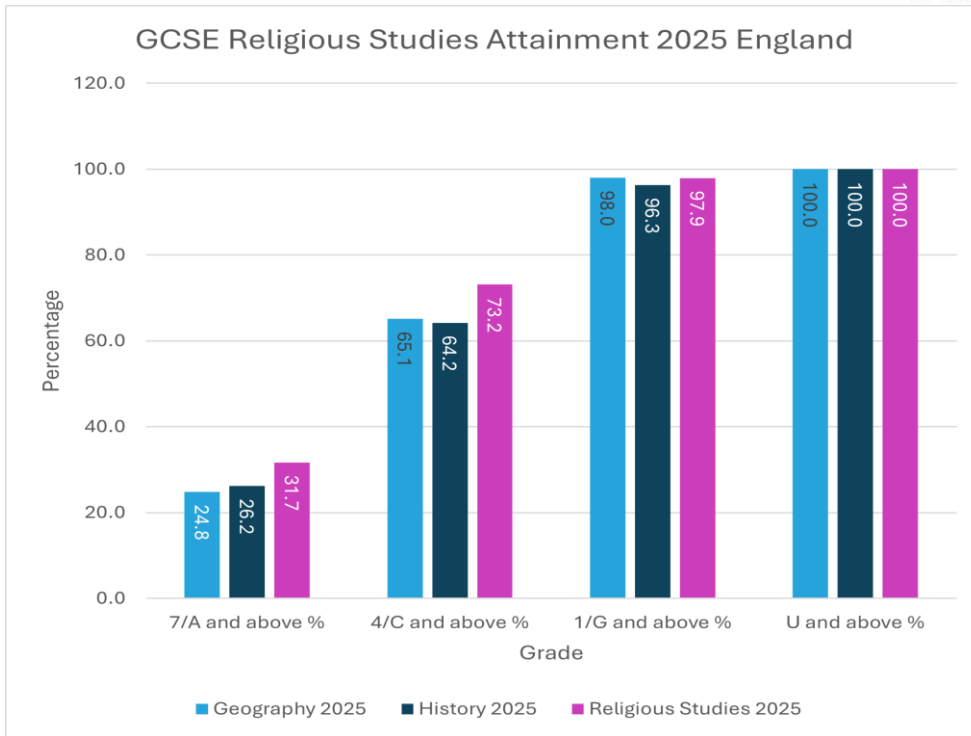


# GCSE Religious Studies 2025 - National Report for England and Wales

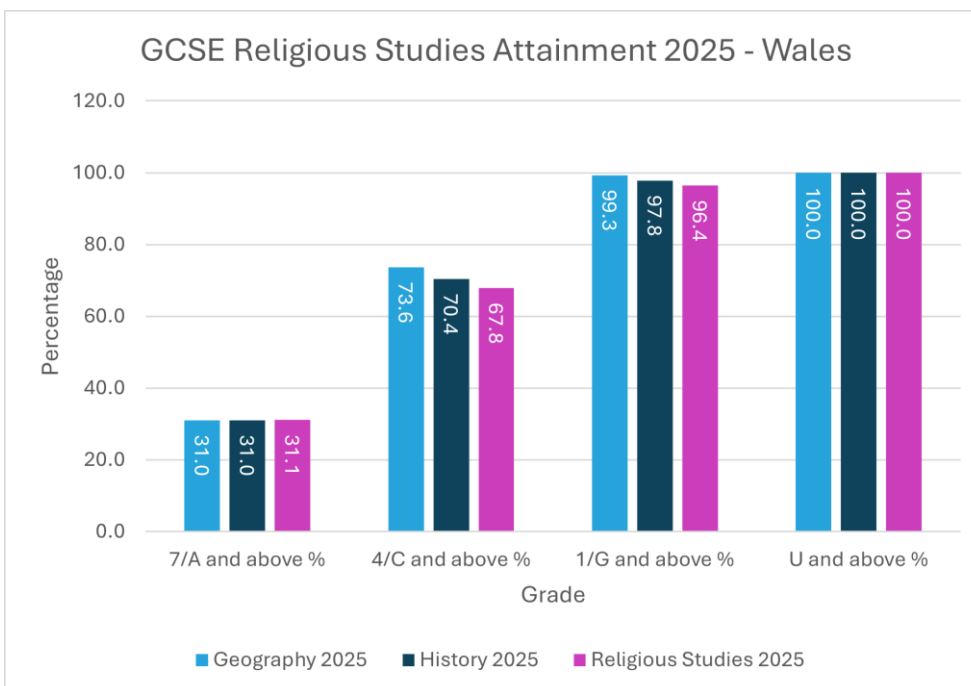
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## National Summaries

