

Perceptions of AS and A levels, GCSEs, and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 19

An Ofqual commissioned report

April 2021

Ofqual/21/6777/1

The logo for YouGov, featuring the word "YouGov" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the letter "v".

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Executive summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of wave 19 of the Perceptions Survey and should be read alongside the [background information document](#). To best appreciate the display of the data, this report should be viewed in colour.

The project was commissioned by Ofqual and conducted by YouGov. The aim of this project was to investigate head teachers'¹, teachers', students', parents', the general public's, employers' and Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) perceptions and levels of confidence in qualifications and the examination system in England.

The survey followed the approach used since wave 13 and was conducted using an online method. The fieldwork for this wave was conducted between 25th November and 22nd December 2020.

The final achieved samples were structured to be representative of the relevant target populations. However, while the sampling approach aimed to identify groups of participants who were representative, given that a survey of this kind only captures the views of those involved, throughout this report responses attributed to groups (for example, teachers, parents) reflect only those respondents included in the study. Further information on sampling and methodology is available in the accompanying [background information document](#).

Throughout the report, all references to differences in findings between waves refer to statistically significant differences. Where an apparent shift in trends over time between the waves included in this report has not been addressed in the commentary or the charts, this is due to there not being a statistically significant difference.

The circumstances in 2020

The questions used in the annual Perceptions Survey are reviewed every year, with a view to both carry on collecting longitudinal trends by retaining previous questions where possible, and also to introduce new questions where required to reflect circumstances relevant to a particular year. The standard questions are worded to elicit general perceptions (e.g. to what extent do respondents agree that "GCSEs are well understood by people"). On this basis, for wave 19, a large number of questions were retained in order to collect longitudinal data as usual on the general perceptions. However, it was realised that these questions may not adequately capture perceptions in relation to the specifics of 2020, or even that respondents might be confused whether to respond generally or specifically. Therefore, to capture the extraordinary nature of the events and arrangements put in place in 2020 as a response to the pandemic, a separate set of questions specific to 2020 was introduced, which mirrored some of the general questions (e.g. to what extent do respondents agree that "GCSEs in 2020 were well understood by people"). Therefore, the survey questions were split into two sections this year: a general section and a 2020-specific section.

¹ The head teachers sample referred to throughout this report consists of head teachers and deputy head teachers.

All respondents were informed or reminded of the exceptional arrangements that were put in place in 2020 and were instructed to first respond to the general section of the survey with their perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications in general, and not specific to any one exam series. Respondents were then instructed to respond to the 2020-specific section of the survey with their perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications in Summer 2020 and the different arrangements due to the closure of schools and colleges in England in March 2020 as a response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

As such, readers can best understand the extraordinary nature of 2020 by comparing the specific and general sections of the report. The responses to the 2020-specific questions may best be understood as reflections on the confidence in the extraordinary arrangements for 2020 and not on the exams system in general. Therefore, the arrangements in 2020 are not associated with a decrease in the general perceptions of confidence in the qualifications system overall.

Key Findings

Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2020

- Asking respondents to think specifically about their perceptions of qualifications in 2020 rather than just their more general outlook exposed the impact that the changes in 2020 had on perceptions of qualifications in that year. In 2020, these qualifications appear to be perceived as less understood, trusted and consistent in standards. There was also less agreement that they were good preparation for further study and work.
- Respondents were less aware of the modified appeals against results process in place for GCSE, and AS and A level results in 2020 than they were about the usual process. Further, among those aware of the 2020 appeals process, levels of agreement that the process was fair were lower than when thinking about the system overall. However, when considering the extent to which they felt they had adequate information about the appeals against results process for GCSEs, and AS and A levels, there was little difference in levels of agreement between 2020-specific perceptions and more general perceptions of the process.
- Teachers and head teachers who teach GCSEs, or AS or A levels were less likely to agree that they had adequate information about what constituted malpractice in 2020 in comparison with their more general awareness of the system. Similarly, they were less likely to agree that they were confident that incidents of malpractice were fairly investigated and properly reported in 2020.
- Teachers and head teachers of Applied General qualifications were equally likely to say they were aware of the appeals against results process in place for Applied General qualifications in 2020 as they were of the normal process. However, they were less likely to agree that they had adequate information about the modified process and that appeals were fairly dealt with in 2020 in comparison with more general perceptions.
- Teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General Qualifications were less likely to agree that they had adequate information about what constituted malpractice for Applied General qualifications in 2020 in comparison with more general perceptions. They also reported lower levels of agreement that incidents of malpractice were fairly investigated and properly reported.

Composite confidence in GCSE, AS, A level and Applied General qualifications in general

- There was an increase in overall composite confidence in GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications in general between waves 18 and 19.
- General, overall composite confidence was highest for AS and A level qualifications, followed by GCSEs and Applied General qualifications, in that order.
- Among head teachers, teachers and HEIs, there was an increase in general confidence in both GCSEs, and AS and A levels between waves 18 and 19.
- In addition, general confidence increased in Applied General qualifications for head teachers and HEIs.

General perceptions of GCSEs

- In comparison with wave 18, there was an increase in the overall level of agreement that, in general, GCSEs are well understood by people (62% to 69%), while agreement that they are trusted qualifications remained broadly consistent (75%).
- Overall levels of agreement that, in general, GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year increased (41% to 45%), as did the perception that, in general, the marking of these qualifications is accurate (39% to 46%) in comparison with wave 18.
- Meanwhile, levels of agreement remained more or less stable when it came to GCSEs in general being good preparation for further study (73%) and work (35%), as well as developing a broad range of skills for students (58%).
- Overall, respondents reported a higher level of agreement that, in general, GCSEs offer 'value for money' in comparison with wave 18 (52% to 56%).
- A trend could be observed among teachers, who stated higher levels of agreement with several statements regarding GCSEs in general in comparison with wave 18. They reported increased levels of agreement that GCSEs in general are well understood by people (54% to 66%), that GCSEs in general are trusted qualifications (74% to 78%), and that GCSE standards in general are maintained year-on-year (46% to 53%).
- Teachers were also more likely to agree that, in general, the marking of GCSEs is accurate (45% to 55%), and that, in general, GCSEs offer 'value for money' (55% to 59%).
- Head teachers also expressed increased levels of agreement in comparison with wave 18 for multiple statements, including that the marking of GCSEs in general is accurate (31% to 45%) and that, in general, GCSEs offer 'value for money' (48% to 59%).

General perceptions of AS and A levels

- Compared to wave 18, there was an increase in the overall level of agreement that, in general, AS and A levels are well understood by people (59% to 63%). There was also an increase in the level of agreement that, in general, the marking of AS and A levels is accurate (42% to 49%).

- In most cases, however, levels of agreement with statements regarding AS and A levels in general have remained broadly consistent in comparison with wave 18. In wave 19, approximately eight in ten respondents (82%) agreed that, in general, AS and A levels are trusted qualifications and half (50%) agreed that, in general, AS and A level standards are maintained year-on-year.
- In addition, proportions roughly consistent with wave 18 agreed that, in general, AS and A levels are good preparation for further study (79%) and work (36%). Similarly, the level of agreement that, in general, AS and A levels develop a broad range of skills for students remained stable in wave 19 (51%).
- In wave 19, approximately half (49%) of respondents agreed that, in general, AS and A levels offer 'value for money', which was roughly consistent with wave 18 but represented a gradual increase in comparison with wave 17 (45%).
- Teachers, head teachers and HEIs each expressed increased levels of agreement in comparison with wave 18 that, in general, the marking of AS and A levels is accurate. The level of agreement increased from 50% to 64% for teachers, 38% to 53% for head teachers, and 43% to 60% for HEIs.
- Young people reported a decrease in levels of agreement that, in general, AS and A levels are trusted qualifications (86% to 80%).

Comparison of general perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied Generals

- Consistent with the previous waves, in general, GCSEs, and AS and A levels were comparably well understood by respondents, whilst Applied General qualifications were perceived as being less well understood.
- Comparable to previous waves, in general, respondents expressed the highest levels of trust in AS and A levels, followed by GCSEs and then Applied General qualifications.
- Respondents indicated higher levels of agreement that, in general, standards are maintained year-on-year for AS and A levels, followed by GCSEs. Agreement levels for both of these were much higher than for Applied General qualifications.
- In line with these findings, overall levels of agreement that, in general, marking is accurate were highest for AS and A levels, GCSEs, and lower for Applied General qualifications.
- Respondents also expressed the highest levels of agreement that, in general, the qualification is good preparation for further study for AS and A levels, and GCSEs, whilst agreement levels were much lower for Applied General qualifications.
- Respondents were most likely to agree that, in general, Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work, with higher levels of agreement than for AS and A levels, and GCSEs.
- As with wave 18, overall levels of agreement that, in general, the qualification develops a broad range of skills were higher for GCSEs than for both AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications.

- Respondents were most likely to agree that, in general, GCSEs offer value for money, with similarly high levels of agreement for AS and A levels. Agreement for Applied General qualifications was much lower.

Reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals against results for GCSE, and AS and A level results

- Eighty-five percent of respondents were aware that there is a review of marking and moderation, and appeals (ROMMA) system for GCSE, and AS and A level results. This was more than in all previous waves.
- Consistent with the previous wave, of those aware of the ROMMA services, a similar proportion of respondents agreed that the review of marking and moderation, and appeals system is fair for GCSEs (49%), and AS and A levels (47%). There was an increase in agreement levels in comparison to wave 18 among HEIs for GCSEs (38% to 50%), and AS and A levels (39% to 51%). There was also an increase in agreement levels that the review of marking and moderation, and appeals system is fair for AS and A levels among teachers, compared to wave 18 (47% to 53%).
- Half (50%) of respondents agreed that they have adequate information about the changes to the ROMMA services for GCSEs, and AS and A levels. This was comparable with the previous wave (48%). There was an increase in agreement levels in comparison to wave 18 among the general public (26% to 33%), teachers (63% to 69%) and HEIs (35% to 46%). There was a decrease in levels of agreement among young people (52% to 36%).

Special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSE and AS and A level qualifications

- Overall, approximately eight in ten (79%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE, or AS or A level student who is eligible for special consideration. This was in line with the previous wave, and an increase in levels of agreement from wave 15.
- Approximately six in ten (62%) teachers and head teachers agreed that special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE, and AS and A level students.
- Approximately half (52%) of teachers and head teachers agreed that, in the current special consideration system, the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE, and AS and A level students. This was a decrease from wave 18 (58%).
- Approximately seven in ten (71%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about the adjustments available for a disabled GCSE, or AS or A level student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments. This was consistent with wave 18 and an increase since wave 15.
- In total, 54% of teachers and head teachers agreed that the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE, and AS and A level disabled students. This was comparable with previous years since wave 15.

- Comparable with each of the previous waves, 66% of head teachers and teachers agreed that reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE, and AS and A level students.

Malpractice for GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications

- Consistent with previous years since wave 15, the majority (86%) of teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs, and AS and A levels.
- A similar proportion of teachers and head teachers (87%) agreed that they know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice in GCSEs, and AS and A levels, consistent with the previous waves.
- Overall, approximately seven in ten (71%) teachers and head teachers were confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs, and AS and A levels, remaining consistent with the previous waves.
- A slightly lower proportion (66%) of teachers and head teachers agreed that they are confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs, and AS and A levels. This was consistent with wave 18 and an increase since waves 17 and 16.

Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications

- In total, nine in ten (90%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.
- Approximately, eight in ten (81%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they are confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges.

Malpractice for Applied General qualifications

- In total, 86% of teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications. This was comparable with the previous wave and an increase since wave 17.
- In total, approximately nine in ten (89%) of teachers and head teachers agreed that they know to whom to report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications. This was consistent with previous years since wave 15.
- In total, 77% of teachers and head teachers agreed that they are confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications are fairly investigated. This was consistent with wave 18 and an increase in levels of agreement since wave 17.
- In total, 65% of teachers and head teachers agreed that they were confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications, comparable with each of the previous waves.

Innovations

- Approximately three in ten (29%) respondents agreed that onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations, equal to the proportion who disagreed. This was comparable with the previous wave. There was a decrease in levels of agreement among young people (48% to 34%).
- In total, 36% of respondents agreed that onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations, comparable to the proportion who disagreed. This was comparable with the previous wave. There was a decrease in levels of agreement among young people (51% to 45%) and teachers (25% to 20%).

Section 1: Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2020

For wave 19, a new series of questions was added to the survey to investigate perceptions specific to the qualifications system in 2020. All respondents were informed (or reminded) that the summer 2020 exam series in England was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that students were awarded the grade their school or college estimated was the grade they would most likely have achieved in their exam or a statistically moderated grade, whichever was higher. Respondents across all groups were presented with statements and questions similar to those asked in the annual survey but asked to think specifically about perceptions they had from March 2020 up until when fieldwork was conducted (November/December 2020). This section of the report explores how general perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications do or do not differ from those reported in relation to 2020.

Confidence in GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications in 2020

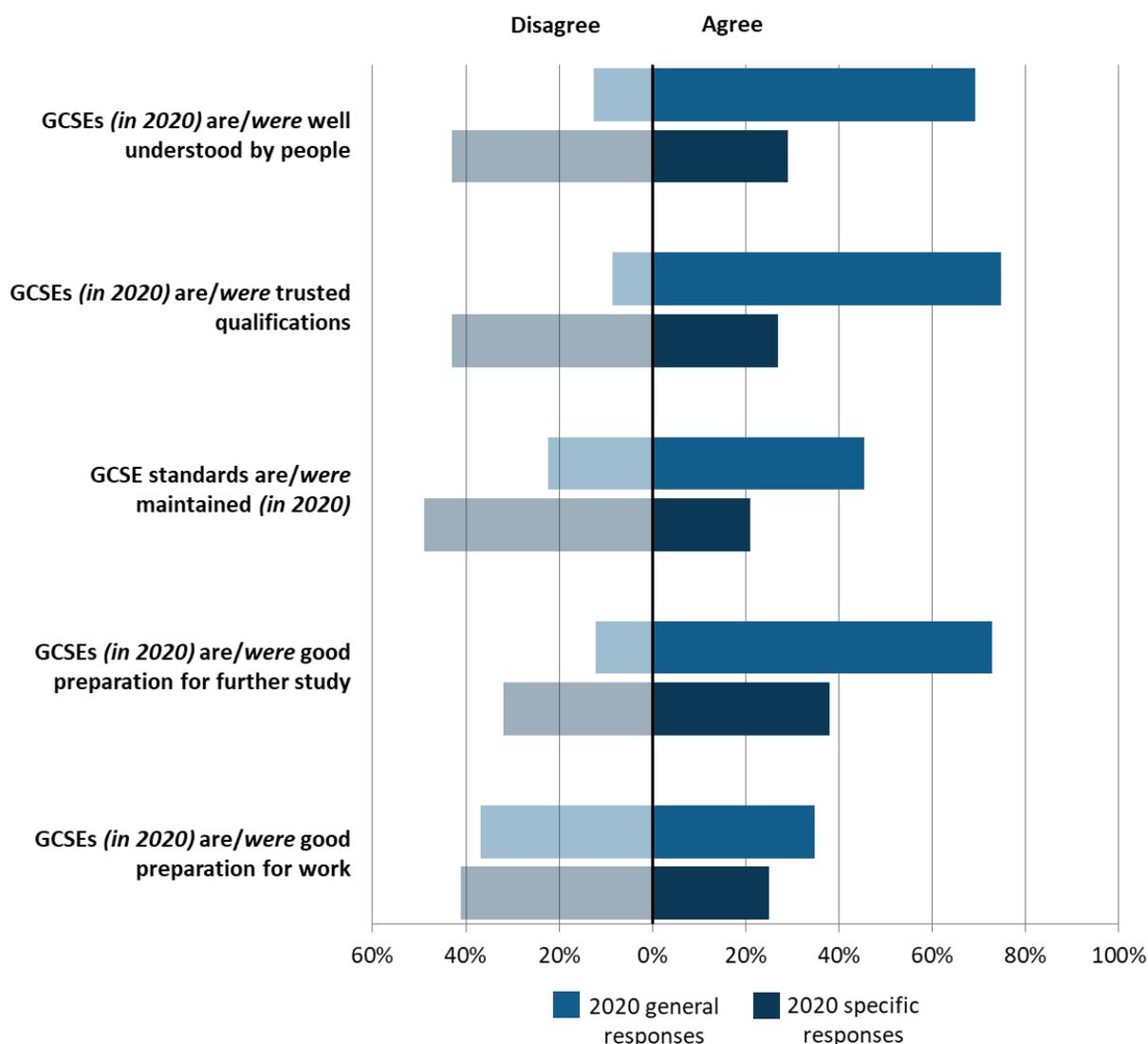
For the following 3 figures the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 2,141.

Overall, respondents tended to express lower levels of confidence in GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Applied General qualifications when thinking specifically about the circumstances in 2020 than when considering their general perceptions. In 2020, these qualifications appear to be perceived as less understood, trusted and consistent in standards. There was also less support for them being good preparation for further study and work.

Looking at levels of agreement regarding whether GCSEs were well understood by people, respondents were less likely to agree when thinking about 2020 specifically than when considering their general perceptions (29% compared with 69%). Similarly, when it came to perceptions of trust, there were much lower levels of agreement among respondents that GCSEs are trusted when thinking about 2020 in comparison with their more general perceptions (27% compared with 75%). Respondents also demonstrated decreased levels of agreement that standards for GCSEs were maintained in 2020 (21% compared with 45%).

Thinking about preparation for the future, results indicated that respondents perceived there to be a greater negative impact on GCSEs being good preparation for further study in 2020 than good preparation for work. Respondents reported lower levels of agreement that GCSEs were good preparation for further study in 2020 than in general (38% compared with 73%). Although this was also the case for agreement regarding whether the qualifications were good preparation for work, these differences were less pronounced (25% compared with 35%).

Figure 1. Confidence in GCSEs in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

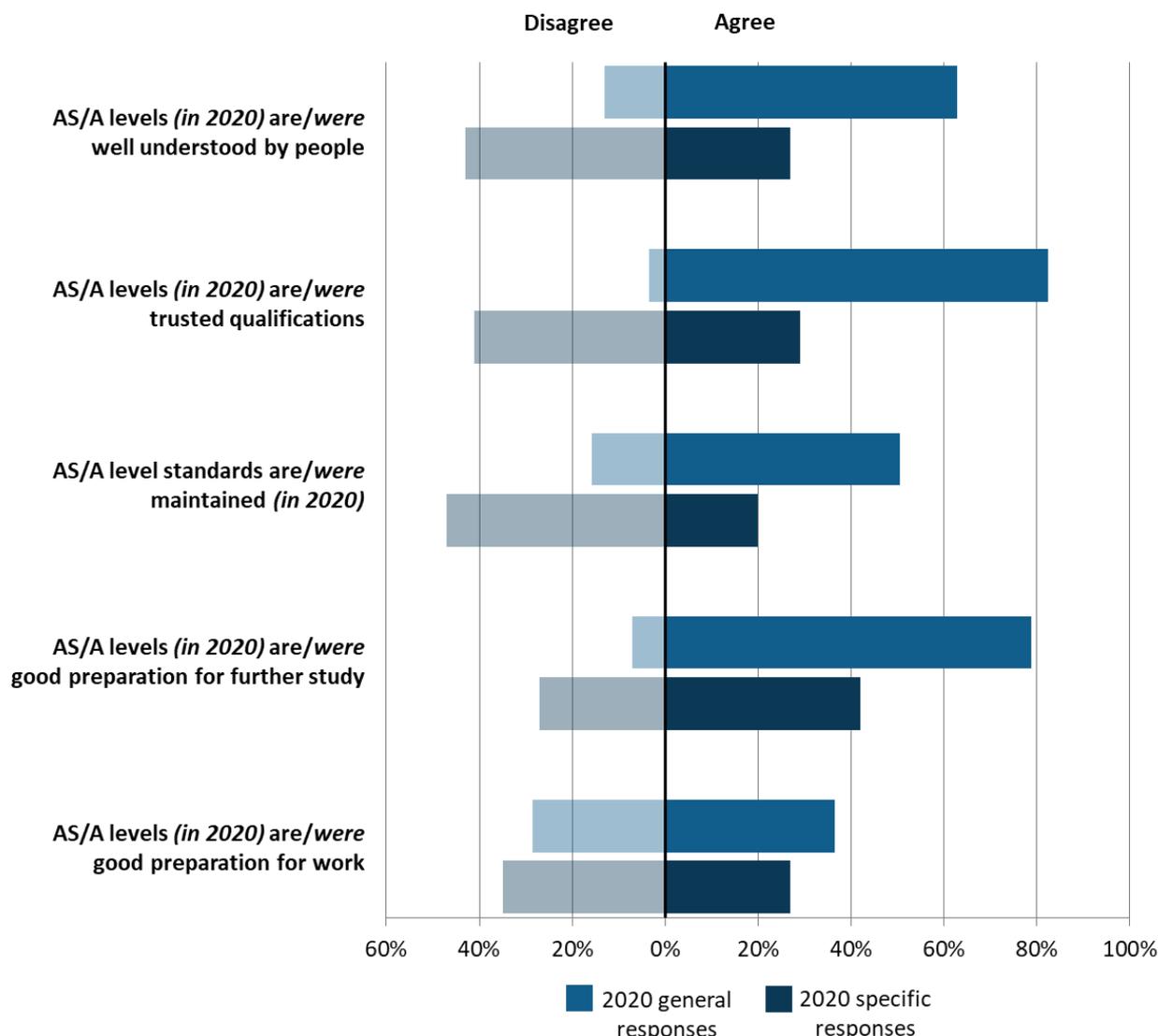
A very similar story to confidence in GCSEs was told when looking at differences between general and 2020-specific perceptions of AS and A levels.

When examining levels of agreement on whether AS and A levels were well understood by people, respondents were less likely to agree when thinking about 2020 specifically than when considering their general perceptions (27% compared with 63%). Similarly, perceptions of trust were weakened in 2020; there were lower levels of agreement among respondents that AS and A levels were trusted when thinking about 2020 in comparison with more general perceptions (29% compared with 82%). Furthermore, respondents demonstrated decreased levels of agreement that standards for AS and A levels were maintained in 2020 (20% compared with 50%).

Much like for GCSEs, results indicated that respondents perceived there to be more of a negative impact on AS and A levels being good preparation for further study in 2020 than good preparation for work. Respondents reported lower levels of agreement that AS and A levels were good preparation for further study in 2020 (42% compared with 79%), and although there was somewhat

of a difference regarding whether AS and A levels were perceived as good preparation for work, these differences were less pronounced (27% compared with 36%).

Figure 2. Confidence in AS and A levels in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

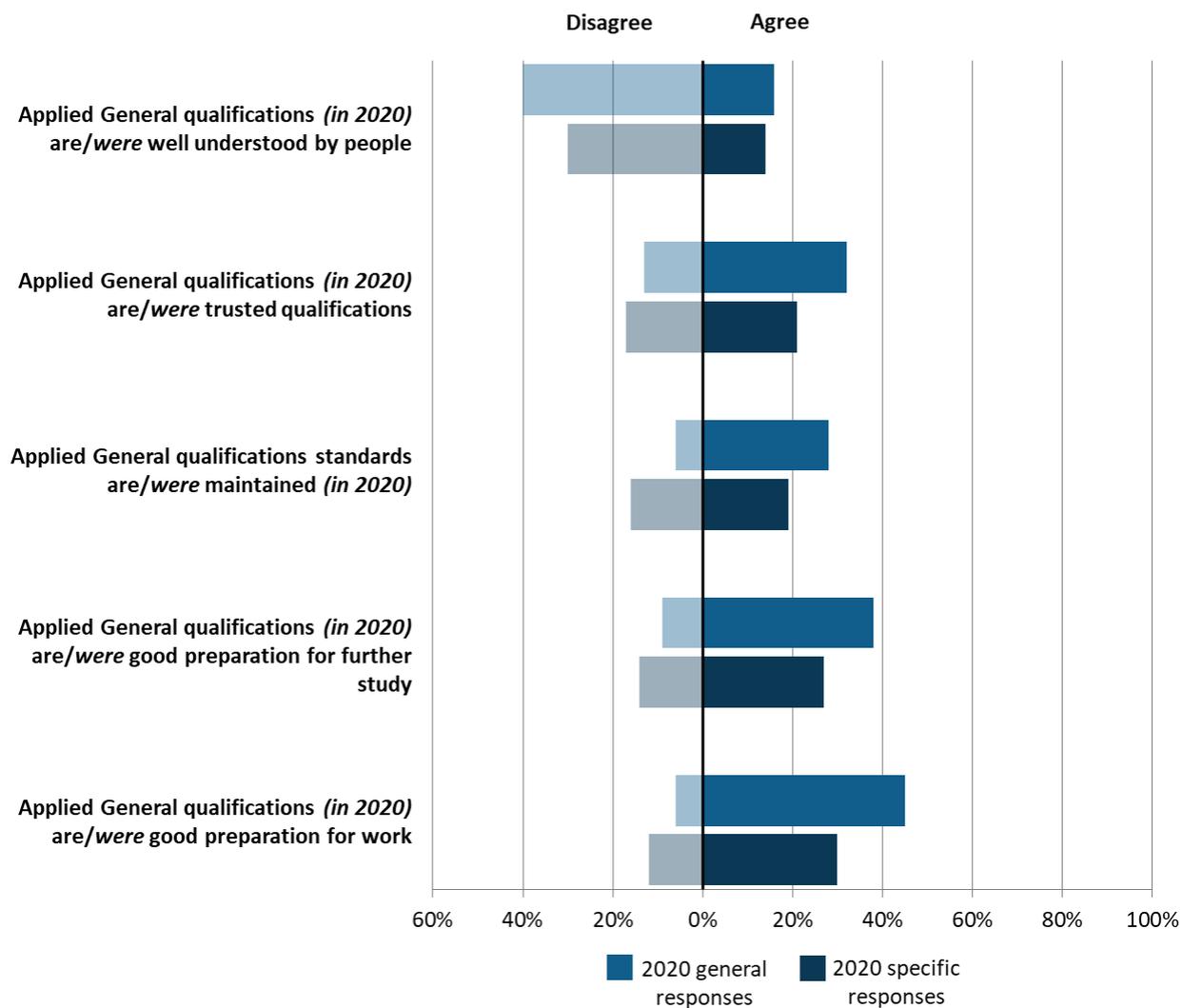
In some cases, differences in general perceptions versus those specific to 2020 were less pronounced for Applied General qualifications than for GCSEs, and AS and A levels.

Notably, there was no real difference between 2020-specific and general perceptions regarding whether Applied General qualifications were well understood by people (14% compared with 16%). However, when it came to perceptions of trust, there were lower levels of agreement among respondents that Applied General qualifications were trusted when thinking about 2020 in comparison with more general perceptions (21% compared with 32%).

In addition, respondents expressed lower levels of agreement that standards for Applied General qualifications were maintained in 2020, although these differences stood out less than for GCSEs, or AS and A levels (19% compared with 28% for Applied General qualifications).

Respondents reported lower levels of agreement that Applied General qualifications were good preparation for further study in 2020 than when thinking more generally (27% compared with 38%). In contrast to GCSEs, and AS and A levels, however, the gap in levels of agreement was wider regarding perceptions of whether the qualifications were good preparation for work (30% compared with 45%). This differs to all other measures where the gaps in level of agreement are smaller than for GCSEs, and AS and A levels.

Figure 3. Confidence in Applied General qualifications in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

Appeals for GCSE, and AS and A level results in 2020

For the following figure the wave 19 effective base was: All who were aware of the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE, and AS and A level results 1,790 (general perceptions); All who were aware of the appeals against results process for GCSEs, and AS and A levels in 2020 1,428 (2020-specific perceptions).

