

SURVEY-SPECIFIC REPORT (FINAL DRAFT)

**REFORM TRACKING RESEARCH:
EMPLOYERS – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026**

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PREPARED FOR: Qualifications Scotland

**Reform Tracking Research:
Employers – Survey-Specific Report for
February/March 2026**

Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd

April 2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report details findings to emerge from the second phase of a programme of Reform Tracking Research being undertaken amongst employers in Scotland on behalf of Qualifications Scotland by Ashbrook Research & Consultancy Ltd.

The purpose of the research is to elicit a range of views amongst employers across Scotland with regard to the reform of qualifications and assessment, together with a range of other issues.

This second phase of the Tracking Research was undertaken during February/March 2026.

A total of 125 structured telephone interviews were undertaken in the second phase of the research. This is notably lower than the number of interviews achieved in the previous survey phase and is predominantly due to the fieldwork period covering the Easter holidays which had a notable impact on the availability of employers to participate in an interview. Despite this relatively low number of interviews, the data presented is sufficiently accurate, representative and robust.

The questionnaire administered in February/March 2026 sought information in relation to the following issues:

- The Scottish Government's plans for qualifications and assessment reform
- Attitudes about qualifications and assessment
- Views about Qualifications Scotland

This survey-specific report provides the following outcomes:

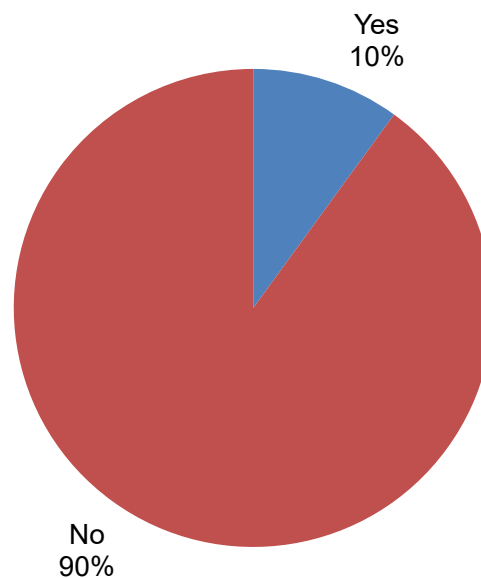
- Graphics for each question asked during this survey
- The highlighting of key changes which were apparent for questions which were asked in the latest survey and that undertaken in September/October 2025

Finally, it should be noted that all variances referred to in this report are statistically significant but that not all statistically significant variances between the latest and the last survey phases are referred to in order to promote the precise nature of the reporting outputs, as requested by Qualifications Scotland.

2.0 THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT REFORM

*“Are you aware of the Scottish Government’s plans for qualifications
and assessment reform?”*

**Figure 1: Aware of the Scottish Government's Plans
for Qualifications and Assessment Reform?**

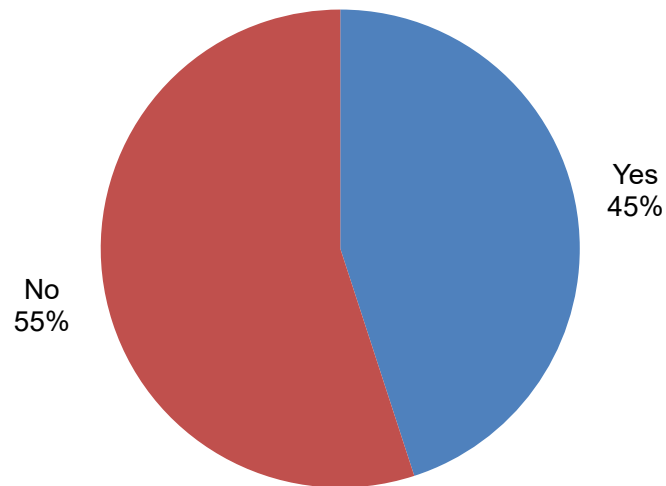


Base: All Respondents

“Scotland is making important changes to its curriculum, qualifications and assessment system to better support children and young people from ages 3 to 18. This will help ensure every learner is recognised for the knowledge, skills and achievements they develop during their learning journey”.

