

Analysis of university applications for 2013/2014 admissions

September 2013

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Overall Trends
3. Applications by age group
4. Applications by geography and gender
5. National Flows
6. Applications to selective universities
7. Applications to live at home
8. Conclusions

Executive Summary

- In 2013, the total number of applicants recovered from the depressed level of the previous year to 498,000, an increase of just less than 2%. This remains 5.7% lower than in 2010, before the introduction of the new fee regime. The drop largely affected English resident applicants, where there was a drop from 446,000 to 415,000, or 31,000 in total, between 2010 and 2013, or 7%.
- The number of older university applicants, continues to decline, with another drop this year from the already depressed level of 2012. There were 16,500 fewer mature applicants across the UK in 2013 than in 2010. This overall drop again was largely among applicants resident in England, where there were 18,500 fewer applicants than in 2010, whereas mature applicant numbers rose in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These figures also do not include part-timers, where HEFCE¹, amongst others, have shown a 40% decline on the number of part time undergraduate students starting in 2012-13, compared to 2010-11.
- For school leavers, the figures should be seen in the context of a decreasing population of young people. The proportion of school leavers applying appears to be remaining constant in England, while showing some continued growth in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Although applications have not fallen overall, a look at what happened to those aged 18 in 2012 shows that 2,600 (or 1%) fewer students from England applied to university in 2012 or 2013 than would have done so had the trend in applications from previous years continued.
- While we have seen some growth in applicants from less privileged neighbourhoods to higher education generally, this growth has been less noticeable in applications to highly selective ST30² and ST13³ institutions.
- The gender gap in applications from young applicants shows a growing disparity, when we look at the cohort of young people who have applied to university by the time they are 19. Girls are now a third more likely to apply to university than boys of the same age group.

¹ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/about/introduction/abouttheinengland/impactreport/Impact-report.pdf>

² The universities in Sutton Trust 13 plus Bath, Cardiff, Exeter, Glasgow, King's College, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Reading, Royal Holloway College, Sheffield, Southampton, Strathclyde and Surrey

³ Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Imperial College, LSE, Nottingham, Oxford, St Andrews, UCL, Warwick and York

1. Introduction

This report builds on analysis undertaken by the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), and follows on from the Commission's report on applications to higher education, published earlier in 2013. Our aim is to analyse UCAS data, but the interpretation and analysis in this report is our own and independent of UCAS or any other organisation.

UCAS have published two reports on demand from applicants in the 2013 cycle: "UK application rates by country, sex, age and background (2013 cycle, January deadline)" and "Demand for full-time undergraduate higher education (2013 cycle, March deadline)".⁴

Our previous reports have raised a number of concerns about the possible impact of the new fee regime, including:

- Impact on demand, evidenced by the relatively steep decline in 2012/13 applications from English applicants
- The increased gender gap in those taking up places at University
- The steep decline in more mature students both applying for and taking up places
- A relatively poor uptake of places at the most selective universities from less privileged students

This report finds further encouraging signs that school leavers overall (18 and 19 year olds) are not being put off a university education, and that the proportion of this group applying to university seems to be remaining constant, although the growth in this measure has stalled (at least in England) and is below trend. Applications from less advantaged areas appear to have grown a little; but the applications in this category to highly selective universities (ST30 and ST13) are growing more slowly. It will be interesting to see whether these trends are maintained in the actual take-up of university places.

As previously reported, the most damaging apparent trend is the continued decline in applications from older students (aged 20 and over), which shows no sign of reversing. This is a complex issue to understand, since some of the decline may be attributable to the increasing percentage of the population who have gone to university as school leavers over the last decade or so. But the speed and timing of the drop in applications certainly suggests that the new fee regime has had a significant impact. It is also interesting to note the very different pattern being seen in Northern Ireland, where we have seen increases in applications from older students.

This is a cause for concern both from the perspective of 'second chance' education for those who missed out as school leavers, and from the economic perspective of needing effective further education and training in the working age population.

We also note that in the case of school leavers:

- The gender gap for applicants remains pronounced, and, since 2010, has grown wider in the least advantaged neighbourhoods in England and Wales.
- Despite the positive trend in overall applications from less advantaged neighbourhoods, the proportion of those applying is still much lower than in more privileged neighbourhoods. UCAS have calculated that (for eighteen year olds) those in the top quintile - from those areas with the highest participation rates - are 2.7 times as likely to apply as those in the bottom quintile.

It is our intention to commission some more detailed research on some of the issues arising here and in particular to explore the issue of gender differentials in less advantaged neighbourhoods and the broader issues concerning mature students.

⁴ UCAS' reports and supporting data files can be found at www.ucas.com/data-analysis/key-analysis

Background

In response to the increase in university fees in the UK from 2012, the Independent Commission on Fees has been established to monitor the impact over a three year period. It has already produced a series of reports assessing the early impact of the increase in fees on application and admissions trends in universities, considering in particular the effect on young people from areas with low participation in higher education.

At this stage, the Commission is analysing data on applications from UK domiciled subjects to universities and other higher education institutions for admission in 2013 (or for deferred entry in 2014), and the Commission is extremely grateful to UCAS for their cooperation in providing datasets to help with the Commission's work. Our aim is to complement work being undertaken by UCAS. The Commission will gather evidence from a number of sources to support its work.

