



Research Report

Survey of Public Opinions of Non- Degree Qualifications in Wales 2019

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Executive summary

Introduction

Qualifications Wales has commissioned Beaufort Research to conduct an annual survey of the Welsh general public to measure public confidence in non-degree qualifications in Wales and in the qualification system. This report provides results for the 2019 survey, following earlier surveys undertaken in 2017 and 2018¹. A sample of 1,000 adults across Wales, representative of the Welsh population, were interviewed face-to-face at home, via CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) using the Beaufort Wales Omnibus. Fieldwork was carried out between 16 September and 15 October 2019. The questionnaire for the Qualifications Wales survey comprised a series of questions about qualifications, mostly using a 5-point Likert Scale with an additional 'don't know' response option. Most of the questionnaire was consistent with earlier surveys to track changes over time, but some new questions were added for 2019.

Summary and conclusions

Public confidence in AS/A levels was generally high, with a composite AS/A level confidence score of 3.60 out of 5. This was slightly higher than the 2018 score (3.53) but the year on year difference is not statistically significant. AS/A levels were felt by the public to be good preparation for further study and to be trusted qualifications. As in previous years, there was some disagreement about how well AS/A levels were understood by people (with around one in four of the public disagreeing with this statement), as well as whether they were good preparation for the world of work and develop a broad range of skills for students (with almost one in five disagreeing with each). Around one in eight of the public were not able to comment on whether the marking of AS/A levels was accurate or whether standards were maintained year on year.

The public confidence composite score for GCSEs was higher than for AS/A levels, at 3.67 (slightly higher than in 2018 – 3.62). Again the year on year difference is not statistically significant. Public perceptions of GCSE qualifications were similar on the whole to those of AS/A levels, with the strongest endorsement of GCSEs for being 'good preparation for further study' and for being 'a trusted qualification'. As was the case with AS/A levels, a proportion of the public

¹ These reports can be found on QW's publications [webpage](#)

disagreed that GCSEs are good preparation for work (26%), although GCSEs were seen as being better understood generally (only 11% disagreed that they are well understood, compared with 19% in the case of AS/A levels). As with AS/A levels similarly high proportions of the public were unable to comment on whether GCSE marking is accurate or whether their standards were being maintained year on year.

Over the three years of tracking there has been a general positive movement in public confidence in non-degree qualifications. Agreement with almost all the dimensions relating to AS/A levels and GCSEs has risen again in 2019, after a rise year on year from 2017 to 2018.

Opinion was divided on whether fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen. The balance of opinion was against changing the GCSE grading system in Wales to be the same as England. Awareness of the GCSE pass grade in Wales was low – only one in four Welsh adults correctly identified it as G when prompted, in a new question for 2019, with over half incorrectly naming another grade and two in ten unable to answer.

Most Welsh adults believe that learners should be expected to take qualifications such as GCSEs before they leave compulsory education at 16, that everything that is studied by 14 to 16 year olds should lead to a qualification and that learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number in less detail. Supporting this, over seven in ten of the public were of the view that learners should take between 5 and 10 GCSE subjects by the age of 16 - only around one in ten were in favour of their studying 11 or more subjects.

Almost all of the Welsh public believed that learners should be expected to study Mathematics and English Language for GCSE, while around nine in ten felt that Information Technology/Computing and Science should be compulsory. At least six in ten adults felt that a Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Geography, Physical Education and Welsh Language should be studied by all learners. Subjects that only a minority of adults thought learners should be expected to study were Drama, Art, Music, Religious Studies and Welsh Literature. The mean average number of individual subjects that the public felt learners should study was 9.3, when respondents were asked about one subject at a time.

When asked if there were any other subjects that they would like to see 14 to 16 year olds in Wales study in school (even if these did not lead to a qualification), the most popular suggestions were Life Skills/Practical Skills, Financial Education/Money Management and Home Economics/Cookery/Needlework (all mentioned unprompted by around one in ten people).

Although the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification was introduced to schools and colleges in Wales a number of years ago, there has been no increase in awareness or knowledge of what it is over time. While six in ten Welsh adults in 2019 had heard of the Welsh Bacc, only 17% considered they knew much about it. Moreover, around four in ten of the population had never heard of the qualification.

While perceptions of the value of the Skills Challenge Certificate component of the Welsh Baccalaureate were positive, as in earlier tracking surveys, public perceptions of the value of vocational qualifications was more emphatically so. The proportion of people agreeing that taking vocational qualifications in school was valuable for young people's futures was significantly higher (92%) than the proportion of those agreeing with the same statement about the Skills Challenge Certificate (82%). This can perhaps be attributed to greater familiarity with and understanding of vocational qualifications than is the case with the Welsh Bacc. Together with the absence of any increase in awareness or familiarity with the Welsh Bacc since tracking started in 2017, this suggests that sustained communications activity over a period of time is likely to be necessary to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of a new qualification brand. Without this, the status of the Welsh Bacc among the general public in Wales is unlikely to change.

Lastly, a new question examining public perceptions of the usefulness of qualifications shows very high agreement that 'qualifications help people get on in life' - 78%. Older people aged 55 and over were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than younger people.

1. Background, research objectives and research method

1.1 Background and objectives

Qualifications Wales (QW) was established through the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 as the regulator of non-degree qualifications and the qualification system in Wales. It is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, independent of government, and is accountable to the National Assembly for Wales.

In the Act, one of QW's two principal aims is promoting public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system. In 2017 QW commissioned Beaufort Research to conduct a survey of the general public in Wales that would provide measurements of public confidence in non-degree qualifications in Wales. This survey aims to monitor public confidence in qualifications and the qualification system.

In 2018 Beaufort was awarded the contract to undertake the Wales public confidence survey for a further three years. This report provides results from the second wave of this contract - 2019.

The overall purpose of the research is to measure public confidence in non-degree qualifications in Wales and in the qualification system and to track attitudes over time.

1.2 Methodology

As in previous years, the 2019 research was conducted on the September Beaufort Wales Omnibus survey using face-to-face interviewing via CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing). The Wales Omnibus survey interviews a representative quota sample of 1,000 adults aged 16+ across Wales in their own home.

Omnibus surveys are a well-established method of conducting market and social research. As their name implies, they enable a group of users to share the same survey vehicle, achieving the benefit of lower costs. The Wales Omnibus is used by many government, quasi-governmental organisations and private sector

clients to measure public opinion, attitudes, awareness, usage and behaviour among the Welsh population and often to track these measures over time. Interviewing is spread across 68 separate locations throughout Wales, with points randomly selected each wave. The primary sampling unit is Lower Level Super Output Areas (LLSOA). Sampling points are selected with probability proportionate to resident adult population after stratification within region.

Within each sampling location, there are interlocking quota controls on age and social class within sex and working status. Quotas are set to reflect the known demographic profile of Welsh residents according to the latest 2011 Census.

All interviews are conducted face to face in the homes of respondents using CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) technology. No more than one person per household is interviewed. Beaufort's experienced fieldworkers are used with postal and telephone back-checking.

At the analysis stage, the data is weighted by age group within gender within Local Authority grouping to make the achieved sample representative of the Wales population derived from the results of the 2011 Census.

The questionnaire for the Qualifications Wales survey comprised a series of questions about qualifications, mostly using a 5-point Likert Scale with an additional 'don't know' response option (see Appendix I).

For tracking purposes the 2019 questionnaire was broadly consistent with that used in earlier years, although a few new questions relating to GCSEs (e.g. awareness of the lowest pass grade for GCSEs in Wales) and qualifications more generally (e.g. to what extent it is felt that qualifications help people get on in life) were added. Demographic questions are also included as standard in the Wales Omnibus survey. The questionnaire was available in English or Welsh at the participant's choice.

1,000 adults were interviewed between 16 September and 15 October 2019, of which 22 chose to answer in Welsh.

Statistical error

As with any survey, findings for the sample of respondents interviewed provide estimates of attitudes, knowledge and opinions held in the population of interest

(in this case the general public). Consequently, all results are subject to sampling error.

Table 1 below illustrates the reliability of individual results for different sample sizes and percentage results at the 95% confidence level. For example, thinking about the overall sample of 1,000 respondents interviewed, if 50% said that they know a fair amount about the Welsh Baccalaureate, we could say that the true proportion lies between 46.9% and 53.1% (i.e. +/- 3.1%) 95% of the time. The specified confidence intervals should be used as an approximate guide given that this survey is based on quota sampling.

