

ACCESS TO ADVANTAGE

The influence of schools and place on admissions to top universities

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Foreword

For more than 20 years, the Sutton Trust has been improving the chances of young people from less advantaged backgrounds to get to our most selective universities. Our summer schools support thousands of students each year, giving them the best chance of getting an excellent education and a great start to their career. But there are a variety of barriers young people from such backgrounds face. Attainment in school is one of the most important, but even talented young students face additional challenges that limit their chances of social mobility.

One barrier is geography. Depending on where you were born, your access to the best universities can be severely limited without travelling significant distances. Recent research has only emphasised the career benefits of attending a top university. Those from all backgrounds should be encouraged and helped to consider travelling to the best university for their needs. Through our Sutton Trust Summer Schools we play our part, giving young people the chance to experience those universities before they apply.

A second barrier is what type of school you attend. Some schools provide excellent support when it comes to university advice. They give early guidance on the best A level subjects to study, give personalised advice on the best university and course for each of their students, and guide them through the sometimes intimidating application process. In particular, some schools help to cultivate their students' extra-curricular activities and essential life skills, giving them the skills and opportunities to bolster their personal statement.

However, many schools are falling behind, and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are simply not getting the advice and support they need in a highly competitive process. Our research has shown that over 40% of teachers would not encourage their brightest students to apply to Oxford and Cambridge.

If we are to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background, have a fair chance of getting in to our top universities, we need to address the patchwork of higher education guidance and support. All young people, regardless of what area they grow up in, or what school they go to, should have access to high quality personal guidance that allows them to make the best informed choices about their future.

But it's not just schools that can help. Top universities should reach out to neglected areas of the country and encourage young people to apply. The admissions process also needs to change. Previous Sutton Trust research has highlighted concerns about the personal statement. They are more likely to reflect the level of coaching and support available to students, as well as the range of extra-curricular opportunities open to them. This must be reviewed. We have also made the case for contextualised admissions, giving students from poorer backgrounds a break.

Getting university access right is as important as ever when it comes to ensuring that all young people have an equal opportunity to succeed. I am grateful to the Sutton Trust team for this important new report.

Sir Peter Lampl

Founder of the Sutton Trust and Chairman of the Education Endowment Foundation

Key findings

- Eight top schools had as many Oxbridge acceptances as another 2894 schools and colleges across the UK put together. This comes to about three quarters of all schools and colleges. The eight schools with the highest number of Oxbridge acceptances had 1310 between them over a three-year period, while 2894 schools and colleges with two or fewer acceptances had just 1220 acceptances between them.
- We also looked at how university applications and admissions differ between different types of schools, looking at England in particular. 21% of higher education applications from independent schools in England are for Oxford or Cambridge, compared to 5% at comprehensive schools and 4% at sixth form colleges. 16% of grammar school applications are to Oxbridge.
- Independent school pupils are 7 times more likely to gain a place at Oxford or Cambridge compared to those in non-selective state schools, and over twice as likely to take a place at Russell Group institutions. 60% of those from independent schools in higher education attend a Russell Group university, compared to just under a quarter of those from comprehensives and sixth form colleges.
- The proportion of HE applicants from state schools in England who gain a place at Oxbridge differs substantially by region, with differences between the South and East of England compared to the rest of the country. Around 1.5% of HE applicants from the South East, South West, London and East of England went to Oxbridge, but only around 0.8% of those from the North or the Midlands.
- Schools with similar exam results had very different rates of progression to top universities, and especially to Oxbridge. Almost a quarter (23%) of students in independent schools in the top fifth of all schools for exam results applied to Oxbridge, but only 11% of students in comprehensives in the same high achieving group of schools did so. Of those who applied to Oxbridge from schools in the top fifth, 35% were successful from independent schools, but only 28% of those applying from comprehensives were accepted.
- Several parts of the country had two or fewer acceptances to Oxbridge from state non-selective schools in all three years examined here, including Halton, Knowsley, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Portsmouth, Rochdale, Rutland, Salford, Southampton and Thurrock.
- Acceptance rates to higher education are high, with over 90% of all applicants accepted to a higher education institution. This was similar across all school types, with general further education colleges the lowest at 89%.
- Applicants from non-selective state schools were less likely to receive and accept an offer from a Russell Group university compared to independent schools (44% compared to 71%). Almost two thirds of those who applied from grammar schools were accepted (63%). FE college acceptance rates were substantially lower, at 30%.
- Acceptance rates for Oxbridge are higher at independent and grammar schools, with about a third (34%) of independent school applicants accepting an offer, along with 31% of those

applying from grammar schools. This compares to 25% of those at sixth form colleges and 22% at comprehensive schools.

- Successful higher education applicants from independent and grammar schools had the highest grades on average, equivalent to ABB. Students accepted to HE from comprehensives and general FE colleges had the lowest average A level results, equivalent to BCC on average.
- The results of students accepted to Russell Group universities were similar across school types, equivalent to between AAA and AAB on average. Students accepted to Oxbridge also had similar results on average, equivalent to A*A*A at A level.

Recommendations

For Universities:

1. **Universities should make greater use of contextual data in their admissions process, to open up access to students from less privileged backgrounds.** Highly selective universities in particular, where low and moderate-income students are substantially under-represented, should make greater use of contextual admissions, including reduced grade offers, to recognise the differing circumstances faced by applicants.
2. **There should be greater transparency from universities when communicating how contextual data is used, including the use of automated 'contextual data checkers'.** In order for contextual admissions to have an effect, it should be communicated clearly to potential applicants where they may benefit from a contextual offer. Otherwise, they may never apply in the first place. Universities should publicise the criteria for contextual admissions clearly, along with how they are taken into account. For example, through an easy-to-use lookup tool on university websites allowing candidates to enter their details and find out whether they qualify.
3. **A geographic element should be included in future university access agreements, including a focus on peripheral areas.** There is a notable lack of provision of university outreach in peripheral areas in stark contrast to working-class schools and colleges in London, which often receive high levels of engagement. Oxbridge and other selective universities should target schools in such neglected areas.
4. **Universities should work to reassure students and families who may be reluctant to move substantial distances to university.** Outreach activities, open days and summer schools such as the Sutton Trust's Summer Schools can help to reassure such students – and their parents – about travelling by offering more opportunities for them to visit those universities.

For schools:

5. **All pupils should receive a guaranteed level of careers advice from professional impartial advisers.** For those facing disadvantage – or who are at risk of failing to reach their potential – there should be further support available, including being supported to undertake and reflect upon academic enrichment activities for the personal statement. The 'Careers Leaders' in schools, established by the government's Careers Strategy, should ensure that key messages are consistent across staff and based on up to date guidelines.
6. **Advice should happen earlier and include guidance on subject options at A level.** Many young people are not getting the right advice when it comes to A level options. Students need more support at an earlier age, that can help them to make an informed choice on their A-level choices. This should include advice on 'facilitating subjects', favoured by Russell Group universities.

1. Introduction

In the UK, whether someone goes to university, and if so at which institution they study, is highly impacted by an individual's socioeconomic background, the school they attend and where in the country they are from. 'Top' universities especially are highly socially selective, with students from better-off homes, and those who attended private schools considerably more likely to gain a place at the institutions which both feature repeatedly at the top of league tables, and which go on to open doors in the job market. Whether looking at Oxbridge, the Russell Group or top tariff institutions, our most highly regarded universities are not equally accessible to all young people in the country.

In 2011, the Sutton Trust published *Degrees of Success*; which looked at university acceptance rates, including how those rates differed by school type and area.¹ The data mostly focused on England, with some statistics for the UK as a whole. Students in state comprehensive schools in England were considerably less likely to gain a place at a top institution than students in independent or grammar schools. Additionally, students in state schools in certain parts of the country, for example Buckinghamshire, Reading or Barnet, were considerably more likely to gain a place at a top university, for example at Oxford or Cambridge, than their counterparts in other parts of the country, including Knowsley, Thurrock or Tower Hamlets.

These differences in university admissions were not in all cases due solely to students' A level results. Although there was a strong link between a school's average A level results and chances of their students going to university, there were also very large differences in university progression rates for some schools with similar exam results, particularly when looking at entry rates to selective universities. For example, of two grammar schools with almost identical A level results, one had 28% of its students go on to highly selective universities, but the other had only 65% of its students doing so.

Since then, the debate on university access has continued, but the pace of change has been slow; although the number of disadvantaged students going on to higher education has increased, the gap in participation rates between the most and the least well off young people remains the same as it was in 2007. At top universities, the gap has also stayed static.

During the same period, there have also been substantial policy changes in higher education. Tuition fees rose significantly in England during this period, increasing from a maximum of £3,290 to £9,000 per year in 2012. Virtually every institution now charges fees at the maximum level of £9,250 per year. In 2016, maintenance grants were scrapped and replaced with additional loans, with means testing used to determine the amount available to loan. Student number controls were also removed in 2015, allowing universities to increase the numbers of students that they admit.²

In that context, this report goes back to some of the issues raised in 2011; looking at both who is accepted to which universities, but also importantly who is applying to those universities as well. Schools can make a considerable difference, not just in the grades they help their students to achieve, but also in the help and advice they provide around the university application process. While some students, such as those at top independent schools, have access to high quality personalised advice, the same is not true for all students in the country.

¹ John O'Leary and Lesley Kendall (2011) *Degrees of success, university chances by individual school*. Sutton Trust.

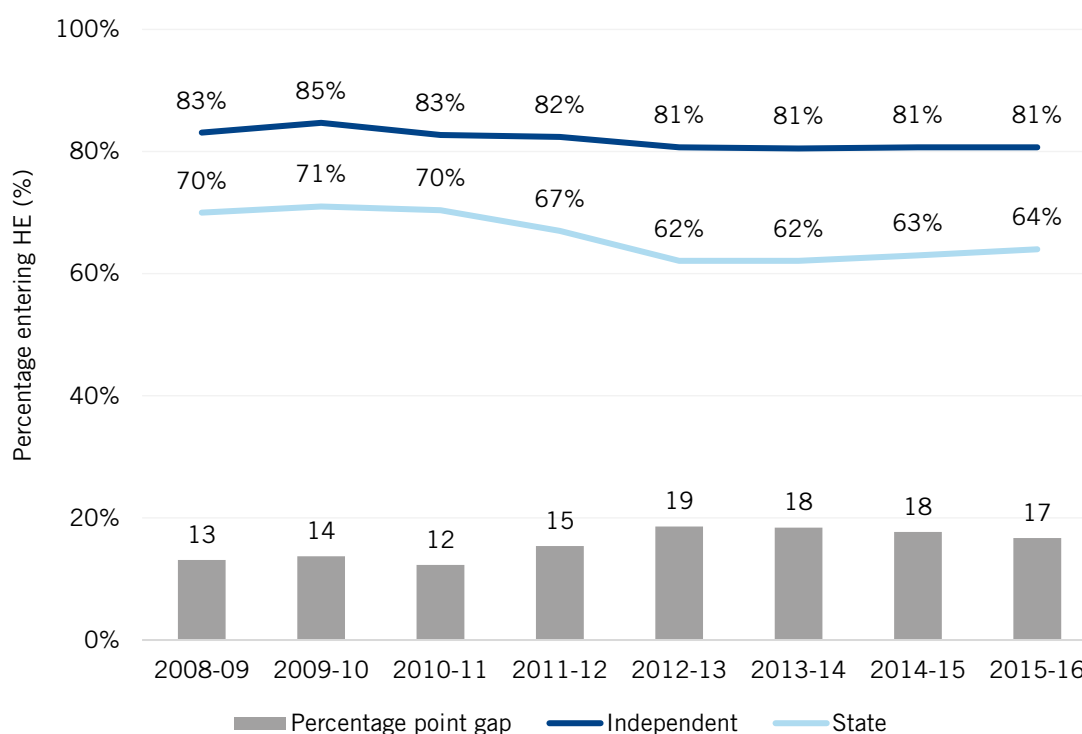
² For a more detailed discussion of recent policy changes to student finance, see: C. Cullinane & R. Montacute (2017) *Fairer Fees – reforming student finance to increase fairness and widen access*. Sutton Trust.

2. Background

Access to higher education

There is a substantial gap in HE participation between students who attended private and state schools, which has also widened recently (when looking at the last few years for which data is available). For students who studied for A levels in 2008-09, the gap in HE participation between state and privately educated students was 13 percentage points. However, in 2015-16 this had increased to 17 percentage points. In that year, 81% of A level students from independent schools went on to HE, compared to just 64% of students from state schools (Figure 1).³ It is important to view this in the context of private school participation. The vast majority of students attend state-funded schools before the age of 16, with just 6.5% of students attending private schools, rising to 18% of students post-16 doing so.⁴

Figure 1: Estimated percentage of A level and equivalent students entering HE by age 19



Source: DfE

According to the Independent Schools Council (ISC), which represents over 1,300 independent schools, private school fees average over £17,000 a year; a figure which is out of reach for the vast majority of families. Although one third of students in ISC schools are on reduced fees, only 14% of means tested

³ Department for Education (2017) Widening participation in higher education, England 2014/15 age cohort. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635103/SFR39-2017-MainText.pdf

⁴ Independent schools council – Research. Available at: <https://www.isc.co.uk/research/>

bursaries cover fees entirely, and 57% cover only half of fees or less.⁵ Therefore, most families with students attending an independent school are paying substantial sums for them to do so, making the differences in progression rates to HE a crucial issue for social mobility.

Indeed, across a range of measures used to examine the impact of socioeconomic status on university access, little progress is being made in closing the gap between the least and the most well-off. Looking at the Multiple Equality Measure (MEM) – which combines several indicators, including whether someone attended a private or a state school, if they were eligible for free school meals (FSM), if they are from a neighbourhood with low HE participation (POLAR3 classification), their ethnicity and their sex – the gap in participation between the highest and lowest MEM groups was 39 percentage points in 2017, the same as it was in 2007. The HE participation gap has also not narrowed between those who were and were not eligible for FSM,⁶ or between young people from the least well-off and most well-off areas as measured by POLAR3.⁷ The background someone is from continues to have a profound impact on their likelihood of accessing higher education.

Place also has a significant impact on HE participation, including when viewed in combination with socioeconomic background. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals at 15 who go on to higher education varies substantially by region. In inner London, 45% of FSM eligible students went on to HE in 2014-15, compared to 53% of non-FSM students. However, in stark contrast, in the South West just 15% of FSM eligible students went on to HE, compared to 37% of their non-FSM eligible peers. Many other areas of the country, including the East Midlands, North East and South East (excluding inner and outer London) had similarly large participation gaps.⁸

All universities in the UK are autonomous institutions and are not directly accountable to government. When tuition fees were first raised to £9,000 a year in 2010, all institutions charging full fees were required to submit Access Agreements annually to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), setting out how the institution planned to safeguard and promote fair access to HE. These documents also included targets set by the university itself on widening participation. In 2018, OFFA was merged with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to form the Office for Students (OfS), with access agreements now submitted to the new regulator.

However, despite minimal narrowing of the gap between the most and the least advantaged going on to HE, no universities have ever had the right to charge higher fees taken away due to breaching their access plans. The OfS is currently consulting on how best to approach regulation of access and participation in HE in future, including whether to increase the focus of their approach on outcomes.⁹

Access to elite universities

As well as looking at access to university in general, it is also important to look at who attends ‘elite’ universities; institutions which are the most highly regarded by employers, are associated with the highest

⁵ ISC census and annual report (2018) Available at: https://www.isc.co.uk/media/4890/isc_census_2018_report.pdf

⁶ Department for Education (2017) Widening participation in higher education, England 2014/15 age cohort.

⁷ UCAS (2017) End of cycle data releases, available at: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports/2017-end-cycle-report>

⁸ Department for Education (2017) Widening participation in higher education, England 2014/15 age cohort.

⁹ OfS (2018) A new approach to regulating access and participation in English higher education: Consultation. Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/a-new-approach-to-regulating-access-and-participation-in-english-higher-education-consultation/>

lifetime earnings, regularly top league tables and are the most likely to open-up access to professional jobs. However, doing so can be challenging, as there is no universally accepted way to define the 'elite' 'top' or 'best' universities. Two of the most common groups examined when looking at top universities in the UK are the Russell Group, a self-selected group of highly selective, research intensive universities; and 'high tariff institutions', the top third of universities as ranked by A level tariff points on entry.

The Russell Group is a set of research intensive universities, with strong links to graduate employers. They also provide a substantial earnings boost to their graduates; attending a Russell Group university increases earnings around 10% more than the average degree.¹⁰ However, membership of the Russell Group is not defined by any set criteria, and does not include some universities which feature highly on league tables, are highly regarded by employers and who receive considerable amounts of research funding. The group also does not alter frequently, indeed, no new members have joined the Russell Group since 2012.¹¹

The previous edition of *Degrees of Success* included a larger group of universities, termed the Sutton Trust 30 (ST30), to also include highly selective universities who are not in the Russell Group.¹² The ST30 is made up of universities in which it was estimated that less than 10 per cent of places were attainable to pupils with 200 UCAS tariff points (equivalent to two D grades and a C grade at A-level) or less. The group were also, in 2011, the 30 most selective in the Times University Guide. This group is often used by the Sutton Trust to examine 'top' universities, to cover a larger number of highly selective universities than the Russell Group alone.

The third of universities with the highest tariff scores of students on entry are also often used to define top universities. This allows for a definition of 'top' universities which alters over time. However, defining the best universities as those with the top third of tariff scores has limitations. Tariff scores can fluctuate due to a number of external factors, such as demand for certain courses, so are a very rough measure of 'quality'. Additionally, if universities are considered 'top' based only on the A level or equivalent results of their students, this is potentially skewed towards universities who do not offer contextual offers to students. Such offers acknowledge the context in which results are achieved, and can include giving students from disadvantaged groups lower grade offers. While this report will focus on the Russell Group, because of the limitations of each group used to define 'top' universities, it will also look at access across the other definitions discussed here.

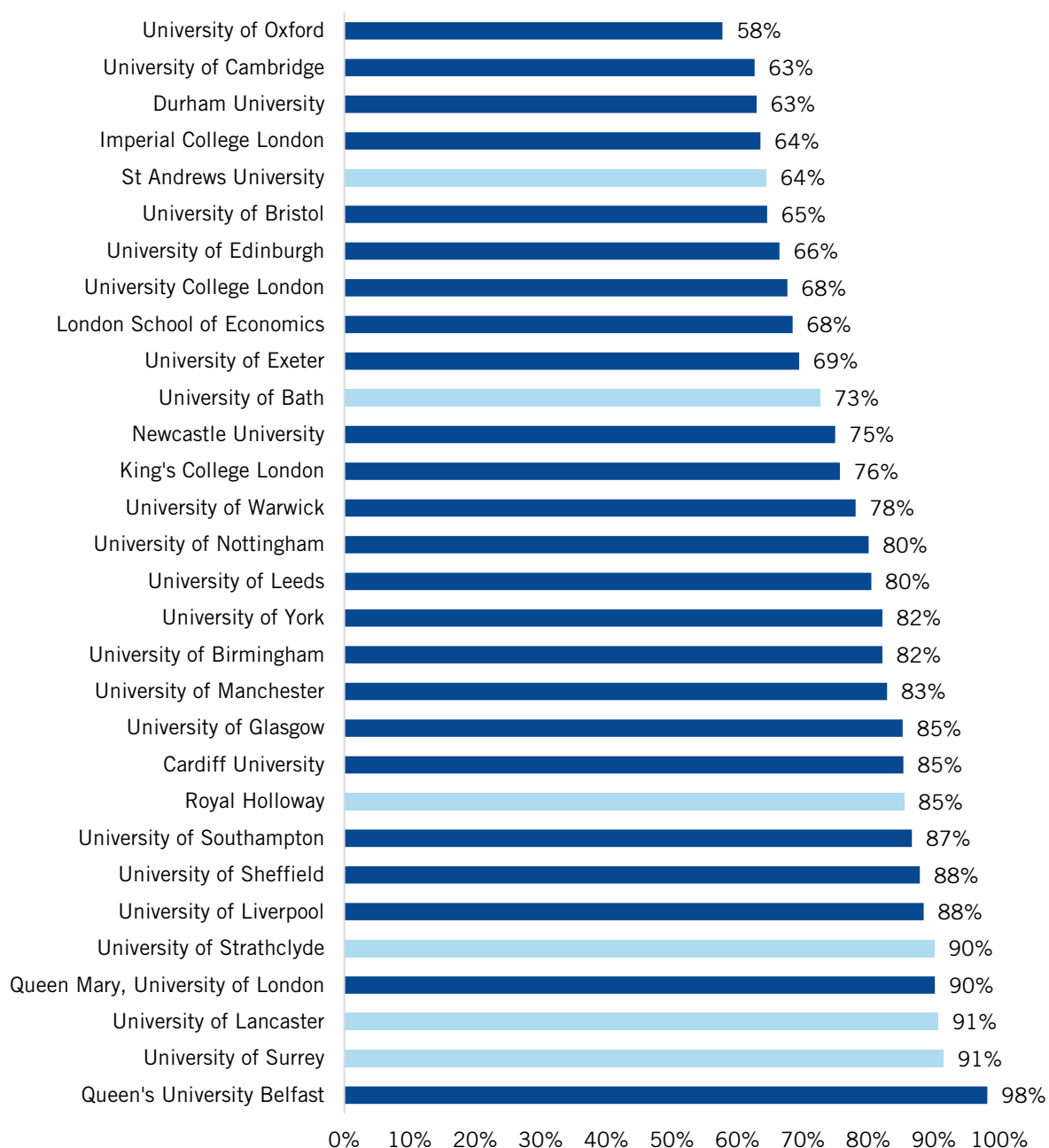
Across all definitions of top university, students from private schools are over-represented. For example, several universities in the Russell Group have very low proportions of students from state-funded secondary schools. In 2016-17, nine Russell Group institutions took fewer than 70% of their UK domiciled full time undergraduate entrants from state schools (Figure 2). Only one non-Russell Group university, St Andrews (which is included in the Sutton Trust 30), had a similarly low proportion of state educated students (64%).

¹⁰ C. Belfield and J. Britton. (2018) Using graduate earnings to assess universities. Institution for Fiscal Studies

¹¹ BBC News (2012) Four universities join elite Russell Group <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-17341478>

¹² The Sutton Trust 30 includes Bath, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial, King's College, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Royal Holloway, Sheffield, Southampton, St Andrews, Strathclyde, Surrey, UCL, Warwick and York.

Figure 2: Percentage of state school entrants to Russell Group and Sutton Trust 30 universities, 2016-2017¹³



Source: HESA

Students who attended independent schools are also considerably more likely to go on to a high tariff institution than students in state schools, and this gap has increased rather than decreased over time. In 2008-09, the gap was 37 percentage points, but as the percentage of students from independent schools going to top institutions increased (now at 65%), and the percentage from state schools decreased (23%), the gap stood at 42 percentage points in 2014-15.¹⁴ There is also a socioeconomic participation gap between the most and the least well-off groups, as measured by the Multiple Equality

¹³ HESA (2018) Widening participation summary: UK Performance Indicators 2016/17. Note: Universities in both the RG and the ST30 are shown in dark blue, those only in the ST30 are shown in light blue.

¹⁴ Department for Education (2017) Widening participation in higher education, England 2014/15 age cohort.

Measure (MEM), at high tariff institutions. This gap has remained static for several years, with almost the same access gap for high tariff universities in 2017 as in 2007; 22 percentage points verses 21.¹⁵

Access to Oxbridge

Widening participation is an issue across top universities, but access to two universities in particular, Oxford and Cambridge, is held under the most intense spotlight. The two institutions are the most competitive to gain access to in the UK; regularly appear in first and second position in league tables and are often at or near the top of worldwide rankings. Additionally, graduates from Oxbridge dominate public life in the UK. Almost half of the current cabinet were educated at Oxbridge (compared to 35% educated at one of the 22 other Russell Group universities) as were 24% of the MPs elected in 2017 (compared to 30% at other Russell Group institutions). Across several other leading professions, Oxbridge also dominates; 78% of top barristers, 54% of prominent journalists and 51% of senior civil servants were educated at one of the two universities.¹⁶ Looking at who is offered a place at Oxbridge and ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have equal opportunities to attend the two universities is crucial for social mobility.

Scrutiny of Oxbridge access intensified at the end of 2017, when Labour MP David Lammy released data on admissions to both universities, which he accessed through freedom of information requests. The release included application and acceptance data for England and Wales from both universities, with breakdowns by race, socioeconomic class and the part of the country that students were applying from. On releasing the data, the MP commented that the universities were “utterly unrepresentative of life in modern Britain”.¹⁷

The data showed that in 2015, over 80% of places at the two universities were given to students from families in the two highest social classes; those in National Statistics Socioeconomic classification (NS-SEC) classes 1 and 2. As shown in Figure 1, Oxford and Cambridge have the two lowest proportions of students from state schools of any Russell Group universities (58% and 63% respectively), but Lammy’s data showed that even the students who they do admit from state schools appear to be from better-off backgrounds in most cases.

The proportion of students from state schools also varies dramatically between colleges within Oxford and Cambridge. For example, between 2015 and 2017, 88% of the students at Mansfield College in Oxford were from state schools, but made up only 41% of students at Trinity College.¹⁸ At Cambridge, just 49% of students at St John’s College in 2017 were from state schools, compared to over 76% at Churchill College. Independently educated students are also much more likely to be overrepresented in certain subjects. For instance, in 2017, over 70% of the home students accepted to study Classics at Cambridge were from independent schools (although it should be noted that this is a similar proportion to the percentage of independent vs state students applying for the course). Also looking at more common subjects, 37% of offers made to home students for medicine at Cambridge go to students from

¹⁵ UCAS (2017) End of cycle data releases, available at: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports/2017-end-cycle-report>

¹⁶ P. Kirby (2016) *Leading people, the educational backgrounds of the UK professional elite*. Sutton Trust.

¹⁷ Comments made by David Lammy in 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxford-accused-of-social-apartheid-as-colleges-admit-no-black-students>

¹⁸ A. Rusbridger (2018) *If Oxford Shrugs. The inside story of how England’s oldest university picks its students, and why it needs to change*. Prospect magazine.

independent schools (compared to 32% of applications), and 26% of offers to study law (compared to 21% of applications).¹⁹ Clearly, the two universities are not representative of the country.

Looking at students applying to Oxbridge both from the state and the independent sector, Lammy's data release also showed that between 2010 and 2015, Cambridge made almost half (48%) of its offers to applicants in London and the South East, compared to just 12% to students in the Midlands and 17% from the North West, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber. Similarly, in that period Oxford also made 48% of offers to students from London and the South East, but only 11% to students in the Midlands, and just 15% to students in the North West, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber.²⁰ The majority of the differences in offers by region are due to fewer students applying to Oxbridge from some parts of the country; 44% of applications to Cambridge and 43% to Oxbridge come from London and the South East, only slightly lower than the proportion of students from those regions who are accepted.

However, acceptance rates to Oxbridge do also differ by region. At Cambridge, the South East had the highest acceptance rate, with 35% of students who applied from the area gaining a place. In contrast, in the North West only 30% of students who apply gain a place, and in Wales (the area with the lowest acceptance rate) only 26% of students who applied gained a place. For Oxford, students applying from the East and the North East had the highest acceptance rates, at 27%. Only 22% of students from the Midlands were successful, and just 19% of students applying to Oxford from Wales were given an offer.²¹

The reasons for the disparities in admissions to Oxbridge, as with access to HE overall, are complex. Gaining a place at a university relies on students taking appropriate qualifications, having predicted grades which make an application realistic, applying, getting through the application process, and finally gaining the grades required for their offer. Many parts of the process cannot be controlled by universities themselves.

However, there is evidence that universities could be doing more to encourage disadvantaged students to apply. For example, according to analysis reported by Alan Rusbridger, principal of Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford University, just 25% of state school students with grades A*A*A and above apply to Oxford, compared to 37% of such students from private schools. For students living in the most deprived areas (areas 4 and 5 using the Acorn neighbourhood level measure), the figures are even lower, with just 14% of such students with the grades to do so applying. There are 5,000 students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with AAA and above each year, but only 220 of them are admitted to Oxford.²²

The role of schools

This report looks at overall applications and acceptances to higher education, to top institutions and to Oxbridge specifically, by type of school. By looking also at applications, this report allows for a full view of the process, not only looking at the decisions by universities in who to accept, but also importantly examining the decisions that students make in terms of where to put in an application. Looking at HE applications and admissions by school type is also important, as the school that someone attends can have a substantial impact on their progression to HE. While many differences between schools are a

¹⁹ University of Cambridge (2018) Undergraduate admissions statistics, 2017 cycle.

²⁰ David Lammy data release following FOI requests to Oxford and Cambridge universities – Oxbridge access data. Available at: <https://www.davidlammy.co.uk/single-post/2017/10/20/Oxbridge-access-data>

²¹ Data analysis carried out by the Sutton Trust on data from David Lammy's release

²² A. Rusbridger (2018) If Oxford Shrugs. The inside story of how England's oldest university picks its students, and why it needs to change. Prospect magazine.

result of the varying socioeconomic backgrounds of their intake, what schools do continues to matter. Students often rely on their school to give them advice on where to apply, on their personal statement, and on preparation for any interviews involved in the application process. However, some schools are much better at this than others, giving students advice early on regarding A level subject choices, university and course choice, and guidance on the application process. In comparison, other schools do not give the same level of support, with many young people, and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, often not getting the level of advice and support that they need.

For example, at some of the top independent schools in the country, including those with extremely high rates of progression to Oxbridge, high quality and personalised support is available to every student. At Eton, a dedicated universities officer speaks to all students who are likely to apply to university, an officer who their website states is “available at any time during the A-level years for interviews with boys or parents.” As well as continuous access to expert support, the school also publishes its own in-house higher education guide each year, to give students and their parents information and advice on the university application process. Over the last thirty years, 60-100 students have gone on to Oxbridge from Eton each year.²³ At Westminster School, students are given personalised mentoring and university preparation classes to help them through the process. In the last five years, 70-80 students from Westminster have gone on to Oxbridge each year.²⁴ At St Paul’s boys’ school, each student is assigned their own adviser in year 11, who helps them to make decisions about A level choices, with their university options in mind. The school employs eleven specialist UK university advisors, with each of their roughly 200 students a year assigned to a specific advisor, who guides them through the application process.²⁵ That help is paying off, with 53 of the school’s 189 students who entered university in 2016 going on to either Oxford or Cambridge.²⁶ This high level of additional, specialist support is likely to explain a large part of how such a small number of schools can continue to dominate admissions to the most elite institutions. And while all private schools may not offer this high level of support, they often have considerably greater funds available with which to provide expert help to their students.

Additionally, there are also differences between the applications of students from different types of school. In particular, previous research carried out for the Sutton Trust found that personal statements written by students from independent and grammar schools were longer, used both longer words and sentences, and were less likely to have punctuation and spelling errors when compared to students from state comprehensive schools. These differences are likely to be due to state school students receiving less help, including from their school, when preparing their statements. State school students were also less likely to talk about formal extracurricular activities in their personal statements, instead more often referencing personal hobbies such as watching football or spending time with friends.²⁷ Indeed, independent schools often offer considerably greater access to extra-curricular activities, which are both commonly referred to in personal statements, and which help to build essential life skills such as communication - likely to be of help in any admissions interviews. Even within state schools, access to these sorts of extra-curricular activities can vary, including by the socioeconomic background of the students within each school. For example, state schools with the lowest proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals are twice as likely to offer debating clubs as schools with the highest proportions.²⁸

²³ Universities, Eton College. Available at: <https://www.etoncollege.com/Universities.aspx>

²⁴ Results and leavers, Westminster school. Available at: <https://www.westminster.org.uk/academic-life/results-and-leavers/>

²⁵ Careers and Universities, St Paul’s school. Available at: <https://www.stpaulsschool.org.uk/st-pauls/academic/universities-and-careers>

²⁶ University Destinations, St Paul’s College. Available at: <https://www.stpaulsschool.org.uk/st-pauls/news/academic-news/university-destinations>

²⁷ Jones, S. (2012) The personal statement: a fair way to assess university applicants? Sutton Trust.

²⁸ Cullinane, C. & Montacute, R. (2017) Life Lessons – Improving essential life skills for young people. Sutton Trust.

Looking just at state non-selective schools, there's a considerable amount of variation in provision. Many students stay on at the school they attended from the age of eleven for their education post-16, but many others do not, and instead go on to specialist post-16 provision in sixth form or FE colleges. These colleges may in some ways have an advantage, as they can focus only on the concerns of students in the post-16 age group, including university applications and admissions. However, as only 12% of students in FE colleges go on to higher education, they may have less experience in advising their students about this route.²⁹

State comprehensive schools themselves vary considerably, with schools both in and outside of local authority control. Different types of state schools are also very different in terms of the socioeconomic backgrounds of their intake. For example, sponsored academies are frequently in deprived urban areas, and often replaced schools with a history of low performance. Conversely, many converter academies were previously very highly performing schools, with less disadvantaged intakes.³⁰ Indeed, in 2016, 22% of students in sponsored academies were eligible for free school meals, compared to 9% of students in converter academies, 15% in free schools, 11% in University Technical Colleges and 16% in studio schools.³¹ This is compared to 13% of students in all state-funded secondary schools having free school meal eligibility.³² Given the considerable differences in intakes between different types of schools and colleges, there are also very likely to be differences in the HE applications and destinations of the students applying from them.

²⁹ Destinations of 16 to 18 students entering different qualification types; and destinations of all key stage 4 pupils at ages 16 and then 18, England 2015 to 2016. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/651013/SFR56_2017_Experimental_Text.pdf

³⁰ Sponsored academies were first opened in the early 2000s by the then Labour government, to allow sponsors to take control of schools with poor performance, in an attempt to improve their results. In 2010, the coalition government introduced a new model for academies, which allowed successful schools to move out of local authority control to become converter academies. This programme has since been expanded, to allow any school that wishes to do so to convert to academy status.

³¹ Free schools were introduced by the Coalition government, and are government funded schools outside of local authority control. They can be set up following an application to the DfE by groups such as charities, universities, teachers or parents. UTCs and Studio schools were set up under the free school programme. UTCs are attended by 14-19 year olds, and designed to offer technically oriented courses of study. Studio schools offer both academic and vocational courses, with links to local employers.

³² Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2016. Department for Education. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2016>

3. Methodology

Data processing

This report, in the main, looks at schools and colleges in England, and data covers the UCAS application cycles 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17. Total applications and acceptances are the combined totals from these three cycles, and acceptance rates are calculated for this three-cycle period, and covers 18-year-old applicants attending schools in England domiciled in England, Wales or Northern Ireland. Where applicants re-applied the following year, the data from their application at age 19 in the subsequent year (either 2015-16, 2016-17 or 2017-18) has been included, rather than their original application the previous year.

