



## Levels of Highest Qualification held by Working Age Adults, 2018

30 April 2019  
SFR 31/2019

Overall, qualification levels in Wales increased in 2018, continuing the general increase seen over time. The increases have taken place mostly in the proportion of working age adults at level 3 (2 A-levels or equivalent qualifications), and secondly at the highest level (7 to 8), with the proportion at levels 4-6 (Higher Education level) remaining steady.

### About this release

This statistical release presents key statistics on the highest qualification held by adults of working age in Wales, according to their age at the start of the academic year.

The statistics provided are taken from the Annual Population Survey (APS) for the year ending 31 December 2018. Qualifications have been grouped into National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels.

This release contains data for one of the 46 national well-being indicators.

### In this release

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### Key Results

Estimated per cent of working age adults in Wales with:

	2017	2018
No Qualifications	8.7%	8.4%
NQF Level 2 or above <sup>1</sup>	78.5%	78.9%
NQF Level 3 or above <sup>2</sup>	58.3%	59.1%
NQF Level 4 or above <sup>3</sup>	37.5%	37.8%

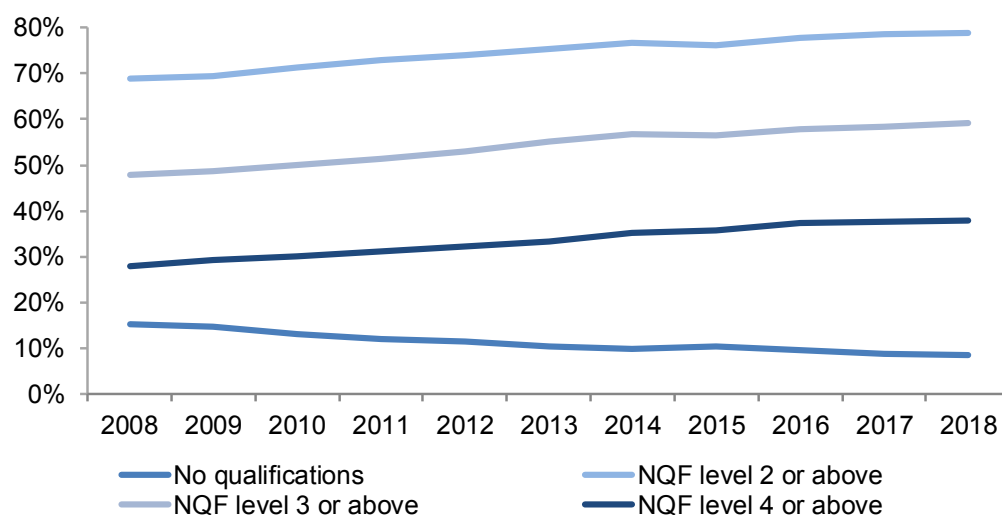
2014 2018

[1] 5 GCSEs A\*-C or equivalent qualifications

[2] 2 A-levels or equivalent qualifications

[3] Higher Education or equivalent level qualifications

**Chart 1: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, 2008 to 2018**



Working age adults refers to males and females aged 18 to 64.

