

An analysis of selected data from Equal Access Survey for SUSI grant awardees among New Entrants to Higher Education

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Higher Education Authority

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Key Findings

- The proportion of respondents to the Equal Access Survey varied between 72% and 78% over the observed period, and was quite similar among those who did and did not receive a SUSI award. However, the pattern of respondents to specific questions is systematically different for questions related to disability.
- The proportion of New Entrants reporting an ethnicity other than White (Irish) in the SUSI group was more than twice that of the non-SUSI group, 30.2% to 13.9% in the 2022/23 year. White (other white background) was the most frequent of the ethnicities other than White (Irish).
- The number of students reporting at least one disability increased by 50% between 2017/18 and 2022/23, and the proportional change was greater in the non-SUSI group (82.3% increase) compared to the SUSI group (13.1% increase). For the SUSI group, there was a decline in disability reports between 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- For the SUSI group, the disability type responsible for the largest part of this growth was psychological conditions, which peaked for this group in 2021/22 and then declined in the subsequent year. For the non-SUSI group, learning conditions, psychological conditions and *other* conditions all grew substantially throughout the period, including in 2022/23.
- Among those students with a disability who reported requiring additional support, there was a strong growth in cases throughout the period for those in the non-SUSI group. For the SUSI group, there was modest growth to 2021/22 and then a decline to 2022/23. For those reporting more than one disability, both the SUSI and non-SUSI groups grew in frequency over the observed period, while the non-SUSI group had a comparatively higher increase between 2020/21 and 2022/23.
- The proportion of respondents who reported being a parent has declined from 4.9% in 2019/20 to 3.1% in 2022/23 in the SUSI group. In the non-SUSI group, the proportion reporting being a parent was lower at between 1% and 2% and more stable over time.
- Of those reporting being a parent in 2022/23, 31.3% in the SUSI group reported receiving the One Parent Family Payment while 14.7% of the non-SUSI group did so. The proportions were relatively similar in other years.

Introduction

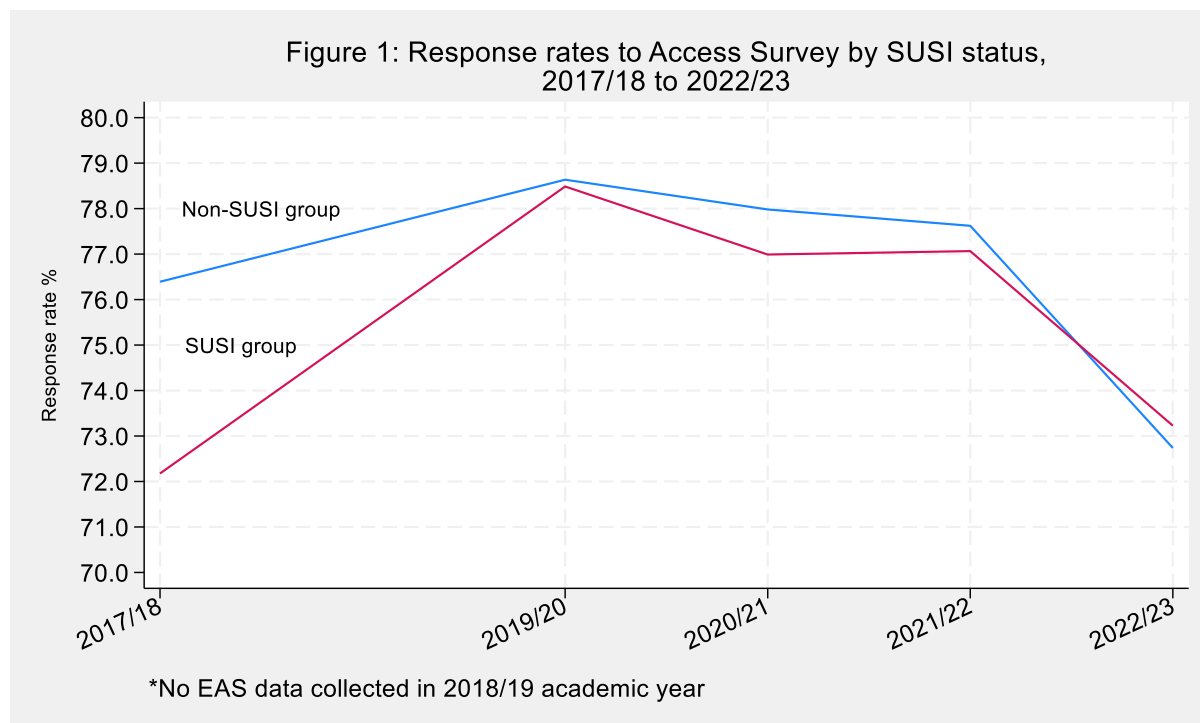
This report provides descriptive analysis of New Entrants for the period 2017/18 to 2022/23, grouped by whether students were awarded a SUSI grant or not and examines variables from data collected in the Equal Access Survey (“EAS”) for the corresponding year. The Equal Access Survey is an annual, voluntary survey of all first-year undergraduate students to Higher Education Authority (“HEA”)-funded institutions. It is deployed to measure progress on national targets relating to equity of access to Higher Education and to develop the evidence base to inform policy in this area.

Results are presented for differences between SUSI grant awardees and those who were not awarded a grant in the following areas:

1. Ethnicity
2. Disability
3. Parental status and receiving One Parent Family Payment

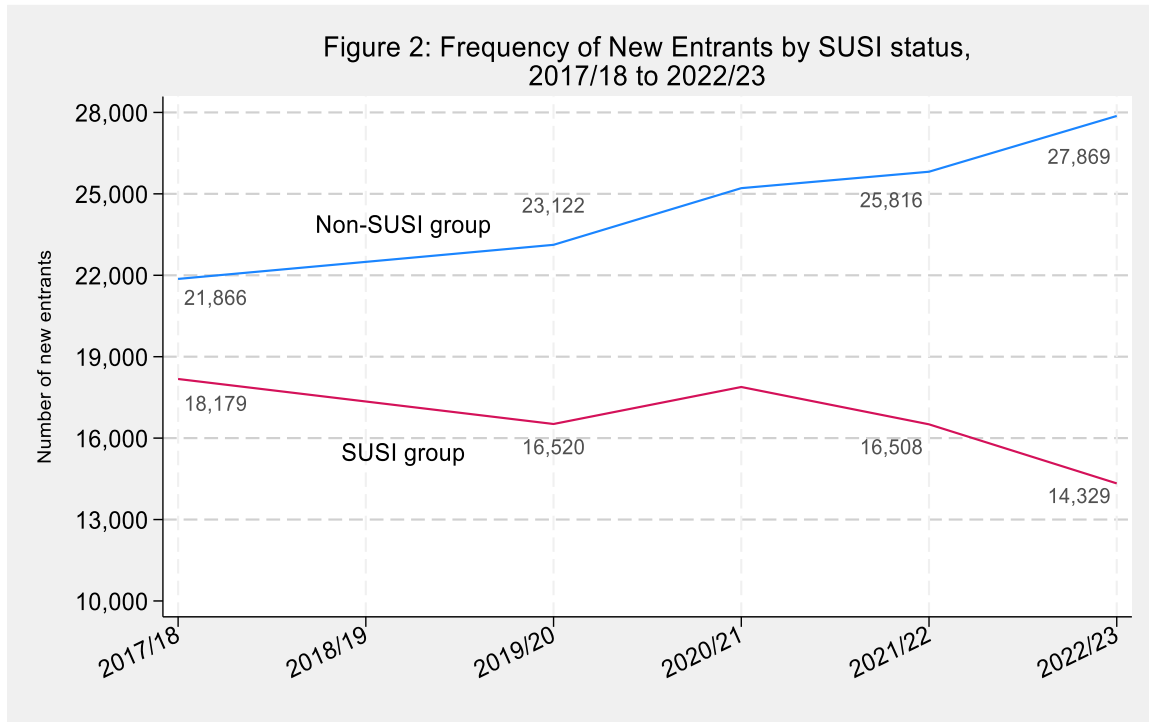
An important consideration for the analysis of survey data such as EAS is the overall response rate to the survey (unit non-response), response rates to individual questions in the survey (item non-response), and any systematic differences between the two groups with respect to both of these. Interpretation of the results should take consideration of any such differences, as differential response rates may influence what inference can be derived from the results.

Figure 1 shows the overall survey response rate for each group. The rates are broadly similar for each year, except 2017/18 where the SUSI group had a response rate four percentage points lower than the non-SUSI group.



Information on the SUSI status of New Entrants is sourced from the Student Record System and from SUSI, and is a full census of the students who provided a ppsn number. Figure 2 shows the frequency of the SUSI and non-SUSI groups updated to include the latest year 2022/23. The number of New Entrants awarded a SUSI grant continued to decline in 2022/23, while the

number not awarded the grant continued to increase. The gap has increased from 3,687 in 2017/18 to 13,540 in 2022/23.



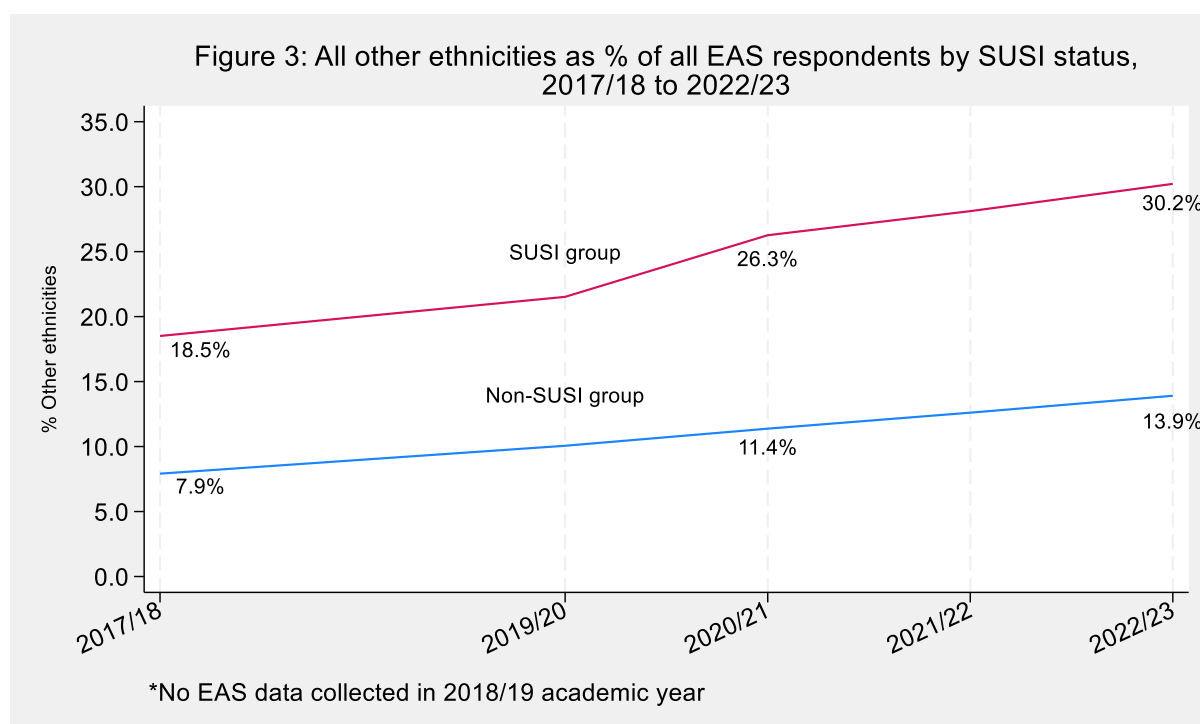
Ethnicity

Table 1 displays the frequencies for the most frequent ethnicity (White: Irish) and all other ethnicities for the period 2017/18 to 2022/23 (except 2018/19), and the frequency and percentage of those who, although survey respondents, did not respond to this question, stratified by SUSI group. The overall item non-response rate was modest and shows an improving pattern over time, with 2.8% of survey respondents not responding to the question on ethnicity in the most recent year. The rate of item non-response tended to be lower among SUSI awardees, but the difference is less than 1 percentage point in each year, except 2020/21 when SUSI awardees had a 1.8 percentage point lower item non-response than those who were not awarded a SUSI grant.

Table 1: Ethnicity frequency, including item non-response

Academic year	SUSI awardees				Non-SUSI awardees				Overall			
	White: Irish	All Other ethnicities	Item non-response	% non-reponse	White: Irish	All Other ethnicities	Item non-response	% non-reponse	White: Irish	All Other ethnicities	Item non-response	% non-reponse
2017/2018	8,813	2,002	2,306	17.6	12,508	1,075	3,121	18.7	21,321	3,077	5,427	18.2
2019/2020	9,666	2,651	649	5.0	15,450	1,728	1,004	5.5	25,116	4,379	1,653	5.3
2020/2021	8,796	3,133	1,840	13.4	15,609	2,004	2,046	10.4	24,405	5,137	3,886	11.6
2021/2022	8,836	3,456	430	3.4	16,842	2,430	767	3.8	25,678	5,886	1,197	3.7
2022/2023	7,162	3,101	232	2.2	16,916	2,733	623	3.1	24,078	5,834	855	2.8

Figure 3 shows the proportion of respondents who reported an ethnicity other than White: Irish, by SUSI status. In 2017/18, 18.5% of those awarded a grant reported one of the other ethnicities, while 7.9% of the non-SUSI group did so. The proportion of those reporting *other* ethnicities increased in every year of the observed period for both groups. In 2022/23, 30.2% of those receiving a SUSI award reported an ethnicity other than white (Irish), while 13.9% of the non-SUSI group did so.

