

Higher education

This article analyses several different sources of data to look at how Herefordshire's population engage in higher education (HE). Some of this data presents difficulties in terms of its timeliness or its statistical accuracy, but all together they help to paint a picture of what is going on in the county. The following is a brief summary of the data sources.

The **Annual Population Survey (APS)** is a national survey of households in Great Britain. Its purpose is to provide information on key social and socio-economic variables including level of qualification held between the ten-yearly censuses. Unfortunately, due to small sample sizes at a local authority level the confidence intervals associated with the data are typically wide i.e. there is low statistical confidence when generalising to the whole population.

The **Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)** uses data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency and other administrative sources to calculate local participation rates. This Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) data covers students studying full-time higher education courses in either higher education institutions or further education¹ institutions and is available down to ward level. A young participation rate (at age 18 or 19) is calculated that uses school age cohorts as a denominator. The latest data available is based on student record data sets for 2000 to 2004.

The **Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)** collects administrative data on the number of 'instances' (student engagement) with a particular institution. An instance is recorded when a student enrolls on a course at the institution (this will occur for every year of study). Because a student can have more than one instance of engagement at an institution in a given year the total number of instances will exceed the number of students. The data available from HESA includes home address (ward), region of institution (destination), subject, term time accommodation, mode of study, disability, study level and ethnicity.

¹ "**Further education**" consists of full-time or part time education (including vocational, social, physical and recreational training) and organised leisure-time occupation provided in connection with the provision of such education, for persons over compulsory school age.

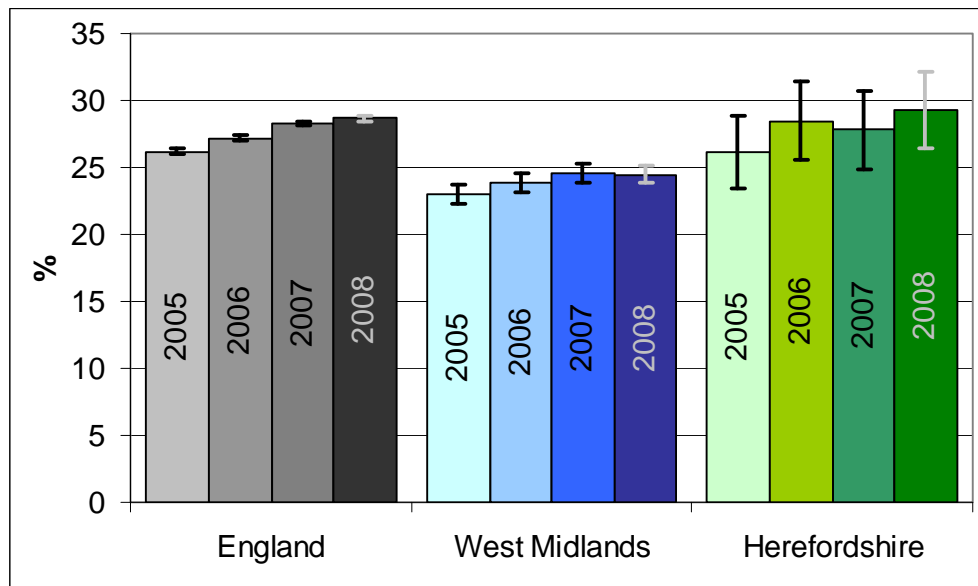
"**Higher education**" consists of education provided by any of the following courses: (a) a course for the further training of teachers or youth and community workers (b) a post-graduate course (including a higher degree course) (c) a first degree course (d) a course for the Diploma of Higher Education (e) a course for the Higher National Diploma or Higher National Certificate of the Business & Technician Education Council, or the Diploma in Management Studies (f) a course for the Certificate in Education (g) a course in preparation for a professional examination at a higher level (ie above the standard of 'A' Level, or the National Diploma of the Business & Technician Education Council) (h) a course providing education at a higher level (see (g) above for definition of "higher level"), whether or not in preparation for an examination.

