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Developing a Critical Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education: *The Contribution of Sally Tomlinson*

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Background



- **Scotland** has high rate of 'inclusion' - slightly under 1% of children in special schools
- Emphasises provision of same high quality education to all pupils - tradition of 'democratic intellectualism'.
- Tradition arises from the Reformation (16th century) – John Knox – school in every parish (mainly boys!)

How is concept of inclusion understood in Scottish education?

- What dilemmas arise in implementing inclusive education policies?



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Competing understandings of inclusion linked to wider debates in equality and social justice



- Emphasis on sameness or difference?
- Disability theory – emphasis on removal of barriers so that disabled people are treated the same as non-disabled people.
- Inclusion of disabled children in mainstream schools, with appropriate support, seen as critical.
- But tensions evident within disability movement – Some Deaf people argue the case for separate special schools to enable Deaf children to use BSL with peer group – right of linguistic minority.



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The development of policies on inclusion in Scotland



As in England, Warnock Report (1978) extremely influential.

Attempted to abolish categories of difficulty and recommended integration – but still saw role for special schools.

Inclusion seen as having different meanings for different children:

- ❖ **Locational** – Children on same site but may spend much time apart
- ❖ **Social** – Children mix during break-time, lunchtime, for some classes e.g. art
- ❖ **Functional** – All children following mainstream curriculum & in mainstream class



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The development of inclusive policies in Scotland



- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 – established presumption of mainstreaming – criticised by some teachers as 'going too far' – but how radical has the change been?
- Some special schools closed – but many more special units opened – sometimes referred to as 'inclusion' units'.
- Children in special units often counted as being in mainstream – but may spend little time there.

Reasons for placing child in separate provision:

- If inclusion would involve unreasonable public expenditure
- Be against best interests of child or other children in class
- Parents request special placement



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Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004



- Ongoing focus on inclusion – but definition of special needs population shifts over time.
- Special educational needs – referred to children with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Additional support needs covers children whose difficulties are mainly social (e.g. children whose parents misuse drugs & alcohol, children of travellers, children of refugees and asylum seekers, looked after children.
- Abolished Record of Needs (formal documents given to about 2% of Scottish children) – replaced with Co-ordinated Support Plan (covers about 0.3% of pupils).
- Changes in the way that statistics about ASN are gathered, and who is included, has led to a considerable increase in children with ASN – 5% in 2005 and 14.6% in 2011 – ILLUSORY INCREASE?



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Overall rates of ASN (Scotland)/SEN (England)

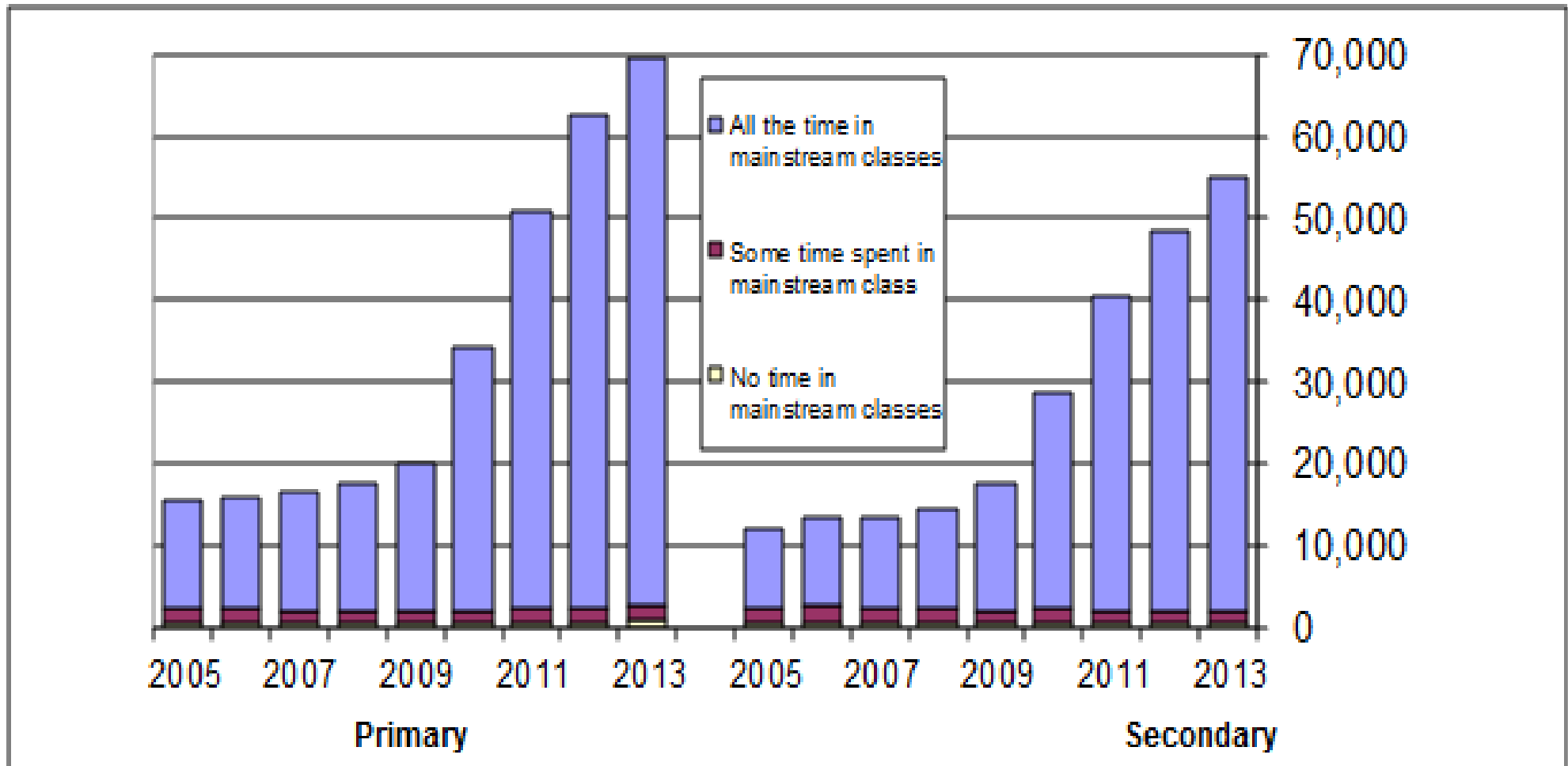


Overall rate of SEN decreasing in England, overall rate of ASN increasing in Scotland



