

Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

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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

Every year Ofqual commissions a survey on the Perceptions of General Qualifications. It aims to explore perceptions of GCSE, A level and Applied General qualifications, as well as levels of confidence in aspects of the examination system in England. This report presents the findings of wave 21 of this survey conducted by YouGov in 2022.

In interpreting these results, it is important to note that 2022 saw the return of exams and formal assessments following 2 years in which alternative arrangements had been put in place due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Given the unique circumstances in 2022, the survey included a 2022-specific section to gauge perceptions based solely on that year. In all other sections participants were asked to reflect on their general perceptions of the system. To provide contextual information and details on the methodology, [a background note is published](#) alongside this report.

A range of stakeholders took part in this survey:

- young people
- parents
- teachers
- head teachers
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- employers
- the general public

The full report provides detailed findings on respondents' perceptions of, and confidence in, qualifications and the examination system in England for the past 5 waves, as well as a breakdown of responses by stakeholder group. Reported below are the key findings of this survey.

Perceptions of GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications

Composite confidence

Respondents' perceptions of the qualifications are collected in relation to a range of criteria: understanding, trust, maintenance of standards, preparation for further study, preparation for work, skills development, accuracy in marking, and value for money.

When considered all together, these criteria can be used to retrieve a measure of overall composite confidence in GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications. In the current wave (wave 21), composite confidence in GCSEs and Applied General qualifications was consistent with waves 20 and 19, showing stability after a period of gradual increases.

Results were somewhat different for A levels. After a four-wave trend of small year-on-year increases, in wave 21 the overall composite confidence in A levels decreased slightly and returned to roughly the values recorded before the pandemic.

General perceptions

When perceptions are considered for each criteria separately, the comparison between results in wave 21 and wave 20 showed that GCSEs and Applied General qualifications remained similarly understood and trusted. The extent to which these qualifications were perceived as good preparation for work and for further study, as well as for developing a broad range of skills for students also remained consistent between these waves. Perceptions that standards are maintained year-on-year also remained stable overall.

Whilst many of the general perceptions of GCSEs and Applied General qualifications remained stable between wave 20 and wave 21, there were some differences between waves. HEIs' perception that GCSEs offer value for money and the general public's perception that Applied General qualifications offer value for money increased compared to wave 20. Small differences also emerged with respect to the accuracy of marking; overall agreement was stable for Applied General qualifications but decreased compared to wave 20 for GCSEs.

Perceptions of A levels appeared in line with previous waves, including that they are trusted, develop a broad range of skills for students, and are good preparation for further study. Perceptions that standards are maintained year-on-year and that the marking is accurate were also consistent with wave 20. There was, however, a decrease in perceptions that A levels are good preparation for work and, particularly among employers, that they are well understood by people. In terms of the accuracy of marking in A levels, overall perceptions remained consistent with wave 20, although teachers reported a decline in agreement.

Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2022

Given the special circumstances during the pandemic and the specific arrangements put in place for 2022, respondents were presented with statements and questions similar to those asked in the annual survey (as reported above) but instructed to think specifically about perceptions of qualifications and arrangements in 2022 rather than their more general outlook.

In 2022, GCSEs and A levels appeared to be perceived as being slightly less well understood and trusted than in general. There was also lower agreement that these qualifications, along with Applied General qualifications in 2022, were good preparation for further study compared to when thinking about the qualifications generally.

These differences in levels of agreement between 2022-specific and general perceptions tended to be more prominent in the case of GCSEs and A levels than for Applied General qualifications. For Applied General qualifications, there was slightly higher agreement that the qualifications in 2022 were well understood compared with their general perceptions. There were no differences in the perception of Applied General qualifications being trusted qualifications, or whether the marking is accurate when thinking about 2022 specifically in comparison with general perceptions.

Despite the often-lower levels of agreement for 2022-specific perceptions compared to general perceptions, agreement is still higher than disagreement for the majority of 2022-specific statements for each qualification.

Aspects of the examination system

Reviews of marking and moderation and appeals against results

The vast majority of respondents reported that they were aware of the process for reviews of marking and moderation and appeals for GCSE and A level results. Approximately half of respondents agreed that this process is fair. This was consistent with wave 20 for most stakeholder groups, apart from teachers where agreement decreased. The proportion of respondents reporting that they have adequate information about the process increased, mainly due to the increase in agreement among young people.

For Applied General qualifications, the overall proportion of respondents who were aware of the appeals against results process remained in line with recent waves. The vast majority of those

teaching Applied General qualifications also felt they have adequate information about the appeals process and are confident that appeals are dealt with fairly, in line with previous findings.

Special consideration and reasonable adjustments

Consistent with previous waves, around 8 in 10 teachers and head teachers reported that they have adequate information about the arrangements available for GCSE or A level students who are eligible for special consideration. Agreement that special consideration makes the qualification system fairer and that the right arrangements are made for the right students also remained in line with previous years.

Malpractice

Much like in wave 20, the vast majority of teachers and head teachers reported that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications. The majority also agreed that they know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice and are confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated and reported.

Onscreen examinations

All stakeholder groups were asked if onscreen examinations in GCSE and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations. Four in 10 agreed with this statement, consistent with wave 20. When asked if they agreed that onscreen examinations would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations, respondents split equally between those who agreed, disagreed and those who could not agree or disagree. Whilst overall agreement was consistent with wave 20, agreement specifically among teachers, increased.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of wave 21 of the Perceptions of General Qualifications Survey conducted in 2022. This report should be read alongside the [background information report](#).

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

The survey followed the approach used since wave 13 in early 2015 and was conducted using an online method. The fieldwork for this wave was conducted between 8 November and 12 December 2022.

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, as this is a survey, it only captures the views of those involved. As a result, the data in this report reflects the responses of only those respondents included in the study. Further information on sampling and methodology is available in the accompanying [background information report](#).

Throughout the report, all differences in findings between waves have been significance tested. Unless specified otherwise, all changes in this report are statistically significant. If a change is not statistically significant but may appear interesting or indicates a trend over time, it is also mentioned in the commentary but is noted as non-statistically significant. Any non-significant differences or other apparent differences in the data are within the margin of error, possibly due to smaller sample sizes, and so cannot be viewed as a change from the previous wave(s). For further information on the significance testing applied, please refer to [the background information report](#).

The circumstances in 2022

The questions used in the annual Perceptions of General Qualifications Survey are reviewed every year, with the intention of retaining previous questions (where possible) to monitor long-term trends over time, while also introducing new questions (where required) to reflect circumstances relevant to a particular year. The standard questions, outlined in the background notes, are worded to elicit general perceptions (for example, to what extent respondents agree that 'GCSEs are well understood by people'). On this basis, for wave 21, a large number of questions were retained in order to collect comparable data to previous waves on general perceptions. It was acknowledged, however, that these questions may not adequately capture perceptions in relation to the specifics of 2022, which saw the return to examinations following the measures put in place during the pandemic, combined with a package of support for students. To capture perceptions in relation to 2022 specifically, as well as general perceptions, a separate set of questions specific to 2022 was included, which mirrored some of the general questions (for example, to what extent respondents agree that 'GCSEs in 2022 were well understood by people'). The survey questions were therefore split into 2 sections: a general section and a 2022-specific section. This was done to allow us to

¹ For the purposes of this report, the head teachers sample refers to school and college leaders (deputy and assistant head teachers) and head teachers.

understand the perceptions specific to 2022 and compare them to general perceptions irrespective of the 2022 circumstances. The approach of splitting the survey into these 2 sections was also taken with the previous 2 waves for 2020 and 2021-specific perceptions. As such, readers can best understand the perceptions of 2022 specifically by comparing the specific and general sections of the report. The responses to the 2022-specific questions may best be understood as reflections on the confidence in the arrangements for 2022 and not on the exams system in general.

Section 1: Perceptions of the qualifications system in 2022

As a result of changing practices during the pandemic, a new series of questions has been added to the survey since wave 19 to investigate year-specific perceptions of the qualifications system given that assessment arrangements were different. Respondents across all groups were presented with statements and questions similar to those asked in the annual survey but instructed to think specifically about perceptions for qualifications and arrangements in 2022.

All respondents were informed that in recognition of the disruption experienced by young people and caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a package of support was made available to young people sitting exams and formal assessments in 2022. This section explores how 2022-specific perceptions of GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications differ and, if so, to what extent, from general perceptions of these qualifications in 2022.

Key Findings

- Prompting respondents to think specifically about their perceptions of qualifications in 2022 rather than their more general outlook highlighted the impact that the circumstances in 2022 had on perceptions of qualifications for that year. In 2022, GCSEs and A levels appeared to be perceived as less well understood (48% and 45% respectively) and trusted (51% and 52% respectively) compared to when thinking about the qualifications generally.
- There was a small, yet statistically significant difference, between 2022-specific and general perceptions for Applied General qualifications, described in [background notes](#). Respondents were more likely to agree that Applied General qualifications in 2022 were well ‘understood by people’ compared with their general perceptions of the qualifications (20% for 2022 specifically, 17% when thinking generally).
- There was lower agreement that GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications in 2022 were ‘good preparation for further study’ compared to when thinking about the qualifications generally (53% vs 70%, 56% vs 80% and 30% vs 36% respectively).
- Despite the lower levels of agreement for 2022-specific perceptions compared to general perceptions, agreement is still higher than disagreement for the majority of 2022-specific statements for each qualification.
- These differences in levels of agreement between 2022-specific and general perceptions tended to be more prominent in the case of GCSEs and A levels than for Applied General qualifications, apart from when considering whether the qualifications were ‘good preparation for work’. For this question, a larger gap was recorded for Applied General qualifications (34% for 2022 specifically, 44% when thinking generally).
- Respondents were also asked this wave whether ‘standards were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of students’. Agreement was consistent between GCSE and A levels (44% and 43%, respectively), and decreased to 27% for Applied General qualifications.

Confidence in GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications in 2022

For Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=2,068).

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, respondents tended to express lower levels of confidence in GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications when thinking specifically about the circumstances in 2022 than when considering their general perceptions of these qualifications. In relation to 2022, these qualifications appeared to be perceived as less understood and trusted, and there was also less agreement that they are good preparation for further study and that the marking was accurate. Despite the fact that agreement was lower for 2022-specific perceptions compared to general perceptions for each qualification, agreement is still higher than disagreement for the majority of statements.

When considering whether the qualifications are good preparation for work there was similar agreement when thinking about 2022 compared to general perceptions. The differences in agreement for Applied General qualifications between general perceptions and 2022-specific perceptions were also less pronounced than for GCSEs and A levels.

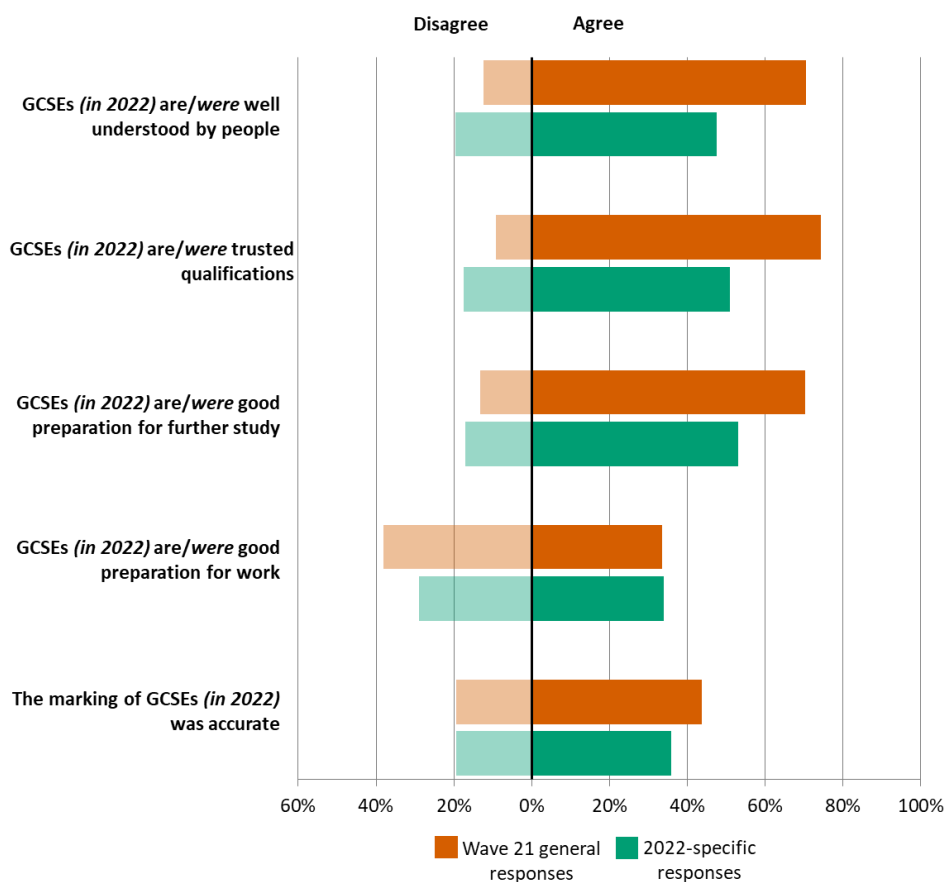
Respondents had lower levels of agreement that 'GCSEs were well understood by people' when thinking about 2022 specifically than when considering their general perceptions (48% compared with 70%). This was also the case when looking at perceptions of trust; 51% of respondents agreed that 'GCSEs are a trusted qualification' in relation to 2022, compared to 74% when considering general perceptions.

Results indicated that compared to general perceptions, respondents had lower levels of agreement that GCSEs taken in 2022 were 'good preparation for further study'. Approximately half of respondents (53%) agreed that 'GCSEs in 2022 were good preparation for further study', compared with 70% in general. Respondents also had higher levels of disagreement that GCSEs were good preparation for further study when thinking about 2022 specifically (17%) compared to their general perceptions (13%).

However, when looking at whether GCSEs were 'good preparation for work', there were similar levels of agreement between general and 2022-specific responses (both 34%). However, respondents had higher levels of disagreement that GCSEs are good preparation for work when considering general perceptions (38%) compared to when considering 2022 specifically (29%).

When asked to consider whether 'the marking of GCSEs is accurate', respondents had lower levels of agreement when thinking about 2022 specifically compared with their general perceptions (36% compared with 44%). However, there was the same level of disagreement.

Figure 1. 2022-specific confidence in GCSEs vs general confidence in GCSEs in Wave 21



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2022-specific question set.

Statement	Wave 21 general response	2022-specific responses
“GCSEs are well understood by people” or “GCSEs in 2022 were well understood by people” – agree	70%	48%
“GCSEs are well understood by people” or “GCSEs in 2022 were well understood by people” – disagree	12%	20%
“GCSEs are a trusted qualification” or “GCSEs in 2022 were a trusted qualification” – agree	74%	51%
“GCSEs are a trusted qualification” or “GCSEs in 2022 were a trusted qualification” – disagree	9%	18%
“GCSEs are good preparation for further study” or “GCSEs in 2022 were good preparation for further study” – agree	70%	53%
“GCSEs are good preparation for further study” or “GCSEs in 2022 were good preparation for further study” – disagree	13%	17%
“GCSEs are good preparation for work” or “GCSEs in 2022 were good preparation for work” – agree	34%	34%
“GCSEs are good preparation for work” or “GCSEs in 2022 were good preparation for work” – disagree	38%	29%
“The marking of GCSEs is accurate” or “the marking of GCSEs in 2022 was accurate” – agree	44%	36%

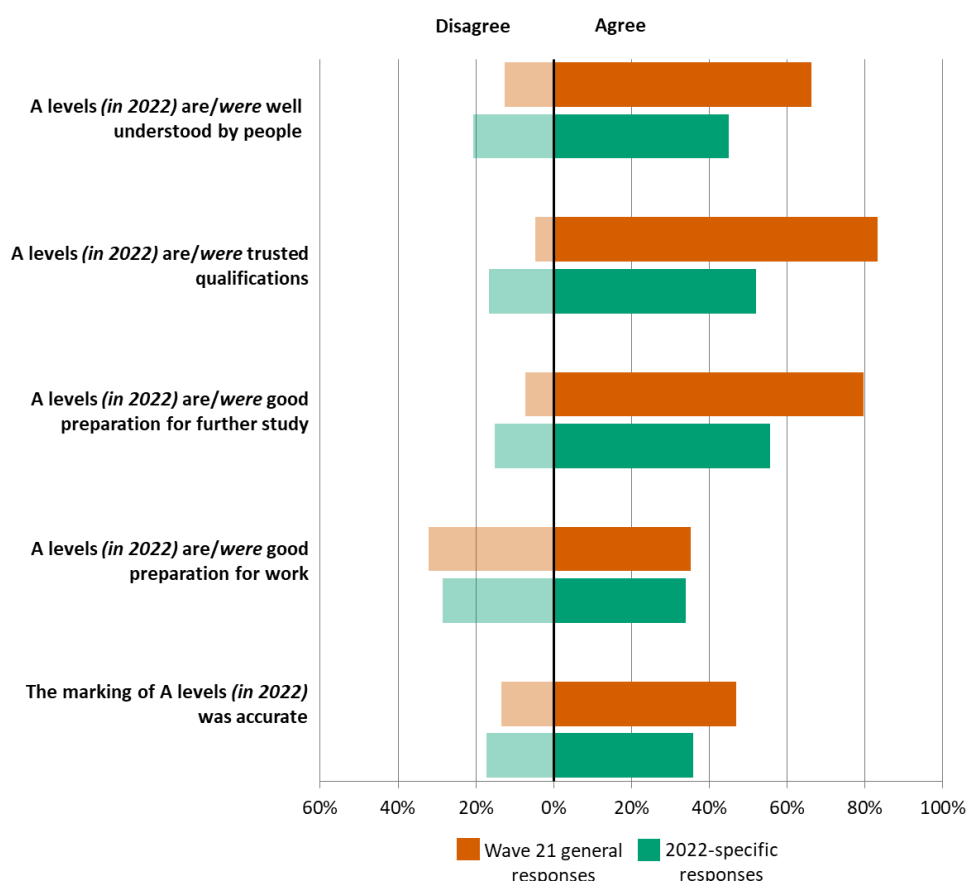
“The marking of GCSEs is accurate” or “the marking of GCSEs in 2022 was accurate” – disagree	19%	19%
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Perceptions of A levels were similar to GCSEs when considering respondents’ general versus 2022-specific responses.

When considering levels of agreement on whether ‘A levels were well understood by people’, respondents had lower levels of agreement when thinking about 2022 specifically than when considering their general perceptions (45% compared with 66%). Similarly, there were lower levels of agreement among respondents that ‘A levels were trusted qualifications’ when thinking about 2022 specifically in comparison with their general perceptions (52% compared with 83%).

Much like GCSEs, respondents had lower levels of agreement that A levels were good preparation for further study in 2022 compared to their general perceptions (56% compared with 80%). Similarly, respondents’ agreement that ‘the marking of A levels is accurate’ was lower when looking at 2022 specifically compared to general perceptions (36% compared with 47%). However, respondents’ perceptions of A levels being ‘good preparation for work’ in 2022 were consistent with their general perceptions (34% and 35% respectively).

Figure 2. 2022-specific confidence in A levels vs general confidence in A levels in Wave 21



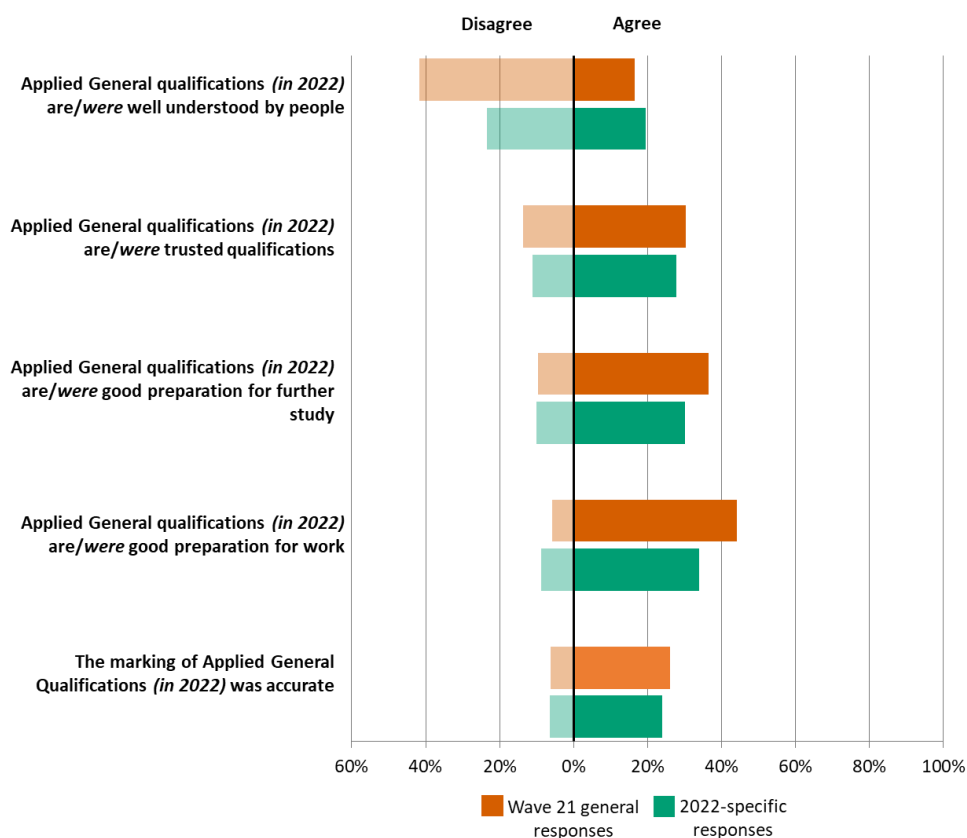
Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2022-specific question set.

Statement	Wave 21 general response	2022-specific responses
“A levels are well understood by people” or “A levels in 2022 were well understood by people” – agree	66%	45%
“A levels are well understood by people” or “A levels in 2022 were well understood by people” – disagree	13%	21%
“A levels are trusted qualifications” or “A levels in 2022 were trusted qualifications” – agree	83%	52%
“A levels are trusted qualifications” or “A levels in 2022 were trusted qualifications” – disagree	5%	17%
“A levels are good preparation for further study” or “A levels in 2022 were good preparation for further study” – agree	80%	56%
“A levels are good preparation for further study” or “A levels in 2022 were good preparation for further study” – disagree	7%	15%
“A levels are good preparation for work” or “A levels in 2022 were good preparation for work” – agree	35%	34%
“A levels are good preparation for work” or “A levels in 2022 were good preparation for work” – disagree	32%	29%
“The marking of A levels is accurate” or “the marking of A levels in 2022 was accurate” – agree	47%	36%
““The marking of A levels is accurate” or “the marking of A levels in 2022 was accurate” – disagree	13%	17%

Unlike GCSEs and A levels, the differences in general perceptions of Applied General qualifications compared with those specific to 2022 were less pronounced. There was a small, yet statistically significant difference in the extent to which respondents agreed that Applied General qualifications in 2022 were well understood by people compared with their general perceptions of the qualifications (20% compared with 17%). Notably, there were no differences in the perception of Applied General qualifications being trusted qualifications, or whether the marking is accurate when thinking about 2022 specifically in comparison with general perceptions.

Respondents reported lower levels of agreement that Applied General qualifications were ‘good preparation for further study’ in 2022 compared to more generally (30% compared with 36%). In contrast to GCSEs and A levels, however, the gap in levels of agreement was wider regarding perceptions of whether the qualifications were ‘good preparation for work’ in 2022 versus in general (34% compared with 44%). This differs to all other measures where the gaps in levels of agreement between 2022-specific and general perceptions were smaller than for GCSEs and A levels.

Figure 3. 2022-specific confidence in Applied General qualifications vs general confidence in Applied General qualifications in Wave 21



Note: Italics are used to highlight text used in the 2022-specific question set.

Statement	Wave 21 general responses	2022-specific responses
“Applied General qualifications are well understood by people” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were well understood by people” – agree	17%	20%
“Applied General qualifications are well understood by people” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were well understood by people” – disagree	42%	23%
“Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were trusted qualifications” – agree	30%	28%
“Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were trusted qualifications” – disagree	14%	11%
“Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were good preparation for further study” – agree	36%	30%
“Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were good preparation for further study” – disagree	10%	10%

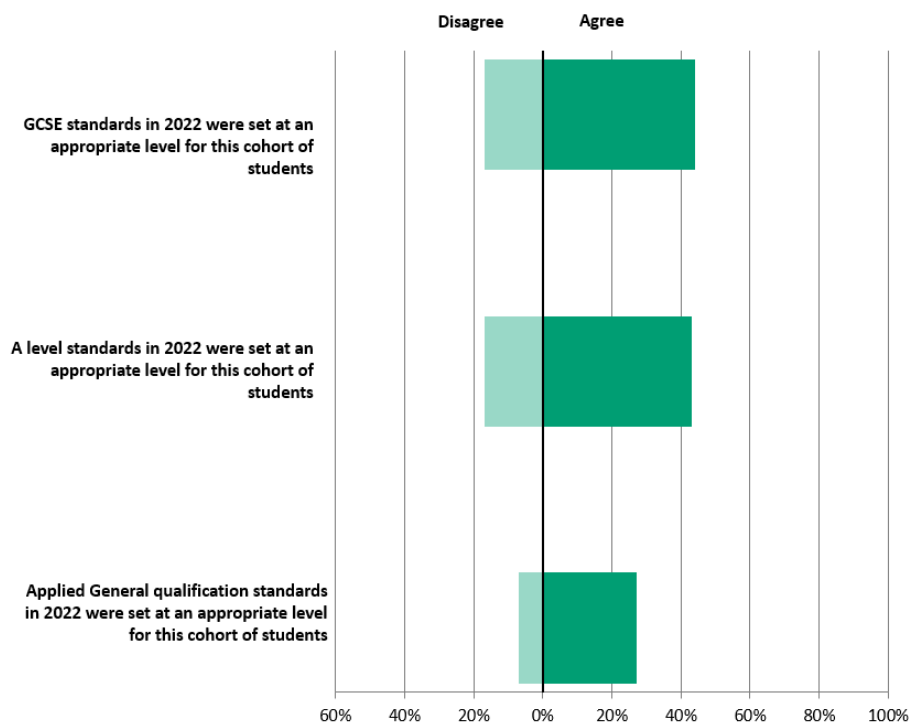
“Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were good preparation for work” – agree	44%	34%
“Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work” or “Applied General qualifications in 2022 were good preparation for work” – disagree	6%	9%
“The marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate” or “The marking of Applied General qualifications in 2022 was accurate” - agree	26%	24%
“The marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate” or “The marking of Applied General qualifications in 2022 was accurate” - disagree	6%	6%

Qualification standards in 2022

Due to the arrangements in place in 2022 and, more specifically, the intention for grading to reflect a mid-point between 2019 and 2021, respondents were asked whether they felt that 'standards were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people'.

As shown in figure 4, 44% agreed that 'GCSE standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people', consistent with the 43% who agreed that A levels standards were set at an appropriate level. Agreement decreased to 27% when looking at whether Applied General qualification standards were set at an appropriate level in 2022, though this is due to higher levels of uncertainty (44%) as opposed to stronger disagreement (7%). This high level of uncertainty suggests respondents have limited knowledge on Applied General Qualification standards set in 2022.

Figure 4. Qualification standards in 2022



Statement	2022-specific responses
“GCSE standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people” – agree	44%
“GCSEs standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people” – disagree	17%
“A levels standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people” – agree	43%
“A levels standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people” – disagree	17%
“Applied General qualification standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people” – agree	27%
“Applied General qualification standards in 2022 were set at an appropriate level for this cohort of young people” – disagree	7%

Section 2: Composite confidence measure of qualifications in general

The following section considers respondents' composite confidence in GCSEs, A levels and Applied General qualifications in general. The results in this section relate to general perceptions, not specific to any exam series, as opposed to 2022-specific perceptions (presented in section 1).

The composite confidence measure was calculated based on levels of agreement with 8 separate questions relating to the following criteria: understanding, trust, maintenance of standards, preparation for further study, preparation for work, skill development, accuracy in marking, and value for money. For more information on how the composite confidence measure is calculated, please see the accompanying [background information report](#).

Key findings

- Composite confidence in GCSEs was consistent with wave 20. This carried on a pattern of stability observed between waves 19 and 20, before which point there was a gradual wave-on-wave increase between waves 17 and 19.
- Composite confidence in A levels decreased in comparison with wave 20. After a 4-wave trend of gradually increasing confidence between waves 17 and 20, overall composite confidence returned to roughly the levels recorded in waves 17 and 18. In comparison with wave 20, there was a decrease in composite confidence in A levels in wave 21 for all stakeholder groups apart from parents.
- Composite confidence in Applied General qualifications was consistent with wave 20 overall, and there were no changes among the stakeholder groups. Composite confidence in Applied General qualifications was also in line with wave 19, representing ongoing stability following 2 subsequent waves of increased confidence between waves 17 and 19.

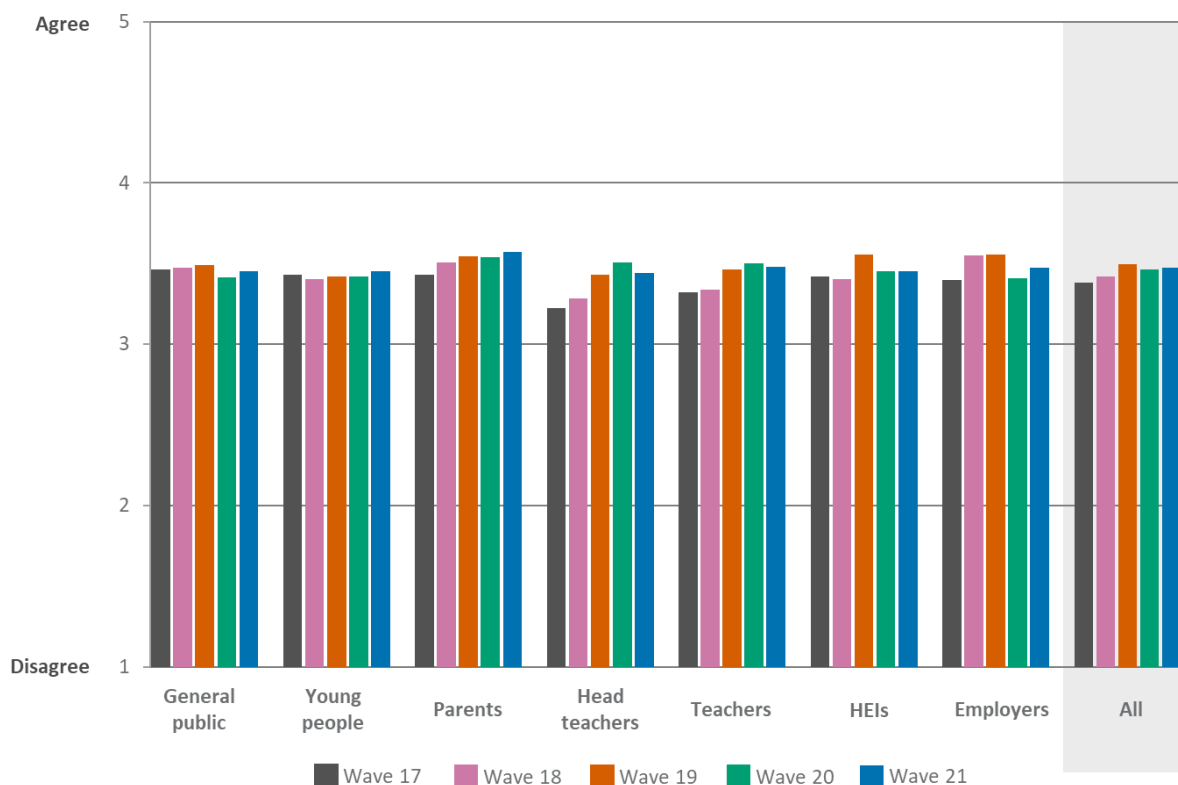
Composite confidence in GCSEs in general

For Figure 5 the wave 21 base is: All responses (N=2,881); Young people (N=248); Parents (N=247); Teachers (N=662); Head teachers (N=253); HEIs (N=248); Employers (N=247); General public (N=976).

