

End of cycle report

2017

Offer making



Table of contents

Offer-making to main scheme applicants in 2017	4
Over 1.9 million offers made this year, a slight fall on 2016	4
Offers continue to be concentrated among applicants who receive 4 or 5 offers ...	5
Offers made to all applicants who make a full set of choices fall slightly, for the first time since 2012.....	6
Proportion of main scheme applicants who receive an offer continues to grow, and over a third have five offers to choose between.....	7
Offer rates	8
Offer rates continue to increase, with largest increases for older age groups	8
Offer-making by providers	10
English and Welsh providers more likely than ever before to make offers to UK 18 year olds.....	10
Highest ever offer rates by English providers to applications from UK 18 year olds	12
Offer rates from Welsh providers increase for applicants domiciled in England and Wales, to the highest on record	13
Reversal in recent offer-making trend at Scottish providers, as offer rate to applications from Scotland grows, but falls for England and Northern Ireland	14
Offer rates to English 18 year olds by predicted A level grade profile .	15
Offer rates increase for the majority of predicted A level grade profiles	15
Over 99 per cent of applicants with common predicted grade profiles received an offer in 2017.....	16
Between one and two thirds of applicants receive five offers, depending on predicted grades	17
Unconditional offer-making	18
Among applicants with A levels, unconditional offers much more likely to be made to those aged 19 or older	18
Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that receive an unconditional offer has increased	20
18 year old applicants taking three A-levels and predicted the equivalent of BBC to ABB were most likely to receive an unconditional offer	23
Applicants predicted AAB to BBB have largest increases in unconditional offers ..	25
Variation in chances of receiving an unconditional offer by geography	26
Largest increase in unconditional offer-making in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and West Midlands regions of England	27

At most providers, unconditional offers account for no more than 5 per cent of all offers made	28
Wide variation in proportion of offers that are unconditional across subject groups	29
A note on numbers in Scotland	31
Glossary	32

Offer-making to main scheme applicants in 2017

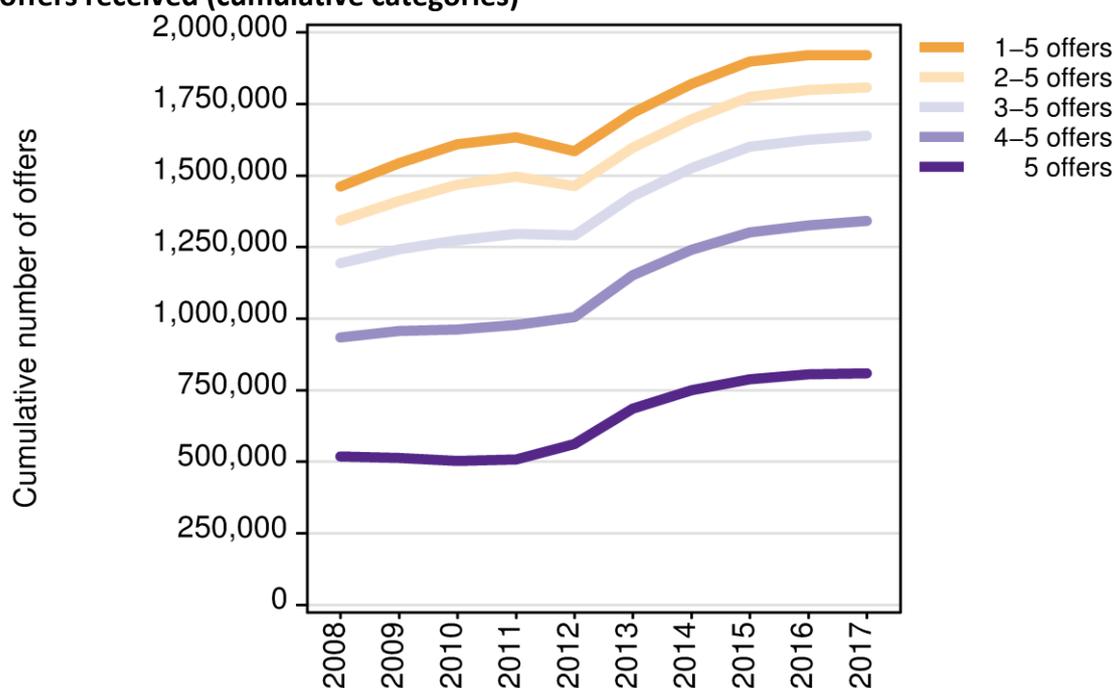
Over 1.9 million offers made this year, a slight fall on 2016

The number of offers made to all main scheme applicants is shown in Figure 6.1. Offers made are shown split by the number of offers received by the applicant (cumulative totals). Just over 1.9 million offers were made in 2017, a slight fall of less than 0.1 per cent compared to the number of offers made in 2016. This is the first time the number of offers made has not increased since 2012.

Despite the slight fall in offers this year, the number of offers made to applicants who received 4 or 5 offers increased by 1.1 per cent. Offers made to this group of applicants accounted for around 70 per cent of all offers made in 2017, the highest on record.

The number of offers made will, in part, be determined by the number of applications. This year, there were just under 2.8 million main scheme applications, 106,270 fewer than in 2016, a reduction of 3.7 per cent.

Figure 6.1 Total number of offers made to all main scheme applicants by number of offers received (cumulative categories)



Offers continue to be concentrated among applicants who receive 4 or 5 offers

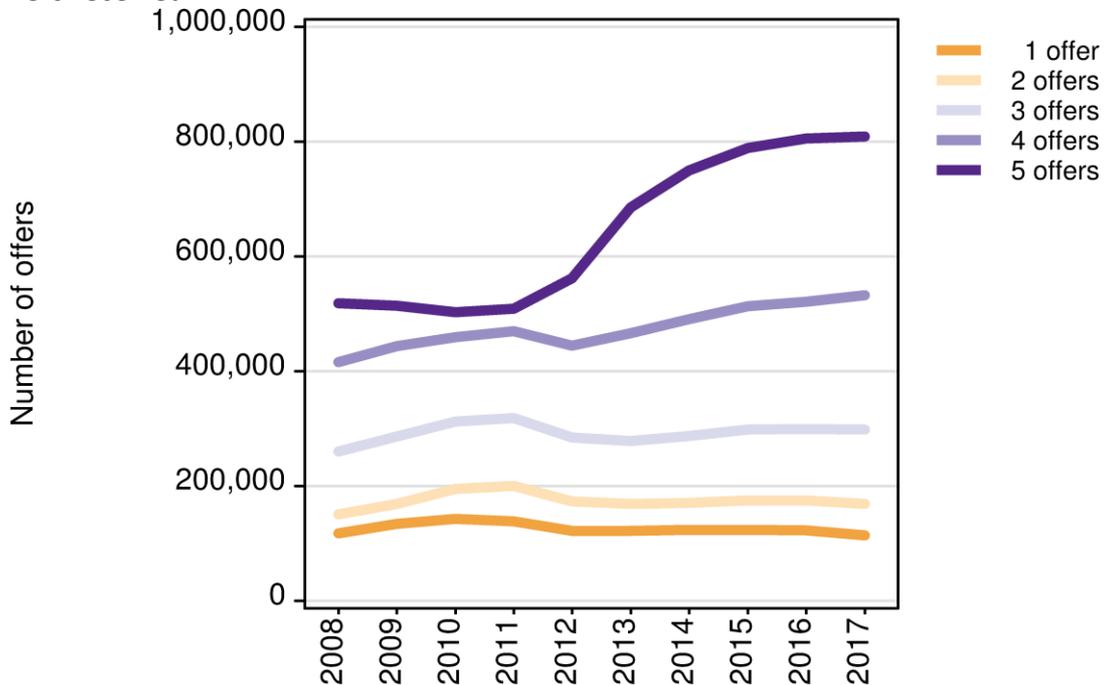
The number of offers made, split by the number of offers applicants received, is shown in Figure 6.2. The number of offers made to applicants who received 4 or 5 offers increased across the period, including in 2017. The number of offers made to applicants who received 1 to 3 offers declined this year.

808,500 offers were made to applicants who received 5 offers (+0.5 per cent, 3,650 more offers), and 532,175 offers were made to applicants who received 4 offers (+2.2 per cent, 11,510 more offers).

The number of offers to applicants who received 3 offers declined by 0.3 per cent (equivalent to 935 offers) to 297,755 offers. 168,050 offers were made to people who received 2 offers in total, a decline of 3.5 per cent (-6,160 offers). The largest decline, in terms of both raw number of offers and percentage, came from applicants who received one offer. 113,420 offers were made to these applicants, a 7.2 per cent decline, with 8,835 fewer offers than in 2016.

These patterns mean that offers are increasingly concentrated among applicants who receive four or five offers. This year, applicants who received 4 or 5 offers accounted for 70 per cent of all offers made.

Figure 6.2 Total number of offers made to all main scheme applicants by number of offers received



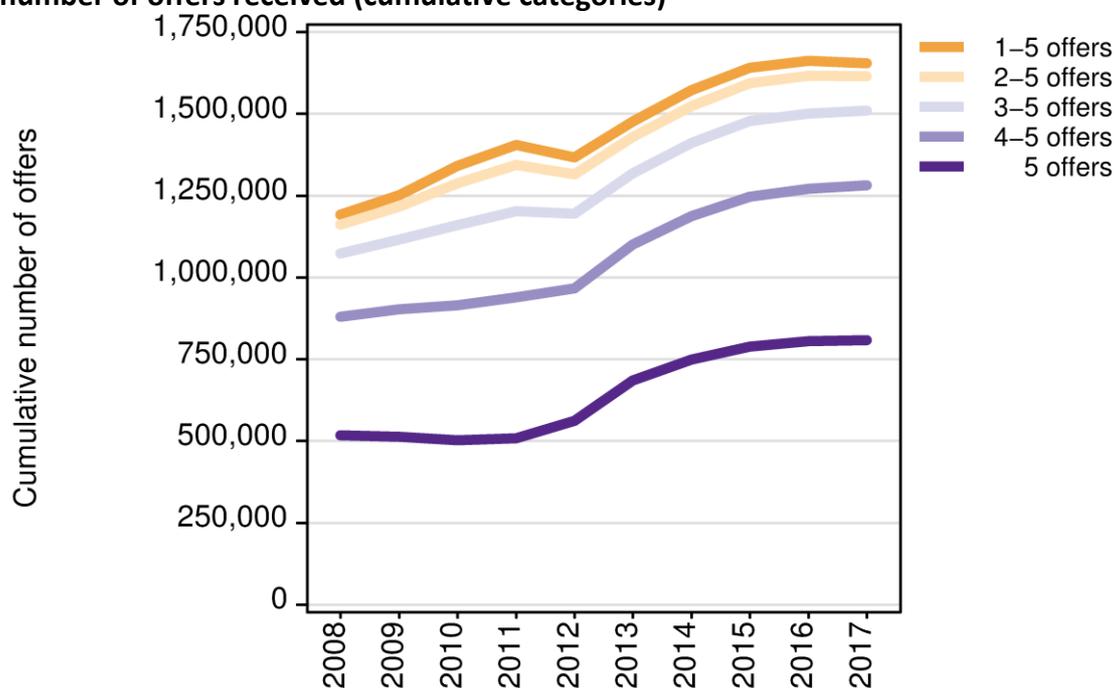
Offers made to all applicants who make a full set of choices fall slightly, for the first time since 2012

Main scheme applicants who make five choices represent a majority (72 per cent) of applicants, and a majority (76 per cent) of offer holders. In the 2017 cycle, 86.2 per cent of offers were to people who made 5 choices. They form a more uniform group to assess patterns in distribution of offers made, as all applicants have the potential to receive the maximum number of five offers. Figure 6.3 shows the number of offers made to applicants who made 5 choices, by the number of offers received (cumulative totals).