Student fees from 2012

From 2012, universities in England could charge up to £9,000 per year for undergraduate courses, raising the cap from its 2011/12 level of £3,375. Universities wanting to charge more than £6,000 had to agree to put in place access measures, which will be assessed and monitored by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Most universities and most courses are charging the £9000 maximum, and the average fee is now £8,507⁵.

Students in Scotland attending Scottish universities do not pay fees. In 2011/12, students from elsewhere in the UK had to pay £1,820 per year to study at a Scottish university but, from 2012, these universities were able to charge up to £9,000 for students from elsewhere in the UK.

Welsh universities can charge fees of up to £9,000, as in England, but the Welsh Assembly pays fee costs above £3,465 a year for Welsh students studying at any UK university.

At universities in Northern Ireland, tuition fees for students from Northern Ireland in 2012 were capped at £3,465, and will rise in line with inflation for the next four years. Fees for other UK students are not capped but the Northern Ireland Executive has said that fees are not expected to exceed £9,000.

The data

This report examines data for four UCAS application cycles, 2010 to 2013 inclusive, in each case using information available at mid-January. This means that the datasets are comparable year on year, but they do not include all applications made in each cycle. All UK domiciled applicants are included. The data covers all course types. The majority of applications relate to honours degrees, but other course types such as foundation degrees and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are also included.

Most of the comparisons made in this report examine changes relative to 2010 to avoid any effects of the fees changes that were announced in 2011, but which came into effect in 2012, complicating the results.

This report examines both overall numbers of applicants and differentials between sub-groups (gender, background, age). We have focused in particular on 18 and 19 year olds in most of our analysis, but also discuss older applicants who form an important minority of applicants. We have treated all applicants aged up to 19 as one group, as together they form a common measure of "young people" accessing Higher Education used by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and others.

Applications to private universities are not included in this analysis, as these applications are not administered by UCAS.

⁵ <http://www.offa.org.uk/press-releases/offa-announces-decisions-on-2013-14-access-agreements/>

2. Overall trends (all UK domiciled applicants)

Table 1: The number of applicants by year and country of domicile : all UK domiciled applicants, compared to 2010

Domicile	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
England	446,177	451,114	1.1%	406,548	-8.9%	415,208	-6.9%
Northern Ireland	18,929	19,636	3.7%	18,795	-0.7%	19,957	5.4%
Scotland	41,018	41,807	1.9%	40,984	-0.1%	41,323	0.7%
Wales	22,188	22,668	2.2%	22,131	-0.3%	21,448	-3.3%
Total Result	528,312	535,225	1.3%	488,458	-7.5%	497,936	-5.7%

Overall there was an increase in 2013 in the number of applicants across the UK of 1.9% when compared to 2012, but the level still stands 5.7 % lower than in the 2010 cycle, which was the last year unaffected by the new fees regime. However, these total numbers are significantly affected by the decline in the population of school leavers (18 and 19 year old applicants), who account for the majority of applicant numbers. This is examined in section 3 below

The pattern of total numbers continue to show a contrast between the different countries of the UK, which now all have different fee regimes, but the contrast is not as defined as in the prior cycle. Nevertheless the drop in applicants from England remains the largest, while both Scotland and Northern Ireland have seen increases when compared to 2010

When we break this down by gender we can see that there are also differences between the genders in each country.

Table 2: The number of applicants by year, gender and country of domicile : all UK domiciled applicants, compared to 2010

Domicile	Gender	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
England	F	255,154	257,092	0.8%	234,119	-8.2%	238,715	-6.4%
	M	191,023	194,022	1.6%	172,429	-9.7%	176,493	-7.6%
Northern Ireland	F	10,726	11,061	3.1%	10,673	-0.5%	11,253	4.9%
	M	8,203	8,575	4.5%	8,122	-1.0%	8,704	6.1%
Scotland	F	24,246	24,555	1.3%	23,988	-1.1%	23,930	-1.3%
	M	16,772	17,252	2.9%	16,996	1.3%	17,393	3.7%
Wales	F	13,029	13,424	3.0%	13,234	1.6%	12,800	-1.8%
	M	9,159	9,244	0.9%	8,897	-2.9%	8,648	-5.6%
Total Result		528,312	535,225	1.3%	488,458	-7.5%	497,936	-5.7%

In both England and Wales we see bigger declines for males than females when compared to 2010. In Northern Ireland we actually see a bigger increase in the number of male applicants than we do for females in 2013 (6.1% compared to 4.9%). In Scotland we see the same pattern, with bigger increases for males than females in 2013, despite still having fewer male applicants overall.

