

Figure 19 January deadline application rates by POLAR4 quintile for UK 18 year olds (quintile 5 is the most advantaged areas)

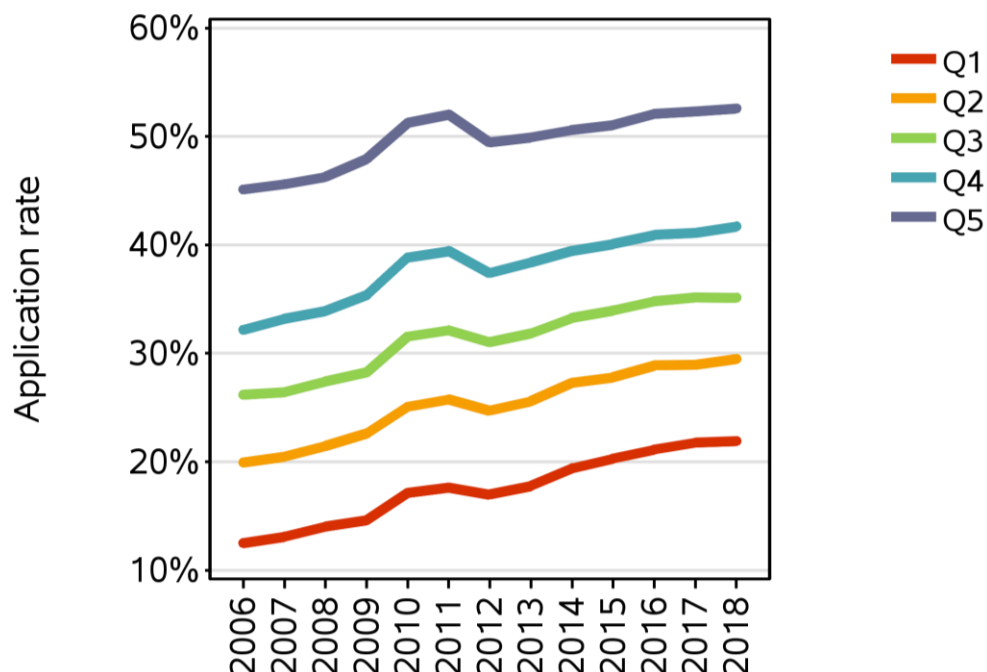


Figure 20 shows the application rates of 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged areas (quintile 1).

In England, the application rate of 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged areas increased from 12.3 per cent in 2006 to 22.2 per cent in 2018, making them 81 per cent more likely to apply to higher education in 2018 than in 2006. 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland were 35 per cent more likely to apply in 2018 than in 2006, 68 per cent more likely in Scotland, and 36 per cent more likely in Wales.

In England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, the application rates from disadvantaged areas are at record levels – 22.2 per cent in England, 25.6 per cent in Northern Ireland, and 16.0 per cent in Scotland. The application rate in Wales this year dropped from the previous year’s record high, to 19.9 per cent.

In 2018, the application rate from disadvantaged areas increased by 0.2 percentage points in England, 0.7 in Northern Ireland, and 0.3 percentage points in Scotland. In Wales, the rate decreased by 0.1 percentage points. These changes mean that 18 year olds from disadvantaged areas in England were 0.8 per cent more likely to have applied by the January deadline in 2018 compared with 2017, 2.7 per cent more likely in Northern Ireland, 2.1 per cent more likely in Scotland, and 0.6 per cent less likely in Wales.

The application rates of 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas (quintile 5) are shown in Figure 21. The proportional changes in the application rates for this group

from 2006 to 2018 are 18.6 per cent in England, 9.3 per cent in Northern Ireland, 7.2 per cent in Scotland, and 16.4 per cent in Wales.

In 2018, the application rate for England increased by 0.2 percentage points (0.3 per cent proportionally), meaning the application rate for the most advantaged areas in 2018 is the highest on record. In Northern Ireland, application rates increased by 0.1 percentage points (0.2 per cent proportionally), in Scotland by 0.7 percentage points (1.4 per cent proportionally), and by 2.1 percentage points in Wales (4.1 per cent proportionally).

In 2006, the application rates from the most advantaged areas in all countries were between 3.1 and 4.6 times as great as the application rates from the most disadvantaged areas. Since then, these differences have reduced substantially such that in 2018, those from the most advantaged areas were between 2.4 and 3.0 times more likely to apply than those from the most disadvantaged areas, mainly due to an increase in the application rate in the most disadvantaged areas.

In England, the ratio between application rates from the most advantaged and disadvantaged areas was 2.4 in 2018, the same as the two previous years.

Table 20/21 January deadline application rates for 18 year olds from POLAR4 Q1 (most disadvantaged areas), POLAR4 Q5 (most advantaged areas), and Q5:Q1 application rate ratio

POLAR4 Q1	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
England	12.3%	13.1%	14.1%	14.9%	17.4%	17.9%	17.1%	18.0%	19.6%	20.5%	21.4%	22.0%	22.2%
Northern Ireland	19.0%	18.8%	17.9%	17.6%	22.0%	21.8%	21.9%	21.3%	23.4%	25.1%	25.3%	24.9%	25.6%
Scotland	9.5%	8.6%	9.1%	9.4%	11.5%	10.8%	11.6%	11.7%	13.8%	13.8%	14.0%	15.7%	16.0%
Wales	14.7%	13.4%	14.5%	13.5%	14.9%	16.2%	16.3%	16.8%	18.6%	19.2%	19.9%	20.0%	19.9%
UK	12.5%	13.1%	14.0%	14.6%	17.1%	17.6%	17.0%	17.8%	19.4%	20.3%	21.1%	21.8%	21.9%

POLAR4 Q5	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
England	44.4%	45.2%	45.8%	47.4%	50.7%	51.9%	48.9%	49.3%	50.4%	50.8%	51.9%	52.5%	52.7%
Northern Ireland	59.9%	60.3%	60.6%	65.0%	67.8%	68.4%	67.4%	70.4%	67.6%	67.2%	65.5%	65.3%	65.5%
Scotland	44.1%	42.3%	43.2%	44.3%	48.2%	47.7%	46.9%	47.5%	46.8%	47.6%	47.9%	46.6%	47.3%
Wales	44.9%	46.6%	49.3%	51.8%	54.7%	49.5%	49.5%	48.4%	48.3%	49.9%	53.2%	50.2%	52.2%
UK	45.1%	45.6%	46.3%	47.9%	51.3%	52.0%	49.5%	49.9%	50.6%	51.1%	52.1%	52.3%	52.6%

Ratio Q5:Q1	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
England	3.6	3.5	3.3	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4
Northern Ireland	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6
Scotland	4.6	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.2	4.4	4.0	4.0	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.0	3.0
Wales	3.1	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.7	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.6
UK	3.6	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4

Figure 20 January deadline application rates by country for 18 year olds (most disadvantaged areas, POLAR4 quintile 1)

