

## Medr statistics

### Progression from Year 11 to tertiary education, August 2017 to January 2025

**Official statistics reference:** Sta/Medr/04/2025  
**Date:** 25 February 2025  
**Designation:** Official statistics in development  
**Email:** [statistics@medr.cymru](mailto:statistics@medr.cymru)

**Summary:** **Analysis of the destinations of learners after leaving Year 11, with breakdowns by type of tertiary education, level of study and learner characteristics.**

**Theme:** Sixth forms, further education, apprenticeships

**Sources:** Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)  
Post-16 Data Collection  
School attendance weekly management information data collection  
Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR)

## Summary

This analysis builds on that previously published as part of the Welsh Government statistical article '[outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic: August 2020 to July 2021](#)'. It aims to provide an up to date picture of progression from Year 11 to tertiary education.

The Year 11 cohorts in this analysis are based on all learners enrolled in Year 11 in maintained secondary, middle and special schools in Wales.

The tertiary education destinations considered in this analysis are publicly funded provision in maintained school sixth forms, further education colleges (excluding adult community learning) and work-based learning providers in Wales. Also included is post-16 learning in maintained special schools and the Welsh Government's Jobs Growth Wales+ / Traineeships employability programmes.

The analysis does not include tertiary destinations in independent schools, other independent or specialist learning providers, tertiary education outside of Wales or any other post-16 EOTAS (Educated Other Than at School) provision.

## Main points

- The provisional proportion of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education was 90% in 2024/25, unchanged from the previous three years.
- The number of learners progressing has increased steadily since 2018/19.
- Of the learners that progressed from Year 11 to tertiary education:
  - An increasing proportion are progressing to further education colleges, with a corresponding decrease in those progressing to sixth forms.
  - There have been recent decreases in the proportion of learners studying at level 3 (including AS levels).
- There are differences in progression between different groups of learners. The proportion progressing was higher for learners who are:
  - Female
  - Living in the least deprived neighbourhoods
  - Not eligible for Free School Meals
  - Not accessing special educational needs or additional learning needs provision
  - From Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh ethnic groups
  - Competent or fluent in their acquisition of English as an additional language
  - Attending Welsh medium schools in Year 11, or are fluent in Welsh.
- There was substantial variation in the type and level of tertiary education provision between different groups of learners and geographically.

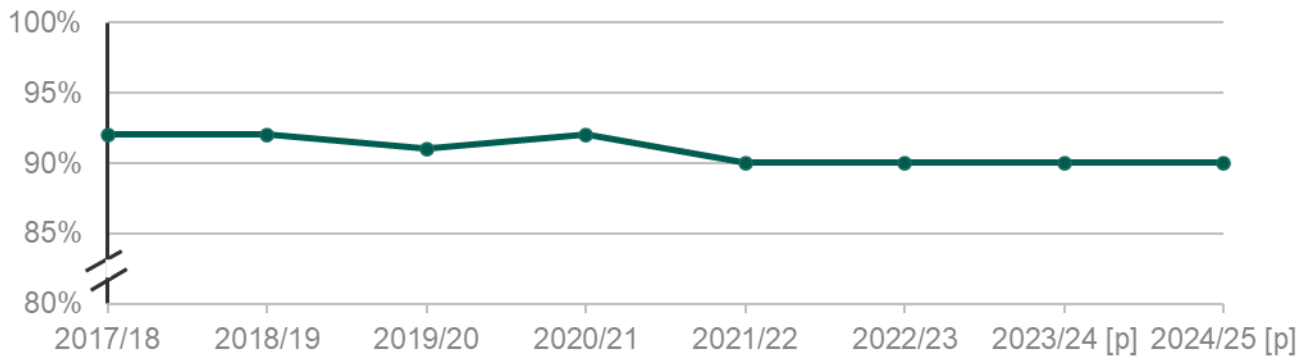
## Contents

Summary .....	1
Main points .....	1
Progression from Year 11 to tertiary education .....	3
Type of tertiary provider and provision .....	5
Level of tertiary provision.....	6
Analysis by characteristics .....	8
Sex .....	8
Deprivation decile of learner’s home neighbourhood .....	8
Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility .....	10
Special educational needs (SEN) or additional learning needs (ALN) provision.....	10
Ethnicity .....	10
English as an additional language (EAL).....	11
Local authority of Year 11 school.....	11
Welsh language .....	13
Learners leaving tertiary education without completing their latest programme .....	14
Quality and methodology .....	15

## Progression from Year 11 to tertiary education

### The proportion of Year 11s progressing to tertiary education has remained steady in recent years

Figure 1: Proportion of Year 11s progressing to tertiary education, by academic year, August 2017 to January 2025



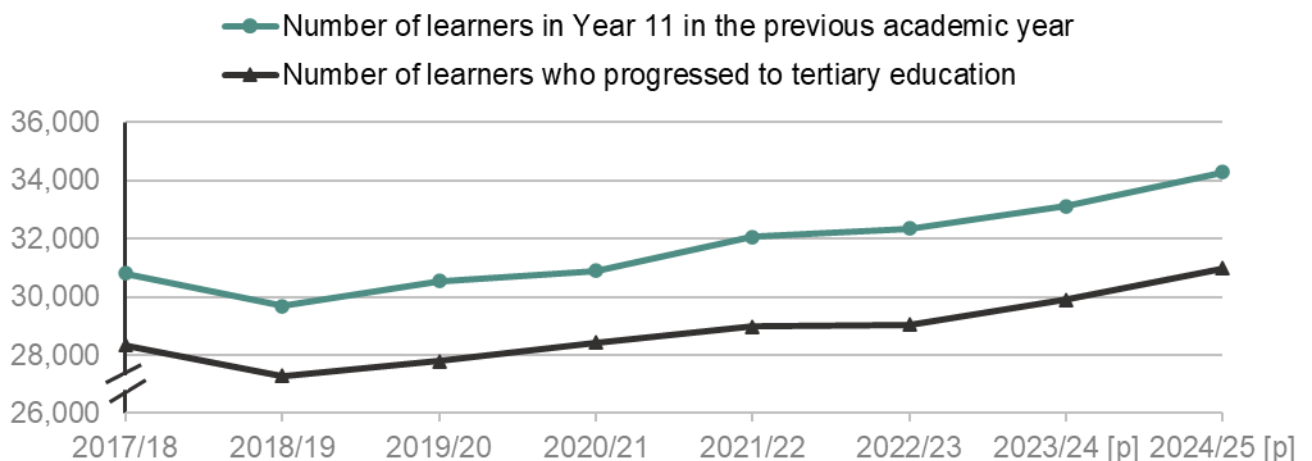
Description: The proportion of Year 11s progressing to tertiary education has been fairly steady over the eight years covered by this analysis. The provisional proportion for 2024/25 is 90%, the same as in the previous three academic years. Between 2017/18 and 2020/21 the proportion was slightly higher, fluctuating between 91% and 92%.

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

### The numbers of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education has increased

Figure 2: Number of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education, by academic year, August 2017 to January 2025



Description: The number of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education has increased gradually since 2018/19.

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

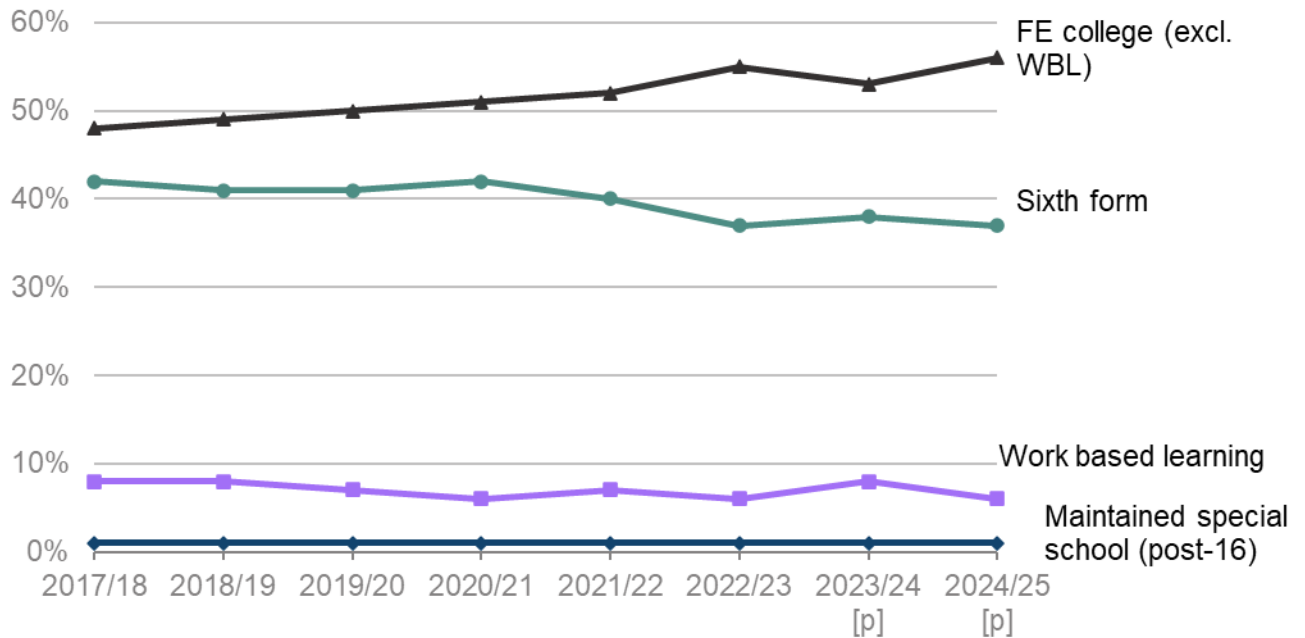
Whilst the proportion of learners progressing has remained steady, the number of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education has increased in line with recent increases to Year 11 cohort sizes. Provisional figures for 2024/25 show that 30,985 learners progressed, up 1,080 on the previous year (4%) and 1,930 (7%) on 2022/23.

## Type of tertiary provider and provision

The analysis in this section is based on the learner's initial tertiary education programme of study. Learners may subsequently change their type of tertiary provision or provider.

### More learners are progressing to further education (FE) colleges after Year 11

Figure 3: Proportion of learners who progressed in each provider/provision category, by academic year, August 2017 to January 2025



Description: The proportion of learners who progressed to an FE college (excluding those undertaking work-based learning at an FE college) has increased from 48% in 2017/18 to 56% in 2024/25. Conversely, the proportion of learners who progressed to a school sixth form has decreased from 42% in 2017/18 to 37% in 2024/25. The proportions progressing to work-based learning (between 6% and 8%) and post-16 provision at maintained special schools (1% throughout) have remained steady throughout the period covered by this analysis.

