

Access and participation resources

Findings from the data: sector summary

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Purpose

1. This document provides a sector-level analysis of the access and participation open data resources that are available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-dashboard. We summarise the key gaps in access, continuation, attainment and progression at a sector level, focusing on the gaps between full-time undergraduate student groups.

Summary of published materials

2. We have published the access and participation data resources as Official Statistics. The interactive data dashboard (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-access-and-participation-data-resources/) allows users to explore and evaluate access and participation at specific universities and colleges registered with the Office for Students (OfS). Comparing different student groups (for example, disabled students or students by their ethnic background) with their peers for each stage of a student's journey through higher education may reveal gaps in access, continuation, attainment and progression at both a provider and a sector level.
3. This publication summarises the key gaps in access, continuation, attainment and progression at a sector level for different student characteristics.
4. In addition to this summary, we have published supplementary information about the access and participation data dashboard and its supporting data resources. The following documents explain how we have used individualised student data to produce the measures shown in the dashboard.

Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-datadashboard/:

- Access and participation data dashboard: User guide
- Access and participation data resources: User guide

Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/:

- Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Regulatory indicators, methodology and rebuild descriptions
- Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Core algorithms

These documents provide information about the definitions and methodology we have used in constructing institutional performance measures, including a detailed description of the indicators we currently use for the access and participation data resources.

5. The following related publications supplement this document.

- Advice and guidance related to access and participation plans – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-plans/.
- Access and participation plan guidance (Regulatory notice 1) (OfS 2019.05) – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-1-access-and-participation-plan-guidance/.
- How to prepare your access and participation plan (Regulatory advice 6) (OfS 2019.06) – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-6-how-to-prepare-your-access-and-participation-plan-effective-practice-advice/.

Overview of the indicators included in access and participation data resources

- The access and participation data resources include indicators for each stage of the student lifecycle:
 - Access indicators, looking at the make-up of students entering higher education.
 - Continuation indicators, looking at whether student entrants continue their studies in higher education.
 - Attainment indicators, looking at degree outcomes and graduates awarded first or upper second-class honours.
 - Progression indicators, looking at graduates progressing to highly skilled employment or higher-level study.
- The data dashboard allows users to explore and understand patterns identified by these indicators for a range of different student characteristics, including ethnicity, disability, age, sex and Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4). The dashboard also enables the user to consider combinations of the different attributes that may exist for a given characteristic.
- The student characteristics are reported at both individual provider level and for the sector. In each case, they are reported separately for each stage of the student lifecycle and for each mode and level of study, across a five-year time series.
- For the first time, the access and participation data includes additional sector-level information on students' qualifications on entry to higher education, and their subject of study. Users can explore this experimental data using the access and participation data dashboard (see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/sector-level-data/)
- The access and participation data resources cover UK-domiciled undergraduate entrants registered at English higher education providers registered by the OfS. Some of the characteristics included in these data resources are necessarily limited to coverage of English-domiciled undergraduate entrants.

11. The sector-level comparative indicators include data for all English higher education providers as included in national student data collections by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Sector summary

Key data concepts

12. The summary of findings at paragraphs 21 to 56 focuses on the gaps at sector level for different student groups, based on the most recent year of available data:
- For measures of access we consider students in academic year 2018-19.
 - We assess continuation into 2018-19 for full-time students who started in 2017-18, and for part-time students who started in 2016-17.
 - Attainment measures are reported for graduates in 2018-19.
 - Progression outcomes come from responses to the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, conducted for the final time for higher education qualifiers in academic year 2016-17.¹ The progression outcomes are fundamentally unchanged from their previous publication in the 2019 release of the access and participation data dashboard.
13. When we refer to 'gaps' we mean the difference between two proportions, which we express in percentage points (pp). For indicators of access to higher education, gaps are based on the profile of 18-year-old entrants at a provider compared with the profile of all 18-year-olds in the UK. For indicators of student success and progression, gaps are based on the differences in students' outcomes.
14. Gaps are always calculated as the proportion of the first group being referenced minus the proportion of the second group being referenced. A negative gap means that the first group has a lower proportion than the second. A positive gap means that the first group has a higher proportion than the second.
15. For example, the positive gap between a continuation rate of 98 per cent for students with no known disability and 95 per cent for disabled students would be expressed as 3 percentage points, and the negative gap between an attainment rate of 67 per cent for white students and 71 per cent for black students would be expressed as -4 percentage points.
16. In the summary of findings we focus on the sector-level gaps between full-time undergraduate student groups. You can find information about part-time undergraduate student groups in the access and participation data dashboard (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

¹ Destinations of 2017-18 and later cohorts of higher education qualifiers will be collected by the Graduate Outcomes survey, which replaces the DLHE; see <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/outcomes>.

17. We look specifically at the gaps that form the basis for several of the OfS's Key Performance Measures (KPMs)² relating to access and participation, including:
- a. The gaps in participation and non-continuation between the most and least represented groups. The measures currently consider underrepresented groups based on the POLAR4 classification (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/), which groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of the young population who participate in higher education (KPMs 1, 2 and 3).
 - b. The gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students (KPM 4).
 - c. The gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between students with no known disability and disabled students (KPM5).
18. OfS KPM2 concerns the gap in participation at higher-tariff providers between the most and least represented groups. Information about higher-tariff providers is not explicitly provided in the access and participation data resources, but a list of these providers can be found in the annex to KPMs 1 and 2 (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-participation-at-higher-tariff-providers-between-the-most-and-least-represented-groups/).
19. For those sector-level gaps that are relevant to the OfS KPMs we have included charts to show the distribution of gaps across all providers. This allows you to see whether there are lots of providers with a gap similar to the sector-level gap, or whether there are many providers where the gaps are particularly large or small.
20. In addition to the KPMs, the summary of findings also looks at the gaps for age, disability, ethnicity and POLAR4 for the lifecycle stages of continuation, attainment and progression.

Summary of findings

Access to higher education

21. These measures show the make-up of students entering higher education.
22. For some student characteristics it is possible to make comparisons between the proportion of 18-year-olds in the UK population and the proportion of 18-year-olds entering higher education in England. In this way, we can identify whether there is a gap between the proportion of 18-year-olds in the population and the proportion entering English higher education.
23. Table 1 shows the gap between 18-year-olds in the UK population and those entering the English higher education sector as full-time undergraduates for POLAR4 quintiles 1 (least represented) and 5 (most represented), and for the student characteristics of ethnicity and sex. Further access data, including other student characteristics and part-time undergraduate entrants, is available in the access and participation data dashboard (see

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/.

www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/) and can be explored through the interactive charts.

Table 1: Proportion of 18-year-olds in the UK and entering English higher education in 2018-19 as full-time undergraduate students, by characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Proportion of 18-year-olds in UK population (%)	Proportion of 18-year-olds in English higher education sector (%)	Gap between population and higher education sector (pp)
POLAR4	Quintile 5	23.6	31.1	-7.5
	Quintile 1	18.0	11.4	6.5
Ethnicity	White	83.9	71.3	12.6
	Black	3.6	6.6	-3.1
Sex	Female	48.5	55.9	-7.4
	Male	51.5	44.1	7.4

Note: Access proportion is for students entering higher education in academic year 2018-19. Because of rounding, the gaps shown in the table might not be the same as the difference between two rates.

