

GHWY Uni Connect

An Analysis of Progression to HE
in West Yorkshire

2017 to 2021

August 2023



Executive summary

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This report presents the data on post school or college progression of students in West Yorkshire, with a particular focus on the impact of local Uni Connect activities delivered by Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) in boosting progression to higher education (HE). This demonstrates the clear impact being made and makes some recommendations to further boost access to HE for traditionally underrepresented groups.

- 1. Post-18 Pathways in West Yorkshire** - The pathways taken by students after school or college varied a lot across the five West Yorkshire local authorities, with high rates of progression to HE in Bradford, but a large proportion going straight into employment in Wakefield. Similarly, even among the cohort who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities, those who live in Bradford had the highest rate of progression to HE, with a much lower rate in Wakefield.
- 2. GHWY Progression Rates** - Rates of progression to HE for those engaging in GHWY Uni Connect activities were higher than the England average for students from areas with similar historical rates of progression to HE and higher than for those who did not participate in any activities.
- 3. Stronger impact on those living in areas of low HE participation** - The GHWY Uni Connect programme appears to have had a particularly large impact on students who live in areas with historically low rates of participation in HE, boosting their likelihood of progressing to HE by about three times.
- 4. Ethnic group differences in progression rates reflect England averages** - As across England, Asian students who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities had a much higher rate of progression to HE than their White peers.
- 5. Rejection rate of UCAS applications varies by ethnic group and POLAR quintile in West Yorkshire** - There is evidence that White students in West Yorkshire were less likely to have UCAS applications rejected than their Asian or Black peers, which follows the pattern of the average rejection rates across England. Those living in areas with low historical HE participation also had a comparatively high rate of UCAS applications rejected.
- 6. Variation in progression rates among the GHWY cohort by type of outreach activity students participated in** - While the variation was not large, those who participated in HE subject insight activities had a higher average rate of progression to HE than those who participated in skills and attainment, or mentoring activities.
- 7. Participating in more GHWY Uni Connect activities was associated with increasing HE progression rates** - There is clear evidence that students who participated in more activities had an increasingly higher rate of progression.
- 8. GHWY cohort makes different subject choices to average** - In particular, a relatively large proportion of the cohort went on to study law, while a smaller than average proportion chose business and management.
- 9. GHWY Uni Connect participants tend to go on to local universities** - More than a third of the Uni Connect cohort went on to universities within the five local authority areas, particularly in Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford. Outside of the GHWY area, nearby larger cities Sheffield and Manchester were the most popular HE destinations. Very few students who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities went on to university in London, the South East or South West. There is evidence that, across England, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged students are generally less geographically mobile than their peers.
- 10. GHWY partners should build on clear successes** - This could include working to understand why they have been so effective at boosting rates of progression to HE and exploring ways to further address local factors that present barriers to progression in some parts of West Yorkshire.



Introduction

Introduction: Background

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Uni Connect

The Office for Students (OfS) funds 29 partnerships to deliver the Uni Connect programme, aimed at ensuring that access to higher education (HE) is not limited by students' background, location or demographics. Eligible students are defined as those living in areas with historically low rates of progression to higher education (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2). However, due to the nature of some outreach activities, sometimes non-eligible students are also able to take part in Uni Connect activities (for example whole class activities).

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY)

GHWY is the partnership of HE institutions and colleges responsible for collectively delivering the Uni Connect programme in West Yorkshire¹. The activities that GHWY has delivered within the project funding period to date with the Uni Connect funding range from intensive Summer Schools to mentoring, and provision of general HE information. The partnership works with target schools and eligible students can be a beneficiary of multiple Uni Connect activities. In fact, over a thousand students have participated in more than five Uni Connect activities.

Widening Participation in higher education

The Widening Participation agenda is a long-standing government strategy, which aims to improve access and progression rates to higher education among traditionally unrepresented groups. This includes removing barriers to higher education for disadvantaged students, students from low-income households, care-leavers, mature students, disabled students and students from particular ethnic groups.



Locations of GHWY partner HE institutions and colleges

¹ Comprised of the five local authority areas of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

Introduction: Explanation of datasets

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Explanation of datasets

The analysis in this report focuses on three different types of data:

- 1. Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)** - In this report, we primarily draw on the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) dataset, supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This dataset is produced from student data input by GHWY, which is then matched to relevant HE activity data. For example, a student who participates in a Uni Connect activity will have their demographic data input into HEAT along with details of the activity they participated in. If they then go on to a HE institution, this will be also be recorded against their record, showing things like the specific institution attended, the subject studied, and in some cases, the grade achieved. This dataset therefore allows analysis of progression to HE institutions by demographics as well as number and type of Uni Connect activities participated in. In total, this dataset includes records for 21,765 students, with HE entry years from 2017 to 2021.
- 2. UCAS applications** - Alongside the HEAT data, the analysis uses UCAS application and rejections data for all applicants from West Yorkshire¹. Although this cannot give insight into the experiences of Uni Connect beneficiaries in particular, it does help provide context for progression to HE in West Yorkshire.
- 3. Public data** - A range of public data has been used to provide context about education and progression in West Yorkshire, as well as to provide benchmarks to better understand the outcomes analysed in the HEAT dataset. Throughout this report, England and regional comparator data is used where available, shown as grey bars.

'Control' group

The HEAT dataset includes students whose details were entered but who are not recorded as having participated in any Uni Connect activity. This group therefore presents a natural control group for the group with Uni Connect activities. There is nothing in the dataset to explain why this group of students did not end up participating in Uni Connect so comparisons should be taken with some caution.

¹ Comprised of the five local authority areas of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

Introduction: Comparison of cohorts

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The cohorts included in each of the datasets used are different in important ways. For example, due to the eligibility criteria, the GHWY cohort has far larger proportions of students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 than across England. This table shows the key differences between the groups explored in this report. Groups that are 10% points larger than the England average are shaded in dark purple, and groups that are between 5% points and 10% points larger than the England average are shaded in light purple.

		GHWY cohort (HEAT data)	Control group (HEAT data)	West Yorkshire UCAS applicants	England average
Total cohort		11,305	10,465	20,780	-
Ethnic Group	Asian	15.2%	24.6%	28.6%	12.1%
	Black	5.6%	5.7%	7.9%	6.0%
	Chinese	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%
	White	73.5%	62.8%	56.7%	70.4%
	Mixed	3.9%	4.9%	5.0%	6.8%
	Other	1.3%	1.8%	1.9%	2.3%
POLAR	Quintile 1 (Most disadvantaged)	41.6%	28.3%	15.4%	19.5%
	Quintile 2	27.8%	28.5%	26.5%	19.7%
	Quintile 3	16.2%	23.5%	25.2%	20.0%
	Quintile 4	9.0%	11.3%	14.8%	20.5%
	Quintile 5 (Least disadvantaged)	4.8%	7.6%	13.9%	20.0%
IDACI	Quintile 1 (Most deprived)	35.9%	40.0%	-	20%
	Quintile 2	24.5%	25.5%	-	20%
	Quintile 3	15.6%	12.1%	-	20%
	Quintile 4	13.2%	12.0%	-	20%
	Quintile 5 (Least deprived)	10.2%	9.7%	-	20%

Note that those with unknown or missing ethnicities in the HEAT data and UCAS applications data have been removed for this analysis. The England average comparator is taken from the 2023 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication for ethnic group, and from the 2022 widening participation pupil numbers for the POLAR quintile percentages.

Introduction: Local education context

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Participation rates and post school and college progression varies across the West Yorkshire local authority areas, with some areas strongly outperforming the England and regional averages. This presents a complex and varied local context in which GHWY operates.

Post school and college progression in West Yorkshire

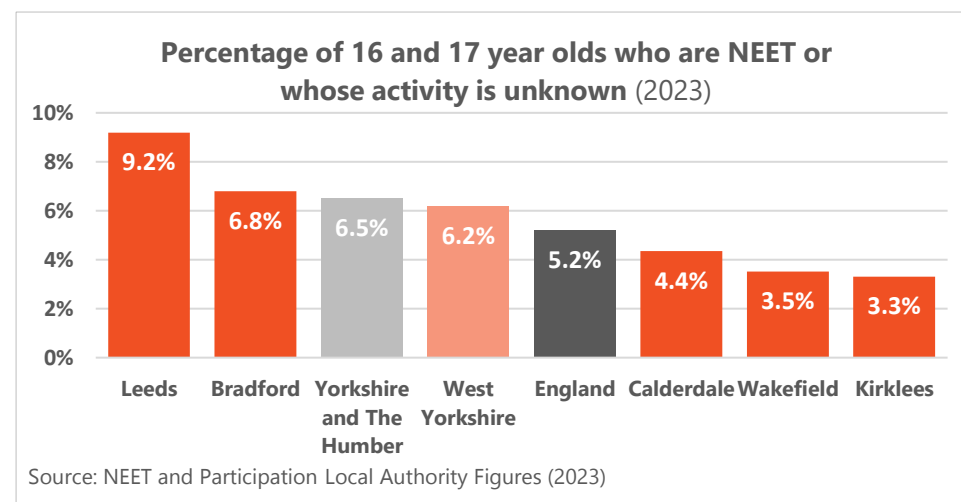
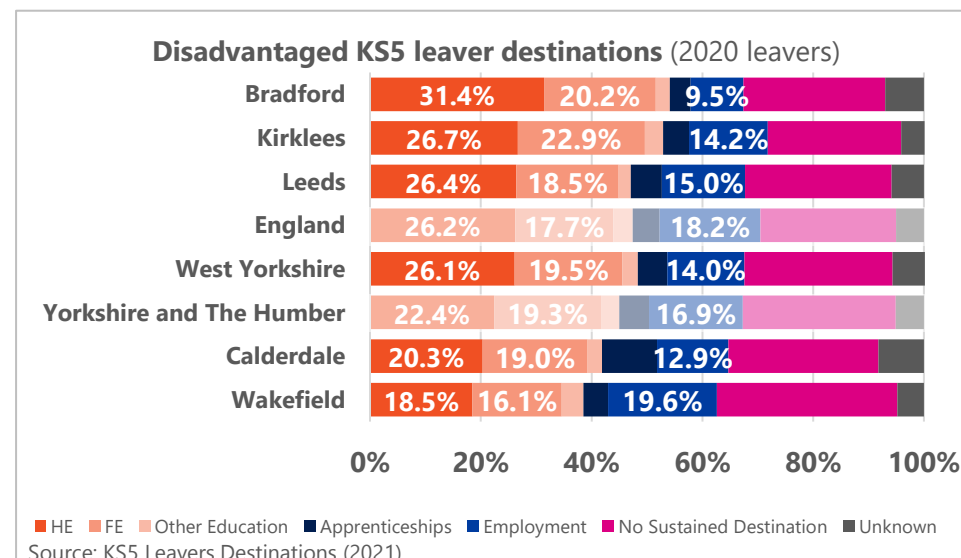
Across England, the latest available data (2020 school and college leavers) shows that 35.7% went on to a UK HE institution. This falls to just 26.2% for disadvantaged students² with a further 17.7% going on to a further education (FE) provider. Some areas of West Yorkshire outperform these England averages; for example, 31.4% of Bradford's disadvantaged KS5 leavers went on to an HE institution and 20.2% on to FE. However, there are areas where progression to HE is much less common. This data covers all students who were in schools or colleges in each of the five local authority areas, not all residents.