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 2 of the accompanying spreadsheet

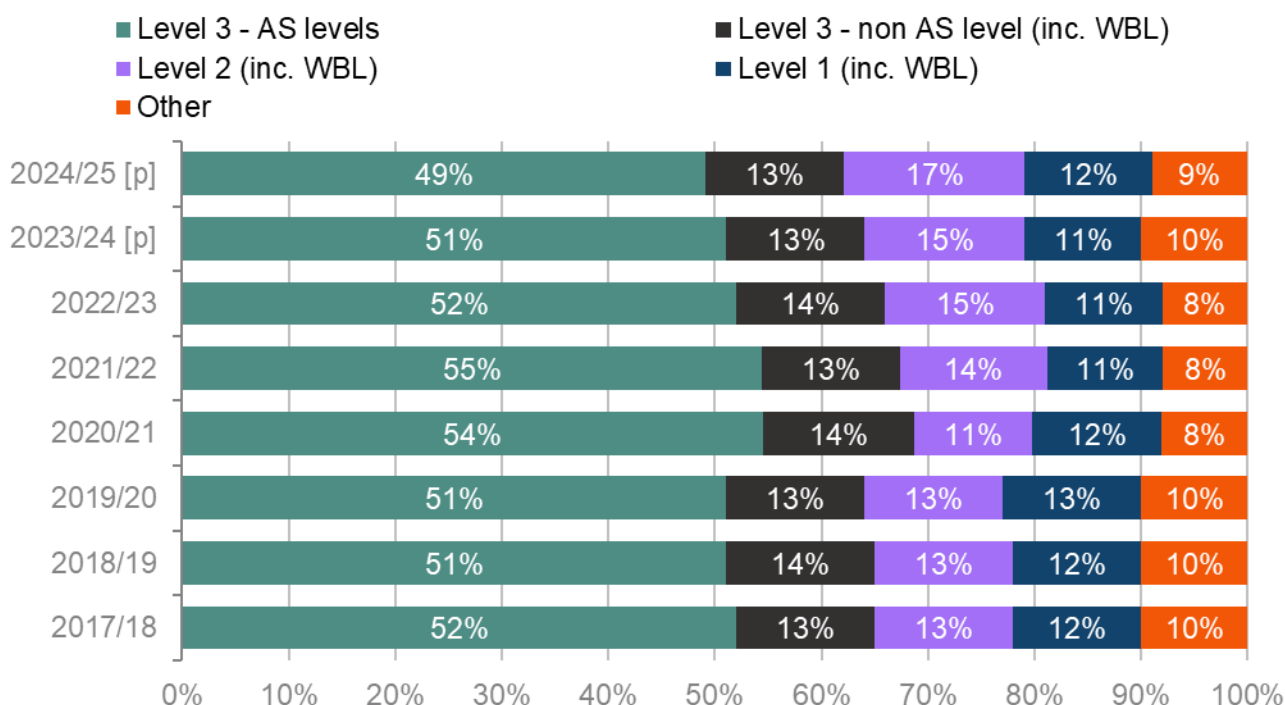
## Level of tertiary provision

The analysis in this section is based on the learner’s initial tertiary education programme of study. Learners may subsequently change their level of tertiary study.

Each learner is counted once. A learner undertaking a level 3 programme of study along with supplementary level 2 learning (for example, an AS level programme along with GCSE resits) would be counted in the level 3 category and not level 2.

### A smaller proportion of learners progressed to level 3 study in 2024/25

Figure 4: Proportion of learners who progressed by level of study, by academic year, August 2017 to January 2025



Description: Provisional figures for 2024/25 indicate that the proportion of those progressing who went on to study at level 3 is 62% (49% studying AS levels, 13% studying other forms of level 3 provision). This proportion has gradually decreased since a peak of 69% in 2020/21.

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 3 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Rates for 2020/21 and 2021/22, in particular, may be affected by changes to examination and assessment arrangements during the Coronavirus pandemic and more learners getting the GCSE grades needed to access AS level programmes.

49% of learners who progressed from Year 11 to tertiary education in 2024/25 studied AS levels. This is the lowest proportion seen in the period covered by this analysis. The proportion progressing to level 2 tertiary provision in 2024/25 is 17%, the highest over the period and up six percentage points on 2020/21.

The proportion of learners studying AS levels may be slightly inflated in the provisional figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25. School attendance data does not provide information on the learner's level or programme of study, therefore this analysis assumes that all learners in school sixth forms are studying AS levels in these years. Data prior to this shows that between 97% and 99% of learners in school sixth forms studied AS levels.



