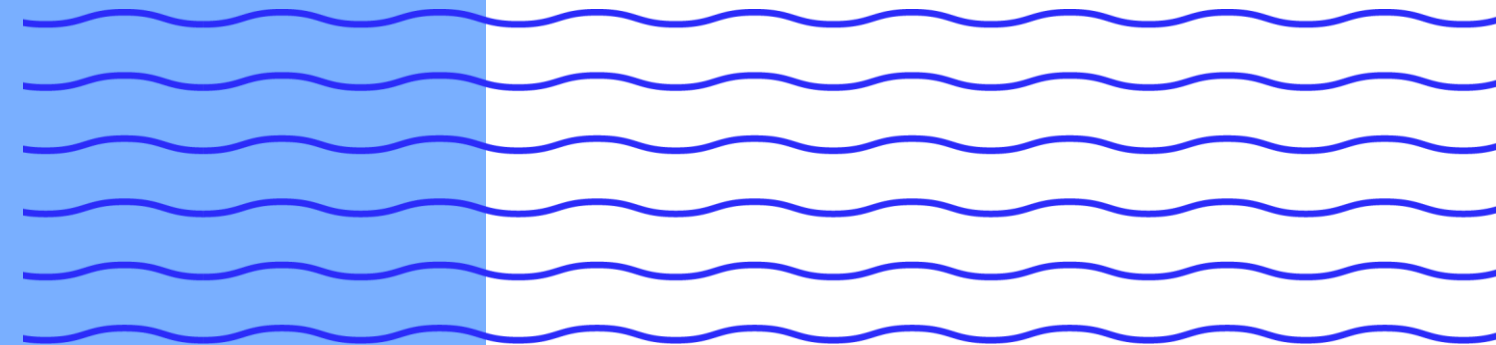


# This week

Mond	Students as consumers and student protection
Tue	Access and participation
Wed	Improving institution-level student representation
Thu	Students on health courses
Fri	Students at work



**WONKHE**  
SUs



# Access and participation

Understanding the agenda, how it's regulated and where SUs fit in





# Social background and educational outcomes

Social class correlates with educational outcomes

The gap starts early – from early years education – and persists

26.3% of pupils on free school meals went to HE in 2018/19 compared to 45.1% of those not on free school meals

Measured by local area disadvantage (POLAR) the difference is 57.8% of the most advantaged versus 27.3% of the least advantaged

Only 4.1% of those from the most disadvantaged areas in England progressed into high tariff HE providers in 2018/19 compared to 21.2% of most advantaged

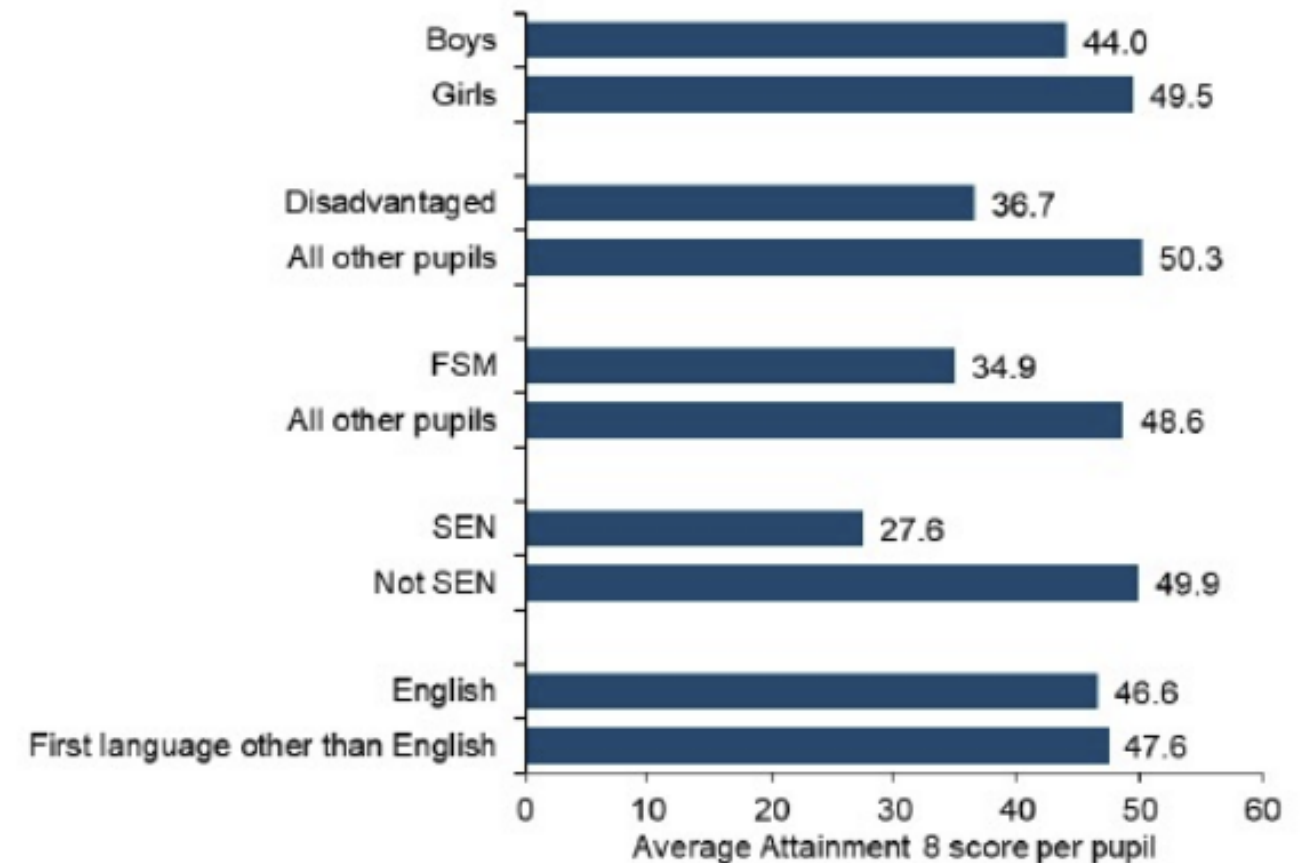
Source: [DFE statistics](#) (England data)

NB Black students more likely to enter HE than white but much less likely to enter high tariff providers

And women are progressing at a higher rate than men

## Attainment by pupil characteristics<sup>19</sup>

Figure 3: Average Attainment 8 score by pupil characteristics  
England, state funded schools, 2019



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Difference in educational outcomes at KS 4 in 2019 in state schools in England

Source: [Department for Education report](#).

# What is a normal student?



- Characteristics of what think people here think a “normal” student is
- Things that try to make people more “normal”
- Things that try to change what is seen as “normal” and accommodate others



# Middle-class pupils will be squeezed out of Oxbridge, says Office for Students

Rosemary Bennett, Education Editor

Wednesday January 29 2020, 12.01am,  
The Times

Universities

Charity

Education



Oxford has 15 students from the wealthiest neighbourhoods for every one from the most disadvantaged areas  
ALAMY

Share



Save



Middle-class children will be squeezed out of Oxbridge as the universities strive to meet ambitious targets to recruit poorer youngsters, the student watchdog says.

# Mind the gap(s)

## 1. Gap in participation between most and least represented groups

**30.9 percentage points**

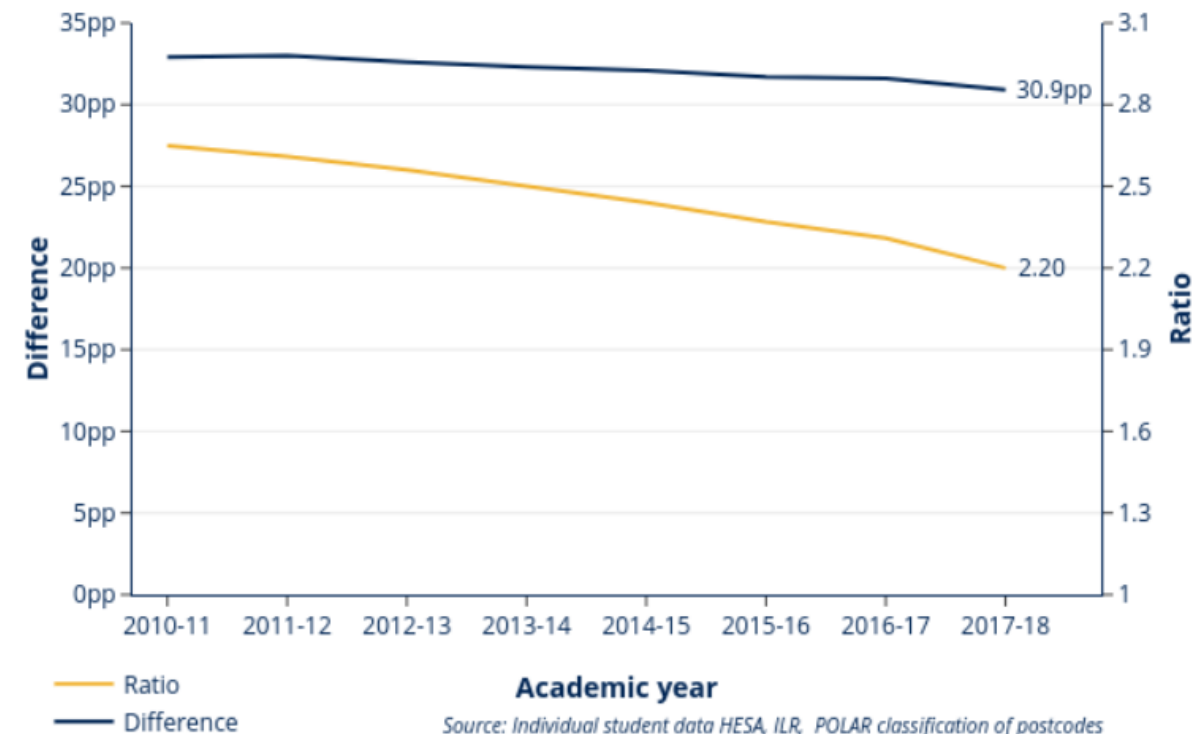
In 2017-18, there was a gap of 30.9 percentage points between the most and least represented groups

[We have postponed setting a target for this measure – learn more](#)

