

A level geography results analysis 2023

Context

It is important to note that A and AS qualifications differ in design and content between the nations. For example, A level qualifications are modular in Northern Ireland and Wales, with AS results contributing to the full A level award. In England, the AS and A levels are stand-alone qualifications, and all exams are taken at the end of the course.

England

Last September, Ofqual set out its expectations for returning to pre-pandemic grading in England, with protection built into the grading process to recognise the disruption that students have faced. Therefore, comparisons to 2019 results will be most meaningful. Senior examiners were asked to make allowances when recommending grade boundaries where national performance was weaker than before the pandemic. As in any year, grade boundaries may change to reflect differences in the demand of the assessments and might be higher or lower than in 2019. Senior examiners recommended the grade boundaries for each specification after reviewing the work produced by students and drawing on all the available evidence, including data.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is on a journey back to pre-pandemic awarding arrangements, and this is reflected in this year's summer 2023 awards. CCEA expects to return to pre-pandemic standards across all subjects by the summer of 2024. Students were provided with high-level Advance Information for the majority of CCEA AS and A level summer 2023 examinations to recognise the disruption students may have faced. There is an open qualifications market in Northern Ireland, meaning schools can choose to offer AS/A levels from awarding organisations other than CCEA, provided these comply with Department of Education requirements.

Wales

Qualifications Wales set out its approach to grading in Wales in September 2022. Grades would be awarded broadly mid-way between the 2019 and 2022 results. Qualification Wales expects to return to pre-pandemic arrangements in 2024. Advance Information (excluding Art and Design) was provided for students to recognise the disruption they may have faced and to support the transition back to pre-pandemic arrangements. There were no omissions of units for the 2023 exams and no changes to the content of courses. Examiners used the review of learner work along with other supporting evidence to set grade boundaries that take into account the context of the series. Only WJEC offers the AS and A levels designed and approved for Wales. Where WJEC does not provide a subject, maintained schools and colleges can offer qualifications from other exam boards.

Source: JCQ **A and AS Results Important Information Summer 2023 Final**

A level highlights overall

Population and entries

- A level UK entries increased by 2.2% from 848,910 in summer 2022 to 867,658 in 2023.
- The individual picture across the nations differs. Whilst England and Northern Ireland saw an increase in A level entries, Wales saw a slight decrease.
- According to ONS population estimates, the 18-year-old population increased by 0.5 % for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland combined. Entries from this age group account for 92.6% of UK A level entries.
- Overall A level outcomes in comparison with 2019:
 - results at A* up by 1.2pp from 7.7% to 8.9%
 - results at A*-A up by 1.8pp from 25.4% to 27.2%
 - results at A*-E down by 0.3pp from 97.6% to 97.3%.
- Entries for A level have increased by 2.2%; this means the number of students achieving A*-E grades has increased in 2023 in comparison with both 2019 and 2022.

Source: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GCE-Level-3-Press-notice.pdf>

Geography A level key points

A level geography entries

- The number of geography entries has increased by 2.19% from 2022. This continues the upward trend since 2021 (Figure 1).
- This increase of 2.19% is close to the increase in total entries for all subjects of 2.2%. Therefore geography entries are stable.
- Geography accounts for 4.4% of total entries in 2023 which is the same as in 2022.
- Economics replaces geography in the top ten most popular subjects by entry.
- 6.3% were A* (up from 5.4% in 2019), 18.5% were grade A (up slightly from 18.4% in 2019). The percentage achieving the highest grades is reflecting the intention to award grades in line with pre-pandemic awards in 2019. 2022 awards moved towards pre-pandemic boundaries, unlike 2020 and 2021 where teacher assessed grades were used (Figure 2). 33.% were awarded at A-A* in 2022 compared with 41.8% in 2021 and 23.8% in 2019 (Figure 2). Therefore comparison with 2019 figures should be made, in 2023 24.3% achieved grades A-A*.
- 98.3% of geography entries were A*-E (down slightly from 98.6% in 2019). 97.3% for all subjects gained grades A*-E (down slightly from 97.6% in 2019).
- Geography remains one of the more gender balanced subjects by entries (Figure 3), but there are now more males than female entries in the UK all ages for geography. M/F in UK all ages is 54.1/45.9 in 2023. This continues a trend of increasing male entries from 2021. Female entries have remained stable during this time.

Figure 1: A level entries (all ages), geography (England, Wales & NI)

