-C range with a decrease of 5.0 percentage points. The percentage of GCSE entries awarded in the A\*-G range has decreased in 2021/22 to 96.6 percentage points.

From 2018/19 (when GCSEs were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 there has been a negligible change in the percentage of GCSE entries awarded A\*-G. However there has still been an increase at the grade ranges A\*-A and A\*-C in the same period, with an increase of 6.4 percentage points at A\*-A and 5.0 percentage points at A\*-C.

**Chart 2: Percentage of GCSE entries by individual grade over all subjects**



The largest change in the distribution of grades occurred in 2019/20 and 2020/21. In 2021/22 the percent of GCSE entries awarded grades A\* and A decreased compared to previous years, the largest decrease is at A\* at 11.6 percentage points. There was a corresponding increase of GCSE entries awarded grades D, E, F and G in 2021/22.

From 2018/19 (when GCSEs were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 there was a large increase in the number of grades awarded A\*, increasing by 4.8 percentage points. The number of GCSEs that were ungraded (U/X) have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

**Chart 3: Top GCSE subject entries and corresponding percentage of A\*-C grades, 2021/22**

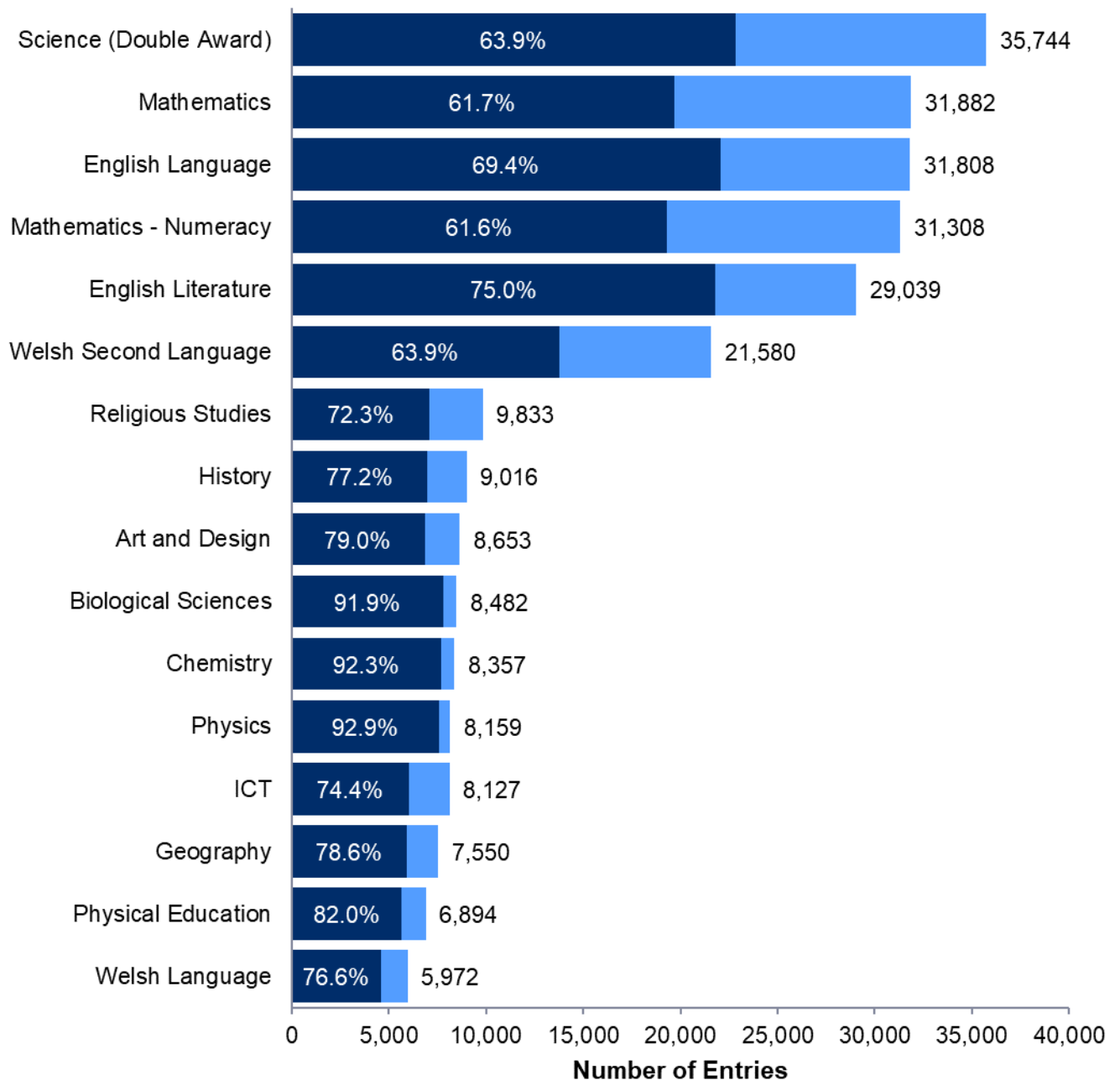


Chart 3 shows the 16 most popular GCSE subjects by the number of exam entries.

The greatest numbers of GCSE entries are in core subjects Science (Double award), Mathematics and English Language (note that double awards are counted as two individual GCSE entries).

The most popular GCSEs that are not core subjects are the foundation subjects of Welsh Second Language and Religious Studies with 21,580 and 9,833 entries respectively.

In 2021/22, between 91.9% and 92.9% of GCSEs in Chemistry, Physics and Biological Sciences were graded at A\*-C.

Full data on all individual subjects are available in the [supplementary tables](#).