Both Wakefield and Calderdale have particularly low rates of progression to HE and FE, with fewer than one in five disadvantaged KS5 leavers progressing to HE in Wakefield. On the other hand, almost one in five disadvantaged students in Wakefield go on to employment straight after finishing school or college. This is a much higher rate than across West Yorkshire.

Participation of 16 and 17 year olds

The latest available data (2023) shows the NEET rates among young people in West Yorkshire also vary substantially. While the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds who are NEET or with an unknown activity is well below the England average in Wakefield and Kirklees, the proportion is almost one in ten in Leeds.

² This refers to students who were FSM eligible at any point in the previous six years, are looked after by the local authority or who were formerly looked after.



Introduction: Widening Participation

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The Widening Participation agenda is a long-standing effort to widen participation in HE to those groups who have traditionally been less likely to enter HE. The government data gives a more specific look at progression to HE in West Yorkshire.

Progression of FSM students to HE

As shown in the KS5 leavers data, Bradford seems to have a relatively high progression rate to HE for students who were FSM eligible at the age of 15. Again, Wakefield has a relatively low rate, well below both England and regional averages.

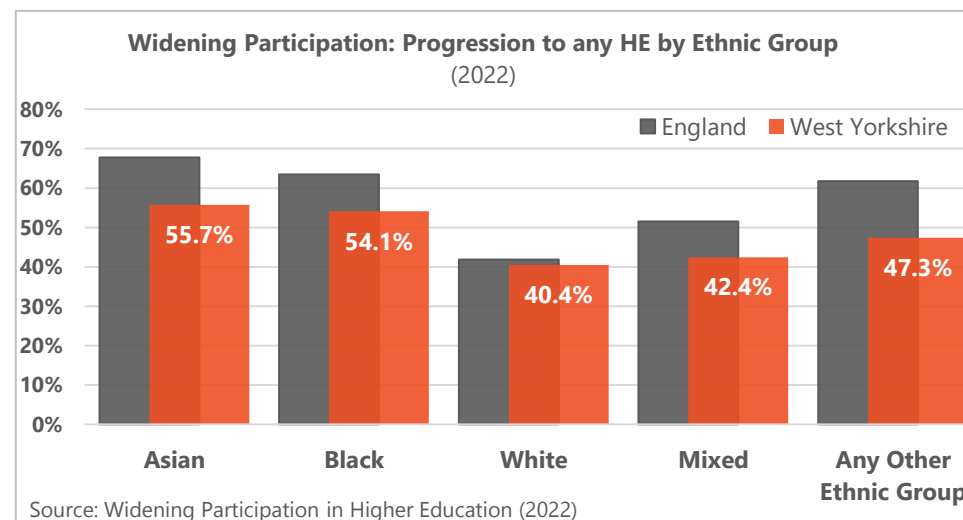
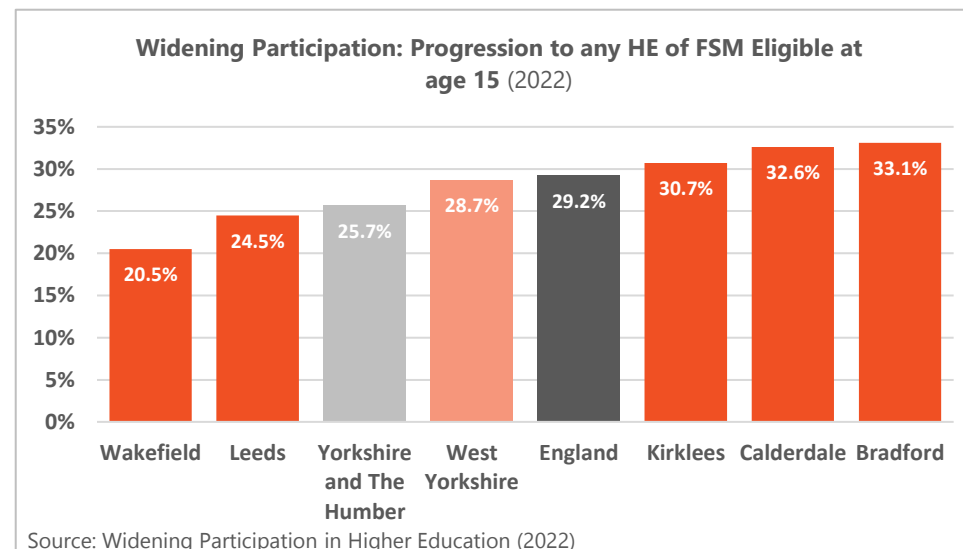
However, the picture looks different when looking at just high tariff universities (ranked based on the mean UCAS tariff score of their intake). Across the Yorkshire and The Humber region, progression of FSM eligible students to high tariff universities is much lower than the England average. This could reflect students in West Yorkshire choosing to study at local providers most suited to their needs, rather than focusing specifically on high tariff HE providers.

Progression to HE by ethnic group

The Widening Participation data also reveals progression rates for different ethnic groups. Asian students in West Yorkshire particularly stand out, with a progression rate to HE below the England average in all five local authority areas. In Bradford, where there is a large Asian student population, just 53.8% of Asian students progress to HE, compared with 67.8% of Asian students across England.

In contrast, while White students tend to progress to HE at lower rates than Asian students, the progression rates in West Yorkshire are much more in line with England averages.

Within these broad ethnic groups there is also a large amount of variation in the progression rates by ethnicity in West Yorkshire.



Data limitations

There are several key limitations of the HEAT dataset that should be considered, including:

- **Missing or unknown data** – Missing data is prevalent in some parts of the dataset; for example, a very large proportion of students' genders (87% for the GHWY cohort) are not known or missing. This means that analysis by gender has not been possible. There are also some data fields that are not included in this dataset; for example, free school meals eligibility. In that case, we have used other measures of economic disadvantage instead.
- **Limited data on longer term outcomes** – Due to the time period covered by this data, this analysis is unable to include analysis of the longer-term outcomes of Uni Connect participants. There is only limited data on the HE grades achieved by these students and no data on outcomes beyond HE, such as employment and earnings.

External factors

- **Changes in data collection over time** – The data collection processes used by GHWY have changed over time. In particular, the collection of participating students' information has moved away from being consent based. This means that the number of participants included in the dataset substantially increases in more recent years. For that reason, comparisons over time should be treated with caution.
- **Impact of the pandemic on HE applications** – There is some [evidence](#) that the COVID pandemic has impacted the availability of HE places for more recent students. This is because HE institutions took on a larger than usual number of students during the pandemic as teacher assessed grades meant that a larger than expected proportion of applicants met their conditional offers. HE institutions are then likely to reduce their intake in following years.

Statistical assumptions

- **Similarity of control group to Uni Connect cohort** – The analysis assumes that there is nothing substantially different between the students in the data that did and did not participate in Uni Connect activities (other than their participation). This does not control for the presence of other factors, such as student motivation or desire to progress to HE, that might impact both the likelihood of participation in Uni Connect and progression to HE.
- **Unknown significant factors** – Similarly, the primary dataset (HEAT) does not include other factors that we expect would significantly impact students' chances of progressing to HE. For example, students' prior attainment level is not included in the dataset, though this is very likely to impact chances of progression to HE.