Note that the headline statistic comparing the Oxbridge acceptances of top schools versus those with the lowest numbers is calculated for schools across the UK.

A list of apply centres (schools, colleges or other institutions through which students make their applications) with recorded HE applications in the three cycles covered in this report were provided by UCAS and matched by the Sutton Trust to publicly available data from the Department for Education, to determine school type (e.g. comprehensive, selective, independent or local authority maintained, sponsored academy etc) for schools in England. This information was subsequently provided to UCAS, who calculated overall applications and acceptances, average A level point scores and average A level point scores for Russell Group facilitating subjects (defined in A level point score section below), for each school type over the three cycles. Apply centres were matched to Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) by UCAS, and the same data provided as for school type by UCAS (for schools classified as state comprehensives, state general further education college, state grammar schools, or state sixth form colleges by the Sutton Trust) per LEA.

Applicants and acceptances

All applicants and acceptances calculated by UCAS were provided to the Sutton Trust rounded to the nearest five, to reduce the risk of disclosing personal data about identifiable individuals. Cell counts of 1 and 2 were reported as 0. Applications and acceptances are calculated from all students in the group previously outlined, regardless of whether they sat A levels or another qualification. In most cases this rounding has no material effect on the overall percentages calculated due to the large numbers of pupils we are dealing with. For local authorities listed in the appendix with lower numbers, this could have an effect on the percentage given.

A level point score

'A level point score' in this report refers to the UCAS-produced measure of the A level results of students. This measure is calculated as follows: A* = 6, A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, E = 1. The score represents the qualifications recorded as held by the applicant at the end of the cycle referred to. The measure looks only at the top three A level results achieved, and only includes A2, and not AS grades.

This measure only includes A level grades of applicants and does not include other qualifications such as the Cambridge Pre-U, the International Baccalaureate (IB). Currently, only 33 state schools and 77 independent schools in the UK offer the IB at 16-18.³³ Similarly, the Cambridge Pre-U, as of July 2016,

³³ International Baccalaureate (2018) Find an IB World School. Available at: <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/find-an-ib-school/>

was offered by roughly just 170 schools in the UK, split evenly between independent and state schools.³⁴ This measure also does not include students going on to university after studying for BTECs, which accounts for roughly a quarter of students entering HE.³⁵

The Russell Group publishes advice on A level subject choices, providing a list of Russell Group (RG) facilitating subjects, which are more frequently required for entry to their degree courses. These subjects are biology, chemistry, English literature, geography, history, physics, modern and classical languages, maths and further maths. A level point score for Russell Group facilitating subjects is calculated as for A level point score above, but only includes A levels gained in the list of Russell Group facilitating subjects. More detailed information on the outputs supplied by UCAS is available on their website.

School types

Application centres provided by UCAS were classified by the Sutton Trust into six main school types, comprehensive state schools, independent schools, selective state schools, general further education colleges and sixth form colleges. Application centres do not only include schools and colleges; centres which did not fit any of the previous categories, such as tutorial colleges, universities, university preparation companies and private adult training businesses, were classified as 'other'. As this report is primarily concerned with applications made by students from schools and colleges, rather than those made through alternative institutions, this category has only been included where required for context.

Schools were only included if they had any HE applications in all the three years covered by this report, with 3,265 apply centres included in this analysis, shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Proportion of application centres per apply centre type

| School type | Number of schools |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Comprehensive | 1966 |
| Independent | 599 |
| General FE college | 311 |
| Selective | 163 |
| Sixth form college | 62 |
| Other | 164 |

Comprehensive schools were further broken down into local authority maintained, converter academies, sponsored academies, free schools and UTC and Studio schools, shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Proportion of application centres classified per comprehensive school type.

| School type | Number of schools |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Converter academies | 863 |
| LA maintained | 588 |
| Sponsored academies | 423 |
| UTC and Studio schools | 70 |
| Free schools | 22 |

³⁴ Cambridge Assessment International Education (2018) Which schools offer Cambridge Pre-U? Available at: <https://help.cambridgeinternational.org/hc/en-gb/articles/203476132-Which-schools-offer-Cambridge-Pre-U>

³⁵ Gicheva, N. & Petrie, K. (2018) Vocation, Vocation, Vocation. Social Market Foundation.

4. Applications and acceptances

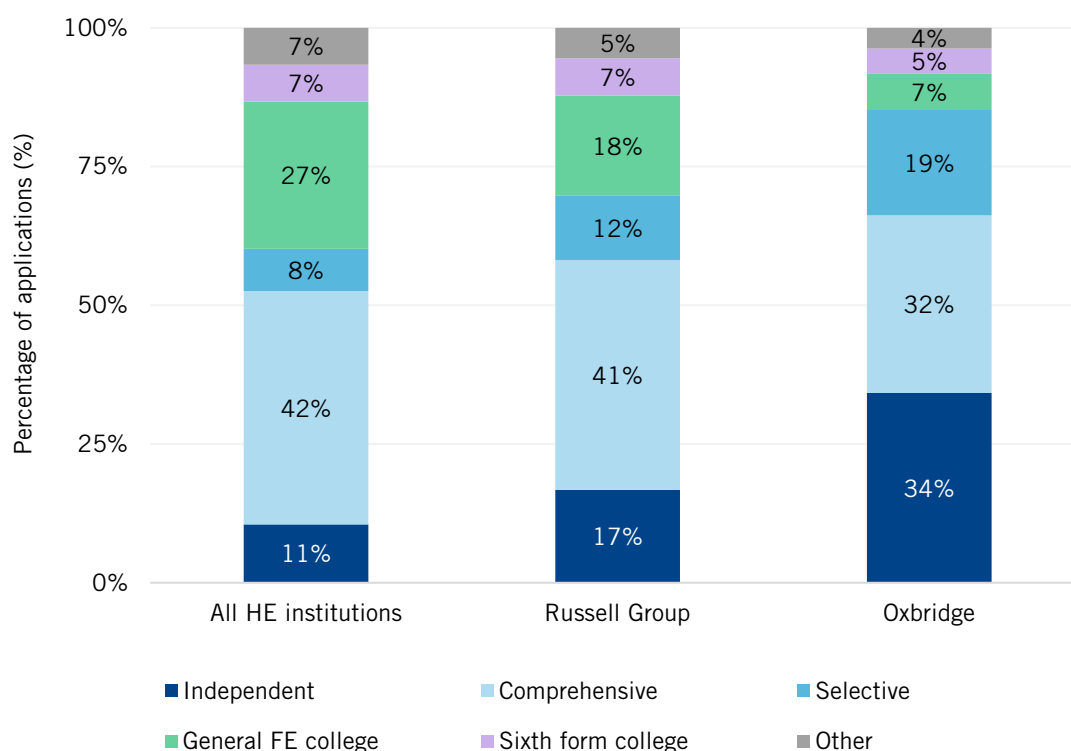
By school type

When applying to university via UCAS, applicants can apply for up to five higher education institutions, including one of either Oxford or Cambridge. They then receive offers and are placed at an institution once they have both accepted an offer; and have met any grades on which that offer is conditional.

The following section breaks down who is applying to higher education, to the Russell Group (including Oxbridge) and to Oxbridge specifically by the type of school they attended. The majority of applications to HE are from students in comprehensive schools, making up 42% of all unique applications. The proportion of students applying to Russell Group universities who are from comprehensive schools is also similar, at 41%. However, students from comprehensive schools are underrepresented, compared to those applying to HE overall, when it comes to applications made to Oxbridge. Students from comprehensive schools make up only 32% of applications to the two universities.

This contrasts with the pattern seen for independent school applicants. While only 11% of all HE applications are made by students from independent schools, 17% of applications to the Russell Group are made by independent school students, and 34% of applications to Oxbridge. Similarly, only 8% of applications to HE are made by students from grammar schools, but almost one fifth of the unique applications to Oxbridge are from this group (Figure 3). Similar results to those seen here were also found for the make-up of applications to Sutton Trust 30 and high tariff institutions.

Figure 3: Applications to higher education, the Russell Group and Oxbridge by school type

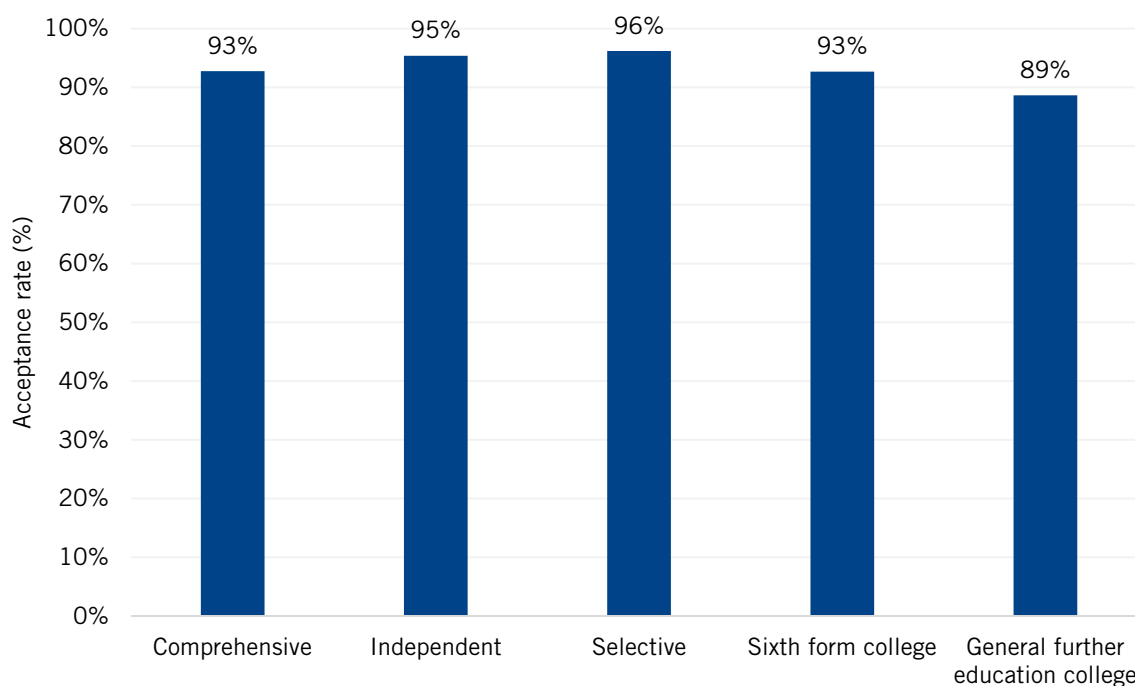


Looking at applications as a total per type of school, 21% of higher education applications made from independent schools are for Oxford or Cambridge, compared to 5% at comprehensive schools and 4% at sixth form colleges. 16% of grammar school applications are to Oxbridge.

Next, acceptances to the same groups of universities are examined by school type; the term acceptance is used by UCAS to describe students who have been placed at an institution (so have both been accepted with a conditional offer, and then gone on to meet their offer and gain a place, or students accepted unconditionally).

The vast majority of students who apply to HE are accepted to at least one of the institutions they apply to. Indeed, between 89% (general FE colleges) and 96% (selective schools) of students who put in an application to HE are accepted. This is similar to results from our 2011 report, which found that the proportion of HE applicants accepted to any institution between 2007 and 2009 stood at 88%.³⁶

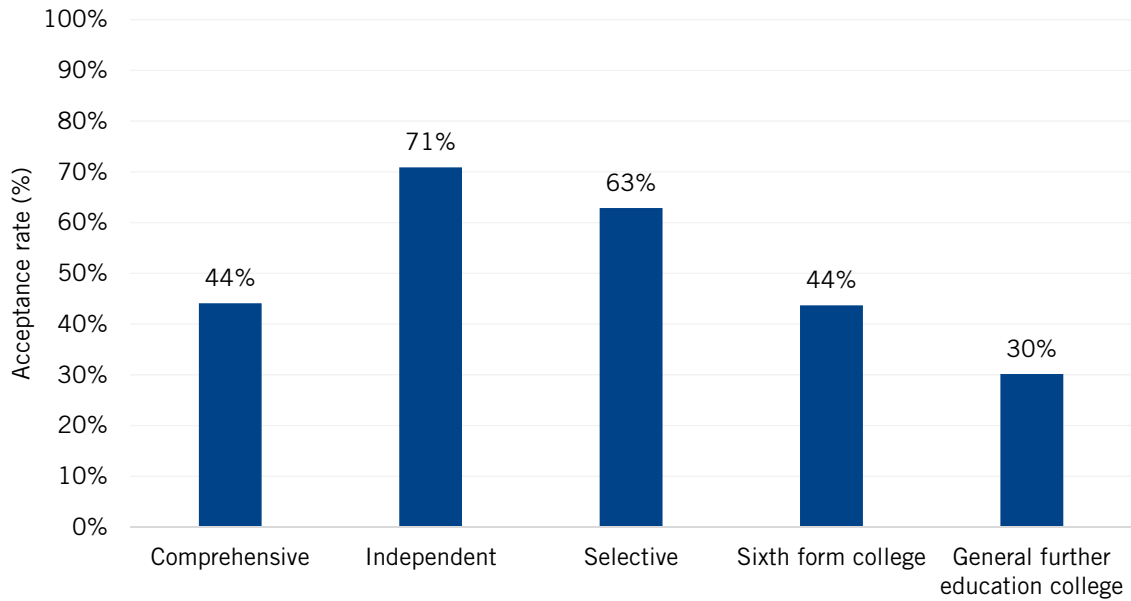
Figure 4: HE acceptance rates for applicants, by school type



However, when looking at the acceptance rates for students who applied to the Russell Group or to Oxbridge, there are some differences depending on the type of school a student attended. 71% of students who apply to the Russell Group from an independent school successfully gain a place at a Russell Group institution, compared to 63% of students applying from selective schools, 44% applying from comprehensive schools or sixth form colleges, and just 30% of students who have applied from general FE colleges (Figure 5).

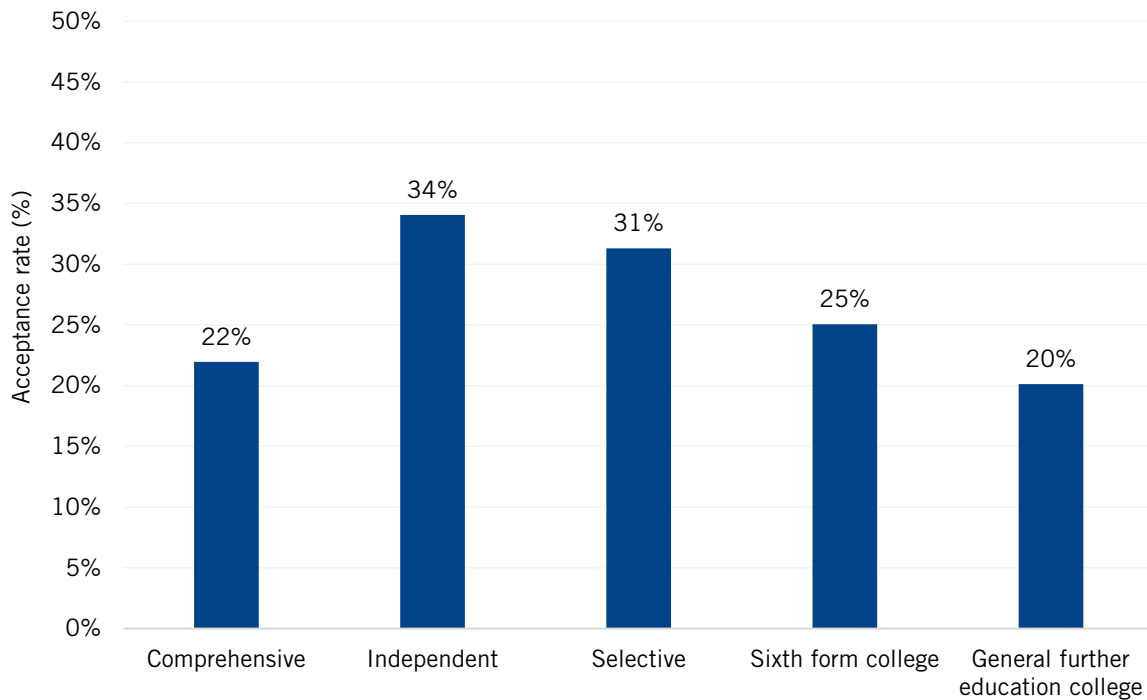
³⁶ John O'Leary and Lesley Kendall (2011) Degrees of success, university chances by individual school. Sutton Trust.

Figure 5: Russell Group acceptance rates for applicants, by school type



Looking at Oxbridge specifically, about a fifth (22% and 20% respectively) of students who apply to Oxbridge from comprehensive schools and general FE colleges go on to gain a place, compared to about a third (34%) of independently educated applicants, 31% of students applying to Oxbridge from grammar schools and 25% applying from sixth form colleges.

Figure 6: Oxbridge acceptance rates for applicants, by school type



Independent school pupils are over twice as likely to take a place at a Russell Group institution, compared to non-selective state school students. Overall, 23% of students applying to HE from comprehensive schools go on to gain a place at a Russell Group university, compared to 60% of students at independent schools, 51% of students from selective schools, 24% applying to HE from sixth form colleges, and just 11% of those applying from general FE colleges. Students applying to HE from independent schools are therefore more than twice as likely to go on to a Russell Group university than those from comprehensive schools, and almost six times more likely to do so than students applying from general FE colleges. Similar results were also found for universities in the Sutton Trust 30, and for high tariff institutions.

In our 2011 report, the proportion of HE applicants from 2007-2009 from comprehensive and selective schools accepted to the Russell Group was similar to those found here, standing at 18% and 48% respectively. However, the proportion of HE applicants accepted to the Russell Group from independent schools has increased since then, from 48% to 60%.³⁷

Looking at the resultant make up of each institution, although only 17% of unique applications to the Russell Group come from independent school students, they make up 25% of the students who are accepted there. Conversely, students from general FE colleges make up 18% of students applying to the Russell Group, but only 11% of the students who gain a place there. Similar results were also found for Sutton Trust 30 and high tariff institutions.

Just over a third (34%) of the students who apply to Oxbridge do so from independent schools. However, a much larger proportion (42%) of acceptances go to students from these schools. Conversely, a smaller proportion of students from comprehensive schools are accepted to Oxbridge than those who apply. While 32% of applications to Oxbridge are from comprehensively educated students, only 25% of those who gain a place are. There is very little difference between applications and acceptances to Oxbridge for students applying from grammar schools; 19% of applications to Oxbridge are made by grammar school pupils, and only a very slightly higher proportion (21%) of acceptances go to selectively educated students (Figure 7).

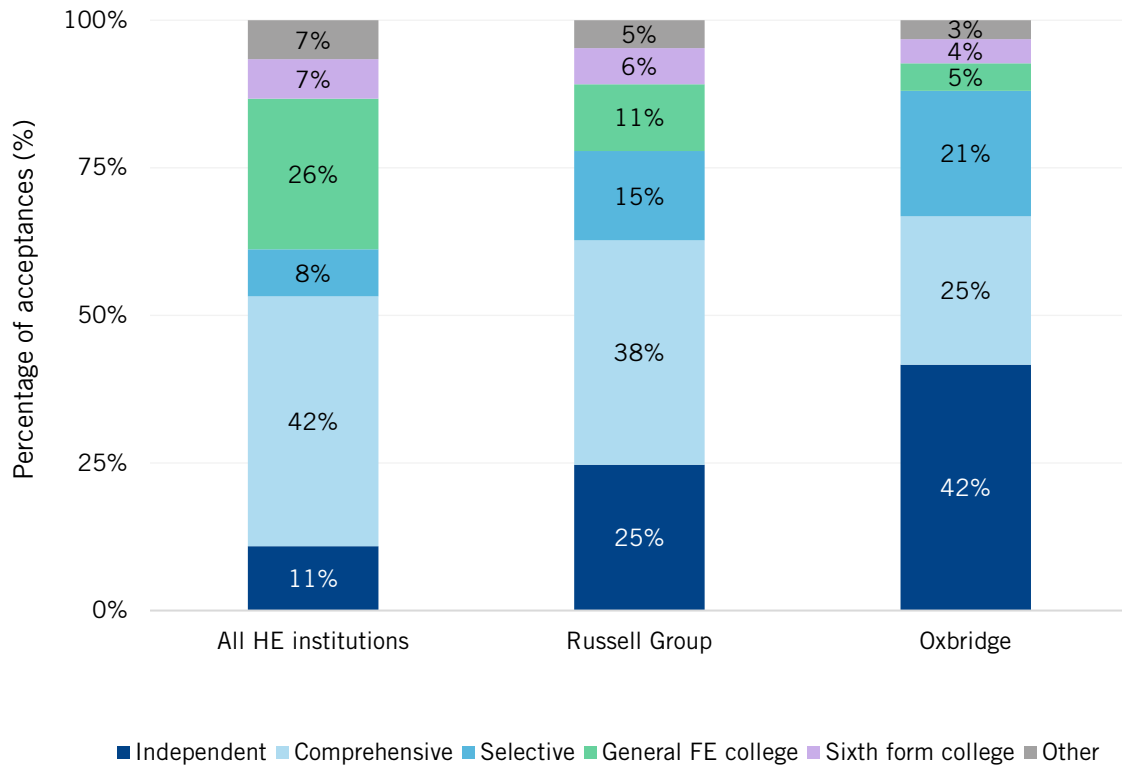
The differences in HE destinations by type of school for Oxbridge are even more stark, with independent school pupils seven times more likely to gain a place at Oxford or Cambridge compared to those in non-selective state schools. While 7% of students applying to HE from independent schools gain a place at Oxbridge, and 5% of students from grammar schools do so, just 1% of students going on to HE from comprehensive schools or sixth form colleges gain a place at Oxbridge, and only 0.3% of the students applying to HE from general FE colleges. These findings are similar to those in our 2011 report, which found that between 2007 and 2009, HE applicants from independent schools were seven times more likely than applicants from comprehensive schools to gain a place at Oxbridge.³⁸

Looking at the UK overall, UCAS calculated that just eight top schools had as many Oxbridge acceptances as another 2894 schools and colleges put together (out of a total of 3901 schools and colleges with at least one acceptance to HE during the period examined here). The eight schools with the highest number of Oxbridge acceptances had 1310 between them over a three-year period, while 2894 schools and colleges with two or fewer acceptances (or less than one a year) had just 1220 acceptances between them.

³⁷ John O'Leary and Lesley Kendall (2011) Degrees of success, university chances by individual school. Sutton Trust.

³⁸ John O'Leary and Lesley Kendall (2011) Degrees of success, university chances by individual school. Sutton Trust.

Figure 7: Acceptances to higher education, the Russell Group and Oxbridge by school type

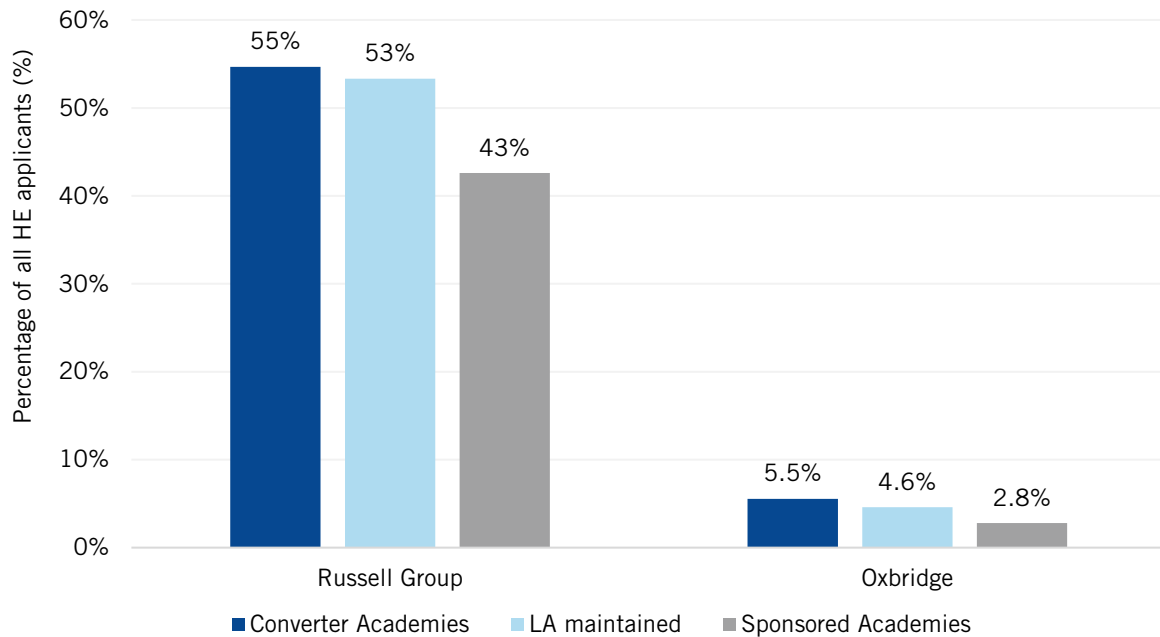


By comprehensive school type

The next section looks at the proportion of applications and acceptances for students in comprehensive schools, by the type of comprehensive school they attended (broken down into local authority maintained schools, converter academies, sponsored academies, free schools and UTC and studio schools).

Over half (55%) of the students applying to HE from comprehensive schools attended converter academies, 30% attended LA maintained schools, 12% sponsored academies, 2% UTC and studio schools less than 1% attended free schools. Due to the small proportion of students applying to the Russell Group and Oxbridge from free schools, and UTC and studio schools, they are not discussed in the analysis below.

Figure 8: Percentage of higher education applicants applying to the Russell Group and Oxbridge, by comprehensive school type



Applications

In converter academies and LA maintained schools, over half of all applications made by applicants were to the Russell Group. This was however lower for students in sponsored academies, with 43% of applicants from these schools applying to the Russell Group.

Looking at Oxbridge specifically, 5.5% of applicants to higher education from converter academies applied to Oxbridge, with a similar but slightly smaller figure of 4.6% of applicants from LA maintained schools doing so. Application rates from sponsored academies were much lower, with only 2.8% of HE applicants from these schools applying to Oxbridge.

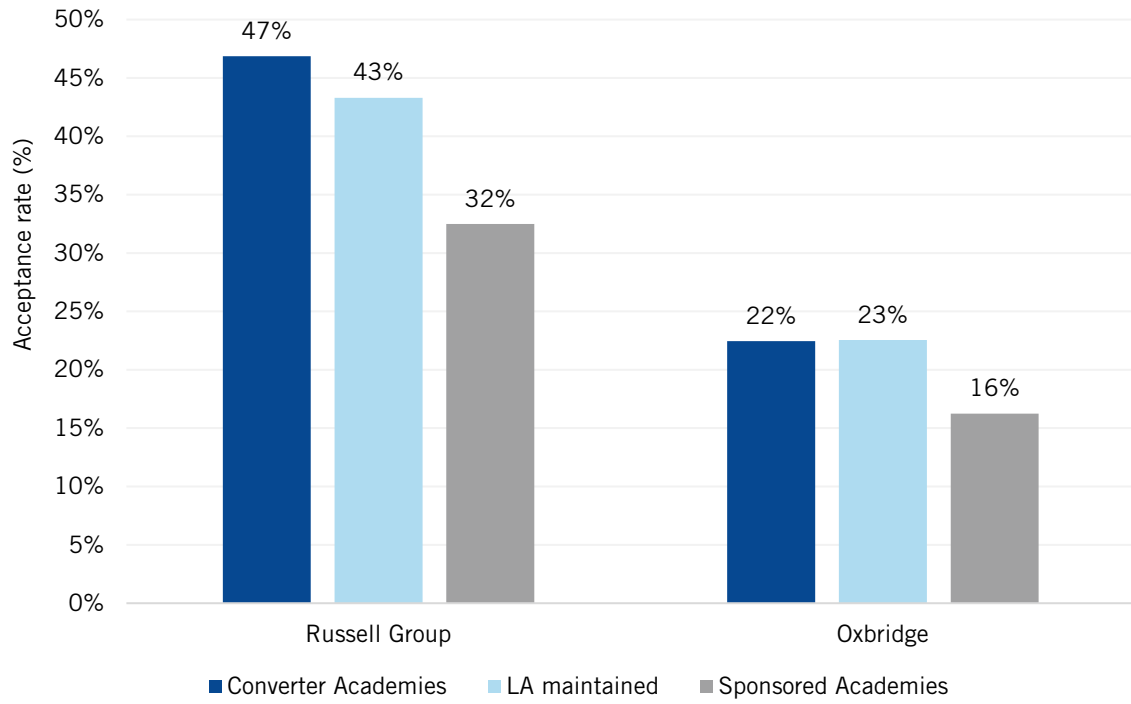
Acceptances

The vast majority of students applying to HE from all types of comprehensive school were accepted to at least one HE institution, with very little variation between comprehensive school types, with 91% of students applying from sponsored academies, and 93% in converter academies and LA maintained schools gaining a place.

Converter academies and LA maintained schools had similar acceptance rates for students who applied to the Russell Group, with 47% and 43% of students applying accepted. This was lower for students applying from sponsored academies, with 32% of those who applied gaining a place.

Acceptance rates to Oxbridge are also higher for students applying from LA maintained schools (23%) and converter academies (22%), compared to sponsored academies (16%).

Figure 9: Acceptance rates to the Russell Group and Oxbridge, by comprehensive school type



5. Regional differences

The next section looks at applications and acceptances per region for students applying to different types of institutions from state schools in England. As previously discussed, the proportion of state school students at many Russell Group institutions, and at both Oxbridge and Cambridge specifically, are low when compared to the percentage of students educated in state schools. Looking at how applications to these universities from state school students differ by region highlights areas most in need of targeted interventions in state-funded schools.

Applications

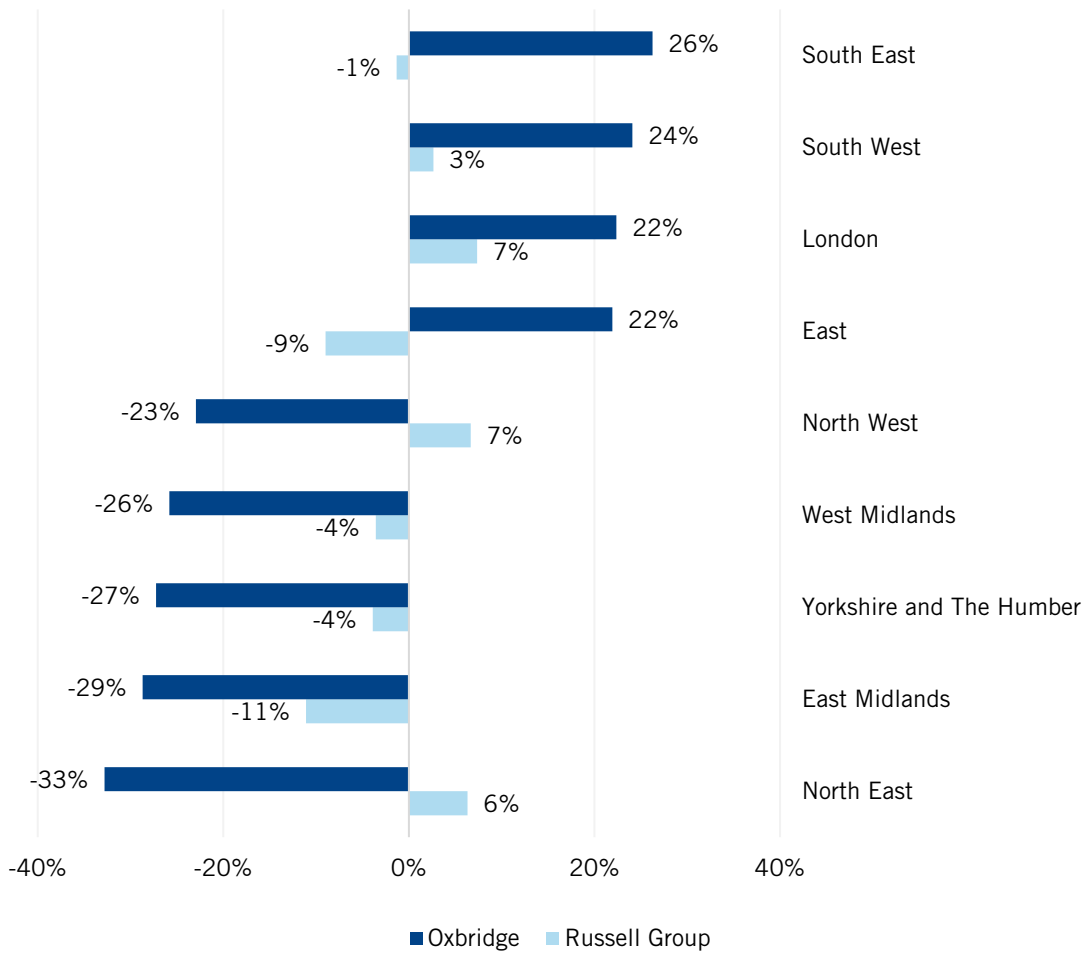
By comparing the proportion of applications to the Russell Group and Oxbridge from each region, to the proportion of students applying to HE overall from each region, it's possible to examine where regions are under or over represented in applications to the two groups of institutions. In Figure 10, applications are shown in the proportion they over or under represent a region, compared to their applications to HE overall. There are some differences in applications to the Russell Group, with London the most over-represented, with 7% more applications to the institutions when compared to all applications from students in London to HE. The East Midlands is the most under-represented in applications to the Russell Group, which are 11% lower than applications to HE from the region overall.

Looking at applications to Oxbridge specifically, several regions are heavily over-represented in Oxbridge applications, when compared to the proportion the region makes up of applications to HE overall. Students applying from the South East, South West, London and the East of England are all over-represented in Oxbridge applications by over 20%. In comparison, the North West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands and the North East were all under-represented in applications to Oxbridge by over 20%, with students from the North East under-represented by a third compared to their applications to HE overall.

Acceptances

As in previous sections, very little variation was found in HE acceptance rates overall, with between 91% and 92% of state school students who applied to HE gaining a place in every region. However, there were some differences in the proportion of students being accepted to top universities by region, and to Oxbridge specifically.

Figure 10: Applications to Oxbridge and the Russell Group, compared to HE applications from each region overall



Russell Group

The proportion of HE applicants accepted to the Russell Group differed across regions, with a gap of five percentage points between the best and worst performing regions. In the South West, 24% of HE applicants gained a place at a Russell Group institution. In the East and West Midlands, 19% of HE applicants did so (Figure 11).

Looking just at those who applied to the Russell Group, application success also differed by region. Almost half (48%) of students from the East of England who applied for a place at a Russell Group institution successfully gained a place at one. Similarly, in the South West and South East 47% of students applying to the Russell Group secured a place. However, only 39% of students applying to the Russell Group from the West Midlands gained a place, and just 40% in the North East (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Proportion of HE applicants accepted to the Russell Group per region

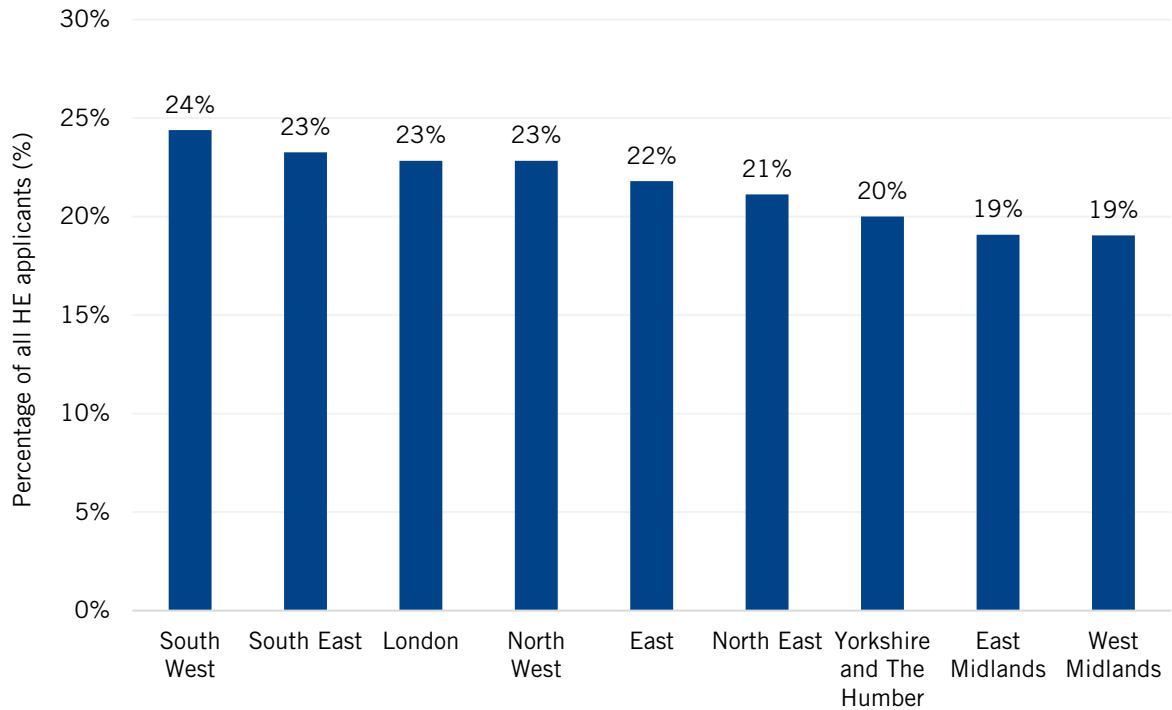
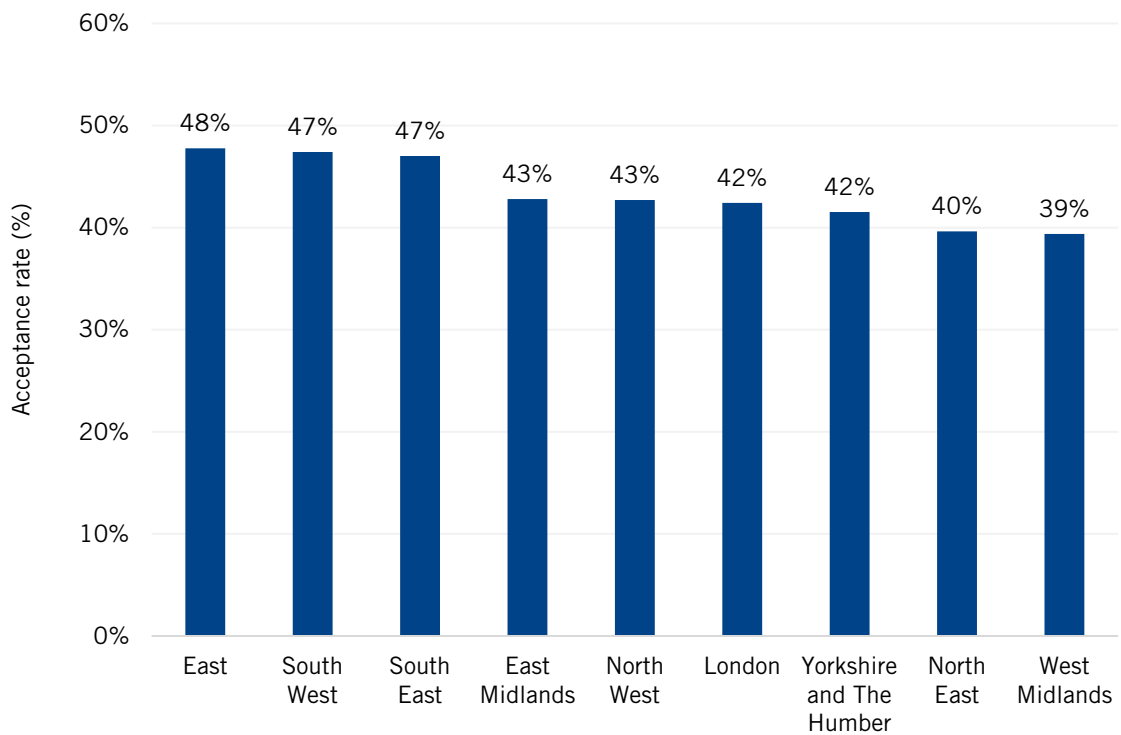


Figure 12: Acceptance rates of Russell Group applicants by region

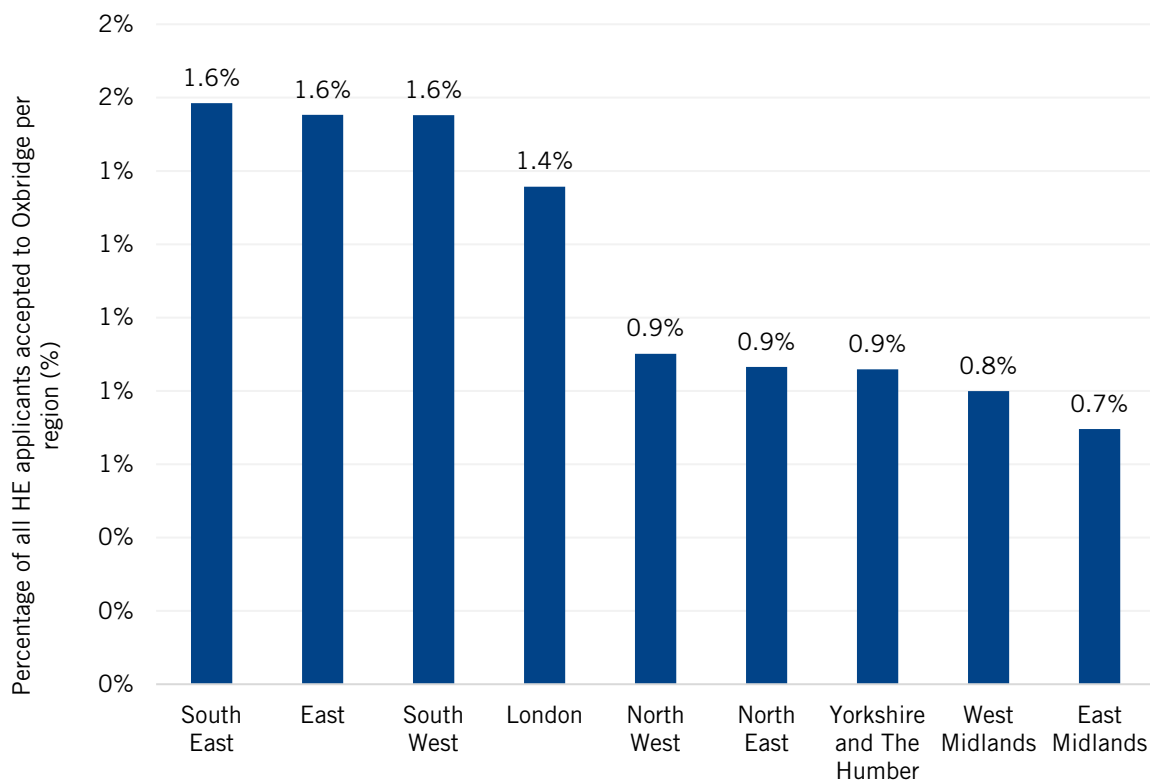


Oxbridge

Oxbridge applications and acceptances differed much more so by region. Four local authorities had two or fewer applications to Oxbridge over the three years studied: Knowsley; North Lincolnshire; Rutland and Thurrock. A further six areas did have some students apply to Oxbridge, but had two or fewer acceptances over the course of the three years studied; Halton; North East Lincolnshire; Portsmouth; Rochdale; Salford and Southampton.

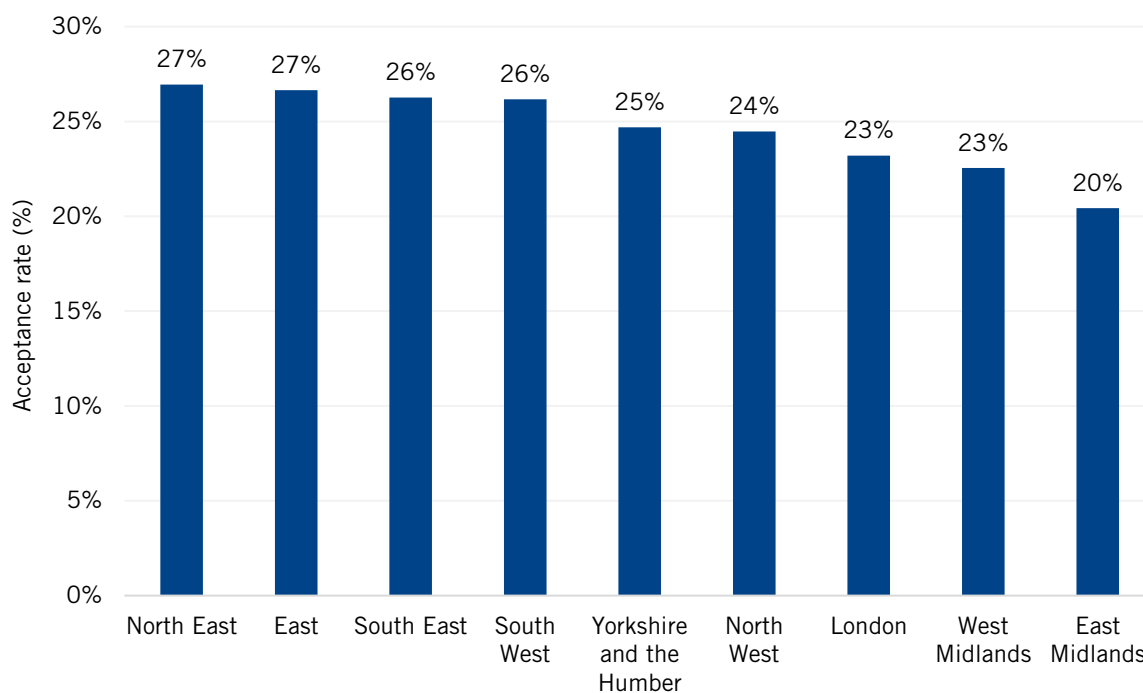
The region with the largest proportion of HE applicants accepted to Oxbridge had almost twice as large a proportion of applicants admitted compared to the regions with the least. In the South East, 1.6% of HE applicants gained a place at Oxbridge, compared to just 0.7% in the East Midlands. Indeed, there was a stark divide across England, with regions in the South and East of England having substantially larger acceptance rates than regions in the rest of England.

Figure 13: Percentage of all HE applicants per region accepted to Oxbridge



Looking only at those students who applied to Oxbridge, acceptance rates also differed somewhat by region. Although only a small proportion of HE applicants from the North East were accepted, the acceptance rate for those who did apply was the highest of any region, with 27% of those who put in an application being successful. Similarly, although a small overall proportion of HE applicants from Yorkshire and the Humber were accepted to Oxbridge, 25% of those who did apply were successful in gaining a place (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Acceptance rates of Oxbridge applicants by region



Acceptances by local education authorities

The next section takes a more detailed look at variations in acceptance rates within regions at the level of local education authorities (LEA).

It is important to bear in mind throughout this section that neighbouring areas can affect one another. Many students attend schools in different authorities from the one in which they live. This is particularly likely to be the case in areas with grammar schools, with students crossing LEA boundaries to attend them. Therefore, it is the general patterns that are important.

Russell Group acceptances by local education authority

The majority of authorities had acceptances to the Russell Group somewhere between 20% and 30%, out of all students applying to HE. However, there are several areas which had rates either well above or well below. For example, as the map in Figure 15 shows, there is a notable band of low Russell Group attendance across the north of England, running from the areas surrounding Liverpool, through to those around Manchester, across the Pennines to the area above Sheffield, and further east over to the areas in and around Hull. Along this band, the proportion of all HE applicants accepted to the Russell Group was mostly between just 10-15% and 15-20%. This is despite this band having a high concentration of Russell Group institutions, higher than any other part of the country outside of London. The Universities of Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds are all nearby to areas with very low acceptance rates to the Russell Group. The lowest areas along this band tended to also have high proportions of students eligible for free school meals, such as Barnsley (16.5%) and Blackburn & Darwen (14.5%).

Areas in the north of England which did better tend to be rural, and better-off, with either average or below average rates of students eligible for free school meals. For example, North Yorkshire had a

particularly high proportion of acceptances to the Russell Group when compared both to nearby areas, and to the country as a whole (31%). The area also had a very low proportion of students who are FSM eligible (6.7%). Other areas in the north of England which outperformed others near to them, such as Cumbria (23%) and Northumberland (26%), are also both rural areas with below average proportions of students eligible for FSM (8.7% and 11.4% respectively).

There are also some areas outside of the north of England with low acceptance rates to the Russell Group, but which are near to universities in the group. Most of these areas also have high or very high levels of disadvantage, such as Croydon (13.7%), Waltham Forest (15.2%) and Lewisham (11.3%).

Areas with the very highest acceptance rates to the Russell Group tend to be wealthier areas in the south of England. For example, Buckinghamshire (42.4%) and Kingston Upon Thames (30.7%) are both wealthy areas with very low proportions of students eligible for free school meals.

Oxbridge acceptances by local education authority

Similar to the pattern seen for Russell Group acceptances, many of the areas which had low acceptance rates for the Russell Group overall also have low levels of acceptances to Oxbridge. For example, as was the case for the Russell Group, Figure 16 displays a band of low Oxbridge acceptance across the North of England, with most areas along that band having acceptance rates of just 0% -1%. Several parts of the country had two or fewer acceptances to Oxbridge from state schools in all three years examined here, including Halton, Knowsley, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Portsmouth, Rochdale, Rutland, Salford, Southampton and Thurrock.

However, the geographical divide is starker for acceptances to Oxbridge, with several areas in the north and midlands which had performed comparatively well for Russell Group acceptances, having much lower Oxbridge acceptance levels compared to areas in the South. For example, the level of acceptances to Oxbridge in North Yorkshire (1.7%) is average overall, but the area had been above average for acceptance to the Russell Group. Additionally, acceptance levels to Oxbridge for Derbyshire (1%) and Nottinghamshire (0.8%) to Oxbridge were low, despite average proportions of HE applicants accepted to the Russell Group overall. This is likely, at least in part, because Russell Group institutions are dispersed across the country, whereas Oxford and Cambridge are both in the south of England. Indeed, acceptance rates were highest in wealthy areas in the south of the country, such as Reading (6%), Kingston Upon Thames (4.3%) and Buckinghamshire (3.9%), with a more pronounced concentration in the areas around both Oxford and Cambridge.

These findings are also similar to those in our 2011 report, which showed that between 2007 and 2009, several areas, particularly in the North and Midlands, had very low proportions of HE applicants accepted to Oxbridge. Indeed, many of the same areas found to have very low proportions of students accepted to Oxbridge here, such as Halton, Rochdale and Thurrock, were also some of the worst performing areas then. Additionally, many of the same areas, such as Kingston Upon Thames and Buckinghamshire, also had some of the highest proportions of HE applicants accepted to Oxbridge in the previous years examined.³⁹ Full local authority tables are included in the Appendix.

³⁹ John O'Leary and Lesley Kendall (2011) Degrees of success, university chances by individual school. Sutton Trust.

Figure 15: Map of Russell Group acceptances by local education authorities in England

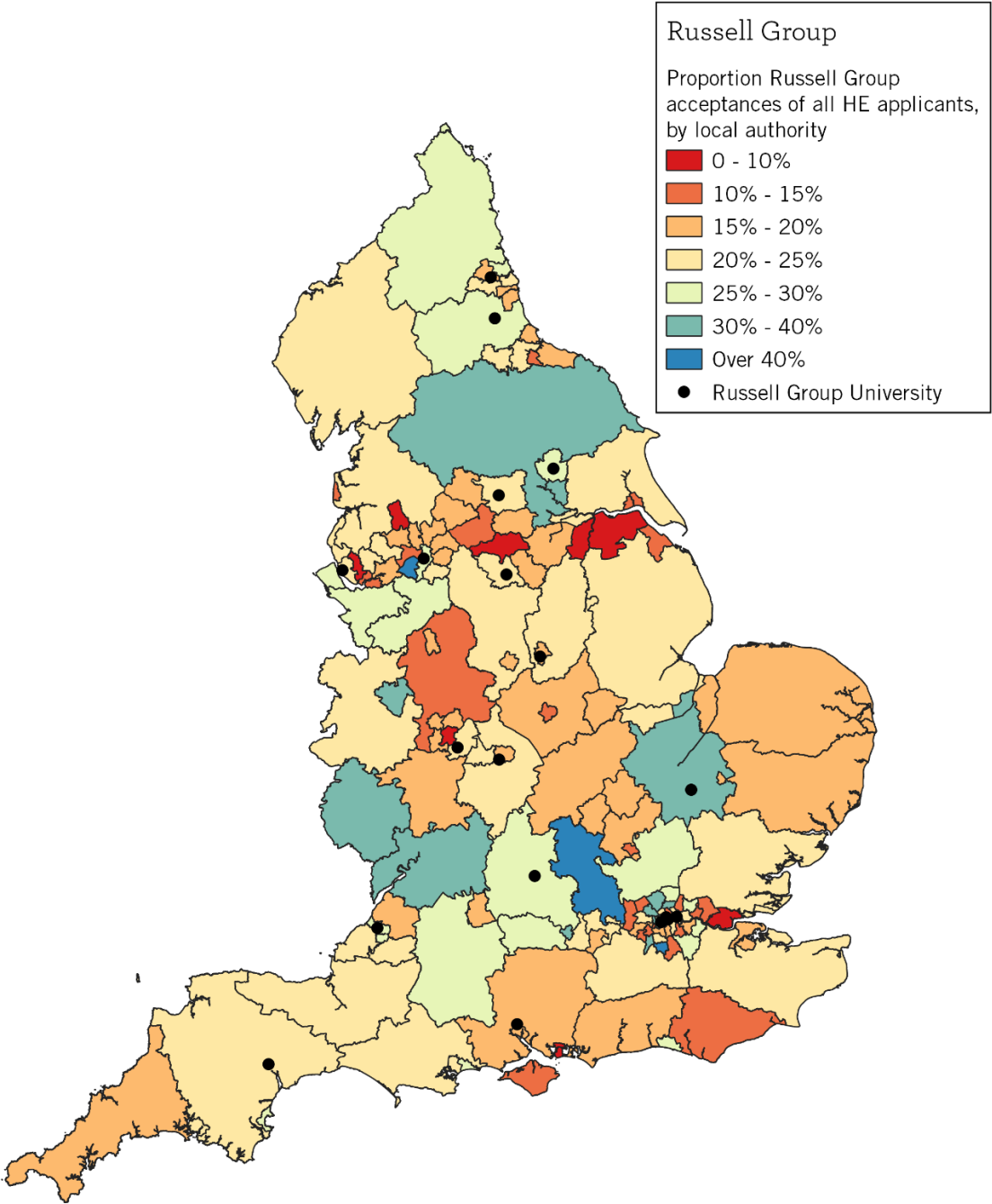
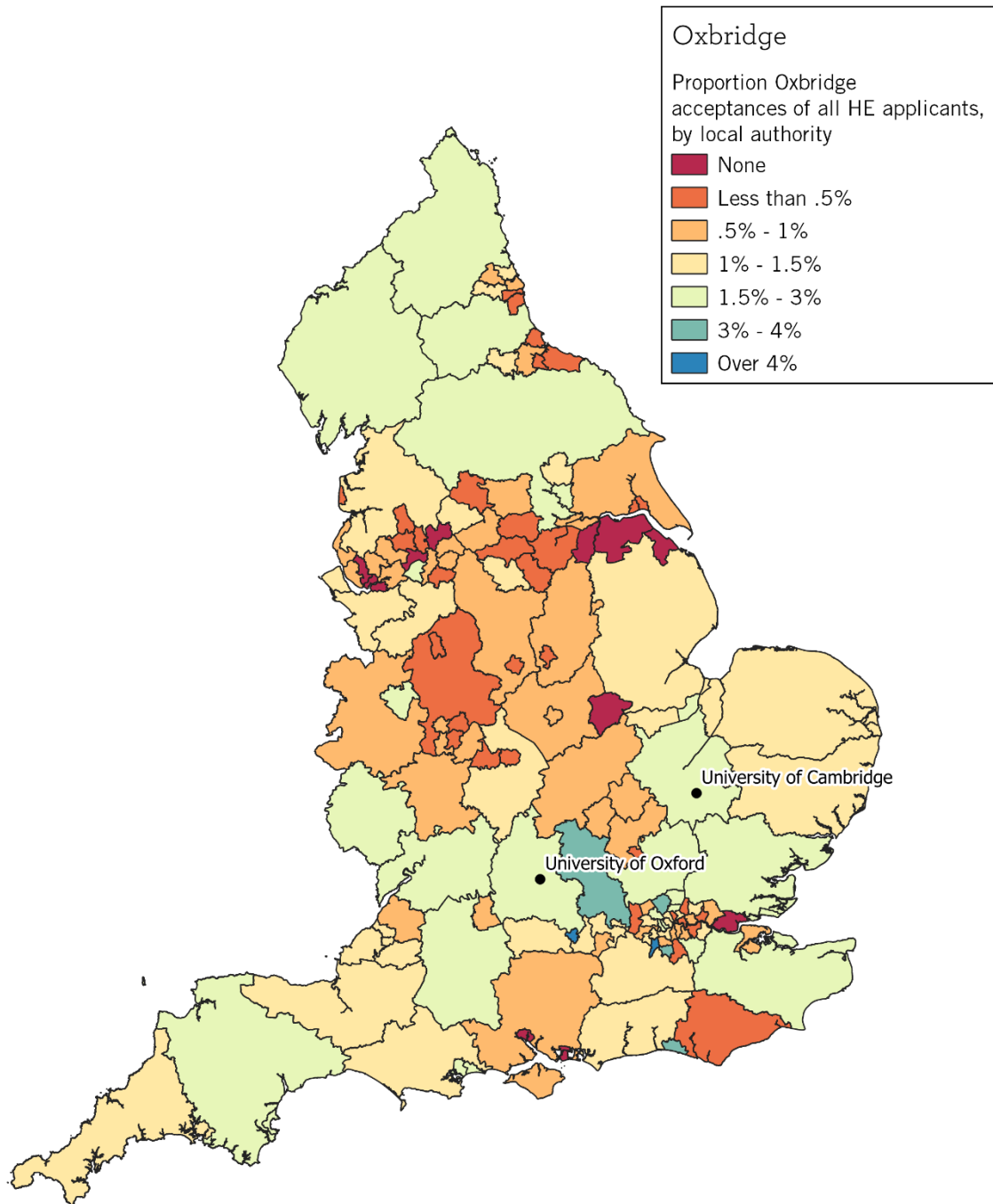


Figure 16: Map of Oxbridge acceptances by local education authorities in England



6. Differences by school attainment

The prior attainment of students is one of the most important factors in HE applications, both in terms of where students feel they have a chance of successful entry, and therefore where they apply; and in terms of where they are then subsequently accepted. Student attainment also differs substantially between school types, an important factor in the variation between school types seen so far in this report.

In the following section, all schools have been divided into five groups based on their exam results at A level, and then analysed within the group of schools with the best and worst exam results. Although there will still be variation in exam results within each group, this allows the attainment levels of students in a school to be taken into account, to help to gain a more accurate picture of the differences in application and acceptance rates between types of school.⁴⁰

Applications

Looking at schools with the highest fifth of exam results, there is some variation in the proportion of HE applicants applying to the Russell Group. At independent schools in this group, 89% of HE applicants applied to the RG, with 84% of those in grammar schools. In comparison, among comprehensive schools in the top fifth for exam results, only 73% of HE applicants applied to the RG, 75% of students from general FE colleges, and only 76% of students from sixth form colleges.

For schools in the bottom fifth of exam results, there is considerable variation between types of school. At independent schools in this group, 87% of HE applicants applied to HE, only slightly lower than the proportion in top performing independent schools. In contrast, just 34% of students from comprehensive schools in the bottom fifth applied to these universities, and just 29% from general FE colleges. Among low performing schools, there are substantial differences in where HE applicants apply.

Table 3: Percentage (%) of HE applicants applying to Russell Group universities

| | Fifth of schools with highest exam results | Fifth of schools with lowest exam results |
|--------------------|--|---|
| All schools | 81% | 31% |
| Independent | 89% | 87% |
| Comprehensive | 73% | 34% |
| Selective | 84% | - |
| General FE college | 75% | 29% |
| Sixth form college | 76% | 33% |
| <i>Other</i> | <i>69%</i> | <i>25%</i> |

Looking at Oxbridge applications specifically, in schools with the highest exam results, there are substantial differences in the proportion of students applying to the two. In independent schools in this group, 23% of HE applicants applied to Oxbridge, and 17% of students from selective schools did so.

⁴⁰ Due to the small number of HE applicants from students in selective schools in the lowest fifth of schools for exam results, results for selectives have not been included in this group.

However, only 11% of students in comprehensive schools, 12% in sixth form colleges and 9% in general FE colleges did so.

For the schools with the lowest exam results, again, the differences were even more stark. A high proportion (25%) of students from low performing independent schools applied to Oxbridge. However, just 1.3% of HE applicants in such comprehensive schools did so, and less than 1% of HE applicants in sixth form colleges and general FE colleges in this group applied to Oxbridge.

Table 4: Percentage (%) of HE applicants applying to Oxbridge

| | Fifth of schools with highest exam results | Fifth of schools with lowest exam results |
|--------------------|--|---|
| All schools | 17% | 1.1% |
| Independent | 23% | 25% |
| Comprehensive | 11% | 1.3% |
| Selective | 17% | - |
| General FE college | 9% | 0.4% |
| Sixth form college | 12% | 0.9% |
| <i>Other</i> | <i>9%</i> | <i>0.5%</i> |

Acceptances

Given the differences which are present in application rates, the next section looks at acceptance rates for students who are applying to the Russell Group and to Oxbridge. Do the relatively high proportions of students applying from some types of school result in lower acceptance rates, perhaps because their applications are more speculative?

In fact, the opposite is true. Looking at schools with the highest fifth of exam results, acceptances saw a similar pattern as applications, with 74% of applicants from independent schools going on to gain a spot at a Russell Group university. Similarly, selective schools in this group had a high proportion of applications, and also had a high acceptance rate, with 64% of applications from students in these schools successful. While the application rate to the Russell Group from sixth form colleges in this group was relatively low, the same proportion were successful (64%) as applicants from selective schools. While not a large difference, applicants from comprehensives (60%) and FE colleges (54%) were less likely to be successful.

Applicants from schools in the lowest fifth for exam results has substantially different acceptance rates by school type. Students in independent and selective schools had high acceptance rates (69% and 70% respectively), but acceptance rates were much lower in other school types. In comprehensives and sixth form colleges the success rate was just 22%, and in general FE colleges just 20%.

Table 5: Acceptance rates of those applying to the Russell Group

| | Fifth of schools with highest exam results | Fifth of schools with lowest exam results |
|--------------------|--|---|
| All schools | 66% | 23% |
| Independent | 74% | 69% |
| Comprehensive | 60% | 22% |
| Selective | 64% | - |
| General FE college | 54% | 20% |
| Sixth form college | 64% | 22% |
| <i>Other</i> | <i>56%</i> | <i>20%</i> |

Acceptance rates for schools in the top fifth for exam results to Oxbridge differed a small amount, but relatively little by school type. Independent schools in this group had a success rate for applicants of 35%, but the rate for other school types was only slightly lower, for example standing at 28% for applicants from comprehensives.

However, looking at success rates by school type for those in the lowest fifth of exam results, acceptance rates for applicants to Oxbridge differed considerably. 34% of applicants from independent schools in this group were successful, and 29% of those from selectives. However, only 10% of applicants applying from general FE colleges, comprehensives and sixth form colleges in this group were successful.

Table 6: Acceptance rates of those applying to Oxbridge

| | Fifth of schools with highest exam results | Fifth of schools with lowest exam results |
|--------------------|--|---|
| All schools | 32% | 20% |
| Independent | 35% | 34% |
| Comprehensive | 28% | 10% |
| Selective | 32% | - |
| General FE college | 28% | 10% |
| Sixth form college | 31% | 10% |
| <i>Other</i> | <i>25%</i> | <i>21%</i> |

7. A level results of acceptances

Applications and acceptances to top universities, and especially to Oxbridge, vary by the type of school that students are applying from. However, are the students who do gain a place at these universities doing so with the same grades, or are students in the schools with higher numbers of applications and acceptances gaining places with lower grades? The next section aims to examine that question, by looking at the average A level point scores of students who are accepted to different types of HE institutions.

Average A level point scores of acceptances by school type

All HE providers

Looking at students accepted to HE overall, those applying from general FE colleges were accepted with the lowest average A level results, equivalent to just over BCC on average. Students gaining an offer from comprehensive schools and sixth form colleges also had similar results, of BCC on average. Students from independent schools (13.2) and grammar schools (13) entered HE with the highest grades, equivalent on average to just over ABB

Russell Group

The grades of students accepted to Russell Group universities differed slightly by school type; equivalent to one grade on average between students applying from general FE colleges and those from independent schools. Students from general FE colleges who are accepted to Russell Group universities achieved just under AAB on average, whereas those from independent schools achieved just under AAA. Very similar results were found for students applying to high tariff and Sutton Trust 30 (ST30) institutions by school type.

Oxbridge

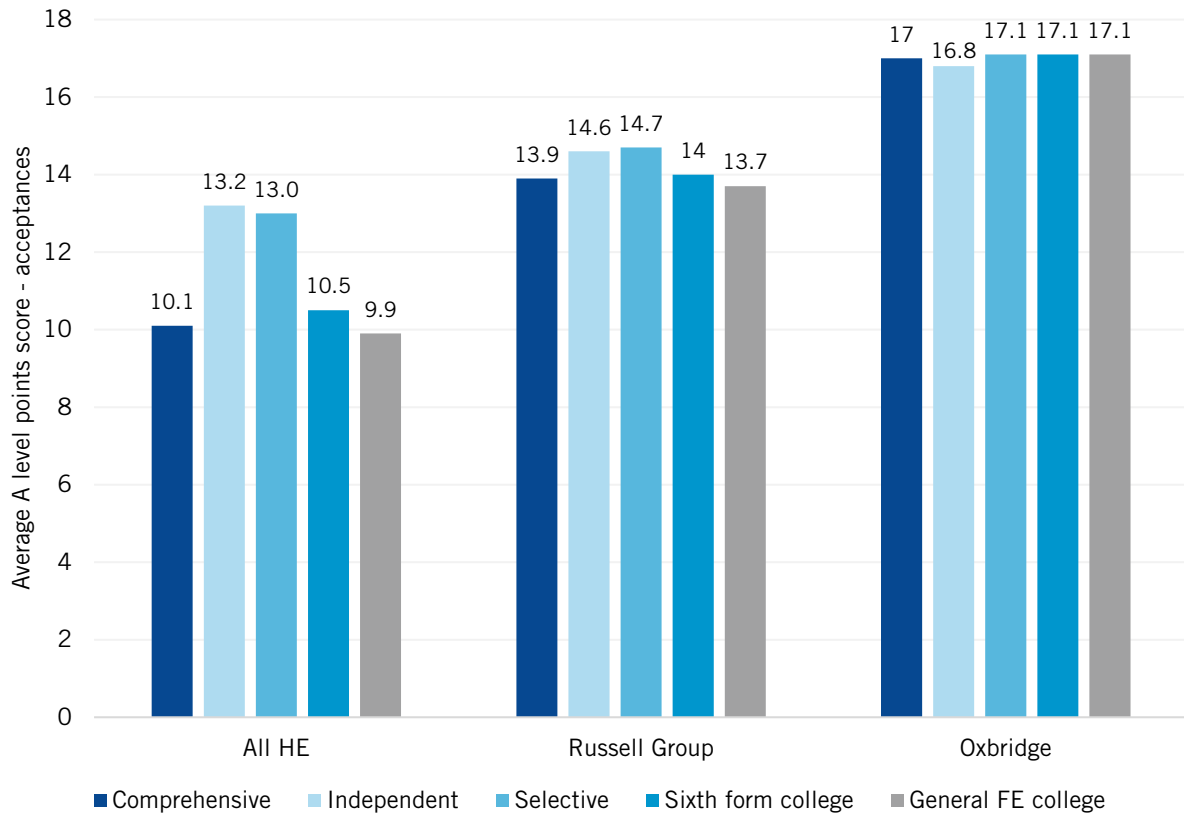
Average A level point scores for students accepted to Oxbridge were similar across school types. with students accepted to the two universities achieving A*A*A on average, regardless of the type of school that they applied from. (Figure 17).

A level point score of acceptances by comprehensive school type

All HE providers

Students accepted to HE from local authority-maintained schools, converter academies, free schools and UTC and studio schools all had similar average A level points scores, roughly equivalent to BCC at A level. Students from sponsored academies were accepted with the lowest scores, equivalent to between CCD and CCC on average.

Figure 17: Average A level point scores of acceptances by school type



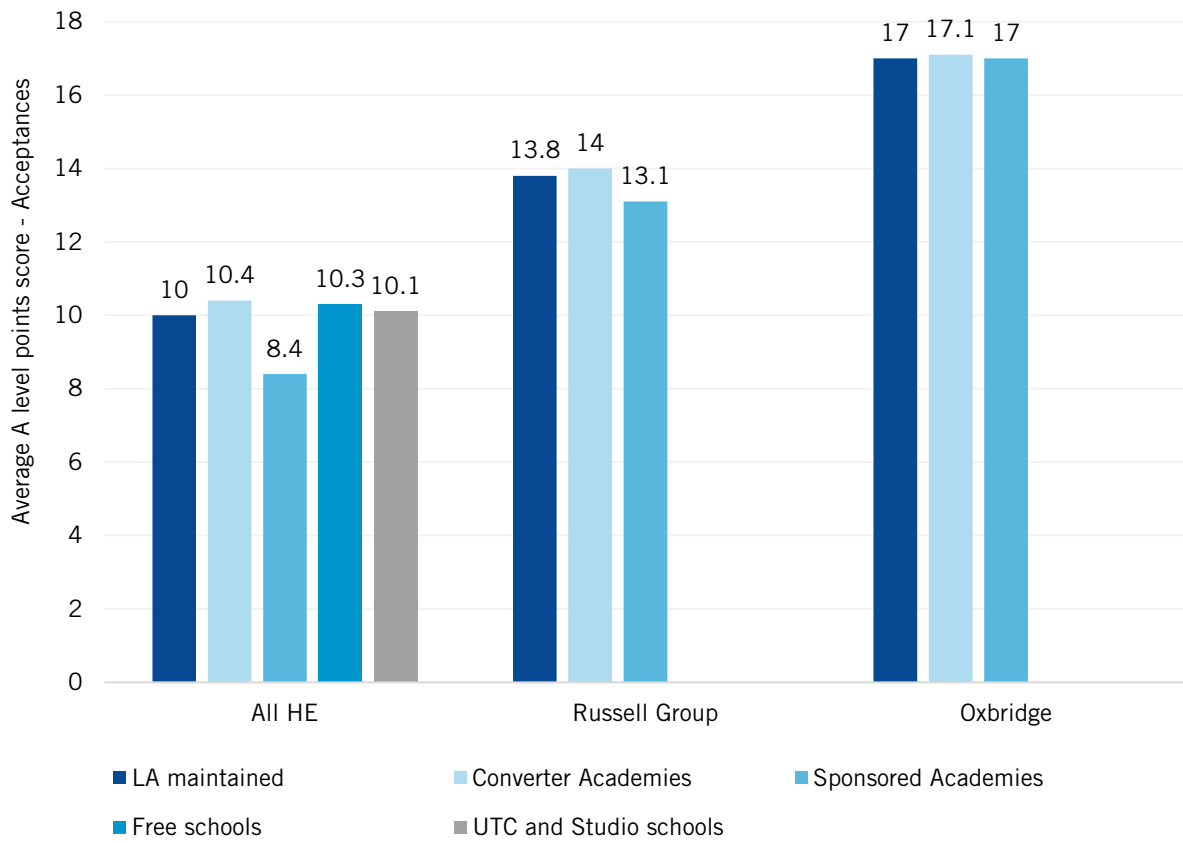
Russell Group

Results for free schools and UTC and studio schools are not reported here, due to the small numbers of students with A level results applying to Oxbridge from these school types. Average grades of students accepted to Russell Group universities were the highest for students from LA maintained schools and converter academies, with students from these schools achieving on average roughly AAB at A level. Students accepted from sponsored academies had the lowest results on average, equivalent to roughly ABB. Very similar results were found for students applying to high tariff and ST30 institutions when examined by comprehensive school type.

Oxbridge

Results for free schools and UTC and studio schools are also not reported here due to small numbers. No differences were found between LA maintained schools, converter and sponsored academies in the results of their students accepted to Oxbridge, with again students from all types scoring A*A*A on average.

Figure 18: Average A level point scores of acceptances by comprehensive school type



Average A level point scores of acceptances for Russell Group facilitating subjects by school type

The Russell Group publishes advice on A level subject choices, providing a list of ‘facilitating’ subjects, which are more frequently required for entry to their degree courses. These subjects are biology, chemistry, English literature, geography, history, physics, modern and classical languages, maths and further maths.⁴¹

Russell Group

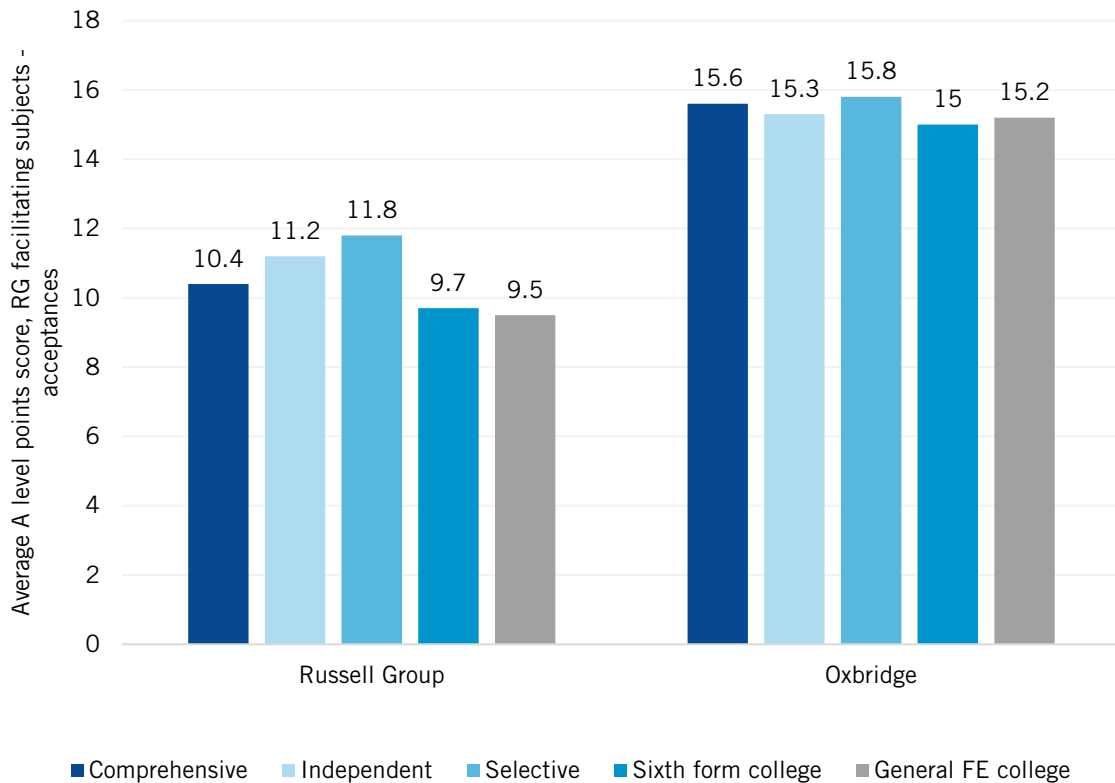
Looking at the average A level points achieved in only RG facilitating subjects, differences between types of school are more pronounced. For the Russell Group, the lowest average for these subjects were found for students accepted from general FE colleges at 9.5, compared to 11.8 for students in selective schools, and 11.2 for students in independent schools.

⁴¹ Russell Group (2017) Informed choices – a Russell Group guide to making decisions about post-16 education, 2017/18 edition.

Oxbridge

For students who gained a place at Oxford, there were some differences in average A level point scores for RG facilitating subjects between different types of school. Students at selective schools had the highest average of 15.8 points in these subjects, compared to almost a grade lower (15 points) for students at sixth form colleges.

Figure 19: Average A level point scores of acceptances for Russell Group facilitating subjects by school type



Average A level point scores of acceptances for Russell Group facilitating subjects by comprehensive school type

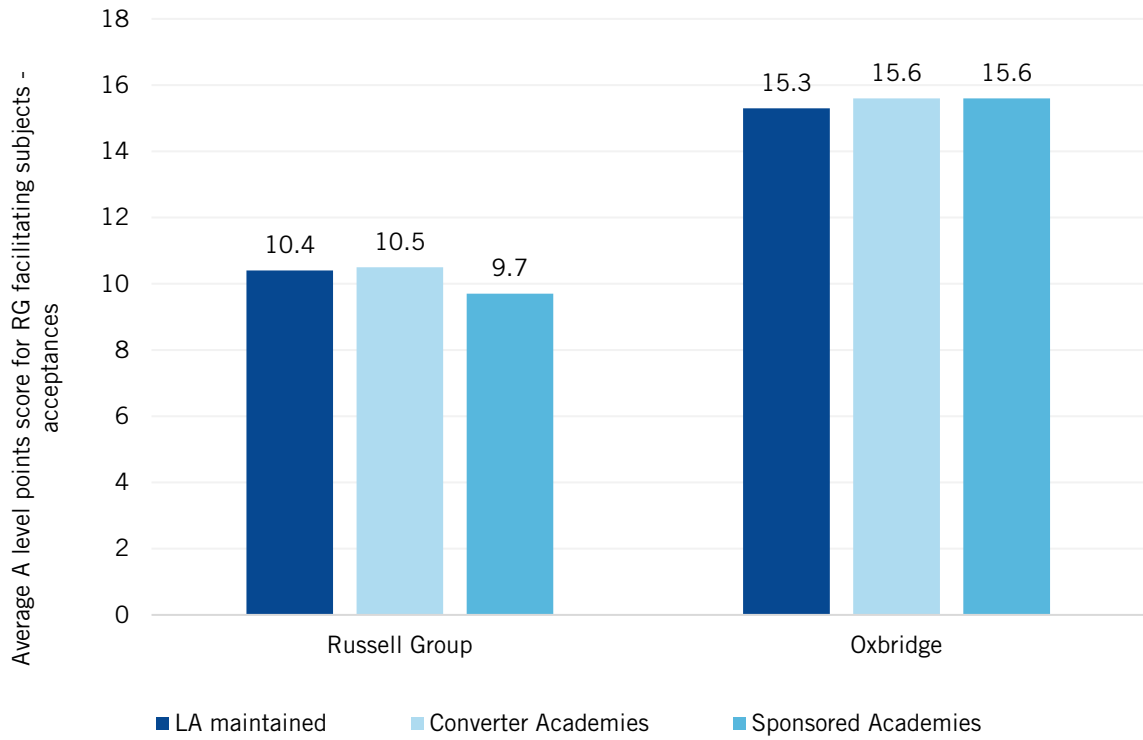
Russell Group

LA maintained schools, converter academies and free schools had very similar averages for RG facilitating subjects for students accepted to the Russell Group. However, students accepted from sponsored academies were almost a grade lower on average.

Oxbridge

Results for free schools and UTC and Studio schools are not reported here, due to the small numbers of students with A level results applying to Oxbridge from these school types. There were no differences in the mean achieved A level points score for Russell Group facilitating subjects by comprehensive school type.

Figure 20: Average A level point scores of acceptances for Russell Group facilitating subjects by comprehensive school type



8. Discussion

University admissions, especially to the top universities in the country, are heavily impacted by an individual's socioeconomic background, including the school that they attended, and where in the country they are from. Concerningly, very little has changed since the Sutton Trust previously looked at these issues in 2011, with findings in this report demonstrating that while most students who apply to higher education are accepted, students from comprehensive schools are still both less likely to apply to Russell Group universities and much less likely to gain a place following an application. This is even more so the case for Oxford and Cambridge, where a small number of schools continue to dominate, with just eight schools gaining more acceptances to the two universities as almost 2,900 others put together.

Similarly, when looking at regional inequalities, students applying from some parts of the country are much less likely to both apply and go on to top universities, with the gap in applicants progressing to Oxbridge being particularly stark between the south and east of England when compared to the rest of the country. The reasons for these disparities are complex, and will in some cases begin even before a child starts at school. To close these gaps, it's important that in every part of education, from the early years, through to primary and secondary school, all children are given the help and support that they need to fulfil their potential.

However, it is clear that top universities, and especially Oxbridge, need to do considerably more to reach out to high attaining students from all backgrounds across England, and to encourage them to apply. Roughly 70% of students getting AAA or better attend state schools, but only 58% of Oxford and 63% of Cambridge entrants were from the same group in 2016-17. Similarly, while the largest proportion of students achieving AAA and above are in the South East (with 10.9% doing so), a relatively high proportion of students in several areas with low progression rates to Oxbridge achieve AAA and above. In the North East, findings in this report show that just 3.2% of higher education applicants gained a place at Oxbridge, but 5.6% of students there achieve AAA and above. In the East Midlands, just 3.4% of HE applicants gain a place at Oxbridge, despite 6.8% of students achieving these top grades. In the North West, 7.2% of students achieve AAA, but only 3.7% of students applying to HE gain a place at Oxbridge.⁴² Gaps in access to HE are unlikely to close entirely while there are still such large inequalities in every part of the school system, and while students in some types of school leave with lower average grades than those from others. However, there is clearly more that can be done, both by schools and colleges, and by universities, to help to level the playing field.

Applications

Students need to receive advice before they even choose their A level subjects, as certain subjects are required for some courses, especially at more selective institutions. The guide the Russell Group produce each year on facilitating subjects should be used in all schools, to help students capable of gaining a place at a selective university to keep their options open and increase their chances of a successful application. It is concerning that gaps in the results of students taking Russell Group facilitating subjects in different types of school were larger than any gaps for A level results overall, and it's important that students in state schools are supported to achieve their full potential in these subjects, often seen as being 'harder' than some of the other subjects on offer at A level. Additionally, previous Sutton Trust

⁴² University of Oxford (2018) Annual admissions statistical report. Available at: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/Oxford%202018%20Annual%20Admissions%20Report.pdf>

research has found that highly able students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take Russell Group facilitating subjects.⁴³

Students then also need help and advice to choose which courses and universities to apply to. Especially for students who don't have support with this process at home, the support from schools can be vital. It is concerning that while applications to the Russell Group from comprehensive schools are representative of their applications to HE overall, students from comprehensives are much less likely to apply to Oxbridge when compared to students at selective and independent schools. Indeed, previous research from the Sutton Trust has found that 43% of state secondary school teachers say that they rarely or never advise their bright pupils to apply to Oxbridge.⁴⁴ Bright students from all schools should be encouraged and supported to put in applications to Oxbridge if that is the right option for them. It is welcome that the government's recent careers strategy focuses on ensuring students gain information on options other than to HE which are frequently not given the attention they require, such as apprenticeships.⁴⁵ However, it is concerning that the strategy does not include a push to ensure all students in state schools with the potential to attend top universities are given the tailored help and advice that they need to have a fair chance to do so.

Applications also differed by region. When looking at Oxbridge specifically, there are some substantial differences in applications by region, with students from outside of the South and East of England considerably under-represented in applications to the two institutions. Previous Sutton Trust research has found that only one in ten students attend a university over 150 miles from home, and students from better-off backgrounds are more likely to move further from home than their peers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.⁴⁶ Here, the areas with the highest progression rates to Oxbridge are also those nearest to the two institutions. While universities have done some work to try to reduce regional inequalities in applications, such as Oxford recently announcing that it will join Cambridge in covering travel costs for disadvantaged students travelling to the institutions for interview,⁴⁷ top universities need to do much more to ensure that students are applying to them from every part of the country. While graduates from Oxford and Cambridge continue to dominate many sectors of British life, it is crucial that access to those universities is more equitable.

Acceptances

Whether or not a student who applies then goes on to successfully gain a place at a particular institution depends primarily on their grades, but is also influenced by their personal statement, and their performance in any interviews included as part of the application process. Students at certain types of school, and particularly those at top independent schools, are likely to have considerably greater access to help with all parts of this process, putting them at an advantage in the application process.

To limit the benefit that better-off students often have in gaining places at top institutions due to external help, personal statements should be reviewed, to consider whether they are beneficial to the application process. If personal statements remain a part of the application process, the current format could be improved, for example by providing more structured prompts (as is the case in many modern job applications), to give an applicant a clearer understanding of what is expected, regardless of any external

⁴³ Sammons, P., Toth, K. & Sylva, K. (2015) Subject to background – what promotes better achievement for bright but disadvantaged students? Sutton Trust.

⁴⁴ Teachers' Oxbridge Perceptions Polling. (2016) Sutton Trust.

⁴⁵ Department for Education (2017) Careers Strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents.

⁴⁶ M. Donnelly & S. Gamsu (2018) Home and away. Social, ethnic and spatial inequalities in student mobility. Sutton Trust.

⁴⁷ Sutton Trust (2016) Research Brief – Oxbridge Admissions

help they receive. Universities can help by increasing transparency around how personal statements are used when considering a student's application.⁴⁸

To increase the number of disadvantaged students accepted to top universities, the Sutton Trust has been calling for wider use of contextual admissions by universities; which means considering the socioeconomic background of and the school attended by potential candidates when looking at their applications. This issue is explored in detail in our report *Admissions in Context*. This research highlighted that when contextualising admissions, universities should also make greater use of individual level indicators (such as eligibility for free school meals) to improve the accuracy with which they target such offers, rather than using only area or school level markers. The report found that a two grade discount to those eligible for Free School Meals could lead to a 50% increase in such students admitted to leading universities every year.⁴⁹

The report also highlighted that universities should also be open and transparent regarding how they contextualise offers, so that students know that they can apply to those institutions. Information on such offers has been patchy, inconsistent and in some cases unavailable. One way to improve this issue would be the use of 'contextual data checkers' or 'lookup tools', so that students can easily look up their likely offer once their background has been taken into account. Making this process more transparent could also help to close the gap in applications we have highlighted in this report, as a wider group of students will be aware they do have a chance at accessing these top institutions.