Table 1: Statistical reliability (at 95% confidence level)

| Ranges at the 95% confidence level (excluding survey design factors) | | | |
|---|------------|------------------|------------------|
| Survey result | 50% | 70% / 30% | 90% / 10% |
| Sample size: | | | |
| 1,000 | +/-3.1 | +/-2.8 | +/-1.9 |
| 750 | +/-3.6 | +/-3.3 | +/-2.2 |
| 500 | +/-4.4 | +/-4.0 | +/-2.6 |
| 200 | +/-6.9 | +/-6.4 | +/-4.2 |
| 100 | +/-9.8 | +/-9.0 | +/-5.9 |

Whenever differences in the data in this report are commented on as significant, this refers to a statistically significant result from a significance test at the 0.05 level.

2. Key findings

2.1 Public confidence in AS levels and A levels

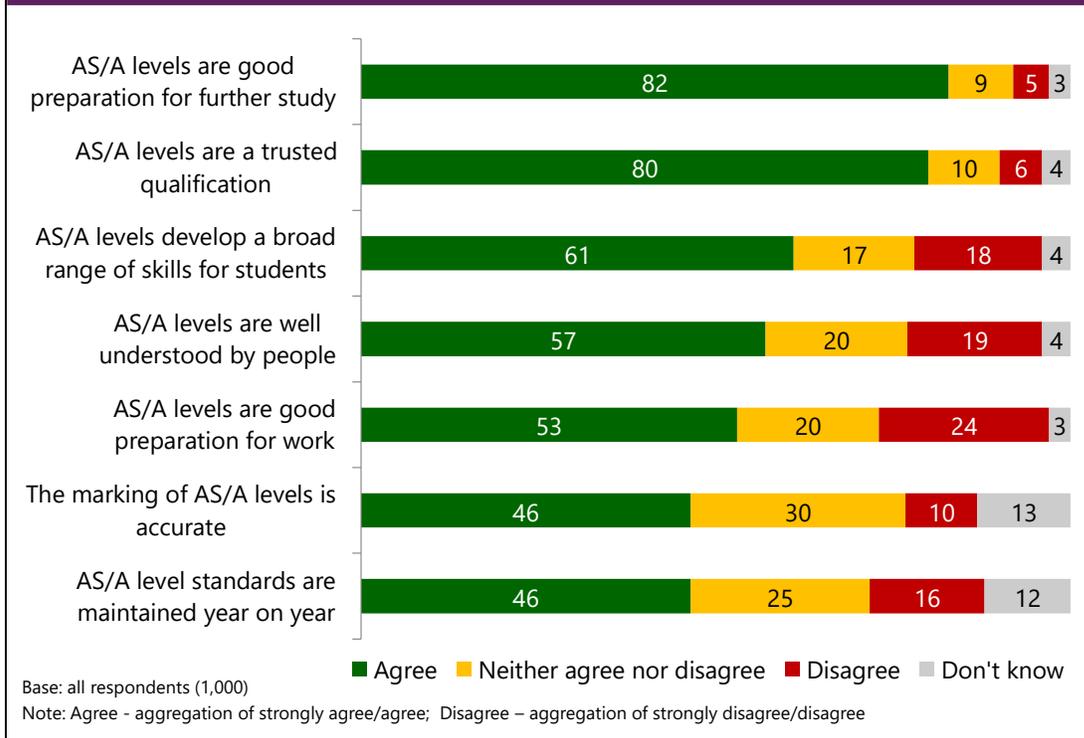
The first set of questions focused on AS and A levels, with participants asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about these qualifications. Respondents could strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the statements ('don't know' was a response option but was not prompted). Where necessary an explanation of AS and A levels was provided by the interviewer before the participant gave an answer. In the report 'agreement' has been defined as the aggregate of those 'strongly agreeing' and 'agreeing', while 'disagreement' is those 'strongly disagreeing' and 'disagreeing' combined.

As in previous years, agreement was high that 'AS/A levels are good preparation for further study' and that 'AS/A levels are trusted qualifications', with around eight in ten adults in Wales agreeing and only around one in twenty disagreeing with each statement (see figure 1 overleaf). Around six in ten of those interviewed agreed that 'AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students and 'are well understood by people', while around half of the sample agreed that they 'are good preparation for work', 'the marking of AS/A levels is accurate' and that 'AS/A level standards are maintained year on year'.

Disagreement was highest with the statement 'AS/A levels are good preparation for work' (with around one in four Welsh adults disagreeing with this), while around one in five disagreed that 'AS/A levels are well understood by people' and 'develop a broad range of skills for students'.

As in previous years, sizeable minorities of the population were unable to comment on whether the marking of AS/A levels was accurate (13% saying 'don't know') and also on whether 'AS/A level standards are maintained year on year' (12% 'don't know').

Figure 1: Confidence in AS / A levels 2019 %



As in previous years, people in the ABC1² socioeconomic grades were significantly more likely to agree with most of the statements about AS/A levels than those from socioeconomic grades C2DE.

Younger people aged 16-34 were significantly more likely than over 55s to agree that 'AS/A levels are well understood by people' as well as that 'the marking of AS/A levels is accurate'. 35-54s were significantly less likely than those aged over 55 to agree that 'AS/A levels are good preparation for work'.

² Socio-economic classification is determined by establishing an individual's job title and position and social grades are defined as follows:

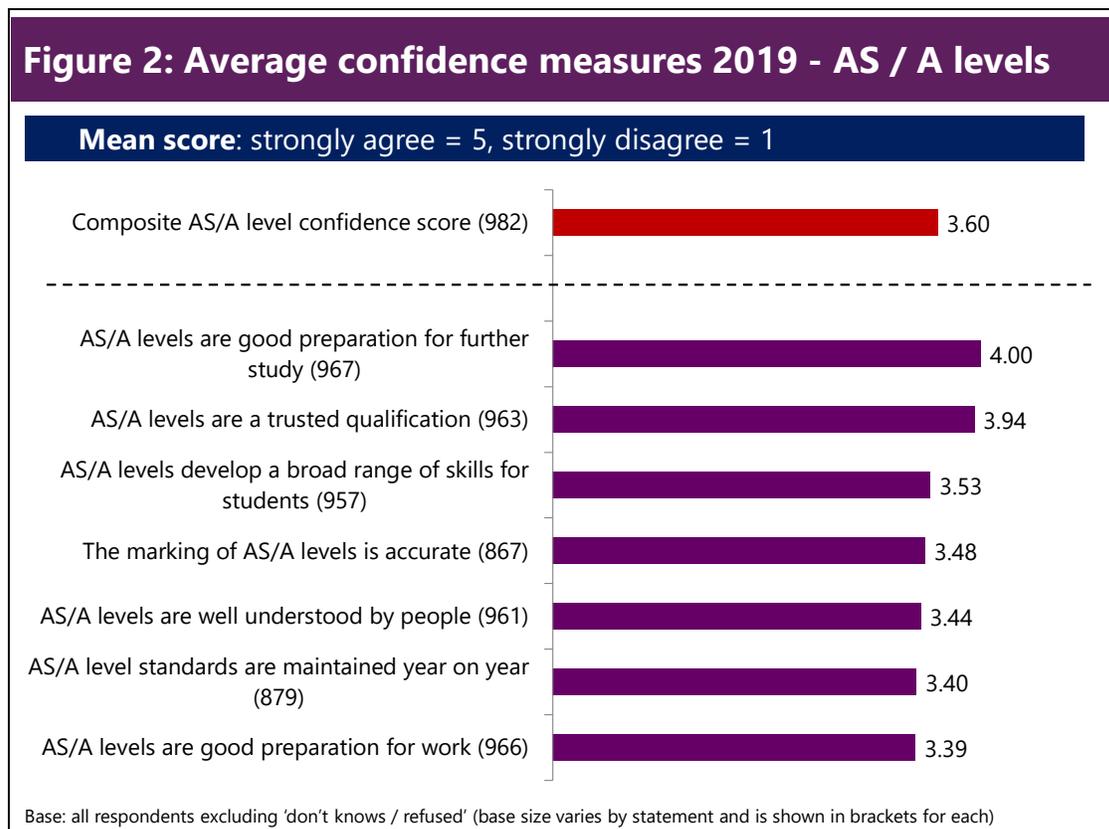
- AB:** Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- C1:** Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- C2:** Skilled manual workers
- DE:** Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only

Women were significantly more likely than men to agree that AS/A levels ‘are good preparation for further study’ and also ‘are good preparation for work.’

