

## Levels of Highest Qualification held by Working Age Adults, 2015

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.

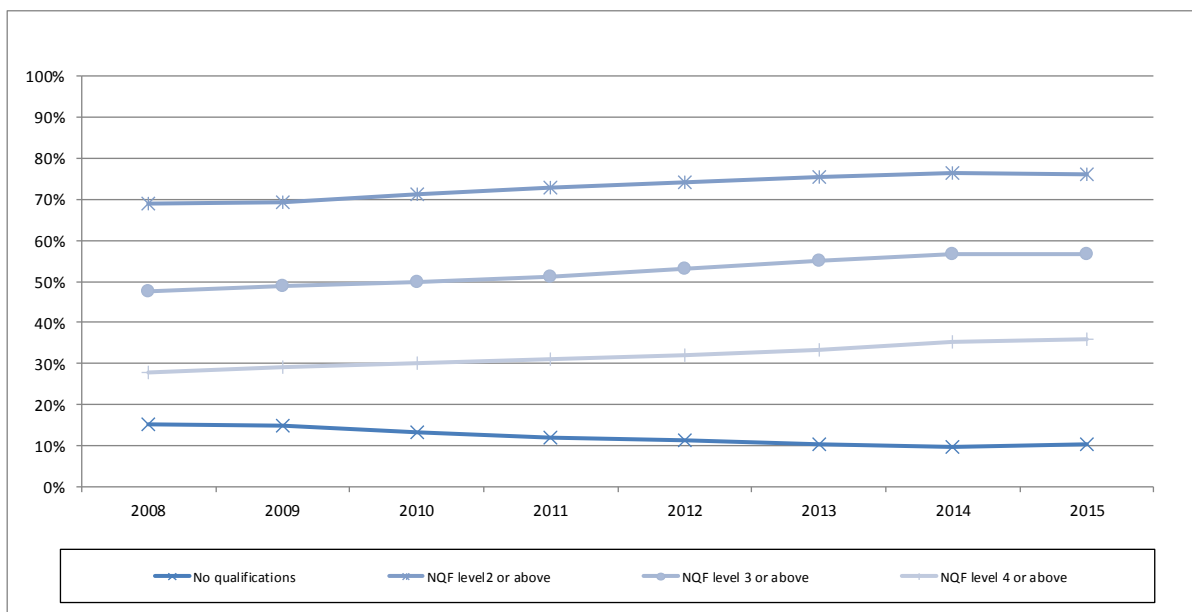
The statistics provided are taken from the Annual Population Survey (APS) for the year ending 31 December 2015. Qualifications have been grouped into National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels. Further information can be found in the notes.

Working age adults in this release now refers to males and females aged 18-64, rather than 18-59/64 used previously. **Therefore figures are not directly comparable with those from previous releases.** See notes for further information.

### Key Results

- Overall, qualification levels in Wales showed little change compared with 2014.
  - An estimated 10 per cent of working age adults in Wales reported having no qualifications the same as in 2014.
  - 76 per cent of working age adults in Wales held at least level 2 qualifications compared with 77 per cent in 2014.
  - 57 per cent of working age adults in Wales were qualified to the level 3 threshold, the same as in 2014.
  - The proportion holding Higher Education or equivalent level qualifications (NQF level 4 or above) was 36 per cent compared with 35 per cent in 2014.

**Chart 1. Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, 2008 to 2015**



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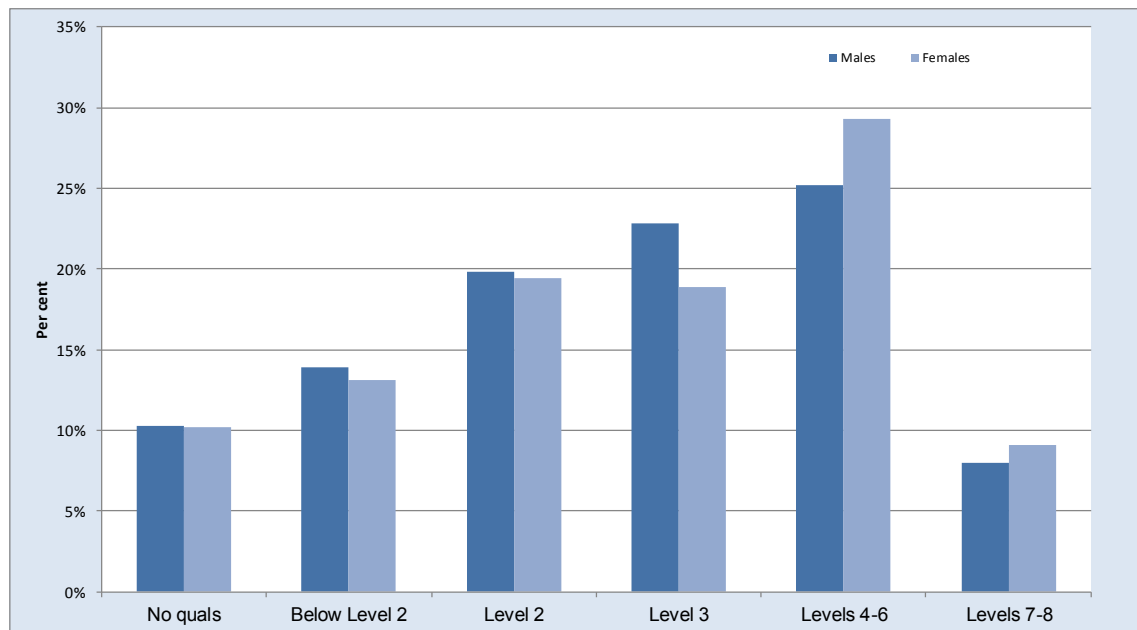
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## Level of Highest Qualification held, by characteristic

### Gender

- Similar proportions of males and females hold no qualifications, whilst females are more likely to hold qualifications at or above level 4.

**Chart 2. Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age, by gender, 2015**



### Age

- The proportion of adults with no qualifications increases with age. 6 per cent of 18-24 year olds were reported as having no qualifications compared with 20 per cent of 60-64 year olds.

### Disability

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

### Ethnicity

- Persons from an ethnic minority are more likely to hold Higher education level qualifications than those from a white ethnic origin, but also more likely to have no qualifications.

### Welsh language

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

### Area

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

### Employment status

- 25 per cent of those who are either ILO unemployed or economically inactive reported having no qualifications. This compares to 6 per cent for those in employment. (Excluding those who are in full-time education.)

### Occupation

- Persons employed in professional occupations are more likely to be qualified to at least level 2 than those in other jobs. 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, 2015 (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>							
Males	10	14	20	<b>76</b>	23	25	<b>33</b>
Females	10	13	19	<b>77</b>	19	29	<b>38</b>
Persons	10	14	20	<b>76</b>	21	27	<b>36</b>
<b>By age</b>							
18-24	6	13	21	<b>81</b>	37	21	<b>22</b>
25-34	6	12	18	<b>82</b>	21	32	<b>42</b>
35-49	9	14	19	<b>77</b>	17	30	<b>41</b>
50-59	14	14	21	<b>72</b>	16	25	<b>35</b>
60-64	20	14	20	<b>66</b>	16	22	<b>30</b>
<b>By ethnic origin</b>							
White	11	14	20	<b>75</b>	19	27	<b>36</b>
Ethnic minority	14	14	13	<b>72</b>	11	33	<b>48</b>
<b>By disability status (b)</b>							
Disabled	21	17	20	<b>62</b>	17	20	<b>25</b>
Not disabled	7	13	19	<b>80</b>	22	29	<b>39</b>
<b>By Welsh language ability</b>							
Welsh speaker	5	10	19	<b>85</b>	22	32	<b>44</b>
Non Welsh speaker	12	15	20	<b>74</b>	20	26	<b>34</b>
<b>By economic activity and main job (c)</b>							
In employment	6	12	20	<b>82</b>	20	31	<b>41</b>
of which:							
Managers, Directors & senior officials	4	10	15	<b>86</b>	19	38	<b>52</b>
Professional occupations	0	2	4	<b>98</b>	6	54	<b>88</b>
Associate professional & technical	1	7	15	<b>91</b>	19	46	<b>57</b>
Administrative & secretarial	3	12	28	<b>85</b>	21	32	<b>36</b>
Skilled Trades occupations	8	15	24	<b>77</b>	34	17	<b>19</b>
Caring, Leisure & other service occupations	4	10	26	<b>86</b>	33	26	<b>28</b>
Sales and Customer Service occupations	10	18	29	<b>73</b>	21	20	<b>23</b>
Process, plant & machine operatives	15	29	29	<b>56</b>	18	9	<b>9</b>
Elementary occupations	17	24	29	<b>59</b>	16	12	<b>14</b>
ILO unemployed or economically inactive	25	19	20	<b>57</b>	15	18	<b>22</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey 2015

