UCAS

End of cycle report
2017

Patterns by applicant characteristics

The Multiple Equality Measure (MEM)

In 2015, UCAS showed how disadvantage, in terms of entry into higher education (HE), is inherently multidimensional in nature[1]. Accordingly, measures which consider only a single dimension of disadvantage can, when used in isolation, miss certain groups who are most and least likely to enter HE.

To address this issue, UCAS developed the Multiple Equality Measure (MEM) to facilitate more accurate identification of those individuals most and least likely to enter HE, and to track patterns of representation in HE through time, using entry rates across MEM groups. As such, the MEM is the primary measure used for reporting here.

The MEM uses statistical modelling techniques applied to a data set of pupils in English schools (including those in independent schools) who were aged 18 between 2006 and 2010 (source: National Pupil Database and School Census, Department for Education), linked to UCAS admissions data. By combining a range of equality dimensions (sex, ethnic group, POLAR3, secondary education sector type, and FSM status[2]) in the statistical model, pupils are aggregated into groups, such that group 1 contains those least likely to enter higher education ('most disadvantaged' in this context), and group 5 contains those most likely to enter higher education ('most advantaged' in this context).

The HE entry probabilities for pupils aged 18 in later years are estimated, and used to place them into MEM groups. Entry rates can then be calculated for each group and the trend assessed between groups across time, to understand patterns of representation within HE across advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The use of a linked National Pupil Database (NPD) – UCAS dataset in the construction of MEM means that the coverage of MEM is limited to those pupils who are in the NPD (see the note at the end of this report for further details). As such, it covers only English 18 year olds present in NPD, on whom there is suitable sex, ethnic group, POLAR3, secondary education sector type, and FSM status information.

Entry rates by MEM group

Entry rates reach new highs across all MEM groups, but percentage point gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups widens

Figure 5.1 shows 18 year old entry rates by MEM group. In 2017, the entry rates for each MEM group increased to the highest values on record, meaning 18 year olds

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[1] 2015 UCAS end of cycle report (Figures 96 and 97).

[2] The National Pupil Database and School Census only records the ethnic group and geographical information (from which POLAR3 quintile is derived) of pupils in state schools. Pupils in independent schools, who have high entry rates, were assigned to have a separate ethnic group and POLAR3 quintile outside of the normal groupings.

from advantaged and disadvantaged groups were more likely to enter HE than ever before. This continues the trend of growth for each group since 2013.

The largest increase in entry rates was among the most advantaged (MEM group 5), while the most disadvantaged (MEM group 1) had the smallest increase. In 2017, the entry rate for MEM group 5 was 53.1 per cent, an increase of 1.0 percentage points (+1.8 per cent proportionally) on the previous cycle. The entry rate for MEM group 1 was 13.8 per cent in 2017, an increase of 0.2 percentage points (+1.2 per cent proportionally). These patterns of entry rates mean the gap in entry rates between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged widened by 0.8 percentage points, to 39.3 percentage points.

Entry rates for the other MEM groups in 2017 were 24.7 per cent (+0.6 percentage points, +2.6 per cent proportionally) for MEM group 2, 32.5 per cent (+0.2 percentage points, +0.6 per cent proportionally) for MEM group 3, 41.0 per cent (+0.8 percentage points, +1.9 per cent proportionally) for MEM group 4.

Looking across the entire reporting period, the increase in entry rates in each MEM group meant those from MEM group 1 were 78 per cent more likely to enter HE in 2017 than in 2006, while those from group 5 were 14 per cent more likely.

Figure 5.1 Entry rates for English 18 year olds by multiple equality measure groups (group 5 = most likely to enter to HE)
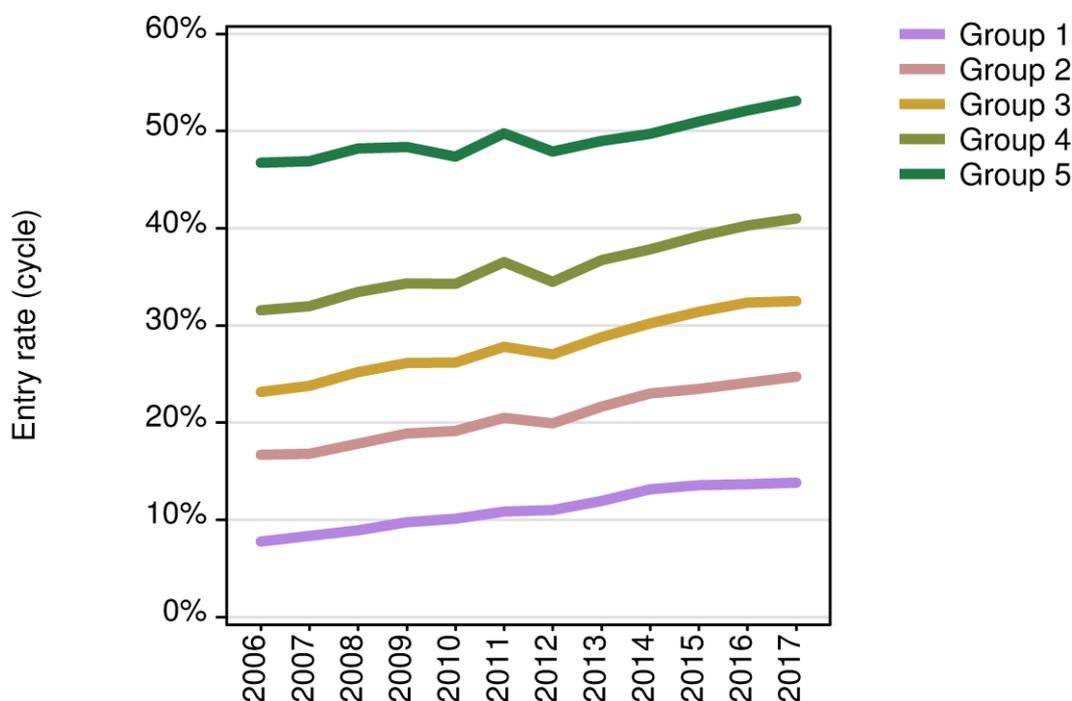
Equality of representation in higher education has seen no progress for three years

Comparing entry rates for MEM group 1 with entry rates in the other groups provides us with a measure of the level of equality of representation in HE. This is achieved by plotting the ratio of entry rates for each MEM group versus the entry rate for group 1 (Figure 5.2). An entry rate ratio of 1.0 indicates equal chances of entering higher education for the two groups. Entry rate ratios greater than 1.0 indicate that 18 year olds from the more advantaged MEM group were more likely to enter than those from the most disadvantaged group – for example, an entry ratio of 2.5 means the advantaged group is two and half times more likely to enter than the disadvantaged group.

Between 2006 and 2014, the entry rate ratio of group 5 versus group 1 fell, from 6.0 to 3.8. This was because the proportional growth in entry rates for group 1 in each of these years was bigger than that for group 5. Since 2014, this entry rate ratio has remained constant. This shows that, over the last three years, no progress has been made in equality of representation between those young people most likely to go into higher education, and those who are the least.

There were similar, though less pronounced patterns between each of the other MEM groups and MEM group 1, showing that, since 2014, there has been no progress in narrowing the gap in representation between these groups, and group 1.

Figure 5.2 Ratio of 18 year old entry rate for MEM groups 2 to 5 vs MEM group 1
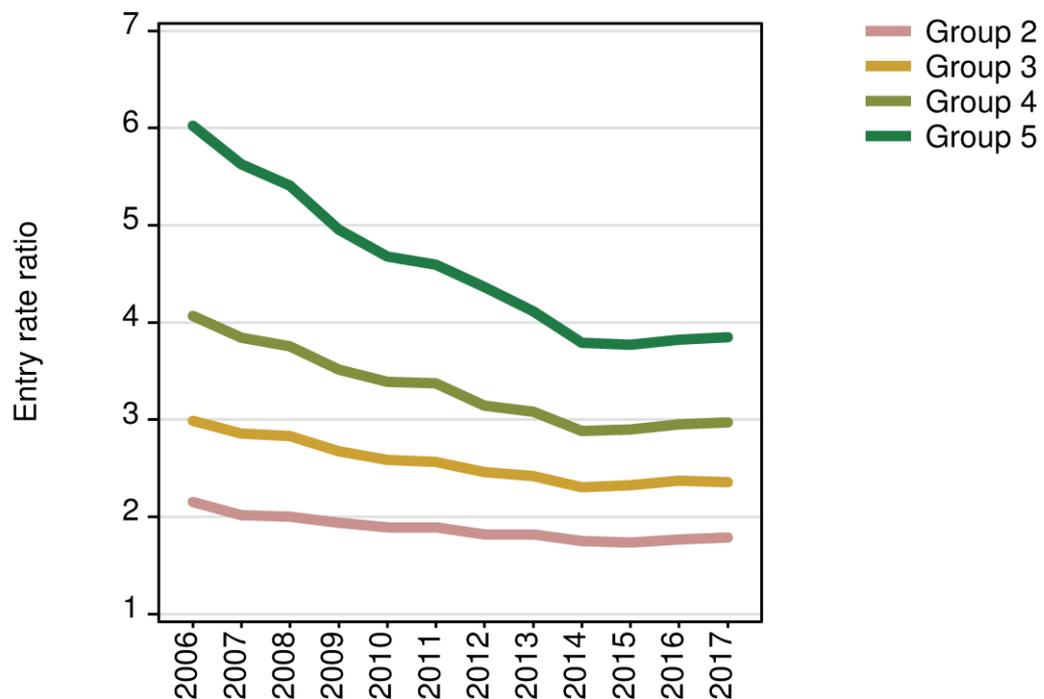
Higher tariff providers have narrowed the gap in terms of representation across MEM groups

Figure 5.3 shows the 18 year old entry rates to high tariff providers by MEM group. In 2017, the entry rates to higher tariff providers for all MEM groups reached their highest values on record.

