

Use of POLAR in table series T2

PITG 13/04

Issue

1. The underlying data used in the classification of Low Participation Neighbourhoods within table series T2 of the Performance Indicators for mature entrants is based on the participation of young people.

Outcomes

2. The Performance Indicators Technical Group to provide advice to the Performance Indicators Steering Group on:

- a. Whether the mature Low Participation Neighbourhood performance indicators for future publications should continue to use POLAR3 or whether adult HE quintiles would be a more appropriate measure.
- b. What additional analysis or information needs to be published alongside the mature Low Participation Neighbourhood performance indicator publication if the use of adult HE quintiles is taken forward.

Discussion

Current Low Participation Neighbourhood classification for mature students

3. From 2006/07 POLAR2 has been used in the classification of mature students from low participation neighbourhoods and as agreed by the Performance Indicator Steering Group in June 2012 the updated POLAR classification (POLAR3) will be phased into use.

4. The POLAR classifications are based on the young participation rate across the UK. Adult HE quintiles, which are published alongside the POLAR quintiles, are created using census area data. They are based on the proportion of adults in an area who have a higher education qualification. While POLAR is a good predictor of a young person's propensity to enter HE there is no a priori reason why the propensity of adults in an area to enter HE would be the same as young people. Therefore there remains a question as to whether the proportion of HE qualified adults in an area might be a better measure of the relative educational disadvantage of adults who go on to enter HE.

5. Table 1 show how the percentage of wards that have a change in their quintile between POLAR2 and the adult HE quintile.

Table 1 - Percentage of wards that change quintile between POLAR2 and adult HE quintile

Increase/decrease of Adult HE quintile compared to POLAR2	Percentage of wards
Increase by 4	0%
Increase by 3	1%
Increase by 2	2%
Increase by 1	12%
Same	51%
Decrease by 1	29%
Decrease by 2	4%
Decrease by 3	1%
Decrease by 4	0%

6. From Table 1 it can be seen that just over half of the wards stay the same between the POLAR2 and adult HE quintiles but this also means that just under half change, highlighting that there are differences between the two measures.

7. The percentage change in the PI and benchmark between POLAR2 and adult HE quintiles for mature full-time undergraduate entrants in 2010/11 are shown in figures 1 and 2 respectively.

