FE SEGMENTATION

PART OF COSMOS



National FE Student Segmentation 2021/2022

Cosmos Engagement Report

November 2022

In this report



Research background	p.03
Methodology & sample	p.06
Executive summary	p.08
PART 1: Understanding FE students & their needs	p.16
PART 2: FE student segmentation	p.44
PART 3: Opportunities & ways forward	p.72
About Cosmos	p.75
Appendix	p.80

RESEARCH BACKGROUND



Research background (1 of 2)

FE SEGMENTATION

OVERVIEW & KEY OBJECTIVES

Partners within the Uni Connect programme have a keen focus on supporting and delivering initiatives for FE students. FE students are not an homogenous group; their needs differ based on demographic, cultural and social values. Key to the success of delivering impactful initiatives is having a clear understanding of this student group's perspectives and needs.

A **national FE Student Segmentation Study*** based on attitudinal and demographic metrics was identified as the most appropriate way to:

- Enable providers to **understand FE student needs in much richer detail;** identify where the gaps in provision are and **ensure initiatives are well targeted**
- **Identify and aggregate key groups of students**, so they can be successfully targeted with relevant interventions
- Identify a **needs base for eamech group**, based on NERUPI framework principles, which can be prioritised depending on which group students align to

* NOTE: Segmentation is a scientific quantitative method that identifies distinct segments within a population based on shared characteristics around relevant geographic, demographic, attitudinal, and/or behavioural variables.



Research background (2 of 2)

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives also needed to be addresses in the research:

- **Exploring what social and economic factors** may affect this group, e.g. parenting/caring responsibilities, existing work, economic constraints (lack of funds generally) and access to finance to ease study.
- **Undertaking interrogative analysis** that will identify universal factors (those which are the same for all groups in all areas), and localised/regional factors
- Identifying **students' knowledge gaps** in provision/progression routes
- **Understand existing pastoral and careers guidance provided by FE colleges**, whilst identifying gaps and best practice
- Understanding **how we can support students' transition**/retention to FE/HE
- **Representative sample:** include both standalone Sixth forms as well as FE colleges within any analysis / primary research



Methodology



To address the research objectives Cosmos has carried out a two-phase research programme and this report summarises findings of both phases:

PHASE ONE: Baseline FE Student Segmentation

Analysis of existing CFE data collected from each provider
Identifying distinct segments of students based on the variables/ indicators available in the CFE dataset using cluster analysis*

- The main purpose of this phase was to identify distinct segments within the FE student population and profile them on a basic level in terms of their attitudes to HE and key demographics
- **Over 30,000 CFE student surveys analysed**, with the focus on waves 2 (survey between May'19 – Jan'20) and (survey between Oct'20 - Feb'21) capturing periods pre- and post- COVID-19
- **Sample was representative** of a wide range of FE student groups within national FE student population

PHASE TWO: Testing Segments & Building Profiles

Segments tested via an online survey
Student profiles built on to include FE educational (including apprenticeships), career and activity/ intervention preferences

- The purpose of this phase was to **validate the segments identified in Phase 1 and further enrich them** by profiling on a range of additional attitudinal, behavioural and demographic characteristics
- Survey fielded in June 2022, with over 1,100 student surveys collected and analysed
- Sample was designed to achieve minimum numbers of surveys per region/ partnership of focus, and weighting** was applied to align segment distribution closer to that established in Phase 1

*An **initial desktop review** of existing relevant evidence (research/insight), and contextual data (i.e. policy developments) was also undertaken ahead of the research commencing*

* More information on the CFE data and Cluster analysis on pages 78-79

** More information on Phase 2 weighting on page 80

Sample



For each phase of the research programme, robust samples of FE students were utilised:

Phase 1 sample: Total n=34,723

		%	n
GENDER	Female	59%	18841
	Male	38%	12398
	Other	3%	964
ETHNICITY	White	86%	27648
	BAME	13%	4109
	Asian	6%	2031
	Black	3%	804
	Mixed	3%	1,011
	Other	1%	263
	Prefer not to say	1%	381
UNI CONNECT	Target	32%	11181
	Unknown	68%	23542

Phase 2 sample: Total n=1,128

		%*	n
GENDER	Female	66%	722
	Male	31%	331
	Other	3%	28
ETHNICITY	White	73%	812
	BAME	27%	269
	Asian	17%	165
	Black	5%	55
	Mixed	3%	30
	Other	2%	19
	Prefer not to say	-	-
UNI CONNECT**	Target	12%	128
	Non-target	57%	675

* Weighted, please see more information on weighting on page 80
** n=325 students completing the survey (32%) were classed as 'Unknown'

NOTE: Sample sizes (n) within a demographic criterion not adding up to the total sample size indicates that not all respondents answered the question

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive summary

FE SEGMENTATION

Our research has shown that FE students are generally **highly motivated to succeed and confident about their abilities**. However, not all are convinced that HE is the right path for them.

Although the **likely claimed take-up of HE is high – 4 in 5 FE students surveyed say they have already applied or were planning to apply to HE*** – around 1 in 5 FE students are either uncertain or considering alternative options. Starting a job is the next most popular choice amongst FE students followed by apprenticeships.

Overall, a large proportion of students understand, and believe in, the benefits offered by HE. **There is a strong relationship between the number of HE benefits students recognise and their likelihood to apply for HE**, so making sure FE students understand and believe in the value of HE is essential to driving HE consideration and take-up.



"Provide information about why university is worth the financial struggle without just trying to sell me into a specific university."

Female, College Level 3 - Year 2, Isle of Wight

* NOTE: Phase 2 fieldwork took place in June 2022. The timings of the research could have impacted these results.

Executive summary



"I need a lot more support regarding possible careers that would link to my current studies beyond lawyer, doctor, teacher. Careers aid is extremely vague."

Female, Sixth Form - Year 13, Cumbria

"Help me get a scholarship because without it I won't be able to continue my education."

Female, Sixth Form - Year 13, Essex

"Tell people what subjects aid with what degrees, for example be more clear which degrees would be suited for a certain course. I chose the wrong A levels due to this which I highly regret."

Female, College Level 3 - Year 2, Yorkshire

FE students' knowledge about the specific aspects of HE could be improved – although most have some degree of knowledge about the individual aspects tested in the survey, **60% or more students say they know little or nothing**, so continued education is essential.

Areas where FE students' knowledge is particularly lacking include: financial support available, student life, the specifics of the application process, types of courses available and, possibly most importantly, careers HE studies could lead to. All of these aspect need particular attention when developing support interventions.

In fact, **career opportunities and earning potential are amongst the top factors FE students consider when deciding on their next steps** post FE (after personal interest in the subject/ area and perceived ability in it).

Ensuring students have clarity about their desired future career early in their FE studies is crucial to driving confident decision making and minimising the chances of students missing out on their ideal next steps (e.g. not getting the right qualifications/ grades etc.).

Executive summary

SEGMENTATION

Knowledge about HE is not the only area where FE students would like to receive support with.

There is a **strong appetite for understanding the full range of options and opportunities post FE** and guidance around which option would be suitable to students' individual circumstances and goals.

There is a **desire for this advice to be personalised, i.e. rooted in students' subject/ area interests and personal strengths (including both academic and personality) and unbiased**, i.e. not just limited to universities. Apprenticeships, for example, is a pathway a lot of students have very limited knowledge about, particularly around assessing personal suitability, sources of information and the application process.

FE students also express a **high degree of interest in support around succeeding in future employment** e.g. help with gaining work experience, securing placements/ internships based on current subjects and/ or preferred sector and navigating the jobs market and the hiring process (e.g support with CV writing, preparing for interviews etc.).

Support with learning, improving grades/ preparing to apply for university/ apprenticeship etc. is as another area of strong interest amongst FE students.



"[I would like] more information and help about things other than university, e.g. assistance on how to take and plan a gap year, how to find full time jobs etc."

Other gender, Sixth Form - Year 13, Cornwall

"Have a chat with everybody personally talking through options, as I never got to know what other options there were other than a university until it was too late to change"

Female, College Level 3 - Year 1, Hampshire

"Help us to find relevant work experience to help us with future career plans"

Female, Sixth Form - Year 13, Essex

Executive summary



In terms of the format of support, **generally students tend to find one-on-one and ongoing support activities more helpful than group and one-off activities**, but there is an overall appetite for a variety of activity types.

Support activities provided internally by schools and colleges are appreciated, but **there is also strong interest in external events** (e.g. university visits, guest speakers/ alumni meetings etc.).

A large proportion of students **would like to see the volume of support provided increase** – many claim to have received very limited support, if any at all – and earlier on in the FE journey than just the final year.

Executive summary

SEGMENTATION

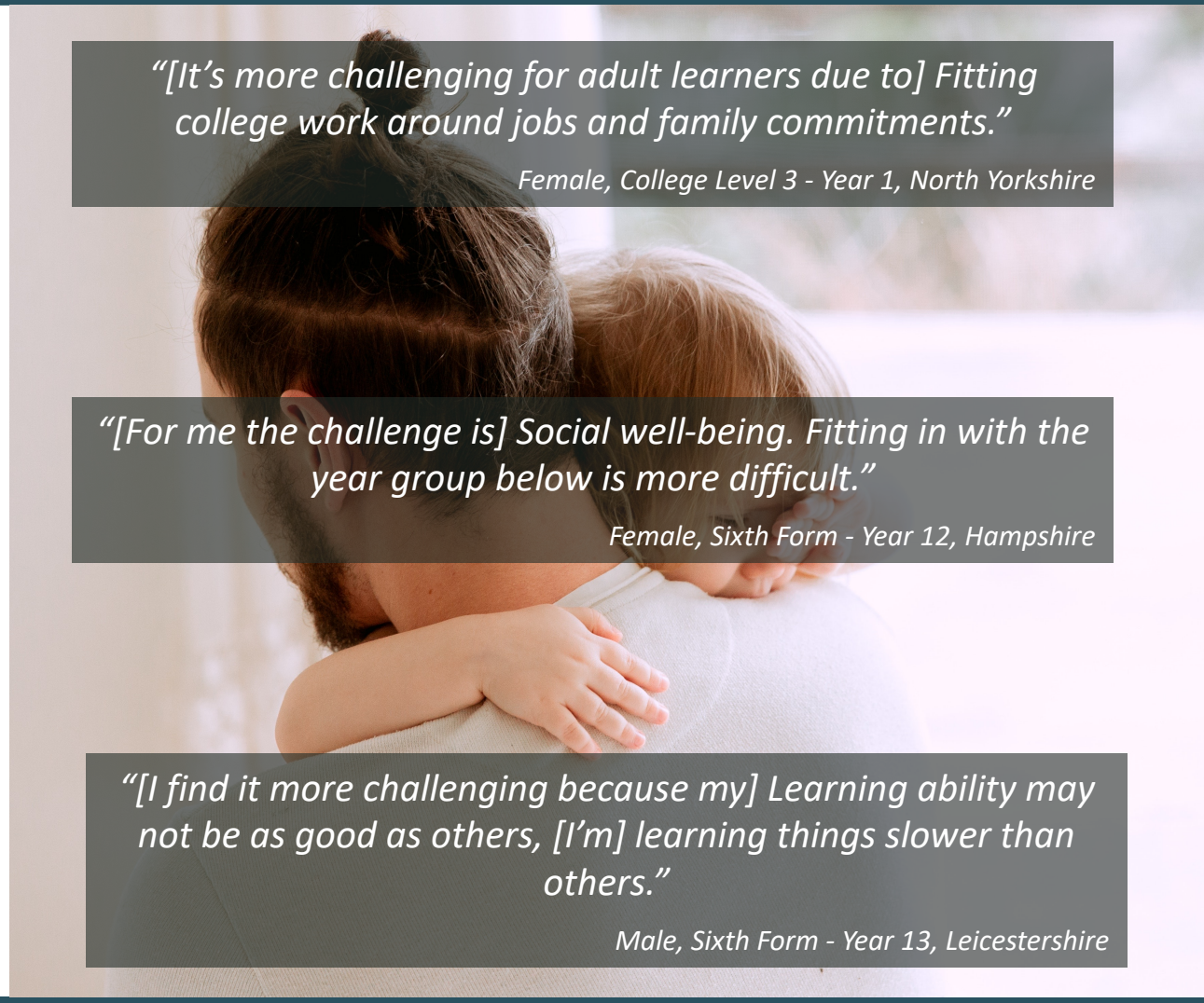
Adult learners, whilst a relatively small proportion of FE students in general, are an audience that requires additional, specialised support as they typically find their study experiences more challenging due to:

- Having to **balance a number of commitments** besides their studies (e.g. jobs, caring for young children etc.)
- Having **difficulties integrating with the rest of the class**/ people typically younger than themselves
- In some instances, **learning difficulties due to age** (e.g. lower ability to concentrate, remember information etc.)

Adult learners, compared to their younger counterparts, are a lot more likely to start jobs after FE studies, so s**upporting them with securing jobs in the relevant fields should be the top support priority** rather than pushing them into further education (university or apprenticeships).

That said, **apprenticeships could be a good middle ground** between higher education studies and full-time jobs. Improving Adult Learners' knowledge about them should the secondary priority.

Continued education around the benefits or HE is also important but might be lower priority for Adult Learner support.



"[It's more challenging for adult learners due to] Fitting college work around jobs and family commitments."

Female, College Level 3 - Year 1, North Yorkshire

"[For me the challenge is] Social well-being. Fitting in with the year group below is more difficult."

Female, Sixth Form - Year 12, Hampshire

"[I find it more challenging because my] Learning ability may not be as good as others, [I'm] learning things slower than others."

Male, Sixth Form - Year 13, Leicestershire

Executive summary

Whilst there is a fair degree of commonality between FE students in terms of the support they need (e.g. careers advice), **our research has identified four distinct segments of FE students**, to help with targeting of the support activities:

- HE Confident (27% of FE students)
- HE Hopeful (18% of FE students)
- HE Maybe (26% of FE students)
- HE Sceptics (19% of FE students)

Each of the four segments represent a significant share of the FE student population, so in-depth understanding of each of them is essential to provide them with the most relevant and useful support.

We explore each of the segments in depth in **PART 2: FE student segmentation** of this report.

PART 3: Opportunities and ways forward provides some initial thought on the types of support/ information these segments should be targeted with.



High level overview of the segments identified based on the analysis of over 30k student surveys*

FE SEGMENTATION









HE Confident

27% of FE students

Highly confident and knowledgeable about HE; on track to study at HE

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Hopeful

18% of FE students

Quite confident about wanting to study at HE, but are lacking knowledge

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Maybe

26% of FE students

Poor knowledge about HE and needing reassurance whether HE is for them

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Sceptics

19% of FE students

Lacking motivation and HE knowledge; fairly convinced HE is not for them

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

* NOTE: Please refer to Parts 2 and 3 of the report for more detail on the segments.

PART 1: Understanding FE students & their needs

FE SEGMENTATION

FE students are generally highly motivated to succeed and confident about their abilities, but reassurances about HE would help to counter doubts

FE SEGMENTATION

Generally, FE students demonstrate high levels of confidence and drive to succeed – there is good foundation for encouraging students to progress into Higher Education:

- Around 9 in 10 say they are motivated to do well in studies
- Around 8 in 10 say they can get the grades needed for further studies and they could go to a university if they wanted to

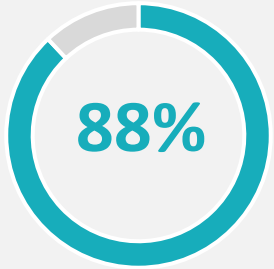
There is also strong agreement amongst FE students, although with some degree of doubt, as to whether:

- Higher Education is suitable for them
- They could cope with the level of study required
- They would fit in well with others in Higher Education

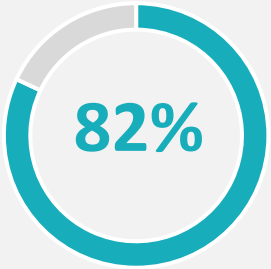
Although it's natural to have doubts about the unknown/ unfamiliar, reassurances about Higher Education would help to counter doubts.

ATTITUDES TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF SELF, % STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE

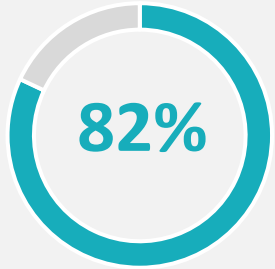
Total sample



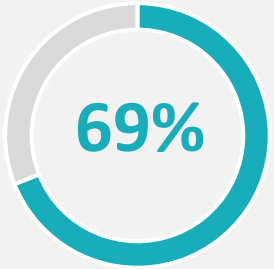
I am motivated to do well in my studies



I can get the grades I need for further study



I believe I could go to university if I wanted to

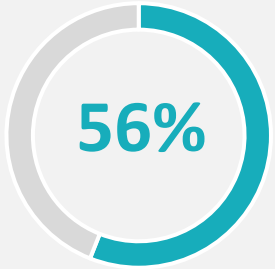


I have the academic ability to succeed

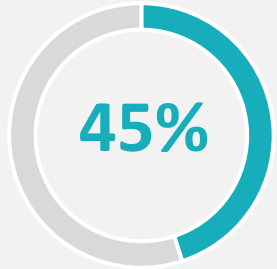
LOWER LEVEL OF AGREEMENT



I would fit in well with others [in Higher Education]



I could cope with the level of study required [in Higher Education]



It [Higher Education] is for people like me

Source: Phase 1, Q4. How much do you agree with the following statements? Q11. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (Q4: n=33,414 / Q11 n=33,313)

There is a strong recognition of the benefits of Higher Education, and so is its claimed (future) take-up. That said, the prospect of going into HE is low for 1 in 5

FE SEGMENTATION

The majority of FE students recognise the benefits of Higher Education, with the top perceived benefits being:

- Being challenged intellectually
- Gaining valuable life skills
- Being able to get a better job with better earnings potential

With many recognising the benefits of Higher Education, the claimed take-up of Higher Education studies is also high with almost 4 in 5 likely to apply or having already applied*.

78%
Will definitely apply, are very likely to apply or have already applied

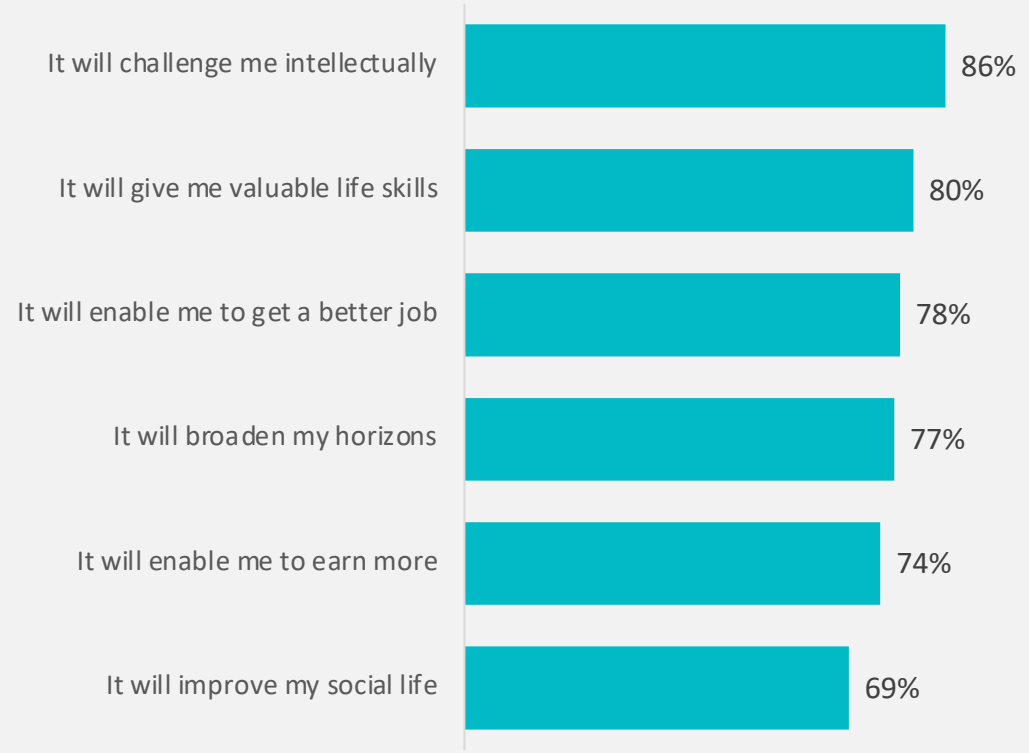
48%
Will definitely apply or are very likely to apply

30%
Have already applied

Source: Phase 2, Q33. How likely are you to apply to higher education in future?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

There is a strong relationship between the number of HE benefits students recognise and their likelihood to apply for Higher Education. Making sure FE students understand, and believe in, the value of HE is essential to driving HE consideration and take-up.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, % AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE
Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q12. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (32,951)

* NOTE: Phase 2 fieldwork took place in June 2022. The timings of the research could have impacted these results.