For higher tariff providers, the largest increases in entry rates in 2017 were among the more disadvantaged MEM groups. The entry rate for MEM group 1 was 2.5 per cent, an increase of 7.4 per cent from 2016. The entry rate for MEM group 2 increased by 4.3 per cent proportionally to reach 5.5 per cent, and for MEM group 3 it increased by 2.1 per cent proportionally to reach 8.1 per cent. The entry rate for MEM group 4 increased by 1.7 per cent proportionally to 12.8 per cent, and the entry rate MEM group 5 increased by 1.1 per cent proportionally to 24.1 per cent.

The larger increase in the entry rate for MEM group 1 meant that the gap in equality of representation between MEM groups 5 and 1 (measured as the ratio of entry rates between these two groups) fell, from 10.4 in 2016 to 9.8 this year. Despite this, the gap remains large, with those young people who are most likely to go into HE nearly ten times more likely to enter a higher tariff provider than those who are least likely to enter HE.

Across the whole reporting period, 18 year olds from MEM group 1 were 70 per cent more likely to enter a higher tariff provider, and since 2011, 65 per cent more likely.

Figure 5.3 Entry rates for English 18 year olds by multiple equality measure groups to higher tariff providers (logarithmic scale)
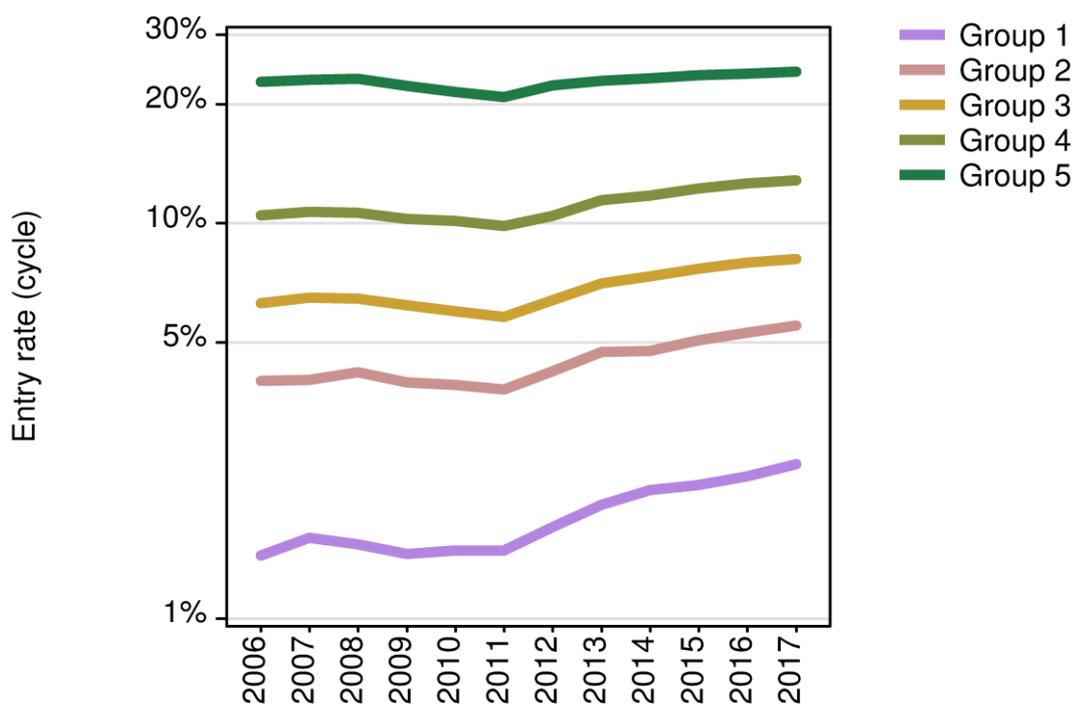
18 year olds from the most advantaged MEM group are 3.5 times more likely to go to a medium tariff provider compared to those from the most disadvantaged group

In 2017, the entry rates to medium tariff providers increased, by similar proportional amounts, across all MEM groups, to their highest recorded values.

The entry rate in 2017 for MEM group 1 was 4.7 per cent, meaning they were 5.6 per cent more likely to enter a medium tariff provider compared to last year. The entry rate for MEM group 2 was 8.7 per cent, a 6.1 per cent proportional increase on the previous year, while for group 3 it was 11.6 per cent, a 5.0 per cent proportional increase.

For MEM group 4, the entry rate in 2017 was 14.2 per cent, a 3.7 per cent proportional increase on the previous year, and for group 5 it was 16.2 per cent, a 5.4 per cent proportional increase.

The similar proportional increases in entry rate across MEM groups meant the group 5 to group 1 entry rate ratio remained unchanged from last year, at 3.5.

Despite no fall in the entry rate ratio, the 18 year old entry rate for MEM group 1 to medium tariff providers has doubled since 2006, and increased by 59 per cent since 2011.

Figure 5.4 Entry rates for English 18 year olds by multiple equality measure groups to medium tariff providers (logarithmic scale)
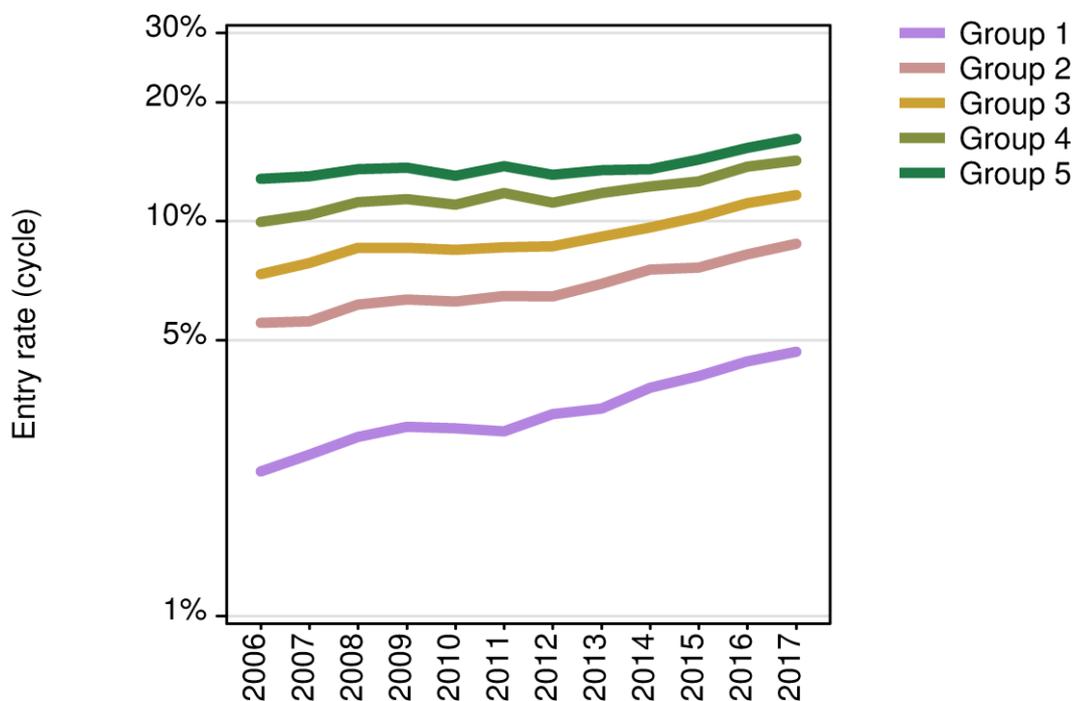
Entry rates to lower tariff providers fall in 2017 for most disadvantaged MEM group

Over the reporting period, entry rates to lower tariff providers across MEM groups were much closer together than they were for either higher or medium tariff providers, indicating greater equality of representation (in terms of young people most and least likely to enter HE) at this set of providers.

Since 2012, the entry rates for MEM groups 3 to 5 were particularly close, with the group 4 entry rate being highest. Across the period, the entry rate for group 1 was the lowest. In 2017, the entry rate for the MEM group 1 was 6.7 per cent (a 3.5 per cent proportional fall compared to 2016, the largest across all MEM groups), while for group 2 it was 10.4 per cent, and for group 3 it was 12.7 per cent. The entry rate for group 4 was 13.9 per cent (a 0.4 per cent proportional increase, the only MEM group for which the entry rate increased this year), and for group 5 it was 12.8.