- **Attainment:** RS shows stronger outcomes than History and Geography, particularly at higher grades. In England, 31.7% of RS candidates achieved grade 7/A+, compared to 26.2% in History and 24.8% in Geography.
- **Gender differences:** Girls significantly outperform boys in RS. In England, 37.4% of girls achieved grade 7/A+ compared to 24.9% of boys. The gender gap is wider than in other humanities.
- **Comparison with other humanities:** RS provides girls with higher attainment than they achieve in either History or Geography, consolidating the subject's role as a strong option for female pupils.
- **Regional patterns:** In Wales, RS attainment at higher grades remains strong for girls, but overall RS performance at grade 4/C+ is slightly behind History and Geography.
- **Entries in England:** RS entries are stable at around 240,000 annually, showing resilience compared to other optional subjects, despite curriculum pressures.
- **Entries in Wales:** RS entries have fallen sharply, from over 15,000 in 2020 to under 11,000 in 2025. The decline is largely due to the collapse in short course entries which is likely due to the new GCSEs for first teaching in September 2025 not including short course.
- **Overall:** RS continues to demonstrate high attainment and is especially strong for girls. The subject remains stable in England but faces serious challenges in Wales.

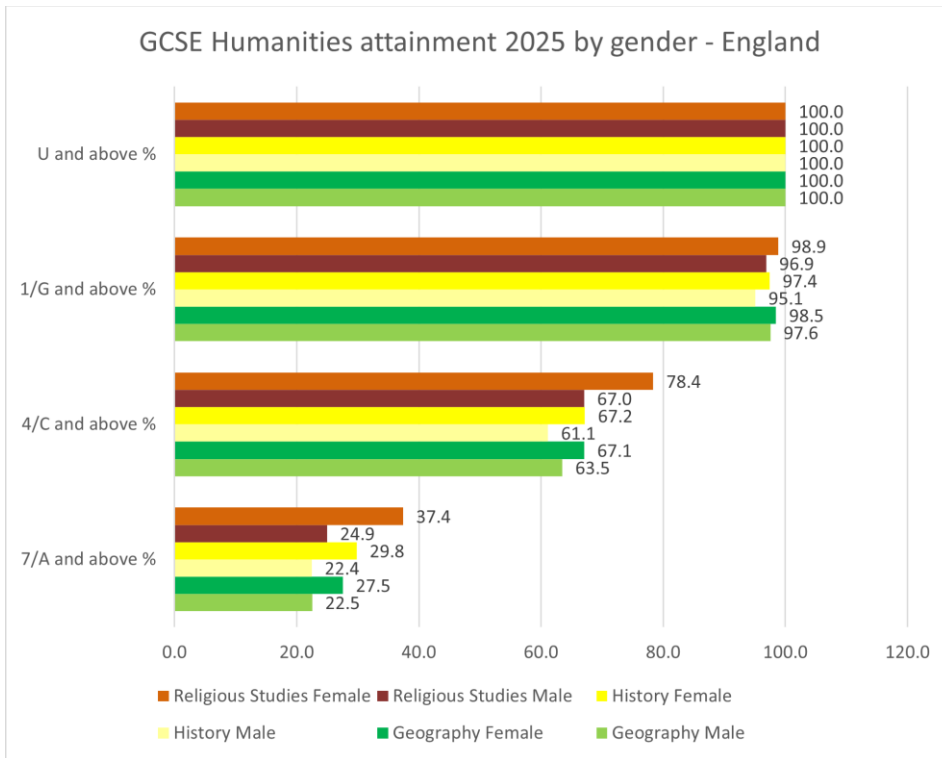


England attainment: Religious Studies shows stronger outcomes than Geography and History at grade 4/C and above (73.2% vs 65.1% and 64.2%). At grade 7/A and above, RS also outperforms the other humanities subjects, suggesting that more pupils achieve higher grades in RS. This continues the trend of RS providing a strong pathway for high attainment, particularly for girls.