3. Applications by age group

Table 3: Number of applicants by age group by country

Country	Age	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
England	Up to 19	312035	315761	1.2%	288889	-7.4%	299585	-4.0%
	20 - 24	77068	78569	1.9%	67506	-12.4%	67354	-12.6%
	25 and over	57074	56784	-0.5%	50153	-12.1%	48269	-15.4%
Northern Ireland	Up to 19	14598	15007	2.8%	14413	-1.3%	14676	0.5%
	20 - 24	2963	3217	8.6%	3122	5.4%	3657	23.4%
	25 and over	1368	1412	3.2%	1260	-7.9%	1624	18.7%
Scotland	Up to 19	25795	25671	-0.5%	25397	-1.5%	25064	-2.8%
	20 - 24	8689	9487	9.2%	9417	8.4%	10104	16.3%
	25 and over	6534	6649	1.8%	6170	-5.6%	6155	-5.8%
Wales	Up to 19	15720	15695	-0.2%	15335	-2.4%	14988	-4.7%
	20 - 24	3727	4023	7.9%	3983	6.9%	3760	0.9%
	25 and over	2741	2950	7.6%	2813	2.6%	2700	-1.5%
UK TOTAL	Up to 19	368,148	372,134	1.1%	344,034	-6.6%	354,313	-3.8%
	20 -24	92,447	95,296	3.1%	84,028	-9.1%	84,875	-8.2%
	25 and over	67,717	67,795	0.1%	60,396	-10.8%	58,748	-13.2%
	TOTAL	528312	535225	1.3%	488458	-7.5%	497936	-5.7%

Table 3 above breaks down the number of applicants by broad age group between those aged up to 19 (school leavers), those aged 20 to 24, and those aged over 25. As already mentioned the numbers of school leavers applying is affected by the declining population of that age, so the reduction in the numbers of under-19s applying do not necessarily indicate a reduction in demand. However, this is not necessarily the case with older students, although some long-term reduction in demand may be affected by the overall increase in young student participation until recently.

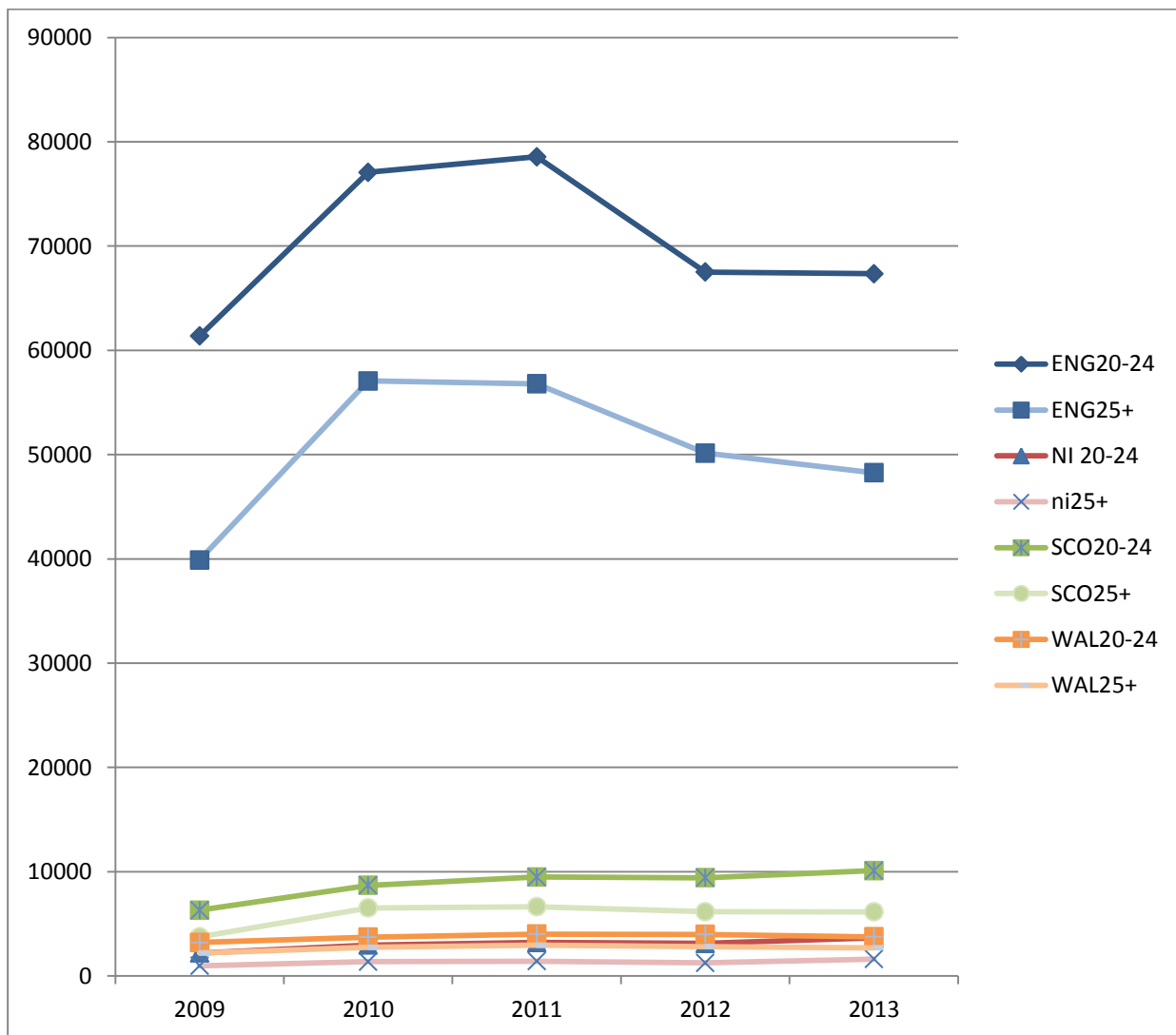
Interestingly, despite these population effects, Northern Ireland has actually slightly increased its number of young people applying to university. It shows an increase of 0.5% on 2010 figures, but still not quite back up to the record level found in 2011 of just over 15,000.