Composite confidence in GCSE qualifications was consistent with wave 20. Confidence also remained in line with wave 19, before which a gradual wave-on-wave increase had been observed between waves 17 and 19 (figure 5).

There were no changes in composite confidence for any stakeholder group in comparison with wave 20.

Figure 5. 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.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All	3.38	3.42	3.49	3.46	3.47
General public	3.47	3.47	3.49	3.42	3.45
Young people	3.43	3.40	3.42	3.42	3.45
Parents	3.43	3.51	3.55	3.54	3.57
Head teachers	3.22	3.28	3.43	3.51	3.44
Teachers	3.32	3.34	3.46	3.50	3.48
HEIs	3.42	3.40	3.56	3.45	3.45
Employers	3.40	3.55	3.55	3.41	3.47

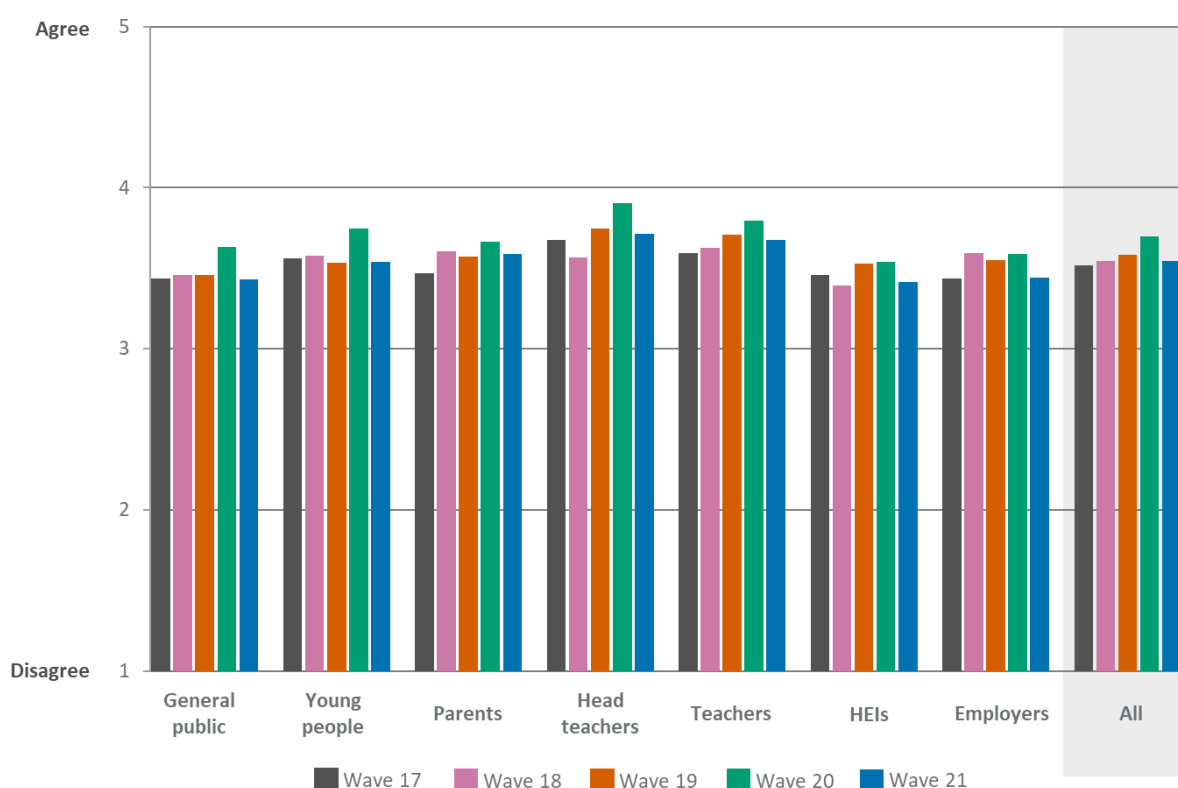
Composite confidence in A levels in general

For Figure 6 the wave 21 base is: All responses (N=2,873); Young people (N=245); Parents (N=245); Teachers (N=658); Head teachers (N=247); HEIs (N=249); Employers (N=248); General public (N=981).

Composite confidence in A levels decreased in comparison with wave 20, following a 4-wave trend of gradually increasing confidence between wave 17 and wave 20 (figure 6). At the overall level, composite confidence returned to roughly the levels recorded in waves 17 and 18.

There was a decrease in composite confidence in A levels for all stakeholder groups apart from parents in comparison with wave 20.

Figure 6. Composite confidence in A levels



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

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All	3.52	3.55	3.59	3.70	3.54
General public	3.44	3.46	3.46	3.63	3.43
Young people	3.56	3.58	3.53	3.75	3.54
Parents	3.47	3.60	3.57	3.66	3.59
Head teachers	3.68	3.57	3.75	3.90	3.71
Teachers	3.59	3.63	3.71	3.79	3.68
HEIs	3.46	3.39	3.53	3.54	3.41
Employers	3.44	3.59	3.55	3.59	3.44

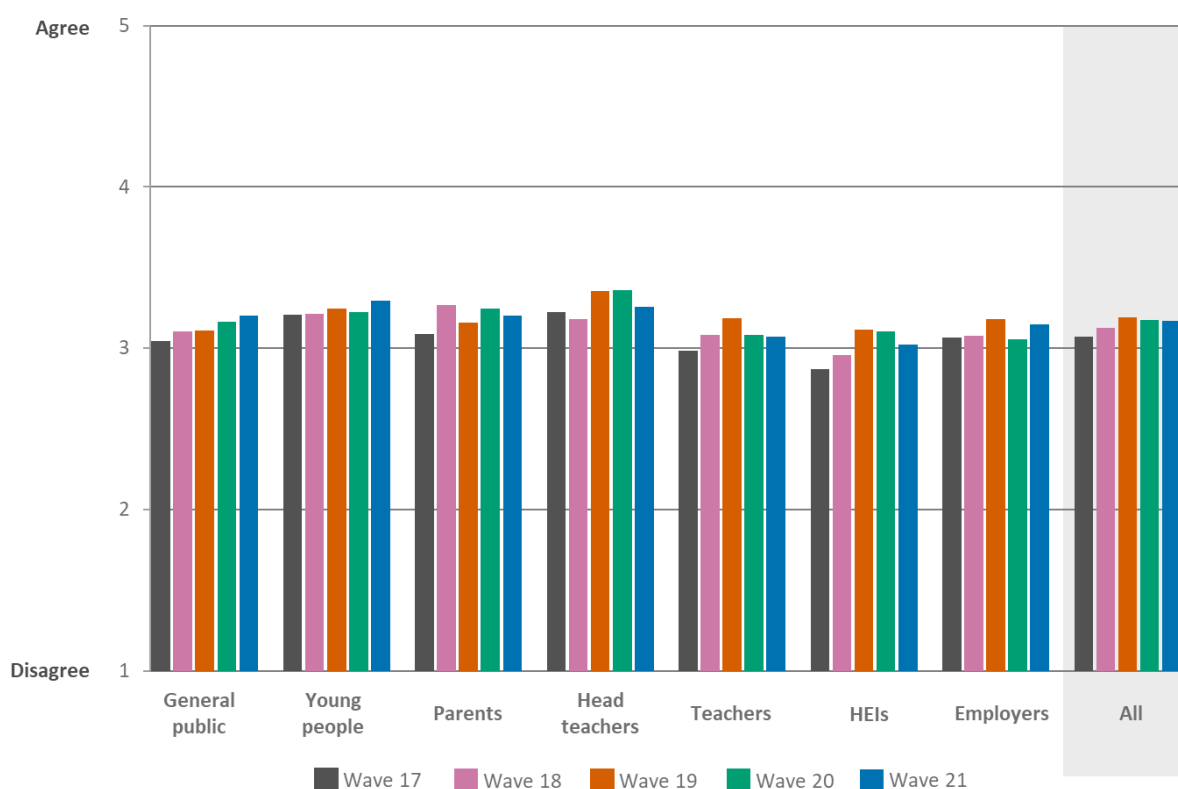
Composite confidence in Applied General qualifications in general

For Figure 7 the wave 21 base is: All responses (N=2,388); Young people (N=201); Parents (N=209); Teachers (N=518); Head teachers (N=215); HEIs (N=214); Employers (N=219); General public (N=812).

Composite confidence in Applied General qualifications was consistent with wave 20 (figure 7) and there was no statistically significant change for any individual stakeholder group.

Composite confidence was also in line with wave 19, representing ongoing stability following 2 subsequent waves of increased confidence.

Figure 7. 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.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All	3.07	3.13	3.19	3.18	3.17
General public	3.04	3.10	3.11	3.16	3.20
Young people	3.21	3.21	3.24	3.22	3.29
Parents	3.09	3.27	3.16	3.25	3.20
Head teachers	3.22	3.18	3.35	3.36	3.26
Teachers	2.99	3.08	3.18	3.08	3.07
HEIs	2.87	2.96	3.12	3.10	3.02
Employers	3.07	3.08	3.18	3.05	3.15

Section 3: General perceptions of GCSEs

The following section considers respondents' general perceptions of GCSEs, as opposed to 2022-specific perceptions. For comparisons with respondents' perceptions of GCSEs in 2022, please see section 1.

For the following 8 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=2,068); Young people (N=224); Parents (N=249); Teachers (N=561); Head teachers (N=235); HEIs (N=243); Employers (N=248); General public (n=968).

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.

Key findings

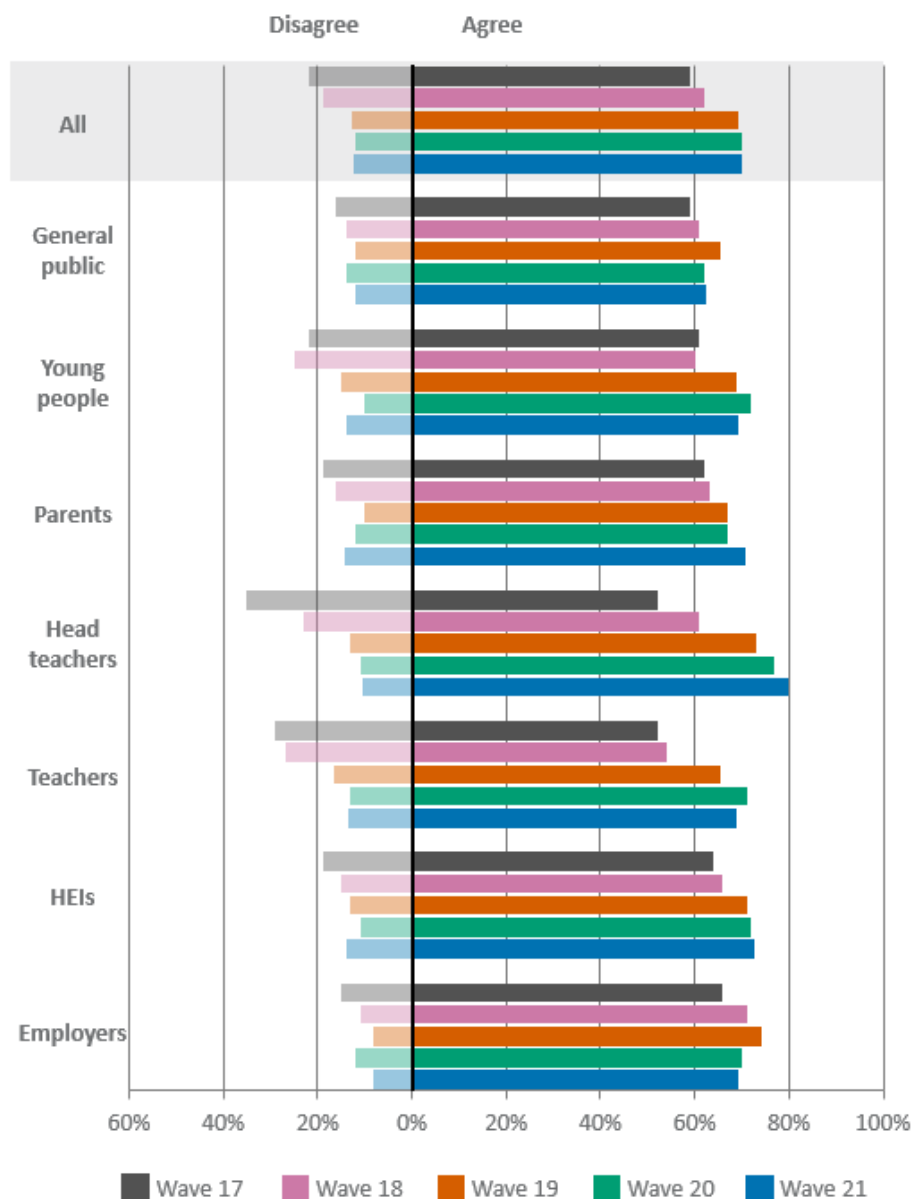
- Overall, perceptions of GCSEs generally remained consistent with wave 20 across all measures. Including that they are generally well understood (70%), trusted (74%), 'good preparation for work' (34%), 'good preparation for further study' (70%), 'develop a broad range of skills for students' (59%) and are qualifications for which standards are maintained year-on-year (42%).
- However, there was a slight decrease in levels of agreement regarding whether 'the marking of GCSEs is accurate' (44%) in comparison with wave 20 (46%). Levels of agreement remained higher than those observed in waves 17 and 18 though. There was also an increase in levels of agreement that, in general, 'GCSEs offer value for money' (58%) compared with wave 20 (53%).
- Among head teachers, levels of agreement that, in general, 'GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year' (50%) decreased compared with wave 20 (57%), which represented an approximate return to wave 19 agreement levels. However, agreement increased among young people (46%) in comparison with wave 20 (39%).
- Levels of agreement that, in general, 'the marking of GCSEs is accurate' among head teachers (46%) decreased in comparison with wave 20 (54%), returning to levels of agreement seen previously.
- There was also an increase in agreement that, in general, 'GCSEs offer value for money' among HEIs (61%) compared with wave 20 (53%).

Overall perceptions

Seven in 10 (70%) respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, 'GCSEs are well understood by people'. This was consistent with wave 20, though shows an increase compared with wave 17 (59%) and wave 18 (62%).

For individual stakeholder groups, although there may appear to be differences compared with wave 20, there were no significant changes. Despite there being no significant changes compared to wave 20, as figure 8 shows, head teachers' agreement has, although not always significantly, increased each wave since wave 17. Due to this continuing wave-on-wave increase, head teachers display higher levels of agreement in wave 21 than in earlier waves (80% in wave 21 compared with 52% in wave 17). Teachers also continued to show higher levels of agreement in wave 21 compared with wave 17 (69% compared with 52%).

Figure 8. Results for “GCSEs are well understood by people.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	59%	62%	69%	70%	70%
All – disagree	22%	19%	13%	12%	12%
General public – agree	59%	61%	66%	62%	62%
General public – disagree	16%	14%	12%	14%	12%
Young people – agree	61%	60%	69%	72%	69%
Young people – disagree	22%	25%	15%	10%	14%
Parents – agree	62%	63%	67%	67%	71%
Parents – disagree	19%	16%	10%	12%	14%
Head teachers – agree	52%	61%	73%	77%	80%

Head teachers – disagree	35%	23%	13%	11%	10%
Teachers – agree	52%	54%	66%	71%	69%
Teachers – disagree	29%	27%	17%	13%	13%
HEIs – agree	64%	66%	71%	72%	73%
HEIs – disagree	19%	15%	13%	11%	14%
Employers – agree	66%	71%	74%	70%	69%
Employers – disagree	15%	11%	8%	12%	8%

Seventy-four per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘GCSEs are a trusted qualification’. This was consistent with wave 20.

Figure 9. Results for “GCSEs are a trusted qualification.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	71%	74%	75%	73%	74%
All – disagree	11%	9%	9%	9%	9%
General public – agree	68%	70%	73%	66%	67%
General public – disagree	8%	9%	7%	11%	9%
Young people – agree	76%	78%	72%	74%	75%
Young people – disagree	11%	7%	11%	7%	8%
Parents – agree	68%	74%	76%	74%	76%
Parents – disagree	7%	9%	5%	9%	8%
Head teachers – agree	72%	75%	77%	82%	82%
Head teachers – disagree	14%	11%	14%	8%	9%

Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

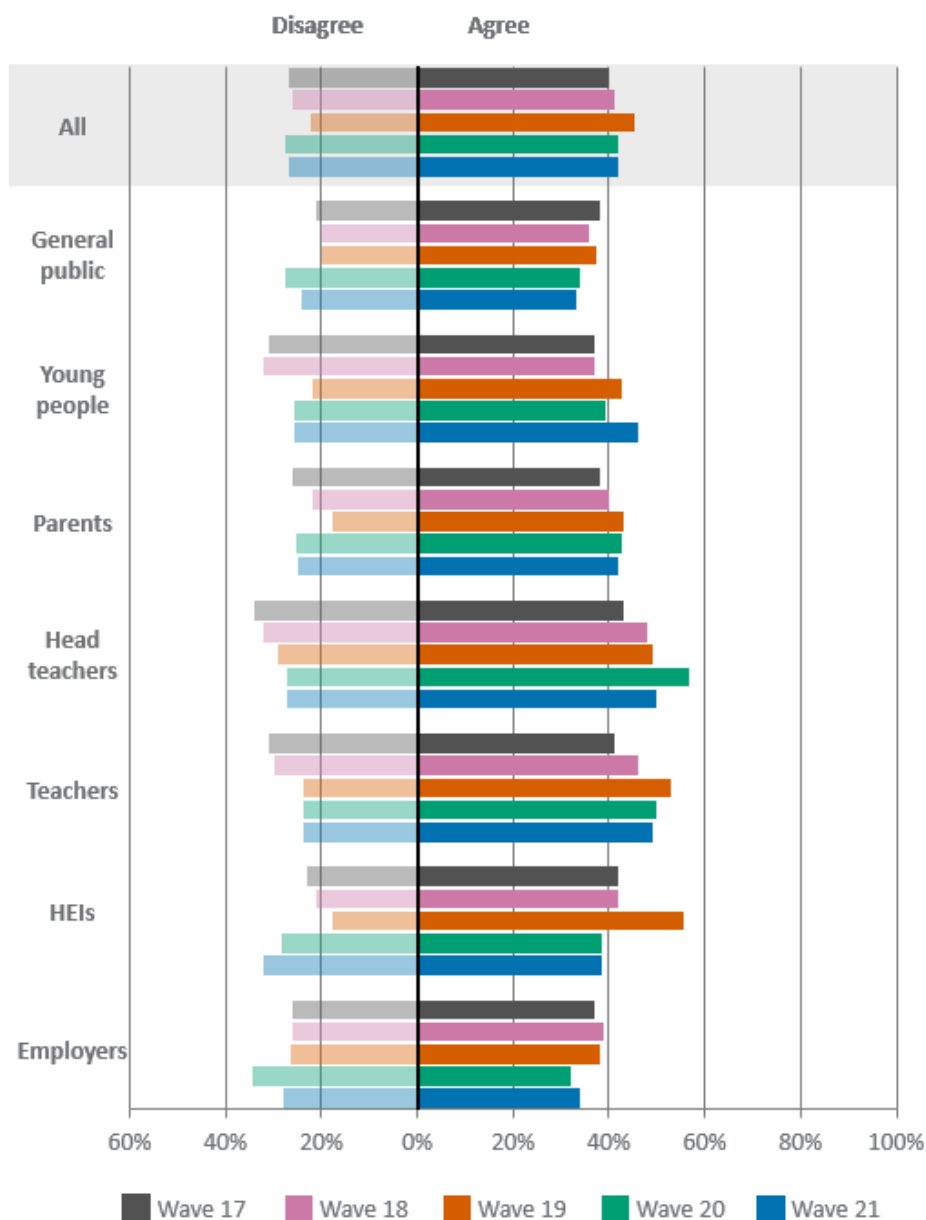
Teachers – agree	69%	74%	78%	78%	75%
Teachers – disagree	13%	10%	8%	8%	9%
HEIs – agree	72%	70%	77%	71%	74%
HEIs – disagree	9%	10%	8%	10%	11%
Employers – agree	69%	75%	70%	67%	72%
Employers – disagree	13%	10%	7%	12%	11%

Confidence in standards and marking

Approximately 4 in 10 (42%) respondents agreed in wave 21 that, in general, ‘GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year’ (figure 10). This was consistent with wave 20, although represented a slight decrease in comparison with wave 19 (45%).

In wave 21, head teachers had lower levels of agreement in comparison with wave 20 (50% compared with 57%), which represented an approximate return to wave 19 agreement levels. However, in wave 21 young people had higher levels of agreement in comparison with wave 20 (46% compared with 39%). This wave, levels of agreement among HEIs were consistent with wave 20 but marked a decrease in comparison with wave 19 (39% compared with 55%). Among all other groups, there were no significant changes.

Figure 10. Results for “GCSE standards are maintained year-on-year.”



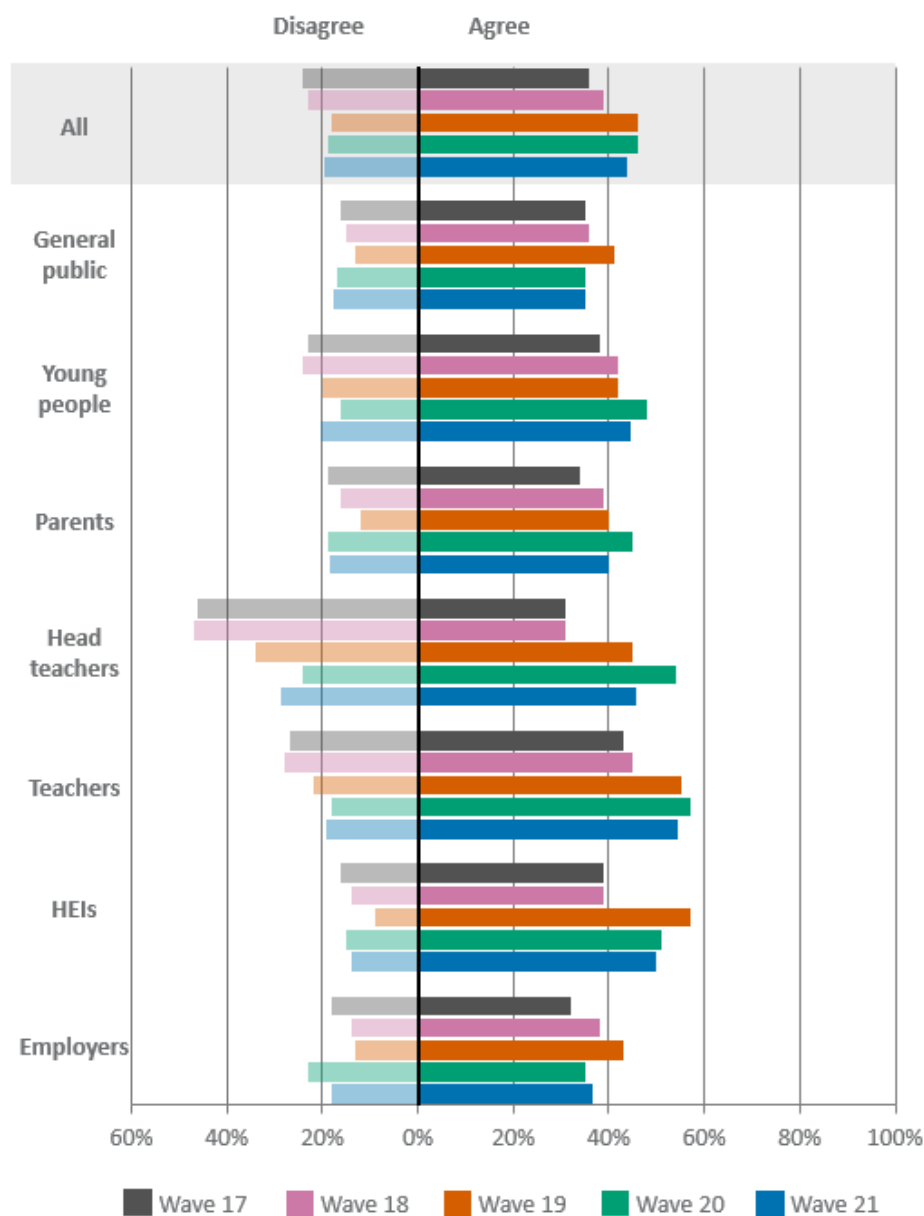
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	40%	41%	45%	42%	42%
All – disagree	27%	26%	22%	27%	27%
General public – agree	38%	36%	37%	34%	33%
General public – disagree	21%	20%	20%	28%	24%
Young people – agree	37%	37%	43%	39%	46%
Young people – disagree	31%	32%	22%	26%	26%
Parents – agree	38%	40%	43%	43%	42%
Parents – disagree	26%	22%	18%	25%	25%
Head teachers – agree	43%	48%	49%	57%	50%
Head teachers – disagree	34%	32%	29%	27%	27%
Teachers – agree	41%	46%	53%	50%	49%
Teachers – disagree	31%	30%	24%	24%	24%
HEIs – agree	42%	42%	55%	39%	39%
HEIs – disagree	23%	21%	18%	28%	32%
Employers – agree	37%	39%	38%	32%	34%
Employers – disagree	26%	26%	26%	34%	28%

More than 4 in 10 (44%) respondents agreed that, in general, ‘the marking of GCSEs is accurate’ in wave 21. This was slightly lower than wave 20 (46%) but still an increase in comparison with waves 17 (36%) and 18 (39%).

Head teachers had lower levels of agreement that ‘the marking of GCSEs is accurate’ in wave 21 compared to wave 20 (46% compared with 54%), returning to similar levels of agreement as wave 19. Among all other groups, there were no statistically significant changes (figure 11).

Figure 11. Results for “The marking of GCSEs is accurate.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	36%	39%	46%	46%	44%
All – disagree	24%	23%	18%	19%	19%
General public – agree	35%	36%	41%	35%	35%
General public – disagree	16%	15%	13%	17%	18%

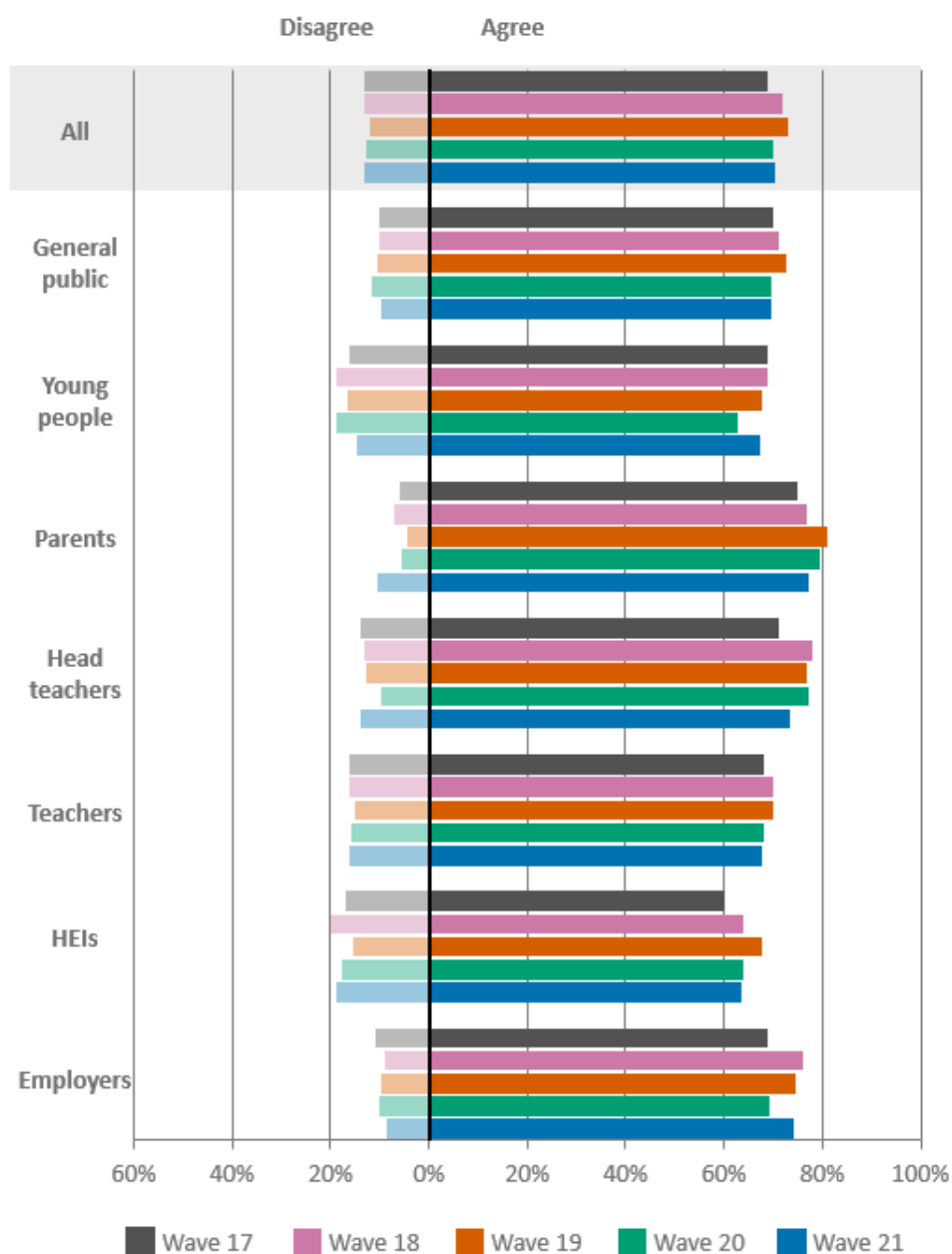
Young people – agree	38%	42%	42%	48%	45%
Young people – disagree	23%	24%	20%	16%	20%
Parents – agree	34%	39%	40%	45%	40%
Parents – disagree	19%	16%	12%	19%	19%
Head teachers – agree	31%	31%	45%	54%	46%
Head teachers – disagree	46%	47%	34%	24%	29%
Teachers – agree	43%	45%	55%	57%	55%
Teachers – disagree	27%	28%	22%	18%	19%
HEIs – agree	39%	39%	57%	51%	50%
HEIs – disagree	16%	14%	9%	15%	14%
Employers – agree	32%	38%	43%	35%	37%
Employers – disagree	18%	14%	13%	23%	18%

Skills and preparation

Seven in 10 (70%) respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘GCSEs are good preparation for further study’ (Figure 12). This was consistent with wave 20.

When individual stakeholder groups were considered, there was an increase in levels of disagreement among headteachers (14% compared with 10%) and parents (10% compared with 6%) in comparison with wave 20. However, there were no statistically significant changes in agreement.

Figure 12. Results for “GCSEs are good preparation for further study.”



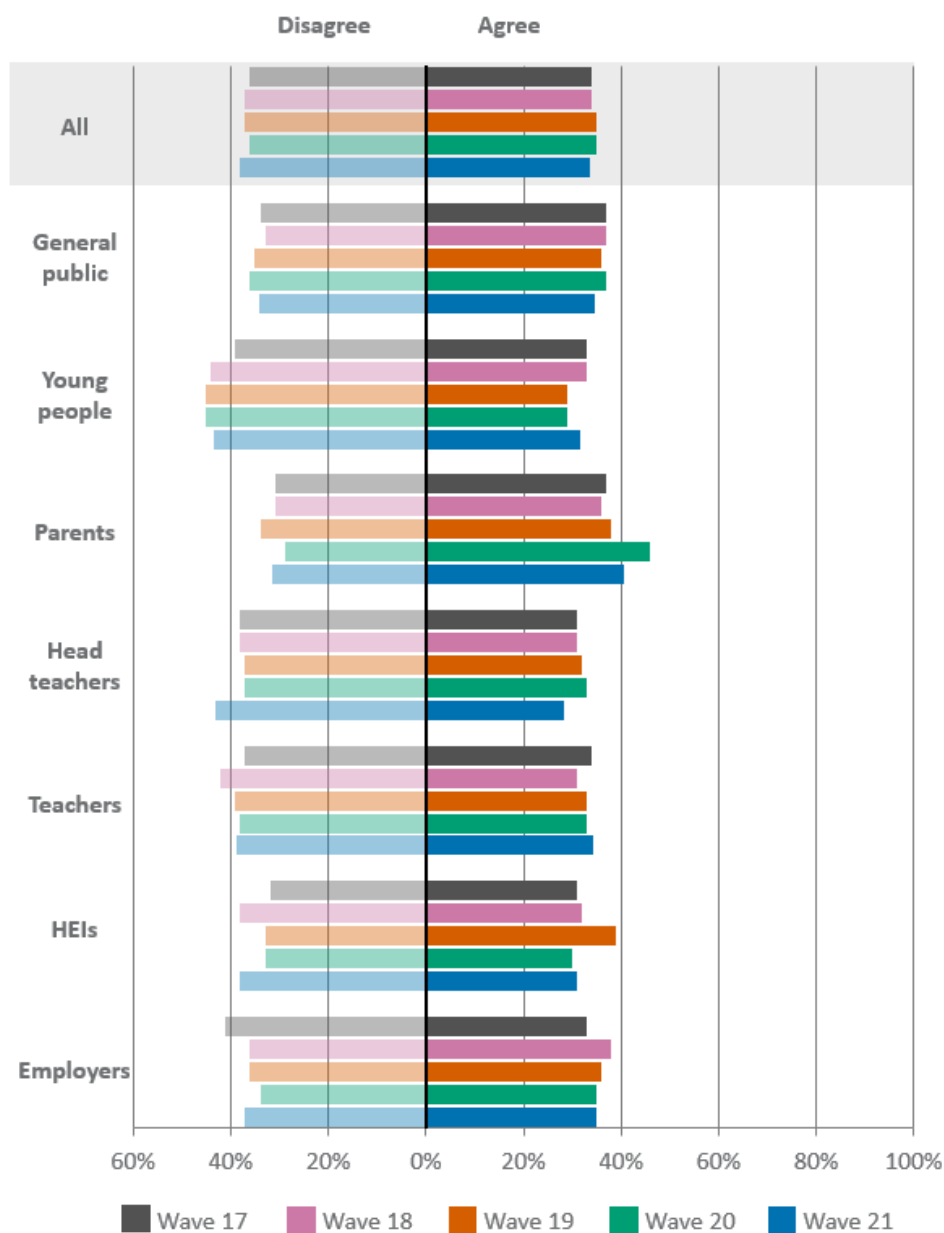
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	69%	72%	73%	70%	70%

All – disagree	13%	13%	12%	13%	13%
General public – agree	70%	71%	73%	69%	69%
General public – disagree	10%	10%	11%	12%	10%
Young people – agree	69%	69%	68%	63%	67%
Young people – disagree	16%	19%	16%	19%	15%
Parents – agree	75%	77%	81%	79%	77%
Parents – disagree	6%	7%	5%	6%	10%
Head teachers – agree	71%	78%	77%	77%	73%
Head teachers – disagree	14%	13%	13%	10%	14%
Teachers – agree	68%	70%	70%	68%	68%
Teachers – disagree	16%	16%	15%	16%	16%
HEIs – agree	60%	64%	68%	64%	64%
HEIs – disagree	17%	20%	16%	18%	19%
Employers – agree	69%	76%	75%	69%	74%
Employers – disagree	11%	9%	10%	10%	9%

Thirty-four per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘GCSEs are good preparation for work’. This was consistent with each of the previous 4 waves (figure 13).

Agreement among each individual stakeholder group this wave also remained relatively consistent, with no statistically significant differences in comparison with wave 20.

Figure 13. Results for “GCSEs are good preparation for work.”



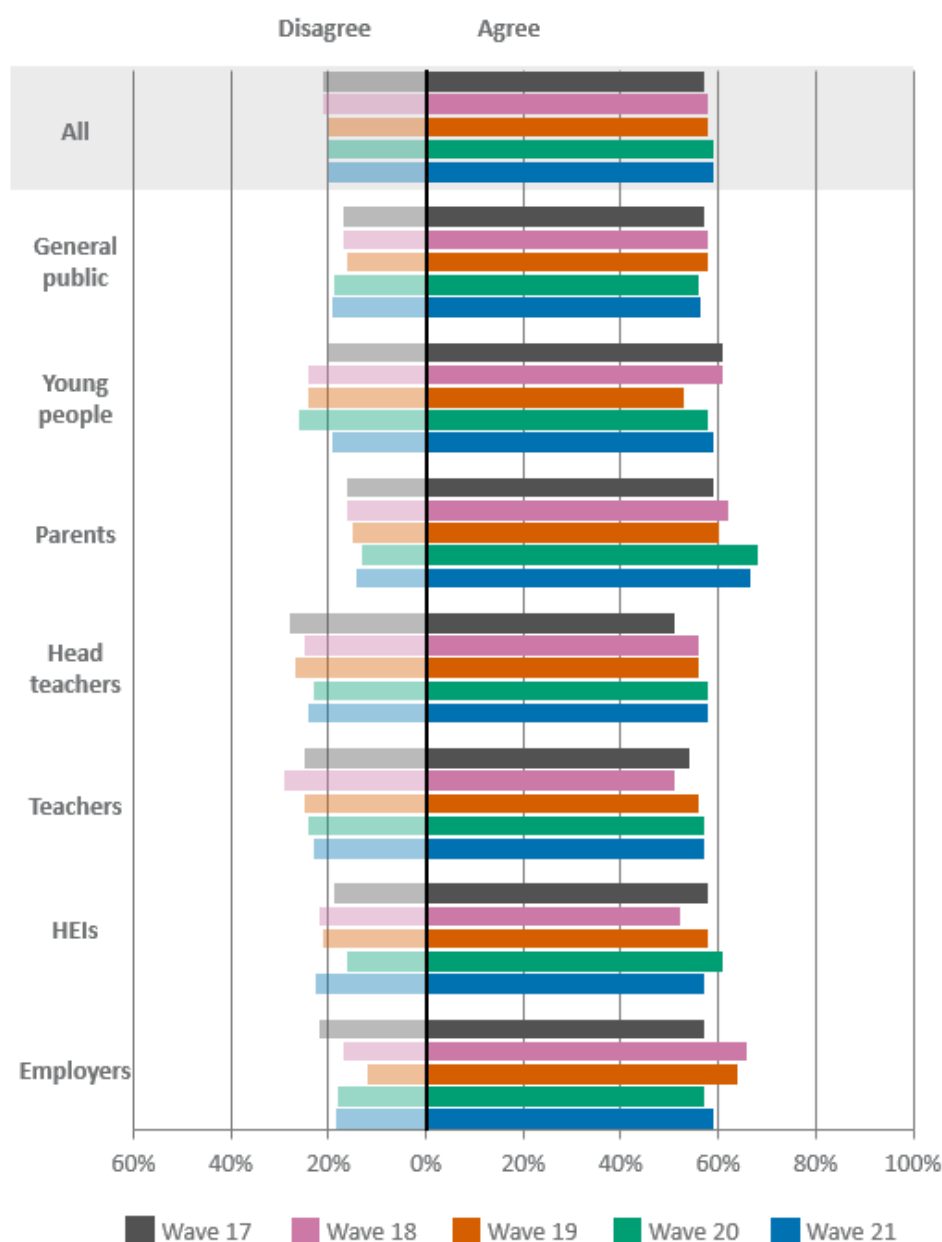
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	34%	34%	35%	35%	34%
All – disagree	36%	37%	37%	36%	38%
General public – agree	37%	37%	36%	37%	34%
General public – disagree	34%	33%	35%	36%	34%
Young people – agree	33%	33%	29%	29%	32%

Young people – disagree	39%	44%	45%	45%	43%
Parents – agree	37%	36%	38%	46%	40%
Parents – disagree	31%	31%	34%	29%	32%
Head teachers – agree	31%	31%	32%	33%	28%
Head teachers – disagree	38%	38%	37%	37%	43%
Teachers – agree	34%	31%	33%	33%	34%
Teachers – disagree	37%	42%	39%	38%	39%
HEIs – agree	31%	32%	39%	30%	31%
HEIs – disagree	32%	38%	33%	33%	38%
Employers – agree	33%	38%	36%	35%	35%
Employers – disagree	41%	36%	36%	34%	37%

Overall, perceptions that ‘GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students’ in wave 21 were consistent with wave 20, as well as with the previous 3 waves, with approximately 6 in 10 (59%) respondents agreeing (figure 14).

Among young people, disagreement decreased this wave in comparison with wave 20 (19% compared with 26%), while agreement levels stayed consistent. HEIs saw an increase in disagreement in comparison with wave 20 (23% compared with 16%), however, there was no significant difference in agreement. For all other stakeholder groups, levels of agreement remained relatively consistent with wave 20.

Figure 14. Results for “GCSEs develop a broad range of skills for students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	57%	58%	58%	59%	59%

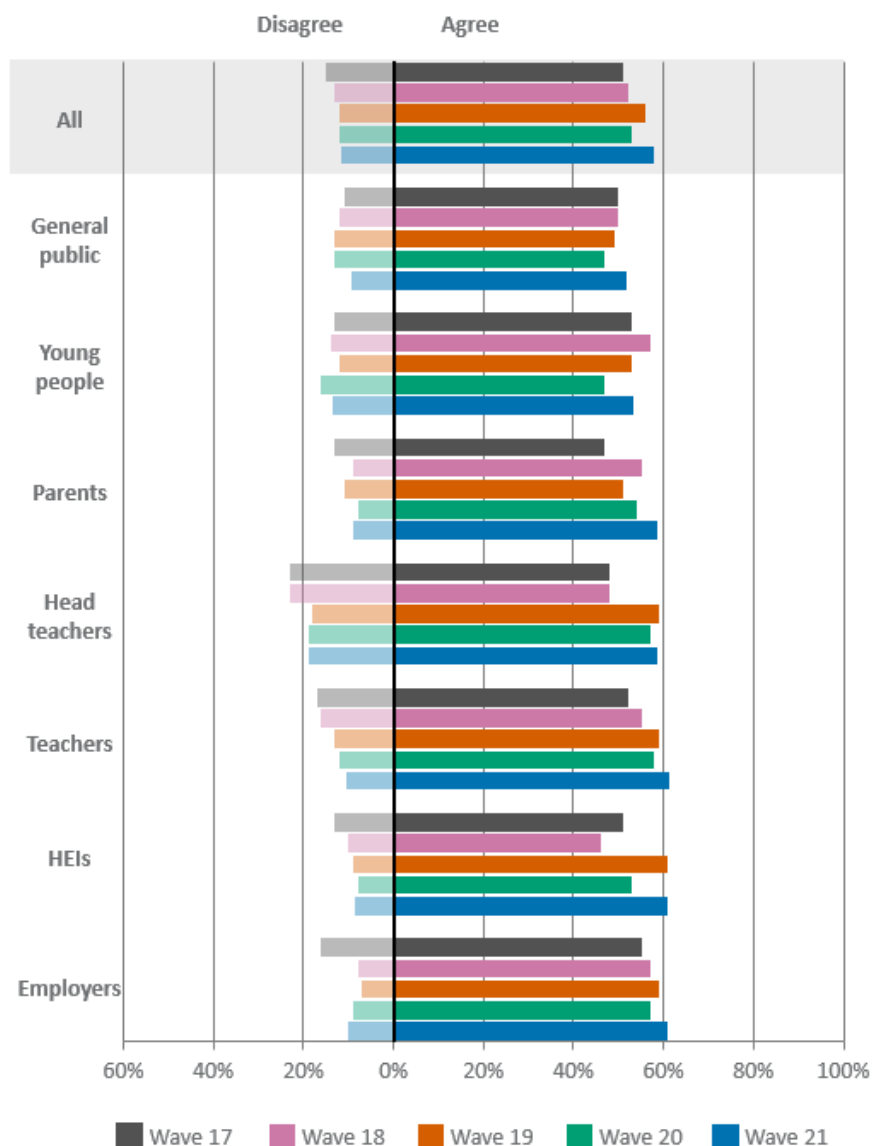
All – disagree	21%	21%	20%	20%	20%
General public – agree	57%	58%	58%	56%	56%
General public – disagree	17%	17%	16%	19%	19%
Young people – agree	61%	61%	53%	58%	59%
Young people – disagree	20%	24%	24%	26%	19%
Parents – agree	59%	62%	60%	68%	66%
Parents – disagree	16%	16%	15%	13%	14%
Head teachers – agree	51%	56%	56%	58%	58%
Head teachers – disagree	28%	25%	27%	23%	24%
Teachers – agree	54%	51%	56%	57%	57%
Teachers – disagree	25%	29%	25%	24%	23%
HEIs – agree	58%	52%	58%	61%	57%
HEIs – disagree	19%	22%	21%	16%	23%
Employers – agree	57%	66%	64%	57%	59%
Employers – disagree	22%	17%	12%	18%	18%

Value for money

In wave 21, roughly 6 in 10 (58%) respondents agreed that ‘GCSEs offer value for money’ which was an increase in comparison with wave 20 (53%).

The only stakeholder group which saw a significant increase in agreement compared with wave 20 were HEIs (61% compared with 53%). Among the rest of the stakeholder groups, levels of agreement were not significantly different this wave in comparison with wave 20.

Figure 15. Results for “GCSEs offer ‘value for money’.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	51%	52%	56%	53%	58%
All – disagree	15%	13%	12%	12%	11%
General public – agree	50%	50%	49%	47%	52%
General public – disagree	11%	12%	13%	13%	10%
Young people – agree	53%	57%	53%	47%	53%

Young people – disagree	13%	14%	12%	16%	14%
Parents – agree	47%	55%	51%	54%	59%
Parents – disagree	13%	9%	11%	8%	9%
Head teachers – agree	48%	48%	59%	57%	59%
Head teachers – disagree	23%	23%	18%	19%	19%
Teachers – agree	52%	55%	59%	58%	61%
Teachers – disagree	17%	16%	13%	12%	10%
HEIs – agree	51%	46%	61%	53%	61%
HEIs – disagree	13%	10%	9%	8%	9%
Employers – agree	55%	57%	59%	57%	61%
Employers – disagree	16%	8%	7%	9%	10%

Section 4: General perceptions of A levels

The following section considers respondents' general perceptions of A levels, not specific to any exam series, as opposed to 2022-specific perceptions. For comparisons with respondents' perceptions of A levels in 2022, please see section 1. To account for changes made to the A level qualification system over recent years, in wave 20, the question text changed to remove reference to AS.

For the following 8 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=2,068); Young people (N=224); Parents (N=249); Teachers (N=561); Head teachers (N=235); HEIs (N=243); Employers (N=248); General public (N=968).

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.

Key findings

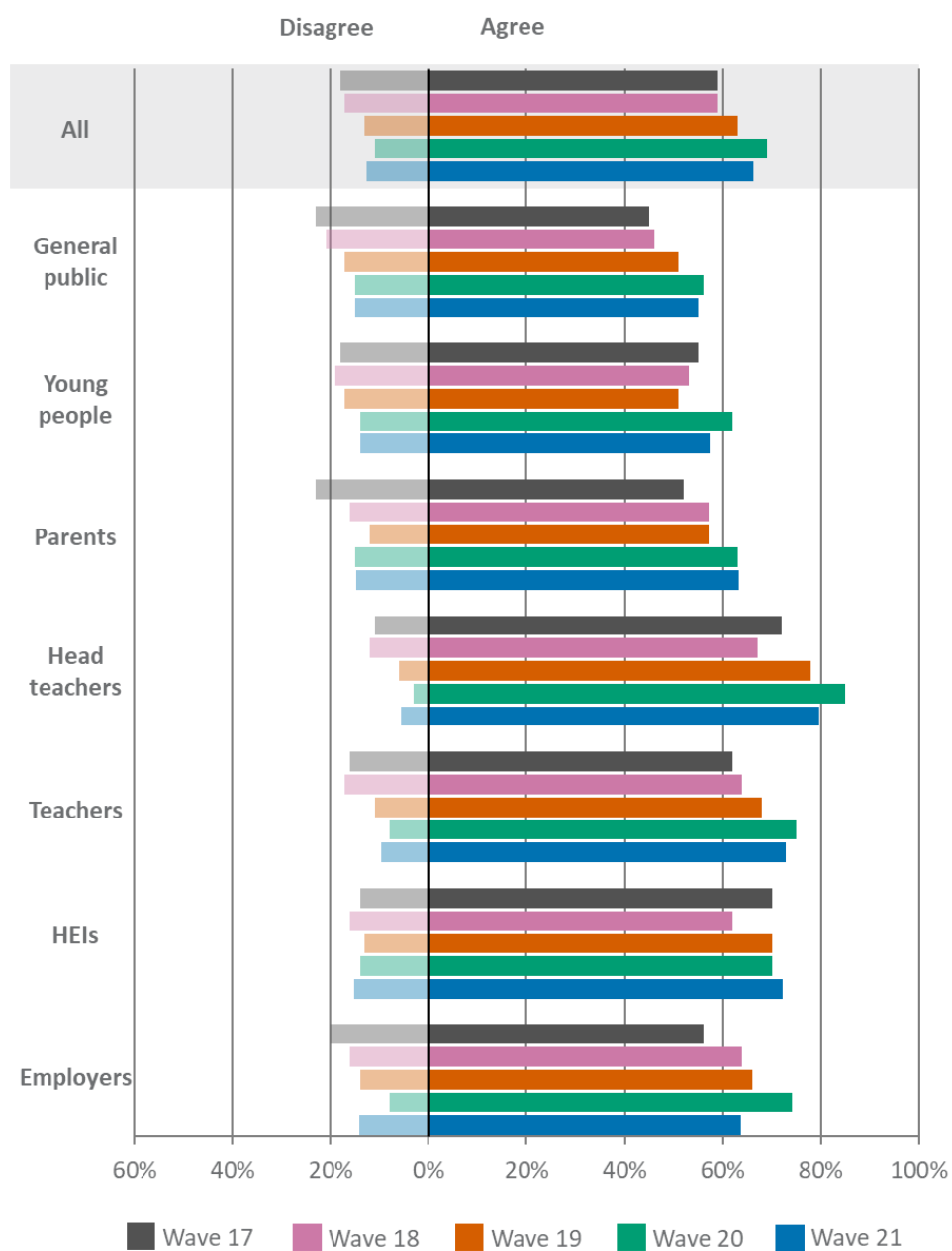
- Overall, perceptions of A levels generally remained in line with previous waves, including that they are trusted (83%), 'good preparation for further study' (80%), and 'develop a broad range of skills for students' (47%).
- Perceptions that 'standards are maintained year-on-year' (44%) and that 'the marking is accurate' (47%) were also consistent with wave 20.
- However, there were also some shifts in perceptions. Despite consistent agreement that A levels are good preparation for further study with previous waves, there was a decline in perceptions that 'A levels are good preparation for work' (35%, down from 39% in wave 20).
- There was also a decrease in overall levels of agreement that, in general, 'A levels are well understood by people' (66% compared with 69% in wave 20). This change was most evident among employers, whose agreement declined from 74% in wave 20 to 64% in wave 21.
- Although overall perceptions about the accuracy of marking in A levels remained consistent with wave 20, teachers reported a significant decline (from 66% in wave 20 to 59%).

Overall perceptions

Sixty-six per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, 'A levels are well understood by people', a slight decline after a peak in agreement in wave 20 (69%). Despite this decline, agreement was still higher than earlier waves (figure 16).

The change in agreement observed this wave was due to small, but not statistically significant, changes across most stakeholder groups. The only group with a significant decline was employers, where agreement declined from 74% in wave 20 to 64% in wave 21, back in line with wave 19 (66%).

Figure 16. Results for "A levels are well understood by people."



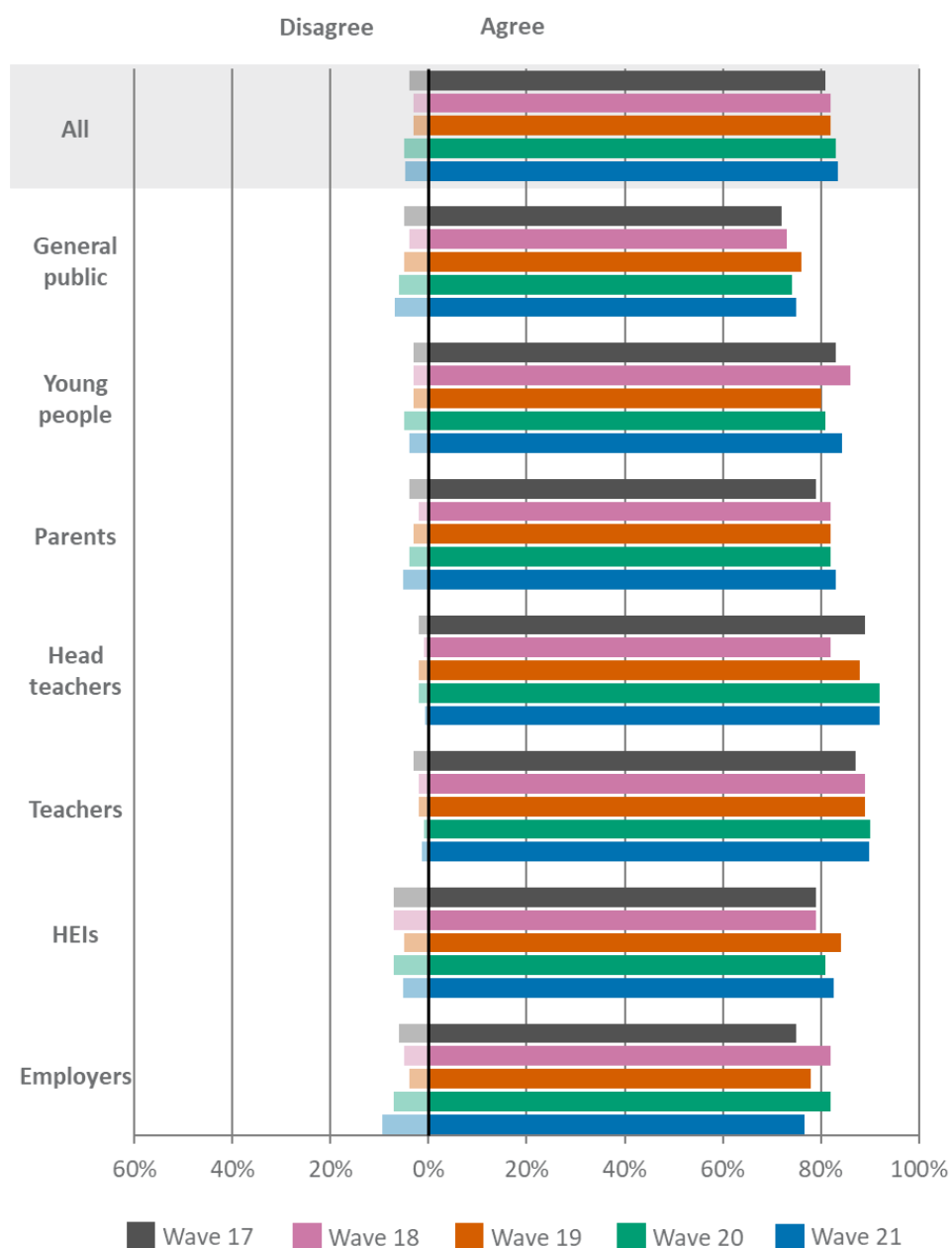
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Teachers – agree	62%	64%	68%	75%	73%
Teachers – disagree	16%	17%	11%	8%	10%
HEIs – agree	70%	62%	70%	70%	72%
HEIs – disagree	14%	16%	13%	14%	15%
Employers – agree	56%	64%	66%	74%	64%
Employers – disagree	20%	16%	14%	8%	14%

Overall, approximately 8 in 10 (83%) respondents believed that, in general, ‘A levels are trusted qualifications’ in wave 21, consistent with all recent waves (figure 17).

There were no statistically significant changes compared to wave 20 for any stakeholder groups. Head teachers showed the highest agreement (92%), closely followed by teachers (90%).

Figure 17. Results for “A levels are trusted qualifications.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	81%	82%	82%	83%	83%
All – disagree	4%	3%	3%	5%	5%
General public – agree	72%	73%	76%	74%	75%
General public – disagree	5%	4%	5%	6%	7%
Young people – agree	83%	86%	80%	81%	84%

Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

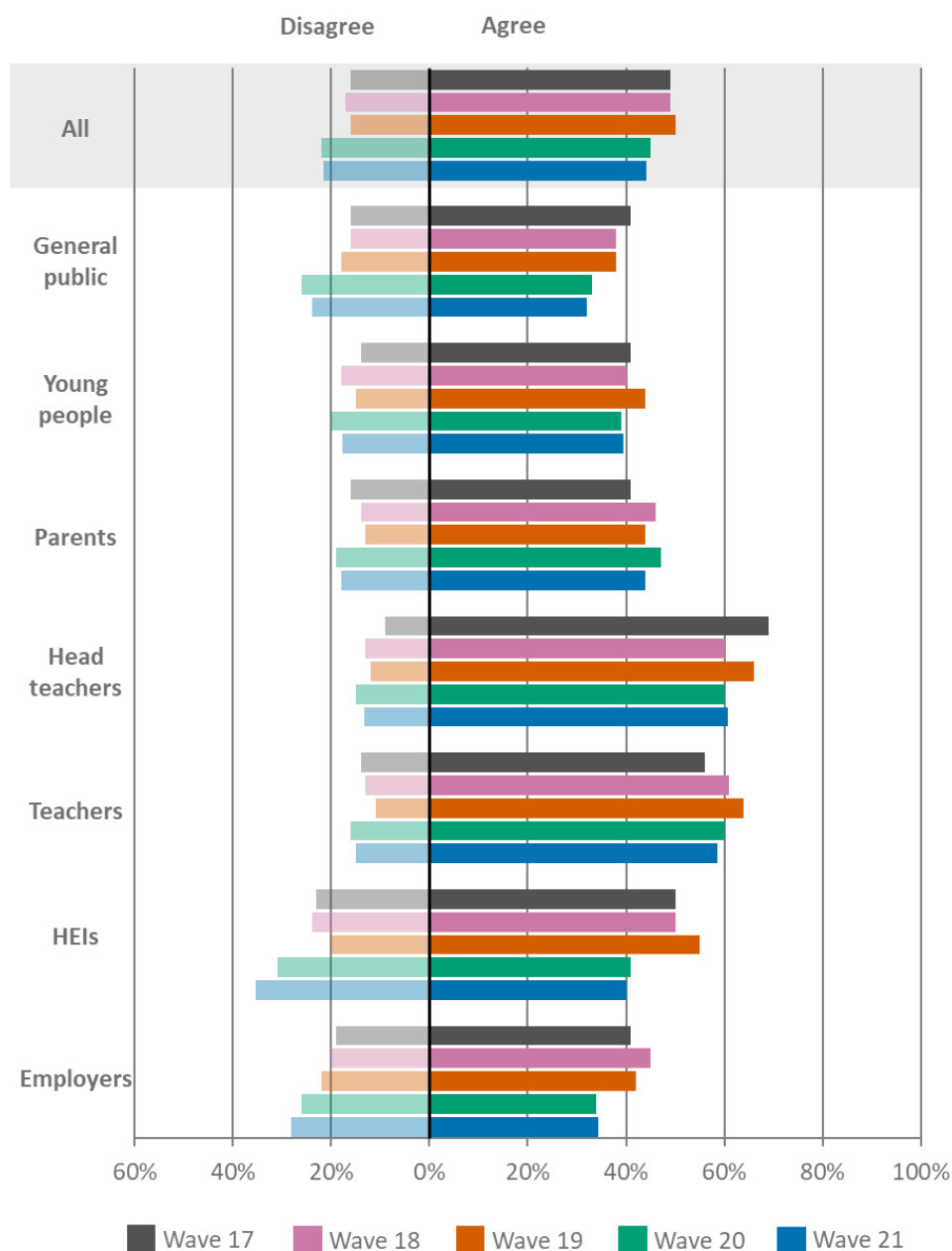
Young people – disagree	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
Parents – agree	79%	82%	82%	82%	83%
Parents – disagree	4%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Head teachers – agree	89%	82%	88%	92%	92%
Head teachers – disagree	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Teachers – agree	87%	89%	89%	90%	90%
Teachers – disagree	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%
HEIs – agree	79%	79%	84%	81%	83%
HEIs – disagree	7%	7%	5%	7%	5%
Employers – agree	75%	82%	78%	82%	77%
Employers – disagree	6%	5%	4%	7%	9%

Confidence in standards and marking

Forty-four per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘A level standards are maintained year-on-year’ (figure 18). This is similar to wave 20 (45%), after dropping from 50% in wave 19.

This pattern was similar across most stakeholder groups, with only small decreases compared to wave 20 that were not statistically significant.

Figure 18. Results for “A level standards are maintained year-on-year.”



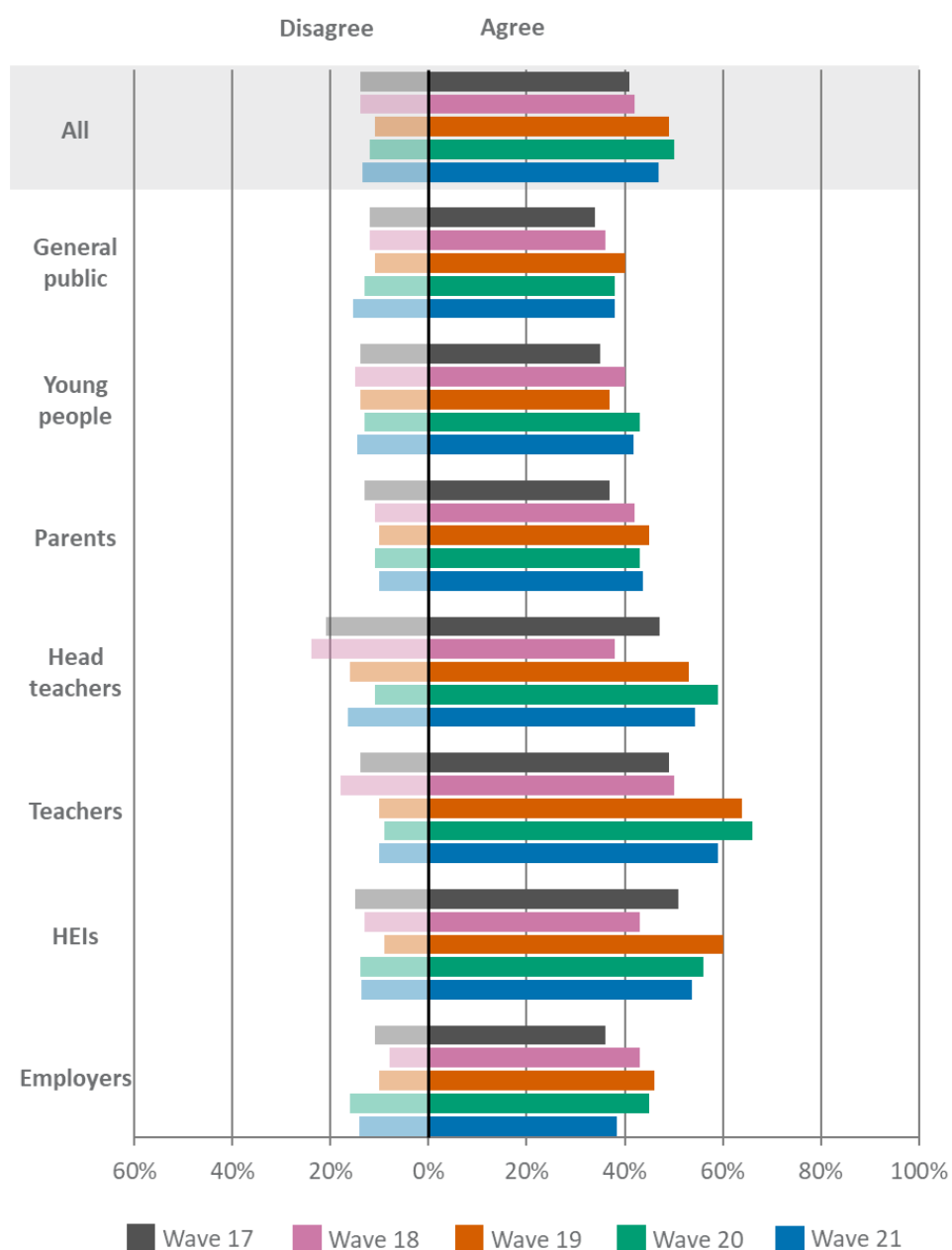
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	49%	49%	50%	45%	44%
All – disagree	16%	17%	16%	22%	22%
General public – agree	41%	38%	38%	33%	32%

General public – disagree	16%	16%	18%	26%	24%
Young people – agree	41%	40%	44%	39%	39%
Young people – disagree	14%	18%	15%	20%	18%
Parents – agree	41%	46%	44%	47%	44%
Parents – disagree	16%	14%	13%	19%	18%
Head teachers – agree	69%	60%	66%	60%	61%
Head teachers – disagree	9%	13%	12%	15%	13%
Teachers – agree	56%	61%	64%	60%	59%
Teachers – disagree	14%	13%	11%	16%	15%
HEIs – agree	50%	50%	55%	41%	40%
HEIs – disagree	23%	24%	20%	31%	35%
Employers – agree	41%	45%	42%	34%	34%
Employers – disagree	19%	20%	22%	26%	28%

In wave 21, nearly half of respondents (47%) agreed that, in general, ‘the marking of A levels is accurate’ (figure 19). This was similar to responses in wave 20 (50%).

There was a decline in levels of agreement for teachers in wave 21 (59%), compared to wave 20 (66%). A similar pattern was observed among head teachers and employers although the decreases were not statistically significant. For teachers, HEIs and employers, a gradual downward trend can be seen since wave 19.

Figure 19. Results for "The marking of A levels is accurate."



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	41%	42%	49%	50%	47%
All – disagree	14%	14%	11%	12%	13%
General public – agree	34%	36%	40%	38%	38%

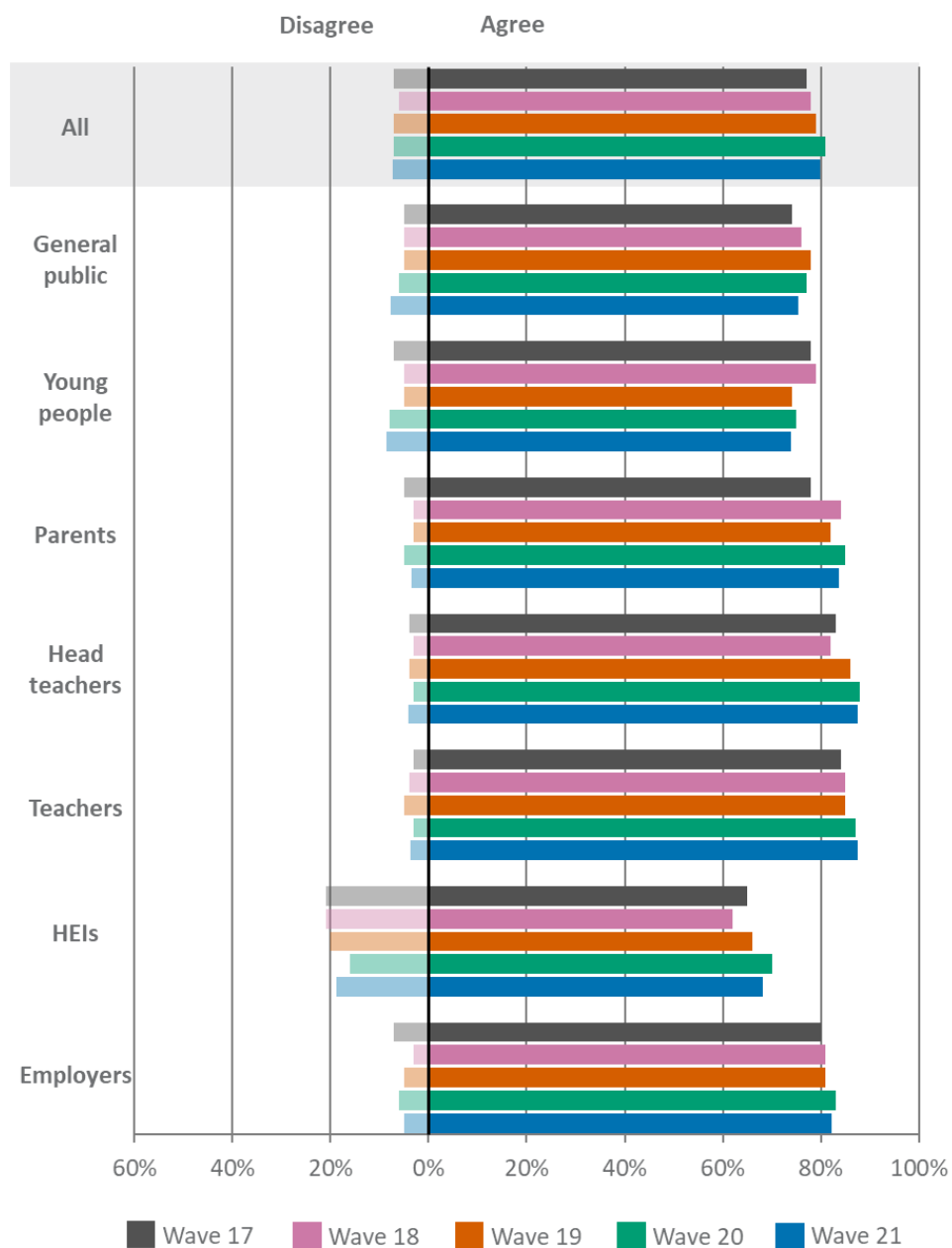
General public – disagree	12%	12%	11%	13%	15%
Young people – agree	35%	40%	37%	43%	42%
Young people – disagree	14%	15%	14%	13%	14%
Parents – agree	37%	42%	45%	43%	44%
Parents – disagree	13%	11%	10%	11%	10%
Head teachers – agree	47%	38%	53%	59%	54%
Head teachers – disagree	21%	24%	16%	11%	16%
Teachers – agree	49%	50%	64%	66%	59%
Teachers – disagree	14%	18%	10%	9%	10%
HEIs – agree	51%	43%	60%	56%	54%
HEIs – disagree	15%	13%	9%	14%	14%
Employers – agree	36%	43%	46%	45%	38%
Employers – disagree	11%	8%	10%	16%	14%

Skills and preparation

Overall, 8 in 10 (80%) respondents agreed that, in general, ‘A levels are good preparation for further study’, roughly consistent with agreement levels in wave 20.

In this wave, agreement was highest among head teachers and teachers (both 88%), and all stakeholders’ agreement remained broadly consistent with wave 20.

Figure 20. Results for "A levels are good preparation for further study."



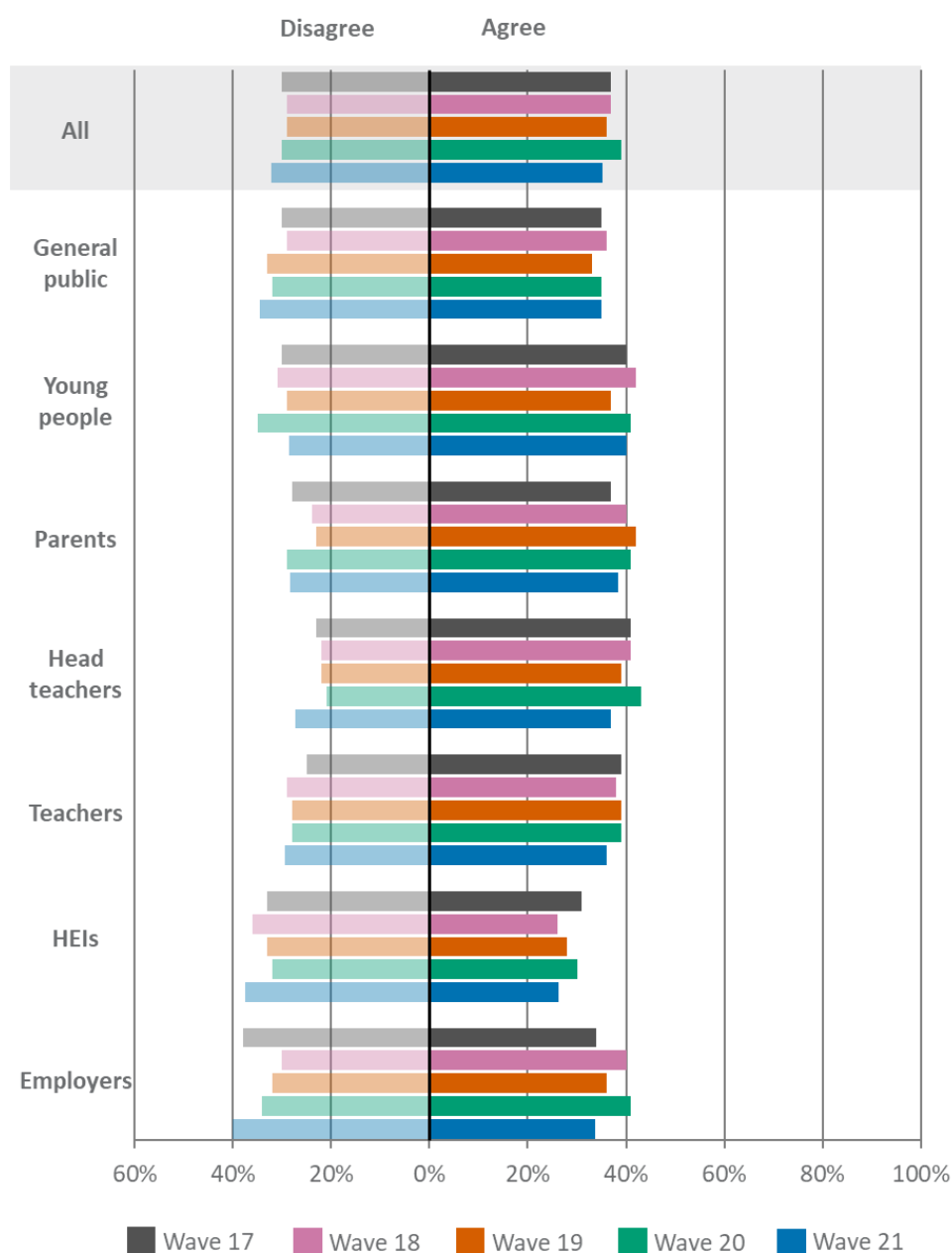
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	77%	78%	79%	81%	80%
All – disagree	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%
General public – agree	74%	76%	78%	77%	75%
General public – disagree	5%	5%	5%	6%	8%

Young people – agree	78%	79%	74%	75%	74%
Young people – disagree	7%	5%	5%	8%	9%
Parents – agree	78%	84%	82%	85%	84%
Parents – disagree	5%	3%	3%	5%	4%
Head teachers – agree	83%	82%	86%	88%	88%
Head teachers – disagree	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%
Teachers – agree	84%	85%	85%	87%	88%
Teachers – disagree	3%	4%	5%	3%	4%
HEIs – agree	65%	62%	66%	70%	68%
HEIs – disagree	21%	21%	20%	16%	19%
Employers – agree	80%	81%	81%	83%	82%
Employers – disagree	7%	3%	5%	6%	5%

The level of agreement that, in general, ‘A levels are good preparation for work’ declined in wave 21 (35%) when compared to wave 20 (39%). The agreement reported in wave 21 was broadly comparable to the findings for waves 17, 18 and 19.

Despite an overall drop, there were no statistically significant changes year-on-year for any individual stakeholder group. Instead, the decline was as a result of non-statistically significant changes across the majority of groups.

Figure 21. Results for "A levels are good preparation for work."



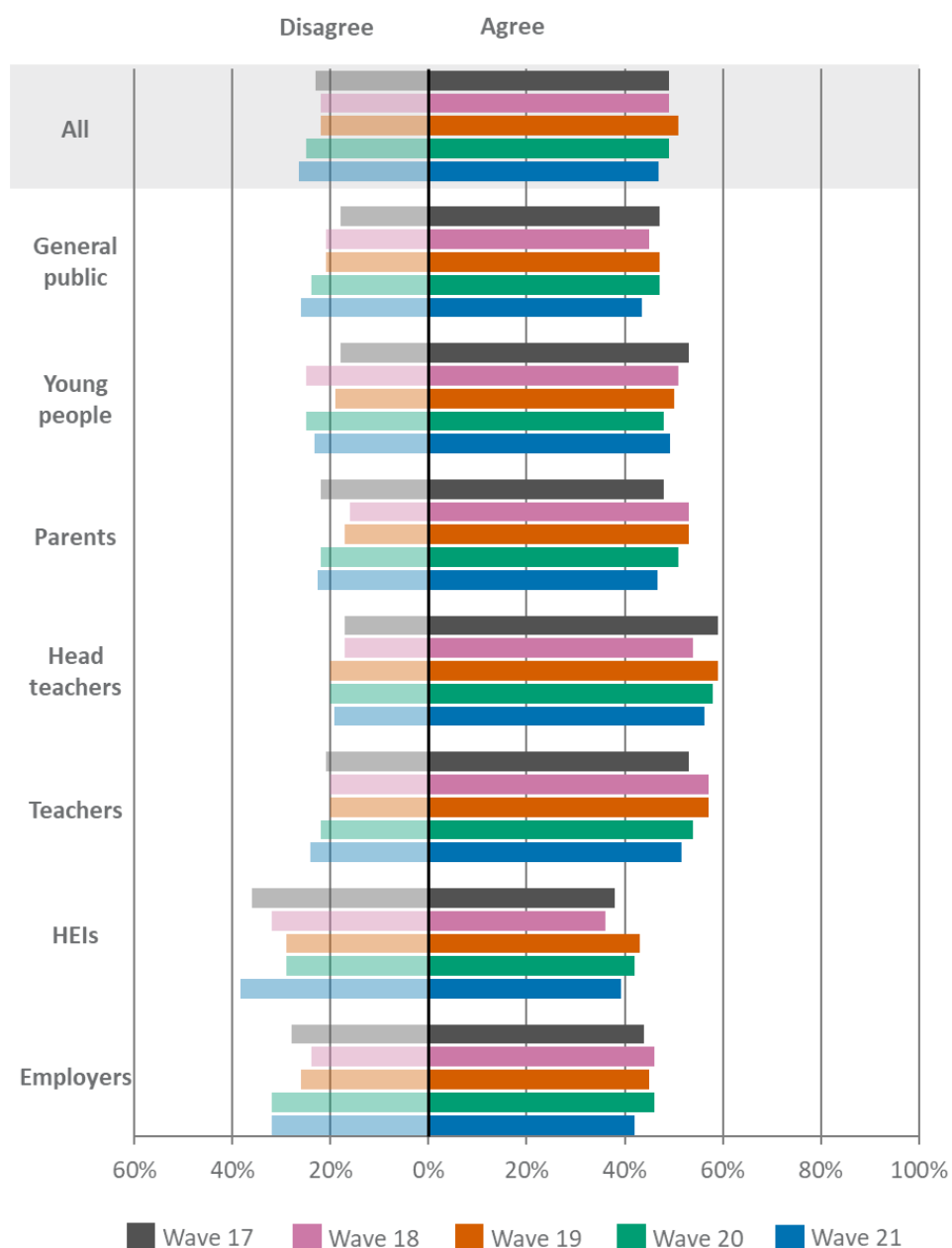
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	37%	37%	36%	39%	35%
All – disagree	30%	29%	29%	30%	32%
General public – agree	35%	36%	33%	35%	35%

General public – disagree	30%	29%	33%	32%	34%
Young people – agree	40%	42%	37%	41%	40%
Young people – disagree	30%	31%	29%	35%	29%
Parents – agree	37%	40%	42%	41%	38%
Parents – disagree	28%	24%	23%	29%	28%
Head teachers – agree	41%	41%	39%	43%	37%
Head teachers – disagree	23%	22%	22%	21%	27%
Teachers – agree	39%	38%	39%	39%	36%
Teachers – disagree	25%	29%	28%	28%	29%
HEIs – agree	31%	26%	28%	30%	26%
HEIs – disagree	33%	36%	33%	32%	37%
Employers – agree	34%	40%	36%	41%	34%
Employers – disagree	38%	30%	32%	34%	40%

In wave 21, nearly half of respondents (47%) believed that, in general, ‘A levels develop a broad range of skills for students’ (figure 22). While this was roughly in line with wave 20 (49%), it does represent a decline in agreement compared with wave 19 (51%).

There has been a gradual decline since wave 19 across many stakeholder groups, although the year-on-year changes were not statistically significant.

Figure 22. Results for “A levels develop a broad range of skills for students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	49%	49%	51%	49%	47%
All – disagree	23%	22%	22%	25%	27%
General public – agree	47%	45%	47%	47%	43%
General public – disagree	18%	21%	21%	24%	26%

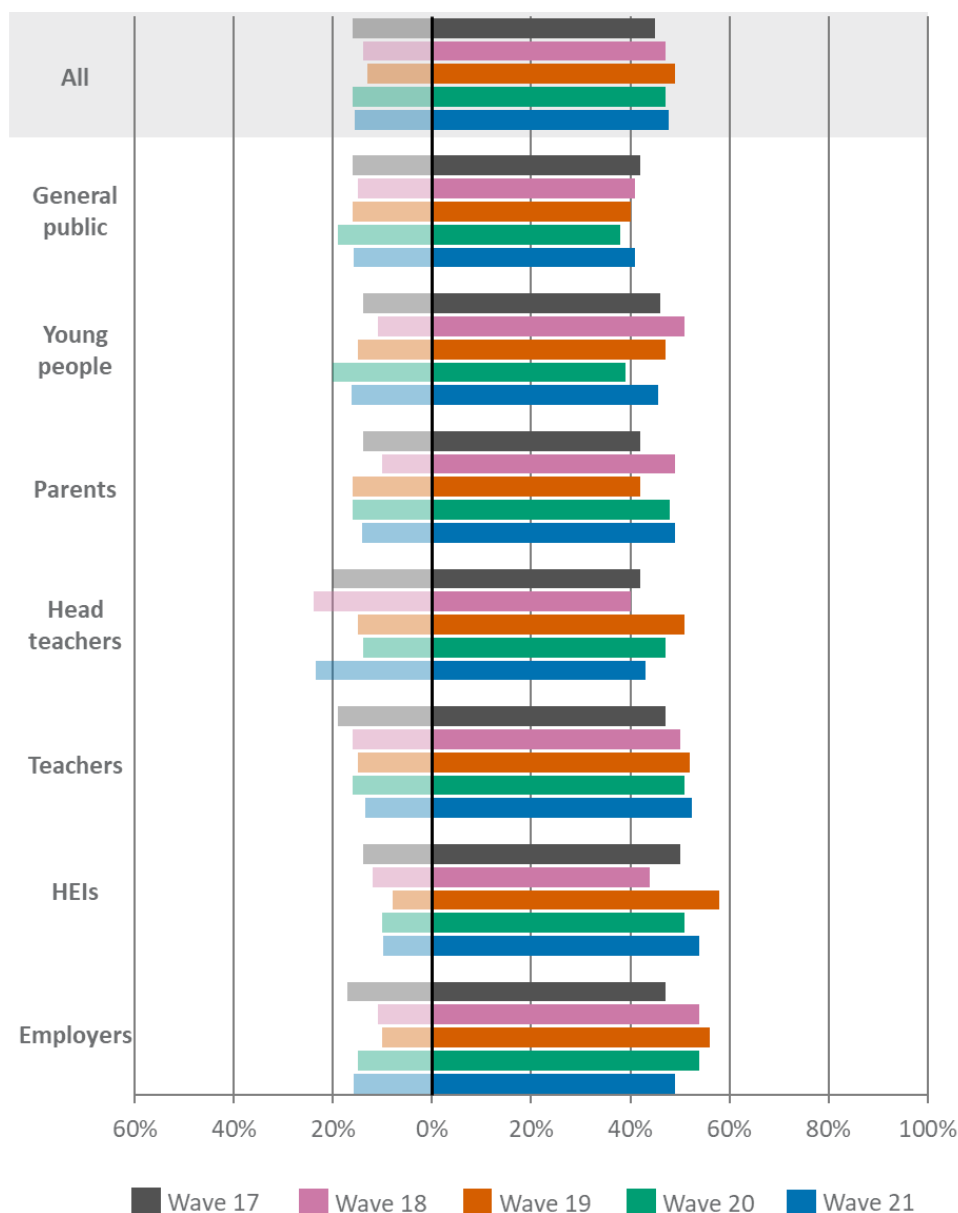
Young people – agree	53%	51%	50%	48%	49%
Young people – disagree	18%	25%	19%	25%	23%
Parents – agree	48%	53%	53%	51%	47%
Parents – disagree	22%	16%	17%	22%	23%
Head teachers – agree	59%	54%	59%	58%	56%
Head teachers – disagree	17%	17%	20%	20%	19%
Teachers – agree	53%	57%	57%	54%	52%
Teachers – disagree	21%	20%	20%	22%	24%
HEIs – agree	38%	36%	43%	42%	39%
HEIs – disagree	36%	32%	29%	29%	38%
Employers – agree	44%	46%	45%	46%	42%
Employers – disagree	28%	24%	26%	32%	32%

Value for money

Overall, approximately half of respondents (48%) agreed in wave 21 that, in general, ‘A levels offer value for money’ (figure 23), consistent with wave 20 (47%).

There were no significant changes year-on-year for most stakeholder groups. However, disagreement among head teachers increased in wave 21 (23%) compared with wave 20 (14%), despite seeing no significant shifts in agreement levels.

Figure 23. Results for "A levels offer ‘value for money’."



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	45%	47%	49%	47%	48%
All – disagree	16%	14%	13%	16%	16%
General public – agree	42%	41%	40%	38%	41%
General public – disagree	16%	15%	16%	19%	16%

Young people – agree	46%	51%	47%	39%	46%
Young people – disagree	14%	11%	15%	20%	16%
Parents – agree	42%	49%	42%	48%	49%
Parents – disagree	14%	10%	16%	16%	14%
Head teachers – agree	42%	40%	51%	47%	43%
Head teachers – disagree	20%	24%	15%	14%	23%
Teachers – agree	47%	50%	52%	51%	52%
Teachers – disagree	19%	16%	15%	16%	14%
HEIs – agree	50%	44%	58%	51%	54%
HEIs – disagree	14%	12%	8%	10%	10%
Employers – agree	47%	54%	56%	54%	49%
Employers – disagree	17%	11%	10%	15%	16%

Section 5: General perceptions of Applied General qualifications

The following section considers respondents' general perceptions of Applied General qualifications, not specific to any exam series, as opposed to 2022-specific perceptions. For comparisons with respondents' perceptions of Applied General qualifications in 2022, please see section 1.

For the following 8 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=2,068); Young people (N=224); Parents (N=249); Teachers (N=561); Head teachers (N=235); HEIs (N=243); Employers (N=248); General public (N=968).

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.

Key findings

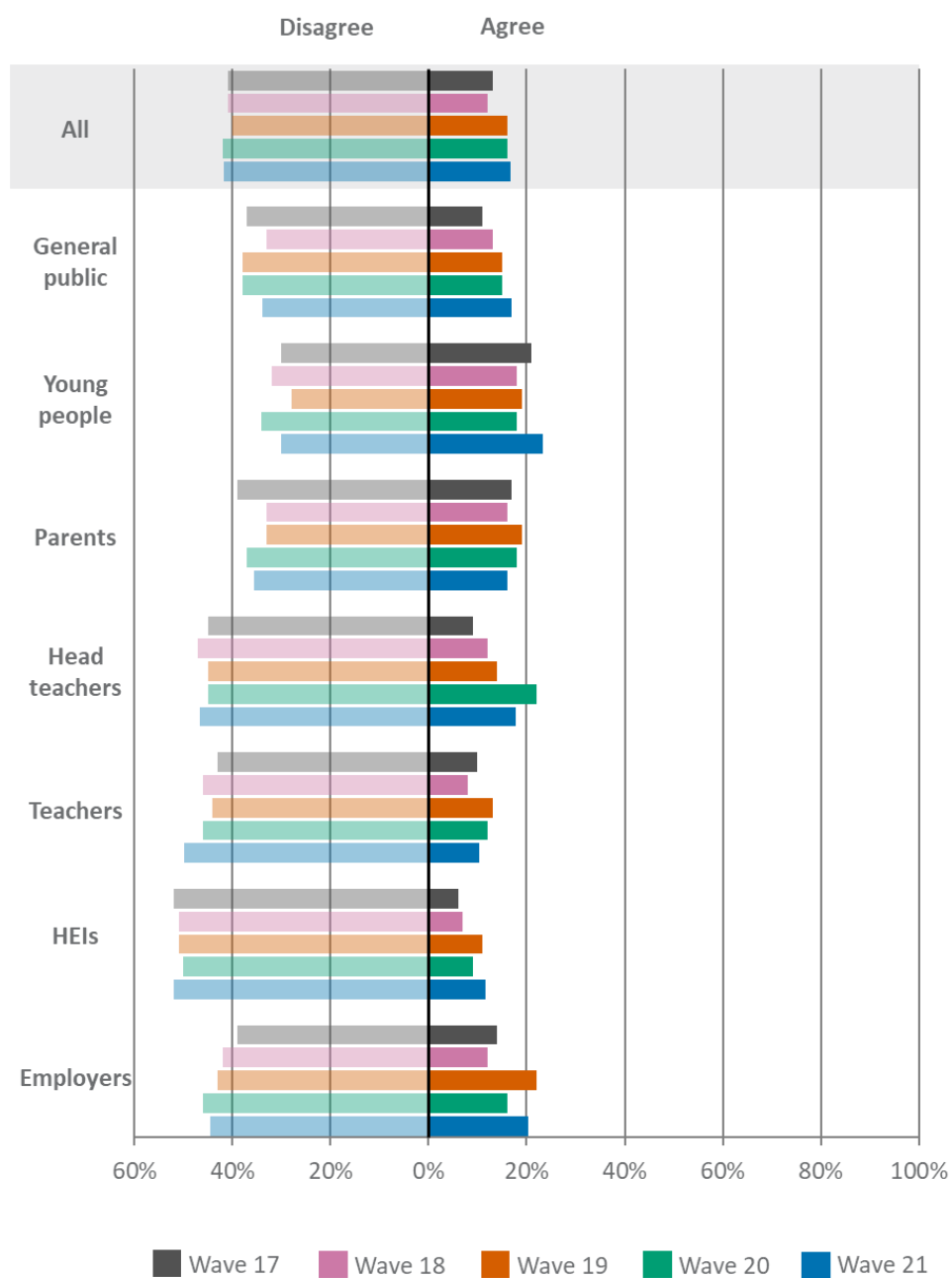
- There were no changes in overall agreement regarding general perceptions of Applied General qualifications in comparison with wave 20. However, the increased levels of agreement first recorded between wave 18 and wave 19 were maintained in wave 21 for perceptions of Applied General qualifications being well understood by people, trusted, consistent in standards year-on-year, accurate in marking, good preparation for further study and good preparation for work, as well as for developing a broad range of skills for students.
- This was true for all perceptions apart from 'value for money', for which there was a gradual increase in levels of agreement recorded between wave 17 (22%) and wave 21 (28%). Differences in comparison with wave 20 for perceptions of 'value for money' were not statistically significant for any stakeholder group apart from the general public, where an increase was observed.
- Among head teachers, in comparison with wave 20, there were small (but not statistically significant) decreases in levels of agreement that, in general, Applied General qualifications are trusted, consistent in standards year-on-year and that the marking is accurate.

Overall perceptions

Nearly 2 in 10 (17%) respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, 'Applied General qualifications are well understood by people', consistent with wave 20. This represented a sustained increase in levels of agreement in comparison with wave 17 (13%) and wave 18 (12%).

Agreement that Applied General qualifications are well understood by people was broadly consistent among each stakeholder group in comparison with wave 20, although there was a small, but not statistically significant, increase for young people and employers.

Figure 24. Results for “Applied General qualifications are well understood by people.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	13%	12%	16%	16%	17%
All – disagree	41%	41%	40%	42%	42%
General public – agree	11%	13%	15%	15%	17%
General public – disagree	37%	33%	38%	38%	34%
Young people – agree	21%	18%	19%	18%	23%
Young people – disagree	30%	32%	28%	34%	30%
Parents – agree	17%	16%	19%	18%	16%
Parents – disagree	39%	33%	33%	37%	36%
Head teachers – agree	9%	12%	14%	22%	18%

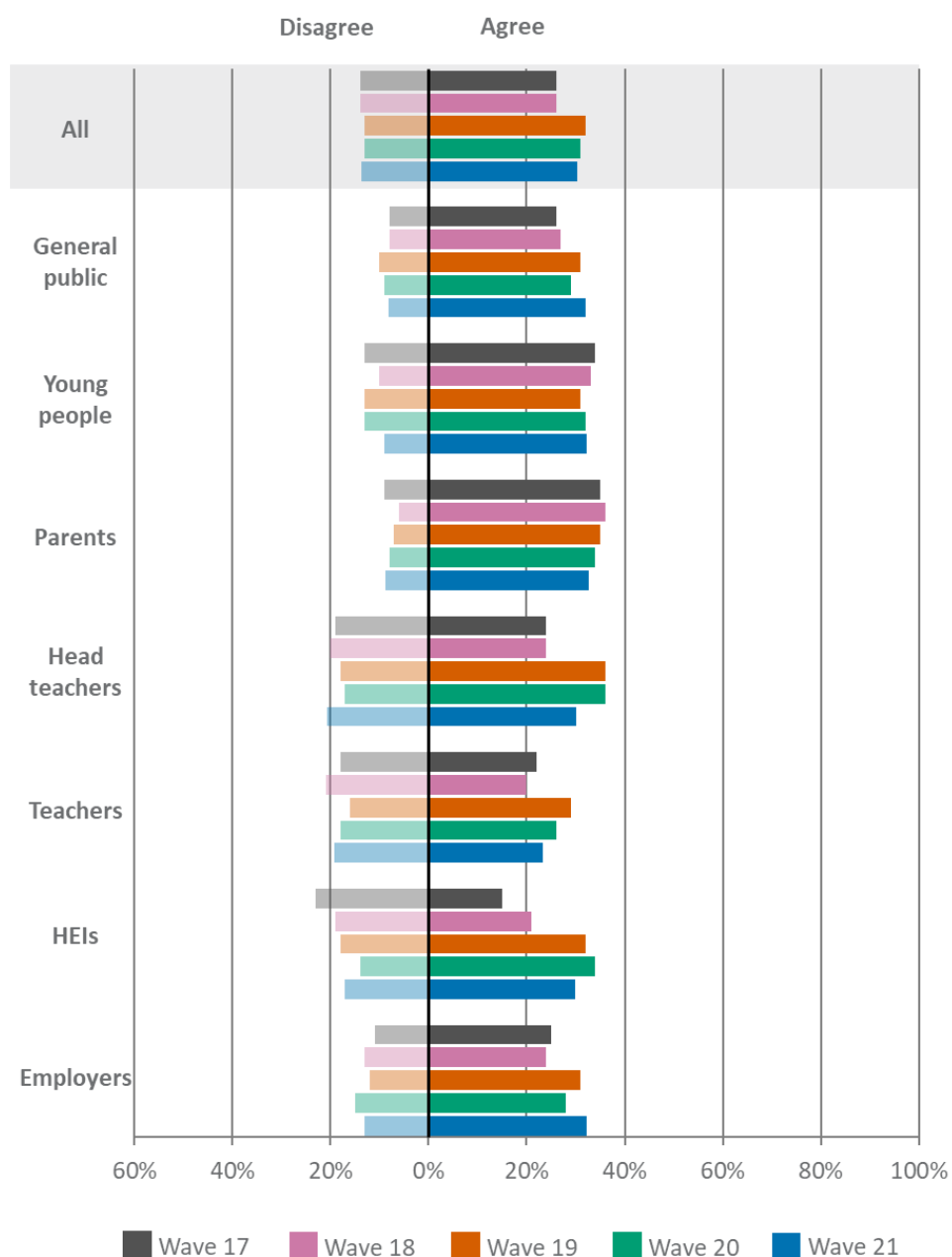
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Head teachers – disagree	45%	47%	45%	45%	47%
Teachers – agree	10%	8%	13%	12%	10%
Teachers – disagree	43%	46%	44%	46%	50%
HEIs – agree	6%	7%	11%	9%	12%
HEIs – disagree	52%	51%	51%	50%	52%
Employers – agree	14%	12%	22%	16%	20%
Employers – disagree	39%	42%	43%	46%	44%

Three in 10 (30%) respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications’, consistent with wave 20. This was a sustained increase in comparison with waves 17 and 18 (both 26%).

Across all stakeholder groups, levels of agreement remained broadly consistent with wave 20, despite a larger, but not statistically significant, decrease for head teachers.

Figure 25. Results for “Applied General qualifications are trusted qualifications.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	26%	26%	32%	31%	30%
All – disagree	14%	14%	13%	13%	14%
General public – agree	26%	27%	31%	29%	32%

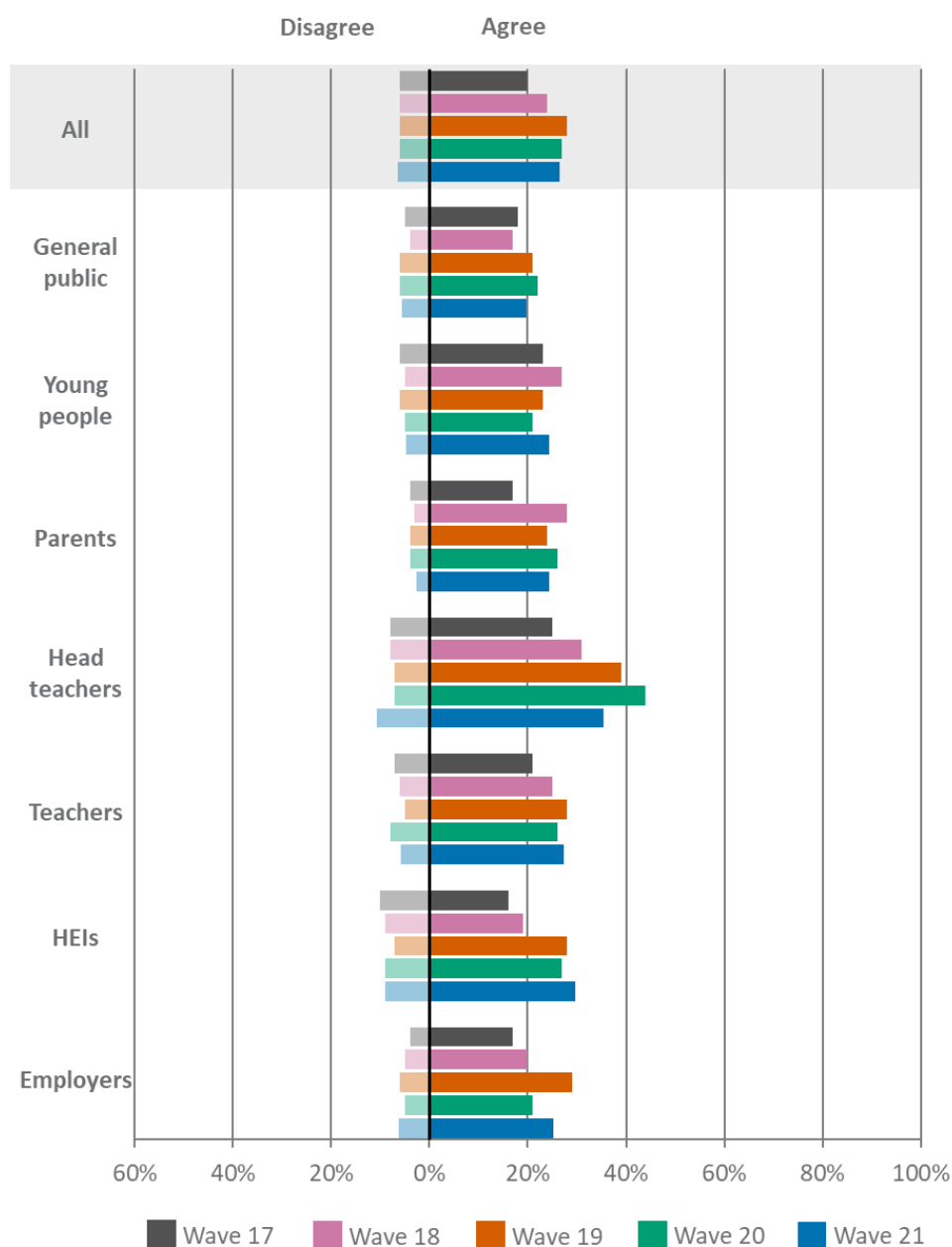
General public – disagree	8%	8%	10%	9%	8%
Young people – agree	34%	33%	31%	32%	32%
Young people – disagree	13%	10%	13%	13%	9%
Parents – agree	35%	36%	35%	34%	33%
Parents – disagree	9%	6%	7%	8%	9%
Head teachers – agree	24%	24%	36%	36%	30%
Head teachers – disagree	19%	20%	18%	17%	21%
Teachers – agree	22%	20%	29%	26%	23%
Teachers – disagree	18%	21%	16%	18%	19%
HEIs – agree	15%	21%	32%	34%	30%
HEIs – disagree	23%	19%	18%	14%	17%
Employers – agree	25%	24%	31%	28%	32%
Employers – disagree	11%	13%	12%	15%	13%

Confidence in standards and marking

Nearly 3 in 10 (27%) respondents this wave agreed that, in general, ‘Applied General qualification standards are maintained year-on-year’, broadly consistent with wave 20. Previously, a gradual increase in levels of agreement was observed between waves 17 and 19.

There were no statistically significant changes in levels of agreement in comparison with wave 20 for any stakeholder group. However, there was a non-statistically significant decrease in levels of agreement among head teachers, halting a trend of agreement increasing between waves 17 and 20.

Figure 26. Results for “Applied General qualification standards are maintained year-on-year.”



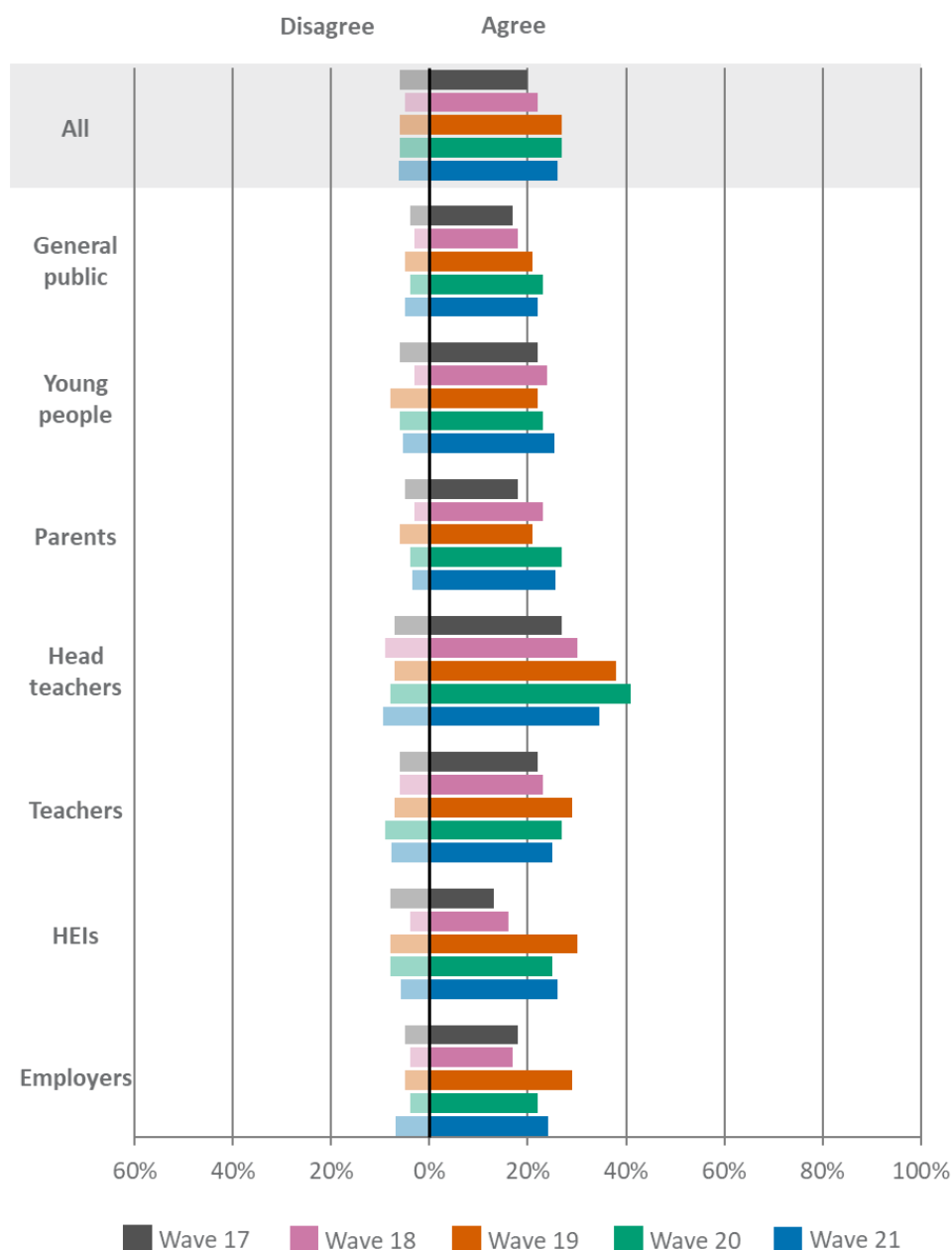
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	20%	24%	28%	27%	27%
All – disagree	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
General public – agree	18%	17%	21%	22%	20%
General public – disagree	5%	4%	6%	6%	6%
Young people – agree	23%	27%	23%	21%	24%
Young people – disagree	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Parents – agree	17%	28%	24%	26%	24%
Parents – disagree	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Head teachers – agree	25%	31%	39%	44%	35%
Head teachers – disagree	8%	8%	7%	7%	11%
Teachers – agree	21%	25%	28%	26%	27%
Teachers – disagree	7%	6%	5%	8%	6%
HEIs – agree	16%	19%	28%	27%	30%
HEIs – disagree	10%	9%	7%	9%	9%
Employers – agree	17%	20%	29%	21%	25%
Employers – disagree	4%	5%	6%	5%	6%

Twenty-six per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘the marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate’, consistent with wave 20. This represented an increase in levels of agreement in comparison with wave 17 (20%) and wave 18 (22%).

Across all stakeholder groups, there were no statistically significant changes in levels of agreement in comparison with wave 20. Among head teachers, however, there was a non-statistically significant decrease in levels of agreement compared with wave 20. This ended a trend of gradually increasing levels of agreement between wave 17 and wave 20.

Figure 27. Results for “The marking of Applied General qualifications is accurate.”



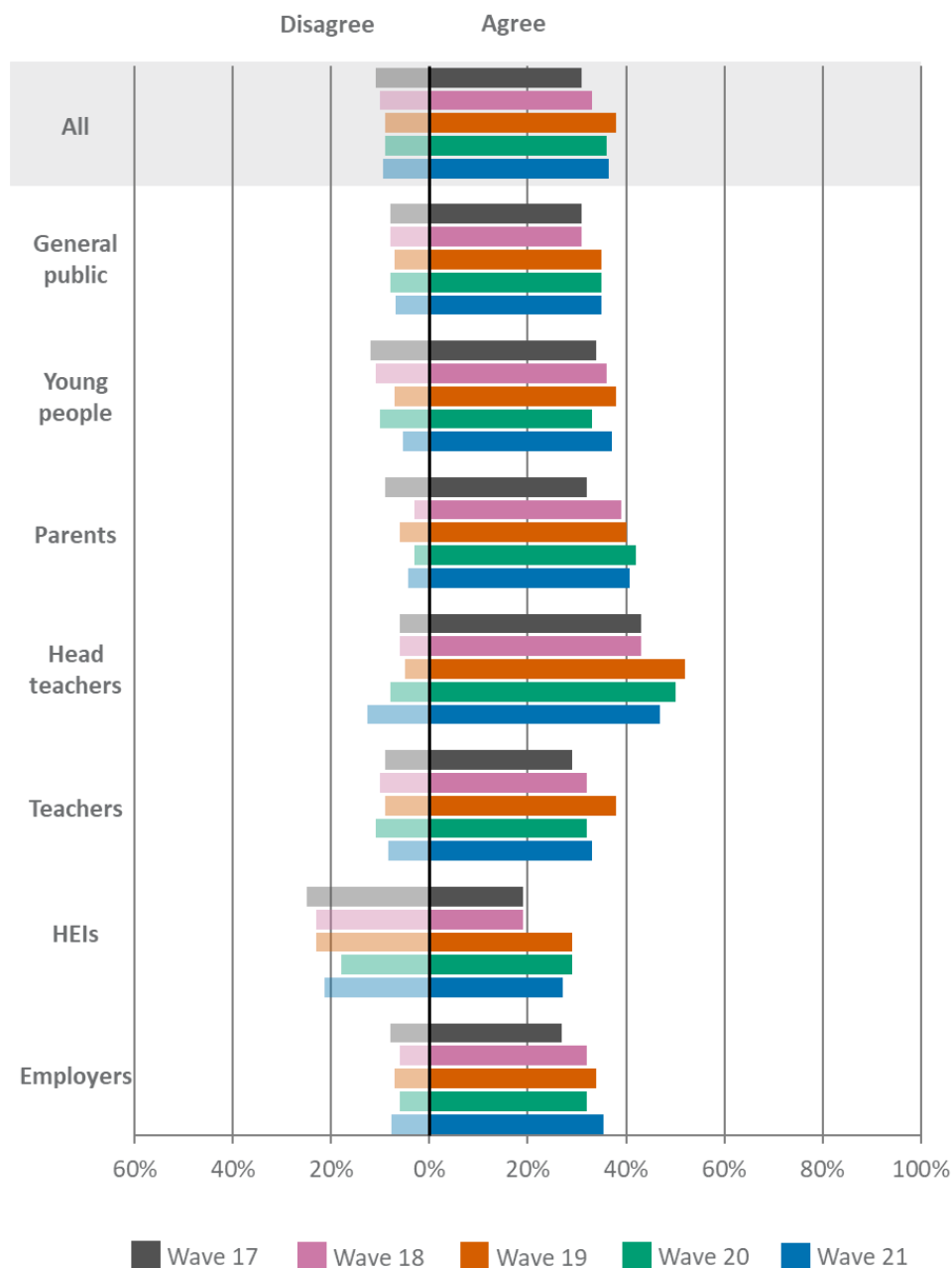
General public – disagree	4%	3%	5%	4%	5%
Young people – agree	22%	24%	22%	23%	25%
Young people – disagree	6%	3%	8%	6%	5%
Parents – agree	18%	23%	21%	27%	26%
Parents – disagree	5%	3%	6%	4%	4%
Head teachers – agree	27%	30%	38%	41%	34%
Head teachers – disagree	7%	9%	7%	8%	9%
Teachers – agree	22%	23%	29%	27%	25%
Teachers – disagree	6%	6%	7%	9%	8%
HEIs – agree	13%	16%	30%	25%	26%
HEIs – disagree	8%	4%	8%	8%	6%
Employers – agree	18%	17%	29%	22%	24%
Employers – disagree	5%	4%	5%	4%	7%

Skills and preparation

Thirty-six per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study’, broadly consistent with wave 20. This was an increase in comparison with wave 17 (31%) and wave 18 (33%).

Levels of agreement were broadly consistent across all stakeholder groups, despite a slightly larger, but not statistically significant, increase for young people in comparison with wave 20.

Figure 28. Results for “Applied General qualifications are good preparation for further study.”



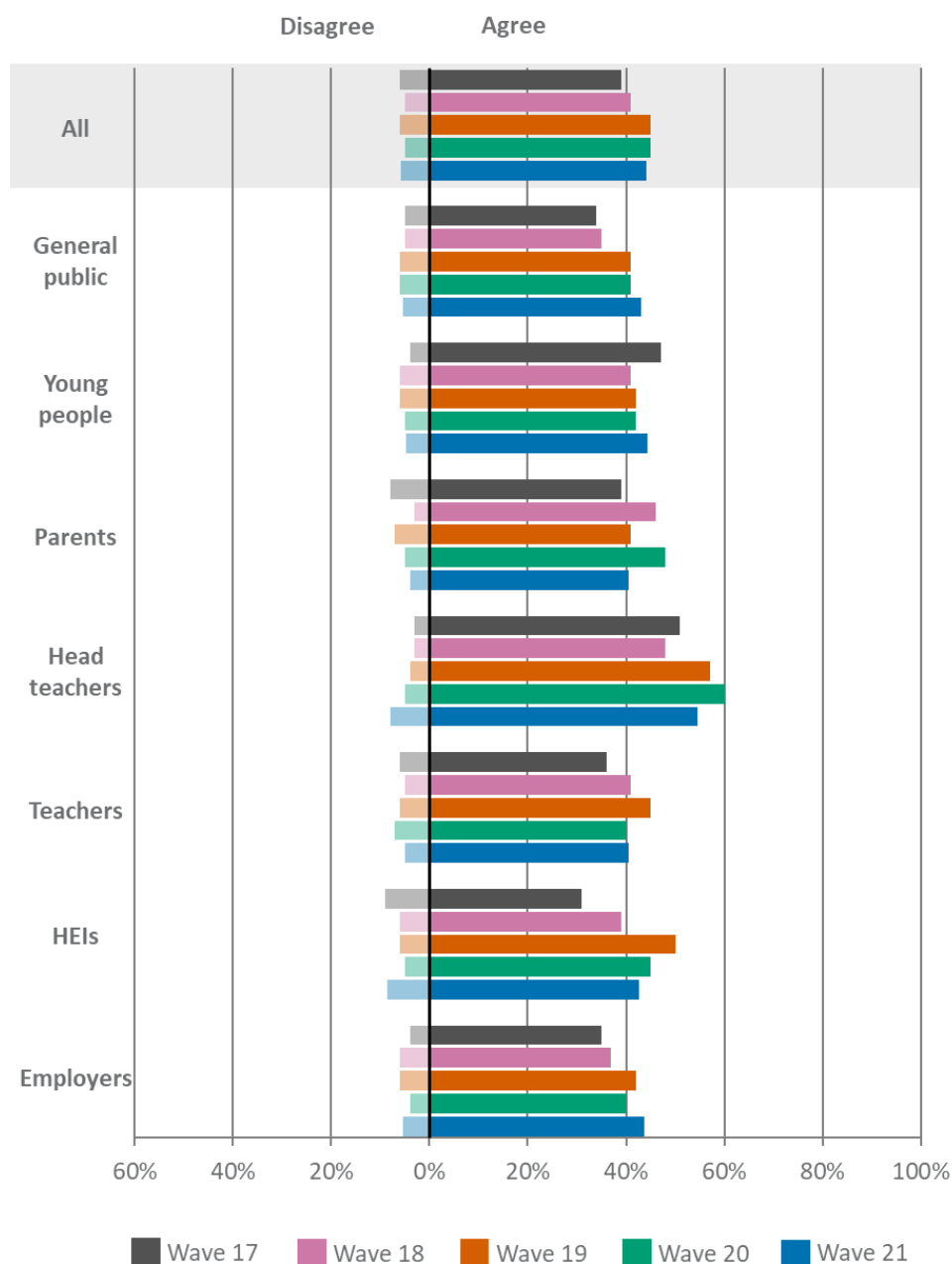
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	31%	33%	38%	36%	36%

All – disagree	11%	10%	9%	9%	10%
General public – agree	31%	31%	35%	35%	35%
General public – disagree	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%
Young people – agree	34%	36%	38%	33%	37%
Young people – disagree	12%	11%	7%	10%	5%
Parents – agree	32%	39%	40%	42%	41%
Parents – disagree	9%	3%	6%	3%	4%
Head teachers – agree	43%	43%	52%	50%	47%
Head teachers – disagree	6%	6%	5%	8%	13%
Teachers – agree	29%	32%	38%	32%	33%
Teachers – disagree	9%	10%	9%	11%	8%
HEIs – agree	19%	19%	29%	29%	27%
HEIs – disagree	25%	23%	23%	18%	21%
Employers – agree	27%	32%	34%	32%	35%
Employers – disagree	8%	6%	7%	6%	8%

Forty-four per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work’, consistent with wave 20. Comparable to other general perceptions of Applied General qualifications, this showed an increase in comparison with wave 17 (39%) and wave 18 (41%).

Across all stakeholder groups, there were no increases or decreases in comparison with wave 20. Among the general public, however, a similar trend could be observed to overall respondents whereby there was an increase in agreement in comparison with waves 17 (39%) and 18 (41%).

Figure 29. Results for “Applied General qualifications are good preparation for work.”

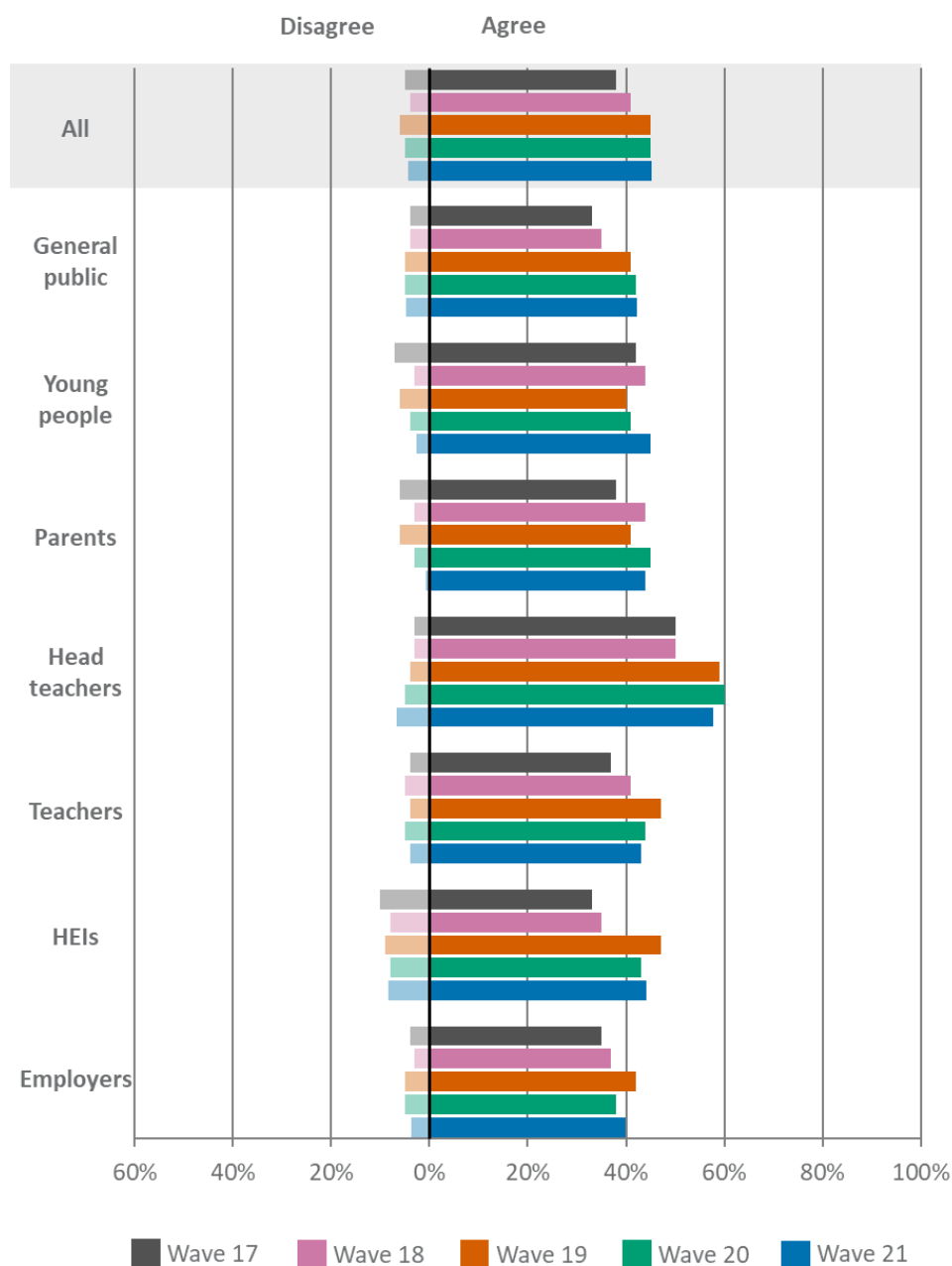


General public – agree	34%	35%	41%	41%	43%
General public – disagree	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%
Young people – agree	47%	41%	42%	42%	44%
Young people – disagree	4%	6%	6%	5%	5%
Parents – agree	39%	46%	41%	48%	40%
Parents – disagree	8%	3%	7%	5%	4%
Head teachers – agree	51%	48%	57%	60%	55%
Head teachers – disagree	3%	3%	4%	5%	8%
Teachers – agree	36%	41%	45%	40%	40%
Teachers – disagree	6%	5%	6%	7%	5%
HEIs – agree	31%	39%	50%	45%	43%
HEIs – disagree	9%	6%	6%	5%	9%
Employers – agree	35%	37%	42%	40%	44%
Employers – disagree	4%	6%	6%	4%	5%

Forty-five per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘Applied General qualifications develop a broad range of skills for students’, equal to the agreement levels seen in wave 20. This represented a sustained increase in comparison with wave 17 (38%) and wave 18 (41%).

Among all stakeholder groups, levels of agreement were broadly consistent with wave 20.

Figure 30. Results for “Applied General qualifications develop a broad range of skills for students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	38%	41%	45%	45%	45%
All – disagree	5%	4%	6%	5%	4%
General public – agree	33%	35%	41%	42%	42%
General public – disagree	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%

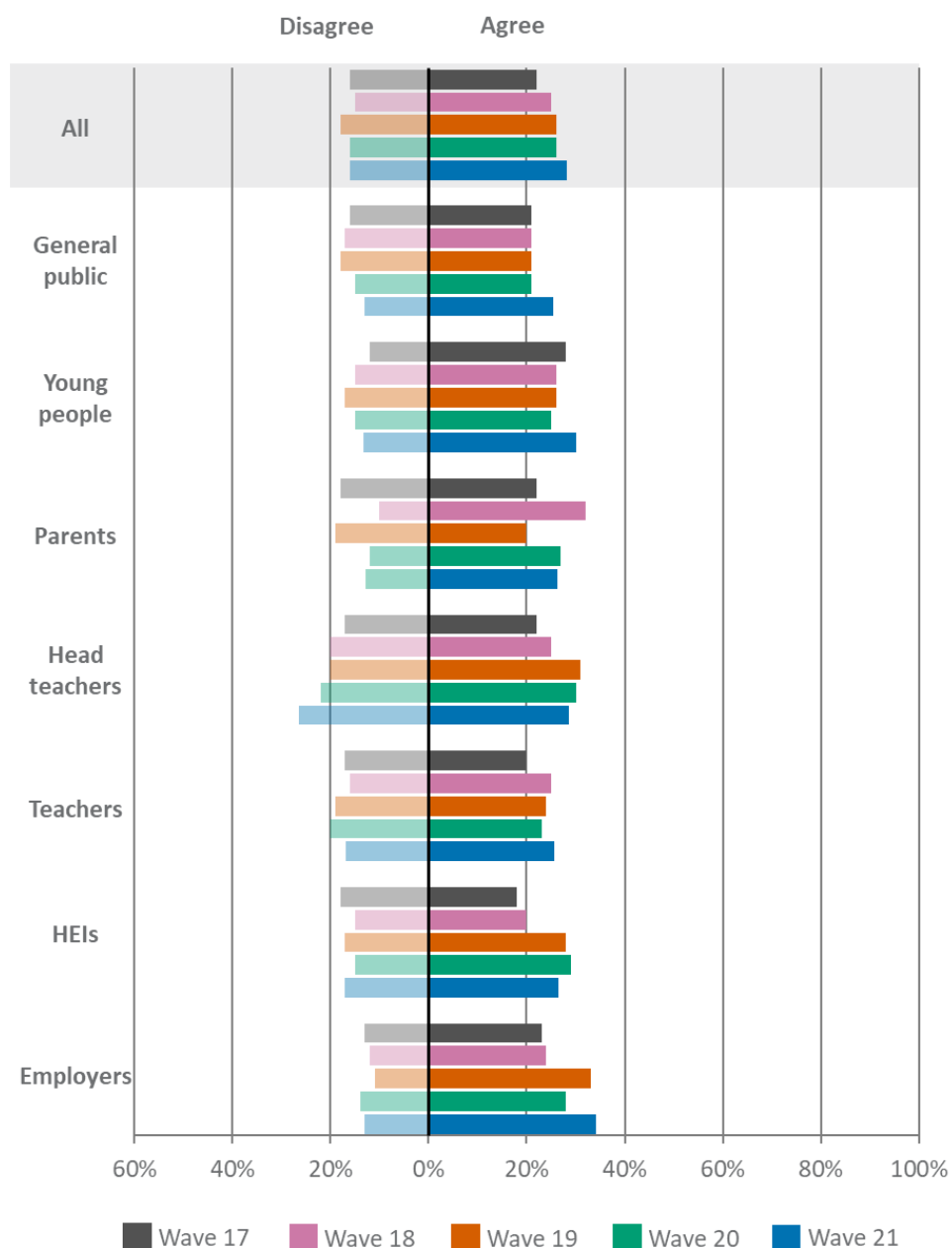
Young people – agree	42%	44%	40%	41%	45%
Young people – disagree	7%	3%	6%	4%	3%
Parents – agree	38%	44%	41%	45%	44%
Parents – disagree	6%	3%	6%	3%	1%
Head teachers – agree	50%	50%	59%	60%	58%
Head teachers – disagree	3%	3%	4%	5%	7%
Teachers – agree	37%	41%	47%	44%	43%
Teachers – disagree	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%
HEIs – agree	33%	35%	47%	43%	44%
HEIs – disagree	10%	8%	9%	8%	8%
Employers – agree	35%	37%	42%	38%	40%
Employers – disagree	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%

Value for money

Roughly 3 in 10 (28%) respondents in wave 21 agreed that, in general, ‘Applied General qualifications offer “value for money”’. Although consistent with wave 20, there was a gradual increase in levels of agreement between wave 17 and wave 21.

There was an increase in levels of agreement among the general public in comparison with wave 20, from 21% to 25%, but no changes among the other stakeholder groups.

Figure 31. Results for “Applied General qualifications offer “value for money”.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	22%	25%	26%	26%	28%
All – disagree	16%	15%	18%	16%	16%

General public – agree	21%	21%	21%	21%	25%
General public – disagree	16%	17%	18%	15%	13%
Young people – agree	28%	26%	26%	25%	30%
Young people – disagree	12%	15%	17%	15%	13%
Parents – agree	22%	32%	20%	27%	26%
Parents – disagree	18%	10%	19%	12%	13%
Head teachers – agree	22%	25%	31%	30%	29%
Head teachers – disagree	17%	20%	20%	22%	26%
Teachers – agree	20%	25%	24%	23%	26%
Teachers – disagree	17%	16%	19%	20%	17%
HEIs – agree	18%	20%	28%	29%	26%
HEIs – disagree	18%	15%	17%	15%	17%
Employers – agree	23%	24%	33%	28%	34%
Employers – disagree	13%	12%	11%	14%	13%

Section 6: Reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals against results for GCSEs and A levels

To account for changes made to the A level qualification system over recent years, in wave 20, the question text changed to remove reference to AS.

Key findings

- Approximately 8 in 10 (82%) respondents were aware of the normal process for reviews of marking and moderation and appeals for GCSE and A level results, representing a decrease compared to wave 20 (84%). Awareness decreased among employers (76% compared with 84%) and HEIs (90% compared with 94%) and increased among young people (79% compared with 73%) compared with wave 20.
- Approximately half of respondents agreed that the process for reviews of marking and moderation and appeals is fair for GCSEs (50%) and A levels (49%). This was consistent with wave 20 for most stakeholder groups apart from teachers, where agreement decreased in wave 21 to 54% compared to 62% for GCSEs and 52% compared to 62% for A levels, returning to levels seen in wave 19.
- Overall, 55% of respondents agreed that they have adequate information about the process, which marked an increase in comparison with wave 20 (50%). This was mainly due to the increase in agreement among young people (48% compared to 40%).
- Approximately 7 in 10 (71%) respondents were aware that for A level or GCSE subjects, in 2022 a school or college can appeal to the exam board on the ground of a marking error. This represented a large increase compared with when this question was last asked in wave 18 (46%). This increase in awareness was seen across all stakeholder groups.

Awareness and perceptions

For the following survey item, the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=2,068); Young people (N=224); Parents (N=249); Teachers (N=561); Head teachers (N=235); HEIs (N=243); Employers (N=248); General public (N=968).

Approximately 8 in 10 (82%) respondents in wave 21 were aware that there is a process of reviews of marking and moderation and appeals for GCSE and A level results (figure 32). This was a decrease compared with wave 20 (84%). When looking at individual stakeholder groups in comparison with wave 20, awareness decreased among employers (76% compared with 84%) and HEIs (90% compared with 94%). However, there was an increase among young people (79% compared with 73%). For the rest of the stakeholder groups, awareness was not significantly different to wave 20.

Figure 32. Results for “Are you aware that there is a process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and A level results?”



Note: 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?”. In wave 20, the question text changed to remove reference to AS.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – Yes	64%	69%	85%	84%	82%
All – No	36%	31%	15%	16%	18%
General public – Yes	42%	47%	70%	69%	65%
General public – No	58%	53%	30%	31%	35%
Young people – Yes	61%	63%	80%	73%	79%
Young people – No	39%	37%	20%	27%	21%

Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Parents – Yes	54%	58%	70%	75%	69%
Parents – No	46%	42%	30%	25%	31%
Head teachers – Yes	94%	95%	98%	99%	98%
Head teachers – No	6%	5%	2%	1%	2%
Teachers – Yes	83%	87%	97%	95%	96%
Teachers – No	17%	13%	3%	5%	4%
HEIs – Yes	63%	75%	96%	94%	90%
HEIs – No	37%	25%	4%	6%	10%
Employers – Yes	53%	62%	86%	84%	76%
Employers – No	47%	38%	14%	16%	24%

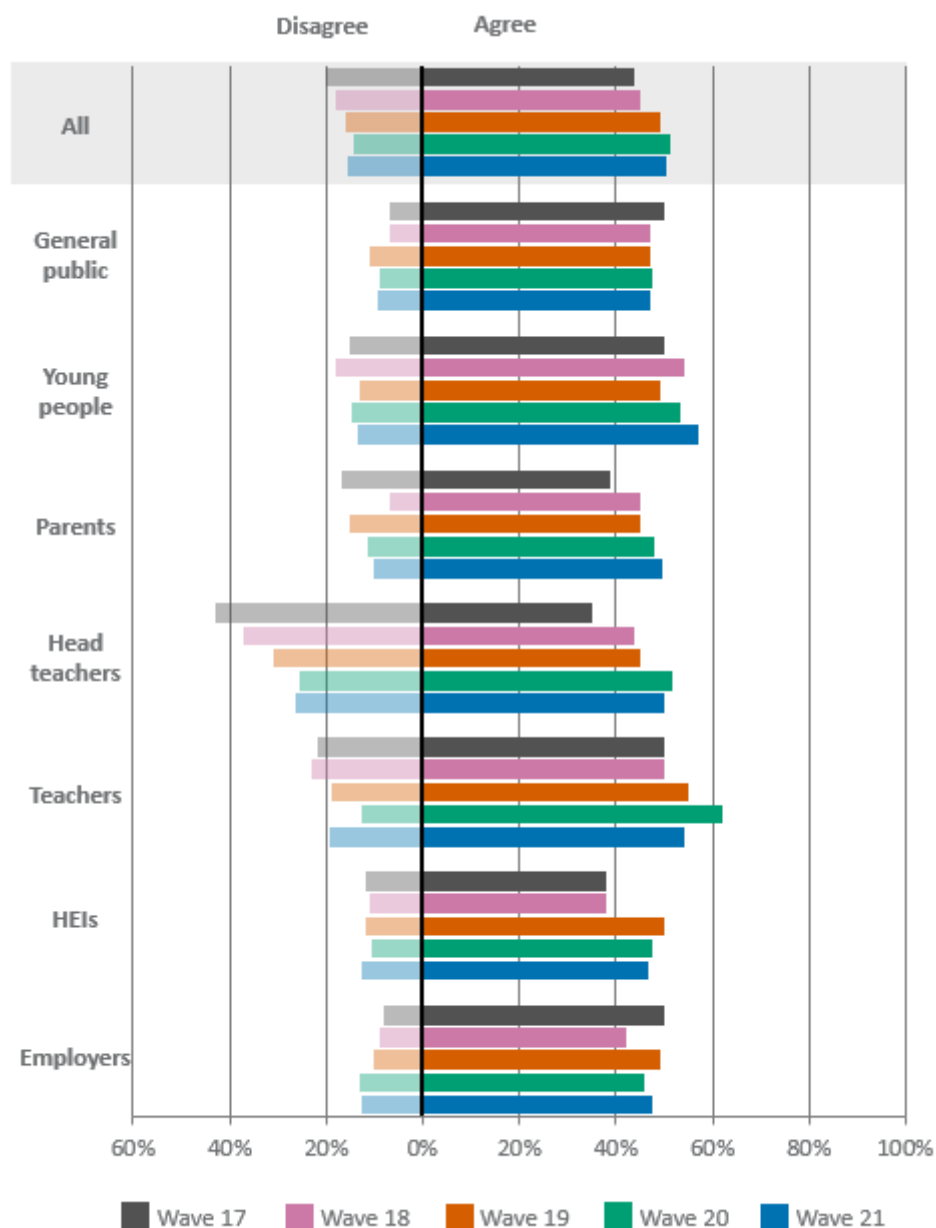
For the following 4 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=1,666); Young people (N=168); Parents (N=173); Teachers (N=541); Head teachers (N=232); HEIs (N=220); Employers (N=189); General public (N=650).

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.

As shown in figure 33, half (50%) of respondents in wave 21 agreed that ‘the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE results is fair’. Overall, this was consistent with wave 20.

In wave 21, agreement among teachers decreased in comparison to wave 20 (54% compared with 62%) returning to levels seen previously, while for other stakeholder groups there were no significant differences.

Figure 33. 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 A level results.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	44%	45%	49%	51%	50%
All – disagree	20%	18%	16%	14%	16%
General public – agree	50%	47%	47%	48%	47%
General public – disagree	7%	7%	11%	9%	10%
Young people – agree	50%	54%	49%	53%	57%
Young people – disagree	15%	18%	13%	15%	13%
Parents – agree	39%	45%	45%	48%	49%

Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

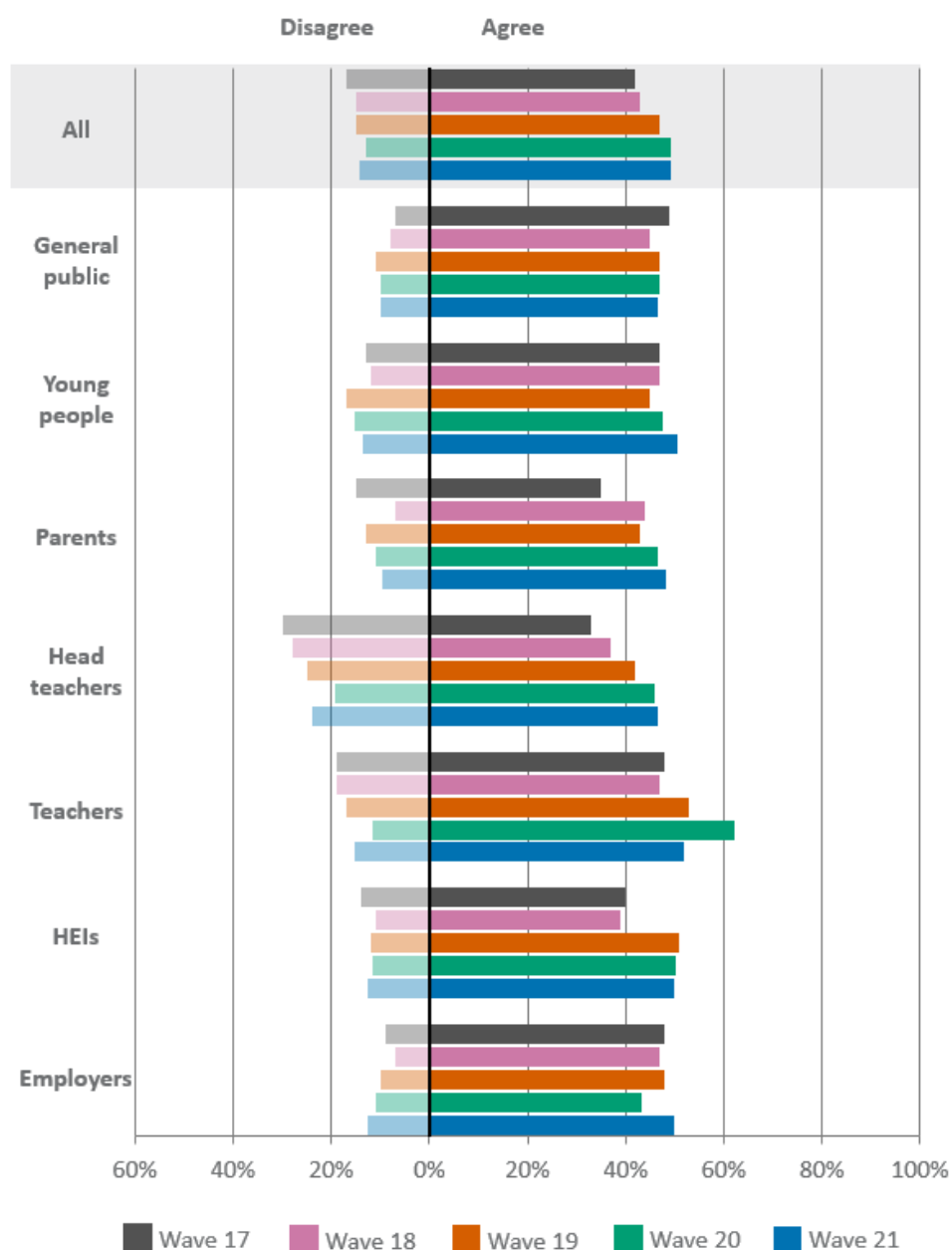
Parents – disagree	17%	7%	15%	12%	10%
Head teachers – agree	35%	44%	45%	52%	50%
Head teachers – disagree	43%	37%	31%	26%	26%
Teachers – agree	50%	50%	55%	62%	54%
Teachers – disagree	22%	23%	19%	13%	19%
HEIs – agree	38%	38%	50%	48%	47%
HEIs – disagree	12%	11%	12%	11%	13%
Employers – agree	50%	42%	49%	46%	47%
Employers – disagree	8%	9%	10%	13%	13%

Approximately half (49%) of respondents agreed this wave that ‘the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for A level results is fair’. This was consistent with wave 20.

As with GCSEs, agreement decreased among teachers in comparison with wave 20 (52% compared with 62%) marking a return to agreement levels seen in wave 19. For other stakeholder groups there were no statistically significant differences compared with wave 20 (figure 34).

Although agreement among parents stayed consistent with wave 20, there has been a gradual increase since wave 17 (48% compared with 35%). Likewise, there was a similar pattern observed among head teachers.

Figure 34. Results for “The process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for 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 A level results.

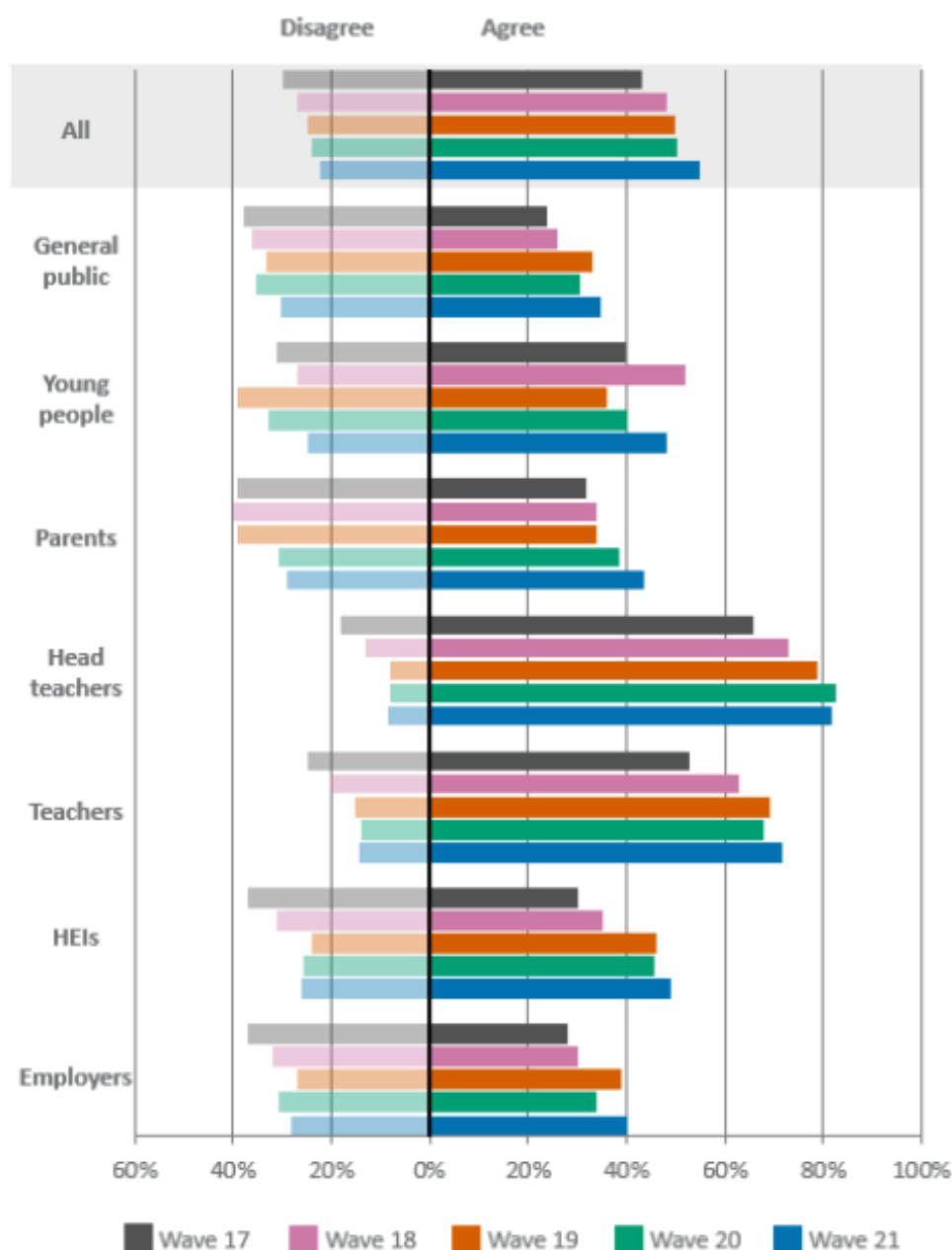
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	42%	43%	47%	49%	49%
All – disagree	17%	15%	15%	13%	14%
General public – agree	49%	45%	47%	47%	47%
General public – disagree	7%	8%	11%	10%	10%
Young people – agree	47%	47%	45%	48%	51%
Young people – disagree	13%	12%	17%	15%	13%
Parents – agree	35%	44%	43%	46%	48%
Parents – disagree	15%	7%	13%	11%	10%
Head teachers – agree	33%	37%	42%	46%	47%
Head teachers – disagree	30%	28%	25%	19%	24%
Teachers – agree	48%	47%	53%	62%	52%
Teachers – disagree	19%	19%	17%	12%	15%
HEIs – agree	40%	39%	51%	50%	50%
HEIs – disagree	14%	11%	12%	12%	12%
Employers – agree	48%	47%	48%	43%	50%
Employers – disagree	9%	7%	10%	11%	13%

Fifty-five per cent of respondents in wave 21 agreed that they ‘have adequate information about the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and A level results’. This was an increase in comparison with wave 20 (50%).

When looking at individual stakeholder groups in wave 21, agreement also increased among young people (from 40% to 48%). However, among the rest of the stakeholder groups there were no statistically significant differences in comparison with wave 20 (figure 35).

Figure 35. Results for “I have adequate information about the process of reviews of marking and moderation, and appeals for GCSE and 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 A level results. In wave 19, the question text changed from “I

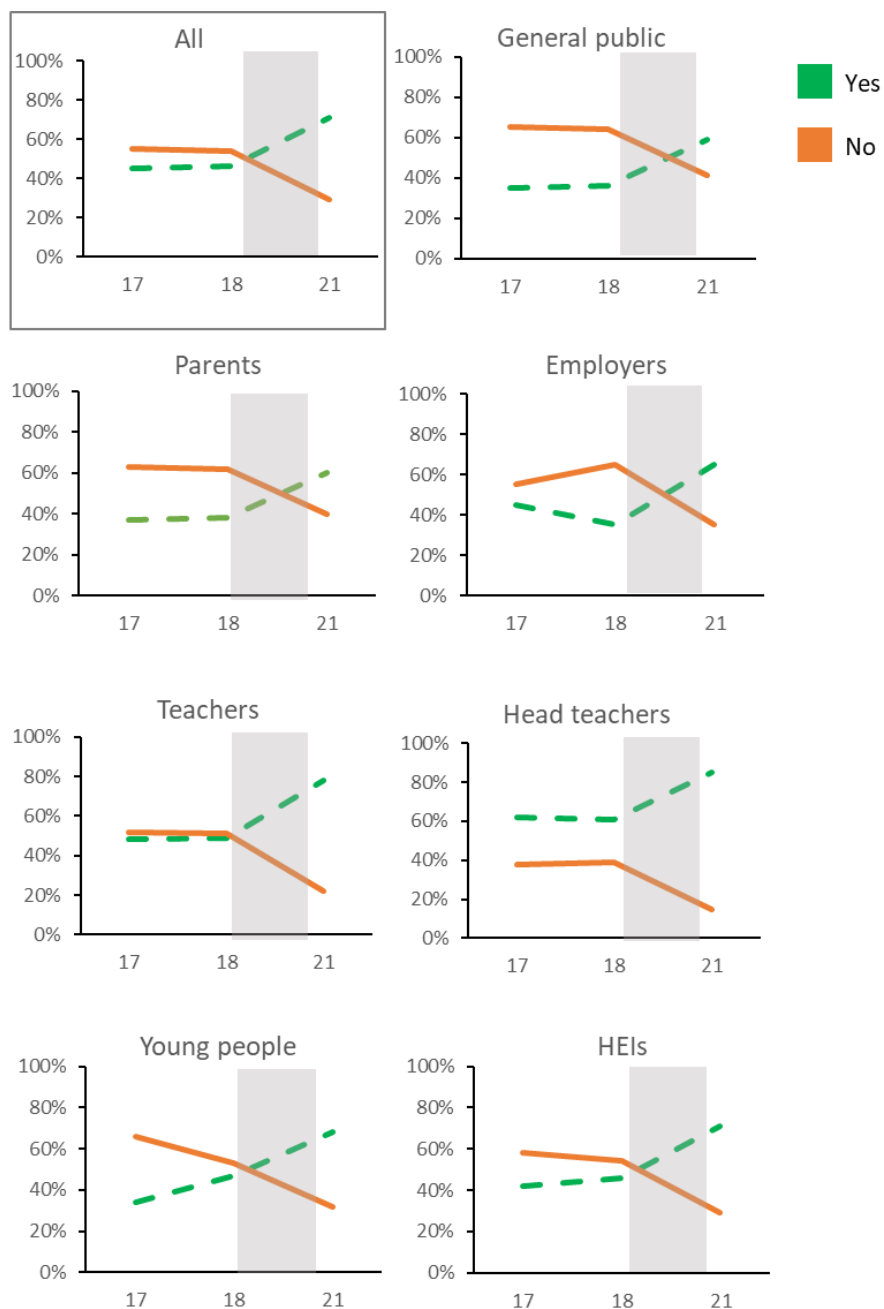
have adequate information about the changes to the review of marking, moderation and appeals system (formally known as Enquiries about Results and Appeals) for GCSEs and AS/A levels?''.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	43%	48%	50%	50%	55%
All – disagree	30%	27%	25%	24%	22%
General public – agree	24%	26%	33%	31%	35%
General public – disagree	38%	36%	33%	35%	30%
Young people – agree	40%	52%	36%	40%	48%
Young people – disagree	31%	27%	39%	33%	25%
Parents – agree	32%	34%	34%	38%	44%
Parents – disagree	39%	40%	39%	31%	29%
Head teachers – agree	66%	73%	79%	83%	82%
Head teachers – disagree	18%	13%	8%	8%	9%
Teachers – agree	53%	63%	69%	68%	72%
Teachers – disagree	25%	20%	15%	14%	14%
HEIs – agree	30%	35%	46%	46%	49%
HEIs – disagree	37%	31%	24%	26%	26%
Employers – agree	28%	30%	39%	34%	40%
Employers – disagree	37%	32%	27%	31%	28%

Approximately 7 in 10 (71%) respondents were aware that ‘for any A level or GCSE subjects, in 2022 a school or college can appeal to the exam board on the ground of a marking error’. This represented a large increase compared with when this question was last asked in wave 18 (46%).

This pattern was seen across all stakeholder groups, with awareness increasing the most among teachers (from 49% to 78%).

Figure 36. Results for “Are you aware that for any A level or GCSE subjects, in 2022 a school or college can appeal to the exam board on the ground of a marking error if their concerns about marking have not been addressed during a review of marking as well as on the ground of a procedural failing by the exam board?”



The greyed-out area on the graph represents a break in the time series where this question was not asked during Covid-19.

In wave 19, the question text changed from “Are you aware that for any AS or A level subject, or in GCSE English language, English literature and maths, in 2019 a school or college whose concerns about marking that were not addressed during a review of marking could appeal to the exam board on the ground of a marking error as well as on the ground of a procedural failing by the exam board?”.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 21
All – agree	45%	46%	71%
All – disagree	55%	54%	29%
General public – agree	35%	36%	59%
General public – disagree	65%	64%	41%
Young people – agree	34%	47%	68%
Young people – disagree	66%	53%	32%
Parents – agree	37%	38%	60%
Parents – disagree	63%	62%	40%
Head teachers – agree	62%	61%	85%
Head teachers – disagree	38%	39%	15%
Teachers – agree	48%	49%	78%
Teachers – disagree	52%	51%	22%
HEIs – agree	42%	46%	71%
HEIs – disagree	58%	54%	29%
Employers – agree	45%	35%	65%
Employers – disagree	55%	65%	35%

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

To account for changes made to the A level qualification system over recent years, in wave 20, the question text changed to remove reference to AS.

For the following 6 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=578); (N=Teachers 519); Head teachers (N=199). These survey items were only available to teachers and head teachers.

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.

Key findings

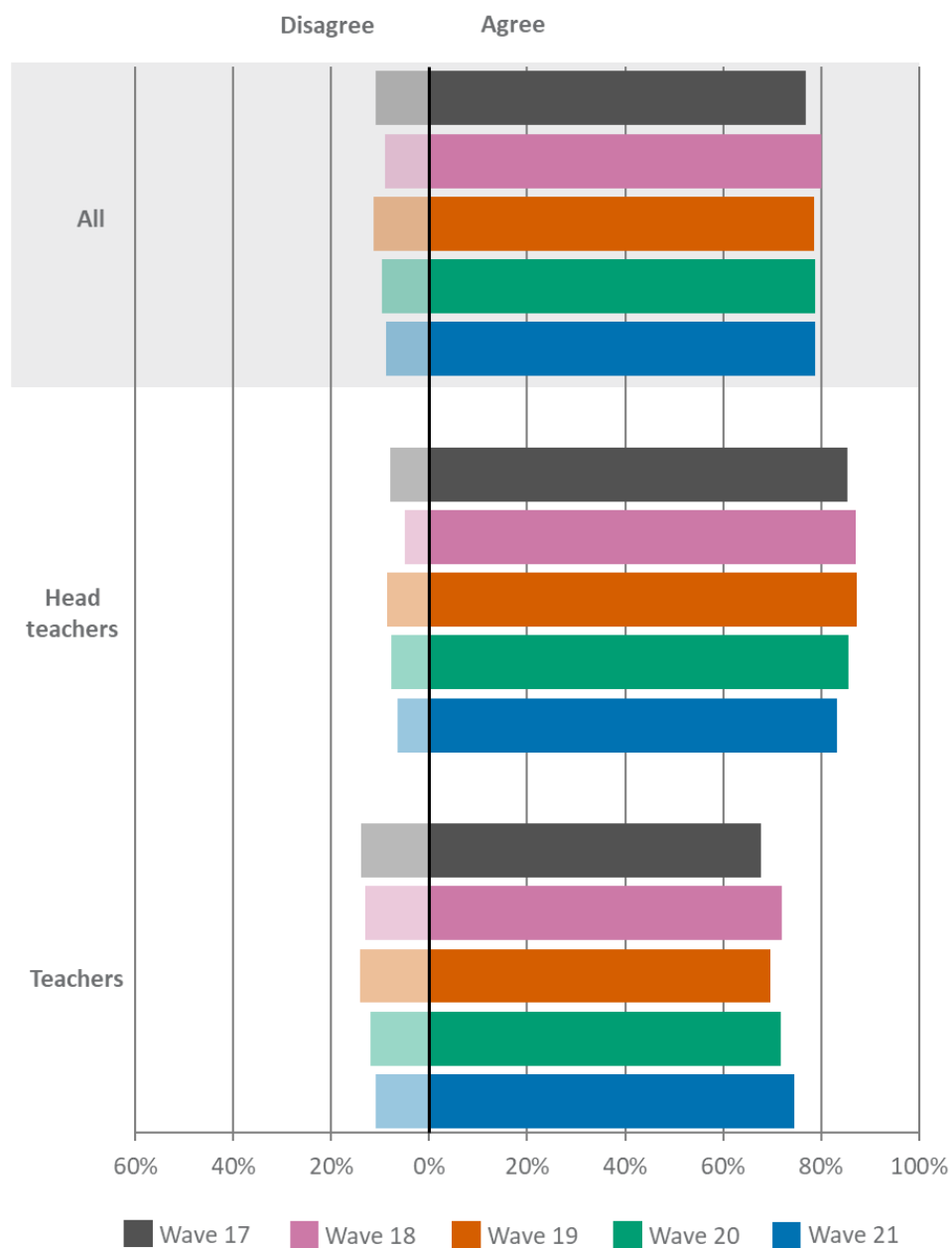
- The proportion of teachers and head teachers who agreed that they have ‘adequate information about the arrangements available for a GCSE or A level student who is eligible for special consideration’ (79%) remained in line with all recent waves.
- This was also the case for overall agreement that ‘special consideration makes the qualification system fairer’ (62%), and that the ‘right arrangements are made for the right students’ in the current system (56%).
- Similarly, the proportions of teachers and head teachers remained broadly consistent with wave 20 when thinking about whether they have ‘adequate information about the adjustments available for a disabled GCSE or A level student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments’ (74%). This was also the case for agreement that the ‘right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE and A level disabled students’ (55%).
- Agreement that ‘reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students’ was consistent with waves, 18, 19 and 20 with approximately 7 in 10 (68%) respondents agreeing with the statement in wave 21. This was, however, a significant increase compared to wave 17 (62%)

Special consideration

Overall, approximately 8 in 10 (79%) head teachers and teachers agreed that they have ‘adequate information about the arrangements available for a GCSE or A level student who is eligible for special consideration’ (figure 37). This was consistent with all waves since wave 17.

