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Issues paper

This report is for information

This report introduces non-continuation rates for full-time first degree entrants to higher education institutions (HEIs) in England split by student and course characteristics between 2005-06 and 2010-11. Interactive graphs accompany this document that provide more detailed data.

Non-continuation rates at English HEIs

Trends for entrants 2005-06 to 2010-11

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Non-continuation rates at English HEIs

Trends for entrants 2005-06 to 2010-11

To	Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions Heads of HEFCE-funded further education colleges Heads of universities in Northern Ireland
Of interest to those responsible for	Student management, Quality assurance, Widening participation
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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This report introduces non-continuation rates for full-time first degree UK-domiciled entrants to higher education institutions (HEIs) in England split by student and course characteristics between 2005-06 and 2010-11.
2. Interactive graphs accompany this document that provide more detailed data. They can be accessed on the HEFCE web-site at www.hefce.ac.uk/ncr/.

Key points

3. The overall trend in the percentage of entrants no longer in higher education (HE) has remained steady, at a value of around 8.2 per cent since 2005-06.
4. The overall trend in percentage of entrants transferring to another HEI remained steady until 2009-10, after which time there was a decrease from 2.8 per cent in 2008-09 to 2.2 per cent in 2009-10 and 1.9 per cent in 2010-11.
5. Mature entrants were more likely to have left HE one year after entry, at 11.6 per cent 2010-11 for mature entrants and 6.3 per cent for young entrants.
6. Computer science entrants have the highest percentage no longer in HE compared with other subjects, while those studying medicine and dentistry had the lowest rate of non-continuation: 12.5 per cent 2.2 per cent respectively in 2010-11.
7. Female entrants were less likely to no longer be in HE one year after entry compared to male entrants: 6.4 per cent and 8.5 per cent respectively in 2010-11. However transfer rates were relatively similar for male and female entrants, at 2.0 per cent and 1.9 per cent respectively for 2010-11 entrants.

8. Black entrants had the highest percentage no longer in HE at 11.3 per cent in 2010-11, and Chinese entrants had the lowest percentage no longer in HE at the end of year one, with 5.5 per cent no longer in HE.

9. Disabled entrants were more likely to remain in HE at the end of year one; in 2010-11 6.2 per cent of disabled entrants did not continue compared to 7.4 per cent of those not disabled in 2010-11.

10. Entrants from areas where there is low participation in HE were more likely than entrants in high participation areas to no longer be in HE at the end of year one: this is the case for both young and mature age groups.

11. State school entrants had a higher percentage no longer in HE after year one than independent school entrants: 7.4 per cent compared to 3.7 per cent in 2010-11. However, these differences were explained once age, subject and qualifications of entrants were taken into account.

12. The North West region had the highest percentage no longer in HE while the South West had the lowest, in 2010-11 the percentages were 10.6 and 5.6 per cent respectively. London had the highest percentage of entrants transferring, while the North East had the lowest.

Action required

13. This document is for information only.

Introduction

14. This report shows non-continuation rates for full-time first degree UK domiciled entrants to higher education institutions (HEIs) in England¹, split by student and course characteristics between 2005-06 and 2010-11.

15. The report provides a background and methodology, an overall non-continuation rate for full-time first degree entrants to English HEIs, and an overview of the results. The results include non-continuation rates for each of the benchmarking factors that are used and then splits of the non-continuation data by a range of characteristics.

16. The characteristics considered are: age, subject studied, qualifications on entry, sex, ethnicity, disability, young participation rate, mature participation rate, previous school and the region of institution.

Background and methodology

17. Non-continuation rates have been published on an annual basis as part of the UK performance indicators (PIs) for higher education (HE)² publication since 1999. They are part of a wider set of performance measures intended to provide consistent and comparable data at institutional level for different measures of performance.

18. This report focuses on the non-continuation following year of entry indicator, and uses the same methodology as that outlined in the UK performance indicators publication. A summary of this methodology is given below, and a full description is available on the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) web-site³ in 'Non-continuation rates – technical details'.

19. We analysed cohorts of full-time first degree entrants from England who entered HEIs between 2005-06 and 2010-11⁴. Entrants were tracked⁵ from the year they entered an institution to the following year, and their study outcome was classified as one of three states: continuing at the same institution; transferring to another institution; or absent from HE.

Benchmark calculations

20. The performance indicators methodology used in the UK publication compares the non-continuation rates by institution, to expected non-continuation rates given the profile of entrants. This expected rate (or benchmark rate) is calculated based on three factors: age, subject studied and qualifications on entry.

21. These benchmark values have been calculated to allow meaningful comparisons to be made between institutions, and aim to take into account other factors that are known to influence

¹ A university or college of higher education (excluding further education colleges); HEFCE provides funds to 128 higher education institutions.

² Published on the HESA web-site under table series T3a, see www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2072/141/

³ For full details of the methodology, see www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2064&Itemid=141

⁴ Entrants who left before 1 December in the year of entry were excluded.

⁵ Note that a difference in linking methodology has led to a small discrepancy between HESA total figures and the analysis presented here.

non-continuation rates. This means that when comparing another factor, the effect of age, subject and entry qualifications have been taken into account.

22. This report does not compare HEIs; instead it presents a summary of the data broken down by student and course characteristics, for the proportion of entrants who transfer and the proportion no longer in HE.

Overview of results

Available data

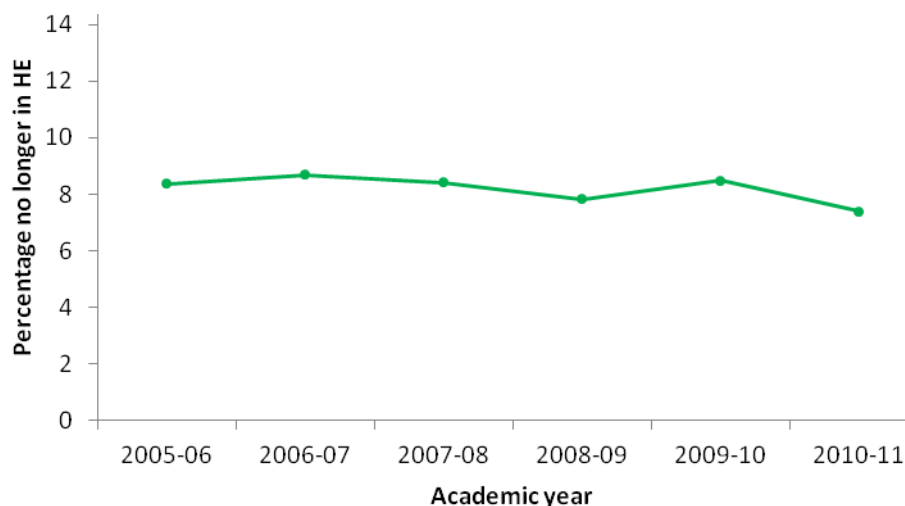
23. The data presented in this document are only a summary of the analyses conducted. The full results have been made available as interactive graphs on the HEFCE web-site⁶.

24. The analysis below focuses on the rate of those no longer in HE after one year; however the interactive graphs mentioned above show more detailed information, such as transfer rates by single student characteristics and a selection of two-way combinations of characteristics.

25. The first section of the report looks at the overall trend in non-continuation rates between 2005-06 and 2010-11.

26. Figure 1 shows the overall trend in the percentage no longer in HE. It shows that the proportion of entrants no longer in HE after one year has not changed to any great extent, remaining steady at around 8 per cent.

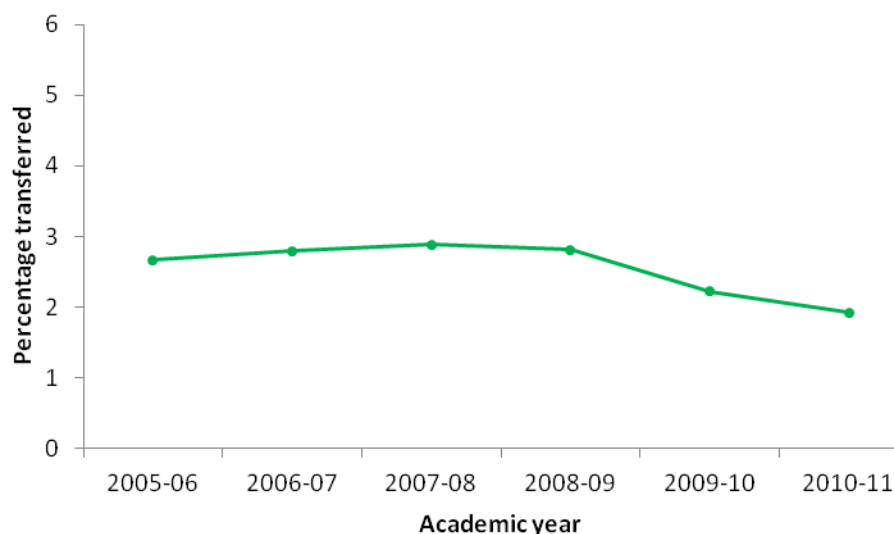
Figure 1 Proportion of entrants who were no longer in HE after one year, from 2005-06 to 2010-11



27. Figure 2 shows the overall trend in percentage transfer. It shows that the trend in transfer rate was steady from 2005-06 to 2008-09, with a decrease in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

⁶ www.hefce.ac.uk/ncr/

Figure 2 Proportion of entrants who transfer to another HEI after one year, 2005-06 to 2010-11



28. The total numbers of transfers and entrants no longer in HE are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Total number of entrants who transfer or are no longer in HE after one year

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Total entrants	273,480	261,200	273,630	293,210	303,840	304,015
% Transferred	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.9
% No longer in HE	8.4	8.7	8.4	7.8	8.5	7.4

29. These numbers are the totals used throughout the report; however note that totals for certain breakdowns may be slightly less due to the unknown values being removed.

Benchmark categories

30. This section splits entrants according to age on entry, qualifications on entry and subject, as these are characteristics included in the benchmark⁷ calculations.

Age

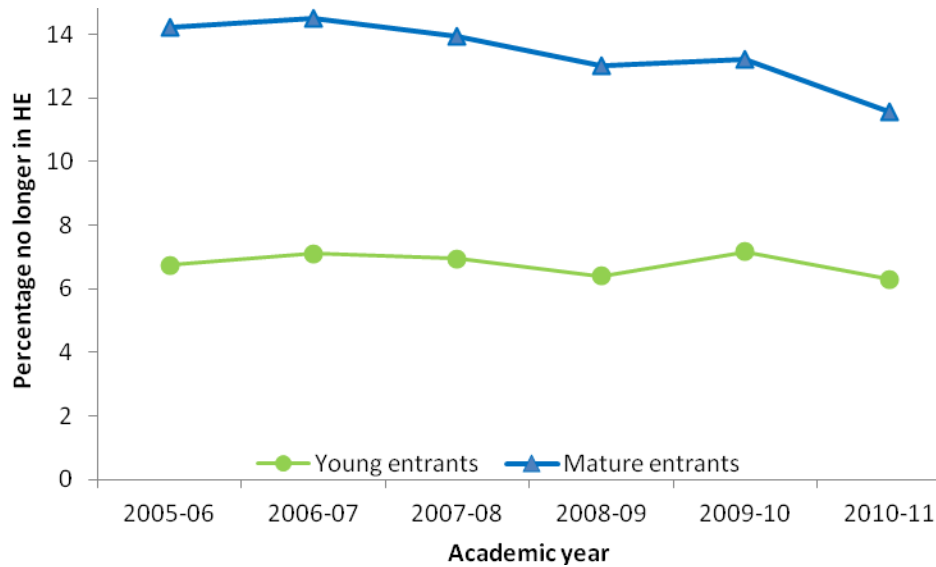
31. Figure 3 shows the percentage of entrants no longer in HE after one year. It can be seen that mature⁸ entrants have a higher percentage no longer in HE than young entrants. However, the proportion of mature entrants no longer found in HE after one year dropped from 14 per cent

⁷ We were unable to include analysis of qualifications on entry due to discontinuities in the time series and the number of qualifications available.

⁸ **Age** is defined on the HESA web-site at www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#age. Young is less than 21 and mature is greater than or equal to 21.

to 11 per cent between 2005-06 and 2010-11 while for young entrants it remained at around 7 per cent.

Figure 3 Proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by age on entry



32. When we analysed the percentage of entrants who transfer to another HEI after year one, split by age on entry, we found a difference between transfer rate for young and mature entrants in every year except 2005-06: more young entrants transferred than mature entrants. In 2010-11, 1.6 per cent of mature entrants transferred while 2.0 per cent of young entrants transferred.

Subject

33. Table 2 shows non-continuation rates by subject⁹ for 2010-11. It shows that computer science entrants have a higher percentage no longer in HE for both young and mature entrants at 12.2 per cent and 17.1 per cent respectively. For medicine and dentistry, non-continuation stands at 1.8 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively for young and mature entrants.

⁹ Subject is defined on the HESA web-site at www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#subject

Table 2 2010-11 entrants no longer in HE after one year by subject area

Subject area	Young entrants (%)	Mature entrants (%)
Medicine and dentistry	1.8	2.8
Subjects allied to medicine	7.7	9.0
Biological sciences	7.5	15.2
Agriculture and related subjects	10.0	14.3
Physical sciences	5.4	14.8
Mathematical sciences	4.4	14.4
Computer science	12.2	17.1
Engineering and technology	9.1	15.0
Architecture, building and planning	8.8	12.6
Social, economic and political studies	6.1	11.4
Law	5.8	13.5
Business and administrative studies	8.2	14.9
Mass communication and documentation	8.0	15.8
Languages	4.1	11.1
Historical and philosophical studies	3.9	11.7
Creative arts and design	8.6	12.1
Education	6.6	8.5
Combined subjects	9.1	15.0

34. The percentage of first degree, full-time entrants who either transfer to another HEI after year one or are no longer in HE, split by subject, is shown on the HEFCE web-site. It is also split by detailed subject grouping on the web-site.

Entry qualifications

35. Table 3 shows the non-continuation rates by qualification on entry¹⁰ for 2010-11. It shows that , for 2010-11 entrants, entrants with A-level AAAA or Scottish Highers grades AAAAAA have the lowest no longer in HE rate for both young and mature entrants: 1.3 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively.

¹⁰ **Entry qualification** is defined at www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#entryquals

Table 3 2010-11 entrants no longer in HE after one year, by entry qualification

Entry qualification	Young entrants (%)	Mature entrants (%)
A level grades AAAA ¹¹	1.3	3.7
A level grades at least AAA	1.8	6.5
A level grades at least AAB	2.3	7.7
A level grades at least AAC	3.5	11.9
A level grades at least ABB	2.8	7.8
A level grades at least ABC or BBB	3.4	13.9
A level grades at least ACC or BBC	4.2	9.8
A level grades at least BCC or CCC	4.7	14.7
Tariff points > 290 ¹²	5.3	8.1
Tariff points > 260	6.0	13.0
Tariff points > 230	6.8	10.0
Tariff points > 200	7.9	11.0
Tariff points > 160	9.7	10.9
Tariff points > 100	11.4	12.3
Tariff points > 0	13.9	11.4
International Baccalaureate	4.1	9.0
HE level foundation course	6.3	10.3
Access course	14.9	11.8
BTEC	14.0	15.5
No previous qualification	13.6	15.0
Other qualifications not given elsewhere	16.9	13.5
Unknown	16.7	11.7
Higher education qualification – Postgraduate	15.9	10.0
Higher education qualification – First degree	7.4	8.3
Higher education qualification – Other undergraduate	10.2	11.0
Not known	16.7	12.1

Categories not included in the benchmark calculations

36. The following characteristics are discussed in terms of the non-continuation rates and their divergence from the adjusted (benchmarked) rates, where appropriate. Interactive versions are available on the HEFCE web-site.