Qualified adults

Qualification level of working age population (Annual Population Survey)

The latest data from the APS shows that 29.3% ($\pm 2.9\%$ confidence interval²) of Herefordshire's working age population³ were qualified to at least level 4 (equivalent to a first degree or higher) in 2008. This was similar to the proportion for England as a whole (28.7%), but greater than for the West Midlands region (24.5%). There has been a nominal increase in this percentage since 2005 (26.2%) in line with the national trend. However, due to the sample size it is not possible to say whether this is a real increase for Herefordshire as a whole (i.e. not statistically significant).

Chart 1. Proportion of working age population qualified to at least level 4 (Error bars show 95% confidence intervals)



Source: Annual Population Survey

Adults holding HE qualifications (2001 Census - HEFCE)

In addition to the young participation rates described on the previous page, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) have analysed ward-level data from the 2001 Census on the proportion of people aged 16-74 holding a HE qualification. The rates for all wards in UK have been ranked and divided into quintiles⁴ to enable comparison to levels nationally. Chart 2 below shows which quintile Herefordshire's wards fall into from '1' (those wards with the lowest participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation).

Hope End ward in the east of the county was the only ward to fall in the top (5th) quintile (20%) nationally in terms of HE qualification rate in 2001, although most of Herefordshire's rural areas fell within the 4th quintile. Only areas in the south of Hereford City (Belmont and St. Martins & Hinton wards) were in the bottom (1st)

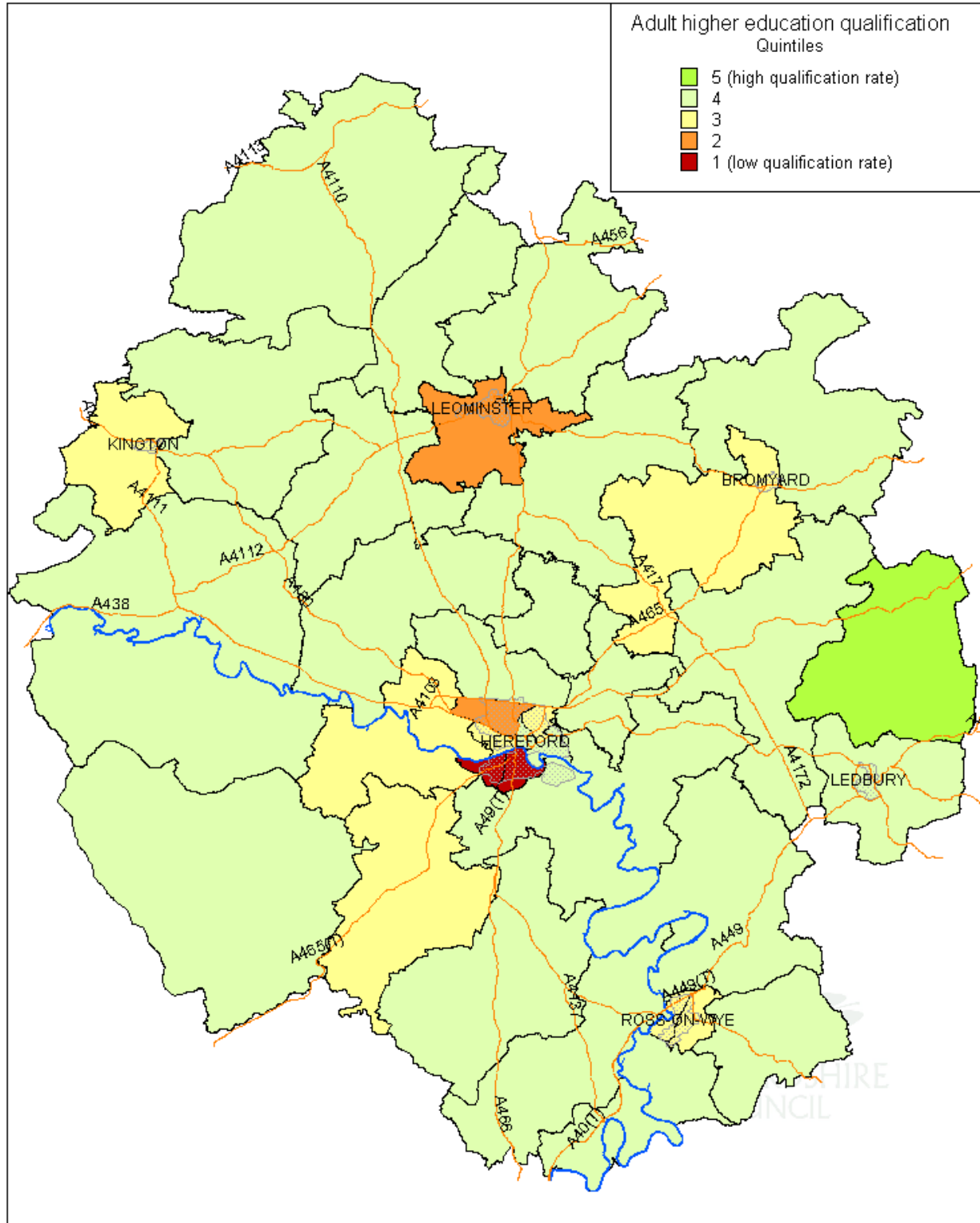
² Surveying a large enough sample of a particular population enables estimates to be made for the population as a whole. Confidence Intervals (C.I.) give an indication of the possible margin of error around these estimates.