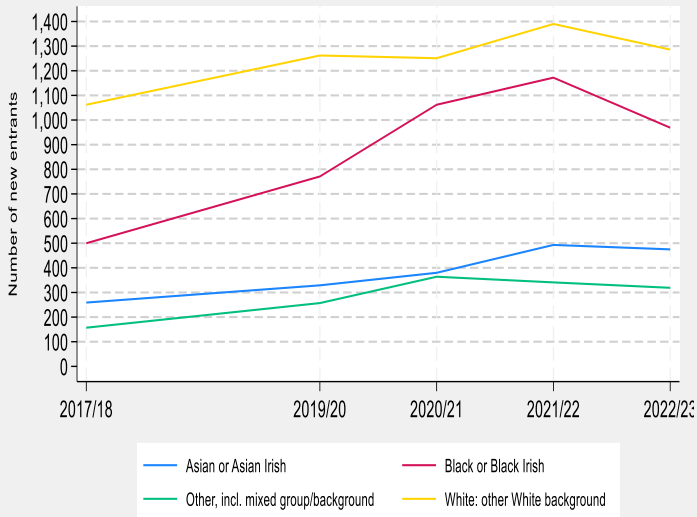


Turning to the composition of *other* ethnicities, figures 4a and 4b shows the count of EAS respondents who reported their ethnicity, excluding White (Irish) for the SUSI and non-SUSI

groups respectively. White (any other white background) is the highest frequency ethnicity with the SUSI group, increasing from 1,062 New Entrants in 2017/18 to 1,286 in the latest year. Black or black Irish ethnicities increased from 500 at the start of the period to 1,172 New Entrants in 2021/22 and then declined to 969 in 2022/23. Asian or Asian Irish ethnicities increased from 259 in 2017/8 to 475 students in 2022/23. Other, including mixed group or background, increased from 157 to 319 New Entrants over the period.

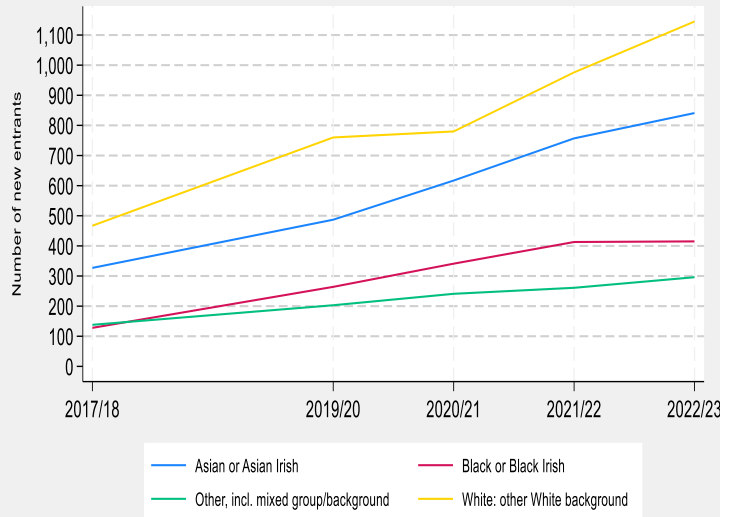
For the non-SUSI group, all ethnicities increased in frequency between 2017/18 and 2022/23. White (any other white background) increased substantially from 467 to 1,145 New Entrants. The number of New Entrants from an Asian or Asian Irish ethnicity increased from 327 to 841, those of Black or black Irish ethnicity increased from 128 to 415, while those in the other ethnicity group increased from 138 to 296.

Figure 4a: Frequency of Other ethnicities SUSI group, 2017/18 to 2022/23



*Irish Traveller and Roma ethnicities not displayed as their frequencies are too low for statistical disclosure

Figure 4b: Frequency of Other ethnicities non-SUSI group, 2017/18 to 2022/23



*Irish Traveller and Roma ethnicities not displayed as their frequencies are too low for statistical disclosure

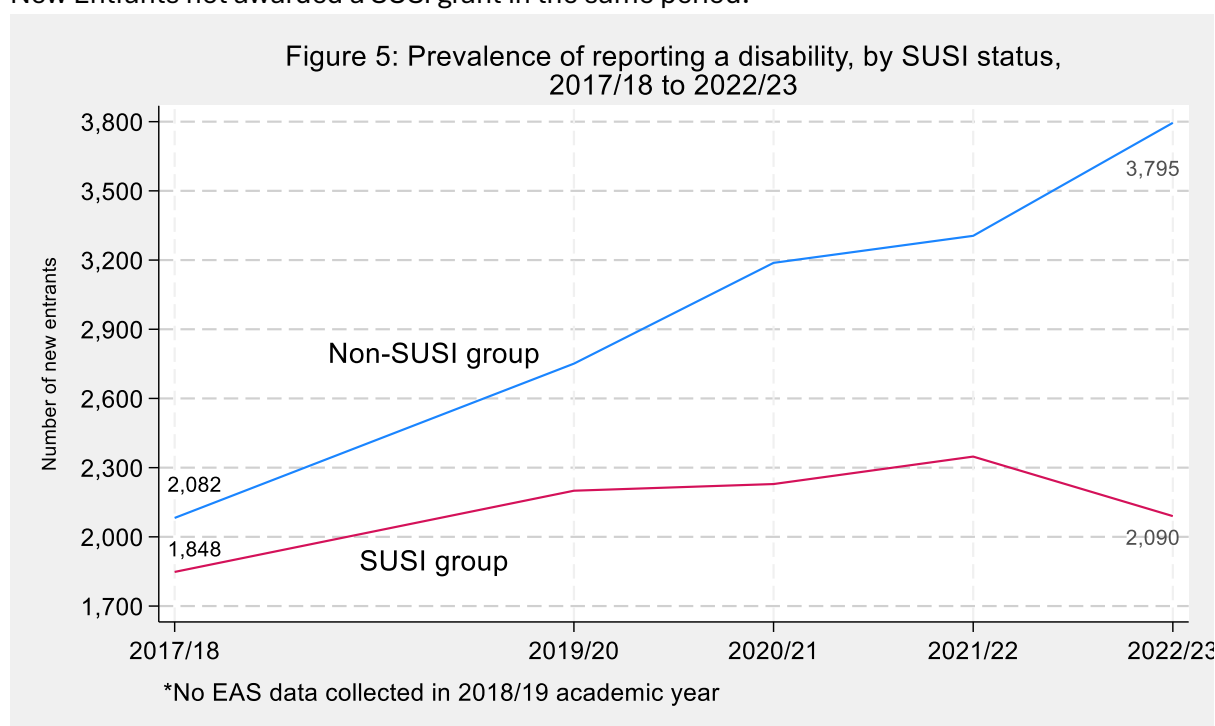
Disability

Table 2 shows the frequencies of those who reported a disability, while also including the percentage of survey respondents who did not respond to this question. Item non-response is substantial for questions on disability, ranging from 15.1% (2022/23) to 28.2% (2020/21). Furthermore, there were differences between those who did and did not receive an award in the pattern of non-responses, with the SUSI awardee group showing a higher rate in each year, ranging from an 8.6 percentage points higher rate in 2020/21 to 3.4 points in the latest year. Such systematic differences in non-response to disability questions suggests caution should be employed when interpreting these results.

Table 2: Disability frequency, including item non-response

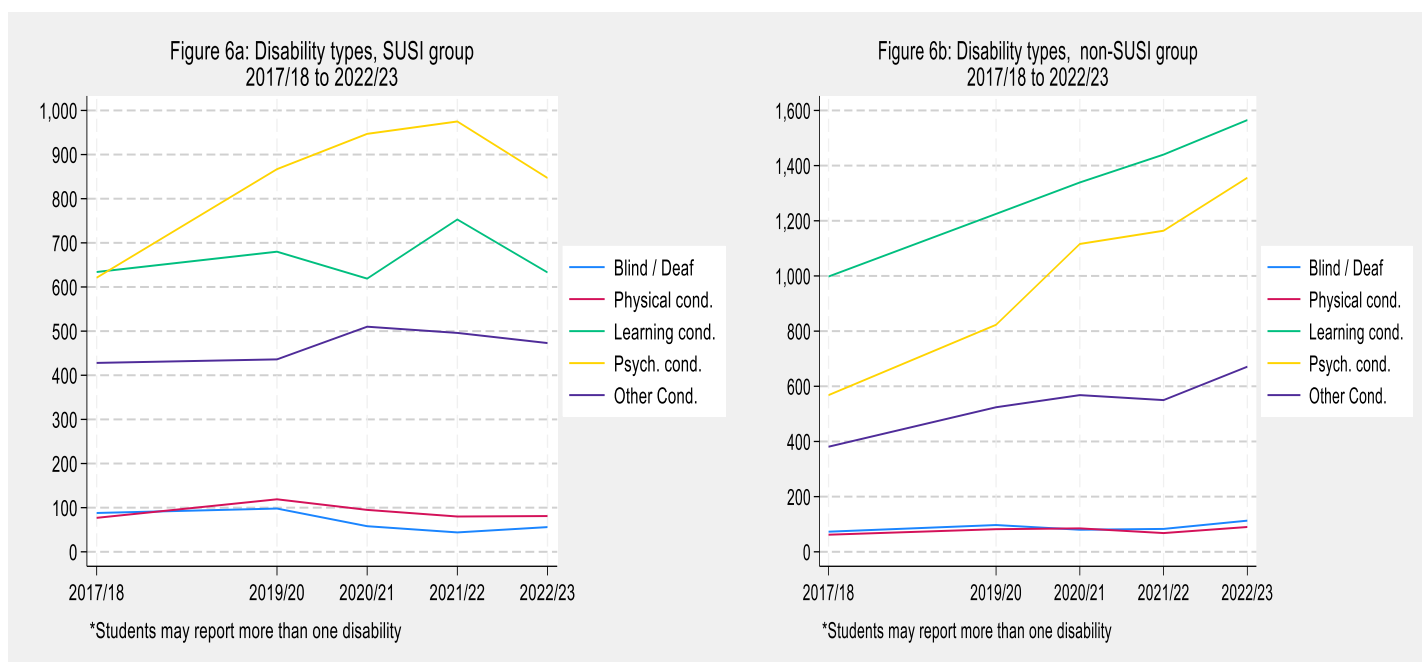
Academic year	SUSI awardees				Non-SUSI awardees				Overall			
	No disability	At least one disability	Item non-response	% non-reponse	No disability	At least one disability	Item non-response	% non-reponse	No disability	At least one disability	Item non-response	% non-reponse
2017/2018	7,231	1,848	4,042	30.8	10,578	2,082	4,044	24.2	17,809	3,930	8,086	27.1
2019/2020	7,559	2,200	3,207	24.7	12,548	2,751	2,883	15.9	20,107	4,951	6,090	19.6
2020/2021	6,477	2,229	5,063	36.8	12,111	3,188	4,360	22.2	18,588	5,417	9,423	28.2
2021/2022	6,147	2,348	4,227	33.2	11,861	3,305	4,873	24.3	18,008	5,653	9,100	27.8
2022/2023	6,471	2,090	1,934	18.4	13,778	3,795	2,699	13.3	20,249	5,885	4,633	15.1