The group 5 to group 1 entry rate ratio remained unchanged in 2017 at 1.9, meaning English 18 year olds who were most likely to enter HE were nearly twice as likely to enter a lower tariff provider than those least likely to enter HE.

The fall in entry rate for MEM group 1 this year was the second fall in consecutive years, and meant the entry rate this year was 7 per cent lower than in 2014. Prior to this, entry rates had increased in most years since 2006. Despite the fall this year, the entry rate for MEM group 1 to lower tariff providers was 68 per cent higher than in 2006.

Figure 5.5 Entry rates for English 18 year olds by multiple equality measure groups to lower tariff providers (logarithmic scale)
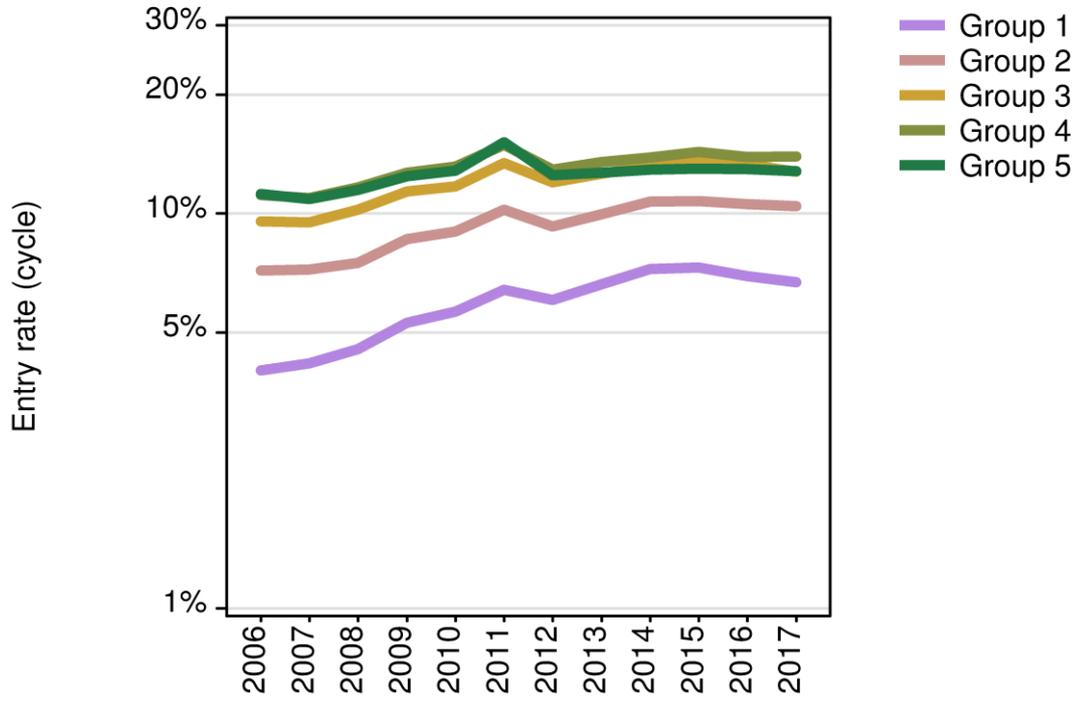
Large variation in equality of representation by MEM group for higher, medium, and lower tariff providers

Figure 5.6 shows the entry rates ratios for MEM group 5 versus group 1, for higher, medium, and lower tariff providers. Across the period, higher tariff providers had the highest entry rate ratio, followed by medium tariff, then lower tariff, which had the lowest entry rate ratio.

In 2017, the entry rate ratio for higher tariff providers was 9.8, down from 10.4 in 2016 – one of the largest falls in this ratio for this group of providers. This is a continuation of the falls since 2010, when the ratio was 14.5.

The entry rate ratio for medium tariff providers was 3.5 in 2017, unchanged from the previous two cycles. However, the ratio is lower now than it was at the beginning of the reporting period, where it stood at 5.5, falling in the majority of years since.

The entry rate ratio for lower tariff providers was 1.9 in 2017, unchanged from 2016, but slightly higher than in 2015, when it was 1.8.

Figure 5.6 18 year old entry rate ratio: Multiple equality measure groups (group 5:group 1) by provider tariff
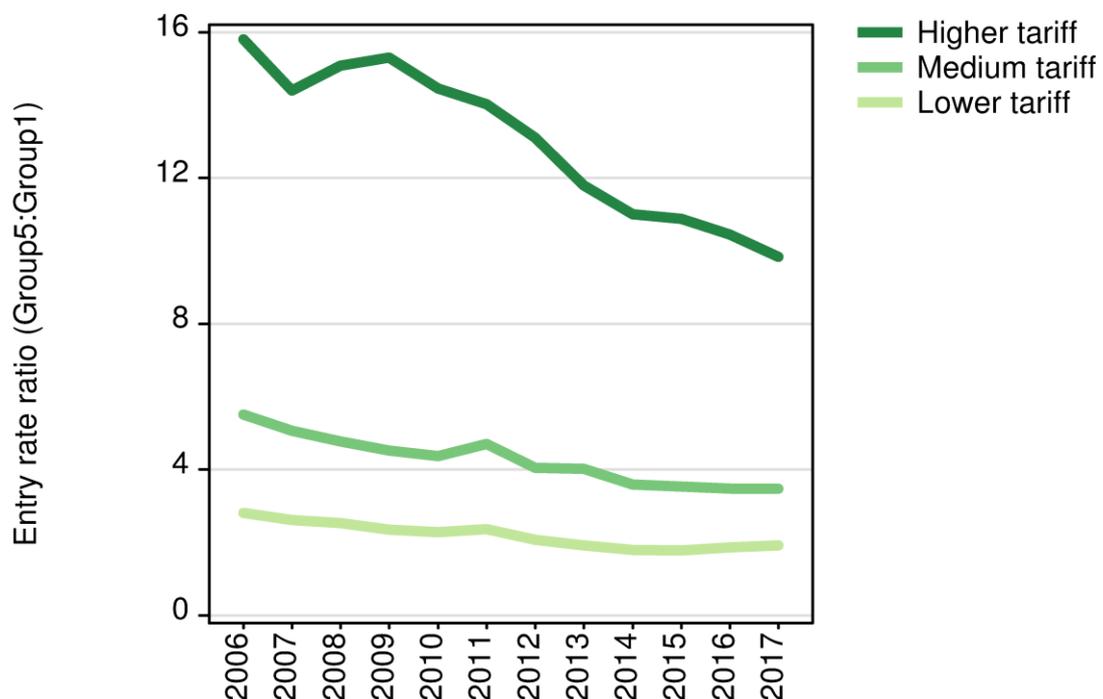
Entry rates by POLAR3 quintile

Highest recorded entry rates for English 18 year olds from all backgrounds

Figure 5.7 shows the entry rates for English 18 year olds by POLAR3 quintile, an area-based measure of educational disadvantage. There is a progression from lower to higher entry rates across the disadvantaged to advantaged groups that is maintained throughout the period. The entry rates for all groups increased across the period.

In 2017, the entry rates from all POLAR3 quintiles increased to their highest recorded values, but had smaller proportional increases than in 2016. The entry rate for POLAR3 quintile 1 (Q1, most disadvantaged areas) was 20.4 per cent, and had the largest increase of any quintile this year, rising by 4.6 per cent proportionally (+0.9 percentage points). The entry rate for quintile 2 in 2017 was 26.9 per cent, an increase of 0.7 percentage points (+2.8 per cent). For quintile 3, the entry rate was 32.5 per cent, an increase of 1.0 percentage points (+3.1 per cent), and for quintile 4 it was 37.6 per cent, an increase of 0.4 percentage points (+1.1 per cent). Quintile 5 (Q5, most advantaged areas) had the highest entry rate of 47.1 per cent, an increase of 0.8 percentage points (+1.8 per cent).

These patterns mean that in 2017 pupils from quintile 5 were 2.3 times more likely to enter HE than those from POLAR3 quintile 1, compared to 2.4 times in 2016.

