

Research Report

Survey of Public Opinions of Non- Degree Qualifications in Wales 2020



Prepared for:
Qualifications Wales

Prepared by:
Beaufort Research



Contact Details

Agency contact: Fiona McAllister

Project: B02010-3

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Beaufort Research

2 Museum Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BG

Tel: (029) 2037 8565

Fax: (029) 2037 0600

E-mail: enquiries@beaufortresearch.co.uk

www.beaufortresearch.co.uk

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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 2020 survey, following earlier surveys undertaken in 2017 to 2019¹. As in previous years, the research was conducted on the September Beaufort Wales Omnibus survey which interviews a representative sample of 1,000 Welsh adults. The COVID-19 public health crisis prevented the survey from being carried out in its usual manner of face-to-face in-home interviewing. Instead interviews for the September 2020 survey were undertaken online, using the Cint online panel exchange platform.

Fieldwork was carried out between 14 September and 4 October 2020. 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. The questionnaire was consistent with earlier surveys to track changes over time but the change in data gathering approach may have resulted in some differences in findings.

Some of the core tracking questions were also included on the November Wales Omnibus to triangulate the September results and help assess whether the changes to the qualification and assessment system in 2020 had affected public confidence.

Summary and conclusions

Public confidence in AS/A levels was generally high, as in previous years, with a composite AS/A level confidence score of 3.66 out of 5. This was slightly higher than the 2019 score (3.60) 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 2017 to 2019, there was some disagreement about whether AS/A levels were good preparation for work and how well the qualifications were understood by people (with about one in five disagreeing with the first statement and one in seven disagreeing with the

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

second). Around three in ten 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 3.74 (slightly higher than in 2019 – 3.67). 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 sizeable proportion of the public disagreed that GCSEs are good preparation for work (22%), although GCSEs were seen as being better understood generally (only 8% disagreed that they are well understood, compared with 15% 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 maintained year on year.

Levels of agreement with all confidence statements for both AS/A levels and GCSEs fell back in 2020, although the pattern of responses was unchanged, while the proportion of survey respondents unable to comment and answering ‘neither agree nor disagree’ rose year on year. This is likely to be a result of the change in method for 2020 to a self-completion online survey.

Opinion was divided on whether fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen (particularly by age) those aged 16 to 54 were significantly more likely than those aged 55 and over to agree with this statement. A majority of the Welsh public felt that everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification, however.

As in previous years there was a preference for learners to study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number in less detail. Reinforcing this, three in four Welsh adults 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. Similar proportions (8%) felt learners should take 4 or fewer subjects or were unable to comment.

The 2020 results show an increase in awareness of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, with almost seven in ten Welsh adults saying they had heard of it (compared with 60% in 2019). The rise in awareness does not seem to be driven by increased levels of familiarity with the qualification, however – most of those

who had heard of it either knew nothing or very little about it. Perceptions of the value of the Skills Challenge Certificate component of the Welsh Baccalaureate were positive, as in earlier tracking surveys, but there was lower agreement that 'It is valuable for young people's futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate' in 2020 than in previous years. This is consistent with falls on other measures across the survey.

Perceptions of vocational qualifications in Wales in 2020 were positive, with high levels of endorsement of their value for young people's futures generally and in comparison, with A levels. 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. This can perhaps be attributed to greater familiarity with and understanding of vocational qualifications than is the case with the Welsh Bacc, introduced more recently to Welsh schools.

As in 2019 when it was first asked, there was high agreement (at 74%) that 'qualifications help people get on in life'. Qualifications are particularly valued by older people and by people in the ABC1 social grades – those aged 55 and over and ABC1s were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than younger people and C2DEs.

Results from the additional questions asked in November 2020 were generally very similar to those seen in the core September survey. One difference between the two waves, however, is that agreement that the marking of AS/A levels and GCSEs is accurate was higher in November than in September. The proportion of respondents agreeing that the marking of AS/A levels is accurate rose from 41% in Sept to 46% in November and a similar rise was seen on the same statement for GCSEs (from 46% to 51%). It may be that confidence in this dimension was lower in September as the survey took place close to the August announcement of examination results and the changes to how learners' grades were determined.

More generally, the changes to the qualification system and the cancellation of summer examinations in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 do not appear to have had a major impact on public confidence in qualifications in Wales. At the same time, there were no additional questions specifically designed to explore these topics in the tracking survey in either September or November.

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 Welsh Parliament.

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. 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 third wave of the contract - 2020.

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.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Welsh schools and sixth form colleges were closed from late March to late June 2020, with learning for most young people undertaken online from home during that period. Summer 2020 examinations were cancelled and the grades awarded to learners taking qualifications were based on teachers' assessments.

While the main tracking survey was conducted in September 2020, some of the core tracking questions were also included on the November Wales Omnibus to triangulate the September results and help assess whether the changes to the qualification and assessment system in 2020 had affected public confidence. Findings from November 2020 were, on the whole, very similar to those from September.

The focus of this report is on the September results, for comparability with previous years, but key findings from the November wave are included in Appendix II.

A new question was also asked in November to assess views on how reformed GCSEs should typically be assessed (that is, through an exam at the end of the course, through coursework or through a combination of the two). Responses to this question are provided in Appendix II.

1.2 Methodology

As in previous years, the 2020 research was conducted on the September Beaufort Wales Omnibus survey. The Wales Omnibus survey interviews a representative quota sample of adults aged 16 and over across Wales.

The COVID-19 public health crisis prevented the survey from being carried out in its usual manner of face-to-face interviewing at selected sample points throughout Wales. Instead interviews for the September 2020 survey were undertaken online, using the Cint™ online panel exchange platform. The change in data gathering approach may have resulted in some changes in findings, due to mode effect, and these are highlighted where applicable in the report.

The Cint™ platform and its products comply with ESOMAR, MRS, ARF, MRIA, AMA, AMSRO and Insights Association standards. Cint™ also complies with ISO 20252. Multiple data quality checks are built into the Cint™ system including GEO IP check and CAPTCHA at registration, unique respondent identification and fraudulent behaviour checks. On top of this Beaufort builds in its own quality control questions and measures within the survey and excludes respondents who fail these checks.

The survey was subject to interlocking demographic quota controls of age within gender. A further separate quota control was set on social grade and interviews were undertaken with residents of every local authority in Wales. At the analysis stage, the data was weighted by age group, gender, local authority grouping and social grade to match Census 2011 figures and ensure it was representative of the Wales population.

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 2020 questionnaire was consistent with that used in earlier years. 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 online between 14 September and 4 October 2020, of which 2 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 and we asked to what extent participants 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. As the 2020 survey was carried out online, the 'don't know' response option was shown in the prompted list for the first time. A brief explanation of AS and A levels was given to participants before the question. 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 75% and 70% of adults in Wales agreeing and only 7% disagreeing with each statement (see figure 1 overleaf). Levels of agreement with each statement are lower than in 2019, however, when they were 82% and 80% respectively.

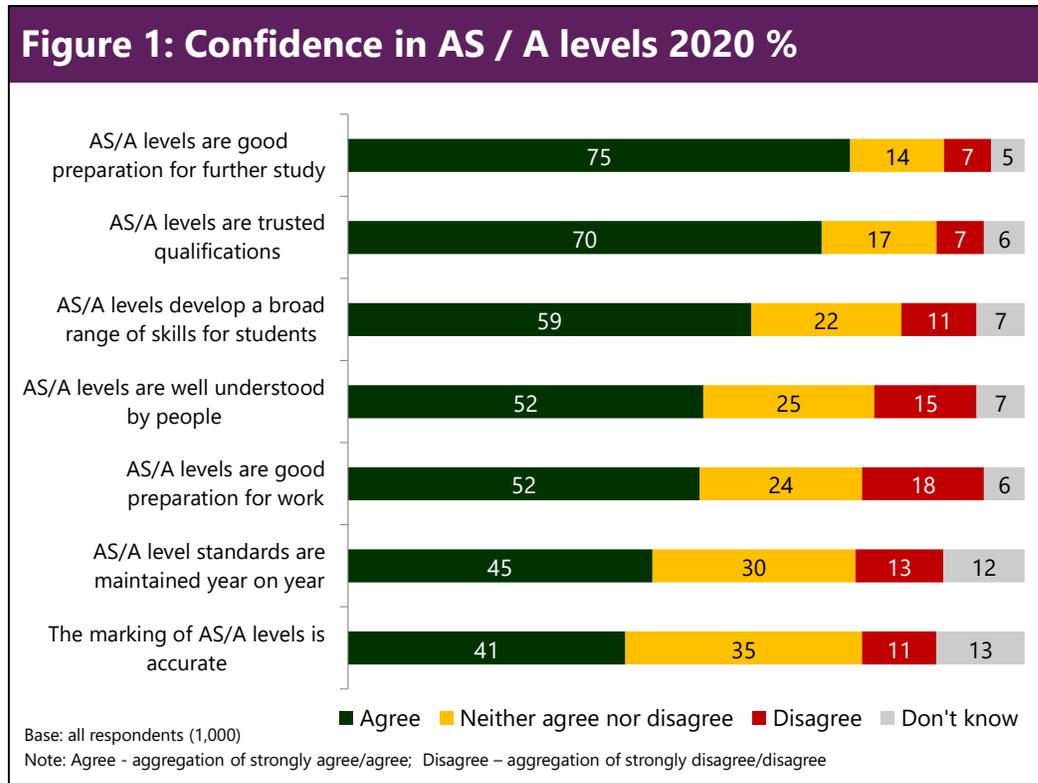
Around six in ten of those interviewed agreed that 'AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students', while around half of the sample agreed that they 'are well understood by people', 'are good preparation for work' and that 'the marking of AS/A levels is accurate'.

Disagreement was highest with the statement 'AS/A levels are good preparation for work', but this has fallen to 18%, from 24% in 2019. Generally, levels of disagreement were similar to (or lower than) those seen in 2019.

As in previous years, sizeable minorities of the population were unable to comment on whether the marking of AS/A levels was accurate (with 13% saying 'don't know') and also whether 'AS/A level standards are maintained year on year' (at 12% 'don't know'). Both levels were unchanged from 2019.

Probably as a result of the change to a self-completion online approach, the proportion of respondents at the mid-point of the scale (that is, answering 'neither agree nor disagree') has increased for all statements in 2020. This is likely to be related to the change in method because having an interviewer changes the dynamic of the interview. In self-completion surveys, respondents are more

willing to give a neutral answer and to admit they do not know much about the subject about which they are being questioned.



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. For example, 58% of ABC1s agreed that 'AS/A levels are well understood by people' compared with 46% of those from the C2DE socioeconomic groups.

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

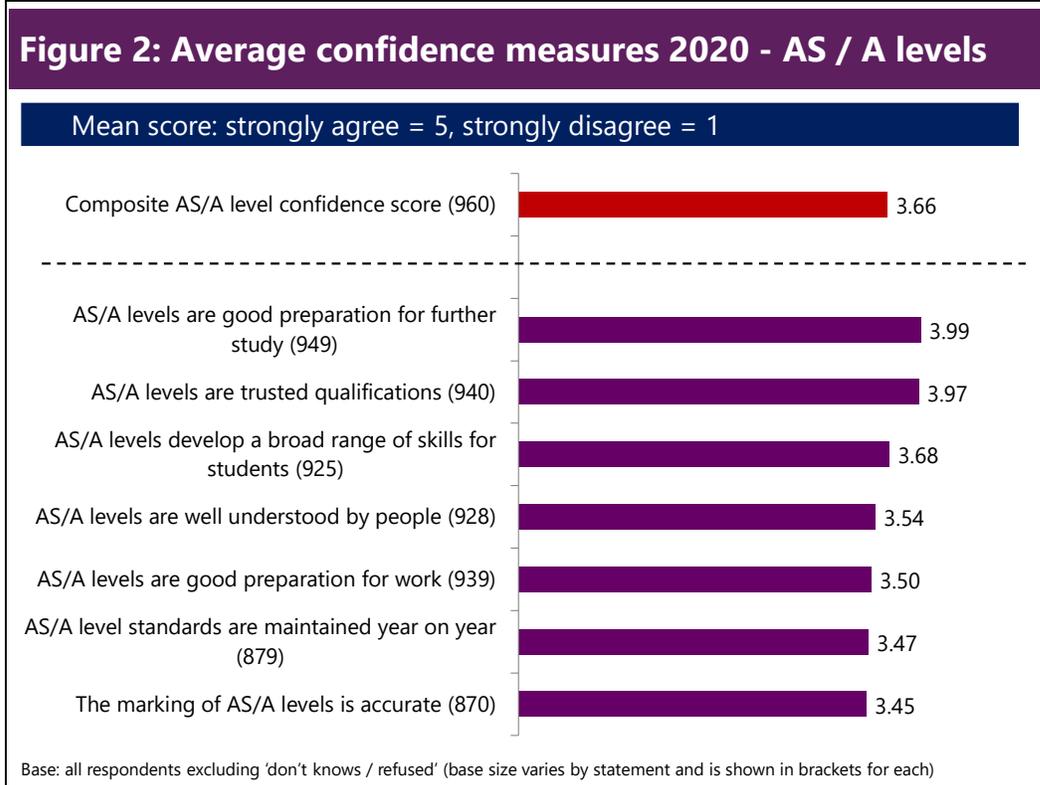
Women were significantly more likely than men to agree that AS/A levels 'are trusted qualifications', 'are well understood' and 'are good preparation for further study.'

Younger people aged 16-34 were generally less positive about AS/A levels than other age groups, although they were most likely to feel that the qualifications 'are well understood'. They were significantly more likely than older people aged 55 and over to disagree with most of the statements, for example that 'AS/A levels are good preparation for work', that they 'are trusted qualifications', 'develop a broad range of skills for students', 'are good preparation for further study' and that 'AS/A level standards are maintained year on year'.

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.