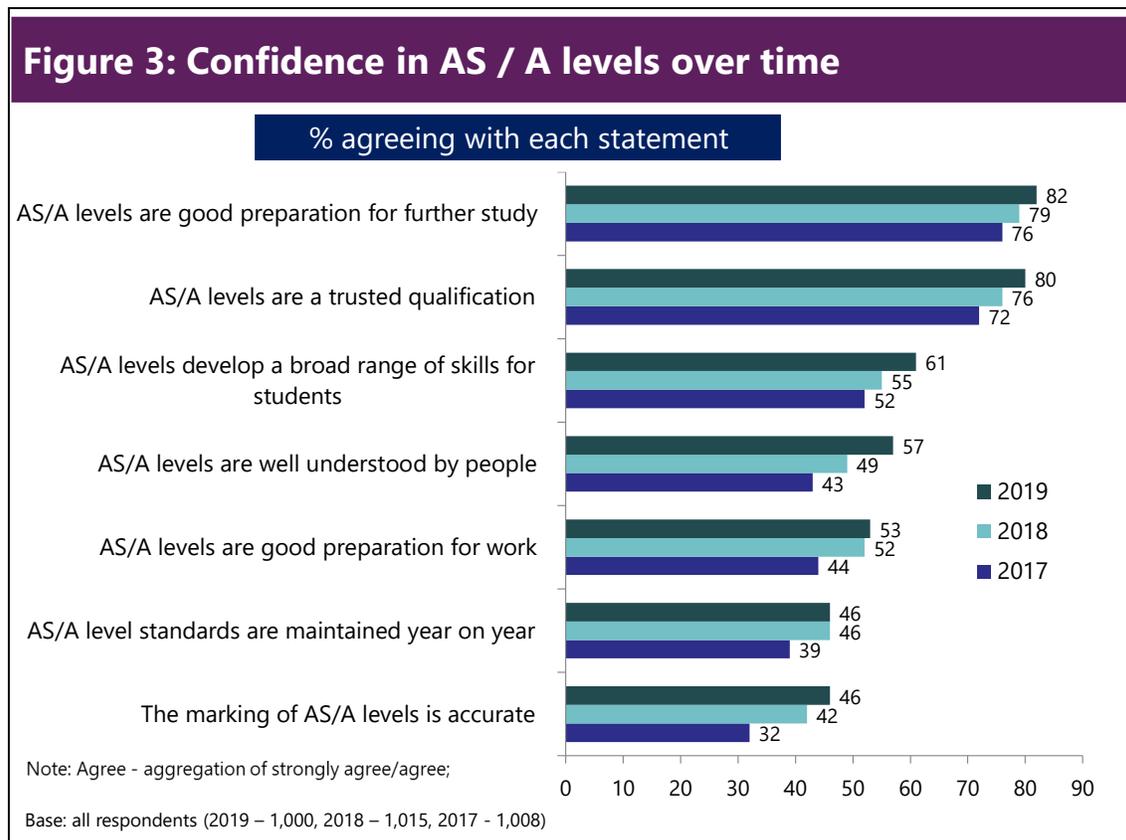
Mean scores or averages were also calculated for each of the statements above, using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 was ‘strongly agree’. In addition to the individual measures, a composite measure of confidence has been developed for all seven statements. This has been calculated by adding the averages of all questions and finding an overall average.

The composite AS/A level confidence mean score for 2019 is 3.60 out of 5, which is slightly higher than the 2018 score (3.53). Mean scores for each individual statement are shown in figure 2 below and range from 3.39 at the lower end (for AS/A levels being ‘good preparation for work’), up to 4.00 (for AS/A levels being ‘good preparation for further study’).

As in 2018 there is a significant difference between the mean scores for AS/A levels being ‘good preparation for further study’ and being ‘trusted qualifications’ and those for all other statements.



While the pattern of results is very consistent across the three years of tracking, the 2019 survey shows a further rise in general levels of agreement with the statements, after the increase seen in 2018 (see figure 3 below). The biggest increase in 2019 occurred for the statement 'AS/A levels are well understood by people', where agreement has risen from 49% to 57%.



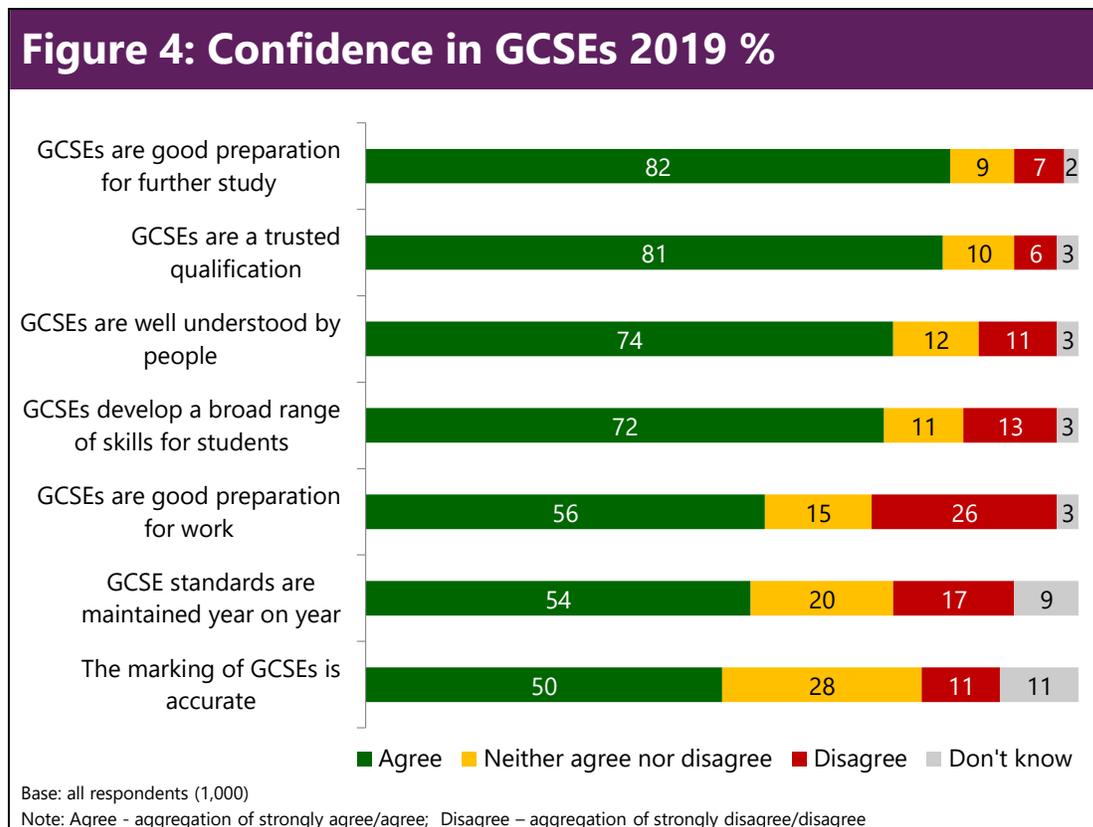
2.2 Public confidence in GCSEs

Survey respondents were then presented with a similar set of statements about GCSEs and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Respondents could strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the statements ('don't know' was a response option but was not prompted). Where necessary a brief explanation of GCSEs was read out by the interviewer before the participant gave an answer.

As with AS/A levels, GCSEs were strongly perceived to be 'good preparation for further study' and to be 'a trusted qualification', with around eight in ten of the

population in Wales agreeing with each of these statements and fewer than one in ten disagreeing. Around three in four of those interviewed agreed that 'GCSEs are well understood by people' and 'develop a broad range of skills for students' (with 74% and 72% agreeing respectively).

Agreement was lowest that 'GCSEs are good preparation for work', 'GCSE standards are maintained year on year' and 'the marking of GCSEs is accurate' (at 56%, 54% and 50% respectively). This was also the case for AS/A levels, although agreement here was lower than for GCSEs (at 53%, 46% and 46% for each statement). As with AS/A levels, a sizeable minority of around one in four (26%) disagreed that GCSEs are 'good preparation for work'.



Younger people aged 16-34 were significantly more likely than older people aged 55 and over to agree that 'GCSEs are well understood by people' and that 'the marking of GCSEs is accurate'. At the same time 16-34s were also significantly more likely than those aged 55 and over to disagree that GCSEs are 'a trusted qualification', are 'good preparation for work' and that they are 'good preparation for further study'.

Women were significantly more likely than men to agree that GCSEs 'are good preparation for work', as was the case for AS/A levels. Very few significant differences in views were evident between those from different socioeconomic grades, however.

As with the statements about AS/A levels, average scores were calculated for each of the statements about GCSEs. The same scale from 1 to 5 was used, where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree'. A composite measure of confidence was calculated for all seven statements by adding the averages of all questions and finding an overall average.

