Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity

Widening access to higher education and disabled students

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Overview

- Increase in numbers of ‘non-traditional’ students including disabled student – as a result of the Dearing report, DDA Part 4 and the Singleton Report
- Data now gathered on disabled students and DSA recipients but no examination of **socioeconomic background and disability –** does it matter? If so, for whom?
- Analyses of outcomes for disabled students focus on a comparison between **Disabled – Non-disabled students – problematic**

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Increases and changes in categories (FT U-G) UK, HESA

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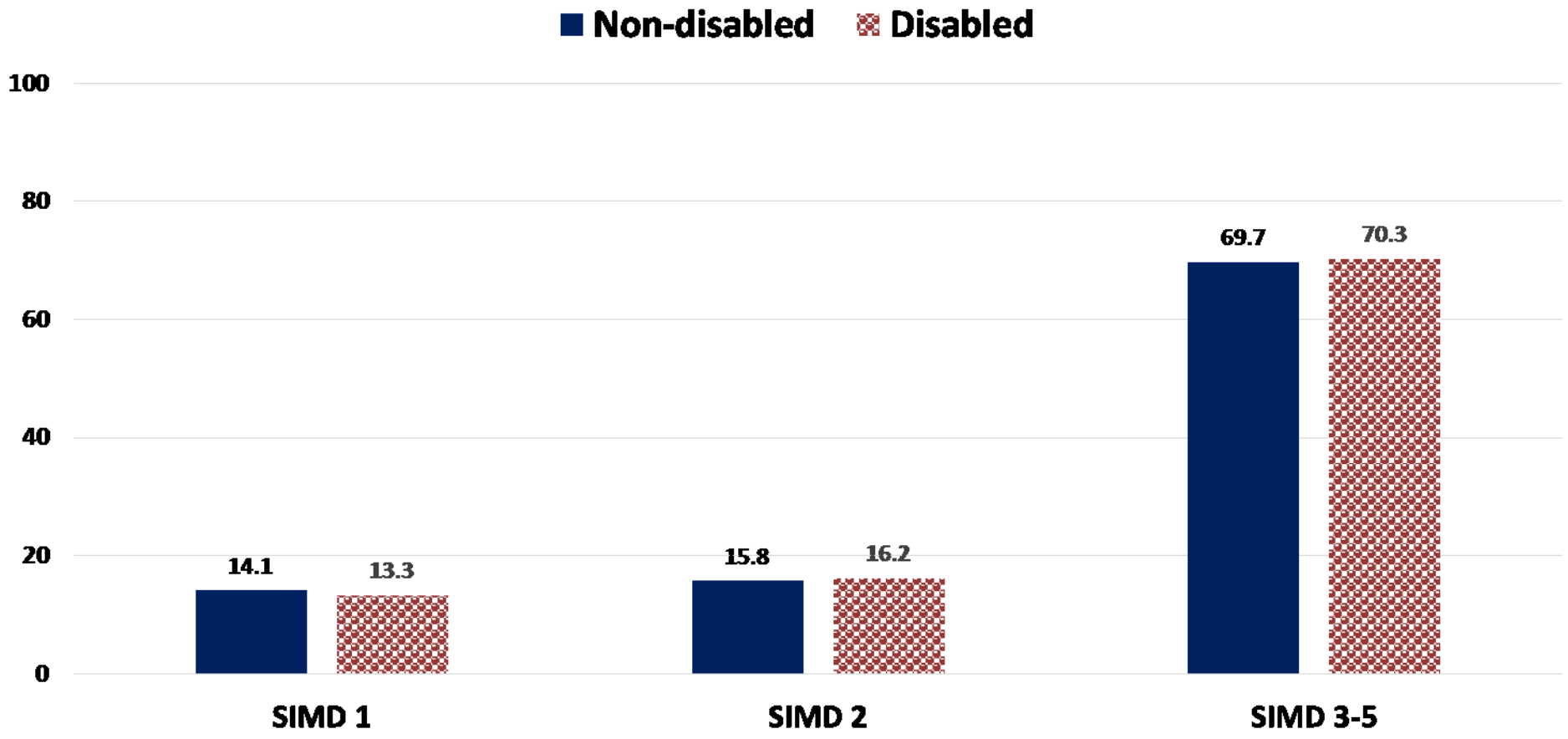
Type of impairment (self declared)	**1994-95**	**2004-05**	**2013-14**
Unseen disability	57.5	17.1	-
Dyslexia *(Specific learning difficulty)*	16.2	54.2	53.3
Other disability *(or medical condition)*	8.9	10.2	8.8
Deaf/hard of hearing	5.9	3.7	2.1
Wheelchair/mobility difficulties *(A physical impairment or mobility issues)*	2.9	2.6	3
Blind/partially sighted	3.9	2.4	0.2
Multiple disabilities *(Two or more conditions)*	3.3	4.8	5.3
Mental health difficulties	1.2	4.0	12.5
Personal care support	0.2	0.1	-
(Social communication and) Autistic spectrum disorder	-	0.9	4
Proportion of all F-T first degree students	3.6	7.1	11.3

