

The Access and Participation Scorecard

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Two very different pictures from different data sources

Data from UCAS, report published 17/12/19

UCAS END OF CYCLE REPORT 2019

CHAPTER 6: WIDENING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

- > Record entry rates for all POLAR4 groups of UK 18 year olds in 2019.
- > For the first time, more than a fifth of young people from the most disadvantaged group are accepted.
- > The entry rate gap between most and least advantaged students to higher tariff universities is now the lowest ever, after narrowing by 8% in 2019.
- > Almost 20% increase in accepted students declaring a mental health condition.
- > Record entry rates for both young women (39.5%) and men (29%), but significant gender gap persists.



Data from the Department for Education, report published 18/12/19

Student wealth divide is biggest in over a decade



The most advantaged pupils were five times more likely to progress to a selective university than the most disadvantaged
CHRIS RADBURN/PA

Why is this an issue?

- Politicising of measures
- Incomplete picture?
- Crowding out of less well-known measures? Over-reliance on socioeconomic background?



Methodology – Data Sources

Producer of data	Measure of progress	Access	Attainment	Continuation	Progress	Number of measures
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)	Rate of entry by student characteristics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	39
Universities and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS)	UCAS end of cycle report, 2019, by student characteristics UCAS end of cycle report, 2017	Yes				24
Department for Education (DFE)	Widening participation in higher education: 2019 Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 students, England, 2016/17 Graduate outcomes (LEO): subject by provider, 2016 to 2017	Yes			Yes	61
Office for Students (OfS)	Access and participation data dashboard	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	105

Some differences in the data sources

Producer of data	Measure of Access	Measure of Progression	Year
HESA		Proportion of graduates in UK work (six months after completion)	2019
UCAS	UK 18 year olds entry rates		2019
DFE (LEO)	Percentage of 15 year old state-funded and special school pupils who entered HE by age 19 by Ethnic Group	Progression to employment or further studies, five years on	2018 (LEO)
OFS	The proportion of students with the attribute, divided by the number of students of students in the cohort Ratio of population: provider Proportion of 18 year olds at provider		2018

Methodology - How was progress in widening participation identified?

- Change in access and participation at four stages of the life-cycle (Access, Attainment, Continuation and Participation)
- Progress was measured as the percentage point difference in rate of access (for example) over the course of a year, with the later time point being the latest data available. Progress (or lack of) was defined as "no change", an increase, or a decrease over the course of a year.
- We did not measure gaps

Methodology

Choosing data sample

Data Source	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)	English HE providers, full-time, first year, undergraduate studies	Part-time students
Universities and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS)	UK HE providers, full-time, 18 year olds	Mature students, Part-time students
Department for Education (DFE)	UK HE providers, full-time, entry at age 19	Mature students, part-time students
Office for Students (OfS)	English HE providers, full-time degree or apprenticeships, first degree	Mature students, part time students

