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Who's in the talent pool? Understanding diversity in labour market entrants across England

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Research on intergenerational income mobility has shown that the UK has relatively low mobility compared to other countries and that this is, in part, driven by inequalities in access to elite occupations in the labour market by socio-economic background. Many employers are actively trying to reduce these gaps in access by socio-economic background, as well as by ethnicity and gender, for reasons of efficiency as well as equity. But they lack access to detailed information about the relevant pools of talent from which they are hiring to set informed hiring targets. This study provides such information by describing the talent pool of English domiciled university graduates and school leavers in terms of socio-economic background, ethnicity and gender by university type, subject and outcomes and school prior attainment. Importantly, given the diversity in ethnicity by place in England, it also provides details of talent pools by Travel to Work Area. Large differences in demographic make-up by attainment, institution type, subject and place are found.

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Highlights

- Less privileged graduates are more likely to graduate with a 2:2 or below and much less likely to attend a Russell Group university. Focusing recruitment on Russell Group universities and setting degree requirements at 2:1 or above reduces the diversity of potential applicants.
- There is a clear drop off in the diversity of social background (school type, free school meal eligibility and quintile of area-based measure) of the talent pool as attainment at A-level increases. Sifting applicants based on this attainment reduces the diversity of the pool.
- The pool of graduates is majority female, although there are large differences by subject. Although the proportions of female graduates in, for example, Engineering and Computing are low, the absolute number of women graduates is not insubstantial as these are both relatively popular subject areas. But employers may need to target universities with large courses in these subjects to find them.
- The difference in proportions of school leavers of different ethnicities between areas is striking and recruiters seeking to increase ethnic diversity in their offices in some Travel to Work Areas may have a very small talent pool of Black school leavers available to them, particularly with high prior attainment.
- The talent pool of London graduates and school leavers is much more diverse in terms of social background and ethnicity than other regions. Diversity targets which are relatively easy to achieve in London will be more challenging for recruitment elsewhere.
- The analysis shows a North-South divide in terms of privilege and university attendance, although there are notable exceptions among the Travel to Work Areas. Coastal towns, and in particular areas in the South West, have lower university attendance than would be expected given mean school attainment. These tend to be areas with particularly large proportions of White students.

Why does this matter?

Understanding the diversity of the talent pool of English university graduates and school leavers is vital for equalising labour market opportunities and driving productivity and economic growth

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This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

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Introduction

Research on intergenerational income mobility has shown that the UK has relatively low mobility compared to other countries (Corak, 2013) and that this is, in part, driven by inequalities in access to elite occupations in the labour market (Macmillan et al., 2015, Crawford et al., 2016, Gregg et al., 2019) by socio-economic background. In the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in understanding diversity in access to, and progression within, occupations since the Milburn report on Fair Access to the Professions (2009). Employers increasingly collect the socio-economic background data of applicants, alongside information on their gender and ethnicity in the equal opportunities section of their applications forms, following published guidance from the Social Mobility Commission on questions to ask. Further, the collection of data on these key demographic characteristics is an item for consideration when employers enter the Employers Social Mobility Index, run by the Social Mobility Foundation. This creates clear incentives for employers with an interest in the area to improve their collection of this data.

While some forward-thinking employers have begun to set themselves workforce diversity targets, including by socio-economic status (for example PwC and Slaughter and May have both announced targets in recent months), employers do not have access to detailed information about the relevant pools of talent that they are hiring from to set informed hiring targets. While there is information available at the national level for the proportion of graduates who are women, or from low socio-economic status backgrounds for example, there is not anything more specific. For employers looking to invest in outreach work, this is problematic as they do not know where to find diverse talent across places for example. This then leads to problematic practices, such as employers only visiting a subset of highly ranked universities in order to attract talent as this is a low-risk strategy.

The aim of this work is to improve the information available to employers to incentivise them to think more broadly about where they attract talent from by lowering the risk. Using linked-administrative data, we are able to show where pools of diverse talent exist across institutions, subject choices, and place. This new detailed information is designed to help employers to understand the diversity of the available entry level talent pool in England at both the graduate and school-leaver level.

We show that while women are overrepresented in the pool of graduates as a whole, they are underrepresented in a range of subject areas. Private school pupils, pupils with a degree educated parent or professional occupations are more likely to be at Russell Group universities and achieve a 2:1 above, relative to their state-educated peers, or those with non-graduate parents, or working in intermediate or routine occupations. There are also wide disparities in talent pools across ethnic groups and places. Black students are relatively few in numbers, and the majority of Black graduates are from Black African backgrounds rather than Black Caribbean or other Black backgrounds. Proportions of non-white students vary a lot by place, with non-Russell Group universities in London and the West Midlands producing a large proportion of non-white graduates compared to the North East or South West. Beyond ethnic group disparities, there are large differences in the talent pool of graduates across places by socio-economic status, with a much more diverse pool from London and the North East relative to the South East, for example.

Widening the focus to all school leavers, we can see that the diversity of the talent pool decreases as A-level or equivalent requirements increase: a more diverse group leave school with a level 3 qualification, relative to those who leave with at least 3 Bs or equivalent at A-level for example. There are also large differences across places, both generally and by ethnic groups, in terms of the types of

qualifications that pupils study and their likelihood of attending university, meaning that some areas will offer a more diverse talent pool than others for employers looking to increase diversity.

This detailed information is intended to help employers to set Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) targets at the employer level, and encourage employers to focus their outreach work in areas of diverse talent pools. For example, employers looking to employ more diverse workforces will be fishing from a much more diverse pool if they reduce their degree or A-level attainment requirements and reach out to a wider set of universities beyond the Russell Group.

In the next section we detail the data used, including measures of attainment and characteristics of graduates and school-leavers. In section 3 we describe the diversity of the graduate talent pool across a number of dimensions, including institution type, subject studies, degree attainment and place. Section 4 broadens the scope to all school-leavers, considering various restrictions of entry requirements from achieving a level 3 qualification, to achieving 3 Bs or equivalent at A-levels. We end with some considerations for recruiters.

Data sources and measures used

We describe the demographic, attainment and geographical characteristics of two recent cohorts of young people who were at school in England at age 16 – a cohort of graduating students and a cohort of school leavers (who may subsequently have gone to university). Tables 2-5 relate to the graduate cohort and tables 6-12 relate to school leavers.

The cohort of graduating students is all those identified in the HESA data as graduating from an undergraduate degree at a UK university in 2021, who have been identified as being at school in England at age 16. This is established through linkage with NPD data for all English students in year 11 (normally age 16 – known as Key Stage 4 or KS4) in any of the previous eight years. It includes students who were at both state and private schools at age 16. Our graduate cohort comprises 251,830 pupils.

The cohort of school leavers is all those recorded in NPD data at age 18 (known as Key Stage 5 or KS5), who were at school in England at age 16, established through linkage with the NPD KS4 data two or more years earlier, and who left school or college in 2019. The cohort thus excludes those students who arrived at an English school or college after age 16. KS5 data include pupils at private and state schools and colleges. To be recorded in the KS5 data, pupils need to take at least one qualification the size of an A-level, but not necessarily at the level of an A-level (which is known as level 3). Our cohort of school leavers meeting the level 3 threshold comprises 311,350 pupils.

Demographic data for school leavers is taken from their KS4 records, where it is most complete. Although both state and private school and further education (FE) college pupils are included in both the KS4 and KS5 data, private schools do not complete the ‘School Census’ which is submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by state schools. The data available on private school pupils comes from the various qualification awarding bodies and does not include demographic data such as ethnicity, eligibility for free school meals and links to geographical area. Demographic data for FE college students comes from their linked KS4 school record.

We chose 2019 as the school leaver cohort to analyse, as it is the year immediately before the Covid pandemic necessitated the use of ‘Teacher Assessed Grades’, which resulted in the awarding of significantly higher grades than previous years, on average. The qualification regulator Ofqual committed to reducing grade profiles to their pre Covid levels by 2023, but these data were not available at the time of this analysis.¹ Using school leavers in 2019 allows us to see which individuals are subsequently found at a UK university in 2019/20 or 2020/21.

Demographic measures

Gender

For graduates the gender is as given in the HESA dataset, and ‘other’ is an option. For school leavers gender comes from the pupils’ KS4 record and is either female or male.

Ethnic Group

Both major and minor ethnic group are available in the HESA data for graduates. For school leavers, ethnicity is missing for private school students who were not at state school at KS4, so the analysis by ethnicity in the school leaver tables 6 and onwards is just for state school pupils.

¹ <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/04/28/exams-in-2023-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Social background measures

There are two measures of social background given in HESA data for the graduate tables. They are whether either parent has a degree qualification, and a socio-economic classification, coded from self-reported data given by applicants about their parents' occupations (if under 21 on entry) when filling in their university application form. This is the collapsed three class form², with additional disclosure of long term unemployed. The three classes are: higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations; intermediate occupations; and routine and manual occupations.

For school leavers this data is not collected in the NPD, so we construct a measure of state school pupils' SES using their KS4 data, which includes a record of the Output Area³ where they live. We use the same approach as Chowdry et al (2013) in constructing SES quintiles based on a combination of whether a student was eligible for free school meals (FSM) at aged 16 with neighbourhood data linked via pupils' Output Area. The quintiles are based on the whole KS4 cohort of state school students, so the mean for the cohort is 3, and 5 is the most privileged. This method is considered the best proxy for social background available for this administrative data (Jerrim, 2020).

Although it doesn't capture the whole range of degrees of privilege, which the SES quintiles aim to do, we also set out FSM measures on their own in both the graduate and school level tables (noting that the measures relate only to those who were at state school). The two measures are whether the pupil/student was eligible for free schools in year 11 (age 16), and whether they had been eligible for free school meals in any of the previous six years.

University measures

Degree class

Degree class is available for the graduates data. We split class of degree into 1st or upper second class honours degree, and lower second class, third class or ordinary (pass degree). This is because graduate employers have historically often set gaining at least a 2:1 as a requirement for applicants. These benchmarks therefore reveal the 'untapped diverse talent' available to firms who remove their 2:1 or degree entry requirements to diversify their applicant pool following the lead of other graduate recruiters⁴.

University groupings

We provide benchmarks according to two different university groupings – whether the graduate attended one of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities or not, and a more nuanced grouping based on work by Boliver (2015), which splits universities into four groups⁵, set out in the Appendix. These groups are Oxbridge, Other Russell Group and higher ranked, Most new and lower ranked old, bottom ranked, UK not classified. These benchmarks therefore highlight the diverse talent available to employers outside the most commonly targeted universities⁶.

² <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20160106042025/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/soc2010-volume-3-ns-sec--rebased-on-soc2010--user-manual/index.html#7>

³ Output areas are the lowest level geography defined by the Office for National Statistics based on Census data. They each contain around 40-250 households (100-625 people). Measures such as housing tenure, educational achievement and socio-economic classification are published by the ONS at Output Area level, most recently relating to the 2021 Census.

⁴ <https://insights.ise.org.uk/selection-and-assessment/blog-2-1-degrees-and-personality-tests-lose-favour/>

⁵ These more theoretically rigorous categories are based on a cluster analysis of five key dimensions of universities: research activity, teaching quality, economic resources, academic selectivity and socio-economic mix of the student body. This gives rise to four distinct clusters.

⁶ https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2021/graduate_market/GM21-Report.pdf (Table 4.8)

Degree subject

Benchmarks are provided for the graduate data using HESA's Higher Education Classification of Subjects⁷ to categorise their undergraduate degree subject. Students were allocated to the first (largest proportion) subject listed if doing joint honours. Benchmarks are reported at the top level of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH).

Five subjects, thought to be important to recruiters, are listed in Appendix 3 if that subject has been taken at all by the student, even if as a minor rather than major part of their degree. These are Law, Mathematics, Business, Accounting and Economics. These benchmarks are thus comparable to any mention of the subject of interest in the degree stated by applicants to firms.

School attainment measures

Level 3 attainment

Level 3 qualifications are those at the level of an A-level. How these are measured, and which qualifications are included, differs between the HESA data and the KS5 NPD data.

For graduates, the HESA measure is according to the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) tariff (see Table 1). All level 3 qualifications with tariff points defined by UCAS (the University and Colleges Admissions Service) are included⁸. These include A-levels, BTECs and the International Baccalaureate, and also a very wide range of other qualifications.

The HESA cohort was linked as far as possible to their KS5 record in order to find out their points from A-levels only. In the KS5 data these are given in terms of the QCA points scale. Points are summed for all unduplicated A-level entries. Because the gap between a fail and an E is a different relative size in the two scales, it is not possible to translate easily from one to another scale without knowing the size and number of the qualifications from which the points are computed. Whilst this is available for KS5 data, it is not from the HESA data. However, examples of total points under both schemes for a variety of results from three A-levels is given in Table 1.

Table 1: UCAS and QCA points for A-levels

A-level grade/grade combination	UCAS scale points	QCA scale points
A*	56	60
A	48	50
B	40	40
C	32	30
D	24	20
E	16	10
Fail	0	0
A*A*A*	168	180
BBB	120	120
BBC	112	110
BCC	104	100
EEE	48	30

For the graduate data we give three measures of attainment at university entry – their UCAS tariff points, the QCA points for A levels only, as computed from KS5 data, and another, more restrictive

⁷ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos>

⁸ <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points>

measure, of their QCA from their best three A levels (for those who have entered three or more A levels).

KS5 data includes QCA points computed from some other level 3 qualifications, such as BTECs. But only level 3 qualifications on the DfE's list of those counting in school performance tables⁹ have their points recorded in the data. For the school leaver tables we give three benchmark measures – the proportion of pupils in the table who have at least three A-levels, rather than other level 3 qualifications, total QCA points for A levels and counting equivalents, and the same more restrictive measure of QCA points from their best three A levels (for those who have entered three or more A levels).

Level 2 attainment

For the school leaver tables we also give benchmarks of GCSE grades in English and maths. The mean score is on the scale of 1-9 with 9 being highest. A 4 is the equivalent of a C on the old scale, and grades 7, 8 and 9 represent the old A and A* grades.

Geographical measures

Region

For graduates we have constructed benchmarks of both the region they have graduated from (i.e. the region of their university) and of the region where they lived aged 16, through using their Output Area of residence age 16, provided in the KS4 data. For region of university the ONS's nine regions have been used, together with an aggregation of those students who were at school in England aged 16 and went on to Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish universities.

Travel to Work Area

The series of tables from 8 to 13 analyses school leavers according to the 'travel to work area' ('TTWA') in which they lived age 16, once more through linkage with Output Area. These tables can thus help recruiters establish the talent pool by key characteristics at various levels of attainment, for the local office area for which they might wish to recruit. TTWAs are a geographical subdivision of the UK into areas where the bulk of the workforce in an area also lives there and vice versa. In general, 'bulk' is defined as 75% of people working in an area living there (and 75% of the resident employed population working there). For larger TTWAs the proportion is allowed to drop to 66.7%. There are 228 TTWAs for the UK derived from 2011 Census information, each with a working population of at least 3,500, although some are very much larger than that. They are contiguous and non-overlapping.¹⁰ We give benchmarks for the 48 English TTWAs which had at least 3,000 school leavers in 2019.

⁹ These vary from year to year. For a list of 'counting' qualifications from 2018 to 2025 see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>

¹⁰ The 2021 Census took place during the Covid pandemic, when patterns of commuting were considerably altered, and the ONS considers there are quality issues with the 2021 Travel to Work census data. 2011 TTWA boundaries remain in use. See

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/traveltoworkqualityinformationforcensus2021>

Note on disclosure controls

All percentages are given to the nearest integer, and counts are rounded to 10, as is required by the conditions of access to this administrative data. Percentages based on counts of fewer than 23 pupils/students are suppressed (labelled SUPP – 0 means below half a percent, but based on a count of 23 or more, so not suppressed).

In all cases percentages are of non-missing data.

Benchmark tables

Graduates

The following section gives four tables of benchmarks for the 2021 graduating cohort of students at UK universities who had been at school in England at age 16.

We start in Table 2 with all graduates, from both private and state schools, giving splits by gender, ethnicity, various measures of social background, university group and level 3 attainment, in total and by degree class and whether or not they attended a Russell Group university. We also include the intersections of gender, ethnicity and social background in this analysis.

Tables 3 and 4 repeat the analysis for the same cohort of graduates and the same measures, but this time split first by region of university attended, then by region of origin at age 16.

The final set of graduate benchmarks in Table 5 report the same set of measures for students with different degree subjects.

Table 2: Graduates by class of degree and type of university

	Number	All	First and 2:1	2:2 and below	Russell Group	Non Russell Group
Total number (State and private) linked to English schools at KS4		251,830	200,280	34,290	71,790	180,040
<i>Gender %</i>						
Female	140,710	56	57	51	54	57
Male	110,770	44	42	49	46	43
Other	350	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Ethnic Group Major %</i>						
White	175,550	72	74	61	74	71
Asian	36,480	15	14	18	15	15
Black	15,660	6	5	13	4	7
Mixed	12,360	5	5	5	6	5
Other	4,200	2	2	3	1	2
<i>Ethnic Group Minor %</i>						
White	175,510	72	74	61	74	71
Irish traveller, traveller, gypsy	40	0	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	0
Other White	220	0	0	SUPP	0	0
Black Caribbean	3,280	1	1	3	1	2
Black African	11,650	5	4	9	3	5
Black Other	730	0	0	1	0	0
Asian Indian	11,720	5	5	4	6	4
Asian Pakistani	11,060	5	4	7	3	5
Asian Bangladeshi	5,080	2	2	3	2	2
Asian Chinese	2,140	1	1	1	1	1
Asian Other	6,490	3	2	3	3	3
Mixed White Caribbean	3,010	1	1	2	1	1
Mixed White African	1,480	1	1	1	1	1
Mixed white Asian	4,430	2	2	1	3	1

Mixed Other	3,440	1	1	2	2	1
Other ethnic group	4,200	2	2	3	1	2
<i>State school %</i>						
State school	219,260	87	86	92	75	92
Private school	32,570	13	14	8	25	8
<i>Parent degree %</i>						
Parent has a degree	121,490	55	56	46	69	49
Parent no degree	100,250	45	44	54	31	51
<i>Three class SEC %</i>						
Professional/managerial	117,530	55	57	44	69	49
Intermediate	44,290	21	20	24	17	22
Routine	49,930	23	22	32	14	28
Long term unemployed	930	0	0	1	0	1
Routine/ltu combined	50,870	24	22	32	14	28
<i>University group %</i>						
Oxbridge (Boliver 1)	4,610	2	2	1	6	N/A
Other Russell Group and most old universities (Boliver 2)	94,460	38	41	20	94	15
Most new universities and lower ranked old (Boliver 3)	128,240	51	48	65	N/A	71
Lower ranked new universities (Boliver 4)	16,470	7	6	9	N/A	9
Other UK universities (e.g. specialist, conservatoires)	8,050	3	3	5	N/A	4
Russell Group	71,790	29	31	13	N/A	N/A
Non Russell Group	180,040	71	69	87	N/A	N/A
<i>Free school meal eligibility %</i>						
<i>(Note for state school pupils only)</i>						
Eligible for FSM in year 11	17,770	8	7	13	5	9

Eligible for FSM in any of 6 years to year 11	35,480	17	14	25	10	19
<i>Intersectionality %</i>						
Male, White, Top SES	41,040	20	20	18	25	18
Female, White, Top SES	49,310	24	26	14	30	22
Male, Non-White, Top SES	10,920	5	5	7	7	5
Female, Non-White, Top SES	12,750	6	6	6	7	6
Male, White, Int SES	12,060	6	6	7	5	6
Female, White, Int SES	16,800	8	9	7	6	9
Male, Non-White, Int SES	6,360	3	3	5	3	3
Female, Non-White, Int SES	7,850	4	4	5	3	4
Male, White, Bottom SES	12,330	6	6	8	3	7
Female, White, Bottom SES	18,770	9	9	10	5	11
Male, Non-White, Bottom SES	7,430	4	3	6	2	4
Female, Non-White, Bottom SES	9,950	5	4	8	3	6
<i>Points from Level 3 qualifications</i>						
Mean A-level points (not equivalents - new QCA points)	189,420	107.7	110.5	80.4	143.8	88.5
QCA points from best 3 A-levels (those with 3 A levels or more)	139,940	111.7	114.3	89.7	139.6	95.6
Mean UCAS tariff points from all Level 3 qualifications (new UCAS tariff points)	241,100	135.9	138.3	121.0	165.8	123.4

Just over quarter of a million young people who had been at school in England in their GCSE year graduated from a UK university in 2021. Of these 87% were at a state school at age 16. 80% of students graduating were awarded a first or 2:1, and females were more likely to get a good degree than males, as well as being more likely to attend university at all.

The analysis by major ethnic group shows Black students graduating are disproportionately much less likely to get at least a 2:1 than their white peers: they make up 6% of the graduating cohort, but 13% of those achieving a 2:2 or below, and are also under-represented at Russell Group universities. The more detailed 'minor ethnic group' categories suggest it is both Black African and Black Caribbean graduates for whom this is true.

For the 219,260 state school students in this cohort, 8% were FSM eligible at age 16 (Year 11), and 17% had been eligible at some point in the six years to Year 11. The relationship of deprivation with educational outcomes is seen in the higher proportions of those who had been eligible for FSM or FSM (6 years) graduating with a 2:2 or below – 13% and 25% of the cohort of state school graduates. They are also under-represented at Russell Group universities.

For all those students (state and private) taking A-levels, the overall mean attainment was around the equivalent of just below BBC from three A-levels. For those gaining at least a 2:1 it was BBC, but for the lower degree class group it was the equivalent of CCD. For Russell Group graduates the mean score was between AAA (150 QCA points) and AAB (140 QCA points).

The UCAS points, as noted above, include not only A-levels, but grades for any of the large number of level 3 qualifications for which UCAS computes tariff points. The mean score of 136 overall could correspond to around BBC at A-level plus an A at AS level¹¹ Those graduating with a 2:2 or below are around 2 A-level grades overall lower than the mean, and those at Russell Group universities nearly 4 A-level grades higher.