While both Oxford and Cambridge do use contextual flags when deciding which applicants to invite to interview, neither automatically offers interviews to flagged candidates, and neither institution offers lower grades to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Being more ambitious in their approach to contextual admissions could also help to widen access to both universities, both in the applications they receive, and who goes on to be accepted. Both universities are also taking other positive steps to improve access, with Lady Margret Hall in Oxford now running a foundation year, a free fully funded course to improve progression to top universities to students from under-represented backgrounds.⁵⁰ Cambridge have also recently announced plans to follow suit.⁵¹ However, both universities need to do much more to improve access.

Access to higher education is improving, and there is now a high level of access to HE overall for students who apply. However, gaps remain persistent, especially at the most highly regarded institutions. More needs to be done to truly open up the opportunities that education at these institutions provide to all young people with talent, regardless of their socioeconomic background or where in the country they come from.

⁴⁸ Wyness, G. (2017) Rules of the Game – disadvantaged students and the university admissions process. Sutton Trust.

⁴⁹ Boliver, V. et al (2017) Admissions in Context. Sutton Trust.

⁵⁰ The LMH Foundation Year, available at: <http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/foundation-year>

⁵¹ The Independent. Cambridge University to offer 'dozens' of poorer students free year of study. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/cambridge-university-student-diversity-admissions-poorer-students-tuition-fees-a8568471.html>



About the report

Dr Rebecca Montacute is Research Fellow at the Sutton Trust.

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Appendix: statistics for state schools by local education authority

| Local Education Authority | Oxbridge Applicants | Oxbridge Acceptances | % Oxbridge Acceptances of all HE applicants | Russell Group Applicants | Russell Group Acceptances | % Russell Group Acceptances of all HE applicants | Total number of HE applicants |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Barking and Dagenham | 65 | 10 | 0.4% | 1,110 | 345 | 14% | 2,555 |
| Barnet | 890 | 250 | 3.3% | 5,150 | 2,785 | 37% | 7,595 |
| Barnsley | 25 | 10 | 0.4% | 830 | 225 | 10% | 2,280 |
| Bath and NE Somerset | 120 | 35 | 1.4% | 1,225 | 595 | 24% | 2,465 |
| Bedfordshire | 235 | 40 | 0.6% | 2,470 | 995 | 16% | 6,175 |
| Bexley | 195 | 35 | 1.1% | 1,870 | 855 | 27% | 3,210 |
| Birmingham | 645 | 165 | 1.0% | 9,080 | 3,360 | 20% | 16,770 |
| Blackburn & Darwen | 40 | 10 | 0.4% | 1,060 | 265 | 9% | 2,840 |
| Blackpool | 65 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,320 | 400 | 13% | 3,075 |
| Bolton | 50 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,395 | 455 | 16% | 2,910 |
| Bournemouth | 155 | 30 | 1.9% | 915 | 435 | 28% | 1,565 |
| Bracknell Forest | 45 | 10 | 0.8% | 565 | 225 | 18% | 1,225 |
| Bradford | 160 | 25 | 0.4% | 3,200 | 995 | 15% | 6,520 |
| Brent | 225 | 60 | 1.7% | 2,190 | 1,080 | 31% | 3,485 |
| Brighton and Hove | 300 | 105 | 3.1% | 1,835 | 990 | 30% | 3,350 |
| Bristol | 235 | 55 | 1.3% | 2,455 | 1,165 | 27% | 4,295 |
| Bromley | 520 | 130 | 2.3% | 3,150 | 1,540 | 27% | 5,725 |
| Buckinghamshire | 1,160 | 365 | 3.9% | 6,320 | 3,940 | 42% | 9,300 |
| Bury | 70 | 15 | 0.3% | 2,180 | 745 | 17% | 4,375 |
| Calderdale | 100 | 35 | 1.2% | 1,405 | 560 | 19% | 2,915 |
| Cambridgeshire | 640 | 210 | 2.8% | 3,895 | 2,305 | 31% | 7,440 |
| Camden | 180 | 45 | 1.2% | 1,865 | 780 | 21% | 3,670 |
| Cheshire | 515 | 110 | 1.0% | 5,750 | 2,825 | 26% | 10,695 |

Note: Percentages in this table are calculated based on numbers rounded to the nearest 5. For local authorities with low numbers, rounding may impact the true figure.

| Local Education Authority | Oxbridge Applicants | Oxbridge Acceptances | % Oxbridge Acceptances of all HE applicants | Russell Group Applicants | Russell Group Acceptances | % Russell Group Acceptances of all HE applicants | Total number of HE applicants |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Cornwall | 260 | 65 | 1.0% | 2,885 | 1,245 | 19% | 6,385 |
| Coventry | 80 | 15 | 0.4% | 1,665 | 610 | 15% | 3,970 |
| Croydon | 110 | 10 | 0.2% | 1,895 | 570 | 14% | 4,155 |
| Cumbria | 275 | 90 | 1.6% | 2,940 | 1,335 | 23% | 5,725 |
| Darlington | 95 | 30 | 1.1% | 1,315 | 620 | 23% | 2,650 |
| Derby | 80 | 15 | 0.5% | 1,325 | 510 | 16% | 3,140 |
| Derbyshire | 290 | 65 | 1.0% | 3,275 | 1,540 | 23% | 6,575 |
| Devon | 445 | 120 | 1.6% | 3,875 | 1,755 | 23% | 7,570 |
| Doncaster | 75 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,365 | 515 | 16% | 3,255 |
| Dorset | 275 | 65 | 1.4% | 2,355 | 1,095 | 24% | 4,520 |
| Dudley | 215 | 40 | 0.7% | 2,885 | 1,160 | 20% | 5,940 |
| Durham | 165 | 55 | 1.5% | 2,170 | 965 | 27% | 3,630 |
| Ealing | 230 | 45 | 1.1% | 2,370 | 1,015 | 25% | 4,130 |
| East Riding | 90 | 20 | 0.8% | 1,285 | 570 | 23% | 2,495 |
| East Sussex | 105 | 15 | 0.4% | 1,395 | 485 | 14% | 3,545 |
| Enfield | 305 | 75 | 1.8% | 2,350 | 1,085 | 27% | 4,065 |
| Essex | 985 | 290 | 1.7% | 7,575 | 3,475 | 20% | 17,320 |
| Gateshead | 100 | 30 | 1.2% | 1,380 | 600 | 23% | 2,585 |
| Gloucestershire | 620 | 205 | 2.8% | 4,205 | 2,375 | 32% | 7,310 |
| Greenwich | 50 | 5 | 0.3% | 860 | 285 | 16% | 1,730 |
| Hackney | 140 | 30 | 1.2% | 1,435 | 515 | 20% | 2,550 |
| Halton | 15 | 0 | 0.0% | 605 | 185 | 14% | 1,345 |
| Hammersmith & Fulham | 140 | 30 | 2.5% | 800 | 450 | 37% | 1,215 |
| Hampshire | 505 | 115 | 0.8% | 6,455 | 2,490 | 17% | 14,330 |
| Haringey | 160 | 40 | 2.3% | 1,150 | 600 | 34% | 1,740 |
| Harrow | 100 | 25 | 0.7% | 1,750 | 510 | 14% | 3,670 |
| Hartlepool | 30 | 5 | 0.3% | 805 | 250 | 17% | 1,455 |

| Local Education Authority | Oxbridge Applicants | Oxbridge Acceptances | % Oxbridge Acceptances of all HE applicants | Russell Group Applicants | Russell Group Acceptances | % Russell Group Acceptances of all HE applicants | Total number of HE applicants |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Herefordshire | 150 | 45 | 1.8% | 1,490 | 795 | 32% | 2,450 |
| Hertfordshire | 1,360 | 335 | 1.7% | 10,380 | 5,390 | 27% | 20,160 |
| Hillingdon | 155 | 10 | 0.2% | 2,255 | 675 | 14% | 4,715 |
| Hounslow | 165 | 25 | 0.6% | 2,120 | 745 | 19% | 3,885 |
| Isle of Wight | 25 | 5 | 0.5% | 340 | 120 | 13% | 925 |
| Islington | 55 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,275 | 420 | 12% | 3,410 |
| Kensington & Chelsea | 160 | 40 | 2.0% | 1,185 | 575 | 28% | 2,040 |
| Kent | 1,325 | 335 | 1.6% | 10,030 | 4,780 | 23% | 20,820 |
| Kingston upon Hull | 65 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,475 | 425 | 13% | 3,330 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 410 | 150 | 4.4% | 1,875 | 1,055 | 31% | 3,440 |
| Kirklees | 85 | 25 | 0.5% | 1,905 | 515 | 11% | 4,650 |
| Knowsley | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 35 | 5 | 8% | 60 |
| Lambeth | 55 | 10 | 0.7% | 705 | 255 | 18% | 1,430 |
| Lancashire | 750 | 195 | 1.2% | 9,245 | 3,920 | 24% | 16,080 |
| Leeds | 210 | 45 | 0.6% | 3,720 | 1,485 | 21% | 7,140 |
| Leicester | 140 | 25 | 0.5% | 1,840 | 585 | 12% | 4,790 |
| Leicestershire | 190 | 35 | 0.6% | 2,505 | 1,055 | 19% | 5,615 |
| Lewisham | 80 | 15 | 0.5% | 1,125 | 330 | 11% | 2,930 |
| Lincolnshire | 490 | 130 | 1.4% | 4,700 | 2,255 | 24% | 9,525 |
| Liverpool | 230 | 55 | 0.9% | 3,515 | 1,450 | 22% | 6,450 |
| Luton | 70 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,025 | 300 | 10% | 2,985 |
| Manchester | 270 | 75 | 0.9% | 4,870 | 2,115 | 26% | 8,055 |
| Medway | 165 | 35 | 0.9% | 1,500 | 575 | 15% | 3,770 |
| Merton | 55 | 10 | 0.8% | 635 | 240 | 20% | 1,185 |
| Middlesbrough | 40 | 5 | 0.2% | 1,045 | 270 | 12% | 2,320 |
| Milton Keynes | 130 | 30 | 0.8% | 1,510 | 600 | 16% | 3,645 |
| N.E.Lincolnshire | 30 | 0 | 0.0% | 640 | 200 | 10% | 1,980 |

| Local Education Authority | Oxbridge Applicants | Oxbridge Acceptances | % Oxbridge Acceptances of all HE applicants | Russell Group Applicants | Russell Group Acceptances | % Russell Group Acceptances of all HE applicants | Total number of HE applicants |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Newham | 160 | 25 | 0.6% | 2,000 | 895 | 22% | 4,025 |
| Norfolk | 395 | 110 | 1.4% | 3,140 | 1,265 | 17% | 7,605 |
| North Lincolnshire | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 115 | 20 | 5% | 430 |
| North Somerset | 140 | 35 | 1.3% | 1,260 | 605 | 22% | 2,695 |
| North Tyneside | 90 | 25 | 1.1% | 1,250 | 580 | 26% | 2,250 |
| North Yorkshire | 575 | 140 | 1.7% | 4,820 | 2,555 | 30% | 8,385 |
| Northamptonshire | 275 | 60 | 0.7% | 3,335 | 1,395 | 17% | 8,325 |
| Northumberland | 160 | 50 | 1.5% | 1,955 | 875 | 26% | 3,335 |
| Nottingham | 130 | 25 | 0.5% | 2,185 | 915 | 18% | 5,160 |
| Nottinghamshire | 290 | 60 | 0.8% | 3,710 | 1,780 | 25% | 7,150 |
| Oldham | 55 | 15 | 0.9% | 805 | 325 | 19% | 1,690 |
| Oxfordshire | 510 | 140 | 2.0% | 3,615 | 1,865 | 26% | 7,050 |
| Peterborough | 145 | 30 | 1.0% | 1,175 | 580 | 20% | 2,895 |
| Plymouth | 155 | 30 | 1.0% | 1,345 | 580 | 20% | 2,900 |
| Poole | 125 | 30 | 1.5% | 1,045 | 475 | 24% | 1,950 |
| Portsmouth | 5 | 0 | 0.0% | 230 | 65 | 9% | 705 |
| Reading | 265 | 110 | 6.0% | 1,110 | 665 | 36% | 1,840 |
| Redbridge | 370 | 70 | 1.1% | 3,925 | 1,715 | 28% | 6,120 |
| Redcar & Cleveland | 25 | 5 | 0.4% | 665 | 250 | 19% | 1,290 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 70 | 20 | 1.0% | 815 | 275 | 14% | 1,925 |
| Rochdale | 25 | 0 | 0.0% | 920 | 330 | 16% | 2,070 |
| Rotherham | 70 | 15 | 0.4% | 1,695 | 725 | 18% | 3,945 |
| Rutland | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 75 | 30 | 17% | 180 |
| S Gloucestershire | 90 | 20 | 0.8% | 1,055 | 390 | 15% | 2,550 |
| Salford | 25 | 0 | 0.0% | 1,165 | 305 | 11% | 2,845 |
| Sandwell | 30 | 5 | 0.2% | 1,320 | 285 | 9% | 3,005 |
| Sefton | 110 | 25 | 0.7% | 2,000 | 875 | 23% | 3,735 |

| Local Education Authority | Oxbridge Applicants | Oxbridge Acceptances | % Oxbridge Acceptances of all HE applicants | Russell Group Applicants | Russell Group Acceptances | % Russell Group Acceptances of all HE applicants | Total number of HE applicants |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Shropshire | 110 | 25 | 0.8% | 1,500 | 685 | 22% | 3,140 |
| Slough | 130 | 30 | 1.2% | 1,395 | 600 | 25% | 2,435 |
| Solihull | 120 | 20 | 0.4% | 2,575 | 945 | 20% | 4,730 |
| Somerset | 295 | 70 | 1.2% | 3,045 | 1,360 | 24% | 5,725 |
| South Tyneside | 30 | 5 | 0.5% | 560 | 205 | 22% | 940 |
| Southampton | 20 | 0 | 0.0% | 535 | 165 | 16% | 1,045 |
| Southend on Sea | 255 | 75 | 1.8% | 2,035 | 945 | 23% | 4,195 |
| Southwark | 90 | 15 | 0.9% | 905 | 360 | 23% | 1,595 |
| St.Helens | 115 | 25 | 0.8% | 1,740 | 725 | 22% | 3,250 |
| Staffordshire | 260 | 45 | 0.4% | 4,275 | 1,445 | 13% | 10,790 |
| Stockport | 90 | 15 | 0.5% | 1,675 | 760 | 23% | 3,245 |
| Stockton-on-Tees | 50 | 10 | 0.6% | 950 | 390 | 22% | 1,760 |
| Stoke-on-Trent | 75 | 10 | 0.5% | 925 | 325 | 15% | 2,130 |
| Suffolk | 305 | 70 | 1.1% | 2,675 | 1,170 | 18% | 6,525 |
| Sunderland | 70 | 10 | 0.3% | 1,560 | 480 | 16% | 3,050 |
| Surrey | 760 | 175 | 1.2% | 7,315 | 3,445 | 24% | 14,640 |
| Sutton | 600 | 180 | 3.8% | 3,265 | 1,930 | 41% | 4,725 |
| Swindon | 90 | 20 | 0.9% | 950 | 385 | 17% | 2,215 |
| Tameside | 70 | 15 | 0.6% | 1,235 | 420 | 17% | 2,480 |
| Telford and Wrekin | 140 | 40 | 2.6% | 890 | 525 | 35% | 1,510 |
| Thurrock | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 15 | 0 | 0% | 40 |
| Torbay | 160 | 50 | 2.6% | 1,095 | 565 | 29% | 1,925 |
| Tower Hamlets | 85 | 15 | 0.5% | 1,965 | 660 | 20% | 3,280 |
| Trafford | 365 | 105 | 2.9% | 2,600 | 1,630 | 44% | 3,675 |
| Wakefield | 75 | 15 | 0.4% | 1,885 | 675 | 16% | 4,205 |
| Walsall | 120 | 15 | 0.4% | 1,840 | 650 | 16% | 4,145 |
| Waltham Forest | 90 | 10 | 0.2% | 1,840 | 500 | 11% | 4,450 |

| Local Education Authority | Oxbridge Applicants | Oxbridge Acceptances | % Oxbridge Acceptances of all HE applicants | Russell Group Applicants | Russell Group Acceptances | % Russell Group Acceptances of all HE applicants | Total number of HE applicants |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Warrington | 70 | 15 | 0.5% | 1,300 | 525 | 18% | 2,980 |
| Warwickshire | 455 | 110 | 1.3% | 4,160 | 2,000 | 24% | 8,265 |
| West Berkshire | 165 | 25 | 1.1% | 1,235 | 610 | 27% | 2,220 |
| West Sussex | 405 | 95 | 1.1% | 3,695 | 1,505 | 18% | 8,525 |
| Westminster | 205 | 45 | 1.5% | 1,745 | 730 | 24% | 3,080 |
| Wigan | 170 | 35 | 0.8% | 2,525 | 1,090 | 24% | 4,485 |
| Wiltshire | 350 | 90 | 1.7% | 2,795 | 1,435 | 28% | 5,200 |
| Windsor/Maidhd/Berks | 105 | 30 | 1.4% | 1,025 | 465 | 21% | 2,165 |
| Wirral | 200 | 55 | 1.1% | 3,040 | 1,485 | 30% | 5,020 |
| Wokingham | 120 | 20 | 1.0% | 1,100 | 485 | 25% | 1,955 |
| Wolverhampton | 80 | 25 | 0.9% | 1,275 | 435 | 16% | 2,800 |
| Worcestershire | 225 | 50 | 0.8% | 3,010 | 1,310 | 20% | 6,650 |
| York | 155 | 40 | 1.1% | 1,880 | 905 | 25% | 3,600 |

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