Higher Education is the most popular next step after FE, followed at a distance by starting a job. Apprenticeships are a comparatively uncommon choice

FE SEGMENTATION

HE is the most popular choice amongst students after current FE studies with 2 in 5 looking to study at a university or other HE institution away from home.

1 in 5 are looking to start a job and around 1 in 14 are planning to do an apprenticeship.

Two-thirds feel confident about their next steps whilst a third are uncertain, with confidence increasing as students approach the final year of FE studies. Males are also more confident about next steps than Females.

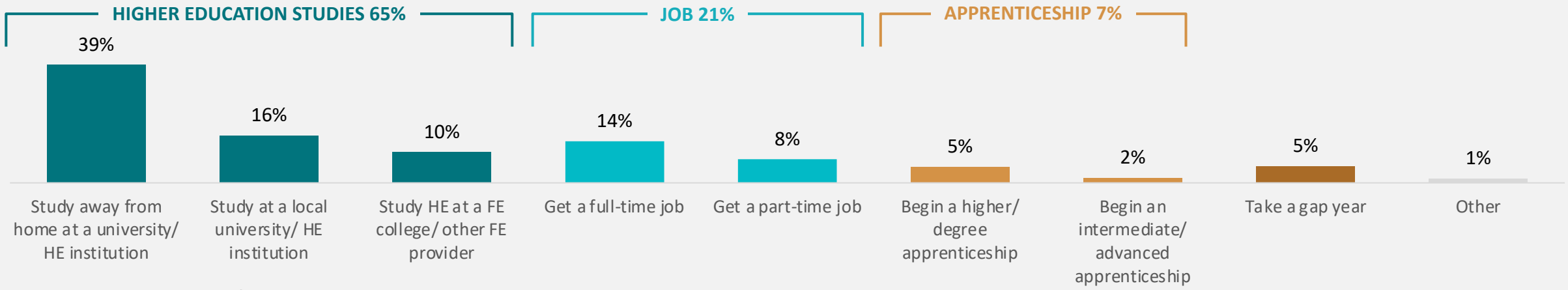
67% Feel confident about their next steps

33% Feel uncertain about their next steps

Source: Phase 2, Q31. How do you feel about your potential next steps?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,078)

FUTURE PLANS AFTER COMPLETING CURRENT STUDIES

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q29. When you finish your current studies, what do you expect to do next?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,056)

FE students have some knowledge about Higher Education, but only a minority claim to know a lot, indicating the need for advice and support

FE SEGMENTATION

Areas of Higher Education where FE students have stronger knowledge are more practical ones: qualification/ grades needed to get into Higher Education, subjects they can study, costs of study and where to find information about applying.

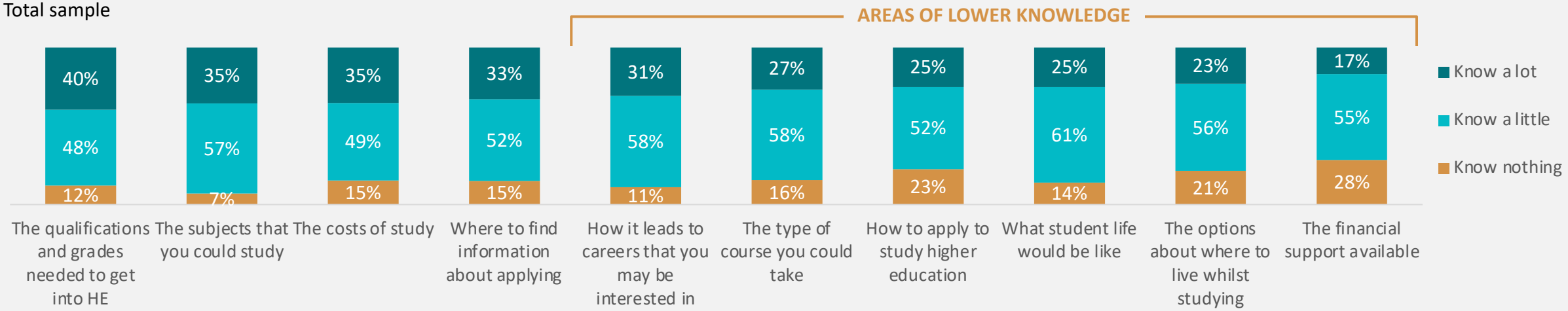
Types of careers studies can lead to has a middling level of knowledge.

Areas where FE students' knowledge is particularly lacking are: financial support available, the process of applying, what student life will be like including options where to live and course types available.

Whilst there is some knowledge about HE amongst FE students, all aspects would benefit from a boost. There is a strong link between knowledge and HE take-up and the currently the majority of FE students claim to know little or nothing.

CLAIMED LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ASPECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q5/Q6. How much do you know about the following things about higher education?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (Q5: n=33,539-33,566, Q6: n=33,056-33,085)

Current level of clarity on potential future careers could be improved as it is essential in helping students make right decisions on their next steps

FE SEGMENTATION

FE students' clarity about the careers they want to pursue is somewhat mixed – just over a third claim to have full clarity, a third have some clarity but have not fully decided and another third are still at the consideration stage.

Clarity on future career increases the likelihood of going into HE (83% of those who have a fairly clear idea about career are more likely to apply compared to 68% of those who are uncertain).

The role of career guidance should not be underestimated.

Career/ job opportunities and earnings potential are the 3rd and 4th priorities for students when deciding on their next steps after interest in the subject and personal ability in it.

> ***"Help me decide what I actually want to do with my life"***
>
> *Female, Sixth Form - Year 13, Essex*

CLAIMED DEGREE OF CLARITY REGARDING FUTURE CAREER

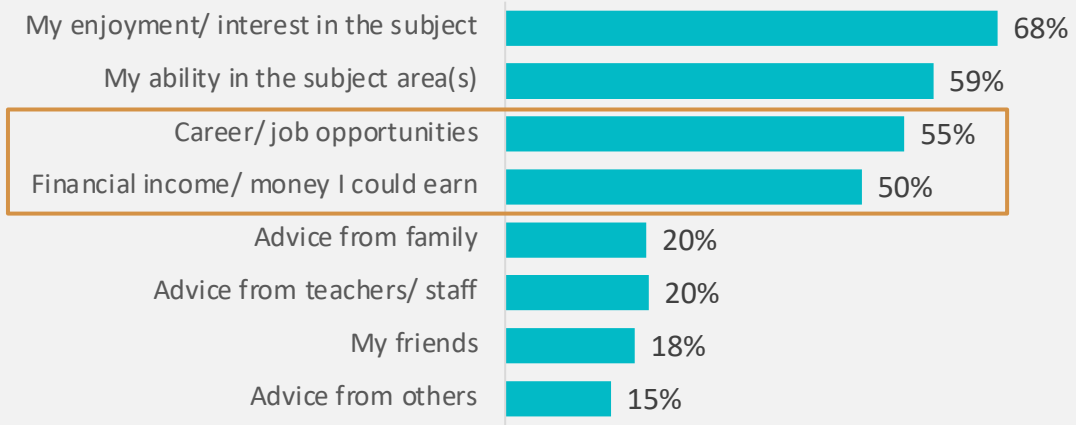
Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q35. And how would you describe your plans for your future job/career?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS WHEN DECIDING ON THE NEXT STEPS/ FUTURE PLANS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q40. How important are each of these in your future plans e.g. whether to go on to university or an apprenticeship, what job to do…? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

There is a clear need for careers advice for FE students. Currently less than half receive this type of support

FE SEGMENTATION

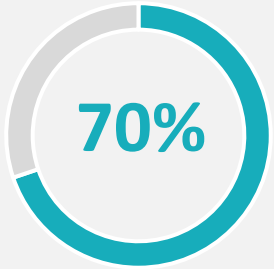
FE students' responses to the Gatsby statements echo the data on the previous page – just over two thirds know how their current and/or future studies could lead to future careers while around a third are uncertain.

3 in 5 know what types of jobs/ careers they would be suited to and what opportunities exist within different career paths, meaning that 2 in 5 need support and guidance.

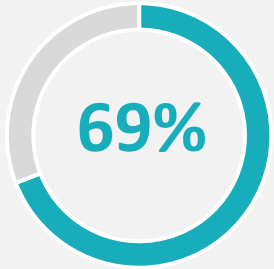
Less than half of FE students have received support from their sixth forms or colleges to help them with their future careers and have spent time with people/ in workplaces related to careers they might be interested in.

There is scope to provide (more extensive) future careers advice to FE students, including personal career suitability and opportunities that exist within different career paths.

AGREEMENT WITH THE GATSBY STATEMENTS, % STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE
Total sample



I know how my current studies could lead to future careers



I know how my future studies could lead to future careers

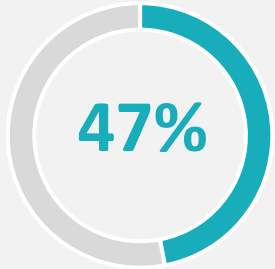


I know which jobs/career(s) I would be suited to

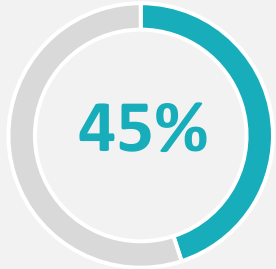


I am aware of the opportunities available in different jobs/careers

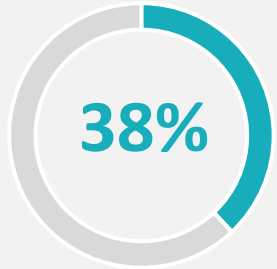
LOWER LEVEL OF AGREEMENT



I have received personal support from sixth form/ college, to help me with my future career



I have spent time with people who work in careers I'm interested in



I have spent time in workplaces I may be interested in working in

Source: Phase 2, Q42. How much do you agree?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

Identifying students' interests and passions and their personal abilities in those subject areas should be a key component of the careers advice and guidance

To provide the most relevant and useful advice, it is important to understand FE students' interests and academic leanings.

Science is by far the most attractive/ desired subject area for FE students with a third of all students being interested in studying or doing an apprenticeship in it.

Social Science, Business & Marketing, Art & Design and Health & Social Care make up the rest of the top 5 subject areas students are interested in pursuing.

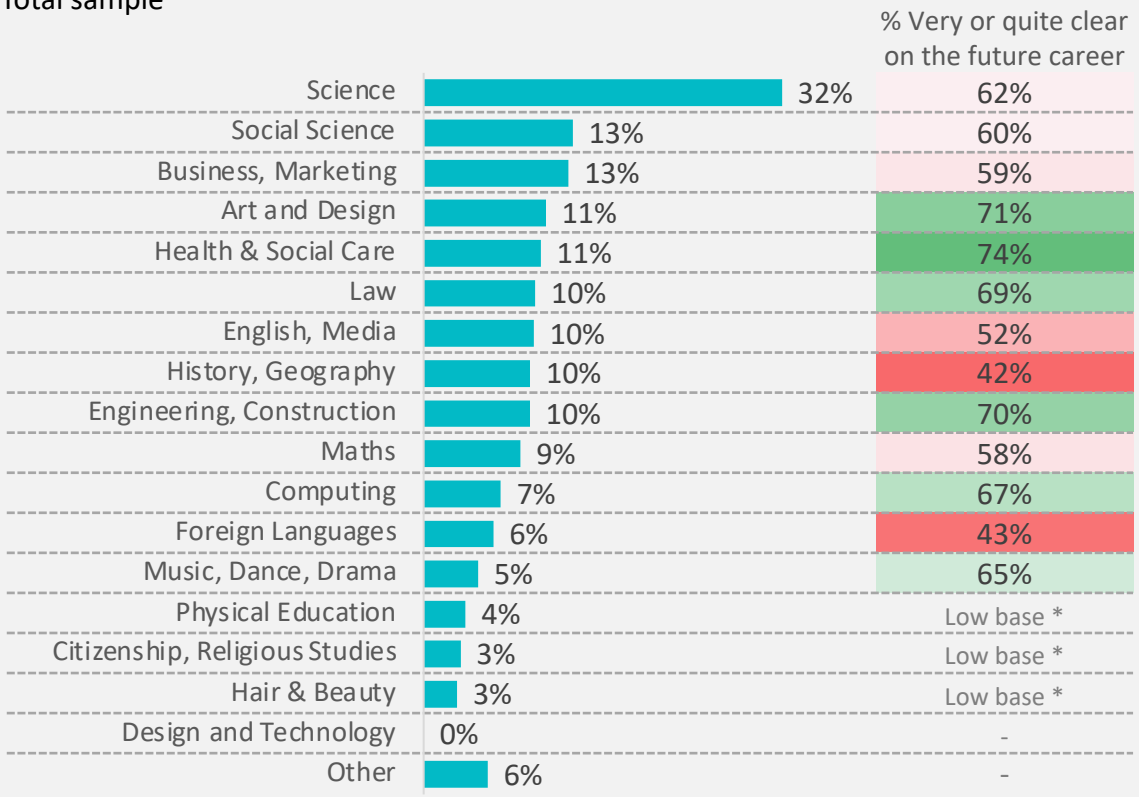
Students looking to study/ do an apprenticeship in Health & Social Care, Art & Design, Engineering & Construction and Law are clearest about their potential future careers.

Those interested in studying/ doing an apprenticeship in History/ Geography, Foreign Languages, English/ Media and Maths are the least clear on their desired career path and need the most support and guidance.

It is important to help FE students identify their interests and passions as well as abilities/ strengths in those subject areas to guide them with relevant, personalised advice on possible careers as well as paths necessary to get there.

FE STUDENTS' SUBJECTS OF INTEREST

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q37. Which of these subjects are you interested in studying (or doing an apprenticeship in), in the future? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,064)
Q35. And how would you describe your plans for your future job/career? Base: Varying * Low base n<50

Besides career guidance, there is a need for information around study costs and financial support available, student life and accommodation options while studying

FE SEGMENTATION

Besides career guidance, a high proportion of FE students would like to find out about areas of Higher Education such as financial support available, student life, the costs of study and accommodation options whilst studying.

It is important to ensure this information is available to FE students and easy to find, as well as delivered in a clear and engaging manner.

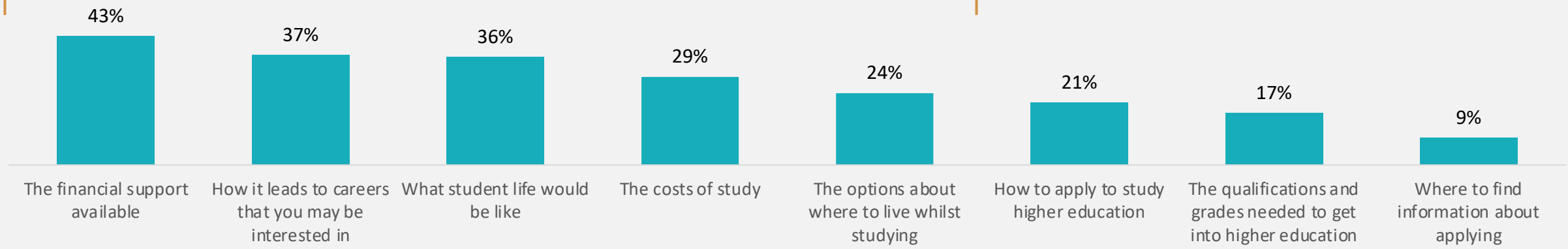
FE students are less interested in learning about the application process including qualifications and grades required, plausibly due to the fact they already have sufficient knowledge on these topics.

It is important to continue providing this information, improving delivery, where possible.

DESIRED INFORMATION ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

Total sample

TOP 5 INFORMATION NEEDS ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION



Source: Phase 2, Q47. Which of these would you most like to find out more about, about higher education?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (926)

FE students have an appetite for more support generally, especially tailored, unbiased advice on the full range of options available to them after current studies

FE SEGMENTATION

FE students also talk spontaneously about a lack of support they receive with 1 in 5 wanting to see more support being provided, particularly in one-to-one format.

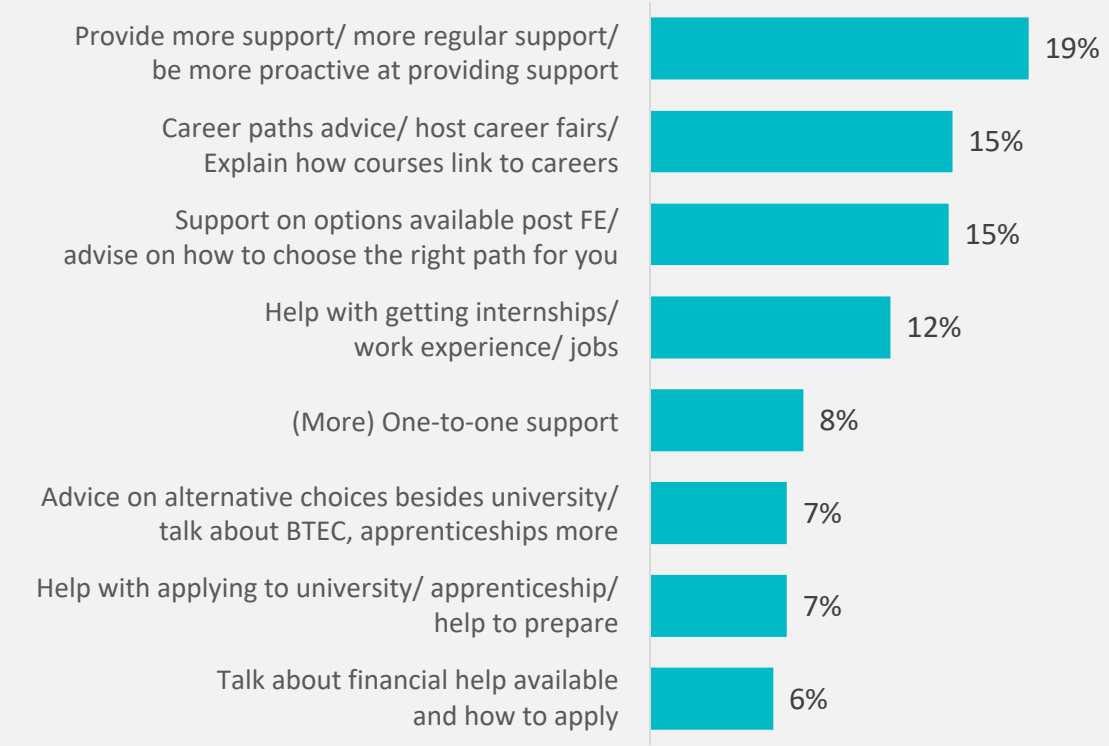
Some also cite the need for help with understanding what options are available after current studies, their pros and cons and what is required to pursue them (e.g. grades, qualifications, financial investment etc.). There is a strong appetite for this advice to be personalised and not be biased towards universities.

> ***"Be more transparent with students about their career options and don't just force them to go to university"***
>
> *Male, Sixth Form – Year 13, Lincolnshire*

There is also a desire for support in getting work experience in the fields of students' interests.

Finally, help with applying to universities and apprenticeships and understanding the financial support options available/ how to apply for those are also mentioned spontaneously by a significant number of students.

