

Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: Achievement, August 2022 to July 2023

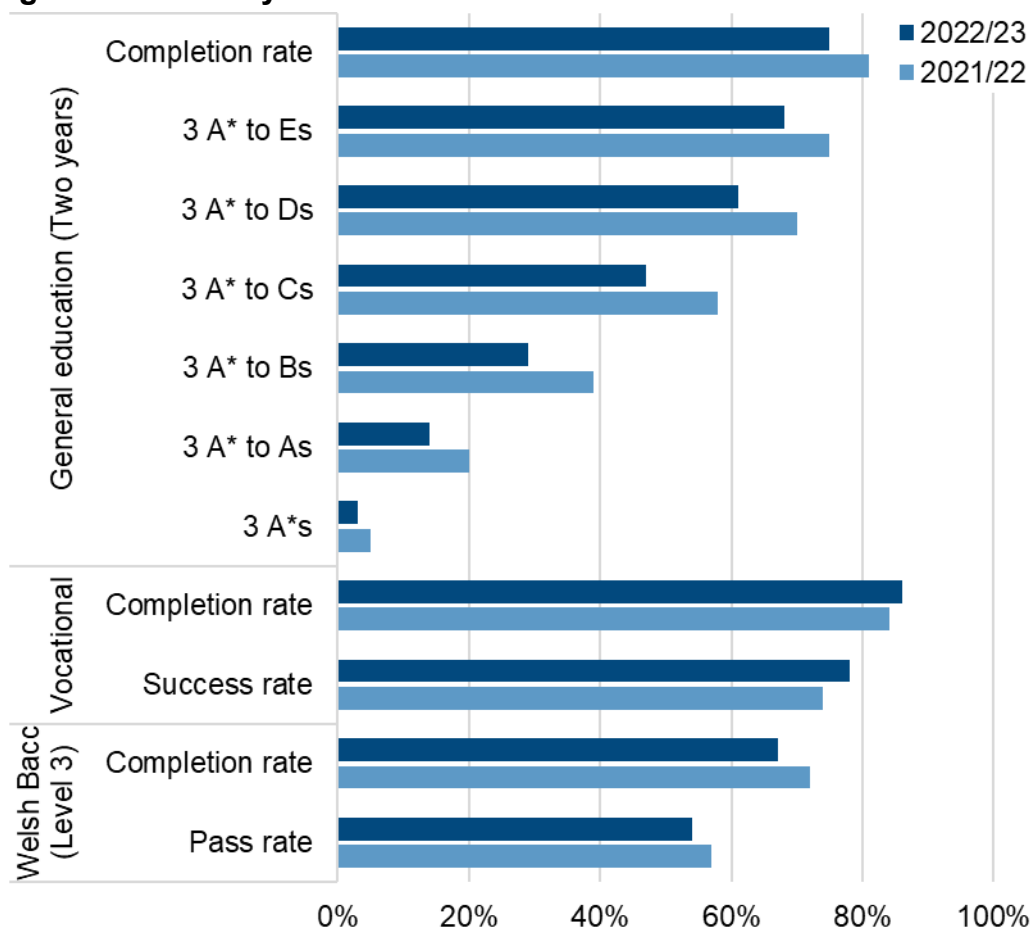
14 March 2024
SFR 7/2024

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

This report highlights some of messages in the data. The [accompanying tables](#) include the full breakdowns for all measures by all the characteristics in this article, and also by provider, local authority and impairments (for colleges).

Figure 1.1: Summary of achievement measures by academic year, August 2021 to July 2023



Description of Figure 1.1: The bar chart shows 75% of A level learners completed their two-year programme in the 2022/23 [academic year](#). 86% of vocational learners completed their programme. 67% 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).

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1. Key points

General education (A levels)

- Grade outcomes were broadly midway between 2018/19 and 2021/22, as planned.
- Fewer learners went onto their second year of A levels and fewer learners completed their A levels compared to 2021/22.
- The fall in learners starting their second year of A levels may be partly due to the fall in AS grades, learners who didn't achieve 3 AS levels were much less likely to continue.
- 52% of female AS learners went on to achieve three Cs at A level, compared to 42% of male learners.
- 49% of 16 year old AS learners went on to achieve three Cs at A level, compared to 21% of older learners.
- Learners from deprived backgrounds were less likely to complete their A levels and less likely to get high grades if they did.
- The deprivation grade gap narrowed in 2022/23, but the completion gap widened.
- Learners from Black, African, Caribbean, Black British or Black Welsh backgrounds had lower A level outcomes than other ethnic groups, including a large drop in completion.
- The inequality in outcomes for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British or Black Welsh backgrounds started before post-16 education, when compared to learners with similar GCSEs, learners from these backgrounds achieved above average outcomes.
- The differences between ethnic groups generally narrowed for both vocational and general education learners.

Vocational education

- Vocational outcomes are recovering from their coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic fall but generally remained below pre-pandemic levels.
- Fewer vocational learners did not complete their programme due to 'Personal reasons' and more did not complete due to 'Failure.'
- Outcomes for Access to Higher Education programmes declined, unlike other programmes.
- Vocational learners linked to experiences of deprivation had lower outcomes than those who were not, but the relationship was less strong than in general education.

Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc)

- Outcomes for the Welsh Bacc fell for general education learners but remained above pre-pandemic levels.
- Vocational learners continued to have lower outcomes than general education learners, but the gap shrank.

2. General education (A levels)

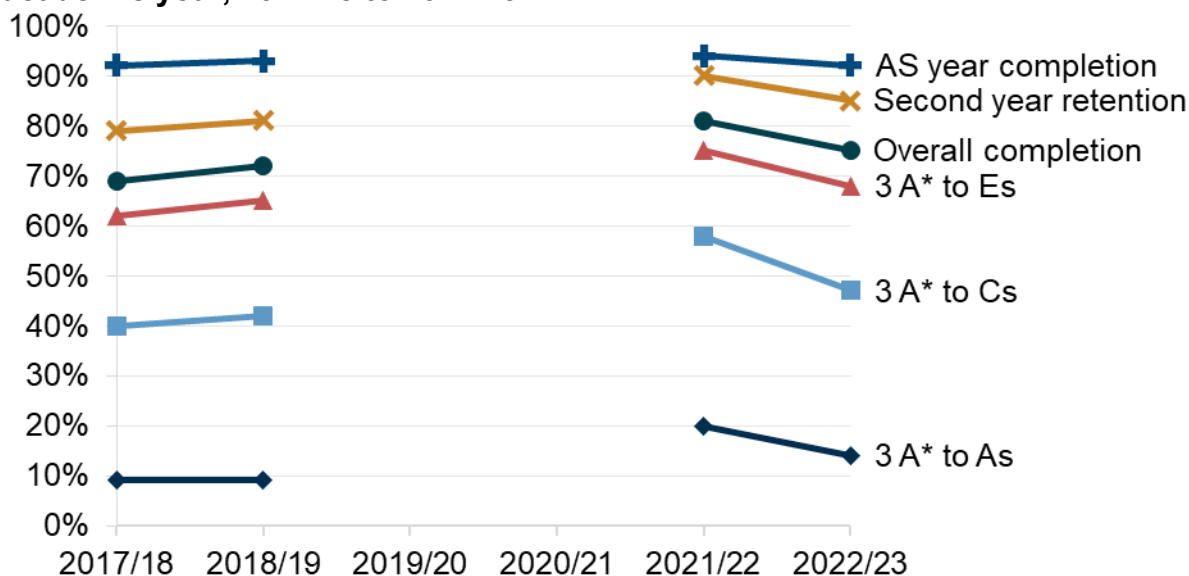
These measures cover full time learners who started studying a programme of three or more [AS levels](#) (or equivalents) in their first year, and how many went on to achieve at least three A levels (or equivalents) by the end of their second year.

Exams were cancelled in the summer of 2019/20, and 2020/21 due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In 2019/20 A level learners received the best of [centre assessed or standardised grades](#). In 2020/21, they received [centre determined grades](#). In both those years, grade outcomes tended to be higher than before the pandemic.

2021/22 was a transitional year for learners. Learners were given a wider choice of questions, and Qualifications Wales set results broadly midway between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

Some support remained in place for learners who sat exams in 2022/23. This support was in the form of advance information and a supportive approach to grading. Qualifications Wales set the results at a national level broadly midway between 2018/19 and 2021/22 outcomes. This context should be kept in mind when comparing outcomes.

Figure 2.1: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by academic year, 2017/18 to 2022/23



Description of Figure 2.1: The line chart shows outcomes for A levels were higher than before the pandemic, but lower than in 2021/22.

[Note 1] Measures were not produced for 2019/20 or 2020/21. See [Notes](#).