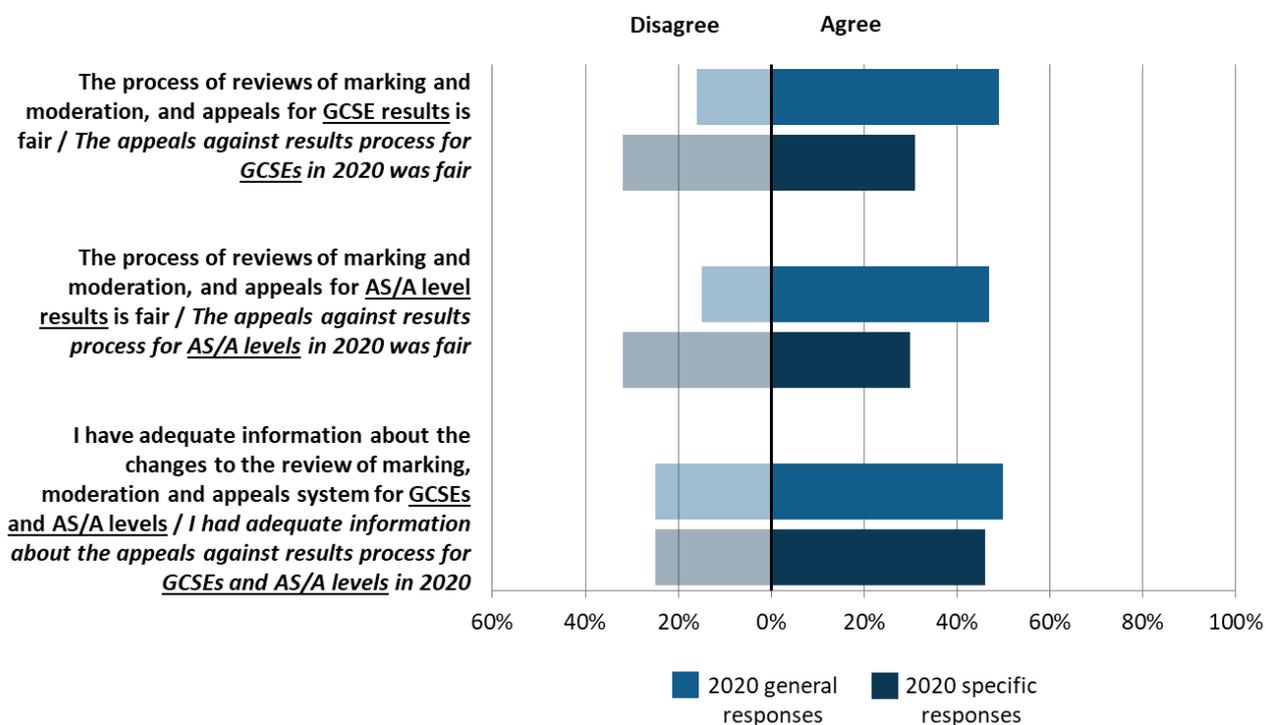
The survey informed respondents that the appeals process for GCSE, and AS and A level results was different than usual in 2020, as there was no Reviews of Marking/Moderation stage. The appeals process was the only way for students or centres to get their results reconsidered if they were not satisfied with their grades.

When asked if they were aware that there was this appeals process was in place for GCSE, and AS and A level results in 2020, 69% of respondents reported that they were aware. In comparison, 85% of respondents reported being aware of the usual process of reviews of marking and moderation and appeals for GCSE, and AS and A level results.

Among those who were aware of the appeals against results process in place for GCSE, and AS and A level results in 2020, 31% agreed that the process was fair for GCSEs. This was lower than the levels of agreement reported for general perceptions of the fairness of the process for GCSE results (49%). Similarly, respondents were less likely to agree that the appeals against results process for AS and A levels was fair in 2020 (30%) in comparison with the proportion who agreed that this is generally the case (47%).

However, when thinking about the extent to which they felt they had adequate information about the appeals against results process for GCSEs, and AS and A levels, there was little difference in levels of agreement between their 2020-specific perceptions (46%) and their more general perceptions of the process (50%).

Figure 4. Perceptions of the appeals process for GCSE, and AS and A level results in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

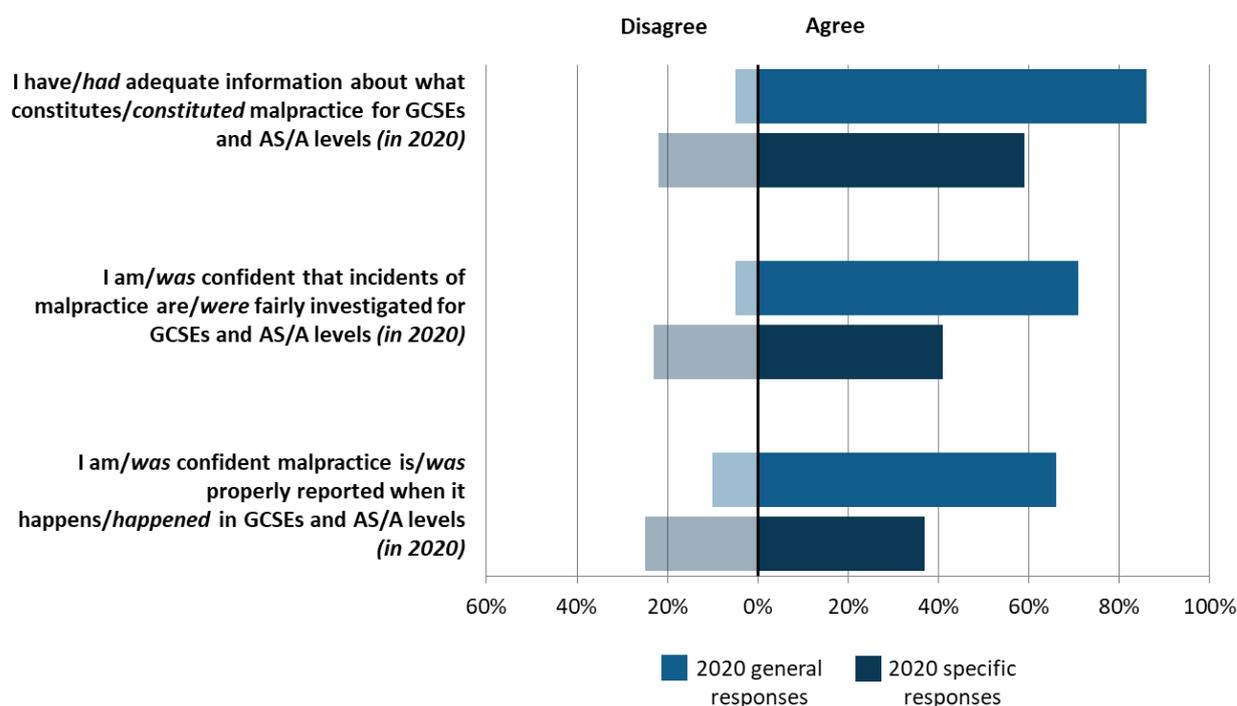
Malpractice for GCSEs, and AS and A levels in 2020

For the following figure the wave 19 effective base was: All who teach GCSEs, or AS and A levels 556.

Among teachers and head teachers who teach GCSEs, or AS or A levels, 59% agreed that they had adequate information about what constituted malpractice for GCSEs, and AS and A levels in 2020. In comparison, levels of agreement were higher when the same respondent groups were asked whether they generally feel they have adequate information about this (86%).

Similarly, teachers and head teachers who teach GCSEs, or AS or A levels were less likely to agree that they were confident that incidents of malpractice were fairly investigated for GCSEs, and AS and A levels in 2020 (41%) in comparison with general perceptions (71%). A similar story was true for levels of agreement that they were confident malpractice was properly reported when it happened in GCSEs, and AS and A levels; levels of agreement were lower for 2020 (37%) than for their overall perceptions (66%).

Figure 5. Perceptions of malpractice for GCSEs and AS and A levels in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

Appeals for Applied General qualification results in 2020

For the following figure the wave 19 effective base was: All who teach Applied General qualifications and were aware of the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications 66 (general perceptions); All who teach Applied General qualifications and were aware of the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications in 2020 68 (2020-specific perceptions).

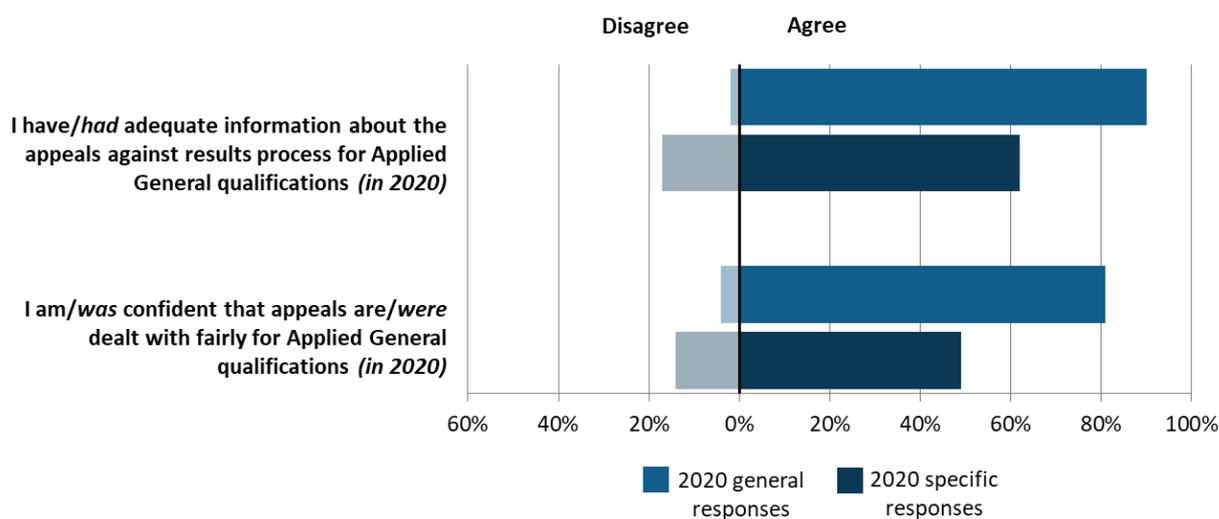
The survey informed teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications that the appeals process for these qualifications results was different than usual in 2020, as there was no Reviews of Marking/Moderation stage. The appeals process was the only way for students or centres to get their results reconsidered if they were not satisfied with their grades.

When asked if they were aware that this was the appeals against results process in place for Applied General qualifications in 2020, 87% said that they were. Notably, the exact same proportion reported being aware of the normal appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications.

Teachers and head teachers of Applied General qualifications who were aware of the appeals against results process were also asked if they felt they had adequate information about the process in 2020, and 62% agreed that this was the case. Comparatively, however, a much higher proportion (90%) of the same group agreed that they have adequate information about the normal appeals against results process.

Similarly, when asked if they were confident that appeals were dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in 2020, 49% agreed in comparison with 81% who agreed with this statement regarding the normal process.

Figure 6. Perceptions of the appeals process for Applied General qualification results in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

Malpractice for Applied General qualifications in 2020

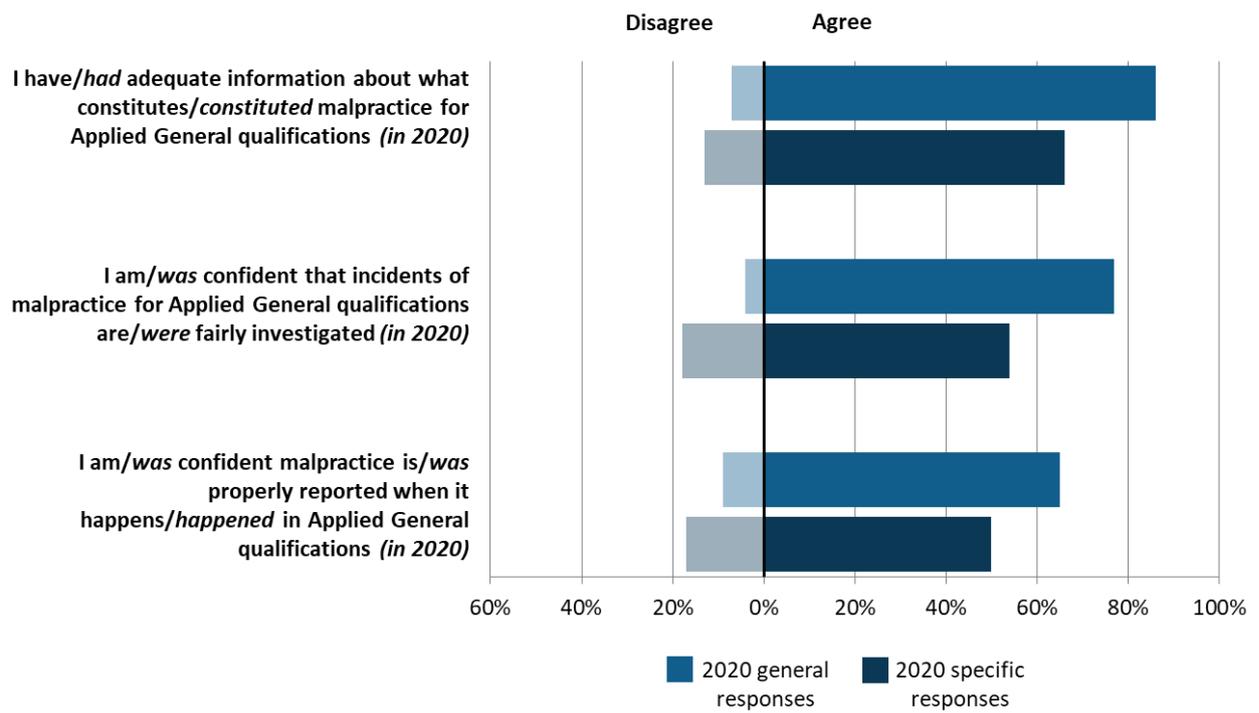
For the following figure the wave 19 effective base was: All who teach Applied General qualifications 80.

Teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General Qualifications were also presented with three statements about malpractice for these qualifications in 2020, and in each case levels of agreement were lower than when thinking about their general perceptions of malpractice in this context.

Overall, 66% agreed that they had adequate information about what constituted malpractice for Applied General qualifications in 2020, compared with 86% who agreed that this is normally the case.

Thinking about confidence in the system, 54% agreed that in 2020 they were confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications were fairly investigated, which compared with 77% who agreed with this statement more generally. In addition, 50% agreed that they were confident malpractice was properly reported when it happened in these qualifications in 2020, in comparison with 65% who agreed with this statement regarding the normal system.

Figure 7. Perceptions of malpractice for Applied General qualifications in 2020



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2020-specific question set.

Section 2: Composite confidence measure of qualifications in general

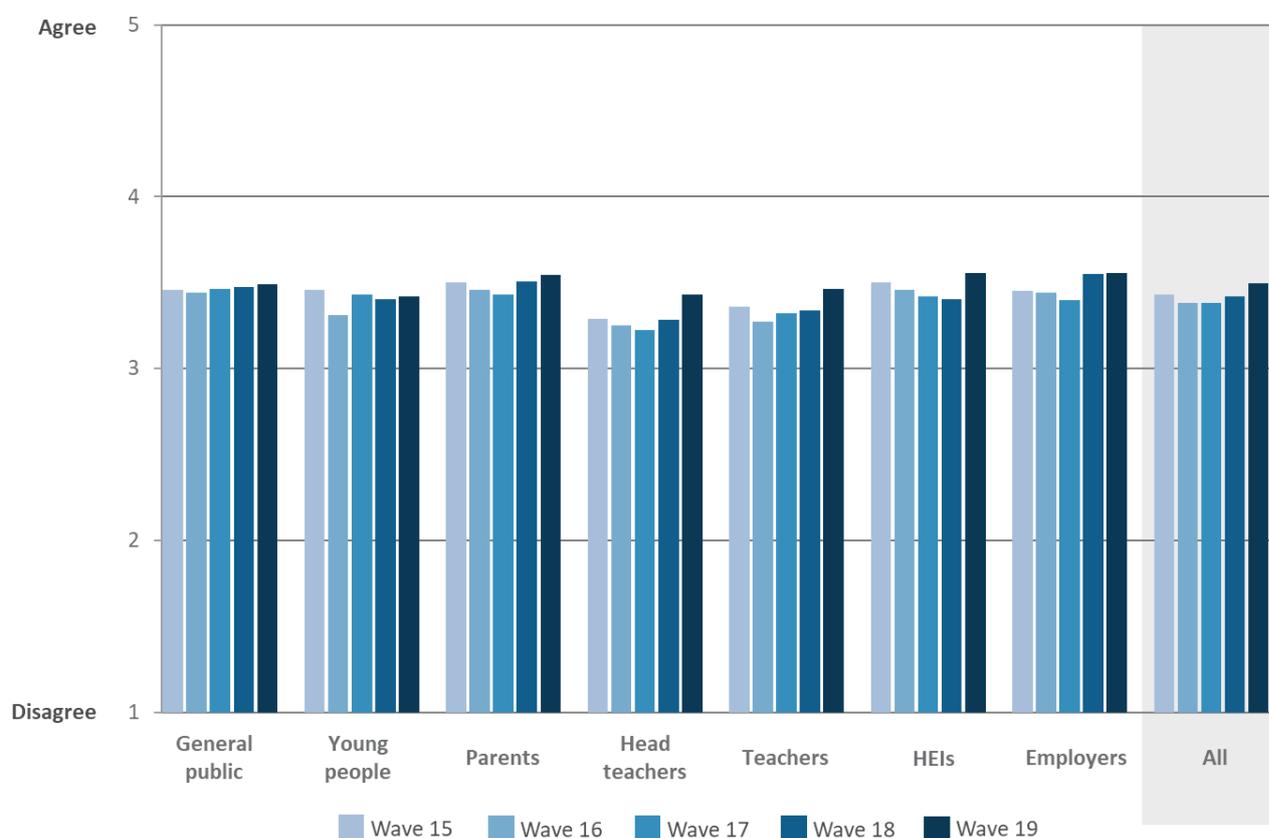
The following section looks at respondents’ overall composite confidence in qualifications in general. For how this compares to respondents’ confidence in qualifications in 2020, please see section 1.

Composite confidence in GCSEs in general

For the following figure the wave 19 base is: All responses 3,039; General public 995; Parents 275; Young people 272; Teachers 695; Head teachers 282; HEIs 265; Employers 255.

There was an increase in overall confidence in GCSE qualifications compared with wave 18, a continuation of the trend observed from wave 17 to wave 18. This increase was driven primarily by teachers, head teachers and HEIs.

Figure 8. Composite confidence in GCSEs



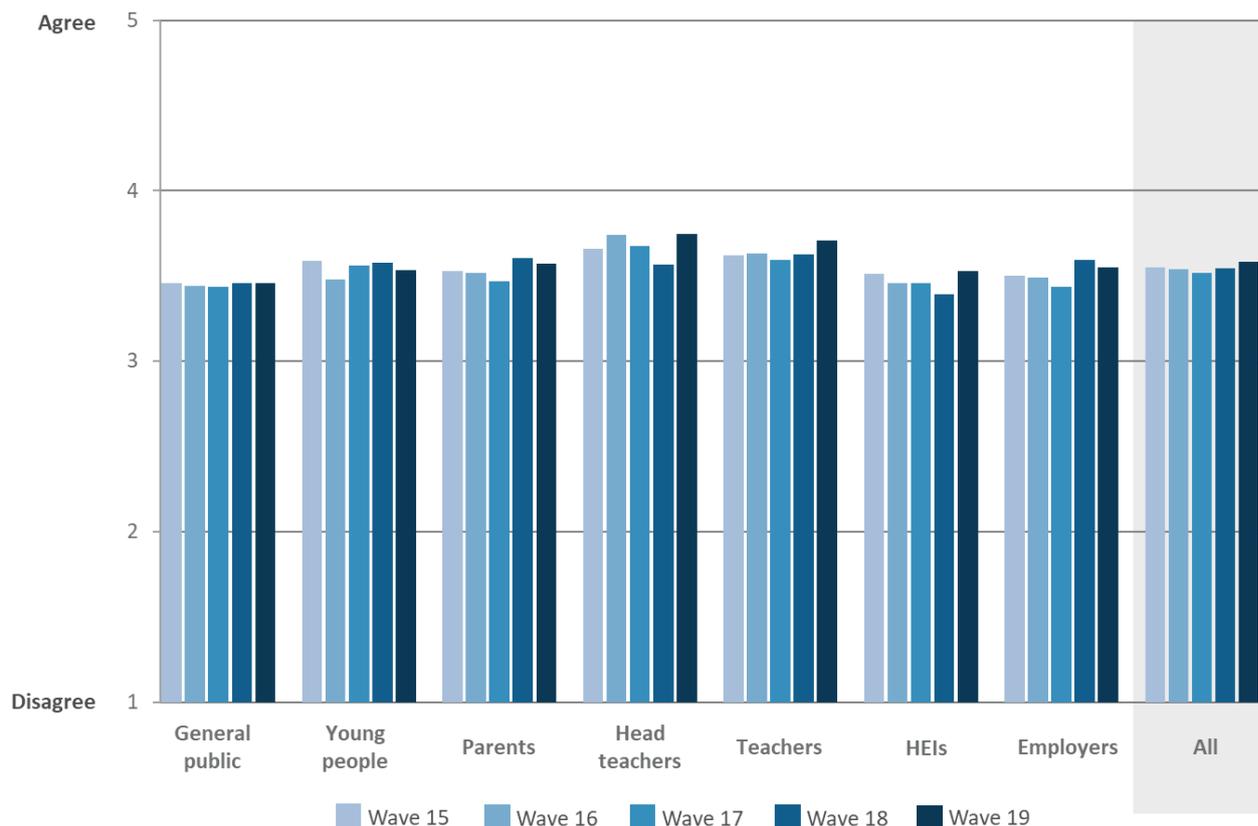
Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1. ‘Don’t know’ responses have been excluded.

Composite confidence in AS and A levels in general

For the following figure the wave 19 base is: All responses 3,003; General public 985; Parents 274; Young people 266; Teachers 687; Head teachers 270; HEIs 267; Employers 254.

Overall confidence in AS and A levels increased in comparison with wave 18, representing a continual rise since wave 17. Confidence increased particularly among teachers, head teachers and HEIs.

Figure 9. Composite confidence in AS and A levels



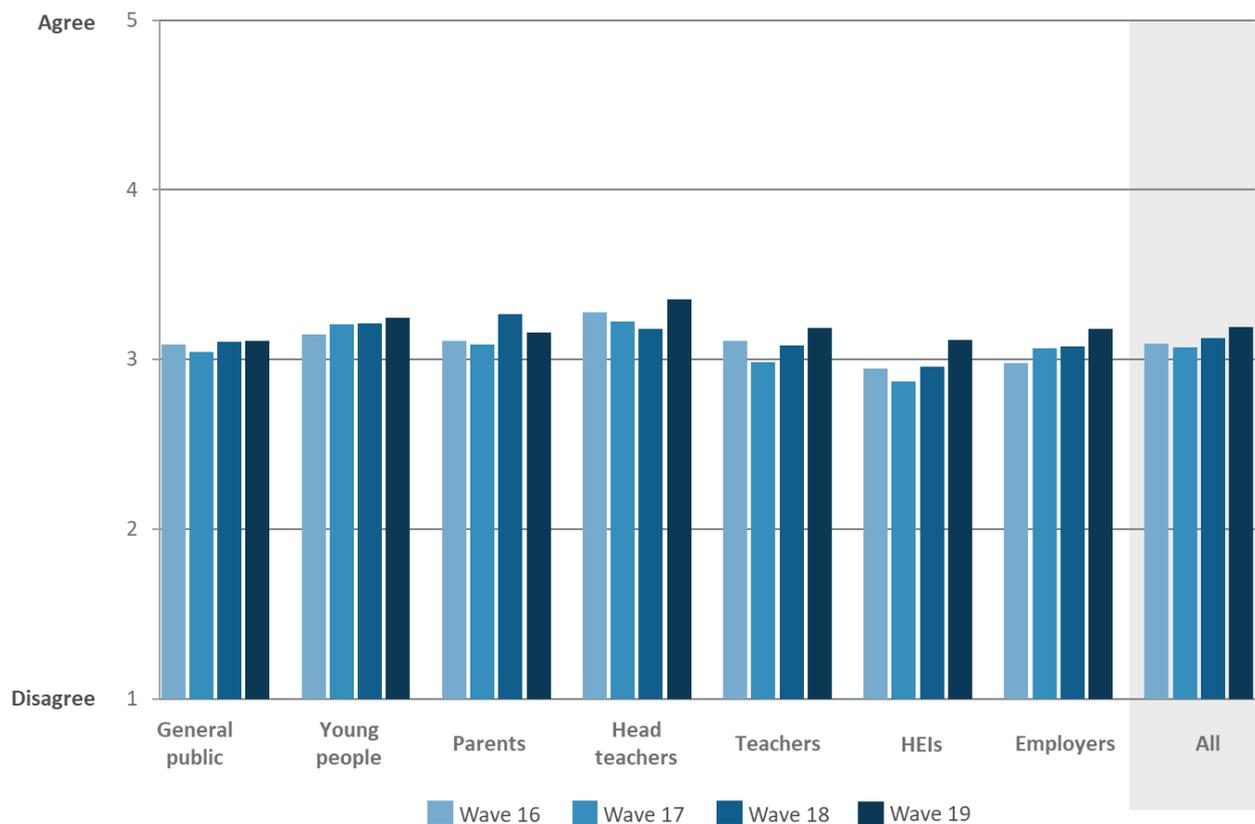
Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.

Composite confidence in Applied General qualifications in general

For the following figure the wave 19 base is: All responses 2,484; General public 833; Parents 231; Young people 206; Teachers 541; Head teachers 228; HEIs 227; Employers 218.

Confidence in Applied General qualifications in wave 19 increased in comparison with wave 18, continuing the increase recorded between wave 17 and wave 18. The largest increases in confidence were specifically among head teachers and HEIs.

Figure 10. Composite confidence in Applied General qualifications



Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1. ‘Don’t know’ responses have been excluded.

Note: The survey items used to calculate the composite confidence measure for Applied General qualifications were included for the first time in wave 16.

Section 3: General perceptions of GCSEs

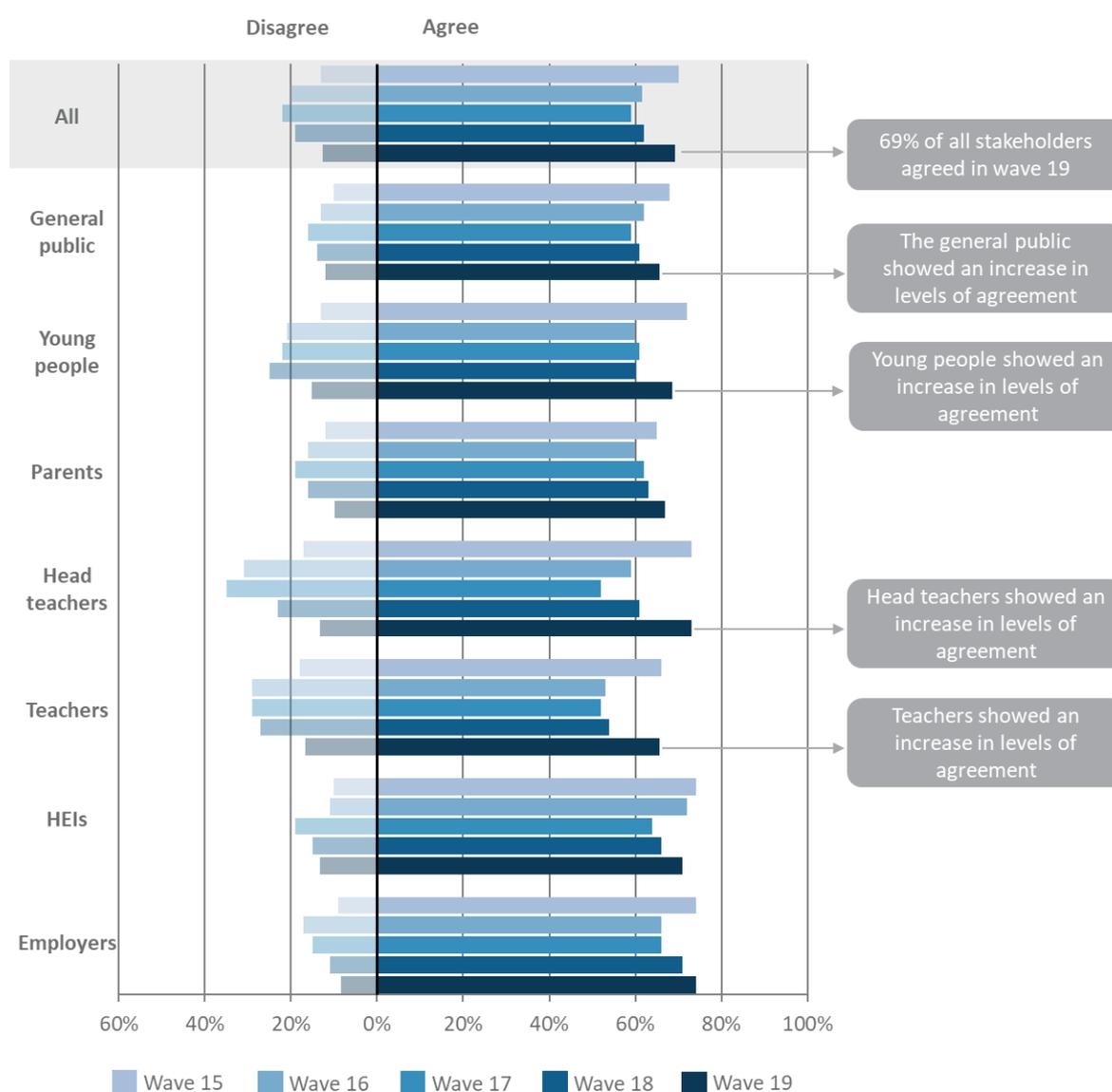
The following section looks at respondents’ general perceptions of GCSEs. For how this compares to respondents’ perceptions of GCSEs in 2020, please see section 1.

Overall perceptions

For the following 8 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 2,141; General public 1,006; Parents 274; Young people 266; Teachers 654; Head teachers 200; HEIs 257; Employers 246.

Approximately, seven in ten respondents agreed in wave 19 that, in general, GCSEs are well understood by people. This represented a continual increase in comparison with waves 18 and 17, and a return to the overall levels of agreement recorded in wave 15.

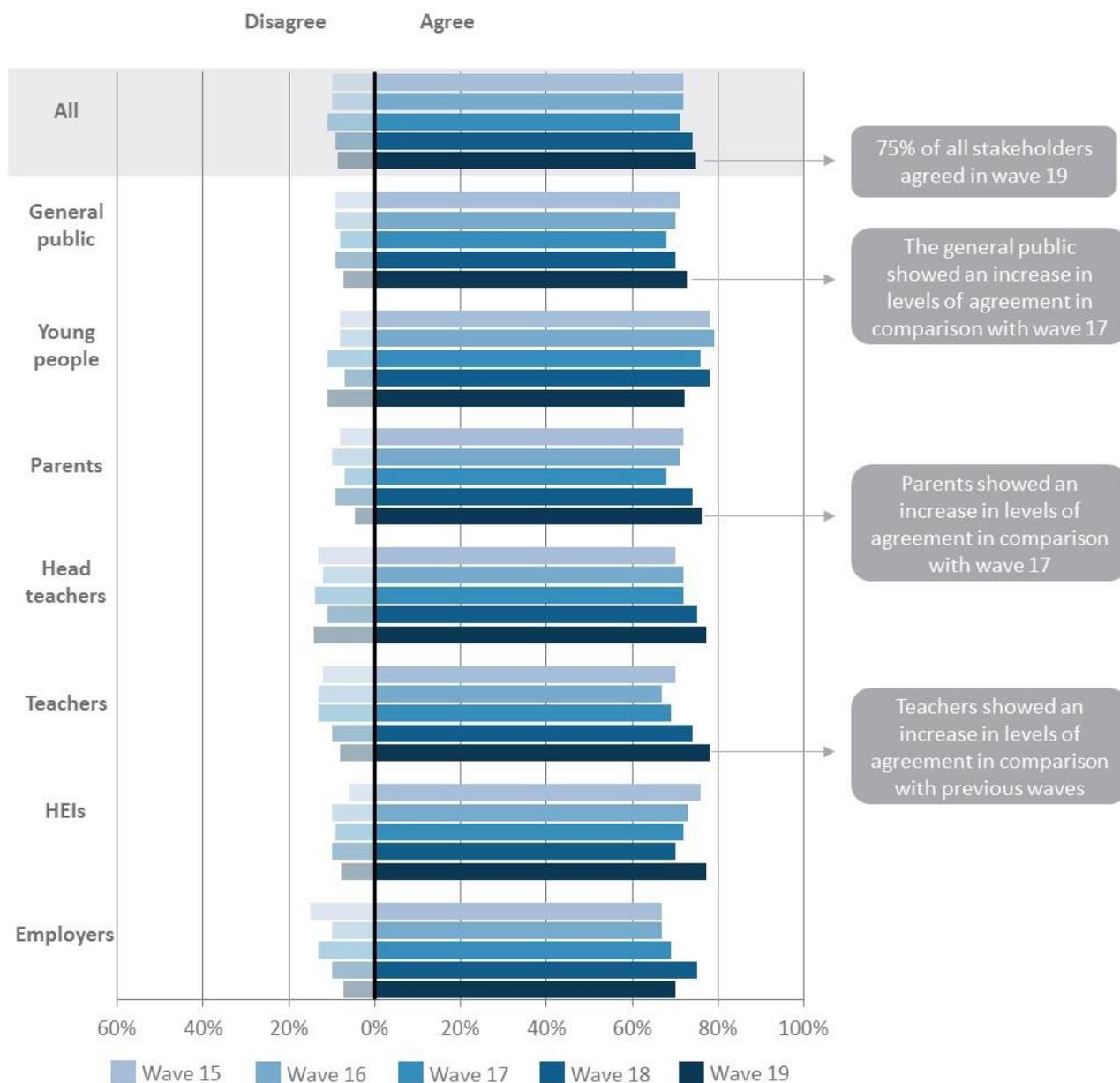
Figure 11. Results for “GCSEs are well understood by people.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Overall, three quarters of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, GCSEs are trusted qualifications. This was higher than in waves 17, 16 and 15, and comparable with wave 18.

Figure 12. Results for “GCSEs are trusted qualifications.”

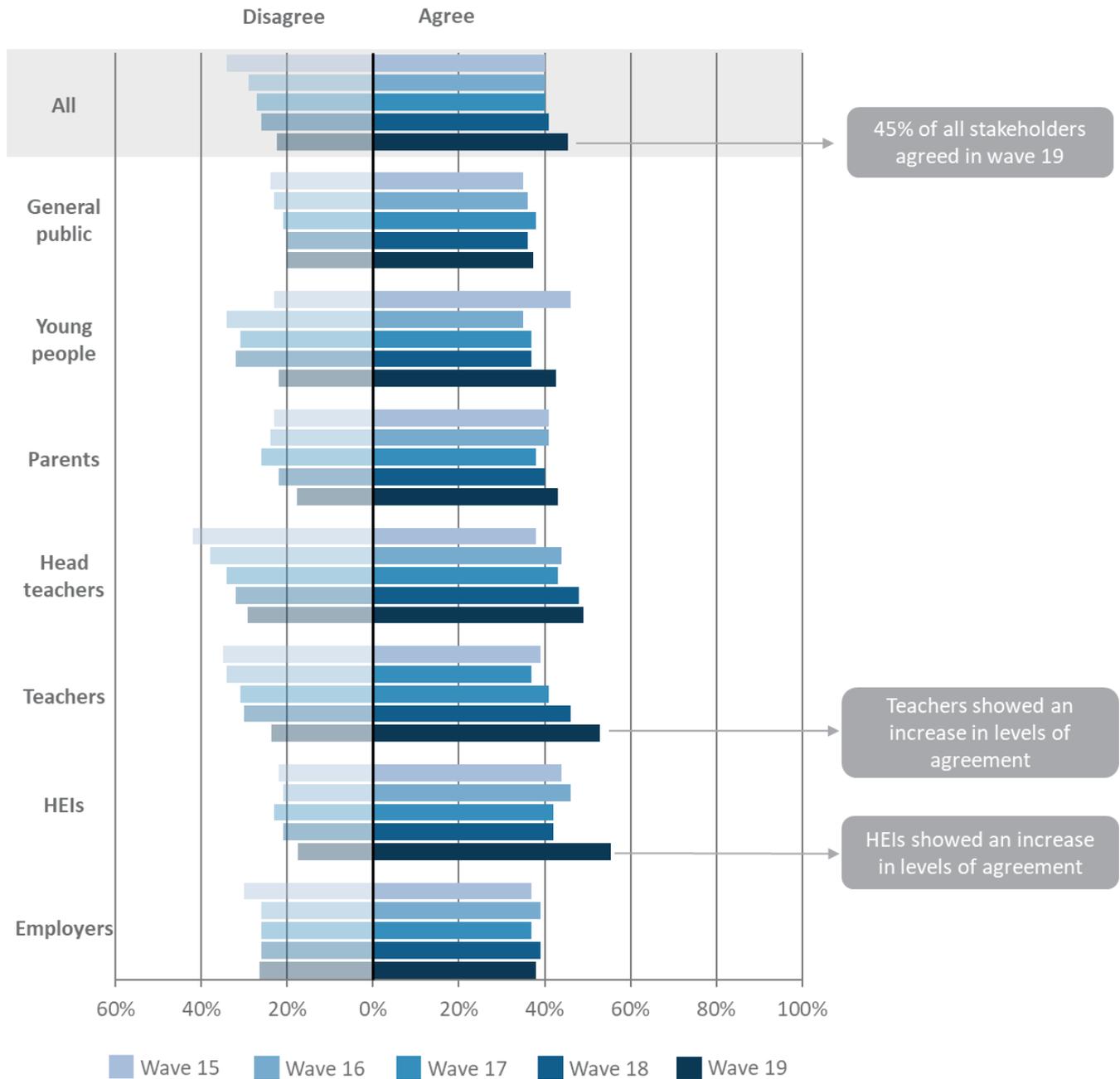


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Confidence in standards and marking

Forty-five percent of respondents agreed in wave 19 that, in general, GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year, an increase in comparison with the previous four waves.

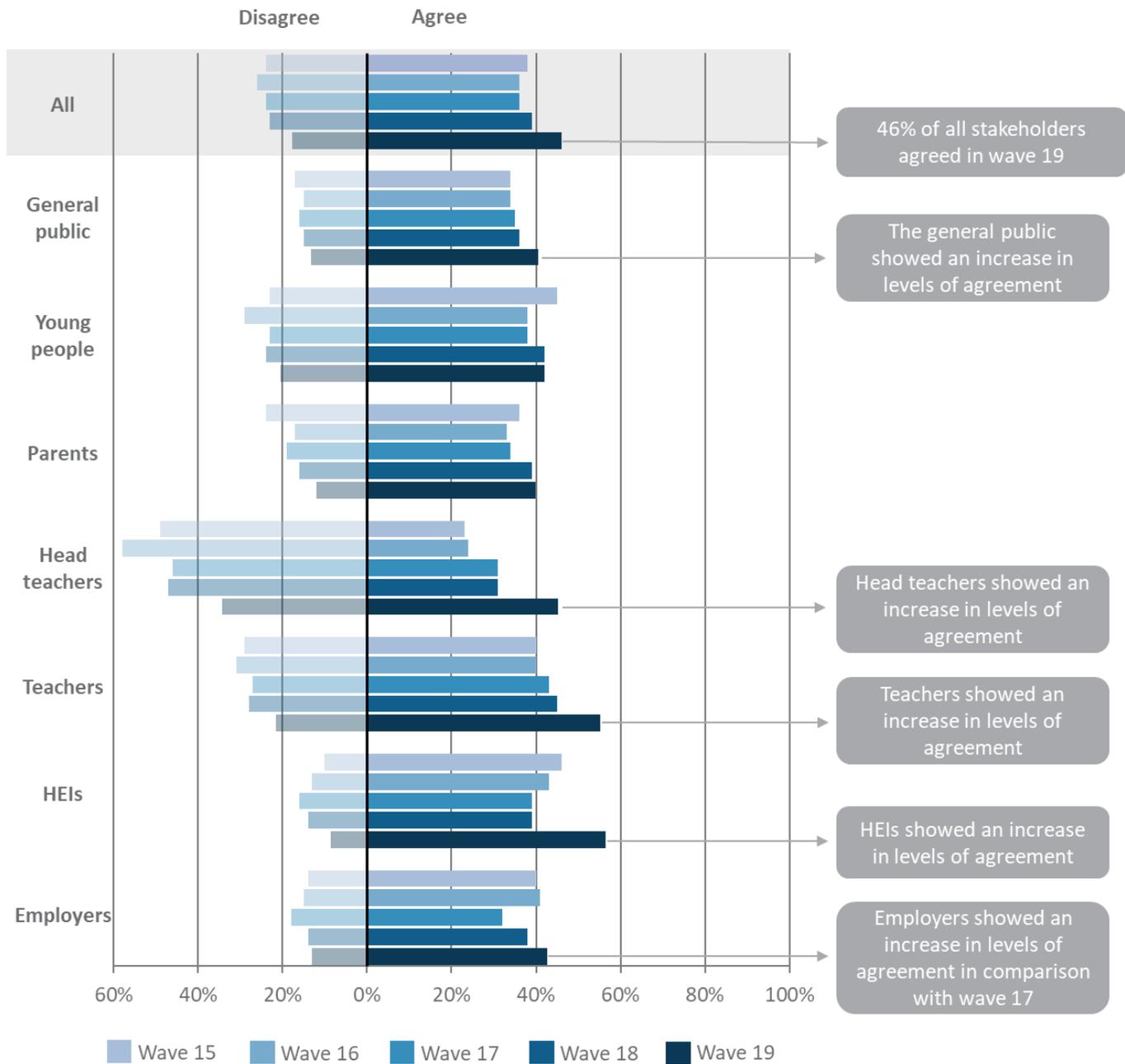
Figure 13. Results for “GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Overall, 46% of respondents agreed that, in general, the marking of GCSEs is accurate. This was an increase in comparison with each of the previous waves.

Figure 14. Results for “The marking of GCSEs is accurate.”

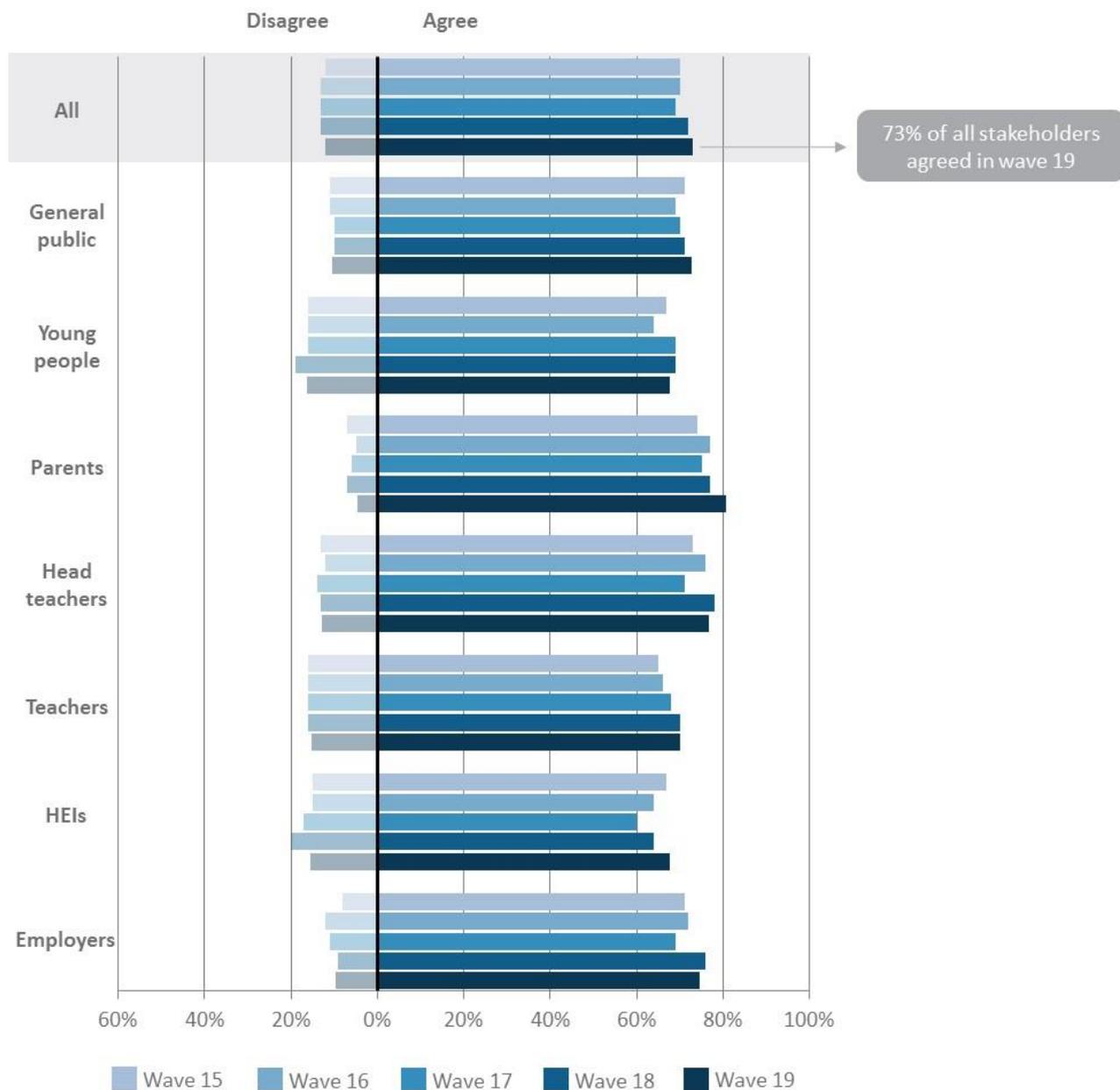


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Skills and preparation

Overall, approximately seven in ten respondents agreed that, in general, GCSEs are good preparation for further study. This was consistent with wave 18 and an increase in comparison with wave 17.

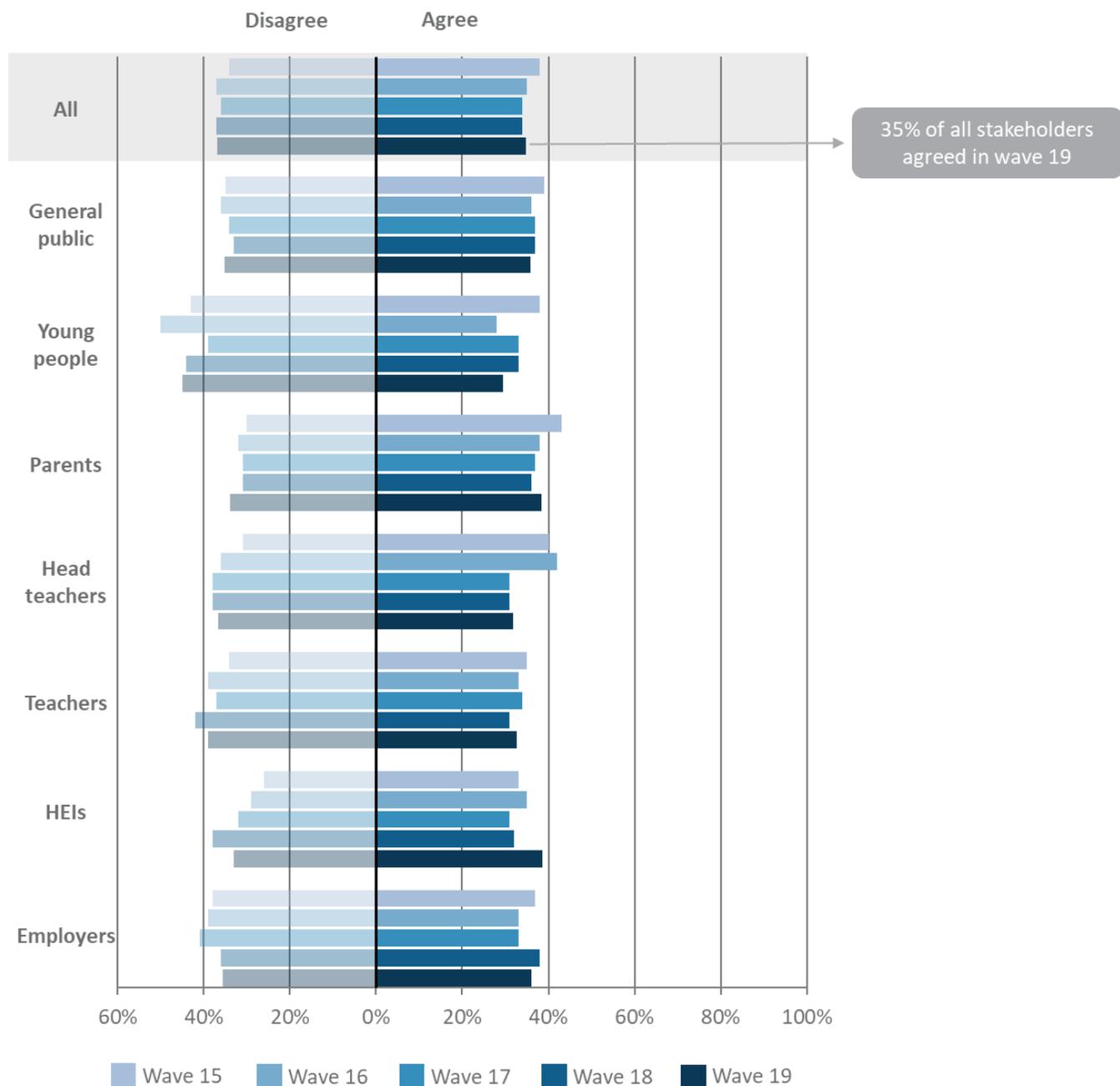
Figure 15. Results for “GCSEs are good preparation for further study.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Overall, a comparable proportion agreed that, in general, GCSEs are good preparation for work in wave 19 compared with waves 18, 17 and 16.

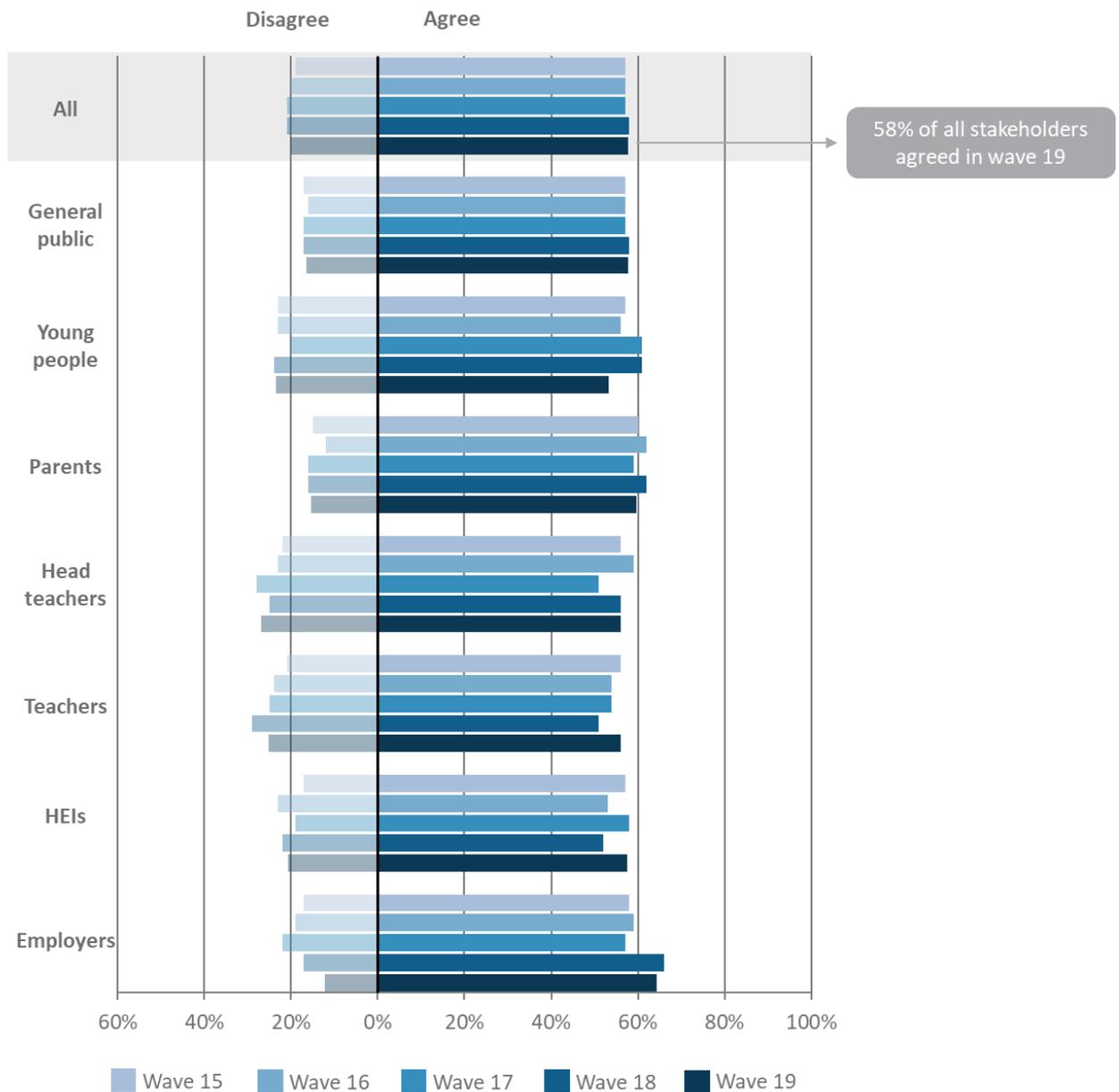
Figure 16. Results for “GCSEs are good preparation for work.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Overall, perceptions that, in general, GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students in wave 19 were consistent with each of the previous waves.

Figure 17. Results for “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students.”

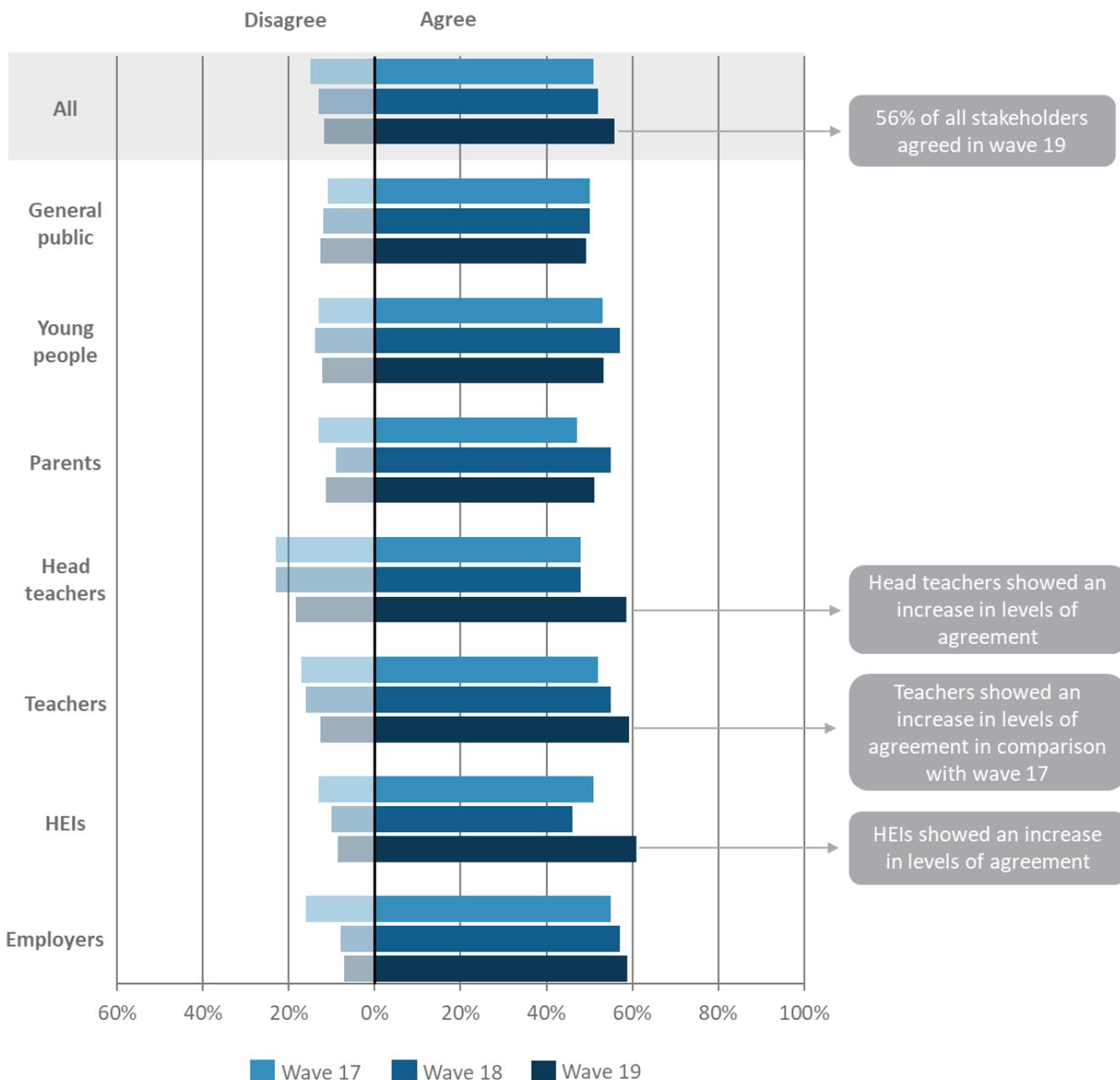


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Value for money

Overall, 56% of respondents agreed in wave 19 that, in general, GCSEs offer value for money, an increase in comparison with waves 18 and 17.