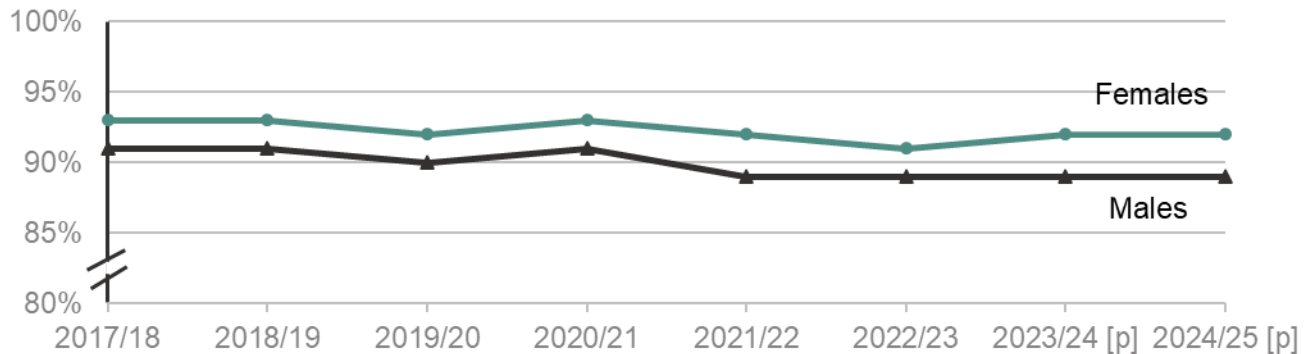
## Analysis by characteristics

The characteristics presented here are based on those recorded for the learner as part of their Year 11 PLASC record. Selected findings of interest are reported but full data is available in the spreadsheet accompanying this release.

### Sex

#### A higher proportion of females progress from Year 11 to tertiary education

Figure 5a: Proportion of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education by sex, by academic year, August 2017 to January 2025



Description: The proportion of females progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education has been consistently higher than the proportion of males throughout the period covered by this analysis. The gap has fluctuated between two and three percentage points.

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 4 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, 71% of females studied at level 3 compared to 60% of males. A higher proportion of males went on to study vocational learning at an FE college or work-based learning.

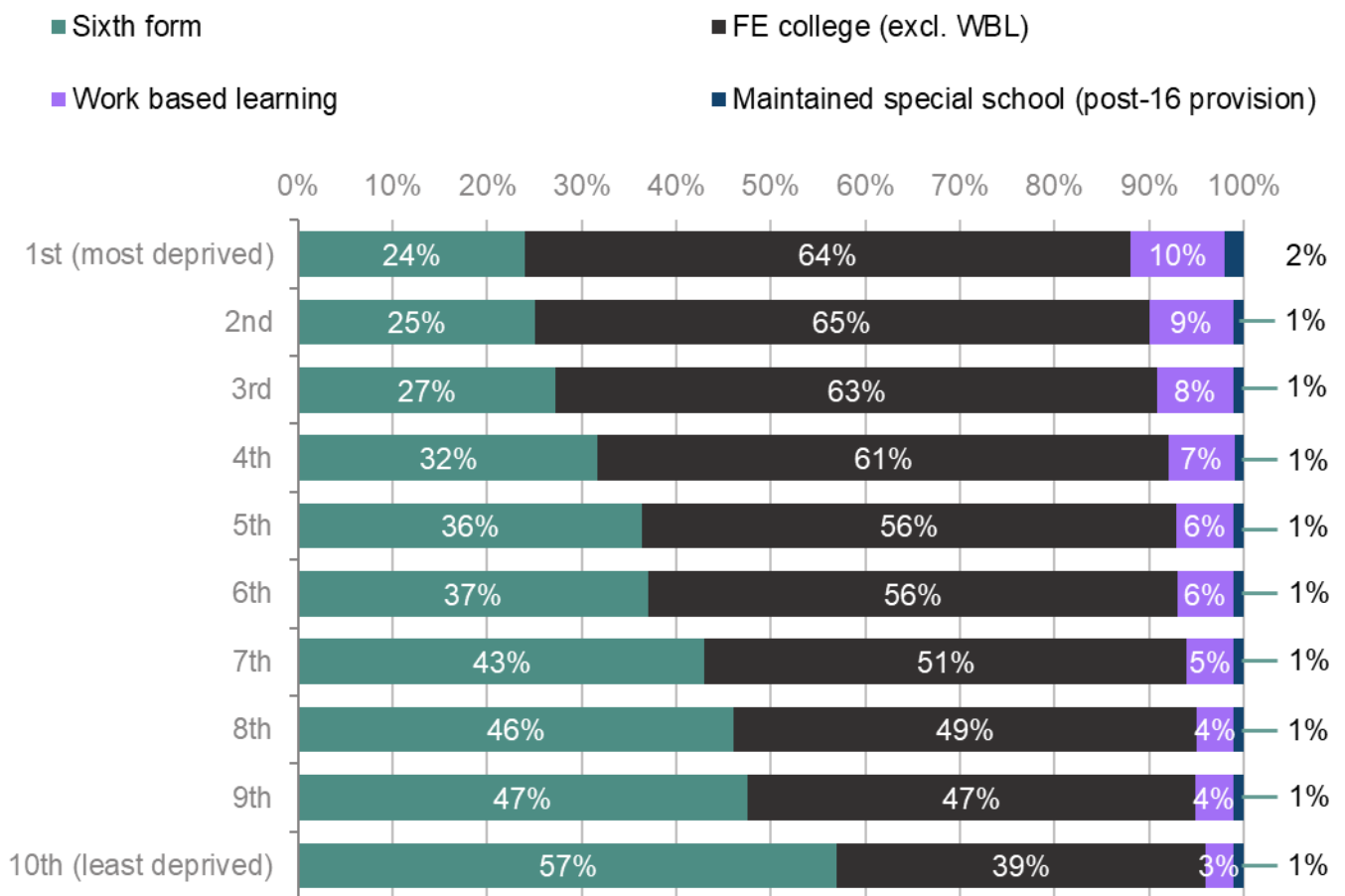
### Deprivation decile of learner's home neighbourhood

The proportion of learners who live in the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education was higher than other learners, but there was little difference between learners living in the remaining 80% of neighbourhoods.