The number of New Entrants reporting a disability increased from 3,930 to 5,885 between 2017/18 and 2022/23, substantially exceeding the rate of increase in the number of New Entrants during this period. Examining this by group (figure 5), SUSI awardees reporting a disability increased from 1,848 in 2017/18 to 2,348 in 2021/22 and then fell to 2,090 in 2022/23. The number of SUSI awardees decreased by 20% during this period. The number of New Entrants not awarded a SUSI grant who reported a disability increased from 2,082 in 2017/18 to 3,795 in the 2022/23, and in contrast to the SUSI group, the prevalence accelerated in the most recent year. This near doubling in frequency occurred when there was a 27% increase in the New Entrants not awarded a SUSI grant in the same period.



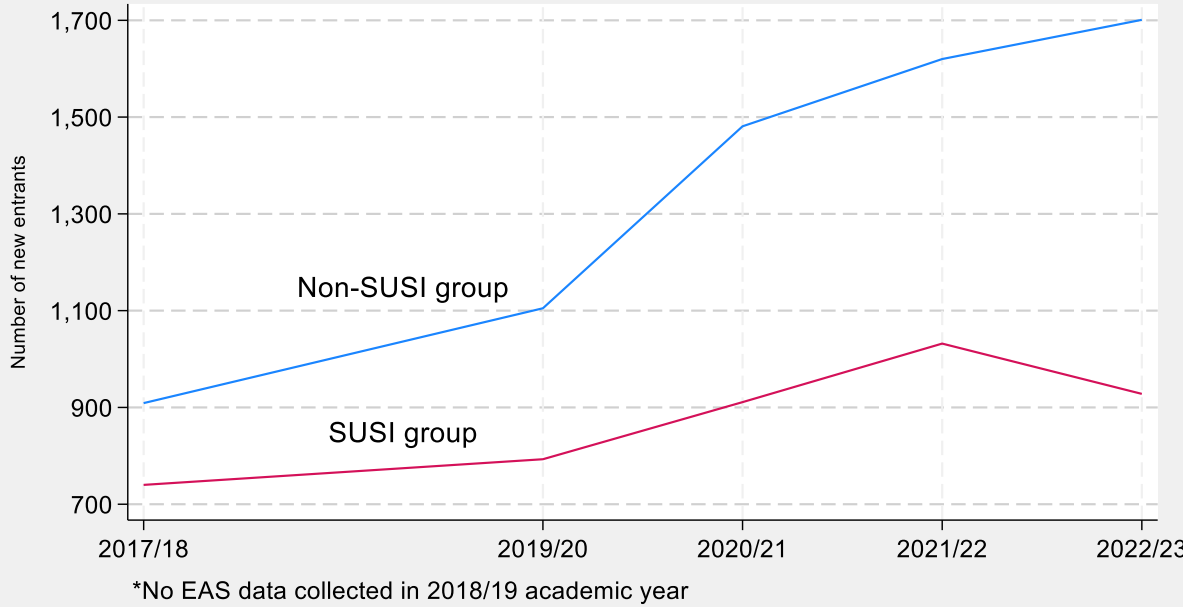
Figures 6a and 6b show the types of disabilities reported for both the SUSI and non-SUSI groups respectively, noting that students may report more than one disability. For the SUSI group, the increase in reported disabilities up to 2021/22 was primarily attributable to increases in reports of learning conditions, and the overall decline in 2022/23 in this group was attributable to a decline in reports of both learning and psychological conditions, which collectively fell by 248 between 2021/22 and 2022/23. Those reporting *other* conditions showed a similar fluctuating trend, but at a more modest rate of change. Reports of both physical conditions and blind or deaf conditions was relatively stable in frequency over time.

