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Delivering on the lifelong learning agenda

Pam Tatlow, Chief Executive
million+

23 October 2012

A few common myths

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- *‘There are hardly any mature students’*
- *‘They only study at the OU and Birkbeck’*
- *‘Most already have degrees’*
- *‘They all study part-time’*
- *‘They only study vocational subjects’*
- *‘They only study for personal interest’*

Never Too Late To Learn

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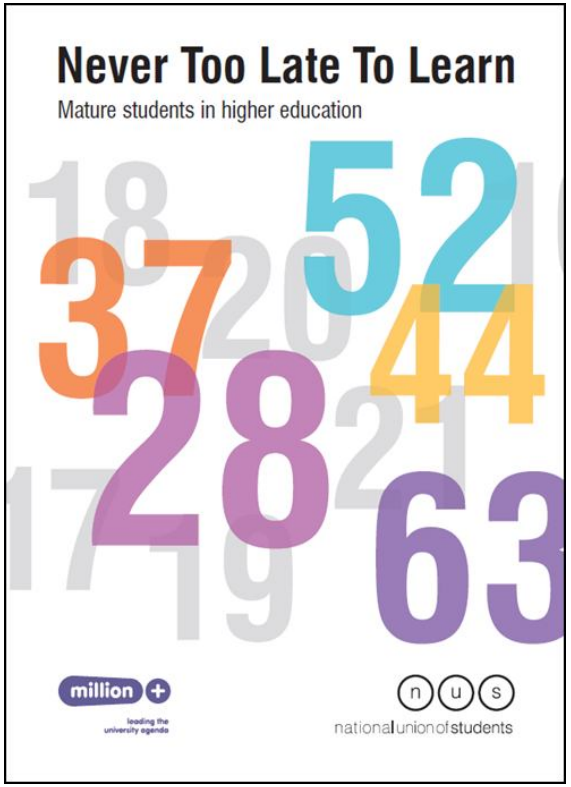
- Drop in mature HE applications
- Level 3 Loans challenges
- An under-researched group
- ‘Social mobility in action’
- Retention challenges
- Unique feature of UK HE



And the realities…..

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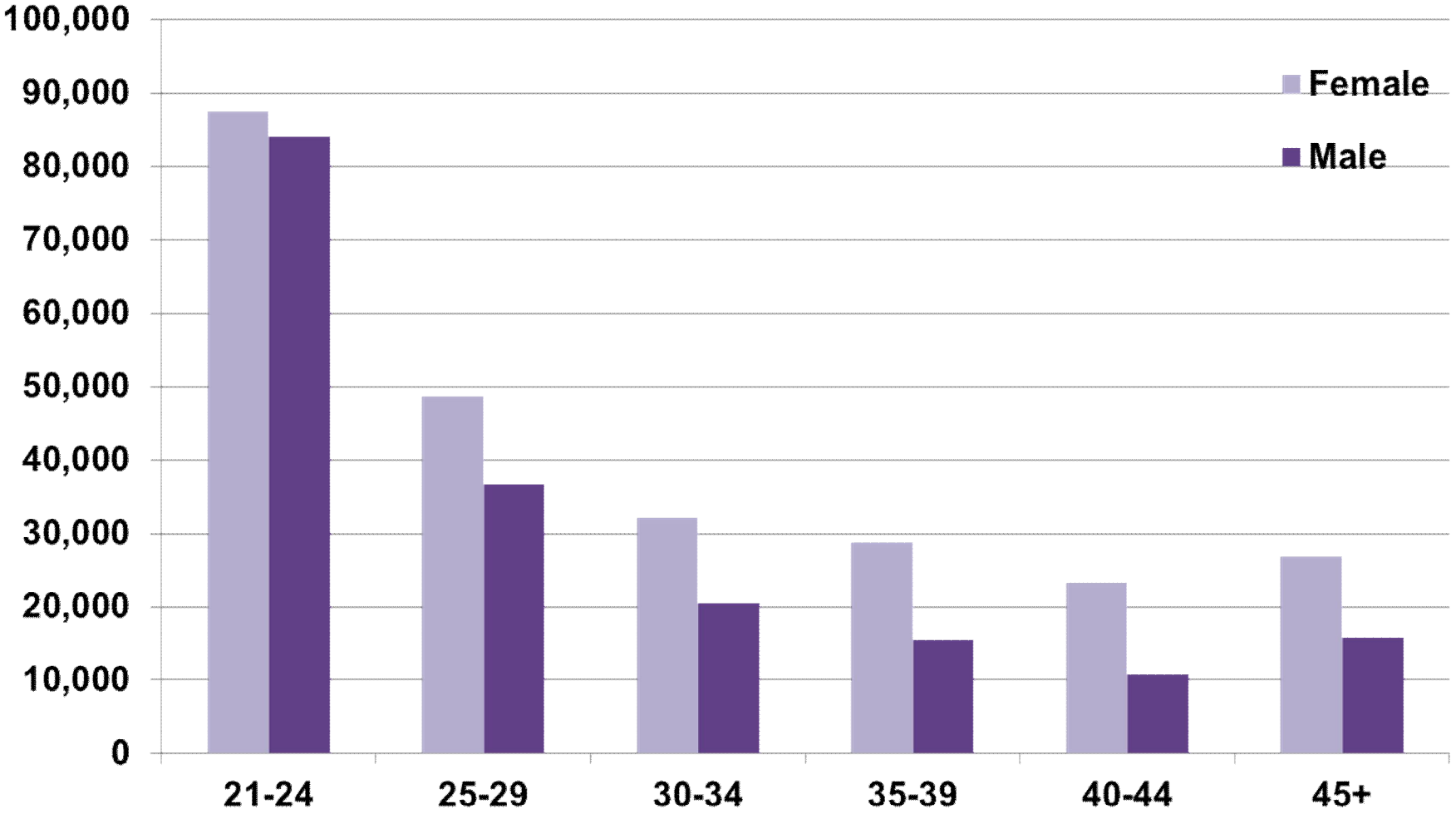
In 2009-10…

- **429,460 mature students = 30% of undergraduates**
- **>10% of student body at all but 21 universities**
- **90% studying for first degree for the first time**
- **Majority (57%) studying full-time**
- **Studying the full range of available subjects**
- **Studying for all sorts of reasons!**

Age Profile


100,000
90,000
80,000
70,000
60,000
50,000
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000
0
Female
Male
21-24
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45+

More likely to….

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- Be female (57%)
- Have disabilities (10.5% + unknowns)
- Be from ethnicity minorities (23%)
- Have dependents & caring responsibilities (43%)
- Apply to just one university or FE college (63%)
- Study part-time (42%) & locally (50%)
- Be eligible for institutional bursaries (49%)

Less likely to….

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- Make use of public info sources
- Have traditional qualifications
- Apply via UCAS
- Complete degree courses
- Obtain ‘good’ degrees
- Progress to postgraduate study
- (Although more likely to be in employment)

