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Social Justice and Widening Access to Higher Education in Scotland: The role of Scottish colleges

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Scottish Government view of fairness in access to higher education



‘A child born today in one of our most deprived communities should have no less a chance of entering higher education than a child born in one of our least deprived. We want every child – whatever their background – to have an equal chance of attending university’. Angela Constance, Former Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning.



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Scottish Government policy on widening access to higher education



This implies an increase in HE participation by those from less socially advantaged backgrounds – and colleges are seen as playing a vital role:

Articulation pathways, defined as progression from college to university where full credit is awarded for prior learning, is a distinctive and much admired feature of Scottish post-16 education. In our interim report, we identified the expansion of articulation pathways as a real success story of Scottish higher education and a powerful means of advancing access (Scottish Government Commission on Widening Access, 2016: 32).



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Focus of presentation



- The role of Scottish colleges in widening access to HE generally and for less advantaged groups specifically.
- Comparisons are made between Scotland and England, and between different types of institutions in Scotland, using data on Higher Education Initial Participation Rates (HEIPR) compiled by the SFC and BIS.
- This analysis is based on research funded by the Sutton Trust on Access in Scotland (Hunter Blackburn et al., 2016)
http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Access-in-Scotland_May2016.pdf



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Higher Education Initial Entry Rate (HEIPR)

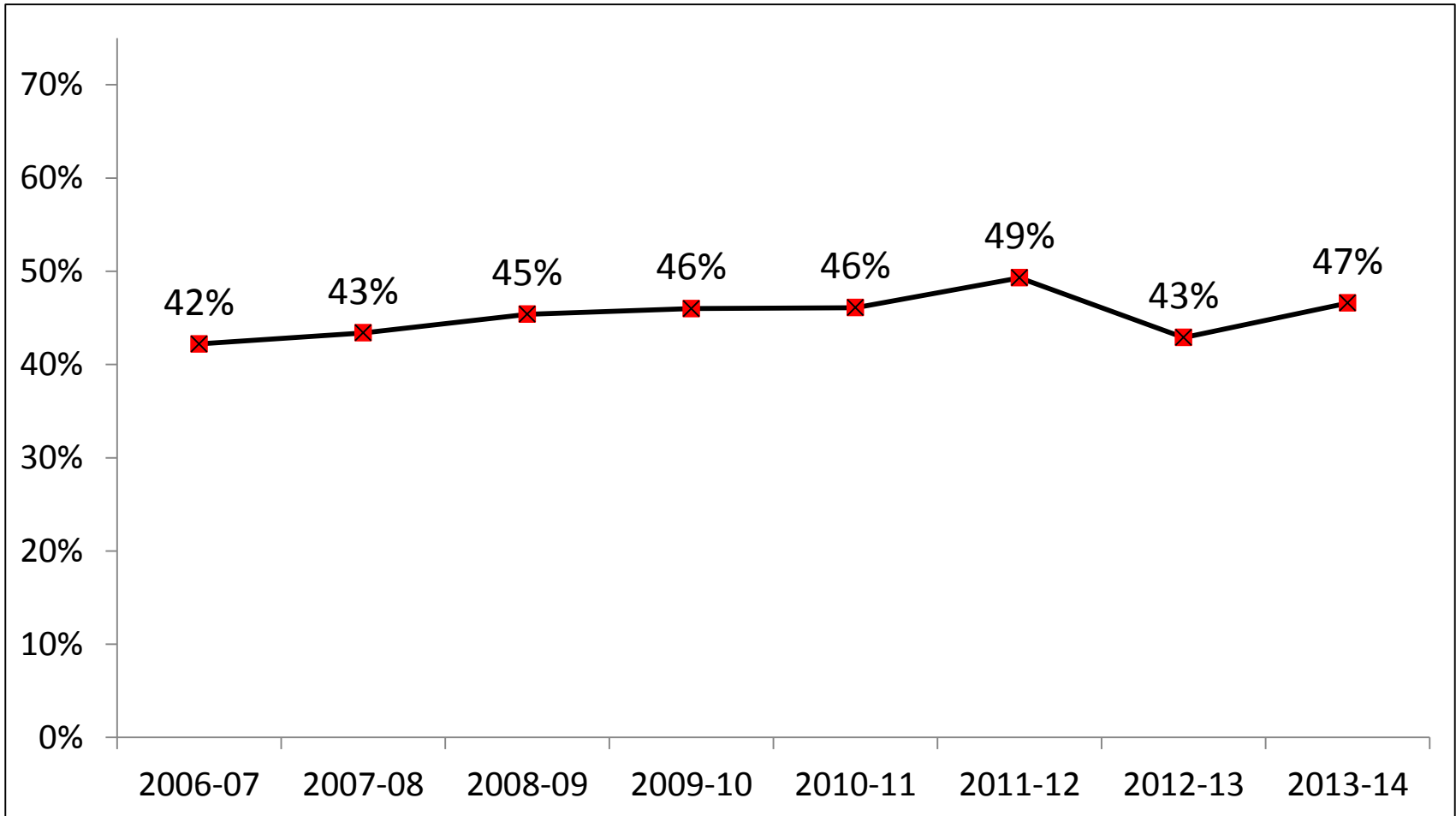


Source	UK government (BIS) and Scottish Government (SFC)
Countries	England and Scotland
Age	Sum of the entry rate at each age up to 30 (17 – 30 in Scotland, 18 - 30 in England).
Institution	All providers
Includes	Initial entrants on HE courses at any level. Full-time and part-time, lasting at least 6 months, who attend for at least 6 months.
Excludes	Re-entrants, who have already been counted in previous years.