Figure 1 - Difference in LPN PI between POLAR2 and adult HE quintiles

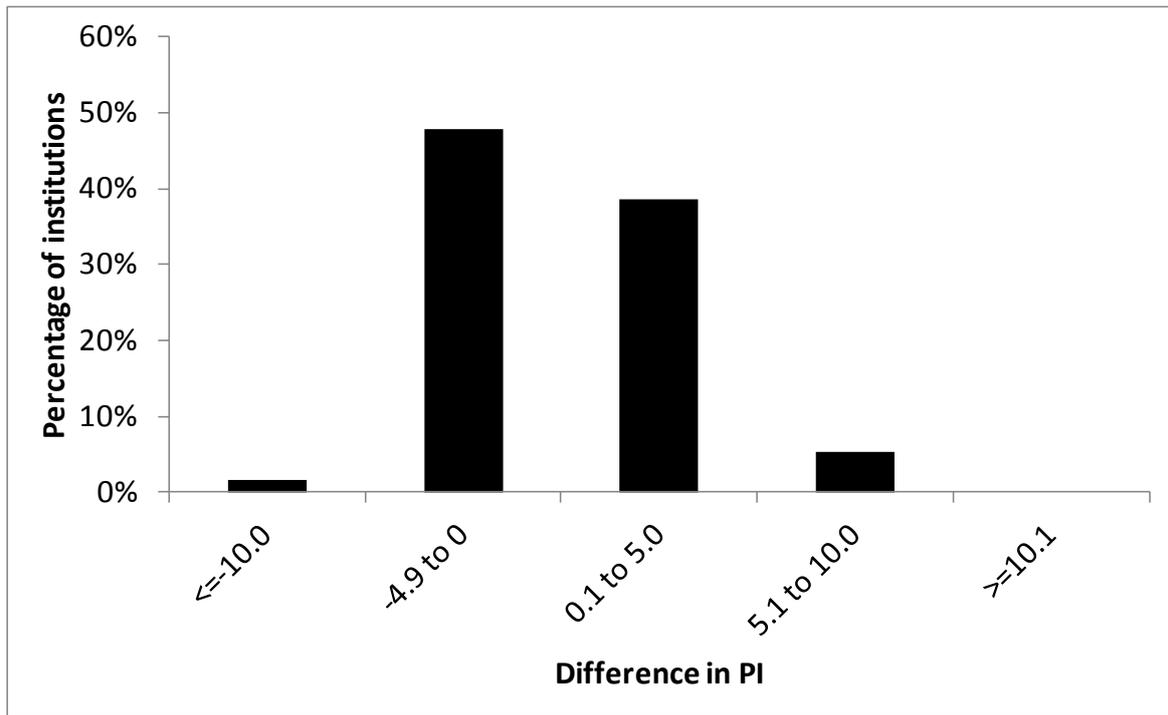
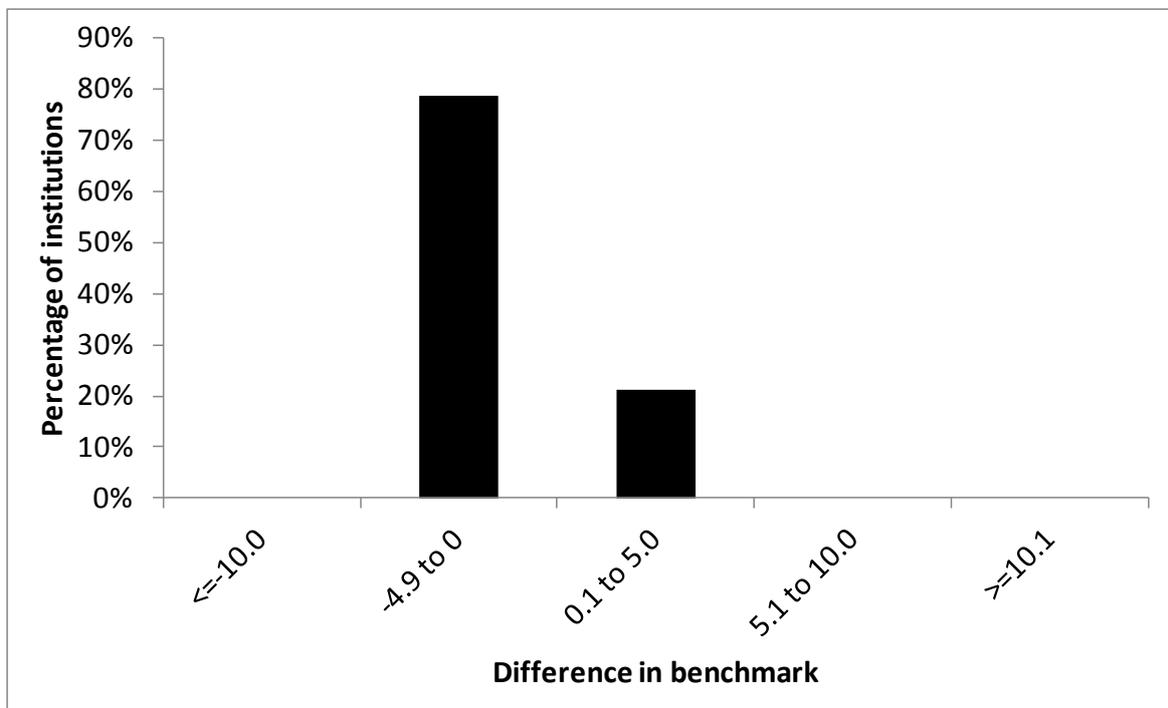


Figure 2 - Difference in LPN benchmark between POLAR2 and adult HE quintiles



8. 44 per cent of institutions see an increase in their PI and 21 per cent have an increase in their benchmark when moving from POLAR2 to adult HE quintiles.

9. 32 institutions have a change to their significance marker when using adult HE quintiles. 15 move to a better significance marker and 17 move to a worse significance marker.

10. Given the adult HE quintiles are based on the participation of adults in an area who have a higher education qualification and the differences observed between POLAR2 and the adult HE quintiles, it seems appropriate to use the adult HE quintiles in the mature low participation performance indicator rather than POLAR2, which is based on young participation.

Further information

18. For further information contact Emily Thorn (Phone: 0117 931 7268; e-mail: e.thorn@hefce.ac.uk).