SPONTANEOUSLY MENTIONED SUPPORT NEEDS, ANYTHING >3% SHOWN
Total sample



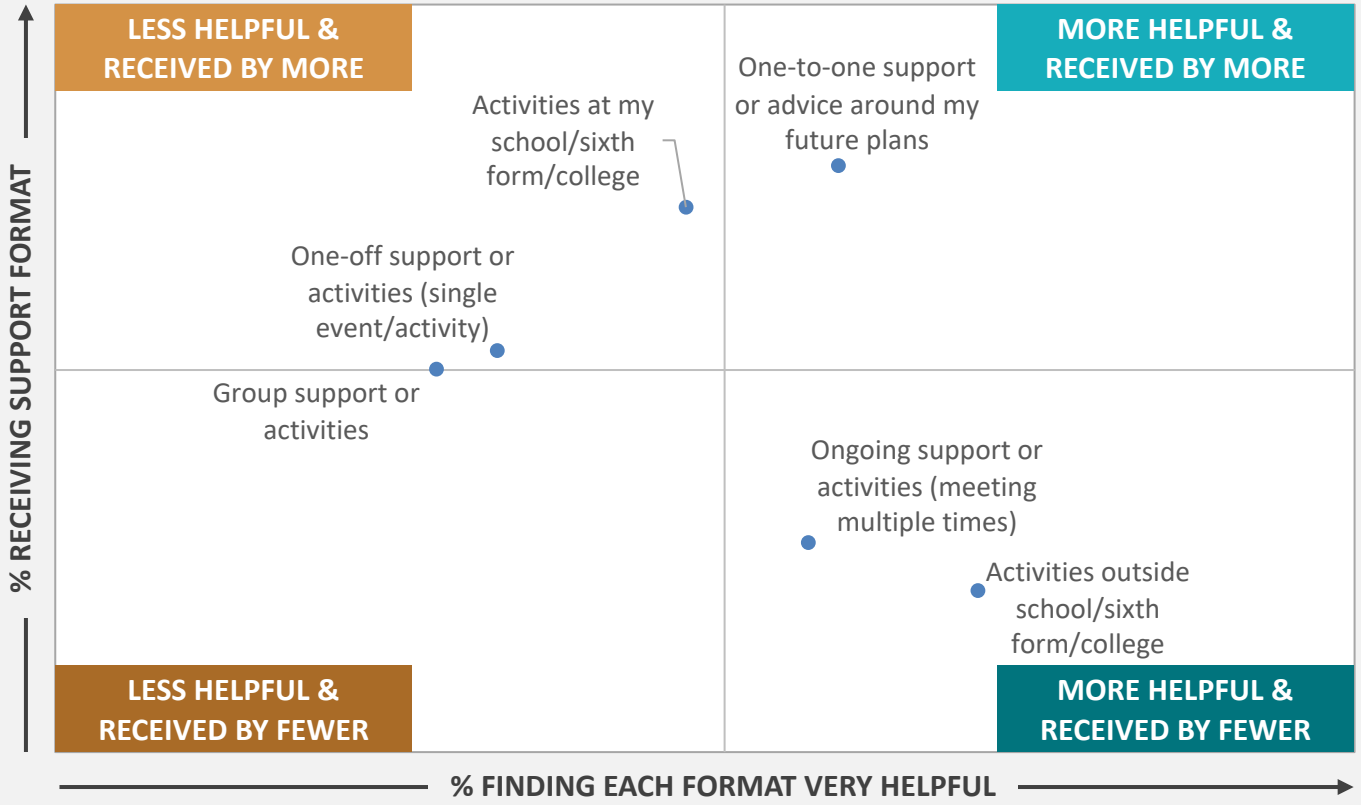
Source: Phase 2, Q67. Finally, if there was one thing your sixth form/college or anyone else could do to help you with your future study or career plans, what would that be? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (449)

Advice and support can be delivered in a range of formats, with students finding ongoing, one-on-one and external activities more helpful than their opposites

FE SEGMENTATION

SUPPORT EXPERIENCED AND HOW HELPFUL IT WAS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q62. Which of these types of support have you experienced? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)
Q64. How much have these helped you in the past? Base: All who received each type of support, varying

FE students find most helpful, support activities that are:

- One-on-one rather than group
- Ongoing rather than one-off
- External rather than internal (i.e. provided at the sixth form/ college)

This is not to say that group, one-off and internal activities are not helpful, but they are deemed less helpful than their opposites.

There is also an overall appetite for variety when it comes to support activities.

> ***"[I'd like] Meetings, different options, aptitude tests, trained professionals who know all different areas of work and study"***
>
> *Female, Sixth Form - Year 13, Dorset*

Given the time, resource and financial constraints, it's important that partners aim for an appropriate balance of activities, prioritising formats students consider most helpful (above).

FE students have limited knowledge about apprenticeships which could be driving their comparatively low take-up

FE SEGMENTATION

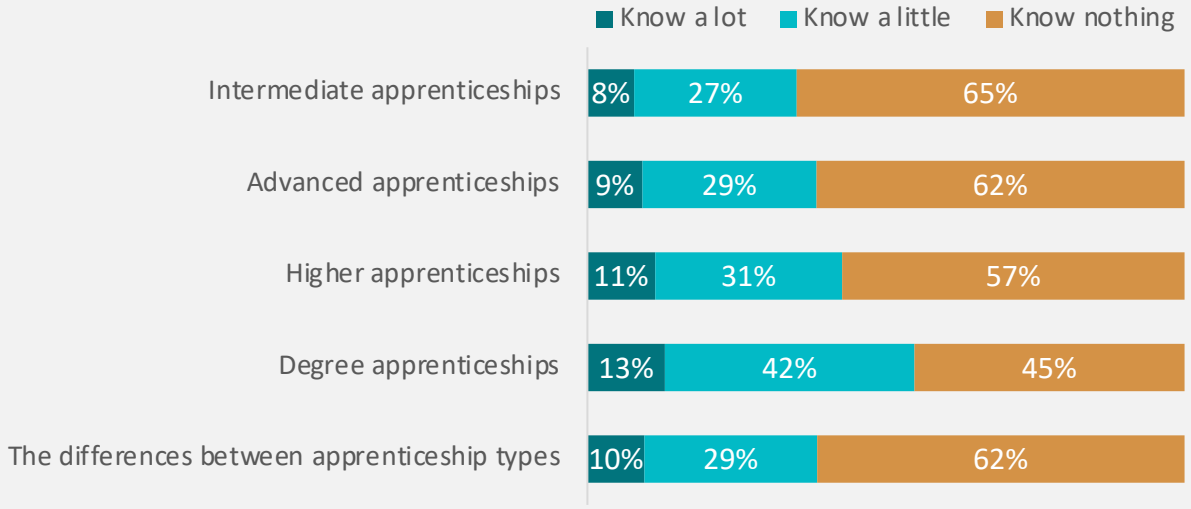
The level of knowledge about all apprenticeship types is fairly low, and there is a lack of clarity on the differences between them.

This low awareness and understanding might be among the reasons of the comparatively low likely take-up of apprenticeships.

> ***"Make apprenticeships more talked about and have easier access to information about them. They always seem to push the idea of university however I have no idea about different types of apprenticeships before reading this survey - I think it would be beneficial"***
>
> *Female, Sixth Form – Year 13, Isle of Wight*

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS

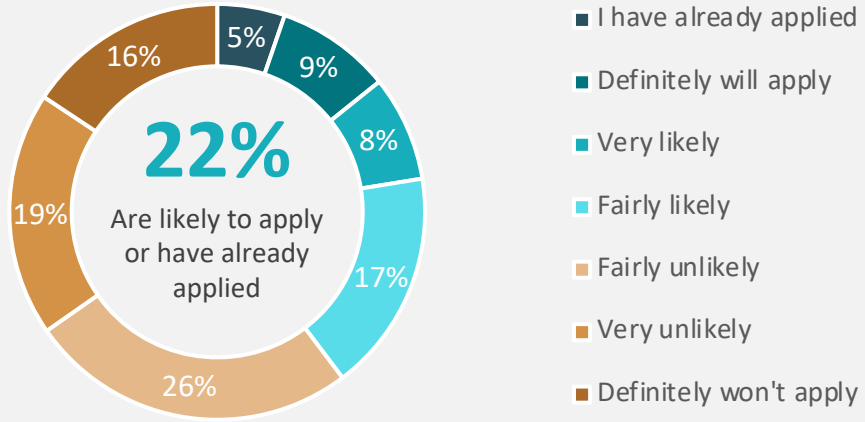
Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q51. How much do you know about these types of apprenticeship?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q34. How likely are you to apply to an apprenticeship in future?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

There is scope to improve FE students' knowledge about apprenticeships and perceptions of this pathway to encourage take-up

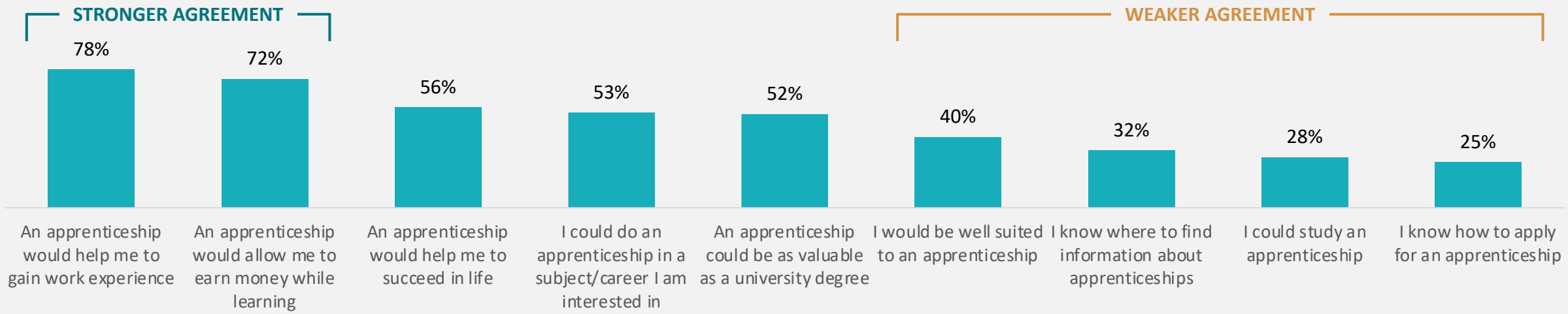
FE SEGMENTATION

Most students agree that apprenticeships provide an opportunity to gain work experience and earn money while studying.

There is less of an agreement that apprenticeships are as valuable as university degrees, can be taken in subjects/ careers students are interested in, and will ultimately help to succeed in life.

The minority of students see themselves as suitable for an apprenticeship and claim to be familiar with sources of information about them and the application process, suggesting the need for more support and guidance.

AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS, % STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE
Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q52. How much do you agree with these points about apprenticeships?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

Adult learners* are a group that require specialised support. It's important to understand their personal circumstances to better tailor support during FE and after

Who are adult learners demographically?

Generally, adult learners are more likely to be male, identify as Asian, Black or Mixed ethnicity and live in urban areas. They are also more likely to be parents and/or be or have previously been in foster care compared to their younger counterparts, indicating a certain degree of vulnerability and need for more support compared to FE students more broadly.

> *"[The challenge for me is] fitting college work around jobs and family commitments"*
>
> *Female, College Level 3 - Year 1, Yorkshire*

> *"[Studies are more challenging for adult students due to] added responsibilities at home when you have children and work commitments."*
>
> *Female, College Level 3 - Year 2, Yorkshire*

What are they like academically?

They are more likely to have lower **educational attainment and overall lower academic confidence** compared to non-adult students.

Understanding adult learners' backgrounds/ personal circumstances is an important first step to better supporting them during and after FE studies.



* In our study, adult learners were defined as someone who started their FE at the age of 19 or later.

There is scope to provide better support to adult learners during FE studies as many claim to have more challenging experiences compared to younger students

FE SEGMENTATION

19+

Half of adult FE students say their experience at sixth form or college is more challenging compared to younger students. This increases to nearly 2 in 3 when talking about expected university experiences.

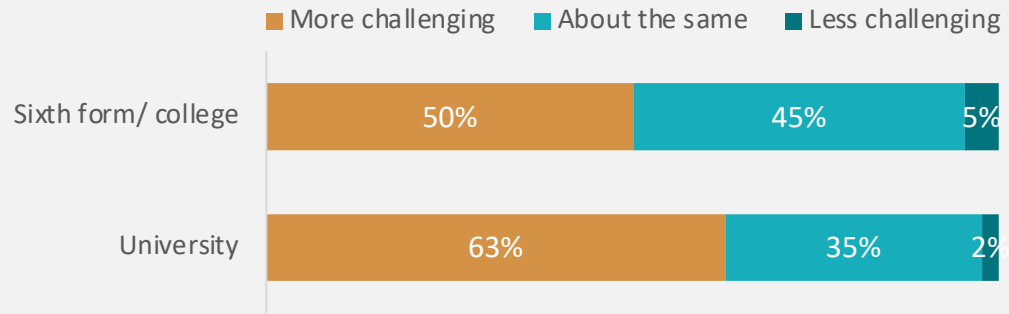
Besides having to 'spin more plates' compared to younger students, other reasons why adult learners find their FE experiences challenging include:

- Difficulties integrating with the rest of their class due to age differences
- Having more difficulty learning and concentrating due to age (e.g. poorer memory, attention)

> *"[The challenge for me is] Fitting in with other students"*
>
> *Female, College Level 3 - Year 1, Northern Lincolnshire*

CLAIMED (EXPECTED) EXPERIENCE OF ADULT LEARNERS COMPARED TO YOUNGER STUDENTS

All adult learners



Source: Phase 2, Q55. How would you describe the experience of older students such as yourself at sixth form/college, compared to the majority of younger students? Q56. What would you expect the experience of older students such as yourself might be like at university/ higher education, compared to the majority of younger students? Base: All adult learners (86)

REASONS FOR HAVING/ EXPECTING MORE CHALLENGING EXPERIENCES, TOP THEMES MENTIONED

All adult learners who report/ expect having more challenging experience

1. Integration/ fitting in with younger students
2. Having to juggle a greater number of things (e.g. work, family)
3. Learning difficulties due to age (e.g. poorer memory, attention)

Source: Phase 2, Q58. What would you say are the main challenges for older students at sixth form/college (older than the majority of students)? Q59. What would you say might be the main challenges for older students at university/higher education (older than the majority of students)? Base: All adult learners who report/ expect having more challenging experience and provided an answer (36 and 42) N.B. Low base, data is indicative only

With many adult learners looking to begin full time jobs post FE, they should be the primary target audience for help and advice with securing work experience/ job hunting

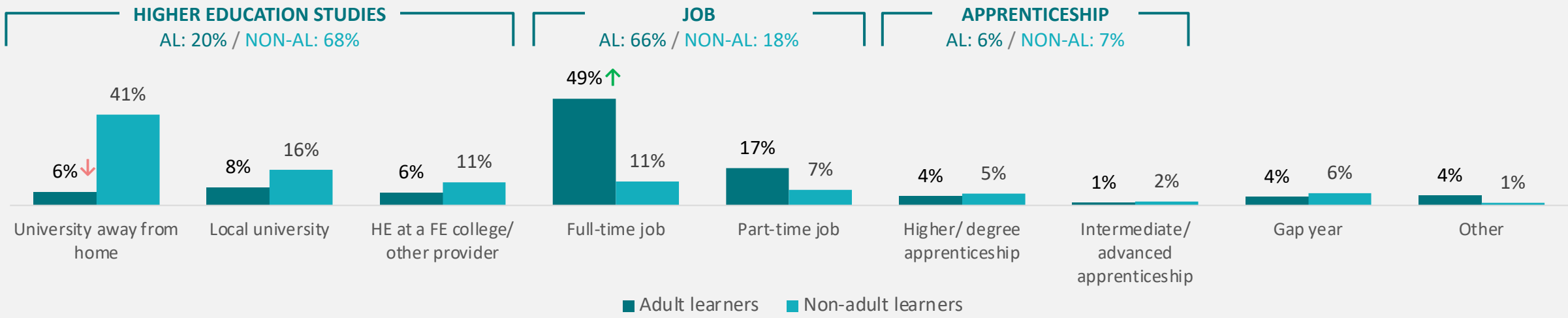
FE SEGMENTATION

Adult learners are significantly less likely to want to continue education after completing their FE studies compared to their younger peers – just 20% are planning to go into Higher Education and 6% are planning to do an apprenticeship. The vast majority (66%) are planning to start a job, with most wanting to work full time.

With a lot of adult learners wanting to start jobs after FE, they are in greater need of support with gaining work experience while studying and securing jobs afterwards. Activities to support adult learners could include helping them to navigate the jobs market, pointing them to information sources based on their desired career paths, CV writing tips/ master classes etc.

FUTURE PLANS AFTER COMPLETING CURRENT STUDIES

Adult learners vs non-adult learners



Source: Phase 2, Q29. When you finish your current studies, what do you expect to do next?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (Adult learners n=80, Non-adult learners n=976)

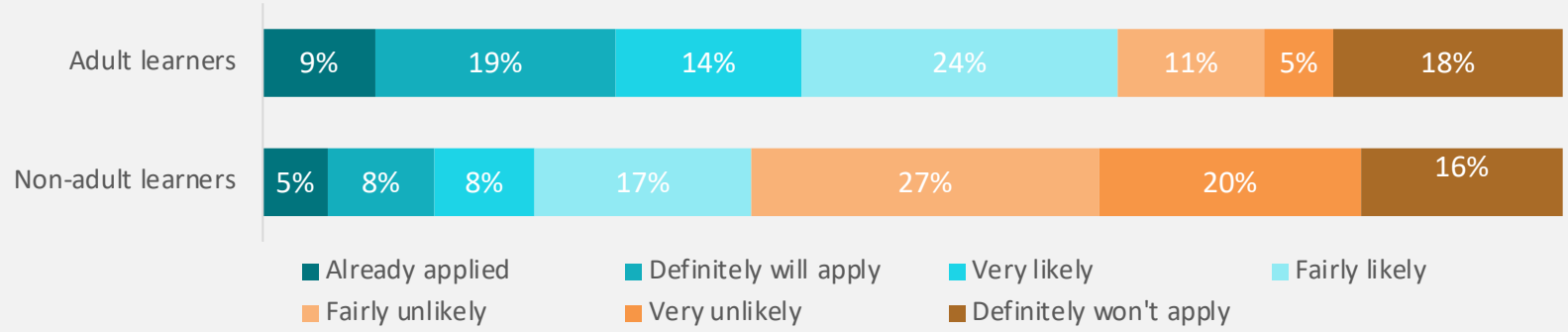
Apprenticeships could be a good viable option for adult learners post FE. It is important that students have complete information about these



Adult learners are more likely than their younger counterparts to consider apprenticeships, likely due to them having a greater need for earning while studying. It might be a good strategy to prioritise providing information about apprenticeship as an alternative to a full-time job for adult learners specifically.

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP IN THE FUTURE

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q34. How likely are you to apply to an apprenticeship in future?
Base: All who provided an answer – adult learners (86), non-adult learners (1,006)

At the moment, just over half of adult learners agree that apprenticeships would help them to gain work experience (52%) and help to make money while learning (55%). Educating adult students in these areas would help to drive take-up.