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Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30) England – all

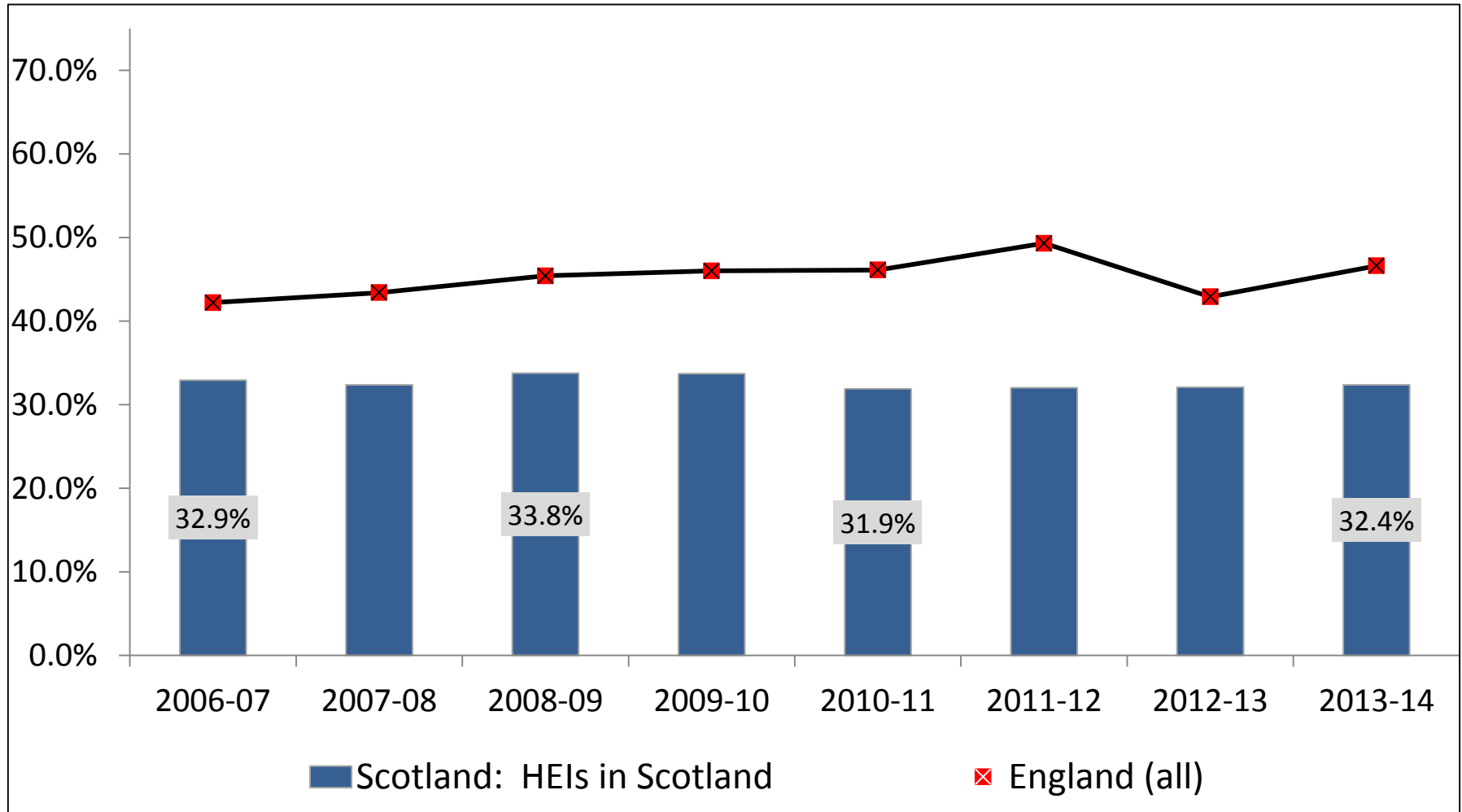




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Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30)