The composite GCSE confidence mean score for 2019 is 3.67 out of 5. As with the AS/A level composite score, this has risen slightly from its 2018 level of 3.60. Although the 2019 GCSE composite mean score of 3.67 is slightly higher than the corresponding AS/A level composite score of 3.60 the difference is not statistically significant.

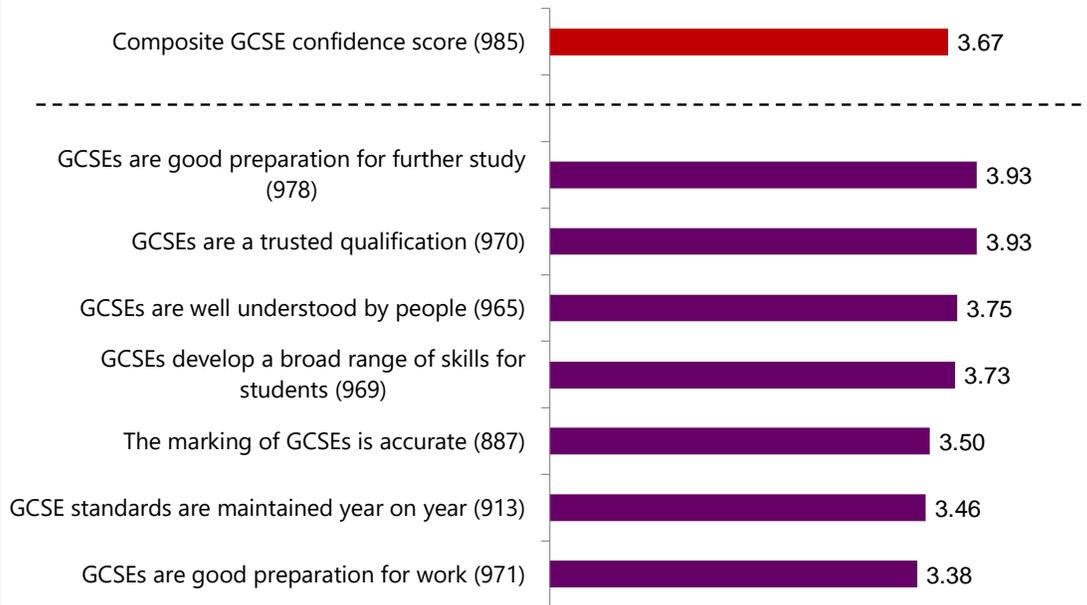
Mean scores for each individual statement are shown in figure 5 overleaf and range from 3.38 at the lower end (for 'GCSEs being good preparation for work'), up to 3.93 (for GCSEs being 'good preparation for further study' and being 'a trusted qualification').

As in previous years a significantly higher score was given for GCSEs being 'well understood by people' than was the case for AS/A levels (3.75 in the case of GCSEs, compared with 3.44 for AS/A levels).

The mean scores for GCSEs being 'good preparation for further study' and being 'a trusted qualification' were significantly higher than those for all other statements about the qualification. This was also true for AS/A levels.

Figure 5: Average confidence measures 2019 - GCSEs

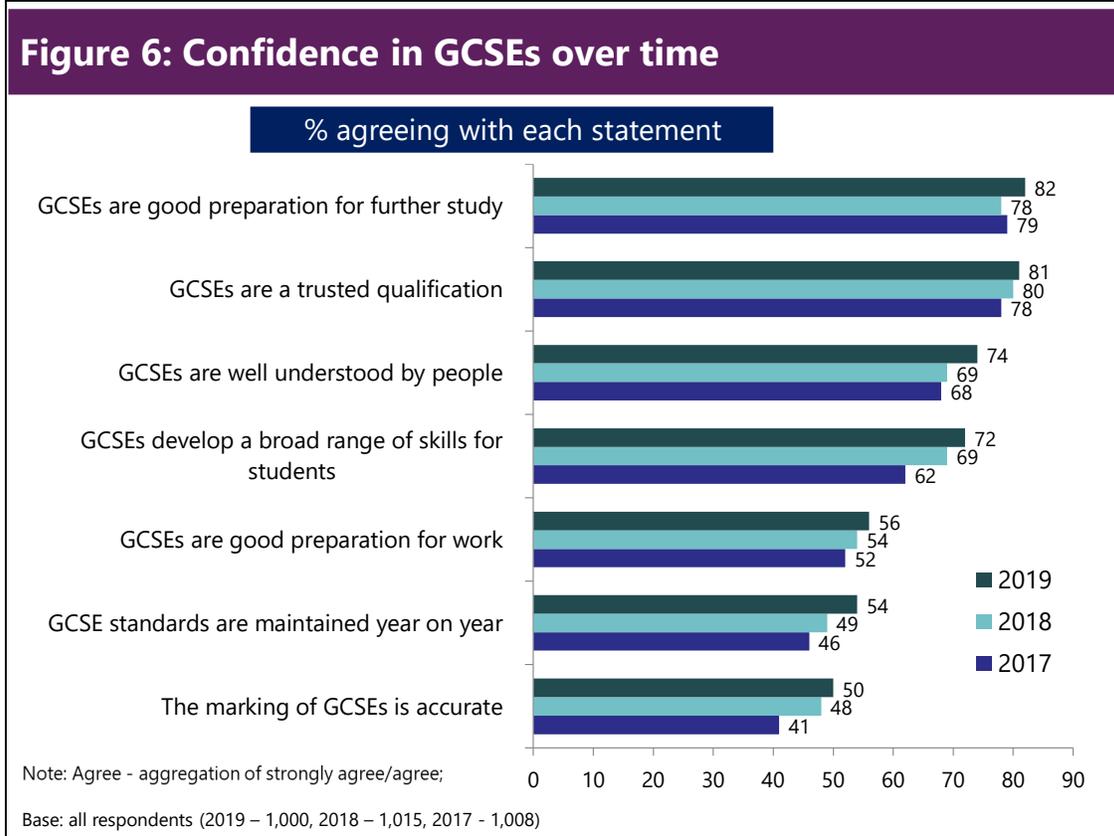
Mean score: strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1



Base: all respondents excluding 'don't know / refused' (base size varies by statement and is shown in brackets for each)

Similar to AS/A levels, there has been a further increase in public confidence in GCSEs in 2019 (see figure 6 overleaf).

Agreement has risen since 2018 on all of the statements relating to GCSEs, with the largest increase evident for 'GCSEs are well understood by people' (as was the case for AS/A levels) and 'GCSE standards are maintained year on year'.



2.3 Views on study subjects for 14 to 16 year olds

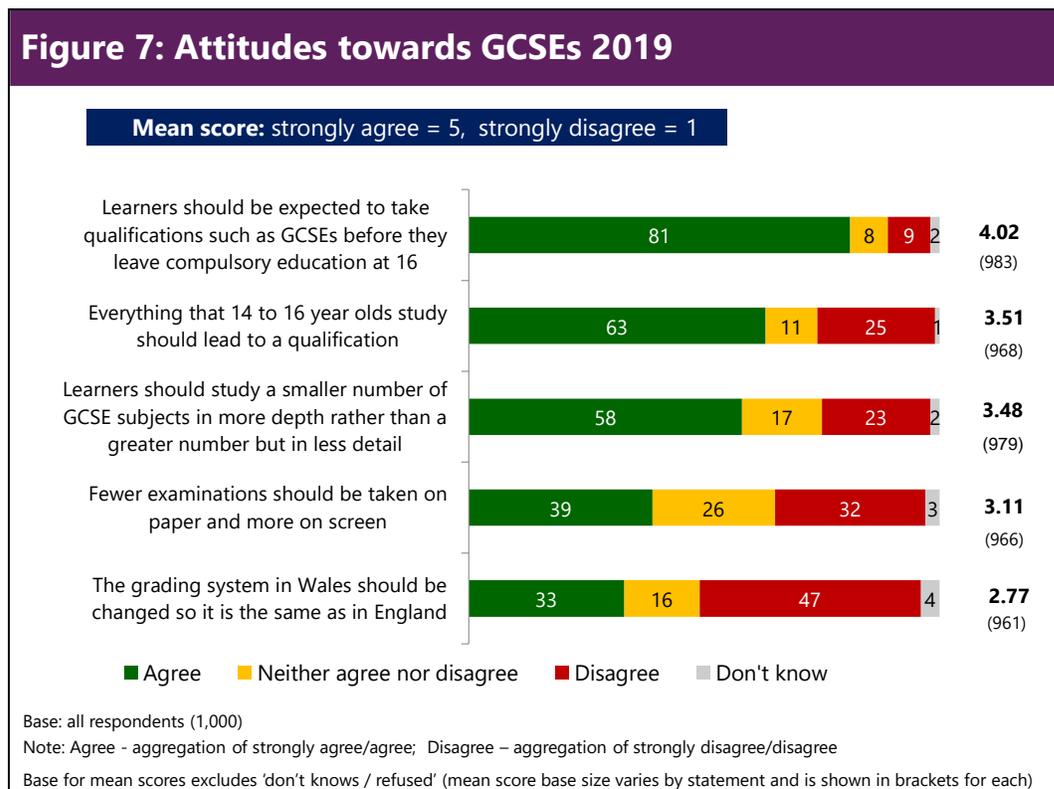
Respondents to the 2019 survey were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about GCSEs:

1. Learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number but in less detail
2. Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification
3. Learners should be expected to take qualifications such as GCSEs before they leave compulsory education at 16
4. Fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen
5. The grading system in Wales should be changed so it is the same as in England.