Figure 18. Results for “GCSEs offer ‘value for money’.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Note: This survey item was included for the first time in wave 17.

Section 4: General perceptions of AS and A levels

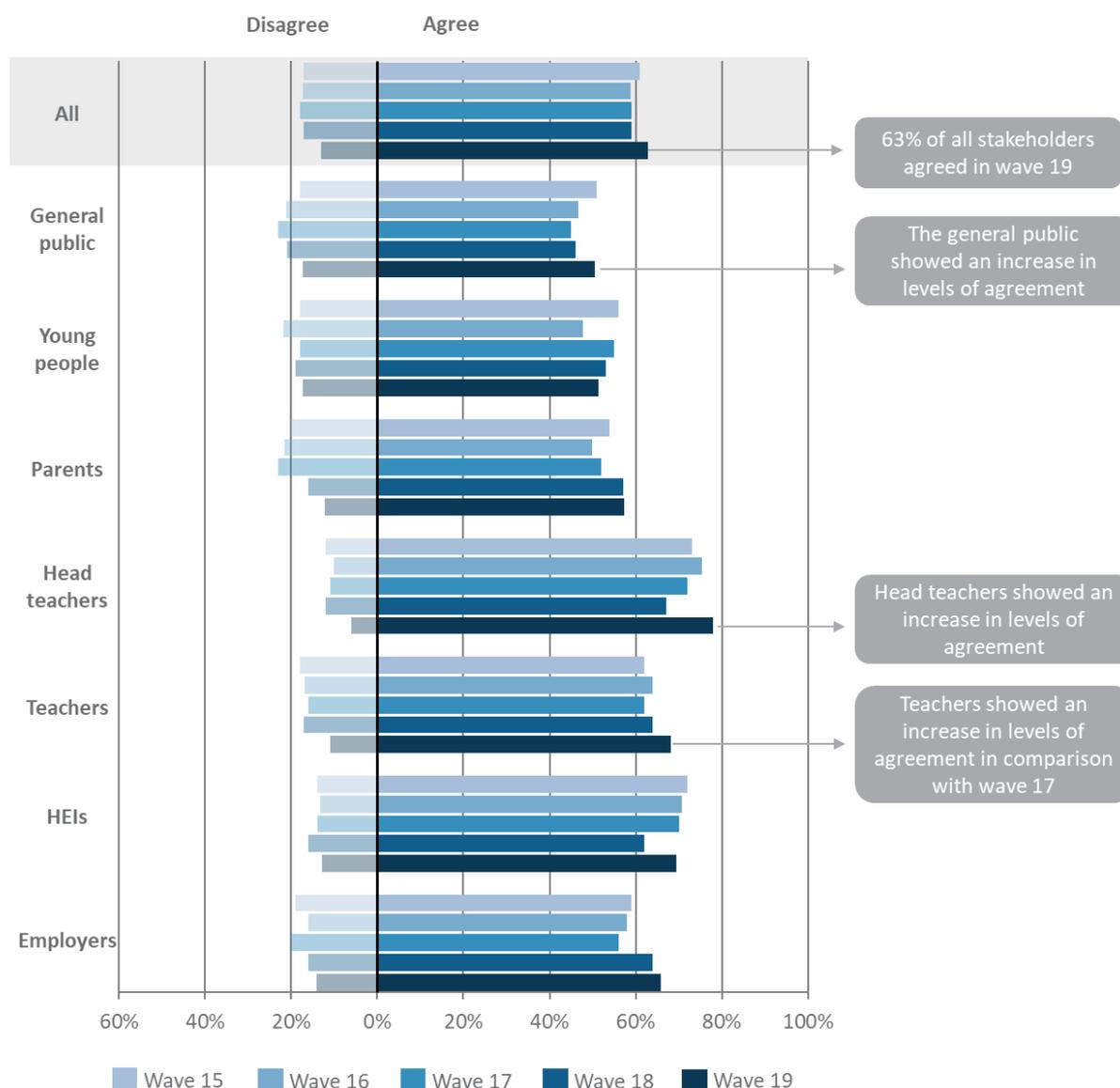
The following section looks at respondents’ general perceptions of AS and A levels. For how this compares to respondents’ perceptions of AS and A levels in 2020, please see section 1.

Overall perceptions

For the following 8 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 2,141; General public 1,006; Parents 274; Young people 266; Teachers 654; Head teachers 200; HEIs 257; Employers 246.

Approximately six in ten respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, AS and A levels are well understood by people, an increase in comparison with waves 18, 17 and 16.

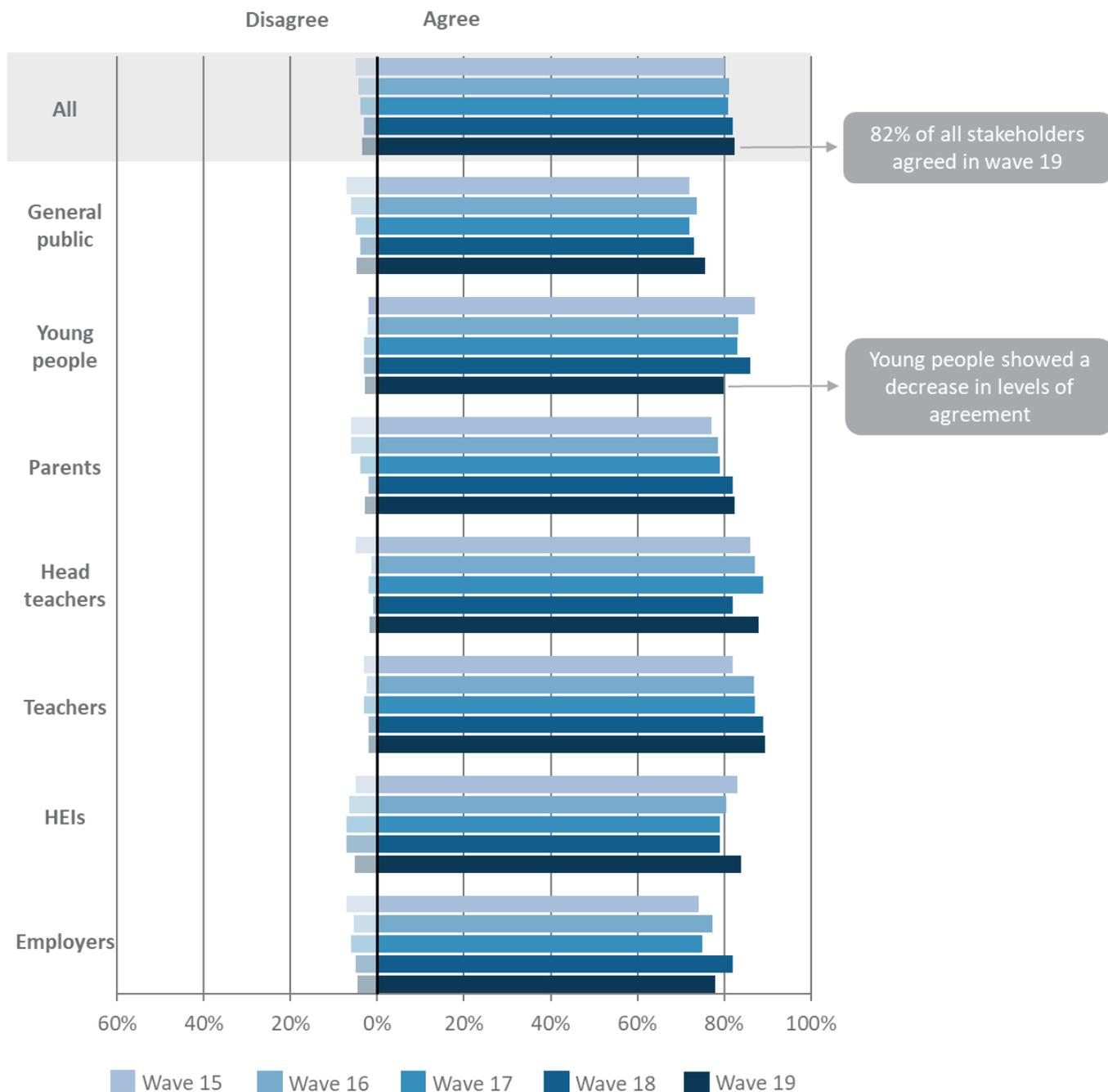
Figure 19. Results for “AS/A levels are well understood by people.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Approximately eight in ten respondents believed that, in general, AS and A levels are a trusted qualification in wave 19, consistent with recent waves.

Figure 20. Results for “AS/A levels are trusted qualifications.”

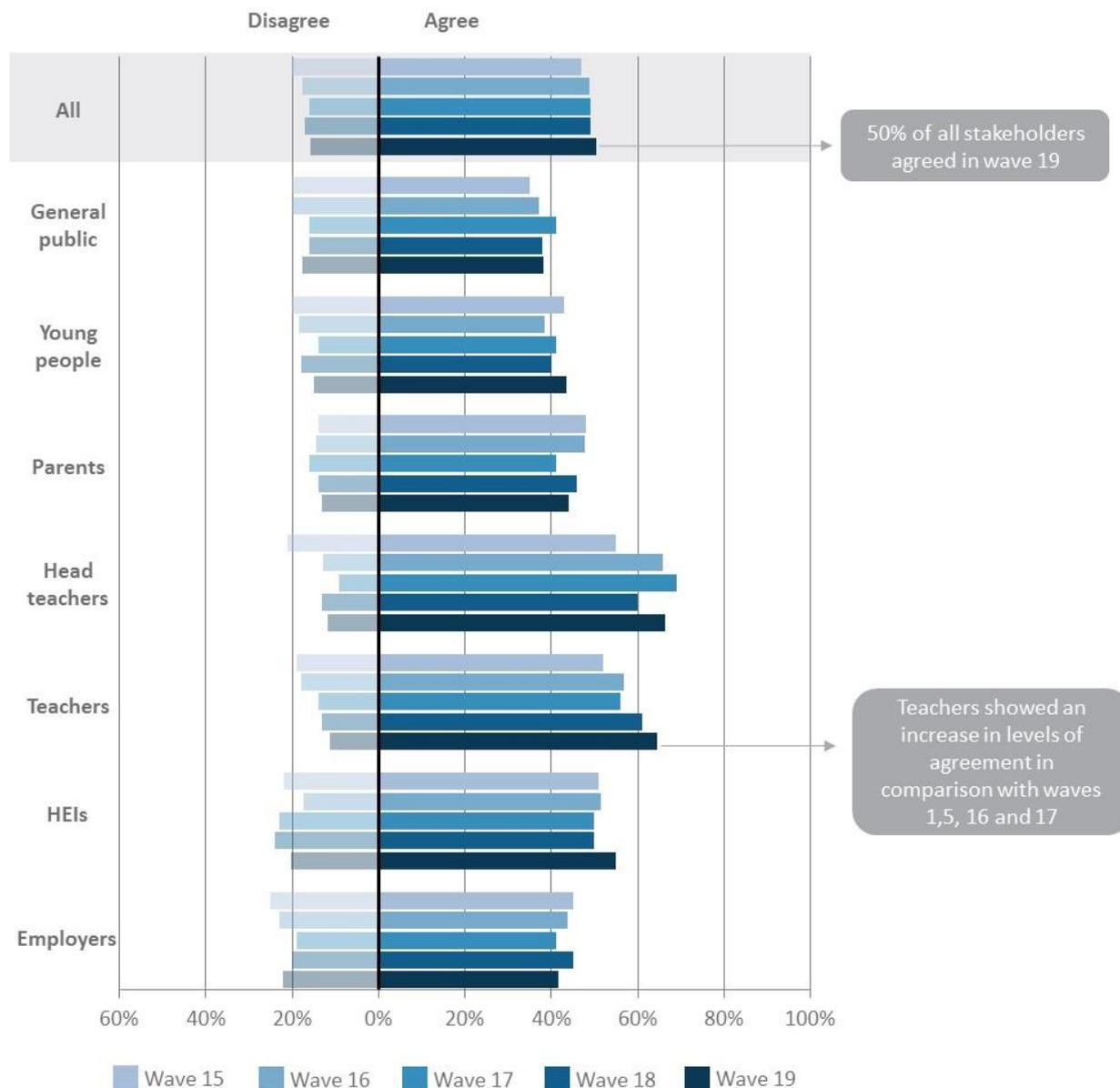


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Confidence in standards and marking

Half of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, AS and A level standards are maintained year-on-year, consistent with previous waves.

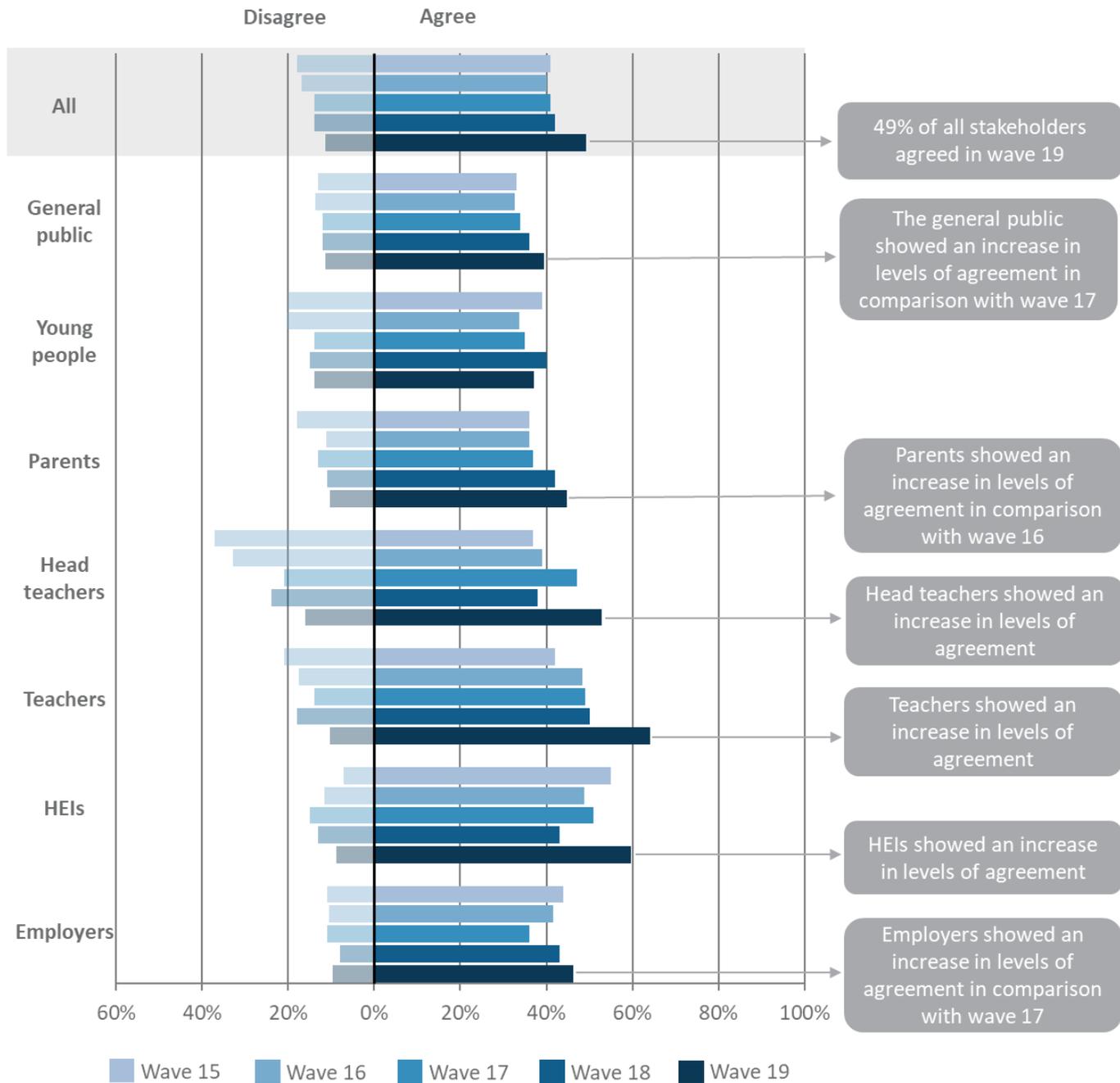
Figure 21. Results for “AS/A level standards are maintained year-on-year.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

In wave 18, approximately half of respondents believed that, in general, the marking of AS and A levels is accurate. This was an increase in comparison with each of the previous four waves.

Figure 22. Results for “The marking of AS/A levels is accurate.”

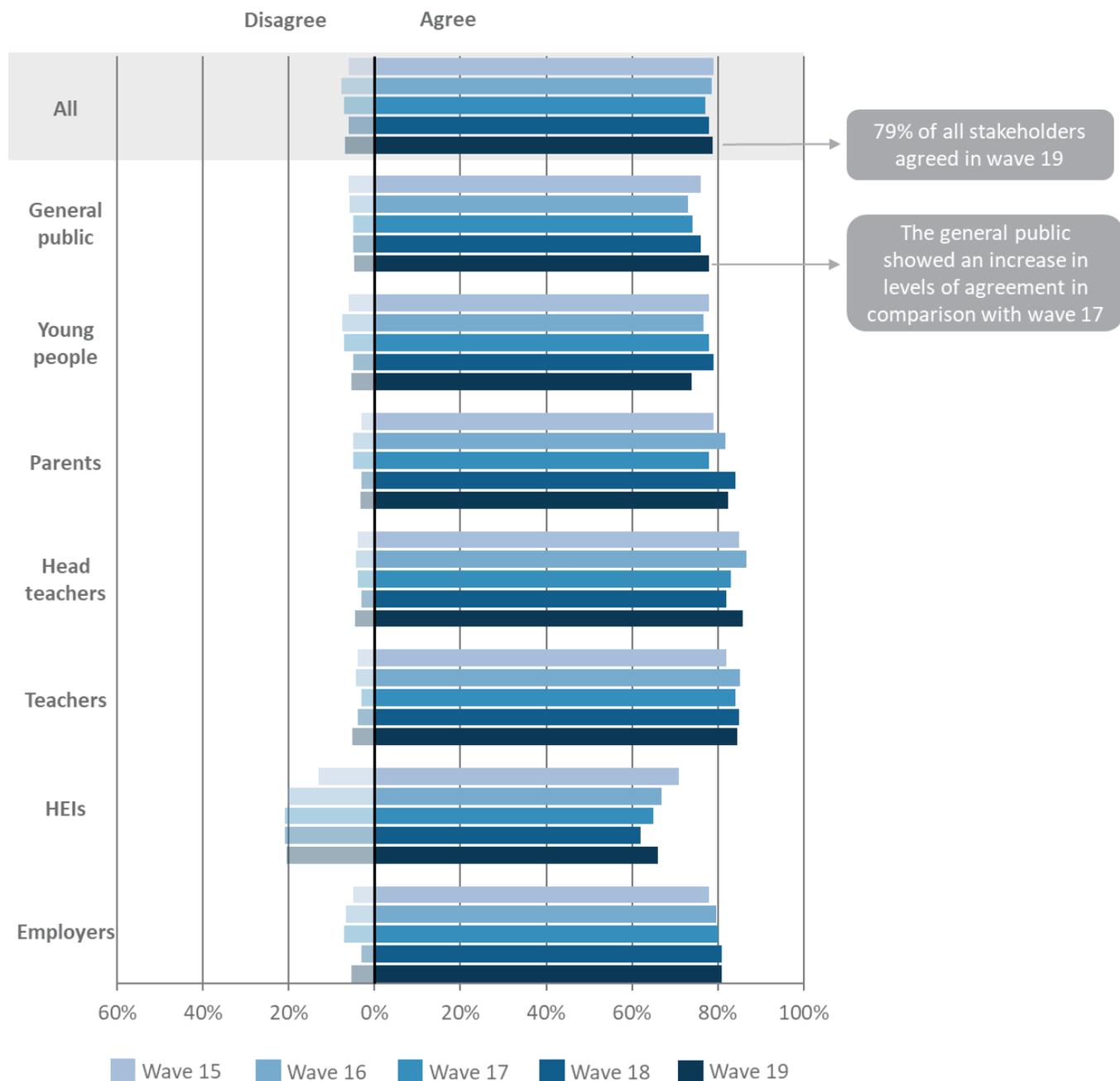


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Skills and preparation

Overall, approximately eight in ten respondents agreed in wave 19 that, in general, AS and A levels are good preparation for further study, consistent with the previous waves.

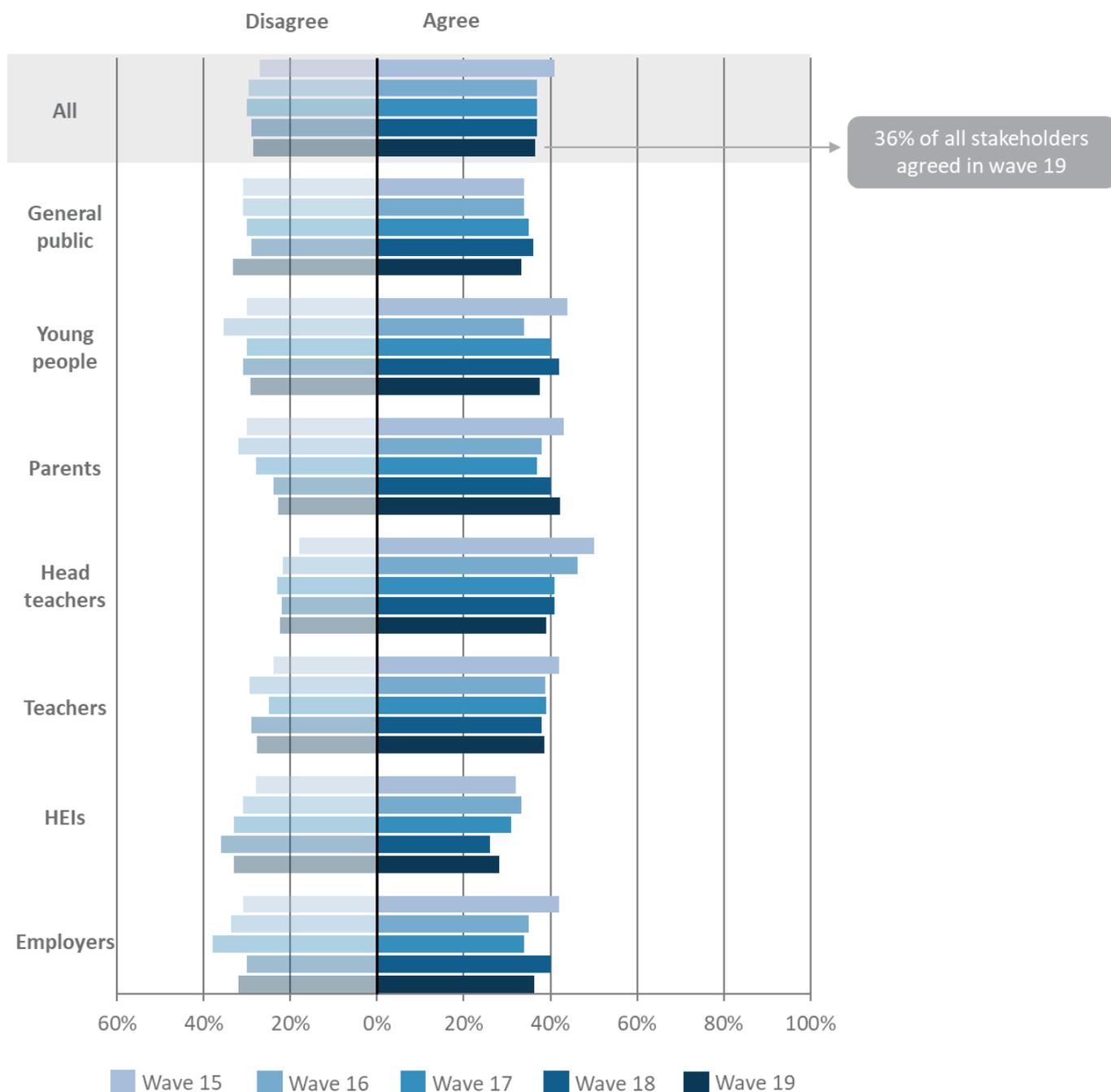
Figure 23. Results for “AS/A levels are good preparation for further study.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

The perception that, in general, AS and A levels are good preparation for work remained consistent in wave 19 with waves 18, 17 and 16, following a decrease in contrast to wave 15.

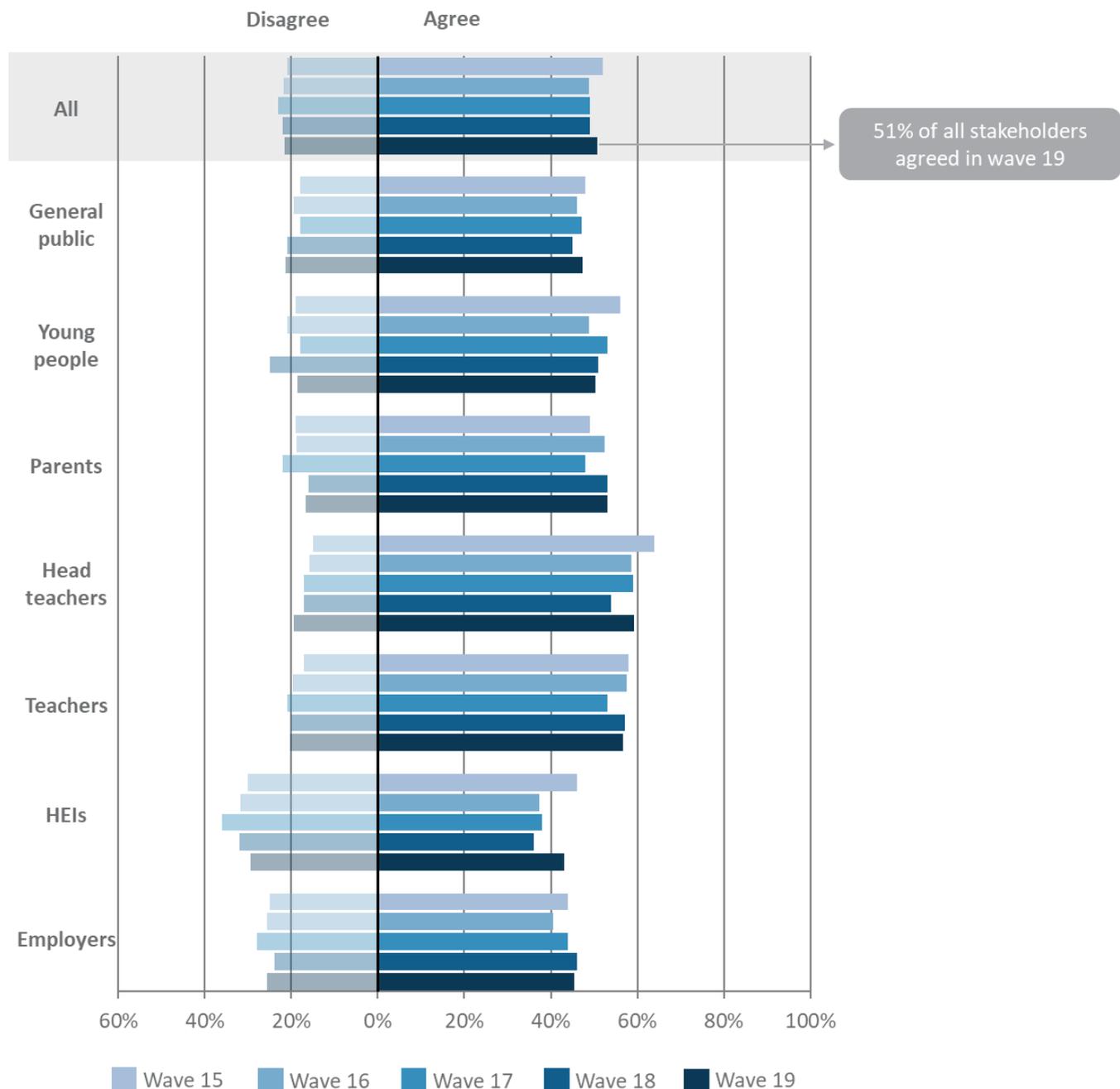
Figure 24. Results for “AS/A levels are good preparation for work.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Approximately half of respondents agreed that, in general, AS and A levels develop a broad range of skills for students, a figure which has remained stable since wave 16.