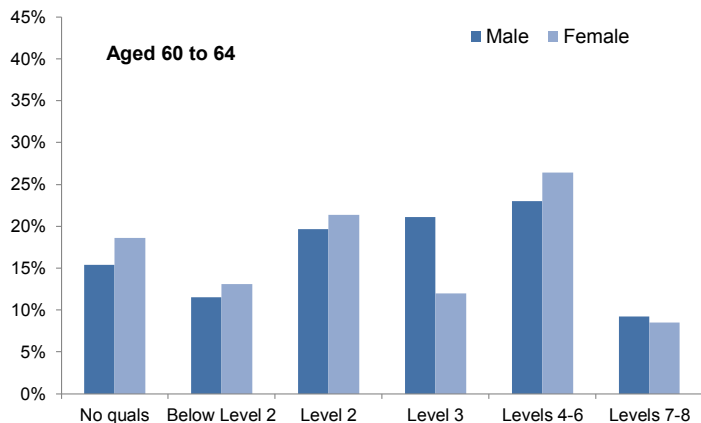
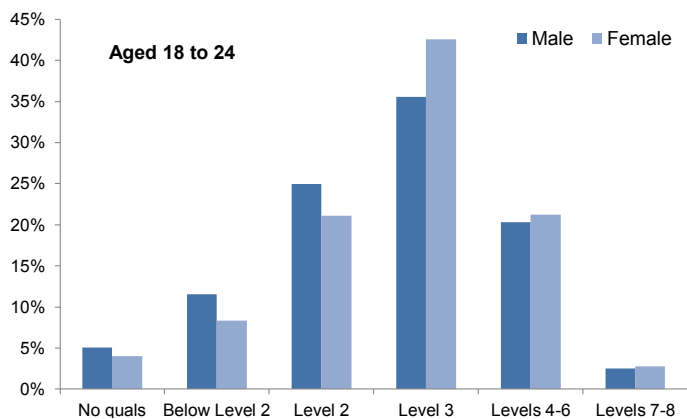
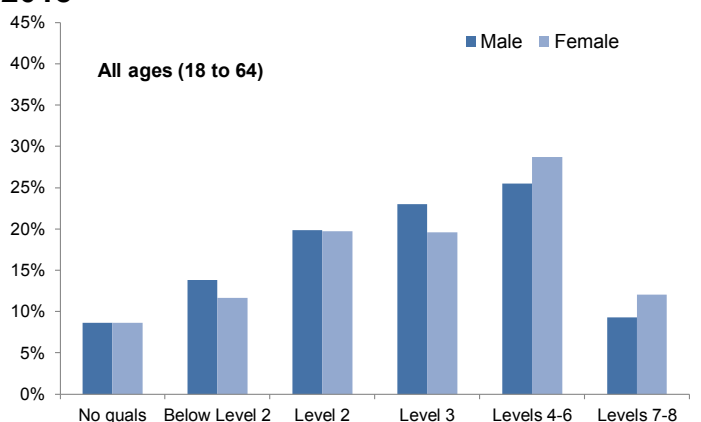
## Level of highest qualification held, by characteristic

### Gender and age

Overall, similar proportions of males and females hold no qualifications, whilst females are more likely to hold qualifications at or above level 4. Within this, there are higher proportions of males than females with no qualifications in all age groups except for the oldest age group of 60 to 64. Females are more likely to hold qualifications at or above level 4 in all age groups.

The proportion of adults with qualifications decreases with age. In 2018, 85 per cent of 18-24 year olds held at least level 2 qualifications compared with 71 per cent of 60-64 year olds. The qualification profile is shown for all ages, alongside that for those aged 18 to 24 and 60 to 64.

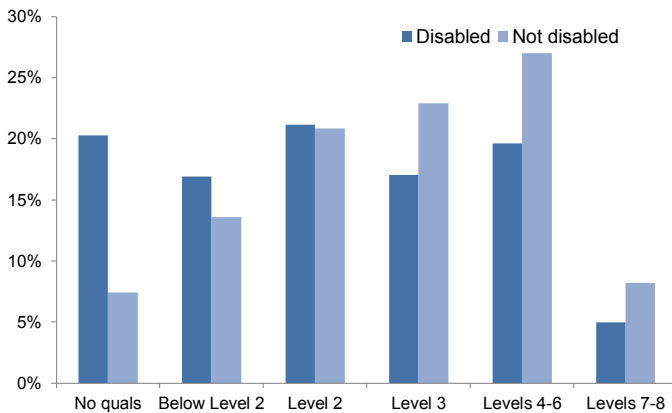
**Chart 2: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, by gender, 2018**



## Disability

People with a disability (on basis of Equality Act 2010 legal definition) are more likely to hold no qualifications than non-disabled people, and less likely to hold qualifications at or above levels 2, 3 and 4.

