Who will be going to university in 2030?

European evidence and data

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Overview

- The role and uses of (European) data

- Likely vs possible futures

- Actions needed

Some initial thoughts

- Many feel concerned by data protection, yet easily give up personal data to global media and commercial companies online (« data privacy paradox »)

- In higher education, public authorities claim to have a high interest in tackling inequity, but justify not collecting (some forms of) data because of the sensitivity of data

- -> While global commercial companies have a wealth of personal data, public authorities often lack the data which would be useful to initiate and monitor policy

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Three purposes of European data

1) Can show why policy is needed

2) Can show how reality is changing (in part as a result of policy)

3) Absence of data can also reveal absence of policy interest

Example 1: to show why policy is needed

Parental educational background: relationship with first cycle entrants, 2018

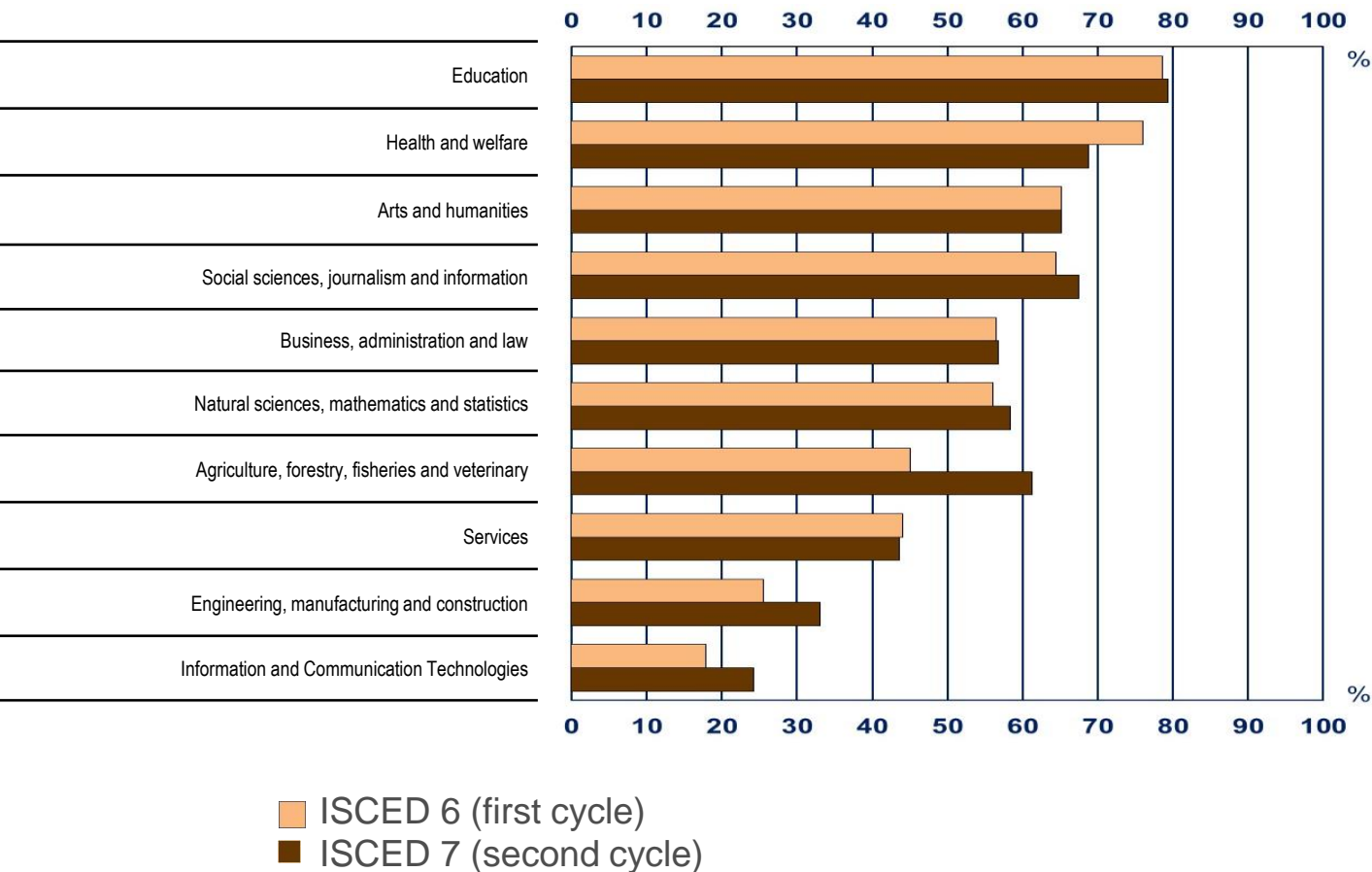*Share of first-cycle new entrants with highly educated parents*
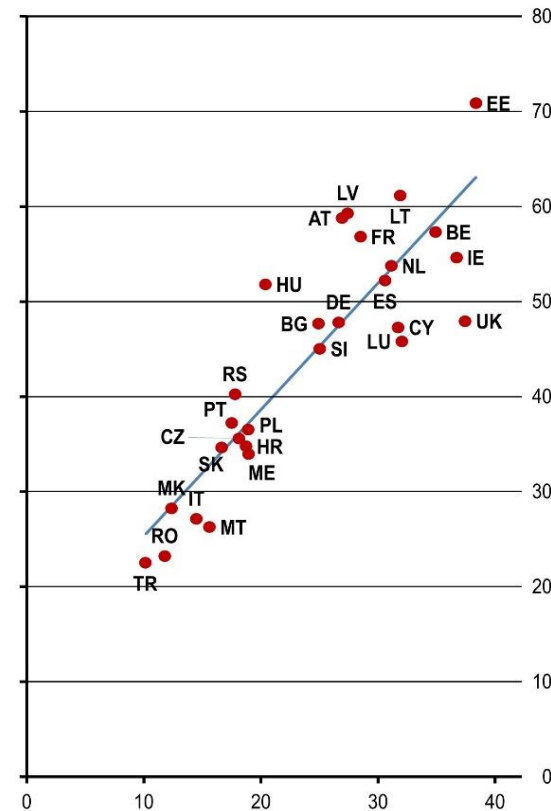
Share of population aged 45 – 65 (parents cohort) with high educational attainment

KEY POINTS
- **Strong relationship** between highly educated parents, and share of entrants with highly educated parents
- **Over-representation** of students with highly educated parents

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Example 1: to show why policy is needed

Female students by subject area, 2017

Bar chart showing percentage of female students by subject area (2017), comparing ISCED 6 (first cycle) and ISCED 7 (second cycle):

- Education
- Health and welfare
- Arts and humanities
- Social sciences, journalism and information
- Business, administration and law
- Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
- Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary
- Services
- Engineering, manufacturing and construction
- Information and Communication Technologies

Legend:
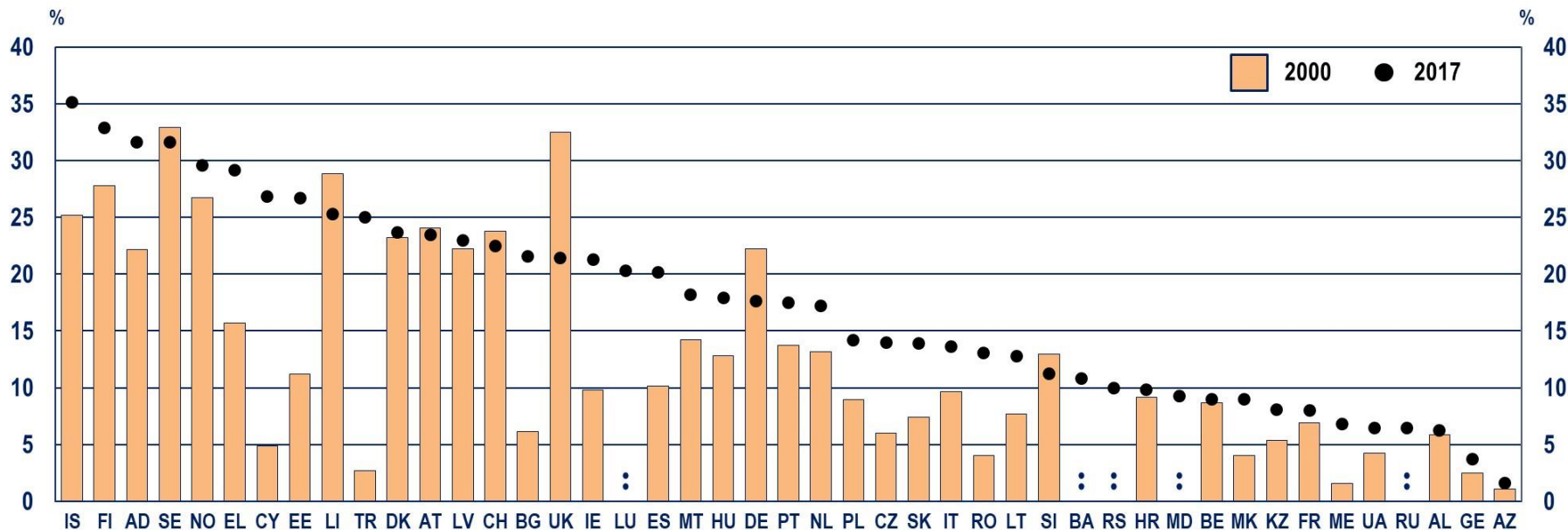- ISCED 6 (first cycle)
- ISCED 7 (second cycle)

KEY POINTS

- **Strong** differentiation between study fields

- **Strongest over-representation of women (c80%)** in education, health

- **Strongest over-representation of men (c80%)** in ICT and engineering

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Example 2: to show how reality is changing

Participation rates of mature students (aged over 30)

KEY POINT

Overall increase from 10% to 17% (weighted average)

Example 3: absence of data - and interest?

Student body: characteristics and when collected, 2016/17

	At entry	During studies	Graduation	After graduation
Gender	46	45	41	17
Age	44	43	39	17
Type and level of qualification prior to entry	43	23	19	9
Disability	24	31	15	3
Socio-economic status	21	28	12	5
Migrant status	13	14	9	3
Minority status	12	12	9	7
Other	12	14	11	7
No monitoring	4	2	5	16

Key Points

Gender, age and qualifications are routinely collected at entry

General decline in attention to characteristics at different stages

Lack of concern for disability, socio-economic status, migrant/minority status

Scope for developing graduate tracking

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What is the state of play of the Social Dimension in EHEA?

- Social Dimension has not progressed well…

- Inequity remains a strong feature of European higher education, and only a handful of countries have taken steps to address this…

- Covid pandemic has affected everyone, but impact has been more severe on the disadvantaged and vulnerable… (Research from Croatia/ESU)

- -> So the future will be even more challenging

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What is the likely future?

- Unfortunately the most likely future is that inequity will remain & its impact will increase….

- Putting equity at the centre of education policy risks upsetting those (including politicians) who benefit from an inequitable status quo

- Little sign that inequity in early childhood and school education is being addressed - although features like early tracking in schools, free school choice, high use of grade retention, private provision lead to inequity)

- Without a holistic approach, higher education can only mitigate impact of inequity

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Some positive signs towards a different future

- Bologna Working Group 2018 – 2020 developed Principles and Guidelines for the Social Dimension: adopted in 2020

- Principles and Guidelines are a comprehensive approach to challenges

- Equity is also a central concern in all European Commission policy and projects

- How will countries respond to implementation challenges?

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Conclusions and Action needed

- Positive change will take time – but will only happen if action is taken now..

- Engaged political approach putting equity as the central concern should be put in place throughout education systems: from early childhood to adult education…

- We need to treat this an urgent challenge and not one among many priorities