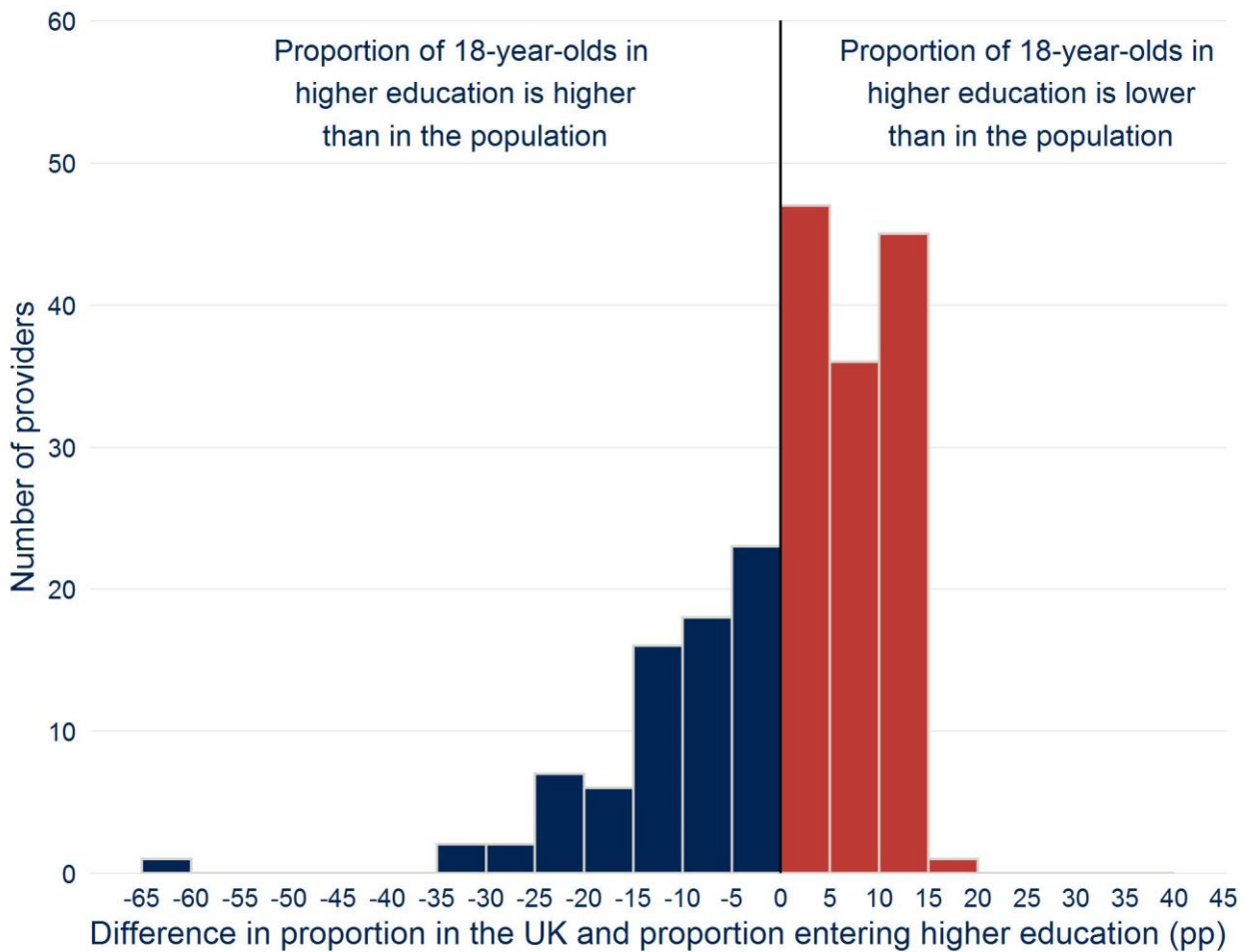
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

POLAR4: Participation of least represented groups (relevant to KPMs 1 and 2)

24. Table 1 shows that the proportion of 18-year-olds entering higher education in England from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas (least represented) was 6.5 percentage points lower than the proportion of 18-year-olds living in POLAR4 quintile 1 areas in 2018-19.

25. Figure 1 shows the distribution of gaps between the proportion of 18-year-old full-time students entering English higher education providers from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas and the proportion of 18-year-olds living in these least represented areas in the UK. It shows that for about two-thirds of providers, the proportion of 18-year-olds from these areas entering higher education is lower than the proportion in the population. That is, those from quintile 1 areas are underrepresented in higher education.

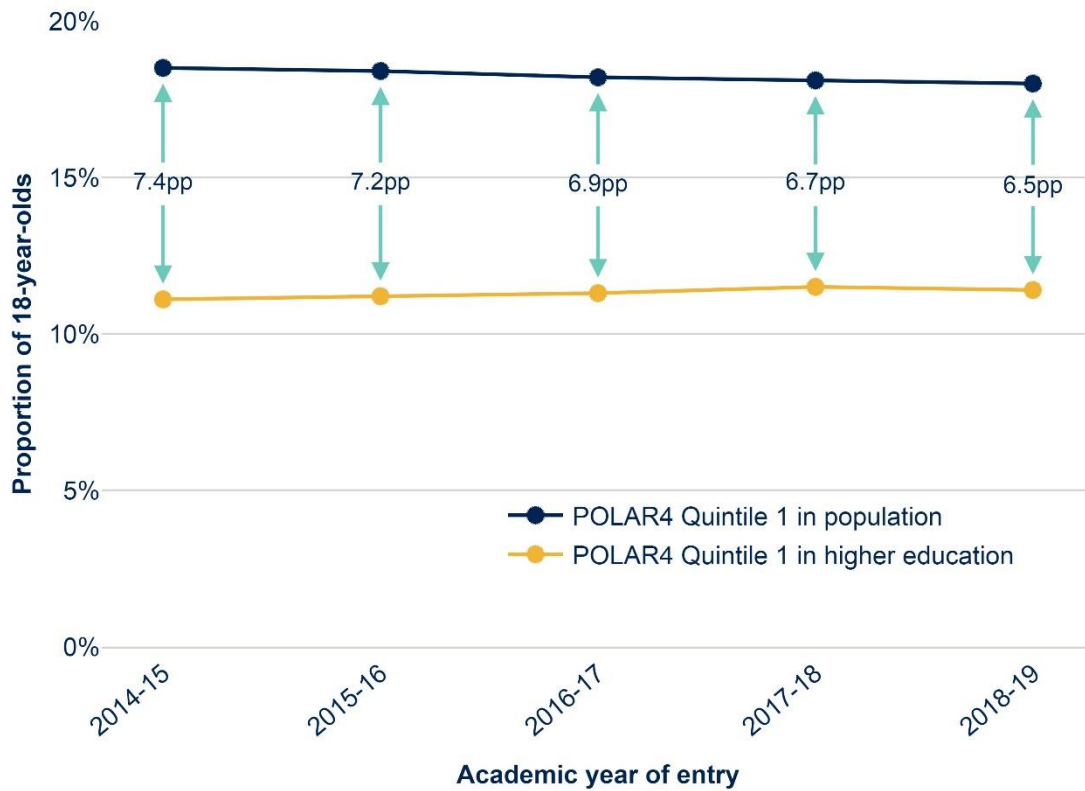
Figure 1: Gaps in proportion of least represented 18-year-olds in 2018-19 (higher education provider compared with population)



Note: Based on proportions for 204 providers.
 Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

26. Figure 2 shows the proportion of 18-year-old entrants to English higher education providers from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas and the proportion of 18-year-olds in the UK living in such areas over the last five years. The gap between these proportions has seen a very slight decline across the time series.

Figure 2: Sector-level time series of gaps in the proportion of least represented 18-year-olds (higher education compared with population)



Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Continuation rate

27. These measures show whether or not students continue their studies.

Table 2: Continuation rates for those entrants continuing into 2018-19, by characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Full-time undergraduate continuation rate (%)	Full-time undergraduate continuation gap (pp)	Part-time undergraduate continuation rate (%)	Part-time undergraduate continuation gap (pp)
Age	Young	92.1		74.8	
	Mature	84.0	8.2	64.5	10.3
Disability	No known disability	90.0		66.8	
	Disabled	89.4	0.6	59.4	7.4
Ethnicity	White	91.1		66.8	
	Black	84.5	6.6	58.3	8.4
POLAR4	Quintile 5	94.1		75.8	
	Quintile 1	89.5	4.6	70.6	5.2

Notes: Full-time continuation rate is for 2017-18 entrants continuing into their second year in 2018-19. Part-time continuation rate is for 2016-17 entrants continuing into 2018-19. Because of rounding, the gaps shown in the table might not be the same as the difference between two rates.

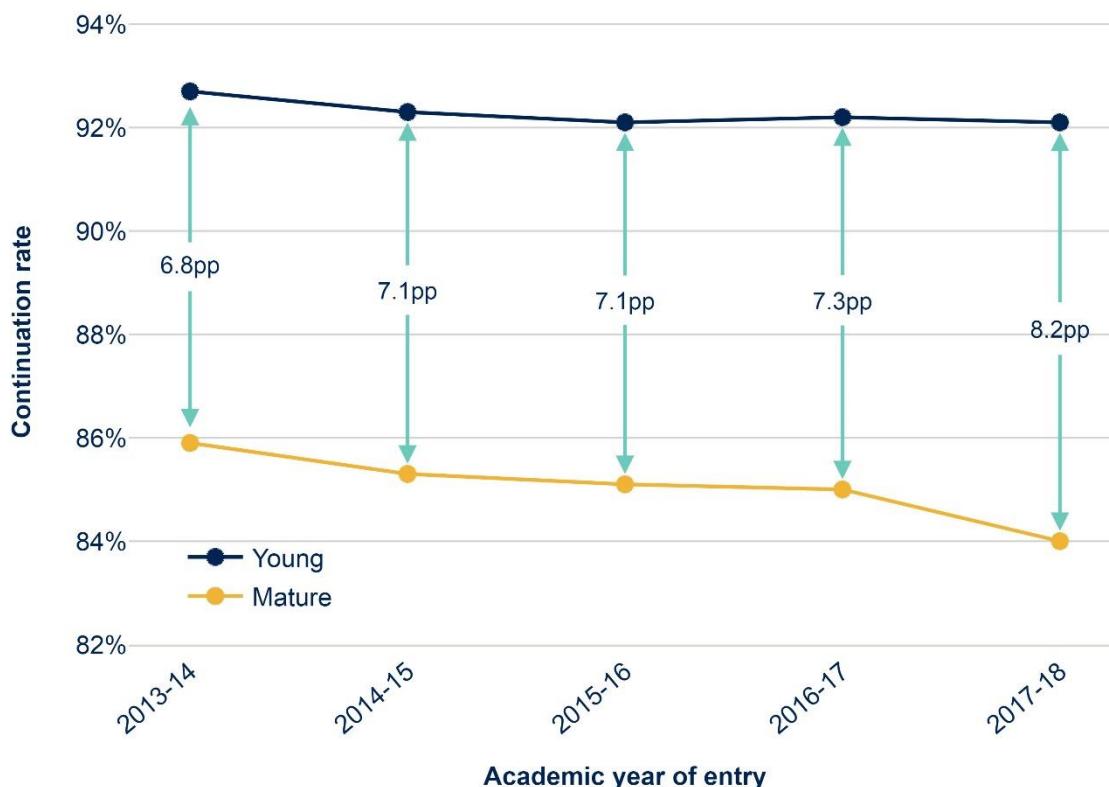
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Age: Gap in continuation rates between full-time undergraduate young and mature students

28. Table 2 shows that the overall sector gap in continuation rates between full-time undergraduate young and mature students entering higher education in 2017-18 was 8.2 percentage points.

29. Figure 3 shows the gaps in continuation rates between the proportions of full-time undergraduate young and mature students over the last five years. The continuation rate is higher for young students (those aged under 21 at the start of their studies) than for mature students. The gap between the two has been increasing across the time series because of a decrease in the continuation rate for mature students.

Figure 3: Sector-level time series of gaps in continuation rates between young and mature students



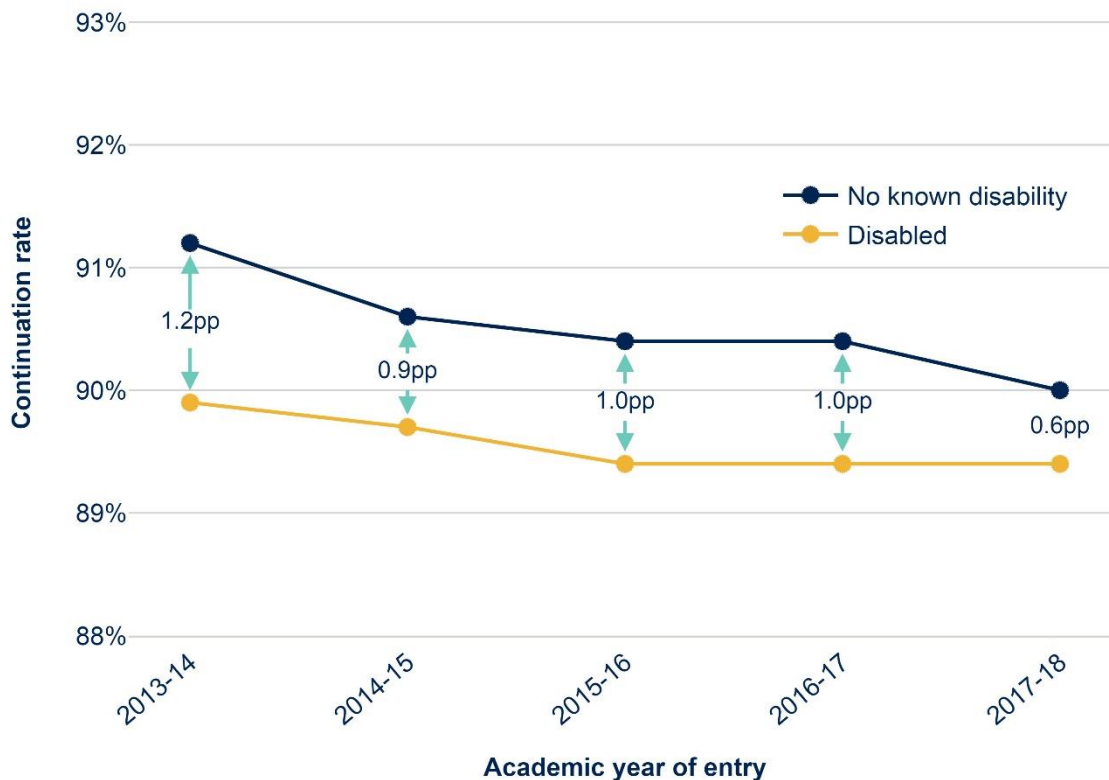
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Disability: Gap in continuation rates between full-time undergraduate students with no known disability and disabled students

30. Table 2 shows that the overall sector gap in continuation rates between full-time undergraduate students with no known disability and disabled students entering higher education in 2017-18 was 0.6 percentage points.

31. Figure 4 shows that the gap between continuation rates for students with no known disability and disabled students has halved from 1.2 percentage points in 2013-14 to 0.6 percentage points in 2017-18.

Figure 4: Sector-level time series of gaps in continuation rates between students with no known disability and disabled students

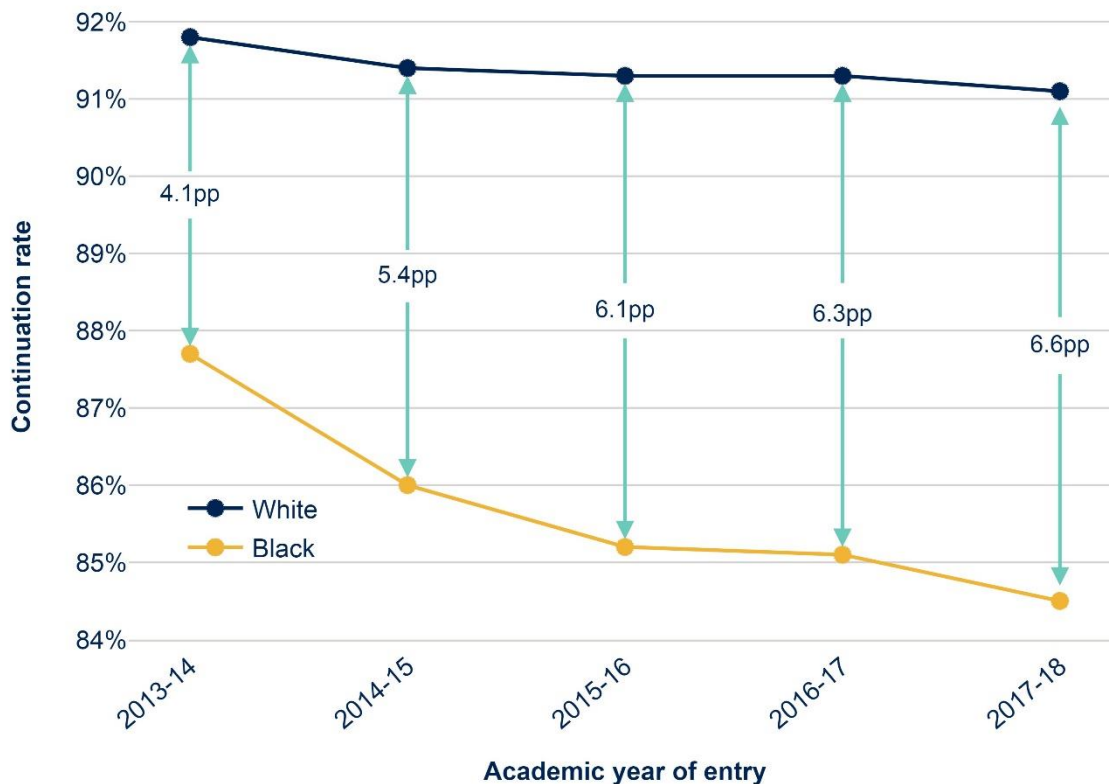


Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Ethnicity: Gap in continuation rates between full-time undergraduate white and black students

- 32. Table 2 shows that the overall sector gap in continuation rates between full-time undergraduate white and black students entering higher education in 2017-18 was 6.6 percentage points.
- 33. Figure 5 shows that the continuation rate for both white and black students has been decreasing over the last five years. However, this decrease has been sharper for black students than for white students, meaning that the gap in continuation rates between the two groups has increased.