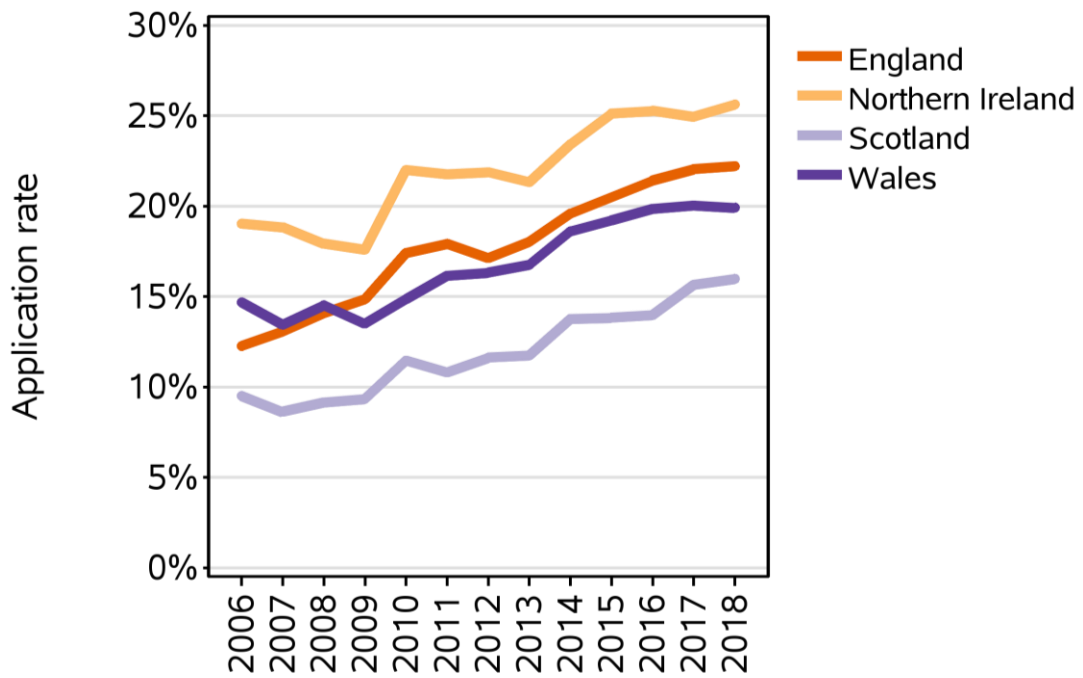
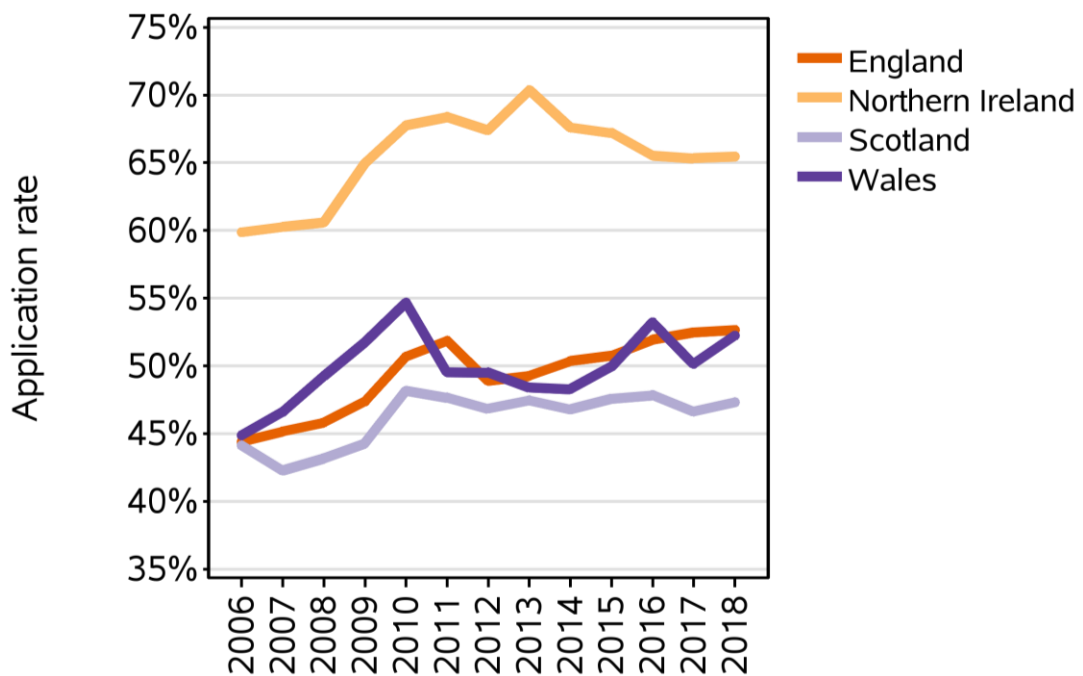


Figure 21 January deadline application rates by country for 18 year olds (most advantaged areas, POLAR4 quintile 5)



Application rates of English 18 year olds from disadvantaged and advantaged areas by sex (POLAR4)

Figure 22 shows the application rates of 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged areas (quintile 1) in England, defined using the POLAR4 classification. The application rates of 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas (quintile 5) in England are shown in Figure 23. The population sizes by background and sex in the other countries of the UK are much smaller, and this means application rates are more variable year to year.

In 2018, women from the most disadvantaged areas in England were 63 per cent more likely to apply than men, compared with advantaged areas, where they were 21 per cent more likely to apply.

In disadvantaged areas in England, the application rate for 18 year old men remained the same as in 2017, and increased by 0.4 percentage points (1.4 per cent proportionally) for women.

In advantaged areas in England, the application rate for 18 year old men decreased by 0.2 percentage points (-0.3 per cent proportionally), and increased by 0.5 percentage points (0.9 per cent proportionally) for women.

Figure 22 January deadline application rates for English 18 year olds (most disadvantaged areas, POLAR4 quintile 1) by sex

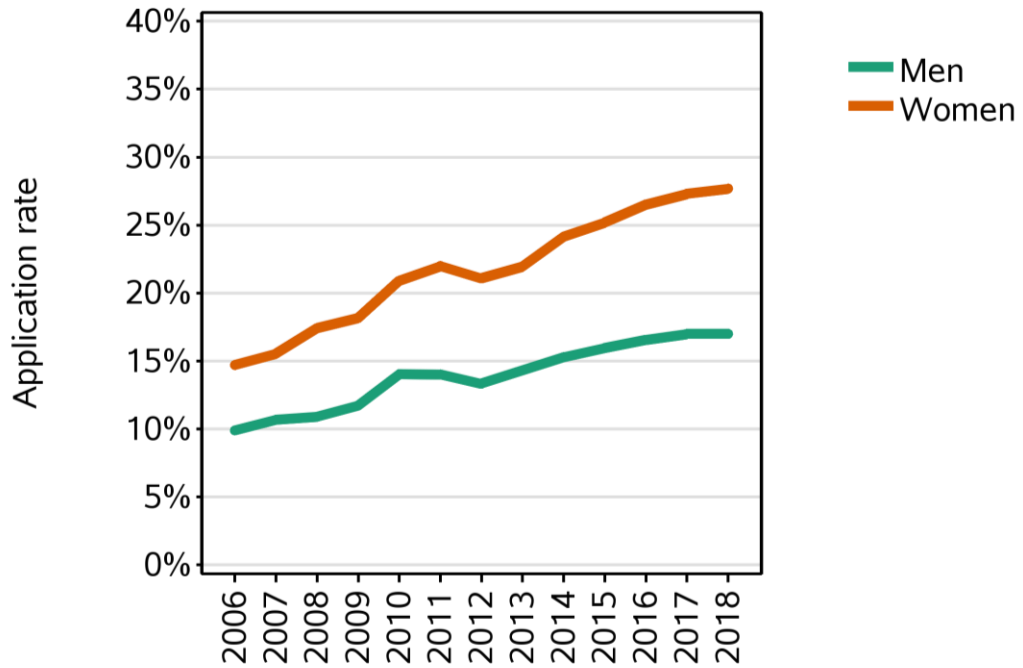
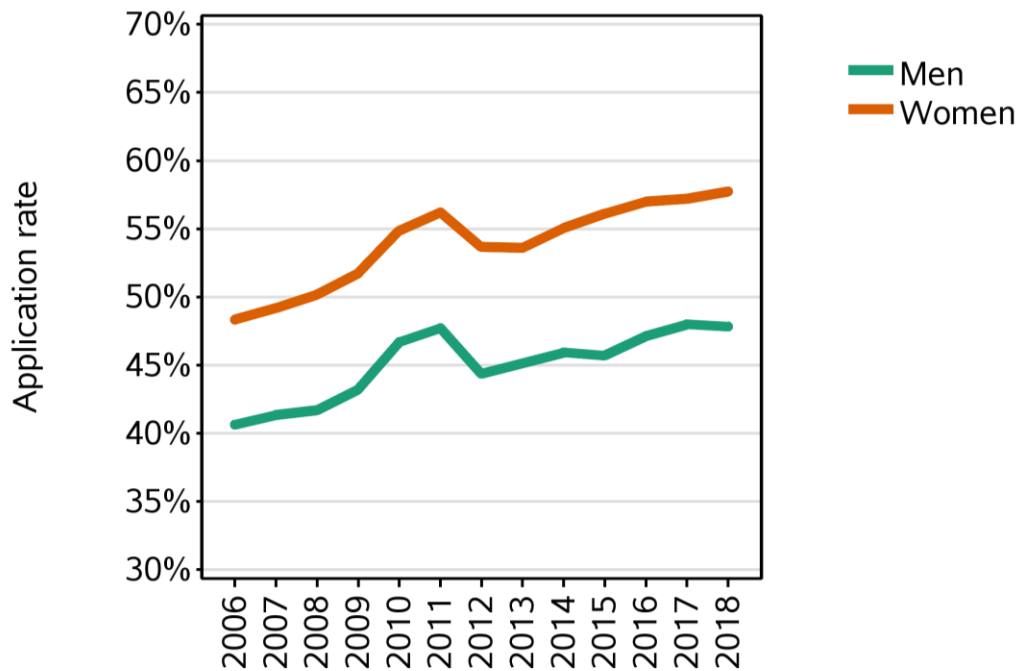


Figure 23 January deadline application rates for English 18 year olds (most advantaged areas, POLAR4 quintile 5) by sex



Application rates of UK 18 year olds by qualification

Entry to higher education is often determined by the type and strength of the qualifications held by an applicant. Most 18 year olds who apply to HE through UCAS do so while studying for the qualifications required for entry, and so apply with their qualifications pending.

The type of qualifications being studied, and the associated predicted grades, are provided by each applicant when they apply. This information on pending qualifications is used to assess the trends in application rates for 18 year olds according to the type of qualifications they were studying on application. A levels are the most widely studied qualification among 18 year old applicants from the UK – around 70 per cent have at least one A level pending on application. Other qualifications that are commonly studied by this group are BTECs, Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers (abbreviated to SQAs for Scottish Qualifications Authority), and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Applicants are often studying combinations of qualifications, most frequently a combination of A levels and BTECs.

