

Medr statistics

Further education, apprenticeships and community learning, August 2024 to July 2025

Reference: Sta/Medr/04/2026
Date: 26 February 2026
Designation: Official Statistics (see [change in accredited statistics status](#))
Email: statistics@medr.cymru

Summary: Statistics on the number of learners, programmes and activities being taken at colleges, work-based learning providers and in local authority community learning.

Theme: Further education, apprenticeships, community learning

Source: Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR)

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Summary

This report summarises some of the key trends in further education, apprenticeships, and local authority community learning during the 2024/25 academic year.

It also includes provisional information for learners, and full-time further education programmes for the first quarter (August to October) of 2025/26.

Main points

- There were 161,920 learners in further education, apprenticeships or local authority community learning during the 2024/25 academic year.
- Full-time further education learners increased to a record high.
- Provisional data suggests the rising trend in full-time further education learners is continuing in 2025/26.
- Part-time learner numbers decreased, for the first time in 4 years.
- The number of apprenticeships started was the lowest since these statistics began.
- Local authority community learning numbers are higher than before the pandemic.
- Level 2 full-time further education has been rising consistently.
- There has been a rise in fluent Welsh speakers taking activities with a 'significant amount' of Welsh medium learning.
- Learners taking further education, apprenticeships, and community learning are more likely to live in deprived neighbourhoods.
- 1 in 6 learners have a learning difficulty or disability, the most since these statistics began.
- Learners are more diverse than the Welsh population.

Note

More detailed data can be found in the accompanying spreadsheet and [StatsWales tables](#). This includes information not in this report, such as:

- Home region
- Primary learning difficulty or disability
- Apprenticeship target measure
- Individual provider
- Highest level of qualification before starting
- Programme and activity level
- Activity guided learning hours
- Sub-sector subject area.

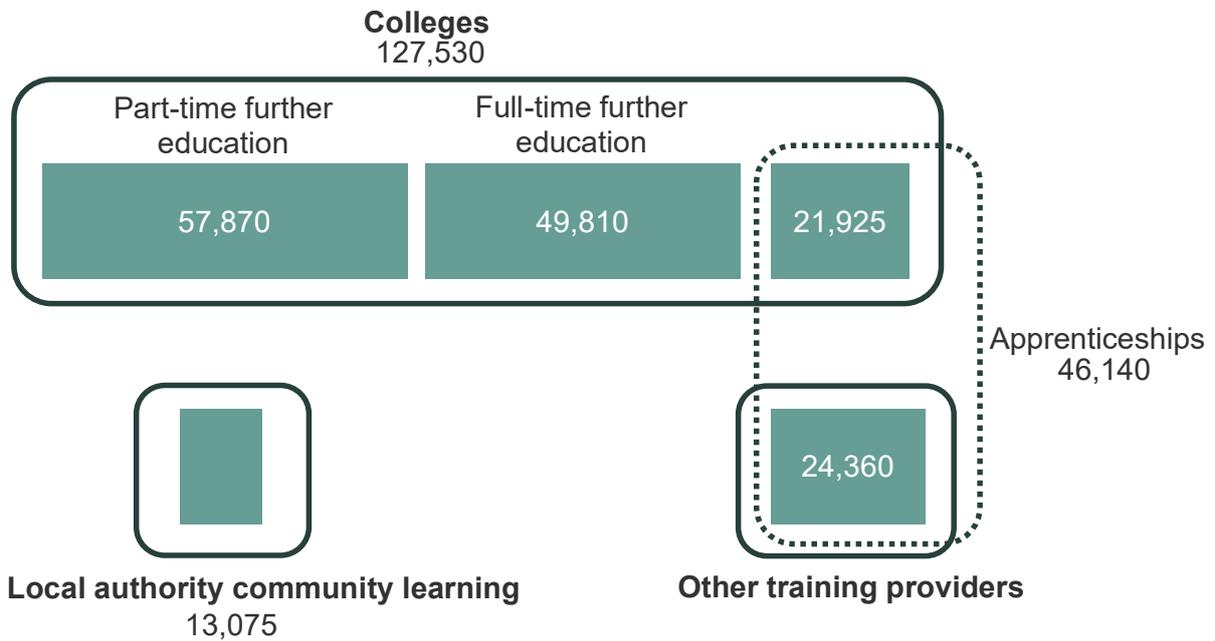
Learners

There were 161,920 learners in further education, apprenticeships or local authority community learning during the 2024/25 academic year.

The statistics in this report do not include learners in school sixth forms or universities. Higher Education statistics are published in the report [Students in Higher Education](#) on medr.cymru. Sixth form statistics are available in the [‘Pupils’ StatsWales tables](#).

Learners by learning and provider type

Figure 1: August 2024 to July 2025



Description: There were 127,530 learners in colleges. There were 46,140 apprentices, split between colleges and other training providers.

[Note 1]: Some learners will have studied at multiple provider types.

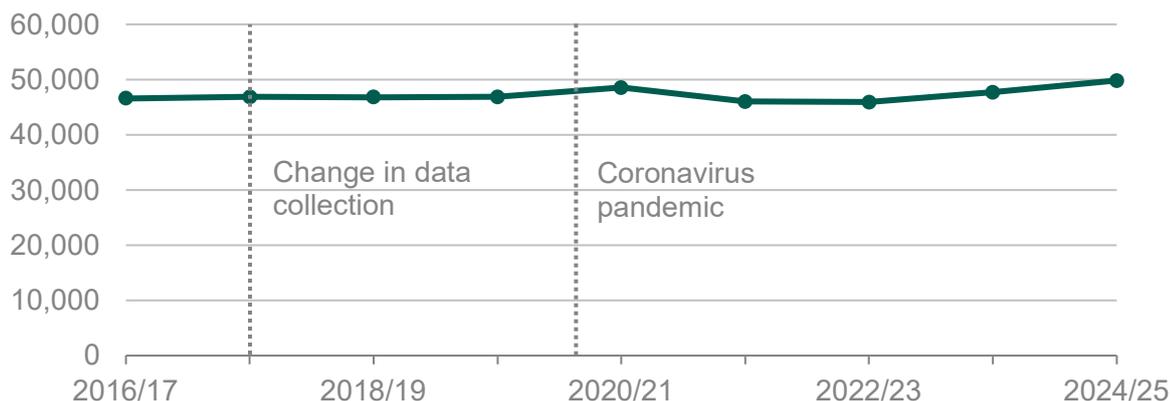
[Data on StatsWales](#)

Further education includes learners studying A levels and other general qualifications, as well as learners studying vocational qualifications (for example BTECs).

Local authority community learning is community learning funded by Medr, that is delivered directly by local authorities.

Full-time further education learners increased to a record high

Figure 2: Full-time further education learners by academic year, August 2016 to July 2025



Description: The number of learners in full-time further education has increased for the past two years.

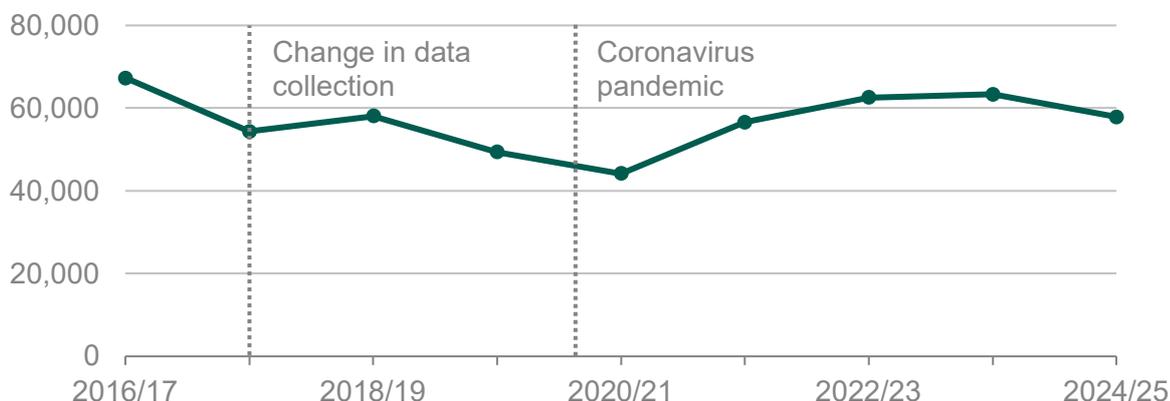
[Data on StatsWales](#)

There were 2,085 more learners in full-time further education in 2024/25 than in the previous year.

Provisional data for the first quarter of 2025/26 shows that the rising trend has continued. There were 51,340 (p) full-time further education learners recorded in Q1 2025/26 compared to 49,485 in Q1 2024/25. The Q1 totals for 2024/25 include 99% of full-time further education learners for that year.

Part-time learner numbers decreased, for the first time in 4 years

Figure 3: Part-time further education learners by academic year, August 2016 to July 2025



Description: The number of learners in part-time further education in 2024/25 was lower than the previous 2 years.

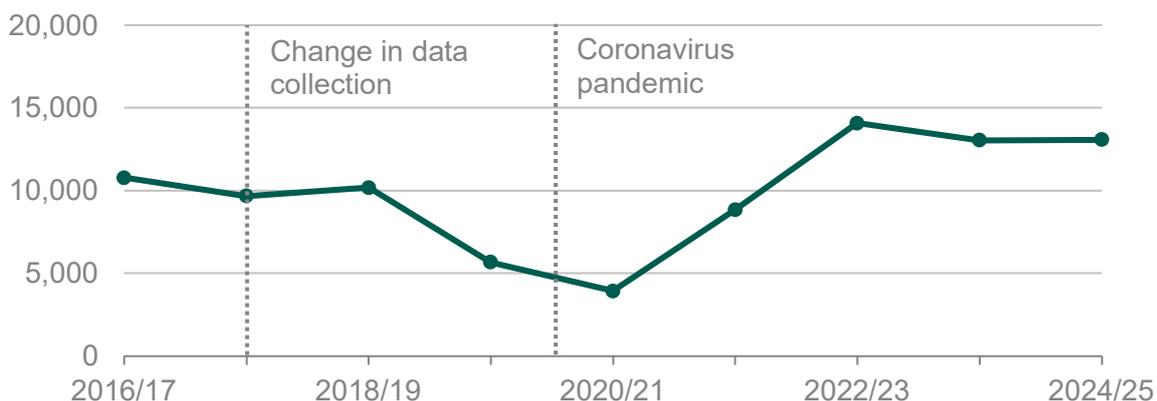
[Data on StatsWales](#)

There were 5,445 fewer learners in part-time further education in 2024/25 than in the previous year.

The fall in part-time learners was concentrated in South East Wales and Mid Wales, and in learners under the age of 40.

Local authority community learning numbers are higher than before the pandemic

Figure 4: Local authority community learning learners by academic year, August 2016 to July 2025



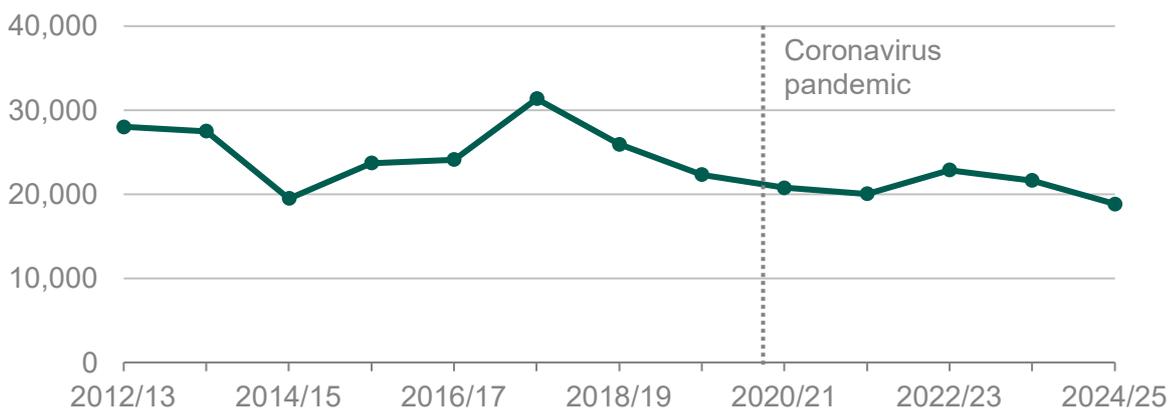
Description: The number of learners taking local authority community learning is similar to last year.

[Data on StatsWales](#)

There were 2,890 more learners in local authority community learning in 2024/25 than there were in 2018/19.

The number of apprenticeships started was the lowest since these statistics began

Figure 5: Apprenticeships started by academic year, August 2012 to July 2025



Description: The number of apprenticeships started has fallen for two years in a row.

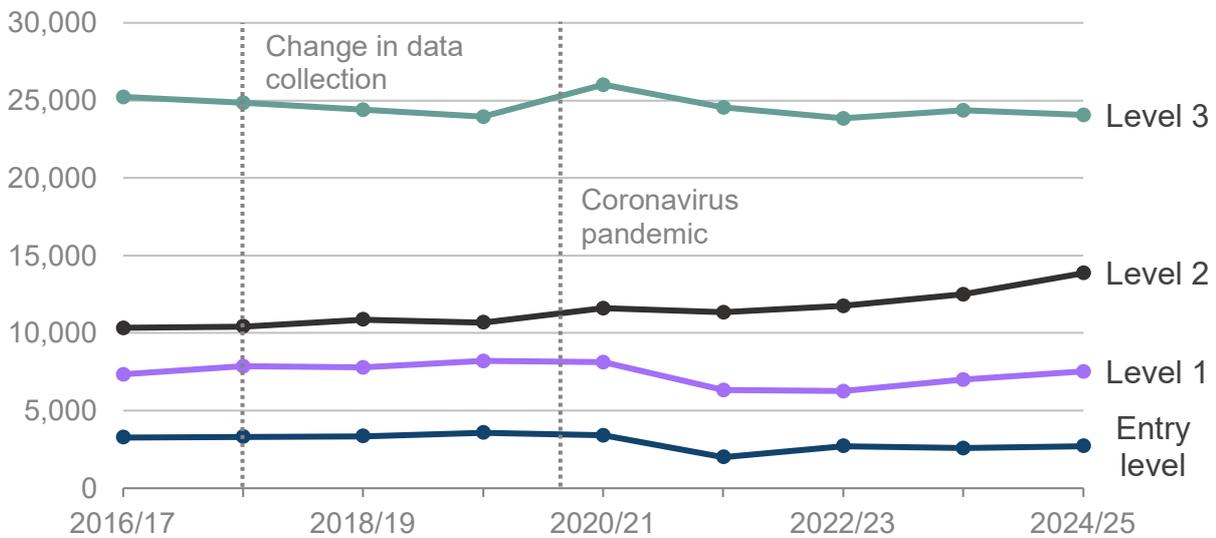
[Data on StatsWales](#)

The Welsh Government financial year budget for apprenticeships in 2023-24 was £139m and £144m in 2024-25 (Source: [Medr Funding Allocations 2025 to 2026](#)). Previously, there was additional funding for apprenticeships from the European Social Fund (£43m in 2023-24 [Medr Funding Allocations 2025 to 2026](#)). This ceased by the 2024-2025 financial year.

Learning taken

Level 2 full-time further education has been rising consistently

Figure 6: Full-time further education programmes in colleges by level and academic year, August 2016 to July 2025



Description: Level 1 programmes have been recovering from a dip in 2021/22.