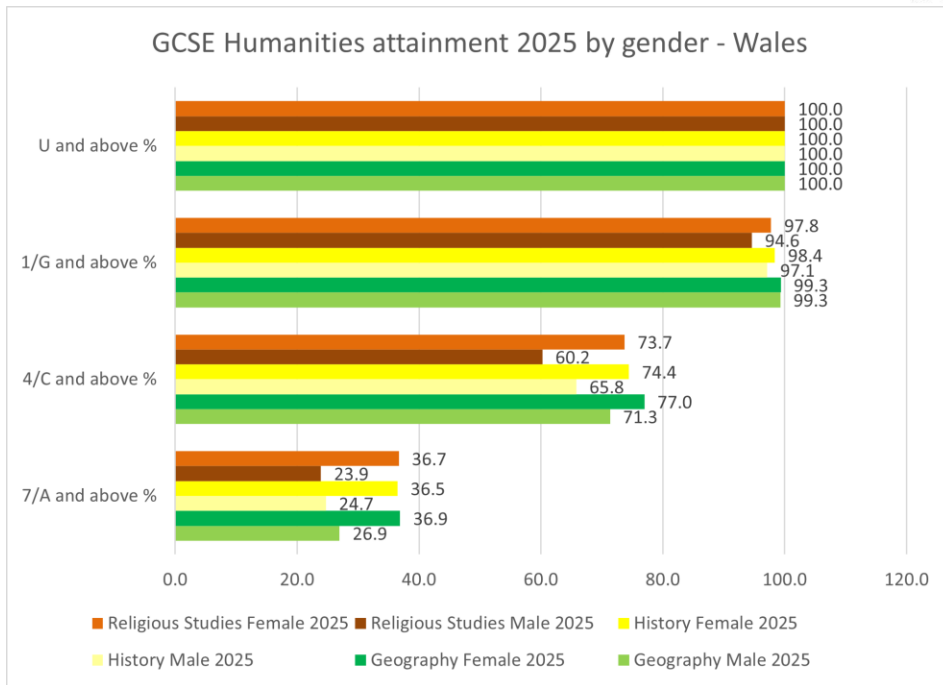


Wales attainment: In

Wales, the differences between subjects are less pronounced, but RS still secures a higher percentage at grade 7/A and above than Geography and History. However, RS lags slightly behind at grade 4/C and above. The RS performance advantage for girls is still evident, reinforcing that RS rewards extended written work and evaluative skills where female candidates in particular tend to excel.

