Eradicating Differential Outcomes for BAME students: Developing simple solutions to a complex problem.

Addressing Differential Outcomes for BME Learners Meeting

NEON Working Groups

Zoom
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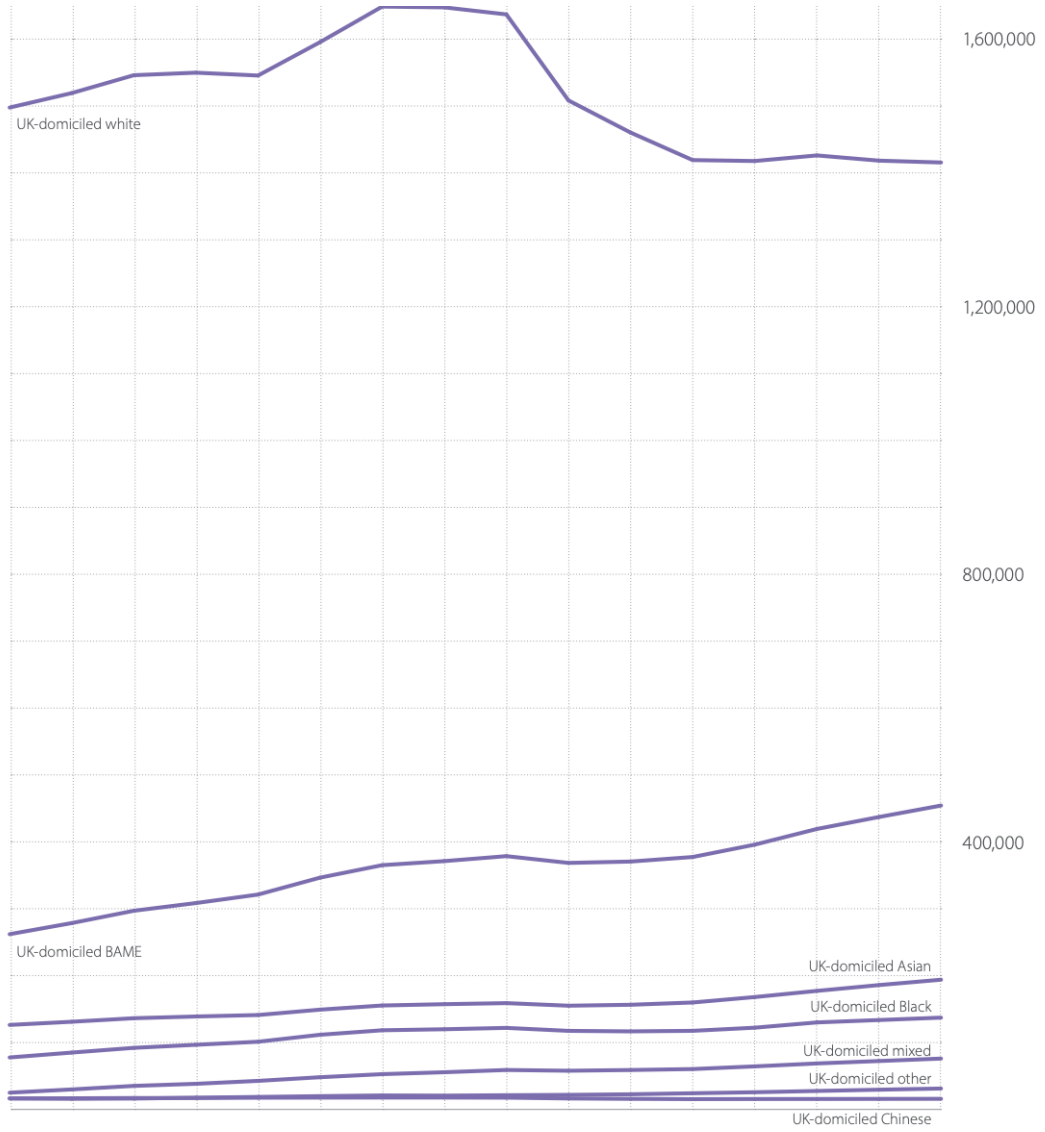
Introduction

- Over the past 12 years the 'BAME attainment/awarding gap, has steadily risen-up the policy agenda.
- This has broadly mirrored the expansion of higher education and the introduction of significant fees.
- Pressure for change is a combination of:
- student and staff activism (moral arguments),
- Regulatory constraints in the form of 'access and participation plans' required by the Office for Students (moral, economic)
- Institutions are desperate to find practical solutions to close the gap.
- New dimension - #BlackLivesMatter movement and growing demands for decolonising the university and dislodging white supremacy.
- The backlash has also began, in the guise of the Conservative equalities minister, Kemi Badenoch saying in BLM debate in parliament said. ""We do not want teachers to teach their white pupils about white privilege and inherited racial guilt" "Any school which teaches these elements of critical race theory … without offering a balanced treatment of opposing views, is breaking the law."
- This presentation will try to offer a way to navigate what is a complex dynamic politicised terrain with some practical suggestions.
- We have some new data from AdvanceHE Oct 2020 Stats Report that highlights some of the trends in attainment and complexity involved.
- In the next few slides I will be looking at this data which can be accessed from the following link. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/advance-he-publishes-annual-statistical-reports-he-students-and-staff

The good news - BAME Participation is increasing – access is working even with Russell Group.