Continuing to educate adult learners on the benefits of HE and types of careers it will lead to is also important as there is general openness to HE amongst adult learners

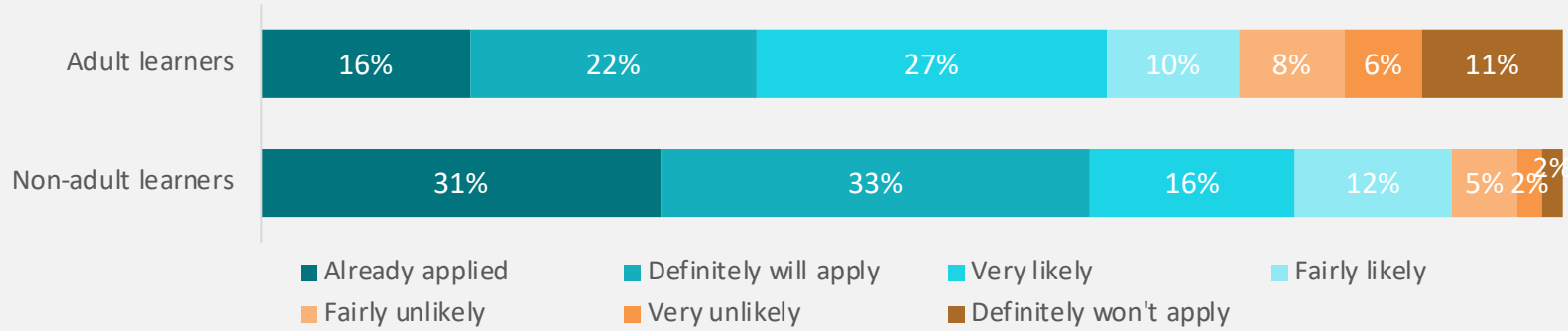
FE SEGMENTATION



Interestingly, despite the fact that adult learners are more likely to reject Higher Education as their immediate next steps post FE and opt for alternative pathways, a large proportion (75%) are open to applying for Higher Education in future.

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FUTURE

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33. How likely are you to apply to higher education in future?
Base: All who provided an answer – adult learners (80), non-adult learners (976)

At the moment, however, adult learners' perceptions of the benefits of HE are less positive compared to students more broadly – they are less likely to think HE would be intellectually challenging, allow them to have a better job and improve their social life. Providing information on HE to adult learners and increasing buy-in is still important, but perhaps secondary to other forms of support and advice.

As part of the analysis, we've also looked at a number of key FE student subgroups...



Being a Uni Connect Target versus not does not have a significant impact on students' attitudes, behaviours and experiences

FE SEGMENTATION

Students being **Uni Connect Target versus Non-Target** was one of the angles investigated.

Overall, despite some differences in the profile of the two groups, there are a lot of similarities between them:

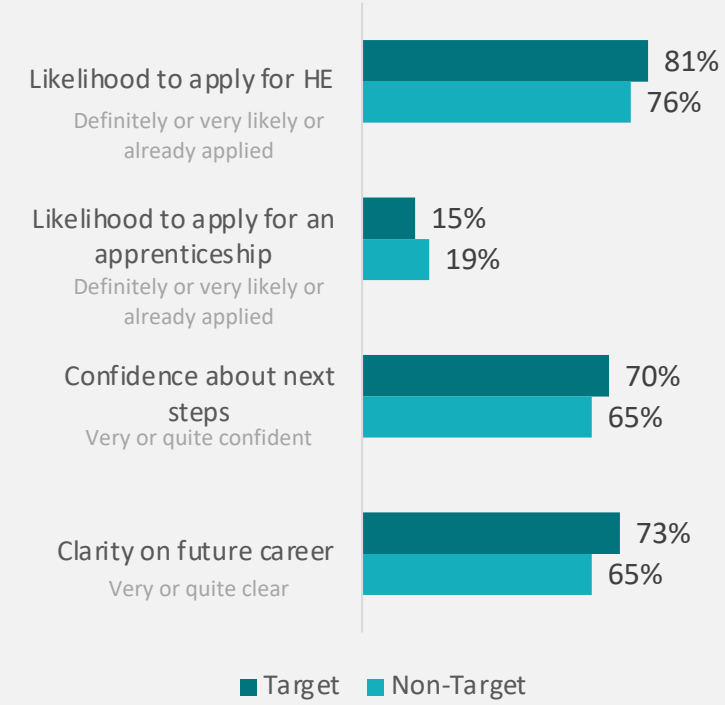
- Both are **equally motivated** to do well in their current studies and are **equally confident** about their abilities and suitability for HE
- Both have **similar plans for their next steps** (i.e. HE, jobs, apprenticeships etc.) and **similar levels of clarity regarding careers** they want to pursue
- Both are **driven by the same types of factors** when deciding on their future careers
- Both **exhibit similar intentions to apply for HE and/or apprenticeships**
- Their **levels of knowledge and appetite to learn more about HE and apprenticeships** are comparable

Areas where we see some differences are:

- **Non-Target students seem to have slightly better attainment compared to Target students**, but this doesn't impact their confidence and motivation, or their future study intentions
- **Target students seem to have stronger recognition of the benefits of HE** (although this doesn't seem to impact their likelihood to apply to HE)
- **Non-Target students are less likely to claim to have received ongoing support activities** (multiple meetings) **or activities outside of their school/ college** compared to Target students, but both groups' desire for future support is consistent

UNI CONNECT TARGET VS NON-TARGET COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Uni Connect Target (128), Uni Connect Non-Target (675)

Gender has a significant impact on students' attitudes and preferences, with Females being more HE leaning than Males

FE SEGMENTATION

Gender does have a significant influence on students' attitudes, behaviours and preferences. The table below summarises the key differences between the main subgroups*:

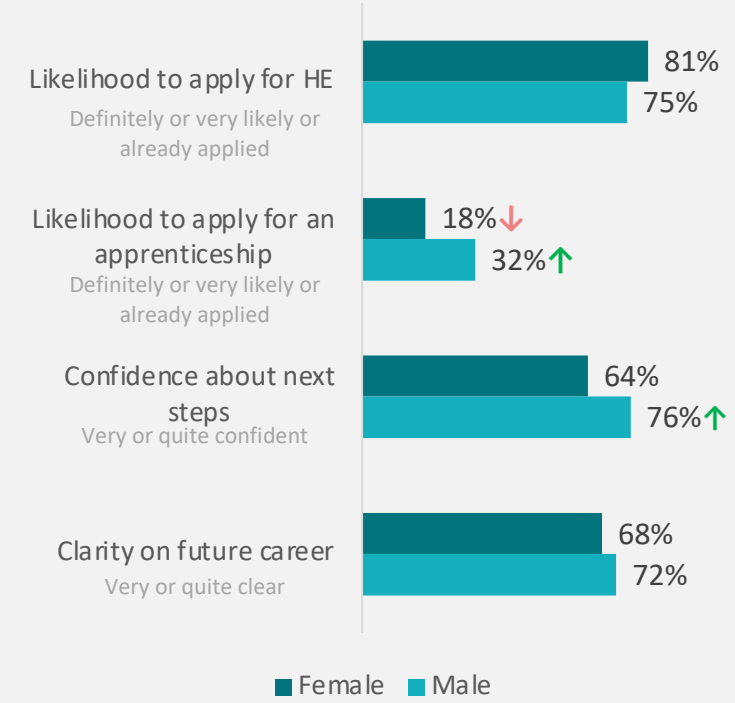
	Female	Male
CURRENT STUDIES	▪ Higher academic attainment ▪ More likely to be studying for A/ AS levels ▪ Less likely to be currently doing an apprenticeship ▪ Leaning towards more human subjects (e.g. Social Science)	▪ Lower academic attainment ▪ More likely to be studying for other qualifications ▪ More likely to be currently doing an apprenticeship ▪ Learning towards more technical subjects (e.g. Maths, Engineering)
ATTITUDES	▪ Stronger believers in the benefits of HE ▪ More motivated to do well in their studies ▪ Are overall more knowledgeable about HE and have a stronger appetite to learn more about HE	▪ Less likely to recognise the benefits of HE ▪ Are less motivated to do well in current studies ▪ Less knowledgeable about HE and are not as interested in learning more as Females
FUTURE PLANS	▪ More likely to go into HE as their next step, and are more likely to have applied already or be planning to apply ▪ Less knowledgeable about apprenticeships and are less likely to apply for one	▪ More likely to go start a job or an apprenticeships ▪ Are less likely to have applied for HE or be planning to apply ▪ More knowledgeable about apprenticeships and are more likely to apply for one
SUPPORT	▪ Less likely to claim to have received support ▪ Similar appetite for future support to Males	▪ More likely to have received group support, ongoing support and activities outside of school/college ▪ Similar appetite for future support as Females, with somewhat greater interest in the benefits of HE

Source: Relevant questions across both Phase 1 and Phase 2

* Those who identify as 'Other' not included in the analysis due to low base size

GENDER COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35

Base: All who provided an answer – Female (128), Male (675)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

There are some differences between FE students depending on their ethnic background, with BAME (esp. Black and Asian) being more positive towards HE

FE SEGMENTATION

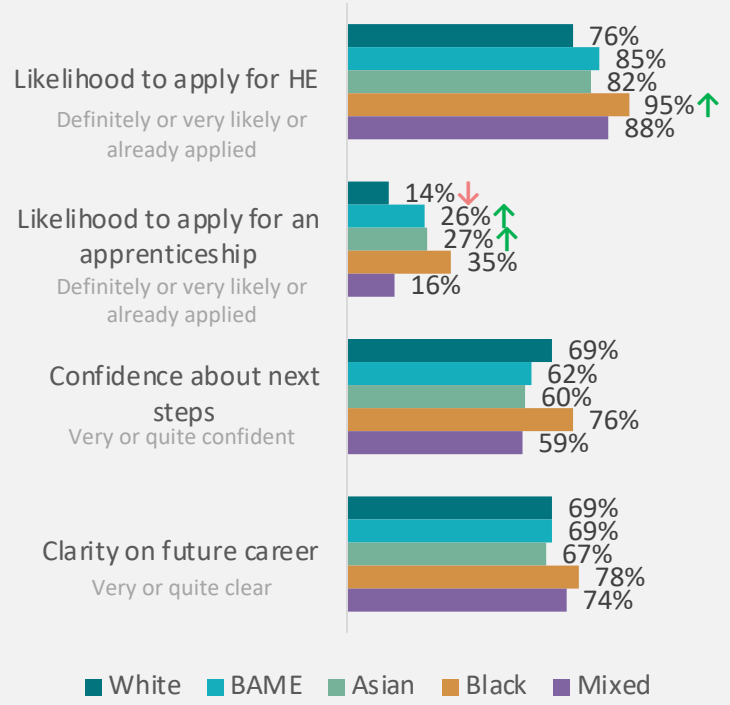
Ethnicity is another characteristic that FE students differentiate on. The table below summarises the key differences between the main subgroups:

	White	BAME
CURRENT STUDIES	▪ A lot of consistency in terms of academic attainment, qualification studied for and subject preferences	
	▪ Less likely to currently be doing an apprenticeship	▪ More likely to currently being doing an apprenticeship (esp. Black and Asian students)
ATTITUDES	▪ Less motivated and confident in own abilities and own fit with HE ▪ Less convinced of the benefits of HE ▪ Weaker knowledge knowledge about HE and/ or apprenticeships than BAME	▪ More motivated and confident in own abilities and own fit with HE (esp. Black and Asian students) ▪ Stronger believers in the benefits of HE (esp. Black and Asian students) ▪ Stronger knowledge about HE and/ or apprenticeships
FUTURE PLANS	▪ More likely to start a job or an apprenticeship after current studies ▪ Are less likely to have already applied or be planning to apply for HE or an apprenticeship than BAME students ▪ Are more likely to be influenced by teachers and friends when deciding on the next steps	▪ More likely to go to HE after current studies ▪ Are more likely to have applied or planning to apply for HE (consistent across all BAME groups) ▪ Are more likely to have applied or planning to apply for an apprenticeship (esp. Black and Asian students) ▪ Are more likely to be influenced by family (esp. Black and Asian)
SUP-PORT	▪ Are directionally less likely to have received support and to claim the support was helpful	▪ Are directionally more likely have received support (esp. Black students) and have found support helpful

Source: Relevant questions across both Phase 1 and Phase 2

ETHNICITY COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – White (812), BAME (269), Asian (165), Black (55), Mixed (30) CAUTION: LOW BASE

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

Type of area FE students live in is not a significant differentiator

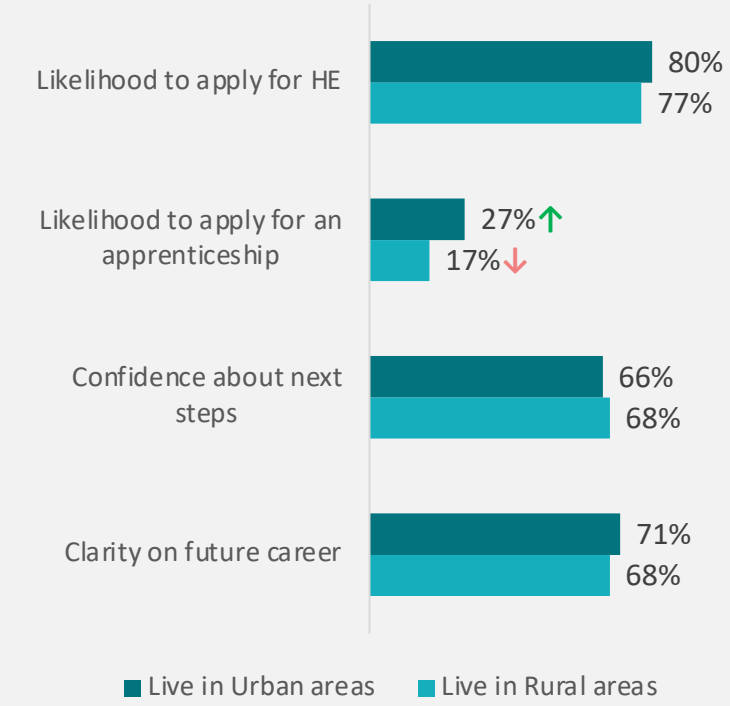
Living in urban or suburban areas does not drive any major differences in FE students' attitudes, behaviours or preferences.

Some of the minor differences noted include:

- **Those living in Urban areas are more likely to apply for apprenticeships** compared to students from Rural areas
- **Students living in Rural areas are less likely to agree** that HE will help them to get a better job and earn more

URBAN VS RURAL AREA COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Those living in Urban areas (557), Those living in Rural areas (518)



↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

FE students who work while studying are not dissimilar to FE students more broadly

FE SEGMENTATION

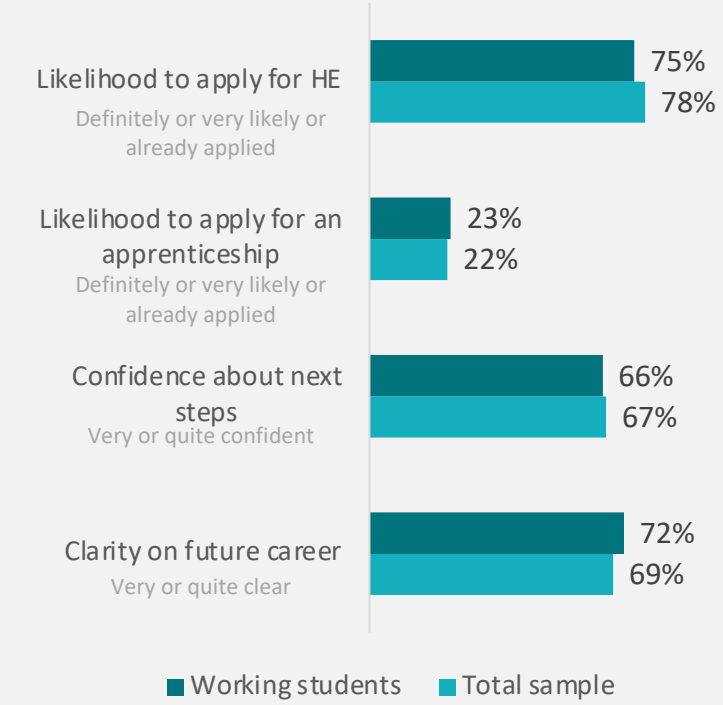
Working while studying does not have a major impact on FE students' attitudes, behaviours or preferences.

Some of the minor differences noted include:

- **Those who work while studying are more likely to have directionally lower GCSE and expected A levels grades** compared to students more broadly
- **Working FE students are also less likely to prefer more 'traditional', academic subjects** and lean towards more practical ones
- **Are more likely to value opinions of others** (e.g. teachers, career advisors, friends etc.) when deciding on what to do next

WORKING STUDENTS VS TOTAL COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Students who are working while studying (292), Total sample (1,092)



↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

Kinship students show some differences compared to FE students in general, and come across as less HE leaning

FE SEGMENTATION

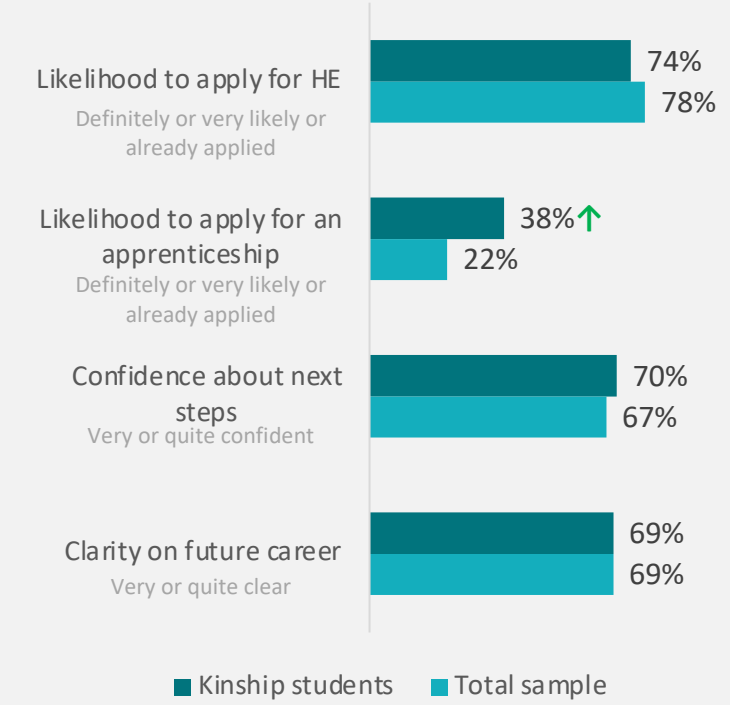
Students in kinship living situations* do come across as somewhat distinct from FE students more broadly in a number of ways.

The main differences noted include:

- **Kinship students have slightly lower GCSE grades**, but **expected A levels grades are on par** with FE students more broadly
- **Kinship students are somewhat less likely to study 'traditional', academic subjects** (e.g. Science, Maths, History/ Geography) and have a directional preference of **more practical subjects** (e.g. Business, Engineering, Beauty)
- **More likely to start a job or apprenticeship** after current studies than FE students in general
- Are somewhat **less motivated to do well in current studies** than FE students in general
- Are **less knowledgeable about HE** than FE students in general, but **are more interested in learning about the HE application process** than average
- However, are **more knowledgeable about apprenticeships** than FE students on average and are more likely to see themselves suited for an apprenticeship and know how to apply

KINSHIP STUDENTS VS TOTAL COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Kinship students (85), Total sample (1,092)

* Living with family members who are not their parents or step-parents
↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

Disabilities/ learning difficulties have a significant impact on FE students' attitudes and future plans, as well as support needs

FE SEGMENTATION

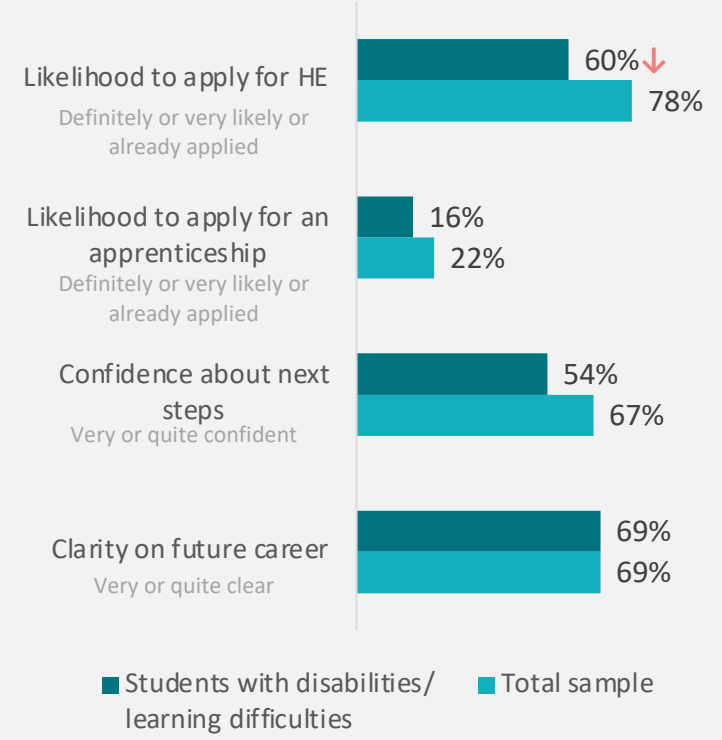
Unsurprisingly, having a disability or learning difficulty does have a significant impact on FE students' attitudes, behaviours, preferences and most importantly support needs.