“Would you like to know more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

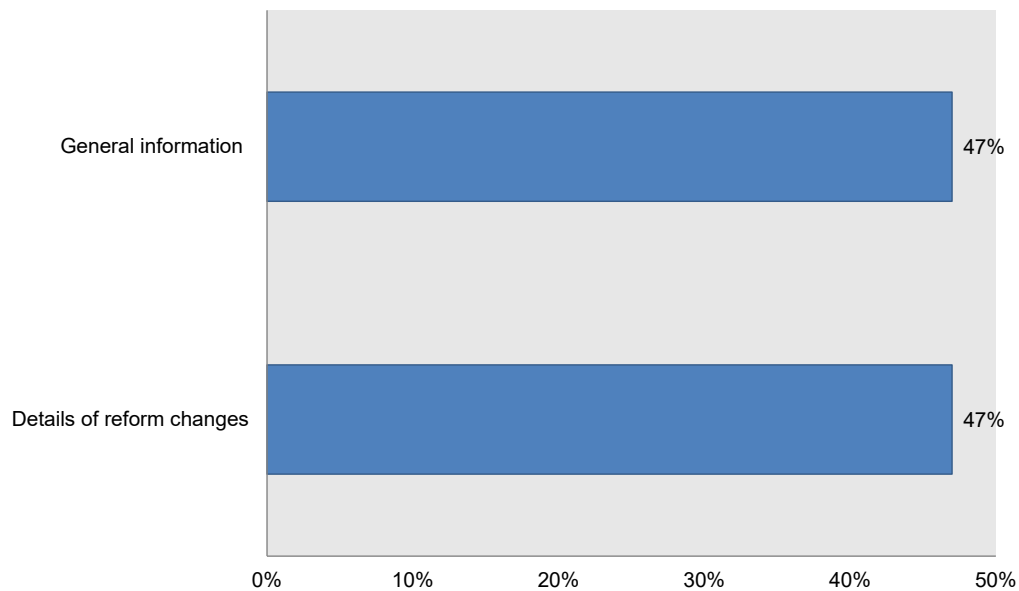
Figure 2: Like to Know More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform?



Base: All Respondents

“What types of information would you like about qualifications and assessment reform?”

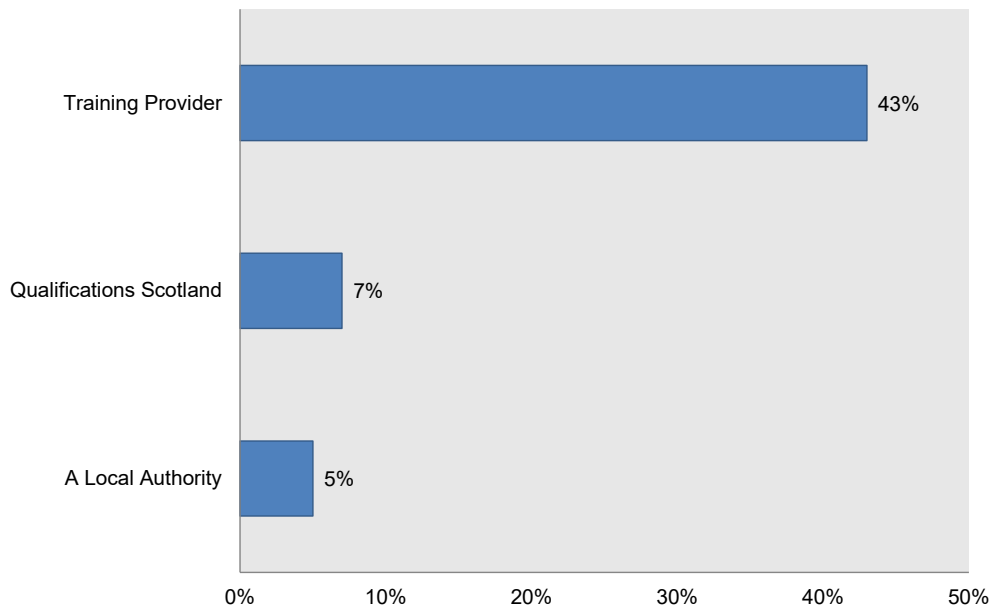
**Figure 3: Information Desires re Qualifications and Assessment Reform
(Unprompted)**



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 2

“Who would you go to in order to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform?”