Expansion of data available

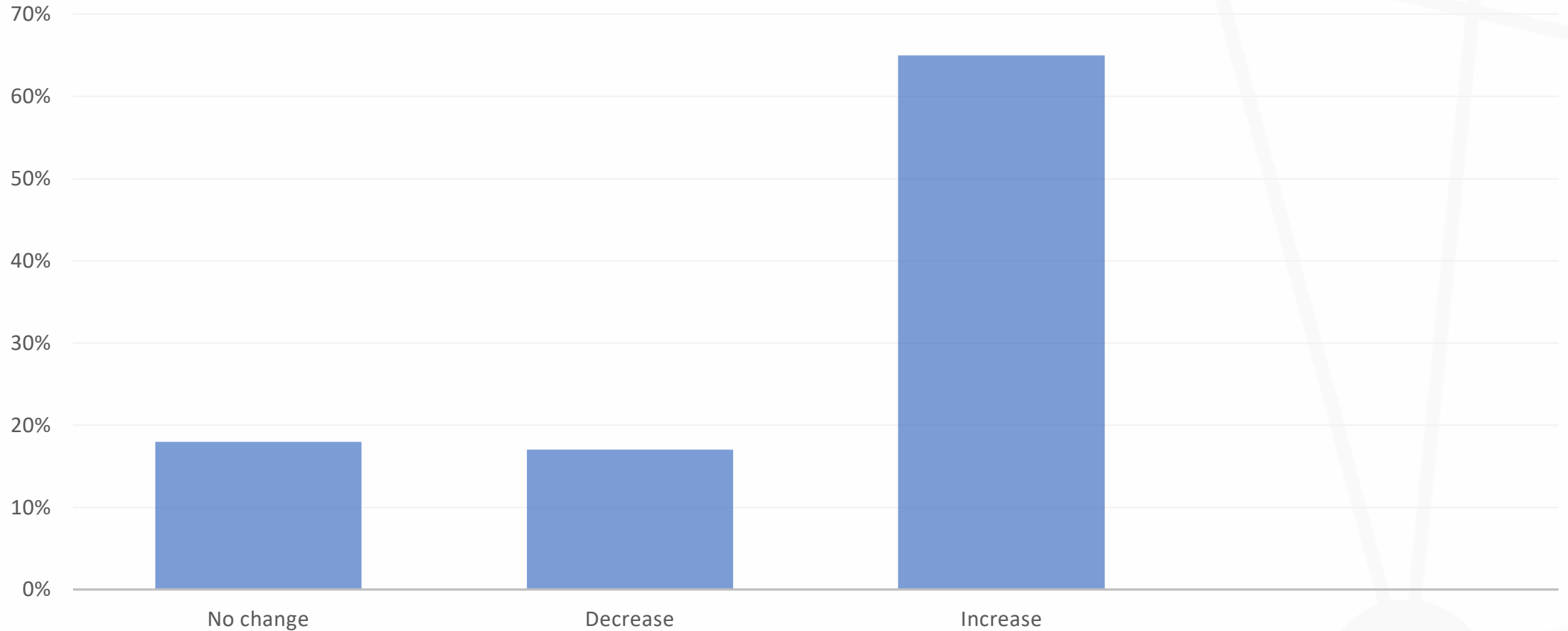
- Overall there were 229 points of data (measures of widening participation), which depicted the change in access and participation in HE
- Originally, there were 35 points of data



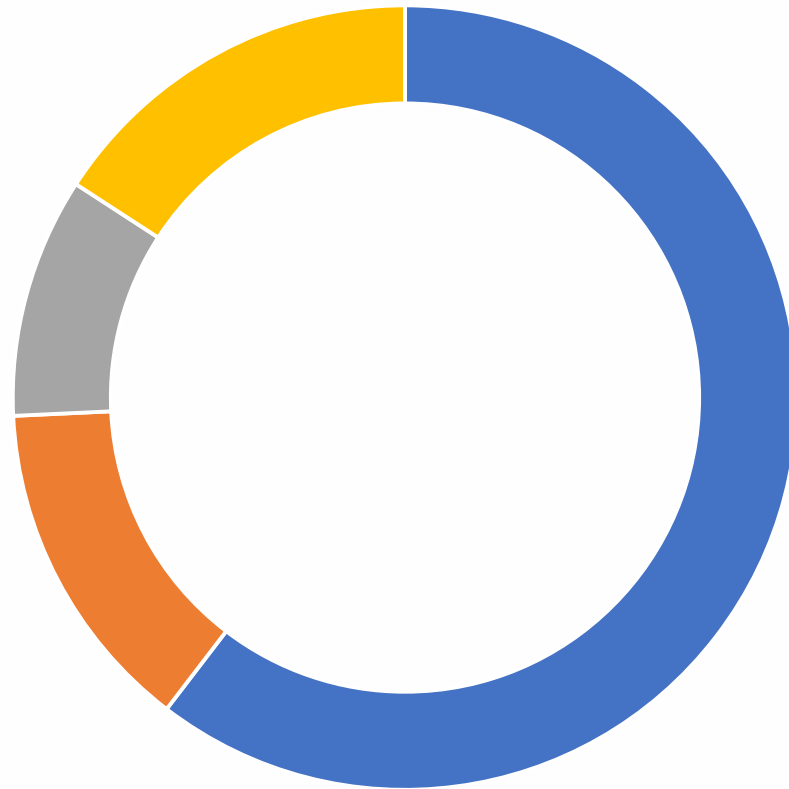
Key Finding 1: Overall there has been progress in access and participation with 65% of measures showing improvement.