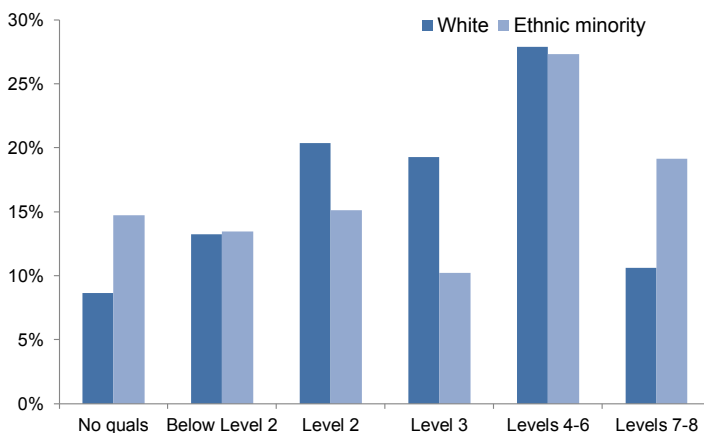
**Chart 3: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, by disability, 2018**



## Ethnicity

People from an ethnic minority are more likely to hold higher education level qualifications than those from a white ethnic group, but also more likely to have no qualifications.

**Chart 4: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, by ethnicity, 2018**



## Welsh language

Higher qualification levels are reported amongst Welsh speakers than their non-Welsh speaking counterparts.

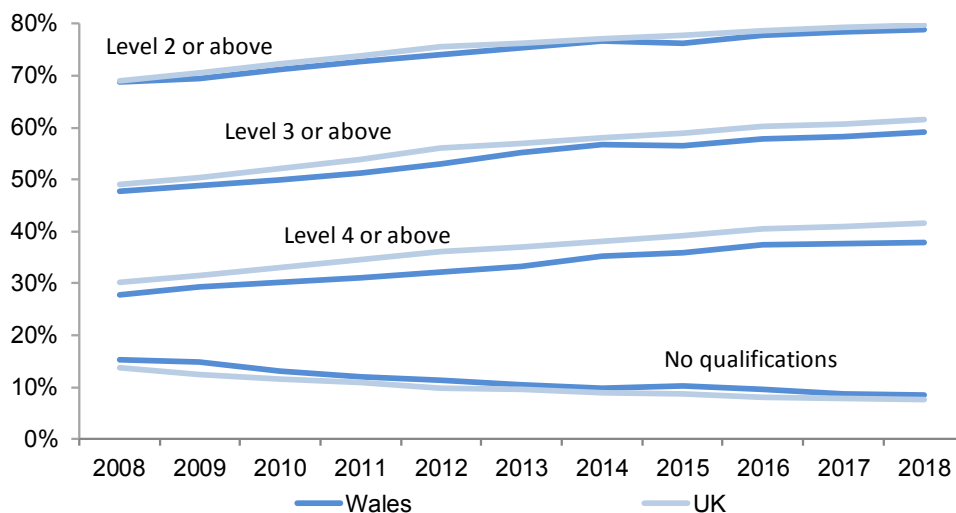
## Geography

In general, qualification levels were highest in Cardiff, Monmouthshire and Vale of Glamorgan, and lowest in Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil.

Qualification levels in Wales were lower than in England, Scotland and the UK as a whole, but higher than in Northern Ireland and some English regions.

As part of its [Employability Plan](#) the Welsh Government established a target to eliminate the gap between Wales and the rest of the UK at all qualification levels in 10 years, and ensure in future as a minimum, to maintain performance relative to the rest of the UK. This target is to be assessed using this Annual Population Survey data

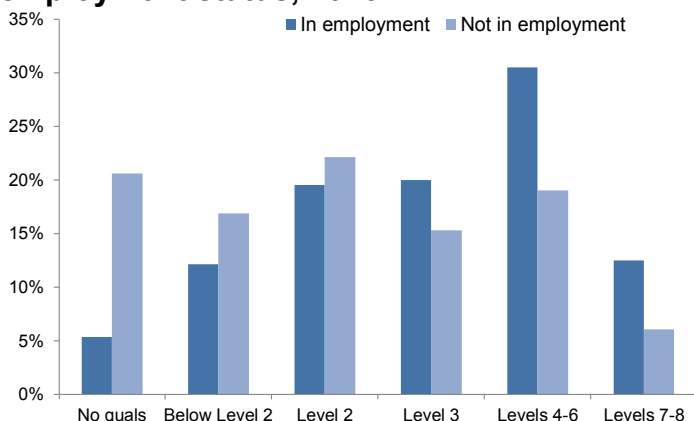
**Chart 5: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, Wales and UK, 2008 to 2018**



### Employment status

In 2018, 21 per cent of those who are either ILO unemployed or economically inactive reported having no qualifications. This compares to 5 per cent for those in employment. (Excluding those who are in full-time education).

**Chart 6: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, by employment status, 2018**



### Occupation

Persons employed in professional occupations are more likely to be qualified to at least level 2 than those in other jobs. In 2018, 98 per cent of persons in professional occupations are qualified at this level.

**Table 1: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age in Wales, 2018  
(a)**

	Percentage of adults of working age qualified at each NQF level						
	No qualifications	Below Level 2	Level 2	Level 2+	Level 3	Levels 4-6	Level 4+
<b>By gender</b>							
Persons	8	13	20	79	21	27	38
Males	9	14	20	78	23	25	35
Females	8	12	20	80	20	29	41
<b>By age</b>							
18-24	5	10	23	85	39	21	23
25-34	6	12	19	82	22	30	41
35-49	7	12	18	80	18	30	45
50-59	11	16	21	73	16	26	37
60-64	17	12	21	71	16	25	34
<b>By ethnic origin (b)</b>							
White	9	13	20	78	19	28	39
Ethnic minority	15	13	15	72	10	27	46
<b>By disability status (c)</b>							
Disabled	17	16	21	68	18	21	28
Not disabled	6	12	19	82	22	29	41
<b>By Welsh language ability</b>							
Welsh speaker	5	8	18	87	23	32	46
Non Welsh speaker	10	14	21	76	20	26	35
<b>By economic activity and main job (d)</b>							
In employment	5	12	20	83	19	30	43
of which:							
Managers, Directors & senior officials	4	9	16	89	16	40	57
Professional occupations	1	2	4	98	7	49	87
Associate professional & technical	2	7	14	92	17	47	61
Administrative & secretarial	2	12	29	87	21	31	36
Skilled Trades occupations	8	15	28	77	32	15	17
Caring, Leisure & other service occupations	4	10	24	85	32	24	29
Sales and Customer Service occupations	7	17	27	75	25	19	22
Process, plant & machine operatives	12	25	34	62	20	7	8
Elementary occupations	16	25	27	58	17	12	14
ILO unemployed or economically inactive	21	17	22	63	15	19	25

Source: Annual Population Survey 2018

(a) Adult working age is defined as 18-64 for males and females

(b) Excludes persons in full-time education. Excluding unknowns

(c) On basis of Equality Act 2010 legal definition of disabled. Excluding unknowns

(d) Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) 2010.

Excludes persons in full-time education. Excluding unknowns.

