

A comparison of A-level results in 2013 between independent schools and state schools and FE colleges in England.¹

Pupils at independent schools are more likely to take certain subjects than their peers in state schools or FE colleges. Figure 1 shows the percentage of A-level candidates at independent schools that took each subject in 2013. By way of comparison, it also gives the percentage of state school or FE college candidates that took each subject. Where a pupil at an independent school is more likely to have taken a subject than one of their peers in the state sector, the row is highlighted in yellow.

Fig 1. A-level candidates taking each subject by school type, 2013

Percentage of A-level candidates that take each subject by type of school:			
	Independent School	State School or FE College	Ratio
Mathematics	45.9%	28.6%	1.61
Biological Sciences	26.0%	21.3%	1.22
Chemistry	25.3%	17.0%	1.49
English	22.9%	33.2%	0.69
History	21.0%	17.3%	1.21
Economics	20.2%	7.1%	2.83
Physics	18.6%	11.2%	1.66
Geography	16.4%	10.6%	1.55
Art and Design	16.0%	15.8%	1.01
Business Studies	10.9%	10.3%	1.07
Further Mathematics	10.8%	4.1%	2.66
Psychology	10.3%	21.9%	0.47
Religious Studies	10.1%	6.9%	1.46
Other modern languages	9.7%	1.7%	5.82
Government and Politics	8.4%	4.8%	1.76
French	8.1%	3.1%	2.58
Classical Studies	6.9%	1.6%	4.16
Spanish	5.5%	2.0%	2.67
Drama	5.3%	4.7%	1.12
Physical Education	5.0%	5.9%	0.85
Design and Technology	5.0%	4.7%	1.05
General Studies	3.9%	14.1%	0.28
Music	3.8%	2.8%	1.34
German	2.6%	1.3%	2.03
ICT	1.6%	3.1%	0.52
Media/Film/Television Studies	1.4%	8.9%	0.16
Sociology	1.1%	12.1%	0.09
Other social studies	1.1%	1.7%	0.68
Other Science	0.9%	1.7%	0.50
Accounting and Finance	0.8%	1.3%	0.61
Other Communication Studies	0.6%	3.7%	0.16
Computer Studies	0.6%	1.4%	0.39
Home Economics	0.3%	0.1%	3.66
Law	0.3%	5.1%	0.07

¹ All figures in this paper relate to all independent schools in England and are not restricted to ISC schools. They do not include results from pupils in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. All figures are derived from Department for Education figures released in SFR02/2014

The A-level performance of pupils at independent schools in 2013 was very strong. Figure 2 shows A-level subjects ranked by the proportion of the total number of A* grades awarded that went to pupils at independent schools. It also shows the percentage of entries for each subject that came from pupils at independent schools. This table gives an indication of the degree to which some strategically important but vulnerable subjects rely on candidates from independent schools to keep them viable.

Fig 2. A-level subjects ranked by the proportion of all A* grades that were awarded to candidates from independent schools, 2013

	Independent entries as % of all entries	Independent A/A* as a % of all A/A*	Independent A* as a % of all A*
Home Economics	35.3%	51.9%	100.0%
Classical Studies	38.3%	58.3%	66.9%
Other modern languages	46.5%	54.0%	55.3%
Spanish	28.5%	42.3%	50.8%
Economics	29.7%	44.0%	50.8%
Music	16.7%	38.9%	49.0%
French	27.8%	39.5%	48.1%
Religious Studies	17.9%	33.6%	42.2%
German	23.2%	36.1%	41.7%
Further Mathematics	28.4%	34.4%	41.1%
Drama	14.4%	33.4%	37.3%
Government and Politics	20.8%	31.7%	36.3%
History	15.4%	30.0%	35.9%
Geography	18.8%	30.6%	35.2%
Physics	19.9%	29.8%	34.0%
Accounting and Finance	8.3%	14.9%	33.4%
Mathematics	19.4%	28.0%	33.1%
Chemistry	18.2%	28.0%	32.8%
Design and Technology	13.5%	27.8%	32.6%
Biological Sciences	15.4%	26.4%	31.8%
English	9.3%	21.2%	28.4%
Art and Design	13.1%	23.9%	26.6%
Business Studies	13.7%	20.3%	20.5%
Other social studies	9.3%	19.4%	20.4%
Physical Education	11.3%	16.6%	18.0%
Other Science	7.0%	12.7%	15.9%
Psychology	6.6%	12.4%	15.4%
Computer Studies	5.5%	11.0%	14.8%
ICT	7.2%	11.9%	14.7%
General Studies	4.0%	8.5%	7.8%
Other Communication Studies	2.4%	4.3%	6.0%
Media/Film/Television Studies	2.3%	5.1%	5.1%
Sociology	1.4%	2.1%	2.8%
Law	1.0%	1.4%	1.6%
All subjects	14.4%	26.9%	31.8%

Figure 3 gives a full breakdown of A-level results by subject in England in 2013 comparing results at independent schools and state schools and FE colleges. Results for pupils at independent schools are given in bold type on a yellow background. The equivalent results at state schools and FE colleges are given below in italic script on a white background. The total number of entries given for each subject has been rounded to the nearest 10, although the underlying calculations are based on more accurate figures where they are available.

