

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.



UCAS

Explore all the end of cycle data in our interactive dashboard on ucas.com¹

Definitions of terms used in this report are given in the glossary²

21%

RECORD ENTRY RATE FOR THE MOST DISADVANTAGED 18 YEAR OLDS

Widening participation across the UK

There were record entry rates in all POLAR4³ groups of 18 year olds accepted into higher education across the UK. For the first time, over one fifth (21.0%, increasing 1.3 percentage points since 2018) of young people from the most disadvantaged areas (quintile 1) of the UK were accepted to start a full-time undergraduate course through UCAS. The entry rate of the most advantaged group of 18 year olds (quintile 5) has increased by 0.9 percentage points, to reach 47.4%.

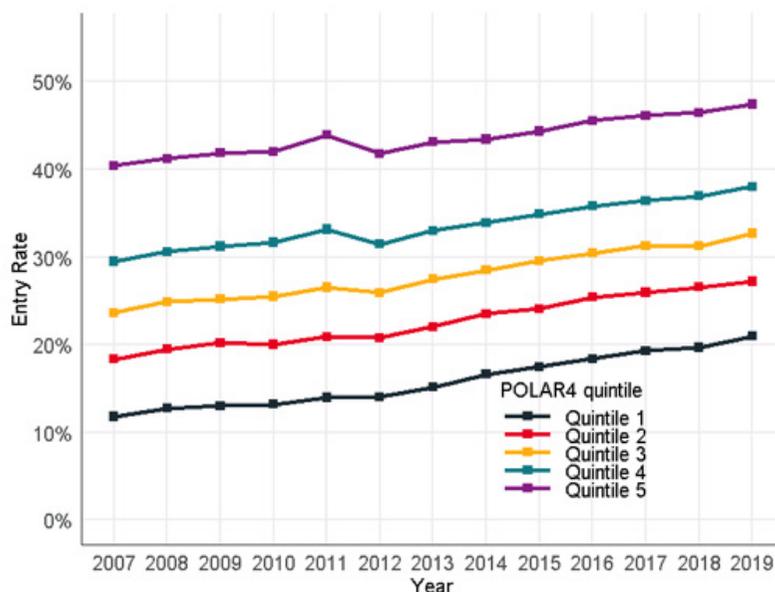


FIGURE 1: Entry rates for each POLAR4 quintile of UK 18 year olds

The large increase in the POLAR4 Q1 entry rate means the gap between 18 year olds from quintile 1 and quintile 5 narrowed to a record low in 2019, with the most advantaged students 2.26 times as likely to enter HE than the most disadvantaged.

This gap has narrowed across the three tariff groups of universities and colleges (higher, medium and lower) in 2019. Although the gap at higher tariff providers remains large, with advantaged applicants currently 5.27 times (compared to 5.74 in 2018) as likely to enter university as the most disadvantaged, there has been significant progress made this year. The higher tariff entry rate gap has narrowed by 8%, the largest year-on-year decrease since 2014, and a new overall low.

We will assess the progress made in the narrowing of the equality gap when considering multiple equality characteristics, in our End of Cycle reporting on the multiple equality measure (MEM), in January 2020⁴.

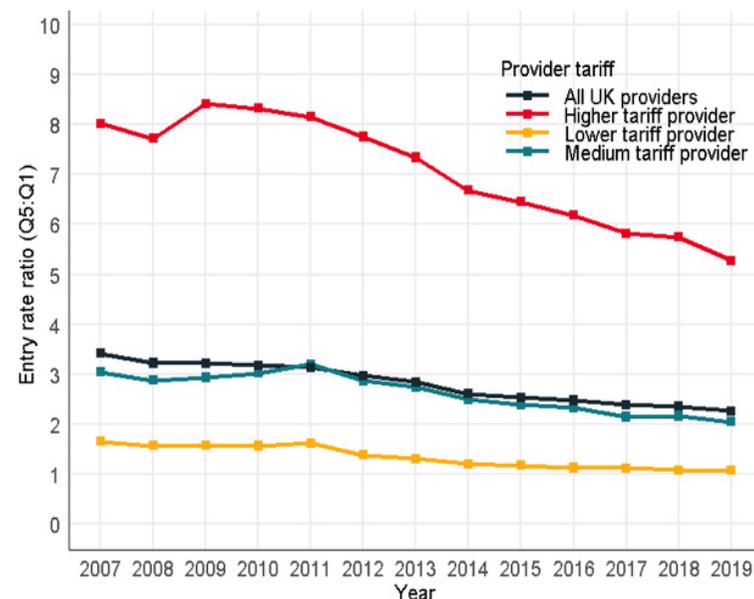


FIGURE 2: Ratio of Q5:Q1 UK 18 year old entry rates for each provider tariff group

¹ www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2019

² www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2019-end-cycle-report

³ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area

⁴ For patterns of entry rates on MEM group up to the 2018 cycle, please see the UCAS Undergraduate End of Cycle Report 2018: Patterns of equality in England. For more information on the MEM, please see the MEM summary and technical reports.