**Table 2: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age in Wales, by local authority, 2018 (a)**

	Percentage of adults of working age qualified at each NQF level						
	No qualifications	Below Level 2	Level 2	Level 2+	Level 3	Levels 4-6	Level 4+
Isle of Anglesey	6	12	18	<b>82</b>	24	32	<b>40</b>
Gwynedd	6	11	18	<b>83</b>	26	26	<b>39</b>
Conwy	7	15	22	<b>78</b>	18	27	<b>39</b>
Denbighshire	7	13	23	<b>80</b>	21	25	<b>35</b>
Flintshire	9	13	22	<b>78</b>	25	24	<b>31</b>
Wrexham	7	14	23	<b>80</b>	21	28	<b>36</b>
Powys	7	13	19	<b>80</b>	23	28	<b>38</b>
Ceredigion	6	10	16	<b>84</b>	29	25	<b>39</b>
Pembrokeshire	9	12	22	<b>79</b>	21	27	<b>37</b>
Carmarthenshire	8	13	22	<b>79</b>	18	29	<b>38</b>
Swansea	9	10	17	<b>80</b>	26	25	<b>37</b>
Neath Port Talbot	11	14	25	<b>76</b>	20	24	<b>31</b>
Bridgend	11	15	19	<b>74</b>	19	27	<b>36</b>
The Vale of Glamorgan	6	12	15	<b>83</b>	19	32	<b>48</b>
Cardiff	7	8	16	<b>85</b>	19	32	<b>49</b>
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12	14	21	<b>74</b>	21	26	<b>33</b>
Merthyr Tydfil	15	21	22	<b>64</b>	18	18	<b>24</b>
Caerphilly	9	14	24	<b>76</b>	22	22	<b>31</b>
Blaenau Gwent	15	16	21	<b>69</b>	23	19	<b>25</b>
Torfaen	9	17	20	<b>75</b>	23	26	<b>32</b>
Monmouthshire	5	11	16	<b>84</b>	16	36	<b>51</b>
Newport	8	16	21	<b>77</b>	20	27	<b>36</b>
<b>Wales</b>	8	13	20	<b>79</b>	21	27	<b>38</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey 2018

(a) Adult working age is defined as 18-64 for males and females.

**Table 3: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age in the United Kingdom, 2018 (a)**

	Percentage of adults of working age qualified at each NQF level						
	No qualifications	Below Level 2	Level 2	Level 2+	Level 3	Levels 4-6	Level 4+
England	7	13	18	<b>80</b>	20	29	<b>41</b>
North East	9	13	22	<b>78</b>	22	24	<b>33</b>
North West	9	12	20	<b>79</b>	21	28	<b>38</b>
Yorkshire & Humberside	8	15	20	<b>77</b>	22	26	<b>35</b>
East Midlands	8	15	20	<b>78</b>	23	27	<b>35</b>
West Midlands	10	13	20	<b>77</b>	21	26	<b>36</b>
Eastern	7	16	20	<b>77</b>	20	27	<b>38</b>
London	6	11	13	<b>83</b>	14	36	<b>56</b>
South East	5	12	17	<b>83</b>	21	32	<b>45</b>
South West	5	12	18	<b>83</b>	23	30	<b>41</b>
Wales	8	13	20	<b>79</b>	21	27	<b>38</b>
Scotland	10	11	16	<b>79</b>	15	37	<b>48</b>
Northern Ireland	14	10	19	<b>76</b>	20	27	<b>37</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	8	13	18	<b>80</b>	20	30	<b>42</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey 2018

(a) Adult working age is defined as 18-64 for males and females.

## Notes

### Policy and operational context

This statistical release presents the annual snapshot of qualification levels of the working age population in Wales.

The statistics are used within the Welsh Government to monitor trends in qualification levels and specifically are included within the Employability Plan targets and the Skills Performance measures. This release contains data for one of the 46 national well-being indicators – see Well-being of Future Generations Act section on page 11.

### Background to the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey

The data presented in this release are based on the results of the Annual Population Survey for 2018. Data from the Annual Population Survey, a household survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics is available from 2004, and prior to this comparable data are available from the annual Local Labour Force Survey for Wales for 2001-2003.

From 2001, annual Local Labour Force Survey (LLFS) data collected in Wales were based on a significantly enhanced sample. This larger sample allowed for more detailed and more robust analysis, particularly for sub-Wales geographies.

