

Aziz Foundation Scholarship Programme Analysis 2024

Introduction

Notes on Data

The data in this report has been generated by the 2024 application season of the Aziz Foundation's Masters Scholarship programme. This incorporates two application cycles, between January – April and April – July, and spans the application, interview and award stages.

No raw figures are given in this report, so as not to influence the decision of potential future applicants over whether to apply or not. The data is therefore given as the percentage of the total number of applicants and awards throughout.

Do note that 'awards' and 'awardees' do not necessarily denote scholars. Awardees are those applicants who have simply been offered a scholarship at the time of publication of this report.

The term 'Scholars' is not used in relation to the 2024 application season as numbers are subject to change. This occurs due to withdrawals, brought about by the change of circumstances of candidates that result in offers being declined.

Means Testing and Social Mobility

When carrying out means testing of applicants, a range of socio-economic and social mobility indicators and measures are taken into account.

However, the financial picture of candidates given by the data is always somewhat partial. The socio-economic circumstances of candidates remain very complex.

To elaborate, we can refer here to the Social Mobility Commission's State of the Nation report which delineates different forms of social mobility - and how they interact - including:

- **Income mobility**
- **Education mobility**
- **Wealth mobility**
- **Housing mobility**
- **Occupational mobility**

The circumstances of someone with high income mobility (i.e. someone with higher earning than their parents and compared to the peers in their age group), for example, may be qualified by living in London, paying higher rents and experiencing low housing mobility, as well as having caring responsibilities in a multi-generational household.

Broadly speaking, the socio-economic data held on candidates fall into three principal categories:

- Place-based data such as POLAR/ TUNDRA, which is a measure of HE participation by locality, and IMD, an indicator of consumer spending power and income

- Personal data and information on financial circumstances, such as caring responsibilities, dependences, living arrangements, house income etc.
- Any state sanctioned entitlements, i.e. Free School Meals Eligibility, Student loan amount, etc.

Benchmarking and National Figures

In evaluating the demographic data of our applicants and awardees, recourse is required to a national point of comparison. Hence, national datasets draw from the 2021 census, which furnishes a breakdown of British Muslims by ethnicity and region, is utilised where appropriate and to contextualise the scholarship management data.

The current season is also placed side by side with the combined 2019-23 Masters Scholarship programme datasets, where available. HESA and other national higher education data is also drawn upon to clarify this year's data.

Positionality of Reviewers

Recording the positionality of reviewers and interview panellists is one of the important means of keeping check of any unconscious biases that may creep into the scholarship assessment process.

Seven reviewers were in total involved in assessing applications. The same reviewers composed the panels that interviewed shortlisted candidates.

How Reviewers self-identify:

- **Three as British Pakistani**
- **One as British Arab**
- **One as British Bosnian**
- **One as British African**
- **One as British Indian**
- **Four identify as women**
- **Three identify as men**

In the text box above, we declare the ethnicity and gender of those staff and trustees who took part in both stages of the application process.

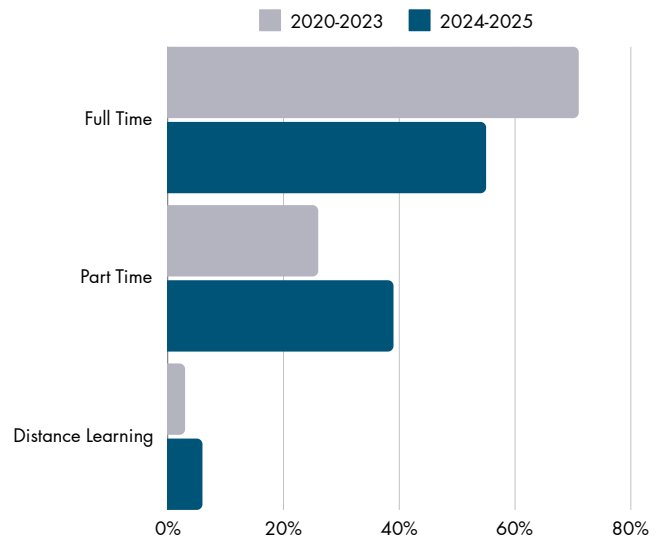
1.Course Data

a. Mode of Study

- 36% of awardees intending to study part time is higher than the average between 2020-23, which stands at 26%. The percentage of distance learners has also doubled
- The data indicates a better success rate for prospective part time applicants in progressing to the award stage than full-time applicants. However, the majority of awardees were still full-time mode of study, in line with data from previous years
- The increase in the number of part time awardees is likely due to the greater level of professional experience of those who intend to continue working while studying part time.
- Additionally, due to the predominance of female scholars who undertake caring responsibilities, studying flexibility would appeal to this demography

Mode of Study	Applications	Awards
Full Time	78%	55%
Part Time	18%	39%
Distance Learning	4%	6%

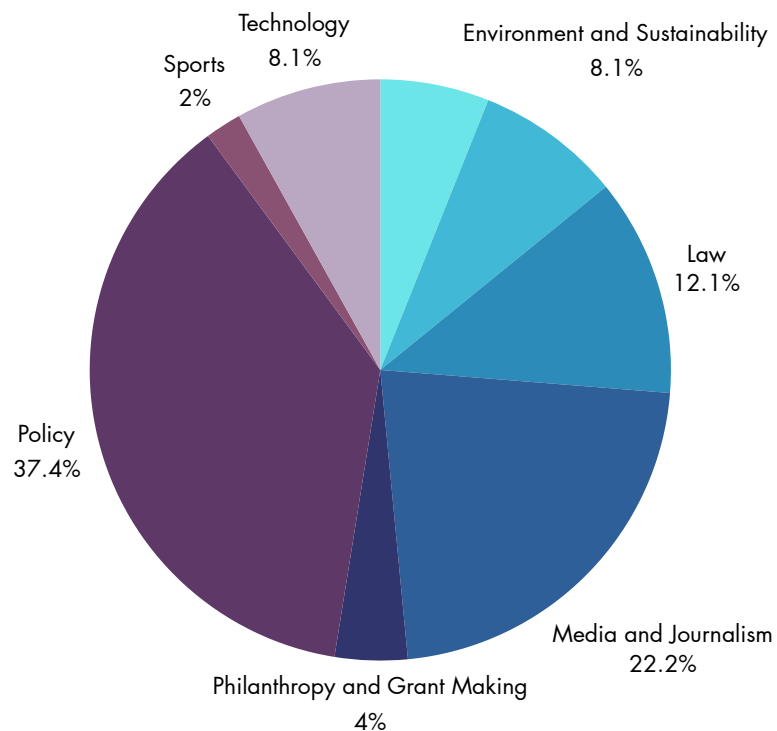
Table 1: Proportion of applicants and awardees per mode of study



Bar Chart 1: Mode of Study of applicants in comparison with awardees

b. Subject Areas

- The policy sub-stream remains the most popular, in terms of awardees, which is due to it being one of the broadest subject areas
- There has been a boost to the proportion of awards in the media and journalism sub stream, compared to previous years
- Philanthropy and Grant-making and Sports are new subject areas, and therefore unsurprisingly have the smallest proportion of awardees



Pie Chart 1: Subject Area Breakdown

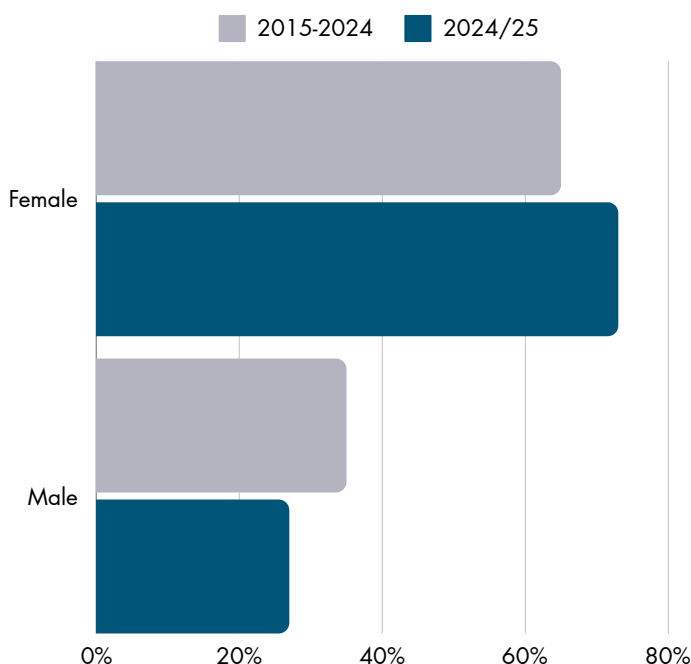
2. Demographic Data

a. Gender

- The gender split at the application stage is fairly even, but it is clear from the data that female applicants have a much greater chance of progression to the award stage.
- On a national level, HESA 2021/22 figures show that 57% of students in HE are female, roughly in line with application figures (the number of Muslim female students is not documented). This figure rises to 61% of postgraduate taught students. Female students are also more likely to study part time.
- Taking into consideration the scholarship trends across the years, there is no surprise in the figures, although the 73% of female awardees is 8% higher than the average (combined data sets)

Gender	Applications	Award
Female	54%	73%
Male	46%	27%

Table 2: Gender Split - Applications vs Awards (2024)



Bar Chart 2: Gender Split 2015-24 vs 2024/25

b. Geographical Distribution

- The geographical distribution of applicants and awardees, in the figures below, are contextualised with 2021 Census data, which shows the breakdown of the British Muslim population in the UK by region.
- Overall, figures reveal that awards are disproportionately given to those living within Greater London (+10% over the national figure), and to a lesser extent in the West Midlands (+5.7%) and the East (+4.1%). Census data suggests that London and the West Midlands have concentrations of British Muslims, but even so there are significant gaps in awarding

- Applicants living in London and the West Midlands also have a good conversion rate from application to shortlisting (S/L) stage (32% and 30% respectively). Almost half of applicants were London-based as well, above 33% of the British Muslim population living in the capital.
- However, the best conversion rate (43%) is amongst applicants living in the East of England.
- There are slight awarding gaps in relation to the SW (-2%), NE (-1.8%), Wales (-1.7%), and the East Midlands (-0.7%).
- There are middling awards gaps for the NW (-6%) and SE (-5.7%), but by far the biggest gap is Yorkshire and Humber (-9%).

Region	Applications	S/L Con. Rate	Awards	National Rate*
London	49%	32%	43%	33%
WM	12%	30%	20%	14.3%
NW	7%	25%	8%	14%
SE	6%	12.5%	2%	7.7%
EM	5%	25%	6%	5.3%
SW	4%	6.25%	4%	2%
East	3%	43%	10%	5.9%
Y&H	3%	23%	2%	11%
Scotland	2%	22%	2%	3%
Wales	2%	29%	0%	1.7%
NE	2%	50%	0%	1.8%

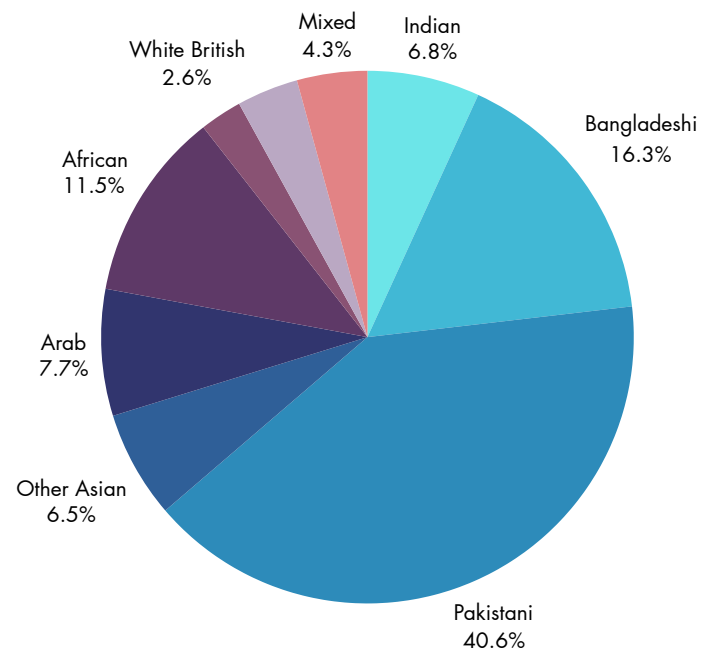
*2021 ONS National Census Figures

c. Ethnicity

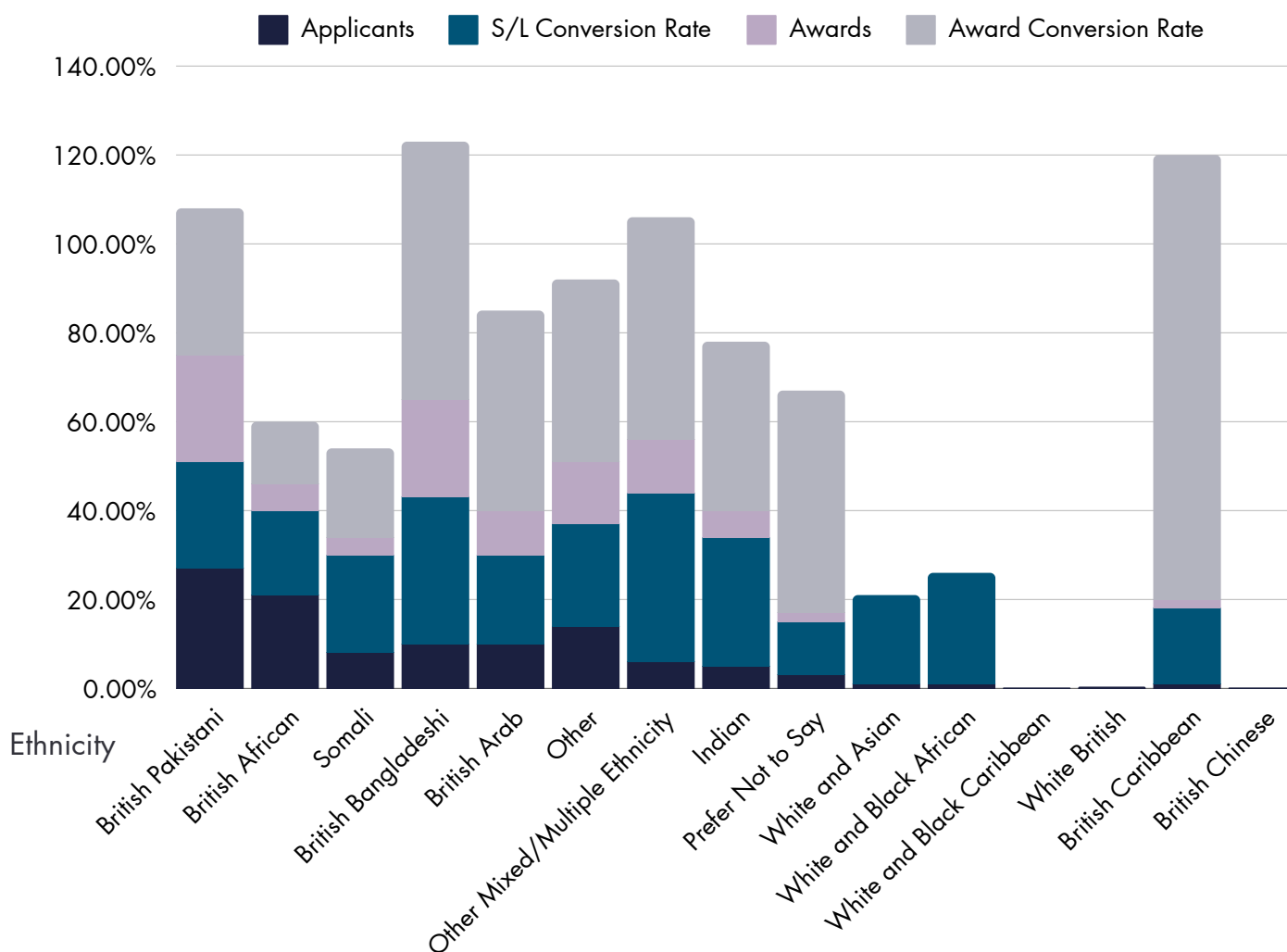
- Diversity monitoring of applicants and awardees is important in order to detect any unconscious biases that may creep into the selection process.
- The point of comparison here is taken from the Census, which provides national datasets on the ethnic breakdown of British Muslim communities. The caveat is that the ethnic categories used by the Foundation have a greater level of granularity than those utilised by the Census. Direct comparisons are therefore not always possible.
- While three out of seven reviewers identify as British Pakistani, the figures show the number of British Pakistani awardees (24%) below the national percentage of British Muslims who identify as such (38%).
- At the application stage, there are greater proportions identifying as British African (+11%), Arab (+2.8%) and Mixed (+4.9%). Only the latter two (with British Bangladeshis),

with good conversion rates, are overrepresented at the award stage.

- British Bangladeshis have the highest conversion rate at the award stage: that is 58% who are shortlisted are offered a scholarship. This must be qualified with the application stage data, indicating a smaller proportion of applicants relative to the national demography (-5.3%).



Pie Chart 2: Ethnic breakdown of British Muslim Communities. Source: Census 2021/ ONS



Bar Chart 3: Ethnic breakdown of applicants and awardees with conversion rates

3. Social Mobility Data

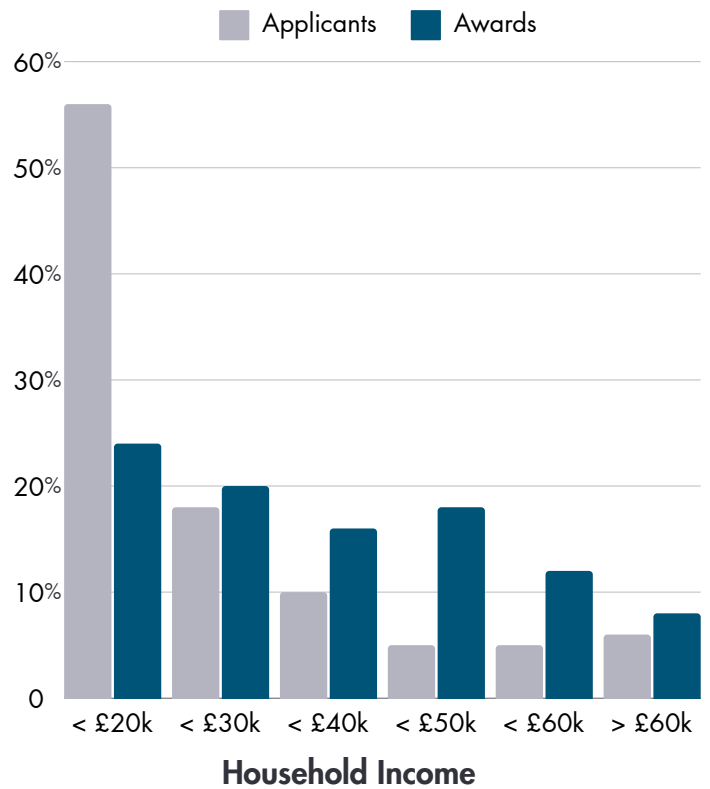
a. Personal Circumstances

- There is a discrepancy between First Gen applicants and awardees, and, furthermore, this is down on the 48% average between 2020-23.
- There are no or at least very little discrepancy across application and awarding stages in relation to those with caring responsibilities (a quarter of applicants and awardees), with dependencies (a third), and or those with Free School Meals

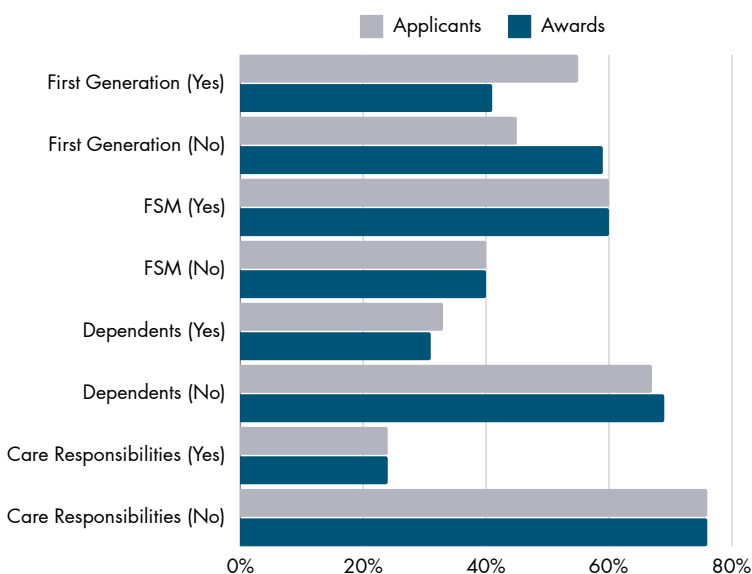
(FSM) eligibility when younger.

- According to government statistics, 2.1m pupils were eligible for FSM as of January 2024. This represents 24.6% of state pupils. The proportion of applicants and awardees with FSM eligibility are significantly higher than this, reflecting the circumstances of those we are targeting the scholarships at.

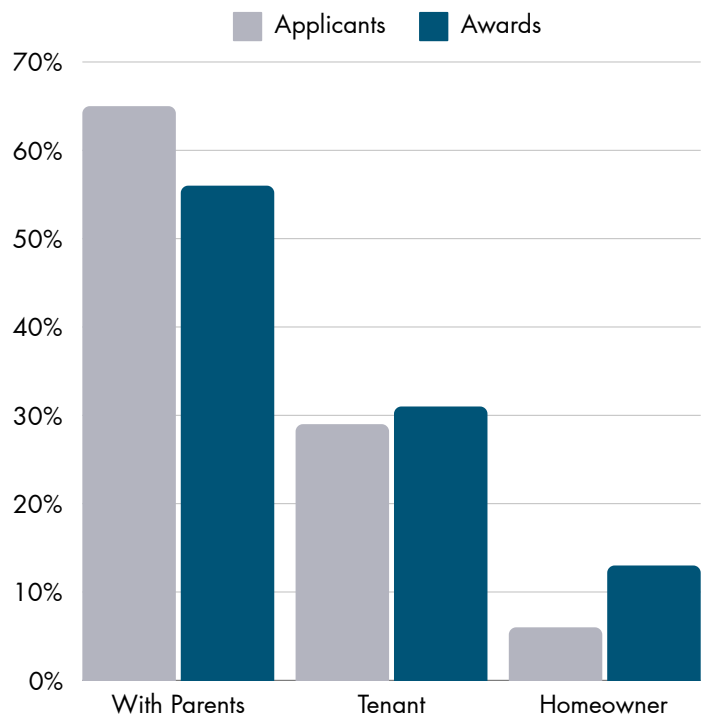
- A significant proportion of Awardees (44%) are on household incomes brackets below £30k, although this is down on applicants below this income threshold (74%). Due to the overrepresentation of awardees from London, housing disadvantage and the higher cost of living in the capital will also need to be factored into this.
- This is the first year that data on living arrangements have been collected, with the majority of applicants and awardees living with their parents, reflecting the younger demographic of British Muslims and the lack of housing mobility generally impacting younger generations (source: Social Mobility Commission).



Bar Chart 5: Household income of applicants compared to awardees



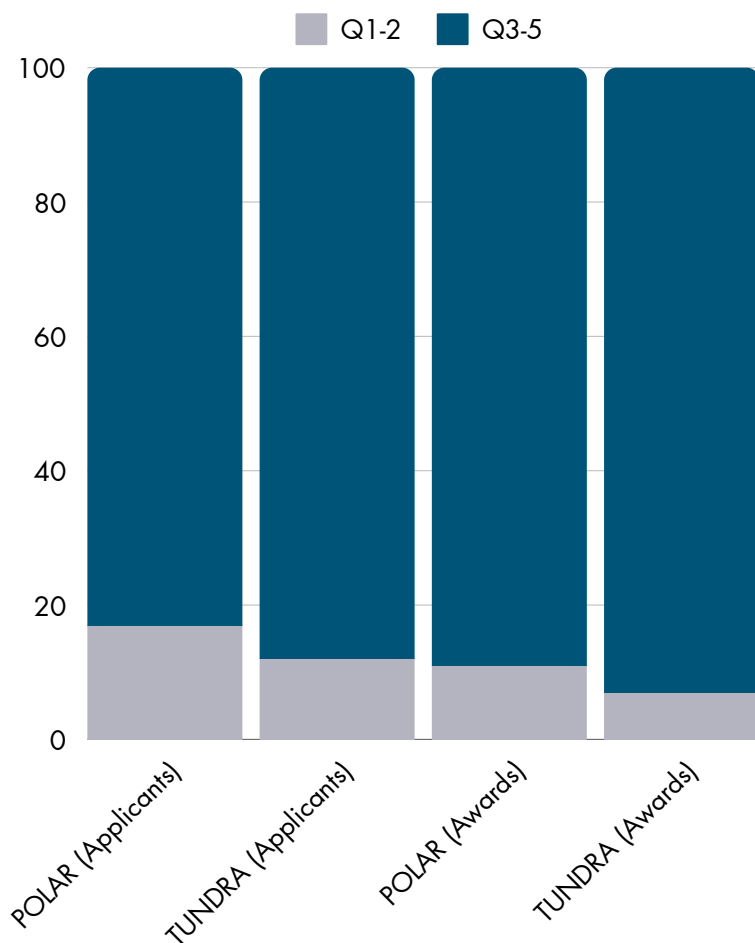
Bar Chart 4: Socio-economic circumstances - applicants vs awards



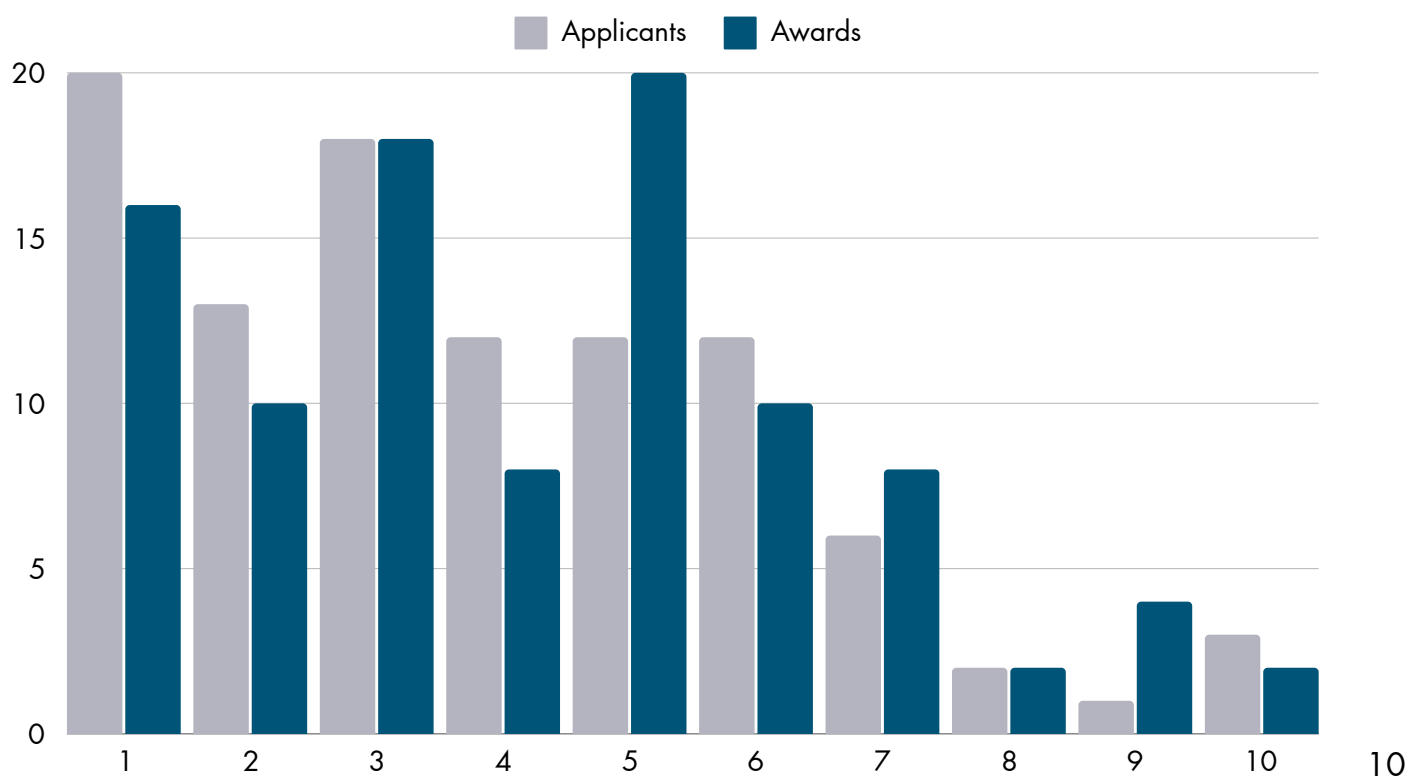
Bar Chart 6: Living arrangements of applicants compared to awardees

b. Place-based participation and deprivation data - IMD and POLAR

- Most applicants and awards live in areas high up on the scale of deprivation, with 51% of applicants in ranks 1-3, and with a slightly lower proportion of awardees at 44%.
- Recent census data indicates that 46% of British Muslims live in the 10% most deprived local authorities, and our data broadly reflects that
- POLAR remains a contested measure due to criticisms around the lack of granularity or the size of areas segmented for analysis. This especially disadvantages Greater London, where very few Q1 areas are located, and is reflected in our datasets.



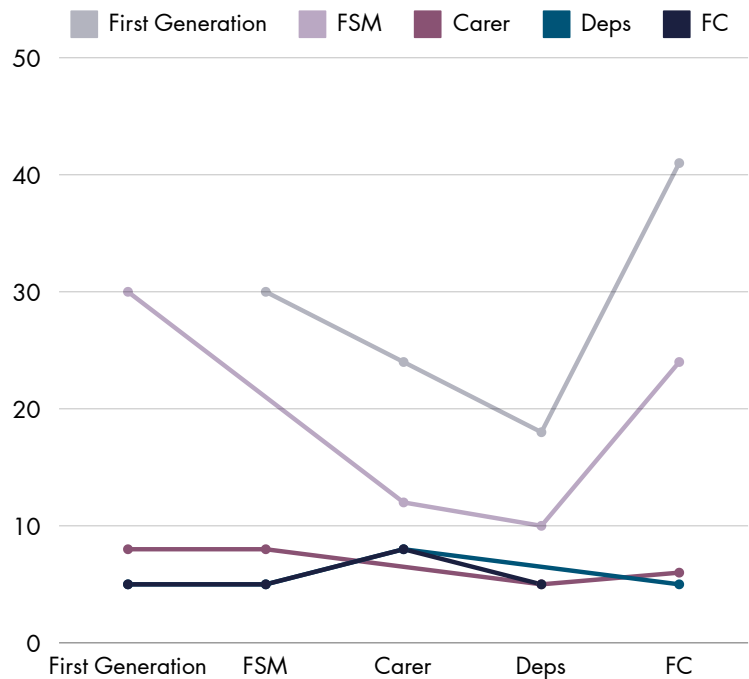
Bar Chart 8: POLAR quintiles - applicants and awardees



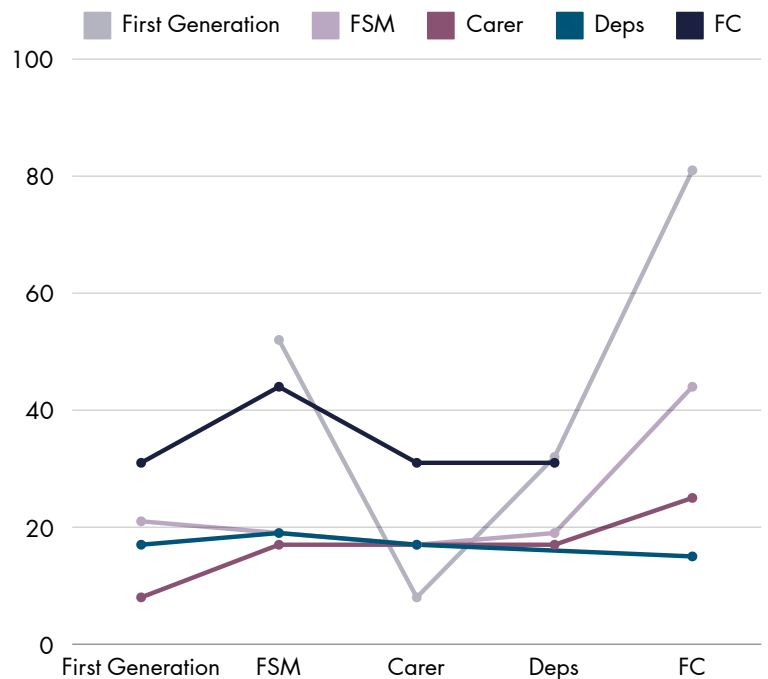
Bar Chart 7: IMD ranks - applicants and awards

4. Intersectionality - Applicants and Awards

- An intersectional analysis enables us to determine the overlapping disadvantages experienced by applicants and awardees.
- The biggest intersection, according to the data we hold, is between those who are first in their generation into HE and contribute financially to household expenses. This stands at 41% for applicants, and to an even greater degree with awardees (81%). It epitomises the double disadvantage of having both a lack of 'navigational capital' - therefore not necessarily knowing what to expect from HE - and of having extra obligations/ responsibilities to the family which is a norm in lower income households.
- Two other big intersections for applicants are between First Gen/FSM (30%) and Financial commitments/ FSM (24%). For awardees, FSM/First Gen (52%) and Financial commitments/ FSM (44%) scores highly.



Bar Chart 9: Intersectional disadvantage of applicants



Bar Chart 10: Intersectional disadvantage of awardees