Widening access in Scotland⁵

Using the SIMD2016 measure⁶, 18 year old students⁷ from Scotland's most deprived areas saw an increase in their entry rate in 2019. Acceptances of young people from quintile 1 rose by 0.3 percentage points to a record 13.3%. In quintile 5 areas, the entry rate rose by 0.4 percentage points in 2019 to 42.7%, entry rates for the remaining groups were all slightly down – between 0.2 percentage points (quintile 4) and 1.2 percentage points (quintile 2).

Continuing our approach of a multidimensional analysis of equality, we are currently developing a Scotland-specific version of the multiple equality measure, which we intend to report on next year, at the end of the 2020 cycle.

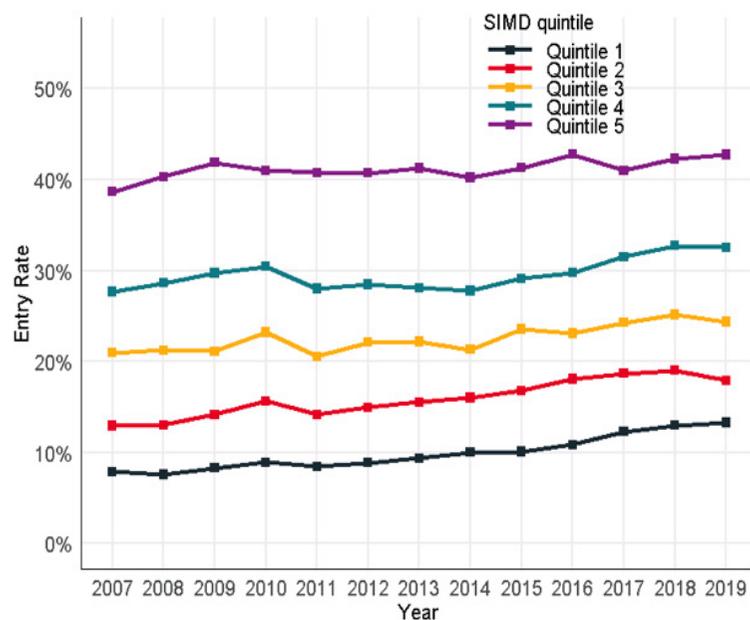


FIGURE 3: Entry rates for each SIMD quintile of Scottish 18 year olds

⁵ In Scotland, there is a substantial proportion of higher education that is not included in UCAS' figures. This is accounted for mostly by full-time higher education provided in further education colleges. These students represent around one third of young full-time undergraduate study in Scotland – this proportion varies by geography and background within Scotland. Accordingly, these figures on applications and application rates in Scotland reflect only those applying for full-time undergraduate study through UCAS. Within the next two years, we anticipate we will be able to extend our reporting on Scottish students by working with the Scottish Government, integrating additional datasets.

⁶ www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD/analysis – in this report, SIMD 2012 is used up to, and including, the 2017 cycle. SIMD 2016 is used thereafter.

⁷ We report on university entry by age 18 year here to provide the most timely analysis. In 2020, we intend on publishing extended analysis on equality in Scotland, covering both older age groups and HE provision in colleges.





Disability and mental health

The number of UK domiciled accepted applicants declaring a disability or mental health condition is at a record high.

In 2019, 12.6% of accepted applicants (58,280 out of 464,335) declared a disability. This is an increase of one percentage point on 2018. These figures have climbed each year over recent cycles.

The largest increase is a 19.2% rise in acceptances of applicants declaring a mental health condition. Mental health is the second most declared disability (15,815 students), after a learning difficulty (21,025 students). Although it is not possible to attribute the continuing year-on-year increase in students declaring a mental health condition to a rise in concerns or diagnoses, we can make a connection to the wider recognition and support of mental health conditions across society, and to the work being done in the HE sector to raise awareness of the support available to students and the encouragement of early disclosure. Collaboration between UCAS, universities and colleges, expert organisations, including Student Minds and the University Mental Health Advisers Network (UMHAN), and sector bodies⁸ is helping to normalise the conversation about mental health and to destigmatise disclosure. We hope UCAS' ongoing work to improve information and advice about mental health, and reviewing the language we use, encourages applicants to feel at ease about giving this sensitive information to their university or college.⁹

19.2%
RISE IN ACCEPTED
STUDENTS DECLARING A
MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

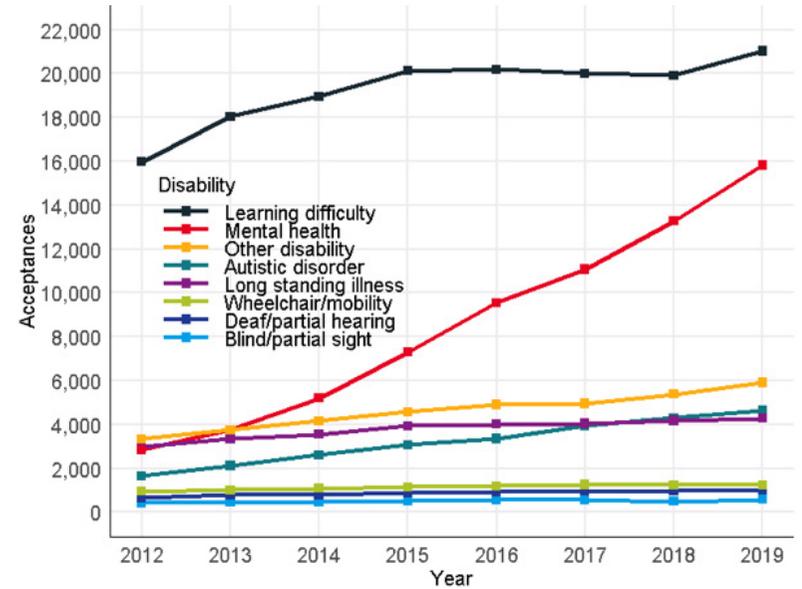


FIGURE 4: Number of acceptances of people declaring disabilities

⁸ twitter.com/ucas_corporate/status/1156192360830836736

⁹ www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students

1.36

RATIO OF YOUNG UK WOMEN
DUE TO START A COURSE
COMPARED TO MEN – A
SMALL DECREASE ON 2018.

Gender

The entry rates of both women and men continue to rise, with both reaching record highs in 2019. 39.5% of UK 18 year old women were accepted onto an undergraduate course. The figure for men is 29%. These are both record highs.

The entry rate for women increased by 3.3% proportionally, and men by 3.5%. In 2019, women were 1.36 times more likely to enter HE than men. This gap narrowed by 0.2% in 2019, for the first time since 2013.

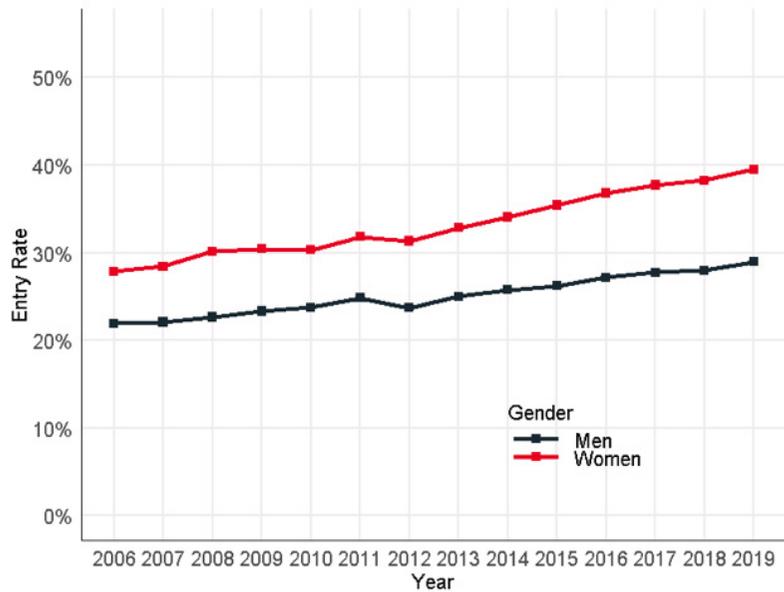


FIGURE 5: Entry rates for UK 18 year old men and women





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