There were no statistically significant changes compared with any previous waves for either teachers or head teachers.

Figure 37. Results for “I have adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE or A level student who is eligible for special consideration.”

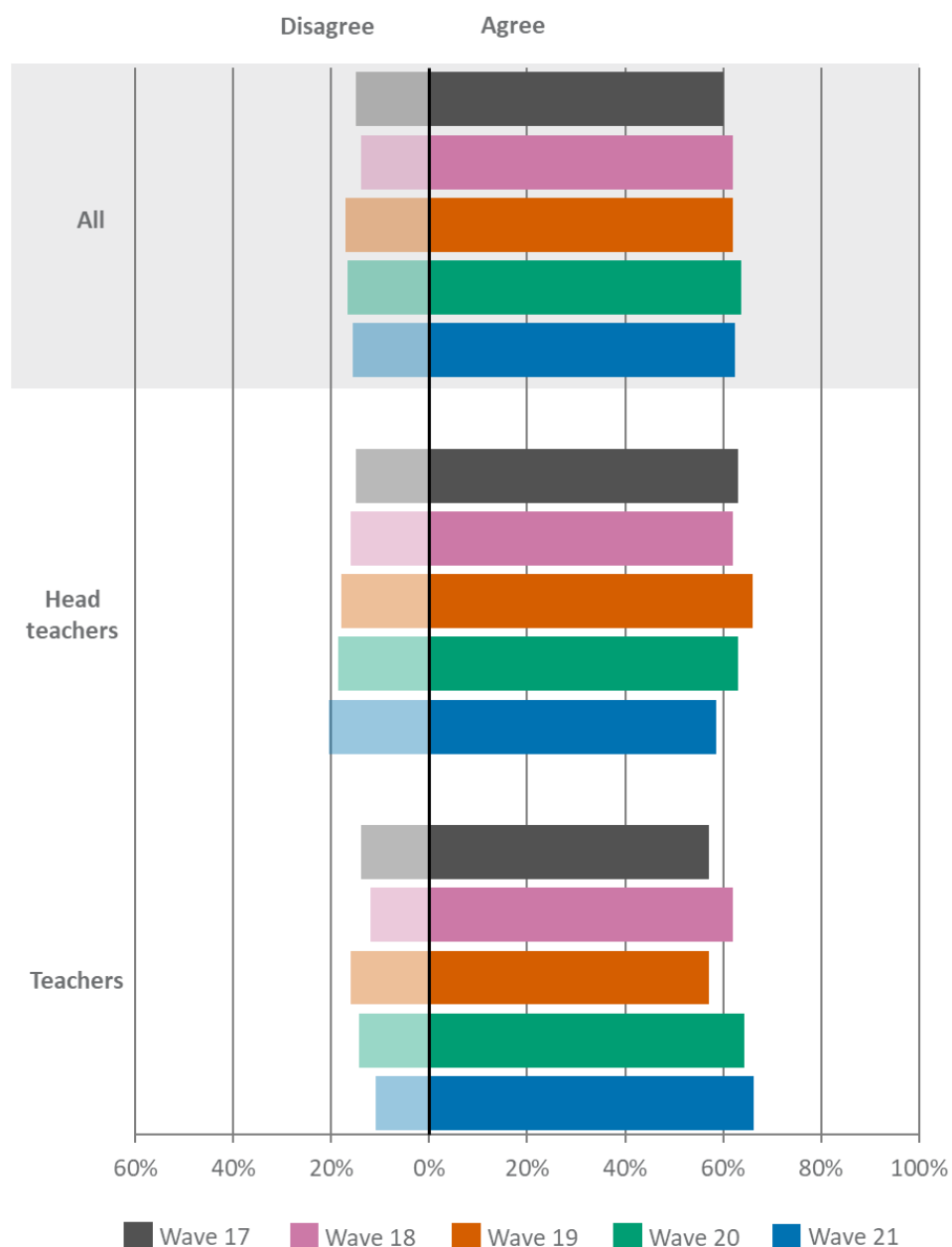


Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	77%	80%	79%	79%	79%
All – disagree	11%	9%	11%	10%	9%
Head teachers – agree	85%	87%	87%	86%	83%
Head teachers – disagree	8%	5%	9%	8%	6%
Teachers – agree	68%	72%	70%	72%	75%
Teachers – disagree	14%	13%	14%	12%	11%

Just over 6 in 10 (62%) head teachers and teachers agreed that ‘special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students’ (figure 38). This was in line with the previous waves.

While perceptions were consistent at an overall level compared to previous waves, teachers saw a gradual increase in the last 3 years which led to a significant increase in agreement compared with wave 19 (66% compared with 57%). Although no changes among head teachers were statistically significant, this group saw a non-statistically significant decrease in levels of agreement.

Figure 38. Results for “Special consideration makes the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	60%	62%	62%	64%	62%

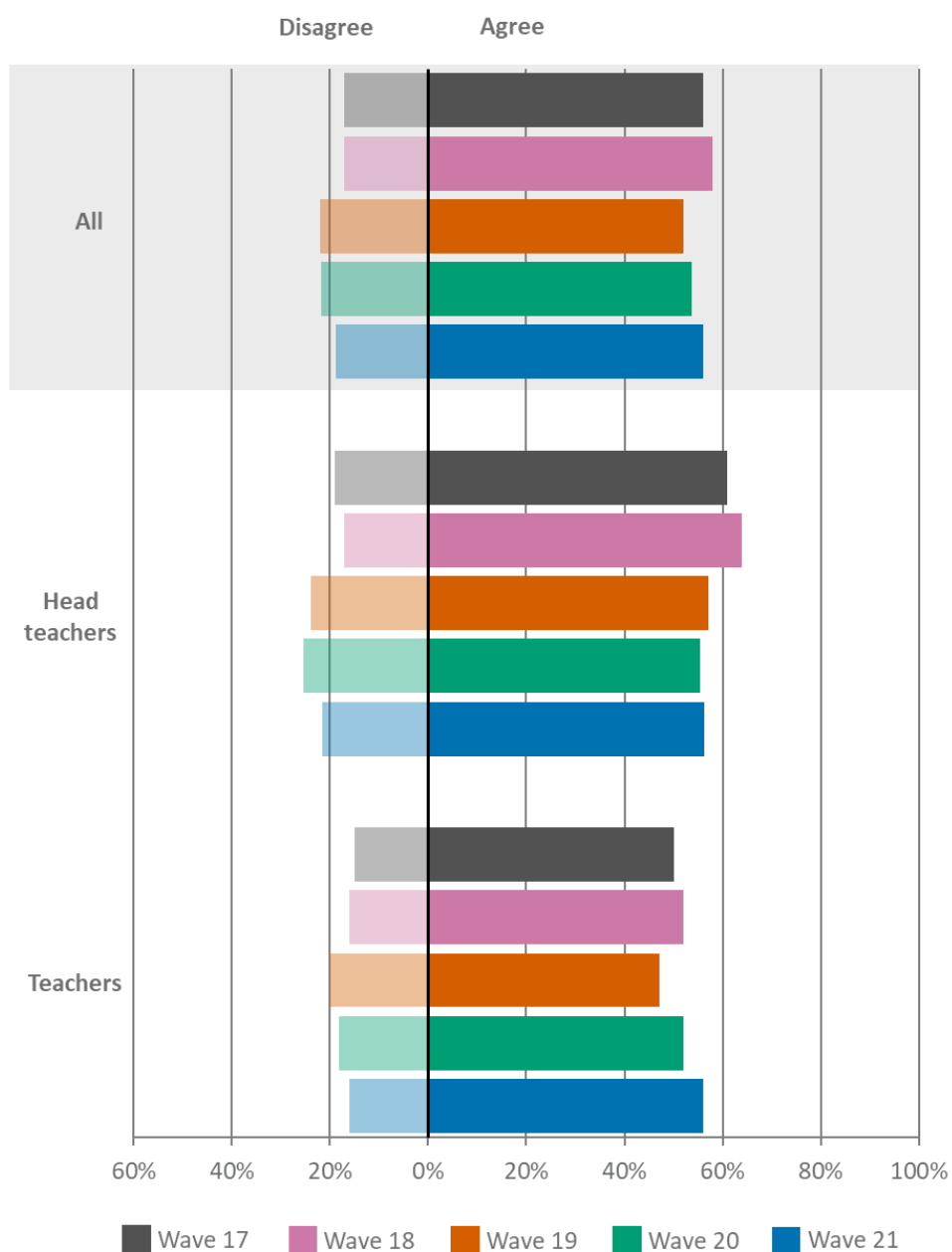
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

All – disagree	15%	14%	17%	17%	16%
Head teachers – agree	63%	62%	66%	63%	58%
Head teachers – disagree	15%	16%	18%	19%	21%
Teachers – agree	57%	62%	57%	64%	66%
Teachers – disagree	14%	12%	16%	14%	11%

Fifty-six per cent of head teachers and teachers agreed that ‘the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and A level students in the current special consideration system’ (figure 39). This was broadly consistent with wave 20 (54%).

In wave 21, there were no statistically significant changes compared with wave 20 by stakeholder group.

Figure 39. Results for “In the current special consideration system, the right arrangements are made for the right GCSE and A level students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	56%	58%	52%	54%	56%
All – disagree	17%	17%	22%	22%	19%
Head teachers – agree	61%	64%	57%	55%	56%

Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

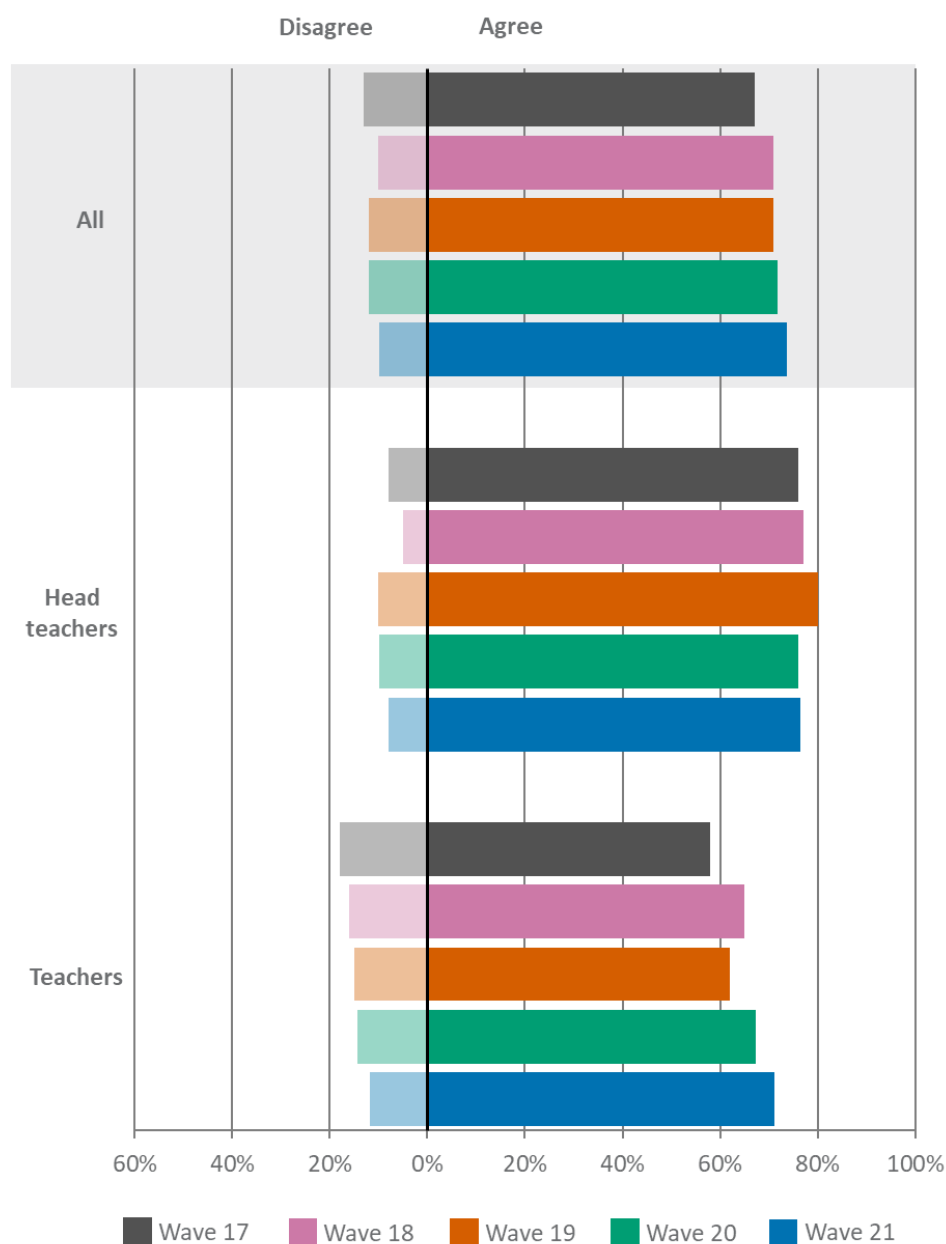
Head teachers – disagree	19%	17%	24%	25%	22%
Teachers – agree	50%	52%	47%	52%	56%
Teachers – disagree	15%	16%	20%	18%	16%

Reasonable adjustments

Seventy-four per cent of head teachers and teachers agreed that they ‘have adequate information about the adjustments available for a disabled² GCSE or A level student who is eligible for reasonable adjustments’ (figure 40). This remained broadly stable compared with previous waves.

Levels of agreement for head teachers and teachers has not significantly changed compared with wave 20. However, teachers saw a gradual year-on-year increases, which led to a significant increase when compared with wave 19 (71% compared with 62%).

Figure 40. Results for “I have adequate information about the adjustments that are available for a GCSE or 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.

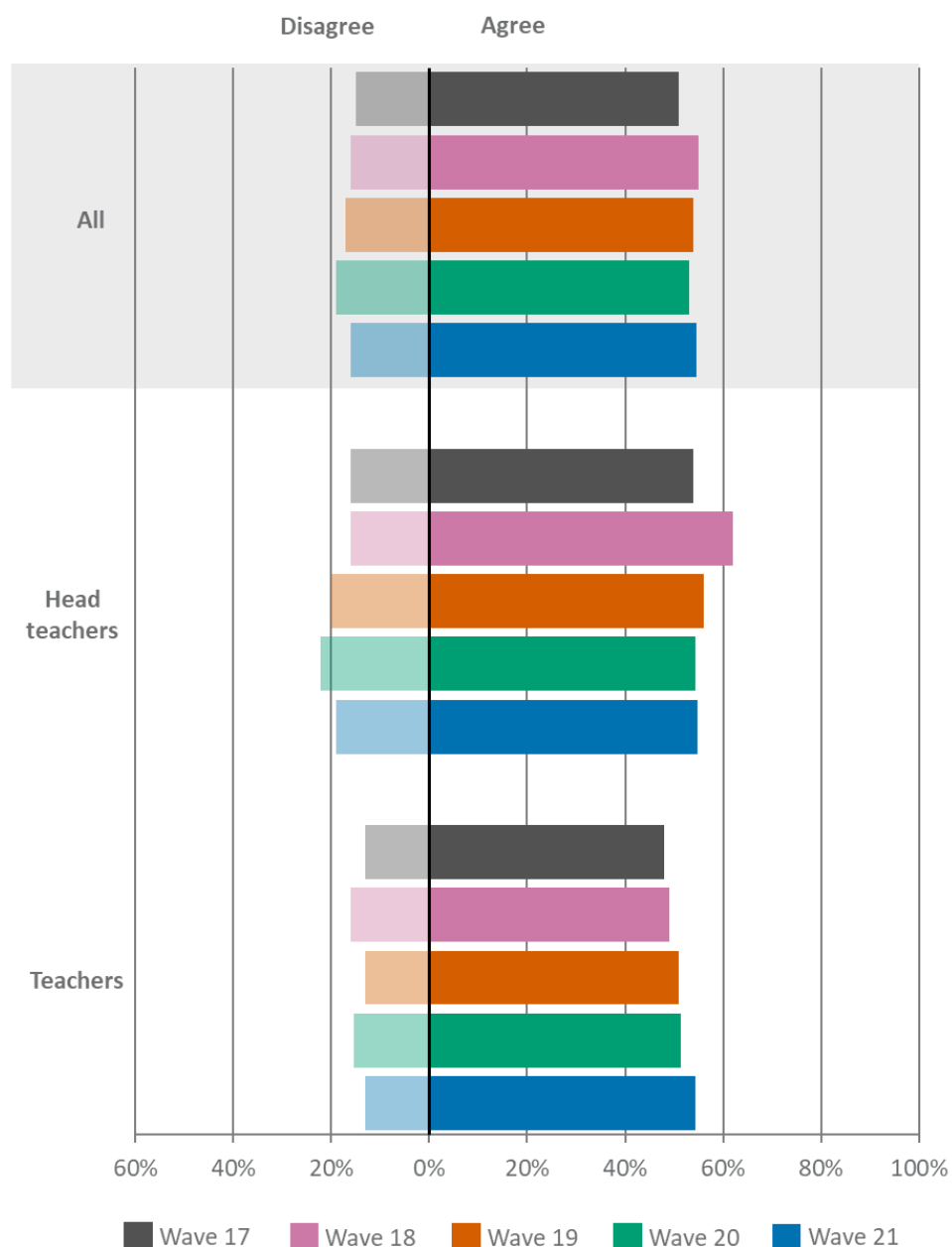
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	67%	71%	71%	72%	74%
All – disagree	13%	10%	12%	12%	10%
Head teachers – agree	76%	77%	80%	76%	76%
Head teachers – disagree	8%	5%	10%	10%	8%
Teachers – agree	58%	65%	62%	67%	71%
Teachers – disagree	18%	16%	15%	14%	12%

Overall, 55% of head teachers and teachers agreed that ‘the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE and A level disabled students’. This was broadly consistent with previous waves.

The level of agreement among teachers in wave 21 (54%) continued the steady increase seen in previous waves, and resultantly was significantly higher than wave 17 (48%).

Figure 41. Results for “Currently, the right reasonable adjustments are made for the right GCSE and A level disabled students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	51%	55%	54%	53%	55%
All – disagree	15%	16%	17%	19%	16%
Head teachers – agree	54%	62%	56%	54%	55%
Head teachers – disagree	16%	16%	20%	22%	19%

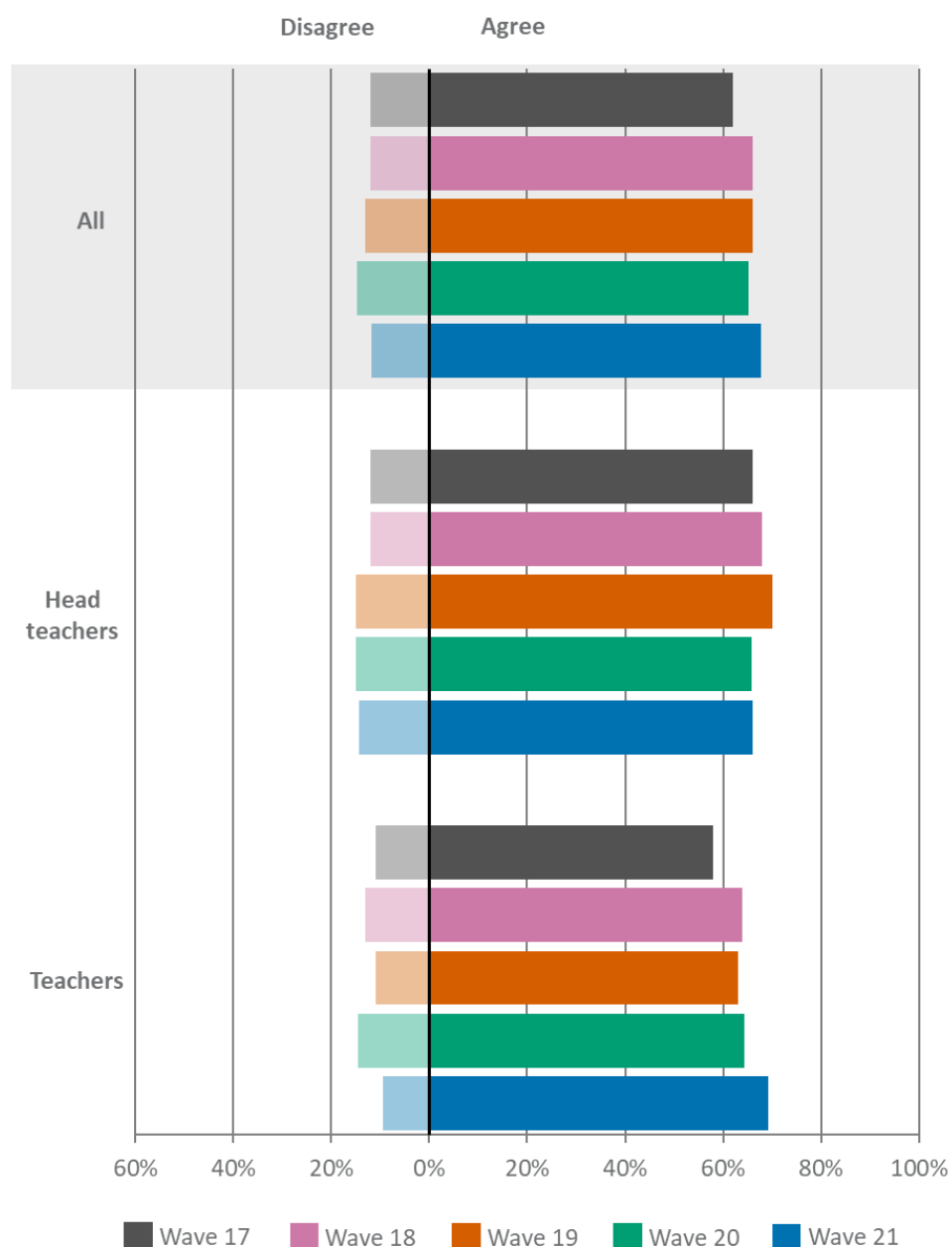
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Teachers – agree	48%	49%	51%	51%	54%
Teachers – disagree	13%	16%	13%	15%	13%

Just under 7 in 10 (68%) head teachers and teachers agreed that ‘reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students’ (figure 42). This was roughly consistent with waves 18, 19 and 20, but represented an increase compared with wave 17 (62%).

In wave 21, the level of agreement among teachers (69%) was significantly higher than in wave 19 (63%).

Figure 42. Results for “Reasonable adjustments make the qualification system fairer for all GCSE and A level students.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	62%	66%	66%	65%	68%
All – disagree	12%	12%	13%	15%	12%
Head teachers – agree	66%	68%	70%	66%	66%

Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Head teachers – disagree	12%	12%	15%	15%	14%
Teachers – agree	58%	64%	63%	64%	69%
Teachers – disagree	11%	13%	11%	15%	9%

Section 8: Malpractice for GCSE and A level qualifications

To account for changes made to the A level qualification system over recent years, in wave 20, the question text changed to remove reference to AS.

For the following 4 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=578); Teachers (N=519); Head teachers (N=199). These survey items were available only to teachers and head teachers.

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.

Key findings

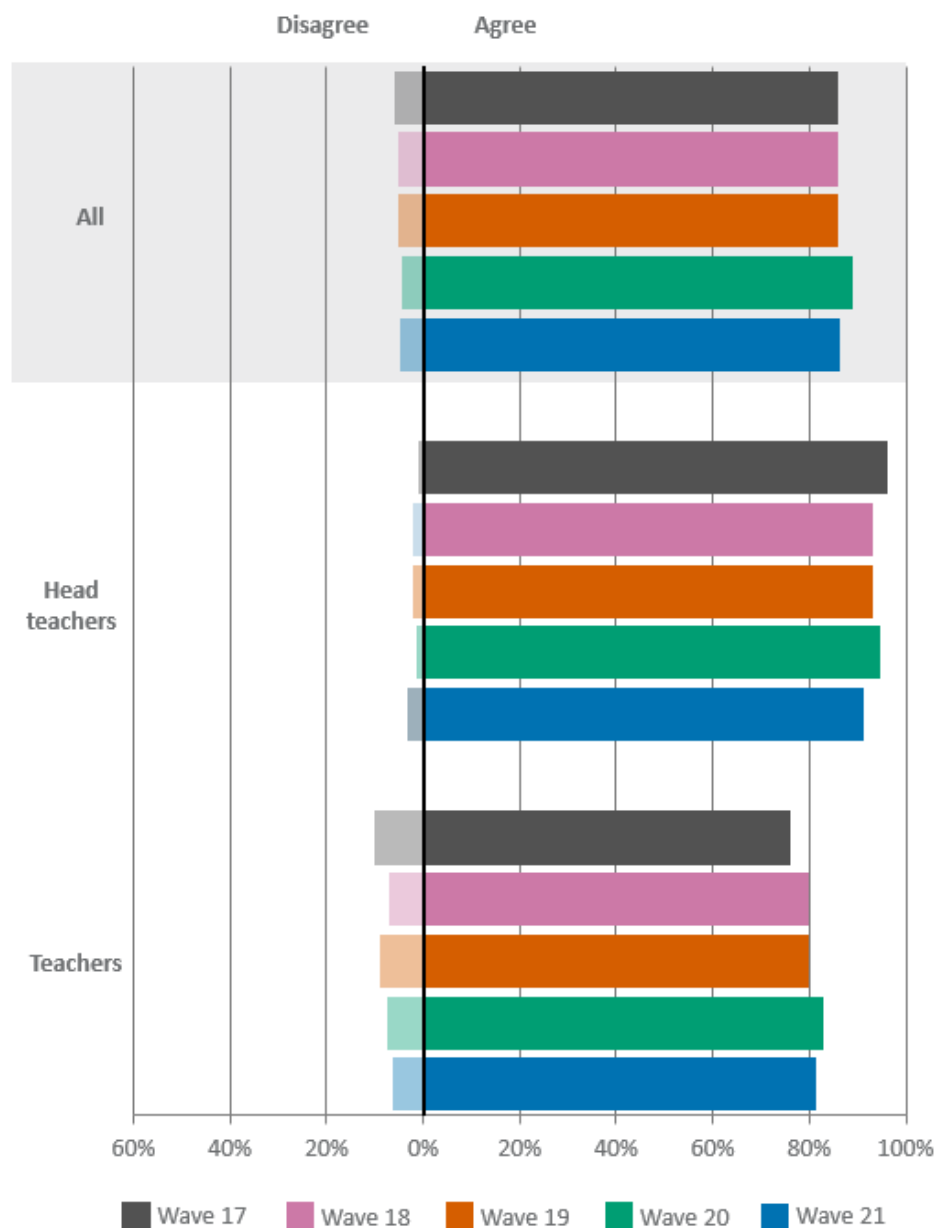
- The proportion of teachers (81%) and head teachers (91%) who agreed that they have ‘adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and A levels’ was broadly consistent with wave 20.
- Similarly, the overall levels of agreement that they know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice (90%) and are confident incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated (73%) and reported (63%) were consistent with wave 20. In each case, agreement was higher among head teachers compared to teachers.

Awareness and perceptions

Figure 43 shows that 86% of teachers and head teachers in wave 21 agreed that they ‘have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and A levels’. This was broadly consistent with previous waves.

Levels of agreement for both head teachers and teachers also saw no statistically significant changes compared to wave 20. However, in the longer time series, head teachers’ agreement in wave 21 (91%) significantly declined compared to wave 17 (96%), while the opposite trend can be seen for teachers, who saw an increase in wave 21 (81%), compared to wave 17 (76%).

Figure 43. Results for “I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for GCSEs and A levels.”

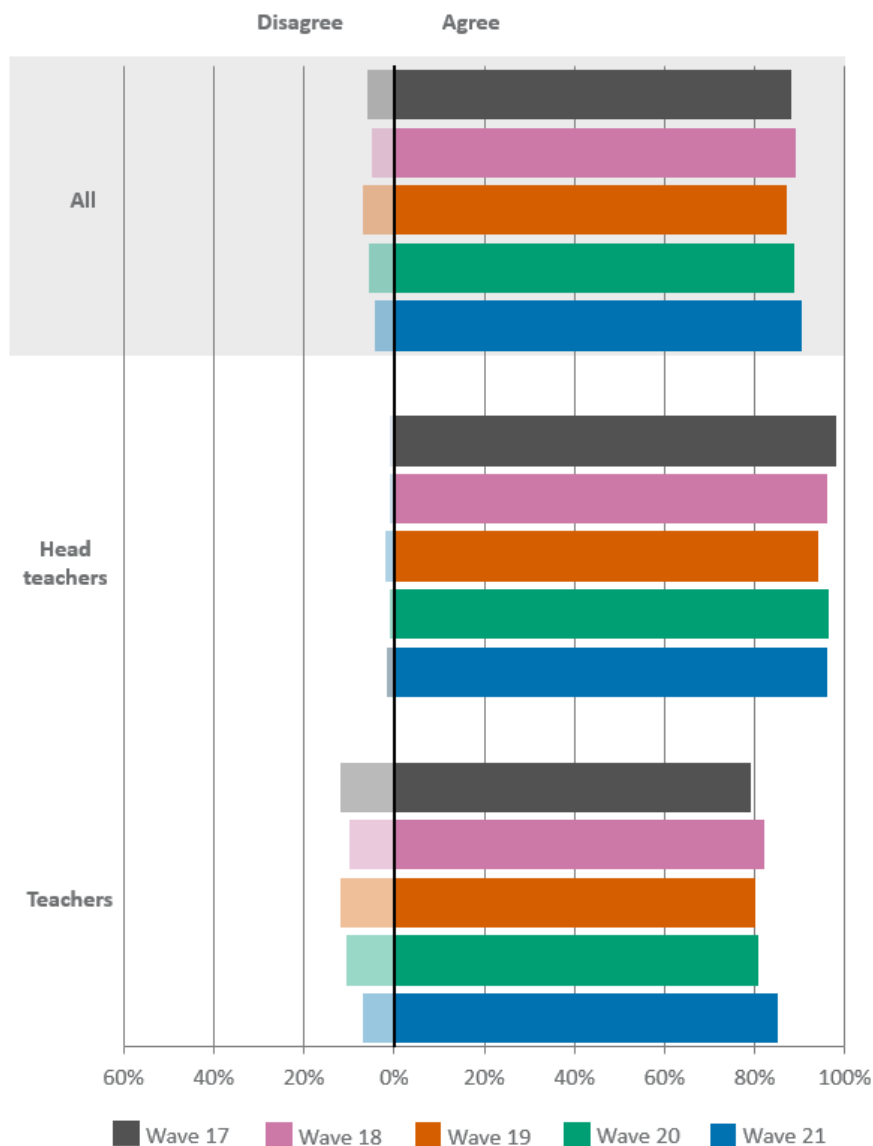


Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	86%	86%	86%	89%	86%
All – disagree	6%	5%	5%	4%	5%
Head teachers – agree	96%	93%	93%	95%	91%
Head teachers – disagree	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%
Teachers – agree	76%	80%	80%	83%	81%
Teachers – disagree	10%	7%	9%	7%	6%

Consistent with the previous waves, 9 in 10 (90%) head teachers and teachers in wave 21 agreed that they ‘know to whom they should report an incident of malpractice in GCSEs and A levels’.

In wave 21, head teachers (96%) had higher levels of agreement compared to teachers (85%), consistent with previous waves (figure 44).

Figure 44. Results for “I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for GCSEs and A levels.”

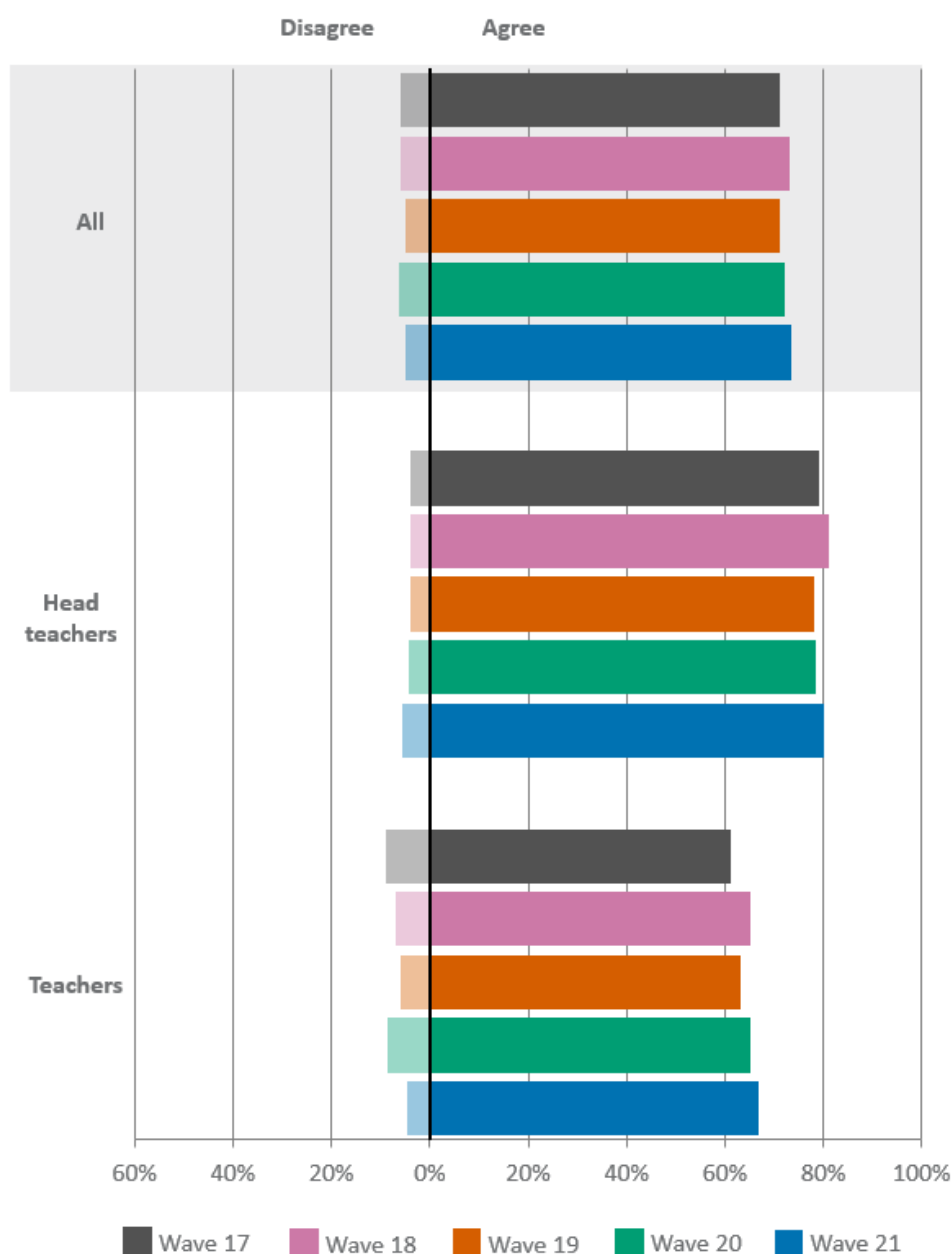


Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	88%	89%	87%	89%	90%
All – disagree	6%	5%	7%	6%	4%
Head teachers – agree	98%	96%	94%	96%	96%
Head teachers – disagree	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Teachers – agree	79%	82%	80%	81%	85%
Teachers – disagree	12%	10%	12%	11%	7%

Approximately 7 in 10 (73%) respondents this wave agreed that they were ‘confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs and A levels’, which was consistent with wave 20 (figure 45).

In wave 21, head teachers were had a higher level of agreement compared to teachers (80% and 67% respectively).

Figure 45. Results for “I am confident that incidents of malpractice are fairly investigated for GCSEs and A levels.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	71%	73%	71%	72%	73%
All – disagree	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Head teachers – agree	79%	81%	78%	78%	80%

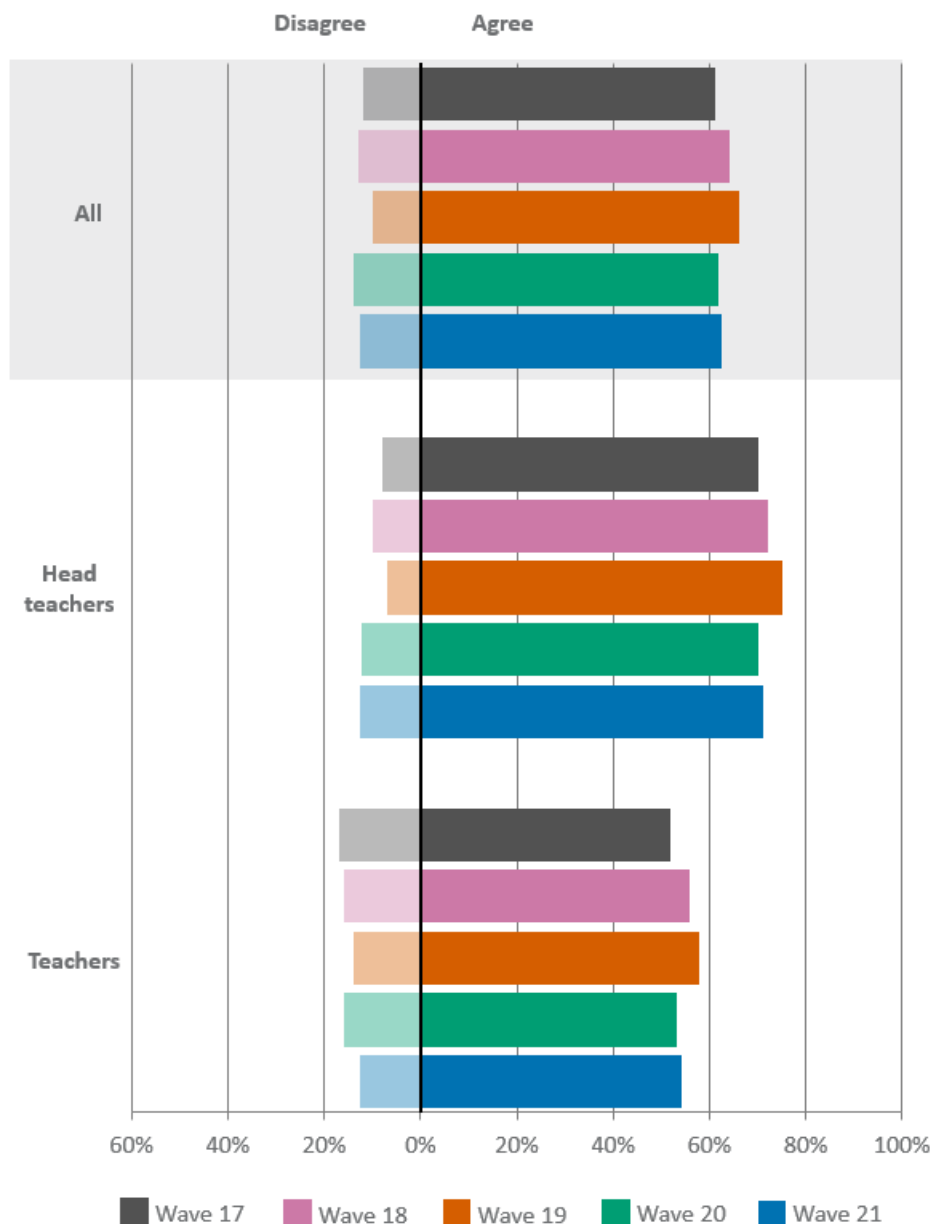
Perceptions of A level, GCSE and Applied General qualifications in England – Wave 21

Head teachers – disagree	4%	4%	4%	4%	6%
Teachers – agree	61%	65%	63%	65%	67%
Teachers – disagree	9%	7%	6%	9%	4%

Overall, approximately 6 in 10 (63%) respondents in wave 21 agreed that they were ‘confident that malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs and A levels’, consistent with wave 20.

Fifty-four per cent of teachers agreed they were confident malpractice is properly reported, compared with 71% of head teachers (figure 46).

Figure 46. Results for “I am confident that malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs and A levels.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	61%	64%	66%	62%	63%
All – disagree	12%	13%	10%	14%	13%
Head teachers – agree	70%	72%	75%	70%	71%
Head teachers – disagree	8%	10%	7%	12%	12%
Teachers – agree	52%	56%	58%	53%	54%

Teachers – disagree	17%	16%	14%	16%	13%
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Section 9: Appeals against results for Applied General qualifications

Key findings

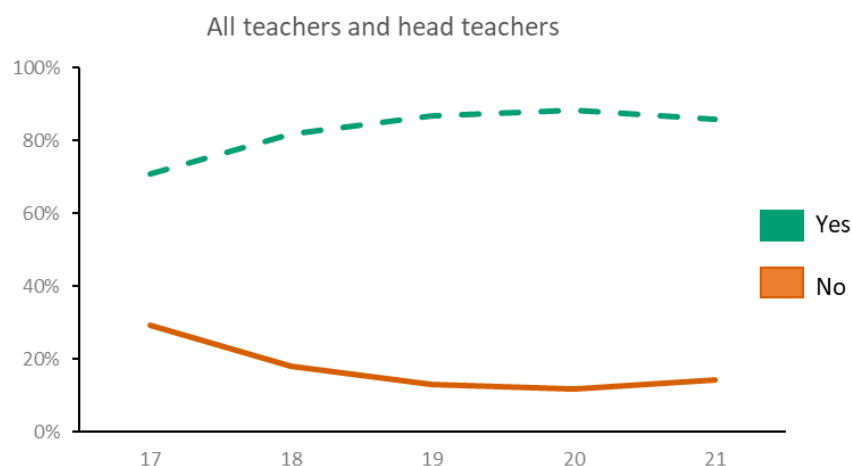
- The overall proportion (86%) of those teaching Applied General qualifications who were ‘aware of the appeals against results process’ remained in line with recent waves, but higher than in wave 17 (71%).
- The proportion of those teaching Applied General qualifications who feel they have ‘adequate information about the appeals against results process’ (87%) and are ‘confident that appeals are dealt with fairly’ (77%) were also not significantly different from wave 20.

Awareness and perceptions

For the following survey item, the wave 21 effective base was: All who teach Applied General qualifications (N=64); Head teachers (N=37), Teachers (N=34). Due to sample sizes, head teachers and teachers are reported as one group.

Overall, 86% of teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications were ‘aware of the appeals process for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges’ (figure 47). This was broadly consistent with recent waves but significantly higher than wave 17 (71%).

Figure 47. 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.

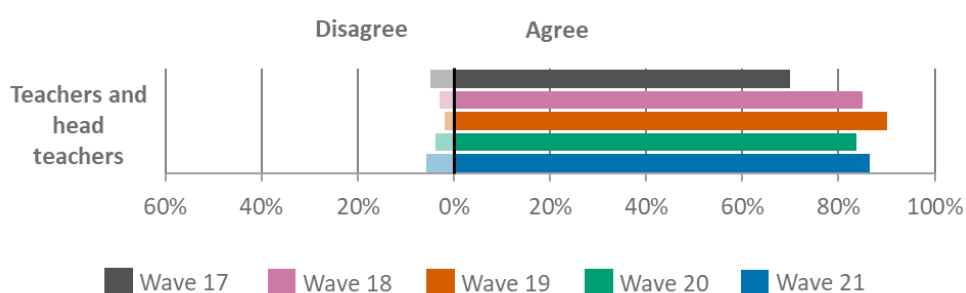
Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – Yes	71%	82%	87%	88%	86%
All – No	29%	18%	13%	12%	14%

For the following 2 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All who teach Applied General qualifications and were aware of the appeals process for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges (N=54); Head teachers (N=33), Teachers (N=26). Due to small sample sizes, head teachers and teachers are reported as one group.

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, just under 9 in 10 (87%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they ‘have adequate information about the appeals process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges’ (figure 48). This was broadly in line with recent waves but represented an increase compared with wave 17 (70%).

Figure 48. Results for “I have adequate information about the appeals against results process for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”

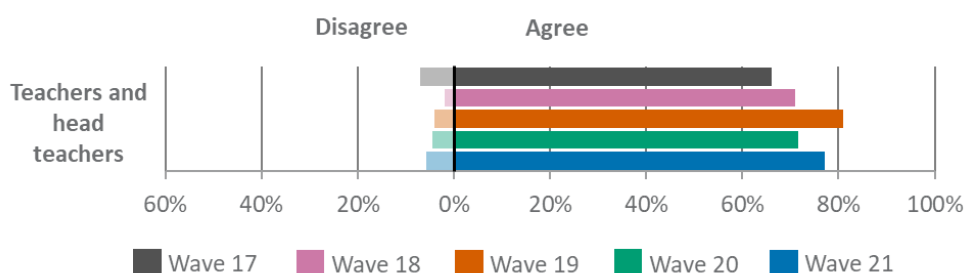


Note: This survey item was previously asked to all respondents but was amended in wave 18 to be only asked to head teachers and teachers. The wave 17 figures have been rebased to be consistent with the wave 18, 19, 20 and 21 data.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
Teachers and head teachers – agree	70%	85%	90%	84%	87%
Teachers and head teachers – disagree	5%	3%	2%	4%	6%

Almost 8 in 10 (77%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they are ‘confident that appeals are dealt with fairly for Applied General qualifications in schools and colleges’ (figure 49). There were no statistically significant differences when compared to any wave since wave 18.

Figure 49. 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 17 figures have been rebased to be consistent with the wave 18, 19, 20 and 21 data.

Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
Teachers and head teachers – agree	66%	71%	81%	72%	77%
Teachers and head teachers – disagree	7%	2%	4%	4%	6%

Section 10: Malpractice for Applied General qualifications

For the following 4 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=64); teachers (N=34); Head teachers (N=37). These survey items were only available to teachers and head teachers who teach Applied General qualifications. Due to small sample sizes, head teachers and teachers are reported as one group.

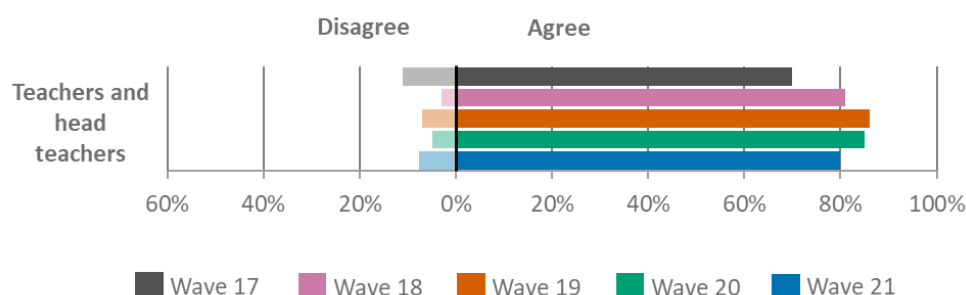
Key findings

- Overall, levels of agreement among teachers and head teachers that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications (80%) was not significantly different from wave 20.
- Much like in wave 20, the majority of teachers and head teachers agreed that they are confident incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications are fairly investigated (71%) and properly reported (69%). The vast majority also agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice (80%) for Applied General qualifications and know to whom to report an incident (85%).

Malpractice for Applied General qualifications

Figure 50 shows that in wave 21, 8 in 10 (80%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they ‘have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges’. This was not significantly different from all previous waves.

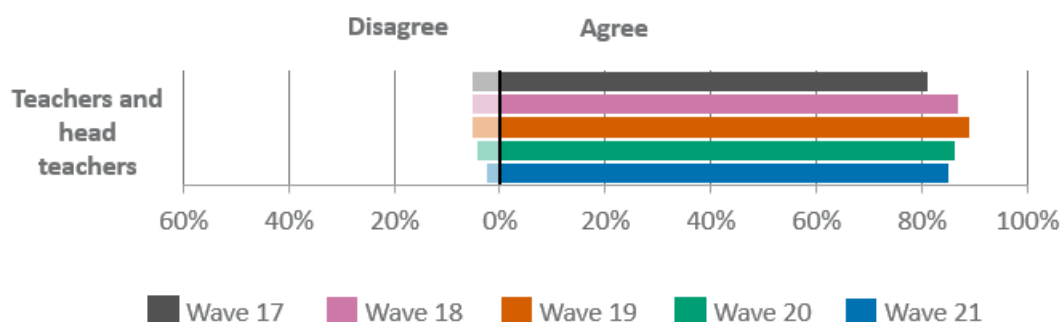
Figure 50. Results for “I have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
Teachers and head teachers – agree	70%	81%	86%	85%	80%
Teachers and head teachers – disagree	11%	3%	7%	5%	8%

Overall, 85% of head teachers and teachers in wave 21 agreed that they ‘know to whom to report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications’. There were no statistically significant changes compared with previous waves (figure 51).

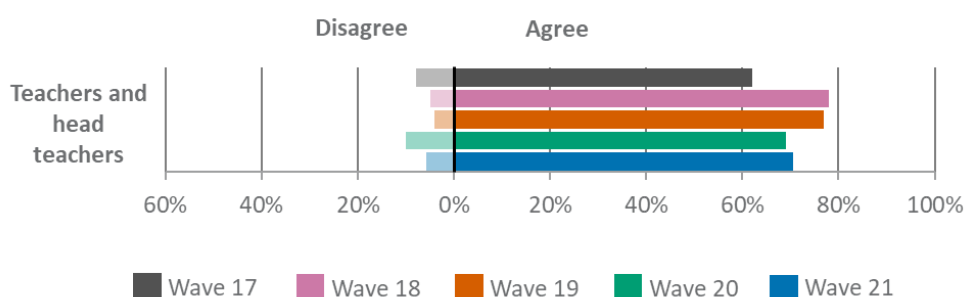
Figure 51. Results for “I know to whom I should report an incident of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
Teachers and head teachers – agree	81%	87%	89%	86%	85%
Teachers and head teachers – disagree	5%	5%	5%	4%	2%

Approximately 7 in 10 (71%) teachers and head teachers agreed that they are ‘confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges are fairly investigated’. This was not significantly different from wave 20 (figure 52).

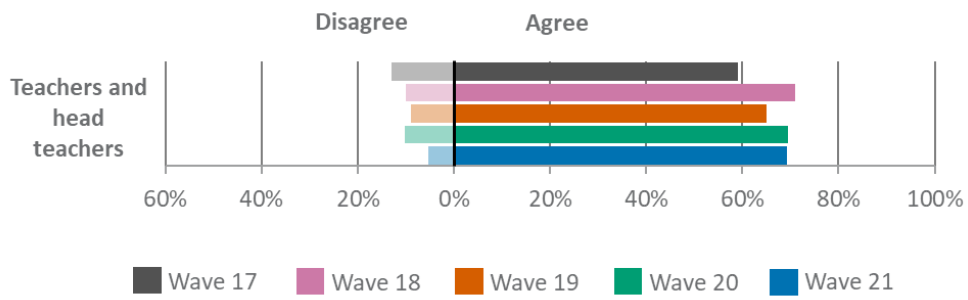
Figure 52. Results for “I am confident that incidents of malpractice for Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges are fairly investigated.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
Teachers and head teachers – agree	62%	78%	77%	69%	71%
Teachers and head teachers – disagree	8%	5%	4%	10%	6%

In wave 21, nearly 7 in 10 (69%) head teachers and teachers agreed they were ‘confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges’. There were no statistically significant changes compared with previous waves (figure 53).

Figure 53. Results for “I am confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in Applied General qualifications taught in schools and colleges.”



Respondent type	Wave 17	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
Teachers and head teachers – agree	59%	71%	65%	69%	69%
Teachers and head teachers – disagree	13%	10%	9%	10%	5%

Section 11: Onscreen examinations

To account for changes made to the A level qualification system over recent years, in wave 20, the question text changed to remove reference to AS.

For the following 2 survey items the wave 21 effective base was: All responses (N=2,068); Young people (N=224); Parents (N=249); Teachers (N=561); Head teachers (N=235); HEIs (N=243); Employers (N=248); General public (N=968).

Key findings

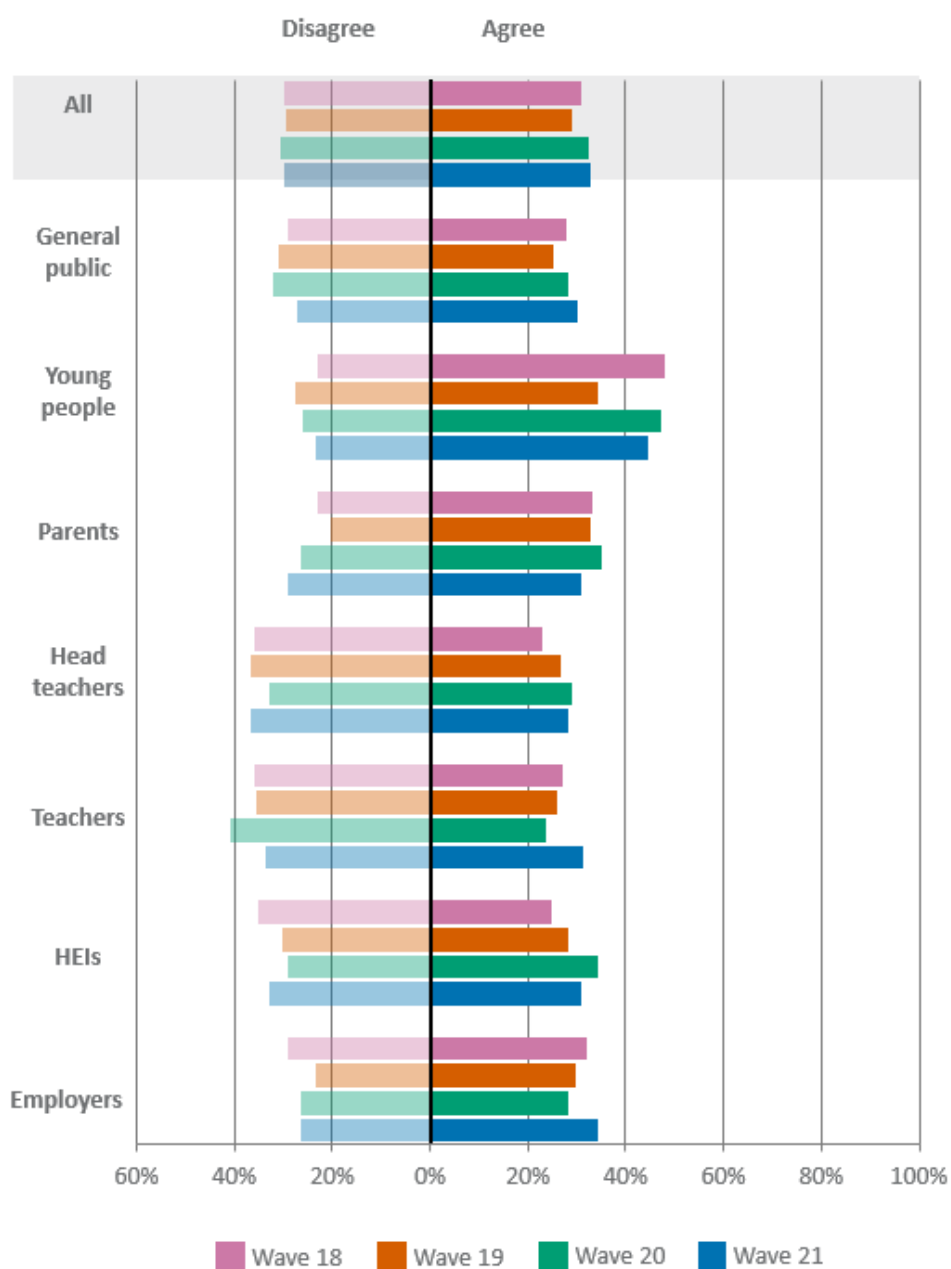
- Roughly equal proportions of respondents agreed (33%) and disagreed (30%) that ‘onscreen examinations (for example, exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations’. Overall agreement was consistent with wave 20. However, agreement specifically among teachers (31%) increased compared to wave 20 (24%).
- Approximately, 4 in 10 (41%) respondents agreed that onscreen examinations in GCSE and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges, consistent with wave 20. Agreement among individual stakeholder groups was also consistent compared with wave 20.

Onscreen examinations

As shown in figure 54, approximately a third (33%) of respondents in wave 21 agreed that ‘onscreen examinations in GCSE and A levels would be fairer for students’. This was consistent with wave 20, maintaining the significant increase seen since wave 19 (29%).

Among the individual stakeholder groups in wave 21, young people showed the highest level of agreement. With respect to wave 20, agreement increased for teachers (31% compared with 24%), while all other changes in agreement were not statistically significant.

Figure 54. Results for “Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and A level qualifications would be fairer for students than existing pen and paper examinations.”



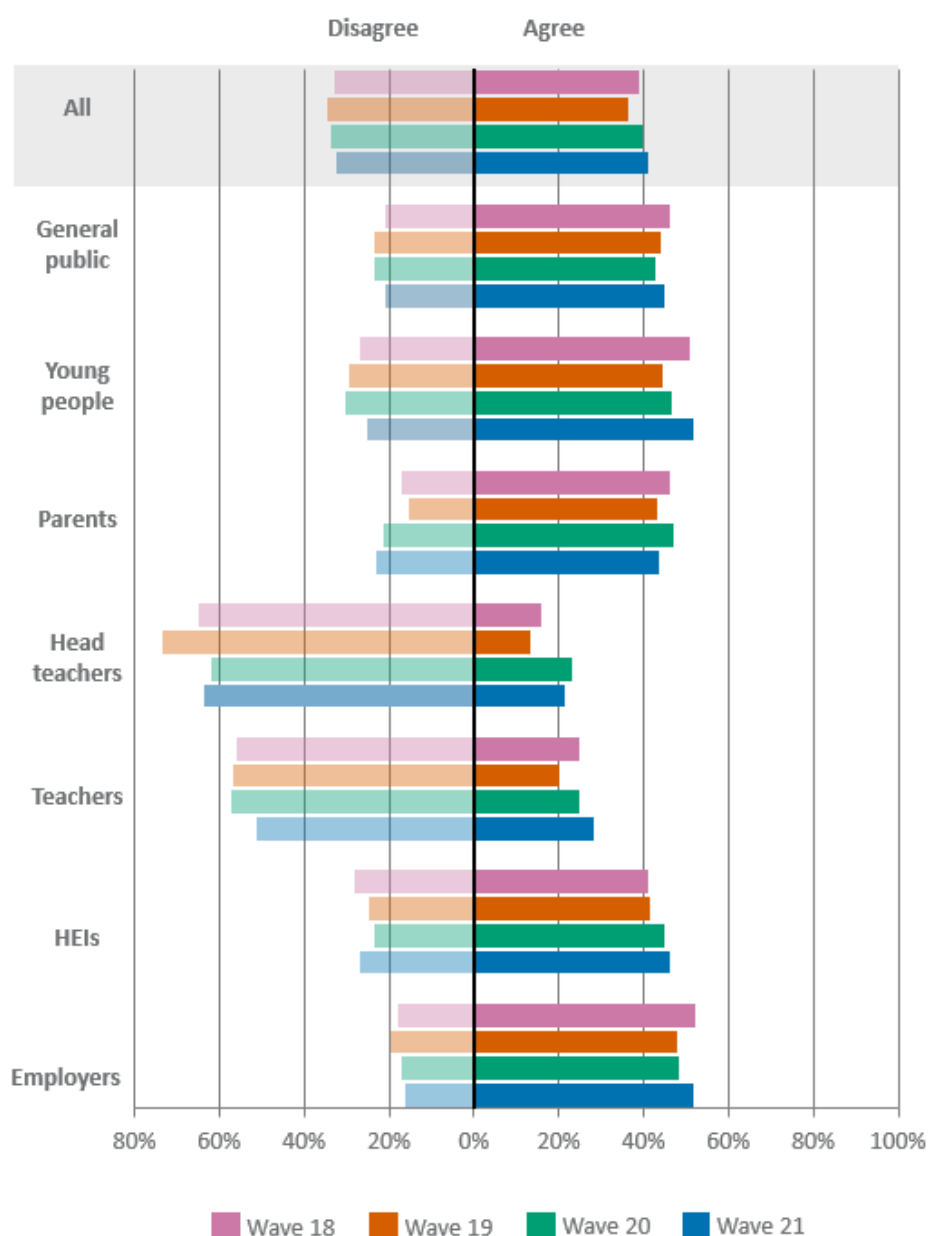
Respondent type	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	31%	29%	32%	33%
All – disagree	30%	29%	31%	30%
General public – agree	28%	25%	28%	30%
General public – disagree	29%	31%	32%	27%
Young people – agree	48%	34%	47%	45%
Young people – disagree	23%	28%	26%	23%
Parents – agree	33%	33%	35%	31%
Parents – disagree	23%	20%	26%	29%

Head teachers – agree	23%	27%	29%	28%
Head teachers – disagree	36%	37%	33%	37%
Teachers – agree	27%	26%	24%	31%
Teachers – disagree	36%	36%	41%	34%
HEIs – agree	25%	28%	34%	31%
HEIs – disagree	35%	30%	29%	33%
Employers – agree	32%	30%	28%	34%
Employers – disagree	29%	23%	26%	26%

In total, approximately 4 in 10 (41%) respondents agreed in wave 21 that ‘onscreen examinations in GCSE and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges’. As with the perceptions of fairness, this showed an increase in comparison with wave 19 (36%) but was consistent with wave 20.

When looking at individual stakeholder groups, there were no significant differences in levels of agreement in wave 21 compared with wave 20 (figure 55).

Figure 55. Results for “Onscreen examinations (e.g. exams taken on a computer) in GCSE and A level qualifications would be more manageable for schools and colleges than existing pen and paper examinations.”



Respondent type	Wave 18	Wave 19	Wave 20	Wave 21
All – agree	39%	36%	40%	41%
All – disagree	33%	35%	33%	32%

General public – agree	46%	44%	43%	45%
General public – disagree	21%	23%	23%	21%
Young people – agree	51%	45%	47%	52%
Young people – disagree	27%	29%	30%	25%
Parents – agree	46%	43%	47%	44%
Parents – disagree	17%	15%	21%	23%
Head teachers – agree	16%	13%	23%	22%
Head teachers – disagree	65%	73%	62%	64%
Teachers – agree	25%	20%	25%	28%
Teachers – disagree	56%	57%	57%	51%
HEIs – agree	41%	41%	45%	46%
HEIs – disagree	28%	25%	23%	27%
Employers – agree	52%	48%	48%	52%
Employers – disagree	18%	19%	17%	16%