

Assessment of UCAS applicants to courses with 15 October deadline

October 2017

UCAS Analysis and Research

Introduction

15 October is the annual deadline for applying to all undergraduate degree courses offered by the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, and for degree courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science/medicine. It is the first deadline of the UCAS admissions cycle, and typically around 10 per cent of all prospective applicants apply to courses with the 15 October deadline. These courses generally have an interview as a mandatory part of the admissions process, and historically have the lowest acceptance rates of all courses, with a high number of applicants per place.

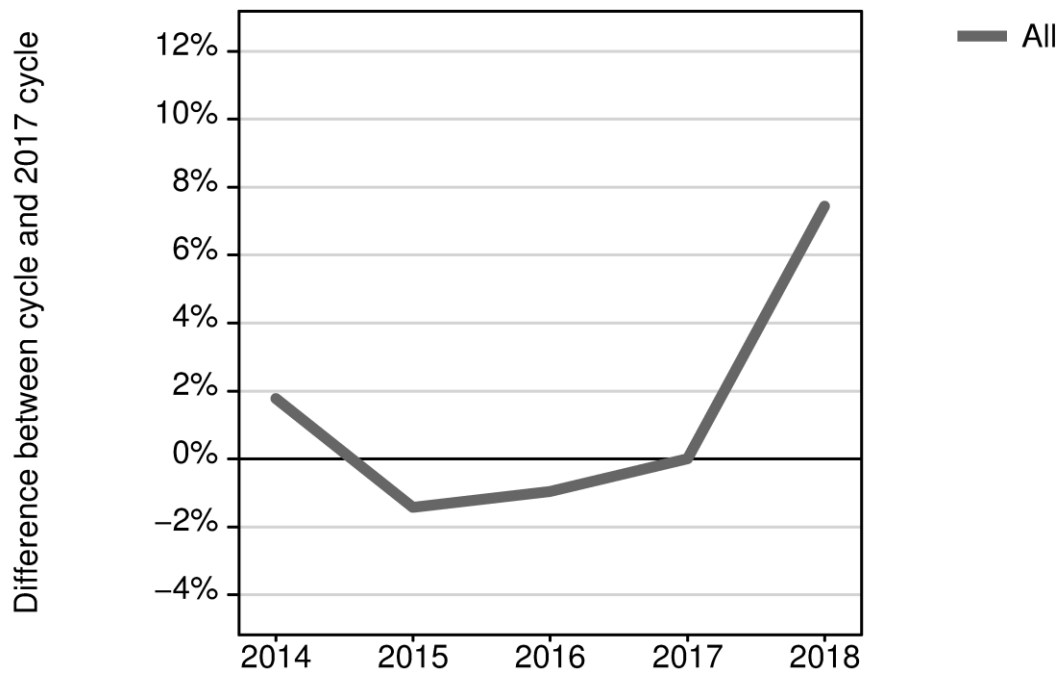
At this point in the cycle, it is not possible to draw conclusions about likely outcomes at the end of the cycle, but it is possible to see how demand for these courses has changed, and draw insight about the traits of those who apply. This analysis covers courses with the 15 October deadline, and does not cover applications to courses not subject to the 15 October deadline.

To avoid disclosing figures for individual universities before the admissions cycle has closed, some numbers for applicants domiciled in Northern Ireland are not reported. All numbers of 15 October deadline applicants reported here can be found in the 2018 applicant figures – 15 October deadline reports, available in the data and analysis section of the UCAS website. These reports contain some additional breakdowns not reported here.

Highest number of applicants to October 15 deadline courses on record

This year, the overall number of applicants to courses with the 15 October deadline reached 61,440, the highest on record, with 4,250 more applicants than the equivalent point in the previous cycle. This 7 per cent increase is the largest on record (Figure 1), and substantially higher than the increases of 0.5 and 1 per cent in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The overall pattern hides differences across domiciles, age groups, and subject areas, which are described below.