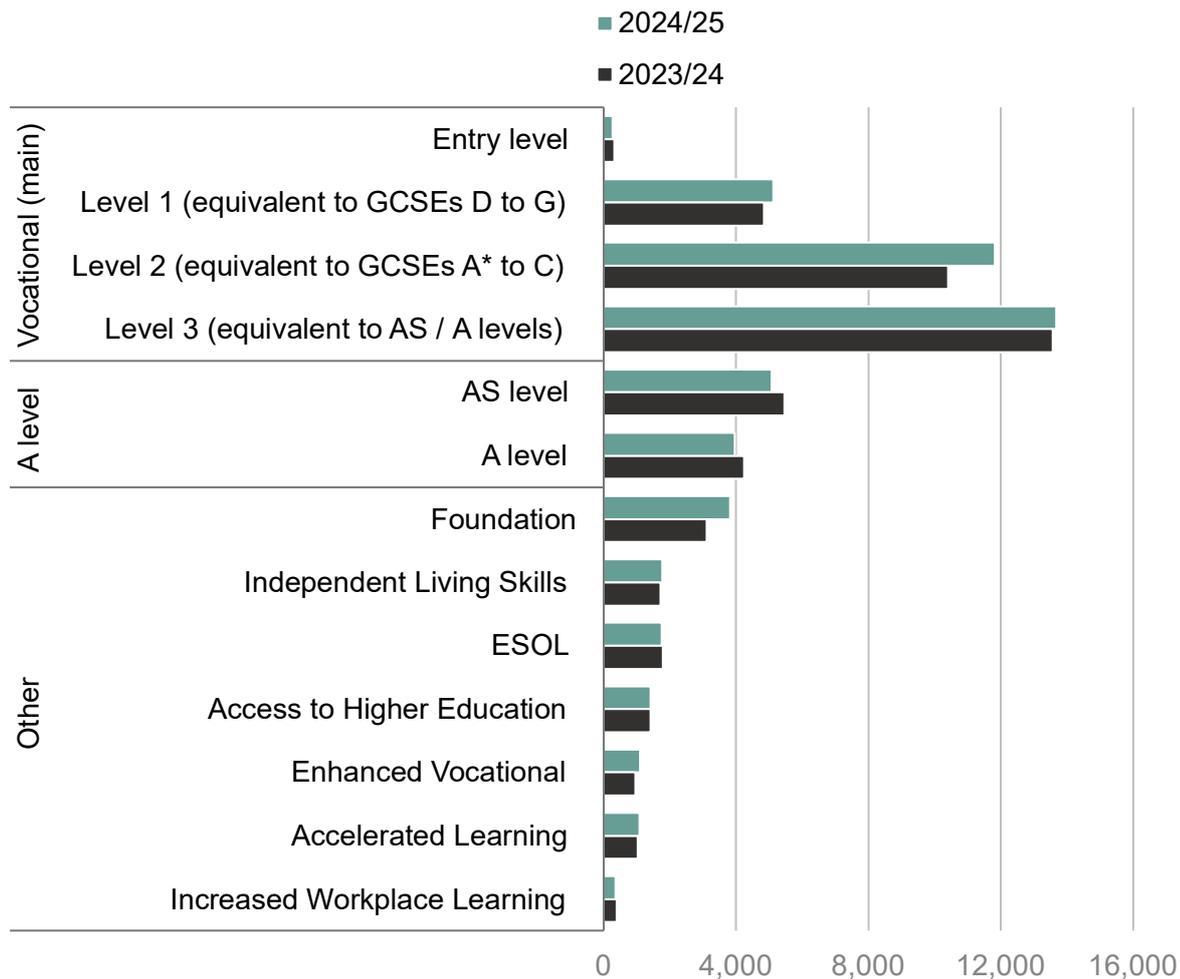
[Note]: Access to Higher Education, and Other level programmes have not been included in the chart.

Data in Table 1.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

There were 3,530 more level 2 full-time further education programmes in 2024/25 than in 2016/17. In the same time period, there has been a fall in level 3 programmes of 1,150, a fall in entry level programmes of 550, and a fall in Access to Higher Education programmes of 445. There were 185 more level 1 programmes.

There has been an increase in full-time foundation programmes

Figure 7: Full-time further education programmes in colleges by type and academic year, August 2023 to July 2025



Description: There has been a decrease in A level programmes taken in colleges.

[Note]: A small number of other programmes have not been included in the chart.

Data in Table 1.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

The number of full-time foundation programmes increased from 3,120 in 2023/24 to 3,830 in 2024/25.

The increase in foundation programmes, and level 1 and 2 vocational programmes is much bigger than the decrease in AS and A level programmes.

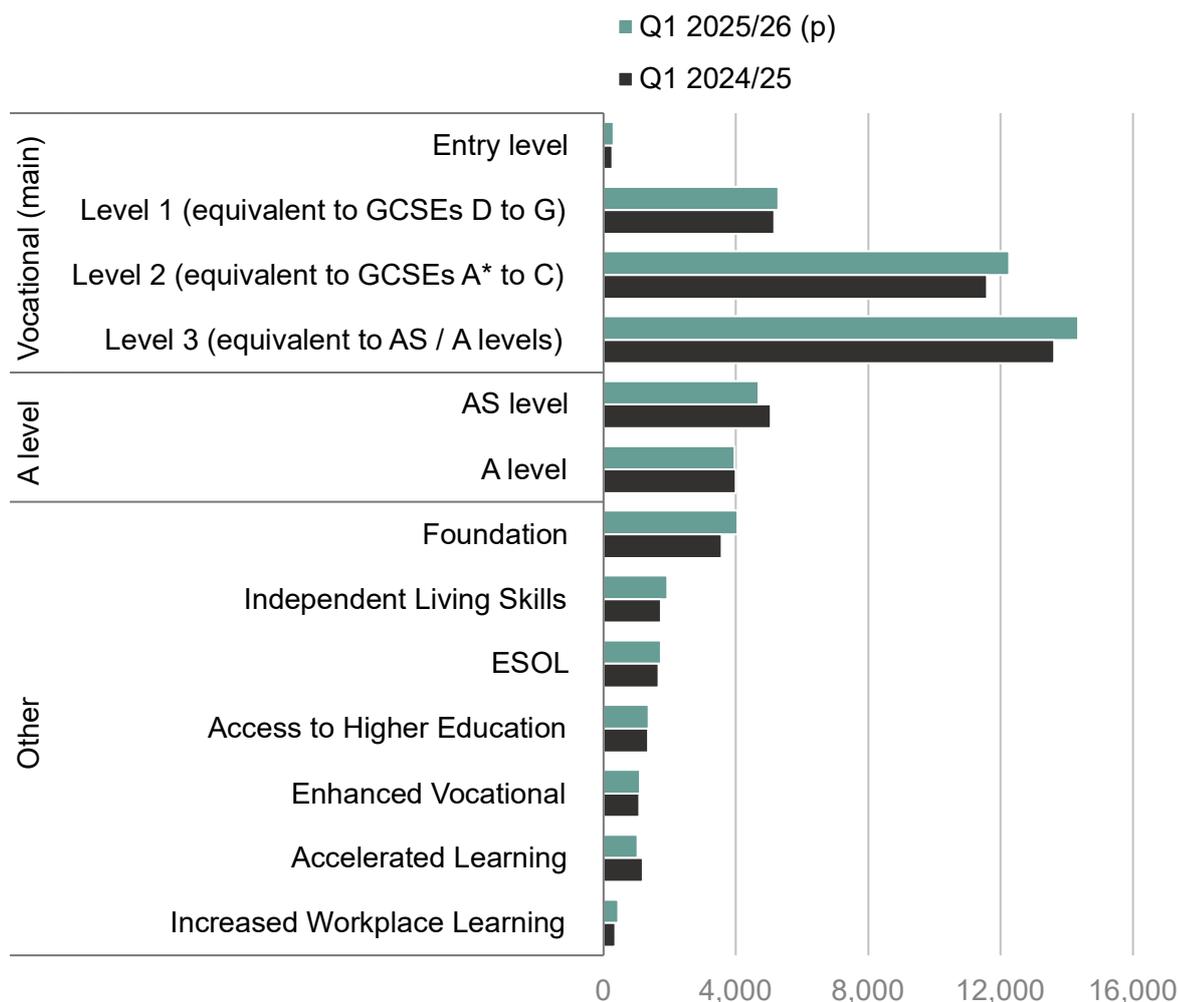
A programme is the collection of qualifications a learner studies. A typical A level programme would be 3 A levels and a Welsh Baccalaureate.

Vocational programmes are focused on a learning for a particular occupation. For example, a Level 1 programme in Automotive Engineering.

Apprenticeships are not included in these figures.

Provisional 2025/26 data shows a recovery in level 3 vocational programmes

Figure 8: Full-time further education programmes in colleges by type and academic year, August to October 2025 and August to October 2026 (provisional)



Description: There were more full-time further education programmes in quarter 1 of 2025/26 than quarter 1 of 2024/25, across most types of programme (except AS levels, A levels and Accelerated Learning).

[Note]: A small number of other programmes have not been included in the chart.

Data in Table 8.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Provisional data suggest the trend of increasing level 1 and level 2 programmes is continuing in 2025/26. However, there is also an increase in level 3 vocational programmes.

The most common apprenticeships are Health and Social Care

Figure 9: Top 5 full-time learning programmes taken, or apprenticeships started by learning type, August 2024 to July 2025

Full-time further education	Programmes	Apprenticeship starts	Programmes
3 AS with Advanced Skills Bacc	3,150	Health and Social Care Level 2	2,895
Construction Level 2 (Foundation)	2,895	Health and Social Care Level 3	1,785
Construction Level 1	1,950	Engineering Manufacture Level 3	745
3 A2 with Advanced Skills Bacc	1,830	Childrens Care, Learning And Development Level 3	730
Foundation Studies Level 1	1,610	Management Level 4	720

Description: The most common full-time further education programme is studying 3 AS levels along with the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales.

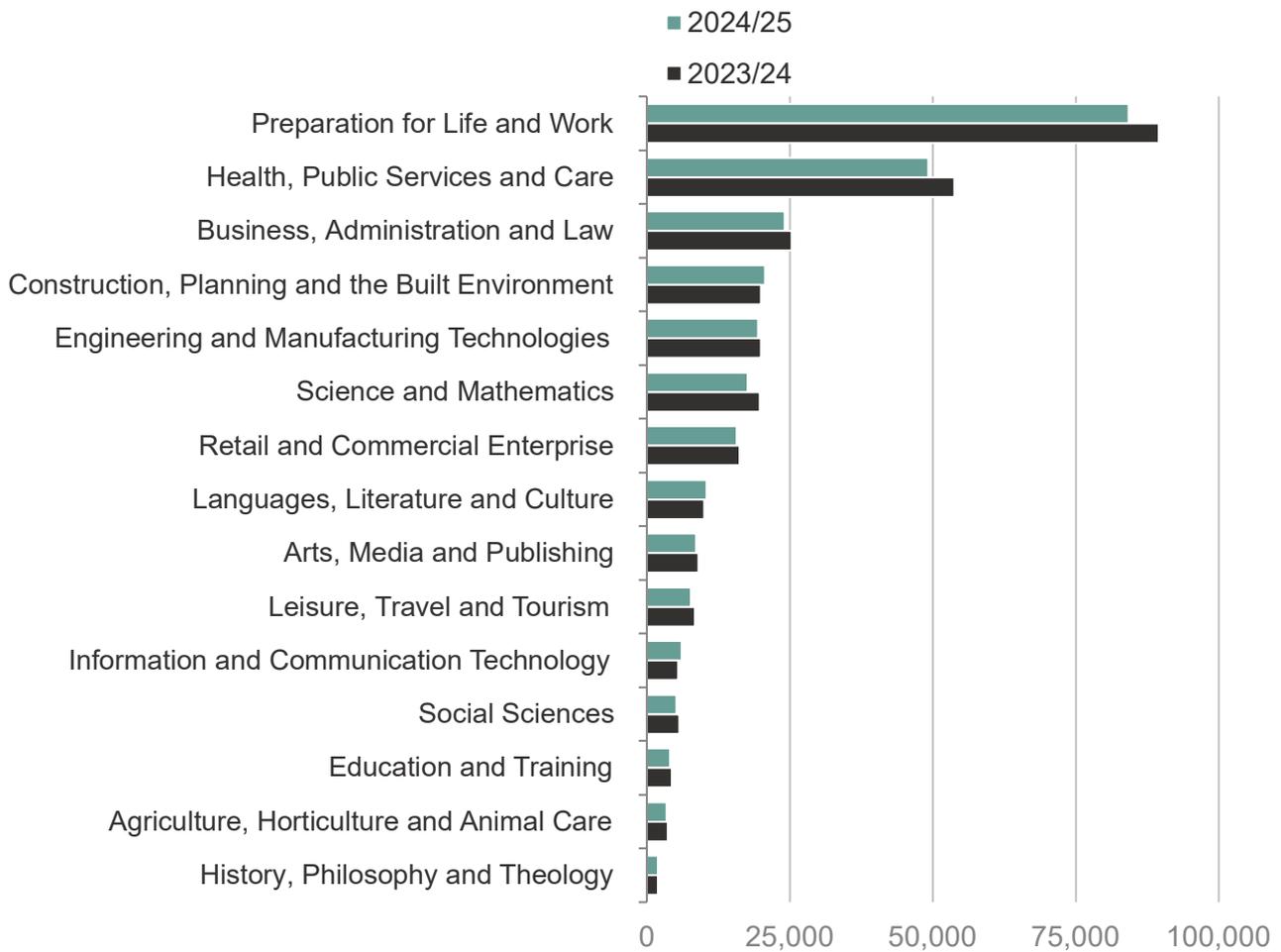
Data in Tables 1.2 and 4.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet

The top 5 apprenticeships started make up over a third of all apprenticeship starts.

A fifth of full-time further education programmes are accounted for by 5 programmes.

There has been a decrease in Science and Mathematics qualifications

Figure 10: Regulated qualifications by sector subject area and academic year, August 2023 to July 2025



Description: The most common sector subject areas are Preparation for Life and Work; and Health, Public Services and Care.

[Note] The drop in Preparation for Life and Work is caused by a change in the structure of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Previously it was recorded as two activities – the overall Welsh Baccalaureate and the standalone Skills Challenge Certificate qualification. This has been replaced by a single qualification, the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales.

Data in Table 2.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

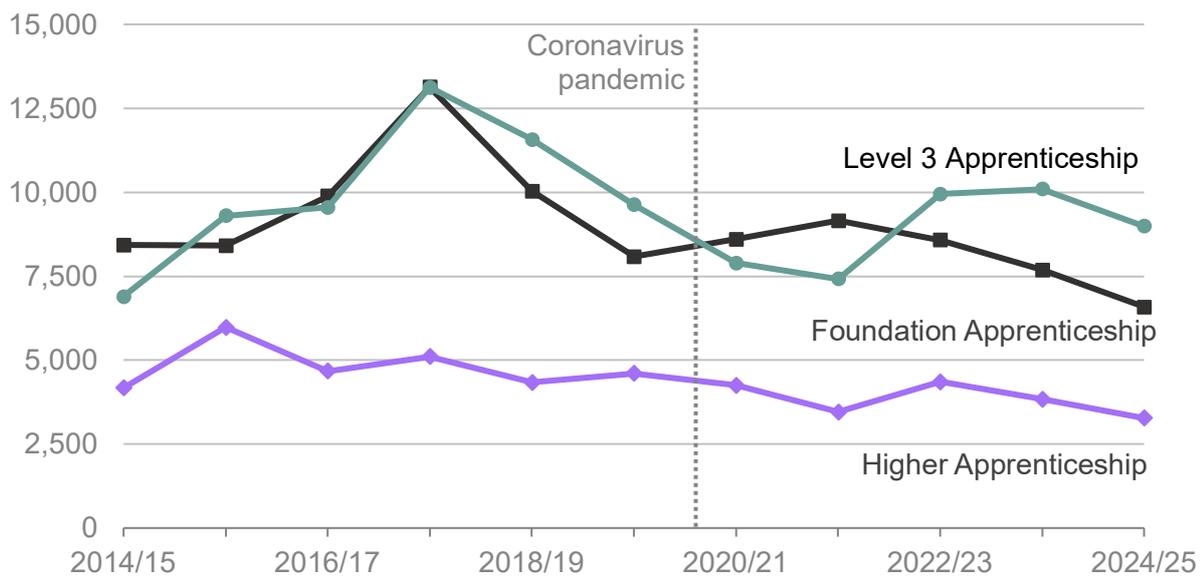
The drop in Science and Mathematics was partly driven by a 19% decrease in GCSE Mathematics (which is most often taken as a resit).

There was an overall 5% drop in the number of regulated qualifications taken. The drop was mainly driven by falls in apprenticeship and part-time learner numbers.

Construction, Planning and the Built Environment; Languages, Literature and Culture; and Information and Communication Technology rose, when qualifications decreased in all other subject areas.

Apprenticeships fell across all levels

Figure 11: Apprenticeship starts by level and academic year, August 2014 to July 2025



Description: There were 8,990 level 3 apprenticeships, 6,580 foundation apprenticeships, and 3,280 higher apprenticeships started in 2024/25.

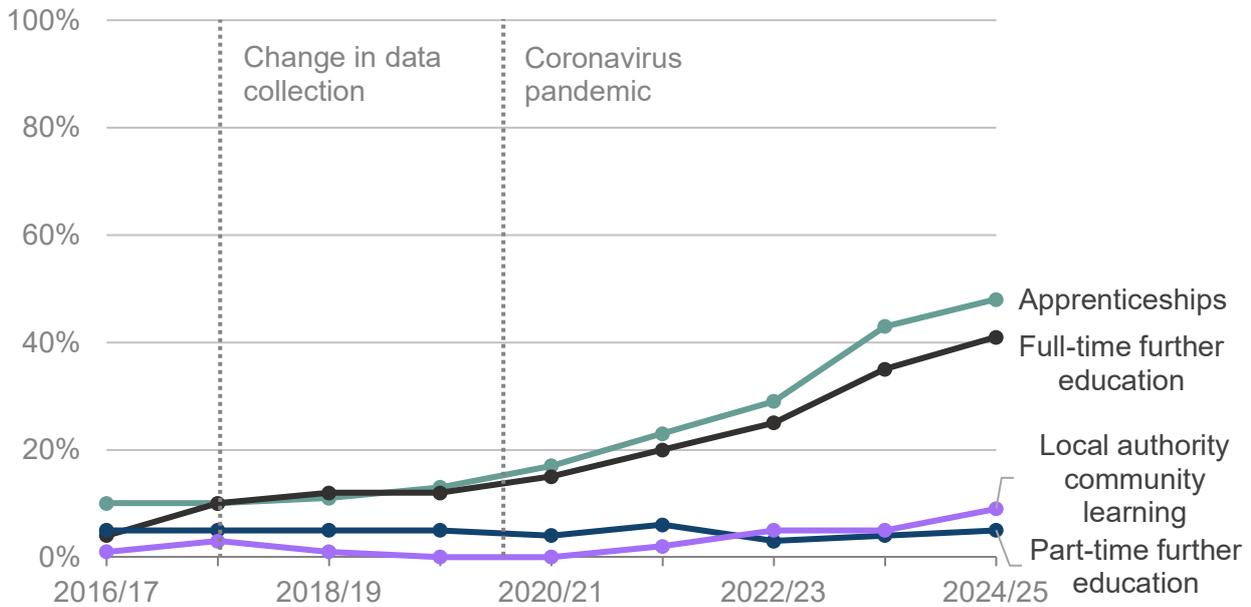
[Note] From September 2022, all construction apprenticeships start at level 3 instead of level 2.

[Data on StatsWales](#)

Welsh medium

More learners are studying at least partly in Welsh

Figure 12: Percentage of learning activities conducted bilingually or in Welsh, by learning type and academic year, August 2016 to July 2025



Description: 48% of apprenticeship activities were delivered at least partly through the medium of Welsh.

[Data on StatsWales](#)

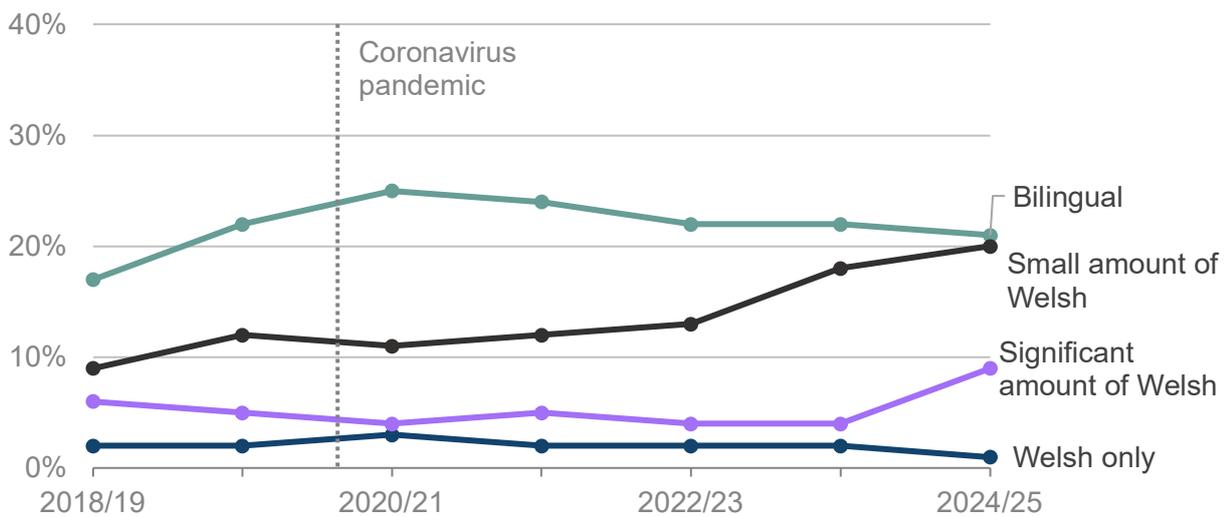
The vast majority (84%) of activities studied at least partly in Welsh involved a “small amount” of Welsh medium learning. 8% were studied bilingually, 6% with a significant amount of Welsh, and only 1% were studied entirely through Welsh.

The increase in Welsh medium learning is almost entirely due to an increase in these “small amount” of Welsh activities.

The [LLWR guidance and services pages](#) has information on how the amount of Welsh medium is meant to be recorded.

There has been a rise in fluent Welsh speakers taking activities with a 'significant amount' of Welsh medium learning

Figure 13: Percentage of Welsh-medium learning delivered in learning activities taken by fluent Welsh speakers, by academic year, August 2018 to July 2025



Description: The percentage of learning activities taken by fluent Welsh speakers with a small amount of Welsh medium learning has doubled over the last 6 years.

[Data on StatsWales](#)

Over 1 in 5 qualifications taken by fluent Welsh speakers were delivered bilingually. But this is lower than three years ago.

The percentage of fluent Welsh speakers taking qualifications entirely in Welsh is at its lowest since 2017/18.

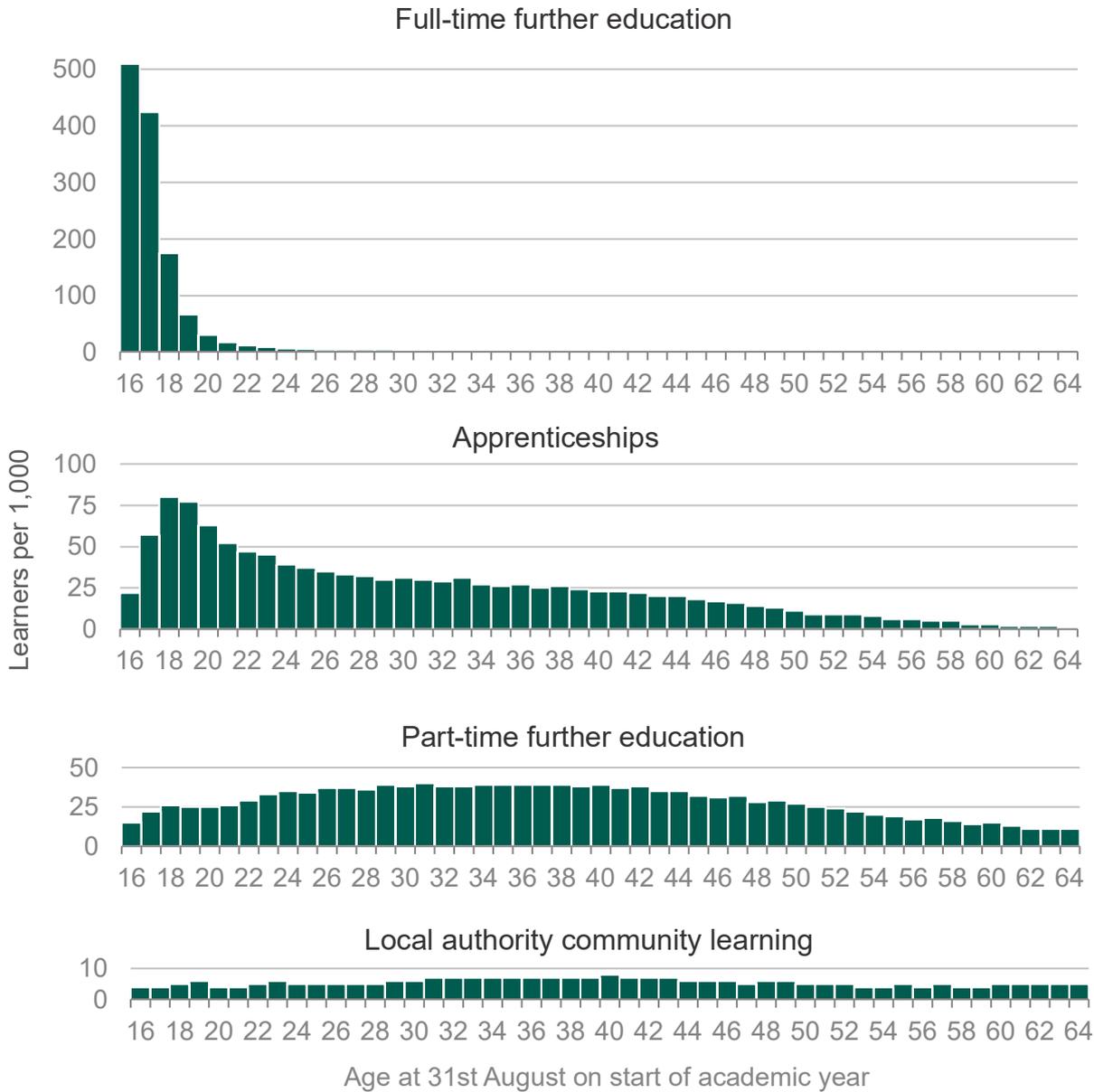
The rise in Welsh speakers taking activities with a significant with a significant amount of Welsh medium learning has taken place largely within Grŵp Llandrillo Menai with Essential Skills qualification and tutorials.

Demographics

Age

People study throughout their lives

Figure 14: Learners per 1,000 people in Wales by age and learning type, August 2024 to July 2025



Description: Most learners in full-time further education were 16 or 17. Apprenticeships peak at 18, but there are many older learners. Part-time further education and local authority community learning is most commonly taken by learners in their 30s.

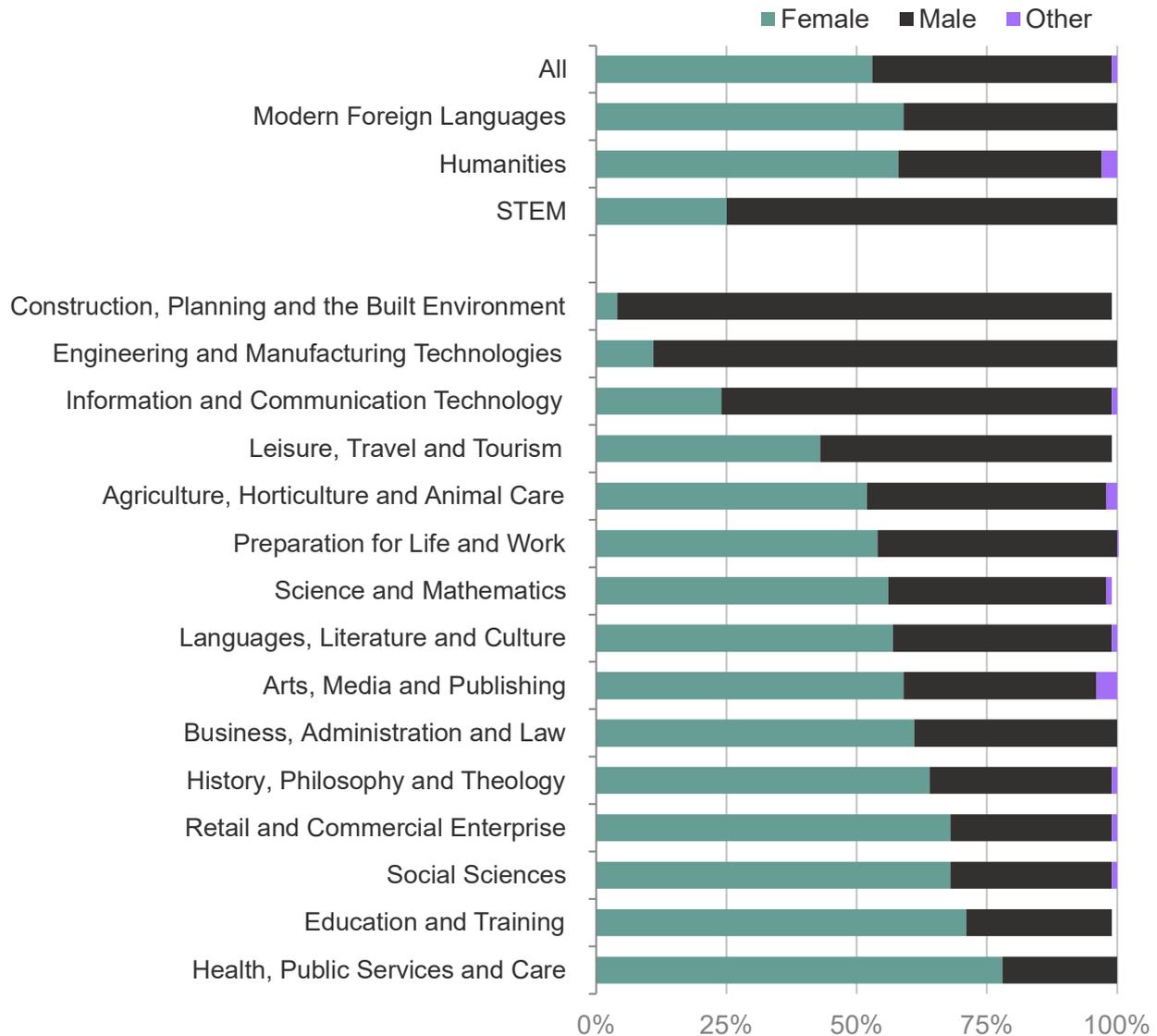
Data in Table 3.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Over 1 in 2 people in Wales aged 16 went into full-time further education in 2024/25.

Gender

Around 1 in 4 STEM qualifications are taken by female learners

Figure 15: Percentage of regulated qualifications taken by gender and sector subject area, August 2024 to July 2025



Description: The majority of qualifications in most sector subject areas are taken by female learners. Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies; Construction, Planning and the Built Environment; and Information and Communication Technology are overwhelmingly taken by male learners.

[Note 1] Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is defined as Science and Mathematics; Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies; Construction, Planning and the Built Environment; Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care; Medicine and Dentistry; Nursing and Subjects and Vocations Allied to Medicine; ICT Practitioners; and Geography.

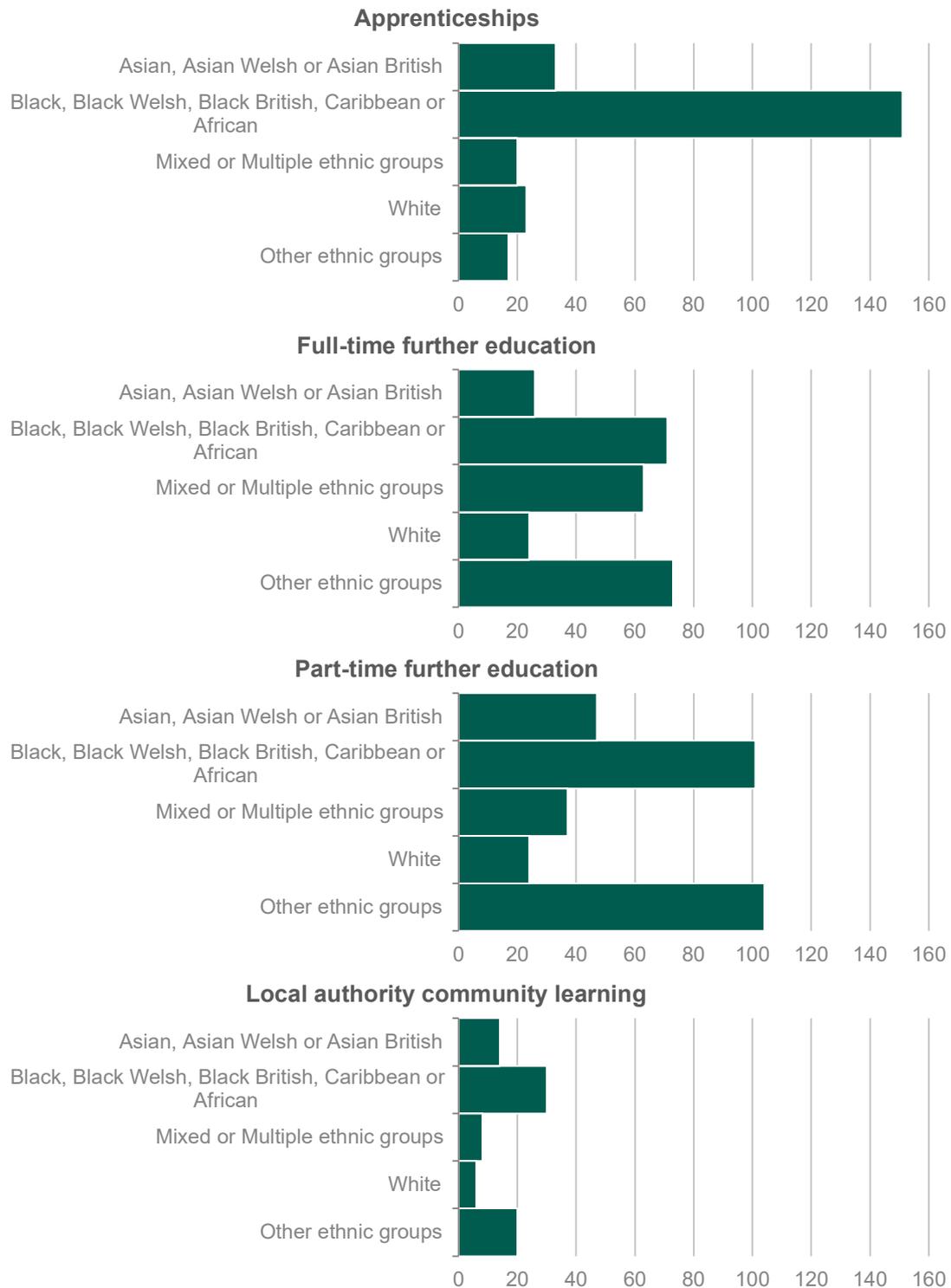
[Note 2] Humanities are defined as Arts, Media and Publishing; History, Philosophy and Theology; and Languages, Literature and Culture.

Data in Table 2.1 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Ethnic background

Learners are more diverse than the Welsh population

Figure 16: Learners per 1,000 people in Wales by ethnic background and learning type, August 2024 to July 2025



Learners per 1,000 people with that background (aged 16 to 64) in Wales

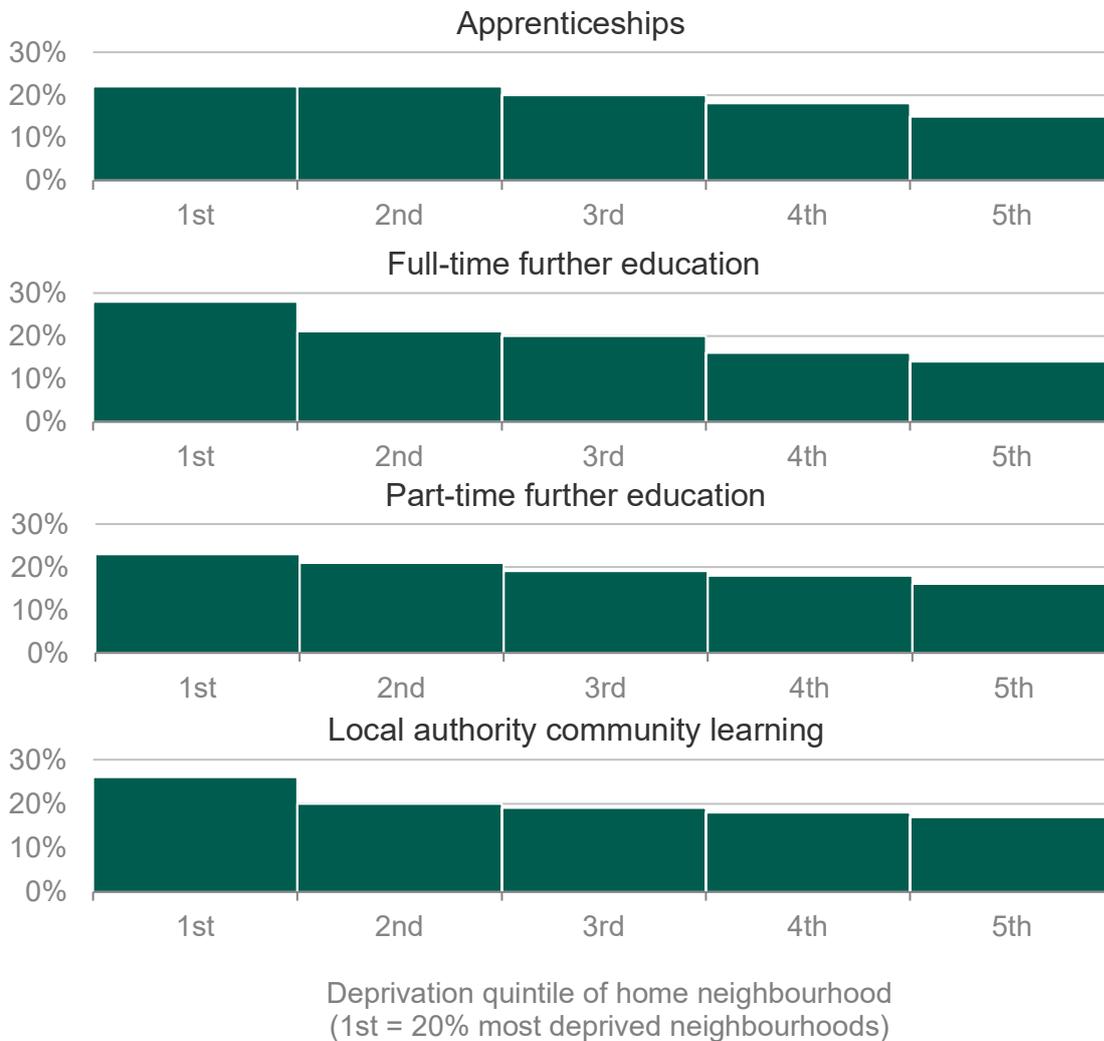
Description: People with Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African backgrounds are more likely to be taking apprenticeships, further education or local authority community learning.

Data in Table 3.2 of the accompanying spreadsheet

Deprivation

Learners are more likely to live in deprived neighbourhoods

Figure 17: Percentage of learners from each Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) quintile, by type of learning, August 2024 to July 2025



Description: 28% of full-time further education learners were living in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in Wales. Only 14% were living in the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods.

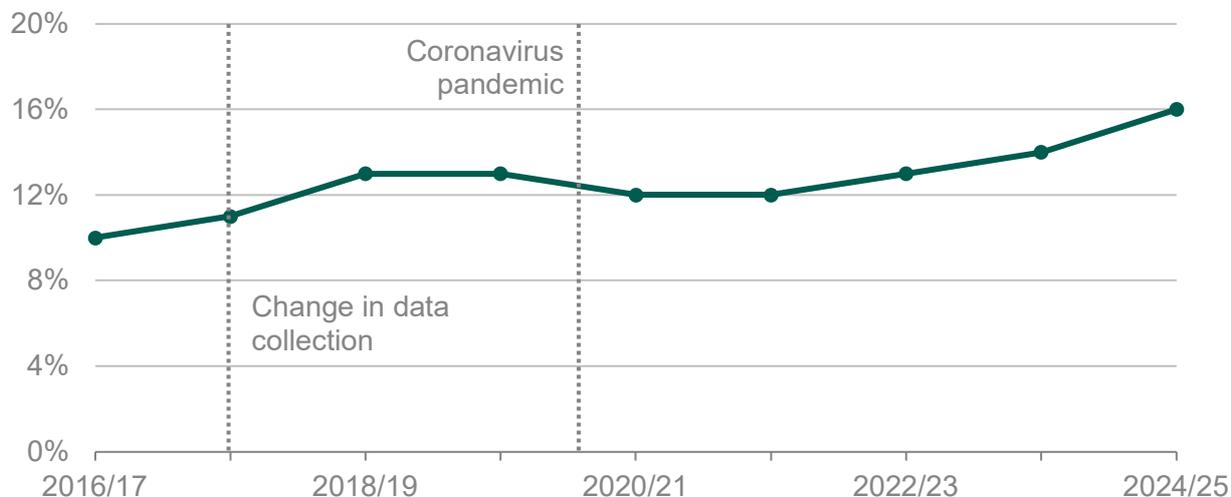
[Data on StatsWales](#)

This report does not cover data on school sixth forms, or on privately funded learning. The [ad-hoc analysis Unique learners in post-16 learning by deprivation decile, August 2021 to July 2022](#) showed that learners in sixth forms were much less likely to live in deprived neighbourhoods.

Learning difficulty or impairment

1 in 6 learners have a learning difficulty or disability, the most since these statistics began

Figure 18: Percentage of learners who have a self-reported learning difficulty or disability by academic year, August 2024 to July 2025



Description: The number of learners with a self-reported learning difficulty or disability has been rising.

[Data on StatsWales](#)

The number of learners with a self-reported learning difficulty or disability dipped during the pandemic but has risen since.

Quality and methodology information

Please see the accompanying *Quality and methodology: Further education, work-based learning and community learning* document for detailed information.

What has changed

If you have any feedback on these changes, please contact statistics@medr.cymru.

Learner counts

The method for producing counts of learners has been improved. The issue revolves around how to count learners who studied multiple types of learning in a year.

Previously two measures were produced: unique learners and provider learners. Unique learners counted a learner once across all learning. Provider learners counted a learner once per provider they attended.

For both measures, if a learner studied multiple types of learning, they would only be counted under one. Apprenticeships were prioritised, then full-time further education.

Unique learners and provider learners have been replaced by a single count of learners. In this new measure, learners are counted once in each row of a table or statistic. For example, a learner would be counted once for “total learners”, but they would also be counted under each type of learning they took, and under each provider they attended.

Figure 19: Comparison of methods for counting learners by provision type, August 2023 to July 2024

<u>Learning type</u>	<u>Previous method (unique learners)</u>	<u>New method (learners)</u>
Apprenticeships	47,855	47,910
Full-time further education	47,090	47,725
Part-time further education	61,555	63,315
Local authority community learning	13,035	13,035

StatsWales

The StatsWales tables have been moved from the [old StatsWales site](#) to the [new site](#).

We have taken the opportunity to simplify and standardise the number of tables available.

We have increased the number of variables within each table. Some tables that were in the accompanying spreadsheet are now covered by StatsWales tables and have been removed from the spreadsheet.

If you need data that is no longer available to you, please contact statistics@medr.cymru and we will supply you with the data you need. We can also consider adding any tables that are missing.

Provisional data for the on-going academic year

Provisional data for learning in quarter 1 (August to October) in the current academic year has been added to this report.

The commentary in the report includes information on full-time further education where the percentage of programmes were recorded in quarter 1 was 99% in 2024/25. Other provision types have a lower percentage of learners and programmes in quarter 1.

Provisional apprenticeship data is available in [Apprenticeship learning programmes started, August to October 2025](#).

Provisional data only uses the programme start and end date to calculate whether it has been taking place in the relevant academic year. Non-provisional data uses information on when a learner starts their learning activities within a programme. This is because the activity data often gets recorded on LLWR later than programme data.

The final data for the full year of 2025/26 will be published in March 2027.

Part-time programme numbers

Data on the number of part-time programmes delivered has been removed.

Part-time programmes can vary greatly in the total amount of learning delivered. Funding is based on the hours delivered and those can be recorded across multiple programmes, whereas for full-time further education funding is based on the overall number of programmes delivered. A count of the number of programmes didn't represent the amount of part-time learning taking place well.

We intend to replace the part-time programme counts with a new measure based on the number of hours of learning delivered.

Other work-based learning

'Other work-based learning' has been removed from the data on further education, apprenticeship and local authority community learning.

A separate table (6.1) has been created in the accompanying spreadsheet with information on the number of other work-based learning programmes.

'Other work-based learning' is made up of transition qualifications for people who work with children in play or childcare settings. This learning is not funded by Medr. The responsibility for it remains within Welsh Government.

New data

Data has been added for:

- Junior apprenticeships
- Learner population comparisons by ethnic background

Improvement to local authority community learning statistics

Local authority community learning data was postponed last year due to a provider reporting substantial errors in their data submitted to the Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR) for 2023/24.

We investigated whether the issue raised may affect other local authorities. The number of learning activities delivered by each provider was compared to funding levels, and local authorities with anomalous patterns were approached. No issues were found.

The data was corrected for 2023/24, and no similar patterns were identified in 2024/25.

Local Authority Community Learning is funded by the Community Learning Grant. Historically the grant has been a relatively small source of funding. Unlike other types of learning, the LLWR data collection is not used for allocating or validating the learning delivered by this grant. As a result, there is more potential for data quality issues that would not affect further education or work-based learning.

As we move forward, the way ACL funding is monitored will exclusively depend on the data that providers submit through the LLWR system. This is a significant shift: until now, LLWR data has mainly been used for performance measures reporting, but from 2026/27 onwards it will directly influence how funding is reported and audited at end of year.

The period between April 2025 and July 2026 acts as a transition period toward this.

Some changes have already begun, including improvements to how data is collected and checked, with detailed guidance published in the ACL programme specification document. Further updates will continue over the next year to make the system more accurate and consistent. The Community Learning Grant funding code is being developed as a direct counterpart to the FE funding code for part-time provision.

The funding allocation has also been mapped to be over the academic year period, rather than over the financial year as before, to further align the Community Learning Grant to the overall post-16 part-time delivery.

Because future reclaim will rely on the LLWR information submitted, providers have a much stronger incentive to ensure their data is complete, correct, and submitted on time. The closer the link between data and funding, the more important it becomes for everyone to get the data right – and so we expect overall data quality will improve.

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 Medr's [Statement of Compliance](#) with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These official statistics demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and value in the following ways.

Trustworthiness

These statistics have been published according to Medr's [Statement of Compliance](#) and [pre-release access to official statistics policy](#).

Quality

The data is sourced from the Lifelong Learning Record Wales which is submitted by learning providers. This data is also used to determine funding for learning providers and is subject to audit.

When the data is submitted it must meet certain validation rules. When the statistics are being produced quality checks are undertaken by the statisticians.

Value

These statistics are produced to provide an insight in the learning being delivered in Wales. They are used for monitoring and evaluating the adult learning, further education, and work-based learning sectors.

Change in accredited statistics status

These statistics were previously published by the Welsh Government as National Statistics (now known as Accredited Official Statistics). As the statistics are now published by a new organisation, the Accredited Official Statistics status has been temporarily removed.

Medr has continued the systems and processes for producing the statistics from Welsh Government, and the statisticians producing the statistics include statisticians who produced further education, work-based learning and community learning statistics at Welsh Government.

The OSR will assess the processes in place at Medr as an official statistics producer. The OSR will assess whether the statistics meet the requirements for Accredited Official Statistics.

Related statistics

Earlier reports in this series were published on gov.wales.

[Students in higher education: August 2024 to July 2025](#) contains similar information for Higher Education.

[Apprenticeships learning programmes started: August to October 2025](#) contains a dashboard with detailed breakdowns of apprenticeship starts.

[Learner outcome measures for apprenticeships and adult learning: August 2024 to July 2025](#) will be published on medr.cymru on 12 March 2026.

[Consistent performance measures post-16 learning \(achievement\), August 2023 to July 2024](#) contains outcomes for further education and will be published on medr.cymru on 10 March 2026.

Next update

Date: March 2027.

Period covered: August 2025 to July 2026.

The next update to these statistics may not be in the same form as this report.

Contact information

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics.

Feedback, questions, and requests for further data can be directed by email to: statistics@medr.cymru

Medr

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