The main differences noted include:

- **Slightly lower GCSE grades, but expected A level grades are on par** with FE students more broadly
- **Lower likelihood to currently be doing apprenticeships** than FE students more broadly
- **Subjects currently studying broadly in line with the average, but directionally leaning towards less 'traditional'**. These students are less likely to want to study Business than students in general
- **Broadly the same plans for next steps as FE students in general**, but feel overall **less confident**
- **Lower likelihood to apply for HE and/ or apprenticeship** in the future than students in general
- **Broadly the same factors considered important when deciding on the next steps**, with better jobs/ better earnings being somewhat less important
- **Same level of motivation and confidence** as FE students in general, but less **likely to consider themselves as well suited for HE**
- **Similar knowledge about HE as FE students in general, but lower knowledge** about apprenticeships
- Somewhat **less likely to have received support in the past** than FE students in general, but are more **interested in receiving support around improving learning and study skills, improving performance/ grades and coping with challenges/ becoming more resilient**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/ LEARNING DIFFICULTIES VS TOTAL COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Students with disabilities/ learning difficulties (96), Total sample (1,092)

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

Being a parent has an impact on FE students' attitudes and behaviours

FE SEGMENTATION

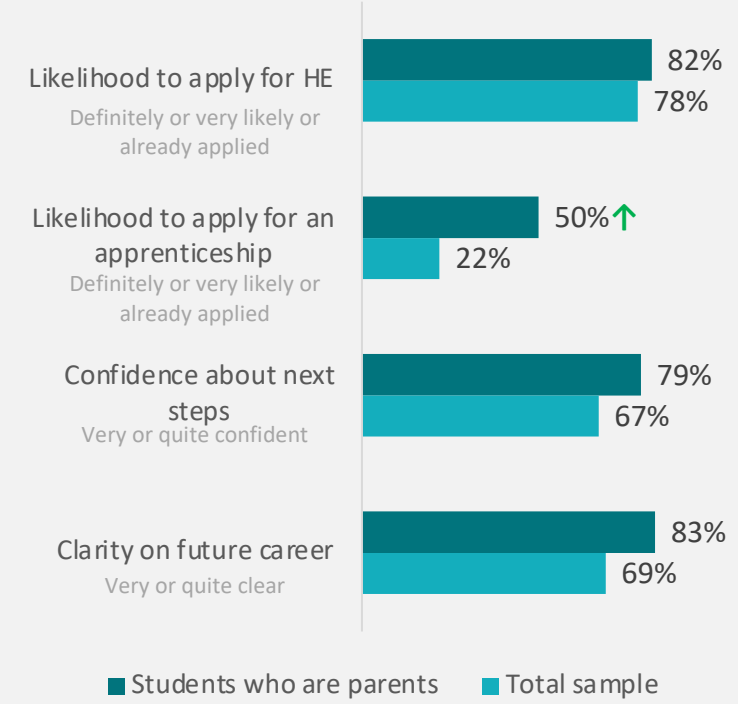
Being a parent is a differentiating factor (**but needs to be analysed with caution due to sample of parents in our study being fairly small, n=46**).

Some of the differences of parents versus FE students in general include:

- **Generally lower GCSE and expected A levels grades**
- **Greater likelihood to be studying for Level 3 NVQ** or access to higher education diploma
- Greater leaning towards **more 'practical' subjects**, less 'traditional' academic
- **Greater likelihood to get jobs** after current studies as their next step
- **Greater likelihood to apply for an apprenticeship** in the future
- **Lower motivation** to do well in current studies, **lower academic confidence** and **lower perceived fit with HE**
- **Indicatively lower knowledge about HE**, but greater interest in learning about costs of HE and financial support available
- **Greater knowledge about apprenticeships** – are more likely to know where to find info about apprenticeships and how to apply
- **Directionally greater likelihood to have received support**

STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS VS TOTAL COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Students who are parents (46), Total sample (1,092) CAUTION: LOW BASE

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

Being or having previously been in care has an impact on FE students' attitudes and behaviours

FE SEGMENTATION

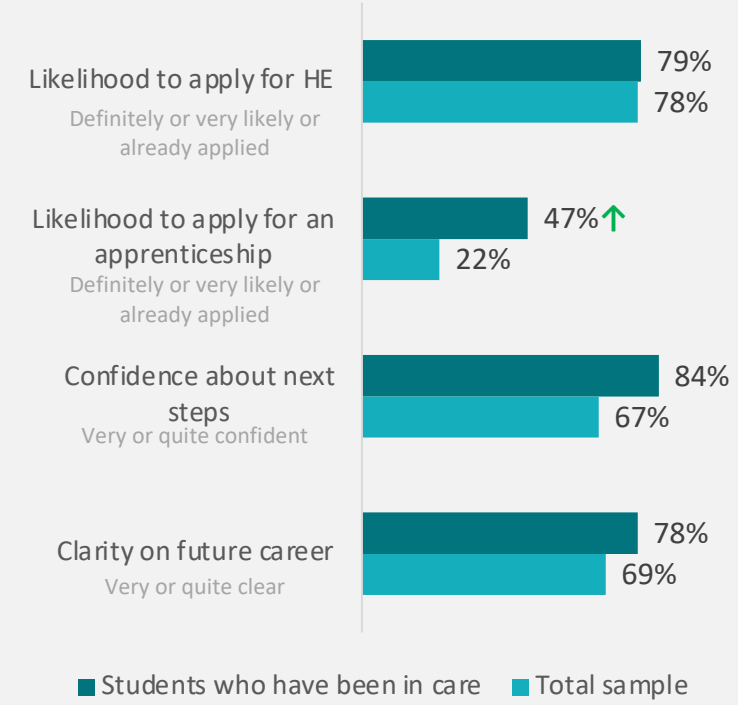
Having been in care is a differentiating factor (**but needs to be analysed with caution due to sample of care leavers in our study being fairly small, n=32**).

Some of the differences of FE students who are/ have been in care versus FE students in general include:

- **Generally lower GCSE and expected A levels grades**
- **Greater likelihood of studying for qualifications like International Baccalaureate Diploma**, General Applied, Level 3 Awards and Access to Higher Education Diploma rather than A levels
- **Greater likelihood to currently be doing an apprenticeship**
- Greater leaning towards **more 'practical' subjects**, less 'traditional' academic
- **Greater likelihood to start a job** after current studies
- **Greater likelihood to apply for an apprenticeship** in the future
- **Lower motivation, confidence** and **perceived fit with HE**
- **Lower recognition of the benefits of HE**
- **Directionally lower knowledge about HE** and lower appetite to learn about it
- **Greater knowledge about apprenticeships**
- **Greater likelihood to have received support, but less likely to have found support helpful**

STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IN CARE VS TOTAL COMPARISON, KEY STATS

Total sample



Source: Phase 2, Q33, Q34, Q31, Q35
Base: All who provided an answer – Students who have been in care (32), Total sample (1,092) CAUTION: LOW BASE

↑ / ↓ - significantly higher vs Total on the 95% confidence level

PART 2:
FE student segmentation



Cosmos carried out a national segmentation of FE students and identified four distinct segments, each with a unique set of traits and support needs



The national segmentation is the result of analysis of over 30,000 FE student responses to the CFE student survey. We used a statistical technique called cluster analysis to identify how students grouped or 'clustered' based on their common responses to key HE knowledge and attitude theme statements (23 in total), i.e. on which statements students tended to align or differ.

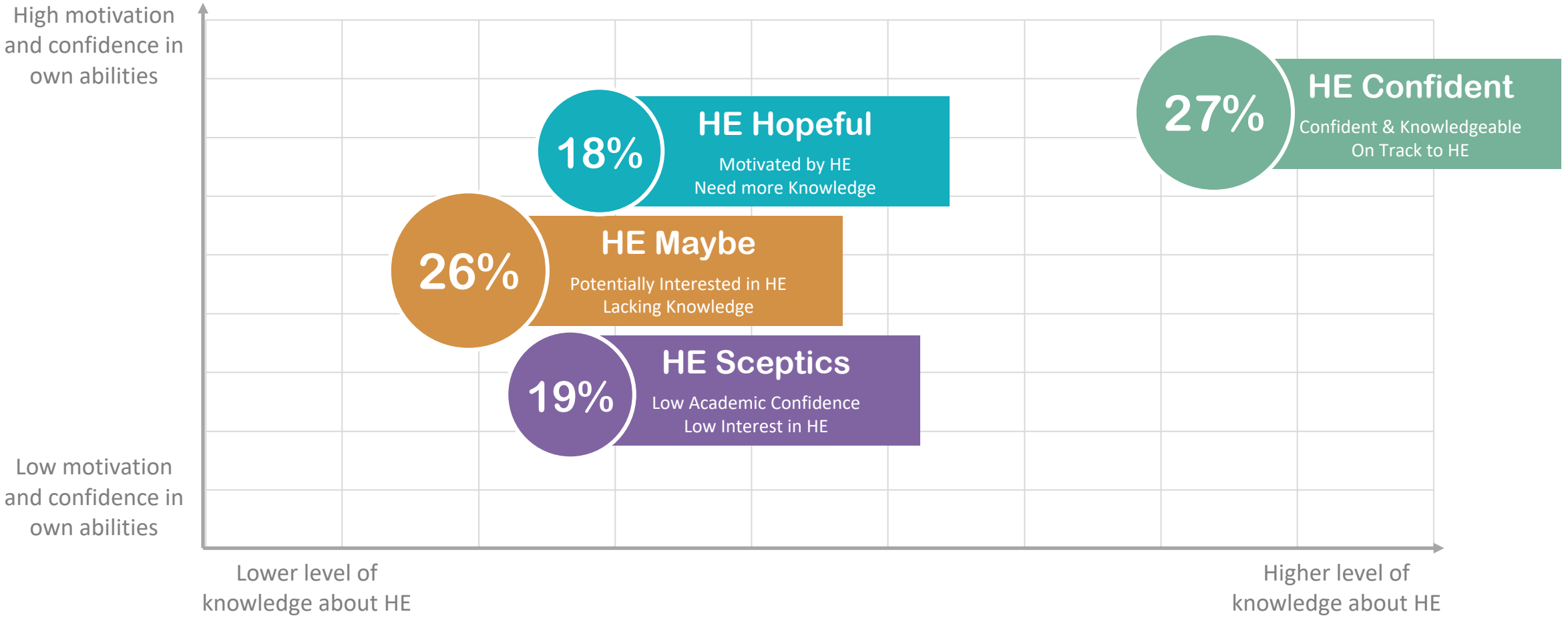
The cluster analysis offered a range of solutions from three segments up to seven, all of which were statistically correct and merely grouped or distinguished clusters at varying degrees of detail. We reviewed these outputs and the characteristics of segments in each of these solutions, before settling on the four-segment solution.

We believe that the four-segment solution provides a clear narrative and approach to identifying and supporting FE students nationally, with our Uni Connect partners expressing positive feedback on this approach following our dissemination of Phase 1 segmentation findings.



The four segments identified each represent a significant share of the FE student population. Their in-depth understanding is essential for targeting support

FE SEGMENTATION

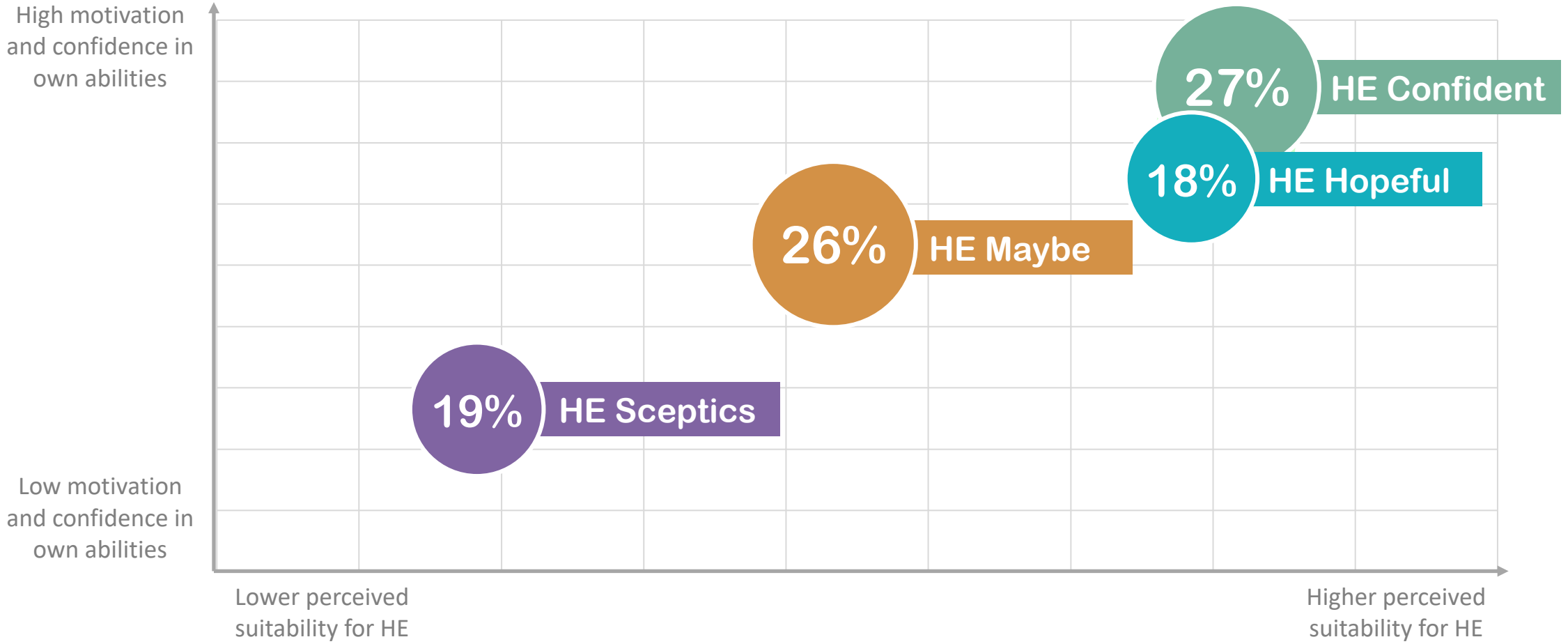


Source: Phase 1 of research (CFE survey)

N.B. 10% of FE students were unassigned to a segment due to incomplete CFE survey responses. Statistical cluster analysis requires participants to complete all questions of interest in order to be included.

Segment mapping against motivation and confidence, and perceived suitability for Higher Education





Source: Phase 1 of research (CFE survey)

N.B. 10% of FE students were unassigned to a segment due to incomplete CFE survey responses. Statistical cluster analysis requires participants to complete all questions of interest in order to be included.

Segments at a glance



	HE Confident Confident & Knowledgeable On Track to HE	HE Hopeful Motivated by HE Need more Knowledge	HE Maybe Potentially Interested in HE Lacking Knowledge	HE Sceptics Low Academic Confidence Low Interest in HE
Segment size	27%	18%	26%	19%
Segment summary	▪ Highly motivated and confident in their ability to succeed ▪ Strong believers in the benefits of HE, but are less 'wowed' by it than HE Hopeful, see HE as 'expected' ▪ High level of knowledge about HE, but some could still improve specific knowledge, e.g. link to careers, student life/ accommodation etc. ▪ Most likely to have family who have been to HE	▪ Highly motivated to do well in studies and confident about own abilities ▪ Highest agreement with benefits of HE compared to the rest of the segments ▪ Significantly lower HE knowledge compared to HE Confident, possibly due to being younger/ earlier in their education journey ▪ Less likely than HE Confident to have family who have been to HE	▪ Quite motivated but lacking in confidence ▪ Mostly positive attitudes towards HE but less so than HE Confident and HE Hopeful ▪ The least knowledgeable segment when it comes to HE, possibly due to being younger and having more time before making the decision about their next steps ▪ Less likely than HE Confident to have family who have been to HE	▪ Low confidence and motivation - don't believe they can succeed in HE ▪ Mostly disinterested in HE, despite greater reported HE knowledge than HE Maybe ▪ Could be challenging to convince about HE/ more suitable to other pathways ▪ The least likely of the segments to have family who have been to HE
Openness to HE	VERY HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Openness to apprenticeships	VERY LOW	VERY LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
Support required	LOWER	MEDIUM	HIGHER	HIGHER

Source: Phases 1 and 2 of research

The segments have varying degrees of confidence and motivation to succeed academically which impacts their perceived fit with Higher Education

FE SEGMENTATION

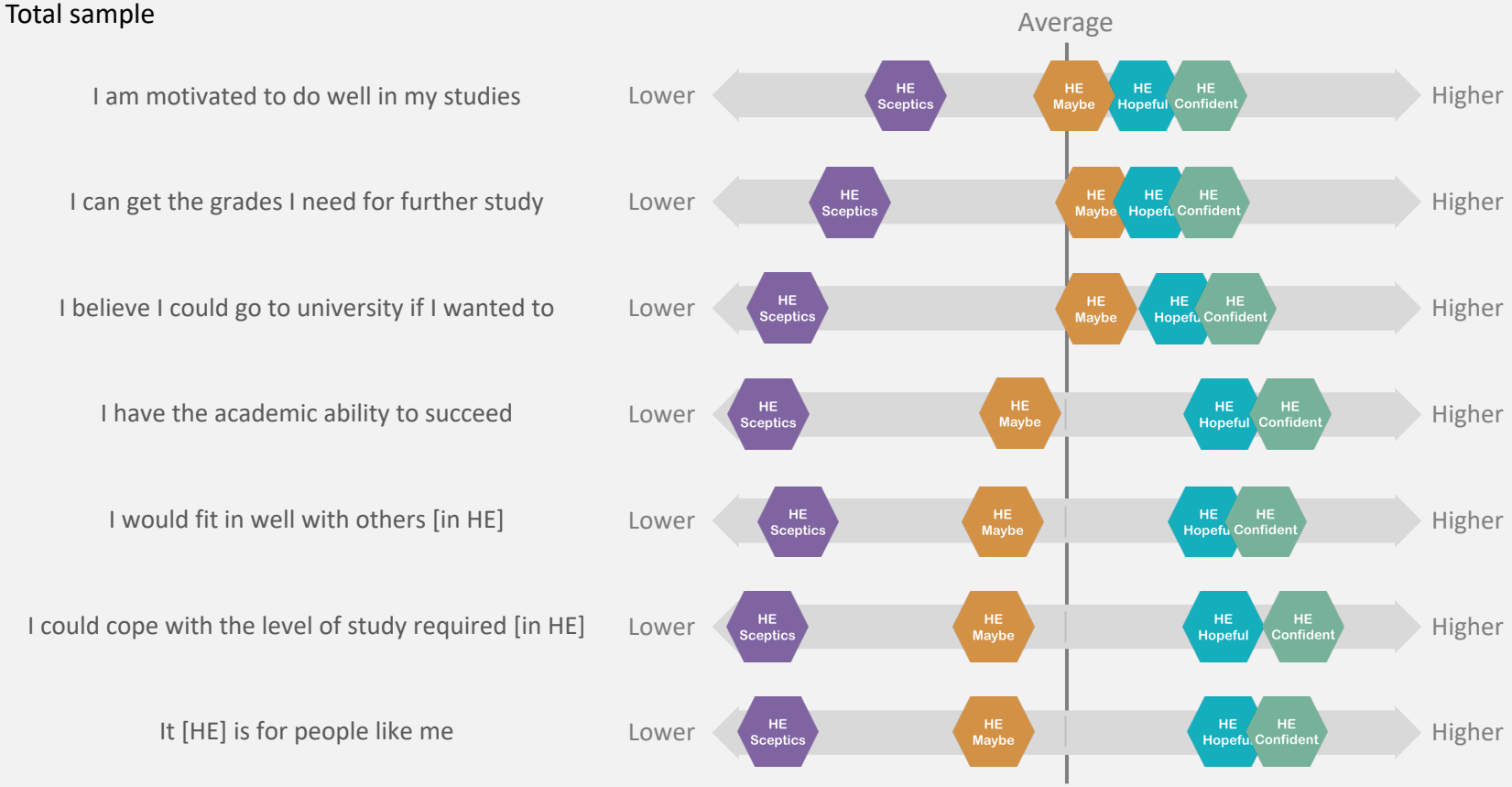
HE Confident and **HE Hopeful** segments demonstrate a greater degree of confidence, self-belief and motivation to succeed, particularly when it comes to higher education. They are also more likely to see themselves fitting well in the HE environment than the other two segments.