The overall participation gap has **reduced steadily** in recent years

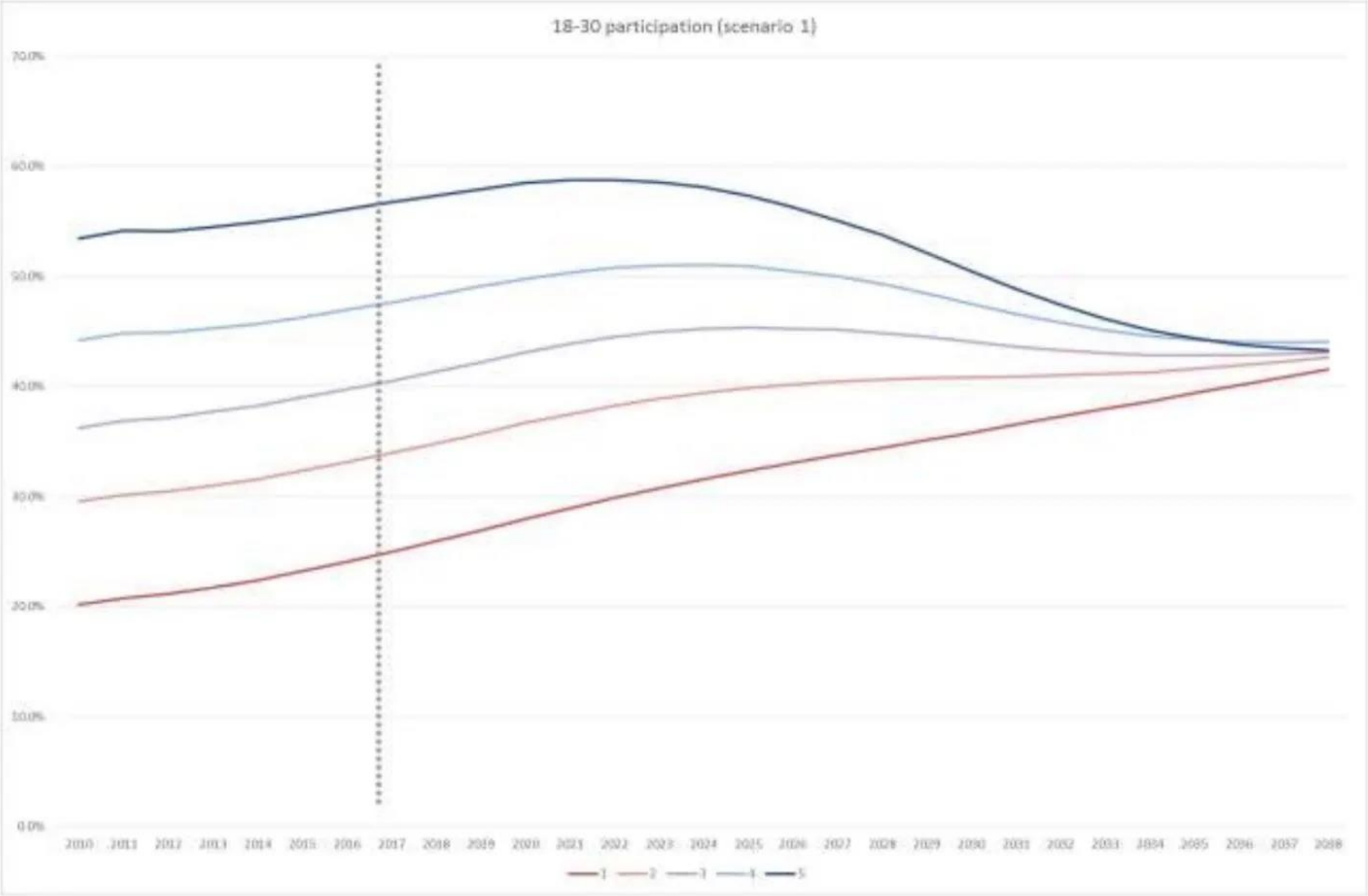
See KPM 1

**WONKHE**  
SUs



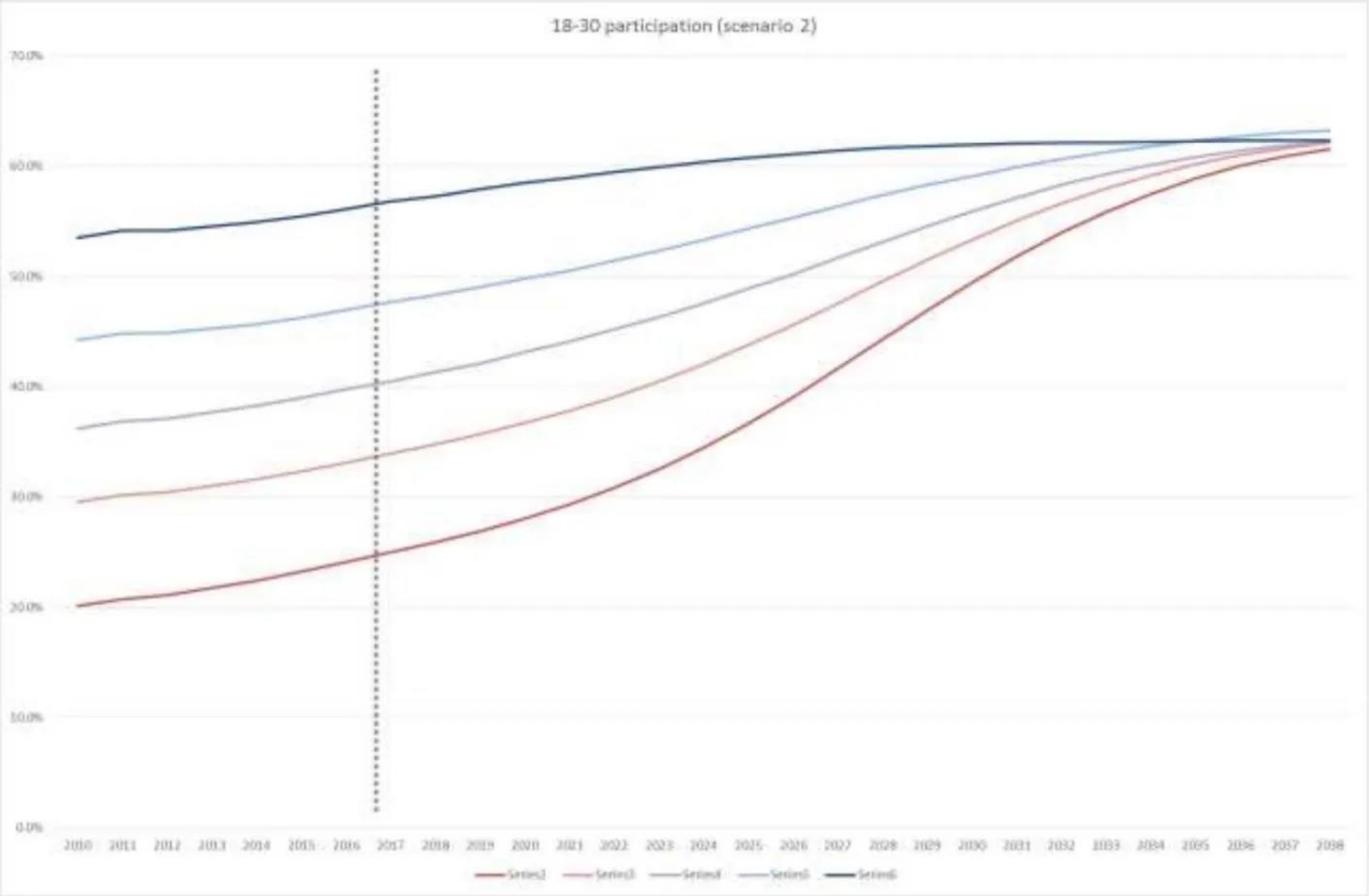


**Scenario 1:** Maintaining the current size of the higher education sector (relative to the wider population) so that the participation rates for all quintiles converge at the current sector average.





**Scenario 2:** Expanding the size of the higher education sector so that the participation rate for quintiles 1-4 increases to that of quintile 5. This would mean increasing the size of the sector by about half over the next 10-20 years.



# Mind the gap(s)

## 2. Gap in participation at higher-tariff providers between the most and least represented groups

**19.8 percentage points**

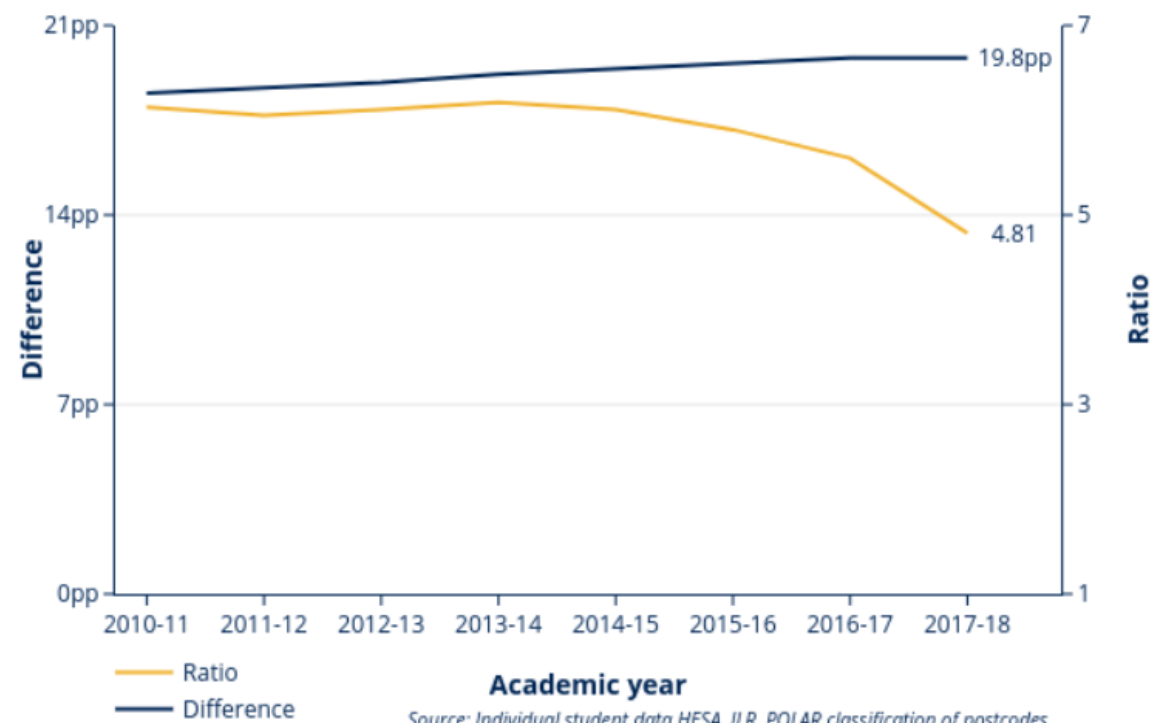
In 2017-18, there was a **gap of 19.8 percentage points** between the most and least represented groups

[Learn about the target for this measure](#)

The participation gap at higher-tariff providers has **widened slightly**, and the participation ratio has **declined** in recent years

See KPM 2

**WONKHE**  
SUs





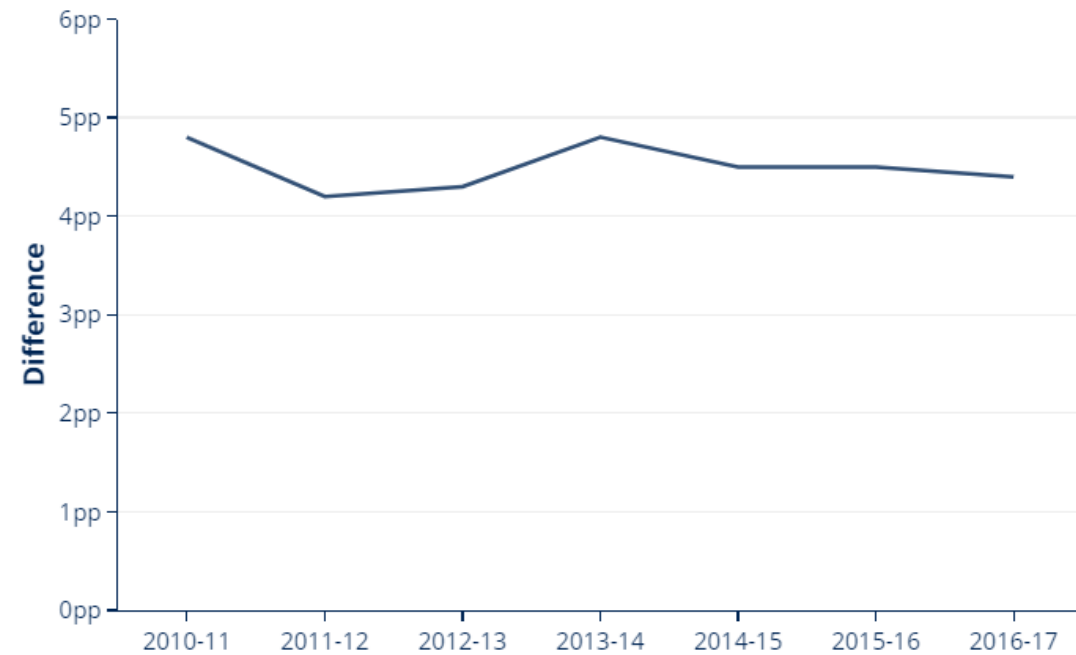
# Mind the gap(s)

## 3. Gap in non-continuation between most and least represented groups

### 4.4 percentage points

In 2016-17, there was a **difference of 4.4 percentage points** between the non-continuation rates of the most and the least represented groups

[Learn about the target for this measure](#)



Academic year of entry

Source: Individual student data HESA, ILR, POLAR classification of postcodes

The gap in non-continuation has **changed very little** since 2014-15

See KPM 3

# Mind the gap(s)

## 4. Gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students

**23.1 percentage points**

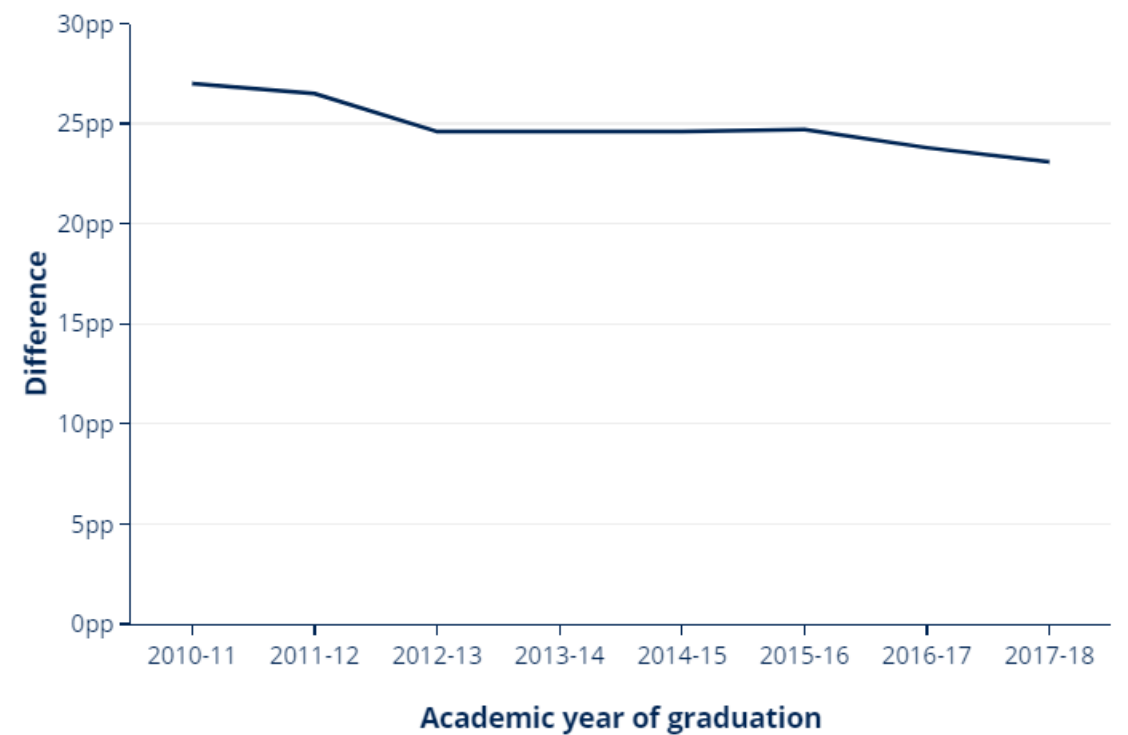
In 2017-18, there was a **difference of 23.1 percentage points** between the proportion of white and black students getting a 1st or 2:1

[Learn about the target for this measure](#)

The gap in degree outcomes has been **falling but remains large**

See KPM 4

**WONKHE**  
SUs



Source: Individual student data HESA, ILR.



# Mind the gap(s)

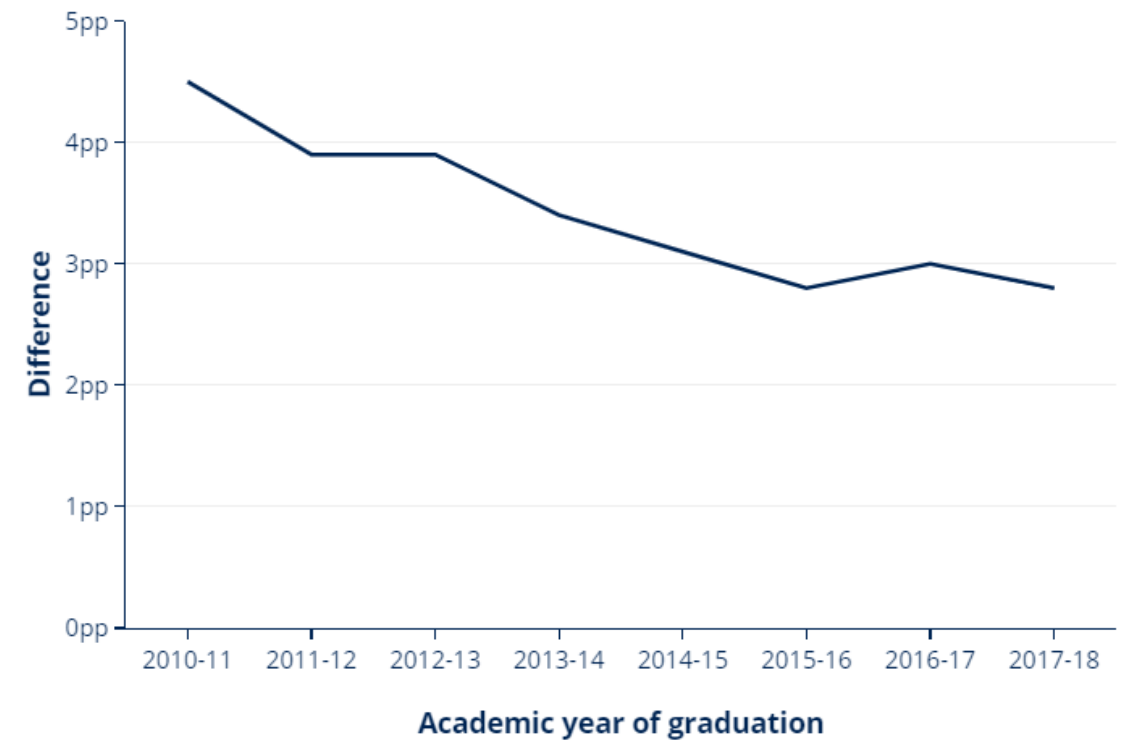
## 5. Gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students

### 2.8 percentage points

In 2017-18, there was a **difference of 2.8 percentage points** between the proportion of disabled and non-disabled students getting a 1st or 2:1

[Learn about the target for this measure](#)

There has been no **further reduction of the gap in degree outcomes** since 2015-16



Source: Individual student data HESA, ILR.

See KPM 5

[See more data](#) →[Help guide](#)

## Select a provider

\* All English higher education providers

## Show me:

Proportions

Gaps

## Current mode and level:

Mode: Full-time or apprenticeship

Level: All undergraduates

[Change mode or level](#)

## Student lifecycle stage

Access

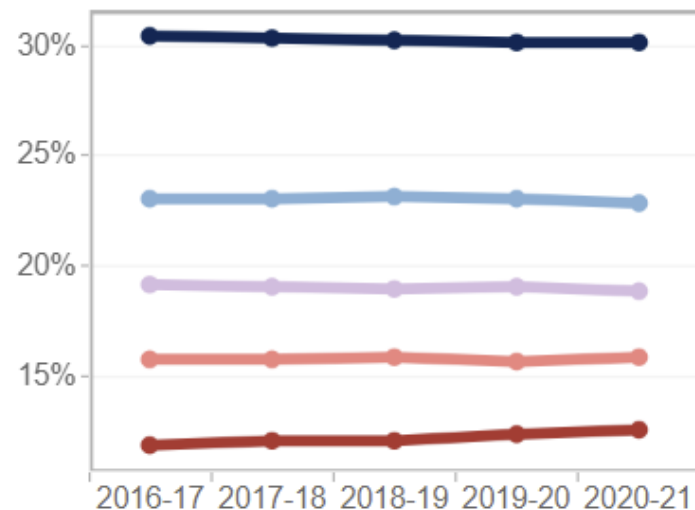
Continuation

Attainment

Progression

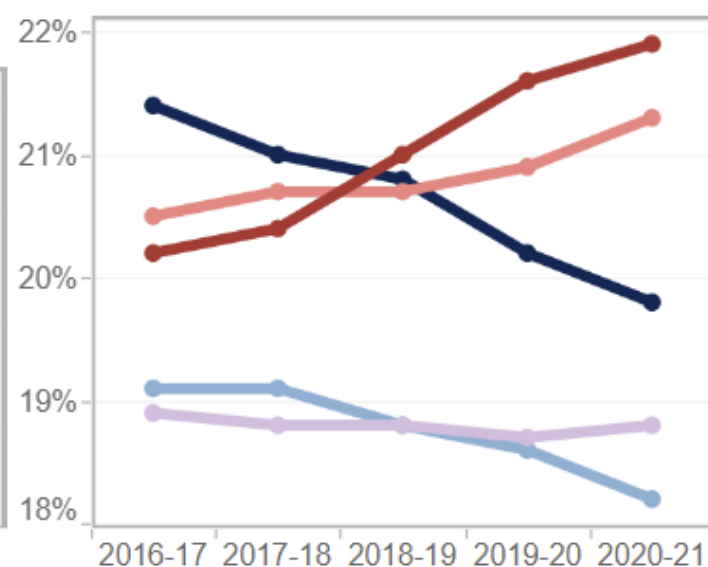
## Participation of local areas (POLAR4): Proportion of young (under 21) entrants

Relevant to OfS KPMs 1 and 2



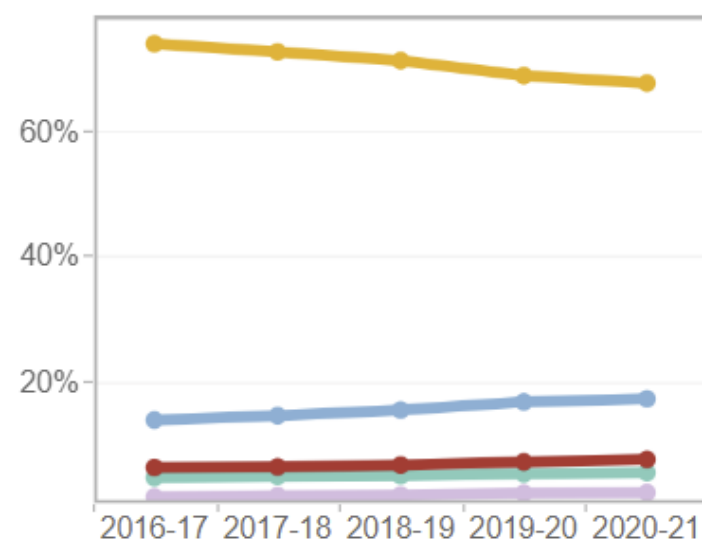
Quintile: 1 2 3 4 5

## Deprivation (IMD 2019): Proportion of entrants

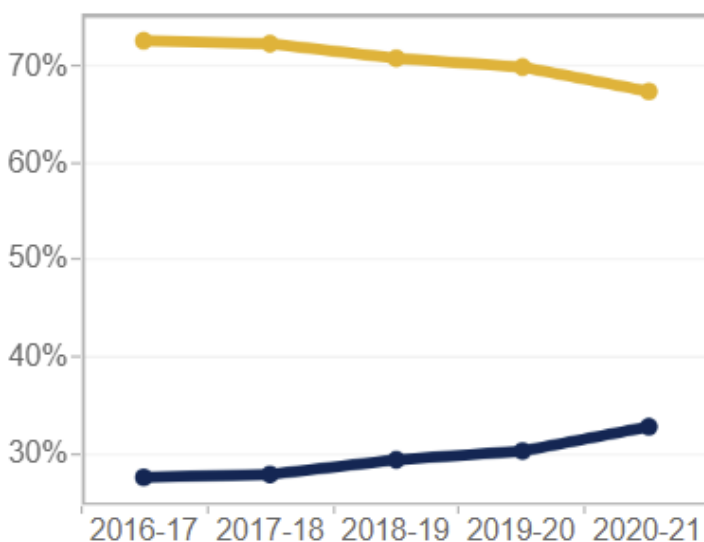


Quintile: 1 2 3 4 5

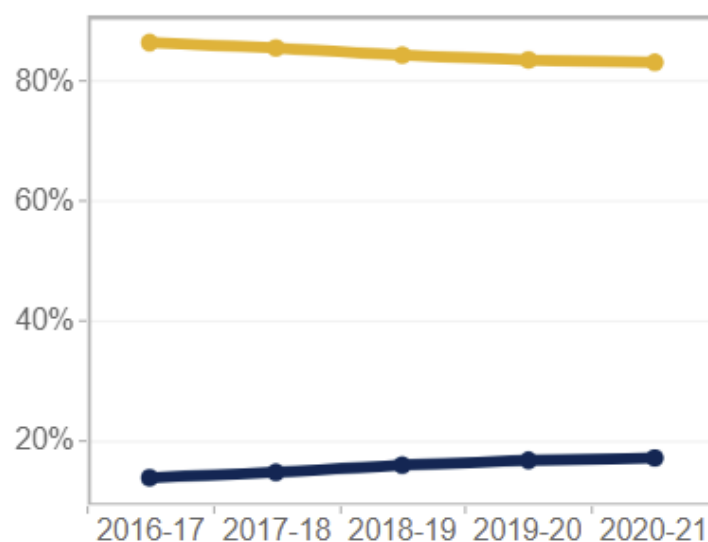
## Ethnicity: Proportion of entrants (18 year olds only)

