

## Variability in GCSE Results for Individual Schools and Colleges



GCSE results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland have generally been relatively stable from one summer to the next, with only very small changes in the overall percentages of students achieving A\*-C grades. But we know that individual schools and colleges may see variation in the proportion of students achieving particular grades from one year to the next. This can be due to many different factors, including differences in the ability mix of the students, different teaching approaches, changes in teaching staff or teaching time, and changes to qualifications.

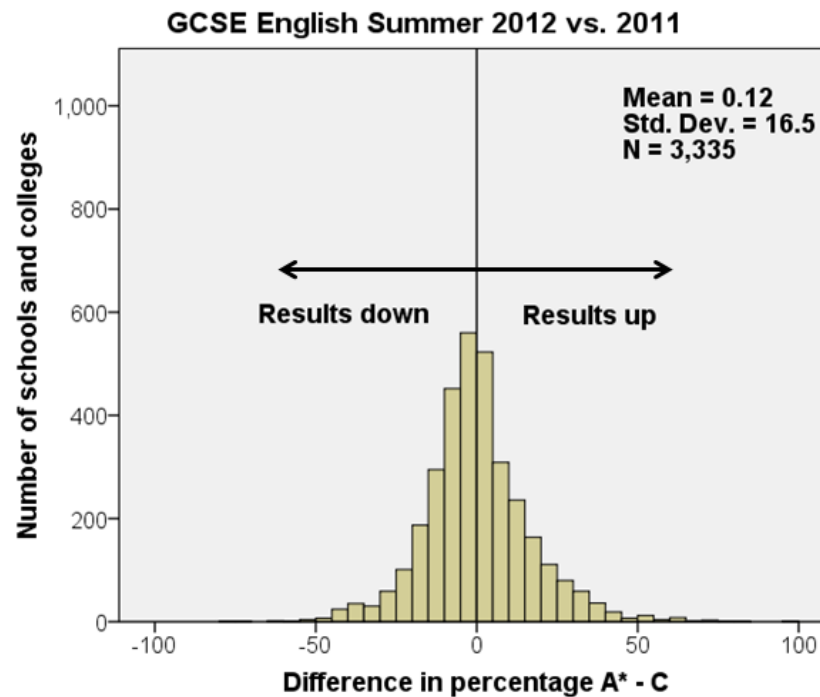
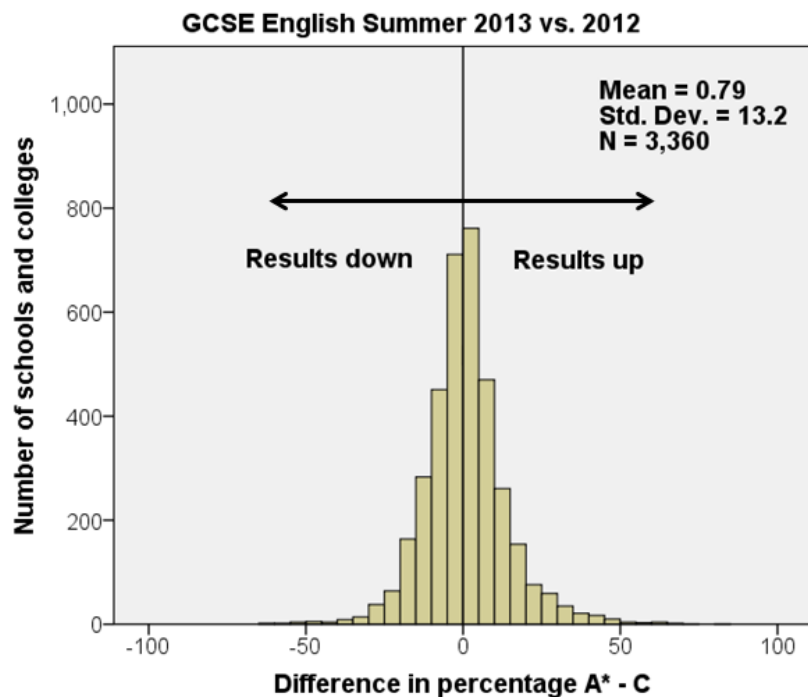
We know that results from one year to the next can vary, but until recently we had not tried to quantify 'normal' variability. We want to understand what level of variation is normal, so we can understand whether results in any one year are within the expected level of variability, or outside that.

We have looked at the year on year variation in the proportion of students achieving A\*-C in English/English language and in mathematics in the summer results published by the Joint Council for Qualifications. We have looked only at schools and colleges with 50 or more students in both years: smaller cohorts are likely to be less stable and to show more variation.

We have plotted the variation seen in each of several thousand schools. Each bar represents the number of schools with a particular level of variation, measured in intervals of five percentage points. For example, the two bars either side of zero represent schools that had either a drop of up to 5 percentage points or an increase of up to 5 percentage points. The higher the peaks in the middle, the greater the stability from one year to the next.

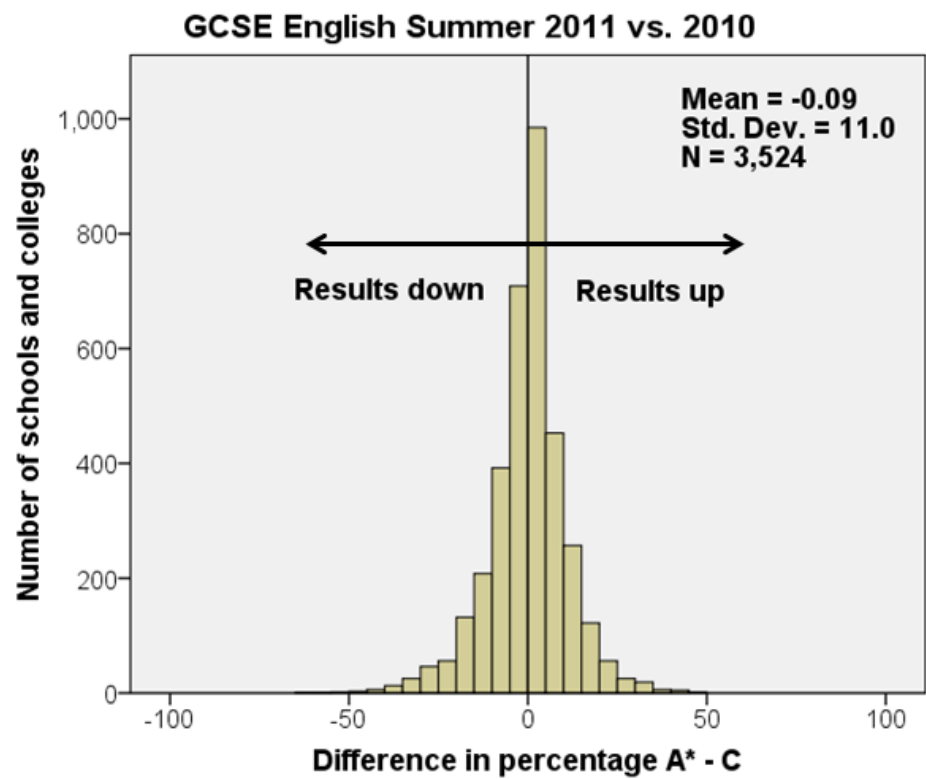
## Variation in GCSE English (English and English language)

The graphs below show that, in general, the year-on-year variation in 2013 was much less than in 2012. There are far more schools in 2013 whose variation was within plus or minus five percentage points. 2012 was the first year of the new qualifications so it is not surprising that more schools saw more variation in their results, as a result of the introduction of a new qualification. We also know that in summer 2012 there were many schools whose results were not as expected. We have reported in detail about this previously.<sup>1</sup>