HE Maybe show 'middling' levels of motivation and confidence in their academic abilities. When it comes to Higher Education, they are likely to have doubts about their fit with this environment.

Whilst some degree of motivation and self-believe is there for **HE Sceptics** more broadly, they are the segment that's the least likely to believe they can go to university if they wanted to or see themselves as fitting well with the Higher Education environment.

ATTITUDES TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND SELF-PERCEPTION BY SEGMENT

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q4. How much do you agree with the following statements? Q11. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? Base: All respondents (HE Confident n=9106/9395, HE Hopeful n=6062/6320, HE Maybe n=7478/8907, HE Sceptics n=6078/6575)

Most segments recognise the benefits of Higher Education, with HE Sceptics being the segment where most work is needed to get the benefits across

FE SEGMENTATION

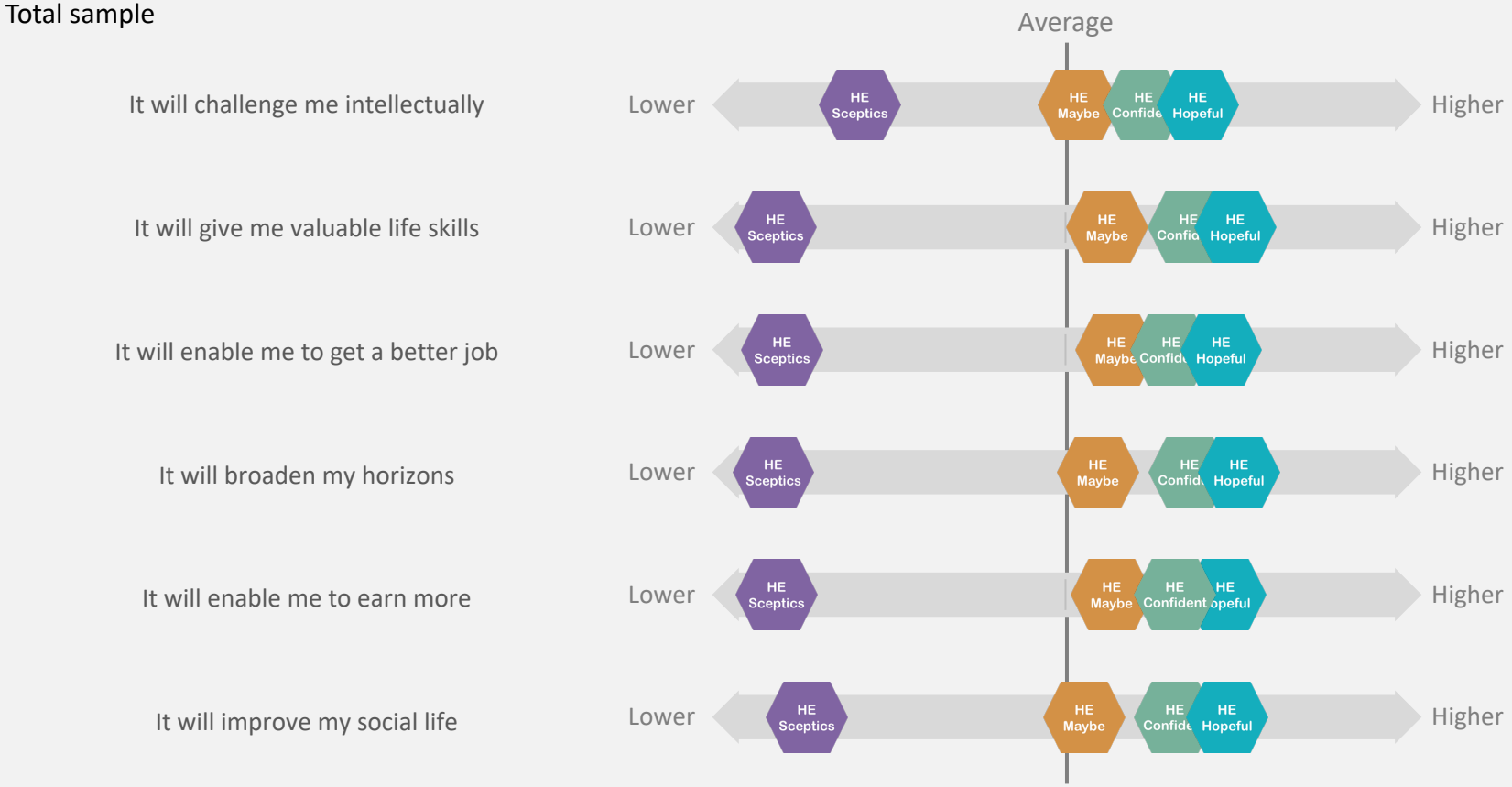
HE Confident, **HE Hopeful** and **HE Maybe** all recognise the benefits of the Higher Education to a similar degree, with **HE Hopeful** in particular being most convinced of the benefits of going into Higher Education.

HE Maybe's recognition of HE benefits is strong, but lower compared to **HE Confident** and **HE Hopeful**, suggesting the need for more convincing benefits.

HE Sceptics are significantly less likely to recognise the benefits of Higher Education – this is the segment where most effort is needed to communicate the benefits in a powerful and convincing way.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY SEGMENT

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q12. How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education?
Base: All respondents (HE Confident n=9388, HE Hopeful n=6318, HE Maybe n=8,908, HE Sceptics n=6,575)

Besides HE Confident, the level of knowledge about aspects of Higher Education amongst the other three segments is low, so proactive communication is key

FE SEGMENTATION

HE Confident demonstrate the highest levels of HE knowledge across all key aspects, particularly qualifications/ grades required, subjects available and application process.

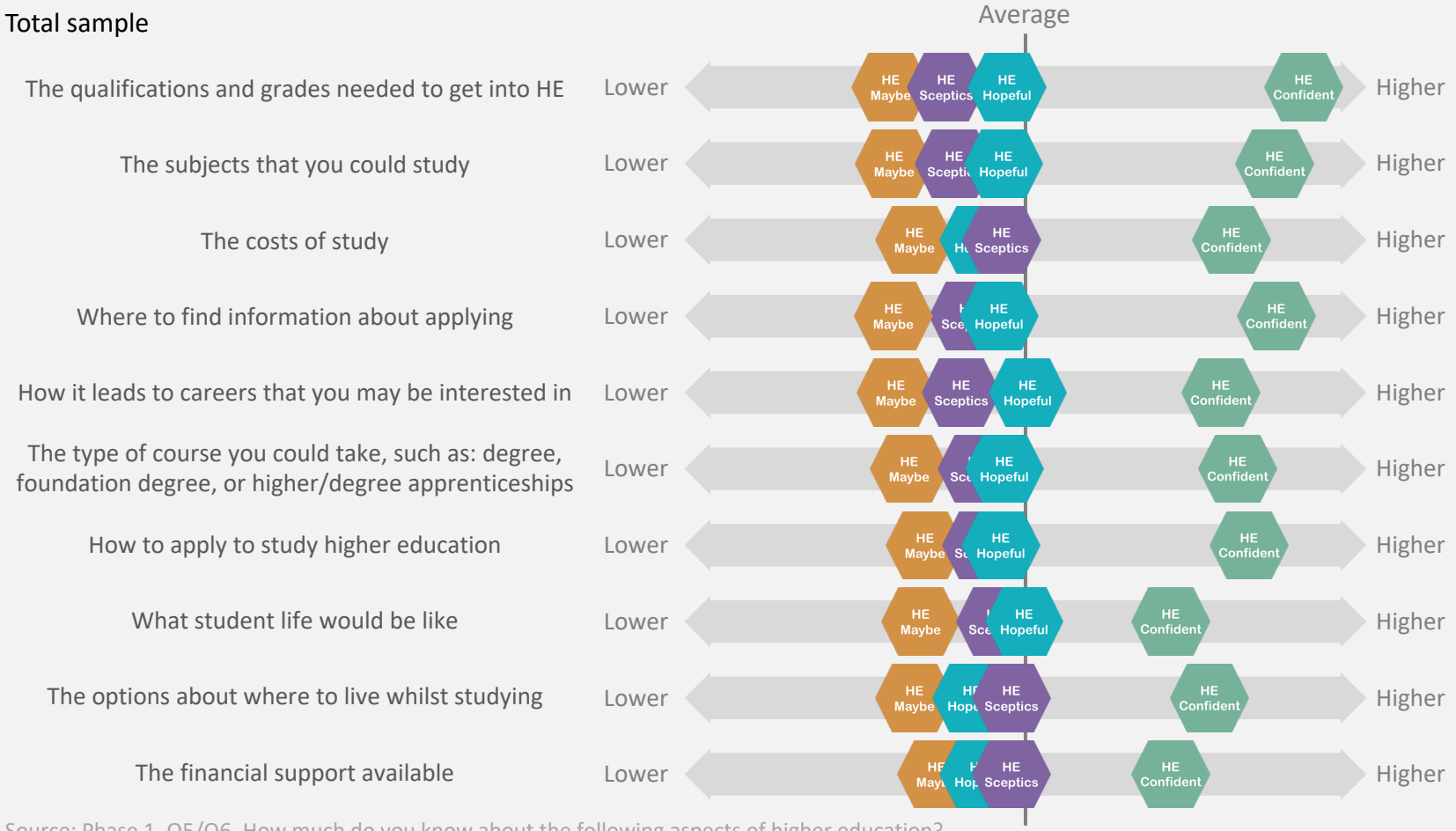
HE Hopeful have a significantly lower level of knowledge compared to **HE Confident**. **HE Hopeful** are particularly behind **HE Confident** in terms of knowledge around qualifications/ grades needed and application process.

HE Sceptics' knowledge about HE is significantly lower than **HE Confident**'s and slightly lower but comparable to **HE Hopeful**. They slightly outperform **HE Hopeful** on knowledge about costs, financial support available and accommodation options.

HE Maybe's HE knowledge is the lowest across all key areas including those that should be investigated early on i.e. qualifications/ grades required, subjects available and what's involved in application.

CLAIMED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION BY SEGMENT

Total sample



Source: Phase 1, Q5/Q6. How much do you know about the following aspects of higher education?
Base: All respondents (HE Confident n=9356, HE Hopeful n=6312, HE Maybe n=8899, HE Sceptics n=6565)

Appetite for support in the Choose, Know and Practise themes were highest, but lower appetite for areas of support identified in the Understand and Become themes

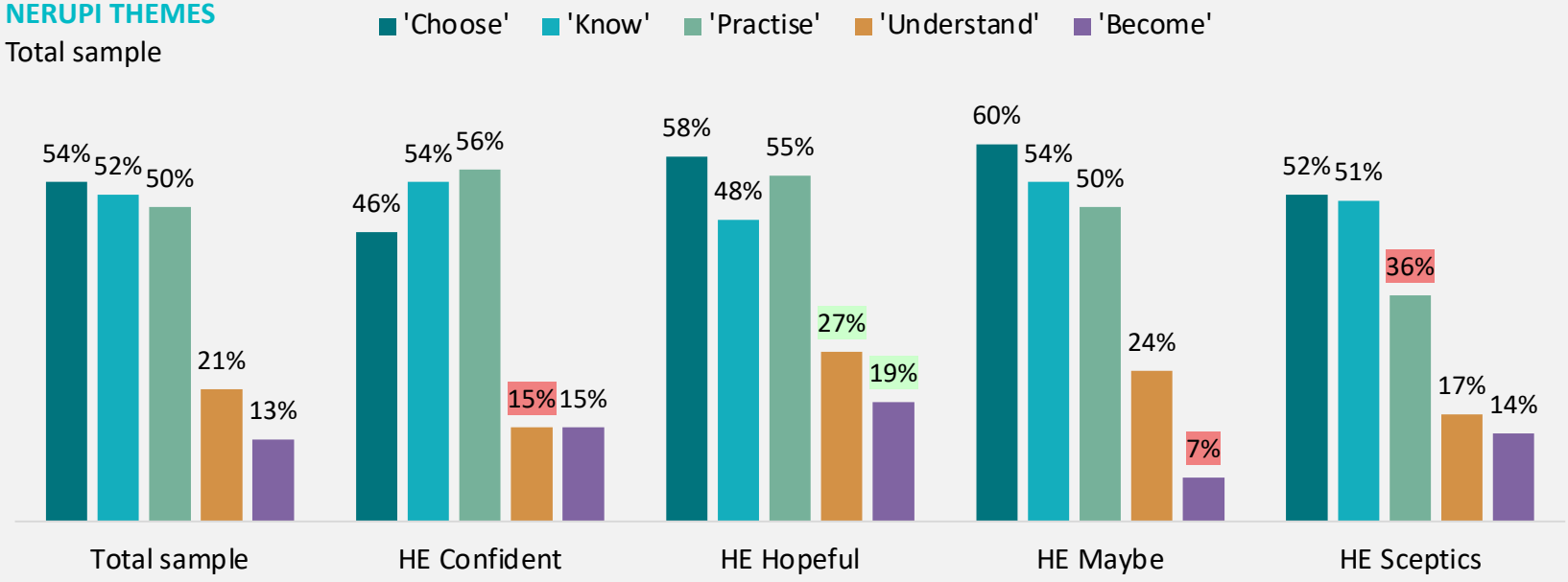
In our phase 2 survey, students selected from a list of support areas that Cosmos devised around the NERUPI Framework Themes*, including two options per theme.

There were stronger levels of appetite for support in the knowledge Choose, Know and Practise themes – this stands at around 50% or more, highlighting a recognised need for support in these areas by students.

HE Confident students, in particular, were most likely to highlight need around 'employment opportunities' and 'work experience'. With most having **already decided upon their future study in HE**, these students are more interested in **looking further ahead** and giving themselves the best chance for longer term success, compared to other segments.

*NERUPI is a praxis-based framework used in the education sector. The framework is widely used by many partners and institutions as a basis for access and widening participation activities and evaluation. Further information about the framework can be found here www.nerupi.co.uk

NERUPI THEMES
Total sample



'Know': Information about the benefits of higher education, Information about future employment opportunities
'Choose': Help to decide what further study I should do in the future, Help to decide what career/jobs I should do in the future
'Become': Help with my confidence and belief about what I can achieve, Help with my resilience to overcome challenges
'Practise': Help to improve my learning and study skills, now and for the future, Help to gain relevant work or voluntary experience, including applying for jobs
'Understand': Help or experience with specific subjects I might study in future, Help to improve my performance/grades at sixth form/college

Source: Phase 2, Q65. Which of these would be most helpful for you now or in future, to work out and prepare for your future plans?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,078), HE Confident (661), HE Hopeful (62), HE Maybe (121), HE Sceptics (234)

There are varying needs for support across the segments, which generally reflects their characteristics

SEGMENTATION

HE Hopeful students over-select on a number of themes compared to other segments. **HE Hopefuls are the most likely segment to ask for support around their confidence and academic performance/grades, to help them on their way to HE**, as well as being the most likely segment to need help to decide their future career. Again, very much line with their defining characteristics, **'deciding further study' is a clear priority for HE Maybe students**.

The responses of **HE Sceptics** were more sporadic, with little indication of any clear priority compared to other segments. However, **information about employment opportunities was the most common request for HE Sceptics**, in keeping with the priority for FE students overall. While their answers to this specific question do not stand out above and beyond any other segment, Cosmos would advise that this area for support is **particularly important for this segment**, who are the most likely to seek a job straight after FE – but appear to be short of the knowledge to do so.



On top of the attitudes the segmentation was built on, there are other criteria the segments differentiate on. Let's deep dive into each of the segments in more detail…

FE SEGMENTATION






HE Confident

27% of FE students

Highly confident and knowledgeable about HE; on track to study at HE

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Hopeful

18% of FE students

Quite confident about wanting to study at HE, but are lacking knowledge

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Maybe

26% of FE students

Poor knowledge about HE and needing reassurance whether HE is for them

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Sceptics

19% of FE students

Lacking motivation and HE knowledge; fairly convinced HE is not for them

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE SEGMENT PROFILE

HE Confident

Overview

FE SEGMENTATION



SIZE

27%

OPENNESS TO HE

VERY HIGH

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females
- Representative in terms of ethnicity
- Slightly older (19 y.o.)
- Often in the last year of the Sixth Form
- Most likely of the segments to have family who have been to HE
- More likely to currently study more ‘traditional’ subjects (e.g. Science, Social Science, Maths, History, English)

“I know what I want to do and I have what it takes to succeed. I’m confident about my choices, but a sounding board would be useful”

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

Highly motivated to do well and the most confident of the segments about their academic abilities (reflected in their overall higher GCSE and expected A level grades).

See themselves as highly suited for HE.

HE BENEFITS

Strong believers in the benefits of HE but are somewhat less 'wowed' by it compared to HE Hopeful, are more likely to see HE as a given.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

Highly knowledgeable about HE, particularly the aspects related to applying as they are more likely to have applied already or looking to apply.

The most confident of all segments about their next steps after current studies (85%).

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to smoothly transition into HE and settle in, e.g. information about student life, accommodation options, student finances.

Future careers advice/ helping them to discover professions they can pursue with the degrees they are considering/ have chosen.

