



End of Cycle report

2015

UCAS Analysis and research

**December 2015**

UCAS

## Foreword

Our End of Cycle report evidences another record year for UK higher education with 532,300 students starting their studies in 2015. The increasing numbers are eye-catching, as are the improving rates of progression which take account of changes in the underlying population. But 2015 saw an unusual uptick in the 18 year old population in the UK which has flattered the totals. From 2016 until 2020, we expect the young population to continue to decline by around 1-2 per cent per year which will make it harder to continue recent rates of increase in volume.

This year's report also shows increases in international recruitment, particularly from EU countries. And growing divergence between approaches in each of the four UK countries are visible in changing patterns of offer rates, acceptance rates, and enrolments.

As the more competitive recruitment environment evolves, the majority of applicants are enjoying record offer rates and higher acceptance rates –the high number of students receiving a full set of five offers suggests that potential applicants for 2017 could afford to be even more ambitious in at least some of their applications.

Two new sections in this year's report highlight important aspects of fair access and widening participation.

In one (page 59) we examine offer making from higher tariff providers in depth. UCAS data scientists have developed their methodology to create control groups against which to compare offer rates for applicants from various ethnic and social backgrounds to all applicants with the same predicted grade profiles and courses applied to. The results are very encouraging in that the offer rates we see closely follow this control group over a wide range of predicted grades and courses. There are some slightly lower offer rates for poorer applicants, some ethnic groups, and men, which warrant continued monitoring. But it is important to be able to reassure potential applicants that they can be confident that the selection process for admissions is fair.

In the second (page 129), we have expanded our analysis of entry rates by relative disadvantage. By creating a model of the probability of entering higher education, we can look in much more detail at how multiple dimensions of disadvantage play out in the overall picture of inequality in entry to higher education.

Our new results show that although the differences in entry between rich and poor continue to reduce, other differences grow. We have previously highlighted the unacceptably large and widening gap between entry rates for men and women and this year shows young men, and especially young white men, falling even further behind. We draw attention to this again this year because our new measures are signalling that the widening gap between men and women is acting to stall progress in reducing inequality overall.

This is a report rich with information about participation, progression and admissions to higher education in the UK. A full set of data files and image files are published alongside this report for reuse and further investigation.

Mary Curnock Cook  
Chief Executive

## Notes to the Report

### Population estimates

The population estimates used for the entry rates in this report are based on the most recent Mid-Year Estimates and National Population Projections published by the Office for National Statistics, which have been revised following the 2011 Census. These are updated from the population estimates used for similar reporting in previous years. The revised population estimates are higher for the young age group, resulting in lower entry rates. The key elements of the trends in entry rates as previously reported are generally unaltered by the new estimates.

### POLAR3

In this report the area-based measure of advantage and disadvantage used is the POLAR3 grouping, an updated version of the POLAR2 grouping used in previous reports, and the most recent classification of small areas according to young HE participation available. Reporting by POLAR3 means that the outcomes for people from advantaged and disadvantaged areas in this report are different and not directly comparable to those in previous end of cycle reports.

### Scotland

For people living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland UCAS covers the overwhelming majority of full-time undergraduate provision so the statistics on acceptances or entry rates can be taken as being very close to all recruitment to full-time undergraduate higher education. In Scotland there is a substantial section of higher education provision that is not included in UCAS' figures. This is mostly full-time higher education provided in further education colleges which represents around one third of young full-time undergraduate study in Scotland, and this proportion varies by geography and background within Scotland. Accordingly, figures on entry rates or total recruitment in Scotland reflect only the part of full-time undergraduate study that uses UCAS.

In 2014, there were fewer very late acceptances than in other cycles recorded in the UCAS data for some Scottish providers. These changes may mean that the number of applicants and acceptances to Scottish UCAS providers in 2014 recorded through UCAS could be understated by up to 2,000 compared to how applicants and acceptances have been reported in recent cycles. This means that comparing 2014 applicants and acceptances for Scottish providers (or those from Scotland) to other cycles may not give an accurate measure of change.

In 2015, around 120 courses at Scottish providers which were previously part of the UCAS Teacher Training scheme (UTT) moved into the UCAS Undergraduate scheme. As such the number of applicants and acceptances to Scottish providers in 2015 recorded through UCAS will include those which were previously part of UTT, meaning that comparing 2015 applicants and acceptances for Scottish providers (or those from Scotland, particularly those aged 21 or over) to previous cycles may not give a like-for-like measure of change.

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# Section 1

Key findings

## Applicants and Acceptances

### **A record 532,300 placed in higher education through UCAS in 2015, up by 3 per cent on a like-for-like basis, as both applicants and acceptance rates increase**

In the 2015 cycle, 532,300 applicants were placed in higher education through UCAS. There were 19,900 more applicants placed in 2015 than in 2014, an increase of 3.9 per cent.

There were changes to the scope of the data recorded in UCAS scheme in 2015 that are estimated to account for around 3,800 of the increase in acceptances. This gives a like-for-like increase in placed applicants of 16,100 (3.1 per cent).

The increase in acceptances is a result of an increase in applicants (2.7 per cent to 718,500) and an increase in the acceptance rate (the proportion of applicants who are placed by the end of the cycle), by 0.9 percentage points to 74.1 per cent. This is a larger increase in the acceptance rate than last cycle and one of the largest increases seen since 2006.

### **Acceptances from the EU increase by 11 per cent to 29,300**

Acceptances from the EU increased by 2,900 (11 per cent) to 29,300. This is the largest single year increase seen in the reporting period and highest total of EU acceptances. The increase results from both an increase in applicants (+8 per cent to 50,700) and an increase in their acceptance rate (by 1.5 percentage points to 57.8 per cent).

There are wide variations across Europe in both the numbers of acceptances and the proportion they form of the population in that country. Of countries recording a larger number of acceptances there were above average increases from Romania (+34 per cent), Italy (+26 per cent), Poland (+25 per cent), Spain (+16 per cent) and France (+16 per cent). These five countries represent 40 per cent of acceptances from the EU in 2015.

### **Acceptances from outside the EU increase by 1.9 per cent to 39,300**

Acceptances from countries outside the EU are higher than for EU countries but are growing at a slower rate. In 2015 acceptances from non-EU countries increased by 1.9 per cent (700 acceptances) to 39,300, the highest number recorded by UCAS.

This increase was driven by a rise in applicants of 1.6 per cent to 75,800. This increase was smaller than has been typical in recent cycles. The acceptance rate of non-EU applicants remains relatively low at 51.8 per cent, similar to last cycle and around 15 per cent (proportionally) lower than was typical between 2006 and 2010.

### **Acceptances from the UK increase to record 463,700 driven by 18 and 19 year olds**

Acceptances from the UK increased to 463,700 in 2015, up 16,300 and the highest number placed through UCAS. Around 3,600 of this increase relates to changes in the scope of the data covered by UCAS for UK applicants in 2015 so that the underlying like-for-like increase is 12,700 (+2.8 per cent).

The majority of this increase (+10,800) comes from the 18 year old age group. Acceptances from 18 year olds have increased by 4.8 per cent to 235,400, the highest number ever recorded. Around 2 percentage points of this increase are represented by the increase in the population this year

with around 3 percentage points being accounted for by a greater proportion of the 18 year olds entering higher education.

The number of 19 year olds have increased by 2.7 per cent (+2,400) to 91,800 acceptances, despite a reduction in the population (around 1 per cent) for this age group in 2015.

### **Largest increases in 2015 are for English acceptances and to English providers**

Placed applicants from England increased by 11,900 (+3.1 per cent) to 394,400, the highest number placed through UCAS and a third larger than the number placed in 2006.

Higher education providers in England also recorded the largest increase in acceptances in 2014; 16,800 (+3.9 per cent) to 450,000, the most ever placed by UCAS at English providers.

There were smaller increases in acceptances from Wales (+1.7 per cent to 20,500) and acceptances to Welsh providers reduced (-0.9 per cent to 25,700).

Acceptances from Northern Ireland reduced to 14,000 (-400, -2.8 per cent). There were larger reductions in acceptances to providers in Northern Ireland. These decreased by 1,100 to 10,200 acceptances (-9.7 per cent). This is the largest reduction seen in the reporting period and takes total acceptances to Northern Ireland providers to a level similar to that seen in the 2012 cycle.

### **Entry rates for young people**

The number of UK 18 years placed by UCAS is a product of both the size of the population and the proportion of 18 year olds in the population who are placed (the 'entry rate'). For the 2015 cycle the number of 18 year olds (aligned to school cohorts) was estimated to have increased by around 2 per cent in England and Northern Ireland, around 0.5 per cent in Wales and to have fallen by around 2 per cent in Scotland. By taking these changes into account, the entry rate statistic gives a better indication than overall numbers, of the experience of young people in terms of their chances of entering higher education.

### **18 year olds living in England and Wales more likely than ever to enter Higher Education**

The proportion of the 18 year old population who entered higher education through UCAS increased by 0.9 percentage points in England to 31.3 per cent, the highest recorded entry rate for England. This increase means young people became 3 per cent (proportionally) more likely to enter in 2015 than last cycle, and 27 per cent (proportionally) more likely to enter than in 2006.

In Wales 28.2 per cent of 18 year olds were placed through UCAS in higher education in 2015, an increase of 1.2 percentage points (4 per cent proportionally). This is highest entry rate recorded for Wales.

Entry rates for 18 year olds living in Northern Ireland are higher than elsewhere in the UK at 33.5 per cent but fell by around 1 percentage point. This fall means that young people in Northern Ireland were around 4 per cent less likely (proportionally) to enter higher education in 2015 than last cycle and about as likely to enter as they were in the 2006 cycle.

### **18 year olds in London 40 per cent more likely to enter higher education than the South West**

Within England, 18 year olds have different entry rates by region. In 2015, the lowest entry rates are in the South West (27.6 per cent) and the North East (27.8 per cent). The highest entry rate is for 18 year olds living in London where 38.6 per cent entered higher education in 2015. Young

people in London were around 40 per cent more likely to enter higher education than those living in the South West and North East in 2015.

Entry rates increased in all English regions in 2015 with the largest increase in London 18 year olds were 6 per cent more likely (proportionally) to enter than in 2014. This increase continues a trend of higher increases in entry rates for young people in London who were 32 per cent more likely to enter higher education in 2015 than they were in 2006, the largest increase of any region over this period.

### **Wide range of entry rates across parliamentary constituencies**

The 650 parliamentary constituencies in the UK show a finer grain geography of 18 year old entry rates across the UK, though their relatively small size means that their entry rates can vary by a few percentage points from year to year through random fluctuations.

Parliamentary constituencies show a wider range of entry rates than regions with around 150 constituencies having an entry rate of 25 per cent or lower in 2015, a similar number having an entry rate of 35 per cent or above. There are over thirty constituencies where 45 per cent or more of 18 year olds are placed in higher education through UCAS.

### **42 per cent of English young people enter higher education by age 19**

In England 11.5 per cent of 19 year olds in the population were placed in higher education through UCAS for the first time in 2015, up 0.3 percentage points on 2014 and highest entry rate for this age group.

This increase is from the same cohort of young people whose entry at age 18 in 2014 increased by 1.2 percentage points to 30.4 per cent. Together (with a small element of entry at age 17) this means that 42 per cent of this cohort has entered higher education by age 19, 1.5 percentage points higher than the previous cohort. This is the highest rate recorded, and means young people are over a quarter more likely to enter higher education than in 2006.

The proportion of young people who enter higher education by the time they are aged 19 has also increased in Wales by 1.1 percentage points to 36.2 per cent, the highest level recorded in Wales. In Northern Ireland the entry rate by age 19 fell by 1.1 percentage points to 42.8 per cent.

### **Entry rates by ethnic group and sex**

#### **Entry rates increase for all ethnic groups in 2015 but difference between groups increase**

The entry rate for English 18 year olds from state schools increased for all ethnic groups in 2015.

The entry rates for pupils from most ethnic groups lie in a range from 28 per cent (White ethnic group) to 41 per cent (Asian ethnic group). The entry rate for pupils in the Chinese ethnic group is higher at 58 per cent.

The largest increases in entry rates in 2015 were for pupils in the Black group (+2.4 percentage points to 37 per cent) and the Asian ethnic group (+2.2 percentage points to 41 per cent).

The lowest entry rate in 2015 was for pupils in the White ethnic group (28 per cent) which also had the lowest increase in entry rate (+0.6 percentage points), increasing the difference between the entry rate of this group and other ethnic groups.

## **Entry rates increasing three times faster for women than for men**

Entry rates for 18 year olds increased in 2015 for both men and women. The increase for men was 0.4 percentage points to 26.2 per cent. The increase for women was 1.3 percentage points to 35.4 per cent.

## **Young women 35 per cent more likely to enter HE than men, the highest difference recorded**

The entry rate for 18 year old women is 9.2 percentage points higher than for men, making them 35 per cent (proportionally) more likely to enter than men. These differences, both proportional and in percentage points, are the highest recorded.

In 2006, there was a difference of 5.9 percentage points between men and women, making women 27 per cent more likely to enter than men.

This difference in 18 year old entry rates between men and women equates to 36,000 fewer 18 year old men entering higher education this year than would be the case if men had the same entry rate as women.

The difference in entry rates between men and women widens by a further percentage point when entry at ages 18 and 19 are considered together.

## **Women over 50 per cent more likely to enter than men in disadvantaged groups**

In the most disadvantaged areas across the UK 18 year old women were 52 per cent more likely to enter than men in 2015.

In England, women who received free school meals were 51 per cent more likely to enter higher education aged 18 in 2015 than men who received free school meals.

## **Entry rates for advantaged and disadvantaged groups**

### **Entry rates for disadvantaged areas**

In England the entry rate for disadvantaged 18 year olds (POLAR3, quintile 1) increased by 0.7 percentage points (4 per cent proportionally) to 18.5 per cent. This is the highest level recorded but the rate of growth is lower than in recent cycles.

Entry rates for this group in England have increased every cycle since 2006, making disadvantaged young people in England 30 per cent more likely to enter university in 2015 than five years ago, and 65 per cent more likely to enter higher education than in 2006.

In Northern Ireland the entry rate decreased by 0.3 percentage points (-2 per cent proportionally) and in Wales decreased slightly by less than 0.1 percentage points. These are the first reductions in the entry rate recorded for this group since 2011.

### **Differences in entry rates between advantaged and disadvantaged fall to a new low in England**

The proportional increase in the 2015 entry rate for English 18 year olds living in POLAR3 quintile 1 areas (+4 per cent proportionally) is greater than those in advantaged POLAR3 Q5 areas (+1 per cent proportionally). This has reduced the differences in entry rates between these groups to a new low for England.



In England advantaged 18 year olds in 2015 were 2.4 times more likely to enter higher education than disadvantaged 18 year olds. This is a small decrease from last year (2.5).

In Wales and Northern Ireland there have been small increases in this ratio.

### **Pupils who received free school meals more likely than ever to enter higher education**

In England, the 18 year olds who had previously received free school meals became 7.5 per cent more likely to enter higher education with their entry rate increasing to 16.4 per cent (up 1.1 percentage points). This is a similar rate of increase as in recent cycles and around twice the proportional increase for pupils in state schools not receiving free school meals.

Free school meal pupils are now over 80 per cent more likely to enter higher education than in 2006.

### **Differences in entry by background remain largest for higher tariff providers**

For 18 year olds in England the entry rates to higher tariff providers (those universities and colleges with, on average, the highest qualification levels of acceptances) show more differences by background than entry to other types of provider.

In 2015 entry rates to these providers range from 3.3 per cent for the most disadvantaged fifth of areas (POLAR3, quintile 1) to 20.7 per cent for the most advantaged fifth of areas (POLAR3, quintile 5). These are the highest entry rates recorded for each group.

Entry rates to medium tariff institutions in 2015 ranged from 5.7 per cent for the most disadvantaged to 13.3 per cent for the most advantaged. For lower tariff institutions entry rates by background all lie within a relatively narrow range between 9.5 and 13.1 per cent.

### **Disadvantaged increase entry rate to higher tariff but at slower rate than before**

The entry rate of 18 year olds in the most disadvantaged areas in England increased from 3.1 per cent to 3.3 per cent in 2015. This means these 18 year olds are 5 per cent more likely to enter these providers in 2015 than 2014, a larger increase than those living in advantaged areas but around half the rate of increase seen in recent cycles.

Compared to 2011, 18 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds are 39 per cent more likely to enter higher tariff providers, the largest proportional increase of any group. However, the percentage point increase over this period is relatively small (from 2.4 per cent to 3.3 per cent) and less than the percentage point increase in the entry rate of the most advantaged group (17.9 per cent to 20.7 per cent).

### **Entry rates vary widely when equality dimensions considered in combination**

When entry rates are calculated for groups formed from multiple equality dimensions they show a wide range. For instance, the average entry rate over recent cycles for state school pupils in the middle quintile 3 in the POLAR classification is 28 per cent. Within that group there are combinations of equality dimensions with much lower entry rates, for example men receiving free school meals in the White ethnic group have an entry rate of 9 per cent – one third the average for the POLAR3 quintile 3 group. Some combinations of dimensions within this group have higher entry rates, for example women not receiving free school meals in the Asian ethnic group have an entry rate of 44 per cent, five times higher than the group with the lowest entry rate.

Similarly, the group of pupils who receive free school meals has within it combinations of equality dimensions with entry rates ranging from 6 per cent to 38 per cent.

### **Differences in entry rates found to be larger, and showing no change, with measures that combine multiple equality dimensions**

Statistical methods that combine multiple equality dimensions show greater differences. For pupils in state schools a multidimensional measure combining sex, ethnic group, area background and free school meal status showed that the most advantaged (in terms of entry rates) quintile was over three times more likely to enter higher education than the most disadvantaged quintile.

In 2015, the entry rate of the least advantaged fifth of pupils on this basis was 14 per cent, an increase of 0.3 percentage points (+2 per cent proportionally). The entry rate for the most advantaged fifth of pupils on this basis was 45 per cent, an increase on 2014 of 1.1 percentage points (+3 per cent proportionally). The difference between these groups showed no change in 2015.

### **Offer-making**

#### **Providers increase offer-making by 4.5 per cent to a record 1.9 million offers**

Providers made 1.9 million offers to main scheme applicants in 2015, 81,000 (5 per cent) more than 2014 and the third consecutive cycle of substantial increases in offers.

#### **Offer rates increase to all age groups**

Offer rates to applications from 18 year olds increased to 76 per cent and for applications from 19 year olds to 67 per cent, both the highest levels for the reporting period. There were also increases in offer rates to older applicants though these remain below levels typical in 2008 and 2009.

#### **English and Welsh providers increase offer rate to UK applicants**

Offer rates from providers to applications from UK 18 year olds have varied by provider country. Offer rates to UK applicants from English providers increased to 78 per cent (+0.9 percentage points) and from Welsh providers to 84 per cent (+0.6 percentage points). These have the highest levels of offer-making recorded for these providers.

UK applicants were less likely in 2015 to receive an offer from Northern Irish providers (-0.9 percentage points) and Scottish providers (-0.5 percentage points).

In Welsh and English providers changes in offer rates are generally similar for applicants from different parts of the UK. In Scotland in 2015 English applicants became 5 per cent (proportionally) more likely to get an offer taking the offer rate to English applicants to 67 per cent, the highest level recorded in the period. Offer rates to Northern Irish applicants also increased.

Offer rates from Scottish providers to Scottish applicants fell (by 3 per cent proportionally) to 61 per cent.

#### **More main scheme applicants receive multiple offers, half have four or more, a third have five**

In 2015, 93 per cent of main scheme applicants who made five choices received at least one offer and 56 per cent of these applicants received four or five offers (1 percentage points higher than in

2014). The proportion having the maximum five offers increased to 32 per cent in 2015, the highest level recorded.

Applicants are 28 per cent more likely to have five offers in 2015 than in 2012, and 52 per cent more likely than in 2011.

### **Offer rates increase across a wide range of A level grades, highest share ever get five offers**

Offer rates to applications from 18 year old English applicants with predicted A level grades increased for each grade profile between BBB and A\*A\*A\*. The large majority of these applicants make five choices – and nearly all of these applicants receive at least one offer ranging from 98.5 per cent for those predicted BBB to 99.7 per cent of those predicted A\*A\*A\*.

For several A level grade profiles over half of applicants receive five offers. Of those predicted AAB 65 per cent received five offers.

### **Offer rates from higher tariff providers vary widely by the combination of predicted A level grades and course applied**

Higher tariff providers show the greatest differentiation in offer rates by predicted A level grades. The combination of predicted grades held and course applied to drives large differences in offer rates. For an applicant with a given set of predicted grades there can be a 50 percentage point difference in offer rates between different types of October deadline courses. For a particular type of course the offer rate can increase by 10 percentage points or more for each additional predicted A level grade.

### **Offer rates from higher tariff providers to different groups are similar to average offer rates**

English 18 year old applicants with A levels between 2010 and 2015 form a consistent group of applicants which can be used to examine offer rates from higher tariff providers to different groups of applicants.

The offer rates to different groups of applicants are similar to average offer rate of all applicants with the same predicted grades and course choices. Offer rates for the different grade profiles and groups range from less than 20 per cent to more than 90 per cent. But for each predicted grade profile the offer rate for each group is typically close, within a few percentage points, to the average offer rate for all applicants with the same grades applying to those courses.

### **Offer rates from higher tariff providers to free school meal and disadvantaged area applicants similar to average offer rates but around one to three points lower for some courses.**

The offer rate from higher tariff providers to English 18 year old applicants with A levels from disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) was similar to the average offer rate to all applicants with the same grades and course choices. Overall the offer rate to this group was 0.7 percentage points lower than the average offer rate for all applicants with the same grades and course choice at January deadline. For October deadline applicants the offer rate was 1.3 percentage points lower than the average offer rate.

The offer rate from higher tariff providers to English 18 year old applicants with A levels previously recorded as claiming free school meals also was typically close to the average offer rate but slightly lower overall. For January deadline applicants the offer rate to this group was 1.6

percentage points lower than the average offer rate and for October deadline applicants 3.3 percentage points lower.

These differences are relatively small compared to the variation in offer rates across grades and courses and equate to approximately 100 applicants a year in each group (from typical totals of around 3,700 for POLAR3 Q1 and 2,000 in the free school meal group) receiving one fewer offer than they would have received if they had the average offer rate for their grades and courses applied to.

### **Offer rates from higher tariff providers to ethnic groups are close to average offer rates for January deadline, but some groups up to two percentage points lower for October deadline**

The offer rate from higher tariff providers to English 18 year old January deadline applicants with A levels was close to average offer rates (within 0.5 percentage points) for applicants from all ethnic groups.

The offer rate to October deadline applicants from the (combined) Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups was 1.4 percentage points lower than the average offer rate to all applicants with those predicted grades and course choices. Within this group the offer rate to Black applicants shows the largest difference against the average offer rate. Overall, the offer rate to Black applicants at October deadline is 2.4 percentage points lower than the average offer rate for all applicants with the same predicted grades and course choices.

These differences are relatively small compared to the variation in offer rates across grades and courses and equate to approximately 300 applicants a year from the Asian, Black, Mixed and Other (from typical annual totals of around 13,000) receiving one fewer offer than they would have received if they had the average offer rate for their grades and courses applied to.

### **Offer rates from higher tariff providers to men close to average offer rates, up to one point lower for some courses**

Offer rates from higher tariff providers to men at both the October and January deadline are close to the average offer rates for all applicants with the same predicted grades applying to the same courses. Overall the offer rate to men is 0.4 points lower than average for January deadline applications, and 0.8 points lower for October deadline.

Men and women are two roughly equal sized groups so that, aside from the differences in grades and courses applied to, any difference from the average for all applicants for men will be reflected as a difference in the opposite direction for women.

These differences from the average offer rate are relatively small compared to the variation in offer rates across grades and courses and equate to approximately 500 men a year (from typical annual totals of around 27,000) receiving one fewer offer than they would have received if they had the average offer rate for their grades and courses applied to.

### **Unconditional offers to 18 year old applicants increase in 2015 to 2.5 per cent of offers**

Unconditional offers from a provider are mostly made to those who already hold qualifications. A small number of unconditional offers are recorded as being made to 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales ahead of them being awarded most of their qualifications.

The number of these offers recorded in 2015 was 23,400, representing around 2.5 per cent of all offers made to these applicants. This is an increase of 11,300 on 2014.

Around 8 per cent of these applicants received at least one unconditional offer from one of their five applications. Applicants with particular A level grade profiles or living in certain parts of the country were more likely to receive at least one offer.

The number of firm replies to unconditional offers recorded from this group was 15,000, an increase of 9,000 on 2014.

The trend of applicant replies to all offers made by providers making unconditional can be used to assess how these applicants respond to unconditional offers. The group of providers who first started making unconditional offers in 2015 have an increase in firm reply rates that is different from what might be expected from the trend and variability in these replies before they started making unconditional offers. For providers who started making unconditional offers in 2014 there is no clear evidence of any change in applicant responses.

## Admission routes

### More applicants placed at their firm 'first' choice

The majority of applicants are placed at the offer they set as their firm choice. In 2015, 384,100 applicants were placed at their firm choice. This is an increase of 12,000 (3.2 per cent) from 2014 and the highest number ever placed by UCAS through this route.

The number of applicants placed at their insurance choice increased by 7.5 per cent (+2,800) to 39,500.

### Increase of 5 per cent in applicants placed through Clearing taking total to record 64,000

In 2015 64,300 applicants were placed through Clearing. This is an increase of 3,000 (5 per cent) from the 2014 cycle and the highest number ever placed through this route.

There are two ways that applicants can use Clearing and they both increased in 2015. Main scheme applicants who are placed through the Clearing process increased by 1,600 (+3.4 per cent) to 49,100. This is the highest number of main scheme applicants placed by this route but the increase is smaller than seen for 2014.

Applicants who apply later and are accepted directly through the Clearing process increased by 1,400 (10 per cent) to 15,200. This more than reverses a fall in the numbers recruited through this route in 2014 and is the largest number ever placed through this route.

## Provider type and qualifications

### More placed at all provider types, largest increase for higher tariff providers

Providers can be grouped by average qualification level of their acceptances. In 2015 acceptances to each type of provider increased to the highest recorded numbers.

Acceptances to lower tariff providers increased by 1,500 (+0.7 per cent) to 221,000. Acceptances to medium tariff providers increased by 8,900 (+5.7 per cent) to 165,900.

The largest change was to higher tariff providers which increased acceptances by 9,500 (+7.0 per cent) to 145,300.

## **Proportion of acceptances with higher grades at A level reducing at higher tariff providers**

The proportion of English 18 year old acceptances that have achieved grades of ABB or above at A level can be used as a summary measure of the qualification strength of acceptances.

Higher tariff providers have the highest proportions of these acceptances. In 2015 74.1 per cent of their acceptances held ABB or above from A levels. This is a decrease of 3.3 percentage points from the 77.4 per cent who held these qualification in 2014, and a decrease of 11.3 percentage points from the 85.4 per cent in 2011.

At medium tariff providers 17.0 per cent of English 18 year old acceptances held ABB or above at A level a fall of 1 percentage point from 2014. Very few acceptances to lower tariff providers hold these qualifications (3.2 per cent in 2015).

The proportion of English 18 year olds holding higher grades at BTECs is increasing at all types of provider. It is highest at lower tariff providers where 16.7 per cent of acceptances held these higher grade BTECs, a proportional increase of 5 per cent on 2014. Very few acceptances to higher tariff providers hold these qualifications (2.3 per cent in 2015).



# Section 2

Analytical overview

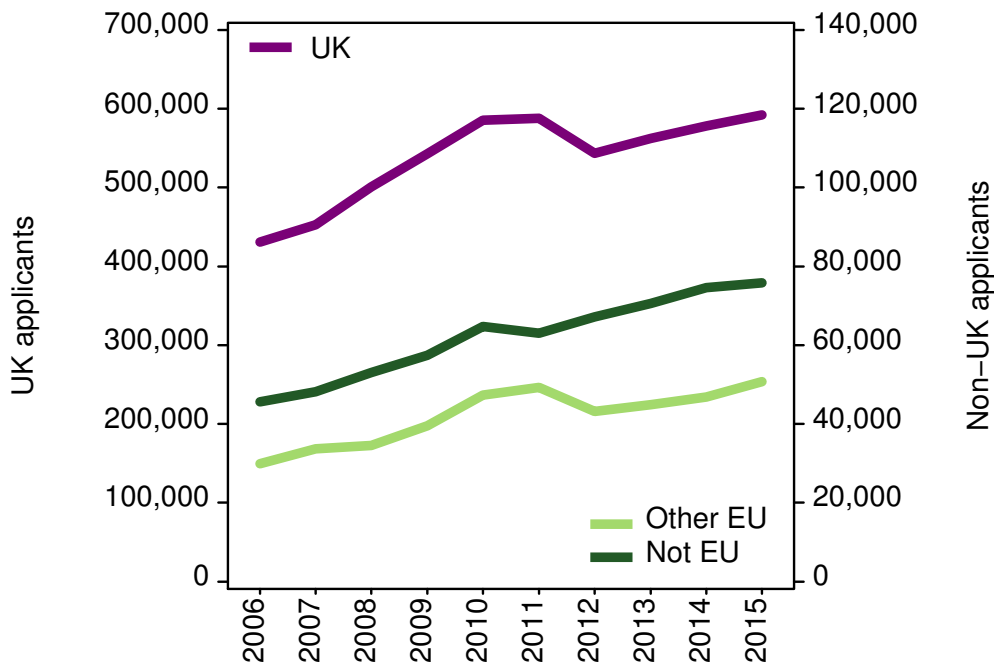
## Applicants

### Record number of applicants from all domiciles in 2015

There were 718,500 applicants in the 2015 cycle, 18,800 more than in the 2014 cycle, an increase of 2.7 per cent. This builds on an increase of 22,300 in the 2014 cycle, resulting in the highest number of applicants of any cycle (+18,300 compared with 2011, which had the previous record number of applicants).

The large majority of applicants in each cycle are domiciled in the UK (592,000, 82 per cent of all applicants, in the 2015 cycle). There was an increase of 13,700 (+2.4 per cent) UK domiciled applicants in 2015, leading to a record number of applicants from the UK (+4,200 compared with 2011). Applicants from the EU increased in 2015 by 3,900 (+8.3 per cent) to 50,700, the highest number of applicants recorded from this domicile in any cycle. Applicants from countries outside of the EU increased in 2015 by 1,200 (+1.6 per cent) to 75,800, a slightly weaker increase compared with annual increases of between 5 and 6 per cent that have been typical since 2011.

Figure 1 Applicants by domicile group



### Acceptances

There were 532,300 applicants accepted to start higher education from the 2015 cycle, 19,900 (+3.9 per cent) more than in the 2014 cycle. For the third year running, this is the highest number of acceptances recorded in any cycle, building on the increases in applicants accepted of 16,800 and 30,700 in the 2014 and 2013 cycles respectively.

#### UK domiciled acceptances increased to a record number in the 2015 cycle

Most acceptances are from the UK, in recent cycles between 87 to 88 per cent of the total. In 2015, there were 463,700 acceptances from the UK, up 16,300 (+3.6 per cent), a slightly larger increase than from the 2013 cycle to the 2014 cycle resulting in the highest number of acceptances of UK domiciled applicants from any cycle.

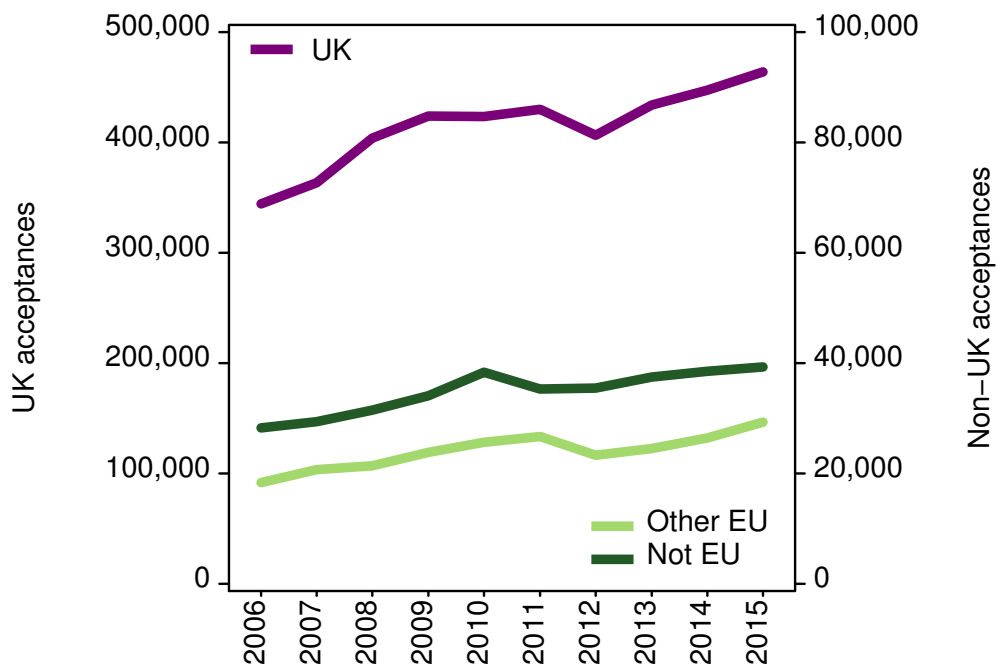
#### Acceptances from other countries in the EU increased 11 per cent in 2015

EU domiciled acceptances form around 5 to 6 per cent of all acceptances, and have increased in each cycle since 2006, apart from 2012. In 2015, acceptances from other countries in the EU increased by 2,900 (+11.1 per cent) to a record 29,300, the highest increase in a single year across the reported period.

#### Acceptances from outside the EU increased to new high

Around 7 to 8 per cent of acceptances are from applicants outside the EU. In 2015, building on the increase in 2014 (+2.8 per cent), 39,300 applicants from outside the EU were accepted (+700, +1.9 per cent). This was the highest number of acceptances from outside the EU recorded in any cycle, but a smaller proportional increase than the increases recorded from other domicile groups.

Figure 2 Acceptances by domicile group



## Acceptances from almost all UK domiciled age groups at record levels, fall in 20 year old acceptances

Around half of UK domiciled acceptances are from 18 year old applicants. In 2015, there were 235,400 acceptances from UK 18 year olds, +10,800 (+4.8 per cent) the most acceptances ever recorded.

Acceptances from 19 year old applicants are usually around a fifth of all UK domiciled acceptances. In 2015, the number of acceptances increased by 2,400 (+2.7 per cent) to 91,800 the highest recorded for 19 year old applicants.

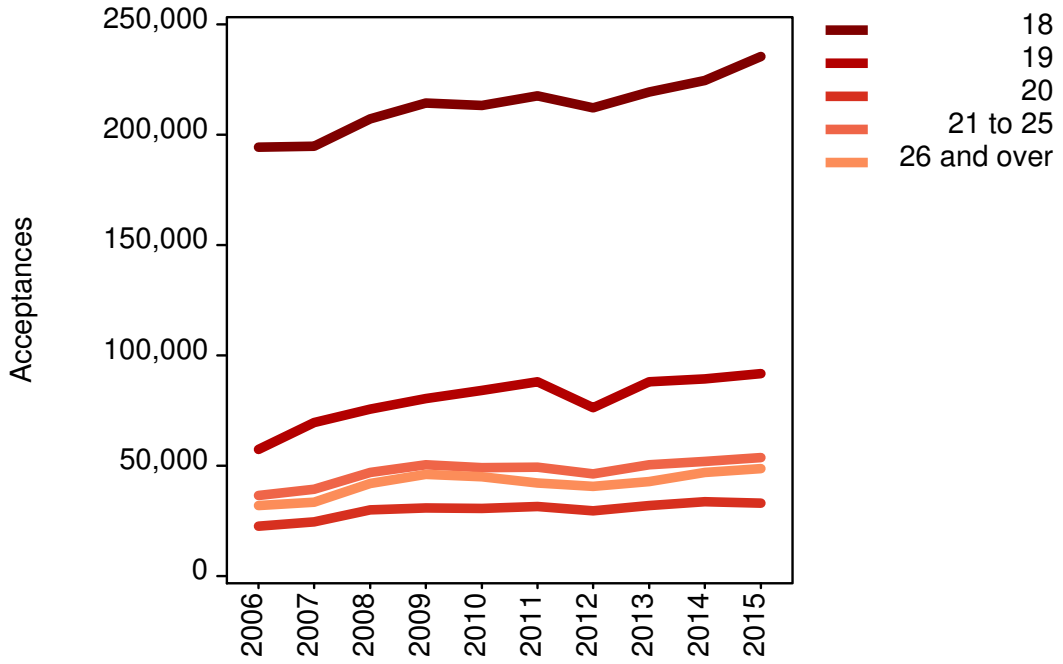
20 year old acceptances are around 7 per cent of all UK domiciled acceptances. In 2015, acceptances from 20 year olds decreased by 700 (-2.0 per cent) to 33,000 following a record high in 2014, but were still 3.4 per cent higher than the number recorded in 2013.

A large set of teacher training courses at providers in Scotland were recruited through the UCAS Undergraduate scheme for the first time in 2015, having previously been recruited through UCAS Teacher Training. Acceptances to these courses tended to be aged 21 and over.

Around 11 per cent of all UK domiciled acceptances are from 21-25 year olds. In 2015, there were 53,500 21-25 year old acceptances, 1,700 (+3.3 per cent) more than in 2014 and the highest recorded for this age group. If acceptances to teacher training courses in Scotland were removed from the time series then the increase in 21-25 year old acceptances reduces to +700 (+1.3 per cent).

Around 10 per cent of all UK domiciled acceptances are from applicants aged 26 or over. Following strong increases in the 2008 and 2009 cycles, the number of acceptances from this age group decreased between 2010 and 2012. This trend has reversed again, with an increased number of acceptances in each cycle since 2013. In 2015, there was a further increase to 48,700 acceptances aged 26 and over, 1,800 (+3.9 per cent) more than in 2014, and the most seen in any cycle. Removing acceptances to teacher training courses in Scotland from the time series reduced the increase in 2015 to +800 (+1.7 per cent).

Figure 3 UK acceptances by age group



**Most acceptances ever recorded from England, Scotland and Wales**

Figure 4 shows acceptances by applicant country of domicile within the UK; acceptances from England are shown against their own (left hand side) axis as numbers for this group are higher than those from other countries.

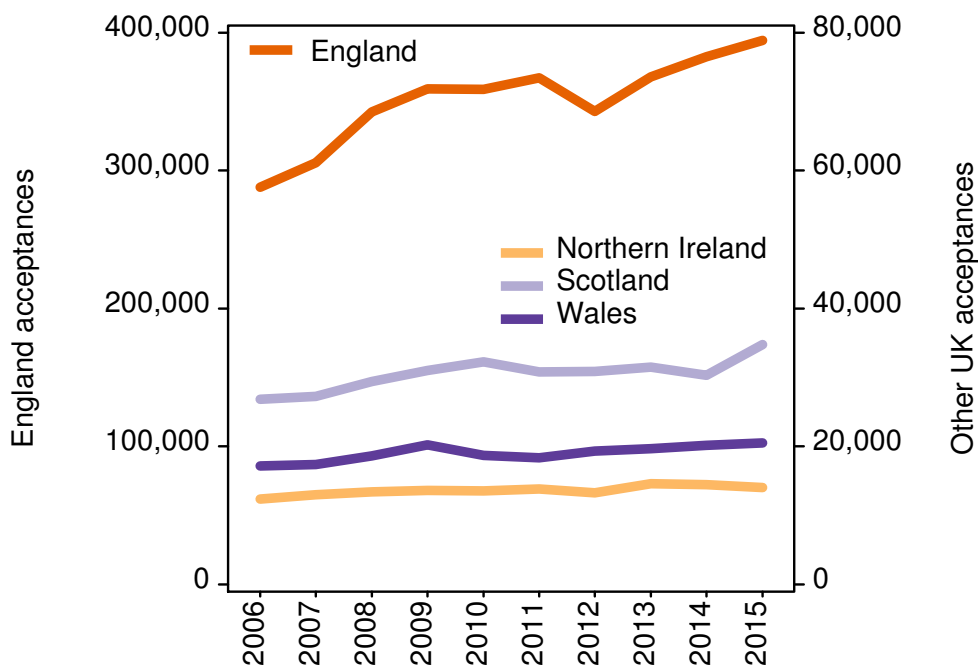
Acceptances from England increased from 288,000 to 367,100 between the 2006 and 2011 cycles, accounting for almost all the increase in UK domiciled acceptances over that period. English domiciled acceptances decreased sharply in the 2012 cycle, but were followed in the 2013 cycle by a similar size increase that completely reversed that fall. In 2015, building on the further increase in 2014 (+4.0 per cent), there were 394,400 England domiciled acceptances, 11,900 (+3.1 per cent) more than in 2014, the highest number of England domiciled acceptances in any cycle.

Acceptances from Northern Ireland fell in 2015, with 400 (-2.8 per cent) fewer acceptances than in 2014, taking the total to 14,000.

Acceptances from Scotland increased by 4,500 (+14.7 per cent), the largest year-on-year increase of any cycle, resulting in a record total of 34,800. In 2014, there were fewer late acceptances to Scotland recorded in the UCAS data for some Scottish providers, meaning that comparing acceptances with 2014 may not give an accurate measure of change. Also, a large set of teacher training courses at providers in Scotland were recruited through the UCAS Undergraduate scheme for the first time in 2015, having previously been recruited through UCAS Teacher Training. These two factors are estimated to account for around 3,600 of the 4,500 increase.

Acceptances from Wales increased for the fourth consecutive cycle to 20,500, an increase of 300 (+1.7 per cent) reaching a new high.

**Figure 4 Acceptances by UK country of domicile**





**Acceptances to higher education providers in England at record level**

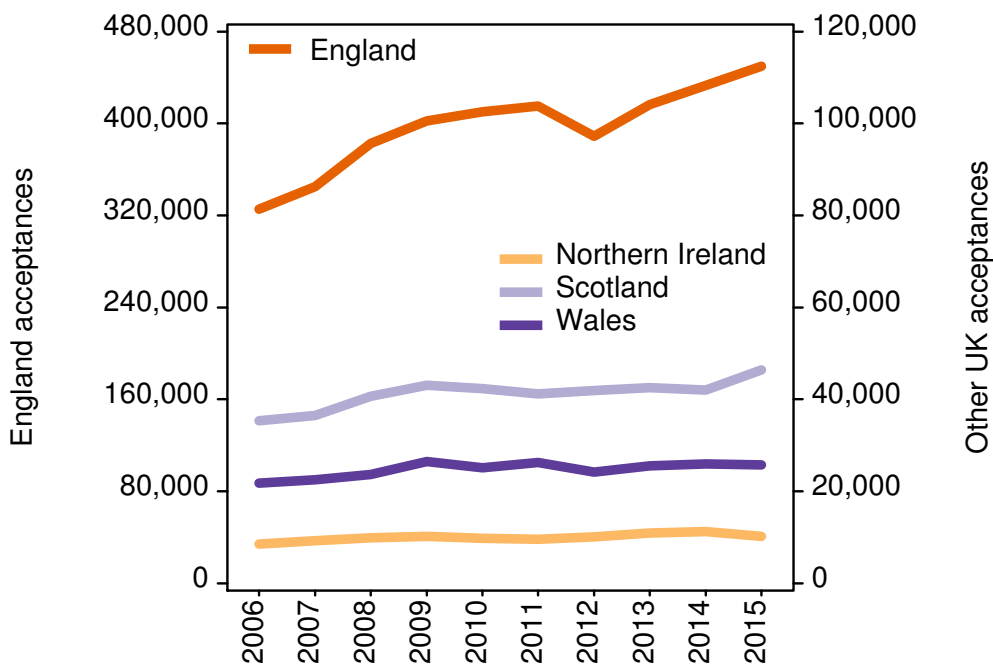
Figure 5 shows the number of acceptances by country of higher education provider; since acceptances to providers in England are much larger than to any other country they are shown on a separate axis (left hand side). Most of the increase in acceptances over the period has been to English providers. Between the 2006 cycle and the 2011 cycle the number of acceptances to English providers increased by more than a quarter to 415,100. Following a fall in the 2012 cycle, acceptances at English providers have increased in each cycle. In 2015, the number of acceptances to providers in England rose again to a new high of 450,000, (+16,800, +3.9 per cent).

Higher education providers in Northern Ireland had 10,200 (-1,100, -9.7 per cent) acceptances in 2015, a fall from their recorded high in 2014.

Acceptances to higher education providers in Scotland increased to a new record high of 46,400 (+4,400, +10.4 per cent). In 2014, there were fewer late acceptances to Scotland recorded in the UCAS data for some Scottish providers, meaning that comparing acceptances with 2014 may not give an accurate measure of change. Also, a large set of teacher training courses at providers in Scotland were recruited through the UCAS Undergraduate scheme for the first time in 2015, having previously been recruited through UCAS Teacher Training. These two factors are estimated to account for around 3,800 of the 4,400 increase in acceptances to providers in Scotland in 2015 compared with 2014.

Acceptances to higher education providers in Wales remained broadly the same (a small decrease of -200, -0.9 per cent) to 25,700.

**Figure 5 Acceptances by provider country**



**Acceptances reach new high at all types of providers**

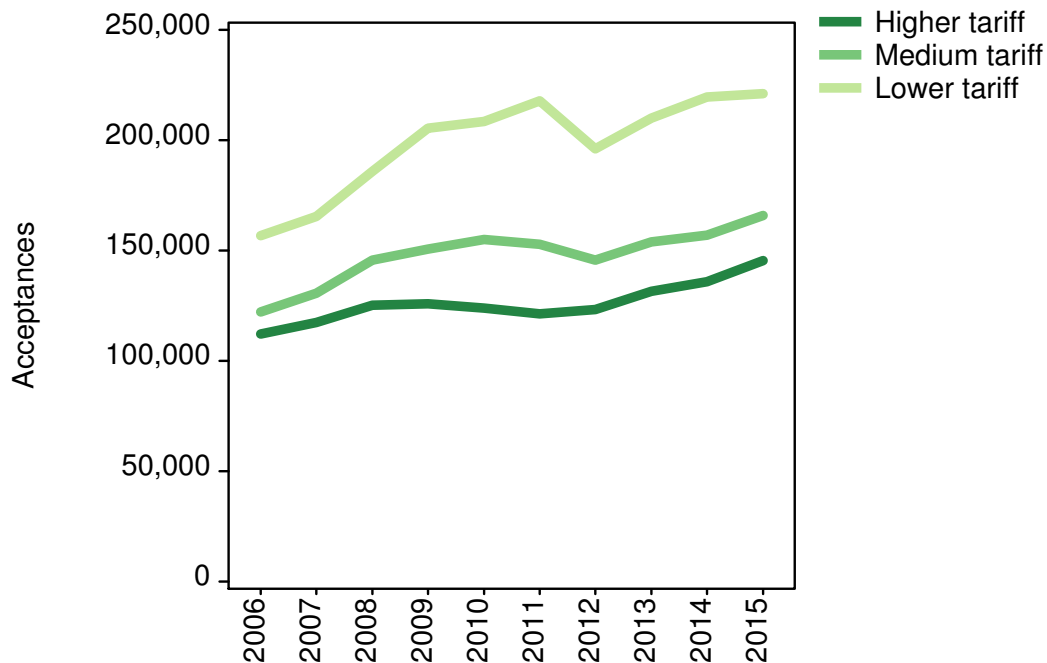
Higher education providers across the UK can be grouped based on the average levels of attainment (summarised through UCAS Tariff points) of a common group of accepted applicants. Figure 6 shows the number of all acceptances by cycle for these provider tariff groups.

Between 2007 and the 2011, acceptances to higher tariff group providers varied less than acceptances to medium and lower tariff providers. Over this period acceptances to lower tariff providers typically increased by 5 to 10 per cent proportionally each year, whereas acceptances to higher tariff providers typically stayed at around the same level between years.

Acceptances in the 2012 cycle fell for the medium and lower tariff providers, and by more in the lower tariff group than the medium tariff group, whilst acceptances for the higher tariff providers saw a small increase in 2012. Acceptances increased for each of the provider tariff groups in each cycle since 2013, resulting in record levels of acceptances for all tariff groups in the 2015 cycle.

The smallest increase in 2015 was to lower tariff providers, where acceptances increased by 1,500 (+0.7 per cent), still to a record high of 221,000; acceptances to medium tariff providers increased by 8,900 (+5.7 per cent) to a record high of 165,900; and acceptances into higher tariff providers increased by the largest amount, +9,500 (+7.0 per cent) to a record high of 145,300.

**Figure 6 Acceptances by provider tariff group**



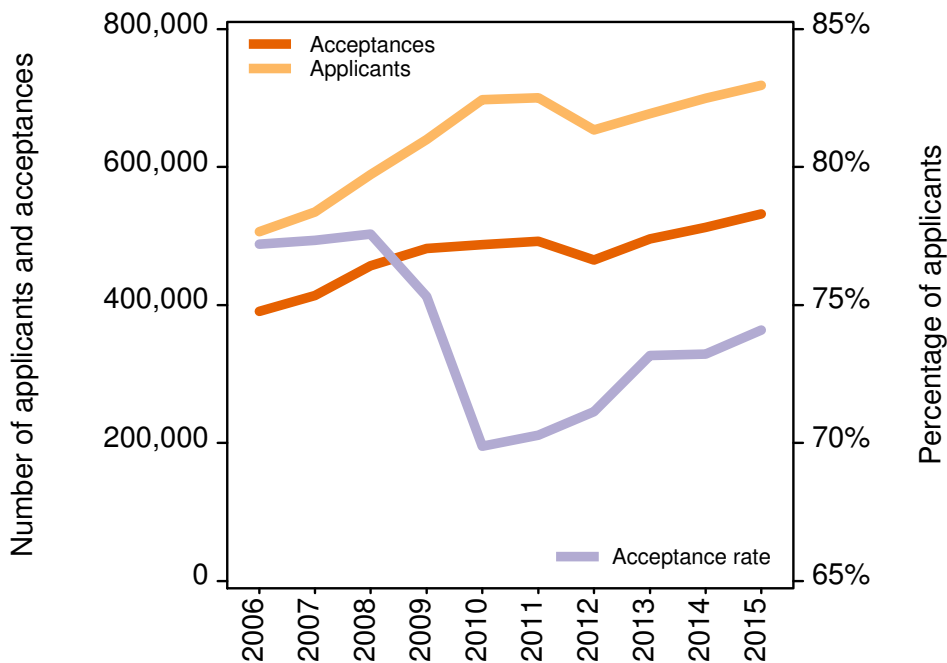
**Acceptance rates**

The proportion of applicants who have a place at the end of the cycle is termed the acceptance rate. At the UK level it reflects the relationship between total applicants and total acceptances. Since the number of acceptances may be subject to number control or physical constraints, it can be broadly interpreted as the ‘difficulty’ of gaining admission to higher education in a particular year. However, becoming accepted requires both a higher education provider to make an offer to the applicant, and the applicant to accept and meet the conditions of the provider’s offer. Therefore changes in the acceptance rate can also reflect differences in applicant choices, or preference to enter higher education.

**Acceptance rate increased in 2015, total acceptances increased at greater rate than number of applicants**

The acceptance rate for all applicants in 2015 increased to 74.1 per cent (+0.9 percentage points). This increase between cycles in the acceptance rate coupled with an increase in the number of applicants resulted in an increase in acceptances that was proportionally larger than the increase in applicants. Despite this increase, the acceptance rate has still not returned to the level seen between the 2006 and 2008 cycles of between 77 and 78 per cent.