Statements 1 and 2 were included in the 2018 survey and repeated in 2019; statements 3, 4 and 5 were added the questionnaire in 2019.

As with other questions, respondents could strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each ('don't know' was a response option but was not prompted).

Responses to the different statements were mixed. A majority of Welsh adults agreed that 'Learners should be expected to take qualifications such as GCSEs before they leave compulsory education at 16', 'Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification' and that 'Learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a larger number but in less detail'. Opinion was divided on whether 'Fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen' and more people disagreed than agreed that 'The grading system in Wales should be changed so it is the same as in England' (see figure 7 below).



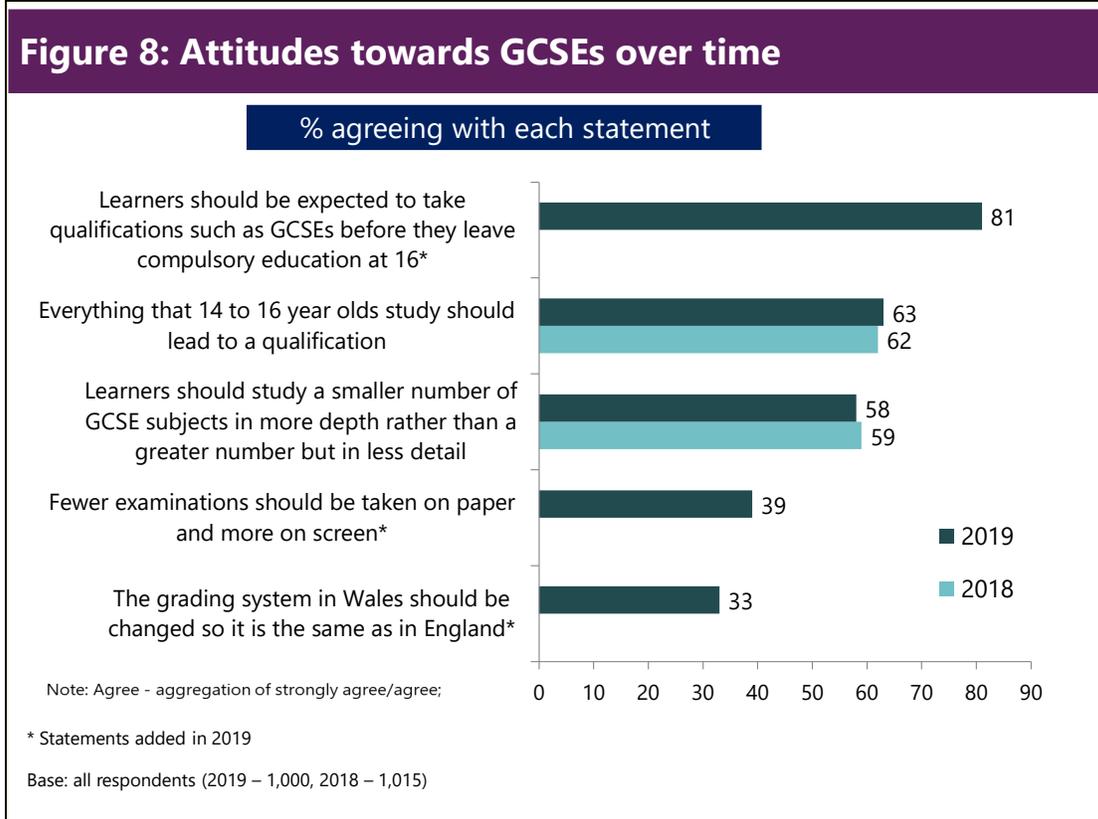
Those in the ABC1 socioeconomic grades were significantly more likely than those from socioeconomic grades C2DE to disagree that 'Learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number but in less detail', with 27% of ABC1s disagreeing with this statement compared with 17% of C2DEs. ABC1s were also significantly more likely than C2DEs to disagree

that 'Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification' - 32% of the former disagreed with this, compared with 16% of the latter.

Moreover, the higher the level of educational attainment, the more likely participants were to feel that not everything young people study should lead to a qualification. For example, over half of those interviewed holding a higher degree (51%) disagreed that 'Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification' compared with 20% of those holding no educational qualifications of this opinion. In contrast, those with no qualifications or whose highest qualification was a GCSE/O-level were significantly more likely than those with first or higher degrees to agree that everything studied should lead to a qualification.

Those aged under 55 (both 16 to 34 and 35 to 54 age groups) were significantly more likely to agree that 'Fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen' than older people aged 55 and over. Under 55s in Wales were also significantly more likely to disagree that 'The grading system in Wales should be changed so it is the same as in England', with 52% of 16-34s and 51% of 35-54s disagreeing with this statement, compared with 39% of those aged 55+.

No real changes were evident year on year for the two dimensions first measured in 2018, namely 'Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification' and 'Learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number but in less detail' – see figure 8 overleaf.

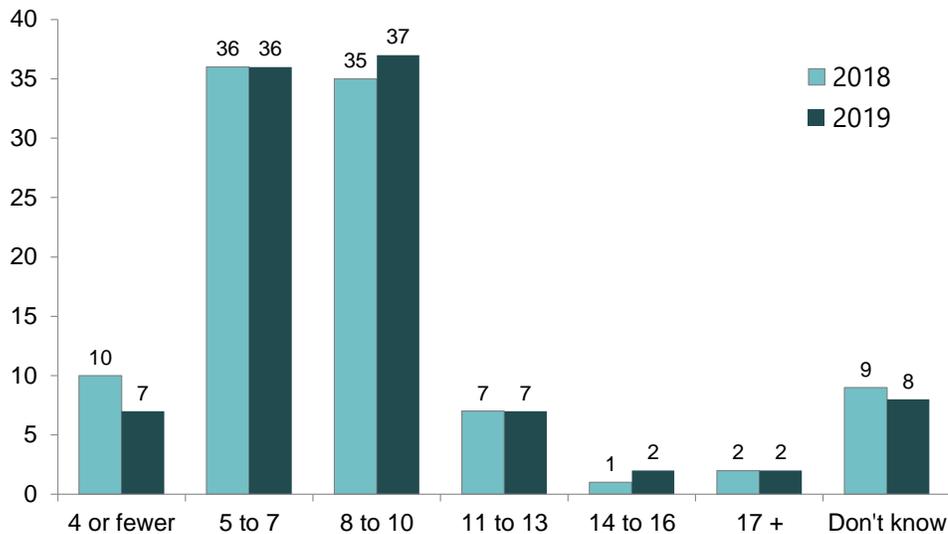


Respondents were asked how many GCSE subjects they felt learners should take by the age of 16. They were given a range of responses from which to choose, from 4 or fewer through to 17+.

As in 2018 the great majority of the Welsh public (73%) were of the view that learners should take between 5 and 10 GCSE subjects by the age of 16, with 36% choosing 5 to 7 subjects and 37% 8 to 10 subjects. Another 7% felt learners should take a smaller number of subjects (4 or fewer), while the same proportion opted for 11 to 13 subjects. Just 4% felt learners should take 14 or more GCSE subjects and another 8% were unable to answer (see figure 9 overleaf).

Figure 9: Views on number of GCSE subjects to be taken %

How many GCSE subjects should learners take by the age of 16?