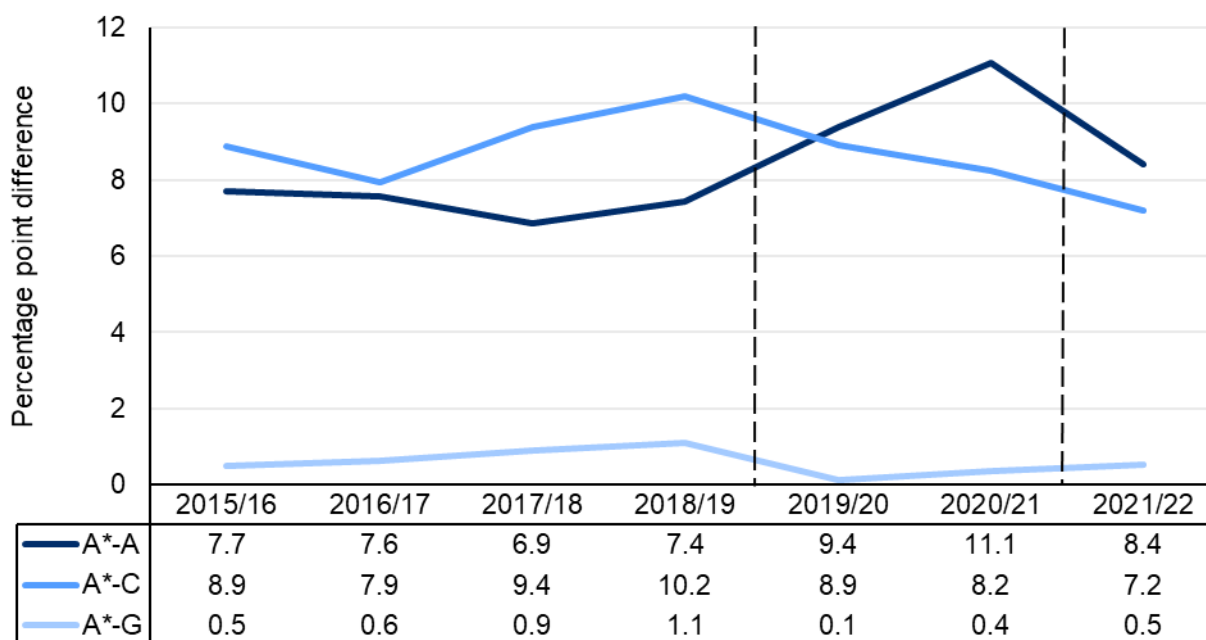
## Results by pupil characteristics

The following charts show the difference in grade distributions over recent years by selected pupil characteristics. Further comparisons by pupils' ethnicity and Special Educational Need (SEN) status can be found in the supplementary tables provided.

Charts 4, 5 and 6 show the difference in the percentage of different groups of pupils achieving various grade ranges. For example, in chart 4 the chart shows the percentage point difference between the percentage of girls awarded a particular grade range (such as A\*-C) minus the percentage of boys who were awarded that grade range.

### Gender

**Chart 4: Gap in achievement in all GCSE subjects at KS4 between girls and boys, by grade range (girls minus boys)**



Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

Girls continue to achieve better educational outcomes at GCSE than boys at all GCSE grades. While the gap is narrow when looking at all A\*-G grades, the gap at higher grades is wider. From 2019/20 the gap has been widest at A\*-A grades.

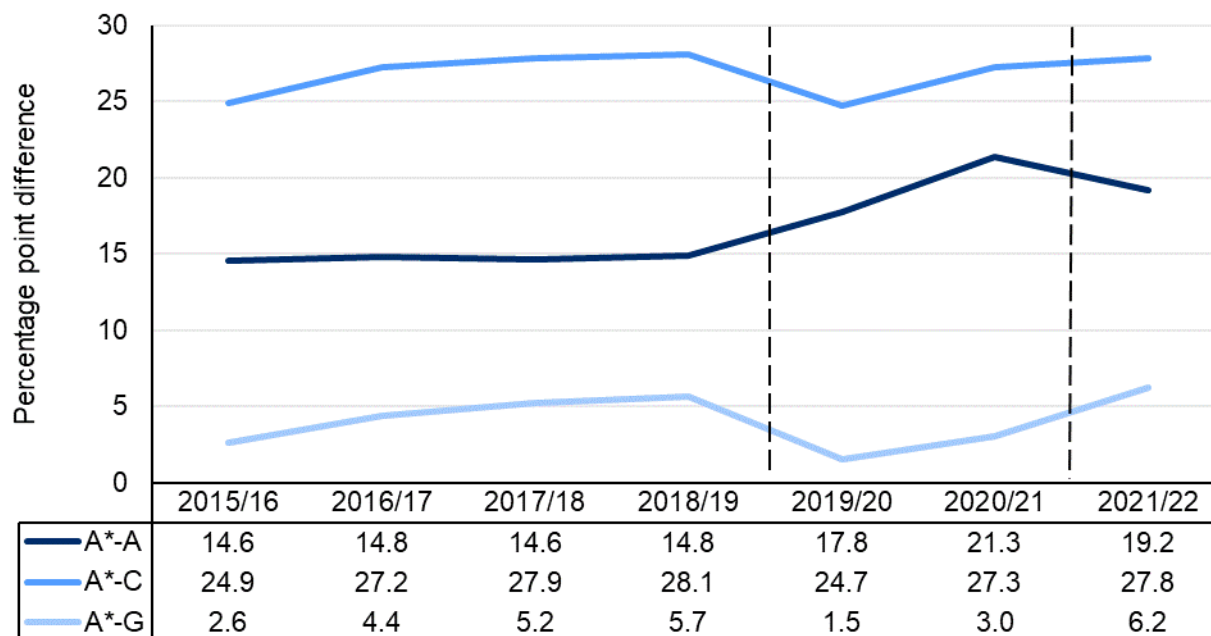
The gap between girls and boys being awarded grades A\*-A between 2015/16 and 2021/22 widened, from 7.7 percentage points in 2015/16 to 8.4 percentage points in 2021/22. Over the same period the gap at A\*-C has narrowed from 8.9 percentage points to 7.2 percentage points. However, the gap has narrowed at both the A\*-A and A\*-C grade ranges over the last year.

From 2018/19 (when GCSEs were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 there has been a negligible change in the gender gap of GCSE entries awarded A\*-G. However the gap at A\*-C has decreased from 10.2 to 7.2 percentage points, and the gap at A\*-A has increased from 7.4 to 8.4 percentage points.