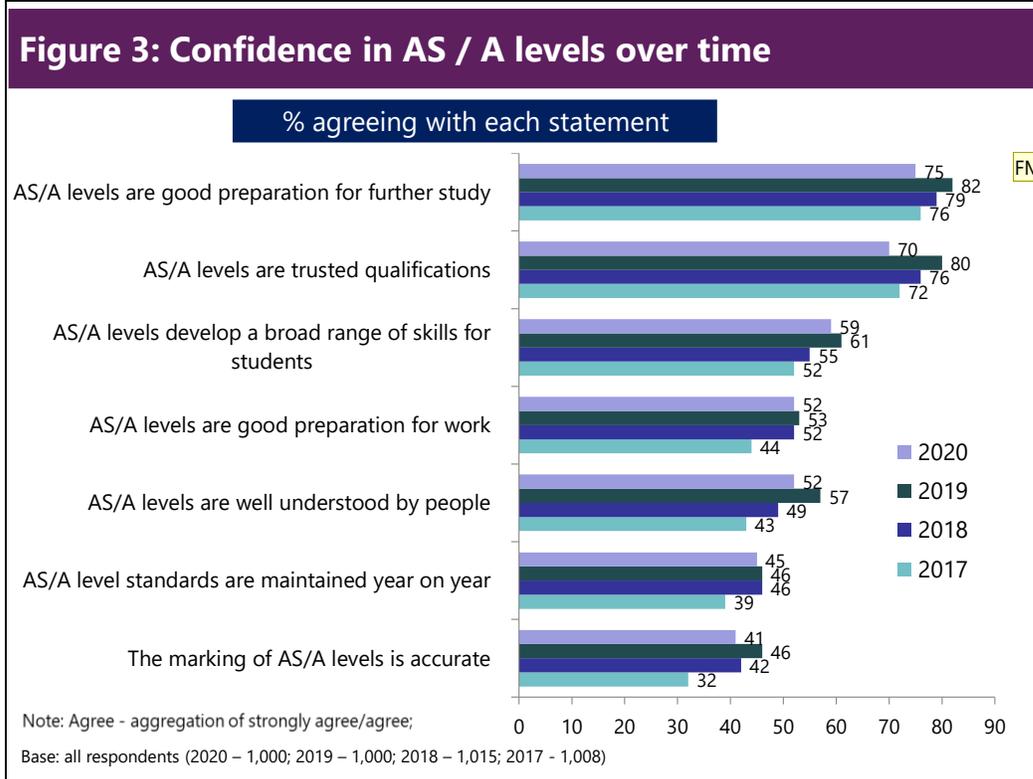
The composite AS/A level confidence mean score for 2020 is 3.66 out of 5, which is slightly higher than the 2019 score (3.60). Mean scores for each individual statement are shown in figure 2 overleaf and range from 3.45 at the lower end (for 'the marking of AS/A levels is accurate'), up to 3.99 (for AS/A levels being 'good preparation for further study').

As in previous years 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 four years of tracking, the 2020 survey shows that agreement levels have fallen back for all statements (see figure 3 overleaf). In some cases, the decline has been very small (for example, on 'AS/A level standards are maintained year on year') while on other statements it is more sizeable (for instance, with 'AS/A levels are trusted qualifications').

This may be a mode effect arising from the change in methodology to online. While there has not been any increase in levels of disagreement in 2020, the proportion of respondents answering 'neither agree nor disagree' to each statement has risen, as noted above.



2.2 Public confidence in GCSEs

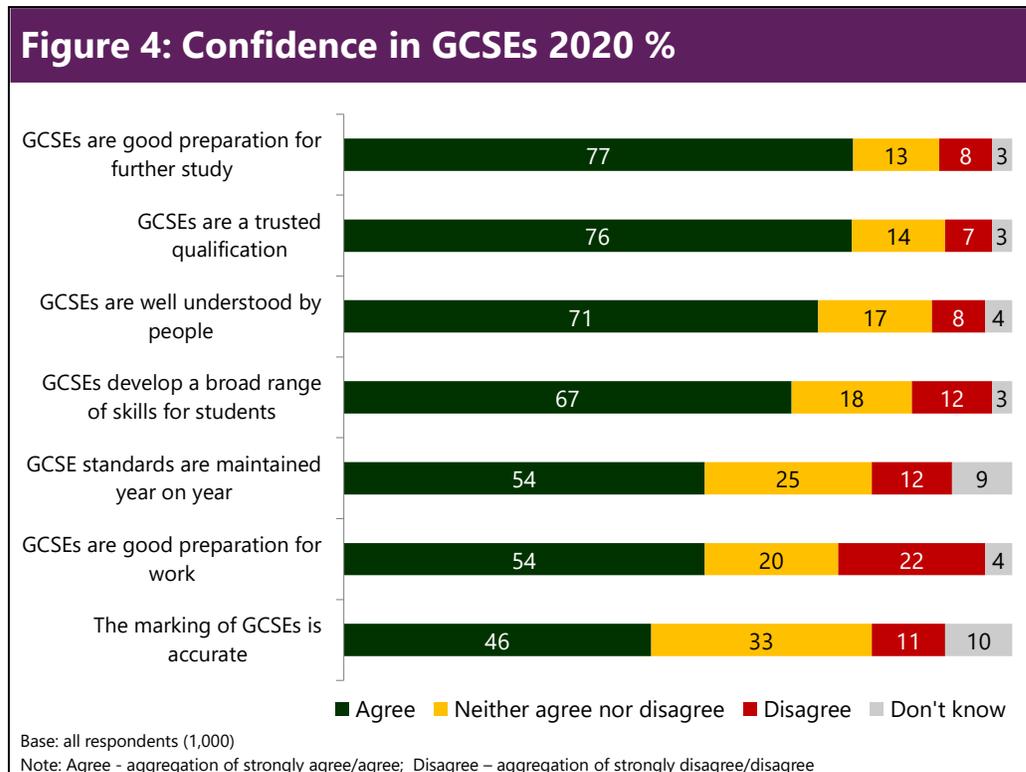
Survey respondents were then presented with a similar set of statements about GCSEs and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Respondents could strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the statements ('don't know' was also included in the list of response options). A brief explanation of GCSEs was included before the question.

As with AS/A levels, GCSEs were strongly perceived to be 'good preparation for further study' and to be 'a trusted qualification', with almost eight in ten of the population in Wales agreeing with each of these statements and fewer than one in ten disagreeing. Around seven in ten of those interviewed agreed that 'GCSEs are well understood by people' and 'develop a broad range of skills for students' (see figure 4 overleaf).

Agreement was lowest that 'the marking of GCSEs is accurate' (at 46%), which has dropped from 50% in 2019. As with the findings for AS/A levels, agreement has fallen on almost all statements in 2020 compared with 2019 levels, while the

proportion of respondents answering 'neither agree nor disagree' has risen year on year.

Consistent with previous years' results and similar to the findings for AS/A levels, a sizeable minority (22%) disagreed that GCSE qualifications are 'good preparation for work'.



As with AS/A levels, people in the ABC1 socioeconomic grades were significantly more likely to agree with many of the statements than those from socioeconomic grades C2DE. For instance, 77% of ABC1s agreed that GCSEs 'are well understood by people' compared with 66% of C2DEs, while 81% of ABC1s felt they 'are good preparation for further study' compared with 73% of C2DEs.