Disabled and non-disabled students by SIMD quintiles, HESA, 2015



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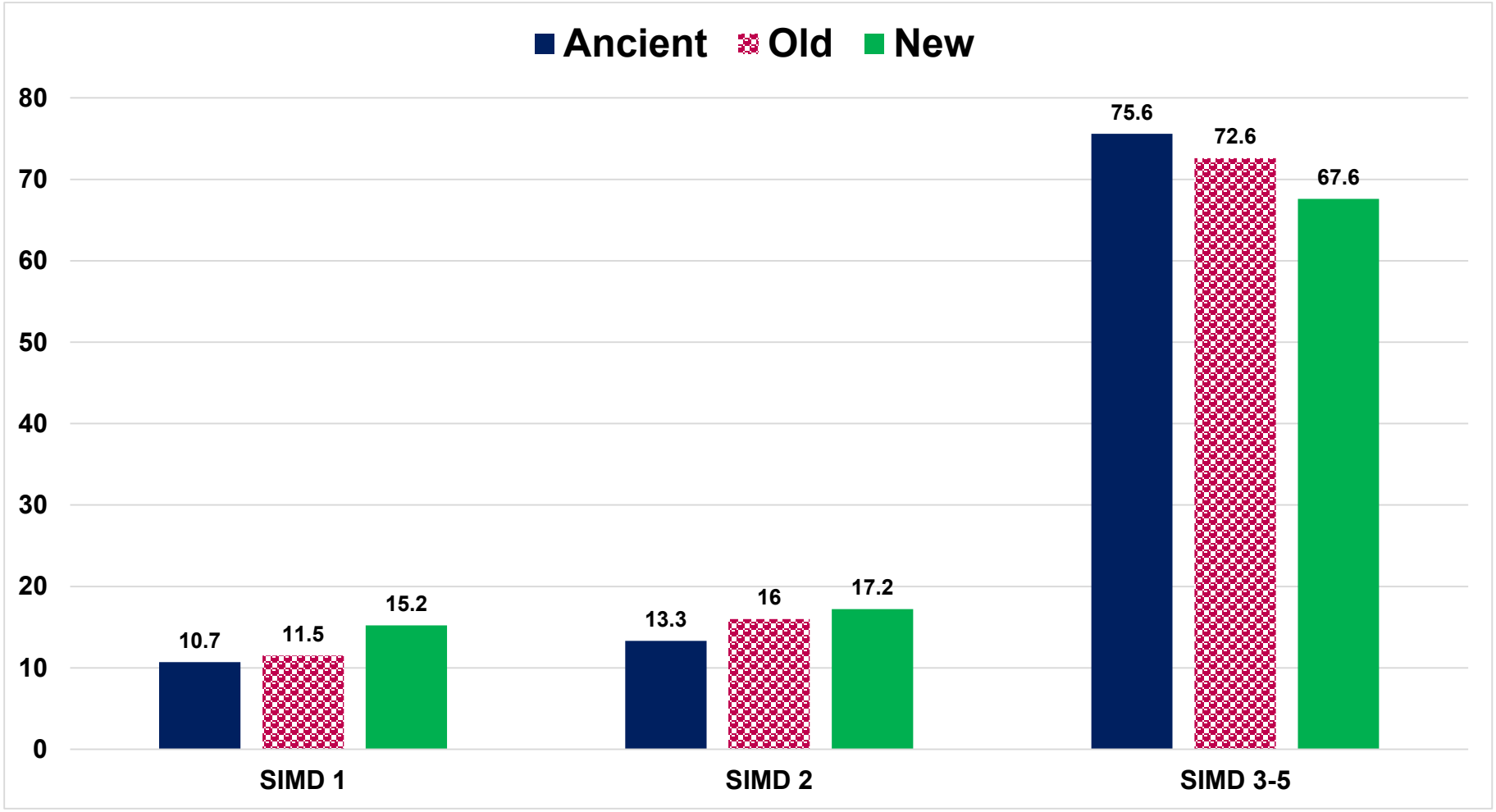
Under-representation of disabled students from less advantaged neighbourhoods – particularly in most selective universities



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BUT

The disabled student population is a heterogeneous population but socioeconomic background is skewed by dominance of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

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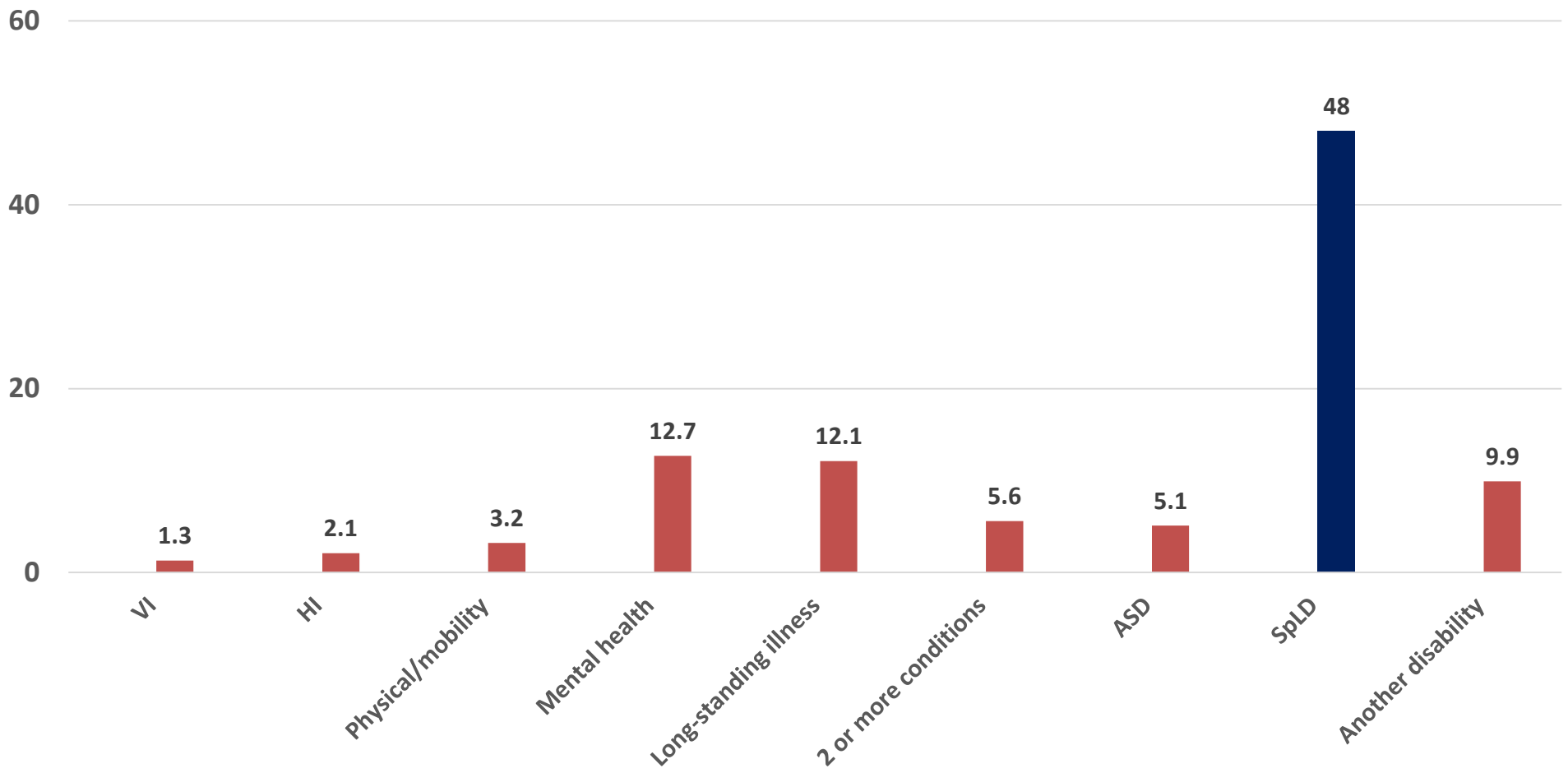
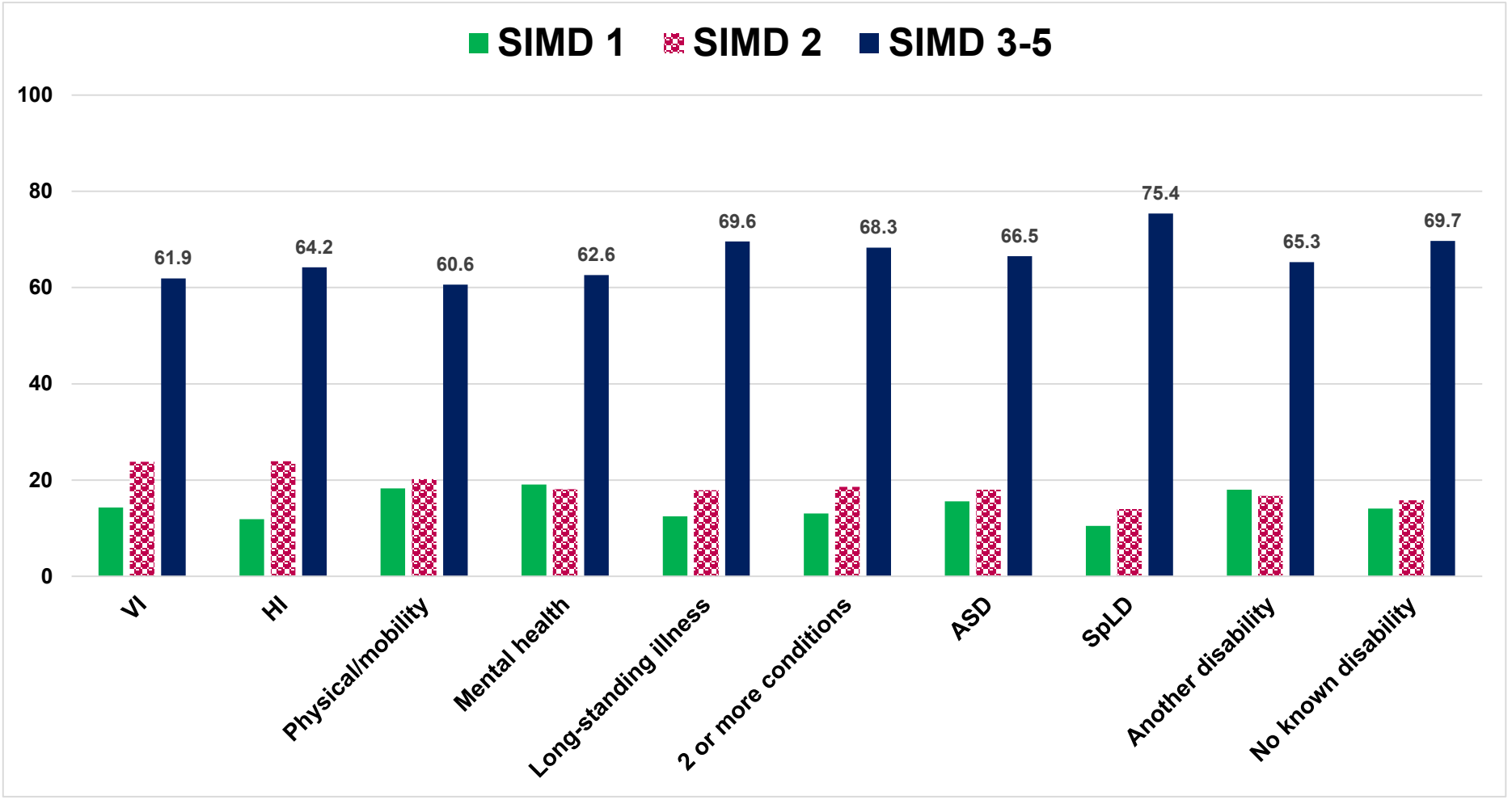
Percentage of Scottish students by type of impairment, HESA, 2015 (as a percentage of disabled student population)



Disabled students by type of impairment and SIMD quintiles,

HESA, 2015 – caution low numbers in some categories



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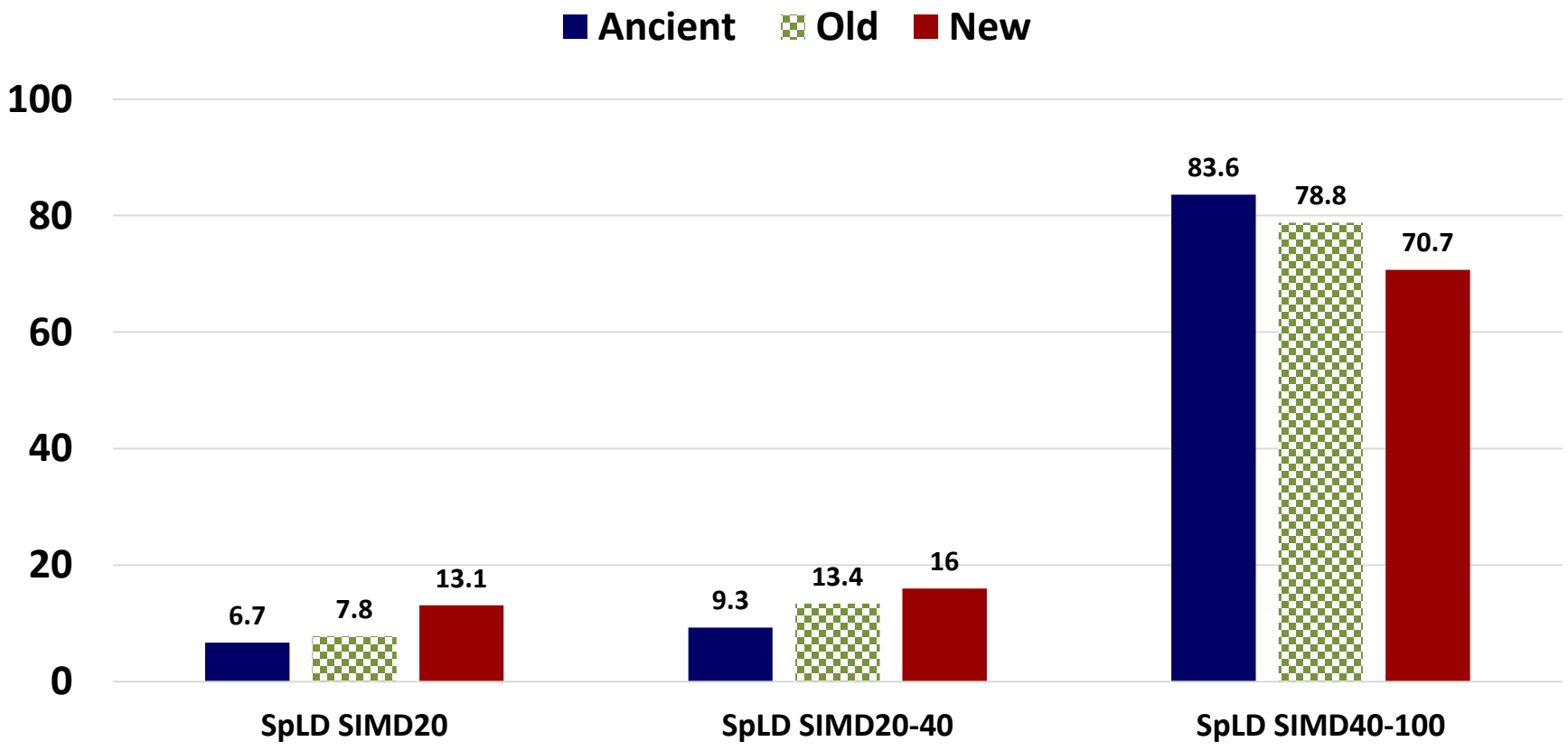
SpLD and socioeconomic background, HESA, 2015



Other data

Progression and outcomes

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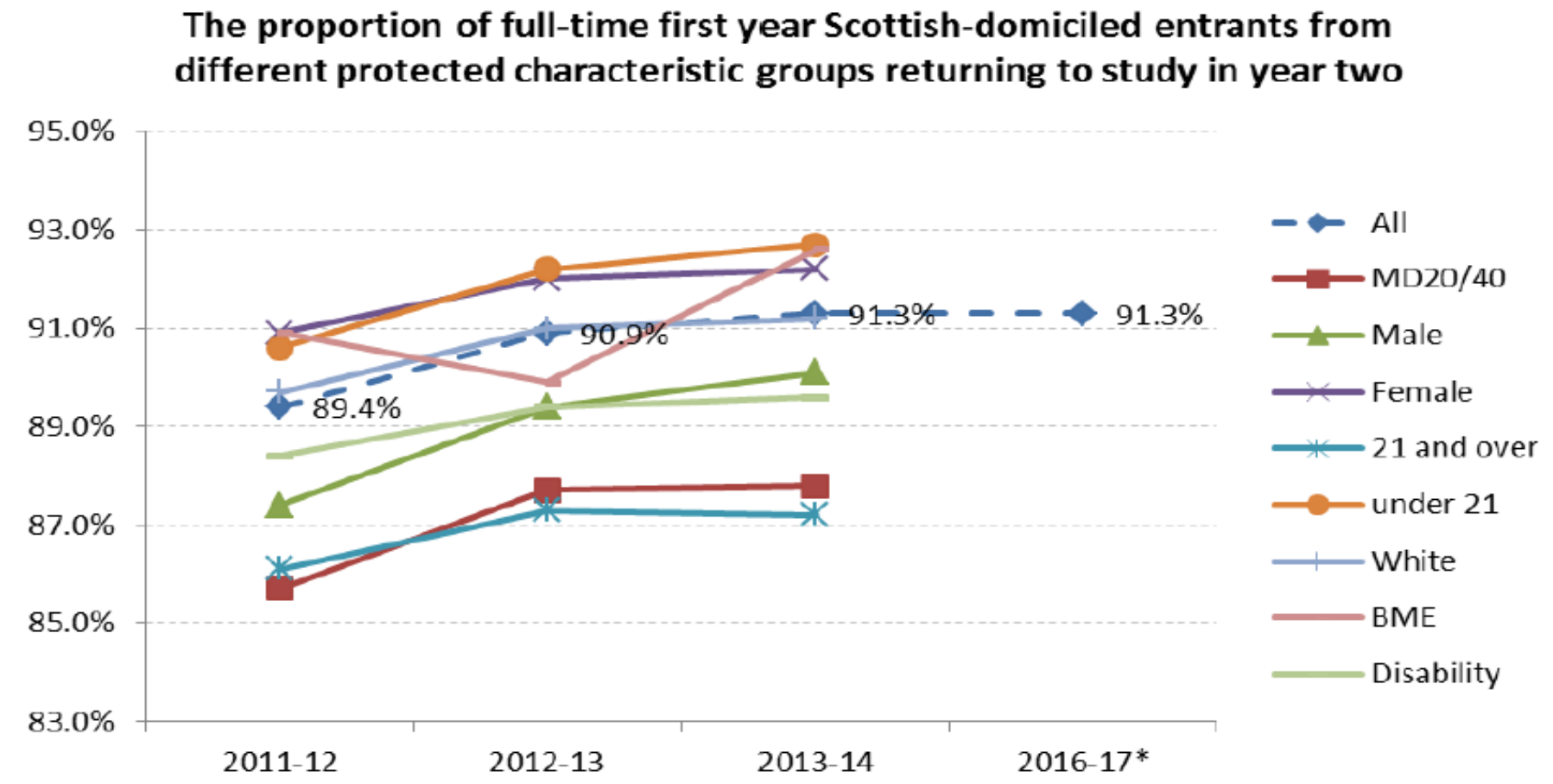
Returning to study in year 2,

