



## Official Statistics

# Attainment Statistics (December) 2021

Tuesday 14 December 2021

**Correction: Wednesday 20 April 2022**

## Summary

**Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.**

The key headline messages have not materially changed from the previously published [Attainment Statistics \(August\) 2021](#) publication:

- Entries for Higher and Advanced Higher are up on 2020, and on each year in the period 2018 to 2019
- Entries for National 5 are down on 2020 but up on each year from 2017 to 2019
- A-C attainment rates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher (85.8%, 87.3% and 90.2% respectively) are down on 2020 but are higher than A-C attainment rates in each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- Grade A attainment rates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher (46.7%, 47.7% and 51.0% respectively) are up on 2020 and are higher than grade A attainment rate for each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- The combination of relatively high A-C attainment rates and increased A attainment rates with high volumes of entries in 2021, has resulted in high volumes of total attainment both for grades A-C and for grade A
- The volume of A-C grades attained at Higher and Advanced Higher (170,110 and 24,175 respectively) are up on 2020 and on each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- The volume of A-C grades attained at National 5, at 255,663, are down on 2020, but are higher than the number of A-C grades in each year in the period 2017 to 2019
- Scottish Baccalaureate attainment rates (Pass and Distinction) are up on recent historical levels (2017-2020). Entries remain within the range seen (2017-2020).

## Contents

<b>Section 1 – Official Statistics</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 2 – Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 3 – Headline statistics:</b>	
<b>Attainment Statistics (December)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Attainment Statistics (December) Sex</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Section 4 – Additional links</b>	<b>12</b>

# 1 Official Statistics

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) became an Official Statistics producer in [The Official Statistics \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2019](#).

Attainment Statistics (December) presents a final count of attainment in a given year. This reflects current information at a particular snapshot in time. The previously published [Attainment Statistics \(August\)](#) has always been considered “provisional” with Attainment Statistics (December) providing a fuller picture of attainment following appeals, late amendments procedures, etc.

More information can be found on our website and in the accompanying statistical methodology documentation via the additional links section at the end of this publication.

## 2 Background

Attainment Statistics (December) details the main qualifications taken at school and college level by learners in Scotland: a mix of current National Courses (National 2 to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) as well as Skills for Work, Awards, National Progression Awards, and National Certificates.

The purpose of National Courses, as well as Skills for Work, Awards, National Progression Awards and National Certifications, is to enable certification and recognition for the programmes of work that learners undertake in the senior phase of secondary education and in colleges.

The broad objectives of National Courses are to provide high standards, and breadth and depth of learning for individual learners, assessed usually via national exams, coursework and / or internally assessed components.

In 2021, the Scottish Government commissioned the SQA to develop an Alternative Certification Model (ACM 2021) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher for 2021. This model was developed by the National Qualifications 2021 Group. The National Qualifications 2021 Group is represented by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Colleges Scotland, Education Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), School Leaders Scotland (SLS), the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the Scottish Government, National Parent Forum of Scotland, and the Scottish Youth Parliament. The model is based on teacher judgment, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. More information on the [ACM 2021 methodology](#) can be found on our information page.

In 2020, the Deputy First Minister directed SQA to issue grades, primarily on the basis of teacher estimates. 9,198 grades that had been adjusted upwards in an [earlier moderation process](#) were also retained.

Prior to 2020 and 2021, the Scottish examination system had been in a period of change since the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

Revised National Qualification (RNQ) changes made to the assessment of National 5 courses in 2018, Higher courses in 2019 and Advanced Higher courses in 2020, meant units and unit assessments were removed and each course assessment was adjusted accordingly.

In addition, grade D was extended from a notional 45–49% to a notional 40–49%, meaning grade D attainment (and No Award results) from:

- 2016/17 and previous years are not directly comparable for National 5
- 2017/18 and previous years are not directly comparable for Higher
- 2018/19 and previous years are not directly comparable for Advanced Higher

Users of these statistics should be mindful of the above information and the different approach to deriving results for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in 2021, particularly when commenting on 2021 results in the context of previous years. This includes commenting on 2021 figures in the context of 2020 results.