Developments to the LLFS led to the Annual Population Survey (APS) which now provides annual datasets updated on a rolling quarterly basis from the Labour Force Survey. The data presented here are based on the year ending 31 December 2018.

The annual LLFS/APS datasets are derived from a sample of approximately 23,000 people of working age across Wales, with a minimum of around 800 people of working age in most local authorities in Wales.

Data in this release are presented for working age adults referring to males and females aged 18-64 according to their age at the start of the academic year. Between April 2010 and November 2018 the state pension age for women gradually increased from 60 to 65. Accordingly, the series has been amended to a working age definition of 18-64 for both males and females, rather than its earlier definition of 18 to 64 for males and 18 to 59 for females.

Estimates on the new basis are only available from 2008 onwards and figures within this release are therefore not directly comparable with those on the basis of the previously used definition.

Headline figures on the previous working age definition (18 to 59/64) are available on [StatsWales](https://www.statswales.gov.wales/).



## Definitions

### Ethnicity

For the analysis of qualifications by ethnicity, people in full-time education have been excluded. This change has been made to remove the impact of international students who attend higher education in Wales and thus inflate the proportion with Level 3+ qualifications.

### Disability

Analysis of qualifications by disability is based on the Equality Act 2010 legal definition. Figures within this release are not comparable to those within releases prior to 2015, which reported those reporting DDA current disability or work-limiting disability.

### Qualifications used in the Labour Force Survey and their National Qualification Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (NQF EWNI) levels<sup>1</sup>

At Annex 1 is a list of the qualifications specifically included in the Labour Force Survey questionnaire and provides details of the NQF EWNI level to which they have been assigned for the purposes of statistical analysis.

Data have previously been presented as NVQ equivalencies. The NQF EWNI has nine levels; Entry Level followed by Level 1 to Level 8. In Wales the NQF EWNI forms part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales; a meta framework which also includes all Higher Level learning within the University Sector and Quality Assured Lifelong Learning.

Further information about the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Please note the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework has different levels

## Key quality information

### 1. Relevance

The statistics are used within the Welsh Government to monitor trends in qualification levels and specifically are included within the Employability Plan targets and Skills Performance measures.

Other key users of these statistics include:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales
- Other government departments
- Students, academics and universities

### 2. Accuracy

As the data come from a survey, the results are sample-based estimates and are therefore subject to differing degrees of sampling variability, i.e. the true value for any measure lies in a differing range about the estimated value. This range or sampling variability increases as the detail in the data increases; for example local authority data are subject to higher variability than regional data.

#### Proxy response

If the respondent is not available at the time of interview, questions may be answered by proxy through another member of the household. For information on highest qualifications, around two-thirds (67 per cent) of responses have been derived from a respondent's own answers. 20 per cent were obtained from a spouse or partner whilst 13 per cent were obtained from another proxy.

Section 11 of the [LFS User Guide](#) Volume 1, 2011 presents findings from a follow up study to test the accuracy of results from proxy respondents.

The results for highest type of qualification held show nearly two thirds matching with significant net error from proxies understating qualifications. However there was wide variation in the standard of proxy response. This variation is both in terms of the relationship of the proxy to the subject (parents were much better than spouses or children) and also by the level and type of qualifications held. Reporting was much better for those subjects holding degrees (80 per cent matched) than for those holding lower or vocational qualifications (30 per cent matched).

#### Non-response

Information on highest qualification is derived from a number of questions in the survey. Overall, the highest qualification was unknown or unable to be derived for 2 per cent of respondents. These respondents have been excluded from the analysis in this release.