Scottish Funding Council, 2015



Source: HESA

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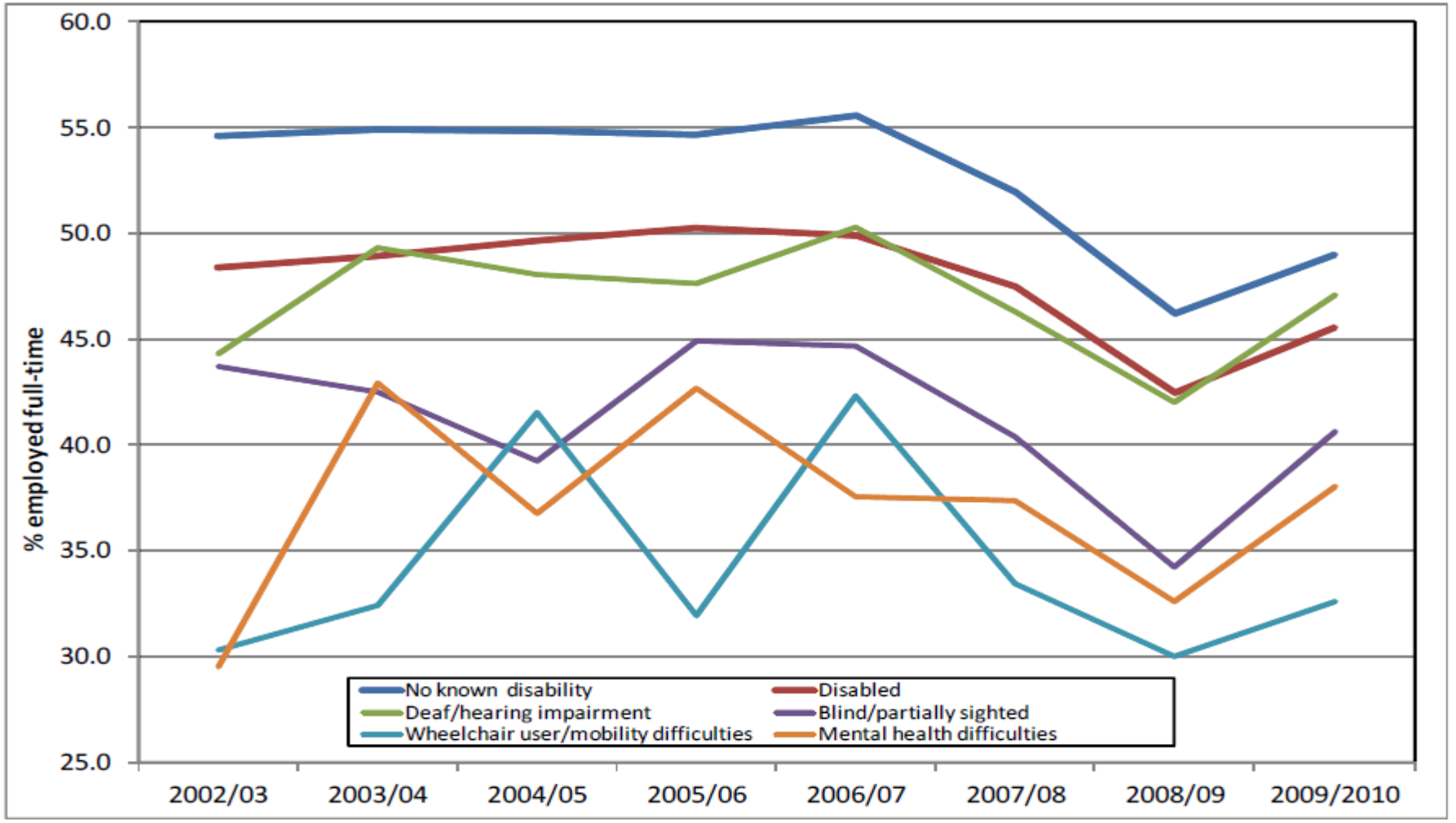
Outcomes: employment rates,