Number of measures

N=229

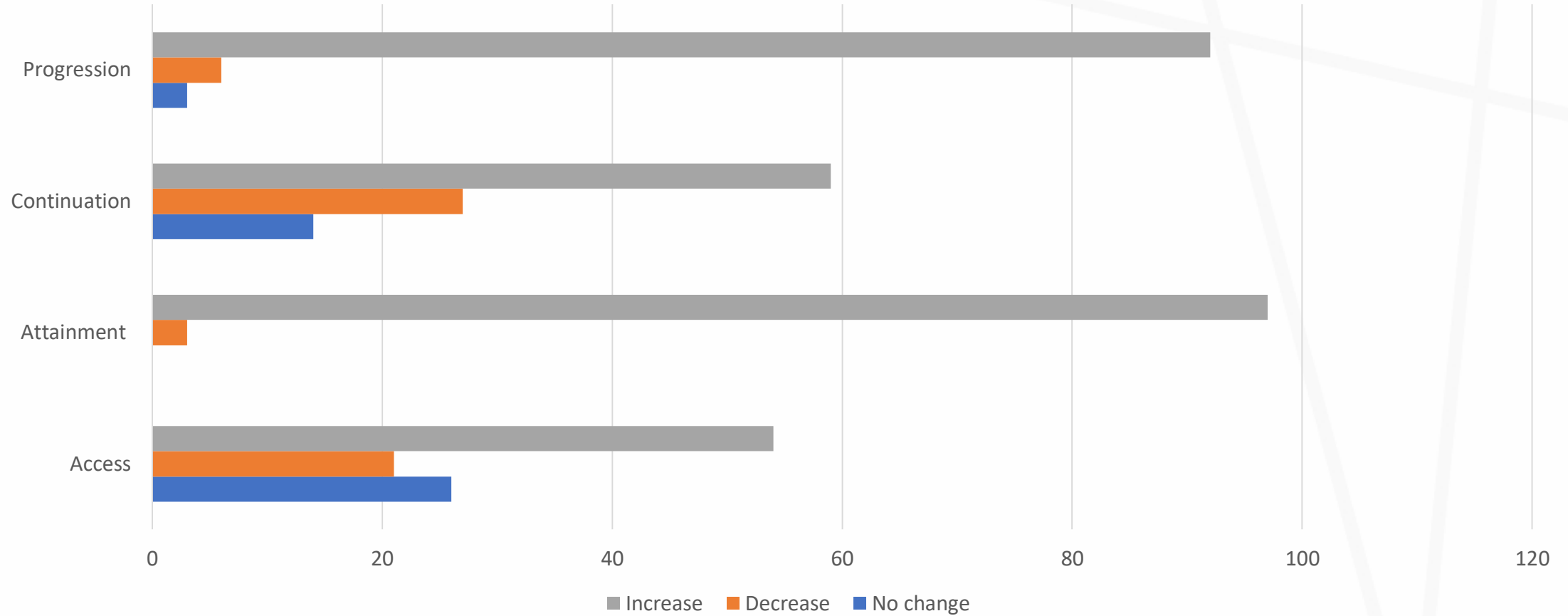


Distribution of measures across the life-cycle



■ Access ■ Attainment ■ Continuation ■ Progression

Data by student life-cycle



Student life-cycle

Key Finding 2: Increase in progress to employment and post graduate education has been substantial, where 92% of measures show an increase.

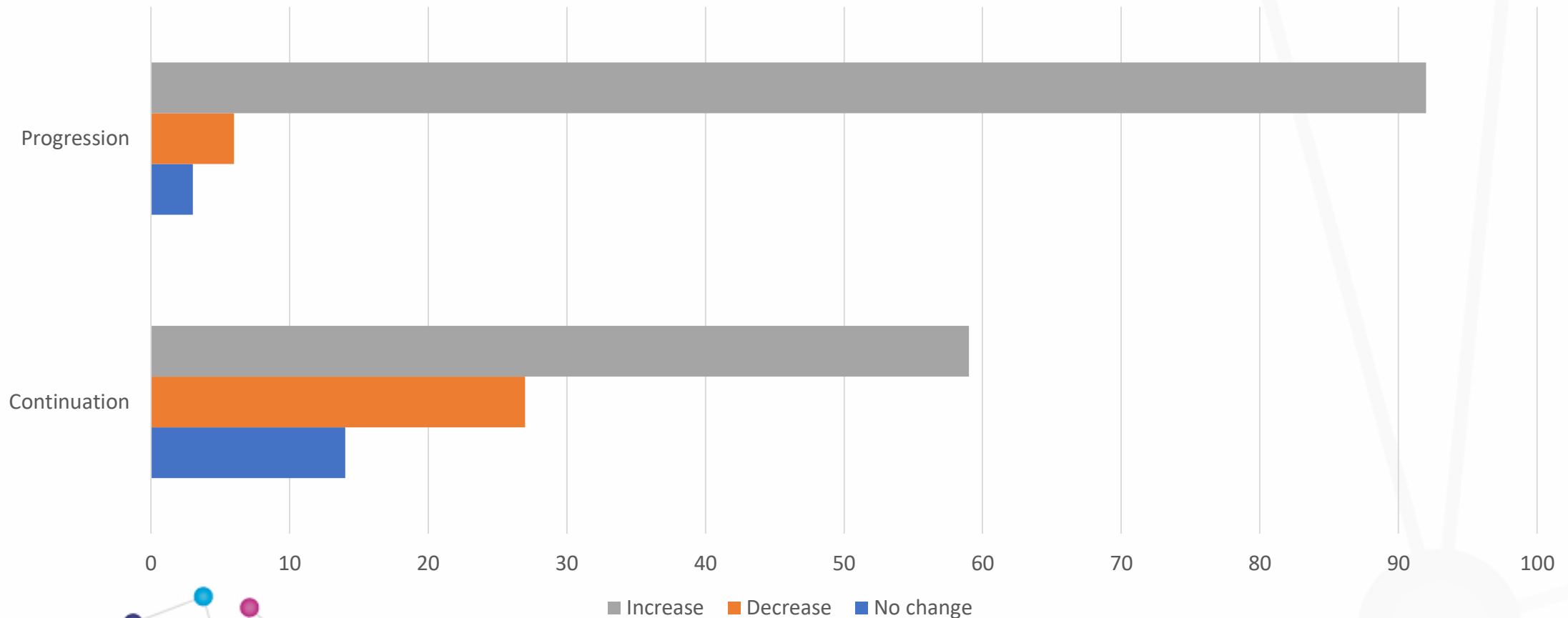
Key Finding 3: A decreasing pattern of progress is most evident in the continuation space

Key finding 4: 97% of data points on attainment show an increase in attainment of upper/first class degree



Key findings, looking at the life-cycle

Can we discuss continuation and attainment together, when discussing student success? Is this appropriate?



Domain specific progress

Key Finding 5: There is the least progress over the student lifecycle in terms of access and participation for learners from lower socio-economic groups. The most progress is evident for disabled students

	SEG	Disability	Ethnicity	Age	Sex
Number of (types of) measures	5	4	3	3	1
Number of datapoints	28	34	76	16	18
No change	25%	3%	20%	19%	22%
Decrease	32%	15%	17%	19%	17%
Increase	43%	82%	63%	75%	61%

Key finding 6: The use of ethnicity measure – whether broad or nuanced – leads to significantly different findings

- The use of a broad, Asian group suggested a decrease in attainment
- When broken down by ethnic group, there was evidence for an increase among Pakistani and Asian student, but a decrease among Indian students

Key finding 7: HE participation rates are decreasing for certain groups of learners with low overall rates of progression to HE in particular those from GRT communities and white students from lower socioeconomic groups.

Student group	Rate of access to HE	Average rate for most advantaged group	Rate of decrease in access to HE
Eligible for ECHP	8.5	48	-0.1
FSM at age 18	47	51	-0.1
Being white and from POLAR Q1 or Q2	20.6	50.2	-0.2
Traveller of Irish Heritage, FSM	4	72	-2
Gypsy/Roma	4.6	77.6	-1
Gypsy/Roma, FSM	3	72	-1

Key finding 8: Learners who are eligible for free school meals are making less progress in HE access than those from low participation neighbourhoods.

	FSM	POLAR	IMD
Number of datapoints	4	9	5
No change			
Decrease	50%	33%	25%
Increase	50%	66%	75%

Key finding 9: There is less progress being made in improving continuation rates, in particular for students with BAME backgrounds, than in improving access, attainment and progression.

Ethnicity	Change
Asian	Decrease
Black	Decrease
Mixed	Decrease
White	No change
Other	Increase

Conclusions and points for discussion

- Widening participation looks very different at different aspects of the life-cycle
- Does widening participation across one domain but not another signal progress?
- Is an increase alone indicative of success, or does it depend on the scale of success?