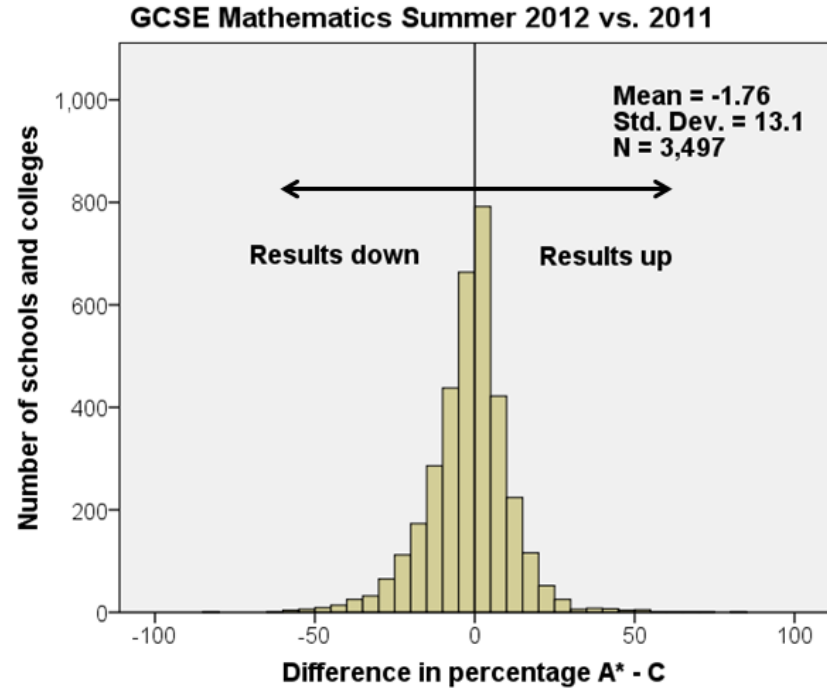
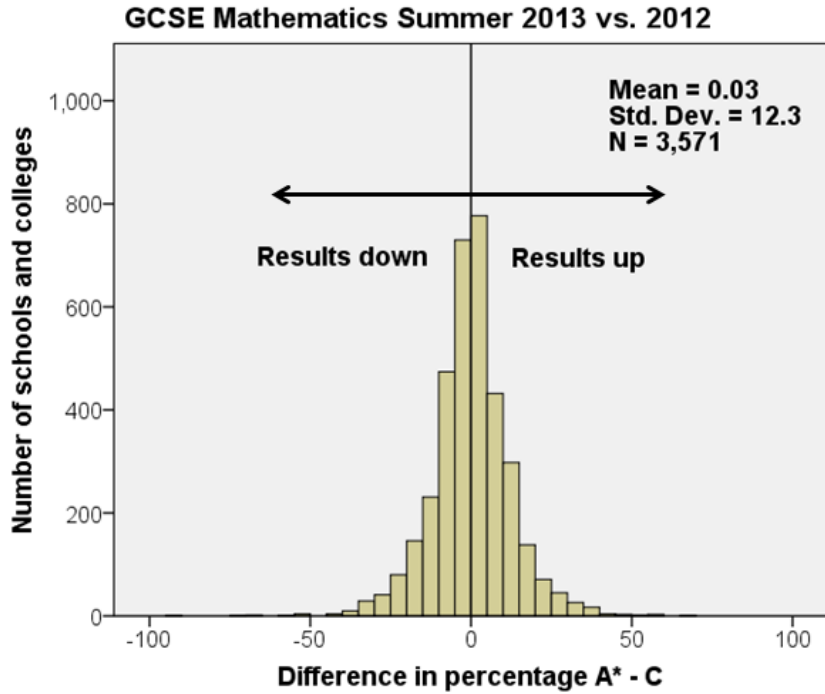
<sup>1</sup> See [www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-11-02-gcse-english-final-report-and-appendices.pdf](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-11-02-gcse-english-final-report-and-appendices.pdf)

The graph below compares schools' results in the last two years of the previous English qualifications. It is not surprising that there is greater stability (as seen by the higher peak in the middle) as schools will have been more familiar with the requirements of the qualification. But, as can be seen below, even when they are familiar with a qualification, individual schools' results can still vary from one year to the next.



## Variation in GCSE mathematics

The graphs below show that results in mathematics saw similar levels of stability in 2013 and in 2012, even though 2012 was the first year of new qualifications.



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First published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in 2014

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