Generally, the information in this summary focuses on the period 2017-2021 unless indicated otherwise.

**Note that 2017-2019 entry and attainment figures are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches. The above should be considered throughout this publication, where differences between years are presented and described for context.**

The key messages from [Attainment Statistics \(August\) 2021](#) have not materially changed.

As such, this document is intentionally brief and seeks to present an overview of the national level statistics and sex tables updated with December data.

A fuller statistical summary published alongside [Attainment Statistics \(August\) 2021](#) can be found on our [Statistics 2021](#) webpage.

## 2.1 Attainment Statistics (December) 2021 summary

### National 5

**Entries were 298,137** (300,683 in 2020; 288,561 in 2019; 281,735 in 2018)

**85.8% attainment** at A-C grade for **National 5** (89.0% in 2020; 78.3% in 2019; 77.5% in 2018)

**46.7% attainment** at A grade for **National 5** (42.4% in 2020; 35.2% in 2019; 35.2% in 2018)

**Table 1. National 5 summary (2017-2021)**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	293,167	281,735	288,561	300,683	298,137
Grade A-C attainment volumes	233,412	218,472	225,819	267,644	255,663
Grade A-C attainment rate	79.6%	77.5%	78.3%	89.0%	85.8%
Grade A attainment volumes	108,997	99,223	101,498	127,375	139,217
Grade A attainment rate	37.2%	35.2%	35.2%	42.4%	46.7%

### Higher

**Entries were 194,794** (186,227 in 2020; 185,917 in 2019; 191,952 in 2018)

**87.3% attainment** at A-C grades for **Higher** (89.3% in 2020; 74.9% in 2019; 77.1% in 2018)

**47.7% attainment** at A grade for **Higher** (40.1% in 2020; 28.5% in 2019; 28.7% in 2018)

**Table 2. Higher summary (2017-2021)**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	194,804	191,952	185,917	186,227	194,794
Grade A-C attainment volumes	150,639	147,949	139,322	166,284	170,110
Grade A-C attainment rate	77.3%	77.1%	74.9%	89.3%	87.3%
Grade A attainment volumes	56,561	55,083	53,013	74,593	92,839
Grade A attainment rate	29.0%	28.7%	28.5%	40.1%	47.7%

## **Advanced Higher**

**Entries were 26,807** (23,571 in 2020; 23,465 in 2019; 24,328 in 2018)

**90.2% attainment** at A-C grades for **Advanced Higher** (93.1% in 2020; 79.6% in 2019; 80.8% in 2018)

**51.0% attainment** at A for **Advanced Highers** (46.3% in 2020; 32.0% in 2019; 32.6% in 2018)

**Table 3. Advanced Higher summary (2017-2021)**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Entries	24,107	24,328	23,465	23,571	26,807
Grade A-C attainment volumes	19,381	19,653	18,680	21,938	24,175
Grade A-C attainment rate	80.4%	80.8%	79.6%	93.1%	90.2%
Grade A attainment volumes	7,717	7,923	7,504	10,924	13,661
Grade A attainment rate	32.0%	32.6%	32.0%	46.3%	51.0%

## **Scottish Baccalaureate**

**Entries were 150** (149 in 2020; 154 in 2019; 156 in 2018)

**92.7% total attainment** rate for **The Scottish Baccalaureate** (87.9% in 2020; 72.1% in 2019; 78.2% in 2018)

**65.3%** entries received Distinction for **The Scottish Baccalaureate** (57.0% in 2020; 35.1% in 2019; 45.5% in 2018)

**Table 4. Scottish Baccalaureate summary (2017-2021)**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Entries	161	156	154	149	150
Pass attainment volumes	139	122	111	131	139
Pass attainment rate	86.3%	78.2%	72.1%	87.9%	92.7%
Distinction attainment volumes	72	71	54	85	98
Distinction attainment rate	44.7%	45.5%	35.1%	57.0%	65.3%