There are much greater differences across the deprivation deciles in the type of tertiary provider and provision.

## A greater proportion of learners from deprived areas progress to FE colleges and work based learning

Figure 5b: Proportion of learners who progressed in each provider/provision category, by deprivation decile, 2022/23 academic year



Description: Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, the proportion who went to school sixth forms ranges from 24% of learners living in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods up to 57% of learners living in the 10% least deprived. The proportion who went to FE colleges or work-based learning ranges from 64% and 10%, respectively, of learners living in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods down to 39% and 3%, respectively, of learners living in the 10% least deprived.

Data in Table 5 of the accompanying spreadsheet

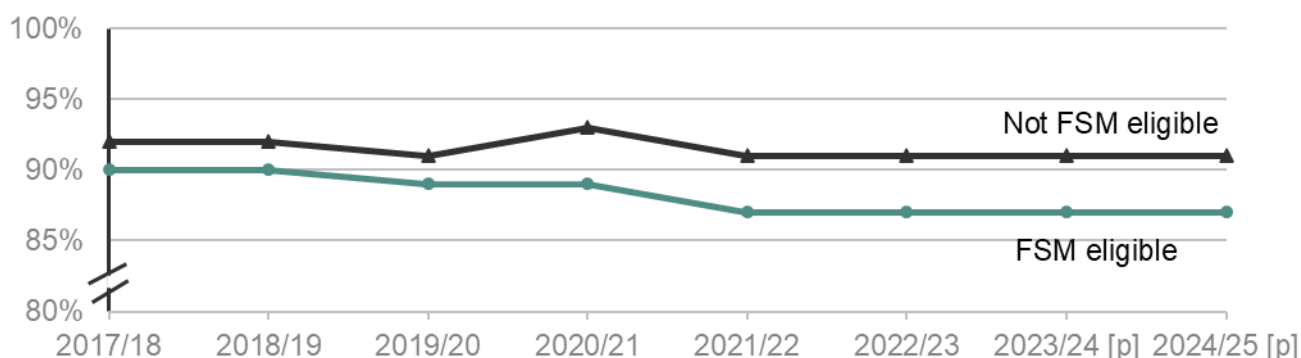
There are similar patterns by level of study. Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, the proportion studying at level 3 ranges from 47% of learners living in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods up to 85% of learners living in the 10% least deprived. The proportion studying at level 2 or below ranges from 49% of learners living in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods down to 14% of learners living in the 10% least deprived.

Learners living in more deprived neighbourhoods were also more likely to leave their tertiary education programme without completing it.

## Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility

### The proportion of learners progressing is lower for learners eligible for FSM

Figure 5c: Proportion of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education by FSM eligibility, by academic year, August 2017 to January 2025



Description: The proportion of learners not eligible for FSM progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education has been consistently higher than the proportion of learners eligible for FSM throughout the period covered by this analysis. The gap has increased slightly in recent years and now stands at four percentage points.

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 4 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, a higher proportion of learners who were eligible for FSM went to FE colleges or work-based learning, and a lower proportion went to school sixth forms. Only 39% of FSM eligible learners went on to study at level 3, compared to 72% of those not eligible for FSM.

Learners eligible for FSM were also more likely to leave their tertiary education programme without completing it.

## Special educational needs (SEN) or additional learning needs (ALN) provision

Learners with no SEN or ALN provision saw higher rates of progression from Year 11 to tertiary education. Provisional figures for 2024/25 show that 86% of learners with SEN or ALN provision progressed compared to 91% of learners with no SEN or ALN provision.

In 2022/23, a higher proportion of learners with SEN or ALN provision went on to FE colleges (65%) than those with no SEN or ALN (53%). A much smaller proportion of learners with SEN or ALN provision studied at level 3 (32%) than learners with no SEN or ALN (73%).

Learners with SEN or ALN were more likely to leave their tertiary education programme without completing it.

## Ethnicity

Learners from Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh ethnic groups saw the highest rates of progression from Year 11 to tertiary education over the period covered by this analysis, in

particular those from Bangladeshi backgrounds. Learners from Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller backgrounds had the lowest rate of progression.

There was variation in the type of tertiary provider, provision and level of study between ethnic group amongst learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23. 92% of learners from Indian backgrounds studied at level 3, with the vast majority undertaking AS levels. 22% of learners from Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller backgrounds studied at level 3, with roughly half of those undertaking AS levels.

Vocational further education and work-based learning routes were more popular for learners from White or Mixed, Multiple ethnic groups.

### **English as an additional language (EAL)**

The proportion of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education is typically much lower for Year 11 learners newly acquiring English as an additional language. In 2024/25, the provisional proportion is 78%, compared to 95% for Year 11 learners categorised as fluent in English as an additional language and 90% of Year 11 learners who have not acquired English as an additional language.

Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, there were large differences in the level of study by EAL category. 38% of learners who were newly acquiring English as an additional language studied at level 3, compared to 89% of learners fluent in English as an additional language.

Learners who were competent or fluent in English as an additional language are also less likely to leave tertiary education without completing their programme of study.

