



Universities UK

# Widening access in higher education: are we there yet?

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NEON, 8 June 2017

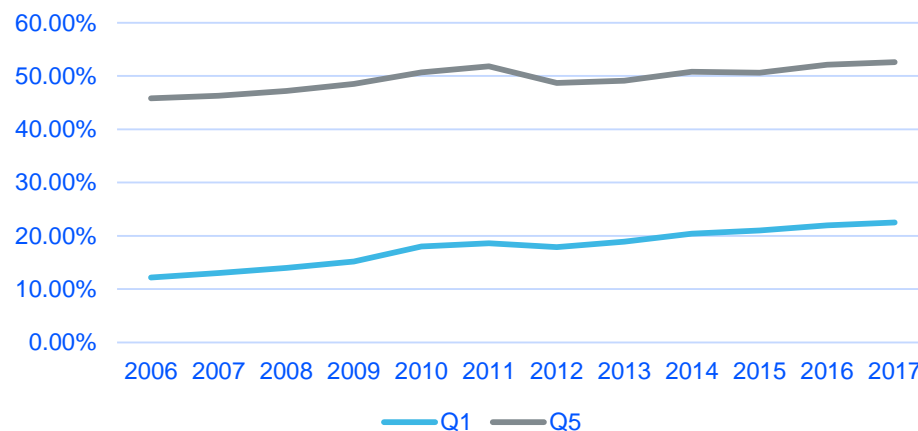
Chris Hale, Universities UK

- 1. What does the data tell us?**
- 2. Some of the current challenges as we see them**
- 3. What we are doing**

# What the data tell us: positives (1)

- » National level data on application rates
- » POLAR3 quintile 1 18 year old application rate is at a record level – 22.5%
- » It's increased by 84% since 2006, and by 25% since 2010
- » Gap between the application rate for 18 year olds from the most advantaged and least advantaged groups is also at lowest ever level
- » Advantaged 18 year olds 2.3 times more likely to apply than their disadvantaged peers, down from 3.8 times in 2006 (and 2.8 times in 2010).

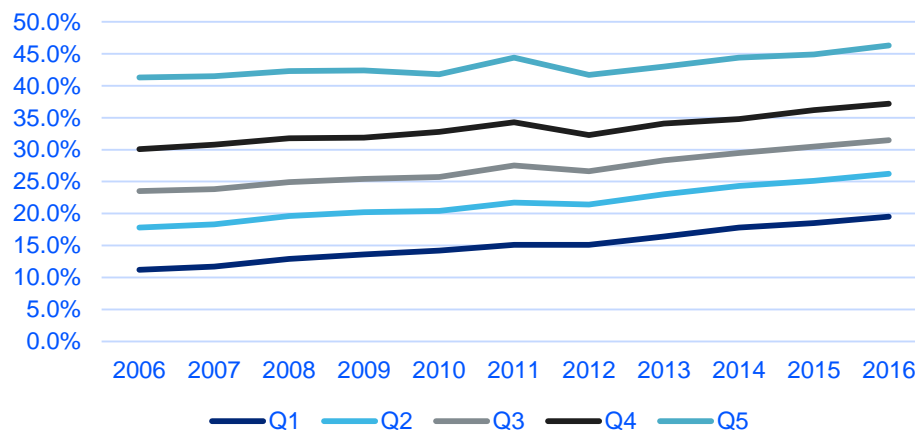
18 year old application rates by POLAR3 quintile, England



# What the data tell us: positives (2)

- » POLAR3 Q1 18 year old entry rate (proportion offered and accept via UCAS) also highest ever level – 19.5%, up 74% since 2006 or 37% since 2010.
- » Q1 had the highest year on year growth in 2016, up 5%, and the ratio between Q1 and Q5 is at its lowest level (Q5 is 2.4 times more likely to enter).
  - » And the 18 year old entry rate's gone up for higher tariff institutions, by 59% between 2006 and 2016, with the gap down to its lowest level.

18 year old entry rate by POLAR3 quintile (England)



# What the data tells us: positives (3)

- » Important to recognise that this growth has also taken place during significant change and tripling of fees since 2012
- » These positives are testament to the significant work done in the sector and the substantial investments made by institutions and by government and funders eg access agreement expenditure is currently c £0.8bn (UUK, Social Mobility Advisory Group)