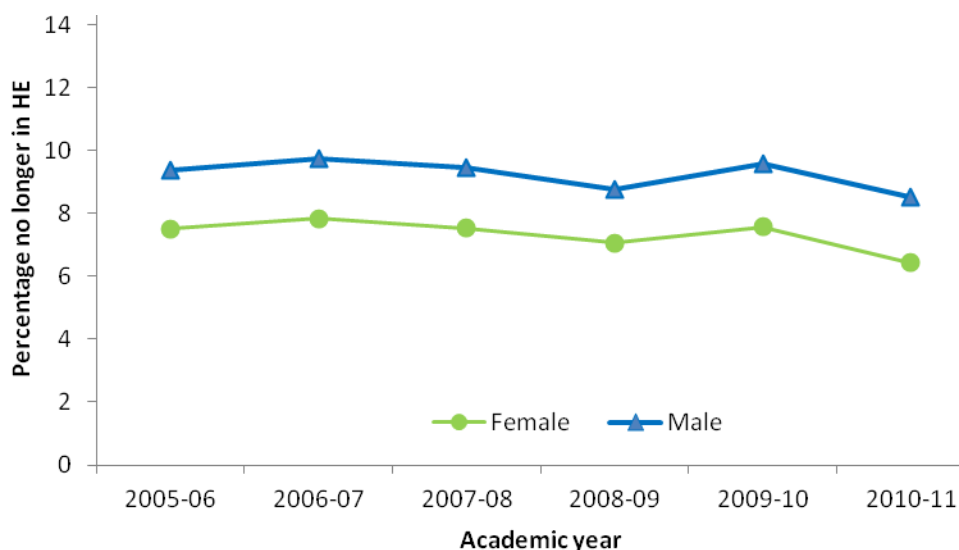
Sex

37. Figure 4 shows that male entrants were more likely than female entrants to no longer be found in HE after year one: 8.5 per cent compared to 6.4 per cent for 2010-11 entrants.

¹¹ Including the equivalent Scottish Higher qualifications. For more information see the HESA web-site www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#entryquals

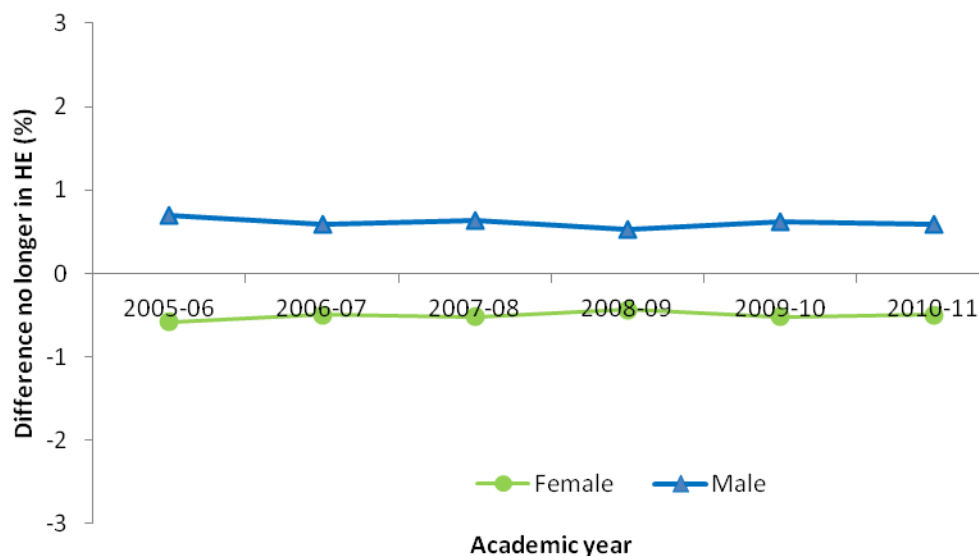
¹² Tariff points are the UCAS tariff points used to compare applicants with different types of entry qualifications. For more information, see the UCAS web-site www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/

Figure 4 Proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by sex



38. Figure 5 shows the difference between the rates presented in Figure 4 and the adjusted rates. It shows that, even after adjusting for age, subject and entry qualifications, male entrants are more likely than females to no longer be in HE after their first year.

Figure 5 Difference between the proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, and benchmark proportion, by sex



39. The percentage of full-time, first degree entrants who transfer to another HEI after year one split by sex shows that transfer rates are similar for male and female entrants between 2005-06 and 2010-11. There was little difference between these rates and the adjusted (benchmarked) rates.

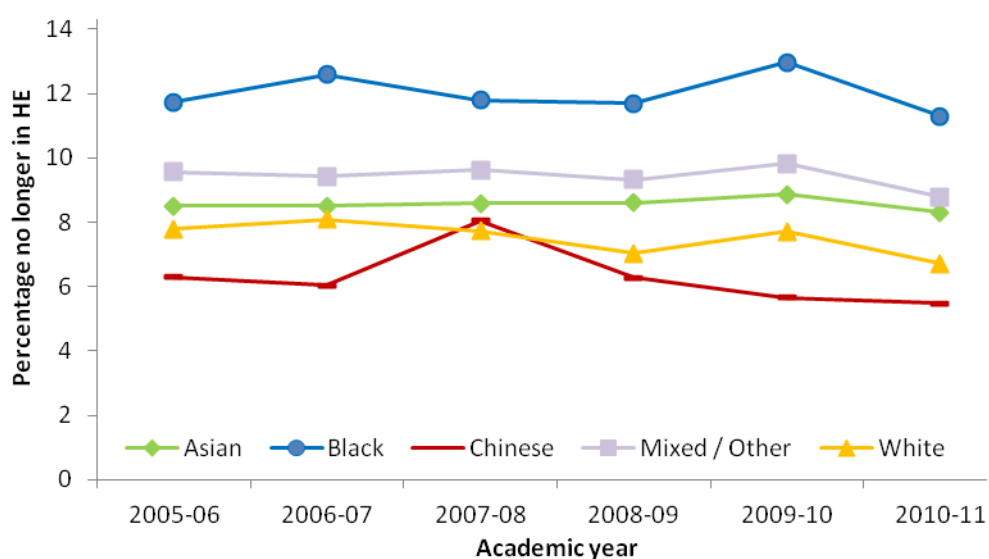
Ethnicity

40. Ethnicity¹³ has been grouped into five broad groups in this section; for a more detailed categorisation please see the HEFCE web-site.