Asian Mixed White  
Black Other

## Age: Proportion of entrants

Mature (21 and over)  
Young (under 21)

## Disability reported: Proportion of entrants

Disability reported  
No disability reported



**Half of university students accepted on lower grades as institutions take into account poor backgrounds, study finds**

**Private school education pays huge benefits as new research shows fee-paying pupils score two grades higher at A-level than state students**

- Fee-paying students at private school score two grades higher than state pupils
- Study shows the two grade difference is in subjects preferred by universities
- Authors suggest gap is down to 'superior' resources available at private schools

**Half of university places go to 'substandard' students as school leavers are accepted for degree courses with lower A-level grades than the results generally demanded**

- Half of school-leavers accepted by universities with grades lower than standard
- The trend comes amid rising competition between universities to fill places
- Overall, record 541,240 students accepted to undergraduate courses this year

Daily Mail

**20% of students with poor A-level grades get firsts at university**

**WONKHE**  
SUs

# The politics of widening access

Tony Blair's 50% HE participation target produced anxiety about protecting standards – “more means worse”

The more progressive version of this is concern about the fate of “the other 50%”

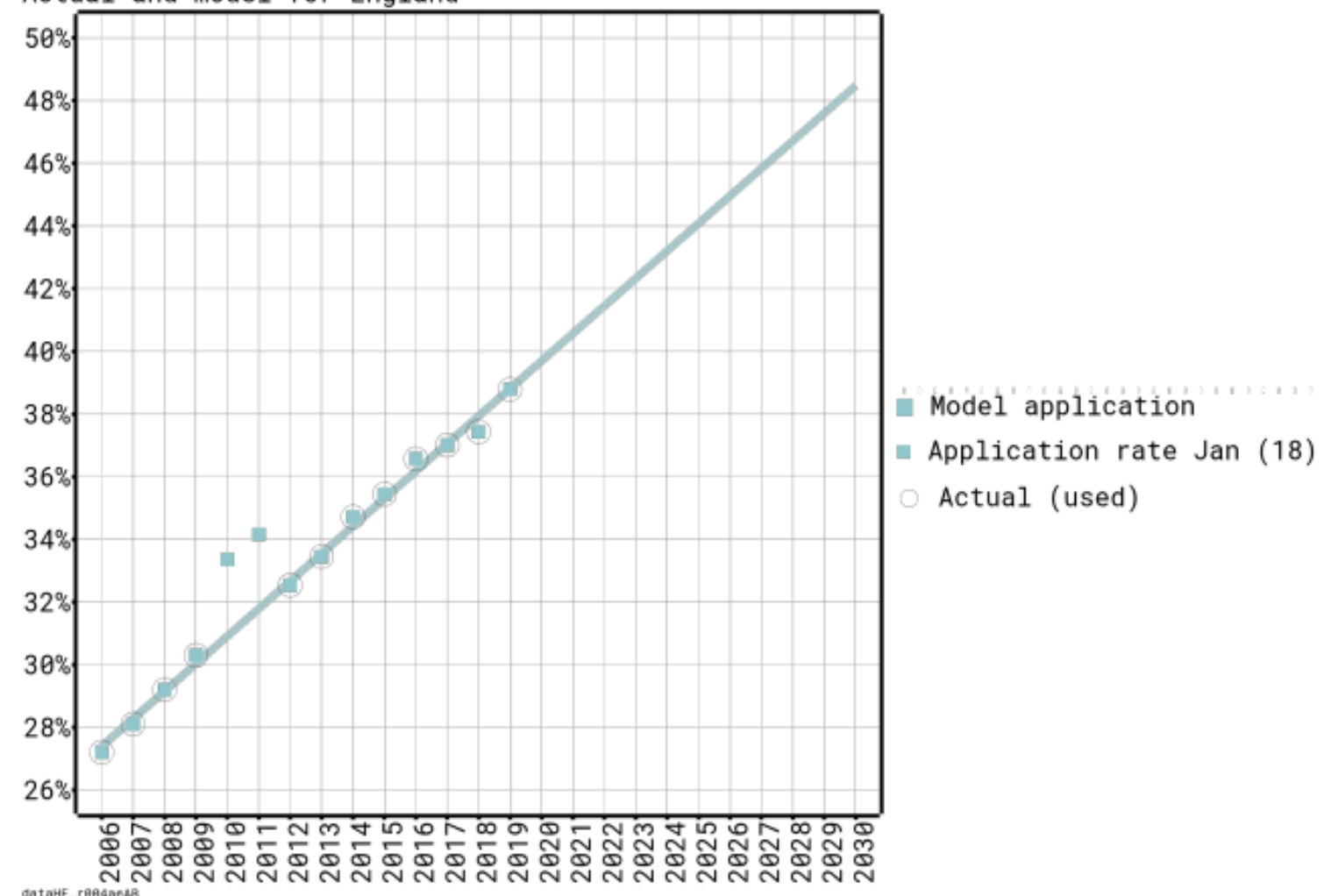
The value of HE (LEO data) – average salary returns mask differentiation by institution, subject, region, student demographics...

Rising application rates – and the cost to governments

*“Social mobility isn't about getting more people into university. For decades we have been recruiting too many young people on to courses that do nothing to improve their life chances or help with their career goals.*

*True social mobility is about getting people to choose the path that will lead to their desired destination and enabling them to complete that path. True social mobility is when we put students and their needs and career ambitions first, be that in HE, FE or apprenticeships.”* Michelle Donelan, universities minister, July 2020.

Actual and model for England



Actual and model application rates for HE to 2030  
by Mark Corver, dataHE [Source: Wonkhe](#)





# Policy “objects”

- Much public policy has “experts” and “objects”
- Students (esp “disadvantaged students”) often “objects” (lab rats)
- Student movement – UK has strong tradition of students themselves leading or proposing solutions to problems

## Three major strands of thinking:

- Student engagement agenda = outcomes rely on partnership both individually and collectively
- Citizen model = not passive consumer but owner of society and institutions
- Expert patient agenda...

# Expert patients

- As the patients are ones living with disease, their **views** and **wishes** should be considered
- Those living with common conditions acquire both **experience** and **knowledge** of their condition
- Expert patients - “develop the **confidence** and **motivation** of patients to use their own **skills** and **knowledge** to take **effective control** over life with a chronic illness”
- Then - “develop the **confidence** and **motivation** of patients to use their own **skills** and **knowledge** to **intervene** at policy level”

"As holders of personal and experiential knowledge about their issue, expert patients are adept in identifying some needs that are not considered or are only poorly considered by doctors and other healthcare professionals."

Their own experience may be further enriched by that of other patients (especially in the context of patients' associations), resulting in collective and, thus, greater experience of illness"





# Sleeves rolled up

THE FEELING THAT THE  
SYSTEM IS  
FAILING



I AM PART OF THE  
SYSTEM, I CAN  
CHANGE IT  
FROM  
WITHIN



RECOGNISE YOU HAVE  
POWER TO INFLUENCE



NO LONGER WAITING  
FOR SOLUTIONS  
TO COME DOWN  
FROM ON HIGH...



NO MORE  
THEY SHOULD DO  
THIS...  
NO MORE  
THEY SHOULD  
DO THAT....

Billieeoks2015



# Student leadership

Where and how students can play a role:

- Designing, operating and running interventions and local work to solve a problem
- Commenting on, critiquing and improving strategic solutions to a problem (noticing issues and gaps)
- Co-commissioning evidence gathering, prioritising, designing and choosing solutions at the strategic level



**“Widening Participation and University Access  
have long been wicked issues of public  
(education) policy.**

**“It is the most troublesome item in talk about  
higher education; in the media, in politics and  
beyond”**

***David Watson***



**“While most people applaud the basic principle of broader access, the issue has given rise to moral panic (and endless articles about toffs at Oxbridge), in turn leading to "an almost pathetic search for the single-issue intervention that will improve the situation ... and a similarly dysfunctional search for scapegoats".**

**As with other heated debates about "employability" and "dumbing down", argues Watson, the field "is so cluttered with non-commensurate, non-replicable research that anyone with a strongly held opinion can find a research study to back it up".**

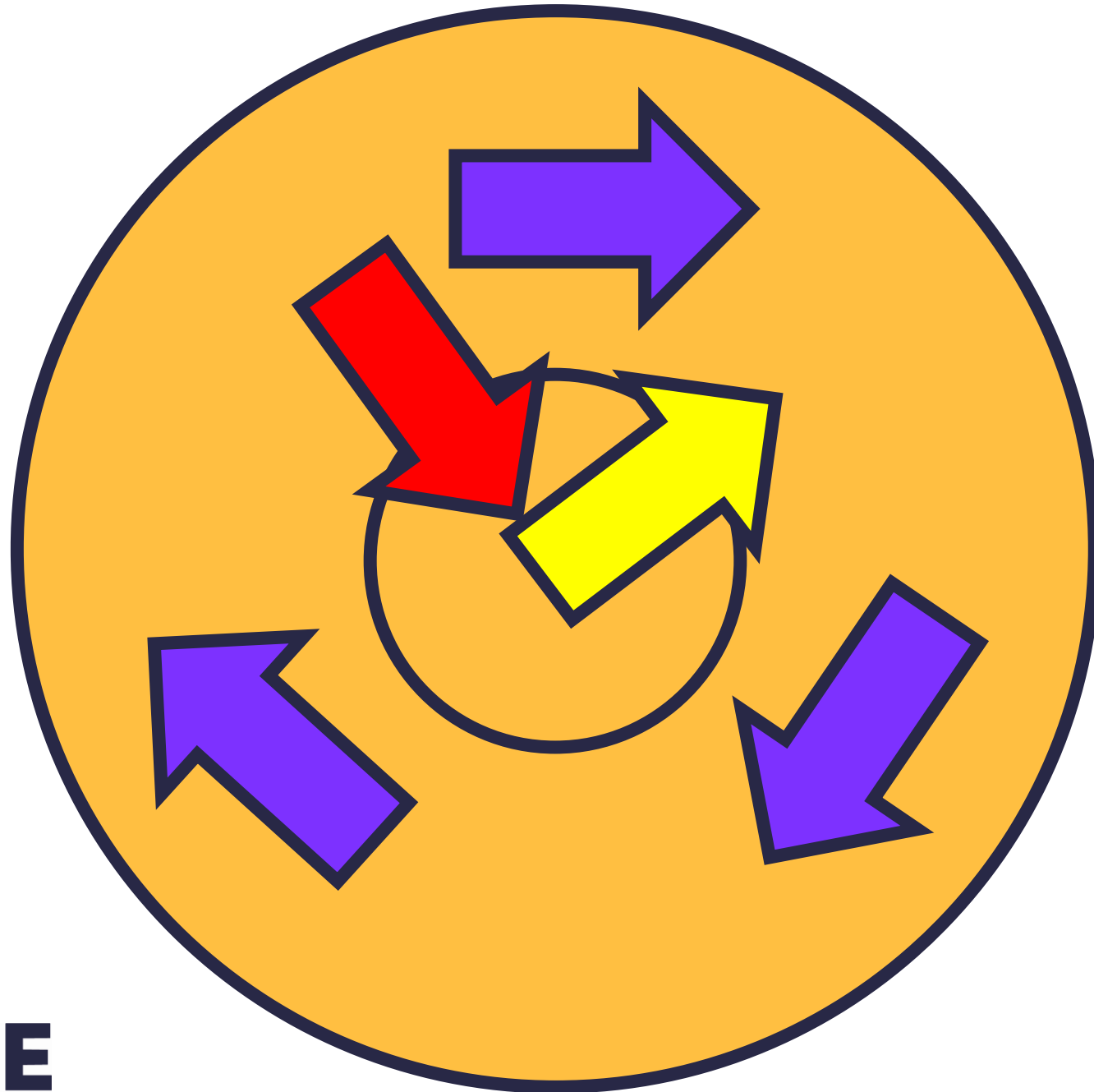




# Widening what?

- Some examine the social class of participants, or deprived areas of origin, or both.
- Some examine these in particular types of institution, or programme; some in HE in general.
- Some focus on gender in subjects; others examine ethnicity, sometimes linking it to socio-geographic distribution, sometimes not.
- Various, the studies research these things to determine the effects of policy, or the causes of the problem that generate the need for policy; or both.