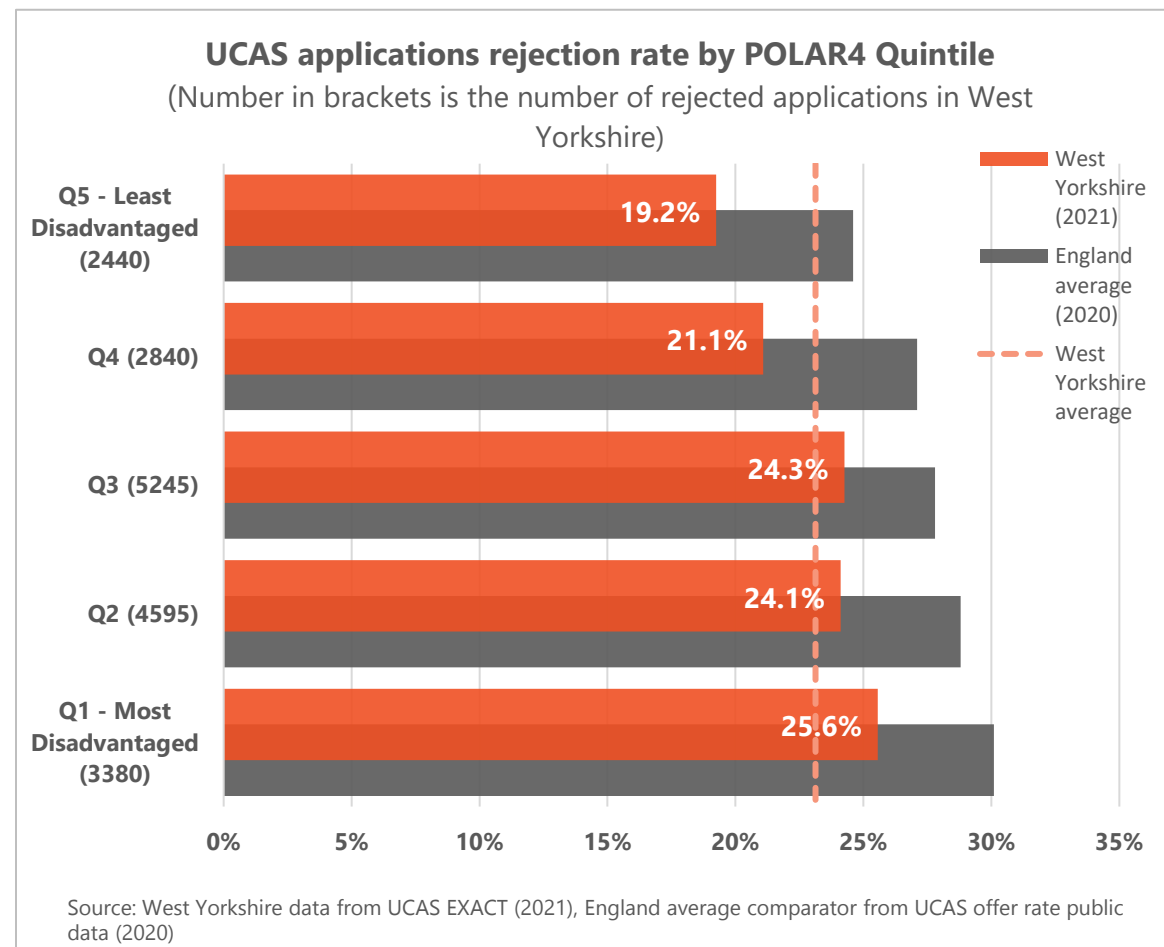
Analysis & Evaluation

UCAS applications: POLAR4 quintile

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This slide looks at UCAS application rejection rates by POLAR4 quintile for **all applications made in West Yorkshire**. This includes both those who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities and those who did not.

- Across the whole of West Yorkshire, in 2021, around 18,500 UCAS applications were rejected. This was equivalent to 23.1% of all applications made. **Compared to the England average rejection rate in 2020 of 27.2%, West Yorkshire saw a smaller proportion of total applications rejected.**
- For each of the POLAR4 quintiles, the **rejection rates in West Yorkshire were lower than the average** rejection rates across the whole of England for the previous year (2020).
- Students who live in **areas that have historically high HE participation rates** had the **lowest rejection rate**.
- In contrast, just **over a quarter** of all UCAS **applications** made by West Yorkshire students living in **areas with low historical HE participation were rejected**.
- This analysis does not control for other factors, including other demographics and school attainment, so further investigation is needed to better understand the disparity observed.



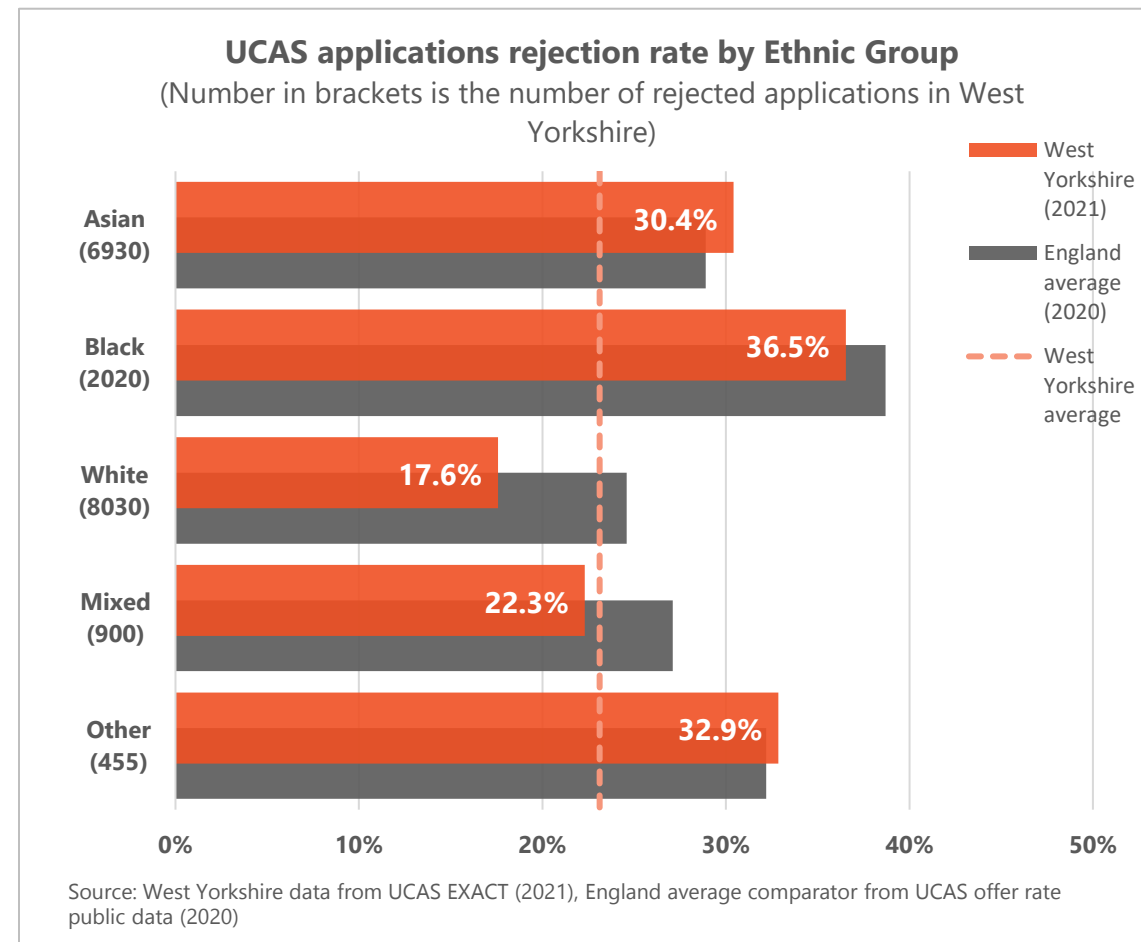
Key point: UCAS applications rejection rates were lower in West Yorkshire than across England, but were highest for students living in areas with a low historical HE participation rate

UCAS application: Ethnic group

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This slide looks at the rejection rate for **all UCAS applications made in West Yorkshire**, split by ethnic group. This includes both those who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities and those who did not. This reveals some striking patterns that would otherwise be hidden by just looking at the data on progression to HE.

- Despite having the lowest rate of progression to HE, **White** students were relatively **successful in their UCAS applications**, with fewer than one in five applications rejected. Compared to the average rejection rate across the whole of England for White students in 2020, the rejection rate in West Yorkshire was much lower.
- In contrast, just over 30% of applications made by **Asian** students in West Yorkshire were rejected and **Black** students had an even **higher rejection rate**. This follows patterns seen in the England average rejection rates by ethnic group for the 2020 cohort.
- Further analysis would be needed to dig into whether these differences are a result of structural bias in the UCAS admissions processes or something else.



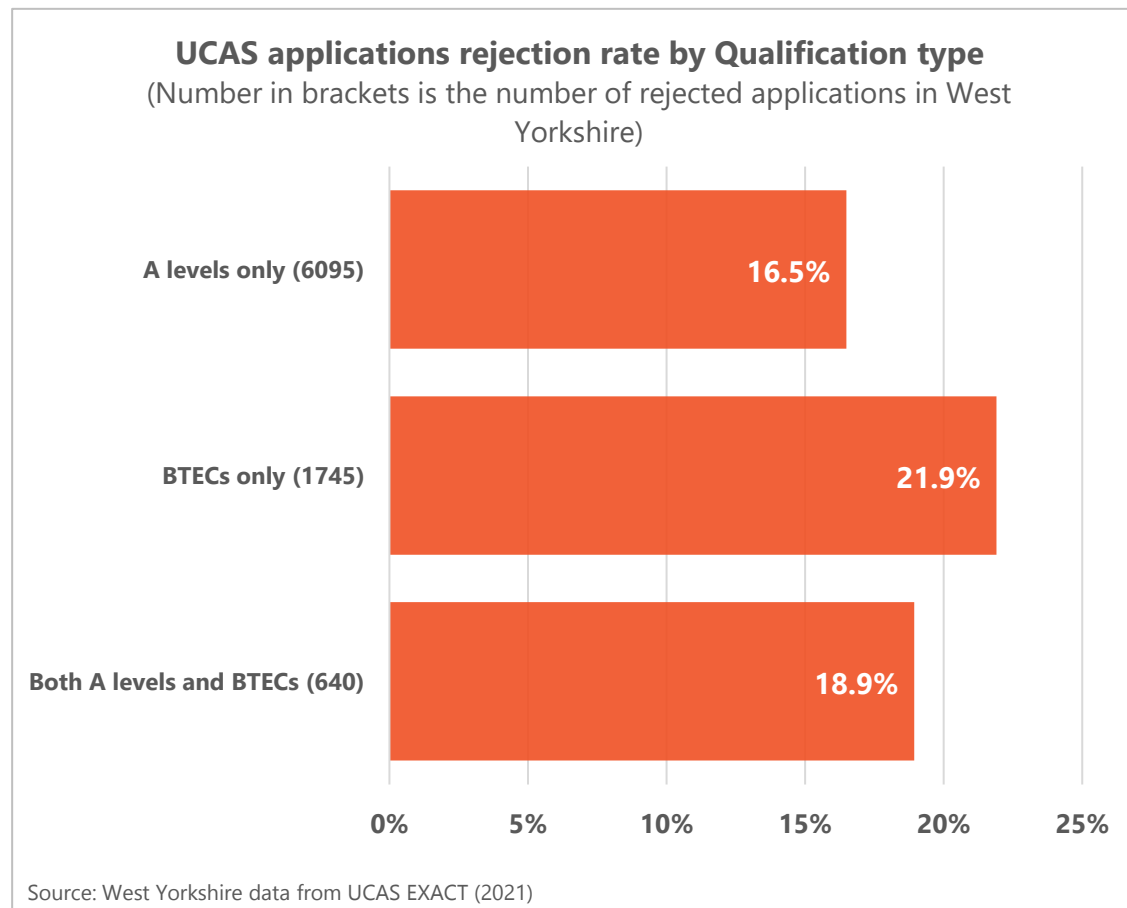
Key point: Following the England trend, UCAS applications rejection rates were low for White students in West Yorkshire, but high for Asian and Black students