## **National 2 – National 4**

**National 2** – Entries were 2,190 (1,992 in 2020; 2,044 in 2019; 2,105 in 2018)

**70.5% attainment rate** (77.6% in 2020; 79.7% in 2019; 82.7% in 2018)

**Table 5. National 2 summary (2017-2021)**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Entries	1,915	2,105	2,044	1,992	2,190
Attainment volumes	1,594	1,740	1,629	1,546	1,543
Attainment rate	83.2%	82.7%	79.7%	77.6%	70.5%

**National 3** – Entries were 20,909 (21,639 in 2020; 19,285 in 2019; 17,905 in 2018)

**88.6% attainment rate** (92.9% in 2020; 89.0% in 2019; 92.0% in 2018)

**Table 6. National 3 summary (2017-2021)**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Entries	17,282	17,905	19,285	21,639	20,909
Attainment volumes	15,799	16,473	17,157	20,106	18,534
Attainment rate	91.4%	92.0%	89.0%	92.9%	88.6%

**National 4** – Entries were 103,660 (102,492 in 2020; 107,999 in 2019; 109,644 in 2018)

**89.2% attainment rate** (92.4% in 2020; 90.0% in 2019; 92.2% in 2018)

**Table 7. National 4 summary (2017-2021)**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Entries	125,649	109,644	107,999	102,492	103,660
Attainment volumes	117,828	101,067	97,221	94,711	92,491
Attainment rate	93.8%	92.2%	90.0%	92.4%	89.2%

## **Skills for Work**

**SCQF level 3 – 100.0% attainment rate** (100.0% in 2020; 100.0% in 2019; 90.9% in 2018)

**SCQF level 4 – 76.7% attainment rate** (83.6% in 2020; 83.2% in 2019; 83.1% in 2018)

**SCQF level 5 – 85.4% attainment rate** (89.0% in 2020; 85.7% in 2019; 87.5% in 2018)

**SCQF level 6 – 84.3% attainment rate** (78.8% in 2020; 86.8% in 2019; 87.8% in 2018)

**Table 8. Skills for Work summary (2017-2021)**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Entries	10,169	10,457	12,111	14,467	13,280
Attainment volumes	8,831	8,998	10,292	12,641	11,081
Attainment rate	86.8%	86.0%	85.0%	87.4%	83.4%

## **Awards, National Certificates and National Progression Awards**

The overall attainment for Awards, National Certificates (NCs), and National Progression Awards (NPAs) numbered 53,420 in 2021 (59,082 in 2020; 53,975 in 2019; 52,023 in 2018). The number of awards, national certificates and national progression awards in this publication is larger than Attainment Statistics (August) as these figures include an extra month of data. More information can be found in the methodology guide for Attainment Statistics (December).

**Table 9. Awards, NCs and NPAs summary (2017-2021)**

	Attainment				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>SCQF level 1</b>					
Awards	298	429	460	406	155
<b>SCQF level 2</b>					
Awards	1,250	900	1,072	951	748
National Progression Awards	96	122	81	91	84



<b>SCQF level 3</b>					
Awards	4,636	4,397	4,843	4,446	3,825
National Certificates	1	4	15	5	1
National Progression Awards	206	189	144	240	112
<b>SCQF level 4</b>					
Awards	11,619	10,846	11,065	12,147	10,134
National Certificates	432	293	295	208	202
National Progression Awards	5,273	5,651	5,007	4,867	4,305
<b>SCQF level 5</b>					
Awards	3,823	4,159	5,427	8,337	7,437
National Certificates	5,191*	4,540*	3,605*	2,623	2,101
National Progression Awards	5,501	5,949	6,395	6,901	6,511
<b>SCQF level 6</b>					
Awards	3,647	4,554	5,544	5,899	5,694
National Certificates	6,888*	6,525*	5,713*	4,939*	4,254*
National Progression Awards	2,143	3,465	4,309	7,022	7,857
<b>TOTAL</b>	51,004	52,023	53,975	59,082	53,420