Figure 5.7 18 year olds in England, entry rates by POLAR3 groups (Q5 = advantaged areas)
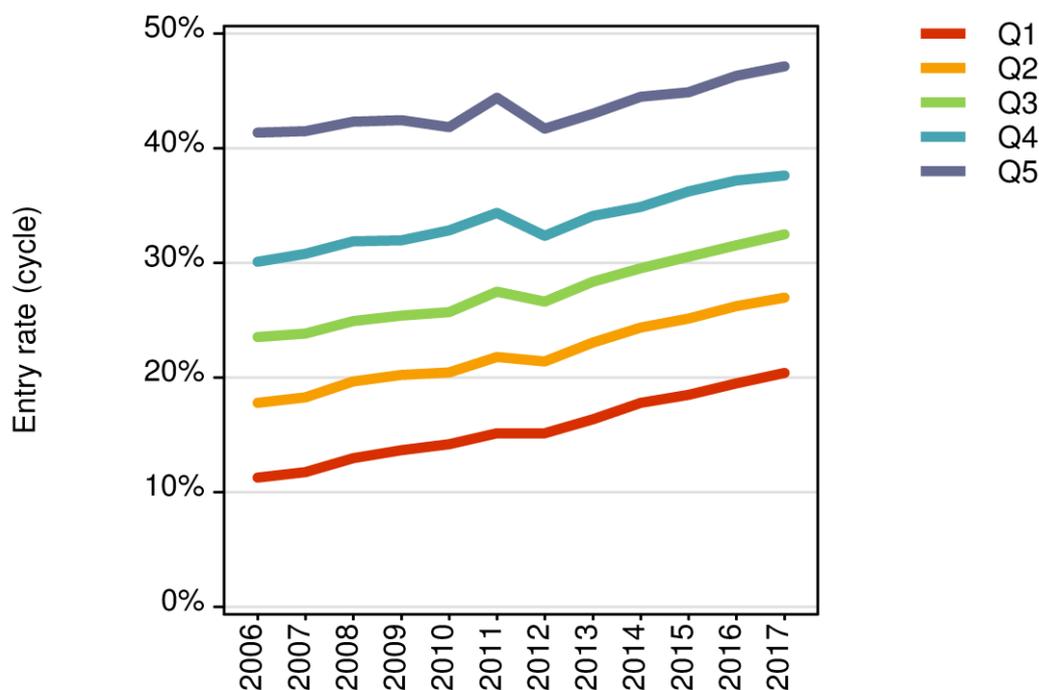
Entry rates for disadvantaged 18 year olds in England and Scotland increase to highest recorded values

Figure 5.8 shows the proportion of the 18 year old population living in the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) that were accepted for entry, by country of domicile. Entry rates for England and Scotland increased in 2017, to the highest values on record, and fell slightly in Northern Ireland and Wales.

In England, entry rates for pupils from POLAR3 quintile 1 increased to 20.4 per cent in 2017. This is an increase of 0.9 percentage points, meaning 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged POLAR3 areas in England were 4.6 per cent more likely to enter HE in 2017 than in 2016.

In Scotland, the entry rate was 12.8 per cent, an increase of 2.2 percentage points, meaning 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged POLAR3 areas in Scotland were 21 per cent more likely to enter HE this year compared to last.

Entry rates in Northern Ireland and Wales fell by less than 0.1 percentage points each, to 15.9 per cent and 18.1 per cent respectively. Despite these falls, the POLAR3 quintile 1 entry rates in Northern Ireland and Wales were the second highest on record for these countries.

Entry rates for advantaged 18 year olds at similar levels to recent cycles

Figure 5.9 shows the entry rate of 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) by country. The entry rates across all countries are generally three to four times higher than for the most disadvantaged group, but do not show the same pattern of increase over the period.

The quintile 5 entry rates increased in England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland in 2017. The increase was greatest in England, where the entry rate rose to 47.1 per cent (+1.8 per cent proportionally). The entry rates in Northern Ireland and Scotland both increased by 0.8 per cent proportionally, to 46.6 and 37.9 per cent respectively. Wales was the only country whose quintile 5 entry rate decreased in 2017, falling by 3.1 per cent proportionally to 45.0 per cent.

Figure 5.8 18 year old entry rates for disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile
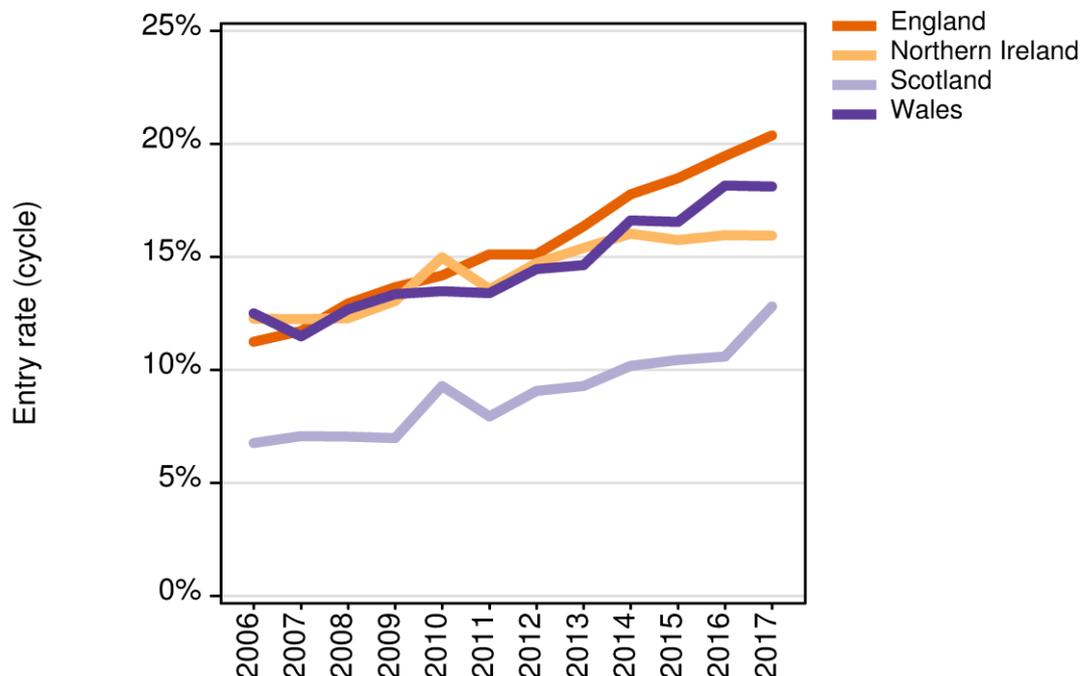
Note: The entry rates for Scotland will be lower than the total entry rates to higher education, since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS.

Figure 5.9 18 year old entry rates for advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) by country of domicile
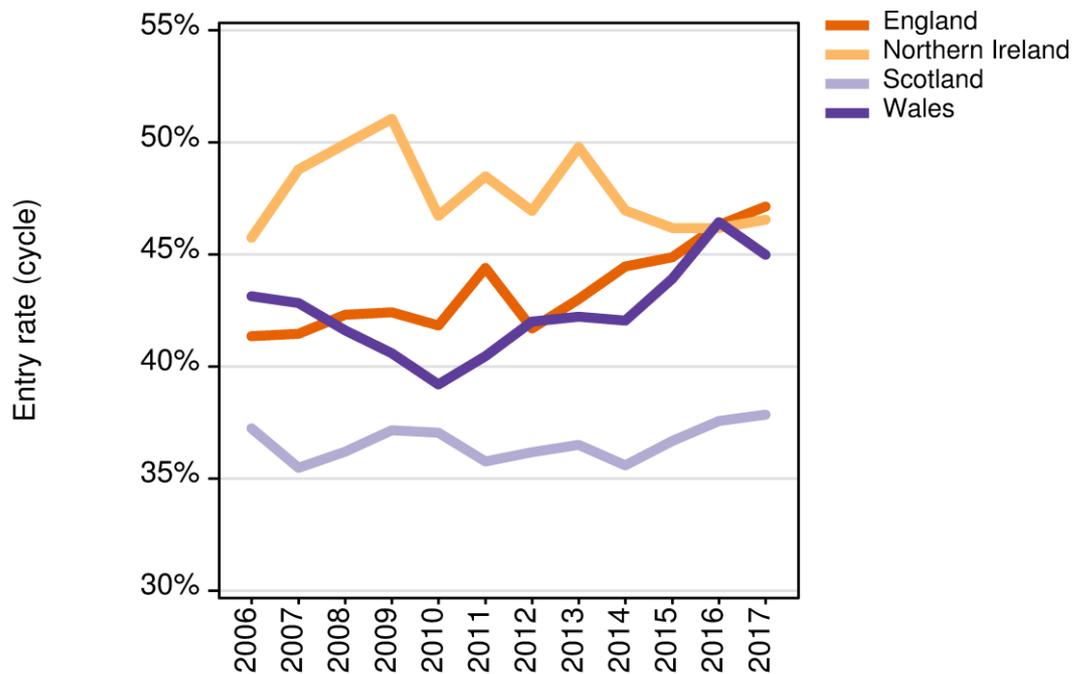
Note: The entry rates for Scotland will be lower than the total entry rates to higher education, since not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS.

Entry rate differences by background fall for most UK countries

Figure 5.10 shows, for each country of the UK, relative differences in the entry rates of 18 year olds by background, using entry rate ratio of POLAR3 quintile 5 to POLAR3 quintile 1.

For all UK countries, pupils from quintile 5 are more likely to enter HE than those from quintile 1. For England and Scotland, the increases in the quintile 1 entry rates have been proportionally greater than those for quintile 5, and so the entry rate ratios for these countries fell in 2017, to 2.3 and 3.0 respectively. In Wales, although entry rates fell in 2017 for both quintile 1 and quintile 5, the proportional fall was greater for quintile 5, which meant the entry rate ratio fell to 2.5. In Northern Ireland, the entry rate ratio remained constant, with quintile 5 pupils from Northern Ireland 2.9 times more likely to enter HE than those from quintile 1.