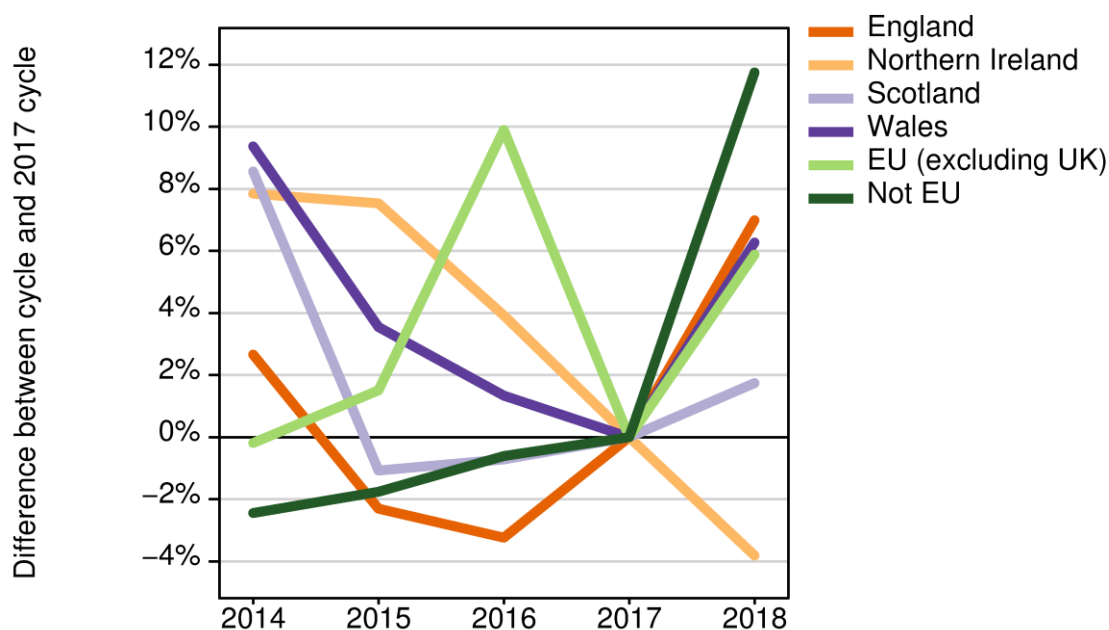
Figure 1: Proportional change in applicants for courses with 15 October deadline



Largest increases in applicants from England, Wales, EU, and non-EU

The majority (61 per cent) of applicants to courses with the 15 October deadline are domiciled in England, meaning the overall trend will tend to reflect the pattern of this group, potentially masking patterns from other domiciles. Figure 2 shows the percentage change in applicants compared to the 2017 cycle, split by domicile.

Figure 2: Proportional change in applicants for courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group



Compared to the October deadline courses last year, the number of applicants from England, Scotland, Wales, the EU, and outside the EU has increased. Northern Ireland is the only domicile to have a decrease in the number of applicants this year.

This cycle, 37,640 applicants to courses with the October deadline were domiciled in England. This is a 7 per cent increase on the same point last cycle, equating to 2,450 more applicants, and the largest increase since before 2010. Wales had a similar increase of 6 per cent, bringing the total to 1,440, 80 more applicants compared to last year. Applicants domiciled in Scotland increased by a smaller amount (2 per cent), resulting in 40 more applicants compared to last year, to a total of 1,990.

This year, 910 applicants were domiciled in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 4 per cent from last cycle, resulting in 30 fewer applicants. This decrease is in keeping with the trend since 2015, during which applicant numbers declined by between 1 and 4 per cent annually.