41. Ethnicity was considered in depth in 'Student ethnicity: Profile and progression of entrants to full-time, first degree study'¹⁴ (HEFCE 2010/13). This considered the continuation rate beyond the first year of study, progression to the end of the course, and degree classification. This report shows similar trends for first year continuation, however there are differences in the adjusted rates. This is because the previous report adjusted for age, subject, entry qualifications and whether or not they were in London whereas this report does not take into account whether or not the student was in London. London has a higher no longer in HE rate and a higher percentage of ethnic minority students.

42. Figure 6 shows that Black entrants had the highest percentage no longer in HE at the end of year one, at 11.3 per cent in 2010-11, while Chinese entrants had the lowest percentage no longer in HE at the end of year one, with only 5.5 per cent no longer in HE.

Figure 6 Proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by ethnic origin



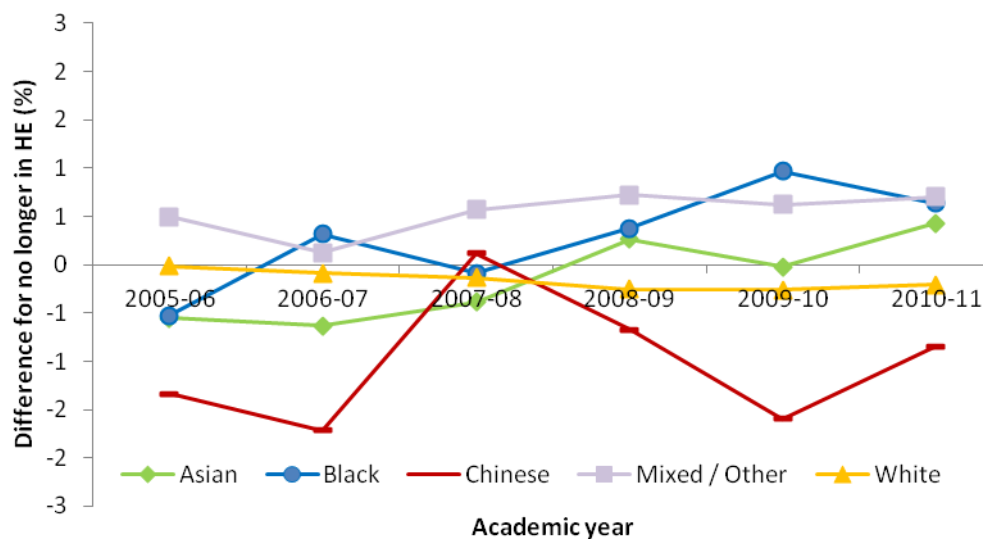
43. Considering the percentage of entrants that transfer from one HEI to another in their first year of study, Black and Asian entrants were most likely to transfer, at 3.4 and 3.2 per cent for 2010-11 entrants. White and Chinese entrants were the least likely, at 1.6 and 1.8 per cent for 2010-11 entrants.

44. Figure 7 shows the difference between the unadjusted rates and the adjusted rates. This shows that differences in non-continuation between ethnic groups were not explained by the age, subject and entry qualifications of the students, i.e. those groups with the highest percentages no longer in higher education shown in Figure 6 still have a higher percentage no longer in HE than expected once subject, age and entry qualifications are taken into account.

¹³ Ethnicity is defined at www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#ethnic

¹⁴ HEFCE 2010/13 is available on the HEFCE web-site at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2010/201013/

Figure 7 Difference between the proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, and benchmark proportion, by ethnic origin

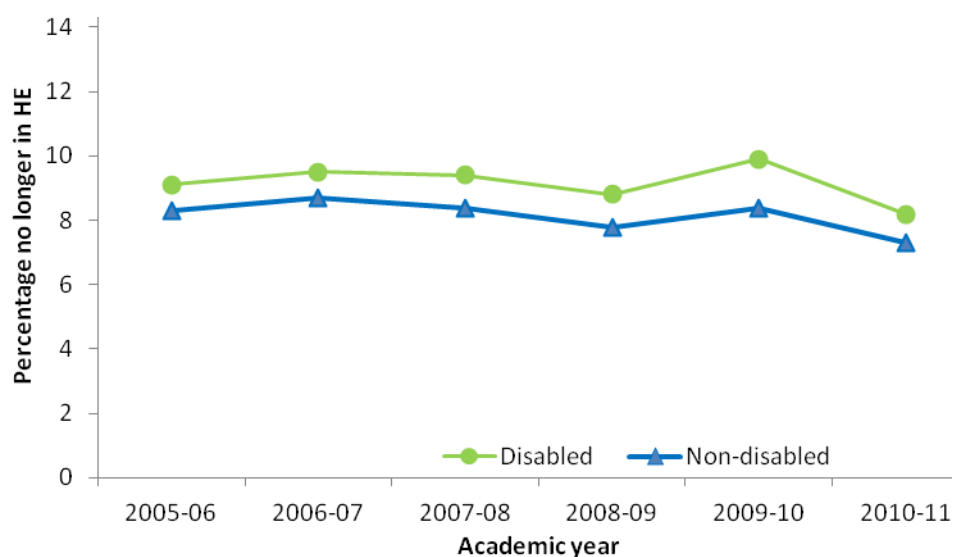


Disability

45. Figure 8 shows the proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after their first year, by disability status¹⁵. Disabled entrants are more likely than non-disabled entrants to no longer be in HE after their first year of study in 2010-11 8.2 per cent of disabled entrants did not continue compared to 7.4 per cent of non-disabled entrants in 2010-11.