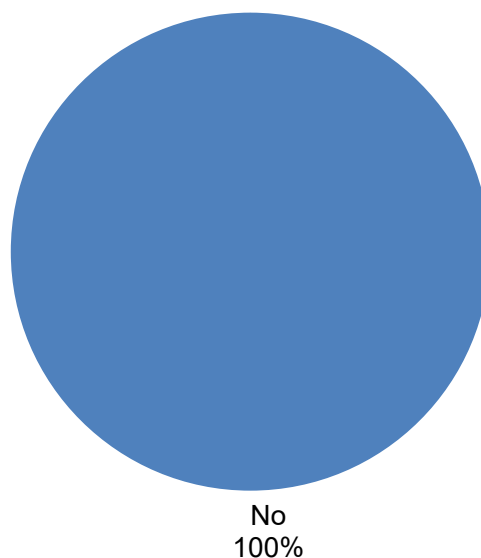
Figure 4: Who Would be Approached to Find Out More About Qualifications and Assessment Reform



Base: 'Yes' in Figure 2

“Have you previously taken part in any SQA or Qualifications Scotland consultation, engagement or research relating to qualifications and assessment reform?”

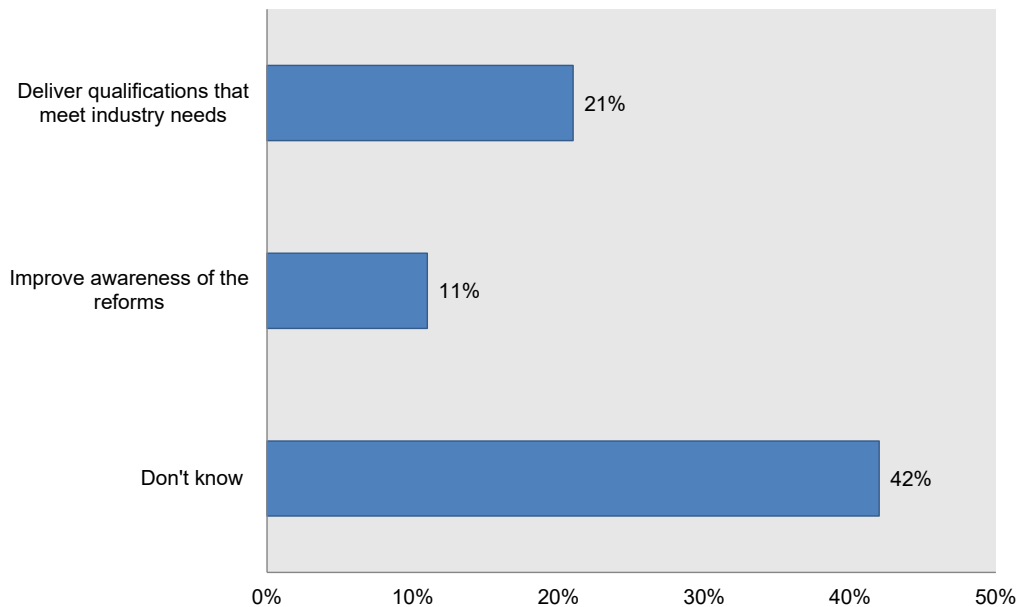
Figure 5: Previously Taken Part in Consultation, Engagement or Research Relating to Qualifications and Assessment Reform?



Base: All Respondents

“What should Qualifications Scotland do to make qualifications and assessment reform a success?”

Figure 6: What Should Qualifications Scotland Focus on to Make Qualifications and Assessment Reform a Success (Unprompted)



Base: All Respondents

Between September/October 2025 and February/March 2026, there was an increase in the extent to which respondents had information desires regarding qualifications and assessment reform that related to ‘details regarding the reform changes’, but decreasing desires for ‘general information’.