Fig 3. A-level results by subject and exam centre, 2013

	Percentage achieving grade							A*-A	A*-E	Number of entries
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	Other			
Biological Sciences	17.1	32.1	23.9	14.4	7.9	3.7	0.9	49.2	99.1	8,840
	<i>6.7</i>	<i>18.4</i>	<i>24.5</i>	<i>22.4</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>9.5</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>25.1</i>	<i>98.3</i>	<i>48,400</i>
Chemistry	15.2	37.1	26.8	12.0	6.0	2.3	0.6	52.2	99.4	8,620
	<i>6.9</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>13.4</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>30.0</i>	<i>98.4</i>	<i>38,700</i>
Physics	17.0	30.9	24.3	14.7	8.1	4.0	1.1	47.9	98.9	6,330
	<i>8.2</i>	<i>19.7</i>	<i>23.3</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>15.7</i>	<i>10.2</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>27.9</i>	<i>97.7</i>	<i>25,580</i>
Other Science	15.7	28.7	25.9	17.4	7.8	2.7	1.7	44.4	98.3	290
	<i>6.3</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>25.1</i>	<i>23.8</i>	<i>17.0</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>23.1</i>	<i>97.6</i>	<i>3,890</i>
Mathematics	29.3	34.0	18.9	9.8	5.1	2.3	0.8	63.3	99.2	15,590
	<i>14.2</i>	<i>24.8</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>17.7</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>39.0</i>	<i>98.6</i>	<i>64,980</i>
Further Mathematics	40.6	29.5	16.6	8.0	3.1	1.5	0.7	70.1	99.3	3,660
	<i>23.2</i>	<i>29.8</i>	<i>23.7</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>52.9</i>	<i>99.4</i>	<i>9,220</i>
Design and Technology	9.0	27.2	30.0	20.8	9.4	3.0	0.7	36.2	99.3	1,690
	<i>2.9</i>	<i>11.7</i>	<i>24.8</i>	<i>28.3</i>	<i>21.1</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>98.3</i>	<i>10,780</i>
Computer Studies	9.6	24.6	24.1	19.3	14.4	6.4	1.6	34.2	98.4	190
	<i>3.2</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>21.2</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>13.8</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>97.0</i>	<i>3,210</i>
ICT	3.4	13.4	25.2	28.9	17.4	9.4	2.2	16.9	97.8	550
	<i>1.5</i>	<i>8.1</i>	<i>22.3</i>	<i>30.7</i>	<i>23.2</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>9.7</i>	<i>98.2</i>	<i>7,150</i>
Home Economics	3.4	18.8	28.2	19.7	18.8	5.1	6.0	22.2	94.0	120
	<i>0.0</i>	<i>11.2</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>32.7</i>	<i>23.4</i>	<i>10.7</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>96.7</i>	<i>210</i>
Accounting and Finance	6.9	19.3	20.1	18.5	19.3	6.6	9.3	26.3	90.7	260
	<i>1.2</i>	<i>12.4</i>	<i>23.5</i>	<i>26.5</i>	<i>20.9</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>13.6</i>	<i>96.4</i>	<i>2,860</i>
Business Studies	4.7	18.5	31.9	26.3	12.4	4.8	1.4	23.3	98.6	3,720
	<i>2.9</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>27.9</i>	<i>30.9</i>	<i>18.8</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>98.9</i>	<i>23,320</i>
Economics	13.1	37.8	27.0	13.4	6.1	2.2	0.5	50.9	99.5	6,870
	<i>5.4</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>30.2</i>	<i>23.5</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>27.4</i>	<i>99.2</i>	<i>16,240</i>
Geography	11.4	36.6	28.9	15.6	5.6	1.6	0.3	48.1	99.7	5,580
	<i>4.8</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>29.6</i>	<i>26.2</i>	<i>13.9</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>25.2</i>	<i>99.4</i>	<i>24,140</i>
Government and Politics	12.8	34.0	30.6	14.4	5.9	1.8	0.5	46.8	99.5	2,870
	<i>5.9</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>28.4</i>	<i>24.7</i>	<i>13.6</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>26.5</i>	<i>99.0</i>	<i>10,920</i>
History	16.0	35.5	30.0	13.6	4.0	0.8	0.1	51.5	99.9	7,130
	<i>5.2</i>	<i>16.6</i>	<i>29.9</i>	<i>28.8</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>99.5</i>	<i>39,290</i>
Law	6.9	18.1	23.3	19.0	14.7	8.6	9.5	25.0	90.5	120
	<i>4.1</i>	<i>14.0</i>	<i>25.2</i>	<i>25.9</i>	<i>18.8</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>18.1</i>	<i>97.4</i>	<i>11,630</i>
Psychology	9.6	23.5	29.7	20.5	10.6	4.9	1.1	33.2	98.9	3,510
	<i>3.7</i>	<i>12.7</i>	<i>26.2</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>19.4</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>98.0</i>	<i>49,830</i>
Sociology	8.5	19.0	30.3	23.3	11.3	4.9	2.8	27.4	97.2	390
	<i>4.2</i>	<i>14.0</i>	<i>28.1</i>	<i>28.9</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>18.1</i>	<i>98.6</i>	<i>27,560</i>
Other social studies	12.3	32.4	32.1	12.0	7.6	2.6	1.0	44.6	99.0	380
	<i>4.9</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>28.0</i>	<i>25.7</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>19.0</i>	<i>97.3</i>	<i>3,760</i>

