Tracking the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort: progression to further and higher education

Research Report

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Executive summary

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the progression outcomes of the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort following the completion of their post-16 studies amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary interest was to understand whether students from this cohort had progressed differently compared to the previous pre-pandemic cohort of students and, if they had, how they might have been impacted. The progression outcomes analysed were: destinations (e.g., higher education, further education), types of higher education institutions (e.g., Russell Group) and subject areas studied in higher education (e.g., Computing).

The June 2020 cohort of students had a very different educational experience compared to previous cohorts of students. Due to the pandemic, the summer 2020 exam series was cancelled. These students - who were due to sit their A Level (and equivalents) exams that summer - were instead awarded (for each subject they have entered) a grade that was either their Centre Assessment Grade (CAG) or a "calculated grade", whichever was higher. CAGs were provided by teachers, and these were intended to be the best representation of the grade the student would most likely have achieved under normal circumstances. "Calculated grades" were based on the CAGs, but these were standardised between schools and colleges to ensure fairness to all students.

Analyses of the final grades showed that the overall outcomes for A and AS Level students in England increased significantly in summer 2020 compared to 2019. For instance, in 2019, 25.2% of the grades given to A Level students in England were at grade A or above, but this rose by 12.9 percentage points to 38.1% in summer 2020 (JCQ, 2020). This increase was observed in all AS and A Level subjects but to varying extents. Given that the outcomes for the June 2020 cohort have noticeably increased - in ways that do not necessarily reflect improvements in learning - relative to the previous cohorts, it is, therefore, important to investigate how this cohort of students might have been impacted in their progression to the next stages of learning, training or employment.

This research focused on the immediate progression to higher or further education of students who achieved at least an A Level, AS Level, Extended Project Qualification, Applied General, or Tech Level in June 2020. A comparison was made with the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort to understand if the outcomes of the June 2020 cohort changed noticeably compared to the pre-pandemic levels. We also investigated the progression outcomes of specific groups of students to understand whether students from different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., disadvantaged students) had been impacted differently.

Data and methods

Data from three different sources were used in the research. The first was the National Pupil Database (NPD), which was used to obtain exam results and the background characteristics of the Key Stage 5 students. The second was the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. This data was used to gather information about progression outcomes in higher education (e.g., degree level, degree subject area) of the students in the 2019 and

2020 cohorts. The final data source was the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), which was used to identify students' participation in further education (e.g., leaning aim duration).

The 2019/20 Key Stage 5 extract of the NPD was used to identify students (i) who were 18 years old by the end of their Key Stage 5 and (ii) who achieved at least one A Level, AS Level, Extended Project Qualification, Applied General, or Tech Level in the June 2020 exam series. The 2018/19 Key Stage 5 NPD extract was used for the June 2019 cohort, with the same restrictions applied. For the June 2020 cohort, the 2019/20 NPD extract was linked to the 2020/21 ILR and 2020/21 HESA data. Similarly, the 2018/19 NPD Key Stage 5 extract was linked to the 2019/20 ILR and 2019/20 HESA data.

We analysed the progression outcomes for the full cohort of students and also for groups of students broken down by their background characteristics using simple descriptive statistics. To understand whether any possible differences between cohorts were driven by changes in the students' backgrounds, we also carried out multilevel regression analyses.

Results

Progression destinations
There were no big changes in the proportions of Key Stage 5 students who went on to each progression destination between the June 2020 and the June 2019 cohorts. There was a slight increase in the proportion of students who had sustained (i.e., six months or more) higher education participation or non-sustained participation in higher education or further education in 2020 relative to the 2019 levels, and a drop in the proportion of students who took a gap year or joined the labour market after completing their Key Stage 5.

Even though the overall progression rates to each destination had not changed much between the 2019 and 2020 cohorts, we found that certain groups of students had progressed slightly differently than their peers (i.e., progression outcomes changed in different directions). For instance, proportionally, fewer Chinese students had progressed to a sustained higher education destination in 2020, and more did not participate in higher education or further education immediately following their Key Stage 5. A similar pattern was also seen among Asian (not Chinese) students, but to a lesser extent. For all other ethnic groups, the general pattern was the opposite: proportionally fewer students joined the labour market or took a gap year, and more had sustained higher education participation.

Similarly, students (1) from low socio-economic backgrounds (as indicated, for example, by their Free School Meals eligibility), (2) with Special Educational Needs, (3) from further education colleges, or (4) who only took Applied Generals and Tech Levels had all progressed differently than their respective peers. For these groups of students, the percentage of students progressing to a sustained higher education destination dropped in 2020 but proportionally more of them progressed to a further education destination, unlike the changes seen in all other groups of students.

Furthermore, students of certain backgrounds experienced a more pronounced change between 2019 and 2020 (i.e., progression outcomes changed in the same direction but with varying magnitude). For example, while the percentage of students with sustained higher education participation was higher for all the Key Stage 4 attainment groups in 2020 relative

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to their respective 2019 levels, the rise was greater among low and medium Key Stage 4 attainers compared to those students from the high Key Stage 4 attainment group. Similarly, students who mostly took A Levels and EPQ had a greater increase in sustained higher education participation in 2020 than students from all other Key Stage 5 pathways. However, once we considered the changes in cohort characteristics (by fitting regression models accounting for students' backgrounds), students from the different Key Stage 5 pathways and Key Stage 4 attainment groups had practically experienced a similar magnitude of change in 2020 (across all destinations). The biggest group difference was about four percentage points: the predicted probability of students progressing to a sustained further education destination increased by five percentage points among students who only took Applied Generals or Tech Levels (or both) in 2020 relative to those for the 2019 cohort; however, the same probability had only increased by one percentage point in 2020 for students who only took A Levels or EPQ or both.

Types of higher education institutions
Although the percentage of Key Stage 5 students who progressed to a sustained higher education destination was only slightly higher among the 2020 cohort than among the 2019 cohort, this research found that a noticeably higher percentage of these students progressed to a Russell Group university in 2020 than in 2019.

The progression rate to a Russell Group university increased for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. But the rise was more noticeable for students of certain backgrounds. In particular, students from minority ethnic backgrounds (Asian, Chinese, Black) had a higher percentage of students progressing to a Russell Group university in 2020 than in 2019 compared to White students and students from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, a greater increase was seen in 2020 among students who studied at independent schools, selective schools and non-selective selective schools compared to other school types, and among students from single-sex schools compared to students from mixed-sex schools.

The percentage increase in the number of students attending a Russell Group university was also the highest for the high Key Stage 4 attainment group compared to students from other attainment groups and for students who only took A Levels or EPQ (or both) during their Key Stage 5 compared to students from all other pathways. After accounting for any changes in cohort characteristics, the changes in the predicted probability of students progressing to a Russell Group differed by, at most, four percentage points among students from the different Key Stage 5 pathways and, at most, three percentage points among students from the different Key Stage 4 attainment groups.

Subject areas in higher education
The uptake rate of each degree subject area was very similar in both the 2020 and 2019 cohorts. It was only in "Business and Management" that there was a noticeably higher percentage of students pursuing the subject among the 2020 cohort than among the 2019 cohort. The percentage of low attainers (based on their Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 performance) pursuing this subject increased more than the increase seen from students of all other attainment groups. Similarly, the rise in uptake was greater for Asian students compared to all other ethnic groups, and for sixth form college students compared to students from other school types.

Finally, although the percentage of students who enrolled in a degree in the "Subjects Allied to Medicine" area remained similar in the 2020 and 2019 cohorts, we observed a slight shift in the characteristics of students who took it. In particular, the percentage of male students enrolling in this subject area dropped in 2020, but the percentage of female students increased. Additionally, there were proportionally fewer Asian and Chinese students but more Black who enrolled in this subject area. Lastly, the percentage of low attainers (based on Key Stage 4 performance) pursuing this subject increased and, on the contrary, fell for high attainers.

Conclusions

Before drawing any conclusions from the findings of this research, it is worth noting it is reasonable to expect progression outcomes to fluctuate between cohorts even during normal years. We can only attribute the entire difference observed between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts to the effects of the pandemic if we are willing to assume that there would have been no change in the absence of the pandemic. Furthermore, since the pandemic has disrupted the education sector beyond secondary education, we need to be cautious not to attribute the difference observed solely to the adjustments that happened in secondary education (e.g., exam cancellation) but also consider the fact that admission to and learning in post-18 destinations had also been disrupted over the same period.

While the findings from this research cannot definitively identify the reasons causing the changes in progression outcomes for the June 2020 cohort, knowing how the outcomes had changed and which groups of students had experienced the most change is vitally important to ensure that more targeted measures can be taken to support these students if required, for example, additional contact hours with university teaching staffs.

The above findings showed that the progression rates to higher and further education from Key Stage 5 were broadly similar among students in the 2020 cohort than among the 2019 cohort, albeit there were slightly more students who progressed to higher education and further education, and fewer who had taken a gap year or sought employment after completing their Key Stage 5. This could be partly due to more students from the 2020 cohort achieving the required grades for higher education admission, fewer students deferring their university offers because of pandemic uncertainty, the changing admission requirements to higher education, or a combination of any of the above factors. In addition, the slight uptick in higher education participation is not unexpected given that even before the pandemic, the university acceptance rate had increased for most years, e.g., the acceptance rates for UK 18-year-old applicants increased by 0.5 percentage points from 2016 to 2017, by 0.34 percentage points from 2017 to 2018, and remained unchanged from 2018 to 2019[1].

The increase in the percentage of students who went on to a Russell Group university is worthy of some attention. Firstly, it would be important to ensure that Russell Group

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[1] These values were calculated using the UCAS data provided in csv files (published on 17 December) at the bottom of this UCAS webpage, titled, "UCAS undergraduate sector-level end of cycle data resources 2019" (link). The file with name "EOC_data_resource_2019_02_024_0102" was used for this calculation.

institutions are well-equipped to support the surge in student intake to ensure that the learning experience of this cohort of students (and subsequent cohorts of students impacted by the pandemic) is not negatively impacted. Secondly, while arguably more support should be provided for all students from this cohort (and those from subsequent impacted cohorts) due to the learning loss that had happened because of school closures, particular attention should be given to the applicants who narrowly met the requirements to be offered a degree course in a Russell Group university. Given that students from the same level of Key Stage 4 performance had scored higher in their Key Stage 5 in 2020 than in 2019 - in ways that did not necessarily reflect improvements in learning - it is likely that the borderline applicants from the 2020 cohort may be less prepared for their post-18 study compared to the same group of applicants from previous years.

In terms of degree subject area, our findings indicated that "Business and Management" had a noticeably higher uptake rate among the 2020 cohort than among the 2019 cohort, and the percentage of low and medium attainers (based both on Key Stage 4 and 5 performance) pursuing this subject was also higher compared to the previous cohort. It is unclear why this subject had a bigger change compared to all other subjects. Nonetheless, it might be beneficial to closely monitor how the students who enrolled in this subject performed whilst in higher education.

The findings provided by this research are just a snapshot of the wider progression picture of the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort. Future research should consider the retention and performance outcomes of this cohort of students (not available at the time this research was carried out) and identify any groups of students who would require additional support in their post-18 learning. Lastly, if a richer set of data on further education becomes available, future research focusing on students who progressed to further education would complement this research well given that this research had mostly focussed on the choices students made during their higher education.

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the June 2020 exam series in England was cancelled. The initial response to the cancellation was that students in Key Stages 4 and 5 who were due to take exams in that series would be awarded Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs). For each subject in which students intended to take an exam, teachers were tasked to provide a CAG, representing the grade the student would most likely achieve under normal circumstances, and a rank order of students for each grade. The goal of having these grades (despite the cancellation of exams) was to facilitate students' progression onto the next stage of education, employment or apprenticeship.

Teachers were advised to award these grades based on a range of evidence and data, such as mock exams and non-exam assessments (Ofqual, 2020a). Despite that, an analysis by Ofqual on the submitted CAGs revealed a prevailing optimism among teachers in ways that could potentially lead to implausibly high national results compared to previous years (Ofqual, 2020b). For example, for A Levels, the percentage of entries with grade A* increased by six percentage points in 2020 compared to 2019 and by 13 percentage points for grades B and above (p.6).

To address this, Ofqual implemented a mechanism to standardise teachers' judgements across different schools and colleges, resulting in a calculated grade for each student and subject. These calculated grades were provided by exam boards and produced using the Direct Centre Performance model introduced by Ofqual (i.e., the standardised mechanism). The model aimed to predict the grade distributions for each school and college by considering (mostly) the schools' historical performance in that subject and any changes in the prior attainment profile of their students (see Ofqual, 2020b for more details).

However, these calculated grades led to disappointing results for many students and the approaches taken concerned many stakeholders. About 59.8% of the A Level entries had the same calculated grades as CAGs. But the remaining (36.9% of all A Level entries) were mostly adjusted down by at least one grade (Ofqual, 2020b, p.135). Ultimately, both Ofqual and the Secretary of State decided that students would be awarded a final grade, which was the higher of their CAG or their calculated grade[2].

As a result, 96.8% of the AS Level entries and 97.8% of A Level entries were awarded a final grade that was the same as the CAG (Ofqual, 2020c, p.8). In other words, grades higher than the initial CAG were awarded to 3.2% of the AS Level entries and 2.2% of A Level entries. Analyses of the final grades showed that the overall outcomes for A Level and AS Level students in England increased significantly in summer 2020 compared to 2019. For instance, in 2019, 25.2% of the grades given to A Level students in England were grade A or above, but this rose by 12.9 percentage points to 38.1% in summer 2020 (JCQ, 2020). This increase was observed in all AS and A Level subjects but to varying extents.

Given that the outcomes for the June 2020 cohort have noticeably increased – in ways that do not necessarily reflect improvements in learning – relative to the previous cohorts, it is,

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-roger-taylor-chair-ofqual

therefore, important to investigate how this cohort of students might have been impacted in their progression to the next stages of learning, training or employment. Thus, this research aims to understand if there were changes in the progression outcomes of this June 2020 Key Stage 5 (KS5) cohort with respect to progression pre-pandemic.

In particular, this research focuses on Key Stage 5 students who took A Levels (including AS Levels), Extended Project Qualification, Applied Generals and Tech Levels in June 2020 and investigates the following progression outcomes:

1) **Progression destinations**
   What were the progression rates (to further and higher education) of students who completed Key Stage 5 in 2020? How does this compare to students with the same qualifications or grades who completed Key Stage 5 in June 2019 (i.e., pre-pandemic)?

2) **Types of higher education institutions**
   For the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort of students who progressed to higher education, what type of institutions did they attend? How does this compare to the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort?

3) **Subject areas in higher education**
   For the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort of students who progressed to higher education, which subject areas did they study? How does this compare to the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort?

Several studies have found that the pandemic disproportionately impacted different groups of learners. For example, Smithers (2023) documented that, proportionally, more A Level entries taken by female students were graded A and A* in 2020 compared to those taken by male students – the biggest gender gap since at least 1995. Other studies have also shown that secondary students from disadvantaged backgrounds (DfE, 2021) experienced more learning loss due to school closures during the pandemic than students not from disadvantaged background. In light of these differences, this research will examine both the overall outcomes (at the cohort level) and outcomes of specific groups of students by their socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, socio-economic background), Key Stage 5 pathways and attainment outcomes.

Any differences in progression outcomes between the June 2020 and June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort *cannot be solely* attributed to the possible grade inflation in 2020. Besides the disruptions to primary and secondary education, university admissions were also disrupted in 2020. Admission interviews and assessments were all carried out online. The uncertainty also caused some universities to make unconditional offers more leniently[3] and encouraged more 18-year-olds to apply for university[4]. Together with the generally higher Key Stage 5

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[3] Data from UCAS (https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2020/2020-entry-provider-level-end-cycle-data-resources) has shown that the number of "direct unconditional" university offers given out to 18 year olds (English, Northern Irish and Welsh) applicants has soared by close to a 100% from 34,990 direct unconditional offers given out in 2019 to 69,140 in 2020.
[4] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7857

outcomes, more university offers were given out compared to previous years[5]. Consequently, in some cases, students had to defer their university places for later entry due to oversubscription[6]. Given that all these changes intersect to impact students' progression outcomes, the findings from this research do not solely represent the impact of awarding CAGs on student progression but also encompass factors beyond that.

Regardless, it is crucial for us to understand whether there were any changes in progression outcomes for this cohort of students relative to the previous cohorts. This understanding will help determine the necessary support for these students throughout their journey in higher education, further education, or employment. In this instance, this research will look at the post-18 progression decisions these Key Stage 5 students made. Once the students in this cohort have progressed through further and higher education (e.g., students pursuing a three-year undergraduate degree had graduated in June 2023, but those pursuing a four-year degree or had deferred their university offers will graduate in June 2024), their performance and retention in further and higher education (e.g., graduation; degree class achieved) can be investigated.

Data

The research used the National Pupil Database (NPD) data for students who completed their Key Stage 5 in the years of interest (i.e., 2019 and 2020), linked to the Spring School Census and students' background data collected at their Key Stage 4 (e.g., prior attainment). In addition, this NPD extract was also linked to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data for information about students' progression outcomes to further education and higher education, respectively.

For the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort, the 2019/20 Key Stage 5 extract of the NPD (including both Pupil and Exam data) was linked to the 2019/20 Spring School Census, 2020/21 ILR and 2020/21 HESA data. Similarly, for the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort, the 2018/19 Key Stage 5 NPD extract was linked to the 2018/19 Spring School Census, 2019/20 ILR and 2019/20 HESA data.

National Pupil Database
The National Pupil Database is a longitudinal database containing information for children who studied in schools in England and is maintained by the Department of Education (DfE). The dataset includes both students' characteristics data (e.g., ethnicity, Special Educational Needs status, Free School Meals eligibility) - which was sourced from the School Census - and students' attainment data for all the qualifications they have entered for, the schools where they took the qualifications and the characteristics of those schools.

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[5] https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/rise-number-students-planning-start-university-autumn
[6] https://www.palatinate.org.uk/students-paid-1259500-to-tackle-oversubscription/

For this work, only Key Stage 5 students who were 18 years of age at the end of their Key Stage 5 academic year[7] were analysed. This age restriction allowed us to analyse a set of "typical" Key Stage 5 students. Furthermore, only those 18 years old who had taken at least one Level 3 qualification in 2020 – whose grades were impacted by the pandemic – were retained for analyses in order to consider the impacts of the changes in the 2020 grading strategy on students' progression. A similar treatment was applied to the 2019 cohort to enable a like-for-like comparison, i.e., only 18-year-olds who had taken at least one Level 3 qualification in 2019. The Level 3 qualifications considered in this work were restricted to A Levels (including AS Levels), Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), Tech Levels, and Applied Generals as defined and approved by DfE for inclusion in its performance tables. This restriction allowed us to categorise the students of interest into different Key Stage 5 pathways.

Table 10 in the Appendix A shows that about 67%-69% (depending on the cohort) of the students who completed their Key Stage 5 at the age of 18 had taken at least one of these qualifications in the year of interest.

Individualised Learner Record

The Individualised Learner Record is a system used in the UK to collect and manage data about learners in further education or skills training. Institutions, such as further education colleges and sixth form colleges, and training providers are typically required to submit data to the ILR for each learner. Higher education institutions are also required to submit data for students who took any higher or degree-level apprenticeships.

For each learner, the dataset includes details about all the learning aims that the learner is undertaking (or has undertaken), programme type (e.g., apprenticeship, traineeship, etc.), the expected duration of each aim, the relevant sector of the aim, and learning outcomes where available. The provider and employer identification were not included in the requested ILR extract.

All the aims commenced on or after the 1st September of the year the cohort of students completed their Key Stage 5 studies were analysed (e.g., for June 2020, aims needed to start from the 1st September 2020 or onwards to be considered).

Higher Education Statistics Agency

The Higher Education Statistics Agency collects data from higher education institutions across the UK. The dataset includes information on all the students who attended a UK university, such as the institution they attended, the course or programme studied, the expected course duration, the degree classification of the programme and some additional background characteristics (e.g., socio-economic status and level of parental education).

Similar to the treatment applied to ILR, only courses commenced on or after the 1st September of the year the cohort of students completed their Key Stage 5 studies were

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[7]By 31st of August. For example, for the June 2020 cohort, students who were born between the 1st September 2001 and 31st August 2002 were 18 years old by 31st of August. Only these students were analysed for the June 2020 cohort.

analysed (e.g., for June 2020, courses needed to start from the 1st September 2020 and onwards to be considered).

Methods

Classification of students' characteristics

For both cohorts of students who were 18 years old at the end of their Key Stage 5 and had taken at least one DfE-approved A Level (including AS Level), EPQ, Tech Level, or Applied General, the following socio-demographic and attainment information available mainly in the NDP was used in the analyses:

Gender[8]: Information readily available in the NPD data with values "male" and "female".

Free School Meals eligibility: The NPD included a variable that indicates whether a student had ever been recorded as eligible for Free School Meals on census day, in any termly or annual census, in the last six years up to the students' current year. This measure was often used as a proxy for students' level of deprivation (e.g., Vidal Rodeiro & Williamson, 2022).

Most of the students' background information available in the NPD was collected as part of the School Census, which only maintained schools were obliged to complete. However, a significant number of Key Stage 5 students studied in independent schools, sixth form colleges and further education colleges. As such, about 40% of the students of interest had missing values for this variable (and other variables such as ethnicity, Special Educational Needs, etc.). Therefore, the information on students' Free School Meals eligibility collected in the final year of their Key Stage 4 (KS4) studies (also included in the NPD) was used instead which only had missing values for 1% of the students. Each student was recorded as eligible ("Yes"), not eligible ("No") or had missing values ("Missing").

Disadvantaged student: The NPD included a flag to indicate whether a student was recorded as "disadvantaged". Disadvantaged students were defined as those eligible for Free School Meals at any point in the previous six years, who had been looked after by their local authority or had left care through adoption or court order. In other words, students who were eligible for Free School Meals were only a subset of disadvantaged students. For reasons similar to the Free School Meals eligibility, the disadvantaged status recorded at the end of the students' Key Stage 4 studies was used in this research. Students were classified as not disadvantaged ("No"), disadvantaged ("Yes"), or had missing values ("Missing").

Ethnicity: Similar to the above, the ethnicity data collected during the students' final year of Key Stage 4 studies was used instead since there were many missing values. The students' ethnic group data, as available in the NPD, was used to classify students into the following groups: Asian (not Chinese), Black, Chinese, White, Mixed, Other, or Missing.

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[8] The word "gender" is used to describe students' characteristics as it reflects the variable name recorded in the National Pupil Database.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) status: The NPD provided information indicating whether a student had received any SEN support (with or without a "statement"– a legal document specifying the educational needs of the student and how the local education authority will meet them), had an education, health and care plan, or did not require any SEN support. For this work, students' SEN status recorded in the final year of their Key Stage 4 studies was used to classify them into groups: those with SEN status ("With SEN"), those without SEN status ("Without SEN") and those with missing values ("Missing").

Prior attainment at Key Stage 4: The NPD included information on the average GCSE and equivalents (uncapped) point score per entry each student achieved during their Key Stage 4. This measure ranges from 0 to 10.75 and was used to divide the Key Stage 5 students into three approximately equally-sized groups, representing low, medium and high attainers at Key Stage 4. Given that both the June 2019 and 2020 cohorts completed their Key Stage 4 before the pandemic, the Key Stage 4 performance in each attainment group was comparable between the two cohorts. Table 11 in Appendix A shows the summary statistics of the point score for each Key Stage 4 attainment group, including the number of students who did not have data for this measure ("Missing").

Attainment at Key Stage 5: For each exam taken by the students, the NPD recorded (among other information) the grade achieved, the performance points assigned to the grade, and the qualification's size equivalent to an A Level. To determine the attainment level of each student at Key Stage 5, the performance points and the size of all the Level 3 qualifications (taken in 2020 for the 2020 cohort, and 2019 for the 2019 cohort) were aggregated within each student. Only DfE-approved A Levels, AS Levels, EPQ, Tech Levels, and Applied Generals with non-pending grades were included in this calculation. The average performance points the student achieved per unit equivalent to an A Level was then calculated by dividing the total performance point by the total entry size. This measure was then used to divide students into three approximately equally-sized groups, representing low, medium, and high attainers at Key Stage 5.

As mentioned in the introduction, the outcomes for the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort were, on average, higher than the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort. Given this, the Key Stage 5 attainment of the students in each group in 2020 was higher than the Key Stage 5 attainment of students in the same group in 2019. Hence, any comparison across groups should be treated with caution. This is clearly shown in Table 11 and Table 12 in Appendix A, where even though the Key Stage 4 performance of each Key Stage 4 attainment group was comparable between the June 2019 and June 2020 cohorts(Table 11), the average Key Stage 5 point score was higher in the June 2020 cohort compared to the June 2019 cohort within each Key Stage 4 attainment group (Table 12). It is also worth noting from Table 12 that the average Key Stage 5 performance points of students from the June 2020 cohort also varied less compared to students from the June 2019 cohort within each Key Stage 4 attainment group.

Key Stage 5 pathways: The DfE published lists of qualifications[9] that were approved for the 16 to 18 performance tables in the years of interest, the guided learning hours associated with each qualification, and an assigned type for each qualification, which could be either A Levels (including AS Levels), Academic (e.g., EPQ), Applied Generals, Tech Levels or Technical Certificates. Using the qualification number, this DfE list was linked to the students' exam data in the NPD, providing information on the classification of the qualification taken by the students and the guided learning hours. Using these measures, students' Key Stage 5 pathways were classified according to the proportion of guided learning hours the students spent between (1) A Levels and EPQ, and (2) Applied Generals and Tech Levels within their overall Key Stage 5 study in 2020 for the 2020 cohort and in 2019 for the 2019 cohort.

Students were classified into five groups representing the different Key Stage 5 pathways:
- **A Levels and EPQ only:** all learning hours solely in A Levels (including AS Levels) or EPQ or both
- **Mostly A Levels and EPQ**: more than half of the learning hours in A Levels, EPQ or both
- **Mixed**: Half the learning hours in A Levels and EPQ, and half the learning hours in Tech Levels and Applied Generals
- **Mostly Tech Levels and Applied Generals**: more than half the learning hours in Tech Levels and Applied Generals
- **Tech Levels and Applied Generals only:** all learning hours solely in Tech Levels or Applied Generals or both

School type: The NPD included information on the centre(s) where the students gained their Key Stage 5 qualifications. In the NPD extract provided to us, these centres were already matched to DfE' register of education establishments[10] for school type and school sex information.

Using the school type information provided, schools were classified into seven groups: non-selective schools (including comprehensive and secondary modern schools), selective schools, independent schools, sixth form colleges, further education colleges, other and missing.

For a small minority of students who took their Key Stage 5 qualifications in more than one school (about 2%), the following procedures were used to assign a school to these students for the purpose of analysis:
- Select the school where the student had taken their *latest* exams (only considering DfE-approved A Levels, EPQ, Tech Levels and Applied Generals).
- Select the school where the student had taken *most* of their Key Stage 5 exams, if the above was not possible (either because the selected school had no matching school type or gender information, or the student had taken the same number of exams in each school).

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[9] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores
[10] https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/

- Select a school randomly from the list of schools (only those with non-missing school type information) where the student had taken at least one Key Stage 5 exam if none of the above approaches worked.

School sex[11]: As mentioned earlier, the school sex information was readily available in the NPD extract provided to us where schools were grouped into three groups: mixed-sex schools, boys' schools, and girls' schools. If students took their Key Stage 5 qualifications in multiple schools with different types of school sex, the same approaches used to obtain school type information for each student were used here.

The Income-Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) – a measure reflecting the income-related deprivation the students experienced – was also considered in this study. However, given that there was a large number of missing data (40% of students) and there was no comparable measure available at the Key Stage 4, and other socio-economic background measures were already considered in this research (i.e., disadvantaged status and Free School Meals eligibility), IDACI measure was thus not included in further analyses.

Classification of outcome variables

Progression destinations

Using the ILR and HESA data, the progression of all the students of interest was grouped into the following four destinations:

- **Sustained higher education participation:** Students were considered to have progressed to higher education with sustained participation if they attended any course (level 4 and above) at a UK Higher Education institution with at least six continuous months of participation (i.e., "sustained") in the academic year immediately after their Key Stage 5 completion (1st of September and onwards). Students who satisfied these criteria and had some further education-related aims (e.g., part-time apprenticeship), regardless of whether it was a sustained participation, in the Individualised Learner Record were also considered in this category.

- **Sustained further education participation:** Students were considered to have progressed to further education with sustained participation if they had at least one aim recorded in the ILR that started in the academic year immediately after their Key Stage 5 completion (1st of September and onwards), and the student had engaged continuously for at least six continuous months in completing that aim, or all other aims combined. These aims may include many different types of qualifications, such as apprenticeship, traineeship, or attending a course provided by further education providers. Students with non-sustained higher education participation but sustained further education participation were included in this category.

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[11] The word 'sex' is used to describe the different types of schools as it best reflects the admission policy at the time of data collection.

- **Not sustained higher or further education:** Students were considered in this category if there was progression information in the HESA and ILR data for the student, but their participation was not sustained in higher education (and without any participation in further education), in further education (and without any participation in higher education) or was not sustained in both higher and further education. These students may have withdrawn from their programme within six months of starting it. However, this will not include all students who have withdrawn since withdrawal may have happened after six months of participation. Retention and withdrawal are beyond the scope of this research as a meaningful analysis of this would require HESA and ILR data that covers the entirety of the programme (for most students in the 2020 cohort, this will require the 2022/23 HESA and ILR data).

- **No information in higher or further education:** Students in this category do not have progression information recorded in either HESA or ILR data in the year analysed. These students may be employed, progressed to an institution outside of the UK, progressed to another unknown destination, or were not in education, employment, or training in the next academic year after their Key Stage 5 (e.g., took a gap year).

Types of higher education institutions

The second progression outcome this research considered was the types of higher education institutions the students progressed to. Naturally, this outcome only applied to students with sustained higher education participation. The higher education institutions were classified into Russell Group, University Alliance, and other (universities not in the former two groups). Universities included in the Russell Group and University Alliance at time of analysis (June 2023) were presented in Table 13 and Table 14 in Appendix A.

Subject areas in higher education

The final progression outcome this research considered was the subject area the students pursued in their higher education study. Similar to the above, this outcome only concerns students who had a sustained progression to higher education. The HESA data included the subjects the student took in their first year of study and the proportion of time allocated to each subject. These subjects were categorised into 21 subject groups according to The Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) coding system. For students who took a combination of subjects within their course, if the proportion of time allocated to a subject area was more than 50% of the entire course, then the student was assigned to that subject area. If otherwise, the student was assigned to an additional subject group created for this research, called "Combined". There was, therefore, a total of 22 subject groups. The HECoS coding system used in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 HESA data was based on different versions. The subject areas in the 2019/20 HESA data were remapped to the 2020/21 version (version 1.3.4)[12] to enable comparison across cohorts.

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[12] For a full list of subject areas and changes between the different versions, see
https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos/cah

Analysis methods

Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were carried out to answer the first and the second research questions (progression destinations and institution types) outlined in the 'Introduction' section. Only descriptive statistics were conducted for the third research question (subject areas in higher education).

Descriptive statistics

For descriptive statistics, the number and percentage of students who achieved a certain outcome (e.g., progressed to higher education, studied in a Russell Group university, started a degree in Maths) was presented for both the June 2019 and June 2020 cohorts overall. Then, the breakdowns of each outcome by the characteristic variables (as listed in the 'Classification of students' characteristics' section) were presented.

Regression models

To better understand the differences in outcomes (if any) between the 2019 and 2020 cohorts, regression analyses were carried out to account for any changes in cohort characteristics.

Two regression models were fitted for each of the following outcomes:
- Progression destinations:
    - Sustained higher education participation
    - Sustained further education participation
    - No information in higher or further education
- Types of higher education institutions:
    - Progressed to a Russell Group university
    - Progressed to a university in the University Alliance group
    - Progressed to other universities

We did not analyse the "not sustained higher or further education" progression outcome using the regression model because only a small proportion of students were in that category (as seen in Table 1 in the Results section).

The regression models used in this research were logistic models, predicting the probability of students achieving the outcome of interest given their observable characteristics. Given that students within a school are likely to have more similar outcomes than those in different schools, this was accounted for using multilevel regression models with the school as a random effect.

The first regression model intended to investigate whether the outcome of the two Key Stage 5 cohorts differed even after controlling for students' characteristics. It also helped investigate whether Key Stage 5 students with the same Key Stage 4 attainment group progressed differently between the 2019 and 2020 cohorts. The Key Stage 4 performance for these two cohorts were unaffected by the pandemic. All the characteristic variables as discussed were included in this model, except the Key Stage 5 attainment group and Free School Meals eligibility, due to their strong correlation with Key Stage 4 attainment group and students' disadvantaged status, respectively.

Mathematically, the specification for this regression model was as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{p_{ic}}{1 - p_{ic}}\right) = \alpha + \beta_0 x_{ic} + \boldsymbol{\beta_1} KS4_{ic} + \boldsymbol{\beta_2}(\boldsymbol{x_{ic} * KS4_{ic}}) + \sum_{k=3}^{n} \boldsymbol{\beta_k X_{kic}} + \gamma_c + u_{ic}$$

where i denotes the student and c indexed school. And,

$\boldsymbol{p_{ic}}$	is the probability of student $\boldsymbol{i}$ from school $\boldsymbol{c}$ achieving the outcome of interest
α	is the intercept
$\beta_0 x_{ic}$	x_{ic} is a binary variable that takes 1 if student i was from the June 2020 cohort, 0 if otherwise. β_0 is the estimated coefficient of this cohort variable. **This is the first coefficient of interest, as it indicates whether the outcomes differ (on average) between the two cohorts.**
$\boldsymbol{\beta_1} KS4_{ic}$	$KS4_{ic}$ is a categorical variable indicating whether student i and school c is in the low, medium or high Key Stage 4 attainment group. $\boldsymbol{\beta_1}$ is a list of estimated coefficients for each category, indicating the average differential in log odds of a Key Stage 4 attainment group (say, low) relative to the reference group.
$\boldsymbol{\beta_2}(\boldsymbol{x_{ic} * KS4_{ic}})$	$(\boldsymbol{x_{ic} * KS4_{ic}})$ is a list of interaction terms with terms as explained above. $\boldsymbol{\beta_2}$ **is the list of coefficients of interest, indicating how the log odds differed by cohort with each Key Stage 4 attainment group.**
$\boldsymbol{\beta_k X_{kic}}$	X_{kicj} represents a set of characteristics variables as discussed, *except for the prior attainment at Key Stage 5 and Free School Meals eligibility. $\boldsymbol{\beta_k}$ is a set of estimated coefficients for these variables.*
γ_c	is the school-level intercept random effect
u_{ic}	is the residual for student i from school c, representing factors not captured in the model that affect students' probability of achieving the outcome of interest.

The second regression model intended to investigate whether Key Stage 5 students who took the same Key Stage 5 pathways had progressed differently between the two cohorts. The model was similar to the first model. But, instead of including an interaction between the cohort variable and Key Stage 4 attainment group, this model included interaction terms between the cohort variable and students' Key Stage 5 pathways instead (e.g., A Levels and EPQ only, mostly A Levels and EPQ, Mixed, etc.). Similar to the first model, all background variables were included, including the Key Stage 4 attainment group *but not* the Key Stage 5 attainment group variable and Free School Meals eligibility. Students with missing values in any of these background characteristic variables were not included in the regression analyses[13].

The full regression output tables are presented in the appendix sections. In the main body of the report, only graphs showing predicted probabilities of progression for the different groups of students are presented.

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[13] To check that our results were robust to the exclusion of these students, we refitted the regression model with these students included. The results from this set of models were very similar to those shown in this report.

Statistical disclosure control rules

Statistical disclosure controls were applied to all the tables and graphs in this research to protect data confidentiality. Given that the ONS and HESA have slightly different rules, in this research, we applied rules that are stricter among the two sets of guidance, which are

1) All candidate counts were rounded to the nearest multiple of five.
2) Results based on counts below ten (after rounding) and their associated percentages were either suppressed (i.e., by replacing the values with a dash, "-") or merged with counts of other categories.
3) Percentages, where the total (i.e., denominator) was less than 22.5 candidates (after rounding), were suppressed.
4) Averages calculated based on fewer than ten candidates (after rounding) were suppressed.

The HESA Standard Rounding Methodology guideline also recommended that percentages be displayed to zero decimal places "unless there is a good statistical reason for using more precision"[14]. In this research, rounding the percentages to zero decimal places would obstruct the main findings we seek to answer (e.g., Table 1) given that most of the differences between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts were found to be relatively small (i.e., less than 1.0%). It would be misleading to report the changes between cohorts to be zero (after rounding, which would imply no change), when in fact there was a small change (e.g., 0.3%). The DfE published similar statistics that were produced using the HESA data[15] and retained the percentage output in one decimal place. In light of the need to retain the usefulness of these statistics outputs, we considered both the risks and benefits of this approach and decided to follow DfE's approach by keeping the percentages in one decimal place. The risk of disclosure this approach imposed is relatively small in our research given that (1) the cohorts of students we analysed were large, even in cases where these students were grouped by their characteristics; hence, any risk of identifying individual students is lower in a big cohort; and (2) the candidate counts used in the percentage calculation were rounded to the nearest multiple of five (both the numerator and denominator) which restricted the possibility of any individual student being identified.

Results

Progression destinations

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of Key Stage 5 students progressing to each progression destination for the 2019 and 2020 cohorts and the differences between the cohorts in percentage points. In this work, we only considered immediate progression, i.e., progression following the year the students completed their Key Stage 5 study and progression to further education (FE) and higher education (HE). In other words, students

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[14] Source: www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/rounding-and-suppression-anonymise-statistics
[15] Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/progression-to-higher-education-and-training-methodology/

who took a gap year or decided to seek employment after their Key Stage 5 study would be considered in the "No HE or FE information" category.

The table shows that there were no big changes in the proportions of Key Stage 5 students who went on to each progression destination between the June 2020 and the June 2019 cohorts. There was a slight increase in the proportion of students who had sustained HE participation (by 0.8 percentage points) and in the proportion of students who had non-sustained HE or FE participation (by 0.3 percentage points) in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 cohort. Consequently, the proportion of students with no progression information in HE or FE was 1.1 percentage points lower, suggesting that perhaps proportionally fewer students in the 2020 cohort took a gap year or joined the labour market after completing their Key Stage 5 study.

Table 15 in Appendix A shows the same information as Table 1 but with a more detailed grouping of progression destinations.

Table 1: Progression destinations of Key Stage 5 students, by cohort.

Progression destination	N students		% students		Difference (2020-2019)
	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	
Sustained higher education (HE)	161505	170810	59.1	59.9	0.8
Sustained further education (FE)	21880	22900	8.0	8.0	0.0
Non-sustained HE or FE	8275	9365	3.0	3.3	0.3
No HE or FE information	81730	82140	29.9	28.8	-1.1
Total	273390	285215	100.0	100.0	

To understand whether students from different backgrounds progressed similarly between the two cohorts, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5 show the proportion of students who progressed to a sustained HE destination, a sustained FE destination, a non-sustained HE or FE destination, or had no HE or FE information respectively, by their background characteristics. Before considering the results, it is worth noting that even though some characteristic groups were collapsed into one (a measure used to minimise the risk of disclosing any individual student), the findings still mainly reflect the pattern observed for the dominant group (i.e., "Other" for the "Other/Missing" school type category, mixed-sex schools for the "Mixed/Missing" school sex category, and the low attainment group for the "Low/Missing" Key Stage 5 attainment group).

The first thing to note from these tables was that the progression rate to a sustained HE destination increased from 2019 to 2020 by the same magnitude (0.8 percentage points) for female and male students. However, the proportion of male students who progressed to a sustained FE destination slightly dropped in 2020 relative to 2019 (0.4 percentage points), but this has marginally increased for female candidates (0.3 percentage points). The proportion of male students with non-sustained HE or FE participation was also marginally higher in the 2020 cohort (0.5 percentage points) than in 2019. But, given the small magnitude of differences, generally speaking, the percentage of students progressing to

each destination had changed broadly similarly for female and male students in 2020 respective to their 2019 levels.

Secondly, proportionally fewer disadvantaged students, students eligible for Free School Meals at Key Stage 4, and Special Education Needs students from the 2020 cohort progressed to a sustained HE destination compared to the same groups of students from the 2019 cohort (between 1.1 and 1.4 percentage points). However, more students from these backgrounds had progressed to a sustained FE education destination in 2020 compared to the 2019 cohort (by about 1.5 to 2.3 percentage points).

Findings from the tables also show that the change in progression destination in 2020 varied slightly by ethnic group. In particular, unlike most of the other ethnic groups, the percentage of Chinese students who progressed to a sustained HE destination dropped in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 cohort (78.3% compared to 81.0%), and proportionally more of these students had no information in HE or FE. A similar trend but to a smaller magnitude was also observed in Asian (not Chinese) students. For all other ethnic groups, progression rates to sustained HE have mostly increased, with the highest increase seen among students in the "Mixed" ethnic group, followed by White students, and the percentage of students without any information in HE or FE have mostly dropped. Compared to other ethnic groups, the progression rates for Black students were relatively stable between the two cohorts.

The percentage of students who progressed to a sustained HE destination increased (from 2019 to 2020) for students from all school types except for those who studied at further education colleges. On the contrary, the progression rate to a sustained FE destination noticeably increased for students from further education colleges in 2020 (6.4 percentage points), but this has dropped for all other school types. The biggest rise in sustained HE progression was observed amongst students from the "Other/Missing" school type (3.1 percentage points), followed by independent schools, sixth form colleges, and non-selective schools (2.3, 2.1, and 2 percentage points, respectively). The smallest change was found amongst students from selective schools. Students from boys' schools also had a more noticeable increase in progression rate (2.2 percentage points) to HE than students from mixed or girls' schools. But, unlike girls' schools, there were proportionally fewer students from boys' schools who went on to participate in FE in 2020 than in 2019.

Table 2: Students who progressed to sustained higher education, by background characteristics.

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	150320	157650	90955	96655	60.5	61.3	0.8
	Male	123070	127565	70550	74155	57.3	58.1	0.8
Disadvantaged	No	230930	239680	136420	144485	59.1	60.3	1.2
	Yes	38475	41925	22845	24445	59.4	58.3	-1.1
	Missing	3985	3610	2240	1880	56.2	52.1	-4.1
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	252720	264050	149390	158780	59.1	60.1	1.0
	Yes	16685	17555	9875	10150	59.2	57.8	-1.4
	Missing	3985	3610	2240	1880	56.2	52.1	-4.1
Ethnicity	Asian	30430	33875	22530	24575	74.0	72.5	-1.5
	Black	13470	14850	10040	11105	74.6	74.8	0.2
	Chinese	1515	1460	1225	1145	81.0	78.3	-2.7
	Mixed	10825	12115	6595	7520	60.9	62.1	1.2
	White	173680	178840	94020	98395	54.1	55.0	0.9
	Other	4160	4540	2990	3240	71.9	71.4	-0.4
	Missing	39315	39535	24100	24830	61.3	62.8	1.5
Special Education Needs	No	224790	234835	132895	140875	59.1	60.0	0.9
	Yes	11595	13400	5920	6660	51.0	49.7	-1.3
	Missing	37005	36980	22690	23275	61.3	62.9	1.6

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	36730	34605	21395	20885	58.3	60.4	2.1
	FE College	27440	35405	11740	13935	42.8	39.4	-3.4
	Independent	30445	30055	19205	19645	63.1	65.4	2.3
	Non-selective	155640	161495	92760	99435	59.6	61.6	2.0
	Selective	22425	22875	16030	16470	71.5	72.0	0.5
	Other/Missing	710	785	370	430	52.0	55.2	3.1
School sex	Mixed	233180	244480	133940	142280	57.4	58.2	0.8
	Boys	17400	17765	11910	12540	68.5	70.6	2.2
	Girls	22595	22770	15530	15885	68.7	69.8	1.0
	Missing	220	200	120	105	55.0	51.7	-3.3
KS4 attainment group	High	88950	92245	64035	66705	72.0	72.3	0.3
	Medium	89830	94965	54230	58905	60.4	62.0	1.7
	Low	90445	93940	40900	43075	45.2	45.9	0.6
	Missing	4165	4065	2335	2125	56.1	52.3	-3.8
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	207780	206130	132825	135910	63.9	65.9	2.0
	Mostly AL & EPQ	19770	22915	10710	13185	54.2	57.5	3.4
	Mixed	3650	4145	1445	1760	39.6	42.5	2.9
	Mostly AG & TL	11855	13720	6005	7190	50.7	52.4	1.7
	AG & TL only	30340	38305	10515	12765	34.7	33.3	-1.3
KS5 attainment group	High	73905	89895	54880	65430	74.3	72.8	-1.5
	Medium	105040	86415	64750	53795	61.6	62.3	0.6
	Low/Missing	94445	108905	41870	51590	44.3	47.4	3.0

Table 3: Students who progressed to sustained further education, by background characteristics.

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	150320	157650	12165	13285	8.1	8.4	0.3
	Male	123070	127565	9715	9620	7.9	7.5	-0.4
Disadvantaged	No	230930	239680	18315	18360	7.9	7.7	-0.3
	Yes	38475	41925	3395	4350	8.8	10.4	1.5
	Missing	3985	3610	170	190	4.3	5.3	1.0
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	252720	264050	20155	20715	8.0	7.8	-0.1
	Yes	16685	17555	1555	1995	9.3	11.4	2.0
	Missing	3985	3610	170	190	4.3	5.3	1.0
Ethnicity	Asian	30430	33875	1525	1800	5.0	5.3	0.3
	Black	13470	14850	690	820	5.1	5.5	0.4
	Chinese	1515	1460	75	70	5.0	4.8	-0.2
	Mixed	10825	12115	790	880	7.3	7.3	0.0
	White	173680	178840	17095	17540	9.8	9.8	0.0
	Other	4160	4540	195	250	4.7	5.5	0.8
	Missing	39315	39535	1515	1540	3.8	3.9	0.0
Special Education Needs	No	150320	157650	12165	13285	8.4	8.2	-0.2
	Yes	123070	127565	9715	9620	14.0	16.3	2.3
	Missing	230930	239680	18315	18360	3.7	3.7	0.0

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	36730	34605	3150	2845	8.6	8.2	-0.4
	FE College	27440	35405	4885	8575	17.8	24.2	6.4
	Independent	30445	30055	790	690	2.6	2.3	-0.3
	Non-selective	155640	161495	11995	9905	7.7	6.1	-1.6
	Selective	22425	22875	980	815	4.4	3.6	-0.8
	Other/Missing	710	785	80	75	11.4	9.5	-2.0
School sex	Mixed	233180	244480	20020	21390	8.6	8.7	0.2
	Boys	17400	17765	695	555	4.0	3.1	-0.9
	Girls	22595	22770	1130	920	5.0	4.0	-1.0
	Missing	220	200	40	35	17.4	16.4	-1.0
KS4 attainment group	High	88950	92245	3345	3270	3.8	3.5	-0.2
	Medium	89830	94965	7035	6445	7.8	6.8	-1.0
	Low	90445	93940	11320	12965	12.5	13.8	1.3
	Missing	4165	4065	185	220	4.4	5.4	1.0
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	207780	206130	12775	10710	6.1	5.2	-1.0
	Mostly AL & EPQ	19770	22915	1965	1730	9.9	7.6	-2.4
	Mixed	3650	4145	490	470	13.5	11.4	-2.1
	Mostly AG & TL	11855	13720	1235	1190	10.4	8.7	-1.7
	AG & TL only	30340	38305	5415	8800	17.9	23.0	5.1
KS5 attainment group	High	73905	89895	2845	3805	3.8	4.2	0.4
	Medium	105040	86415	7655	6145	7.3	7.1	-0.2
	Low/Missing	94445	108905	11380	12955	12.1	11.9	-0.2

Table 4: Students who did not sustainably progressed to further or higher education, by background characteristics.

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	150320	157650	4720	5065	3.1	3.2	0.1
	Male	123070	127565	3555	4305	2.9	3.4	0.5
Disadvantaged	No	230930	239680	6795	7590	2.9	3.2	0.2
	Yes	38475	41925	1425	1715	3.7	4.1	0.4
	Missing	3985	3610	55	65	1.4	1.7	0.3
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	252720	264050	7595	8545	3.0	3.2	0.2
	Yes	16685	17555	625	755	3.7	4.3	0.6
	Missing	3985	3610	55	65	1.4	1.7	0.3
Ethnicity	Asian	30430	33875	670	935	2.2	2.8	0.6
	Black	13470	14850	275	325	2.1	2.2	0.1
	Chinese	1515	1460	20	25	1.2	1.6	0.5
	Mixed	10825	12115	285	390	2.7	3.2	0.6
	White	173680	178840	6115	6725	3.5	3.8	0.2
	Other	4160	4540	85	120	2.1	2.7	0.6
	Missing	39315	39535	820	850	2.1	2.1	0.1
Special Education Needs	No	224790	234835	7135	8040	3.2	3.4	0.3
	Yes	11595	13400	375	550	3.2	4.1	0.9
	Missing	37005	36980	765	780	2.1	2.1	0.0

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Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	36730	34605	1180	1140	3.2	3.3	0.1
	FE College	27440	35405	1170	1685	4.3	4.8	0.5
	Independent	30445	30055	530	535	1.7	1.8	0.0
	Non-selective	155640	161495	4965	5510	3.2	3.4	0.2
	Selective	22425	22875	410	465	1.8	2.0	0.2
	Other/Missing	710	785	15	30	2.1	3.8	1.7
School sex	Boys	17400	17765	325	335	1.9	1.9	0.0
	Girls	22595	22770	465	520	2.1	2.3	0.2
	Mixed/Missing	233400	244680	7485	8510	3.2	3.5	0.3
KS4 attainment group	High	88950	92245	1700	1800	1.9	2.0	0.0
	Medium	89830	94965	2740	3030	3.1	3.2	0.1
	Low	90445	93940	3775	4455	4.2	4.7	0.6
	Missing	4165	4065	60	80	1.4	1.9	0.5
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	207780	206130	5440	5420	2.6	2.6	0.0
	Mostly AL & EPQ	19770	22915	695	955	3.5	4.2	0.7
	Mixed	3650	4145	155	210	4.3	5.1	0.8
	Mostly AG & TL	11855	13720	485	660	4.1	4.8	0.7
	AG & TL only	30340	38305	1495	2115	4.9	5.5	0.6
KS5 attainment group	High	73905	89895	1475	1835	2.0	2.0	0.0
	Medium	105040	86415	3130	2760	3.0	3.2	0.2
	Low/Missing	94445	108905	3670	4775	3.9	4.4	0.5

Table 5: Students who did not have progression information in further or higher education, by background characteristics.

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	150320	157650	42480	42645	28.3	27.1	-1.2
	Male	123070	127565	39250	39490	31.9	31.0	-0.9
Disadvantaged	No	230930	239680	69400	69245	30.1	28.9	-1.2
	Yes	38475	41925	10810	11420	28.1	27.2	-0.9
	Missing	3985	3610	1520	1475	38.1	40.9	2.8
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	252720	264050	75585	76010	29.9	28.8	-1.1
	Yes	16685	17555	4630	4655	27.8	26.5	-1.2
	Missing	3985	3610	1520	1475	38.1	40.9	2.8
Ethnicity	Asian	30430	33875	5705	6565	18.8	19.4	0.6
	Black	13470	14850	2460	2600	18.2	17.5	-0.8
	Chinese	1515	1460	195	225	12.9	15.3	2.4
	Mixed	10825	12115	3155	3325	29.2	27.5	-1.7
	White	173680	178840	56450	56180	32.5	31.4	-1.1
	Other	4160	4540	890	930	21.4	20.4	-0.9
	Missing	39315	39535	12880	12320	32.8	31.2	-1.6
Special Education Needs	No	224790	234835	65850	66560	29.3	28.3	-1.0
	Yes	11595	13400	3685	4010	31.8	29.9	-1.9
	Missing	37005	36980	12195	11570	33.0	31.3	-1.7

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students progressing		% students progressing		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	36730	34605	11005	9735	30.0	28.1	-1.8
	FE College	27440	35405	9640	11210	35.1	31.7	-3.5
	Independent	30445	30055	9920	9185	32.6	30.6	-2.0
	Non-selective	155640	161495	45920	46640	29.5	28.9	-0.6
	Selective	22425	22875	5005	5125	22.3	22.4	0.1
	Other/Missing	710	785	245	245	34.4	31.5	-2.9
School sex	Boys	17400	17765	4470	4330	25.7	24.4	-1.3
	Girls	22595	22770	5470	5445	24.2	23.9	-0.3
	Mixed/Missing	233400	244680	71795	72365	30.8	29.6	-1.2
KS4 attainment group	High	88950	92245	19870	20465	22.3	22.2	-0.2
	Medium	89830	94965	25825	26585	28.7	28.0	-0.8
	Low	90445	93940	34450	33445	38.1	35.6	-2.5
	Missing	4165	4065	1580	1640	38.0	40.3	2.3
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	207780	206130	56740	54090	27.3	26.2	-1.1
	Mostly AL & EPQ	19770	22915	6400	7040	32.4	30.7	-1.7
	Mixed	3650	4145	1555	1700	42.7	41.0	-1.7
	Mostly AG & TL	11855	13720	4125	4680	34.8	34.1	-0.7
	AG & TL only	30340	38305	12910	14630	42.6	38.2	-4.4
KS5 attainment group	High	73905	89895	14705	18830	19.9	20.9	1.0
	Medium	105040	86415	29505	23720	28.1	27.4	-0.6
	Low/Missing	94445	108905	37520	39590	39.7	36.4	-3.4

In addition, the tables also show that although the HE progression rates increased for all students, regardless of their Key Stage 4 attainment group, the increase was higher for students from the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group (1.7 percentage points). Combining this with the drop in the FE progression rate suggests that, proportionally, more students from the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group had progressed to a sustained HE destination instead of a sustained *FE* destination in 2020 compared to 2019. For the low Key Stage 4 attainment group, proportionally slightly more students had progressed to a HE or FE destination (sustained or non-sustained) in 2020 than in 2019. Finally, the progression rates to HE and FE destinations (sustained and non-sustained) of the high Key Stage 4 attainment group remained similar in the 2020 and 2019 cohorts.