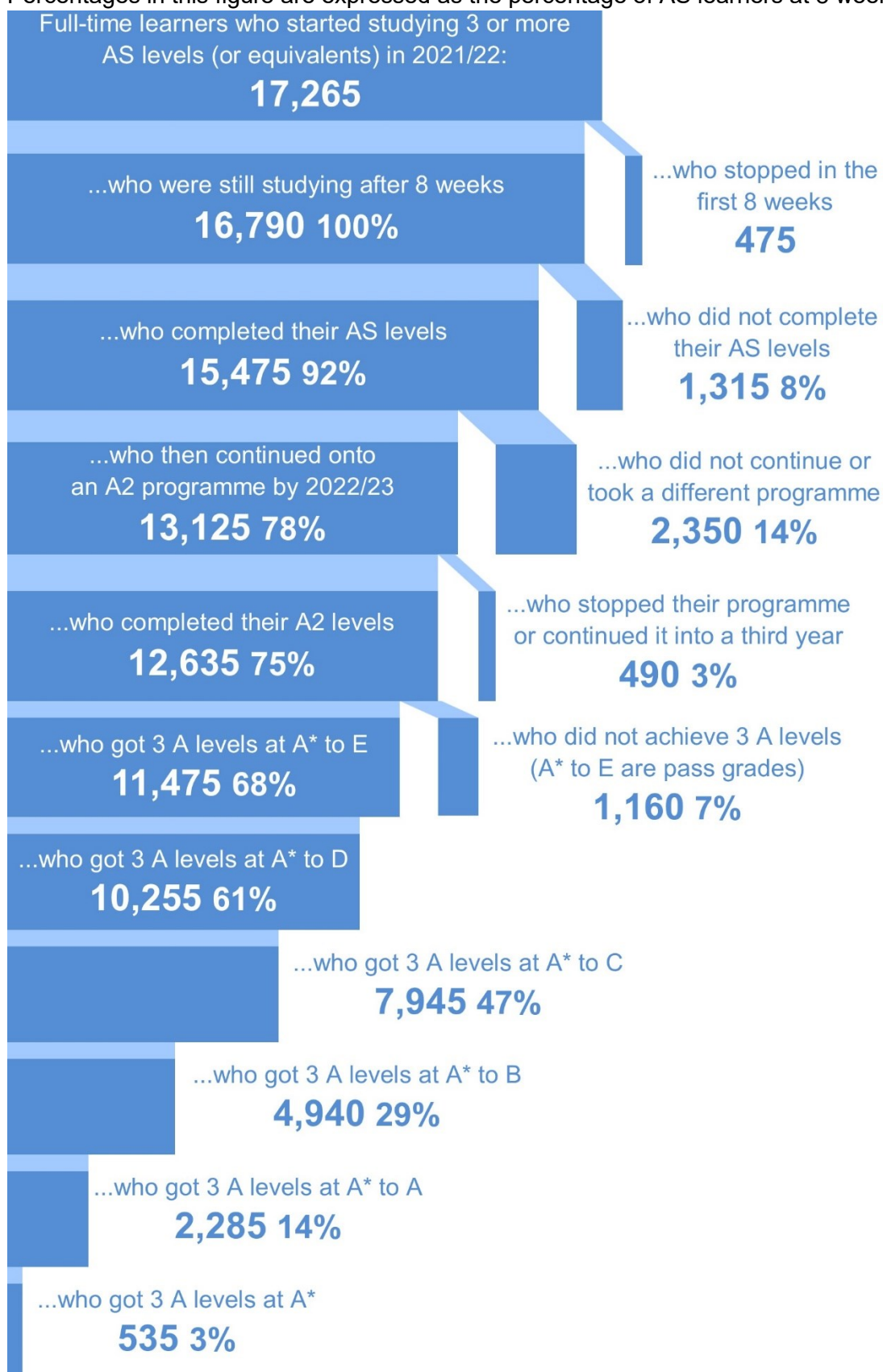
[Data can be found in Table 1.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The grades learners achieved were close to halfway between 2021/22 and 2018/19, reflecting how Qualifications Wales set individual grade boundaries. However, the proportion of learners completing their A levels also dropped.

The main cause of the drop was learners not continuing onto their second year after completing their AS year. The retention rate fell from 90% to 85%. However, this was still above the pre-pandemic retention rate of 81% in 2018/19. One reason for this could be lower AS results as learners transitioned back to exams. 98% of AS completers who achieved three AS levels in 2021/22 went onto their second year of A level in 2022/23.

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

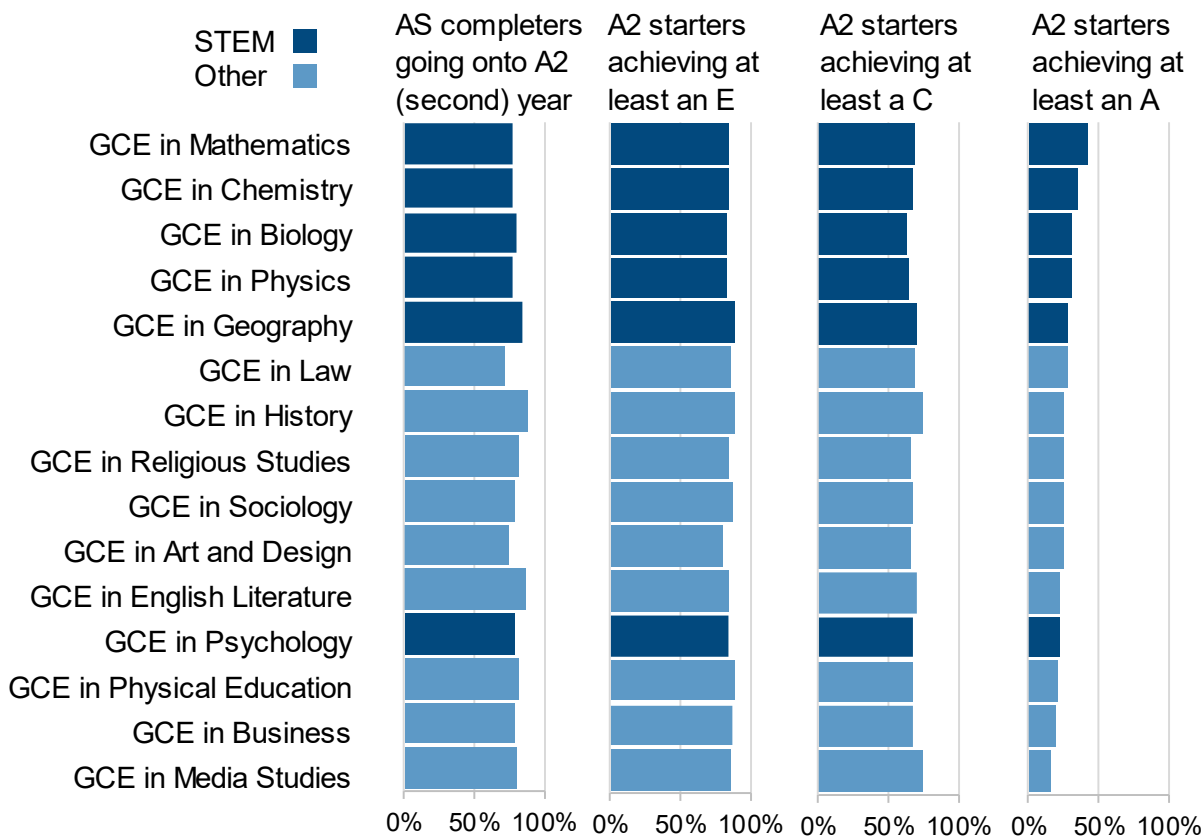
Percentages in this figure are expressed as the percentage of AS learners at 8 weeks



Description of Figure 2.2: The flow diagram shows the learner journey for full-time A level learners, starting in 2021/22 and completing their A levels in 2022/23. The biggest drop off was at the end of the AS year, where 14% of the AS learners studying at 8 weeks didn't go onto the second year.

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

Figure 2.3: A level course outcomes for the 15 most taken A levels by Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) status, academic year 2022/23



Description of Figure 2.3: The bar chart shows that amongst the 15 most taken A levels, the 5 with the highest proportion of learners achieving an A or A* at A level were STEM subjects.

[Note 1] The broad definition of STEM has been used here which is defined as sector subject areas: 2: Science and Mathematics, 4: Engineering and Manufacturing technologies, 5: Construction, planning and the built environment, 1.1: Medicine and dentistry, 2.2: Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine, 6.2: ICT practitioners, and 11.1: Geography.

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

Over 4 in 10 learners who started the second year of their Maths A level went on to get an A or A*. Only 2 in 10 Business A level learners achieved an A or A*, and even fewer learners in Media Studies.

Nearly 9 in 10 learners who completed a History AS continued onto History A level in their second year. English Literature and Geography also had a high retention rate. These subjects, along with Media Studies, had a high percentage of learners achieving at least a C.

Different subjects may attract different types of learner, for example from different backgrounds or with different levels of prior achievement..

3. Vocational programmes

These measures cover full time learners studying programmes with mainly vocational qualifications, in a particular sector or subject area. They do not include apprenticeships.

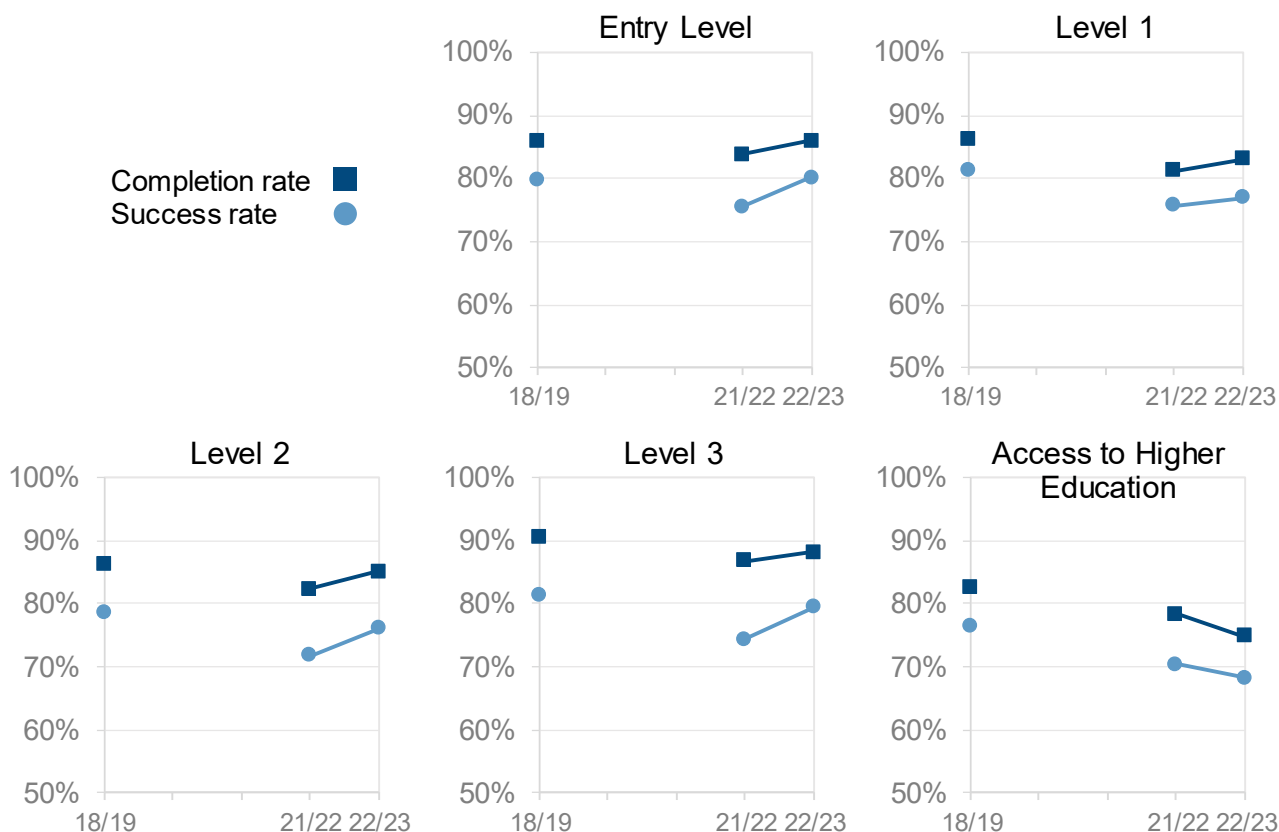
Vocational qualifications have different lengths, so the vocational measures only look at achievement over one year. Success for vocational programmes is measured as the percentage of [main qualifications](#) studied that were successful.

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 in these years 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. Outcomes for all programmes, including level 3 programmes, were below pre-pandemic levels.

In 2022/23, vocational qualifications that were Wales specific were [expected to take into account the approach taken with GCSEs and A levels](#). However Ofqual, in England, [supported a return to 2018/19 assessments](#), which affected Welsh learners taking vocational qualifications available in both England and Wales.

Figure 3.1: Completion and success rate for vocational programmes by qualification level and academic year, 2018/19 to 2022/23



Description of Figure 3.1: The line charts show that outcomes improved for vocational programmes of all levels in 2022/23, except for Access to Higher Education programmes where they fell.

[Note 1] Measures were not produced for 2019/20 or 2020/21. See [Notes](#).

[Data can be found in Table 2.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Vocational outcomes remained below 2018/19 for all levels, except entry level. This is a marked difference to general education programmes, where outcomes were still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

There was an increase in learners taking entry level programmes in 2022/23. This was driven by an increase in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes, which may be a result of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Wales from February 2022. However, outcomes rose across most subject areas for entry level, not just ESOL.

Unlike other programmes, Access to Higher Education programmes saw a drop in completion and success rates. Access to Higher Education programmes are designed to prepare people without traditional qualifications for study at university.

7 in 10 starters on Access to Higher Education programmes were in Health, Public Services and Care programmes. These programmes saw a drop in outcomes, along with Social Sciences; and Business, Administration and Law. Outcomes rose for the second most common Access to Higher Education subject area: Science and Mathematics.

Figure 3.2: Completion measures for vocational programmes, academic year 2022/23

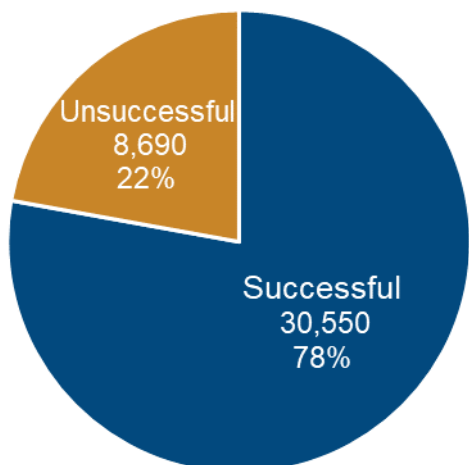
Percentages in this figure are expressed as the percentage of vocational learners at 8 weeks



Description of Figure 3.2: The flow chart shows the progression of vocational learners through their programme. 1 in 9 learners left their vocational programme within the first 8 weeks. For those who didn't leave in the first 8 weeks, 86% went onto complete their vocational programme.

[Data can be found in Table 2.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

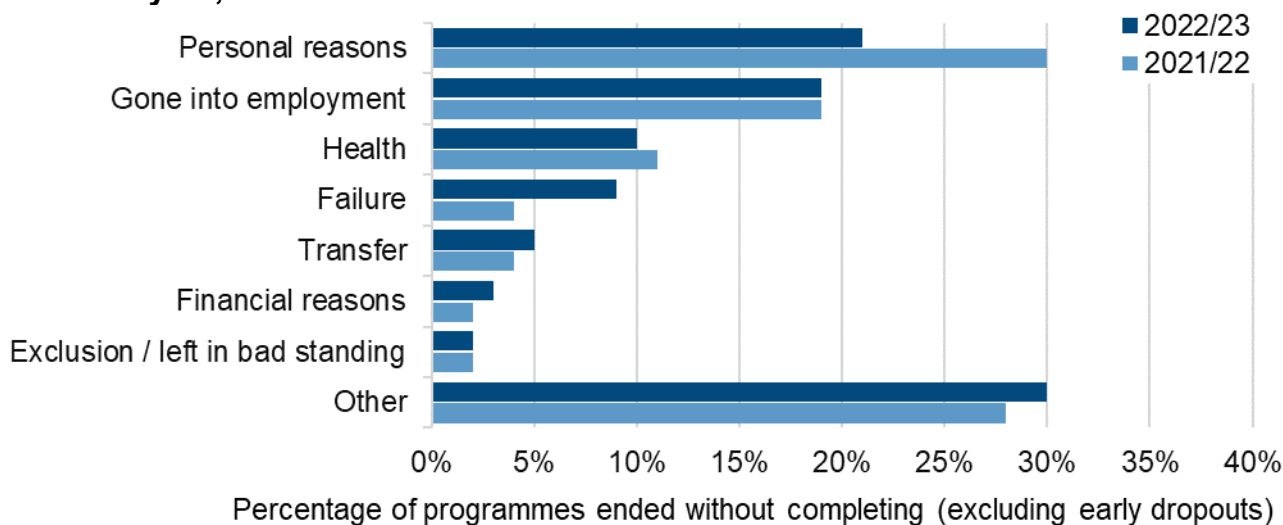
Figure 3.3: Success rate of main qualifications taken by learners in vocational programmes, academic year 2022/23



Description of Figure 3.3: The pie chart shows 78% of the main qualifications taken as part of a full time vocational programmes were successfully achieved. This is 4 percentage points higher than the year before.

[Data can be found in Table 2.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Figure 3.4: Reason for ending non-completed vocational programmes at colleges by academic year, 2021/22 to 2022/23



Description of Figure 3.5: The bar chart shows that fewer learners didn't complete their programme because of "personal reasons" in 2022/23 and twice as many didn't complete their programme because of "failure" compared to 2021/22.

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

1 in 11 non-completers in 2022/23 were recorded as not completing due to "failure". This was a big increase compared to the previous year. However, the largest reasons for not completing were still recorded as "personal reasons" and "gone into employment."

4. Welsh Baccalaureate

The Welsh Baccalaureate (known as the “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.

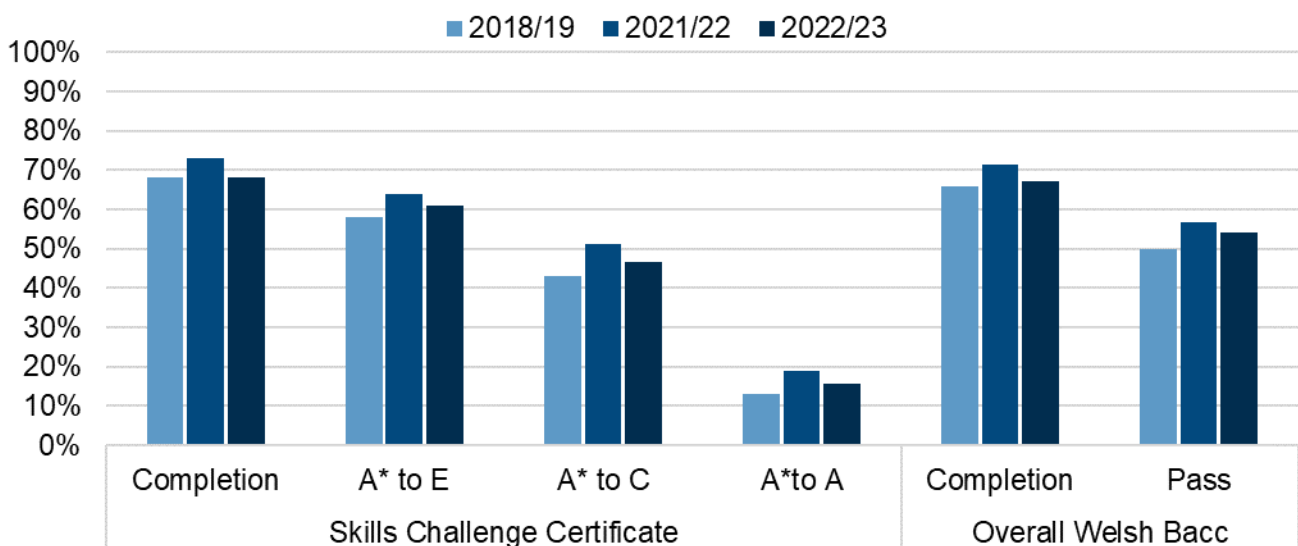
This report focuses on the level 3 Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate.

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, 2018/19 to 2022/23



Description of Figure 4.1: The bar chart shows that the 2022/23 outcomes of the Welsh Bacc were lower than 2021/22 but still higher than before the pandemic in 2018/19. The exception is the 2022/23 completion rate of the Skills Challenge Certificate, which was the same as 2018/19.

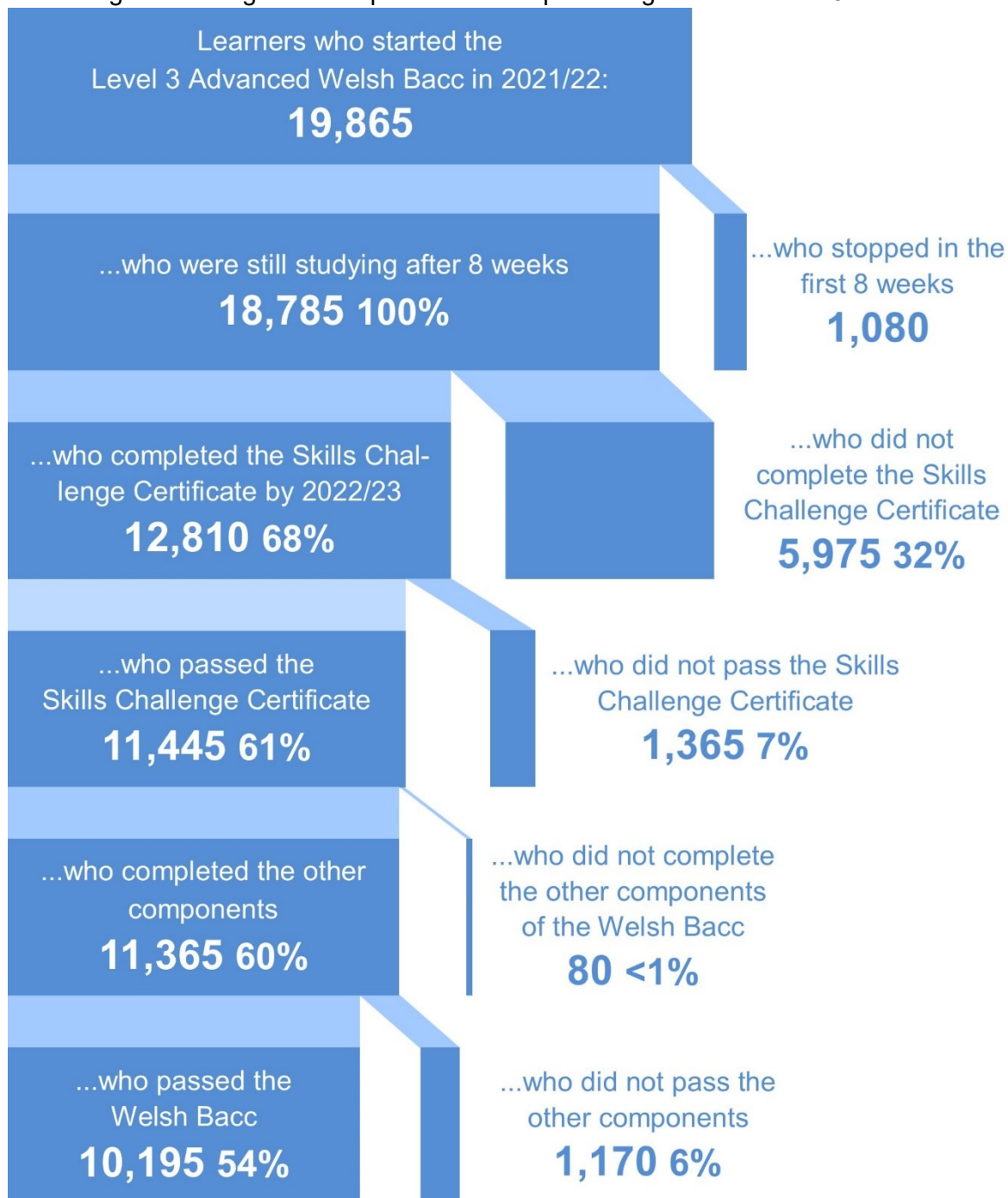
[Note 1] Measures were not produced for 2019/20 or 2020/21. See [Notes](#).

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

54% of learners passed the Advanced 3 Welsh Bacc in 2022/23, compared to 57% in 2021/22.

Figure 4.2: Advanced Welsh Bacc achievement measures

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

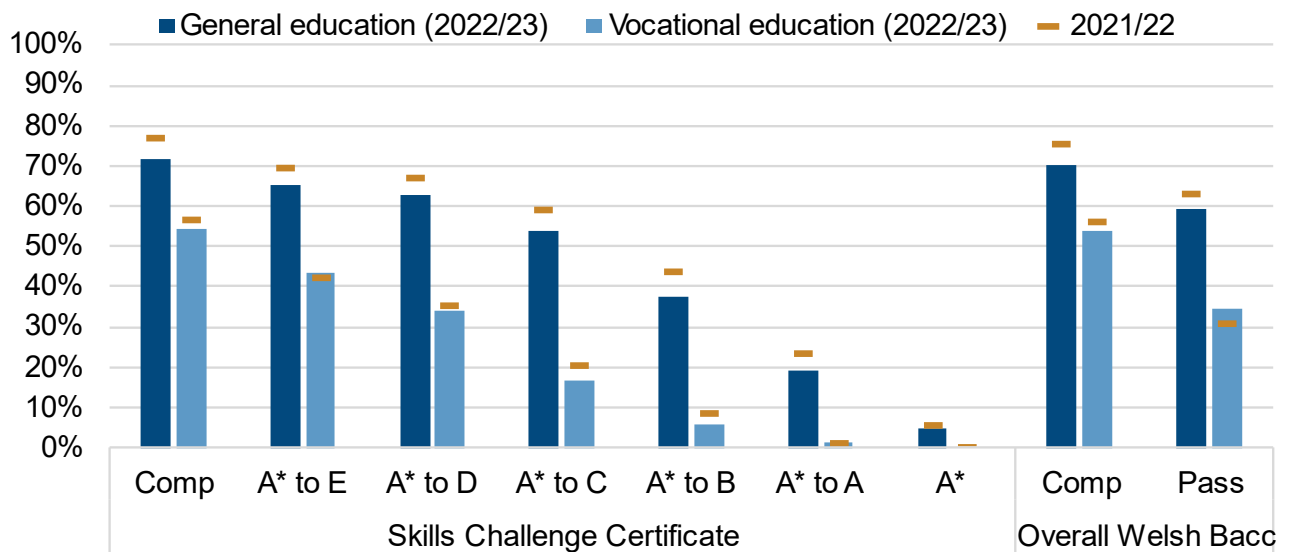


Description of Figure 4.2: The flow chart shows the progression of learners through the Welsh Bacc, including their progression on the Skills Challenge Certificate qualification. Most learners who didn't pass the Welsh Bacc didn't complete the Skills Challenge Certificate.