Base: all respondents (2019 – 1,000, 2018 - 1,015)

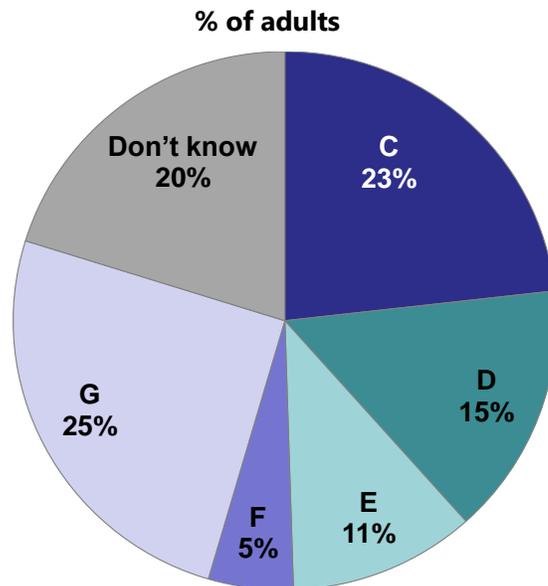
Younger people were more likely to be in favour of learners taking a greater number of GCSEs by the age of 16 than older people – 15% of 16 to 34s felt learners should take 11 or more GCSE subjects compared with 7% of those aged 55 and over saying this. Those aged over 55 were significantly more likely to answer ‘don’t know’ to this question, however.

For the first time in 2019, respondents were asked whether they knew which grade is the lowest pass grade for GCSEs in Wales, after being shown a list of grades (from A* to G).

One in four Welsh adults correctly identified the lowest GCSE pass grade as G, but around the same proportion (23%) gave C as their answer (rising to 37% of 16-24s). Other grades (D, E and F) were chosen by a total of 30% of respondents, while 20% of adults were unable to give an answer (see figure 10 overleaf).

Figure 10: Awareness of GCSE pass grade, 2019

Which grade is the lowest pass grade for GCSEs in Wales?



Base: all respondents (1,000)

Those interviewed in the survey were also asked which specific subjects they thought all learners in Wales should be expected to study for GCSE. They were prompted with a list of 16 subjects (presented in a random order) and were asked to say whether each of these should be studied by all learners.

The two highest ranked subjects that people felt should be studied for GCSE were Mathematics and English Language, selected by 97% and 96% of respondents respectively (see table 1 overleaf). The great majority of those interviewed (around nine in ten) felt all learners should be expected to study Information Technology/Computing and Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) for GCSE, while around two-thirds selected a Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Geography, Physical Education (PE) and Welsh Language. Almost half chose Design and Technology.

Younger people (aged 16 to 34) were significantly more likely to feel that all learners in Wales should study Welsh Language for GCSE than older people (aged 55+), with 67% of younger people saying this compared with 57% of older people. Welsh speakers were also significantly more likely to feel all learners

should study the Welsh Language at GCSE than non-Welsh speakers (at 79% of the former compared with 56% of the latter group). 16-34s were also significantly more likely than other age groups to feel all 14 to 16 year olds should study Welsh Literature for GCSE.

Subjects that only a minority of respondents felt should be compulsory for GCSE were Welsh Literature and Religious Studies (each selected by around three in ten respondents), Music and Art (selected by around one in four) and Drama (selected by one in five).

Table 1: Which subjects all learners in Wales should be expected to study for GCSE – prompted

| % | Yes | No | Don't know |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|------------|
| Mathematics | 97 | 2 | 1 |
| English Language | 96 | 3 | 1 |
| Information Technology / Computing | 90 | 9 | 2 |
| Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) | 86 | 11 | 2 |
| A modern foreign language | 64 | 32 | 4 |
| English Literature | 64 | 32 | 4 |
| History | 64 | 32 | 4 |
| Geography | 63 | 34 | 3 |
| Physical Education (PE) | 62 | 35 | 3 |
| Welsh Language | 61 | 35 | 4 |
| Design and Technology | 47 | 48 | 5 |
| Welsh Literature | 32 | 63 | 5 |
| Religious Studies | 30 | 64 | 6 |
| Music | 26 | 69 | 5 |
| Art | 25 | 69 | 6 |
| Drama | 18 | 77 | 5 |

Base: all respondents (1,000)

A separate question added in 2019 asked which other subject/s, if any, Welsh adults felt 14 to 16 year olds should study in school (even if these did not lead to a GCSE). Responses were completely unprompted and are shown in table 2 overleaf.

The most popular spontaneous suggestions were Life Skills/Practical Skills (mentioned by 14% of Welsh adults), Financial Education/Money Management and Home Economics/Cookery/Needlework (both suggested by 10% each). A variety of other subjects were suggested by 3% or fewer of those interviewed.

Table 2: Which other subjects should 14 to 16 year olds study in school (even if they don't lead to a GCSE)? – unprompted

| % | All |
|--|-----------------|
| Life Skills / Practical Skills / Basic Skills | 14 |
| Financial Education / Money Management | 10 |
| Home Economics / Cookery / Needlework | 10 |
| Politics and Government / Current Affairs | 3 |
| Social Skills / Communication / Manners | 3 |
| Accountancy / Banking | 2 |
| Business / Business Studies | 2 |
| Citizenship / Community Responsibility / Volunteering / Rights | 2 |
| Economics | 2 |
| First Aid / Lifesaving | 2 |
| Health / Mental Health / Wellbeing | 2 |
| Sociology / Social Sciences | 2 |
| Woodwork / Carpentry / DIY / Metalwork | 2 |
| Engineering / Mechanics | 1 |
| Environmental Studies | 1 |
| Gardening / Agriculture | 1 |
| Interview Skills / Job Application Skills / CV Writing | 1 |
| Philosophy / Morals / Ethics | 1 |
| Sex Education / Sexual Health | 1 |
| Sign Language | 1 |
| Vocational Subjects | 1 |
| Childcare / Child Development | * |
| General Studies | * |
| Health & Social Care | * |
| Psychology | * |
| Welsh History / Studies | * |
| Other | 3 |
| None | 39 |
| Don't know | 11 |
| Base: all respondents (1,000) | * fewer than 1% |

2.4 Familiarity with and confidence in the Welsh BaccaLaureate

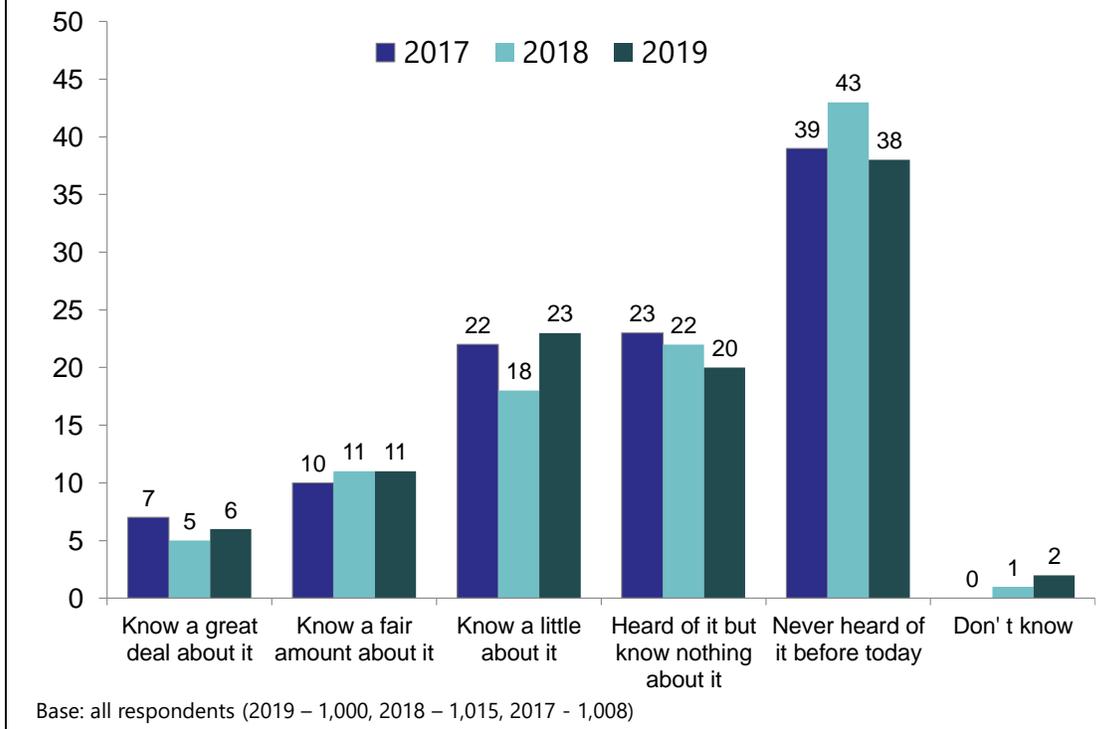
As in previous years respondents were asked how much, if anything, they know about what the Welsh BaccaLaureate is.