To better understand whether the change in 2020 outcomes was driven by the changes in student characteristics between the two cohorts, Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 depict the predicted probability of students progressing to a sustained HE destination, progressing to a sustained FE destination, and having no information in HE or FE respectively, by their Key Stage 4 attainment group. These predicted probabilities were calculated based on outputs from the regression models that controlled for any potential changes in cohort characteristics (for more about the model, see the "Analysis methods" section). The full regression outputs for these figures are presented in Table 16 in Appendix B. The probabilities shown in these figures are specifically for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only. The predicted probability for students with a different set of background characteristics might be different but the *probability differences between cohorts* would nonetheless be the same as those depicted in these figures.

These figures demonstrated that, in practical terms, the cohort differences within each Key Stage 4 attainment group were small after considering any changes in cohort characteristics between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts. The biggest probability difference was only about two percentage points. In other words, our findings suggest that students in the 2020 cohort did not have a noticeably higher or lower probability of progressing to each destination compared to students with the same characteristic profile from the 2019 cohort.

Figure 1: Predicted probabilities of sustained higher education (HE) participation, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only.

Figure 2: Predicted probabilities of sustained further education (FE) participation, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only.

Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of not having progression information in further education (FE) or higher education (HE), by Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only.

Table 2 shows that the percentage of students who progressed to a sustained HE destination increased for students from all Key Stage 5 pathways, except those who only took Applied Generals or Tech Levels (or both). On the contrary, the progression rates to a sustained FE destination noticeably increased for these students who only took Applied Generals or Tech Levels only (by 5.5. percentage points) but dropped for students from all other Key Stage 5 pathways. These cohort differences can still be observed after controlling for background characteristic changes between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts, although the magnitude of differences was again generally small in practice. These findings are depicted in Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6, which show the predicted probability of students progressing to a sustained HE destination, progressing to a sustained FE destination, and having no information in HE or FE respectively, by their Key Stage 5 pathway. The full regression outputs for these figures are presented in Table 17 in Appendix B.

As seen in these figures, the biggest difference in predicted probabilities between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts was in the group of students who took Applied Generals or Tech Levels (or both) only. Among students who took this Key Stage 5 pathway, it was predicted that students from the 2020 cohort had a 5-percentage point higher probability of progressing to a sustained FE destination than students from the 2019 cohort with the same characteristics (e.g., same ethnic group, socioeconomic background, school type, Key Stage 4 attainment group, etc). The cohort differences for the remaining progression destinations and Key Stage 5 pathways were practically small, with a 3-percentage point difference at most.
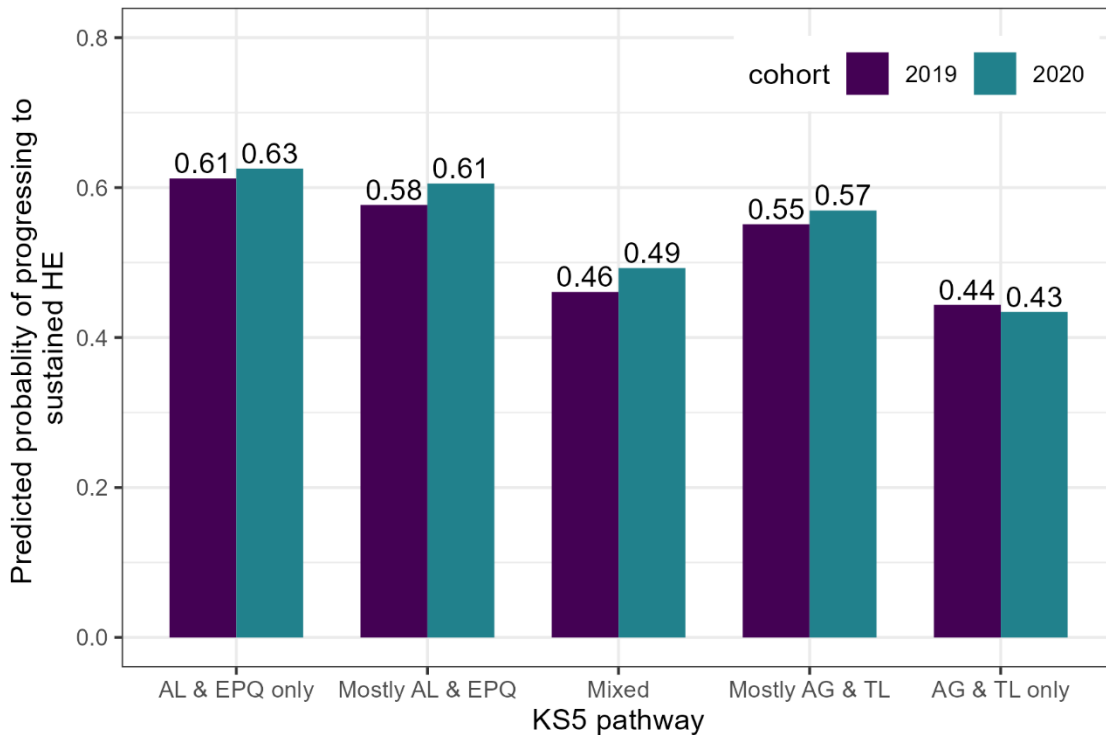
Figure 4: Predicted probabilities of sustained higher education (HE) participation, by Key Stage 5 pathway and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and in the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group.
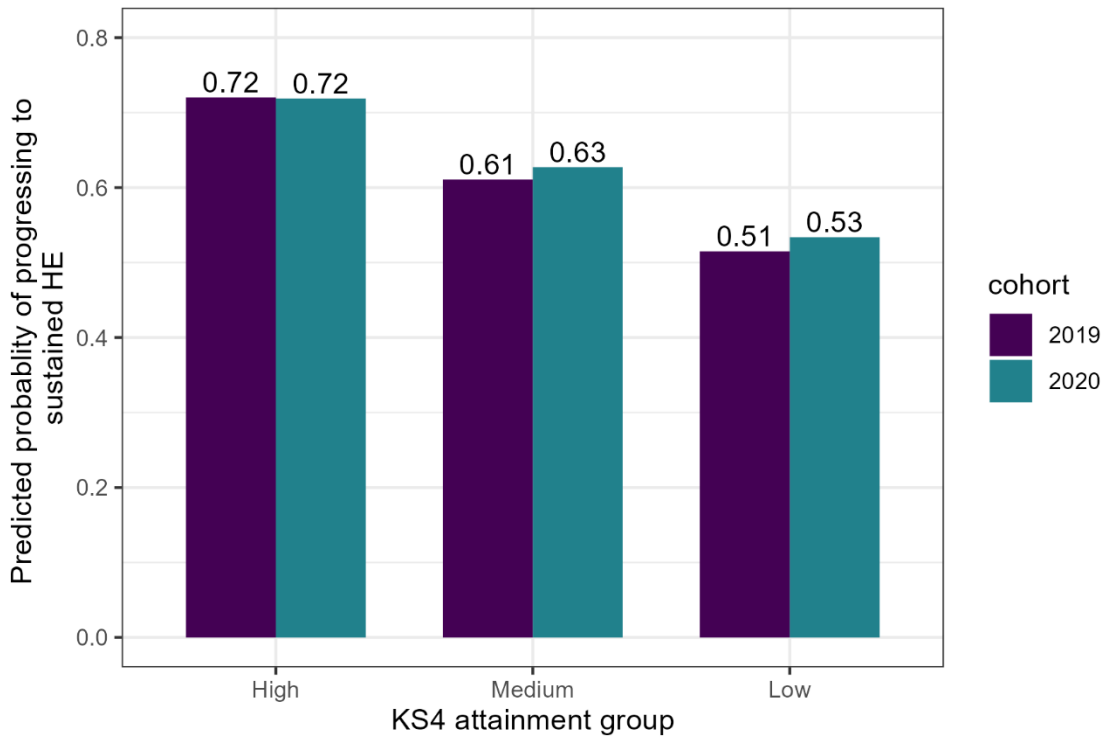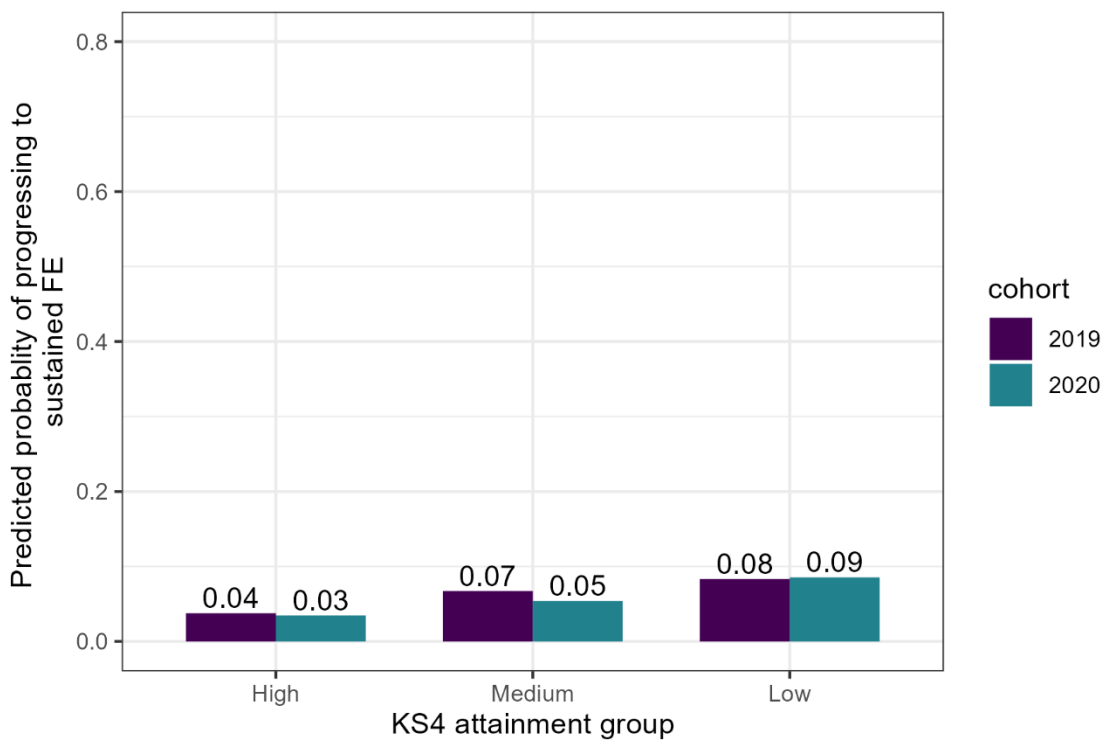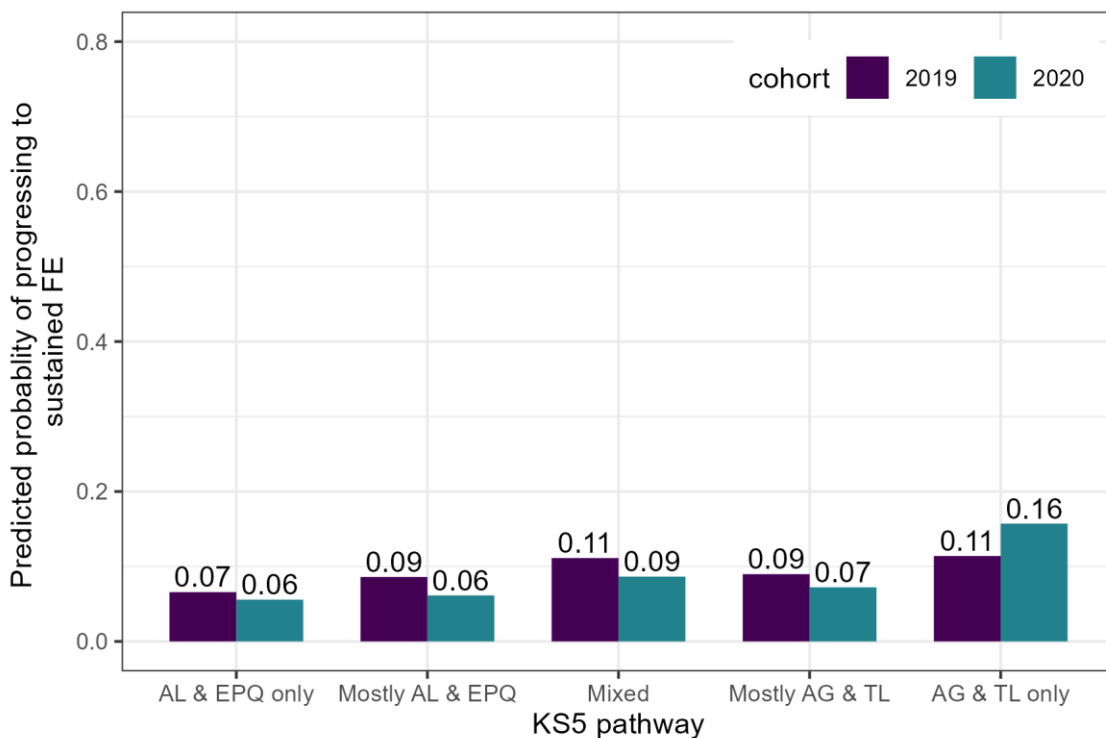

Figure 5: Predicted probabilities of sustained further education (FE) participation, by Key Stage 5 pathway and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and in the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group.
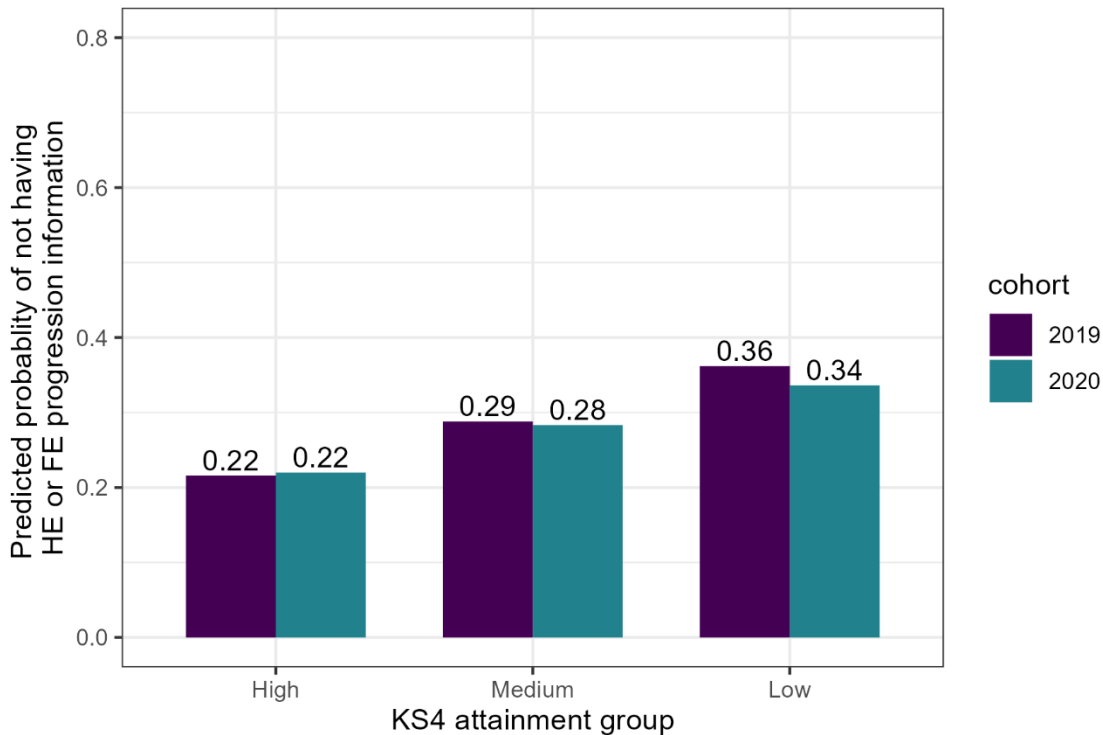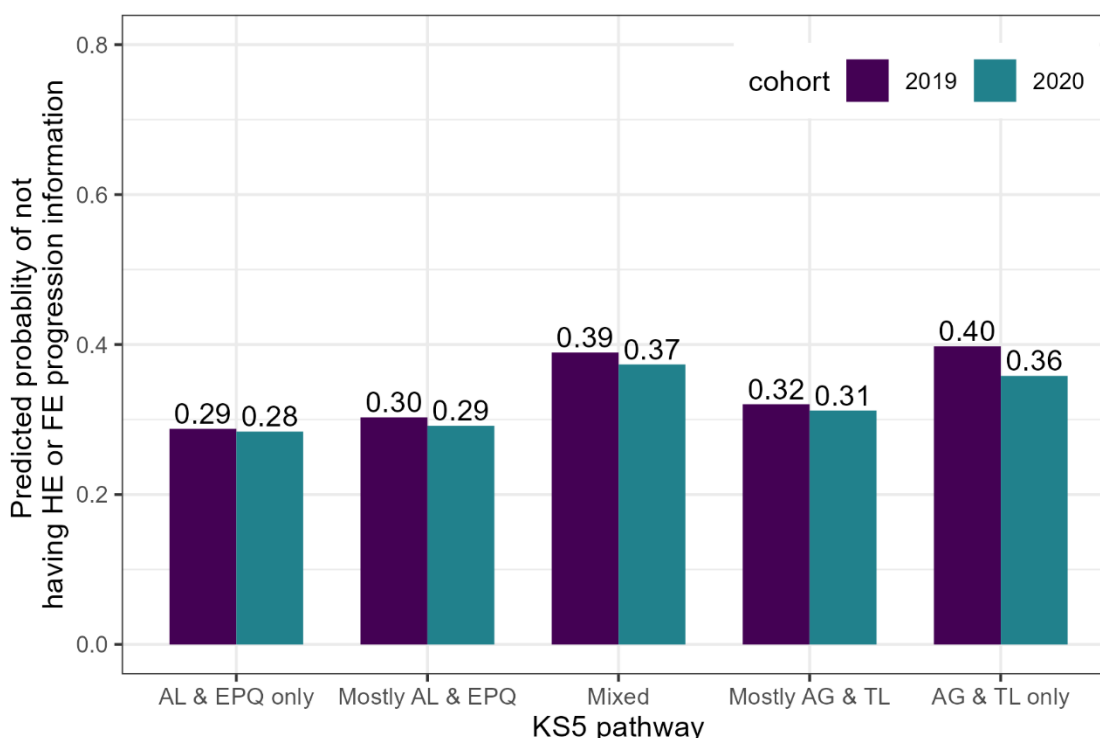
Figure 6: Predicted probabilities of not having progression information in further education (FE) or higher education (HE), by Key Stage 5 pathway and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and in the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group.

Finally, Table 2 to Table 5 also show that the percentage of students progressing to each destination had changed the most (from 2019 to 2020) for students from the low Key Stage 5 attainment group. The percentage of low Key Stage 5 attainers progressing to a sustained HE destination was noticeably higher in 2020 (by 3 percentage points), and the percentage of students from this attainment group who had no information in HE or FE was also noticeably lower in 2020 (3.4 percentage points). The findings for the high attainers were very different. In 2020, the percentage of high attainers who had a sustained HE participation dropped by 1.5 percentage points, whilst the percentages of students in this attainment group who had a sustained FE participation and who had no HE or FE information (i.e., took a gap year or joined the labour market) increase by 0.4 and 1.0 percentage points, respectively. Lastly, the progression rates of the medium attainers to various destinations remained mostly unchanged between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts. However, it is worth noting that the comparison between the two cohorts based on students' Key Stage 5 attainment group is less informative, given that the attainment of students in each attainment group in 2020 was higher than that of students in the same group in 2019.

Types of higher education institutions

The results in this section show the types of HE institutions attended by Key Stage 5 students with sustained HE participation. Results from Table 6 indicate that the percentage of students who attended a Russell Group university increased by 3.5 percentage points in 2020 relative to the same group of students from the 2019 cohort. Consequently, the

percentage of students who attended a university in the University Alliance group and other universities was lower in the 2020 cohort.

Table 6: Type of institutions attended by Key Stage 5 students who progressed to sustained higher education (HE), by cohort.

Higher education institution type	N students		% students		Difference (2020-2019)
	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	
Russell Group	53025	62120	32.8	36.4	3.5
University Alliance	41255	40330	25.5	23.6	-1.9
Other	67220	68360	41.6	40.0	-1.6
Total students progressed to HE	161505	170810	100.0	100.0	

Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9 show the percentage of Key Stage 5 students (those with sustained HE participation) who attended a Russell Group university, a university in the University Alliance group, and other universities, respectively, by their background characteristics. Similar to the previous results, some characteristic groups were collapsed into one to minimise the risk of disclosing any individual student, but it is worth noting that the findings still mainly reflect the pattern observed for the dominant group (i.e., the non-missing groups).

The first thing to note from these tables is that the proportion of students who attended a Russell Group university was higher among the 2020 cohort than among the 2019 cohort, regardless of their background characteristics, and lower for other institution types.

The one exception was the high Key Stage 5 attainers. The percentage of students who progressed to a Russell Group university was lower among the high Key Stage 5 attainers of the 2020 cohort than those in the 2019 cohort but higher for other non-Russell Group institutions. As briefly discussed, comparing the cohorts based on students' Key Stage 5 attainment group should be treated with a bit of caution since the attainment of students in each attainment group in 2020 was higher than the attainment of students in the same group in 2019 due to the possible grade inflation that had happened in June 2020. Given that within each Key Stage 5 attainment group, the performance was higher for the June 2020 cohort than for the June 2019 cohort, it would be very unlikely that proportionally more students from the high Key Stage 5 attainment group were not offered a place in these universities in 2020. It seems more likely that this high-attaining group had included students of different interest profiles in the two cohorts, which could partly determine the types of HE institutions they applied to (as will be shown later, for example, in Figure 23, the percentage of students from the high Key Stage 5 attainment group enrolling in "Design, and Creative and Performing Arts" was higher in 2020 than in 2019, and lower for "Medicine and Dentistry").

Even though students from almost all backgrounds had a higher rate of progression to a Russell Group university and a lower rate of progression to other non-Russell Group universities in 2020 than in 2019, the changes differed by students' backgrounds. Firstly, the increase (from 2019 to 2020) in the proportion of students who progressed to a Russell

Group university was slightly higher among disadvantaged than non-disadvantaged students (4.3 vs 3.5 percentage points).

Among the ethnic groups, the increase in the proportion of students who progressed to a Russell Group university was the highest for Chinese students (6.1 percentage points), followed by Black and Asian students (5.1 and 4.9 percentage points). On the contrary, the percentage of Chinese students who studied at an institution not belonging to the Russell Group or University Alliance dropped by 5.2 percentage points, and the percentages of Black and Asian students who attended a university in the University Alliance group both dropped by 3.1 percentage points.

As for school type and school sex, the increase in the percentage of students who attended a Russell Group university was the highest among students from independent schools (4.9 percentage points), followed by those from selective and non-selective schools (4.4. and 4.1 percentage points). Single-sex schools also had a greater increase compared to mixed-sex schools. Consequently, proportionally fewer students from independent, selective, non-selective, and single-sex schools had attended an institution not belonging to the Russell Group.

The changes in percentages (between 2019 and 2020) of students progressing to the different institutions were very similar between female and male students, between students with and without Free School Meals eligibility, and between students with and without Special Education Needs.

Table 7: The number and percentage of Key Stage 5 students (who progressed to higher education sustainably) attending a Russell Group university, by background characteristics.