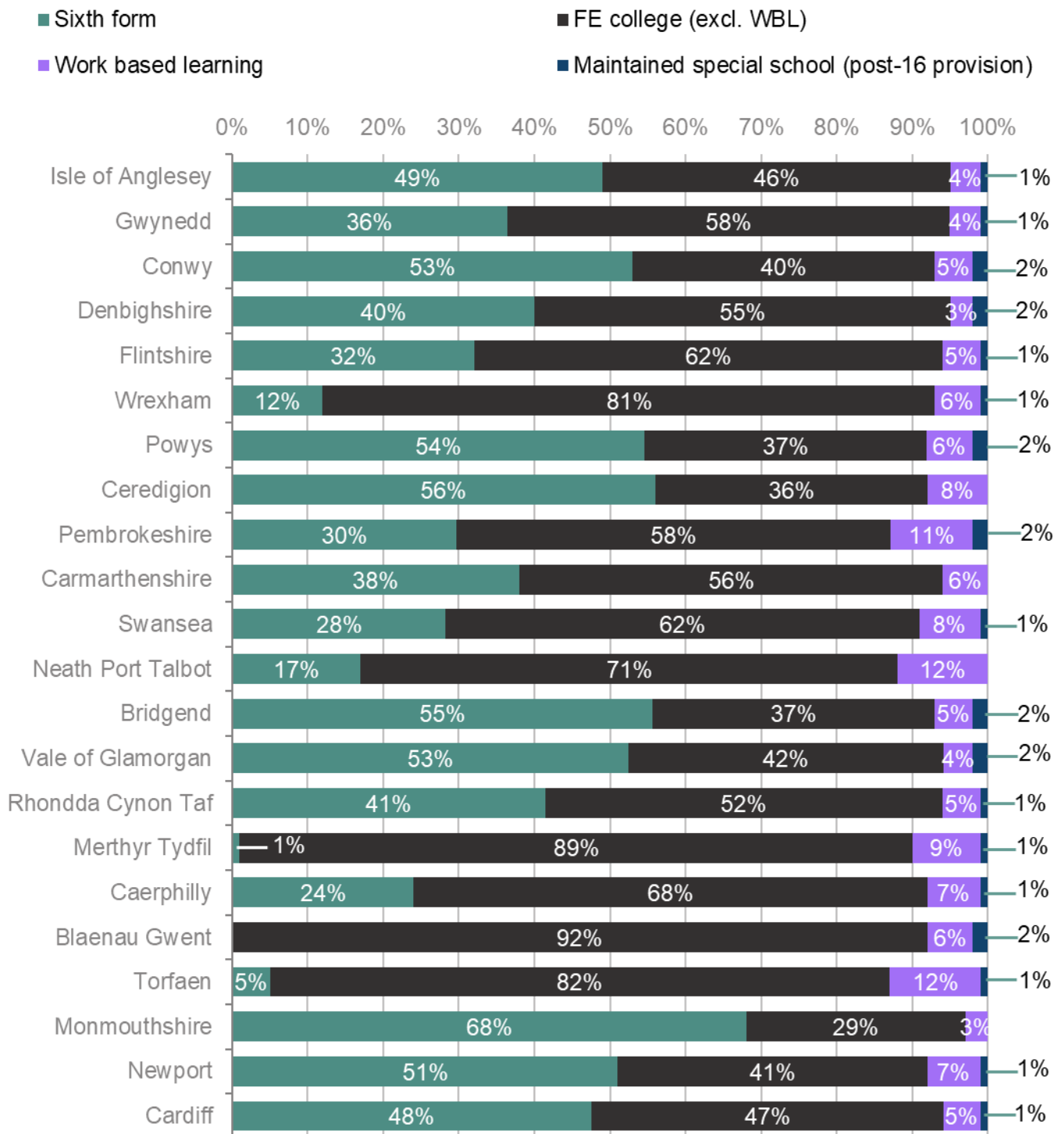
### **Local authority of Year 11 school**

The proportion of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education varies by local authority, but proportions for local authorities that border with England are affected by data availability. See the [limitations](#) section for further information.

Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, there was substantial variation across local authorities in the type of tertiary provider and provision.

### Tertiary education destinations vary between local authorities

Figure 5d: Proportion of learners who progressed in each provider/provision category, by local authority of Year 11 school, 2022/23 academic year



Description: The proportion learners in school sixth forms varied from 0% for Blaenau Gwent up to 68% for Monmouthshire. The proportion in FE colleges varied from 29% for Monmouthshire up for 92% in Blaenau Gwent. The types of tertiary education provision available varies between areas. For example, there are no school sixth forms in Merthyr Tydfil or Blaenau Gwent. Proportions for Monmouthshire (and other border local

authorities) may be affected by the unavailability of data for learners who progressed to tertiary education outside of Wales.

Data in Table 5 of the accompanying spreadsheet

There was also variation in the level of study. The local authority with the highest proportion of learners studying at level 3 in 2022/23 was Monmouthshire with 77%. The lowest proportion was Merthyr Tydfil (51%).

## **Welsh language**

Learners enrolled in Year 11 in Welsh medium schools had higher rates of progression to tertiary education throughout the period covered by this analysis. It should be noted that a higher proportion of Welsh medium and bilingual schools have a sixth form compared to English medium schools. There may also be demographic differences between learners from Welsh medium schools compared to other learners.

Of learners that progressed to tertiary education in 2022/23, a higher proportion from Welsh medium schools went to school sixth forms (54%) compared to English medium (33%), English with significant Welsh (51%) and bilingual schools (47%). 42% of learners from Welsh medium schools went to an FE college compared to 60% from English medium schools.

