

Office for
Students



Annex G: Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics

Estrangement

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This annex should be read alongside the report ‘Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics’ (OfS 2020.30)

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Summary

Any questions or feedback related to this publication can be sent to William Rimington at official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk. This includes further detail of the results of applying our data quality framework, including specific disclosure rates and inconsistency scores.

1. Estranged students are those who have been irreconcilably estranged from their parents for a substantial amount of time. Around 3,000 students recorded as estranged enter higher education each year.¹ The Office for Students regards students who are estranged from their parents as an underrepresented group and higher education providers are encouraged to consider them in their access and participation plans.²
2. The continuation rate of entrants in 2017-18 who were estranged from their parents was 8.2 percentage points lower than students who were not estranged. This difference has been reducing in the last four years.
3. The rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree for estranged qualifiers in 2018-19 was 13.0 percentage points lower than qualifiers that were not estranged. However, estrangement may not negatively impact progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level.
4. The statistics in this annex apply to full-time students who were under 25 during the academic year and were domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and attended a higher education provider in England. Throughout, estrangement is measured as whether the student was ever recorded as estranged while at their higher education provider.
5. The statistics included in this annex are raw continuation, attainment and progression rates and we have not used weighting or statistical modelling in their calculation to account for other student characteristics that can impact the rates of students with these characteristics.
6. The rates and differences in rates are rounded to one decimal place. Some of these characteristics apply to small populations and we have not performed significance or sensitivity analysis on the raw rates included here. Small differences in rates may not represent statistically significant differences in outcomes for students with those characteristics. Also, note that the differences in rates were calculated using unrounded rates. The value of the

¹ See the data file associated with this release, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/, for the numbers of entrants each year who are recorded as estranged.

² Estranged students can have similar needs to care experienced students, but local authorities do not have the same statutory responsibilities for estranged students as for care experienced students. As a result estranged students are at risk of financial difficulty, summer homelessness and social isolation. See our effective practice page dedicated to estranged students for more information: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/estranged-students/.

differences can thus be 0.1 percentage point higher or lower than the difference between the rounded rates included in this annex.

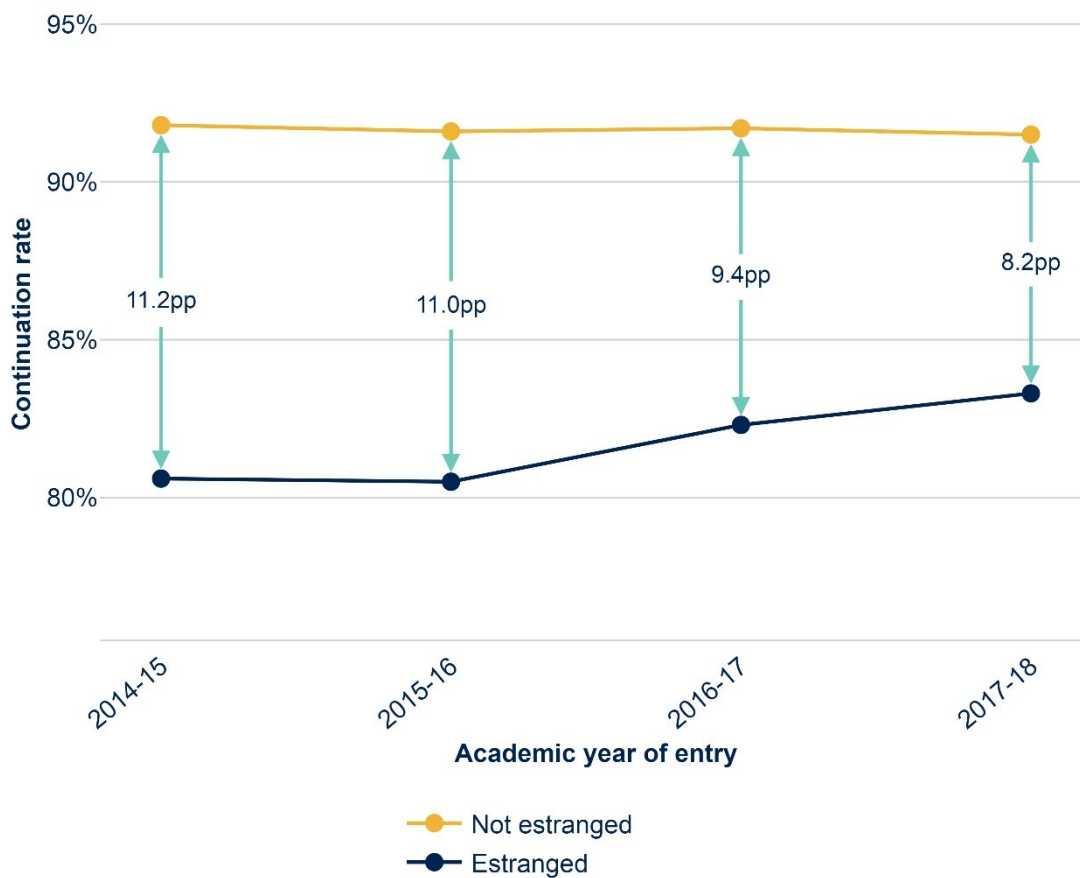
Differences in continuation

7. Students who are estranged from their parents have lower continuation rates than students who are not (see Figure G1). For entrants in 2017-18, the continuation rate of estranged students was 8.2 percentage points lower than those who were not.
8. This data on estrangement comes from the Student Loans Company (SLC) and was linked to data reported by the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA's) Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the Higher Education Statistics Authority's (HESA's) student record and student alternative record. These statistics apply to full-time undergraduate or apprenticeship students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, attending higher education providers in England.
9. To be included in the population³ the student must have begun their course in 2014-15 or later and be under 25 in the academic year. Furthermore the student must have had an SLC record while at their current provider. In these continuation calculations around 35,000 students a year are excluded from the access and participation population as they did not have an SLC record at their current provider.⁴
10. Continuation rates are a measure of the proportion of entrants who either qualified, transferred to another higher education provider or continued their studies. All other students are deemed non-continuers. For full-time students this measure is based on student activity one year and 14 days after their commencement date.
11. The continuation rate of students who are estranged from their parents has increased in recent years. This rate has increased by 2.7 percentage points from 80.6 per cent for 2014-15 entrants to 83.3 per cent for 2017-18 entrants.
12. During this time the continuation rate of students who are not estranged has dropped slightly by 0.3 percentage points, from 91.8 per cent for 2014-15 entrants to 91.5 per cent for 2017-18 entrants.
13. Therefore the gap between the continuation rates of students who are and are not estranged has reduced in recent years, declining from 11.2 percentage points for 2014-15 entrants to 8.2 percentage points for 2017-18 entrants.

³ The population and measure of continuation in higher education is based on our access and participation data algorithms. See our document 'Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Regulatory indicators, methodology and rebuild descriptions' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

⁴ See the data file associated with this release, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/, for the numbers of students who have been excluded from the access and participation population based on the population restrictions outlined.

Figure G1: The differences in continuation rate by estrangement for full-time undergraduate students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland



Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in the data file associated with this publication.⁵ Details of the student population can be found later in this annex.

⁵ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

Differences in degree outcomes

14. Students who are estranged from their parents have a lower rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree than students who are not (see Figure G2). For qualifiers in 2018-19, the attainment rate was 13.0 percentage points lower for estranged students compared with those who are not.
15. This data on estrangement comes from the SLC and was linked to data on the ESFA's ILR and HESA's student record and student alternative record. These statistics apply to full-time students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, who attended higher education providers in England and qualified with a first degree or undergraduate with postgraduate components qualification.
16. To be included in the population⁶ the student must have begun their course in 2014-15 or later and have been under 25 in the academic year. Furthermore the student must have had a SLC record while at their provider. In these calculations around 14,000 students a year are excluded from the access and participation population as they did not have an SLC record at their provider.⁷ This value differs from the 35,000 value in paragraph 9 as these attainment statistics are calculated for a different population from the continuation statistics.⁸
17. Attainment rates are a measure of the proportion of students awarded Level 6+ undergraduate degree qualifications (first degree or undergraduate with postgraduate components) who received a first or upper second (2:1).
18. The attainment rate of estranged qualifiers increased between 2016-17 (64.7 per cent) and 2017-18 (67.4 per cent) by 2.7 percentage points. However, the attainment rate dropped by 0.8 percentage points between 2017-18 and 2018-19 (66.6 per cent). As the estrangement data is used for 2014-15 entrants onwards, the data for qualifiers for 2016-17 does not include students who completed their qualification in four years. Given that undergraduate with postgraduate component qualifications typically take four years to complete and have a much higher attainment rate than first degrees,⁹ the increase in attainment rate between 2016-17 and 2017-18 will in part result from these additional students being included in the population. The rates for 2017-18 and 2018-19 qualifiers are therefore more representative of the student population.
19. The attainment rate of qualifiers who are not estranged from their parents also increased between 2016-17 (78.2 per cent) and 2017-18 (80.0 per cent) but by a smaller extent (1.8 percentage points). As discussed in paragraph 18 some of this change will be the result of the

⁶ The population and measure of attainment are based on our access and participation data algorithms. See footnote 3.

⁷ See footnote 4.

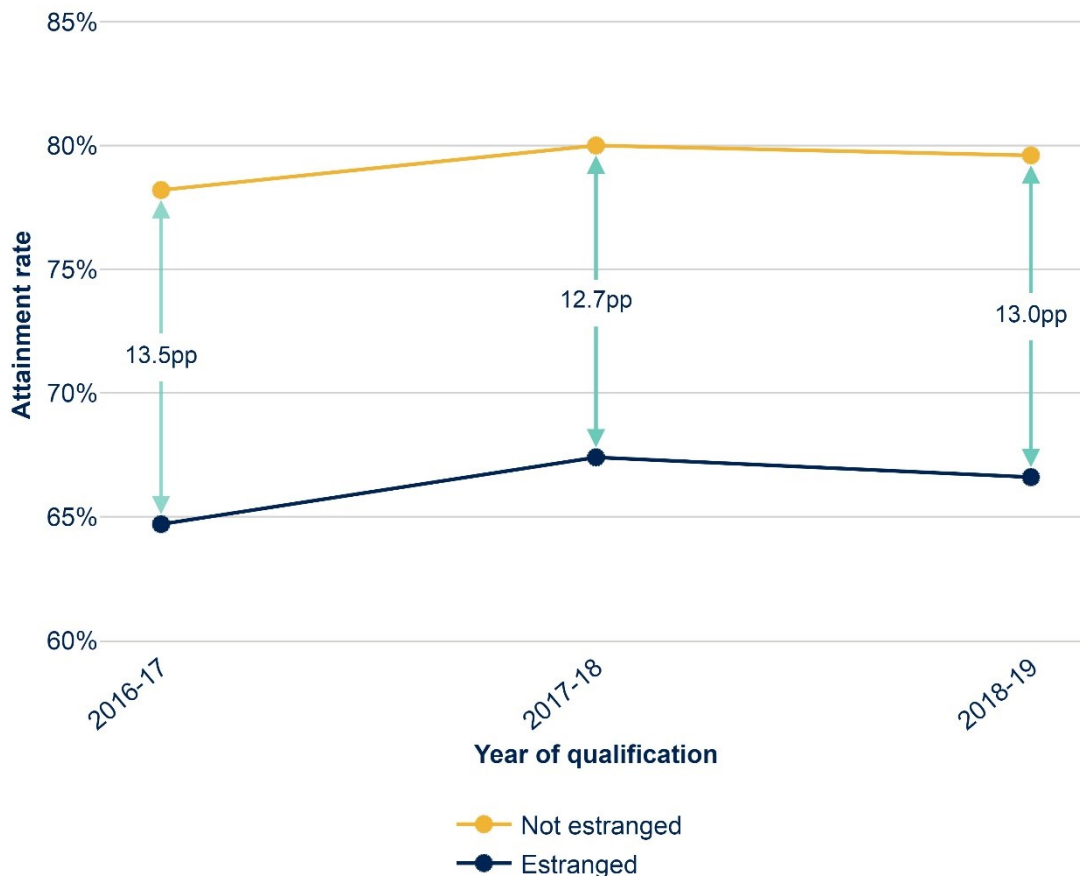
⁸ For further detail of the different populations see footnote 3.

⁹ See our access and participation data dashboard at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/.

different student populations. The attainment rate for these students also dropped between 2017-18 and 2018-19 (79.6 per cent) by 0.4 percentage points.

20. The gap in attainment rate decreased between 2016-17 and 2017-18 from 13.5 percentage points to 12.7 percentage points. However it increased again for 2018-19 qualifiers to 13.0 percentage points. Some of the difference between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 may be the result of the different student populations (as mentioned in paragraph 18).

Figure G2: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by estrangement for full-time first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components qualifiers domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland



Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in the data file associated with this publication.¹⁰ Details of the student population can be found later in this annex. The data for 2016-17 consists of a reduced population and is less robust than subsequent years; see paragraph 18 for more details.