Figure 25. Results for “AS/A levels develop a broad range of skills for students.”

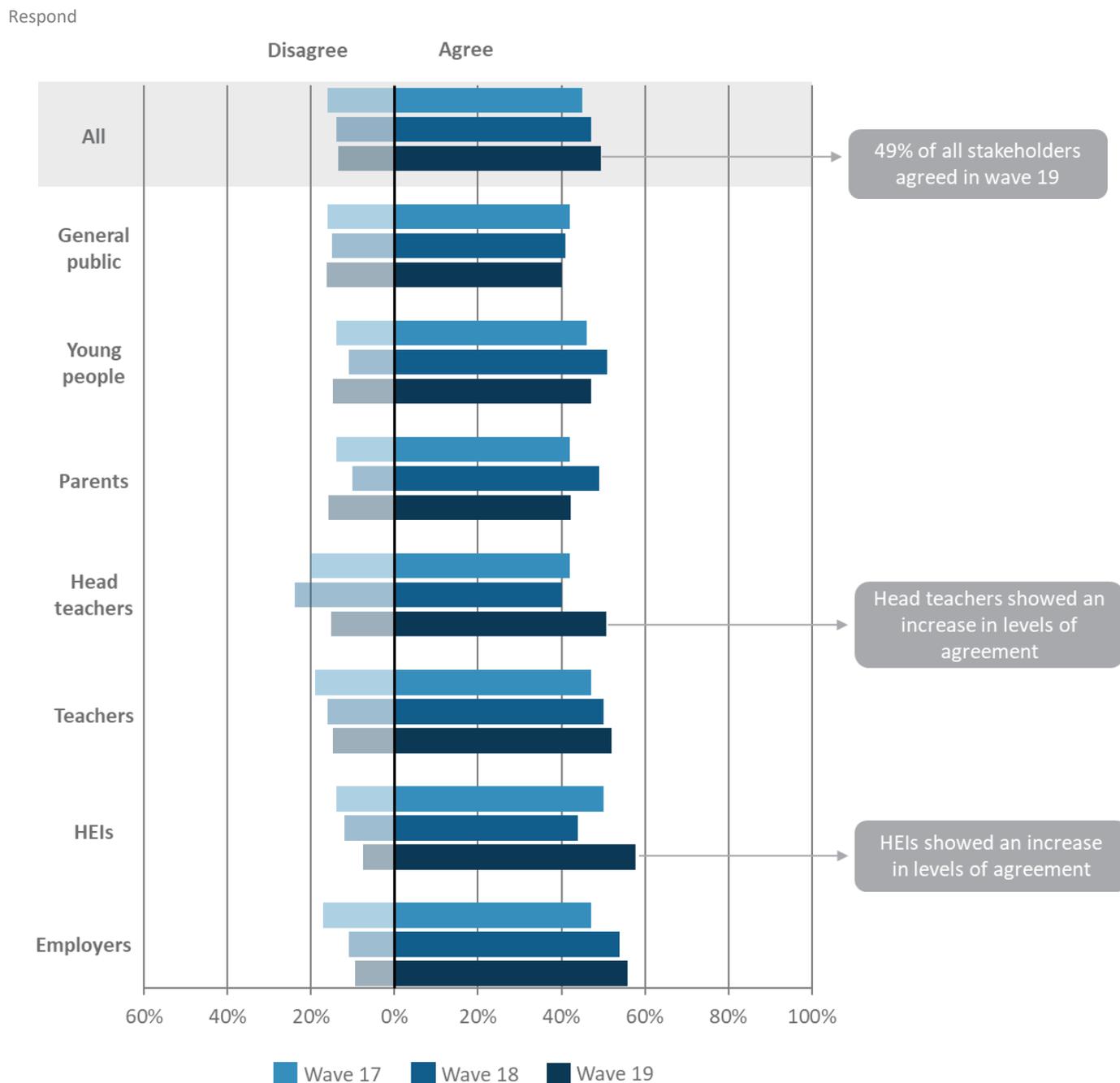


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Value for money

Overall, approximately half of respondents agreed in wave 19 that, in general, results for AS and A levels offer value for money, comparable with wave 18 but an increase in comparison with wave 17.

Figure 26. Results for “AS/A levels offer ‘value for money’.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Note: This survey item was included for the first time in wave 17.

Section 5: General perceptions of Applied General qualifications

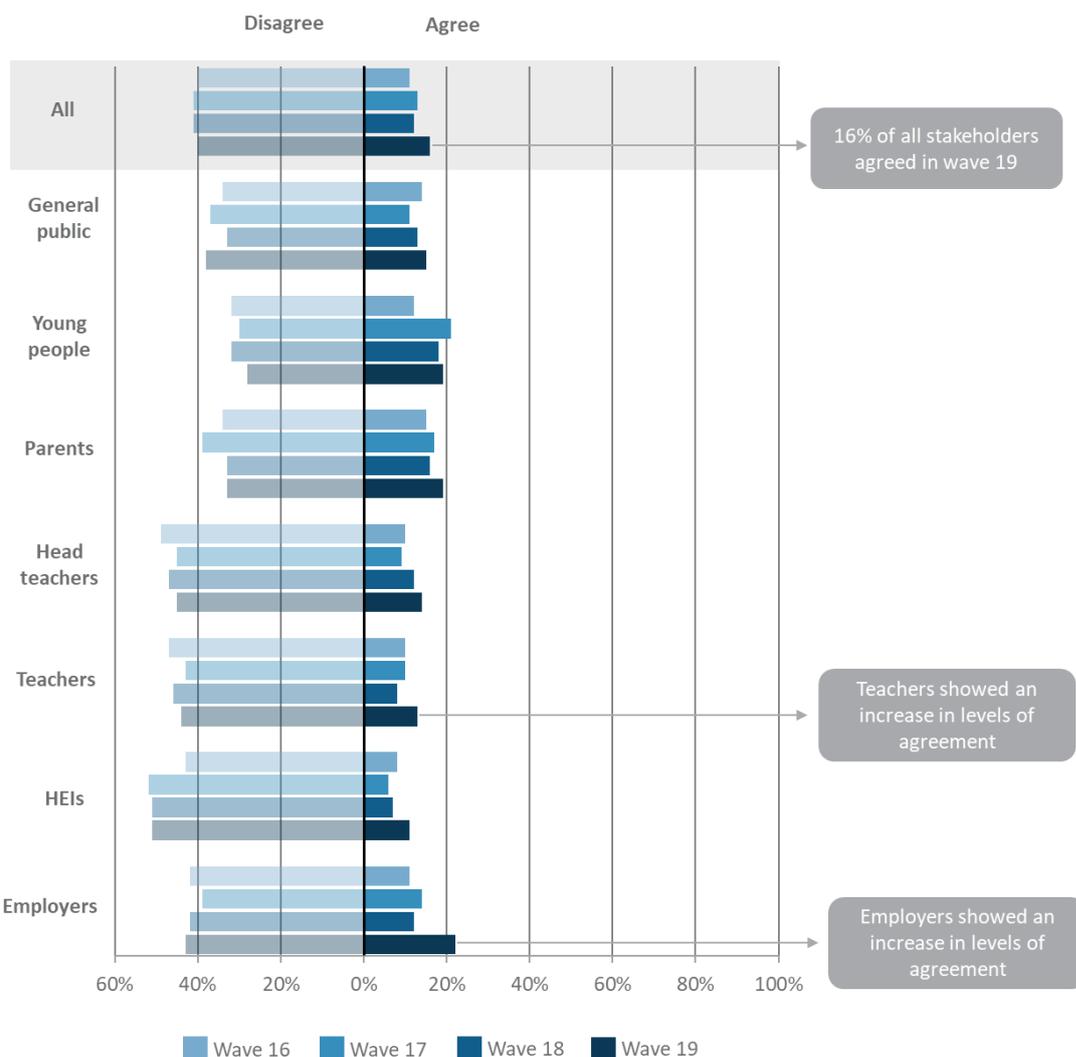
The following section looks at respondents’ general perceptions of Applied General qualifications. For how this compares to respondents’ perceptions of Applied General qualifications in 2020, please see section 1.

Overall perceptions

For the following 8 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 2,141; General public 1,006; Parents 274; Young people 266; Teachers 654; Head teachers 200; HEIs 257; Employers 246.

Overall, 16% of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are well understood by people. This was an increase in comparison with wave 18.

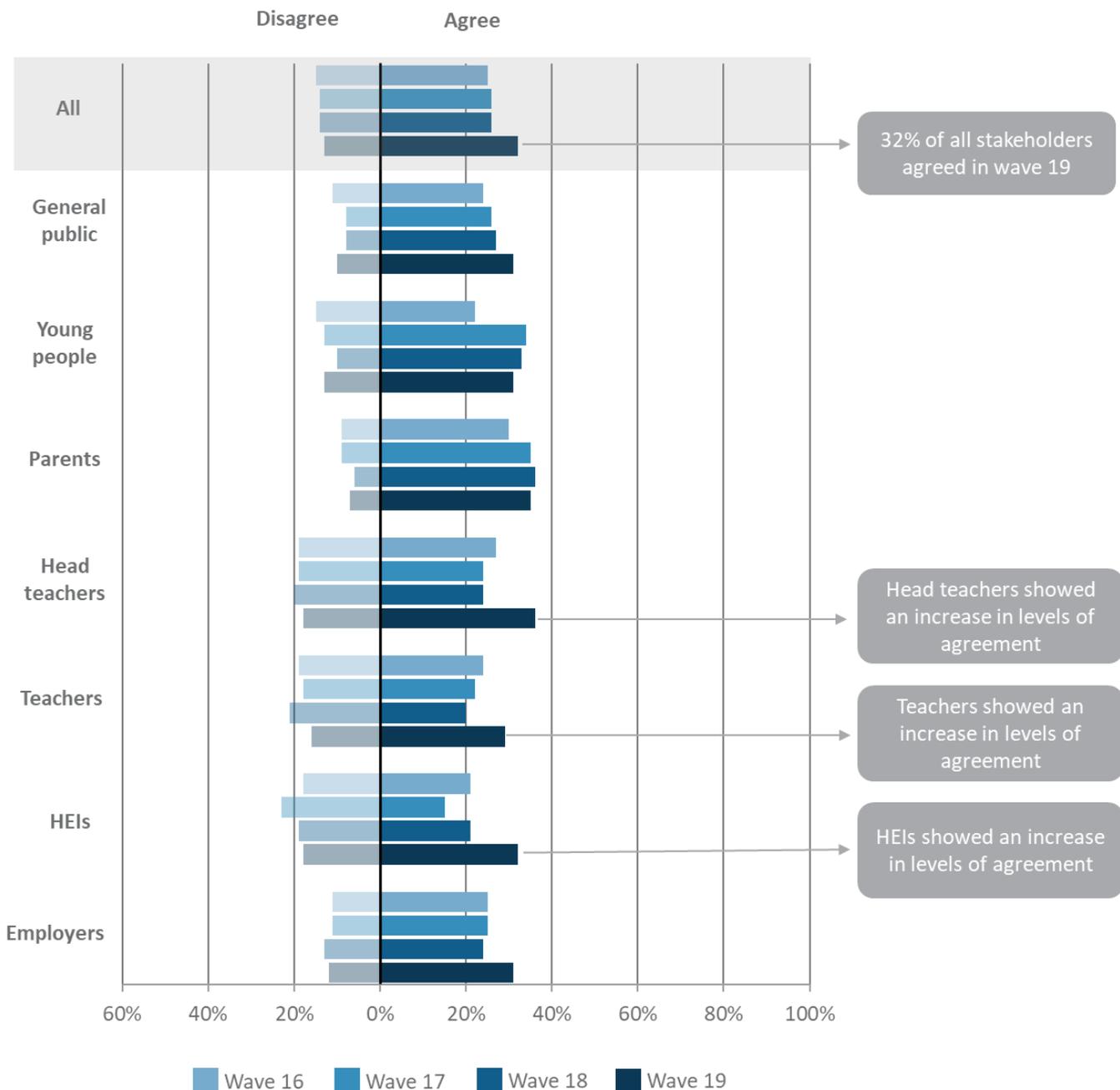
Figure 27. Results for “Applied General qualifications are well understood by people.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Approximately three in ten respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are trusted. This was an increase in comparison with each of the previous waves.

Figure 28. Results for “Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications.”

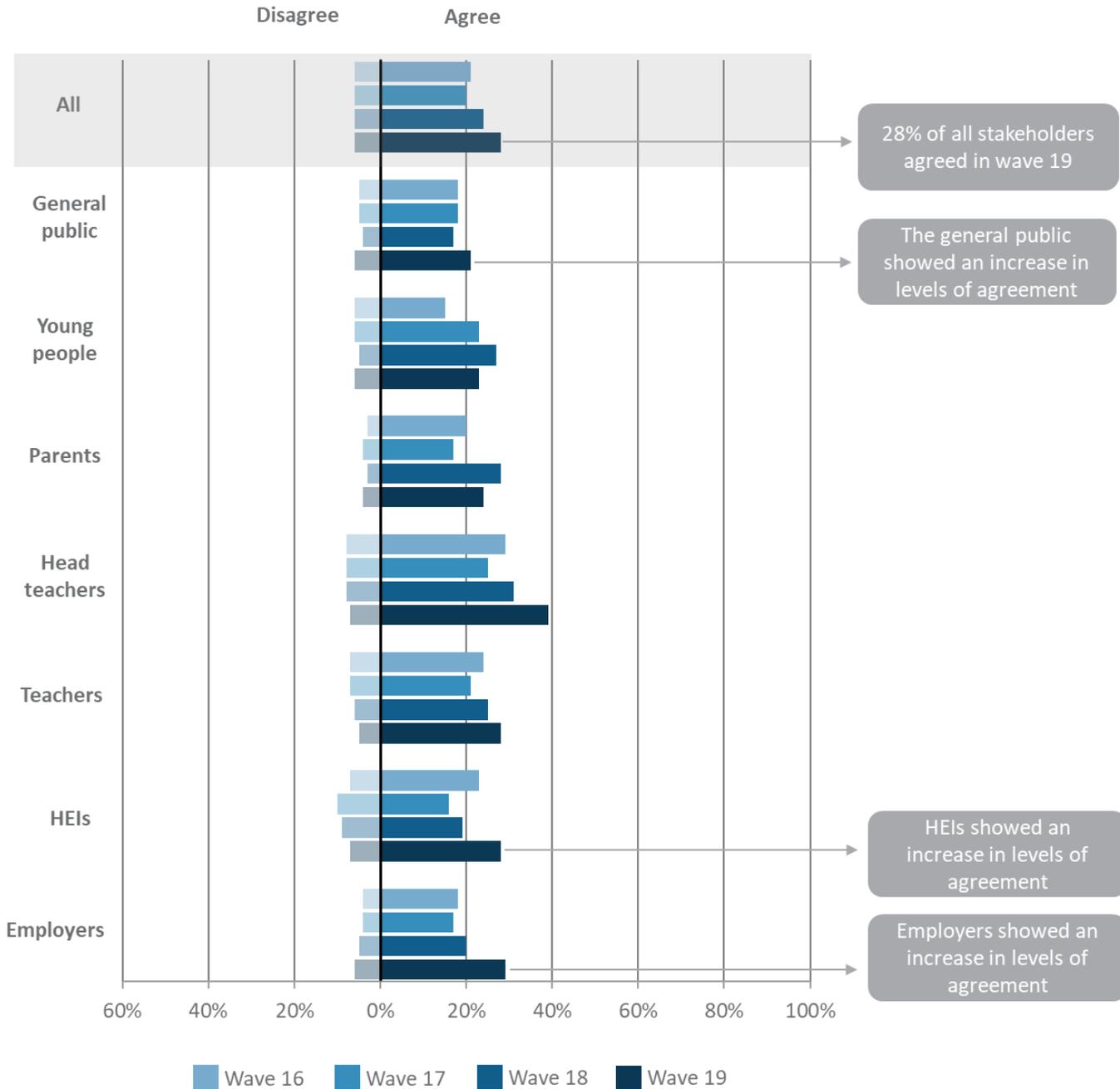


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Confidence in standards and marking

Approximately three in ten respondents agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications standards are maintained year-on-year. This was an increase compared with each of the previous waves.

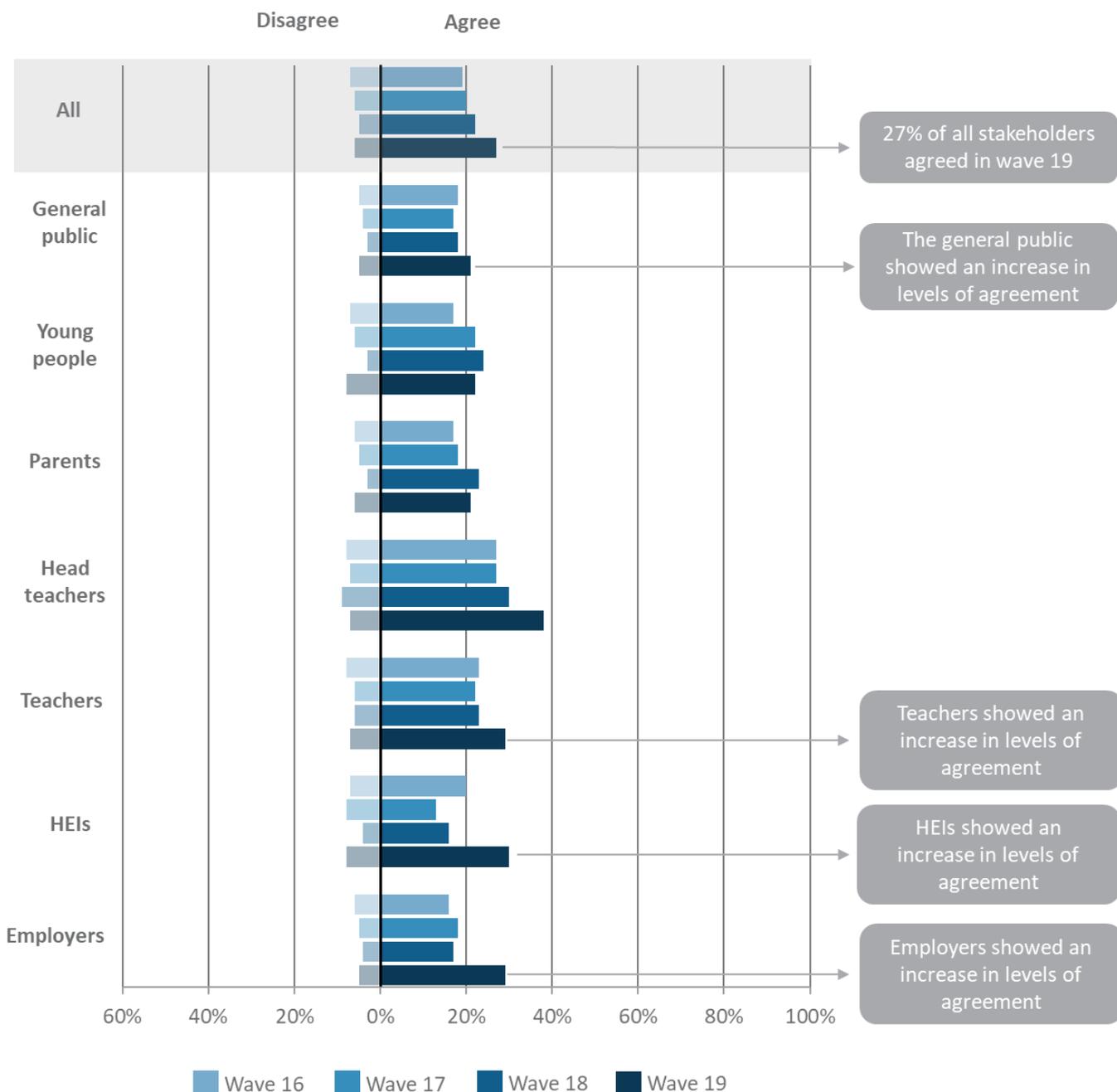
Figure 29. Results for “Applied General qualifications standards are maintained year-on-year.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Approximately a quarter of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, the marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate. This was an increase compared with each of the previous waves.

Figure 30. Results for “The marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate.”

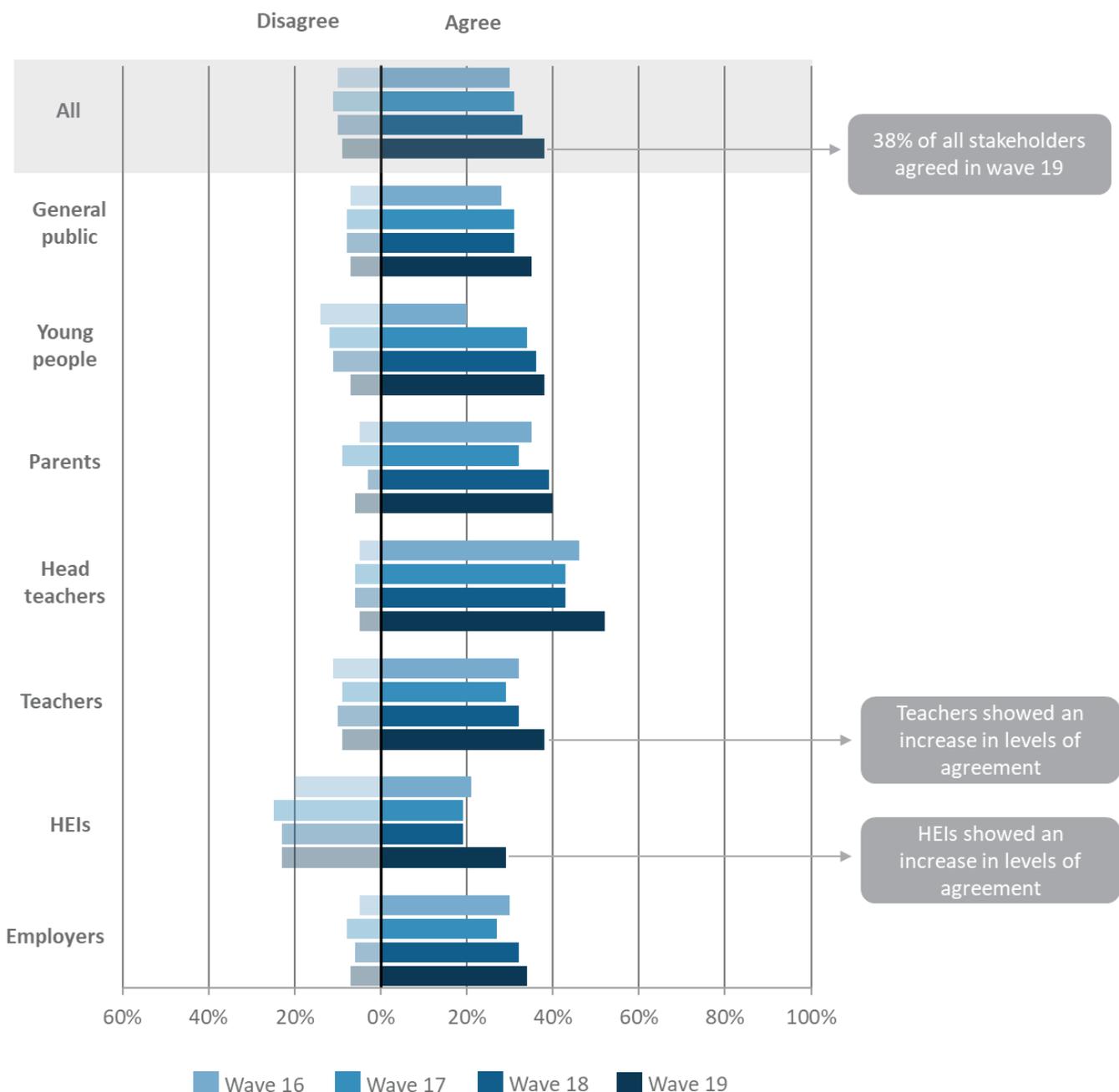


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Skills and preparation

In total, 38% of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study. This was an increase compared with each of the previous waves.

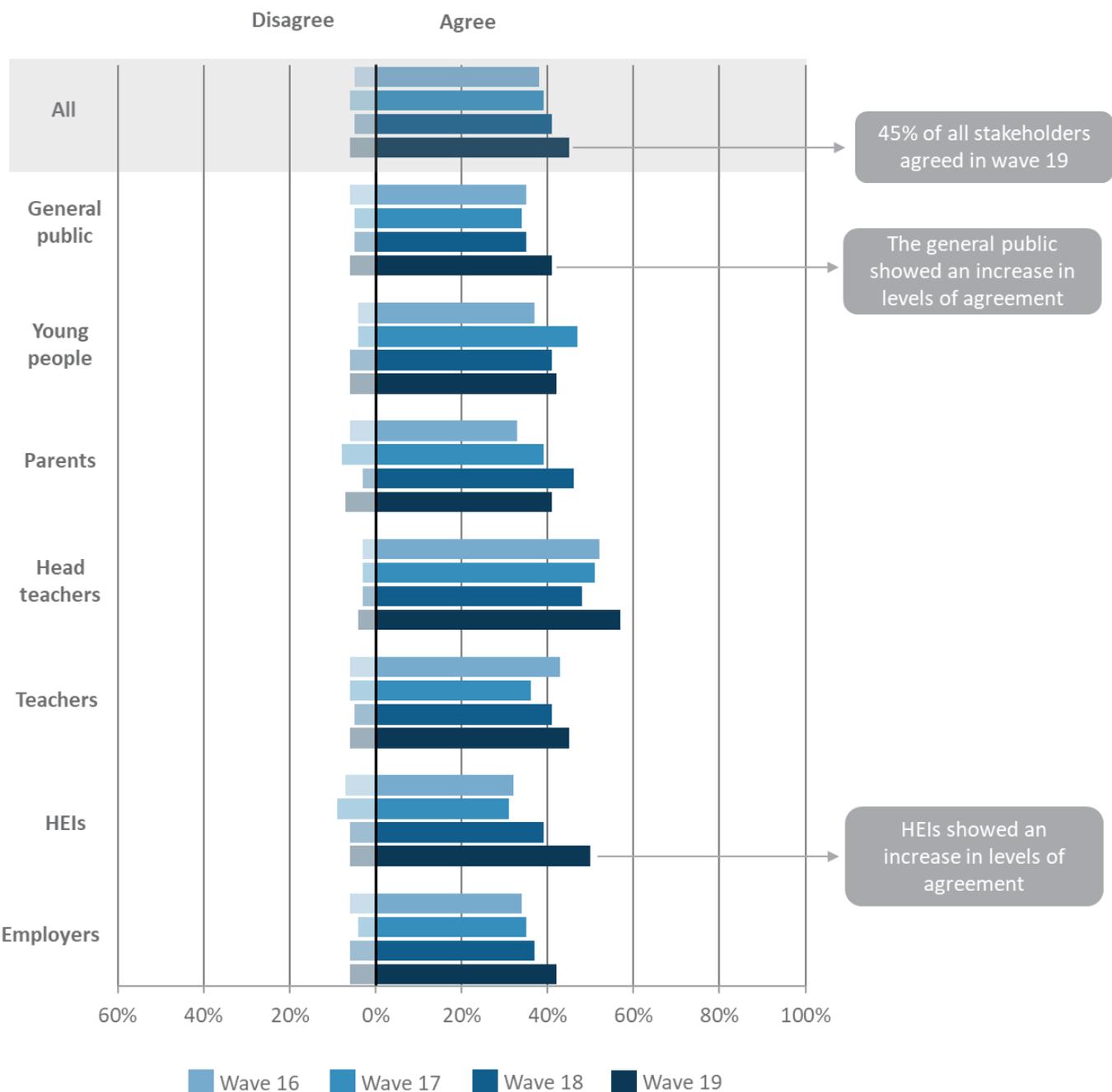
Figure 31. Results for “Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

In wave 19, 45% of respondents agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work. This was an increase compared with each of the previous waves. Respondents remained more likely to share the opinion that Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work than they are for further study.