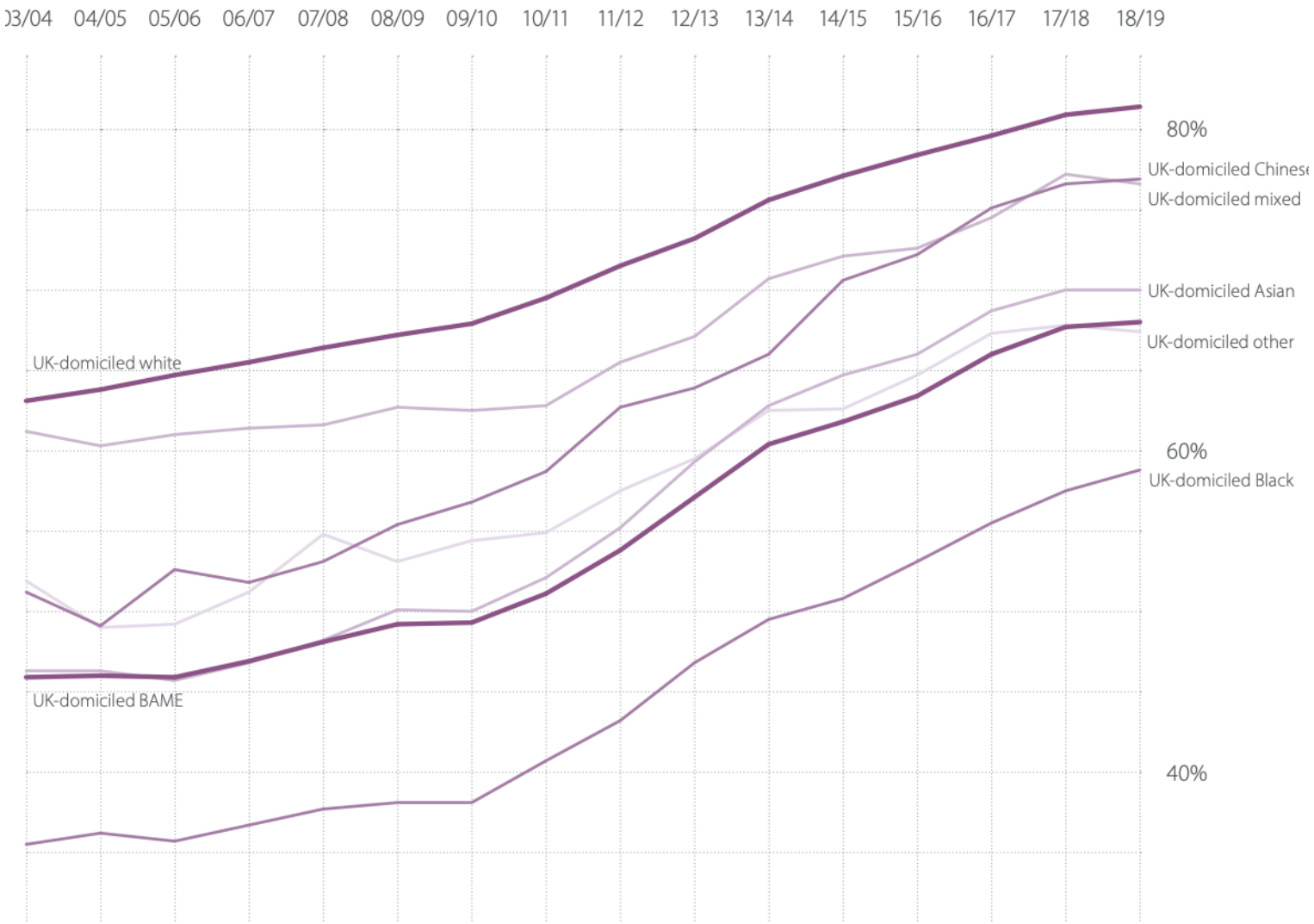
The bad news: Improvements across the board mean the gap remains.

At the present rate of change it will be in 2070-71 when the white-BAME awarding gap will close, and 2085-86 when the white-Black awarding gap closes.

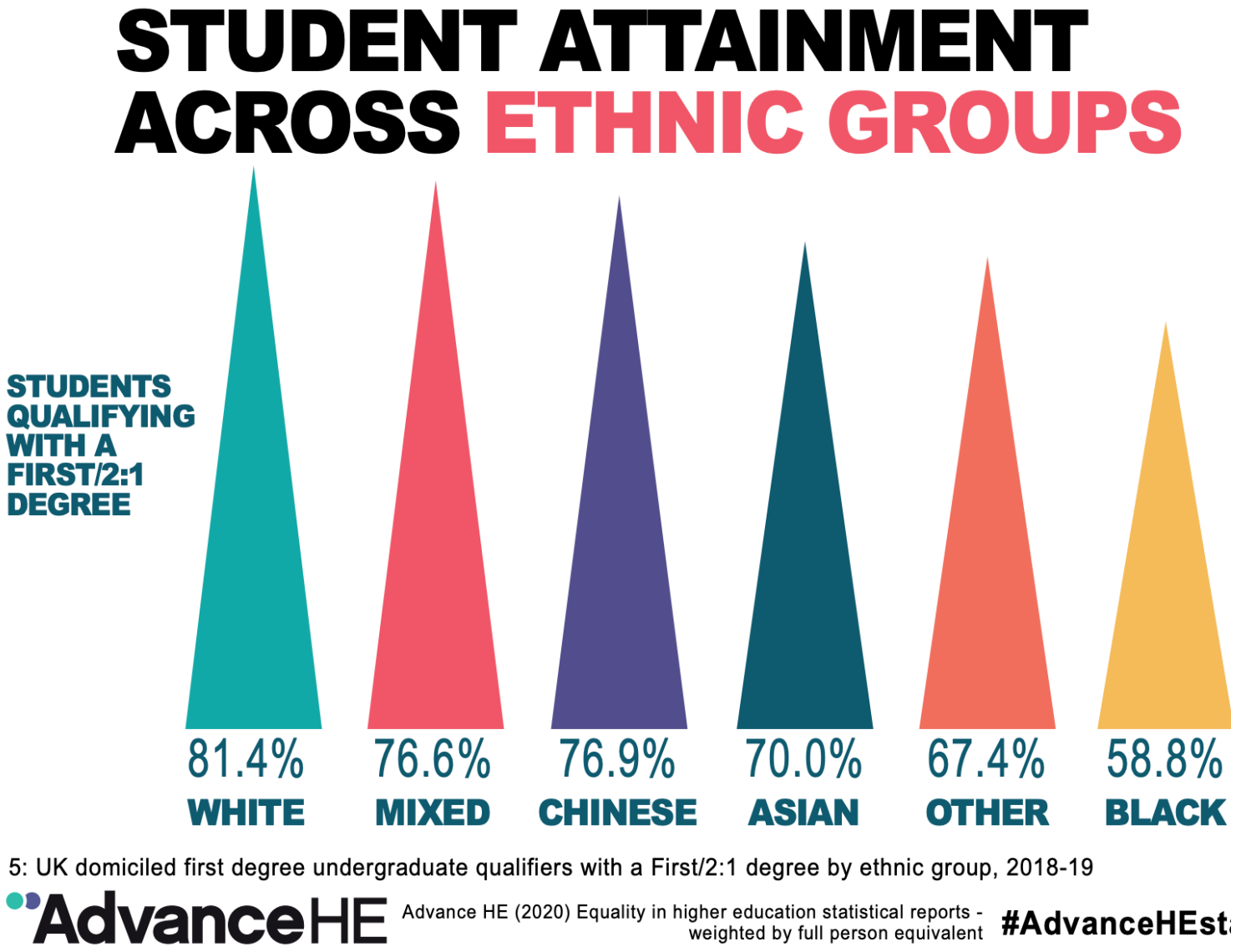
Overall awarding gap between UK-domicile undergraduate white and BAME students has remained relatively static at 13.2 percentage points in 2017-18 and 13.3 percentage points in 2018-19.