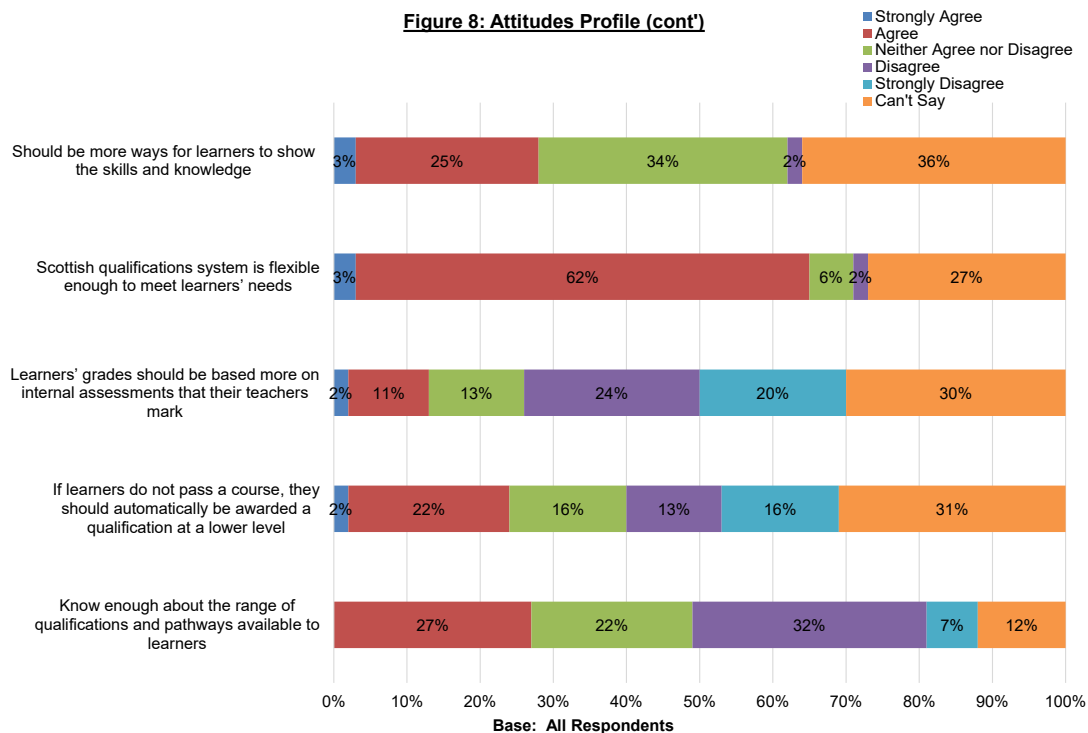
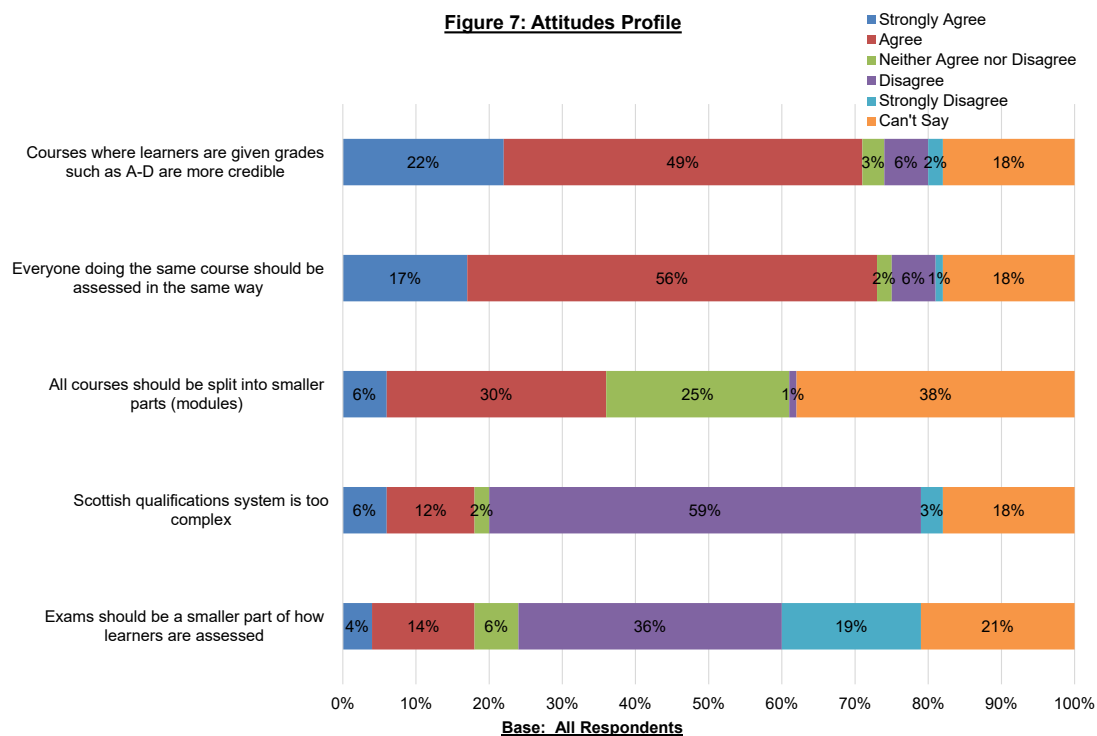
Since the last survey, there was a decrease in the extent to which employers would approach training providers, colleges, a local authority and the Scottish Government to find out more about qualifications and assessment reform.

