



# 2019/2020 HeppSY Partnership Report

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Produced by the HeppSY Data & Evaluation Team

# Contents

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<b>3</b>	<b>Foreword</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Likelihood of Applying to Higher Education at Age 18 or 19</b>
9	All Students
12	Uni Connect Students
20	Section Summary
<b>21</b>	<b>HE Knowledge and Perceived Benefits</b>
21	All Students
24	Uni Connect Students
30	Section Summary
<b>31</b>	<b>Perceived Sense of Belonging and Fit Within HE</b>
31	All Students
32	Uni Connect Students
34	Section Summary
<b>35</b>	<b>Self-Efficacy</b>
35	All Students
38	Uni Connect Students
40	Section Summary
<b>41</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>
42	Recommendations for Practice
<b>43</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>44</b>	<b>Appendices</b>

# Foreword



This report provides the partnership with an insightful analysis of the latest wave of the national survey carried out in HeppSY partner schools and colleges across October and November of 2019.

With over 12,000 responses, it offers both HeppSY and the wider region the most extensive overview of young people's perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of higher education and their educational options associated with the programme to date.

The outcomes and recommendations made here will support the development of HeppSY's 2020/21 core offer and provide the planned headline programmes with further insight as they are developed, ahead of launch.

We would like to extend our thanks to our school and college partners for supporting us with the administering of the survey. We look forward to discussing the outcomes of this work in more detail with partners and supporting them to use the evidence generated here and across the programme.

**Professor Wyn Morgan**

Vice-President for Education, The University of Sheffield  
and Chair of HeppSY

# Executive Summary



## Introduction

The Higher Education Progression Partnership South Yorkshire (HeppSY) is part of the national Uni Connect programme (UCP), funded by the Office for Students (OfS), to help school and college students aged 13-19 across South Yorkshire who are most at risk of missing out on higher education (HE). HeppSY is working in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, The University of Sheffield and South Yorkshire schools and colleges.

This report reviews the outcomes from Wave 2 of the Uni Connect (formerly NCOP) survey. The survey was administered online and in HeppSY schools and colleges throughout October and November of 2019, and forms part of the national evaluation being conducted by CFE research. Overall, 12246 student responses across 46 schools/colleges were included in the final dataset. The main aims and objectives of the report are as follows:

- To outline the attitudes of young people in South Yorkshire towards higher education and its potential benefits.
- To make evidence-based recommendations that support HeppSY in appropriately targeting provision for the next academic year.
- To inform and influence outreach activity planning by partnership members, including local universities and South Yorkshire schools and colleges.

The outcomes reported on here provide an indication of how young people in HeppSY partner schools and colleges across South Yorkshire conceptualise HE, and their potential place within it. Crucially, we can use the insights generated to highlight existing gaps and to tailor subsequent provision, ensuring students are supported in the most appropriate and impactful way possible.

Supporting work will use this data alongside that from other waves of the survey to evaluate the attitudes of matched HeppSY students over time, considering the interventions they have received as part of the programme to date.

The responses analysed and discussed here can be taken as a baseline before the onset of the global Coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. We can reasonably expect attitudes and intentions to change as a result of the ongoing situation, and this will be considered in how the outcomes of this report are used by the partnership.

## Findings and Recommendations

The key findings of the research are detailed below, split by substantive section. Where the term 'Uni Connect students' is used, it refers to those students from target postcodes for the HeppSY programme. Given the conclusions drawn, a series of recommendations are made around the development of activities as part of the HeppSY programme.

### Likelihood of Applying to HE at Age 18/19:

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- 68.2% of Uni Connect students reported that they are likely to apply to HE at age 18/19.
- Year 11 students were less likely than Year 9s to intend on applying to HE.
- Girls were more likely than boys in both secondary school and post-16 year groups to intend on applying to HE. The gap appears to widen between Year 9 and 11.
- Uni Connect students on other Level 3 courses were substantially less likely than Year 12 and 13 (A-Level) students to intend on studying away from home at a HE institution, and 2.5 times more likely to intend on getting a full-time job when they finish their current studies.
- Both Asian and Other Minority Ethnic post-16 students were around half as likely to say they wanted to study HE away from home compared to White, Black, or Mixed Ethnicity students.
- A high proportion of both Black and Asian students reported that they were likely to apply to HE. For Black students, this was due to girls generally expressing a strong intention to apply, with the expectations of Black boys being more equivocal. The small sample size and disproportionate number of Black respondents that were in post-16 year groups relative to the rest of the sample should be taken into consideration when interpreting these outcomes.
- Students who did not know whether they would be the first in their family to go to HE were substantially less likely to intend on applying themselves, particularly in Year 11.

### HE Knowledge and Perceived Benefits:

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- Aggregated across year groups, over one in five Uni Connect students reported that they knew nothing about how to apply to HE, where to find information about applying, where to live whilst studying, the financial support available, the costs of study, the types of courses available, and what student life would be like.
- The proportion of students reporting that they knew nothing about the above topics negatively correlated with year group, so that fewer students in higher year groups indicated that they had no knowledge about the subjects.
- Uni Connect students generally saw the social, intellectual and career benefits of HE. In particular, students felt that it would enable them to get a better paid job, which was the primary motivation for the majority of students that intended on applying.
- The main reasons students suggested they may not apply to HE were because they wanted to get a job and earn money, and due to uncertainty over their grades.

### Perceived Sense of Belonging and Fit Within HE:

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- Students generally had a positive perception of their social and academic fit within HE.
- Despite the broadly positive attitudes reported, 46.9% of Uni Connect students gave either a neutral or 'don't know' response to the statement, 'it is for people like me'.
- Students were generally more likely to believe that they had the academic ability to succeed than to believe that they could cope with the level of study required in HE.
- Both Black and Asian students generally had a greater sense of fit within HE, particularly regarding how well they would fit in with others and the extent to which they had the academic ability to succeed.



## Self-Efficacy:

- There was little difference in self-efficacy scores between males and females, or between secondary school year groups.
- Post-16 students had higher mean self-efficacy scores than secondary school respondents, though this does not necessarily suggest that any change occurs at an individual level. Instead, students with lower self-efficacy may be less likely to progress to A-Level/Level 3 courses, and therefore would not have featured in this sample.
- Within the total sample, Black and Asian students both had higher mean self-efficacy scores than White, Mixed Ethnicity, and Other Minority Ethnic students. However, differences between groups were small, and there was substantial variation within groups. It is therefore difficult to predict with an acceptable degree of accuracy whether a student is likely to be low or high in self-efficacy based on their ethnicity.
- Uni Connect students who did not know whether they would be the first in their family to go to HE had lower mean self-efficacy scores than both students who said they would be the first in their family and those who said that they would not be.

## Recommendations:

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made with regards to future practice and the HeppSY offer for academic year 2020/21:

- A key goal of outreach should be to maintain – rather than seek to ‘raise’ - the high aspirations of the majority of students who already intend on going to HE. Interventions focused on boys throughout Year 9 and 10 are particularly important to prevent a downward shift in HE aspirations. Further evidence should be drawn upon to devise the content and focus of these interventions.
- Students on other Level 3 courses are more likely than Year 12/13 A-Level students to plan on working full-time after their current studies, and less likely to aspire to study away from home. Interventions could focus on non-traditional HE routes for these students, such as higher degree apprenticeships, and on addressing barriers to living away from home to study.
- As getting a well-paid job is the primary motivation for the majority of students who plan on applying to HE, it is important that the latest information about the expected financial return from HE study is provided impartially, including how this varies based on factors such as course studied and type of university attended.
- Many students who did not intend on applying to HE indicated that this was because they wanted to work and earn money instead. Students may benefit from increased focus on the financial support available (knowledge of this remained low until Year 13), working part-time while studying, and higher degree apprenticeships.
- Students were generally less likely to believe that they could cope with the level of study required at HE than to believe that they have the academic ability to succeed. It is possible that there is a mismatch between the perceived and actual requirements of HE study that could be addressed through outreach activity.
- White and Mixed ethnicity students were relatively uncertain whether they would fit in with others at HE, compared to Black and Asian ethnic groups. Targeted interventions for these students which focus on social relationship-building in a HE setting may be appropriate.
- Self-efficacy scores do not differ between males and females – both groups may benefit from interventions designed to increase confidence in their capacity to overcome challenges.
- Self-efficacy scores tends to be lower in secondary school students compared to Year 12/13 and other Level 3 students. It may therefore be appropriate to focus confidence and self-efficacy building interventions disproportionately on younger students.



# Full Report

# Introduction

The Higher Education Progression Partnership South Yorkshire (HeppSY) is part of the national Uni Connect programme (UCP), funded by the Office for Students (OfS), to help school and college students aged 13-19 across South Yorkshire who are most at risk of missing out on higher education. HeppSY is working in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, The University of Sheffield and South Yorkshire schools and colleges.

This report reviews the outcomes from Wave 2 of the Uni Connect (formerly NCOP) survey. The survey was administered online and in HeppSY schools and colleges throughout October and November of 2019, and forms part of the national evaluation being conducted by CFE research. Overall, 12246 student responses across 46 schools/colleges were included in the final dataset. The breakdown of respondents is shown in Appendix A.

The responses analysed and discussed here can be taken as a baseline before the onset of the global Coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. We can reasonably expect attitudes and intentions to change as a result of the ongoing situation, and this will be considered in how the outcomes of this report are used by the partnership.

## Aims and Objectives

**The main aims and objectives of the report are as follows:**

- To outline the attitudes of young people in South Yorkshire towards higher education and its potential benefits.
- To make evidence-based recommendations that support HeppSY in appropriately targeting provision for the next academic year.
- To inform and influence outreach activity planning by partnership members including local universities and South Yorkshire schools and colleges.

The outcomes reported on here provide an indication of how young people in HeppSY partner schools and colleges across South Yorkshire conceptualise HE, and their potential place within it. Crucially, we can use the insights generated to highlight existing gaps and tailor subsequent provision, ensuring students are supported in the most appropriate and impactful way possible.

Supporting work will use this data alongside that from other waves of the survey to evaluate the attitudes of matched HeppSY students over time, considering the interventions they have received as part of the programme to date.

## Report Structure

**Split into four parts, each addresses a substantive section of the survey:**

1. Likelihood of applying to HE at age 18 or 19
2. HE knowledge and perceived benefits
3. Perceived sense of belonging and fit within HE
4. Self-efficacy

The four strands of HeppSY programme activity (HE knowledge, career knowledge, attainment, and confidence and resilience) are broadly covered across the four sections of the report. The outcomes of this report will support the development of the HeppSY programme offer within each of the strands and the progression framework.

As part of the survey analysis, comparisons on key measures were made between Uni Connect (students from target HeppSY postcodes) and non-Uni Connect students. However, as no substantial differences were observed, direct comparisons are not shown in this report. Instead, for each section the data for the total sample is presented, followed by more detailed analyses for Uni Connect postcode students.



# Likelihood of Applying to Higher Education at Age 18 or 19

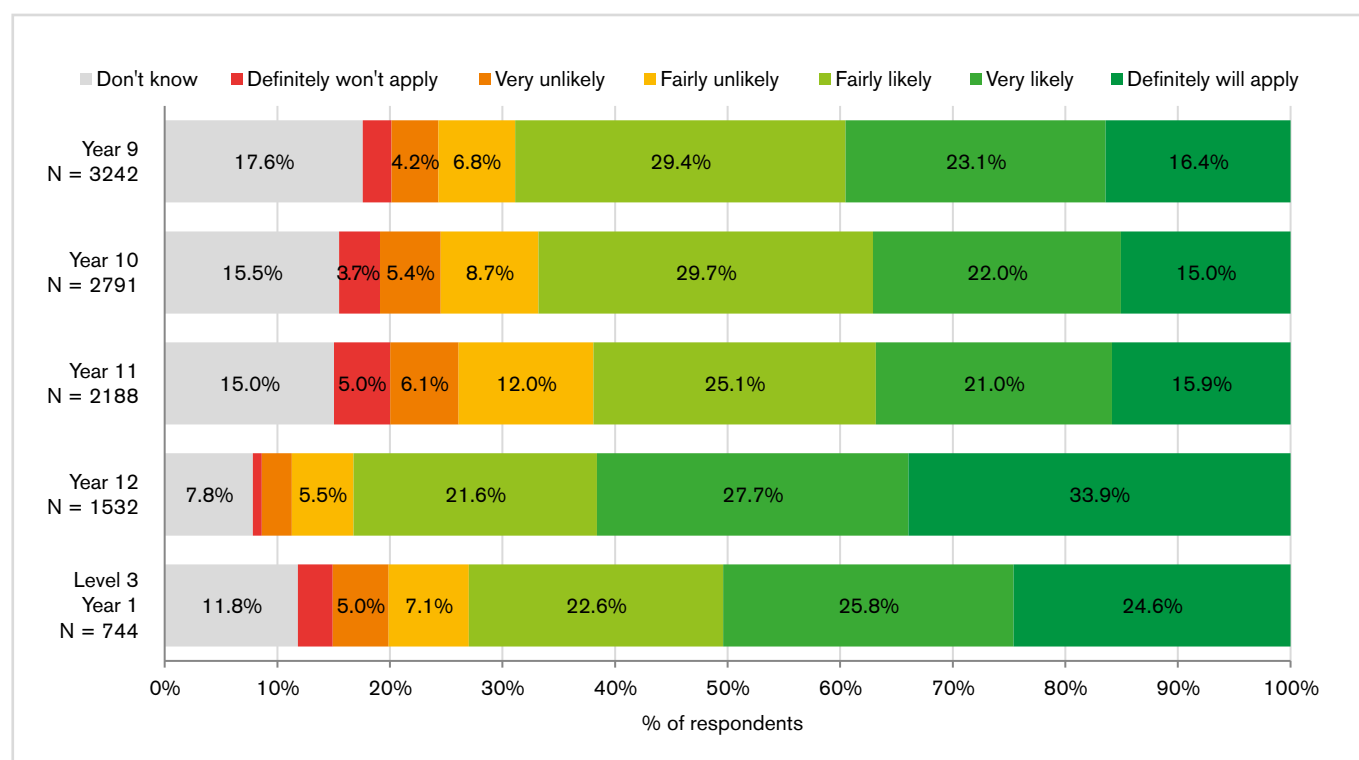
## All Students

Students in Years 9 to 12 were asked how likely they were to apply to higher education (HE) at age 18 or 19. Responses were given on a six-point ordered scale from 'definitely won't apply' to 'definitely will apply', with an additional 'don't know' response option available.

Overall, a high proportion of students indicated that they were likely to apply to HE, with 69.3% saying that they were fairly likely, very likely, or that they definitely would apply. This exactly replicates the finding from the HeppSY 2018/19 annual survey, in which 69.3% of respondents said that they were likely to apply (HeppSY Partnership Report, 2019).

Likelihood of applying to HE was generally lower in older compared to younger secondary school students, with 23.1% of Year 11 students saying that they were fairly unlikely, very unlikely, or definitely wouldn't apply, compared to only 13.6% of Year 9s (see Figure 1.1). Post-16 students generally expressed favourable intentions towards HE, with 83.2% of Year 12 students and 73% of Level 3 Year 1<sup>1</sup> students reporting that they were likely to apply, and 33.9% and 24.6% of the two groups respectively indicating that they would definitely apply (Figure 1.1).

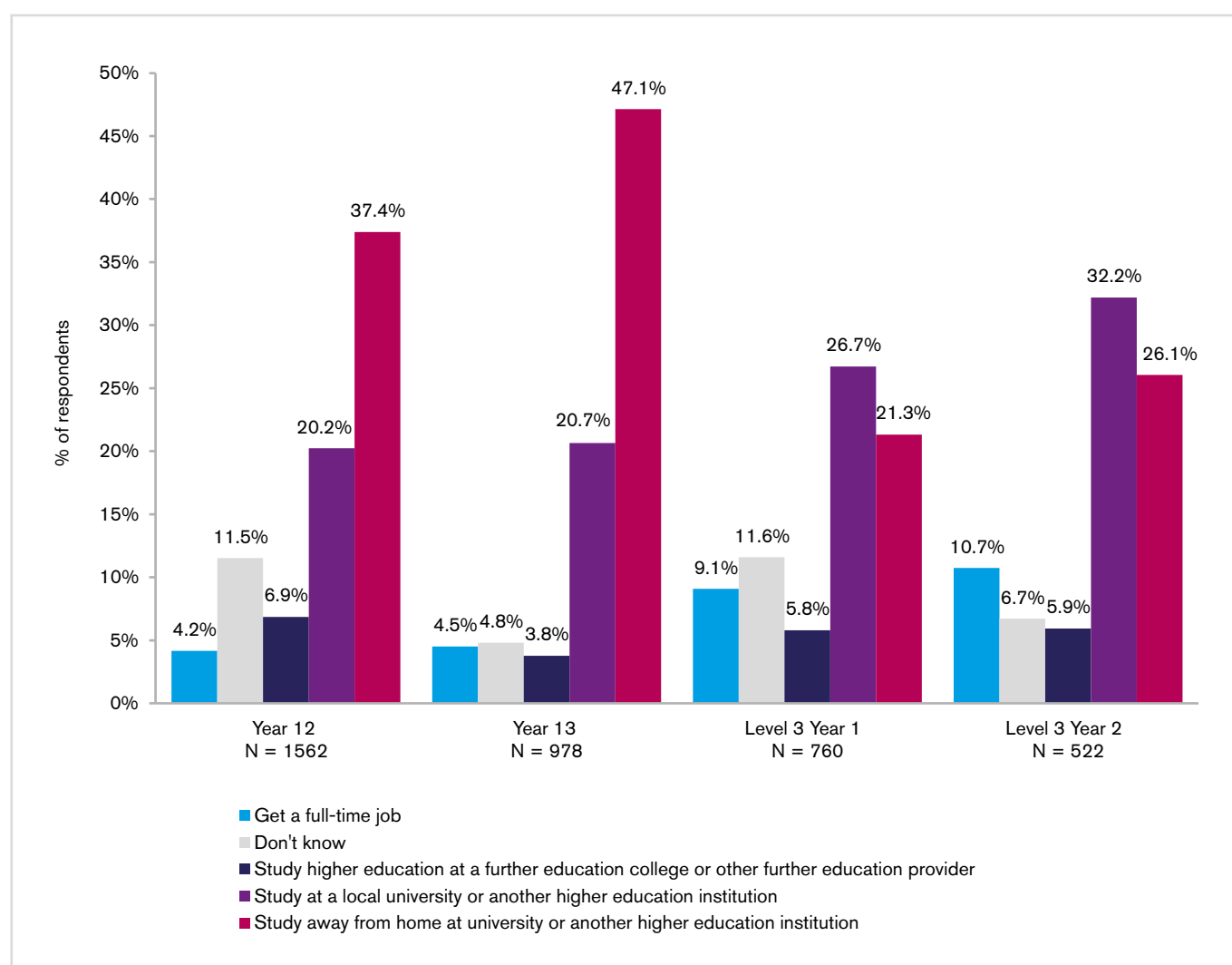
**Figure 1.1.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Year Group – All Students.