Scotland – HEIs in Scotland; England – all



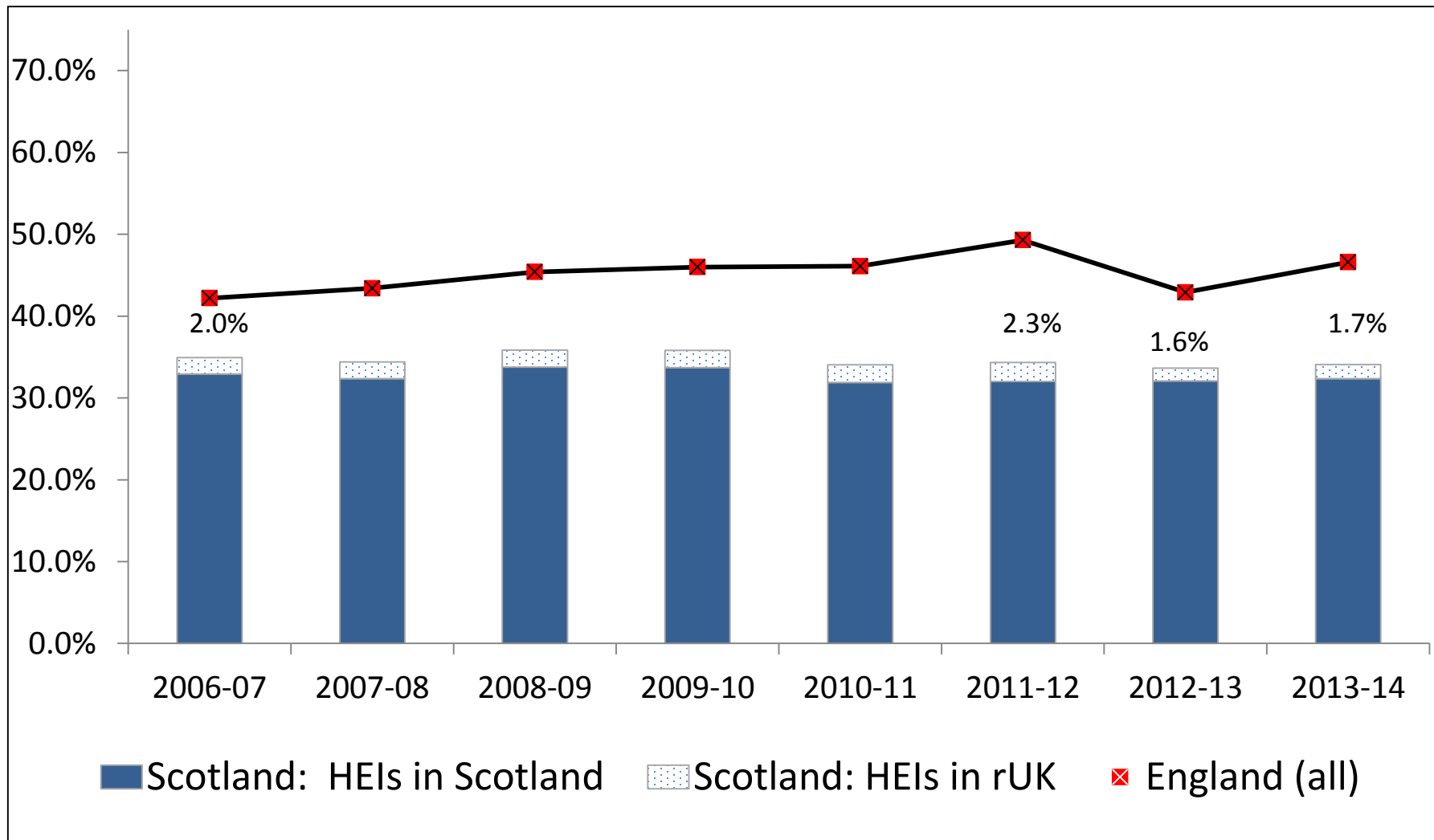


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Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30)



Scotland – HEIs in Scotland & rUK; England – all

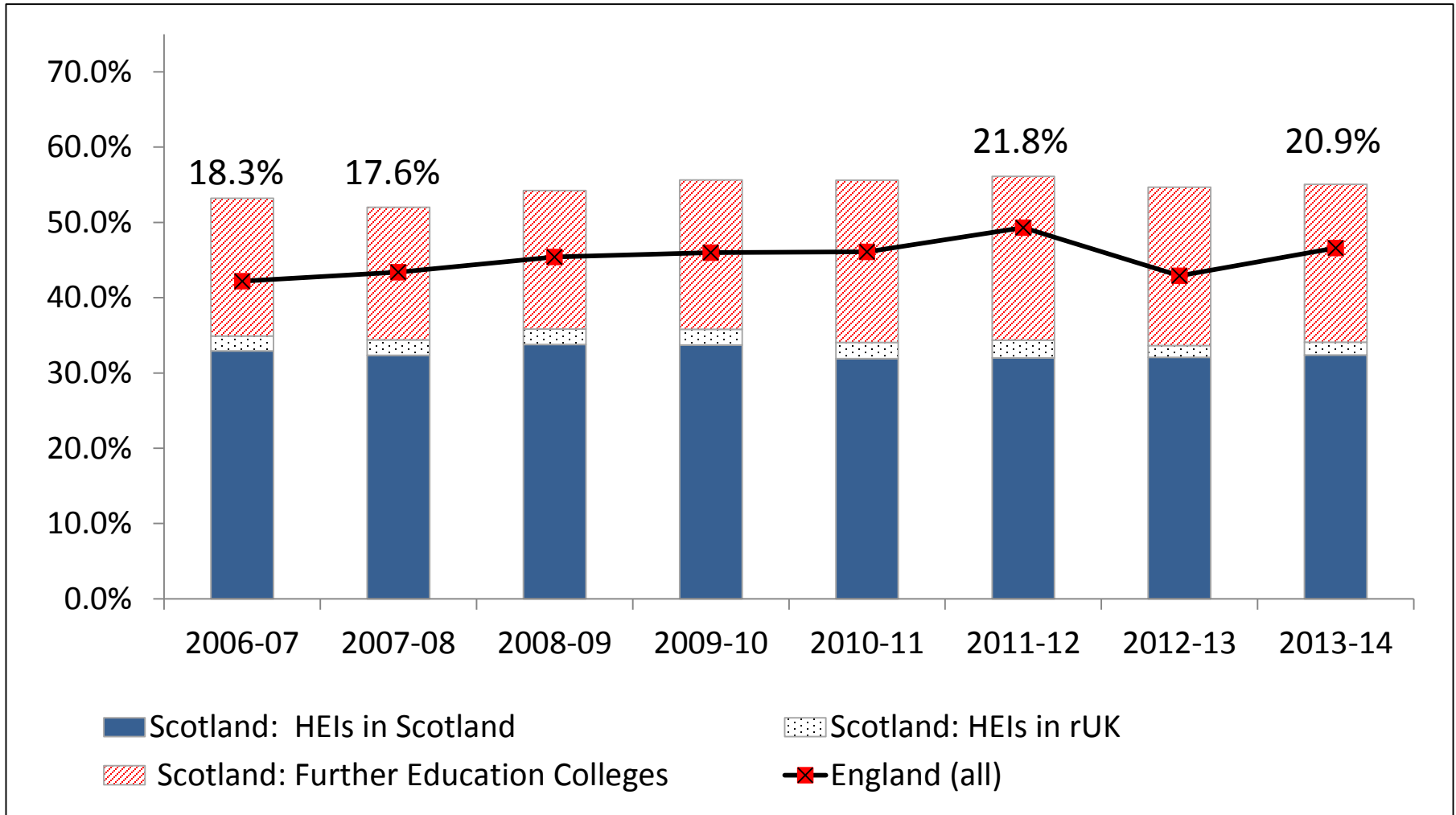




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Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30)

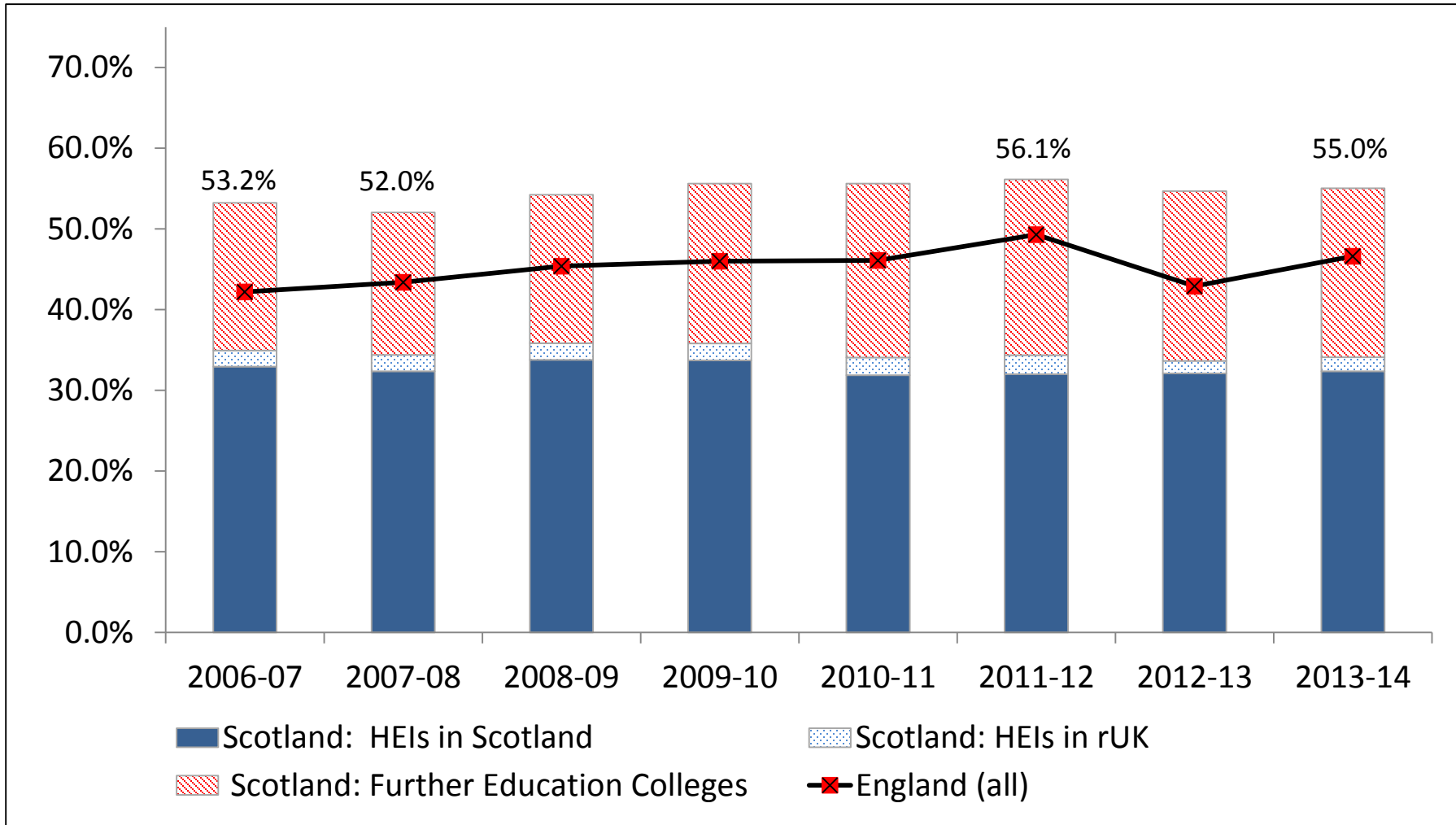
Scotland – HEIs and Colleges; England – all