Between September/October 2025 and February/March 2026, there were increasing beliefs that, in order to make qualifications and assessment reform a success, Qualifications Scotland should ‘deliver qualifications that meet industry needs’ and ‘improve awareness of the reforms’. During that time, however, there was a decrease in the extent to which employers made reference here to Qualifications

Scotland having 'good communications about the reforms', together with an increase in the provision of 'don't know' responses here.

3.0 ATTITUDES ABOUT QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

“Please choose the option which most closely matches your views about each of the statements below”



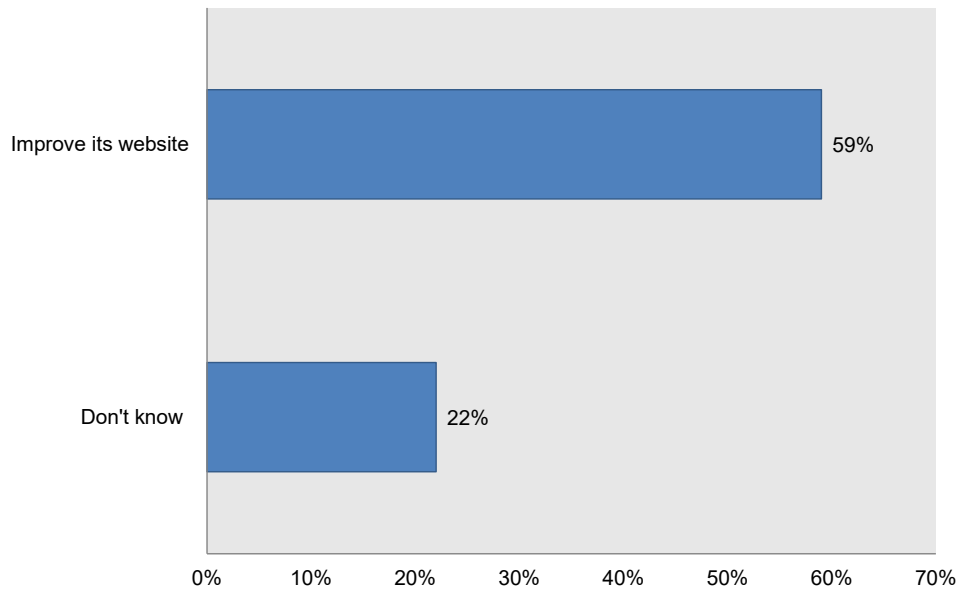
Between September/October 2025 and February/March 2026, there was increasing agreement with a number of statements, including 'courses where learners are given grades such as A to D are more credible than those which are pass or fail' and 'the Scottish qualifications system is flexible enough to meet learners' needs'. During that time, however, there was a decrease in agreement that 'there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they have developed in their courses', 'all courses should be split into smaller parts (modules) that learners can complete one at a time', 'exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed' and 'learners grades should be based more on internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessment SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks'.