# Change what?



- Change students (attainment at A level, “ Aim Higher”)
- Change universities (culture, structure, support)
- Change society (economics, social policy)



# Problem?

## Chapter 1: What is the problem?

### What is the problem?

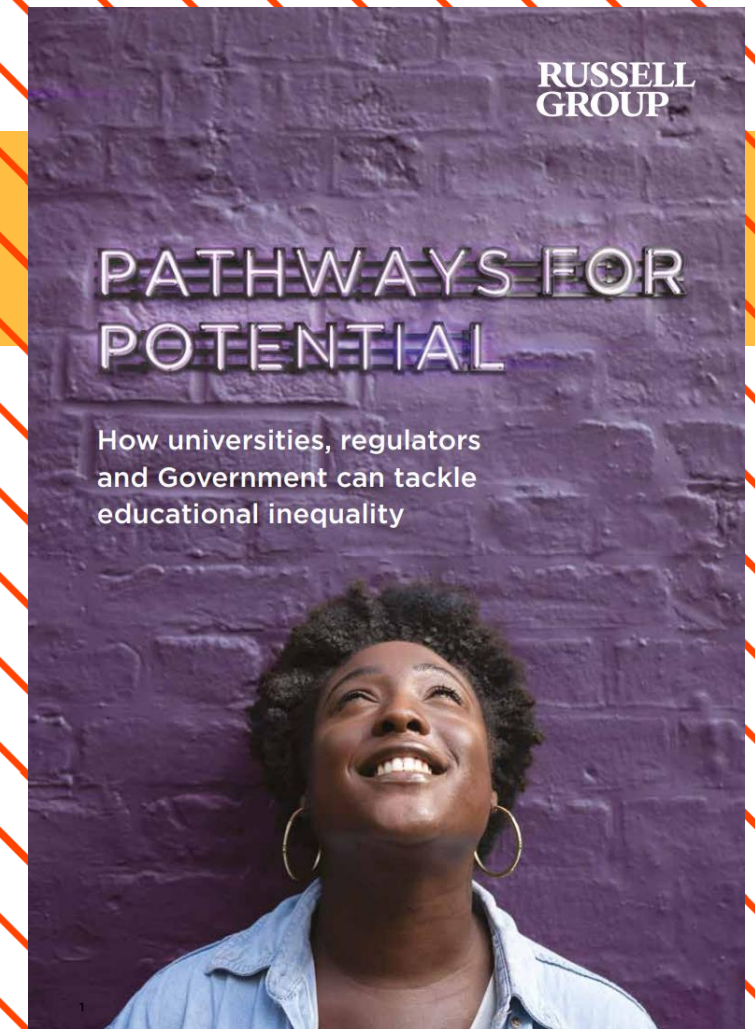
The number of disadvantaged and under-represented students progressing to university, including the most selective institutions, has steadily increased over a period of years. The most under-represented students are 61% more likely to enter university now than they were ten years ago, and 30% more likely to enter Russell Group universities than they were five years ago.<sup>1</sup>

However, gaps by social and geographical background and by ethnicity and disability persist in access to university, especially at selective institutions, and universities across the sector have further to go in supporting student success and progression to employment:

- Young people from the most highly represented neighbourhoods are around five times more likely to be placed at a higher tariff institution than those from the least represented neighbourhoods.<sup>2</sup>
- Looking across the whole sector, the proportion of students with a disability in higher education is 6% lower than the proportion of working-age adults with a disability, and the number of mature students at UK universities has decreased by 46% over the past decade.<sup>3</sup>
- There are also significant differences in access to higher education by region: for example, 18-year-olds from London are 35% more likely than those from elsewhere in England to progress into higher education.<sup>4</sup>
- Once at university, there is a five-percentage point gap in continuation rates between students from the most under-represented areas and their peers from the most highly represented areas.<sup>5</sup>
- There is a 13% gap at sector-level between the likelihood of white students and students from black, asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds getting a first or upper second-class degree classification.<sup>6</sup>

Through a series of in-depth interviews we conducted with academics, practitioners and charity and school leaders, the following factors arose as key social, cultural and financial barriers to access and participation for under-represented students:

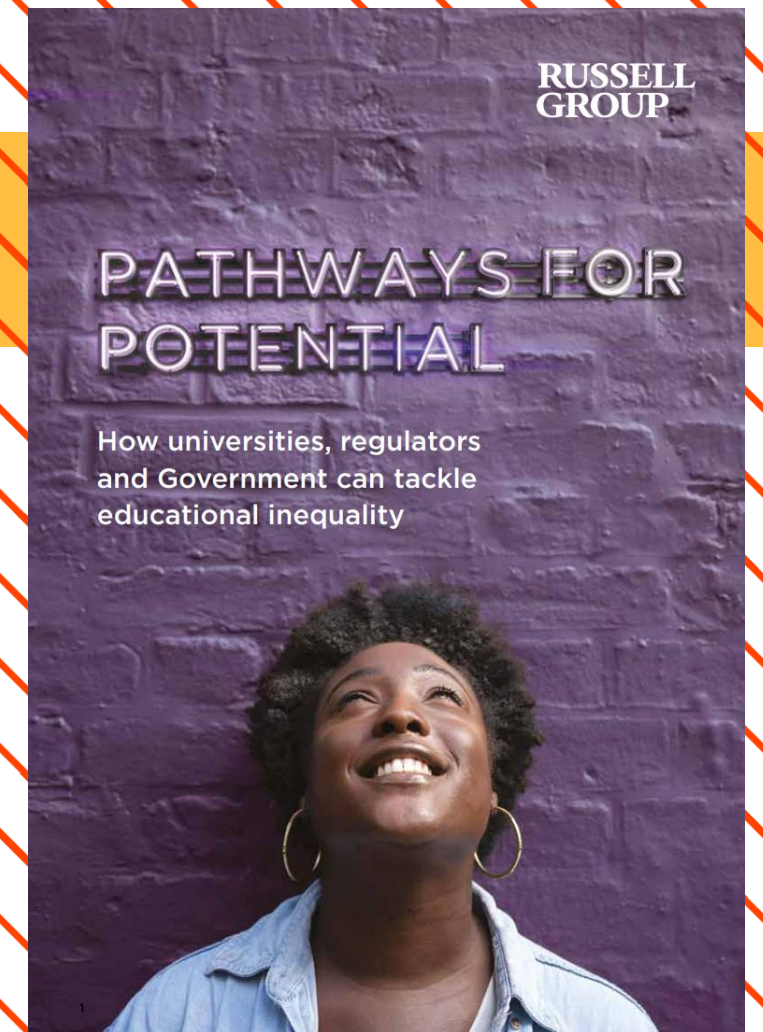
- **Gaps in prior attainment** in school (and even differences in cognitive development in the early years, with disadvantaged pupils falling behind their peers early on) shape people's life chances for years to come. The causes of these gaps are complex and include differences in the challenges faced by schools, their curricula, and extracurricular support structures, parental expectations and whether students are care experienced. Teacher shortages, lack of teacher retention and less qualified or experienced teachers are key factors which can affect schools in more deprived areas.
- **Lack of knowledge about higher education** and a lack of practical support in decision-making can impact negatively on the confidence of under-represented students and undermine their expectations that they can fulfil their ambitions. Without good quality careers advice and guidance, students who are the first in their family to go to university can find it difficult to navigate the choices available to them.
- **Financial concerns can** cause disadvantaged students to restrict their higher education choices to institutions in their local area, with many choosing to live at home rather than move away to study. This can also be exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the student loans system.
- **People from certain places face** greater barriers than others in accessing university as a result of geographical distance from a university campus, poor transport links, and subject choice at school or college. Low participation rates (or absence of a tradition of going to certain institutions) can mean there is a lack of tacit knowledge and role models to draw on.





# Problem?

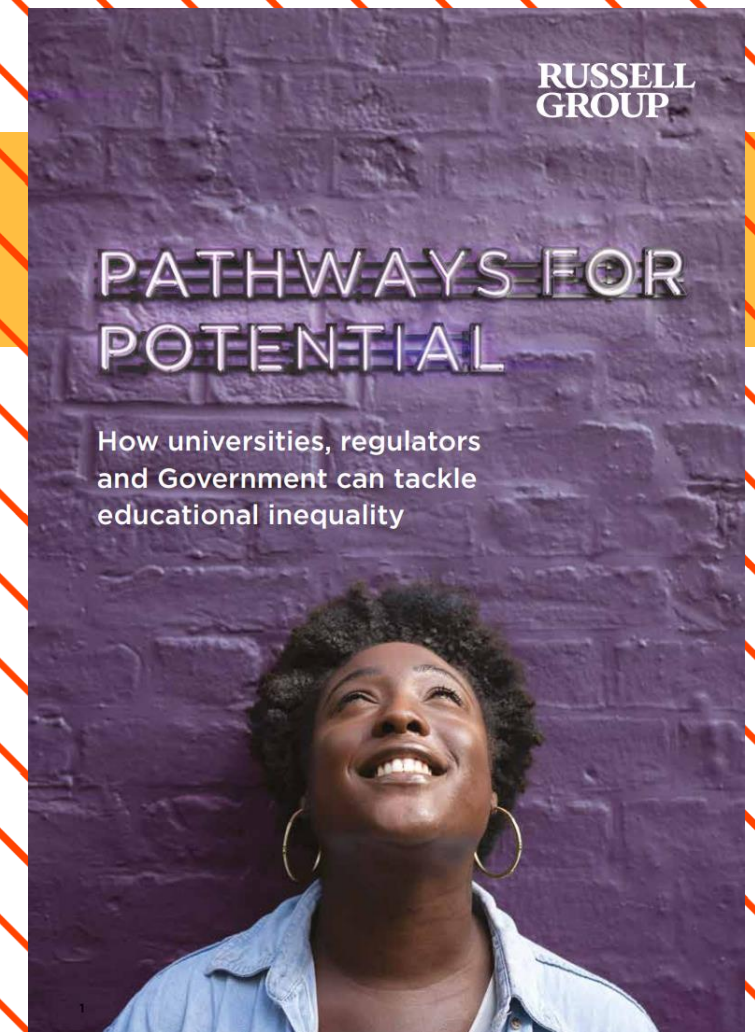
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# Problem?

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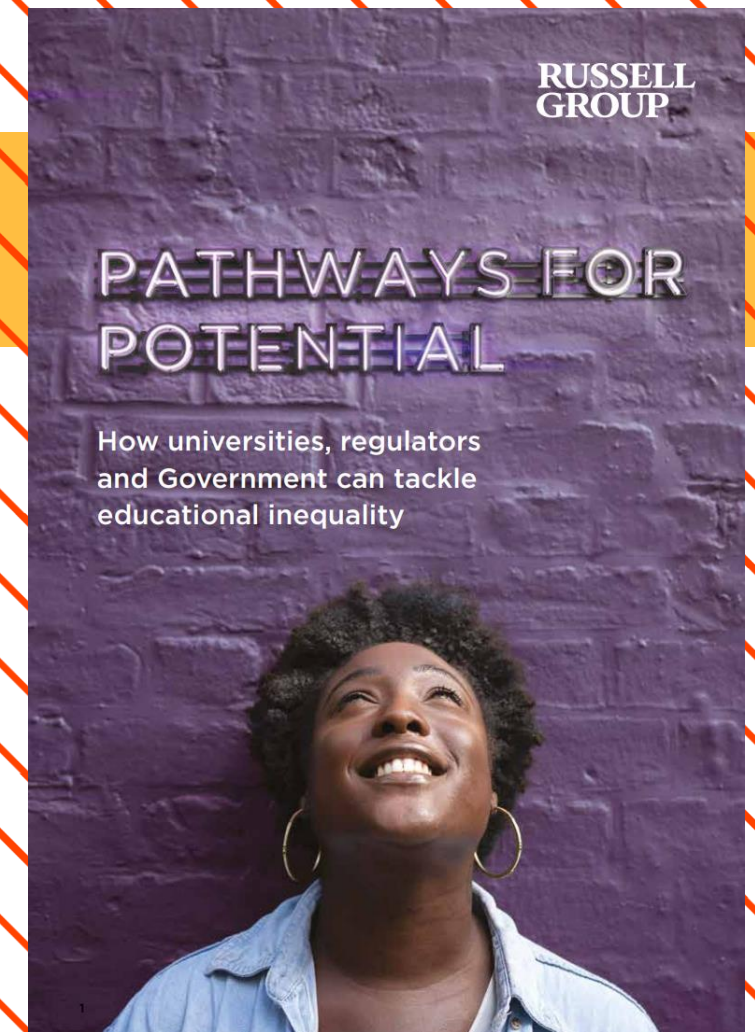
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# Problem?

