Local Area Analysis of Qualifications Across England and Wales

Coverage: England and Wales
Date: 07 March 2014
Geographical Area: Local Authority and County
Theme: Children, Education and Skills

Key Points

- Of the 45.5 million usual residents aged 16 and over in England and Wales in March 2011, over a fifth (22.7%) had no qualifications, while over three quarters (77.3%) had at least one qualification. For those aged between 16 and 64, these rates were 15.0% with no qualifications and 85.0% with at least one qualification.

- Over half (52.9%) of the population aged 65 and over had no qualifications, dropping to a quarter (25.1%) of those aged 50 to 64 and only 9.1% of those aged 25 to 34.

- The percentage of those with no qualifications was higher among men compared with women, below the age of 50.

- Degree level or above qualification was the most common highest level of qualification reported and was highest (4 in 10 people, 40.3%) among those aged 25 to 34, with a higher proportion of women (42.6%) in comparison with men (38.1%).

- Below the age of 50, a higher proportion of women had a degree level or above qualification in comparison with men.

- There were 2.9 million (6.4%) usual residents aged 16 and over that had an apprenticeship qualification, of which 1.6 million (3.6%) reported this as their highest level of qualification. There were 1.1 million (3.1%) people aged 16 to 64 reporting apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification, with a higher proportion among men (5.3%) than women (0.9%).

- The North East had the highest proportion of people reporting apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification, with Barrow-in-Furness in the North West having the highest proportion across all local authorities. Conversely, local authorities in the London region accounted for the 20 local authorities with the lowest proportions.
• Blaenau Gwent (27.1%) followed by Merthyr Tydfil (26.2%) were the local authorities with the highest proportion of people reporting no qualifications. Local authorities in the South of England had the lowest proportion reporting no qualifications.

• Great Yarmouth (15.7%) followed by Corby (16.1%) were the local authorities with the lowest proportions reporting a degree level or above qualification. The 5 local authorities with the highest proportions were all found in the London region.

**Introduction**

The 2011 Census collected a range of information from people who were usual residents in England and Wales, including a question on qualifications. Qualifications and skill attainment are indicators of employability and productivity among those in employment. This analysis looks at the general pattern of qualifications across England and Wales by age and gender. A study looking into labour market participation among those with varying qualifications will be published at a later date.

This analysis provides an overview of the general qualification levels in England, Wales and the regions, as reported in the census, in particular for those aged 16 to 64, who are considered to be of the age group most likely to be active within the labour market. Compared with the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is considered a more reliable source of statistics on qualifications nationally, the census provides a rich source of data at low levels of geography, allowing variations in qualifications and the ranking of local authorities to be explored, by the proportion of usual residents with no qualifications, degree level or above qualification and apprenticeship, for example.

The responses from the 2011 Census question on qualifications were grouped into those with no qualifications, and six other qualifications categories, including a new category on apprenticeship qualifications, which was included in the census questionnaire as a separate category for the first time in 2011. This analysis will focus on each individual's highest level of qualification within the following categories:

• ‘No qualifications’: No academic or professional qualifications.
• ‘1-4 GCSEs or equivalent’ (Level 1 qualifications): 1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic/Essential Skills.
• ‘5+ GCSEs or equivalent’ (Level 2 qualifications): 5+ O Level (Passes)/CSEs (Grade 1)/GCSEs (Grades A*-C), School Certificate, 1 A Level/ 2-3 AS Levels/VCEs, Intermediate/Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma.
• ‘Apprenticeship’: Apprenticeship.
• ‘2+ A-levels or equivalent’ (Level 3 qualifications): 2+ A Levels/VCEs, 4+ AS Levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma, NVQ Level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma.
• ‘Degree level or above’ (Level 4 qualifications and above): Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher Degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, Foundation degree (NI), Professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing, accountancy).
• ‘Other qualifications’: Vocational/Work-related Qualifications, Foreign Qualifications/Qualifications gained outside the UK (NI) (Not stated/level unknown).