Characteristics		N KS5 students progressed to HE		N students attending		% students attending		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	90955	96655	29090	34440	32.0	35.6	3.6
	Male	70550	74155	23935	27680	33.9	37.3	3.4
Disadvantaged	No	136420	144485	47510	55310	34.8	38.3	3.5
	Yes	22845	24445	4390	5745	19.2	23.5	4.3
	Missing	2240	1880	1130	1060	50.4	56.5	6.1
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	149390	158780	49955	58700	33.4	37.0	3.5
	Yes	9875	10150	1940	2355	19.7	23.2	3.6
	Missing	2240	1880	1130	1060	50.4	56.5	6.1
Ethnicity	Asian	22530	24575	5790	7510	25.7	30.6	4.9
	Black	10040	11105	1870	2635	18.6	23.7	5.1
	Chinese	1225	1145	600	630	49.1	55.2	6.1
	Mixed	6595	7520	2055	2575	31.2	34.3	3.1
	White	94020	98395	28605	33040	30.4	33.6	3.2
	Other	2990	3240	810	1010	27.0	31.2	4.2
	Missing	24100	24830	13295	14720	55.2	59.3	4.1
Special Education Needs	No	132895	140875	38975	46355	29.3	32.9	3.6
	Yes	5920	6660	1225	1595	20.7	23.9	3.2
	Missing	22690	23275	12820	14170	56.5	60.9	4.4

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Characteristics		N KS5 students progressed to HE		N students attending		% students attending		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	21395	20885	6090	6545	28.5	31.3	2.9
	FE College	11740	13935	1910	2490	16.3	17.9	1.6
	Independent	19205	19645	11835	13075	61.6	66.5	4.9
	Non-selective	92760	99435	24830	30675	26.8	30.8	4.1
	Selective	16030	16470	8260	9205	51.5	55.9	4.4
	Other/Missing	370	430	105	130	27.9	29.9	1.9
School sex	Mixed	133940	142280	39770	47025	29.7	33.1	3.4
	Boys	11910	12540	6080	7025	51.0	56.0	5.0
	Girls	15530	15885	7160	8050	46.1	50.7	4.6
	Missing	120	105	15	15	14.2	16.3	2.2
KS4 attainment group	High	64035	66705	39235	44395	61.3	66.6	5.3
	Medium	54230	58905	10495	13780	19.3	23.4	4.0
	Low	40900	43075	2140	2760	5.2	6.4	1.2
	Missing	2335	2125	1160	1180	49.6	55.6	6.0
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	132825	135910	51165	59325	38.5	43.6	5.1
	Mostly AL & EPQ	10710	13185	915	1465	8.6	11.1	2.6
	Mixed	1445	1760	95	165	6.4	9.3	2.9
	Mostly AG & TL	6005	7190	335	470	5.6	6.5	0.9
	AG & TL only	10515	12765	515	700	4.9	5.5	0.6
KS5 attainment group	High	54880	65430	38925	45580	70.9	69.7	-1.3
	Medium	64750	53795	13475	14790	20.8	27.5	6.7
	Low/Missing	41870	51585	625	1750	1.5	3.4	1.9

Table 8: The number and percentage of Key Stage 5 students (who progressed to higher education sustainably) attending a university belonging to the University Alliance, by background characteristics

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students attending		% students attending		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	90955	96655	23030	22420	25.3	23.2	-2.1
	Male	70550	74155	18225	17905	25.8	24.1	-1.7
Disadvantaged	No	136420	144485	34200	33430	25.1	23.1	-1.9
	Yes	22845	24445	6755	6685	29.6	27.4	-2.2
	Missing	2240	1880	300	210	13.4	11.2	-2.2
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	149390	158780	38055	37345	25.5	23.5	-2.0
	Yes	9875	10150	2900	2775	29.4	27.3	-2.1
	Missing	2240	1880	300	210	13.4	11.2	-2.2
Ethnicity	Asian	22530	24575	6155	5965	27.3	24.3	-3.1
	Black	10040	11105	2960	2935	29.5	26.4	-3.1
	Chinese	1225	1145	200	175	16.5	15.5	-1.0
	Mixed	6595	7520	1580	1725	23.9	23.0	-1.0
	White	94020	98395	26210	25630	27.9	26	-1.8
	Other	2990	3240	665	600	22.3	18.5	-3.8
	Missing	24100	24830	3485	3300	14.5	13.3	-1.2
Special Education Needs	No	132895	140875	36445	35665	27.4	25.3	-2.1
	Yes	5920	6660	1700	1755	28.7	26.3	-2.4
	Missing	22690	23275	3115	2910	13.7	12.5	-1.2

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students attending		% students attending		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	21395	20885	6525	5985	30.5	28.7	-1.8
	FE College	11740	13935	4030	4430	34.3	31.8	-2.5
	Independent	19205	19645	2165	1900	11.3	9.7	-1.6
	Non-selective	92760	99435	26275	25915	28.3	26.1	-2.3
	Selective	16030	16470	2160	1990	13.5	12.1	-1.4
	Other/Missing	370	430	100	105	27.4	24.5	-2.8
School sex	Mixed	133940	142280	37270	36645	27.8	25.8	-2.1
	Boys	11910	12540	1700	1535	14.3	12.2	-2.0
	Girls	15530	15885	2265	2130	14.6	13.4	-1.2
	Missing	120	105	25	15	19.2	16.3	-2.8
KS4 attainment group	High	64035	66705	6740	5655	10.5	8.5	-2.0
	Medium	54230	58905	18005	17760	33.2	30.2	-3.0
	Low	40900	43075	16190	16655	39.6	38.7	-0.9
	Missing	2335	2125	325	255	13.8	12.0	-1.8
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	132825	135910	30010	27000	22.6	19.9	-2.7
	Mostly AL & EPQ	10710	13185	4250	4985	39.7	37.8	-1.9
	Mixed	1445	1760	580	720	40.2	41.0	0.8
	Mostly AG & TL	6005	7190	2485	2785	41.4	38.7	-2.7
	AG & TL only	10515	12765	3930	4835	37.4	37.9	0.5
KS5 attainment group	High	54880	65430	3405	4520	6.2	6.9	0.7
	Medium	64750	53795	19905	14690	30.7	27.3	-3.4
	Low/Missing	41870	51585	17945	21120	42.9	40.9	-1.9

Table 9: The number and percentage of Key Stage 5 students (who progressed to higher education sustainably) attending an institution not in Russell Group or the University Alliance, by background characteristics.

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students attending		% students attending		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
Gender	Female	90955	96655	38835	39795	42.7	41.2	-1.5
	Male	70550	74155	28385	28565	40.2	38.5	-1.7
Disadvantaged	No	136420	144485	54710	55745	40.1	38.6	-1.5
	Yes	22845	24445	11695	12010	51.2	49.1	-2.1
	Missing	2240	1880	810	605	36.2	32.3	-4.0
Eligible for Free School Meals	No	149390	158780	61380	62735	41.1	39.5	-1.6
	Yes	9875	10150	5030	5020	51.0	49.4	-1.5
	Missing	2240	1880	810	605	36.2	32.3	-4.0
Ethnicity	Asian	22530	24575	10585	11105	47.0	45.2	-1.8
	Black	10040	11105	5215	5535	51.9	49.9	-2.0
	Chinese	1225	1145	425	335	34.5	29.3	-5.2
	Mixed	6595	7520	2960	3215	44.9	42.8	-2.1
	White	94020	98395	39205	39730	41.7	40.4	-1.3
	Other	2990	3240	1515	1630	50.7	50.3	-0.3
	Missing	24100	24830	7325	6810	30.4	27.4	-3.0
Special Education Needs	No	132895	140875	57475	58855	43.2	41.8	-1.5
	Yes	5920	6660	2990	3315	50.5	49.7	-0.8
	Missing	22690	23275	6755	6195	29.8	26.6	-3.2

Characteristics		N KS5 students analysed		N students attending		% students attending		
		2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	Difference (2020-2019)
School type	6th Form	21395	20885	8780	8355	41.0	40.0	-1.0
	FE College	11740	13935	5805	7015	49.4	50.3	0.9
	Independent	19205	19645	5205	4670	27.1	23.8	-3.3
	Non-selective	92760	99435	41655	42850	44.9	43.1	-1.8
	Selective	16030	16470	5615	5280	35.0	32.0	-3.0
	Other/Missing	370	430	165	195	44.7	45.6	0.9
School sex	Mixed	133940	142280	56900	58610	42.5	41.2	-1.3
	Boys	11910	12540	4135	3980	34.7	31.7	-3.0
	Girls	15530	15885	6105	5700	39.3	35.9	-3.4
	Missing	120	105	80	70	66.7	67.3	0.6
KS4 attainment group	High	64035	66705	18060	16650	28.2	25.0	-3.2
	Medium	54230	58905	25735	27365	47.5	46.5	-1.0
	Low	40900	43075	22570	23660	55.2	54.9	-0.3
	Missing	2335	2125	855	690	36.6	32.4	-4.3
KS5 pathway (AG = applied generals, TL = Tech Levels; AL = A Levels; EPQ = Extended Project Qualification)	AL & EPQ only	132825	135910	51655	49585	38.9	36.5	-2.4
	Mostly AL & EPQ	10710	13185	5545	6735	51.8	51.1	-0.7
	Mixed	1445	1760	770	875	53.4	49.7	-3.7
	Mostly AG & TL	6005	7190	3185	3935	53.0	54.8	1.8
	AG & TL only	10515	12765	6070	7230	57.7	56.6	-1.1
KS5 attainment group	High	54880	65430	12550	15325	22.9	23.4	0.6
	Medium	64750	53795	31370	24310	48.4	45.2	-3.3
	Low/Missing	41870	51585	23300	28720	55.6	55.7	0.0

The tables above also showed that the percentage increase in the proportion of students who attended a Russell Group university was the highest among students in the high Key Stage 4 attainment group (5.3 percentage points) and the lowest among those in the low attainment group (1.2 percentage points). This is further explored in Figure 7, which depicts the predicted probability of students in each Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort attending a Russell Group university (full regression outputs in Appendix C).

It indicates that high-attaining students from the 2020 cohort had about five percentage points higher probability of progressing to a Russell Group university than the same group of students from the 2019 cohort after controlling for differences in cohort characteristics. As a result, students from the high Key Stage 4 attainment group were predicted to be less likely to progress to other non-Russell Group universities in 2020 than in 2019. This can be seen in Figure 8 and Figure 9, which present the predicted probabilities of students attending a university in the University Alliance group and a university not in Russell Group or University Alliance, respectively, by Key Stage 4 attainment group. The full regression outputs are again presented in Table 18 in Appendix C.
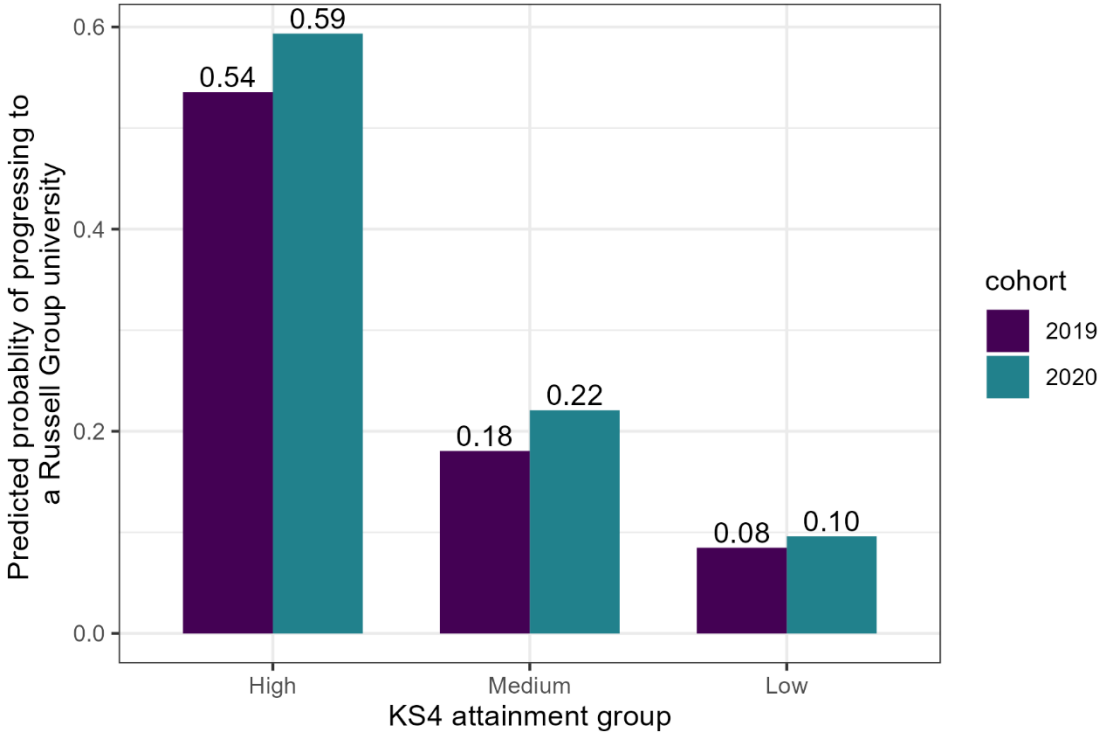
Figure 7: Predicted probabilities of progressing to a Russell Group university, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only.
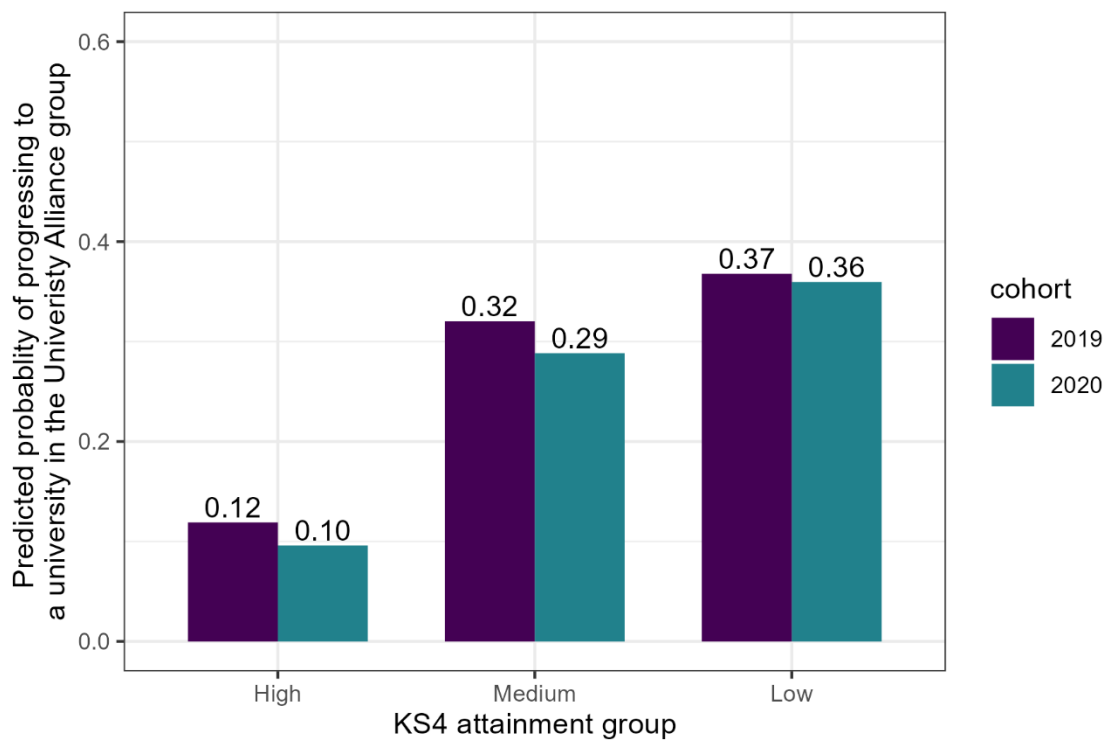
Figure 8: Predicted probabilities of progressing to a University Alliance university, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only.
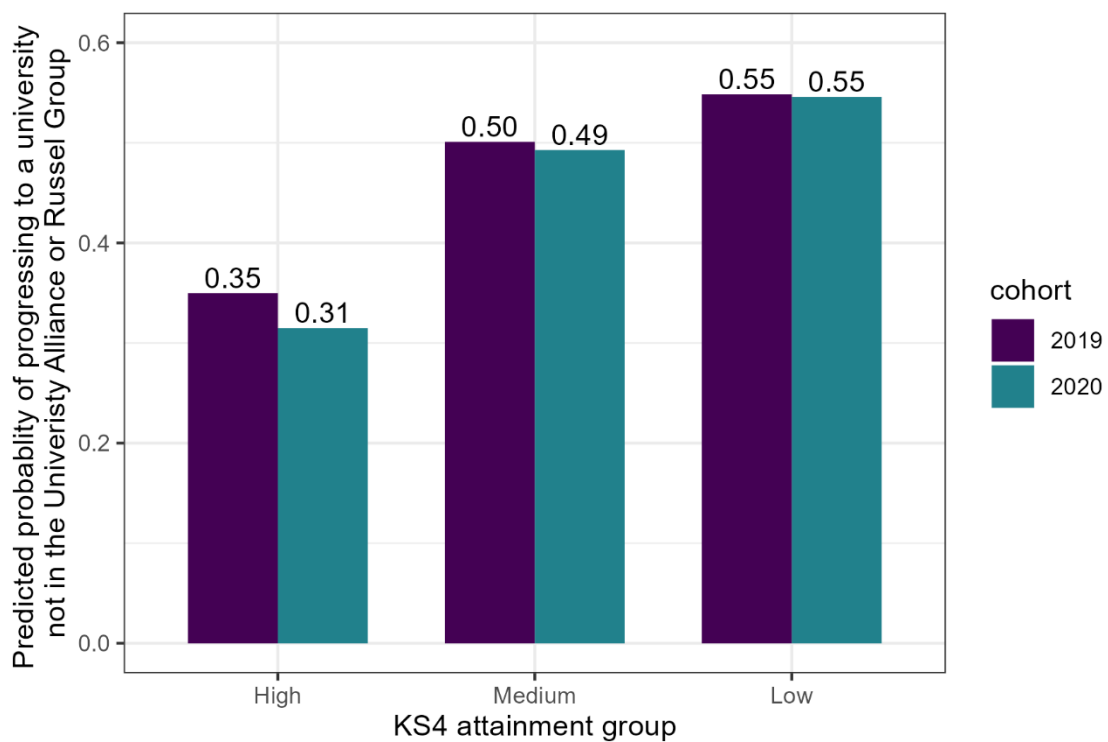
Figure 9: Predicted probabilities of progressing to a university not in Russell Group or University Alliance, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and taking either A Levels or EPQ (or both) only.

Lastly, results from Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9 also suggest the increase in the proportion of students who progressed to a Russell Group university was the highest (5.1 percentage points) for students who took A Levels or EPQ (or both) compared to the increase observed in students from other Key Stage 5 pathways. Students who took the "Mixed" Key Stage 5 pathways and those who mostly took A Levels and EPQ had the second and the third highest increase.

Figure 10, Figure 11 and Figure 12 below show the predicted probabilities of students attending a university in the Russell Group, a university in the University Alliance group and a university in the other institution types, respectively, by their Key Stage 5 pathways and cohort. The full regression outputs are presented in Table 19 in Appendix C. The figures show that the 2020 cohort of students who only took A Levels or EPQ (or both) had about four percentage points higher probability of progressing to a Russell Group university than the 2019 students from the same pathway. The probability difference between the two cohorts was mostly small for students from all other pathways and for progression to other institution types. In other words, our findings suggest that, in most cases, students in the 2020 cohort did not have a noticeably higher or lower probability of progressing to each institution type compared to the 2019 cohort of students who took the same pathways.
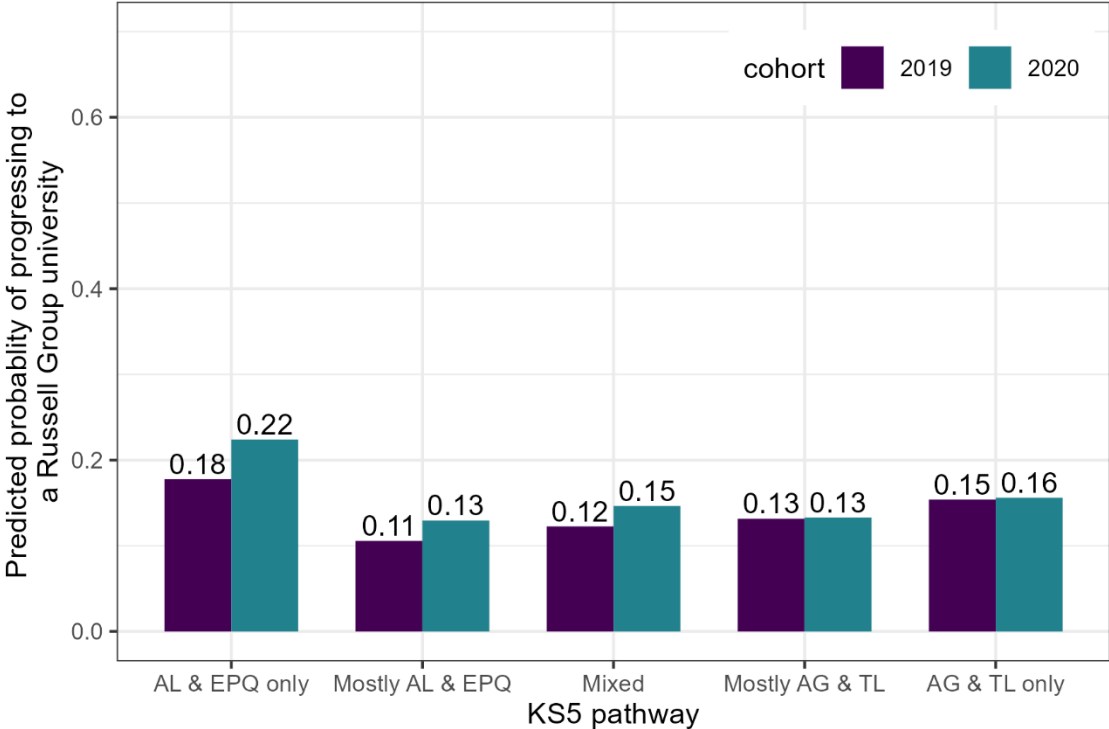
Figure 10: Predicted probabilities of progressing to a Russell Group university, by Key Stage 5 pathway and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and in the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group.
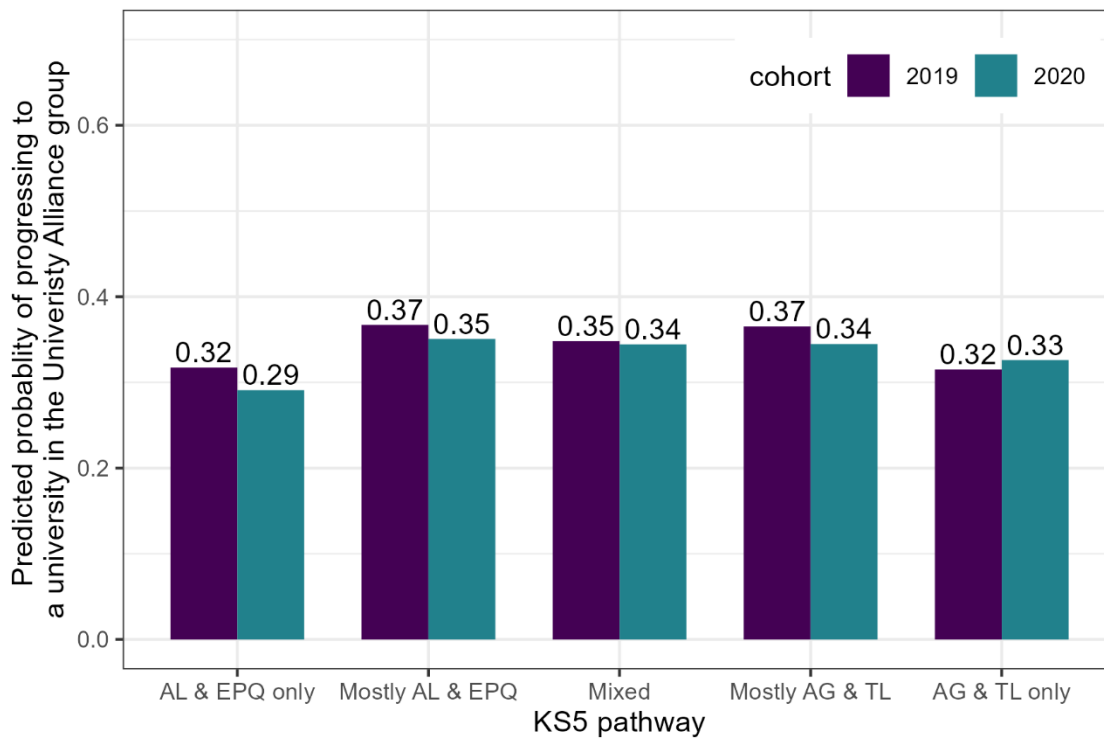
Figure 11: Predicted probabilities of progressing to a university in University Alliance, by Key Stage 5 pathway and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and in the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group.
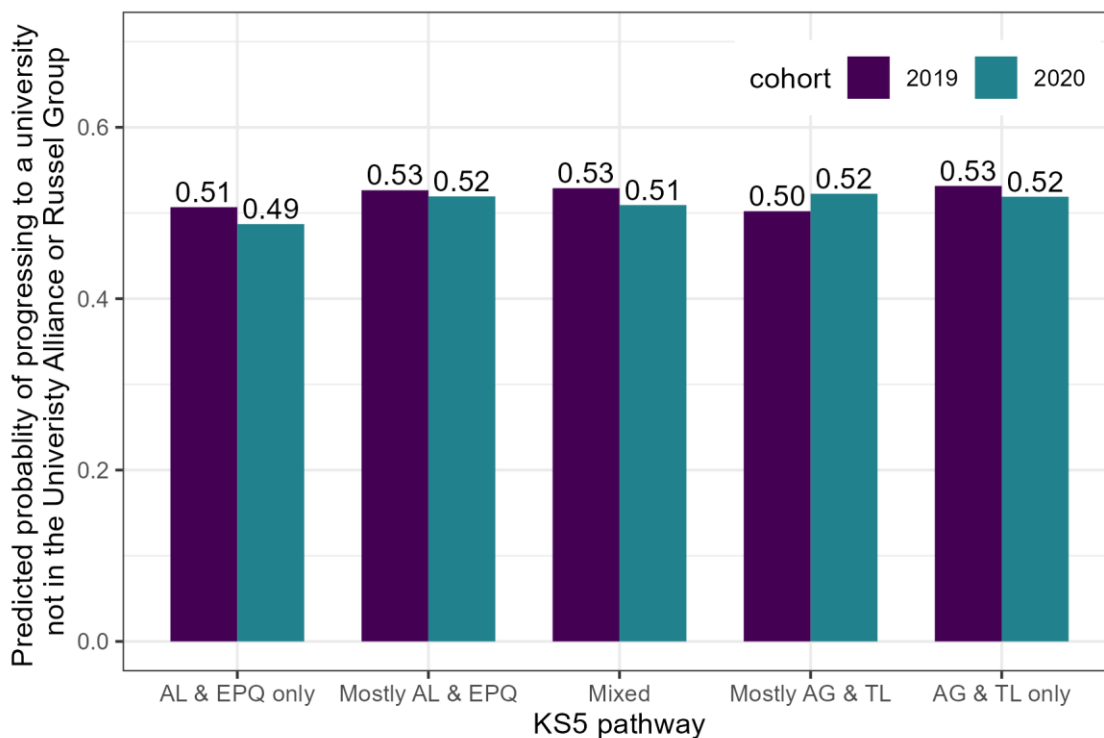
Figure 12: Predicted probabilities of progressing to a university not in Russell Group or University Alliance, by Key Stage 5 pathway and cohort. The calculated probabilities are for a White female, not disadvantaged, with no Special Educational Needs, in a non-selective, mixed-sex school, and in the medium Key Stage 4 attainment group.