# Where are the challenges? (1)

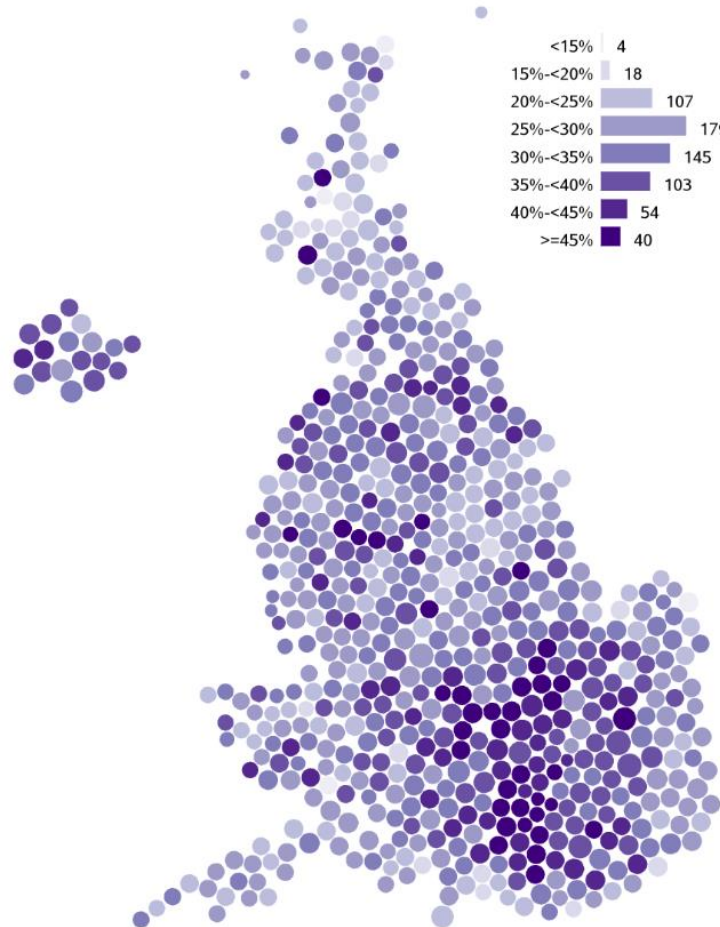
- » But the gaps are still large, and progress is slow, and appears to be slowing slightly, and if you use different measures some gaps are increasing:
  - » The entry rate for 18 year olds receiving free school meals did increase between 2015 and 2016, but only by 0.2 percentage points (1.3%), less than the increase in the entry rate for those not receiving free school meals (up by 1.3 percentage points or 4.1%)
  - » The gap between them has increased and the ratio has gone up for the first time since 2006.
  - » Those not receiving free school meals were 2.04 times more likely to enter, up from 1.98 last year
  - » And the higher tariff entry rates are still small. 3.6% for POLAR Q1 (compared to 21.3% for Q5), and 2.5% for free school meal recipients.

# Where are the challenges? (2)

- » And when you drill down into groups there are big disparities:
  - » Breakdowns by ethnicity and sex show 18 year old men from white and mixed ethnic backgrounds have entry rates 36% below the rates for 18 year old women from Chinese ethnic backgrounds (latest figures from 2015).
  - » And when you bring in free school meal status as well that widens even more. White 18 year olds of both sexes have entry rates under 10%, and mixed race boys are only slightly above that, at 11%.
  - » And location plays as big a part – there are 44 parliamentary constituencies where the HE entry rate at 18 is below 15%, and 8 where they are equal to or above 45%.

# Where are the challenges (3)

Entry rates in 2016 for UK 18 year olds by parliamentary constituency



Source: Figure 17 from 'UCAS End of Cycle Report 2016', [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

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



# Where are the challenges? (4)

- » The previous slides give, at a national level, an overview of how we are doing and show a mixed scorecard
- » Universities UK was asked to examine some of the main priorities and challenges and identify how progress could be made
- » This work went beyond access and explored the whole lifecycle
- » The Social Mobility Advisory Group was established and reported at the end of last year

**WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP:  
ENABLING SOCIAL MOBILITY  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The final report of the  
Social Mobility Advisory Group



- Report sent to HE and Science Minister, Jo Johnson
- 15 recommendations aimed at institutions, schools, third sector, employers, and government

# Objectives

Double the number  
of disadvantaged  
students  
by 2020

Increase number  
of BME students  
by 20% by 2020

Improve access for  
white working  
class boys

Improve outcomes  
for BME students

Reduce barriers  
and improve  
outcomes for  
disabled students

Review the role of  
data in supporting  
social mobility

# Additional points to consider

- Lifelong learning  
  
“The need to move away from the perception that people only have one chance for university study at the age of 18” .
- What role can universities play in social mobility beyond young people?
- Can a move away from traditional modes of delivery aid universities role in social mobility?
- Mature students also need to be part of the solution

# Evidence: what did the group find?

- No one solution works - wide range of interventions are required
- Socio-economic disadvantage is most significant driver of inequality in access and outcomes from HE
- Age poses different challenges, including the importance of the availability of opportunities to study flexibly and for entrants to be able to hold different qualifications or to use prior experience as an entrant qualification
- Place matters – growth of regionalism

# Evidence: what did the group find?

- Access is only part of the challenge, need to consider entire student lifecycle
- Access major issue for white working class, however not the key issue for BME
- More work needed to raising standards across all schools and addressing the attainment gap
- Collaboration at all levels is key
- Employers open to engaging

# Recommendations - themes

1. Smarter and better use of data
2. Evaluation and understanding what works
3. Information, advice and guidance and communications
4. Role of league tables
5. Institutional practice
6. Graduate outcomes

# How are we moving this forward?

- » 4 main strands of work:
  
- » Exploring how we can address challenges of graduate outcomes.
  - » Regional focus, with an emphasis on careers advice.
  - » What are universities doing, how are they working with other actors and employers in a region?
  - » What interventions work and how can we support these?
- » How does the relationship with schools needs to develop and evolve
  - » Address concerns over Green Paper and conservative Manifesto
  - » What is the 'bandwidth' of these relationships and how can they be supported
  - » More to it than school sponsorship
- » Evidence and data: how do we know what works?
  - » Develop the proposal for an evidence and impact exchange- what works model
  - » Explore developing a broader basket of indicators to understand disadvantage
  - » Work with league table compilers to examine disincentives
- » Proactive efforts to promote what the sector is doing



- » Whoever wins the election, social mobility will continue to be a focus
- » If we have a Conservative majority then there will be challenges around the development of the relationship between schools and a likely focus on white working class males. In the context of recent terrorist events the issues of exclusion and disadvantage within certain communities will be important
- » If we see a Labour majority or coalition the big question will be how we can sustain income for HEIs to continue their work in this area. If there are limits on the public purse a cap on student numbers would also be hugely damaging.
- » Establishment of OfS under HE & Research Act

# Thank you...

Full SMAG report available at:

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/working-in-partnership-enabling-social-mobility-in-higher-education.aspx>

Questions:

- » how can our work best support you?
- » what do you want from an evidence and impact exchange?