Also consistent with the findings for AS/A levels, 16 to 34 year olds were more negative than other age groups and were significantly more likely than over 55s to disagree with most of the statements. For example, 32% of 16-34s disagreed that GCSEs are 'good preparation for work' compared with 15% of those aged 55 and over, while 16% of 16-34s disagreed that GCSEs are 'good preparation for further study' compared with just 4% of over 55s saying this.

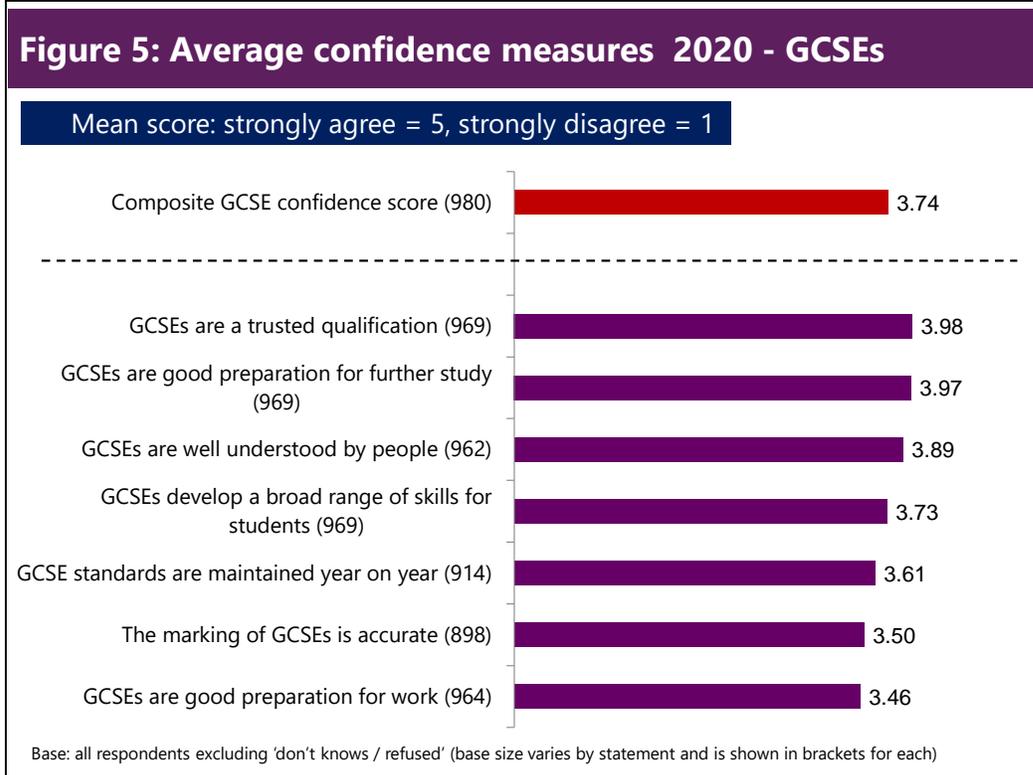
Fewer statistically significant differences were evident by gender than for AS/A levels, although women were significantly more likely than men to agree that GCSEs 'are good preparation for further study' and 'are trusted qualifications'.

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 2020 is 3.74 out of 5. As with the AS/A level composite score, this has risen slightly from its 2019 level of 3.67. Although the 2020 GCSE composite mean score of 3.74 is slightly higher than the corresponding AS/A level composite score of 3.66 the difference is not statistically significant.

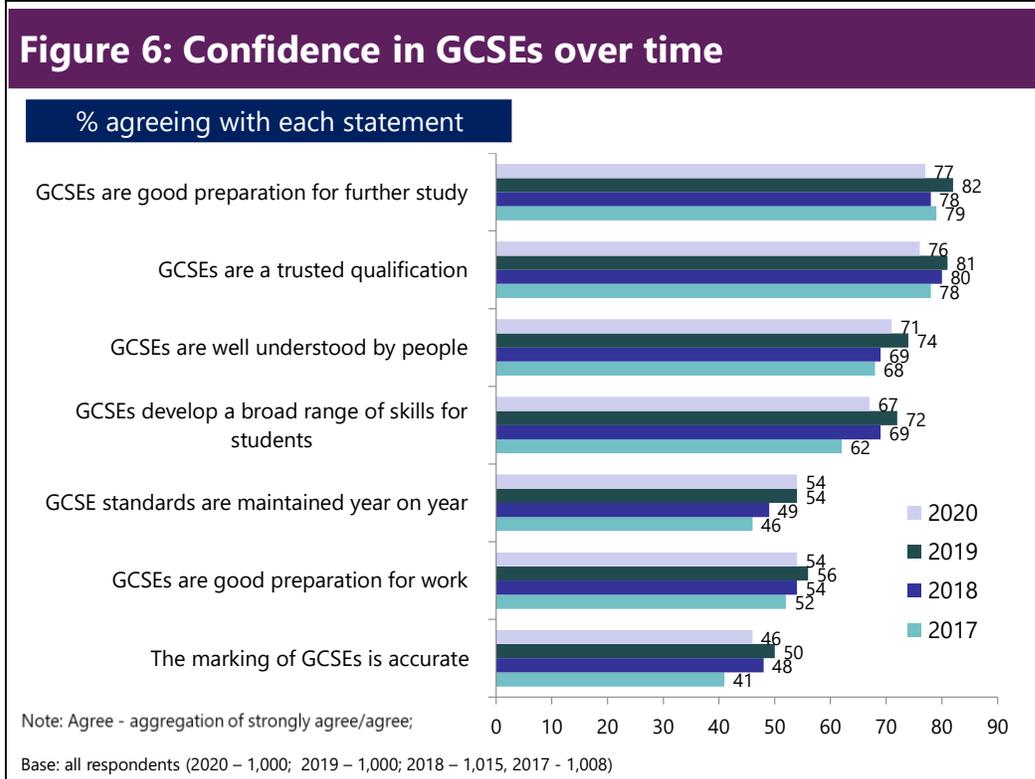
Mean scores for each individual statement are shown in figure 5 overleaf and range from 3.46 at the lower end (for GCSEs being 'good preparation for work'), up to 3.98 (for GCSEs being 'a trusted qualification'). As in previous years a significantly higher score was given for GCSEs being 'well understood by people' than was the case for AS/A levels (3.89 in the case of GCSEs, compared with 3.54 for AS/A levels).

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



As with AS/A levels, agreement levels for almost all GCSE statements have fallen back in 2020 from 2019 (see figure 6 overleaf). The exception is 'GCSE standards are maintained year on year', which has not changed. The decreases are the result of larger proportions of respondents at the mid-point of the scale in 2020 (that is, answering 'neither agree nor disagree'), rather than an increase in the proportion disagreeing.

The largest decreases are evident for 'GCSEs are good preparation for further study', 'are a trusted qualification' and 'develop a broad range of skills for students', with drops of 5% year on year for each dimension.



