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Lord Willets
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Dear David

4th March 2020

Thank you for your contributions during the debate on The Sutton Trust's *Mobility Manifesto* and Social Mobility Commission's *State of the Nation* report on 29 January 2020

You asked me to confirm the percentage of the number of people from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds who go to university.

In response to this, the measure of disadvantage used in relation to higher education is POLAR, which is a measure of participation by local area, rather than of income. According to this measure, 21.6% of English 18 year-olds from the most disadvantaged quintile entered higher education in 2019, while 48% of English 18 year-olds from the most advantaged quintile entered HE, a gap indicating that the most advantaged are now 2.2 times more likely to enter higher education than the most disadvantaged. This gap has fallen over recent years; it stood at 3.1 in 2009.

Despite this, continued progress on this front remains a key ambition of this Government. The Office for Students, as the regulator for higher education, has set the sector a number of stretching targets to improve access and participation, including one aimed at further reducing the gap at the most selective providers.

I hope this answer has been useful and will place a copy in the house libraries.

EB Berridge

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE