



# Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics

The impacts of care experience, free school meal eligibility, parental higher education, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, estrangement and household residual income on outcomes in higher education

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Enquiries to William Rimington at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk)

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## Abbreviations

DfE	Department for Education
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Authority
HRI	Household residual income
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
LGB	Lesbian, gay and bisexual
NS-SEC	National Statistics socioeconomic classification
OfS	Office for Students
ONS	Office for National Statistics
POLAR	Participation of local areas (an area-based measure of participation of young people in higher education)
SLC	Student Loans Company

# Summary

This ad hoc statistical report is a new and experimental release by the Office for Students (OfS). Any feedback related to this work is actively encouraged and can be sent to William Rimington at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk).

1. It is well known that there are distinct patterns between successful outcomes in higher education and certain groups of students. Here we report the differences in continuation rates, rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree (attainment rate) and rates of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level (progression rate) by care experience, free school meal eligibility, parental higher education, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, estrangement and household residual income. This report looks at raw, unadjusted rates of continuation, attainment and progression between different student groups. It does not look to determine the effect of different characteristics on students' outcomes after taking other factors into account.

## Care experience

2. Students who are care experienced have lower continuation and attainment rates than students who were not in care. The continuation rate of care experienced entrants in 2017-18 was 5.6 percentage points lower than the continuation rate of students who have not been in care. The attainment rate of care experienced qualifiers in 2018-19 was 12.1 percentage points lower than students who were not in care.

## Free school meal eligibility

3. Students who were eligible for free meals when at school have lower continuation, attainment and progression rates than students who were not. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 who were eligible for free school meals was 5.4 percentage points lower than entrants who were not. The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2018-19 who were eligible for free school meals was 13.0 percentage points lower than those who were not eligible. The progression rate of qualifiers in 2016-17 who were eligible for free school meals was 4.8 percentage points lower than that of students who were not eligible.

## Parental higher education

4. Continuation, attainment and progression rates are all lower for students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 was 3.1 percentage points lower for students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification compared with those whose parents do. The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents do not have a higher education qualification was 5.7 percentage points lower than students whose parents do. Furthermore the progression rate of qualifiers in 2016-17 whose parents do not have a higher education qualification was 2.6 percentage points lower than students whose parents do.

## **Sexual orientation**

5. There are differences in continuation and attainment rates by different sexual orientations. The continuation rate of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) entrants in 2017-18 was 1.1 percentage points lower than heterosexual students. The continuation rate of students who are not heterosexual or LGB was 5.6 percentage points lower than heterosexual students. The attainment rate of LGB qualifiers in 2018-19 was 2.4 percentage points higher than heterosexual students. The attainment rate of students who are not heterosexual or LGB was 6.9 percentage points lower than heterosexual students.

## **Socioeconomic background**

6. Continuation and attainment rates reduce with socioeconomic background. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 whose parents work in intermediate occupations<sup>1</sup> was 2.0 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents work in intermediate occupations was 5.2 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. These differences when compared to students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations are even larger for students whose parents work in routine and manual occupations or have never worked or are long-term unemployed.

## **Estrangement**

7. Students who are estranged from their parents have lower rates of continuation and attainment than students who are not. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 who were estranged from their parents was 8.2 percentage points lower than students who were not estranged. The attainment rate of estranged qualifiers in 2018-19 was 13.0 percentage points lower than qualifiers who were not estranged.

## **Household residual income**

8. In this report household residual income (HRI) is a measure of the income of a student's parents. As HRI increases so do continuation, attainment and progression rates. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above was 6.9 percentage points higher than that of students whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0. Qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above had an attainment rate 14.9 percentage points higher than students whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0. The progression rate of qualifiers in 2016-17 whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above was 7.6 percentage points higher than that of students whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0.

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<sup>1</sup> See the National Statistics Socioeconomic classification for more details at [www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationsserebasedonsoc2010](http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationsserebasedonsoc2010)

# Introduction

9. Every student has a unique experience when in higher education. However, distinct patterns and differences in outcomes exist for certain groups of students, as can be seen in our key performance measures.<sup>2</sup> For example, in 2018-19 the rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree was 22.1 percentage points lower for black students compared with white students.<sup>3</sup>
10. The OfS reports sector-level differences in outcomes by a number of characteristics including age, disability and ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, differences in outcomes by certain characteristics at a provider level can be seen in our access and participation data dashboard.<sup>5</sup>
11. This report includes differences in student outcomes by seven additional characteristics not included in our access and participation sector-level summary:<sup>6</sup> care experience, free school meal eligibility, parental higher education, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background (NS-SEC)<sup>7</sup>, estrangement and household residual income.
12. There are a number of ways of measuring student outcomes in higher education. These measures usually involve assessing the extent to which students continue their studies and how well they do in those studies. As in our access and participation data dashboard, this report includes three measures of successful outcomes in higher education:
  - **Continuation rate** – the proportion of entrants that continue their studies
  - **Attainment rate** – the proportion of qualifiers that achieve a first or upper second class degree
  - **Progression rate** – the proportion of qualifiers that enter highly skilled employment or further higher education at a higher level approximately six months after leaving.

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<sup>2</sup> See our participation performance measures: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/).

<sup>3</sup> See our key performance measure 4: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-degree-outcomes-1sts-or-21s-between-white-students-and-black-students/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-degree-outcomes-1sts-or-21s-between-white-students-and-black-students/).

<sup>4</sup> See our report 'Access and participation resources. Findings from the data: sector summary', at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-data-and-its-findings/findings-from-the-data/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-data-and-its-findings/findings-from-the-data/).

<sup>5</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>7</sup> For full details of the National Statistics Socioeconomic classification see [www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonsoc2010](http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonsoc2010)

13. The statistics included in this report are raw continuation, attainment and progression rates as observed in the available data. We have not used weighting or statistical modelling in their calculation to account for other student characteristics that can impact these rates.
14. Throughout this report we have included rates and differences in rates rounded to one decimal place. Some of these characteristics apply to small populations and we have not performed significance or sensitivity analysis on the raw rates included here. Small differences in rates may not represent statistically significant differences in outcomes for students with those characteristics. Also note the differences in rates were calculated using unrounded rates. The value of the differences can thus be 0.1 percentage point higher or lower than the difference between the rounded rates included in this report.
15. Identifying differences in outcomes is a key part of the OfS approach to access and participation and allows the OfS and higher education providers to make targeted decisions to reduce and remove these differences.<sup>8</sup>
16. This investigation of differences in outcomes by these further characteristics allows us to develop a greater understanding of the student experience. In the future we plan to use statistical modelling to determine how these different characteristics interact to impact a student's time in higher education.
17. This report was first published in June 2020 and contained differences in outcomes by care experience, free school meal eligibility, parental higher education, sexual orientation and socioeconomic background. It was updated in November 2020 to also include differences in outcomes by estrangement and household residual income, as well as further data on the number of students in our access and participation populations who were included in and excluded from these calculations.

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<sup>8</sup> See the report 'Transforming opportunity in higher education' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/transforming-opportunity-in-higher-education/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/transforming-opportunity-in-higher-education/).

# Differences in student outcomes: further characteristics

18. This report includes the differences in continuation and attainment rates by the following student characteristics:

- a. **Care experience** – whether a student was in care prior to entering higher education.<sup>9</sup>
- b. **Free school meal eligibility** – whether a student was ever recorded as eligible for free school meals in the six years prior to their final year of Key Stage 4.<sup>10</sup>
- c. **Parental higher education** – whether one or more of a student’s parents have a higher education qualification.<sup>11</sup> Attending higher education when your parents did not is sometimes referred to as being the ‘first in family’.
- d. **Sexual orientation** – a student’s sexual orientation, based on their own self-assessment.<sup>12</sup>
- e. **Socioeconomic background** – the background of a student, based on the occupation of their parent, step-parent or guardian who earns the most, which is used to assign them to a National Statistics socioeconomic classification (NS-SEC) group.<sup>13</sup>
- f. **Estrangement** – whether a student has been irreconcilably estranged from their parents for a substantial amount of time.<sup>14</sup>
- g. **Household residual income** – the income of the student’s household after certain allowances have been taken into account.<sup>15</sup>

19. Differences in progression rates are also included for all characteristics except sexual orientation and socioeconomic background. Progression data is not included for sexual orientation and socioeconomic background because of a lack of data availability.

20. Our judgement about the suitability of this data for publication has been informed by a data quality framework that we have developed to aid decision-making regarding the quality of

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<sup>9</sup> Data reported by HESA – see [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/careleaver](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/careleaver).

<sup>10</sup> Data produced by the DfE as part of the National Pupil Database (NPD) – see <https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/concepts/d7f8e8e0-6fa7-4aa2-a963-265267c2bed4>. The DfE does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the NPD data by third parties.

<sup>11</sup> Data reported by HESA – see [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/pared](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/pared).

<sup>12</sup> Data reported by HESA – see [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sexort](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sexort).

<sup>13</sup> Data reported by HESA – see [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sec](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sec).

<sup>14</sup> Data provided by the Student Loans Company – see [www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/estrangement.aspx](http://www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/estrangement.aspx).

<sup>15</sup> Data provided by the Student Loans Company. For detail on how household residual income is calculated see document ‘How you’re assessed and paid’ available at [www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltime-students](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltime-students).

student characteristic data. The framework combines quantitative and qualitative methods, full details of which can be found in Annex A.<sup>16</sup>

21. Details of how the data quality framework is applied, as well as more detail of the student populations and the differences calculated can be found in the annexes associated with each characteristic.<sup>17</sup> The data file associated with this release contains the counts, rates and differences calculated for the characteristics and the data used to produce the charts found throughout this report.
22. In addition to the seven characteristics included in this report, we investigated data on gender identity<sup>18</sup> and religion or belief.<sup>19</sup> However, these two characteristics did not meet the standards in the data quality framework and differences in outcomes by these characteristics are not included in this report.
23. These statistics apply to students at English higher education providers. The statistics for care experience, parental higher education, sexual orientation and socioeconomic background in this report apply to UK-domiciled, full-time, undergraduate students. The free school meal eligibility statistics apply to England-domiciled, full-time, undergraduate students. The estrangement and household residual income statistics apply to full-time undergraduate students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Further detail of student populations used to calculate these statistics can be found in Annexes B to H.
24. The data on free school meal eligibility is produced by the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the National Pupil Database (NPD). The data on estrangement and household residual income was provided by the Student Loans Company (SLC). This NPD and SLC data was linked onto data from the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA's) Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the Higher Education Statistics Authority's (HESA's) student record and student alternative record. The other characteristics included in this report all relate to students on the HESA student record.
25. Student outcome populations and outcome definitions follow our access and participation data algorithms.<sup>20</sup> However, because of issues relating to data availability, data quality and population requirements, these outcome populations had to be restricted for the analyses in this report. Details of these restrictions, including the number of students impacted, can be found in the data file associated with this report. For all characteristics, population totals when

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<sup>16</sup> Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data. Available alongside this report at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>17</sup> Annexes B-H: each of the seven characteristics has a detailed annex detailing the differences in outcomes, how they were calculated and how the data quality was assessed. Available alongside this report at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>18</sup> Data reported by HESA – see [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/genderid](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/genderid).

<sup>19</sup> Data reported by HESA – see [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/relblf](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/relblf).

<sup>20</sup> See our document 'Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures. Regulatory indicators, methodology and rebuild descriptions' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).

counting included and excluded numbers are identical to the number of students included in our access and participation data dashboard.<sup>21</sup>

26. Throughout this report<sup>22</sup> attainment and progression rates are included for students three years after the year of entrance for which the data is usable; for example, if our framework determines data is usable for 2014-15 entrants then we include attainment and progression rates for students who qualified in 2016-17. However, it is worth noting that the first year of attainment and progression data included in this report does not include students who completed their qualification in four years. Given that undergraduate with postgraduate component qualifications typically take four years to complete and have a much higher attainment rate than first degrees<sup>23</sup>, any difference recorded between the first and second year of attainment and progression data will in part result from these additional students being included in the second year. See Annexes B to H for more details.

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<sup>21</sup> See footnote 5.

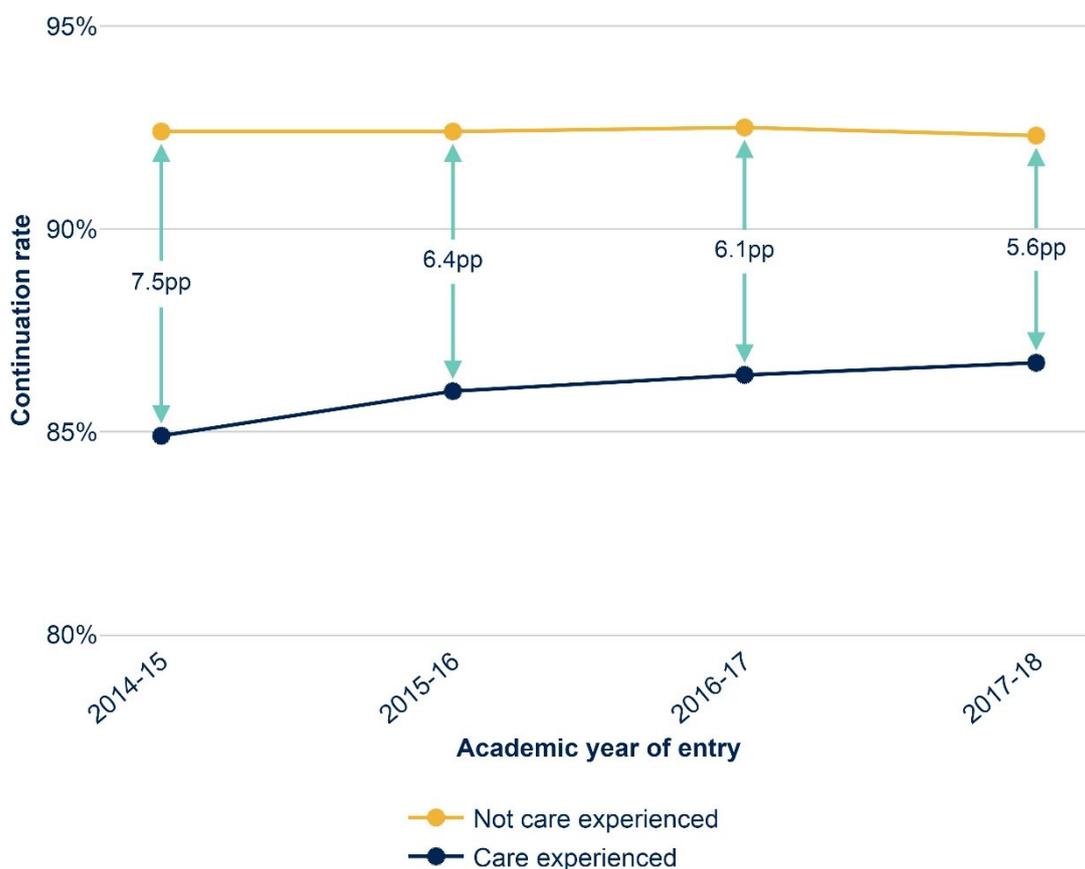
<sup>22</sup> With the exception of household residual income, which is available for a larger number of years than the other characteristics. Attainment and progression data is therefore included in charts four years after the year of entrance for which the data is usable. However, the data for three years after is available in the data file. Also note progression data is not included for sexual orientation and socioeconomic background.

<sup>23</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

## Care experience

27. A recent DfE report shows that access to higher education is much lower for young people who have been in care. In 2018-19 only 13 per cent of pupils who were looked after continuously for 12 months or more entered higher education by age 19 compared with 43 per cent of all other pupils.<sup>24</sup>
28. Not only do students who have been in care prior to entering higher education have reduced access, they also have lower outcomes. The data presented here shows continuation and attainment rates are both considerably reduced for students who were in care prior to entering higher education compared with those who were not.
29. Care experienced entrants in 2017-18 had a continuation rate 5.6 percentage points lower than the continuation rate of students who have not been in care (see Figure 1). The continuation rates of students who have not been in care have changed little between 2014-15 and 2017-18 but during this time the continuation rates of care experienced students increased. This means the difference in continuation rates has been shrinking.

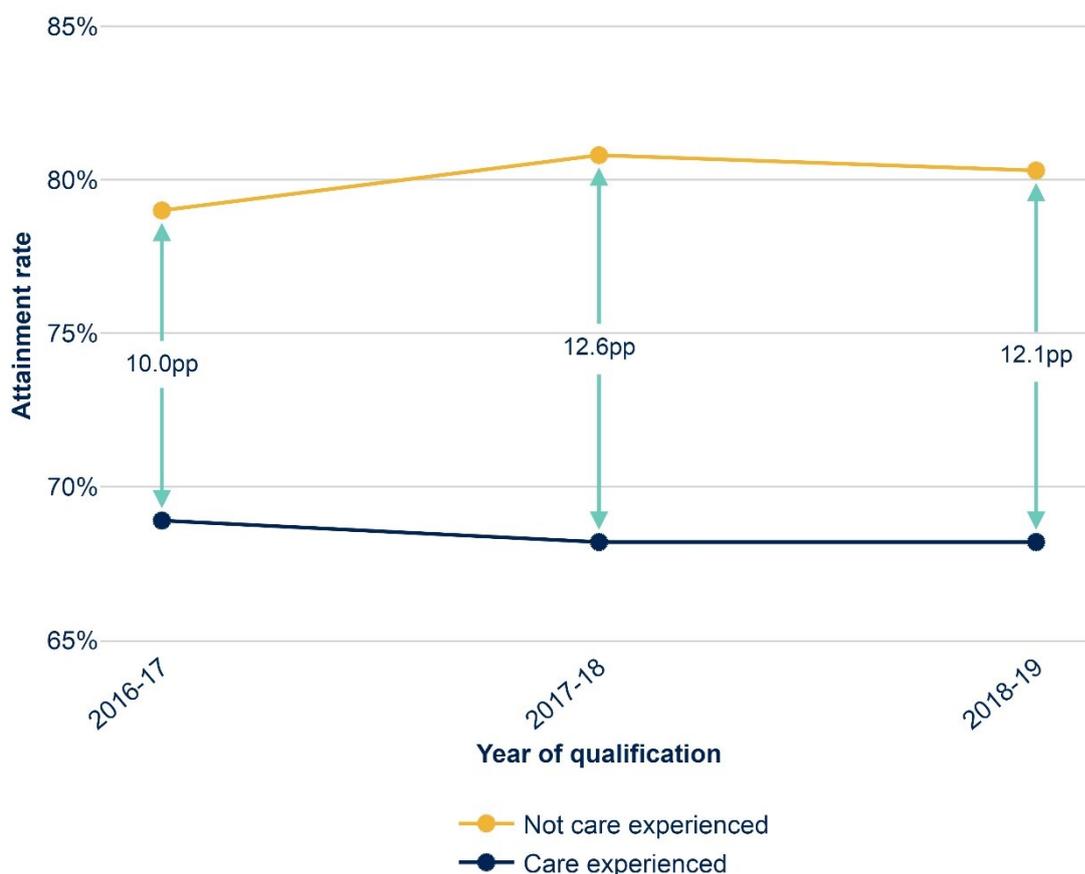
**Figure 1: The differences in continuation rate by care experience for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate students**



<sup>24</sup> See DfE report 'Widening participation in higher education: 2020' at [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2020).

30. Care experienced students have a lower rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree when compared with students who have not been in care (see Figure 2). The attainment rate of care experienced qualifiers in 2018-19 was 12.1 percentage points lower than the attainment rate of students who have not been in care. Attainment rates between 2017-18 and 2018-19 remained the same for care experienced students but dropped slightly for students who were not in care. The difference in attainment therefore reduced slightly.

**Figure 2: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by care experience for full-time, UK-domiciled, first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students**



31. Care experienced students may have a slightly higher rate of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level compared with students who are not care experienced. The progression rate of care experienced qualifiers in 2016-17 was calculated to be 0.4 percentage points higher than that of students who were not care experienced. However, these statistics apply to small numbers of care experienced students and a reduced population. Further investigation is therefore required to determine the extent to which this reflects progression rates for care experienced students; the caveats associated with this progression data can be found in Annex B.

### Free school meal eligibility

32. Students who received free meals when at school are less likely to enter higher education than students who did not. The DfE has reported that only 26.3 per cent of state-funded and special

school pupils who received free school meals at age 15 entered higher education by age 19 in 2018-19 compared with 45.1 per cent of students who did not receive free school meals.<sup>25</sup>

33. Free school meal eligibility is highly correlated with other measures of disadvantage. For example, 3 in 10 pupils who are eligible to receive free school meals live in a POLAR4 quintile 1 neighbourhood whereas 1 in 10 live in a POLAR4 quintile 5 neighbourhood<sup>26</sup>.
34. Students who were eligible for free meals when at school have worse outcomes in higher education than students who were not eligible. The data presented here shows continuation, attainment and progression rates are all lower for students who were eligible to receive free school meals.
35. These free school meal eligibility statistics apply to England-domiciled students because the National Pupil Database (where this data was obtained) only contains data on schools in England. These statistics also apply to students who attended a state-funded mainstream school<sup>27</sup> and were under 21 when they began their qualification. Furthermore it should be noted that this data is a record of students' free meal eligibility when they were at school and does not rely on students self-declaring their eligibility.
36. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 who were eligible to receive free meals while at school was 5.4 percentage points lower than those who were not (see Figure 3). Between 2014-15 and 2017-18, this difference in continuation has grown – this is as a result of the continuation rates of students eligible to receive free school meals dropping, while the continuation rates of students who were not eligible have been stable.

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<sup>25</sup>See footnote 24.

<sup>26</sup> POLAR4 is an area-based measure of young participation in higher education. Quintile 1 represents the lowest level of participation; quintile 5 the highest. See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-the-data/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-the-data/).

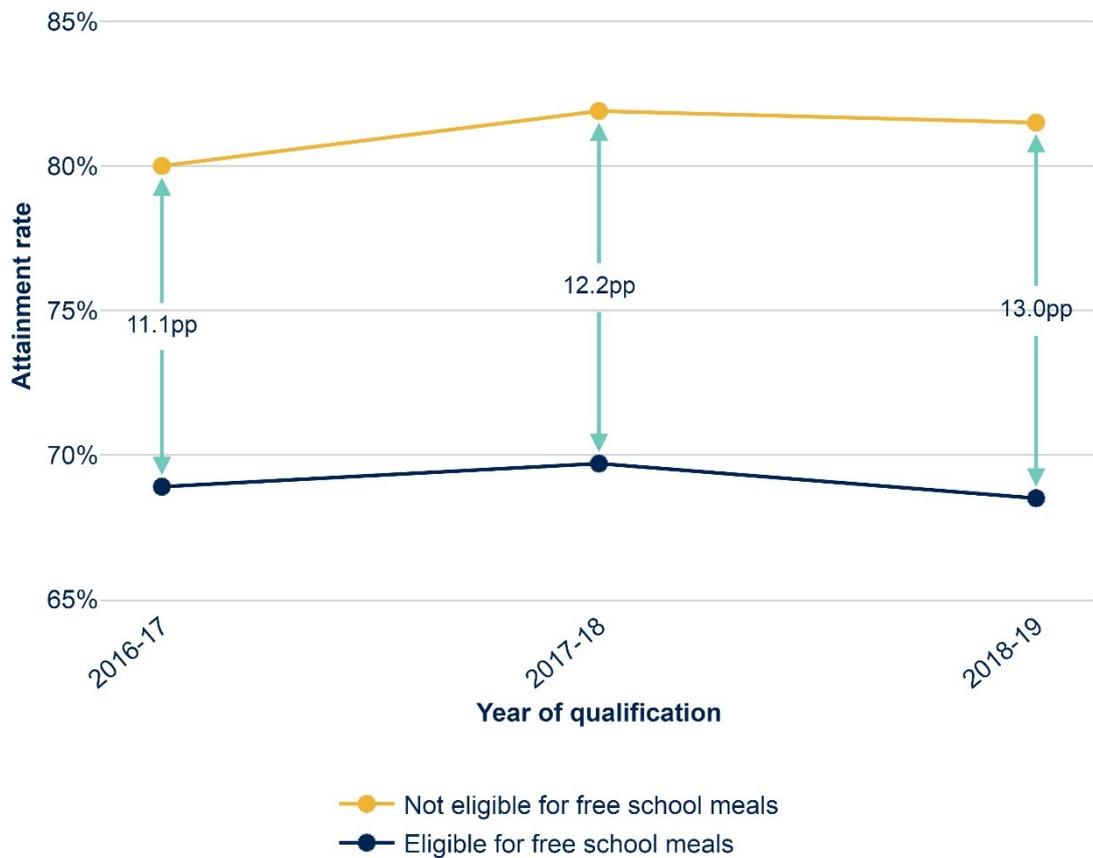
<sup>27</sup> Note that the definition of 'state-funded mainstream school' was changed slightly as part of the November 2020 update to this report. This had no impact on the rounded outcome rates, but changed the numbers of students found in the data file by a small amount. See Annex C for more information.