Figure 5: Sector-level time series of gaps in continuation rates between white and black students



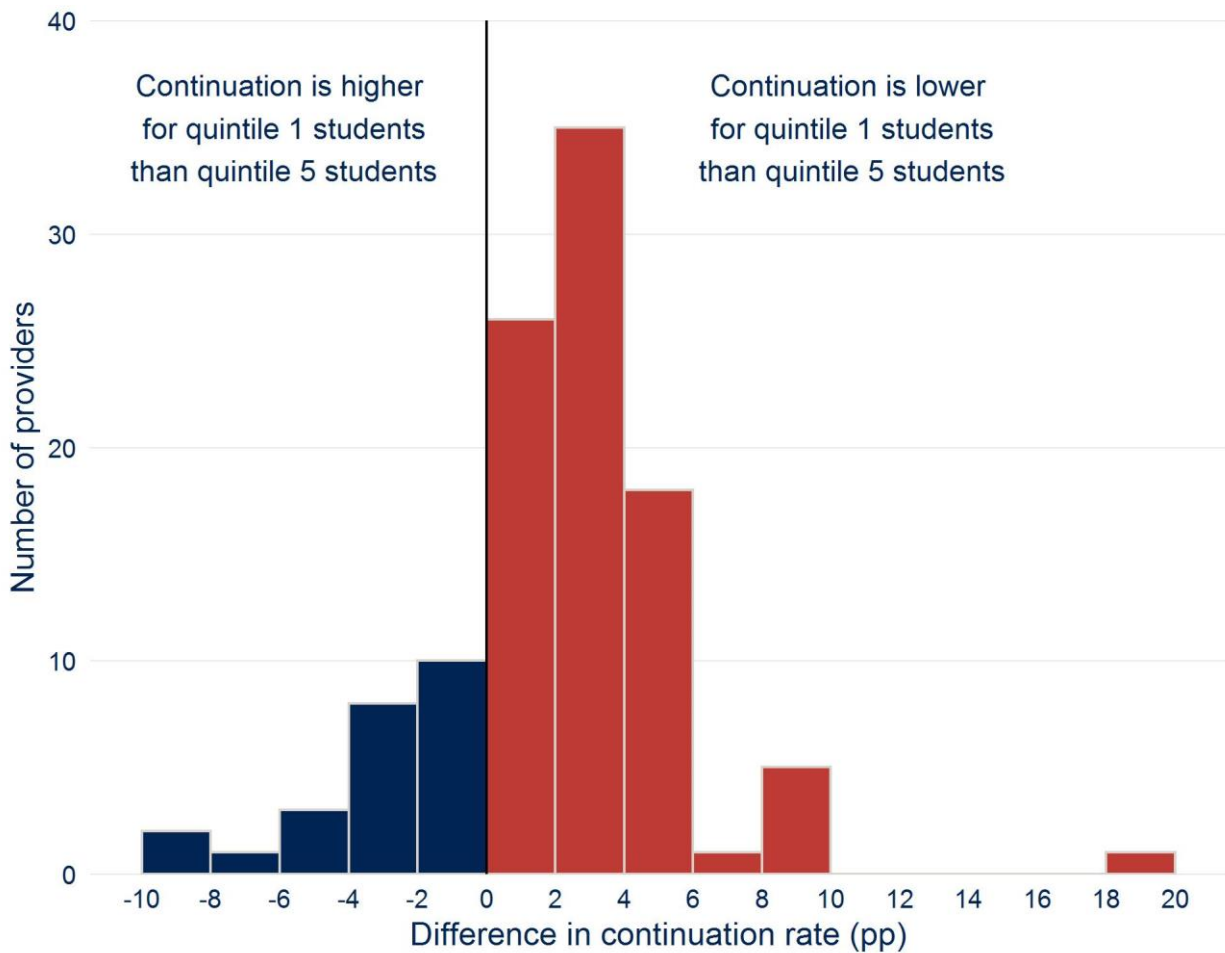
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

POLAR4: Gap in continuation rate between most and least represented groups (relevant to KPM3)

34. Table 2 shows that the overall sector gap in continuation rates between the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintile 5 and quintile 1) was 4.6 percentage points for full-time undergraduate entrants in 2017-18.

35. Figure 6 shows that the continuation rate is lower for entrants from quintile 1 areas than for entrants from quintile 5 areas for 78 per cent of the 111 providers included in the figure.

Figure 6: Gaps in continuation rate between most and least represented groups by provider

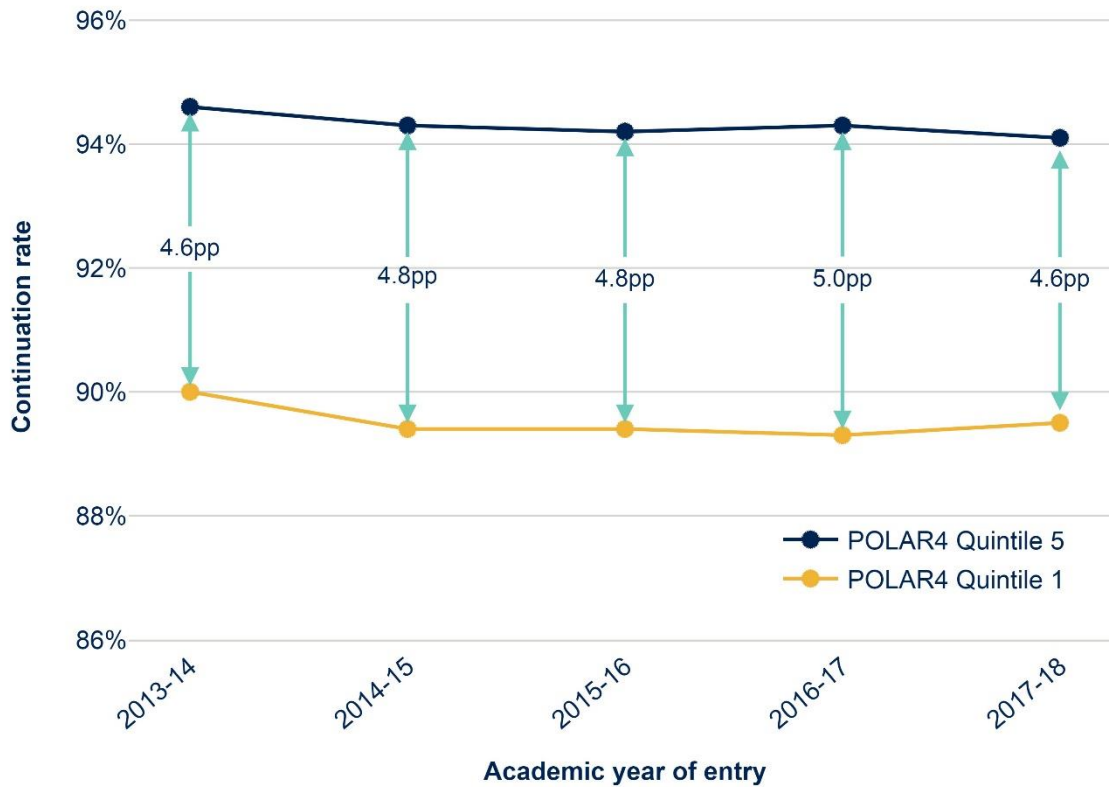


Note: Based on the continuation rate for 111 providers.

Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

36. Figure 7 shows that students from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas have lower continuation rates than those from POLAR4 quintile 5 areas across the time series. The gap between the two is the same for full-time undergraduate entrants in 2013-14 as in 2017-18 (4.6 percentage points).

Figure 7: Sector-level time series of gaps in continuation rates between most and least represented groups



Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Attainment

37. These measures examine the numbers of graduates who achieve a first or upper second-class degree.

Table 3: Attainment rates for students obtaining a first or upper second-class degree in 2018-19 by characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Full-time undergraduate attainment rate (%)	Full-time undergraduate attainment gap (pp)	Part-time undergraduate attainment rate (%)	Part-time undergraduate attainment gap (pp)
Age	Young	80.2		44.4	
	Mature	70.3	9.9	61.3	-16.9
Disability	No known disability	78.7		58.5	
	Disabled	76.2	2.5	52.4	6.1
Ethnicity	White	82.2		64.3	
	Black	60.1	22.1	28.6	35.7
POLAR4	Quintile 5	84.1		48.1	
	Quintile 1	74.5	9.6	43.0	5.0

Note: Attainment rate reflects students obtaining a first or upper second-class degree in 2018-19. Because of rounding, the gaps shown in the table might not be the same as the difference between two rates.