2.3 Views on qualifications

Respondents to the 2020 survey were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about qualifications:

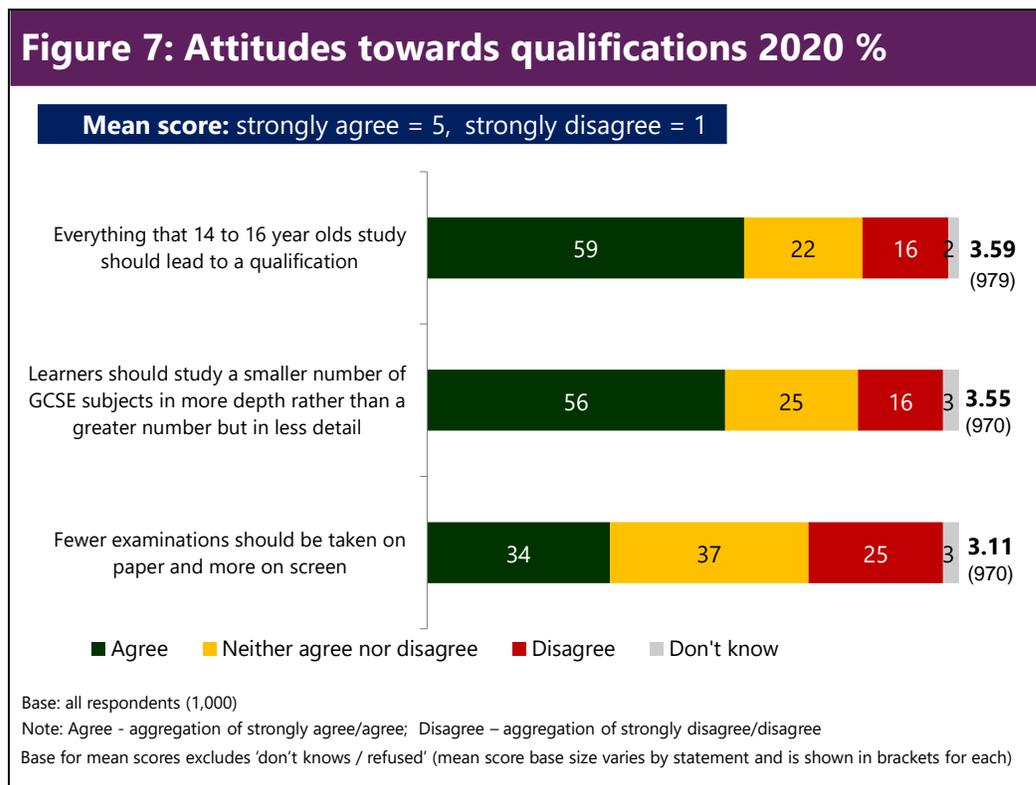
1. Learners should study a smaller number of GCSE subjects in more depth rather than a greater number but in less detail
2. Everything that 14 to 16 year olds study should lead to a qualification
3. Fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen.

Statements 1 and 2 have been included in the tracking survey since 2018, while statement 3 was added to 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 also included in the scale).

Responses to the statements were mixed. While around six in ten Welsh adults agreed that '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'. Just a third of respondents agreed with the latter, compared with a quarter disagreeing with the idea (see figure 7 below).

The same mode effect was evident here as with the confidence statements for AS/A levels and GCSEs, with higher proportions of respondents in 2020 giving a 'neither agree nor disagree' response and a corresponding decrease in the proportions agreeing with each statement.

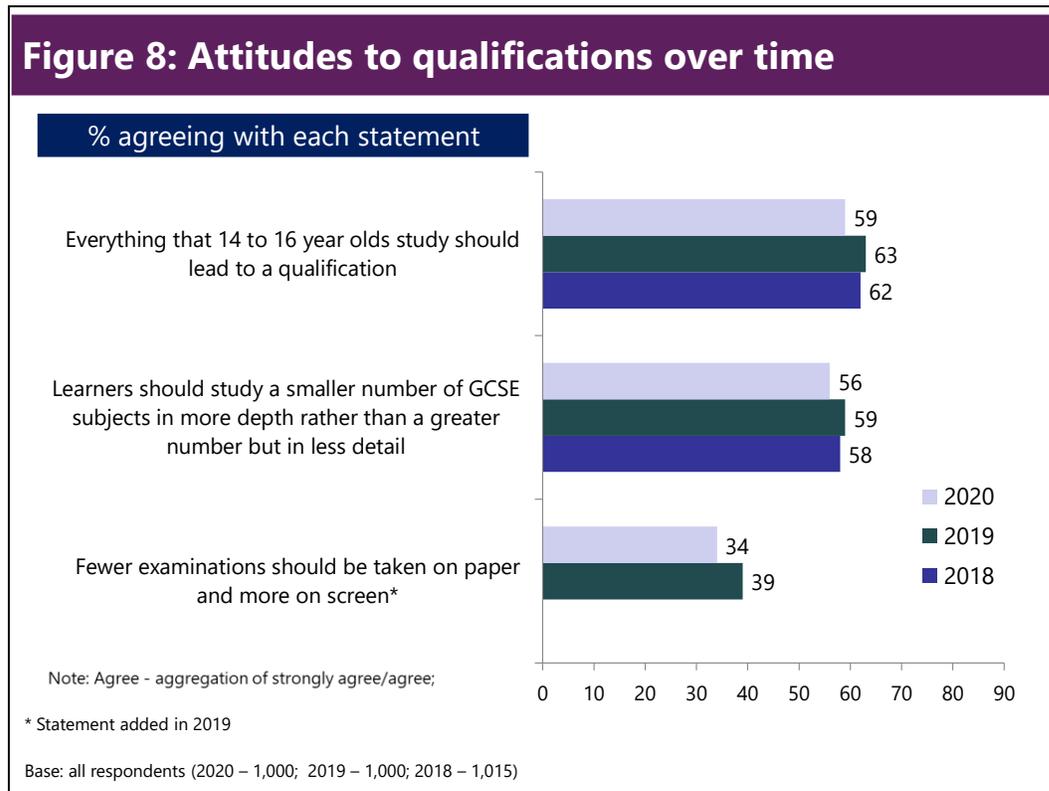


Those aged under 55 were significantly more likely to agree that 'Fewer examinations should be taken on paper and more on screen' than older people aged 55 and over. 39% of 16-34s and 38% of 35-54s agreed with this statement, compared with 27% of those aged 55 or more.

As in 2019, people 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'. 21% of ABC1s disagreed with this statement compared with 11% 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

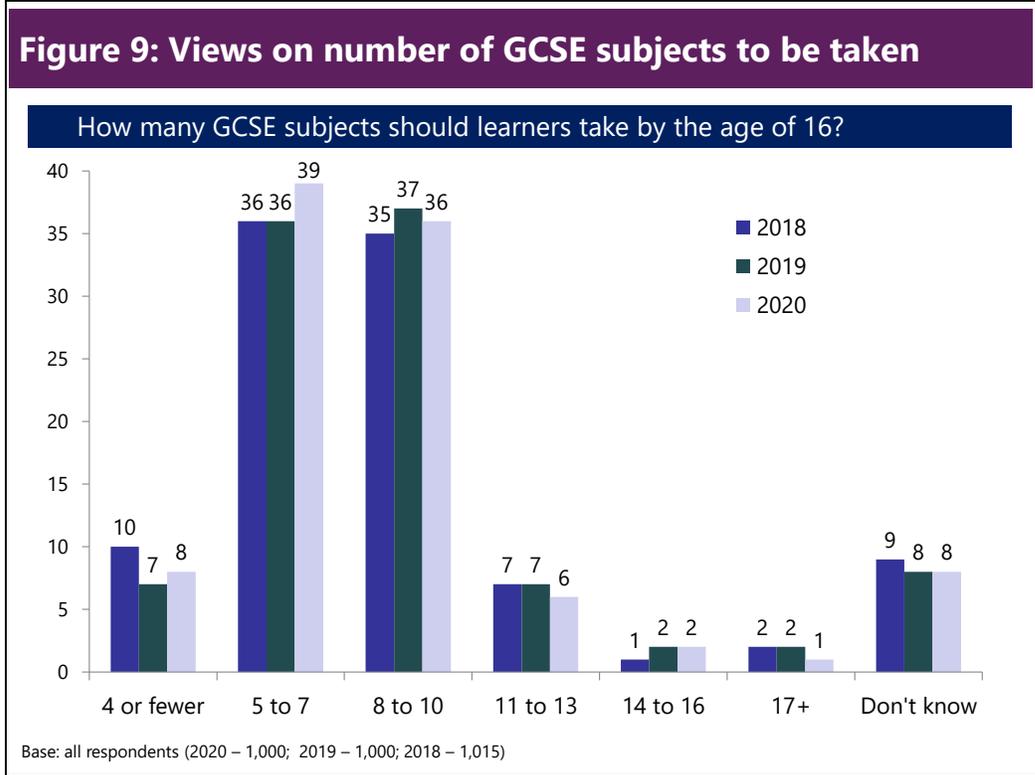
qualification’ - 22% of the former disagreed with this, compared with 10% of the latter.

As mentioned above, agreement levels with all three statements fell back slightly in 2020 from the level seen in previous years - see figure 8.



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 previous years the great majority of the Welsh public (75%) felt that learners should take between 5 and 10 GCSE subjects by the age of 16, with 39% choosing 5 to 7 subjects (a slight rise from 2019) and 36% 8 to 10 subjects. Another 8% felt learners should take a smaller number of subjects (4 or fewer), while 6% opted for 11 to 13 subjects. Just 3% felt learners should take 14 or more GCSE subjects and another 8% were unable to answer (see figure 9 overleaf).



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 just 1% of those aged 55 and over saying this.

2.4 Familiarity with and confidence in the Welsh Baccaulaureate

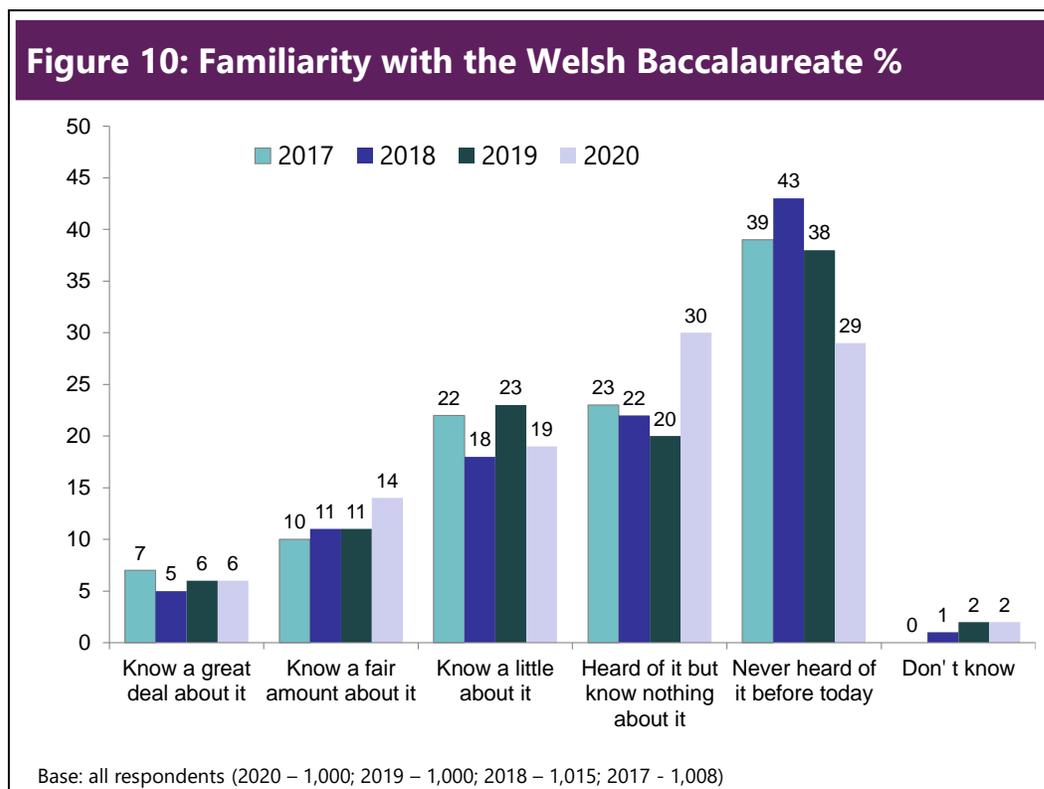
As in previous years respondents were asked how much, if anything, they know about what the Welsh Baccaulaureate is. Almost seven in ten Welsh adults (69%) said they had heard of the Welsh Baccaulaureate before being interviewed. This is a marked increase from the 2019 awareness level of 60%.

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 at 83% and 80% among each of these groups.

Around three in ten Welsh adults (29%) 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 39% and 58% of these groups respectively not having heard of it before being interviewed).

The increase in awareness of the qualification in 2020 does not seem to be driven by increased levels of familiarity. Almost half of those interviewed (49% overall) said they had heard of the Welsh BaccaLaureate but knew either nothing or only a little about it. Only 20% overall felt they knew a fair amount or a great deal about the qualification.

Young people aged 16 to 34 were significantly more likely to say they knew a great deal or a fair amount about the Welsh Bacc than other age groups, with 15% and 22% respectively saying this, compared with 6% and 14% overall.

