

**Bridge
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research
action
equality

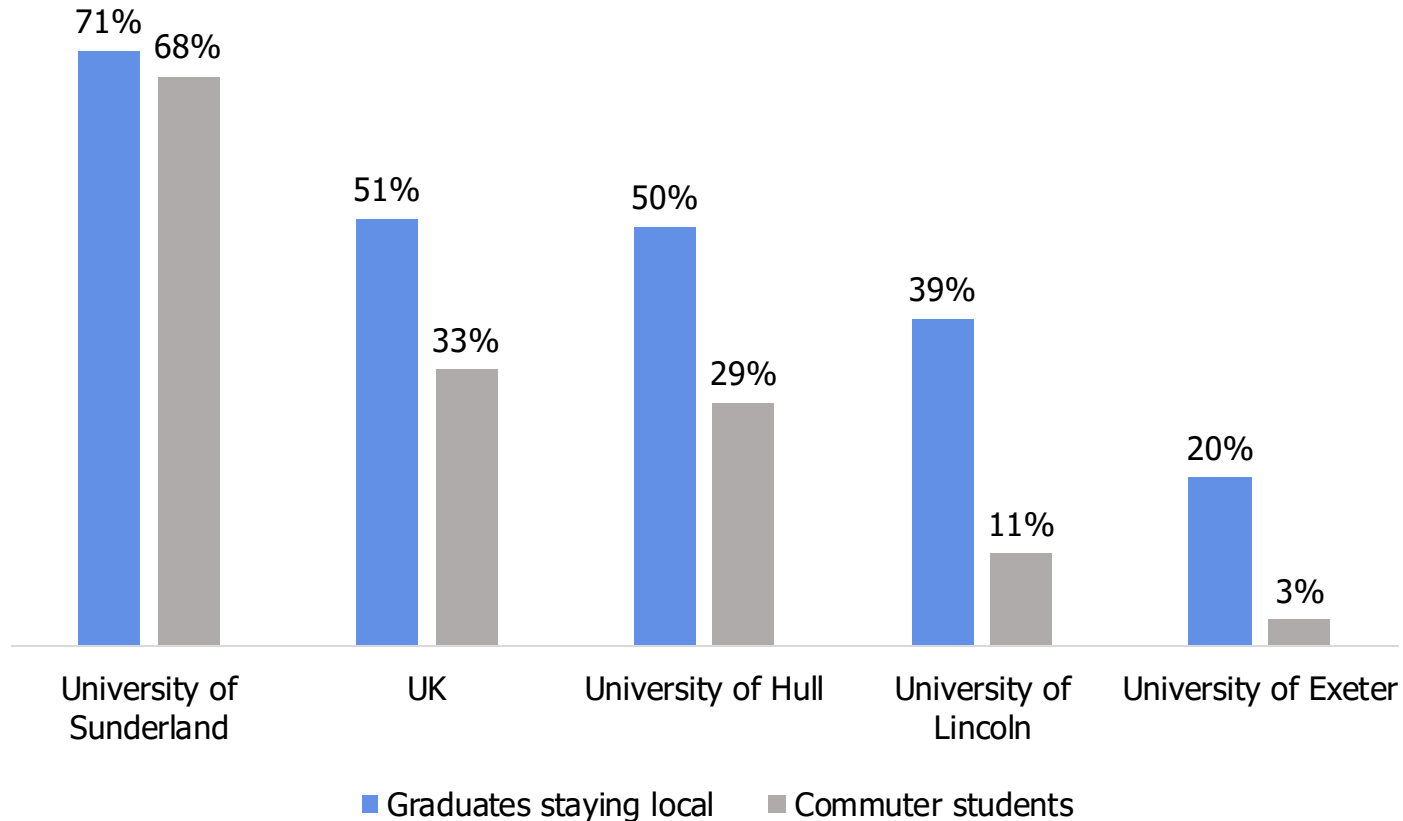
Staying local: understanding the value of graduate retention for social equality

September 2021

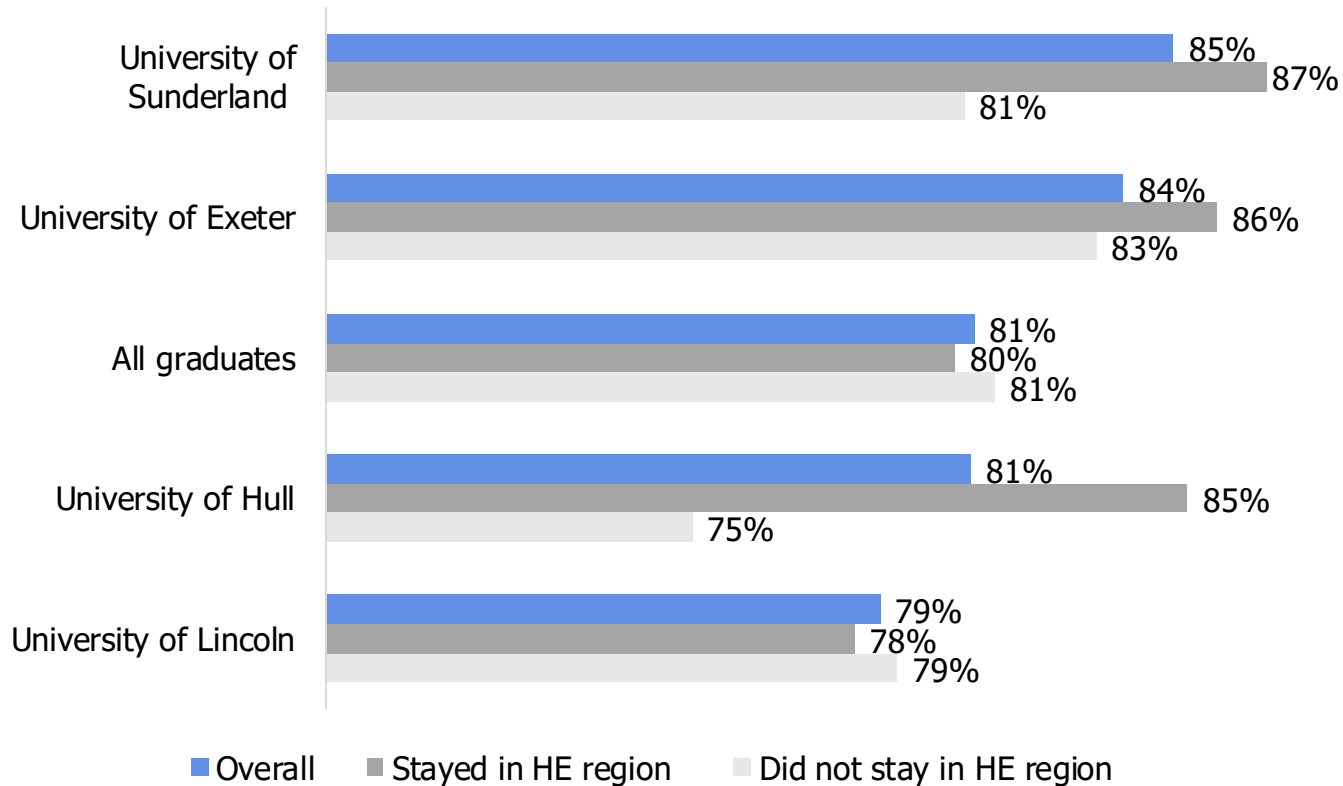
Key findings

- > 51% of graduates stay in the region of their university after graduating
- > Graduates who do so are equally likely to be employed and on track with their career plans
- > The current narrative of success, which emphasises high salaries as the most important measure, is neither accurate nor inclusive
- > Prioritising local recruitment can have a positive impact for local employers and communities

Proportion of commuter students by university and proportion of graduates staying within HEI region post-graduation by university



Respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that their current activity was on track with their future plans, by university



Graduate voices

"I love the South West. I love the landscape and the geography of the place. It's a beautiful little corner of the world ... It would be difficult to pull myself away from the sea now."

"I was the first from my family to go to university. Staying local has meant I've been able to build up some money behind me and hopefully buy my own house."

"To be honest it would be a little scary moving to a bigger city now. Not knowing anyone. At least here I feel like I've got my foot in the door."

"I may be a little fish in a little pond – but you can do so much more in a smaller company. You can participate more. I'd rather work my way up in a small city and build my experience."

"I feel like I've got to go to London, there are just so many opportunities. Even looking at the jobs advertised – you click it, it's London, click it, of course, it's London."

The current narrative of success, which emphasises high salaries as the most important measure, is neither accurate nor inclusive

Employers' perspectives

"The University helped put up the job ad, edited the spec, and screened candidates – giving us a shortlist of recruits. They did a fantastic job of presenting us with really good, really realistic candidates."

"There's a lot of deprivation in [this region] – there's been years of under-investment. But it feels like there are more opportunities now. ... And institutions like the University [...] are drawing more students and more graduates in."

"It's not a skills challenge, but an area challenge."

Recommendations

Recommendations for measuring impact

- > Change our view and definitions of success for both individuals and universities
- > Identify and celebrate universities' contribution to levelling up their region

Recommendations to facilitate the regional retention of graduates

- > Universities to inform, broaden and support graduates' choices and progression locally – to employment and startups
- > Employers to recognise that there is graduate demand for regional opportunities