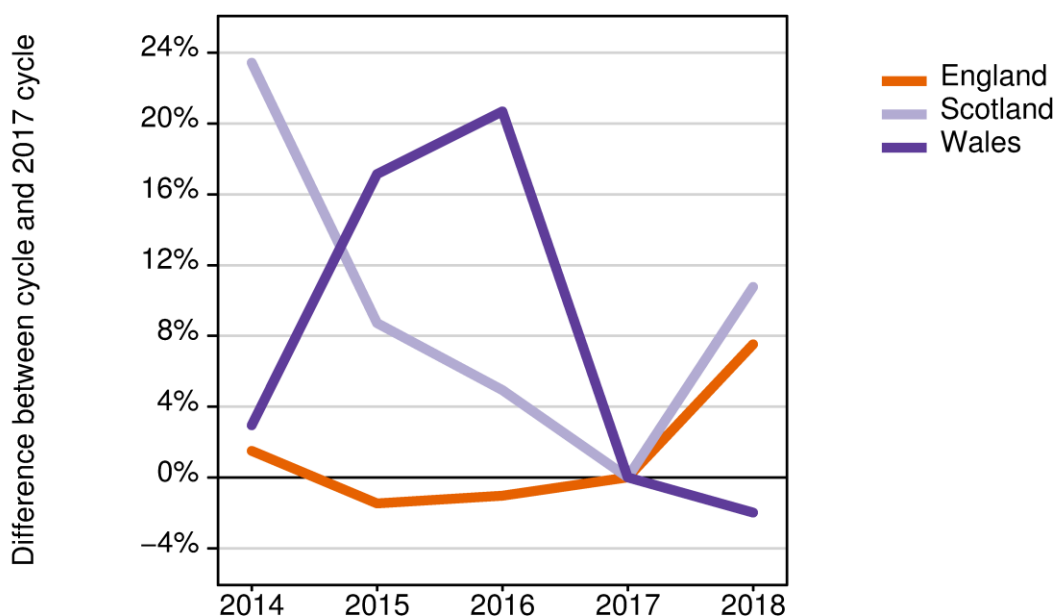
The combined number of applicants from the EU, and outside the EU, account for almost one third of all applicants to October deadline courses. With 6,610 applicants at the 15 October deadline, there are more applicants domiciled in the EU than in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales put together. This year applicants from the EU increased by 6 per cent, reversing much of the 9 per cent fall seen in 2017, to reach the second highest number recorded, but still 4 per cent lower than the peak in 2016.

There are twice as many applicants from countries outside the EU as there were within the EU (excluding the UK), making them the second largest domicile in terms of applicants. This cycle, applicants from outside the EU had the largest increase of any domicile group, 12 per cent (an additional 1,350), bringing the total to 12,860. This increase is notably higher than the annual 1 per cent increases over the past few cycles, and the highest increase on record.

Applicants to providers in England and Scotland up, applicants to providers in Wales down

This year, there has been an increase in applicants to providers in England and Scotland, while applicants to providers in Wales have declined. Applicants to providers in England reached 59,950, an increase of 8 per cent from last year, as shown in Figure 3. Applicants to providers in Scotland have increased by 11 per cent to 7,450, a reversal of the previous trend of annual declines. At 4,090 applicants, providers in Wales have declined by 2 per cent, equating to 90 fewer applicants. This follows the sharp decrease of 17 per cent (860 applicants) to providers in Wales in the previous year.

Figure 3: Applicants for courses with 15 October deadline by country of provider



While the majority of applicants from England and Scotland applied to providers in their country of domicile, most applicants from Wales applied to providers in England. For applicants domiciled in England, over 99 per cent make at least one application to a provider in England, while 70 per cent of applicants from Scotland apply to at least one provider in Scotland. In contrast, 30 per cent of applicants from Wales apply to at least one provider in Wales, with the majority (98 per cent) applying to at least one provider in England. These figures remain relatively unchanged through recent cycles.