#### Allocation of qualifications with unknown levels

Whilst other questions in the survey are used to allocate qualifications to NQF levels as far as possible, for some categories the respondents are distributed into levels using proportions that have been fixed for many years. This is currently true for 'Other' qualifications, Trade Apprenticeships, Scottish CSYS qualifications and SCE Highers or equivalent. These qualifications account for 8 per cent of responses, mainly consisting of Trade Apprenticeships (3.3 per cent) and 'Other' qualifications (4.5 per cent). 'Other' qualifications are apportioned across NQF levels Below Level 2, Level 2 and Level 3 in the ratio 55:35:10; Trade apprenticeships are apportioned across

Level 2 and Level 3 in the ratio 50:50 and Scottish CSYS qualifications are apportioned across Level 2 and Level 3 in the ratio 33:67. This is a long standing calculation based on detailed analysis of qualifications from the General Household Survey. SCE Highers are apportioned across Level 2 and Level 3 in the ratio 37:63 based on data from previous years.

### **Revisions**

Since the previous publication, the Annual Population Survey data back to 2012 had been reweighted, and the time series in this release has been updated with these new data. The reweighted data has made a slight change to the time series in this release and underlying data provided on [StatsWales](#).

### **3. Timeliness and punctuality**

This statistical release is published annually in April and covers the preceding year ending 31 December.

### **4. Accessibility and clarity**

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics & Research website of the Welsh Government. All underlying data for this release as well as other years are available on [StatsWales](#).

### **5. Comparability and coherence**

The figures may differ to those published from statistical publications by other government departments due to a slight difference in source and/or methodologies for deriving levels of qualifications. Also other tables may be based on all persons of working age (16-64) whilst this release is restricted to those aged 18-64 (adults of working age).

The Department for Education have developed an enhanced method of producing qualification estimates from the Labour Force Survey, including the use of administrative records to improve the quality of the attainment data recorded on the LFS and imputation of qualification levels for those with unknown qualifications. Details can be found on the [archive Data Service website](#).

Data is also available from the Census of Population on highest qualification levels. The 2011 census indicated that one in four of the population of Wales aged 16 and over (26 per cent, 651,000) reported having no recognised qualifications and just under one in four of the population of Wales aged 16 and over (24 per cent, 614,000) reported having a qualification at level 4 (degree level) or above. The difference between the level of qualifications reported through the Census and the APS data in this release is in part explained by the wider age range of the Census data. That is both including 16/17 year olds who may not yet have completed their education, and the older age groups. Additional factors to consider are the APS asks more detailed questions about qualifications than the Census. In addition the APS is an interviewer-administered survey whereas the Census is self-completed. Therefore the interviewer can probe the respondent with further questions to try to establish whether details have been recalled correctly. However, the APS is a sample survey whereas the Census is a more comprehensive count. Similar issues applied to the 2001 Census.

The biggest benefit of the Census data is to be able to analyse within local authority, down to community level, and in cross tabulations with small subgroups of the population not possible through the APS.

## **National Statistics status**

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

These statistics last underwent a [full assessment](#) against the Code of Practice in 2011. Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Brought forward the annual publication timetable to a full release of data in April;
- Made more underlying data available through statswales;
- Publish to the new adults of working age population definition (18 to 64) but continue to make the longer time series of data available on the old definition (18 to 59/64) through statswales.

## **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. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016 and this release includes one of the national indicators:

- (8) Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework.

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](#).

As a national indicator under the Act they must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## **Further details**

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/levels-highest-qualification-held-working-age-adults>

## **Next update**

April 2020 (provisional)

Period covered: Year ending 31 December 2019

## **We want your feedback**

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

## **Open Government Licence**

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## **Annex 1: Qualifications used in the Labour Force Survey and their National Qualification Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (NQF EWNI) levels**

### **NQF Levels 7-8 (previously NVQ level 5 or equivalent)**

Higher degree

NVQ level 5

Level 8 Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Level 8 Certificate<sup>3</sup>

Level 7 Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Level 7 Certificate<sup>3</sup>

Level 8 Award<sup>3</sup>

### **NQF Levels 4-6 (previously NVQ level 4 or equivalent)**

First degree/Foundation degree

Other degree

NVQ level 4

Level 6 Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Level 6 Certificate<sup>3</sup>

Level 7 Award<sup>3</sup>

Diploma in higher education

Level 5 Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Level 5 Certificate<sup>3</sup>

Level 6 Award<sup>3</sup>

HNC, HND, BTEC higher etc.

Teaching (further, secondary and primary education, foundation stage<sup>1</sup> and level not stated)

Nursing etc.

RSA higher diploma

Other higher education qualification below degree level

Level 4 Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Level 4 Certificate<sup>3</sup>

### **NQF Level 3 (previously NVQ level 3 or equivalent)**

Level 5 award<sup>3</sup>

NVQ level 3

Advanced/Progression (14-19) Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Level 3 Diploma<sup>3</sup>

Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate<sup>1</sup>

International Baccalaureate<sup>1</sup>

Scottish Baccalaureate<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These qualifications were added to the list included on the LFS questionnaire in either 2004 or 2005. This slightly improved the estimates, as they may previously have been incorporated in "Other qualifications" or left out altogether by a respondent.

GNVQ/GSVQ Advanced  
2+ A levels, 4+ AS levels or equivalent  
RSA advanced diploma  
OND, ONC, BTEC, SCOTVEC national etc.  
City and Guilds advanced craft/Part 1  
Scottish 6 Year Certificate/CSYS (67%)  
3 or more SCE higher or equivalent  
Access to HE qualifications<sup>1</sup>  
Trade apprenticeship (50%)  
Other qualifications (10%)  
Level 3 Certificate <sup>3</sup>

### **NQF Level 2 (previously NVQ level 2 or equivalent)**

Level 4 Award <sup>3</sup>  
NVQ level 2  
Intermediate Welsh Baccalaureate<sup>1</sup>  
1 A level, or 2/3 AS levels, or equivalent  
Trade apprenticeship (50%)  
GNVQ/GSVQ intermediate  
RSA diploma  
City and Guilds craft/Part 2  
BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general diploma  
Higher (14-19) Diploma <sup>3</sup>  
Level 2 Diploma <sup>3</sup>  
5+ O levels, GCSE grade A\*-C, CSE grade 1 or equivalent  
Scottish 6 Year Certificate CSYS (33%)  
1 or 2 SCE higher or equivalent  
Other qualifications (35%)  
Level 2 Certificate <sup>3</sup>  
Scottish National Level 5 <sup>4</sup>  
Level 3 Award <sup>3</sup>

### **Below NQF Level 2 (previously NVQ level 1 or equivalent)**

NVQ level 1  
Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate<sup>2</sup>  
GNVQ, GSVQ foundation level  
Foundation (14-19) diploma <sup>2</sup>  
Level 1 Diploma <sup>3</sup>  
Scottish National Level 4<sup>4</sup>  
Up to 4 O levels, GCSE grade A\*-C, CSE grade 1 or equivalent

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<sup>2</sup> This qualification was added to the list included on the LFS questionnaire in 2008

<sup>3</sup> This qualification was added to the list included on the LFS questionnaire in 2011

<sup>4</sup> This qualification was added to the list included on the LFS questionnaire in 2015

GCSE below grade C, CSE below grade 1  
BTEC, SCOTVEC first or general certificate  
SCOTVEC modules  
RSA other  
Scottish Nationals Level 3<sup>4</sup>  
Scottish Nationals below Level 3<sup>4</sup>  
City and Guilds foundation/part 1  
Level 1 Certificate  
Level 2 Award  
YT, YTP certificate  
Key skills qualification<sup>1</sup>  
Basic skills qualification<sup>1</sup>  
Entry level qualification<sup>1</sup>  
Entry level Diploma <sup>3</sup>  
Entry level Certificate <sup>3</sup>  
Level 1 Award <sup>3</sup>  
Entry level award  
Other qualifications (55%)

The percentages in brackets denote that a qualification is split across levels when calculating the number of persons with that qualification. This is done for those qualifications where the LFS does not collect sufficient information to allow a more accurate breakdown of the qualification.