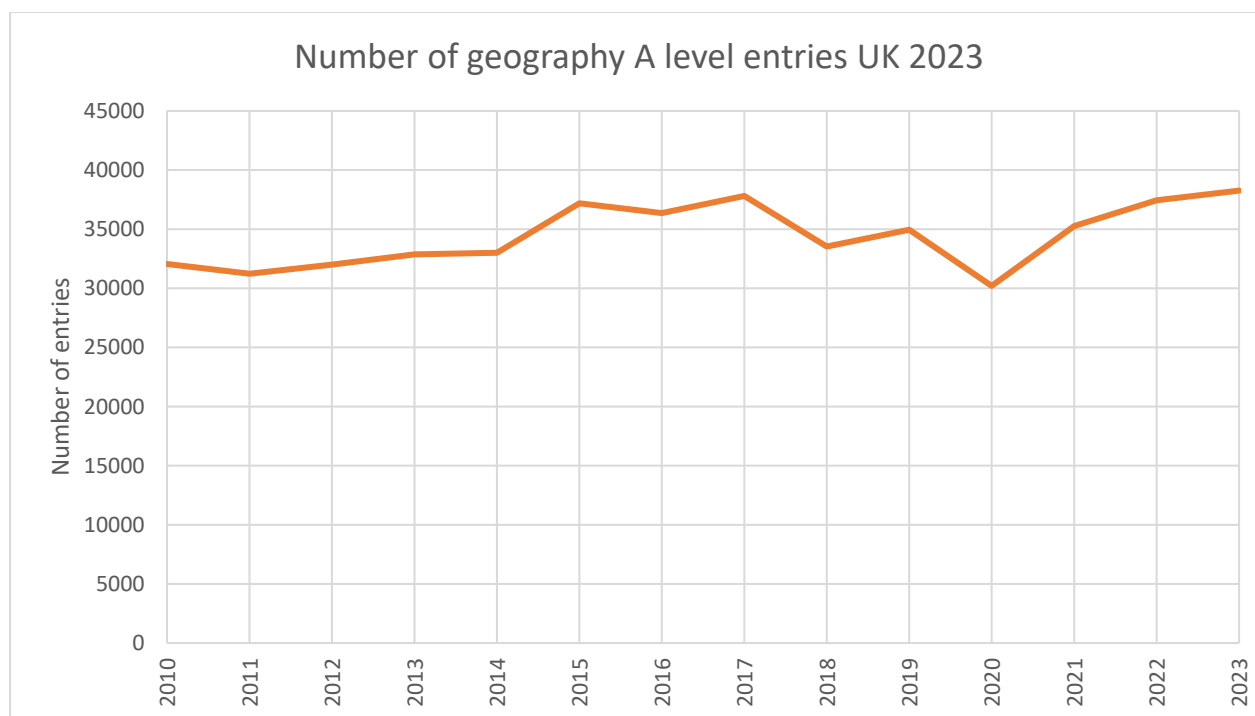


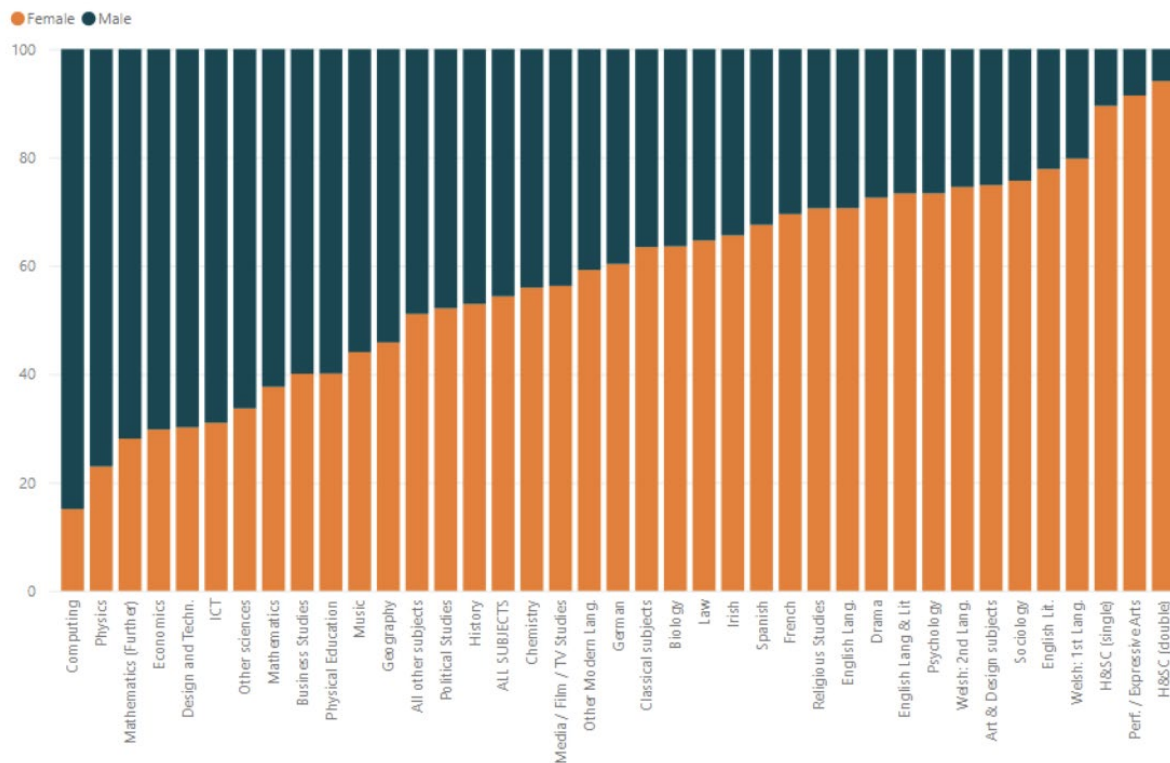
Figure 2: Trends in UK A level geography entry, all ages, between 2010 and 2023