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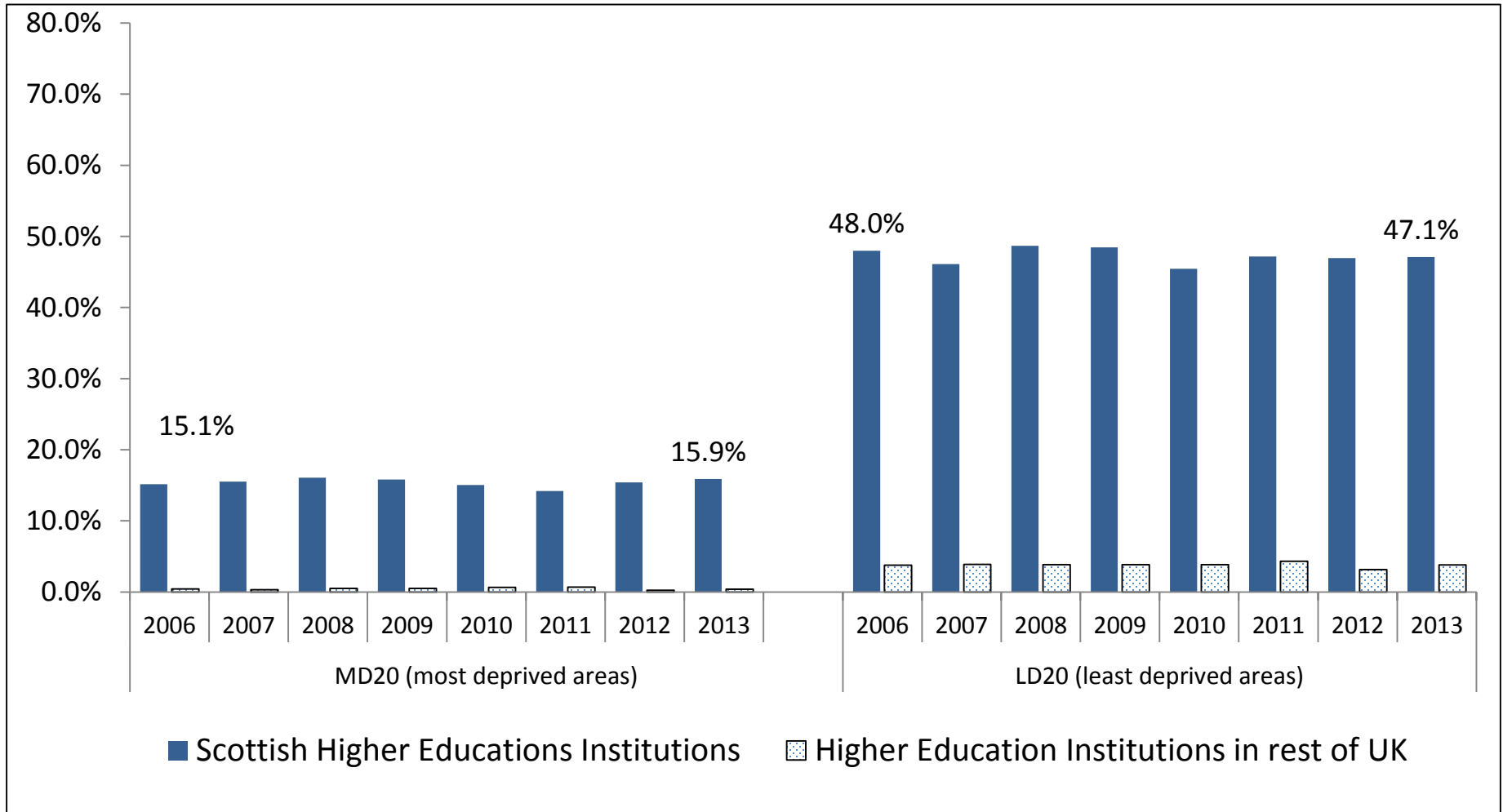
Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30) Scotland – HEIs and FECs; England – all