¹¹ From university entry in 2017 onwards AS levels are worth 40% of A-levels, rather than 50% as before. See <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/New%20Tariff%20FAQs.pdf>

Table 3: Graduates by region of university

	All	London	North East	North West	Yorkshire/ Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	South East	South West	UK not England
Total number (State and private) in English schools at KS4	251,830	33,680	13,920	30,950	29,960	29,660	24,940	14,440	34,900	25,580	11,730
<i>Gender %</i>											
Female	56	58	53	57	57	54	56	55	55	55	53
Male	44	42	47	42	43	45	44	44	45	45	47
Other	0	SUPP	SUPP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Ethnic Group Major %</i>											
White	72	43	89	78	80	72	59	65	76	88	83
Asian	15	31	6	13	12	13	24	16	11	5	8
Black	6	13	1	3	3	9	10	11	6	2	3
Mixed	5	8	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	6
Other	2	5	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
<i>Ethnic Group Minor %</i>											
White	72	43	89	78	80	72	59	65	76	88	81
Black Caribbean	1	3	SUPP	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	1
Black African	5	10	1	2	2	7	7	8	5	2	2
Black Other	0	1	SUPP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	SUPP
Asian Indian	5	8	2	3	3	7	9	5	4	2	3
Asian Pakistani	5	7	2	6	7	3	9	4	2	1	1
Asian Bangladeshi	2	8	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	0	0
Asian Chinese	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asian Other	3	7	1	1	1	2	3	4	3	1	2
Mixed White Caribbean	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Mixed White African	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
Mixed white Asian	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
Mixed Other	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Other ethnic group	2	5	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
<i>State school %</i>											
State school	87	87	82	92	89	90	90	89	86	80	77

Private school	13	13	18	8	11	10	10	11	14	20	23
<i>Parent degree %</i>											
Parent has a degree	55	49	58	51	55	55	51	53	55	62	70
Parent no degree	45	51	42	49	45	45	49	47	45	38	30
<i>Three class SEC %</i>											
Professional/managerial	55	45	59	52	57	55	52	53	57	63	69
Intermediate	21	25	19	22	18	21	21	22	21	19	16
Routine	23	29	21	25	25	24	27	25	21	17	15
Long term unemployed	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	SUPP	1	SUPP	SUPP
Routine/ltu combined	24	30	22	26	25	24	27	25	22	18	15
<i>University group %</i>											
Russell Group and most old universities (Boliver 1 & 2) ¹²	39	33	53	33	40	37	31	34	51	40	57
Most new universities and lower ranked old (Boliver 3)	51	52	47	52	50	62	60	44	42	55	41
Lower ranked new universities (Boliver 4)	7	6	SUPP	14	7	1	8	17	7	2	1
Other UK universities (eg specialist, conservatoires)	3	9	SUPP	1	3	SUPP	SUPP	5	0	4	1
Russell Group	29	29	53	27	40	19	31	16	15	31	47
Non Russell Group	71	71	47	73	60	81	69	84	85	69	53
<i>Degree class %</i>											
First or 2:1	85	85	88	85	87	82	84	85	86	87	90
2:2, 3rd or non-honours	15	15	12	15	13	18	16	15	14	13	10
<i>Points from Level 3 qualifications</i>											
Mean A-level points (not equivalents - new QCA points)	107.7	110.1	119.4	102.8	106.5	101.0	108.0	109.2	104.6	113.3	115.5
QCA points from best 3 A-levels (those with 3 A levels or more)	111.7	111.6	124.6	108.3	111.5	106.4	113.9	110.3	108.9	117.0	113.4
Mean UCAS tariff points from all Level 3 qualifications (new UCAS tariff points)	135.9	135.7	148.7	135.8	134.2	129.5	134.5	133.4	133.6	141.8	141.7

¹² Boliver 1 and 2 categories combined here as the regional analysis would otherwise disclose Oxford and Cambridge separately

Employers wishing to recruit a diverse intake graduates might be interested in the pool of graduates from local universities, given students may wish to stay in the area in which they attended university. Table 3 splits the cohort of students by English region, and includes a column for those at school in England at age 11 who graduated from a Northern Irish, Scottish, or Welsh university. The pool of graduates varies considerably by region, from the relatively small number of universities in the North East producing around 14,000 graduates, to London with nearly 34,000. The proportion of graduates from universities of different types varies considerably by region. The North East, for example, with a relatively low total number of universities has a high proportion of graduates from Russell Group universities (53%) while the proportions in the East Midlands, East of England, and South East are much lower, at between 15% and 19%

There are striking differences by ethnicity between regions, with London and West Midlands universities having the most ethnically diverse graduates (and indeed White graduates do not form the majority in London). The North East and South West regions have the highest proportion of White graduates (89 and 88%, compared with 72% nationally).

Graduates from London and West Midlands universities are also the least likely to have a graduate parent, and most likely to have parents working in routine or manual occupations. Graduates who were at school in England and then chose to go elsewhere in the UK for university are the most privileged group – 70% of them have a graduate parent and 69% come from the highest parental SEC class. Those graduating from South West and North East universities were the next most privileged.

The level three attainment patterns across regions are consistent with the concentration of students in more selective universities in the region. The spread in mean A-level scores goes from the equivalent of around BCD (90 QCA points) for graduates of East Midlands universities, to just below BBB (120 QCA points) for the North East.

The patterns change when the split is by region of origin, rather than region of graduation (See Table 4). The North East has the fewest graduates, the highest 'White' proportion, the lowest proportion with a graduate parent and almost the lowest from a professional/managerial parental background – only London is lower on that measure.

Benchmarks for graduates originating from London are outliers on a number of measures. As well as having the lowest proportion of professional/managerial parents, they show much the highest proportion of graduates in receipt of Free School Meals – 15% of the cohort were eligible in year 11, and 30% at any time in the six years to then. They are much the most ethnically diverse group, with only 35% White students, and much the highest proportions of Asian and Black students (29% and 22% respectively).

Despite the relative lack of privilege, on average, of London students, their mean QCA points were above average for England. The lowest mean attainment was in the North East, at slightly more than half an A-level grade below the mean. The highest was the East of England, at a third of a grade above.

Table 4: Graduates by region of origin age 16 (State schools only)

	Number	All	London	North East	North West	Yorkshire/ Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	South East	South West
Total number (State schools only) in England year 11		219,260	37,930	8,810	27,470	18,980	17,320	22,210	22,800	34,090	18,370
<i>Gender %</i>											
Female	123,880	56	56	58	57	57	57	57	56	55	57
Male	95,070	43	44	42	43	43	43	43	44	44	43
Other	310	0	0	SUPP	0	SUPP	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Ethnic Group Major %</i>											
White	151,980	71	35	90	80	79	79	68	80	81	90
Asian	32,780	15	29	6	13	14	13	21	10	10	4
Black	14,870	7	22	1	3	3	3	5	5	3	1
Mixed	10,500	5	8	2	4	3	4	5	5	5	4
Other	3,830	2	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
<i>Ethnic Group Minor %</i>											
White	151,360	71	34	90	80	79	79	67	80	81	90
Black Caribbean	3,140	1	5	SUPP	0	1	1	2	1	0	0
Black African	11,030	5	16	1	2	2	2	3	4	3	1
Black Other	700	0	1	SUPP	0	SUPP	0	0	0	0	SUPP
Asian Indian	10,020	5	8	1	3	2	8	8	3	3	1
Asian Pakistani	10,230	5	5	2	7	9	3	9	3	3	0
Asian Bangladeshi	4,780	2	6	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1
Asian Chinese	1,750	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Asian Other	6,010	3	8	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1
Mixed White Caribbean	2,810	1	2	SUPP	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Mixed White African	1,320	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Mixed white Asian	3,420	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1
Mixed Other	2,950	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Other ethnic group	3,830	2	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
<i>Parent degree %</i>											
Parent has a degree	98,540	51	48	47	50	49	50	46	54	57	57

Parent no degree	94,820	49	52	53	50	51	50	54	46	43	43
<i>Three class SEC %</i>											
Professional/managerial	95,800	52	43	48	51	50	52	49	57	60	56
Intermediate	40,450	22	26	21	22	21	20	22	22	19	21
Routine	48,410	26	31	30	27	28	27	29	22	20	23
Long term unemployed	890	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Routine/ltu combined	49,290	27	31	31	27	29	28	29	22	20	23
<i>University group %</i>											
Russell Group and most old universities (Boliver 1 & 2) ¹³	76,960	35	42	29	31	29	29	26	39	43	36
Most new universities and lower ranked old (Boliver 3)	119,380	54	49	65	55	60	64	63	46	49	56
Lower ranked new universities (Boliver 4)	15,900	7	5	5	13	8	5	9	10	4	5
Other UK universities (eg specialist, conservatoires)	7,030	3	4	2	2	3	2	2	5	4	4
Russell Group	53,850	25	27	25	25	25	21	21	23	26	27
Non Russell Group	165,410	75	73	75	75	75	79	79	77	74	73
<i>Degree class %</i>											
First or 2:1	172,430	85	81	84	84	84	85	83	87	88	87
2:2, 3rd or non-honours	1,610	15	19	16	16	16	15	17	13	12	13
<i>Free school meal eligibility %</i>											
Eligible for FSM in year 11	17,770	8	15	8	8	8	6	10	5	4	4
Eligible for FSM in any of 6 years to year 11	35,490	17	30	17	16	15	12	19	11	9	10
<i>Points from Level 3 qualifications</i>											
Mean A-level points (not equivalents - new QCA points)	160,690	104.4	105.5	98.5	105.1	101.3	101.8	99.3	107.7	107.5	106.6
QCA points from best 3 A-levels (those with 3 A levels or more)	119,500	109.3	109.8	107.3	109.1	107.8	106.7	105.3	111	112.5	110.6

¹³ Boliver 1 and 2 categories combined here as the regional analysis would otherwise disclose Oxford and Cambridge separately.

Mean UCAS tariff points from all Level 3 qualifications (new UCAS tariff points)	209,380	133.5	129.5	133.2	136.5	134.1	129.9	131.1	134.8	137.0	137.3
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Table 5: Graduates' degree subjects (first named subject – CAH categories), by demographic measures and attainment

Total number (State and private) linked to English schools at KS4	Total Number	Female	White	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other ethnicity	State School	Parent degree	Top SES	Intermediate SES	Routine/LTU	Russell Group	First/2:1	FSM	FSM6	A level points QCA's	UCAS tariff
All	251,830	56	72	15	6	5	2	87	55	55	21	24	29	85	8	17	107.7	135.9
Medicine and dentistry	4,560	59	52	35	4	5	3	72	74	72	16	12	82	96	6	10	167.9	191.1
Subjects allied to medicine	22,160	79	60	24	10	4	2	92	47	46	24	30	23	81	10	20	96.2	134.9
Biological and sports sciences	16,530	49	79	9	6	5	1	89	55	56	20	24	25	81	6	14	102.1	133.8
Psychology	12,930	83	73	13	7	5	2	91	49	52	22	27	20	87	9	19	102.9	127.8
Veterinary sciences	760	85	94	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	78	65	67	21	12	54	90	SUPP	6	146.7	168.2
Agriculture, food and related studies	1,520	75	95	2	SUPP	2	SUPP	83	55	51	26	24	10	77	4	9	88.8	125.2
Physical sciences	7,950	41	77	13	3	5	1	86	60	62	18	20	54	88	6	13	133.5	152.9
Mathematics	6,470	34	70	19	3	5	2	89	60	62	19	19	55	85	6	12	143.2	158.5
Engineering and technology	14,490	18	65	21	7	5	3	85	63	60	19	20	39	89	7	15	124.4	146.9
Computing	12,080	13	65	21	7	5	2	93	52	47	22	30	16	83	10	20	96.8	131.5
Architecture, building and planning	4,930	32	73	13	6	5	2	85	58	58	21	21	16	83	7	14	97.0	128.7
Social sciences	26,930	62	69	15	8	6	2	86	52	54	21	25	31	84	10	20	106.2	130.7
Law	11,720	68	60	22	10	6	3	92	48	50	23	27	26	84	11	22	105.5	130.4
Business and management	31,410	43	62	22	9	5	2	87	50	52	22	26	14	85	10	19	89.9	124.4
Language and area studies	12,750	75	83	7	3	6	1	80	62	63	19	19	51	92	6	13	118.3	141.4
History, philosophical and religious studies	13,870	55	84	6	3	6	1	75	66	67	18	15	62	92	5	11	122.0	144.7
Education and teaching	7,290	89	80	12	4	3	1	95	38	43	25	31	4	78	9	19	76.3	121.1
Combined and general	1,060	71	85	6	4	5	SUPP	72	69	74	15	11	53	87	6	11	123.8	155.6
Media, journalism and communications	5,930	54	80	6	7	6	1	92	51	53	21	26	13	86	7	15	89.5	118.2
Design, creative and performing arts	27,670	65	84	5	5	6	1	90	57	54	21	25	7	85	7	15	94.2	136.0
Geography, earth and environmental studies	6,630	56	88	6	1	4	1	79	67	69	16	15	53	91	3	8	113.2	135.0

Table 5 analyses the 2021 graduate cohort by their first or main degree subject and demographic and attainment measures.

Large differences in subjects by gender are illustrated in the table. Subject groups where women make up more than three quarters of the graduates include subjects allied to medicine, psychology, veterinary science, agriculture/food, language studies, history, philosophy and religious studies and education/teaching. They form fewer than a quarter of those graduating in engineering and computing.