## 2.2 Attainment Statistics (December) 2021 Sex tables overview

This is the first time that Sex tables have been published using Attainment Statistics (December) data. These are an update of the provisional Attainment Statistics (August) Male and Female Sex tables. Like the main tables, the key figures and messages from the Sex tables from Attainment Statistics (August) 2021 have not materially changed.

Further discussion on sex differences can be found in the 2021 Alternative Certification Model Equalities Monitoring Report on our information page.

### National 5 Headline Statistics – attainment by Sex

- **87.2%** A-C grade attainment for **Females** at **National 5** (90.4% in 2020)
- **84.3%** A-C grade attainment for **Males** at **National 5** (87.6% in 2020)
- **51.5%** A grade attainment for **Females** at **National 5** (46.4% in 2020)
- **41.8%** A grade attainment for **Males** at **National 5** (38.2% in 2020)

Table 10. National 5 summary – Sex (2020-2021)

	2020		2021	
	M	F	M	F
Entries	146,933	153,727	147,779	150,267
Grade A-C attainment volumes	128,698	138,928	124,547	131,029
Grade A-C attainment rate	87.6%	90.4%	84.3%	87.2%
Grade A attainment volumes	56,082	71,291	61,740	77,411
Grade A attainment rate	38.2%	46.4%	41.8%	51.5%

### Higher Headline Statistics – attainment by Sex

- **89.4%** A-C grade attainment for **Females** at **Higher** (90.9% in 2020)
- **84.8%** A-C grade attainment for **Males** at **Higher** (87.2% in 2020)
- **52.1%** A grade attainment for **Females** at **Higher** (43.3% in 2020)
- **42.2%** A grade attainment for **Males** at **Higher** (36.0% in 2020)

**Table 11. Higher summary – Sex (2020-2021)**

	2020		2021	
	M	F	M	F
Entries	82,390	103,831	88,031	106,733
Grade A-C attainment volumes	71,871	94,408	74,654	95,435
Grade A-C attainment rate	87.2%	90.9%	84.8%	89.4%
Grade A attainment volumes	29,621	44,972	37,171	55,660
Grade A attainment rate	36.0%	43.3%	42.2%	52.1%

**Advanced Higher Headline Statistics – attainment by Sex**

- **92.2%** A-C grade attainment for **Females** at **Advanced Higher** (94.4% in 2020)
- **87.6%** A-C grade attainment for **Males** at **Advanced Higher** (91.4% in 2020)
- **53.2%** A grade attainment for **Females** at **Advanced Higher** (47.6% in 2020)
- **48.1%** A grade attainment for **Males** at **Advanced Higher** (44.8% in 2020)

**Table 12. Advanced Higher summary – Sex (2020-2021)**

	2020		2021	
	M	F	M	F
Entries	10,362	13,209	11,644	15,162
Grade A-C attainment volumes	9,467	12,471	10,201	13,973
Grade A-C attainment rate	91.4%	94.4%	87.6%	92.2%
Grade A attainment volumes	4,641	6,283	5,597	8,064
Grade A attainment rate	44.8%	47.6%	48.1%	53.2%

### 3 Additional links

[SQA Official Statistics documentation](#)

[SQA Methodology for Attainment Statistics \(December\)](#)

[SQA Methodology for Attainment Statistics \(December\) - Sex](#)

[SQA Statistics Publication Schedule](#)

[SQA Statistics](#) – current year

[SQA Statistics - archive](#)

[SQA Information](#) – current year

[SQA Information - archive](#)

[SQA Statistics Revisions and Correction Policy](#)