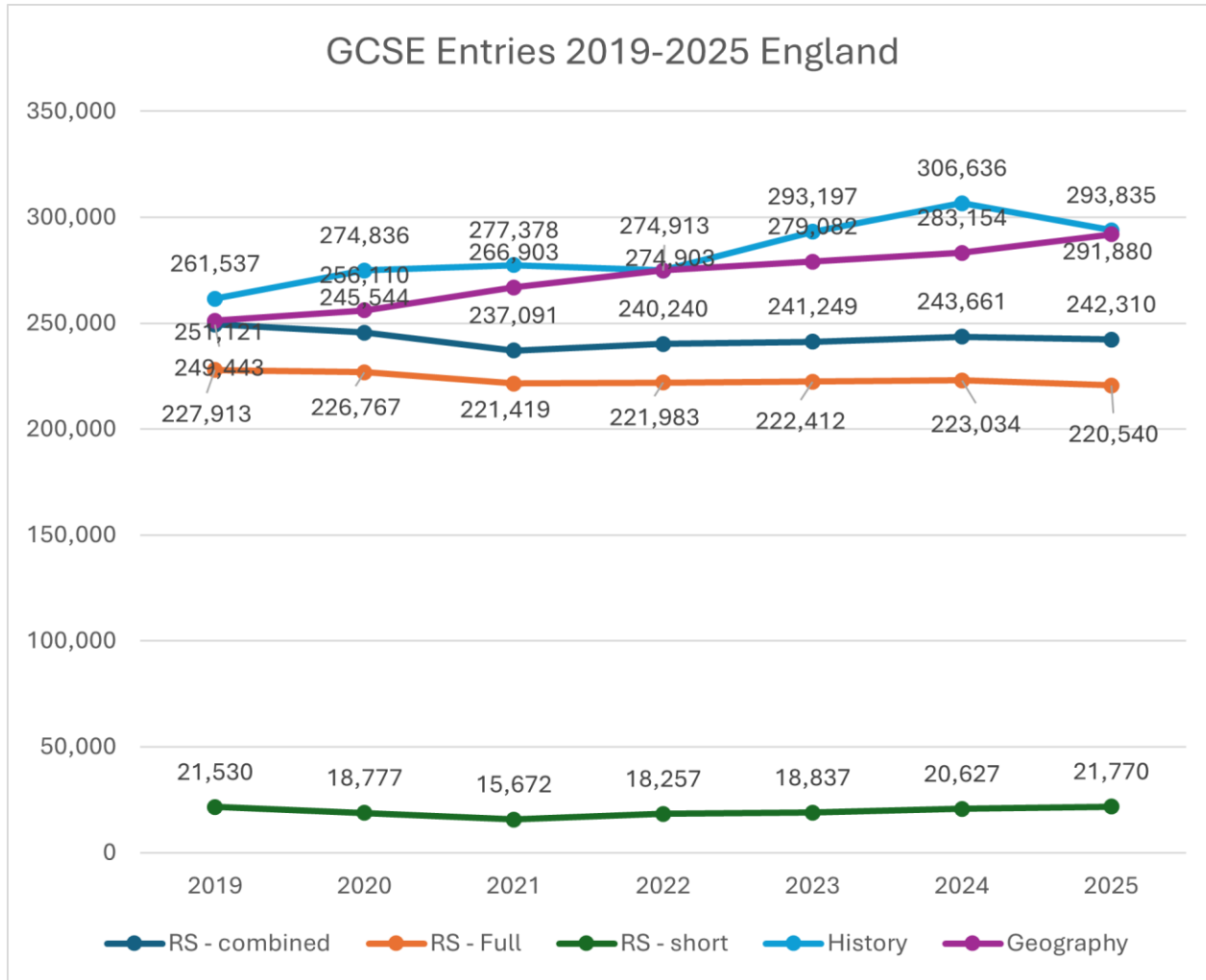


England gender breakdown: Girls significantly outperform boys in RS at both grade 7/A and above (37.4% vs 24.9%) and grade 4/C and above (78.4% vs 67.0%). The gender gap in RS is wider than in History and Geography, where attainment is closer between male and female candidates.