Subject areas in higher education

The results in this section show the degree subject area taken by Key Stage 5 students who had sustained HE participation in their first year of HE studies. Figure 13 shows the difference in the percentages of students who progressed to each degree subject area between the 2019 and 2020 cohorts. The subject areas were ordered based on the magnitude of difference between the two cohorts, where the subject area with the largest increase (from 2019 to 2020) was at the top, and the subject area with the largest decrease was at the bottom. The full data used to generate this figure, including the number of candidates, is presented in Table 20 in Appendix D.

The table and the graph can be interpreted as follows. The first row of Table 20 shows that 0.5% of the Key Stage 5 students from the 2019 cohort who had progressed to higher education sustainably had taken "Agriculture, Food and Related Studies" as their major degree subject. Similarly, the same percentage of Key Stage 5 students from the 2020 cohort had chosen this subject area in their higher education studies, resulting in a difference on 0 percentage points (as can be seen in Figure 13).

Overall, the figure indicates that the percentage of students in each degree subject area was very similar in the 2020 and 2019 cohorts, suggesting that the uptake pattern of degree subject areas did not change noticeably between these two cohorts. The subject area with the biggest change was "Business and Management". Among the 2019 cohort, 10.1% of the students who had sustained HE participation chose this subject as their degree subject, and this increased to 11.4% among the 2020 cohort of students (see Table 20), representing a rise of 1.3 percentage points.
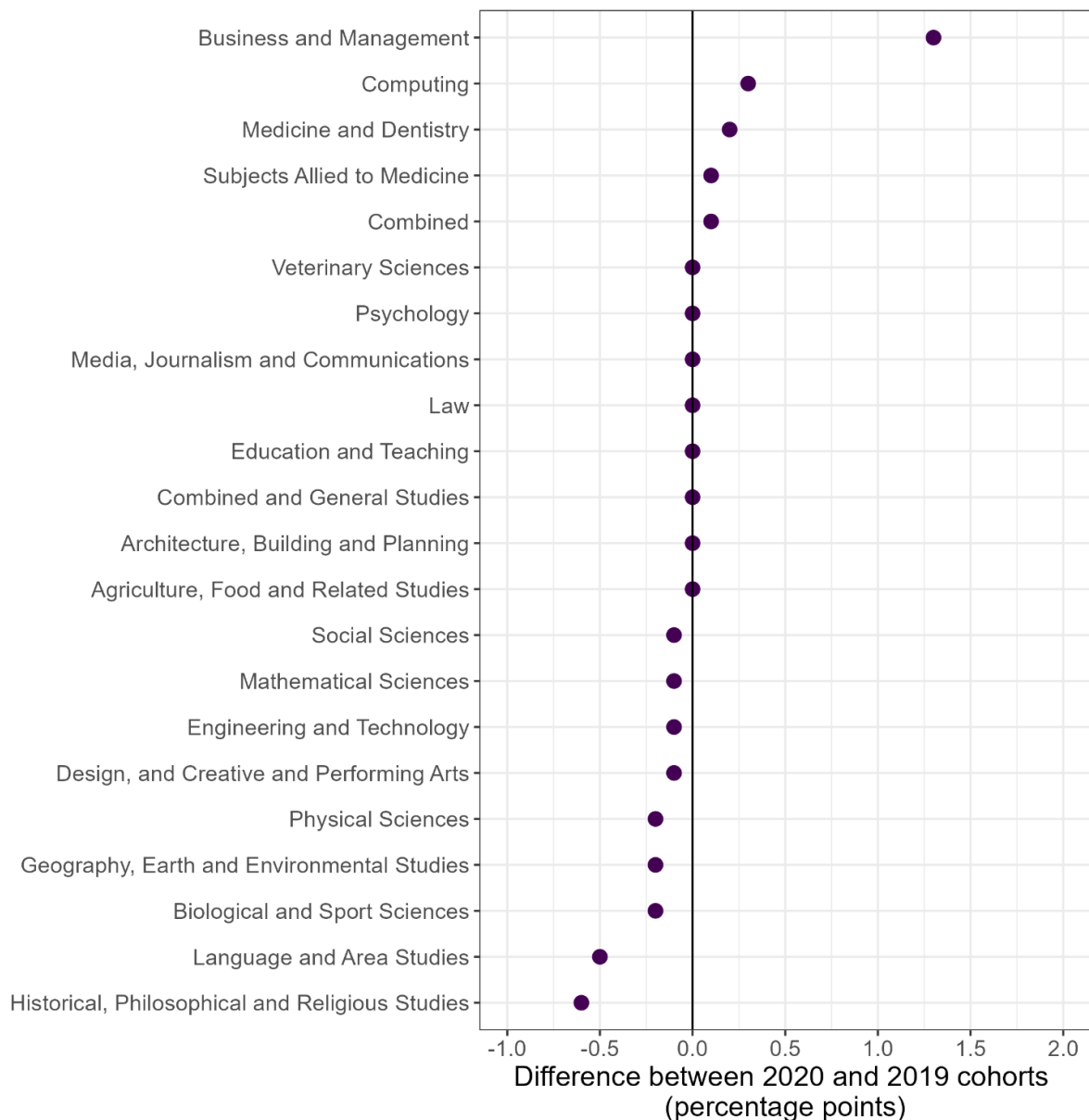
Figure 13: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts.

Figure 14 to Figure 23 show the difference in the percentages of students who took each subject area in the 2020 and 2019 cohorts, by students' background characteristics. The full data used to generate these figures, including the number of candidates, are presented in Table 21 to Table 33 in Appendix D. It is worth noting that even though some characteristic groups were collapsed into one (to minimise the risk of disclosing any individual student), the findings still mainly reflect the pattern observed for the dominant group (i.e., mixed-sex schools for the "Mixed/Missing" school sex category, and the low attainment group for the "Low/Missing" Key Stage 5 attainment group, and non-selective schools for the "non-selective/other/missing" school type category).

The figures can be interpreted as follows. As an example, values in Table 21 show that 15.5% of the male students in the 2020 cohort took "Business and Management" and only 13.8% of the male students in the 2019 cohort took the same subject area. This means that the percentage of male students who studied "Business and Management" was 1.7 percentage points higher in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 cohort as depicted in Figure 14.
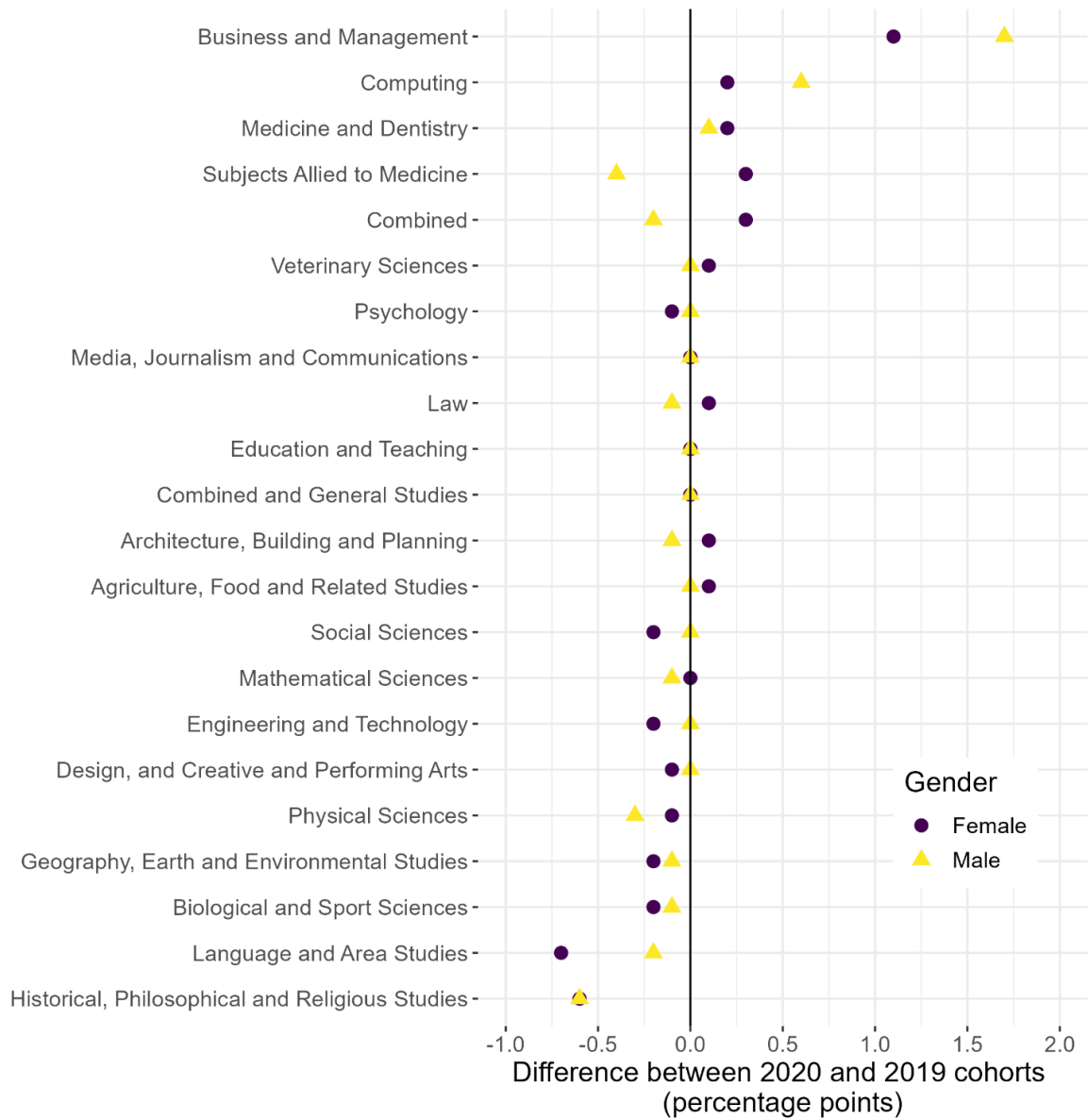
Figure 14: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by gender.
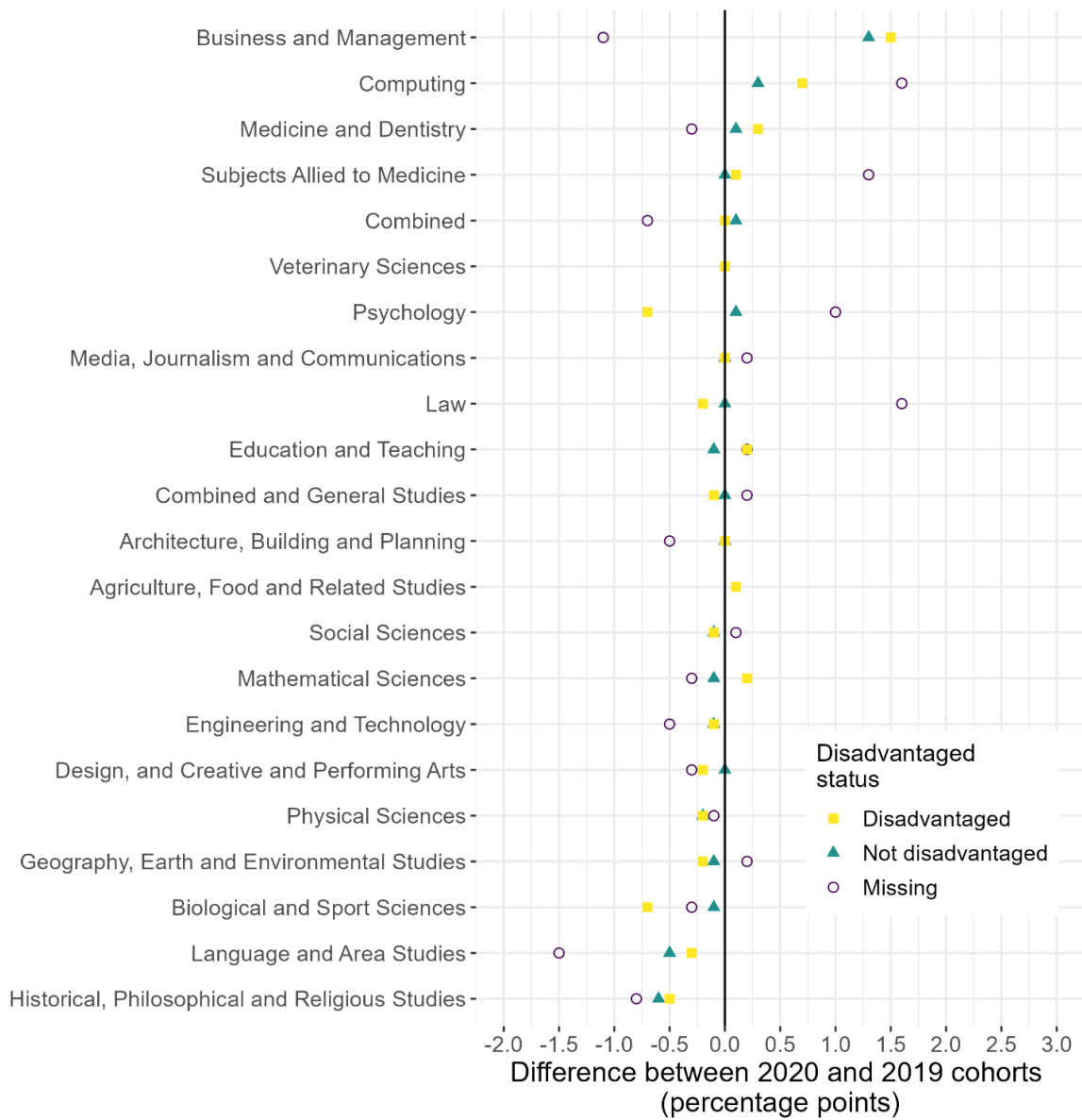
Figure 15: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by disadvantaged status.
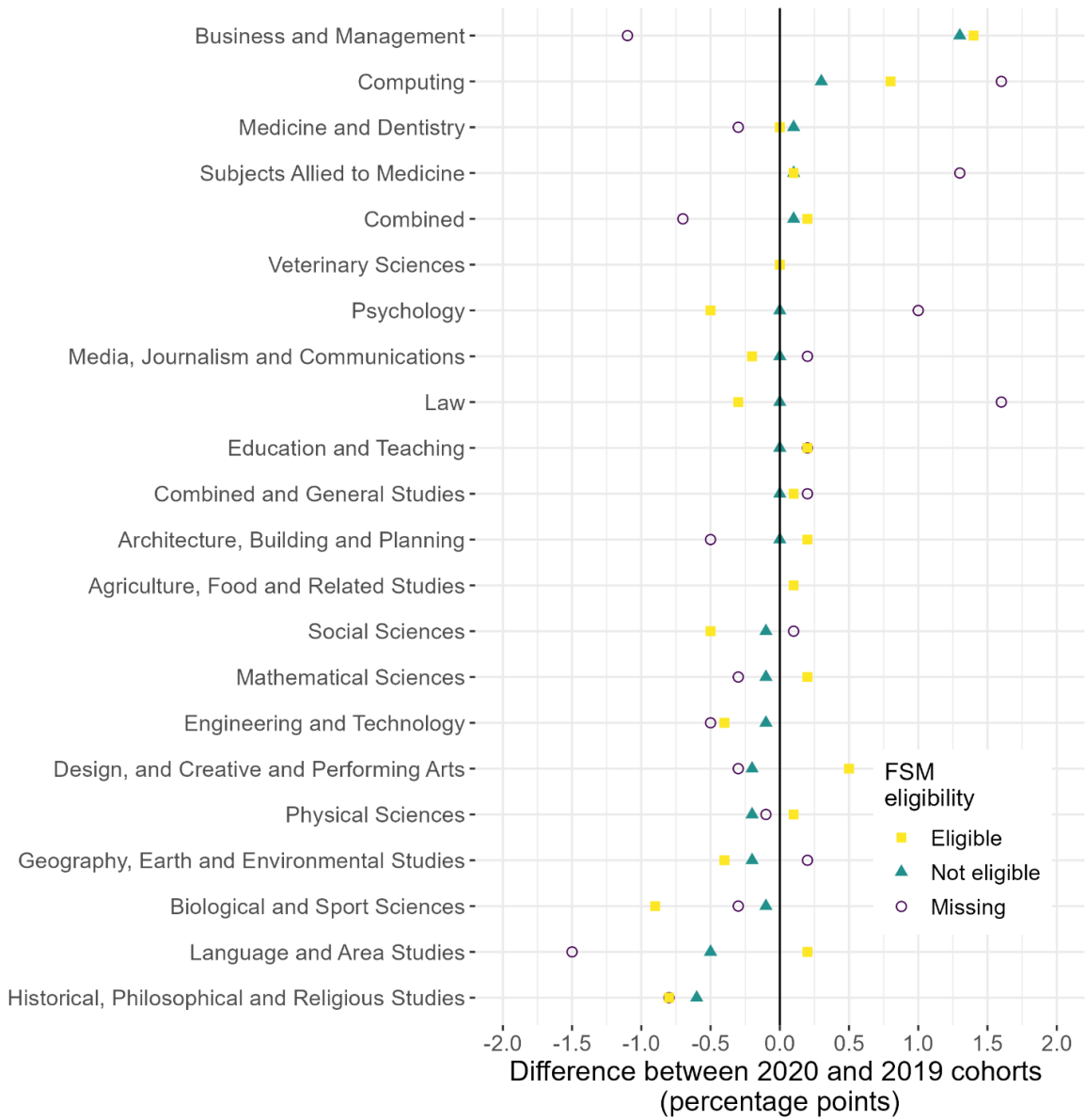
Figure 16: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility.
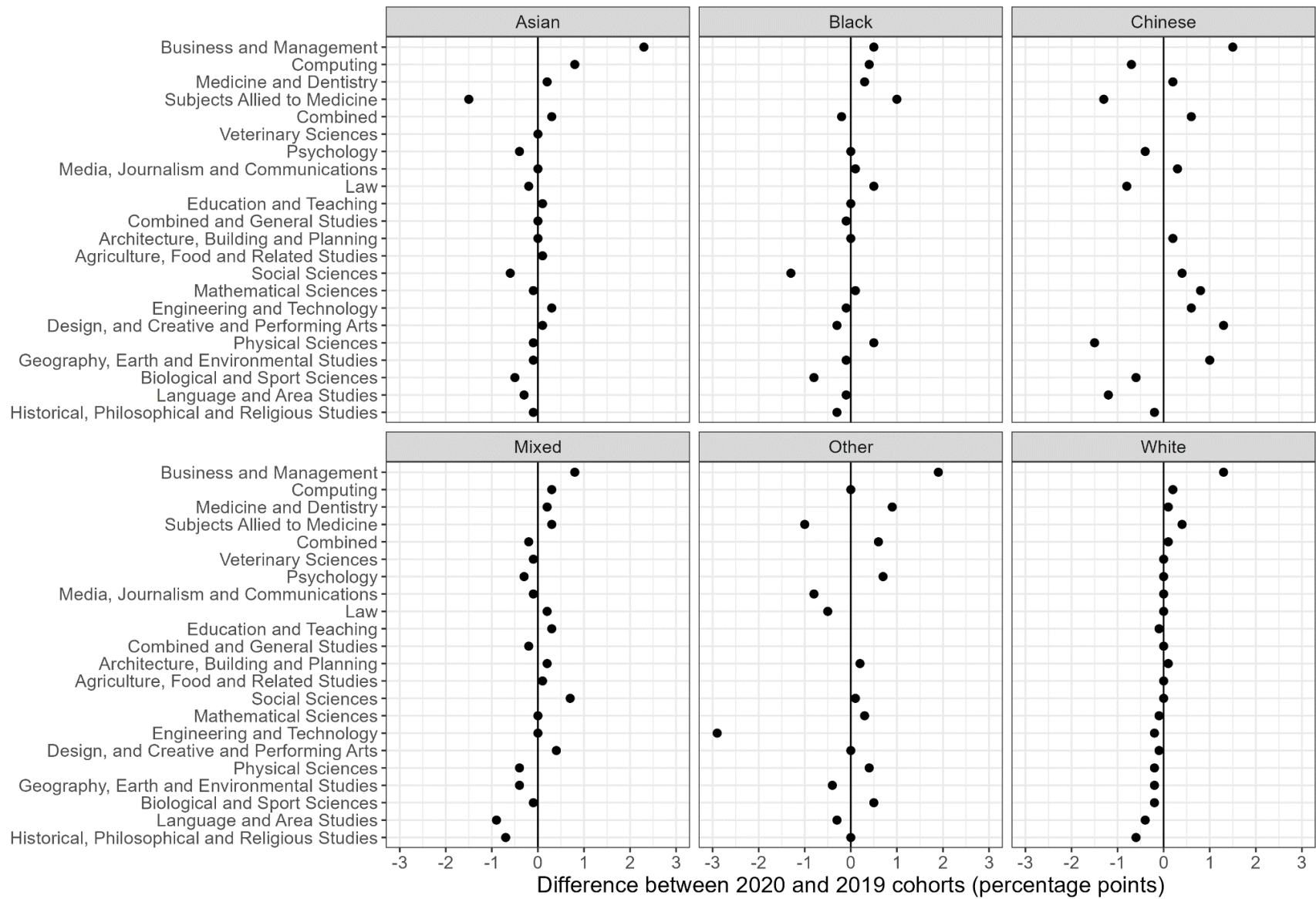
Figure 17: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by ethnicity.
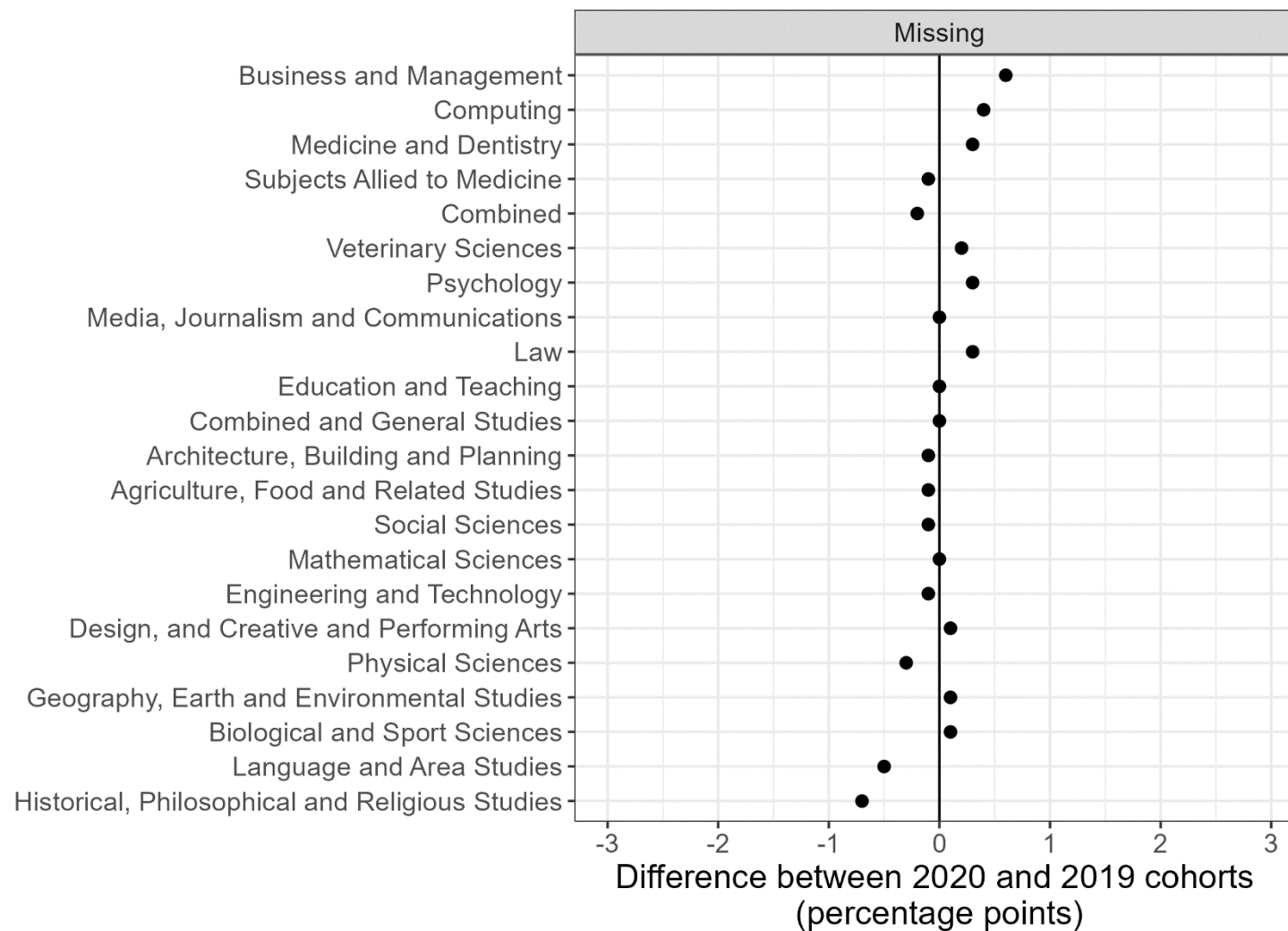
Figure 17 (continued): The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by ethnicity.
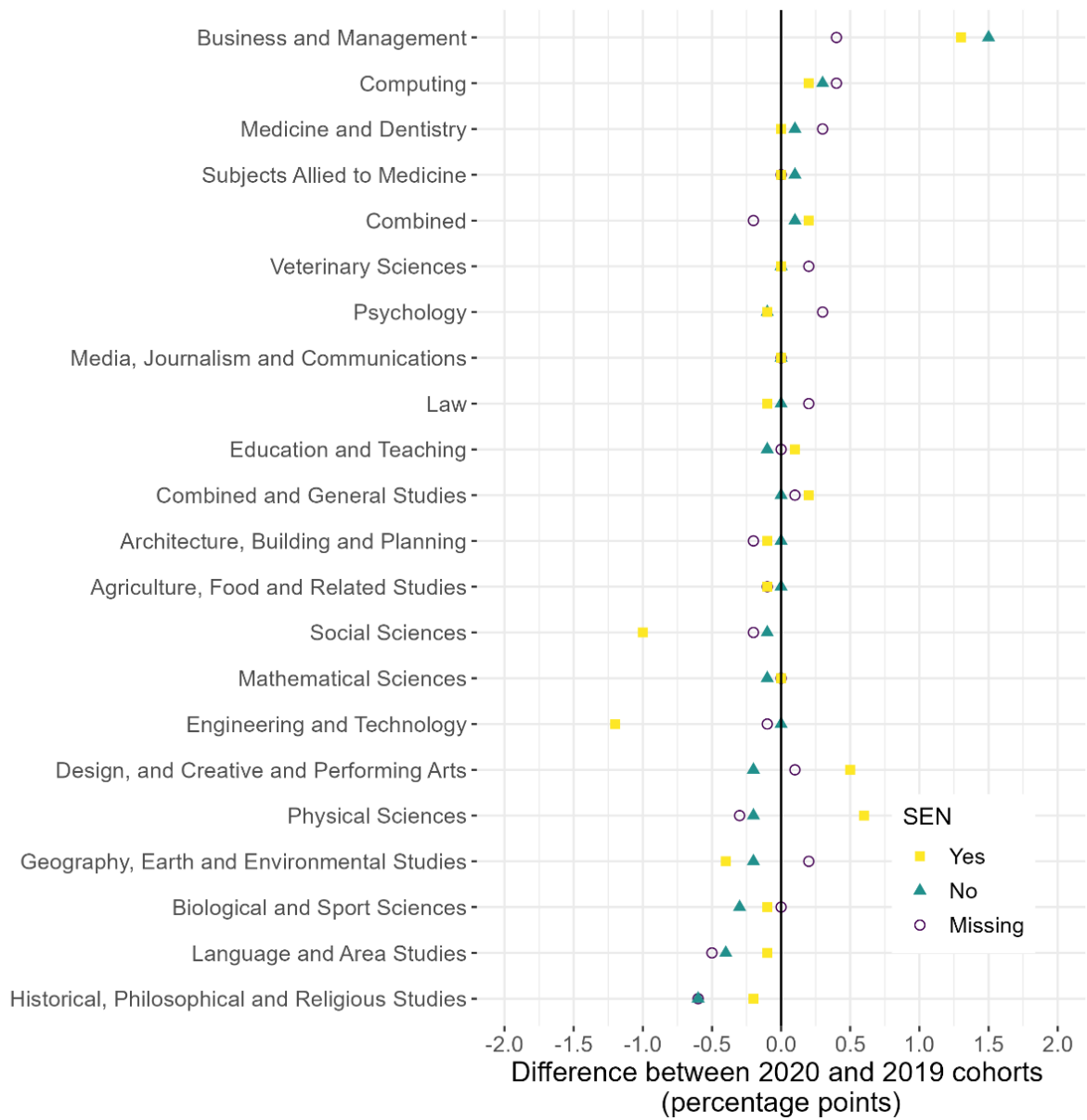
Figure 18: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by Special Educational Needs (SEN).
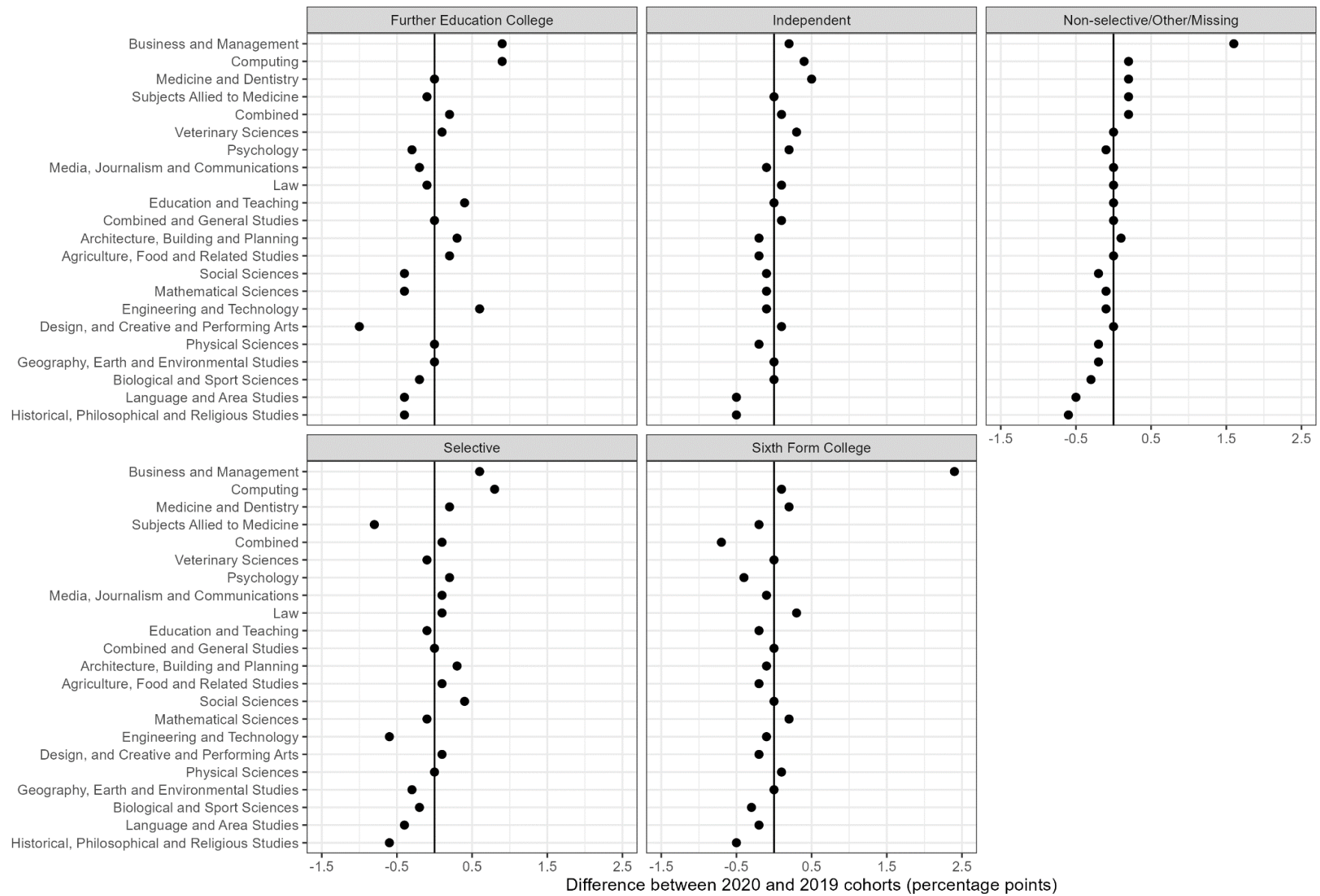
Figure 19: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by school type.
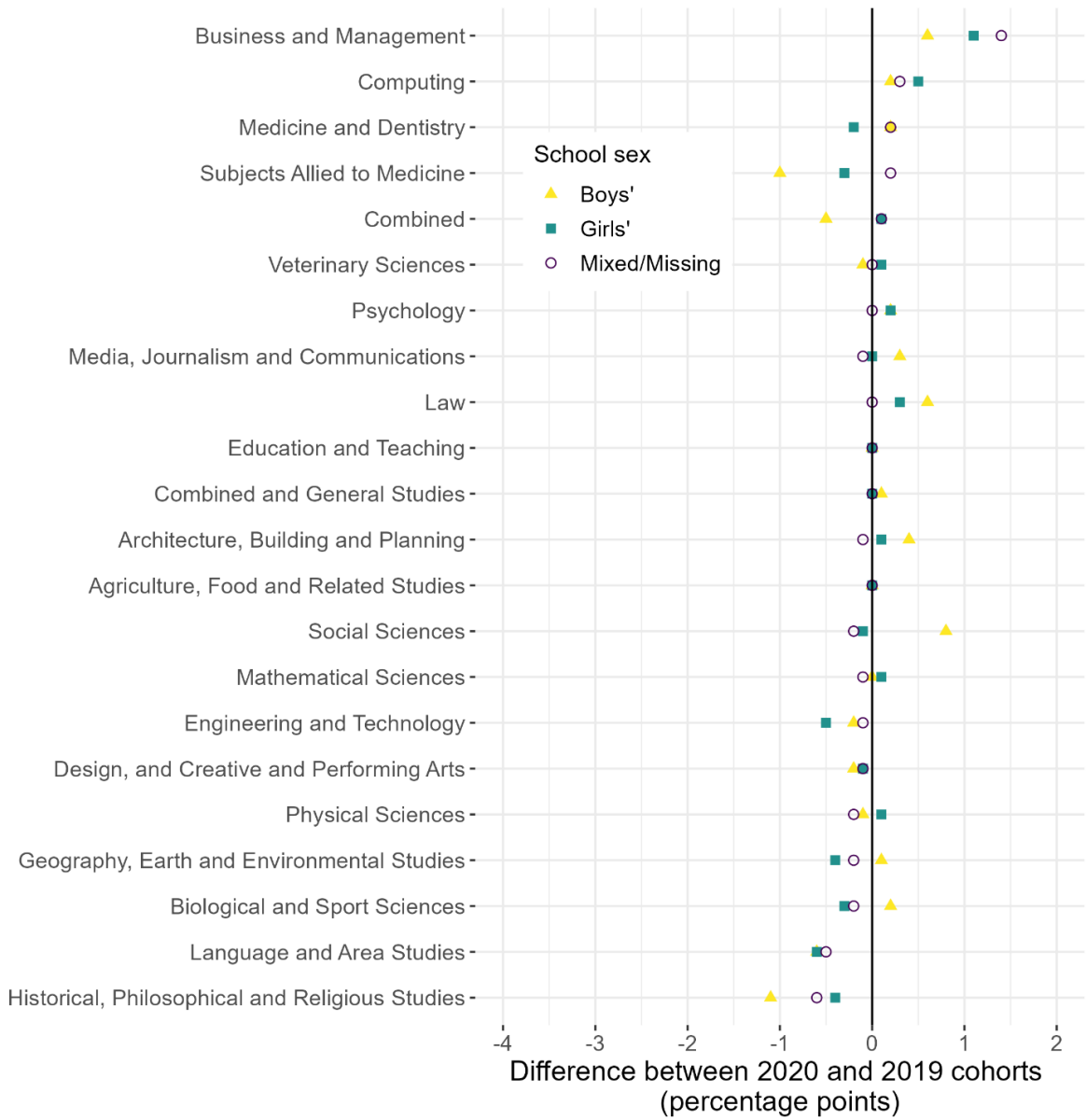
Figure 20: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by school sex.
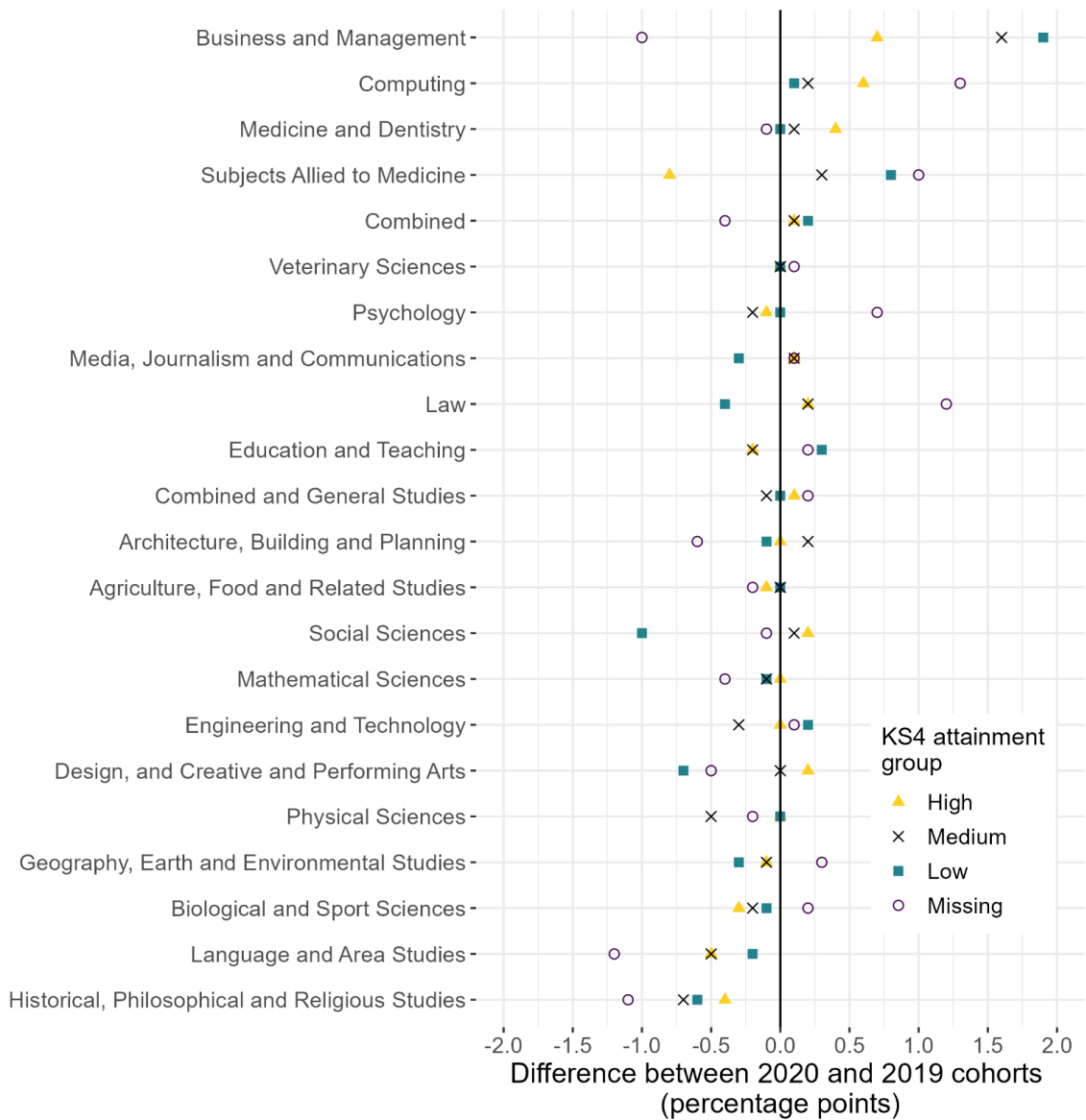
Figure 21: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by Key Stage 4 attainment group.
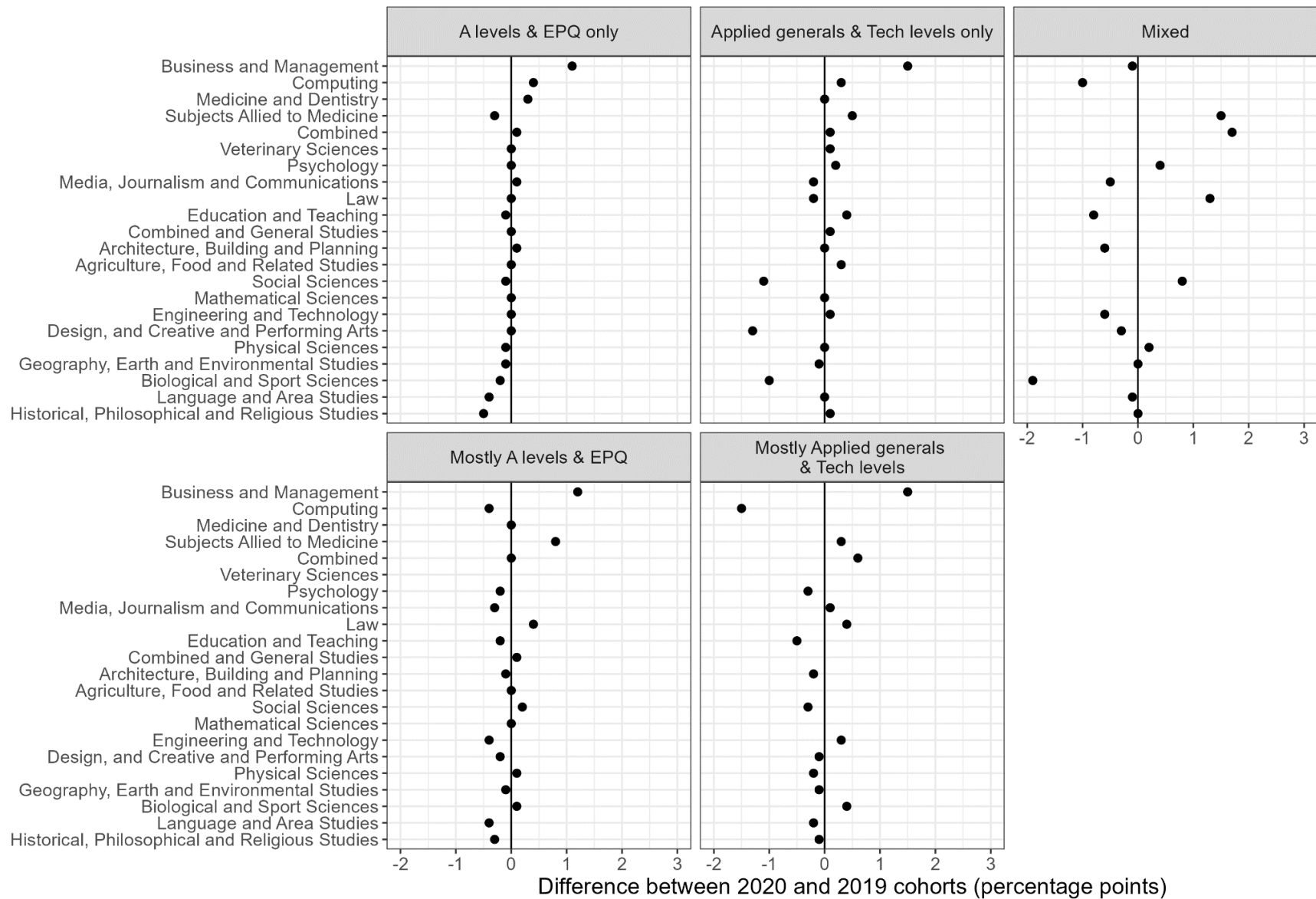
Figure 22: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by Key Stage 5 pathway.
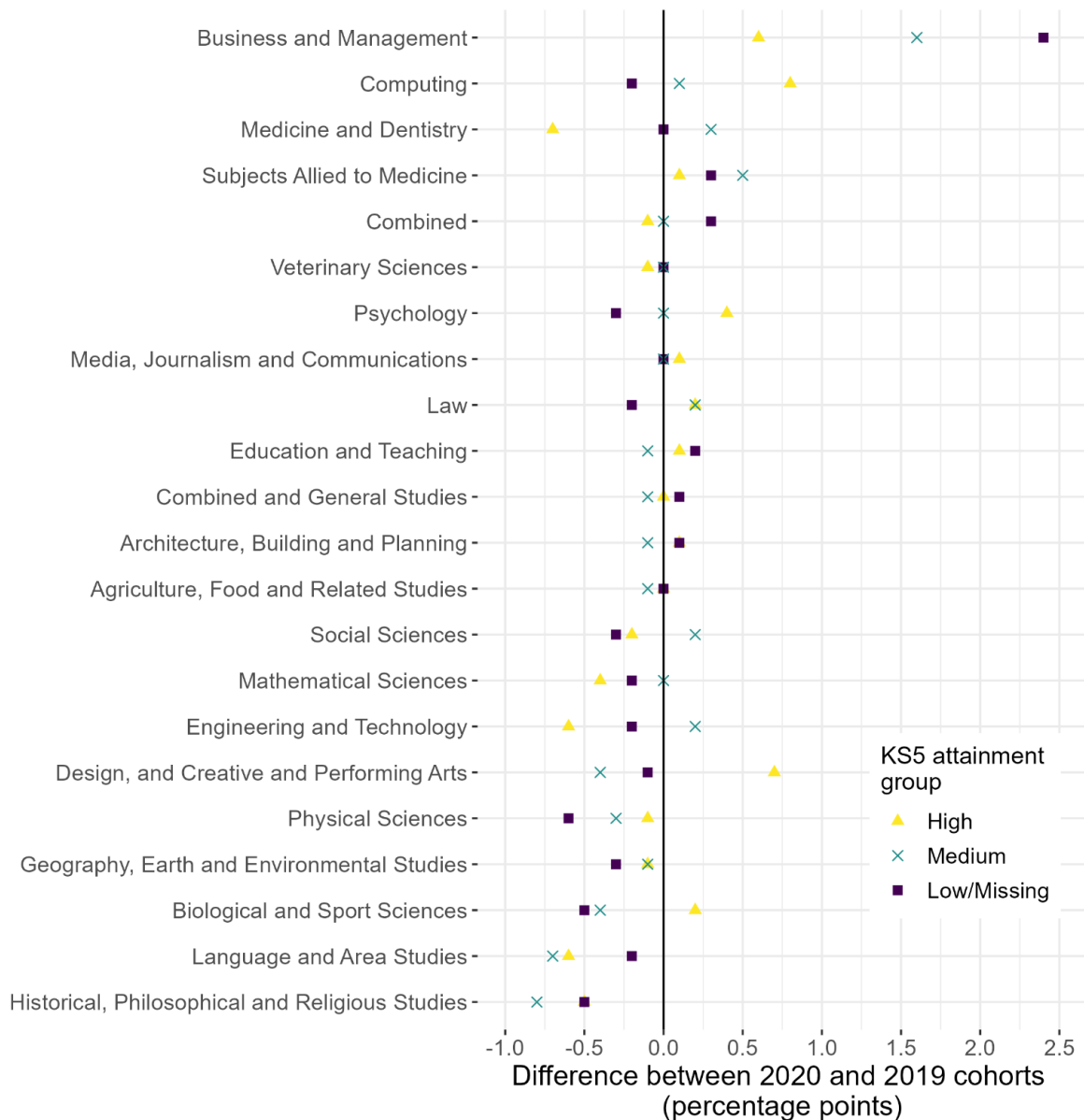
Figure 23: The difference in percentages of students who progressed to each higher education subject area between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 5 cohorts, by Key Stage 5 attainment group.

These figures collectively indicate that the uptake of "Business and Management" increased (from 2019 to 2020) for all students, independent of their characteristics. But the change was more noticeable for students of certain characteristics. In particular, the percentage increase was marginally higher among male than female students (1.7 vs 1.1 percentage points). Among the ethnic groups, the percentage increase was higher for (by the order of magnitude) Asian students (2.3 percentage points), students of "Other" ethnicities, Chinese students and White students (1.9, 1.5, and 1.3 percentage points, respectively). Students from sixth form colleges and non-selective schools also had a higher increase compared students from other school types (2.4 and 1.6 percentage points respectively; figure for non-selective schools was as indicated by the "Non-selective/Other/Missing" category). In addition, the percentage increase in "Business and Management" uptake was the highest for low attainers (based on both Key Stages 4 and 5 performance), followed by students from

the medium attainment group. Finally, the uptake of "Business and Management" increased more amongst students who mostly or solely took Applied General or Tech Levels compared to students from the A Levels or EPQ pathway.

These figures also show that there was a slight shift in the profiles of students who took degrees belonging to the "Subjects Allied to Medicine" in 2020 compared to 2019. Even though the overall proportion of students who took this subject was comparable between the two cohorts, proportionally fewer male students in the 2020 cohort pursued this subject area compared to the 2019 cohort (but proportionally more female students). In addition, the percentage of Asian and Chinese students who took this subject area also dropped in 2020 but the percentage for Black students increased. Moreover, the percentage of students from the low Key Stage 4 attainment group pursuing this subject area increased in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 cohort, but it dropped for students from the high attainment group.

Conclusions

In this research, we analysed the progression outcomes of the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort after their post-16 studies and explored whether students from this cohort had progressed differently to pre-pandemic cohorts by comparing their outcomes with those of students from the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort. The progression outcomes investigated were destinations (e.g., Higher Education, Further Education), types of higher education institutions (e.g., Russell Group universities), and subject areas studied in higher education (e.g., Medicine and Dentistry).

Before considering the results, it is worth noting that progression outcomes might change between cohorts even in the absence of the pandemic disruptions. Any differences we observed between the June 2020 and June 2019 cohorts can be attributed to factors from three broad categories: (1) factors as a consequence of the pandemic-induced learning disruption in schools and exam cancellation, such as grade inflation or learning loss; (2) factors as a consequence of the pandemic but are unrelated to learning disruption or exam cancellation, e.g., universities changing admission methods or requirements; and (3) factors unrelated to the pandemic, e.g., changes in students' general interests in higher or further education. Therefore, the findings we provided here shed light on shifts in outcomes between cohorts, which can be indicative of the general impacts of the pandemic on students' progression outcomes (i.e., changes as a result of factors 1 and 2) but are not definitive (factor 3 not fully accounted for). Nonetheless, knowing how and where the progression outcomes of the June 2020 cohort had changed is important so that appropriate and targeted measures can be taken to support these students if required.

Firstly, our findings suggested there were no big changes in the proportion of students who progressed to each destination between the June 2020 and June 2019 cohorts. Some evidence indicated that, proportionally, fewer students among the June 2020 cohort joined the labour market or took a gap year immediately after completing their Key Stage 5. On the contrary, slightly more students had progressed sustainably (i.e., six months or more) to a higher education destination or a higher or further education unsustainably. The slight uptick in higher education participation is perhaps not unexpected given that the university application acceptance rate (for UK applicants) had gradually increased for many years (e.g., see UCAS, 2018, p.6). Specifically for 18 years old, the acceptance rates for UK applicants increased by 0.5 percentage points from 2016 to 2017, by 0.34 percentage points from 2017 to 2018, but remained unchanged from 2018 to 2019[16].

The progression rates to each destination changed slightly differently among groups of students with different characteristics. However, there was no clear evidence suggesting that any group was disadvantaged in their progression to higher or further education. The three exceptions were Asian students, Chinese students and students from the high Key Stage 5 attainment group, where proportionally more students from these groups had not progressed to any HE or FE destination in 2020 (compared to their respective 2019 levels), and

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[16] These values were calculated using the UCAS data provided in csv files (published on 17 December) at the bottom of this UCAS webpage, titled, "UCAS undergraduate sector-level end of cycle data resources 2019" (link). The file with name "EOC_data_resource_2019_02_024_0102" was used for this calculation.

proportionally fewer had progressed to a sustained higher education destination. One could argue that these students were not disadvantaged if they made a conscious choice to, for example, take a gap year from studying, but the exact reason why this happened would require further research.

Even though there was only a slight increase in students who progressed to any higher or further education, there was, however, a more noticeable increase (3.5 percentage points) in the percentage of students - who had sustained higher education participation – progressing to a university belonging to the Russell Group in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 cohort. In contrast, the percentage of students who progressed to *all other types* of universities dropped in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 cohort. This finding aligns with the fact that the total number of accepted applicants among Russell Group universities (specifically for English applicants) drastically increased in 2020 by 15% (+12,245 applicants) relative to the 2019 value (UCAS, 2020)[17]. In comparison, the increase was only 2% from 2018 to 2019. Moreover, the total number of accepted applicants for *other non-Russell Group* universities had only increased by 1.5% from 2019 to 2020 - much lower than the 15% increase observed among Russell Group universities in the same year. Among other explanations, this could be because more students in the 2020 cohort had achieved the required grades for a place in a Russell Group university, the admission requirements to these universities had been slightly different from the previous years, or both.

Students from almost all backgrounds had a higher rate of progressing to a Russell Group university in 2020 than in 2019. However, the magnitude of the increase differed by the students' backgrounds. For example, the increase in the percentage of students progressing to a Russell Group university was the highest for students in the high Key Stage 4 attainment group and students who only took A Levels or EPQ (or both) during their Key Stage 5 study, compared to students from other attainment groups and other Key Stage 5 pathways, respectively. Furthermore, the predictive probability of a student in the high Key Stage 4 attainment group progressing to a Russell Group university was five percentage points higher for the June 2020 cohort than the predicted probability for students of the same characteristics profile in the 2019 cohort. It was unsurprising that this group of high-attaining students experienced a bigger increase than other attainment groups, given that more students from this group were likely (1) to have grades very close to the admission requirements of a Russell Group university and (2) to apply to study at a Russell Group university, relative to students from other attainment groups. Hence, any positive impacts on students' Key Stage 5 performance would have raised the chances of progressing to a Russell Group university disproportionally more for applicants from the high attainment group.

For students who only took A Levels or EPQ (or both), the predicted probability of progressing to a Russell Group university was about 4 percentage points higher in 2020,

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[17] This value and the remaining values in this paragraph were calculated using the UCAS data provided in csv files at the bottom of this UCAS webpage, titled, "2020 entry provider-level end of cycle data resources" (link). The file with name "EOC_HEP_data_resource_2020_004_1" was used for all UCAS values mentioned in this paragraph.

which was the highest increase among all the Key Stage 5 pathways. This means that the predicted probability of progressing to a Russell Group university for students who took mostly or solely Applied Generals and Tech Levels did not rise as much as the increase for students who only took A Levels or EPQ. As discussed earlier, it would be inaccurate to attribute all of the differences to the impact of the pandemic disruption. Only if we are willing to assume that 2020 outcomes would remain at the 2019 level in the absence of the pandemic, then we could argue that students who mostly took Applied Generals and Tech Levels were being disadvantaged – in terms of their chances of progressing to a Russell Group university - by about four percentage points, compared students from the A Levels and EPQ only pathway, and three percentage points for students who only took Applied Generals or Tech Levels.

The increase in the percentage of students progressing to a Russell Group university was noticeably lower for students from sixth form colleges and further education colleges. In addition, the increase in the percentage of students progressing to a Russell Group university was lower among White students and students with "Mixed" ethnicities. In contrast, the percentages progressing amongst students from minority ethnic groups (Chinese, Asian, and Black students) had a much higher increase in 2020. Finally, our results also indicated that students with Special Educational Needs or from low socio-economic backgrounds (as indicated by their disadvantaged status and Free School Meals eligibility) had not been disadvantaged in their progression to a Russell Group university, i.e., students from these groups had a change in outcomes that was of similar magnitude to that of their peers.

In most of the degree subject areas students pursued in higher education, we found no noticeable change between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts. Only in "Business and Management" was the percentage of students pursuing the subject area noticeably higher among the 2020 cohort than among the 2019 cohort (1.3 percentage points). The rise in the uptake of this subject area was most visible among the low and medium attainers (based on their Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 performance) compared to the high attainment group. The percentage of students who pursued this subject area had also increased more (from 2019 to 2020) among Asian students compared to students from other ethnic groups and students from sixth form colleges compared to students from other school types.

Overall, the findings from this research suggest that the June 2020 Key Stage 5 cohort had progressed similarly to the June 2019 Key Stage 5 cohort, despite being impacted by the pandemic. However, given that the students' university performance data were not yet available during analyses, this research did not consider changes in retention and students' performance in their post-18 destinations. It would be vital to investigate these once the data become available to provide a more comprehensive picture of the progression outcomes of this cohort of students. This research has, however, suggested several areas where a closer monitoring of students' performance might be beneficial. The first is the group of students who progressed to Russell Group universities. Given the drastic increase in the number of students who progressed to these universities, ensuring sufficient resources (e.g., adequate contact hours with lecturers or other teaching staff) were available to support these students in their learning journey would be important. The second group is the students who enrolled in a degree in the "Business and Management" subject area. In 2020, proportionally, there were more students pursuing this subject area compared to 2019, especially students from

the low attainment group. This suggests that it might be worth considering whether the existing course arrangements (e.g., numbers of tutors) are still suitable for the whole cohort of students, and whether some additional supports should be given to this cohort of students who might, on average, be not as well-prepared for this course compared to the previous cohorts.

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Appendix A

Table 10: The number (N) and percentage (%) of students available in the National Pupil Database (NPD) and analysed in this research.

Cohort	N KS5 students in the NPD	Students who were 18 years old by the end of KS5		18-year-old KS5 students who had at least one exam in the qualifications of interest*	
		N	% total KS5 students	N	% 18 years old
2019	589465	398605	67.6%	273390	68.6%
2020	600935	425945	70.9%	285215	67.0%

*These are the students analysed in this work.

Table 11: Summary statistics of the average (uncapped) GCSE and equivalents point score per entry, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and Key Stage 5 cohort.

Key Stage 4 attainment group	KS5 cohort	N students	Average GCSE and equivalents point score	
			Mean	Standard deviation
High	2019	88950	7.33	0.62
	2020	92245	7.50	0.67
Medium	2019	89830	5.75	0.37
	2020	94965	5.84	0.39
Low	2019	90445	4.34	0.60
	2020	93940	4.30	0.72
Missing	2019	4165	*No data available*	
	2020	4065	*No data available*	

Table 12: Summary statistics of the average A Level and equivalents performance points per entry, by Key Stage 4 attainment group and Key Stage 5 cohort.

Key Stage 4 attainment group	KS5 cohort	N students	Average A Level and equivalents performance points	
			Mean	Standard deviation
High	2019	88950	43.48	9.79
	2020	92245	48.19	8.42
Medium	2019	89830	32.00	9.67
	2020	94965	36.84	8.64
Low	2019	90445	25.49	9.46
	2020	93940	29.24	9.33
Missing	2019	4165	37.31	12.97
	2020	4065	41.84	12.36

Table 13: List of Russell Group universities.

1	London School of Economics & Political Science
2	University of Oxford
3	University of Liverpool
4	University of Bristol
5	University of York
6	The University of Manchester
7	Cardiff University
8	University of Southampton
9	University College London
10	University of Warwick
11	University of Nottingham
12	University of Sheffield
13	University of Newcastle Upon Tyne
14	University of Durham
15	University of Glasgow
16	King's College London
17	University of Cambridge
18	University of Edinburgh
19	University of Leeds
20	Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine
21	University of Birmingham
22	Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London
23	University of Exeter
24	The Queen's University of Belfast

Table 14: List of universities in the University Alliance.

1	Sheffield Hallam University
2	University of Plymouth
3	Teesside University
4	The Open University
5	Cardiff Metropolitan University
6	University of the West of England, Bristol
7	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
8	University of Lincoln
9	The Manchester Metropolitan University
10	University of Bradford
11	Bournemouth University
12	University of Hertfordshire
13	Glasgow Caledonian University
14	Kingston University
15	Liverpool John Moores University
16	University of Huddersfield
17	Nottingham Trent University
18	Coventry University
19	University of Glamorgan / Prifysgol Morgannwg
20	De Montfort University
21	Oxford Brookes University
22	University of Portsmouth
23	University of Salford
24	Sheffield Hallam University

Appendix B

Table 15: Progression destination of Key Stage 5 students, by cohort.

Progression destination	N students		% students		Difference (2020-2019)
	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	
Sustained higher education (HE) (undergraduate degree and above)	156950	165515	57.4	58	0.6
Sustained higher education (below undergraduate degree)	2375	3185	0.9	1.1	0.2
Sustained further education (FE)	21880	22900	8.0	8.0	0.0
Sustained HE with FE	2180	2110	0.8	0.7	-0.1
Not sustained HE or FE	8275	9365	3.0	3.3	0.3
No HE or FE information	81730	82140	29.9	28.8	-1.1
Total	273390	285215	100.0	100.0	

Table 16: Results of regressions modelling the probability of student progressing to each destination with an interaction term between cohort and Key Stage 4 attainment group.

Model		(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable		Sustained HE participation	Sustained FE participation	No information in HE or FE
Intercept		0.689 ***	0.105 ***	0.183 ***
		(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.014)
Cohort (ref: 2019 cohort)	2020 cohort	-0.001	-0.003 *	0.004
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
KS4 attainment group (ref: high)	Low	-0.205 ***	0.046 ***	0.146 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Medium	-0.110 ***	0.030 ***	0.072 ***
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Gender (ref: Female)	Male	-0.029 ***	-0.002 **	0.032 ***
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Disadvantaged (ref: No)	Yes	-0.007 ***	0.001	0.001
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Ethnicity (ref: Asian)	Black	0.045 ***	-0.006 **	-0.033 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Chinese	0.030 ***	0.010 *	-0.036 ***
		(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.008)
	Mixed	-0.094 ***	0.015 ***	0.073 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
	Other	-0.011 *	-0.001	0.012 *
		(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)
	White	-0.141 ***	0.027 ***	0.103 ***
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Has Special Educational Needs (ref: No)	Yes	-0.014 ***	0.041 ***	-0.025 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
School type (ref: Sixth form)	FE college	-0.081 ***	0.094 ***	-0.017
		(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.012)
	Independent	-0.006	-0.035 ***	0.049 ***
		(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.013)
	Non-selective	0.026 *	-0.027 ***	0.003
		(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.011)
	Other	-0.112 **	0.032	0.072 *
		(0.036)	(0.018)	(0.034)
	Selective	0.020	-0.021 **	0.004
		(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.013)
School sex (ref: Boys' school)	Girls' school	-0.019	0.006	0.010
		(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.010)
	Mixed school	-0.035 ***	0.010 *	0.018 *
		(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.009)
KS5 pathways (ref: AG & TL only)	AL & EPQ only	0.182 ***	-0.077 ***	-0.091 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Mostly AG & TL	0.123 ***	-0.057 ***	-0.061 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
	Mostly AL & EPQ	0.154 ***	-0.065 ***	-0.080 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Mixed	0.040 ***	-0.040 ***	0.004
		(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Cohort*KS4 attainment group (ref: 2019, High)	2020 * Low	0.020 ***	0.005 *	-0.030 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	2020 * Medium	0.018 ***	-0.010 ***	-0.009 **
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
N students		478895	478895	478895
N schools		2835	2835	2835

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 17: Results of regressions modelling the probability of student progressing to each destination with an interaction term between cohort and Key Stage 5 pathway.

Model		(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable		Sustained HE participation	Sustained FE participation	No information in HE or FE
Intercept		0.694 ***	0.080 ***	0.206 ***
		(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.014)
Cohort (ref: 2019 cohort)	2020 cohort	-0.009 **	0.043 ***	-0.040 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
KS5 pathway (ref: AG & TL only)	AL & EPQ only	0.169 ***	-0.048 ***	-0.110 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Mostly AG & TL	0.108 ***	-0.024 ***	-0.077 ***
		(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)
	Mostly AL & EPQ	0.133 ***	-0.028 ***	-0.095 ***
		(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.004)
	Mixed	0.017 *	-0.003	-0.008
		(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.008)
Gender (ref: Female)	Male	-0.029 ***	-0.002 **	0.032 ***
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Disadvantaged (ref: No)	Yes	-0.007 ***	0.001	0.001
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Ethnicity (ref: Asian)	Black	0.045 ***	-0.006 **	-0.033 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Chinese	0.030 ***	0.011 *	-0.036 ***
		(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.008)
	Mixed	-0.094 ***	0.015 ***	0.073 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
	Other	-0.011 *	-0.001	0.012 *
		(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)
	White	-0.141 ***	0.027 ***	0.103 ***
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Has Special Educational Needs (ref: No)	Yes	-0.014 ***	0.041 ***	-0.026 ***
		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
School type (ref: Sixth form)	FE college	-0.081 ***	0.094 ***	-0.017
		(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.012)
	Independent	-0.005	-0.035 ***	0.049 ***
		(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.013)
	Non-selective	0.026 *	-0.027 ***	0.003
		(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.011)
	Other	-0.112 **	0.031	0.072 *
		(0.036)	(0.018)	(0.034)
	Selective	0.021	-0.021 **	0.004
		(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.013)
School sex (ref: Boys' school)	Girls' school	-0.019	0.006	0.010
		(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.010)
	Mixed school	-0.035 ***	0.011 *	0.018 *
		(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.009)
KS4 attainment group (ref: high)	Low	-0.195 ***	0.048 ***	0.132 ***
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
	Medium	-0.100 ***	0.024 ***	0.068 ***
		(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Cohort*KS5 pathway (ref: 2019, AG & TL only)	2020*AL & EPQ only	0.023 ***	-0.053 ***	0.036 ***
		(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
	2020*mostly AG & TL	0.028 ***	-0.061 ***	0.031 ***
		(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.007)
	2020*mostly AL & EPQ	0.038 ***	-0.068 ***	0.028 ***
		(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.006)
	2020*Mixed	0.041 ***	-0.068 ***	0.024 *
		(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.011)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable	Sustained HE participation	Sustained FE participation	No information in HE or FE
N students	478895	478895	478895
N schools	2835	2835	2835

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

Appendix C

Table 18: Results of regressions modelling the probability of student progressing to each type of higher education institution with an interaction term between cohort and KS4 attainment group.

Model		(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable		**Russell Group**	**University Alliance**	**Other**
Intercept		0.484 ***	0.123 ***	0.393 ***
		(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.025)
Cohort (ref: 2019 cohort)	**2020 cohort**	0.058 ***	-0.023 ***	-0.035 ***
		(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
KS4 attainment group (ref: high)	**Low**	-0.451 ***	0.249 ***	0.199 ***
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
	Medium	-0.355 ***	0.201 ***	0.151 ***
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Gender (ref: Female)	**Male**	0.022 ***	0.009 ***	-0.031 ***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Disadvantaged (ref: No)	**Yes**	-0.013 ***	-0.004	0.018 ***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Ethnicity (ref: Asian)	**Black**	-0.002	0.032 ***	-0.029 ***
		(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
	Chinese	0.090 ***	-0.047 ***	-0.042 ***
		(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)
	Mixed	0.028 ***	-0.014 ***	-0.015 **
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
	Other	0.010	-0.018 **	0.010
		(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
	White	0.025 ***	-0.021 ***	-0.006 *
		(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Has Special Educational Needs (ref: No)	**Yes**	-0.010 **	-0.019 ***	0.029 ***
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
School type (ref: Sixth form)	**FE college**	-0.039 **	0.003	0.037
		(0.012)	(0.021)	(0.023)
	Independent	0.145 ***	-0.067 **	-0.076 ***
		(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.023)
	Non-selective	0.010	-0.018	0.011
		(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.020)
	Other	0.001	-0.045	0.041
		(0.038)	(0.060)	(0.066)
	Selective	0.063 ***	-0.029	-0.032
		(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.024)
School sex (ref: Boys' school)	**Girls' school**	-0.006	0.001	0.006
		(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.018)
	Mixed school	-0.030 ***	0.052 ***	-0.019
		(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.015)
KS5 pathways (ref: AG & TL only)	**AL & EPQ only**	0.047 ***	-0.018 ***	-0.028 ***
		(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
	Mostly AG & TL	-0.023 ***	0.033 ***	-0.011 *
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
	Mostly AL & EPQ	-0.037 ***	0.037 ***	-0.002
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
	Mixed	-0.019 *	0.025 **	-0.006
		(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Cohort*KS4 attainment group (ref: 2019, High)	**2020 * Low**	-0.047 ***	0.015 ***	0.032 ***
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
	2020 * Medium	-0.018 ***	-0.009 *	0.027 ***
		(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N students		282980	282980	282980
N schools		2740	2740	2740

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 19: Results of regressions modelling the probability of progressing to each type of higher education institution with an interaction term between cohort and Key Stage 5 pathway.

Model		(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable		**Russell Group**	**University Alliance**	**Other**
Intercept		0.513 ***	0.104 ***	0.382 ***
		(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.025)
Cohort (ref: 2019 cohort)	2020 cohort	0.002	0.011 *	-0.013 *
		(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
KS5 pathway (ref: AG & TL only)	AL & EPQ only	0.024 ***	0.002	-0.025 ***
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
	Mostly AG & TL	-0.022 ***	0.050 ***	-0.030 ***
		(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)
	Mostly AL & EPQ	-0.048 ***	0.052 ***	-0.005
		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)
	Mixed	-0.031 **	0.033 **	-0.003
		(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.014)
Gender (ref: Female)	Male	0.022 ***	0.009 ***	-0.031 ***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Disadvantaged (ref: No)	Yes	-0.013 ***	-0.004	0.018 ***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Ethnicity (ref: Asian)	Black	-0.002	0.032 ***	-0.029 ***
		(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
	Chinese	0.090 ***	-0.047 ***	-0.043 ***
		(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)
	Mixed	0.028 ***	-0.014 ***	-0.015 **
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
	Other	0.010	-0.018 **	0.010
		(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
	White	0.025 ***	-0.021 ***	-0.007 *
		(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Has Special Educational Needs (ref: No)	Yes	-0.010 **	-0.019 ***	0.029 ***
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
School type (ref: Sixth form)	FE college	-0.040 ***	0.003	0.037
		(0.012)	(0.021)	(0.023)
	Independent	0.144 ***	-0.067 **	-0.076 **
		(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.023)
	Non-selective	0.010	-0.018	0.011
		(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.020)
	Other	0.002	-0.046	0.041
		(0.038)	(0.060)	(0.066)
	Selective	0.062 ***	-0.029	-0.032
		(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.024)
School sex (ref: Boys' school)	Girls' school	-0.006	0.001	0.006
		(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.018)
	Mixed school	-0.030 ***	0.052 ***	-0.019
		(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.015)
KS4 attainment group (ref: high)	Low	-0.474 ***	0.256 ***	0.215 ***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
	Medium	-0.364 ***	0.197 ***	0.165 ***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Cohort*KS5 pathway (ref: 2019, AG & TL only)	2020*AL & EPQ only	0.044 ***	-0.037 ***	-0.007
		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)
	2020*mostly AG & TL	-0.001	-0.031 ***	0.033 **
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)
	2020*mostly AL & EPQ	0.022 **	-0.027 ***	0.005
		(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)
	2020*Mixed	0.022	-0.015	-0.007
		(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.018)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent variable	Russell Group	University Alliance	Other
N students	282980	282980	282980
N schools	2740	2740	2740

Note: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

Note: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

Appendix D

The tables in this section show the underlying counts and data used to generate the figures in the "Subject areas in higher education" results section. Most tables show (1) the number of students (who had a sustained HE participation) in each degree subject area within a Key Stage 5 cohort and characteristic group (e.g., within female and within male for gender), and (2) the percentage of students that number represents out of the total number of students in that Key Stage 5 cohort and characteristic group. For example, the first row of Table 20 shows that, 0.5% of the June 2019 Key Stage 5 students - who progressed to higher education sustainably - had taken the "Agriculture, Food and Related Studies" subject area as their degree subject area. The same percentage of June 2020 Key Stage 5 students had chosen this subject area in their higher education studies. For Table 21, for instance, the fourth row shows that 15.5% of the male students in the 2020 cohort took "Business and Management" and only 13.8% of the male students in the 2019 cohort took the same subject area.

Table 20: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE.

Subject area	N students who progressed to HE		% students who progressed to HE[1]	
	2019 cohort	2020 cohort	2019 cohort	2020 cohort
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	810	835	0.5	0.5
Architecture, Building and Planning	2955	3155	1.8	1.8
Biological and Sport Sciences	10475	10735	6.5	6.3
Business and Management	16250	19450	10.1	11.4
Combined	10775	11515	6.7	6.7
Combined and General Studies	720	760	0.4	0.4
Computing	6800	7770	4.2	4.5
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	10285	10720	6.4	6.3
Education and Teaching	3420	3590	2.1	2.1
Engineering and Technology	10920	11340	6.8	6.6
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	4360	4350	2.7	2.5
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	7270	6700	4.5	3.9
Language and Area Studies	7155	6790	4.4	4.0
Law	9400	10020	5.8	5.9
Mathematical Sciences	4010	4100	2.5	2.4
Media, Journalism and Communications	2755	2915	1.7	1.7
Medicine and Dentistry	4695	5225	2.9	3.1
Physical Sciences	6790	6875	4.2	4.0
Psychology	9595	10100	5.9	5.9
Social Sciences	17430	18225	10.8	10.7
Subjects Allied to Medicine	13955	14880	8.6	8.7
Veterinary Sciences	675	755	0.4	0.4
Total	161505	170810	100.0	100.0

[1]Out of the total number of students in that cohort who had a sustained HE participation.

Table 21: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and gender.

Subject area	N students progressed to HE				% students progressed to HE[1]			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	585	635	225	200	0.6	0.7	0.3	0.3
Architecture, Building and Planning	1135	1290	1820	1865	1.2	1.3	2.6	2.5
Biological and Sport Sciences	5545	5655	4930	5080	6.1	5.9	7.0	6.9
Business and Management	6540	7990	9710	11460	7.2	8.3	13.8	15.5
Combined	6180	6815	4590	4700	6.8	7.1	6.5	6.3
Combined and General Studies	525	535	195	230	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.3
Computing	940	1200	5860	6570	1.0	1.2	8.3	8.9
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	6815	7115	3465	3605	7.5	7.4	4.9	4.9
Education and Teaching	3110	3310	310	285	3.4	3.4	0.4	0.4
Engineering and Technology	2140	2175	8780	9165	2.4	2.2	12.4	12.4
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	2455	2400	1905	1945	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.6
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	4170	3910	3100	2785	4.6	4.0	4.4	3.8
Language and Area Studies	5650	5350	1505	1440	6.2	5.5	2.1	1.9
Law	6450	6965	2950	3050	7.1	7.2	4.2	4.1
Mathematical Sciences	1285	1320	2725	2780	1.4	1.4	3.9	3.8
Media, Journalism and Communications	1570	1660	1185	1255	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Medicine and Dentistry	3010	3360	1685	1860	3.3	3.5	2.4	2.5
Physical Sciences	2820	2920	3970	3950	3.1	3.0	5.6	5.3
Psychology	8025	8455	1570	1645	8.8	8.7	2.2	2.2
Social Sciences	10560	11030	6870	7195	11.6	11.4	9.7	9.7
Subjects Allied to Medicine	10885	11915	3070	2965	12.0	12.3	4.4	4.0
Veterinary Sciences	560	635	120	125	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.2

[1] Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.

Table 22: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and disadvantaged status (No = not disadvantaged; yes = disadvantaged).

Subject area	N students progressed to HE						% students progressed to HE[1]					
	Missing		No		Yes		Missing		No		Yes	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	15	-	745	-	50	70	0.6	-	0.5	-	0.2	0.3
Architecture, Building and Planning	45	25	2560	2735	355	395	1.9	1.4	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.6
Biological and Sport Sciences	130	105	9015	9375	1325	1255	5.9	5.6	6.6	6.5	5.8	5.1
Business and Management	285	215	13375	16085	2595	3150	12.6	11.5	9.8	11.1	11.4	12.9
Combined	205	155	9180	9855	1390	1500	9.1	8.4	6.7	6.8	6.1	6.1
Combined and General Studies	10	15	595	640	110	110	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4
Computing	90	105	5615	6325	1100	1340	3.9	5.5	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.5
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	135	105	8925	9340	1225	1275	6.0	5.7	6.5	6.5	5.4	5.2
Education and Teaching	15	20	2850	2935	555	640	0.8	1.0	2.1	2.0	2.4	2.6
Engineering and Technology	250	200	9360	9770	1310	1370	11.1	10.6	6.9	6.8	5.7	5.6
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	30	30	4005	4035	325	285	1.4	1.6	2.9	2.8	1.4	1.2
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	65	40	6520	6040	685	615	3.0	2.2	4.8	4.2	3.0	2.5
Language and Area Studies	85	45	6260	5950	815	800	3.8	2.3	4.6	4.1	3.6	3.3
Law	95	110	7465	7970	1840	1935	4.3	5.9	5.5	5.5	8.1	7.9
Mathematical Sciences	95	75	3530	3570	385	455	4.2	3.9	2.6	2.5	1.7	1.9
Media, Journalism and Communications	35	30	2335	2470	385	415	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Medicine and Dentistry	80	65	4190	4655	420	505	3.7	3.4	3.1	3.2	1.8	2.1
Physical Sciences	95	75	5945	6040	745	755	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.3	3.1
Psychology	80	85	7805	8360	1710	1655	3.6	4.6	5.7	5.8	7.5	6.8
Social Sciences	265	225	14320	14960	2850	3040	11.9	12.0	10.5	10.4	12.5	12.4
Subjects Allied to Medicine	125	130	11210	11915	2620	2835	5.7	7.0	8.2	8.2	11.5	11.6
Veterinary Sciences	10	-	620	-	50	45	0.4	-	0.5	-	0.2	0.2

[1] Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.

Table 23: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and Free School Meals eligibility status (No = not eligible; yes = eligible).

Subject area	N students progressed to HE						% students progressed to HE[1]					
	Missing		No		Yes		Missing		No		Yes	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	15	-	775	-	25	35	0.6	-	0.5	-	0.2	0.3
Architecture, Building and Planning	45	25	2775	2970	140	160	1.9	1.4	1.9	1.9	1.4	1.6
Biological and Sport Sciences	130	105	9760	10120	585	510	5.9	5.6	6.5	6.4	5.9	5.0
Business and Management	285	215	14870	17960	1095	1270	12.6	11.5	10.0	11.3	11.1	12.5
Combined	205	155	9990	10740	585	620	9.1	8.4	6.7	6.8	5.9	6.1
Combined and General Studies	10	15	665	700	45	50	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Computing	90	105	6230	7085	480	580	3.9	5.5	4.2	4.5	4.9	5.7
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	135	105	9670	10080	480	535	6.0	5.7	6.5	6.3	4.8	5.3
Education and Teaching	15	20	3160	3295	245	275	0.8	1.0	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.7
Engineering and Technology	250	200	10110	10605	560	535	11.1	10.6	6.8	6.7	5.7	5.3
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	30	30	4185	4205	145	115	1.4	1.6	2.8	2.6	1.5	1.1
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	65	40	6880	6405	325	255	3.0	2.2	4.6	4.0	3.3	2.5
Language and Area Studies	85	45	6745	6390	325	355	3.8	2.3	4.5	4.0	3.3	3.5
Law	95	110	8505	9110	800	795	4.3	5.9	5.7	5.7	8.1	7.8
Mathematical Sciences	95	75	3750	3835	165	190	4.2	3.9	2.5	2.4	1.7	1.9
Media, Journalism and Communications	35	30	2550	2720	175	160	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.6
Medicine and Dentistry	80	65	4415	4960	200	200	3.7	3.4	3.0	3.1	2.0	2.0
Physical Sciences	95	75	6385	6475	310	320	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.1	3.1	3.2
Psychology	80	85	8760	9295	755	720	3.6	4.6	5.9	5.9	7.6	7.1
Social Sciences	265	225	15885	16735	1280	1265	11.9	12.0	10.6	10.5	13	12.5
Subjects Allied to Medicine	125	130	12690	13575	1140	1175	5.7	7.0	8.5	8.6	11.5	11.6
Veterinary Sciences	10	-	645	-	25	25	0.4	-	0.4	-	0.3	0.3

[1] Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.

Table 24: The number of students who progressed to higher education sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and ethnicity.

Subject area	Asian		Black		Chinese		Missing		Mixed		Other		White	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	10	20	-	-	-	-	170	140	15	20	-	-	600	635
Architecture, Building and Planning	385	415	205	220	30	30	530	510	110	145	75	85	1625	1750
Biological and Sport Sciences	940	915	645	625	80	65	1305	1370	440	495	130	155	6935	7110
Business and Management	3135	3985	1455	1665	135	145	2605	2820	685	845	325	410	7905	9580
Combined	1115	1275	625	665	85	85	1960	1965	485	540	150	180	6360	6805
Combined and General Studies	100	110	40	35	-	-	215	230	35	30	-	-	310	330
Computing	1235	1560	490	585	110	95	675	795	290	355	170	180	3830	4200
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	405	465	375	385	55	65	1360	1410	415	505	110	120	7560	7775
Education and Teaching	415	460	90	95	-	-	180	200	70	105	-	-	2630	2685
Engineering and Technology	1890	2135	755	820	135	130	1910	1945	445	515	325	260	5460	5535
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	205	200	70	65	20	30	890	950	130	125	35	25	3020	2960
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	340	335	150	140	20	15	1730	1625	255	235	60	60	4720	4285
Language and Area Studies	495	460	215	220	30	15	1380	1285	325	300	75	75	4635	4440
Law	1875	1980	805	940	50	35	990	1085	450	530	250	255	4985	5190
Mathematical Sciences	565	580	110	130	65	70	565	565	160	180	75	90	2475	2490
Media, Journalism and Communications	160	170	185	210	10	10	280	295	140	145	45	25	1940	2050
Medicine and Dentistry	1275	1445	260	325	65	65	1160	1265	180	215	135	175	1625	1740
Physical Sciences	725	755	190	265	85	60	1050	1005	265	265	90	110	4380	4410
Psychology	1270	1270	580	645	45	40	970	1055	425	465	160	195	6145	6430
Social Sciences	2525	2610	1385	1395	100	100	2805	2865	745	900	300	330	9570	10025
Subjects Allied to Medicine	3465	3415	1405	1665	95	75	1250	1275	495	585	430	435	6810	7435
Veterinary Sciences	15	20	-	-	-	-	125	170	25	20	-	-	500	540

Table 25: The percentage of students who progressed to higher education sustainably (out of total number of students in that category), broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and ethnicity. The underlying counts are presented in Table 24.

Subject area	Asian		Black		Chinese		Missing		Mixed		Other		White	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	0.0	0.1	-	-	-	-	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.3	-	-	0.6	0.6
Architecture, Building and Planning	1.7	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.6	2.2	2.1	1.7	1.9	2.5	2.7	1.7	1.8
Biological and Sport Sciences	4.2	3.7	6.4	5.6	6.4	5.8	5.4	5.5	6.7	6.6	4.3	4.8	7.4	7.2
Business and Management	13.9	16.2	14.5	15.0	11.1	12.6	10.8	11.4	10.4	11.2	10.8	12.7	8.4	9.7
Combined	4.9	5.2	6.2	6.0	6.8	7.4	8.1	7.9	7.4	7.2	5.0	5.6	6.8	6.9
Combined and General Studies	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	-	-	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.4	-	-	0.3	0.3
Computing	5.5	6.3	4.9	5.3	8.9	8.2	2.8	3.2	4.4	4.7	5.6	5.6	4.1	4.3
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	1.8	1.9	3.7	3.4	4.6	5.9	5.6	5.7	6.3	6.7	3.7	3.7	8.0	7.9
Education and Teaching	1.8	1.9	0.9	0.9	-	-	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.4	-	-	2.8	2.7
Engineering and Technology	8.4	8.7	7.5	7.4	10.9	11.5	7.9	7.8	6.8	6.8	10.9	8.0	5.8	5.6
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	1.5	2.5	3.7	3.8	2.0	1.6	1.1	0.7	3.2	3.0
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.4	7.2	6.5	3.9	3.2	1.9	1.9	5.0	4.4
Language and Area Studies	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.4	1.2	5.7	5.2	4.9	4.0	2.6	2.3	4.9	4.5
Law	8.3	8.1	8.0	8.5	4.0	3.2	4.1	4.4	6.9	7.1	8.3	7.8	5.3	5.3
Mathematical Sciences	2.5	2.4	1.1	1.2	5.4	6.2	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.5
Media, Journalism and Communications	0.7	0.7	1.8	1.9	0.7	1.0	1.2	1.2	2.1	2.0	1.6	0.8	2.1	2.1
Medicine and Dentistry	5.7	5.9	2.6	2.9	5.3	5.5	4.8	5.1	2.7	2.9	4.4	5.3	1.7	1.8
Physical Sciences	3.2	3.1	1.9	2.4	6.9	5.4	4.4	4.1	4.0	3.6	3.0	3.4	4.7	4.5
Psychology	5.6	5.2	5.8	5.8	3.7	3.3	4.0	4.3	6.5	6.2	5.4	6.1	6.5	6.5
Social Sciences	11.2	10.6	13.8	12.5	8.2	8.6	11.6	11.5	11.3	12	10.0	10.1	10.2	10.2
Subjects Allied to Medicine	15.4	13.9	14.0	15.0	7.9	6.6	5.2	5.1	7.5	7.8	14.4	13.4	7.2	7.6
Veterinary Sciences	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	-	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.2	-	-	0.5	0.5

Table 26: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and Special Educational Needs (SEN, No = no SEN; yes = has SEN).

Subject area	N students progressed to HE						% students progressed to HE[1]					
	Missing		No		Yes		Missing		No		Yes	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	170	135	615	670	30	30	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4
Architecture, Building and Planning	495	475	2355	2565	105	115	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7
Biological and Sport Sciences	1225	1260	8880	9060	370	415	5.4	5.4	6.7	6.4	6.3	6.2
Business and Management	2465	2630	13215	16095	570	725	10.9	11.3	9.9	11.4	9.6	10.9
Combined	1870	1865	8535	9220	370	430	8.2	8.0	6.4	6.5	6.3	6.5
Combined and General Studies	205	225	500	500	15	35	0.9	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5
Computing	615	710	5730	6535	455	525	2.7	3.1	4.3	4.6	7.7	7.9
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	1275	1330	8460	8745	545	650	5.6	5.7	6.4	6.2	9.2	9.7
Education and Teaching	155	160	3130	3275	135	160	0.7	0.7	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.4
Engineering and Technology	1815	1840	8675	9095	430	405	8.0	7.9	6.5	6.5	7.3	6.1
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	855	920	3365	3300	140	130	3.8	4.0	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.0
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	1675	1580	5335	4840	260	275	7.4	6.8	4.0	3.4	4.4	4.2
Language and Area Studies	1320	1230	5620	5325	215	240	5.8	5.3	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.6
Law	905	970	8220	8740	275	310	4.0	4.2	6.2	6.2	4.7	4.6
Mathematical Sciences	530	540	3330	3385	150	175	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.6	2.6
Media, Journalism and Communications	250	260	2365	2500	140	155	1.1	1.1	1.8	1.8	2.3	2.3
Medicine and Dentistry	1115	1205	3525	3955	55	65	4.9	5.2	2.7	2.8	0.9	0.9
Physical Sciences	985	955	5560	5605	240	315	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.7
Psychology	875	975	8415	8785	305	340	3.9	4.2	6.3	6.2	5.2	5.1
Social Sciences	2650	2685	14170	14920	610	620	11.7	11.5	10.7	10.6	10.3	9.3
Subjects Allied to Medicine	1120	1145	12360	13200	475	535	4.9	4.9	9.3	9.4	8.0	8.0
Veterinary Sciences	115	165	540	565	20	20	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3

[1] Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.

Table 27: The number of students who progressed to higher education sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and school type (The abbreviation "FE" stands for Further Education).

Subject area	Sixth form		FE college		Independent		Non-selective/ Other/Missing		Selective	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	95	70	150	205	140	105	380	390	45	65
Architecture, Building and Planning	395	355	160	225	415	385	1720	1865	265	325
Biological and Sport Sciences	1285	1190	800	925	1035	1065	6390	6600	965	960
Business and Management	2190	2630	1050	1360	2050	2150	9725	11940	1240	1370
Combined	1405	1230	715	880	1570	1625	5940	6595	1140	1185
Combined and General Studies	65	55	30	45	180	190	385	400	60	70
Computing	915	920	565	800	445	540	4305	4805	565	710
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	1570	1490	940	970	1035	1080	6165	6585	565	600
Education and Teaching	445	385	490	640	80	85	2255	2355	150	125
Engineering and Technology	1265	1210	580	765	1560	1565	5930	6260	1590	1535
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	520	500	220	260	800	830	2300	2265	525	495
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	815	690	350	360	1550	1485	3775	3475	775	690
Language and Area Studies	955	900	435	465	1180	1095	3845	3635	740	695
Law	1595	1630	790	920	685	720	5505	5890	825	855
Mathematical Sciences	470	500	210	195	475	475	2315	2385	540	540
Media, Journalism and Communications	435	400	280	305	195	180	1740	1890	105	140
Medicine and Dentistry	490	525	105	125	1055	1175	1795	2075	1250	1320
Physical Sciences	855	855	405	470	880	860	3845	3865	805	830
Psychology	1435	1310	840	950	700	750	5925	6335	700	760
Social Sciences	2135	2085	1240	1420	2280	2315	9995	10505	1780	1900
Subjects Allied to Medicine	2000	1895	1325	1560	795	810	8560	9430	1275	1185
Veterinary Sciences	55	55	65	100	100	155	325	335	130	115

Table 28: The percentage of students who progressed to higher education sustainably (out of total number of students in that category), broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and school type (The abbreviation "FE" stands for Further Education). The underlying counts are presented in Table 27.

Subject area	Sixth form		FE college		Independent		Non-selective/ Other/Missing		Selective	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	0.5	0.3	1.3	1.5	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4
Architecture, Building and Planning	1.8	1.7	1.3	1.6	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.9	1.7	2.0
Biological and Sport Sciences	6.0	5.7	6.8	6.6	5.4	5.4	6.9	6.6	6.0	5.8
Business and Management	10.2	12.6	8.9	9.8	10.7	10.9	10.4	12	7.7	8.3
Combined	6.6	5.9	6.1	6.3	8.2	8.3	6.4	6.6	7.1	7.2
Combined and General Studies	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.9	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Computing	4.3	4.4	4.8	5.7	2.3	2.7	4.6	4.8	3.5	4.3
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	7.3	7.1	8.0	7.0	5.4	5.5	6.6	6.6	3.5	3.6
Education and Teaching	2.1	1.9	4.2	4.6	0.4	0.4	2.4	2.4	0.9	0.8
Engineering and Technology	5.9	5.8	4.9	5.5	8.1	8.0	6.4	6.3	9.9	9.3
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	2.4	2.4	1.9	1.9	4.2	4.2	2.5	2.3	3.3	3.0
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	3.8	3.3	3.0	2.6	8.1	7.6	4.1	3.5	4.8	4.2
Language and Area Studies	4.5	4.3	3.7	3.3	6.1	5.6	4.1	3.6	4.6	4.2
Law	7.5	7.8	6.7	6.6	3.6	3.7	5.9	5.9	5.1	5.2
Mathematical Sciences	2.2	2.4	1.8	1.4	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.4	3.4	3.3
Media, Journalism and Communications	2.0	1.9	2.4	2.2	1.0	0.9	1.9	1.9	0.7	0.8
Medicine and Dentistry	2.3	2.5	0.9	0.9	5.5	6.0	1.9	2.1	7.8	8.0
Physical Sciences	4.0	4.1	3.4	3.4	4.6	4.4	4.1	3.9	5.0	5.0
Psychology	6.7	6.3	7.1	6.8	3.6	3.8	6.4	6.3	4.4	4.6
Social Sciences	10.0	10.0	10.6	10.2	11.9	11.8	10.7	10.5	11.1	11.5
Subjects Allied to Medicine	9.3	9.1	11.3	11.2	4.1	4.1	9.2	9.4	8.0	7.2
Veterinary Sciences	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.7

Table 29: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and school sex.

| Subject area | N students progressed to HE | | | | | | % students progressed to HE[1] | | | | | |
| | Boys' | | Girls' | | Mixed/Missing | | Boys' | | Girls' | | Mixed/Missing | |
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	25	25	55	70	730	740	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5
Architecture, Building and Planning	255	310	210	245	2490	2600	2.1	2.5	1.4	1.5	1.9	1.8
Biological and Sport Sciences	690	755	895	860	8890	9125	5.8	6.0	5.7	5.4	6.6	6.4
Business and Management	1235	1385	1060	1245	13955	16820	10.4	11.0	6.8	7.9	10.4	11.8
Combined	920	905	1145	1185	8705	9425	7.7	7.2	7.4	7.5	6.5	6.6
Combined and General Studies	40	45	120	125	560	590	0.3	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.4
Computing	645	700	255	345	5900	6725	5.4	5.6	1.7	2.2	4.4	4.7
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	390	385	815	815	9080	9525	3.3	3.1	5.2	5.1	6.8	6.7
Education and Teaching	50	50	300	305	3075	3235	0.4	0.4	1.9	1.9	2.3	2.3
Engineering and Technology	1410	1460	690	625	8825	9255	11.8	11.6	4.4	3.9	6.6	6.5
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	395	425	540	490	3425	3430	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.4
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	710	620	940	895	5620	5185	6.0	4.9	6.0	5.6	4.2	3.6
Language and Area Studies	425	380	1010	940	5720	5470	3.6	3.0	6.5	5.9	4.3	3.8
Law	475	575	870	935	8055	8510	4.0	4.6	5.6	5.9	6.0	6.0
Mathematical Sciences	455	475	300	320	3255	3305	3.8	3.8	1.9	2.0	2.4	2.3
Media, Journalism and Communications	90	125	185	195	2485	2590	0.7	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.9	1.8
Medicine and Dentistry	630	690	1005	1005	3060	3530	5.3	5.5	6.5	6.3	2.3	2.5
Physical Sciences	620	635	525	560	5645	5675	5.2	5.1	3.4	3.5	4.2	4.0
Psychology	320	360	1050	1115	8225	8625	2.7	2.9	6.8	7.0	6.1	6.1
Social Sciences	1460	1650	1780	1810	14190	14765	12.3	13.1	11.5	11.4	10.6	10.4
Subjects Allied to Medicine	635	540	1670	1670	11655	12670	5.3	4.3	10.8	10.5	8.7	8.9
Veterinary Sciences	45	40	110	125	520	585	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.4

[1] Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.

Table 30: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and Key Stage 4 attainment group.

Subject area	N students progressed to HE								% students progressed to HE[1]							
	High		Medium		Low		Missing		High		Medium		Low		Missing	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	235	215	230	265	330	350	15	10	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.4
Architecture, Building and Planning	930	950	885	910	1095	1270	45	30	1.4	1.4	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.3
Biological and Sport Sciences	4375	4370	2520	2645	3440	3595	135	125	6.8	6.5	6.3	6.1	6.2	6.1	5.7	5.9
Business and Management	3135	3730	6720	7860	6105	7615	290	240	4.9	5.6	11.3	12.9	16.4	18.3	12.4	11.4
Combined	4635	4840	2335	2545	3595	3950	205	180	7.2	7.3	6.6	6.7	5.7	5.9	8.8	8.4
Combined and General Studies	345	370	115	140	250	235	10	15	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.7
Computing	2250	2745	2115	2275	2340	2640	90	110	3.5	4.1	4.3	4.5	5.2	5.3	3.9	5.2
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	2460	2655	3745	3650	3935	4295	145	120	3.8	4.0	7.3	7.3	9.2	8.5	6.2	5.7
Education and Teaching	430	365	1620	1840	1355	1365	20	20	0.7	0.5	2.5	2.3	4.0	4.3	0.8	1.0
Engineering and Technology	5850	6050	1440	1580	3375	3470	255	235	9.1	9.1	6.2	5.9	3.5	3.7	11.0	11.1
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	2340	2390	515	415	1475	1505	35	35	3.7	3.6	2.7	2.6	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.7
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	3735	3620	1070	850	2395	2185	75	45	5.8	5.4	4.4	3.7	2.6	2.0	3.2	2.1
Language and Area Studies	3900	3705	1015	985	2150	2050	90	55	6.1	5.6	4.0	3.5	2.5	2.3	3.8	2.6
Law	2845	3035	3030	3035	3420	3825	105	120	4.4	4.6	6.3	6.5	7.4	7.0	4.5	5.7
Mathematical Sciences	2760	2865	245	230	905	920	95	80	4.3	4.3	1.7	1.6	0.6	0.5	4.2	3.8
Media, Journalism and Communications	395	465	1250	1195	1080	1220	35	35	0.6	0.7	2.0	2.1	3.1	2.8	1.5	1.6
Medicine and Dentistry	4405	4880	30	45	175	225	80	75	6.9	7.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	3.5	3.4
Physical Sciences	4165	4350	705	750	1820	1690	100	90	6.5	6.5	3.4	2.9	1.7	1.7	4.3	4.1
Psychology	3195	3295	2160	2260	4155	4445	85	95	5.0	4.9	7.7	7.5	5.3	5.3	3.7	4.4
Social Sciences	5905	6290	5410	5255	5835	6425	280	255	9.2	9.4	10.8	10.9	13.2	12.2	12.0	11.9
Subjects Allied to Medicine	5225	4950	3705	4280	4895	5505	135	145	8.2	7.4	9.0	9.3	9.1	9.9	5.9	6.9
Veterinary Sciences	525	560	45	55	100	130	10	10	0.8	0.8	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5

[1]Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.

Table 31: The number of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and Key Stage 5 pathway (The abbreviation "AG" stands for Applied Generals, "TL" for Tech levels, AL for "A Levels, and "EPQ" for Extended Project Qualification).

Subject area	AG & TL only		AL & EPQ only		Mostly AG & TL		Mostly AL & EPQ		Mixed	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	130	190	575	530	-	-	65	75	-	-
Architecture, Building and Planning	170	200	2400	2530	140	150	195	225	45	45
Biological and Sport Sciences	1215	1345	8095	7965	490	620	585	735	85	75
Business and Management	1855	2445	11440	13135	1115	1440	1615	2150	230	280
Combined	455	555	9290	9625	280	380	685	850	65	110
Combined and General Studies	10	20	675	690	-	10	20	35	-	10
Computing	770	970	4800	5485	480	465	665	765	85	85
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	720	715	7985	8120	530	630	850	1020	200	240
Education and Teaching	690	895	1925	1790	305	330	445	515	60	60
Engineering and Technology	470	585	9720	9920	225	285	440	490	60	60
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	15	15	4125	4085	40	45	170	195	10	10
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	15	20	6955	6360	50	50	235	250	15	15
Language and Area Studies	30	45	6775	6390	60	55	270	280	20	25
Law	375	435	7980	8205	270	350	670	875	105	150
Mathematical Sciences	15	15	3885	3960	-	-	85	105	-	-
Media, Journalism and Communications	150	160	2155	2250	130	165	280	300	40	40
Medicine and Dentistry	10	10	4670	5195	-	-	15	10	-	-
Physical Sciences	185	235	6280	6245	100	100	195	250	30	40
Psychology	280	370	8225	8435	225	250	800	960	65	85
Social Sciences	1060	1155	14155	14350	630	730	1380	1730	200	260
Subjects Allied to Medicine	1855	2325	10090	9970	870	1060	1030	1370	110	160
Veterinary Sciences	40	60	620	675	-	10	15	-	-	-

Table 32: The percentage of students who progressed to higher education sustainably (out of total number of students in that category), broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and Key Stage 5 pathway (The abbreviation "AG" stands for Applied Generals, "TL" for Tech levels, AL for "A Levels, and "EPQ" for Extended Project Qualification). The underlying counts of students are presented in Table 31.

Subject area	AG & TL only		AL & EPQ only		Mostly AG & TL		Mostly AL & EPQ		Mixed	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	1.2	1.5	0.4	0.4	-	-	0.6	0.6	-	-
Architecture, Building and Planning	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.3	2.1	1.8	1.7	3.3	2.7
Biological and Sport Sciences	11.5	10.5	6.1	5.9	8.2	8.6	5.5	5.6	6.0	4.1
Business and Management	17.6	19.1	8.6	9.7	18.6	20.1	15.1	16.3	15.9	15.8
Combined	4.3	4.4	7.0	7.1	4.7	5.3	6.4	6.4	4.4	6.1
Combined and General Studies	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.5	-	0.2	0.2	0.3	-	0.6
Computing	7.3	7.6	3.6	4.0	8.0	6.5	6.2	5.8	5.9	4.9
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	6.9	5.6	6.0	6.0	8.8	8.7	7.9	7.7	13.9	13.6
Education and Teaching	6.6	7.0	1.4	1.3	5.1	4.6	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.3
Engineering and Technology	4.5	4.6	7.3	7.3	3.7	4.0	4.1	3.7	4.1	3.5
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	0.2	0.1	3.1	3.0	0.7	0.6	1.6	1.5	0.6	0.6
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	0.1	0.2	5.2	4.7	0.8	0.7	2.2	1.9	1.0	1.0
Language and Area Studies	0.3	0.3	5.1	4.7	1.0	0.8	2.5	2.1	1.5	1.4
Law	3.6	3.4	6.0	6.0	4.5	4.9	6.2	6.6	7.3	8.6
Mathematical Sciences	0.1	0.1	2.9	2.9	-	-	0.8	0.8	-	-
Media, Journalism and Communications	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.7	2.2	2.3	2.6	2.3	2.7	2.2
Medicine and Dentistry	0.1	0.1	3.5	3.8	-	-	0.1	0.1	-	-
Physical Sciences	1.8	1.8	4.7	4.6	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.3
Psychology	2.7	2.9	6.2	6.2	3.8	3.5	7.5	7.3	4.4	4.8
Social Sciences	10.1	9.0	10.7	10.6	10.5	10.2	12.9	13.1	14.0	14.8
Subjects Allied to Medicine	17.7	18.2	7.6	7.3	14.5	14.8	9.6	10.4	7.5	9.0
Veterinary Sciences	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	-	0.2	0.1	-	-	-

Table 33: The number and percentage of students who progressed to higher education (HE) sustainably, broken down by subject areas studied in HE, Key Stage 5 cohort and Key Stage 5 attainment group.

| Subject area | N students progressed to HE | | | | | | % students progressed to HE[1] | | | | | |
| | High | | Medium | | Low/Missing | | High | | Medium | | Low/Missing | |
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	95	130	325	420	390	280	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.8	0.8
Architecture, Building and Planning	715	915	895	1155	1345	1090	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.2
Biological and Sport Sciences	2920	3600	3225	3735	4335	3400	5.3	5.5	6.7	6.3	7.7	7.2
Business and Management	2940	3900	5945	8550	7365	7005	5.4	6.0	11.4	13.0	14.2	16.6
Combined	4205	4985	2305	2975	4265	3555	7.7	7.6	6.6	6.6	5.5	5.8
Combined and General Studies	280	355	155	250	285	155	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.5
Computing	1815	2665	2460	2955	2525	2145	3.3	4.1	3.9	4.0	5.9	5.7
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	2395	3360	2775	3350	5115	4015	4.4	5.1	7.9	7.5	6.6	6.5
Education and Teaching	465	575	1275	1660	1680	1360	0.8	0.9	2.6	2.5	3.0	3.2
Engineering and Technology	4680	5140	2610	3090	3630	3110	8.5	7.9	5.6	5.8	6.2	6.0
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	1745	2040	805	835	1815	1470	3.2	3.1	2.8	2.7	1.9	1.6
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	3390	3720	1050	1040	2830	1940	6.2	5.7	4.4	3.6	2.5	2.0
Language and Area Studies	3445	3750	1020	1160	2690	1880	6.3	5.7	4.2	3.5	2.4	2.2
Law	2870	3550	2685	3205	3850	3265	5.2	5.4	5.9	6.1	6.4	6.2
Mathematical Sciences	2675	2920	400	430	935	745	4.9	4.5	1.4	1.4	1.0	0.8
Media, Journalism and Communications	450	600	905	1160	1405	1155	0.8	0.9	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
Medicine and Dentistry	4375	4775	45	60	270	390	8.0	7.3	0.4	0.7	0.1	0.1
Physical Sciences	3360	3920	1385	1410	2040	1540	6.1	6.0	3.2	2.9	3.3	2.7
Psychology	2740	3540	2515	2945	4340	3615	5.0	5.4	6.7	6.7	6.0	5.7
Social Sciences	5785	6715	4815	5770	6830	5740	10.5	10.3	10.5	10.7	11.5	11.2
Subjects Allied to Medicine	3075	3745	4195	5325	6690	5810	5.6	5.7	10.3	10.8	10.0	10.3
Veterinary Sciences	470	525	75	110	135	120	0.9	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

[1] Out of the total number of students - who had a sustained HE participation - in that cohort and characteristic group.