Variations amongst groups are significant.

Proportions of UK domiciled qualifiers who received a first/2:1 over time



There are significant differences amongst ethnic groups



Degree attainment breakdown within countries of the UK The gap is consistent across the UK

UK domiciled first degree undergraduate qualifiers by country of institution, degree class and ethnic group

		First/2:1		First		2:1		2:2		Third/pass		All
		No.	→ %	No.	→ %	No.	→ %	No.	→ %	No.	→ %	No.
England												
W	White	164,845	*81.6*	64,950	*32.2*	99,895	*49.5*	30,885	*15.3*	6,165	*3.1*	201,895
BAME	BAME	49,565	*68.0*	15,435	*21.2*	34,130	*46.8*	18,590	*25.5*	4,785	*6.6*	72,940
A	Asian	22,650	*70.1*	7,345	*22.7*	15,310	*47.3*	7,810	*24.2*	1,870	*5.8*	32,330
B	Black	12,585	*58.9*	3,110	*14.6*	9,470	*44.3*	6,770	*31.7*	2,020	*9.5*	21,375
C	Chinese	1,885	*77.4*	725	*29.9*	1,155	*47.5*	450	*18.6*	100	*4.1*	2,435
M	Mixed	9,485	*76.4*	3,250	*26.2*	6,235	*50.2*	2,395	*19.3*	530	*4.3*	12,410
O	Other	2,960	*67.5*	1,005	*22.9*	1,960	*44.6*	1,160	*26.5*	265	*6.0*	4,385
All	All	214,410	*75.1*	80,385	*29.2*	134,025	*48.8*	49,475	*18.0*	10,945	*4.0*	274,835
Northern Ireland												
W	White	6,665	*81.4*	2,270	*27.7*	4,395	*53.7*	1,355	*16.5*	170	*2.1*	8,190
BAME	BAME	125	*67.2*	40	*22.6*	85	*44.6*	55	*28.5*	10	*4.3*	185
A	Asian	50	*64.9*	15	*18.9*	35	*45.9*	25	*31.1*	5	*4.1*	75
B	Black	10	*50.0*	0	*8.3*	10	*41.7*	10	*41.7*	0	*8.3*	25
C	Chinese	20	*81.5*	10	*33.3*	15	*48.1*	5	*14.8*	0	*3.7*	25
M	Mixed	35	*72.0*	15	*30.0*	20	*42.0*	10	*24.0*	0	*4.0*	50
O	Other	5	..	0	..	5	..	5	..	0	..	10
All	All	6,790	*81.1*	2,310	*27.6*	4,480	*53.5*	1,410	*16.8*	175	*2.1*	8,375
Scotland												
W	White	16,730	*80.9*	5,675	*27.5*	11,055	*53.5*	3,345	*16.2*	595	*2.9*	20,670
BAME	BAME	1,280	*71.3*	6,025	*19.4*	11,985	*51.9*	3,775	*23.9*	680	*4.8*	22,465
A	Asian	535	*70.2*	120	*15.7*	415	*54.5*	195	*25.7*	30	*4.1*	760
B	Black	150	*57.6*	30	*11.0*	125	*46.6*	90	*33.3*	25	*9.1*	265
C	Chinese	150	*74.4*	40	*19.6*	110	*54.8*	40	*20.1*	10	*5.5*	200
M	Mixed	365	*82.1*	135	*30.5*	230	*51.6*	65	*14.7*	15	*3.2*	440
O	Other	80	*63.6*	25	*19.4*	55	*44.2*	40	*31.8*	5	*4.7*	130
All	All	18,010	*80.2*	6,025	*26.8*	11,985	*53.3*	3,775	*16.8*	680	*3.0*	22,465
Wales												
W	White	12,565	*78.4*	4,780	*29.8*	7,780	*48.6*	2,970	*18.5*	495	*3.1*	16,025
BAME	BAME	1,150	*68.0*	350	*20.6*	800	*47.4*	450	*26.7*	90	*5.3*	1,690
A	Asian	465	*67.8*	150	*22.1*	310	*45.7*	185	*27.4*	35	*4.8*	685
B	Black	210	*57.7*	55	*14.9*	155	*42.8*	120	*33.1*	35	*9.1*	360
C	Chinese	50	*68.1*	15	*23.6*	30	*44.4*	20	*26.4*	5	*5.6*	70
M	Mixed	340	*76.6*	100	*22.3*	240	*54.3*	90	*20.3*	15	*3.2*	445
O	Other	90	*68.5*	30	*21.5*	60	*46.9*	35	*27.7*	5	*3.8*	130
All	All	13,715	*77.4*	5,130	*29.0*	8,580	*48.4*	3,420	*19.3*	580	*3.3*	17,715

UNDERGRADUATES QUALIFYING WITH A FIRST CLASS DEGREE

29.8% OF WHITE STUDENTS

14.9% OF BLACK STUDENTS

11: UK domiciled first degree qualifiers with a First class degree by black/white identity, 2018-19

AdvanceHE

Advance HE (2020) Equality in higher education statistical reports - weighted by full person equivalent

#AdvanceHEstats

Gap in relation to 1st Class degrees – increasingly significant due to 'grade inflation'

Digging deeper – Comparing black and white men the gap is even wider (25%)

UNDERGRADUATES QUALIFYING WITH A FIRST/2:1 DEGREE

79.2% OF WHITE MALE STUDENTS

54.5% OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS

10: UK domiciled first degree male qualifiers with a First/2:1 degree by black/white identity, 2018-19

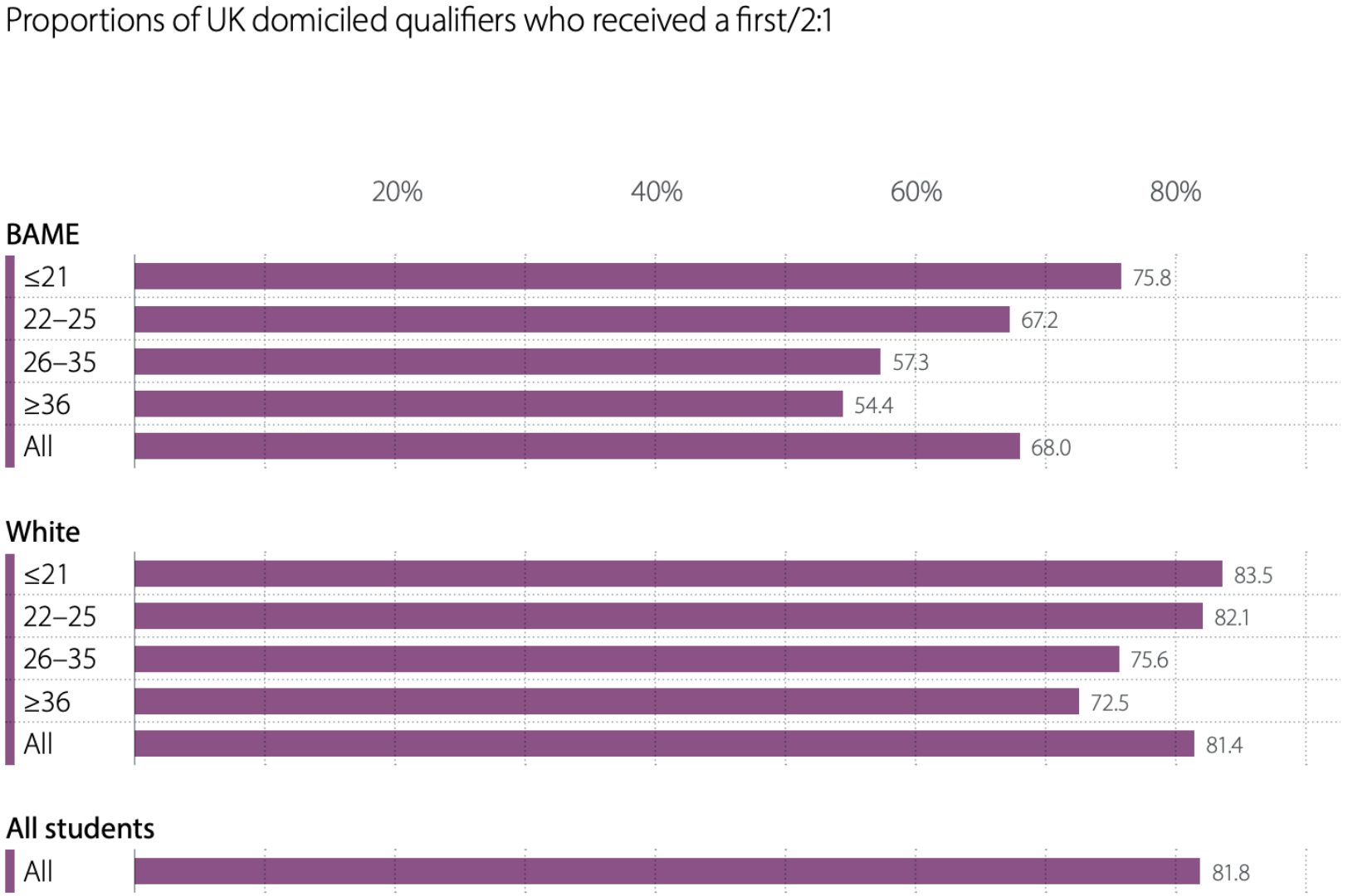
AdvanceHE Advance HE (2020) Equality in higher education statistical reports - weighted by full person equivalent #AdvanceHEstat

Significant variations within subject disciplines.

Participation and awarding gaps between BAME and white students by subject area

Subject area		Participation gap	Awarding gap	Students (size of bubble)
AGRI	Agriculture, related subjects	*0.7*	*7.2*	9,330
ARCH	Architecture, building, planning	*0.1*	*17.5*	28,210
BIOS	Biological sciences	*1.9*	*12.1*	168,510
COMP	Computer science	*-0.8*	*11.1*	73,725
ENGI	Engineering, technology	*-1.6*	*9.9*	86,775
MATH	Mathematical sciences	*0.1*	*8.1*	30,785
MEDI	Medicine, dentistry	*-2.4*	*2.8*	40,660
PHYS	Physical sciences	*2.2*	*12.8*	62,510
SUBJ	Subjects allied to medicine	*-4.0*	*10.6*	158,915
VETS	Veterinary science	*0.3*	..	4,725
BUSI	Business, administrative studies	*-5.9*	*17.5*	171,755
COMB	Combined	*0.7*	*22.4*	13,910
ARTS	Creative arts, design	*4.7*	*14.7*	125,115
EDUC	Education	*1.5*	*17.5*	52,660
HIST	Historical, philosophical studies	*2.7*	*7.0*	56,875
LANG	Languages	*2.5*	*9.7*	66,245
LAW	Law	*-2.3*	*15.7*	58,145
COMM	Mass comms, documentation	*0.7*	*15.3*	31,155
SOCI	Social studies	*-1.2*	*13.2*	147,235