Over 1.65 million offers were made to this group of applicants in 2017, a 0.4 per cent fall on the number in 2016, and the first decline since 2012. Just under half of all offers (49 per cent) were made to applicants who received 5 offers, and 77 per cent made to those who received 4 or 5 offers.

The number of offers made will, in part, be determined by the number of applications. This year, there were over 2.3 million main scheme applications from applicants who made 5 choices, a fall of 3.7 per cent compared to 2016. The offer rate (defined as the proportion of all applications who received an offer) to this group of applicants this year was 70.3 per cent.

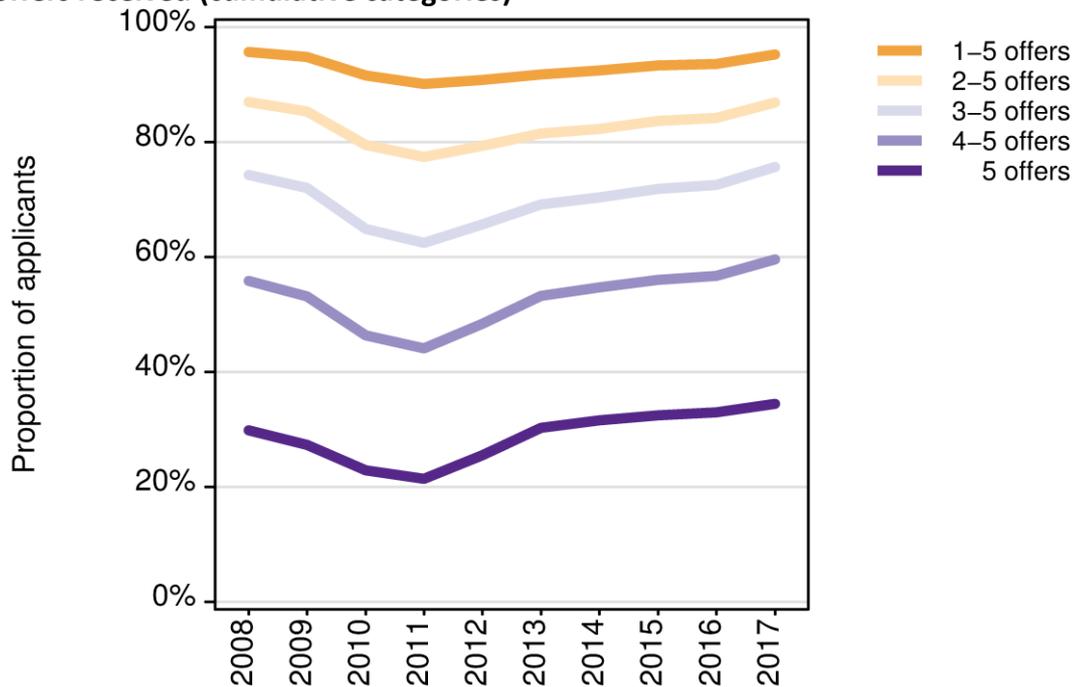
Figure 6.3 Total number of offers made to all applicants who made five choices by number of offers received (cumulative categories)



Proportion of main scheme applicants who receive an offer continues to grow, and over a third have five offers to choose between

In the 2017 cycle, the proportion of applicants who made five choices and received an offer increased (Figure 6.4). This year, 95.2 per cent of all applicants who made 5 choices received at least one offer (1.6 percentage point increase compared to 2016), the second highest proportion on record. The proportion of applicants who had 5 offers to choose between increased to 34.4 per cent (+1.4 percentage points) in 2017, the highest level recorded.

Figure 6.4 Proportion of main scheme applicants who made five choices by number of offers received (cumulative categories)



Offer rates

Offer rates continue to increase, with largest increases for older age groups

Offer rates (the proportion of all applications that receive an offer) increased in 2017 across all reported age groups (Figure 6.5).

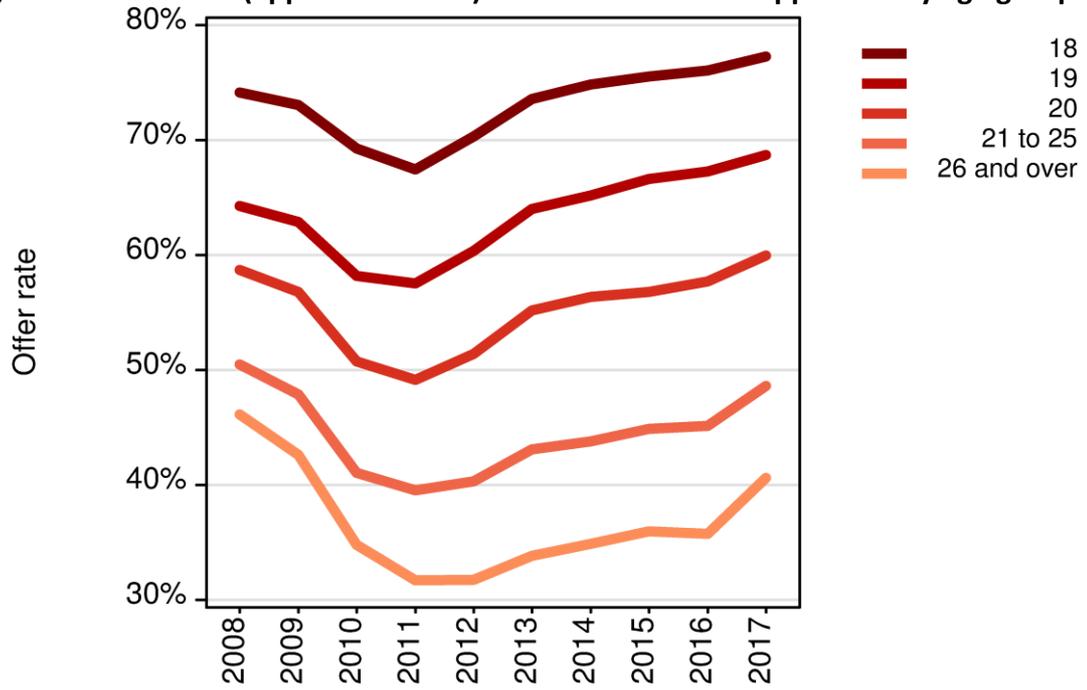
There is a clear progression in offer rates across age groups. Across the reporting period, 18 year olds consistently had the highest offer rate. Lower offer rates are observed for older age groups, with those aged 26 and over having the lowest offer rate every year.

Between 2012 and 2016, offer rates increased across all age groups. In 2017, offer rates increased again. 18 year olds had an offer rate of 77.3 per cent in 2017, a 1.2 percentage point increase compared to 2016, and the highest on record for the fourth cycle in a row. As such, 18 year olds were 1.6 per cent more likely to receive an offer than in 2016.

Offer rates for 19 and 20 year olds also increased, with rates in 2017 the highest on record. 19 year olds had an offer rate of 68.7 per cent, 1.5 percentage points higher than in 2016, while 20 year olds had an offer rate of 59.9 per cent, a 2.3 percentage point increase compared to 2016. These increases meant that, this year, 19 year olds were 2.2 per cent more likely to receive an offer compared to last year, while 20 year olds were 3.9 per cent more likely.

The offer rate for 21 to 25 year olds increased by 3.5 percentage points in 2017, to 48.6 per cent. The offer rate for those aged 26 and over increased by 4.9 percentage points to 40.6 per cent. The year-on-year increases in offer rates this year were largest on record for both these respective age groups, and for those aged 26 and over, the increase this year was the largest seen in any year for any age group. This meant that, in 2017, applicants aged 21 to 25 were 7.7 per cent more likely to receive an offer compared to 2016, while those aged 26 and over were 13.7 per cent more likely.

Figure 6.5 Offer rate (application level) for all main scheme applicants by age group



Offer-making by providers

Offer rates will depend on the choices made by applicants (in terms of the courses applied to), as well as the decisions made by providers. Given the strong association of the offer rate with age, this analysis concentrates on offers made to 18 year old UK domiciled applicants, to better identify changes in provider behaviour.

English and Welsh providers more likely than ever before to make offers to UK 18 year olds

The proportion of applications from UK 18 year old applicants who receive offers varies by the country of the provider. This year, offer rates from English, Scottish, and Welsh providers increased, while in Northern Ireland they fell (Figure 6.6).

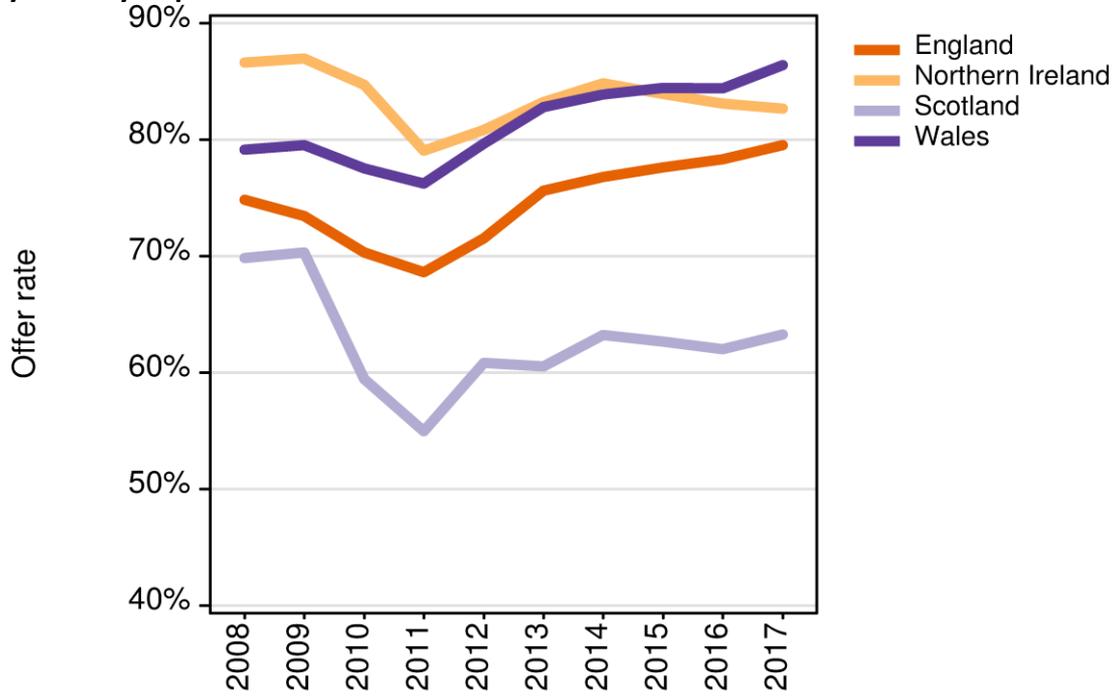
Since 2015, Welsh providers have had the highest offer rates to UK 18 year olds, compared to those elsewhere in the UK. In 2017, the offer rate from Welsh providers was 86.4 per cent, an increase of 2 percentage points. This was the highest offer rate on record, meaning providers in Wales were more likely than ever before to make offers to UK 18 year old applicants.