¹⁰ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

Differences in employment outcomes

21. Unlike continuation and attainment, the rate of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level may not be lower for estranged students than for those who are not estranged.
22. This data on estrangement comes from the SLC and was linked to data on the ESFA's ILR and HESA's student record and student alternative record. These statistics apply to full-time or apprenticeship students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who attended higher education providers in England.
23. Progression rates are based on the proportion of higher education leavers who say they are in highly skilled employment or studying at a higher level (or both) approximately six months after leaving. These outcomes are based on student responses to the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. The mapping of DLHE responses for progression rates is detailed elsewhere.¹¹
24. To be included in the population¹² the student must have begun their course in 2014-15 or later, have been under 25 in the academic year and have qualified with an undergraduate qualification and have responded to the DLHE survey. Furthermore the student must have had a SLC record while at their provider. In these calculations 16,000 students were excluded from the 2016-17 access and participation population as they did not have an SLC record at their provider.¹³ This value differs from the values in paragraphs 9 and 16 as these progression statistics are calculated for a different population from the continuation and attainment statistics.¹⁴
25. The DLHE survey has been discontinued and the last year of data available is for 2016-17 qualifiers. Given that this estrangement data is used for 2014-15 entrants and later, progression data is available only for those students who qualified in 2016-17. Additionally, as detailed in paragraph 18, the data for 2016-17 only includes students who completed their studies in three years or less. Furthermore, these statistics relate to a reduced number of estranged qualifiers (1,090 estranged students were included in the 2016-17 progression calculations).
26. As a result of the caveats discussed above the progression rates calculated are not robust and further data and investigation are needed to determine whether they are truly reflective of employment outcomes for estranged students. These caveats aside, we have calculated that for 2016-17 qualifiers the progression rate for estranged students (68.8 per cent) was 0.3 percentage points higher than for students who are not estranged (68.5 per cent).

¹¹ See footnote 3.

¹² The population and measure of progression are based on our access and participation data algorithms. See footnote 3.

¹³ See footnote 4.

¹⁴ For further detail of the different populations see footnote 3.

Quality framework and student populations

27. A summary of applying our data quality framework¹⁵ to the data on student estrangement can be found in Table G1. Estrangement is not fixed as part of the student entry profile and estrangement status can change year on year. Table G1 details the results of applying the framework to our 'ever estranged' flag (detailed below) for students in their first year of higher education. Furthermore, this estrangement data is provided by the SLC and is not reported by higher education providers. Estrangement is verified on a case-by-case basis and does not have the same data quality concerns as those associated with student data reported by providers. The primary purpose of applying the framework was therefore to allow a better understanding of this data.

Table G1: Summary of applying data quality framework to estrangement data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	Student Loans Company
Year data collection started	2014-15
Summary of data field	Whether a student has been irreconcilably estranged from their parents for a substantial amount of time
Student population data available for	Students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who have had an SLC record while at their current provider
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Documentation available
I.B – disclosure rate	Available for 100% of appropriate student population but see paragraph 33
I.C – provider response	NA
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Data not reported by providers but linked via SLC. Data not available for Scotland-domiciled students. No identified issues with available data.
II.B – reporting consistency	Data not reported by providers so inconsistency score does not reflect whether data is being reported inconsistently. However inconsistency scores are well below 1 for all years, indicating that there is low variability in the proportions of estranged students attending providers.
II.C – comparisons with public	Comparable statistics for the general population could not be found.
Outcome	Data used for 2014-15 entrants onwards.

¹⁵ See Annex A associated with this report, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

28. Student estrangement is recorded by the SLC on a case-by-case basis and to be recorded as estranged a student must be irreconcilably estranged from their living biological or adoptive parents for a considerable period of time (usually at least 12 months). This being the case there will be students who are estranged but are not recorded as so because they do not have an SLC record or have chosen to not declare their estrangement to the SLC. There may also be students who consider themselves to be estranged from their parents but do not fulfil the requirements of the SLC to be recorded as estranged. Furthermore, the SLC records estrangement for students under 25 and there will be students who are 25 and over that are estranged from their parents but not recorded as such in the data.
29. Individualised estrangement data was linked to data in the ESFA's ILR and HESA's student record and student alternative record. When calculating the differences in outcomes we did not use only estrangement status in the current year. This is because estrangement status can change year or year and is not fixed as part of the entry profile of the student. For example, a student could be recorded as estranged in their first year but recorded as not estranged in their final year. However, they will have experienced estrangement during their time at the provider so we want to include them as part of the estranged population in both their first and final years. For this reason we have created an 'ever estranged' flag which records whether a student has ever been recorded as estranged while at their current higher education provider. This method ensures a student that has been recorded as estranged while at their current provider is included in the estranged population when calculating outcomes.
30. We have accounted for year when creating the 'ever estranged' flag to ensure that an estranged student's first record of estrangement is not backdated. For example, if a student is recorded as estranged in their second year but not estranged in their first year then we record them as not estranged in their first year and as 'ever estranged' in their second and subsequent years.
31. The 'ever estranged' flag records estrangement at a provider level but not a course level as we want to record whether a student has ever been recorded as estranged while at their current provider. If in a given year a student is recorded as estranged on one course but not estranged on another course at the same provider then they are recorded as 'ever estranged' on both courses because they have been recorded as estranged at that provider.
32. Only students who have an SLC record while at their current provider are included in these estrangement statistics and students on ESFA's ILR and HESA's student record and student alternative record that have never had an SLC record at their current provider are not assigned an 'ever estranged' status. This is because these students have not had an opportunity to have their estrangement recorded and it would be inappropriate to assume they are not estranged.
33. The SLC data is a record of the estranged students in the current year and does not record students as not estranged. We have therefore assumed that all the students who are not recorded as estranged are not estranged. This results in us calculating 100 per cent disclosure rates for students who have had an SLC record while at their current provider when applying our data quality framework. As mentioned above, there may be cases where a student considers themselves to be estranged but they are not recorded as such with the SLC and will be included in the not estranged population in these calculations.

34. For further detail of our data linking method and 'ever estranged' flag please contact William Rimington at official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk.
35. As mentioned in paragraph 28, estrangement only applies to students who are under 25. For this reason these calculations are limited to students who are under 25 in their current academic year. To allow for consistency of age calculation and alignment with our access and participation methodologies age is calculated as of 31 August in the academic year.¹⁶ Limiting the student population to those under 25 has the result of excluding students from attainment and progression calculations who have been recorded as 'ever estranged' but are 25 or older in their year of graduation. There are less than 200 students a year in our attainment and progression measures who have been recorded as 'ever estranged' but graduate aged 25 or older. While this results in a loss of data it is necessary to allow valid comparison of estranged and not estranged students as age is known to relate to outcomes in higher education.¹⁷
36. For consistency with our access and participation populations apprenticeship students are included in these statistics but it should be noted that an SLC record, and therefore estrangement status, are only available for around 1 per cent of apprenticeship students.
37. These statistics apply to students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Students domiciled in Scotland are not included because of a lack of data availability. Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales and Student Finance Northern Ireland have the same criteria for a student to be considered estranged.
38. The estrangement data is available from 2014-15 onwards. To allow for a consistent population when calculating these outcome statistics the populations have been limited to students who began their studies in 2014-15 or later. This ensures the students included in the calculations had the opportunity for estrangement to be recorded at any stage during their time at the provider.
39. As we limit the population to those who began their studies in 2014-15 or later the first two years of qualifier data available by estrangement (2014-15 and 2015-16) are not presented as these results relate to a small number of students who completed their studies in one or two years – it is not until the third year of data that more robust statistics can be produced. Qualifier statistics are therefore presented from 2016-17 onwards. The qualifier population was not limited by the time it took to achieve the qualification. Furthermore, as detailed in paragraph 18, the data for 2016-17 does not include students who completed their undergraduate studies in four years and the data after 2016-17 can be considered to be more representative of the undergraduate population.
40. Continuation, attainment and progression populations were based on those included in our access and participation data dashboard. Details of these populations can be found in the document 'Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Regulatory indicators,

¹⁶ See footnote 3.

¹⁷ See our document 'Access and participation resources. Findings from the data: sector summary' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-data-and-its-findings/findings-from-the-data/.

methodology and rebuild descriptions'.¹⁸ Where restrictions exist in the availability of this data, beyond those associated with the access and participation populations, then these were also applied. For example the access and participation populations include UK-domiciled students; however, as discussed in paragraph 37, this data is not available for Scotland-domiciled students. Further detail of these restrictions can be found in the data file associated with this release.¹⁹

¹⁸ See footnote 3.

¹⁹ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.



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