3.1 Older applicants

UCAS holds application data on those who apply for full-time study. Many older applicants mix work and part-time study and apply directly to universities.

Table 3 clearly shows us that the most significant falls in applicant numbers have occurred amongst mature students. It is likely that it is among this group that the higher tuition fees have had the greatest impact, as the demographic factors accounting for the decline in the number of school leaver applicants do not affect the broader population of mature students.

Fig 1: Applicants aged 20 and over by country



The figures above show that there continues to be a decline in the number of those 20 and overs applying to university in the UK, which has fallen by 10%, or 16,500 students, since 2010. This pattern is mainly driven by the drop in those from England applying, whereas other areas in the UK have seen little change or even increases this year.

In England we see the biggest falls in applications come from those aged 25 and over, with a drop of 15.4% compared to 2010. We see this pattern to a lesser extent in Wales, but not in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

It is also useful to consider how applicants from the different countries have changed their behaviour in relation to the different tuition fee arrangements in their own countries.

Table 4: Number of older applicants by country of domicile and country of institution applied to

Age	Domicile	Number of applicants applying to:	2010	2011	2012	2013
20 and over	England	England only	124,012	124,198	108,236	105,862
	NI	NI only	2,403	2,296	2,379	2,982
	Scotland	Scotland only	22,562	22,446	22,802	22,418
	Wales	Wales only	3,614	3,699	3,479	3,095

Table 5: Percentage of older applicants by country of domicile and country of institution applied to

Age	Domicile	Percentage of applicants applying to:	2010	2011	2012	2013
20 and over	England	England only	92.4%	91.8%	92.0%	91.6%
	NI	NI only	55.5%	49.6%	54.3%	56.5%
	Scotland	Scotland only	87.5%	87.4%	89.8%	89.4%
	Wales	Wales only	55.9%	53.0%	51.2%	47.9%

Overall, we can see that there have been different geographical patterns for applications in different countries. In England, we continue to see a very high percentage of older students applying only to English universities. In Northern Ireland, 2013 has seen the highest proportion of older students applying only to local universities, (almost 57%). Since 2010, the percentage of older Welsh applicants applying only to Welsh institutions has fallen from 56% to 48%. In Scotland we see near record figures for Scottish applications to Scottish institutions.

This is one of the areas where we infer that students are making rational choices in response to the current tuition fee system. Welsh students appear now more likely to apply to universities outside of Wales, encouraged by their fee system. Conversely, we see Northern Irish students now less likely to apply to universities outside of Northern Ireland, and again this behaviour may be encouraged by their tuition fee system.

3.2 Young Applicants

As the total application figures are affected by the declining population of school leavers, we consider that the best single indicator of what is happening to this group is the application rate by cohort. That is to say, we should look at the entire population who are aged 18 in a given year, and then we should look at the overall percentage of those who apply to university by the time they are 19.

We now have access to the final numbers for the 2012 cohort - those who were aged 18 in 2012 but who may also have applied as nineteen year olds in the current cycle. As the table below shows, the application rate in England held more or less steady at 43.7%, while the other home countries showed an increase of about one percentage point when compared to the 2010 cohort.

This analysis builds on work done in the UCAS July 2013 Demand report. The chart below shows the total number of 18 year old and 19 year old applicants over the last three years, grouped by cohort. That is to say that it groups the applicants by birth year, and compares them to the overall cohort born in the same year.

Table 6: Number of applicants by cohort by country

Applicants	2010	2011	2012
England	285,055	274,981	273,264
Northern Ireland	13,416	13,156	13,014
Scotland	23,231	22,858	22,542
Wales	14,656	14,177	14,233

Table 7: Application rates by cohort by country

Application rate	2010	2011	2012
England	43.6%	43.6%	43.7%
Northern Ireland	51.8%	52.2%	52.1%
Scotland	36.3%	36.8%	37.1%
Wales	36.7%	37.0%	37.8%

The 2012 cohort application rate did not show the drop that might have been expected following the drop in the number of 18 year olds applying in the last cycle. A substantial bounce back in the number of 19 year old applicants brought back the overall rate to the almost identical level of the previous two years.

However, evidence from the other home nations suggests that an increase might have been expected. The steady state in England contrasts with an increase of around one percentage point in the application rate comparing those aged 18 in 2010 with those aged 18 in 2012 from Scotland and Wales, and a rather smaller increase for Northern Ireland. This suggests that 2,600 young people from England, who were aged 18 in 2012, applied to university in 2012 or 2013 than might have done so had the trend from previous years continued.

For the current cycle UCAS has reported an increase in the 18 year old application rate from England⁶, but we will have to wait until next year to see the impact of this on the cohort as a whole.

⁶ <http://www.ucas.com/news-events/news/2013/demand-full-time-undergraduate-higher-education-2013>

If we look at cohort application rates by gender, we see that the 'gender gap in applications continues to widen. The following table shows how much more likely girls in each cohort are to apply than boys in the same cohort:

Table 8: The increased probability of applying to university by age 19 for females compared with males in the 18 year old age cohort by year

Increased probability of applying for females compared with males			
	2010	2011	2012
England	28.0%	28.0%	29.2%
Northern Ireland	34.4%	31.0%	34.4%
Scotland	39.0%	37.6%	40.6%
Wales	35.0%	40.9%	40.8%

This table shows that in all cohorts in all countries, females have been more likely to apply to university than males, and that this trend is continuing. The cohort seen in 2012 is the only one for which the new fees regime was in place.

Overall, young females are now a third more likely to apply to university than young males in the UK.

4. Applications by geography and gender ('young' applicants only)

Table 9: The number of applications by year, gender and QYPR: all English domiciled applicants aged up to 19.

POLAR2 QYPR group	Gender	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
1 (low participation)	F	94,867	100,364	5.8%	94,858	0.0%	97,479	2.8%
	M	70,198	72,428	3.2%	65,807	-6.3%	70,669	0.7%
2	F	133,628	138,985	4.0%	129,755	-2.9%	134,756	0.8%
	M	104,066	107,709	3.5%	98,106	-5.7%	102,610	-1.4%
3	F	162,683	167,164	2.8%	153,745	-5.5%	162,333	-0.2%
	M	130,692	133,871	2.4%	122,718	-6.1%	127,124	-2.7%
4	F	188,791	191,668	1.5%	176,706	-6.4%	183,009	-3.1%
	M	162,380	165,007	1.6%	146,904	-9.5%	153,280	-5.6%
5 (high participation)	F	230,817	234,530	1.6%	214,936	-6.9%	218,527	-5.3%
	M	208,970	212,249	1.6%	191,729	-8.3%	198,199	-5.2%

Note: This table omits a small number of students with missing data

In this section, we have analysed the total number of applications for 18 and 19 year olds in relation to gender and also the neighbourhoods in which the applicants live, using a measure called POLAR2.

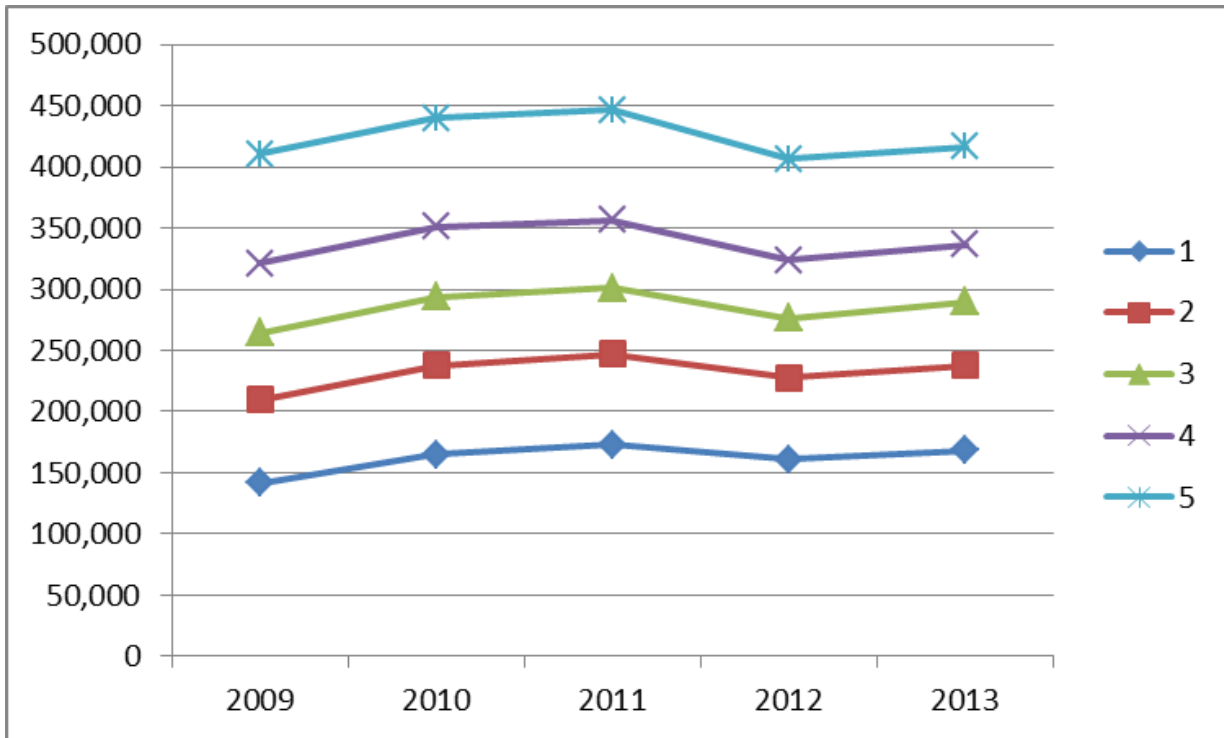
The POLAR2 data measure sorts the population into quintiles, depending on whether the neighbourhood they live in has historically seen relatively high or low numbers of young people progress into higher education. Specifically, it looks at those who were aged 18 between 2000 and 2004 and entered a course in a UK higher education institution or GB further education college, aged 18 or 19, between academic years 2000/01 and 2005/06.