There are other regular survey sources used for Official Statistics on qualifications in England and Wales\(^3\), which include the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In addition, administrative sources are used to provide National Statistics on achievement by young people by the Department for Education\(^4\). All surveys are known to have a degree of under-reporting of qualifications due to respondents being less likely to report low level qualifications as they undervalue or don't recall them. However, the LFS reduces the extent of this through additional probing and support from the interviewer, whilst the census is based on a single self-reported question. Therefore, the level of respondents reporting ‘no qualifications’ group is likely to be higher in the census, relative to the LFS or administrative sources. A separate article (227.8 Kb Pdf) comparing qualifications between the 2011 Census and these sources, as well as changes to the 2011 Census question on qualifications compared with the 2001 Census.

Notes for Introduction

1. For the 2011 Census purposes, a usual resident of the UK is anyone who, on census day, was in the UK and had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of 12 months or more, or had a permanent UK address and was outside the UK and intended to be outside the UK for less than 12 months.

2. Question as defined in the 2011 Census questionnaire
3. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) publish official qualification level estimates for England and the Welsh Government publish official qualification level estimates for Wales.


Overview of Qualifications in England and Wales

In March 2011, there were 45.5 million usual residents in England and Wales who were aged 16 and over. The majority, 77.3% (35.2 million) had at least one qualification with 22.7% (10.3 million)
having no qualifications\(^1\). The highest level of qualifications reported included: 27.2% with a degree level or above qualification (Level 4 qualifications and above), 15.3% with 5+ GCSEs or equivalent (Level 2 qualifications), 13.3% with 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent (Level 1 qualifications), 12.3% with 2+ A Levels or equivalent (Level 3 qualifications), 5.7% with ‘Other’ qualifications and 3.6% with an apprenticeship.

**Figure 1: Highest level of qualification among usual residents aged 16 and over, England and Wales, 2011**

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.

Download chart
\[\text{xls} \quad \text{xls format} \]
(26.5 Kb)
Across the age groups, those aged between 25 and 34 had the lowest proportion with no qualifications, accounting for fewer than 1 in 10 people (9.1%). Beyond this age group, the proportion of those with no qualifications increased for each age group.

**Table 1: The proportion of at least one qualification and no qualifications by age, England and Wales, 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At least one qualification</th>
<th>16 – 24</th>
<th>25 – 34</th>
<th>35 – 49</th>
<th>50 – 64</th>
<th>65 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usual residents aged 16 and over</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:
1. Data from 2011 Census DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

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Over half of the population aged 65 and over (52.9%) had no qualifications. This was five times the proportion of those aged 16 to 24\(^2\) and 25 to 34, four times the proportion of those aged 35 to 49 and twice the proportion of those aged 50 to 64. Those 65 and over were the only age group with a higher proportion of people reporting no qualifications as opposed to at least one qualification. A possible reason could be even though O Levels had existed since the 1950s, secondary modern schools provided limited access to O Levels and no access to A Levels. Therefore, those who attended secondary modern schools had poor educational opportunities and were more likely to have left school with no formal qualifications\(^3\).

Notes

1. Those who reported no qualifications included those aged 16 and over who were still in education at the time of the census.

2. National Statistics for England, based on administrative data indicate the proportion of this age group with no qualifications is much lower.

3. Those within the older age groups would have been affected by the 1944 Education Act. This Act introduced the tripartite system for secondary state schools based on an IQ test at age 11 or the '11 plus'. Depending on the results of this test, pupils would attend one of; grammar schools,
technical schools or secondary modern schools. A study by the University of Stirling found that, “fewer than 10% of [secondary] modern pupils took O Level exams and extremely few went on to other institutions to take A Levels, essentially because no appropriate background training had been provided”.

Highest Levels of Qualification for Usual Residents Aged 16 to 64

Of the 45.5 million people aged 16 and over usually resident in England and Wales in March 2011, 36.3 million were aged between 16 and 64. Of this population, 85.0% (30.8 million) reported having at least one qualification, while 15.0% (5.4 million) reported having no qualifications. Almost 3 in 10 (29.7%) of the 16 to 64 population reported having a degree level or above qualification. There were almost equal proportions of the 16 to 64 population having 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent (15.2%), no qualifications (15.0%) and 2+ A Levels or equivalent (14.5%), while those with 5+ GCSEs or equivalent had a slightly higher rate (17.2%). ‘Other’ qualifications and apprenticeships had the smallest proportions for highest level of qualification at 5.5% and 3.1% respectively.

Figure 2: Highest level of qualification among usual residents aged 16 to 64, England and Wales, 2011
Degree level or above was the most common qualification across all age groups, with the exception of those aged 16 to 24, some of whom would still be in school or university and yet to complete their education. Therefore, because a proportion of this population were still studying to achieve qualifications such as GCSEs and A Levels, it is hard to compare those aged 16 to 24 with the older age groups.

It was found that those aged 25 to 34 were most likely to report having a degree level or above qualification, with 4 in 10 (40.3%) reporting this as their highest level of qualification. On the other hand, within the 16 to 64 population, those aged 50 to 64 were the age group most likely to report no qualifications (25.1%).
Figure 3: Highest level of qualification by age, England and Wales, 2011

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.

Download chart
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(27.5 Kb)

No Qualifications by Age and Gender

There were 5.4 million (15.0%) usual residents aged 16 to 64 in England and Wales with no qualifications. There was a fairly equal split in the proportion of men (14.9%) and women (15.0%) reporting no qualifications. Beyond the age of 25, as the age group increased, so did the proportion of the population with no qualifications, for both men and women. There were however, a higher proportion of men with no qualifications across the age groups, except among those aged 50 to 64,
where women had a higher proportion. This age group seen the largest difference between men and women, with a higher proportion of women (27.0%) compared with men (23.2%) reporting no qualifications. A possible reason for women over the age of 50 having a higher proportion with no qualifications in comparison with men, may have been because women of that generation were more likely to have been looking after the home and children rather than pursuing education\(^1\).

**Figure 4: The proportion of men and women with no qualifications by age, England and Wales, 2011**

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.

**Download chart**

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Comparing the highest and lowest proportions of those with no qualifications for men and women across the age groups, women aged 50 to 64 were three times more likely to report no qualifications (27.0%) in comparison with women aged 25 to 34 (8.7%), whereas, men aged 50 to 64 were just over twice as likely to have no qualifications (23.2%) in comparison with men aged 25 to 34 (9.5%).

Notes

1. [Labour Force Survey (LFS) data](#) shows that over the last 2 decades, the economic inactivity rates for women has declined steadily, also, the most common reason for inactivity among women was looking after the home or family, which has also seen a steady decline.

Degree Level or Above Qualification by Age and Gender

Of the 36.3 million people in England and Wales aged 16 to 64, almost 3 in 10 people (29.7%) had a degree level or above qualification. People within this age group were twice as likely to report having a degree level or above qualification, in comparison with those who reported having no qualifications (15.0%).
Figure 5: The proportion of men and women with a degree level or above qualification by age, England and Wales, 2011

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.

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(26.5 Kb)

The percentage of those with a degree level or above qualification was highest for those aged 25 to 34, for both men and women. The data could partly reflect the expansion in the number of students in higher education that has taken place in England and Wales since the 1950s, with more universities, courses offered and places available for students. It could also reflect the effect of a government target set in 1999, to increase university participation of young people to 50%. Beyond this age group, the percentage of those with a degree level or above qualification declines with each consecutive age group. This general trend is the reverse to what is observed among those reporting no qualifications, where the rate increases with each consecutive age group.
Those aged 16 to 24 had the lowest percentage with degree level or above qualification, as some within this age group would still be studying (in particular those aged below 21) and typically not expected to have graduated university. This is evidenced in the relatively high percentage of those within this age category recording 5+ GCSEs or equivalent (26.6%) or 2+ A Levels or equivalent (25.9%) qualifications as their highest level of qualification, which precedes having a degree level qualification. Therefore, although the lowest proportion is for those aged 16 to 24, it doesn't mean that they were not studying towards a degree level qualification. Therefore, this impacts the overall proportion of the population and would be higher if we analysed only those above this age group.

There was little difference in the percentage of women (30.1%) and men (29.3%) aged 16 to 64 reporting a degree level or above qualification. However, across the age groups, women were more likely to report a degree level or above qualification except for those aged 50 to 64, where men (29.1%) reported a higher rate than women (26.3%). This shows that for those in the population born after 1961, women were more likely to have a degree level or above qualification compared with men. Women are now tending to have children later, firstly pursuing education and a career before starting a family\(^1\) which could help to explain the difference in proportions.

**Notes**

1. ONS data on [Live Births in England and Wales](https://www.ons.gov.uk) shows a steady increase in the mean age of mothers at first birth since the 1970s

**Apprenticeship by Age and Gender**

As defined by the [National Apprenticeship Service](https://www.gov.uk), an apprenticeship is a job with an accompanying skills development programme designed by employers in the sector. It allows the apprentice to gain technical knowledge and real practical experience, along with functional and personal skills, required for their immediate job and future career. These are acquired through a mix of learning in the workplace, formal off the job training and the opportunity to practice and embed new skills in a real work context.

For the 2011 Census, based on consultations with users on improving the census questionnaire, a separate category was introduced for the first time to measure the number of people with an apprenticeship qualification. Although the census had only one apprenticeship tick box, within the general qualifications hierarchy, intermediate apprenticeships are equivalent to 5+ GCSE passes while advanced apprenticeships are equivalent to 2+ A Level passes, but the data below present these apprenticeships together.
Figure 6: The proportion of men and women with an apprenticeship by age, England and Wales, 2011

The 2011 Census estimates that 2.9 million usual residents aged 16 and over in England and Wales have an apprenticeship qualification, of which 1.6 million have this as their highest level of qualification. Among these, 1.1 million people (3.1% of usual residents aged 16 to 64) had apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification. Apprenticeships were generally more common among men than women, across all age groups, as they are mostly found within male dominated occupations, such as skilled trade occupations.

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.
Among men aged 16 to 64, the highest percentage of those with an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification was among those aged 50 to 64, accounting for almost 1 in 10 (9.8%) people within this age group. This is more than four times the percentage of those aged 25 to 34 (2.1%). Across the age groups, the trend in the percentage of men with apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification showed a dip after the 16 to 24 age group, and then a rise for age groups beyond the age of 25. For women, the highest percentage of those with apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification was among those aged 16 to 24 (1.6%).

In the 1960s/1970s they were predominantly undertaken by males entering skilled trade occupations. This could explain why the biggest gender difference appears for those aged 50 to 64. Also, the number of apprenticeships has increased since the late 1990s, when apprenticeships were relaunched, and the apprenticeship programme has expanded more rapidly since 2009/10 as a result of increased government investment in adult apprenticeships. A wider range of apprenticeship subjects on offer could explain why the male/female ratio is becoming more even amongst the younger age groups.

Qualifications Across the English Regions and Wales

In comparison with the other regions, London’s profile was very different in terms of qualifications. Not only did London have the highest proportion of degree level or above qualification, it also had a much higher proportion of its population recording ‘Other’ qualifications. People in London were almost twice as likely to report ‘Other’ qualifications as their highest level of qualification, compared with the other English regions and Wales. A likely reason for this is that the higher proportion of the population who were non-UK born in London (36.7%), potentially obtained their qualifications abroad. Of the total non-UK born population, 19.4% reported having ‘Other’ qualifications, while this figure rose to one in four foreign nationals. The census defines, ‘Foreign qualifications’ as ‘Other’ qualifications if their UK equivalent was not specified by the respondent.

London had the lowest proportions regarding highest level of qualification reported across the following qualification categories; 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent, 5+ GCSEs or equivalent, apprenticeship and 2+ A Levels or equivalent. It had the highest proportion for degree level or above and ‘Other’ qualifications and the second lowest proportion regarding no qualifications, behind the South East.

The following qualification categories; no qualifications, degree level or above and apprenticeship will be explored in more detail in the subsequent sections.
Figure 7: The distribution of highest level of qualification among usual residents aged 16 to 64 across English regions and Wales, 2011

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.

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**No Qualifications**

Of the English regions and Wales, West Midlands had the highest percentage of usual residents aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications (18.1%), followed by Wales (17.9%) and the North East (17.8%).

The South East had the lowest percentage (11.7%), followed by London (12.4%) and the South West (12.5%). Overall, these regions with the lowest percentage reporting no qualifications, including the East, were well below the average for England and Wales (15.0%)
Figure 8: The proportion of men and women aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications across English regions and Wales, 2011

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.

Download chart

XLS format
(27 Kb)

Comparing gender, there was an equal split between men and women with no qualifications in the West Midlands and the South West. The biggest gender difference was in the North East where 18.5% of women and 17.1% of men reported no qualifications. Also, women of the North East had the highest percentage with no qualifications compared with women from the other English regions and Wales. Men in Wales and the West Midlands reported the highest percentage with no qualifications (both at 18.1%).
South East, London and the South West had a proportionally lower percentage of men and women with no qualifications and to a certain extent, the East of England as well. Also, these regions consistently had the lowest proportions with no qualifications across each of the age groups.

**Table 2: Proportion of usual residents with no qualifications by age group, English regions and Wales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>16 – 24</th>
<th>25 – 34</th>
<th>35 – 49</th>
<th>50 – 64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and The Humber</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table source:** Office for National Statistics

**Table notes:**
1. Data from 2011 Census DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

**Download table**

[XLS](#) [XLS format](#) (27 Kb)

Across all the regions, as with the national picture, the highest proportion with no qualifications was among those aged 50 to 64. The lowest proportion was generally among those aged 25 to 34, except in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and The Humber, where there was a lower proportion of people with no qualifications among those aged 16 to 24.

Overall, the regions in the North of England and Wales were more likely to report no qualifications in comparison with regions in the South of England, therefore suggesting a potential North-South divide. One possible reason could be due to migration to London, for example, of higher qualified people due to employment opportunities, reducing relative percentage of those with no qualifications in London.

**Degree Level or Above Qualification**
Four in ten people (40.5%) aged 16 to 64 living in London reported having a degree level or above qualification, the highest percentage across the English regions and Wales. This was followed by the South East (32.3%) and South West (29.5%). The reverse was found for no qualifications where these regions had the lowest percentage.

London could have the highest proportion because of its younger age profile, as 19.9% of the population were aged 25 to 34 at the time of the 2011 Census\(^1\). This was at least 7.7 percentage points higher, in comparison with the other English regions and Wales of this age group.

The North East (24.3%), Yorkshire and The Humber (25.4%) and the West Midlands (25.5%) were the regions with the lowest percentage of the 16 to 64 population reporting a degree level or above qualification.

**Figure 9: The proportion of men and women aged 16 to 64 with a degree level or above qualification across English regions and Wales, 2011**

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age.
Across the English regions and Wales, there were slightly more women than men reporting a degree level or above qualification, with the exception of London and the South East. The largest gender difference, in terms of proportion, was in Wales with 25.2% of men and 27.7% of women reporting a degree level or above qualification.

Generally, a higher proportion of men and women in London (40.7% and 40.3% respectively) reported a degree level or above qualification in comparison with men and women of the other English regions and Wales.

Table 3: Proportion of usual residents with a degree level or above qualification by age group, English regions and Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>Yorkshire and The Humber</th>
<th>East Midlands</th>
<th>West Midlands</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>South East</th>
<th>South West</th>
<th>Wales</th>
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<tr>
<td>16 – 24</td>
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<td>34.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 64</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:
1. Data from 2011 Census DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

Across all of the age groups, London had the highest proportion of the population reporting a degree level or above qualification. As seen at the national level, those aged 25 to 34 had the highest proportion with a degree level or above qualification, across the English regions and Wales. The largest difference for those aged 25 to 34 was between London (55.2%) and the South West (40.6%), with a 14.6 percentage point difference.
Overall, people living in the South of England were more likely to report having a degree level or above qualification in comparison with those living in regions in the North of England and Wales. This is a reverse in the trend regarding no qualifications and thus further suggesting a North-South divide. However, the North-South divide is not as stark in comparison with those with no qualifications. One potential reason could be that London attracts a high proportion of qualified migrants which could be due to more graduate employment opportunities compared with other areas.

Apprenticeships

The North East reported the highest overall percentage of usual residents aged 16 to 64 with an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification (4.1%) followed by Yorkshire and The Humber and the South West (both at 3.7%). London had the lowest percentage of its population reporting an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification at 1.4%, almost a third of the proportion of those in the highest region (North East). This was followed by the West Midlands (2.9%) and the South East (3.1%).

Figure 10: The proportion of men and women aged 16 to 64 with an apprenticeship across English regions and Wales, 2011
Across the English regions and Wales, more men reported having an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification in comparison with women. There was a large difference between men and women across the English regions and Wales, with the largest difference being 6.2 percentage points in the North East (7.2% and 1.0% respectively). Also, apprenticeships are driven by the following industries; manufacturing, construction and wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles. Such industries are particularly male dominated which may explain why a higher proportion of men had an apprenticeship in comparison with women.

There was not much difference in the proportion of women with an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification across the regions, with London (0.6%) reporting the lowest proportion and the South West (1.2%) reporting the highest proportion.

Table 4: Proportion of usual residents with an apprenticeship by age group, English regions and Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>16 – 24</th>
<th>25 – 34</th>
<th>35 – 49</th>
<th>50 – 64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and The Humber</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:
1. Data from 2011 Census DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age
Across the English regions and Wales, there was a higher proportion of people aged 50 to 64 with an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification. This reflects the tendency for many males in the 1960s and 1970s to take an apprenticeship route into skilled trade occupations. The population aged 16 to 24 had the second highest proportion overall regarding apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification and this could be a result of increased uptake in recent years among this age group.

Notes

1. This information was obtained from table QS103EW and is available on the [2011 Census NOMIS website](http:// NOMIS website).
Table 5: The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications, highest and lowest five local or unitary authorities in England and Wales, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No qualifications (Per cent)</th>
<th>No qualifications (count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blaenau Gwent</td>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>12,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Merthyr Tydfil</td>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>9,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sandwell</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>49,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>23,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>39,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City of London</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>347</td>
<td>Richmond upon</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>346</td>
<td>Isles of Scilly</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>344</td>
<td>Kensington and</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England and</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>5,426,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:
1. Data from 2011 Census DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

Download table

[XLS XLS format](27.5 Kb)

The two local authorities with the highest percentage of their population reporting no qualifications were both in Wales; Blaenau Gwent (27.1%) and Merthyr Tydfil (26.2%). Making up the highest 5 proportions were Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent in the West Midlands and Knowsley in the North West.

Out of the 10 local authorities reporting the highest percentage with no qualifications, 4 were in Wales; Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerphilly in addition to Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil. Other local authorities making up the highest 10 proportions included; Kingston upon Hull and Barnsley in Yorkshire and The Humber and Walsall in the West Midlands.
The distribution of no qualifications varies by age groups across local authorities. This is highlighted by the fact that the 5 local authorities with the highest overall proportion of no qualifications were not necessarily the same for each age group. Across the age groups, Blaenau Gwent had the highest percentage of the population reporting no qualifications up to the age of 49 with Sandwell having the highest percentage for those aged 50 to 64.

Elementary occupations\(^1\) were the most common occupations across the 5 local authorities with the highest percentage of no qualifications. Also, among the 16 to 64 population in employment with no qualifications, elementary occupations were the most popular at just over a quarter (28.6\%)\(^2\). The local authority with the lowest percentage of the population reporting no qualifications were City of London (4.1\%), followed by Richmond upon Thames (6.1\%) and Isles of Scilly (7.0\%). However, it must be noted that City of London and Isles of Scilly in particular, have extremely small populations. The 3 of the 5 local authorities with the lowest percentage of no qualifications were in London. Reasons for this could be because of the employment opportunity in London due to the type of dominant industries. The main industries in London include ‘Financial and insurance activities’, ‘Information and Communication’ and ‘Professional, scientific and technical activities’, which typically offer employment in highly skilled service occupations which are characterised by high levels of qualifications.
Map 1: The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications, local or unitary authorities in England and Wales, 2011

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

Download map
PNG PNG format
(401.2 Kb)
The City of London had the lowest percentage of the population reporting no qualifications across all the different age groups. Apart from this local authority, as was seen with the highest proportions, there were differing local authorities appearing within the list of the lowest percentages when analysing by age group.

**Degree Level or Above Qualification**

**Table 6: The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with a degree level or above qualification, highest and lowest five local or unitary authorities in England and Wales, 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Degree level or above (Per cent)</th>
<th>Degree level or above (count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>City of London</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>4,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wandsworth</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>130,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Richmond upon Thames</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>70,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kensington and Chelsea</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>63,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>86,206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Degree level or above (Per cent)</th>
<th>Degree level or above (count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>348</td>
<td>Great Yarmouth</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>347</td>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>6,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>346</td>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>6,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
<td>Castle Point</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>8,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>344</td>
<td>Fenland</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>9,840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**England and Wales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Degree level or above (Per cent)</th>
<th>Degree level or above (count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>10,761,780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table source:** Office for National Statistics

**Table notes:**
1. Data from 2011 Census DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

**Download table**

[**XLS format**](#) (27.5 Kb)

The local authority with the highest percentage of the population reporting degree level or above qualification was City of London (71.5%), followed by Wandsworth (57.0%) and Richmond upon Thames (56.7%). The 8 of the 10 local authorities with the highest proportion of degree level or
above were of the London region. Outside of London, the local authority with the highest percentage of degree level or above qualification was St Albans in the East of England with 50.1%.

As previously discussed, City of London, Richmond upon Thames and Kensington and Chelsea were among the 5 local authorities who reported the lowest percentage of those with no qualifications. This supports the finding that the London region has the highest share of people with a degree level or above qualification.

The City of London had the highest percentage with a degree level or above qualification across all of the age groups. However, the City of London has a smaller population in comparison with other local authorities in the highest 5 proportions, with only 4,000, compared with Wandsworth for instance, which is the second highest proportion and has a population in excess of 130,000.
Map 2: The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with a degree level or above qualification, local or unitary authorities in England and Wales, 2011

Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data from DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

Download map

PNG PNG format
(395.9 Kb)
Areas in regions located in the South of England were most likely to report a degree level or above qualification. A reason for this could be because there are more job prospects for high skilled workers, particularly in London and therefore people with a degree level or above qualification are more likely to migrate there.

The 5 areas with the lowest percentage of the population reporting a degree level or above qualification were in the East of England and East Midlands. Great Yarmouth had the lowest percentage of the population reporting degree level or above qualification (15.7%) followed by Corby (16.1%) and Boston (16.5%). A fifth (20.0%) of Great Yarmouth’s population were aged 50 to 64 and only 10.9% were aged 25 to 34 in comparison with Wandsworth, whereby 11.8% of the population were aged 50 to 64 and 29.0% were aged 25 to 34 at the time of the 2011 Census. As previously discussed, those aged 50 to 64 were least likely to report having a degree level or above qualifications in comparison with the younger age groups, particularly those aged 25 to 34 whom were most likely. This could be a possible explanation why Great Yarmouth had the lowest proportion.

Across the age groups, Great Yarmouth had the lowest percentage reporting degree level or above for those aged 16 to 24 and 35 to 49, Boston had the lowest for those aged 25 to 34 and Sandwell had the lowest for those aged 50 to 64.

**Apprenticeships**
Table 7: The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with an apprenticeship, highest and lowest five local or unitary authorities in England and Wales, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Apprenticeship (Per cent)</th>
<th>Apprenticeship (count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Highest 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Barrow-in-Furness</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Copeland</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Tyneside</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Redcar and Cleveland</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Blaby</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lowest 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>348</td>
<td>City of London</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>347</td>
<td>Kensington and Chelsea</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>346</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>344</td>
<td>Wandsworth</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>England and Wales</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1,123,417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Table notes:
1. Data from Census 2011 DC5102EW - Highest level of qualification by sex by age

Download table

[XLS](XLS format) (27.5 Kb)

The local authority with the highest percentage of the population reporting apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification was Barrow-in-Furness (8.4%), followed by Copeland (5.6%), both of
the North West. It was found that Barrow-in-Furness had the highest percentage across all of the age groups.

When looking at the industries prevalent in the 5 local authorities with the highest percentage of the population reporting apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification they tended to be manufacturing and construction dominated. These industries are also more likely to have apprenticeship type schemes.

Unlike the findings for those with no qualifications and degree level or above qualifications, there was variability regarding the 10 local authorities with the highest percentage of apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification. The local authorities were a mix of the Northern and Southern regions of England with one in Wales. However, the reverse was found with the 10 local authorities with the lowest percentages with apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification, which were all found in the London region.

The local authority with the lowest percentage of the population reporting apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification was the City of London (0.6%), followed by Kensington and Chelsea (0.6%) and Westminster (0.7%). These low proportions for London reflects the fact that industries and occupations predominant in London are different from those in other regions.

Notes

1. Occupations classified at this level will usually require a minimum general level of education (that is, that which is acquired by the end of the period of compulsory education). Some occupations at this level will also have short periods of work-related training in areas such as health and safety, food hygiene, and customer service requirements as defined in the SOC2010 Volume 1 Structure and Descriptions of Unit Groups.

2. This information was obtained from table DC6501EWla and is available on the 2011 Census NOMIS website.

References


Background notes

1. The 2011 Census was administered through a self completion questionnaire, asking respondents to select all qualifications they held, or their equivalents, from a list of options. Highest levels of qualifications were then derived for each individual using an established hierarchy of qualifications.

2. The 2011 Census published data on highest level of qualification using the following categories;
   - ‘No qualifications’: No academic or professional qualifications.
• ‘1-4 GCSEs or equivalent’ (Level 1 qualifications): 1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic/Essential Skills.
• ‘5+ GCSEs or equivalent’ (Level 2 qualifications): 5+ O Level (Passes)/CSEs (Grade 1)/GCSEs (Grades A*-C), School Certificate, 1 A Level/ 2-3 AS Levels/VCEs, Intermediate/Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma.
• ‘Apprenticeship’: Apprenticeship.
• ‘2+ A-levels or equivalent’ (Level 3 qualifications): 2+ A Levels/VCEs, 4+ AS Levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma, NVQ Level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma.
• ‘Degree level or above’ (Level 4 qualifications and above): Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher Degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, Foundation degree (NI), Professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing, accountancy).
• ‘Other qualifications’: Vocational/Work-related Qualifications, Foreign Qualifications/Qualifications gained outside the UK (NI) (Not stated/ level unknown).

3. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) publish official qualification level estimates for England and the Welsh Government publish official qualification level estimates for Wales.

4. A new category on apprenticeship qualifications was included in the census questionnaire as a separate category for the first time in 2011. More recent data on apprenticeship for England is published by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and that for Wales is published by the Welsh Government.

5. All key terms used in this publication are explained in the 2011 Census glossary. Information on the 2011 Census geography products for England and Wales is also available.

6. A person’s place of usual residence is in most cases the address at which they stay the majority of the time. For many people this will be their permanent or family home. If a member of the services did not have a permanent or family address at which they were usually resident, they were recorded as usually resident at their base address.

7. ONS is responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales. Simultaneous but separate censuses took place in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These were run by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) respectively.

8. ONS has ensured that the data collected meet users’ needs via an extensive 2011 Census outputs consultation process in order to ensure that the 2011 Census outputs are of increased use in the planning of housing, education, health and transport services in future years.

9. The ONS developed the coverage assessment and adjustment methodology to address the problem of undercounting. The coverage assessment and adjustment methodology involved the use of standard statistical techniques, similar to those used by many other countries, for
measuring the level of undercount in the census and providing an assessment of characteristics of individuals and households. ONS adjusted the 2011 Census counts to include estimates of people and households not counted.

10. All census population estimates were extensively quality assured using other national and local sources of information for comparison and review by a series of quality assurance panels. An extensive range of quality assurance, evaluation and methodology papers were published alongside the first release in July 2012, including a Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) document (157.6 Kb Pdf).

11. The 2011 Census achieved its overall target response rate of 94% of the usually resident population of England and Wales, and over 80% in all local and unitary authorities. The population estimate for England and Wales of 56.1 million is estimated with 95% confidence to be accurate to within +/- 85,000 (0.15%).

12. Census day was 27 March 2011.

13. Further information on future releases is available online in the 2011 Census reporting and analysis prospectus.

14. An article (227.8 Kb Pdf) comparing qualifications between the 2011 Census and the Annual Population Survey (APS) and Labour Force Survey (LFS) is published on the ONS website

15. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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