Increases in first time applicants from the UK, EU and non-EU, decreases in reapplicants from the UK and EU

The majority (91 per cent) of applicants to courses with the 15 October deadline did not apply to UCAS in the previous cycle, and are classified as first time applicants. The changes in first time applicants across domiciles largely reflect the overall applicant trends for this reason, with the largest increase seen among applicants outside of the EU (12 per cent), increases from England (8 per cent), Scotland (3 per cent), Wales (8 per cent), and the EU (6 per cent), and a decrease in applicants from Northern Ireland (-3 per cent), as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Proportional change in first time applicants for courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group

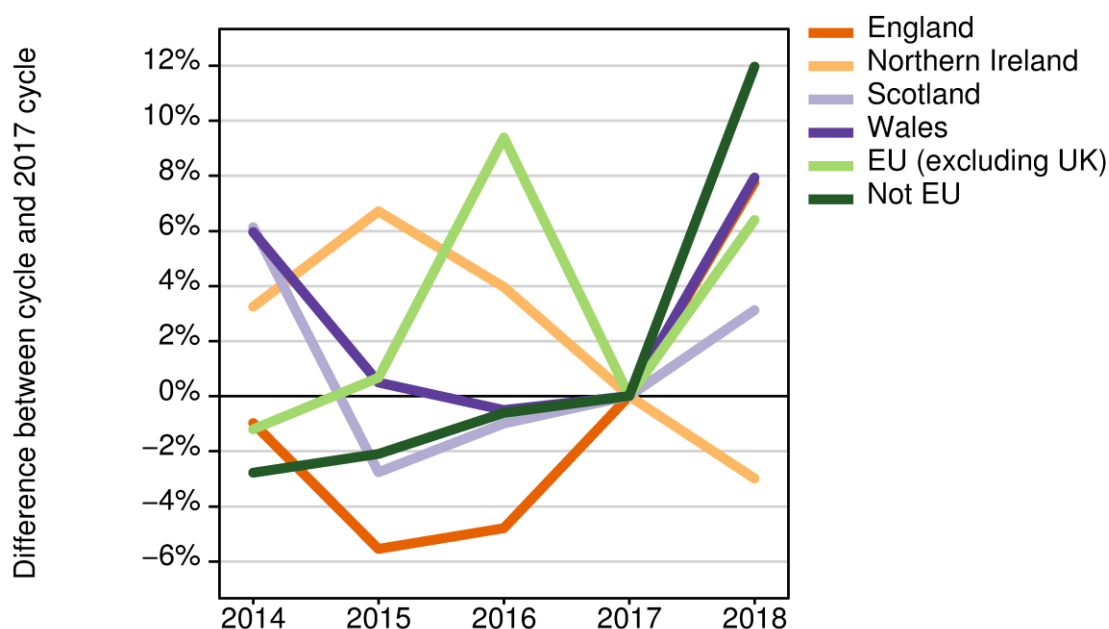
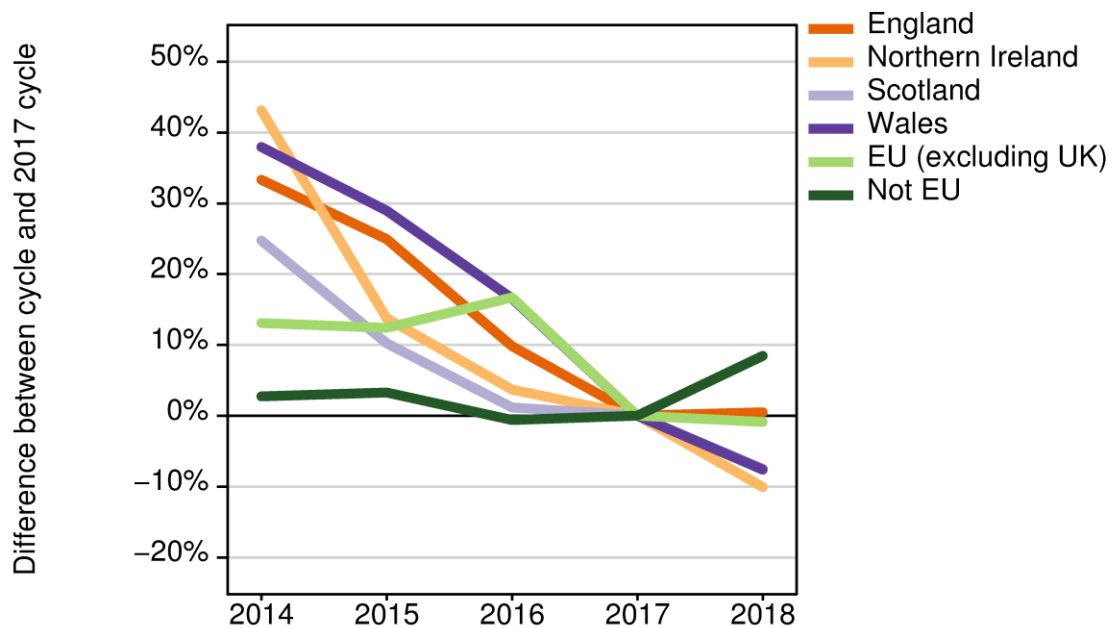


Figure 5 shows a different pattern for reapplicants, defined as those who applied to UCAS at any point in the previous cycle, and who applied to a course with the 15 October deadline this cycle. There has been an increase of 1 per cent in the number of reapplicants this year, driven entirely by an increase in reapplicants domiciled outside the EU resulting in an overall increase of 30 applicants. This is counter to the decreasing trend over the past few cycles, with overall reapplicant numbers dropping by 22 per cent between 2014 and 2017. This decline was driven by UK applicants which, this cycle, make up 78 per cent of all reapplicants which has been decreasing since 2014.

Figure 5: Proportional change in reapplicants for courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group



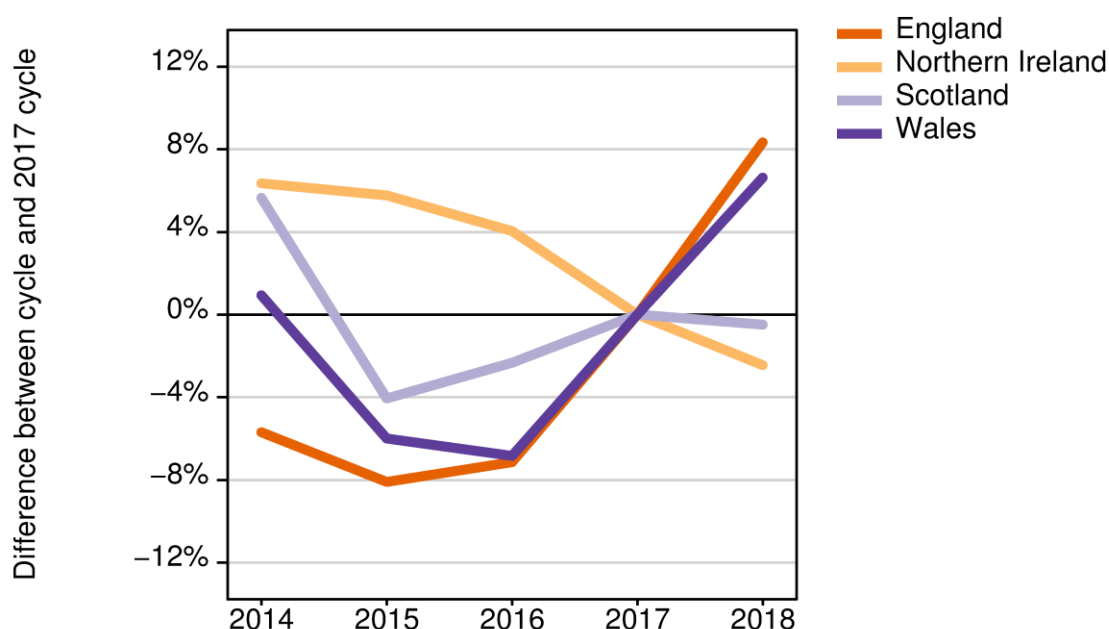
The [2016 End of Cycle Report](#) provides insight into the recent decline in UK reapplicant numbers. In recent cycles, the overall acceptance rate (to courses with October 15 deadlines and those without) for this group of applicants increased from 72 per cent in 2010 to 79 per cent in 2016, meaning applicants were more likely to be placed first time, reducing the potential pool of reapplicants the following cycle. This pattern is also seen amongst courses with an October 15 deadline, for example applicants to [Group A medicine and dentistry courses](#).