Applicants are grouped by the combination of the pending qualifications they were recorded to be studying for. Applicants studying for three or more A levels, and not studying for another of the other three qualification types, are reported in the 'A level only' group. Applicants studying Level 3 BTECs (to the equivalent amount of three A levels) but not studying any of the other three qualification types, are assigned to the 'BTEC only' group. Applicants studying for at least three Scottish Highers or Scottish Advanced Highers are in the 'SQA only' group. Applicants studying for the International Baccalaureate and not studying for any of the other qualification types, are in the 'IB only' group. Applicants studying for a combination of A levels and BTECs (to the equivalent amount of three A levels) are reported in the 'A level & BTEC' group. Applicants who are not assigned to any of these groups are not reported – in 2018, these accounted for around 16 per cent of UK 18 year old applicants.

Figures 24a and 24b show the proportion of the UK 18 year old population that applied, split by qualification group. The application rate for the A level only group is shown on a separate graph, as it is much higher than for the other qualifications. The application rate for the A level group has increased during the period from its lowest recorded rate of 22.2 per cent in 2012, to reach a record high of 23.6 per cent in 2017. In 2018, this rate declined slightly to 23.5 per cent, the second highest on record.

The BTEC only group is the next largest. Between 2012 and 2015, the application rate for this group increased proportionally by 60 per cent, to a high of 3.9 per cent. After remaining constant in 2016, the application rate fell by 0.3 percentage points in 2017. In 2018, the application rate fell by 0.1 percentage points to 3.4 per cent – still 41 per cent higher than its lowest recorded rate from 2012.

Applying while studying for both A levels and BTECs became more common between 2010 and 2017, rising from an application rate of 0.6 per cent to 1.7 per cent. 2018 was the first recorded year that showed a decline for this qualification group, with the application rate falling to 1.6 per cent.

Young people in Scotland applying to HE via UCAS generally hold, or are studying for, Scottish Highers or Advanced Highers (SQA awards). The proportion of UK 18 year olds applying with SQAs has remained relatively stable since 2010, ranging between 2.1 and 2.3 per cent. In 2018, 2.2 per cent of UK 18 year olds applied with SQAs.

The smallest qualification group in this report is the International Baccalaureate (IB) only group. The proportion of UK 18 year olds applying while studying for the IB in 2018 was 0.3 per cent, and has remained between 0.3 and 0.4 per cent during the period.

Figure 24a Application rates for UK 18 year olds by type of qualification being studied on application (A level only)

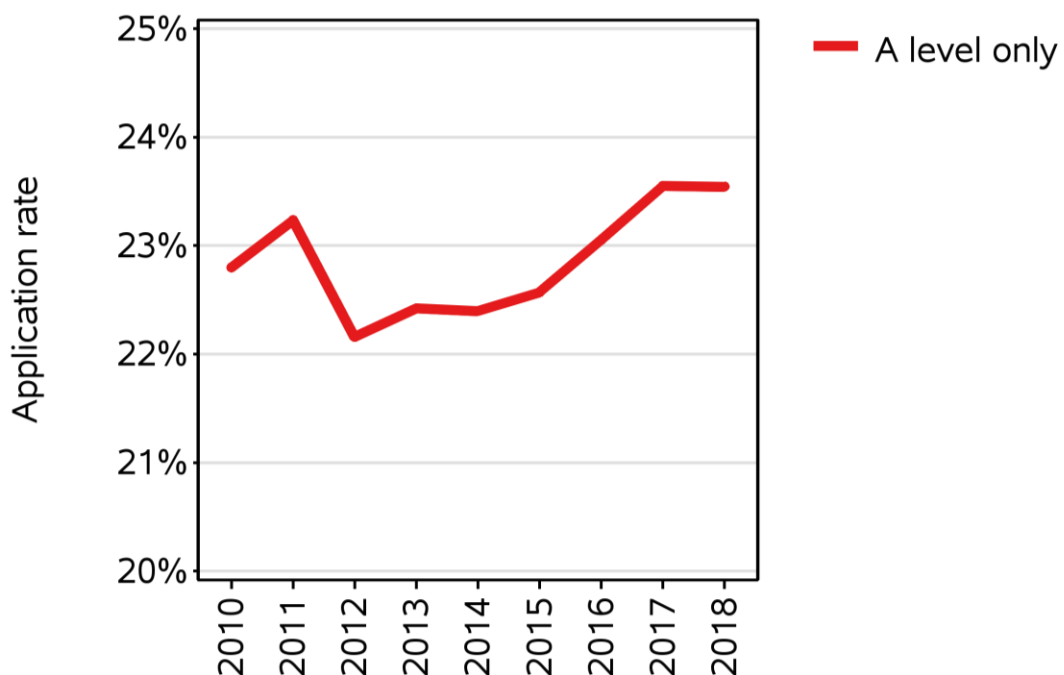
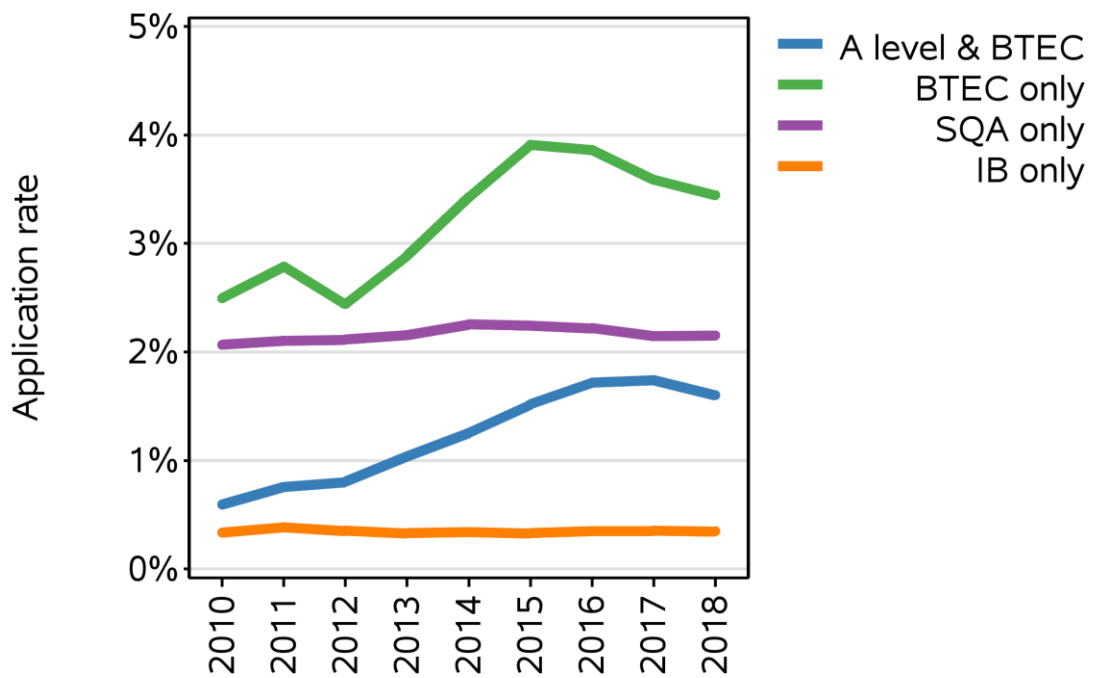


Figure 24b Application rates for UK 18 year olds by type of qualification being studied on application (excluding the A level only group)



Note: Due to the addition of some reformed BTEC qualifications, the BTEC application rates from 2017 may differ from previous publications.

19 year old 'first time' application rates by country

After 18 year old application rates, the next largest age-specific application rate from the UK is for those aged 19. This rate is more difficult to interpret, since it is influenced by the application and acceptance rate of 18 year olds in the previous cycle. Whereas 18 year olds are usually applying for higher education for the first time, 19 year olds typically fall into one of two categories – applying for the first time, or reapplying after having already made an application aged 18.

