



# Summary of Appeal Outcomes, 2023

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# Headlines

## Appeal entries

- ◆ A total 39,660 (7.3%) of the 540,920 certificated grades for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher were appealed in 2023.
- ◆ At National 5, 18,025 (5.6%) of the 321,360 certificated grades were appealed.
- ◆ At Higher, 19,680 (10.3%) of the 191,810 certificated grades were appealed.
- ◆ At Advanced Higher, 1,955 (7.0%) of the 27,750 certificated grades were appealed.

## Priority appeals

- ◆ In 2023, there were 1,095 priority appeal requests (2.8% of all appeal requests). A priority appeal request is when the learner needed the outcome of an appeal for immediate progression to university, college, training or employment.
- ◆ At National 5, there were 120 priority appeal requests (0.7% of all National 5 appeal requests).
- ◆ At Higher, there were 765 priority appeal requests (3.9% of all Higher appeal requests).
- ◆ At Advanced Higher, there were 210 priority appeal requests (10.8% of all Advanced Higher appeal requests).

## Result change

- ◆ A total of 3,980 appeal requests (10.0%) resulted in an upgrade and five appeal requests (<0.05%) resulted in a downgrade.

## Request breakdown

- ◆ Education Authority centres accounted for 92.3% of appeal requests, while 6.8% came from Independent centres. As a proportion of their entries, Other centres had the highest appeal rate at 9.8%.
- ◆ Of all appeal requests, 53.9% were from female learners and 46.1% were from male learners. As a proportion of their entries, Not Applicable learners had the highest number of appeals at 16.4%.
- ◆ The 20% most deprived areas of Scotland (SIMD 1) accounted for 15.6% of all appeal requests, and the 20% least deprived areas (SIMD 5) accounted for 25.7%.
- ◆ Appeal rates for SIMD quintiles ranged from 6.9% to 7.7%. Appeal outcomes varied by SIMD quintile: upgrade rates were between 9.1% and 11.5% for all quintiles.

# Background

The purpose of Appeals 2023 was to provide learners and centres with the opportunity to review an SQA National Course grade whenever a learner had not achieved the expected result for the SQA-marked assessment components of their course. Appeals 2023 was different from the service provided in 2022 - alternative assessment evidence was not considered as part of any appeal for 2023. Instead, a marking review of a learner's externally-assessed components was carried out and checked that:

- ◆ all parts of the assessment have been marked
- ◆ the marking is in line with the national standards
- ◆ the marks given for each answer have been totalled correctly
- ◆ the correct result has been entered into the system

This year, learners, their representatives or centres could submit learner appeals. However, as grades can go up, down or stay the same, learners must consent before any requests can be submitted by a centre or learner's representative. Appeals could be prioritised if the learner had a conditional place at college or university, or for training or employment that depended on their grade.

Learners can apply for an appeal if they have been awarded a final grade based on externally-assessed components that were submitted to SQA for marking. Learners are not able to submit an appeal in the following circumstances:

- ◆ If a course award has been cancelled as a penalty due to serious candidate malpractice.
- ◆ If a learner has been certificated at grade A. A marking review is designed to address situations where the certificated grade result needs to be reviewed and there is no grade higher than an A.\*
- ◆ If the course is National 5 Practical Electronics, National 5 Practical Metalworking or National 5 Practical Woodworking — these courses are wholly internally assessed and are not eligible for appeals.
- ◆ If the award was reached using the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service. In these cases, a full review of all learner materials will have been undertaken by SQA senior appointees before certification.

\*Candidates with a conditional offer and in need of a grade A band 1 for a place at university or with an employer can be considered for an appeal via their school or college.

The operation of an appeals system has varied fundamentally in each of the last four years due to the alternative awarding arrangements that were in place to account for the COVID-19 pandemic. Further details of the awarding arrangements are given in the [methodology report published on the SQA website](#). Further details about the [arrangements and process for appeals in 2023 are available on the SQA website](#).

# Terms used and rounding

- ◆ 'Entries' refers to the number of entries reported in Provisional Attainment Statistics — August 2023, published on 8 August 2023.
- ◆ 'Upgrade' refers to an appeal request that resulted in a candidate receiving a higher grade.
- ◆ 'Downgrade' refers to an appeal request that resulted in a candidate receiving a lower grade.
- ◆ 'No Change' refers to an appeal request that did not result in a change to the grade awarded to the candidate.
- ◆ 'Upgrade/downgrade/no change rate' refers to the respective outcomes as a proportion of appeal requests.
- ◆ 'Appeal rate' refers to the number of appeals as a proportion of entries.
- ◆ In some cases, centre type categories are used in these statistics and result from the grouping of some related centre types. 'Education Authority — Secondary School' and 'Education Authority — Special School' are grouped as 'Education Authority'. 'Independent — Secondary School' and 'Independent — Special School' are grouped as 'Independent'. 'Further Education College' is reported as 'FE College'. All remaining centre types, including training providers, voluntary sector organisations, HM Armed Forces, prisons and primary schools are reported as 'Other'.
- ◆ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a geography-based, relative measure of multiple deprivation which considers income, resources and opportunities to rank small geographical units (datazones) of roughly equal population size in terms of deprivation. SIMD quintiles split the datazones (geographical units) into five groups, each containing 20% of Scotland's datazones. SIMD 1 contains the 20% most deprived datazones and SIMD 5 contains the 20% least deprived datazones. Alternatively, SIMD deciles split the data zones into 10 groups. [Further information about SIMD is available on the Scottish Government website.](#)
- ◆ All figures are rounded to the nearest five. Totals are also rounded which may cause the sum of rounded figures to differ from the total reported. Entry numbers between one and four inclusive have been suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosing personal information. Suppressed figures are marked up with the shorthand '[c]'.
- ◆ Percentages are calculated using figures prior to rounding. Percentages with a value greater than zero and less than 0.05% are marked up with '<0.05%'.