<sup>1</sup> In general, Year 12 and 13 here refers to students completing their A-Levels and Level 3 Year 1 and 2 to students completing Level 3 courses other than A-Levels, such as BTEC and NVQ vocational qualifications. However, year group was based on student self-report so this was not verified through any objective measure.

Post-16 students were also asked in more detail what they would like to do after their current studies. The results by year group are displayed in Figure 1.2. There was a substantial difference in the proportion of Year 12 and Year 13 students that indicated they would like to study away from home at a HE institution (37.4% and 47.1%, respectively), compared to Level 3 Year 1 and Year 2 students (21.3% and 26.1%, respectively). Level 3 students were also around twice as likely to say that they would like to get a full-time job after their current studies.

**Figure 1.2.** What would you most like to do after your current studies, Post-16 Year Groups – All Students.



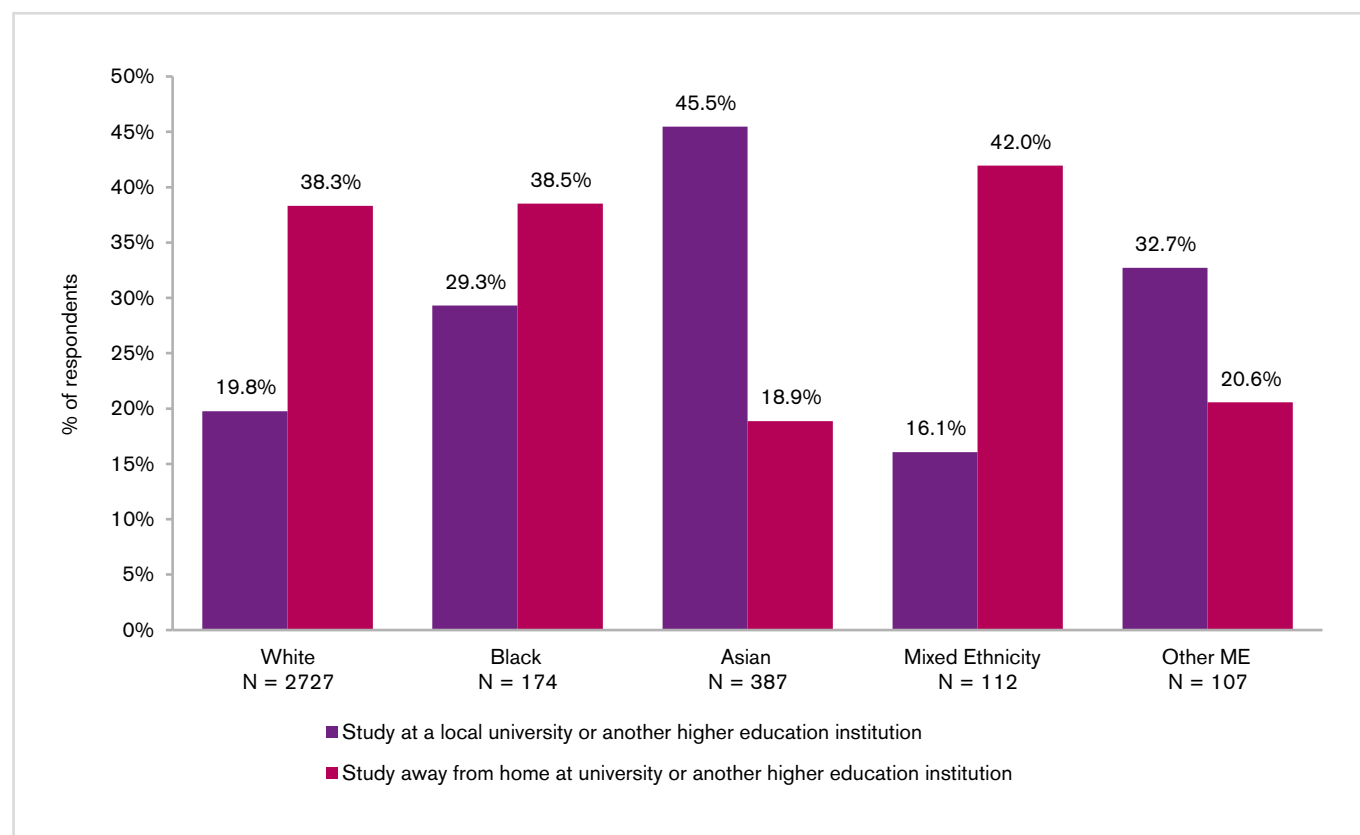
**Note:** Figure does not show the complete list of response options.

Figure 1.3 shows the proportion of post-16 students that indicated they would like to study HE locally or away from home, split by ethnicity. Due to the relatively small sample sizes of many groups, ethnicities were aggregated into five broader categories: White, Black, Asian, Mixed Ethnicity, and Other Minority Ethnic (ME)<sup>2</sup>.

Both Asian and Other Minority Ethnic post-16 students were around half as likely to say they wanted to study HE away from home compared to White, Black, or Mixed Ethnicity students.



**Figure 1.3.** What would you most like to do after your current studies, Post-16 by Ethnicity – All Students.



<sup>2</sup> The Other Minority Ethnic category includes the following ethnicities: Arab, Other Ethnic Group, Gypsy or Traveller and Irish Travellers.

## Uni Connect Students

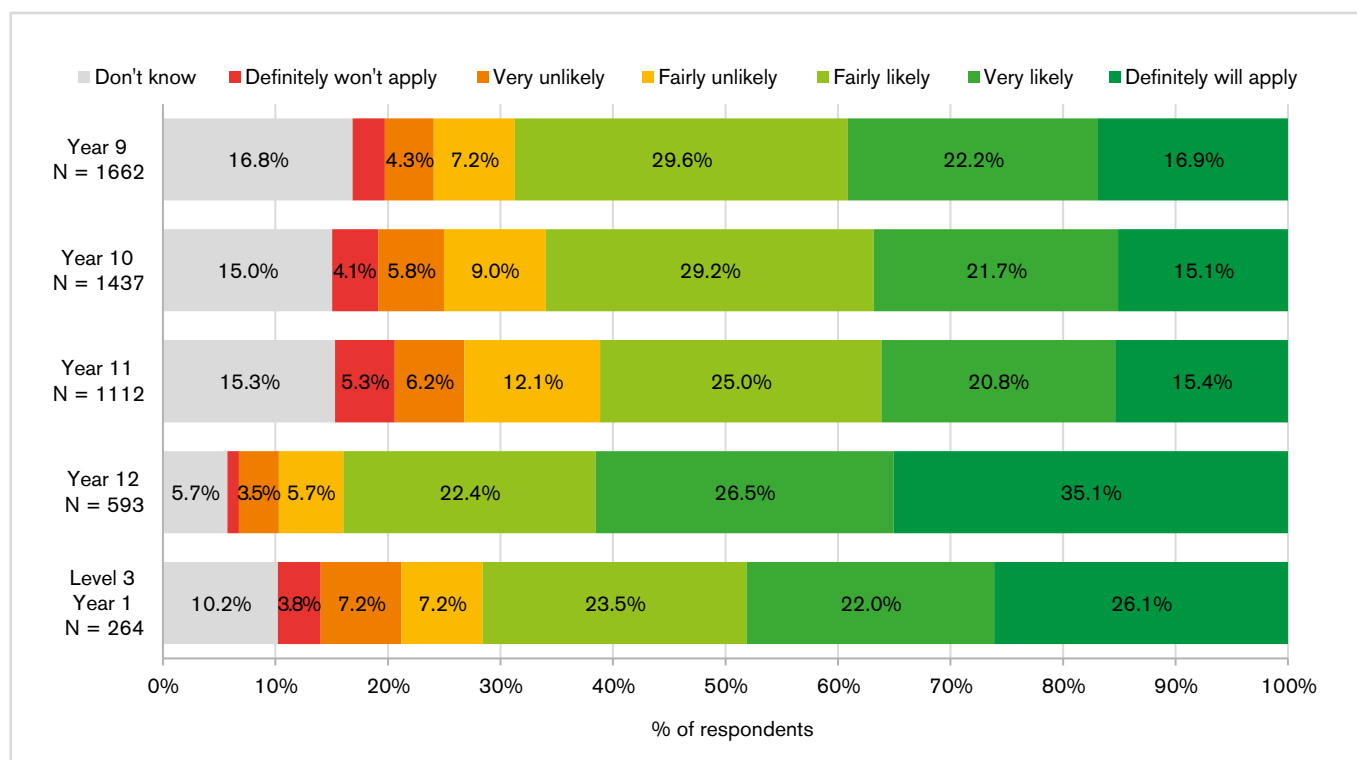
A high proportion of Uni Connect postcode students indicated that they were likely to apply to HE, with 68.2% responding that they were fairly likely, very likely, or that they definitely would apply. Based on a UK-wide UCAS entry rate of around 34% of 18 year olds (UCAS, 2019a), this suggests an overly optimistic view of what HE entry is likely to be for this cohort, who are selected on the basis that they live in areas of the country in which young people are statistically less likely to go to HE.

It is possible that self-reported likelihood of applying to HE is disproportionately high due to response bias within the survey, as students with lower intention to apply to HE may have been less likely to respond. Additionally, it is likely that there is a gap between intention and behaviour, with many students who express an intention to apply to HE not ultimately submitting an application for a myriad of reasons. Previous research drawing on the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LYPE) supports this suggestion, with Anders (2017) finding that a much larger proportion of Year 9s expected to apply to university than actually make an application by age 21. Anders (2017) observed that the proportion of students that expected to apply to university reduced between ages 14 and 17, with children from low socioeconomic backgrounds particularly likely to revise their expectations downwards during this period, even after controlling for prior attainment.

This finding of lower expectations of applying to HE amongst students later in secondary school was observed cross-sectionally in the present survey (see Figure 1.4), with 23.6% of Year 11 Uni Connect students reporting that they are unlikely to apply, compared to 14.4% of Year 9 students. Taken together, these findings suggest that an important goal of widening participation should be to maintain the already positive aspirations of the two thirds of students who say they are likely to apply, so that these intentions translate through to applications.

The majority of post-16 Uni Connect students expressed favourable intentions towards HE. A total of 84% of Year 12 students and 71.6% of Level 3 Year 1 students reported that they were likely to apply to HE, with 35.1% and 26.1% of the two groups respectively, indicating that they would definitely apply (Figure 1.4).

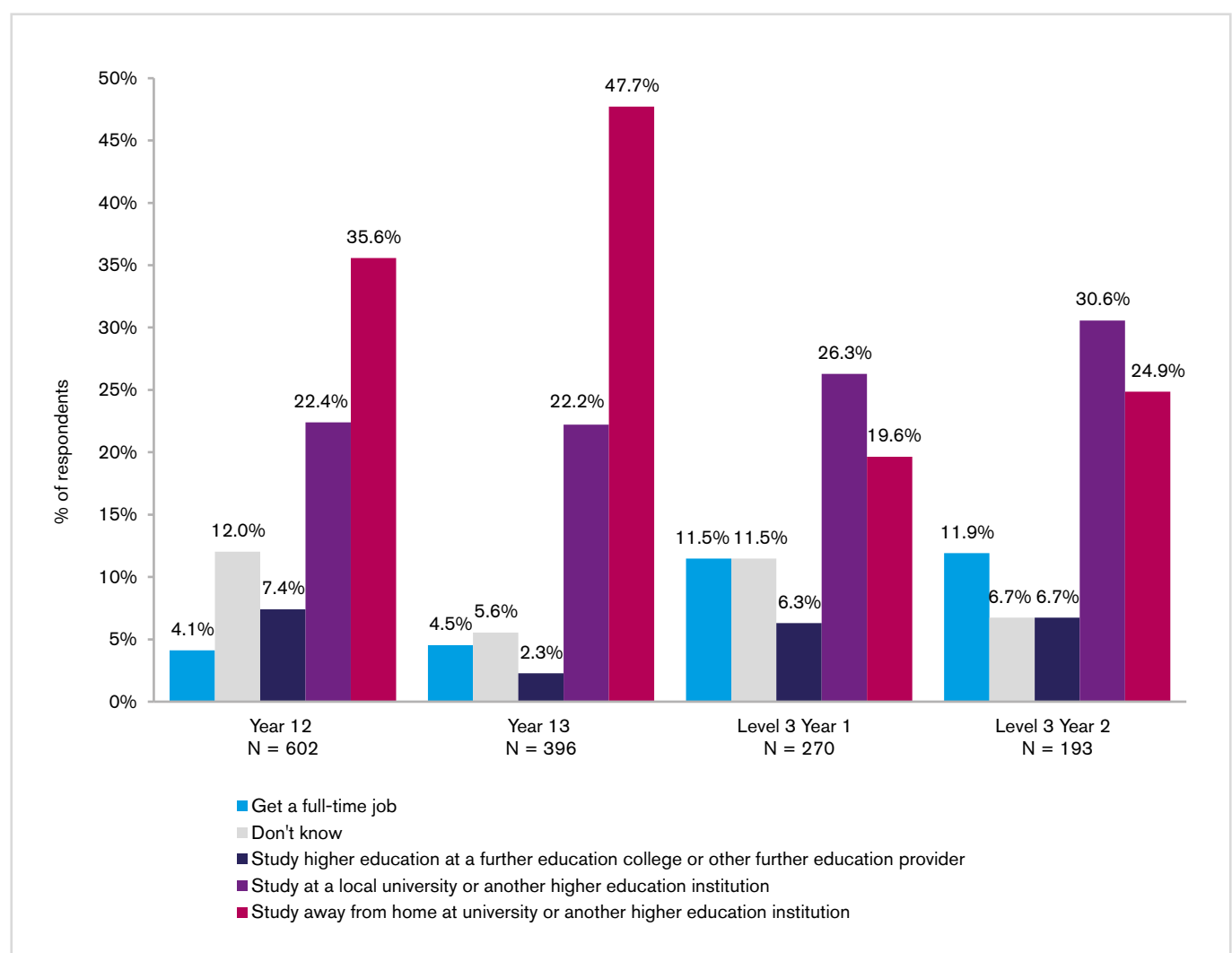
**Figure 1.4.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Year Group – Uni Connect Students.





Post-16 Uni Connect students were also asked in more detail what they would like to do after their current studies. The results by year group are displayed in Figure 1.5. Similar to the results observed at the total sample level, Year 12 and Year 13 students were substantially more likely to intend on studying away from home at a HE institution (35.6% and 47.7%, respectively) compared to Level 3 Year 1 and Year 2 students (19.6% and 24.9%, respectively). Level 3 students were also over 2.5 times more likely to intend on getting a full-time job once they finish their current studies.

**Figure 1.5.** What would you most like to do after your current studies, Post-16 Year Groups – Uni Connect.



**Note:** Figure does not show the complete list of response options.



## Gender Differences

Substantial gender differences were observed in self-reported likelihood of applying to HE for Uni Connect students. In secondary school year groups (Year 9 – 11), 72.5% of girls indicated that they were likely to apply compared to 61.7% of boys (see Figure 1.6). Girls were especially more likely than boys to express a strong intention to apply to HE, with 45.5% of girls indicating they were very likely to apply or that they definitely would apply, compared to only 31.4% of boys. This gender disparity mirrors the national-level trend, with girls more likely to progress to A-Levels/Level 3 courses than boys (Department for Education, 2019) and to go to HE (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2020).