Since the last survey, there was increasing disagreement that 'exams should be a smaller part of how learners are assessed', 'learners grades should be based more on internal assessments that their teachers mark and less on exams and assessments SQA or Qualifications Scotland marks' and 'the Scottish qualifications system is too complex'. During that time, however, there was decreasing disagreement that 'there should be more ways for learners to show the skills and knowledge they have developed in their courses'.

4.0 VIEWS ABOUT QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND

*“What **one thing** do you think Qualifications Scotland needs to do to improve how it works with you?”*

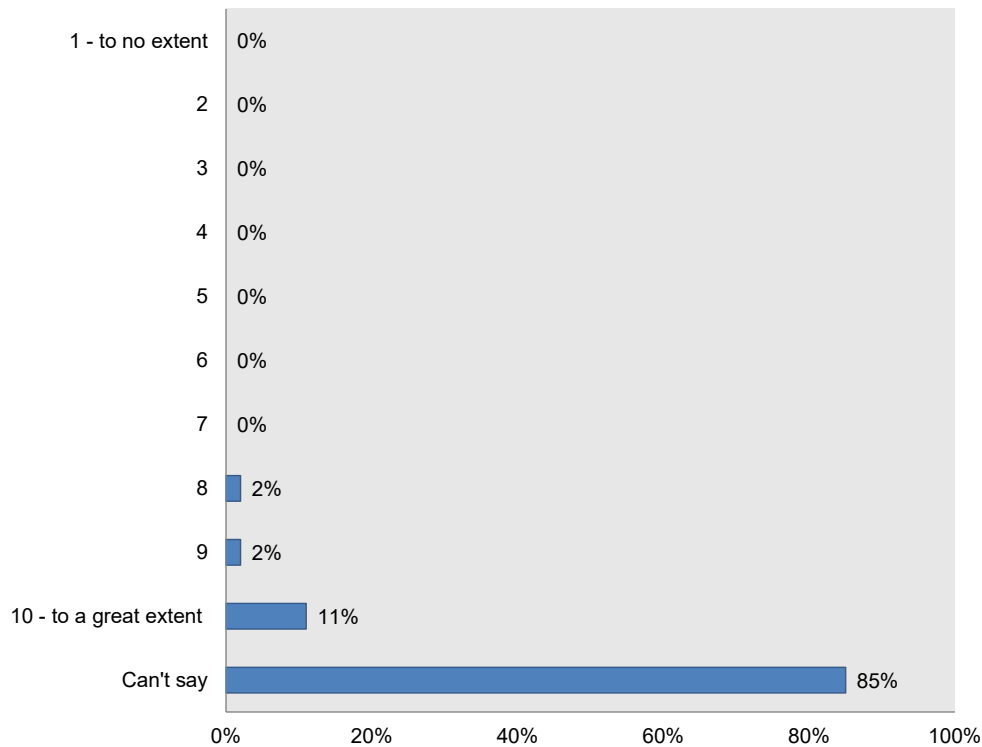
Figure 9: What Qualifications Scotland Needs to Do to Improve How It Works with Employers (Unprompted)



Base: All Respondents

“On a scale from 1 to 10, where ‘1’ is ‘to no extent’ and ‘10’ is ‘to a great extent’, to what extent do you trust Qualifications Scotland to consult and engage with learners, teachers, lecturers and other stakeholders to create new qualifications?”

Figure 10: Extent of Trust that Qualifications Scotland will Consult and Engage with Learners, Teachers, Lecturers and Other Stakeholders to Create New Qualifications