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

(b) On basis of Equality Act 2010 legal definition of disabled

(c) Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) 2010.

Excludes persons in full-time education.

**Table 2: Level of highest qualification held by adults of working age in Wales, by local authority, 2015 (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	8	12	20	<b>79</b>	22	27	<b>37</b>
Gwynedd	8	11	25	<b>81</b>	20	29	<b>37</b>
Conwy	7	13	20	<b>80</b>	21	29	<b>38</b>
Denbighshire	8	14	20	<b>78</b>	20	30	<b>38</b>
Flintshire	8	17	21	<b>75</b>	21	27	<b>33</b>
Wrexham	9	16	19	<b>75</b>	21	28	<b>35</b>
Powys	7	10	21	<b>83</b>	23	31	<b>39</b>
Ceredigion	7	10	19	<b>84</b>	28	23	<b>36</b>
Pembrokeshire	11	16	20	<b>73</b>	20	25	<b>33</b>
Carmarthenshire	11	12	22	<b>76</b>	20	26	<b>34</b>
Swansea	12	13	18	<b>75</b>	20	26	<b>36</b>
Neath Port Talbot	16	14	22	<b>70</b>	19	25	<b>29</b>
Bridgend	15	15	22	<b>70</b>	16	26	<b>32</b>
The Vale of Glamorgan	7	11	19	<b>82</b>	20	33	<b>43</b>
Cardiff	8	11	13	<b>80</b>	22	32	<b>45</b>
Rhondda Cynon Taf	11	16	21	<b>73</b>	21	24	<b>31</b>
Merthyr Tydfil	14	18	21	<b>68</b>	20	22	<b>27</b>
Caerphilly	12	15	20	<b>73</b>	23	23	<b>30</b>
Blaenau Gwent	21	15	23	<b>64</b>	19	19	<b>21</b>
Torfaen	11	16	21	<b>74</b>	23	23	<b>29</b>
Monmouthshire	6	13	18	<b>81</b>	19	33	<b>44</b>
Newport	10	12	20	<b>78</b>	21	29	<b>37</b>
<b>Wales</b>	10	14	20	<b>76</b>	21	27	<b>36</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey 2015

(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, 2015 (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	8	14	19	<b>78</b>	20	29	<b>39</b>
North East	10	14	21	<b>76</b>	23	24	<b>32</b>
North West	10	14	21	<b>77</b>	21	26	<b>35</b>
Yorkshire & Humberside	10	15	20	<b>75</b>	22	24	<b>33</b>
East Midlands	8	15	21	<b>77</b>	22	26	<b>34</b>
West Midlands	13	14	20	<b>73</b>	20	26	<b>34</b>
Eastern	8	16	21	<b>76</b>	20	27	<b>36</b>
London	7	12	13	<b>81</b>	16	36	<b>52</b>
South East	6	14	19	<b>81</b>	20	31	<b>42</b>
South West	5	13	20	<b>81</b>	22	30	<b>40</b>
Wales	10	14	20	<b>76</b>	21	27	<b>36</b>
Scotland	9	11	17	<b>79</b>	17	36	<b>46</b>
Northern Ireland	16	12	22	<b>72</b>	19	24	<b>31</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	9	14	19	<b>78</b>	20	29	<b>39</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey 2015

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

## Notes

### 1. Policy/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 *Skills Performance measures* and the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan*.

Prior to 2014 publication of this data was through a statistical headline followed by a more detailed statistical bulletin of commentary and charts later in the year. In line with our plans set out in the consultation "Proposals concerning the publication of official statistics" (December 2013) we have developed the headline into a statistical release, and intend to produce the detailed bulletin on an occasional basis rather than annually.

### 2. 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 2015. 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 2015.

For years labelled 2001 to 2003, the actual periods covered are the 12 months running from March in the year given to February in the following year (e.g. 2001 = 1 March 2001 to 28 February 2002). Note therefore that there is a two-month overlap between the last period presented on the former March to February basis (2003), and the first period on the new basis (2004).

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 is gradually increasing from 60 to 65. This release has now been amended to a working age definition of 18-64 for both males and females, rather than its previous definition of 18 to 64 for males and 18 to 59 for females. This change has taken some time to put in place within this release, to allow for a large enough time series, as estimates on this basis are only available from 2008 onwards.

Figures within this release are therefore not directly comparable with those within previous releases. StatsWales tables are also currently based on the 18 to 59/64 basis, but will be supplemented with data on the new 18 to 64 basis for both males and females shortly.

Headline figures on the previous working age definition (18 to 59/64) are:-

- An estimated 10 per cent of those aged 18 to 59/64 in Wales reported having no qualifications compared with 9 per cent in 2014
- 77 per cent of those aged 18 to 59/64 in Wales held at least level 2 qualifications compared with 78 per cent in 2014.
- 57 per cent of those aged 18 to 59/64 in Wales were qualified to the level 3 threshold compared with 58 per cent in 2014.
- The proportion holding higher education level qualifications (NQF level 4 or above) was 36 per cent the same as in 2014.

### **3. Revisions**

There are no revisions to data within this Statistical First Release.

### **4. Key Quality Information**

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.

#### **Ethnicity**

For the analysis of qualifications by ethnicity, persons 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**

For the analysis of qualifications by disability, this release uses a different definition of disability to that used previously, now being based on the Equality Act 2010 legal definition. Therefore figures within this release are not comparable to those within previous releases which reported those reporting DDA current disability or work-limiting disability.

#### **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 (68 per cent) of responses have been derived from a respondent's own answers. 21 per cent were obtained from a spouse or partner whilst 11 per cent were obtained from another proxy.

Section 11 of the LFS User Guide Volume 1 presents findings from a follow up study to test the accuracy of results from proxy respondents:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/labour-market/labour-market-statistics/index.html>

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 less than 1 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<sup>1</sup>, 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 10.8 per cent of responses, mainly consisting of Trade Apprenticeships (4.5 per cent) and 'Other' qualifications (6.3 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. The aim had been to reconsider these ratios for this analysis of the 2015 data, in line with work taking place across other GSS departments, however this methodology work has not yet been completed and therefore we will incorporate as soon as this is finalised.

## 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 Business, Innovation and Skills 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 here <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/Statistics/statisticalfirstrelease/methodology/>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance the numbers of GCSEs held by a respondent are used to distribute persons whose highest qualification was a GCSE between levels 1 (less than 5 GCSEs) and 2 (5 or more).



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.

### **Changes to LFS qualification questions**

Significant changes were made to the LFS Education section in January 2011 after a full Education and Training review had been completed in partnership between ONS and BIS. The aim of the review and re-design of the education section was to improve the collection of education data and update the questions to reflect recent changes to the UK education landscape. This included extending the list of qualifications to reflect the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and new questions to allow more accurate classification of foreign or other qualifications into levels.

## 5. Qualifications used in the Labour Force Survey and their National Qualification Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (NQF EWNI) levels <sup>2</sup>

Below 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 can be found [here](http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/creditqualificationsframework)  
<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/creditqualificationsframework>.

### **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>

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<sup>2</sup> Please note the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework has different levels

<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.

International Baccalaureate <sup>1</sup>  
Scottish Baccalaureate <sup>4</sup>  
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>3</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  
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

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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

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.



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