Large increase in 18 year old applicants brings total to highest on record

73 per cent of UK applicants to courses with the 15 October deadline were aged 18, with 10 per cent aged 19. The proportion of applicants aged 18 has increased by 1 or 2 percentage points each cycle, from 66 per cent in 2014, to the 73 per cent this year.

This year, the number of 18 year old applicants from England and Wales has increased, in Scotland it remained the same, and in Northern Ireland it decreased (Figure 6). This is consistent with the broader trends for each of these domiciles.

Figure 6: Proportional change in 18 year old applicants for courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group



At 27,700 the number of 18 year old applicants domiciled in England is the highest number recorded by the October deadline. This is an increase of 8 per cent on last year, a difference of 2,130 applicants, and follows a similar 8 per cent increase from the year before. 19 year old applicants from England have increased by 1 per cent from the last cycle. Together, 18 and 19 year olds show a 7 per cent increase from the last cycle, and represent 84 per cent of the overall applicants domiciled in England.

Among applicants from Northern Ireland, 18 year olds have shown a decline of 2 per cent, a reduction of 10 applicants, bringing the total to 680. There were 1,200 18 year old applicants domiciled in Scotland, the same as last year. This year, 18 year old applicants domiciled in Wales increased by 7 per cent, an increase of 60 applicants, bringing their total to 1,030.

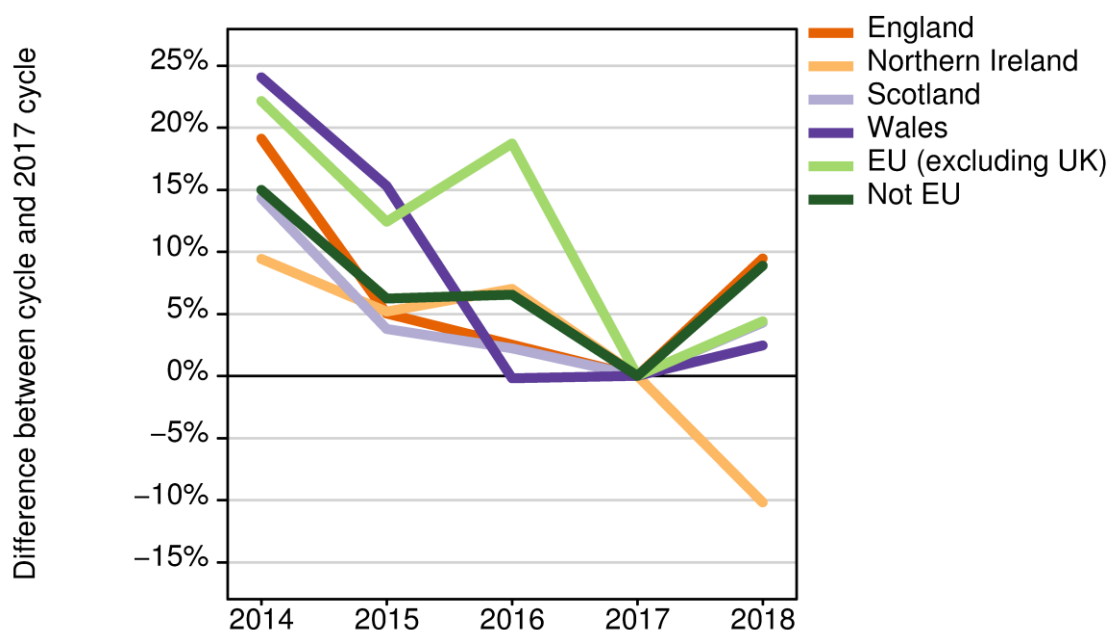
Highest number of medicine applicants since 2014

Around one third of October deadline applicants applied for a course in medicine. This cycle, there were 20,730 applicants to medicine, the largest number since 2014. This is an increase of 8 per cent from the previous cycle (+ 1,520 applicants). This increase comes following a series of declines between 1 and 10 per cent from 2015 to 2017.

Figure 7 shows the changes in applicants to courses in medicine are similar to those of all applicants to courses with the 15 October deadline, with increases in applicants from England, Scotland, Wales, the EU, and outside the EU, and a decline in Northern Ireland. The main difference between these two sets of applicants lies in previous trends. Where there was no clear pattern from 2014 to 2017 across domiciles for all applicants to courses with the October deadline, during the same period applicants to medicine courses declined by between 8 and 20 per cent across all domiciles. As such, the increase in applicants across the majority of domiciles this year is against the recent trend.

At 15,620, the majority (75 per cent) of applicants to medicine courses are domiciled in the UK, with 13,480 of these domiciled in England, an increase of 9 per cent from last year. At 1,070, applicants from Scotland have increased by 4 per cent, and applicants domiciled in Wales have increased 2 per cent to total 580. Applicants from Northern Ireland have decreased 10 per cent to 490. Applicant to medicine from the EU increased by 4 per cent to 1,800, and countries outside of the EU increased by 9 per cent, to of 3,310.

Figure 7: Proportional change in applicants for medicine courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group



The majority of applicants to medicine (88 per cent) are first time applicants. This is reflected by first time applicants to medicine having a similar pattern to the overall trend, as shown in Figure 8. However, first time applicants domiciled in England show the largest increase, at 13 per cent, 2 percentage points higher than all applicants to medicine courses.

Figure 8: Proportional change in first time applicants for medicine courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group