**Figure 1.6.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Gender – Uni Connect Students Years 9-11.

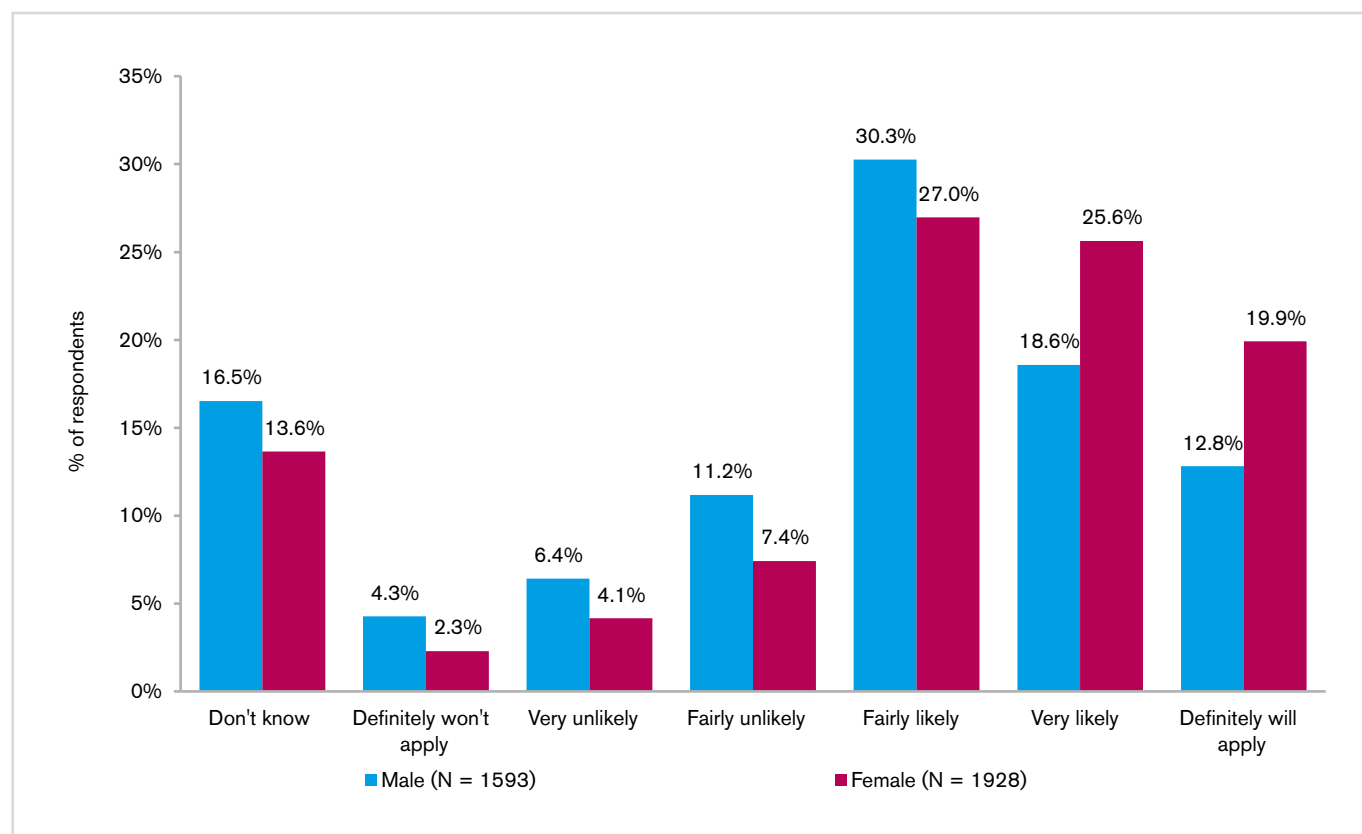
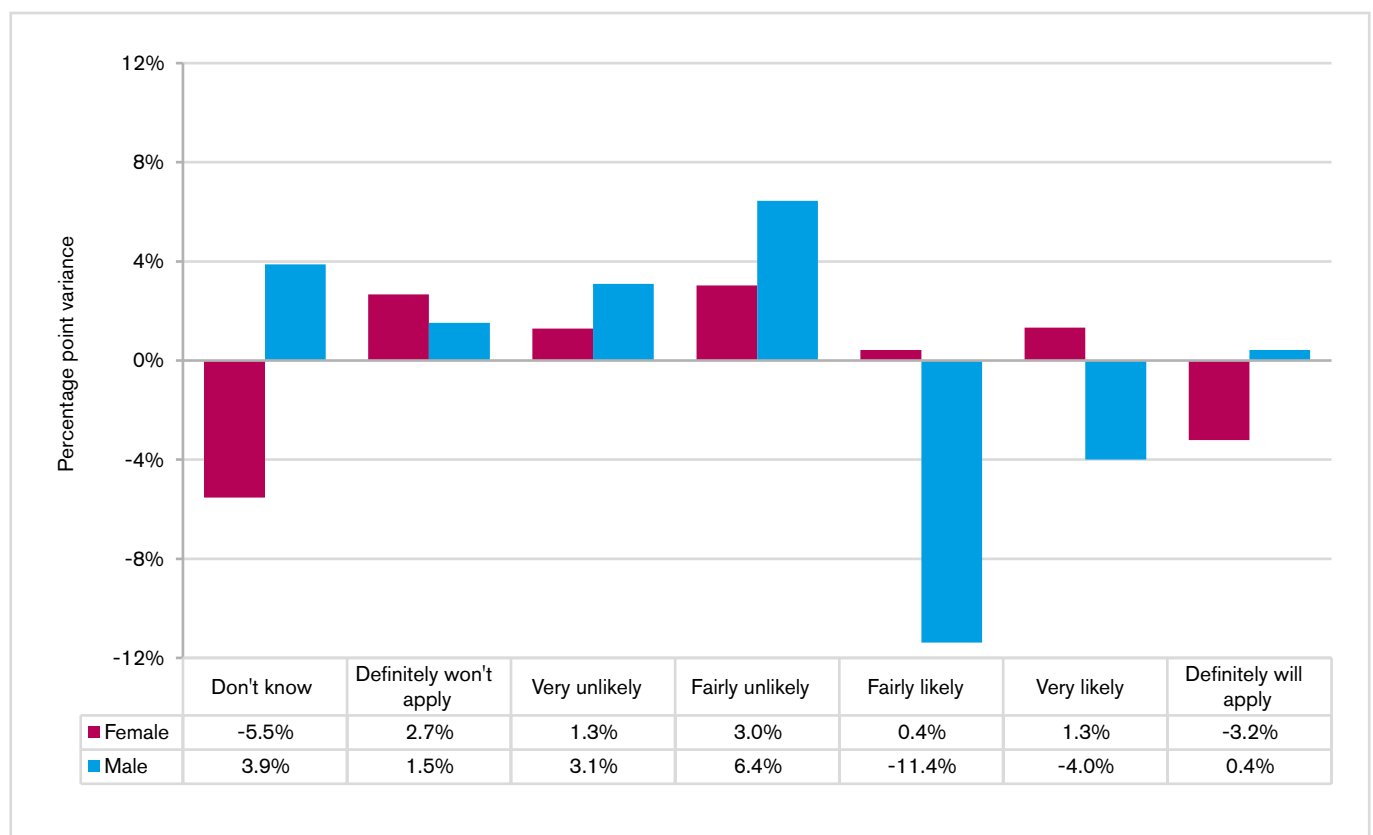


Figure 1.7 shows the percentage-point difference between the proportion of Year 11s and the proportion of Year 9s that selected each response option, split by gender. For example, the proportion of Year 11 boys that said they were fairly likely to apply to HE (24.1%) minus the proportion of Year 9 boys that said they were fairly likely to apply (35.5%) equates to a percentage point of variance of -11.4%. Overall, 53.1 % of Year 11 boys reported that they were fairly likely, very likely, or definitely would apply to HE, compared to 68.1% of Year 9 boys – giving a percentage-point variance of -15.0%. In comparison, 72.5% of Year 9 girls reported that they were fairly likely, very likely, or definitely would apply to HE compared to 71.1% of Year 11 girls – equating to just a -1.4 percentage-point variance.

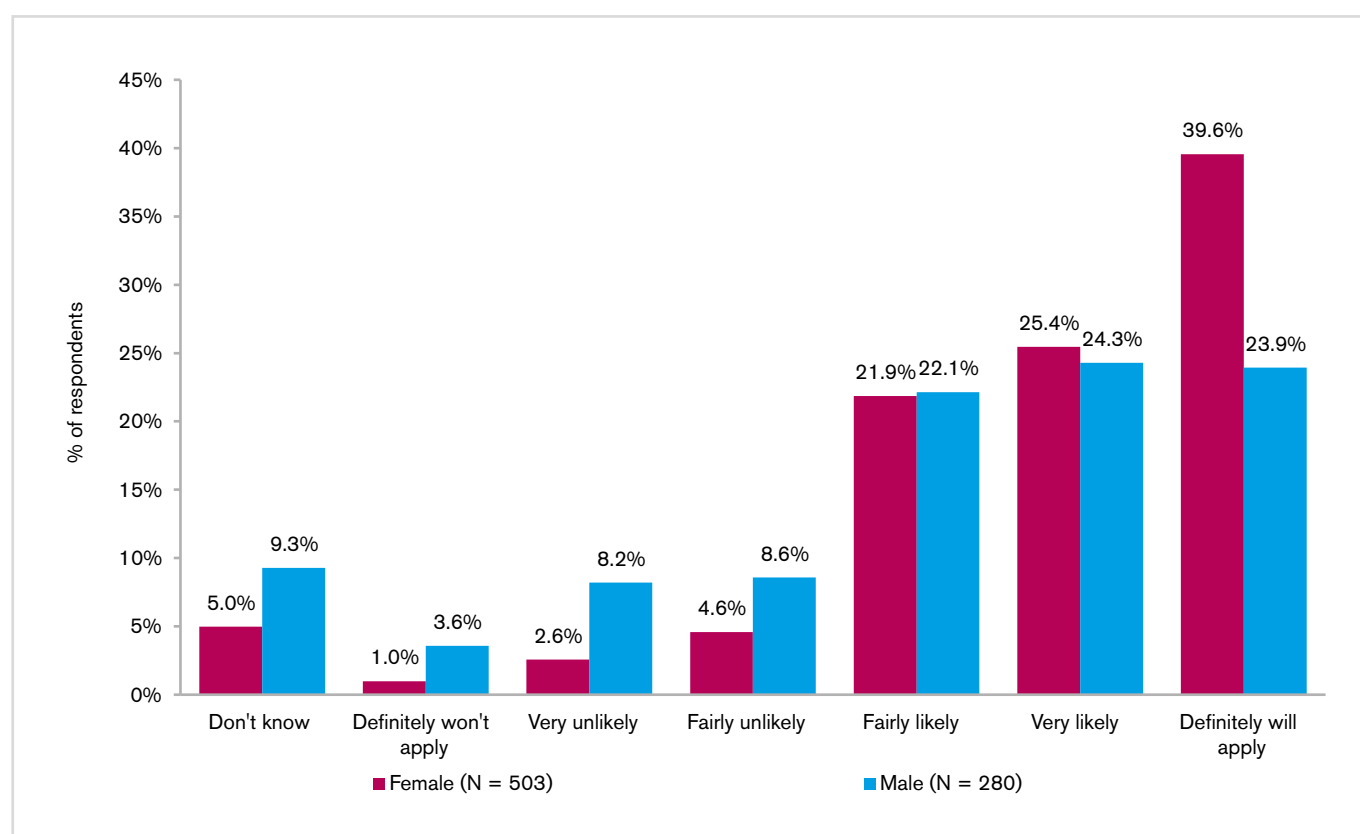
**Figure 1.7.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Gender – Percentage Point Variances Between Year 11 and Year 9 Uni Connect Students.





Gaps in intention to apply to HE between males and females persist into post-16 year groups. Male students in Year 12 and Level 3 Year 1 were 2.5 times more likely than females to say that they were unlikely to apply, and only 23.9% said that they would definitely apply, compared to 39.6% of female students (Figure 1.8).

**Figure 1.8.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Gender – Uni Connect Year 12 / Level 3 Year 1 Students.





## Ethnicity

Figure 1.9. compares the self-reported likelihood of applying to HE based on ethnic background. A very high proportion of both Black and Asian students indicated that they were likely to apply to HE, with 80.5% and 78% of the two groups respectively saying that they were fairly likely to apply, very likely, or would definitely apply. Many Black students expressed a strong intention to apply, with almost 40% saying that they would definitely apply. The observed differences in self-reported likelihood of applying to HE between ethnicities may have been in part due to the differing mix of year groups within the survey sample. For example, over 40% of Black Uni Connect students sampled were in post-16 year groups, compared to only 27% of White students. However, the positive aspirations of Black and Asian students observed here is consistent with sector-wide access data, with Black students almost 1.5 times more likely to enter HE at age 18 than White students, and Asian students 1.66 times more likely (UCAS, 2019b).

**Figure 1.9.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Ethnicity Category – Uni Connect Students.

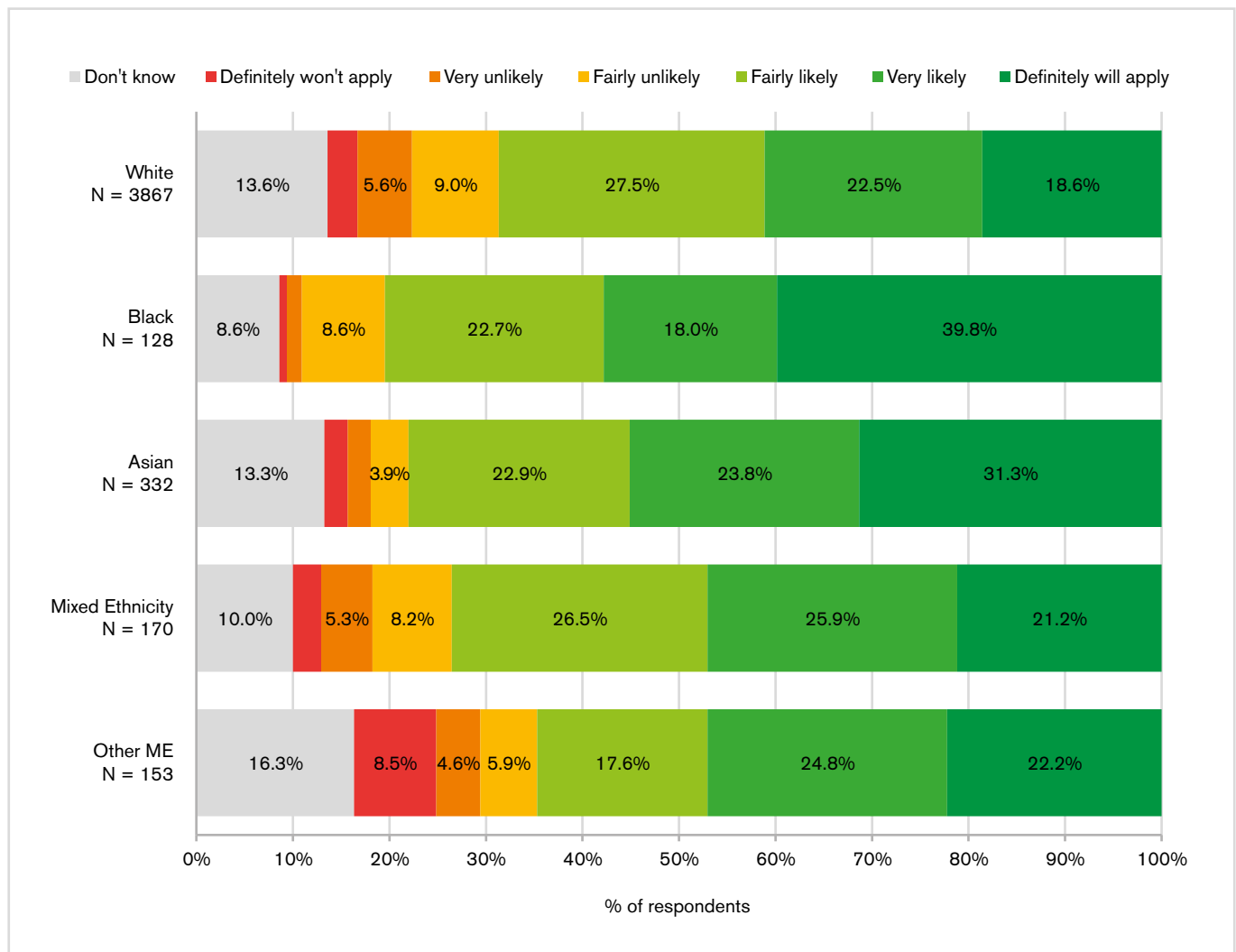
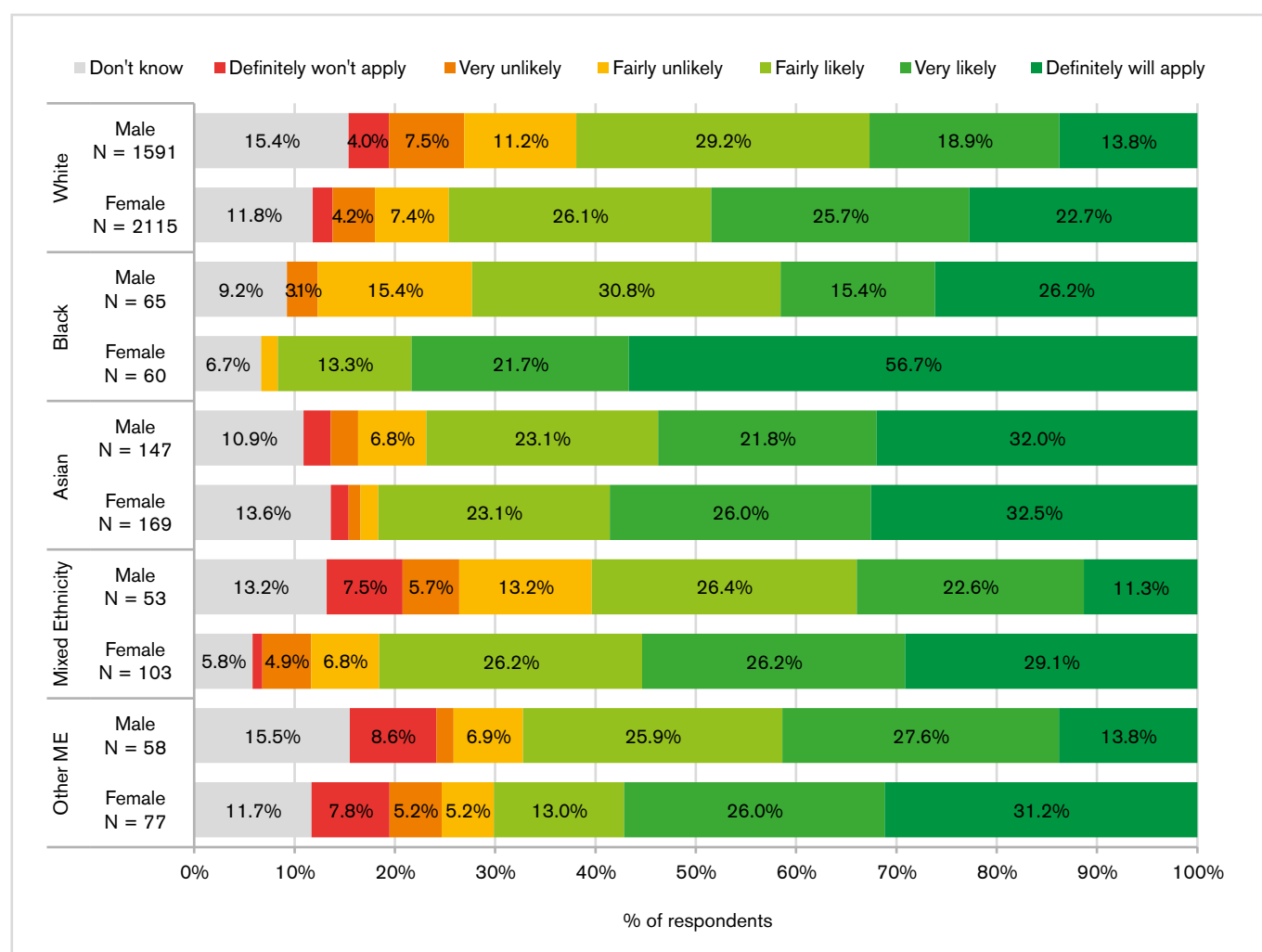


Figure 1.10 displays the self-reported likelihood of applying to HE split by gender and ethnicity category. The sample sizes for some of the groups are small and these findings should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Asian students were the only ethnic group for which there were minimal differences in reported likelihood of applying to HE between males and females. A large gender difference was observed for Black students in this sample, with 18.5% of Black boys reporting that they were unlikely to apply to HE compared to just 1.7% of Black girls. However, few Black boys expressed a strong intention not to apply, with only 3.1% saying that they were very unlikely to apply, and none reporting that they definitely would not apply<sup>3</sup>. In total, 91.7% of Black girls said that they were fairly likely, very likely, or definitely would apply, compared to 72.3% of Black boys. A large proportion of Black girls expressed a strong intention to apply to HE, with 56.7% saying that they definitely would apply, compared to 26.2% of Black boys.

Gender differences in the same direction were also observed for Mixed Ethnicity and Other ME students. Other ME girls were twice as likely as Other ME boys to say that they will definitely apply to HE, and Mixed Ethnicity girls were over 2.5 times more likely than Mixed Ethnicity boys to say that they definitely will apply.