## Free School Meals (FSM)

Pupils are [eligible for free school meals](#) if their families are in receipt of certain benefits/support payments or are on universal credit. Chart 5 illustrates the size of the attainment gap between those eligible for FSM (eFSM) and those who are not (nFSM).

**Chart 5: Gap in achievement in all GCSE subjects at KS4 between nFSM and eFSM pupils, by grade range (not eligible FSM minus eligible FSM)**



Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

Pupils not eligible for FSM consistently achieve better educational outcomes than pupils eligible for FSM. The gap between FSM pupils is wider than the gap seen in gender. At A\*-C grade in 2021/22 the gap between genders was 7.2 percentage points, while the gap in achievement at A\*-C between pupils not eligible for free school meals and those who were was 27.8 percentage points. The gap between these two groups of pupils is widest at the A\*-C grades and narrowest at A\*-G grades at 6.2 percentage points.

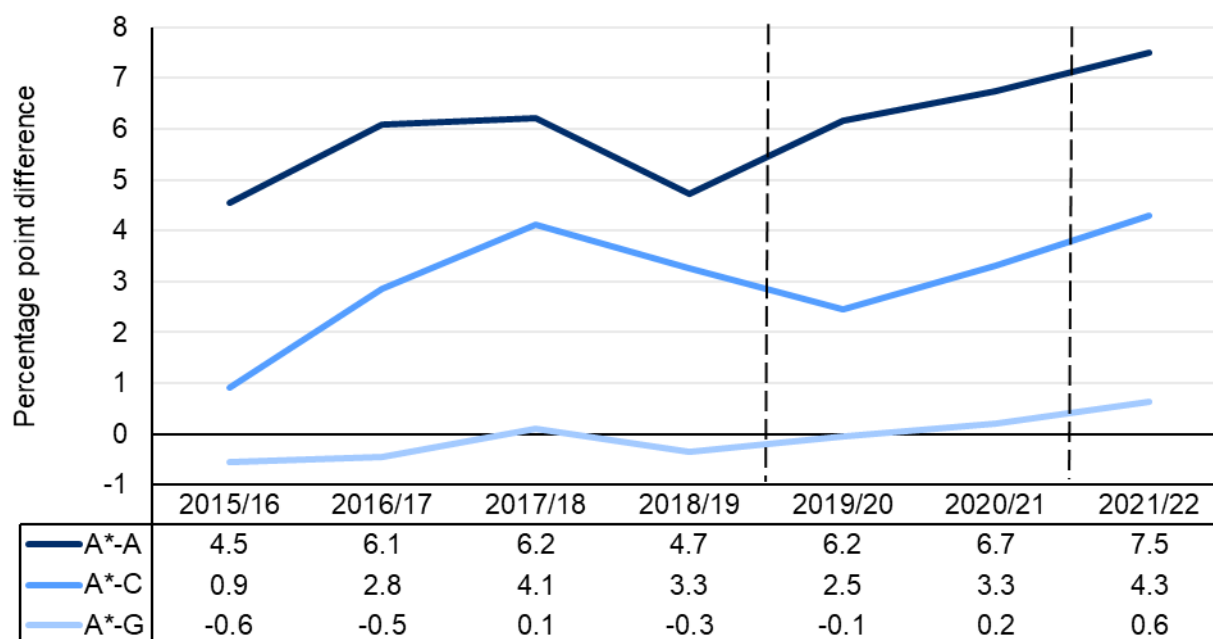
In 2021/22, the gap between pupils not eligible FSM and pupils eligible for FSM awarded GCSE grades A\*-A narrowed to 19.2 percentage points, from 21.3 percentage points in 2020/21. The gap had previously been relatively stable at around 14.7 percentage points between 2015/16 and 2018/19 before widening in the most recent 3 years.

From 2018/19 (when GCSEs were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 there has been little change in the gap of GCSE entries awarded to FSM pupils at A\*-G and A\*-C. However, the gap at A\*-A has increased by 4.4 percentage points from 14.4 to 19.2 percentage points.

## Ethnicity

In the context of this publication the category "White" used below, refers to White British pupils only. All other pupils which have a recorded ethnicity are included under the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group category. This category therefore also includes non-British White pupils. Pupils that have not indicated their ethnicity have not been included. There are differences in achievement between groups within the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group category. Further analysis is available for more detailed ethnic groups in the supplementary tables and in Chart 7 below.

**Chart 6: Gap in achievement in all GCSE subjects at KS4 between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils (Black, Asian and minority ethnic minus White)**



Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

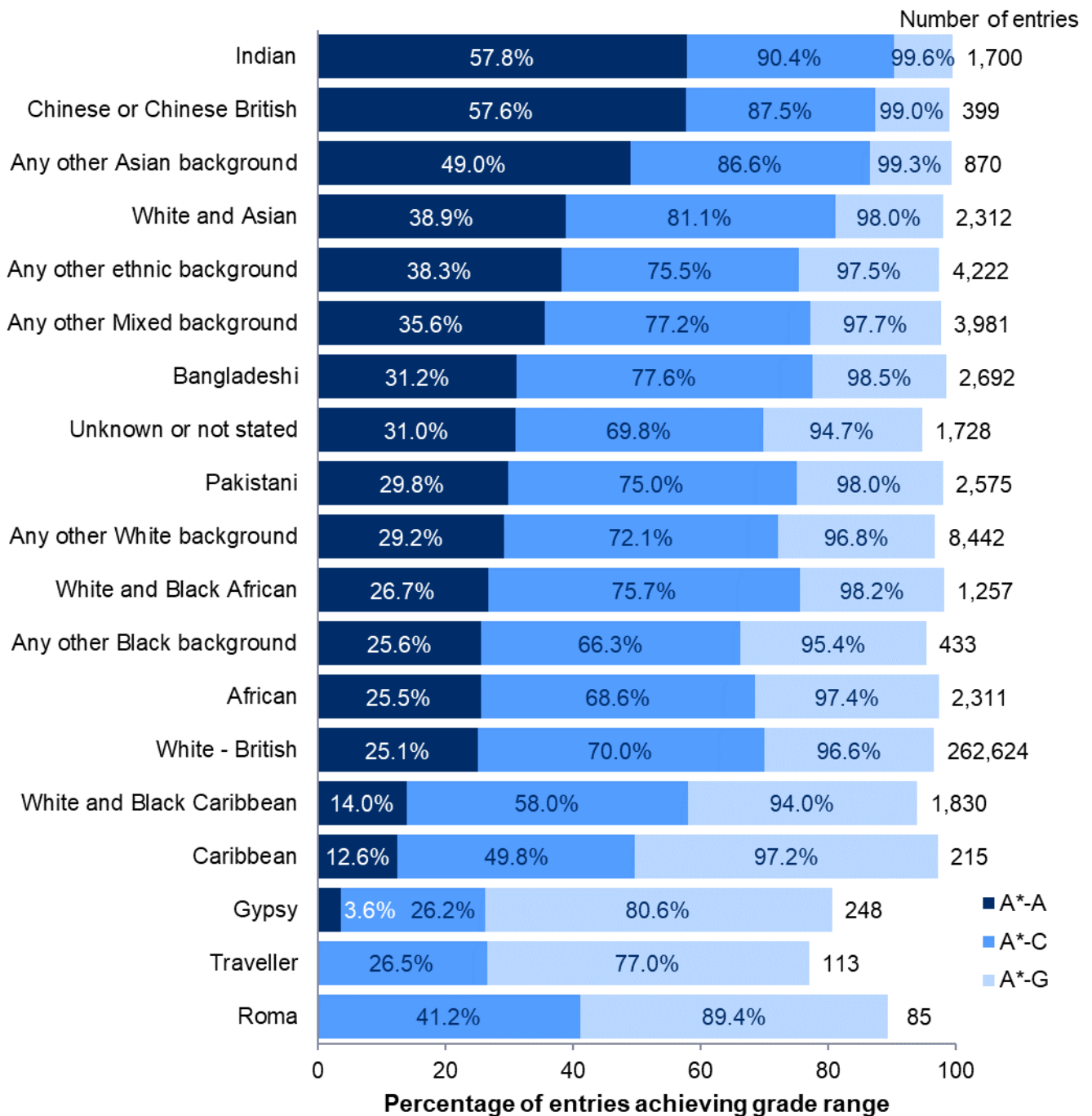
The gap in attainment between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils is negligible for all grades A\*-G. However, at the higher grades Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils consistently achieve better educational outcomes at GCSE than White pupils, with a gap of 7.5 percentage points in A\*-A grades.

The gap between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils awarded grades A\*-C between 2015/16 and 2021/22 has fluctuated but has widened from 0.9 percentage points in 2015/16 to 4.3 percentage points in 2021/22.

From 2018/19 (when GCSEs were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 the gap between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils of GCSE entries awarded to pupils at all grade ranges has increased. The largest increase was at the A\*-A grades, where the gap increased from 4.7 to 7.5 percentage points.



**Chart 7: GCSE entries and results by ethnic background (ungraded GCSEs are not shown, data is ordered by the percentage achieving A\*-A), 2021/22**



Traveller and Roma A\*-A results have been suppressed due to small numbers.

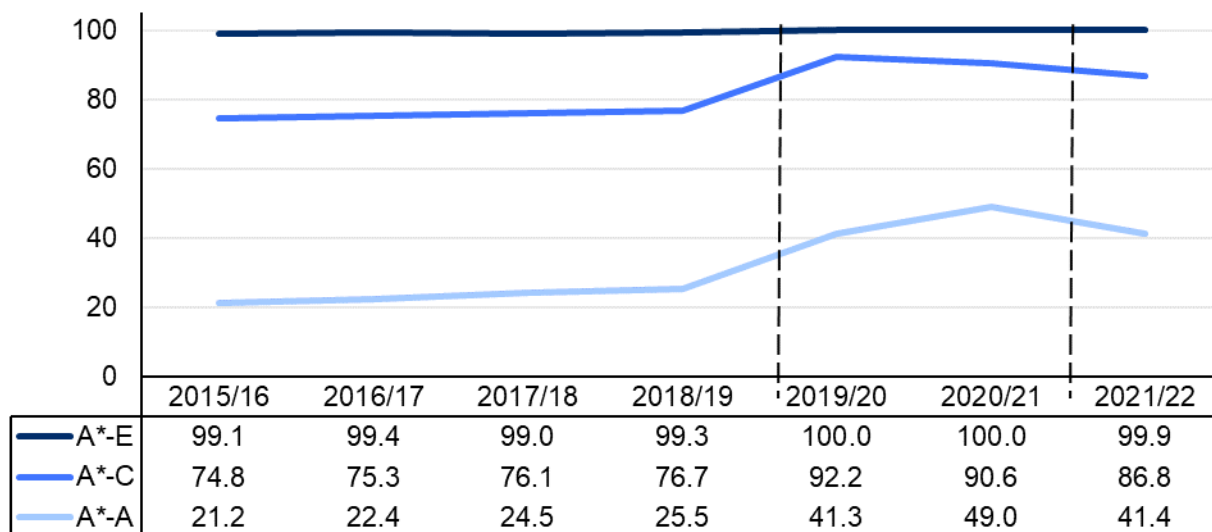
Pupils with an Indian background achieved the highest percent of GCSEs entries at the A\*-A grade range at 57.8%, followed closely by pupils with a Chinese or Chinese British background (57.6%). This is over double the 25.9% A\*-A grades of entries by all pupils (Chart 1), similarly 25.1% of White British pupils that achieved an A\*-A. Pupils with a White and Black Caribbean, Caribbean, and Gypsy backgrounds have the lowest percentage of A\*-A grades shown, with 3.6% of entries by pupils with a Gypsy background achieving A\*-A.

A similar pattern is seen in the A\*-C grade range, with 90.4% of entries by pupils from an Indian background achieving A\*-C, whilst 26.2% and 26.5% of entries by pupils from a Gypsy and Traveller background respectively achieved GCSE A\*-C grades. In comparison 70.1% of entries by all pupils achieved A\*-C (Chart 1).