³ Working age population – 16-59 for females 16-64 for males

⁴ Quintiles – When a population, in this case rates of participation, are divided equally into five, so that each quintile represents 20% (one fifth) of the total population. This means that the median (average) – the value which 50% of ward rates are below and 50% above, falls in the 3rd quintile.

quintile (lowest 20%). Three Elms ward in Hereford City and both wards in Leominster were in the 2nd quintile. The other market towns with the exception of Ledbury (which was in the 4th) and Aylestone and St. Nicholas wards in Hereford were in the 3rd quintile (close to the national average).

Chart 2. Proportion of people aged 16-74 holding a HE qualification at the time of the 2001 census (UK quintiles)



Proportion of people aged 16-74 holding a higher education qualification

Source: 2001 Census (HEFCE)



SCALE 1: 285,000

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Participation of young people in higher education (HE) (HEFCE POLAR)

HEFCE's POLAR2 dataset is based on the HE participation rates of people who turned 18 between 2000 and 2004 and entered a HE course in a UK higher education institution or GB further education college. POLAR2 is an update to POLAR which was based on participation rates from the late 1990s. It draws on data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the other UK funding bodies and HM Revenue & Customs. Participation rates for wards are calculated as a proportion of the school age cohort who turned 18 between 2000 and 2004 that entered a HE course in a UK higher education institution or GB further education college.