[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 11,445 who passed the Skills Challenge Certificate, a further 1,250 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 and academic year, 2021/22 and 2022/23



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](#)

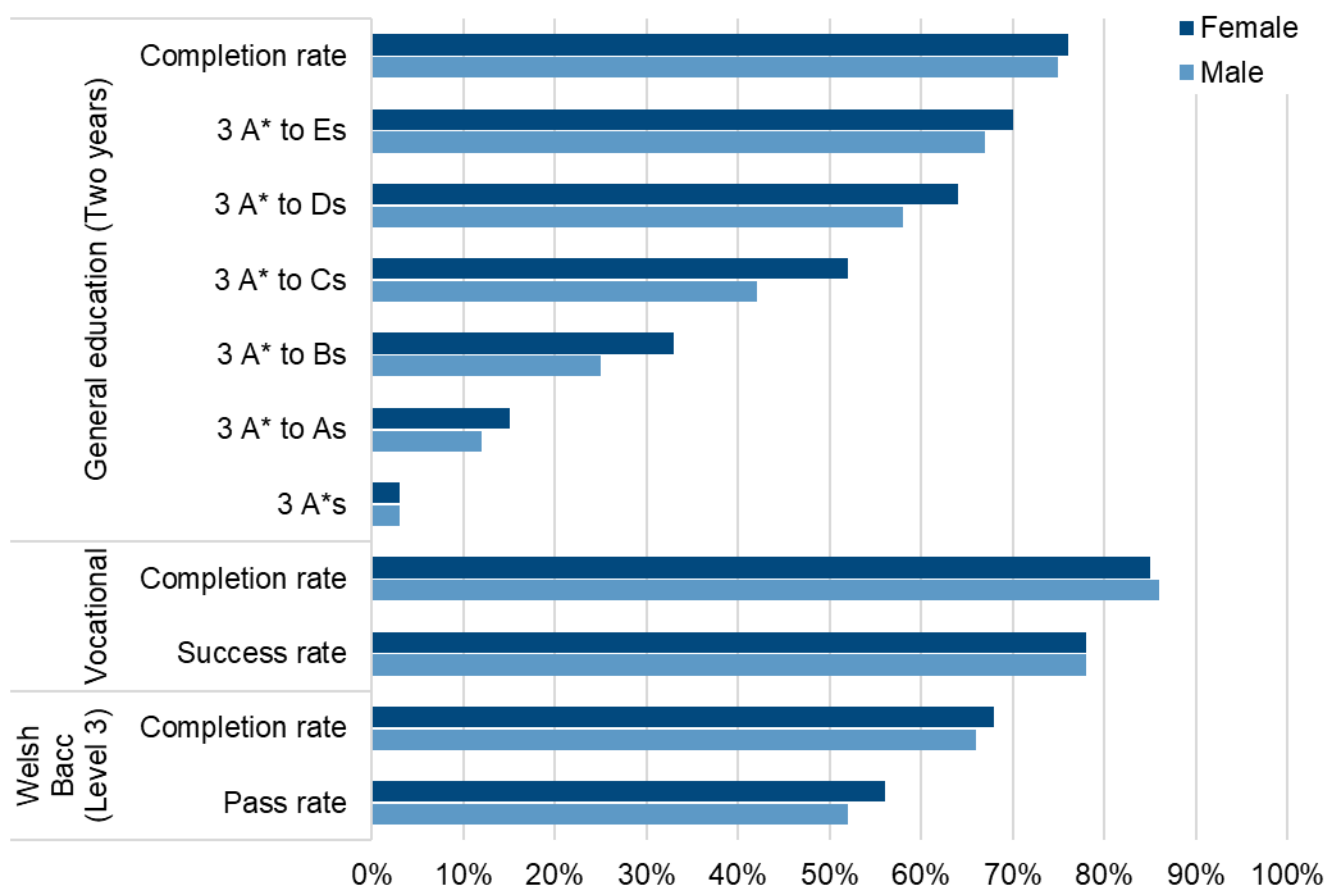
In 2022/23, Welsh Bacc outcomes dropped less for vocational learners than they did for general education learners. In some cases, outcomes for vocational learners rose compared to 2021/22.

This reverses some of the post-pandemic pattern where outcomes only increased for learners on general education programmes.

The Welsh Bacc pass rate for vocational learners was 35%, compared to 59% for general education learners.

5. Gender

Figure 5.1: Achievement measures by gender, academic year 2022/23



Description of Figure 5.1: The bar chart shows that females had higher outcomes than males in general education programmes, except for the percentage of learners achieving 3 A*s. Males had a higher completion rate than females in vocational programmes.

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

76% of females who were 8 weeks into their AS levels went on to complete their A levels, compared to 75% of males. Female learners were less likely to complete their AS year but were more likely to continue onto their second year if they did, leading to an overall higher completion rate.

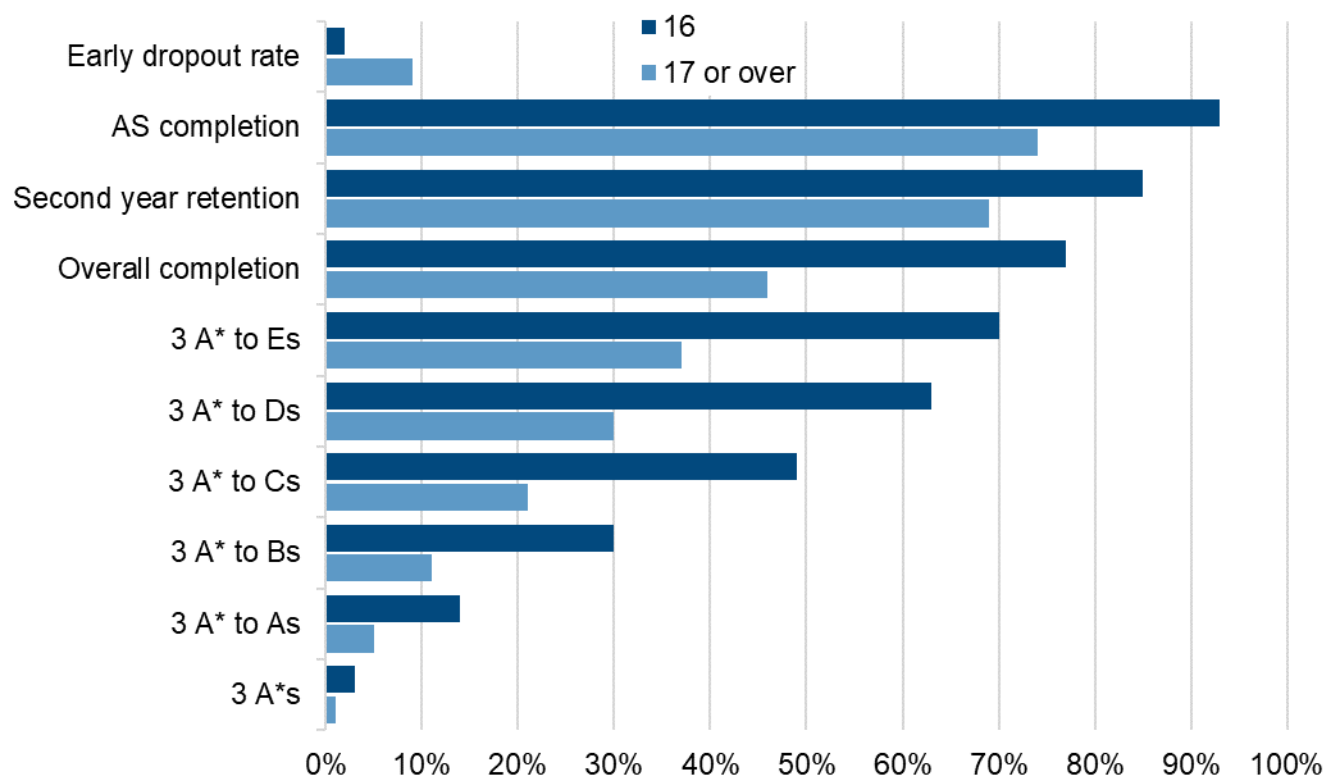
52% of female AS learners went on to achieve three Cs at A level, compared to 42% of male learners.

The difference in overall grade outcomes for completers widened in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22.

Male learners were 2 percentage points more likely to complete their vocational programme than female learners in 2022/23, unchanged from 2021/22. However, the gender gap in success rate disappeared.

6. Age

Figure 6.1: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by age at the start of the first year, academic year 2022/23



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

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

46% of AS level learners aged 17 or older went on to complete their full A level programme, compared to 77% of 16 year olds.

49% of 16 year old AS learners went on to achieve three Cs at A level, compared to 21% of older learners.

The gap in outcomes was similar to last year and remained wider than before the pandemic.

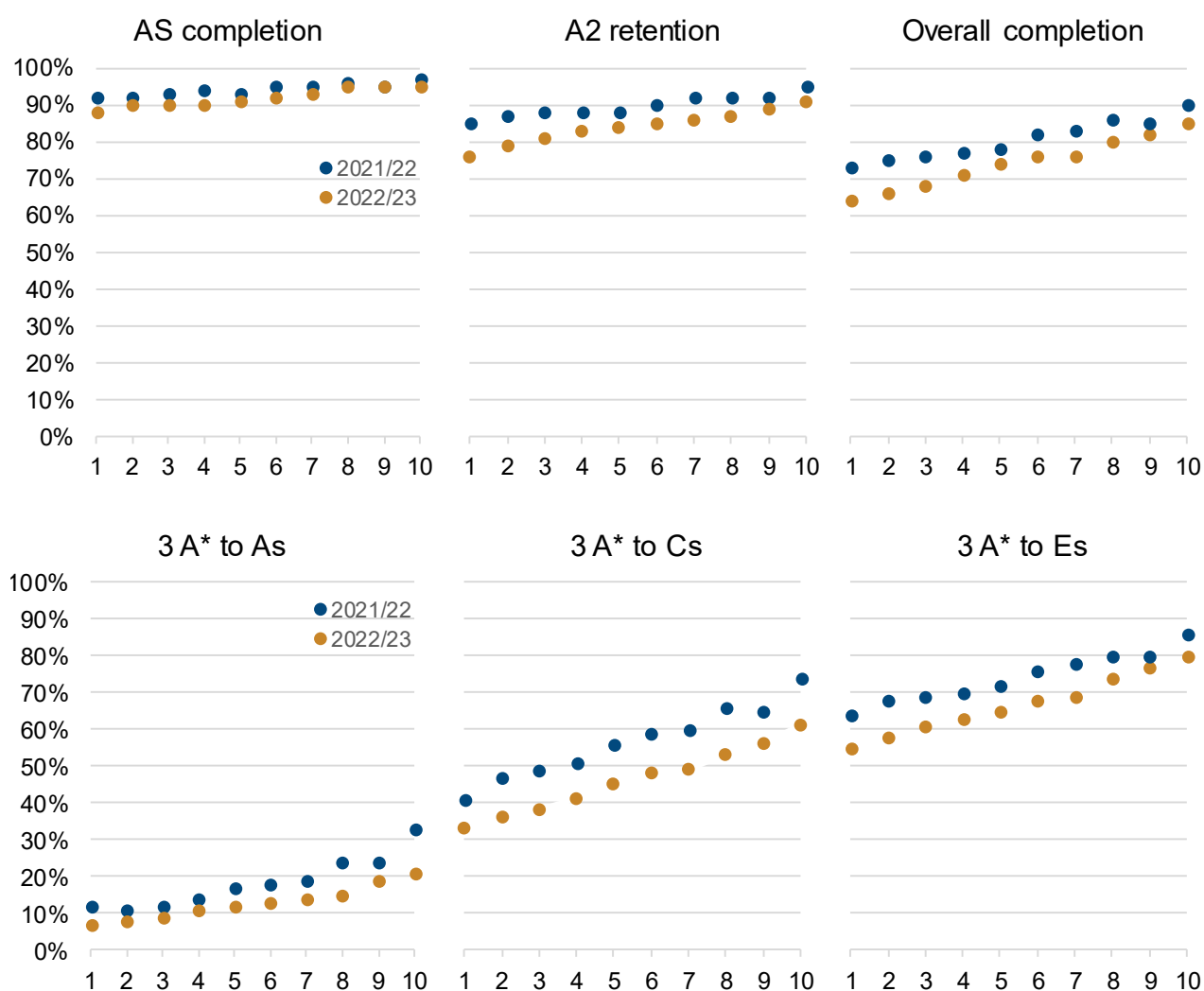
Most learners in Wales will start their A levels at 16. Older learners may have followed a less traditional education route or could be retaking A levels.

7. Deprivation

There are two measures of deprivation in this release. The first 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](#).

The second is a learner level proxy 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, 2021/22 and 2022/23



1 = Most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods, 10 = least deprived

Description of Figure 7.1: The scatter graph shows that the more deprived the area that learners lived in, the lower their outcomes were. The gap in overall A Level completion widened in 2022/23.

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

In 2022/23, in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods only 64% of AS learners went on to complete their A levels. In the least deprived 10% of neighbourhoods, 85% of AS learners completed their A levels. The gap was 4 points wider than in 2021/22.

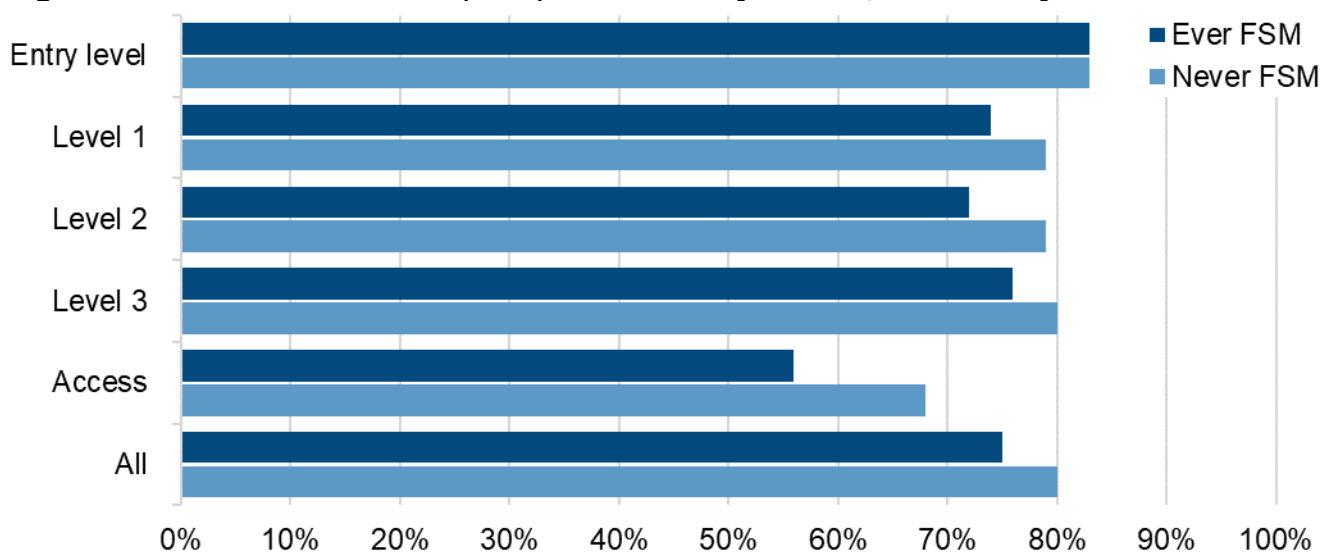
Most of the gap stems from learners in deprived areas not continuing onto the second year of A levels. The retention rate was only 76% for learners living in the most deprived areas, compared to 91% for learners in the least deprived areas. Learners from the most deprived areas were also less likely to complete their AS levels in the first place.

For those who completed their A levels, the gap in grades shrank.

The narrowing grade gap for completers might be related to the widening retention gap. Learners in deprived backgrounds with low AS grades were particularly likely to not go onto the second year. 93% of the non-continuers from the most deprived neighbourhoods did not have three AS levels.

A gap was also seen between learners who had been eligible for Free School Meals in secondary school, and those who were never eligible.

Figure 7.2: Vocational programme success rate by whether the learner was ever eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in secondary school, academic year 2022/23



Description of Figure 7.2: The bar chart shows that learners who were ever eligible for [free school meals in secondary school](#) had a lower success rate in vocational programmes than learners who were not. This was true for every level except entry level, where there was no difference.

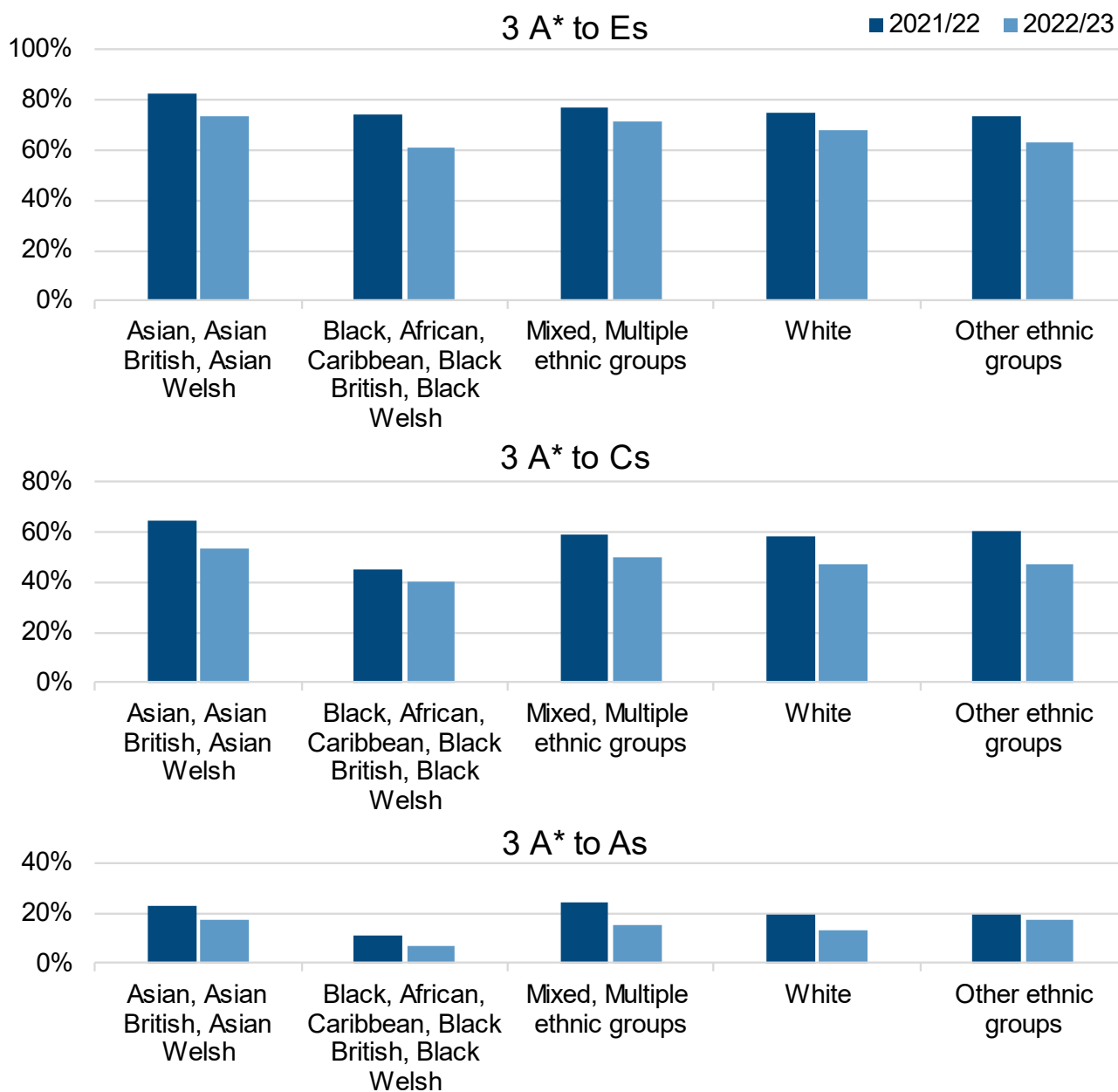
[Data can be found in Table 2.10 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

The link between deprivation and achievement in vocational programmes was not as strong as general education. 75% of learners from who were once eligible for free school meals achieved their vocational qualifications, compared to 80% who were not.

17% of vocational learners FSM status in secondary school could not be identified. This includes learners who did not go to secondary school in Wales, and learners who left secondary school before 2010/11, which is as far back as records can be matched in the dataset used for this. There was also a deprivation gap when looking at the area based measure of deprivation, where there were less unknowns.

8. Ethnic background

Figure 8.1: General education two-year achievement measures at A level by the learner's ethnic background and academic year, 2021/22 to 2022/23



Description of Figure 8.1: The bar chart shows that outcomes for learners across all backgrounds fell in 2022/23. Learners from Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh ethnic groups were the most likely to achieve 3 A levels and the most likely to achieve at least three Cs, and at least three As. However, learners from Other ethnic groups were as likely to achieve at least three As as those from Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh groups.

[Data can be found in Table 1.8 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

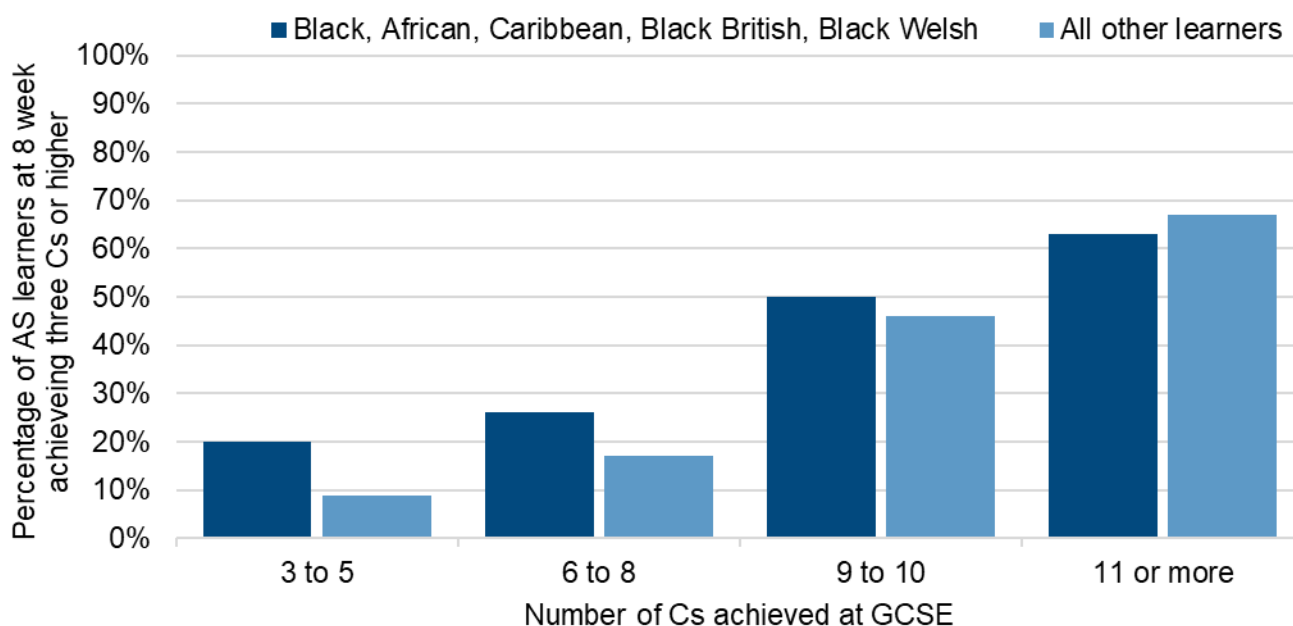
A level outcomes were more similar across ethnic groups in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.

The completion rate for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British and Black Welsh backgrounds fell substantially in 2022/23. The completion rate fell from 82% in 2021/22 (above average) to 66% in 2022/23 (lower than any other group).

For learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds who did complete their A levels, the gap in grade outcomes shrank slightly compared to 2021/22.

The gap in outcomes for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds has largely appeared since the pandemic. Prior attainment data suggests the issue may start before post-16 education.

Figure 8.2: Percentage of AS learners who went on to achieve at least three Cs at A level by number of Cs achieved at GCSE and ethnic background, academic year 2022/23



Description of Figure 8.2: The bar chart shows that learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds were more likely to achieve three Cs at A level than other learners who had achieved the same numbers of Cs at GCSE. The exceptions were learners who achieved 11 or more Cs at GCSE.

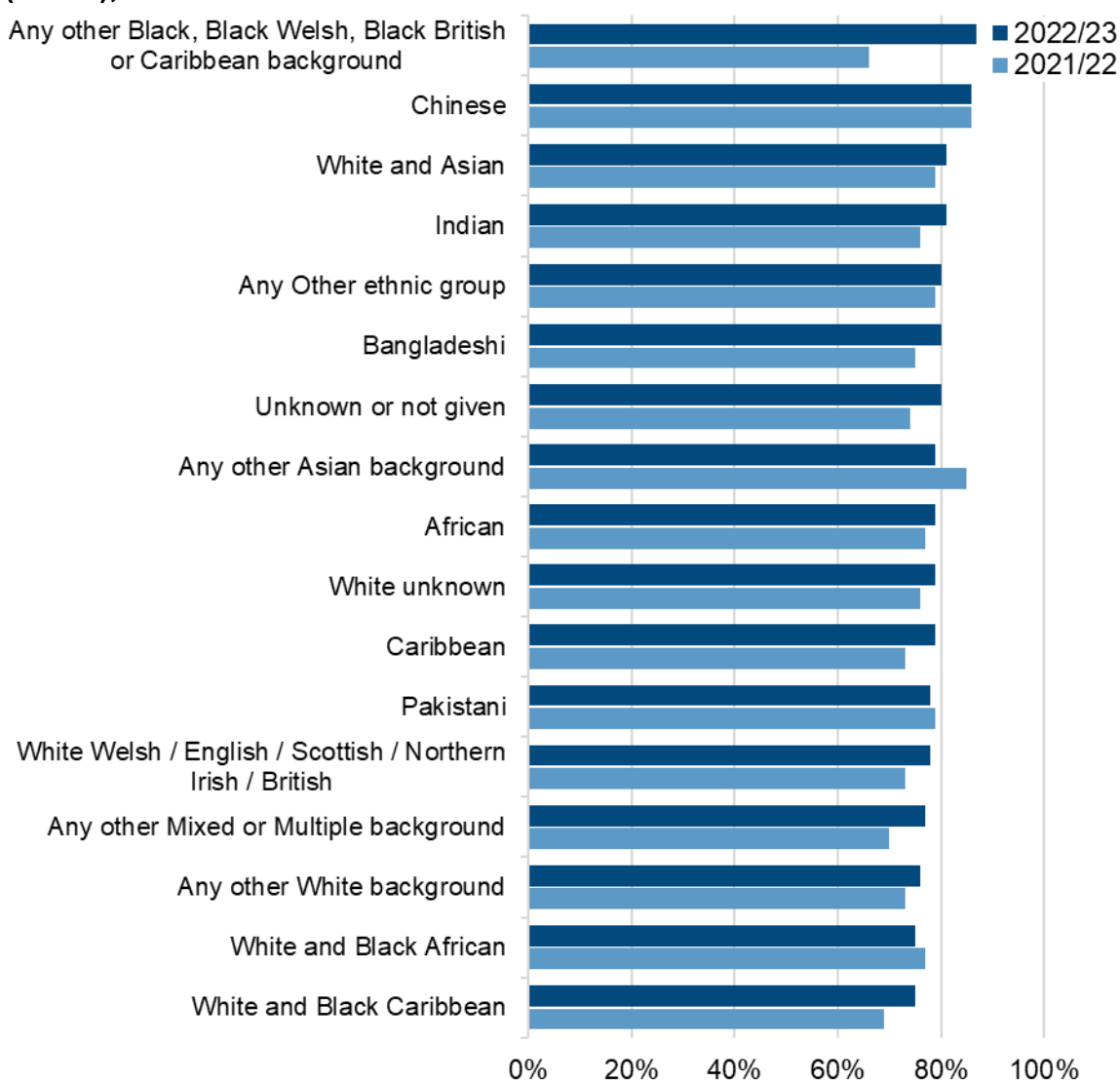
[Note 1] Some categories based on very low numbers have been excluded to avoid disclosure.

[Data can be found in Table 1.19 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds had lower GCSE grades coming into A levels than other learners. 45% of Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh learners had fewer than 9 Cs at GCSE. This is more than double the rate of other learners. They were also more likely to have experience of deprivation, with higher rates of learners who were eligible for Free School Meals, and learners living in deprived neighbourhoods.

When comparing learners with a similar number of Cs at GCSE, learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British, Black Welsh backgrounds achieved higher A level outcomes than learners with other backgrounds. This is unlike other inequalities highlighted in this report, where the trends were mostly preserved, even across similar levels of prior attainment.

Figure 8.3: Vocational education success rate by the learner’s detailed ethnic background and academic year, excluding English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), 2021/22 to 2022/23



Description of Figure 8.3: The bar chart shows that range of outcomes across ethnic backgrounds was narrower in 2022/23 than the year before.

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

[Data can be found in Table 2.9 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Learners with Any other Black, Black Welsh, Black British, or Caribbean backgrounds had the highest success rate (87%) on vocational programmes in 2022/23 (excluding programmes that teach English for Speakers of Other Languages). This was a 21 percentage point rise compared to the previous year.

The learners with the lowest success rate were learners from White and Black Caribbean backgrounds, but that still represented an increase from 69% in 2021/22 to 75% in 2022/23.

Amongst learners taking English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes, the success rate rose from 79% to 93% for learners from Any other White background. The number of learners taking these programmes rose from 85 in 2021/22 to 345 in 2022/23. The rise may be due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees who were offered ESOL training.

Glossary

Academic year

For schools, the academic year is from 1st September to 31st August. For colleges, the academic year is 1st August to 31st July.

Age

A learner's age is calculated from the 31st 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.

Main qualifications

Main qualifications should take up at least 50% of the Guided Contact Hours for a programme, with the ideal target being 70%. They should be qualifications that are approved or designated by Qualifications Wales. Whether a qualification is a main qualification is self-reported by the provider.

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.

In this release vocational education does not cover apprenticeships or Jobs Growth Wales+.

Notes

Tables are published alongside this release containing all 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.

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.

Learners not included in the analysis

Learners on apprenticeships and learners taking adult learning provided directly by local authorities are not included in the measures. They are included in the [Learner outcomes measures for work based learning and adult learning](#) report.

Learners on Junior Apprenticeships, Independent Learner Skills programmes, Innovation programmes, those using Personal Learning Accounts and those who died during their learning are also not included in the measures.

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.

Suspension of performance measures in 2019/20 and 2021/22

The standard performance measures were not produced in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the disruption of the COVID-19 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.

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 unless it was a valid transfer.

Transfers

From 2022/23, learners who enrol on a learning programme and then transfer to another programme are not included in the measures for their first programme if:

- the programme they transferred to could be identified
- and was in the same academic year
- the programme was full time or work-based learning
- and the learner transferred to a programme of any level within the first 8 weeks, or they transferred after the first 8 weeks to the same or higher level programme
- if the transfer was to another provider it must take place within 21 days

In previous years, transfers to other providers were treated as non-completions. Transfers within providers were counted as non-completions if the transfer was to a different level, or between general and vocational education.

The changes were tested on the 2021/22 measures. For general education programme measures this would have led to an extra 75 records out of 16,925 being excluded. The early dropout rate would have changed from 3% to 2%, and the percentage of learners achieving three Cs from 58% to 59%. All other rates were unchanged.

For vocational programmes, the changes would have led to an extra 765 records being excluded out of 35,950. The early dropout rate would have changed from 12% to 10%. The completion rate and success rate were unaffected.

The 2021/22 statistics in this release do not use the new transfer methodology.

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.

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 Baccaulaureate 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, the learner's ethnic background, and Free School Meal eligibility. The accompanying spreadsheet 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.

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.

Quality and methodology 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 for the academic year in the release.

A standard reconciliation cycle was undertaken for colleges 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.

There are known data quality issues with the vocational measures in school sixth forms. The success rate of vocational programmes in school sixth forms was 33% in 2022/23, and it has been low in previous years. The courses started and completed are recorded by schools in the Post-16 data collection, and are then matched onto grade outcomes in the Welsh Examination Database

which contains data from examining bodies. There are many instances where courses in the Post-16 data collection can't be matched to the Welsh Examination Database, and vice versa. Schools have been contacted about individual extreme cases, and a variety of causes have been identified. In one case, a school recorded learners under an old course code which had been replaced by a new type of course. Some causes are not data quality issues - another school was enrolling learners on courses that they were unlikely to complete but that the school believed would still benefit the learner. School sixth forms make up less than 1% of vocational programmes taken, and the overall impact on the measures is minimal. If schools were excluded from the measures, the overall vocational programme success rate would be unchanged in 2022/23.

Table 1: Early dropouts by measure, and academic year, 2021/22 and 2022/23

Measure	2021/22	2022/23
General education programmes	3%	3%
Vocational education programmes	12%	11%
Welsh Bacc	5%	5%

[Data can be found in Table 1.1, Table 2.1, and Table 3.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet](#)

Learners who drop out of a programme without completing it within the first 8 weeks, are excluded from the main measures, but are reported separately. The early dropout rate for vocational programmes was much higher than the early dropout rate for general education programmes.

Timeliness and punctuality

The data in this release refers to the 2022/23 academic year ending in July / August 2023. 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 2023. The post-16 data collection was finalised in November 2023.

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.

2021/22 and 2022/23 were transitional periods for learners. Some support remained in place for learners, and for general education courses and some vocational courses. Learners were given a

wider choice of questions, and Qualifications Wales set results broadly midway between 2018/19 and 2020/21. The statistics for these years should be understood in that context.

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. Creative Solution programmes were excluded before 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 are 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.

Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's [Statement of Compliance](#).

These official statistics were published as experimental statistics (now known as official statistics in development) for four years, with an additional gap of two years due to the pandemic. The status

reflected the on-going development to the methodology and data quality that had been taking place since they were created.

This year they have been published as official statistics, without the experimental / in development label. This reflects the maturation that has been established through repeated publication cycles.

The standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and public value have been demonstrated and improved in the following ways.

Trustworthiness

From the beginning the measures have been developed by professional statisticians according to the Welsh Government's statement of compliance. Release dates are pre-announced, protocols around data confidentiality are followed.

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.

Quality

There is a validation process for data when it is collected. There is an additional reconciliation process for data from the Lifelong Learning Record Wales. The measures are created from code through a methodology that has been improved and validated over the years. Automated checks are built into the code. When the measures have been produced, the final report is written and checked by statisticians.

Each year, learning providers receive an achievement measures report for their own data, including information on how exactly the measures have been calculated and highlighting potential data quality issues. This gives providers a chance to highlight and raise issues.

Explanatory notes are sent to all providers each academic year which give guidance on how the measures are created and explain any changes to the methodology that year.

In 2021/22, colleges received the code that was used to generate the measures, giving them the opportunity to critique the methodology directly. We plan to expand this to publishing the code publicly in the future.

These processes and other work have led to the following improvements in quality:

- The data collection guidance and validation rules accompanying the data collection has been improved, leading to higher quality data.
- Changes have been made to the school sixth form and college data collections to further harmonise their results.
- The handling of data collection issues around the Welsh Bacc has been strengthened, including a reconciliation process, and a system for better dealing with incomplete records.

- A method was developed for multi-syllabus qualifications, where a learner may achieve multiple qualifications within one learning code (for example in GCE Art and Design).
- A system has been implemented to check that the reported grade achieved by a learner matched the grade outcomes possible for the qualification.
- A method was created to remove programme transfers from the measures, if and only if the learner could be identified as having moved onto to a valid programme.

Value

The measures were developed with the help of a regular technical group with representatives from colleges, sixth forms, local authorities and Estyn. Their feedback has led to changes to the methodology, and an expansion of the measures to cover more aspects of post-16 learning.

We held a public consultation on the Consistent Performance Measures for Post-16 learning in 2017 for people to give their input into the principles and details around the measures.

The following changes have been made to improve the value of the statistics since the measures were first published in 2018:

- The A level course measures were revamped to be two-year measures with information on completion and retention.
- Measures were created for courses other than A levels, that account for the wide variety of grade structures possible.
- The vocational programme measures were expanded to include learning in school sixth forms.
- Additional demographic data has been added around gender, ethnic background, home local authority, deprivation of home neighbourhood, and FSM eligibility status in secondary school, and information about learners with impairments in data relating to colleges.
- Expanded A level grade outcomes to the full range (A* to E) instead of A, C and E only.

Future work

Although these statistics are no longer labelled as experimental / in development, we will continue to improve the measures.

We intend to examine how transfers are handled at a course level in the future, and there are known data quality issues around how school sixth form vocational data is recorded (see [Accuracy section](#)).

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Feedback can be provided by email to post16ed.stats@gov.wales. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

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 or March 2025 for the academic year 2023/24. The next update to this release is expected to be published by the [Commission for Tertiary Education and Research](#) (CTER). CTER will be a new arm’s length body responsible for funding and overseeing post-16 education and research from August 2024.

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

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