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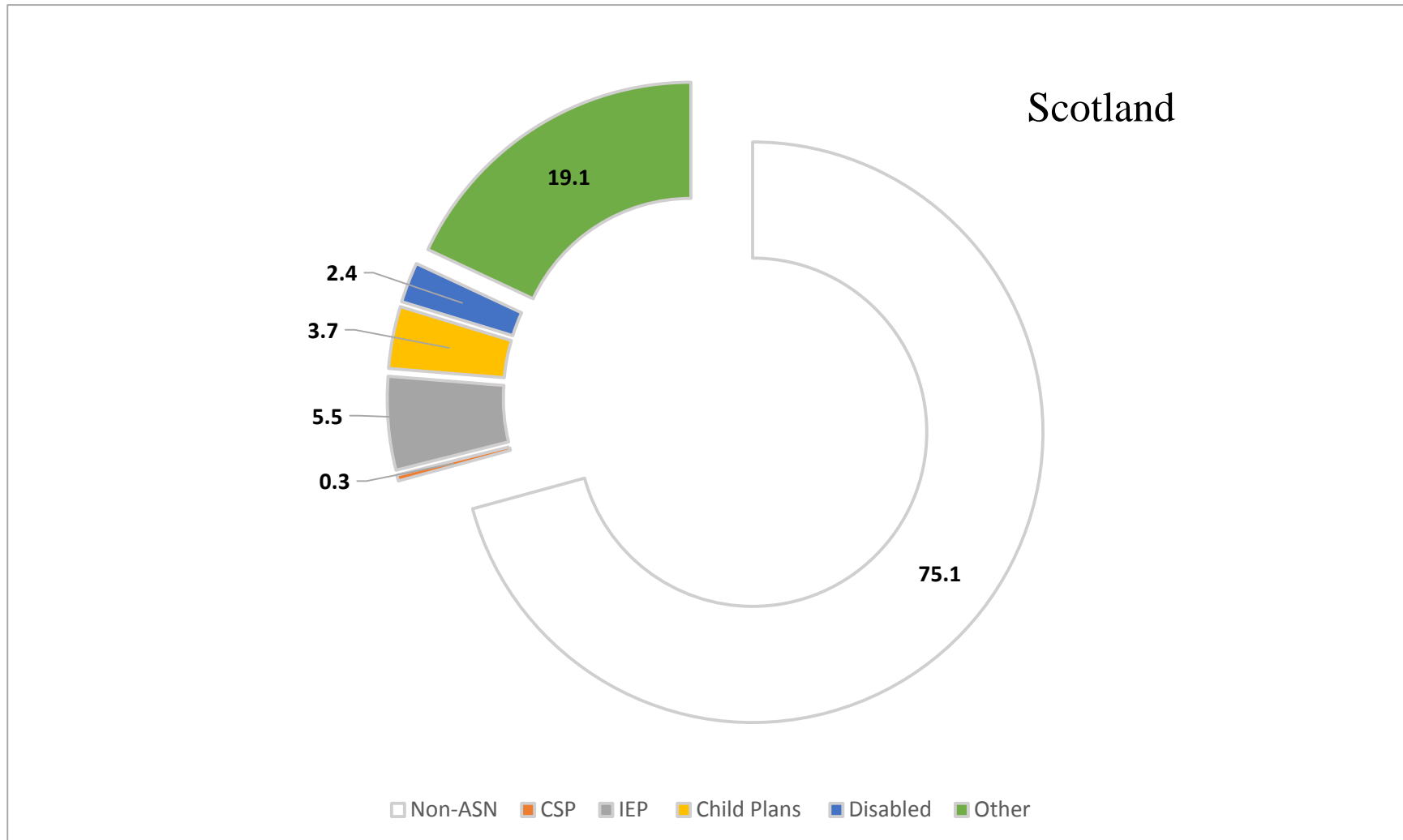
Number of children with ASN and use of special and mainstream settings





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Snapshot of ASN plans

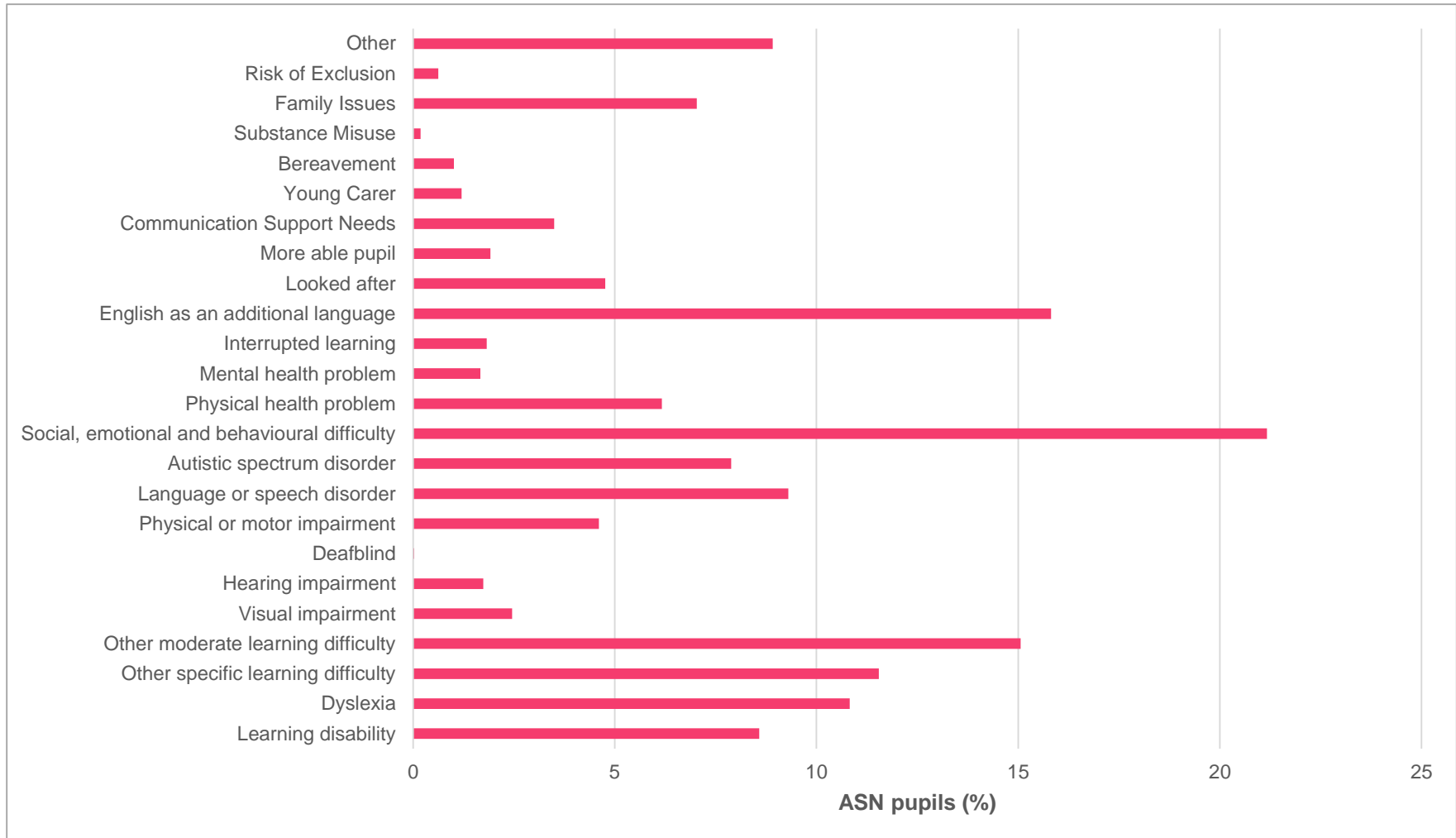




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Type of need – Growing number of categories

Marked expansion in non-normative categories e.g. SEBD.

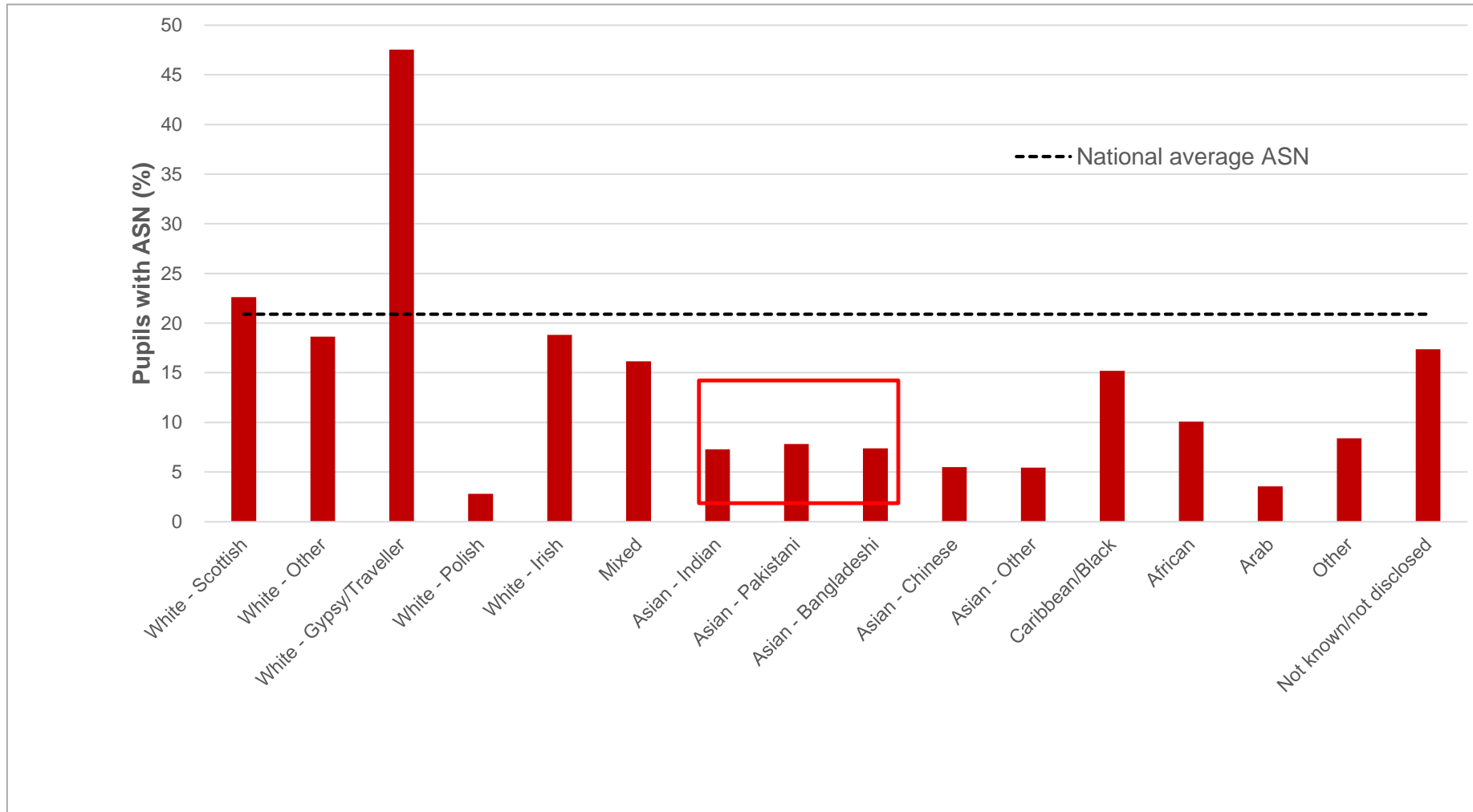




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Ethnicity

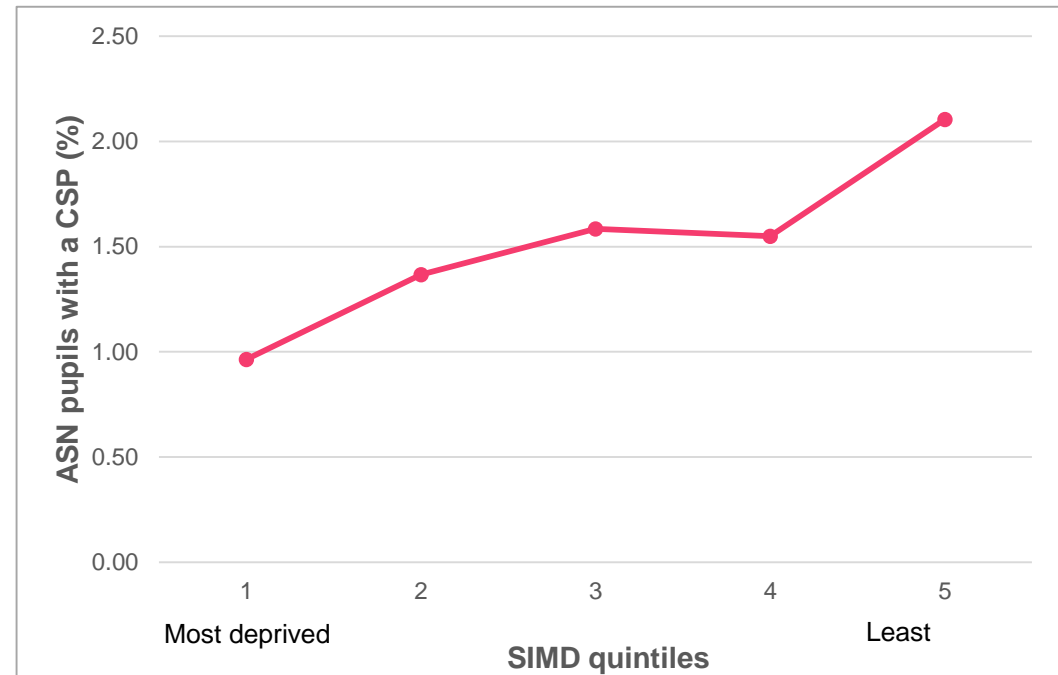
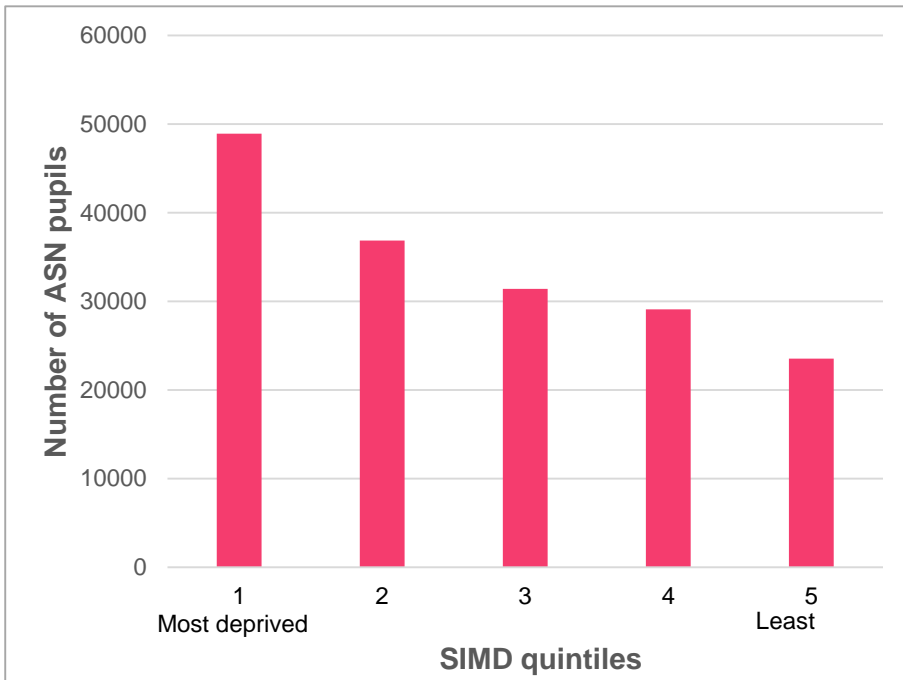
when category of ASN removed, children of Asian heritage
less likely to be identified than other groups





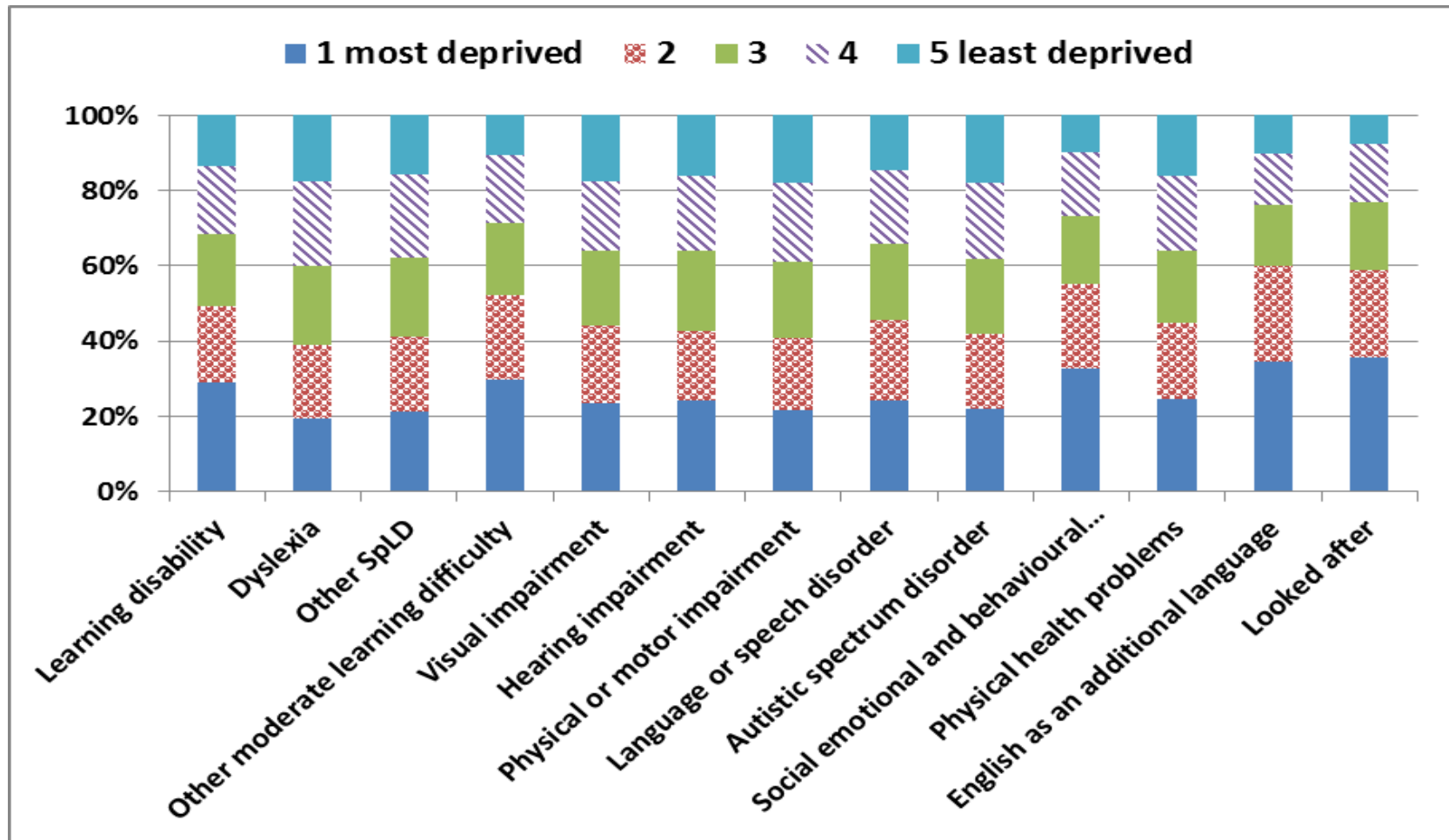
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Social Deprivation & ASN Scotland



Higher numbers of ASN pupils in most deprived areas
More use of CSPs in less deprived areas

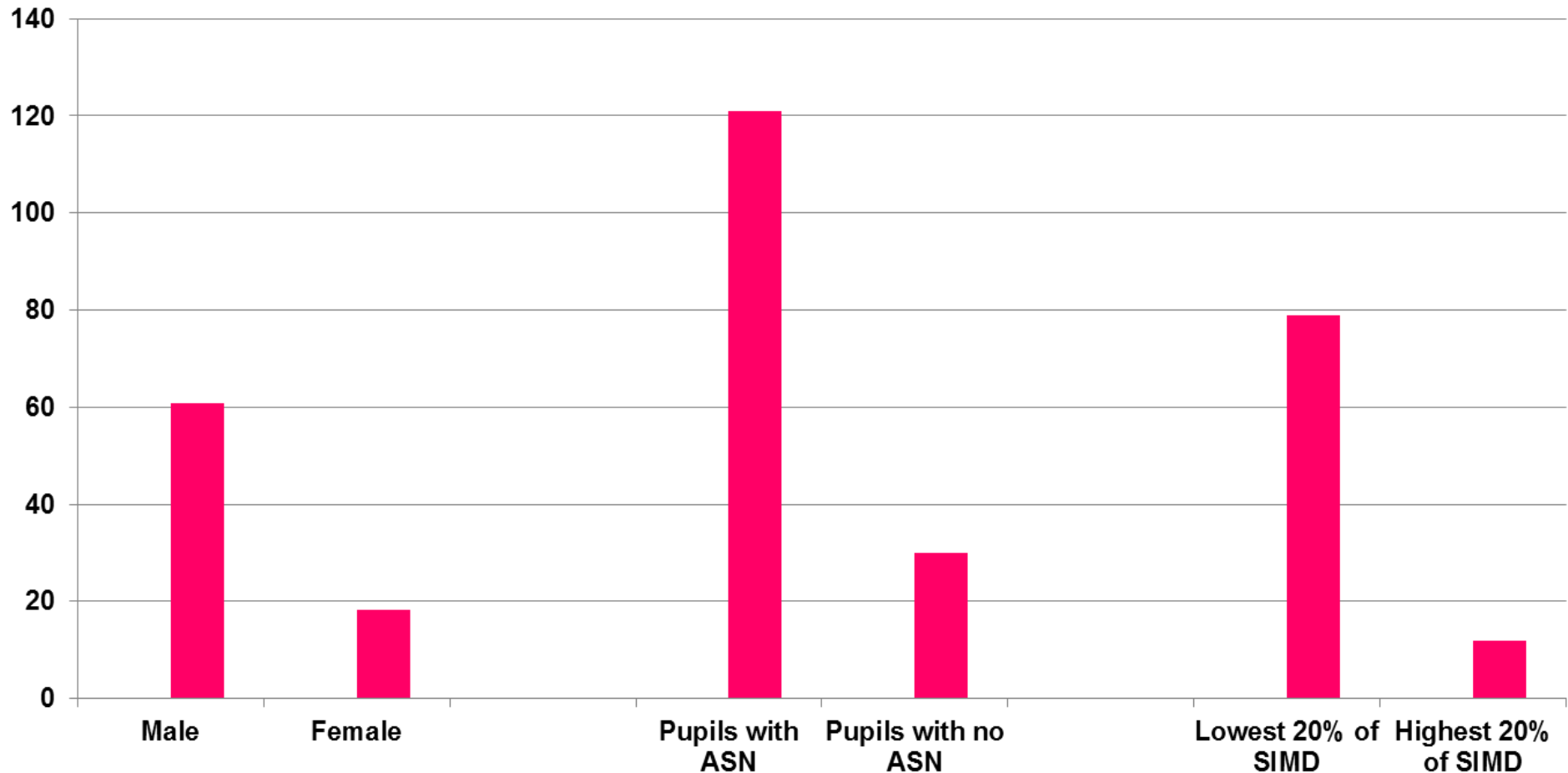
Links between deprivation & ASN





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Exclusions, ASN and social deprivation, rate per 1000 pupils





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ASL Act & Parents' and Children's Rights



- ASfL legislation attempted to strengthen parents' rights by according greater rights of appeal.
- New dispute resolution measures included tribunal, adjudication and mediation – but rarely used.
- Children and young people are rarely involved in disputes or decisions about funding.
- 2016 amendments to ASfL Act strengthen rights of children over 12 with capacity – but linked to CSPs which are gradually disappearing



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Summary of trends: Support for inclusion but creation of exclusion



- For 30 years, strong focus on inclusion in Scottish education – accords with Scotland’s image of itself as a more collectivist country than England
- But large gap between attainment levels of schools & LAs linked to levels of social deprivation (OECD, 2007)
- Pupil attainment: top 20% improving - bottom 20% static
- No decline in proportion of children in special (‘inclusion’) units (around 1%)
- Exclusions rose – have recently stabilised and decreased slightly
- Strong (and often unrecognised) links between social deprivation & disability – particularly for males



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Backlash against inclusion of children with ASN



- Teachers associate inclusion agenda with discipline problems – concerns about increase in violence. Also anxiety around National Improvement Framework.
- Teachers supportive of inclusion of disabled children, especially relatively able children with physical or sensory impairments – but worried about disruptive pupils – would like to see more pupils excluded (boys & socially disadvantaged groups).
- Teacher unions call for ‘additional off-site behaviour facilities for children and young people displaying particularly challenging behaviour’.
- Scottish Government currently consulting on presumption of mainstreaming.



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Experiences of disabled children & their parents



Professionals wary of parents' rights discourse:

I think it's [the ASL Act] strengthened the rights of those parents I described earlier who have this sense of entitlement and hostility to basically be frivolous and vexatious. (Pupil and Parent Manager)

Parents complain about lack of respect & attention to rights:

There has been no support whatsoever, even though he is starting P7 and was diagnosed in P2. the school has been unhelpful, even issuing a letter of exclusion. We have had to fight for basic rights

(Parent of child with diagnosis of ADHD)



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Conclusion



Scottish education has tried to treat all children the same – emphasis on universal provision.

Majority of children with ASN educated in mainstream schools – but significant minority of parents dissatisfied with provision.

Current research explores extent to which children with ASN able to use new rights of participation and redress

Major gaps between rhetoric & reality – tendency for discourse of inclusion to mask exclusionary practices.



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Questions for discussion



What is driving increase in number & proportion of children with ASN in Scotland (as opposed to reduction in England)? What are the pros and cons of counting more children as having ASN? Why is less use being made of CSPs in Scotland over time?

Why do you think there is a link between neighbourhood deprivation and identification of ASN?

Why do you think the tribunal is relatively little used in Scotland c.f. England?

Why do parents and children with ASN find it difficult to use their rights?

Why do you think the Government is currently conducting a review of mainstreaming – and what do you think might be its outcome?