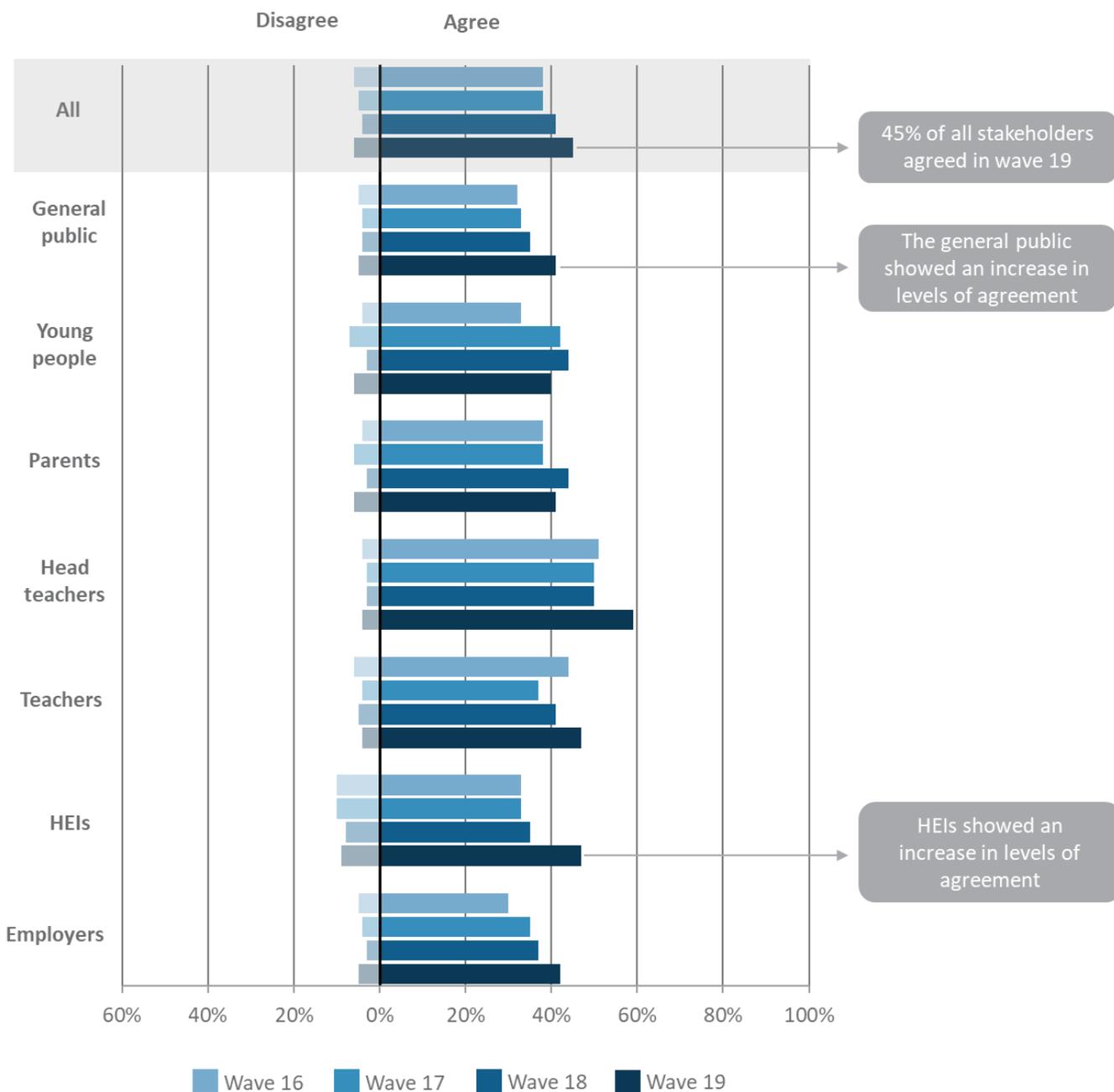
Figure 32. Results for “Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work.”



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

In total, 45% of respondents agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications develop a broad range of skills for students. This has increased compared with each of the previous waves.

Figure 33. Results for “Applied General qualifications develop a broad range of skills for students.”

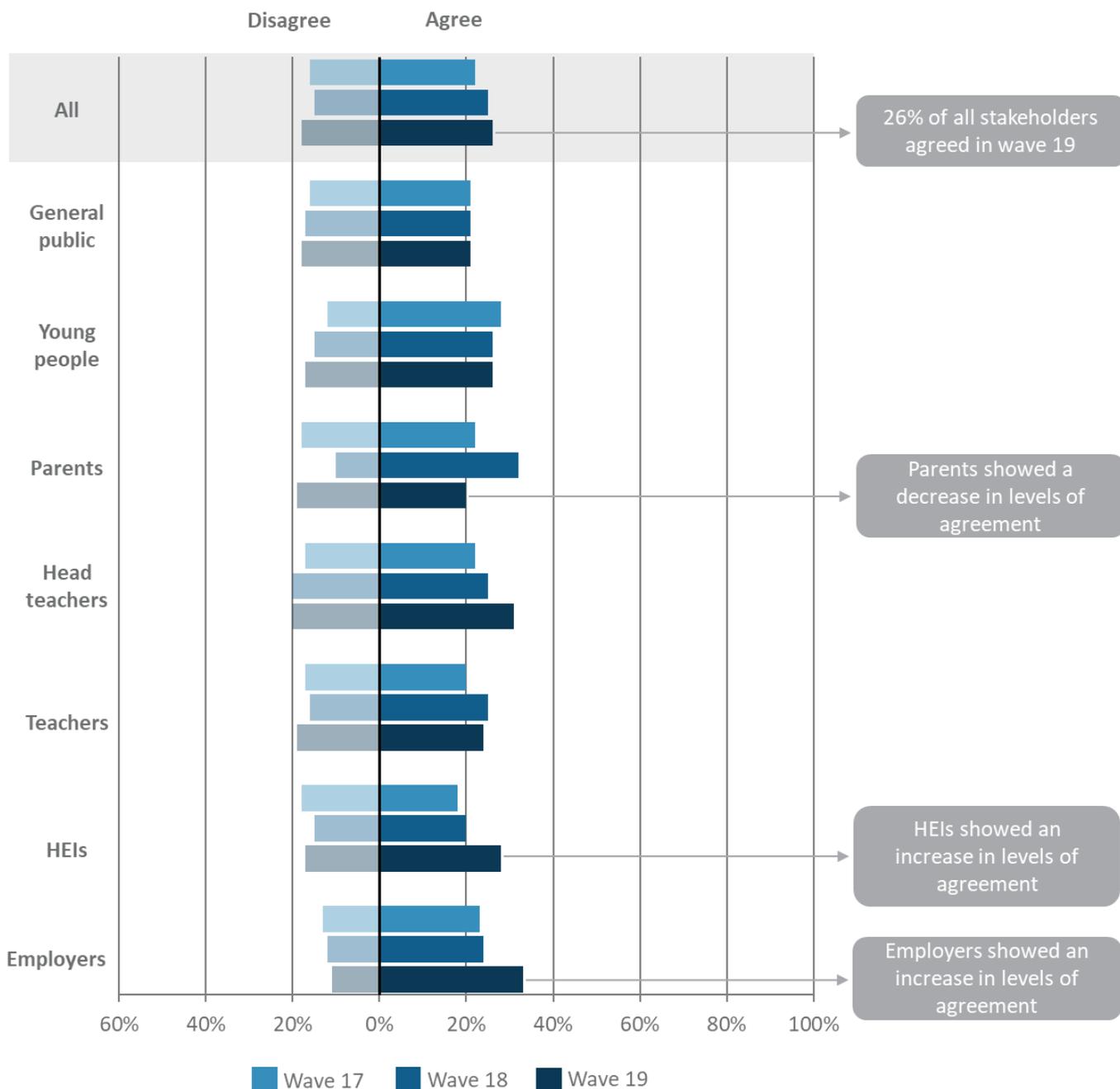


Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Value for money

Overall, approximately a quarter of respondents in wave 19 agreed that, in general, Applied General qualifications offer value for money. This was consistent with the previous wave.

Figure 34. Results for “Applied General qualifications offer “value for money””



Respondents were shown a 5-point agreement scale. Agree is an aggregation of strongly agree and agree and disagree an aggregation of strongly disagree and disagree.

Note: This survey item was included for the first time in wave 17.

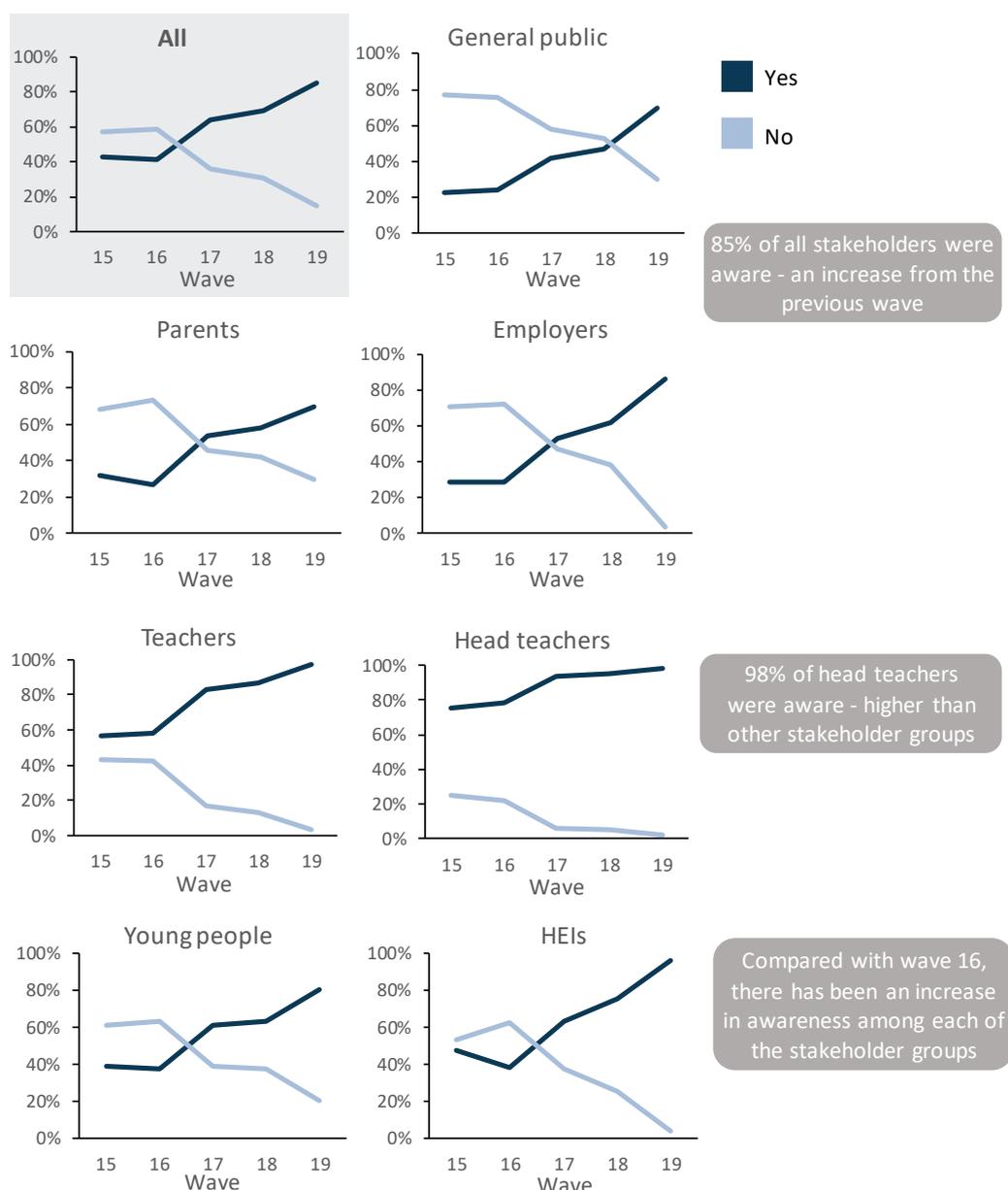
Section 6: The review of marking and moderation, and appeals against results for GCSEs, and AS and A levels

Awareness and perceptions

For the following survey item, the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 2,141; General public 1,006; Parents 274; Young people 266; Teachers 654; Head teachers 200; HEIs 257; Employers 246.

Eighty-five percent of respondents were aware that there is a review of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSE, and AS and A level results, an increase in awareness compared with all of the previous waves.

Figure 35. Results for “Are you aware that there is a process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and AS/A level results?”

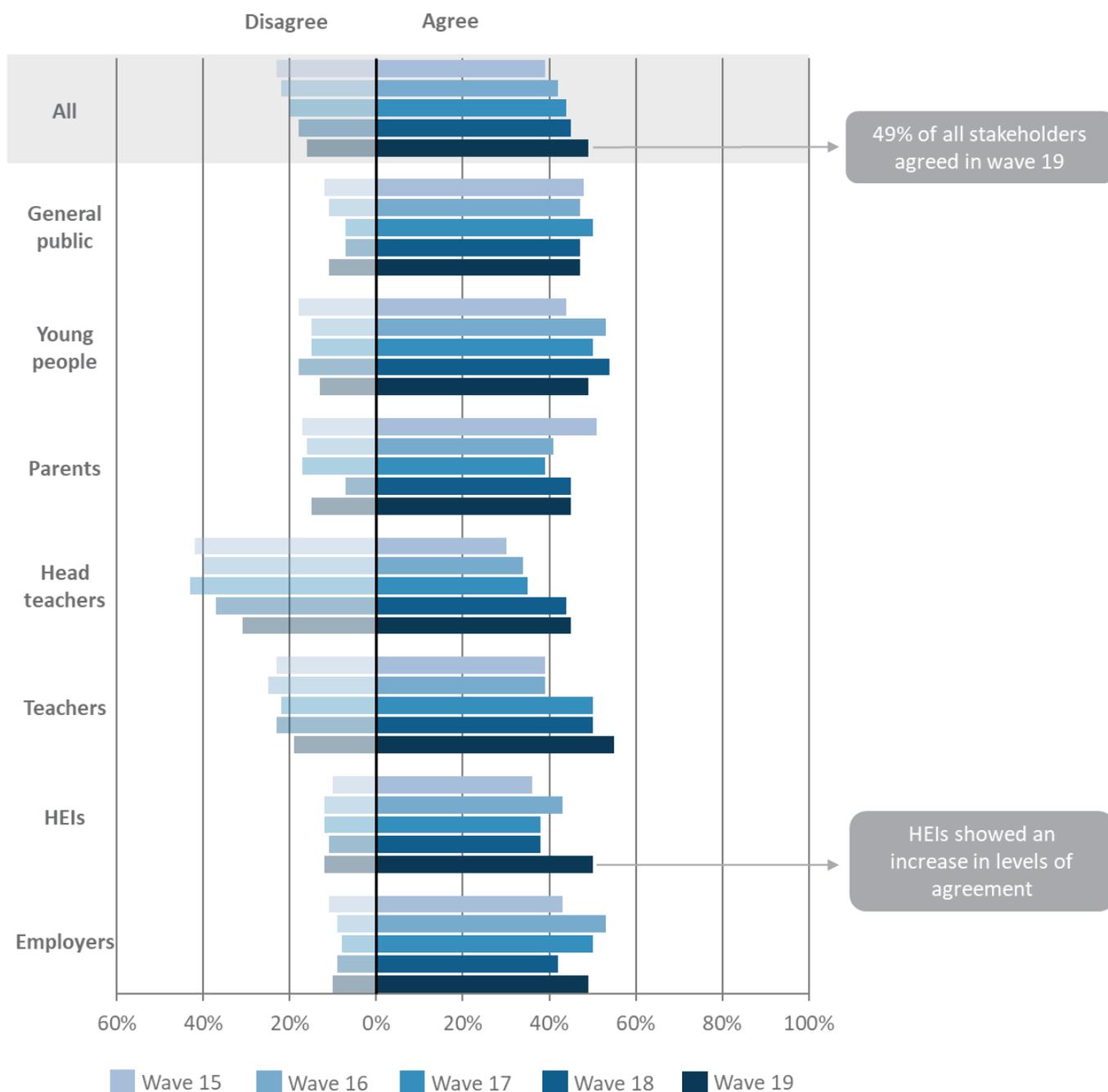


Note: An option for 'Don't know' was not included in waves 17, 18 and 19, but it did feature in previous waves. To allow for comparison, responses for 'No' and 'Don't know' have been combined in this figure for waves 14, 15 and 16. Before wave 17, this question was asked as: "Are you aware that there is a review of marking and moderation, and appeals system (formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals) for GCSE and AS/A level results?" Employers were not included in the sample for this question in wave 14. In wave 19, the question text changed from "Are you aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals system (formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals) for GCSE and AS/A level results?".

For the following 4 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 1,790; General public 710; Parents 192; Young people 208; Teachers 635; Head teachers 196; HEIs 247; Employers 213.

Approximately half (49%) of respondents in wave 19 agreed that the reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSEs is fair. This has increased since wave 15.

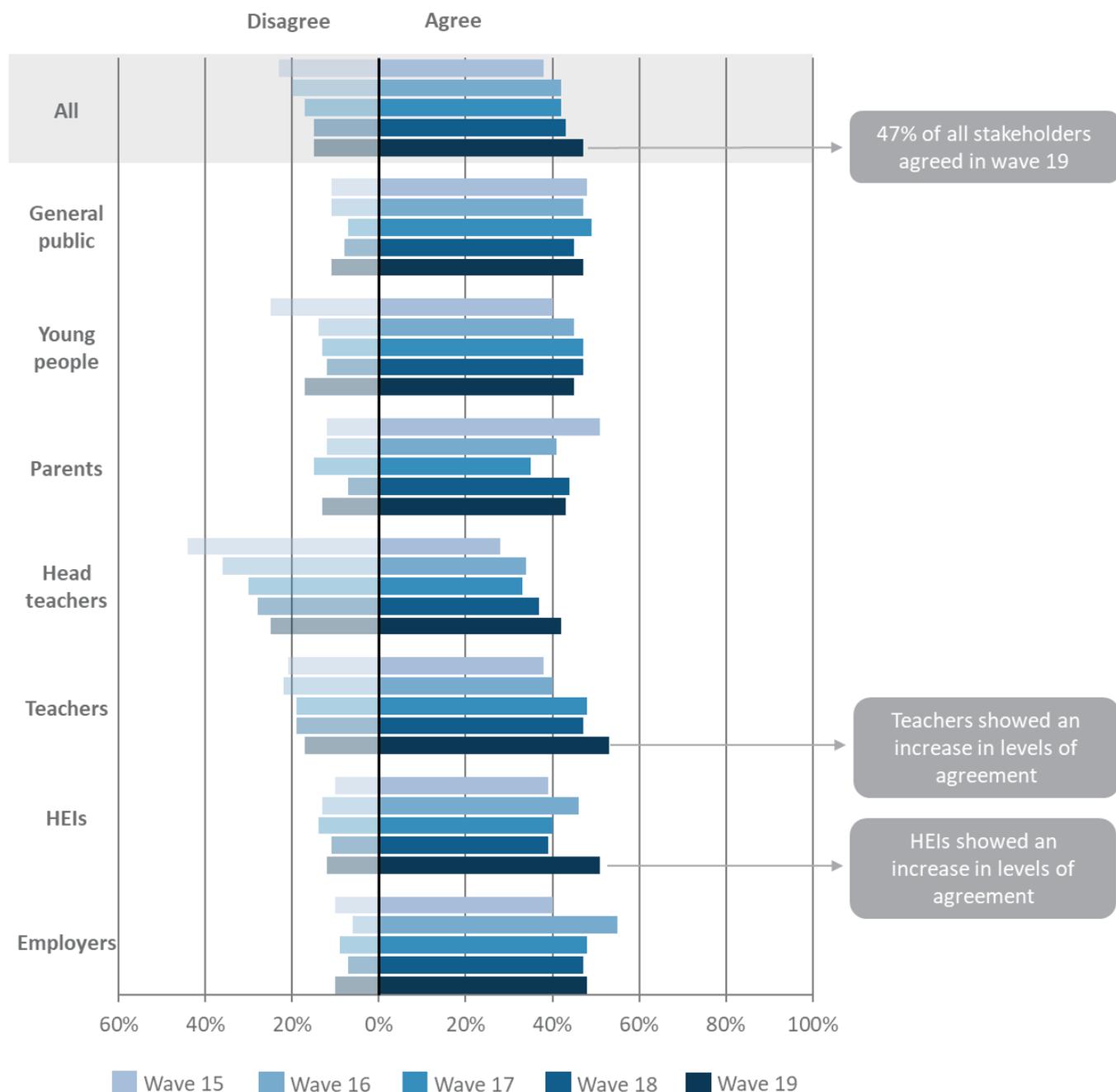
Figure 36. Results for “The process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE results is fair.”



Note: This survey item was available only to those who were aware that there is a review of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSE, and AS and A level results. This survey item was included for the first time in wave 15. Before wave 17, this question included a reference to the system being “formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals”.

In total, 47% agreed that the reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for AS and A levels is fair. This has increased compared with each of the previous waves.

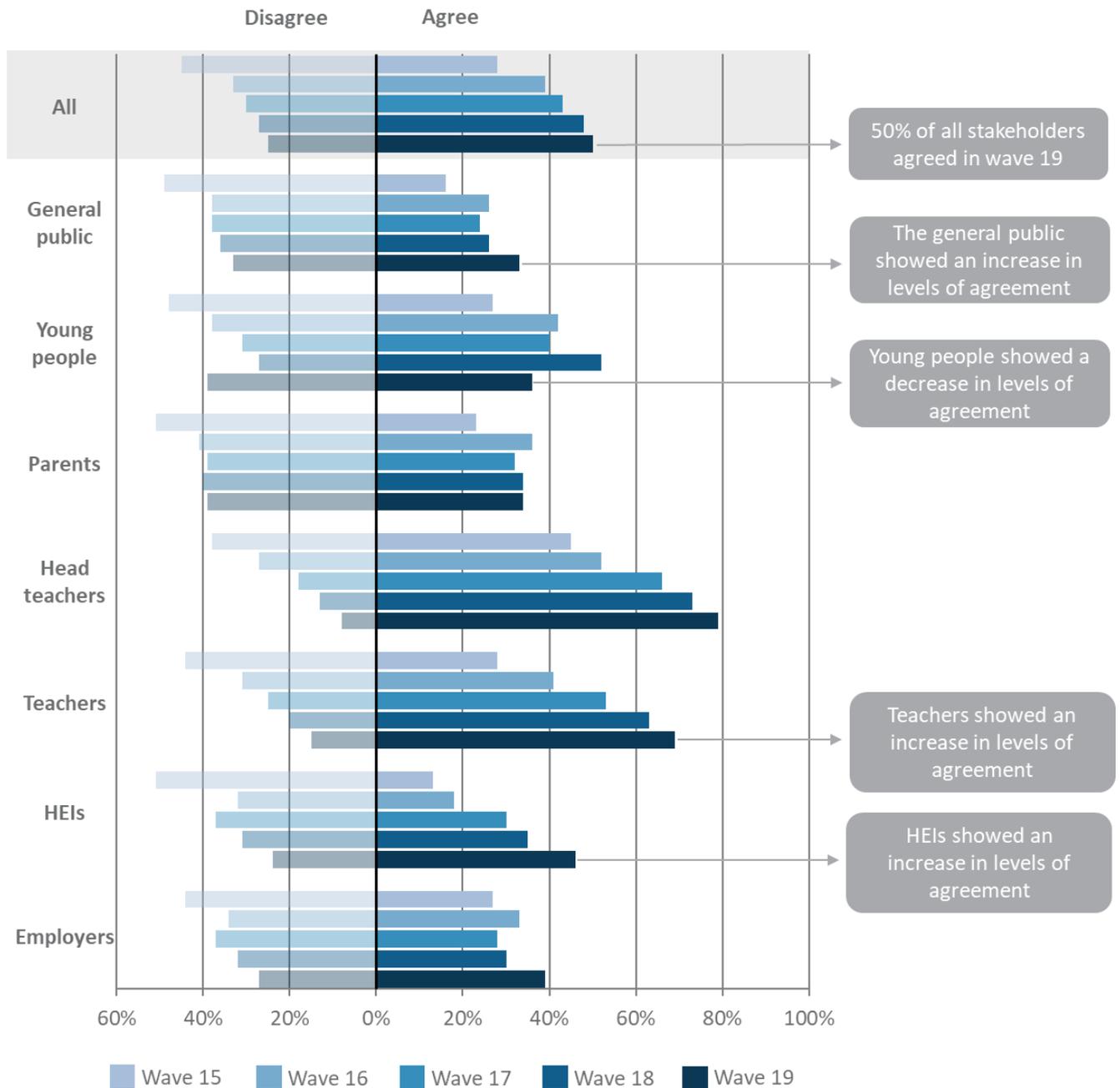
Figure 37. Results for “The process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for AS/A level results is fair.”



Note: This survey item was available only to those who were aware that there is a review of marking and moderation and appeals system for GCSE, and AS and A level results. This survey item was asked for the first time in wave 15. Before wave 17, this question included a reference to the system being “formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals”.

Half of respondents agreed that they have adequate information about the reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSEs, and AS and A levels. This has been a sustained increase in levels of agreement since wave 15.

Figure 38. Results for “I have adequate information about the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and AS/A level results.”



Note: This survey item was available only to those who were aware that there is a review of marking and moderation, and appeals system for GCSE, and AS and A level results. This survey item was asked for the first time in wave 15. Before wave 17, this question included a reference to the system being “formerly known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals”. In wave 19, the question text changed from “I have adequate information about the changes to the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (formally known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals) for GCSEs and AS/A levels?”.

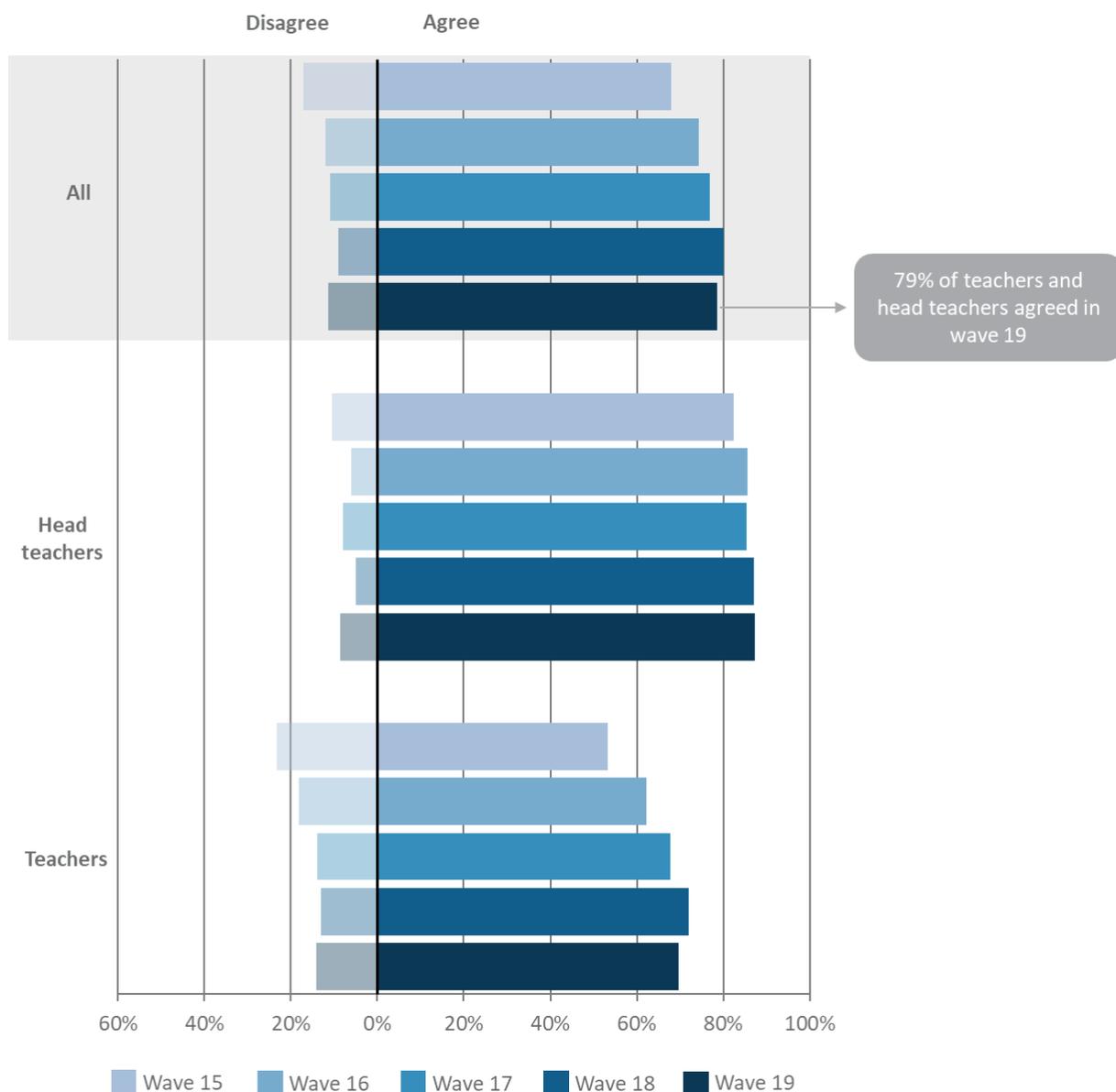
Section 7: Special consideration and reasonable adjustments for GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications

Special consideration

For the following 6 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 556; Teachers 589; Head teachers 187. These survey items were available only to teachers and head teachers, therefore 'All' in the following items represent only head teachers and teachers.