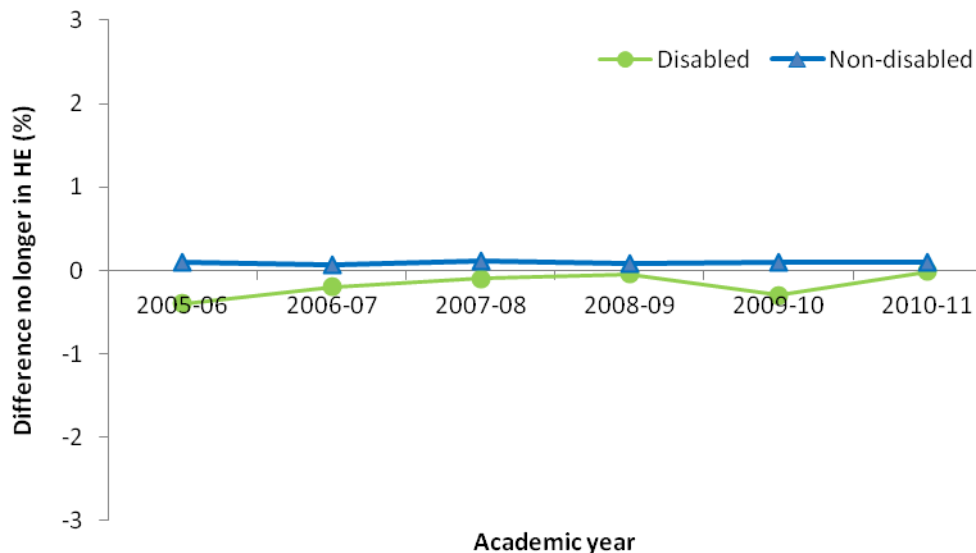
¹⁵ **Disability** is a self-reported characteristic; we have grouped entrants who consider themselves disabled and those claiming disabled student allowance. For more information see the HESA web-site www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#dsa

Figure 8 Proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by disability status



46. Further, Figure 9 shows that the disabled proportion no longer in HE is lower than expected given the characteristics of age, subject and entry qualifications of disabled entrants.

Figure 9 Difference between the proportion of entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, and benchmark proportion, by disability status



Young participation rate classification

47. The Participation of Local Areas (POLAR3)¹⁶ classification¹⁷ is used to classify young entrants by postcode based on young participation rates to HE in that area. Young entrants in the

¹⁶ **Young participation rate classification** uses the participation of local areas (POLAR) classification of rates of participation. Further information can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk/polar/

¹⁷ POLAR3 classification has been used in this report, see www.hefce.ac.uk/polar/ for more information.

quintile 1 group come from areas with the lowest rates of participation in HE , and those in the quintile 5 group come from areas with the highest HE participation rates.

48. The percentage of young entrants who were no longer in HE after year one split by POLAR3 classification is shown in Figure 10, with adjusted rates shown in Figure 11 where age, subject studied and entry qualifications are adjusted for. Figure 10 shows that those from areas of low participation were more likely to no longer be in HE after their first year than those from areas of high participation. Figure 11 shows these trends hold even after benchmark factors are taken into account.

Figure 10 Proportion of young entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by POLAR3 classification

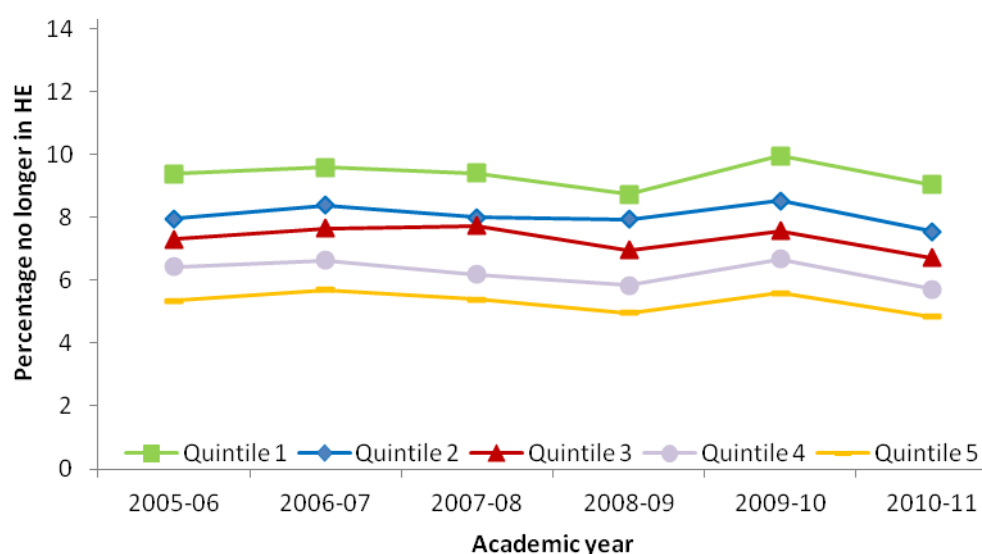
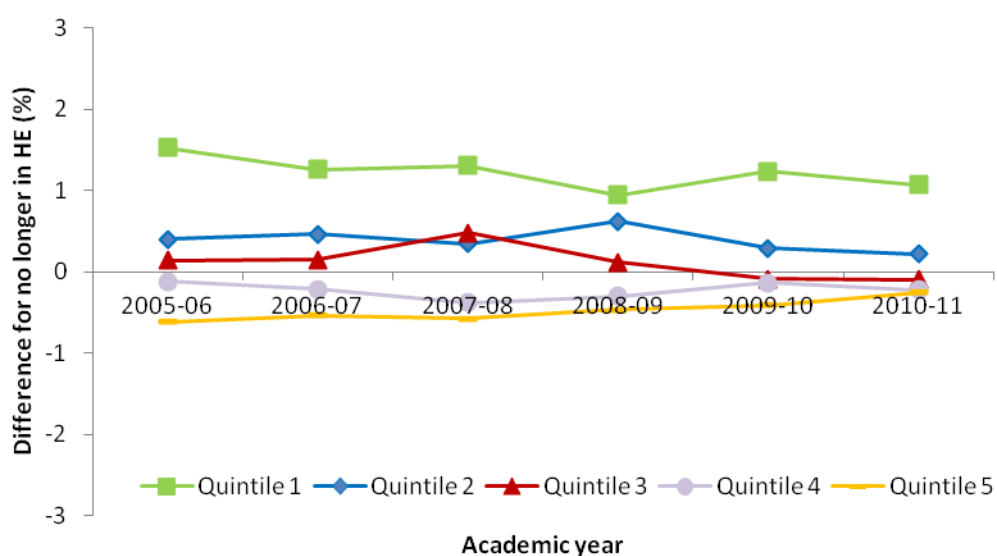


Figure 11 Difference between the proportion of young entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, and benchmark proportion, by POLAR3 classification

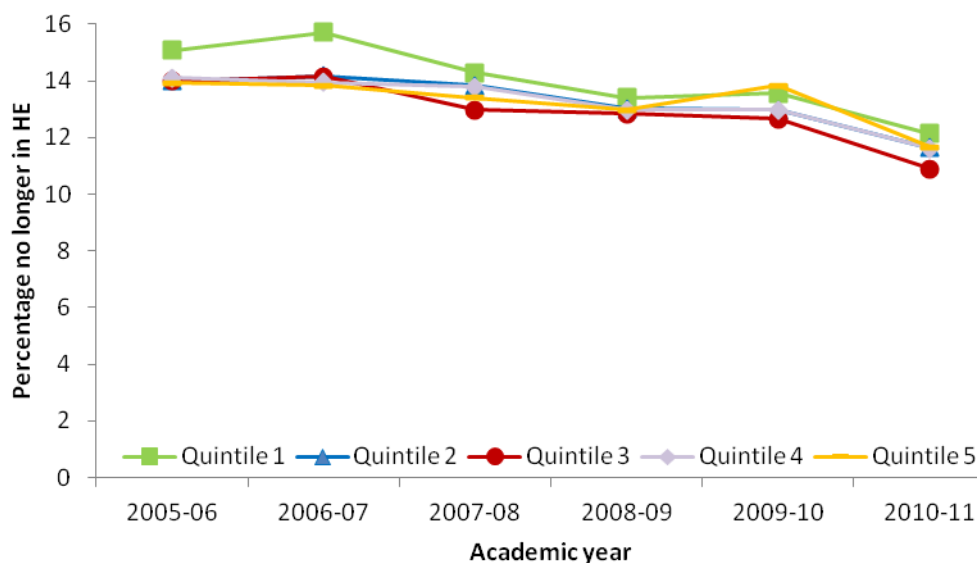


Mature participation rate classification

49. For mature entrants a different participation measure is used: quintiles are determined by the percentage of the adult population in that area who hold a HE qualification (HE qualified adults classification)¹⁸. Quintile 5 is the group with the highest proportion holding an HE qualification.

50. Figure 12 shows the percentage of mature entrants who are no longer in HE after year one. In all years except 2009-10, quintile 1 entrants were the most likely to no longer be in HE after their first year, and this was higher than expected when adjusting for the benchmark factors.

Figure 12 Proportion of mature entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by HE qualified adults classification



51. The difference from the benchmark was considered but not included. Details can be found on the HEFCE web-site along with the transfer rate to another HEI.

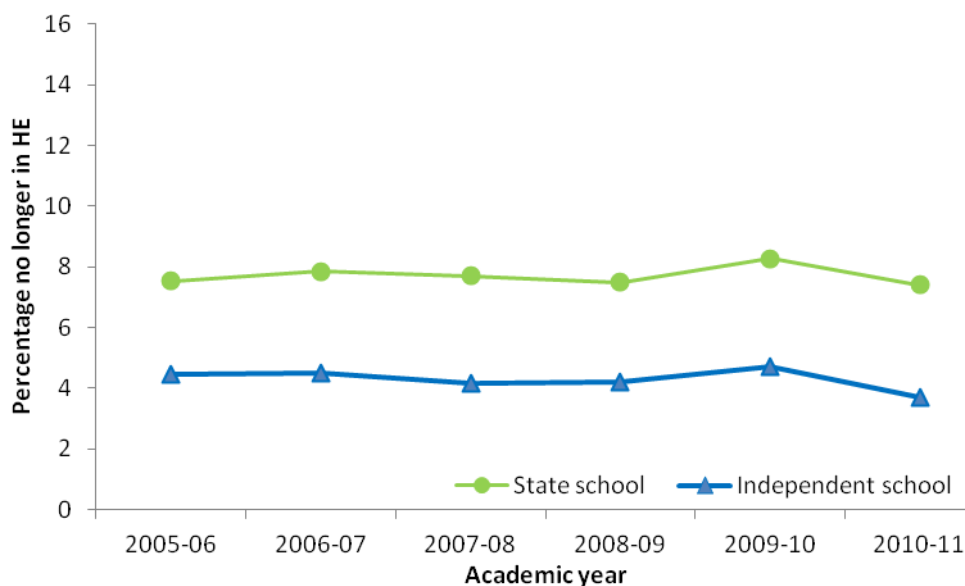
Previous school

52. Figure 13 shows that state school entrants¹⁹ were twice as likely to no longer be in HE after their first year compared with non state school entrants: in 2010-11 7.4 per cent compared to 3.7 per cent.

¹⁸ **Mature participation rate classification** uses data on the number of adults in the local area that hold an HE qualification. For more information see the HESA web-site at www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#lowpart

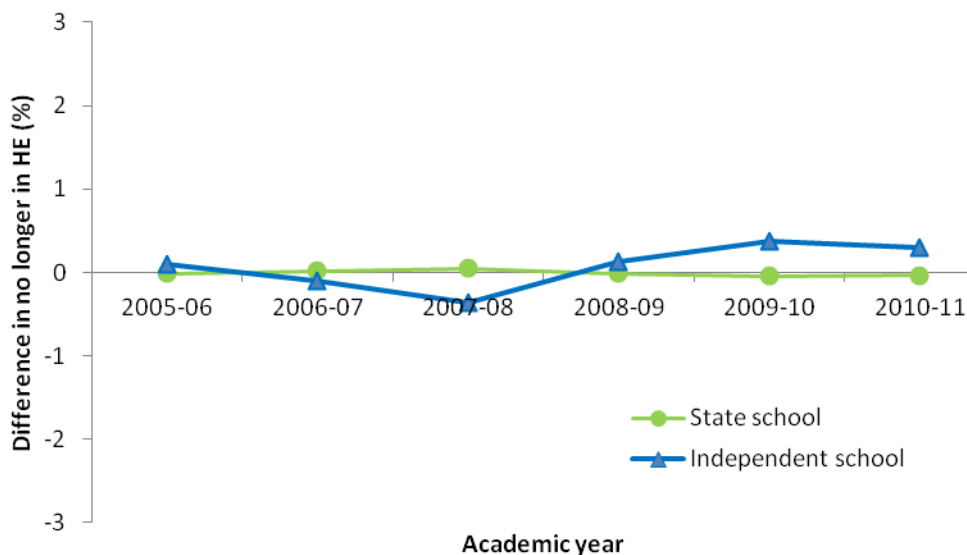
¹⁹ **State schools** are defined using the HESA definition. More information can be found at www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2379/#school

Figure 13 Proportion of young entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, by previous school



53. However, once the benchmark factors are accounted for, there is no significant difference between those that attended state school and others (see Figure 14): all of the differences seen between the two groups can be explained by age, entry qualifications and subject studied.

Figure 14 Difference between the proportion of young entrants who are no longer in HE after one year, and benchmark proportion by previous school



Region of institution

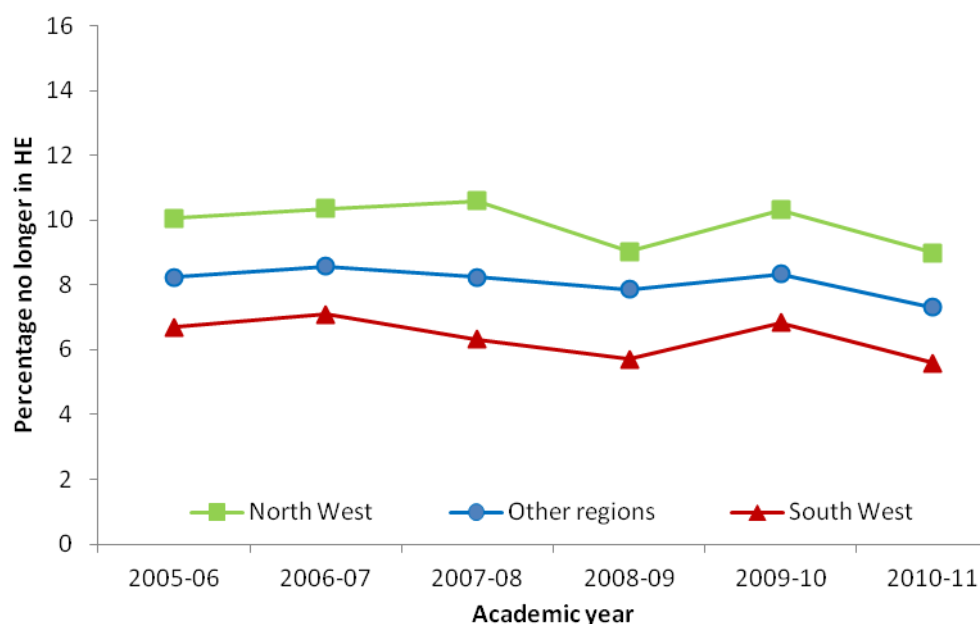
54. We present information for each of the nine English regions on the HEFCE web-site. However, in the document we have summarised the information and shown it in Figure 15. Due to the large number of regions²⁰, it is difficult to establish trends in the time series. For this

²⁰ Region refers to the geographical region that the institution falls in.

reason, the highest and lowest region, and grouped the other regions. For the percentage no longer in HE the South West region had the lowest rate and the North West the highest. Further breakdowns of this information containing all regions can be found on the HEFCE web-site.

55. The percentage of full-time first degree entrants who are no longer in HE after year one split by region is shown in Figure 15. The North West had the highest percentage no longer in HE while the South West had the lowest, 10.6 and 5.6 per cent respectively in 2010-11.

Figure 15 Unadjusted rates by region for full-time first degree entrants who are no longer in HE after one year



56. The percentage of full-time, first degree entrants who transfer to another HEI after year one shows that from 2006, London had the highest percentage of entrants transferring while the North East had the lowest. Other regions, with the exception of the East of England, show a similar trend. For more detail see the HEFCE web-site.

57. The difference from the benchmark was considered but not included.