Providers in Northern Ireland had the second highest offer rate to UK 18 year olds this year. A 0.4 percentage point fall on 2017 reduced the offer rate to 82.6 per cent, and continued the series of declines which began in 2014.

The offer rate from English providers to UK 18 year olds this year was 79.5 per cent, 1.2 percentage points higher than 2016. This increase is in keeping with increases of between 0.7 and 1.2 percentage points each year since 2013, and brought the offer rate for English providers to the highest on record.

Offer rates from Scottish providers to UK 18 year olds have been consistently lower than the offer rates from providers elsewhere in the UK. This year, the offer rate from providers in Scotland was 63.2 per cent in 2017, a 1.2 percentage point increase compared to last year, which brought the offer rate to the highest since 2009 (though not all higher education in Scotland is recorded by UCAS – see the note at the end of this report for further details).

Figure 6.6 Offer rate (application level) to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants by country of provider



Highest ever offer rates by English providers to applications from UK 18 year olds

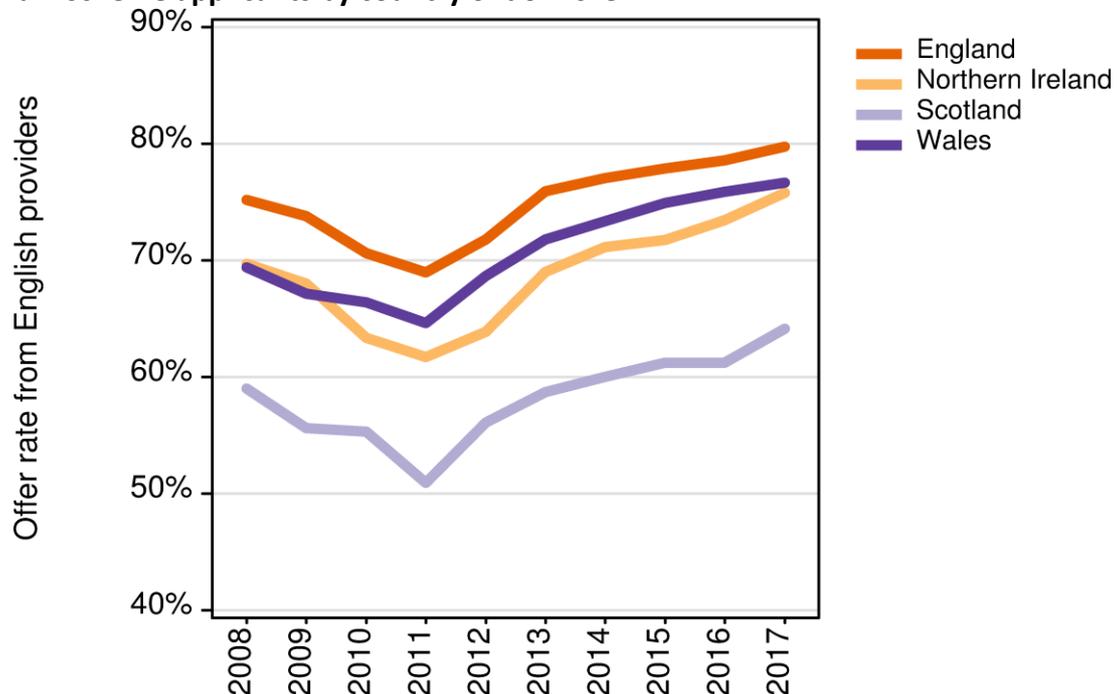
Figure 6.7 shows the offer rates from English providers to applications made by 18 year olds from each of the UK counties. Offer rates varied across the countries but, since 2011, they have increased.

Offer rates to applications made by English 18 year olds were higher than to those from the other UK countries. In 2017, 79.7 per cent of applications from English applicants received offers, a 1.2 percentage point increase, and the highest offer rate to this group of applicants on record.

Offer rates to applications made by 18 year old applicants from Wales and Northern Ireland were very similar. This year, the offer rate to applicants from Wales was 76.7 per cent (+0.8 percentage points), while the offer rate to applicants from Northern Ireland was 75.8 per cent (+2.4 percentage points). As with the offer rate to applications from English 18 year olds, these offer rates were the highest on record.

Scottish applications to English providers had the lowest offer rates across the period. In 2017, 64.1 per cent of applications from Scottish 18 year olds received an offer, 2.9 percentage points higher than 2016. This is the largest percentage increase in the offer rate for Scottish providers since 2012.

Figure 6.7 Offer rate (application level) from English providers to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants by country of domicile



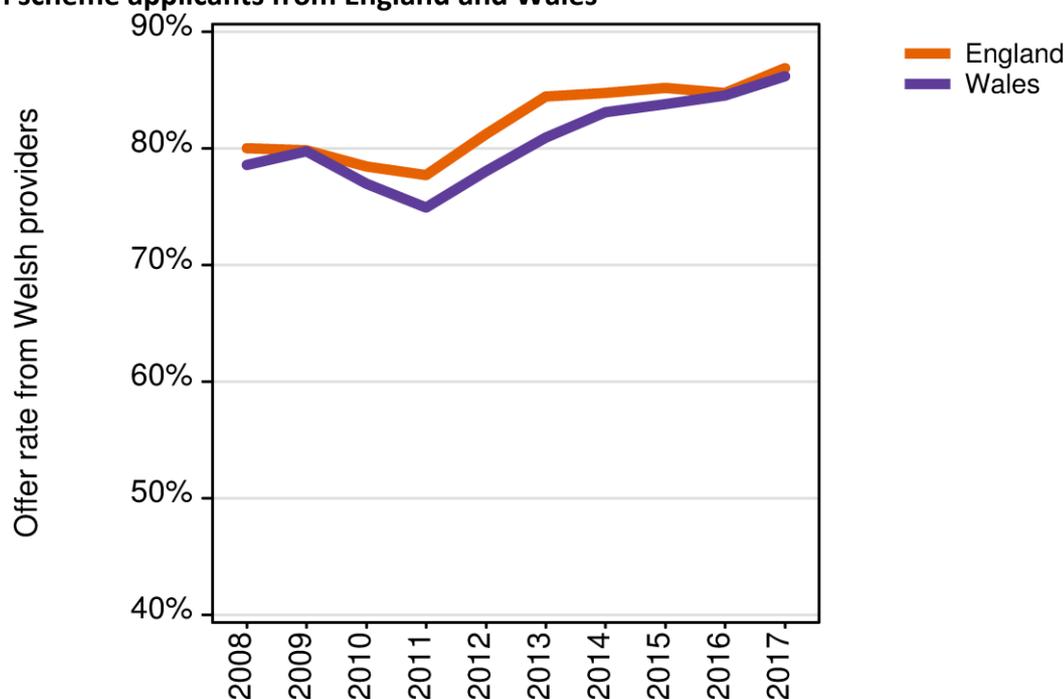
Offer rates from Welsh providers increase for applicants domiciled in England and Wales, to the highest on record

Figure 6.8 shows the offer rates from Welsh higher education providers to applications made by 18 year olds from England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland are not shown, as only a very small number of 18 year olds from these countries apply to providers in Wales.

Offer rates increased to applications from England and Wales, to the highest on record. The offer rate for Welsh applications increased by 1.7 percentage points to 86.2 per cent, continuing the series of year-on-year increases that began in 2012.

The offer rate for English applications was 86.8 per cent in 2017, an increase of 2.1 percentage points. This reversed the small decline in 2016, and brought the offer rate to the highest on record.

Figure 6.8 Offer rate (application level) from Welsh providers to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants from England and Wales



Note: Very few 18 year olds from Scotland and Northern Ireland apply to providers in Wales each cycle, so offer rates for these countries are not shown.

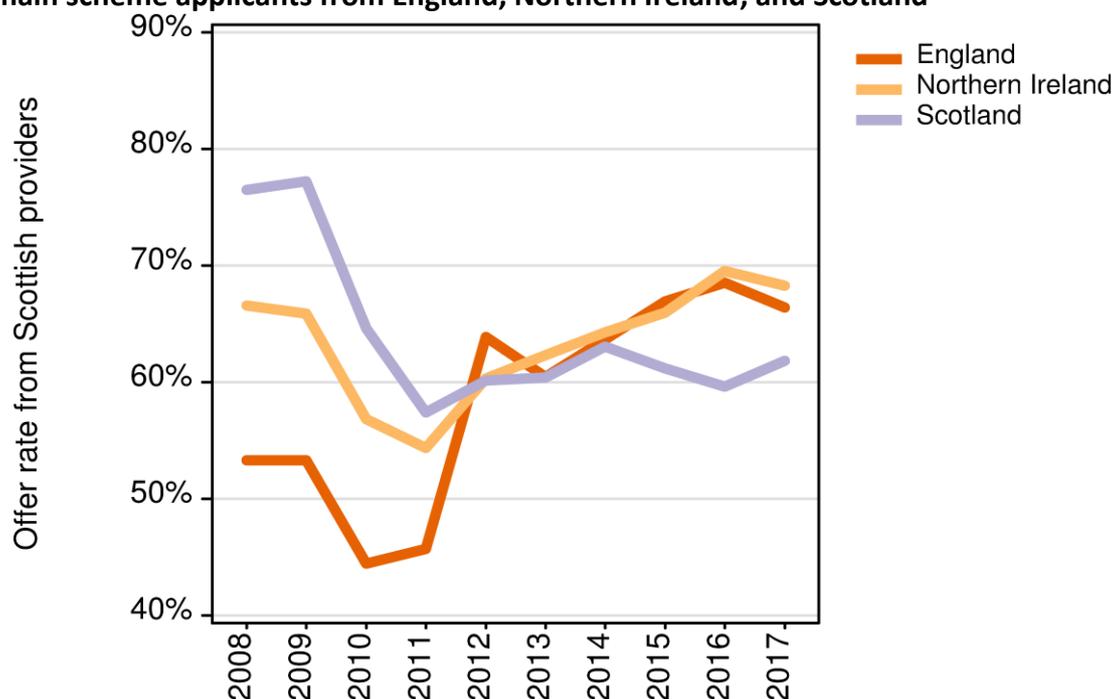
Reversal in recent offer-making trend at Scottish providers, as offer rate to applications from Scotland grows, but falls for England and Northern Ireland

Figure 6.9 shows the offer rate from Scottish higher education providers to applications from 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Each year, only a very small number of 18 year olds from Wales apply to Scottish providers, so numbers for Wales are not shown.

In 2017, the offer rate to Scottish applicants increased by 2.2 percentage points, to 61.8 per cent. This reverses the recent trend of decreasing offer rates in the previous two cycles, bringing the offer rate to the second highest since 2010.