The POLAR2 classification is formed by ranking 2001 Census Area Statistics wards by their young participation rates for the combined 2000 to 2004 cohorts. This gives five types of area ordered from '1' (those wards with the lowest participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation), each representing 20 per cent of UK young cohort.

Students have been allocated to the neighbourhoods on the basis of their postcode. Those students whose postcode falls within wards with the lowest participation (quintile 1) are denoted as being from a low participation neighbourhood. The figures above show that there have been fewer applications in 2013 compared to 2010, with the exceptions of the lowest two QYPR participation quintiles.

For Q1 and Q2, the lowest participation areas, there were increases in the overall numbers of applications overall, and we see a bigger increase from females and males. In Q4 and Q5, the highest participation areas, we see decreases in the overall numbers of applications, and we see bigger decreases in applications from males than females.

Fig 2: Number of applications by QYPR by year, young English applicants only



5. National Flows

In this section we consider the geographical patterns of applications from younger students (those aged up to 19).

Table 10: Number of young applicants by country of domicile and country of institution applied to

Domicile	Applying to:	Applicants			
		2010	2011	2012	2013
England	England only	252,754	260,107	237,956	242,360
NI	NI only	4,870	4,425	5,232	5,003
Scotland	Scotland only	22,562	22,446	22,802	22,418
Wales	Wales only	4,044	3,756	3,119	2,956

Table 11: Percentage of young applicants by country of domicile and country of institution applied to

Domicile	Applying to:	2010	2011	2012	2013
England	England only	81.0%	82.4%	82.4%	80.9%
NI	NI only	33.4%	29.5%	36.3%	34.1%
Scotland	Scotland only	87.5%	87.4%	89.8%	89.4%
Wales	Wales only	25.7%	23.9%	20.3%	19.7%

Similarly to the trends we have seen for applicants aged 20 and over, we can see the impact of the different tuition fee arrangements in the different home countries. Welsh students are now less likely to apply just to Welsh universities – the Welsh Assembly will subsidise their fees at universities not in Wales, including paying the English differential. Northern Irish students are now more likely to apply only to local universities, and the Northern Ireland Assembly subsidises their study if they stay there. Scottish students are now even less likely to apply to universities outside Scotland than before the new fees regime was introduced.

When we look at national flows by applications into English universities, we find that the number of students from Scotland applying to ‘at least one’ English university have fallen since 2012. In 2010, 3,100 young applicants from Scotland applied to at least one English university, compared to 2,500 each year in 2012 and 2013.

Conversely, we have seen an increase in the number of young Welsh applicants to at least one English university. The proportion of applicants applying to at least one English institution is up from 74% in 2010 to just over 80% in 2013.

We also see similar patterns for older applicants from Scotland and Wales.

6. Applications to selective universities

This section considers how the total number of applications to selective universities has changed over time for young English applicants. We do this by considering applications to two groups of highly selective universities in particular – ‘Sutton Trust 13’⁷ and ‘Sutton Trust 30’⁸.

Table 12: applications by selectivity of institution and by year, England, aged up to 19

Country of domicile	Type of institution	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
England	ST13	217,610	200,359	-7.9%	198,213	-8.9%	205,323	-5.6%
	ST30	503,781	476,888	-5.3%	455,565	-9.6%	494,866	-1.8%
	Other	992,885	1,057,409	6.5%	951,474	-4.2%	967,253	-2.6%

ST30 includes ST13.

Table 11 shows that, overall, the most selective institutions have seen larger declines in the number of applications they receive than those which are less selective. This is broadly similar to the pattern seen in 2012.

It is worth noting that the applications pattern to the different groups of universities will also have been affected by the changes to student number controls introduced in 2012. One of these changes meant that although the majority of places a university offered were under a student number control limit, but the number of students with AAB+ grades at A-level were excluded from this control. This meant that universities were free to recruit as many AAB+ students as they could in 2012, and this has changed to any students with ABB+ in 2013. Some of the patterns observed above may reflect changing behaviours towards applying for different types of university for these high-achieving students.

Table 13: Change in number of applications by university type and QYPR: 2010 to 2013: England, aged up to 19

QYPR	Other	ST30 (includes ST13)	ST13
1 (low)	2.2%	0.6%	-3.4%
2	0.1%	-0.8%	-4.5%
3	-1.9%	0.0%	-4.0%
4	-4.5%	-3.7%	-7.7%
5 (high)	-7.4%	-2.6%	-6.1%

⁷ Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Imperial College, LSE, Nottingham, Oxford, St Andrews, UCL, Warwick and York