Entry Qualifications

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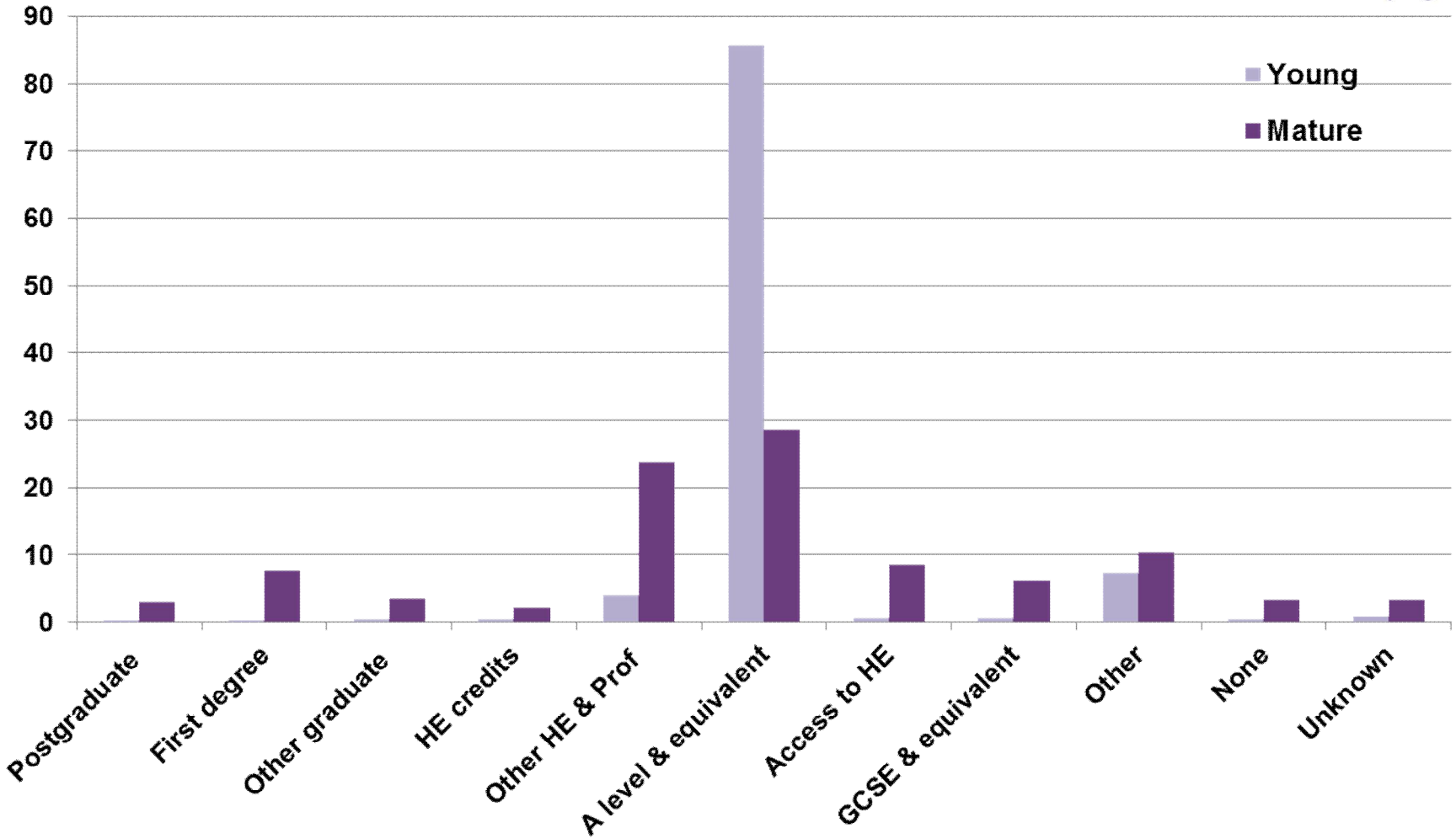
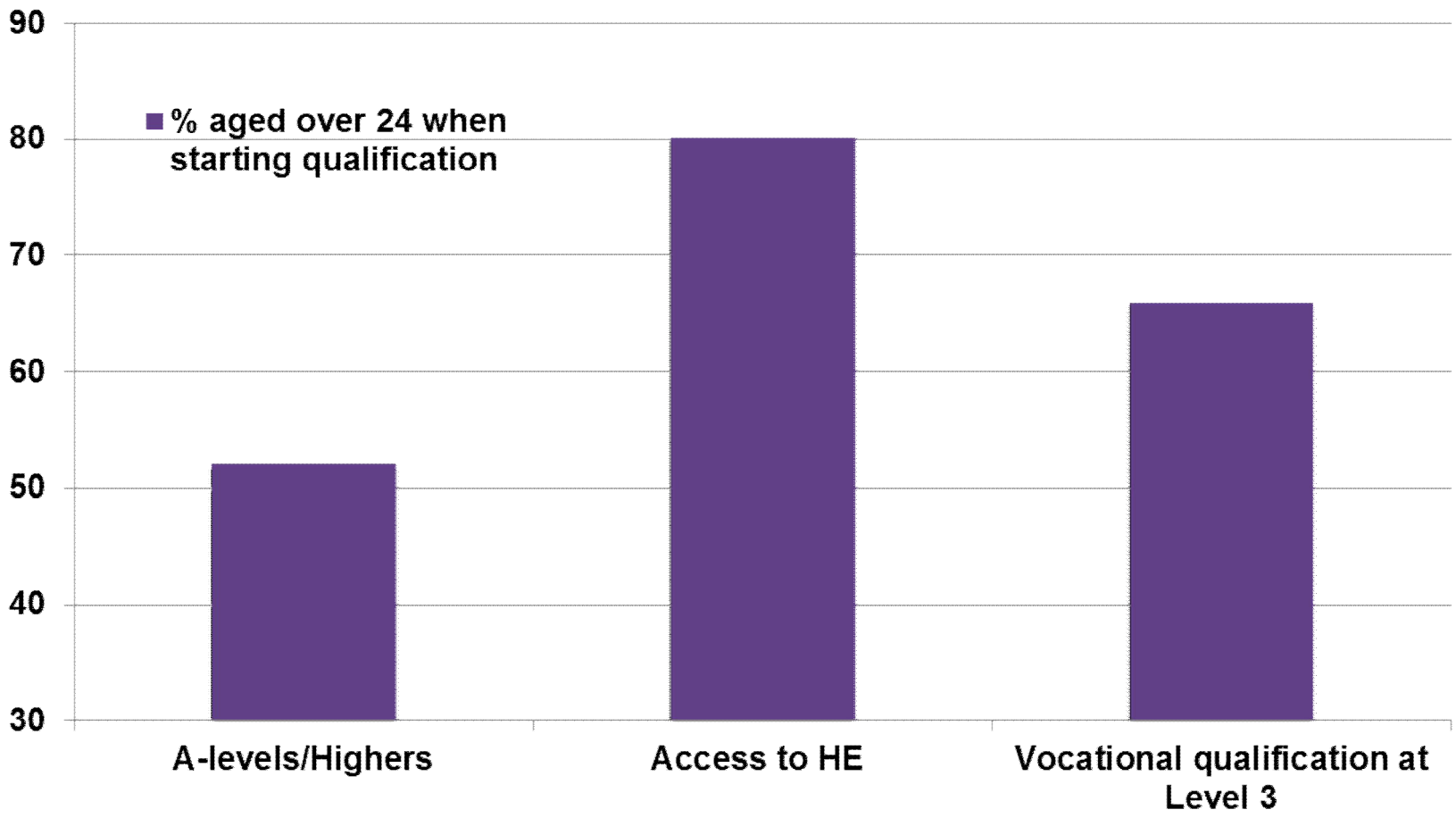