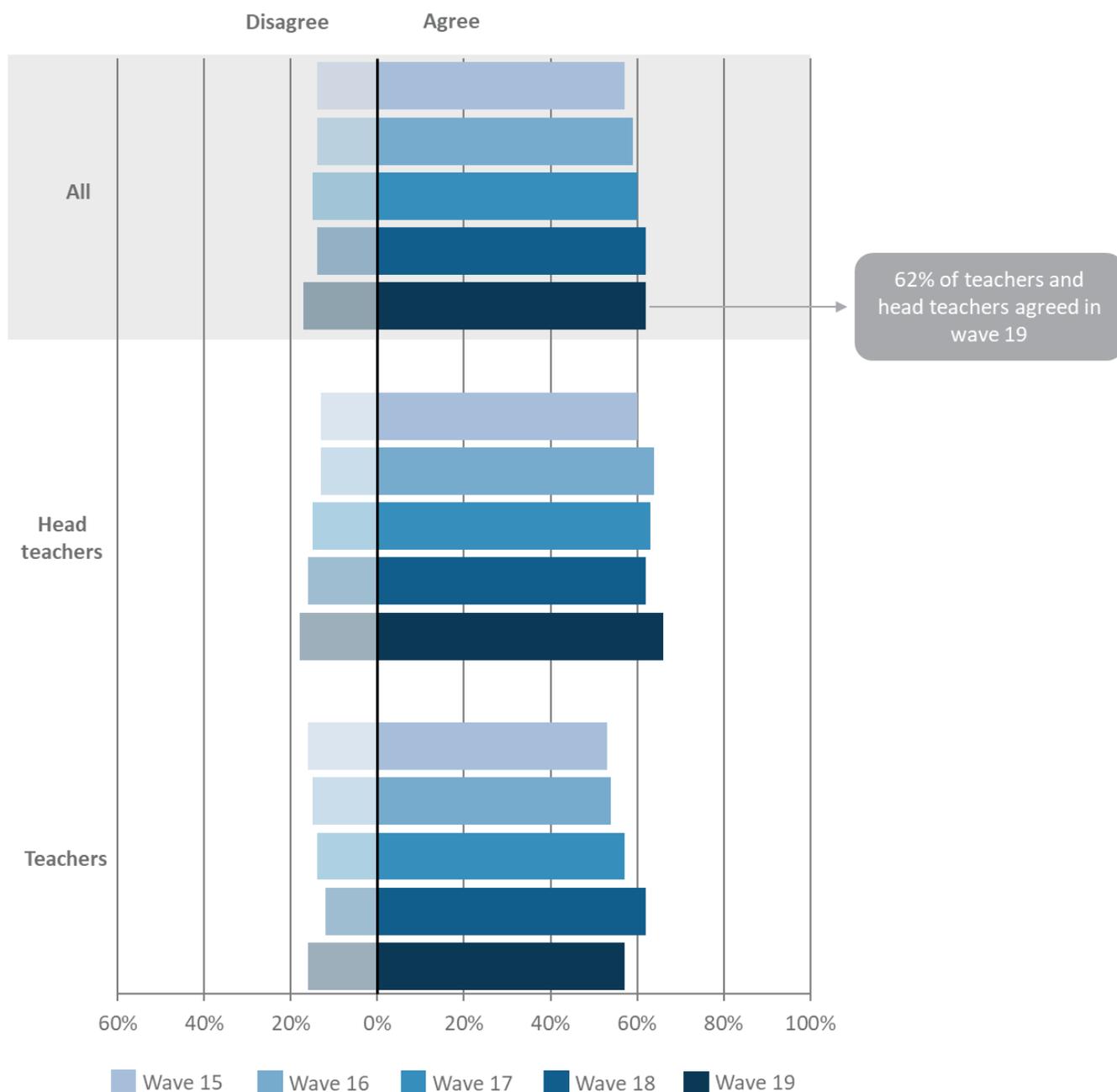
Overall, approximately eight in ten head teachers and teachers agree that they have adequate information about the arrangements available for a GCSE, or AS or A level student who is eligible for special consideration. This was an increase in agreement from wave 15.

Figure 39. Results for “I have adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE or AS/A level student who is eligible for special consideration.”



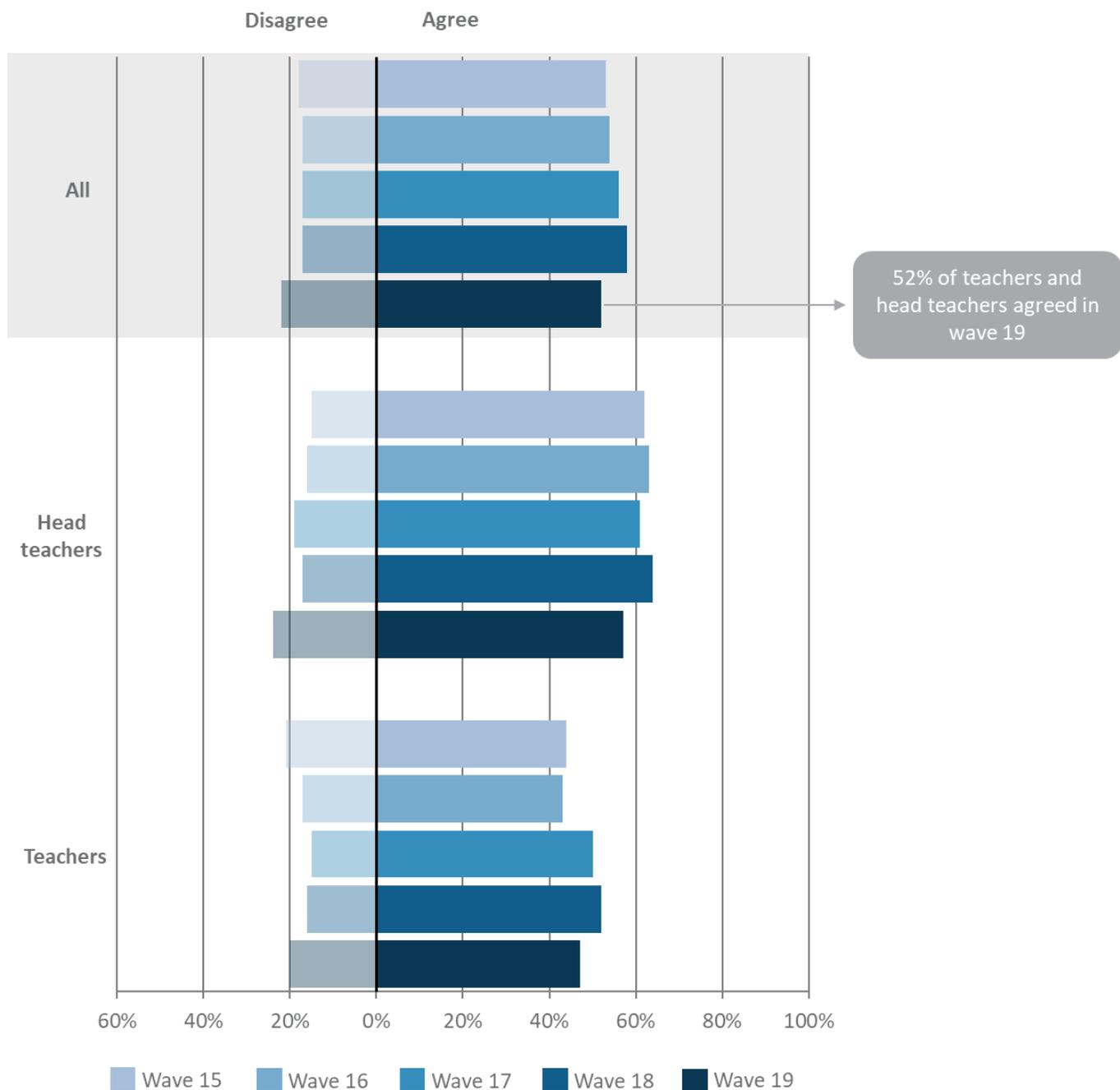
Approximately six in ten head teachers and teachers agreed that special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE, and AS and A level students. This was consistent with the previous waves.

Figure 40. Results for “Special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students.”



Approximately half of head teachers and teachers agreed that the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE, and AS and A level students in the current special consideration system. This was a decrease from wave 18.

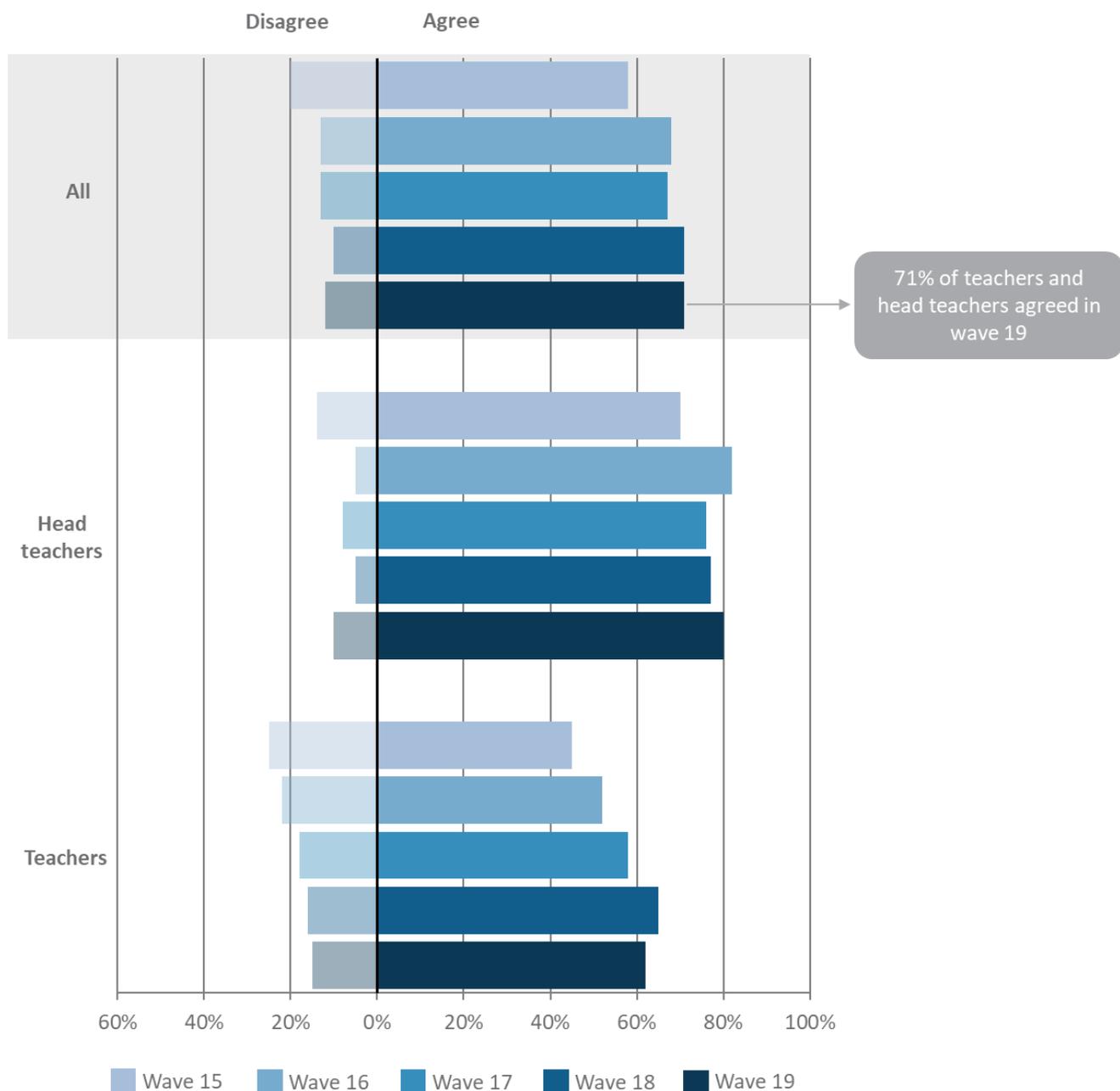
Figure 41. Results for “In the current special consideration system, the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level students.”



Reasonable adjustments

Approximately seven in ten head teachers and teachers agreed that they have adequate information about the adjustments available for a disabled² GCSE, or AS or A level student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments. This was an increase since wave 15.

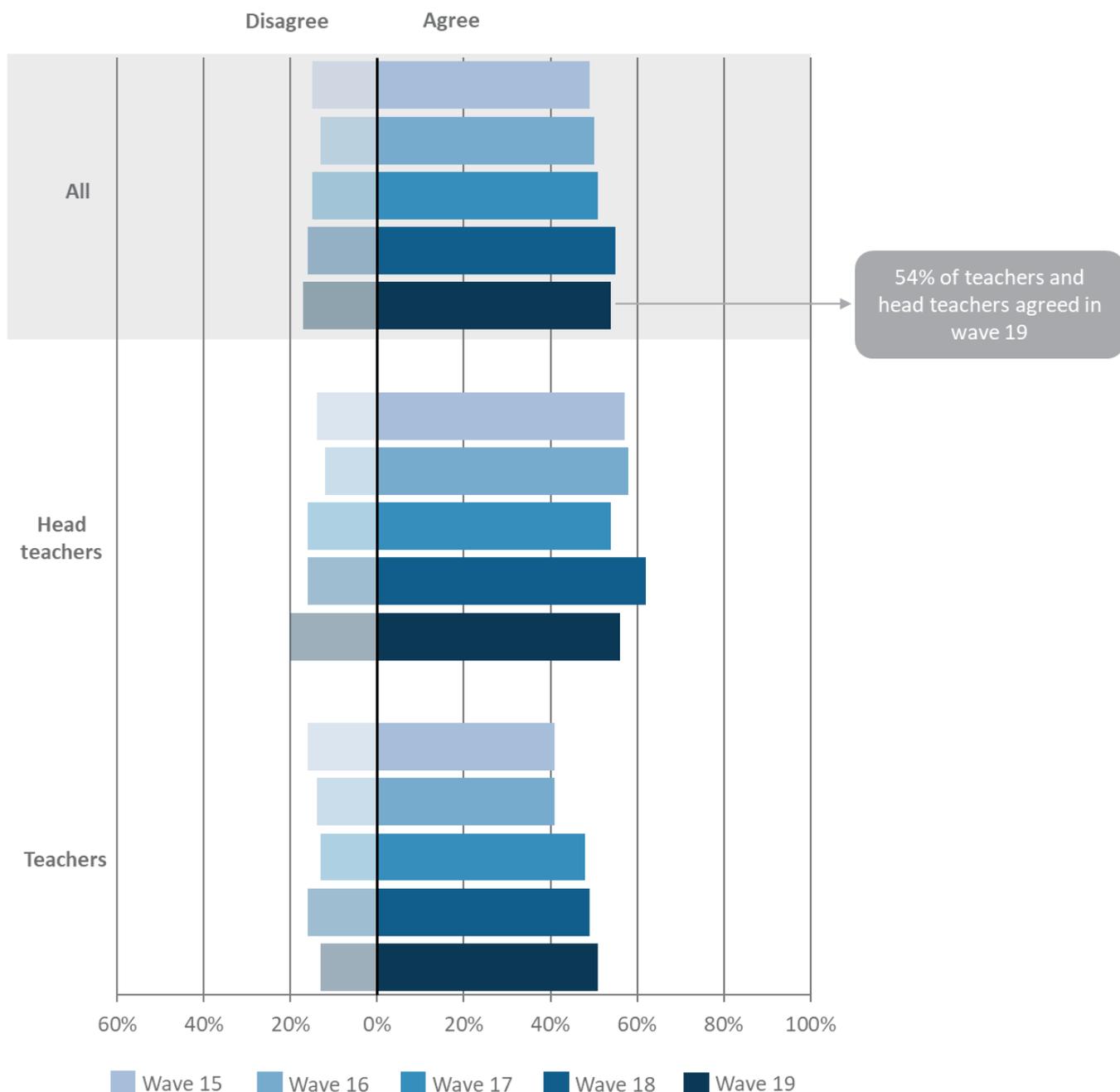
Figure 42. Results for “I have adequate information about the adjustments that are available for a GCSE or AS/A level disabled student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments.”



² Being disabled under the Equality Act 2010 is defined as having a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities.

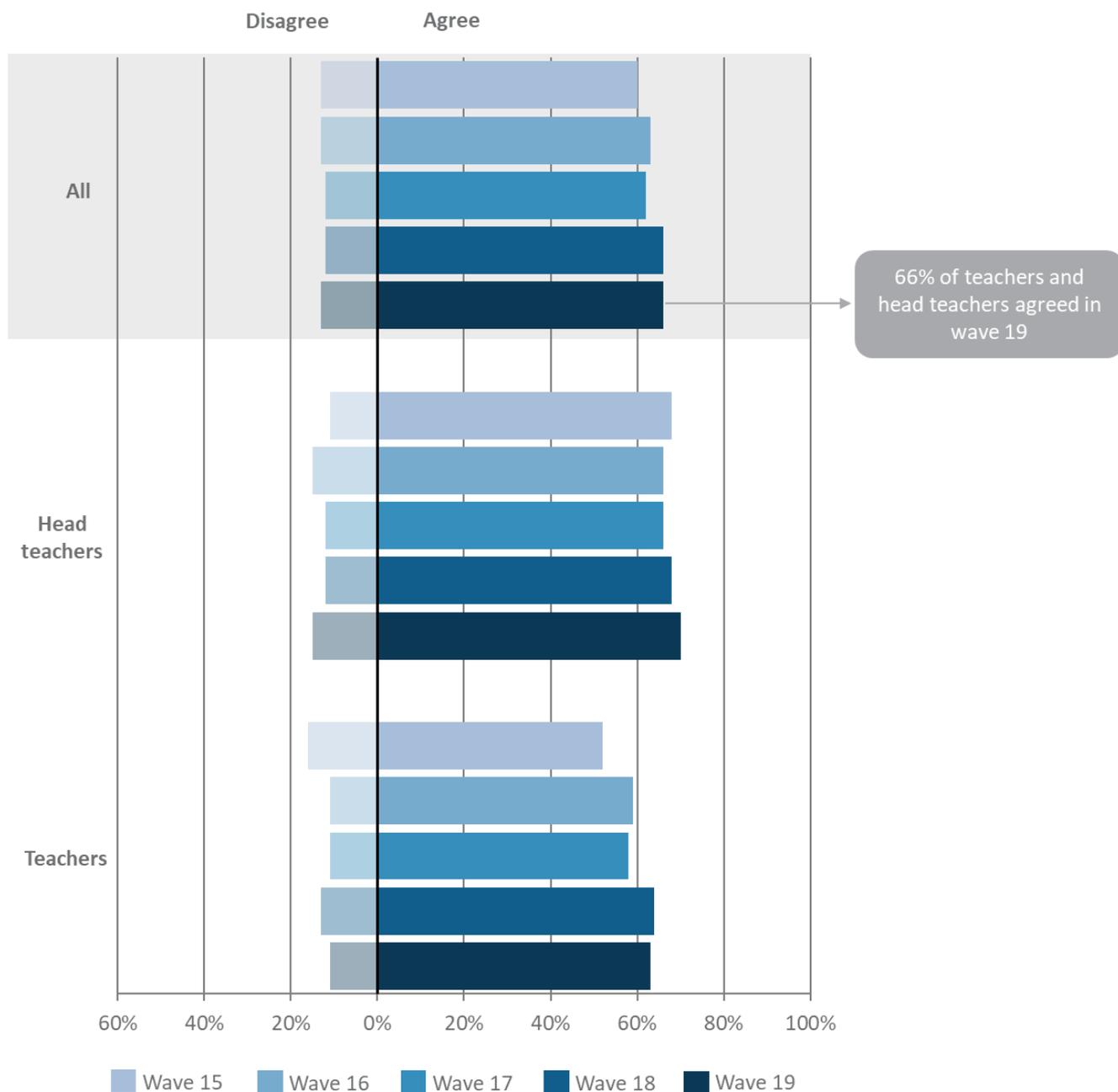
In total, 54% of head teachers and teachers overall agreed that the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE, and AS and A level disabled students. This was consistent with the previous waves.

Figure 43. Results for “Currently, the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE and AS/A level disabled students.”



In total, 66% of head teachers and teachers agreed that reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE, and AS and A level students. This was higher than wave 15 but consistent with waves 18, 17 and 16.

Figure 44. Results for “Reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and AS/A level students.”



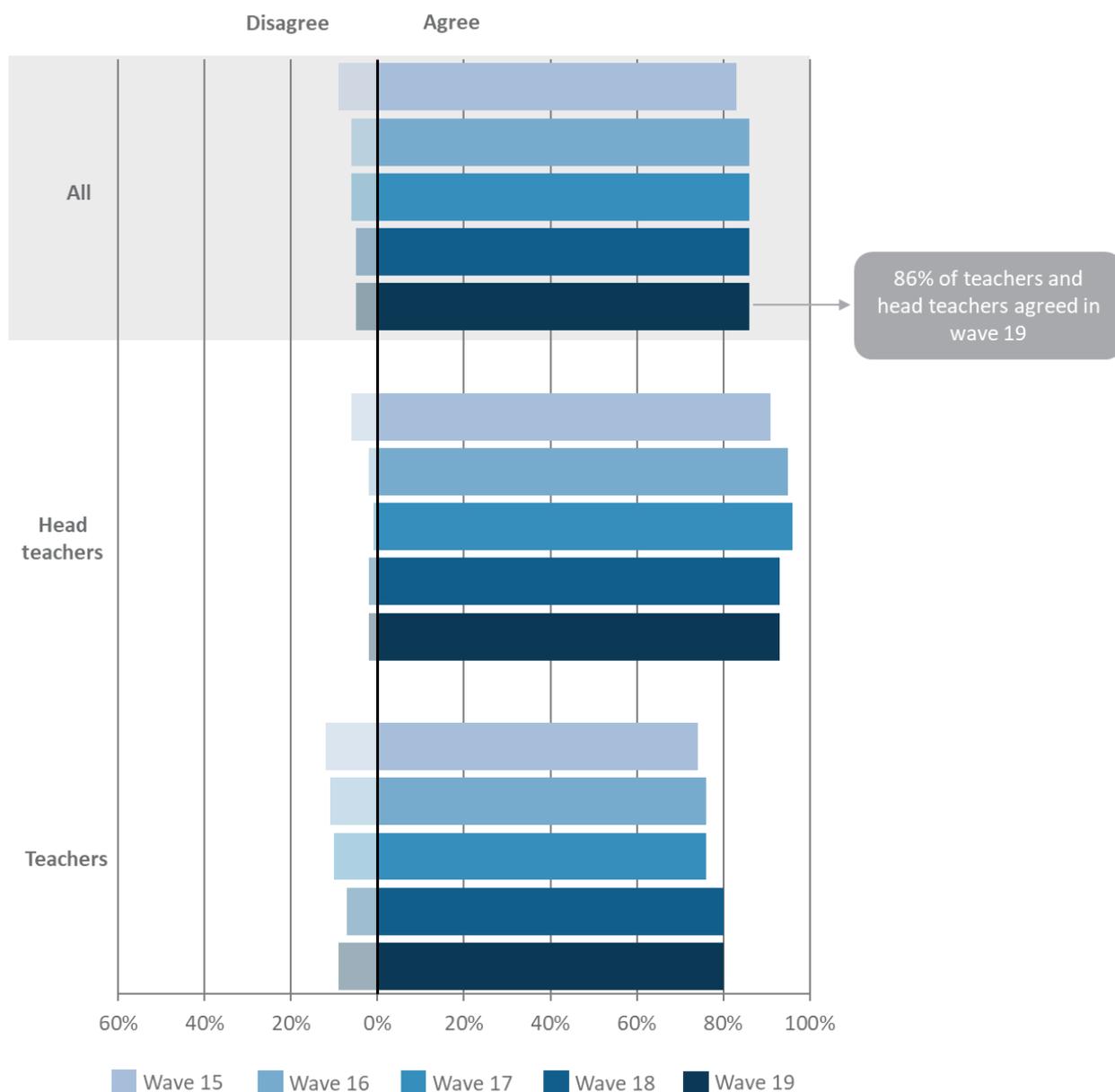
Section 8: Malpractice for GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications

Awareness and perceptions

For the following 4 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 556; Teachers 589; Head teachers 187. These survey items were available only to teachers and head teachers, therefore 'All' in the following items represent only head teachers and teachers.

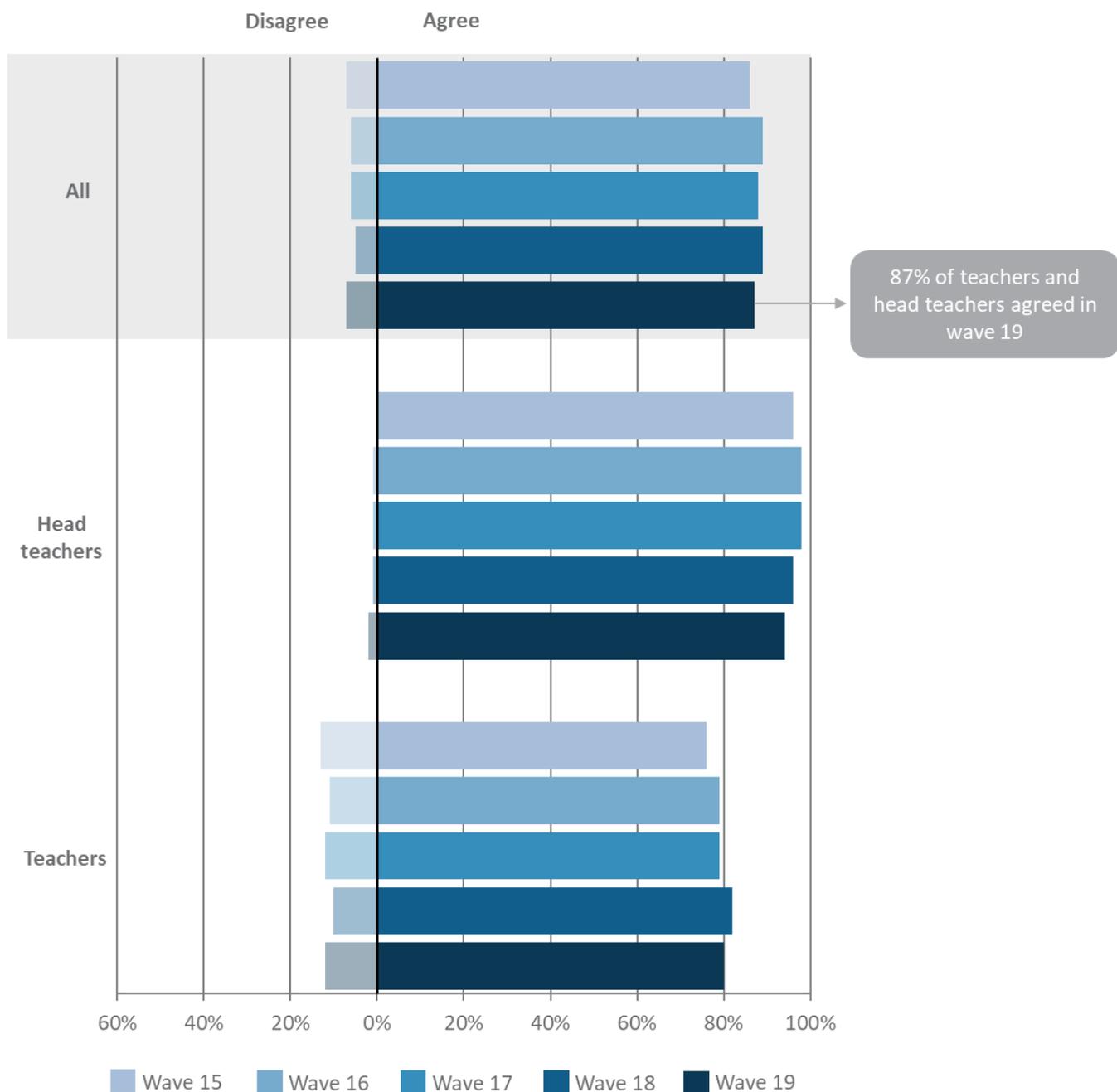
Among head teachers and teachers, 86% agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs, and AS and A levels. This was consistent with the previous waves.

Figure 45. Results for “I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels.”



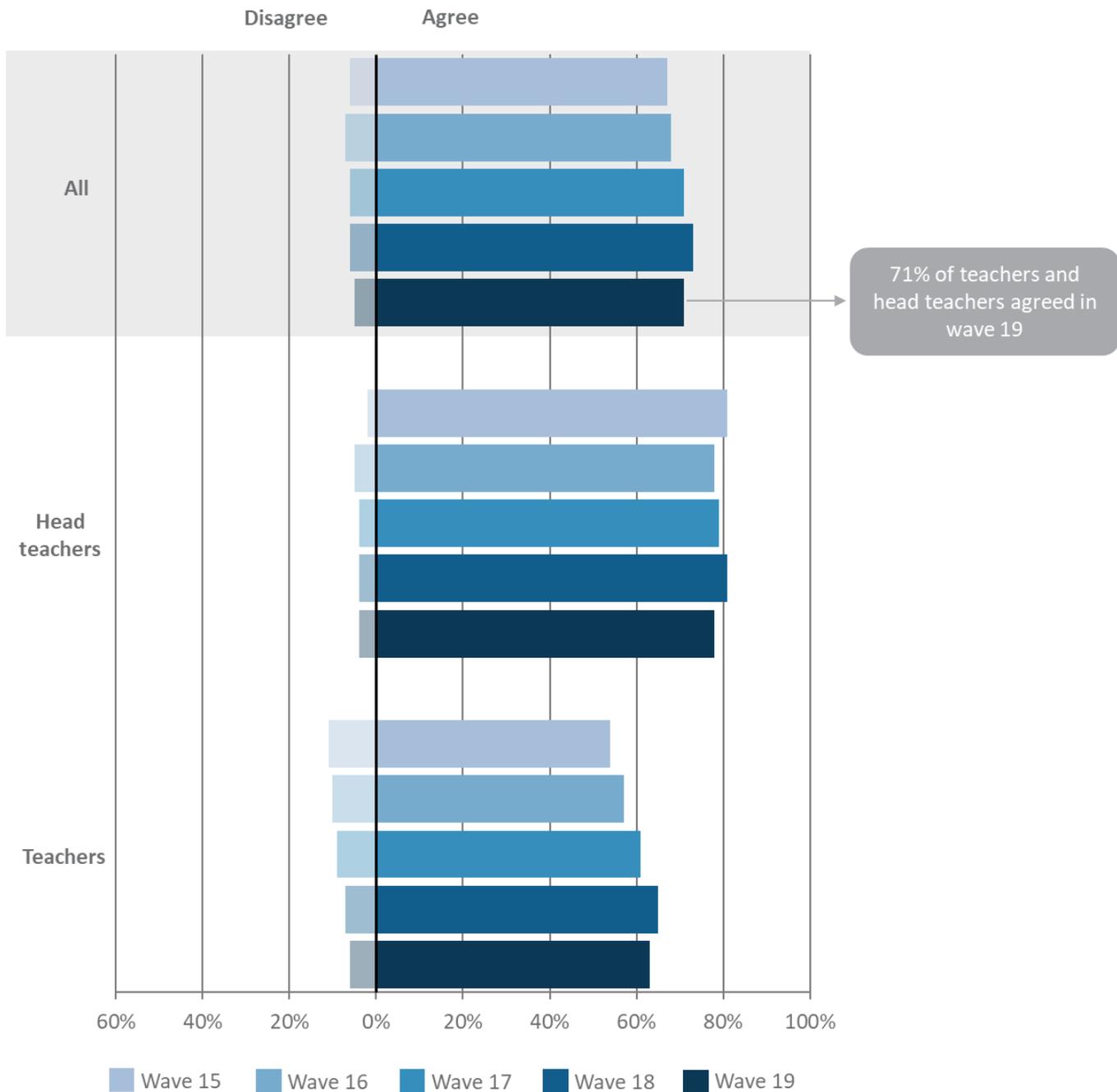
Consistent with the previous waves, 87% of head teachers and teachers agreed that they know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice in GCSEs, and AS and A levels in wave 19.

Figure 46. Results for “I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for GCSEs and AS/A levels.”



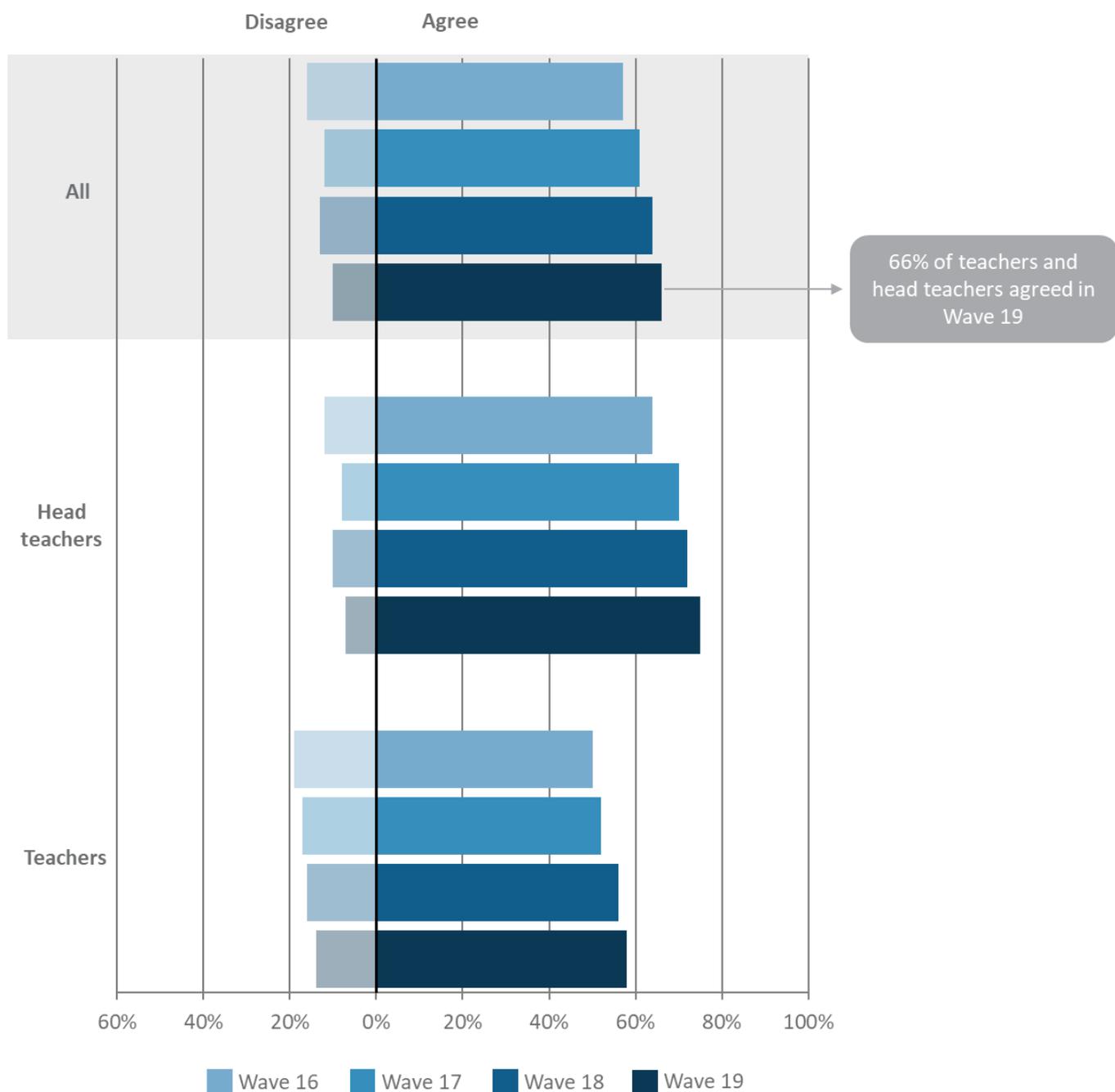
Approximately seven in ten head teachers and teachers agreed that they are confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated in GCSEs, and AS and A levels. This was consistent with each of the previous waves.

Figure 47. Results for “I am confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs and AS/A levels.”



In total, 66% of head teachers and teachers agreed that they are confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs, and AS and A levels, consistent with wave 18 and an increase since waves 17 and 16.

Figure 48. Results for “I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs and AS/A levels.”



Note: This survey item was included for the first time in wave 16.

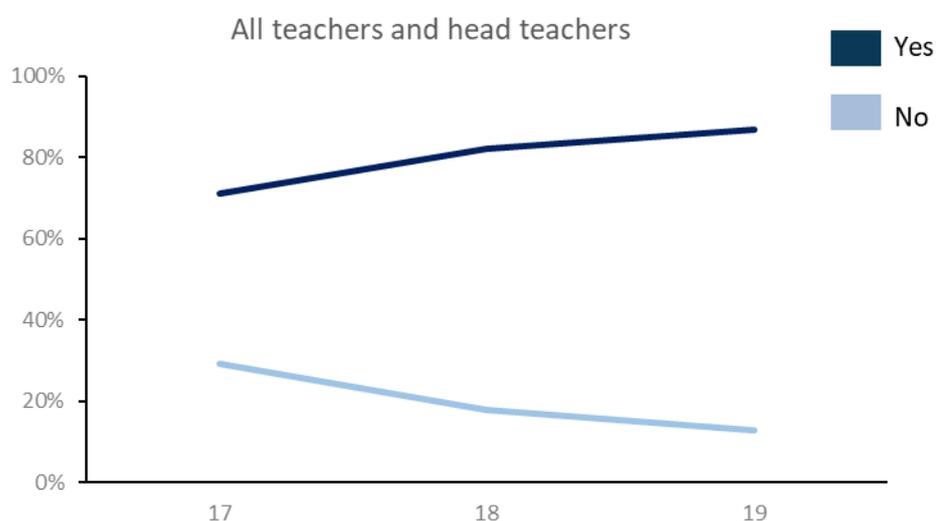
Section 9: Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications

Awareness and perceptions

For the following survey item, the wave 19 effective base was: All who teach Applied General qualifications 80; Head teachers 45, Teachers 47. Due to sample sizes, head teachers and teachers are reported as one group.

In total, 87% of teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications were aware of the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges.

Figure 49. Results for “Are you aware of the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges?”

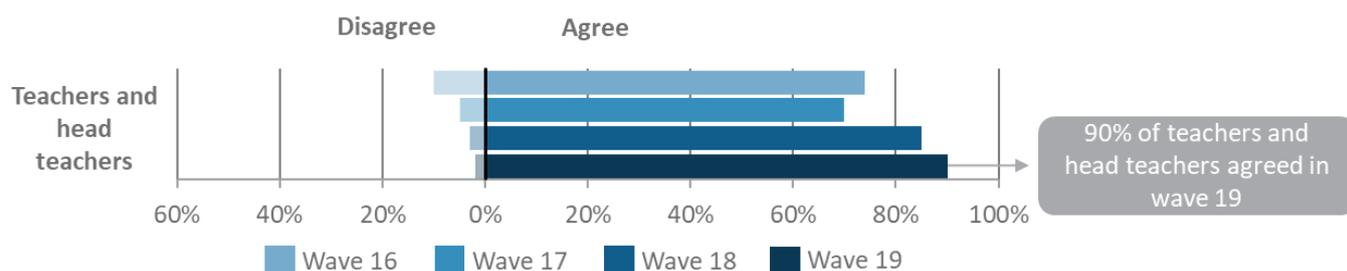


Note: This survey item was previously asked to all respondents but was amended in wave 18 to be only asked to head teachers and teachers who teach Applied General qualifications. The wave 17 figures have been rebased to be consistent with the wave 18 data. In wave 16 the respondent base size for teachers or head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications was small (<50). Therefore, data relating to wave 16 is not included here.

For the following 2 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All who teach Applied General qualifications and were aware of the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges 66; Head teachers 43, Teachers 31. Due to sample sizes, head teachers and teachers are reported as one group.

In total, nine in ten teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.

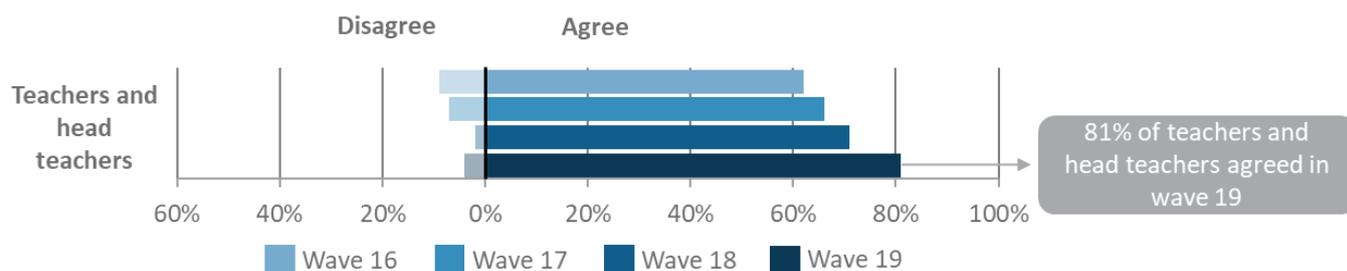
Figure 50. Results for “I have adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



Note: This survey item was previously asked to all respondents but was amended in wave 18 to be only asked to head teachers and teachers. The wave 16 and wave 17 figures have been rebased to be consistent with the wave 18 data.

Approximately, eight in ten teachers and head teachers agreed that they are confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges.

Figure 51. Results for “I am confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges.”



Note: This survey item was previously asked to all respondents but was amended in wave 18 to be only asked to head teachers and teachers. The wave 16 and wave 17 figures have been rebased to be consistent with the wave 18 data.

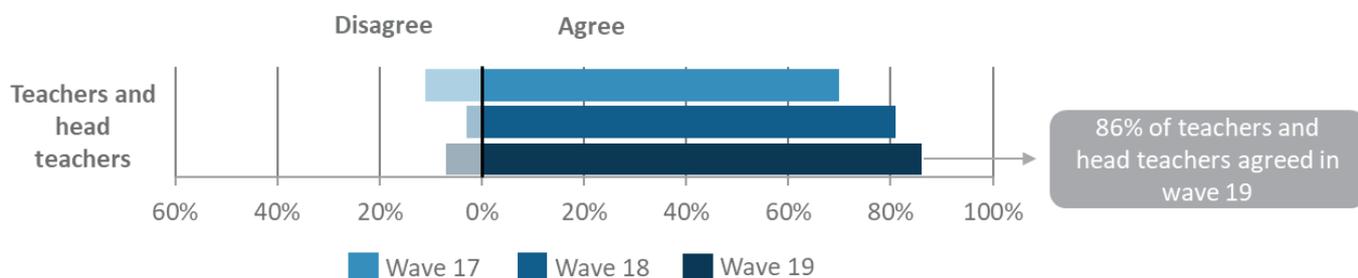
Section 10: Malpractice for Applied General qualifications

Awareness and perceptions

For the following 4 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 80; Head teachers 45, teachers 47. These survey items were available only to teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications. Due to sample sizes, head teachers and teachers are reported as one group.

In wave 19, 86% of teachers and head teachers agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications. This was comparable with the previous wave and an increase since wave 17.

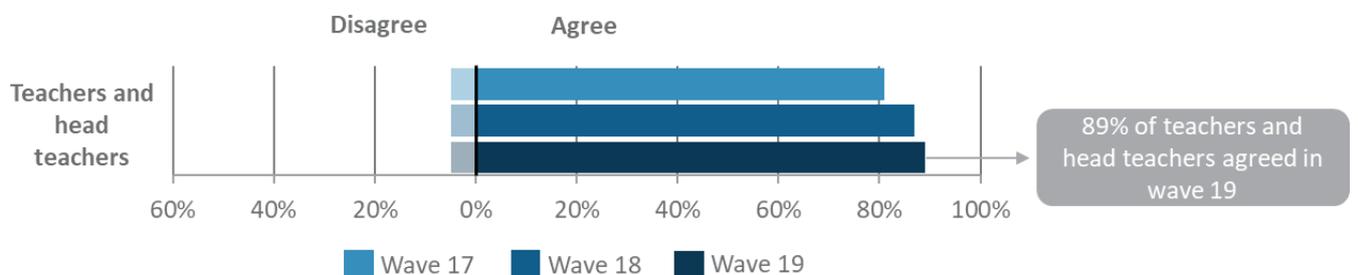
Figure 52. Results for “I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



In wave 16 the base size for teachers or head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications was too small (<50) for the data to be shown.

Overall, approximately nine in ten teachers and head teachers agreed that they know to whom to report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications. This was consistent with each of the previous waves.

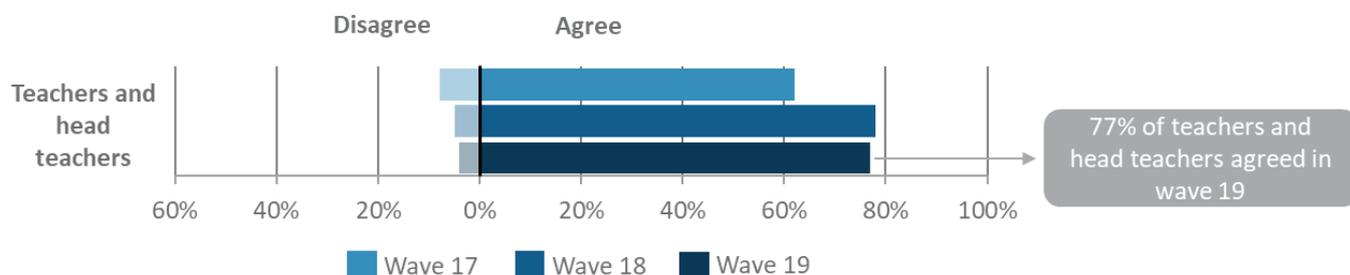
Figure 53. Results for “I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



In wave 16 the base size for teachers or head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications was too small (<50) for the data to be shown.

In total, 77% of teachers and head teachers agreed that they are confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications are fairly investigated, higher than the proportion who disagreed. This was consistent with wave 18 and an increase in levels of agreement since wave 17.

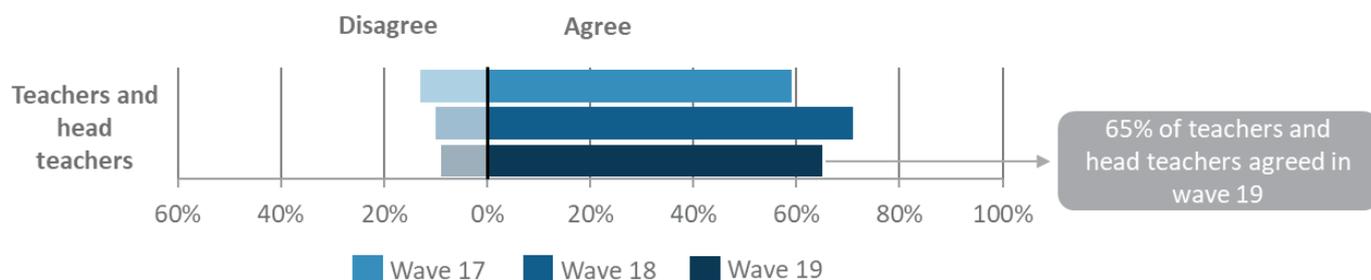
Figure 54. Results for “I am confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges are fairly investigated.”



In wave 16 the base size for teachers or head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications was too small (<50) for the data to be shown.

In wave 19, 65% of respondents agreed that they were confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications, higher than the proportion who disagreed. This was comparable with each of the previous waves.

Figure 55. Results for “I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



In wave 16 the base size for teachers or head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications was too small (<50) for the data to be shown.

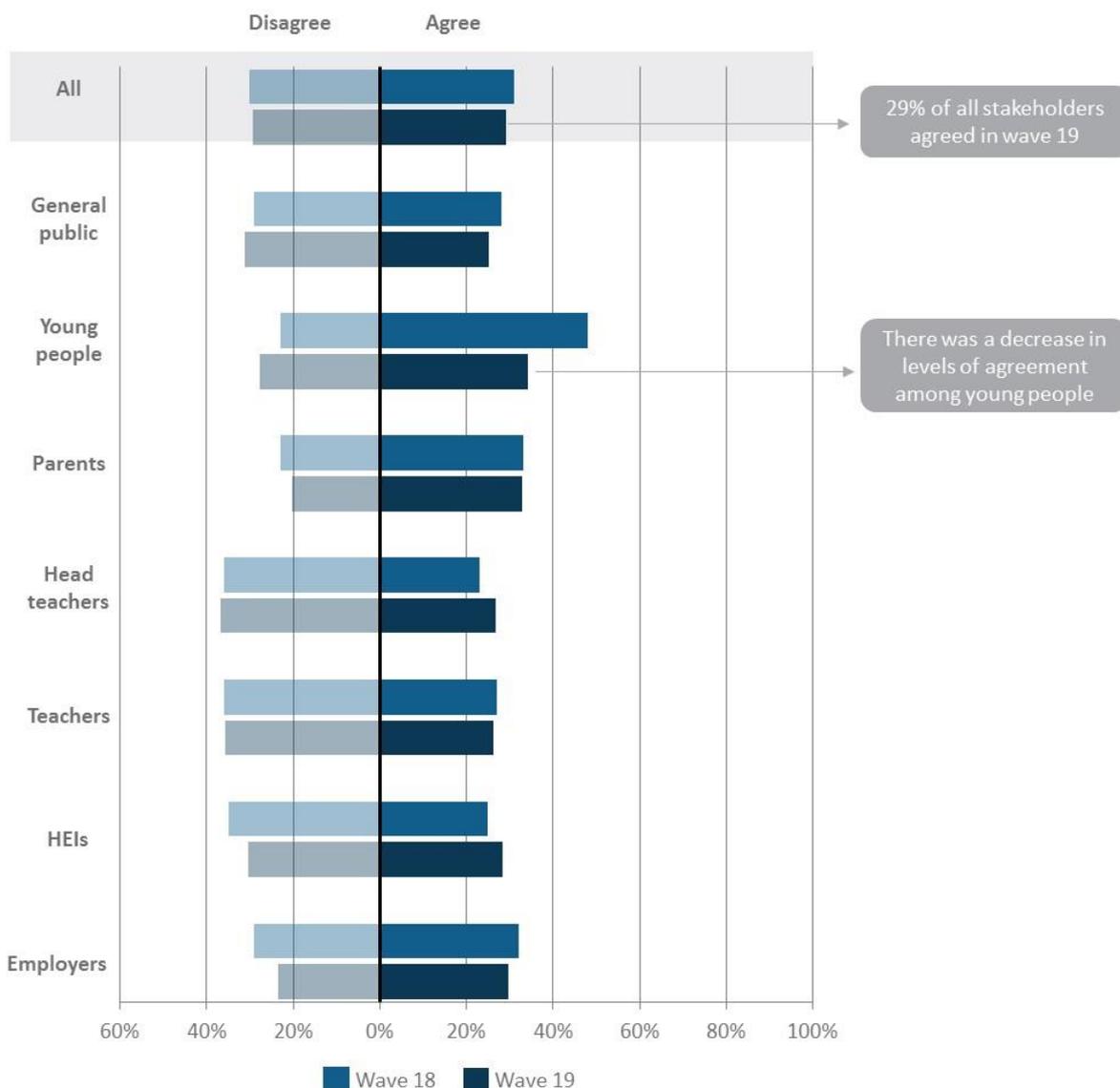
Section 11: Innovations

Onscreen examinations

For the following 2 survey items the wave 19 effective base was: All responses 2,141; General public 1,006; Parents 274; Young people 266; Teachers 654; Head teachers 200; HEIs 257; Employers 246.

Approximately three in ten respondents agreed that onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations, equal to the proportion who disagreed. This was comparable with the previous wave.

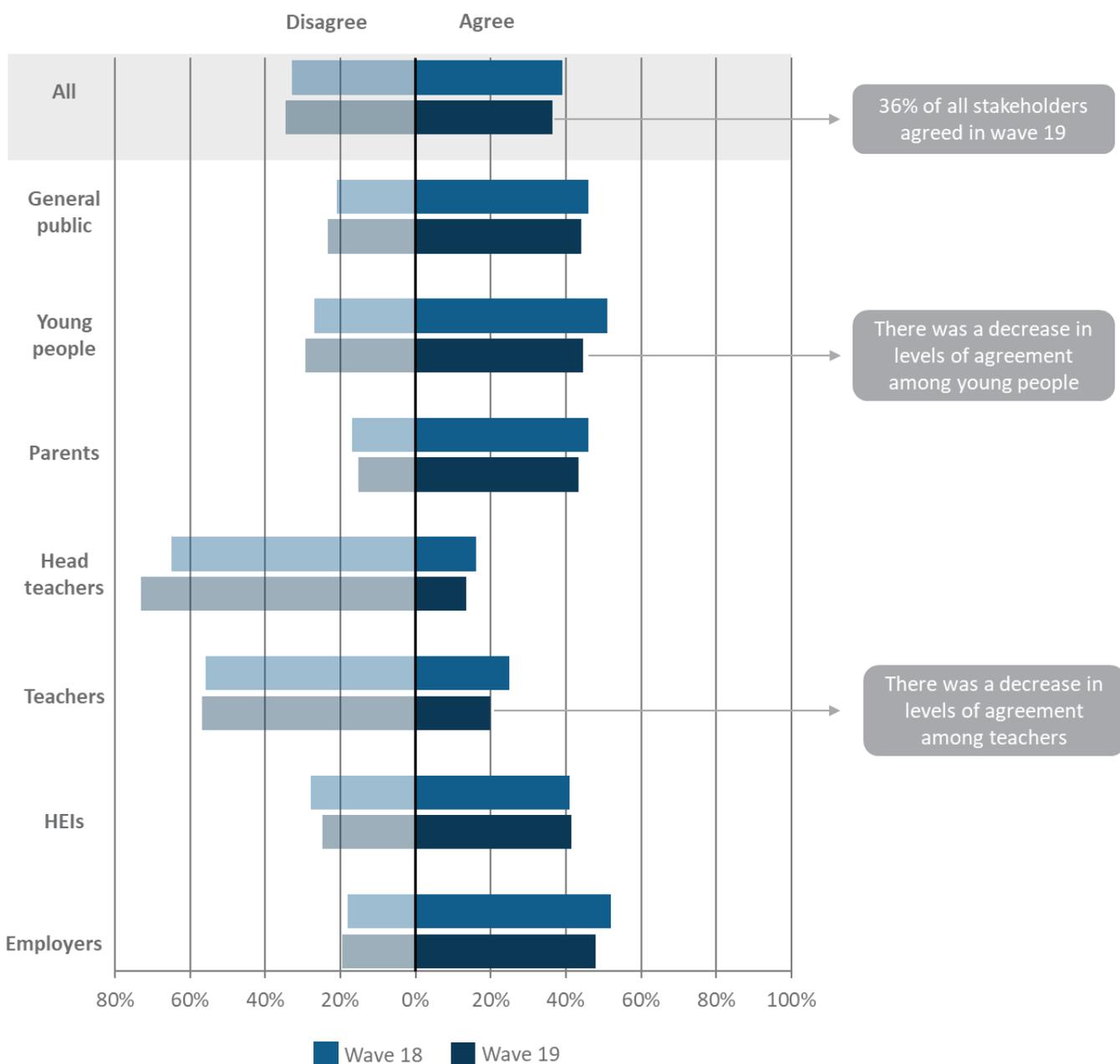
Figure 56. Results for “Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and AS/A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations.”



Note: This survey item was included for the first time in wave 18.

In total, 36% of respondents agreed that onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE, and AS and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations, comparable to the proportion who disagreed. This was comparable with the previous wave.

Figure 57. Results for “Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and AS/A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations.”



Note: This survey item was included for the first time in wave 18.