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**“Fantastic A-level news for sciences and maths”**

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The number of pupils taking A-level subjects in science and maths (maths, further maths, biology, chemistry, and physics) saw marked increases today. But for the first time in many years the ‘market share’ every one of those subjects also increased – in other words, the rise in those subjects was not just a result of more A-levels being taken overall.

**CaSE Director, Imran Khan, commented:**

“It’s fantastic that the sustained efforts of pupils and teachers alike have paid off today. Two thirds of all employers report difficulties in recruiting enough workers with science, technology, engineering and maths skills, so this is great news for the economy as well as for pupils.”

“CaSE saw signs of the increase last year, when AS-level sciences and maths participation and market share went up – so it’s encouraging that we’ve had the same increases in AS-levels this year, too.”

“The one cause for concern is that although the number of girls taking science and maths at A-level has increased, the number of boys doing so is increasing even faster – so the gender gap isn’t narrowing.”

**A\***

Across all A levels, **8.1%** were awarded A\*. However, the proportion of A\* in Chemistry was **9.2%**, Physics **10.3%**, Maths **17.2%**, and Further Maths **29.9%**.

This shows that it is still the brightest students who are taking STEM subjects, so there is still scope for many more students to study physics and further mathematics - there is a misconception that you would only take these rigorous and stimulating subjects if you are likely to do exceptionally well in them.

**Gender**

There are particular concerns in Physics, where the proportion of entries accounted for by males actually rose to 78.5%, from 77.8% last year (1,410 more boys, but only 130 more girls). This is despite the fact that female physicists received more A\* grades (11.6% compared to 10.0% for boys) and A grades (26.3% compared to 21.6% for boys) – which suggests that girls are only taking physics if they think they can really excel at it.

**School type**

There are still concerns about the inequality of participation in different school types. Comprehensives account for 42.6% of all A-levels taken, but only 31% of Further Maths, 39.3% of Maths, 39.6% of Chemistry, 40.7% of Physics, and 42.4% of Biology entries.

Independent schools, by contrast, account for just 13.5% of all A-levels taken, but 29% of Further Maths, 18.6% of Maths, 18.2% of Chemistry, 20.3% of Physics, and 15.2% of Biology entries.

**CaSE Director Imran Khan said:**

“Science and engineering are fields which intellectually benefit from a diversity of views and backgrounds, so it’s vital that they are seen as subjects which everyone, regardless of background, can take part in. It’s also grossly unfair if pupils in the state sector do not have the opportunity to study these stimulating and rewarding subjects.”

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

1. CaSE is the Campaign for Science and Engineering, the leading advocate for the scientific and engineering health of the UK. More details here: <http://sciencecampaign.org.uk/>

2. The full JCQ briefing is available here:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/attachments/published/1297/JCQ-A%20LEVEL%20RESULTS.pdf>