Patterns of offer rates for English and Northern Irish applicants also contrast with the recent trend of increases for these countries. In 2017, the offer rate for Northern Irish applicants fell (by 1.3 percentage points) to 68.2 per cent. The offer rate for English applicants also fell (by 2.1 percentage points) to 66.4 per cent. These declines came after several consecutive year-on-year increases, which saw the emergence of a gap between offer rates for Scottish applicants, and for applicants from England and Northern Ireland.

Figure 6.9 Offer rate (application level) from Scottish providers to 18 year old UK main scheme applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland



Note: Very few 18 year olds from Wales apply to providers in Scotland each cycle, so offer rates for these countries are not shown.

Offer rates to English 18 year olds by predicted A level grade profile

Offer rates increase for the majority of predicted A level grade profiles

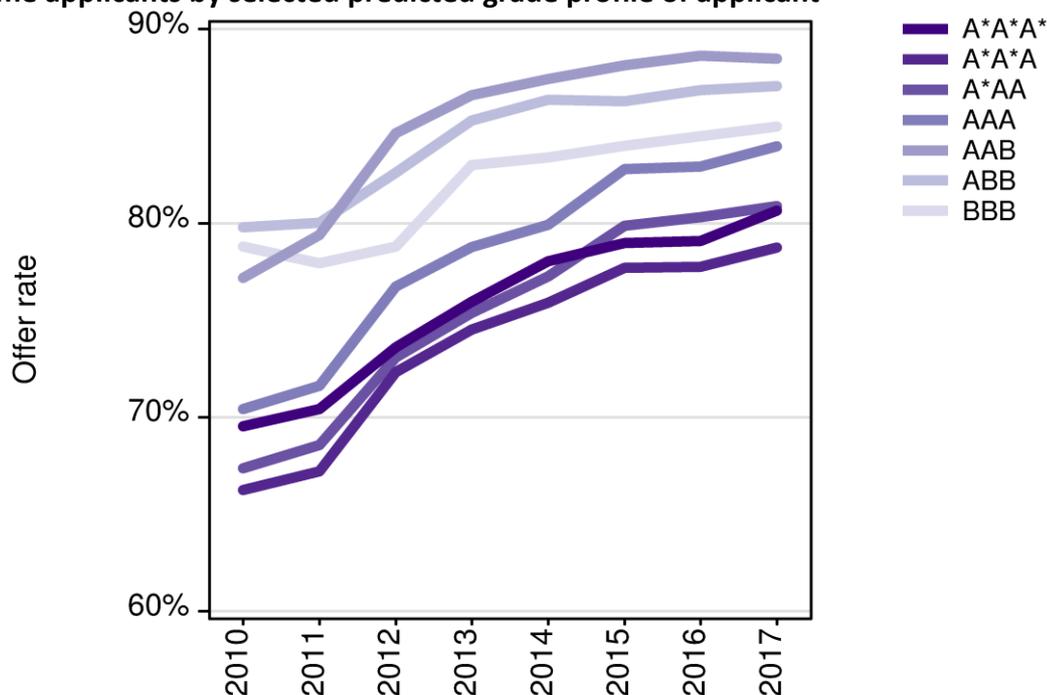
For 18 year old applicants who apply with A level results pending, it is possible to investigate offer rates according to the profile of three highest predicted A level grades. This reflects the information available to the provider at the time offers are made. Figure 6.10 shows the offer rates to applications from English 18 year old applicants across some of the most common predicted grade profiles.

The rank order of the level of offer-making to applicants holding each of these profiles is complex, reflecting both provider decisions and an applicant's choice of course. For example, the offer rate to applications from applicants predicted AAB is higher than for those predicted BBB. But when applicants are predicted one or more A* grades, the offer rate goes down again, reflecting the different types of courses applied to.

Offer rates to English 18 year olds increased across all predicted A level grade profiles, with the exception of those predicted AAB, where the offer rate fell slightly. Offer rates spanned a relatively narrow range in 2017, ranging between 78.7 per cent for those predicted A*A*A, and 88.5 per cent for those predicted AAB.

The biggest increase in 2017 was for applicants predicted A*A*A*, which increased by 1.6 percentage points.

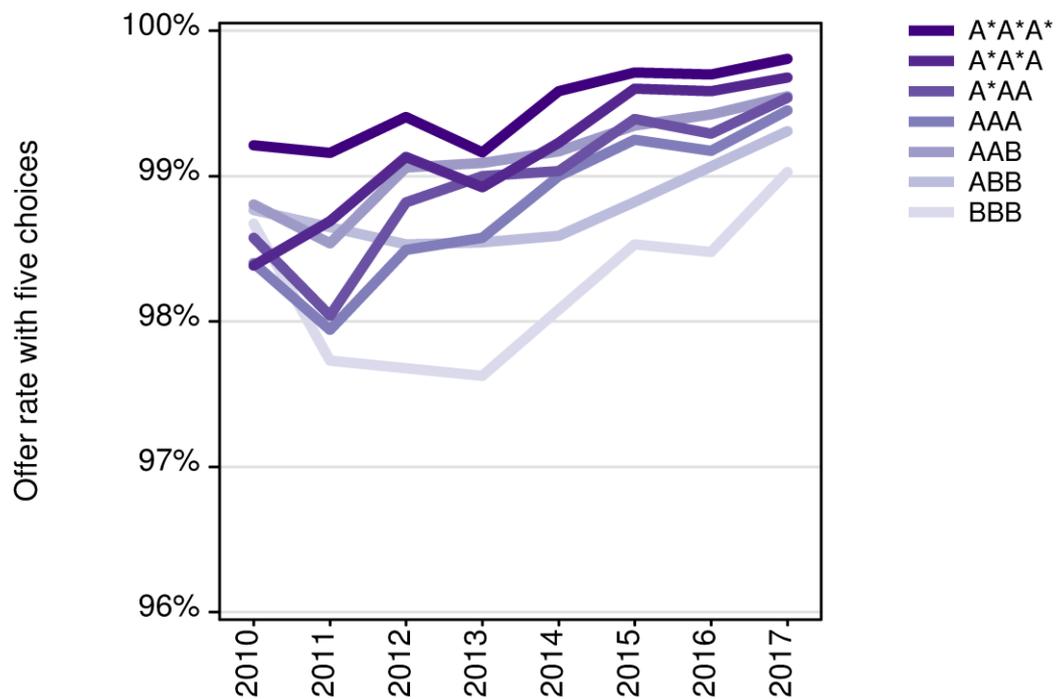
Figure 6.10 Offer rate (application level) to 18 year old English domiciled main scheme applicants by selected predicted grade profile of applicant



Over 99 per cent of applicants with common predicted grade profiles received an offer in 2017

Figure 6.11 shows the proportion of English 18 year old applicants who made five choices and received at least 1 offer, split by predicted grade profile. In 2017, over 99 per cent of applicants with predicted A level grade profiles of BBB received at least one offer. Offer rates increased for all grade profiles, with the largest increase (+0.5 percentage points) for applicants predicted BBB.

Figure 6.11 Proportion of 18 year old English domiciled main scheme applicants who receive at least one offer (from five choices) by predicted grade profile



Between one and two thirds of applicants receive five offers, depending on predicted grades

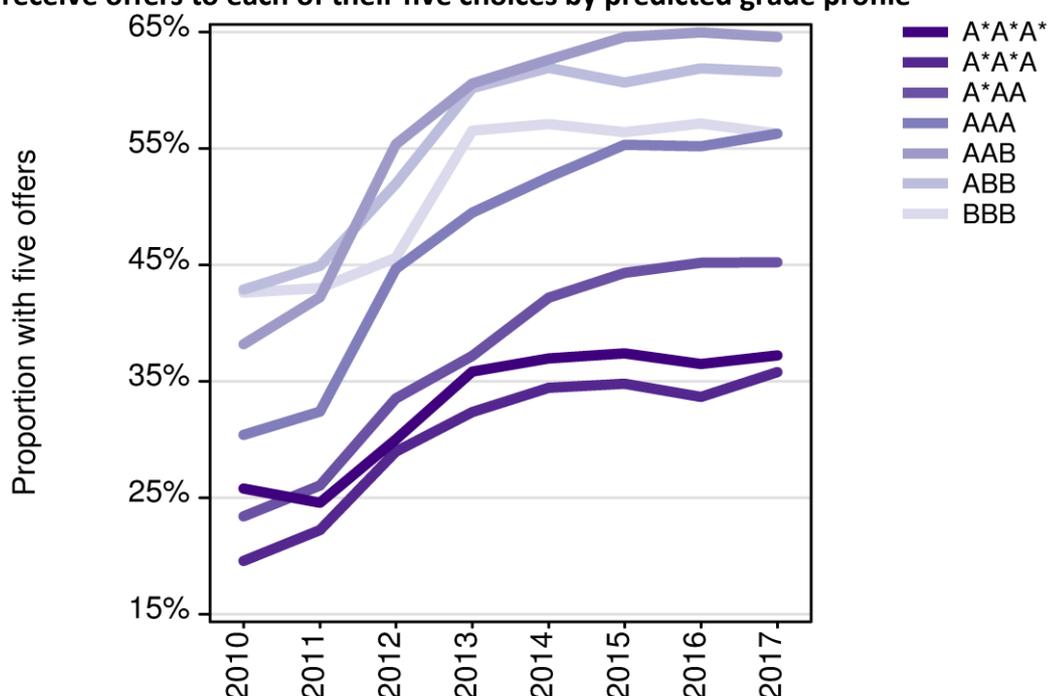
Many 18 year old applicants who make five choices, and have three predicted A level grades, will receive offers from all five of their choices. In 2017, the proportion getting five offers varied across predicted grade profiles, from 35.8 per cent of those predicted A*A*A, to 64.6 per cent for those predicted AAB.

In 2017, the proportion of applicants receiving five offers increased for those with generally higher predicted grade profiles, and fell for those with lower predicted grade profiles. The proportion of applicants with predicted grade profiles of A*A*A*, and those predicted A*A*A, and AAA, all increased this year. 35.8 per cent of the those predicted A*A*A received five offers, and had the biggest increase this year, of 2.1 percentage points. These applicants were 6.4 per cent more likely to receive five offers in 2017 than they were in 2016.

Applicants with predicted grade profiles of AAB and below were less likely this year to receive five offers. Those predicted BBB had the biggest reduction this year, falling by 0.8 percentage points to 56.3 per cent.

Applicants with the highest predicted grades were, on average, the least likely to receive five offers, when compared to those with other predicted grades profiles. This is likely a reflection of the courses applied to, with those predicted the highest grades possibly applying to courses which have a higher ratio of applicants to places.

Figure 6.12 Proportion of 18 year old English domiciled main scheme applicants who receive offers to each of their five choices by predicted grade profile



Unconditional offer-making

Offers made by providers to applicants are described as being either conditional or unconditional, depending on whether the provider wishes to attach certain conditions to the offer, usually related to the attainment of specific qualification and subject examination results. Unconditional offers are also increasingly made by providers in England where they believe that the applicant has demonstrated sufficient potential to succeed on the course they have applied for, in advance of having been awarded their final secondary qualifications.