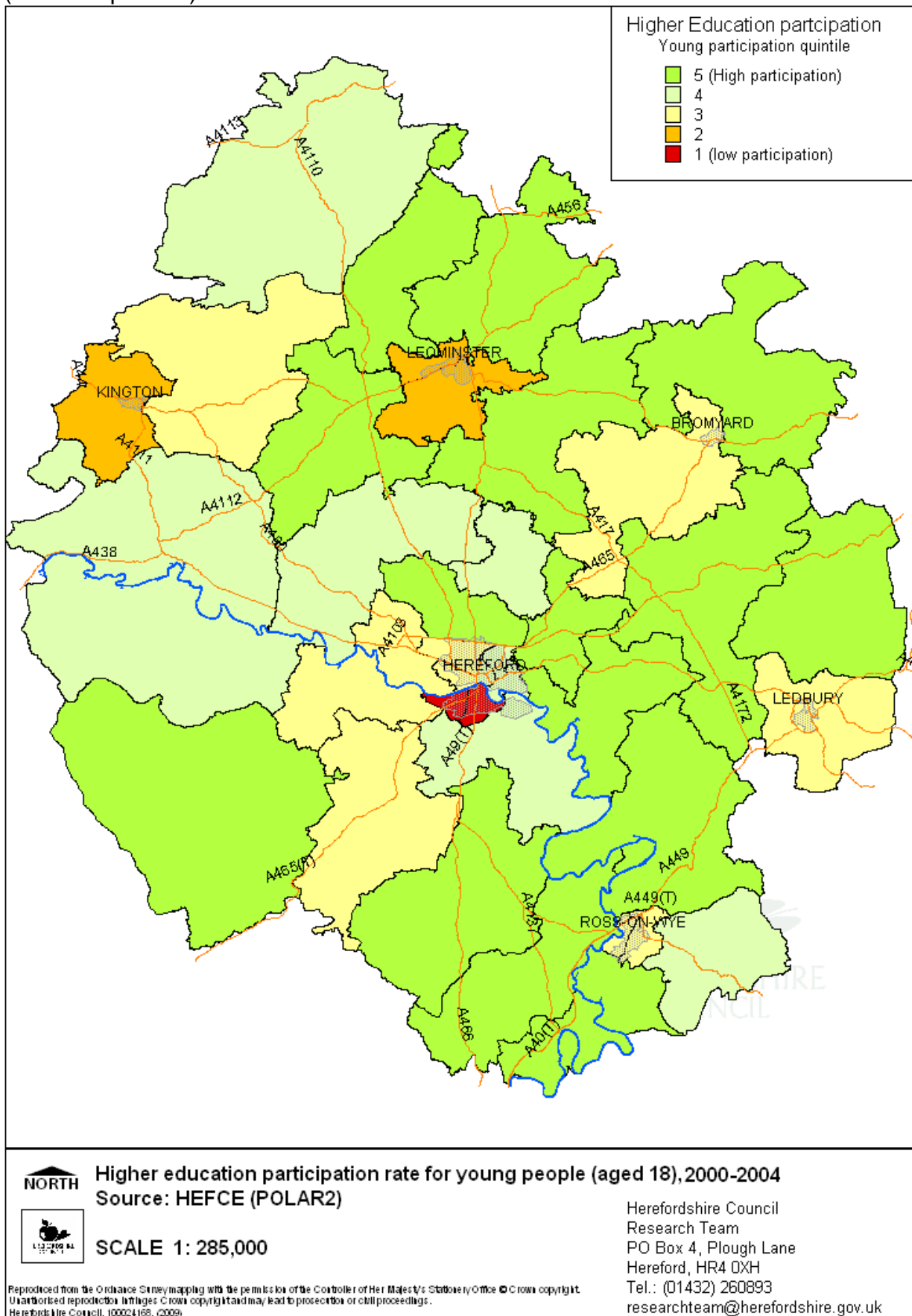
The POLAR2 classification is formed by ranking wards by their young participation rates⁵ for the combined 2000 to 2004 cohorts. As with the adult participation rate (described on page 2) this gives five quintile groups from '1' (those wards with the lowest participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation), each representing 20% of wards nationally. Chart 3 below shows this data for Herefordshire.

In general participation rates in Herefordshire (35% in 2000) have been above that of the West Midlands (28%) and the UK as a whole (29%). However this masks considerable variation within the county.

- Rural areas of the county have the highest participation rates, whilst Hereford City and the market towns are lower.
- The south of Hereford City (Belmont and St. Martins & Hinton) had the lowest rates, with both wards being in the lowest (1st) quintile nationally.
- Leominster and Kington were in the 2nd quintile, whilst Ledbury, Bromyard and Ross-on-Wye were in the 3rd (close to national average).
- Three wards in Hereford City and a further seven rural wards are in the 4th quintile.
- 15 rural wards in the highest (5th) quintile nationally, mostly in the east of the county.

⁵ The participation rate for wards is calculated using school age cohorts as a denominator.