Six in ten Welsh adults (60%) said they had heard of the Welsh BaccaLaureate before being interviewed. This was slightly higher than in 2018 but at a similar level to 2017. As in previous years, awareness of the new qualification was highest among young people aged 16-24 and those in the ABC1 socioeconomic groups (with awareness rising to 71% of each).

Almost four in ten Welsh adults (38%) had not heard of the Welsh Bacc, however. Those least likely to have heard of the qualification were people in the C2DE socioeconomic grades and those with no qualifications (with 47% and 64% of these groups respectively not having heard of it before being interviewed).

Knowledge of the Welsh BaccaLaureate was limited on the whole. Most of those aware (43% overall) said they had heard of the qualification but knew nothing about it or felt they knew very little about it. Only 17% overall felt they knew a fair amount or a great deal about the Welsh Bacc. Young people were much more likely to feel they knew a fair amount or a great deal, however, with 39% of those aged 16-24 saying this.

Figure 11: Familiarity with the Welsh Bacallaureate %



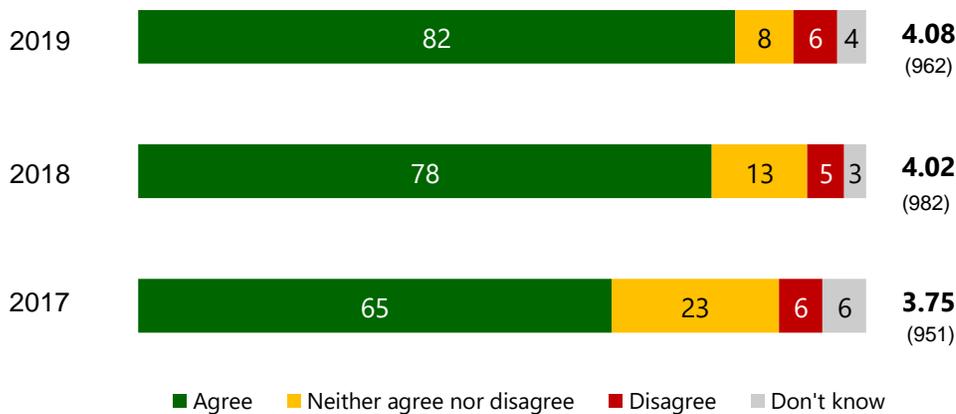
An explanation was then given of the Welsh Bacallaureate and the Skills Challenge Certificate before respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that it was valuable for young people’s futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate. The same 5-point scale was used as for the statements about AS/A levels and GCSEs earlier in the interview.

Over eight in ten Welsh adults (82%) agreed that ‘it is valuable for young people’s futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate’, while only 6% disagreed. Despite there being no increase in awareness or understanding of the Welsh Bacallaureate year on year (as seen above), the proportion of respondents agreeing with this statement has risen slightly in 2019 for the second year (from a level of 78% in 2018 and 65% in 2017). This is due to a decrease in the proportion that neither agreed nor disagreed, rather than to any change in the level of disagreement year on year (see figure 12 overleaf).

Figure 12: Confidence in the Welsh Baccalaureate over time %

Agreement / disagreement with 'It is valuable for young people's futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate'

Mean score: strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1



Base: all respondents (2019 – 1,000, 2018 – 1,015, 2017 - 1,008)

Note: Agree - aggregation of strongly agree/agree; Disagree – aggregation of strongly disagree/disagree

Base for mean scores excludes 'don't knows / refused' (mean score base size is shown in brackets)

2.5 Public confidence in vocational qualifications

Participants were also asked for their views on vocational qualifications, covering a range of work-related subjects taken in school or Further Education colleges. Respondents were prompted with two statements about vocational qualifications and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed.

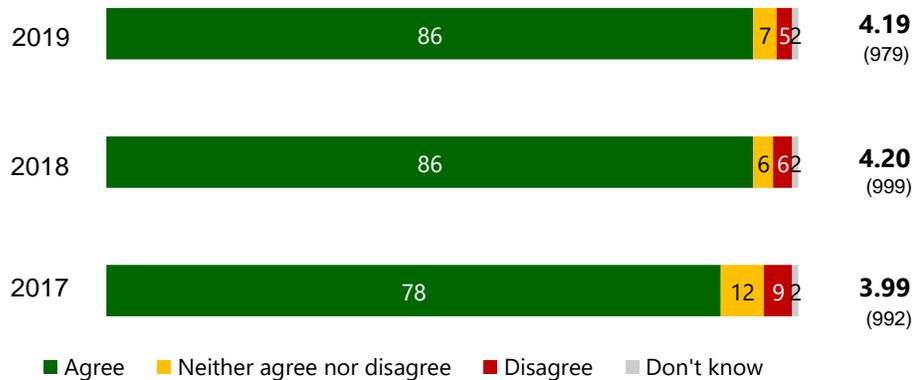
Perceptions of vocational qualifications in Wales were very positive on the whole, with high levels of endorsement of their value, broadly unchanged from 2018. Around nine in ten Welsh adults agreed that 'achieving a vocational qualification at age 18 instead of A levels is at least as valuable for young people's futures as achieving A levels' and that 'vocational qualifications, taken in school, are valuable for young people's futures' (with 86% and 92% agreeing respectively).

Levels of disagreement with each statement were very low – at 5% and 2% respectively (see figures 13 and 14 overleaf)

Figure 13: Confidence in vocational qualifications over time - I %

Agreement / disagreement with 'Achieving a vocational qualification at age 18 instead of A-levels is at least as valuable for young people's futures as achieving A-levels'

Mean score: strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1



Base: all respondents (2019 – 1,000, 2018 – 1,015, 2017 - 1,008)

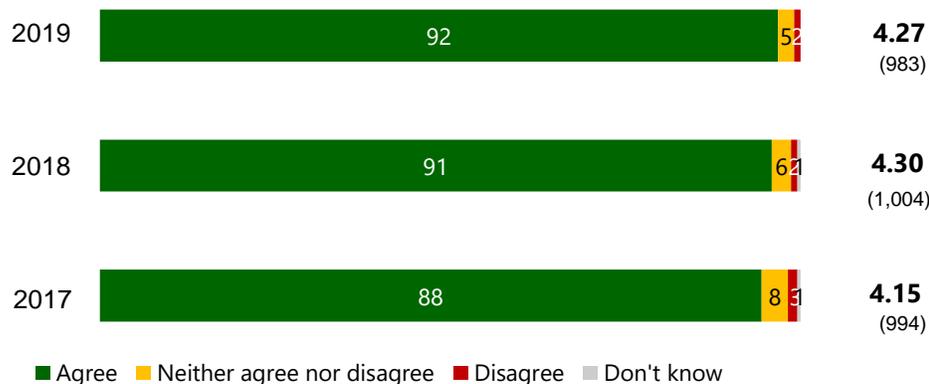
Note: Agree - aggregation of strongly agree/agree; Disagree – aggregation of strongly disagree/disagree

Base for mean scores excludes 'don't knows / refused' (mean score base size is shown in brackets)

Figure 14: Confidence in vocational qualifications over time - II %

Agreement / disagreement with 'Vocational qualifications, taken in school, are valuable for young people's futures'

Mean score: strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1



Base: all respondents (2019 – 1,000, 2018 – 1,015, 2017 - 1,008)

Note: Agree - aggregation of strongly agree/agree; Disagree – aggregation of strongly disagree/disagree

Base for mean scores excludes 'don't knows / refused' (mean score base size is shown in brackets)

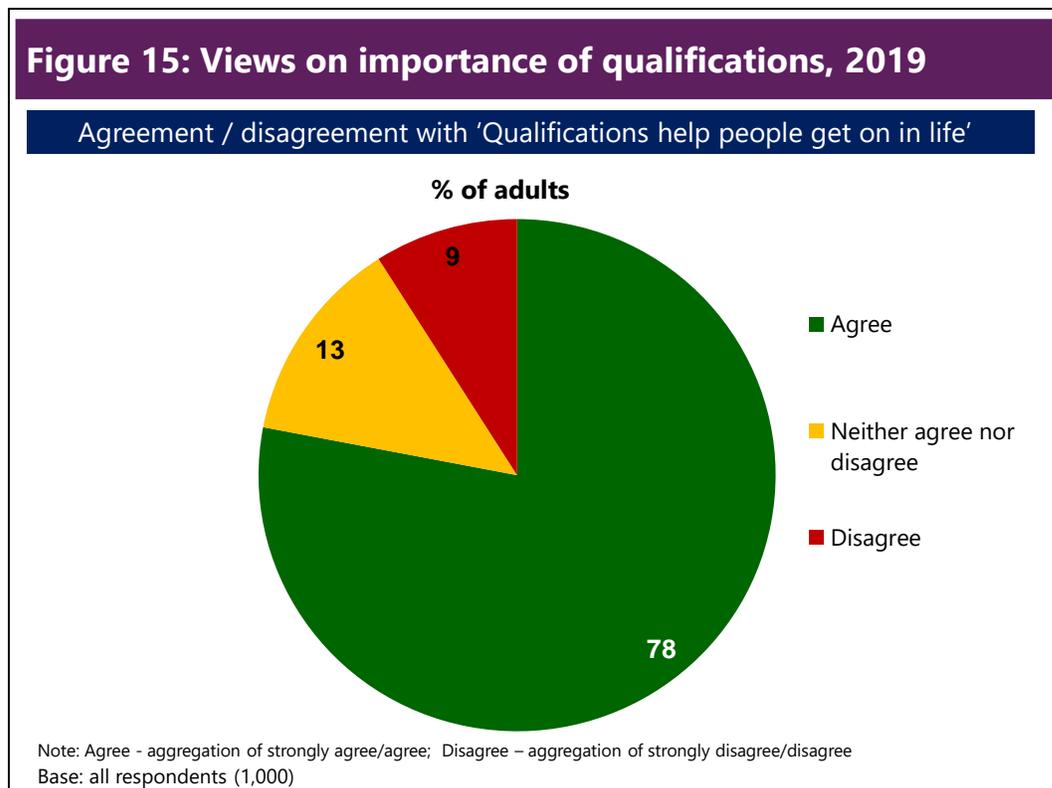
As in previous years, perceptions of the value of vocational qualifications were significantly more positive than those relating to the value of the Welsh Baccalaureate. There is a significant difference between the mean score for 'Vocational qualifications, taken in school, are valuable for young people's futures' and that for a similar statement about the Skills Challenge Certificate ('It is valuable for young people's futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate').

2.6 Perceptions of the usefulness of qualifications

A final question asked respondents about the perceived usefulness of qualifications.

Almost eight in ten of those interviewed (78%) agreed that 'Qualifications help people get on in life' while less than one in ten (9%) were of the opposite view. Another 13% neither agreed nor disagreed.

People aged 55 and over were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than 16-34s and 35-54 year olds, as were those in the AB socioeconomic groups compared to those in C2DE socioeconomic groups.



Appendix I

Survey questionnaire

**B01910_3 September Wales Omnibus
2019 Qualifications Wales Questions – FINAL 3.09.19**

ASK ALL

Showcard A

Q1. I'd like to start with some questions about your views on qualifications in Welsh secondary schools and colleges. Firstly some questions about A levels and AS levels.

IF NECESSARY, EXPLAIN: AS levels are taken at the end of the first year of sixth form (year 12) or college. The result from an AS level contributes to the overall A level grade. A levels are taken at the end of the second year of sixth form (year 13) or college.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about A / AS levels? Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each. *NOTE: Don't know is a response option but will not be on the showcard*

ORDER OF STATEMENTS TO BE RANDOMISED. READ OUT EACH IN TURN

- i)** AS/A levels are well understood by people
- ii)** AS/A levels are trusted qualifications
- iii)** AS/A level standards are maintained year on year
- iv)** AS/A levels are good preparation for further study
- v)** AS/A levels are good preparation for work
- vi)** AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students
- vii)** The marking of AS/A levels is accurate

ASK ALL**Showcard A again**

Q2. Now some questions about GCSEs. IF NECESSARY, EXPLAIN: GCSEs are the main qualifications usually taken by learners aged 15-16 after two years of study.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about GCSEs? Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each. NOTE: Don't know is a response option but will not be on the showcard

ORDER OF STATEMENTS TO BE RANDOMISED. READ OUT EACH IN TURN

- i) GCSEs are well understood by people
- ii) GCSEs are a trusted qualification
- iii) GCSE standards are maintained year on year
- iv) GCSEs are good preparation for further study
- v) GCSEs are good preparation for work
- vi) GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students
- vii) The marking of GCSEs is accurate

ASK ALL**Showcard B**

Q3. The new Welsh Baccalaureate was recently introduced to schools and colleges. How much, if anything, do you know about what the Welsh Baccalaureate is?

- A great deal
- A fair amount
- A little
- Heard of it but know nothing about it
- Never heard of it before today

Don't know

ASK ALL**Showcard C**

The core of the Welsh Baccalaureate is the Skills Challenge Certificate, which is a standalone qualification. The intention of the Skills Challenge Certificate is to develop life and work skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, planning

and organisation. Depending on the level of study, the Skills Challenge Certificate is equivalent to one GCSE or one A level.

Showcard A again

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the Welsh Baccalaureate? Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree. NOTE: Don't know is a response option but will not be on the showcard

READ OUT

- i) It is valuable for young people's futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate

ASK ALL

Showcard D

Many young people take vocational qualifications in Further Educational Colleges instead of taking A levels. These vocational qualifications cover a range of work related subjects.

Showcard A again

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- i) Achieving a vocational qualification at age 18 instead of A levels is at least as valuable for young people's futures as achieving A levels

ASK ALL

Showcard E

Some young people in schools take vocational qualifications alongside their GCSEs. These vocational qualifications cover a range of work related subjects.

Showcard A again

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- i) Vocational qualifications, taken in school, are valuable for young people's futures

ASK ALL**Showcard A again**

Q7. Thinking about GCSEs again, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each. NOTE: Don't know is a response option but will not be on the showcard

ORDER OF STATEMENTS TO BE RANDOMISED. READ OUT EACH IN TURN

- i) Learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number but in less detail
- ii) Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification
- iii) Fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen

ASK ALL**Showcard F**

Q8. How many GCSE subjects should learners take by the age of 16?

- 4 or fewer
- 5-7
- 8-10
- 11-13
- 14-16
- 17+

Don't know

ASK ALL

Q9. I now want to ask you about which subjects you think all learners in Wales should be expected to study for GCSE. READ OUT EACH SUBJECT – ORDER TO BE RANDOMISED. CODE YES / NO / DON'T KNOW TO EACH

- a) Should all learners study [A modern foreign language] for GCSE?
- b) Should all learners study [Art] for GCSE?
- c) Should all learners study [Design and technology] for GCSE?
- d) Should all learners study [Drama] for GCSE?
- e) Should all learners study [English language] for GCSE?

- f) Should all learners study [English literature] for GCSE?
- g) Should all learners study [Geography] for GCSE?
- h) Should all learners study [History] for GCSE?
- i) Should learners study [Information technology / Computing] for GCSE?
- j) Should all learners study [Mathematics] for GCSE?
- k) Should all learners study [Music] for GCSE?
- l) Should all learners study [Physical education (PE)] for GCSE?
- m) Should all learners study [Religious studies] for GCSE?
- n) Should all learners study [Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics)] for GCSE?
- o) Should all learners study [Welsh language] for GCSE?
- p) Should all learners study [Welsh literature] for GCSE?

ASK ALL

Q10. Which other subject/s, if any, should 14 to 16 year olds study in school (even if they don't lead to a GCSE)?

WRITE IN _____

None

Don't know

ASK ALL**Showcard A again**

Q11. England has adopted a system in which learners are graded 9 to 1 for GCSEs (where 9 is the highest grade and 1 is the lowest), while Wales has retained the A* to G grading system (where A* is the highest and G is the lowest). To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

- i) The grading system in Wales should be changed so it is the same as in England

ASK ALL**Showcard G**

Q12. Which grade is the lowest pass grade for GCSEs in Wales?

- A*
- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G

Don't know

ASK ALL**Showcard A again**

Q13. In Wales it is legally compulsory to stay in full time education until the age of 16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- i) Learners should be expected to take qualifications such as GCSEs before they leave compulsory education at 16

ASK ALL**Showcard A again**

Q14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree that...

NOTE: Don't know is a response option but will not be on the showcard.

- i) Qualifications help people get on in life

ASK ALL**Showcard H**

Q15. Are you in education or do you have any children in any of the following situations? *Can multicode*

Yes – I have a child /children in primary school

Yes – I have a child /children in secondary school or sixth-form college

Yes – I have a child / children at university or college

Yes – I'm at secondary school or sixth-form college

Yes – I'm at university or college

No

ASK ALL**Showcard I**

Q16. Thinking now about yourself, what is your highest level of educational qualification? *Single code*

GCSE, O-Level, O-Grade, Standard Grade or similar

A level, Higher, Sixth Year Study or similar

HNC or HND

First Degree

Higher Degree

No qualifications

Still in education

Other

Don't know