Figure 5.10 18 year old entry rate ratios: most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) relative to most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile
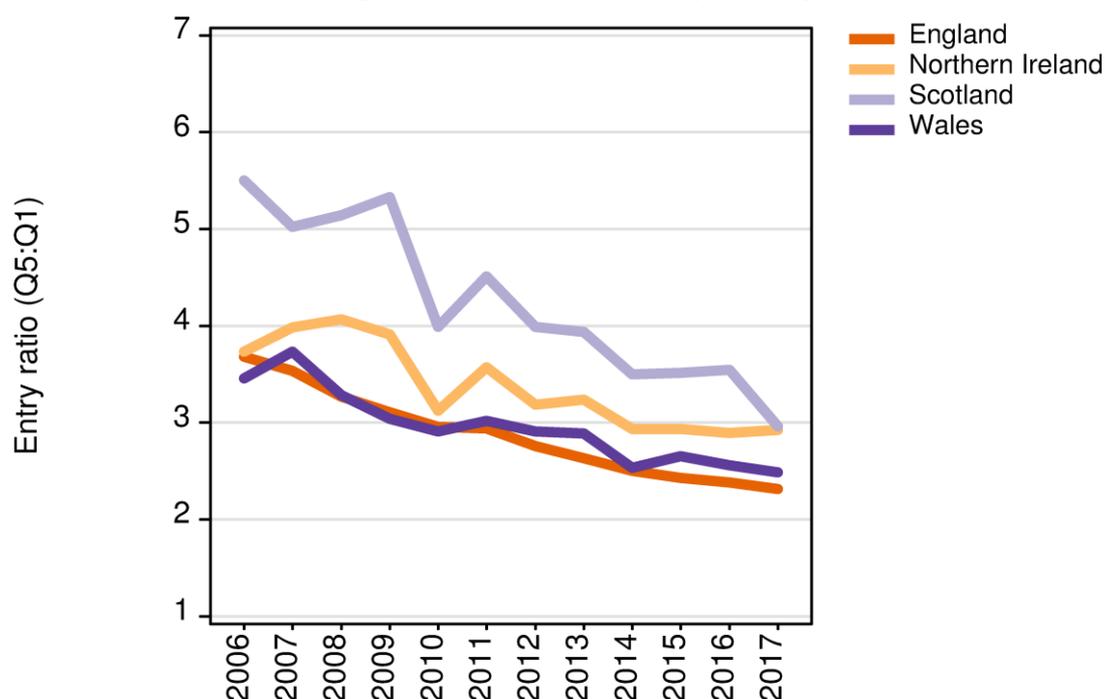
Largest recorded single year increase in quintile 1 entry rate to higher tariff providers this year

The difference in entry rates between POLAR3 quintiles is greatest for the higher tariff providers, and smallest for the lower tariff providers. Entry rates for the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged POLAR3 quintiles in 2017 ranged from 4 per cent to 22 per cent for entry to higher tariff providers, from 7 per cent to 15 per cent for medium tariff providers. For lower tariff providers, entry rates from all backgrounds were in a much narrower range of 9 to 13 per cent.

Figure 5.11 shows entry rates to higher tariff providers by background for the 18 year old population in England against a logarithmic axis (so the proportional changes are clearer).

In 2017, the entry rates to higher tariff providers from all POLAR3 quintiles increased. The largest increase was seen for quintile 1, whose entry rate rose by 10.4 per cent proportionally to 4.0 per cent. This was the greatest single year increase in the quintile 1 entry rate on record, and the second largest single year increase of any quintile. The entry rate for quintile 2 increased to 5.9 per cent (+2.0 per cent proportionally), for quintile 3 to 8.5 per cent (+4.3 per cent proportionally), for quintile 4 to 12.4 per cent (+1.3 per cent proportionally), and for quintile 5 increased to 21.7 per cent (+2.0 per cent proportionally).

The greater increase in the quintile 1 entry rate than that of the quintile 5 means that, in 2017, pupils from quintile 5 were 5.5 times more likely to enter higher tariff providers than those from quintile 1 – a fall from 5.9 times in 2016.

Figure 5.11 English 18 year olds, entry rates to higher tariff providers by POLAR3 groups (logarithmic scale)
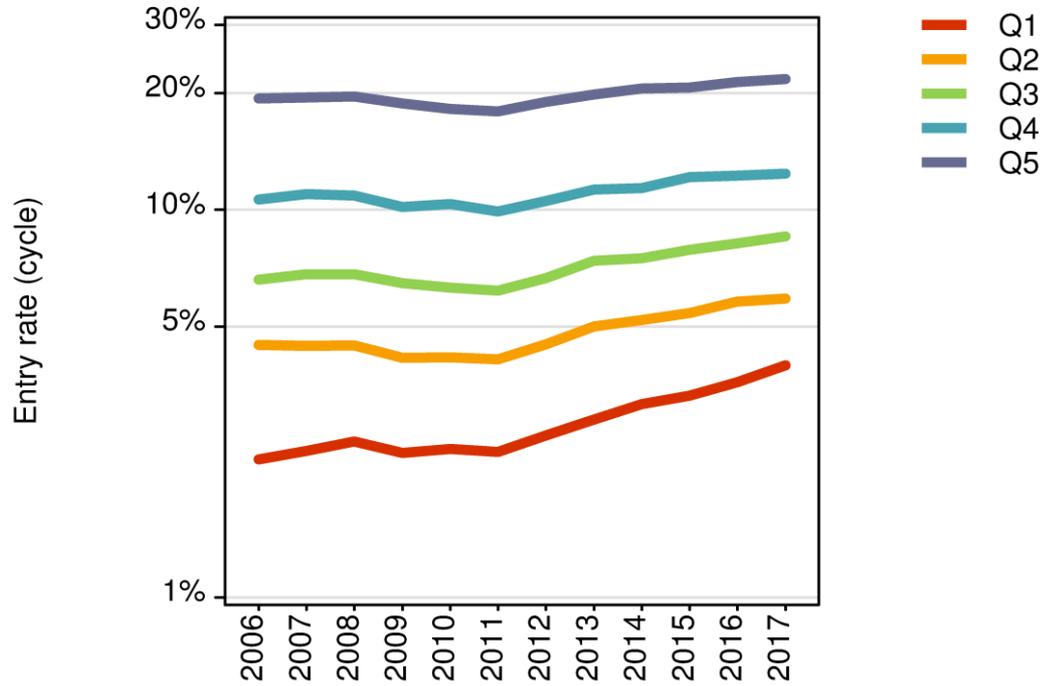
Entry rates to medium tariff providers increase from all backgrounds in 2017

Entry rates to medium tariff providers (Figure 5.12) have generally increased across the period across all POLAR3 quintile, but there were greater increases in entry rates from the more disadvantaged quintiles.

The entry rate to medium tariff providers for English 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas was 14.9 per cent in 2017 (+0.7 percentage points, +5.2 per cent proportionally), while the entry rate from the most disadvantaged areas was 6.9 per cent (+0.6 percentage points, +9.8 per cent proportionally). This means the most advantaged applicants were 2.1 times more likely to enter medium tariff providers than the most disadvantaged in 2017 – a decline from 3.4 times more likely in 2006, and from 2.2 times in 2016.

Figure 5.12 English 18 year olds, entry rates to medium tariff providers by POLAR3 groups (logarithmic scale)
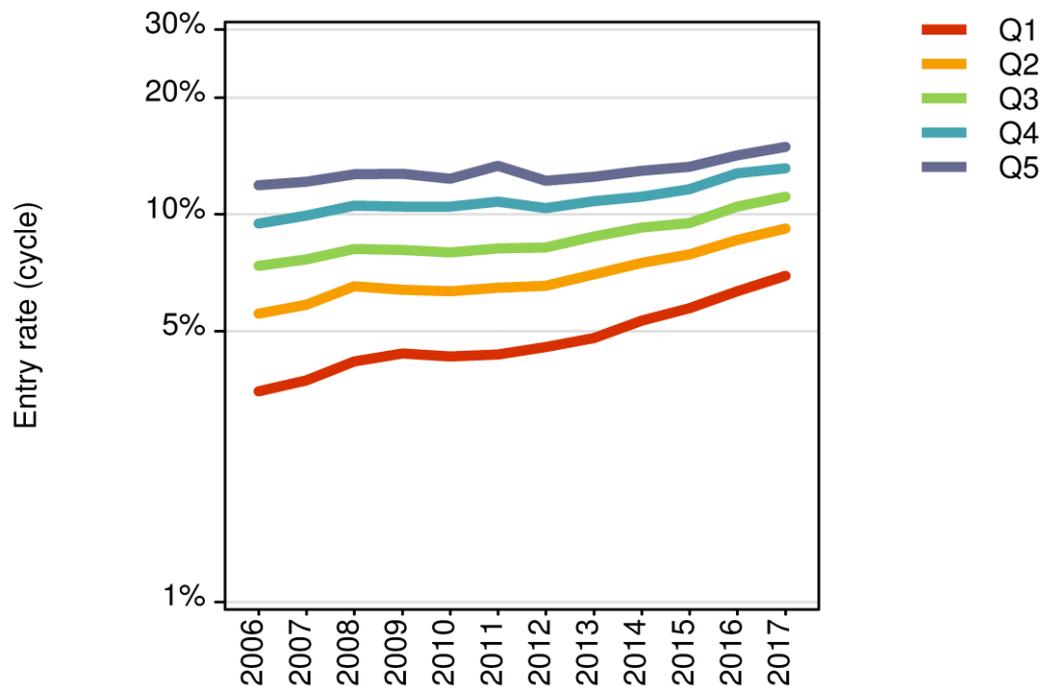
Entry rates to lower tariff providers by background are similar to previous cycles

For entry to lower tariff providers (Figure 5.13), there is much less differentiation in entry rates by background, compared to medium and higher tariff providers. In 2017, the entry rates from all backgrounds to lower tariff providers were within a 3.4 percentage point range (in 2006, the range was 4.7 percentage points).