Chart 3. Participation rate of young people (aged 18) in higher education, 2000-2004 (national quintiles)



Students in Higher Education Institutions (HESA) 2007-08

Data obtained from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) provides a rich source of data for how students from Herefordshire are engaged with HE institutions. The data records individual instances (student engagement) rather than actual numbers of students so the total number of instances will be greater than the number of students enrolled at a particular institution. An instance is recorded when a student enrolls on a course at the institution (this will occur for every year of study).

This data defines Higher education (HE) students as those enrolled on courses for which the level of instruction is above level 3 of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (e.g. courses at the level of Certificate of HE and above).

In total in 2007-08 there were 5,064 instances recorded for residents of Herefordshire engaged at higher education institutions in the UK.

Mode of study

In 2007-08 66% of these enrolments were on full-time or sandwich course⁶. The remaining 34% were enrolled on part-time courses. Part time courses were more common amongst Herefordshire residents than in the UK as a whole, where only 16% of enrolments were on part time courses. Although there is no direct evidence, the relatively old age structure of Herefordshire residents, coupled with a low level of HE provision, seems likely to form part of the explanation for this.

Level of study

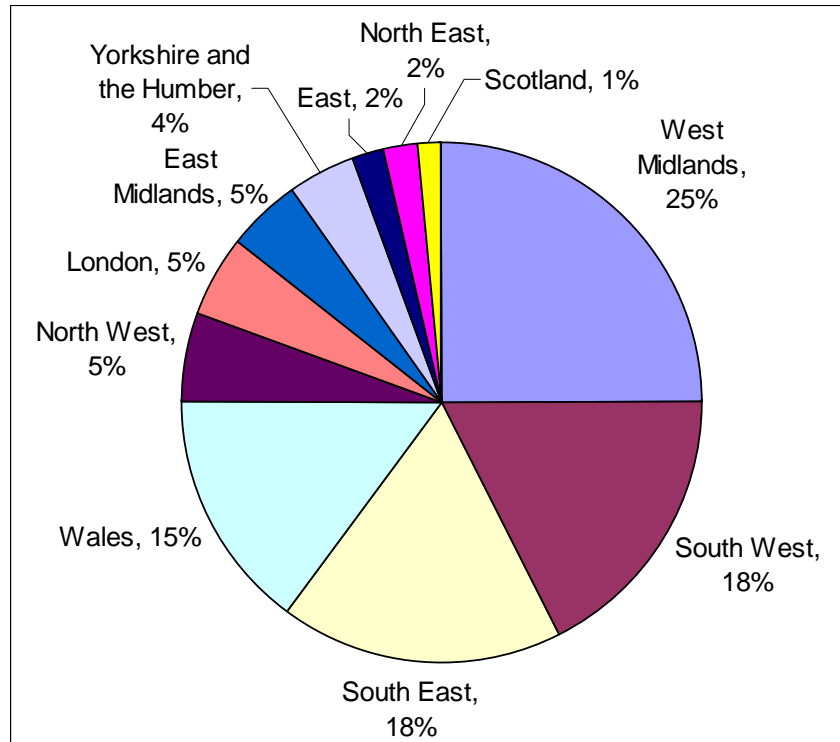
In 2007-08 85% of student engagement from residents of Herefordshire was in undergraduate courses and 15% in postgraduate courses, compared 78% undergraduate and 22% postgraduate for the UK as a whole.

⁶ Full-time and sandwich students are those normally required to attend an institution for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the year of study, on thick or thin sandwich courses, and those on a study-related year out of their institution.

Region of study

The institution of study is grouped into regions⁷ (English Government Office Regions and other UK countries). The greatest proportion of instances from Herefordshire residents were at institutions in the West Midlands (25%), followed by the South West (18%) and the South East (18%), then Wales (15%).

Chart 4. Proportion of instances by region of destination institution.



Source: HESA

Looking at the proportion of study in the West Midlands region for different wards in Herefordshire, it ranges from 7% for residents of Kerne Bridge in the south of the county to 39% for Bromyard in the north and Belmont in Hereford city. As you might expect there is some variability throughout the county in terms of destinations for study depending largely on where the ward is located.

The proportion of study carried out in the West Midlands by residents of Hereford city as a whole is 30%, twice that of Ross-on-Wye (15%), where 26% of study is at institution in the South West region of England. Looking at the Golden Valley in the west of the county for example, the greatest proportion of study was in the South East region (24%), followed by Wales (20%) and then the West Midlands region (17%).

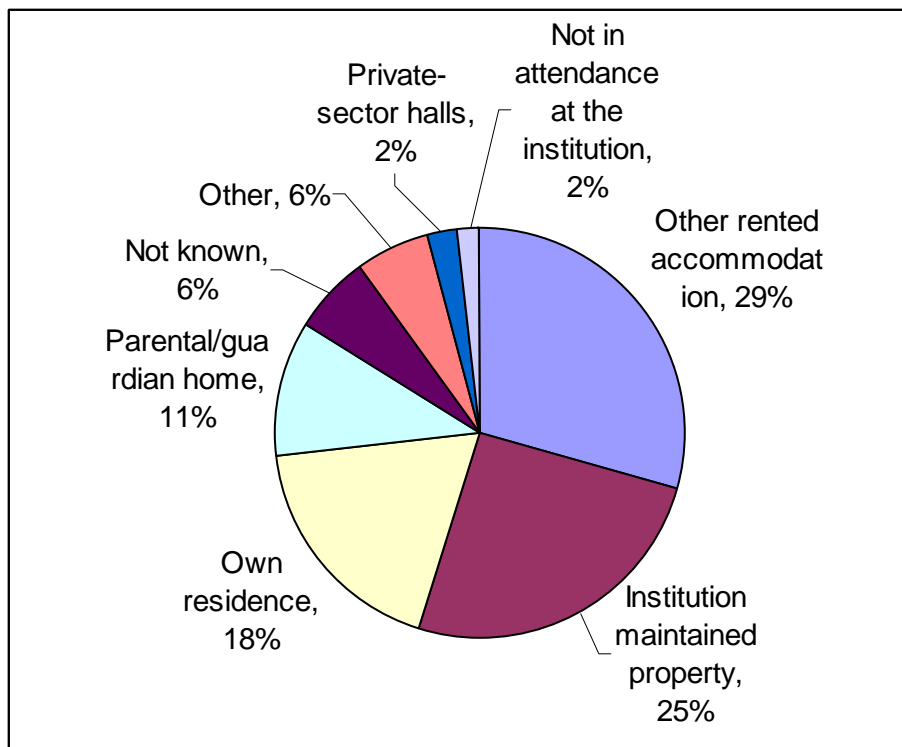
⁷ The allocation of an institution to a geographical region is done by reference to the administrative centre of that institution so although the Open University teaches throughout the UK, its administrative centre is located in South East England, and except where shown separately, is counted as a wholly English institution.

Term time accommodation

The following chart shows the proportion of instances that are associated with a particular term time residence. Because an instance will be recorded for every year of a student's study the data for 2007-08 shows a snapshot of all students in their respective years and subsequently their varied requirements for accommodation. This analysis is restricted to students studying full-time or sandwich courses as part time students are not required to indicate what type of accommodation they are using.

The greatest proportion of students studying on a full-time or sandwich course were accommodated in 'other rented' accommodation (29%) e.g. privately rented, followed by 'institution maintained property' (25%) and 'own residence' (18%). The proportion staying in the parental or guardian home was 11%. Unfortunately there is no data available to make a national comparison.

Chart 5. Proportion of instances for Herefordshire (full-time or sandwich) by type of accommodation, 2007-08.



'Not in attendance at the institution' is where full-time and sandwich students are not currently in attendance at the institution for reasons such as industrial placement or language year abroad.

Source: HESA

For further information on the data in this article, please contact the Research Team on 01432 260 893, or e-mail researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk