AGCAS

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A report on the outcomes of disabled graduates from the 2021/22 academic year

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REPORT ENDORSED BY shaw trust

We welcome the latest What Happens Next? report from AGCAS, which sheds light on the higher education outcomes of disabled graduates. Understanding these experiences and outcomes is key to identifying and removing the barriers many disabled graduates face.

At Shaw Trust, breaking down these barriers is at the heart of what we do. We want to see a society where everyone has the opportunity to gain rewarding work. That's why we offer people-centred services tailored to individual needs, and work closely with educators, employers, and career professionals to help disabled people to overcome obstacles to meaningful work. We're encouraged to see that the report shows that disabled graduates are as likely as graduates with no known disability to feel their graduate activity is meaningful - a vital part of personal wellbeing.

The report also highlights how important this work is - not just ours, but that of the many organisations and individuals who support disabled people. Disabled graduates, particularly those with autism, continue to face higher unemployment rates across all qualification levels. Disabled graduates may also face further disadvantage dependent on their gender or ethnic background. This is results in a real loss of talent and opportunity for individuals, the UK labour market and the wider economy. Supporting the success of disabled students and graduates requires a collective effort from charities, universities, career professionals, employers and government.

We want all disabled graduates to secure outcomes that they can celebrate, and are pleased to endorse this report as part of our collaborative work towards this aim.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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With thanks to the AGCAS Disability Task Group and the AGCAS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Party for their input and support.

Published by AGCAS in April 2025

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FOREWORD

This is the first edition of *What Happens Next?* released during my tenure as Chief Executive Officer at AGCAS, but it is the twenty-first edition of this vital long-running report series. For more than two decades, AGCAS has produced *What Happens Next?* reports, to increase understanding and awareness of the outcomes of disabled graduates on leaving higher education. This work is crucially important, and I am proud to introduce our 2025 report.

Earlier this year, our work on the employment outcomes of disabled graduates led to an invitation to contribute to the Welsh Parliament's Equality and Social Justice Committee report, *Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: tackling the disability employment gap*[1]. With previous editions of *What Happens Next?* cited on the Office for Students website[2] and in The Buckland Review of Autism Employment[3], the wider need for information on the outcomes of disabled graduates is indisputable.

This report focuses on the graduates who left UK higher education in 2021/22, using data from the national Graduate Outcomes Survey. For the first time in the history of the *What Happens Next?* series, we have drawn in the graduate voice, exploring whether graduates feel their activity is meaningful and fits with their future plans, and also incorporating their perspectives on whether they are using what they learned during their time in higher education. Given the continued disability employment gaps explored elsewhere in this year's report, it is positive to see that disabled graduates are as likely as graduates with no known disability to feel their graduate activity is meaningful.

The report also incorporates consideration of further personal characteristics for the first time. By including the gender and ethnic background of disabled graduates, we explore the double disadvantage faced by some disabled graduates looking to enter the workforce. We know that disabled graduates bring a wealth of diversity, resilience, and unique perspectives to the workplace, which can be invaluable to employers seeking innovative and dedicated employees. Despite these contributions, disabled graduates often continue to face significant difficulties in the job market. This year we have found that disabled graduates' outcomes do vary significantly by gender and ethnic background, with more notable challenges for some groups of disabled graduates.

[1] Welsh Parliament - Equality and Social Justice Committee, Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap. March 2025. Available at: https://senedd.wales/media/t1ilh0rq/cr-ld17039-e.pdf
[2] Office for Students, Support for disabled students. Available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/support-for-disabled-students/useful-resources/
[3] UK Government – Department for Work & Pensions, The Buckland Review of Autism Employment. 28 February 2024. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-buckland-review-of-autism-employment-report-and-recommendations/the-buckland-review-of-autism-employment-report-and-recommendations

Across the AGCAS membership, careers practitioners and employability experts work with students and graduates to help them identify and secure the graduate opportunities that align to their individual ambitions. The work of our members is ever-growing, including integrating employability in curriculum, one-to-one or group guidance, and developing work-based learning opportunities. However, it is all delivered with the ultimate aim of ensuring all students are equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to secure the graduate outcome that is right for them.

As a series, *What Happens Next?* contributes to the understanding and awareness of all higher education stakeholders. It shines a light on persistent disadvantage and delivers a call for action, to support inclusivity and equity across graduate outcomes. Thank you for taking the time to read this important research.

Martin Edmondson
Chief Executive Officer
AGCAS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the twenty-first *What Happens Next?* publication, and the fourth report using data from the national Graduate Outcomes (GO) survey to present an analysis of the outcomes of disabled graduates 15 months after they leave UK higher education. Over the past two decades, through *What Happens Next?*, AGCAS has explored the impact that having a disability can have on graduates' outcomes.

For the first time, the report dataset has been expanded to include graduate data beyond disability and qualification level. By including data on ethnic background and gender, this report more fully reflects the layered and multiple challenges that disabled graduates may face. The report has also been expanded to include 'graduate voice' measures. These GO survey questions allow graduates to identify the extent to which they feel their activity 15 months after graduation is meaningful and fits with their future plans, and to assess whether they are currently utilising what they learnt during their studies.

The report uses data from the 2021/22 GO survey to understand the outcomes of disabled graduates and compare these with outcomes for graduates with no known disability. Throughout this report, 'disabled graduates' refers to GO survey respondents whose Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record showed that they identified themselves as having a disability or learning difficulty during their course, and 'graduates with no known disability' refers to respondents whose HESA student record did not show any disclosure of a disability during their course (see section 2.3 for further guidance on report terminology). This report describes the number and proportion of graduates disclosing a disability at different qualification levels and the types of disabilities disclosed, as well as the outcomes of disabled graduates by qualification level, ethnic background, gender and type of disability. For employed graduates, the report includes further evaluation of their basis of employment, their reason for taking the role, the level of skill in their role, and the extent to which their qualification was required.

Overall, the report found that disabled graduates were less likely to be engaged in activity that fits with their future plans but they were as likely as graduates with no known disability to feel that their graduate activity is meaningful. However, across all demographic groups explored in this report, disabled graduates continue to experience employment gaps, higher levels of unemployment and potentially poorer outcomes from higher education. This was exacerbated by intersectional disadvantage for some graduates, with more significant employment and outcome gaps evident by both ethnic background and by gender. Autistic graduates at all qualification levels, from all ethnic backgrounds and of all genders, experience the lowest levels of full-time employment. They also experience a poorer fit between current activity and future plans, lower levels of self-reported meaningful activity post-graduation, and lower levels of highly skilled and permanent employment.

1.1. Key findings

Disclosure of disability

- Levels of disability disclosure were highest amongst first degree undergraduates, lower for postgraduate taught, and lower still for postgraduate research. This pattern is consistent with earlier years of *What Happens Next?* analysis.
- Levels of disability disclosure have consistently increased year on year at all qualification levels.
- Graduates with specific learning differences continued to have the highest proportion of disclosures at all qualification levels. Mental health conditions were the second most commonly disclosed disability across all qualification levels.
- White graduates and graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds were notably more likely to have disclosed a disability whilst at university than Black or Asian graduates, or those from other or unknown ethnic backgrounds.
- Male graduates are notably less likely to have disclosed a disability whilst at university than any other gender
- Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth had a higher rate of disability disclosure than any other group.

Graduate activity by qualification level and disability

- The proportion of all disabled graduates in full-time employment was lower than the proportion of all graduates with no known disability in full-time employment, at all qualification levels.
- Since 2020/21, there has been a small drop in first degree graduates in full-time employment, from 54% to 52% for disabled graduates, and from 61% to 60% for graduates with no known disability.
- Unemployment for disabled graduates from first degrees increased slightly from 6% in 2020/21 to 7% in 2021/22, whereas for graduates with no known disability unemployment remained at 5%.
- The postgraduate taught cohort saw a three percentage point increase in levels of full-time employment since 2020/21, from 58% to 61% for disabled graduates, and from 67% to 70% for graduates with no known disability.
- Total employment of disabled graduates at all qualification levels was lower than that of graduates with no known disability.
- The total disability employment gap in 2021/22 decreased in line with qualification level i.e. the higher the level of qualification, the lower the total disability employment gap.
- All disabled graduates from first degrees and postgraduate taught degrees, apart from graduates with specific learning differences, had levels of full-time employment that were at least five percentage points lower than those for graduates with no known disability.

- All disabled postgraduate research graduates, apart from graduates with specific learning differences and graduates with mental health conditions, had levels of full-time employment that were at least five percentage points lower than those seen for graduates with no known disability.
- Autistic graduates from first degree and postgraduate taught courses experienced lower full-time employment, higher part-time employment and higher unemployment than any other group.

Graduate activity by ethnic background and disability

- Disabled graduates have lower rates of full-time employment than graduates with no known disability across all ethnic backgrounds.
- The difference in full-time employment rates for disabled graduates, when compared to graduates from the same ethnic background with no known disability, ranges from 7% for Asian and Black graduates, to 11% for graduates from other ethnic backgrounds.
- Disabled graduates from other ethnic backgrounds reported a four percentage point difference between unemployment levels for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability.
- Across all ethnic backgrounds, autistic graduates reported markedly lower levels of full-time employment, and levels of unemployment that were at least two times those of their counterparts with no known disabilities.
- Black graduates with mobility/physical disabilities or two or more conditions, and Black deaf/hearing impaired graduates also had levels of unemployment twice as high as those of Black graduates with no known disability.

Graduate activity by gender and disability

- Across all genders, disabled graduates have lower rates of full-time employment than graduates with no known disability.
- 55% of both male and female disabled graduates were in full-time employment; lower than graduates with no known disability with full-time employment rates of 64% (male) and 62% (female).
- Disabled graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth had a 14 percentage point difference in their level of full-time employment when compared to disabled graduates whose gender identity remained the same as at birth.
- Disabled female graduates of all disability types, apart from those with specific learning differences, were less likely to report full-time employment than female graduates with no known disability.
- Autistic female graduates had an unemployment rate more than double that of female graduates with no known disability.

- Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth who were autistic or had two or more conditions reported lower levels of full-time employment than graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth with no known disability.
- Male graduates of all disability types were less likely to report full-time employment than male graduates with no known disability.
- Higher levels of male unemployment were noted for autistic graduates, graduates with mobility/physical disabilities or two or more conditions, and blind/visually impaired graduates.

Graduate voice measures

- Levels of agreement with the statement “My current activity is meaningful” were broadly consistent between most disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability.
- The disabled graduate population was two percentage points less likely to strongly agree, and two percentage points less likely to agree, that their current activity fits with their future plans. Even lower levels of agreement on fit between current activity and future plans were reported by autistic graduates, graduates with mental health conditions and graduates with two or more conditions.
- Deaf/hearing impaired graduates, and graduates with mobility/physical disability or specific learning differences, showed stronger agreement with the statement “I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity” than graduates with no known disability.
- Autistic graduates showed markedly lower levels of strong agreement and agreement around the extent to which they were utilising their learning from their studies in their current activities, and higher levels of disagreement and strong disagreement. Graduates with mental health conditions also showed higher levels of disagreement and strong disagreement.

Further employment measures

- Disabled graduates were slightly more likely to report low or medium skilled employment than graduates with no known disability.
- Autistic graduates, graduates with a mental health condition and graduates with two or more conditions reported lower levels of highly skilled employment.
- 56% of graduates with no known disability, 50% of all disabled graduates and 40% of autistic graduates were on a permanent or open-ended contract.
- Graduates with no known disability were slightly more likely than disabled graduates to be in a role where their qualification was not required.
- Disabled graduates were slightly more likely than graduates with no known disability to report that they needed both the level and subject of their qualification to secure their current role. However, there was notable variation. Deaf/hearing impaired graduates were more likely to indicate that both

the level and subject of their qualification was a formal requirement, but autistic graduates and graduates with a mental health condition were less likely to say this.

- Graduates with no known disability were more likely than disabled graduates to feel that their role fitted into their career plan.
- Disabled graduates were slightly more likely to indicate that they took a role to earn a living.
- Autistic graduates and graduates with a mental health condition were most likely to report that they took a job to earn a living. Autistic graduates were also more likely than other graduates to say that they were taking a job to gain and broaden their experience.

1.2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Further work is needed to explore how to ensure that disabled graduates can access and secure activities and employment that help them work towards their future plans.

Recommendation 2: All stakeholders should consider how to effectively and collaboratively support and resource appropriate higher education careers and employability activity, working towards reducing and ultimately eliminating employment gaps for disabled graduates.

Recommendation 3: Further work is needed to explore intersectional disadvantage amongst disabled graduates. Those collecting, using and publishing institutional and sector data should review whether their approach and measures incorporate intersectional disadvantage.

Recommendation 4: Further research and data on the experiences and outcomes of autistic graduates are urgently needed. A collaborative approach from sector bodies, higher education institutions and employers is vital, and all work must centre the voices of autistic students and graduates.

1.3. AGCAS commitment

As the expert membership organisation for higher education student career development and graduate employment professionals, through our members AGCAS supports the best possible career outcomes from higher education for individuals, institutions, society and the economy. AGCAS recognises our key role in supporting and delivering careers practice, research and advocacy aligned to the recommendations above. AGCAS is committed to playing its part in reducing and ultimately eliminating the disability employment gap for all disabled graduates, in line with our mission, vision, strategy and values[4].

[4] AGCAS, The AGCAS Strategy. Available at: https://www.agcas.org.uk/Mission-Vision-and-Strategy

2. INTRODUCTION

2025 brings a new approach to *What Happens Next?,* in line with the wider societal and legislative environment in the United Kingdom (UK). The King's Speech in 2024[5] announced that the Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will be brought before Parliament. This new Bill will call for mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for all UK businesses with more than 250 employees, mirroring current legal requirements around gender pay gap reporting. AGCAS welcomes this increase in transparency around disability employment, and the potential for better understanding and more focused action. We are pleased that future pay gap reporting legislation will focus on disability, ethnicity and gender, to support better recognition of the complexities of identity that affect employment and reward.

This upcoming legislative change has inspired a refreshed approach to *What Happens Next?*. Where previous reports focused solely on disability, this report also includes consideration of disabled graduates' outcomes in conjunction with their ethnic background and gender. This change has been incorporated to enhance understanding and support meaningful calls for action to deliver equity of employment outcomes for all. The Institute of Labor Economics noted that the disability pay gap is "both pronounced and persistent", but that it has received less attention or investigation than gender or ethnicity pay gaps[6]. By exploring the overall employment gap experienced by disabled graduates and investigating related topics around the nature and quality of employment, we add to vital knowledge and understanding on this topic and support effective action.

In a recent report[7], the Institute of Directors collaborated with Disability@Work to explore the main benefits of disability employment reporting in addressing disability employment disadvantage. They noted that this reporting highlights contextual information that may help employers interpret and explain their disability pay gaps, whilst also helping employers to understand their progress towards addressing the disability employment gap and increasing diversity and inclusion in their organisation. For the past two decades, AGCAS has published information on graduate employment that focuses on the disability employment gap, how that is experienced by students with different disabilities, and what the impact is on the nature of their graduate employment. We are proud to continue to contribute to the conversation about disability employment gaps, and work towards their elimination.

[5] UK Government, The King's Speech 2024, 17 July 2024. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024

[6] IZA Institute of Labor Economics, The Disability Pay Gap Within and Across Firms, February 2025. Available at: https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/17679/the-disability-pay-gap-within-and-across-firms

[7] The Institute of Directors, in collaboration with Disability@Work, Progress Through Transparency: The case for mandatory disability employment and pay gap reporting, 23 January 2025. Available at: https://www.iod.com/resources/inclusion-and-diversity/progress-through-transparency-the-case-for-mandatory-disability-employment-and-pay-gap-reporting/

2.1. Aims of the report

In this report, data on the outcomes for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability are compared, at first degree and postgraduate (taught and research) levels, to understand the impact that having a disability can have on graduates after leaving university. The outcomes for graduates with different types of disability are explored to identify any differences in employment prospects between disabled graduates. The outcomes for the whole disabled graduate population are also considered in conjunction with ethnic background and gender, to provide insight into intersectionality in this population, and how this may connect to graduate outcomes. Finally, the report examines the basis of the employment of all disabled graduates, the qualifications and level of skill required, and the main reason for taking a role, to build a more detailed picture of the nature of employment amongst disabled graduates.

Key reasons for producing this report are to support understanding of the barriers facing disabled students and graduates and thus enable the provision of professional support for students and graduates and support labour market success. The Disabled Students Commission recognise that the biggest outcome gap for disabled students exists when they move from study into employment[8].

A further, equally significant, reason for this report is to highlight the potential loss to the UK economy created by unemployment and underemployment of disabled graduates. Examining and quantifying the outcomes of disabled graduates draws attention to the employment gap they experience. AGCAS strongly encourages employers to consider the accessibility of their job opportunities, to help them connect with disabled graduates for mutual benefit. AGCAS encourages all readers, including disability charities, think tanks and academics, to use the findings of *What Happens Next?* to highlight the challenges and barriers experienced by disabled graduates and to call for more action and support.

2.2. Method and sample

This report examines the data captured by HESA through the 2021/22 GO survey, the biggest annual social survey in the UK[9], which is completed 15 months after graduation. In total, 273,040 graduates across three qualification levels[10] (first degree, taught postgraduate degree and postgraduate research degree) responded to the 2021/22 survey. Of these, 53,270 (19.5%) disclosed a disability during their

[8] Disabled Students' Commission, The Disabled Student Commitment. Published by Advance HE on behalf of the Disabled Students' Commission, 24 April 2023. Available at: https://advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/disabled-student-commitment
[9] More information about the Graduate Outcomes survey is available at: https://www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk/
[10] Those who completed an award classified as "Other postgraduate" or "Other undergraduate" have been excluded, due to small sample sizes, and for consistency with previous What Happens Next? datasets and reports.

studies. Figure 1 shows the increasing number and proportion of disclosures since 2017/18. Details of disclosure figures are explored further in section 4 of this report.

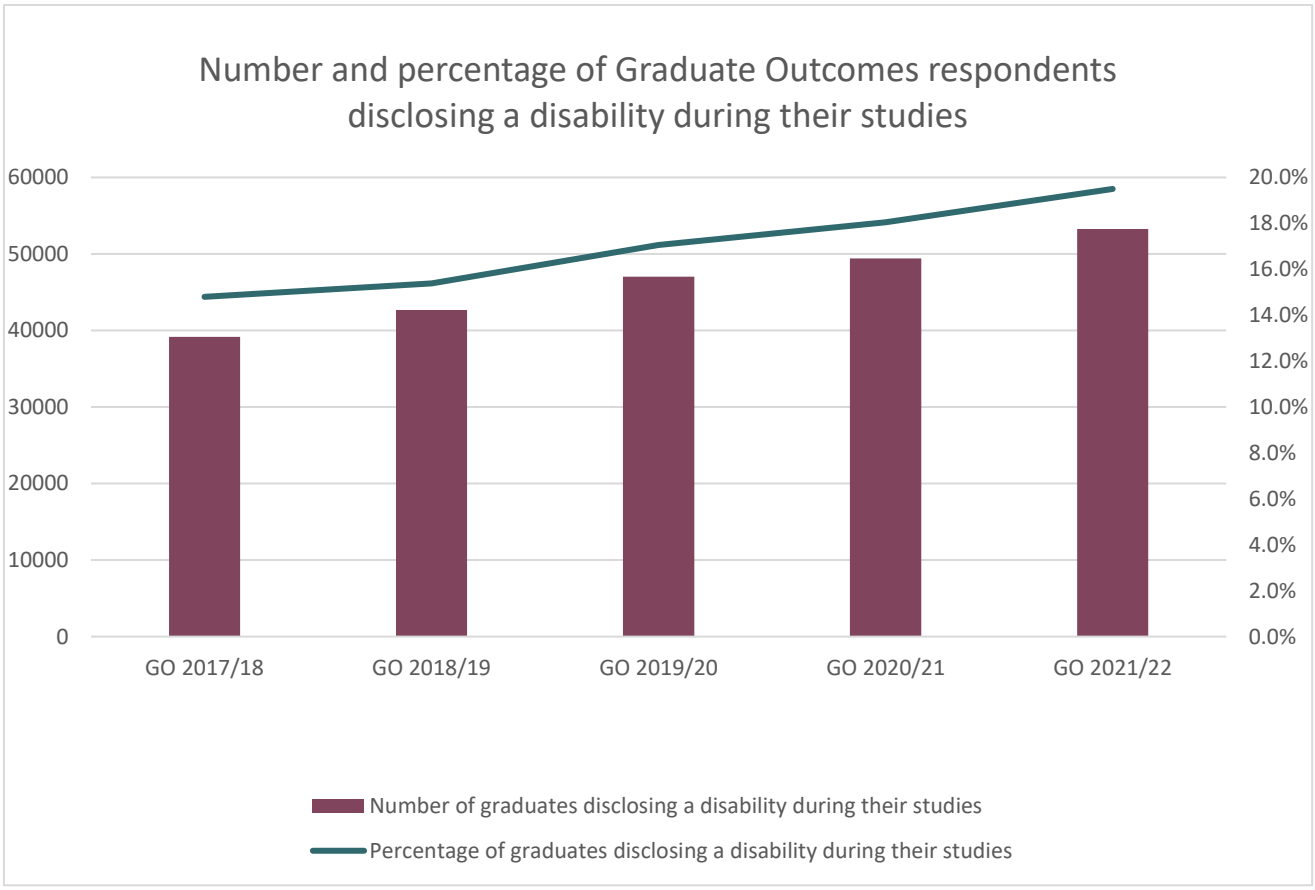


Figure 1 - Number and percentage of Graduate Outcomes respondents disclosing a disability during their studies

All data presented in this report has been rounded in line with HESA's Standard Rounding Methodology (SRM)[11]. The key SRM principles are reproduced below:

- Counts of people are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.
- Percentages (like % of students who are disabled) are not published if they are fractions of a small group of people (fewer than 22.5). This includes percentage change calculations ([New-Old]/Old) where either the old or new number is less than 22.5.
- Averages (like average age or average salary) are not published if they are averages of a small group of people (7 or fewer).

[11] More information about HESA's Standard Rounding Methodology is available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/rounding-and-suppression-anonymise-statistics

Therefore, some tables in this report have suppressed data due to sample sizes of less than 22.5 individuals. Percentages are calculated on unrounded data, but all student numbers are displayed rounded to the nearest multiple of five. The percentages from section 3.4 onwards (which consider disabled graduates in smaller groupings, rather than as one larger cohort) are rounded to zero decimal places, in line with HESA's SRM guidance.

The *What Happens Next?* report series offers insight into the trends relating to disabled graduates and graduate outcomes. This report therefore also notes where findings concur with, or diverge from, those of previous editions[12] where possible.

2.3. Terminology

2.3.1. Intersectionality

Stemming from Black feminist activism, the term 'intersectionality' was originally used by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, and defined as follows: "Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking."[13].

For the first time the *What Happens Next?* report considers personal characteristics other than disability, via the inclusion of information on ethnic background and gender. We hope this more intersectional view will enhance understanding of the complexities of personal identity and impact on graduate employment. We will continue to review personal characteristics for inclusion in future editions of this report.

2.3.2. Disability

This report adopts the definition of disability described in the Equality Act 2010. This states that a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities[14].

In this report the term 'disabled graduates' refers to GO survey respondents whose HESA student record showed that they disclosed a disability during their course. In this report, the term 'graduates with no known disability' refers to survey respondents whose HESA student record did not show any

[12] The most recent previous *What Happens Next?* publication is available at: https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Research%20and%20knowledge/WHN_2022.pdf

[13] Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

[14] Equality Act 2010, c.15. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6

disclosure of a disability during their course. 'Graduates with no known disability' therefore includes graduates who declared that they did not have a disability, and those who did not provide any disability data to their university during their course. Table 1 (column 1) shows the categories which students could select from, to describe their disability on their HESA Student Record. As part of the GO dataset, information from the HESA Student Record, including disability and demographic data, is mapped to GO responses at the individual level. This allows meaningful analysis of outcomes by disability.

Throughout this report, these categories are presented in the manner shown in columns two and three of table 1, to align to the social model of disability[15] and maintain concise report terminology.

Table 1 - HESA Student Record categories of disability

Categories of disability as captured in the HESA Student Record[16]	Categories used in report tables/charts	Group descriptor used in report text
Blind or a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses	Blind/visual impairment	Blind/visually impaired graduates
Deaf or a serious hearing impairment	Deaf/hearing impairment	Deaf/hearing impaired graduates
A physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches	Mobility/physical disability	Graduates with mobility/physical disabilities
A mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder	Mental health condition	Graduates with mental health conditions
A long-standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy	Long-standing condition	Graduates with long-standing conditions
Two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions	Two or more conditions	Graduates with two or more conditions
A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D	SpLD	Graduates with SpLD or graduates with specific learning differences
A social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder	Autism	Autistic graduates
A disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above	Other disability or condition	Graduates with another disability or condition

[15] Disability Rights UK, Social Model of Disability: Language. Available at: https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/social-model-disability-language
[16] HESA, Student 2021/22. Accessed 27 February 2025. Available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c21051/a/disable

2.3.1. Ethnic background

HESA use the graduate's self-assessment of their ethnic background, as recorded when they were a student[17]. HESA data is presented in line with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) ethnicity frame[18] for UK-wide data collection. This is reproduced in table 2, along with the HESA group descriptors used in this report. Throughout this report, these categories are presented as in columns two and three of table 2, to maintain concise report terminology, aligned to government guidance on writing about ethnicity[19].

Table 2 - HESA Student Record categories of ethnicity

ONS ethnic groups (as used in 2021 census of England and Wales) and used by HESA	Categories used in report tables/charts	Group descriptor used in report text
Asian or Asian British Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese Any other Asian background	Asian	Asian graduates
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African Caribbean African Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background	Black	Black graduates
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background	Mixed	Graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds
White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British Irish Gypsy or Irish Traveller Roma Any other White background	White	White graduates
Other ethnic group Arab Any other ethnic group	Other	Graduates from other ethnic backgrounds
Not known or not available Not known/Prefer not to say/Not available	Unknown	Graduates from unknown ethnic backgrounds

[17] More detail on how this question is asked of students is available from HESA at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/22056/datadictionary?element=Student_ETHNIC

[18] ONS, List of ethnic groups. Accessed 27 February 2025. Available at: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups/

[19] UK Government, Writing about ethnicity. Accessed 28 February 2025. Available at: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity/

2.3.1. Gender

HESA collect data from students on their sex, and whether the gender they identify with is the same as their registered sex at birth[20]. In this report, this information has been brought together, in order to represent a graduate's employment outcomes and experiences in line with the gender they identify as, rather than their sex as assigned at birth, wherever possible. Anyone who chose not to share their gender identity, or whose gender identity is unknown, is not included in the gender-led sections of this report, to ensure there is no misrepresentation.

Table 3 shows how the two HESA datasets (sex and gender identity) combine in this report. Throughout this report, these categories are presented in the manner shown in columns three and four of table 3, to align to maintain concise report terminology. Those graduates in the "Gender identity not the same as at birth" group may identify as non-binary, transgender, male, female or other, but it is not possible to be more specific due to the limitations of the data available.

Table 3 - HESA Student Record categories of sex and gender

Sex in HESA student record	Response to HESA gender identity question	Categories used in report tables/charts	Group descriptor used in report text
Female	Yes - gender identity is the same as that originally assigned at birth	Female	Female graduates
Male	Yes - gender identity is the same as that originally assigned at birth	Male	Male graduates
Other	Yes - gender identity is the same as that originally assigned at birth	Other	Graduates of other genders
Female	No - gender identity is not the same as that originally assigned at birth	Gender identity not the same as at birth	Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth
Male	No - gender identity is not the same as that originally assigned at birth		
Other	No - gender identity is not the same as that originally assigned at birth		

[20] More detail on both of these questions is available from HESA at : https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/22056/datadictionary?element=Student_SEXID and https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/23056/datadictionary?element=Student_GENDERID

2.3.2. Total employment

Where the term 'total employment' is used, this has been calculated as the sum of graduates in all forms of employment – full-time, part-time, voluntary, employment and further study. The total employment gap is the difference between this calculated sum for disabled graduates, and graduates with no known disability.

2.3.3. Positive outcomes

Throughout this report graduate outcomes have not been marked as positive or negative in any way, to recognise that there are different aspirations and expectations from HE participation. As in previous sections, the small numbers of graduates who reported unknown patterns of employment or further study are excluded from the analysis in this section.

In sections 4, 5 and 6 there is a focus on full-time employment. This does not indicate any preference for full-time employment as a graduate outcome and is certainly not intended to imply that this is a more positive outcome. Instead, it is a pragmatic approach to work with the dataset as effectively and thoroughly as possible; the larger numbers reporting full-time employment allow for more detailed analysis within each of the groups considered in this report.

3. DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY

This section describes the level of disclosure of disability at first degree and postgraduate (taught and research) levels. It should be noted that each disclosure is a self-assessment by an individual of their disability status, and that there is no obligation to report any disability.

The disability disclosures used in this dataset were made by graduate respondents during their course of study. These disclosures were later matched (using HESA's unique student identifier) to the GO responses, which were collected 15 months after graduation. As a result, there is the potential for specific gaps to be present in the dataset, for example graduates who become disabled after graduation, or graduates who chose not to disclose their disability whilst studying at university.

The GO survey has a strong response rate for a data collection of this type, with complete responses of 40%[21] . However, there will inevitably be a number of disabled graduates who have not been captured in this dataset. As such, the figures reported in all sections are derived from a subset that may not be representative of the total population.

Key findings:

- Levels of disability disclosure were highest amongst first degree undergraduates, lower for postgraduate taught, and lower still for postgraduate research. This pattern is consistent with earlier years of *What Happens Next?* analysis.
- Levels of disability disclosure have consistently increased year on year at all qualification levels.
- Graduates with specific learning differences continued to have the highest proportion of disclosures at all qualification levels. Mental health conditions were the second most commonly disclosed disability across all qualification levels.
- White graduates and graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds were notably more likely to have disclosed a disability whilst at university than Black or Asian graduates, or those from other or unknown ethnic backgrounds.
- Male graduates are notably less likely to have disclosed a disability whilst at university than any other gender.
- Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth had a higher rate of disability disclosure than any other group.

[21] HESA, Graduate Outcomes 2021/22: Summary Statistics – Summary. 4 February 2025. Available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/13-06-2024/sb268-higher-education-graduate-outcomes-statistics

3.1. Disclosure by qualification level

Table 4 shows the number and proportion of graduates disclosing a disability at each qualification level in 2021/22. Disclosure levels were higher at first degree (20.8%), than at postgraduate (taught) (16.7%) or at postgraduate (research) level (12.8%). This is a recurring pattern in recent years, as figure 2 shows.

Table 4 – 2021/22 Disability disclosures at each qualification level

Level of qualification	Graduates with no known disability	Graduates disclosing a disability	Total number of graduates	Disability disclosure by level of qualification
First degree	155.810	40,955	196,765	20.8%
Postgraduate (taught)	54,180	10,885	65,065	16.7%
Postgraduate (research)	9,775	1,430	11,205	12.8%

This is a recurring, consistent pattern in recent years. An increasing percentage of disability disclosure at all levels can be seen across the five most recent GO cohorts, as illustrated in Figure 3.

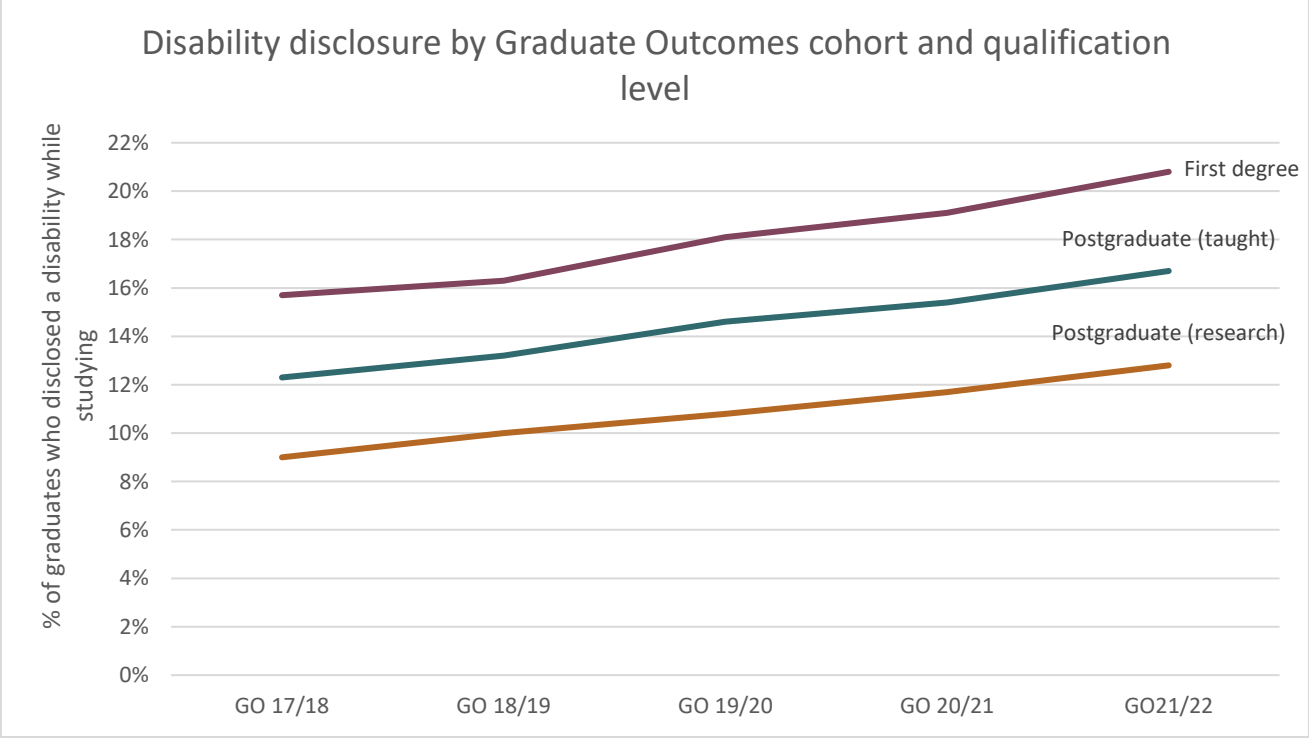


Figure 2 - Disability disclosure by Graduate Outcomes cohort and qualification level

It continues to be unclear whether these differences in the proportion of disability disclosures at each qualification level occur because students on higher level qualifications are less willing to disclose a disability, or because fewer disabled students access higher level qualifications than those with no known disability. Other factors may also be involved, or a combination of factors may create this imbalance in levels of disclosure.

3.2. Disclosure by ethnic background

Table 5 - 2021/22 Disability disclosures by ethnic background

Ethnic background	Graduates with no known disability	Graduates disclosing a disability	Total number of graduates	Disability disclosure rate by ethnic background
Asian	25,980	3,690	29,670	12.4%
Black	15,305	2,885	18,190	15.9%
Mixed	8,235	2,510	10,745	23.4%
Other	3,705	725	4,430	16.3%
Unknown	23,610	2,755	26,365	10.4%
White	142,930	40,710	183,635	22.2%

This is the first time this data has been reviewed in this report, and differences by ethnic background are immediately apparent in table 5, with White graduates, and graduates of Mixed ethnic background notably more likely to have disclosed a disability whilst at university than Black or Asian graduates, or those from other or unknown ethnic backgrounds. Please note that where the total number of graduates does not exactly match the combined number of disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability, this is due to the application of HESA's SRM.

UK government reporting highlights considerable variation in the prevalence of disability within individual ethnic groups, and that disability rates are highest in the White ethnic group. In population level statistics in the UK, this variation can largely be explained by population age distribution; older people are more likely to be disabled, and minority ethnic groups tend to have a younger age

composition compared with the general population[22]. However, this may not account for the difference seen in this population as 74% of respondents to the GO survey in 2021/22 were aged 29 or under[23]. More specific analysis would be required to understand whether there are genuinely lower levels of disability in certain ethnic groups, or simply lower levels of disclosure.

3.3. Disclosure by gender

Table 6 - 2021/22 Disability disclosures by gender

Gender	Graduates with no known disability	Graduates disclosing a disability	Total number of graduates	Disability disclosure rate by gender
Female	111,245	30,335	141,580	21.4%
Gender identity not the same as at birth	1,300	1,115	2,420	46.2%
Male	85,040	16,305	101,345	16.1%
Other	210	80	285	27.5%

This is the first time this data has been reviewed in this report and differences by gender are clear. Table 6 shows that male graduates are notably less likely to have disclosed a disability whilst at university than any other gender. UK-wide, levels of disability are higher amongst women than men[24], and this appears to be mirrored in the graduate population. Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth had a notably higher rate of disability disclosure.

Please note that where the total number of graduates does not exactly match the combined number of disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability, this is due to the application of HESA's SRM. The total number of graduates shown in table 6 is different to that in tables 4 and 5 due to the exclusion of graduates whose gender identity is unknown and those who chose not to share their gender identity.

[22] Esme Kirk-Wade, Sonja Stiebahl, Helen Wong, UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences. House of Commons Library, 2 October 2024. Available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9602/CBP-9602.pdf

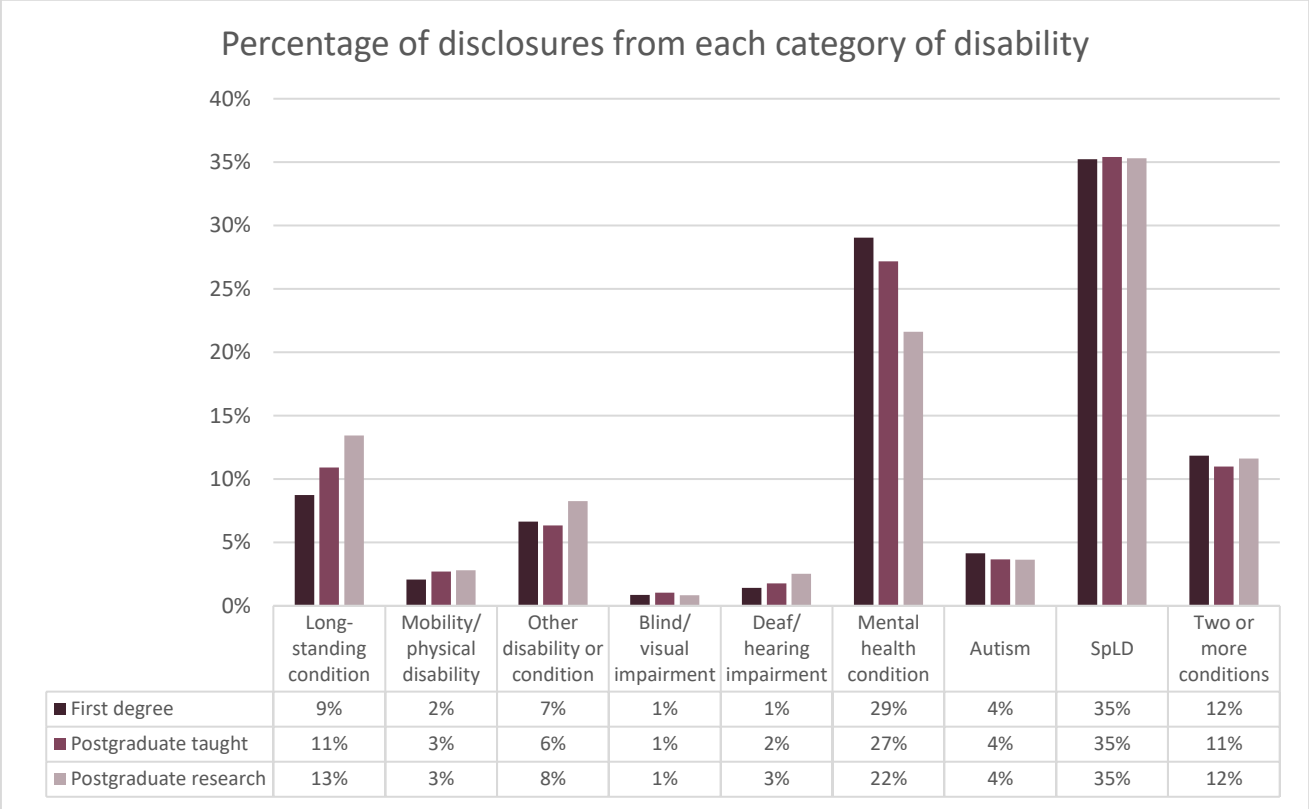
[23] Calculated from the HESA data in Figure 5 - Graduate outcomes by activity and personal characteristics. Available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb268/figure-5

[24] Esme Kirk-Wade, Sonja Stiebahl, Helen Wong, UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences. House of Commons Library, 2 October 2024. Available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9602/CBP-9602.pdf

3.4. Disclosure by disability type and qualification level

Figure 3 shows the type of disability disclosed as a percentage of the total number of respondents disclosing a disability each year, for the 2021/22 GO cohorts.

SpLD was the most commonly disclosed disability. Earlier *What Happens Next?* reports show that SpLD had the highest percentage of disclosures at all qualification levels in recent years, consistently accounting for just over a third of all disclosed disabilities of graduates across all qualification levels. Although there are minor changes across categories from year to year, the overall percentage of disclosures falling into each category in 2021/22 is broadly consistent with 2020/21.



	Long-standing condition	Mobility/ physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions
First degree	9%	2%	7%	1%	1%	29%	4%	35%	12%
Postgraduate taught	11%	3%	6%	1%	2%	27%	4%	35%	11%
Postgraduate research	13%	3%	8%	1%	3%	22%	4%	35%	12%

Figure 3 – 2021/22 Percentage of disclosures from each category of disability

As in previous years, mental health conditions were the second most commonly disclosed disability across all qualification levels, and graduates from postgraduate taught and undergraduate qualifications were more likely to disclose a mental health condition than graduates from postgraduate research programmes. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has also been a consistent pattern in long-standing health conditions, where there is a notably larger proportion of disclosures at higher qualification levels.

4. GRADUATE ACTIVITY BY QUALIFICATION LEVEL AND DISABILITY

This report section considers overall graduate activity reported by graduates in the 2021/22 GO survey. It compares outcomes for disabled graduates with outcomes for graduates with no known disability, for first degree, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research courses. It also considers the total employment of each group and identifies the size of the total employment gap. For clarity, the small numbers of graduates who reported unknown patterns of employment or further study are excluded from the analysis in this section.

It should be noted that for postgraduates, and particularly for postgraduate research, the number of graduates with some disabilities was less than 100. Due to the small sample sizes in these cases, a degree of caution should be employed when seeking to draw conclusions from the results.

Key findings:

- The proportion of all disabled graduates in full-time employment was lower than the proportion of all graduates with no known disability in full-time employment, at all qualification levels.
- Since 2020/21, there has been a small drop in first degree graduates in full-time employment, from 54% to 52% for disabled graduates, and from 61% to 60% for graduates with no known disability.
- Unemployment for disabled graduates from first degrees increased slightly from 6% in 2020/21 to 7% in 2021/22, whereas for graduates with no known disability unemployment remained at 5%.
- The postgraduate taught cohort saw a three percentage point increase in levels of full-time employment since 2020/21, from 58% to 61% for disabled graduates, and from 67% to 70% for graduates with no known disability.
- Total employment of disabled graduates at all qualification levels was lower than that of graduates with no known disability.
- The total disability employment gap in 2021/22 decreased in line with qualification level i.e. the higher the level of qualification, the lower the total disability employment gap.
- All disabled graduates from first degrees and postgraduate taught degrees, apart from graduates with specific learning differences, had levels of full-time employment that were at least five percentage points lower than those for graduates with no known disability.
- All disabled postgraduate research graduates, apart from graduates with specific learning differences and graduates with mental health conditions, had levels of full-time employment that were at least five percentage points lower than those seen for graduates with no known disability.

- Autistic graduates from first degree and postgraduate taught courses experienced lower full-time employment, higher part-time employment and higher unemployment than any other group.

4.1. Full-time employment by qualification level and disability

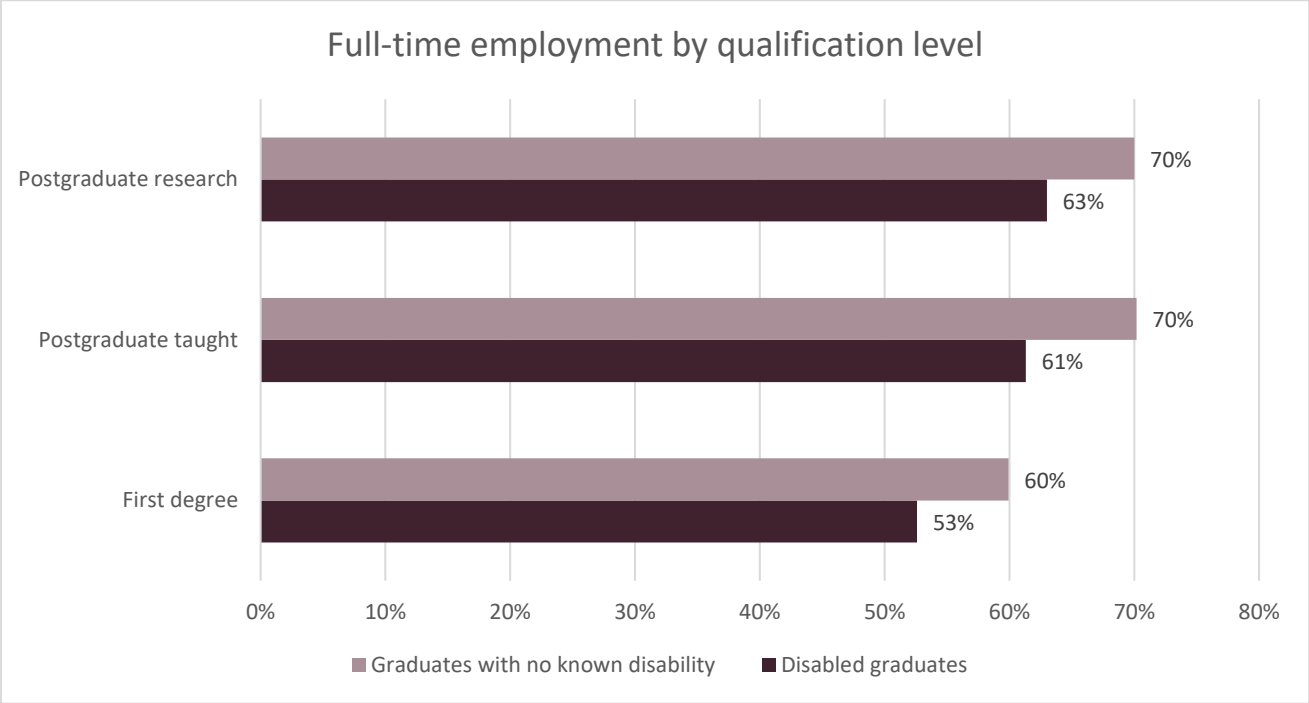


Figure 4 – 2021/22 Percentage of graduates in full time employment by qualification level

Figure 4 illustrates that the proportion of disabled graduates in full-time employment following their first degree was lower than the proportion of graduates with no known disability in full-time employment. Both groups saw a small drop since 2020/21 in the proportion of full-time employment, from 54% to 52% for disabled graduates, and from 61% to 60% for graduates with no known disability. This marks the end of a period of gradual increases to levels of full-time employment amongst first degree respondents in recent years.

The proportion of disabled graduates in full-time employment following a postgraduate taught degree was lower than the proportion of graduates with no known disability in full-time employment. Both postgraduate taught cohorts saw a three percentage point increase in levels of full-time employment since 2020/21, from 58% to 61% for disabled graduates, and from 67% to 70% for graduates with no known disability.

The proportion of disabled graduates in full-time employment following a postgraduate research degree was lower than the proportion of graduates with no known disability in full-time employment. Full-time employment increased from 62% in 2020/21 to 63% in 2021/22 for disabled graduates and remained at 70% for graduates with no known disability.

4.2. All graduate activity by qualification level and disability

Table 7 - 2021/22 All graduate activity by qualification level and disability

Qualification level	First degree		Postgraduate taught		Postgraduate research	
2021/22 graduate activities	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability
Employment and further study	11%	11%	11%	9%	12%	10%
Full-time employment	53%	60%	61%	70%	63%	70%
Full-time further study	7%	7%	4%	3%	5%	4%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	8%	6%	5%	4%	6%	5%
Part-time employment	13%	10%	12%	9%	11%	9%
Part-time further study	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unemployment	7%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%

Table 7 shows a slight increase in unemployment for disabled graduates from first degrees, from 6% in 2020/21 to 7% in 2021/22, whereas for first degree graduates with no known disability, unemployment remained at 5% across both years. Part-time employment stayed at 10% for first degree graduates with no known disability, and increased from 12% to 13% for disabled graduates from first degrees since 2020/21.

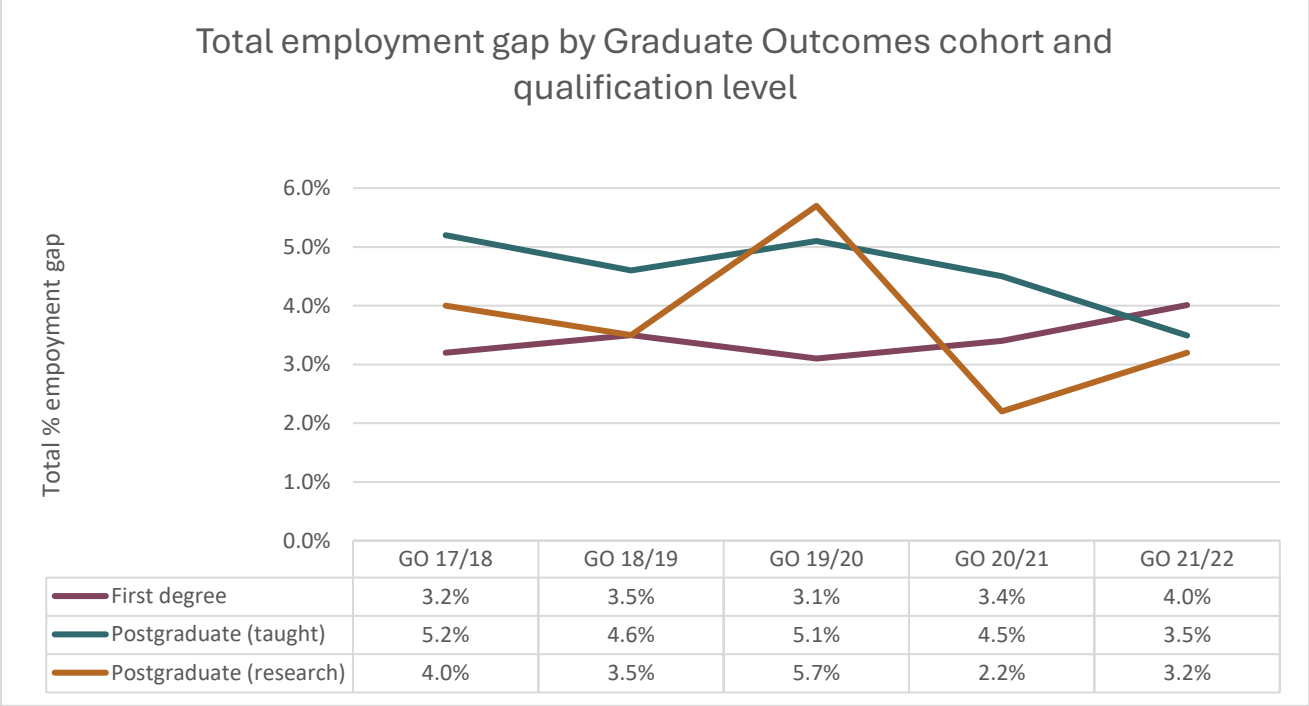
In contrast to the first degree group, postgraduate taught graduates saw a one percentage point decrease in unemployment for both groups since 2020/21; disabled graduates moved from 5% to 4%, and graduates with no known disability from 4% to 3%. The proportion of postgraduate taught respondents in part-time employment had reduced since 2020/21, for disabled graduates that moved from 14% to 12%, and for those with no known disability the shift was from 10% to 9%.

For postgraduate research graduates, unemployment remained consistent with 2020/21 at 3% for disabled graduates and 2% for graduates with no known disability. This returned the group to the 2018/19 level, when unemployment of 3% was also reported. As with the postgraduate taught group, the proportion of postgraduate research respondents in part-time employment had decreased since

2020/21, for disabled graduates that moved from 14% to 11%, and for those with no known disability this figure moved from 10% to 9%.

4.3. Total disability employment gap by qualification level

The total employment[25] of disabled graduates at all qualification levels continues to be lower than the total employment of graduates with no known disability. This is in line with findings from previous *What Happens Next?* reports, where disabled graduates consistently experience lower levels of total employment, as shown in figure 5.



	GO 17/18	GO 18/19	GO 19/20	GO 20/21	GO 21/22
First degree	3.2%	3.5%	3.1%	3.4%	4.0%
Postgraduate (taught)	5.2%	4.6%	5.1%	4.5%	3.5%
Postgraduate (research)	4.0%	3.5%	5.7%	2.2%	3.2%

Figure 5 - Total employment gap by Graduate Outcomes cohort and qualification level

The total employment gap between disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability following a first degree continued to grow slightly between 2020/21 and 2021/22, by 0.6 percentage points (from 3.4% to 4.0%). Where graduates had completed a postgraduate taught qualification, the total employment gap continued to reduce slightly between 2020/21 and 2021/22, by one percentage point (from 4.5% to 3.5%). For the postgraduate research group, the employment gap increased (from 2.2% to 3.2%) between 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The total disability employment gap in 2021/22 decreased in line with qualification level i.e. the higher the level of qualification, the lower the total disability employment gap. This is broadly consistent with

[25] See section 2.3.2 for definition of total employment.

findings from previous *What Happens Next?* reports, higher qualification levels have typically been linked to a lower total disability employment gap, although figure 9 shows some variation on this during the pandemic period. Total employment for the postgraduate research group shows the greatest variation across the five-year period; their smaller group size is likely to account for these fluctuations.

4.4. Graduate activity by qualification level and disability type.

In the following sections, tables show the percentage of graduates with each disability type reporting each activity outcome at each qualification level. These percentages were compared to the percentage of graduates with no known disability at the same qualification level reporting that activity outcome.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points lower than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a box with a bold border.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points greater than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a shaded box with white text.

4.4.1. First degree graduates

The first degree activity outcomes for disabled graduates are shown in table 8.

Table 8 - 2021/22 First degree - activity outcomes by disability

Disability / 2021/22 first degree activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
Employment and further study	11%	9%	11%	13%	12%	11%	10%	11%	12%	*11%*
Full-time employment	**54%**	**51%**	**52%**	**51%**	**54%**	**53%**	**43%**	56%	**45%**	*60%*
Full-time further study	8%	7%	7%	7%	6%	8%	9%	7%	9%	*7%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	7%	10%	8%	7%	9%	7%	6%	7%	10%	*6%*
Part-time employment	11%	12%	13%	13%	11%	12%	**17%**	12%	13%	*10%*
Part-time further study	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	*0%*
Unemployment	6%	8%	7%	7%	6%	7%	**12%**	5%	8%	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	*1%*

Disparities between outcomes for graduates with no known disability and disabled graduates are evident, particularly in relation to levels of full-time employment. These patterns are broadly consistent

with previous years, where disabled graduates, apart from graduates with SpLD, had levels of full-time employment at least five percentage points lower than those of graduates with no known disability.

The group of disabled graduates from first degree courses experiencing the greatest differences from graduates with no known disabilities were autistic graduates. They experienced notably lower full-time employment, and higher part-time employment and unemployment. Again, this pattern was also observed in previous years

4.4.2. Postgraduate taught graduates

Table 9 – 2021/22 Postgraduate taught - activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 postgraduate taught activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
Employment and further study	11%	10%	12%	6%	11%	11%	9%	10%	12%	*9%*
Full-time employment	**61%**	**51%**	**59%**	**55%**	**61%**	**62%**	**48%**	67%	**51%**	*70%*
Full-time further study	5%	6%	4%	**8%**	3%	5%	5%	3%	6%	*3%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	7%	6%	7%	4%	7%	4%	4%	4%	7%	*4%*
Part-time employment	11%	**17%**	13%	**17%**	11%	12%	**20%**	11%	**15%**	*9%*
Part-time further study	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	*0%*
Unemployment	3%	5%	2%	6%	6%	4%	**10%**	3%	6%	*3%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	*1%*

Table 9 shows that postgraduate taught graduates also experience notable differences between outcomes for graduates with no known disability and disabled graduates, in relation to levels of full-time employment. All disabled graduates from postgraduate taught courses, apart from graduates with SpLD, had levels of full-time employment that were at least five percentage points lower than those seen for graduates with no known disability. This pattern was also seen in 2020/21.

As with first degree graduates, the disabled graduates from taught postgraduate courses who experienced the greatest outcome differences when compared to graduates with no known disabilities were autistic graduates. They experienced the lowest full-time employment at 48%, although positively, this had increased from earlier years (42% in 2020/21 and 40% in 2019/20). They also reported higher part-time employment at 20% (22% in 2020/21 and 17% in 2019/20), and higher unemployment at 10%

(11% in 2020/21 and 13% in 2019/20), but again there had been a reduction in both of these indicators when compared to earlier years.

4.4.3. Postgraduate research graduates

Due to a small sample size, the data for blind/visually impaired postgraduate research graduates has been suppressed; any references to "all disabled graduates" in this report section excludes these graduates. It should also be noted that smaller sample sizes within this group mean the data and comparisons should be considered with caution, as their reliability and wider applicability may be limited. No comparison with earlier data has been included due to the small sample size.

Table 10 - 2021/22 Postgraduate research - activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 postgraduate research activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
Employment and further study	14%	10%	11%	Small sample size, data suppressed in line with HESA SRM	**3%**	11%	**17%**	12%	11%	*10%*
Full-time employment	**56%**	**50%**	**63%**		**64%**	67%	**50%**	68%	**54%**	*70%*
Full-time further study	4%	3%	4%		6%	6%	4%	3%	**10%**	*4%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	6%	**25%**	8%		8%	2%	8%	4%	**11%**	*5%*
Part-time employment	**15%**	8%	11%		**17%**	11%	**15%**	11%	8%	*9%*
Part-time further study	0%	3%	0%		3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	*0%*
Unemployment	4%	0%	3%		0%	3%	4%	2%	2%	*2%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	3%	0%		0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	*0%*

Table 10 shows that, like graduates at other levels of qualification, postgraduate research graduates experience notable differences in levels of full-time employment between graduates with no known disability and disabled graduates In both 2019/20 and 2020/21, all disabled graduates from postgraduate research courses, apart from graduates with SpLD and those with mental health conditions, had levels of full-time employment that were at least five percentage points lower than those seen for graduates with no known disability. Autistic graduates and graduates with a mobility/physical disability were the least likely to be in full-time employment, 50% of each group reported full-time employment as their activity outcome.

In 2021/22, higher levels of part-time employment were reported following postgraduate research by graduates with long-standing conditions, autistic graduates, and deaf/hearing impaired graduates. Autistic graduates also reported higher levels of further study. Graduates with a mobility/physical disability were the most likely to be undertaking other activities.

5. GRADUATE ACTIVITY BY ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND DISABILITY

This report section considers overall graduate activity reported by graduates in the 2021/22 GO survey. It compares outcomes for disabled graduates with outcomes for graduates with no known disability across all ethnic backgrounds. It specifically explores full-time employment for each group and includes further context on all graduate activities by ethnic background and disability.

For clarity, the small numbers of graduates who reported unknown patterns of employment or further study are excluded from the analysis in this section. There are no comparisons with earlier years as this is the first time this specific analysis has been carried out.

Key findings:

- Disabled graduates have lower rates of full-time employment than graduates with no known disability across all ethnic backgrounds.
- The difference in full-time employment rates for disabled graduates, when compared to graduates from the same ethnic background with no known disability, ranges from 7% for Asian and Black graduates, to 11% for graduates from other ethnic backgrounds.
- Disabled graduates from other ethnic backgrounds reported a four percentage point difference between unemployment levels for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability.
- Across all ethnic backgrounds, autistic graduates reported markedly lower levels of full-time employment, and levels of unemployment that were at least two times those of their counterparts with no known disabilities.
- Black graduates with mobility/physical disabilities or two or more conditions, and Black deaf/hearing impaired graduates also had levels of unemployment twice as high as those of Black graduates with no known disability.

5.1. Full-time employment by ethnic background and disability

Figure 6 shows that disabled graduates have lower rates of full-time employment than graduates with no known disability across all ethnic backgrounds captured in HESA data.

The percentage point difference in full-time employment ranges from 7% for Asian and Black graduates, to 11% for graduates of other ethnic backgrounds. White disabled graduates are more likely to be in full-time employment than disabled graduates from all other ethnic backgrounds.

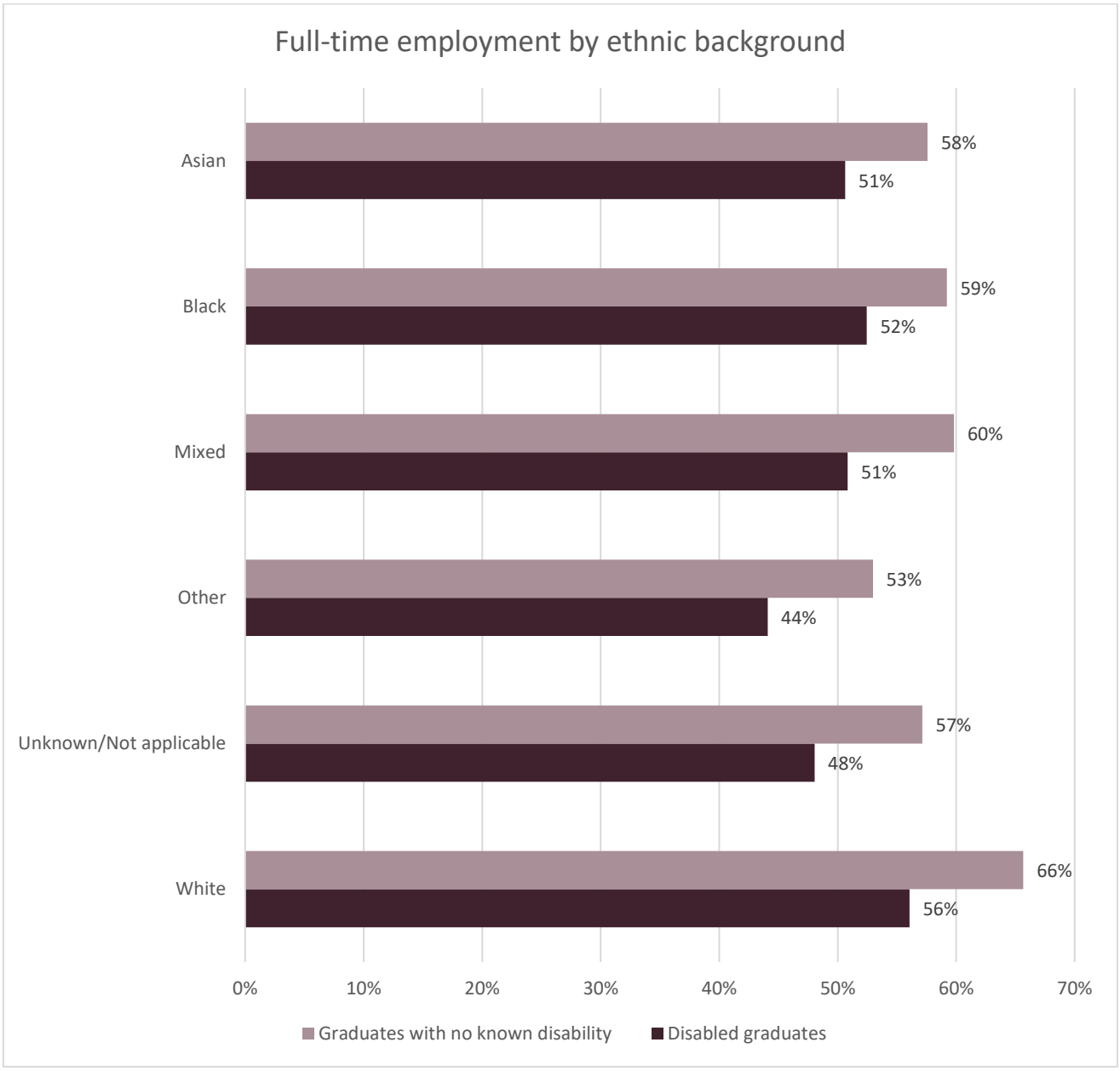


Figure 6- 2021/22 Percentage of graduates in full time employment by ethnic background

5.2. All graduate activities by ethnic background and disability

Table 11 outlines all graduate activities by ethnic background and disability. This shows higher levels of part-time employment and unemployment for disabled graduates across all ethnic groups. This is most marked for disabled graduates from other ethnic backgrounds, where there is a four percentage point difference between unemployment levels for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability.

Table 11 - 2021/22 All graduate activity by ethnic background and disability

Ethnic background	Asian		Black		Mixed		Other		Unknown/ Not applicable		White	
2021/22 graduate activities	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability
Employment and further study	12%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	13%	12%	11%	10%
Full-time employment	51%	58%	52%	59%	51%	60%	44%	53%	48%	57%	56%	66%
Full-time further study	7%	6%	5%	4%	7%	6%	8%	6%	12%	11%	7%	5%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	8%	6%	9%	6%	9%	5%	9%	8%	7%	6%	7%	5%
Part-time employment	11%	10%	13%	12%	14%	11%	12%	10%	9%	8%	13%	10%
Part-time further study	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Unemployment	10%	8%	8%	6%	6%	5%	13%	9%	8%	6%	5%	4%
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

5.3. Graduate activity by ethnic background and disability type

In the following sections, tables show the percentage of graduates with each disability type reporting each activity outcome, divided by ethnic background. These percentages were compared to the percentage of graduates with no known disability of the same ethnic background reporting that activity outcome. In the final column of each table, the percentage outcomes for graduates of all ethnic backgrounds with no known disability is included for reference and comparison.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points lower than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a box with a bold border.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points greater than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a shaded box with white text.

Due to small population sizes, graduates whose ethnic background was recorded as “Unknown/Not applicable” or “Other” are not included in the analysis in the following sections.

5.3.1. Asian graduates

Table 12 - 2021/22 Asian graduates activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 Asian graduates' activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*Asian graduates with no known disability*	*Graduates from all ethnic backgrounds with no known disability*
Employment and further study	10%	9%	13%	15%	10%	11%	10%	13%	11%	*11%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	**51%**	**42%**	**45%**	**50%**	55%	**52%**	**37%**	**53%**	**49%**	*58%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	9%	7%	6%	4%	2%	7%	11%	6%	9%	*6%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	10%	9%	**11%**	8%	7%	8%	4%	7%	9%	*6%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	10%	10%	11%	**15%**	11%	11%	13%	10%	8%	*10%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	*1%*	*0%*
Unemployment	8%	**18%**	11%	8%	12%	9%	**22%**	9%	11%	*8%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%	*1%*	*1%*

Disabled Asian graduates of all disability types, apart from deaf/hearing impaired graduates, were less likely to report full-time employment than Asian graduates with no known disability, as shown in table 12. Asian autistic graduates, or those with a mobility/physical disability were markedly more likely to be unemployed with levels of unemployment more than twice that of Asian graduates with no known disability. Those with another disability or condition were more likely to report an outcome classified as ‘other’, including travel, caring for someone or being retired, and Asian blind/visually impaired graduates were more likely to be in part-time employment.

5.3.1. Black graduates

Table 13 - 2021/22 Black graduates activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 Black graduates' activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*Black graduates with no known disability*	*Graduates from all ethnic backgrounds with no known disability*
Employment and further study	11%	11%	10%	**6%**	11%	13%	13%	10%	12%	*11%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	**51%**	**48%**	**53%**	58%	**48%**	**52%**	**41%**	55%	**47%**	*59%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	4%	2%	4%	4%	5%	5%	3%	4%	7%	*4%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	**11%**	**13%**	8%	8%	**11%**	7%	10%	9%	10%	*6%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	13%	11%	16%	15%	9%	11%	**17%**	14%	11%	*12%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	*0%*	*0%*
Unemployment	8%	**12%**	6%	8%	**16%**	8%	**13%**	6%	**12%**	*6%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	2%	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	3%	1%	1%	*1%*	*1%*

Table 13 illustrates that disabled Black graduates of all disability types, apart from SpLD and blind/visually impaired graduates, were less likely to report full-time employment. Those with mobility/physical disabilities, long-standing conditions and who were deaf/hearing impaired reported higher levels of activities recorded as 'other' such as travel, caring for someone or being retired.

Black autistic graduates had higher levels of part-time employment than Black graduates with no known disability. Black deaf/hearing impaired graduates, autistic graduates and graduates with two or more conditions or mobility/physical disabilities were more commonly unemployed, with levels of unemployment twice as high as those of Black graduates with no known disability.

5.3.2. Graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds

Table 14 shows that disabled graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds of all disability types were less likely to report full-time employment. Those with mobility/physical disabilities and mental health

conditions reported higher levels of activities recorded as 'other' such as travel, caring for someone or being retired.

Table 14 - 2021/22 Graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds' activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 Graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds' activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*Graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds with no known disability*	*Graduates from all ethnic backgrounds with no known disability*
Employment and further study	12%	10%	10%	Small sample size, data suppressed in line with HESA SRM	Small sample size, data suppressed in line with HESA SRM	10%	12%	12%	10%	*11%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	**54%**	**46%**	**55%**			**52%**	**41%**	**51%**	**47%**	*60%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	7%	8%	9%			8%	3%	6%	9%	*6%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	7%	**11%**	6%			**10%**	6%	9%	9%	*5%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	14%	11%	11%			13%	**22%**	14%	13%	*11%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	1%	0%	4%			0%	2%	1%	2%	*0%*	*0%*
Unemployment	5%	8%	5%			7%	**12%**	5%	8%	*5%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	**6%**	1%			1%	3%	1%	3%	*1%*	*1%*

Autistic graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds had levels of part-time employment twice as high as those of graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds with no known disability. Levels of unemployment for autistic graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds were more than twice as high as those for graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds with no known disability.

Graduates from Mixed ethnic backgrounds with mobility/physical disabilities were more commonly in voluntary or unpaid work than graduates of Mixed ethnic backgrounds with no known disability.

5.3.3. White graduates

All disabled White graduates experience levels of full-time employment five or more percentage points lower than White graduates with no known disability. This was most marked for White autistic graduates. This group also reported higher unemployment and higher part-time employment. These results are shown in table 15.

Table 15 - 2021/22 White graduates activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 White graduates' activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*White graduates with no known disability*	*Graduates from all ethnic backgrounds with no known*
Employment and further study	11%	9%	11%	9%	12%	11%	10%	10%	12%	*10%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	**58%**	**53%**	**56%**	**54%**	**57%**	**56%**	**45%**	**60%**	**47%**	*66%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	7%	6%	6%	8%	5%	7%	8%	6%	8%	*5%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	6%	9%	7%	6%	9%	6%	6%	6%	9%	*5%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	11%	14%	13%	14%	12%	13%	**18%**	12%	14%	*10%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	*0%*	*0%*
Unemployment	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%	**11%**	4%	7%	*4%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	*1%*	*1%*

6. GRADUATE ACTIVITY BY GENDER AND DISABILITY

This report section considers overall graduate activity reported by graduates in the 2021/22 GO survey. It compares outcomes for disabled graduates with those for graduates with no known disability, across genders. It specifically explores full-time employment for each group and includes further context on all graduate activities by gender and disability.

For clarity, the small numbers of graduates who reported unknown patterns of employment or further study are excluded from the analysis in this section. As explained in section 2.3.1 anyone who chose not to share their gender identity, or whose gender identity is unknown, is not included in this section, to ensure there is no misrepresentation. There are no comparisons with earlier years as this is the first time this specific analysis has been carried out. It should be noted that the number of graduates of other genders and graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth are relatively small. Due to the small sample sizes in these cases, a degree of caution should be employed when seeking to draw conclusions from the results.

Key findings:

- Across all genders, disabled graduates have lower rates of full-time employment than graduates with no known disability.
- 55% of both male and female disabled graduates were in full time employment; lower than graduates with no known disability with full-time employment rates of 64% (male) and 62% (female).
- Disabled graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth, had a 14 percentage point difference in their level of full-time employment when compared to disabled graduates whose gender identity remained the same as at birth.
- Disabled female graduates of all disability types, apart from graduates with specific learning differences, were less likely to report full-time employment than female graduates with no known disability.
- Autistic female graduates had an unemployment rate more than double that of female graduates with no known disability.
- Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth who were autistic or had two or more conditions reported lower levels of full-time employment than graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth with no known disability.
- Male graduates of all disability types were less likely to report full-time employment than male graduates with no known disability.
- Higher levels of male unemployment were noted for autistic graduates, graduates with mobility/physical disabilities or two or more conditions, and blind/visually impaired graduates.

6.1. Full time employment by gender and disability

Figure 7 shows that disabled graduates have lower rates of full-time employment than graduates with no known disability across all genders captured in HESA data.

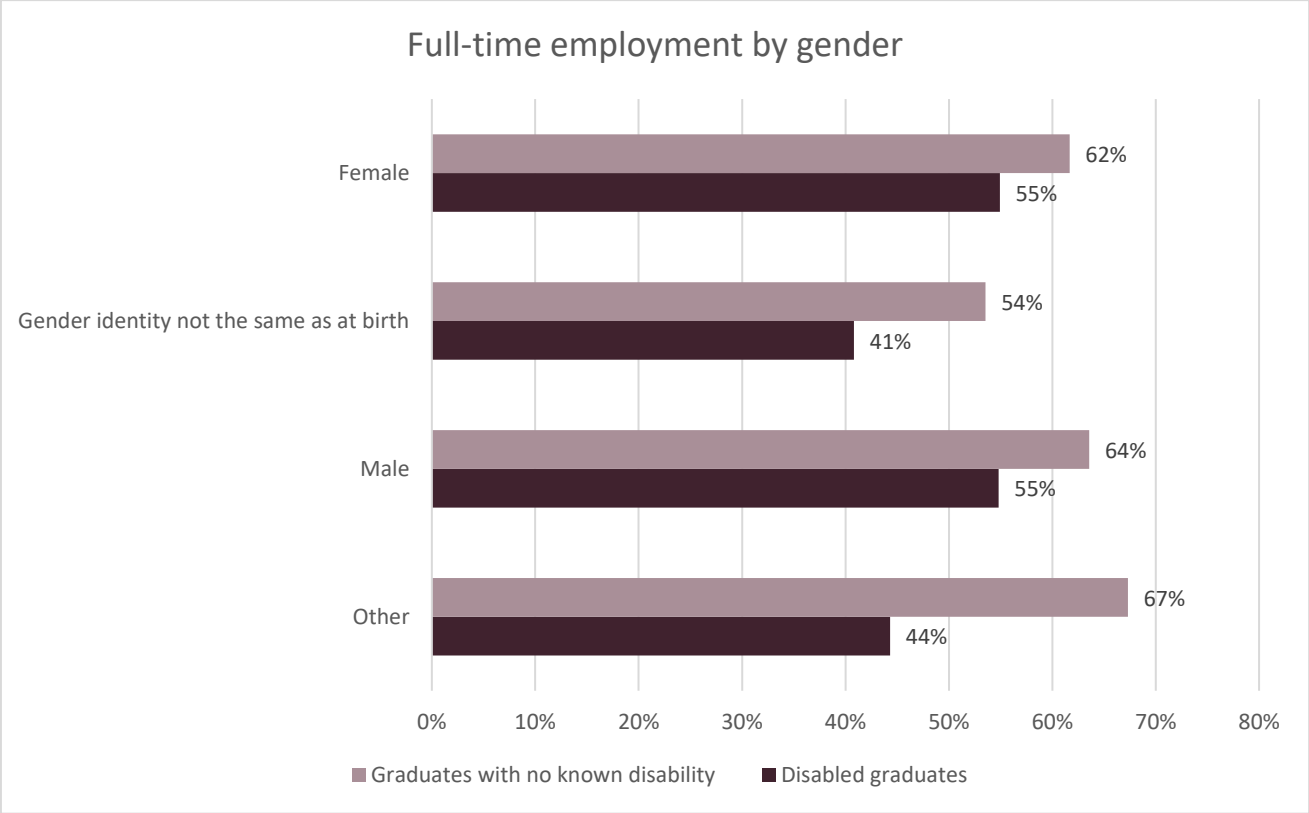


Figure 7 - 2021/22 Percentage of graduates in full time employment by gender

The percentage point difference in full-time employment ranges from 23% for graduates of other genders, to 7% for female graduates. 55% of both male and female disabled graduates were in full-time employment. Disabled graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth had a 14 percentage point difference in their level of full-time employment when compared to disabled male and female graduates (whose gender identity remained the same as at birth).

6.2. All graduate activities by gender and disability

Table 16 outlines all graduate activities by gender and disability. This shows higher levels of part-time employment and unemployment for disabled graduates across all genders. This is most marked for disabled graduates of other genders, where there is a six percentage point difference between unemployment levels for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability, and an eight percentage point difference between part-time employment levels for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability. These graduates were also more likely to be undertaking an activity described as ‘other’ such as travel, caring for someone, or being retired. However, it should be noted

that this is a relatively small group, compared to the male and female populations, so the calculated percentages may be less indicative of population level trends.

Table 16 - 2021/22 All graduate activities by gender and disability

Gender	Female		Gender identity not the same as at birth		Male		Other	
2021/22 graduate activities	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability	Disabled graduates	Graduates with no known disability
Employment and further study	11%	10%	11%	11%	12%	11%	10%	8%
Full-time employment	55%	62%	41%	54%	55%	64%	44%	68%
Full-time further study	7%	6%	10%	8%	7%	6%	10%	9%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	7%	6%	8%	5%	6%	4%	9%	4%
Part-time employment	13%	11%	19%	14%	11%	8%	14%	6%
Part-time further study	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Unemployment	5%	4%	8%	6%	7%	5%	9%	3%
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

6.3. Graduate activity by gender and disability type

In the following sections, tables show the percentage of graduates with each disability type reporting each activity outcome, divided by gender. These percentages were compared to the percentage of graduates with no known disability of the same gender reporting that activity outcome. In the final column of each table, the percentage outcomes for graduates of all genders with no known disability is included for reference and comparison.

Due to small population sizes, graduates whose gender was recorded as “Other” are not included in the analysis in the following sections.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points lower than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a box with a bold border.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points greater than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a shaded box with white text.

6.3.1. Female graduates

Table 17 shows that disabled female graduates of all disability types, apart from graduates with SpLD, were less likely to report full-time employment than female graduates with no known disability. Autistic female graduates had an unemployment rate more than double that of female graduates with no known disability. Autistic female graduates, or those with a mobility/physical disability, were markedly more likely to be in part-time employment than female graduates with no known disability. Female graduates with a mobility/physical disability were also more likely to report an outcome classified as 'other', including travel, caring for someone or being retired.

Table 17 - 2021/22 Female graduates activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 Female graduates' activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*Female graduates with no known disability*	*Graduates of all genders with no known disability*
Employment and further study	11%	10%	12%	8%	10%	11%	14%	10%	11%	*10%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	**54%**	**48%**	**54%**	**55%**	**57%**	**56%**	**41%**	58%	**49%**	*62%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	8%	6%	6%	8%	6%	7%	8%	6%	8%	*6%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	8%	**11%**	7%	7%	8%	6%	5%	7%	9%	*6%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	12%	**16%**	13%	15%	13%	12%	**19%**	13%	14%	*11%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	*0%*	*0%*
Unemployment	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	6%	**9%**	4%	6%	*4%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	*1%*	*1%*

6.3.2. Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth

Table 18 is based on relatively small numbers, so care should be taken in interpreting these results too broadly. However, it illustrates that graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth who were autistic or had two or more conditions reported lower levels of full-time employment than graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth with no known disability. Autistic graduates in this group also reported higher levels of unemployment.

Table 18 - 2021/22 Graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 Graduates whose gender identify was not the same as at birth activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*Graduates with no known disability whose gender*	*Graduates of all genders with no known disability*
Employment and further study	11%	Small sample size, data suppressed in line with HESA SRM	12%	Small sample size, data suppressed in line with HESA SRM	Small sample size, data suppressed in line with HESA SRM	11%	11%	11%	11%	*11%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	56%		54%			55%	**45%**		**48%**	*54%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	8%		6%			7%	8%	6%	8%	*8%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	7%		7%			6%	5%	7%	9%	*5%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	11%		13%			12%	17%	12%	13%	*14%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	1%		1%			1%	1%	0%	1%	*0%*	*0%*
Unemployment	6%		6%			6%	**11%**	5%	7%	*6%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%		1%			1%	2%	1%	2%	*0%*	*1%*

6.3.3. Male graduates

Table 19 shows that male graduates of all disability types were less likely to report full-time employment than male graduates with no known disability. Higher levels of unemployment were noted for male autistic graduates, graduates with mobility/physical disabilities, blind/visually impaired graduates and graduates with two or more conditions. Male autistic graduates and those with mobility/physical disabilities were also more likely to report part-time employment.

Table 19 - 2021/22 Male graduates activity outcomes by disability

Disability 2021/22 Male graduates' activity outcomes	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*Male graduates with no known disability*	*Graduates of all genders with no known disability*
Employment and further study	12%	8%	11%	13%	14%	13%	10%	11%	12%	*11%*	*10%*
Full-time employment	**59%**	**54%**	**54%**	**51%**	**55%**	**54%**	**46%**	**58%**	**47%**	*64%*	*63%*
Full-time further study	6%	6%	6%	8%	5%	7%	8%	7%	10%	*6%*	*6%*
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	6%	7%	8%	6%	8%	6%	5%	6%	7%	*4%*	*5%*
Part-time employment	9%	9%	12%	**13%**	10%	12%	**16%**	11%	11%	*8%*	*10%*
Part-time further study	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	*0%*	*0%*
Unemployment	7%	**10%**	8%	**10%**	7%	7%	**12%**	6%	**10%**	*5%*	*5%*
Voluntary or unpaid work	2%	3%	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	*1%*	*1%*

7. GRADUATE VOICE MEASURES

Graduates are asked three questions about their feelings about their activities at the time of the GO survey. These questions are commonly referred to as graduate voice questions[26]. Graduates who responded 'Not applicable' to these questions have been excluded from this analysis. All data in this section is presented at the population level; it looks across all qualification types, ethnic backgrounds and genders. There are no comparisons with earlier years as this is the first time this specific analysis has been carried out.

The responses to these questions are presented by disability type in the following sections, with the outcomes for graduates with no known disability and for all disabled graduates also shown for comparison purposes.

Key findings:

- Levels of agreement with the statement "My current activity is meaningful" were broadly consistent between most disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability.
- The disabled graduate population was two percentage points less likely to strongly agree, and two percentage points less likely to agree, that their current activity fits with their future plans. Even lower levels of agreement on fit between current activity and future plans were reported by autistic graduates, graduates with mental health conditions and graduates with two or more conditions.
- Deaf/hearing impaired graduates, and graduates with mobility/physical disability or with specific learning differences, showed stronger agreement with the statement "I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity" than graduates with no known disability.
- Autistic graduates showed markedly lower levels of strong agreement and agreement around the extent to which they were utilising their learning from their studies in their current activities, and higher levels of disagreement and strong disagreement. Graduates with mental health conditions also showed higher levels of disagreement and strong disagreement.
- Autistic graduates were noticeably less likely to strongly agree or agree with all three graduate voice statements, and more likely to disagree or strongly disagree.

[26] Note that the wording of these questions varies slightly depending on responses to the activities they were involved in during the census week. For more information, see HESA guidance: XACTONTRACK, XACTMEAN and XACTSKILLS.

7.1. My current activity is meaningful

Figure 8 shows that levels of agreement with the statement “My current activity is meaningful” were broadly consistent across most groups. Some disabled graduates, including graduates with mobility/physical disability, deaf/hearing impaired graduates or graduates with long-standing conditions, showed stronger agreement with this statement than graduates with no known disability. However, autistic graduates were noticeably less likely to strongly agree with this statement, with a third of the group (33%) in strong agreement compared to over 40% from every other group.

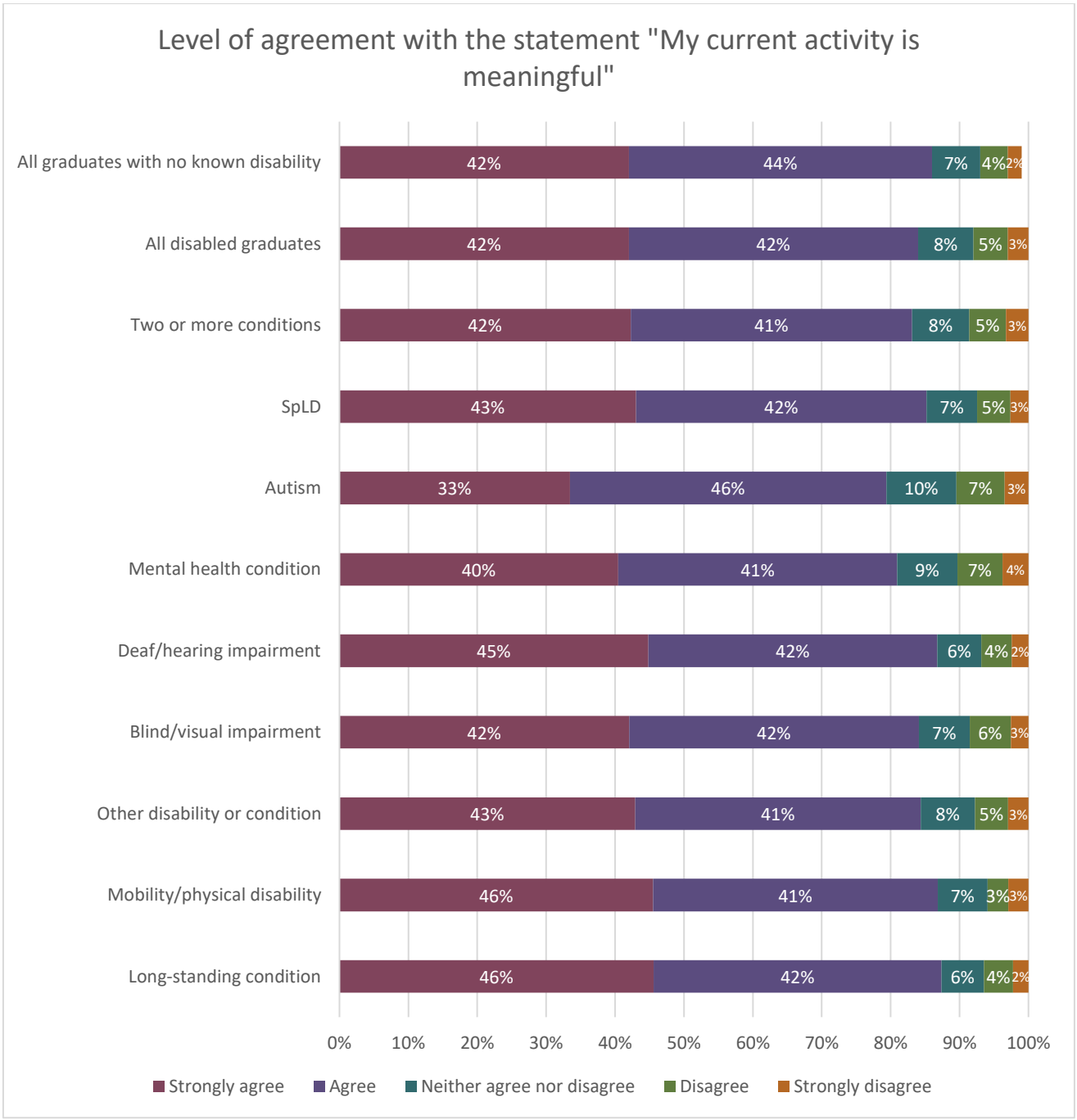


Figure 8 – 2021/22 Level of agreement with the statement "My current activity is meaningful"

7.2. My current activity fits with my future plans

Some disabled graduates showed levels of agreement around current activity and alignment to their future plans that were broadly similar to those of graduates with no known disability, as shown in figure 9. However, as a whole, the disabled graduate population was two percentage points less likely to strongly agree with this statement, and two percentage points less likely to agree with this statement. Certain groups showed even lower levels of agreement, namely autistic graduates, graduates with mental health conditions and graduates with two or more conditions.

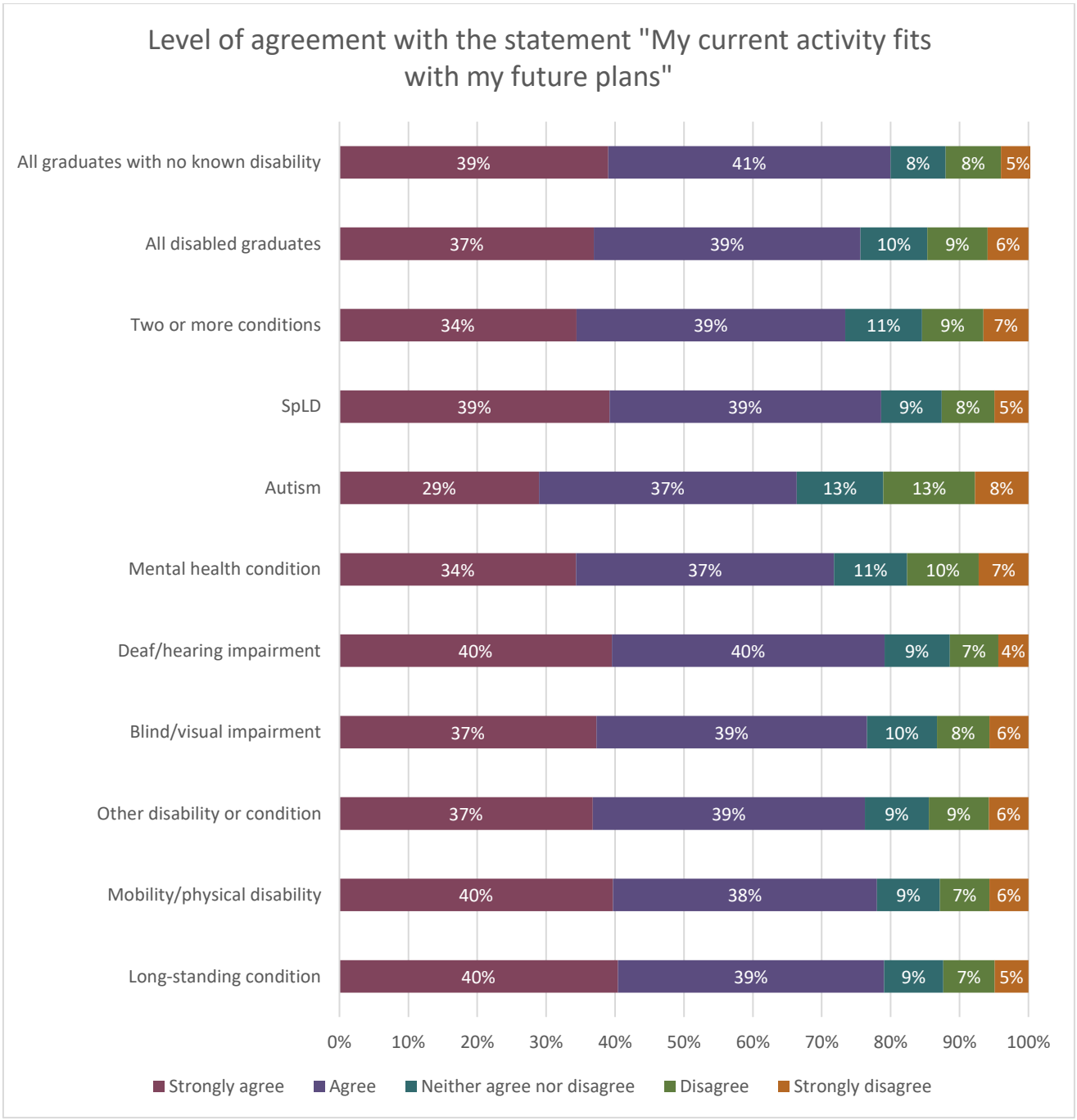


Figure 9 – 2021/22 Level of agreement with the statement "My current activity fits with my future plans"

7.3. I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity

Figure 10 shows that some disabled graduates, including deaf/hearing impaired graduates and graduates with mobility/physical disabilities, long-standing conditions or SpLD, showed stronger agreement with this statement than graduates with no known disability. Autistic graduates showed markedly lower levels of strong agreement and agreement with this statement, and higher levels of disagreement and strong disagreement. Graduates with mental health conditions also showed higher levels of disagreement and strong disagreement.

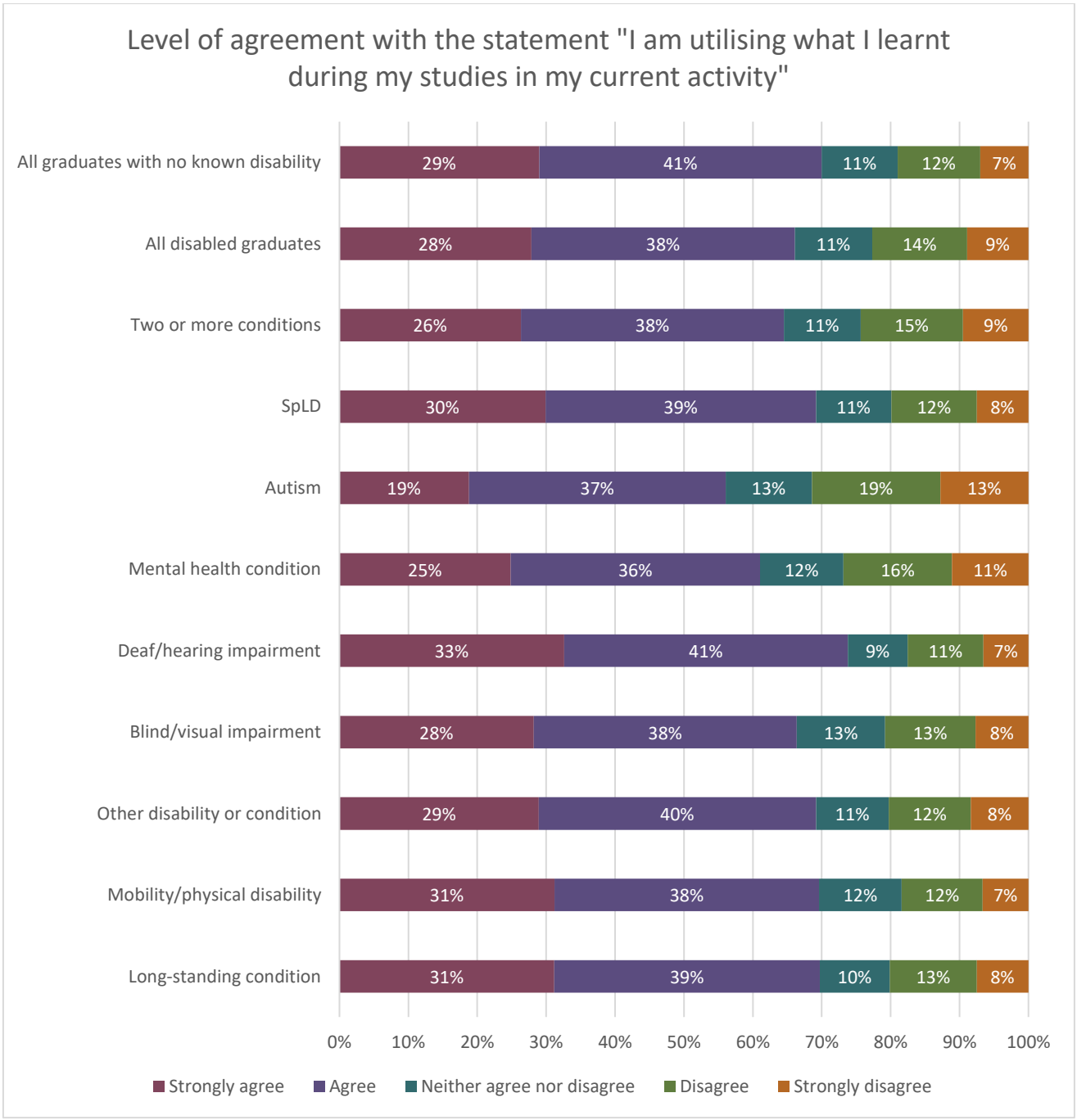


Figure 10 – 2021/22 Level of agreement with the statement "I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity"

8. FURTHER EMPLOYMENT MEASURES

This report section focuses on four further datasets within the graduate outcomes survey that may be indicative of the quality of employment secured by graduates and/or the likelihood that the graduates themselves perceive this as a desirable or successful outcome. These are employment skill level, employment basis, whether the role required their qualification, and their main reason for taking the role. All data in this section is presented at the population level; it looks across all qualification types, ethnic backgrounds and genders.

In each section, a graph shows the overall percentages for disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability reporting each outcome. A table then shows the percentage of graduates with each disability type reporting each outcome. These percentages were compared to the percentage of graduates with no known disability reporting that activity outcome. As in previous sections:

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points lower than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a box with a bold border.

Where outcomes for disabled graduates are five or more percentage points greater than the outcomes for graduates with no known disability, this is marked using a shaded box with white text.

Key findings:

- Disabled graduates were slightly more likely to report low or medium skilled employment than graduates with no known disability. Autistic graduates, graduates with a mental health condition and graduates with two or more conditions reported lower levels of highly skilled employment.
- 56% of graduates with no known disability, 50% of all disabled graduates and 40% of autistic graduates were on a permanent or open-ended contract.
- Graduates with no known disability were slightly more likely than disabled graduates to be in a role where their qualification was not required.
- Disabled graduates were slightly more likely than graduates with no known disability to report that they needed both the level and subject of their qualification to secure their current role.
- Graduates with no known disability were more likely than disabled graduates to feel that their role fitted into their career plan.
- Disabled graduates were slightly more likely to indicate that they took a role to earn a living.
- Autistic graduates and graduates with a mental health condition were most likely to report that they took a job to earn a living. Autistic graduates were also more likely than other graduates to say that they were taking a job to gain and broaden their experience.

8.1. Highly skilled employment

The GO dataset classifies jobs into high, medium and low skill levels. These are derived from the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code for the employment roles and duties reported by the graduate. SOC major groups 1 to 3 are classified as high skill, major groups 4 to 6 are classified as medium skill, major groups 7 to 9 are classified as low skill.

Figure 11 shows that disabled graduates were slightly more likely to report low or medium skilled employment than graduates with no known disability.

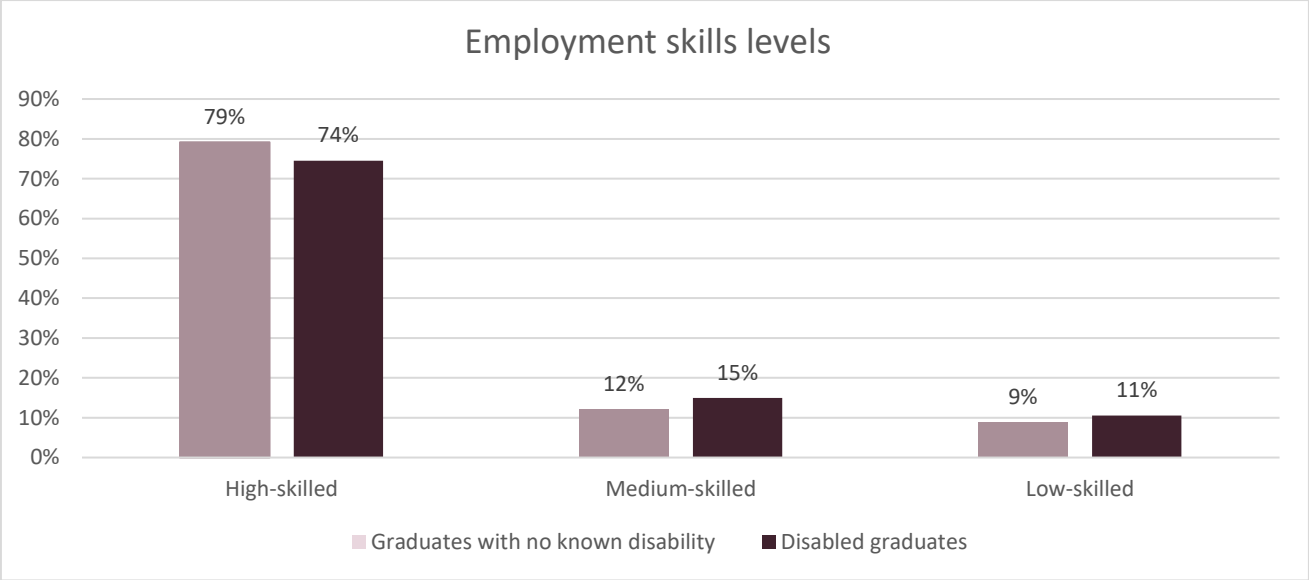


Figure 11 – 2021/22 Employment skills levels for all employed graduates

This is explored further in table 20, which shows that autistic graduates, graduates with a mental health condition and graduates with two or more conditions have lower levels of high skill employment, and higher levels of medium skill employment. Autistic graduates also have higher levels of low skill employment.

Table 20 – 2021/22 Employment skills levels for all employed graduates by disability type

Disability / 2021/22 employment skill level	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
High-skilled	78%	79%	75%	75%	79%	**70%**	**63%**	78%	**73%**	*79%*
Medium-skilled	13%	14%	15%	16%	13%	**17%**	**18%**	13%	**17%**	*12%*
Low-skilled	8%	7%	9%	9%	8%	12%	**19%**	10%	10%	*9%*

8.2. Basis of employment

Graduates in employment were asked about the contractual basis of that employment. Figure 12 shows that graduates with no known disability more commonly reported being on a permanent or open-ended contract than disabled graduates.

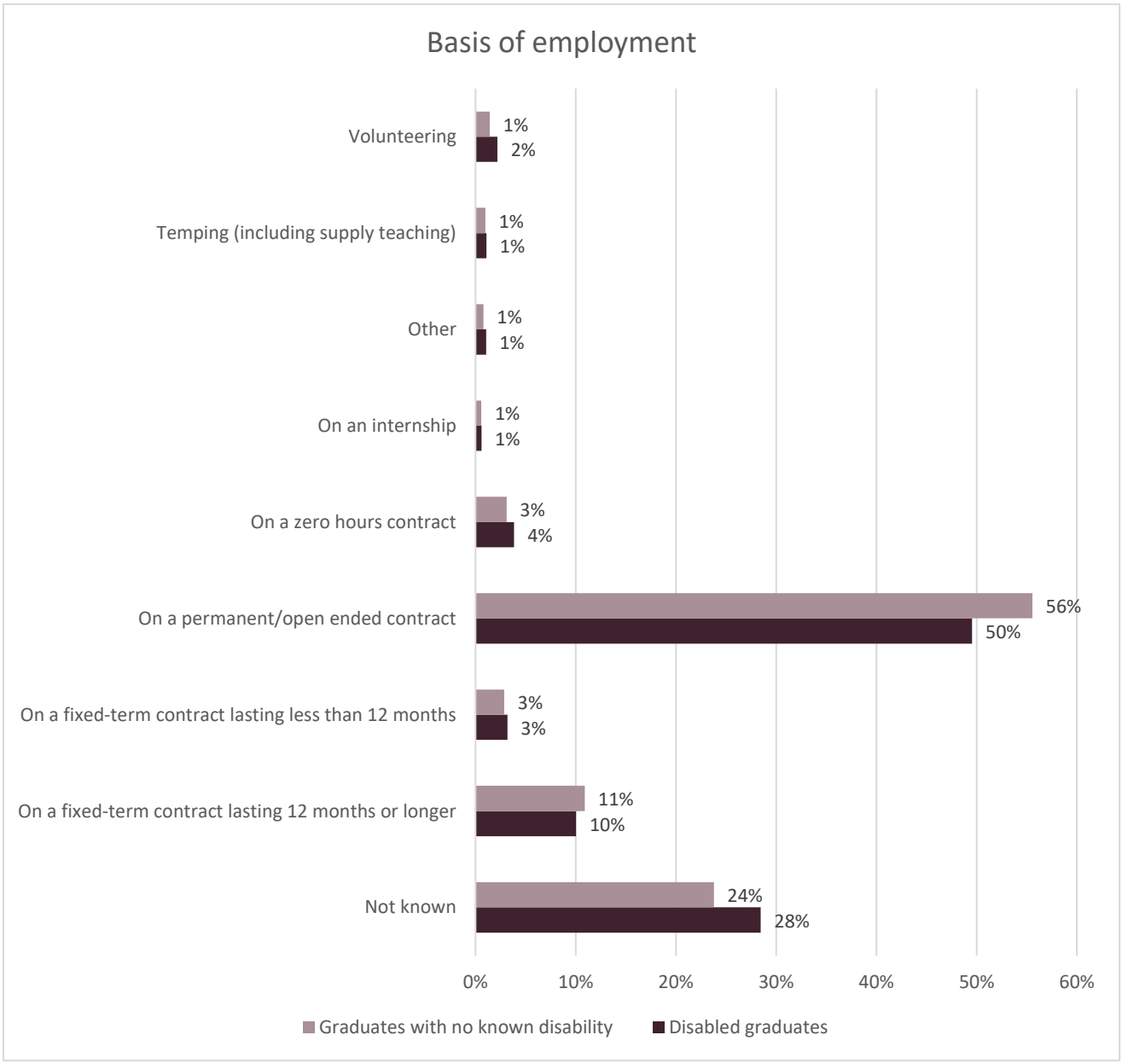


Figure 12 – 2021/22 Basis of employment for all employed graduates

56% of graduates with no known disability, and 50% of all disabled graduates, were on a permanent or open-ended contract. Table 21 provides more insight, by showing that the group least likely to be on a permanent or open-ended contract are autistic graduates (40%).

Table 21 – 2021/22 Basis of employment for all employed graduates by disability type

Disability / 2021/22 basis of employment	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
Not known	28%	**33%**	28%	**30%**	26%	28%	**37%**	26%	**35%**	*24%*
On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer	10%	10%	11%	10%	12%	10%	7%	10%	9%	*11%*
On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	*3%*
On a permanent/open ended contract	**51%**	**46%**	**49%**	**48%**	53%	**50%**	**40%**	52%	**44%**	*56%*
On a zero hours contract	3%	2%	3%	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	*3%*
On an internship	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	*1%*
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	*1%*
Temping (including supply teaching)	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	*1%*
Volunteering	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%	*1%*

8.3. Requirement for qualification

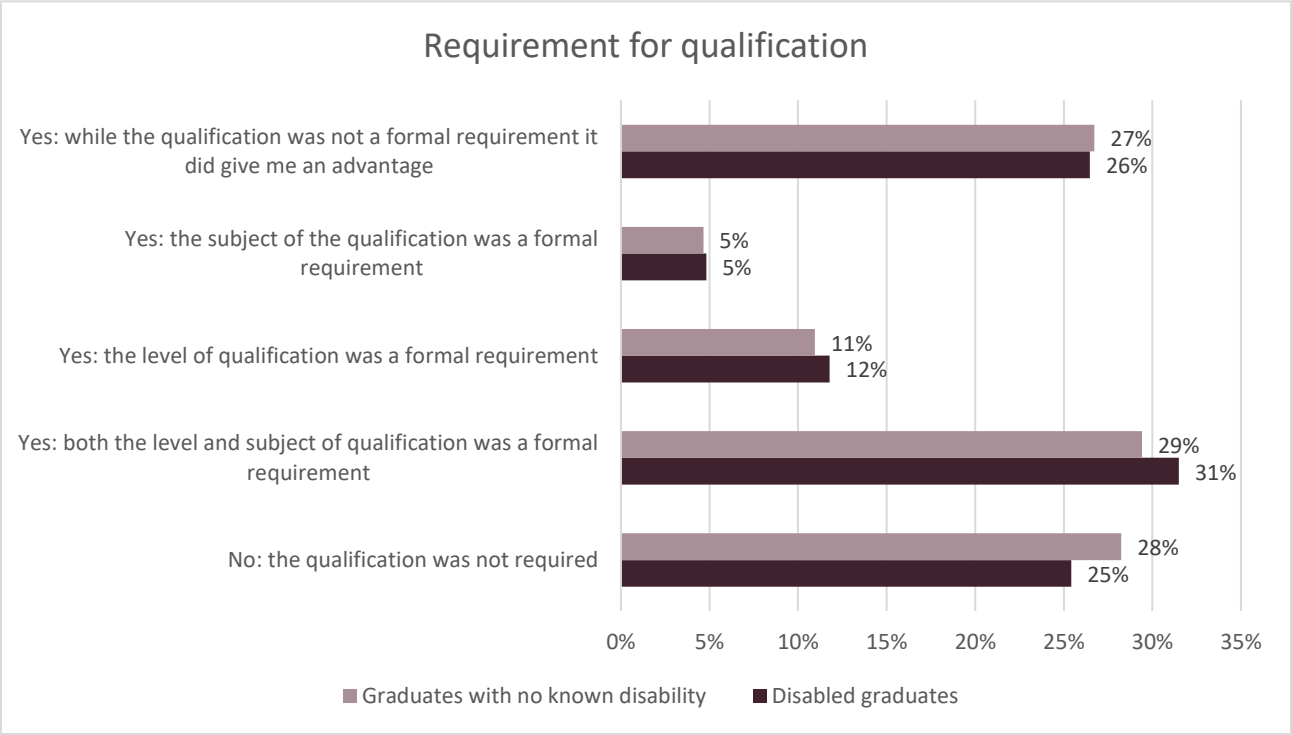


Figure 13 – 2021/22 Requirement for qualification for all employed graduates

Graduates in employment were asked whether they required the qualification they recently completed. They could indicate that both the level and subject were required, either the level or subject was required, that the qualification was not required but gave them an advantage, or that the qualification was not required. Those who answered 'Don't know' or 'Not applicable' are excluded from the analysis in this section.

Figure 13 shows broadly similar results for graduates with no known disability and disabled graduates. Graduates with no known disability were slightly more likely to be in a role where their qualification was not required, and disabled graduates were slightly more likely to report that they needed both the level and subject of their qualification to secure their current role.

Table 22 explores this further, showing that experiences varied across different groups of disabled graduates. Autistic graduates, graduates with a mental health condition and graduates with two or more conditions were most likely to report that their qualification was not required. Autistic graduates and graduates with a mental health condition were also far less likely to say that both the level and subject of their qualification was a formal requirement for their role. However deaf/hearing impaired graduates were more likely to indicate that both the level and subject of their qualification was a formal requirement.

Table 22 – 2021/22 Requirement for qualification for all employed graduates by disability type

Disability / 2021/22 requirement for qualification	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
No: the qualification was not required	26%	24%	28%	29%	28%	**31%**	**39%**	25%	**30%**	*25%*
Yes: both the level and subject of qualification was a formal requirement	31%	29%	30%	32%	**36%**	**24%**	**19%**	34%	28%	*31%*
Yes: the level of qualification was a formal requirement	12%	13%	12%	12%	10%	11%	9%	10%	10%	*12%*
Yes: the subject of the qualification was a formal requirement	5%	7%	4%	3%	3%	5%	3%	5%	4%	*5%*
Yes: while the qualification was not a formal requirement it did give me an advantage	27%	27%	26%	24%	23%	29%	30%	25%	27%	*26%*

8.4. Main reason for taking role

In this report section, the tables show the self-reported reasons that graduates took their jobs, reviewing not only the nature of employment for disabled graduates, but also their reasons for taking those roles. For clarity and brevity, in this section's tables, 'Unknown' responses have been excluded and two responses have been abbreviated as follows:

- "It fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted" has been abbreviated to "It fitted into my career plan".
- "To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want" has been abbreviated to "To gain and broaden my experience".

Graduates with no known disability were more likely to identify that their role fitted into their career plan than disabled graduates. Disabled graduates were slightly more likely to indicate that they took a role to earn a living. These results are shown in figure 14.

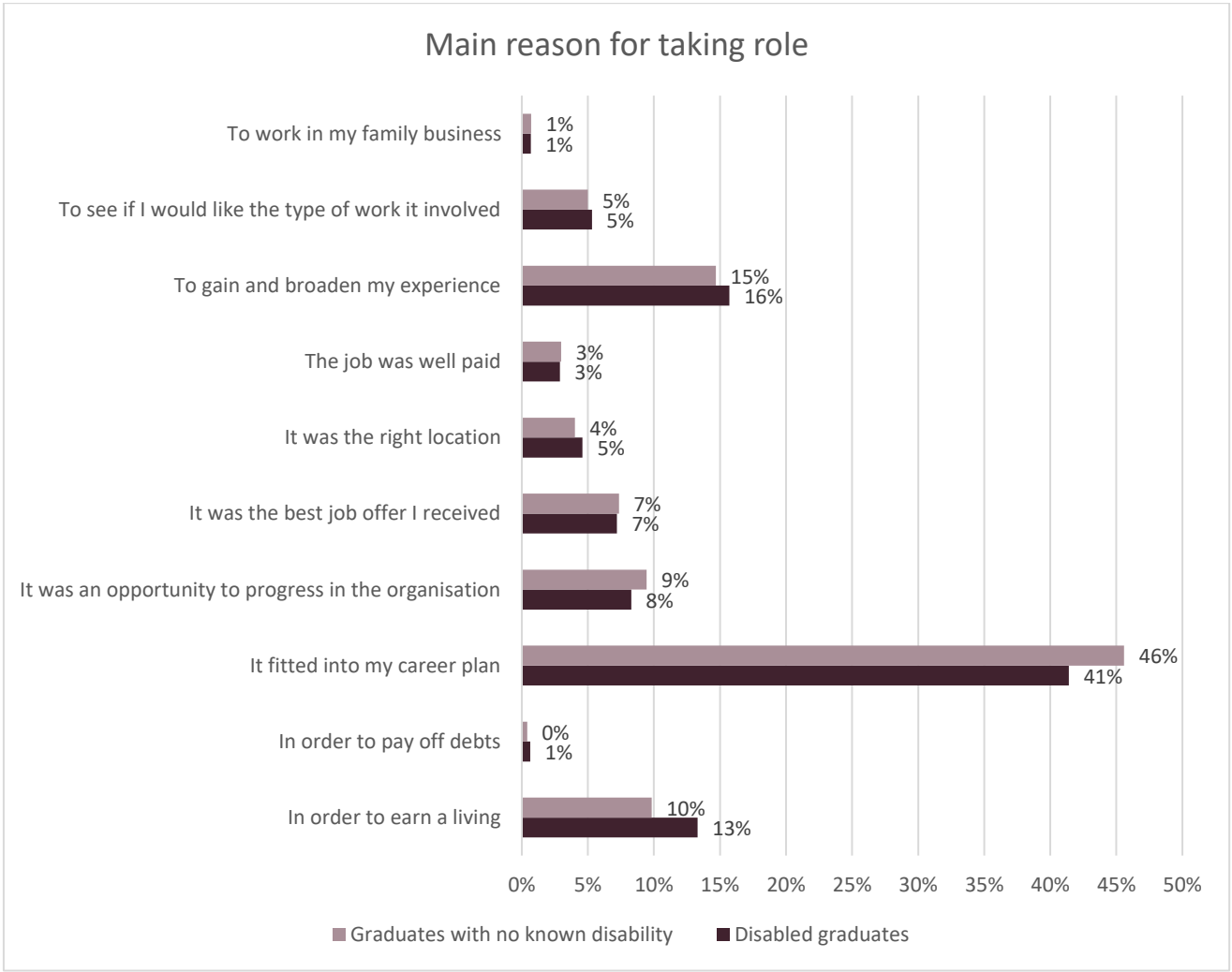


Figure 14 – 2021/22 Main reason for taking role for all employed graduates

Looking across the data by disability type, autistic graduates and graduates with a mental health condition were most likely to report that they took a job to earn a living, and along with graduates with two or more health conditions were least likely to report that they took a job because it fitted into their career plan. Autistic graduates were also more likely than other graduates to say that they were taking a job to gain and broaden their experience. This can be seen in table 23.

Table 23- 2021/22 Main reason for taking role for all employed graduates by disability type

Disability / 2021/22 main reason for taking role	Long-standing condition	Mobility/physical disability	Other disability or condition	Blind/ visual impairment	Deaf/ hearing impairment	Mental health condition	Autism	SpLD	Two or more conditions	*No known disability*
In order to earn a living	11%	11%	12%	10%	10%	**16%**	**19%**	11%	14%	*10%*
In order to pay off debts	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	*0%*
It fitted into my career plan	45%	45%	44%	43%	47%	**37%**	**29%**	45%	**39%**	*46%*
It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation	9%	10%	10%	9%	10%	7%	7%	9%	8%	*9%*
It was the best job offer I received	7%	6%	6%	11%	7%	7%	10%	7%	7%	*7%*
It was the right location	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	4%	7%	5%	5%	*4%*
The job was well paid	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	*3%*
To gain and broaden my experience	14%	15%	15%	15%	14%	17%	**20%**	15%	17%	*15%*
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	6%	4%	5%	6%	*5%*
To work in my family business	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	*1%*

9. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. Disabled graduates are less likely to be doing something that fits with their future plans but they are as likely as graduates with no known disability to feel that their graduate activity is meaningful

We recognise that people enter higher education for a variety of reasons, and full-time employment may not be the end goal for all. Introducing analysis of the graduate voice questions into this report for the first time in 2025 has helped to explore whether disabled graduates are accessing the higher education outcomes that they want. Levels of agreement around whether their current activity was meaningful were broadly consistent between most disabled graduates and graduates with no known disability, but the disabled graduate population was less likely to agree that their current activity fits with their future plans. While some disabled graduates showed stronger levels of agreement with the statement "I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity" than graduates with no known disability, this was not the case for all. Autistic graduates and graduates with mental health conditions showed markedly lower levels of agreement around the extent to which they were utilising their learning from their studies in their current activities, and higher levels of disagreement.

Recommendation 1: Further work is needed to explore how to ensure that disabled graduates can access and secure activities and employment that help them work towards their future plans.

9.2. Disabled graduates continue to experience employment gaps

Across all demographic groups explored in this report, disabled graduates continue to experience employment gaps and potentially poorer outcomes from higher education. Lower levels of full-time employment and higher levels of unemployment are consistently seen. Given these differences in outcomes, AGCAS continues to call for further exploration of whether disabled graduates have equity of access to their preferred opportunities and outcomes following higher education. We have worked to develop knowledge and understanding in this area through projects such as ENGAGE[27], but there is more to be done, and this needs to be a sector-wide collaborative effort.

AGCAS supports the Disabled Student Commitment[28] which specifically calls upon HE providers to ensure that careers and employment guidance acknowledges barriers that disabled students may

[27] For more detail on the Enhancing Neurodivergent Graduates' Access to Graduate Employment (ENGAGE) project please visit https://www.agcas.org.uk/knowledge-centre/enhancing-neurodivergent-graduates-access-to-graduate-employment-engage-

[28] Disabled Students' Commission, The Disabled Student Commitment. Published by Advance HE on behalf of the Disabled Students' Commission, 24 April 2023. Available at: https://advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/disabled-student-commitment (the "Moving forward" section of this commitment is reproduced in full in Appendix A)

experience, and to provide disability-specific support for employment and recruitment. AGCAS will continue to work with member institutions, employers and other organisations to support institutional and sector-wide activity using these principles, to proactively reduce employment gaps for disabled graduates. Current AGCAS activity in this space includes supporting best practice through member groups such as our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Party and our Disability Task Group, offering specific member training on inclusive design and supporting neurodivergent students into employment, and responding to national consultations such as the Welsh Parliament's Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry into the disability employment and payment gap in 2024. The latter work led to AGCAS being cited in the 2025 report, *Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: tackling the disability employment gap*[29].

Recommendation 2: All stakeholders should consider how to effectively and collaboratively support and resource appropriate higher education careers and employability activity, working towards reducing and ultimately eliminating employment gaps for disabled graduates.

9.3. There is clear evidence of intersectional disadvantage with some disabled graduates experiencing more significant employment and outcome gaps

For the first time, this report has explored ethnic background and gender alongside disability. The findings in this area need careful interpretation and consideration, but show clear indications of intersectional disadvantage. For example, we can see that White disabled graduates are more likely to be in full-time employment than disabled graduates from all other ethnic backgrounds. Disabled graduates whose gender identity was not the same as at birth had a 14 percentage point difference in their levels of full-time employment when compared to disabled graduates whose gender identity remained the same as at birth. There is a need for further detailed consideration of this data to identify those most affected by intersectional disadvantage, so that effective interventions can be delivered in advance of, during, and following higher education.

Recommendation 3: Further work is needed to explore intersectional disadvantage amongst disabled graduates. Those collecting, using and publishing institutional and sector data should review whether their approach and measures incorporate intersectional disadvantage.

[29] Welsh Parliament Equality and Social Justice Committee, Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap. Available at: https://senedd.wales/media/t1ilh0rq/cr-ld17039-e.pdf

9.4. A continued focus on autistic graduates is vital, to support access to meaningful outcomes that fit their future plans

Previous reports have highlighted that autistic graduates experience less positive outcomes when compared to graduates with no known disability and to other disabled graduates. This included their overall employment and the nature of that employment, and it applied at all qualification levels. While it is recognised that the desired outcomes from higher education participation vary, in this year's data, autistic graduates at all qualification levels, from all ethnic backgrounds and of all genders experience the lowest levels of full-time employment and lower levels of highly skilled and permanent employment. Further to this, when reviewing graduate voice questions, we can also see that particularly low levels of agreement on the fit between current activity and future plans were reported by autistic graduates, along with lower levels of self-reported meaningful activity post-graduation. It is therefore likely that many autistic graduates are not securing the outcomes they had hoped for from higher education. As identified in the previous *What Happens Next?* report, *What Happens Next in Challenging Times?*[30], many organisations are doing great work to support autistic students and graduates including organisations such as PRO Autism[31] and Ambitious About Autism[32]. However, the continued disparity in outcomes means more work and focus is needed, and we continue to call for this to happen.

Recommendation 4: Further research and data on the experiences and outcomes of autistic graduates are urgently needed. A collaborative approach from sector bodies, higher education institutions and employers is vital, and all work must centre the voices of autistic students and graduates.

Some of the above recommendations focus on specific groups of disabled graduates and their outcomes. However, the work towards equity of outcomes should incorporate principles of inclusive design, whether in the curriculum, in online or physical spaces, in wider student and graduate support or in workplaces, in order to maximise the potential benefits of any action taken.

[30] *What Happens Next in Challenging Times?* is available at: https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Research%20and%20knowledge/WHN_2022.pdf
[31] PRO Autism. Available at: https://proautism.org.uk/
[32] Ambitious about Autism, Understanding autism for careers and employability professional. Available at: https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/training-and-consultancy/our-training-courses/understanding-autism-for-careers-and-employability-professionals

10. APPENDICES

10.1. Appendix A – The Disabled Student Commitment

This appendix reproduces page 12 of the Disabled Student Commitment as published in 2023[33].

Moving out of studying and into employment is a crucial step for disabled students, and yet this is where the biggest gap in outcomes exists. The Commitment calls upon HEPs to ensure that:

- Careers and employment guidance acknowledges the barriers that may be experienced by disabled students, and emphasis and consideration are given to the positive attributes and skills that disabled students will have developed during their time at university.
- The relationships built with employers include recognition of opportunities for disabled students and graduates.
- Disability specific support in preparation for employment and the recruitment process is provided.
- Employability activities are referenced whilst on course and embedded throughout the student life cycle.

The Commitment also calls upon:

- DWP to work with HEPs and employers to support the planned roll-out of the disability passport scheme into employment.
- DWP to promote better understanding among students and higher education careers advisers of the available funding for reasonable adjustments in employment and promote Access to Work to disabled students.
- Sector-focused Disability Access Ambassadors are asked to encourage their sector to provide frameworks/routes to employment for disabled graduates.
- Employer organisations to commit to producing accessible information focused on the nature of the role and the support for disabled employees so that disabled applicants and students can make informed choices about future employment.
- Employer organisations are asked to promote the benefits of providing placements for disabled students, apprentices and employing disabled graduates.

Finally, the Commitment encourages the following:

- For the Business Disability Forum to share the emerging findings and outputs with the OfS on the next iteration of The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey.

[33] Disabled Students' Commission, The Disabled Student Commitment. Published by Advance HE on behalf of the Disabled Students' Commission, 24 April 2023. Available at: https://advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/disabled-student-commitment