For the non-SUSI group, three conditions increased in frequency over the period; the disability with the highest prevalence for this group was learning conditions, and these reports increased by more than 50% from 998 in 2017/18 to 1,565 in 2022/23. Reports of psychological conditions increased by 140% over the same period, from 568 to 1,356, while *other* conditions increased by more than 75% from 381 in 2017/18 to 671 in 2022/23. Both physical conditions and reports of blind or deaf conditions also increased but more modestly and from a much lower baseline.



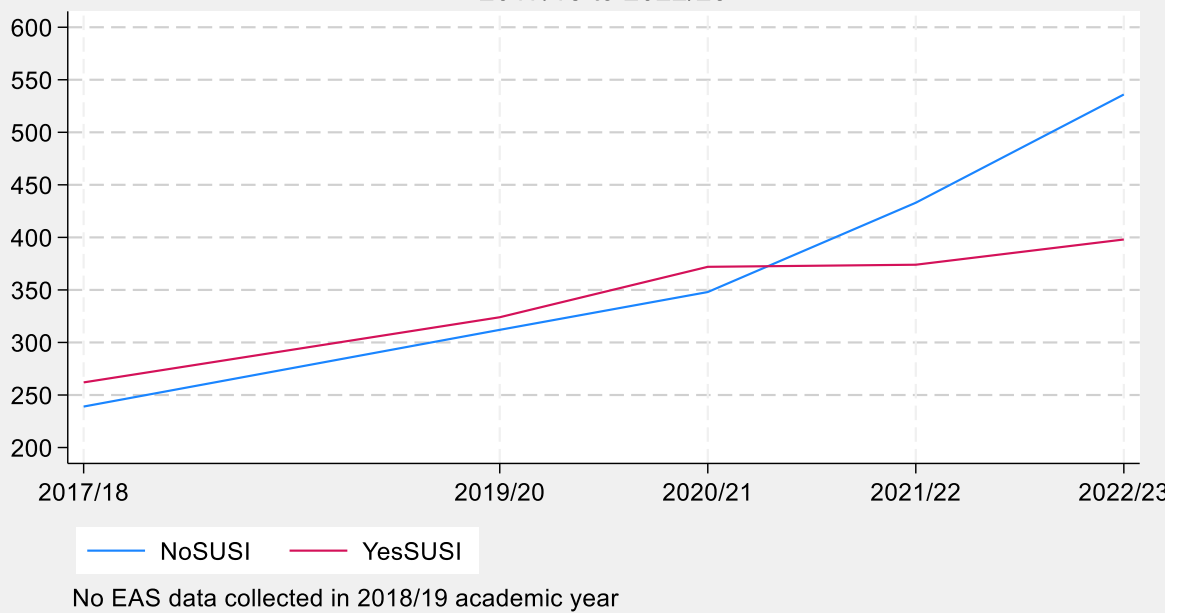
Students were also asked to indicate if they required additional support arising from their disability. For the SUSI group, there was an increase in prevalence of such cases from 2017/18 (909) to 2021/22 (1,032), and then a decline in the most recent year to 928 (figure 7). For the non-SUSI group, the same pattern of uninterrupted growth in frequency observed in reported disabilities (see figure 5) is also observed among those indicating additional support requirements, increasing from 909 cases in 2017/18 to 1,701 in 2022/23.

Figure 7: Reporting a disability and additional support required by SUSI status, 2017/18 to 2022/23



When examining those who reported more than one disability (figure 8), both the SUSI and non-SUSI groups increased in frequency in each year. For the non-SUSI group, there were 262 cases of reports of more than one disability in 2017/18 and 536 cases in 2022/23. The decline in the most recent year observed in total disabilities (see figure 5) is not observed in this more restricted category. The number of students not awarded a SUSI grant who reported more than one condition increased at a faster rate than the SUSI group, from 239 cases in 2017/18 to 536 in 2022/23.

Figure 8: Number of disabilities reported (one or more than one), by SUSI group 2017/18 to 2022/23