Year	Entries	% of total entry	A*	A	B	C	D	E	A*-E	A*/A	Change from previous year
2023	38264	4.4	6.3	18.5	29.7	25.3	13.6	5.0	98.3	24.8	821
2022	37443	4.4	11.2	22.6	30.7	21.4	9.8	3.8	99	33.8	2175
2021	35268	4.3	15.4	26.4	27.8	19.6	7.9	2.6	99.7	41.8	5065
2020	30203	3.9	11.8	24.9	29.4	23.1	8.7	2.0	99.9	36.7	-4757
2019	34960	4.4	5.4	18.4	29.4	26.4	14.4	4.6	93.2	23.8	1422
2018	33538	4.1	5.5	19.4	30.0	26.1	13.3	4.4	98.7	24.9	-4276
2017	37814	4.6	5.9	20.8	29.7	25.3	13.0	4.1	98.9	26.7	1451
2016	36363	4.3	6.0	20.2	29.7	25.6	13.4	4.1	99.1	26.2	-832
2015	37195	4.4	7.1	20.4	29.5	24.6	13.6	4.0	99.2	27.5	4188
2014	33007	4.0	6.3	21.2	29.3	24.9	13.1	4.4	99.2	27.5	135

2013	32872	3.9	5.6	22.9	29.4	24.5	12.7	4.1	99.2	28.5	867
2012	32005	3.7	6.3	22.8	29	24.6	12.6	3.9	99.2	29.1	779
2011	31226	3.6	7.1	23.0	27.9	23.6	13.3	4.1	99.0	30.1	-837
2010	32063	3.8	6.8	23.4	27.6	23.1	13.4	4.5	98.8	30.2	-164

Source: JCQ (2023) **GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023**

Figure 3: Differences between male and female A level subject choices UK, all ages, Summer 2023



Source: JCQ 2023 A level Appendices Summer 2023

A level entries by country

- A level entries have increased in England (2.2%) and Northern Ireland (8.7%) but have decreased in Wales (-6.6%)
- Ofqual provide analytics tools that enable a closer look at geography results within England (Figures 5-11). Figure 5 shows the increase in entries as well as the increase in entries of male candidates overtaking the number of female candidates, which has remained fairly stable.
- Figure 6 shows the changes in grade distribution over time. The information shown in Figure 4 must be borne in mind when interpreting this data. We see a position returning to the pre-pandemic boundaries.
- The maps in Figures 7-9 enable a spatial pattern in the percentage achieving selected grades in geography in England which can be compared with Figure 11 showing the awarding of grades E and above for all subjects. 14.74% of all geography entries achieving grade E and above are in Greater London, with Hertfordshire next with 3.88%. Although there is variation in the size of the student population within each county there is variation between counties in the number of A level geography entries. These patterns are not unique to geography.
- It is well worth studying the Ofqual Analytics website to explore these patterns in more detail as they relate to your County if you are in England.
- Figure 11 shows the pattern in subject entries by English regions. For geography the South East clearly dominates, accounting for over half of all entries in the subject.

Figure 4: Geography A level entries, all ages, by country 2010-2023

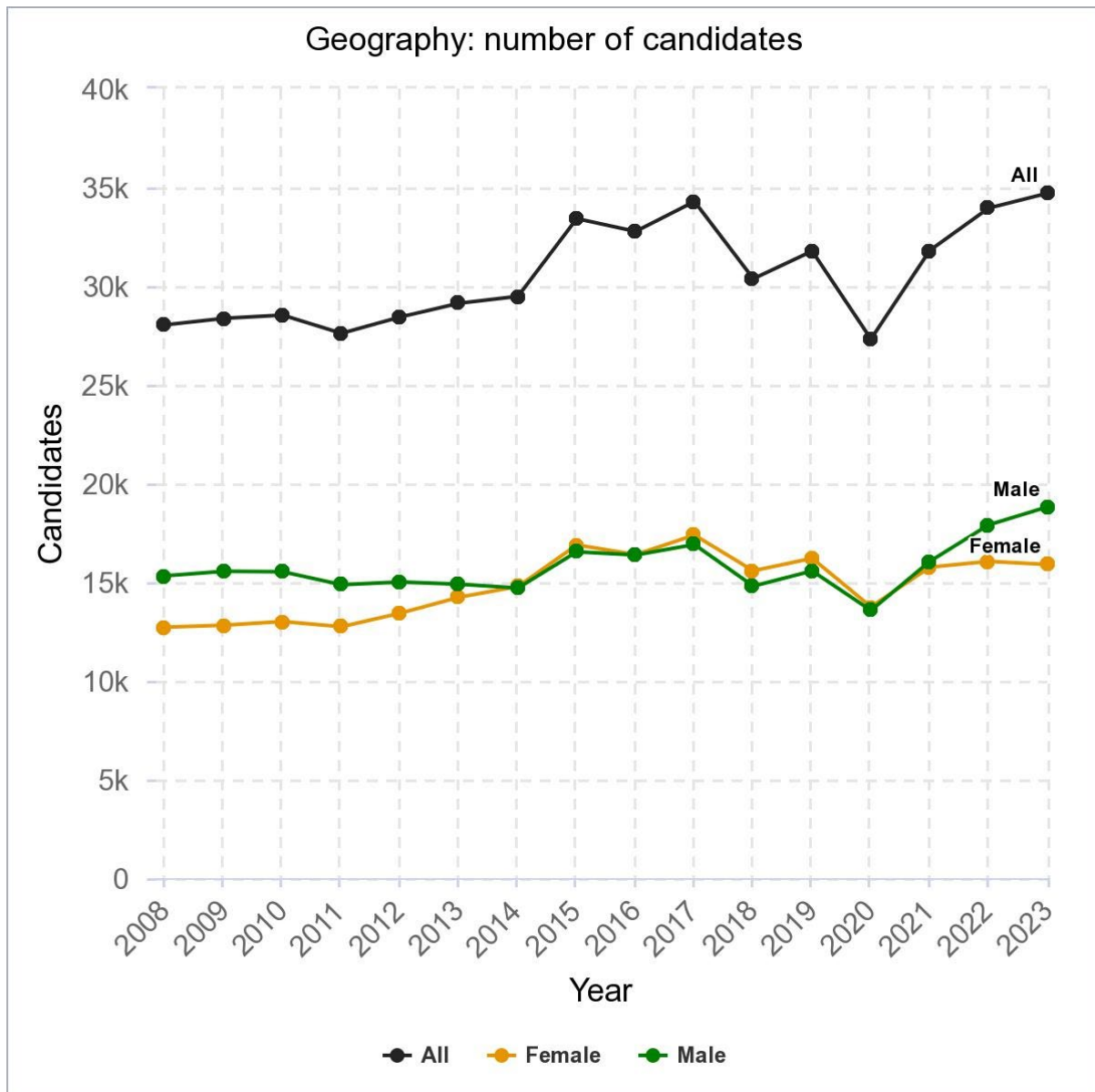
Year	England	Northern Ireland	Wales	UK (not Scotland)	Change England	Change NI	Change Wales	Change UK
2023	34700	1994	1354	38264	753	160	-96	817
	4.4	6.1	4.1	4.4	2.2	8.7	-6.6	2.2
2022	33947	1834	1450	37443	2144	-38	77	2183
	4.4	5.6	4.1	4.4	6.7	-2	5.6	6.2
2021	31803	1872	1371	36268	4489	336	205	5030
	4.2	5.8	3.8	4.3	16.4	21.9	17.6	16.8
2020	27309	1536	1168	30013	-4174	-83	-174	-4947
	3.8	5.5	3.8	3.9	-13.3	-5.1	-13.0	-16

2019	31483 <i>4.3</i>	1619 <i>5.7</i>	1342 <i>4.2</i>	34960 <i>4.3</i>	1402 <i>4.6</i>	9 <i>0.6</i>	-20 <i>-1.5</i>	1422 <i>4.2</i>
2018	30366 <i>4.1</i>	1610 <i>5.6</i>	1342 <i>4.1</i>	33538 <i>4.1</i>	-3915 <i>-11.4</i>	-92 <i>-5.4</i>	-197 <i>-12.8</i>	-4276 <i>-11.3</i>
2017	34281 <i>4.5%</i>	1702 <i>5.6%</i>	1539 <i>4.6%</i>	37814 <i>4.6%</i>	1516 <i>5.0%</i>	-162 <i>-7.5%</i>	-195 <i>-10.2%</i>	1451 <i>3.8%</i>
2016	32765 <i>4.3%</i>	1864 <i>5.9%</i>	1734 <i>4.9%</i>	36363 <i>4.3%</i>	-649 <i>-2.1%</i>	-110 <i>-5.1%</i>	-73 <i>-3.8%</i>	-832 <i>-2.4%</i>
2015	33414 <i>4.3%</i>	1974 <i>6.1%</i>	1807 <i>5.0%</i>	37195 <i>4.4%</i>	3938 <i>13.0%</i>	78 <i>3.6%</i>	172 <i>9.0%</i>	4188 <i>12.2%</i>
2014	29476	1896	1635	33007	350 <i>1.2%</i>	-105 <i>-4.9%</i>	-110 <i>-5.7%</i>	135 <i>0.4%</i>
2013	29126	2001	1745	32872	696 <i>2.3%</i>	133 <i>6.2%</i>	38 <i>2.0%</i>	867 <i>2.5%</i>
2012	28430	1868	1707	32005	826 <i>2.7%</i>	-10 <i>-0.5%</i>	-37 <i>-1.9%</i>	779 <i>2.3%</i>
2011	27604	1878	1744	31226	-921 <i>-3.0%</i>	72 <i>3.3%</i>	12 <i>0.6%</i>	-837 <i>-2.4%</i>
2010	28525	1806	1732	32063	165 <i>0.5%</i>	-195 <i>-9.1%</i>	-134 <i>-7.0%</i>	-164 <i>-0.5%</i>

% figures in italics for entries show the proportion of entries for geography out of the total number of entries for all A-level subjects.

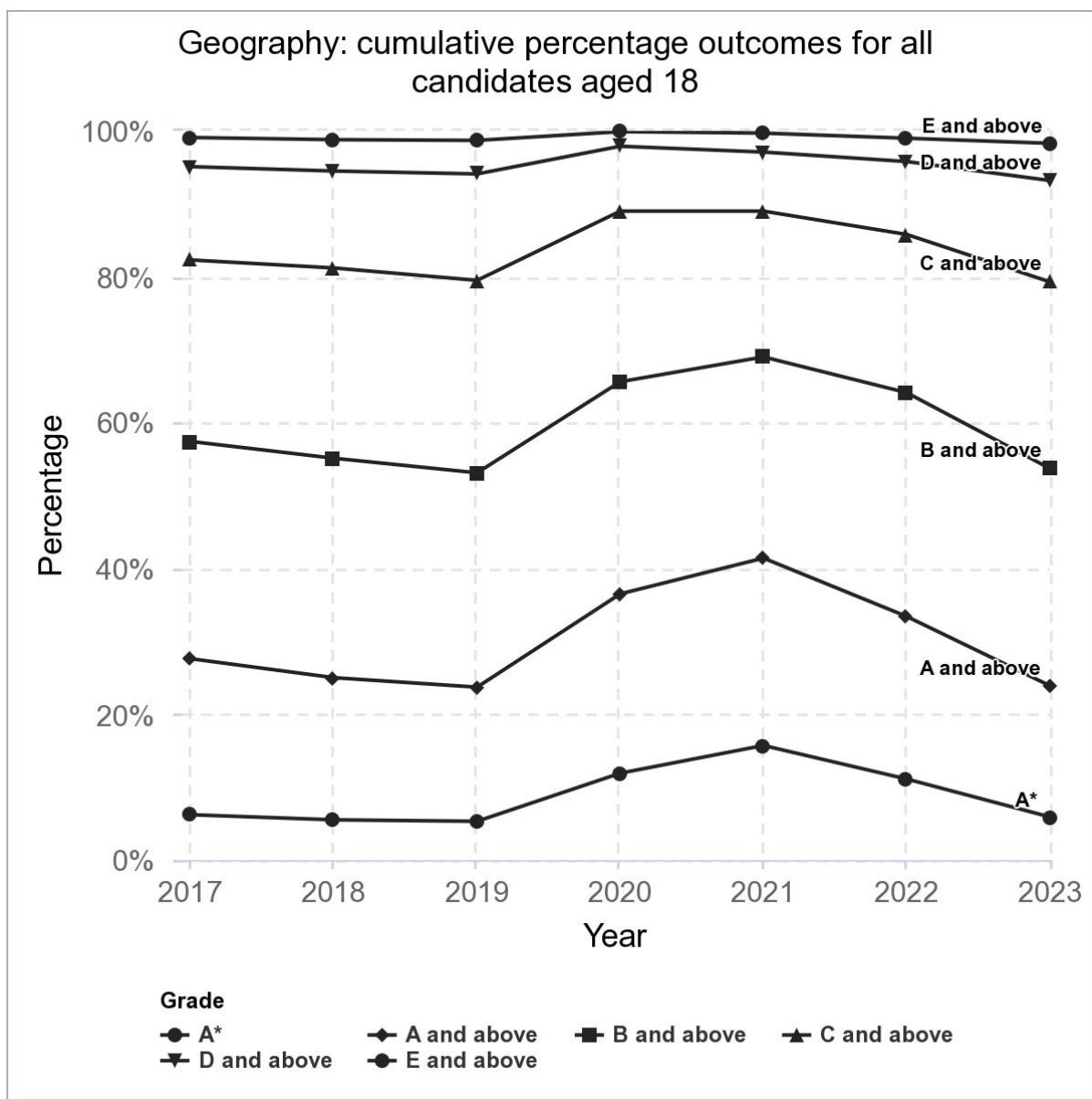
Source: JCQ (2023) **GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023**

Figure 5: Geography A level entries 2008-2023 England, all ages



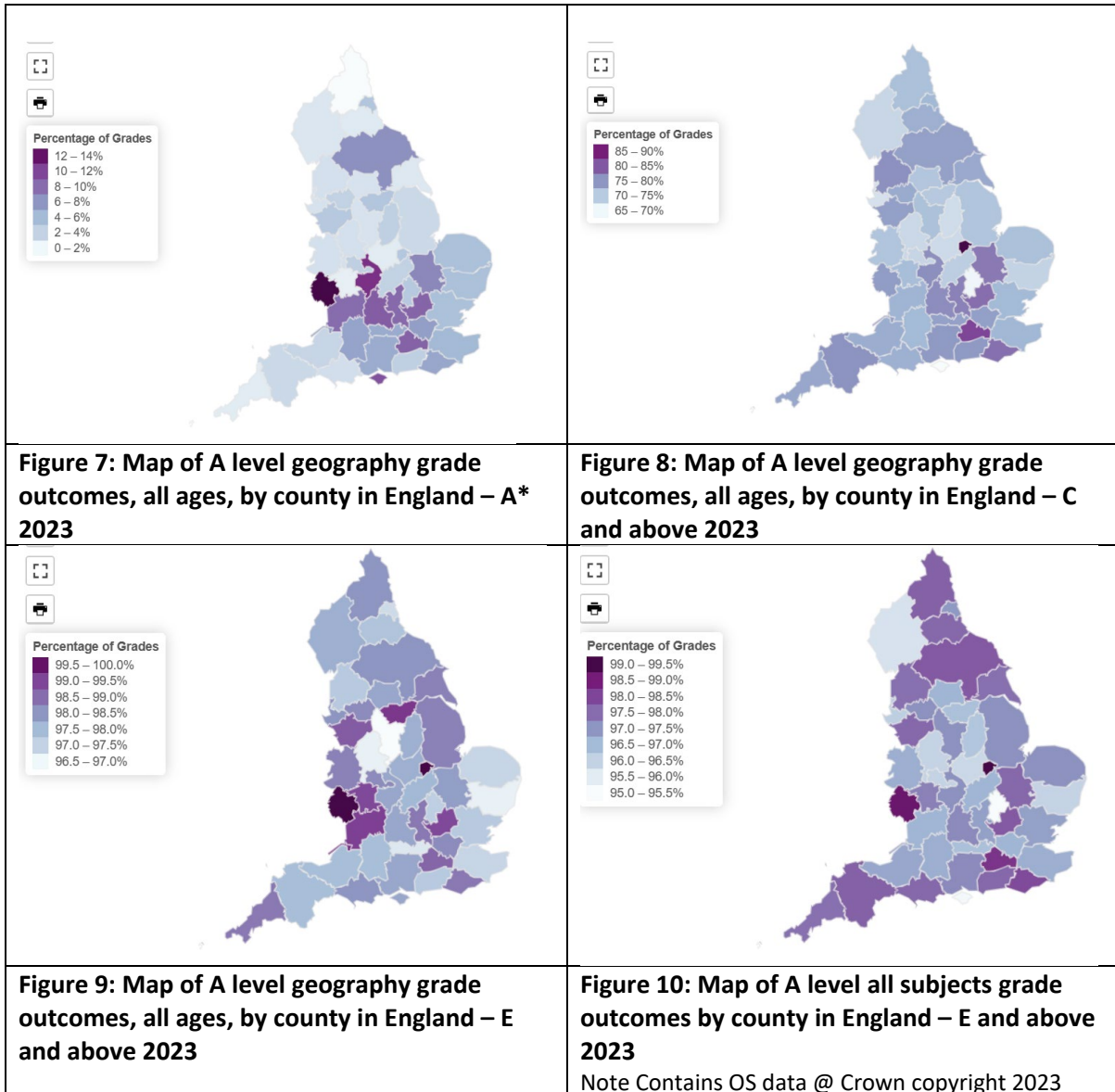
Source: [A level outcomes in England \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-outcomes-in-england/)

Figure 6: Cumulative percentage outcomes for all geography candidates 2008-2023, aged 18, England



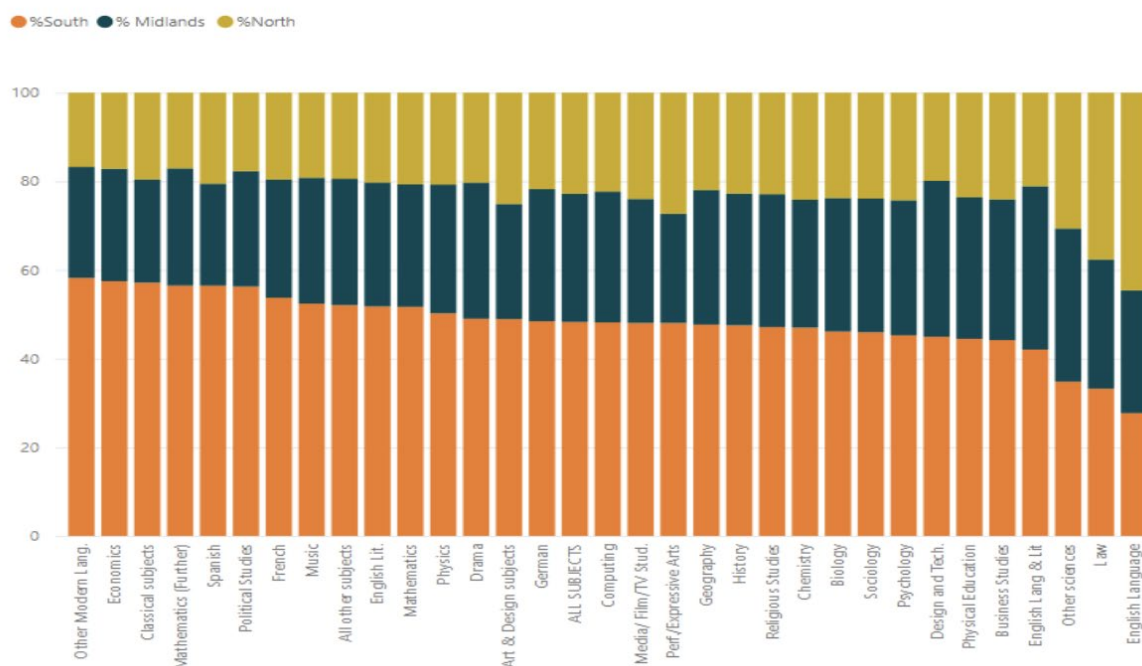
Source: [A level outcomes in England \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-outcomes-in-england/)

Figure 7 - 10 Ofqual Analytics – Maps of geography grade outcomes for England, all ages, 2023



Source: [Map of A Level grade outcomes by county in England \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofqual.gov.uk/grade-outcomes-by-county/)

Figure 11: Differences in A level subject choices by major region in England, Summer 2023



Source: JCQ 2023 A level Appendices Summer 2023

Entries by gender, A level geography (Figures 12a and 12b)

- In England entries from males increased to 18,810 for all ages from 17,895 in 2022 (Figure 5), an increase of 5.1%.
- In England entries from females dropped slightly to 15,890 in 2023 from 16,050 in 2022 for all ages, a decrease of 0.9%.
- In England entries for 18-year-old males increased from 17,410 in 2022 to 18,265 in 2023, an increase of 4.9%.
- In England for 18-year-old females entries dropped slightly from 15,640 in 2022 to 15,435 in 2023, a decrease of 1.3%.
- In England there was an increase in entries from 2022 to 2023 of 753 (2.2%), In Northern Ireland there was an increase in entries of 160 (8.7%). In Wales there was a decrease of -96 (-6.6%).
- In Northern Ireland there was an increase of 366 male entries from 2022 to 2023 (15.3%).
- In Northern Ireland there was an increase of female entries of 24 (2.5%) from 2022 to 2023.
- In Wales there was a decrease in male entries of 49 (-6.2%) from 2022 to 2023.
- In Wales there was a decrease in female entries of 52 (-7.9%).