There are somewhat smaller, but still significant, differences in subjects studied by ethnicity. There are particularly large proportions of Asian students graduating in medicine and allied subjects, and business and law are also very popular. Subjects allied to medicine and law both have large proportions of Black students compared with their overall representation (both 10%, compared with 6% overall).

A pattern of relative privilege indicated by high proportions from private schools, being in the top SES group and from Russell Group universities is seen for some subjects, together with lower FSM proportions and higher mean level 3 points. Medicine, veterinary science, languages, history, philosophy and religious studies and combined studies are examples. On the other hand, subjects allied to medicine, psychology, law, business and computing are chosen by less privileged students, on average.

Degree class awarded varies from 77% of those graduating in agriculture/food gaining at least a 2:1, to 96% of those doing medicine and dentistry.

School leavers

Tables 6 to 13 cover the cohort of pupils leaving school in England 2019 age 18+ (KS5). This data is relevant for employers recruiting directly, but also as additional information for those recruiting graduates, and those planning outreach activities in schools. Various subsets of KS5 pupil data are analysed according to the attainment levels reached. By the last tables very high proportions of the school leavers are going on to university.

Table 6 is all school and college leavers (age 18+) in England in 2019 who have entered at least one qualification at Level 3 the size of an A level –where the qualification must be one of those counting in the DfE’s performance tables. These 311,350 pupils are said to have reached the ‘Level 3 threshold’ and include private school pupils.

Table 7 sets out more detailed demographic data for a subset of Table 6 – those at state schools or colleges in their final year of schooling, in total and by English region. In addition to the characteristics in Table 6, it includes ethnicity (both minor and major ethnic groups) and free school meals eligibility for students leaving state schools and further education colleges in England in 2019, who were also at school in England at age 16.

The series of tables from 8 to 13 sets out demographic characteristics and measures of attainment for six increasingly highly attaining school leaver groups, with figures given for all pupils domiciled in England at age 16 by TTWA. It starts with the whole state school cohort, then those meeting the Level 3 threshold (i.e. the same sample as Table 7) then those achieving the equivalent of at least BCC, BBC and BBB at A level, and finally those achieving at least AAA from three A levels (ie not including equivalents). The first three levels were chosen as being ones where school leaver and graduate recruiters commonly consider setting entry requirements, and the final one to note the difference in diversity where recruitment is actually at this higher level, and of applicants with A levels only.

Table 6: School leaver cohort 2019 (private and state)– by A-level (and equivalents) points thresholds

	All meeting L3 threshold	BCC+ mean	BBC+ mean	BBB+ mean	AAA+ mean (excl. equivalents)
Total (private and state)	311,350	154,970	129,470	91,840	33,840
<i>Gender %</i>					
Female	55	58	57	57	54
Male	45	42	43	43	46
<i>State school % (at age 18)</i>					
State school	90	84	83	80	76
Private school	10	16	17	20	24
<i>Attend university by 2021 %</i>	71	86	88	89	93
<i>Level 3 attainment</i>					
Three A-levels %	61	82	85	86	100
Total 'counting' QCA points at L3	98.7	138.9	146.2	158.9	182.0
QCA points from best 3 A levels (3 A level cohort only)	109.2	128.8	133.8	142.4	161.3
<i>GCSE mean score (1-9 scale)</i>					
Maths	5.9	6.7	6.9	7.2	8.0
English	5.9	6.5	6.7	6.9	7.5
<i>Free school meal eligibility % (Note for state school pupils only)</i>					
Eligible for FSM in year 11	8	5	5	5	3
Eligible for FSM in any of 6 years to year 11	17	12	11	10	7
<i>Ethnic Group Major % (Note for state school pupils only)</i>					
White	74	75	75	76	75
Asian	14	14	14	14	15
Black	6	5	5	4	3
Mixed	5	5	5	5	5

The number of pupils achieving BBB or equivalent in counting qualifications is 70% lower than those meeting the L3 threshold. The proportion of pupils achieving the level 3 threshold is weighted towards girls, and increases slightly for those achieving at least BCC or equivalent at A-level, then very slightly decreases for the two highest attaining groups.

90% of those meeting the level 3 threshold in 2019 are at state school (including further education college). As the mean attainment increases, so does the proportion of those from private schools.

The proportion of those achieving three A-levels is 61% of the 'level 3 threshold' group, but the proportion increases with mean attainment. The mean attainment including BTEC, IB or other equivalents recorded in the KS5 data is the equivalent of around CCD from three A-levels for those meeting the threshold (although some will have qualifications of smaller total size). This mean attainment increases as lower attaining students are progressively dropped from the analysis.

This pattern is also seen in the GCSE mean scores.

Table 7: School leaver cohort 2019: State school leavers reaching Level 3 threshold by demographic characteristics, mean attainment and region

	England	London	North East	North West	Yorkshire/ Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	Est of England	South East	South West
Total number	279,650	43,990	10,760	31,510	24,340	21,500	27,520	29,550	43,740	24,330
<i>Gender %</i>										
Female	55	54	58	56	56	56	57	56	54	55
Male	45	46	42	44	44	44	43	44	46	45
<i>Ethnic group major %</i>										
White	74	39	91	81	79	81	69	84	82	92
Asian	14	26	6	12	15	12	21	8	9	3
Black	6	21	1	2	2	3	5	3	3	1
Mixed	5	9	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	3
<i>Ethnic group minor %</i>										
White British	68 ¹⁴	27	89	79	76	76	66	78	77	87
White Other	5	11	2	2	3	4	3	5	5	4
Black Caribbean	1	4	SUPP	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Black African	4	15	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	1
Black Other	1	2	SUPP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian Indian	4	7	1	3	2	6	7	2	3	1
Asian Pakistani	5	5	2	6	10	3	9	2	3	1
Asian Bangladeshi	2	6	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1
Asian Chinese	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Asian Other	2	6	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1
Mixed White Caribbean	1	2	SUPP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mixed White African	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Mixed white Asian	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Mixed Other	2	4	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Other ethnic group	2	6	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
<i>Mean SES quintile</i>										
(cf full year 11 cohort – mean=3)	3.3	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.6
<i>Free school meal eligibility %</i>										

¹⁴ Some other White groups have been suppressed from this table as the numbers are so small – White Irish, Irish Traveller, Roma..

Eligible for FSM in year 11	8	13	8	8	8	6	10	5	4	5
Eligible for FSM in any of 6 years to year 11	17	29	18	17	16	14	20	12	10	11
Attend university by 2021 %	70	80	68	71	69	68	69	66	68	63
<i>Level 3 attainment</i>										
Three A -levels %	59	66	49	61	53	57	54	61	60	58
Total 'counting' QCA points at L3	94.7	98.2	90.5	93.6	90.7	91.3	90.2	96.6	97.6	94.6
QCA points from best 3 A levels (3 A level cohort only)	106.7	105.8	107.8	106.9	107	103.5	103.3	106.4	109.8	107.7
<i>GCSE mean score (1-9 scale)</i>										
Maths	5.9	6.0	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.9	6.0	5.9
English	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.9

Table 7 gives further demographic analysis, broken down by English region, for the state school pupils included within Table 6. As we might expect from the graduates' region of origin table, Table 4, there are large differences in the size of the regional talent pool, with the North East the smallest, and London the largest.

Proportions of females are fairly consistent across regions, while ethnicity varies considerably. As with the graduates' region of origin, the North East and South West have much the least diverse school leaver populations, and London and the West Midlands the most.

The mean SES value for the full cohort of state school pupils, including those who didn't reach the level 3 threshold, is 3.0. For this subset reaching the level 3 threshold the mean is 3.3 – so they are a little more privileged, on average. But there are relatively large differences in mean SES quintile by region. Those achieving the threshold in London are no more privileged than the whole school leaver population for England, while those in the South East and South West are considerably more privileged, with mean SES quintiles of 3.8 and 3.6. The Free School Meals measures are consistent with this – 29% of this London origin cohort had been in receipt of FSM during the six years to year 11.

The rates of university attendance one or two years after leaving school differ by region. The lowest proportion is 63% in the South West, compared with 80% of London origin students.

Patterns of qualifications taken also vary considerably by region. In the North East, less than half of the cohort takes three A levels, while in London two thirds does. London and the South East have the highest mean points from 'counting' level 3 qualifications. Interestingly, there is less variation in GCSE score.

Table 8: All state school leavers 2019 - demographics and attainment by Travel To Work Area

	Total Number	Female %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	White %	FSM %	FSM Six %	Mean SES quintile	Attend University %	3 A levels %	Mean GCSE English score	Mean GCSE maths score
England	518,440	50	11	6	4	77	12	25	3	45	32	5.2	5.2
Birkenhead	3,340	51	2	SUPP	2	95	15	32	3.1	46	35	5.2	5.0
Birmingham	18,210	48	29	9	6	53	20	36	2.4	46	28	5.1	5.0
Blackburn	3,410	51	26	SUPP	3	70	13	26	2.7	45	31	5.3	5.2
Bradford	5,580	50	42	1	4	52	17	31	2.2	44	24	4.9	4.8
Bristol	7,020	50	5	5	5	84	10	21	3.4	39	32	5.1	5.1
Cambridge	5,860	50	3	2	4	90	6	15	3.7	48	39	5.5	5.5
Chelmsford	4,580	49	3	2	4	91	7	16	3.6	43	38	5.4	5.3
Coventry	5,390	50	15	5	4	74	13	25	2.8	45	28	4.9	4.9
Crawley	5,350	48	6	2	4	87	6	14	3.7	43	34	5.3	5.3
Derby	3,960	49	13	2	4	79	11	24	3.1	42	31	5.1	5.1
Dudley	5,320	50	16	4	5	73	15	29	2.4	40	25	4.9	4.8
Exeter	3,370	49	SUPP	SUPP	2	96	10	18	3.3	38	29	5.4	5.3
Guildford/Aldershot High	5,110	47	8	1	4	86	5	14	3.9	48	41	5.5	5.7
Wycombe/Aylesbury	3,910	48	17	2	5	74	5	13	3.9	55	46	5.8	5.9
Hull	4,210	51	1	1	2	95	14	26	2.8	41	23	5.1	5.0
Ipswich	3,210	50	2	1	5	91	10	19	3.2	39	31	5.1	5.0
Leeds	6,880	49	12	6	5	75	14	28	2.9	43	31	5.1	5.2
Leicester	8,540	49	23	4	4	67	10	21	3.0	46	32	5.2	5.2
Lincoln	3,140	48	1	SUPP	2	96	10	20	3.2	39	27	5.2	5.1
Liverpool	8,630	50	2	2	3	91	20	35	2.6	43	26	5.0	4.9
London	69,430	50	18	22	9	46	17	35	2.8	57	40	5.4	5.4
Luton	7,580	50	19	7	6	66	10	21	3.3	52	39	5.3	5.3
Manchester	24,380	50	16	5	4	73	16	31	2.7	47	32	5.2	5.2
Medway	5,780	48	4	3	4	88	9	20	3.0	40	30	5.2	5.2
Middlesbrough/Stockton	4,430	51	6	1	2	90	18	32	2.7	43	21	5.0	5.0
Milton Keynes	3,730	47	8	11	5	74	9	21	3.2	46	32	5.2	5.1

Newcastle	8,680	49	5	1	2	91	15	28	2.7	41	27	5.1	5.0
Northampton	3,180	48	6	6	5	82	9	20	3.1	44	31	4.9	5.0
Norwich	3,710	51	1	1	3	94	9	20	3.2	37	34	5.2	5.2
Nottingham	6,850	50	9	5	7	77	14	27	2.9	41	31	5.1	5.1
Oxford	4,130	50	6	3	5	84	6	16	3.8	47	40	5.6	5.6
Peterborough	3,260	49	11	2	4	82	10	23	2.8	39	29	4.9	4.9
Portsmouth	4,250	50	3	1	2	93	11	24	3.0	34	25	5.2	5.1
Preston	3,730	49	10	SUPP	3	86	10	19	3.4	46	31	5.4	5.2
Plymouth	3,010	49	1	SUPP	1	96	13	24	3.0	36	25	5.0	5.0
Reading	4,780	49	10	4	6	79	7	14	3.9	50	44	5.6	5.7
Sheffield	7,380	50	9	4	4	80	15	27	2.7	42	26	5.2	5.2
Slough/Heathrow	14,830	49	27	9	8	50	10	24	3.1	58	44	5.4	5.5
Southampton	5,730	50	5	1	4	89	9	19	3.5	44	34	5.3	5.4
Southend	5,560	50	3	4	3	89	9	23	2.9	38	33	5.6	5.5
Stevenage/Welwyn													
Garden City	3,540	48	5	3	6	86	8	19	3.3	43	34	5.1	5.1
Stoke-on-Trent	4,530	52	7	1	3	88	12	24	2.7	43	27	5.0	4.9
Sunderland	3,560	49	3	SUPP	1	95	19	32	2.3	35	18	5.0	4.9
Swindon	3,520	50	7	2	3	87	7	17	3.3	40	33	5.2	5.1
Wakefield/Castleford	3,110	49	3	1	2	93	12	25	2.5	35	23	5.2	5.1
Warrington/Wigan	7,830	50	1	0	2	96	13	26	3.0	40	26	5.1	5.0
Wolverhampton/Walsall	7,420	50	17	5	5	72	16	34	2.5	43	24	4.9	4.9

Table 8 starts with all those who left state school or college in 2019 having entered for at least one qualification the size of an A-level but not necessarily at that level, and who were at school in England at age 16 (KS4). Of these 518,000 pupils, nearly 240,000 were not entered for level 3 (A level equivalent) qualifications counting in the DfE performance tables, and therefore do not have performance points recorded. These are pupils doing qualifications of the following types:

- at a lower level than level 3;
- apprenticeships;
- qualifications which do not count in the DfE's performance tables.

These pupils were largely at further education colleges. Although all these pupils were recorded in the KS4 data, a large number did not have English and/or maths GCSE recorded. The mean GCSE scores in Table 8 are calculated using 341,740 English scores and 341,820 maths scores.

Statistics are given for the whole cohort, and for the 48 Travel To Work Areas with more than 3,000 school leavers in 2019. Together they total 342,940 pupils – two thirds of the total school leaver population.

The first thing to note is that the gender balance for the whole cohort is even, and the proportion of White students is higher than that for school leavers reaching the I3 threshold. On average this full cohort of pupils is less privileged (higher FSM, lower SES quintile) than the I3 threshold cohort and only 45% of them went to UK university in the two years after they left school. Fewer than a third of them did 3 A-levels. As noted above, the mean GCSE scores are computed on only about two thirds of the cohort for which results are available.

TTWAs vary hugely by size. London is one TTWA, with nearly 70,000 18+ school/college leavers in 2019. Manchester, Birmingham and the Slough/Heathrow TTWAs are the only others with 5-digit school leaver populations.

The TTWAs vary considerably in their ethnic diversity. For example, 42% of the cohort in Bradford comes from an Asian background, whilst the Exeter TTWA has fewer than 23 school leavers from an Asian background in total, meaning that the proportion cannot be disclosed. The highest proportion of Black pupils is found in London (at 22%) whilst 7 TTWAs have fewer than 23 Black pupils leaving school at 18+. Some TTWAs have very few non-White school leavers – for example Exeter, Lincoln, Plymouth, Sunderland and Warrington/Wigan are all 95% or more White.

TTWAs also differ in the privilege of their school leaver population. Eight of the 48 have the six-year rate of FSM eligibility at over 30% - Birkenhead, Birmingham, Bradford, Liverpool, London, Middlesbrough/Stockton, Sunderland and Wolverhampton/Walsall. Bradford and Sunderland school leavers have the lowest mean SES quintiles of 2.2 and 2.3. At the privileged end of the spectrum, the eight TTWAs with the lowest rates of FSM 6 (all below 18%) are Cambridge, Chelmsford, Crawley, Guildford/Aldershot, High Wycombe/Aylesbury, Oxford, Reading and Swindon, with mean SES quintiles from 3.3 to 3.9.

It is interesting to compare rates of entry to university between some more and less privileged TTWAs. For example Exeter, while above averagely privileged, has a considerably lower than average proportion of pupils going to university (38%). On the other hand, 44% of Bradford pupils go. They have the lowest mean SES quintile, but a much bigger proportion of pupils from non-White backgrounds than Exeter. Portsmouth and Plymouth are other areas with low university participation like Exeter, with low ethnic minority populations and, in their case, average SES.

London has the highest rate of university participation for this level of attainment, at 57%, despite its lower mean SES quintile, and high FSM proportions. The only other TTWA in these 48 with a university participation rate approaching London is High Wycombe/Aylesbury at 55% - which has a combination of relatively high numbers of school leavers with an Asian background and high SES quintile. It has the highest mean scores for English and maths GCSE (5.8 and 5.9). The TTTWAs with the next highest average scores are all in the South: Cambridge, Chelmsford, London, Oxford, Reading and Southend.

Table 9: State school leavers reaching L3 threshold 2019 - demographics and attainment by Travel To Work Area

	Total Number	Female %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	White %	FSM %	FSM Six %	Mean SES quintile	Attend University %	3 A levels %	Mean GCSE English score	Mean GCSE maths score
England	279,650	55	13	6	5	74	8	17	3.3	70	59	5.9	5.9
Birkenhead	2,030	55	3	SUPP	2	93	8	20	3.5	71	58	5.8	5.6
Birmingham	9,510	57	32	8	6	50	14	28	2.7	71	54	5.8	5.8
Blackburn	1,680	59	30	SUPP	2	66	8	17	2.9	71	64	6.0	5.9
Bradford	3,050	58	49	1	3	46	12	22	2.4	71	44	5.5	5.4
Bristol	3,770	57	6	4	5	83	5	13	3.7	64	60	5.8	5.9
Cambridge	3,550	55	3	2	4	89	3	8	4.0	70	64	6.0	6.1
Chelmsford	2,780	55	3	2	4	89	4	10	3.8	64	62	5.9	5.9
Coventry	2,900	56	20	6	4	69	8	17	3.1	71	52	5.7	5.7
Crawley	3,170	53	7	2	4	86	3	7	4.0	66	58	5.9	6.0
Derby	2,090	56	16	2	4	76	6	15	3.6	68	59	5.9	5.9
Dudley	2,680	55	21	4	5	68	10	21	2.7	66	50	5.6	5.6
Exeter	1,720	55	SUPP	SUPP	2	95	6	11	3.6	62	56	6.1	6.1
Guildford/Aldershot High	3,180	52	9	1	4	84	3	8	4.1	70	66	6.0	6.2
Wycombe/Aylesbury	2,560	52	17	2	5	74	2	7	4.1	75	70	6.2	6.5
Hull	1,970	58	1	SUPP	2	94	6	14	3.3	69	48	5.9	5.8
Ipswich	1,840	54	2	SUPP	5	90	6	11	3.5	61	55	5.7	5.8
Leeds	3,890	54	13	7	5	73	9	19	3.3	69	56	5.7	5.8
Leicester	4,750	56	28	4	4	63	6	15	3.3	70	58	5.8	5.8
Lincoln	1,570	54	SUPP	SUPP	2	95	6	12	3.5	68	54	5.8	5.8
Liverpool	4,400	57	3	2	3	89	13	24	3.0	71	50	5.7	5.6
London	42,550	54	22	21	8	43	13	28	3.0	78	65	5.9	6.0
Luton	4,170	57	20	7	6	66	5	13	3.6	77	70	6.1	6.1
Manchester	11,820	56	20	5	4	69	9	20	3.1	74	66	6.0	6.0
Medway	3,410	54	5	4	5	84	5	13	3.2	63	50	5.6	5.7
Middlesbrough/Stockton	2,010	64	9	SUPP	2	87	10	19	3.2	75	47	5.7	5.7
Milton Keynes	2,230	52	11	13	5	70	5	14	3.4	69	53	5.8	5.8

Newcastle	4,460	56	6	1	2	89	9	17	3.1	69	53	5.8	5.8
Northampton	1,760	53	8	6	6	79	5	14	3.4	69	57	5.6	5.8
Norwich	2,010	58	2	1	3	93	5	12	3.4	60	62	5.8	5.9
Nottingham	3,490	56	12	5	6	76	7	16	3.4	71	61	5.9	6.0
Oxford	2,530	54	7	2	5	84	3	9	4.0	69	66	6.1	6.2
Peterborough	1,720	55	14	3	3	79	6	16	3.1	67	56	5.7	5.8
Portsmouth	1,690	57	6	2	3	89	6	13	3.5	66	63	6.0	6.0
Preston	1,630	56	14	SUPP	3	82	5	10	3.8	72	72	6.4	6.2
Plymouth	1,610	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	7	14	3.4	61	47	5.7	5.8
Reading	3,160	53	12	4	5	77	4	9	4.1	70	67	6.0	6.1
Sheffield	3,600	57	10	4	4	80	9	17	3.2	71	54	5.8	6.0
Slough/Heathrow	9,360	53	32	8	8	45	7	18	3.3	80	70	6.0	6.2
Southampton	3,310	56	6	1	4	87	4	10	3.8	68	58	5.9	6.0
Southend	2,950	55	4	6	4	85	5	14	3.2	60	62	6.0	6.0
Stevenage/Welwyn													
Garden City	1,880	55	7	3	5	83	4	10	3.6	69	65	5.8	5.9
Stoke-on-Trent	2,080	58	9	SUPP	3	86	6	14	3.1	71	60	5.8	5.7
Sunderland	1,470	58	5	SUPP	SUPP	93	10	19	2.8	65	44	5.8	5.8
Swindon	2,070	55	8	2	3	85	4	10	3.6	61	57	5.9	5.9
Wakefield/Castleford	1,360	59	4	SUPP	2	92	7	14	2.9	63	53	6.0	5.9
Warrington/Wigan	3,590	57	1	SUPP	2	95	6	13	3.5	68	57	5.9	5.9
Wolverhampton/Walsall	3,670	57	24	5	5	65	10	23	2.8	71	48	5.6	5.6

Table 9 shows the TTWA analysis for the same sample as Table 7 – some 280,000 state educated pupils with at least one A level sized entry at l3.

Compared with Table 8 for the full cohort, as the threshold for inclusion in the table becomes higher, the proportion of female pupils rises and the proportion of Asian students increases slightly, broadly speaking, at the expense of White students. The proportion of pupils from Black backgrounds drops slightly, in some cases from a low base, so that now 13 TTWAs have too few to disclose the proportion. The population becomes more privileged, with smaller proportions, on average, eligible for Free School Meals, higher mean SES quintiles and a jump in the proportion attending university. Mean GCSE marks go up substantially.

The range in proportion for the FSM 6 measure goes from 7% in Crawley and High Wycombe/Aylesbury to 22% in Bradford, 23% in Wolverhampton/Walsall and 28% in London, but Bradford still has a (just) higher than average proportion of university attenders despite having the lowest SES quintile measure (2.4). Slough/Heathrow and London, at 80% and 78% respectively, have the highest proportion of university attenders despite average/below average SES quintiles (Heathrow/Slough at 3.3 and London 3.0). Slough/Heathrow is joint top with the more privileged (but less ethnically diverse) High Wycombe/Aylesbury area in the proportion gaining at least 3 A-levels – at 70%.

Table 10: State school leavers reaching BCC or 'counting' equivalent (104 UCAS points) - demographics and attainment by Travel To Work Area

	Total Number	Female %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	White %	FSM %	FSM Six %	Mean SES quintile	Attend University %	3 A levels %	Mean GCSE English score	Mean GCSE maths score
England	130,680	59	13	5	5	75	5	12	3.6	87	82	6.5	6.6
Birkenhead	1,050	57	3	SUPP	3	92	6	14	3.7	87	74	6.4	6.2
Birmingham	4,150	61	32	7	6	51	11	22	3.0	88	78	6.5	6.6
Blackburn	770	65	27	SUPP	SUPP	70	6	12	3.3	83	84	6.7	6.6
Bradford	1,100	63	43	SUPP	4	51	8	17	2.7	86	63	6.1	6.2
Bristol	1,690	61	5	2	5	87	3	8	4.1	84	85	6.5	6.7
Cambridge	1,970	57	3	SUPP	4	90	2	5	4.2	87	83	6.6	6.8
Chelmsford	1,390	59	4	2	5	87	2	6	4.0	82	81	6.6	6.6
Coventry	1,190	59	19	4	4	71	5	11	3.5	86	78	6.4	6.5
Crawley	1,530	57	6	SUPP	4	87	2	5	4.2	85	87	6.6	6.7
Derby	900	58	14	SUPP	4	79	4	10	3.9	88	84	6.6	6.7
Dudley	1,080	57	21	3	5	69	7	16	3.0	85	76	6.4	6.5
Exeter	840	58	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	3	7	3.8	84	83	6.7	6.8
Guildford/Aldershot High	1,720	55	8	SUPP	4	85	2	5	4.3	87	93	6.6	6.8
Wycombe/Aylesbury	1,490	52	15	2	5	77	SUPP	5	4.4	90	87	6.9	7.2
Hull	890	60	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	5	9	3.5	84	75	6.5	6.6
Ipswich	890	58	SUPP	SUPP	5	91	4	8	3.7	80	77	6.3	6.4
Leeds	1,710	57	10	4	5	78	5	13	3.7	87	84	6.5	6.6
Leicester	2,130	59	29	3	4	62	4	11	3.5	88	80	6.4	6.5
Lincoln	700	58	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	5	9	3.7	89	78	6.5	6.5
Liverpool	1,810	59	3	2	3	88	9	18	3.3	88	72	6.4	6.4
London	20,890	57	23	16	9	46	10	23	3.2	89	83	6.5	6.7
Luton	2,140	60	16	4	6	71	3	8	3.9	90	91	6.7	6.8
Manchester	5,570	60	18	4	4	71	7	15	3.4	88	91	6.6	6.6
Medway	1,510	59	5	5	6	83	3	7	3.5	81	72	6.4	6.5

Middlesbrough/Stockton	790	66	8	SUPP	SUPP	87	7	14	3.5	89	75	6.5	6.5
Milton Keynes	930	58	12	10	4	73	4	10	3.7	87	80	6.6	6.7
Newcastle	2,080	61	6	SUPP	2	88	6	12	3.4	86	77	6.4	6.4
Northampton	710	55	7	6	5	81	4	10	3.6	86	80	6.3	6.5
Norwich	950	61	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	4	8	3.6	83	83	6.5	6.6
Nottingham	1,650	59	10	3	5	79	5	10	3.7	88	83	6.5	6.7
Oxford	1,290	57	5	SUPP	5	86	2	6	4.2	88	87	6.7	6.8
Peterborough	750	57	10	SUPP	3	82	4	12	3.4	87	79	6.4	6.5
Portsmouth	750	59	5	SUPP	SUPP	89	4	10	3.8	83	88	6.6	6.7
Preston	900	57	14	0	3	82	3	6	4.0	85	96	6.9	6.8
Plymouth	620	59	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	4	10	3.6	83	73	6.6	6.7
Reading	1,570	55	12	2	5	78	2	6	4.4	87	88	6.6	6.9
Sheffield	1,540	58	9	3	4	82	7	12	3.5	89	80	6.5	6.8
Slough/Heathrow	4,820	55	32	6	8	48	5	14	3.5	91	89	6.5	6.9
Southampton	1,720	58	6	SUPP	4	88	2	6	4.1	85	82	6.5	6.7
Southend	1,390	56	5	4	3	86	3	9	3.5	79	84	6.5	6.6
Stevenage/Welwyn													
Garden City	910	61	7	SUPP	6	83	SUPP	7	3.9	86	85	6.6	6.6
Stoke-on-Trent	770	61	8	SUPP	SUPP	86	4	9	3.4	88	79	6.4	6.5
Sunderland	560	63	5	SUPP	SUPP	93	6	12	3.2	88	72	6.6	6.5
Swindon	920	60	8	SUPP	4	84	SUPP	7	3.8	85	86	6.6	6.7
Wakefield/Castleford	560	60	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	5	9	3.2	81	84	6.6	6.6
Warrington/Wigan	1,640	61	SUPP	SUPP	2	95	5	9	3.8	85	82	6.6	6.6
Wolverhampton/Walsall	1,390	60	22	5	5	67	7	17	3.2	87	68	6.2	6.4

Table 10 describes the 130,680 state school and college pupils with 104 or more UCAS points (BCC at A level or 100 QCA points). These points can be from A-levels or the equivalent in other Level 3 qualifications on the DfE's list of qualifications counting in Performance Tables, such as BTECs, or the International Baccalaureate. These are total points, so may be made up of a mixture of qualifications.

The cohort becomes more female overall at this higher level of attainment. High Wycombe and Aylesbury have the most even female/male split (52% female) while Middlesbrough/Stockton is the least even, with almost twice as many female as male pupils.

The overall ethnic mix for this cohort is similar for those reaching the I3 threshold shown in Table 9, although the proportion of Black students drops again - now there are 25 TTWAs with fewer than 23 Black pupils reaching the BCC or equivalent threshold.

Pupils reaching this attainment level are less privileged than those in Table 9, with only 12% having been eligible for Free School Meals in the six years to year 11, and as before this proportion varies considerably by TTWA. The mean SES quintile increases to 3.6. The most privileged pupils by these measures are in Southern TTWAs as before: Cambridge; Crawley; Guildford/Aldershot; and High/Wycombe/Aylesbury and Reading based on SES quintile. London continues to have the overall highest FSM proportions, followed by Birmingham.

There's a steep jump in the proportion starting university in the two years following leaving school for this higher attaining group – a mean of 87%. But once again there is a lot of variation by TTWA. High Wycombe/Aylesbury, Luton and Slough/Heathrow have participation rates of 90% plus. TTWAs with the lowest participation rates (83% and below) are in predominantly White, southern, towns and cities such as Chelmsford, Ipswich, Norwich, Portsmouth and Plymouth, or less privileged northern areas such as Blackburn and Wakefield/Castleford.

Bradford school leavers continue to have the lowest mean SES quintile (only 2.7) and the lowest mean GCSE scores in both English and maths, but despite this have an about average university participation rate.

A-levels are much the most popular level 3 qualification for this cohort, with 87% gaining at least three. But that proportion, too, varies considerably by TTWA. Only 72% of school leavers with 100 QCA points in Liverpool gain their points from three A-levels, much lower than their regional neighbours Manchester at 91% and Preston at 96%.

Table 11: State school leavers reaching BBC or 'counting' equivalent (112 UCAS points) - demographics and attainment by Travel To Work Area

	Total Number	Female %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	White %	FSM %	FSM Six %	Mean SES quintile	Attend University %	3 A levels %	Mean GCSE English score	Mean GCSE maths score
England	107,270	59	13	5	5	75	5	11	3.6	88	85	6.7	6.8
Birkenhead	850	57	3	SUPP	3	92	5	13	3.8	89	79	6.6	6.4
Birmingham	3,340	61	31	6	6	52	10	21	3.1	89	81	6.6	6.8
Blackburn	610	64	27	SUPP	SUPP	71	5	11	3.3	86	87	6.8	6.8
Bradford	820	63	39	SUPP	4	55	7	15	2.7	88	69	6.3	6.5
Bristol	1,390	61	5	2	6	87	3	7	4.2	87	88	6.7	6.9
Cambridge	1,680	57	3	SUPP	4	90	2	4	4.2	89	85	6.7	7.0
Chelmsford	1,160	58	5	SUPP	5	87	2	6	4.0	85	83	6.7	6.8
Coventry	950	59	20	4	4	71	5	11	3.5	87	81	6.5	6.7
Crawley	1,280	58	6	SUPP	4	87	SUPP	5	4.2	87	88	6.7	6.9
Derby	720	57	14	SUPP	4	80	4	10	3.9	91	88	6.8	6.9
Dudley	860	58	21	SUPP	5	69	7	16	3.0	89	79	6.6	6.7
Exeter	710	58	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	SUPP	6	3.9	86	84	6.9	7.0
Guildford/Aldershot High	1,470	54	8	SUPP	4	86	2	5	4.4	89	94	6.7	7.0
Wycombe/Aylesbury	1,300	53	14	SUPP	5	78	SUPP	4	4.4	92	90	7.0	7.4
Hull	720	61	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	92	5	8	3.5	85	77	6.6	6.6
Ipswich	730	58	SUPP	SUPP	5	91	4	8	3.8	85	80	6.4	6.5
Leeds	1,390	57	9	4	5	79	5	11	3.8	88	87	6.6	6.8
Leicester	1,720	59	30	3	4	62	4	11	3.5	89	84	6.5	6.7
Lincoln	560	57	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	5	9	3.8	89	82	6.6	6.7
Liverpool	1,390	59	3	2	3	88	9	17	3.3	90	77	6.6	6.6
London	17,210	57	23	15	9	46	10	22	3.3	90	86	6.7	6.9
Luton	1,820	60	16	4	6	72	3	7	4.0	91	92	6.9	7.0
Manchester	4,610	60	17	4	4	72	6	14	3.5	90	93	6.7	6.8
Medway	1,200	59	5	5	6	82	2	6	3.5	84	77	6.6	6.8
Middlesbrough/Stockton	610	63	7	SUPP	SUPP	88	6	12	3.6	90	78	6.6	6.7
Milton Keynes	760	57	11	10	SUPP	73	SUPP	10	3.8	88	83	6.8	6.9

Newcastle	1,640	59	5	SUPP	2	89	5	12	3.5	89	81	6.6	6.6
Northampton	540	54	7	5	5	81	SUPP	9	3.6	86	82	6.5	6.7
Norwich	760	61	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	4	8	3.6	87	86	6.7	6.8
Nottingham	1,370	58	10	3	6	79	5	10	3.8	90	87	6.7	6.9
Oxford	1,060	57	4	SUPP	5	87	SUPP	6	4.3	90	91	6.9	7.0
Peterborough	620	57	10	SUPP	SUPP	83	SUPP	10	3.4	89	82	6.6	6.7
Portsmouth	620	60	6	SUPP	SUPP	88	SUPP	10	3.8	86	89	6.8	6.9
Preston	760	56	14	SUPP	3	82	SUPP	6	4.0	86	96	7.0	6.9
Plymouth	470	63	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	SUPP	9	3.6	86	77	6.9	6.9
Reading	1,320	55	12	2	5	78	2	5	4.4	89	91	6.7	7.1
Sheffield	1,230	57	9	2	4	83	6	11	3.6	91	84	6.7	7.0
Slough/Heathrow	4,000	55	32	6	8	48	5	13	3.5	92	91	6.7	7.1
Southampton	1,440	59	6	SUPP	4	89	2	5	4.2	86	85	6.6	6.9
Southend	1,130	56	4	4	3	86	3	8	3.5	82	87	6.7	6.8
Stevenage/Welwyn													
Garden City	740	60	7	SUPP	5	83	SUPP	6	3.9	88	88	6.7	6.8
Stoke-on-Trent	580	61	7	SUPP	SUPP	87	SUPP	8	3.5	90	83	6.7	6.7
Sunderland	450	63	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	6	11	3.2	90	75	6.8	6.6
Swindon	770	60	8	SUPP	4	85	SUPP	7	3.9	88	88	6.7	6.9
Wakefield/Castleford	450	60	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	SUPP	9	3.2	85	88	6.8	6.8
Warrington/Wigan	1,340	61	SUPP	SUPP	3	95	4	9	3.8	88	85	6.7	6.8
Wolverhampton/Walsall	1,080	60	21	5	5	69	7	18	3.2	88	71	6.4	6.7

The 107,270 pupils described in Table 11 attained 112+ UCAS points (the equivalent of BBC, or 110 QCA points).

The splits by gender and ethnicity are very similar for these students as for the cohort achieving the equivalent of one grade lower, as might be expected, although now 29 areas have fewer than 23 Black school leavers with this level of attainment.

The proportion with 3 A-levels, rather than points from other types of qualification, increases somewhat for this subgroup, by around 3 percentage points, but the pattern across TTWAs stays very similar.

In Table 12, fixing the threshold at the equivalent of BBB at A-level (120 UCAS points, 120 QCA points) reduces the size of the cohort by nearly 34,000 pupils, and by now the number of school leavers in 23 of the 48 TTWAs with the biggest full school leavers cohorts has fallen below 1,000.

Only 11 of the TTWAs have more than 23 Black school leavers at this level of attainment, and 11 of the TTWAs are over 90% White. These are the southern and eastern, often coastal, towns and cities noted above (Cambridge, Exeter, Hull, Ipswich, Lincoln, Norwich, Plymouth) and some further north – Birkenhead, Sunderland, Wakefield/Castleford and Warrington/Wigan.

For this attainment threshold, the rate of six-year FSM drops to 10% and even London's is below 20%. The mean SES quintile for 15 of these areas has now reached 4, although Bradford's, at 2.9, is still below the mean for the entire English school leaver cohort.

The overwhelming majority of these pupils is matched to university entry in the following two years – and 33 of the 48 TTWAs have participation rates of 90% or more. High Wycombe/Aylesbury has 94% of pupils reaching this attainment level matched to attendance at a UK university – a remarkably high rate given that some may choose to wait, go abroad, or choose some other work, apprenticeship or training instead.

The mean GCSE scores also rise for this subgroup, and the English and maths scores diverge slightly, with maths increasing for this cohort more than English. The highest mean maths score is for High Wycombe/Aylesbury at 7.7 and the lowest is 6.8 for Birkenhead, Bradford, Ipswich and Sunderland. Bradford and Sunderland's lower GCSE grades are perhaps reflected in their having the lowest 3 A-level rates of the 48 TTWAs listed (in other words for more of them their 100 QCA points are earned from alternative qualifications such as BTECs). But despite this, and the relatively low mean SES quintiles for these pupils (2.9 and 3.3), 90% plus of pupils from these areas go on to UK university.

Table 12: State school leavers reaching BBB or 'counting' equivalent (120 UCAS points) - demographics and attainment by Travel To Work Area

	Total Number	Female %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	White %	FSM %	FSM Six %	Mean SES quintile	Attend University %	3 A levels %	Mean GCSE English score	Mean GCSE maths score
England	73,560	58	12	4	5	76	5	10	3.7	91	87	6.9	7.2
Birkenhead	540	57	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	91	SUPP	12	4.0	91	84	6.8	6.8
Birmingham	2,260	61	31	6	7	52	9	19	3.2	91	84	6.9	7.2
Blackburn	360	65	28	SUPP	SUPP	70	SUPP	9	3.4	91	88	7.0	7.2
Bradford	500	64	33	SUPP	SUPP	61	6	13	2.9	90	73	6.6	6.8
Bristol	930	61	4	SUPP	6	87	3	7	4.3	90	92	7.0	7.2
Cambridge	1,300	58	3	SUPP	5	90	SUPP	4	4.3	91	87	6.9	7.2
Chelmsford	840	56	5	SUPP	5	86	SUPP	5	4.0	88	85	6.9	7.1
Coventry	590	56	22	SUPP	4	68	5	10	3.5	92	85	6.8	7.1
Crawley	880	58	5	SUPP	4	88	SUPP	5	4.3	89	90	7.0	7.3
Derby	490	57	14	SUPP	SUPP	80	SUPP	7	4.0	94	89	7.0	7.2
Dudley	560	59	20	SUPP	5	71	6	12	3.1	90	82	6.8	7.1
Exeter	530	58	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	SUPP	7	3.9	90	84	7.0	7.2
Guildford/Aldershot High	1,020	54	7	SUPP	4	86	SUPP	4	4.4	92	96	6.9	7.3
Wycombe/Aylesbury	980	52	13	SUPP	5	78	SUPP	3	4.5	94	91	7.2	7.7
Hull	480	62	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	91	5	9	3.6	88	79	6.8	6.9
Ipswich	530	57	SUPP	SUPP	5	91	SUPP	8	3.8	87	83	6.6	6.8
Leeds	970	57	8	4	5	80	4	10	3.9	92	90	6.8	7.1
Leicester	1,150	58	30	3	4	62	3	9	3.6	91	86	6.7	7.0
Lincoln	380	55	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	SUPP	7	3.8	91	85	6.8	7.1
Liverpool	880	57	4	SUPP	3	87	9	17	3.4	92	81	6.8	7.0
London	11,760	57	23	14	9	48	9	19	3.4	92	87	7.0	7.3
Luton	1260	57	15	3	6	74	2	6	4.0	93	93	7.1	7.3
Manchester	3,020	60	17	3	4	73	6	12	3.6	93	94	7.0	7.2
Medway	820	57	5	5	6	82	SUPP	6	3.5	88	78	6.8	7.1
Middlesbrough/Stockton	380	63	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	88	SUPP	12	3.6	93	80	6.9	7.0
Milton Keynes	520	57	11	7	SUPP	77	SUPP	9	3.9	91	86	7.1	7.2

Newcastle	1,110	59	5	SUPP	3	89	5	11	3.6	91	84	6.8	6.9
Northampton	320	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	82	SUPP	8	3.7	89	81	6.7	6.9
Norwich	510	59	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	SUPP	9	3.7	88	87	7.0	7.0
Nottingham	910	58	11	SUPP	5	79	5	9	3.8	92	88	6.9	7.2
Oxford	750	54	4	SUPP	5	88	SUPP	5	4.3	92	94	7.2	7.3
Peterborough	410	58	8	SUPP	SUPP	85	SUPP	9	3.6	90	86	6.8	7.1
Portsmouth	430	62	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	89	SUPP	9	3.9	88	91	7.0	7.2
Preston	520	56	15	SUPP	SUPP	81	SUPP	6	4.0	88	96	7.3	7.2
Plymouth	330	65	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	95	SUPP	SUPP	3.7	87	80	7.1	7.3
Reading	900	54	12	SUPP	5	78	SUPP	4	4.4	92	92	6.9	7.4
Sheffield	830	57	9	SUPP	4	83	5	10	3.7	92	85	6.9	7.4
Slough/Heathrow	2,710	56	32	5	8	50	4	11	3.6	93	94	6.9	7.4
Southampton	1,080	59	5	SUPP	4	89	SUPP	5	4.2	89	87	6.8	7.1
Southend	780	56	5	5	4	84	SUPP	8	3.6	86	89	6.9	7.1
Stevenage/Welwyn													
Garden City	510	59	8	SUPP	5	83	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	90	90	6.9	7.1
Stoke-on-Trent	350	60	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	87	SUPP	SUPP	3.6	91	85	6.9	7.0
Sunderland	310	63	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	SUPP	9	3.2	93	75	7.0	6.8
Swindon	570	57	8	SUPP	SUPP	85	SUPP	4	4.0	90	90	6.9	7.2
Wakefield/Castleford	290	58	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	92	SUPP	10	3.3	88	85	7.0	7.0
Warrington/Wigan	940	60	SUPP	SUPP	3	94	4	9	3.9	92	88	7.0	7.1
Wolverhampton/Walsall	680	59	23	4	5	68	5	14	3.2	91	74	6.6	7.0

Table 13: State school leavers reaching AAA from best three A levels (168 UCAS points) - demographics and attainment by Travel To Work Area

	Total Number	Female %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	White %	FSM %	FSM Six %	Mean SES quintile	Attend University %	Mean GCSE English score	Mean GCSE maths score
England	25,730	54	15	3	5	75	3	7	3.9	95	7.4	8.0
Birkenhead	160	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	86	SUPP	SUPP	4.2	94	7.4	7.8
Birmingham	690	53	34	4	8	51	7	15	3.5	96	7.5	8.0
Blackburn	150	63	30	SUPP	SUPP	69	SUPP	SUPP	3.5	92	7.5	7.8
Bradford	130	56	21	SUPP	SUPP	74	SUPP	SUPP	3.4	93	7.4	7.9
Bristol	330	60	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	88	SUPP	SUPP	4.4	94	7.4	8.0
Cambridge	470	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	91	SUPP	SUPP	4.5	96	7.4	7.9
Chelmsford	270	55	10	SUPP	SUPP	81	SUPP	SUPP	4.2	96	7.5	8.0
Coventry	190	48	25	SUPP	SUPP	67	SUPP	SUPP	3.7	95	7.3	8.0
Crawley	370	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	88	SUPP	SUPP	4.4	93	7.4	8.0
Derby	150	49	19	SUPP	SUPP	78	SUPP	SUPP	4.2	98	7.4	7.9
Dudley	170	54	19	SUPP	SUPP	73	SUPP	SUPP	3.5	97	7.4	8
Exeter	180	55	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	94	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	94	7.4	8
Guildford/Aldershot High	410	49	9	SUPP	SUPP	86	SUPP	SUPP	4.5	95	7.3	8.0
Wycombe/Aylesbury	460	52	14	SUPP	6	79	SUPP	SUPP	4.7	96	7.6	8.3
Hull	120	61	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	86	SUPP	SUPP	3.8	98	7.6	7.9
Ipswich	140	52	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	91	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	95	7.3	7.8
Leeds	330	53	10	SUPP	SUPP	81	SUPP	SUPP	4.2	95	7.3	7.8
Leicester	370	50	28	SUPP	SUPP	65	SUPP	SUPP	3.9	97	7.3	7.9
Lincoln	120	50	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	SUPP	SUPP	3.8	96	7.5	7.9
Liverpool	280	50	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	83	SUPP	11	3.6	96	7.6	7.9
London	4,310	53	28	10	9	49	7	14	3.6	95	7.5	8.0
Luton	520	55	17	SUPP	SUPP	74	SUPP	6	4.2	97	7.6	8.0
Manchester	1,150	57	18	2	4	74	4	8	3.9	97	7.4	7.8
Medway	250	45	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	80	SUPP	SUPP	3.7	94	7.3	7.9
Middlesbrough/Stockton	120	53	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	98	7.7	8.1
Milton Keynes	150	47	20	SUPP	SUPP	74	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	95	7.5	8.2

Newcastle	340	55	8	SUPP	SUPP	87	SUPP	SUPP	3.9	95	7.5	7.8
Northampton	90	48	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	83	SUPP	SUPP	3.7	94	7.2	8.0
Norwich	180	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	SUPP	SUPP	3.7	95	7.5	7.8
Nottingham	300	57	11	SUPP	SUPP	80	SUPP	SUPP	4.1	96	7.5	8.0
Oxford	300	50	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	85	SUPP	SUPP	4.4	96	7.7	8.1
Peterborough	140	53	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	83	SUPP	SUPP	3.8	99	7.3	8.0
Portsmouth	150	56	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	89	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	94	7.6	8.0
Preston	220	51	16	SUPP	SUPP	81	SUPP	SUPP	4.2	92	7.5	7.8
Plymouth	110	56	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	SUPP	SUPP	4.0	94	7.8	8.2
Reading	370	49	15	SUPP	SUPP	77	SUPP	SUPP	4.5	96	7.4	8.1
Sheffield	320	53	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	87	SUPP	SUPP	4.1	97	7.4	8.1
Slough/Heathrow	1,100	50	34	3	7	51	3	8	3.7	97	7.5	8.2
Southampton	370	59	8	SUPP	SUPP	87	SUPP	SUPP	4.3	94	7.3	7.9
Southend	230	48	11	SUPP	SUPP	79	SUPP	SUPP	3.7	96	7.4	8.0
Stevenage/Welwyn							SUPP	SUPP				
Garden City	190	54	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	79			4.1	95	7.4	7.8
Stoke-on-Trent	100	52	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	89	SUPP	SUPP	3.8	98	7.5	7.8
Sunderland	90	56	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	90	SUPP	SUPP	3.4	99	7.9	8.0
Swindon	170	47	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	85	SUPP	SUPP	4.2	95	7.4	8.2
Wakefield/Castleford	90	52	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	89	SUPP	SUPP	3.5	96	7.5	7.8
Warrington/Wigan	300	57	SUPP	SUPP	SUPP	93	SUPP	SUPP	4.3	97	7.5	8.0
Wolverhampton/Walsall	180	53	31	SUPP	SUPP	60	SUPP	SUPP	3.5	97	7.3	8.1

Table 13 gives the TTWA analysis for the 25,730 pupils achieving AAA or better in three A levels (not including equivalents from other types of level three qualification). Whilst few employers require such high marks at A-level, in practice some academically competitive recruiters end up recruiting students with this sort of level of school attainment.

State school students with this attainment are just under 5% of the total state school leaver cohort. Only 3% of them are Black, compared with 6% of the state school leaver cohort described in Table 8, while the proportion of Asian students has increased from 11% to 15%. These AAA+ students are the most privileged, with only 7% having received free school meals in the last six years, compared with 25% of the full state cohort. Overall 95% of them go to university in the UK within the following two years.

At this level of attainment It is very striking in this table how much has to be suppressed because of data disclosure rules, meaning that fewer than 23 pupils from that category in that TTWA have achieved AAA or better in three A levels. Only Birmingham, London, Manchester and Slough/Heathrow have 23 or more Black pupils achieving AAA+. Similarly small numbers were in receipt of free school meals. Recruiters aiming to employ young people from under-represented backgrounds with very high prior attainment outside the largest metropolitan areas are fishing in very a very small pool indeed.

Considerations for recruiters

We summarise below some issues for recruiters raised by the data set out in Tables 2-13. We start first with graduate recruitment, then consider recruitment of school leavers, or outreach work in schools relating to future employment.

Graduate recruitment

Gender

The pool of graduates is majority female, although, as is well known, the differences in proportion by degree subject is very marked. Although the proportions of female graduates in Engineering and Computing are low, the absolute number of women graduates is not tiny as these are both relatively popular subject areas. But firms may need to target universities with large courses in these subjects to find them.

School type

Students from private schools are over-represented at Russell Group universities, and the majority of state school students graduate from Boliver Group 3 universities – ie most new (post 1992 universities) and lower ranked old ones. This also might direct firms' marketing efforts if they are aiming to recruit a more diverse workforce. Focusing on recruiting students from particular degree subjects might also help: for example law, design/creative arts and computing are relatively more likely to be done by state school and college students.

Ethnicity

There are relatively few Black graduates – just 6% - the majority of whom are from Black African, rather than Black Caribbean or other Black backgrounds. Black students are disproportionately unlikely to be found at Russell Group universities, and they are much more likely to graduate with a 2:2 or below than their White peers. Removing the requirement for a 2:1 or above from recruitment processes would therefore increase the size of the Black talent pool. Law is a degree subject with disproportionately high uptake by both Black and Asian students: it's an example where recruitment effort in a particular subject might increase the talent pool of under-represented groups. Proportions of White students also vary enormously by region – non-Russell Group universities in London and the West Midlands, for example, produce a much greater proportion of non-White graduates than those in the North East or South West.

Social background

Graduates whose parents don't have a degree, whose parents have intermediate or routine occupations, or who were eligible for Free School Meals are more likely to graduate with a 2:2 or below and much less likely to attend a Russell Group university than their more privileged peers. As with Ethnicity, removing the requirement for at least a 2:2, and focusing recruitment activity at non-Russell Group universities would increase the size of the pool of less privileged graduates.

Regional recruitment

Employers recruiting for offices throughout England need to consider the make-up of universities in their area. For example, graduates who were at school age 11 in the North East are on average, amongst the least privileged in the country, but those attending university in the North East are considerably more privileged. Focusing graduate recruitment on the two Russell Group universities in the North East means fishing in rather a different pool than those who were at school locally.

Recruiters might bear in mind the variation in range in mean A-level score by region of origin. This might be a reason to consider flexibility in A-level requirements. For example, there's a gap of almost a full A-level grade between the mean in the North East and in the East of England.

School leaver recruitment/outreach work

Attainment and social background

A clear story told by the school leaver data is that as attainment thresholds are set higher, the privilege of the pupils increases. This clearly is important when setting A-level or equivalent requirements for school leaver programmes.

It might also be important to make sure requirements are presented not just in terms of A-levels. The proportions of qualifications of different types vary considerably by Travel To Work Area – for some pupils, for example in Liverpool, a significant proportion even of the highest attaining group won't have A-levels, whilst their neighbours in Manchester are much more likely to.

Ethnicity

The difference in proportions of school leavers of different ethnicities between areas is striking and recruiters seeking to increase ethnic diversity in their offices in some TTWAs may have a very small talent pool of non-White school leavers available to them. Only 12 of the 48 TTWAs had a talent pool available in their area of 23 or more Black school leavers gaining at least BBB or equivalent at level 3, and only 4 had 23 or more gain AAA or better from three A levels.

North-South divide and coastal towns

There is evidence from these tables of a north south divide in terms of privilege and university attendance, although some areas in the north, for example Bradford, have high rates of university attendance given their relative lower mean SES. It is also the case, as has been documented¹⁵, that coastal towns, and in particular areas in the South West, have lower university attendance than would be expected. These tend to be areas with particularly large proportions of White students.

Some of these areas may present opportunities for firms with local offices to recruit school leavers who in other parts of the country might attend university. But on the flip side, while they may increase diversity in terms of social background, they are unlikely to increase ethnic diversity.

Recruiters seeking out school leavers with particularly strong GCSEs might identify High Wycombe/Aylesbury, Reading, Sheffield, Slough/Heathrow as places to target, although in all these TTWAs the proportion of university attenders among BBB attaining school leavers is very high, at 92% or above. London has very nearly as high mean attainment in maths GCSE and is considerably more diverse ethnically and in terms of FSM entitlement.

¹⁵ See, for example, Playford, C. J., Mountford-Zimdars, A., & Benham-Clarke, S. (2023). Coast and City, It Matters Where You Live: How Geography Shapes Progression to Higher Education in England. *Social Sciences*, 12(11), 610.

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Appendices

Table 14: Appendix 1 - University categories (Boliver clusters)

Cluster 1 (Oxbridge)	Cluster 3 (New universities and old lower ranked)	Cluster 3 cont'd	Cluster 4 (Bottom ranked)
Cambridge ^a	Abertay Dundee	Newman	Anglia Ruskin
Oxford ^a	Aberystwyth	Northampton	Bishop Grosseteste
	Arts University, Bournemouth	Nottingham Trent	University College, Birmingham
Cluster 2 (Russell Group and other higher ranked)	University of the Arts, London	Northumbria	Bolton
Aberdeen	Aston	Oxford Brookes	Buckinghamshire New
Bath	Bangor	Plymouth	Cumbria
Birmingham ^a	Bath Spa	Portsmouth	East London
Bristol ^a	Bedfordshire	Queen Margaret	Edge Hill
Cardiff ^a	Birmingham City	Robert Gordon	Glyndwr
Dundee	Bournemouth	Roehampton	Leeds Trinity
Durham ^a	Bradford	Salford	Liverpool Hope
UEA	Brighton	Sheffield Hallam	London Metropolitan
Edinburgh ^a	Brunel	Staffordshire	Newport
Exeter ^a	Christ Church, Canterbury	Stirling	St Mark and St John
Glasgow ^a	Cardiff Metropolitan	Sunderland	Southampton Solent
Goldsmiths	Central Lancashire	Swansea	Suffolk
Heriot-Watt	Chester	Teesside	Trinity St David
Imperial College ^a	Chichester	Ulster	Wolverhampton
Kent	City	UWE Bristol	York St John
King's College London ^a	Coventry	West London	
	University for the Creative Arts	West of Scotland	
Lancaster	De Montfort	Westminster	
Leeds ^a	Derby	Winchester	
Leicester	Edinburgh Napier	Worcester	
Liverpool ^a	Essex		
UCL ^a			
London School of Economics ^a	Falmouth		
Loughborough	Glamorgan		
Manchester ^a	Glasgow Caledonian		
Newcastle ^a	Gloucestershire		
Nottingham ^a	Greenwich		
Queen Mary ^a	Harper Adams		
Queen's Belfast ^a	Hertfordshire		
Reading	Highlands and Islands		
Royal Holloway	Huddersfield		
St Andrews	Hull		
SOAS	Keele		
Sheffield ^a	Kingston		
Southampton ^a	Leeds Beckett		
Strathclyde	Lincoln		
Surrey	Liverpool John Moores		
Sussex	London South Bank		
Warwick ^a	Manchester Met		
York ^a	Middlesex		

Other universities not included in this analysis (mostly smaller specialist universities and conservatoires) are included in a separate group in the benchmarks.

Table 15: Appendix 2 - Intersections by major ethnic group, gender and three class SES (30 category) Percentages (read downwards)

	Number	All	First and 2:1	2:2 and below	Russell Group	Non Russell Group
Total number (State and private) linked to English schools at KS4		251,830	200,280	34,290	71,790	180,040
Male, White, Top SES	41,040	20	20	18	25	18
Female, White, Top SES	49,310	24	26	14	30	22
Male, Asian, Top SES	5,390	3	2	3	4	2
Female, Asian, Top SES	5,650	3	3	2	4	2
Male, Black, Top SES	2,280	1	1	2	1	1
Female, Black, Top SES	3,160	2	1	2	1	2
Male, Mixed, Top SES	2,670	1	1	1	2	1
Female, Mixed, Top SES	3,290	2	2	1	2	1
Male, Other, Top SES	590	0	0	0	0	0
Female, Other, Top SES	660	0	0	0	0	0
Male, White, Int SES	12,060	6	6	7	5	6
Female, White, Int SES	16,800	8	9	7	6	9
Male, Asian, Int SES	4,040	2	2	3	2	2
Female, Asian, Int SES	4,560	2	2	3	2	2
Male, Black, Int SES	1,100	1	0	1	0	1
Female, Black, Int SES	1,720	1	1	2	0	1
Male, Mixed, Int SES	870	0	0	1	0	0
Female, Mixed, Int SES	1,140	1	1	1	0	1
Male, Other, Int SES	350	0	0	0	0	0
Female, Other, Int SES	440	0	0	0	0	0
Male, White, Bottom SES	12,330	6	6	8	3	7
Female, White, Bottom SES	18,770	9	9	10	5	11
Male, Asian, Bottom SES	4,370	2	2	3	2	2
Female, Asian, Bottom SES	5,260	3	2	4	2	3
Male, Black, Bottom SES	1,670	1	1	2	0	1
Female, Black, Bottom SES	2,670	1	1	3	1	2
Male, Mixed, Bottom SES	940	0	0	1	0	1
Female, Mixed, Bottom SES	1,430	1	1	1	0	1
Male, Other, Bottom SES	450	0	0	0	0	0
Female, Other, Bottom SES	600	0	0	1	0	0

Table 16: Appendix 3 - Five subjects of interest - whether major or minor

Total number (State and private) linked to English schools at KS4	Total Number	Female %	White %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed %	Other ethnicity %	State School %	Parent degree %	Top SES %	Intermediate SES %	Routine/LTU %	Russell Group %	First/2:1 %	FSM %	FSM6 %	A level points QCA's	UCAS tariff
Law	12,780	68	60	21	10	6	3	92	48	50	23	27	25	83	11	23	104.4	129.8
Maths	7,150	34	69	20	4	5	2	89	61	62	19	19	56	85	6	12	143.3	158.9
Business and management	33,110	43	62	21	9	5	2	86	50	52	22	26	16	85	9	19	91.0	124.9
Accounting and finance	6,600	35	42	41	11	4	3	92	43	43	26	31	17	85	11	23	90.5	121.1
Economics	9,830	28	59	25	8	6	2	78	63	65	19	16	48	92	7	14	127.0	145.4

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