**Figure 1.10.** Likelihood of Applying to HE by Gender and Ethnicity Category – Uni Connect Students.



<sup>3</sup> Figure 1.9 shows that 0.8% of Black students said that they definitely would not apply, which was due to the response of one Black student who did not report their gender as either male or female.

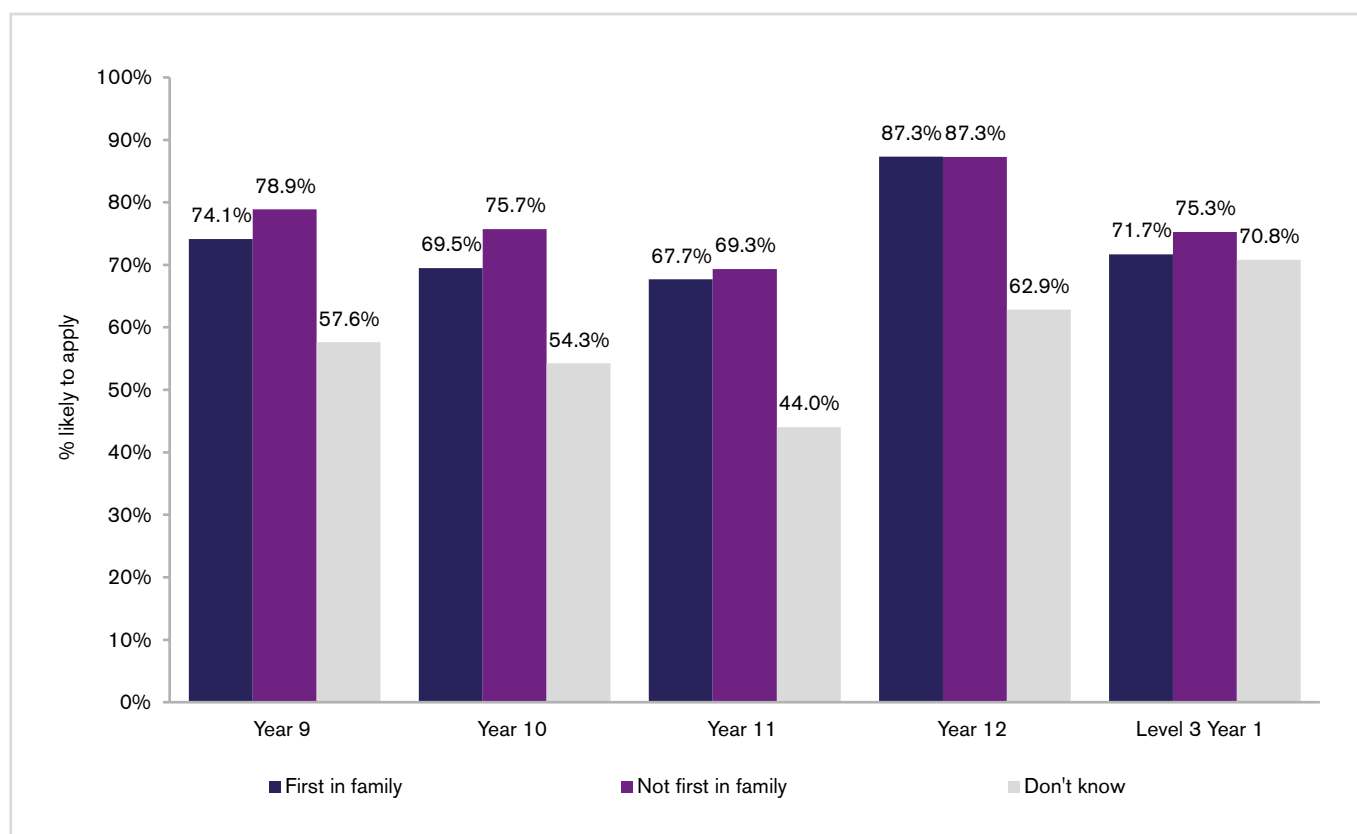
## First in Family to go to HE

Students were asked, 'if you do go on to higher education, would you be the first person in your immediate family to do so?'. Students could respond 'yes', 'no'<sup>4</sup> or 'don't know'. Figure 1.11 compares the likelihood of applying to HE by year group, split by self-reported first-in-family status. The differences between students who reported that they would be the first in their family to go to HE and those who reported that they would not be the first in their family to go were relatively small across most year groups. However, students that responded 'don't know' were substantially less likely to intend on applying themselves. This was especially pronounced for Year 11 students, where only 44% of students that responded 'don't know' indicated that they were likely to apply, compared to 68% who reported that they would be the first in their family to go and 69% of students who reported that they would not be the first in their family.

There are several possible explanations for the observed association between likelihood of applying to HE and knowledge of first-in-family status. One possibility is that students who already intended on applying to HE were more likely to speak to their family about this aspiration, and therefore more likely to find out about their family's experience with HE than students who did not intend on applying. A second possibility is that both likelihood of applying to HE and knowledge of first-in-family status may be correlated with a third factor not measured here, such as parental expectations. Students with parents who want and expect them to go to HE may be more likely to intend on applying and more likely to have found out about their family's own experience with HE.

It is important to note that respondents who indicated that they did not know whether they would be the first in their family to go to HE are probably more likely to be those who would be the first in their family to attend. It is therefore likely that first-in-family students in this sample (if measured objectively) were in fact less likely to report that they intended on applying to HE.

**Figure 1.11.** *Percentage of Students Likely to Apply to HE by Year Group and Self-Reported First in Family Status.*



<sup>4</sup> Three 'no' response options were available, with students indicating whether a grandparent, parent/carer, or sibling had already gone to higher education. All 'no' responses were combined into a single category for the purpose of this analysis.

**Table 1.** Sample Sizes for Figure 1.11.

	First in Family	Not First in Family	Don't Know
Year 9	N = 313	N = 587	N = 571
Year 10	N = 357	N = 486	N = 435
Year 11	N = 328	N = 417	N = 252
Year 12	N = 252	N = 228	N = 70
Level 3 Year 1	N = 106	N = 97	N = 48

**Note:** These sample sizes represent the total number of students in each category that responded to the likelihood of applying to HE question.

## Section Summary



This section has reviewed responses relating to likelihood of applying to HE. The key findings are:

- 68.2% of Uni Connect students reported that they are likely to apply to HE at age 18/19.
- Year 11 students were less likely than Year 9s to intend on applying to HE.
- Girls were more likely than boys in both secondary school and post-16 year groups to intend on applying to HE. The gap appears to widen between Year 9 and 11.
- Uni Connect students on other Level 3 courses were substantially less likely than Year 12 and 13 (A-Level) students to intend on studying away from home at a HE institution, and 2.5 times more likely to intend on getting a full-time job when they finish their current studies.
- Both Asian and Other Minority Ethnic post-16 students were around half as likely to say they wanted to study HE away from home compared to White, Black, or Mixed Ethnicity students.
- A high proportion of both Black and Asian students reported that they were likely to apply to HE. For Black students, this was due to girls generally expressing a strong intention to apply, with the expectations of Black boys being more equivocal. The small sample size and disproportionate number of Black respondents that were in post-16 year groups relative to the rest of the sample should be taken into consideration when interpreting these outcomes.
- Students who did not know whether they would be the first in their family to go to HE were substantially less likely to intend on applying themselves, particularly in Year 11.



# HE Knowledge and Perceived Benefits

## All Students

### HE Knowledge

Students were asked to report how much they knew about various aspects of HE on a three-point scale (nothing, a little, a lot). Figure 2.1 reports the results for questions relating to HE study and the application process, for the total sample. A fairly low number of students reported knowing either nothing or a lot about any of the topics, with a large proportion of responses for each question at the mid-point of the scale (range 49.9% - 64.9%). Questions about how to apply to HE and where to find information about applying received the largest proportion of 'nothing' responses (33.8% and 26.3%, respectively).

**Figure 2.1.** Knowledge of HE Study and Application Process – All Students.

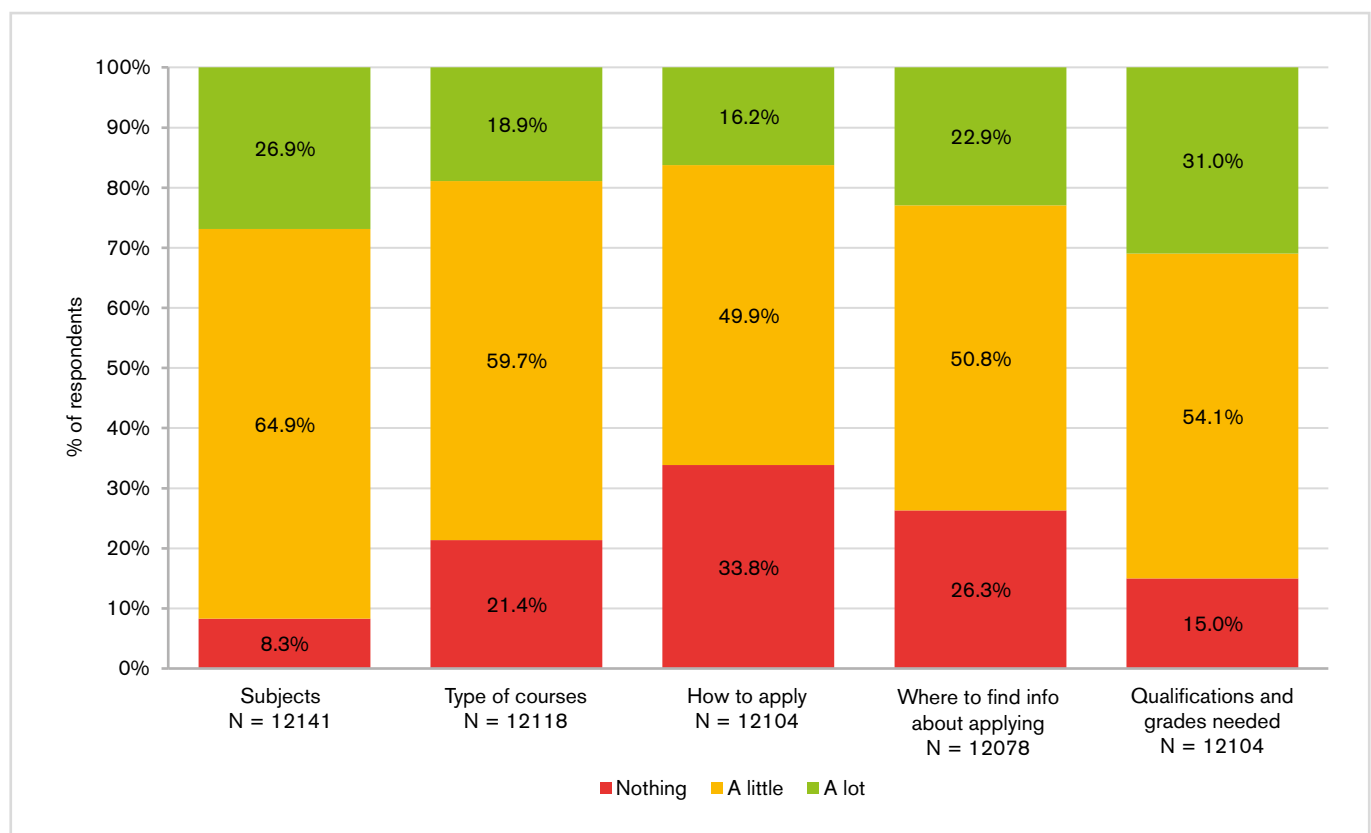
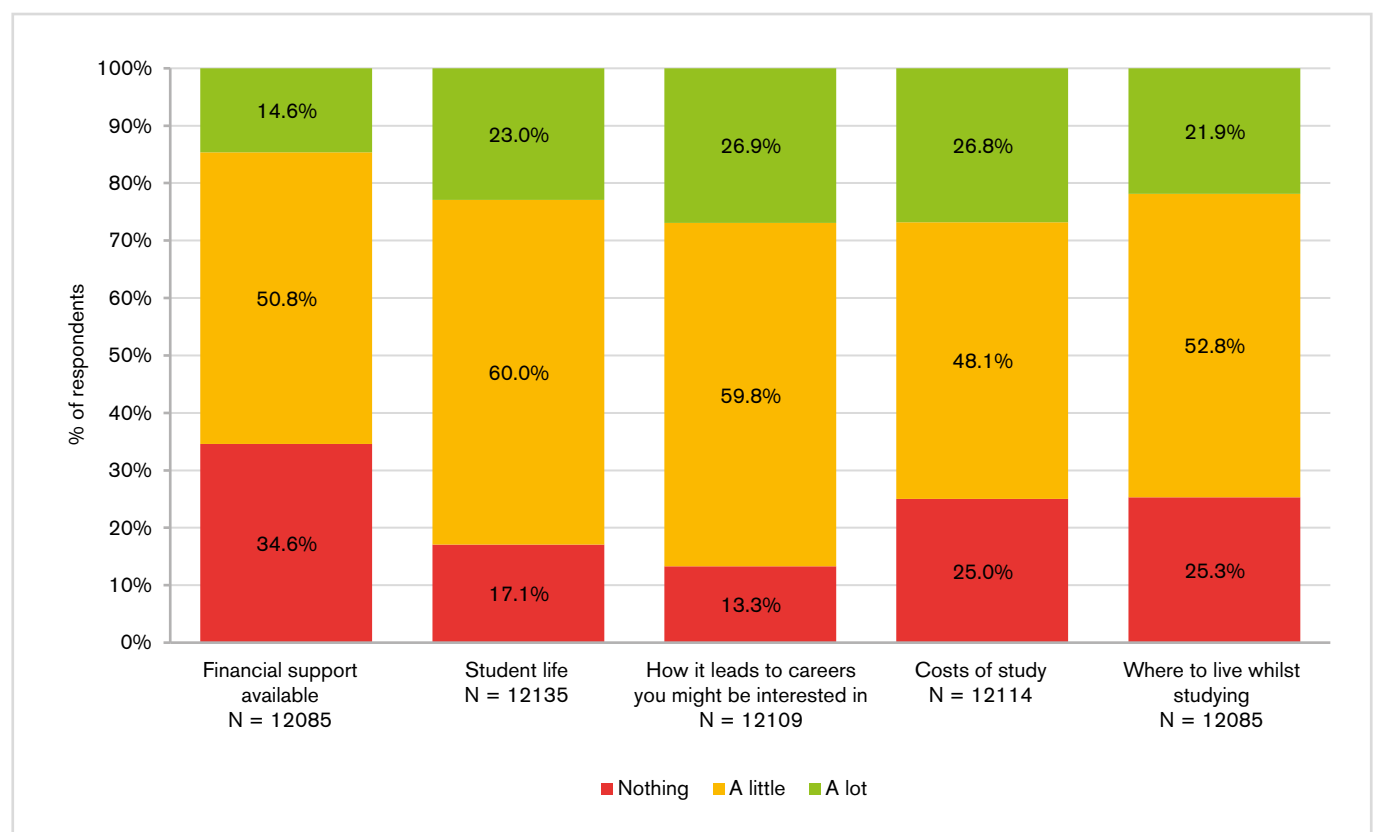




Figure 2.2 shows the self-reported level of knowledge about aspects of HE relating to student life, finance, and careers, for the total sample. Again, a large proportion of responses to each question were on the mid-point of the scale (range 48.1% - 60%). Over a third of respondents reported knowing nothing about the financial support available for HE study, and a quarter said they knew nothing about the costs of study, or where to live while studying.

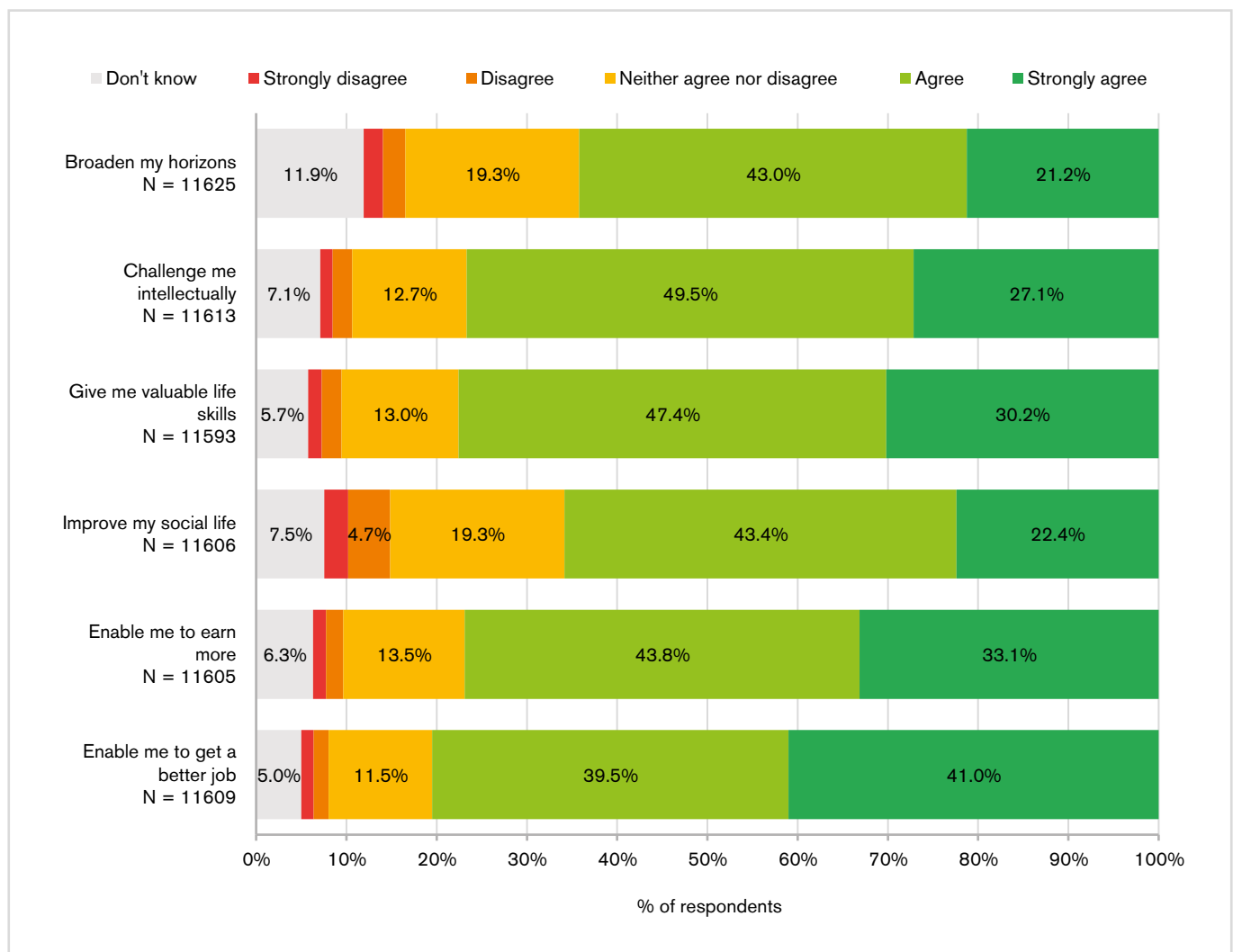
**Figure 2.2.** Knowledge of HE Student Life, Finance and Careers – All Students.