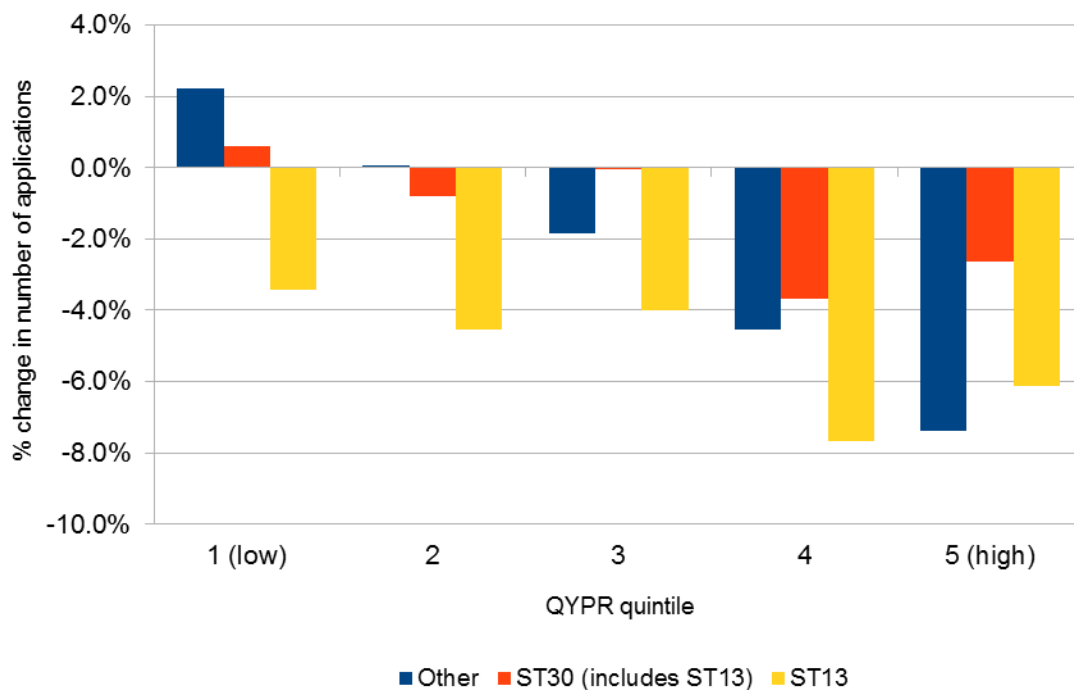
⁸ The universities in Sutton Trust 13 plus Bath, Cardiff, Exeter, Glasgow, King’s College, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Reading, Royal Holloway College, Sheffield, Southampton, Strathclyde and Surrey

We can see that there have been fewer applications to ST13 institutions than in 2010, across all POLAR groups, but the reductions are highest in areas of high participation in HE. For universities not in the ST30, we can see increases in applications from the lowest POLAR groups and decreases from the higher POLAR groups.

UCAS carried out its own analysis of application rates to different groups of institutions, published in July 2013. They concluded that ‘In 2013 application rates of 18 year olds living in disadvantaged areas increased to all institution groups; including by 8 per cent (proportionally) to higher tariff institutions, the largest proportional increase in demand of 18 year olds from any background to those institutions.’

There are several reasons why we have come to different conclusions: the Sutton Trust 13 is a much smaller group of selective institutions than the UCAS sample; we are also looking at applicants aged up to 19, whereas UCAS looked at 18 year olds only.

Fig 3: Percentage change in number of applications by selectivity of institution and by year, aged up to 19 only



It is clear from Figure 3 above that applicants from high participation areas made fewer applications to all types of university in 2013 than in 2010, but in particular to those outside our ST30 group (a drop of over 7% on 2010). The opposite is true for those from the lowest participation areas. They are now relatively more likely to apply to ‘other’ universities than in 2010, with an increase in applications of 2.2%, than to the ST30 group.

Looking at applications to these university types by gender also shows some differences.

From Table 13 we can see that there has been a bigger decline in males applying to all university types on 2010 levels, than for females. The most marked difference is for the 'other' group, where there has been a 4.1% decline for males applying this cycle compared to 2010, but only a 1.4% drop for females applying to these universities.

Table 14: Change in number of applications by university type and gender: 2010 to 2013: England, aged up to 19