UCAS application: Qualification type

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This slide looks at the rejection rates of **all UCAS applications made in West Yorkshire** by qualification type to identify any differences between students studying A levels and those taking BTEC qualifications before applying to HE. This includes both those who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities and those who did not.

- For students in West Yorkshire taking **only A levels**, just 16.5% of UCAS applications were rejected in 2021. This is **lower** than the **rejection rate** for students taking **only BTECs** of 21.9%.
- Within these broad groups of qualification types, the rejection rates by grades achieved was also investigated. Within both the A level only and BTEC only groups, there were **only small variations in the rejection rates by grades achieved**. This could be due to students applying to HE courses based on their predicted grades, meaning that both high and low attaining groups see similar rejection rates.



Key point: The UCAS applications rejection rate was lower for students in West Yorkshire taking only A levels than for those taking only BTECs

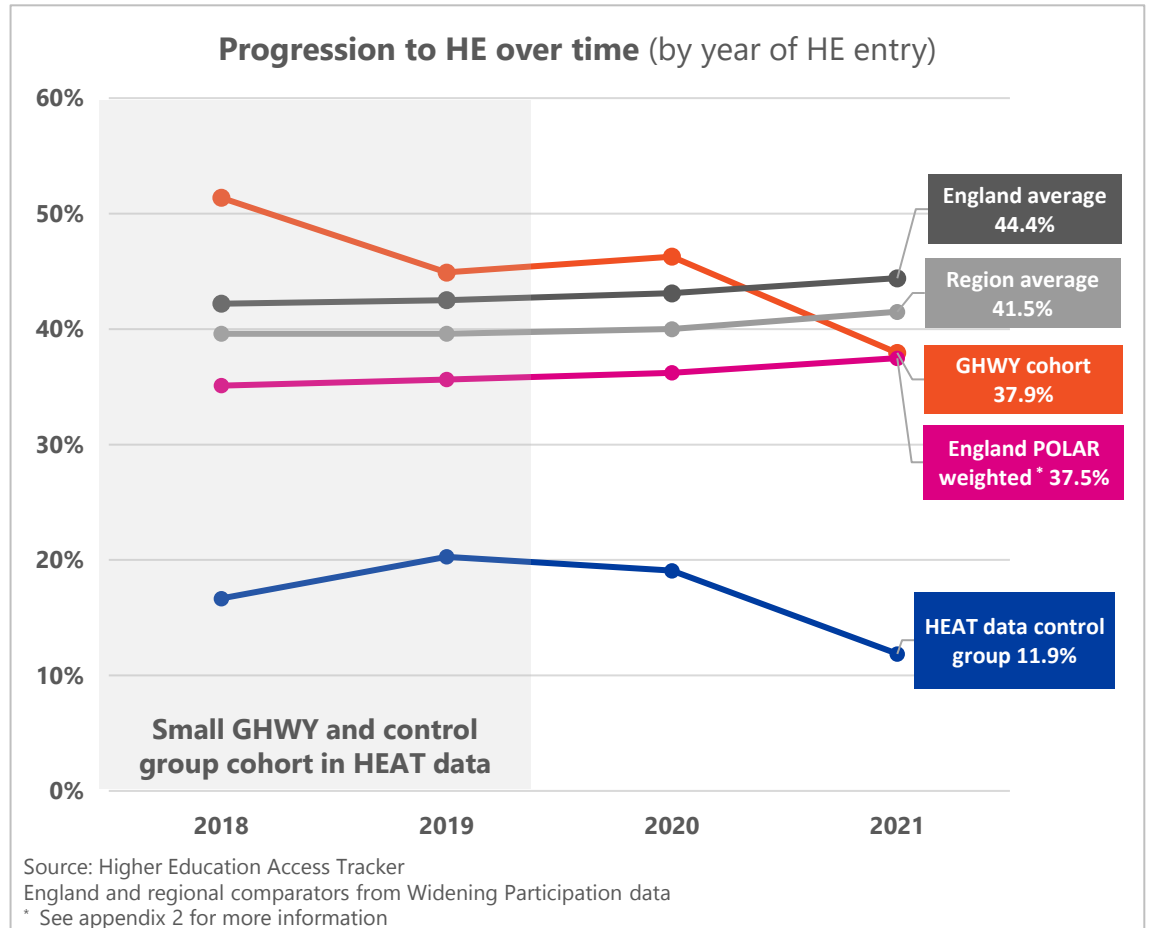
Progression to HE: Rates over time

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This shows the rates of progression to HE for the **GHWY Uni Connect cohort**³ in the HEAT dataset compared to England and the regional progression rates. This should be treated with caution, as the GHWY cohort data from 2018 and 2019 is much less reliable because the data coverage was poor, having been reliant on consent.

- **Throughout** the four-year period, the rate of **progression to HE** for those participating in **GHWY Uni Connect** activities was **higher than the England average for students from areas with similar historical rates of progression to HE**. This England weighted average was created to be more comparable to the GHWY cohort, where students are much more likely to be from areas with historically lower rates of participation in HE (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2).
- In **2021** there appears to be a **large fall in admissions** to HE for the GHWY cohort. One possible factor in this decrease could be due to the students who did not go on to HE straight after finishing KS5 (for example, if they are taking a gap year), meaning that they have not yet appeared in the most recent HESA dataset.
- In **2020**, the GHWY cohort had a **high progression rate** to HE compared to both the overall **England average** and the **regional average** for Yorkshire and the Humber. However, in 2021, the GHWY progression rate fell below these averages.
- Compared to the control group (made up of students in the HEAT dataset who did not participate in any outreach activities), the GHWY cohort consistently had a higher progression rate to HE.

³ Note that the GHWY in this context is defined as any students recorded in the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) that have participated in at least one GHWY outreach activity. This includes both the eligible students (who live in areas with historically low participation rates in HE – POLAR quintiles 1 and 2), and any other students that are recorded as participating.



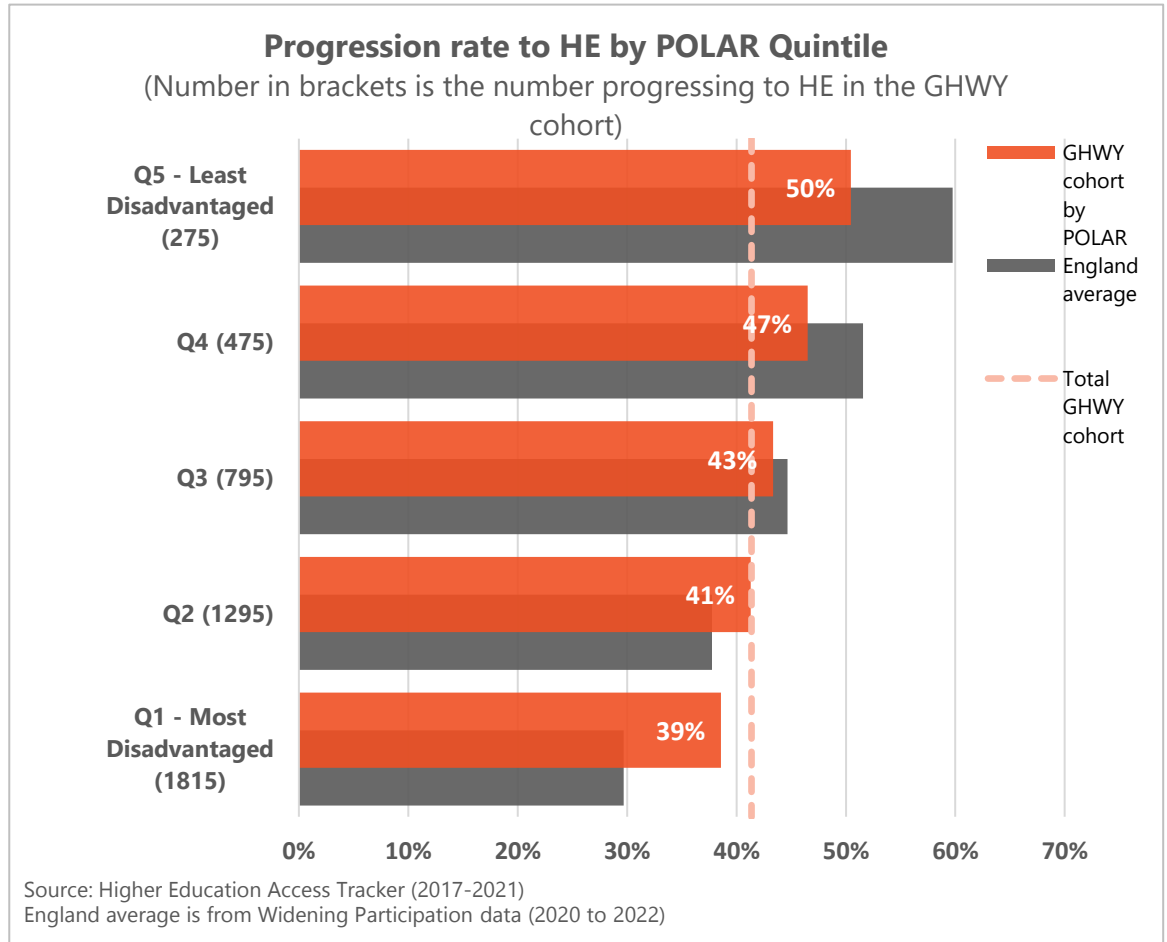
Key point: Over the four years, the GHWY cohort had a consistently higher progression rate to HE compared to England average for students from areas with similarly low progression rates to HE. However, there was a clear fall in admissions to HE in 2021

Progression to HE: POLAR4 quintile

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POLAR4 quintiles classify areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in HE. Quintile 1 areas have the lowest participation rates. Students in POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 are eligible for Uni Connect activities. Among students who participated in GHWY's Uni Connect activities (with an expected HE entry year between 2017 and 2021), there is a clear benefit for those from the lowest POLAR quintiles.

- In the GHWY cohort, 39% of those who live in the areas with the lowest HE participation rates progressed to HE, compared to under 30% across England. While this progression rate is lower than those for other POLAR quintiles, this suggests that **GHWY are successfully supporting more students from areas of low participation to progress to HE** than would otherwise have progressed.
- Conversely, 50% of GHWY Uni Connect participants from **areas with the highest HE participation rates** progressed to HE, **well below** the England **average** rate. However, the sample of just 275 students is relatively small.
- These findings are supported by logistic regression results, which indicate that **Uni Connect participation appears to have a particular impact on those from POLAR quintile 1 areas**. For students from these areas of low progression, Uni Connect participation statistically significantly increases the chance of progression to HE. This is not the case for other POLAR quintiles.
 - In fact, for those from POLAR quintile 1 areas, participation in Uni Connect activities appears to more than triple their probability of progressing to HE (compared to the control group of students in the HEAT dataset who did not participate in any outreach activities).
- Within the **POLAR quintile 1 cohort**, there were important **intersections with ethnicity**, with more than 55% of Asian and Black GHWY participants in this group progressing to HE, compared to less than a third of White students.



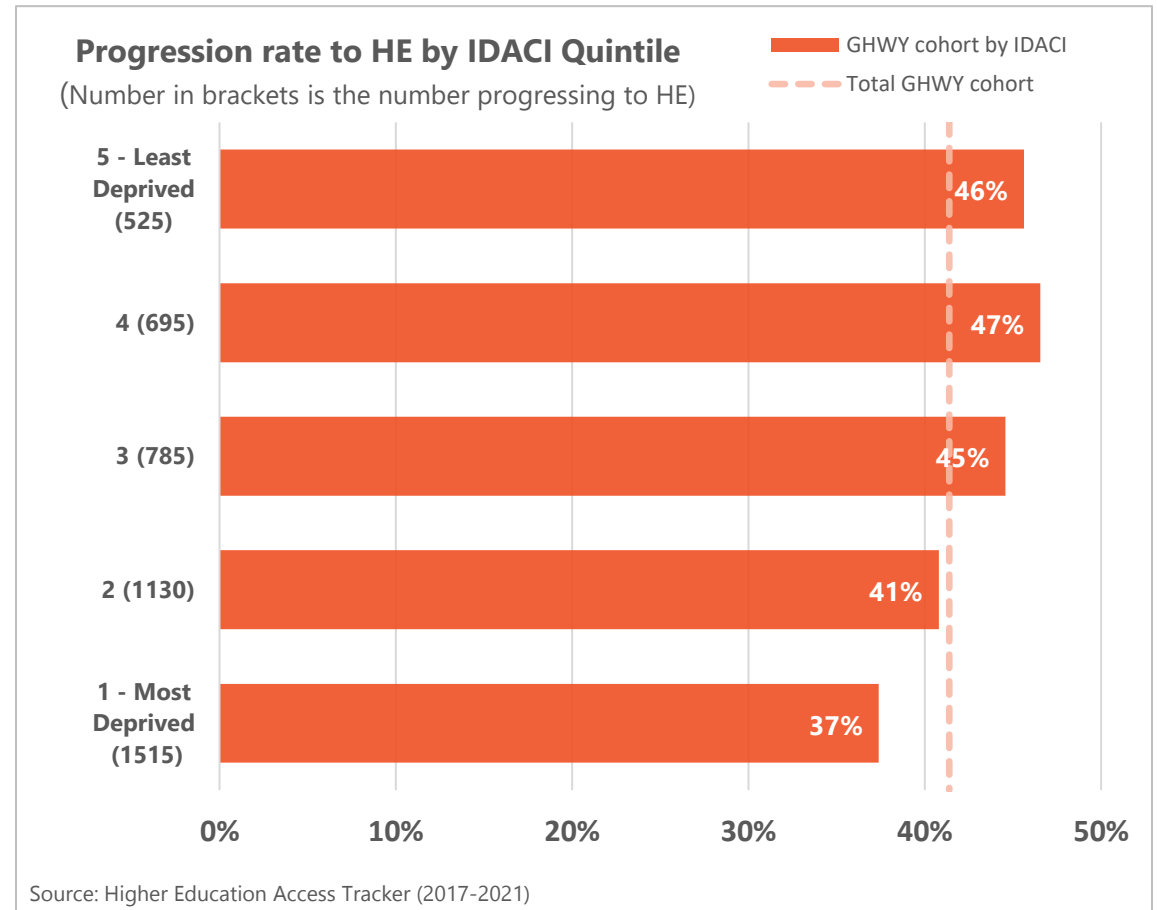
Key point: GHWY POLAR quintile 1 and 2 (Uni Connect eligible) students progressed to HE at higher rates compared to the England average

Progression to HE: Deprivation

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The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in low-income families in each area across the country. Students in IDACI quintile 1 live in areas with the highest level of deprivation impacting children in the country. The numbers in brackets in the chart labels show the number of students progressing to HE in each group.

- GHWY Uni Connect participants from areas with **higher levels of deprivation** have a **lower progression rate to HE** than their peers.
 - This is particularly important to understand as the **majority of students** who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities live in either quintile IDACI 1 or 2, the **most deprived 40% of areas** in the country.
- Regression analysis confirms that IDACI band is an important factor for progression to HE, with particularly **strong negative effects** on **progression to HE** from living in either **quintile 1** or **quintile 2** areas.
- However, there is no evidence from the regression analysis to indicate a particularly different effect of participation in Uni Connect activities for those from different IDACI quintiles. This suggests that the GHWY Uni Connect programme is supporting the progression of students from all IDACI quintiles in a similar way.



Key point: GHWY participants from areas with higher levels of deprivation (a large majority of the cohort) progressed to HE at lower rates than their peers

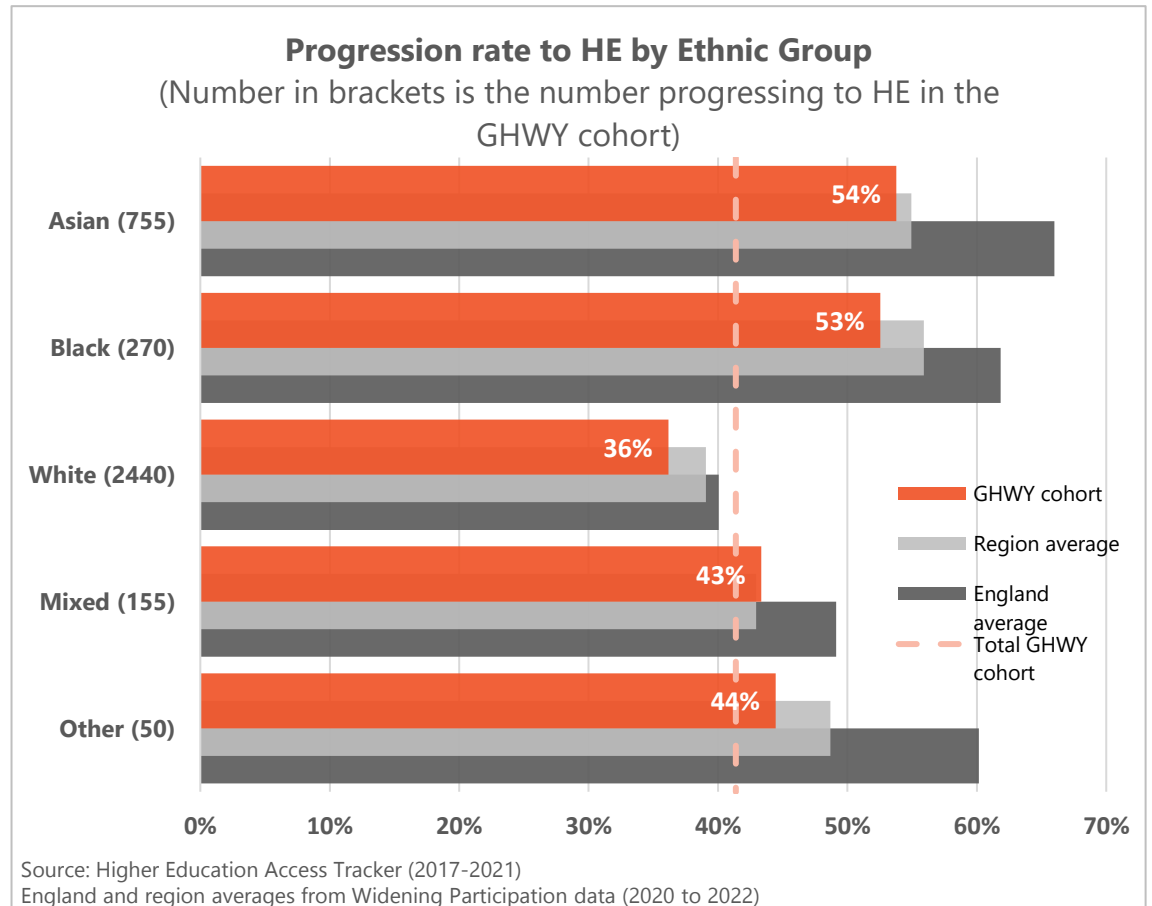
Progression to HE: Ethnic group

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This slide presents summary statistics on the progression rates of GHWY Uni Connect participants by ethnic group. As noted in previous research on GHWY's Widening Participation work, local demographics like ethnicity play a substantial role in student's progression and outcomes⁴. However, there was a large number of unknown ethnicities in the HEAT data (18.7% of the GHWY cohort), so this analysis should be treated with caution. The numbers in brackets in the chart labels show the number of students progressing to HE in each ethnic group.

- Across England, **Asian students progress to HE at higher rates than their peers**. The pattern was no different for the GHWY cohort, with 53% of Asian participants progressing to HE, the largest rate of any ethnic group.
- In contrast, just 36% of **White** GHWY participants **progressed to HE**, the **lowest rate** of all ethnic groups.
- Across **all five ethnic groups** GHWY participants' progression rate was **lower than the average** across England, and also tended to be lower than the average across the region (Yorkshire and The Humber). However, as shown on page 6, the GHWY cohort includes a larger proportion of Asian students than the England average, which pulls up their overall progression rate.
- Statistical analysis showed that having a missing ethnicity was significantly correlated to other factors, including both the chance of participation in Uni Connect activities and the chance of progression to HE. For that reason, robust regression analysis of the impact of ethnicity was not possible.
- Within these broad ethnic groups, there was also variation in progression rate to HE by ethnicity. For example, within the Asian ethnic group, those from the Indian ethnic subgroup progressed to HE at higher rates (of 57.7%) than those from the Pakistani ethnic subgroup (at 50.4%).

⁴ Formby, A., Woodhouse, A. and Basham, J. (2020) 'Reframing widening participation towards the community: A realist evaluation', Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 22(2).



Key point: As across England, Asian and Black students in the GHWY cohort have a higher progression rate to HE than other ethnic groups. This partly drives the cohort's strong overall progression rate

Progression to HE: Geographical area

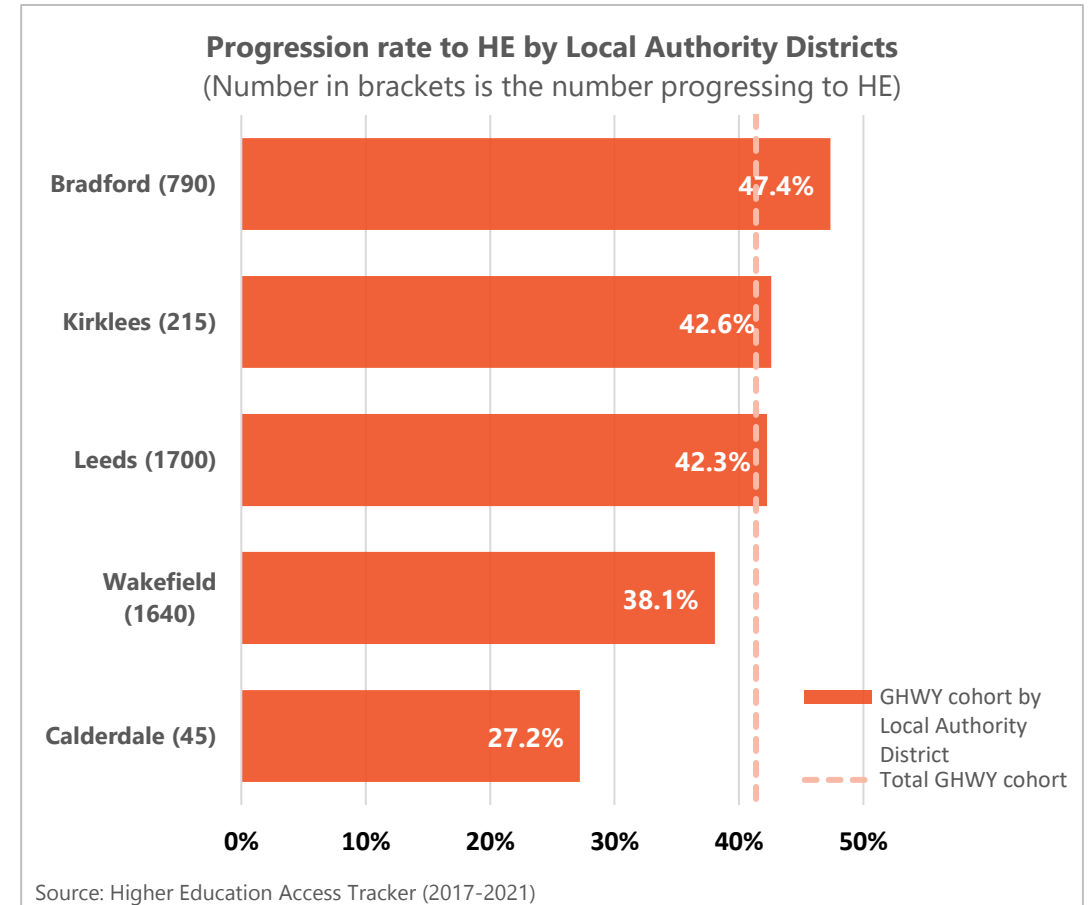
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This slide looks at the geographical variation in progression to HE across the GHWY cohort. This local context is particularly important in West Yorkshire, as noted by Formby et al. (2020), 'young people in inner-city Leeds are likely to have different needs and different attitudes to young people in the ex-mining communities that surround Wakefield'⁵.

A large majority of GHWY Uni Connect participants were in Leeds and Wakefield (over 80% of all outreach activities were attended by students living in Leeds and Wakefield), likely reflecting both the large number of GHWY partner organisations, and the larger populations.

- As shown in the introduction, **Bradford** students have the **highest progression rate to HE**. This is likely related to the **demographic profile** of this cohort, with large numbers of Asian students, who tend to have a higher rate of progression to HE.
- In contrast, **Wakefield** has the **lowest rate** of progression to HE. This is also likely to be driven by similar demographic factors as Wakefield has a very small Asian cohort and a very large **White cohort**.
- However, there is a large amount of variation at a more local level, with progression to HE rates by school ranging from more than two thirds of participants to around 10%. There are schools in each local authority area with high and low progression rates.
- The cohort of participants in Calderdale is very small so caution should be taken with drawing any conclusions from their low progression rate.
- There is also some evidence of an important **intersection** between local authority area and **POLAR quintile**. Among those in POLAR quintile 1, areas with historically low rates of progression to HE, Leeds and Bradford had the highest progression rates.

⁵ Formby, A., Woodhouse, A. and Basham, J. (2020) 'Reframing widening participation towards the community: A realist evaluation', Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 22(2).



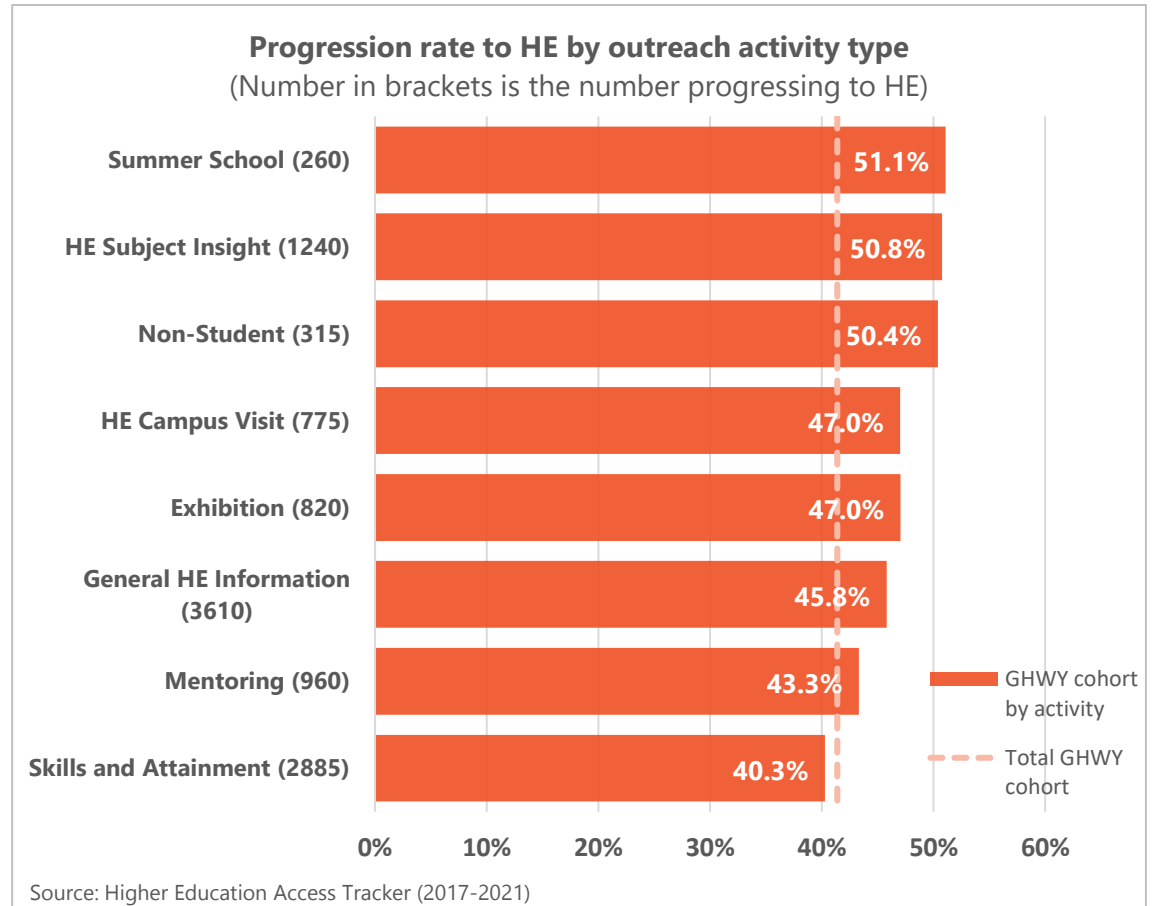
Key point: Among the GHWY cohort, students living in Bradford have the highest progression rate to HE. This may be linked to the ethnic pattern shown in the analysis on page 18

Progression to HE: Activity type

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This analysis looks at whether the types of GHWY Uni Connect activities students participated in is associated with different progression rates to HE (though this analysis does not demonstrate any *causal* link between activity and progression). Many students participated in multiple activities so will be counted in multiple categories.

- The large number of activities classified as **HE subject insight** are **associated with a high progression rate to HE**. These activities are most commonly campus visits and masterclasses, as well as Collaborative Taster Days. Higher intensity activities like summer schools are also associated with high rates of progression to HE.
- **Non-student** activities, such as parent/carers meetings, are associated with similarly high progression rates.
- On the other hand, the broad categories of **skills and attainment, and mentoring** are associated with the **lowest progression rates**. However, within these categories, there is a large variation in progression rate by the more specific sub-category of activity type. For example, within the skills and attainment broad category, the Masterclasses (subject-specific taster sessions) and Masterclasses (application/interview support) subcategories are both associated with high progression rates to HE, at 54% and 49% respectively.
- **Logistic regression supports these findings**, with all activity types except skills and attainment, and mentoring associated with a statistically significant increase in a student's chance of progression to HE. The regression model finds that general HE information activities have the largest effect size, followed by summer schools.



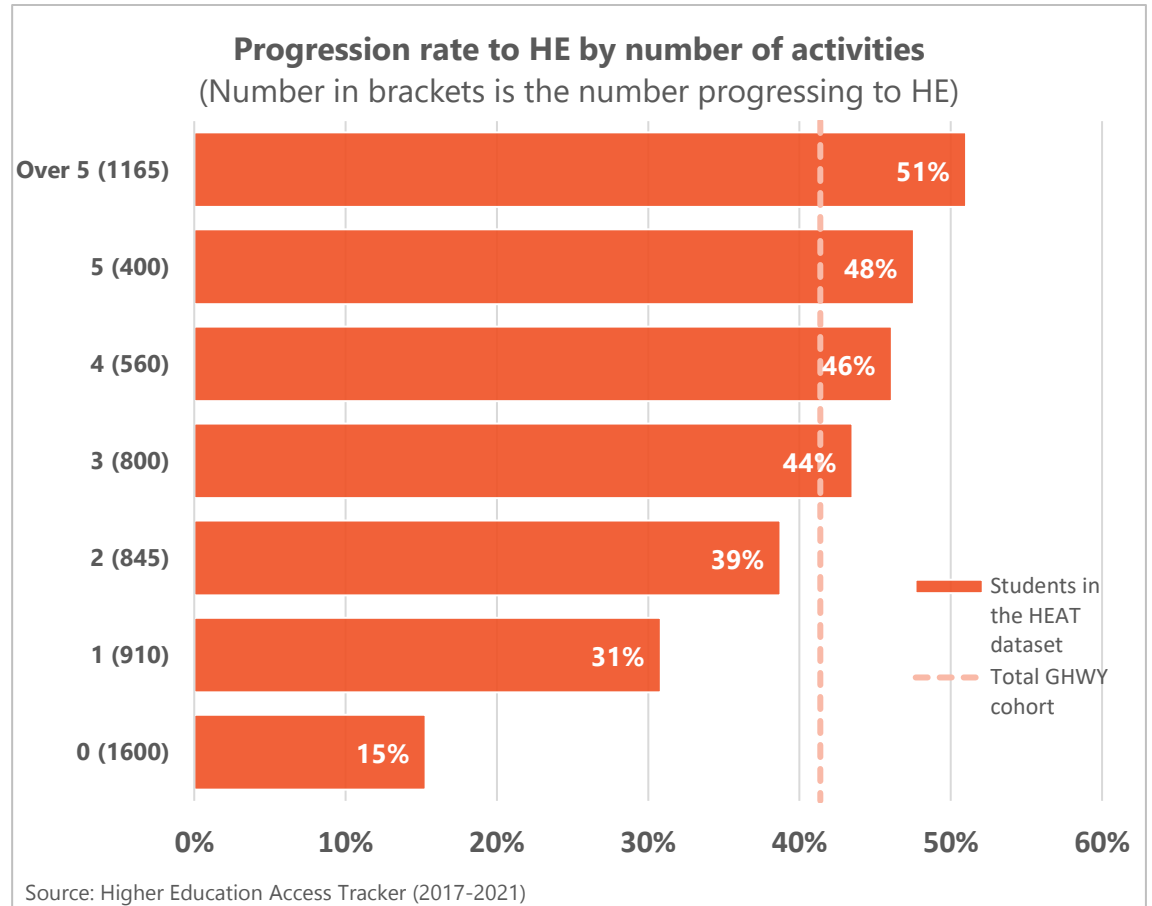
Key point: HE subject insights, non-student activities and summer schools are associated with a high progression rate to HE compared to other GHWY activity types including mentoring and skills and attainment activities. However, there is large variation among sub-categories of each group

Progression to HE: Number of activities

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This analysis looks at whether participation in GHWY Uni Connect activities is associated with higher progression rates to HE and, importantly, whether participating in *more* activities is associated with increasingly higher rates of progression to HE.

- **Students who have participated** in any GHWY Uni Connect activity have a **much higher average progression rate to HE** than those who are not recorded as having participated in any activity.
- There is evidence that those who participated in **more activities had increasingly higher rates of progression to HE**, though the increase from extra activities appears to fall as the number of activities rises.
- Logistic regression results reveal that participation in GHWY Uni Connect activities does have a **statistically significant** effect on a student's chances of progression to HE. In fact, the model suggests that **participants are more than twice as likely to progress to HE** than students in the HEAT data who are not recorded as having participated in any Uni Connect activity.
 - However, it is also clear from the model that there are many other explanatory factors that might help explain these differences. Given the missing data, these results should be treated with some caution.
- Furthermore, a **larger number of activities participated** does appear to have a **statistically significant effect on progression to HE**. The model predicts about a 20% increase in the probability of progression to HE with each additional activity.
- In addition, there is evidence that, of the students who participated in two or three activities, those who participated in a mixture of different activity types had a slightly higher progression rate than those who only participated in one type of activity (41.1% compared to 40.2%).



Key point: Students who participated in more outreach activities had increasingly higher rates of progression to HE

Higher education choices: Region

22

The following analysis explores the choices made by students in the GHWY cohort that progressed to higher education.

The geographic variation in the higher education providers that GHWY students attended is explored in this slide. Due to the large numbers attending local universities, such as in Leeds, a large majority of the cohort that progressed to higher education studied at an institution within Yorkshire and The Humber. This is likely related to trends seen across England, where disadvantaged students and ethnic minorities are generally less likely to be geographically mobile than their peers⁶.

- **Over 60%** of the GHWY cohort that progressed to HE **stayed** within the **Yorkshire and The Humber** region, with a majority of them staying inside West Yorkshire. The control group of students included in the HEAT dataset but who did not participate in any activities had a similar pattern.
- The next most popular region was the **North West**, where roughly **one in every eight** students studied. As shown on slide 20, this was largely driven by The Manchester Metropolitan University.
- **Very few** students (only 0.8%) within the GHWY cohort studied at a higher education provider located in the **East of England**.
- **Despite** the **large number** of HE **institutions**, **very few** students in the GHWY cohort went on to study in **London**, the South East or the South West.

HE Provider Region	GHWY HE cohort		
North East	345	7.4%	<div></div>
North West	590	12.7%	<div></div>
Yorkshire and The Humber	2,855	61.0%	<div></div>
East Midlands	335	7.2%	<div></div>
West Midlands	130	2.8%	<div></div>
East of England	40	0.8%	<div></div>
London	110	2.3%	<div></div>
South East	100	2.2%	<div></div>
South West	60	1.3%	<div></div>
Outside England	95	2.0%	<div></div>

Source: Higher Education Access Tracker (2017-2021)

⁶ J. Britton et al. (2021) London calling? Higher education, geographical mobility and early-career earnings

Key point: The majority of the GHWY cohort that progressed to HE stayed within the Yorkshire and the Humber region

Higher education choices: Provider

23

This slide presents data on the specific higher education institutions that the GHWY cohort have entered. The table shows the twenty most popular higher education institutions among the GHWY cohort. In addition, the proportion of students that progressed to a 'top third' university is also explored (defined as the 52 most selective universities)⁷.