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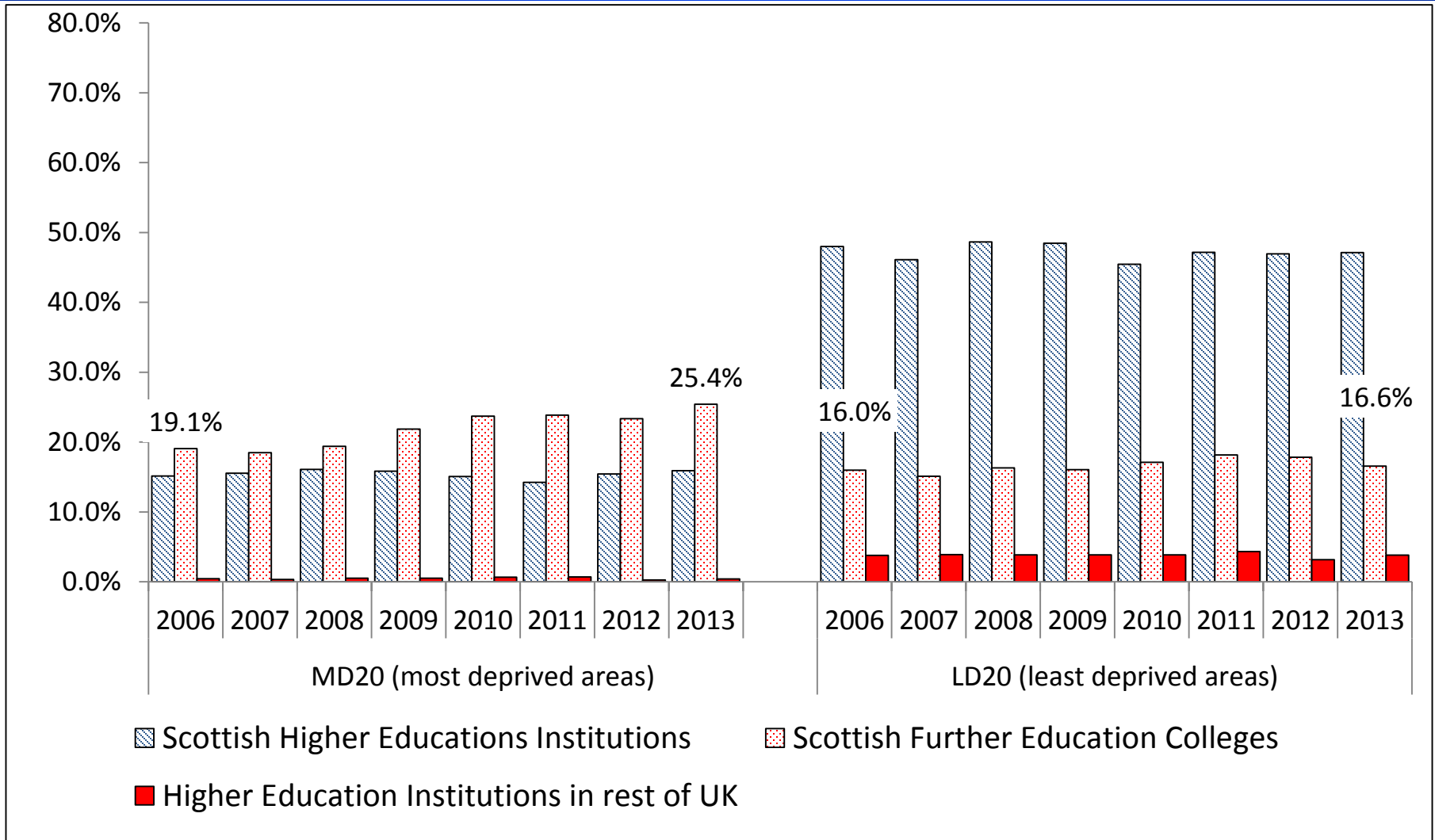
Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30) Scotland – by most and least deprived 20%: higher education institutions





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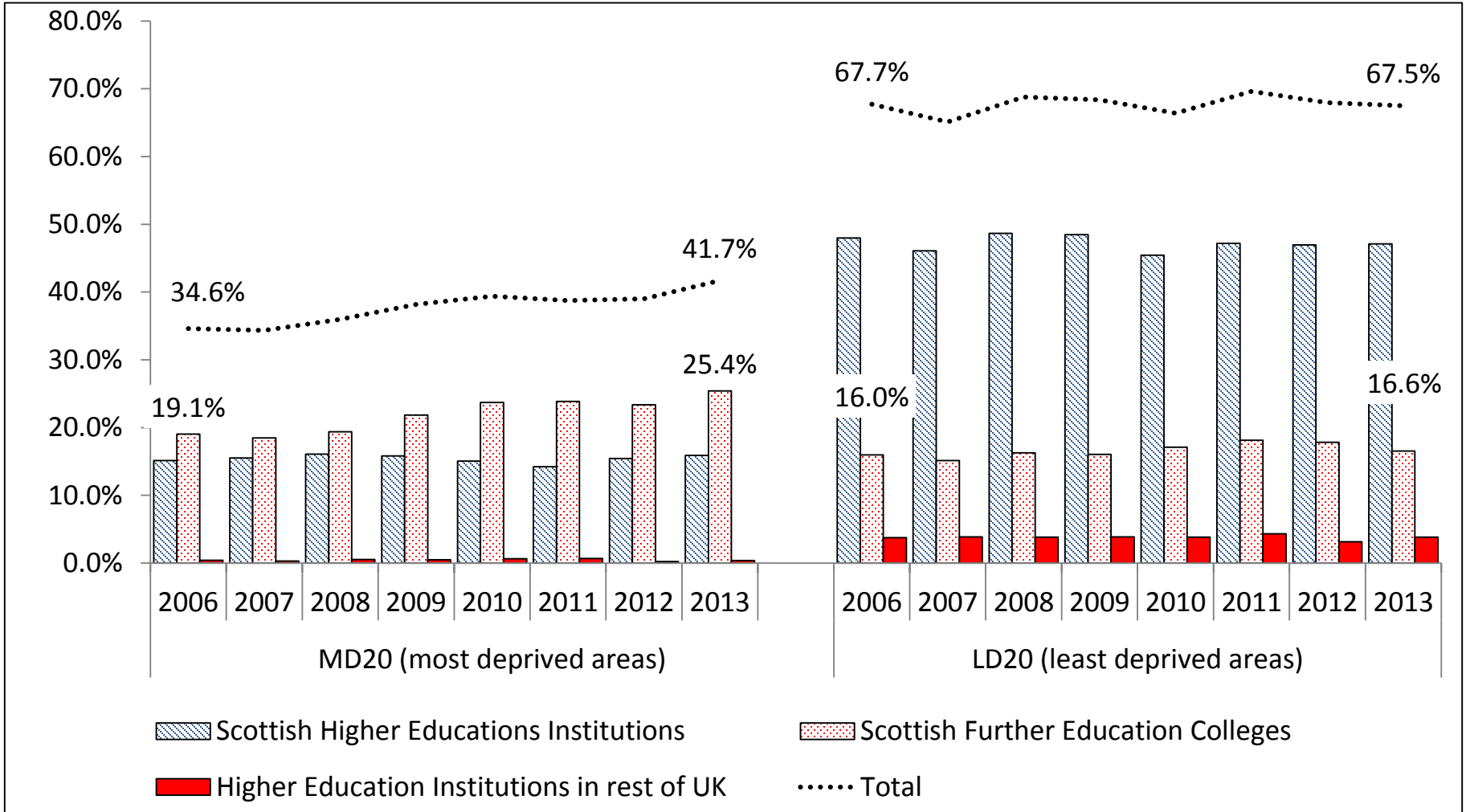
Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30) Scotland – by most and least deprived 20%: all entrance routes