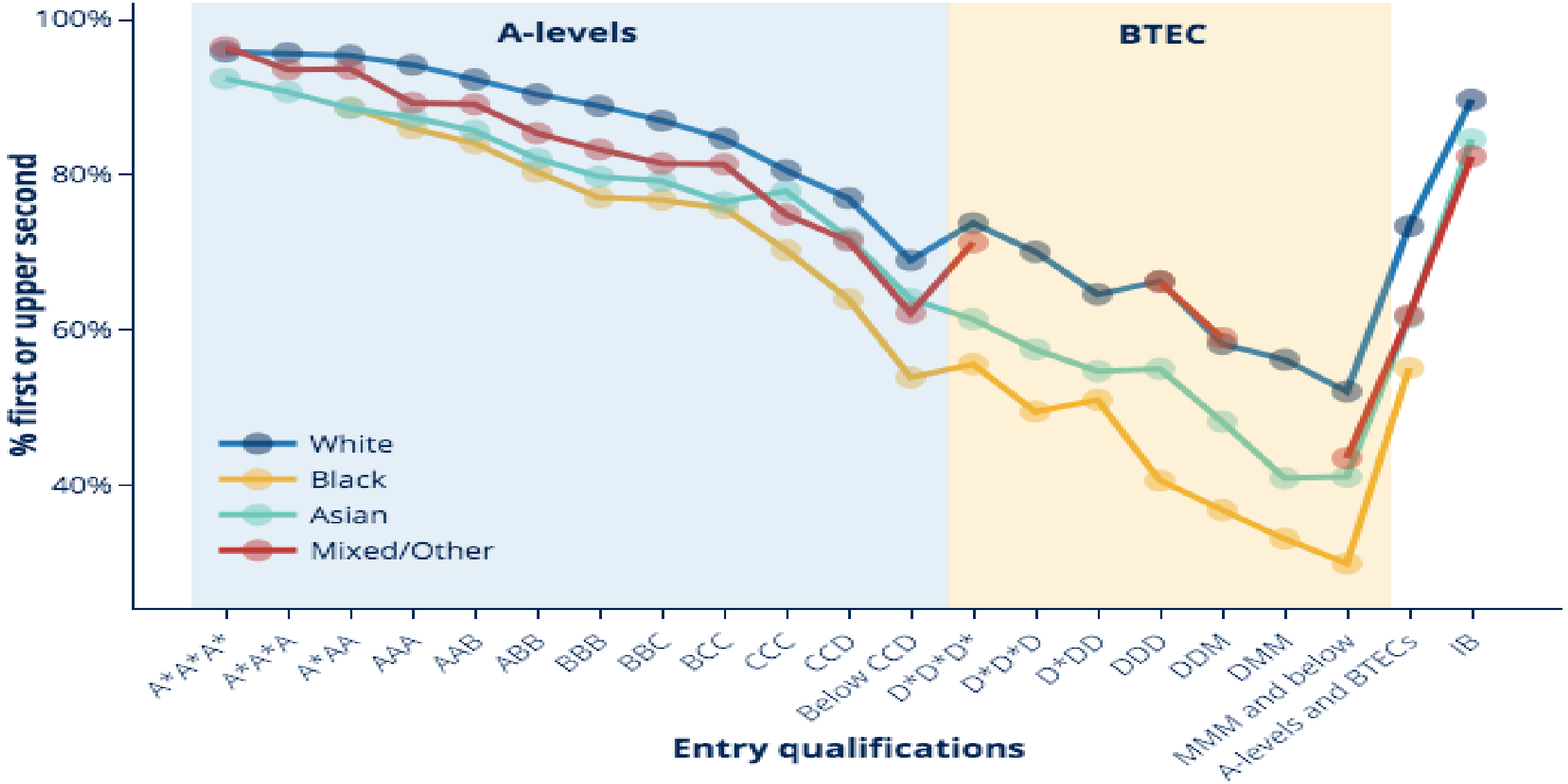
Intersectionality data – age. Gap gets bigger with age.



Religion and belief – produces variations but need to be careful NOT to jump to stereotypes. Religion can often be a proxy for other factors.

First degree undergraduate qualifiers by degree class and religion and belief

		First/2:1		First	
		No.	→ %	No.	→ %
NREL	No religion	146,855	*79.8*	56,395	*30.7*
BUDD	Buddhist	3,365	*71.9*	1,165	*24.9*
CHRI	Christian	89,655	*76.7*	32,390	*27.7*
HIND	Hindu	5,030	*72.6*	1,665	*24.0*
JEW	Jewish	1,470	*86.8*	545	*32.2*
MUS	Muslim	20,320	*64.4*	6,040	*19.1*
SIKH	Sikh	2,600	*74.1*	865	*24.7*
SPIR	Spiritual	3,315	*77.5*	1,195	*27.9*
OTH	Any other religion or belief	4,945	*74.2*	1,885	*28.3*
REF	Information refused	21,770	*76.2*	8,545	*29.9*



Degree outcomes compared to ethnicity and entry qualifications for 2016- 2017.
Source Office for Students (https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/differences-in-student-outcomes/ethnicity/

What effects Student Wellbeing? HEPI Policy Note 21 Feb 2020

https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/HEPI-Policy-Note-21-What-affects-student-wellbeing-13_02_20.pdf

- Students who report few or no helpful teachers are 65% more likely to report a high level of anxiety than students who report all or most teachers as helpful
- Significant relationship between ethnic identity and dissatisfaction with life, with life satisfaction scores of under 7 (on a 0-to-10 scale) 42% among Bangladeshi students to 28% among White students
- Significant relationship between ethnic identity and anxiety, with anxiety scores of 7 or more ranging from 27% among Mixed identity students to 21% among Black African students

Figure 1: Dissatisfaction with life by ethnic identity

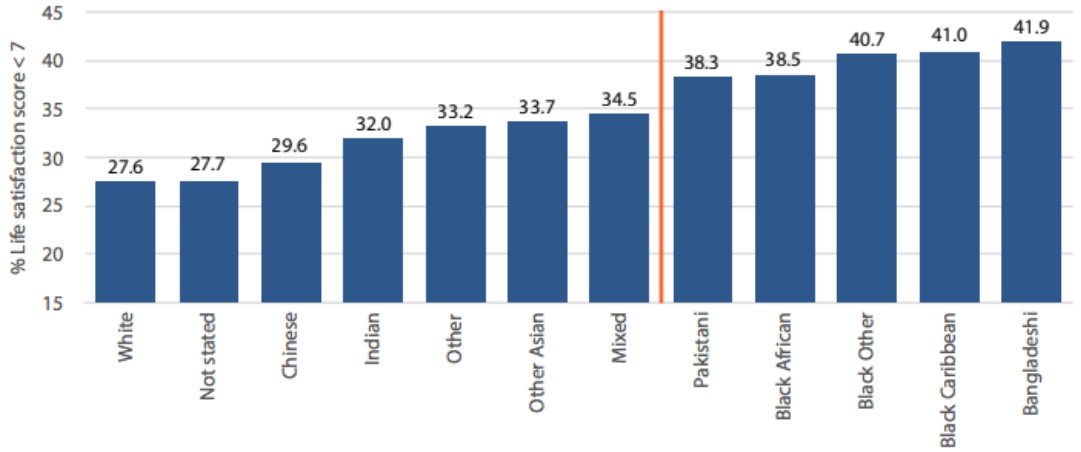
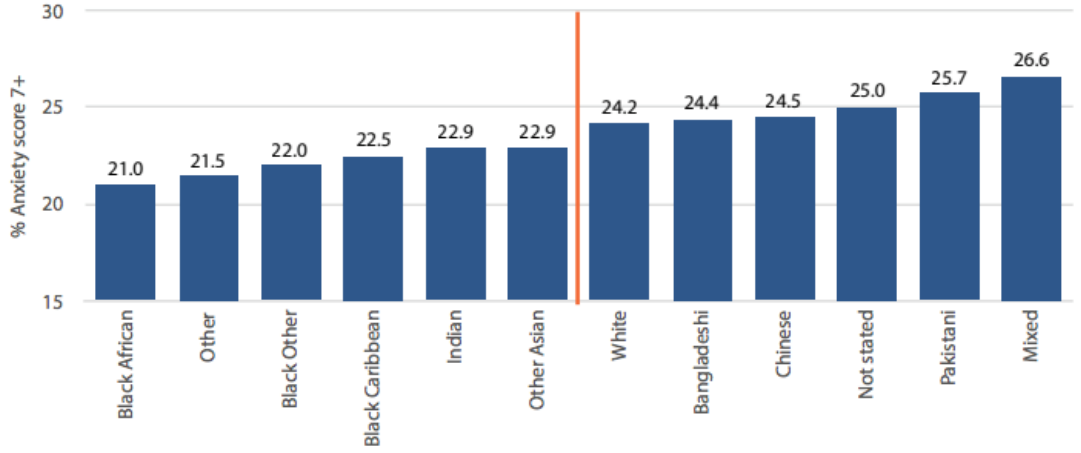


Figure 2 shows a relationship between ethnic identity and high anxiety, although it is less strong than with life satisfaction. Anxiety scores of 7 or more vary from 27% among Mixed identity students (highest) to 21% among Black African students (lowest).

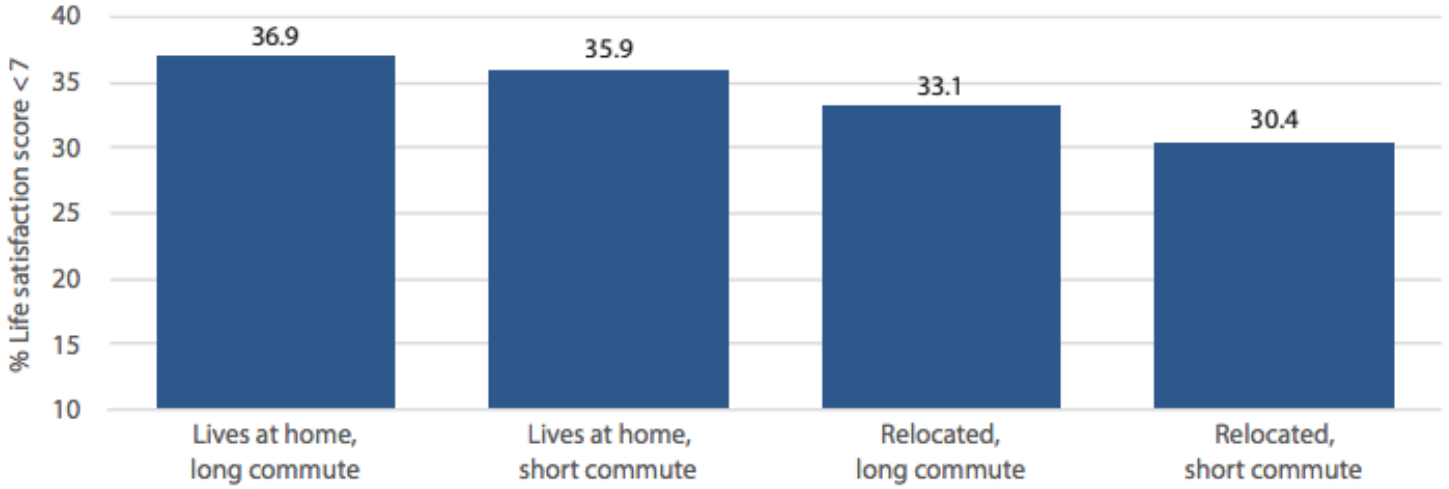
Figure 2: High anxiety by ethnic identity



Anxiety and Class

- higher dissatisfaction with life among students who live at home while studying and who commute more than five miles (37%) than among those who have relocated to their place of study (30%)
- only 12% of students who relocate to study work 12 or more hours a week compared to 25% of students who continue living at home – but longer working hours have no significant effect on anxiety and only a small negative effect on life satisfaction

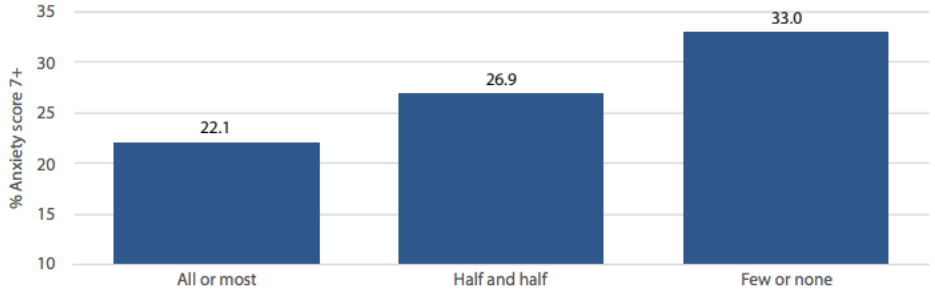
Figure 5: Dissatisfaction with life by home / commute status



Anxiety and staff support

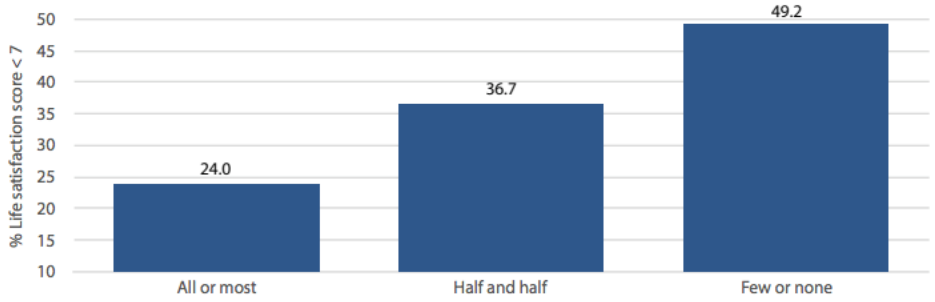
- 62% of students think all or most staff are helpful and supportive, while 22% say half and half are and 7% say few or none are
- as the proportion of staff experienced as helpful and supportive declines, the proportion of students reporting high anxiety rises, from 22% to 33%
- dissatisfaction with life is reported by 24% of students who feel all or most staff are helpful and supportive, but this rises to 49% among students who feel few or no staff are helpful and supportive
- students who say they experience few or no helpful teachers are seen to be 146% more likely to report a high level of life dissatisfaction than students who report all or most teachers are helpful

Figure 6: High anxiety by proportion of staff who were helpful and supportive



These effects are even stronger on life satisfaction. Figure 7 shows that, while dissatisfaction with life was reported by 24% of students who feel all or most staff are helpful and supportive, this rises to over double that rate, 49%, among students who feel few or no staff are helpful and supportive.

Figure 7: Proportion of staff who were helpful and supportive by dissatisfied with life

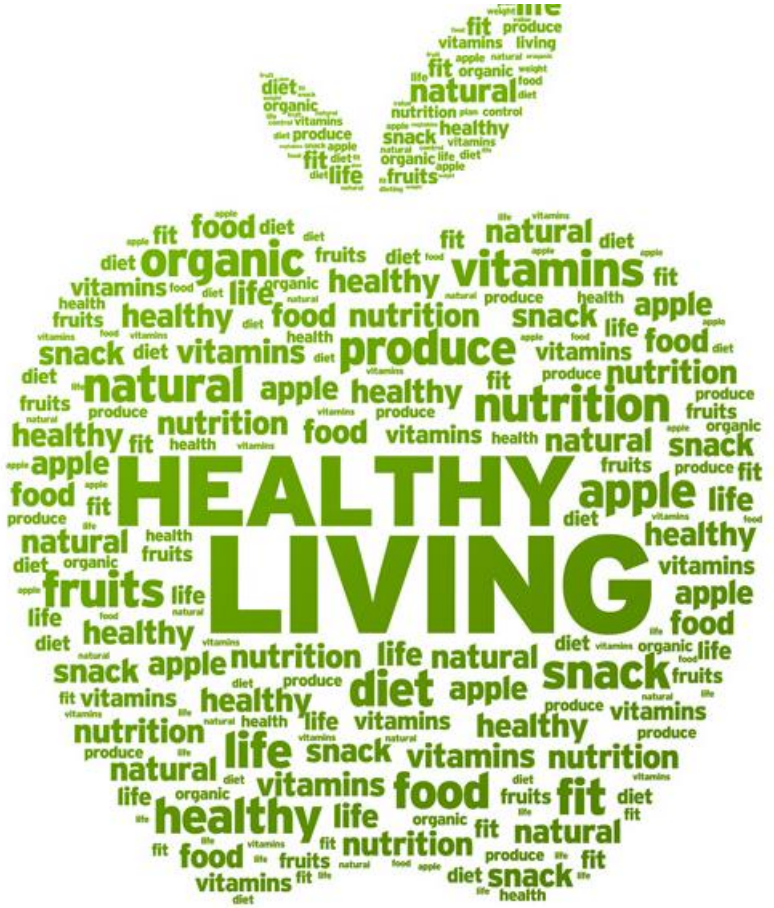


Reflections

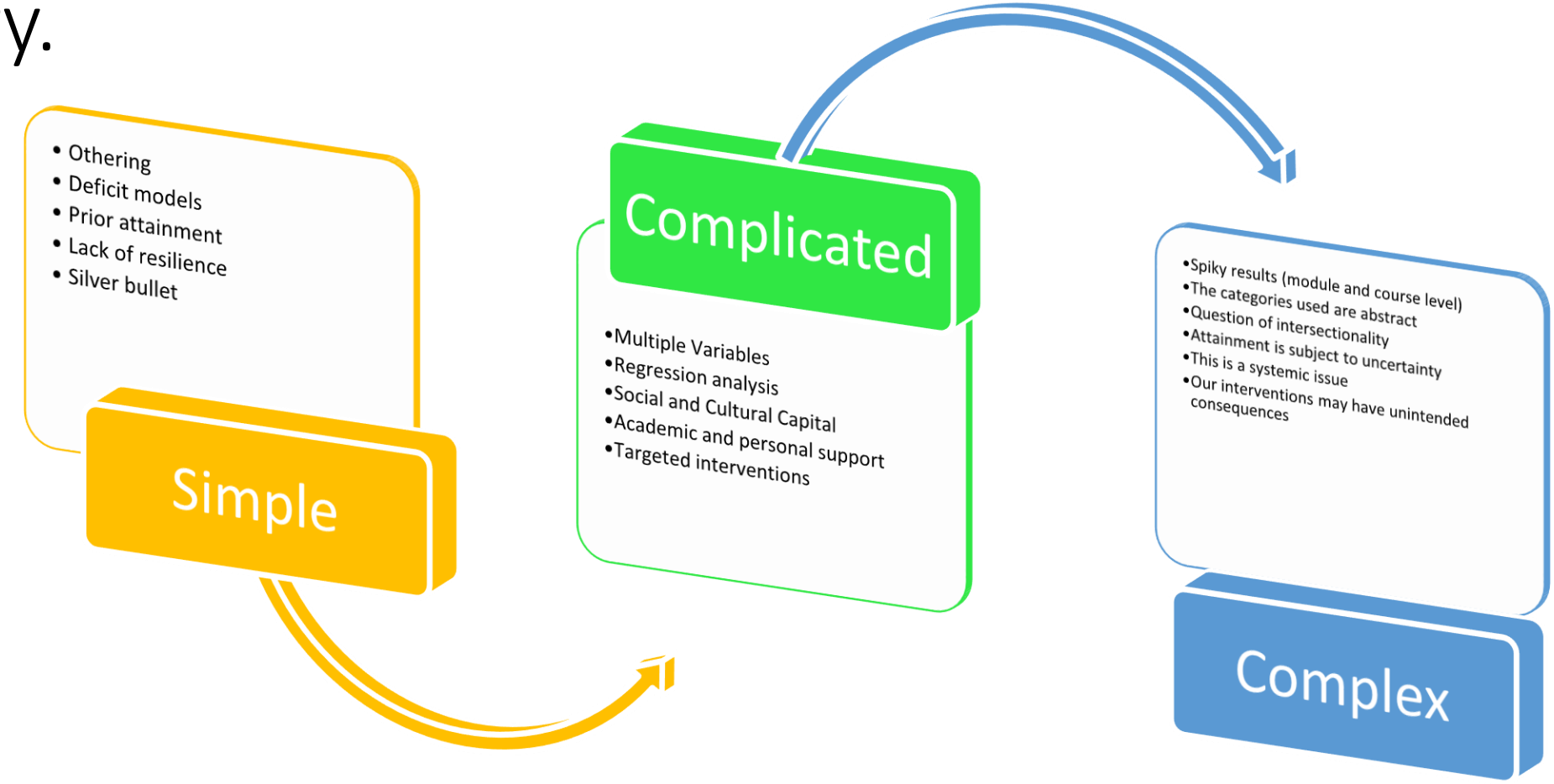
- Anxiety may impact dissatisfaction which may impact performance.
- What is the relationship between anxiety and student performance?
- Situational anxiety and general anxiety?
- Is anxiety correlated with sense of belonging?
- Do we need to change our perception of the role of academic tutors?
- Helpful teachers and feedback appears to have an impact on achievement and wellbeing.

Disparities in Degree Awarding – What is the nature of the problem?

- **Simple problem** – limited range of variation therefore high degree of predictability. Once a solution is found, involve replication of process and behavior. (e.g. Jigsaw puzzle)
- **Complicated problem** – high levels of variation but we know what the outcomes will be and we have formulas to solve problems. More research will uncover a solution. (Software programming error)
- **Complex problem** – uncertainly is ever present, hence predictability never exact. Do not follow logical reasoning. Even having knowledge of the problem and resources may not solve the problem! Uncritical use of 'data' may actually be part of the problem! (Think about dieting!)

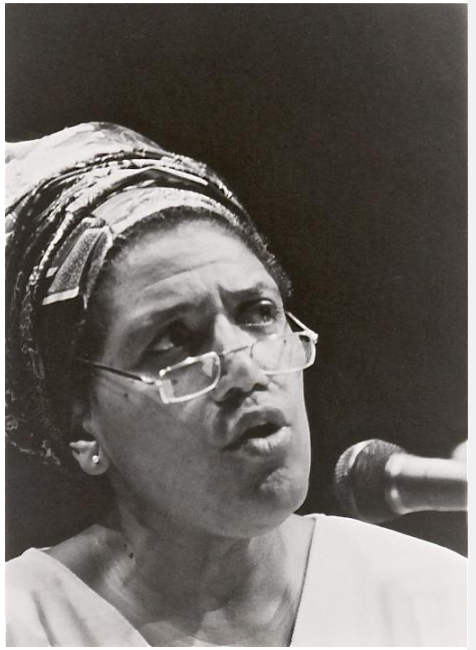


Disparity in degree attainment – nature of the problem – application of complexity theory.



How can we solve complex or ‘wicked’ problems?

- Wicked problems require novel solutions.
- Thinking out of the box – lateral thinking – need to get of the track e.g. From Attainment Gaps, to Awarding Gaps, to Decolonising etc.?
- Ultimately, we may need a paradigm shift – what are our assumptions of the purpose of higher education and how may they need to change?
- What is our conception of ‘intelligence’, ‘knowledge’, of ‘criticality’, of ‘achievement’?
- Can we develop other ways or recoding student achievement than systems of classification which have a dubious history?



The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never allow us to bring about genuine change.

Audre Lorde

Developing solutions to complex problems

- We can rarely solve the problem on our own and success is always a collective effort.
- Creative collaborative solutions, solutions from below, not necessarily from experts – students and and staff co-creators of solution.
- Academics not as ‘lecturers’ but ‘curators of learning’.
- Self organisation and collective (swarming) is the best way to generate and exchange information and ultimately more efficient – this should not be the exception but the norm, but will require patience. (e.g. scrapping tradition modes of assessment)
- Chaos is not a problem, order is, therefore we should welcome challenge.
- Reframing and challenging fundamental assumptions is critical.
- Failure is not the opposite of success but an essential ingredient to it!
- Nature uses feedback loops to learn and solve problems (i.e. trial and error).

Conclusion – how to proceed.

1. We must avoid blaming individuals, though those with the most power and influence must carry a greater responsibility.
2. Evidence can help but cannot provide a complete solution as we are dealing with a complexd problem that is not governed by linear causal relationships but dynamic interacting systems.
3. The answer is a complex relationship between human agency (Our will) and systems of power and privilege that impact all our lives, but the solutions are often blindingly obvious, but we cannot solve the problem on our own.
4. Honest reflection - all our actions have consequences – big and small.
5. Change needs to be sustained and sustainable - not about tinkering at the end or image management.