**Figure 3: The differences in continuation rate by free school meal eligibility for full-time, England-domiciled, undergraduate students**



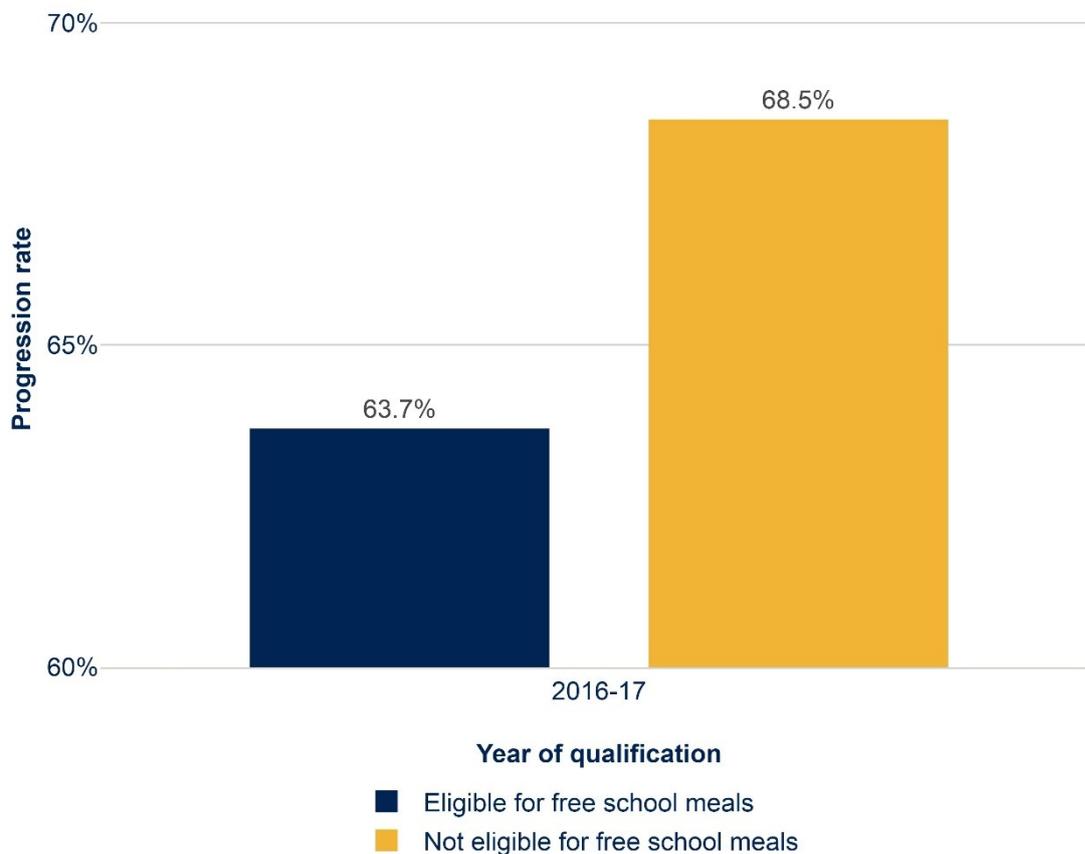
37. Students who were eligible to receive free meals when at school have a lower rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree than students who were not eligible (see Figure 4). The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2018-19 who were eligible to receive free school meals was 13.0 percentage points lower than those who were not. Attainment rates dropped between 2017-18 and 2018-19 regardless of free school meal eligibility but the attainment rate of students who were eligible dropped by a greater extent. The difference in attainment therefore increased by 0.8 percentage points during this time.

**Figure 4: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by free school meal eligibility for full-time, England-domiciled, first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students**



38. For qualifiers in 2016-17 the rate of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level was 4.8 percentage points lower for students who were eligible to receive free school meals compared with students who were not eligible (see Figure 5). Further investigation is required to determine the extent to which this reflects differences in progression by free school meal eligibility; the caveats associated with this progression data can be found in Annex C.

**Figure 5: The difference in students progressing into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level by free school meal eligibility for full-time, England-domiciled, undergraduate qualifiers**



## Parental higher education

39. Attending higher education when your parents did not is seen as a marker of social mobility and improved access and participation.<sup>28</sup> The proportion of full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate entrants who have a parent with a higher education qualification (45.1 per cent in 2018-19) is similar to the proportion who do not (44.7 per cent in 2018-19).<sup>29</sup>

40. Continuation, attainment and progression rates are all lower for students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification compared with students whose parents do.

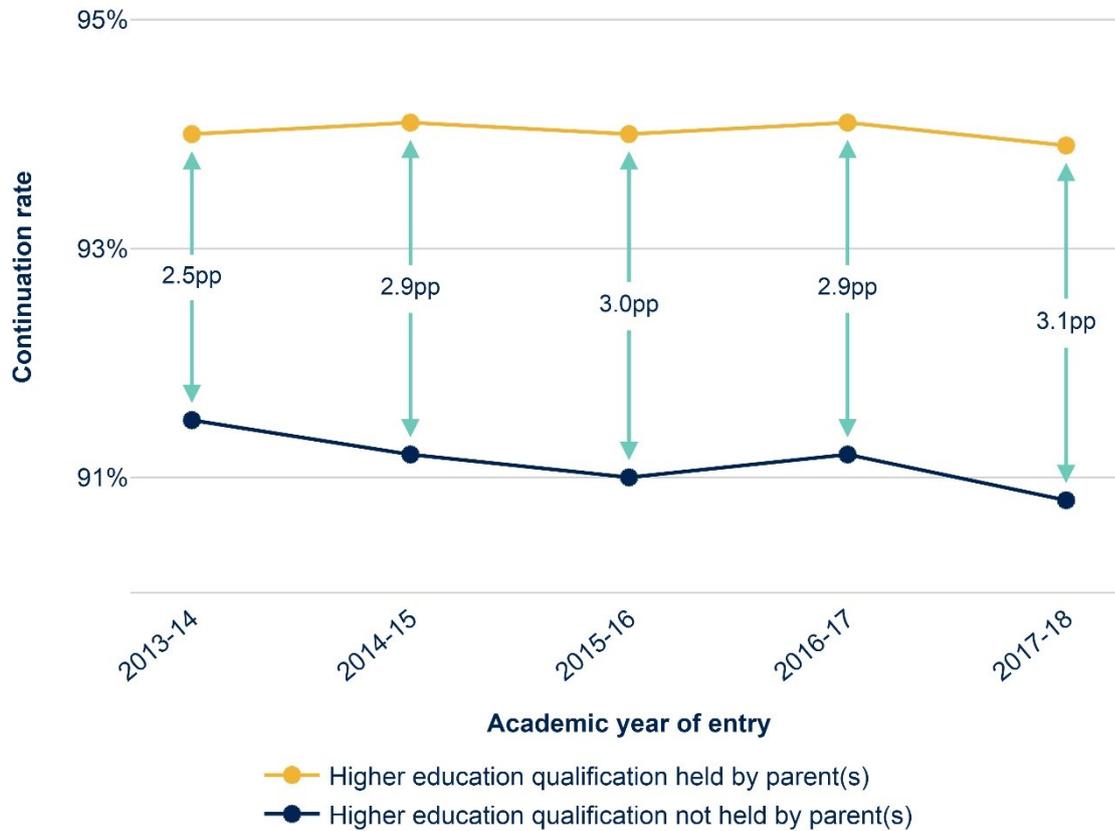
41. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 whose parents do not have a higher education qualification was 3.1 percentage points lower than the continuation rate of students whose parents have a higher education qualification (see Figure 6). The continuation rates of students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification dropped between 2013-14 and 2017-18, whereas the continuation rate of students whose parents have a higher education

<sup>28</sup> See report 'Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential. A plan for improving social mobility through education' at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-social-mobility-through-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-social-mobility-through-education).

<sup>29</sup> These values can be found on our equality and diversity webpages at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/).

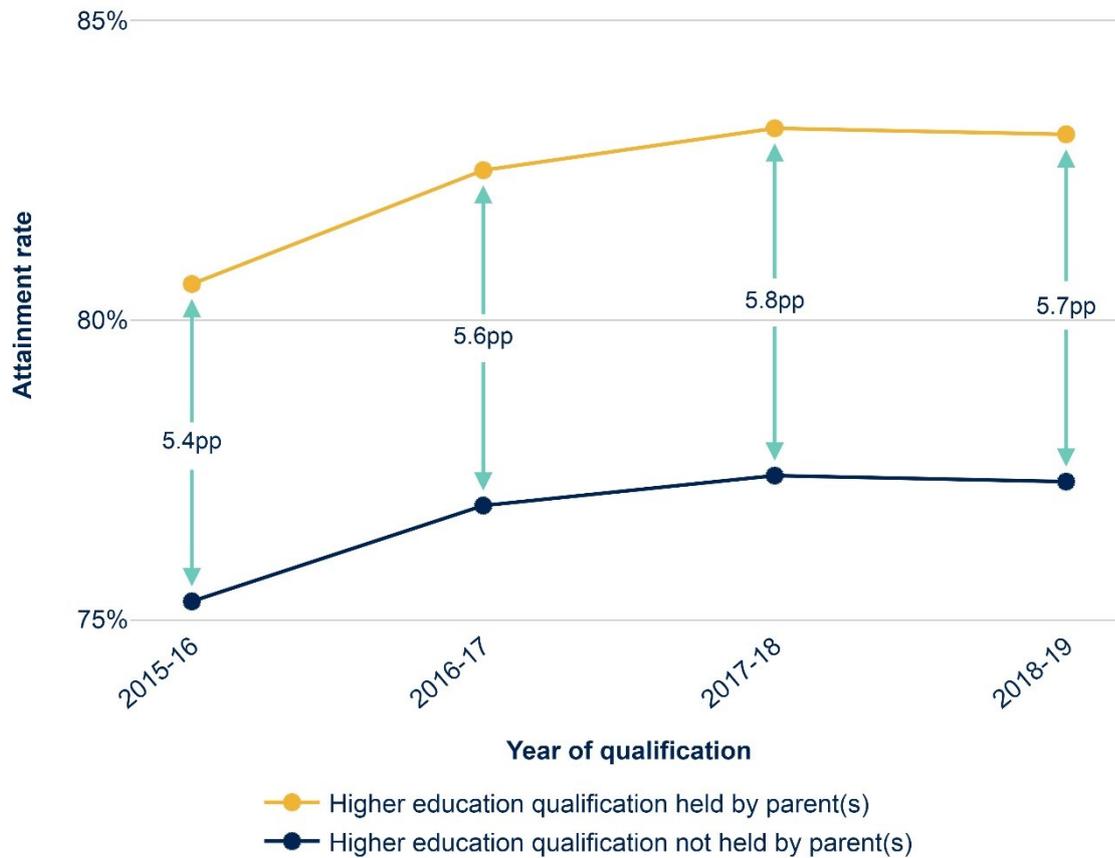
qualification remained stable during this time. This difference in continuation has thus slowly increased.

**Figure 6: The differences in continuation rate by parental higher education for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate students**



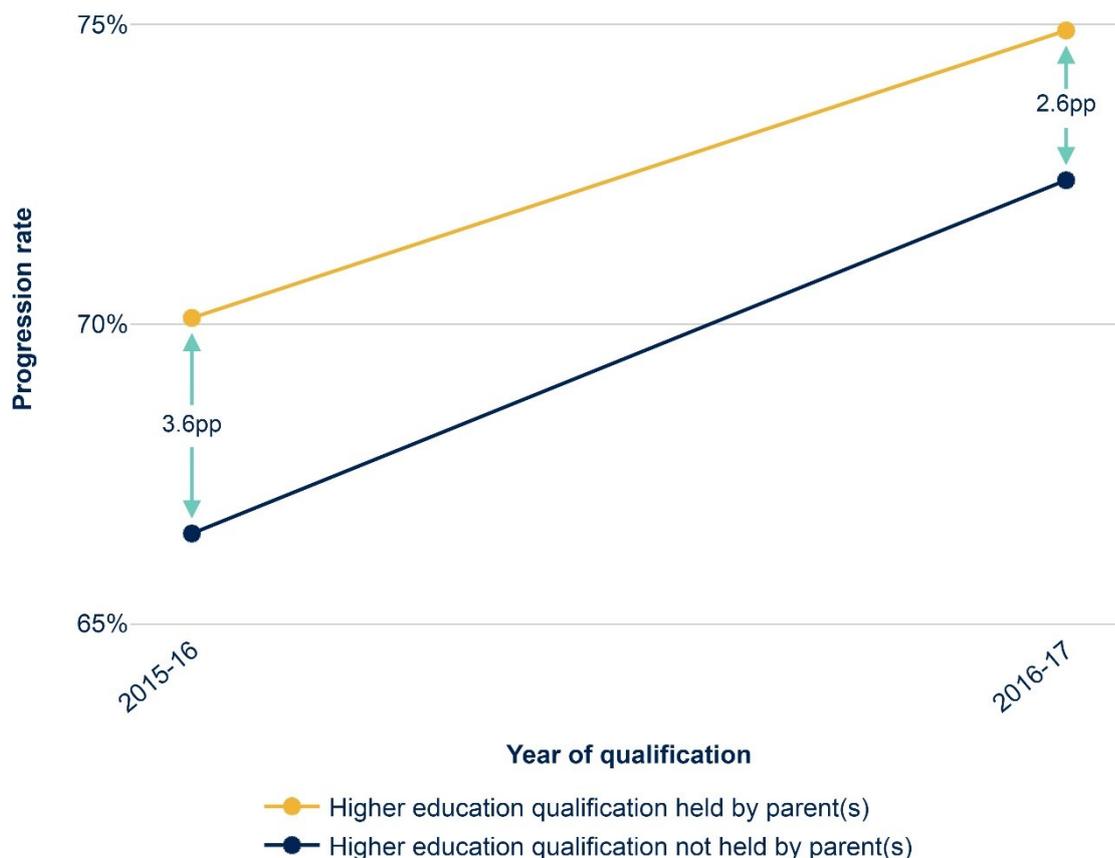
42. Students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification have a lower rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree than students whose parents do (see Figure 7). The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents do not have higher education qualification was 5.7 percentage points lower than that of students whose parents have a higher education qualification. This difference in attainment rate has been relatively stable.

**Figure 7: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by parental higher education for full-time, UK-domiciled, first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students**



43. Students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification have a lower rate of progressing into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level when compared with students whose parents do (see Figure 8). The progression rate of qualifiers in 2016-17 whose parents do not have higher education qualification was 2.6 percentage points lower than students whose parents do. The data for 2016-17 qualifiers is more representative of the student population than the data for 2015-16 and this data should not be interpreted as showing that this gap is rapidly reducing. Further details can be found in Annex D.

**Figure 8: The differences in students progressing into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level by parental higher education for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate qualifiers**



## Sexual orientation

44. The proportion of students who report as being lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)<sup>30</sup> has been increasing. In 2018-19, 6.2 per cent of full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate entrants reported that they are LGB. In the same year, 85.3 per cent of students reported as being heterosexual.<sup>31</sup>

45. Successful outcomes in higher education vary depending on sexual orientation. The data presented here shows that continuation rates for LGB students are lower than heterosexual students but attainment rates are higher. Continuation and attainment rates for students who are not heterosexual or LGB are lower than heterosexual and LGB students (Figures 9 and 10<sup>32</sup>).

<sup>30</sup> Trans students are not included in this group because student gender identity data is collected separately to this sexual orientation data.

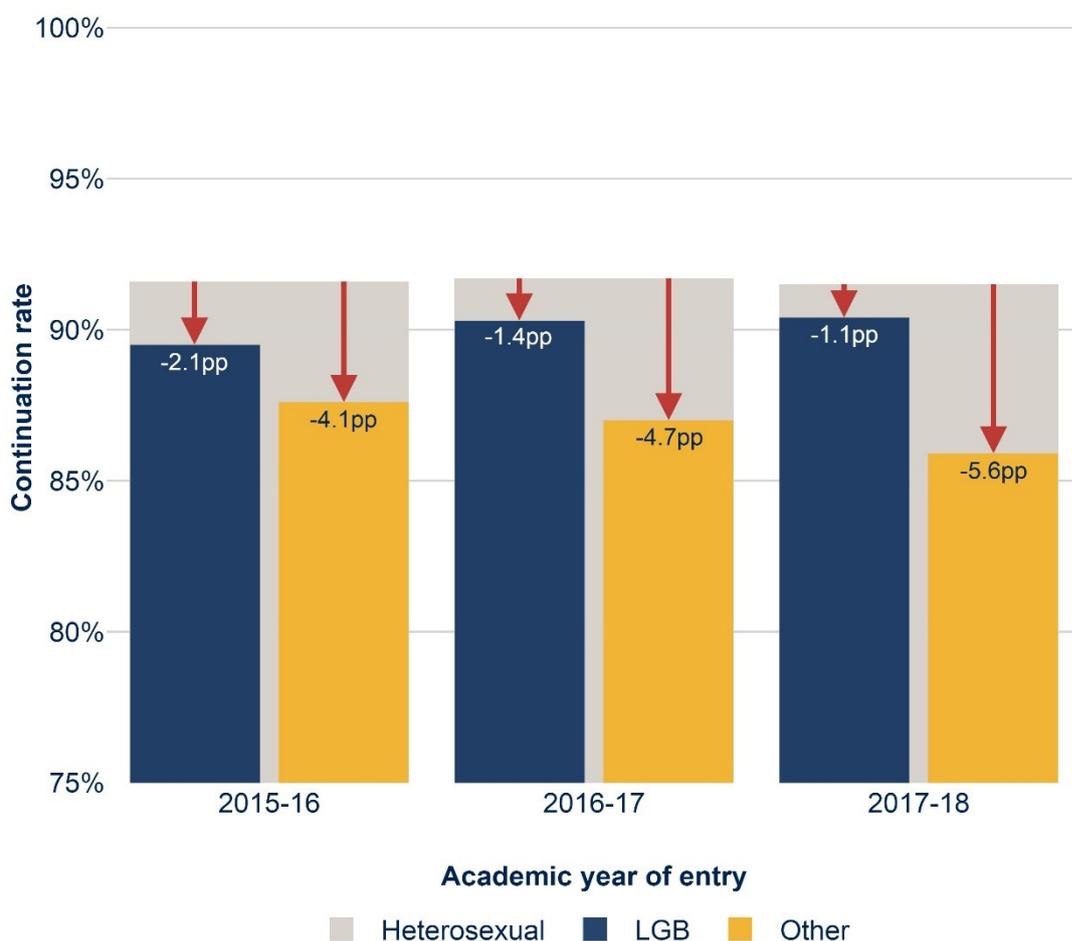
<sup>31</sup> See our equality and diversity webpages at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/).

<sup>32</sup> The style of these charts is different from the care experience, free school meal eligibility, parental higher education and estrangement charts because sexual orientation has three categories rather than two.

46. To allow us to more effectively communicate sector-level trends we have combined data for students recorded as bisexual, gay man and gay woman/lesbian into a single group called LGB. Continuation and attainment rates of bisexual, gay man and gay woman/lesbian students can be found as separate groups in the data file associated with this release.

47. LGB entrants in 2017-18 had a continuation rate that was 1.1 percentage points lower than heterosexual students, while students who are not heterosexual or LGB had a continuation rate that was 5.6 percentage points lower than that of heterosexual students (see Figure 9). Between 2015-16 and 2017-18 the continuation rates of heterosexual students remained stable while the continuation rates of LGB students increased and rates for students who are not heterosexual or LGB dropped. The difference in continuation rates between heterosexual students and LGB students has thus been shrinking while the difference between heterosexual students and students who are not heterosexual or LGB has been growing.

**Figure 9: The differences in continuation rate by sexual orientation for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate students**

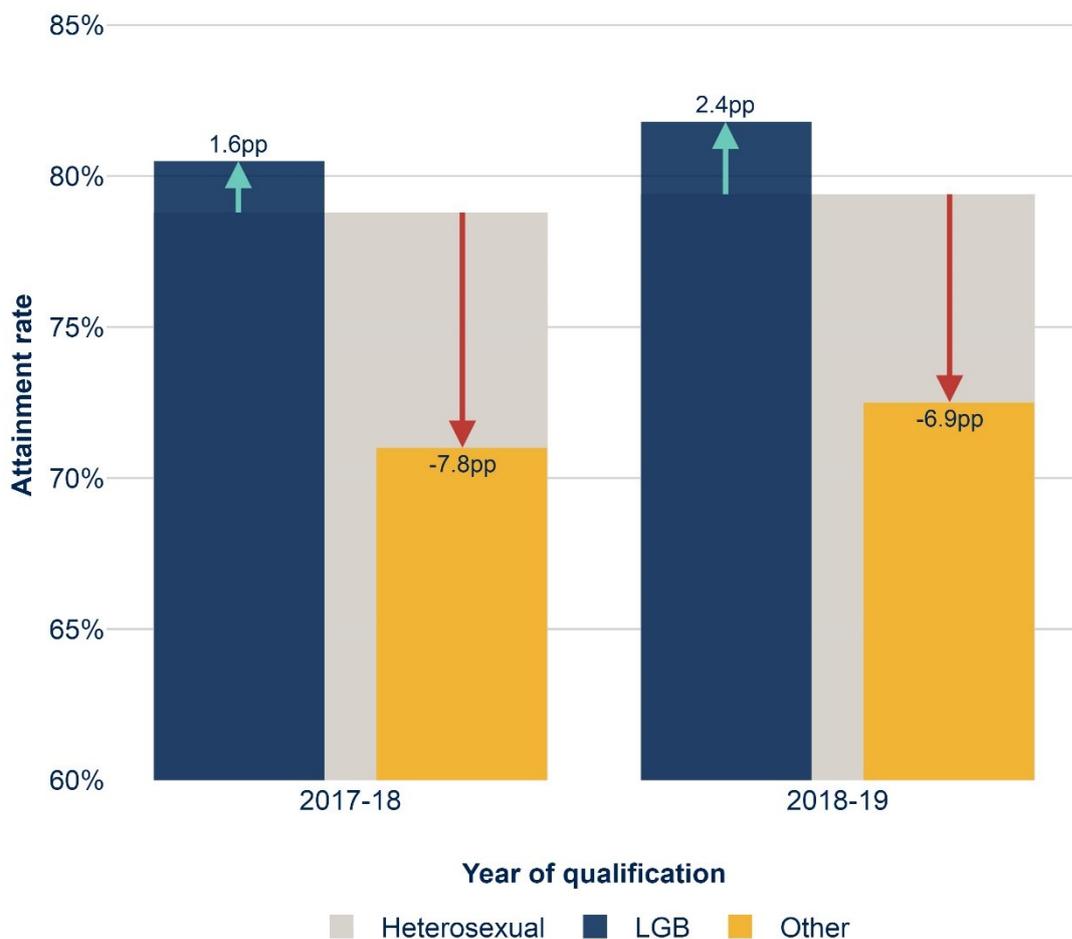


48. LGB students have a higher rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree than heterosexual students (see Figure 10). However, students who are not heterosexual or LGB have a lower attainment rate when compared with heterosexual or LGB students. The attainment rate of LGB qualifiers in 2018-19 was 2.4 percentage points higher than of heterosexual students; whereas the attainment rate of students who are not heterosexual or LGB was 6.9 percentage points lower than of heterosexual students. The data for qualifiers in

2018-19 is more representative of attainment for this population of students than the data for 2017-18. The caveats associated with this data are detailed in Annex E.

49. There is insufficient data to calculate differences in progression rates by sexual orientation. This is because progression rates are based on responses to the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey which has been discontinued and the final year of data available relates to qualifiers in 2016-17. Robust data on qualifiers by sexual orientation is only available from 2017-18 and later. We will investigate differences in progression by sexual orientation when the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey data is available.

**Figure 10: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by sexual orientation for full-time, UK-domiciled, first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students**



### National Statistics socioeconomic classification (socioeconomic background)

50. Access to higher education varies considerably with socioeconomic background.<sup>33</sup> There are many methods of classifying socioeconomic background, including the National Statistics

<sup>33</sup> See our effective practice webpage 'Low higher education participation, household income and socioeconomic status': [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-)

socioeconomic classification (NS-SEC) which assigns occupations to different socioeconomic groups.<sup>34</sup>

51. Students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations consistently have the highest continuation and attainment rates, followed by students whose parents work in intermediate occupations, then students whose parents work in routine and manual occupations. Students whose parents have never worked or are long-term unemployed have the lowest rates (see Figures 11 and 12<sup>35</sup>). These statistics apply to students who were under 21 when they began their qualification.
52. Entrants in 2017-18 whose parents work in intermediate occupations had a continuation rate 2.0 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (see Figure 11). Students whose parents work in routine and manual occupations had a continuation rate that was 3.7 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. Students whose parents have never worked or are long-term unemployed had a continuation rate 5.4 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations.
53. Continuation rates dropped slightly between 2015-16 and 2017-18 for all socioeconomic backgrounds but this drop was larger for students whose parents do not work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. The differences in continuation therefore grew between 2015-16 and 2017-18.

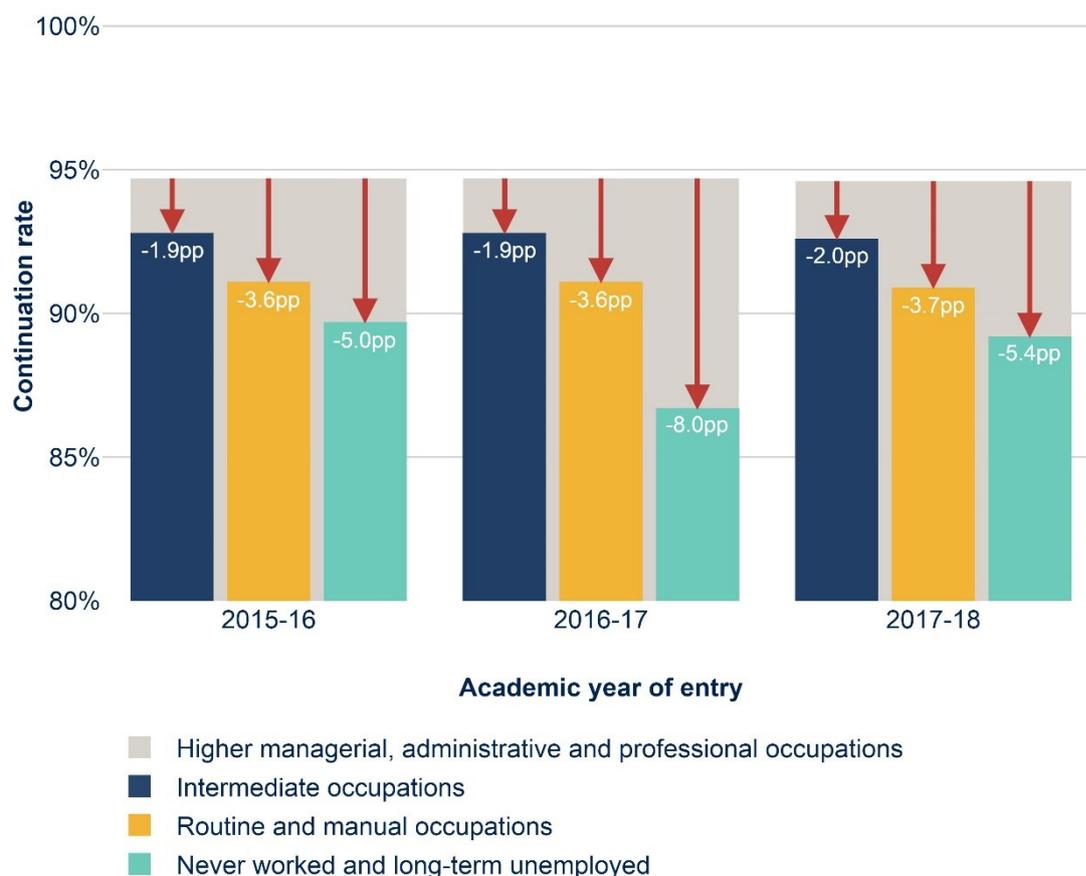
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[opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/low-higher-education-participation-household-income-and-socio-economic-status/](#).

<sup>34</sup> See the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website for details of how NS-SEC is assigned: [www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonsoc2010](http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonsoc2010).

<sup>35</sup> The style of these charts is different from the care experience, free school meal eligibility, parental higher education and estrangement charts because socioeconomic background has four categories rather than two.

**Figure 11: The differences in continuation rate by socioeconomic background (NS-SEC) for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate students**



54. Qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents work in intermediate occupations had an attainment rate 5.2 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (see Figure 12). Students whose parents work in routine and manual occupations had an attainment rates that was 8.6 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. Students whose parents have never worked or are long-term unemployed had an attainment rate 21.5 percentage points lower than students whose parents work in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations. The data for qualifiers in 2018-19 is more representative of attainment for this population of students than the data for 2017-18. The caveats associated with this NS-SEC data can be found in Annex F.

55. There is insufficient data to calculate differences in progression rates by socioeconomic background. This is because progression rates are based on responses to the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey which has been discontinued and the final year of data available relates to qualifiers in 2016-17. Robust data on qualifiers by socioeconomic background is only available from 2017-18 and later. We will investigate differences in progression by socioeconomic background when the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey data is available.

**Figure 12: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by socioeconomic background (NS-SEC) for full-time, UK-domiciled, first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students**



## Estrangement

56. Estranged students are those who have been irreconcilably estranged from their parents for a substantial amount of time. The data presented here shows that estranged students have considerably lower continuation and attainment rates than students who are not estranged from their parents.

57. Around 3,000 students recorded as estranged enter higher education each year.<sup>36</sup> The Office for Students regards students who are estranged from their parents as an underrepresented group and higher education providers are encouraged to consider them in their access and participation plans.<sup>37</sup>

58. The differences in outcomes for estranged and care experienced students in this report should not be directly compared, because they come from different sources and apply to different

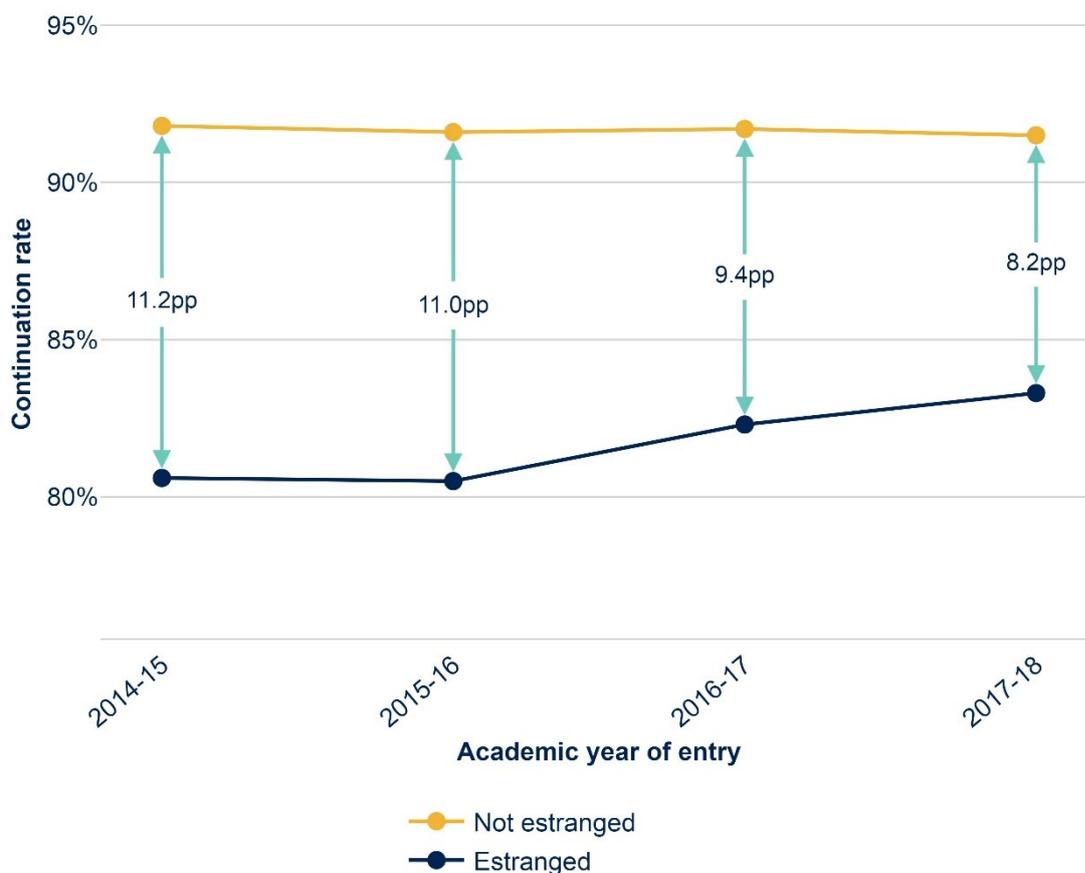
<sup>36</sup> See the data file associated with this release, available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/), for the numbers of entrants each year who are recorded as estranged.

<sup>37</sup> See our effective practice page dedicated to estranged students at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/estranged-students/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/estranged-students/).

groups of students. Further investigation is needed to determine the extent to which outcomes for care experienced and estranged students differ.

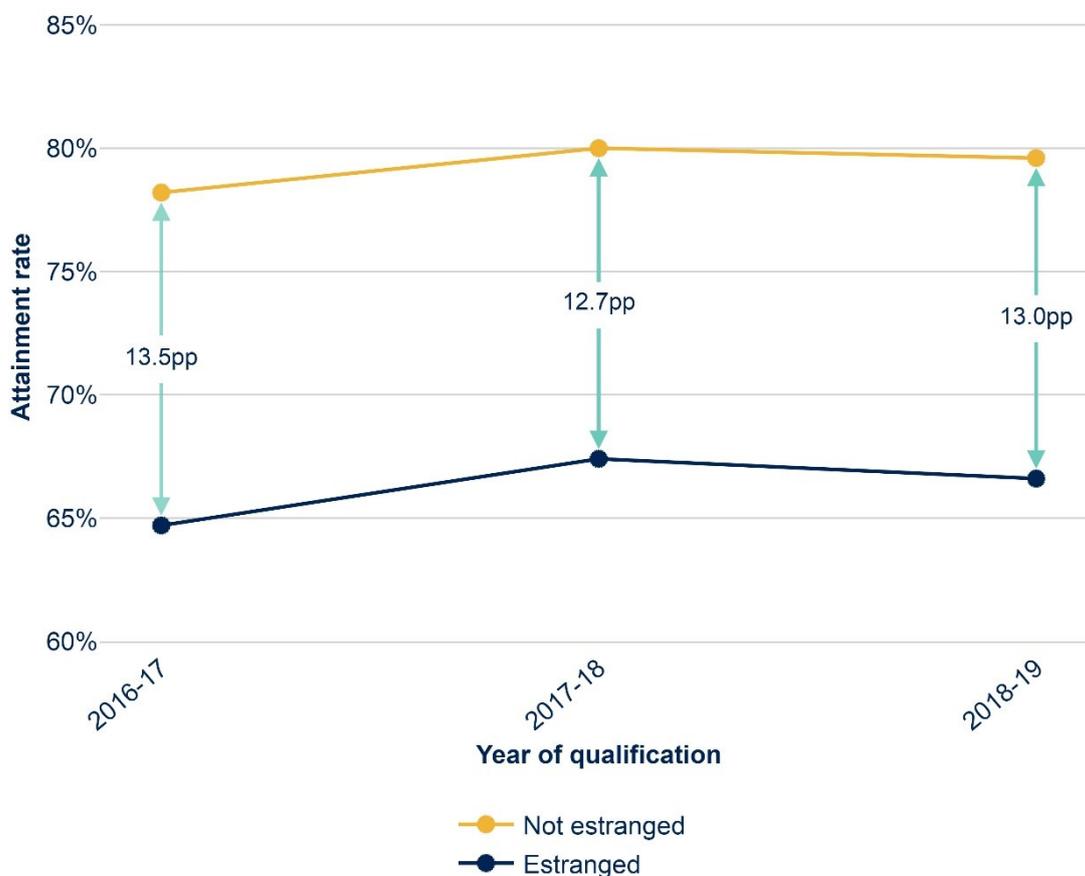
59. Students who are estranged from their parents have lower continuation rates than students who are not (see Figure 13). Estranged entrants in 2017-18 had a continuation rate 8.2 percentage points lower than students who were not estranged. This difference has reduced in recent years, and while the continuation rates of students who are not estranged from their parents have mostly remained steady, the continuation rates of estranged students have increased. As a result this difference in continuation has reduced from 11.2 percentage points for 2014-15 entrants to 8.2 percentage points for 2017-18 entrants.

**Figure 13: The differences in continuation rate by estrangement for full-time undergraduate students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**



60. Students who are estranged from their parents have a lower rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree than students who are not (see Figure 14). Estranged qualifiers in 2018-19 had an attainment rate 13.0 percentage points lower than students who were not estranged. The attainment rates of both estranged students and students who are not estranged dropped between 2017-18 and 2018-19, but this drop was slightly larger for estranged students. The differences in attainment therefore increased from 12.7 percentage points for 2017-18 qualifiers to 13.0 percentage points for 2018-19 qualifiers.

**Figure 14: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by estrangement for full-time first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components qualifiers domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**



61. Students who are estranged from their parents potentially have a slightly higher rate of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level compared with students who are not. The progression rate of estranged qualifiers in 2016-17 was calculated to be 0.3 percentage points higher than students who were not estranged. However, these statistics apply to small numbers of estranged students and a reduced population. Further investigation is therefore required to determine the extent to which this reflects progression rates for estranged students; the caveats associated with this progression data can be found in Annex G.

## Household residual income

62. Household residual income is a measure of income after accounting for certain outgoings.<sup>38</sup> These statistics apply to students who were recorded as dependent on their parents by the SLC. These statistics therefore represent a student’s parental income prior to entering higher education.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 15.

63. This report shows that continuation, attainment and progression rates all increase with parental HRI (see Figures 15 to 17).<sup>39</sup> In all years investigated, students whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above have the highest rates, followed by students whose parents have a HRI between £25,001 and £42,600, then those whose parents have a HRI between £1 and £25,000. Students whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0 have the lowest rates.
64. Reporting HRI is optional and not necessary if not seeking an income-assessed loan. Throughout the time series presented here the collection of HRI has been consistent. However, the boundaries for income-assessed loans and the amount of money received by students have not been consistent across this time period. This was especially the case between 2015-16 and 2016-17, and the HRI boundaries and access to finance changed markedly for students entering higher education in 2016-17 compared with those who entered in 2015-16.<sup>40</sup> This change may have impacted the reporting of HRI and consequently the raw continuation rates calculated between 2015-16 and 2016-17 (and subsequent years of qualification for attainment rates). Discussion of the reporting of HRI and the outcomes for students who do not report HRI can be found in Annex H.
65. Entrants in 2017-18 whose parents have a HRI between £25,001 and £42,600 had a continuation rate 1.0 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above (see Figure 15). In the same year, entrants whose parents have a HRI between £1 and £25,000 had a continuation rate 3.3 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above. Entrants whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0 had a continuation rate 6.9 percentage points lower than entrants whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above.

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<sup>39</sup> The style of these charts differs from the other charts in this report because we have used four HRI groups and they contain a longer time series. Unlike the other charts, the differences in outcomes are not labelled. However, these differences can be found in the data file associated with this release, available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>40</sup> See footnote 15.

**Figure 15: The differences in continuation rate by household residual income for full-time undergraduate students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**



66. Qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents have a HRI between £25,001 and £42,600 had an attainment rate 3.3 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above (see Figure 16). Qualifiers whose parents have a HRI between £1 and £25,000 had an attainment rate 8.2 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above. Qualifiers whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0 had an attainment rate 14.9 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above.

**Figure 16: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by household residual income for full-time first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**



67. Qualifiers in 2016-17 whose parents have a HRI between £25,001 and £42,600 had a progression rate 2.9 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above (see Figure 17). Qualifiers whose parents have a HRI between £1 and £25,000 had a progression rate 5.0 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above. Qualifiers whose parents were recorded as having a HRI of £0 had a progression rate 7.6 percentage points lower than those whose parents have a HRI of £42,601 and above.

**Figure 17: The difference in students progressing into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level by household residual income for full-time undergraduate students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**





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