Art and Design	24.7	26.8	27.8	14.4	4.5	1.6	0.3	51.5	99.7	5,440
	10.3	14.5	29.5	27.2	13.7	3.9	0.9	24.8	99.1	35,950
Drama	10.3	27.0	37.2	18.9	5.4	0.9	0.2	37.3	99.8	1,800
	2.9	9.5	30.2	33.8	18.7	4.3	0.6	12.4	99.4	10,740
English	19.1	28.6	29.4	16.7	5.2	0.9	0.2	47.7	99.8	7,790
	5.0	13.3	27.9	32.1	17.4	3.9	0.4	18.3	99.6	75,640
Media/Film/Television Studies	2.7	20.5	32.6	28.4	12.7	2.9	x	23.2	99.8	480
	1.2	9.1	31.3	37.0	17.2	3.5	0.7	10.3	99.3	20,320
Other Communication Studies	4.5	17.0	41.0	24.5	11.0	1.5	x	21.5	99.5	200
	1.7	9.8	32.1	37.7	15.3	2.8	0.7	11.5	99.3	8,310
French	11.4	45.3	27.3	11.5	3.2	1.0	0.3	56.7	99.7	2,750
	4.7	28.8	30.8	20.3	11.1	3.6	0.7	33.5	99.3	7,130
German	13.1	49.5	20.4	11.2	4.8	1.0	0.0	62.6	100.0	880
	5.6	28.0	28.5	20.8	11.7	4.9	0.6	33.5	99.4	2,900
Spanish	13.2	42.2	27.9	12.0	4.0	0.7	x	55.4	99.9	1,860
	5.1	25.1	30.9	22.2	11.6	4.5	0.8	30.1	99.2	4,660
Other modern languages	16.1	42.9	30.1	7.3	1.5	1.2	0.9	59.0	99.1	3,290
	11.3	32.3	29.7	15.3	6.3	2.9	2.2	43.6	97.8	3,790
<i>of which:</i>										
Chinese	5.5	42.2	40.1	8.8	1.2	1.4	0.7	47.7	99.3	2,020
	2.6	34.9	43.7	12.3	4.0	1.7	0.6	37.5	99.2	650
Italian	18.2	48.8	26.3	5.7	x	0.0	0.0	67.0	100.0	210
	9.3	32.1	33.6	16.3	5.7	1.5	1.5	41.5	98.5	470
Polish	56.7	26.7	10.0	x	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.3	100.0	30
	23.4	33.4	16.3	14.1	6.6	4.4	1.7	56.8	98.3	590
Russian	45.4	47.3	5.2	0.8	0.5	x	0.8	92.7	99.2	660
	27.4	55.9	14.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.2	99.6	260
Classical Studies	19.3	37.8	26.2	11.9	3.6	1.1	0.2	57.1	99.8	2,330
	5.9	19.4	30.3	24.5	13.5	5.3	1.0	25.3	99.0	3,750
<i>of which:</i>										
Latin	32.2	42.5	19.6	4.2	0.9	0.5	0.0	74.7	100.0	920
	16.9	41.1	26.6	9.9	2.4	1.2	0.0	58.0	99.4	330
Greek	34.1	53.1	10.9	1.4	x	0.0	0.0	87.2	100.0	210
	17.2	48.3	17.2	13.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	65.5	100.0	30
Classical Civilisation	6.4	30.8	34.1	20.1	6.6	1.9	0.3	37.1	99.7	1,010
	5.2	18.0	30.4	25.5	13.8	6.1	1.0	23.2	99.0	2,610
Religious Studies	13.3	36.3	28.0	14.9	5.5	1.9	0.2	49.6	99.8	3,430
	4.0	17.4	29.0	26.8	15.9	5.8	1.1	21.3	98.9	15,740
Music	11.5	30.9	27.3	19.1	9.0	1.8	0.4	42.4	99.6	1,280
	2.4	11.0	23.1	29.2	23.4	9.3	1.5	13.4	98.5	6,380
Physical Education	6.2	17.7	26.6	23.2	16.2	8.7	1.3	23.9	98.7	1,690
	3.6	11.7	24.4	26.9	21.2	10.6	1.5	15.3	98.5	13,320
General Studies	9.0	18.5	24.7	21.4	16.0	7.9	2.6	27.5	97.4	1,330
	4.4	7.9	18.3	25.2	24.1	15.7	4.5	12.2	95.5	32,120
All subjects	17.4	32.6	26.2	14.3	6.4	2.4	0.7	50.0	99.3	111,260
	6.3	16.6	26.6	25.9	16.3	6.9	1.4	22.9	98.6	662,390