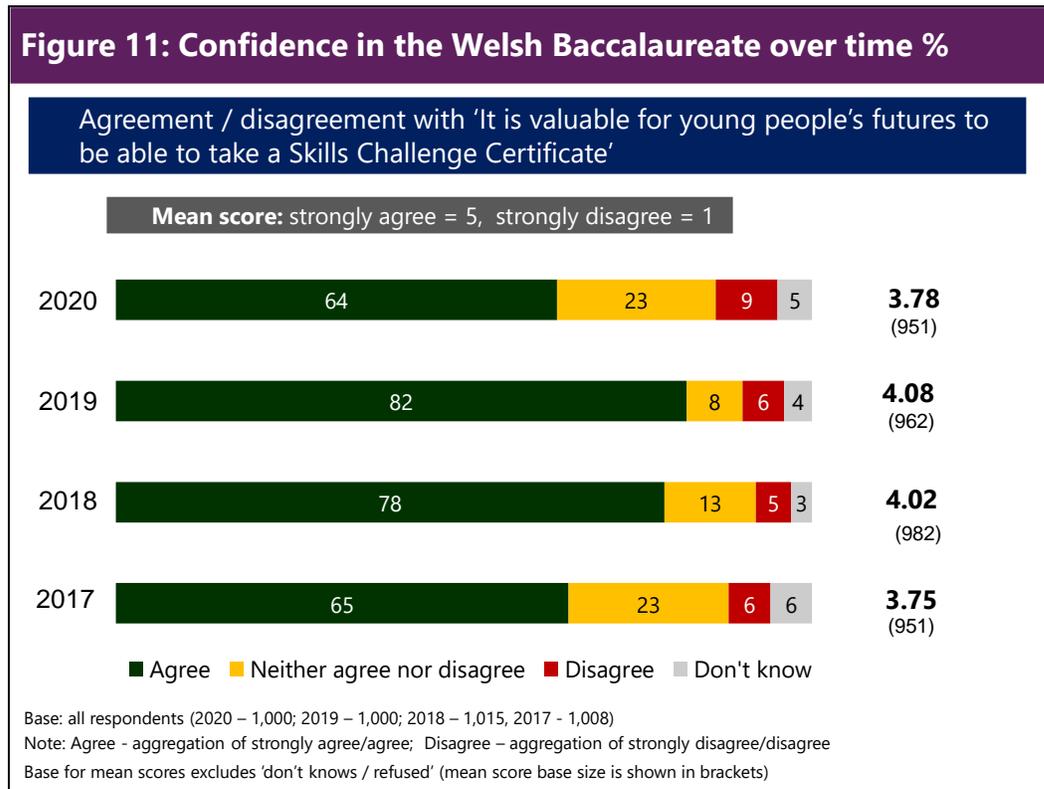


An explanation of the Welsh BaccaLaureate and the Skills Challenge Certificate was then shown before respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that it was valuable for young people’s futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate. The same 5-point scale was used as for the statements about AS/A levels and GCSEs earlier in the interview, together with a ‘don’t know’ response.

Agreement that ‘it is valuable for young people’s futures to be able to take a Skills Challenge Certificate’ has dropped in 2020 to 64% (from 82% in 2019). This is due to an increase in the proportion that neither agreed nor disagreed with the

statement, rather than any major change in the level of disagreement year on year (see figure 11).

The mean score of 3.78 in 2020 for this statement is significantly lower than the 2019 mean (4.08).



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 different statements about vocational qualifications and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each.

Eight in ten Welsh adults agreed that 'vocational qualifications, taken in school, are valuable for young people's futures', while seven in ten 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'. Levels of disagreement with each statement were low – at 4% and 8% respectively (see figures 12 and 13).

In line with other findings in 2020, agreement with both statements has fallen back from 2019 (because of a higher proportion of respondents at the mid-point of the scale) but agreement remains high. The mean scores for 2020 for each statement are significantly lower than in 2019, however.

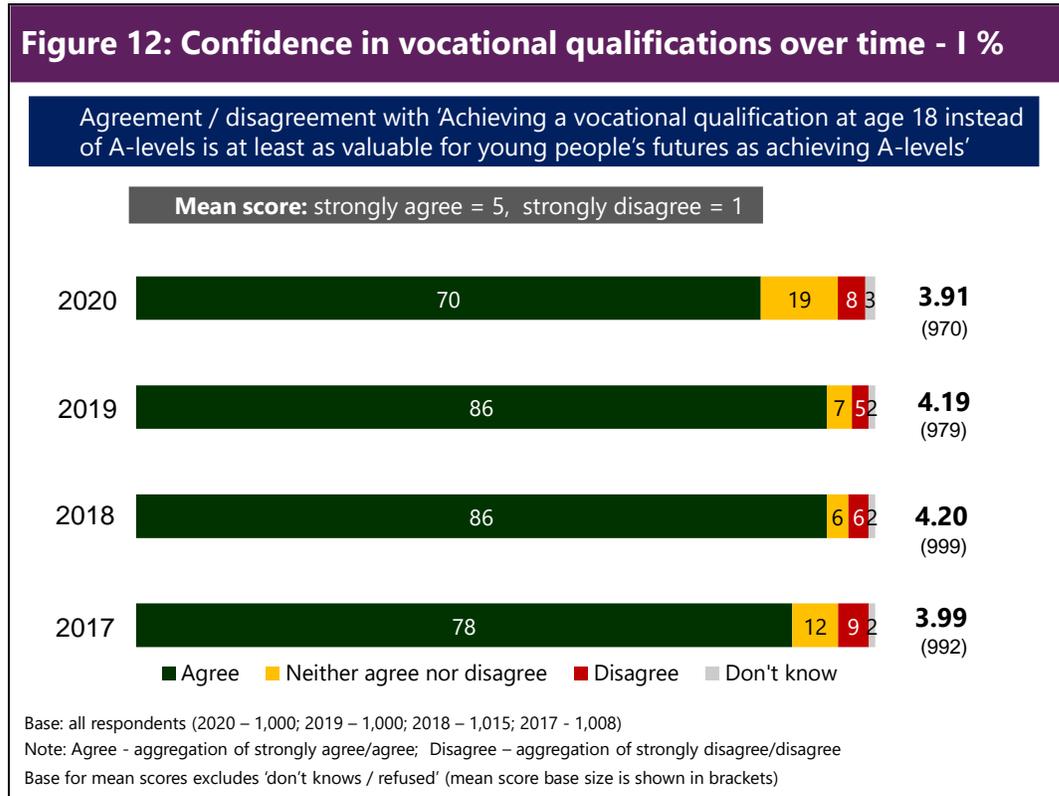
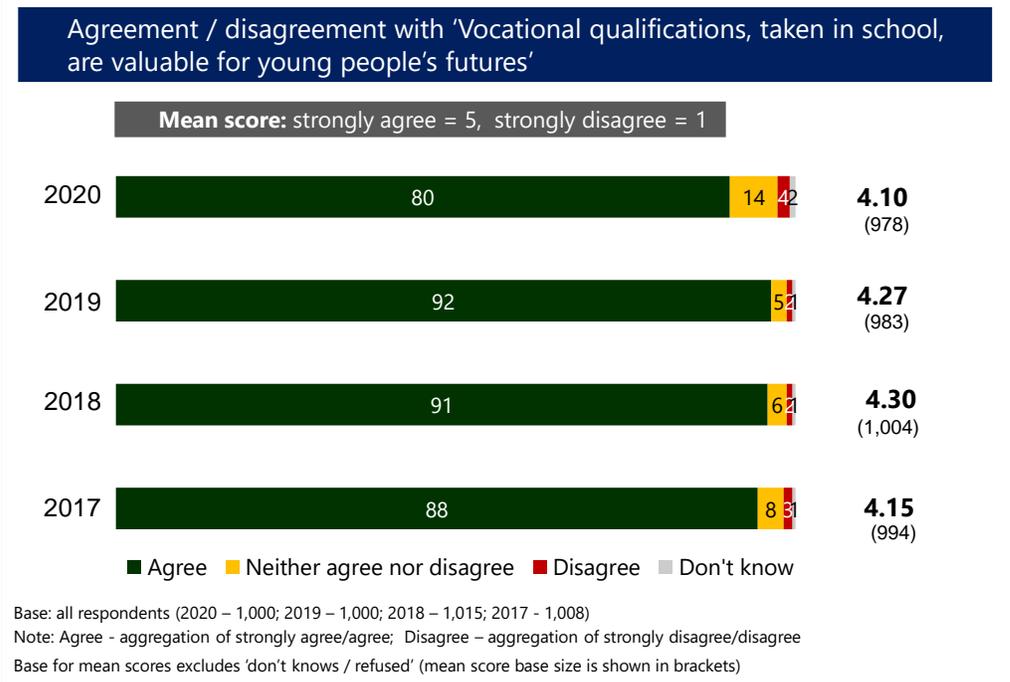