There were either small falls, or no change, in the entry rates to lower tariff providers for all POLAR3 quintiles in 2017. The 18 year old entry rates ranged from 9.5 per cent for those living in the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1), to 12.9 per cent (for those living in POLAR3 Q3 areas). The entry rate for those living in the most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) had the largest proportional fall, of 3.2 per cent, to 10.5 per cent. Entry rates for those living in POLAR3 Q1, Q2 and Q3 remained constant since last year, while the entry rate for POLAR3 Q4 fell by 1.0 per cent proportionally.

In 2006, the entry rate to lower tariff providers from the most advantaged areas was 1.9 times the entry rate from the most disadvantaged areas. By the end of the period in 2017, the entry rate from the most advantaged areas was 1.1 times the entry rate from the most disadvantaged areas – the same value as in 2016.

Figure 5.13 English 18 year olds, entry rates to lower tariff providers by POLAR3 groups (logarithmic scale)
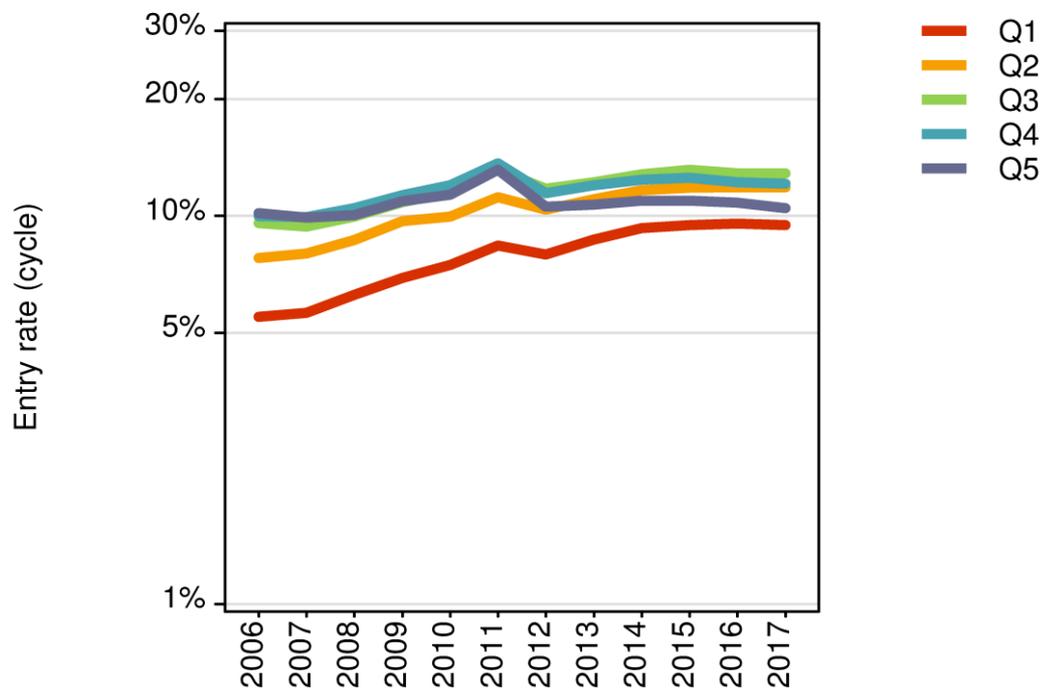
# Entry rates for Scottish domiciles by SIMD

Highest recorded single year increase in SIMD quintile 1 entry rate to high tariff providers

Figure 5.14 shows the entry rates for Scottish 18 year olds by area-based background, based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD 2016). SIMD ranks small geographical areas in Scotland by their relative level of deprivation across a range of measures, which are used to form five groups with equal population sizes. Not all higher education providers in Scotland use UCAS, meaning there is a section of provision (mostly offered through further education colleges) not included in UCAS' figures. This means these entry rates will be lower than the total entry to higher education.

In 2017, the entry rates increased for all SIMD quintiles, except for quintile 5 (Figure 5.14). The entry rate for quintile 1 had the largest increase, rising by 16.2 per cent proportionally to 12.3 per cent, the highest value on record. This is the largest single year increase of any quintile across the period. Quintile 2 had the second largest increase in entry rate (+6.3 per cent proportionally), reaching a value of 18.7 per cent. There were smaller increases for quintile 3 (+2.7 per cent proportionally to 24.3 percent) and quintile 4 (+1.3 per cent proportionally to 31.5 per cent), while quintile 5 was the only quintile whose entry rate fell in 2017 (-2.7 per cent proportionally to 41.0 percent).

The increase in the quintile 1 entry rate, combined with the fall in the quintile 5 entry rate, meant that in 2017 pupils from quintile 5 were 3.3 times more likely to enter HE than those from quintile 1.

Figure 5.14 Scottish 18 year olds, entry rates by SIMD 2016 groups (Q5 = least deprived)
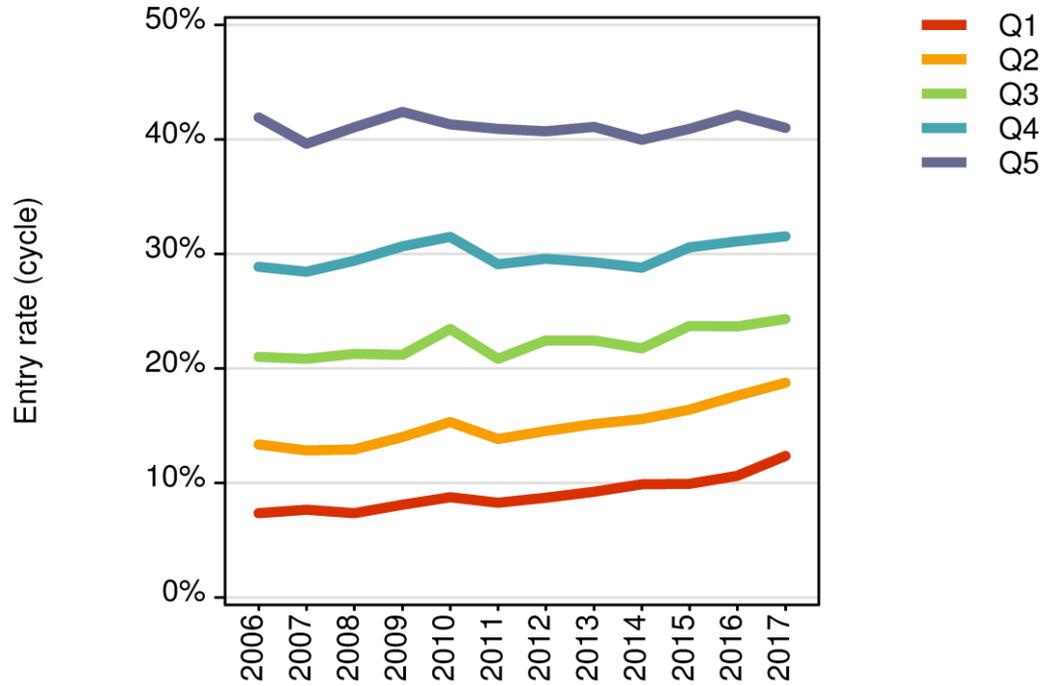
Entry rates by FSM

For pupils attending state schools in England, administrative data sets record whether an individual is receiving free school meals (FSM, a means-tested benefit that can be used as an indicator of low income) and their ethnic group. Linking these pupil data sets (source: National Pupil Database and School Census, Department for Education) to the UCAS admissions data allows the calculation of entry rates by these categories recorded in the pupil data sets, when the applicant was age 15.

Non-FSM pupils remain twice as likely to enter HE than FSM pupils

Each year, between 12.5 and 15.0 per cent of 15 year old state school pupils in England receive free school meals (FSM). Figure 5.15 shows the entry rates for those who while at school were in, and not in, receipt of free school meals.

Across the period, pupils who received FSM were less likely to enter higher education aged 18 than those who did not receive FSM. In 2017, the entry rate for pupils who received FSM was 16.9 per cent, 0.3 percentage points higher than in 2016, and a proportional increase of 2.0 per cent. The entry rate for non-FSM pupils was 33.8 per cent, an increase of 0.6 percentage points, also a proportional increase of 2.0 per cent.

These increases meant that those who were not in receipt of free school meals were twice as likely to enter HE aged 18 than those who were not in receipt, unchanged from 2016. However, the smaller percentage point increase for the FSM group compared to the non-FSM group, meant that the percentage point gap between the two groups increased by 0.3 percentage points, to 16.9 per cent.