**Figure 7 Applicants, acceptances and the acceptance rate**

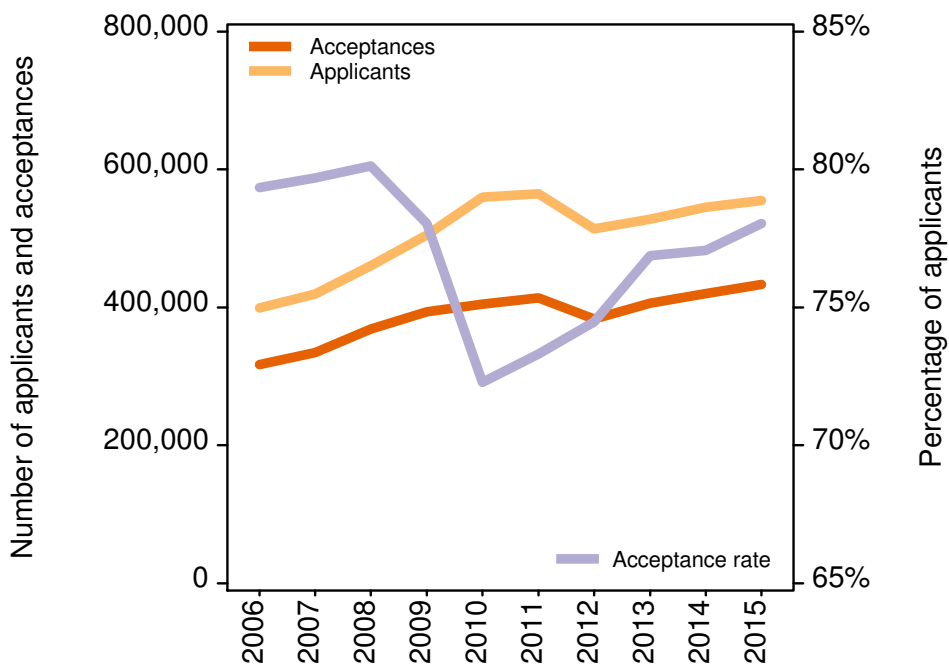


**Acceptance rate for UK main scheme applicants at highest since 2009**

UK main scheme applicants are the largest group of applicants, typically 78 to 80 per cent of the total. They have broadly similar opportunities within each cycle, making up to five initial applications followed by the opportunity to use other routes later in the cycle. The acceptance rates of this group best reflect the ‘difficulty’ of gaining admission to higher education in a particular year.

The acceptance rate for UK main scheme applicants decreased by almost 6 percentage points in 2010 driven by a continuing trend in the increase of applicants that was not matched by the number of acceptances. Between 2011 and 2014 the acceptance rate increased each year, but not by enough to offset the decrease in 2010. In 2015, the acceptance rate increased further to 78.0 per cent (+1.0 percentage point change), reaching the same level as in 2009. The acceptance rate remains 2 percentage points lower than it was in 2007 and 2008.

**Figure 8 Applicants, acceptances and the acceptance rate for UK main scheme applicants only**



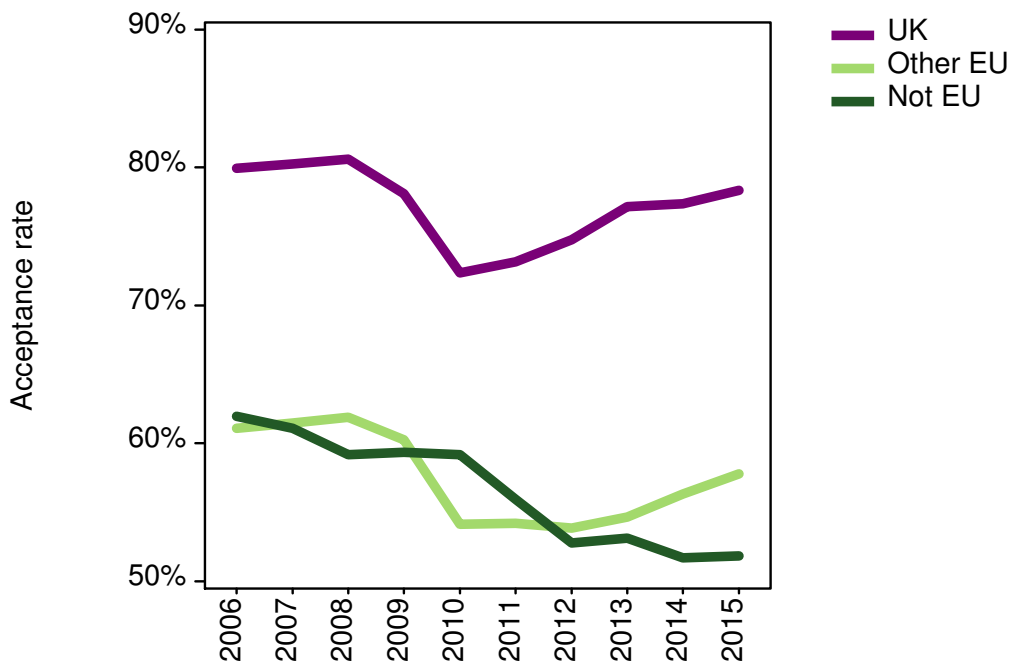
**Acceptance rates increased from UK and EU, broadly the same from outside EU**

A higher proportion of UK domiciled applicants are accepted than applicants from outside the UK. The acceptance rate for UK domiciled applicants increased to 78.3 per cent (+1.0 percentage points) in 2015. Acceptance rates for this group remained below the 80 to 81 per cent values typical between 2006 and 2008.

The acceptance rate for EU applicants in 2015 was 57.8 per cent, an increase of 1.5 percentage points and reaching the highest rate since the steep decrease in 2010. Before 2010, the acceptance rate for EU applicants was typically 60 to 62 per cent.

The acceptance rate for applicants from outside the EU remained broadly the same as 2014 at 51.8 per cent in 2015, therefore not recovering from the new low seen in 2014. This means that non-EU applicants were around 15 per cent less likely to be placed in 2015 than was typical in the 2006 to 2010 cycles.

**Figure 9 Acceptance rates by applicant domicile group**



**Acceptance rates increased for all UK age groups, joint record high for 19 year olds**

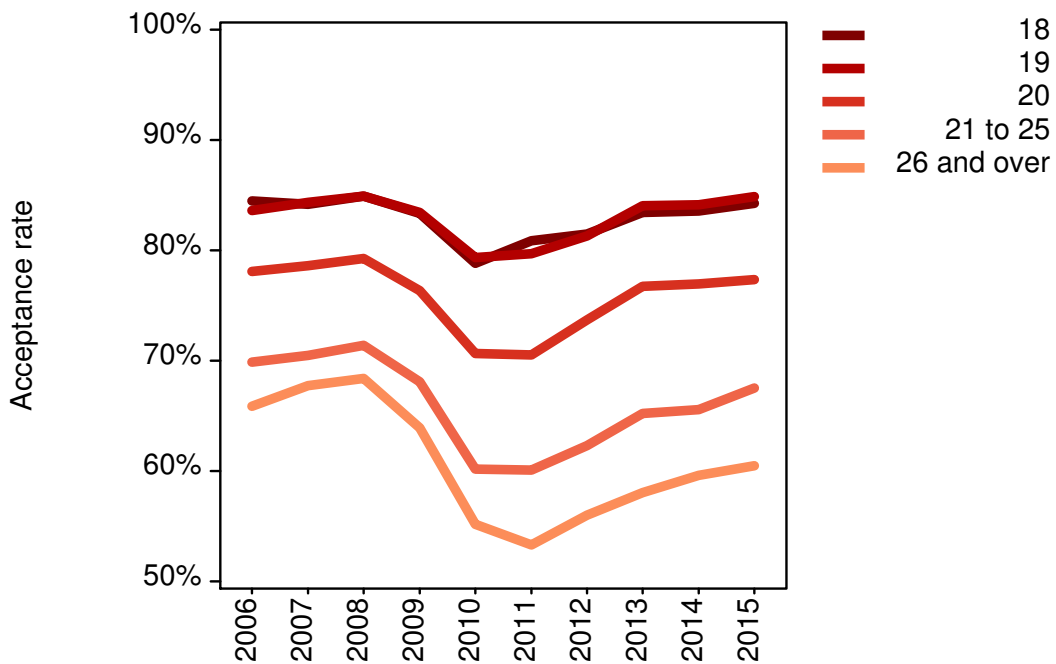
In each cycle the acceptance rate for UK 18 year olds is at a very similar level to the acceptance rate for 19 year olds. In 2015, the acceptance rate was 84.2 per cent for 18 year olds (+0.7 percentage points) and 84.9 per cent for 19 year olds (+0.8 percentage points), a joint record high with the level in 2008 for 19 year olds.

The acceptance rates for older age groups are consistently lower. For 20 year olds the acceptance rate remained broadly the same in 2015 as 2014 at 77.3 per cent (+0.4 percentage points). This was still lower than the acceptance rate typical before 2009 (78 to 80 per cent).

The greatest increase in acceptance rate in 2015 was for those aged 21 to 25 years, where the rate increased to 67.5 per cent (+2.0 percentage points). As with the 20 year old group, this remained lower than the acceptance rate typical before 2009 (70 to 72 per cent).

The acceptance rate for the group aged 26 and over increased by 0.9 percentage points in 2015 to 60.5 per cent, remaining much lower than the acceptance rate that was typical before 2009 (66 to 68 per cent).

**Figure 10 Acceptance rates for UK domiciled applicants by age group**





**Acceptance rates for 18 year olds in England and Wales increased to a new high, but fell to new low in Northern Ireland**

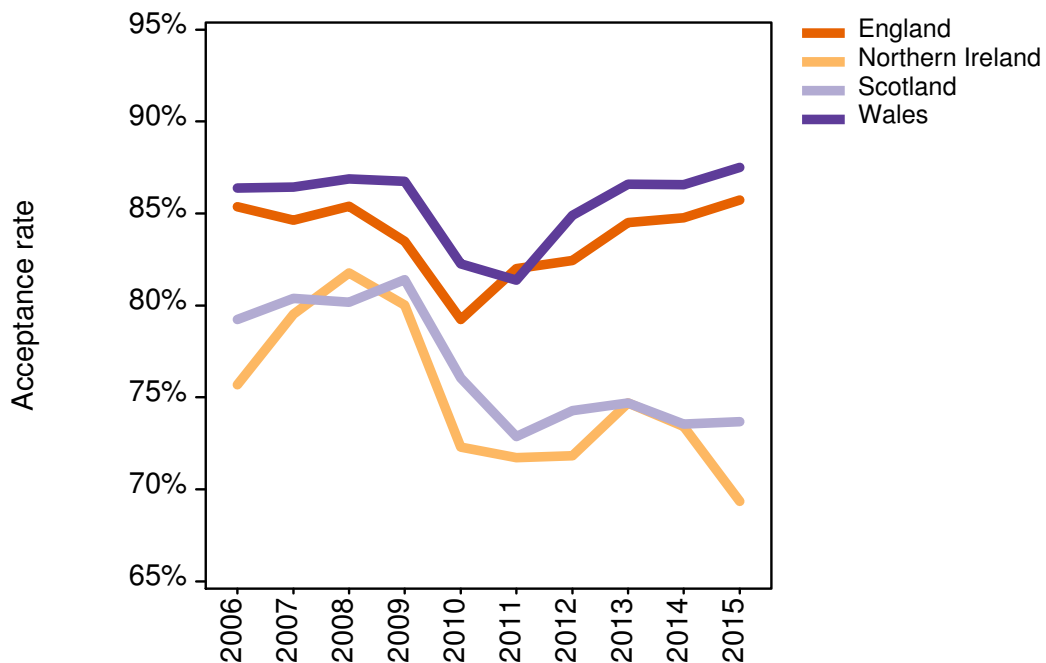
Acceptance rates vary by age and country of domicile, and the typical age composition of applicants also varies by country. Figure 11 shows the trend in acceptance rates for 18 year old applicants (the largest single applicant age group in each country) by UK country of domicile. Acceptance rates have been higher for applicants from England and Wales compared to Scotland and Northern Ireland in all cycles and particularly since 2011.

The acceptance rates for English and Welsh domiciled applicants in 2015 were 85.7 per cent (+1.0 percentage points) and 87.5 per cent (+0.9 percentage points) respectively, representing new record levels for both of these countries.

In 2015, acceptance rates for 18 year old applicants from Scotland remained broadly the same as 2014 at 73.7 per cent. Acceptance rates for applicants from Scotland remained lower than values typical before 2010.

Acceptance rates for applicants from Northern Ireland fell to a new low of 69.3 per cent (-4.1 percentage points). This fall in acceptance rates arose because a 4.2 per cent increase in 18 year old applicants was matched by a 1.6 per cent decrease in acceptances.

**Figure 11 Acceptance rates for 18 year olds by UK country of domicile**



## Entry rates for 18 and 19 year olds from the UK

### 18 year olds in England, Wales and Scotland were more likely to enter higher education in the 2015 cycle than any previous year

The entry rate is the proportion of the population accepted into higher education through UCAS. The entry rate refers to the cycle in which the applicant is accepted and includes both acceptances for immediate entry to higher education and those that are deferred until the next academic year.

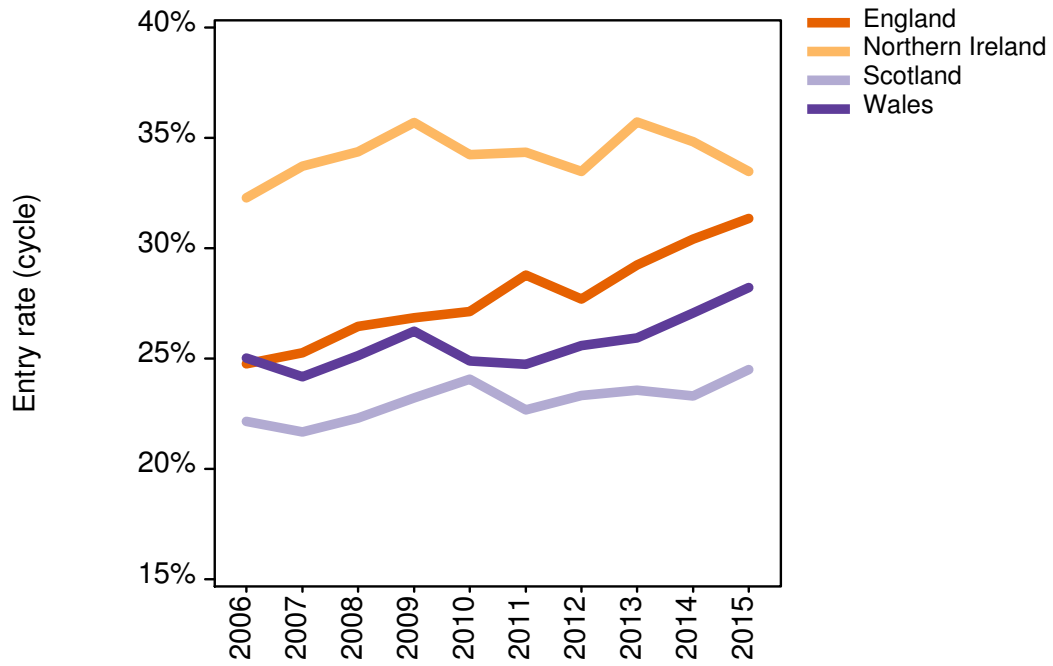
In 2015, 31.3 per cent of the English 18 year old population were accepted into higher education, an increase of 0.9 percentage points, continuing the trend of increasing entry rates recorded every year since 2012. This was the highest level recorded for this group of applicants, and 6.5 percentage points higher than in 2006 (27 per cent proportionally).

Following a 0.9 percentage point decrease in 2014 in the entry rate for 18 year olds in Northern Ireland, the entry rate decreased again in 2015 to 33.5 per cent, the lowest rate since 2006. Entry rates for 18 year olds from Northern Ireland have varied between 32.3 per cent and 35.7 per cent across the period, the highest rate of any country across the UK in each year reported.

Entry rates for 18 year olds in Scotland are lower than for other countries on this measure, since not all higher education provision in colleges in Scotland is recruited through UCAS. Higher Education provided by further education colleges is an important component of provision in Scotland that is not recorded through UCAS. Around one third of young entrants in Scotland will be in further education colleges and not recorded in these statistics. The entry rates for 18 year olds in Scotland increased in 2015 to 24.5 per cent (+1.2 percentage points) – the highest entry rate recorded in the period.

In Wales, the entry rate increased by 1.2 percentage points to 28.2 per cent, the highest rate seen across the period, and continuing the trend of increasing entry rates recorded each year since 2011.

Figure 12 Proportion of 18 year olds accepted for entry by cycle and country of domicile



**19 year old entry rates increased to new highs in England and Scotland**

The first-time entry rate of 19 year olds is the proportion of the 19 year old population that are accepted for entry to higher education for the first time. It excludes the small number of accepted applicants that were accepted to start higher education at age 18, but who then applied and were accepted again at age 19. It does not include acceptances at age 18 who intend to start their courses age 19 (deferred acceptances) since these are already included in the 18 year old cycle based entry rate.

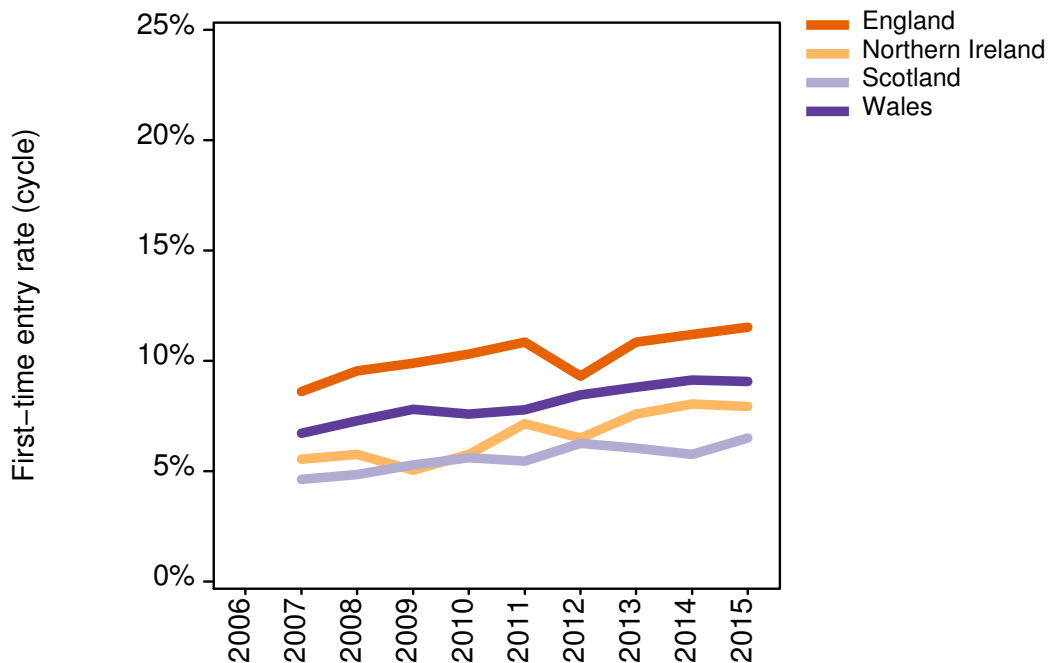
In 2015, the first-time entry rate for 19 year olds from England increased slightly by 0.3 percentage points to a new high of 11.5 per cent.

For 19 year olds in Northern Ireland, the first-time entry rate was broadly unchanged (-0.1 percentage points) at 7.9 per cent. However, this remained higher than from 2007 to 2013.

Entry rates for 19 year olds in Scotland are lower than for other countries on this measure, since not all higher education provision in colleges in Scotland is recruited through UCAS. After falling for two successive years, the first-time entry rate for 19 year olds from Scotland increased by 0.7 percentage points to 6.5 per cent, the highest on record.

For 19 year olds in Wales, after four years of increases, the entry rate was around the same level in 2015 (-0.1 percentage points) at 9.1 per cent.

**Figure 13 Proportion of 19 year olds accepted for entry for the first time by country of domicile**



### Cohort entry rates for young people reach highs across England and Wales

When looking at entry rates for single age groups, changes in entry year can make the interpretation of whether young people are becoming more or less likely to enter higher education difficult. One measure that is less influenced by changes in age of entry is a cohort-based entry rate that combines entry to higher education at ages 18 and 19. It has the advantage that it is unaffected by changes in the choice to apply and be accepted for entry at ages 18 or 19. It has the disadvantage that it cannot yet report on a complete rate for the cohort that was aged 18 in 2015, since they are yet to have the opportunity to apply at age 19. Figure 14 shows the proportion of a young cohort (referenced by the year the cohort would be aged 18) that is accepted for entry aged either 18 or 19.

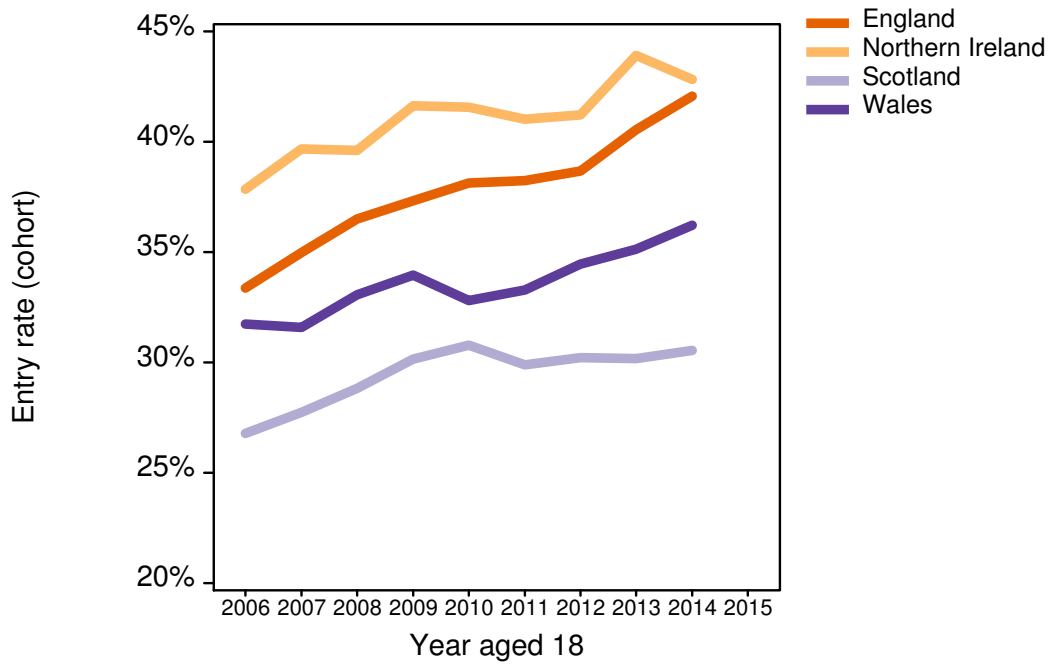
In England, 42.1 per cent of the cohort aged 18 in 2014 were accepted to enter higher education either at age 18 in 2014 or at age 19 in 2015. This was an increase of 1.5 percentage points compared to the cohort aged 18 in 2013. This increase was driven by increases in both the 18 year old entry rate and the first time 19 year old entry rate for the cohort. It continued the trend of annual increases for each cohort since those aged 18 in 2006. The cohort from England age 18 in 2014 was 26 per cent more likely to be accepted to higher education through UCAS by the age of 19 than the cohort that was age 18 in 2006. The greatest rate of increase recorded across the countries of the UK.

The entry rate for the 2014 cohort from Wales increased by 1.1 percentage points to 36.2 per cent, also a new high. This rate was 4.5 percentage points higher than the rate for the cohort that was 18 in 2006, making them 14 per cent more likely to enter higher education than the earlier cohort of young people from Wales.

For young people from Northern Ireland, the entry rate for the cohort aged 18 in 2014 fell by 1.1 percentage points to 42.8 per cent. Despite the fall, this cohort entry rate was still higher than the entry rates for the cohorts aged 18 in the years between 2006 and 2012, and was 5.0 percentage points (+13 per cent proportionally) higher than the cohort aged 18 in 2006.

The 2014 cohort entry rate for Scotland (lower than on comparable student record measures since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS) increased slightly (+0.4 percentage points) compared with the entry rate for the cohort aged 18 in 2013, to 30.5 per cent. This rate has remained at around the same level since 2011, following a period of year-on-year increases since 2006, resulting in the cohort that was 18 in 2014 being 14 per cent more likely to have been accepted to enter higher education by age 19 than the cohort age 18 in 2006.

Figure 14 Young entry rate (cohort) by country



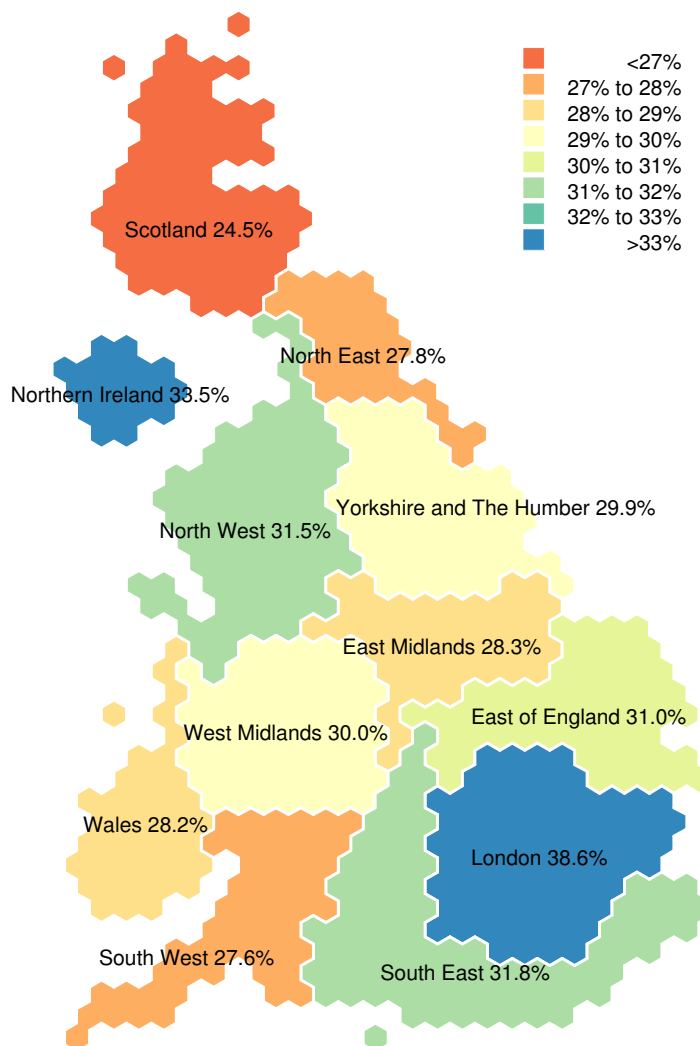
### Entry rates by region

The geographical patterns of English regional entry rates, together with entry rates for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales can be shown on maps. The maps used (see Thomas, B. and Dorling, D., 2007, Identity in Britain: A cradle-to-grave atlas, Bristol: Policy Press) are designed so that the size of each area approximates the size of its population and their arrangement approximates the geographical locations of the areas.

### Entry rates highest in Northern Ireland and London in 2015

Figure 15 maps the 2015 entry rates for 18 year olds by region. Amongst these units of English regions and other UK countries, London (38.6 per cent) and Northern Ireland (33.5 per cent) have the highest entry rates amongst their 18 year old populations in 2015. Scotland (24.5 per cent, but not all higher education in Scotland is recorded in UCAS), the South West (27.6 per cent), the North East (27.8 per cent) are the regions with the lowest entry rates in 2015.

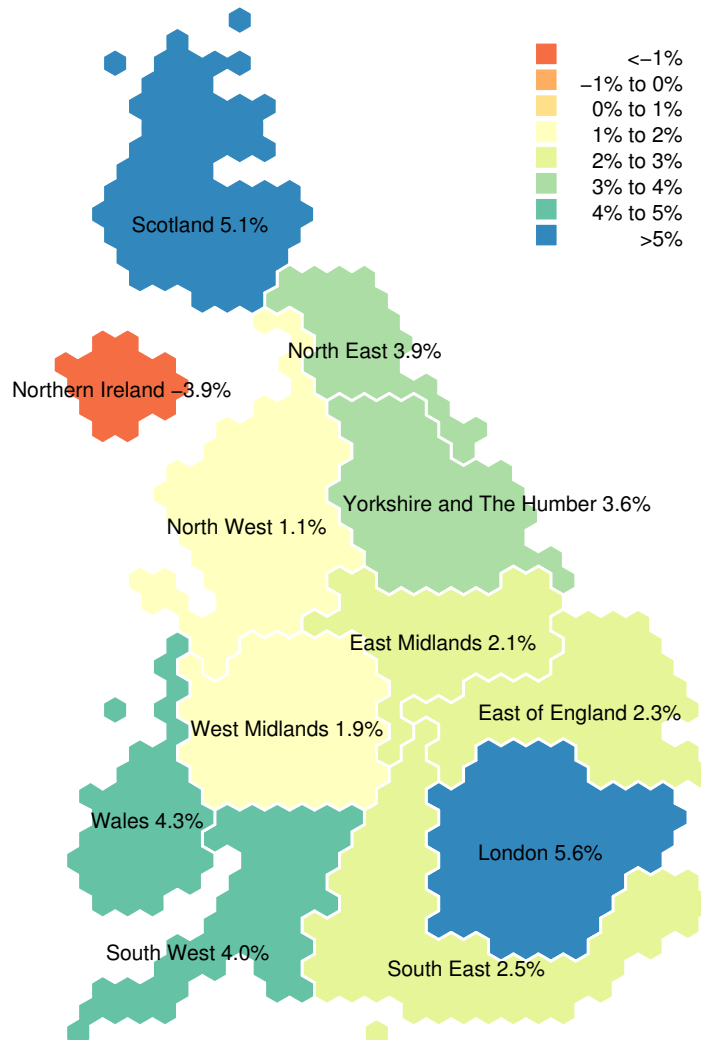
**Figure 15 Entry rates in 2015 for UK 18 year olds by region and country**



**Regions in London and Scotland show largest increases in 18 year old entry rates between 2014 and 2015**

The geographical patterns of proportional changes in entry rates in 2015 compared to 2014 are shown in Figure 16. In London and Scotland, 18 year olds have become between 5 to 6 per cent more likely to enter higher education in the most recent year. The North West and West Midlands have seen the lowest proportional increases over this period (1 to 2 per cent proportionally). In Northern Ireland 18 year olds were less likely to enter higher education in 2015 compared to 18 year olds in 2014.

**Figure 16 Change in entry rates between 2014 and 2015 for UK 18 year olds by region and country**

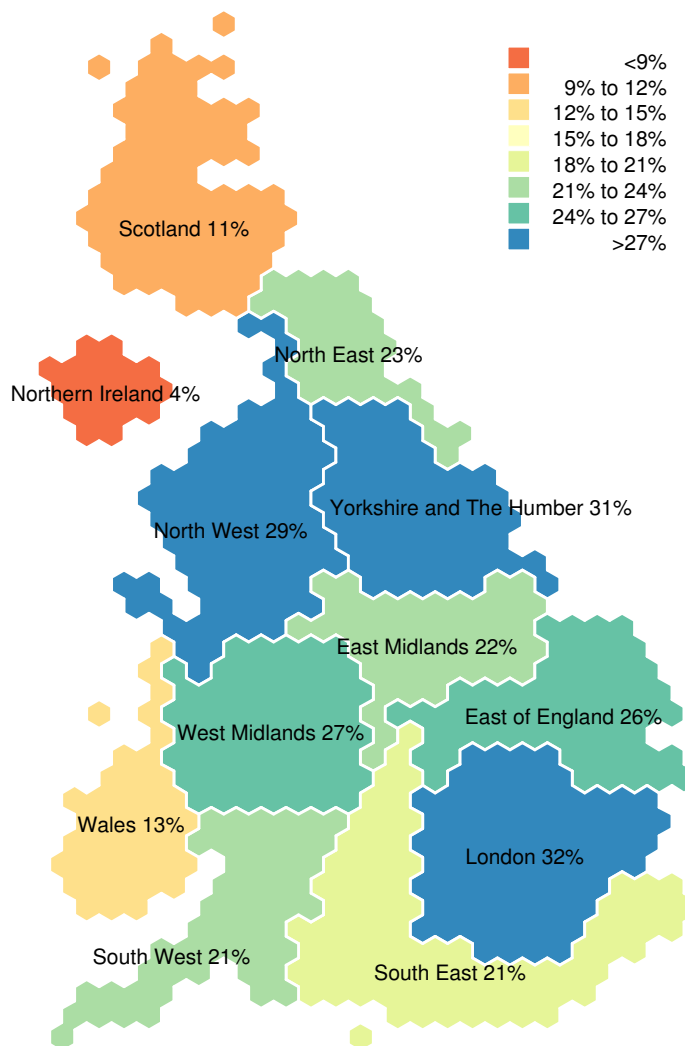




**Regions in London, the North West and Yorkshire show largest increases in 18 year old entry rates between 2006 and 2015**

The geographical patterns of proportional changes in entry rates between 2006 and 2015 are shown in Figure 17. In London, the North West as well as Yorkshire and the Humber, 18 year olds have become between 29 to 32 per cent more likely to enter higher education between 2006 and 2015. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have seen the lowest proportional increases over this period (4 to 13 per cent).

**Figure 17 Change in entry rates between 2006 and 2015 for UK 18 year olds by region and country**

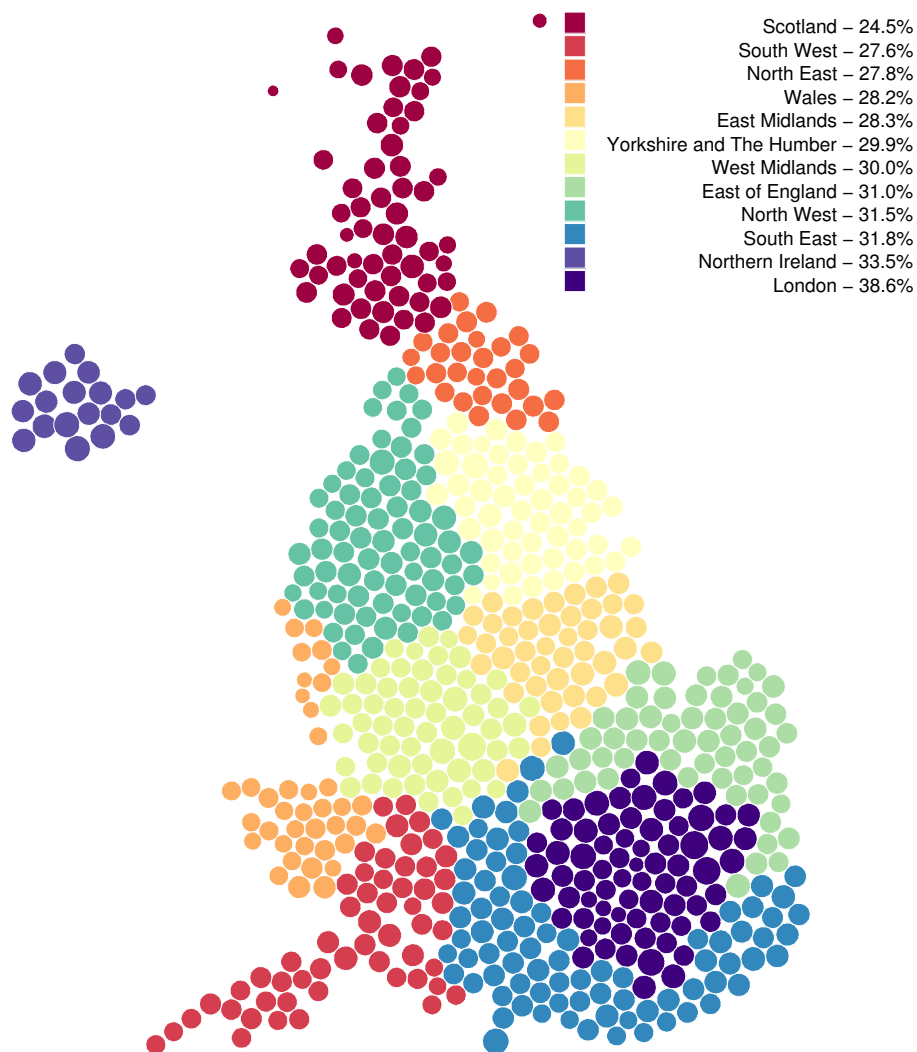


### Entry rates by parliamentary constituency

There are 650 parliamentary constituencies in the UK (533 in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland). Parliamentary constituencies are much smaller than regions, with populations of typically just over 1,000 18 year olds, and are designed to have a more uniform population size than other geographies. This makes them a particularly suitable smaller geographical unit for reporting entry rates.

Figure 18 shows all the parliamentary constituencies in the UK by the region they are located in and the entry rate of that region. In this map each parliamentary constituency is shown as a circle, where the size of each circle approximates the size of the constituency population and their arrangement approximates the geographical locations of the constituencies.

**Figure 18 Parliamentary constituencies and 18 year old entry rate by region in 2015**



## Entry rates of 18 year olds vary across constituencies from 14 per cent to 57 per cent

The proportion of 18 year olds in a constituency who enter higher education through UCAS varied from 14 per cent to 57 per cent in 2015. Young people living in the constituencies with the highest entry rates were four times more likely to enter higher education than those living in constituencies with the lowest rates.

Entry rates also vary between constituencies within a region. In the East of England (the region with the most variation in entry rates in 2015) entry rates ranged from 18 per cent in the constituency with the lowest entry rate to 54 per cent in the constituency with the highest entry rate. This was a 36 percentage point range in entry rates within the region, with 18 year olds in the constituency with the highest entry rate in the region being three times as likely to enter higher education than those in the constituency with the lowest entry rate. In the North East, the region with the least variation, the entry rates ranged from 23 to 36 per cent (13 percentage points).

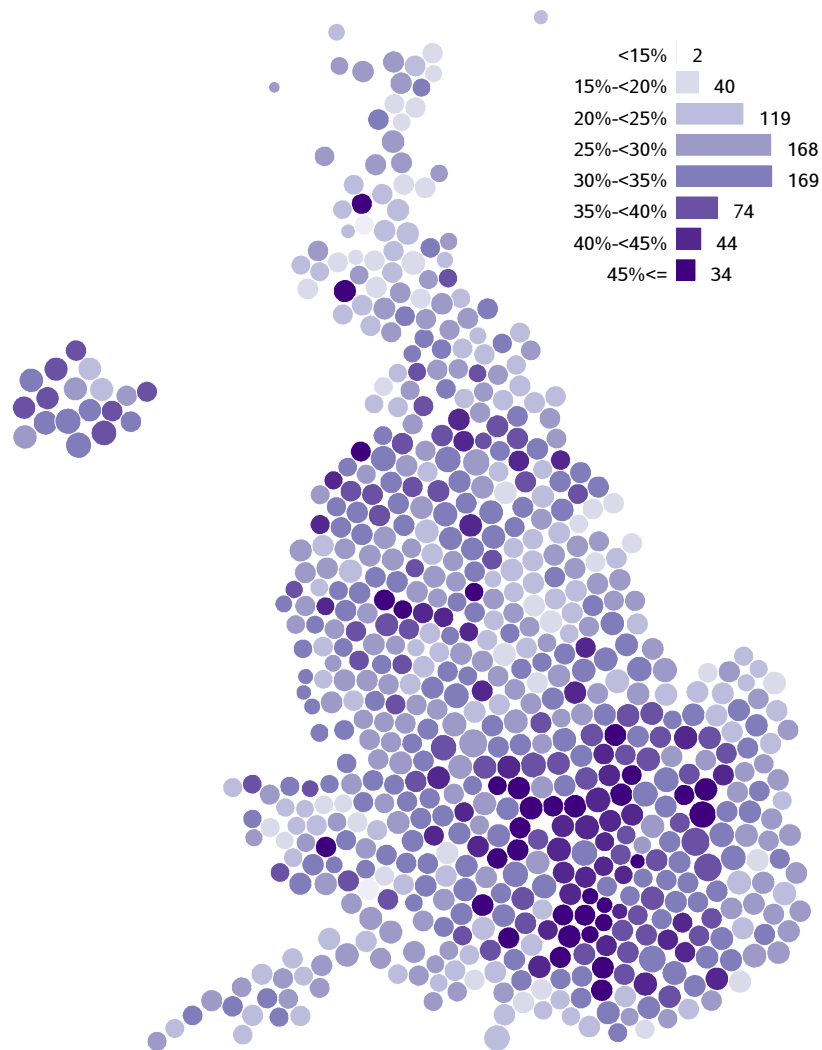
Similar variation was seen amongst parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

In Wales the range was from 18 per cent to 48 per cent, while in Northern Ireland the range was from 21 per cent to 39 per cent.

In Scotland the entry rates range from 14 per cent to 46 per cent. Around one third of young entrants in Scotland will be studying higher education at a further education college in Scotland which is not recorded through UCAS. The proportion studying in further education colleges in some constituencies can be higher, around half. So the UCAS entry rates in these constituencies will understate HE entry rates, possibly by around one half in extreme cases.

Over half of parliamentary constituencies have 18 year old entry rates that fall within a ten percentage point band between 25 per cent and 35 per cent. A relatively small number of constituencies have entry rates less than 20 per cent (42) or 45 per cent or higher (34).

Figure 19 Entry rates in 2015 for UK 18 year olds by parliamentary constituency

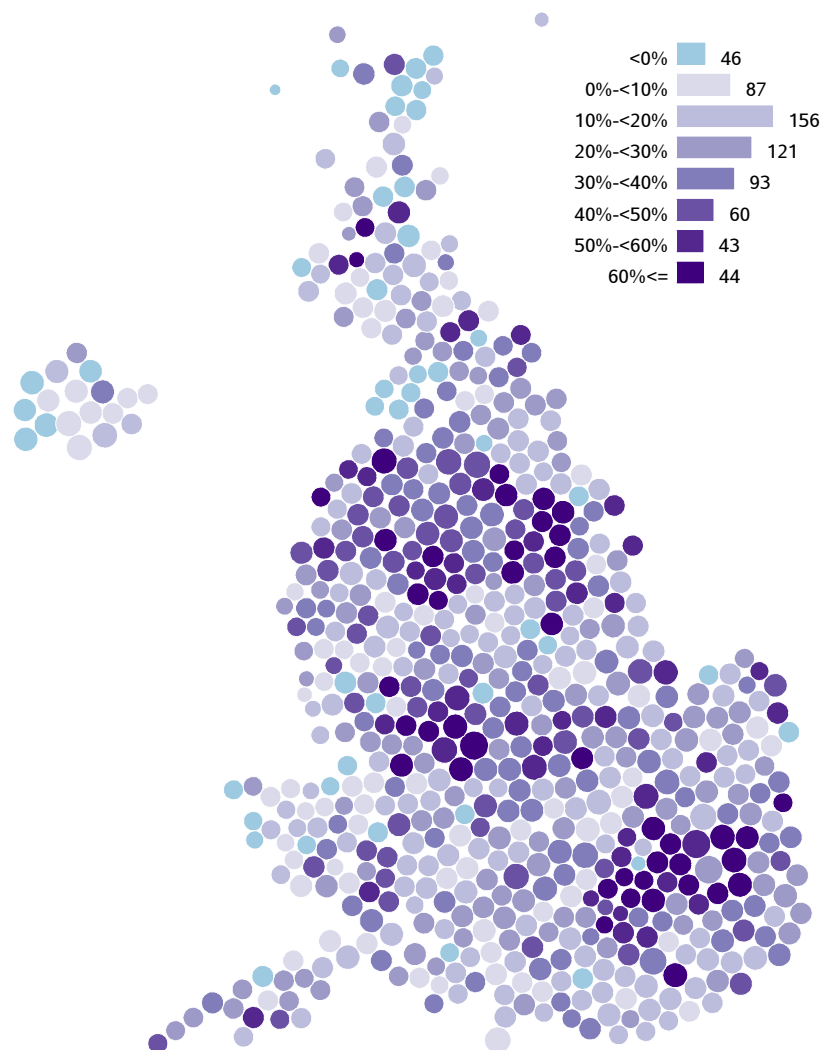


**Wide range of changes in entry rates between 2006 and 2015**

The relatively small population of constituencies means that changes in entry rates from one cycle to the next can have a high ratio of random variation against underlying change. Looking at changes over a longer period, where underlying changes may be greater, can reduce this.

Between 2006 and 2015 entry rates increased in the majority of constituencies. In 46 constituencies (7.1 per cent) the entry rate in 2015 was lower than the entry rate in 2006. In 87 constituencies (13.4 per cent) the entry rate of 18 year olds increased by (proportionally) 50 per cent or more.

**Figure 20 Proportional change in 18 year old entry rate between 2006 and 2015 by constituency**



## Acceptances and entry rates from Europe

### Changes in acceptances vary across European countries

Acceptances from applicants domiciled in the EU, and not in the UK, increased by 11 per cent in the 2015 cycle. The geographical patterns in the number of acceptances, the proportional increase in acceptances and young entry rates by country can be shown on maps. The following maps show selected countries in the EU, and also Norway and Switzerland.

Figure 21 shows the number of acceptances in 2015 from countries across Europe. Those domiciled in France have the largest number of acceptances, 3,060 in 2015. Other countries with a large number of acceptances are Italy, Romania and Ireland, each with over 2,000 accepted applicants to UK higher education in 2015.

The proportional change in acceptances by country, from the 2014 cycle to the 2015 cycle, for applicants domiciled across Europe is shown in Figure 22. There was a large range of proportional changes by country. The largest proportional increase (87 per cent) was from Croatia, the newest member of the EU. As there were only 170 acceptances from Croatia in 2015, the large proportional increase was from a small base of 90 in 2014.

Of the countries with a proportional increase of more than the 11 per cent average, Romania (+34 per cent, 2,450 acceptances), Italy (+26 per cent, 2,630 acceptances), Poland (+25 per cent, 1,660 acceptances), Spain (+16 per cent, 1,850 acceptances) and France (+16 per cent, 3,060 acceptances) all had more than 1,000 acceptances in 2015.

Acceptances decreased from ten countries across Europe, with Norway (-6 per cent, 1,420 acceptances) and Greece (-2 per cent, 1,610 acceptances) representing the largest absolute decreases.

Figure 21 Number of acceptances by selected European country

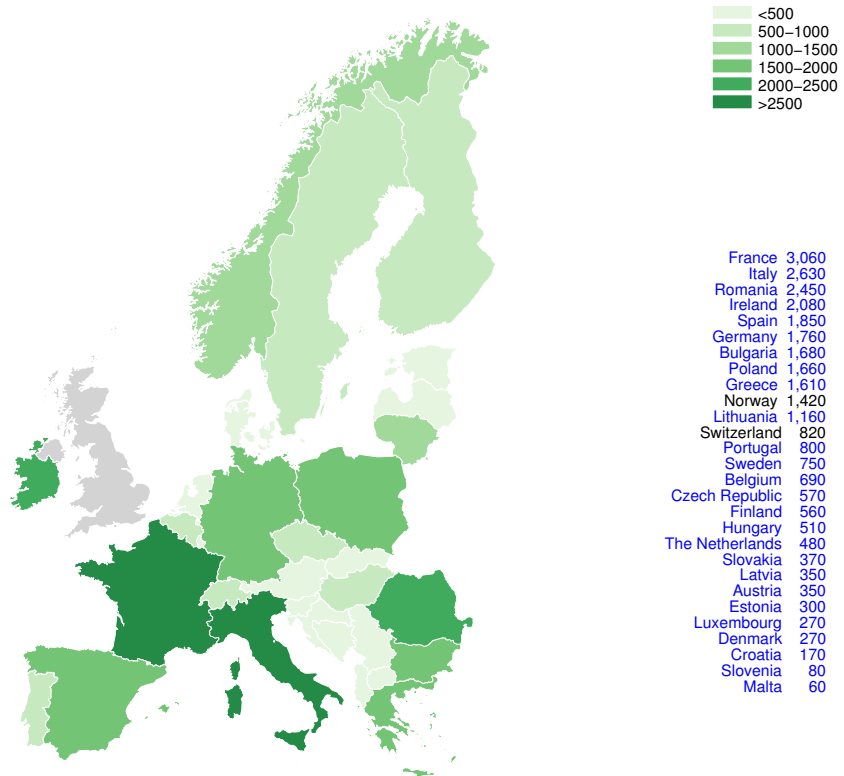


Figure 22 Changes in acceptances for 2015, relative to 2014 by selected European country

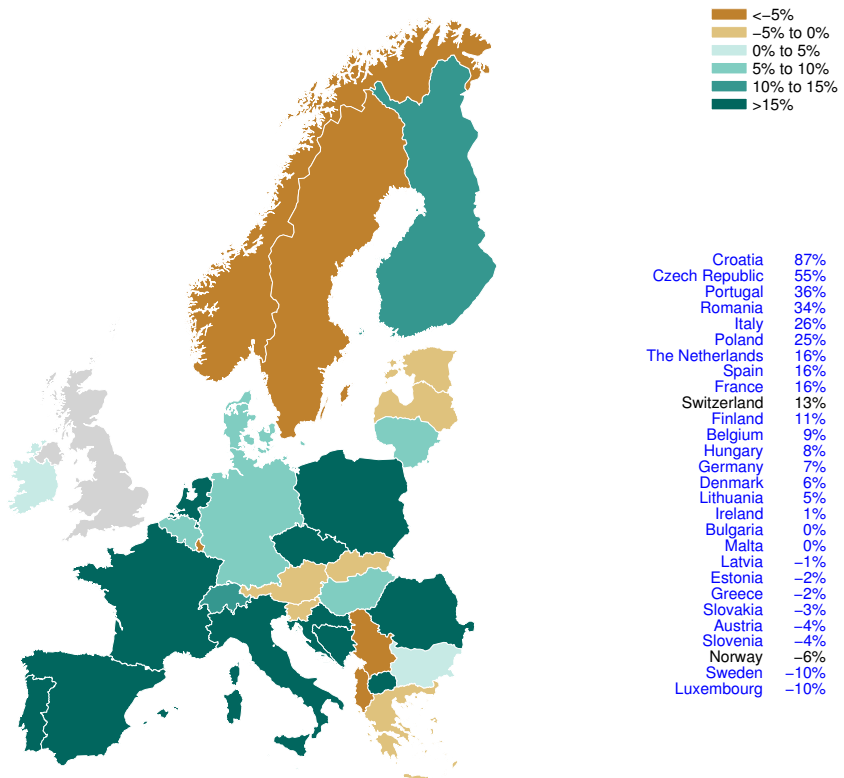
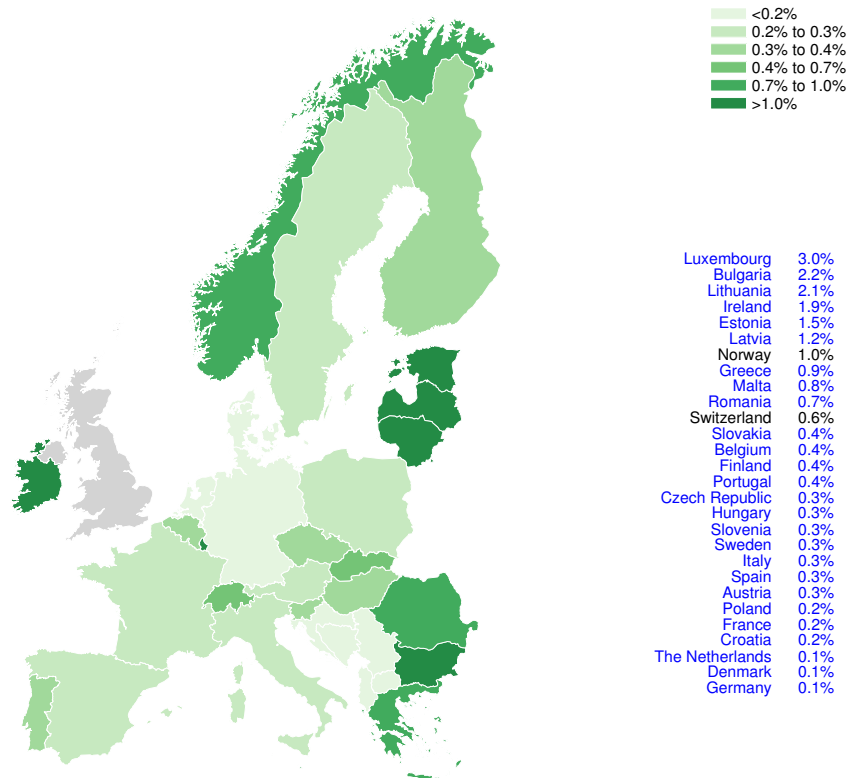


Figure 23 shows the cohort entry rate by age 19 from countries across Europe for young people that were age 18 in 2014. The cohort entry rate is the proportion of the population accepted to UK higher education through UCAS either at age 18 or age 19. The following entry rates are calculated using population estimates published by The World Bank (The World Bank: Health Nutrition and Population Statistics: The United Nations Population Division’s World Population Prospects, and World Bank’s estimates from World Bank’s population projections).