HE Confident

Current studies

FE SEGMENTATION

CURRENT LEVEL OF STUDY

26%	Sixth Form - Year 12
43%	Sixth Form - Year 13
6%	College Level 1
4%	College Level 2
9%	College Level 3 - Year 1
11%	College Level 3 - Year 2
1%	Other

QUALIFICATIONS STUDYING FOR (TOP 7)

84%	A level or AS level
7%	Level 3 diploma
4%	Access to higher education diploma
4%	Level 3 certificate
3%	Level 3 national diploma
2%	Level 3 award
2%	International Baccalaureate diploma

SUBJECTS CURRENTLY STUDYING (TOP 10)



62% Science or related



31% Social Science or related



27% Maths or related



22% History, Geography or related



21% English, Media or related



14% Business, Marketing or related



11% Art, Design or related



10% Foreign Languages



7% Law or related



7% Music, Dance, Drama or related

WHETHER ARE DOING AN APPRENTICESHIP

11% Yes

89% No

EXPECTED AVERAGE # OF A LEVELS GRADES

1.7 A-A*

0.7 B-C

0.0 D-E

HE Confident

Future plans



PLANS AFTER CURRENT STUDIES

53%	University away from home
13%	University locally
10%	HE at a FE college/ other provider
9%	Full-time job
7%	Part-time job
4%	Gap year
3%	Higher/degree apprenticeship
1%	Intermediate/advanced apprenticeship
1%	Other

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR HE

51%	Have already applied
40%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
91%	Have already applied or will apply

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

6%	Have already applied
12%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
18%	Have already applied or will apply

SUBJECTS PLANNING TO STUDY IN HE (TOP 10)

38% Science or related

16% Social Science or related

14% Business, Marketing or related

10% Health & Social Care or related

10% English, Media or related

9% Art and Design or related

8% Law or related

8% History, Geography or related

8% Engineering, Construction or related

6% Maths or related

CONFIDENCE ABOUT NEXT STEPS

85% Very or quite confident

15% Very or quite uncertain

CLARITY ABOUT FUTURE CAREER

77% Very or quite clear

23% Not very or not at all clear

HE Confident

Support needs & Demographics

FE SEGMENTATION

AREAS OF HE ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING (MORE) ABOUT

48%	What student life would be like
43%	The financial support available
43%	How it leads to careers
27%	The options about where to live
22%	The costs of study
14%	The qualifications and grades needed
13%	How to apply to study higher education
8%	Where to find information about applying

OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

41%	Information about future employment opportunities
40%	Relevant work or voluntary experience, including applying for jobs
32%	Help to decide what career/jobs I should do in the future
26%	Help to improve my learning and study skills, now and for the future
20%	Information about the benefits of higher education
20%	Help to decide what further study I should do in the future
15%	Help to improve my performance/grades at sixth form/college
15%	Help with my resilience to overcome challenges



GENDER

62%	Female
36%	Male
1%	Other
1%	Refused

AGE

25%	17 or younger
48%	18
20%	19
7%	20 or older

ETHNICITY

85%	White
15%	BAME

UNI CONNECT

33%	Target
67%	Non-Target

FAMILY IN HE

53%	Yes
39%	No
8%	Don't know

HE Hopeful

Overview

FE SEGMENTATION



SIZE

18%

OPENNESS TO HE

HIGH

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females
- Representative in terms of ethnicity, with a mild BAME skew
- Slightly younger (17 y.o. or less)
- Typically in the penultimate year of the Sixth Form or in Level 3 College
- Average likelihood to have family in HE
- More likely than other segments to be currently studying Arts/ Design and Law

"I feel like I know what I want to do and I feel confident I can succeed. I want to go into HE, but I still need to do a lot of research about it"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

Highly motivated to do well and very confident in their academic abilities (reflected in their second highest GCSE and expected A level grades).

See themselves as highly suited for HE.

HE BENEFITS

The strongest believers in the benefits of HE of the segments and are particularly more likely to link HE to better jobs, higher earning and and improved social life.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

Are somewhat lacking knowledge about HE – including the topics that are useful to learn about early on. This could be due to the stage in their education journey (slightly earlier on compared to HE Confident).

Have average (61%) level of confidence about next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to understand what pathway is best for them and guiding them through the steps of getting there (e.g. support with the subjects/ qualifications needed, application process).

Future careers advice/ helping them to discover professions they can pursue based on the subjects they like/ are good at.

HE Hopeful
Current studies

FE SEGMENTATION

CURRENT LEVEL OF STUDY

41%	Sixth Form - Year 12
17%	Sixth Form - Year 13
5%	College Level 1
2%	College Level 2
21%	College Level 3 - Year 1
14%	College Level 3 - Year 2
0%	Other

QUALIFICATIONS STUDYING FOR (TOP 7)

86%	A level or AS level
7%	Level 3 diploma
3%	Applied general
2%	Access to higher education diploma
2%	Level 3 certificate
2%	Level 3 national diploma
2%	Level 3 national certificate

SUBJECTS CURRENTLY STUDYING (TOP 10)

- 58% Science or related
- 27% Social Science or related
- 24% Maths or related
- 21% History, Geography or related
- 21% English, Media or related
- 21% Art, Design or related
- 15% Business, Marketing or related
- 10% Law or related
- 8% Computing or related
- 6% Foreign Languages

WHETHER ARE DOING AN APPRENTICESHIP

6% Yes **94%** No

AVERAGE EXPECTED # OF A LEVELS GRADES

1.4 A-A* **1.1** B-C **0.0** D-E

HE Hopeful

Future plans

FE SEGMENTATION

PLANS AFTER CURRENT STUDIES

51%	University away from home
19%	University locally
8%	HE at a FE college/ other provider
8%	Higher/ degree apprenticeship
3%	Full-time job
3%	Part-time job
3%	Gap year
0%	Intermediate/advanced apprenticeship
3%	Other

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR HE

24%	Have already applied
63%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
87%	Have already applied or will apply

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

3%	Have already applied
11%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
14%	Have already applied or will apply

SUBJECTS PLANNING TO STUDY IN HE (TOP 10)

- **35%** Science or related
- **16%** History, Geography or related
- **15%** Business, Marketing or related
- **13%** Law or related
- **11%** Social Science or related
- **11%** Art, Design or related
- **11%** Engineering, Construction or related
- **10%** Maths or related
- **8%** Health, Social Care or related
- **6%** English, Media or related

CONFIDENCE ABOUT NEXT STEPS

- **61%** Very or quite confident
- **39%** Very or quite uncertain

CLARITY ABOUT FUTURE CAREER

- **65%** Very or quite clear
- **35%** Not very or not at all clear

HE Hopeful

Support needs & Demographics

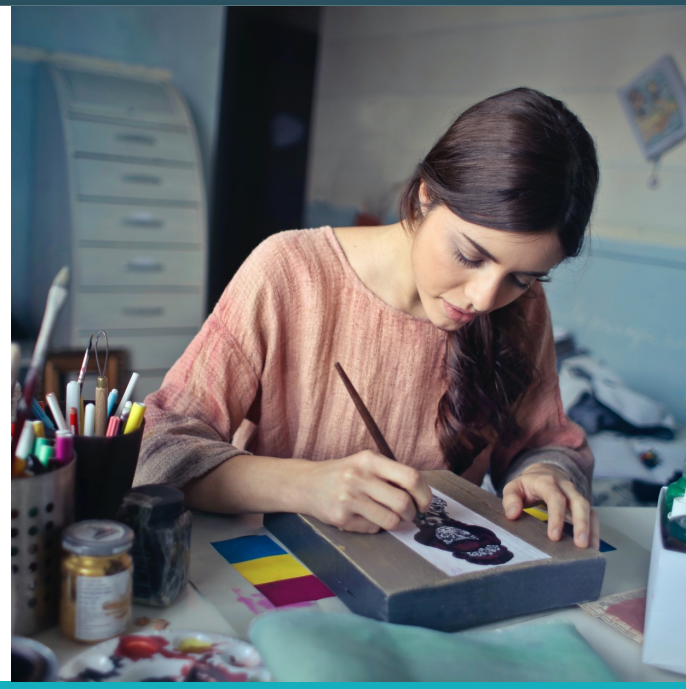
FE SEGMENTATION

AREAS OF HE ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING (MORE) ABOUT

46%	The financial support available
46%	How it leads to careers
34%	What student life would be like
32%	The costs of study
32%	The options about where to live
24%	How to apply to study higher education
17%	The qualifications and grades needed
8%	Where to find information about applying

OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

40%	Help to decide what career/jobs I should do in the future
39%	Relevant work or voluntary experience, including applying for jobs
34%	Help to decide what further study I should do in the future
31%	Information about future employment opportunities
27%	Help to improve my learning and study skills
27%	Help to improve my performance/grades at sixth form/college
23%	Information about the benefits of higher education
19%	Help with my resilience to overcome challenges



GENDER

61%	Female
37%	Male
1%	Other
1%	Refused

AGE

42%	17 or younger
42%	18
11%	19
5%	20 or older

ETHNICITY

84%	White
16%	BAME

UNI CONNECT

33%	Target
67%	Non-Target

FAMILY IN HE

49%	Yes
41%	No
10%	Don't know

HE Maybe

Overview

FE SEGMENTATION



SIZE

26%

OPENNESS TO HE

MEDIUM-HIGH

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females
- Representative in terms of ethnicity
- Slightly younger (17 y.o. or less)
- More likely to be in Year 12 of Sixth Form or Level 1 of College
- Slightly less likely to have family in HE
- More likely than other segments to be (interested in) studying Health/ Social care

"I want to do well and would like to go into Higher Education, but I'm not sure it'll be a good fit for me... There's a lot I still don't know about HE"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

Quite motivated to do well in studies, but are somewhat doubtful about their academic abilities, (reflected in their lower GCSE and expected A level grades compared to HE Confident and HE Hopeful).

Uncertain about their suitability for HE.

HE BENEFITS

Are likely to recognise the benefits of HE but are less certain about those compared to HE Confident and HE Hopeful.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

Are the least knowledgeable of the segments in terms of all aspects related to HE, including such essential areas as qualifications and grades needed, costs, subjects available and how to apply. This could partially be due to their stage in the education journey (slightly earlier on).

Have average (62%) level of confidence about next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to discover options available (whilst ensuring they understand the benefits of HE), identify those that are best suited based on their interests and guiding them through the process.

Future careers advice/ helping them to discover professions they might be suited to based on their interests and abilities/ strengths.

HE Maybe
Current studies

FE SEGMENTATION

CURRENT LEVEL OF STUDY

43%	Sixth Form - Year 12
19%	Sixth Form - Year 13
7%	College Level 1
4%	College Level 2
16%	College Level 3 - Year 1
8%	College Level 3 - Year 2
2%	Other

QUALIFICATIONS STUDYING FOR (TOP 7)

75%	A level or AS level
8%	Level 3 diploma
6%	Level 3 certificate
3%	Level 3 national diploma
3%	Level 3 award
3%	Music grades 6, 7 and 8
3%	Level 3 national certificate

SUBJECTS CURRENTLY STUDYING (TOP 10)

- 50% Science or related
- 24% Maths or related
- 22% Social Science or related
- 17% History, Geography or related
- 17% English, Media or related
- 14% Business, Marketing or related
- 14% Art and Design or related
- 9% Health & Social Care or related
- 8% Law or related
- 6% Computing or related

WHETHER ARE DOING AN APPRENTICESHIP

13% Yes **87%** No

AVERAGE EXPECTED # OF A LEVELS GRADES

1.2 A-A* **0.8** B-C **0.0** D-E

HE Maybe
Future plans

FE SEGMENTATION

PLANS AFTER CURRENT STUDIES

30%	University away from home
18%	University locally
13%	Full-time job
12%	HE at a FE college/ other provider
10%	Part-time job
9%	Gap year
5%	Higher/ degree apprenticeship
3%	Intermediate/advanced apprenticeship
1%	Other

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR HE

20%	Have already applied
56%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
75%	Have already applied or will apply

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

6%	Have already applied
16%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
22%	Have already applied or will apply

CONFIDENCE ABOUT NEXT STEPS

62% Very or quite confident

38% Very or quite uncertain

CLARITY ABOUT FUTURE CAREER

65% Very or quite clear

35% Not very or not at all clear

SUBJECTS PLANNING TO STUDY IN HE (TOP 10)

35% Science or related

15% Social Science or related

14% Health, Social Care or related

12% Maths or related

11% English, Media or related

10% Art and Design or related

10% Law or related

10% History, Geography or related

8% Business, Marketing or related

8% Engineering, Construction or related

HE Maybe

Support needs & Demographics

FE SEGMENTATION

AREAS OF HE ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING (MORE) ABOUT

47%	The financial support available
35%	The costs of study
31%	How it leads to careers
31%	What student life would be like
23%	How to apply to study higher education
22%	The options about where to live
20%	The qualifications and grades needed
8%	Where to find information about applying

OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

42%	Help to decide what further study I should do in the future
35%	Information about future employment opportunities
33%	Relevant work or voluntary experience, including applying for jobs
32%	Help to decide what career/jobs I should do in the future
26%	Information about the benefits of higher education
25%	Help to improve my learning and study skills
24%	Help to improve my performance/grades at sixth form/college
7%	Help with my resilience to overcome challenges



GENDER

60%	Female
37%	Male
1%	Other
2%	Refused

AGE

41%	17 or younger
33%	18
14%	19
12%	20 or older

ETHNICITY

89%	White
11%	BAME

UNI CONNECT

33%	Target
67%	Non-Target

FAMILY IN HE

40%	Yes
38%	No
22%	Don't know

HE Sceptics

Overview

FE SEGMENTATION



SIZE

19%

OPENNESS TO HE

LOW

KEY PROFILING INFORMATION

- A mix of Males and Females, with a mild skew towards Males
- Slightly more likely to identify as White
- Slightly older (19 y.o. or older)
- Often in the last year of Sixth Form or College
- Less likely to have family in HE
- More likely to be into practical subjects (e.g. Business, Art/ Design, Engineering)

"I'd like to do well in my current studies, but I'm not sure if HE is the right pathway for me. I don't think it'll be that beneficial or suited to me"

CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION

The least motivated of the segments and most doubtful about their academic abilities (which is also reflected in the lowest GCSE and expected A level grades compared to the other three segments).

Strongly doubt their fit with HE.

HE BENEFITS

Are the least likely of the segments to believe in the benefits of HE, including that it'll enable them to get better jobs and have better earnings.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HE

They are lacking knowledge about HE but know more compared to HE Maybe, which could be a factor of them being slightly older/ further down in their education journey.

They are the most uncertain segment when it comes to next steps after current studies.

SUPPORT NEEDS

Helping them to understand the benefits of HE and accurately assess their suitability.

If HE isn't the most suitable option, helping them to identify the best alternatives based on their interests and abilities/ strengths, and guiding them towards those.

Future careers advice/ helping them to identify potential jobs they could pursue based on their interests and strengths.

HE Sceptics
Current studies

FE SEGMENTATION

CURRENT LEVEL OF STUDY

31%	Sixth Form - Year 12
30%	Sixth Form - Year 13
3%	College Level 1
12%	College Level 2
15%	College Level 3 - Year 1
9%	College Level 3 - Year 2
0%	Other

QUALIFICATIONS STUDYING FOR (TOP 7)

60%	A level or AS level
14%	Level 3 diploma
6%	Level 3 award
5%	Access to higher education diploma
4%	Level 3 certificate
4%	Applied general
3%	International Baccalaureate diploma

SUBJECTS CURRENTLY STUDYING (TOP 10)

- 31% Science or related
- 23% English, Media or related
- 16% Social Science or related
- 16% Business, Marketing or related
- 13% Maths or related
- 11% History, Geography or related
- 11% Art, Design or related
- 10% Health, Social Care or related
- 10% Engineering, Construction or related
- 8% Computing or related

WHETHER ARE DOING AN APPRENTICESHIP

27% Yes

73% No

AVERAGE EXPECTED # OF A LEVELS GRADES

0.7 A-A*

0.6 B-C

0.1 D-E

over-indexing vs Total sample by 20

under-indexing vs Total sample by 20

HE Sceptics

Future plans

FE SEGMENTATION

PLANS AFTER CURRENT STUDIES

31%	Full-time job
21%	University away from home
13%	University locally
11%	Part-time job
10%	HE at a FE college/ other provider
5%	Higher/ degree apprenticeship
4%	Gap year
3%	Intermediate/advanced apprenticeship
2%	Other

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR HE

20%	Have already applied
38%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
58%	Have already applied or will apply

LIKELIHOOD TO APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

5%	Have already applied
31%	Definitely will or very likely to apply
36%	Have already applied or will apply

SUBJECTS PLANNING TO STUDY IN HE (TOP 10)

- **18%** Science or related
- **17%** Business, Marketing or related
- **14%** Art and Design or related
- **12%** Engineering, Construction or related
- **12%** English, Media or related
- **11%** Computing or related
- **10%** Social Science or related
- **10%** Law or related
- **9%** Health, Social Care or related
- **8%** Citizenship, Religious Studies or related

CONFIDENCE ABOUT NEXT STEPS

- **56%** Very or quite confident
- **44%** Very or quite uncertain

CLARITY ABOUT FUTURE CAREER

- **69%** Very or quite clear
- **31%** Not very or not at all clear

HE Sceptics

Support needs & Demographics

FE SEGMENTATION

AREAS OF HE ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING (MORE) ABOUT

- 33% | The financial support available
- 28% | The costs of study
- 27% | What student life would be like
- 27% | How it leads to careers
- 27% | How to apply to study higher education
- 19% | The qualifications and grades needed
- 14% | The options about where to live
- 14% | Where to find information about applying

OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

- 34% | Information about future employment opportunities
- 29% | Help to decide what further study I should do in the future
- 28% | Help to decide what career/jobs I should do in the future
- 21% | Information about the benefits of higher education
- 20% | Relevant work or voluntary experience, including applying for jobs
- 18% | Help to improve my learning and study skills
- 17% | Help to improve my performance/grades at sixth form/college
- 14% | Help with my resilience to overcome challenges
- 34% | Information about future employment opportunities



GENDER

- 51% | Female
- 44% | Male
- 2% | Other
- 3% | Refused

AGE

- 19% | 17 or younger
- 46% | 18
- 20% | 19
- 15% | 20 or older

ETHNICITY

- 91% | White
- 9% | BAME

UNI CONNECT

- 31% | Target
- 69% | Non-Target

FAMILY IN HE

- 36% | Yes
- 37% | No
- 27% | Don't know

It's important to keep in mind that the segments are not permanent, and students can flow between segments backward and forward

FE SEGMENTATION

Depending on the interventions, we see four possible 'segment flow' options:

Higher probability/
relatively low effort required to achieve

1. HE Hopeful → HE Confident

Medium probability/
medium effort required to achieve

2. HE Maybe → HE Hopeful → HE Confident

3. HE Maybe → HE Sceptics

**we recognise that this may not be a desired outcome for partners, but is a possibility*

Lower probability/
high effort required to achieve

4. HE Sceptics → HE Hopeful → HE Confident

PART 3: Opportunities and ways forward



Now that we understand the segments in more depth, let's summarise their mindsets and top needs

FE SEGMENTATION

	HE Confident (27%)	HE Hopeful (18%)	HE Maybe (26%)	HE Sceptics (19%)
Mindset	*"I know what I want to do and I have what it takes to succeed. I'm confident about my choices, but a sounding board would be useful"*	*"I feel like I know what I want to do and I feel confident I can succeed. I want to go into HE, but I still need to do a lot of research about it"*	*"I want to do well and would like to go into Higher Education, but I'm not sure it'll be a good fit for me... There's a lot I still don't know about HE"*	*"I'd like to do well in my current studies, but I'm not sure if HE is the right pathway for me. I don't think it'll be that beneficial or suited to me"*
#1 need	**Reassure/ sense check** Reassure me that I'm on the right track – help me to confirm I've chosen the right course/ university	**Reassure/ sense check** Help me to confirm that HE is the right path for me	**Show me my options** Help me understand if HE is right for me or if I might be better suited to a different pathway	**Reassure/ sense check** Help me to confirm that the pathway I'm considering is right for me given my goals, interests and strengths
#2 need	**Student life guidance** Tell me about what HE student life will be like – what to expect, where to live etc. – to help me prepare	**Help to prepare for HE** Tell me about all aspects of HE, particularly course/ universities available and what I'll need to apply	**Help get the grades** Help me to ensure I have sufficient grades to apply to HE if I want to; help me with my confidence/ self-esteem	**Help me to succeed** Help me to pursue the chosen path, be it apprenticeship or job, with relevant advice/ give me access to resources
Common need #1	**Career guidance** – Help me to explore career paths available early on to ensure that I choose the right qualifications to obtain, the right course/ subject to study. As part of this, explain to me how different careers link my individual strengths (e.g. analytical, creative, leadership, people skills etc.) to help me understand what careers I'll have the best chance of succeeding in. Once ideal career path is identified, help me to ensure I have the tools/ access to information to successfully get on that path			
Common need #2	*Not a need or considerably less of a need for this segment*	**Post FE pathway guidance** – help me to discover all my options post FE, including HE, different types of apprenticeships as well as employment and explain the pros and cons of each, so I can choose what I think will work best for me		

Should there be a need to prioritise efforts, we recommend focusing on the universal needs and HE Maybe's as a large but the least well-informed of the segments