Figure 12a: Male entries for A level geography, 2010-2022

Year	Entries	% TOTAL ENTRY	A*	A	B	C	D	E	A*-E	A*-A	% male
2023	20716	5.2	3.9	14.6	28.5	28	16.3	6.4	97.7	18.5	54.1
2022	19701	5.1	7.3	19	31.2	24.9	12.1	4.2	98.7	26.3	52.6
2021	17778	4.8	10.4	22.5	28.8	24	10.4	3.5	99.6	32.9	50.4
2020	14911	4.3	8	20.1	30.3	27.4	11.3	2.7	99.8	28.1	49.4
2019	17136	4.4	3.5	14.8	28.6	28.7	17.1	5.5	94.7	18.3	49
2018	16310	4.5	3.9	15.3	29.1	28.8	15.8	5.6	98.5	19.2	48.6
2017	18663	5.0	4.2	17.5	29.2	27.6	15.2	5.1	98.8	21.7	49.4
2016	18172	4.8	4.3	17.1	29.3	27.6	15.5	4.9	98.7	21.4	50.0
2015	18348	4.8	5	17.1	28.7	27.1	16	5	98.9	22.1	49.3
2014	16489	4.3	4.8	17.5	28.3	27.4	15.5	5.4	98.9	22.3	50.0
2013	16776	4.3	4.3	19.2	28.5	26.9	14.9	5.2	99	23.5	51.0
2012	16784	4.2	4.7	19.4	28.1	27.2	14.9	4.6	98.9	24.1	52.4
2011	16739	4.2	5.5	19.8	27.9	25.3	15.3	5	98.8	25.3	53.6
2010	17333	4.4	5.1	20.7	27.2	24.9	15.3	5.4	98.6	25.8	54.1

Source: JCQ (2023) GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023

Figure 12b: Female entries for A level geography, 2010-2023

Year	Entries	% TOTAL ENTRY	A*	A	B	C	D	E	A*-E	A*-A	% female
2023	17548	3.7	5.4	23.1	31	22.1	10.4	3.3	99.0	9.1	45.9
2022	17742	3.8	15.6	26.6	30.1	17.6	7.2	2.2	99.3	42.2	47.4
2021	17490	3.8	20.5	30.3	26.8	15.3	5.2	1.7	99.8	50.8	49.6
2020	15292	3.5	15.6	29.4	28.5	19.1	6.2	1.1	99.9	45	50.6
2019	17824	4	7.3	21.8	30.2	24.1	11.8	3.8	99	29.1	51
2018	17228	3.9	7.1	23.2	30.9	23.6	10.8	3.4	99.0	30.3	51.4
2017	19151	4.2	7.6	24.0	30.2	23.2	10.9	3.2	99.1	31.6	50.6
2016	18191	3.9	7.7	23.3	30.1	23.6	11.2	3.3	99.2	31.0	50.0

2015	18847	4.0	9.2	23.6	30.2	22.3	11.1	3.1	99.5	32.8	50.7
2014	16518	3.6	7.8	25.0	30.1	22.6	10.6	3.3	99.4	32.8	50.0
2013	16096	3.5	7.0	26.6	30.5	21.9	10.5	3.0	99.5	33.6	49.0
2012	15221	3.3	8.1	26.6	30	21.6	10.2	3	99.5	34.7	47.6
2011	14487	3.1	9	26.5	28.1	21.7	10.9	3.2	99.4	35.5	46.4
2010	14730	3.2	8.8	26.6	28.1	21	11.1	3.6	99.2	35.4	45.9

Source JCQ (2023) **GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023**

AS level geography 2023: Key points

Overall

- UK entries for AS qualifications increased by 4.2% from 135,397 in summer 2022 to 141,096 in 2023.
- However, the individual picture across the nations differs. Whilst Northern Ireland and Wales saw an increase in AS entries, there was a decrease in England, mostly due to differences in qualification design where AS is a stand-alone qualification.
- According to ONS population estimates, the 17-year-old population increased only slightly by 0.1 % for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland combined. Entries from this age group account for 80.2% of UK AS entries.

Source: 2023 Notes for users of the JCQ results tables A and AS level June 2023 series

Entries for AS geography by country, 2023 (Figures 13 - 14)

Figure 13: Entries for AS by country, 2023

Year	England	Northern Ireland	Wales	UK (not Scotland)	% Change England	% Change Wales	% Change UK
2023	1707	1968	1326	5001	1.3	-10.2	-7.11
2022	1685	2192	1497	5384	7.6	6.72	2.3
2021	1566	2054	1637	5263	-8.5	-13.3	-9.8
2020	1712	2368	1755	5835	-42.6	12.1	-14
2019	2983	2113	1434	6650	-92	-1501	-48
2018	5742	2338	1762	9842	-302	2	-180
2017	23085	2280	1968	27333	-117	-11	-100
2016	50106	2533	2227	54866	-1	-9	-2
2015	50633	2749	2419	55801	0	3	0

Source: JCQ (2023) **GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023**

Gender: AS level geography 2023 (Figure 14)

The pattern of decline in AS entries has been reasserted with a slight decrease of 383 (-7.1%) in total entries. This decrease is largely accounted for by the decrease in male entries of 231 (-7.7%). There is also a decline of female entries of 152 (-2.8%).