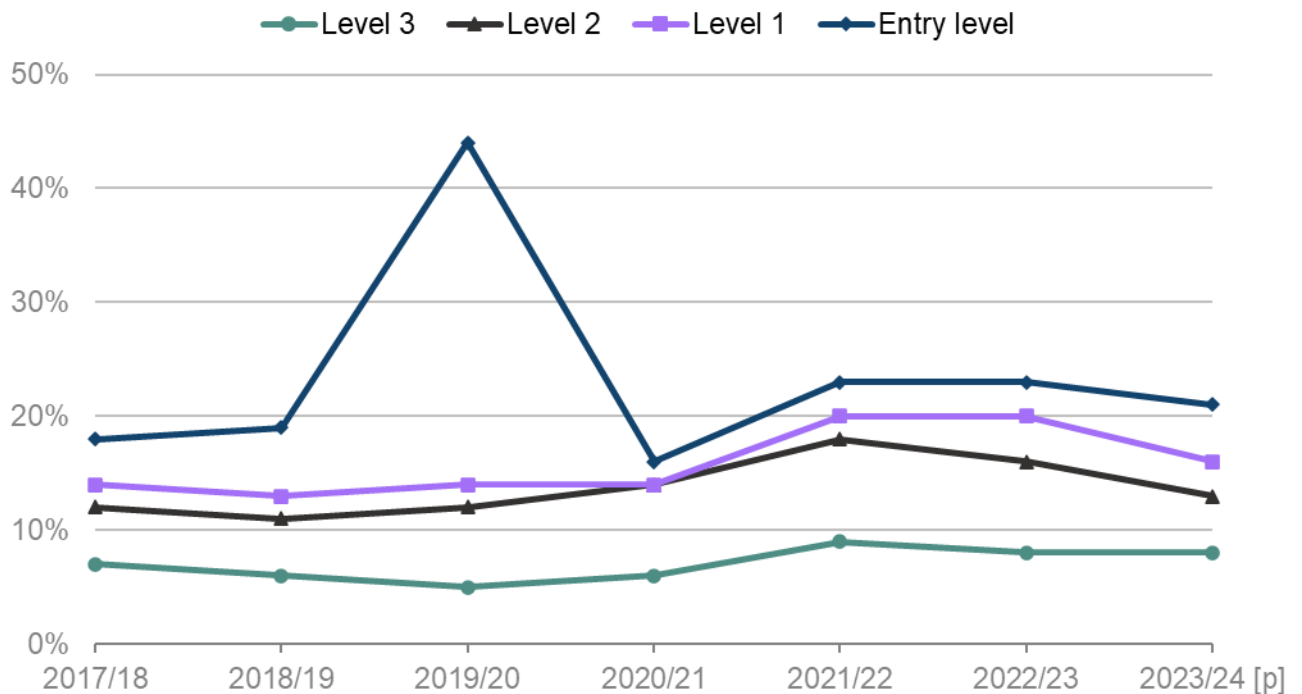
Learners from Welsh medium schools were also more likely to study at level 3 (76%) than learners from English medium (64%), English with significant Welsh (70%) and bilingual schools (71%).

Similar differences were seen between learners fluent in Welsh and those who cannot speak Welsh.

## Learners leaving tertiary education without completing their latest programme

### The proportion of learners leaving their latest programme without completing it decreases as the level of study increases

Figure 6: Proportion of learners progressing to tertiary education but leave their latest programme without completing it, by academic year, August 2017 to July 2024



Description: Of the learners who progressed from Year 11 to tertiary education, the proportion leaving tertiary education without completing their latest programme was highest for those studying at entry level (provisionally 21% in 2023/24) and lowest for those studying at level 3 (provisionally 8% in 2023/24).

[p]: Provisional.

Data in Table 3 of the accompanying spreadsheet

## Quality and methodology

### Data sources

The data sources used in this release are:

- [Pupil Level Annual School Census \(PLASC\)](#): an electronic collection of pupil and school level data provided to Welsh Government by all maintained sector primary, middle, secondary, nursery and special schools. The data collected is based on a January census date.
- [Post-16 Data Collection](#): every autumn, all maintained schools with sixth forms are required to report all learning programmes and activities undertaken by pupils in the previous academic year.
- [Lifelong Learning Wales Record \(LLWR\)](#): data on further education, work-based learning and adult community learning. It's collected on a 'rolling' basis throughout the year with regular statistical freezes. It is the official source of statistics in Wales for these sectors.
- [School attendance weekly management information data collection](#): weekly data extracted directly from school management information systems started in Autumn 2020. The data is collected from all maintained nursery, primary, middle, secondary and special schools and any pupil referral units that have such management information systems and routinely record their information electronically.

### Methodology

The main changes to the methodology used in the analysis previously published in the Welsh Government statistical article '[outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic: August 2020 to July 2021](#)' are:

- For academic years 2022/23 and previous, final datasets are used to identify tertiary education destinations rather than in-year datasets subject to further change.
- The Post-16 Data Collection is used for sixth form destinations as far as possible, providing information on the type of learning programme being studied. Weekly management information on school attendance is used for 2023/24 and 2024/25 as the Post-16 Data Collection is not yet available for these years.
- Post-16 learning destinations in maintained special schools are reported.