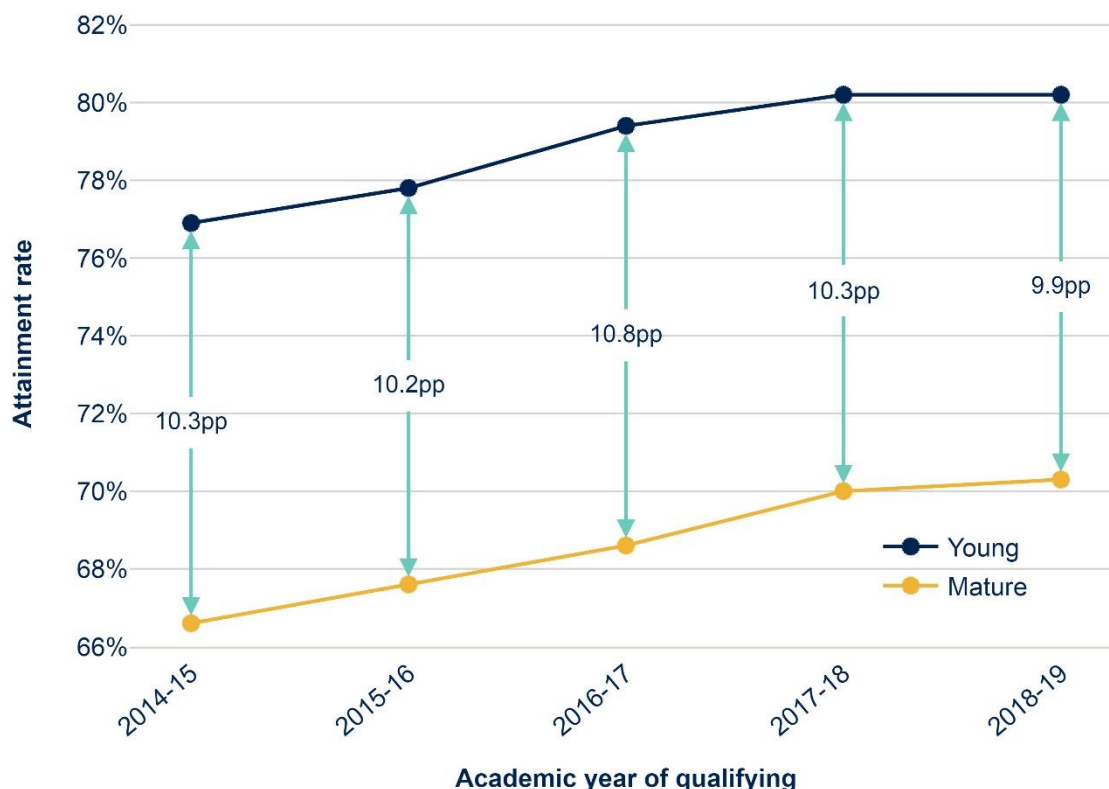
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Age: Gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate young and mature students

38. Table 3 shows that the overall sector gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate young students and mature students in 2018-19 was 9.9 percentage points.

39. Figure 8 shows that the attainment rate has seen a slight increase over the time series for both young and mature students. The increase has been similar for both groups, meaning that there has been little change in the attainment gap, which remains quite large.

Figure 8: Sector-level time series of gaps in attainment rates between young and mature students



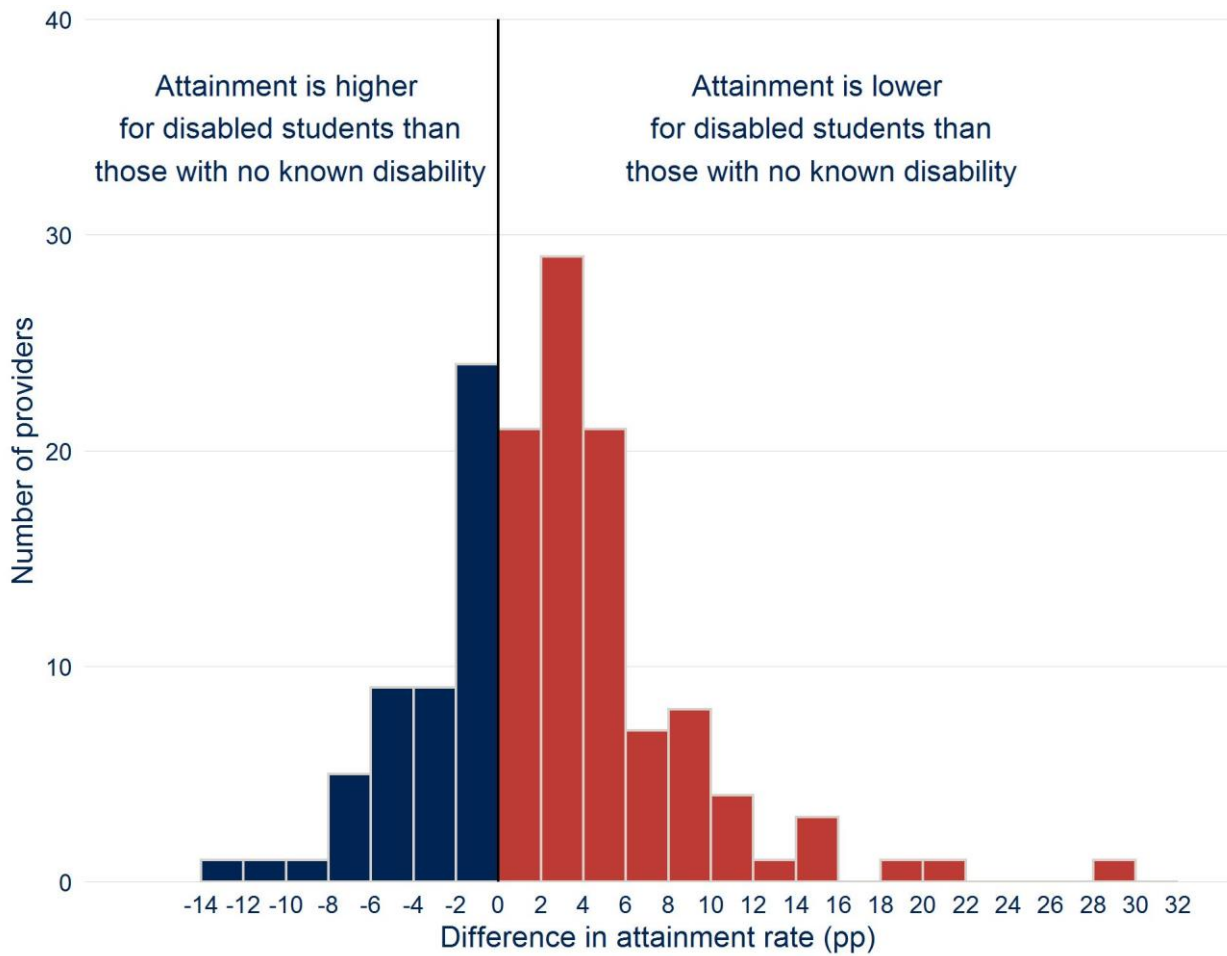
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Disability: Gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate students with no known disability and disabled students (relevant to KPM5)

40. Table 3 shows that the overall sector gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate students with no known disability and disabled students was 2.5 percentage points in 2018-19.

41. Approximately one-third of the 147 providers included in Figure 9 have an attainment rate that is higher for disabled students than for students with no known disability, whereas two-thirds of providers have an attainment rate that is lower for disabled students. For 13 per cent of providers, the attainment rate for students with no known disability is more than 10 percentage points higher than for disabled students.

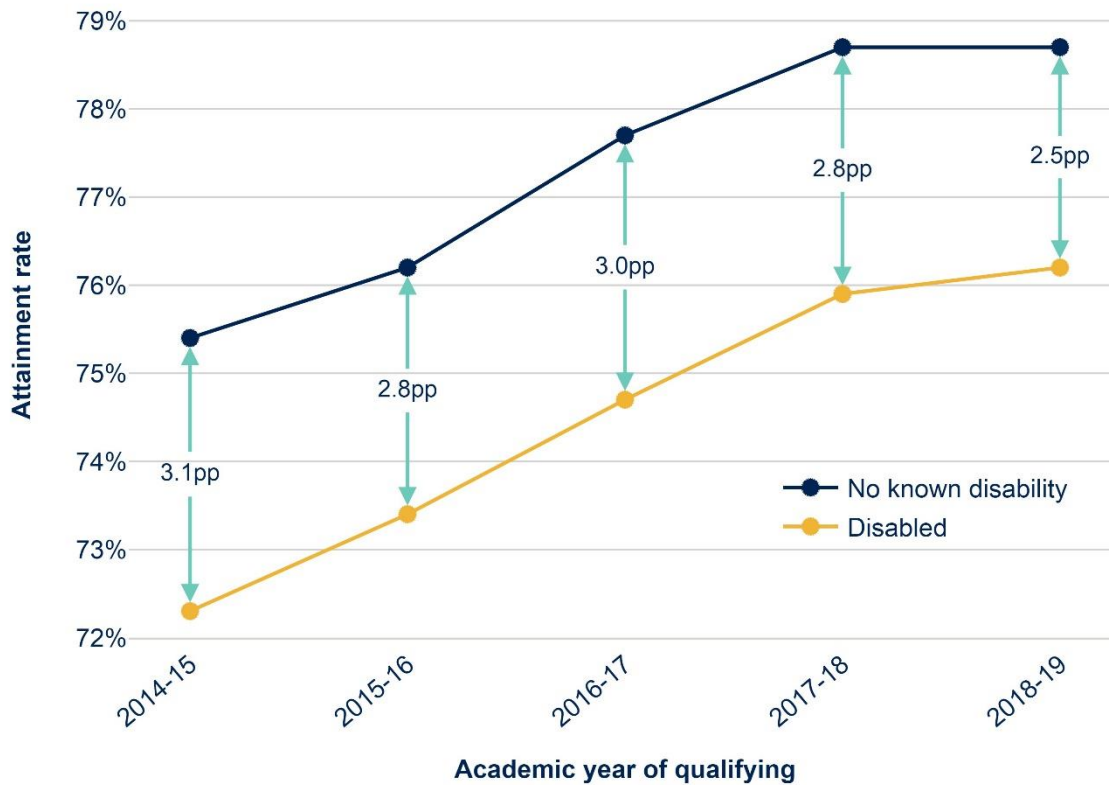
Figure 9: Gaps in attainment rate between students with no known disability and disabled students by provider



Note: Based on the attainment rate for 147 providers.
 Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

42. Figure 10 shows that the attainment rate for full-time disabled students is lower than for students with no known disability across the time series, although this gap has reduced from 3.1 percentage points in 2014-15 to 2.5 percentage points in 2018-19.

Figure 10: Sector-level time series of gaps in attainment rates between students with no known disability and disabled students



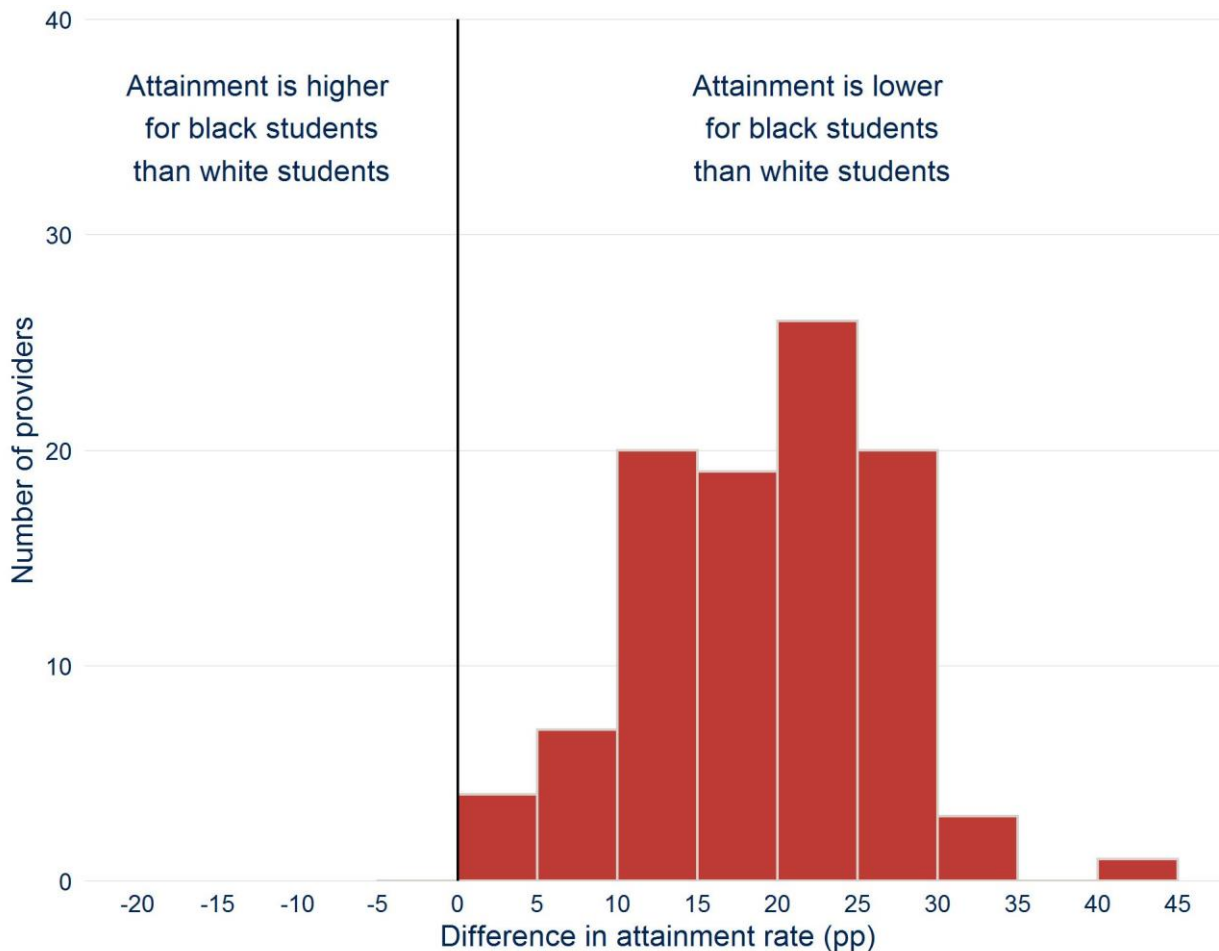
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Ethnicity: Gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate white and black students (relevant to KPM4)

43. Table 3 shows that the overall sector gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate white and black students was 22.1 percentage points in 2018-19.

44. Figure 11 shows that the gap in attainment rate between full-time undergraduate white and black students exists at every provider. For 55 per cent of the 100 providers in Figure 11, this gap is greater than 20 percentage points.

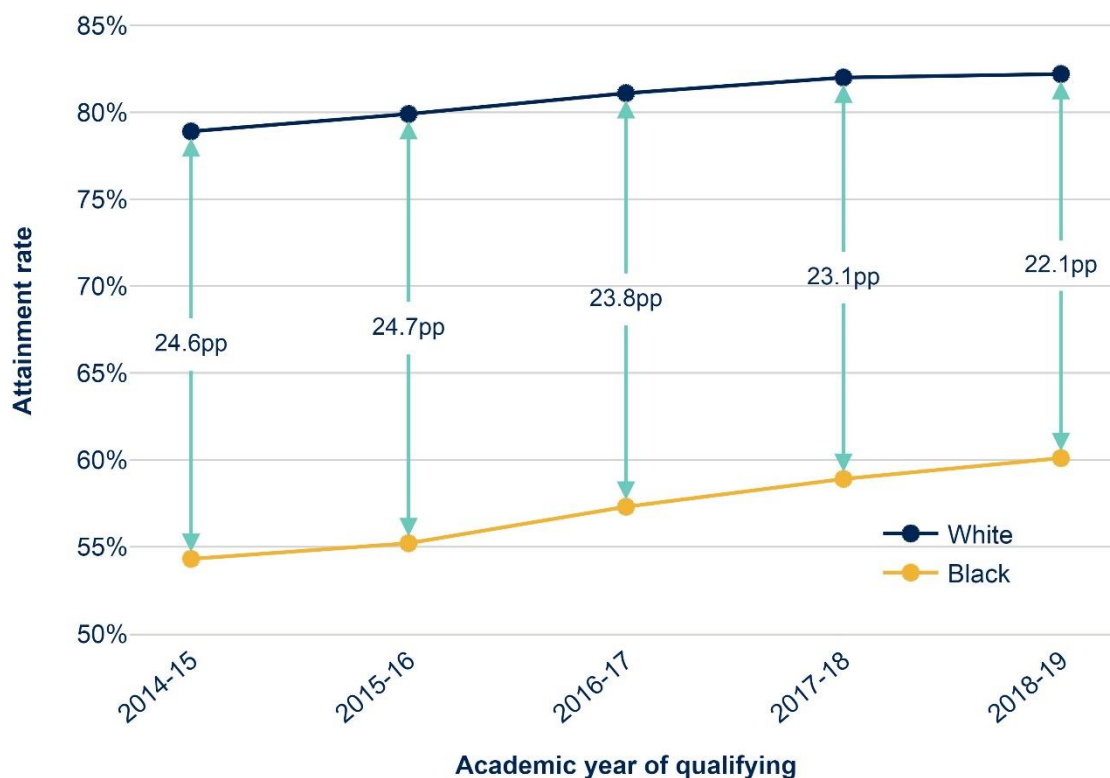
Figure 11: Gaps in attainment rate between white and black students by provider



Note: Based on the attainment rate for 100 providers.
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

45. Figure 12 shows that the gap in attainment rate between full-time white and black students has closed by two percentage points in the last five years, but continues to be very large, with an attainment rate over 20 percentage points higher for white students than black students across the time series.

Figure 12: Sector-level time series of gaps in attainment rates between white and black students



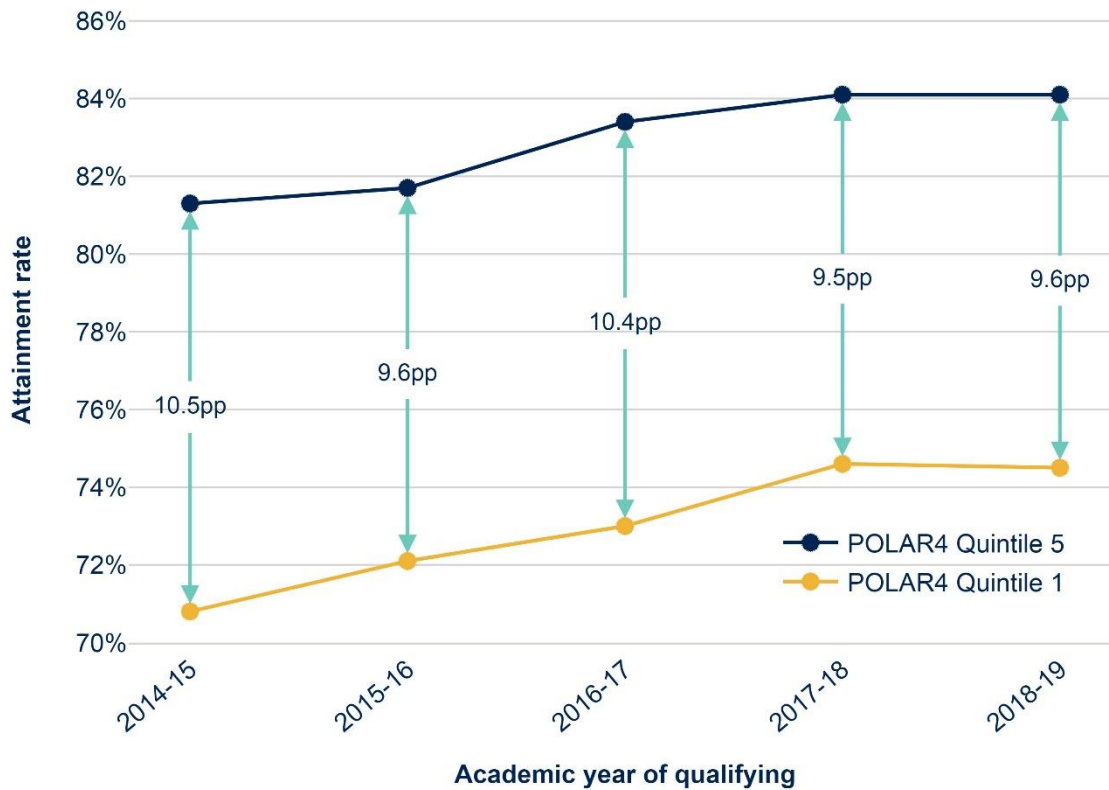
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

POLAR4: Gap in attainment rate (1sts or 2:1s) between full-time undergraduate students from the most and least represented groups

46. Table 3 shows that the overall sector gap in attainment rate between full-time undergraduate students from the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintile 5 and quintile 1) in 2018-19 was 9.6 percentage points.

47. Figure 13 shows that the attainment rate for both POLAR4 quintile 1 and quintile 5 students has seen a slight increase between 2014-15 and 2018-19. There has been a slight closing of the gap between quintiles 1 and 5 over the time series, but the gap remains quite large.

Figure 13: Sector-level time series of gaps in attainment rates between most and least represented groups



Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Graduate outcomes: progression to highly skilled employment

48. These measures report on whether students are in highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level six months after leaving higher education. The data presented here has not been updated since last year, but we include it in this document for completeness.

Table 4: Progression rates for students qualifying in 2016-17 by characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Full-time undergraduate progression rate (%)	Full-time undergraduate progression gap (pp)	Part-time undergraduate progression rate (%)	Part-time undergraduate progression gap (pp)
Age	Young	72.3		64.2	
	Mature	75.7	-3.4	75.8	-11.5
Disability	No known disability	73.3		74.4	
	Disabled	71.5	1.8	66.6	7.8
Ethnicity	White	74.0		74.3	
	Black	69.3	4.7	67.7	6.5
POLAR4	Quintile 5	74.8		64.4	
	Quintile 1	68.8	6.0	61.0	3.0

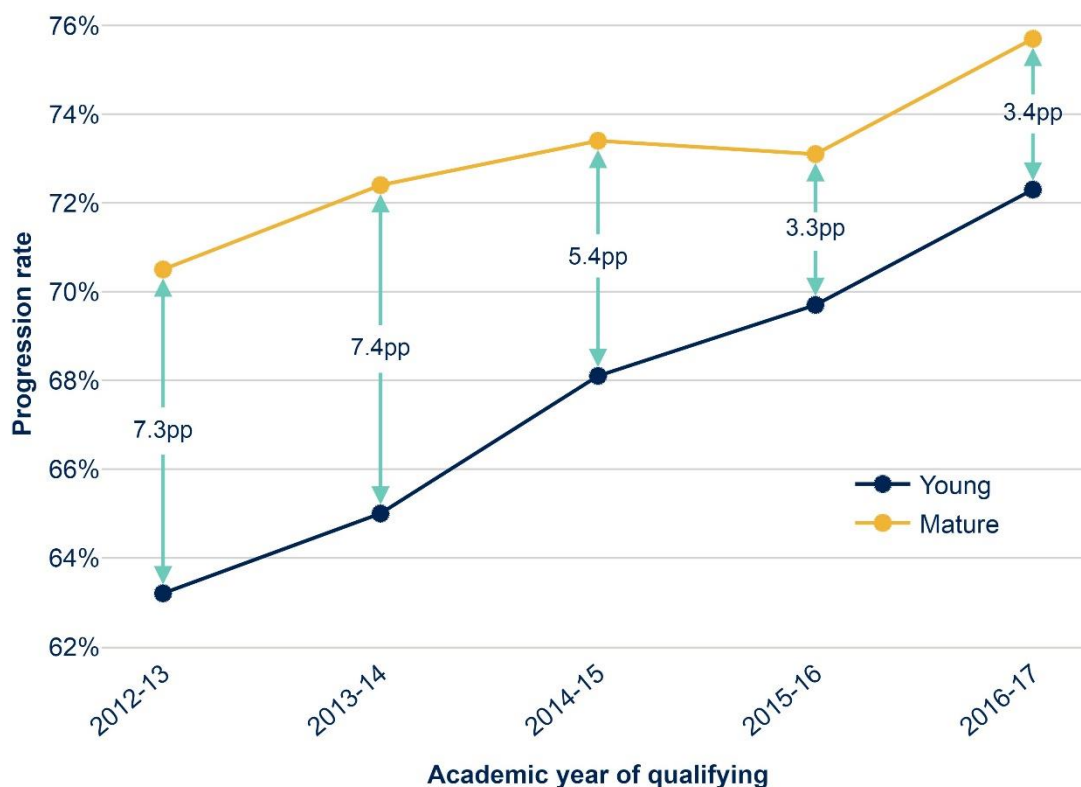
Note: Progression outcomes come from responses to the DLHE survey, conducted for the final time for higher education qualifiers in academic year 2016-17. Because of rounding, the gaps might not be the same as the difference between two rates.

Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Age: Gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate young and mature students

49. Table 4 shows that the overall sector gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate young and mature students qualifying from higher education in 2016-17 was -3.4 percentage points.
50. Figure 14 shows that, while the progression rate for both young and mature students has been increasing since 2012-13, the gap in progression rate between young and mature students has more than halved between those qualifying in 2012-13 and those qualifying in 2016-17.

Figure 14: Sector-level time series of gaps in progression rates between young and mature students



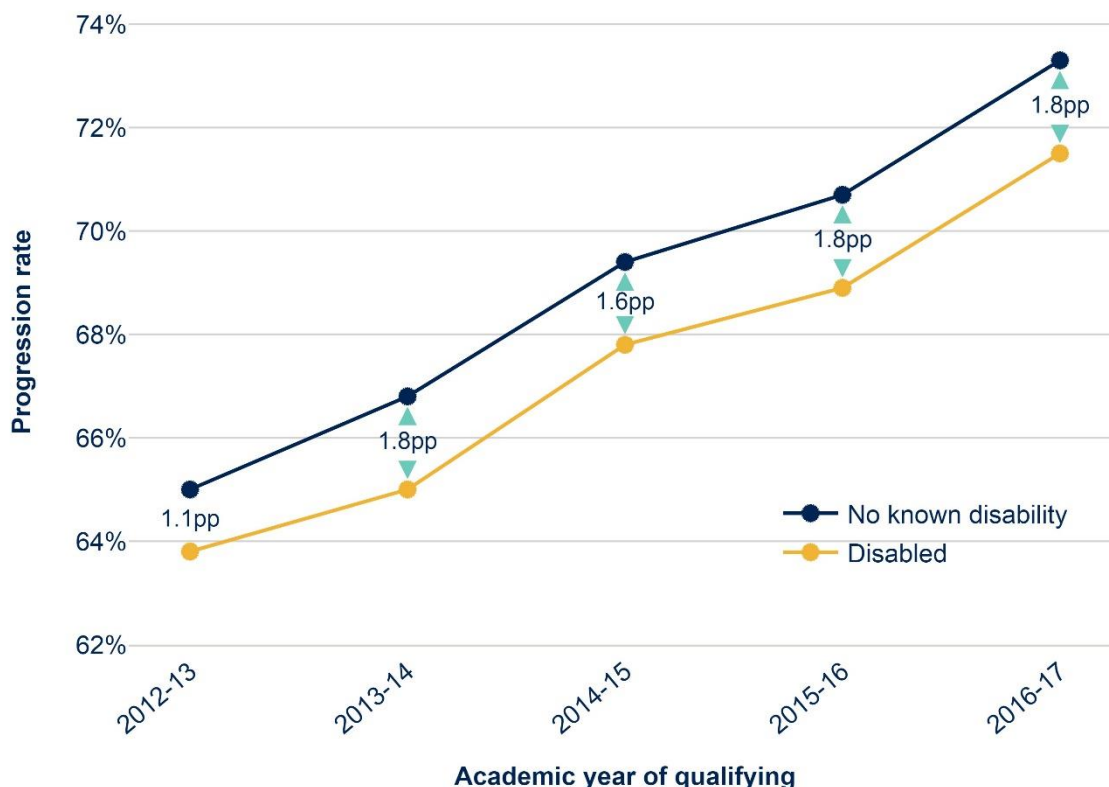
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Disability: Gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate students with no known disability and disabled students

51. Table 4 shows that the overall sector gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate students with no known disability and disabled students qualifying in 2016-17 was 1.8 percentage points.

52. Figure 15 shows that the gap in progression rate to highly skilled employment between students with no known disability and disabled students has remained fairly consistent in recent years.

Figure 15: Sector-level time series of gaps in progression rates between students with no known disability and disabled students



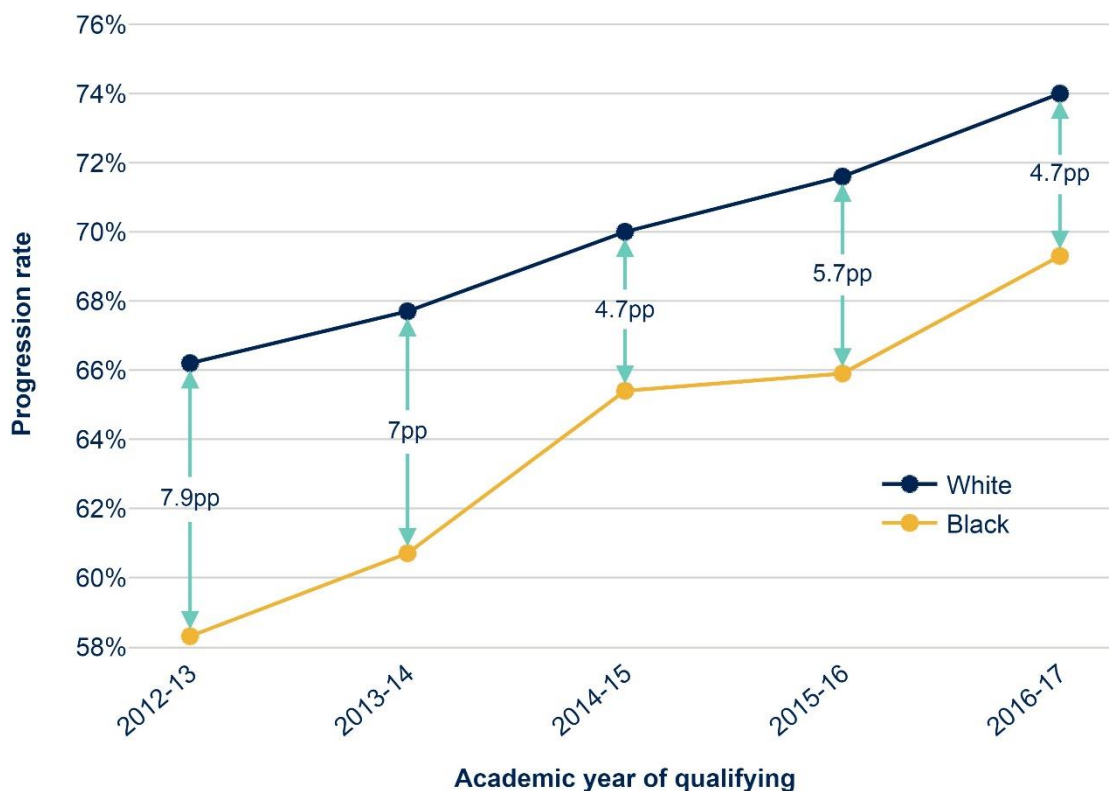
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Ethnicity: Gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate white and black students

53. Table 4 shows that the overall sector gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate white and black students qualifying in 2016-17 was 4.7 percentage points.

54. Figure 16 shows that the progression rate to highly skilled employment for both black and white students has increased across the time series, while the gap between the two has decreased. However, this narrowing of the gap has not been consistent across the time series, with an increase for those students qualifying between 2014-15 and 2015-16, followed by a decrease for those qualifying in 2016-17.

Figure 16: Sector-level time series of gaps in progression rates between white and black students



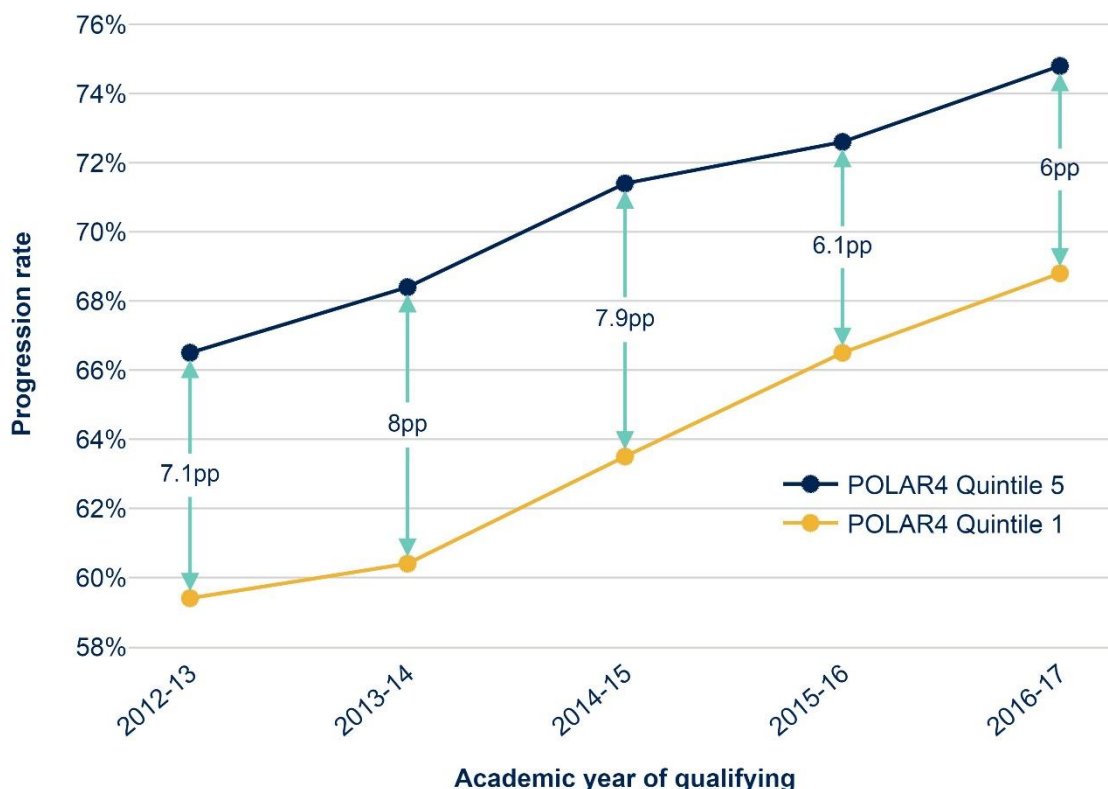
Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

POLAR4: Gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate students in the most and least represented groups

55. Table 4 shows that the overall sector gap in progression rate between full-time undergraduate students in the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1) was 6.0 percentage points for those students qualifying in 2016-17.

56. Figure 17 shows that the progression rate for students from both POLAR4 quintile 1 and quintile 5 has increased between those qualifying in 2012-13 and 2016-17. This increase has been slightly sharper for those from quintile 1, resulting in a reduction in the gap from 7.1 percentage points for those qualifying in 2012-13 to 6.0 percentage points for those qualifying in 2016-17.

Figure 17: Sector-level time series of gaps in progression rates between most and least represented groups



Source: Access and participation dataset (May 2020).

Related statistics and data sources

57. The access and participation data resources draw on nationally collected data, which is used in the construction of related statistics and analysis, including the following:

- Metrics, data and provider submissions used in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-data/get-the-data/
- Data and analysis about higher education students and providers published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency – www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis
- Data and analysis about higher education students and providers published by the Office for Students – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/
- National Student Survey results data – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/nationalstudent-survey-nss/get-the-nss-data/
- UK Performance Indicators published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency – www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators

- Higher education graduate employment and earnings data published by the Department for Education – www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-higher-education-graduate-employment-andearnings
- Analysis of degree classifications over time published by the Office for Students – www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/analysis-of-degree-classifications-over-timechanges-in-graduate-attainment/

Technical notes

58. Field naming conventions and valid entries shown in the open data resources are described in the supplementary data resources data definitions file (www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-access-and-participation-data-resources/get-the-underlying-data/).
59. The Office for Students is committed to following the Code of Practice for the statistics it produces. Details can be found on the website of the UK Statistics Authority at www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/.

List of abbreviations

DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
KPM	Key Performance Measures
OfS	Office for Students
pp	Percentage point
POLAR4	Participation of local areas



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