The cohort entry rate for those age 18 in 2014 varied from 0.1 per cent of the young population from Germany to 3.0 per cent of the young population from Luxembourg. The cohort entry rate for most countries across Europe lies between 0.2 per cent and 2 per cent.

Cohort entry rates from Norway (1.0 per cent) and Switzerland (0.6 per cent) are above the European average (0.3 per cent).

**Figure 23 Young entry rate (cohort) by selected European country**



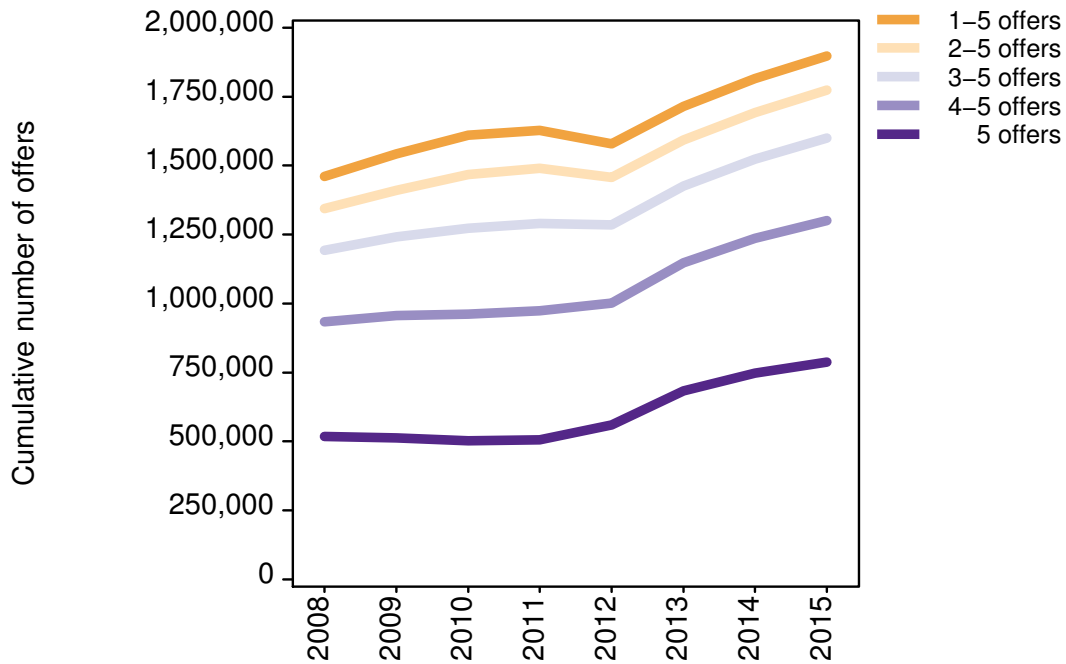


**Offer-making to main scheme applicants in 2015**

**Offers made in 2015 increase by 4.5 per cent to 1.9 million, highest recorded total**

The number of offers made to all main scheme applicants is shown in Figure 24. The offers made are shown split by the number of offers received by the applicant (cumulative totals). The total number of offers made (represented by the 1-5 offers applicants) increased in 2015 by 81,000 (+4.5 per cent) to 1.9 million, the highest number of offers made recorded and continuing the trend seen since 2013 of an increasing number of offers. The number of offers made to applicants who received offers for all five of their choices increased by 41,200 (+6 per cent). The total number of offers made to applicants with four or five offers reached a record high at 1.3 million. This means that for the third consecutive year more than two thirds of offers were made to applicants with 4 or 5 offers to choose between, continuing the trend that offer-making is becoming more concentrated on applicants with four or five offers.

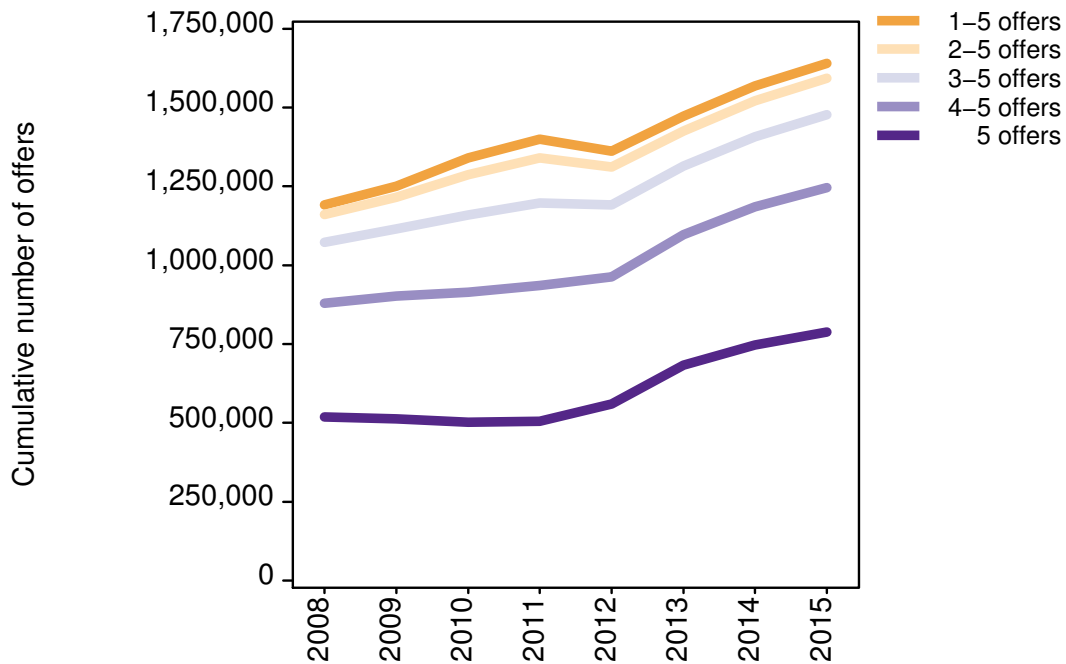
**Figure 24 Total number of offers made to all main scheme applicants by number of offers received (cumulative categories)**



**Offers made to all applicants who make a full set of choices increase by 5 per cent to 1.6 million, the highest level recorded**

Main scheme applicants who make five choices represent the large majority of applications and form a more uniform group to assess patterns in the distribution of offers made. There was an increase in total offers made to this group of 5 per cent (70,400) to 1.6 million offers, the highest level recorded. More than three quarters of offers made to this group were received by applicants who received four or five offers in total. The greatest proportional increase in number of offers made to five-choice applicants was to those who received the maximum five offers, +41,200, +6 per cent to 788,300.

**Figure 25 Total number of offers made to all applicants who made five choices by number of offers received (cumulative categories)**

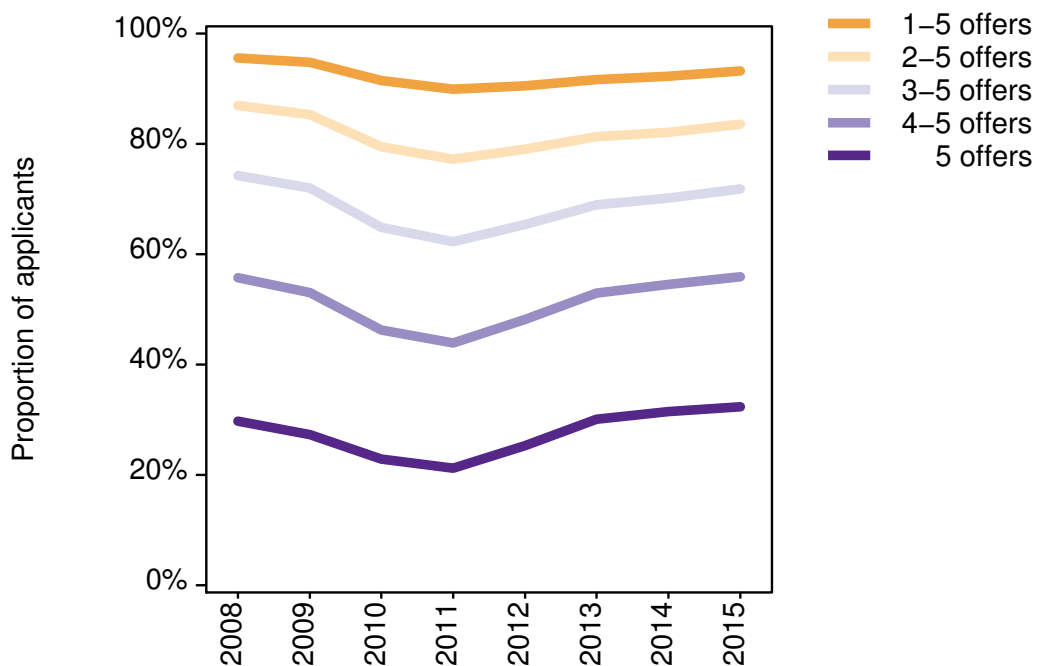


**Over half of applicants receive four or more offers and almost a third have five offers to choose between**

In 2015, 93 per cent of all applicants that made five choices received at least one offer and 56 per cent of these applicants received four or five offers. High offer rates seen at the start of the period (2008 cycle) reduced to reach minimum levels in 2011. However, since 2011 a greater share of applicants have received offers, with further increases in 2015.

The proportion of all applicants that made five choices, receiving at least one offer increased by 1 percentage point to 93 per cent in 2015 but remained slightly below levels in the 2008 and 2009 cycles. The proportion of applicants receiving four or five offers increased by 1 percentage point to a record high of 56 per cent. The proportion of applicants having the maximum five offers to choose between increased to 32 per cent in 2015, the highest level recorded. Applicants were 28 per cent more likely to have five offers than in 2012, and 52 per cent more likely than in 2011.

**Figure 26 Proportion of all main scheme applicants who made five choices by number of offers received (cumulative categories)**



**Offer rates for young applicants increase in 2015 to new highs**

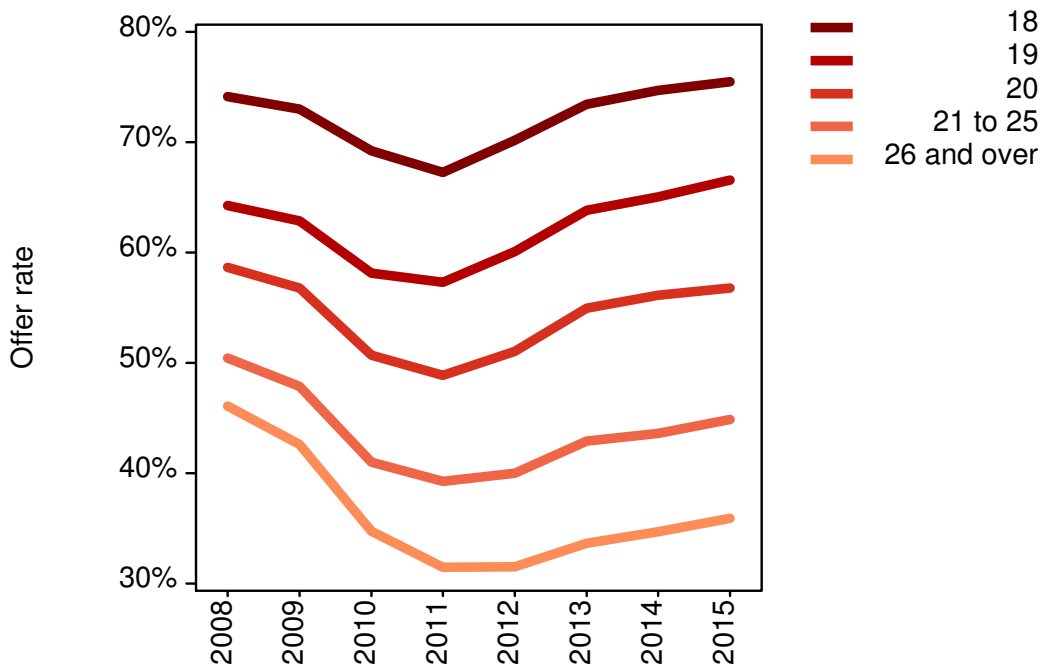
Applications from younger applicants are more likely to receive offers than applicants in other age groups. Applications from 18 year old applicants consistently had the highest chance of receiving an offer and this increased in 2015 to reach 76 per cent, the new highest total recorded over the period and 8 percentage points higher than in 2011. Applications from 19 year olds were less likely to receive an offer but showed a similar pattern with an increase in 2015 to 67 per cent, also a new high.

**Offer rates to older applicants increase in 2015 but remain lower than previously**

Applications from applicants in older age groups were less likely to receive offers. In 2015, 57 per cent of applications from 20 year old applicants received offers (up 2 percentage points from the 2014 cycle) and 45 per cent for those from applicants aged 21 to 25 (up 1 percentage point from the 2014 cycle). The offer rate for applications from applicants aged 26 and over also increased by 1 percentage point to 36 per cent – less than half the offer rate to applications from 18 year olds.

Offer rates to applications from these older age groups fell sharply between 2008 and 2011. Offer rates have increased since 2011, and increased further in 2015, but not by enough to offset the earlier falls. Offer rates to the older age groups remained substantially below previous levels, in contrast to younger age groups. The offer rate gap between applications from younger and older applicants remained broadly at 40 percentage points for the previous three cycles.

**Figure 27 Offer rate (application level) for all main scheme applicants by age group, excluding under 18s**



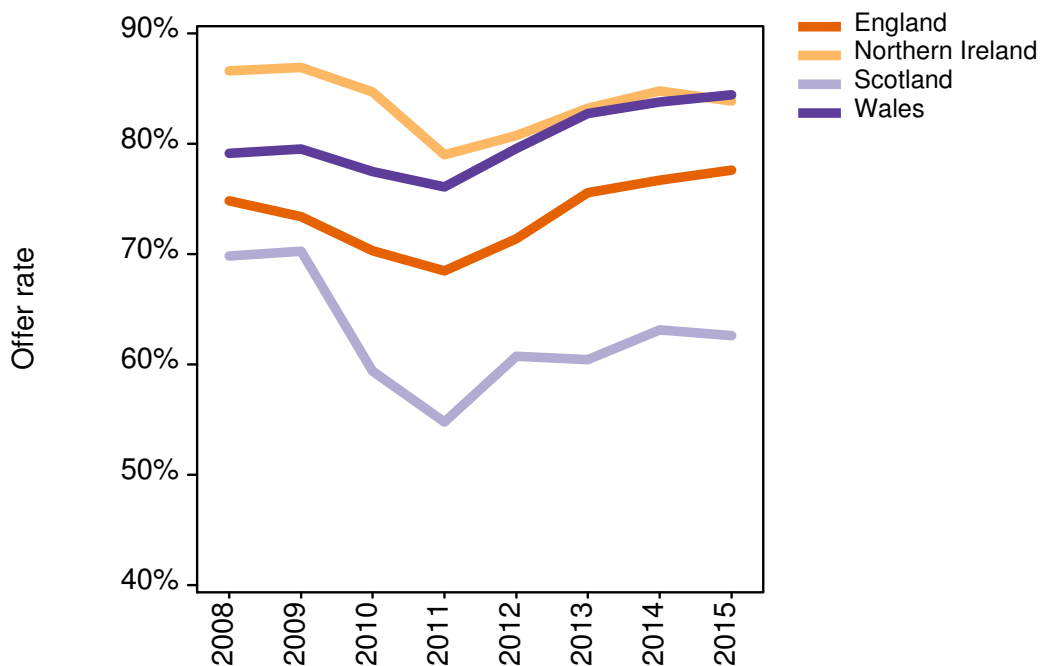
**Offer-making by providers**

Offer-making rates to applications will depend on the choices made by applicants (in terms of the courses applied to) as well as the decisions made by providers. However, since the pattern of choices made by applicants in terms of, for example tuition fees, has been shown to be generally similar over this period, changes in trends in offer-making can be interpreted primarily as changes in provider offer-making decisions, in particular their demand for applicants of different types. Given the strong association of the offer rate with age, this analysis concentrates on offers made to 18 year old UK domiciled applicants to better identify changes in provider behaviour.

**English and Welsh providers more likely than ever to make offers to UK 18 year olds, offer rates for Scottish and Northern Irish providers fall**

The proportion of applications from 18 year old UK domiciled applicants who receive offers varies by the country of the provider. Between 2009 and 2011 applications became less likely to receive offers from providers across the UK. From 2011 to 2014, the offer rates of English, Welsh and Northern Irish providers increased year-on-year. In 2015, applications from these applicants to providers in Wales and Northern Ireland were most likely to receive an offer (84 per cent of applications), followed by England (78 per cent) and Scotland (63 per cent). The offer rate from English providers went up 0.9 percentage points from the previous cycle, and from Welsh providers 0.6 percentage points. As a result, offer rates to applications from providers in England and Wales were at the highest levels on record. The offer rate from Northern Irish providers fell for the first time since 2011, with a decrease of 0.9 percentage points in 2015. Applications to Scottish providers were less likely to result in an offer in 2015 than in 2014, following a reduction of 0.5 percentage points in the offer rate.

**Figure 28 Offer rate (application level) to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants by country of provider**

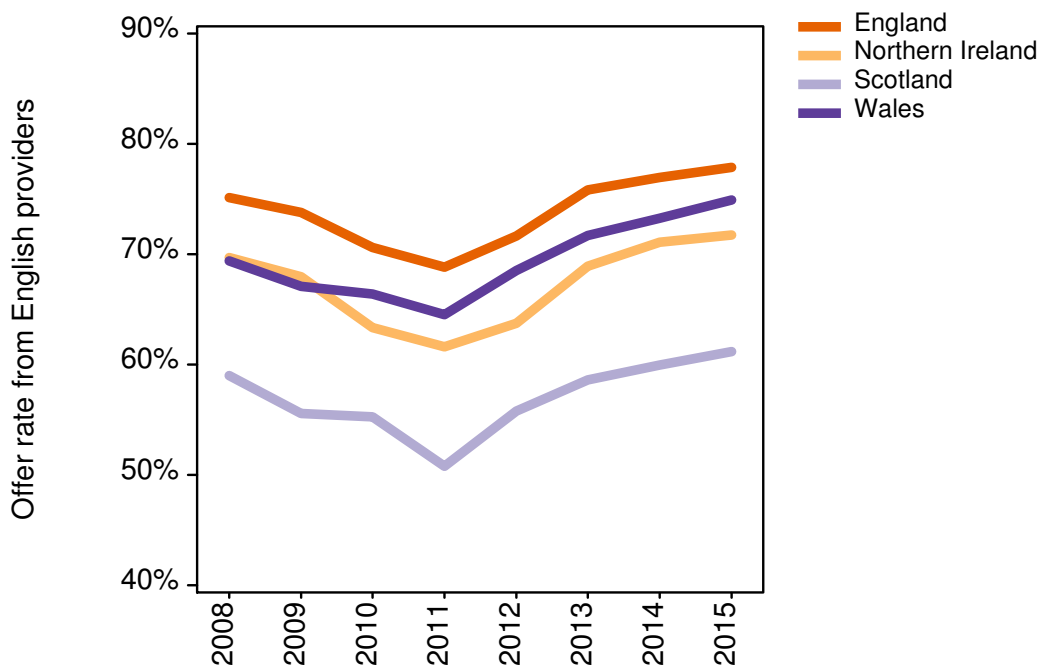


**English providers increase offer rates to 18 year olds from across the UK to new highs**

The offer rate from English providers in 2015 to applications varied by the country of the 18 year old applicant ranging from 61 per cent for applicants from Scotland in 2015, 72 per cent for applicants from Northern Ireland, 75 per cent for applicants from Wales, to 78 per cent for applicants from England. This range of around 15 to 18 percentage points is common across the period and the trends in offer rates are generally undifferentiated by country of domicile.

Offer rates from English providers to applicants from all UK countries increased by around 1 or 2 percentage points in 2015. These followed rises in both the 2013 and 2014 cycles so that applications from all countries are now over 13 to 20 per cent (proportionally) more likely to receive an offer than in 2011. For 18 year old applicants domiciled in all UK countries, the chances of receiving an offer from an application to an English provider are now higher than previously recorded in this period.

**Figure 29 Offer rate (application level) from English providers to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants by country of domicile**

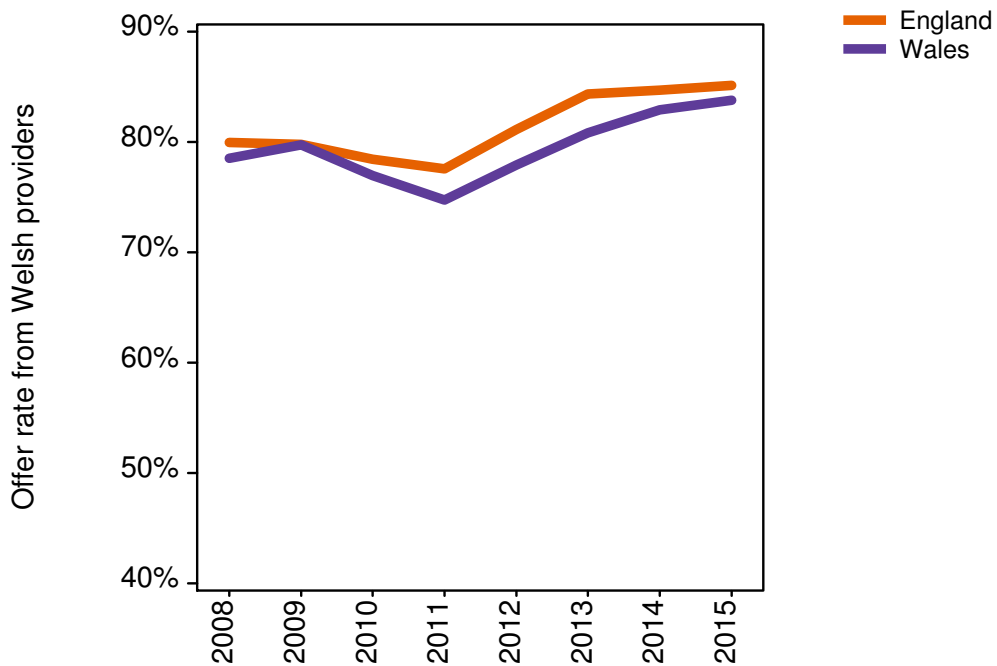


**Providers in Wales increase offer-making to both Welsh and English applications**

The large majority of UK applications to Welsh providers come from Wales and England. The offer rate by Welsh providers in 2015 to applications from 18 year olds was similar for applications from Wales (84 per cent) and from England (85 per cent). The trends in offer rates were also similar to applicants from both countries over the period, with offer rates to English applicants being slightly higher throughout.

Offer rates from Welsh providers increased by 0.5 percentage points for 18 year old applicants from England in 2015 and 0.9 percentage points for 18 year old applicants from Wales, with the offer rates to applications from both countries at their highest values for the period. For 18 year old applicants from Wales, this followed larger increases in 2012, 2013 and 2014, meaning applications from Welsh applicants were 12 per cent more likely to receive an offer than in 2011. The proportional increase in the offer rate for 18 year old English applicants to Welsh providers was similar to the previous year and these applicants are now 10 per cent more likely to receive an offer than in 2011.

**Figure 30 Offer rate (application level) from Welsh providers to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants from England and Wales**



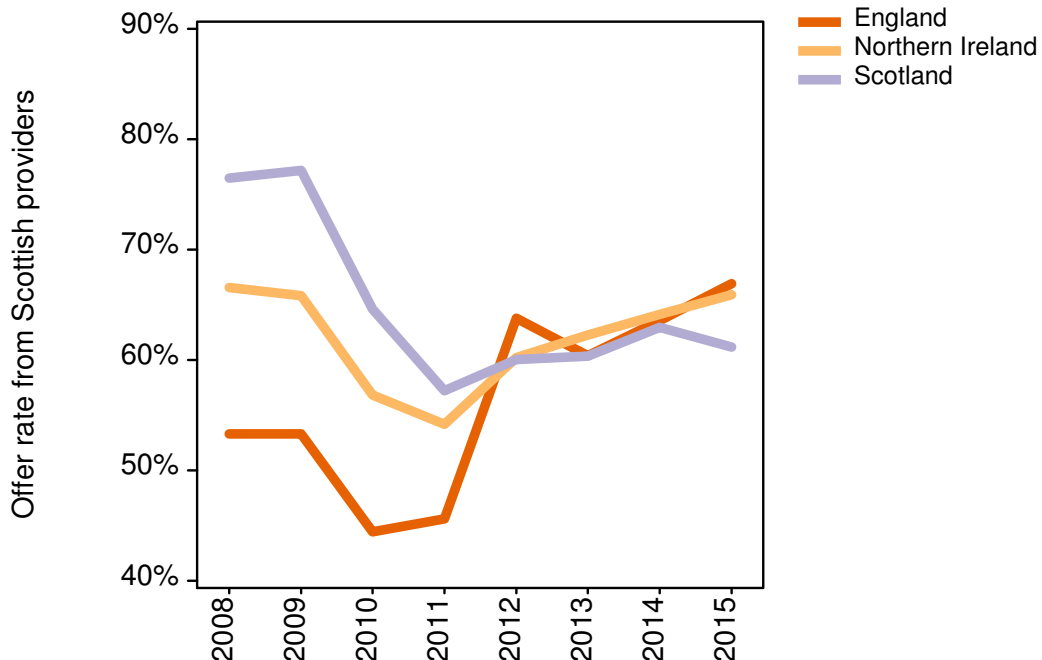
**Offer rates by Scottish providers to 18 year old applicants from England at record level, offer rates to applicants from Scotland down on 2014**

In the 2008 and 2009 cycles, Scottish providers made offers to around three quarters of applications from 18 year olds from Scotland and around a half of applications from 18 year olds from England. By 2011 offer-making rates to applications from both countries had decreased; to 57 per cent for Scottish applicants and 46 per cent for English applicants.

In 2015, the offer rate to applications from Scottish applicants decreased by 1.8 percentage points to 61.2 per cent (-2.8 per cent proportionally) following an increase in 2014. The offer rate to applications from English applicants increased by 3.3 percentage points to 66.9 per cent (+5.3 per cent proportionally), exceeding the previous recorded high of 63.8 per cent in 2012.

Since 2012, offer rates by Scottish providers to English applicants have been slightly ahead of offers rates to Scottish applicants, whereas six years ago applications from Scottish applicants were proportionately around 45 per cent more likely to receive an offer than applications from English applicants. In 2015, applications from English applicants were proportionately around 9 per cent more likely to receive an offer than applications from Scottish applicants. The offer rate by Scottish providers to Northern Irish applicants has increased steadily at a rate of around 3 percentage points per year since 2012.

**Figure 31 Offer rate (application level) from Scottish providers to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Scotland**





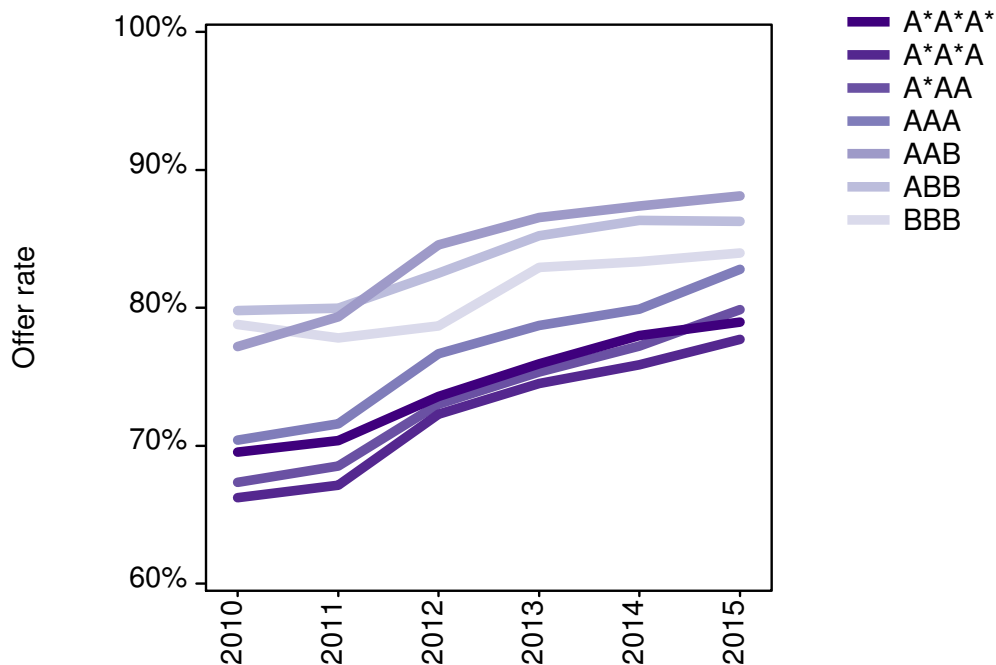
**Offer rates increase to applicants who are predicted A levels from AAB to A\*A\*A\*, offer rates to those predicted ABB down on 2014**

For 18 year old applicants who apply with A level results pending it is possible to investigate offer rates by the profile of three highest predicted A level grades. This reflects the information available to the provider at the time the offer is made. Figure 32 shows the offer rates to applications from English 18 year old applicants across some of the most common predicted grade profiles.

The rank order of the level of offer-making to applicants holding each of these profiles is complex, reflecting both provider decisions and the applicant choice of course. For example, the offer rate to applications from applicants predicted AAB is higher than for those predicted BBB. But when applicants are predicted one or more A\* grades, the offer rate goes down again, reflecting the competitiveness of the most selective courses.

There was a relatively narrow range of offer rates across these grade profiles ranging (in 2015) from 77.7 per cent for A\*A\*A to 88.1 per cent for AAB. The offer rates to applications from all selected grade profiles increased from 2012 to 2014. In the 2015 cycle, applications from those predicted AAA increased the most with 2.9 percentage points whilst the offer rate for those predicted ABB fell for the first time over the period by 0.1 percentage points. The offer rate to those with the remaining grade profiles increased by at least 0.6 percentage points in 2015.

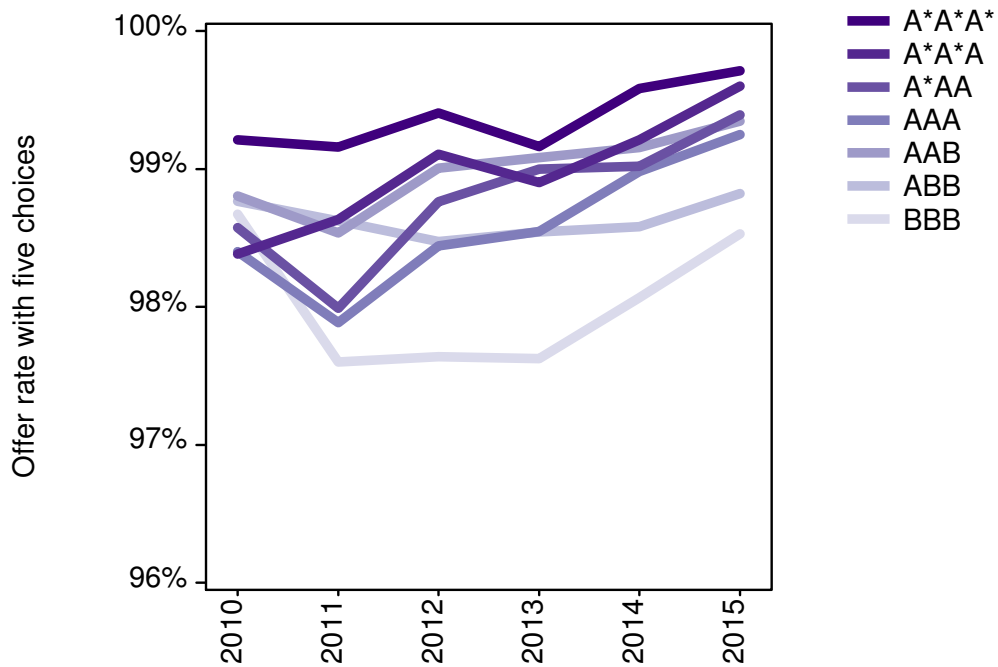
**Figure 32 Offer rate (application level) to 18 year old English domiciled main scheme applicants by selected predicted grade profile of applicant**



**Young applicants over a wide range of predicted grades who made five choices were at least 98 per cent likely to get an offer**

Most 18 year old English applicants with three predicted grades at A level will make five applications. The proportion of these applicants who received offers was very high across common grade profiles ranging from 98.5 per cent of those predicted BBB to 99.7 per cent of those predicted A\*A\*A\*. There was a slight increase in the proportion of applicants receiving at least one offer for all grade profiles (selected for illustration) in the 2015 cycle.

**Figure 33 Proportion of 18 year old English domiciled main scheme applicants that receive at least one offer (from five choices) by predicted grade profile of applicant**



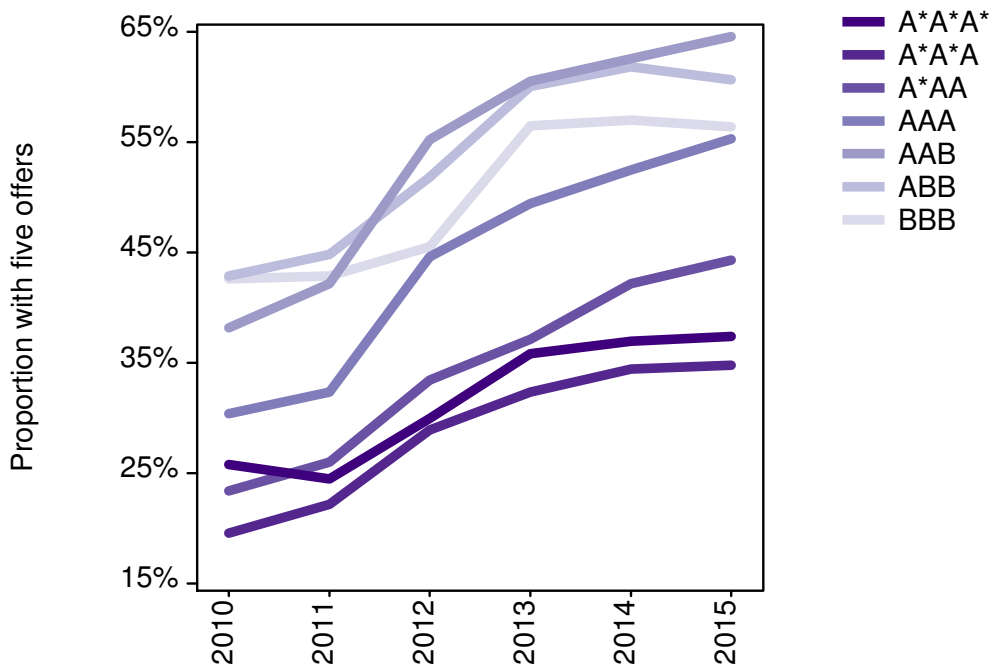
**The proportion of applicants getting five offers increases across AAB to A\*A\*A\* grade profiles, falls for BBB and ABB grade profiles**

Many 18 year old applicants who apply to five choices with three predicted A level grades will get offers from all five of their applications. From 2012 to 2014, this offer rate increased across all the top predicted grade profiles to record highs for each. 2015 was the first year since 2011 that the offer rate of any of these selected grade profiles decreased, with falls in the offer rates for those predicted BBB and ABB of 0.6 percentage points and 1.2 percentage points respectively. In 2015, the proportion getting five offers ranged from 34.7 per cent of those predicted A\*A\*A to 64.6 per cent of those predicted AAB.

For those predicted AAA, the probability of getting five offers increased the most (proportionally) in 2015 by around 5.3 per cent. Those predicted A\*AA had the next highest proportional increase in this offer rate by 5.1 per cent. Those predicted ABB and BBB had proportional decreases in 2015 of around 2.0 per cent and 1.1 per cent.

Between the 2011 and 2015 cycles, the proportion of applicants with predicted grade profiles of AAB and above getting five offers increased by at least a half. Over the same period, the proportion of applicants with predicted grade profiles of ABB and BBB getting five offers increased by around a third.

**Figure 34 Proportion of 18 year old English domiciled main scheme applicants that receive offers to each of five choices by predicted grade profile of applicant**



## Offer rates for different groups at higher tariff providers

Higher tariff providers show the greatest differentiation in offer rates by predicted A level grades. There are two key deadlines for applications to higher tariff providers: these are the October deadline for courses at Oxford and Cambridge and for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses, and the January deadline for most other courses. October deadline applicants have their predicted grades made earlier in the year, are likely to have stronger predicted qualifications overall, and offers they receive may involve factors other than the predicted grades, e.g. interviews. For these reasons we consider applications to these two deadlines separately in this section.

## Defining a consistent group of applicants for looking at offer making

Offer rates can vary by many factors, for instance by type of qualification or the age of the applicant. As differences in offer rates by groups such as men and women are small relative to those from age or qualification type, the following analysis was based on a large subset of applicants with a consistent set of key characteristics, to help make a reliable like-for-like comparison between different groups.

The applicants were 18 year olds from England applying to UCAS for the first time. This group were most likely to be studying for A level qualifications when they applied, and not previously attained level 3 qualifications. Most 18 year old applicants to higher tariff providers are studying for A level qualifications when they apply and the analysis is restricted to these.

The applicants in the subset held predicted grades for three or four A levels, with selected complete predicted grade profiles in the range BBB to A\*A\*A\*A\*, went on to achieve A levels with at least three D grades, and did not attain any BTEC, Scottish Highers or Advanced Highers or the International Baccalaureate. The predicted grade profiles selected represent the large majority of these subset of applications (around 80 per cent), even when considering applicants with five or more predicted A level grades. The applications considered are to higher tariff providers in England for immediate entry (not deferred). Applications at the October deadline cover on-time main scheme applications to at least one October deadline course (any concurrent applications to courses not covered by the October deadline are considered in this group), and applications at the January deadline include on-time main scheme applications made by applicants that applied after the October deadline and before the January deadline. The data for six cycles, 2010 to 2015, are combined to increase group sizes and reduce the range of variability in the results.

## Calculating an average offer rate for a group of applicants

Two factors are dominant in the offer rate to these applicants – their predicted grades and the course applied to. The analysis controls for these factors through calculating an average offer rate for a group of applicants. This average offer rate represents what the offer rate to a group of applicants would be if they had exactly the same chance of receiving an offer as all applicants applying to the same courses with the same predicted grades. In these calculations the average offer rate is constructed with reference to every combination of the predicted grade profiles shown on the graphs and the course applied to (represented by detailed subject group at a named provider).

Different groups of applicants with the same predicted A level grades may make different patterns of choices of courses, and be presenting with a different set of predicted grade profiles. This can result in groups recording very different levels of actual offer rates, mostly reflecting their

particular combinations of courses, and strength of predicted grades. Since the average offer rate takes these different patterns of applications and grades into account, then the difference between the actual offer rate for a group and the calculated offer rate represents a difference in offer making, specific for that group, that cannot be accounted for by the choices made by that group and the strength of their predicted qualifications.

Many of the groups looked at are small in number. For example, for free school meal October deadline applicants, ten of the 14 predicted grade profiles represent 150 or fewer applications a year. Even with the data for six cycles combined, the totals remain small and the degree of random variation that would be expected is appreciable. To aid the interpretation of the results an indicative expected range of variation is added to the Figures (the grey band). This represents the range that the observed offer rate would be expected to fall within (95 per cent of the time) if the underlying propensity for the group to receive an offer was that described by the average offer rate for that grade profile. This is an indicative range that does not, for instance, take account of the contribution of the group itself to the average for a particular grade profile. The variability range is specific to the predicted grade being reported, not to the overall set of the results. For example, the offer rate may be within the expected range for each grade profile but the overall rate may be significantly different from the overall average offer rate.

Only the two factors listed – predicted grade profile and course applied to – are referenced by the average offer rate calculation. Many other factors that may play a part in the decision to make an offer, such as the subject of the A level studied, their relevance to a course, or the grade in each subject; GCSE attainment; personal statements; teacher references; interviews; admissions tests; or any other criteria (such as work experience or portfolios) that may be part of the admissions decision are not referenced. Differences between the offer rate and average offer rate for a group may reflect differences between the group and other applicants across these factors.

**Offer rates across combinations of predicted attainment and course applied to vary widely**

Predicted attainment is one factor that is related to the chances of an application receiving an offer. One other factor is the relationship between predicted attainment and the course applied to. For example, applications to some courses would be likely to receive an offer when the applicant has been predicted a grade profile of AAA at A level, whereas for other courses the same predicted grades may be less likely to receive an offer.

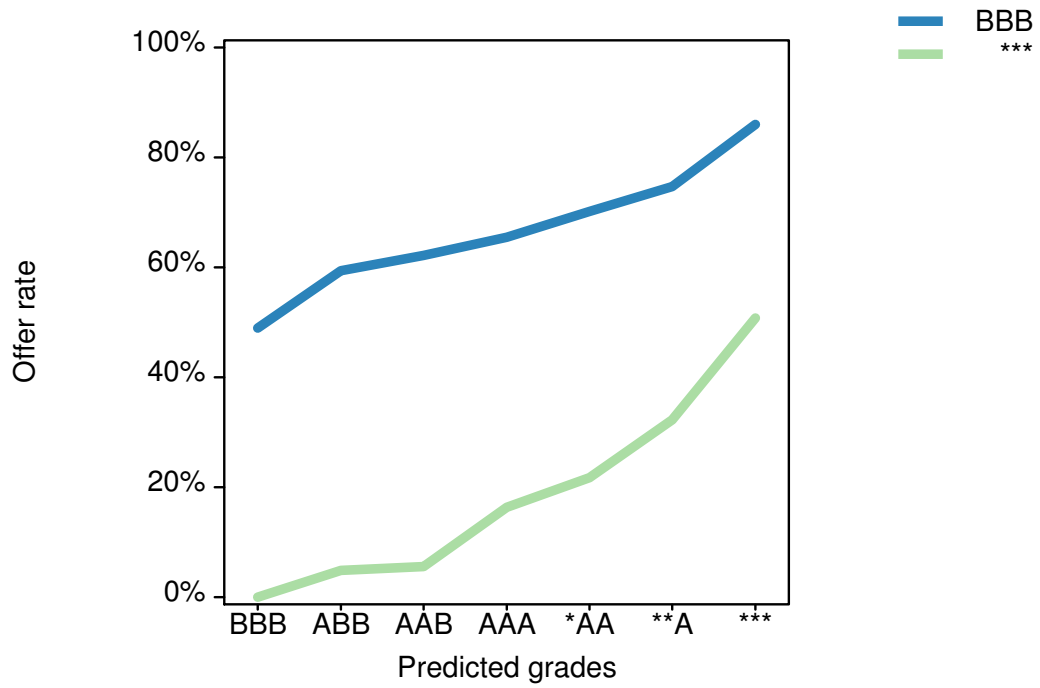
To illustrate this Figure 35 shows offer rates across a range of predicted A level grade profiles for two example groups of courses. The two example groups of courses are those where the offer rate is around 50 per cent for applicants predicted exactly BBB (the first group, 'lower grade' courses) or A\*A\*A\* (the second group, 'higher grade' courses).

The graph makes two properties of offer making clear. Firstly, for any given predicted grade profile an applicant is more likely to receive an offer from a 'lower grade' course than for a 'higher grade' course. For example, applicants with a predicted grade profile of AAA have an offer rate of 66 per cent when applying to 'lower grade' courses, but much less (50 percentage points less) when applying to 'higher grade' courses.

Secondly, for applications to any particular course, the offer rate increases for applicants with higher predicted grade profiles. For example, applicants to 'higher grade' courses with predicted grades of AAB have a 6 per cent offer rate, whereas applicants to the same courses with predicted grades of A\*A\*A\* have a 52 per cent offer rate. That is, for these courses the offer rate increases by over 10 percentage points for each additional predicted A level grade.

These changes in offer rates, of (for example) 50 percentage points between courses and 10 percentage points for individual grades, are large. Both the predicted grades, and the choice of courses, can vary substantially between different groups so it is important to control for these, as the average offer rate does.

Figure 35 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline courses with 50 per cent offer rates for selected predicted grade profiles (2010-2015)



## Offer rates from higher tariff providers to different ethnic groups at January deadline close to average offer rates

Figure 36 shows the offer rates for January deadline applications from the White ethnic group by predicted A level grade profile. Generally offer rates to this group were relatively high, over 70 per cent on average across all grade profiles, and increased as the strength of the predicted grade profile increases.

Figure 37 shows the offer rates for applications from the Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups combined. Reporting the offer rates for the combined groups increases the number of applications at each profile, reducing the range of variation. The grey band indicates the average offer rate for the courses applied to at each predicted grade point. The range represents the variability of offer rates that might be expected for a group of this size if their underlying propensity to receive an offer was the same as the average offer rate. This range is wider for grade profiles where there are fewer applications.

For each predicted A level grade profile the offer rate to the combined group was close to the average offer rate and, at each grade point, falls within the range of offer rates that are typical for the pattern of applications made by the group.

The offer rate to the Asian, Black, Mixed and Other combined group over all the predicted grade profiles was 76.4 per cent, very close to the average offer rate for this pattern of applications (76.5 per cent).



Figure 36 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from the White ethnic group

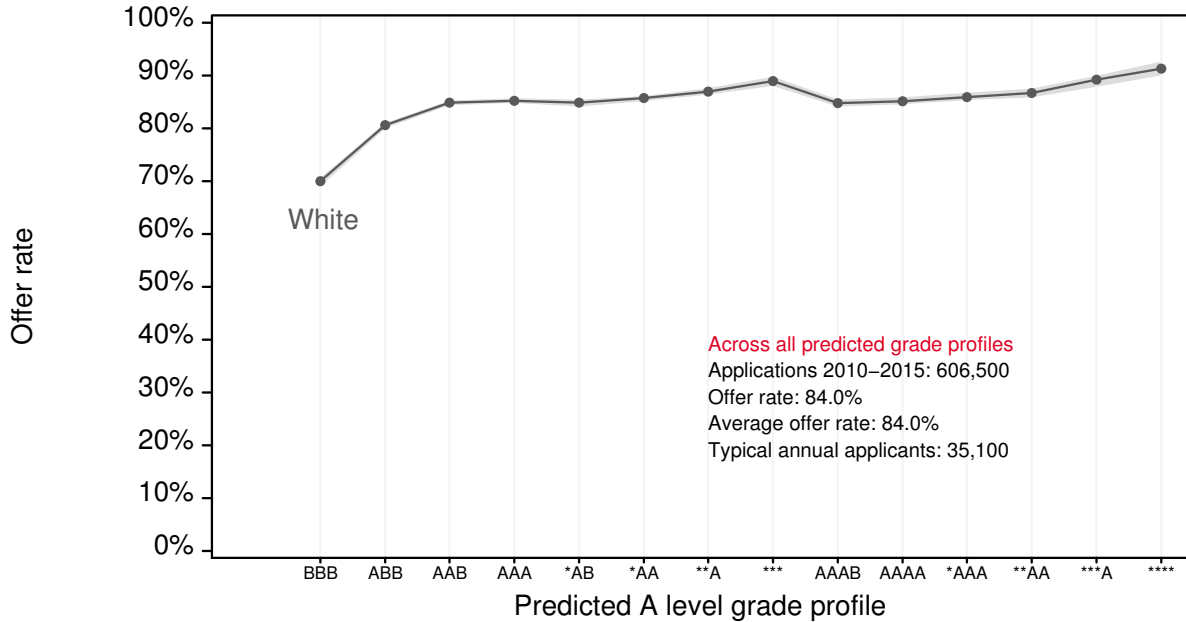
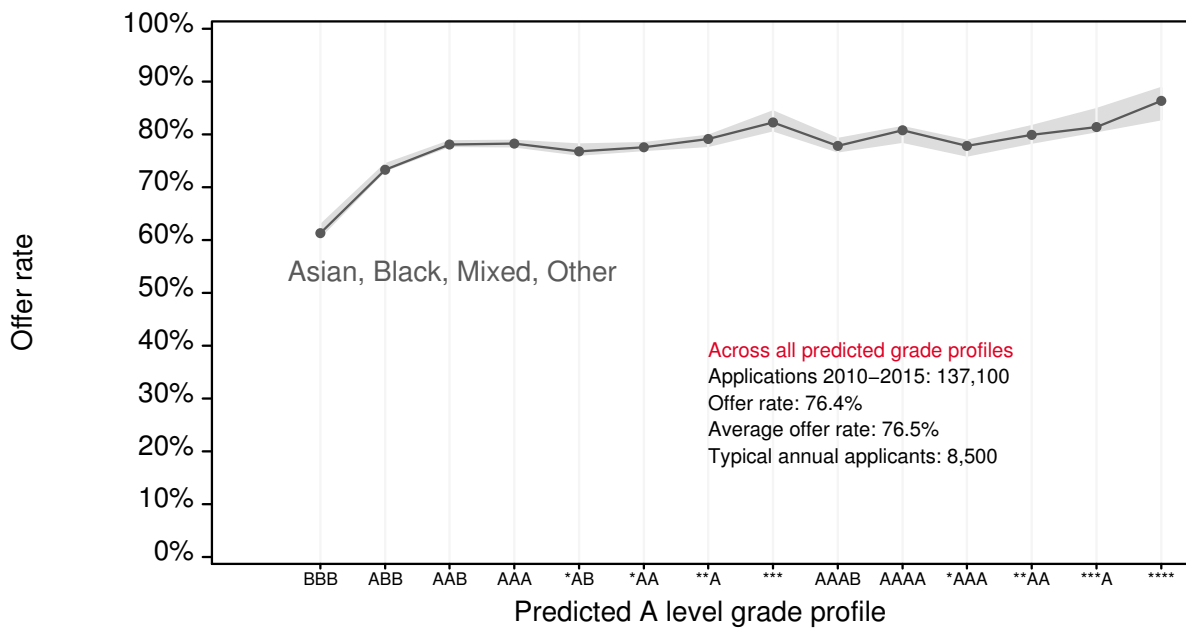


Figure 37 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from the Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups



## Higher tariff provider offer rates to individual ethnic groups at the January deadline are close to average offer rates

The following three figures show the offer rates for January deadline applications for the Asian, Black and Mixed ethnic groups separately. The grey bands indicate the average offer rate for these courses at each predicted grade profile and the typical range. The range represents the variability of offer rates than might be expected for a group of this size if their underlying propensity to receive an offer was the same as the average offer rate. This range is wider for grade profiles where there are fewer applications.

There were more applications from the Asian ethnic group than the other two ethnic groups. At each predicted A level grade profile the offer rate was within the range of offer rates that could be expected for the pattern of applications from this group, and usually lie within one percentage point of the average offer rate. Overall the offer rate to this group is 75.2 per cent, the same as the average offer rate.

The Black ethnic group is the smallest of the reported groups and the greater random variation expected in the offer rates is reflected in the wider grey band. The offer rates were close to the average offer rate and not outside of the range of variation for any particular grade profile. For each of the three-grade predicted profiles the offer rate was below the average offer rate, typically by less than two percentage points. The four-grade predicted profiles typically have higher offer rates than the average, but also lie within the expected variability range for each predicted grade profile. Overall the offer rate to the Black group is 75.4 per cent, 0.5 percentage points lower than the average offer rate of 75.9 per cent.

Amongst applications from the Mixed ethnic group the pattern of offer rates was similar to the other groups and all but one grade profile is within the expected range. Applications at the January deadline from the Mixed ethnic group with a predicted grade profile of AAAA were slightly higher than the range of variation (though this would be expected to be the case in around one case in twenty). Overall the offer rate to this group was 80.7 per cent, slightly higher than the average offer rate for this pattern of applications of 80.6 per cent.

Figure 38 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from the Asian ethnic group

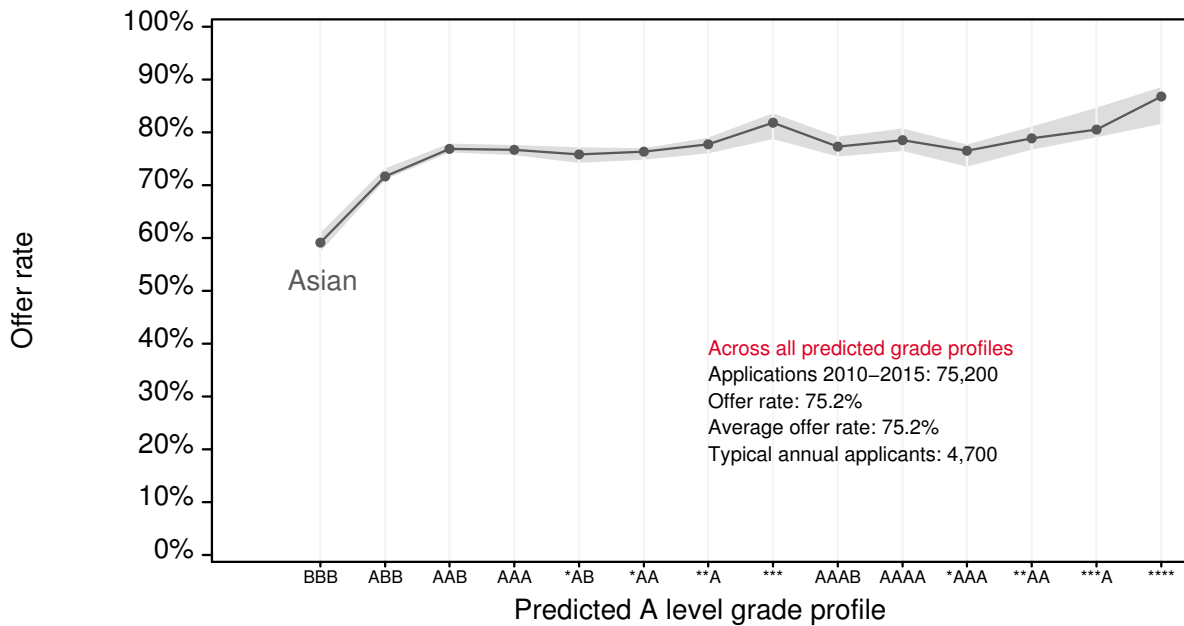


Figure 39 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from the Black ethnic group

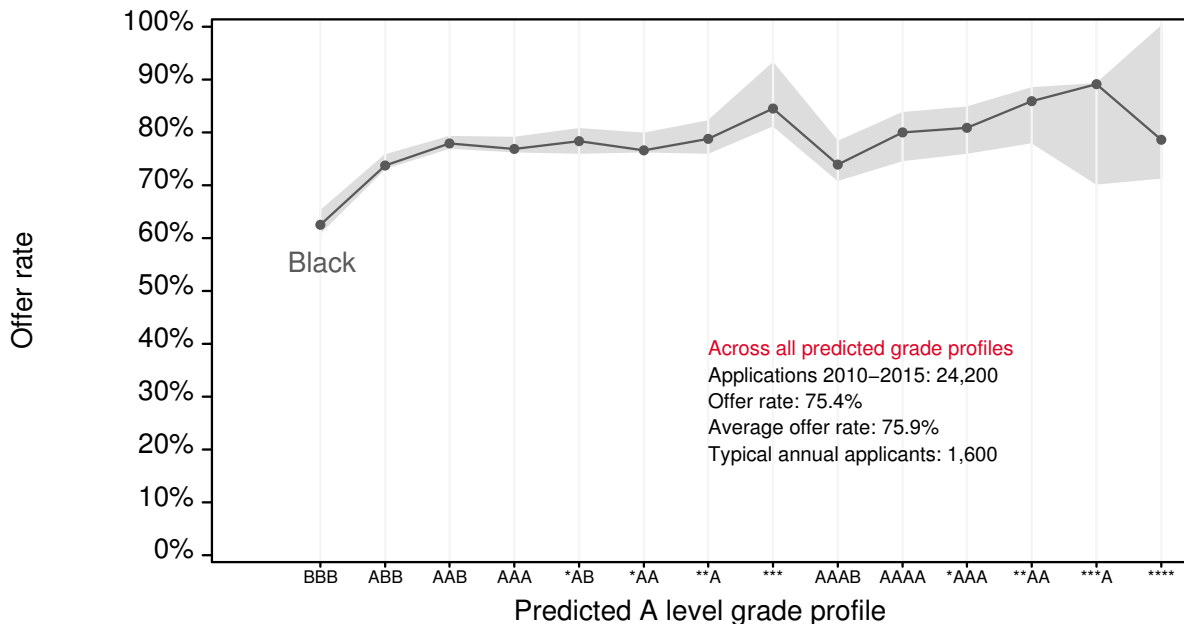
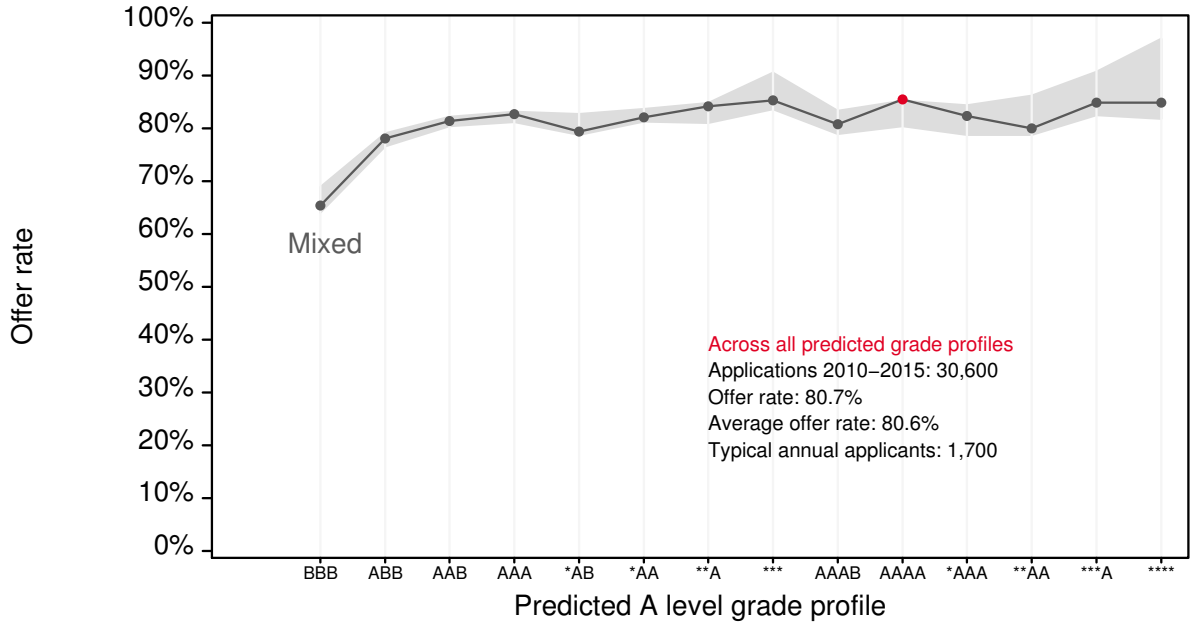


Figure 40 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from the Mixed ethnic group



**Higher tariff provider offer rates to October deadline applications by ethnic group close to average, one percentage point lower for the combined Asian, Black, Mixed and Other group**

Figure 41 shows the offer rates for applications from October deadline applicants in the White ethnic group by predicted A level grade profile. The offer rates were generally more differentiated by predicted grade profile than the offer rates for the White ethnic group at the January deadline, varying from 34 per cent for applications with predicted grade profile of BBB to 77 per cent for those with predicted grade profile of A\*A\*A\*. A similar trend of increasing offer rates exists within the four-grade predicted profiles, with offer rates varying from 47 per cent for those with predicted grade profiles of AAAB to 81 per cent for A\*A\*A\*A\*.

The offer rates to Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups (combined together, shown in Figure 42) were close to the average offer rate but typically lower by between 0.5 percentage points and 2.6 percentage points. Offer rates for this group were lower than the expected range of variation about the average offer rate for around half the grade profiles.

Overall the offer rate to applications from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other October deadline applicants was 50.3 per cent, 1.4 points lower than the average offer rate for this pattern of applications and predicted grades.

**Figure 41 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline applications 2010-2015 from the White ethnic group**

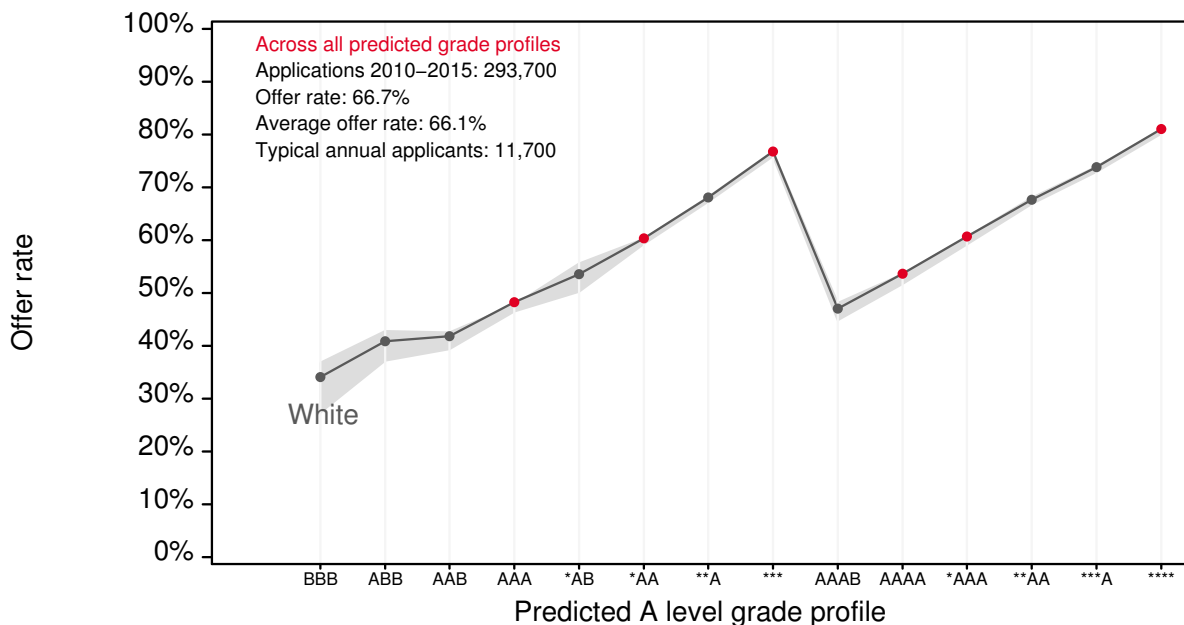
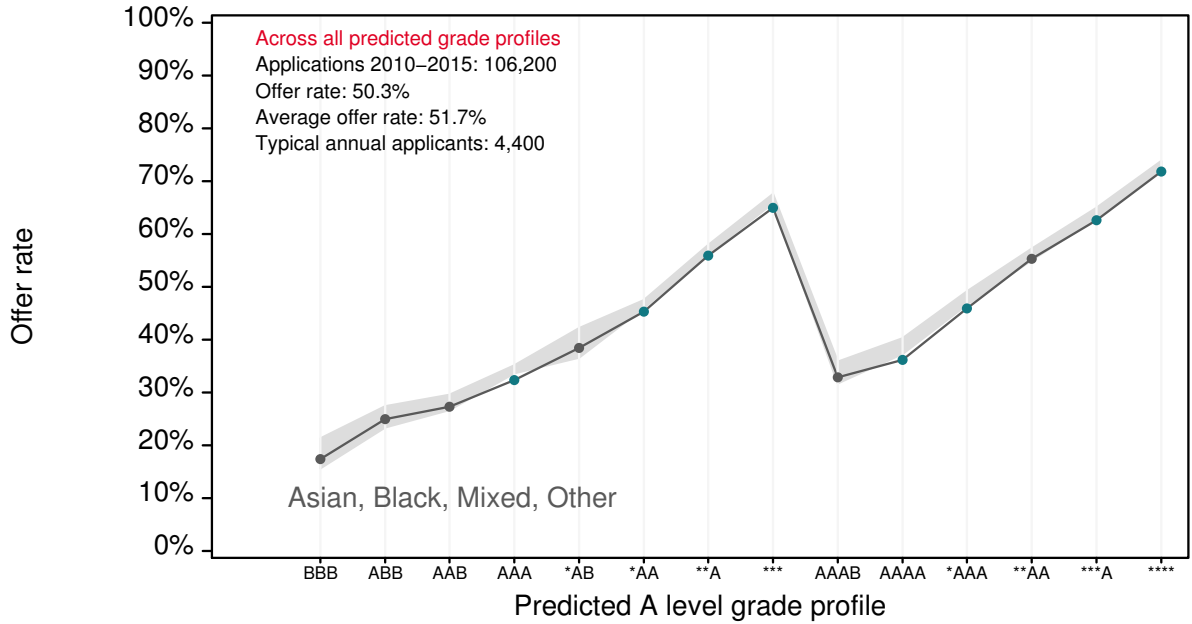


Figure 42 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline applications 2010-2015 from the Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups

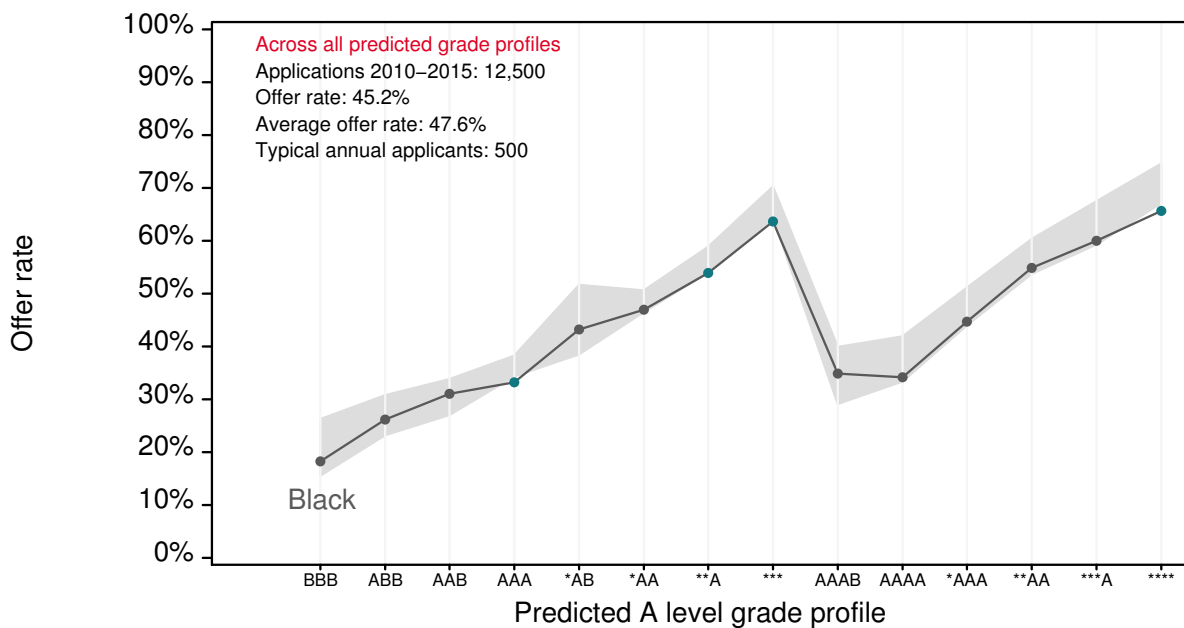


**Higher tariff provider offer rates to October deadline applications in the Black group similar to average offer rates, 2.4 percentage points lower than average offer rates overall**

October deadline applicants in the Black group have the largest difference between offer rates and average offer rates of the different ethnic groups. Offer rates to these applicants are similar to the average offer rate at each predicted grade profile, but more often lower than higher. Offer rates for this group were within the range of expected variation for ten of the 14 grade profiles, but the range is quite large for this group as the number of applicants in many profiles is relatively small.

Overall the offer rate to October deadline applicants in the Black ethnic group was 45.2 per cent, 2.4 percentage points lower than the average offer rate, the largest difference at October deadline of any ethnic group.

**Figure 43 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline applications 2010-2015 from the Black ethnic group**



**Offer rates for men and women close to average offer rates, men up to one percentage point lower than the average offer rate whilst offer rates to women are similarly higher than average**

Men and women are two roughly equal sized groups so that, aside from the differences in grades and courses applied to, any difference from the average for one group will be reflected as a difference in the opposite direction for the other group.

Offer rates to men at the January deadline and for October deadline courses (Figure 44 and Figure 45) generally reflect the average offer rate for that pattern of choices of university and subject at each predicted grade profile. Offer rates for this group were within the indicative range of expected variation about the average for 10 of the 14 grade profiles at the January deadline and 7 of the 14 grade profiles for October deadline courses.

Typically the offer rate to men is slightly lower than the average offer rate for most profiles, around 0.5 percentage points for January deadline applicants and around 1 percentage point for October deadline applicants. Overall the offer rate to men is 0.4 points lower than average for January deadline applications, and 0.8 points lower for October deadline. The differences for women are typically in the opposite direction so that, overall and allowing for differing grades and course choices, the offer rate to women is around one to two points higher than for men.

**Figure 44 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from men**

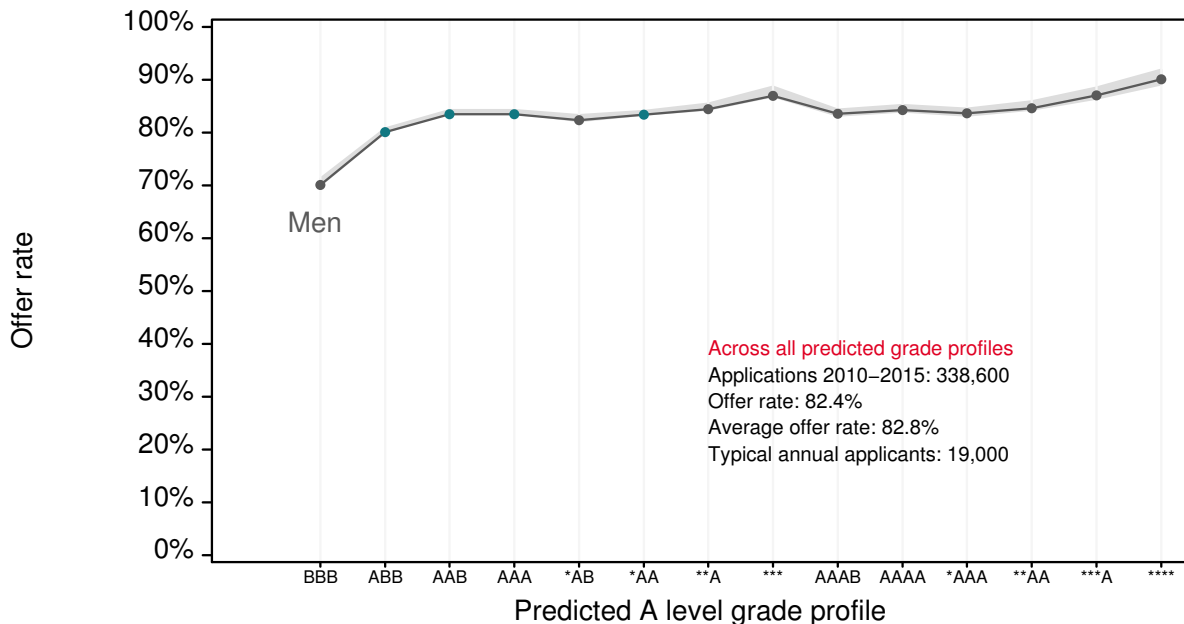
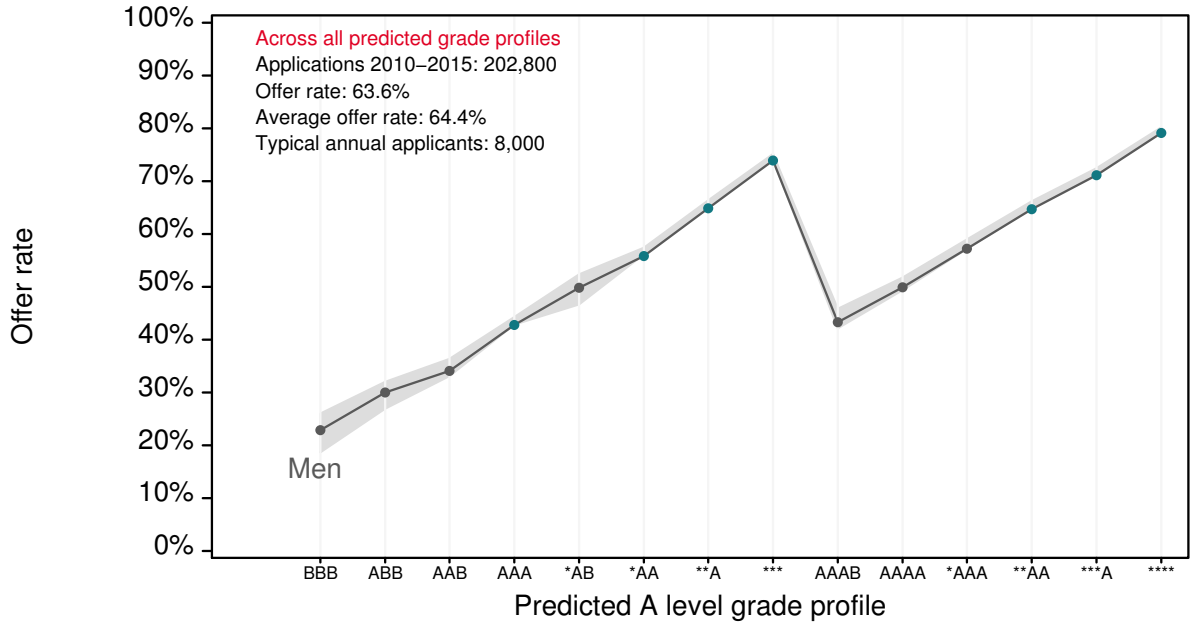




Figure 45 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline applications 2010-2015 from men



## **Offer rates for applicants from disadvantaged areas close to, but slightly below, average values**

Applicants from the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) represent around a fifth of the English 18 year old population, but because they have a lower than average application rates to higher tariff providers there are relatively small numbers in this analysis, particularly to October deadline courses. Figures 46 and 47 show the offer rates for those from the most disadvantaged areas against the average offer rate and the indicative expected range of variation (grey bands) about that average. The grey bands are wider for predicted grade profiles where there are fewer applicants.

The offer rates are close to the average offer rate across most grade profiles for both October and January deadline courses. For most profiles the offer rates are slightly lower than the average offer rate, by around a percentage point, but typically not outside of the range of expected variation for any particular grade profile.

Overall the offer rate to POLAR3 Q1 applicants is 81.8 per cent for January deadline applicants, 0.7 percentage points lower than the average offer rate and 57.0 per cent for October deadline applicants, 1.3 percentage points lower than the average offer rate.

Figure 46 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1)

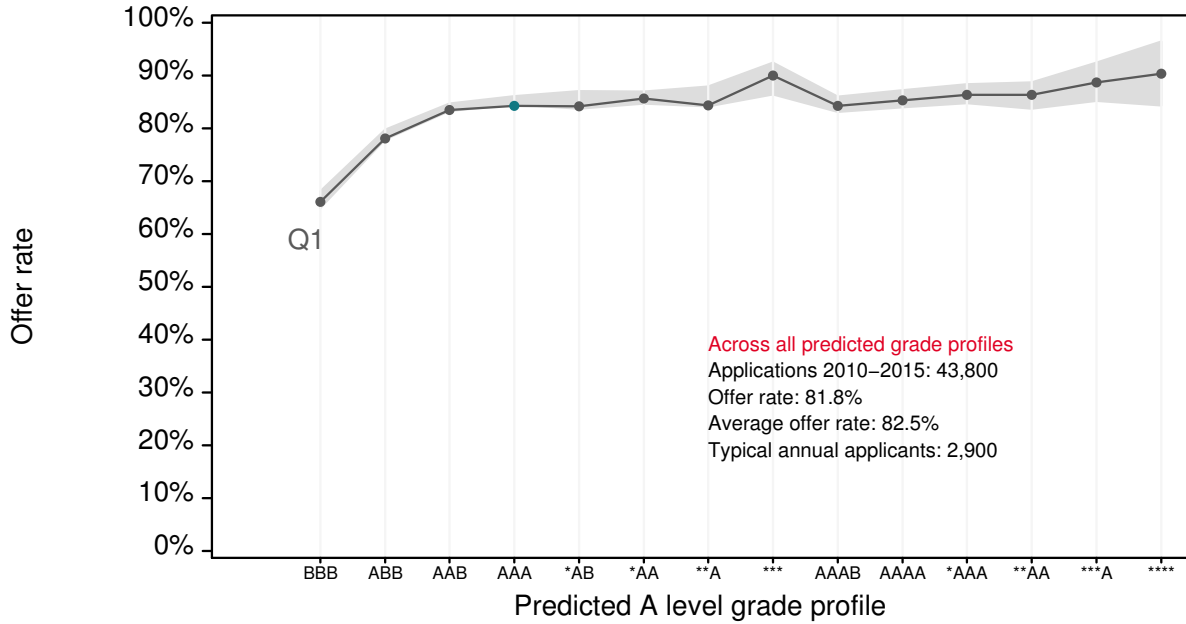
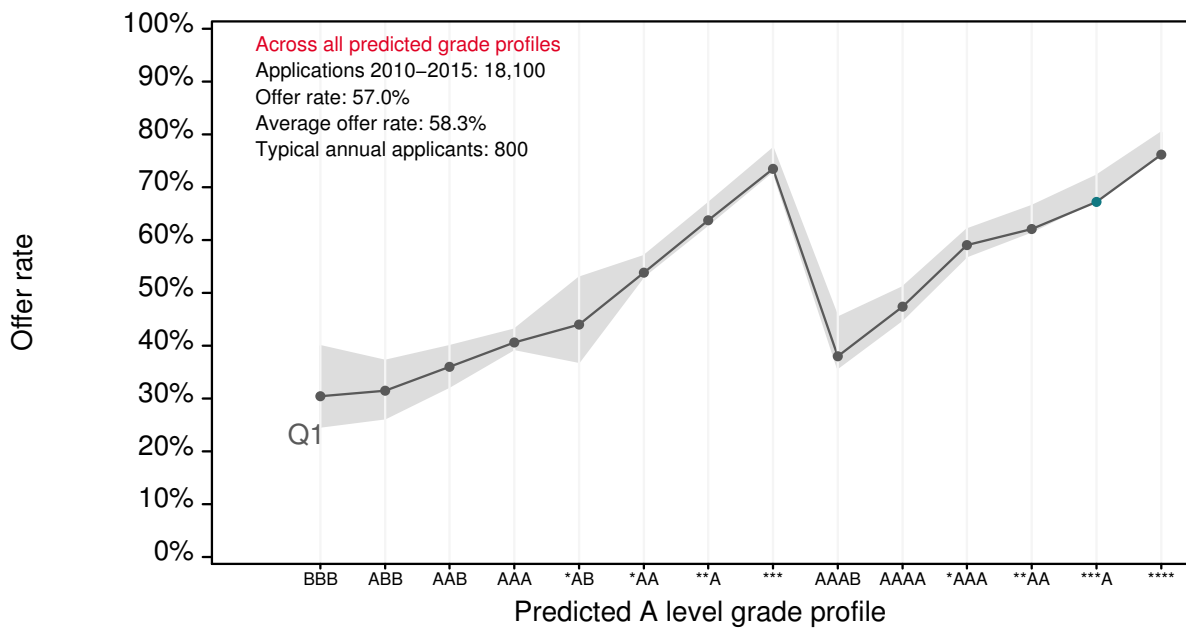


Figure 47 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline applications 2010-2015 from the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1)



## **Offer rates for applicants receiving free school meals similar to average offer rates but typically two to three percentage points lower than average**

Applicants recorded as receiving free school meals (FSM, a means-tested benefit that can be used as an indicator of low income – see page 115) when aged 15 have lower than average entry rates to higher education.

Figure 48 shows the offer rates to January deadline applications from applicants identified as in the FSM group. Offer rates were around 2 percentage points lower than the average offer rate for the combination of courses applied to for all but the three highest predicted grade profiles, and were outside of the range that might be expected for those predicted ABB, AAB and AAA. Overall the offer rate for free school meal January deadline applicants is 75.0 per cent, 1.6 percentage points lower than the average offer rate.

Offer rates for applications to October deadline courses for the FSM group were higher than average for the combination of courses applied to by those with predicted grades of BBB, ABB and AAB, but still within the expected range for each of those grades. For every other grade profile the offer rates are lower than the average offer rate. For six grade profiles the offer rate is below the expected range of variation about the average offer rate. For those predicted A\*AA, A\*A\*A and A\*A\*A\*, offer rates are between 3.5 and 5.5 percentage points lower than the average offer rate, and for those predicted four A\* grades offer rates are 7 percentage points lower than the average offer rate.

Overall offer rates to free school meal pupils at the October deadline were 46.1 per cent, 3.3 percentage points lower than the average offer rate.

Figure 48 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for January deadline applications 2010-2015 from free school meal (FSM) pupils

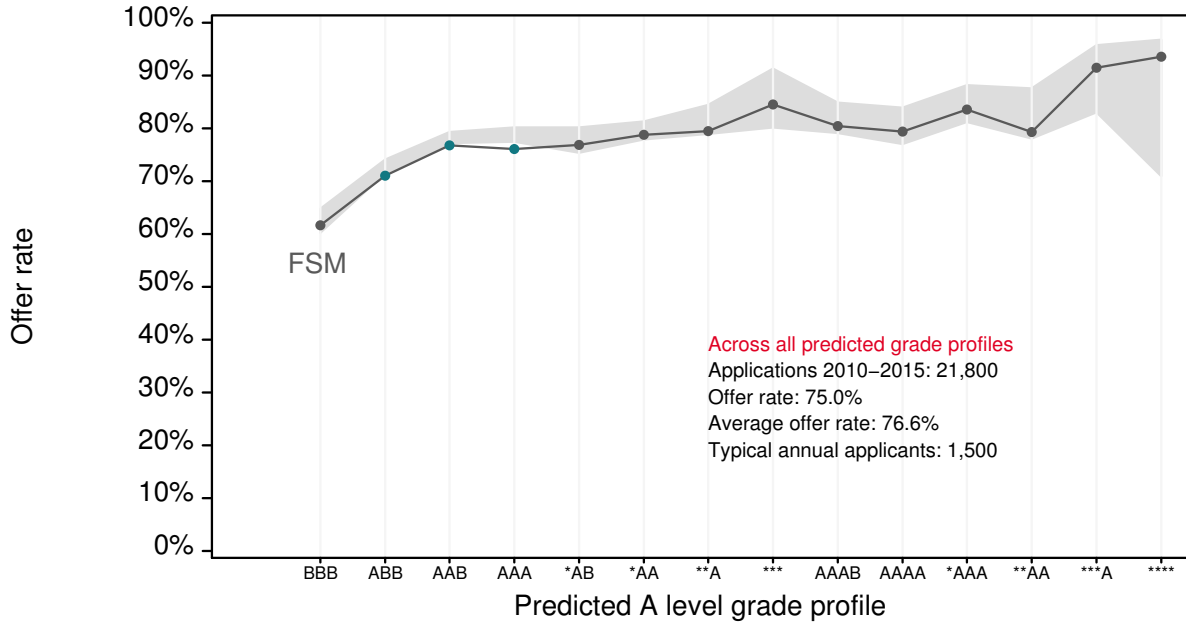
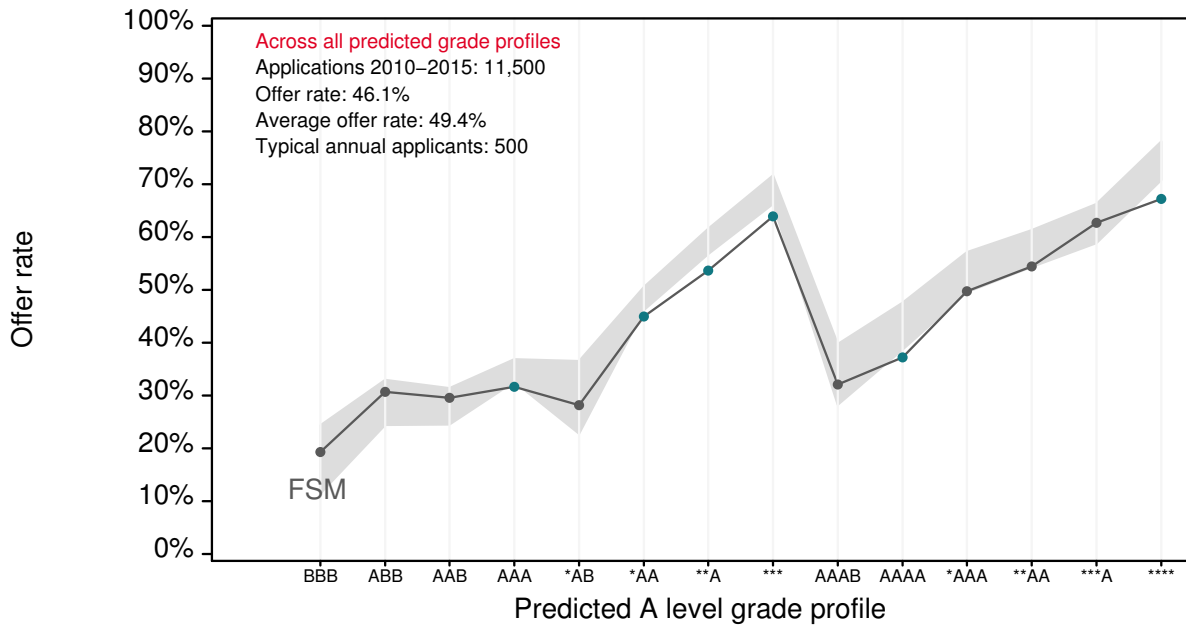


Figure 49 Offer rates by predicted A level grade profile for October deadline applications 2010-2015 from free school meal (FSM) pupils



## Unconditional offers

Offers made by providers to applicants are described as being either conditional or unconditional, depending on whether the applicant needs to meet conditions, usually related to attaining specific qualification profiles. Unconditional offers are commonly made when the provider is satisfied that the applicant has met any conditions for entry they may have, typically by already having been awarded any relevant qualifications.

### **For applicants holding offers aged 19 and over, and those holding offers with Scottish qualifications, around half receive unconditional offers, broadly the same as in 2011**

Figure 50 shows the proportion of all applicants holding at least one offer (either conditional or unconditional – referred to here as offer holders) in 2015 who received at least one unconditional offer, by age and qualification type. Figure 51 shows the same results for the 2011 cycle. In 2015, around half of offer holders aged between 19 and 30 whose main qualifications were A levels or BTECs were recorded as receiving at least one unconditional offer. These are similar levels as to those recorded in 2011, although there have been some increases for older age groups with BTECs.

For offer holders in 2015 whose main qualifications were BTECs 29 per cent of 19 year olds, and between 38 and 52 per cent for those aged between 20 and 30, received at least one unconditional offer. For offer holders in 2015 whose main qualifications were A levels, between 45 and 63 per cent of those aged 19 to 30 received at least one unconditional offer.

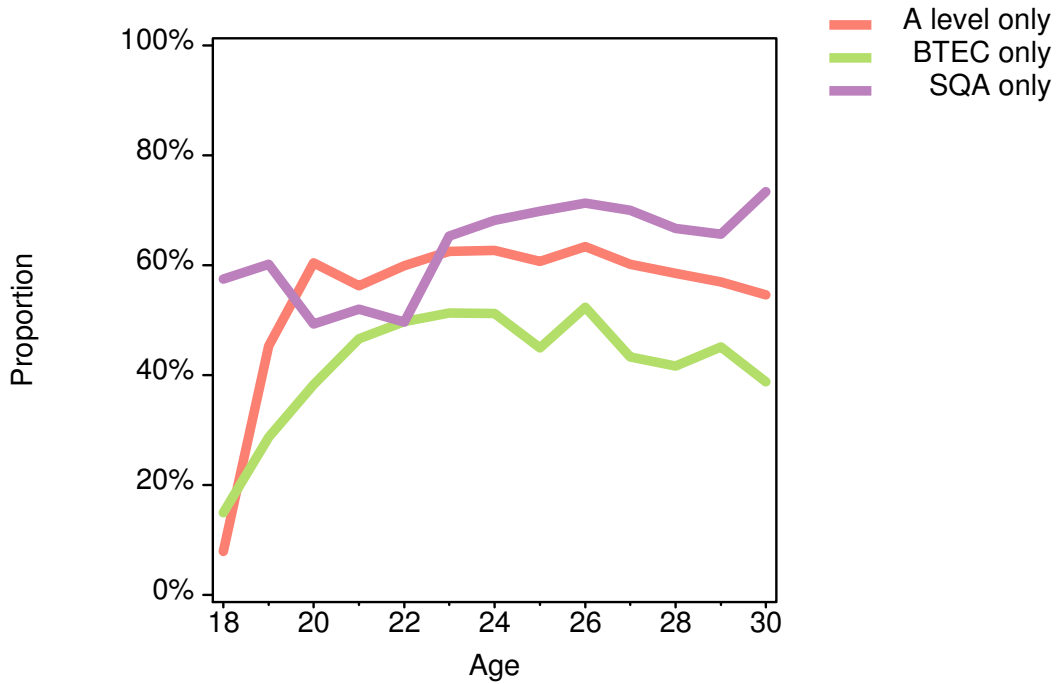
Amongst offer holders in 2015 with Scottish qualifications (SQA Highers and Advanced Highers), the majority of those aged between 18 and 30 received at least one unconditional offer. These proportions are similar in 2015 and 2011.

### **Proportion of 18 year old offer holders who received an unconditional offer has increased to 8 per cent for those with A levels, and 15 per cent for those with BTECs**

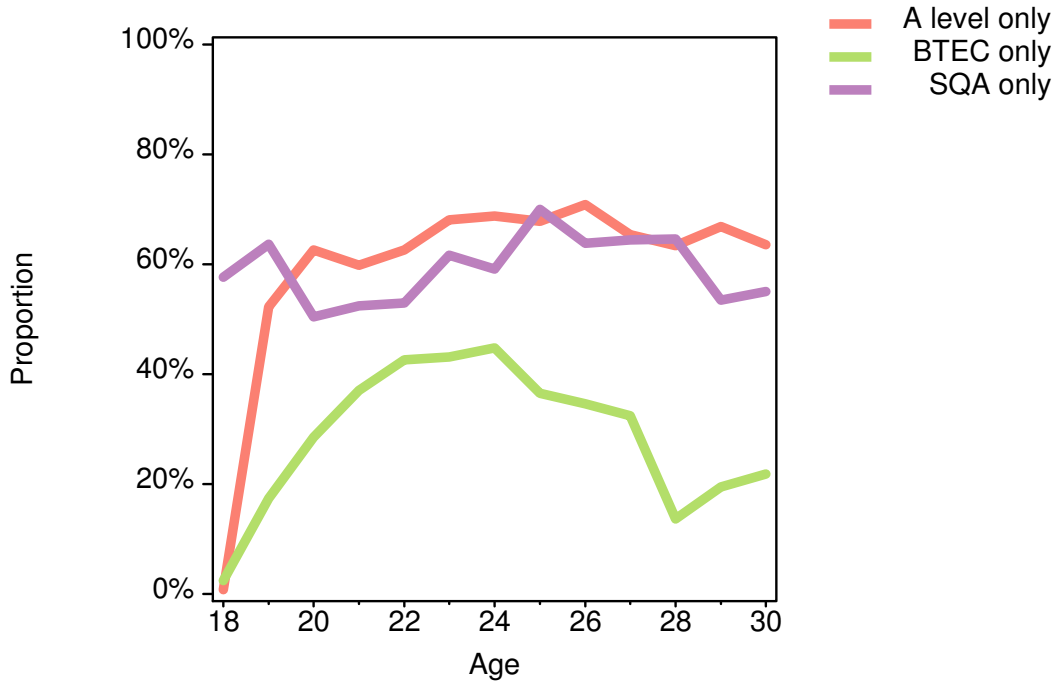
In 2011 a relatively low share of offer holders aged 18 received an unconditional offer: 1 per cent of those with A levels and 2 per cent of those with BTECs (Figure 51).

In 2015, offer holders aged 18 with A levels or BTECs remain less likely than any other age group to receive unconditional offers but the share of offers made to them that are unconditional has increased (Figure 50). For offer holders aged 18 and whose main qualifications were BTECs, 15 per cent were recorded as receiving an unconditional offer. For those with A levels the proportion was 8 per cent.

**Figure 50 Proportion of UK offer holders that received at least one offer recorded as unconditional, by age and qualifications held (2015 cycle)**



**Figure 51 Proportion of UK offer holders that received at least one offer recorded as unconditional, by age and qualifications held (2011 cycle)**



## **Unconditional offers to 18 year olds in England, Northern Ireland and Wales increased in 2015 to 2.5 per cent of offers to this group**

Main scheme 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales usually apply with most of their qualifications for entry to higher education still pending and with predicted, rather than achieved, results. They form a uniform group within which offer-making by providers, and the response of applicants, can be assessed from year to year.

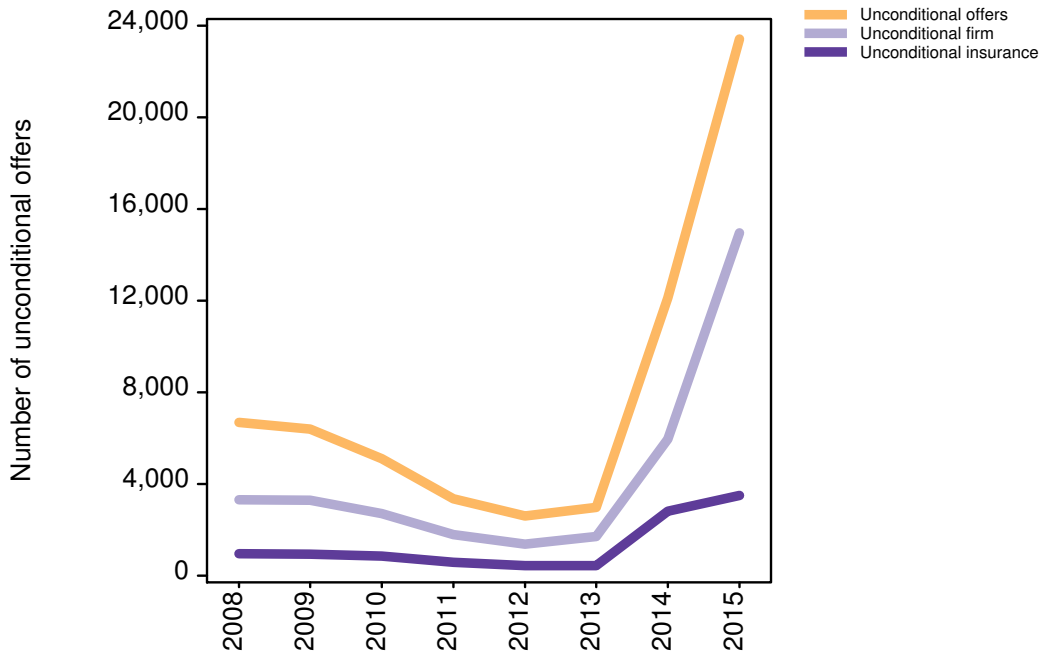
Between 2008 and 2013 relatively few unconditional offers were recorded as being made to 18 year old main scheme applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales, less than 1 per cent of all offers made to this group. Between 2013 and 2014 the number of unconditional offers recorded increased by 9,100 from 3,000 to 12,100 (1.4 per cent of all offers to this group). In 2015 the number of unconditional offers recorded increased by 11,300 (+93 per cent proportionally) to 23,400, (2.5 per cent of all offers to this group).

When an offer is made by a provider the applicant may choose to select that offer as their firm choice or as their insurance choice. The numbers of unconditional firm choices and unconditional insurance choices resulting from unconditional offers follow a similar trend to the number of unconditional offers made. In 2015 the number of unconditional firm choices increased by 9,000 from 6,000 to 15,000 (+150 per cent proportionally). The number of unconditional insurance choices increased from 2,800 to 3,500 (+24 per cent proportionally).

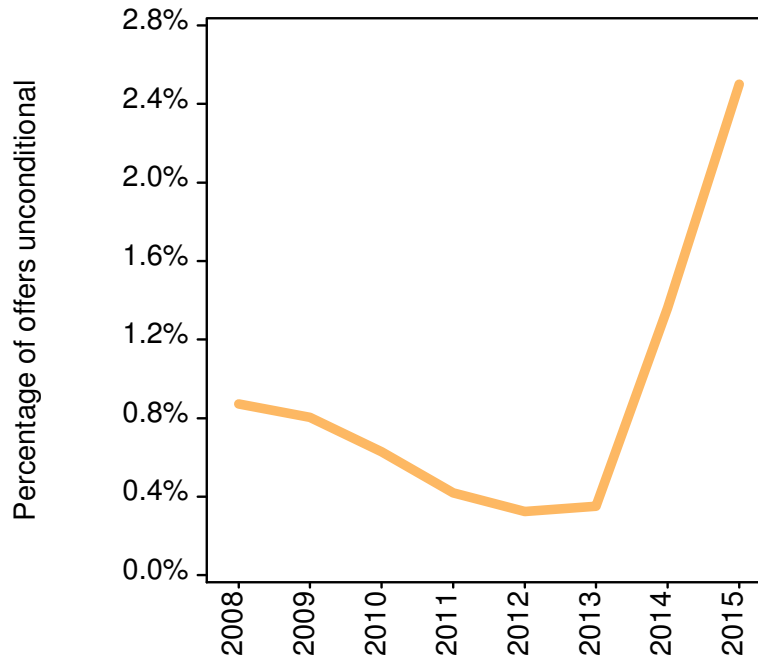
Some unconditional offers are only recorded at the stage when the applicant sets them as their firm choice. Approximate estimates, based on the number of unconditional firm choices, suggest that the total number of unconditional offers made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland and Wales, including those not directly recorded, could be around twice the recorded total.



**Figure 52 Number of unconditional offers made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland and Wales, the number made firm and the number made insurance**



**Figure 53 Proportion of offers made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that were unconditional**

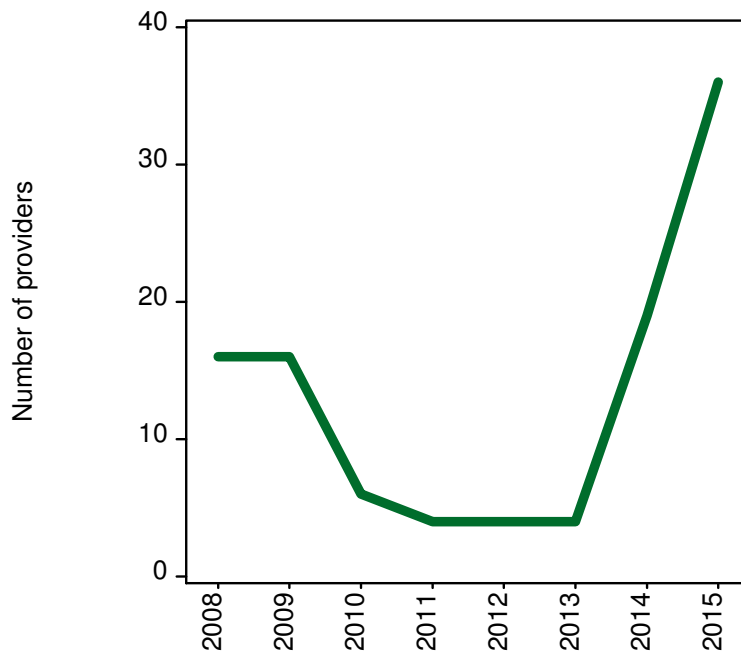


**More providers recorded as making unconditional offers to 18 year olds in 2015**

The number of providers that make a substantial number of unconditional offers (defined to be at least 100 unconditional offers in a cycle) to English, Northern Irish and Welsh 18 year olds has varied through time. In 2008 and 2009 there were 16 providers recorded as making at least 100 unconditional offers. This number subsequently fell to four providers in the 2011, 2012 and 2013 cycles before increasing to 19 providers in 2014 and then 36 providers in 2015.

The pattern in the number of providers making unconditional offers since 2013 mirrors that of the number of unconditional offers being made, indicating that the increase in the number of unconditional offers being made since 2013 is a result of an increasing number of providers making unconditional offers rather than a relatively stable number of providers increasing the number of unconditional offers they make.

**Figure 54 Number of providers that made at least 100 unconditional offers to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland and Wales**

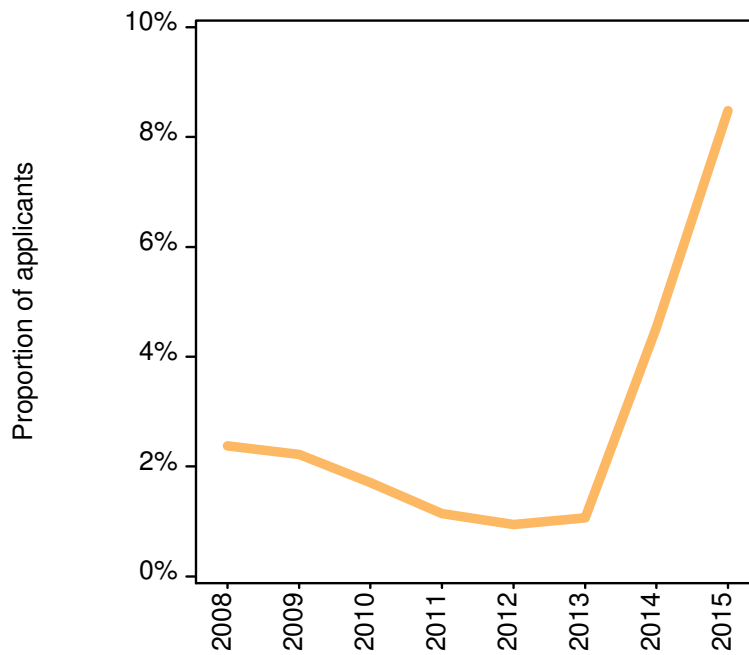


**Around one in 12 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales recorded as receiving at least one unconditional offer in 2015**

Although the proportion of offers to 18 year olds in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales recorded as unconditional is relatively small (2.5 per cent in 2015) these applicants typically make five applications so the chance of them receiving at least one unconditional offer is higher.

Figure 55 shows how the proportion of 18 year old main scheme applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that received at least one unconditional offer has changed since 2008. Between 2008 and 2012 the proportion of applicants with at least one recorded unconditional offer fell from 2.4 per cent to 0.9 per cent. The proportion increased slightly in 2013 to 1.1 per cent before increasing to 4.5 per cent in 2014. The proportion increased again to 8.5 per cent in 2015, around one in 12 of this group of applicants.

**Figure 55 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that received at least one unconditional offer**



**18 year old applicants with higher predicted grades more likely to receive an unconditional offer than those with lower grades**

The probability of receiving an unconditional offer varies according to an applicant’s predicted attainment.

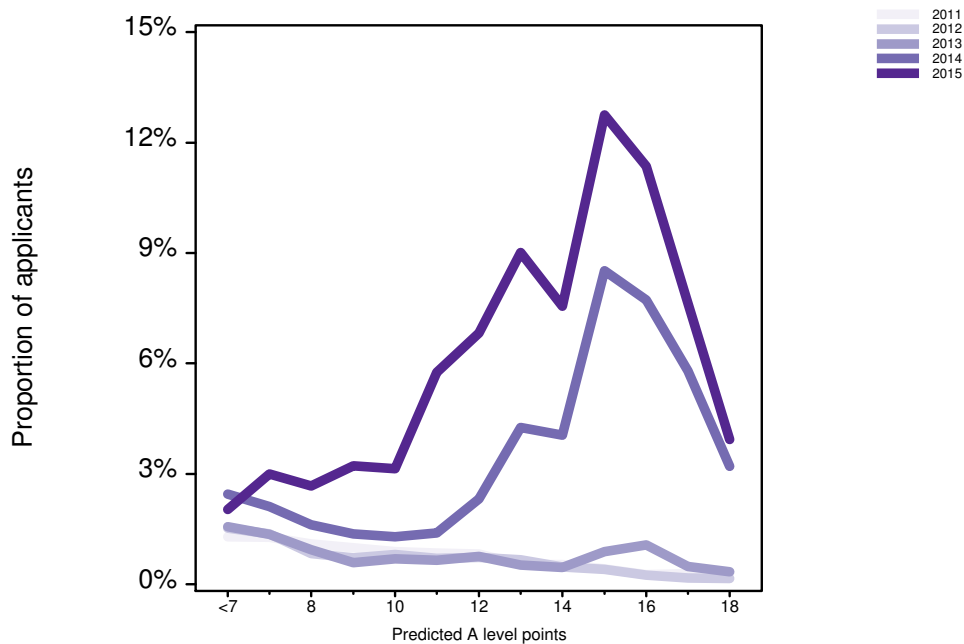
Figure 56 shows the proportion of 18 year old A level applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that received at least one unconditional offer by the predicted number of A level grades from their best three predicted A levels. These numeric A level grades are calculated by assigning a value of 6 grades to an A\*, 5 grades to an A, 4 grades to a B and so on, so that the difference between adjacent A level grades is 1.

In 2011 and 2012 few applicants received unconditional offers, with the lowest rates seen for those with higher predicted grades. Since 2014, applicants with higher grades (but not the very highest) have been most likely to receive at least one recorded unconditional offer.

In both 2014 and 2015 applicants predicted 15 and 16 grades (equivalent to a best three predicted A level grade profile of AAA or A\*AA) were most likely to receive at least one recorded unconditional offer. In 2015 13 per cent of applicants predicted 15 A level grades, and 11 per cent of applicants predicted 16 grades received at least one unconditional offer.

The chances of receiving an unconditional offer are halved (to 6 per cent) for applicants predicted 11 grades (equivalent to BBC) and halved again (to 3 per cent) for those predicted 10 grades or fewer (equivalent to BCC or below).

**Figure 56 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that received at least one unconditional offer by predicted A level grade points**



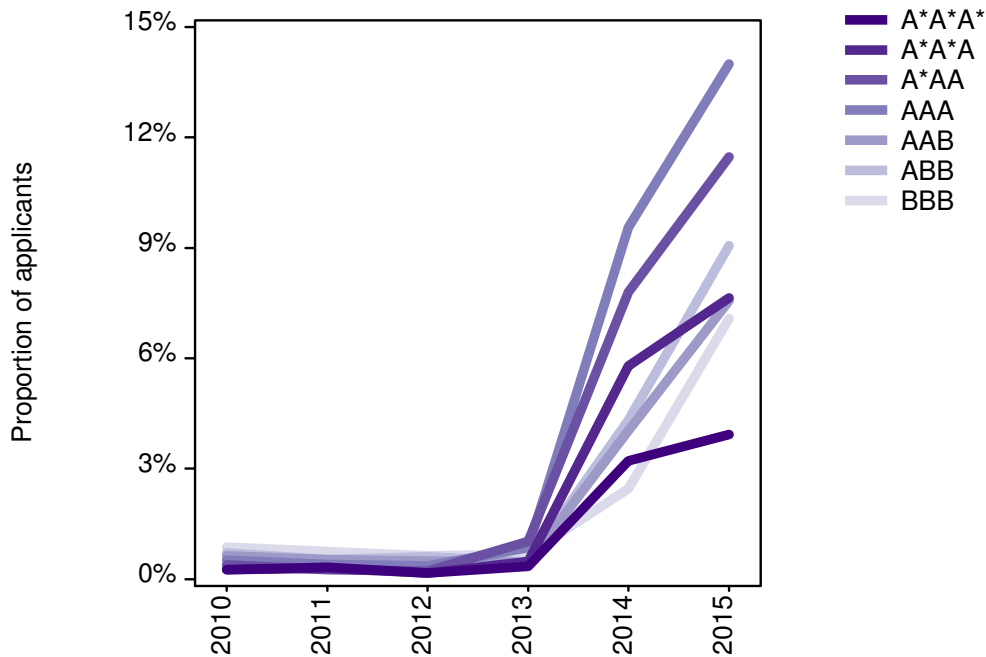
**Applicants predicted ABB and BBB have largest increases in unconditional offers in 2015**

Figure 57 shows the trend in the proportion of applicants that received an unconditional offer by selected predicted (exact, rather than point equivalent) grade profiles. Between 2010 and 2013 the probability of receiving at least one unconditional offer was similar across all predicted grade profiles, ranging between 0.2 and 1.0 per cent. In 2014 the probability of receiving at least one unconditional offer increased across all predicted grade profiles, and increased again in 2015.

In 2015 applicants who were predicted to achieve AAA grades were most likely to receive at least one unconditional offer, with 14 per cent of all applicants doing so. 11.5 per cent of applicants who were predicted A\*AA received an unconditional offer, while the proportion of those predicted other grade profiles between A\*A\*A and BBB who received an unconditional offer ranged between 9.1 and 7.1 per cent. Applicants predicted A\*A\*A\* grades were least likely to receive an unconditional offer; only 3.9 per cent of applicants with these predicted grades did so.

The largest increase in 2015 in the proportion receiving at least one unconditional offer is seen for those predicted ABB (from 4.3 to 9.1 per cent), BBB (from 2.5 to 7.1 per cent) and AAA (9.5 to 14.0 per cent).

**Figure 57 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that received at least one unconditional offer by selected predicted grade profile**

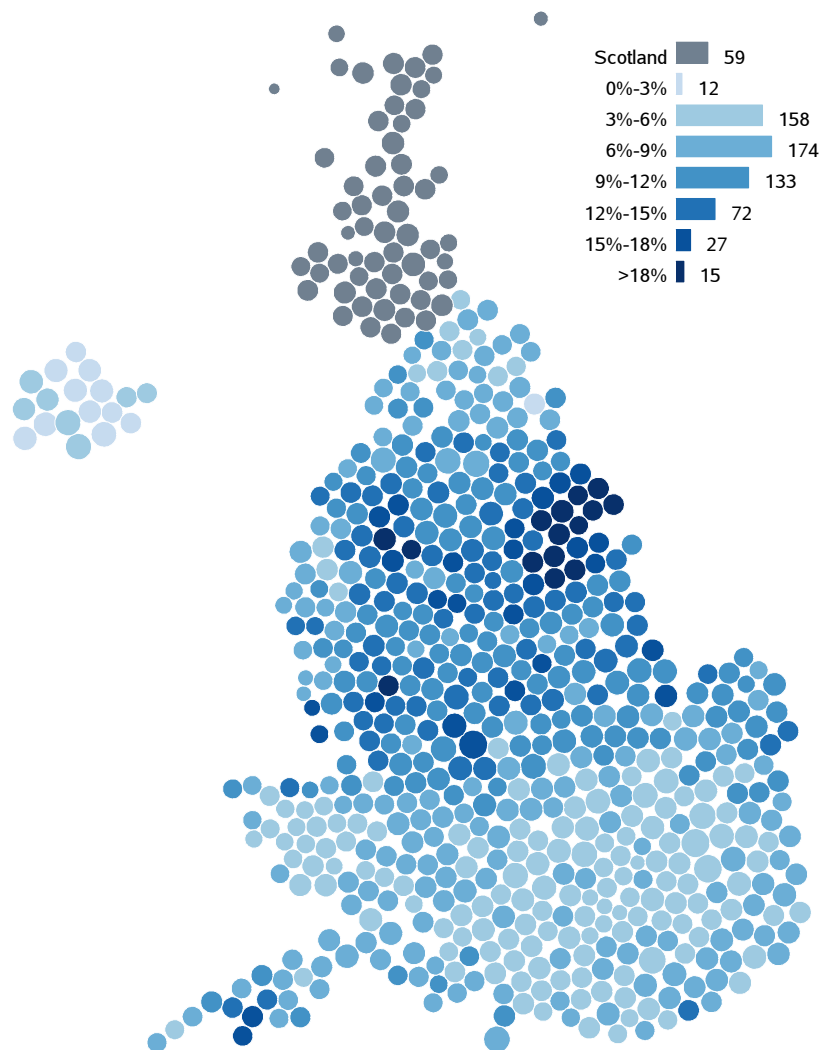


**18 year old applicants in northern regions of England most likely to receive at least one recorded unconditional offer**

The probability of receiving an unconditional offer also varies according to where an applicant lives. Figure 58 shows the proportion of applicants that received at least one recorded unconditional offer by the parliamentary constituency they live in.

The proportion of 18 year old applicants who receive at least one unconditional offer ranges from around 31 per cent to 1 per cent. Applicants from constituencies in the North of England are more likely to have received an unconditional offer than those who live in Southern regions of the country, or in Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Figure 58 Proportion of applicants in 2015 that received at least one unconditional offer by parliamentary constituency**



### **Trends in responses to offers from providers making unconditional offers to 18 year olds in England, Northern Ireland and Wales**

Within a provider, unconditional offers may be directed towards only certain kinds of applicants, which could mean that the likelihood of an unconditional offer being made firm is different to that of a conditional offer. In 2015, 64 per cent of unconditional offers were selected as firm choice and 15 per cent were selected as insurance choice. But the likely direction of these offers to particular types of applicant, and the fact some unconditional offers are only recorded when they are selected as firm, means that comparing these response rates to those for conditional offers will not reliably indicate whether they influence the reply that the applicant makes.

One other way of assessing applicant response to the growth in unconditional offers is to compare, through time, how applicants respond to all offers (whether conditional or unconditional) from groups of providers. The use of unconditional offers by some providers for the first time in 2014, and by another group of providers for the first time in 2015, allows the response of applicants to all offers made by these groups of providers (unconditional or conditional) to be compared against a group of providers that never made a substantial number of unconditional offers.

#### **Increase in firm replies to providers using unconditional offers for the first time in 2015**

Figure 59 shows the proportion of all offers that were made firm or insurance for the group of providers that were recorded as making a substantial number of unconditional offers for the first time in 2015. These are compared to the same proportions for those providers that up to and including 2015 had never made a substantial number of unconditional offers.

In 2015, 19.4 per cent of all offers made by providers who have never made a substantial number of unconditional offers (fewer than 100, labelled 'not unconditional' ) are selected as the firm choice and 18.7 per cent selected as the insurance choice. These rates are close to rates seen for this group of providers in recent cycles.

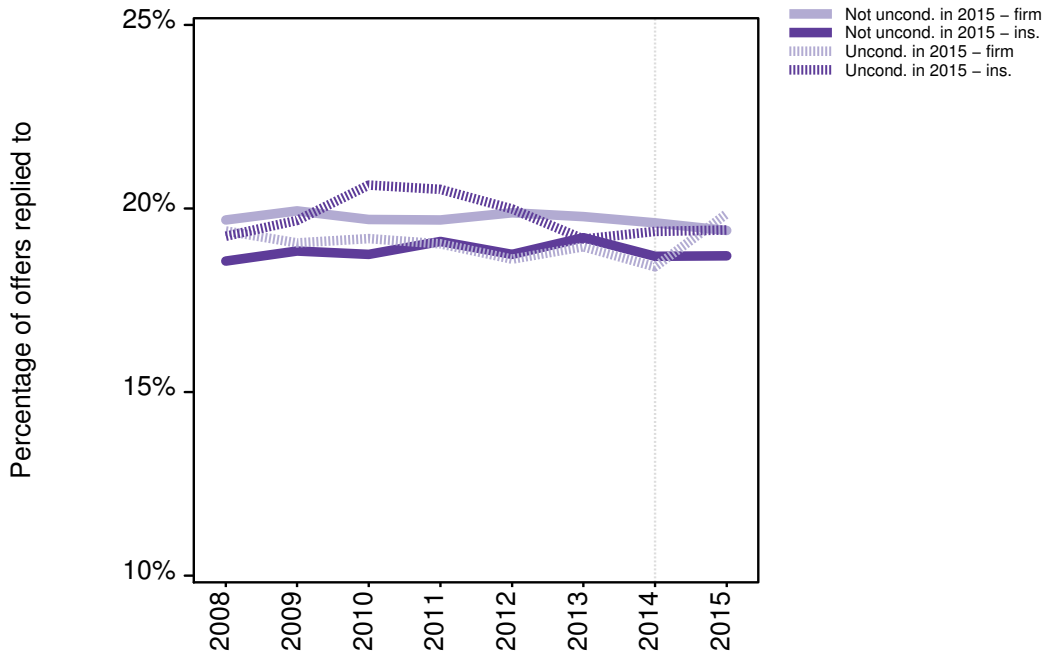
For those providers that had a substantial number of unconditional offers recorded for the first time in 2015 (100 or more), the proportion of all offers that were selected as firm increased from 18.4 per cent in 2014 to 19.9 per cent in 2015. This was a larger increase than seen for any other cycle in the period. There is little change in the proportion of all offers selected as the insurance choice.

Figure 60 shows a similar analysis, this time looking at the proportion of all offers that were made firm or insurance for providers that were recorded as making a substantial number of unconditional offers for the first time in 2014, compared to those providers that up to and including 2014 had never made a substantial number of unconditional offers.

For the providers that made a substantial number of unconditional offers recorded for the first time in 2014, 17.3 per cent of all offers from these providers were selected as the applicant's firm choice in 2014. Most of this group of providers continued to make substantial numbers of unconditional offers in 2015, and the proportion of all offers made firm in 2015 for this group fell to 16.9 per cent.

These changes are not unusually high or outside of typical variation compared with recent cycles.

**Figure 59 Proportion of offers made firm or insurance, split by whether the provider group had made unconditional offers for the first time in 2015**



**Figure 60 Proportion of offers made firm or insurance, split by whether the provider group had made unconditional offers for the first time in 2014**





**Increase in the proportion of offers that lead to acceptances for providers using unconditional offers for the first time in 2015**

Another way of looking at the outcome of offers is whether they lead to an acceptance by the end of the cycle. This includes acceptances through both firm and insurance routes.

The proportion of offers that result in an applicant being placed at providers who have never made a material number of unconditional offers has remained broadly constant since 2008, ranging between 15.7 and 17.0 per cent (Figure 61) and decreasing slightly in 2015.

For providers that made unconditional offers for the first time in 2015 the proportion of all offers that led to an acceptance increased from 16.1 per cent to 17.4 per cent (+8 per cent proportionally). This is the largest increase observed during the period.

Figure 62 shows the same analysis for providers who used unconditional offer-making for the first time in 2014. There is no material change to the proportion of offers that lead to an acceptance and the changes in 2014 and 2015 are not untypical of the period.

**Figure 61 Proportion of offers accepted by whether the provider group had made unconditional offers for the first time in 2015**

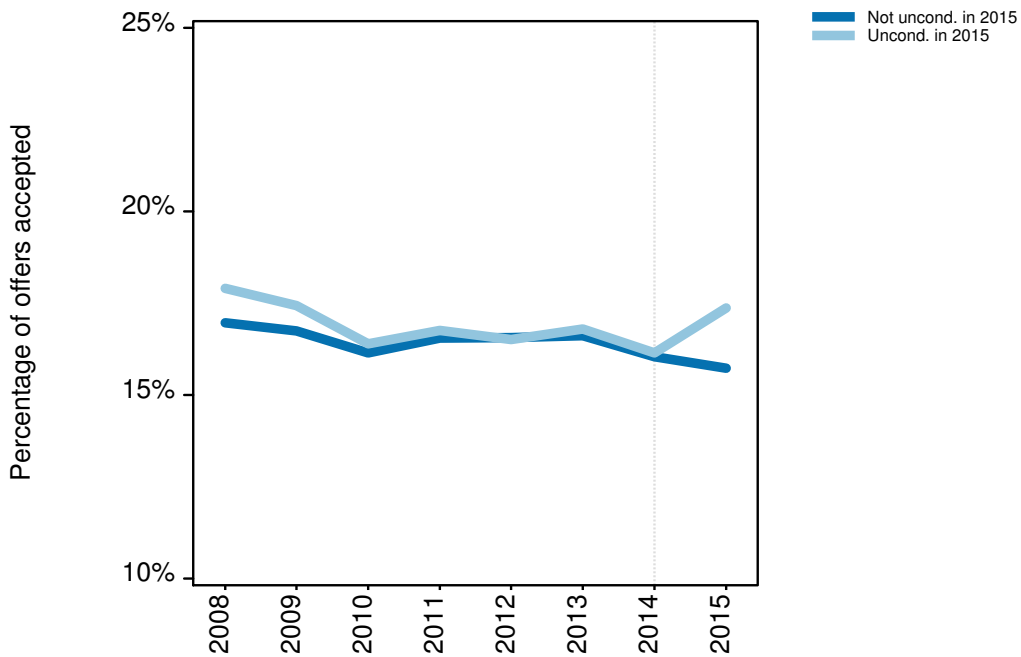
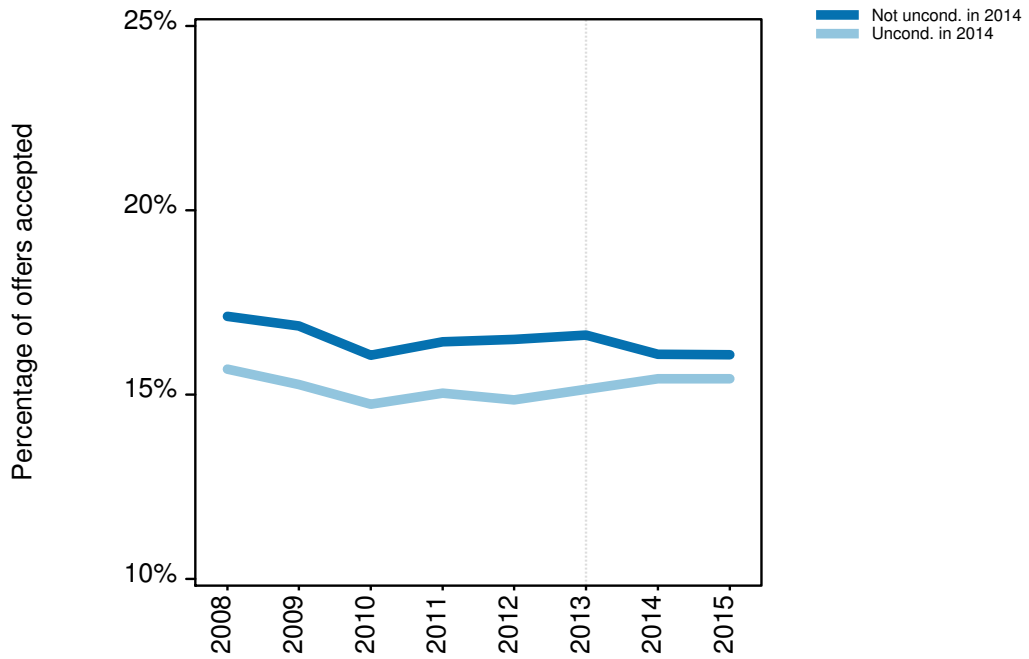


Figure 62 Proportion of offers accepted by whether the provider group had made unconditional offers for the first time in 2014



## Acceptance routes

### Record numbers accepted through firm choice and Clearing (from direct and main scheme), with substantial increases in acceptances through insurance choice

There are a number of different acceptance routes in the admissions cycle. Figure 63 shows the number of acceptances by acceptance route using a logarithmic scale so that the proportional changes can be seen more clearly across the large differences in the numbers accepted through the various routes.

Most acceptances, over 70 per cent, are from the applicant selecting an offer as their firm choice and then satisfying any conditions attached to that offer. In 2015, firm choice continued to be the most likely route of acceptance and the numbers accepted by this route increased by 12,000 (+3.2 per cent) to 384,100, the highest number of acceptances recorded through this route to date.

Acceptances through an insurance choice (for applicants who do not satisfy their firm offer) increased at a faster rate than acceptances through firm rate between 2006 and 2011 and then fell substantially in 2012. Since 2012 the number of acceptances through this route increased each year, and again by more proportionally than the acceptances to the firm route. In 2015, there were 39,500 acceptances through an insurance choice (+2,800, +7.5 per cent).

Applicants who do not receive any offers from their five main scheme choices, or decline any offers that they receive, are eligible to make choices through the Extra process. Acceptances through Extra increased in each cycle between 2006 and 2011, and then fell substantially in 2012. In subsequent years there have been small decreases in the number of these acceptances. In 2015, 7,500 acceptances were through the Extra route, a decrease of 100 (-1.7 per cent).

There are two routes for Clearing; an applicant may have been unsuccessful in the main scheme and then found a place in the Clearing process, or an applicant may have applied directly to the Clearing process. Acceptances through the Clearing process for those that were unsuccessful in the main scheme increased in 2015 to 49,100 (+1,600, +3.4 per cent), reaching a record level. The number of applicants accepted by applying directly to the Clearing process increased following a fall in 2014. In 2015, this number reached 15,200 (+1,400, +10.2 per cent), the highest recorded for this route. The total placed through both Clearing routes was 64,300, an increase of 3,000 (5.0 per cent) from 2014 and the highest number ever placed through the Clearing routes.

The Adjustment route (where applicants can 'adjust' to a place at another provider if they meet and exceed the conditions of their offer) was used by 1,100 acceptances in 2015, broadly the same as 2014 and still a very small share of acceptances.

### UK 18 year olds: record numbers of firm and main scheme Clearing accepts

The profile of acceptance routes varies across age and domicile groups. Figure 64 shows the trends in the number of UK 18 year olds entering by acceptance route. Acceptances through the firm choice route dominate (177,900, 76 per cent of all acceptances) and increased slightly in 2015 (+7,000, +4.1 per cent). The number accepted through Clearing after applying in the main scheme increased by 1,300 (+5.4 per cent) to 24,900, the highest recorded. Applying and being accepted direct to Clearing is a less frequently used route for this group of applicants, and has increased by 200 to 1,500 following a fall in 2014. There were increased acceptances through the insurance choice (+1,800, +7.5 per cent) although not enough to offset the substantial fall in 2012. Adjustment use was broadly the same in 2015 with 750 UK 18 year olds placed through this route.

Figure 63 Acceptances by acceptance route (logarithmic scale)

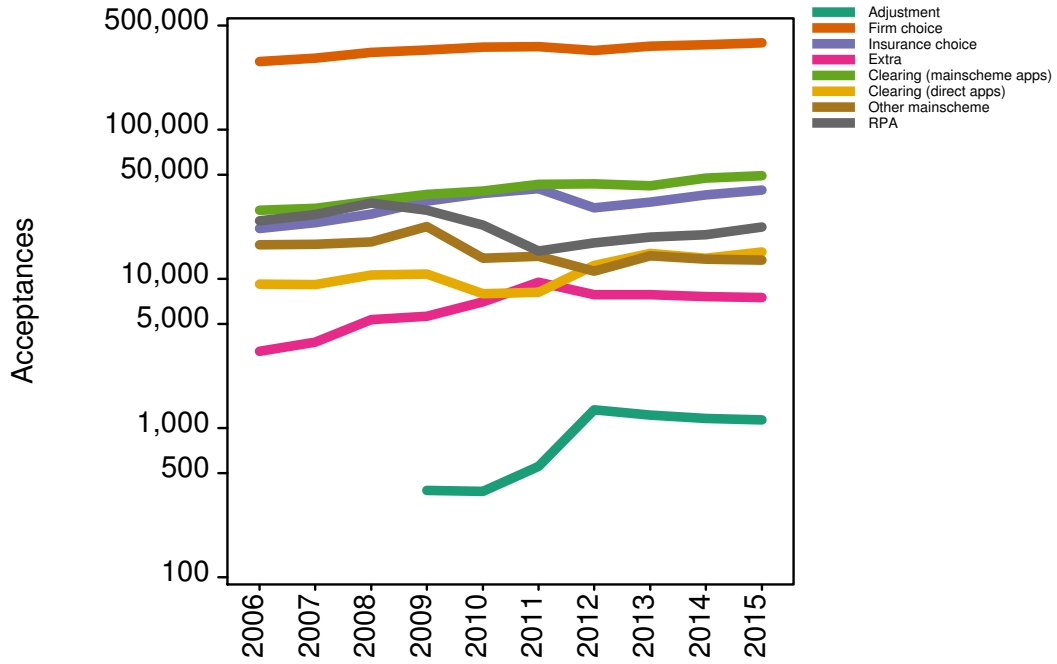
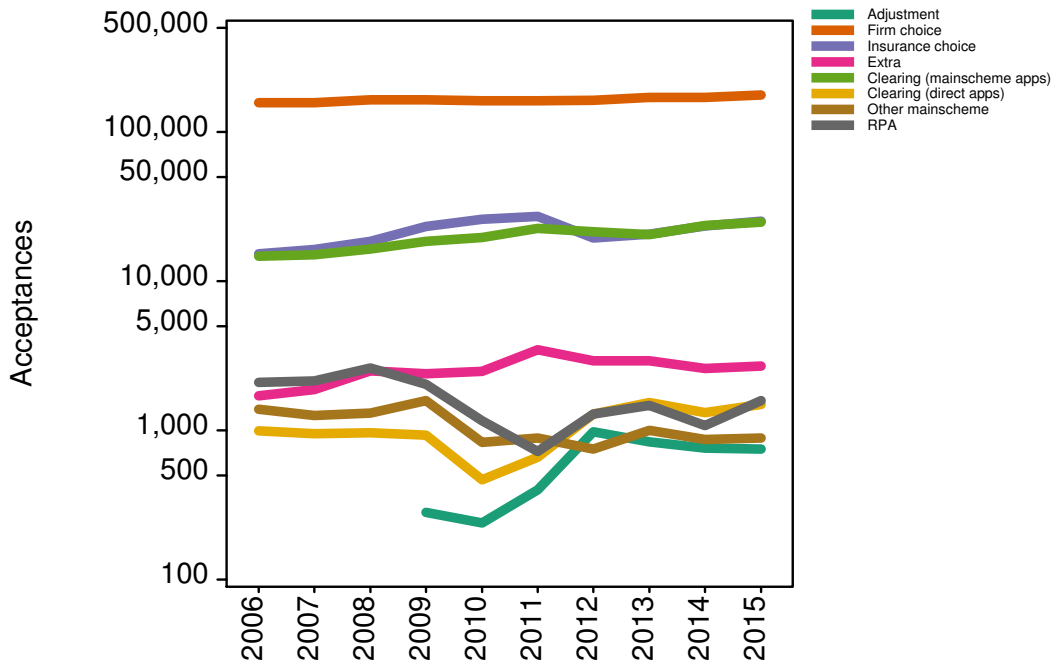


Figure 64 UK domiciled 18 year old acceptances by acceptance route (logarithmic scale)



## Entry rates by background

### Entry rates for disadvantaged 18 year olds increase in England and Scotland but decrease in Northern Ireland and Wales

Figure 65 shows the proportion of the 18 year old population living in the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) that were accepted for entry, by country of domicile. The entry rates for Scotland will be lower than the total entry to higher education since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS.

In 2015, the entry rates increased compared to 2014 for England (+0.7 percentage points to 18.5 per cent) and Scotland (+0.3 percentage points to 10.4 per cent), whereas the entry rate decreased for Northern Ireland (-0.3 percentage points to 15.7 per cent), and remained broadly the same for Wales (less than -0.1 percentage points to 16.6 per cent). The decreases in Northern Ireland and Wales deviate from a general increasing trend across the period, but in both countries the entry rates are close to the highs recorded in 2014.

### Entry rates for disadvantaged increase by nearly a third in five years in England

In all countries, the entry rate for 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged areas increased over the period between 2006 and 2015. Compared with entry rates five years ago, in 2010, 18 year olds from these disadvantaged areas were around 30 per cent (England), 5 per cent (Northern Ireland), 12 per cent (Scotland) and 23 per cent (Wales) more likely to be accepted for entry in 2015.

Disadvantaged young people in England have become more likely to enter higher education in every cycle in the period. They are now almost 65 per cent more likely to enter in 2015 than they were in 2006.

### Entry rates for advantaged 18 year olds at similar levels to recent cycles

Figure 66 shows the entry rate of 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5), by country. The entry rates for Scotland will be lower than the total entry to higher education since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS. The entry rates across all countries are generally three to four times higher than for the most disadvantaged group, but did not show the same pattern of increase over the period. The entry rates in 2015 were at similar levels to those seen across the period, and less than 10 per cent (proportionally) from where they were in 2006.

Between the 2014 and 2015 cycles, the entry rate for the 18 year olds living in advantaged areas increased in England (+0.4 percentage points, 1.0 per cent proportionally), Scotland (+1.1 percentage points, 3.0 per cent proportionally) and Wales (+1.8 percentage points, 4.3 per cent proportionally), and decreased in Northern Ireland (-0.7 percentage points, -1.6 per cent proportionally).

Figure 65 18 year old entry rates for disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile

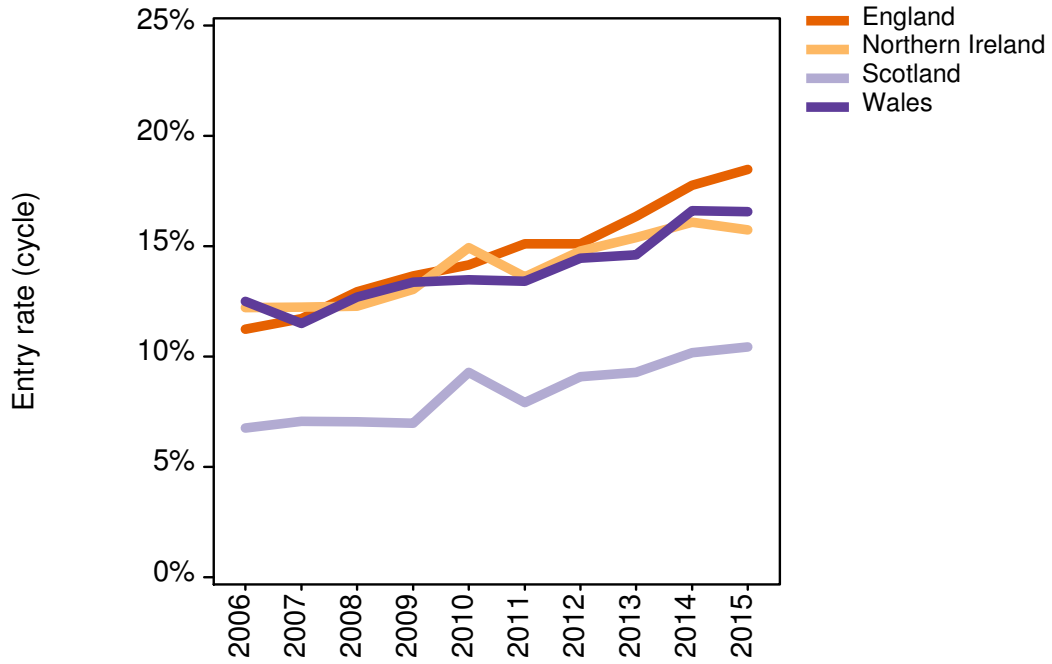
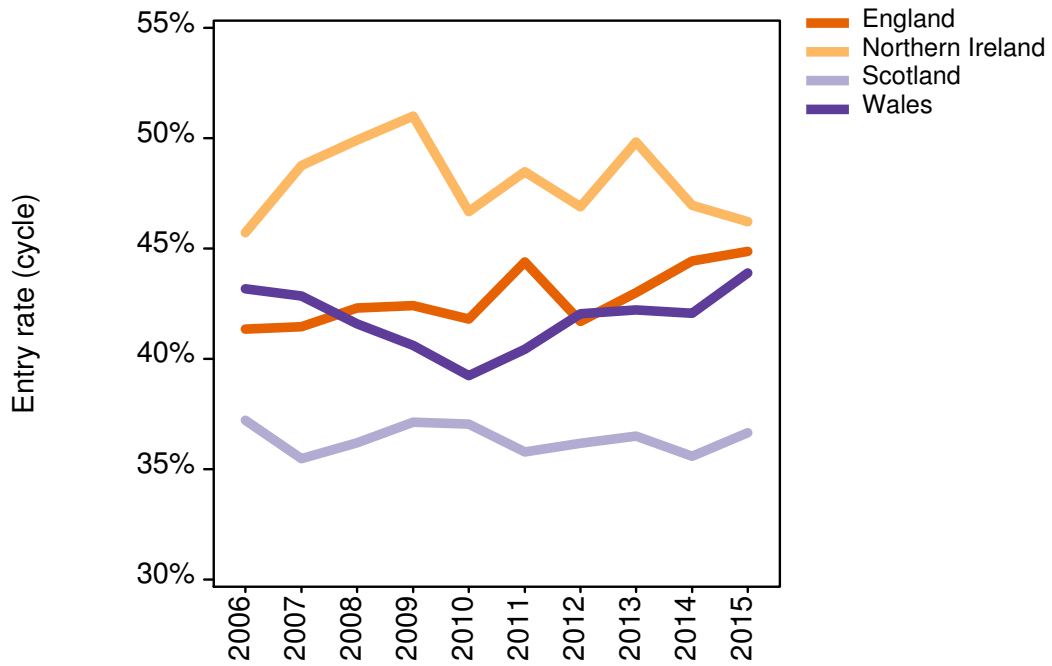


Figure 66 18 year old entry rates for advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) by country of domicile



**Entry differences by background continue to reduce in England**

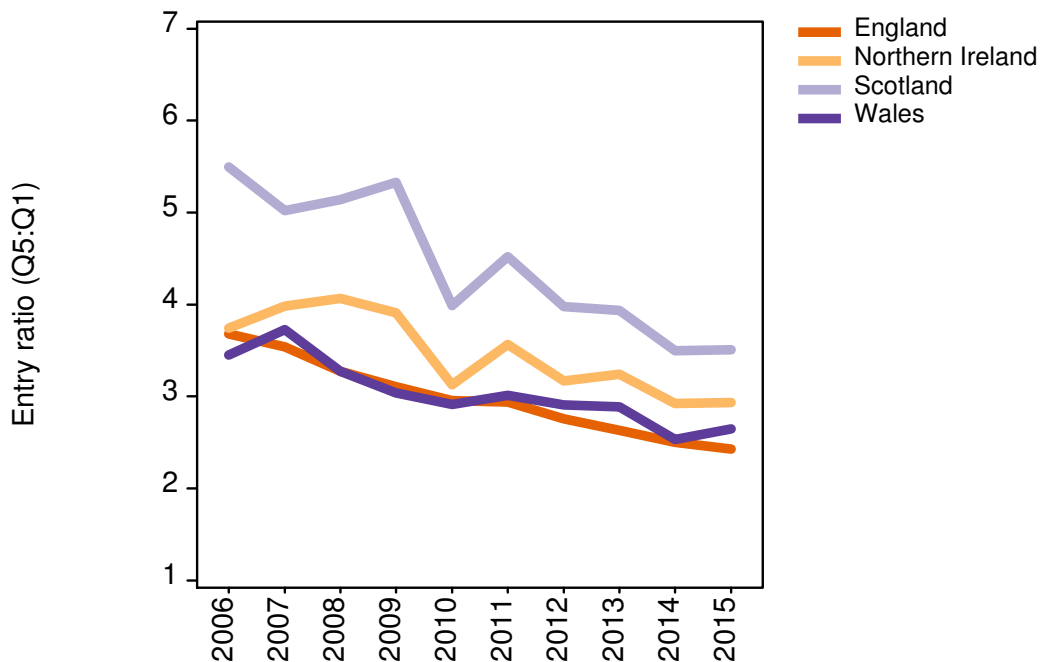
Figure 67 shows, for each country of the UK, relative differences in the entry rates of 18 year olds, by background. It shows the entry rate ratio, quantifying how much more likely those in the most advantaged areas were to enter higher education than those in the most disadvantaged areas. That is, the entry rate from the most advantaged areas divided by the entry rate for the most disadvantaged areas. An entry rate ratio of 1.0 indicates equal chances of entering higher education for the two groups. Entry rate ratios greater than 1.0 indicate that 18 year olds from the most advantaged backgrounds are more likely to enter than those from the most disadvantaged areas, for example 2.5 means the advantaged group are two and half times more likely to enter than the disadvantaged group.

In all four countries, 18 year olds living in the most advantaged areas were much more likely to enter higher education than 18 year olds in the most disadvantaged areas. This relative difference decreased between 2006 and 2015.

In 2015, the difference between the advantaged and disadvantaged decreased in England with the entry rate ratio reaching a new low of 2.4. In Wales the entry rate ratio increased in Wales (2.6, only 2014 was lower across the period), and the ratios were broadly unchanged in Northern Ireland (2.9) and Scotland (3.5). In 2006, the entry rate ratios were: England (3.7), Northern Ireland (3.7), Scotland (5.5) and Wales (3.5).

In each cycle, the entry rate ratio was greater for applicants domiciled in Scotland, though this difference reduced over the period. This may reflect that not all higher education admissions in Scotland are recorded through UCAS.

**Figure 67 18 year old entry rate ratios: most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) relative to most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile**



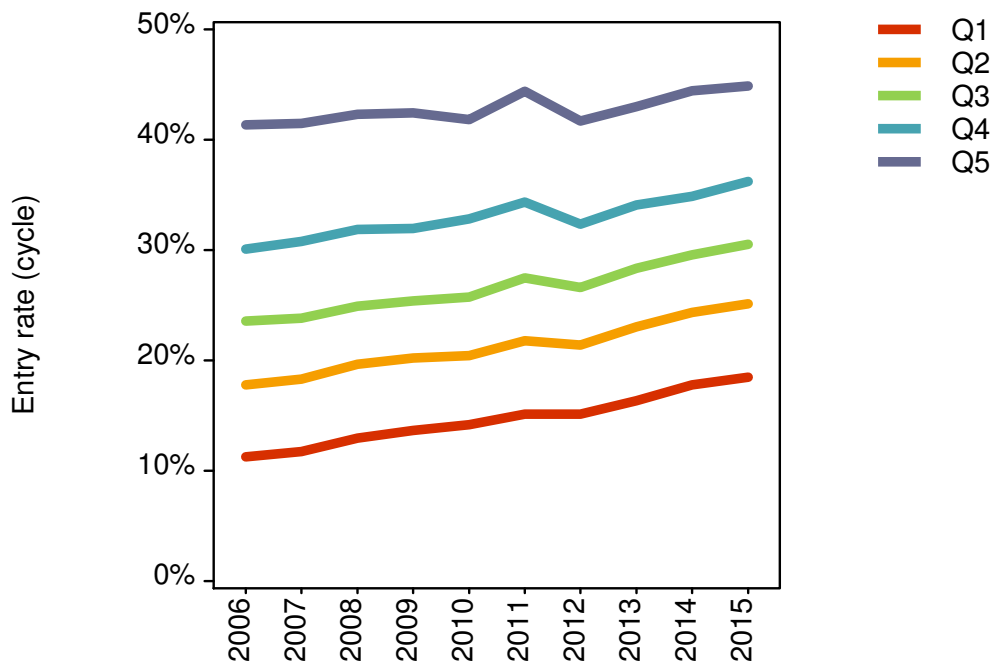
**Highest recorded entry rates for English 18 year olds from all backgrounds**

Figure 68 shows the entry rates for English 18 year olds by area-based background (POLAR3). There is a progression from lower to higher entry rates across the disadvantaged to advantaged groups that is maintained throughout the period. The entry rates for all groups increased across the period.

In the 2015 cycle, entry rates increased from 2014 in each of the groups, with the smallest proportional increase in the most advantaged group (1.0 per cent in quintile 5 - Q5) and the biggest proportional increase in the most disadvantaged group (4.0 per cent in quintile 1 - Q1). With the exception of quintile 4 (Q4), the increase in entry rates was smaller than in 2014.

The 2015 entry rate was the highest recorded for all groups. The entry rates in 2015 were 18.5 per cent in quintile 1 (Q1), 25.1 per cent in quintile 2 (Q2), 30.5 per cent in quintile 3 (Q3), 36.2 per cent in quintile 4 (Q4) and 44.9 per cent in quintile 5 (Q5).

**Figure 68 18 year olds in England, entry rates by POLAR3 (Q5=advantaged) groups**





**Cohort entry rates increase to new highs for young people from all backgrounds**

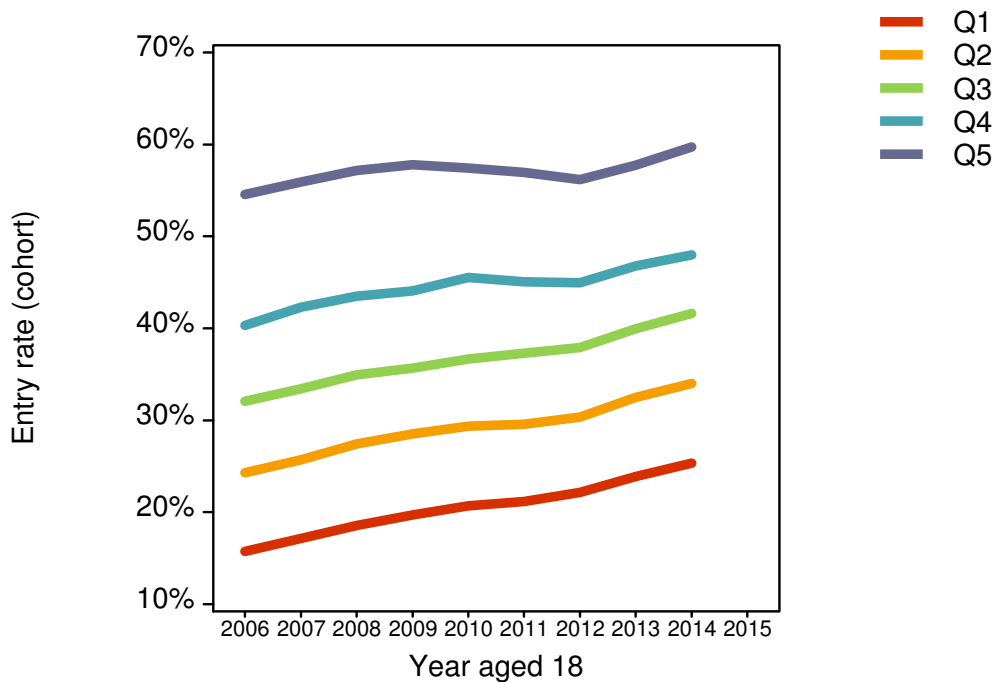
Figure 69 reports cohort entry rates for English young people by area-based background. This measure combines the proportion of the population accepted for entry at age 18 with the proportion of the same population accepted for entry at age 19, a year later. As such, it gives a representation of the total proportion of a young cohort that has been accepted for entry into higher education by age 19. It is therefore unaffected by people switching their age of entry between age 18 and age 19.

The entry rates are higher on this cohort measure than for entry at age 18 alone. For the young cohort that was aged 18 in 2014 living in the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) 25.3 per cent were accepted for entry aged either 18 in 2014 or 19 in 2015. This is an increase of 1.4 percentage points (6.1 per cent proportionally) on the previous cohort (2013) and the highest value recorded. The cohort living in the most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) recorded the largest percentage point increase in entry rate of 2.0 percentage points, the highest recorded in the period for this group. The increases for quintiles 1, 2, 3 and 4 were all lower than the previous cohort.

The cohort rate for those living in the most disadvantaged areas has increased by between half a percentage point and 2 percentage points each year, resulting in the entry rate for the 2014 cohort being 9.6 percentage points (61 per cent proportionally) higher than the 2006 cohort.

For 18 year olds in 2014 living in the most advantaged areas, 59.8 per cent - around 3 in every 5 young people - were accepted for entry aged either 18 in 2014 or 19 in 2015.

**Figure 69 Young cohort entry rates (aged 18 or 19 on entry) by background (POLAR3 Q5=advantaged) for England**



### Entry rates to higher tariff providers in England and Scotland increase for fourth year

Figure 70 shows the proportion of 18 year olds living in disadvantaged areas across the UK who were accepted for entry into a higher tariff provider. These entry rates were relatively low, typically between 1 and 3 per cent of the age group and, for the smaller countries, show a high degree of cycle-to-cycle proportional variation (reflecting the small population and acceptance base and the geographical distribution of higher tariff providers).

The entry rate to higher tariff providers for disadvantaged 18 year olds in England and Scotland increased in each cycle since 2011 and, in 2015, was the highest recorded level at 3.3 per cent for England and 5.6 per cent for Scotland. The proportional increase in this rate for each of the 2012, 2013 and 2014 cycles was around 10 per cent; in 2015, this rate of increase reduced to around 5 per cent proportionally.

In Wales the entry rate in 2015 decreased by 0.1 percentage points to 3.2 per cent, but remained higher than in any cycle earlier than 2014.

The rate in Northern Ireland is lower at 1.7 per cent and fluctuates between years, by proportionally larger amounts reflecting the smaller population and acceptance base. In 2015, the rate is 0.5 percentage points higher, a 44 per cent proportional increase.

### Disadvantaged in England 39 per cent more likely to enter higher tariff providers than in 2011

Young people from the most disadvantaged areas in England became 5.0 per cent more likely to enter a higher tariff provider in 2015 compared to 2014, and 39 per cent more likely to enter higher tariff providers than four years ago in 2011. This is the greatest proportional increase for any background. The relatively low entry rate for the most disadvantaged group means that these large proportional increases in entry rates translate to less than a single percentage point increase in the rate over this period (from 2.4 per cent to 3.3 per cent) compared to nearly three percentage points for the most advantaged group.

### Record entry rates to higher tariff providers from advantaged areas in England

Entry rates to higher tariff providers for 18 year olds in advantaged areas are typically between four to eight times greater than in disadvantaged areas, larger differences than for entry to all providers.

Across the 2006 to 2011 cycles, the entry rates were relatively constant in England and Northern Ireland, but decreased in Scotland and Wales. In each cycle from 2011-2015, the entry rate to higher tariff providers for 18 year olds in advantaged areas has increased in England (to 20.7 per cent), Scotland (to 23.1 per cent) and Wales (to 17.6 per cent). In England, the rate increased very slightly in 2015, + 0.1 percentage points from 2014.

The entry rate to higher tariff providers from the most advantaged areas in Northern Ireland increased in 2015 by 1.2 percentage points, 15.1 per cent proportionally, to 9.4 per cent.

Figure 70 18 year olds entry rates to higher tariff providers for disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile

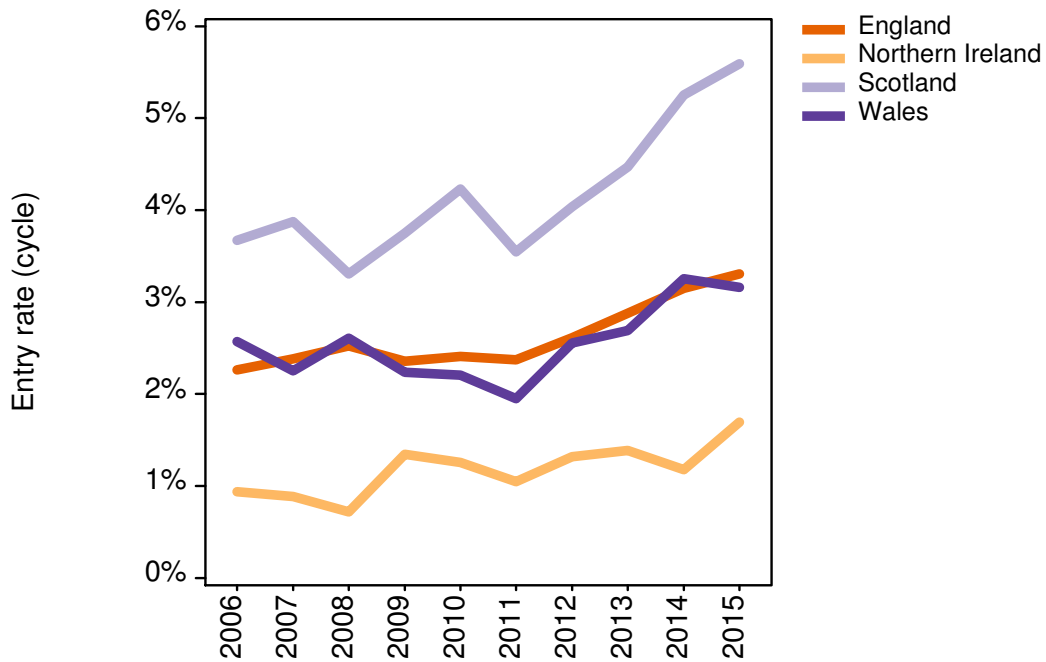
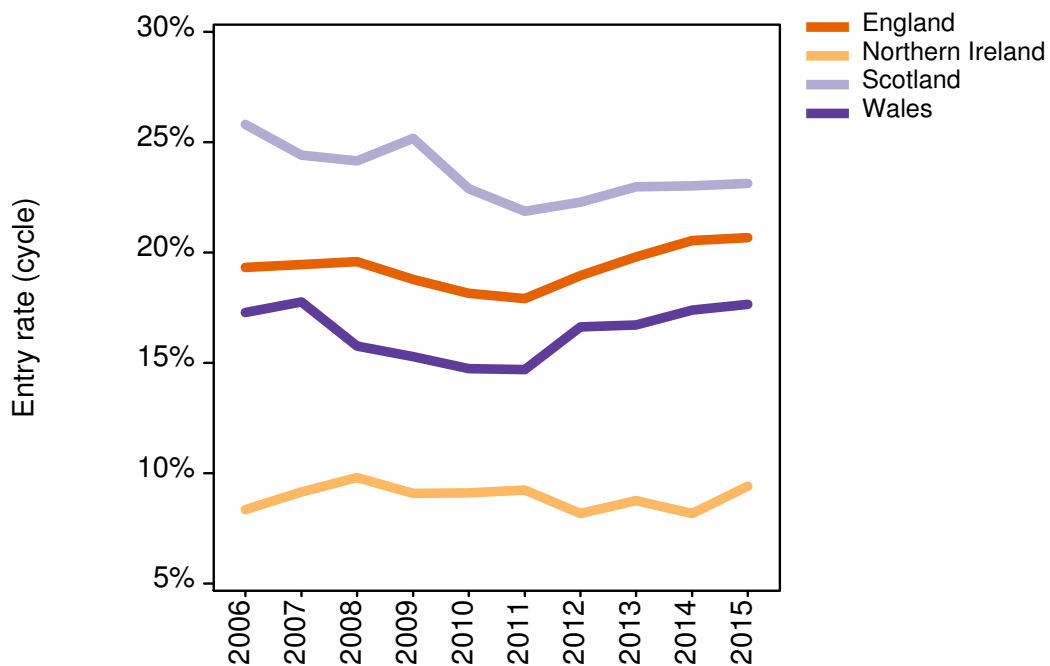


Figure 71 18 year olds entry rates to higher tariff providers for advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) by country of domicile



**Proportional differences in entry rates by background to higher tariff providers fell in 2015**

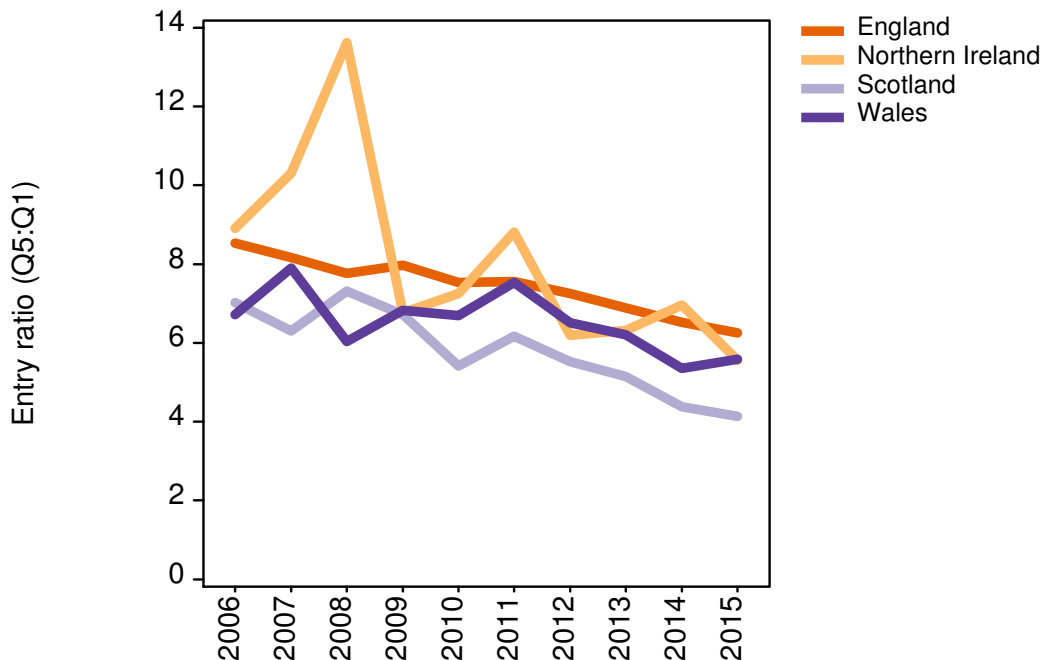
Figure 72 shows the ratios of the entry rates to higher tariff providers from the most advantaged areas to the entry rates to higher tariff providers for the most disadvantaged areas within each country. That is, how much more likely the 18 year olds in the most advantaged areas were to enter these providers than those living in the most disadvantaged areas.

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales show a high degree of cycle-to-cycle variation in entry rates (reflecting the small population and acceptance base), giving variable entry rate ratios. In each of these three countries, despite the cycle-to-cycle variation, the general trend across the period has been for these entry ratios to reduce. There remains a much greater proportion of 18 year olds in the most advantaged areas entering higher tariff providers, compared to 18 year olds in the most disadvantaged areas. In 2015, the entry ratio was 5.6 in Northern Ireland, 4.1 in Scotland (where not all higher education is recorded through UCAS) and 5.6 in Wales.

In England, the entry ratio in 2006 was 8.5, meaning that 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas were eight and a half times as likely to enter higher tariff providers compared to those from the most disadvantaged areas. With the exception of 2009 and 2011, this ratio reduced in every cycle across the period, so that in 2015, English 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas were 6.3 times more likely to enter higher tariff providers compared to the most disadvantaged areas.

In England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the relative difference in entering higher tariff providers between advantaged and disadvantaged groups reached a new low in 2015.

**Figure 72 18 year old entry rate ratios (higher tariff providers): most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) to most disadvantaged areas by country of domicile**



**Entry rates to all types of provider increase in 2015 for disadvantaged English 18 year olds**

Figures 73 to 75 show the English 18 year old entry rates to each of the three provider tariff groups by area-based background (POLAR3). The uneven distribution of providers by tariff group across the UK, in combination with the relatively small number of entrants from different background groups, means that the large population bases in England provide the clearest way to look at trends by background and type of provider.

The difference in entry rates between backgrounds is greatest for the higher tariff providers and lowest in the lower tariff providers. The range in entry rates between the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged in 2015 is 3 per cent to 21 per cent for entry to higher tariff providers and 6 per cent to 13 per cent for medium tariff providers. For lower tariff providers entry rates from all backgrounds are in a narrow range of 9 to 13 per cent.

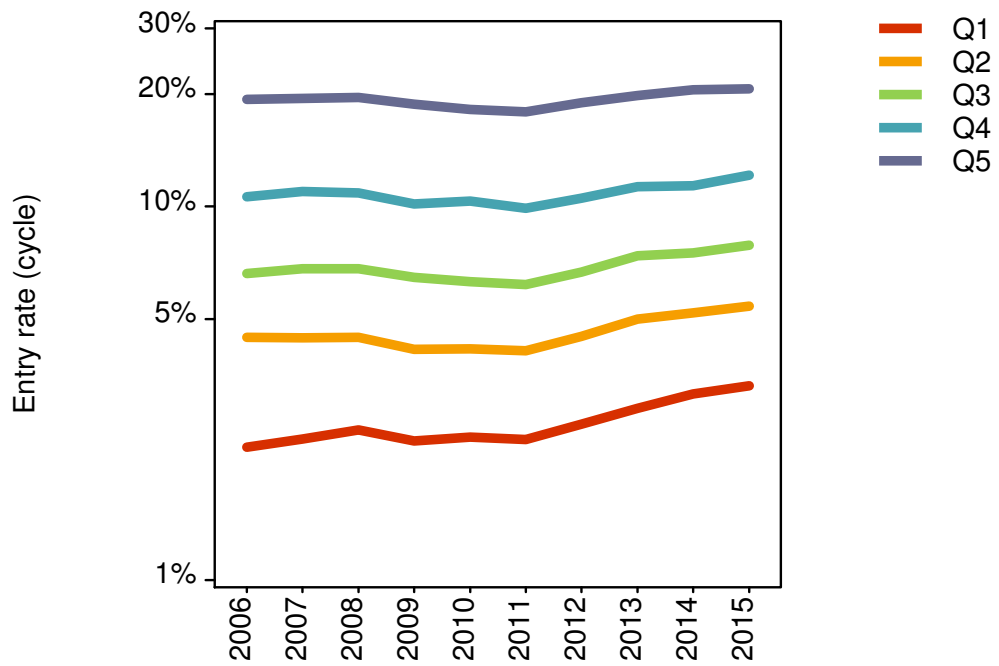
**Entry rates to higher tariff providers by background span wide range**

Figure 73 shows entry rates to higher tariff providers by background for the 18 year old population in England against a logarithmic axis (so that the proportional changes are clearer). There is a marked progression from lower to higher entry rates across the disadvantaged to advantaged groups that is maintained throughout the period. This is characterised by each quintile group being between 40 and 100 per cent more likely to be accepted to higher tariff providers than the preceding (more disadvantaged) quintile group.

In 2015, the entry rate for applicants from the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 quintile 1) to higher tariff providers was 3.3 per cent. The entry rate for the most advantaged applicants (POLAR3 quintile 5) was more than six times higher at 20.7 per cent. Entry rates increased for all groups in 2015. For the most disadvantaged the entry rate increased by 0.2 percentage points (5 per cent proportionally). For the most advantaged group the entry rate increased by 0.1 percentage points (less than 1 per cent proportionally).

Since 2011, entry rates have increased from 2.4 per cent to 3.3 per cent for the most disadvantaged (39 per cent proportionally, 0.9 percentage points). For the most advantaged group the increase has been from 17.9 per cent to 20.7 per cent (15 per cent proportionally, 2.8 percentage points).

Figure 73 English 18 year olds, entry rates to higher tariff providers by POLAR3 groups (logarithmic scale)

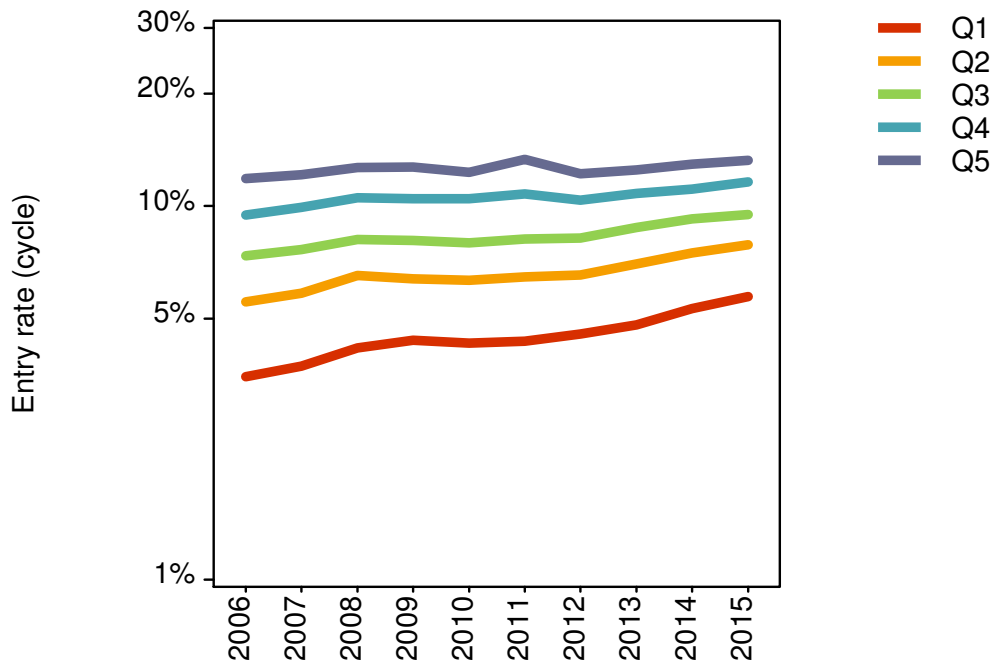


**Entry rates to medium tariff providers increased from all backgrounds in 2015**

Entry rates to medium tariff providers (Figure 74) have generally increased across the period in all areas, but there were greater increases in entry rates from the more disadvantaged areas. There is a clear difference and progression in entry rates between the groups, but these differences have declined over the period.

The entry rate to medium tariff providers for English 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas was 13.3 per cent in 2015, whilst the entry rate from the most disadvantaged areas was 5.7 per cent. This means the most advantaged applicants were 2.3 times more likely to enter medium tariff providers than the most disadvantaged in 2015 – a decline from 3.4 times more likely in 2006.

**Figure 74 English 18 year olds, entry rates to medium tariff providers by POLAR3 groups (logarithmic scale)**



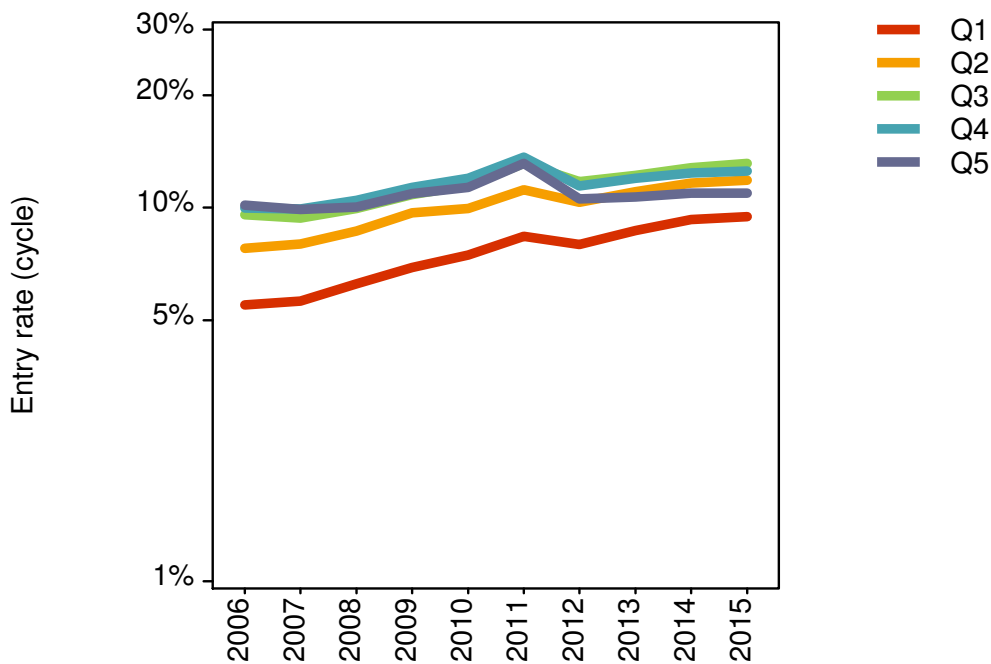
**Small and reducing differences in entry rates to lower tariff providers by background**

For entry to lower tariff providers (Figure 75), there is much less differentiation in entry rates by background and in 2015, the entry rates from all backgrounds were within a 3.7 percentage point range, a small increase from 3.5 percentage points in 2014 (in 2006, the range was 4.7 percentage points).

In 2015, the entry rates range from 9.5 per cent, for quintile 1 (English 18 year olds in the most disadvantaged areas), to 13.1 per cent, for quintile 3. The entry rate for quintile 5 was 10.9 per cent.

In 2006, the entry rate to lower tariff providers from the most advantaged areas was 1.9 times the entry rate from the most disadvantaged areas. By the end of the period, in 2015, the entry rate from the most advantaged areas was 1.2 times the entry rate from the most disadvantaged areas. Since 2012 the entry rates to lower tariff providers for quintile 2 to quintile 5 were within 2.5 percentage points of each other. It is only in the most disadvantaged areas (quintile 1) that the entry rate was lower. The entry rate for this group increased, so that in 2015 it is only 1.5 percentage points lower than the rate for quintile 5.

**Figure 75 English 18 year olds, entry rates to lower tariff providers by POLAR3 groups (logarithmic scale)**





**Entry rate for Scottish 18 year olds from the most deprived areas (SIMD) 34 per cent higher than in 2006**

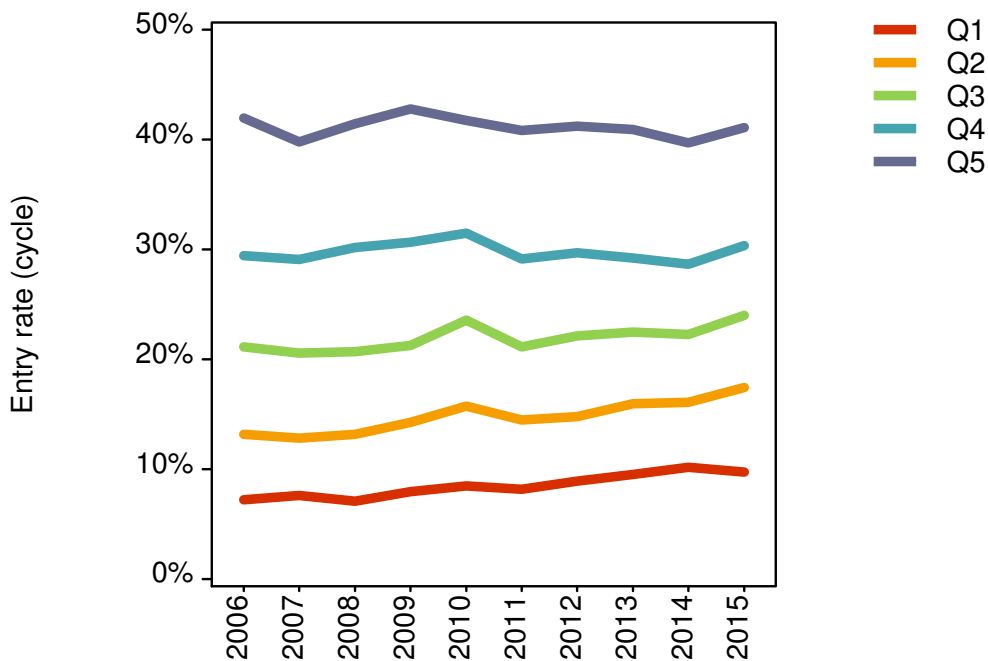
Figure 76 shows the entry rates for Scottish 18 year olds by area-based background based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD 2012). SIMD ranks small geographical areas in Scotland by their relative level of deprivation across a range of measures, which are used to form five groups with equal population sizes. Not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS, meaning there is a substantial section of provision (mostly offered through further education colleges) that is not included in UCAS' figures. This means that these entry rates will be lower than the total entry to higher education.

There is a progression from lower to higher entry rates from the most deprived to the least deprived areas that was maintained throughout the period. The entry rates in 2015 were 9.7 per cent from Q1, 17.4 per cent from Q2, 24.0 per cent from Q3, 30.3 per cent in Q4 and 41.1 per cent in Q5. So that the entry rates from the least deprived areas are 4.2 times as high as the entry rates from the most deprived areas.

The entry rates increased in 2015 from all areas apart from the most deprived (Q1), with smaller proportional increases for less deprived areas (+8.5 per cent in Q2, +7.8 per cent in Q3, +5.8 per cent in Q4 and +3.5 per cent in Q5). The proportional increases for Q4 and Q5 were some of the largest seen over the period for these groups respectively.

For the most deprived group, the entry rate decreased in 2015 for the first time since 2011, with a proportional decrease of 4.1 per cent (-0.4 percentage points). Despite this fall the entry rate for this group in 2015 was the second highest on record, 35 per cent higher than in 2006, and 19 per cent higher compared to 2011.

**Figure 76 Scottish 18 year olds, entry rates by SIMD (Q5=least deprived) groups**



### Cohort entry rates increase to new highs for young Scottish applicants from deprived backgrounds (SIMD)

Figure 77 reports cohort entry rates for Scottish young people by area-based background (SIMD 2012). This measure combines the proportion of the population accepted for entry at age 18 with the proportion of the same population accepted for entry at age 19, a year later. As such, it gives a representation of the total proportion of a young cohort that has been accepted for entry into higher education by age 19. It is therefore unaffected by people switching their age of entry between age 18 and age 19 and acceptance rates for 18 year olds (which deplete the cohort of potential acceptances at age 19). It does not include 18 year olds in 2015 as they have not yet had the opportunity to apply at age 19. These cohort entry rates will be lower than the total entry to higher education since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS.

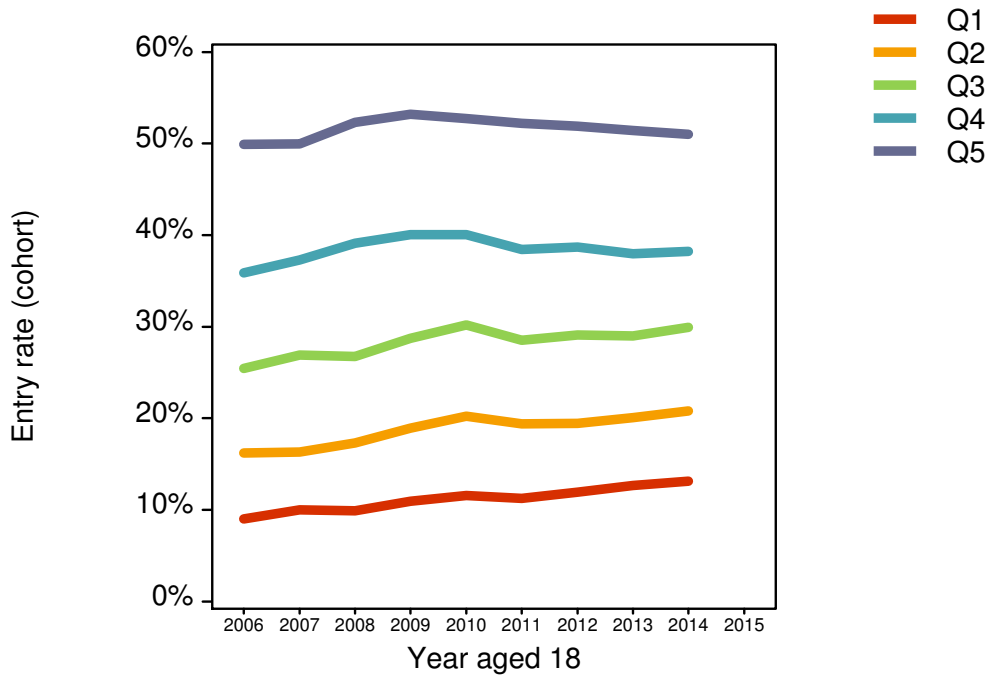
The entry rates are higher on this cohort measure than for entry at age 18 alone. For the young cohort that was aged 18 in 2014 living in the most deprived areas in Scotland, 13.1 per cent were accepted for entry aged either 18 in 2014 or 19 in 2015. This is an increase of 0.5 percentage points (4 per cent proportionally) compared with the previous cohort (2013) and the highest value recorded. The entry rate for Q2 increased by 4 per cent proportionally to 20.8 per cent for the cohort age 18 in 2014, a new recorded high. The increases for Q3 and Q4 followed small decreases for the cohort age 18 in 2013, whilst the entry rate for Q5 (least deprived areas) has decreased for every cohort since those age 18 in 2010.

The cohort rate for those living in the most deprived areas in Scotland has increased in all but two years over the period, resulting in the cohort entry rate for those age 18 in 2014 being 4.1 percentage points (46 per cent proportionally) higher than the cohort that were age 18 in 2006.

For Scottish 18 year olds in 2014 living in the least deprived areas, 51.0 per cent were accepted for entry through UCAS aged either 18 in 2014 or 19 in 2015, 2 per cent higher proportionally than the cohort that were age 18 in 2006, and 4 per cent lower proportionally than the high recorded for the cohort that were age 18 in 2009.

The entry rates for the cohort that were age 18 in 2014 from the least deprived areas are 3.9 times as high as the entry rates from the most deprived areas, reduced from 5.5 times as high for the cohort that were age 18 in 2006.

Figure 77 Young cohort entry rates (aged 18 or 19 on entry) by background (SIMD Q5=least deprived) for Scotland



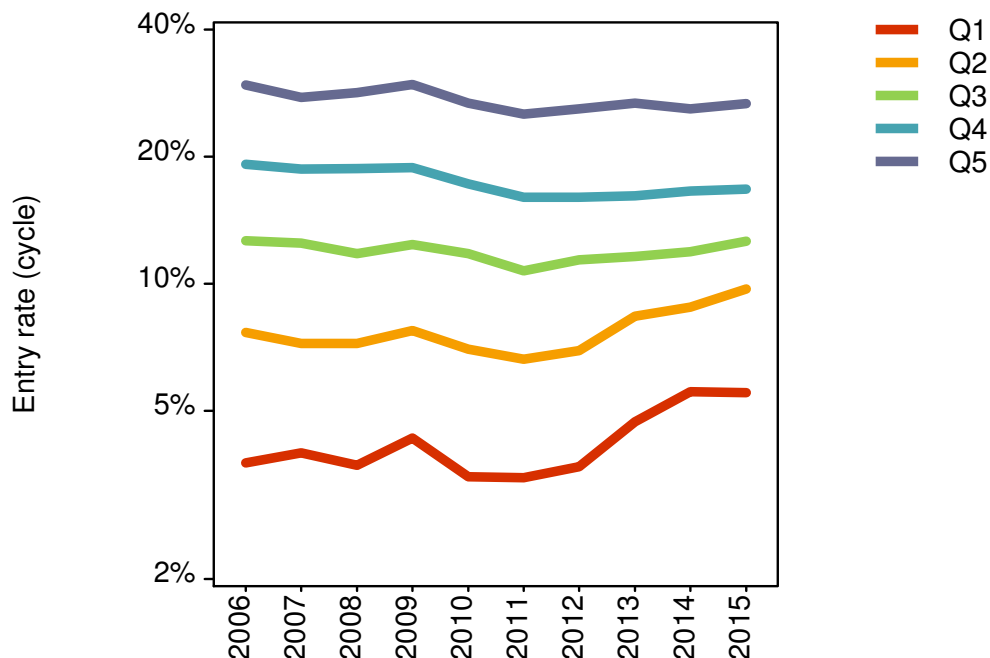
**Differences between entry rates for Scottish 18 year olds to higher tariff providers by background (SIMD) reduce since 2006**

Figure 78 shows entry rates to higher tariff providers by background for the 18 year old population in Scotland against a logarithmic axis (so that the proportional changes are clearer). There is a marked progression from lower to higher entry rates from the most deprived to least deprived areas that was maintained, but reduced in size, throughout the period reported. In 2015, entry rates to higher tariff providers range between 5.5 per cent from the most deprived areas and 26.7 per cent from the least deprived areas. In 2015, the entry rate to higher tariff providers increased for 18 year olds from each of these areas except for the most deprived areas.

The entry rate to higher tariff providers from the most deprived areas decreased in 2015 for the first time since 2011, with a small proportional decrease of less than 1 per cent. Despite this fall the entry rate for this group in 2015 is the second highest on record, 47 per cent higher than in 2006, and 59 per cent higher compared to 2011.

The entry rate from the least deprived areas was lower in 2015 (26.7 per cent) than it was in 2006 (29.5 per cent). Since 2006 the differences in entry rates across SIMD areas have reduced, with entry rates from Q5 (least deprived) and Q4 lower in 2015 than in 2006, entry rates from Q3 broadly the same, and entry rates from Q2 and Q1 (most deprived) higher than 2006. In 2006, the entry rate from the least deprived areas was 7.8 times the entry rate in the most deprived areas, in 2015 this ratio has reduced to 4.8.

**Figure 78 Scottish 18 year olds, entry rates to higher tariff providers by SIMD groups (logarithmic scale)**



## Application and entry rates by sex

### 18 year old women a third more likely to enter higher education than men

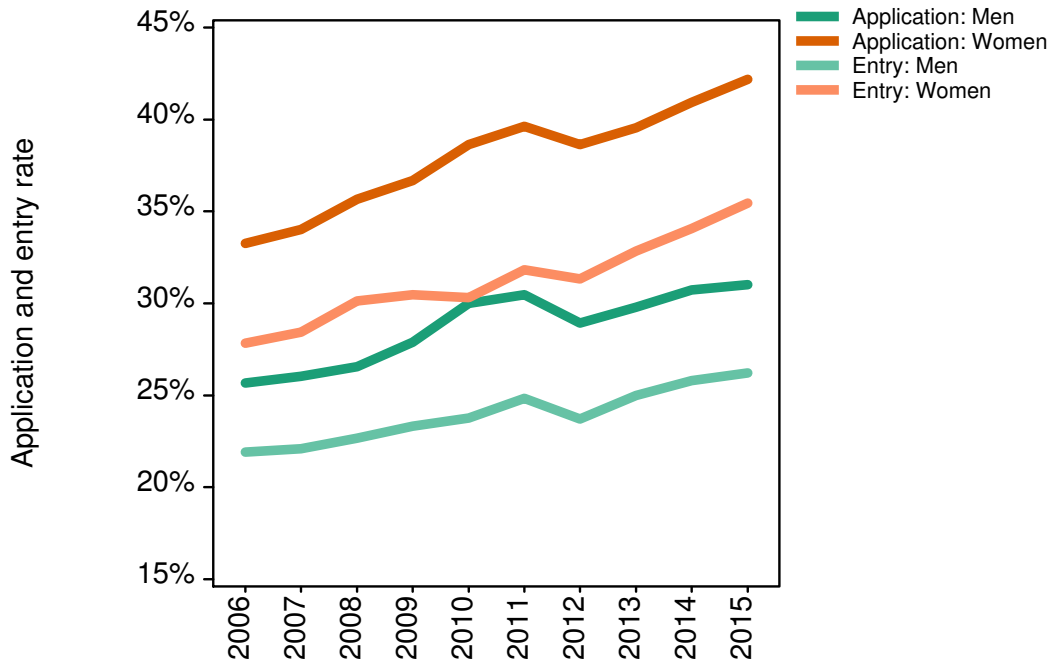
In 2015, around 37 per cent of the UK 18 year old population applied to higher education through UCAS and around 31 per cent were accepted for entry. These national rates were a mixture of different rates for men and women. Figure 79 shows the application rates and entry rates for UK domiciled 18 year old men and women.

The application rate for women was substantially higher than that for men for the whole period. Despite increases in the application rate for men since 2006, the application rate for men in 2015 (31.0 per cent) remained below the level for women nine years previously in 2006 (33.3 per cent). For both men and women, the application rate increased in 2015 (1.0 per cent proportionally for men, 3.1 per cent for women). In 2015, as in most of the more recent cycles, 18 year old women were around a third more likely (36 per cent) to apply than 18 year old men but the percentage point difference widened for a second successive year in 2015 to 11.2 percentage points.

The entry rate for women was considerably higher than the entry rate for men across the whole period. For 18 year olds in 2015 the entry rate increased (1.7 per cent proportionally for men, 4.0 per cent for women) to the highest recorded levels for both men (26.2 per cent) and women (35.4 per cent). As with application rates, 18 year old women were around a third (35 per cent) more likely to enter higher education than 18 year old men. The entry rate for women remains higher than the application rate for men.

The absolute difference in entry rates between men and women widened by one percentage point in 2015 to 9.2 percentage points – the largest difference recorded. The difference in 18 year old entry rates between men and women equates to 36,000 fewer 18 year old men entering higher education this year than would be the case if men had the same entry rate as women.

Figure 79 UK domiciled 18 year olds, application and entry rates by sex



## By age 19, 46 per cent of women have entered higher education, over 10 percentage points higher than men

Cohort application rates and cohort entry rates for UK domiciled young men and women are shown in Figure 80. These measures combine the proportion of the population that applied or were accepted for entry at age 18 with the proportion of the same population that applied or were accepted for entry at age 19 a year later. As such, they give a representation of the total proportion of a young cohort that has been accepted for entry into higher education by age 19. These rates have the disadvantage that they cannot yet be reported for the cohort that was aged 18 in 2015, since they have not yet had the opportunity to apply at age 19.

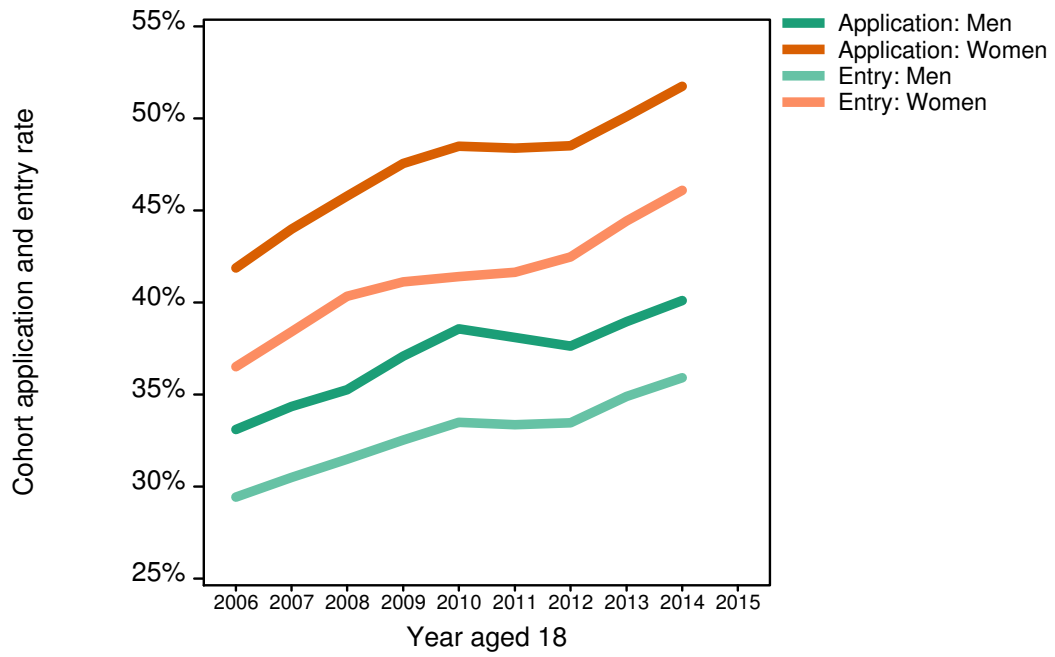
The cohort of young women that were 18 in 2014 were around 25 per cent more likely to apply or be accepted to enter higher education than the cohort that were 18 in 2006. For men the cohort that were 18 in 2014 were around 22 per cent more likely to apply or be accepted than the cohort that were 18 in 2006.

Throughout this period the application rate and entry rate for each cohort of young women was substantially higher than the application rate and entry rate for each cohort of young men. For those that were 18 in 2014, women were 29 per cent more likely to apply for higher education by age 19 than men, and 28 per cent more likely to be accepted to enter higher education by age 19.

For the 2014 cohort (those who were 18 in 2014 and 19 in 2015) the cohort entry rate for women was 46.1 per cent, 10.2 percentage points higher than for men (35.9 per cent). The cohort entry rate for women (46.1 per cent) was higher by 6.0 percentage points than the cohort application rate for men (40.1 per cent). The cohort application rate for women for the 2014 cohort was 51.7 per cent.

For the 2014 cohort, application and entry rates increased for both sexes to their highest levels. The entry rate for women increased by 1.7 percentage points (3.7 per cent proportionally) and the entry rate for men increased by 1.0 percentage points (2.9 per cent proportionally). This increased the difference between men and women with the percentage point difference reaching 10.2 percentage points, the largest recorded.

Figure 80 UK domiciled cohort application and entry rates by sex





**Entry rates for women were higher than for men at all types of providers**

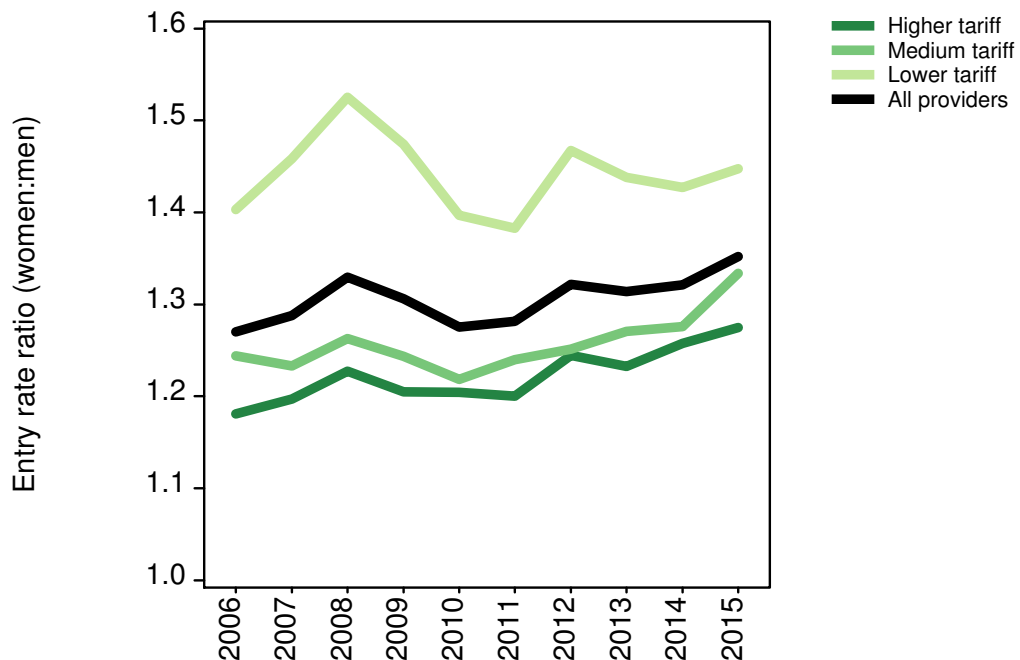
The entry rate ratios of UK 18 year old women to men for entry to different groups of providers are shown in Figure 81. 18 year old women were around 30 per cent more likely to enter all types of higher education than 18 year old men. The entry rate ratios were greater than 1.0 for entry to all three provider tariff groups. That is, young women were more likely to enter all of these types of providers than young men.

In all cycles the entry rate ratio between women and men was lower for higher tariff providers than other provider tariff groups at around 1.2 (that is, young women were 20 per cent more likely to enter higher tariff providers). Over the period the relative difference between men and women entering higher tariff providers increased. In 2006, women were 18 per cent more likely to enter higher tariff providers than men; in 2015 they were 28 per cent more likely to enter than men, the highest relative difference in this period.

The entry rate ratio for medium tariff providers in 2015 was 1.33. That is, women were a third more likely to enter medium tariff providers than men, increased from 1.28 in 2014, the largest widening in the gap between entry for men and women across all provider types.

Lower tariff providers had the greatest entry rate ratio between men and women for each cycle. The ratio was variable from cycle-to-cycle but at least 1.4 in almost every year. In 2015, 18 year old UK women were 45 per cent more likely to enter lower tariff providers than men.

**Figure 81 Ratio for UK 18 year olds of entry rate from women to entry rate from men by provider tariff group**



**Differences in entry rates by background were greater for men than for women and reduce for both sexes in 2015**

The entry rates for men and women from the most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) and the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) are shown in Figure 82. The entry rates from the most advantaged areas were greater than the entry rates from the most disadvantaged areas, and the entry rates for women were greater than the entry rates for men from both areas.

Figure 83 shows the ratios of the entry rates from the most advantaged areas divided by the entry rates for the most disadvantaged areas for men and women. For both men and women, 18 year olds living in the most advantaged areas were much more likely to enter higher education than 18 year olds in the most disadvantaged areas. The entry rate ratios decreased most cycles between 2006 and 2015, but in each cycle the entry ratio was greater for men than women.

For UK 18 year olds in 2006, men in the most advantaged areas were over four times more likely to enter higher education than men in the least advantaged areas. Women in the most advantaged areas were over three times more likely to enter higher education than those in the most disadvantaged areas.

By 2015 these entry rate ratios had decreased for men and women. The relative differences by background for men reduced by more than the ratios for women, but remained greater than the differences by background for women. In 2015, men from the most advantaged areas were 2.8 times more likely to enter higher education than men from the most disadvantaged areas, compared with women where the ratio was 2.2.

**Disadvantaged 18 year old women are around 50 per cent more likely to enter higher education than men in 2015**

Young entry rates are higher for 18 year old women than men, in both advantaged and disadvantaged areas. In 2015 the percentage point differences between men and women were similar by background; 7.7 percentage points for disadvantaged areas, 9.3 percentage points in advantaged areas. The much lower entry rates in disadvantaged areas means that the proportional difference in entry between men and women is much larger in disadvantaged areas. In 2015, 18 year old women living in disadvantaged areas were 52 per cent more likely to enter than men.

Figure 82 UK 18 year olds entry rates from most advantaged (POLAR3 Q5) areas and from most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by sex.

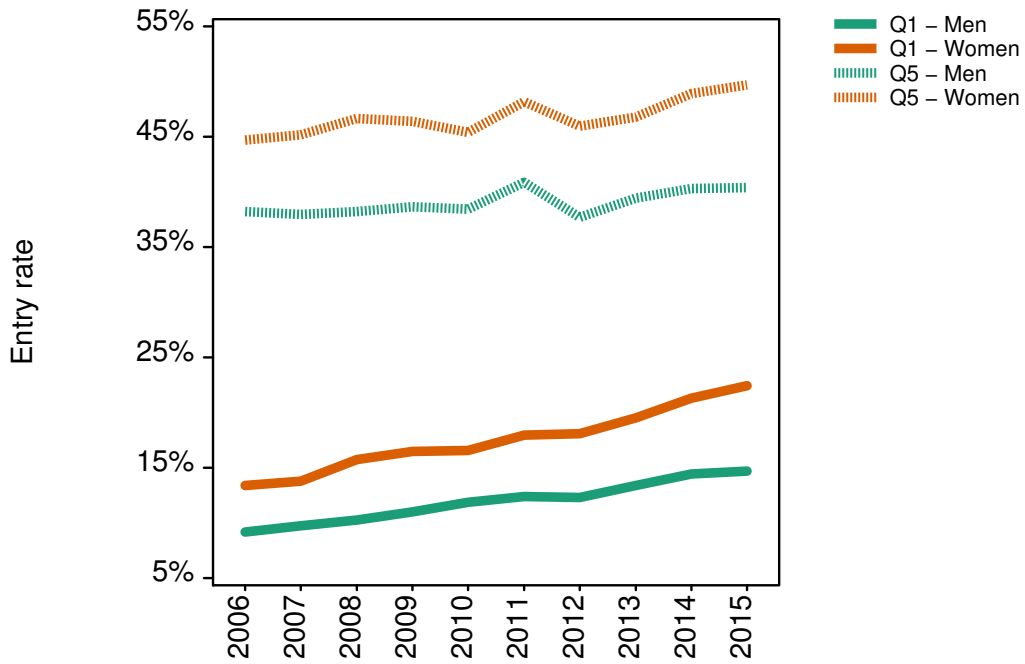
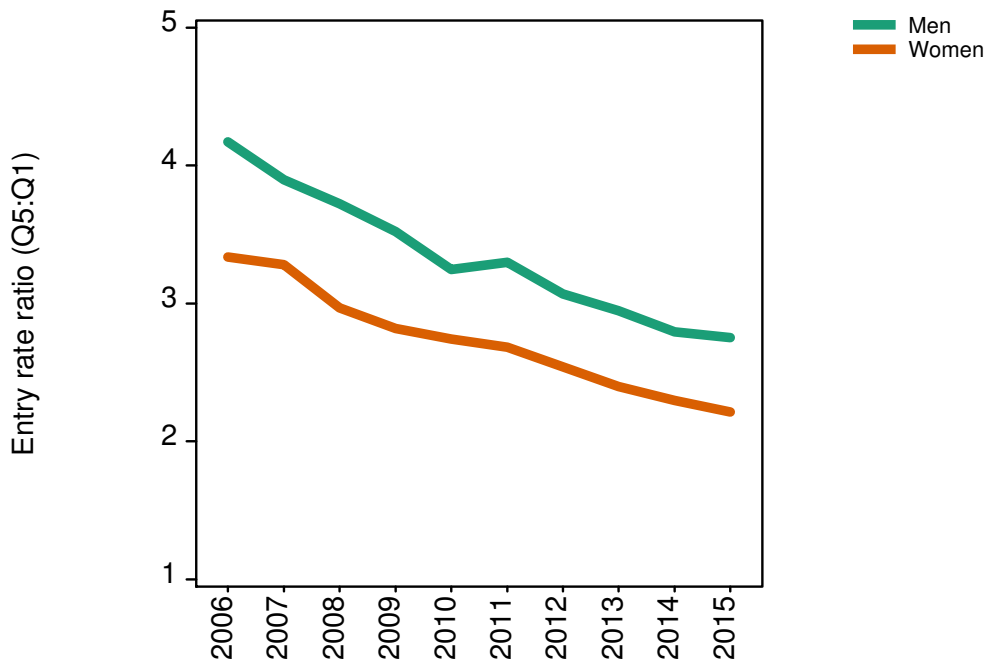


Figure 83 UK 18 year olds ratio of entry rate from most advantaged (POLAR3 Q5) areas to entry rate from most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by sex.



## **Entry rates by income background and ethnic group for state school pupils in England**

For pupils attending state schools in England, administrative data sets record whether an individual is receiving free school meals (FSM, a means-tested benefit that can be used as an indicator of low income) and their ethnic group. Linking these pupil data sets (source: National Pupil Database, Department for Education) to the UCAS admissions data allows the calculation of entry rates by these categories recorded in the pupil data sets when the applicant was age 15.

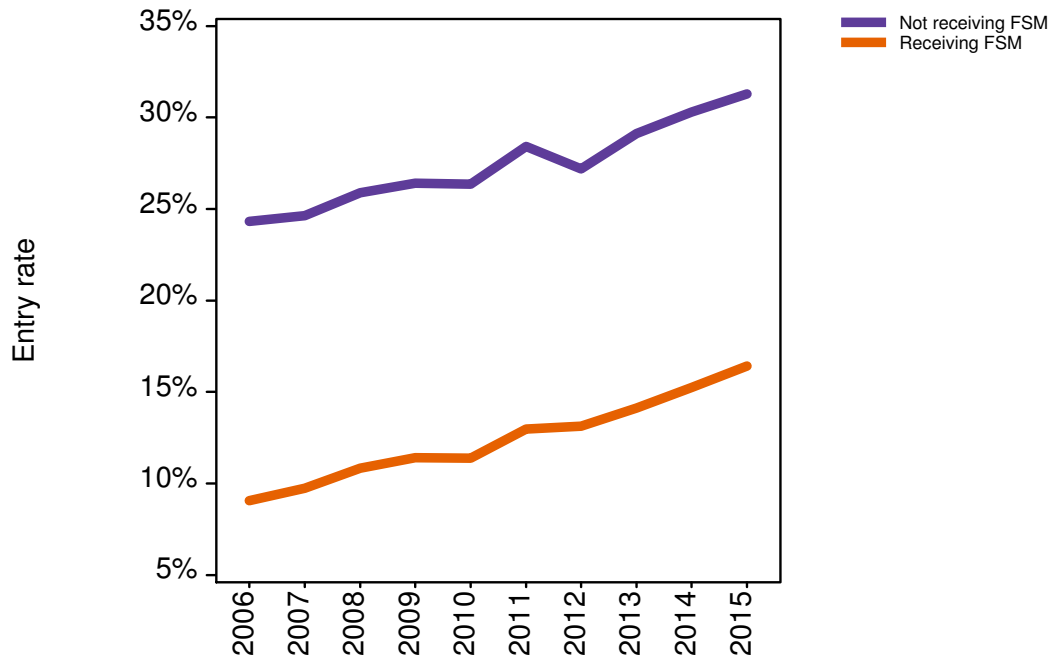
To calculate these statistics, a conservative linking method has been used, that requires a full match across a range of identifying details to English-domiciled UCAS applicants. This necessarily makes the entry rate lower than the true value (for example, ambiguous matches are not used). The linking method, and differences in scope between the two data sources, introduces more uncertainty into these linked entry rates than the other methods used in this report, that do not rely on record linking. All the entry rates for FSM and ethnic group are based on linking.

### **Entry rates for both FSM and non-FSM pupils increased in 2015 to highest recorded values**

Between 12 and 15 per cent of the state school 15 year old population were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) over the period. In 2015, the entry rate for young people who received FSM aged 15 was 16.4 per cent in 2015, compared to 31.3 per cent for the non-FSM group. Compared to 2014, these rates were around one percentage point higher for both FSM and non-FSM, resulting in a proportional increase in entry rates of 7.5 per cent for FSM and 3.2 per cent for non-FSM pupils.

Since 2006 the entry rate for FSM pupils increased proportionally by over 80 per cent, compared to a proportional increase of just under 30 per cent for the non-FSM entry rate over the same period. The percentage point difference between the FSM and non-FSM group remains at around 15 percentage points, almost unchanged across the same period.

Figure 84 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by free school meal (FSM) status at age 15

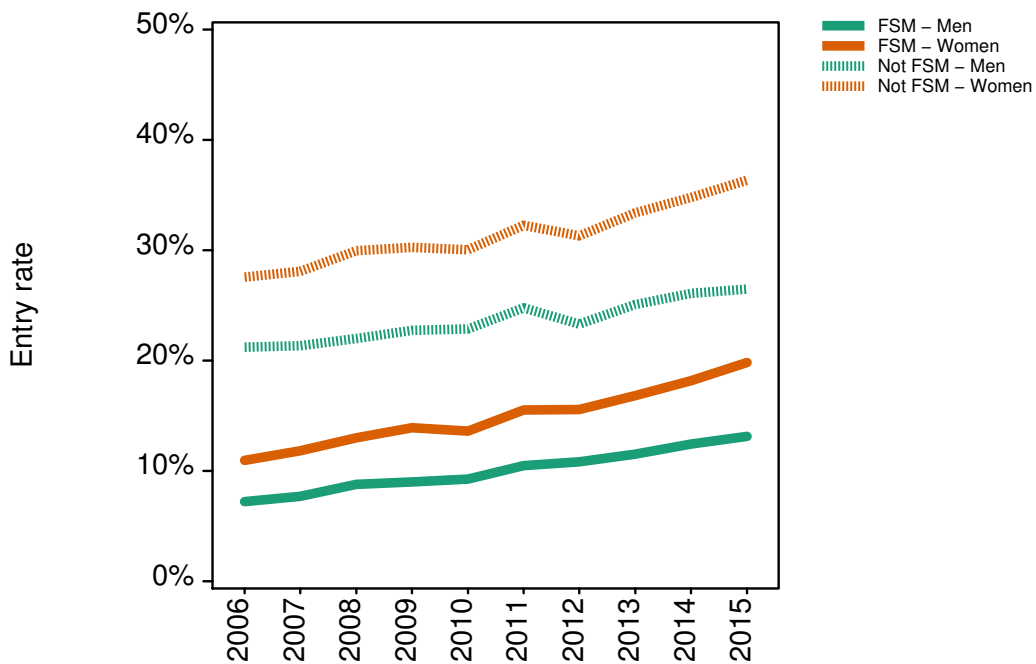


**Entry rates 51 per cent higher for women than men amongst free school meal (FSM) pupils**

Young women have higher entry rates than men within both the FSM and non-FSM groups. In 2015, women in both the FSM and non-FSM groups became more likely to be accepted to enter higher education than men in the same group. The entry rate for the non-FSM group was 36.3 per cent for women (+1.6 percentage points compared to 2014), higher (37 per cent proportionally) than the entry rate for men, which was 26.5 per cent (+0.4 percentage points compared to 2014). In the FSM group, the entry rate for women was 19.8 per cent (+1.7 percentage points), proportionally 51 per cent higher than the entry rate for men, which was 13.1 per cent (+0.7 percentage points).

For both the FSM and non-FSM groups, the percentage point difference in entry rates between women and men has increased over the period. For the non-FSM group entry rate for women is 9.9 percentage points higher than the entry rate for men in 2015, compared with a difference in entry rates of 6.3 percentage points in 2006. The difference in entry rates for men and women in the FSM group is smaller (6.7 percentage points) than for the non-FSM group, but this is relative to a much lower entry rate. This difference has increased from 3.7 percentage points in 2006.

**Figure 85 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by free school meal (FSM) status at age 15 and sex**

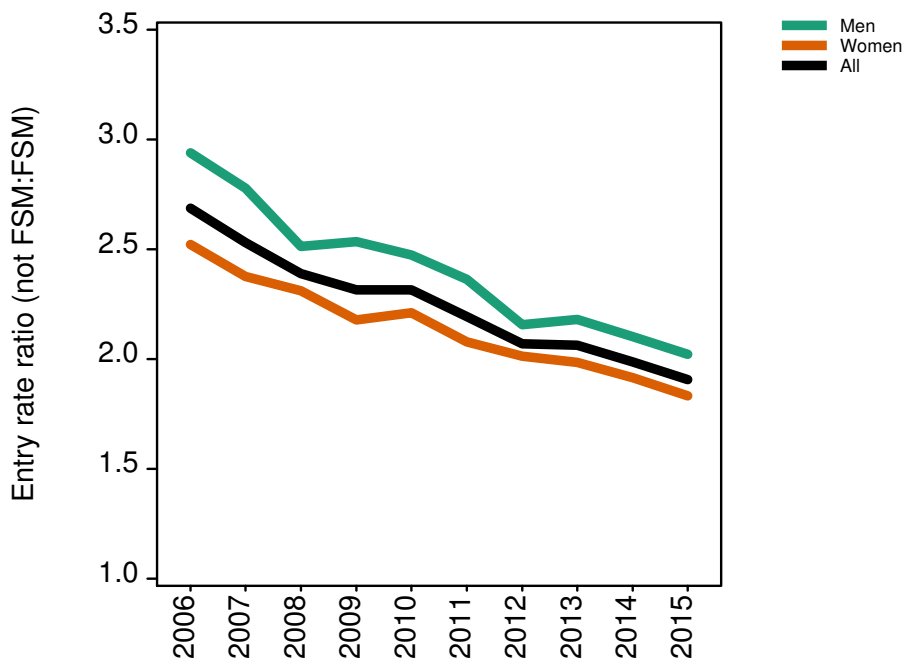


**Non-FSM pupils nearly twice as likely to enter as FSM, reduces in 2015 to lowest difference recorded**

The ratio of entry rates between non-FSM and FSM pupils declined over the period from 2.7 in 2006 to 1.9 in 2015. This decline was a result of the entry rate for FSM pupils increasing (proportionally) by just over 80 per cent, whilst the proportional increase over the same period for Non-FSM pupils was just under 30 per cent. Despite this decline the entry rate for non-FSM pupils was still nearly twice that of FSM pupils.

The ratio of non-FSM to FSM entry rates was higher for men (2.0) than women (1.8), but both sexes show a similar trend of declining differences over time.

**Figure 86 Entry rate ratios (formerly not FSM: FSM) for English 18 year olds from state English schools**



## **FSM pupil entry rates to low tariff providers increased by nearly 80 per cent since 2006**

For young English people in 2015 who were formerly in English state schools and not in receipt of free school meals (non-FSM), 12.1 per cent entered lower tariff providers, 10.1 per cent entered medium tariff providers and 9.0 per cent entered higher tariff providers. Non-FSM entry rates increased in 2015 to all provider groups, and for higher and medium tariff providers they were the highest levels recorded.

Entry rates to all types of provider are lower for those who formerly received FSM. The entry rate to lower tariff providers (9.5 per cent) was much higher than to medium (4.5 per cent) and higher tariff (2.4 per cent) providers. Entry to a lower tariff provider was four times more likely for this group than entry to a higher tariff provider.

In 2015, the entry rate of non-FSM pupils to higher tariff providers was 3.8 times higher than that of FSM pupils, the equivalent ratios for medium and lower tariff providers were 2.3 and 1.3 respectively.

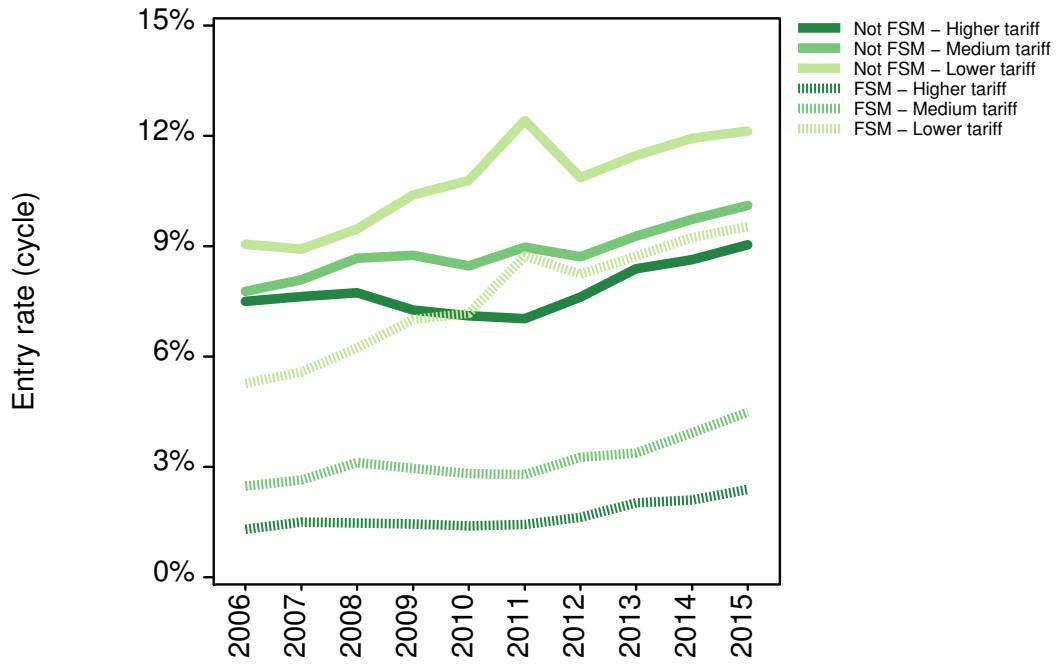
Entry rates to all types of provider for the FSM group increased in 2015 to the highest recorded values. The entry rate to lower tariff providers has increased by 81 per cent since 2006 (+4.3 percentage points).

Compared to 2014, for entry to higher tariff providers, entry rates increased by 13.9 per cent proportionally for the FSM group and 4.8 per cent proportionally for those in the non-FSM group. The entry rate of FSM pupils to higher tariff providers has increased by 65 per cent proportionally between 2011 and 2015, over twice the proportional increase of non-FSM pupils.

The difference in entry rates to higher tariff providers for the two groups is 6.7 percentage points, higher than the 5.6 percentage points in 2011, and similar to 2006 (6.2 percentage points).



Figure 87 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by free school meal (FSM) status at age 15 and provider tariff group



**Large differences in entry rates by ethnic group for English pupils**

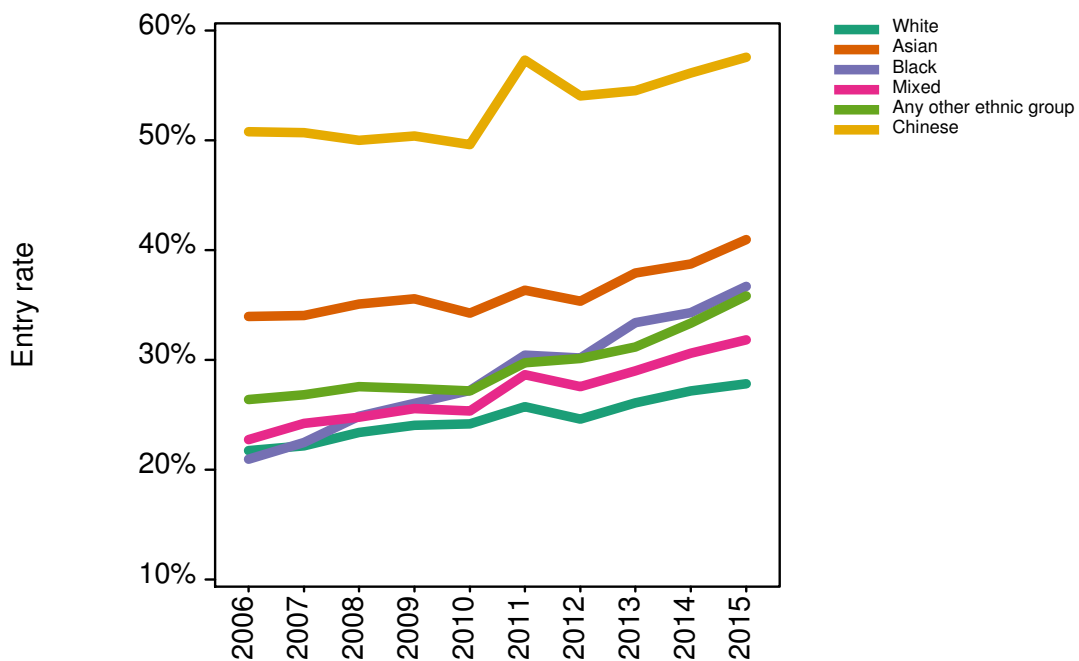
The entry rates for 18 year olds who were formerly in English state schools varies by the ethnic group recorded in the pupil data sets. Former state school pupils recorded as being in the Chinese ethnic group have the highest entry rate (58 per cent in 2015) and those recorded in the White ethnic group had the lowest (28 per cent in 2015).

The entry rates for all ethnic groups increased in 2015, reaching the highest recorded values for each group. For the White ethnic group, the entry rate was 27.8 per cent (+0.6 percentage points), for the Asian ethnic group 41.0 per cent (+2.2 percentage points), for the Black ethnic group 36.7 per cent (+ 2.4 percentage points), for the Mixed ethnic group 31.8 per cent (+1.2 percentage points), for the Chinese ethnic group 57.6 per cent (+1.4 percentage points), and for the Any other ethnic group 35.8 per cent (+2.5 percentage points).

Young people recorded in the Black ethnic group have the largest increase in entry rates over the period, increasing from 20.9 per cent in 2006 to 36.7 per cent in 2015, a proportional increase of 75 per cent.

Since 2008 the White ethnic group have had the lowest entry rate of all ethnic groups. In 2015, the difference between the entry rate for the White ethnic group and the other ethnic groups increased further, as the entry rate for the White ethnic group increased at a slower rate than the other ethnic groups. Since 2006 the entry rate for the White group has increased from 21.7 per cent to 27.8 per cent in 2015, a proportional increase of 28 per cent.

**Figure 88 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by ethnic group**



### Increases in entry rates for men and women across all ethnic groups

Figure 89 shows the entry rates by ethnic group for 18 year old women, while Figure 90 shows the entry rates by ethnic group for 18 year old men. The patterns of entry rates across ethnic groups are similar for both men and women, with entry rates increasing during the period for all ethnic groups, and the relative ordering of entry rates across the ethnic groups being broadly the same.

Entry rates for both men and women from most ethnic groups increased in 2015 to the highest recorded values. For men in the Mixed ethnic group and White ethnic group the entry rate remained broadly unchanged from the record highs in 2014. For both sexes, the highest entry rate was in the Chinese ethnic group (54.9 per cent for men, 60.2 per cent for women), and the lowest entry rate was in the White ethnic group (23.5 per cent for men, 32.3 per cent for women).

For all ethnic groups the entry rates in 2015 for women increased by more than the entry rates for men, both in percentage point increases and proportionally. For women the increases ranged from +2.7 per cent proportionally from the Chinese ethnic group to +8.0 per cent proportionally from the Black ethnic group, and +8.4 per cent for the Any other ethnic group. The increases for men were not as large; ranging from no change in the Mixed ethnic group to +5.5 per cent for the Black ethnic group, and +6.8 per cent for the Any other ethnic group.

These increases continue the general trend across the period in which the entry rates for both women and men for all ethnic groups have increased since 2006. During this time, for both sexes, the largest increase in entry rate was for young people in the Black ethnic group. For men, the entry rate of the Black ethnic group has nearly doubled from 15.2 per cent in 2006 to 30.0 per cent in 2015 (+14.8 percentage points, +98 per cent proportionally). For women the entry rate from the Black ethnic group has increased from 26.5 per cent to 43.3 per cent (+16.9 percentage points, +64 per cent proportionally). The smallest percentage point increase in entry rate between 2006 and 2015 was for White men, which increased by 4.4 percentage points (23 per cent proportionally) to 23.5 per cent – the lowest entry rate of any ethnic group, for men or women, in 2015.

Figure 89 Entry rates for English 18 year old female state school pupils by ethnic group

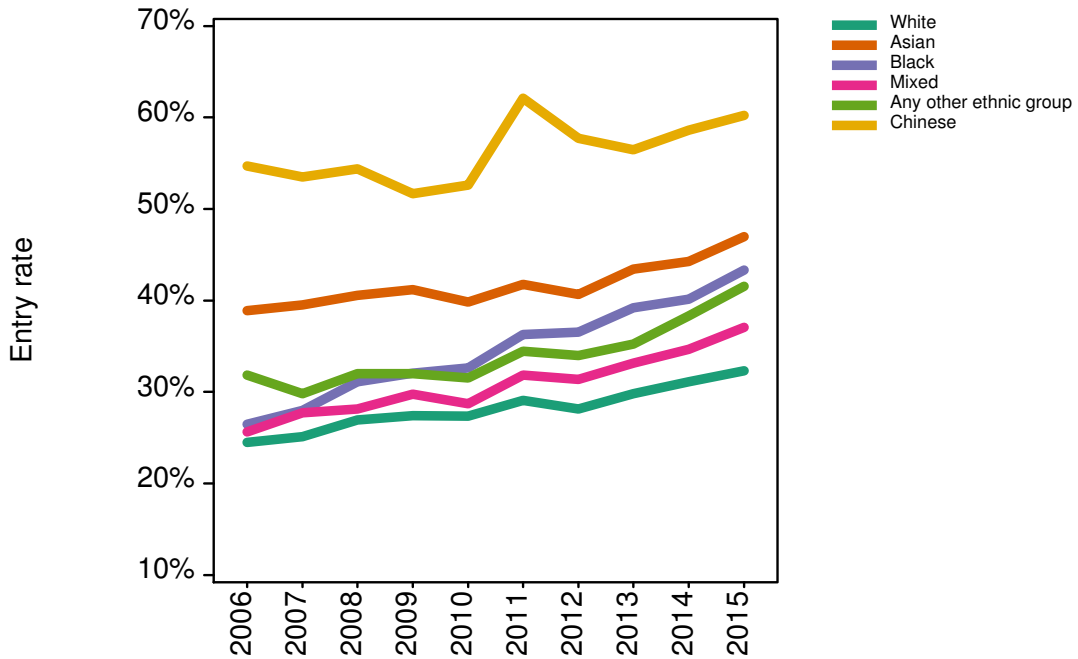
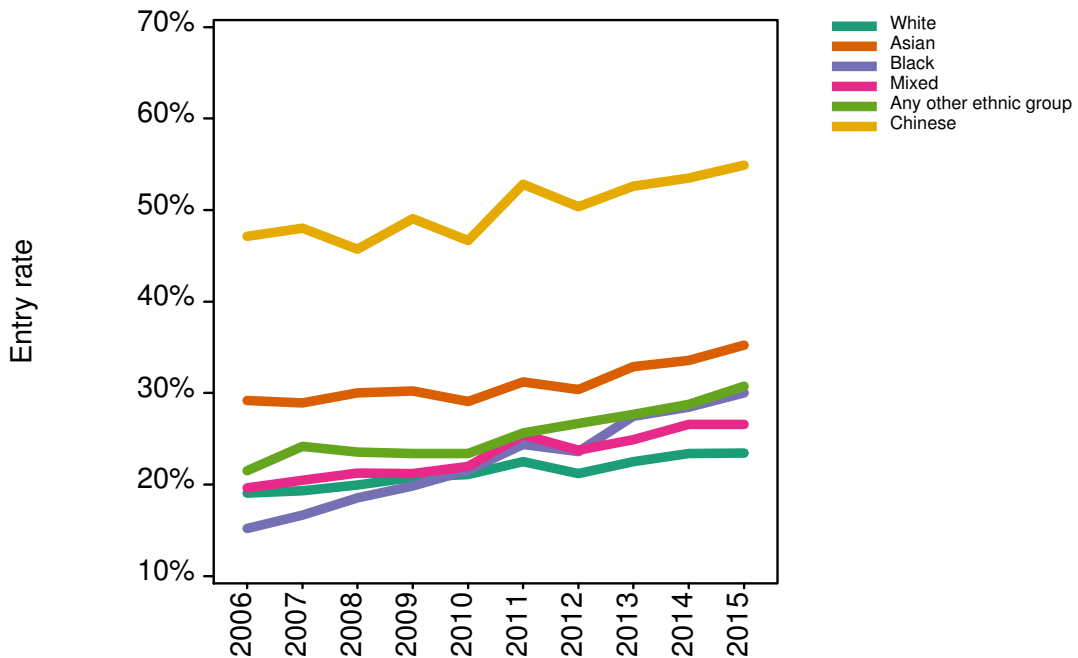


Figure 90 Entry rates for English 18 year old male state school pupils by ethnic group



**Large differences in entry rates for men and women across all ethnic groups**

The ratio of the 18 year old entry rate for women divided by the entry rate for men, for each ethnic group, is shown in Figure 91. The entry rate ratios were greater than one across all ethnic

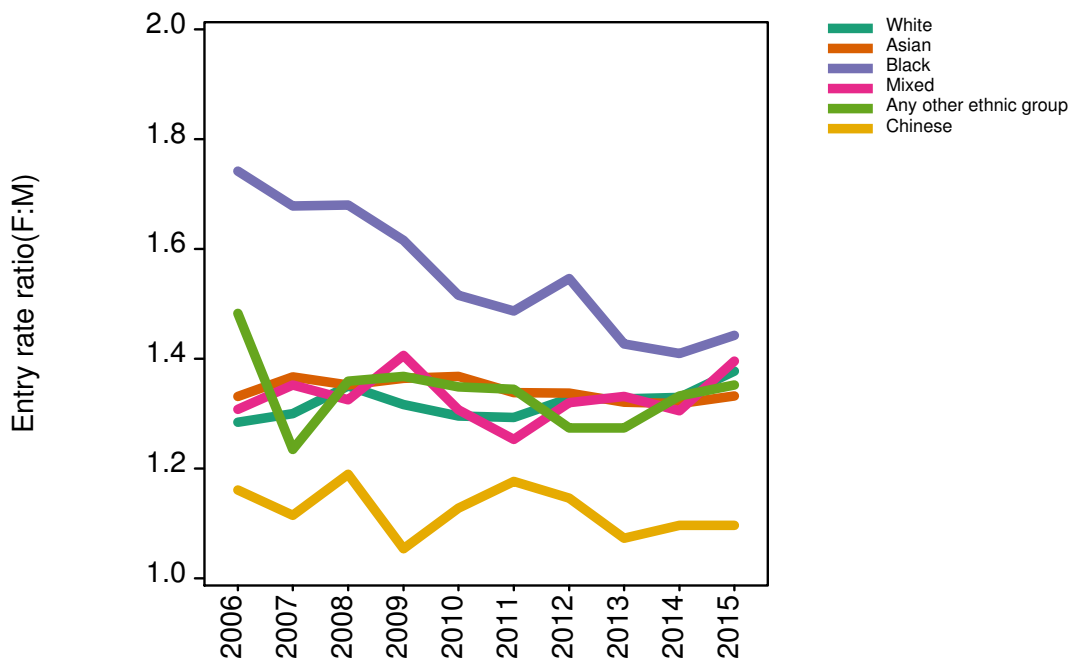
backgrounds, meaning that women were more likely than men to enter higher education in all groups throughout the period.

The patterns in the entry rate ratios vary by ethnic group. Differences in entry rate between men and women in the Chinese ethnic group are consistently lower than other ethnic groups. In 2015 the entry rate ratio was 1.1, indicating that women from the Chinese ethnic group were around 10 per cent more likely to enter higher education than men from the Chinese ethnic group.

Differences in entry rate are greatest between men and women in the Black ethnic group, but the entry rate ratio had fallen from 1.7 in 2006 to 1.4 in 2015. This fall in the ratio for the Black ethnic group arises because the proportional increase in the entry rate for men in the Black ethnic group across the period (+98 per cent) were greater than the proportional increase for women (+64 per cent). In 2015, women from the Black ethnic group were around 44 per cent more likely to be accepted for entry to higher education than men from this group.

The entry rate ratios for the other ethnic groups remained broadly stable during the period and in 2015 had values that ranged between 1.3 and 1.4. That is women from each of these ethnic groups were between 30 and 40 per cent more likely to enter higher education than men from the same ethnic group.

**Figure 91 English 18 year old ratio of entry rate for women to entry rate for men by ethnic group**



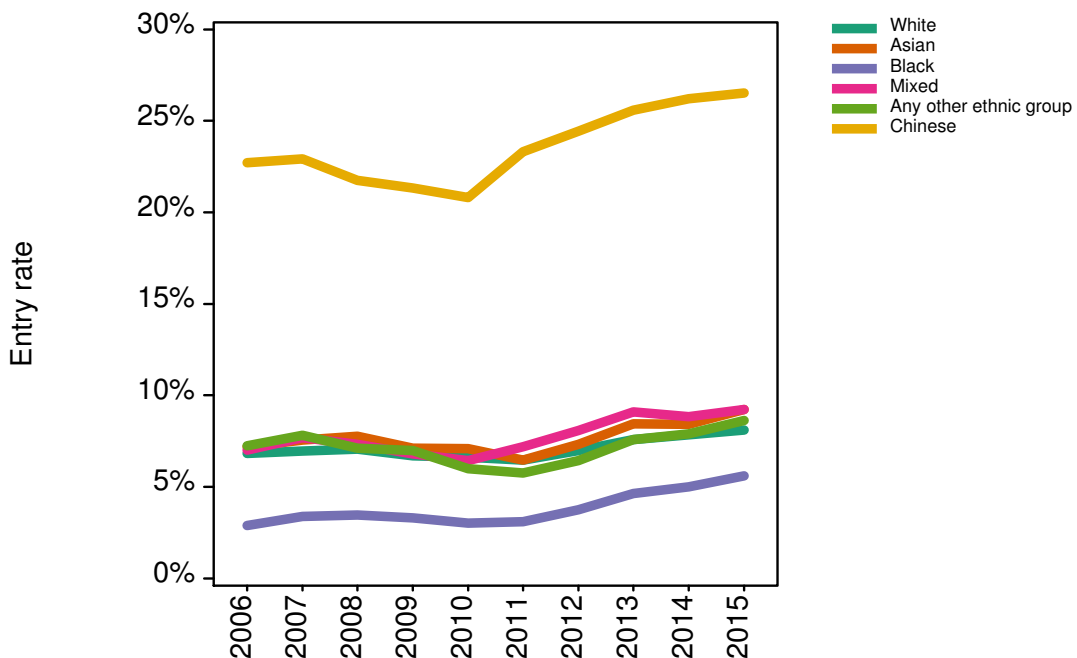
**Large differences in entry rates by ethnic group for English pupils accepted to higher tariff providers**

The entry rates for 18 year olds accepted to higher tariff providers varies by ethnic group. In 2015, entry rate to higher tariff providers from the Chinese ethnic group was 26.5 per cent, the highest on record – and considerably higher than for other ethnic groups. The lowest entry rates to higher tariff providers are for the Black ethnic group, 5.6 per cent in 2015. The other ethnic groups have entry rates to higher tariff providers of between 8.1 and 9.2 per cent.

The entry rates to higher tariff providers for all ethnic groups increased in 2015, reaching the highest recorded values for each group. For the Chinese ethnic group 26.5 per cent (+0.3 percentage points), for the Mixed ethnic group 9.2 per cent (+0.4 percentage points), for the Asian ethnic group 9.2 per cent (+0.8 percentage points), for the Any other ethnic group 8.6 per cent (+0.7 percentage points), for the White ethnic group the entry rate was 8.1 per cent (+0.3 percentage points) and for the Black ethnic group 5.6 per cent (+0.6 percentage points).

Young people recorded in the Black ethnic group had the largest proportional increase in entry rates to higher tariff providers over the period, increasing from 2.9 per cent in 2006 to 5.6 per cent in 2015, a proportional increase of 95 per cent. This group also had the largest proportional increase from 2014 to 2015 of 12 per cent. Despite this, the entry rate for the Black ethnic group remains 2.5 percentage points lower than the White ethnic group, which had the second lowest entry rate to higher tariff providers in 2015.

**Figure 92 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils to higher tariff providers by ethnic group**



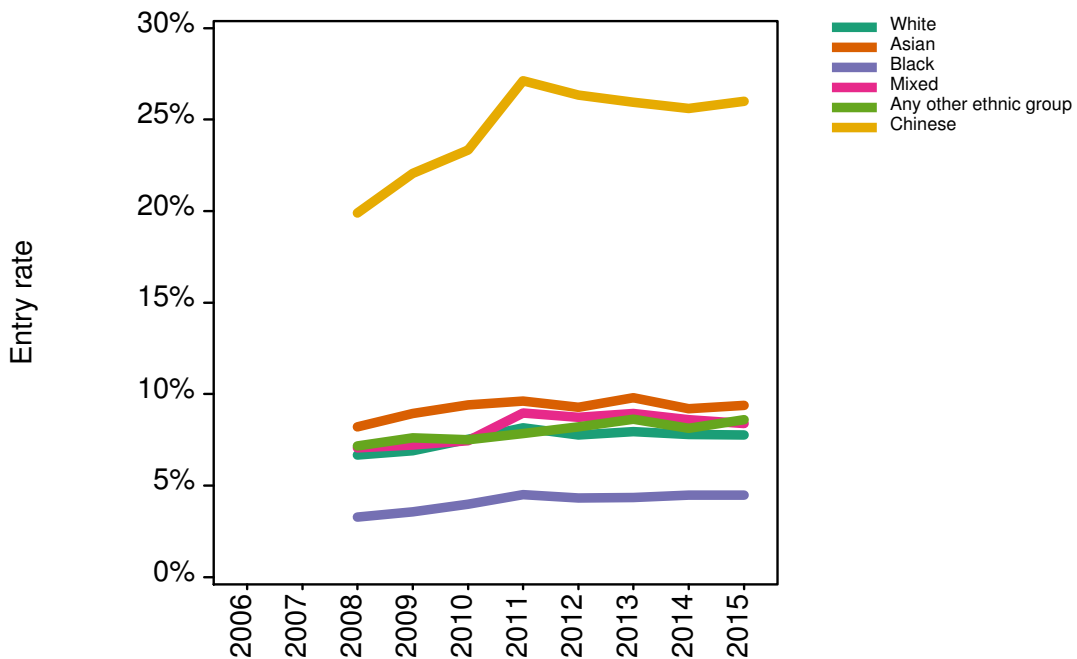
**A level ABB+ entry rates by ethnic group show similar pattern to entry rates to higher tariff providers**

Figure 93 shows the proportion of each ethnic group that are accepted to higher education while holding high grade (ABB and above) A level qualifications.

The pattern of entry, to all providers, with ABB+ A level by ethnic group follows a broadly similar pattern to the entry rates to higher tariff providers shown in Figure 92. The highest A level ABB+ entry rates are for the Chinese ethnic group, 26.0 per cent in 2015. The lowest entry rates holding ABB+ A levels are for the Black ethnic group, 4.5 per cent in 2015. Between 7.8 per cent and 9.4 per cent of the other ethnic groups are accepted for entry to higher education holding A level qualifications with grades of ABB and above.

Most ABB+ acceptances to higher tariff providers hold A level qualifications (Figure 107), 74 per cent of English 18 year old acceptances in 2015. The pattern of entry rates holding A level ABB+ suggests that the entry rates to higher tariff providers are related to entry with these qualifications.

**Figure 93 A level ABB+ entry rate of English 18 year olds state school pupils by ethnic group**



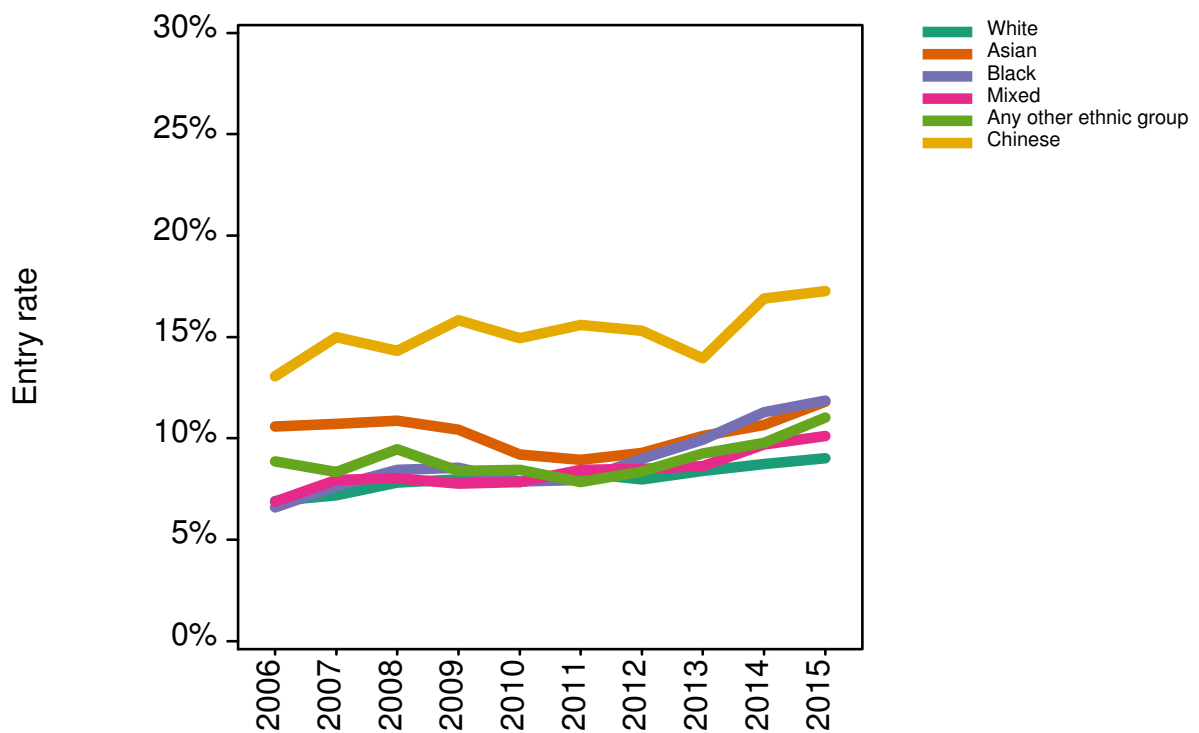
**Entry rates to medium tariff providers at record high for all ethnic groups**

For entry to medium tariff providers, there is much less variability in entry rates across ethnic groups compared with those to higher tariff providers. The highest entry rates to medium tariff providers are from the Chinese ethnic group (17.3 per cent in 2015) and the lowest from the White ethnic group (9.0 per cent in 2015).

The entry rates to medium tariff providers for all ethnic groups increased in 2015, reaching the highest recorded values for each group. For the Chinese ethnic group the entry rate was 17.3 per cent (+0.4 percentage points), for the Black ethnic group 11.9 per cent (+0.6 percentage points), for the Asian ethnic group 11.8 per cent (+1.2 percentage points), for the Any other ethnic group 11.0 per cent (+1.2 percentage points), for the Mixed ethnic group 10.1 per cent (+0.4 percentage points) and for the White ethnic group the entry rate was 9.0 per cent (+0.3 percentage points).

The entry rates to medium tariff providers are greater than those to higher tariff providers for all ethnic groups apart from the Chinese group.

**Figure 94 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils to medium tariff providers by ethnic group**





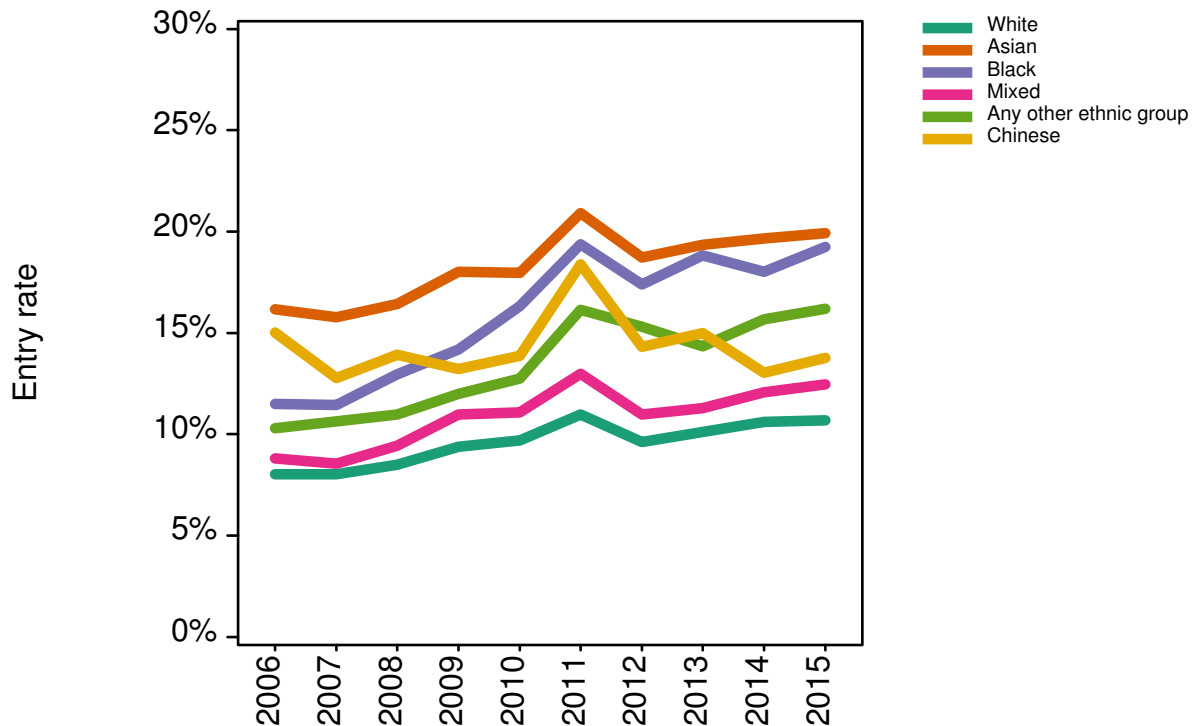
**Entry rates to lower tariff providers highest for Asian ethnic group, lowest for White ethnic group**

The entry rates for lower tariff providers varied by ethnic group with a range of around 9 percentage points in 2015. Former pupils recorded as being in the Asian ethnic group had the highest entry rate to lower tariff providers (19.9 per cent in 2015) and those in the White ethnic group had the lowest (10.7 per cent in 2015).

The entry rates to lower tariff providers for all ethnic groups increased in 2015. The rates for the Asian ethnic group 19.9 per cent (+0.3 percentage points), for the Black ethnic group 19.2 per cent (+1.2 percentage points), for the Any other ethnic group 16.2 per cent (+0.5 percentage points), for the Chinese ethnic group 13.8 per cent (+0.7 percentage points), for the Mixed ethnic group 12.5 per cent (+0.4 percentage points), and for the White ethnic group the entry rate was 10.7 per cent (+0.1 percentage points). Despite these increases, the entry rates for all groups apart from the Any other ethnic group are lower than those seen in 2011.

The entry rates to lower tariff providers are higher than those to medium tariff providers for all ethnic groups apart from the Chinese group. This ethnic group is also the only group to have an entry rate to lower tariff providers that was lower in 2015 than in 2006, when it was 15.0 per cent.

**Figure 95 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils to lower tariff providers by ethnic group**



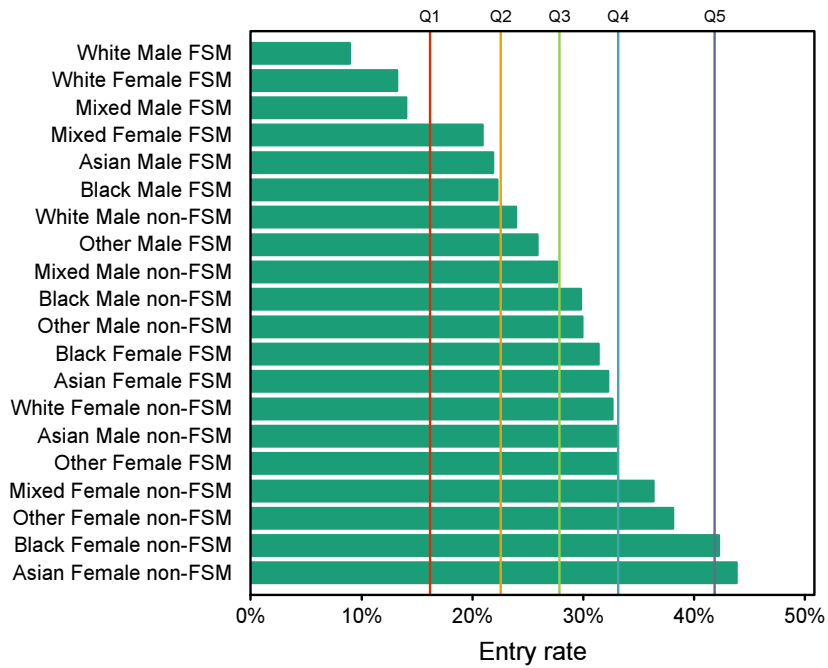
**Patterns in young entry rates vary with combinations of applicant characteristics**

Analysis shown above highlights how the probability of entry to higher education (HE) varies by background and characteristic. For example large differences exist by area-based measures, income-based measures, ethnic group and sex. Furthermore, although one group with a particular characteristic may be more likely to enter HE than another group with a different characteristic (for example women compared to men), this increased likelihood of entry to HE does not persist when assessed in combination with other characteristics. For example, although women who live in disadvantaged areas are more likely to enter HE than men from the same areas, and women who claim FSM are more likely to enter HE than men who claim FSM, there are nevertheless some men who are more likely to progress into HE than women (for example men from the most advantaged areas are more likely to enter HE than women from the most disadvantaged). As such regarding young men as being less likely to enter HE compared to young women, whilst true on average, is not the case when we consider multiple characteristics in combination.

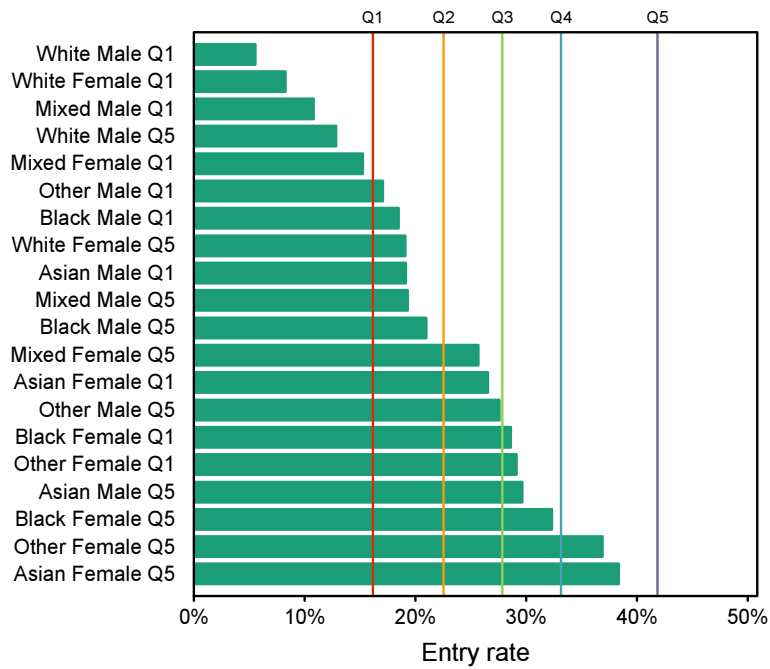
This is shown in Figure 96 which shows the entry rates for various combinations of background and characteristic (ethnic group, sex and FSM) for English 18 year old former state school pupils between 2011 and 2015 who live in POLAR3 quintile 3 areas. The overall 18 year old entry rate for former state school pupils from POLAR3 quintile 3 between 2011 and 2015 was 27.9 per cent, but when split according to the different combinations of background and characteristic the entry rates span a wide range, from 8.9 per cent for White men who claim FSM, through to 43.8 per cent for Asian women who do not claim FSM. This variation in entry rates within a single POLAR3 quintile, which is greater than the variation in entry rates between the most disadvantaged and most advantaged quintiles, shows that there are groups within POLAR3 quintile 3 who could be considered more disadvantaged than others.

Figure 97 shows the entry rates split by POLAR3 quintile, ethnic group and sex for those who claim FSM. A similar range of entry rates is seen and show that even within those who claim FSM there are some groups who have very low and very high entry rates.

**Figure 96 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils in POLAR3 quintile 3 by ethnic group, sex and FSM status at age 15 (2011-2015)**



**Figure 97 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils receiving FSM at age 15 by ethnic group, sex and POLAR3 quintile (Q1 and Q5, 2011-2015)**



### Combining multiple equality dimensions shows greater differentiation in entry rates than using single characteristics

The broad range in entry rates observed for pupils who live in similar areas, or who claim free school meals, highlights the need to consider multiple characteristics in combination when assessing trends in entry rates.

Statistical modelling techniques enable the derivation of pupil level measures that simultaneously consider combinations of multiple equality dimensions. Using linked data sets of pupils in English state schools who were age 18 between 2006 and 2010, a range of characteristics can be combined to create such a measure that can be estimated for pupils who were age 18 in later years also. This measure can then be used to group all pupils in each year into groups where group 1 contains those least likely to apply to higher education and group 5 contains those most likely to apply based on the multiple dimensions of equality. Entry rates can then be calculated for each group and the trends assessed between groups and across time.

The entry rates for each group are shown in Figure 98. The entry rates have increased for all groups since 2014 to reach their highest values in 2015. The entry rate in 2015 for group 1 was 14.0 per cent (+0.3 percentage points, 2 per cent proportionally); for group 2 it was 23.3 per cent (+0.9 percentage points, 4 per cent proportionally); for group 3 it was 28.9 per cent (+0.7 percentage points, 3 per cent proportionally); for group 4 it was 36.4 per cent (+1.6 percentage points, 5 per cent proportionally); and for group 5 it was 45.3 per cent (+1.1 percentage points, 3 per cent proportionally).

Entry rates have increased across the period, with the largest proportional increase between 2006 and 2015 for group 1. For this group the entry rate increased by 73 per cent proportionally (+5.9 percentage points), compared to 49 per cent for group 2 (+7.6 percentage points), 32 per cent for group 3 (+7.0 percentage points), 28 per cent for group 4 (+7.9 percentage points) and 15 per cent for group 5 (+5.9 percentage points).

Figure 98 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by groups based on multiple dimensions of equality (Group 5=most likely to apply)

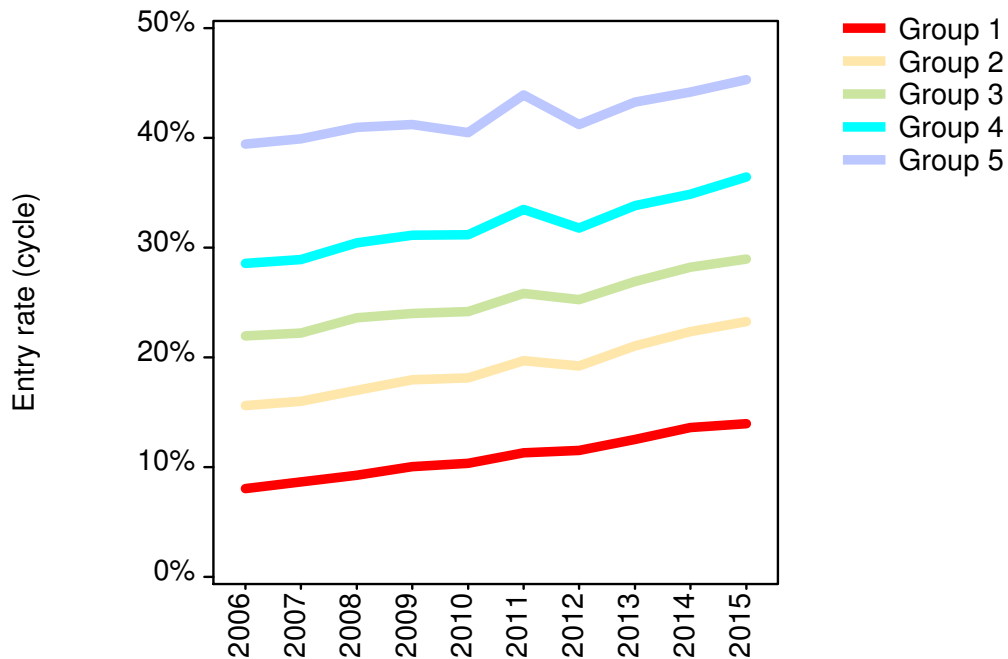
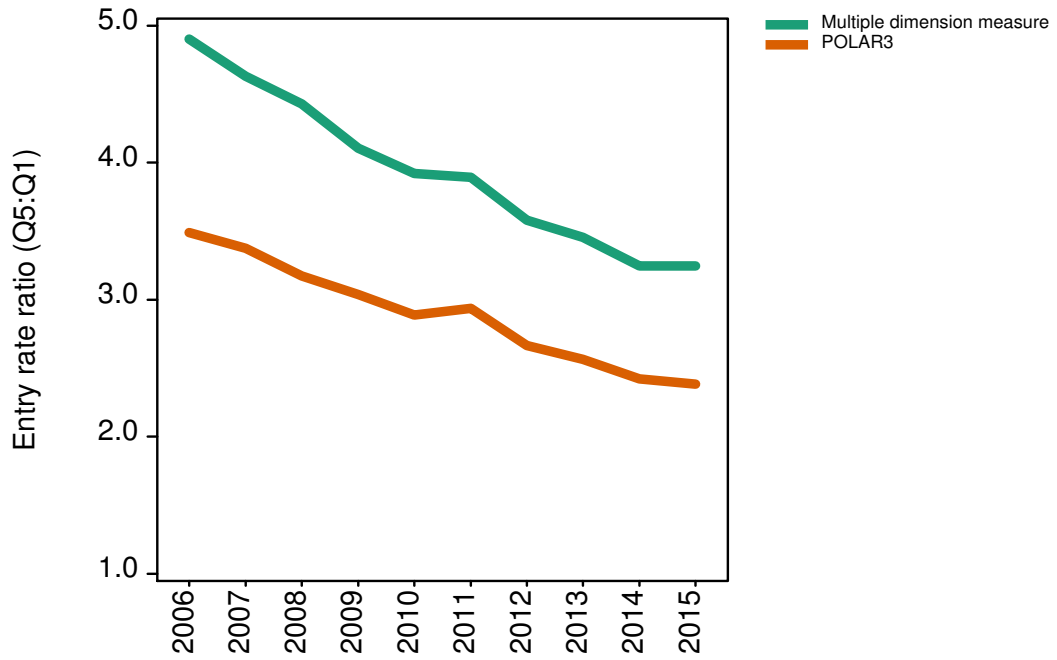


Figure 99 shows the ratio of 18 year old entry rates for group 5 compared to group 1 for the groups formed from multiple dimensions of equality, and for POLAR3 Q5 compared to Q1. The entry rate ratio for the group formed from multiple dimensions of equality remained at 3.2 in 2015, unchanged from 2014, meaning that those English 18 year old former state school pupils in the most advantaged groups on this measure are just over three times more likely to enter HE than those with the lowest probabilities. This is the joint lowest value on record, and has followed falls in each year since 2006.

The entry rate ratio for the groups formed by considering multiple equality dimensions was higher in every year than the entry rate ratio for POLAR3 for these pupils. In 2015, the ratio for POLAR3 continued to decline, meaning that entry rates between the advantaged and disadvantaged areas became more equal on this measure. For the groups formed by considering multiple equality dimensions the ratio was unchanged, indicating no further progress towards equal rates.

Figure 99 18 year old entry rate ratios: POLAR3 (Q5:Q1 – Q5 most advantaged) and groups based on multiple dimensions of equality (Group 5:Group 1 – Group 5 most likely to apply)



## Qualifications held by applicants

Entry to higher education is often determined by the type and strength of the qualifications held by an applicant. This analysis includes both qualifications that applicants list as achieved when they apply and those that are awarded during the application cycle itself. The qualifications that applicants hold when they apply or enter higher education can vary, depending on which country they are from and by their age. UK 18 year old applicants are the largest single group of applicants by country and age, therefore this section describes the type and strength of qualifications held by this group and how they have changed in the 2015 cycle.

A levels are the most widely held qualification amongst 18 year old acceptances from the UK; around two-thirds held A levels in 2015. Other qualifications that are widely held by this group are BTECs, Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers (abbreviated to SQAs for Scottish Qualifications Authority) and the International Baccalaureate (IB). 18 year olds are often accepted holding combinations of qualifications, most frequently a combination of A levels and BTECs.

In this section, UK 18 year olds are grouped by the combination of qualifications they were recorded as having attained by the end of the cycle. Applicants holding three or more A levels, and not holding the other three qualification types are reported in the 'A level only' group. Applicants with Level 3 BTECs (to the equivalent amount of three A levels) and not holding the other three qualification types are assigned to the 'BTEC only' group. Applicants with at least three Scottish Highers or Scottish Advanced Highers are in the 'SQA only' group. Applicants achieving the International Baccalaureate and not holding the other three qualification types are in the 'IB only' group. Applicants with a combination of A levels and BTECs (to the equivalent amount of three A levels) are reported as holding 'A level & BTEC's. Applicants who are not assigned to any of these groups are not reported. In 2015, these accounted for around 13 per cent of UK 18 year old applicants, and 11 per cent of acceptances.

### One fifth of the 18 year old population in the UK entered with A levels as their main qualification

Figure 100 reports the proportion of the UK 18 year old population that were accepted to enter higher education (the entry rate) split by the type of qualification held by accepted applicants. The entry rates for those holding A levels only are shown on a separate axis (left hand side) as they are so much more widely held compared with the other qualifications. In 2015, 19.6 per cent of the UK 18 year old population were accepted for entry and were holding at least three A levels qualifications. This was 0.3 percentage points higher than for 2014, and 0.2 percentage points lower than the rate in 2011, the highest in the period.

### Almost 1 in 20 UK 18 year olds entered holding BTECs as their main qualification

The next mostly widely held qualification among UK 18 year olds is BTECs. In 2015, 3.5 per cent of UK 18 year olds were accepted for entry holding only BTECs (to the equivalent of three A levels, e.g. the Extended Diploma), an increase of 0.2 percentage points from 2014. With the exception of 2012, this rate has increased every cycle since 2008, almost doubling in that time. In 2015, 92 per cent of these applicants holding only BTEC qualifications were from England.

### A growing number of young people enter HE holding a combination of A levels and BTECs

In 2015, 2.3 per cent of UK 18 year olds entered HE holding a combination of A levels and BTECs, 3.8 times the entry rate in 2008 (0.6 per cent).

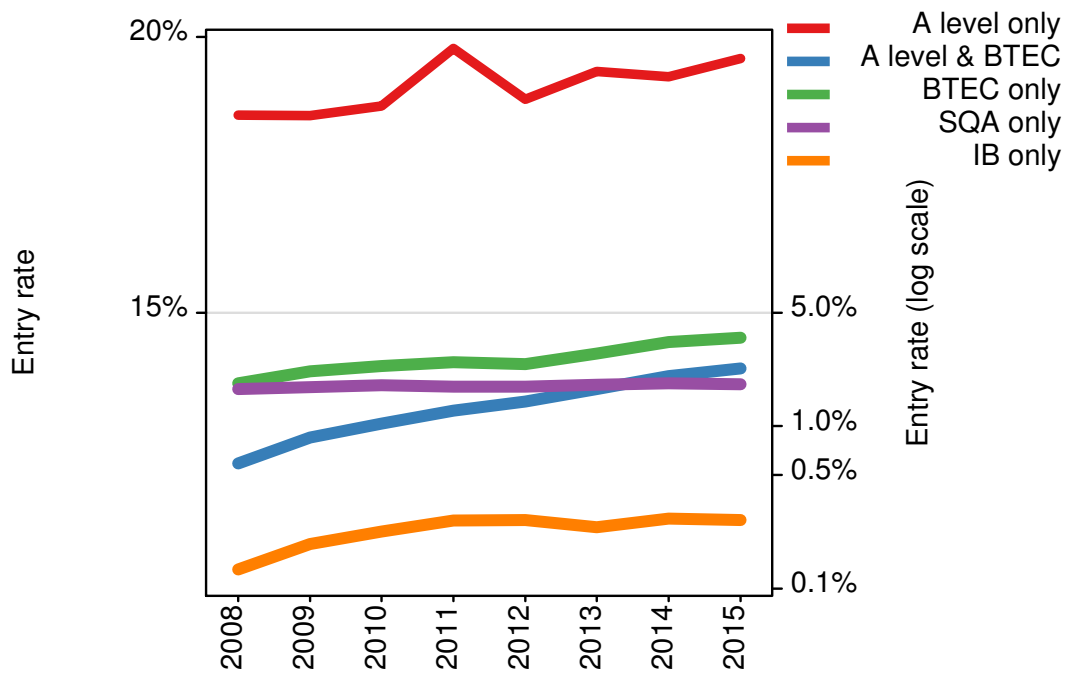
**Entry rate to higher education through UCAS for those holding SQA qualifications remains stable**

Young people from Scotland entering higher education through UCAS generally hold Scottish Highers or Scottish Highers in combination with Advanced Highers (SQA awards). There has been little change in the entry rate of UK 18 year olds holding SQA awards since 2008, with the entry rate ranging between 1.7 and 1.8 per cent each cycle. The entry rates for those holding SQA awards will be lower than the total entry to higher education holding SQA awards since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS.

**Relatively few young people enter higher education holding the International Baccalaureate**

In 2015, the entry rate for UK 18 year olds entering higher education holding the International Baccalaureate (IB) was 0.3 per cent, just over 2,000 acceptances. This entry rate was relatively unchanged since 2010, ranging between 0.2 and 0.3 per cent, but was twice the rate in 2008.

**Figure 100 UK 18 year old entry rate by type of qualification held (logarithmic scale)**





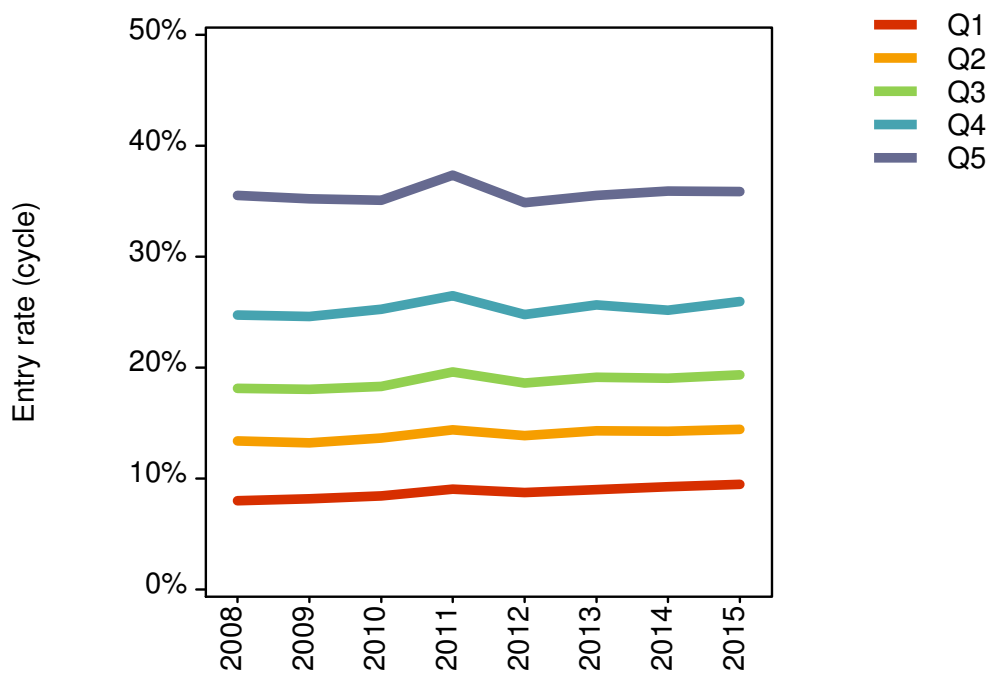
**Entry rate for those holding three or more A levels reaches new highs for more disadvantaged applicants in 2015 but remains highly differentiated by background**

Figure 101 shows the proportion of the English 18 year old population in each POLAR3 area who are accepted to higher education and hold at least three A levels (without holding BTEC, IB or SQA qualifications). There is a differentiation in these entry rates across the groups, with young people in the more advantaged areas being substantially more likely to enter higher education and hold A levels than those living in more disadvantaged areas.

Of 18 year olds living in the areas with the lowest levels of higher education participation (Q1), 9.5 per cent held at least three A levels and were accepted to higher education in 2015. This was an increase of 0.2 percentage points from 2014, continuing a trend of annual increases (with the exception of 2012) that has seen this rate increase by 19 per cent proportionally since 2008.

The entry rates for 18 year olds holding A levels from the most advantaged areas POLAR3 Q5 was unchanged at 35.9 per cent, and remained at around the same level as 2008 although lower than the high in 2011. The entry rate from the most advantaged areas is substantially higher than the rates from other areas across the period reported.

**Figure 101 English 18 year old entry rates by POLAR3 group (accepted applicants holding at least three A levels)**

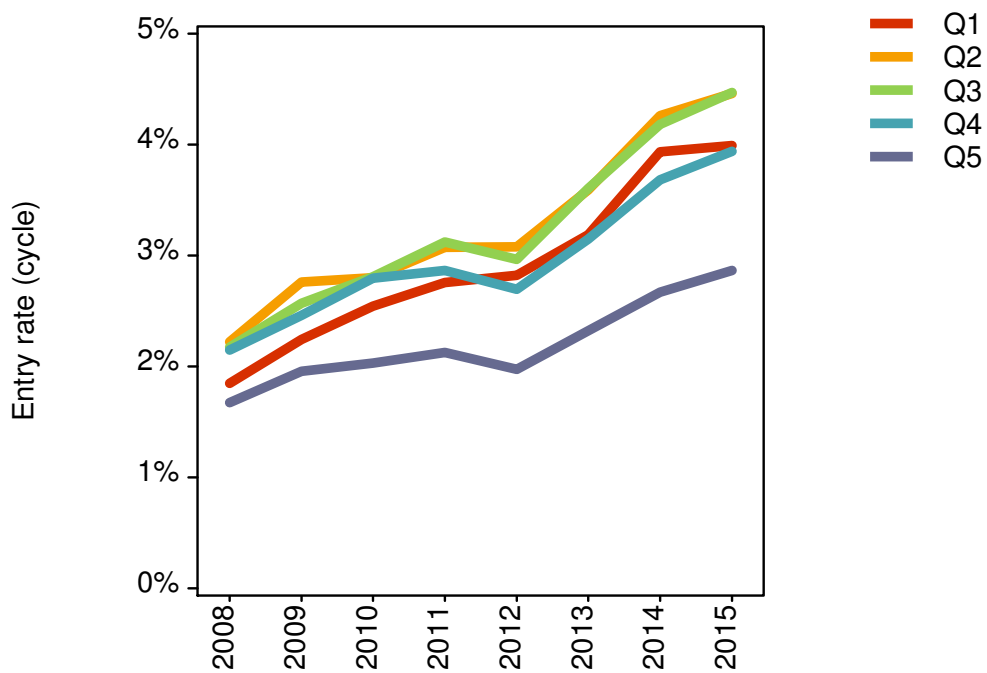


**Entry rates for those holding BTECs show little difference by background, increased to new highs for all groups in 2015**

The entry rate for the English 18 year old population holding only BTECs is lower than the entry rate for those holding only A levels but has increased considerably since 2008 and shows relatively little differentiation by background. Between 3.9 to 4.5 per cent of the 18 year old population in most background groups (Q1 to Q4) were accepted for entry in 2015 holding only BTECs, with the exception of the most advantaged areas (Q5), where 2.9 per cent of the population were accepted and held only BTECs.

For all background groups, the entry rates of those holding BTECs increased in 2015; between 0.1 and 0.3 percentage points since 2014, to their highest recorded values. These entry rates have increased over the period so that 18 year old from all areas are around twice as likely to enter holding BTECs as their main qualification (between 1.7 times for Q5 and 2.2 times for Q1).

**Figure 102 English 18 year old entry rates by POLAR3 group (accepted applicants holding only BTECs to the equivalent of three A levels)**

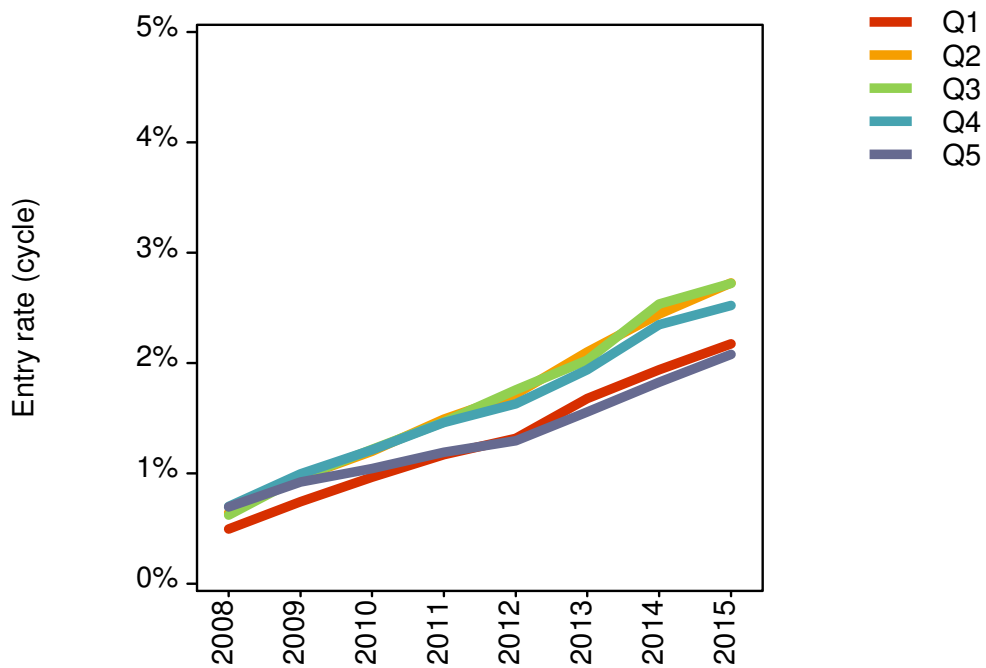


**A small but increasing proportion of young people who enter UK higher education hold a combination of A levels and BTECs**

Figure 103 shows the proportion of English 18 year olds that enter higher education holding a combination of A level and BTEC qualifications to a total attainment level equivalent to three A levels or more by POLAR3 area. In 2015, around 2 per cent of 18 year olds from all backgrounds entered higher education holding A level and BTEC combinations.

The entry rates show little differentiation by background, consistently increasing since 2008 and more than tripling, from a base of around 0.6 per cent for each group during the period.

**Figure 103 English 18 year old entry rates by POLAR3 group (accepted applicants holding a combination of A levels and BTECs to the equivalent size of three A levels)**



**Acceptance rates for applicants holding A levels and those holding BTECs increase**

Figure 104 shows the acceptance rate (the proportion of applicants accepted for entry) for UK 18 year olds by the type of qualification held by applicants at the end of the cycle. The acceptance rate for those who held A levels is higher than for those holding any other type of qualification. In 2015 the acceptance rate for the A level only group was 88.1 per cent, 0.6 percentage points greater than in 2014, but slightly lower than in 2008.

In each cycle since 2010, the acceptance rate for applicants holding BTECs has been increasing. In 2015, the acceptance rate was 82.0 per cent, the highest recorded and 7.2 percentage points higher than the acceptance rate in 2010. In each year since 2010, the proportional increase in the acceptance rate for the BTEC applicants has been greater than the A level only group, meaning the difference between the two groups has fallen to 6.0 percentage points in 2015.

**Small decrease in acceptance rate for applicants holding both A levels and BTECs but remains higher than for the BTEC only group**

In 2015, the acceptance rate for those holding combinations of A levels and BTECs was 86.3 per cent. Aside from a small fall of less than 2 percentage points in 2010, the acceptance rate for the group has increased every year since 2008 and in 2015 was 8.5 percentage points higher than at the start of the period, the largest increase of any qualification group.

Throughout the period the acceptance rate for those holding combinations of A levels and BTECs has been lower than for the A level only group, but since 2010, higher than for the BTEC only group. In 2015, the acceptance rate for those with combinations of A levels and BTECs was 1.7 percentage points lower than the A level only group but 4.3 percentage points higher than for the BTEC only group.

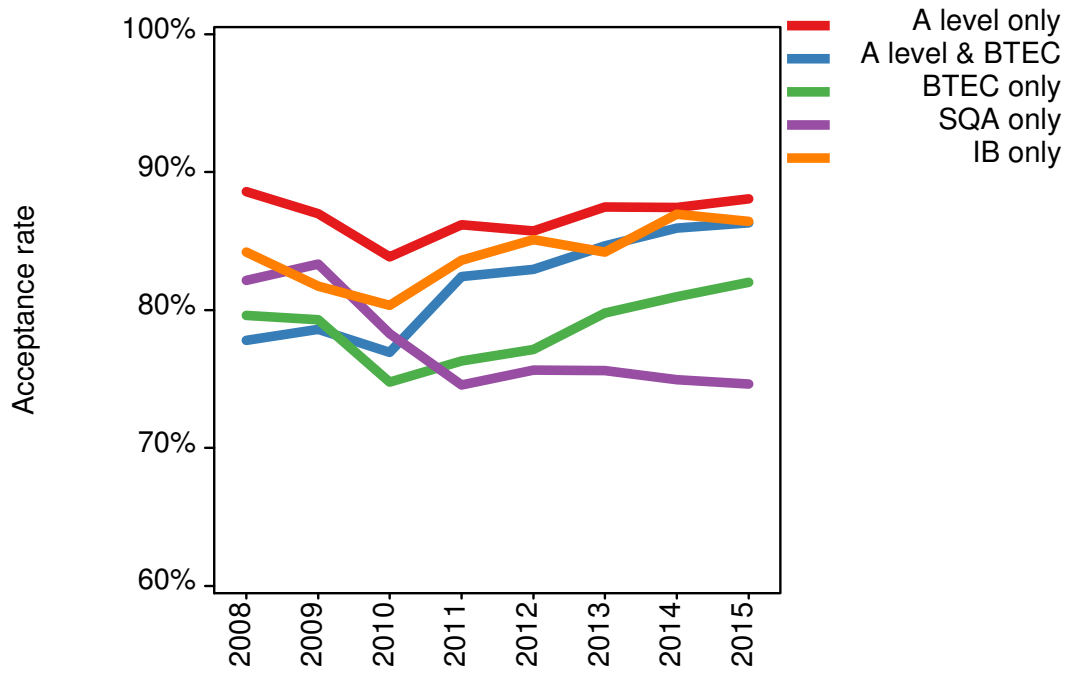
**Despite slight fall in 2015, acceptance rate for applicants holding SQAs remains broadly stable, but lower than for any other qualification group**

The acceptance rate for the SQA only group in 2015 was 74.6 per cent, a fall of 0.3 percentage points from 2014, and the same rate as in 2011. This acceptance rate is the lowest for any qualification group. Most applicants holding SQA awards are domiciled in Scotland meaning that the pattern in acceptance rates over time for this qualification group is similar to the pattern for Scotland as a whole.

**Acceptance rate for applicants holding the IB second highest only to A level only group**

In 2015, the acceptance rate for those holding an IB qualification was 86.4 per cent, lower than the A level only group, but higher than the A level and BTEC group. The acceptance rate for those holding an IB qualification has been consistently high relative to all qualification groups except the A level only group since 2010.

Figure 104 Acceptance rates for UK 18 year olds by type of qualification held



**Those predicted A\*A\*A\* most likely to meet predicted grades in 2015**

Figure 105 shows the proportion of English 18 year old applicants whose A level attainment at the end of the cycle was higher or equal to their predicted attainment, by the highest three A level grades that they were predicted when they applied. That is, the proportion of applicants in each predicted A level grade profile that go on to meet or exceed their predicted grades.

A level attainment recorded at the end of the cycle is more likely to be lower than predicted than higher. This is reflected in the proportions of those predicted each grade profile who go on to meet or exceed their predicted grades, which have been less than 50 per cent since 2010.

In 2015, those predicted A\*A\*A\* were most likely to meet their predicted grades (38.1 per cent), followed by AAA (31.4 per cent) and A\*AA (30.0 per cent). In 2010, the proportion was highest for AAA at 48.9 per cent, followed by A\*AA (41.7 per cent) and A\*A\*A\* (41.4 per cent). Those applicants predicted BBB were least likely to achieve their predicted grades in recent cycles, 28.2 per cent in 2010 and 18.4 per cent in 2015.

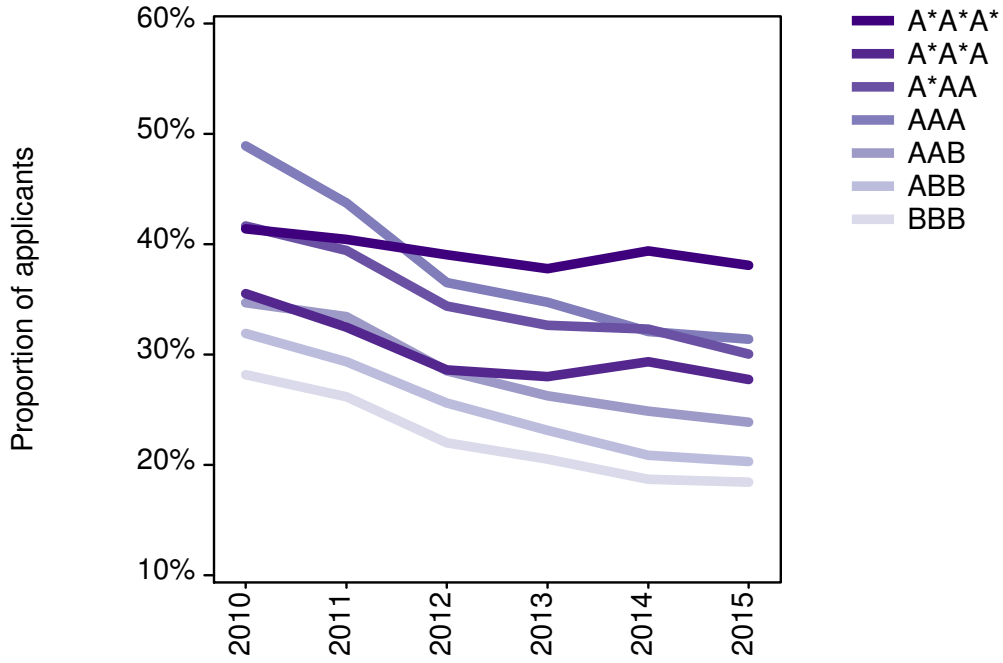
The proportion of applicants meeting or exceeding their predicted grades fell for all grade profiles from 2014 to 2015. The decreases ranged from 0.3 percentage points (-1.5 per cent proportionally) for BBB to 2.3 percentage points (-7.0 per cent proportionally) for A\*AA. The decreases for those grade profiles of AAA and lower were the smallest year on year changes for these groups seen across previous cycles.

Over the period, the proportion of applicants meeting or exceeding their predicted grades has decreased. The predicted grade profile with one of the largest proportional decreases was AAA, with applicants in this group 36 per cent less likely in 2015 to achieve their predicted grades than in 2010 (-17.5 percentage points). The proportion of those predicted A\*A\*A\* who achieved their predicted grade profile remained broadly consistent over recent cycles, with a 3.3 percentage point decrease since 2010 (-8.0 per cent proportionally).

Predicted grade profiles of A\*AA and lower decreased in this proportion every cycle since 2010.

Although the AAA and A\*AA groups have seen large proportional decreases in recent cycles, in 2015, those applicants with these predicted grade profiles were still most likely to meet or exceed their predicted grades after those in the A\*A\*A\* group.

Figure 105 Proportion of English 18 year old applicants who met or exceeded their predicted attainment by predicted grade profile



**Proportion of 18 year olds with ABB+ at higher and medium tariff providers falls again in 2015**

The proportion of English 18 year old acceptances to English providers holding combinations of qualifications with higher grades (denoted ABB+ here, reflecting the A level grades represented within the attainment group) increased from 35 per cent in 2008 to 42 per cent in 2011. In each cycle since then it has decreased slightly to reach 41 per cent in 2015. The proportion with ABB+ qualifications varies substantially by the tariff group of the provider. Recent trends in this proportion are different for these provider groups.

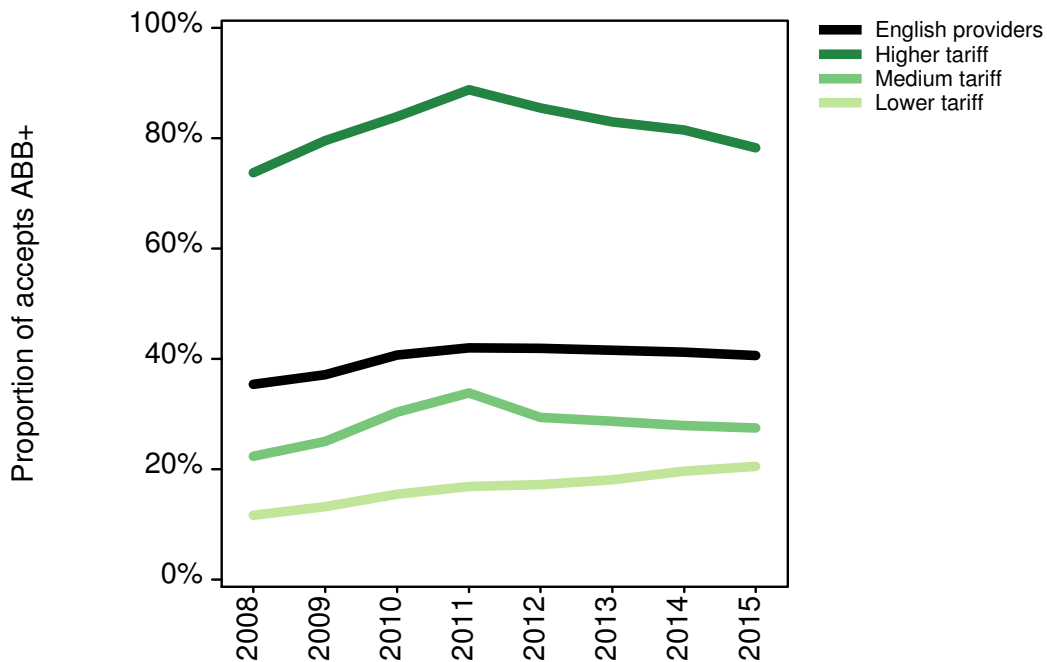
The proportion of English 18 year old acceptances holding ABB+ is much higher at English higher tariff providers than at other English providers. At these providers the proportion increased from 74 per cent in 2008 to a high point of 89 per cent in 2011. Since then it has decreased in each cycle, to reach 78 per cent in 2015. This is a reduction of 3.3 percentage points from 2014, the largest year on year decrease seen over the period for this group.

The proportion holding ABB+ at medium tariff providers increased from 22 per cent to 34 per cent between 2008 and 2011. In 2012 the proportion decreased by 4.5 percentage points and there were further decreases in each cycle since to 27 per cent in 2015.

**Proportion of ABB+ at English lower tariff providers increases to high of 20 per cent in 2015**

At lower tariff institutions the proportion holding ABB+ has increased each cycle from 12 per cent in 2008 to 20 per cent in 2015, the highest value recorded in this period.

**Figure 106 Proportion of English 18 year old acceptances who are holding ABB+ qualifications by provider tariff group**





## **Proportion of 18 year old ABB+ students who have BTECs doubles between 2008 and 2015**

For English 18 year olds the ABB+ acceptances are predominantly those who hold A level or BTEC qualifications at higher grades. In 2015, 73 per cent of these ABB+ acceptances were from those holding A levels (87 per cent in 2008) and 25 per cent were from those holding BTECs (12 per cent in 2008).

The trends in the proportion of English 18 year old acceptances who are ABB+ for these providers are a composite of the varying contributions of the BTEC and A level sub groups to each provider group.

## **Acceptances holding BTEC ABB+ increasing but remain only 2 per cent at higher tariff**

The proportion of English 18 year old acceptances to providers in England who are BTEC ABB+ has been increasing for all provider groups across all years. In 2015, the proportion of 18 year old English acceptances that held ABB+ from BTEC qualifications increased to 16.7 per cent for lower tariff providers and 9.9 per cent for medium tariff providers, representing proportional increases of 5 per cent.

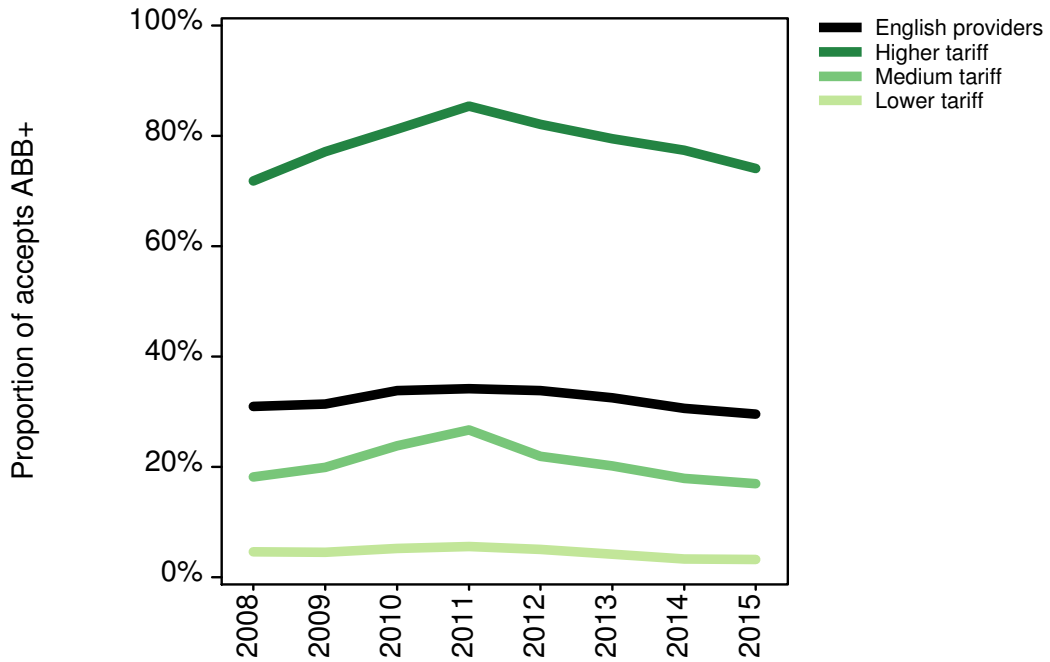
The proportional increase in the share of BTEC ABB+ acceptances at higher tariff providers was higher (over 7 per cent) but the proportion of English 18 year old entrants holding BTEC ABB+ remains much lower (2.3 per cent in 2015) than at other provider types.

## **Acceptances holding A level ABB+ highest at higher tariff providers but decreasing for all groups**

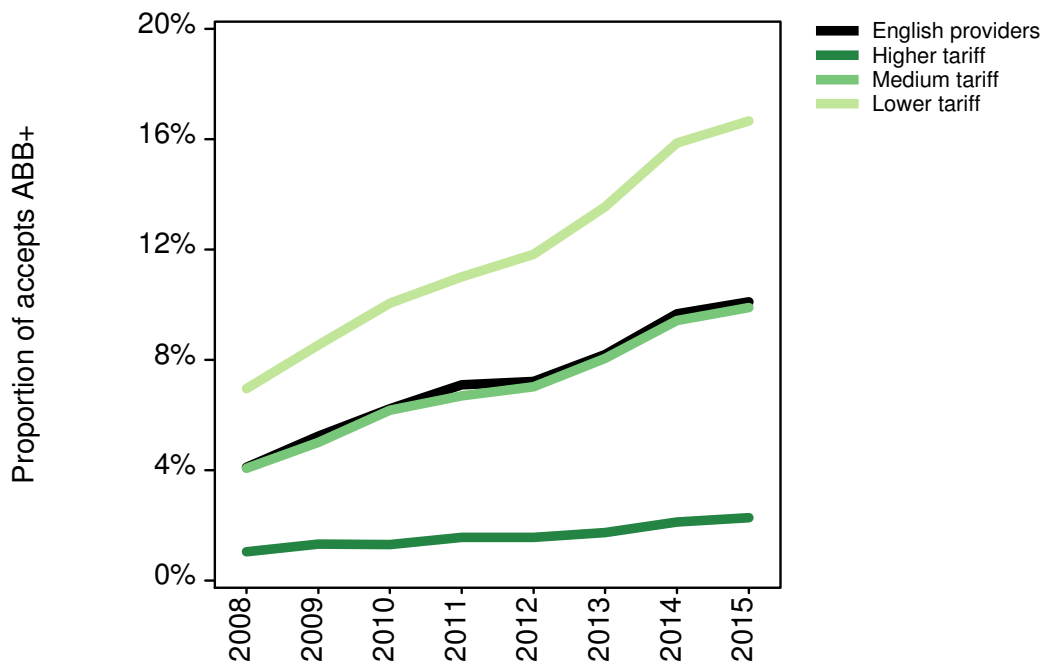
The proportion of acceptances who are A level ABB+ has decreased for all provider groups in each cycle since 2012. Acceptances to higher tariff providers are much more likely to hold ABB+ qualifications from A levels. In 2015, the proportion of 18 year old English acceptances to higher tariff providers who held ABB+ from A level reduced to 74 per cent, the lowest since 2008.

Very few acceptances to lower tariff providers hold ABB+ from A levels, 3.2 per cent in 2015, the lowest recorded value in this period.

**Figure 107 Proportion of English 18 year old acceptances who are holding A level ABB+ qualifications by provider tariff group**



**Figure 108 Proportion of English 18 year old acceptances who are holding BTEC ABB+ qualifications by provider tariff group**



## Acceptance rates to provider groups similar for most grade profiles between 2015 and 2014

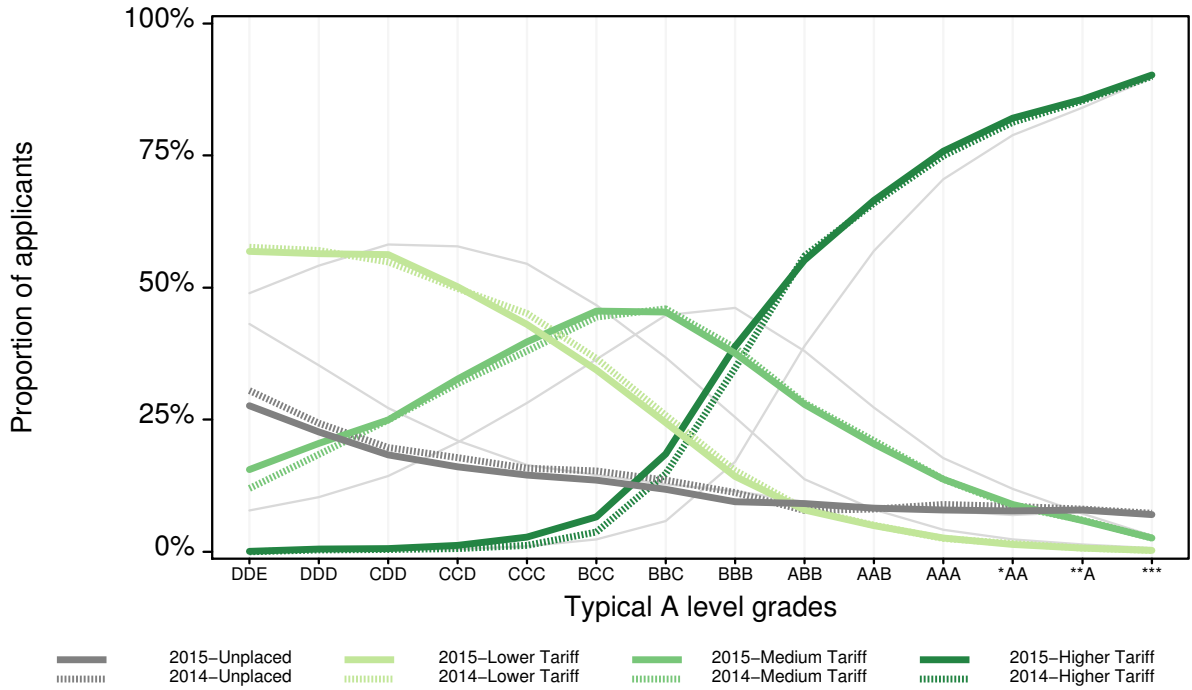
Figure 109 covers English 18 year old applicants in the 2015 and 2014 cycles with three A levels who were either accepted to English providers, or made a main scheme application to an English provider but were unplaced (in total, around 150,000 per cycle). The applicants are grouped by the number of A level grades they obtained (A\* treated as six grades, E as one, labelled by a typical grade profile). For each group the proportion of applicants that were accepted to higher, medium or lower tariff providers (or left unplaced) is shown. The corresponding pattern for the 2011 cycle is shown as a thinner grey line.

Applicants with the highest A level grades are most likely to enter higher tariff providers, those with the lowest grades are most likely to enter lower tariff providers, and those with grades in between are most likely to enter medium tariff providers. Applicants with the lowest number of A level grades are the most likely to be unplaced.

The proportion of applicants in each grade profile accepted to the different provider groups is similar for the 2014 and 2015 cycles. This is in contrast to the change in the acceptance rates between both of these cycles and 2011.

For example, of those applicants with a typical grade profile of BBB in 2015; 39 per cent entered a higher tariff provider, 38 per cent a medium tariff provider and 14 per cent a lower tariff provider. This represents a shift towards BBB applicants being more likely to be accepted to higher tariff providers when comparing with the proportions in 2014 (35 per cent higher, 39 per cent medium, 15 per cent lower). In 2011 the proportion entering higher tariff providers was lower (17 per cent) and the proportion entering medium tariff (46 per cent) and lower tariff (25 per cent) providers were higher.

Figure 109 Acceptance rates of English 18 year old applicants to higher, medium and lower tariff English providers, by number of A level grades



# Section 3

Reference tables

## Reference tables

Applicants are reported as individuals who have applied to a UCAS cycle, this will include applications for deferred entry. Accepted applicants are also reported in the cycle through which they applied, irrespective of whether they were accepted for immediate or deferred entry.

Counts of the number of applicants reported have been rounded to the nearest 5, which may result in instances where totals do not equal the sum of the components.

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**Table 1:**

**Applicants and acceptances for full-time undergraduate courses at UK higher education providers (2011-2015)**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total applicants	700,160	653,635	677,375	699,685	718,480
Total accepted applicants	492,030	464,910	495,595	512,370	532,265
Total unplaced applicants	208,130	188,725	181,775	187,315	186,215
Acceptance rate	70.3%	71.1%	73.2%	73.2%	74.1%

**Table 2:**

**Applicants and acceptances by domicile group (2011-2015)**

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
England	Applicants	496,635	454,000	471,120	487,870	494,495
	Accepted applicants	367,150	342,755	367,900	382,515	394,380
Northern Ireland	Applicants	20,240	19,375	20,545	20,570	21,030
	Accepted applicants	13,790	13,285	14,555	14,455	14,050
Scotland*	Applicants	46,015	45,115	45,720	44,785	51,295
	Accepted applicants	30,800	30,900	31,495	30,315	34,775
Wales	Applicants	24,975	24,845	24,595	25,065	25,200
	Accepted applicants	18,325	19,305	19,665	20,165	20,510
UK	Applicants	587,865	543,340	561,985	578,290	592,025
	Accepted applicants	430,070	406,240	433,610	447,450	463,715
EU (excluding UK)	Applicants	49,275	43,150	44,835	46,830	50,705
	Accepted applicants	26,700	23,235	24,510	26,380	29,300
Not EU	Applicants	63,020	67,150	70,555	74,560	75,750
	Accepted applicants	35,260	35,435	37,475	38,535	39,250
All	Applicants	700,160	653,635	677,375	699,685	718,480
	Accepted applicants	492,030	464,910	495,595	512,370	532,265

\*Not all HE providers in Scotland use UCAS. Therefore the share of the total HE provision in Scotland that is recorded through UCAS can change by both cycle and background. Also, recruitment to Scottish providers in 2014 recorded through UCAS may have been up to 2,000 fewer than the reporting base in recent cycles following some changes to reporting of late acceptances. Recruitment to Scottish providers in 2015 recorded through UCAS included around 2000 acceptances to teacher training courses that were previously part of the UCAS Teacher Training scheme (UTT).



**Table 3:**

**Applicants and acceptances by domicile and age group (2011-2015)**

			2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK	17 and under	Applicants	2,420	2,080	1,970	1,895	2,080
		Accepted applicants	1,490	1,375	1,325	1,220	1,415
	18	Applicants	269,195	260,360	262,850	268,760	279,365
		Accepted applicants	217,655	212,105	219,320	224,555	235,360
	19	Applicants	110,505	93,830	104,655	106,220	108,125
		Accepted applicants	88,050	76,275	87,945	89,340	91,760
	20	Applicants	44,570	40,115	41,560	43,710	42,630
		Accepted applicants	31,420	29,555	31,880	33,635	32,970
	21-25	Applicants	82,035	74,395	77,335	79,100	79,305
		Accepted applicants	49,290	46,325	50,430	51,835	53,520
	26-30	Applicants	30,640	27,680	28,400	29,930	30,580
		Accepted applicants	16,570	15,635	16,555	17,945	18,810
	31-35	Applicants	18,690	17,385	17,600	18,390	18,575
		Accepted applicants	9,835	9,605	10,160	10,915	11,125
	36 and over	Applicants	29,805	27,495	27,620	30,285	31,365
		Accepted applicants	15,765	15,365	16,000	18,005	18,755

			2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
EU (excluding UK)	17 and under	Applicants	3,140	3,000	3,170	3,525	3,980	
		Accepted applicants	1,500	1,500	1,640	1,910	2,205	
	18	Applicants	13,945	13,445	14,095	15,065	16,970	
		Accepted applicants	7,510	7,435	7,795	8,685	10,020	
	19	Applicants	14,180	12,455	13,155	13,690	14,805	
		Accepted applicants	8,080	6,965	7,505	7,935	8,825	
	20	Applicants	6,345	5,265	5,550	5,810	5,895	
		Accepted applicants	3,610	2,845	3,075	3,440	3,610	
	21-25	Applicants	9,395	7,150	7,100	7,080	7,255	
		Accepted applicants	5,015	3,715	3,735	3,735	3,895	
	26-30	Applicants	1,555	1,160	1,135	1,070	1,170	
		Accepted applicants	700	510	500	435	510	
	31-35	Applicants	415	375	350	295	320	
		Accepted applicants	175	150	155	130	110	
	36 and over	Applicants	300	300	285	300	310	
		Accepted applicants	110	120	105	110	120	
	Not EU	17 and under	Applicants	3,935	4,840	5,565	6,195	6,040
			Accepted applicants	1,790	2,140	2,385	2,650	2,625
18		Applicants	17,060	19,430	21,895	23,505	25,160	
		Accepted applicants	9,335	10,125	11,325	11,730	12,900	
19		Applicants	15,290	16,270	16,860	18,335	18,350	
		Accepted applicants	8,945	9,180	9,720	10,225	10,265	
20		Applicants	9,250	9,735	10,100	10,805	10,505	
		Accepted applicants	5,690	5,695	6,005	6,240	5,945	
21-25		Applicants	13,750	13,420	12,930	12,580	12,460	
		Accepted applicants	7,945	7,055	6,855	6,495	6,330	
26-30		Applicants	2,330	2,145	2,015	1,940	2,025	
		Accepted applicants	1,010	810	765	745	785	
31-35		Applicants	850	750	695	675	700	
		Accepted applicants	335	250	245	265	230	
36 and over		Applicants	560	560	490	530	510	
		Accepted applicants	210	185	175	185	170	

			2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
All	17 and under	Applicants	9,490	9,920	10,710	11,610	12,105
		Accepted applicants	4,780	5,015	5,350	5,780	6,250
	18	Applicants	300,205	293,235	298,840	307,330	321,495
		Accepted applicants	234,500	229,665	238,440	244,975	258,280
	19	Applicants	139,975	122,555	134,670	138,250	141,280
		Accepted applicants	105,080	92,415	105,170	107,500	110,850
	20	Applicants	60,165	55,120	57,205	60,325	59,025
		Accepted applicants	40,720	38,095	40,960	43,315	42,525
	21-25	Applicants	105,180	94,965	97,365	98,755	99,025
		Accepted applicants	62,245	57,090	61,025	62,065	63,750
	26-30	Applicants	34,525	30,985	31,550	32,940	33,780
		Accepted applicants	18,275	16,955	17,820	19,125	20,100
	31-35	Applicants	19,960	18,505	18,645	19,360	19,590
		Accepted applicants	10,345	10,000	10,555	11,310	11,470
	36 and over	Applicants	30,665	28,355	28,395	31,115	32,180
		Accepted applicants	16,085	15,675	16,275	18,300	19,045

**Table 4:**

**Applicants and acceptances by domicile and sex (2011-2015)**

			2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK	Men	Applicants	253,810	232,675	241,610	247,080	250,830
		Accepted applicants	192,465	180,435	193,030	197,420	201,960
	Women	Applicants	334,055	310,665	320,375	331,210	341,195
		Accepted applicants	237,605	225,810	240,580	250,030	261,755
EU (excluding UK)	Men	Applicants	21,595	18,605	19,140	19,620	20,985
		Accepted applicants	12,110	10,445	10,900	11,470	12,490
	Women	Applicants	27,680	24,545	25,700	27,210	29,715
		Accepted applicants	14,595	12,790	13,605	14,915	16,810
Not EU	Men	Applicants	31,660	33,790	34,705	35,895	36,160
		Accepted applicants	17,305	17,410	18,135	18,400	18,265
	Women	Applicants	31,360	33,360	35,850	38,665	39,590
		Accepted applicants	17,955	18,025	19,340	20,135	20,985
All	Men	Applicants	307,065	285,070	295,450	302,600	307,975
		Accepted applicants	221,875	208,285	222,070	227,290	232,715
	Women	Applicants	393,095	368,570	381,920	397,085	410,500
		Accepted applicants	270,155	256,625	273,530	285,080	299,550

**Table 5:**

**Acceptances by domicile group and provider country (2011-2015)**

Domicile group	Provider country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
England	England	352,235	328,895	353,110	366,475	378,760
	Northern Ireland	245	330	260	680	620
	Scotland*	3,245	4,005	4,100	4,675	4,560
	Wales	11,425	9,525	10,430	10,680	10,435
Northern Ireland	England	3,860	3,210	3,370	3,480	3,885
	Northern Ireland	8,640	9,020	10,010	9,855	8,920
	Scotland*	1,075	905	1,015	970	1,075
	Wales	215	145	160	150	170
Scotland*	England	1,640	1,460	1,565	1,525	1,675
	Northern Ireland	20	25	15	15	25
	Scotland*	29,075	29,360	29,850	28,710	33,030
	Wales	65	55	70	65	45
Wales	England	6,460	7,315	7,360	8,090	8,380
	Northern Ireland	10	5	5	10	15
	Scotland*	95	115	105	115	120
	Wales	11,765	11,875	12,190	11,955	11,990
UK	England	364,200	340,875	365,405	379,570	392,700
	Northern Ireland	8,915	9,380	10,290	10,560	9,580
	Scotland*	33,485	34,385	35,070	34,470	38,790
	Wales	23,470	21,595	22,845	22,850	22,645
EU (excluding UK)	England	20,945	17,350	18,915	20,435	23,380
	Northern Ireland	440	460	440	455	385
	Scotland*	4,270	4,400	4,105	4,350	4,245
	Wales	1,045	1,025	1,050	1,145	1,290
Not EU	England	29,925	30,570	32,250	33,165	33,935
	Northern Ireland	195	200	230	245	200
	Scotland*	3,405	3,155	3,380	3,180	3,355
	Wales	1,735	1,505	1,615	1,945	1,760

Domicile group	Provider country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
All	England	415,070	388,795	416,570	433,170	450,015
	Northern Ireland	9,550	10,040	10,965	11,260	10,165
	Scotland*	41,165	41,945	42,555	42,000	46,390
	Wales	26,250	24,130	25,510	25,935	25,695

\*Not all HE providers in Scotland use UCAS. Therefore the share of the total HE provision in Scotland that is recorded through UCAS can change by both cycle and background. Also, recruitment to Scottish providers in 2014 recorded through UCAS may have been up to 2,000 fewer than the reporting base in recent cycles following some changes to reporting of late acceptances. Recruitment to Scottish providers in 2015 recorded through UCAS included around 2000 acceptances to teacher training courses that were previously part of the UCAS Teacher Training scheme (UTT).

**Table 6:****Acceptances by domicile group and tariff band (2011-2015)**

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
England	1. Higher tariff group	76,545	77,325	83,715	86,105	90,915
	2. Medium tariff group	105,190	99,020	105,840	109,910	115,335
	3. Lower tariff group	185,415	166,410	178,345	186,500	188,130
Northern Ireland	1. Higher tariff group	1,750	1,480	1,510	1,485	1,695
	2. Medium tariff group	4,755	4,805	5,400	5,365	5,130
	3. Lower tariff group	7,290	7,000	7,645	7,600	7,225
Scotland*	1. Higher tariff group	12,865	13,005	13,410	13,715	15,675
	2. Medium tariff group	17,285	17,380	17,500	15,980	18,485
	3. Lower tariff group	650	510	590	620	615
Wales	1. Higher tariff group	3,715	4,205	4,180	4,450	4,640
	2. Medium tariff group	5,200	5,420	5,530	5,765	5,995
	3. Lower tariff group	9,415	9,685	9,955	9,950	9,875
UK	1. Higher tariff group	94,875	96,015	102,810	105,755	112,925
	2. Medium tariff group	132,430	126,625	134,265	137,025	144,945
	3. Lower tariff group	202,765	183,600	196,535	204,670	205,845
EU (excluding UK)	1. Higher tariff group	8,815	8,560	8,760	9,845	10,955
	2. Medium tariff group	8,610	7,565	7,930	8,065	9,085
	3. Lower tariff group	9,275	7,110	7,820	8,475	9,260
Not EU	1. Higher tariff group	17,690	18,715	20,040	20,245	21,455
	2. Medium tariff group	11,830	11,375	11,790	11,915	11,900
	3. Lower tariff group	5,745	5,350	5,645	6,375	5,900
All	1. Higher tariff group	121,380	123,285	131,610	135,840	145,335
	2. Medium tariff group	152,865	145,565	153,985	157,005	165,925
	3. Lower tariff group	217,780	196,060	210,000	219,520	221,005

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**Table 7:**

**Acceptances by country and POLAR3 quintile (UK domiciled only, age 18 2011-2015)**

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
England	POLAR3 Quintile 1	18,880	18,715	19,800	21,425	22,480
	POLAR3 Quintile 2	27,535	27,025	28,570	30,005	31,505
	POLAR3 Quintile 3	35,960	34,980	36,810	37,860	40,085
	POLAR3 Quintile 4	43,805	41,985	43,645	43,915	46,430
	POLAR3 Quintile 5	58,745	56,340	57,130	58,130	60,675
	Not assigned	350	325	310	340	505
Northern Ireland	POLAR3 Quintile 1	455	495	500	520	520
	POLAR3 Quintile 2	830	765	805	845	760
	POLAR3 Quintile 3	1,235	1,245	1,340	1,295	1,300
	POLAR3 Quintile 4	2,595	2,540	2,610	2,545	2,475
	POLAR3 Quintile 5	3,455	3,365	3,480	3,235	3,250
	Not assigned	20	10	20	15	15
Scotland*	POLAR3 Quintile 1	470	530	545	600	605
	POLAR3 Quintile 2	1,395	1,330	1,380	1,390	1,505
	POLAR3 Quintile 3	2,085	2,250	2,230	2,185	2,235
	POLAR3 Quintile 4	3,355	3,405	3,415	3,370	3,555
	POLAR3 Quintile 5	6,905	6,900	6,905	6,700	6,805
	Not assigned	40	35	25	35	35
Wales	POLAR3 Quintile 1	1,235	1,330	1,305	1,515	1,500
	POLAR3 Quintile 2	1,880	1,990	2,020	1,995	2,165
	POLAR3 Quintile 3	1,625	1,690	1,625	1,760	1,800
	POLAR3 Quintile 4	2,195	2,180	2,180	2,215	2,420
	POLAR3 Quintile 5	2,590	2,650	2,655	2,640	2,725
	Not assigned	15	20	20	15	25



		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK	POLAR3 Quintile 1	21,040	21,070	22,145	24,060	25,100
	POLAR3 Quintile 2	31,645	31,115	32,775	34,235	35,930
	POLAR3 Quintile 3	40,900	40,165	42,000	43,100	45,420
	POLAR3 Quintile 4	51,945	50,110	51,850	52,045	54,880
	POLAR3 Quintile 5	71,695	69,260	70,170	70,710	73,450
	Not assigned	425	390	375	400	580

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# Section 4

## Glossary

<b>ABB+</b>	The high grade qualification combinations that were used in the number control arrangements for most courses in England in the 2013-14 academic year. They approximate the categories that relate to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) student number control arrangements in that year from information recorded in the UCAS system. The assessment of entry qualifications uses a number of data sources including information provided by applicants themselves.
<b>Acceptance</b>	An applicant who at the end of the cycle has been placed for entry into higher education.
<b>Acceptance rate</b>	The number of acceptances divided by the number of applicants.
<b>Adjustment</b>	An acceptance route where applicants who have met and exceeded the conditions of their firm choice choose to take up an alternative offer.
<b>Age</b>	This analysis uses country-specific age definitions that align with the cut off points for school and college cohorts within the different administrations of the UK. For England and Wales, ages are defined on the 31 August, for Northern Ireland on the 1 July and for Scotland on the 28 February the following year. Defining ages in this way matches the assignment of children to school cohorts. For applicants outside of the UK a cohort cut off of 31 August has been used.
<b>A level points</b>	A level grades are assigned points such that A*=6 points, A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2 and E=1. Achieved A level grades profiles of applicants are assigned the total number of points of their best three achieved grades, for example a grade profile of AAB would be worth 14 A level points.
<b>Applicant</b>	A person who has made an application in the UCAS system. Counts of applicants include those applying through main scheme, late applicants direct to clearing and RPAs.
<b>Application rate</b>	The number of applicants divided by the estimated base population.
<b>Base population estimate</b>	The population estimates are based upon Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates and national population projections. For 16 to 20 year olds the estimates are obtained by aging 15 year olds from the appropriate number of years earlier. This approach avoids the estimates being susceptible to changes in net migration (including overseas students) during these ages. Older ages are obtained from the mid-year estimates and national population projections without aging. In both cases the estimates are adjusted from age at mid-year to age on the country-specific reference dates using the monthly distribution of births. The small area population estimates used were provided by HEFCE.

<b>BTEC</b>	Originally Business and Technician Education Council, BTEC are qualifications now offered by Pearson. The Level 3 BTECs covered in this analysis include from the NQF framework: National Awards, National Certificate, National Diploma and Subsidiary Certificates, and the following qualifications in the QCF framework: the Extended Diploma, the Diploma, the Subsidiary Diploma, and the 90-credit Diploma. The majority of BTECs are awarded to applicants from England.
<b>Clearing</b>	An acceptance route available late in the application cycle.
<b>Cohort</b>	A group of the population all born in the same academic year, and are therefore, for example, all aged 18 on a particular reference date.
<b>Conditional firm</b>	An offer made by a provider dependent on achieving specified conditions which has been accepted by the applicant as their first choice.
<b>Conditional offer</b>	Offer made by provider dependent on meeting specified conditions which may include academic and/or non-academic conditions.
<b>Defer (deferred)</b>	Most acceptances are into the academic year that starts immediately at the end of the cycle, for example into 2015-16 from the 2015 application cycle. Acceptances can also be deferred for entry into the following academic year, for example into 2016-17 from the 2015 cycle. These are called deferred acceptances.
<b>Direct Clearing</b>	Applied via Clearing without an initial application through the main scheme (i.e. prior to the 30 June deadline).
<b>Domicile</b>	Declared area of permanent residence.
<b>Entry rate</b>	Number of acceptances from a UCAS application cycle divided by the estimated base population.
<b>Extra</b>	An acceptance route where applicants who held no offers after using all five main scheme choices, make additional choices.
<b>Firm choice</b>	An offer made by a provider which has been confirmed by the applicant as their first choice. These can be either conditional (dependent on achieving specified conditions) or unconditional (applicant has met specific conditions and are assumed to be accepted or placed at the provider).
<b>FSM</b>	Free school meals, a means-tested benefit that can be used as an indicator of low income.
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education.
<b>HEFCE</b>	Higher Education Funding Council for England.

<b>Higher tariff provider</b>	A provider that belongs to the higher tariff group, from the grouping of providers based on the average levels of attainment of their UK 18 year old accepted applicants (summarised through UCAS Tariff points) in recent cycles. The other two groups are medium tariff providers, and lower tariff providers. Each group of providers accounted for around a third of all UK 18 year old acceptances in recent cycles.
<b>IB</b>	International Baccalaureate Diploma.
<b>Insurance choice</b>	An offer made by a provider which has been confirmed by the applicant as their second choice, in case the conditions of the firm choice are not met. These can be either conditional (dependent on achieving specified requirements) or unconditional (no further requirements to be met).
<b>Main scheme</b>	The main UCAS application scheme through which up to five providers/courses can be applied to. This opens in September and closes to new applications on 30 June the following year.
<b>Main scheme Clearing</b>	Where an applicant was unsuccessful in the main scheme (i.e. applied before 30 June) and subsequently found a place using Clearing.
<b>National pupil database</b>	The Department for Education's national pupil database (NPD) holds a range of information about pupils who attend schools and colleges in England. For this analysis a link has been formed between individuals attending state schools and colleges in the NPD at 15 years old and those that were 18 years old in UCAS data three years later.
<b>Non-EU</b>	Countries outside the European Union. Includes the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
<b>Offer</b>	Provider decision to grant a place to an applicant; may be subject to the applicant satisfying academic and/or other criteria.
<b>Offer rate</b>	The proportion of applications that receive an offer.
<b>POLAR3</b>	Developed by HEFCE and classifies small areas across the UK into five groups according to their level of young participation in HE. Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people and is ranked from quintile 1 (areas with the lowest young participation rates, considered as the most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 (highest young participation rates, considered most advantaged).
<b>Provider</b>	A higher education provider – a university or college.
<b>RPA</b>	Record of Prior Acceptance. When a provider informs UCAS of applicants it has accepted outside of the normal application process (e.g. individuals who have applied directly to the provider).

<b>Reply</b>	Applicant response to any offers received, this could be firm, insurance or decline.
<b>SIMD</b>	Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland, providing a relative measure of deprivation amongst small areas (data zones). In this report, the SIMD 2012 has been used to group areas in each year in the times series, from 2006 to 2015.
<b>SQA</b>	Scottish Qualifications Authority Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications taken by young people in Scotland when applying to higher education.
<b>Tariff</b>	A numerical summary of qualification level.
<b>Unconditional offer</b>	Offer made by provider when it is satisfied that the applicant has met specific conditions.
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom. Excludes the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

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