Figure 14: Geography AS entries by gender, 2014-2023

Geography entries	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
AS Males	2743	2974	2745	2916	3285	4897	13689	27610	28111	28222
AS Females	2258	2410	2518	2957	3365	4978	13928	27256	27690	27455
AS Total	5001	5384	5263	5873	6650	9875	27617	54866	55801	55677

Source: JCQ (2023) **GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023**

Figure 15 shows the distribution of grades for AS in the different nations. It is important to note the different nature of AS in each country as explained in the context. The distribution of grades shows the position in England is more similar to 2019, though lower grades have higher percentages than in 2022. Northern Ireland shows higher percentages than 2019 at higher grades though they are down in 2022. There is a similar pattern in Wales. Both of these jurisdictions are in the process of returning to pre-pandemic grading in 2024.

Figure 15: AS results by country

AS results by country									
Country	Year	Total geography AS entries	% OF TOTAL ENTRY for AS	A	B	C	D	E	A-E
England	2023	1707	2.8	22.8	18.1	18.9	15.9	10.4	86.1
England	2022	1685	2.7	24.5	18.8	22.1	16.7	9.5	91.6
England	2021	1566	2.8	28.8	22.7	22.2	14.6	8.5	96.7
England	2020	1712	2.4	26.5	22.2	25.4	15	9	98.1
England	2019	2983	2.6	20.1	17.7	20.7	16.3	12.5	87.3
England	2018	5742	2.2	19.5	17.4	20.6	18.6	12.3	88.4
England	2017	23085	3.6	22	22	22.1	17	9.6	92.7
England	2016	50106	4.5	22.4	20.6	21.2	16.6	10.6	91.4
Northern Ireland	2023	1968	5.0	33.6	25.9	23.2	11.6	4.2	98.5
Northern Ireland	2022	2192	6.2	38	29.5	20.4	9.1	2.5	99.5
Northern Ireland	2021	2054	5.8	46.9	28.6	17.3	5.1	1.6	99.5
Northern Ireland	2020	2368	6.5	37.6	31.4	23.3	6.4	1.2	99.9
Northern Ireland	2019	2113	5.6	27.6	27.5	21.7	13.7	5.6	96.1
Northern Ireland	2018	2338	5.8	26.9	28.8	22.8	13	5.5	97
Northern Ireland	2017	2280	5.4	28.6	27.7	22.5	12.2	5.4	96.4
Northern Ireland	2016	2533	5.5	26.1	26.4	23.5	13.1	6.6	95.7
Wales	2023	1326	3.3	28.8	20.1	19.8	15.5	7.9	92.1
Wales	2022	1497	3.9	35.6	20.4	16.6	14.9	6.9	94.7

Wales	2021	1637	3.8	40.7	26.1	16.9	9.3	4.8	97.8
Wales	2020	1755	3.9	31.1	27.5	25.2	10.9	4.6	99.3
Wales	2019	1534	3.9	22.4	21.3	19.2	17.4	10.8	91.1
Wales	2018	1762	4.1	21.8	17.5	22.4	16.8	11.8	90.3
Wales	2017	1968	4.3	20.4	16.1	20.5	18.7	12.6	88.3
Wales	2016	2227	4.5	19.1	15.9	20.2	17.9	12.9	86

Source: JCQ (2023) **GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023**

Regulator links:

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>

Northern Ireland

<https://ceea.org.uk/regulation>

Wales

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/>

<https://qualificationswales.org/cymraeg>

Education Department links

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Northern Ireland

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/>

Wales

<https://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>

References

JCQ 2023 A and AS Results Important Information Summer 2023 Final [Examination results - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

JCQ 2023 GCE Level 3 Press notice [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GCE-Level-3-Press-notice.pdf>

JCQ (2023) GCE A Level & GCE AS Level Results Summer 2023 [Examination results - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

JCQ 2023 A level Appendices Summer 2023

JCQ 2023 Notes for users of the JCQ results tables A and AS level June 2023 series.

JCQ (2023) Other Results Information 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) [Examination results - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

JCQ (2023) GCE Entry, Gender and Regional Charts Summer 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) [Examination results - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

Additional Information published by Ofqual

Ofqual (2023) Infographics for A level results 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infographic-a-level-results-2023/infographics-for-a-level-results-2023>

Ofqual (2023) [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) [A level outcomes in England \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](#)

Ofqual (2023) Interactive Visualisations 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) [Ofqual - Analytics](#)

Ofqual (2023) Map of A level grade outcomes by county England 2022 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) [Map of A Level grade outcomes by county in England \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](#)

Ofqual (2023) Interactive Graphs 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) [A level outcomes in England \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](#)

Gov.UK 2023 Infographics for A level results, 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infographic-a-level-results-2023/infographics-for-a-level-results-2023>

Gov.UK 2023 Guide to AS and A level results for England, summer 2023 [online] (accessed 17.8.2023) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guide-to-as-and-a-level-results-for-england-summer-2023>

Elizabeth Rynne, Assessment and Examination Special Interest Group

17.8.2023