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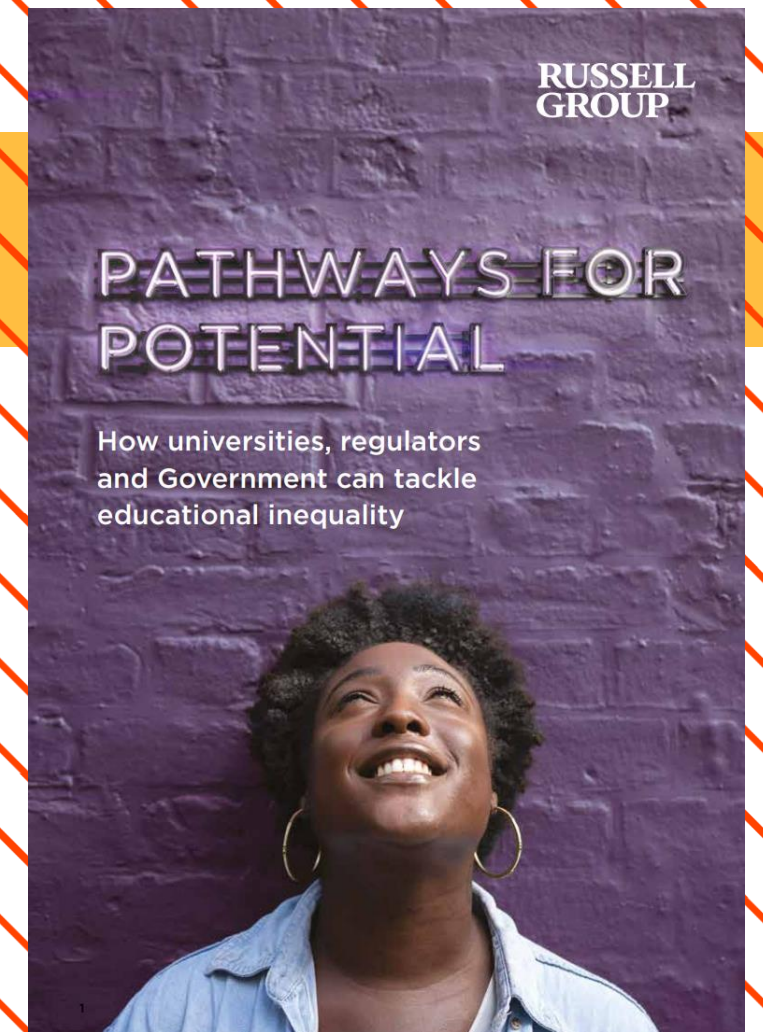




# Problem?

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# Deep disagreements

There are too many people going  
to university nowadays



Agree

Disagree



# Deep disagreements

Elite universities should reflect the social make up of the country, not the locality



Agree

Disagree

# Deep disagreements

We should spend more time worrying about the 50% that don't go to uni than the 50% that do



Agree

Disagree

# Deep disagreements

Lowering grades to get in for disadvantaged students is not a wise solution, we should help them get the grades



Agree

Disagree



# Deep disagreements

The problem with access work isn't what universities do or don't do, it's what other students are like



Agree

Disagree

# Deep disagreements

There is a major lack of (educational) aspiration among working class communities in the UK



Agree

Disagree

# Aspiration as an example

- In 2009 Education Secretary Damian Hinds told universities and schools in the north-east of England that they had to “raise aspirations among all working class communities”
- Twenty years earlier his predecessor, David Blunkett, invoked a “poverty of aspirations”, later reflected in the 2003 White Paper which stated that “aspirations are low” among “families without a tradition of going to HE”.
- Echoed more recently by OfSTED Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman “white working class communities lack aspiration and drive”.
- Trope – disadvantaged young people are under-represented in higher education because they have low aspirations for education or their lives in general



# Aspiration and evidence

- Little evidence to support lack of aspiration.
- Young people in general have high aspirations and that there are few differences in aspiration between different social class groups.
- More disadvantaged young people say that they want to go to university than actually do
- Asking a young person if they expect to go to university may be a better indication of what they are likely to do years in the future.
- Importantly, expectations don't just reflect whether someone wants to do something, but whether they feel they will be able to, given the personal and social constraints that they face.
- Arjun Appadurai refers to this as being a different 'capacity to aspire'.
- Ever-present element of the discourse around access to higher education.

# Aspiration and “victims”

- Similar to the idea of “blaming the victim” in common speech.
- Added dimension of relying on the victim to (unknowingly) collude in the process of normalisation.
- Middle class conceit to explain away the manifestly unequal.
- Easier to assert that working class young people are responsible for their unfortunate position than to concede the severity of the challenges and constraints that they face.
- This, after all, would carry with it the moral obligation to act to tackle these inequalities.
- By setting out to persuade disadvantaged young people that it is their aspirations that need to rise, policymakers are setting an unrealistic challenge that it will be impossible to meet – positioning another generation to fail and further entrench the idea that they who are to blame.
- It will not impact the status quo, but it will make it feel more just.

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# Aspiring for something else

- Many young people grow up in environments where they rarely encounter educational or economic success – or the relationship between the two.
- By far the strongest predictor for participation in higher education is attainment in school. Working class young people do not progress to higher education because they lack ambition, but because the accumulation of disadvantage throughout their childhood becomes embodied in their qualifications.
- A ‘possible selves’ approach might be one way forwards.
- Focuses on how we make links between future visions of ourselves and our current actions.
- Sees the individual in their social context and supports them to build their own ways of getting to where they want to be, rather than berating them about their aspirations.

# Policy eras

## Mid 90s to Mid 00s: Aim Higher

- Help students to achieve the grades and have the aspiration to get in
- “AimHigher”

## Mid 00s to Mid 10s: Fair Access

- Spend “additional fee income” on student financial support and outreach work
- “Office for Fair Access”
- One year “effort” plans

## Mid 10: Access and Participation

- Need to focus on “getting in” and “getting on”
- Data driven and evidence led (“what actually works”)
- National and local targets/aspirations
- Five year “attainment” plans

Aimhigher...

offa  
office for fair access

Office for  
Students 



# The OfS era





# Regulating access

Universities must complete an access and participation plan (England), a fee and access plan (Wales), or an outcome agreement (Scotland).

These may cover what the university is doing on

- Outreach, entry to HE and additional financial support
- Retention, attainment (eg awarding gaps) and employment

They should be **evidence-informed** (historically this has been rather light)

Generally, SUs are invited to get involved in the process

Target demographics:

- Lower socio-economic background (POLAR/SIMD/WIMD)
- Gender, race, disability, age (mature vs non-mature)
- Care experienced
- Refugees



Chris Millward, Director for Fair Access at the Office for Students

# OfS approach

**Move to solutions and  
action that work**

**Demonstrate  
deep  
understanding**

**Frame as  
urgent/critical**

**It is a problem**

# The OfS approach (1)

## Targets to eliminate inequalities

- We have set ambitious and long-term targets for the sector. These are to eliminate:
  - the gap in entry rates at higher tariff providers between the most and least represented groups
  - the gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups
  - the gap in degree outcomes between white and black students
  - the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students.
- We will expect providers to set their own targets working towards these long-term targets.



# The OfS approach (2)

## Access and participation plans

- These set out how higher education providers will improve equal opportunities for underrepresented groups.
- Under the new approach, the approved timescale of a provider's plan will reflect how likely or unlikely they are to make enough progress reducing gaps in access, success and progression. The first plans will be in force from 2020-21.

## Monitoring

- Providers will need to submit and publish a report on the impact of their activities.
- This will be accompanied by an action plan that will set out any steps they need to take to improve their current access and participation plan.

# The OfS approach (3)

## Investment

- We want results. So we will not ask universities to spend a minimum amount on access and participation. Though we will still look at how much they spend when we judge the credibility of their plan.
- Instead, we will ask them to focus on achieving the ambitions they set.

## National Collaborative Outreach Programme

- We will continue to support the National Collaborative Outreach Programme for 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- In the longer term, we want to sustain the programme's infrastructure, and align it with the work universities and colleges do through their access and participation plans.

# The OfS approach (4)

## Evidence and evaluation

- We also want to make sure that universities use evidence so that their activity is strategic and has the greatest impact.
- We are introducing tougher requirements on evaluation, including a self-assessment to be completed against a set of criteria as part of their access and participation plans.

## Access and participation dataset

- We have published an access and participation dataset for each registered provider.
- This reveals challenges across the student lifecycle at a sector-level and provider-level, and provides more transparency on how we assess performance.



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## Fee and Access Plan

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Any institution that wishes for its full-time undergraduate courses to be automatically designated for student support is required to submit a fee and access plan to us. If that fee and access plan is accepted the institution will be permitted to charge up to the maximum fee limit, of £9k, and students studying those courses at that institution will be able to receive student support up to that amount.

Only those institutions that are in Wales, that provide higher education and are a charity can apply for fee and access plans. On application an institution is required to provide information relating to its financial viability, the arrangements for the organisation and management of its financial affairs, and the quality of education it provides or is provided on its behalf. A fee and access plan must set out the objectives of an institution as they relate to equality of opportunity and the promotion of higher education.

### Links



[Advance HE Review of  
Fee and Access Plan](#)

[Evaluation Frameworks](#)

- ▶ [Advance HE Review of  
Fee and Access Plan  
Evaluation Frameworks](#)

# Data - access

Select a mode of study:

Full-time or apprenticeship

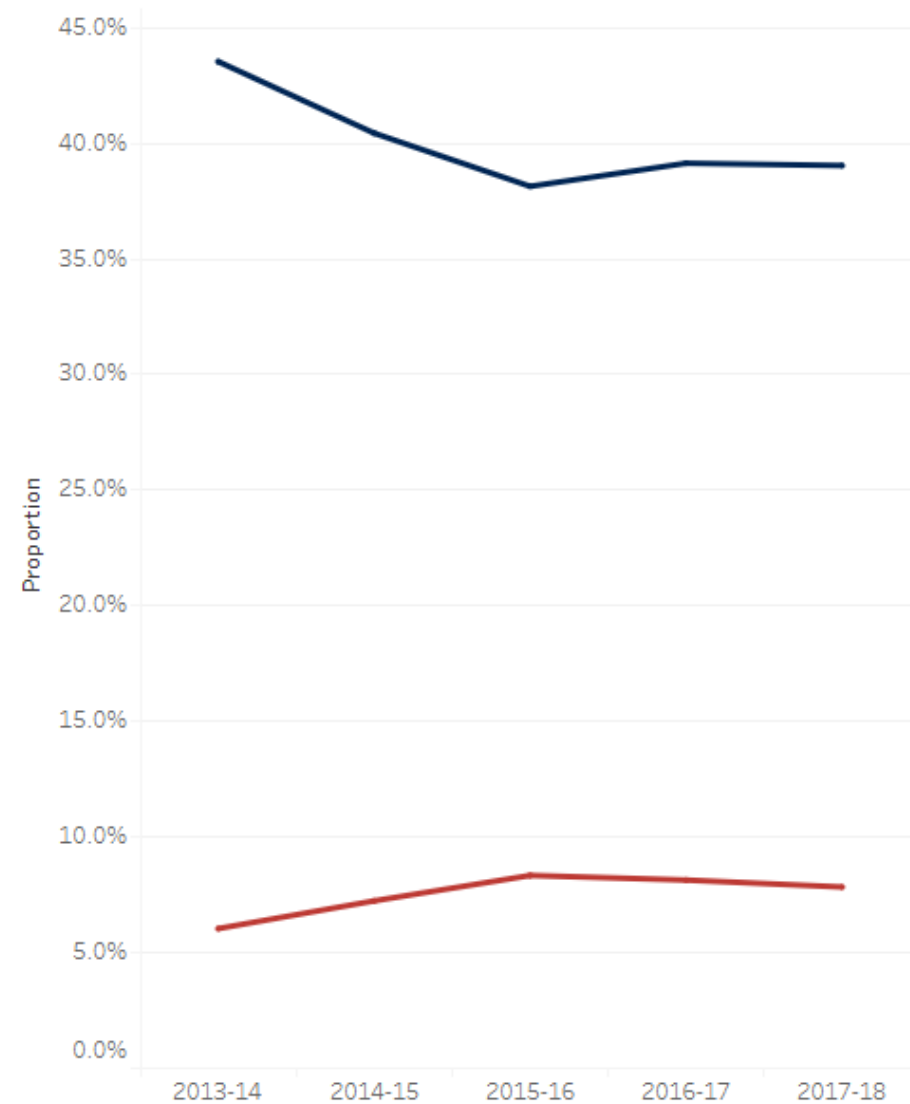
Select a level of study:

All undergraduates

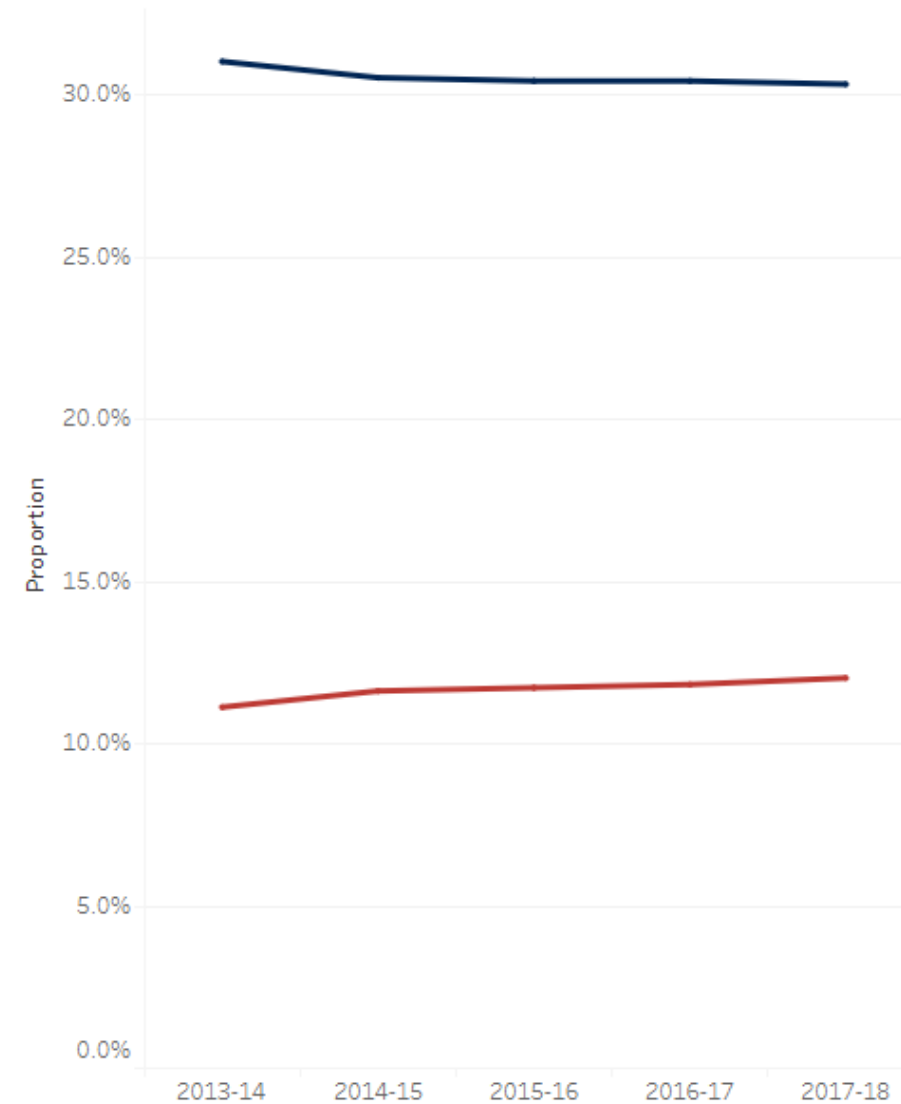
■ Quintile 1

■ Quintile 5

University of York



All English higher education providers



# Data - continuation

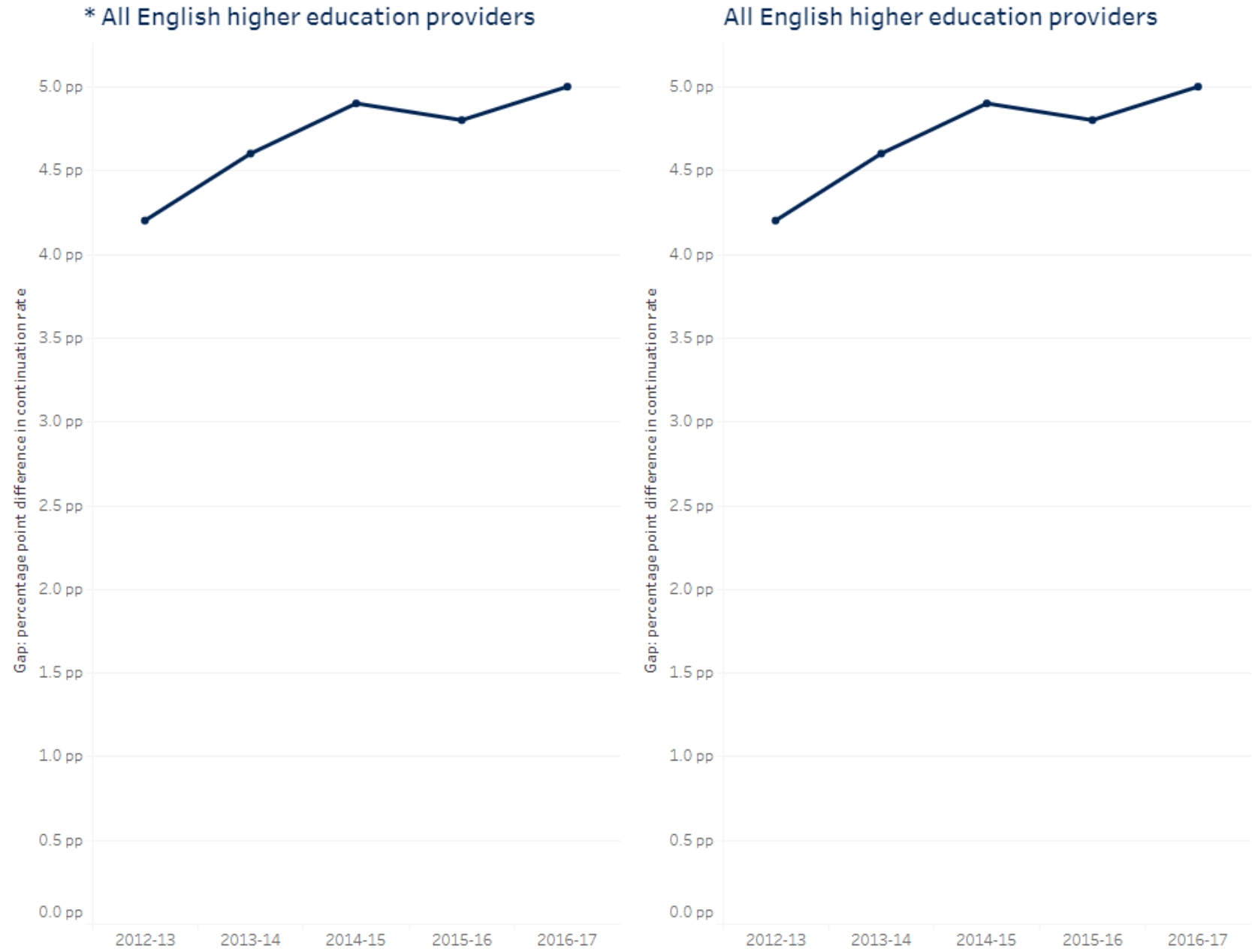
Explore the data:

Select a mode of study:

Full-time or apprenticeship

Select a level of study:

All undergraduates





# Data – BaME attainment

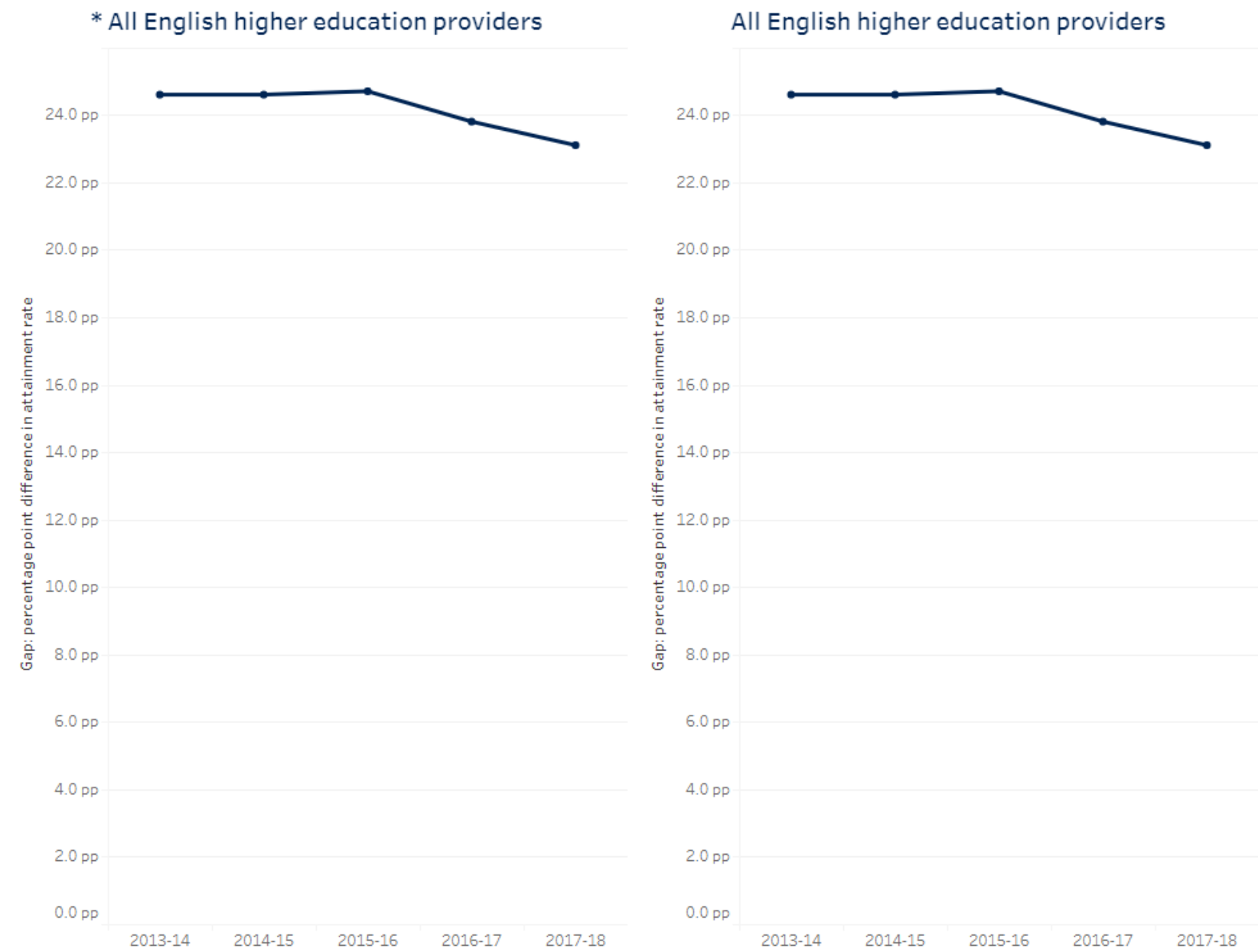
Explore the data:

Select a mode of study:

Full-time or apprenticeship

Select a level of study:

All undergraduates

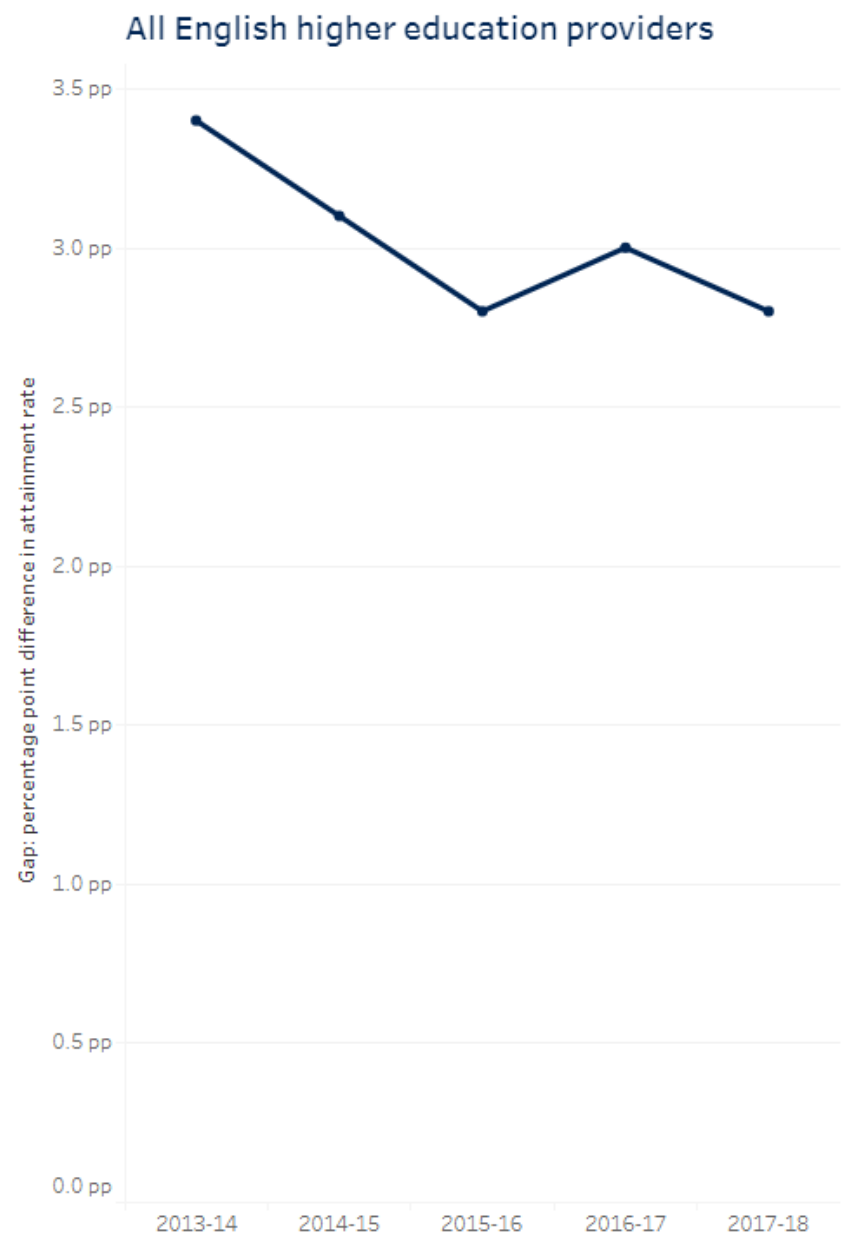
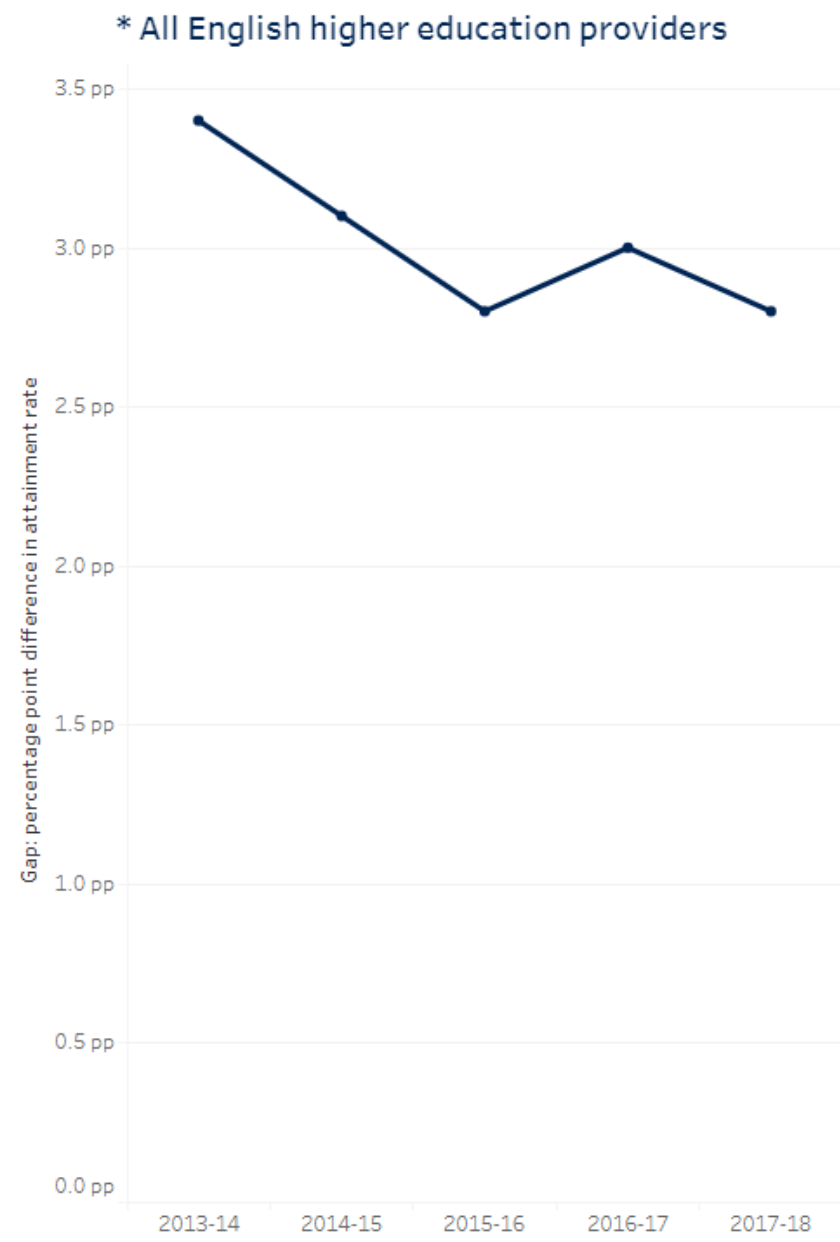


# Data – disabled attainment

Explore the data:

Select a mode of study:  
Full-time or apprenticeship

Select a level of study:  
All undergraduates



# Student involvement

Office for  
Students



- Students make a significant personal and financial investment in their studies, and the funds devoted to access and participation plans could otherwise be devoted to teaching and other forms of student support.
- We expect, therefore, that you will involve students as active partners and cocreators in developing, implementing and evaluating your access, success and progression work.
- You must include details of the following in your access and participation plan:
  - how you have provided your students with the opportunity to express their views about the content of your plan before it was submitted for approval and what steps you took as a result
  - how you will involve students in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the access and participation plan
  - how you will ensure that students from a range of backgrounds are included in your consultation on and delivery of your plan. 148. It is important that students have meaningful and informative opportunities to feed into your plan.



# Student involvement

Office for  
Students



We are interested in:

- How students (including students' unions or other representative bodies) have been consulted and engaged during the development of the access and participation plan
- How students (including students' unions or other representative bodies) have been consulted and engaged during the implementation and evaluation of the access and participation plan
- How students from underrepresented groups are specifically supported to meaningfully contribute to and participate in wider student engagement
- After looking at the access and participation dataset and your own assessment of performance, what areas your students' union feels you should focus on and whether they think your ambition is sufficient.

# From getting in to getting on

## University access

- Tightly, centrally managed
- Work with schools and communities
- Can involve “contextual offer” making
- Financial incentives
- Education work
- Assumes once in, “level”

## Participation

- Harder to change
- Involves actions of other students and academics and wider university
- Do you change the student (deficit model) or change the university?

# Major issues for SUs

1. SU **campaigning goals** that matter (ie the BAG) now part of APP discussions – potential for secure significant commitment/resource/change
  - However this stuff is hard and often involves “reaching deeper” than has been done in the past

(See also UUK project in this area)



# Major issues for SUs

- Generally the shift of A&P planning into “getting on” is a challenge for Universities
- If you’re just doing access you can employ lots of people and shiny minibuses but to fix the other stages often means a focus on doing things with existing staff – like changing how you teach, assess and support the groups where the gaps are, often via changing the way current academics and professional services staff do things.
- This is therefore a good opportunity to get “into” deeper cultural change on other agendas

# Note on cultural change...

- A classic debate in Access has been “do you change the applicant” or “do you change HE”
- The former – give them inspiration, money and information
- The latter - make timetables work for mature students with caring responsibilities, change the way you do assessment, change the curriculum
- Lots of A&P work “stuck” in the former mode as you can centrally employ a team
- How much academic power is devolved, and how does that affect Access... and Participation?

# Major issues for SUs

2. There has been a gradual decline in the proportion of access spend going on **bursaries**.
- Sadly this has been repeatedly “evidenced” in research (although given how hard it has been for prospective students to find out about bursaries there’s no surprises- impact research design matters here).
  - (That said the whole of the sector seems to agree that bringing back the grant is a thing that should happen!)



# Major issues for SUs

3. Some SUs have received “semi ringfenced” funding for their **own** activities

- Some have taken a view on A&P gaps in own involvement and secured resource to make that happen (ie BaME involvement in sport, buddying schemes etc etc) but data is an issue
- The need to evidence the relationship between the activity and the impact is a challenge
- The lack of headline ringfencing (and the removal of the monitoring over things that aren't SFS) is also a challenge

Recipient	Amount
Household income £16,000 or less	£1300
Household income £16,001 – £20,000 and from POLAR 1 postcode	£800
Care leavers and estranged students	£2500

*Figure 9: Bursaries for new entrants 2020/21 to 2024/25.*

- Judged as what was needed (no more) to make the difference
- 16k is now higher – earnings growth
- £1,300 worth less – inflation rising faster
- Costs of support outside of financial support increasing too, and support from DfE/OfS declining (frozen but volume + inflation)
- Triple whammy!

# Major issues for SUs

4. Requirement to work in **partnership** with students and / or the SU over access agreement development

- Lots of SUs experienced token committee membership/fair access decisions
- Bypassing SU



# SUs and plans...

- Many providers consulted with identified student representatives such as students' union officers. This may have been as a group, or by speaking to individual student officers with responsibility for different underrepresented groups.
- Some providers conducted student focus groups or online surveys.
- Many providers included submissions written by students, and one provider included a link to a filmed student submission.
- Many universities and colleges included students on the steering groups created to write the plan.
- At one provider the senior leadership “ran sessions open to all students” to discuss issues relating to access and participation plans (it doesn't say how many came...)
- Some providers trained students to enable them to provide constructive feedback on the commitments in the plan.

# SUs?

- Some providers only described how they consulted students on the content of the plan prior to approval, whereas others went further, detailing how they will engage students on an ongoing basis in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of commitments in access and participation plans.

The types of commitments universities and colleges made included:

- Asking students how they would like to be involved on an ongoing basis in the delivery of the plan.
- Involving students on boards, committees and steering groups responsible for the monitoring and delivery of the access and participation plans.
- Some providers created formal partnership arrangements with their students' unions while others made commitments about co-creating provider policies with students.
- Holding periodic student forums or meetings specifically to discuss issues relating to access and participation. Some providers committed to developing student forums or networks for specific underrepresented groups either on their own or in partnership with their SU.
- Ensuring there is a students' union rep with specific responsibility for access and participation.
- Allowing the students' union to bid to run access and participation projects, and drama or writing projects designed to communicate the experiences of underrepresented students.

# What's being asked?

## Four new priorities:

- **Priority A:** Make access and participation plans more accessible in a way that prospective and current students, their parents and other stakeholders can easily understand.
- **Priority B:** Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.
- **Priority C:** Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.
- **Priority D:** Seek to develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships.





# Access and participation

Understanding the agenda, how it's regulated and where SUs fit in



# Access and participation

Understanding the agenda, how it's regulated and where SUs fit in