	HE Confident (27%)	HE Hopeful (18%)	HE Maybe (26%)	HE Sceptics (19%)
Mindset	*"I know what I want to do and I have what it takes to succeed. I'm confident about my choices, but a sounding board would be useful"*	*"I feel like I know what I want to do and I feel confident I can succeed. I want to go into HE, but I still need to do a lot of research about it"*	*"I want to do well and would like to go into Higher Education, but I'm not sure it'll be a good fit for me... There's a lot I still don't know about HE"*	*"I'd like to do well in my current studies, but I'm not sure if HE is the right pathway for me. I don't think it'll be that beneficial or suited to me"*
Need #1	**Reassure/ sense check** Reassure me that I'm on the … confirm I've chosen the right course/ university — **Lower priority**	**Reassure/ sense check** Help me to confirm that HE is … — **Medium priority**	**Show me my options** Help me understand if HE is … better suited to a different pathway — **Higher priority**	**Reassure/ sense check** Help me to confirm that the … right for me given my goals, interests and strengths — **Higher priority**
Need #2	**Student life guidance** Tell me about what HE … to expect, where to live etc. – to help me prepare — **Lower priority**	**Help to prepare for HE** Tell me about all aspects of … universities available and what I'll need to apply — **Medium priority**	**Help get the grades** Help me to ensure I have … HE if I want to; help me with my confidence/ self-esteem — **Higher priority**	**Help me to succeed** Help me to pursue the chosen … job, with relevant advice/ give me access to resources — **Higher priority**
Common need #1	**Career guidance** – Help me to explore career paths available early on to ensure that I choose the right qualifications to obtain, the right course/ subject to study. As part of this, explain to me how different careers link my individual strengths (e.g. analytical, creative, leadership, people skills etc.) to help me understand what careers I'll have the best chance of succeeding in. Once ideal career path is identified, help me to ensure I have the tools/ access to information to successfully get on that path — **Higher priority**			
Common need #2	*Not a need or considerably less of a need for this segment*	**Post FE pathway guidance** – help me to discover all my options post FE, including HE, different types of apprenticeships as well as employment … ons of each, so I can choose what I think will work best for me — **Higher priority**		

ABOUT COSMOS



Our project team



Sarah Dirrane

Director, Research & Strategy

- **Trained researcher** – Masters in Research Methodology at University of Leeds
- Experienced in delivering **multi-method research programmes** across both qualitative & quantitative research methods
- Led on **evaluation & Impact programme** for Uni Connect consortiums and access/outreach initiatives
- Delivered research & evaluation services in the **education, HEI and public sectors**
- **Developed Access & Participation Plans** – deep understanding of the wider access and outreach context
- **Knowledge & understanding of the HEI sector** – led the research & Intelligence Team for 5 years at a large HEI

Senior Research Associates

- Cosmos has a **wealth of experience within its team**, with **only accomplished and experienced researchers** making up the project team.
- The team consists of Senior Research Associates that have **extensive experience** across a plethora of research methodologies, in many cases **10+ years experience**.
- Experience ranges from project management, directing research departments, teams of researchers and a large portfolio of research projects



Sean Dirrane

Managing Director

- **Significant knowledge** of the HEI sector
- 10-year career at Leeds Beckett University, **Widening Participation Practitioner & WP Manager: Research & Evaluation**
- **Engagement & Training** - specialist in the Education and Social Care sectors
- Works with a range of WP audiences and has relevant and extensive experience **working with school & college stakeholders**
- **Works closely with a number of Uni Connect networks** delivering work which is highly focussed on supporting and developing disadvantaged and marginalised groups, primary focusing on supporting young disadvantaged men through the Marginal Gains programme
- Has also developed a number of other initiatives working with the Social Care sector and Uni Connect networks

Our experience

FE SEGMENTATION

Cosmos has extensive experience working in the education and impact evaluation sector, having worked with a large number of HE clients. Cosmos specialises in delivering HE research programmes across a wide range of disciplines and methods - this includes quantitative, qualitative, empirical & secondary research. Cosmos has delivered innovative research programmes that have been recognised by the Office for Students as 'exemplary'. Cosmos has also supported delivery of a 'sector leading' impact research programme with a partner institution. Further to this, a recent Cosmos report has been recognised by and presented to the House of Lords, in order to inform and aid development of new policies.

"Really delighted with the data analysis work Cosmos have undertaken for us. Many thanks for your attention to detail, clear communication, and quality reporting within agreed timescales – great service."

- *Anna Woodhosue, Uni Connect Research & Evaluation Manager: University of Leeds*

Experienced in qualitative student segmentation:
Cosmos has led on a large qualitative student segmentation project for a northern HEI, identifying key potential customer segments for the university. This involved a mixed-methods approach that triangulated both qualitative and quantitative data. The segments included both UG and PG audiences and were brought to life by multi-media. Given the multi-cultural composition of the university, there was also a focus on including BAME communities within the sample. Cosmos then also helped to embed the segments within the marketing departments and wider university departments to ensure that the relevant messages were being tailored for each target segment, which led to increased engagement and conversion by potential students during their student journey.

"Cosmos Engagement Ltd. have proven themselves to be a highly skilled professional company who work with dedication and enthusiasm towards meeting their client's brief. They were able to provide advanced analytical skills that produced valuable insights into the attitudes and needs of our students. The report that was produced was on brief, detailed, well evidenced and engaging in style …. provided excellent customer care, keeping us updated on progress and meeting the changing needs of the project with good grace. Thank you to everyone involved for all of their hard work"

- *Emily Rozier, Head of Funding, Graduation & Awards : University of Birmingham*

CASE STUDY



Cosmos was commissioned to carry out advanced statistical analysis of a survey that had been commissioned by the university.

Comsos was required to analyse 6,500+ survey responses across a number of pre-determined variables.

One of the key stakeholders for the project was the institution's partner schools and colleges, hence one of the project outputs involved developing individual reports for each school / college – in an accessible format. The individual reports formed a key part of the university's strategic partner plans and provision allocation.

Our experience

FE SEGMENTATION

CASE STUDY



Cosmos was commissioned to undertake a research project to help the university understand the impact and experiences of those who have received one their bursary awards

The project was part of a wider multi-method research programme involving:

- ✓ Running an online survey - managing the responses and sending / managing email invitations & reminders. Response of nearly 2,000 students. Response rate was 50% higher than the target of 1,000 responses
- ✓ Qualitative F2F interviews – recruited from the online survey
- ✓ Secondary analysis of multiple datasets with 100,000+ data points, in order to create a logic model.

The survey was developed with guidance and approval from the university and scripted using an online survey design platform, in an engaging and easy to use format. It was also optimised via. omni-channel options to ensure a smooth user experience.

The university has used the results as a basis for their strategic review of the full awards package. The findings have ensured that students who have benefitted the most from the awards package were included in the revised award offer.

A selection of our HE clients:

University of Bristol

Bishop Grosseteste University

University of Hull

University of Cumbria

University of Birmingham

University of Portsmouth

University of Southampton

University of Leeds

Our clients



We also have extensive experience working in the Uni Connect space. Our clients include…

inspiring choices
York & North Yorkshire

HOP
HUMBER OUTREACH PROGRAMME

GREATER MANCHESTER HIGHER

LINCHIGHER

STUDY HIGHER

GO HIGHER
West Yorkshire

SUN SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

hello future.

Aimhigher
West Midlands

Appendix A: Methodology detail



Phase 1: CFE data

Office for Students (OfS) commissioned CFE Research to undertake a national survey measuring and assessing attitudes and behaviours towards education, across all Uni Connect regions. Since this work was commissioned, CFE Research have run several waves of research amongst learners of various ages nationally via a survey distributed by the participating partners.

Some of the data collected for FE students specifically was shared with Cosmos under the GDPR guidelines for analysis and development of an attitudinal FE student segmentation. The data shared included a range of socio-demographic indicators as well as students' responses to a range of attitudinal statements around:

- Level of motivation to do well in studies and confidence (e.g. to go to a university, get the grades required for further studies etc.)
- Perceived suitability for HE/ fit in the HE environment
- Perceived benefits of HE
- Level of knowledge about various aspects of HE etc.
- Likelihood to apply to HE in the future

Cosmos' analysis focused on Waves 2 & 3 of the CFE research which covered both pre and post Covid periods and included over 30,000 student surveys.



Phase 1: Cluster Analysis



The national segmentation is the result of analysis of over 30,000 FE student responses to the CFE student survey. Cosmos used a statistical cluster analysis to identify how students grouped or 'clustered' based on their common responses to key HE knowledge and attitude theme statements, i.e. on which statements students tended to align or differ.

The cluster analysis offered a range of solutions from three segments up to seven, all of which were statistically correct and merely grouped or distinguished clusters at varying degrees of detail. Cosmos reviewed these outputs and the characteristics of segments in each of these solutions, before settling on the four-segment solution as shown. It was felt that the three-segment solution was too broad and provided limited benefit, while solutions of five segments and more were too detailed and only served to dilute the differences between segments that were clear in the four-segment solution, as well as being more difficult to recall and utilise.

Another benefit of the four-segment approach is the size or prevalence of the segments, ranging from 18% to 27% nationally. While the exact proportion or distribution of segments varies at a regional level (regional figures have been shared with each of our Uni Connect partners), having just four segments ensures that there are a significant number of students of each segment within each region – allowing partners to identify, differentiate and target the needs of their students accordingly. Having four segments also made it easier for Cosmos to acquire sufficient sample sizes for each segment, to facilitate robust comparison and insights included in this report. All the benefits above may have been lost, or significantly impeded, by the use of five or more segments.

Cosmos believe that the four-segment solution as shown and discussed throughout this report provides a clear narrative and approach to identifying and supporting FE students nationally, with our Uni Connect partners expressing positive feedback on this approach following our dissemination of Phase 1 segmentation findings.

Phase 2: A note on weighting



As the Phase 2 sample was not designed to be representative of the UK FE student population and instead used a pragmatic approach with minimum quotas per region/ partnership (without further quotas on study level or demographics), the segment distribution achieved in Phase 2 was quite different to that identified in Phase 1 (CFE survey data).

Our view was that the segment distribution observed in Phase 1 was closer to reality considering the robustness of the sample size (30,000+ records). Hence, the decision was made to weight Phase 2 data on segment for analysis and reporting purposes, aligning the distribution as close to that of Phase 1 as possible.

Weighting factors between 0.45-3.0 were applied on each survey response – the table on the right summarises the final approach.

APPROACH TO PHASE 2 DATA WEIGHTING

	Raw/ unweighted Phase 2 segment distribution	Phase 1 segment distribution (CFE survey data)	Proposed weights (including upper caps of 3.0*)	Final Phase 2 segment distribution
HE Confident	59%	27%	0.45	26%
HE Hopeful	6%	18%	3.00*	17%
HE Maybe	11%	26%	2.57	28%
HE Sceptics	21%	19%	0.92	19%
Unassigned	3%	10%	3.00*	10%

As the table shows, in Phase 2 data:

- **HE Hopeful, HE Maybe and Unassigned** segments were up-weighted
- **HE Confident segment** was down-weighted
- **HE Sceptics'** proportion remained broadly the same

* IMPORTANT: An upper cap of 3.0 was applied to weighting factors to ensure the extent of weighting is within an acceptable range and does not undermine reliability of the data.

Appendix B: Additional data

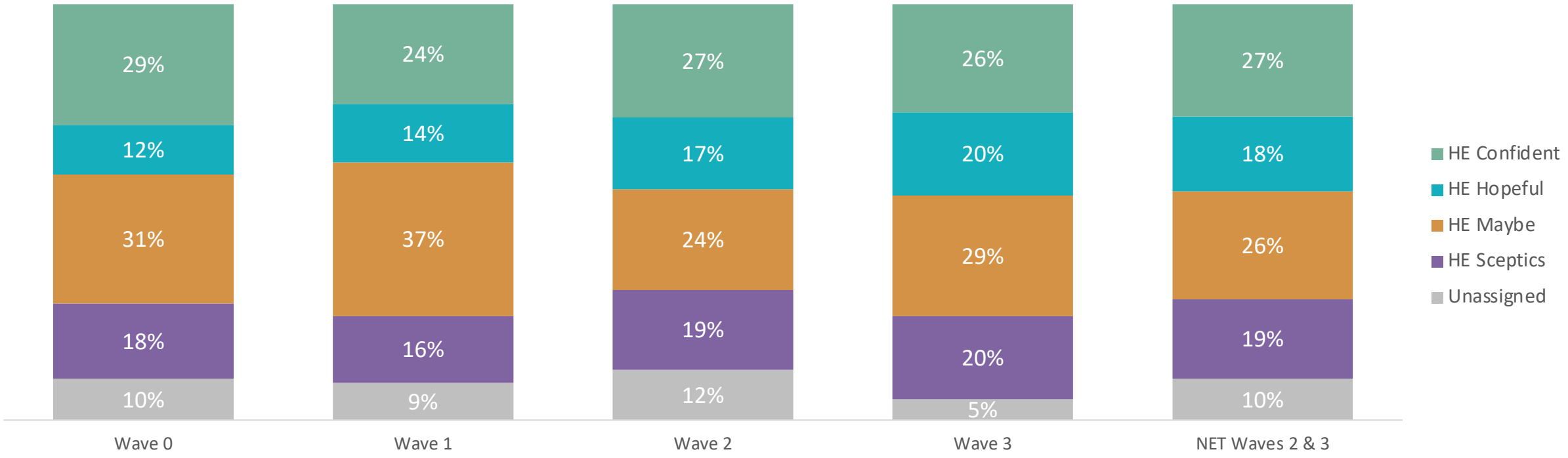


Segment distribution by wave

SEGMENTATION

SEGMENT DISTRIBUTION BY WAVE

Total sample



Source: Phase 1 CFE survey
Base: Wave 0 – n=26,929, Wave 1 – n=16,019, Wave 2 – n=24,292, Wave 3 – n=10,431, Waves 2&3 – n=34,723

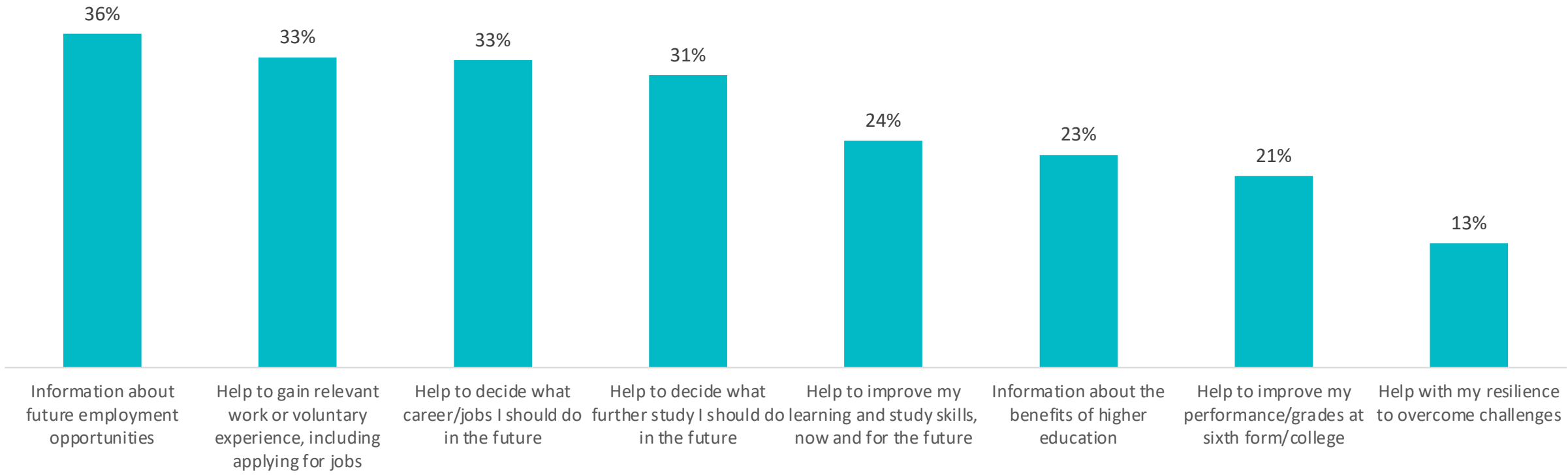
N.B. Some students were unassigned to a segment due to incomplete CFE survey responses. Statistical cluster analysis requires participants to complete all questions of interest in order to be included.

There is strong demand for support amongst FE students, particularly in areas related to future career

FE SEGMENTATION

HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT NEEDS

Total sample



Source: Q65. Which of these would be most helpful for you now or in future, to work out and prepare for your future plans? Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,078)

Covid-19 is likely to have interfered with the majority of FE students' learning experiences. Understanding these effects will help provide better support for students

A large proportion of FE students claim to have been impacted by Covid-19 in one way or the other.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the shorter-term experiences are most likely to have been negatively impacted i.e.:

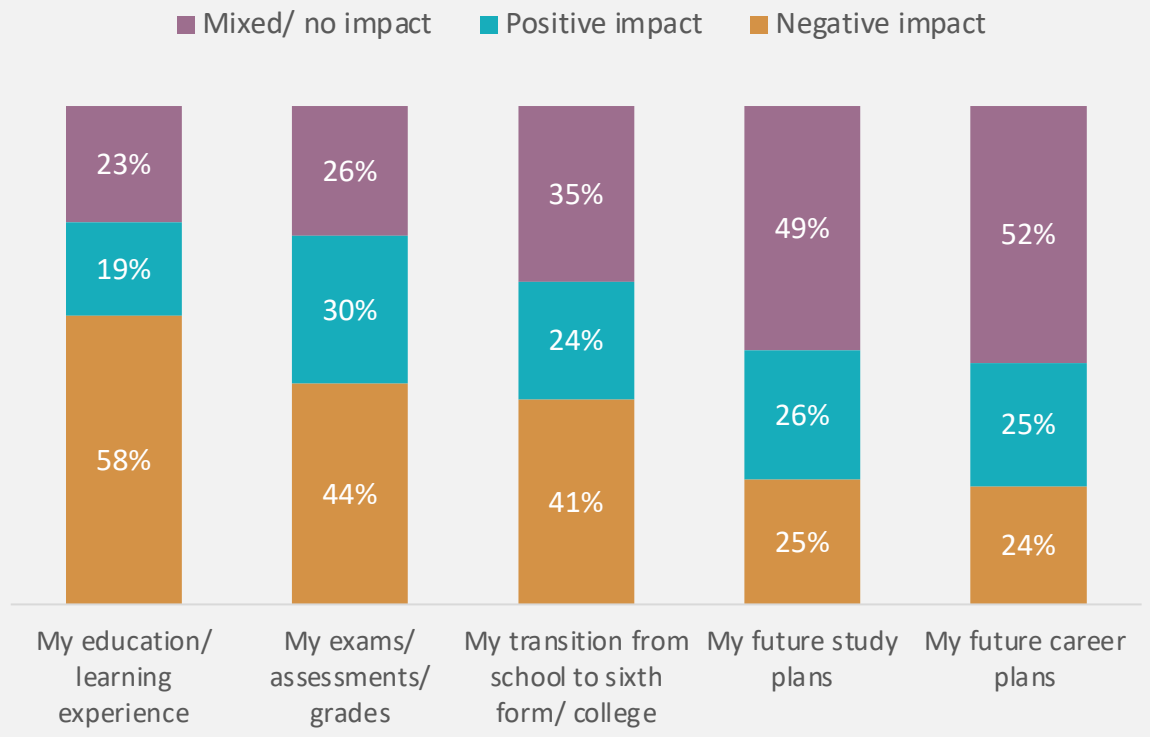
- Education/ learning experiences
- Exams, assessments and grades
- Transition from school to sixth form/ college

Longer-term plans – study or career – are more likely to have remained unchanged or been impacted in a positive way.

It is important to better understand the effects Covid-19 has had on FE students' lives and future plans, to better help them get back on track.

REPORTED IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION AND FUTURE PLANS

Total sample



Source: Q66. And how have your education and future plans been impacted by COVID-19, if at all?
Base: All respondents who provided an answer (1,092)

COSMOS

Nexus, University of Leeds,
Discovery Way, Leeds LS2 3AA

T | 0113 887 0191
W | www.cosmosltd.uk
E | hello@cosmosltd.uk