Parental status & One Parent Family Payment

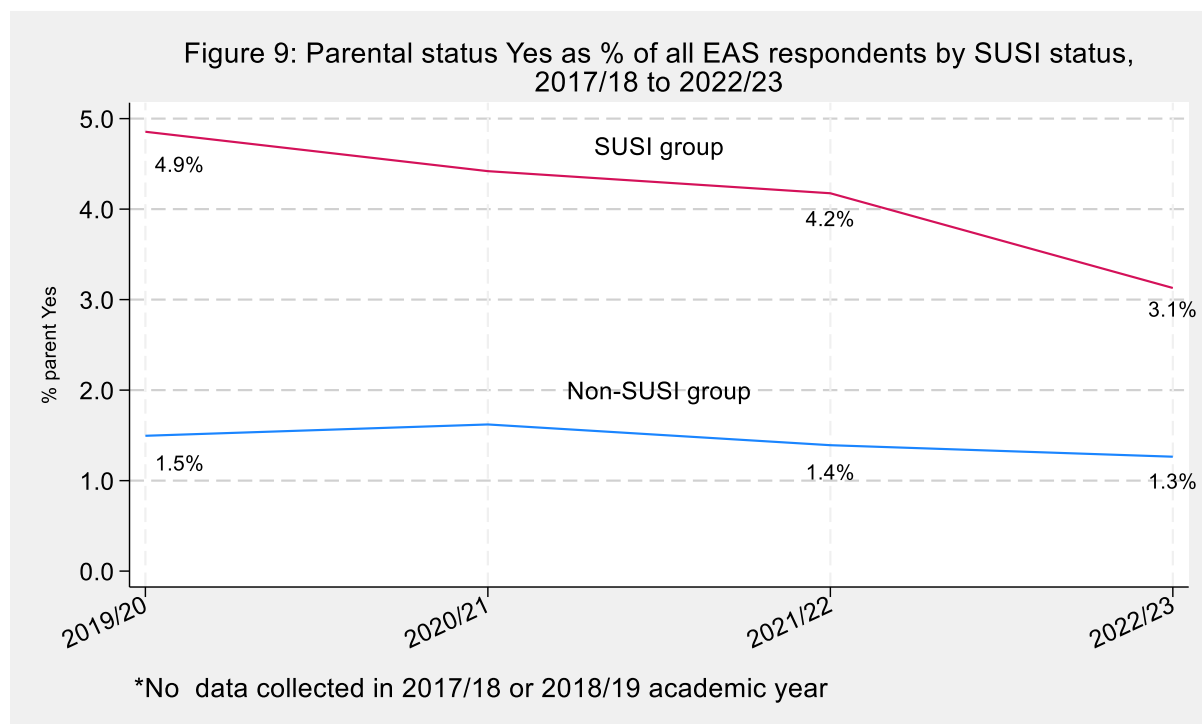
Table 3 shows the frequencies for the parental status of respondents, while also including the percentage of respondents who did not respond to this question. The overall item non-response rate was 3.0% in the 2022/23 year. With the exception of the 2019/20, the proportion of non-respondents in the SUSI and non-SUSI groups is quite similar. However, as the number of positive responses for this question is low, results are therefore sensitive to any differences in item non-response. Caution is required when interpreting differences between the groups on this question.

Table 3: Parental status frequencies, including item non-response

Academic year	SUSI awardees				Non-SUSI awardees				Overall			
	Parent - Yes	Parent - No	Item non-response	% non-reponse	Parent - Yes	Parent - No	Item non-response	% non-reponse	Parent - Yes	Parent - No	Item non-response	% non-reponse
2019/2020	541	10,602	1,823	14.1	215	14,160	3,807	20.9	756	24,762	5,630	18.1
2020/2021	565	12,220	984	7.1	297	18,027	1,335	6.8	862	30,247	2,319	6.9
2021/2022	484	11,108	1,130	8.9	253	17,927	1,859	9.3	737	29,035	2,989	9.1
2022/2023	320	9,908	267	2.5	248	19,364	660	3.3	568	29,272	927	3.0

*No data collected in 2017/18

Among those respondents awarded a SUSI grant, the proportion who reported being a parent has declined from 4.9% in the first year that data was available (2019/20) to 3.1% in the latest available year (figure 9). For those New Entrants not awarded a SUSI grant, a lower proportion reported being a parent and the proportion has remained stable over the four years observed.



Of those who reported being a parent, table 4 shows those who reported receiving the One Parent Family Payment (“OPFP”), those who reported not and those who did not respond to the question. Overall item non-response for this question ranged between 2.8% in 2019/20 and 7.5% in 2021/22. When stratified by SUSI group there was no clear pattern in item non-response.

Table 4: Frequency of reporting One Parent Family Payment among those who reported being a parent, and item non-response

Academic year	SUSI awardees				Non-SUSI awardees				Overall			
	OPA-Yes	OPA-No	Item non-response	% non-reponse	OPA-Yes	OPA-No	Item non-response	% non-reponse	OPA-Yes	OPA-No	Item non-response	% non-reponse
2019/2020	159	369	13	2.4	34	173	8	3.7	193	542	21	2.8
2020/2021	166	372	27	4.8	35	246	16	5.4	201	618	43	5.0
2021/2022	124	322	38	7.9	34	202	17	6.7	158	524	55	7.5
2022/2023	98	215	7	2.2	35	203	10	4.0	133	418	17	3.0

*No data collected in 2017/18

Plotting the proportion of those who reporting receiving the OPFP by SUSI group (figure 10), a higher proportion of SUSI awardees who reported being a parent report being in receipt of OPA compared to respondents not awarded a SUSI grant who reported being a parent.