Year 11 cohorts are defined as any learner on roll in a maintained secondary, middle or special school in Wales on the PLASC census date.

For academic years 2017/18 to 2022/23, the Post-16 Data Collection and LLWR are used to identify tertiary education programmes of study that were active at any point during the year. Programmes included in this analysis include the following publicly funded learning:

- Any programme of study in school sixth forms.
- Further education undertaken in further education colleges.
- Work-based learning, either undertaken in further education colleges or private training providers including apprenticeships, Jobs Growth Wales+ and traineeships.



PLASC data is also used to identify any learners undertaking post-16 provision in maintained special schools.

For academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25, LLWR data is used as above. The Post-16 Data Collection is not currently available for these years, therefore weekly management information on school attendance is used to identify learners in school sixth forms and undertaking post-16 provision in maintained special schools. There are a number of [limitations](#) as a result of using this management information.

Based on comparisons for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years, the weekly management information on school attendance over-estimates overall progression by around half a percentage point compared to the Post-16 Data Collection. It also causes over-estimates in the proportion of learners switching their tertiary education programme and leaving their tertiary education programme without completing it.

Of the learners who progressed, the proportions attending sixth forms are over-estimated by between 1.5 and 3 percentage points, with an under-estimate in proportions attending FE colleges.

Year 11 cohorts are then linked to the various datasets containing information on tertiary education – initially on the Unique Pupil Number and Unique Learner Numbers, with further linkage on unmatched records based on names and dates of birth.

## Limitations

Figures for 2024/25 are provisional as they are based on in-year data. Tertiary programmes of study have been drawn from the January 2025 LLWR freeze. The data may not fully reflect all learning up to the point the freeze was taken and will be subject to change in the future. Data for the remainder of the academic year is not included, which may affect statistics for 2024/25. A relatively small number of learners may start their first tertiary programme of study after January, most commonly in work-based learning.

For 2024/25, weekly management information on school attendance is available up to the end of the winter term.

Figures for 2023/24 are also provisional as the Post-16 Data Collection will replace the weekly management information on school attendance once it is available.

The weekly management information on school attendance has not undergone the same level of quality assurance as accredited official statistics and the data may be subject to future revisions. It does not provide any information on the learner's programme of study.

This analysis does not include tertiary education destinations outside of Wales, or any independent or specialist tertiary education. The proportion of learners progressing from Year 11 to tertiary education in local authorities that border England (Flintshire, Wrexham, Powys, Monmouthshire) is likely to be affected.

## Definitions

The tertiary education destinations reported in this analysis are based on the first programme of study undertaken by the learner. When identifying a learner's first programme the following programmes are prioritised over other FE programmes: AS

level, A2 level, vocational, apprenticeships and Jobs Growth Wales+/traineeships. The most common programmes they're prioritised over are GCSEs which are often taken as supplemental courses.

Only enrolment into the academic year immediately following Year 11 is included. Learners who started tertiary education in a later academic year are not included in this analysis.

Where weekly management information on school attendance is used, learners are considered to be still enrolled in tertiary education if they have an attendance or authorised absence record within 2 weeks of the following dates:

- 31 May 2024 for the 2023/24 academic year, as the attendance data becomes more unreliable during the summer examination period.
- 20 December 2024 for the 2024/25 academic year, the final data of the winter term as data for only part of the academic year is available.

The school attendance dataset is taken directly from schools' Management Information Systems. In some cases learners appear to be automatically rolled over from Year 11 into Year 12 when this was not the case. Because of this a learner is not listed as enrolled if they were:

- not listed as enrolled after 6 September,
- and had not attended the school or had a specific recognised absence before 6 September,
- and it was the same school that they were enrolled into in Year 11.

All analysis by characteristics are based on those recorded for the learner as part of their Year 11 PLASC record.

The deprivation decile of the learner's home neighbourhood is based on the main index of the [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019](#).

'AS level' tertiary destinations here include both AS level and AS level equivalent programmes. AS level equivalent programmes consist of a mixture of AS levels and vocational qualifications, for example 2 AS levels and a BTEC National Certificate.

## **Rounding and suppression**

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

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

## **Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics**

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

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in our [Statement of Compliance](#) with the Code of Practice for Statistics. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards.

Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

## Trustworthiness

These statistics have been published according to our [Statement of Compliance](#) with the Code of Practice for Statistics and [pre-release access to official statistics policy](#).

## Quality

The statistics in this release have largely been produced from final versions of recognised administrative data sources used to produce official statistics on education in Wales. These have been supplemented with weekly management information on school attendance to provide the most recent estimates of progression from Year 11 to tertiary education (for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years). The limitations of using this management information have been explained and these estimates are marked as provisional.

## Value

These official statistics in development aim to comply with the Code as far as possible. They have been produced rapidly in response to demands for better analysis on participation in tertiary education in Wales.

They are labelled as 'official statistics in development' to test whether they meet user needs and to reflect that the methodology is not fixed and could be further developed based on user feedback. We would welcome any comment on the usefulness of these statistics. Please contact [statistics@medr.cymru](mailto:statistics@medr.cymru).

# Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil  
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

[www.medr.cymru](http://www.medr.cymru)

2 Cwr y Ddinas  
Stryd Tyndall  
Caerdydd  
CF10 4BZ

2 Capital Quarter  
Tyndall Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 4BZ



Noddir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Sponsored by  
**Welsh Government**