### 3. Pupils aged 17 at the start of the school year in schools (Key Stage 5)

#### Overall A level grade distribution

Chart 8: Percent of A level entries by pupils aged 17 awarded different grade range



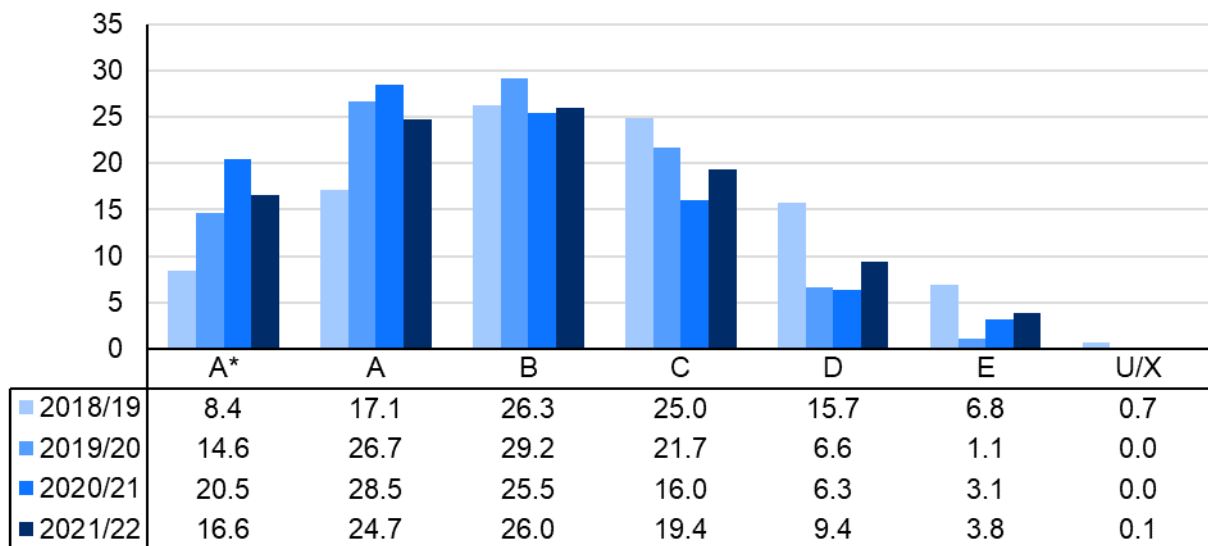
Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

Between 2015/16 and 2020/21 the percentages of A level entries awarded to all three grade ranges (A\*-A, A\*-C and A\*-E) increased. The largest increase was a 27.8 percentage point increase in the A\*-A grade range.

In 2021/22 the percentages of A level entries that were awarded to grade ranges A\*-A, A\*-C and A\*-E have decreased, the largest decrease was in the A\*-A grade range with a decrease of 7.6 percentage points.

From 2018/19 (when A levels were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 there has been a negligible change in the percentage of A level entries awarded A\*-E. However there has been an increase at the grade ranges A\*-A and A\*-C in the same period, with an increase of 15.9 percentage points at A\*-A and 10.1 percentage points at A\*-C.

**Chart 9: Percent of A level entries by pupils aged 17 awarded grade in all subjects**



The largest change in the distribution of grades occurred in 2019/20 and 2020/21. In 2021/22 the percentage of GCSE entries awarded grades A\* and A decreased compared to the previous year, the largest decrease is at A\* at 3.9 percentage points. There was a corresponding increase of GCSE entries awarded grades C, D and E in 2021/22.

From 2018/19 (when A levels were last awarded by examination) to 2021/22 there was a large increase in the number of grades awarded A\*, increasing by 8.2 percentage points. The number of A levels that were ungraded (U/X) remains negligible.

**Chart 10: Top A level subject entries and corresponding percentage of A\*-C grades, 2021/22**

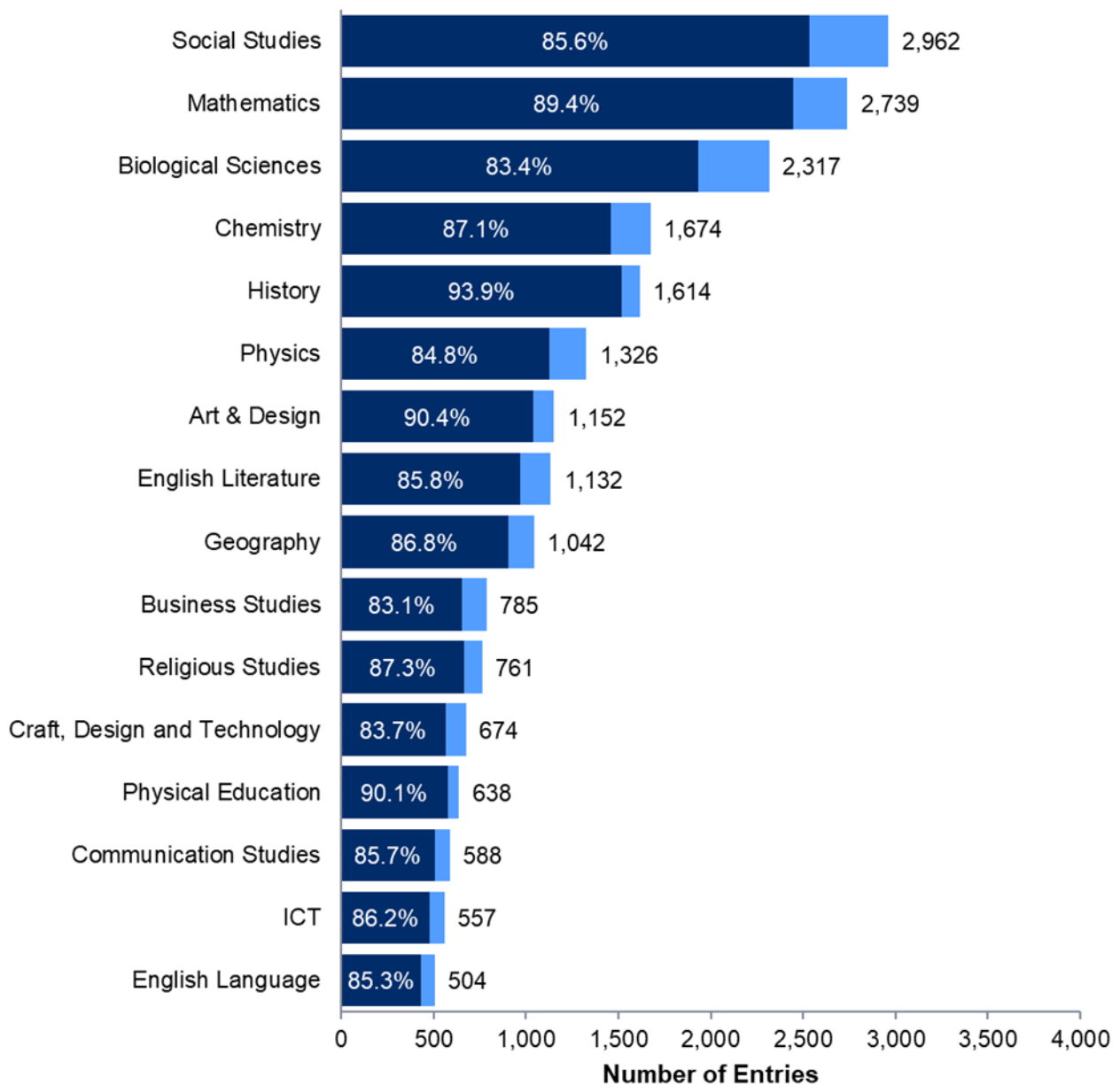


Chart 10 shows the 16 most popular A level subjects by the number of exam entries.

The most popular A levels in Wales were Social Studies (2,962 entries) and Mathematics (2,739 entries) in 2021/22. History saw one of the highest rates of A\*-C grade achievement of any A level subject, with 93.9% of pupils achieving these grades.

Physical Education and Art & Design were two of the highest A\*-C graded subjects in 2021/22 with 90.1% and 90.4% of entries being awarded one of these grades respectively. Of the 16 most popular subjects, Business Studies had the lowest proportion of A\*-C grades, with 83.1%.

Full data on all individual subjects and their corresponding grade distributions are available in the [supplementary tables](#).

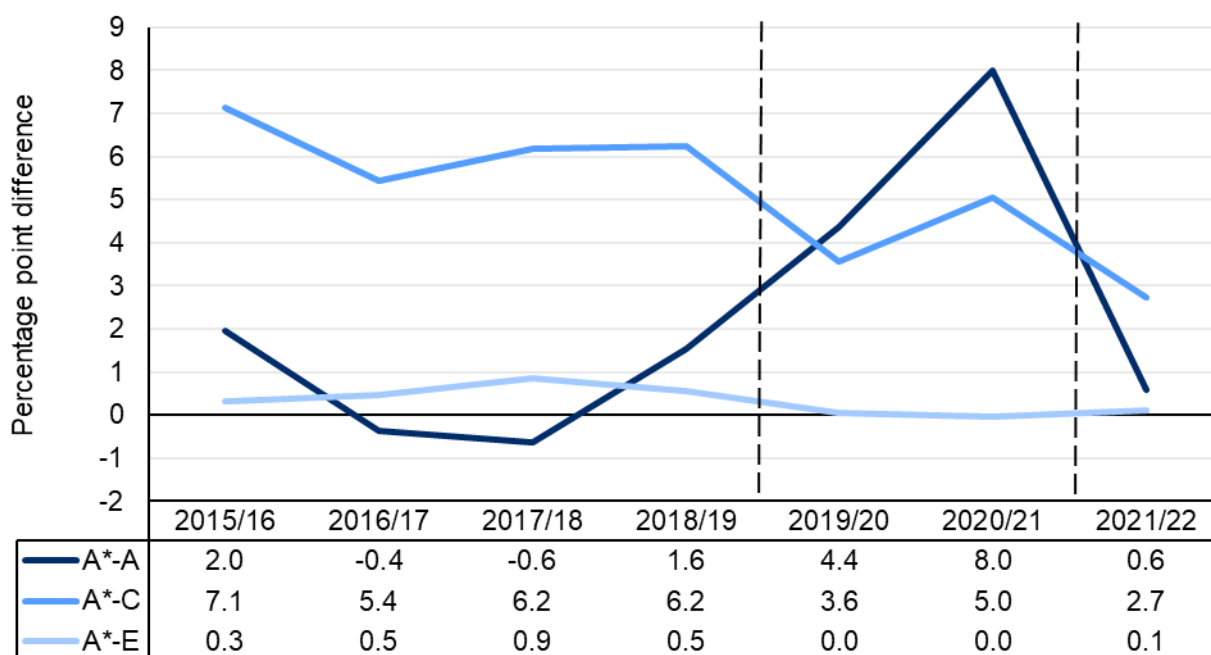
## Results by pupil characteristics

The following charts show the difference in grade distribution in recent years by selected pupil characteristics. There is no chart for free school meal entitlement because the number of such pupils in year 13 in maintained schools is too low to allow any meaningful comparisons. Further comparisons by pupils' ethnicity and SEN status can be found in the supplementary tables provided.

Charts 10 and 11 show the difference in the percentage of different groups of pupils achieving various grade ranges. For example, in chart 10 the chart shows the percentage point difference between the percentage of girls awarded a particular grade range (such as A\*-C) minus the percentage of boys who were awarded that grade range.

### Gender

**Chart 11: Gap in achievement in all A level subjects at KS5 between girls and boys, by grade range (girls minus boys)**



Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

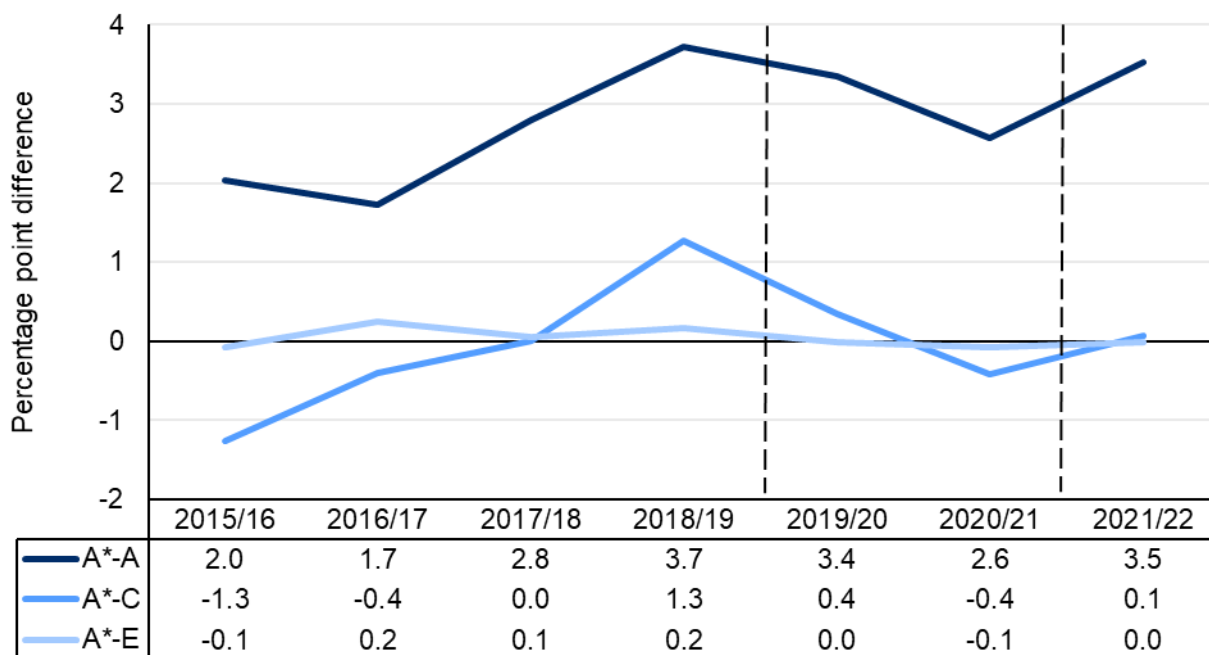
While the gap is negligible for A\*-A and A\*-E grades in 2021/22, at A\*-C grades girls achieve a better outcome than boys. From 2018/19 (when A levels were last awarded by examination) to 2020/21 the gap at A\*-A grades considerably widened to 8.0 percentage points but has narrowed to 0.6 percentage points in 2021/22 which is the smallest gap since 2018/19.

The gap between girls and boys awarded grades A\*-C between 2015/16 and 2021/22 narrowed, from 7.1 percentage points in 2015/16 to 2.7 percentage points in 2021/22.

## Ethnicity

In the context of this publication the category "White" used below, refers to White British pupils only. All other pupils which have a recorded ethnicity are included under the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group category. This category therefore also includes non-British White pupils. Pupils that have not indicated their ethnicity have not been included. There are differences in achievement between groups within the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group category. Further analysis is available for more detailed ethnic groups in the supplementary tables provided and in Chart 13 below.

**Chart 12: Gap in achievement in all A level subjects at KS5 between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils, by grade range (Black, Asian and minority ethnic minus White)**

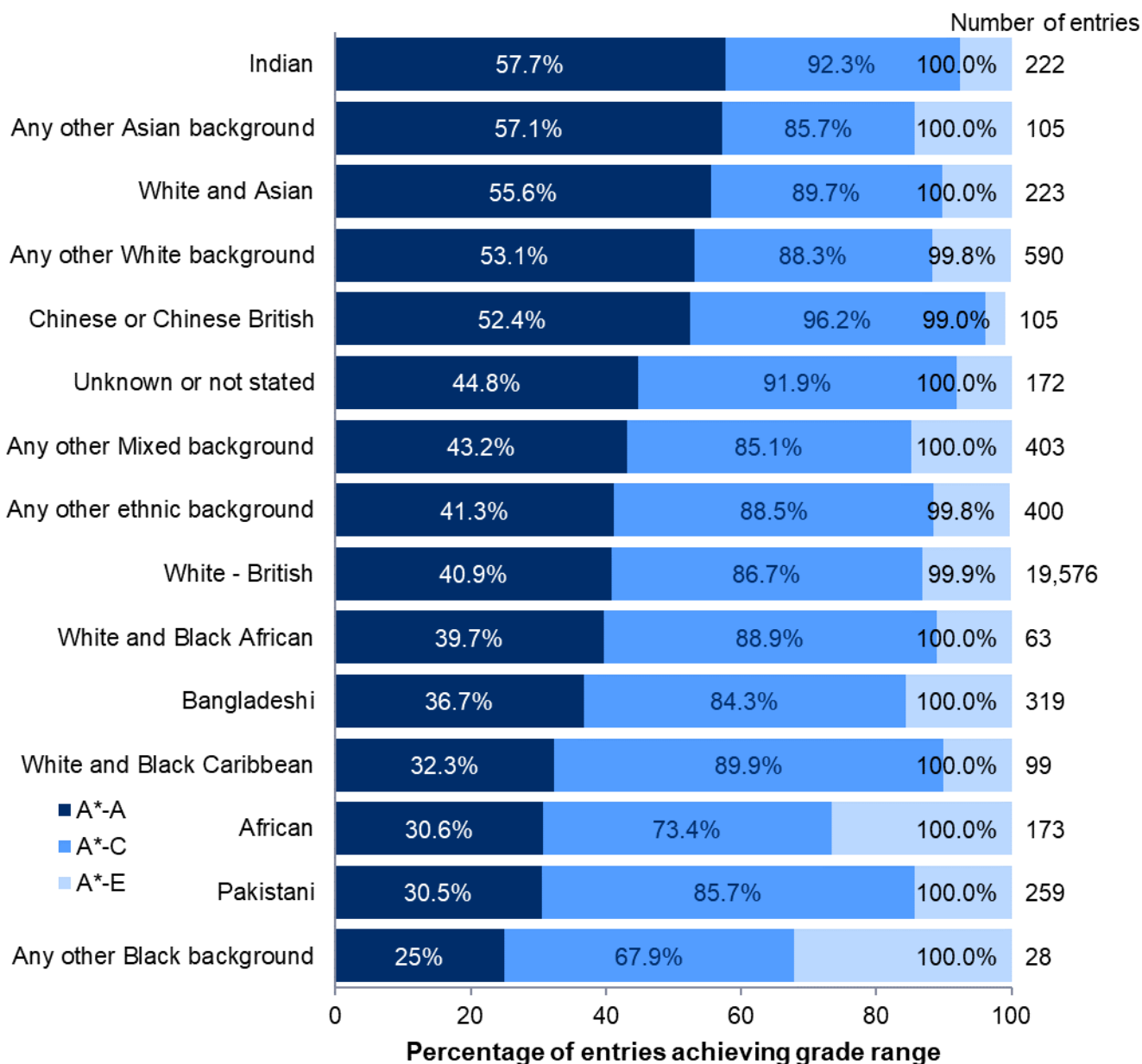


Between dashed lines indicate when qualifications were awarded using centre assessed or determined grades.

The gap between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils is negligible for grade ranges A\*-E and A\*-C. However, at the A\*-A grades Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils consistently achieve better outcomes than White pupils, with a gap of 3.5 percentage points in 2021/22.

The gap between Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils and White pupils awarded grades A\*-A between 2015/16 and 2021/22 has fluctuated, changing from 2.0 percentage points in 2015/16 to 3.5 percentage points in 2021/22, similar to the gap in 2018/19 when A levels were last awarded by examination.

**Chart 13: A level entries and results by ethnic background (ungraded A levels are not shown, data is ordered by the percentage achieving A\*-A), 2021/22**



Pupils from Caribbean and Traveller backgrounds have not been included due to small numbers of entries by pupils from these backgrounds. There are a relatively small number of entries to A level by pupils from some ethnic backgrounds. Caution should, therefore, be taken when interpreting these results as reporting based on small numbers of entries may lead to wider fluctuations year on year.

Pupils with an Indian background achieved the highest percentage of A levels at the A\*-A grade range (57.7%), followed closely by pupils with 'Any other Asian background' (57.1%). Pupils with 'Any other Black background' had the lowest percentage of A\*-A grades, with 25.0% of entries achieving these grades. In comparison 41.4% of entries by all pupils achieved A\*-A grades (Chart 8).

96.2% of entries by pupils from a Chinese or Chinese British background achieved A\*-C grades, whilst 67.9% of entries by pupils from 'Any other Black background' achieved A\*-Cs. In comparison 86.8% of entries by all pupils achieved A\*-C grades (Chart 8).

## 4. Definitions

### Changes and comparisons

The 2022 examination period was a transitional year, where relevant qualifications sat by Welsh pupils returned to written examination. This was not a complete return to pre-pandemic examinations. To compensate for any disruption to the school timetable, pupils who sat exams in 2022 were given a wider choice of questions from the syllabus, with Qualifications Wales setting results broadly midway between 2019 (the last time examinations were sat) and 2021 outcomes.

On 21 June 2021 the then [Minister for Education confirmed](#) that learners entered for GCSE, AS and A Levels qualifications in summer 2021 would have their qualifications awarded through a centre determined grade model.

The closure of schools during the March to August 2020 period prevented the Welsh Government from completing a census of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) schools or Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) pupils. For this reason PRU and EOTAS pupils have not been included in the results for the 2019/20 academic year.

The data in this release starts at 2015/16 due to a definition change of the GCSE cohort between 2014/15 and 2015/16 where the cohort was changed from pupils aged 15 to pupils in Year 11.

Data for earlier years can be found on [StatsWales](#).

Similar information has also been published in August 2022 by the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\)](#). However, the information published by the JCQ will differ from that which is published here as they will include students of all ages who have undertaken GCSE or A Levels and at all examination centres (including further education institutions and independent schools) and will reflect the grades available on results day (JCQ).

On 20 October 2022 Qualifications Wales published an equalities analysis of the 2022 GCSE and A level results. This included analysis by gender, FSM and SEN / ALN. The GCSE analysis will differ from that presented here as it will only include the data as at results day in August and will not include any subsequent appeals and re-marks. The A level data will differ because it will also include qualifications achieved at FE colleges and again the data will refer to the position on results day in August. The results in this release are for students in year 11 or aged 17 in maintained schools in Wales and reflect the grades available as of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

## 5. Notes

### Accuracy

Schools and local authorities have now had an opportunity to assess the provisional results for accuracy and have supplied amended information where applicable. In keeping with previous years, the change between provisional and final data in this release is less than 1 percentage point.

### National Statistics

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 continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2019 following a [compliance check by the Office for Statistics Regulation](#). These statistics last underwent a [full assessment against the Code of Practice in 2019](#).

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:

- Introduced a summary of the key figures to the start of the publication, including a detailed explanation of the new key figures and placed them into context in terms of grade equivalents.
- A breakdown of the figures by gender, ethnicity, and Free School Meal eligibility has been included in the release and accompanying tables.

## **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 and this release included 1 of the national indicators namely the average capped points score per pupil, including the gap between those who are eligible or are not eligible for free school meals. In the summer period of 2019 calculations of the average capped points score suspended. The indicator has been supplemented with the grade distributions found in this release. Further information on the average capped points score is available in the [Examination results in schools in Wales, 2021/22](#) release.

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](#).

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.

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.

## **Further details**

The document and supplementary tables are available at:

<https://gov.wales/examination-results-september-2021-august-2022>

Further technical information can be found in the notes document also on the examination results webpage.

## **Next update**

October 2023

## **We want your feedback**

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [school.stats@gov.wales](mailto:school.stats@gov.wales).

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