However, due to differences in the application process, some smaller HE providers (for example, FE institutions offering HE courses), including GHWY partners, are not included in this data. This particularly affects Wakefield and Calderdale, due to the lack of universities. This analysis therefore does not include all relevant providers of HE for this cohort.

- **Leeds Beckett University** was the single most popular HE destination for the GHWY cohort who progressed to a HE institution. With 16.9% of the cohort that progressed to HE studying at Leeds Beckett University, this is a much higher proportion than the second most popular choice of the **University of Huddersfield** (where 8.9% of the cohort were studying).
- While the overall pattern was broadly similar for the control group of students who did not participate in Uni Connect activities, the University of Bradford was the most popular destination among those progressing to HE from that group.
- Among the GHWY cohort that progressed to higher education, the **University of Leeds** was the third most popular institution to study at, with 7.1% of students studying there. This is the most popular destination that is classified as a top third university.
- Of the GHWY cohort that progressed to higher education, around **three in every ten** (28%) were studying at a **top third university**. This is equivalent to around 1,300 students.

HE Provider	GHWY HE cohort	
Leeds Beckett University	790	16.9%
The University of Huddersfield	420	8.9%
The University of Leeds	330	7.1%
Sheffield Hallam University	280	6.0%
The University of Bradford	280	6.0%
Leeds Trinity University	180	3.8%
The University of York	170	3.6%
York St John University	165	3.5%
The Manchester Metropolitan University	155	3.3%
Newcastle University	130	2.8%
University of Northumbria at Newcastle	125	2.7%
The University of Hull	110	2.4%
The Nottingham Trent University	85	1.8%
The University of Manchester	80	1.7%
The University of Liverpool	80	1.7%
The University of Lincoln	75	1.6%
The University of Sheffield	75	1.6%
The University of Salford	70	1.5%
University of Nottingham	65	1.4%
University of Durham	60	1.3%

Source: Higher Education Access Tracker (2017-2021)

⁷ These are defined as the 52 most selective HE institutions, calculated according to mean UCAS A level tariff score of entrants in 2010 to 2011: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-and-employment-destination-data-published>

Key point: Leeds Beckett University was the single most popular HE destination for the GHWY cohort who progressed to a HE institution. Outside the region, nearby large cities Sheffield and Manchester are popular destinations

Higher education choices: Subject

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This slide explores the breakdown of subjects studied by the GHWY cohort at university or other HE providers. Like across England, among the GHWY cohort that progressed to HE there was a large variation in the choice of subject.

- Among the GHWY cohort that progressed to HE, **social sciences, business and management**, and **subjects allied to medicine** (though not medicine itself) were all **popular** choices, with over 10% of the cohort studying each of these subject groups.
- Notably, 8.7% of the GHWY cohort that progressed to HE studied **Law**. This is a **much higher rate** than the **England average** of just 5%.
- At 6.6%, the proportion of GHWY students going on to study **biological and sports sciences** also stands out as being **higher** than the **England average** of 5.1%.
- In contrast, despite making up 11% of the cohort, the proportion of GHWY students studying **business and management** was **lower than** the **England average** of 14.8%.

Subject (CAH groupings) *	GHWY cohort			England average	GHWY difference to England average	
01 Medicine and dentistry	85	1.8%	<div></div>	2.8%	-1.0%	<div></div>
02 Subjects allied to medicine	610	13.1%	<div></div>	13.2%	-0.1%	<div></div>
03 Biological and sport sciences	310	6.6%	<div></div>	5.1%	+1.5%	<div></div>
04 Psychology	270	5.7%	<div></div>	5.4%	+0.3%	<div></div>
05 Veterinary sciences	10	0.2%	<div></div>	0.4%	-0.2%	<div></div>
06 Agriculture, food and related studies	10	0.2%	<div></div>	0.7%	-0.5%	<div></div>
07 Physical sciences	165	3.5%	<div></div>	2.8%	+0.7%	<div></div>
09 Mathematical sciences	90	1.9%	<div></div>	1.8%	+0.1%	<div></div>
10 Engineering and technology	235	5.0%	<div></div>	5.9%	-0.9%	<div></div>
11 Computing	260	5.5%	<div></div>	5.0%	+0.5%	<div></div>
13 Architecture, building and planning	135	2.9%	<div></div>	2.0%	+0.9%	<div></div>
15 Social sciences	515	11.0%	<div></div>	11.1%	-0.1%	<div></div>
16 Law	405	8.7%	<div></div>	5.0%	+3.7%	<div></div>
17 Business and management	515	11.0%	<div></div>	14.8%	-3.8%	<div></div>
19 Language and area studies	160	3.4%	<div></div>	3.8%	-0.4%	<div></div>
20 Historical, philosophical and religious studies	160	3.4%	<div></div>	3.7%	-0.3%	<div></div>
22 Education and teaching	155	3.3%	<div></div>	3.1%	+0.2%	<div></div>
23 Combined and general studies	10	0.2%	<div></div>	1.5%	-1.3%	<div></div>
24 Media, journalism and communications	100	2.2%	<div></div>	1.7%	+0.5%	<div></div>
25 Design, and creative and performing arts	425	9.0%	<div></div>	8.3%	+0.7%	<div></div>
26 Geography, earth and environmental studies	60	1.3%	<div></div>	1.9%	-0.6%	<div></div>

Source: Higher Education Access Tracker (2017-2021)
England comparators from public HESA data (2020 to 2022)

* The Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) subject groupings were created by HESA to provide a standardised hierarchical aggregation (grouping) of higher education subject codes and terms.

Key point: Among the GHWY cohort that progressed to HE, there was a large variation in choice of subject, with law being a particularly popular choice



Conclusion

Key findings for GHWY's Uni Connect activity:

- **GHWY Progression Rates** – Rates of progression to HE for those engaging in GHWY Uni Connect activities were higher than the England average for students from areas with similar historical rates of progression to HE and higher than for those who did not participate in any activities.
- **Stronger impact on those living in areas of low HE participation** – The GHWY Uni Connect programme appears to have had a particularly large impact on students who live in areas with historically low rates of participation in HE, boosting their likelihood of progressing to higher education (HE) by about three times.
- **Even within GHWY cohort, local factors remain strong** – Among the cohort who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities, those in who live in Bradford had the highest rate of progression to HE, with a much lower rate in Wakefield. This is likely to partly reflect local cultural contexts.
- **Some outreach activity types were associated with higher HE progression rates** – While the variation was not large, those who participated in HE subject insight activities had a higher average rate of progression to HE than those who participated in skills and attainment, or mentoring activities.
- **Participating in more GHWY Uni Connect activities was associated with increasing HE progression rates** – Students who participated in any GHWY Uni Connect activity have a much higher average progression rate to HE than those who did not, and there is clear evidence that those who participated in more activities have increasingly higher rates of progression.
- **GHWY Uni Connect participants tend to go on to local universities** – A large proportion of the Uni Connect cohort went on to universities within the five local authority areas, particularly in Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford. Outside of the GHWY area, nearby larger cities Sheffield and Manchester were the most popular HE destinations. Very few students who participated in GHWY Uni Connect activities went on to university in London, the South East or South West.

Recommendations for GHWY:

- **Build on success with target student groups** – For example, understanding what has worked well with students from areas with historically low rates of participation in HE and building on that, both for these students and their peers in areas with slightly higher rates of historical progression to HE.
- **Students should be encouraged to participate in multiple GHWY Uni Connect activities** – While the benefit of participating in another activity appears to fall as the number of activities increases, there does appear to be a substantial benefit to participating in two or more activities rather than one. GHWY could consider how to make it easier for students to participate in multiple activities.
- **Delivery partners should continue to consider how to engage with local cultural context** – The GHWY Uni Connect programme should work to address some of the local context that appears to keep HE progression rates lower in areas like Wakefield. It is likely that continuing to adopt a contextualised approach to delivering Uni Connect and Widening Participation, ensuring that activities are meaningful in the local institutions and local cultural context.
- **Delivery partners should consider whether to focus efforts on certain types of activity** – In particular, there should be further exploration into why HE subject insight and non-student activities are associated with higher progression rates compared to skills and attainment, and mentoring activities.

Appendix 1: Data sources

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Public Data Sources:

- Schools, pupils and their characteristics (2023) - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>
- Widening Participation in Higher Education (2022) - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education>
- KS5 Leavers Destinations (2020 Leavers) - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/16-18-destination-measures/2020-21>
- NEET and Participation Local Authority Figures (2023) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-and-participation-local-authority-figures>
- Higher Education Statistics Agency: What do HE students study? (2022) - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study>
- Entry UCAS undergraduate reports by sex, area background and ethnic group (2020) - <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2020/2020-entry-ucas-undergraduate-reports-sex-area-background-and-ethnic-group>

Other Data Sources:

- Higher Education Access Tracker (2017 to 2021) - <https://heat.ac.uk/>
- UCAS EXACT (2021) - <https://www.ucas.com/providers/our-products-and-services/data-products-and-solutions/exact>

Appendix 2: England weighted average calculation

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The chart on page 15 includes the progression rate for an 'England POLAR weighted' group. This is an average from across England for students from areas with similar historical rates of progression to HE as the GHWY cohort. Details on how this was calculated are provided below:

1. The England average progression rates for students from areas with different historical rates of progression to HE (POLAR4 quintile) was taken from the Widening Participation in Higher Education public data. This data gives the average progression rate across England for students who live in each POLAR4 quintile.
2. The England progression rate for each POLAR4 quintile was then weighted according to the proportion of students from the GHWY cohort in each quintile. The proportion of the GHWY cohort by POLAR quintile is shown in the table on page 7. This was used to create a weighted average for the England progression rate.

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