## HE Benefits

Respondents were asked to report the extent to which they agreed with various statements relating to the benefits of HE. Responses were given on a five-point ordered scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with a 'don't know' response option also available. The results are displayed in Figure 2.3. Respondents had generally favourable perceptions of the benefits of HE, with agree and strongly agree responses ranging between 64.2% and 80.5% across all questions. Responses to the statement that HE enables you to get a better job were particularly positive, with 39.5% agreeing and 41% strongly agreeing with this statement. Very few students disagreed with any of the statements, though there were a substantial proportion of 'don't know' responses and answers on the mid-point of the scale (neither agree nor disagree) for the statements relating to improving social life, and broadening horizons.

**Figure 2.3.** Perception of HE Benefits – All Students.



# Uni Connect Students

## HE Knowledge

Figure 2.4 reports the results for questions relating to HE study and the application process for Uni Connect students. In line with the results of the total sample, few Uni Connect students reported knowing either nothing or a lot about any of the topics, with a large proportion of responses for each question at the mid-point of the scale (range 49.5% - 64.5%). Questions about how to apply to HE and where to find information about applying received the largest proportion of 'nothing' responses (34.7% and 27.2%, respectively).

**Figure 2.4.** Knowledge of HE Study and Application Process – Uni Connect Students.

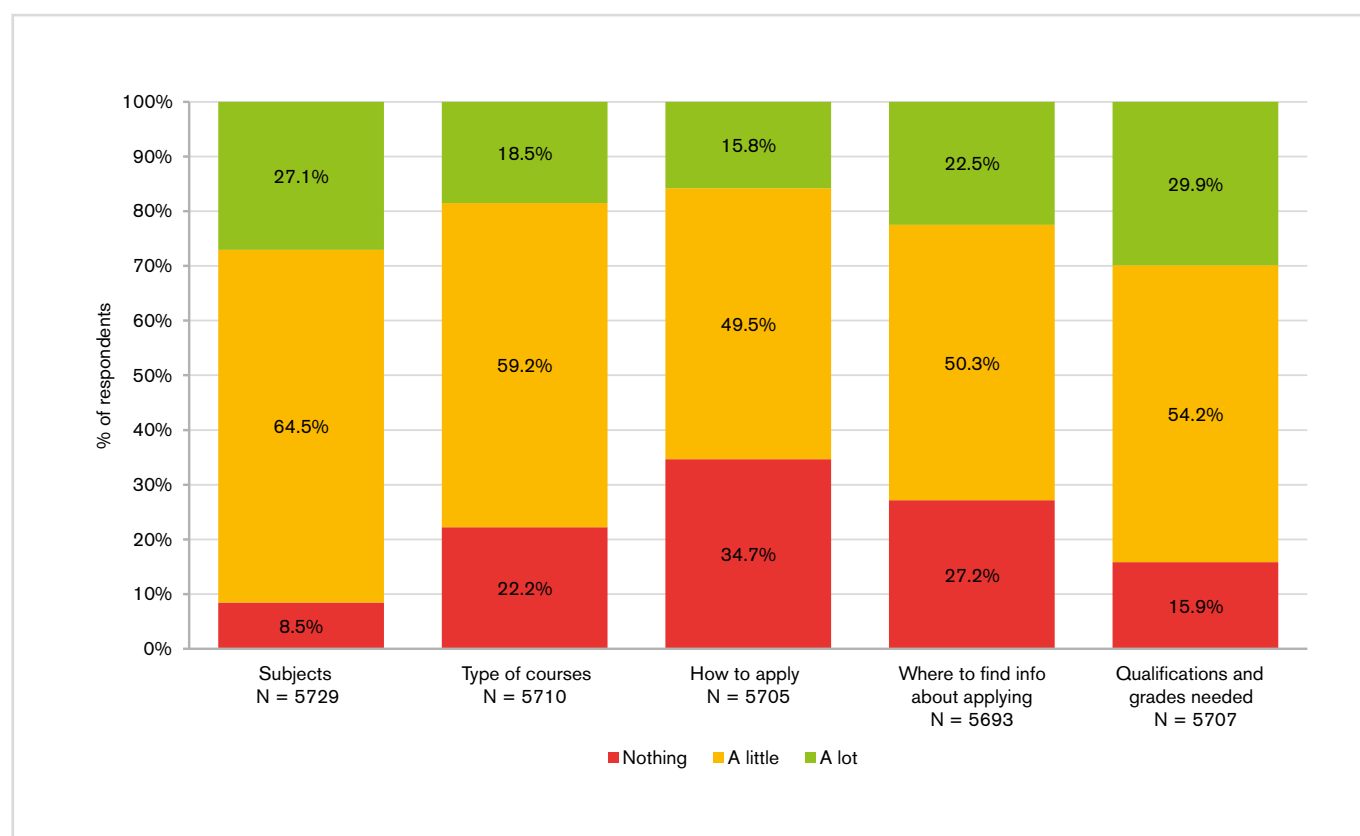
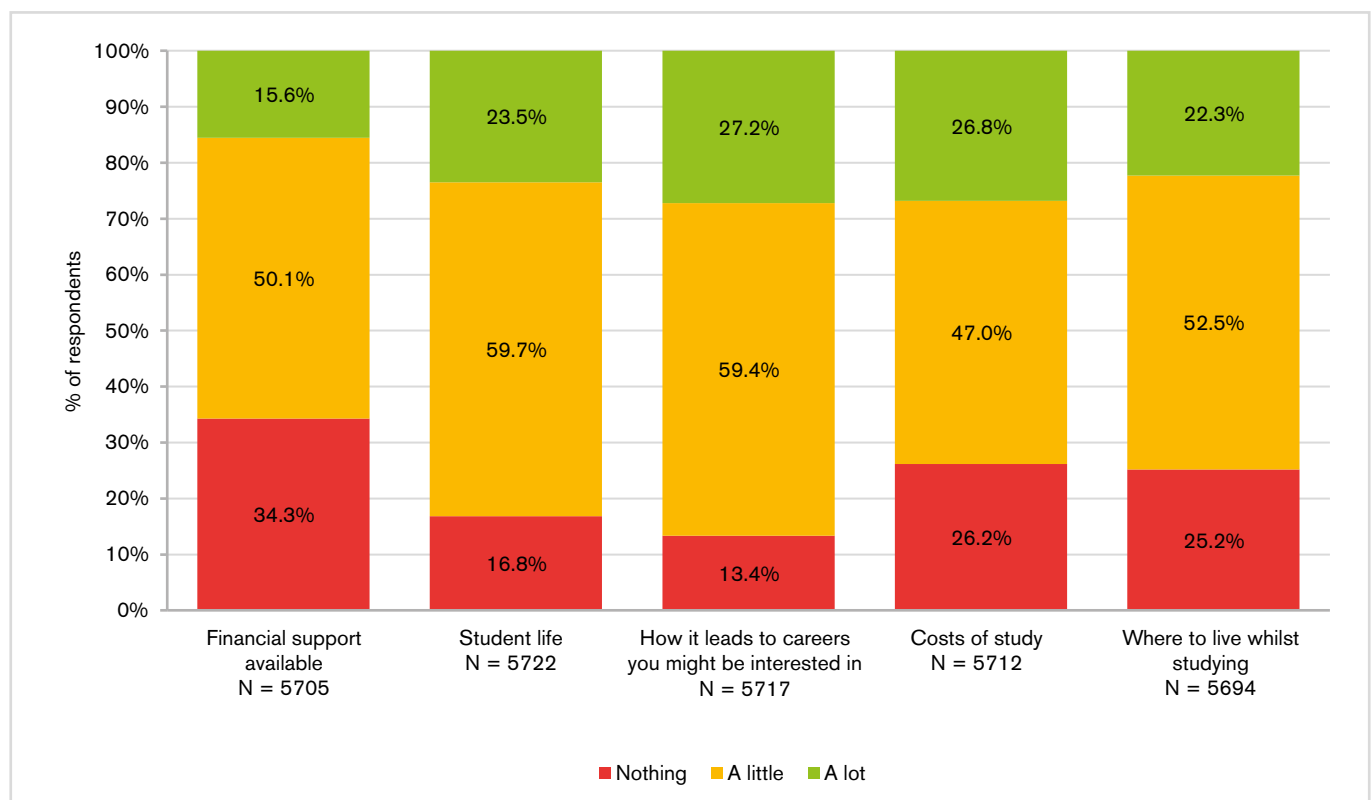






Figure 2.5 shows the self-reported level of knowledge about aspects of HE relating to student life, finance, and careers, for Uni Connect students. A large proportion of responses to each question were on the mid-point of the scale (range 47% - 59.7%). Over a third of respondents reported knowing nothing about the financial support available for HE study, and around a quarter said they knew nothing about the costs of study, or where to live while studying.

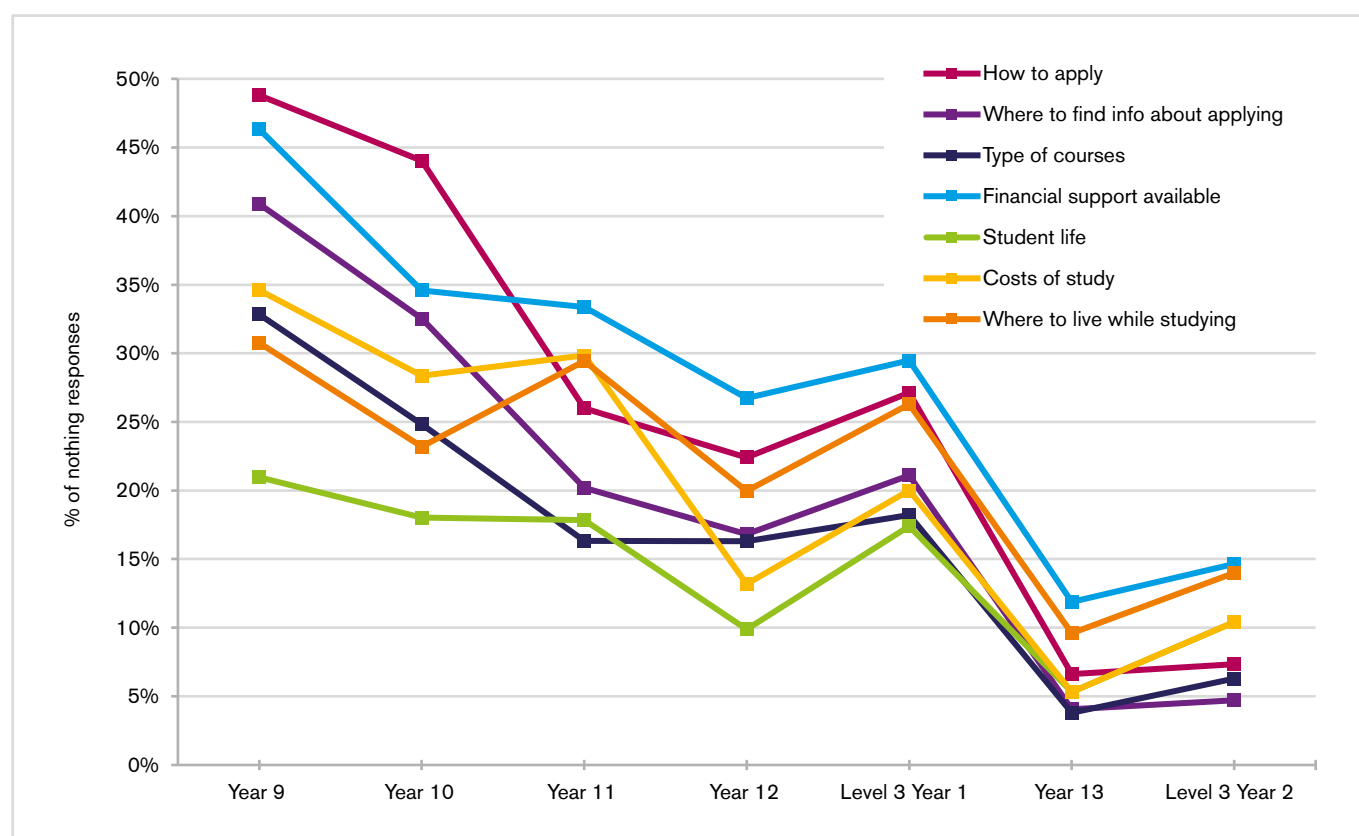
**Figure 2.5.** Knowledge of Student Life, Finance and Careers – Uni Connect Students.



For the topics where over 20% of Uni Connect students responded that they knew 'nothing', a break down by year group is shown in Figure 2.6. The proportion of 'nothing' responses are negatively correlated with year group, in that fewer respondents in higher year groups said that they knew 'nothing' about a topic. However, there was still a substantial minority of Year 12 (26.7%) and Level 3 Year 1 (29.5%) students who reported knowing nothing about the financial support available for HE study.



**Figure 2.6.** Percentage of Know Nothing Responses by Year Group – Uni Connect Students.

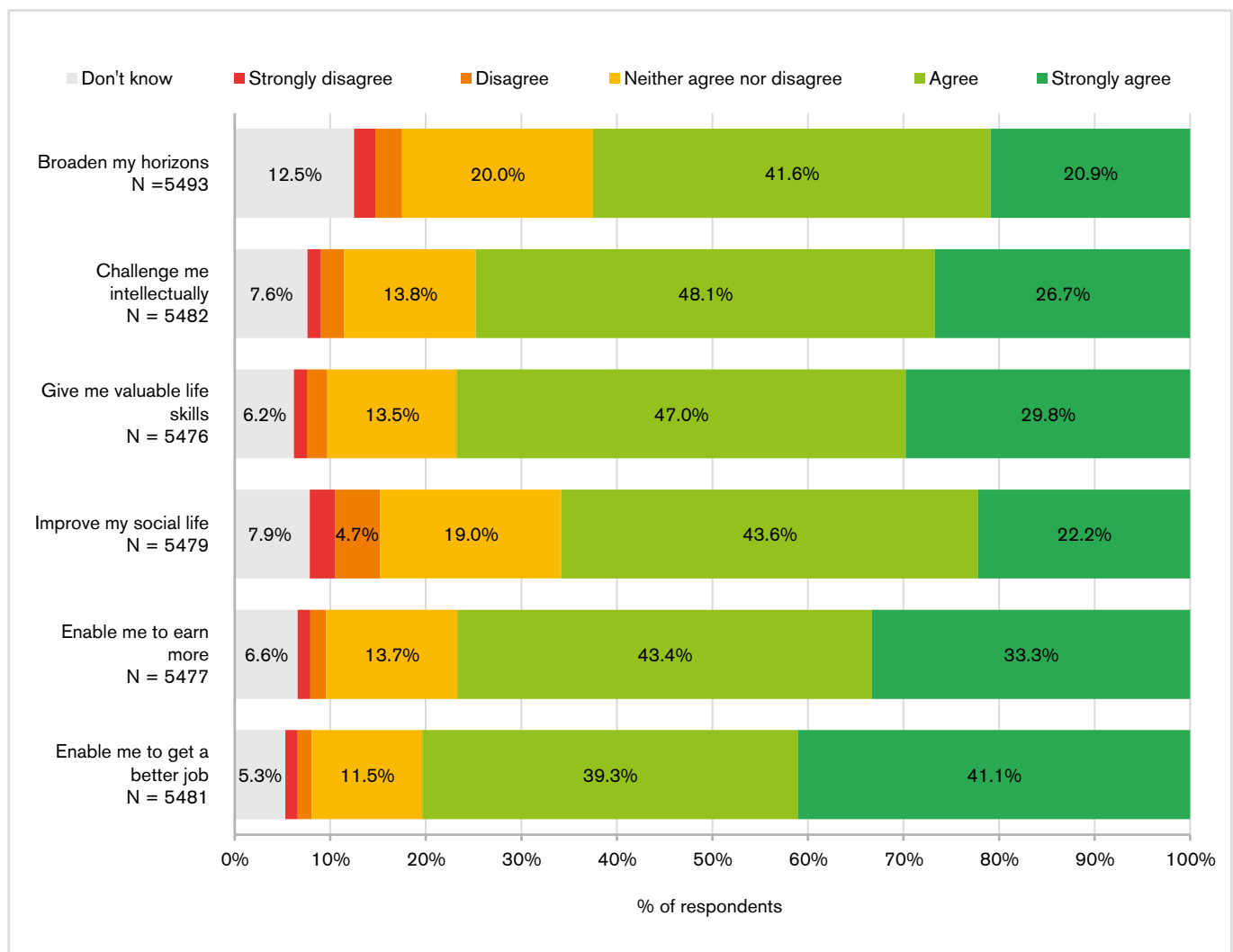


**Note:** Minimum sample sizes for each question: Year 9 (N = 1625), Year 10 (N = 1417), Year 11 (N = 1096), Year 12 (N = 606), Level 3 Year 1 (N = 268), Year 13 (N = 393), Level 3 Year 2 (N = 191).

## HE Benefits

Responses from Uni Connect students regarding the benefits of HE followed a similar pattern to the total sample of students. Uni Connect respondents had generally favourable perceptions of the benefits of HE, with combined agree and strongly agree responses ranging between 62.5% and 80.4% across all questions (see Figure 2.7). Responses to the statement that HE enables you to get a better job were particularly positive, with 39.3% agreeing and 41.1% strongly agreeing with this statement. Only a small minority of Uni Connect students disagreed with any of the statements, though there were a substantial proportion of 'don't know' responses and answers on the mid-point of the scale (neither agree nor disagree) for the statements relating to improving social life, and broadening horizons.

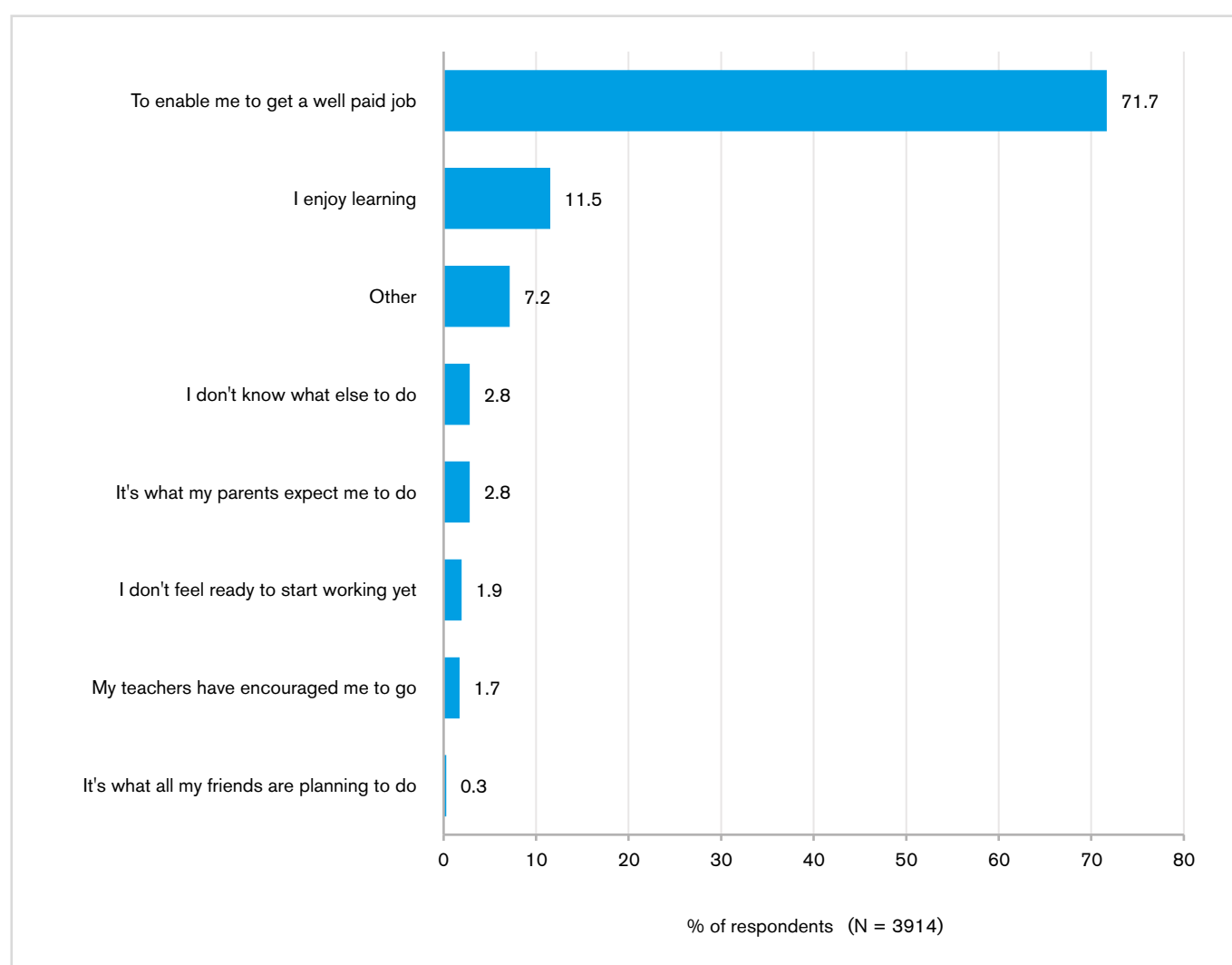
**Figure 2.7.** Perception of HE Benefits – Uni Connect Students.



## Reasons To Go Or Not To Go

Respondents who indicated that they are likely to apply to HE were asked to select one response that best reflected the main reason they wanted to go (Figure 2.8). 71.7% of Uni Connect students who wanted to apply to HE indicated that the main reason was because they believed it would enable them to get a well-paid job. This closely aligns with the data shown in Figure 2.7, which demonstrates the positive perception that Uni Connect students had about how HE study could help them to get a better job and earn more money. Given that the primary appeal of HE for the vast majority of Uni Connect students is to help them to earn more money in their career, it is important that students are provided with the latest information on the expected financial return from HE study, and that they understand how this varies based on factors such as course studied and the type of university attended (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2020).

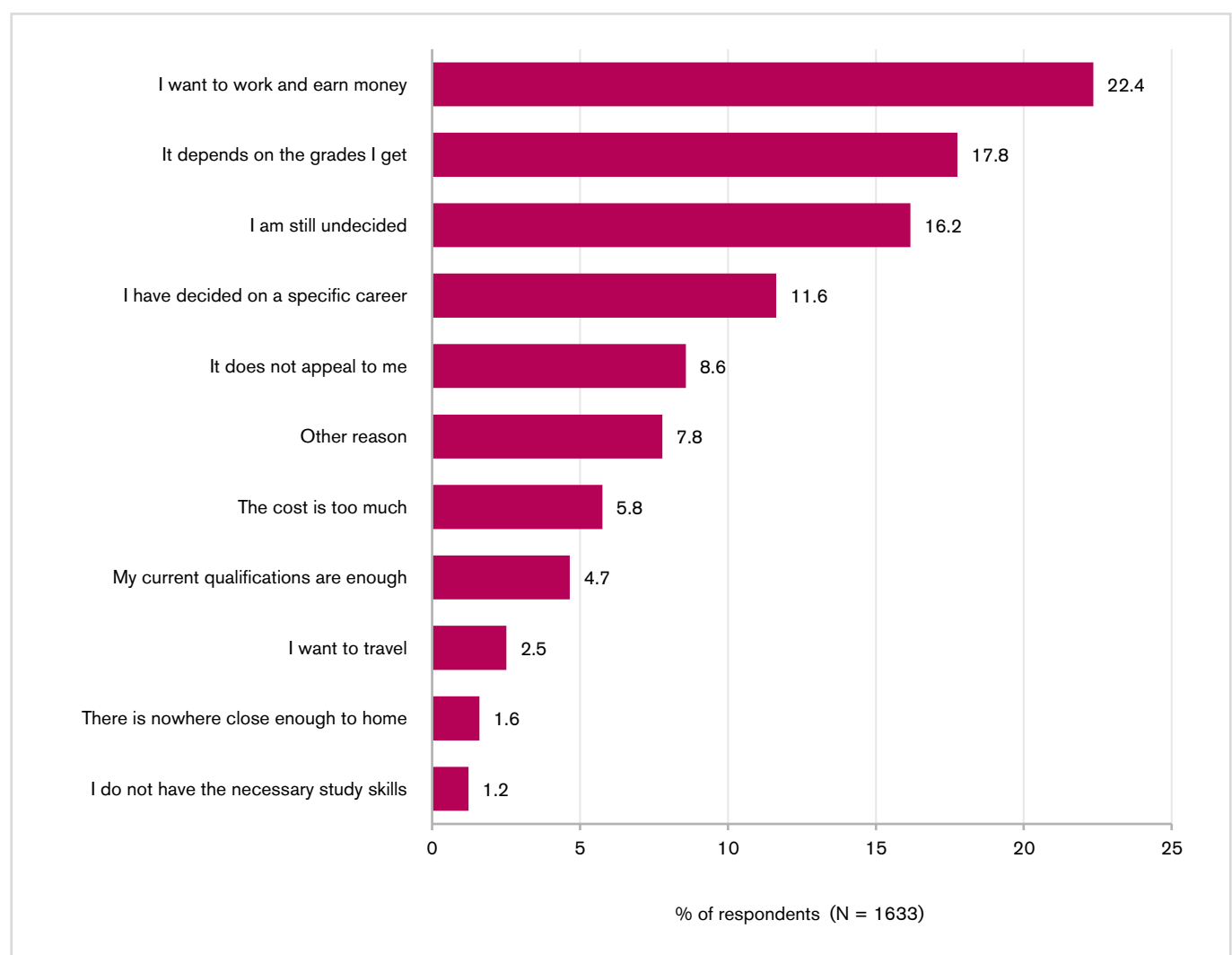
**Figure 2.8.** Main Reason to go to HE – Uni Connect Students.



**Note:** Only students that had responded that they were fairly likely, very likely, or definitely would apply to HE were asked this question.

Respondents who did not indicate that they were likely to apply to HE (unlikely or don't know responses) were asked to select the main reason that they may not go (Figure 2.9). Few students cited the direct financial cost of study as their main reason (5.8%). However 22.6% of respondents said that they wanted to work and earn money, perhaps highlighting the perceived opportunity cost of HE study, or the need or desire for a more immediate income. A substantial proportion of students indicated they were uncertain about whether they would achieve sufficient grades for HE, with 17.8% of students, who had previously said they were unlikely or unsure about whether to apply to HE, stating that it depends on the grades that they get.

**Figure 2.9.** *Main Reason Students May Not Go to HE – Uni Connect Students.*



**Note:** Only students that had responded that they didn't know, were fairly unlikely, very unlikely, or definitely wouldn't apply to HE were asked this question.





## Section Summary

This section has reviewed responses relating to HE knowledge and perceived benefits. The key findings are:

- Aggregated across year groups, over one in five Uni Connect students reported that they knew nothing about how to apply to HE, where to find information about applying, where to live whilst studying, the financial support available, the costs of study, the types of courses available, and what student life would be like.
- The proportion of students reporting that they knew nothing about the above topics negatively correlated with year group, so that fewer students in higher year groups indicated that they had no knowledge about a subject.
- Uni Connect students generally saw the social, intellectual and career benefits of HE. In particular, students felt that it would enable them to get a better paid job, which was the primary motivation for the majority of students that intended on applying.
- The main reasons students suggested they may not apply to HE were because they wanted to get a job and earn money, and due to uncertainty over their grades.

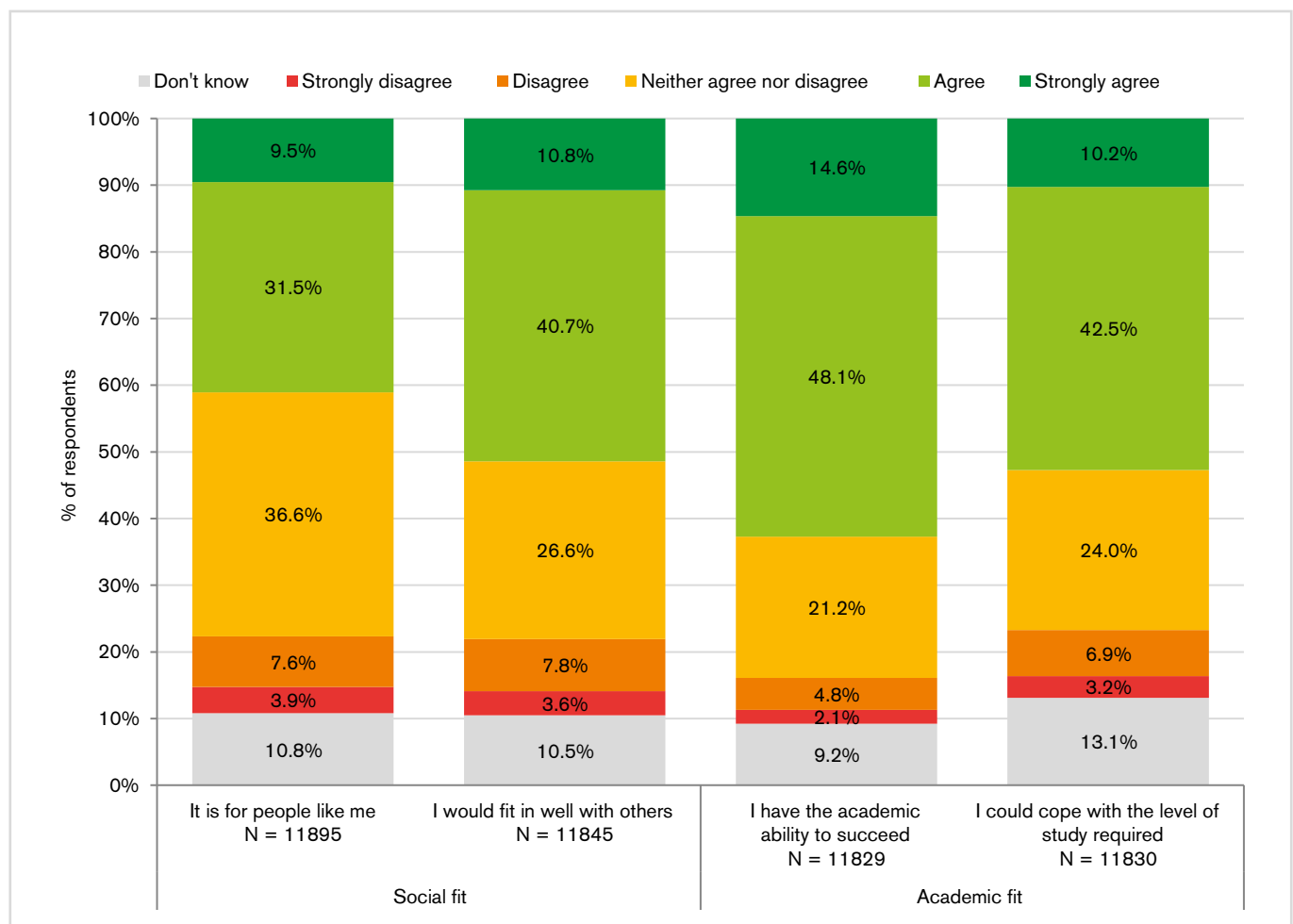
# Perceived Sense of Belonging and Fit Within HE

## All Students

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with four statements relating to their perceived academic and social fit within HE. Responses were given on a five-point ordered scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with a 'don't know' response option also available.

The results are displayed in Figure 3.1. Responses were generally positive, with a low proportion of disagree and strongly disagree responses to any statement (range 6.9% - 11.5%). However, there were a substantial number of neutral and 'don't know' responses across all questions. This was particularly the case for responses to the statement, 'it is for people like me', with 36.6% of students stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 10.8% responding 'don't know'. Although this could be interpreted as indicating that many students were unsure whether they would fit in a HE environment, it is also possible that some students considered the question to be asking whether they felt HE was especially for people like them, which may have led to the uncertainty in responses.

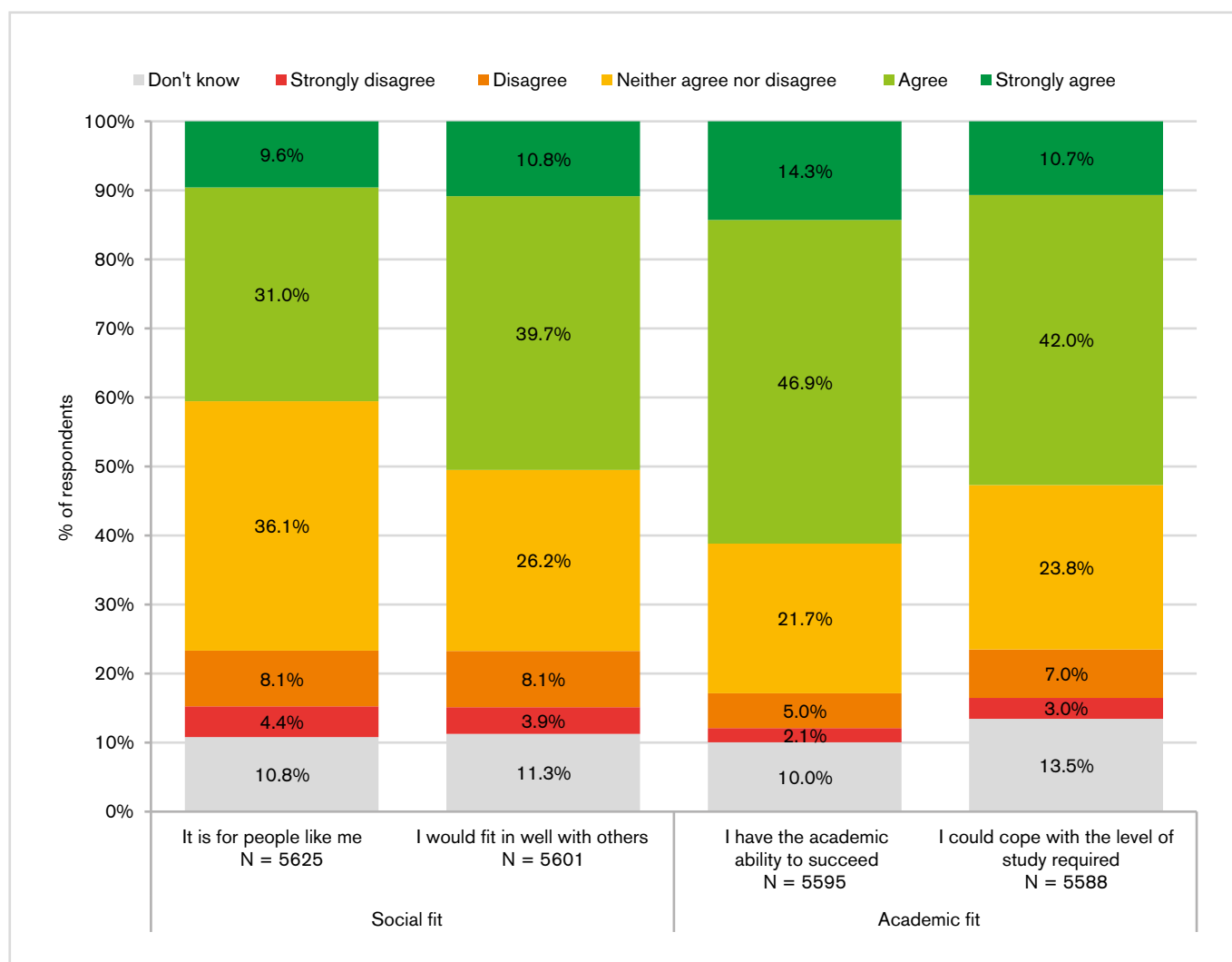
**Figure 3.1.** Perceived Academic and Social Fit Within HE – All Students.



## Uni Connect Students

Uni Connect students generally had a positive perception of their expected academic and social fit within a HE setting, with many students agreeing (though few strongly) with the statements, and a low proportion of respondents providing 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' responses (range 7.1% - 12.5% across the four statements). However, in line with the trend for the total sample, there were a substantial number of neutral and 'don't know' responses. This was especially the case for responses to perceived social fit statements, with 36.1% and 26.2% of Uni Connect students responding 'neither agree nor disagree' to the statements 'it is for people like me' and 'I would fit in well with others', respectively. Additionally, students were more likely to believe that they had the academic ability to succeed (61.2%) than to believe that they could cope with the level of study required (52.7%).