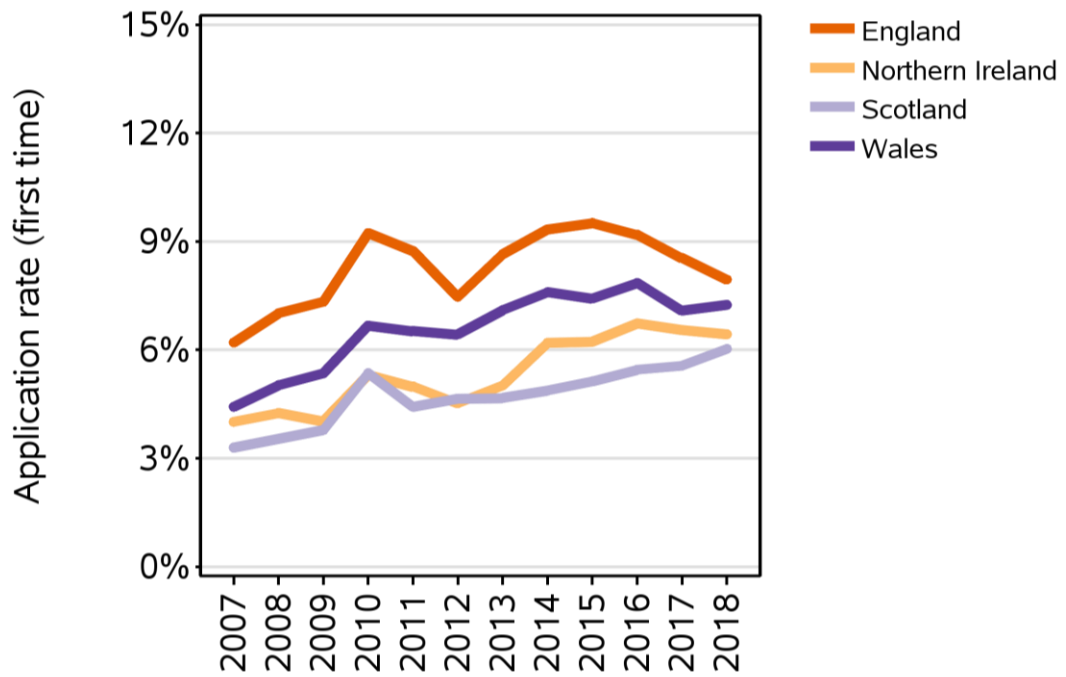
The 'first time' application rates at age 19 only include those applicants who did not apply in the previous cycle. Unlike the application rate for 19 year olds as a whole, they are not directly influenced by the acceptance rate of 18 year olds in the previous cycle. However, they may be sensitive to changes in the application rate at age 18, since if the application rate at age 18 increases substantially, it may result in a smaller pool of potential applicants to apply for the first time at age 19. Figure 25 shows the 'first time' 19 year old application rates.

First time 19 year old application rates are higher in England than elsewhere in the UK. The first time application rate in England reached a peak of 9.5 per cent in 2015, before dropping for the first time since 2012 the following year. Since 2015, the first time application rate for 19 year olds has continued to decrease each year, falling to 8.0 per cent in 2018, a reduction of 0.6 percentage points from 2017.

In Wales, the rate has generally been increasing over time, reaching a peak of 7.9 per cent in 2016, then decreasing in 2017. In 2018, much of this decline reversed, bringing the application rate to 7.2 per cent. A similar trend is seen in Northern Ireland, where in 2016, a high of 6.7 per cent was recorded, followed by declines in 2017 and 2018. The 0.1 per cent decline in the 19 year old first time application rate in 2018 brought the rate to 6.4 per cent.

In Scotland – where the measure will not include most demand for higher education provided at further education colleges (see note at the end of this report) – the first time 19 year old application rate has been increasing gradually over the period, apart from an elevated demand in 2010, which reversed in the following cycle. 2016 was the first year which saw the rate pass the previous high of 2010. In 2018, the rate increased by 0.5 percentage points, the largest single increase since 2010, to 6.0 per cent – the highest recorded.

Figure 25 First time application rates of 19 year olds by country



Cohort demand for higher education covering 18 and 19 year olds

Applicant decisions about whether to apply at age 18 or 19 can vary from year to year. Material changes in the balance of applying at age 18 versus age 19 can make it more difficult to interpret trends for single age groups as an indicator of demand from young people as a whole.

One measure that is not influenced by the decision to apply at age 18 or age 19 is the cohort application rate. Each cohort includes all young people aged 18 in a particular academic year. The cohort application rate is the proportion of that cohort that applies for higher education either at age 18 or, a year later, at age 19 – people who apply in both years are only counted once. With this construction, the rate is not affected if applicants decided to apply at age 19 instead of 18, or if changes in the acceptance rate of 18 year olds leads to more or fewer reapplicants the next year.

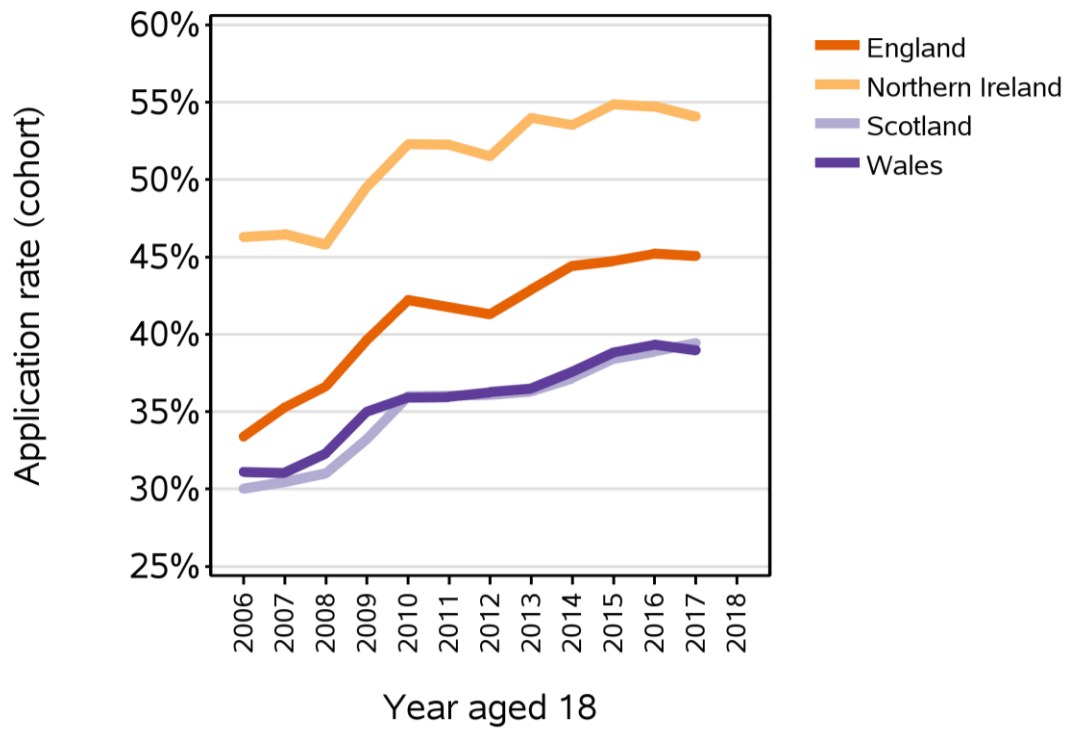
To calculate cohort rates, an additional year is needed, so the cohort has had the opportunity to apply at age 19 as well as age 18. In this report, we can look at cohort demand up to and including the cohort that was aged 18 in 2017 ('the 2017 cohort'), and applied for the first time aged 18 in 2017, or the first time aged 19 in 2018.

Over the reported period, the proportion of the English young population that applied for higher education by the age of 19 (Figure 26) has generally increased, despite small decreases in the 2011 and 2012 cohorts (where applicants began to experience higher and more variable fees for the first time). These decreases were more than reversed following the 1.6 percentage point increase in the 2013 cohort application rate, after which rates have shown year-on-year increases. 2017 is the first year to show decreases since then, with the cohort application rate decreasing by 0.2 percentage points, to 45.1 per cent, the second highest on record.

Up to 2013, a similar pattern was seen in Northern Ireland, leading to an application rate of 54.0 per cent for that cohort, after declines in the previous two years. Following this, the pattern of cohort application rates has been variable, with a decrease of 0.7 per cent in 2017, bringing the rate to 54.1 per cent, the third highest on record.

The cohort application rates in Wales and Scotland are lower than for England and Northern Ireland (the Scottish rate will not include applications to HE in many further education colleges in Scotland – see note at the end of this report), but have also increased over the period. Since 2010, the application rates for the two countries have remained very similar. In 2017, the application rate for Wales was 39.0 per cent and the application rate for Scotland was 39.4 per cent. Wales saw a 0.3 percentage point decline compared to 2016, while Scotland increased by 0.5 percentage points to the highest rate on record.

Figure 26 Cohort application rates by age 19 by country



Reapplication rates of previously unplaced 18 year old UK applicants

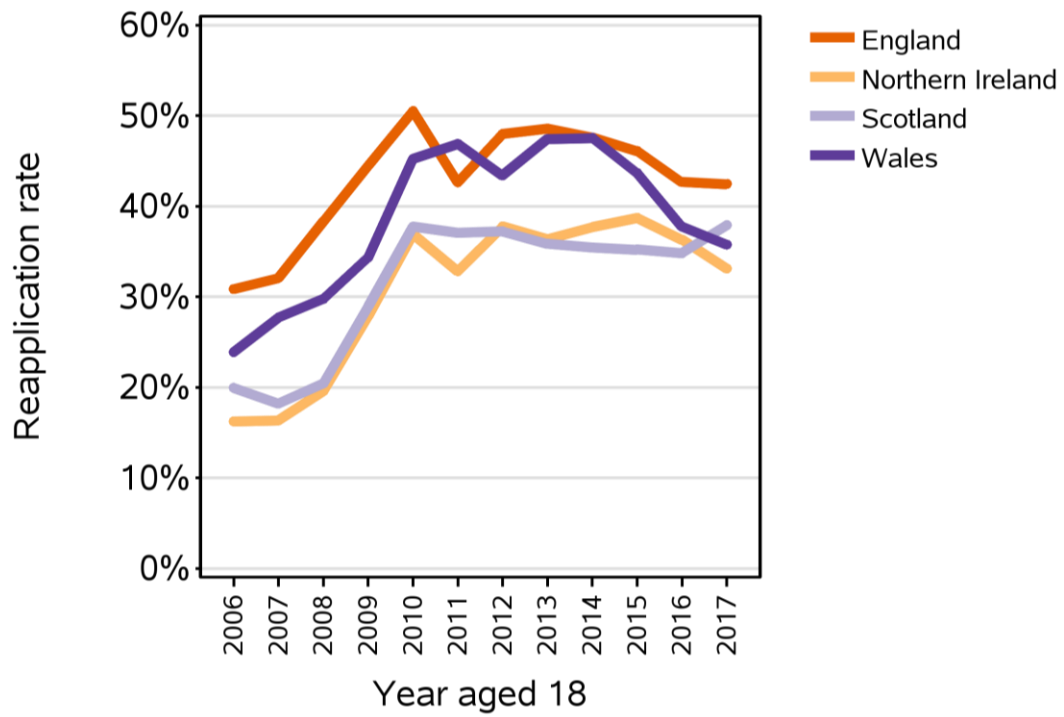
Almost all 18 year old applicants from the UK apply through UCAS for the first time. At the end of the application cycle, most of these applicants will have been placed. A minority of these applicants – typically 15 to 20 per cent – will be unplaced at the end of the cycle.

Some of these unplaced 18 year old applicants reapply in the following cycle, aged 19. The proportion of the unplaced applicants who reapply in this way is the reapplication rate. Trends in this statistic can indicate both the extent of remaining demand for entry into higher education at the end of the original cycle, together with how applicants view the relative attractions of entering higher education in one cycle compared to the next.

Figure 27 shows the reapplication rates for unplaced 18 year olds by UK country of domicile. The rates are referenced by the cycle in which they were unplaced – for example, the proportion of unplaced 18 year old applicants from the 2017 cycle who reapply aged 19 in the 2018 cycle, is shown against 2017.

The 2018 cycle reapplication rates for those aged 18 in 2017 fell for all UK countries except Scotland. In England, the reapplication rates decreased by 0.2 percentage points to 42.5 per cent, Northern Ireland had a decrease of 3.2 percentage points to 33.1 per cent, Wales had a decrease of 2.0 percentage points to 35.8 per cent, and Scotland had an increase of 3.1 percentage points to 37.9 per cent. The reapplication rates from those aged 18 in 2017 are within 10 percentage points of the values from those aged 18 in 2010 in each country, and are still substantially higher than the reapplication rates from those aged 18 in 2006 and 2007.

Figure 27 January deadline reapplication rates for UK 18 year olds unplaced in the previous cycle



Interaction between the acceptance rate of 18 year olds and the reapplication rate

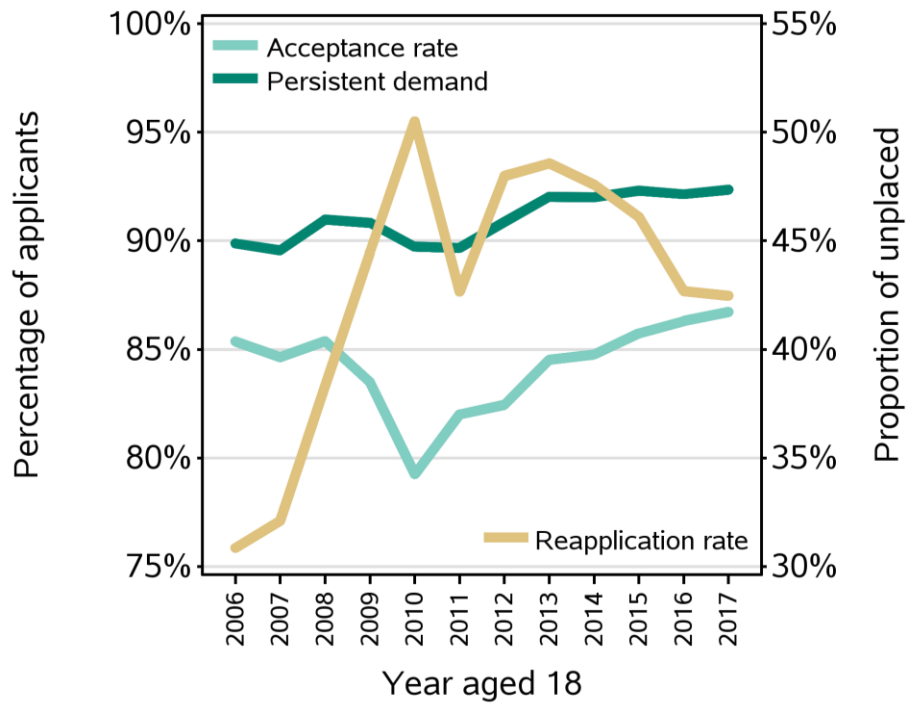
The acceptance rate for 18 year old applicants has varied from cycle to cycle, with part of this variation (prior to the 2015 cycle) relating to the number of places effectively available in higher education. Consequently, it is likely that the reapplication rate and the acceptance rate in the previous cycle may be associated.

Figure 28 shows the acceptance rate for English 18 year old applicants in each cycle (left axis), and the reapplication rate of those who are not accepted (right axis, shown against the cycle in which they were unplaced). Both the acceptance rate and reapplication rate have varied considerably across the period. However, a combination of these measures (the proportion of 18 year old applicants who are either accepted or immediately reapply the next cycle) gives a statistic that is more constant. This measure describes the proportion of applicants who either translate their application into entry or, if not, have the persistence of demand to immediately seek to do so the next cycle.

This statistic can be interpreted as a measure of degree of persistence in demand for higher education among those who have already applied. The stability of this statistic at around 90 to 92 per cent of applicants over the measured period (despite large fluctuations in application, acceptance, and reapplication rates), suggests that a steady proportion of those 18 year olds who apply will tend to persist in their applications to higher education. In particular, any increase in the 18 year old acceptance rate towards 90 per cent may lead to fewer 19 year old reapplicants. However, this is not apparent across all cycles, with 18 year olds from the 2012 and 2013 cycles having experienced increased acceptance rates and increased reapplication rates, causing the measure for persistent demand to rise.

In 2017, the acceptance rate increased to 86.7 per cent (+0.4 percentage points), and the 18 year old reapplication rate decreased to 42.5 per cent (-0.2 percentage points), resulting in the persistent demand being 92.4 per cent, an increase of 0.2 percentage points from the previous year.

Figure 28 Acceptance rates, reapplication rates, and persistent demand



Application rates by age

Interpreting application rate trends as a measure of demand for higher education for age groups older than age 18, is more difficult than it is for those aged 18. The link to the background population is less clear (for example, a large and changing proportion will already have higher education qualifications), and the applicants themselves will, in many cases, have had previous opportunities to apply. In addition, a lower proportion of total applicants in older age groups apply by the January deadline, making January deadline rates a less complete measure of demand, and this proportion has changed over time.

Figures 29 to 32 show the application rates for all age groups (except the 18 and 19 year old age groups, which have been reported earlier) from each country in turn. Application rates vary substantially across the age groups – for example, in England, 20 year olds have an application rate twice that of 21 year olds, over ten times greater than 25 to 29 year olds, and over 80 times greater than 40 to 60 year olds. To accommodate this range, and to allow the assessment of proportional changes, the rates are shown on a logarithmic axis.

In England, the rates in 2018 fell for all groups aged 20 and older, except 21 year olds who increased by 0.8 per cent proportionally. The largest proportional decrease was for the 30 to 39 age group (-11.3 per cent proportionally), followed by the 25 to 29 age group (-9.4 per cent). Across the reported period, the application rates increased by between 20 and 68 per cent for all age groups.

In Northern Ireland, the application rates increased for those aged 21, 25 to 29, and 40 to 60. Application rates fell for all other age groups shown here, with the largest decrease seen in those aged 23 (-14.4 per cent proportionally).

Scotland differed from the rest of the UK, with application rates increasing for all age groups. New highs were recorded in 2018 for those aged 20, 21, 22, and for the 30 to 39 and 40 to 60 age groups. The largest increase was from those aged 40 to 60 (14.3 per cent proportionally), followed by the 30 to 39 age group (8.4 per cent proportionally).

In Wales, the majority of age groups had declining application rates in 2018, except those aged 21, 23, or 40 to 60. The largest decrease was seen for those aged 24 (-15.5 per cent proportionally), and the largest increase was seen for the 40 to 60 age group (18.4 per cent proportionally).

Figure 29 January deadline application rates from England by age

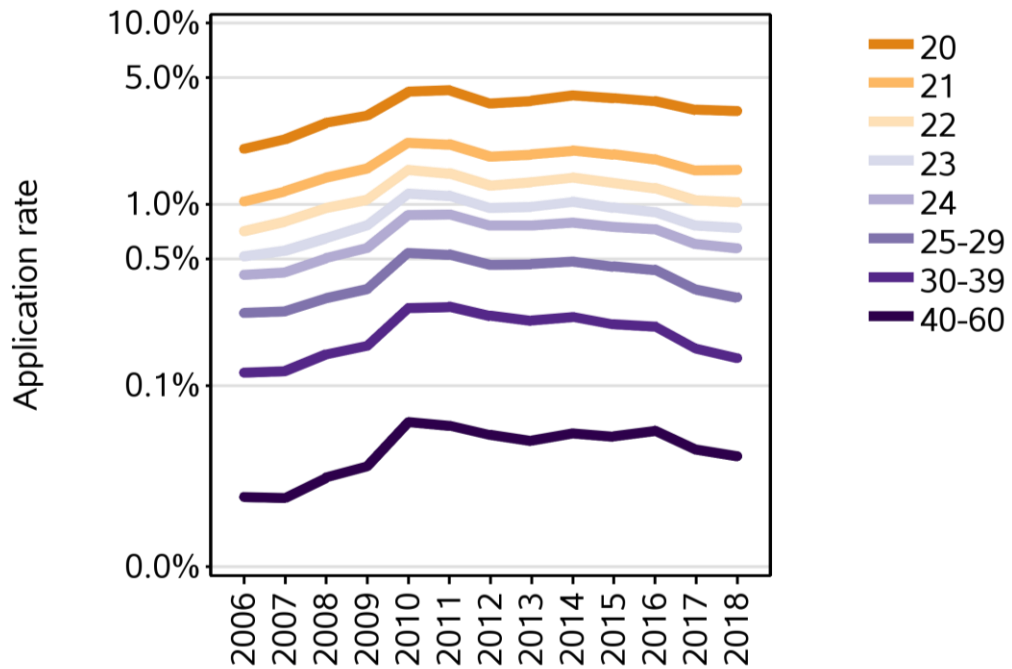


Figure 30 January deadline application rates from Northern Ireland by age

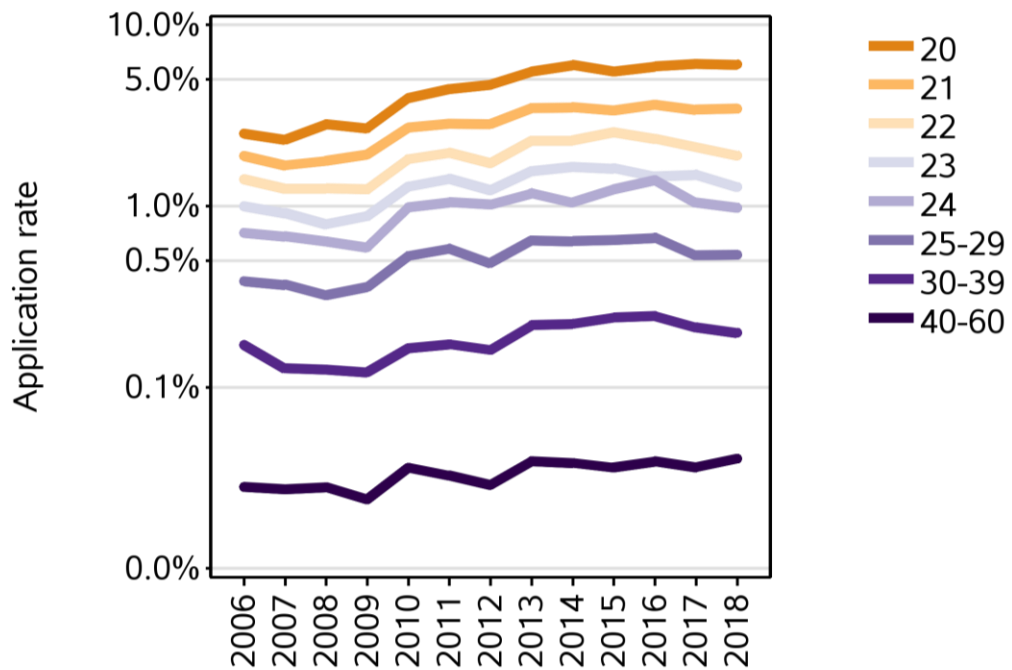


Figure 31 January deadline application rates from Scotland by age

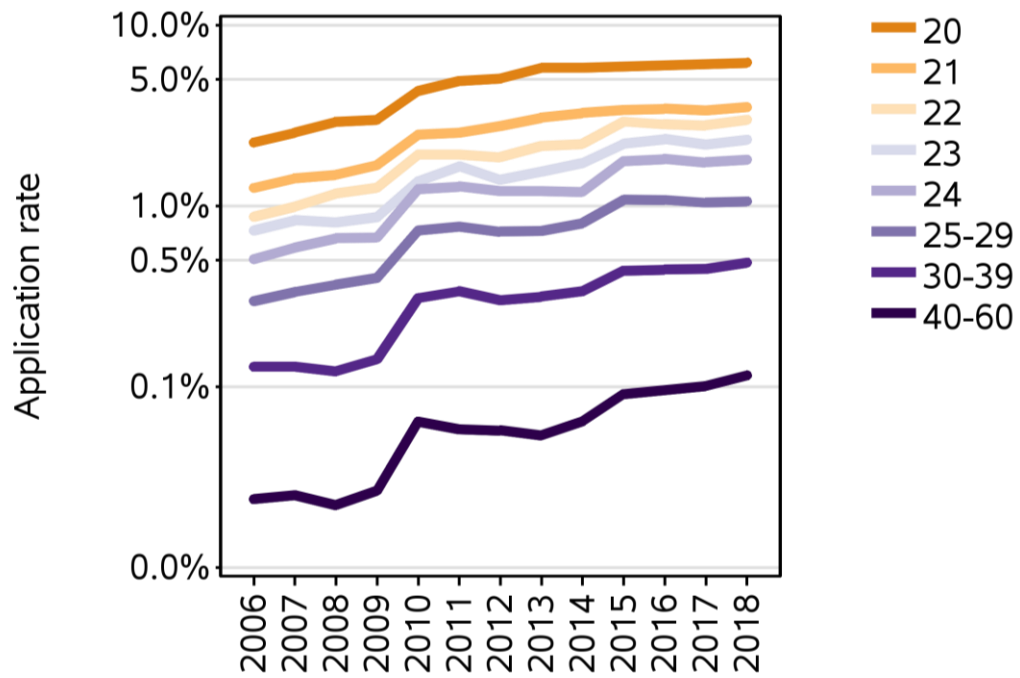


Figure 32 January deadline application rates from Wales by age

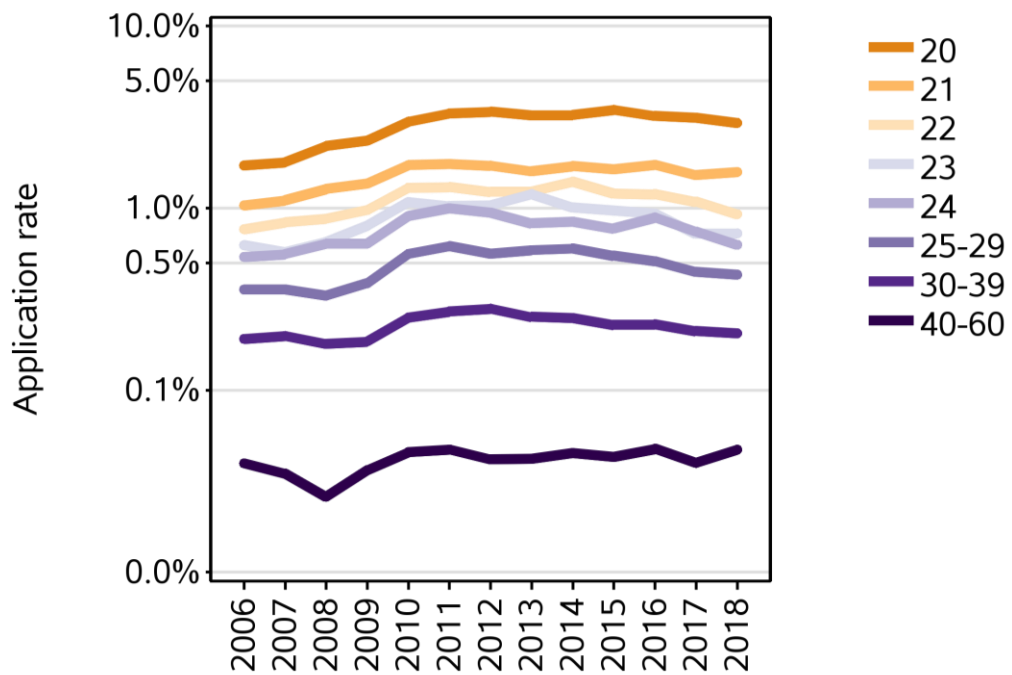
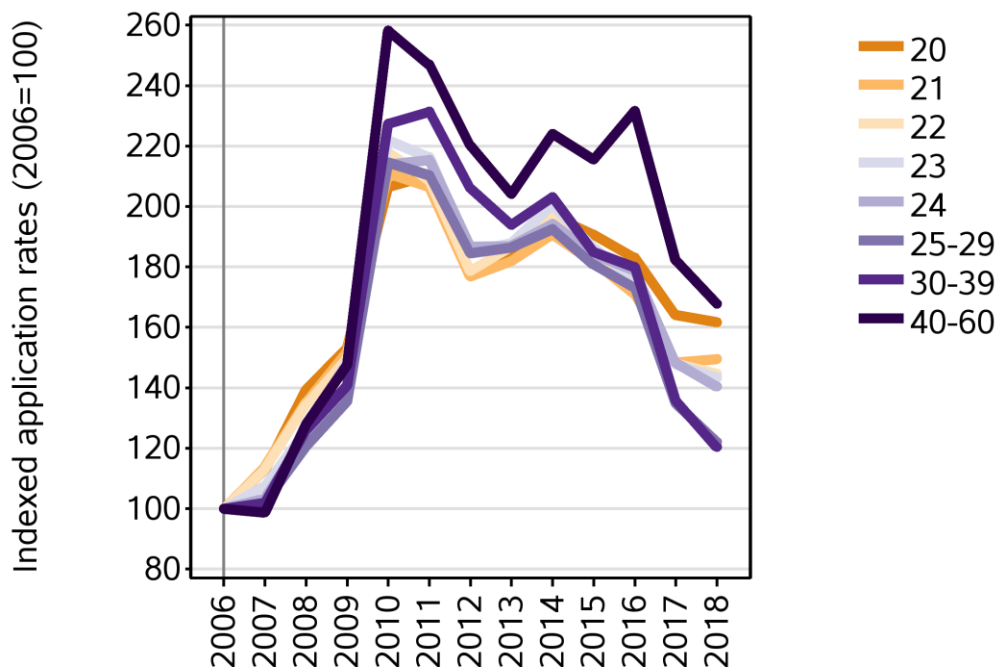


Figure 33 shows the application rates for all age groups (except the 18 and 19 year old age groups) from England, indexed such that the rate in 2006 equals 100. This shows how application rates for each age group have changed – in a proportional sense – in relation to the start of the reporting period. For example, a value of 200 means the application rate is twice that of the rate in 2006.

Between 2006 and 2010, the application rates for all age groups more than doubled. Since then, application rates have followed a downward trend, despite all age groups increasing in 2014. In 2018, application rates from 21 year olds increased, while all other age groups decreased.

Figure 33 January deadline application rates from England by age (indexed to 2006 = 100)



Annex A: 18 year old population context

Over half of all UK applicants at the January deadline are aged 18. This analysis uses country-specific age definitions that align with the cut-off points for school/college cohorts in the different administrations of the UK. For the 2018 cycle, England and Wales ages are defined on 31 August 2017, for Northern Ireland on 1 July 2017, and for Scotland on 28 February 2018. Defining ages in this way matches the assignment of children to school cohorts, and means the group of applicants treated as 18 year olds in each country will generally be applying to UCAS for the first time.

The population estimates are based on ONS' mid-year estimates and national population projections controlled to UK countries (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 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 and Research Agency. These small area population estimates have been revised to be consistent with the national level population estimates.

Figure 34 shows the population of the 18 year old cohort by UK country for the cohorts covered in this report. England is shown on a separate axis (left hand side) to the other countries of the UK. On the basis used in this report, the 2018 18 year old cohort size to the nearest thousand (proportion of UK cohort) is 609,000 (84 per cent) for England, 23,000 (three per cent) for Northern Ireland, 56,000 (8 per cent) for Scotland, and 34,000 (5 per cent) for Wales. The relatively large size of the cohort in England (11 to 26 times that of the other UK countries) means that some analysis, such as application rates by background and sex, are easier to interpret for England than for the other countries, where small base population sizes introduce appreciable year-to-year variations.

Figure 35 shows these same figures indexed to the size of the 2009 cohort, to show the trends in cohort size between the different countries more clearly. Since 2009, the size of the cohort has reduced for each country. In the 2018 cycle, the 18 year old cohort changed proportionally against the 2017 cohort by -2.3 per cent in England, -4.1 per cent in Northern Ireland, -3.1 per cent in Scotland, and -3.2 per cent in Wales. These different changes include a component resulting from the different age reference dates.

In 2018, the 18 year old cohort compared to 2009 is 8.8 per cent smaller (-58,900) in England, 10.8 per cent smaller (-2,800) in Northern Ireland, 14.3 per cent smaller (-9,300) in Scotland, and 14.7 per cent smaller (-5,900) in Wales. This is a reduction across the UK of around 76,900 since 2009, -9.6 per cent proportionally. If the

observed 2018 application rates were to be applied to a population of the same size as the 2009 cohort, there would have been around 28,500 more 18 year old applicants in 2018.

Figure 34 Population estimates for 18 year olds by country of the UK

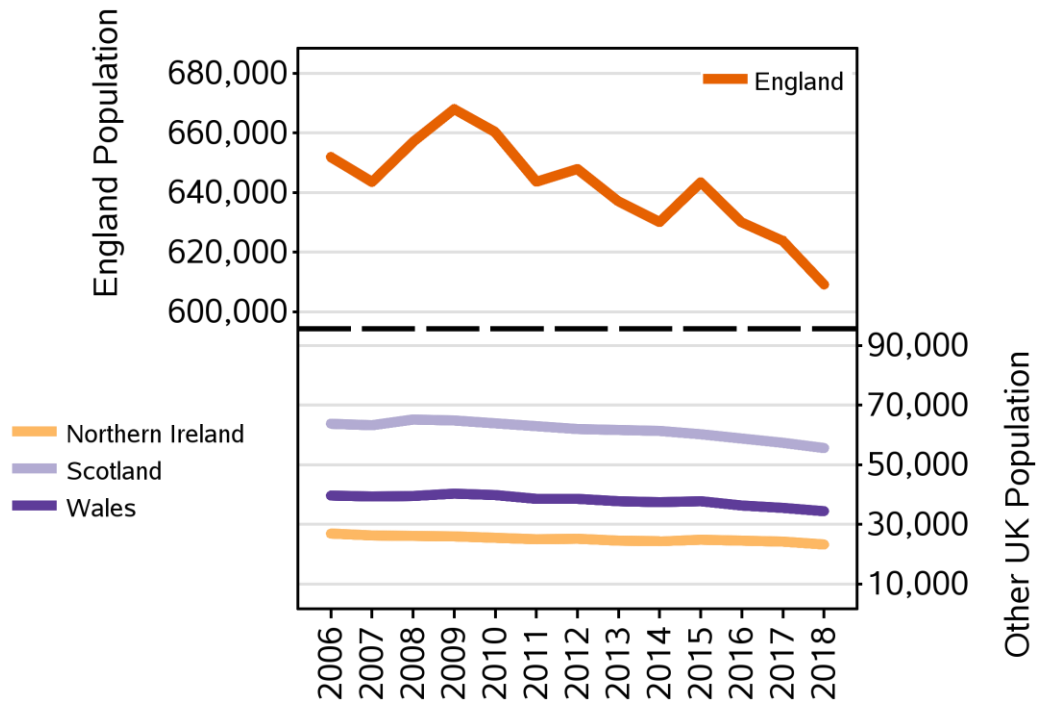
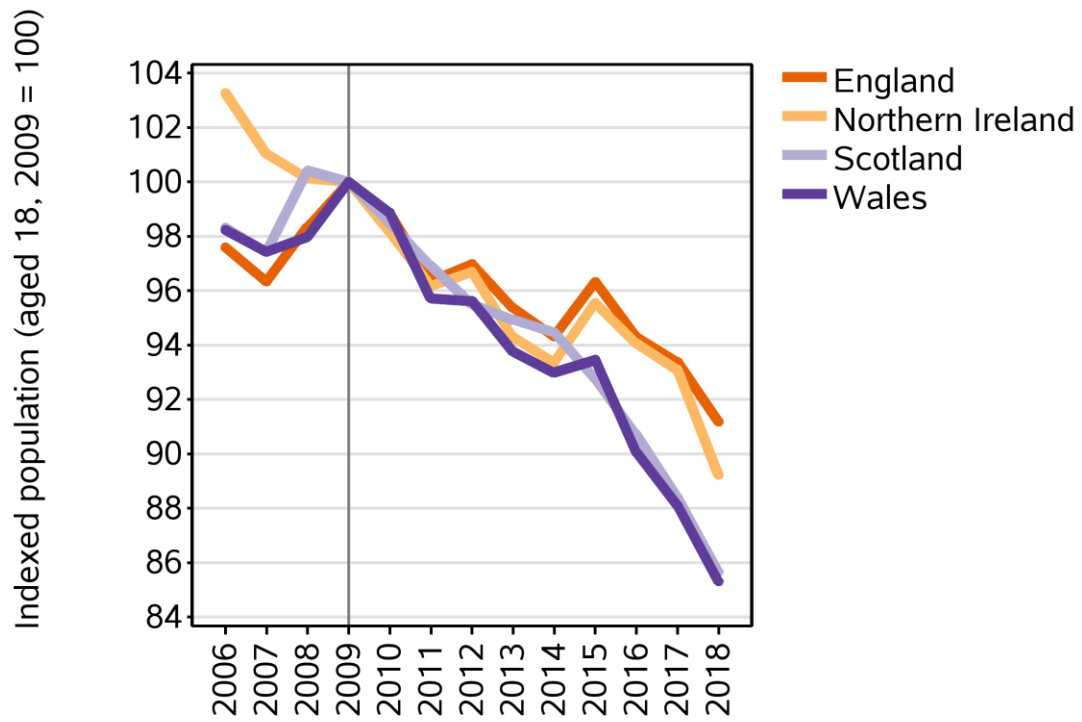


Figure 35 Population estimates for 18 year olds by country of the UK (indexed to 2009 = 100)



Incorporating population estimates

The population estimates used in this report are based on ONS mid-year estimates and national population projections, which have been aligned to the 2011 census.

The 15 year old population in these estimates (apportioned to school cohorts, rather than age at mid-year) is of particular interest, since it is this group that is aged to give the core 18 year old estimates (the 'derived' 18 year old estimates). This group is aged, rather than the 18 year olds being used directly, to avoid inaccuracies that can relate from varying numbers of non-UK domiciled 18 year olds being resident at age 18 (for example, international students).

The use of these estimates results in a difference in the direction of population change for derived 18 year olds between 2013 and 2014 (based on the 15 year olds in 2010 and 2011). The ONS mid-year estimates show a 0.5 per cent increase in the population between these years, while trends derived from other administrative population sources (including school statistics and benefit records) show a 1 per cent decrease. In each case, the derived 18 year old population estimates show the 18 year old population to have risen between 2013 and 2014, compared to the other administrative sources which show the population to have fallen.

The difference in these trends is due to the revision of the mid-year estimates to be consistent with the 2011 census. These estimates cover all ages and, because of the estimation methods involved in the census, are intended to be most accurate for age bands rather than single years of age.⁴ The ONS has advised that adjustments to the 2011 census to account for missing data are thought to have led to a small overestimation of the number of 15 year olds, and under-estimation of the number of 16 to 19 year olds, predominately those aged 16.⁵

This effect for 15 and 16 year olds in 2011 will mostly affect the number of 18 year olds in the derived estimates used in this work for 2013 and 2014. To minimise this issue, the derived estimates are based on the mid-year estimates, but with an adjustment for 15 year olds in 2010 (who are based on 16 year olds in the 2011 census), and 15 year olds in 2011 (based on 15 year olds in the 2011 census). For these years, an adjustment is made so the proportional changes in the population across 2009, 2010, and 2011 match those observed for the total number of UK 15

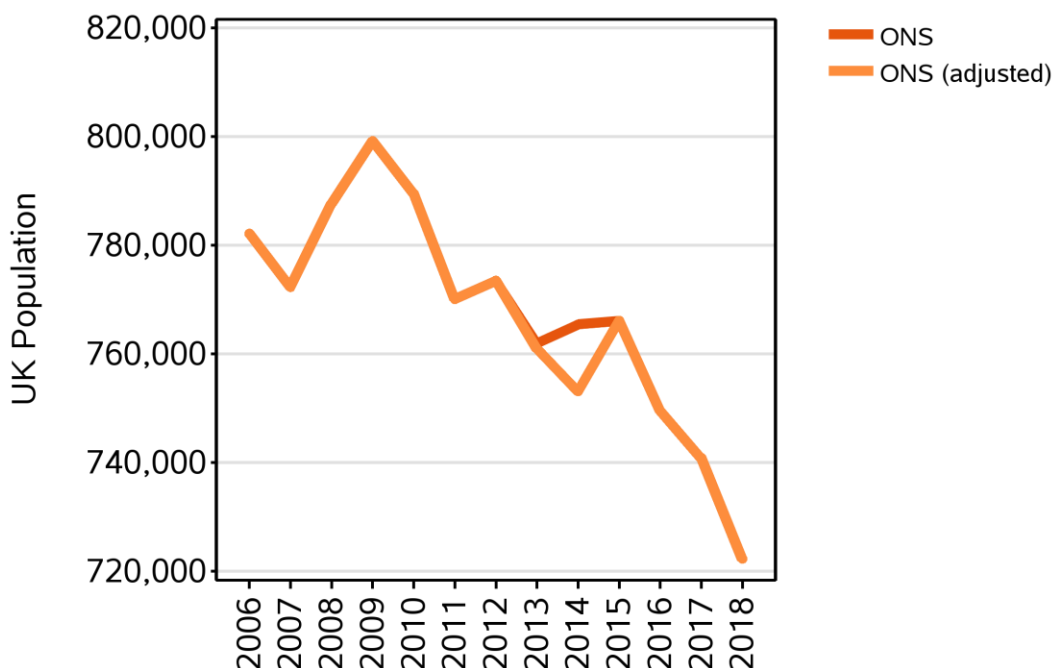
⁴ See Section D of the technical notes in the Department for Education Statistical First Release Participation in education, training, and employment by 16-18 year olds in England (www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209934/Participation_SFR_end_2012_-_FINALv2.pdf).

⁵ See www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/2011-census-user-guide/quality-and-methods/quality/quality-notes-and-clarifications/index.html

year old school pupils.⁶ That is, the mid-year estimates of 15 year olds in 2009 (based in part on 17 year olds in the 2011 census) are taken as correct, then the 2010 and 2011 figures derived by proportional changes from that figure. This adjustment results in the derived 18 year old population for 2013 being 0.1 per cent lower than when based on the (unadjusted) mid-year estimates, while for 2014, they are 1.6 per cent lower.

Because the ONS mid-year population estimates for 2015 are unlikely to be materially affected (as 2011 census population estimates for 14 year olds, who would be aged 18 in 2015, are unaffected by adjustments to account for missing data), they are not adjusted, and comparison between these estimates and the total number of UK 15 year old school pupils, shows a similar proportional increase in the population between 15 year olds in 2011 and 2012 (18 year olds in 2014 and 2015). For similar reasons, no adjustments are made for the 2016, 2017, or 2018 population estimates.

Figure 36 ONS 15 year old mid-year population estimates with and without adjustment



⁶ Numbers given in Table 5 of the Education and Training Statistics for the UK: 2013 (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-and-training-statistics-for-the-uk-2013) published by the Department for Education. Adjustment applied to derived figures on same age definition.

A note on numbers in Scotland

UCAS covers the overwhelming majority of full-time undergraduate provision for people living in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, so the statistics on acceptances or entry rates can be taken as being very close to all recruitment to full-time undergraduate higher education. In Scotland, there is a substantial section of higher education provision 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 2010, the Scottish Centralised Applications to nursing and midwifery Training Clearing House (CATCH) was incorporated into the UCAS Undergraduate admissions scheme. Data from 2010 onwards includes nursing and midwifery diploma courses in Scotland.

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.

A note on POLAR3, POLAR4, and SIMD

The POLAR classification, developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)⁷, classifies small areas across the UK into five groups according to their level of young participation in higher education (entry at age 18 or 19). Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people, and are 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). POLAR4 is the most recent version of the POLAR classification, and is available for the first time in UCAS' reporting since its launch in 2017.

The SIMD⁸ classification (the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) 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 approximately equal population sizes. The groupings follow the same format as POLAR, with quintile 1 representing the most disadvantaged applications, and quintile 5 representing the most advantaged applicants.

18 year old applicants from the UK are assigned a POLAR quintile based on their postcode, with all 18 year olds in Scotland also being assigned an SIMD quintile. Each cycle, there are a number of applicants who are unable to be assigned a quintile due to their postcode being unclassified⁹. For POLAR3, in 2018, missing applicants accounted for 0.4 per cent of all applicants (0.4 per cent for each of the countries). For POLAR4, in 2018, 0.5 per cent of all applicants were not assigned to a quintile (0.5 per cent for England, Scotland, and Wales, and 0.4 per cent for Northern Ireland). 0.3 per cent of Scottish applicants were not assigned to an SIMD quintile in 2018.

All applicants who are not assigned to a quintile are equally distributed among applicants in their country of domicile, by adjusting the weighting for each applicant with a known quintile in that country. Applicants with no known quintile are given a weighting of 0. For example, if there were 1,000 applicants in England with a known POLAR quintile, and 10 applicants with unknown quintiles, each of the known 1,000 applicants would have a weighting of 1.01, with the unknown applicants having a weighting of 0. This ensures that the weighted proportion of applicants in each POLAR quintile is the same as the proportion of known applicants in each quintile. These weightings are then used to calculate the application rates. As such, application rates will not match those derived from using the population estimates, and the number of POLAR3/ POLAR4/ SIMD applicants reported in the deadline applicant statistics.

⁷ Source: www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR

⁸ Source: www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD

⁹ Source: www.hefce.ac.uk/postcode/