

## Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: Achievement, August 2021 to July 2022 (experimental statistics)

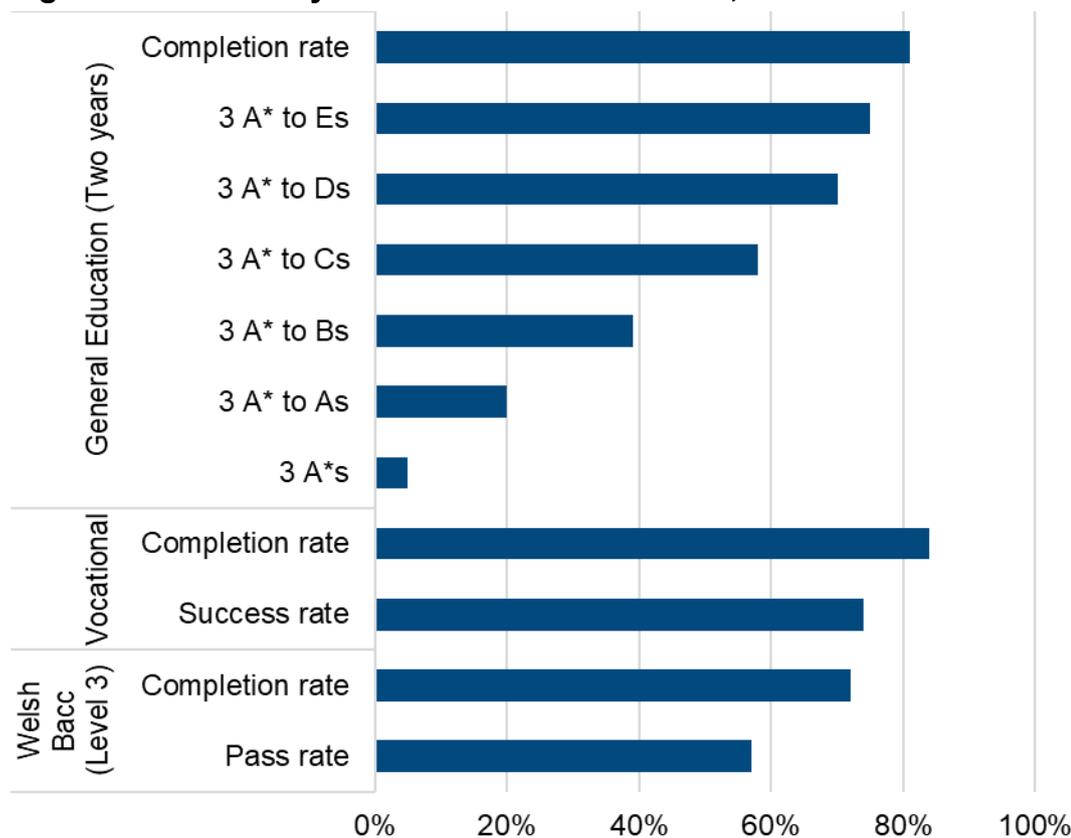
28 February 2023  
SFR 9/2023

This report covers outcomes for general education and vocational education in sixth forms and colleges. It looks at the progression across all the qualifications a learner took as part of their programme, as well as the grade outcomes.

Statistics on work based learning and adult learning are in the [Learner outcomes measures for work based learning and adult learning](#) report.

The standard performance measures were not produced in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the disruption of the pandemic. Instead, special reports were produced on [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#). Those statistics cannot be compared with this report.

**Figure 1.1: Summary of achievement measures, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 1.1: The bar chart shows 81% of A level learners completed their two-year programme. 84% of vocational learners completed their programme. 72% of Welsh Bacc learners completed the qualification.

### About this release

This release is part of a set of three consistent performance measures for colleges and sixth forms.

The measures are [Achievement](#), Value Added, and [Destinations](#).

Outcomes for learners should be understood in the context of other measures.

Sources:

Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR),

Post-16 data collection, Welsh Examinations Database (WED).

### In this release

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## 1. Key points

General education (A level) learners' outcomes have generally improved compared to before the pandemic. Outcomes for vocational learners have been worse.

### General education

The grades for learners were higher across the board when compared to 2018/19.

The greatest increase came from the middle and higher grades:

- 20% of the full-time learners who started an AS level in the 2020/21 academic year achieved the equivalent of three A levels at A\* to A in 2021/22, compared to 9% in 2018/19
- 58% achieved at least three A\*s to Cs, compared to 42% in 2018/19
- 75% achieved three or more A levels of any grade, compared to 65% in 2018/19

The percentage of learners who completed their AS and went onto their second year of A levels was higher than before the pandemic.

Outcomes were less equal than before the pandemic:

- learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black Welsh, Black British backgrounds didn't see the same level of rise in grades that other learners saw
- grades rose more for younger learners
- the gap between learners from the most deprived neighbourhoods and the least deprived neighbourhoods widened

Learners taking Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics were particularly likely to get high grades. Half of second year maths A level learners got at least an A.

### Vocational education

Outcomes for vocational learners were lower than in 2018/19 across all levels of learning:

- 84% of full time programmes were completed in 2021/22, compared to 88% in 2018/19
- 74% of main vocational qualifications were successfully achieved, compared to 80% in 2018/19

Level 3 outcomes were lower than 2018/19, unlike during the first two years of the pandemic where they were higher.

The largest drop in success rate were for learners in Social Sciences; Science and Mathematics; Health, Public Services, and Care; and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.

Learners aged 16, and between 20 and 24 typically had higher success rates than other learners in 2018/19, in 2021/22 this was no longer the case.

There was less of a gap in outcomes for learners from more deprived areas than in 2018/19.

### Welsh Baccalaureate

Outcomes for the Welsh Baccalaureate (known as the Welsh Bacc) were better than before the pandemic for learners on general education programmes, but not for vocational learners.

## 2. General education (A levels)

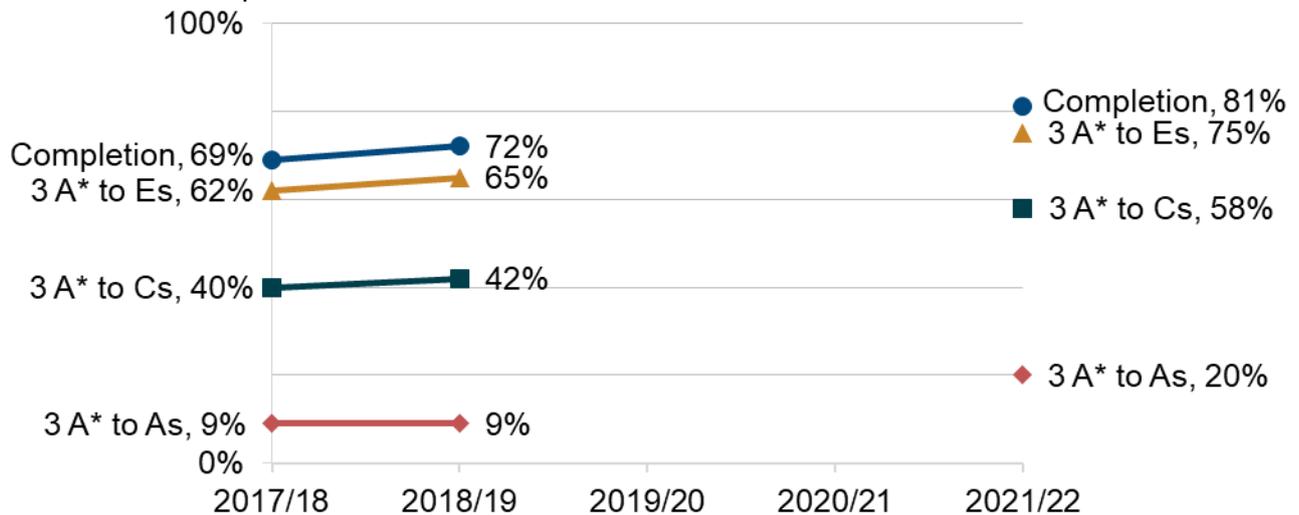
These measures cover full time learners who started studying a programme of three or more [AS levels](#) (or equivalents) in their first year, and how many went onto achieve at least three A levels (or equivalents) by the end of their second year.

Exams were cancelled in the summer of 2019/20, and 2020/21. In 2019/20 A level learners received the best of [centre assessed or a standardised grades](#). In 2020/21, they received [centre determined grades](#). In both years, grade outcomes tended to be higher than before the pandemic.

The 2021/22 examination period was a transitional year for learners. This was not a complete return to pre-pandemic examinations. To compensate for disruption, learners who sat exams in 2022 were given a wider choice of questions from the syllabus, with Qualifications Wales setting results broadly midway between 2018/19 (the last time examinations were sat) and 2020/21. This context should be kept in mind when comparing outcomes to before the pandemic.

**Figure 2.1: Time series of general education two-year achievement measures at A level**

Measures were not produced for 2019/20 or 2020/21.



Description of Figure 2.1: The line chart shows outcomes for A levels were higher in 2021/22 than in 2018/19.

[Data can be found in Table 1.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Learners were more likely to continue onto their second year of A levels than before the pandemic. 9 in 10 learners who completed their AS levels in 2020/21 went onto the second year of A levels in 2021/22. Only 8 in 10 did in the years before the pandemic. This data is in Table 1.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet.

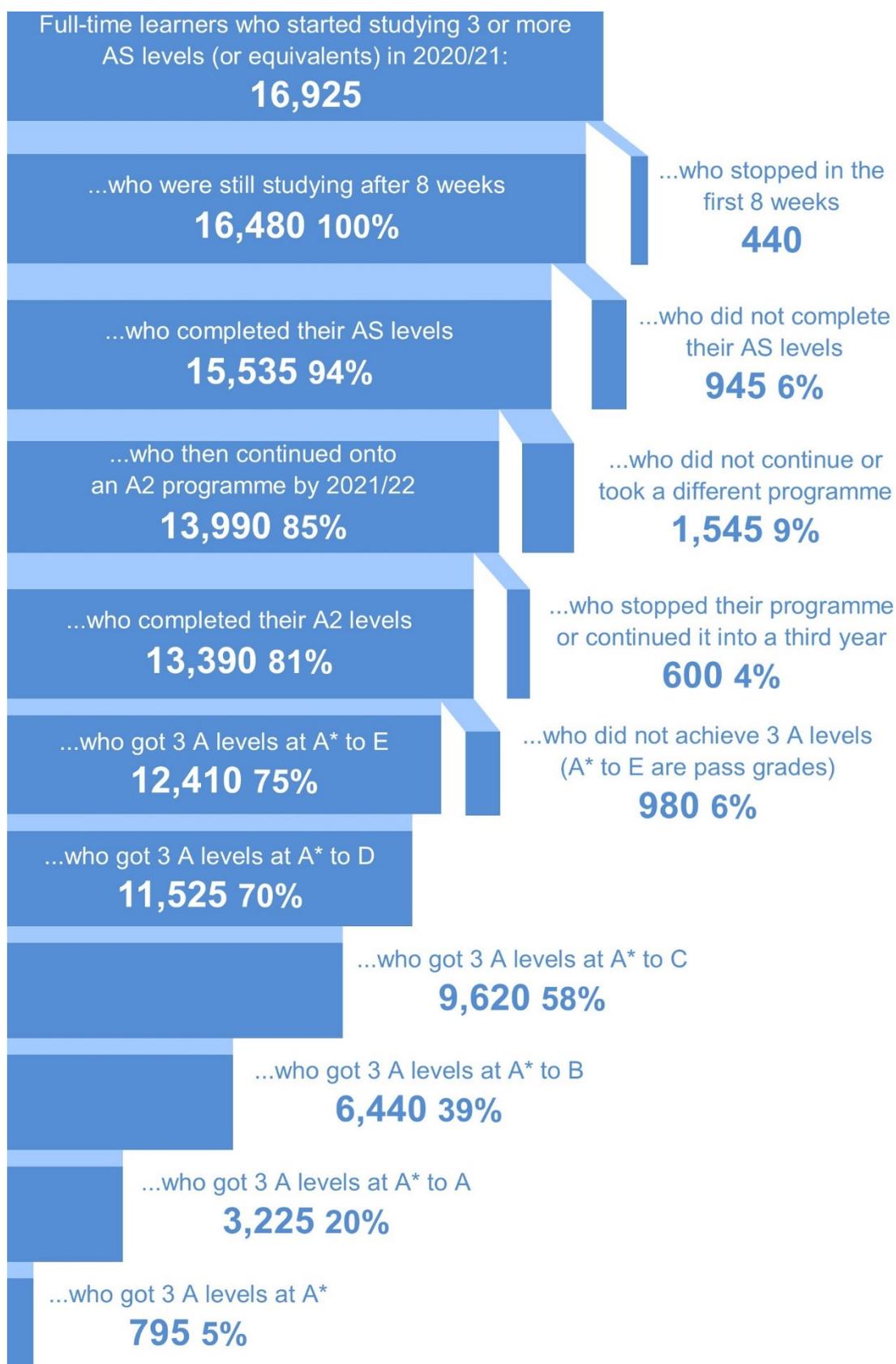
The increase in learners completing their A levels, and the increase in learners getting three A levels at any grade is mostly due to this increase in learners continuing onto their second year.

There was no change in the AS completion rate, or the second year completion rate for learners who had started their second year. Data on this can be found in the accompanying spreadsheet.

The change in learners getting at least three Cs or three As cannot be explained by the change in retention rate. 2 in 10 learners achieved three As or A\*s in 2021/22, compared to 1 in 10 in 2018/19. The increase in learners achieving at least three Cs at A level was bigger still.

**Figure 2.2: Two-year achievement measures for general education (A level) programmes**

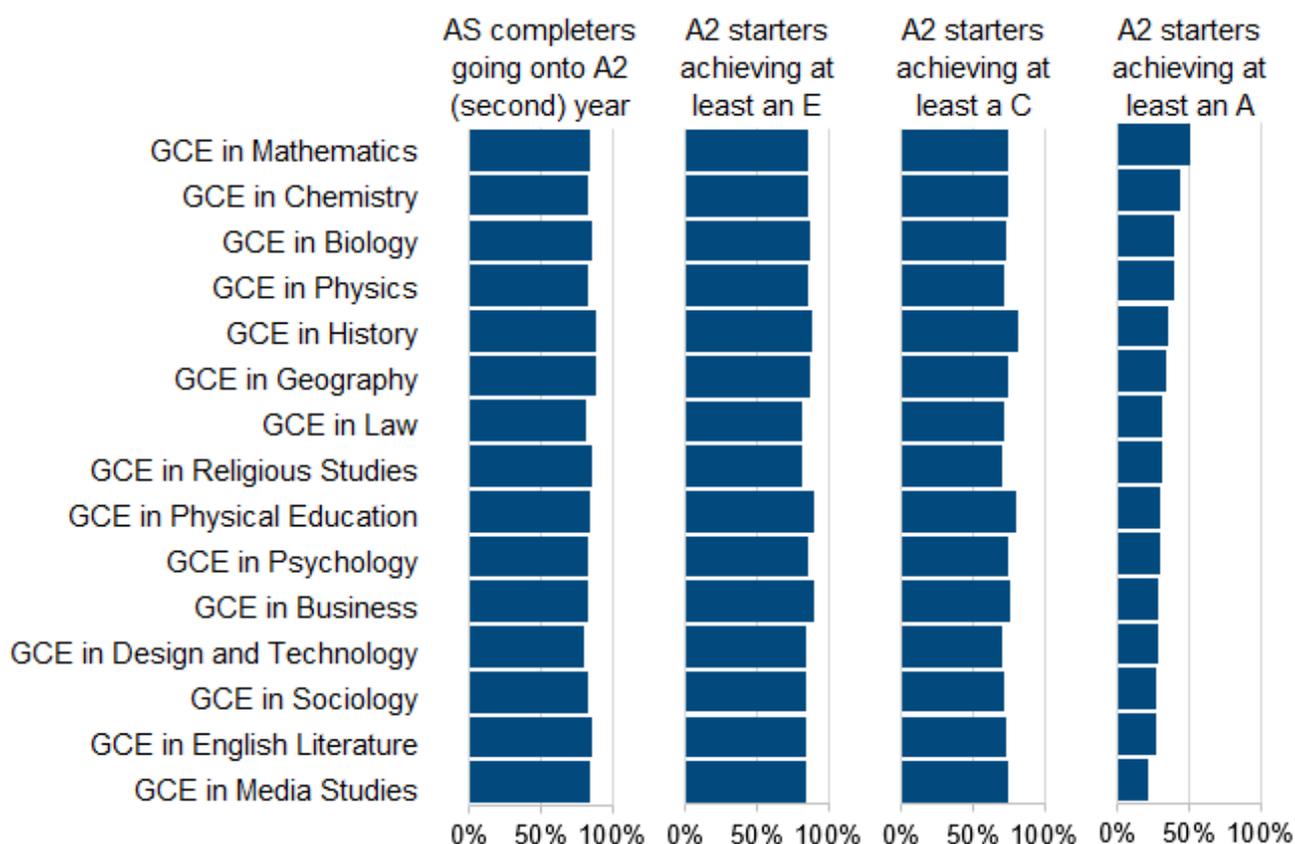
Percentages in this figure are expressed as the percentage of AS learners at 8 weeks



Description of Figure 2.2: The flow diagram shows the learner journey for full-time A level learners, starting in 2020/21 and completing their A levels in 2021/22. The biggest drop off is at the end of the AS year, where 9% of the AS learners 8 weeks in don't go onto the second year.

[Data can be found in Table 1.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

**Figure 2.3: A level course outcomes for the 15 most taken A levels, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 2.3: The bar chart shows that 5 in 10 learners who started their second year of Maths A level achieved an A or A\*. This was the highest value. The lowest value was for Media Studies where only 2 in 10 learners achieved an A or A\*. The subjects where high proportions of learners got As or above weren't always the subjects where high proportions of learners got Cs or above.

[Data can be found in Table 4.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Maths, Chemistry, Biology and Physics all have high rates of learners achieving A and A\*s. Sociology, English Literature and Media Studies have lower rates.

History and Geography have a high retention rate. Nearly 9 in 10 learners who finished their AS levels in those subjects continued onto their second year of A levels. They also had high AS completion rates, and rates of learners achieving at least a C. Physical Education also had a high proportion of learners achieving at least a C.

### 3. Vocational programmes

These measures cover full time learners studying programmes with mainly vocational qualifications, in a particular sector or subject area. These qualifications have different lengths, so the vocational measures only look at achievement over one year. Success for vocational programmes is measured as the percentage of main qualifications studied that were successful.

In 2019/20 and 2020/21, some assessments were cancelled and replaced with alternatives such as teacher assessed grades, others were adapted and some were delayed. Outcomes were generally lower, except for level 3 programmes (equivalent to A level).

In 2021/22 assessments went ahead, but awarding bodies were able to make adaptations to examinations and assessments, to help mitigate the disruption of the pandemic on learning. This context should be kept in mind when comparing outcomes to before the pandemic.

#### Figure 3.1: Completion measures for vocational programmes, 2021/22

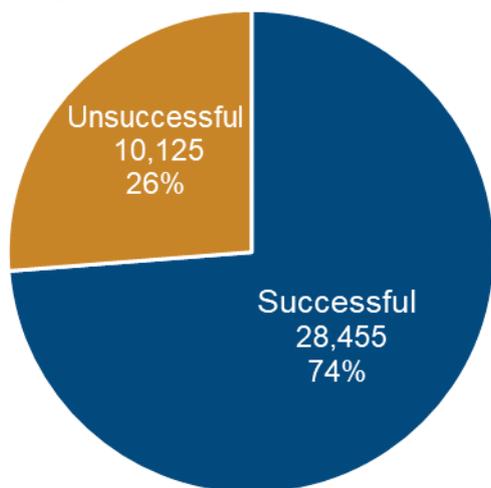
Percentages in this figure are expressed as the percentage of vocational learners at 8 weeks



Description of Figure 3.1: The flow chart shows the progression of vocational learners through their programme. 1 in 8 learners left or transferred out of their vocational programme within the first 8 weeks, which is higher than before the pandemic. For those who didn't leave in the first 8 weeks, 84% went onto complete their vocational programme.

[Data can be found in Table 2.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

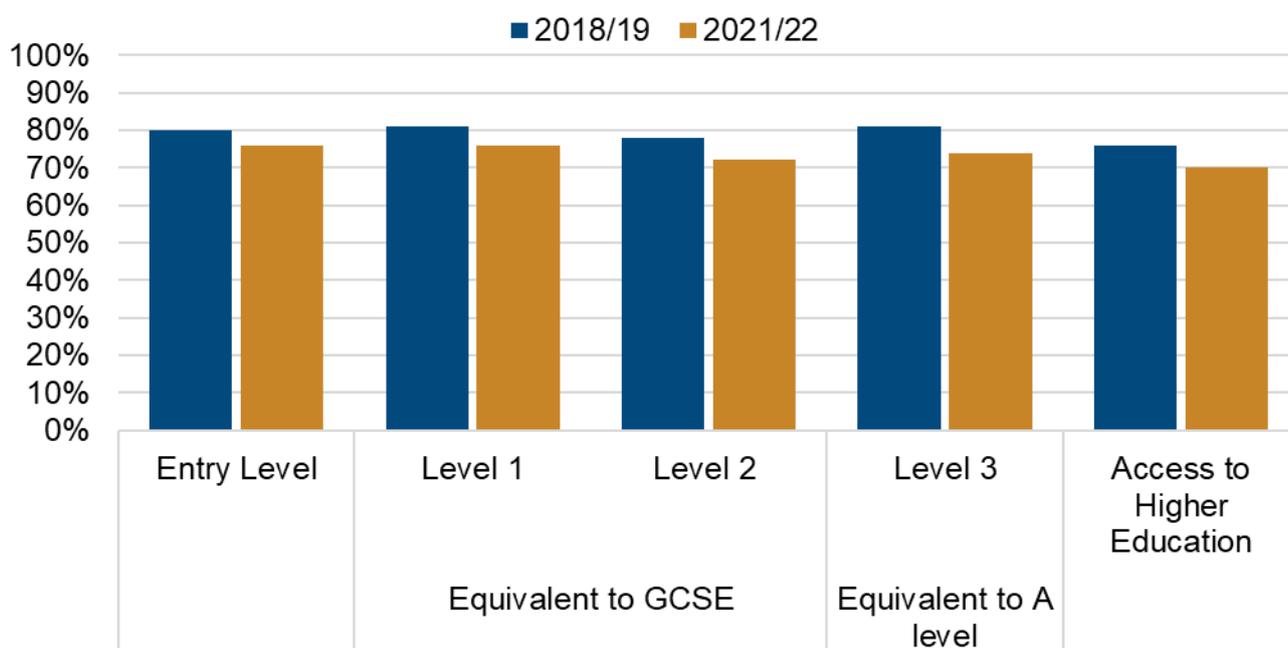
**Figure 3.2: Success rate of main qualifications taken by learners in vocational programmes, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 3.2: The pie chart shows 74% of the main qualifications taken as part of a full time vocational programme were successfully achieved. This is 7 percentage points lower than in 2018/19.

[Data can be found in Table 2.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

**Figure 3.3: Success rate by qualification level for vocational programmes, 2018/19 and 2021/22**



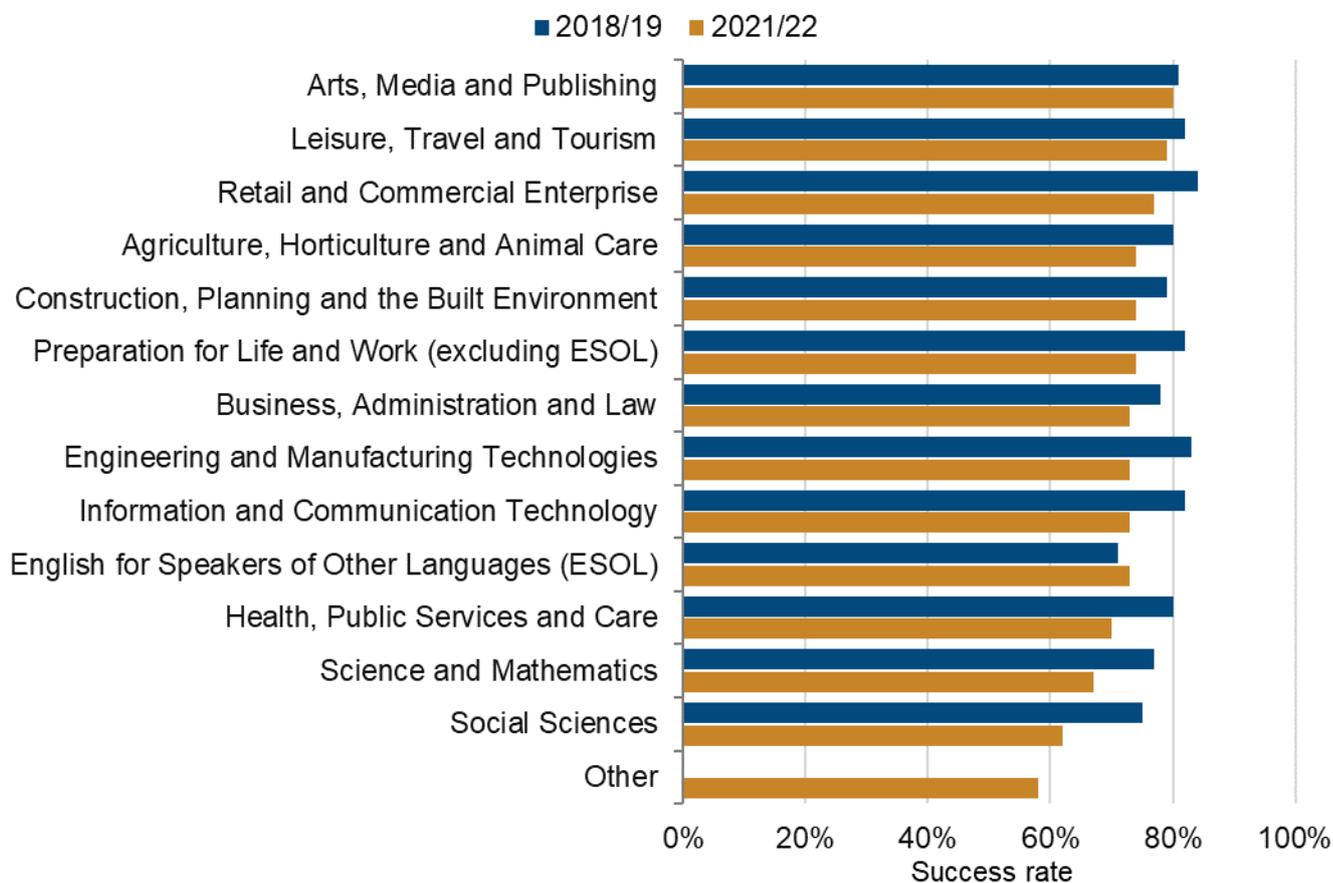
Description of Figure 3.3: The bar chart shows that the success rate for vocational programmes was lower across all levels than before the pandemic in 2018/19.

[Data can be found in Table 2.13 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

During the first two years of the pandemic, learners on level 3 programmes saw better outcomes than pre-pandemic but not in 2021/22. In 2021/22, level 3 programmes were the programmes that saw the biggest fall in success rate compared to before the pandemic. This is a marked difference to general education programmes, where outcomes were still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

The lowest success rates were in Access to Higher Education programmes (70%). Access programmes are designed to prepare people without traditional qualifications for study at university.

**Figure 3.4: Success rate by sector for vocational programmes by academic year**

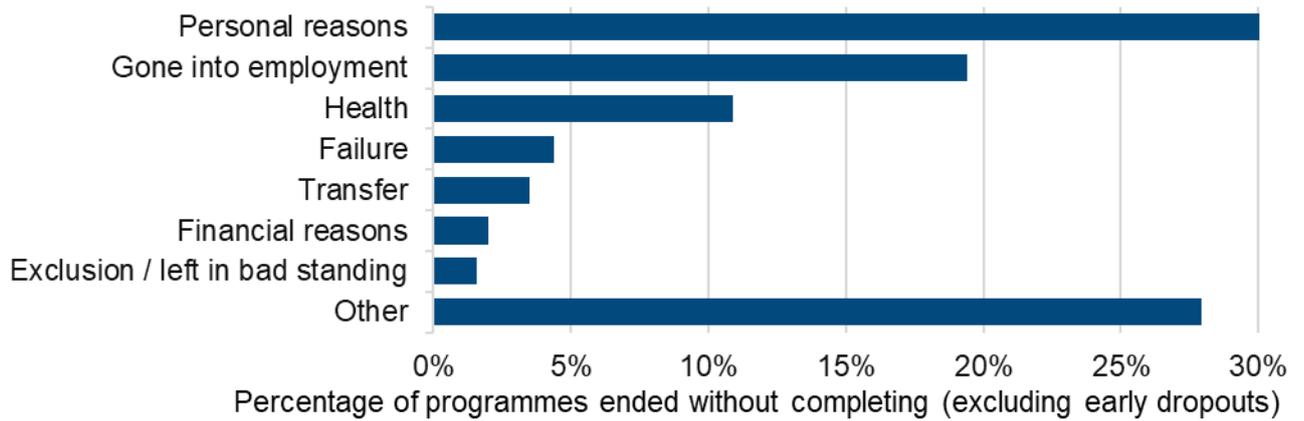


Description of Figure 3.4: The bar chart shows that Social Sciences; Science and Mathematics; and Health, Public Services, and Care had the lowest success rates of all vocational programmes. These three had some of the highest falls in success rate compared to 2018/19 as well, along with Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.

[Data can be found in Table 2.12 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The success rate for Arts, Media and Publishing; and Leisure, Travel and Tourism programmes fell less than other programmes between 2018/19 and 2021/22. The success rate for learners on English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes rose.

**Figure 3.5: Reason for ending non-completed vocational programmes at colleges, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 3.5: The bar chart shows that for learners who didn't complete their vocational programme, 3 in 10 ended their programme due to personal reasons, 2 in 10 left to go into employment, and 1 in 10 left due to health reasons.

[Data can be found in Table 2.14 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

## 4. Welsh Baccalaureate

The Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) is a Wales-only qualification, designed to be studied as part of general education or vocational programmes. It aims to develop skills useful for education and employment.

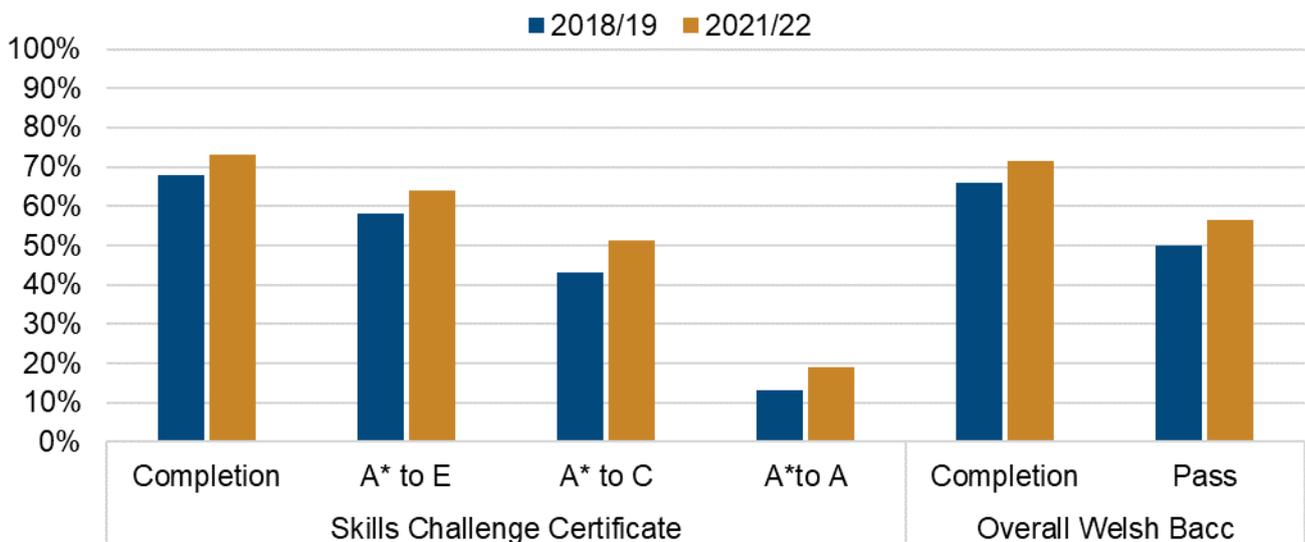
There are three levels of Welsh Bacc. Almost all post-16 learners study the highest level, the level 3 Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate.

The level 3 Welsh Bacc has several parts:

- Skills Challenge Certificate – this is a graded qualification, equivalent to an A Level
- GCSEs in Maths-numeracy and English or Welsh Language
- supporting A level or vocational qualifications

Learners need to achieve all of these to get the overall Welsh Bacc, although the Skills Challenge Certificate is also a standalone qualification.

**Figure 4.1: Advanced Welsh Bacc achievement measures by academic year**



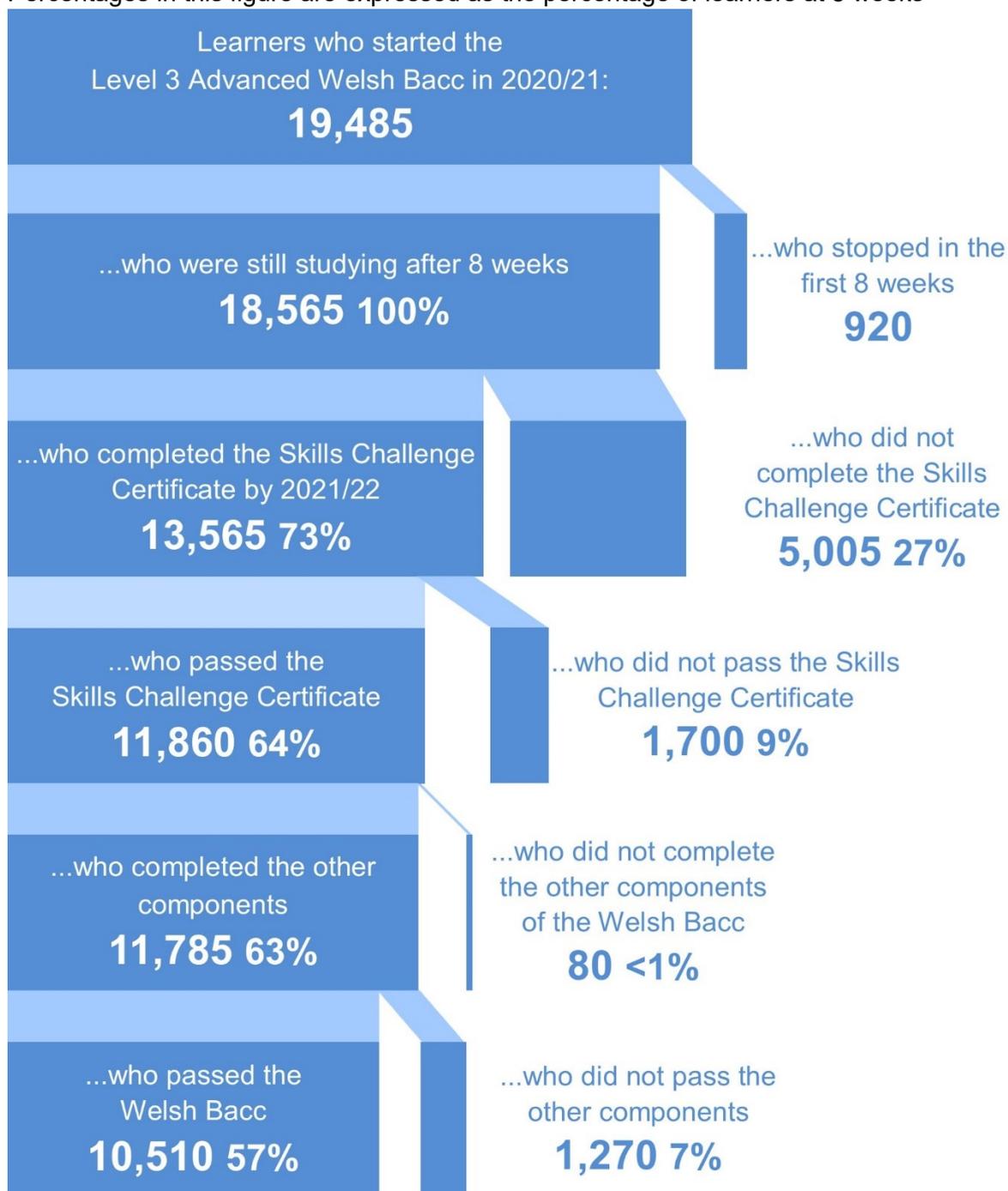
Description of Figure 4.1: The bar chart shows that the outcomes of the Welsh Bacc were higher in 2021/22 than in 2018/19.

[Data can be found in Table 3.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

57% of learners passed the Advanced 3 Welsh Bacc, compared to 50% in 2018/19. More learners completed and passed the Skills Challenge Certificate, and more learners completed the overall Welsh Bacc.

**Figure 4.2: Advanced Welsh Bacc achievement measures, 2021/22**

Percentages in this figure are expressed as the percentage of learners at 8 weeks

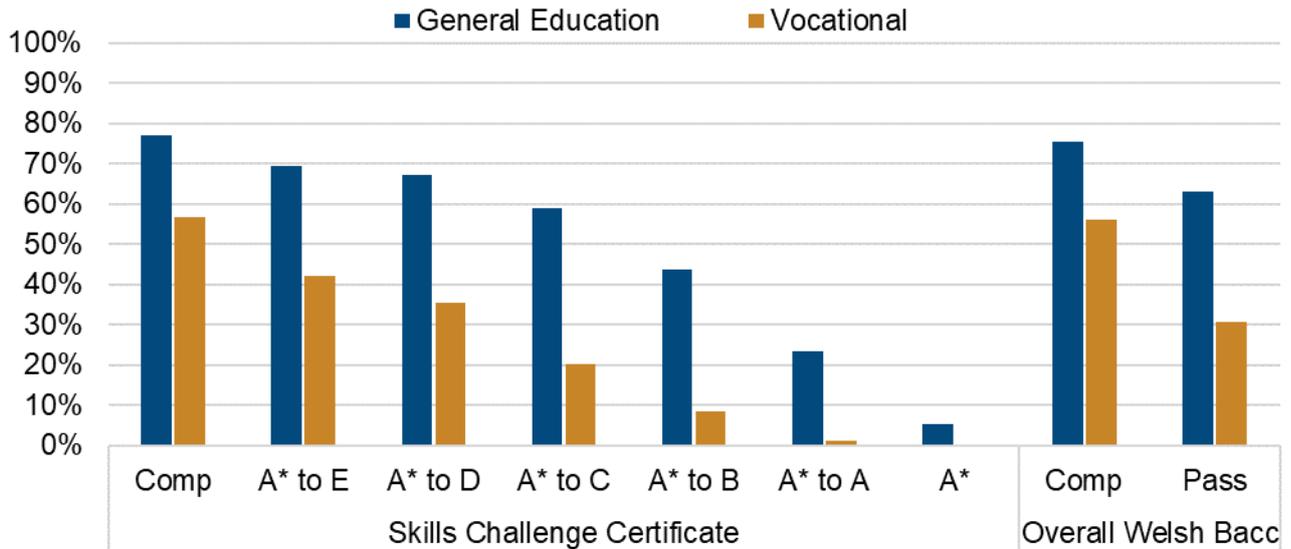


Description of Figure 4.2: The flow chart shows the progression of learners through the Welsh Bacc, including their progression on the Skills Challenge Certificate qualification. Most learners who didn't pass the Welsh Bacc didn't complete the Skills Challenge Certificate.

[Data can be found in Table 3.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

1 in 3 learners who started the Welsh Bacc did not pass the Skills Challenge Certificate. Of the 11,860 who passed the Skills Challenge Certificate, a further 1,350 did not receive the Welsh Bacc. This is because they did not successfully complete the other components.

**Figure 4.3: Achievement measures by learner programme type for the Advanced Welsh Bacc, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 4.3: The bar chart shows that learners studying general education programmes had higher Welsh Bacc outcomes than learners studying vocational programmes.

[Data can be found in Table 3.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

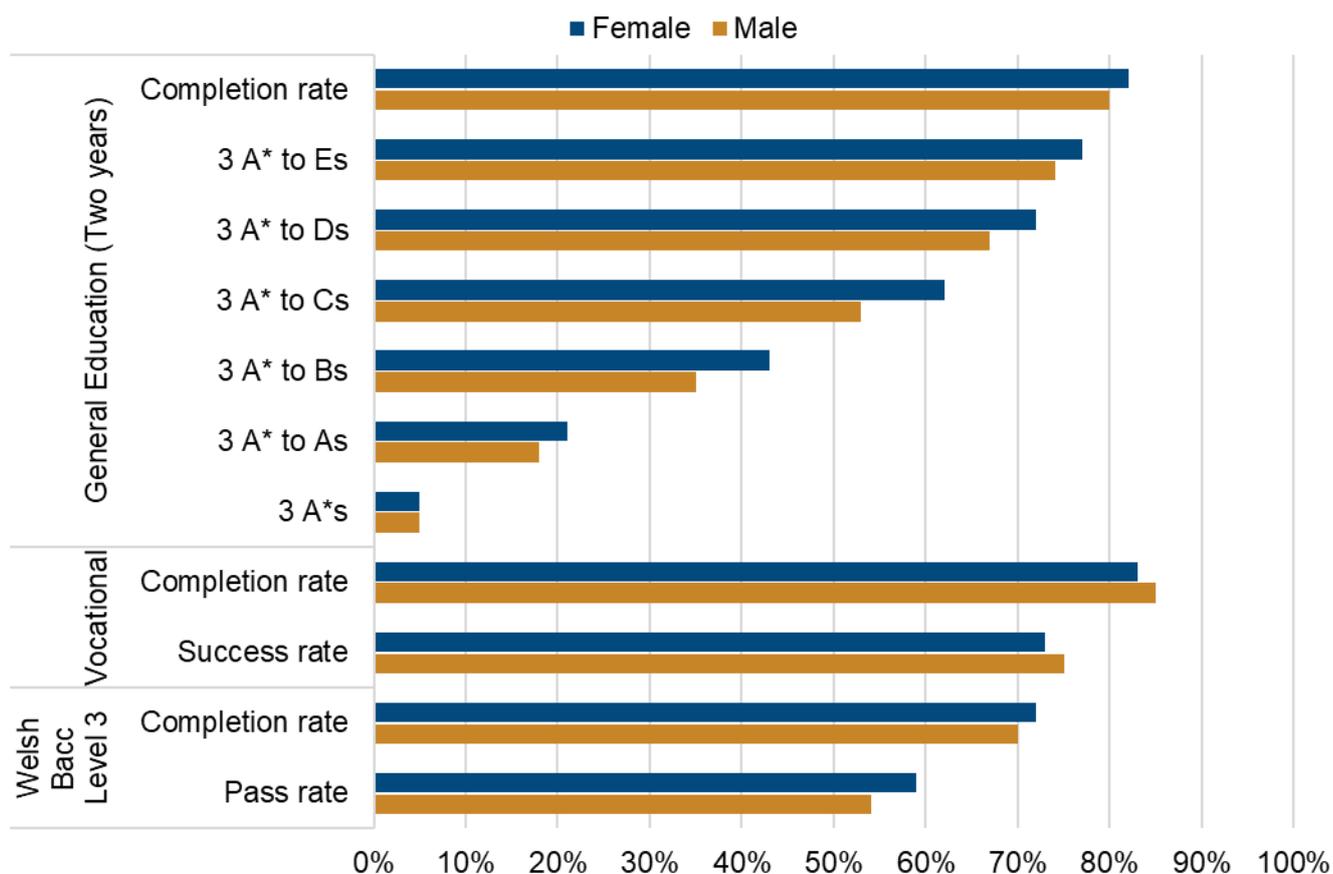
Learners studying vocational programmes were less likely to achieve the Welsh Bacc. The pass rate for learners on vocational programmes was 32 percentage points lower than on general education programmes (31% compared with 63%).

The gap between vocational and general education was wider in 2021/22 than before the pandemic. Only learners on general education programmes saw an increase in outcomes. Outcomes for vocational learners remained similar to 2018/19.

Less than 5 learners on vocational programmes got an A\* in the Skills Challenge Certificate, out of the 3,625 vocational learners who didn't drop out early. 45 learners on vocational programmes achieved an A\* or A.

## 5. Gender

Figure 5.1: Achievement measures by gender, 2021/22



Description of Figure 5.1: The bar chart shows that females had higher outcomes than males in general education programmes and in the Welsh Bacc. Males had higher outcomes in vocational programmes.

[Data can be found in Table 1.2, 2.2, 3.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

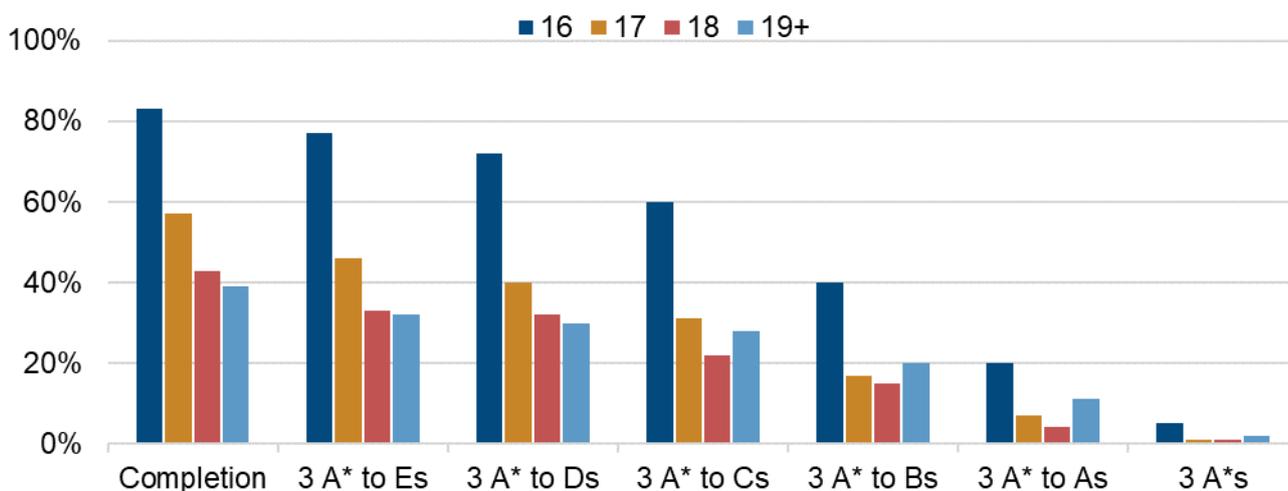
77% of females passed three A levels (A\* to E), compared with 74% of males. The one exception is the proportion of learners who achieved 3 A\*s, which is equal across the genders.

The gender gap in general education shrank in 2021/22 compared to before the pandemic.

Male learners were 2 percentage points more likely to achieve their vocational programme than female learners in 2021/22. There was no gender gap in achievement in 2018/19.

## 6. Age

**Figure 6.1: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by age at the start of the first year, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 6.1: The bar chart shows that learners aged 16 at start of their A Levels had higher achievement rates than older learners on full time general education programmes.

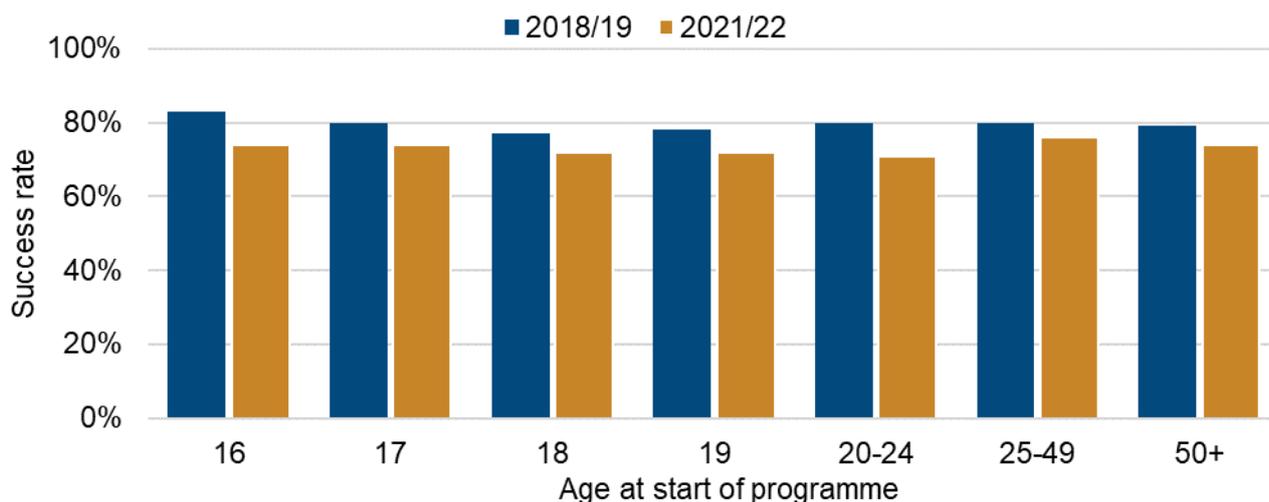
[Data can be found in Table 1.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Learners aged 19 or older were half as likely to complete their programmes compared to 16 year olds.

Whilst younger learners have seen an increase in outcomes compared to before the pandemic, older learners were less likely to complete their A levels than in 2018/19. The age gap in grade outcomes has also increased compared to before the pandemic.

Most learners in Wales will start their A levels at 16. Older learners may have followed a less traditional education route, or may be retaking A levels.

**Figure 6.2: Vocational programme success rate by age, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 6.2: The bar chart shows that there wasn't a clear relationship between age and success rate in full time vocational programmes.

[Data can be found in Table 2.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The vocational learners with the higher success rates were aged between 25 and 49, and success rates were lowest for those groups between 18 and 24.

The success rate dropped the most for learners aged 16 and those between 20 and 24, compared to before the pandemic. 16 year olds would be taking programmes immediately after the end of compulsory education. In each group the success rate was 9 percentage points lower than in 2018/19. Previously success rates were particularly high in these age categories.

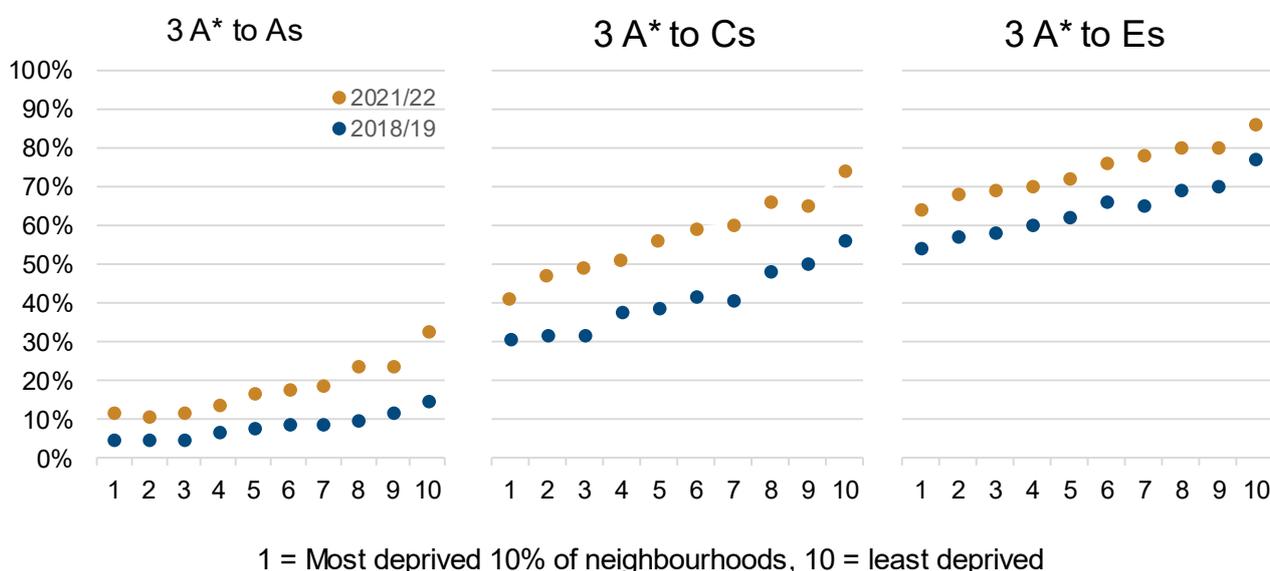
## 7. Deprivation

This section displays the inequality in learning outcomes between learners in deprived and less deprived areas. It does not necessarily mean that deprivation causes a learner to achieve less academically. For example, there may be differences in the type of post-16 education offered in the local authorities that contain many deprived areas.

The main measure of deprivation in this release is the deprivation of the small area that a learner lives in. It is not based on the deprivation of the learner specifically. Many non-deprived learners live in deprived areas and vice versa. This comes from the main index of the [2019 Welsh Index of Multiple of Deprivation](#).

This year we have also included a proxy learner level measure of deprivation: whether a learner was eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at any point during secondary school.

**Figure 7.1: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by the deprivation of the learner’s home neighbourhood and academic year**



Description of Figure 7.1: The scatter graph shows that the more deprived the area that learners lived in, the lower their outcomes were. Outcomes for all learners were higher than in 2018/19.

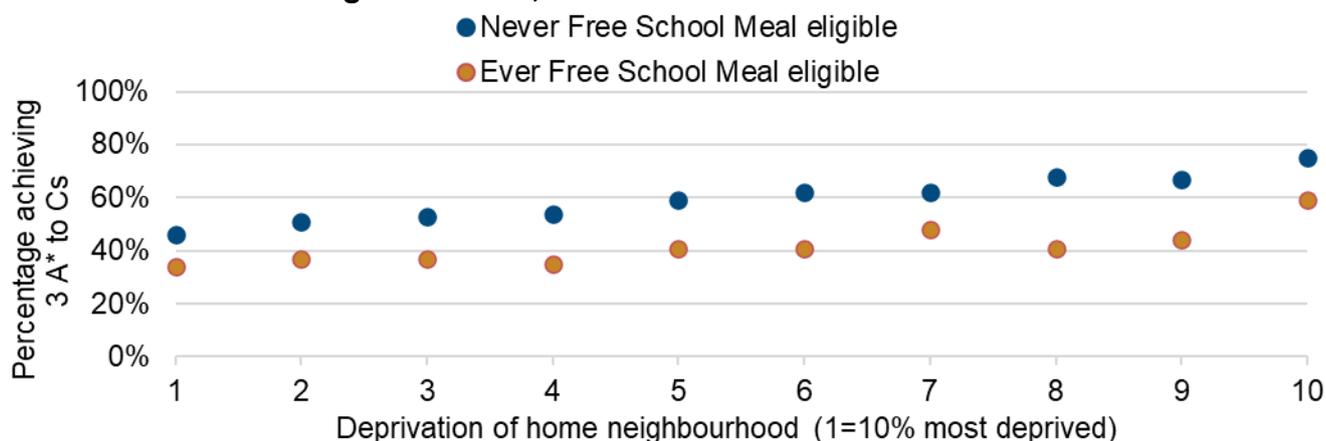
[Data can be found in Table 1.4 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The gap in outcomes between learners living in the most deprived and least deprived areas was wider in 2021/22 than before the pandemic. 33% of learners living in the least deprived areas received three A\*s or As in 2021/22. Only 12% of learners from the most deprived areas did.

This effect was most visible for learners getting at least three Cs at A level. There was a 33 percentage point gap between achievement for learners from the most and least deprived neighbourhoods. 74% of learners in the least deprived areas achieved three Cs, compared to 41% of learners in the most deprived areas.

The exception to the gap growing was in terms of the percentage of learners getting at least three Es, where the gap was the same as it was in 2018/19.

**Figure 7.2: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by whether the learners was ever eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), and the deprivation of the learner’s home neighbourhood, 2021/22**

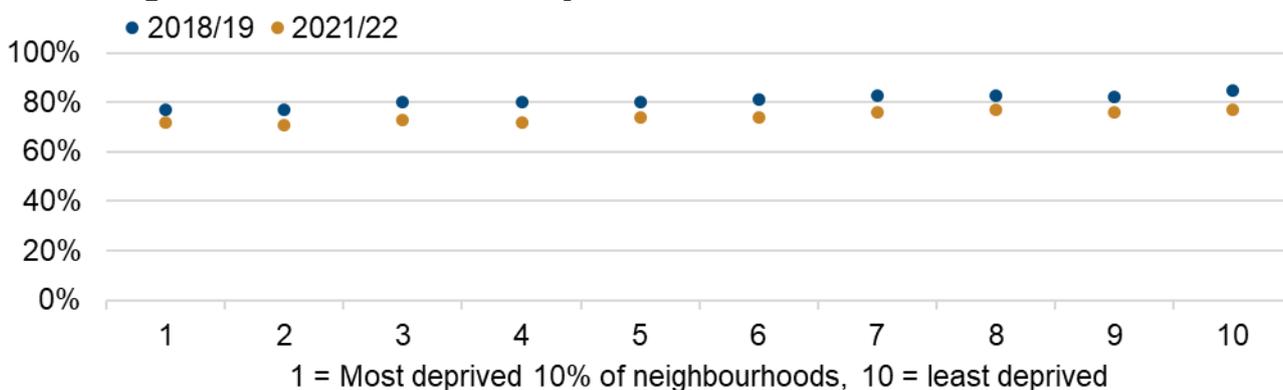


Description of Figure 7.2: The scatter graph shows both eligibility for free school meals and living in deprived areas are associated with lower outcomes. Even amongst learners who were never eligible for free school meals, those living in deprived areas had lower outcomes than learners living in less deprived areas.

[Data can be found in Table 1.12 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Learners are eligible for free school meals if their families are in receipt of certain benefits/support payments, or are on universal credit. Learners who were ever eligible for free school meals during secondary school had lower outcomes than learners who were never eligible.

**Figure 7.3: Vocational programme success rate by the deprivation of the learner’s home neighbourhood and academic year**



Description of Figure 7.3: The scatter graph shows that the more deprived the area a vocational learner lived in, the lower their success rate was. This was true in 2018/19 and 2021/22.

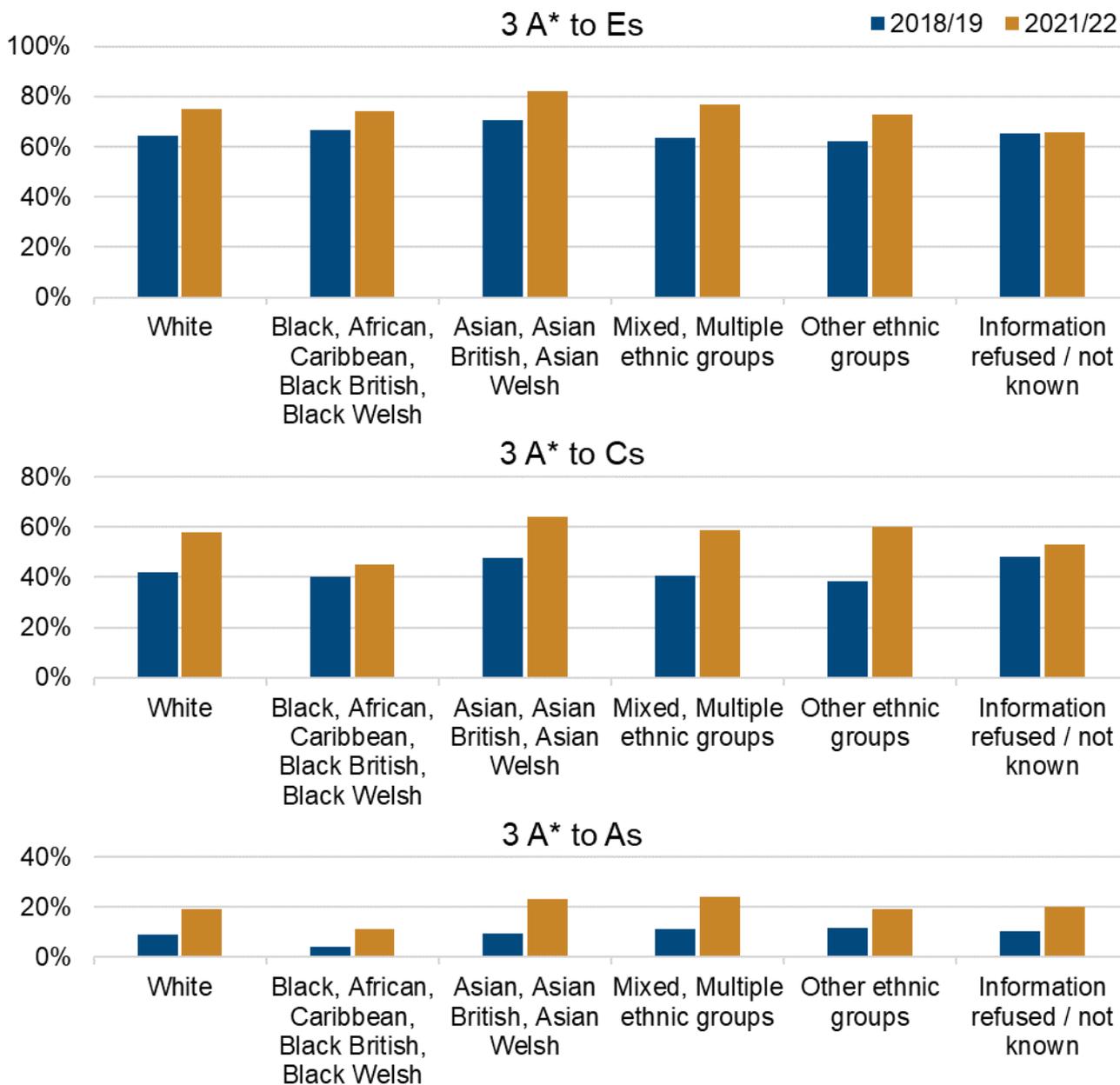
[Data can be found in Table 2.4 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The link between deprivation and achievement was not as strong as in general education. 72% of learners from the most deprived areas achieved their vocational qualifications, compared to 77% in the least deprived areas.

The gap in outcomes was less severe in 2021/22 than in 2018/19. Learners in the most deprived neighbourhoods saw less of a drop in the success rate compared to before the pandemic than other learners.

## 8. Ethnic background

**Figure 8.1: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by the learner's ethnic background and academic year**



Description of Figure 8.1: The bar chart shows that learners across all backgrounds had higher grades in 2021/22 than in 2018/19, but this was less true for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds. Learners with Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh backgrounds had the highest outcomes.

[Data can be found in Table 1.7 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

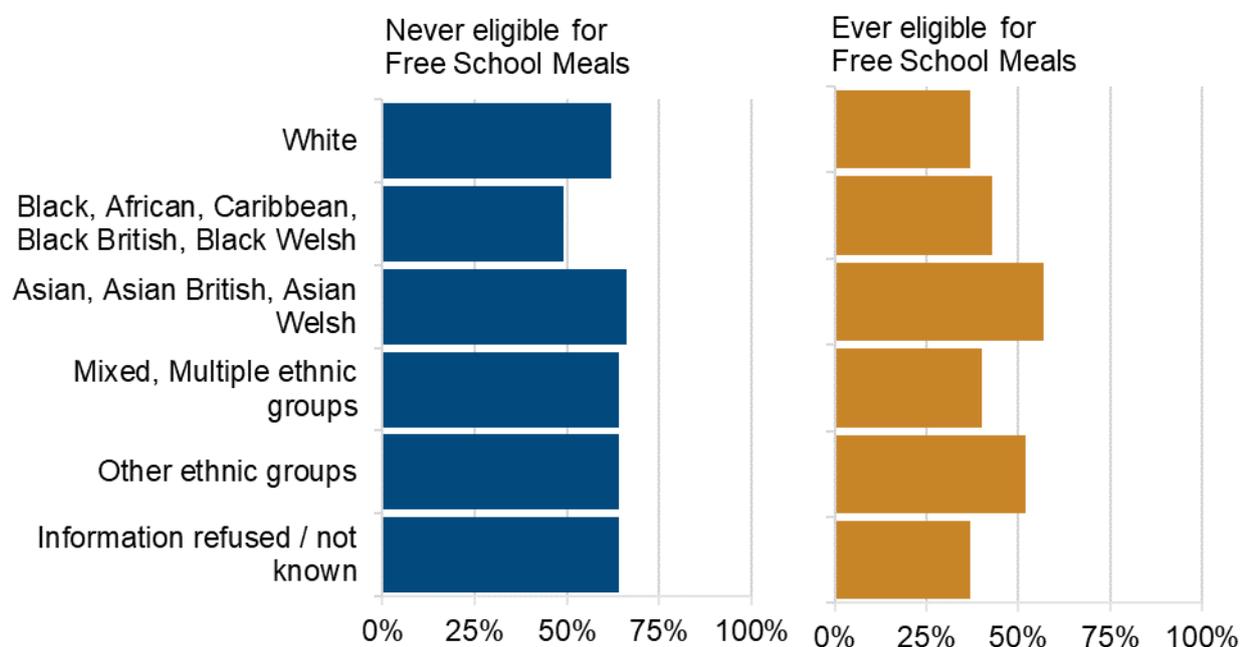
A large inequality gap opened up for A level learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds. 58% of A level learners went on to get at least three 3 Cs in 2021/22, but only 45% of learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds did. This inequality was much smaller before the pandemic in 2018/19.

Across all ethnic backgrounds, the percentage of learners achieving at least three Cs was 16 percentage points higher than before the pandemic. It was 5 percentage points higher for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds.

The [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) reports aren't directly comparable to these measures, but they showed a similar inequality in 2020/21. However, in the first year of the pandemic, 2019/20, the inequality didn't exist.

Learners from Other ethnic groups saw the largest rise in achieving at least three Cs, an increase of 21 percentage points from 2018/19. Learners from Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh backgrounds saw the largest rise in achieving at least three As, an increase of 14 percentage points from 2018/19.

**Figure 8.2: Percentage of A level learners who achieved at least three Cs at A level, by the learner's ethnic background and whether they were ever eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), 2021/22**



Description of Figure 8.2: The bar chart shows that amongst learners who were never eligible for Free School Meals, a lower proportion of learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds got at least three Cs at A level than any other group. Amongst learners who were eligible for Free School Meals, learners with White backgrounds were the least likely to achieve three Cs at A level.

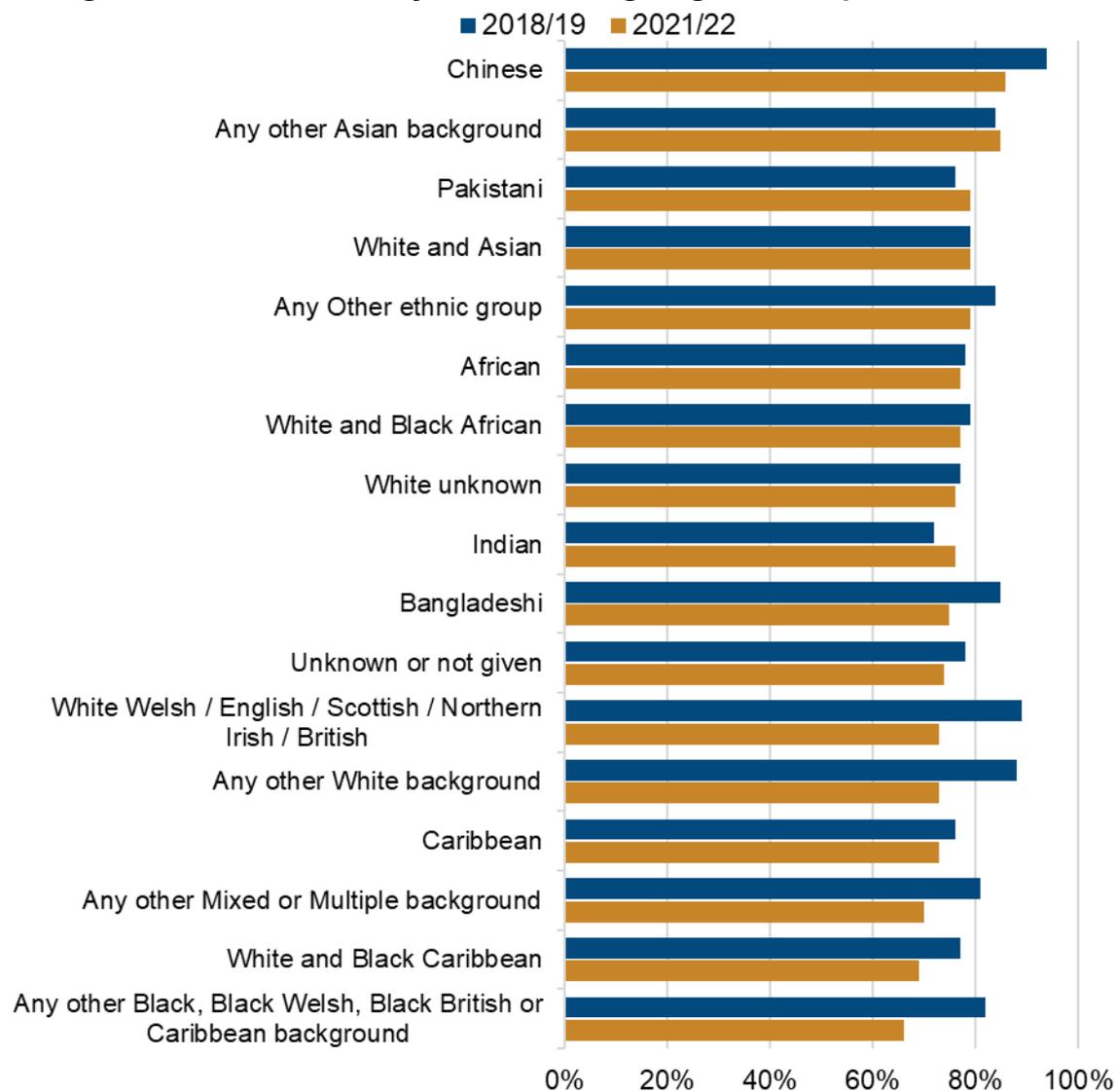
[Data can be found in Table 1.13 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The inequality in outcomes for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds cannot easily be explained by deprivation as this inequality does not exist amongst learners who were eligible for Free School Meals. It only appears between learners who were never eligible for Free School Meals.

The pattern is the same across both measures of deprivation used in this release – Free School Meal eligibility or the deprivation of the learner's home neighbourhood.

Learners with White; and Mixed, Multiple backgrounds had the largest gap in achievement between more deprived and less deprived learners. Learners with these backgrounds who had been eligible for Free School Meals were less likely to complete their A levels, with less learners continuing onto their second year after A levels.

**Figure 8.3: Vocational education success rate by the learner’s detailed ethnic background and academic year, excluding English for Speakers of Other Languages**



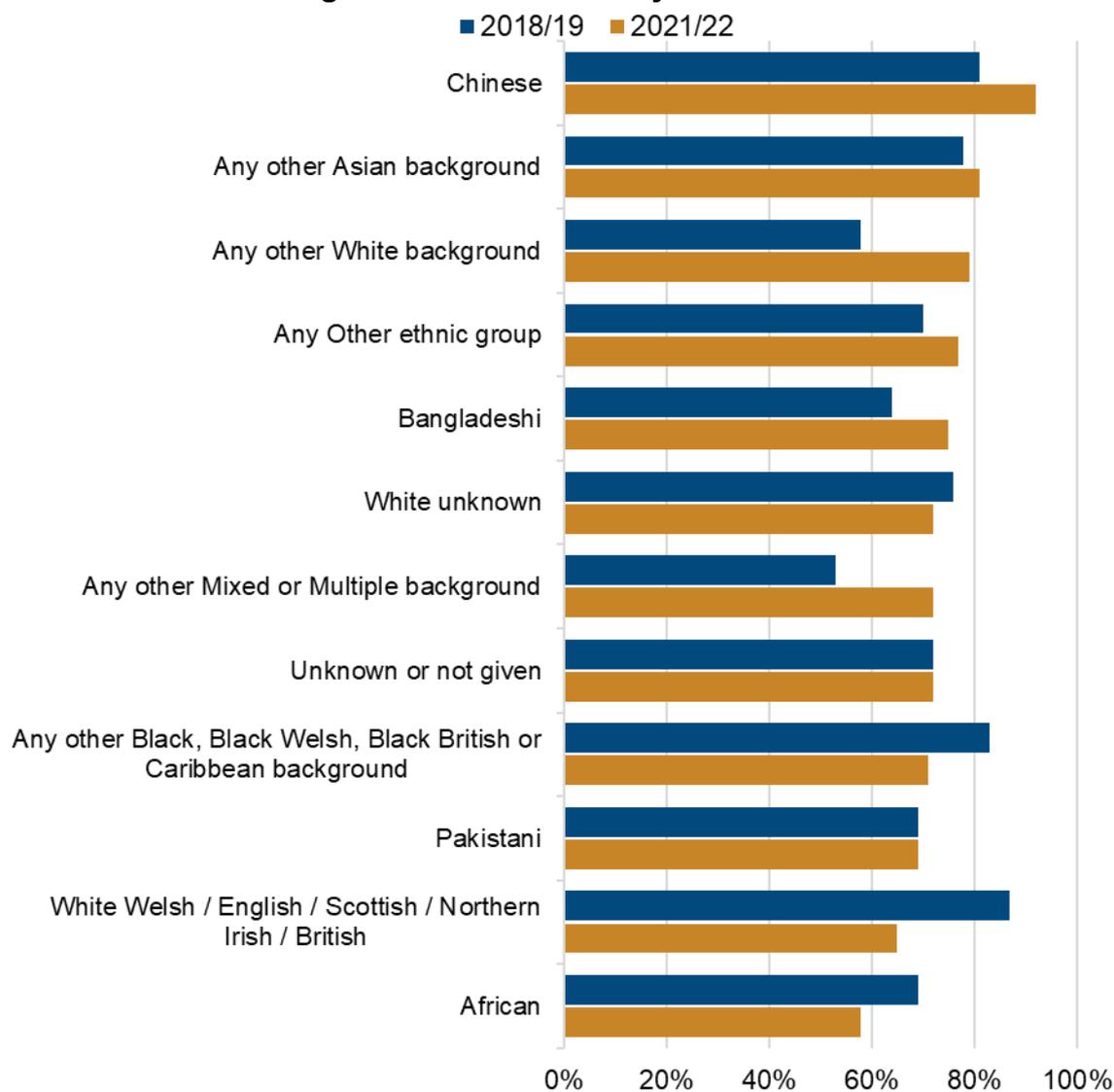
Description of Figure 8.3: The bar chart shows that vocational outcomes were lower in 2021/22 than before the pandemic for learners of most ethnic backgrounds, except those with Indian, Pakistani and Any other Asian backgrounds.

[Data can be found in Table 2.8 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

[Note 1] Some categories based on low numbers have been excluded to avoid disclosure.

Learners with Chinese backgrounds had the highest success rate (86%) on vocational programmes in 2021/22 (excluding programmes that teach English for Speakers of Other Languages). The largest fall in success rate since the pandemic were for learners with White Welsh / English / Scottish / Northern Irish / British backgrounds, and for learners in the “Any other Black, Black Welsh, Black British or Caribbean backgrounds” category.

**Figure 8.4: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) success rate by the learner’s ethnic background and academic year**



Description of Figure 8.4: The bar chart shows that the success rate of ESOL programmes in 2021/22 ranged from 92% for learners with Chinese backgrounds, to 58% for learners with African backgrounds.

[Data can be found in Table 2.8 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

[Note 1] Some categories based on low numbers have been excluded to avoid disclosure.

Unlike for other vocational programmes, on ESOL programmes there was a large fall in success rate for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds.

Within the broader categories there was a lot of variation in the success rate. The success rate for learners with Chinese backgrounds was 92%. For learners with Pakistani backgrounds, it was 69%.

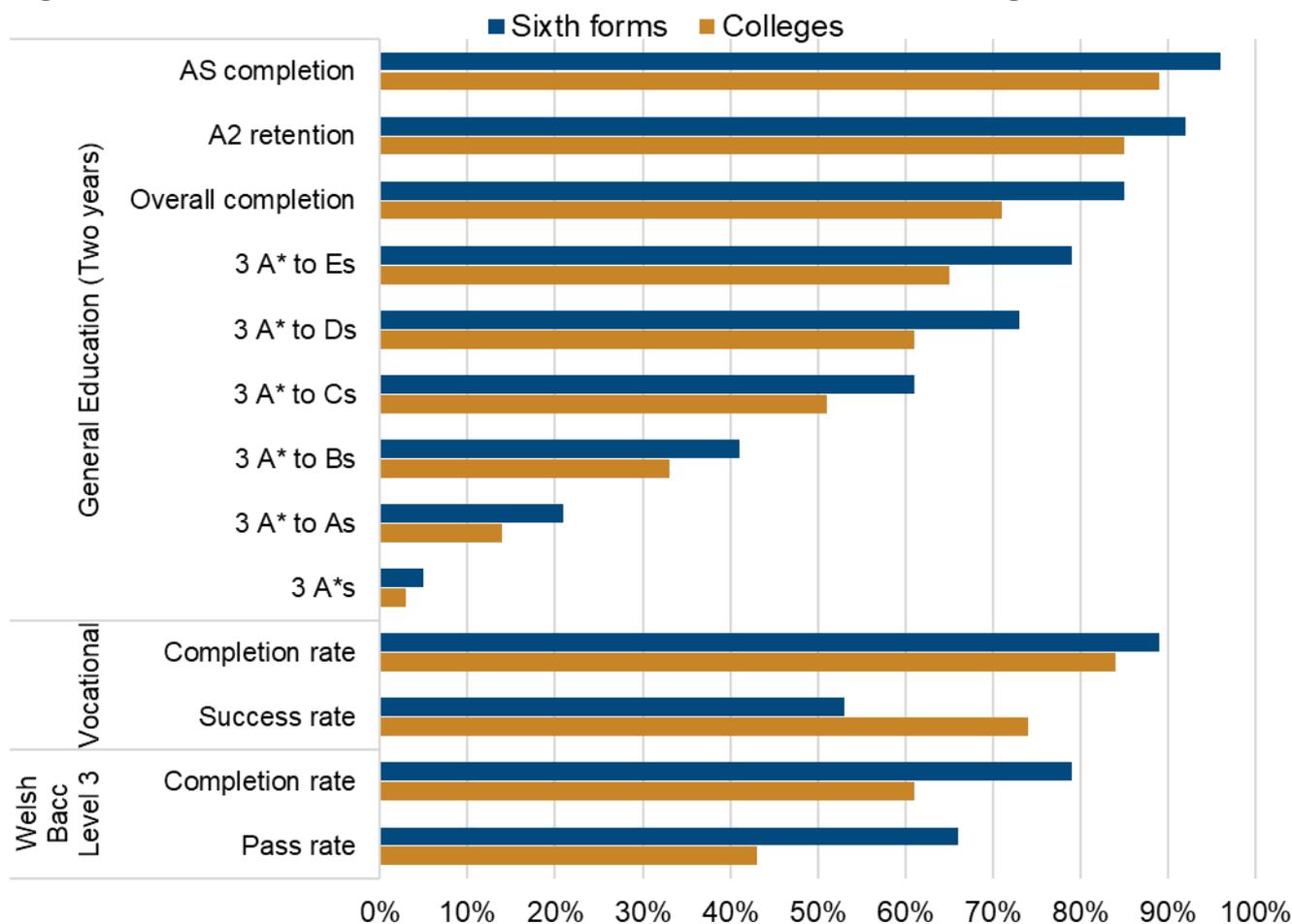
## 9. Providers

It should be expected that colleges and school sixth forms will have differences in their achievement measures. Factors that could affect the measures include:

- school sixth forms and colleges can attract learners with different backgrounds, experience of education, and prior attainment
- school sixth forms mostly deliver level 3 (A level and equivalent) qualifications, colleges deliver qualifications from entry level to level 4 and above
- few sixth forms deliver vocational programmes and where they do, it is often a small proportion of the post-16 learners at that sixth forms
- post-16 education is delivered in different ways in different areas, with different mixes of school sixth forms and colleges
- providers have different entry requirements for programmes
- sixth forms and colleges have separate data collection methods and this can have a minor effect on the calculation of some measures

Because not many school sixth forms deliver vocational programmes, their vocational achievement measures are heavily affected by the practices of a few schools.

**Figure 9.1: Achievement measures for school sixth forms and colleges, 2021/22**



Description of Figure 9.1: The bar chart shows sixth forms generally had higher general education outcomes than colleges, but learners in colleges had a higher success rate on vocational programmes.

[Data can be found in Table 1.5, 2.5, 3.5 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

79% of learners achieved three A levels or equivalents at school sixth forms, compared with 65% of learners in colleges. This gap is larger than it was before the pandemic in 2018/19.

Most of the difference in general education outcomes is because learners in college were less likely to complete their AS, less likely to go onto A2, and less likely to complete their A2. Those who did complete their A2 were as likely to get at least three Cs as A2 completers in sixth forms. However more learners in sixth forms still achieved the higher grades.

Colleges had higher success rates for vocational programmes, but slightly lower completion rates. The gap was much smaller than it was in 2018/19.

## **Glossary**

### **Academic year**

For schools the academic year is from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August. For colleges the academic year is 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July.

### **Age**

A learner's age is calculated from the 31<sup>st</sup> August at the beginning of their AS year for general education, and at the beginning of the named year for vocational education.

### **AS, A2 and A level**

A levels are qualifications which are usually taken over 2 years. Typically a learner takes Advanced Subsidiary GCE (AS) qualifications in the first year, and may then go on to take the overall Advanced GCE qualification in the second year. This second year is sometimes referred to as the A2 year.

Some learners will take linear A levels, where they spend two years working towards an A level qualification without taking an Advanced Subsidiary GCE.

### **Colleges and school sixth forms**

In this release, 'colleges' means further education institutions, also known as FEIs. Some further education institutions are a group of several colleges. 'Schools' or 'Sixth forms' refers to maintained school sixth forms.

St David's Catholic Sixth Form College is defined as a college. Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen is a school sixth form.

### **Courses**

Courses are individual qualifications that a learner studies. For example, a physics A level.

### **Completion rate**

The completion rate is the proportion of programmes or activities that are finished, whether or not the qualifications were achieved. See the [notes](#) for more information.

### **Early dropouts**

Learners are defined as early dropouts if they:

- end their programme within 8 weeks of their start date
- and did not complete that programme
- and the programme had an expected length of 24 weeks or greater

Early dropouts are excluded from the measures.

### **Ethnic background**

Ethnic categories are presented according to the [Government Analysis Function harmonised standards](#). The information is self-reported by the learner.

## **Free School Meals**

Learners are eligible for free school meals if their families are in receipt of certain benefits/support payments, or are on universal credit. Learners are only recorded as eligible if they have applied for free school meals to their local authority.

A learner is defined in this report as “ever eligible for Free School Meals” if they were eligible for free school meals at any point during secondary school in Wales. If they were not eligible in any year of secondary school in Wales they are described as ‘never eligible for Free School Meals’. Learners who could not be matched to a secondary school record in Wales are categorised as unknown.

## **General education**

General education refers to a programme of learning which includes a mix of qualifications across several subject areas. In post-16 learning these qualifications are often A levels, but learners can also take a mixture of vocational qualifications as part of their general education programme.

## **Home neighbourhood**

The small area called the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) which contains the learner’s address.

## **Programme**

A programme is a collection of qualifications that a learner will study. For example, an A level programme may include three A levels and a Welsh Bacc.

An example of a vocational programme might be ‘Carpentry & Joinery Level 1’, which involves studying a ‘Diploma in Carpentry and Joinery’ as the main qualification, along with any supporting qualifications, such as pre-GCSE mathematics.

## **Qualification levels**

Qualification levels range from entry level to level 8.

A level 1 qualification is equivalent to a D to G at GCSE, a level 2 qualification is equivalent to an A\* to C at GCSE, and a level 3 qualification is equivalent to an AS or A level.

The [Credit and Qualification Framework learner guide](#) has a diagram outlining the levels of different qualifications.

## **Sector subject areas**

The sector subject areas are based on the 15 first-tier areas of learning classified by the Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (OfQual). They can refer to the subject of an overall vocational programme, or individual courses.

## **Success rate**

The success rate is the proportion of main qualifications taken that were achieved. See the [notes](#) for more information.

**Vocational education**

Vocational education is a set of learning activities taken by a learner with the aim of preparing them for a specific area of work. BTECs are a typical kind of vocational qualification taken as part of a vocational programme.

## Notes

Tables are published alongside this release containing all of the data presented here.

### Data sources

The main data sources used in this release are as follows:

- a. Post-16 Data Collection: every October, all maintained schools with sixth forms and middle schools with pupils in years 12, 13 and/or 14, are required to report all learning programmes and activities undertaken by pupils in the previous academic year.
- b. Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR): contains data on further education, work based learning and adult learning. It's collected on a 'rolling' basis throughout the year with regular statistical freezes. It is the official source of statistics on learners in further education institutions (colleges) in Wales.
- c. Welsh Examinations Database (WED): contains data on examination entries and outcomes collected from a number of awarding organisations.

All data for further education institutions comes from LLWR. For schools, learner data is from the Post-16 data collection, and qualification attainment data is taken by matching learners to WED.

### General education programmes

Full-time learners enrolled on AS level learning programmes in the previous academic year are the base cohort for the general education programmes measures. The learners who complete their AS programmes are then matched to learners starting an A2 programme in the next academic year.

The learner's achievement over the full two-years is taken for calculating whether the learner achieved three A levels (or equivalents) at particular grades.

The achievement measures include only those qualifications approved or designated for use in Wales. An examination is discounted when a learner achieves a higher grade or a higher level qualification in the same subject group. If a qualification is discounted then it does not count towards the statistics published in this release. Qualifications of comparable size and value to A level are counted towards the general education achievement measure. This includes BTEC subsidiary diplomas and the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate, for example.

### Vocational programmes

The base cohort for vocational programmes is full-time learners on vocational programmes that ended in the current academic year. This is to account for the range of lengths of vocational programmes.

Learners on Junior Apprenticeship and Independent Learner Skills programmes are excluded.

Providers report which qualifications in a learner's programme are considered to be main qualifications. This can be different depending on the learner. The measure only includes Access to Higher Education qualifications and qualifications approved or designated for use in Wales.

The success rate is then calculated as the number of main qualifications achieved, divided by the number of main qualifications undertaken. A learner can have multiple main qualifications in one programme. The Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate is included.

### **Level 3 Welsh Baccalaureate and Skills Challenge Certificate**

The base cohort is learners starting a Level 3 Welsh Baccalaureate in the previous academic year. The learners are then matched to the second part of the Welsh Baccalaureate and Skills Challenge Certificate in either the current or the previous academic year.

### **Learners undertaking multiple learning programmes with the same provider**

Where a learner undertakes more than one general education or vocational programme with the same provider during an academic year, the most recent learning programme undertaken is counted in the performance measures (for example changing from a four AS level programme to a three AS level programme). If a learner took a vocational and a general education programme in the same year, then that learner will show up in each measure.

### **Learners transferring between providers**

Where a learner enrolls on a learning programme then withdraws/transfers from that programme and subsequently takes up learning at a different provider, both learning programmes will count towards the performance measures.

### **Rounding**

All figures are rounded to the nearest 5. Numbers less than 5 are suppressed. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages based on a denominator of less than 23 are suppressed.

Differences between values are calculated using unrounded values, so there may be small discrepancies when compared with the rounded figures.

### **Experimental statistics status**

This is the fourth year these statistics have been published as experimental statistics, with a gap of two years due to the pandemic. The status reflects the on-going developments to the methodology and data quality. In the next year we will be reviewing how transfers between learning programmes are handled in time for the 2022/23 release.

There are still some data quality issues, particularly in the post-16 data collection. We are working with schools to learn the best practices in submitting data for the post-16 collection and to help improve the quality of the data submitted.

When these issues are resolved, we will look to remove the experimental statistics status and work towards a National Statistics assessment.

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics. Feedback can be provided by email to [post16ed.stats@gov.wales](mailto:post16ed.stats@gov.wales).

## **Consistent measures**

The consistent performance measures combine data from colleges and school sixth forms. In the past, there were separate measures of learner outcomes for each, even though they deliver many of the same learning programmes.

The consistent performances measures are:

- Achievement – the completion, retention and attainment of learners undertaking A Level, vocational and Welsh Baccalaureate programmes
- Value added – the progress made by learners above what would normally be expected based on their prior attainment and gender
- Destinations – the proportion of learners who go on to employment and/or further learning (including higher education).

The measures aim to treat colleges and schools consistently. However, small differences are unavoidable because college and school data come from separate sources.

## **Value added status**

In 2016, following procurement FFT Education Ltd was appointed as the contractor to develop the value added measure and produce reports for schools and colleges. The post-16 value added contract with FFT has now come to an end and no further reports will be issued under this methodology. We are considering how best to take value added forward in future, but due to the disruption to assessments in 2020 and 2021, the earliest a new model could be in place would be 2024/25.

## **Protected characteristics**

The release includes statistics on gender, age and the deprivation of a learner's home neighbourhood (LSOA) according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Information on the learner's ethnic background, and Free School Meal eligibility was added this year. The accompanying spreadsheet now also contains information on the impairments of learners in colleges.

For learners in school sixth forms, the ethnic background information was sourced from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC).

A learner was categorised as being "Ever eligible for Free School Meals" if they were eligible for Free School Meals at any point in secondary school. Information on Free School Meal eligibility is calculated by matching learners back to their secondary school Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) record via the Matched Education dataset.

This means the status of learners who were not educated in Wales is unknown. Additionally, for some learners who moved to Wales during secondary school, there will be less information. Some learners will be unable to be matched to their PLASC record even if the PLASC record exists.

The final issue with the Free School Meal eligibility calculations is that the Matched Education dataset for the current academic year was not available at the time this release was published.

Therefore learners could only be matched who had an earlier Post-16 record. Most general education learners could be matched, because they had an earlier AS year, but less vocational learner were able to be matched. We are hoping the Matched education dataset will be available earlier in future years.

Information on impairments was only available in the Lifelong Learning Wales Record and could not be produced for sixth form learners. We will continue to explore ways to create a consistent measure across sixth form and college learners.

## Key quality information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability and Coherence.

### Relevance

The measures set out in this publication are used:

- by Welsh Government to monitor providers' performance and as baseline information to set targets for improvements as part of the Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning;
- by Estyn, to inform inspection judgements on standards; and
- by providers themselves, as a management tool to measure their own performance and benchmark themselves against sector averages, as part of their self-assessment cycles.

The measures are also used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the main users are:

- ministers and officials in the Welsh Government;
- Members of the Senedd and researchers in the Senedd;
- other government departments;
- local authorities and regional education consortia;
- students, researchers, and academics;
- schools and further education institutions;
- citizens, private companies, and the media.

### Accuracy

The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2021/22 academic year. Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information. In these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release. Where changes are not deemed to be significant, figures will be corrected if they appear in future releases.

The consistent measures were paused for two years during the pandemic. In addition, patterns of learning and the format and timing of assessments was disrupted. Some programmes in this report will have started in 2020/21 and may have been affected by that disruption. The suspension, and the impacts on data could also have affected data collection.

A standard reconciliation cycle was undertaken in 2021/22 for colleges in order to improve the quality of the data collection.

Some schools reported learners as studying a Welsh Bacc or the Skills Challenge Certificate, but not both. The Welsh Bacc and Skills Challenge Certificate cannot be taken separately, so in the measures learners who studied one were assumed to have studied the other. If the Welsh Bacc was completed, it was assumed the Skills Challenge Certificate was completed because it is a necessary component of the Welsh Bacc. If the Welsh Bacc entry was missing, it was assumed the learner had withdrawn.

### **Timeliness and punctuality**

The data in this release refers to the 2021/22 academic year ending in July / August 2022. The LLWR data goes through a reconciliation process from August to December after the academic year is finished. A final 'freeze' of LLWR data was taken in December 2022. The post-16 data collection was also finalised in December 2022.

### **Accessibility and clarity**

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics and Research section of the Welsh Government website](#).

The release is published as an accessible format PDF (PDF/A), alongside a spreadsheet available in an open data format (ODS). Both the release and the spreadsheet follow accessibility guidelines.

### **Comparability and coherence**

Due to the changes in how grades were awarded in 2020 and 2021, and the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic, the Welsh Government did not produce its usual performance measures for schools or post-16 learning in 2019/20 or 2020/21. Instead, special reports were produced on [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#). Those statistics are calculated using different methodologies and cannot be compared with this report. For example, the general education measures are calculated on a one-year basis.

We do not advise comparing statistics on the 2016/17 academic year with later years, because several providers were excluded in this first year due to data quality issues. The data quality has improved since, and all post-16 providers have been included for 2017/18 and 2018/19. These two years can be compared, as the changes in methodology have been minor.

Independent Living Skills were excluded in the measures from Entry Level vocational programmes in 2018/19.

These statistics are part of a set of consistent measures. The other measures are Value Added, and Destinations. Together they show a more complete picture of learner outcomes.

The underlying cohort and methodology of the achievement consistent measures are different to previous performance measures, and they cannot be compared.

The Welsh Government Examination Results statistical release has statistics on A level outcomes for 17 year olds in schools. These is not comparable with these achievement measures because:

- the examination results are one-year measures, whereas the achievement measures are a two-year measure looking at the progression of learners from their AS programme
- the examination results report on 17 year olds, whereas the achievement measures report on learners on all ages in post-16 education
- the examination results only report on schools, whereas the achievement measures report on learners at schools and further education institutions.

The Learner outcome measures for work based learning and adult learning previously contained statistics on learner outcomes for further education in further education institutions. The statistics are not comparable with the achievement measures, but they provide a time series on previous learner outcomes at further education institution.

The Department for Education publish [A level and other 16 to 18 results](#) outcomes for schools, as well as [16 to 18 destinations measures](#) which covers the destinations into employment and learning, earnings and the progression of learners.

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

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.

### Further details

The document and supporting tables are available at: [Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning \(achievement\) | GOV.WALES](#).

Background information on post-16 consistent measures is [available from the Hwb website](#).

### Next update

February 2024 for the academic year 2022/23.

### 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](mailto:post16ed.stats@gov.wales)

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