AGCAS, 2013



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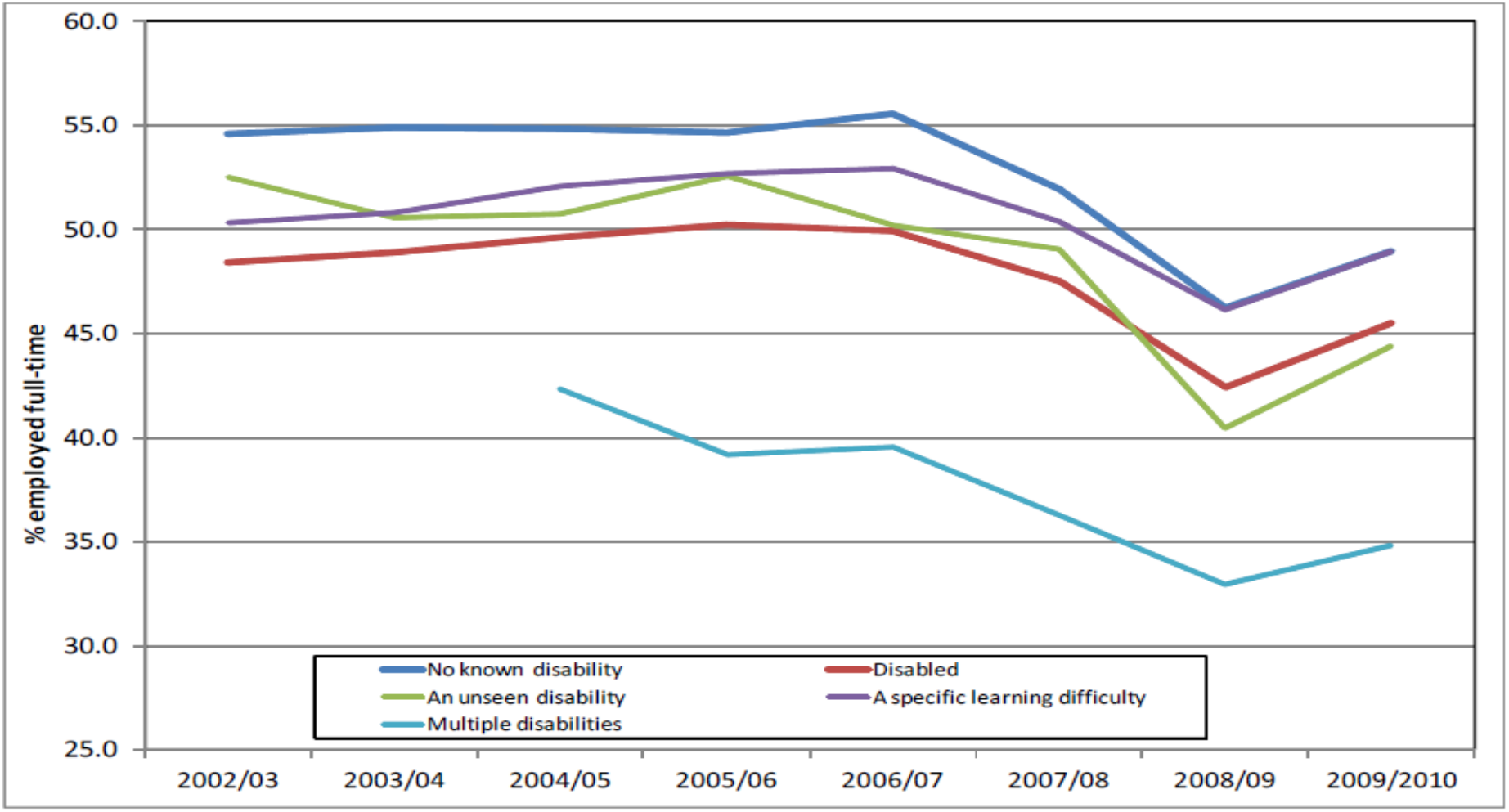
Outcomes: employment rates continued, AGCAS, 2013



The impact social background on educational experiences of deaf students

'the social networks and advocacy power of their parents were closely related to their ***socio-economic status****. They played a significant role in shaping the young people's experiences of school education, as well as their post-school journeys' (Fordyce, et al, 2013, p.113)*

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Issues and challenges

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1. Disabled students are not a homogeneous group – they have:
   - different impairments which lead to different needs
   - different outcomes
2. Disabled students from disadvantaged backgrounds are potentially doubly disadvantaged because:
   - they do not necessarily have access to social networks that can help them
   - they are probably at greater risk of dropping out
3. We need more fine-grained analysis of access to university, retention and outcomes for disabled students by type of impairment

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References

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Fuller, M., Georgeson, J., Healey, M., Hurst, A., Kelly, K., Riddell, S., Roberts, H. and Weedon, E. (2009) *Improving Disabled Students' Learning: Experiences and outcomes,* London, Routledge

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