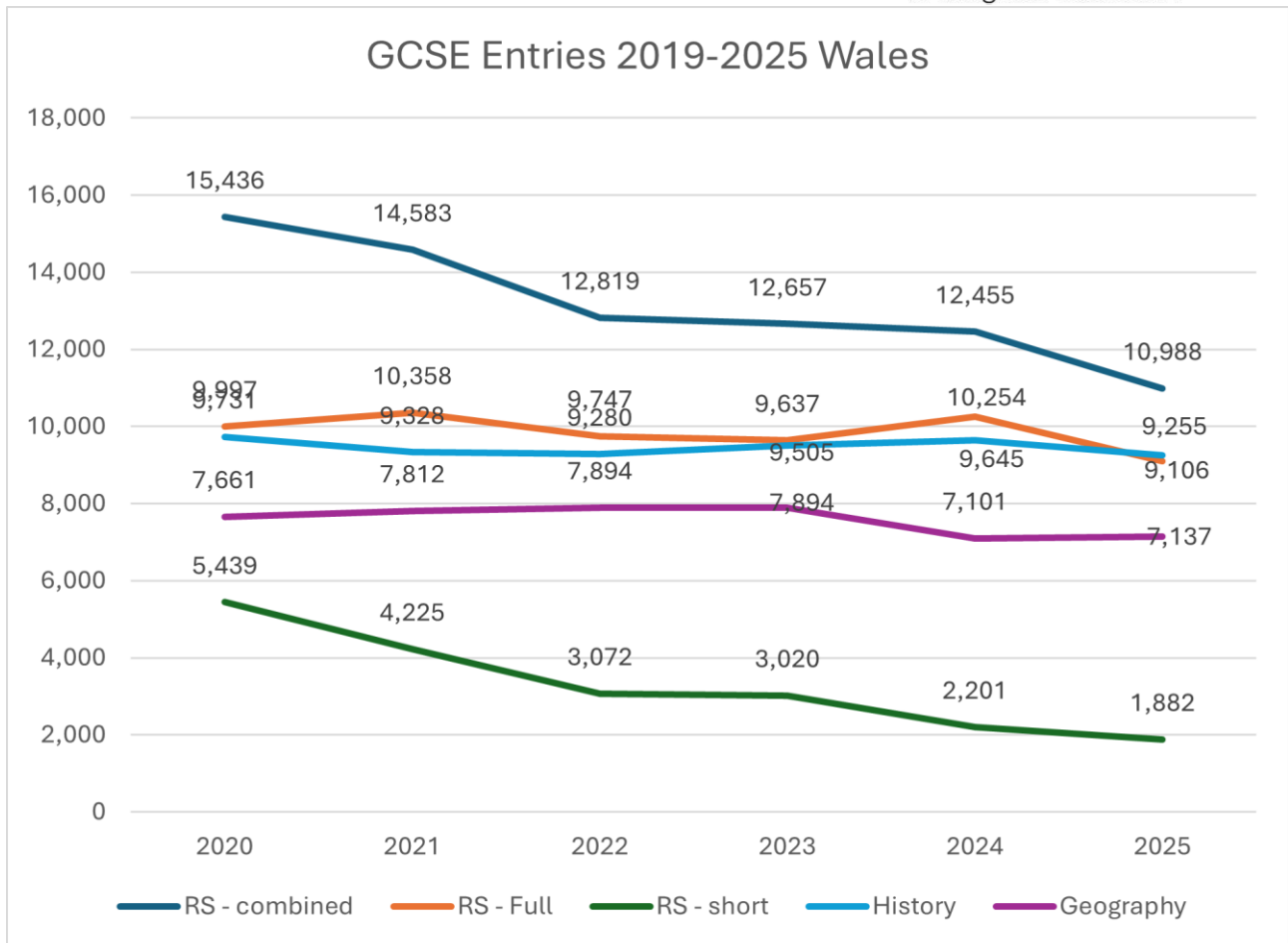


Wales gender breakdown: Female candidates in RS also perform notably better than their male peers, with 36.7% achieving grade 7/A and above compared to 23.9% of boys. At grade 4/C and above, the female advantage is similarly clear (73.7% vs 60.2%). Compared to Geography and History, RS continues to demonstrate a particularly strong outcome for girls.

## Entries



England entries over time: RS combined entries (full course plus short course) have remained relatively stable from 2019–2025, hovering around 240,000. This contrasts with steady growth in Geography and History entries. The stability of RS entries in England suggests that despite curriculum pressures, the subject remains valued, especially with consistent strong attainment for girls.



Wales entries over time: RS combined entries have fallen sharply from over 15,000 in 2020 to under 11,000 in 2025. This decline is largely due to a collapse in short course entries. History and Geography entries have remained steadier. Despite falling numbers, RS outcomes for girls remain comparatively strong, suggesting that the subject continues to deliver value for those who take it.

## How Religious Studies average grades compares with English Language, English Literature, History and Geography

Many schools in England are using average grades as a measure of progress this year. For this reason, we include the following data.