Figure 13: Confidence in vocational qualifications over time - II %



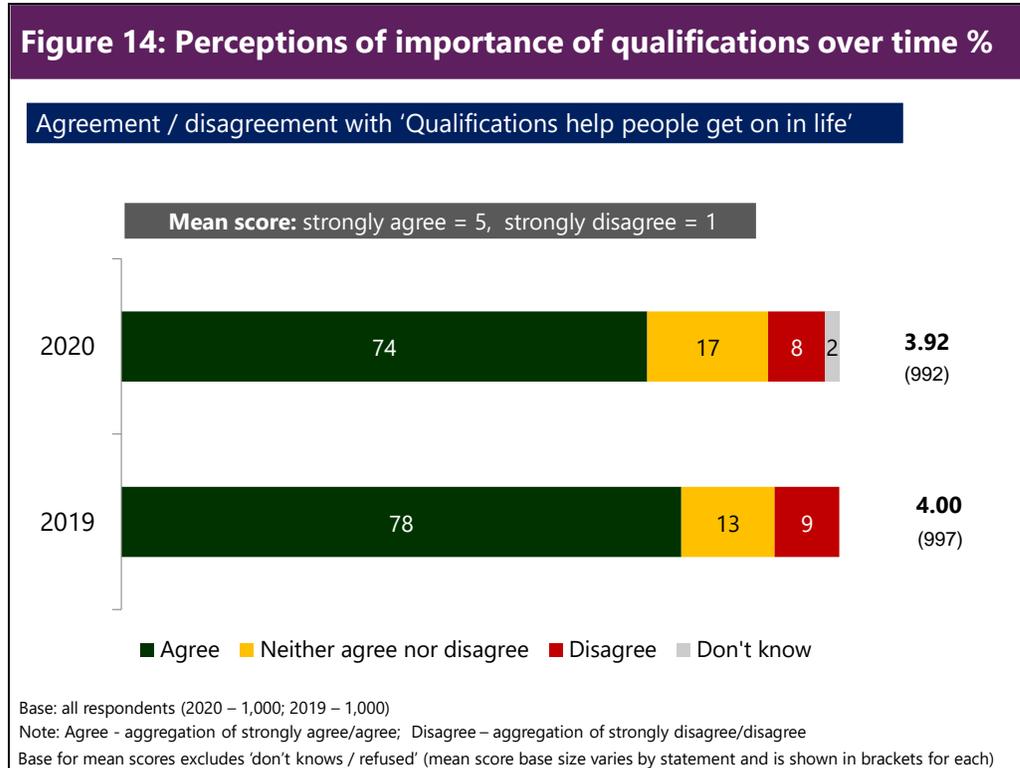
As in previous years, perceptions of the value of vocational qualifications were significantly more positive than those relating to the value of the Welsh Baccalaureate. There is a significant difference between the mean score for 'Vocational qualifications, taken in school, are valuable for young people's 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 three in four of those interviewed (74%) agreed that 'Qualifications help people get on in life' while less than one in ten (8%) were of the opposite view. Another 17% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Older 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 ABC1 socioeconomic groups compared to those in the C2DE socioeconomic groups.



Appendix I

Survey questionnaire

**B02010_3 September Wales Omnibus
2020 Qualifications Wales Questions – FINAL 7.09.20**

ASK ALL

Q1. We'd like to ask you some questions about your views on qualifications in Welsh secondary schools and colleges. Firstly, some questions about A levels and AS levels.

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? Scale: *strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

ORDER OF STATEMENTS TO BE RANDOMISED

- 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

Q2. Now some questions about GCSEs. 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? Scale: *strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

ORDER OF STATEMENTS TO BE RANDOMISED

- 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

Q3. The Welsh Baccalaureate is taken in 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

Q4. 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. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the Welsh Baccalaureate? *Scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

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

ASK ALL

Q5. 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. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *Scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

- 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

Q6. Some young people in schools take vocational qualifications alongside their GCSEs. These vocational qualifications cover a range of work related subjects.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *Scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

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

ASK ALL

Q7. Thinking about GCSEs again, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

ORDER OF STATEMENTS TO BE RANDOMISED

- 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

Q8. How many GCSE subjects should learners take by the age of 16? *Please tick one only*

4 or fewer

5-7

8-10

11-13

14-16

17+

Don't know

ASK ALL

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *Scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree, don't know*

- i) Qualifications help people get on in life

ASK ALL

Q10. Are you in education or do you have any children in any of the following situations? *Tick all that apply*

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

Q11. Thinking now about yourself, what is your highest level of educational qualification? *Tick one only*

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

Appendix II

Comparison of September and November 2020 survey results

Table A1: Confidence in AS/A levels

	All Sept 2020		All Nov 2020		Sept 2020	Nov 2020
	% Agree	% Disagree	% Agree	% Disagree	Mean score	Mean score
AS/A levels are good preparation for further study	75	7	76	6	3.99	4.06
AS/A levels are trusted qualifications	70	7	74	5	3.97	4.05
AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students	59	11	60	12	3.68	3.69
AS/A levels are well understood by people	52	15	53	15	3.54	3.55
AS/A levels are good preparation for work	52	18	53	22	3.50	3.47
AS/A level standards are maintained year on year	45	13	52	13	3.47	3.56
The marking of AS/A levels is accurate	41	11	46	11	3.45	3.48

Base: all respondents (Sept – 1,000; Nov – 1,002; for mean scores base excludes don't knows and varies slightly by statement)

Scale for mean scores: strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1

Table A2: Confidence in GCSEs

	All Sept 2020		All Nov 2020		Sept 2020	Nov 2020
	% Agree	% Disagree	% Agree	% Disagree	Mean score	Mean score
GCSEs are good preparation for further study	77	8	77	7	3.97	3.99
GCSEs are a trusted qualification	76	7	78	4	3.98	4.08
GCSEs are well understood by people	71	8	73	7	3.89	3.93
GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students	67	12	65	11	3.73	3.75
GCSE standards are maintained year on year	54	12	54	14	3.61	3.57
GCSEs are good preparation for work	54	22	52	23	3.46	3.43
The marking of GCSEs is accurate	46	11	51	11	3.50	3.57

Base: all respondents (Sept – 1,000; Nov – 1,002; for mean scores base excludes don't knows and varies slightly by statement)
Scale for mean scores: strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1

Table A3: Q. GCSEs are going to be reformed by 2027. Overall, how do you think the reformed GCSEs should typically be assessed?

	November 2020 %
Where possible GCSEs should always be assessed through an exam at the end of the course	15
Where possible GCSEs should always be assessed through coursework	17
Where possible GCSEs should always be assessed through a mix of exams and coursework	63
Don't know	6

Base: all respondents (1,002)