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Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (to age 30) Scotland – by most and least deprived 20%: all entrance routes





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Implications of expanding HE in the college sector



- HEIPR in Scotland is higher than in the rest of the UK because it includes those on HN programmes in college as well as those on degree programmes in university.
- Compared with students from most deprived backgrounds, those from least deprived backgrounds are three times as likely to go straight to university rather than college.
- 90% of the overall growth in HEIPR for the most disadvantaged in Scotland has been due to increased entry into college level higher education.
- Colleges may offer familiar environment in home communities and cheaper for government. But some issues still to be resolved.



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Future implications for earnings of those graduating from HEIs & colleges ...

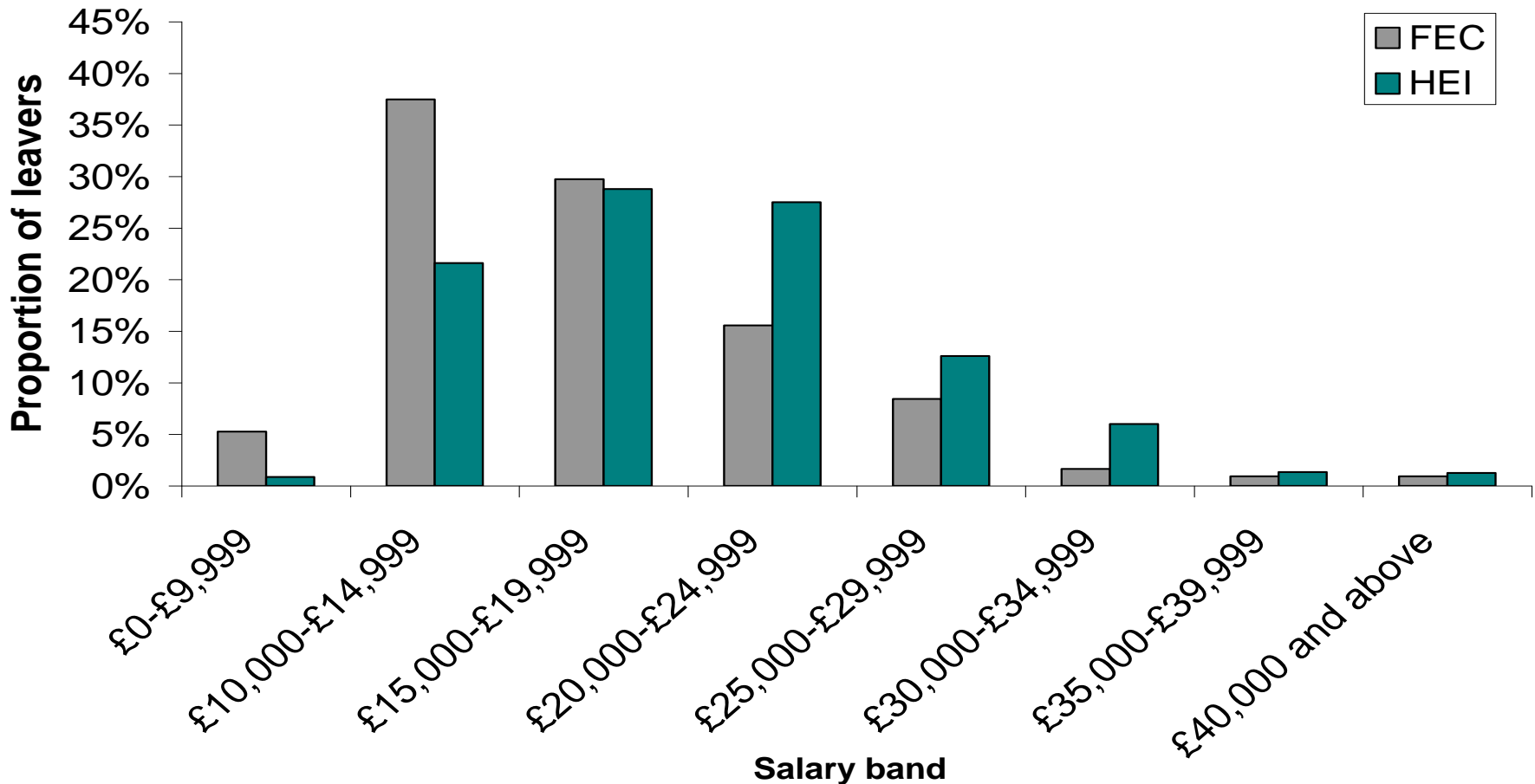


- No data available for Scotland comparing post-graduate earnings for college and university higher education graduates.
- (Limited) evidence from England suggests that university graduates likely to earn significantly more than college graduates.
- Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data will enable us to examine longer term earnings implications for college and university graduates.



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UK-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers from English HE providers in 2010–11 in full-time paid UK employment by salary band and institution type six months after graduation

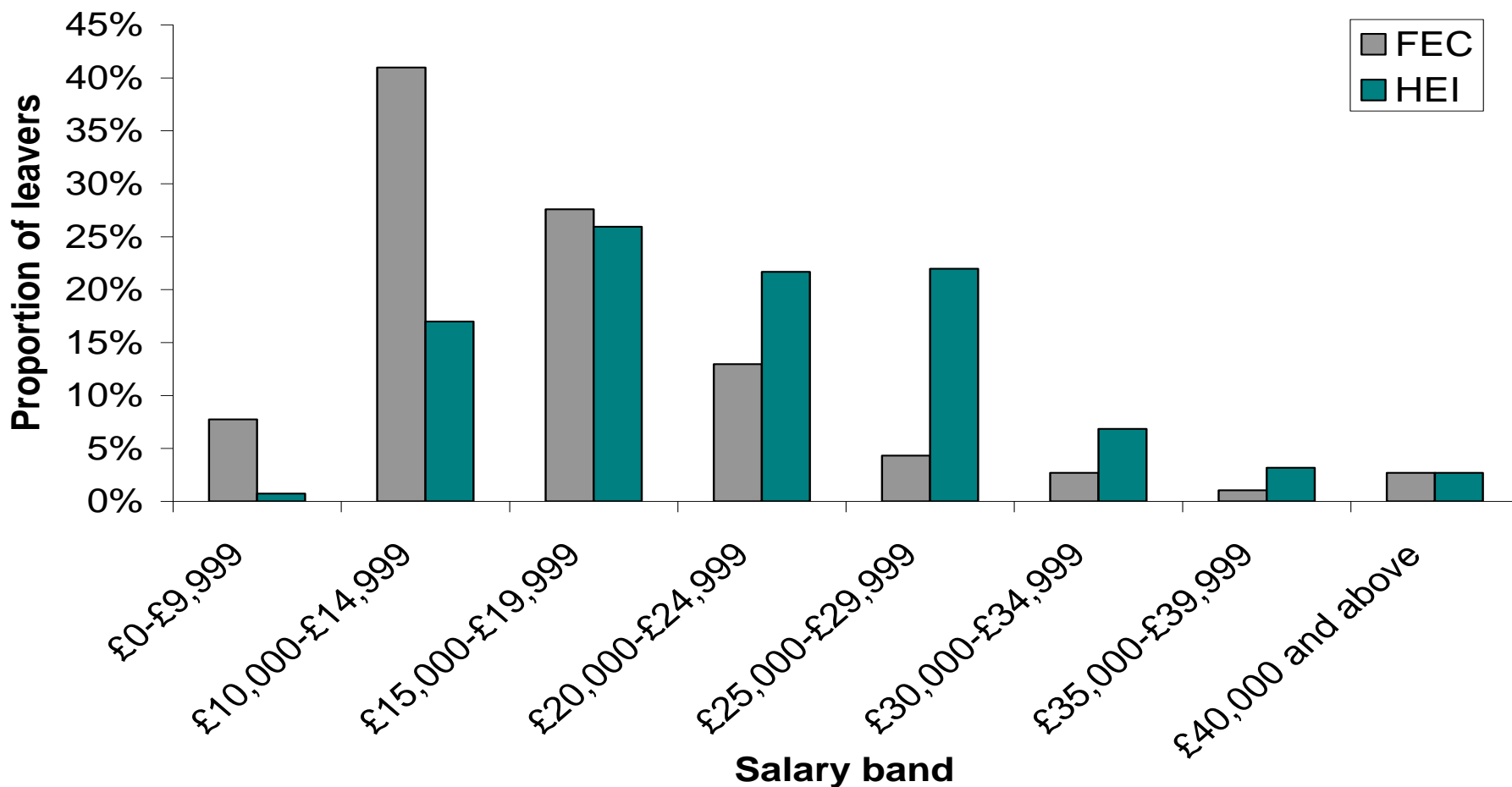


Source: HEFCE 2013



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UK-domiciled full-time foundation degree qualifiers (from English HE providers in 2010–11) in full-time paid UK employment by salary band and institution type



Source: HEFCE 2013



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Entry to HE through Colleges: equivalence issues with direct entry to university & social justice implications



- HN-level qualifications alone: lower earnings gains, access not enabled to the same range of occupations, particularly the professions.
- For the remainder who transfer to university:
 - Around 50% of these will obtain no credit or only partial credit, requiring repeat years (particularly if moving onto one of the older universities), leading to higher direct and opportunity costs.
 - For those obtaining full credit, more limited subject and institutional choice.
 - Potential transitional challenges – social/cultural/pedagogical.



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Implications & Questions



- Need for tighter articulation between colleges and universities. How is this to be achieved?
- Most articulation routes are between colleges and post-92 universities – should there be an automatic right to move more between colleges and pre-92/ancient universities? How to achieve this?
- Should there be clearer designation of some/(all?) HN provision as the first two years of a university degree?
- Should colleges be empowered to offer full degree programmes?
- Should we be concerned that students from less advantaged backgrounds are far more likely to go to college than university compared with those from more advantaged backgrounds?
- How can we ensure that participation in college based HE is fair – should we insist on equalities of participation by SIMD?