Among applicants with A levels, unconditional offers much more likely to be made to those aged 19 or older

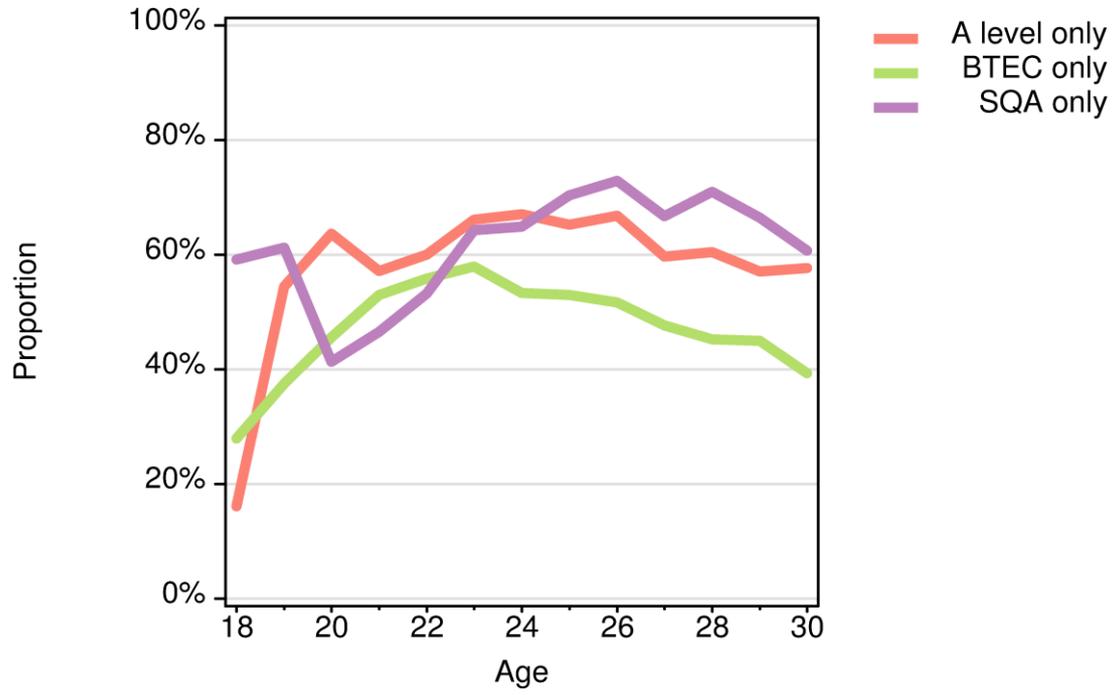
Figure 6.13 shows the proportion of all applicants holding at least one offer (either conditional or unconditional – referred to here as offer holders) who received at least one unconditional offer, by age and qualification type, in the 2017 cycle.

In 2017, 16 per cent of 18 year old offer holders whose main qualifications were A levels received an unconditional offer. This was substantially lower than the 54 to 67 per cent of offer holders aged between 19 and 30 whose main qualifications were A levels, and who received an unconditional offer.

For offer holders in 2017 whose main qualifications were BTECs, a similar pattern is seen to that for offer holders with A levels. Offer holders aged 18 were least likely to receive an unconditional offer (28 per cent) compared to older applicants, for which the proportion who received an unconditional offer ranged between 38 and 58 per cent.

For offer holders whose main qualifications were SQA Highers and Advanced Highers, the proportion who received an unconditional offer by age showed a different pattern. A similar proportion of offer holders aged 18 received an unconditional offer as those from older age groups. This is because in Scotland, a substantial proportion of applicants aged 18 who apply have already attained SQA Highers, and met the academic requirements to begin HE level study. This is not the case for most 18 year old applicants who study A levels and BTECs, who apply with predicted, rather than achieved, grades.

Figure 6.13 Proportion of UK offer holders who received at least one offer recorded as unconditional, by age and qualifications held (2017 cycle)



Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales that receive an unconditional offer has increased

Main scheme 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales usually apply with most of their qualifications for HE entry still pending, and with predicted, rather than achieved, grades. They form a uniform group within which offer-making by providers, and the response of applicants, can be assessed from year to year. Figure 6.14 shows the number of unconditional offers made to this group of applicants, along with the number selected by applicants as either their firm (first) or insurance (second) choice.

Between 2008 and 2013, relatively few unconditional offers were recorded as being made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, less than 1 per cent of all offers made to this group. In 2014, the number of unconditional offers recorded increased by 9,130, from 2,985, to 12,115 (1.4 per cent of all offers to this group). There were further increases in the number of unconditional offers recorded in 2015 (23,410, 2.5 per cent of all offers to this group), and in 2016, to 36,825 (3.9 per cent of all offers). In 2017, the number of unconditional offers recorded increased again, to 51,615, an increase of 40 per cent, comprising 5.3 per cent of offers made to this group of applicants.

When an offer is made, the applicant may select that offer as their firm choice, their insurance choice, or decline the offer. The number of unconditional firm choices, and unconditional insurance choices resulting from unconditional offers, follow a similar trend to the number of unconditional offers. In 2017, the number of unconditional firm choices increased by 9,890, from 20,090, to 29,980 (+49 per cent proportionally). The number of unconditional insurance choices increased from 7,335 to 8,420 (+15 per cent proportionally).

Figure 6.14 Number of unconditional offers made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, and the number made firm and insurance

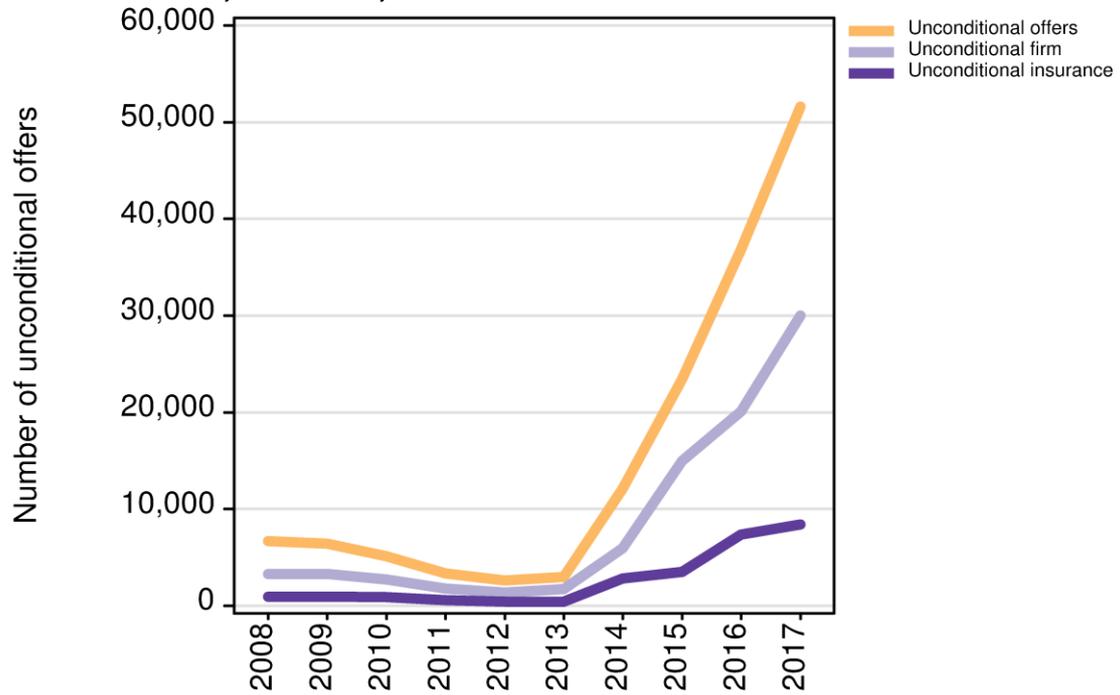
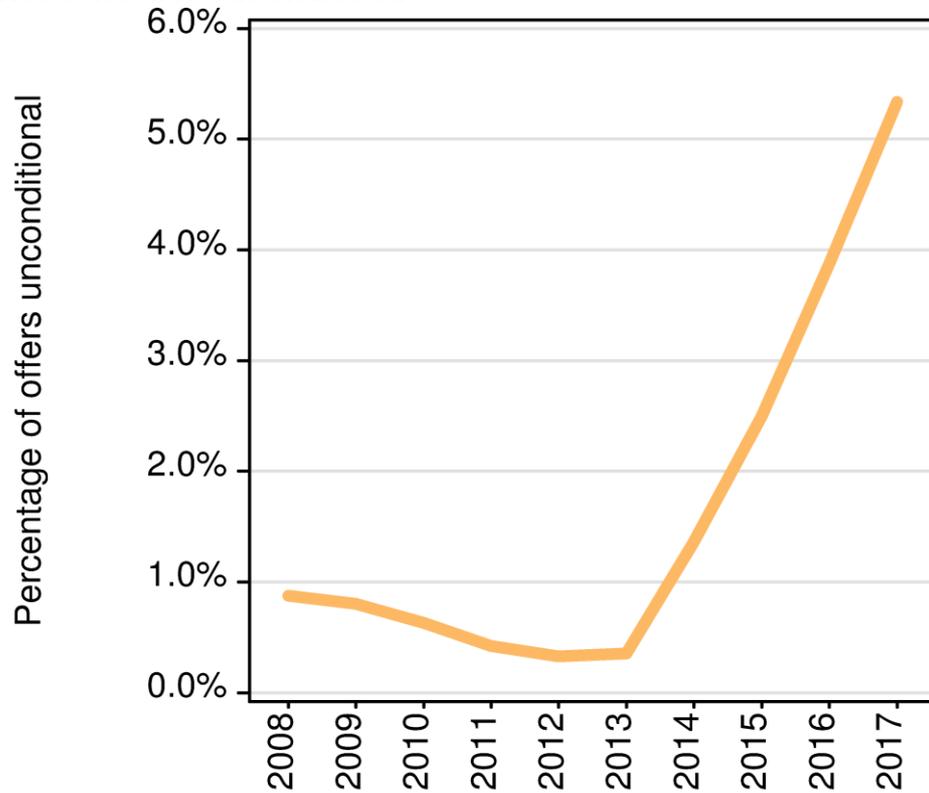


Figure 6.15 Proportion of offers made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales that were unconditional