Figure 5.15 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by free school meal (FSM) status at age 15
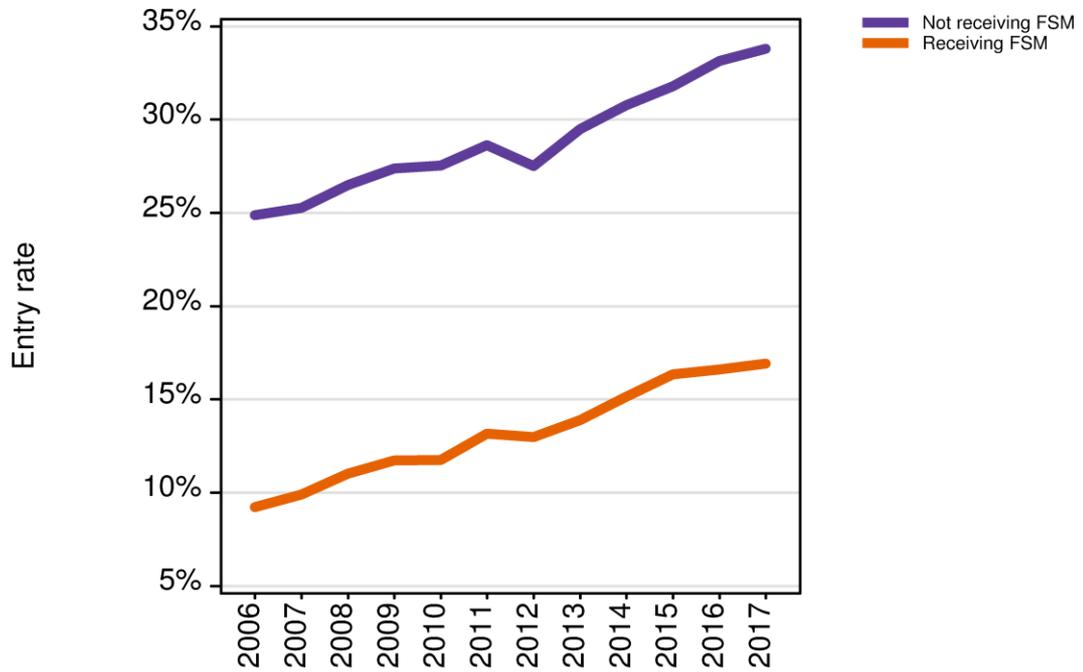
Entry rates by ethnic group

Entry rates increase for all ethnic groups, but large differences persist

Figure 5.16 shows the variation of 18 year old entry rates by ethnic group. Since 2006, former state school pupils recorded as being in the Chinese ethnic group consistently had the highest entry rate, while since 2007, those recorded in the White ethnic group consistently had the lowest. Across the period, entry rates increased for all ethnic groups, and in 2017 they increased to the highest ever recorded values, meaning that 18 year olds from across groups were more likely to enter HE than ever before.

In 2017, the entry rate for the Chinese ethnic group was 63.0 per cent, a proportional increase of 3.6 per cent on the previous year. The entry rate for the Asian ethnic group was 45.8 per cent, the second highest of all ethnic groups, and 3.8 per cent higher than in 2016.

The entry rate for the Black ethnic group was 40.4 per cent, an increase of 3.2 per cent on 2016. The Any other ethnic group had a similar entry rate of 40.1 per cent, an increase of 5.7 per cent.

The Mixed ethnic group has an entry rate of 34.0 per cent, the second lowest entry rate of all ethnic groups in 2017, but an increase of 2.0 per cent on the previous cycle. The White ethnic group had the lowest entry rate of all ethnic groups of 29.3 per cent, and also the smallest proportional increase of any ethnic group this year, increasing by 1.5 per cent.

These patterns meant that the proportional gap between the White ethnic group and all other ethnic groups increased in 2017. Compared to former state school pupils from the White ethnic group, those from the Chinese group were 2.2 times more likely to enter HE this year, while those from the Asian ethnic group were 1.6 times more likely, and those from the Black group were 1.4 times. 18 year olds from the Any other ethnic group were 1.4 times more likely, while the Mixed ethnic group were 1.2 times more likely to enter HE compared to the White ethnic group.

Figure 5.16 Entry rates for English 18 year old state school pupils by ethnic group
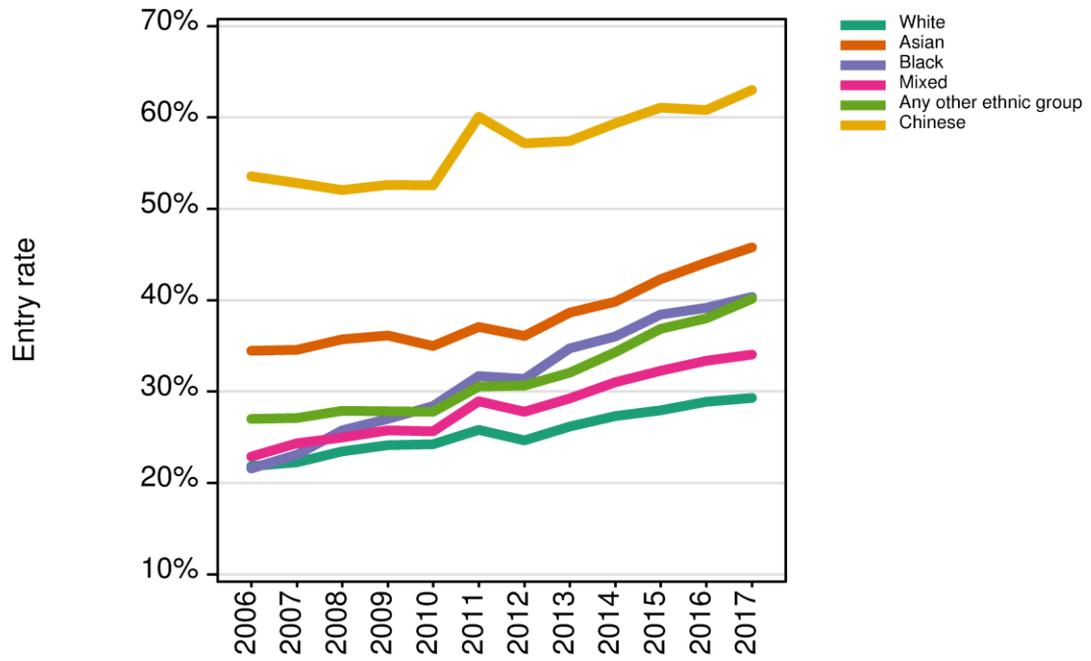
Entry rates by sex

18 year old women remain over a third more likely to apply and enter HE than 18 year old men

In 2017, 38.1 per cent of the UK 18 year old population applied to university through UCAS, with 32.6 per cent accepted. This represented a 0.6 percentage point increase (1.7 per cent proportionally) on the application rate, and a 0.7 percentage point increase (2.3 per cent proportionally) on the entry rate. The national rates are composed of a mixture of different rates for men and women, shown in figure 5.17.

With the exception of 2012, entry rates for 18 year old men and women increased each year since 2006. During this time, 18 year old men were less likely to apply than women.

In 2017, application rates for men and women both increased to their highest recorded values, with 44.0 per cent of women, and 32.5 per cent of men applying through UCAS. The application rate for men increased by 1.9 per cent, a greater proportional increase than the application rate for women, which rose by 1.5 per cent. However, there was a slightly bigger percentage point increase in the application rate for women (+0.7 percentage points) than for men (+0.6 percentage points). In 2017, 18 year old women were over a third (36 per cent) more likely to apply to HE than 18 year old men.

18 year old men were also less likely to enter HE than 18 year old women across the reporting period. In 2017, the entry rates for men and women increased to the highest values on record. For women, the entry rate increased by 0.9 percentage points (+2.5 per cent proportionally) to 37.7 per cent. For men, it increased by 0.6 percentage points (+2.1 per cent proportionally) to 27.8 per cent.

As with application rates, women are over a third (36 per cent) more likely to enter a HE provider through UCAS than men, with the percentage point difference in entry rate widening, to 9.9 percentage points in 2017. This difference in 18 year old entry rates between men and women equates to 37,780 fewer 18 year old men entering higher education this year than would be the case if men had the same entry rate as women.

Figure 5.17 UK domiciled 18 year old application and entry rates by sex
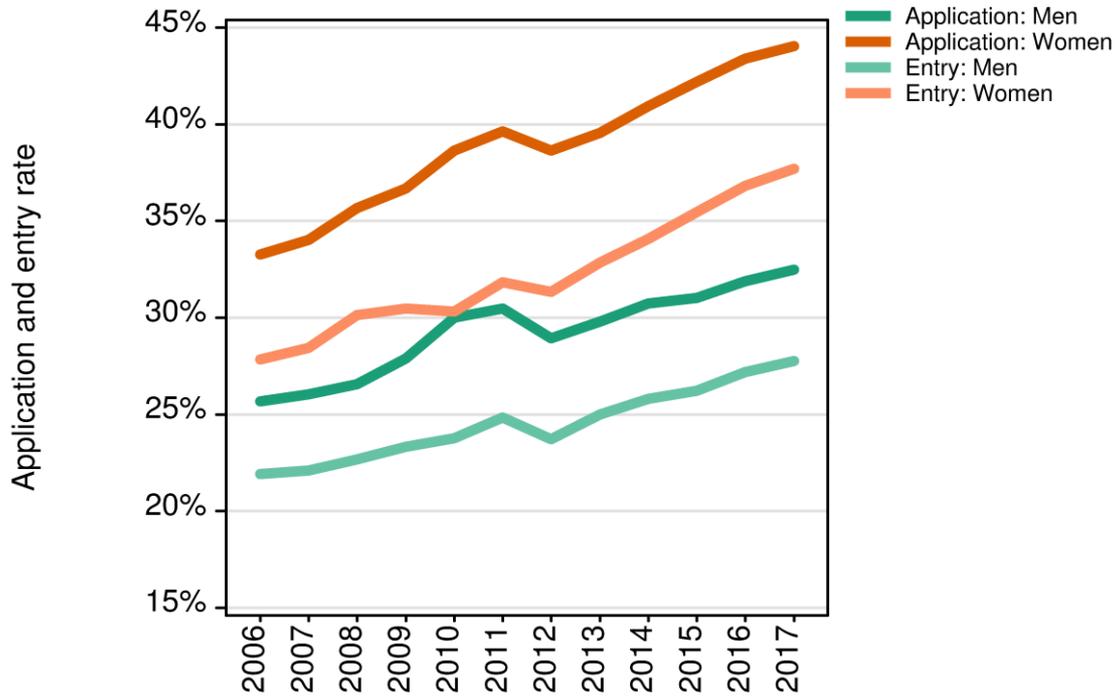
48 per cent of young women from the UK now enter HE by age 19, compared to 37 per cent of young men

Cohort application rates and entry rates for UK domiciled young men and women are shown in Figure 5.18. These measures combine the proportion of the population that applied or were accepted for entry at age 18, with the proportion of the same population that applied or were accepted for entry at age 19, a year later. As such, they give a representation of the total proportion of a young cohort that has been accepted for entry into higher education by age 19. These rates have the drawback that they cannot yet be reported for the cohort that was aged 18 in 2016, since they have not yet had the opportunity to apply at age 19.

For the 2016 cohort (those who were 18 in 2016, and 19 in 2017), the cohort application rates increased for both women (+0.8 percentage points, +1.6 per cent proportionally) and men (+0.6 percentage points, +1.4 per cent proportionally), to 53.6 per cent, and 40.7 per cent respectively.

The cohort entry rate for women increased to 48.1 per cent (+1.0 percentage points, +2.0 per cent proportionally), while the rate for men had a slightly smaller increase to 36.7 per cent (+0.7 percentage points, +1.8 per cent proportionally). The increases in both application and entry rate for men are much greater than those seen for the 2015 cohort, whereas those for women are similar. These increases meant that for the 2016 cohort, women were around 32 per cent more likely to apply to higher education than men, and 31 per cent more likely to enter.

Figure 5.18 UK domiciled cohort application and entry rates by sex
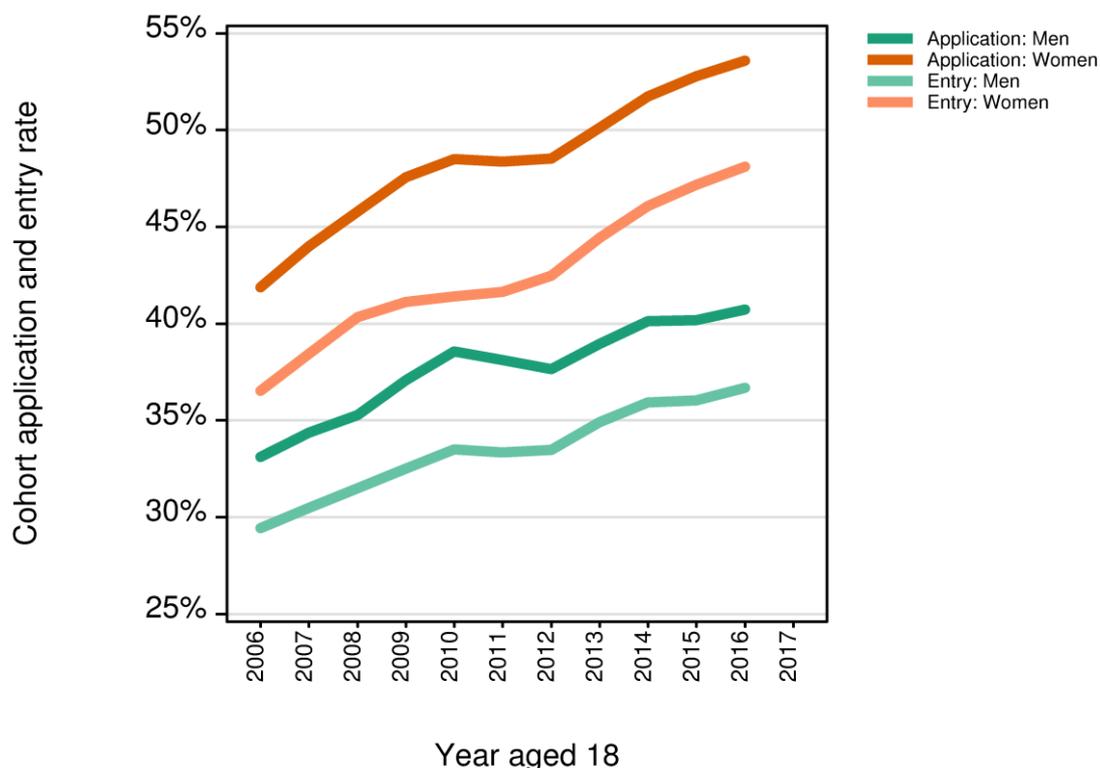
Notes to the report

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 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 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. This means 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.

Entry rates by ethnic group, free school meals (FSM), and multi-dimensional equality measure (MEM)

For pupils attending state schools in England, administrative data sets record whether an individual is receiving free school meals (FSM, a means-tested benefit that can be used as an indicator of low income) and their ethnic group. Linking these pupil data sets (source: National Pupil Database and School Census, Department for Education) to the UCAS admissions data allows the calculation of entry rates by these categories recorded in the pupil data sets when the applicant was age 15.

To calculate these statistics, a conservative linking method has been used, that requires a full match across a range of identifying details to English domiciled UCAS applicants. This necessarily makes the entry rate lower than the true value (for example, ambiguous matches are not used). The linking method, and differences in scope between the two data sources, introduces more uncertainty into these linked

entry rates than the other methods used in this report that do not rely on record linking. All the entry rates for FSM, ethnic group, and MEM are based on linking.

Improvements to the linking procedure were made for the 2017 cycle. As a result, entry rates reported by FSM, ethnic group, and MEM may differ slightly from those in the previous end of cycle reports.

Glossary

Acceptance	An applicant who, at the end of the cycle, has been placed for entry into higher education.
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.
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.
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.
FSM	Free school meals – a means-tested benefit that can be used as an indicator of low income, which has been sourced from the National Pupil Database (NPD). Changes to the coverage of the free school meal indicator in the School Census for the 2013/14 academic year, affecting those applying in the 2016 cycle aged 18, have made it necessary to

	adjust identification of the FSM group in the UCAS data. This means that entry rates reported for the FSM and non-FSM groups differ slightly from those in previous end of cycle reports.
HE	Higher education.
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England.
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.
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.
Multi-dimensional equality measure (MEM)	The multiple equality measure (MEM) brings together information on several equality dimensions for which large differences in the probability of progression into higher education exist. These equality dimensions include sex, ethnic group, where people live (using the POLAR3 classification), secondary education school sector (state or private), and income background (as measured by whether a person was in receipt of free school meals [FSM], a means-tested benefit while at school). These equality dimensions are combined using statistical modelling techniques, and a linked data set of pupils in English schools who were aged 18 between 2006 and 2010 (source: National Pupil Database and School Census, Department for Education). The probability of entry to higher education aged 18 is then calculated based on these equality characteristics and their combinations. These probabilities are then used to aggregate pupils into groups, where group 1 contains those least likely to enter higher education ('most disadvantaged' in this context), and group 5 contains those most likely to enter higher education ('most advantaged' in this context). The composition of these groups, and their entry rates, can then be calculated and the trends in these assessed over time.
National pupil database (NPD)	The Department for Education's National Pupil Database (NPD) holds a range of information about pupils who attend schools and colleges in England. For this analysis, a link has been formed between individuals attending state schools and colleges in the NPD at 15 years old, and those who were 18 years old in UCAS' data three years later.

Non-EU	Countries outside the European Union, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
POLAR3	Developed by HEFCE and classifies small areas across the UK into five groups, according to their level of young participation in HE. Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people, and is ranked from quintile 1 (areas with the lowest young participation rates, considered as the most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 (highest young participation rates, considered most advantaged).
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).
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland, providing a relative measure of deprivation among small areas (data zones). In this report, the SIMD 2016 has been used to group areas in each year in the times series, from 2006 to 2017.
Tariff	A numerical summary of qualification level.
UK	United Kingdom. Excludes the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.