**Figure 3.2.** Perceived Academic and Social Fit Within HE – Uni Connect Students.

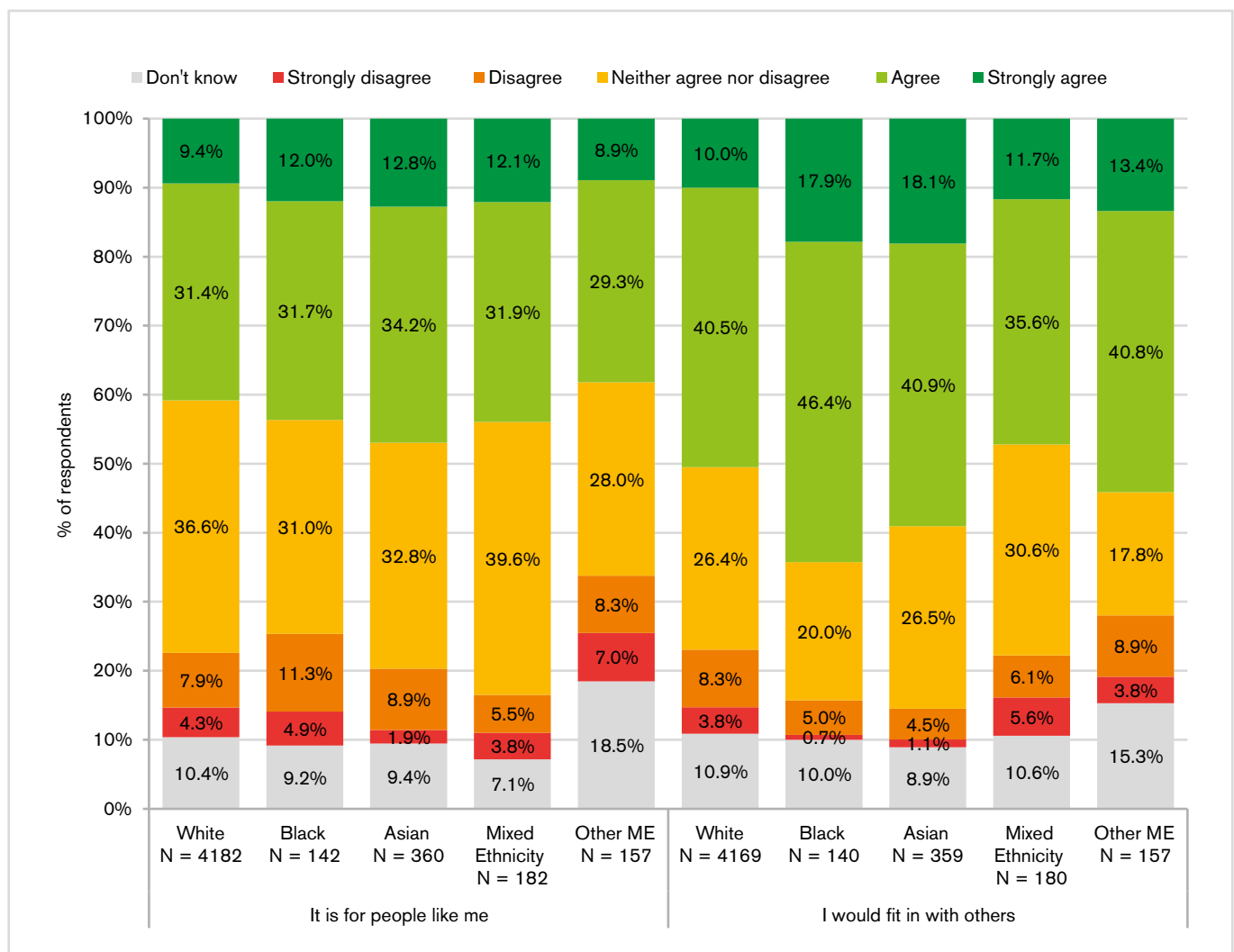




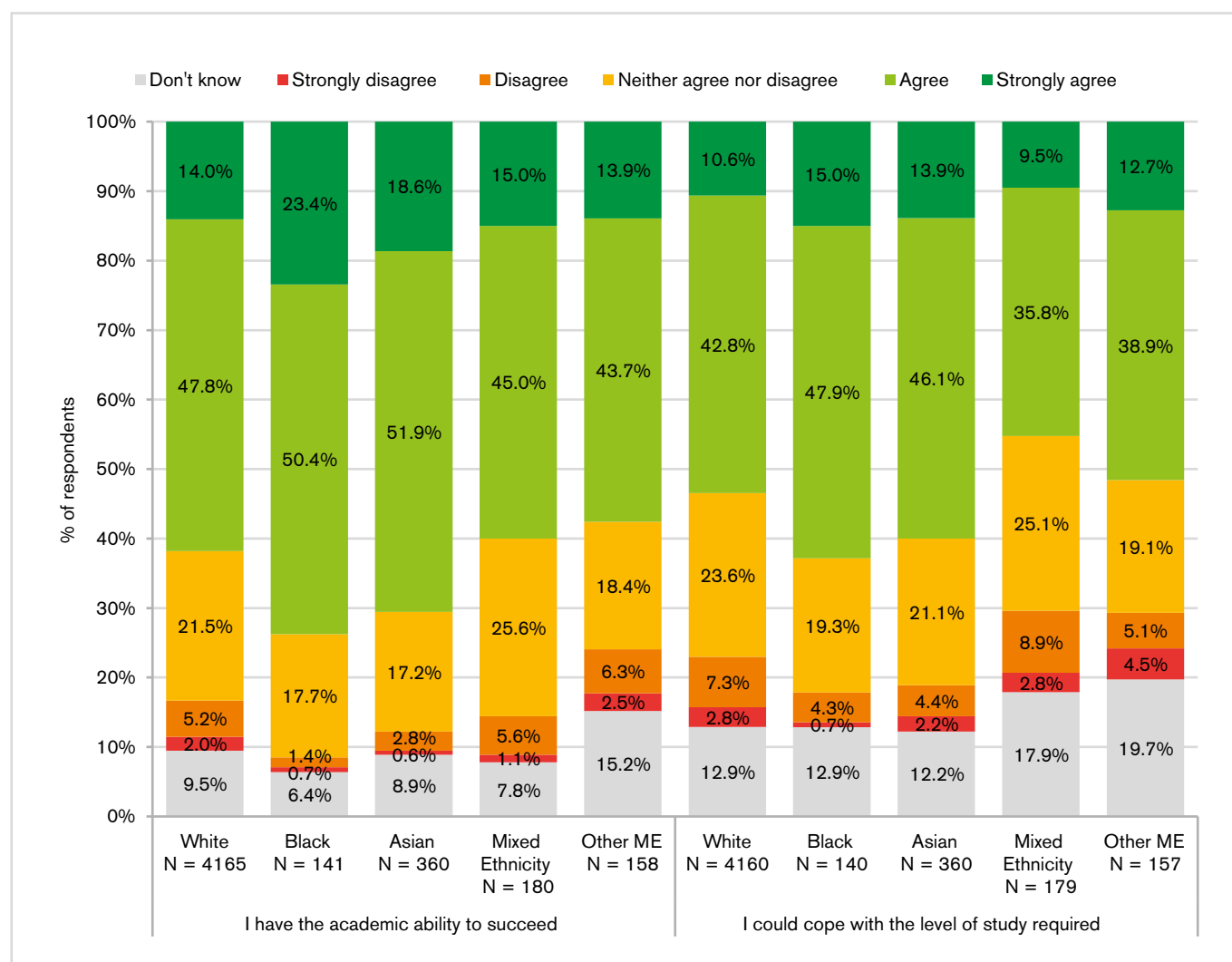
## Ethnicity

Figure 3.3 and 3.4 show responses broken down by ethnicity category, for perceived social and academic fit, respectively. In general, differences between ethnicities were fairly small. However, it is notable that a relatively high proportion of Other ME students gave 'don't know' responses across all questions (range 15.3 – 19.7%). Both Black and Asian students generally indicated greater perceived fit within a HE environment compared to both White and Mixed Ethnicity students, particularly for the statements 'I would fit in with others', and 'I have the academic ability to succeed'.

**Figure 3.3.** Perceived Social Fit Within HE by Ethnicity Category – Uni Connect Students.



**Figure 3.4.** Perceived Academic Fit Within HE by Ethnicity Category – Uni Connect Students.



## Section Summary

This section has reviewed responses relating to sense of belonging and fit within a HE environment. The key findings are:

- Students generally had a positive perception of their social and academic fit within HE, with few students disagreeing with any of the statements.
- Despite the broadly positive attitudes reported, 46.9% of Uni Connect students gave either a neutral or 'don't know' response to the statement, 'it is for people like me'.
- Students were generally more likely to believe that they had the academic ability to succeed than to believe that they could cope with the level of study required.
- Both Black and Asian students generally had a greater sense of fit within HE, particularly regarding how well they would fit in with others and the extent to which they had the academic ability to succeed.
- Other Minority Ethnic students gave a higher proportion of 'don't know' responses across all statements compared to other ethnic groups.



# Self-Efficacy



## All Students

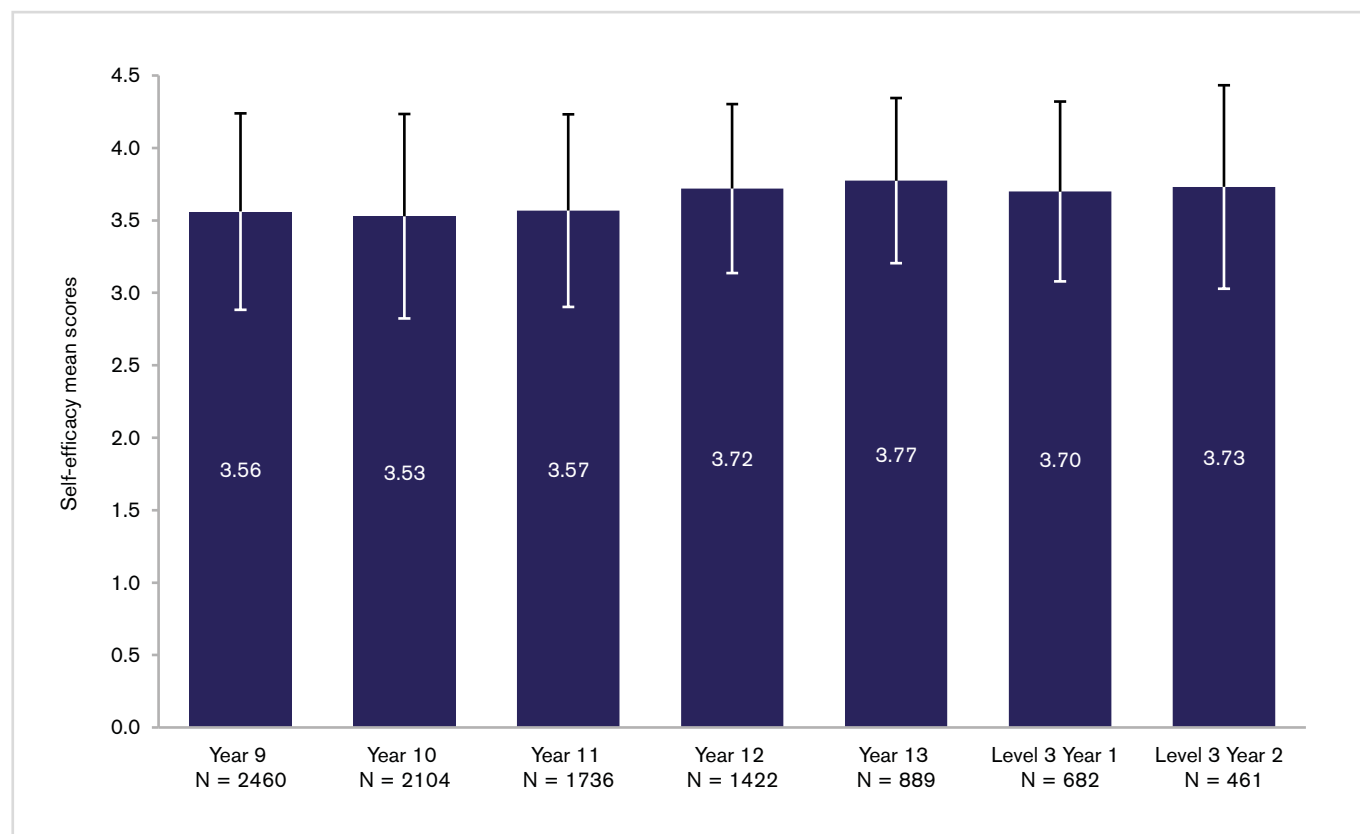
General self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's own capacity to effectively deal with a variety of challenging demands (Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005). General self-efficacy was measured in this survey using items adapted from the generalised self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The scale used here consisted of six questions, with a single score computed by calculating the average (mean) response across all six items for each respondent.

I can overcome any study difficulties
I can manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
I am confident that I could deal with unexpected events.
I can solve most problems if I use the necessary effort.
When I have a problem, I can usually find several solutions

Students responded to each item on a five-point ordered scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Responses in the combined scale were scored between 1-5 with 1 representing low self-efficacy, and 5 representing high self-efficacy. Figure 4.1 displays the mean self-efficacy scores by year group. Difference in scores between secondary school year groups (Year 9 -11) were very small, and not statistically reliable. Post-16 year groups had higher mean self-efficacy scores than secondary school year groups, for example, Year 12 students (mean = 3.72) compared to Year 11s (mean = 3.57). Although it is possible that self-efficacy in students increases between Year 11 and 12, a more likely explanation is that students with particularly low self-efficacy scores are less likely to progress to A-Level/Level 3 courses and would therefore no longer be within the target population sampled for this survey.



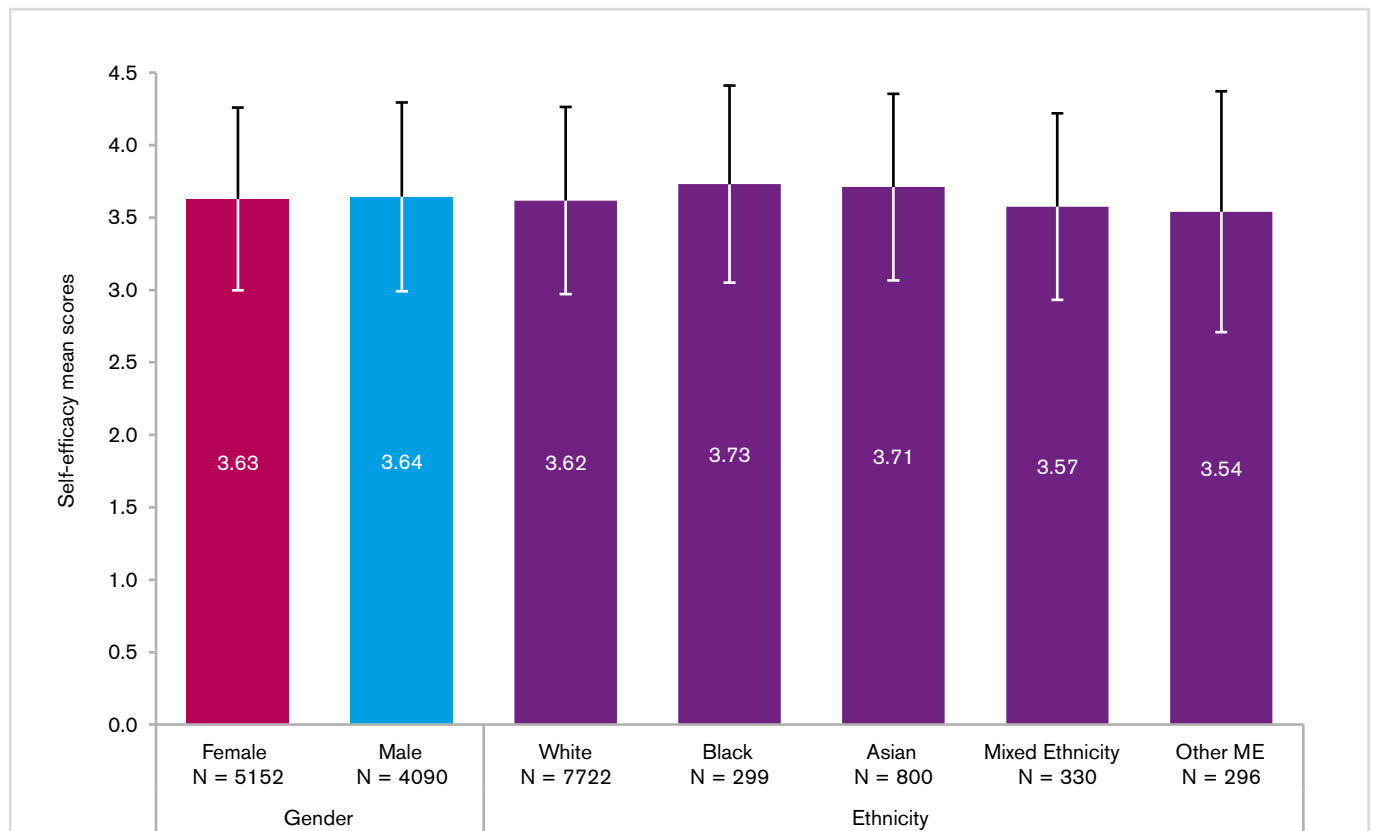
**Figure 4.1.** Mean Self-Efficacy Scores by Year Group – All Students.



**Note:** Bars represent the standard deviation of the mean.

Figure 4.2 displays mean self-efficacy scores by gender and by ethnicity category. No differences were observed between male and female scores. White, Mixed Ethnicity, and Other ME students all had lower mean self-efficacy scores compared to both Black and Asian students. No other differences between ethnicities were statistically reliable. It is important to note that even where mean ethnicity differences were observed, the variance between individuals within a group was larger than the difference between groups. It is therefore not possible to determine with any accuracy whether an individual is low or high in self-efficacy based on their ethnicity.