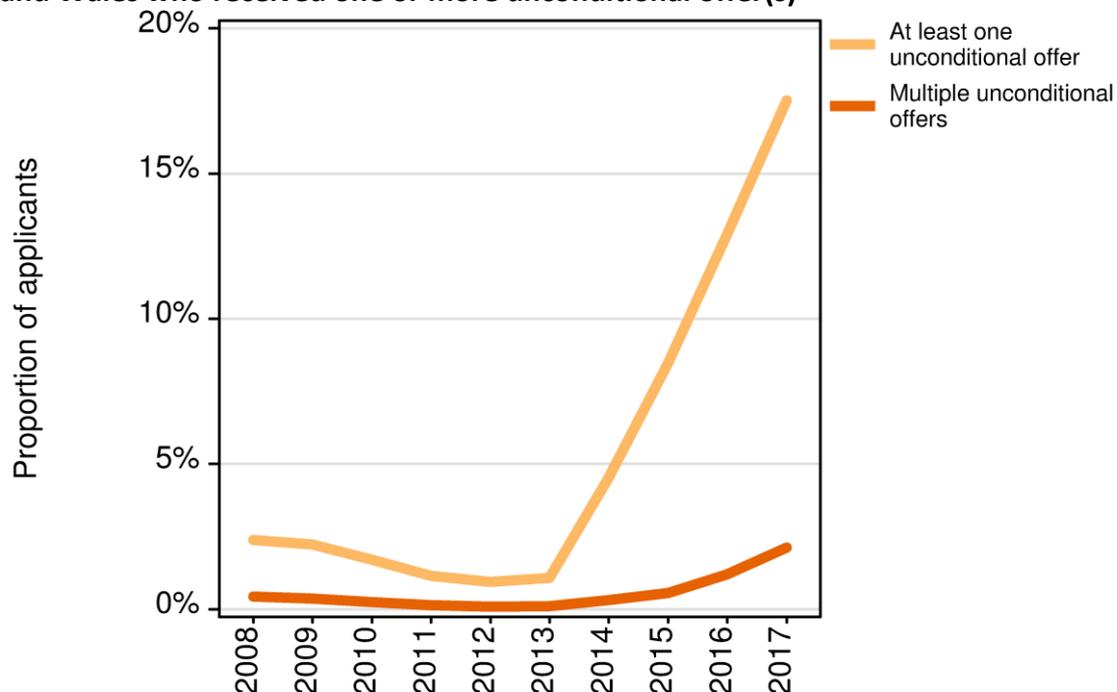
The proportion of unconditional offers to 18 year olds in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales in 2017 was relatively small (5.3 per cent in 2017). These applicants typically make five choices, so the chance of them receiving at least one unconditional offer is higher. Figure 6.16 shows the proportion of 18 year old main scheme applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales who received at least one recorded unconditional offer, or multiple recorded unconditional offers.

In 2017, 17.5 per cent of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales received at least one unconditional offer. This is a 36 per cent increase from 2016, more than double the proportion in 2015, and more than 16 times the proportion in 2013.

A much smaller proportion of applicants receive more than one unconditional offer. In 2017, 2.1 per cent of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales received more than one unconditional offer, up from 1.2 per cent in 2016, and 0.1 per cent in 2013.

Some offers are confirmed as unconditional once an applicant has chosen the offer as their firm choice. This means the proportion of applicants reported as receiving an unconditional offer will be underestimated, and this will be more pronounced when estimating the proportion of applicants that received multiple unconditional offers.

Figure 6.16 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales who received one or more unconditional offer(s)



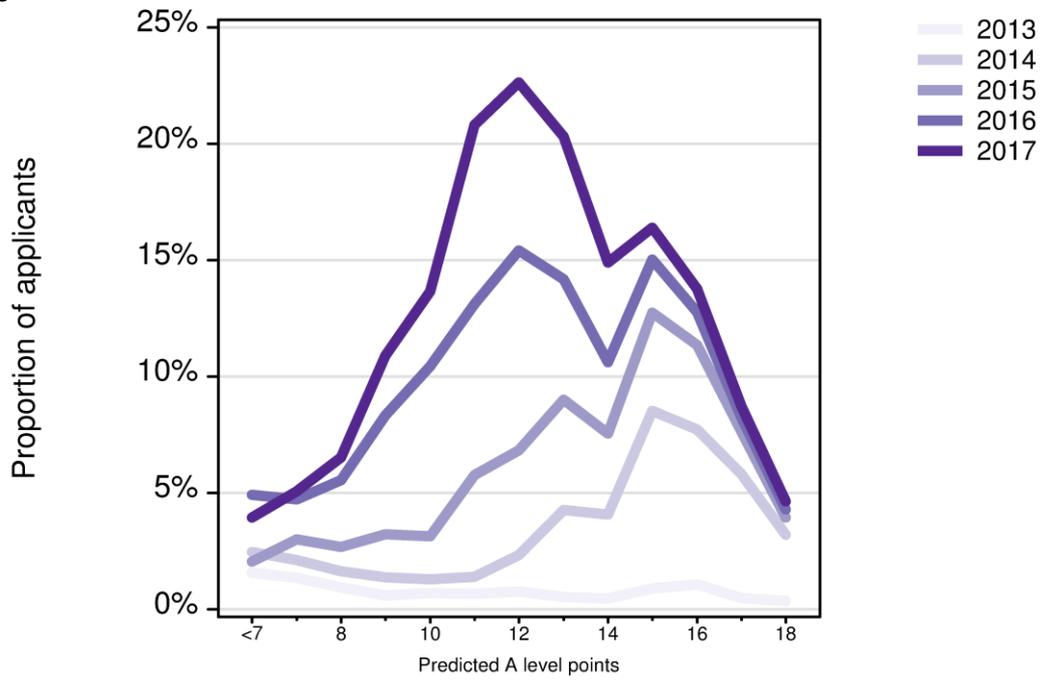
18 year old applicants taking three A-levels and predicted the equivalent of BBC to ABB were most likely to receive an unconditional offer

The probability of receiving an unconditional offer varies according to an applicant's predicted attainment. Figure 6.17 shows the proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales who received at least one unconditional offer by predicted A level grade points total. These numeric A level grades are calculated by assigning a value of 6 points to an A*, 5 points to an A, 4 points to a B, and so on, so that the difference between adjacent A level grades is 1. The scores corresponding to an applicant's best three predicted A levels are then added together to get the total.

In 2017, 4.6 per cent of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales who were predicted 18 A level points (equivalent to A*A*A*) received an unconditional offer. The proportion receiving an unconditional offer was higher for applicants with lower predicted point scores. 16.4 per cent of applicants predicted 15 A level points (equivalent to a grade profile of AAA) received at least one unconditional offer, as did 22.6 per cent of those predicted 12 A level points (equivalent to BBB). 10.9 per cent of applicants predicted 9 points (equivalent to CCC) received an unconditional offer, as did 3.9 per cent of those predicted 6 points or less (DDD or below).

The shape of the distribution shown in Figure 6.17 has changed over time, reflecting how the share of applicants who received an unconditional offer has shifted towards those with lower grades. In 2014 and 2015, applicants predicted 15 A level points were the most likely to receive an unconditional offer. In 2016, the proportion of applicants predicted 12 points who received an unconditional offer increased by 8.6 percentage points, such that they were just as likely as those predicted 15 points to receive an unconditional offer. In 2017, applicants predicted 12 points were the most likely to receive an unconditional offer, 38 per cent more likely than those predicted 15 points.

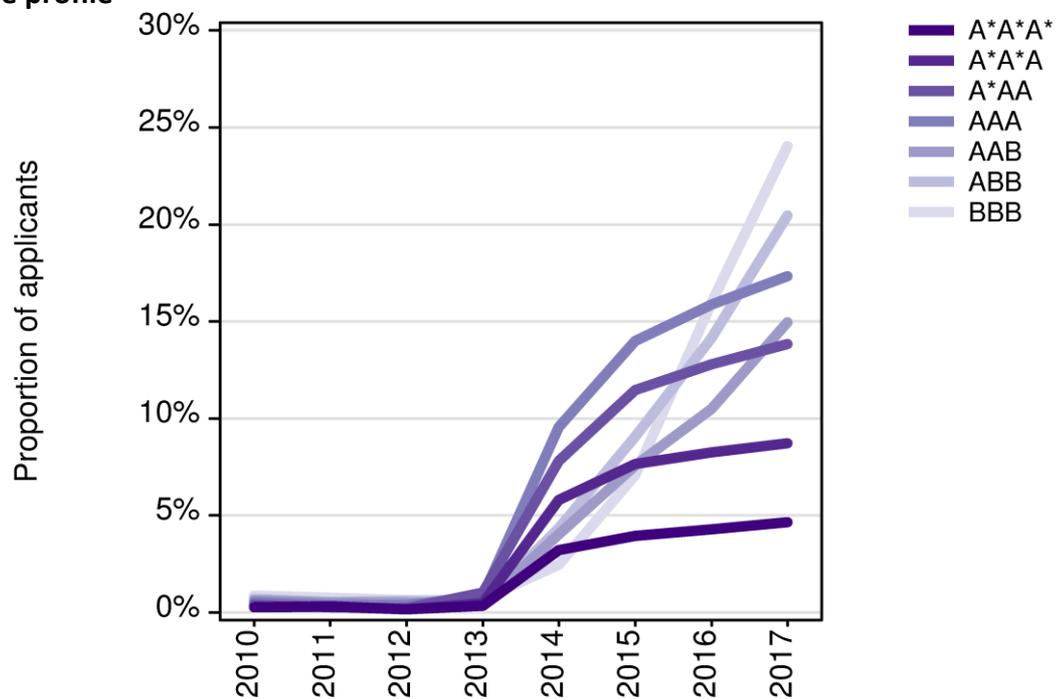
Figure 6.17 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales who received at least one unconditional offer by predicted A level points



Applicants predicted AAB to BBB have largest increases in unconditional offers

The trend of unconditional offer-making across predicted grade profiles is shown in Figure 6.18. Since 2013, the proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales with predicted grade profiles equivalent to BBB or above has increased each year. Since 2015, the proportion of applicants with predicted profiles equivalent to AAB and below increased more rapidly than for applicants with predicted profiles of AAA or above. This meant that in 2017, applicants' predicted grade profiles equivalent to BBB or ABB were more likely to receive an unconditional offer than those predicted AAA, which until this year, had been the most likely.

Figure 6.18 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales who received at least one unconditional offer by selected predicted grade profile

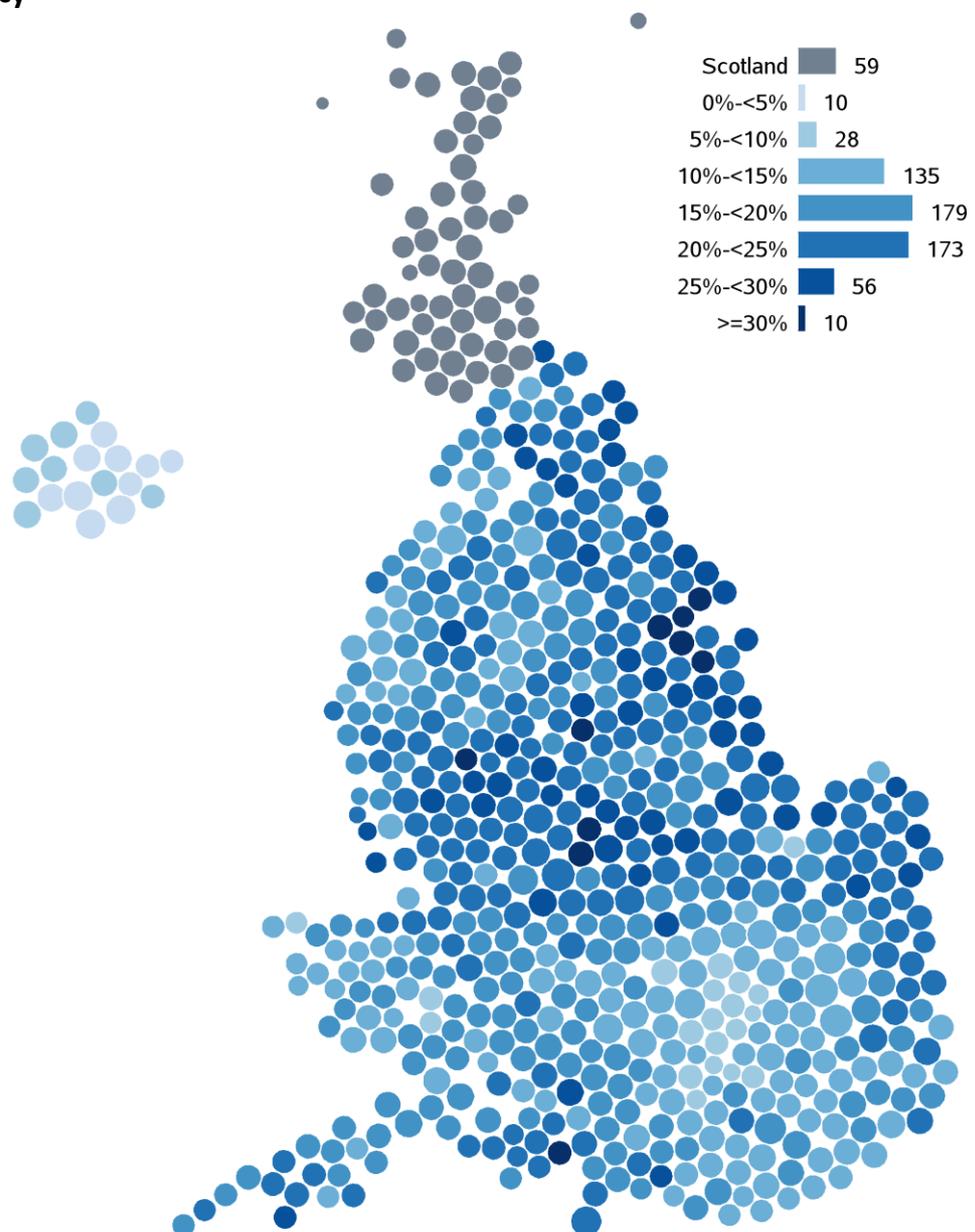


Variation in chances of receiving an unconditional offer by geography

The probability of receiving an unconditional offer varies according to where an applicant lives. Figure 6.19 shows the proportion of 18 year old applicants who received an unconditional offer by the parliamentary constituency they live in.

The proportion of applicants receiving at least one unconditional offer ranged from 2.8 per cent to 36.1 per cent. Applicants from around London and the south east of England are least likely to receive unconditional offers, with those from constituencies in the Midlands being the most likely.

Figure 6.19 Proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales who received at least one unconditional offer in 2017, by parliamentary constituency

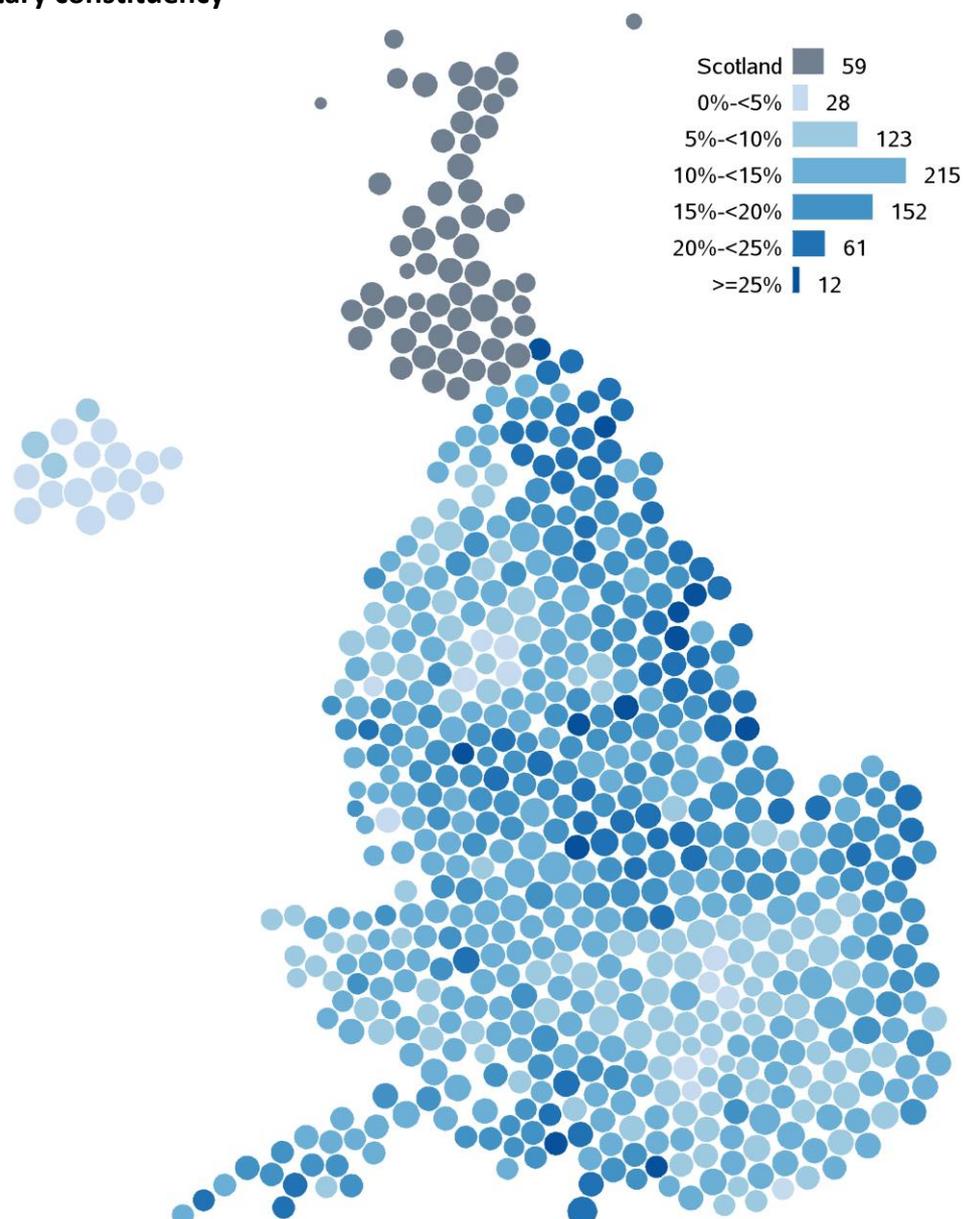


Largest increase in unconditional offer-making in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and West Midlands regions of England

Figure 6.20 maps the proportional change in the proportion of applicants receiving unconditional offers between 2014 and 2017 by parliamentary constituency. Applicants from all constituencies in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales were more likely to receive an unconditional offer in 2017 compared to 2014.

In 73 constituencies (around 1 in 8 constituencies across England, Northern Ireland, and Wales), the chances of receiving at least one unconditional offer increased by 20 per cent or more. Many of these constituencies were in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the Midlands regions of England.

Figure 6.20 Change in proportion of 18 year old applicants from England, Northern Ireland and Wales receiving unconditional offers between 2014 and 2017 by parliamentary constituency



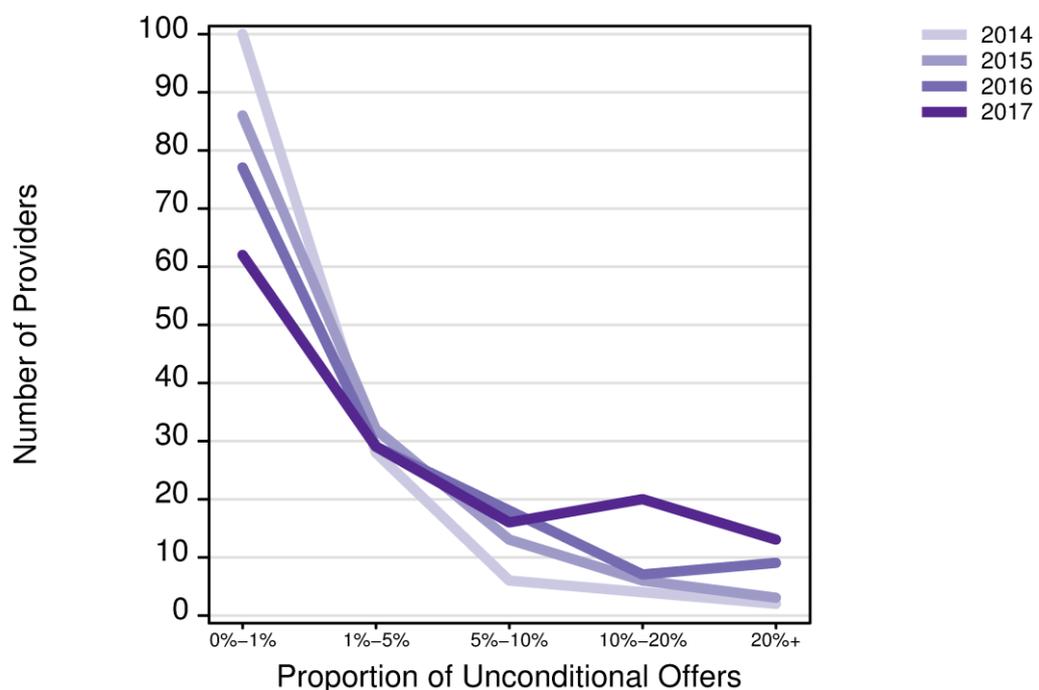
At most providers, unconditional offers account for no more than 5 per cent of all offers made

Figure 6.21 shows the number of providers grouped according to the proportion of offers made in 2017 that were unconditional. Providers included in the figures are limited to the 140 providers that averaged 500 or more acceptances since 2012. For the majority of these providers, the number of unconditional offers made represents only a small proportion (no more than 5 per cent) of all offers they make.

In 2017, for 62 providers, the proportion of unconditional offers made represented between 0 and 1 per cent of all offers (the sum of conditional and unconditional offers). There were 29 providers where unconditional offers accounted for between 1 and 5 per cent of all offers, and 16 providers where they accounted for between 5 and 10 per cent. For 20 providers, unconditional offers accounted for between 10 and 20 per cent (between one in ten and one in five) of all offers, while at 13 providers, unconditional offers accounted for at least 20 per cent (one in five offers).

Since 2014, the number of providers where unconditional offers represented less than one per cent of all offers, has fallen. In 2014, there were 100 providers in this group, and this number has fallen each year since. This has meant there has been an increase in the number of providers where unconditional offers represented higher proportions of all offers, with the number for which unconditional offers accounted for more than 10 per cent of all offers increasing each year since 2014.