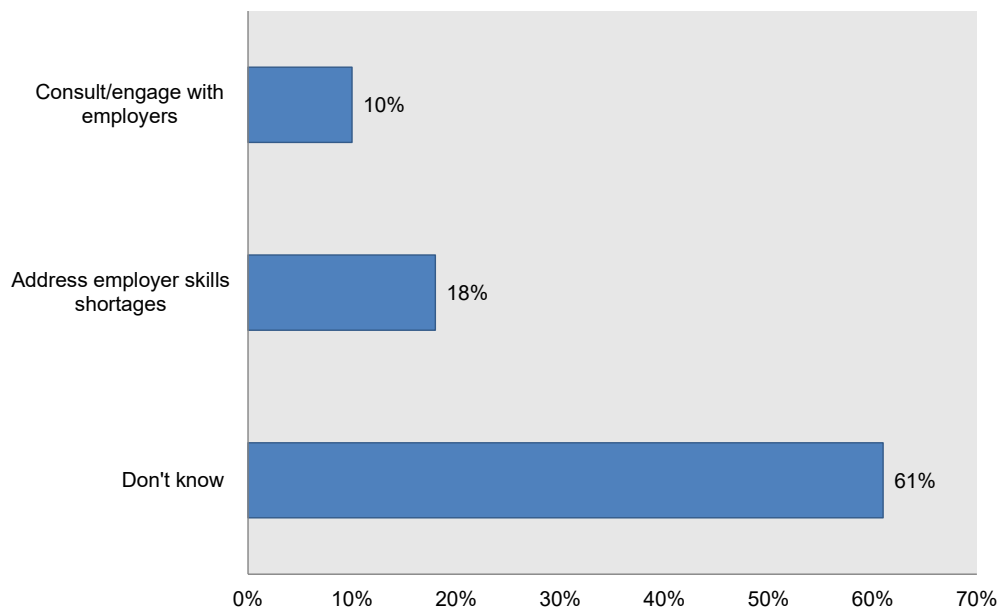


Base: All Respondents

Average = N/A Due to Very Small Numbers Providing Response

“How can Qualifications Scotland better support industry needs?”

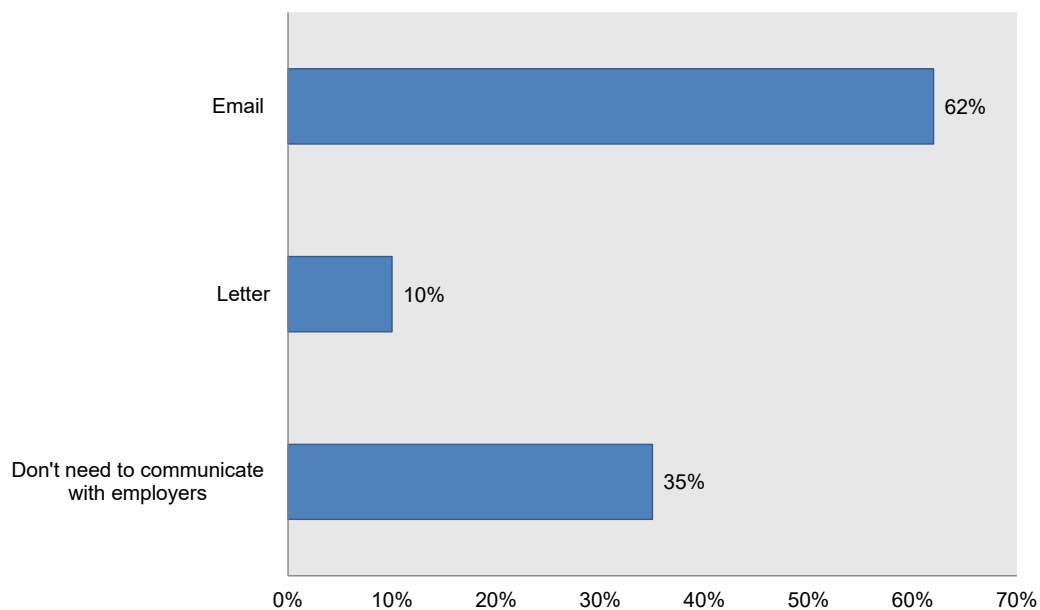
Figure 11: How Can Qualifications Scotland Better Support Industry Needs? (Unprompted)



Base: All Respondents

“What would be the best ways for Qualifications Scotland to communicate with you?”

Figure 12: Best Ways for Qualifications Scotland to Communicate with Employers? (Unprompted)



Base: All Respondents

Between September/October 2025 and February/March 2026, there was increasing unprompted reference to beliefs amongst employers that Qualifications Scotland needs to improve how well it works with employers through 'improving its website'. During that time, however, decreasing references were made to Qualifications Scotland 'improving awareness of the organisation', 'communicating change better' and 'developing and delivering more qualifications for an employer's sector'.