Entry Qualifications (+24)



Opportunities and Challenges

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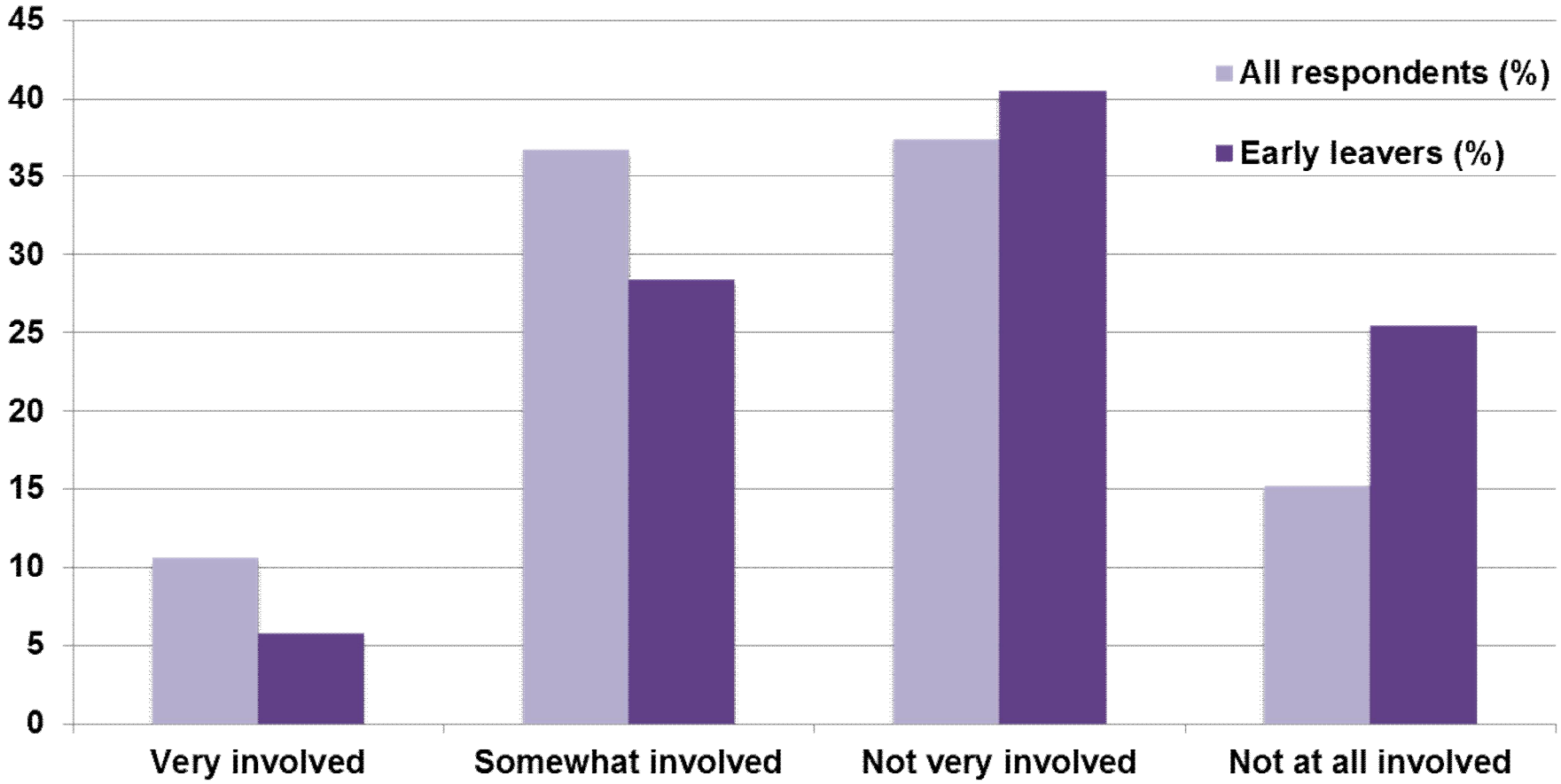
- Mature students view HE as wonderful opportunity
- But one that involves many challenges e.g. information, returning to study, balancing study with paid work & other responsibilities, finance, involvement
- Those who have considered leaving early are more likely to report worse ‘student experience’
- Important not to overstate challenges – overwhelming majority (93%) have positive experiences

Involvement in University Life



Delivering life-long learning

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- Lack of confidence
- Feeling overwhelmed during induction
- Group work with younger students
- Late provision of timetables & reading lists
- School half-term
- Child-friendly campuses
- Financial struggles

Financial Hardship: Profile

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Students suffering financial hardship more likely to:

- **Be studying full-time**
- **Have caring responsibilities**
- **Have a disability**
- **Have an Access to HE qualification**
- **Rent, rather than own, their home**

Finance and Retention

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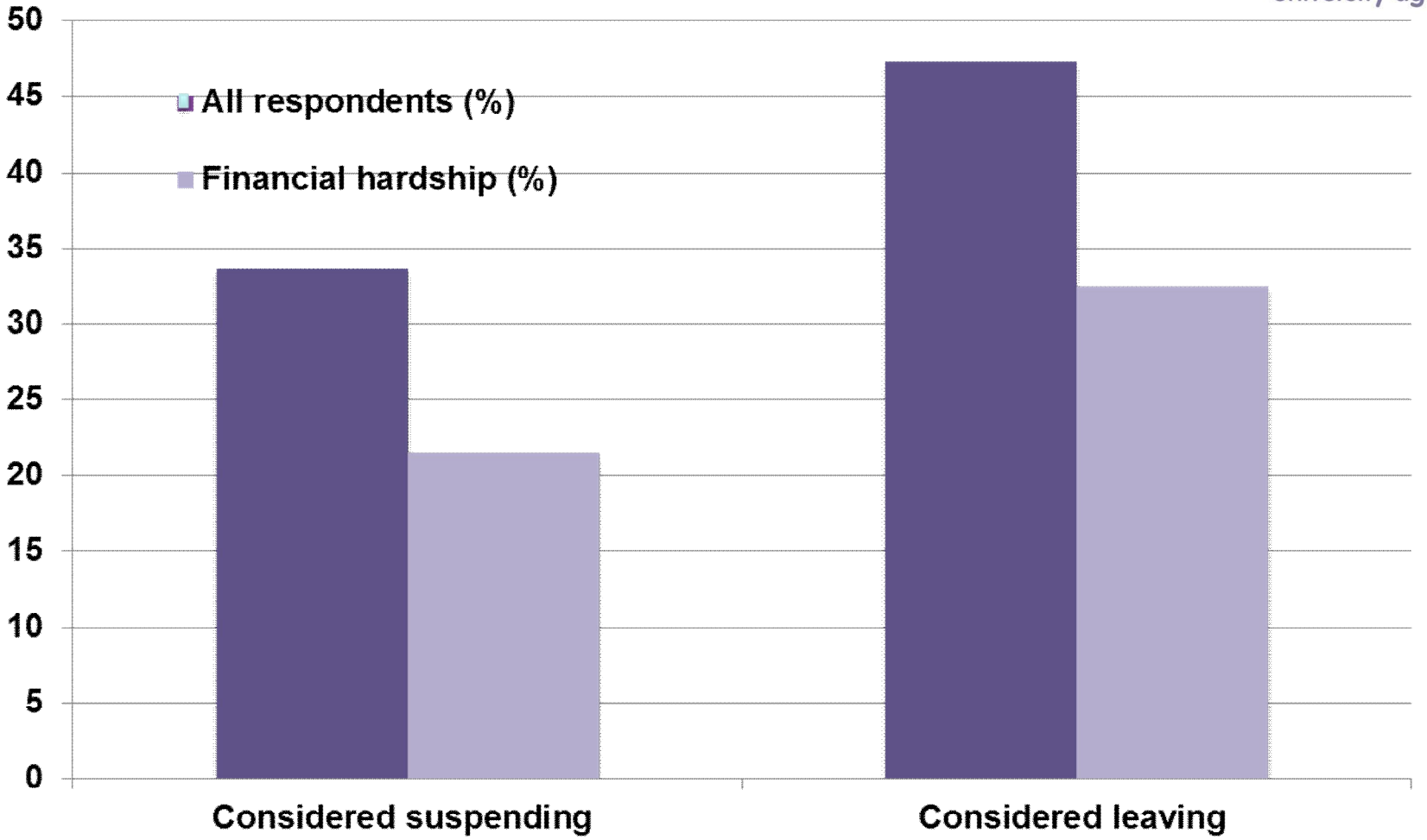
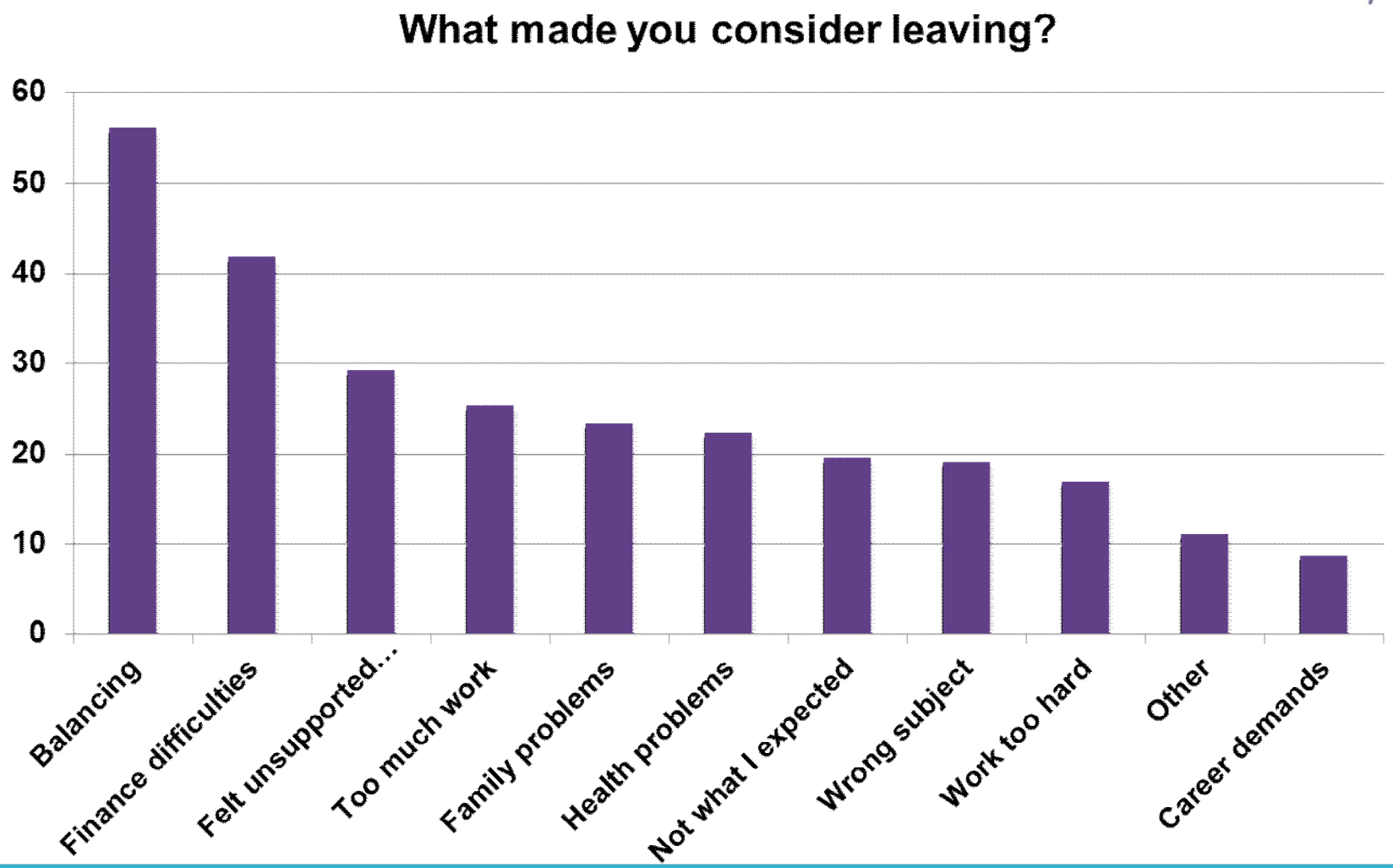


Reasons for Leaving



Finance and Funding

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- England and UK lack holistic student finance and support & flexible fee regimes
- £150m pa to provide maintenance support for PT*
- 24+ Advanced-learner loans:70p RAB charge (BIS)
- PT students / graduates: -7% RAB i.e. Treasury gain*

(London Economics / million+ evidence to Browne)

Conclusions

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- Life-long learners are an integral part of the student body
- And unique feature of UK HE
- More likely to have WP characteristics
- Future challenges in light of greater debt adversity (Level 3 loans policy and tuition fees = barriers to entry) and lack of targeted campaigning
- UG, PG, ELQ, adult learning = failure of policy-makers at all levels, in all parties

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