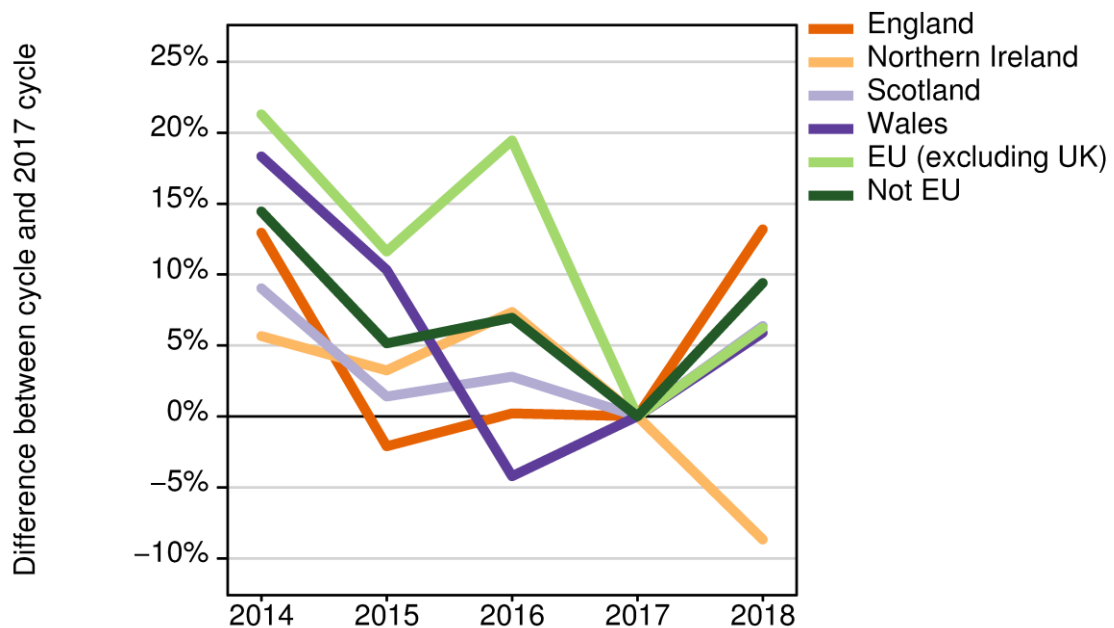
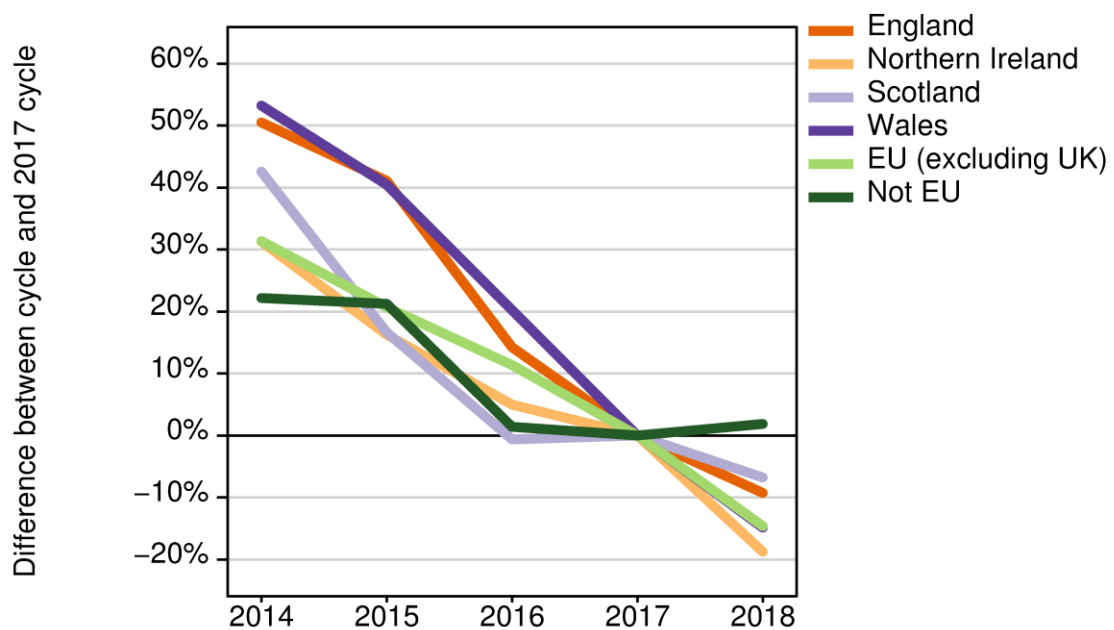


Figure 9 shows that for medicine courses, reapplicants domiciled outside the EU increased, while all other domiciles decreased. While this is consistent with overall trends for all applicants to October deadline courses, the decreases for most domiciles are larger this year compared to 2017, meaning the total number of reapplicants to medicine has reduced from last year by 9 per cent. This cycle, reapplicants to medicine comprised 12 per cent of medicine applicants, a reduction of 2 percentage points from last year, equating to 240 fewer applicants, and totalling 2,480.

Figure 9: Proportional change in reapplicants for medicine courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group



This cycle, the number of 18 year old applicants domiciled in England increased by 16 per cent (Figure 10), bringing the total to 7,770 the highest number recorded. 18 year olds now comprise 58 per cent of all medicine applicants from England, compared to 54 per cent last cycle. 19 year olds from England have decreased by 7 per cent, to 1,170. Falling numbers of applicants, and increases in acceptance rates for applicants to medicine over the past few cycles has led to fewer applicants available to reapply in the following cycle. Most reapplicants are 19 years old, so the reductions in reapplicants in earlier cycles will tend to reflect the patterns observed in 19 year old applicants.

Figure 10: Proportional change in 18 year old applicants for medicine courses with 15 October deadline by domicile group