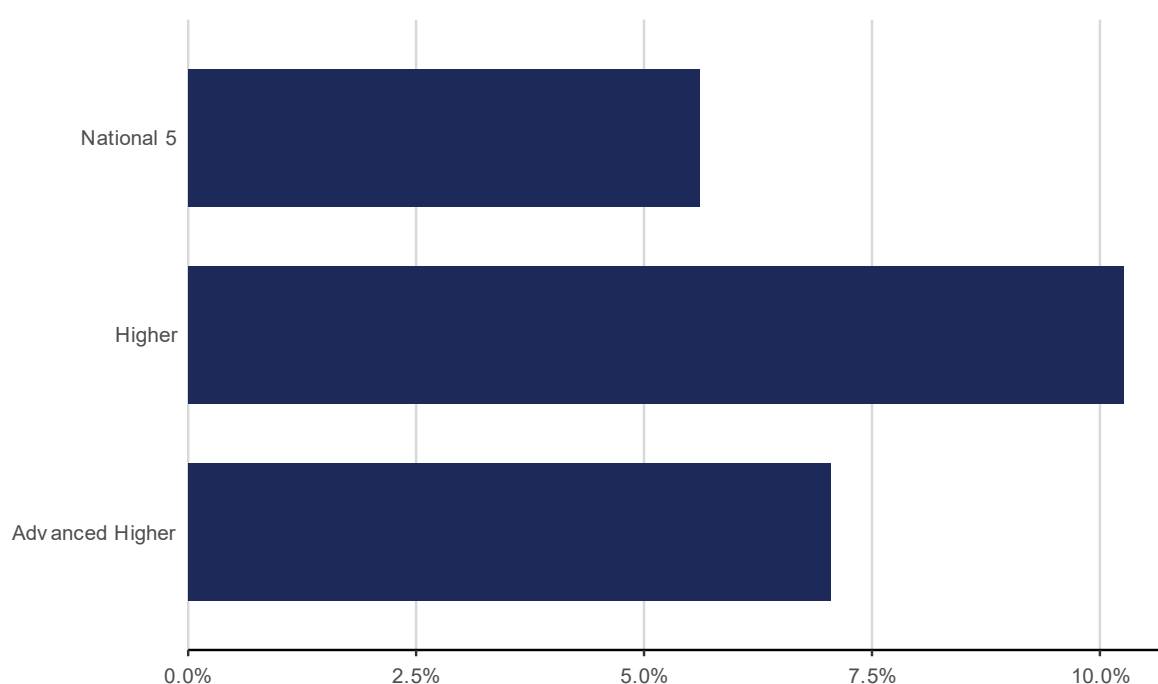
# Summary of appeal requests

## Level

The proportion of entries resulting in an appeal request this year was highest for Higher and lowest for National 5.

- ◆ 18,025 appeal requests were received for National 5 (5.6% of 321,360 entries).
- ◆ 19,680 appeal requests were received for Higher (10.3% of 191,810 entries).
- ◆ 1,955 appeal requests were received for Advanced Higher (7.0% of 27,750 entries).

*Figure 1: Number of appeal requests as a proportion of entries by qualification level, Scotland, 2023.*



*Table 1: Appeal requests by qualification level, 2023.*

Level	Entries	Appeals	Appeal rate
National 5	321,360	18,025	5.6%
Higher	191,810	19,680	10.3%
Advanced Higher	27,750	1,955	7.0%

## Original certificated grade

At each level, the highest number of appeals came from awards originally awarded at grade B, however as a proportion, those originally awarded at grade D were most likely to be the subject of an appeal.

As the purpose of an appeal is to appeal the grade and not a band, A grades could not be appealed based on the band awarded (grades A to C and No Award contain upper and lower bands) unless necessary for a conditional place at university or employment. This year, 10 (<0.05%) appeal requests were received for entries originally awarded an A grade.

Figure 2: Appeal requests as a proportion of entries by original certificated grade, Scotland, 2023.

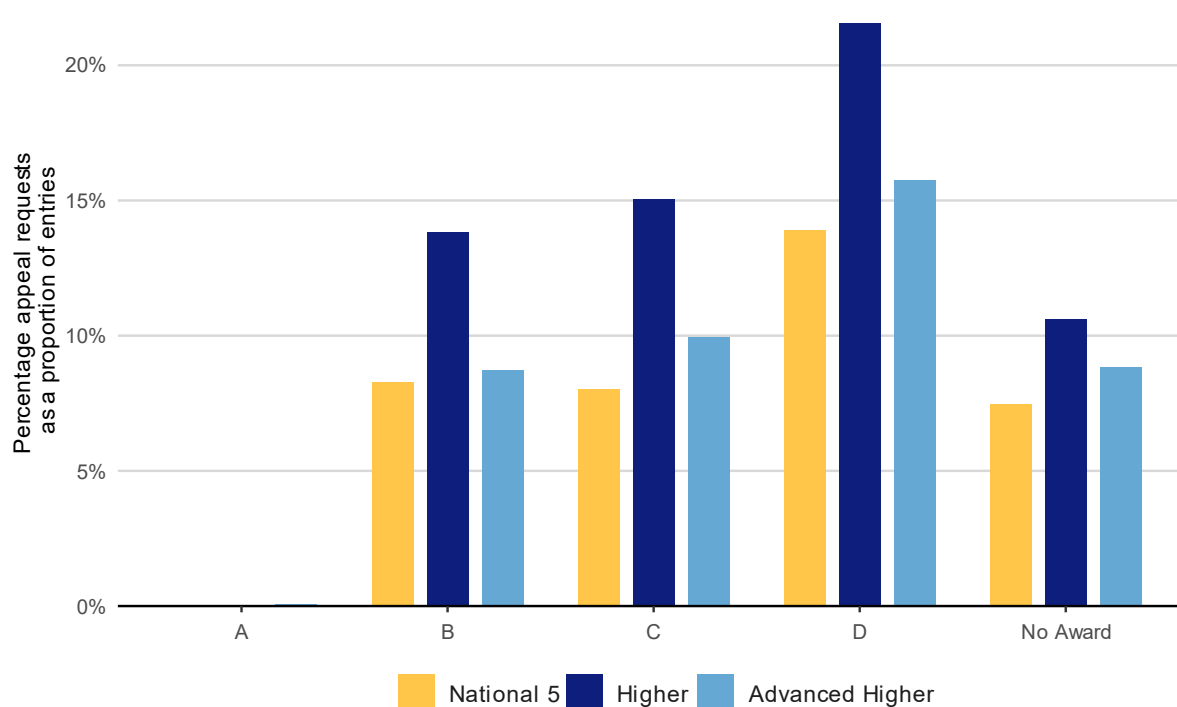


Table 2: Appeal request rates by qualification level for each grade, 2023.

Level	Original grade	Entries	Appeals	Appeal rate
National 5	A	124,130	[c]	<0.05%
National 5	B	71,800	5,930	8.3%
National 5	C	57,145	4,570	8.0%
National 5	D	37,700	5,240	13.9%
National 5	No Award	30,585	2,285	7.5%
Higher	A	62,945	[c]	<0.05%
Higher	B	46,205	6,380	13.8%
Higher	C	38,760	5,835	15.1%
Higher	D	25,740	5,540	21.5%
Higher	No Award	18,160	1,920	10.6%
Advanced Higher	A	9,145	5	0.1%

Level	Original grade	Entries	Appeals	Appeal rate
Advanced Higher	B	7,090	620	8.7%
Advanced Higher	C	5,915	590	9.9%
Advanced Higher	D	3,575	565	15.8%
Advanced Higher	No Award	2,030	180	8.8%

## Subject grouping

- ◆ Care subjects had the highest appeal rate (11.2%).
- ◆ Language subjects had the lowest appeal rate (4.5%).
- ◆ Appeal rates for other subject groupings ranged between 4.7% and 8.5%.

Figure 3: Appeal requests as a proportion of entries by subject grouping, Scotland, 2023.

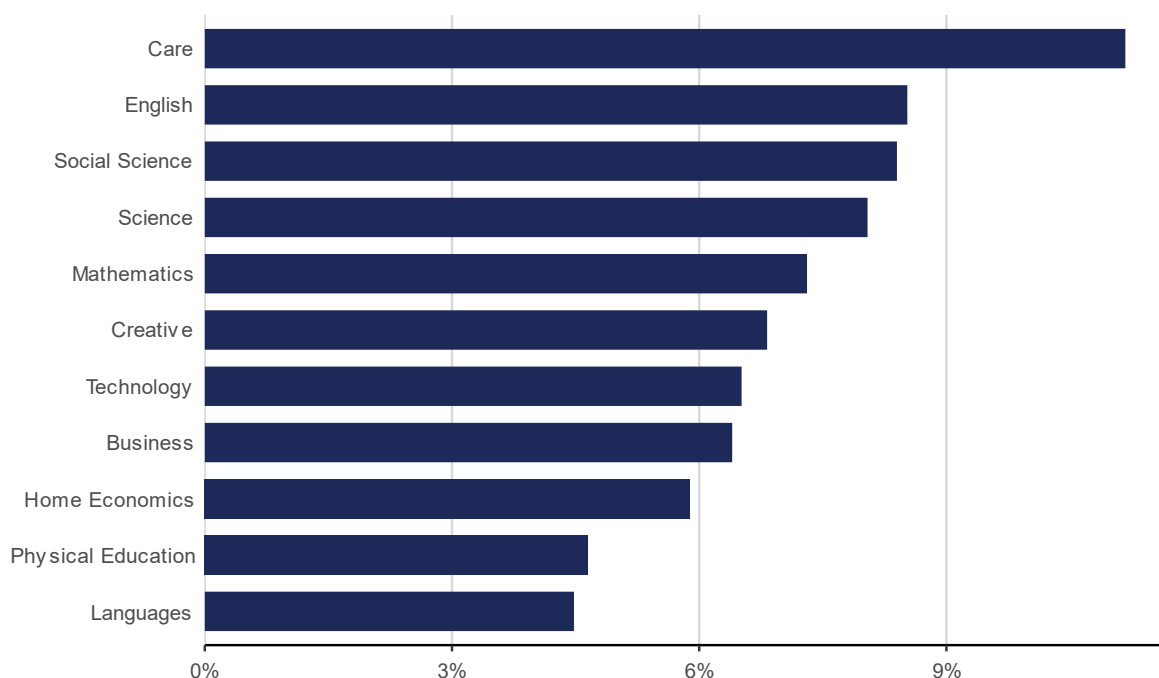


Table 3: Appeal requests by subject grouping, 2023.

Subject grouping	Entries	Appeals	Appeal rate
Business	33,720	2,160	6.4%
Care	735	80	11.2%
Creative	49,280	3,365	6.8%
English	87,150	7,430	8.5%
Home Economics	12,795	755	5.9%
Languages	24,220	1,085	4.5%
Mathematics	81,590	5,965	7.3%
Physical Education	32,450	1,510	4.7%
Science	92,550	7,445	8.0%
Social Science	86,815	7,290	8.4%
Technology	39,620	2,580	6.5%



## Centre type

- ◆ Appeal rates did not vary significantly by centre type (Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $X^2 = 0$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 1$ ).
- ◆ Education Authority centres made 36,590 appeals (92.3% of all appeal requests) and 7.4% of all Education Authority centre entries were appealed.
- ◆ FE Colleges centres made 330 appeals (0.8% of all appeal requests) and 5.7% of all FE College entries were appealed.
- ◆ Independent centres made 2,700 appeals (6.8% of all appeal requests) and 7.0% of all Independent centre entries were appealed.
- ◆ Other centres made 40 appeals (0.1% of all appeal requests) and 9.8% of all Other centre entries were appealed.

Among centre types, the highest appeal rate was from Other centres (which includes training providers, voluntary sector organisations, HM Armed Forces, prisons and primary schools). However, there were only 400 entries and 40 appeals from within this group of centres.

Figure 4: Appeal requests as a proportion of entries by centre type, Scotland, 2023.

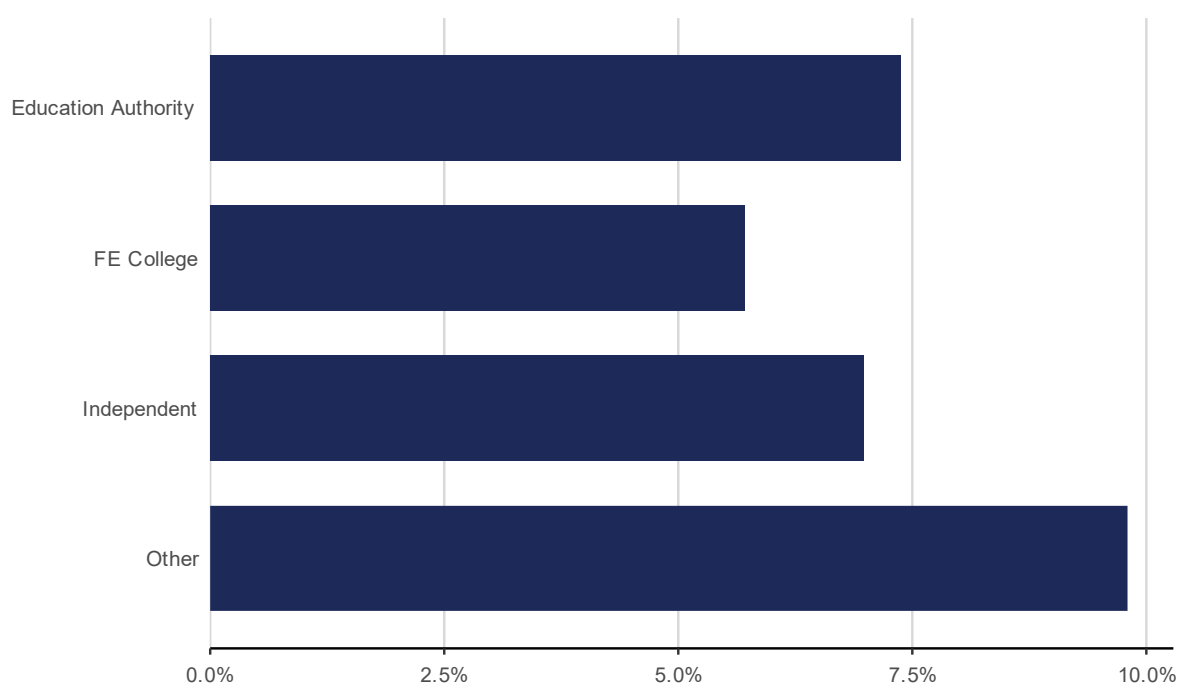


Table 4: Appeal requests by centre type, 2023.

Centre type	Entries	Appeals	Appeal rate
Education Authority	496,040	36,590	7.4%
FE College	5,765	330	5.7%
Independent	38,715	2,700	7.0%
Other	400	40	9.8%

## Sex

- ◆ There was no significant difference of appeal rates by sex (Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $X^2 = 0$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.986$ ).
- ◆ The appeal rate was higher for females than males by 0.7%.
- ◆ 21,375 appeals (7.6% of entries) were from females.
- ◆ 18,270 appeals (7.0% of entries) were from males.
- ◆ The Not Applicable and Not Known sex categories had small entry numbers (65 and 110 respectively) and had 10 and fewer than five, appeal requests, respectively. They are not included in analyses due to these small numbers which are unlikely to allow meaningful comparisons to be made.

Figure 5: Appeal requests as a proportion of entries by sex, Scotland, 2023.

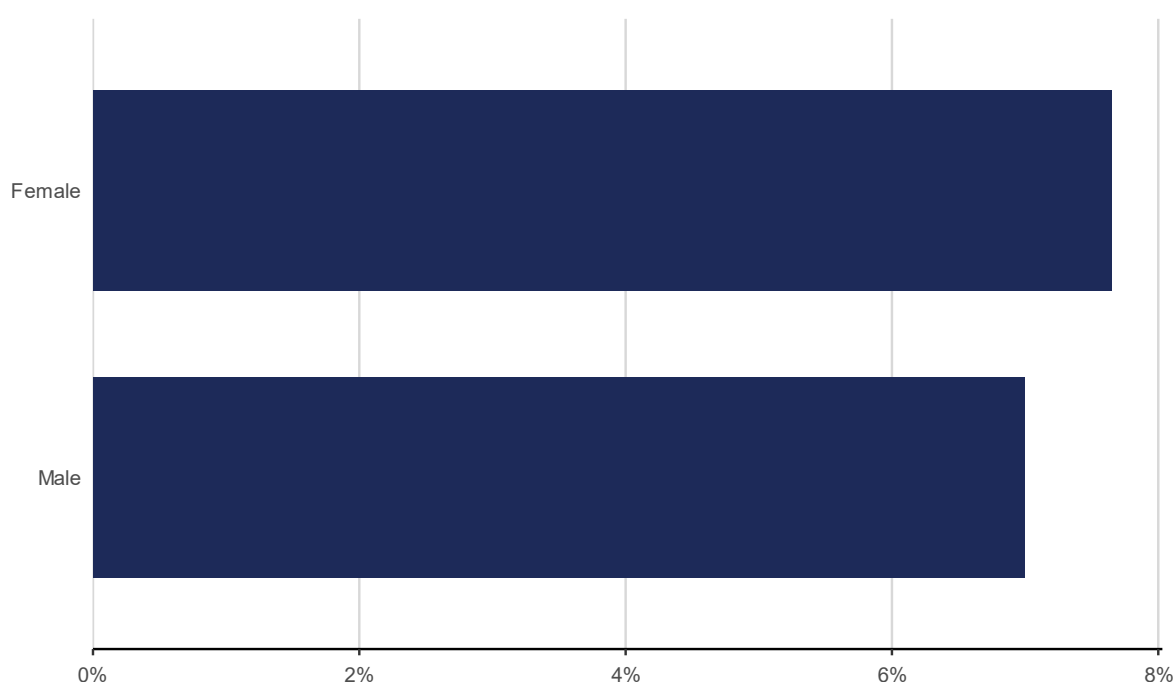


Table 5: Appeal requests by sex, 2023.

Sex	Entries	Appeals	Appeal rate
Female	279,495	21,375	7.6%
Male	261,245	18,270	7.0%

## SIMD

- ◆ There was no significant difference in the appeal rates between the most and least deprived SIMD areas (Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $X^2 = 0$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.985$ ).
- ◆ 6,200 appeals (15.6% of all appeal entries) came from the most deprived datazone (SIMD 1) and had an appeal rate of 7.6%.
- ◆ 10,175 appeals (25.7% of all appeal entries) came from the least deprived datazone (SIMD 5) and had an appeal rate of 6.9%.

- ◆ The highest appeal rate was from those areas not assigned to a SIMD (Unknown), with an appeal rate of 7.8%, however this captures only 1.6% of all appeal entries.

A breakdown by SIMD decile and qualification level is included in the [data tables accompanying this release](#).

Figure 6: Appeal requests as a proportion of entries by SIMD quintile, Scotland, 2023.

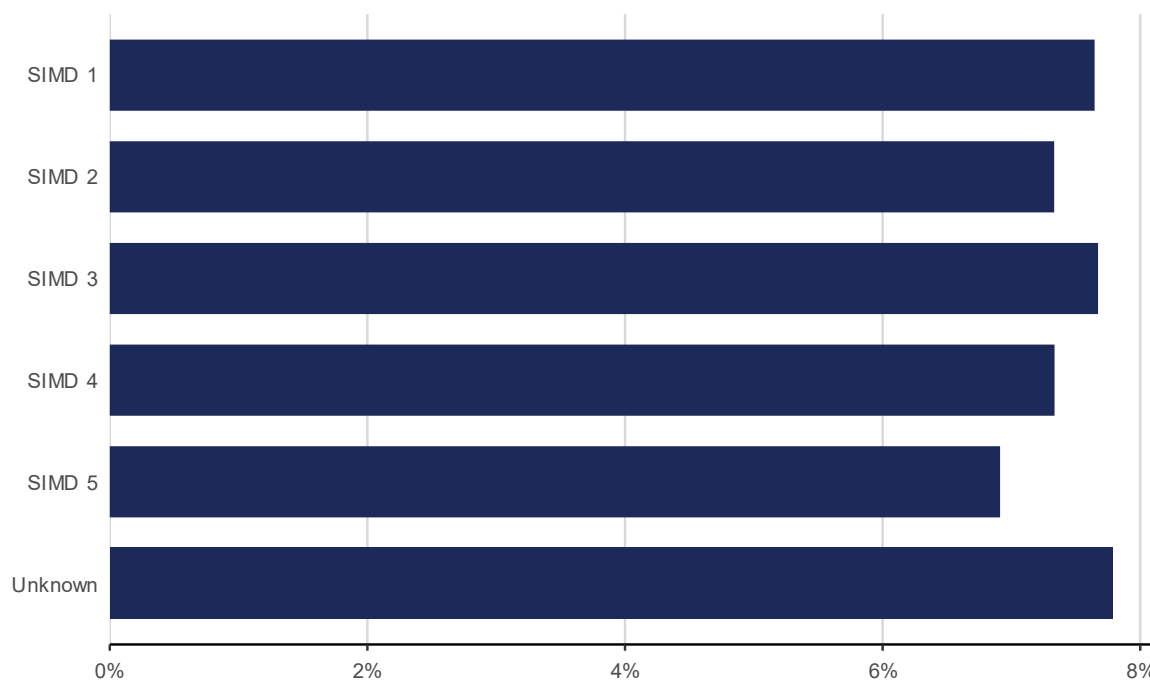


Table 6: Appeal requests by SIMD quintile, 2023.

<b>SIMD quintile</b>	<b>Entries</b>	<b>Appeals</b>	<b>Appeal rate</b>
SIMD 1	81,110	6,200	7.6%
SIMD 2	85,670	6,280	7.3%
SIMD 3	95,565	7,330	7.7%
SIMD 4	123,185	9,035	7.3%
SIMD 5	147,205	10,175	6.9%
Unknown	8,185	635	7.8%

# Summary of appeal request outcomes

## Level

At qualification level, the proportion of appeal requests resulting in an upgrade was highest for Advanced Higher and lowest for National 5.

- ◆ For National 5, 1,475 (8.2%) of the 18,025 appeal requests resulted in an upgrade, fewer than five (<0.05%) resulted in a downgrade and 16,545 (91.8%) resulted in no change.
- ◆ For Higher, 2,180 (11.1%) of the 19,680 appeal requests resulted in an upgrade, fewer than five (<0.05%) resulted in a downgrade and 17,495 (88.9%) resulted in no change.
- ◆ For Advanced Higher, 320 (16.5%) of the 1,955 appeal requests resulted in an upgrade, fewer than five (0.1%) resulted in a downgrade and 1,630 (83.5%) resulted in no change.

Figure 7: Appeal outcomes as a proportion of appeal requests by level, Scotland, 2023.

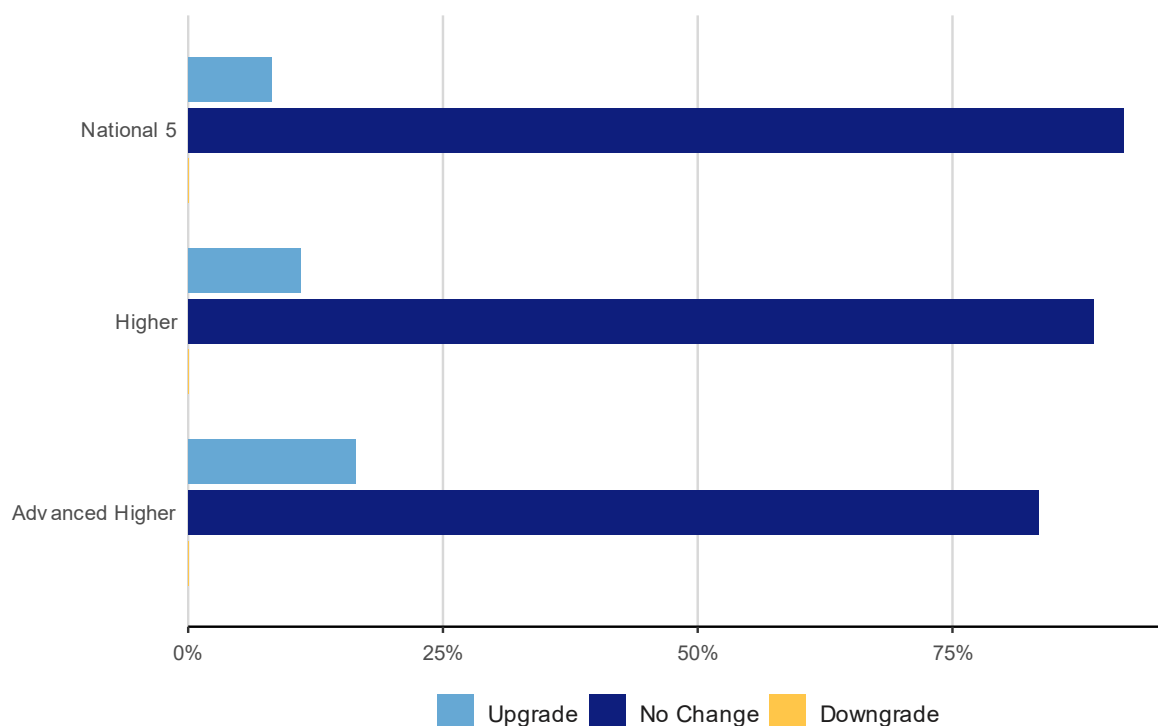


Table 7: Appeal outcomes by qualification level, 2023.

Level	Appeals	Upgrade number	Upgrade rate	Downgrade number	Downgrade rate	No Change number	No Change rate
National 5	18,025	1,475	8.2%	[c]	<0.05%	16,545	91.8%
Higher	19,680	2,180	11.1%	[c]	<0.05%	17,495	88.9%
Advanced Higher	1,955	320	16.5%	[c]	0.1%	1,630	83.5%

## Original certificated grade

Upgrade rates varied across original certified grades and within each qualification level, with Advanced Higher original certified D grade seeing the largest upgrade rate of 18.3%.

- ◆ At National 5, upgrade rates were highest and lowest for original certificated B grades (10.6%) and No Award (4.6%), respectively.
- ◆ At Higher, upgrade rates were highest and lowest for original certificated B grades (13.5%) and No Award (6.9%), respectively.
- ◆ At Advanced Higher, upgrade rates were highest and lowest for original certificated D grades (18.3%) and No award (11.2%), respectively.

Figure 8: Appeal outcome numbers as a proportion of appeal requests by original certificated grade, Scotland, 2023.

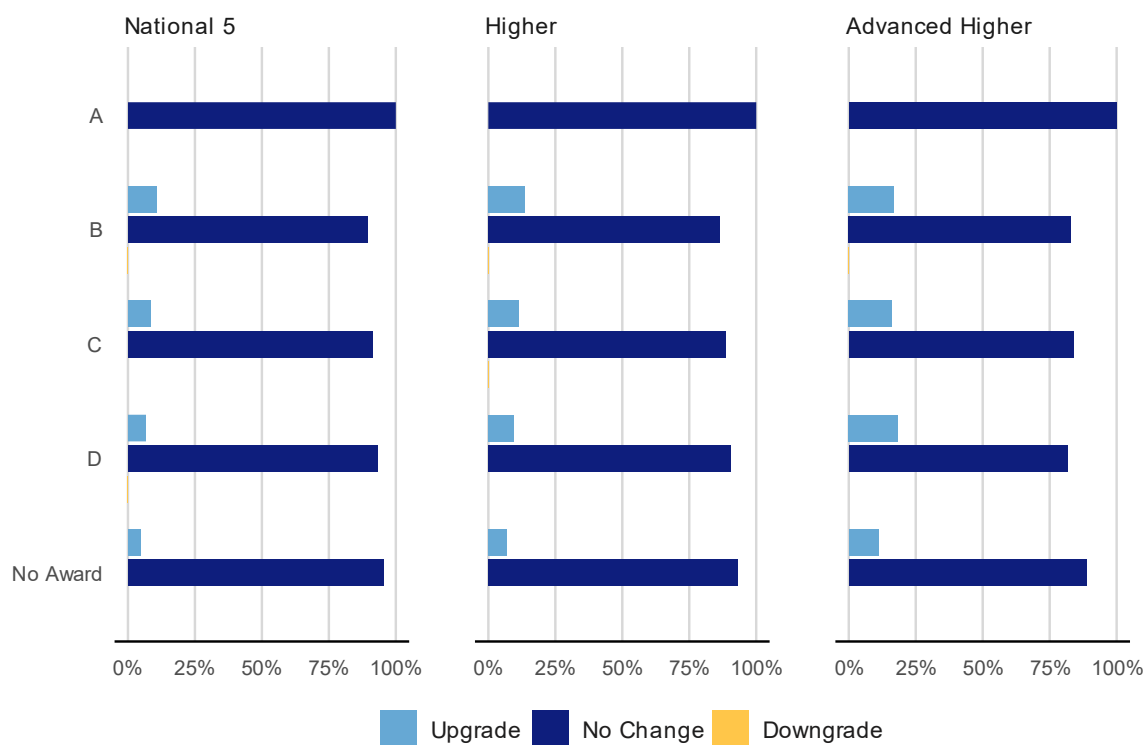


Table 8: Appeal outcomes by qualification level for each original certificated grade, 2023.

Level	Original grade	Appeals	Upgrade number	Upgrade rate	Downgrade number	Downgrade rate	No Change number	No Change rate
National 5	A	[c]	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	[c]	100.0%
National 5	B	5,930	625	10.6%	[c]	<0.05%	5,300	89.4%
National 5	C	4,570	390	8.6%	0	0.0%	4,180	91.4%
National 5	D	5,240	355	6.7%	[c]	<0.05%	4,885	93.2%
National 5	No Award	2,285	105	4.6%	0	0.0%	2,180	95.4%
Higher	A	[c]	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	[c]	100.0%
Higher	B	6,380	860	13.5%	[c]	<0.05%	5,515	86.5%
Higher	C	5,835	655	11.3%	[c]	<0.05%	5,175	88.7%
Higher	D	5,540	530	9.6%	0	0.0%	5,010	90.4%
Higher	No Award	1,920	135	6.9%	0	0.0%	1,790	93.1%
Advanced Higher	A	5	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
Advanced Higher	B	620	105	16.8%	[c]	0.2%	515	83.0%
Advanced Higher	C	590	95	16.2%	0	0.0%	495	83.8%
Advanced Higher	D	565	105	18.3%	0	0.0%	460	81.7%
Advanced Higher	No Award	180	20	11.2%	0	0.0%	160	88.8%

## Subject grouping

There were large differences in upgrade rates between subject groupings.

- ◆ The lowest upgrade rates were found in Science (2.4%) and Mathematics (6.9%).
- ◆ The highest upgrade rates were found in Home Economics (22.2%) and Care subjects (25.6%).

Requests and outcomes for individual courses are summarised in the [data tables accompanying this release](#).

Figure 9: Appeal outcomes as a proportion of appeal requests by subject grouping, Scotland, 2023.

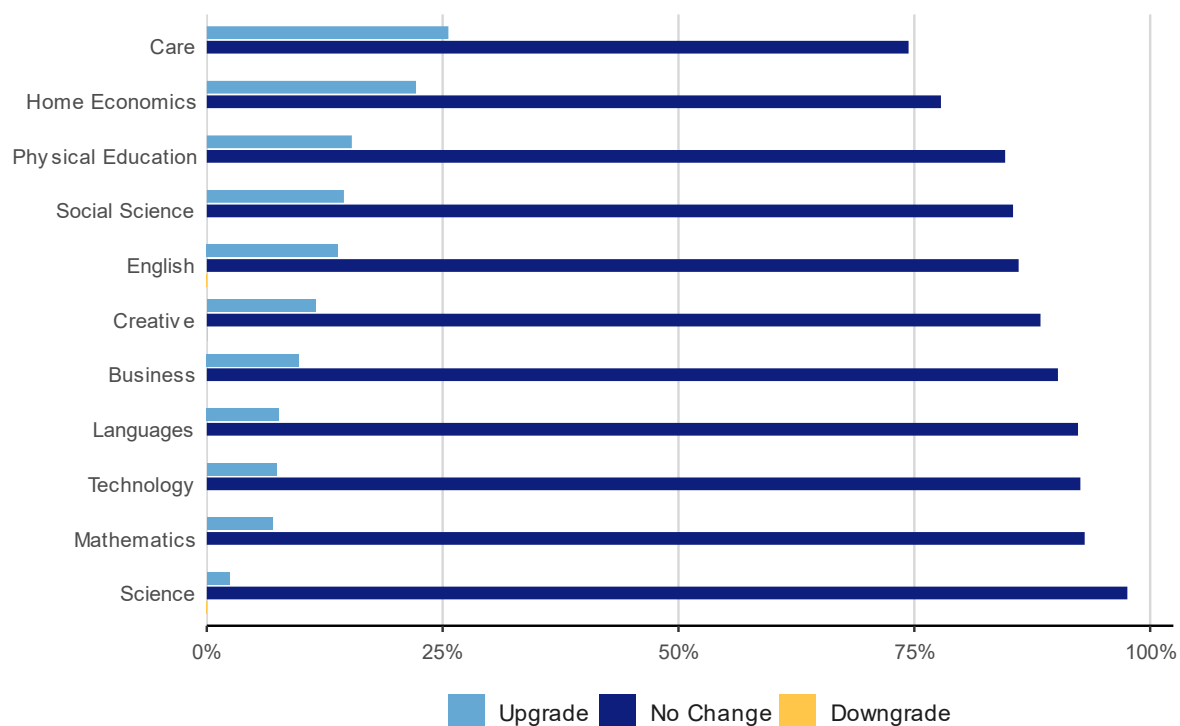


Table 9: Appeal outcomes by subject grouping, 2023.

Subject grouping	Appeals	Upgrade number	Upgrade rate	Downgrade number	Downgrade rate	No Change number	No Change rate
Business	2,160	210	9.8%	0	0.0%	1,945	90.2%
Care	80	20	25.6%	0	0.0%	60	74.4%
Creative	3,365	390	11.5%	[c]	0.1%	2,970	88.4%
English	7,430	1,035	13.9%	[c]	<0.05%	6,395	86.1%
Home Economics	755	165	22.2%	0	0.0%	585	77.8%
Languages	1,085	85	7.6%	0	0.0%	1,000	92.4%
Mathematics	5,965	415	6.9%	0	0.0%	5,550	93.1%
Physical Education	1,510	230	15.4%	0	0.0%	1,275	84.6%
Science	7,445	175	2.4%	[c]	<0.05%	7,265	97.6%
Social Science	7,290	1,060	14.5%	0	0.0%	6,230	85.5%
Science							
Technology	2,580	190	7.4%	0	0.0%	2,390	92.6%

## Centre type

- ◆ Appeal outcomes varied among centre types (Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $X^2 = 34$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
- ◆ The upgrade rate was highest for FE College (13.1%), followed by Independent centres (12.8%), and Educational Authorities (9.8%).
- ◆ 'Other' centres had the lowest upgrade rate (7.7%) but the number of appeal entries from this group of centres was small (40).

Figure 10: Appeal outcomes as a proportion of appeal requests by centre type, Scotland, 2023.

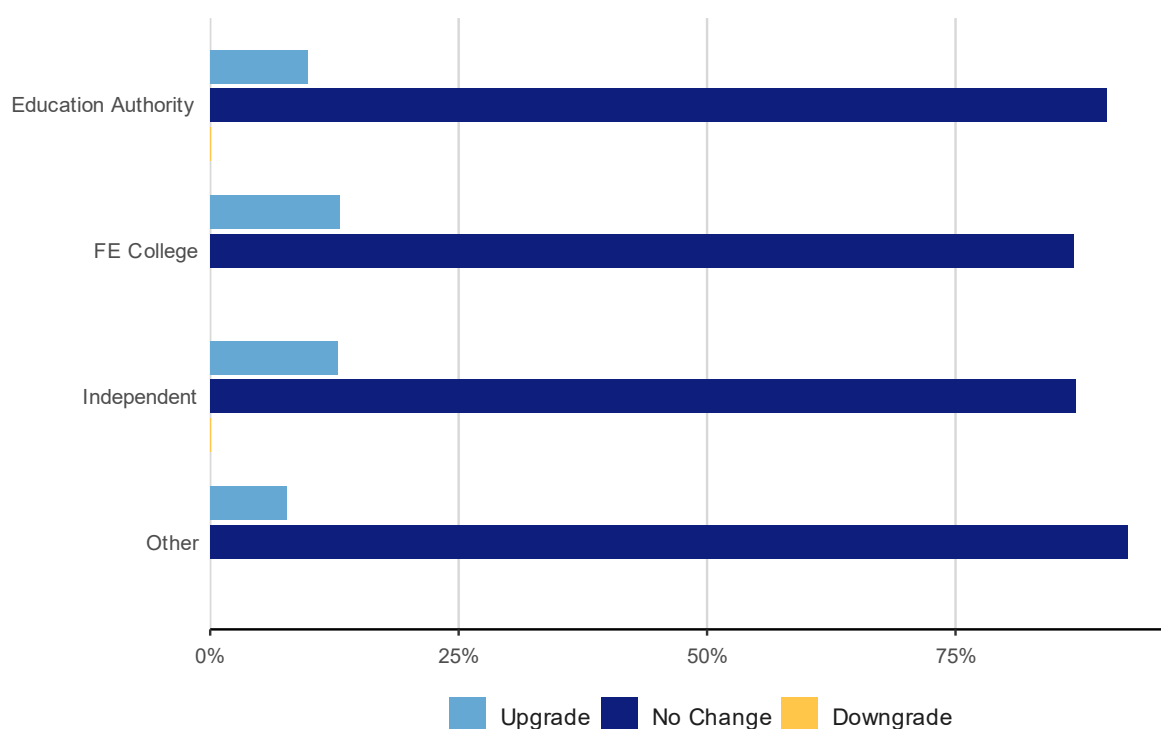


Table 10: Appeal outcomes by centre type, 2023.

Centre type	Appeals	Upgrade number	Upgrade rate	Downgrade number	Downgrade rate	No Change number	No Change rate
Education Authority	36,590	3,585	9.8%	5	<0.05%	33,000	90.2%
FE College	330	45	13.1%	0	0.0%	285	86.9%
Independent	2,700	345	12.8%	[c]	0.1%	2,355	87.1%
Other	40	[c]	7.7%	0	0.0%	35	92.3%



## Sex

- ◆ Appeal outcomes varied by sex (Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $X^2 = 44$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
- ◆ The upgrade rate for females (11.0%) was higher than the upgrade rate for males (9.0%).
- ◆ The Not Applicable and Not Known sex categories had small entry numbers (65 and 110 respectively) and had 10 and fewer than five, appeal requests, respectively. They are not included in analyses due to these small numbers which are unlikely to allow meaningful comparisons to be made.

Figure 11: Appeal outcomes as a proportion of appeal requests by sex, Scotland, 2023.

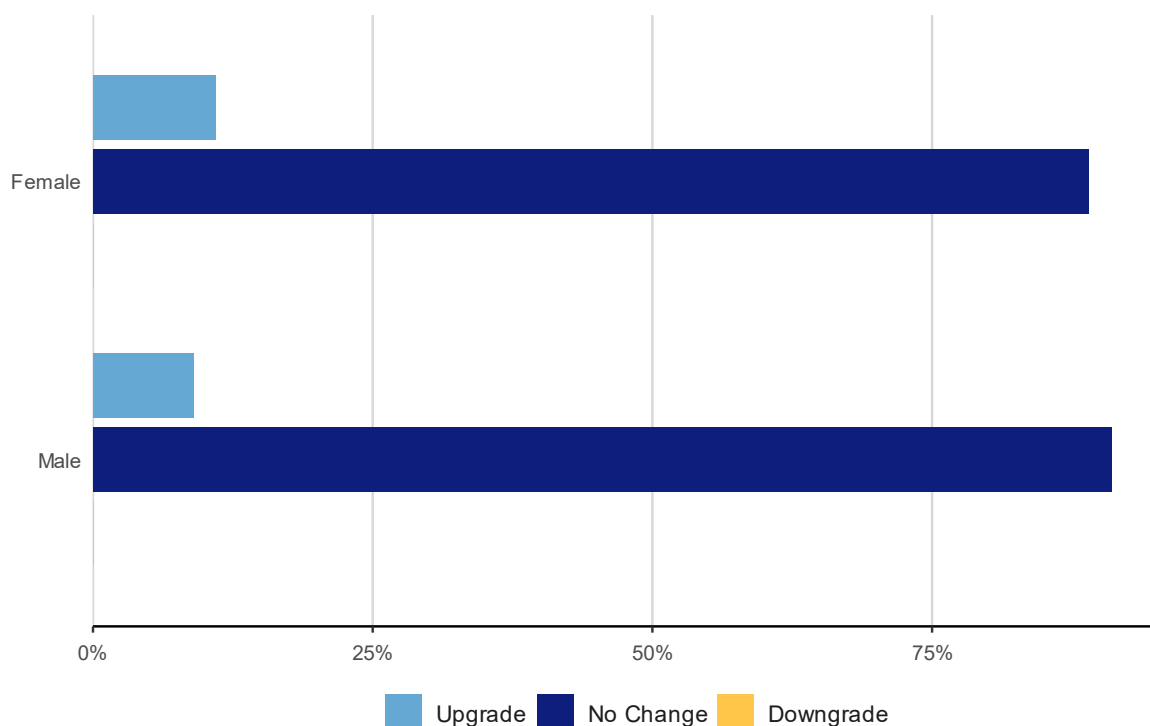


Table 11: Appeal outcomes by sex, 2023.

Sex	Appeals	Upgrade number	Upgrade rate	Downgrade number	Downgrade rate	No Change number	No Change rate
Female	21,375	2,345	11.0%	[c]	<0.05%	19,030	89.0%
Male	18,270	1,635	9.0%	[c]	<0.05%	16,630	91.0%

## SIMD

- ◆ The appeal outcomes varied by SIMD (Pearson's Chi-squared test:  $X^2 = 44$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
- ◆ The upgrade rate was lowest for the most deprived quintile (SIMD 1; 9.1%), not including those Unknown SIMD datazones which capture only 1.6% of all appeal entries.
- ◆ The upgrade rate was highest for the least deprived quintile (SIMD 5; 11.5%).

Figure 12: Appeal outcomes as a proportion of appeal requests by SIMD quintile, Scotland, 2023.

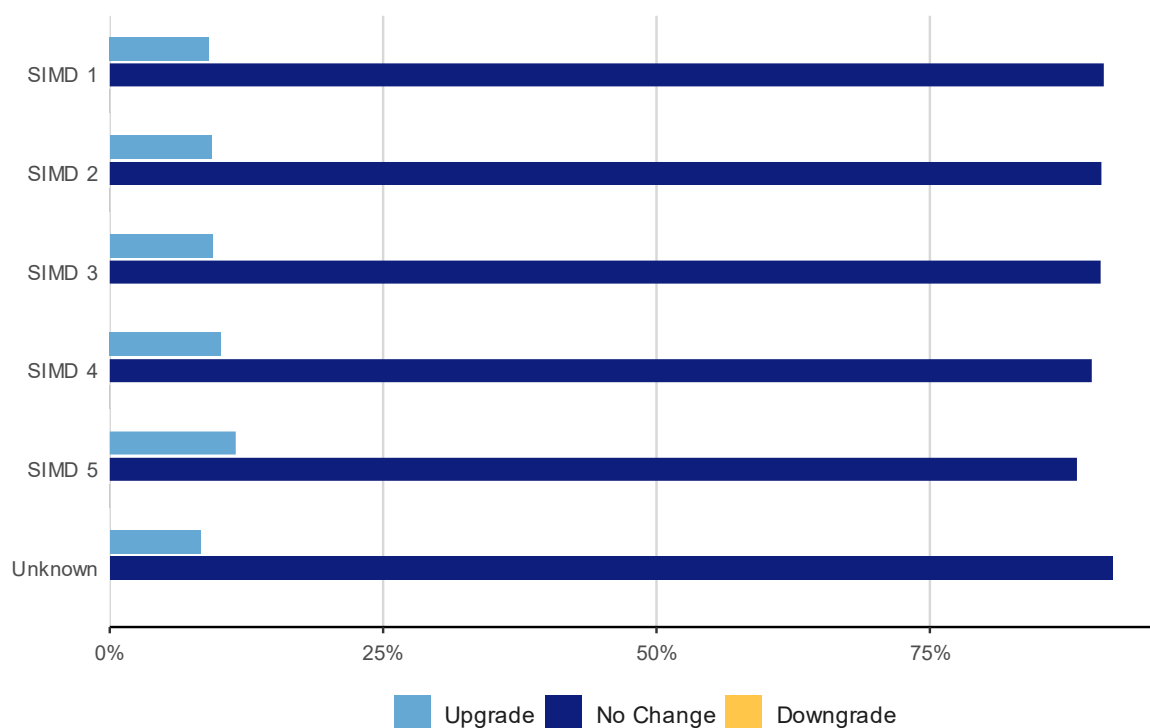


Table 12: Appeal outcomes by SIMD quintile, 2023.

SIMD quintile	Appeals	Upgrade number	Upgrade rate	Downgrade number	Downgrade rate	No Change number	No Change rate
SIMD 1	6,200	565	9.1%	[c]	<0.05%	5,635	90.9%
SIMD 2	6,280	585	9.3%	[c]	<0.05%	5,695	90.7%
SIMD 3	7,330	690	9.4%	0	0.0%	6,645	90.6%
SIMD 4	9,035	920	10.2%	[c]	<0.05%	8,115	89.8%
SIMD 5	10,175	1,170	11.5%	[c]	<0.05%	9,000	88.5%
Unknown	635	55	8.3%	0	0.0%	585	91.7%

## Magnitude of grade changes

- ◆ 35,675 appeals (89.9%) resulted in no change of grade.
- ◆ 3,985 appeals (10.1%) resulted in a grade change between 1 and 4 grades.
- ◆ Of those appeal entries where a grade change was applied, 3,950 (99.1%) changed by one grade, 30 (0.7%) changed by two grades, fewer than five (0.1%) changed by three grades, and fewer than five (0.1%) changed by four grades.

Figure 13: Magnitude of grade changes for appeals requests, Scotland, 2023.

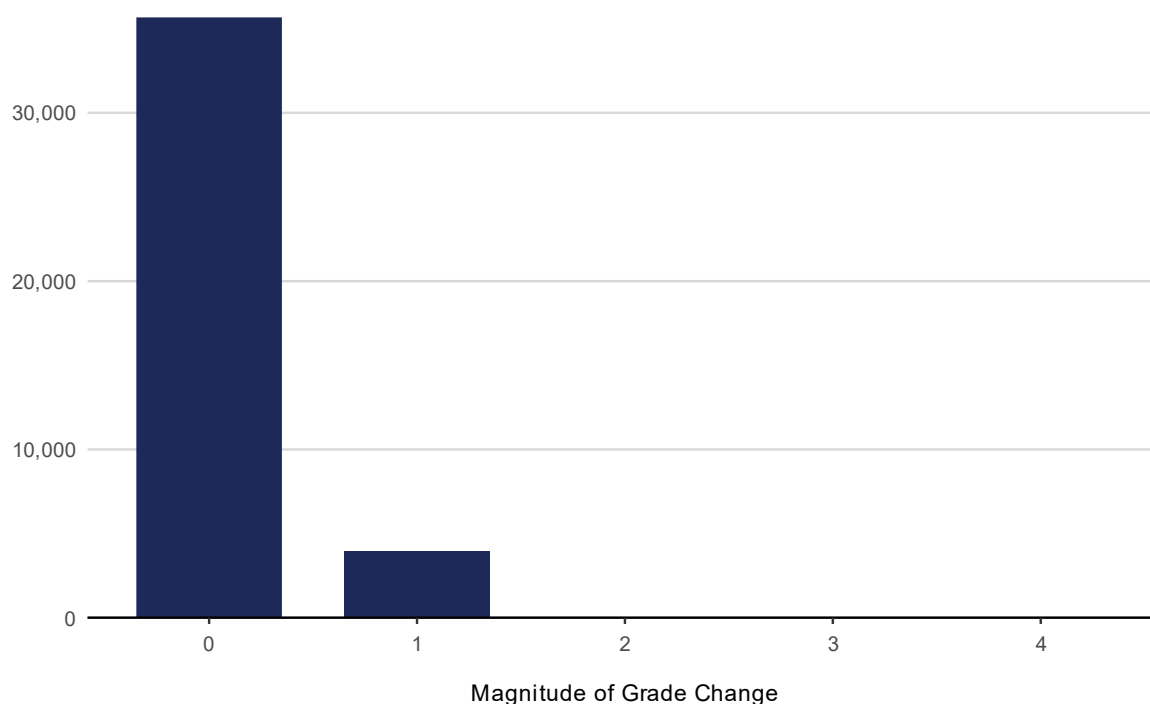


Table 13: Magnitude of grade changes for appeal requests, 2023.

Magnitude of change in grade	Number of appeals	Percentage of appeals
0	35,675	89.9%
1	3,950	10.0%
2	30	0.1%
3	[c]	<0.05%
4	[c]	<0.05%

# Data tables accompanying this report

[Data tables accompanying this report giving the following summaries are available from the SQA website:](#)

- ◆ appeal requests and outcomes by subject and qualification level
- ◆ appeal requests and outcomes by SIMD decile and qualification level
- ◆ appeal requests and outcomes by centre type and qualification level