**Figure 4.2.** *Self-Efficacy Scores by Gender and Ethnicity Category – All Students.*

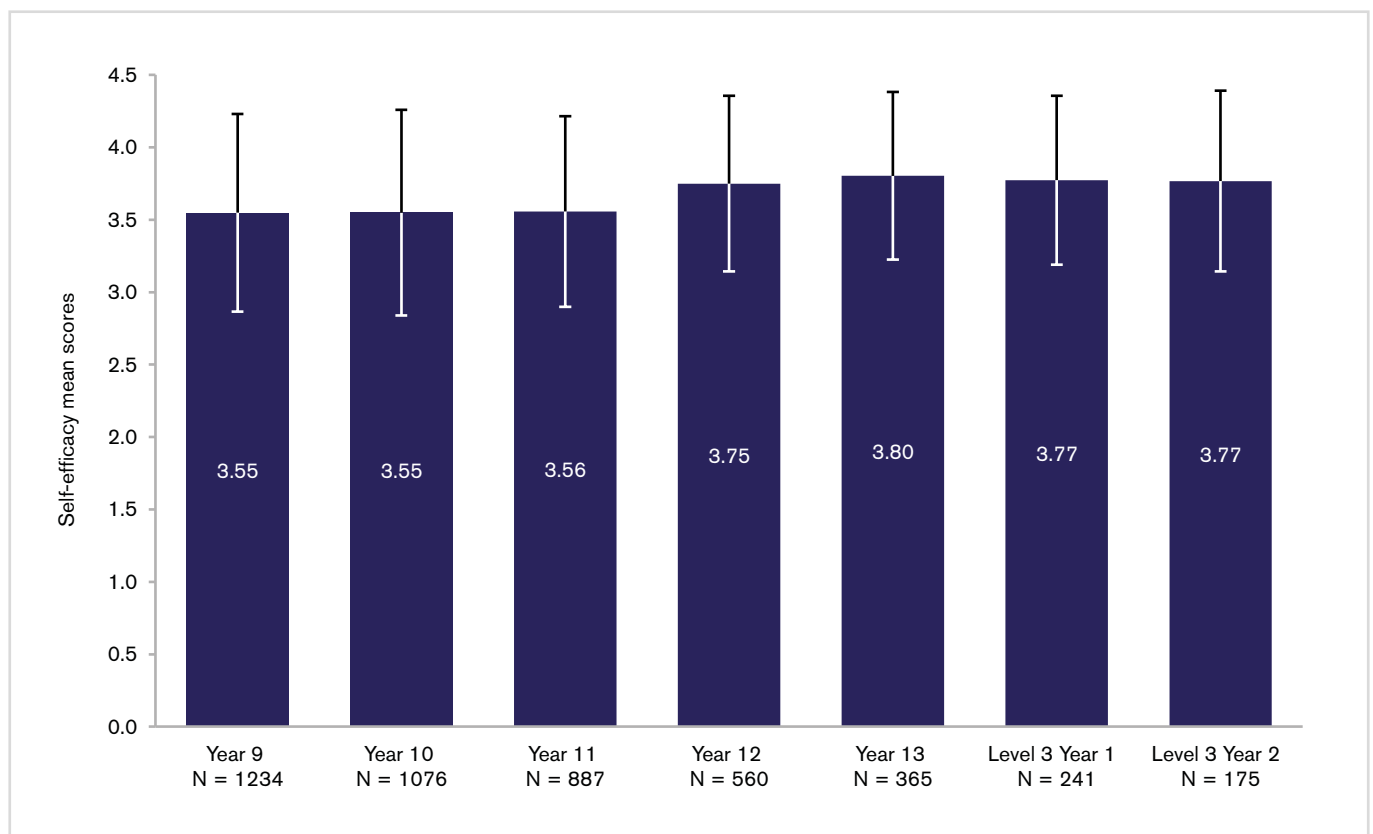


**Note:** Bars represent the standard deviation of the mean.

## Uni Connect Students

Within the Uni Connect sample, mean self-efficacy scores (Figure 4.3) did not differ between secondary school year groups (Year 9 – 11). Post-16 year groups had higher mean self-efficacy scores than secondary school year groups, for example, Year 12 students (mean = 3.75) compared to Year 11s (mean = 3.56).

**Figure 4.3.** Mean Self-Efficacy Scores by Year Group – Uni Connect Students.

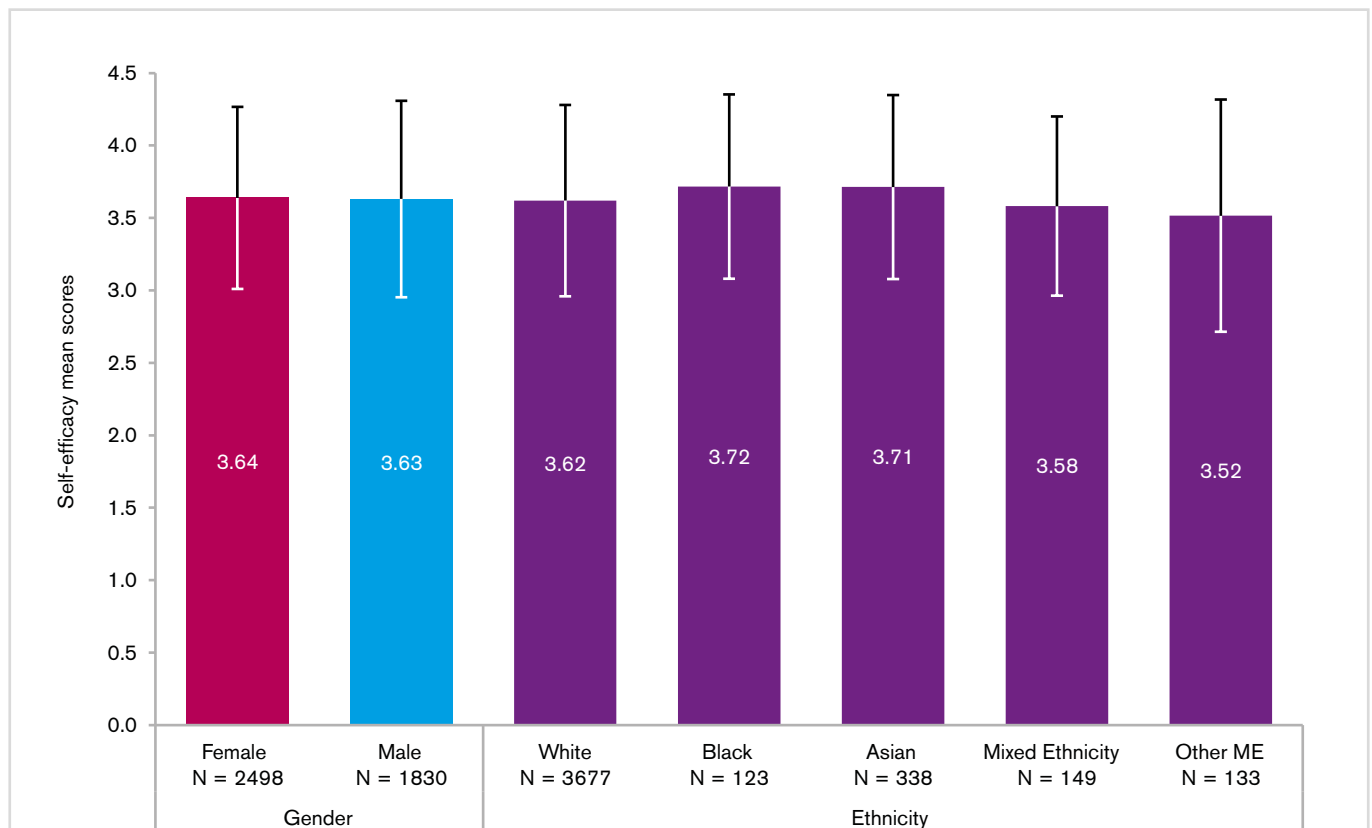


**Note:** Bars represent the standard deviation of the mean.



There was no statistical difference between Uni Connect male and female self-efficacy scores (Figure 4.4). Ethnicity differences in mean self-efficacy for Uni Connect students appeared to follow a similar pattern to the total sample, however these differences were not statistically reliable.

**Figure 4.4.** Self-Efficacy Scores by Gender and Ethnicity Category – Uni Connect Students.

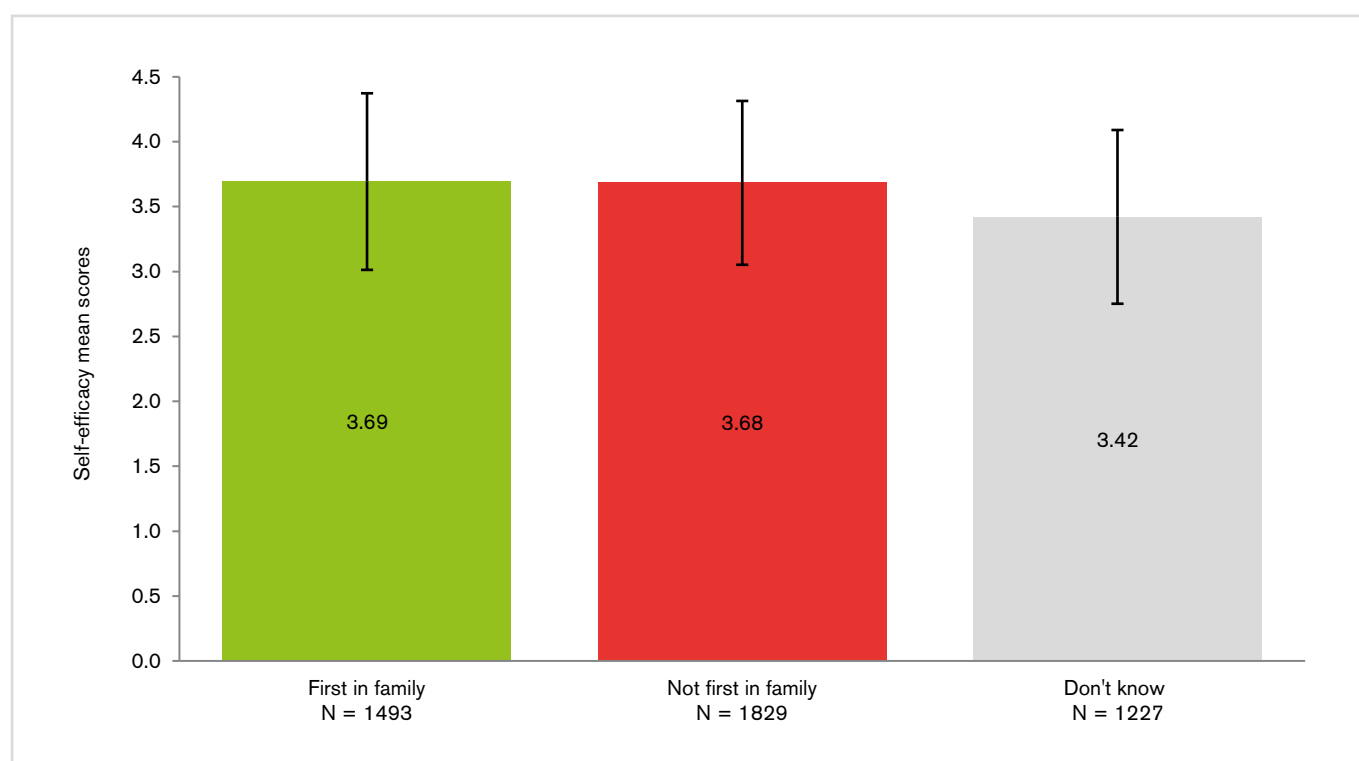


**Note:** Bars represent the standard deviation of the mean



Figure 4.5 shows the mean self-efficacy scores of Uni Connect students, split by whether they indicated that they would be the first in their family to go to HE, would not be the first, or did not know whether they would be the first. There was no statistical difference between students that said they would be the first in their family compared to those that said that they would not. However, students that did not know whether they would be first in their family had lower mean scores. It is unlikely that there is a causal relationship between knowledge of family history of HE and one's own self-efficacy. Instead, both knowledge of first in family status and self-efficacy may be correlated with a third variable not measured in the survey.

**Figure 4.5.** *Self-Efficacy Scores by First-in-Family Status – Uni Connect Students.*



**Note:** Bars represent the standard deviation of the mean.

## Section Summary

This section has reviewed responses relating to students' self-efficacy. The key findings are:

- There is little difference in self-efficacy scores between males and females, or between secondary school year groups.
- Post-16 students had higher mean self-efficacy scores than secondary school respondents, though this does not necessarily suggest that any change occurs at an individual level. Instead, the students with lower self-efficacy may be less likely to progress to Level 3 courses, and therefore would not have featured in this sample.
- Within the total sample, both Black and Asian students had higher mean self-efficacy scores than White, Mixed Ethnicity, and Other Minority Ethnic students. However, differences between groups were small, and there was substantial variation within groups. It is therefore difficult to predict with an acceptable degree of accuracy whether a student is likely to be low or high in self-efficacy based on their ethnicity.
- Uni Connect students who did not know whether they would be the first in their family to go to HE had lower mean self-efficacy scores than both students who said they would be the first in their family and those who said that they would not be.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has drawn on data gathered as part of the Wave 2 national evaluation survey administered across South Yorkshire in October and November of 2019. Split into four sections, each discussed outcomes relating to the full sample of student responses, and more specifically those from HeppSY Uni Connect target postcodes.

The first section detailed responses in relation to likelihood of applying to HE at age 18 or 19. Over two thirds (68.2%) of Uni Connect students reported that they are likely to apply to HE. However, there was a marked difference in likelihood of applying between those in Year 11 and those in Year 9, with those in Year 11 comparatively less likely to expect to apply. A substantial gender difference was observed, with girls more likely than boys in both secondary school and post-16 year groups to intend on applying to HE, and the gap appearing to significantly widen between Year 9 and 11. In addition, Uni Connect students on other Level 3 courses were substantially less likely than Year 12 and 13 (A-Level) students to intend on studying away from home at a HE institution, and 2.5 times more likely to intend on getting a full-time job when they finish their current studies. Splitting responses by ethnicity, a high proportion of both Black and Asian students reported that they were likely to apply to HE. For Black students, this was due to girls generally expressing a strong intention to apply, with the expectations of Black boys being more equivocal.



Section 2 analysed and discussed responses relating to HE knowledge and perceived benefits. Aggregated across year groups, over one in five Uni Connect students reported that they knew nothing about: how to apply to HE, where to find information about applying, where to live whilst studying, the financial support available, the costs of study, the types of courses available, and what student life would be like. However, the proportion of students reporting that they knew nothing about the above topics negatively correlated with year group, so that fewer students in higher year groups indicated that they had no knowledge about a given subject. This highlights the need to focus provision specific to student's year group – drawing on the partnership's progression framework.

Uni Connect students generally saw the social, intellectual and career benefits of HE. In particular, students felt that it would enable them to get a more well-paid job, which was the primary motivation for the majority of students that intended on applying. The main reasons students suggested that they may not apply to HE were to enable them to work and earn money, and due to uncertainty over their grades.

Section 3 outlined responses relating to sense of belonging and fit within a HE environment. Students generally had a positive perception of their social and academic fit within HE, with few students disagreeing with any of the statements. Despite the broadly positive attitudes reported, 46.9% of Uni Connect students gave either a neutral or 'don't know' response to the statement, 'it is for people like me'. Students were also generally more likely to believe that they had the academic ability to succeed than to believe that they could cope with the level of study required. Splitting the analysis by ethnicity, both Black and Asian students generally had a greater sense of fit within HE, particularly regarding how well they would fit in with others and the extent to which they had the academic ability to succeed.

The final section discussed responses relating to students' self-efficacy. There was little difference in self-efficacy scores between males and females, or between secondary school year groups. Post-16 students had higher mean self-efficacy scores than secondary school respondents, though this does not necessarily suggest that any change occurs at an individual level. Instead, the students with lower self-efficacy may be less likely to progress to Level 3 courses, and therefore would not have featured in this sample. Within the total sample, Black and Asian ethnic students both had higher mean self-efficacy scores than White, Mixed Ethnicity, and Other Minority Ethnic students. However, differences between groups were small, and there was substantial variation within groups. It is therefore difficult to predict with an acceptable degree of accuracy whether a student is likely to be low or high in self-efficacy based on their ethnicity.



## Recommendations for Practice

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made with regards to future practice:

- A key goal of outreach should be to maintain – rather than seek to ‘raise’ - the high aspirations of the majority of students who already intend on going to HE. Interventions focused on boys throughout Year 9 and 10 are particularly important to prevent a downward shift in HE aspirations. Further evidence should be drawn upon to devise the content and focus of these interventions.
- Students on other Level 3 courses are more likely than Year 12/13 students to plan on working full-time after their current studies, and less likely to aspire to study away from home. Interventions could focus on non-traditional HE routes for these students, such as higher degree apprenticeships, and on addressing barriers to living away from home to study.
- As getting a well-paid job is the primary motivation for the majority of students who plan on applying to HE, it is important that the latest information about the expected financial return from HE study is provided impartially, including how this varies based on factors such as course studied and type of university attended.
- Many students who did not intend on applying to HE indicated that this was because they wanted to work and earn money instead. Students may benefit from increased focus on the financial support available (knowledge of this remained low until Year 13), working part-time while studying, and higher degree apprenticeships.
- Students were generally less likely to believe that they could cope with the level of study required at HE than to believe that they have the academic ability to succeed. It is possible that there is a mismatch between the perceived and actual requirements of HE study that could be addressed through outreach activity.
- White and Mixed ethnicity students were relatively uncertain whether they would fit in with others at HE, compared to Black and Asian ethnic groups. Targeted interventions for these students which focus on social relationship-building in a HE setting may be appropriate.
- Self-efficacy scores do not differ between males and females – both groups may benefit from interventions designed to increase confidence in their capacity to overcome challenges.
- Self-efficacy scores tends to be lower in secondary school students compared to Year 12/13 and Level 3 students. It may therefore be appropriate to focus confidence and self-efficacy building interventions disproportionately on younger students.

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# Appendices

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# Appendix A – Respondent Characteristics

Overall, 12246 students across 46 schools/colleges were included in the final dataset.

The breakdown of respondents is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1.** Respondents by Gender and Year Group.

Year Group	Uni Connect Students				All Students			
	Male	Female	Other/ Missing	Subtotal	Male	Female	Other/ Missing	Total
Year 9	613	765	289	1667	1222	1440	598	3260
Year 10	548	651	244	1443	1080	1170	551	2801
Year 11	430	512	170	1112	888	927	377	2192
Year 12	194	358	55	607	537	866	160	1563
Year 13	133	232	31	396	344	547	87	978
Level 2	26	50	9	85	44	102	23	169
Level 3 Year 1	94	157	20	271	293	406	62	761
Level 3 Year 2	77	96	20	193	193	255	74	522
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2115</b>	<b>2821</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>5774</b>	<b>4601</b>	<b>5713</b>	<b>1932</b>	<b>12246</b>



**Table 2.** Respondents by Gender and Ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Uni Connect Students				All Students			
	Male	Female	Other/ Missing	<u>Subtotal</u>	Male	Female	Other/ Missing	<u>Total</u>
White	1708	2323	169	<b>4200</b>	3631	4644	334	<b>8609</b>
Black	70	70	3	<b>143</b>	164	172	14	<b>350</b>
Asian	164	183	16	<b>363</b>	397	426	43	<b>866</b>
Mixed Ethnicity	59	110	14	<b>183</b>	154	212	26	<b>392</b>
Other Minority Ethnic	60	85	19	<b>164</b>	143	159	68	<b>370</b>
Missing/ Refused	54	50	617	<b>721</b>	112	100	1447	<b>1659</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2115</b>	<b>2821</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>5774</b>	<b>4601</b>	<b>5713</b>	<b>1932</b>	<b>12246</b>





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