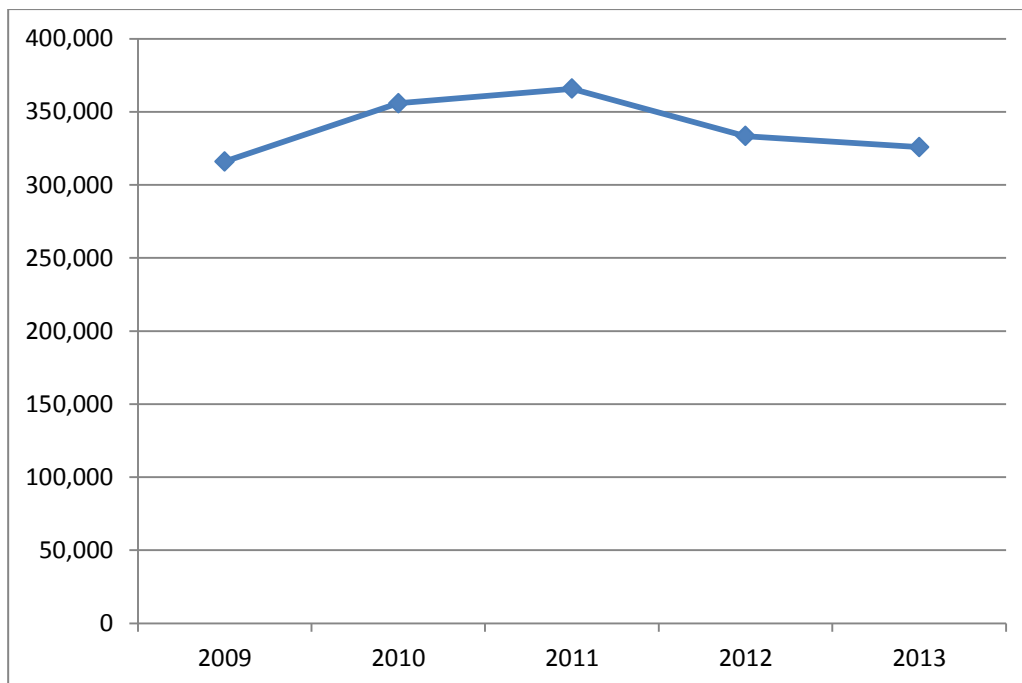
University type	Gender	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
Other	F	554,465	591,408	6.7%	540,370	-2.5%	546,836	-1.4%
	M	438,420	466,001	6.3%	411,104	-6.2%	420,417	-4.1%
	All	992,885	1,057,409	6.5%	951,474	-4.2%	967,253	-2.6%
ST13	F	110,676	101,641	-8.2%	100,286	-9.4%	104,951	-5.2%
	M	106,934	98,718	-7.7%	97,927	-8.4%	100,372	-6.1%
	All	217,610	200,359	-7.9%	198,213	-8.9%	205,323	-5.6%
ST30	F	261,571	247,071	-5.5%	235,975	-9.8%	257,079	-1.7%
	M	242,210	229,817	-5.1%	219,590	-9.3%	237,787	-1.8%
	All	503,781	476,888	-5.3%	455,565	-9.6%	494,866	-1.8%

7. Applications to live at home

Table 15: The number of applications by year, country of domicile and living at home

Domicile	2010	2011	2011 v 2010	2012	2012 v 2010	2013	2013 v 2010
England	283,216	294,299	3.9%	264,408	-6.6%	259,699	-8.3%
Northern Ireland	14,788	14,222	-3.8%	13,718	-7.2%	13,272	-10.3%
Scotland	46,810	46,513	-0.6%	45,573	-2.6%	43,624	-6.8%
Wales	11,013	10,733	-2.5%	9,657	-12.3%	9,218	-16.3%

Fig 4: The number of applications by year and living at home, all countries



Perhaps surprisingly, the table above shows that fewer 18 and 19 year-old students are applying for courses where they would live at home in 2013 than was the case in 2010.

The measure for 'living at home' only includes those applicants who stated at application that they intended to live at home.

8. Conclusions

The Higher Education funding reforms are still recent and it may take many years for the impact to be fully felt and for the consequences of greatly increased levels of personal debt to become apparent. In the short term, it is encouraging to see that school leavers in England appear to not have been discouraged from applying to university, even if the growth trend in demand seems to have stalled. However, it must be a concern that demand from mature students appears to be in marked decline, both for the overall impact this may have on social mobility, but also on the potential effects on labour market flexibility.

The areas which we have looked at in this report may be summarised as follows:

- In 2013, the total number of applicants recovered from the depressed level of the previous year to 498,000, an increase of just less than 2%. This remains 5.7% lower than in 2010, before the introduction of the new fee regime. The drop largely affected English resident applicants, where there was a drop from 446,000 to 415,000, or 31,000 in total, between 2010 and 2013, or 7%.
- The number of older university applicants, continues to decline, with another drop this year from the already depressed level of 2012. There were 16,500 fewer mature applicants across the UK in 2013 than in 2010. This drop again was largely among applicants resident in England, where there were 18,500 fewer applicants than in 2010. Mature applicant numbers rose in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These figures also do not include part-timers, where HEFCE⁹, amongst others, have shown a 40% decline on the number of part time undergraduate students starting in 2012-13, compared to 2010-11.
- For school leavers, the figures should be seen in the context of a decreasing population of young people. The proportion of school leavers applying appears to be remaining constant in England, while showing some continued growth in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Although applications have not fallen overall, a look at what happened to those aged 18 in 2012 shows that 2,600 (or 1%) fewer students from England applied to university in 2012 or 2013 than would have done so had the trend in applications from previous years continued.
- While we have seen some growth in applicants from less privileged neighbourhoods to higher education generally, this growth has been less noticeable in applications to highly selective ST30¹⁰ and ST13¹¹ institutions.
- The gender gap in applications from young applicants shows a growing disparity, when we look at the cohort of young people who have applied to university by the time they are 19. Girls are now a third more likely to apply to university than boys of the same age group.

⁹ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/about/introduction/aboutheinengland/impactreport/Impact-report.pdf>

¹⁰ The universities in Sutton Trust 13 plus Bath, Cardiff, Exeter, Glasgow, King's College, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Reading, Royal Holloway College, Sheffield, Southampton, Strathclyde and Surrey

¹¹ Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Imperial College, LSE, Nottingham, Oxford, St Andrews, UCL, Warwick and York