- England-only results, Summer 2025
- Averages include U (graded as 0 on the 9–1 scale)

- Two options are provided for analysis (1) 16-year-olds and (2) All ages
  - All ages vs 16-year-olds:
    - All ages includes re-sits and any early entries.
    - 16-year-old figures for mainstream cohort evaluation; use All ages for a whole-entry view.

### Executive summary

- Religious Studies (RS) records the highest average grade among the five subjects for 16-year-olds in 2025 (RS 5.15, English literature 4.83, English language 4.77, Geography 4.71, History 4.70).
- [Ofqual research into comparability](#), shows that Religious Studies at GCSE sits roughly in the middle of the range in terms of level of difficulty of all subjects.
- The girls–boys attainment gap is largest in RS ( $\approx +0.83$  grades), English literature shows a sizeable gap too ( $\sim +0.69$ ), followed by English language (+0.56), History (+0.48) and Geography (+0.30).
- On U rates, English language is lowest, History is highest; RS and English Literature sit mid-range.
- Across All ages (includes re-sits and any early entries), RS still leads on the average grade.

### Headline figures

Average grade (incl. U) — 16-year-olds

Subject	All	Girls	Boys
Religious Studies	5.15	5.53	4.70
English language	4.77	5.06	4.49
English literature	4.83	5.17	4.48
Geography	4.71	4.85	4.56
History	4.70	4.93	4.44

Average grade (incl. U) — All ages

Subject	All	Girls	Boys
Religious Studies	5.19	5.55	4.75
English language	4.32	4.65	4.03
English literature	4.82	5.16	4.47
Geography	4.71	4.86	4.56
History	4.70	4.93	4.44

## Interpreting the picture

- RS attainment is comparatively strong when measured by average grades. Across England, the RS average grade is above History and Geography and clearly above English language (which is sat by almost the whole cohort in most schools). English literature's average 4.83 for 16-year-olds sits between RS and English language and slightly ahead of History/Geography.
- Gender differences: the girls–boys gap is largest in RS ( $\approx +0.83$  grades). Consider targeted support for lower-attaining boys: scaffolded extended writing, modelling of evaluative reasoning, and systematic retrieval practice.
- Selection effects matter. English language is compulsory, while History and Geography are options with RS and English Literature a mix of the two. Subject averages reflect both teaching/assessment and who enters.

## Sources

- Ofqual Analytics — GCSE outcomes in England dashboard: <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/>
- JCQ — GCSE Summer 2025 results tables (England and Wales splits; see Table 9 for 16-year-olds): <https://www.jcq.org.uk/>

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## Key Questions for Schools

- How do our RS attainment results at grades 7/A+ and 4/C+ compare with the national averages?
- Do we see a similar gender gap in RS outcomes, and how does this compare with History and Geography in our school?
- Are our RS entries stable, growing, or declining compared to the national trend?
- If our RS entries are falling, what factors may be driving this – timetable pressures, curriculum choices, or student demand?
- How does the performance of our female students in RS compare with their outcomes in other humanities subjects?
- Do our outcomes suggest that RS is providing high-attainment opportunities for both boys and girls?
- What implications do these patterns have for staffing, curriculum planning, and option promotion in our school?

## Key Questions for Awarding Organisations and Regulators

1. Why do boys and girls perform differently in relation to some of the GCSE Religious Studies themes and assessment objectives?
2. What steps could be taken to ensure assessments allow both boys and girls to demonstrate their strengths more equally?
3. How do mark schemes and question design influence the gender gap in RS compared to other humanities subjects?
4. Is the balance of knowledge, evaluation, and extended writing in RS exams contributing to the wider gender gap?
5. Could awarding bodies provide clearer guidance to schools on how to support boys' attainment in RS without disadvantaging girls?
6. What lessons can be learned from History and Geography, where the gender gap is narrower, and applied to RS assessment design?
7. How might regulators and awarding bodies monitor long-term trends in RS outcomes to ensure fairness and consistency across all student groups?