



Centre for Research in  
Education Inclusion  
and Diversity



# Recent research in widening access to higher education

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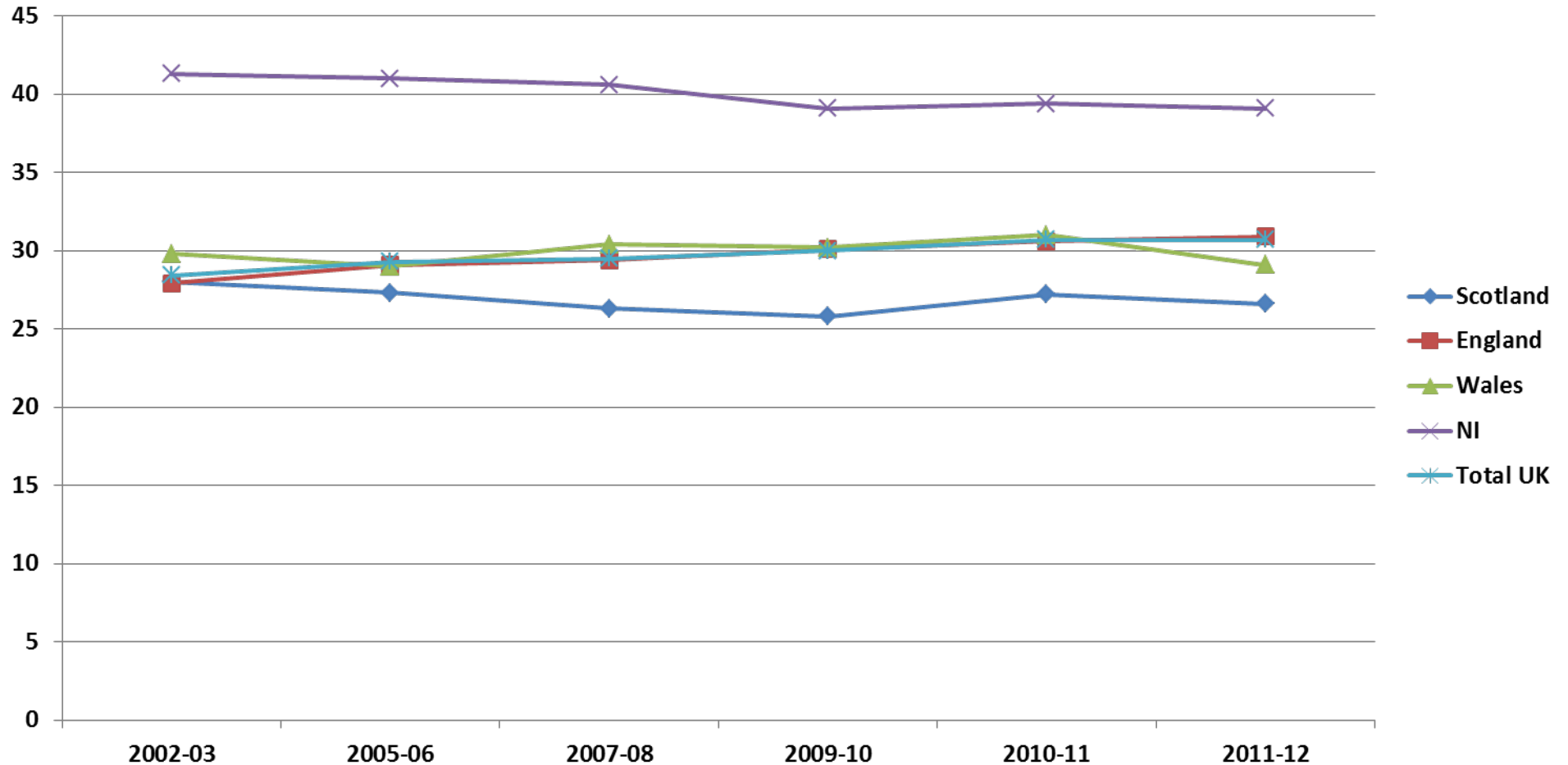
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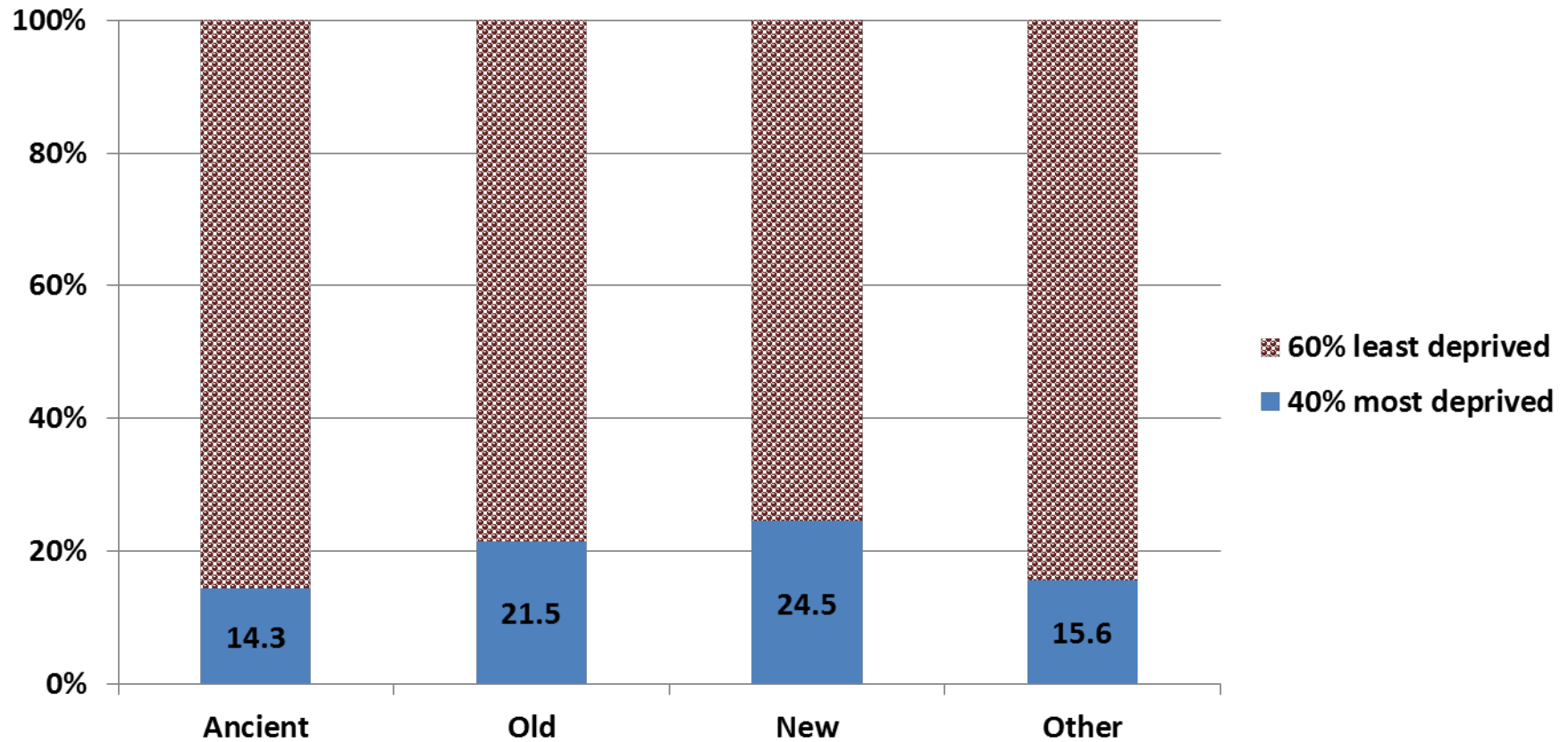
## Some of the things we know:

- Targeted, consistent and early interventions work
- Certain types of intensive interventions, e.g. summer schools and mentoring seem to work well – easier to measure?
- Outreach focused mainly on young people – less on mature people
- Retention is affected by support (within as well as outside institution), transition stages important
- Finance matters but not the only influence on decision-making .... There are other

# Widening access – NS-SEC 4-7 (HESA, PI)



# Type of institution attended by level of deprivation, Scotland (SIMD40), 2011-12





# Recent publications – not all!!

- Two recent literature reviews
  - Literature review of research into widening participation to HE: Report to HEFCE and OFFA by ARC network
  - Widening access to higher education: does anyone know what works? Report to Universities Scotland by CREID
- Widening access and contextualised admissions, Report to SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programmes)
- Working Paper: The challenges of using performance indicators to measure widening access



## HEFCE – research gaps –there is a need to:

- Explore what works within HE-related IAG – there is little empirical evidence of what constitutes a successful model of IAG intervention as part of WP
- Explore what works in terms of financial support
- Fill in ‘evidence vacuum’ in relation to progression to post-graduate study
- Examine the importance of networks in supporting access, retention and success in HE
- Provide better data to support the evaluation of outcomes from widening participation interventions



# Universities Scotland – research gaps

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- Examine the use of contextual admissions data
- Explore why offers of places at university are NOT accepted by some students from poorer backgrounds
- Develop improved systems of evaluating outreach activities and tracking widening access students through their courses ... this should include gathering data on part-time and mature students



# Contextual admissions – key conclusions

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- Contextual information and data has a role to play in admissions process ..BUT
- Changes (frequent) in policy context and entry qualifications present problems when evidence of HE outcomes relating to disadvantage is mixed and difficult to collate
- A more coordinated evidence based with research at sector level and comparative research between institutions is needed
- Providers need to be clear about rationale for using contextual information and data in different ways



# The challenges of using performance indicators to widen access



- HESA/SFC measures: **SIMD20/40 (POLAR3)** – different area based measures; **NS-SEC 4-7** and **state/private school** – individual
- Focus on young FT undergraduates – limited data on PT and mature students
- HESA data does not include Scottish students studying HE in FE



## Some issues for discussion

- How can we develop some form of monitoring of what works in WP initiatives that are comparable across institutions and longitudinal?
- How do we ensure that **mature** students do not miss out on opportunities (particularly England?) Cost of OU 120 credits in Scotland £1510 - £2815; in England £5,124 (loan available)
- What is/should be the role of contextual admissions in widening access?
- How do we measure the success of institutions in widening participation?
- Others?



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<http://www.creid.ed.ac.uk>