Figure 6.21 Number of providers by share of all offers made that are unconditional



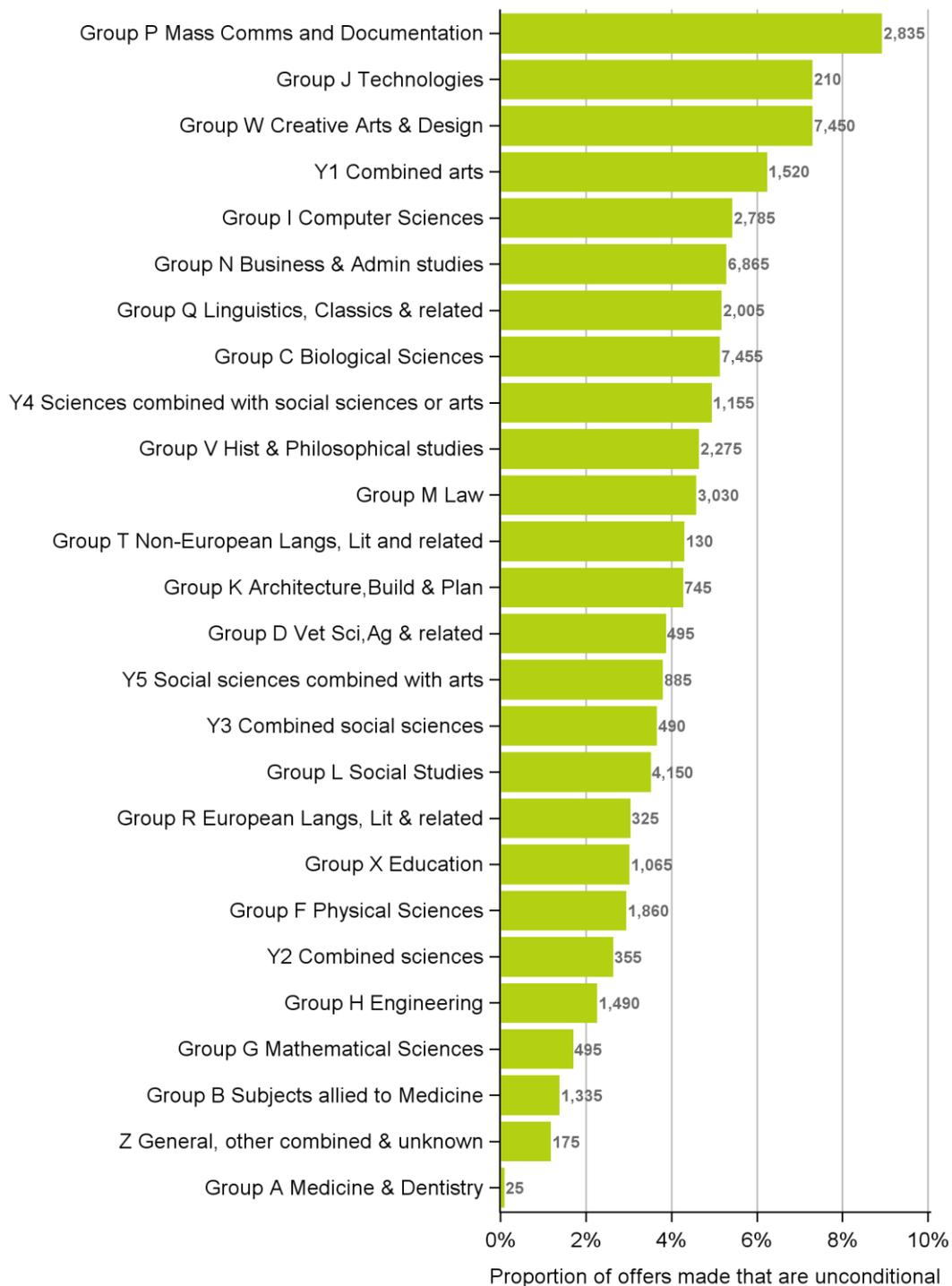
Wide variation in proportion of offers that are unconditional across subject groups

Figure 6.22 shows the proportion of all offers that were unconditional in 2017 within each JACS3 subject group (see the glossary at the end of the report for further details about JACS3 classification). There is wide variation across the subject groups in the proportion of offers that were unconditional. 8.9 per cent of offers made to applications to the mass communications and documentation subject group, were unconditional, the highest proportion of any subject group.

There were a further seven subject groups where the proportion of unconditional offers made in 2017 was over 5 per cent of all offers. These were technologies (7.3 per cent), creative arts and design (7.3 per cent), combined arts (6.2 per cent), computer sciences (5.4 per cent), business and admin studies (5.3 per cent), linguistics, classics, and related subjects (5.2 per cent) and biological sciences (5.1 per cent). For some of these subject groups, such as creative arts and design, the decision to make an offer will be dependent upon an applicant's portfolio, as well as their predicted grades.

The subject group in which unconditional offers represented the smallest share of all offers made, was medicine and dentistry, for which fewer than 0.1 per cent of all offers that were made were unconditional. The share of all offers made to applications to subjects allied to medicine which were unconditional was also notably small, at 1.4 per cent in 2017.

Figure 6.22 Proportion of offers made to 18 year olds from England, Northern Ireland, and Wales in 2017 that were unconditional, by subject group



Note: Bars show the proportion of all offers made that were unconditional within a subject group. Number of unconditional offers are shown as annotations next to the bars.

A note on numbers in Scotland

UCAS covers the overwhelming majority of full-time undergraduate provision for people living in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, so the statistics on acceptances or entry rates can be taken as being very close to all recruitment to full-time undergraduate higher education. In Scotland, there is a substantial section of higher education provision that is not included in UCAS' figures. This is mostly full-time higher education provided in further education colleges, which represents around one third of young full-time undergraduate study in Scotland, and this proportion varies by geography and background within Scotland. Accordingly, figures on entry rates or total recruitment in Scotland reflect only the part of full-time undergraduate study that uses UCAS.

In 2014, there were fewer very late acceptances than in other cycles recorded in the UCAS data for some Scottish providers. These changes may mean that the number of applicants and acceptances to Scottish UCAS providers in 2014 recorded through UCAS could be understated by up to 2,000, compared to how applicants and acceptances have been reported in recent cycles. This means that comparing 2014 applicants and acceptances for Scottish providers (or those from Scotland) to other cycles may not give an accurate measure of change.

In 2015, around 120 courses at Scottish providers which were previously part of the UCAS Teacher Training scheme, moved into the UCAS Undergraduate scheme. As such, the number of applicants and acceptances to Scottish providers in 2015 recorded through UCAS will include those which were previously part of UCAS Teacher Training, meaning that comparing 2015 applicants and acceptances for Scottish providers (or those from Scotland, particularly those aged 21 or over) to previous cycles may not give a like-for-like measure of change.

Glossary

ABB+	The high grade qualification combinations that were used in the number control arrangements for most courses in England in the 2013/14 academic year. They approximate the categories that relate to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) student number control arrangements in that year from information recorded in the UCAS system. The assessment of entry qualifications uses a number of data sources, including information provided by applicants themselves.
Acceptance	An applicant who, at the end of the cycle, has been placed for entry into higher education.
Acceptance rate	The number of acceptances divided by the number of applicants.
Age	This analysis uses country-specific age definitions that align with the cut-off points for school and college cohorts in the different administrations of the UK. For England and Wales, ages are defined on 31 August, for Northern Ireland on 1 July, and for Scotland on 28 February the following year. Defining ages in this way matches the assignment of children to school cohorts. For applicants outside the UK, a cohort cut-off of 31 August has been used.
A level points	A level grades are assigned points such that A* = 6 points, A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, and E = 1. Achieved A level grade profiles of applicants are assigned the total number of points of their best three achieved grades – for example, a grade profile of AAB would be worth 14 A level points.
Applicant	A person who has made an application in the UCAS system. Counts of applicants include those applying through the main scheme, late applicants direct to Clearing, and Records of Prior Acceptance (RPAs).
Application rate	The number of applicants divided by the estimated base population.
Base population estimate	The population estimates are based on Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates, and national population projections (published in June 2015). For 16 to 20 year olds, the estimates are obtained by ageing 15 year olds from the appropriate number of years earlier. This approach avoids the estimates being susceptible to changes in net migration (including overseas students) during these ages. Older ages are obtained from the mid-year estimates, and national population projections without ageing. In both cases, the estimates are adjusted from age at mid-year to age on the country-specific reference dates using the monthly distribution of births. Analysis of application and entry rates by area-based background are supported through small area population estimates, available from the Office for National Statistics, National Records for Scotland, and the Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency. These small area population estimates have been revised to be consistent with the national level population estimates.

BTEC	<p>Originally Business and Technician Education Council, BTECs are qualifications now offered by Pearson. The Level 3 BTECs covered in this analysis include the following from the NQF framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Awards • National Certificate • National Diploma • Subsidiary Certificates <p>They also include the following qualifications in the QCF framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Diploma • Diploma • Subsidiary Diploma • 90-credit Diploma <p>The majority of BTECs are awarded to applicants from England.</p>
Clearing	An acceptance route available late in the application cycle.
Cohort	A group of the population all born in the same academic year, who are therefore, for example, all aged 18 on a particular reference date.
Domicile	Declared area of permanent residence.
Entry rate	Number of acceptances from a UCAS application cycle divided by the estimated base population.
Firm choice	An offer made by a provider which has been confirmed by the applicant as their first choice. These can be either conditional (dependent on achieving specified conditions), or unconditional (applicant has met specific conditions and assumed to be accepted or placed at the provider).
HE	Higher education.
Higher tariff provider	A provider that belongs to the higher tariff group, from the grouping of providers based on the average levels of attainment of their UK 18 year old accepted applicants (summarised through UCAS Tariff points) in recent cycles. The other two groups are medium tariff providers and lower tariff providers. Each group of providers accounted for around a third of all UK 18 year old acceptances in recent cycles.
IB	International Baccalaureate Diploma.
Insurance choice	An offer made by a provider which has been confirmed by the applicant as their second choice, in case the conditions of their firm choice are not met. These can be either conditional (dependent on achieving specified requirements) or unconditional (no further requirements to be met).
JACS	Joint Academic Coding System is a way of coding academic subjects. The system is co-owned and maintained by HESA and UCAS. JACS version 1.7 was introduced in 2002/03. It has been revised twice, with JACS 2.0 coming into effect in 2007/08 and JACS 3.0 in 2012/13.

Main scheme	The main UCAS Undergraduate application scheme through which up to five course choices can be applied for. This opens in September, and closes to new applications on 30 June the following year.
Main scheme Clearing	Where an applicant was unsuccessful in the main scheme (i.e. applied before 30 June), and subsequently found a place using Clearing.
Non-EU	Countries outside the European Union, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
Offer	Provider decision to grant a place to an applicant. May be subject to the applicant satisfying academic and/or other criteria.
Offer rate	The proportion of applications who receive an offer.
Provider	A higher education provider – a university or college.
RPA	Record of Prior Acceptance. When a provider informs UCAS of applicants it has accepted outside of the normal application process (e.g. individuals who have applied directly to the provider).
Reply	Applicant response to any offers received – this could be firm, insurance, or decline.
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority – Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications taken by young people in Scotland when applying to higher education.
Tariff	A numerical summary of qualification level.
UK	United Kingdom. Excludes the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.