



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? 2018

A report on the first destinations of 2016 disabled graduates

August 2018

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The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

Endorsed by  

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AGCAS's *What Happens Next?* 2018 report is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand how disabled graduates fare compared to their non-disabled peers. Although great strides are being made by employers around diversity and inclusion, the report shines a spotlight on the important work that still needs to be done to harness this largely untapped talent pool. As the labour market continues to evolve and increasing numbers of students declare disabilities, it is imperative that employers, universities and support organisations collaborate to support disabled graduates into meaningful employment.

This report cuts to the heart of the work we do at EmployAbility to support disabled graduates into employment; and the need for our continued work with employers to enable them to become more disability inclusive. EmployAbility and I fully endorse this important report and thank all those that have worked hard to put this together.

employ-ability.org.uk

Endorsed by the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP)

NADP welcomes this report and its findings, which highlight the sector development need and focus to reduce barriers for disabled graduates moving into employment. Our organisation is committed to raising the profile and standard of disability equality throughout the student journey from pre-entry to post-exit, into - and beyond - first destination employment.

Close collaboration between specialist agencies and partners is clearly essential, with disabled people at the heart of all processes, and the long term impact on each individual's quality of life and progression opportunities. NADP remains dedicated to collaborative working within a social model framework, seeking to identify and address barriers to employment and progression in increasingly joined-up and coherent ways.

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Executive summary

For the past sixteen years, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) has commissioned the national AGCAS Disability Task Group (DTG) to carry out a study into the destinations of disabled graduates. This research has resulted in the annual *What Happens Next?* report which, over the years, has provided insights into the impact a disability can have on a graduate's prospects in the labour market. Until later this year, when the new Graduate Outcomes survey will be implemented for the first time, data on the destinations of UK graduates has been collected via the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, administered by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), six months after graduation. With regards to 2016 graduates, the DLHE data collected provides the most effective indicator of the value of higher education qualifications and experience at that point in time.

This study reports on the disclosure of disability and destinations of this cohort of graduates. In addition, the destinations of each disability group are examined. Finally, details relating to those graduates who entered employment are described, including the basis of employment and when this employment commenced.

Key findings from the 2016 survey

- Over the past three surveys, at each qualification level, there has been a year-on-year increase in the proportion of graduates disclosing a disability.
- Continuing the pattern of the previous two *What Happens Next?* studies, disclosure decreased with increasing qualification level.
- Compared to non-disabled graduates, at all qualification levels those disclosing a disability were less likely to be in full-time employment, more likely to be in part-time employment and more likely to pursue further study.
- Concurring with the findings of previous *What happens Next?* studies, there was a general increase in total employment figures (full and part-time employment combined) for disabled graduates with increasing qualification level.
- Graduates disclosing a specific learning disability (SpLD) were most likely to have entered full-time employment and the least likely to be unemployed.
- Conversely, of all the disability groups, those with a social/ASD condition were least likely to be in full-time employment and most likely to be unemployed. Indeed, for this group of graduates, unemployment figures actually increased with increasing qualification level.

- At first degree and postgraduate (taught) levels, disabled graduates were less likely to be employed on a permanent basis than non-disabled graduates; however, this changed at postgraduate (research) level, where several disability groups showed higher proportions of permanent employment than non-disabled graduates.
- Graduates (at all qualification levels) with a social/ASD condition who had obtained employment were less likely to have secured this on a permanent basis than any other disability group; this group also had the higher proportions employed on a voluntary basis.
- At all qualification levels, graduates disclosing a disability were more likely to be self-employed or in the process of starting their own business than non-disabled graduates.
- At first degree and postgraduate (taught) levels, graduates with a social/ASD condition were least likely to have obtained their current employment before or during their studies; at postgraduate (research) level, those disclosing mental health conditions were least likely to have commenced employment before or during their studies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the report

This investigation examines the destinations of disabled graduates from UK universities. In doing so, it provides insights into the impact of disability on a graduate's prospects subsequent to their studies. This report also seeks to make a comparison with the destinations of non-disabled graduates, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level; in addition, the destinations for different disability types are explored. Finally, details related to the types of employment obtained by disabled graduates are described, including the employment basis and when this employment commenced.

It is hoped that the findings of this report will be of real interest to those who share a concern for the outcomes and welfare of people with disabilities. University careers and employability services play a key role in recognising the needs of, and providing support to, disadvantaged students and graduates in accessing and succeeding in the labour market. It is therefore anticipated that, as in previous years, this most recent study will also be of significant value to these careers services wishing to gain a greater understanding of the challenges facing disabled students.

1.2 Method and sample

This study analyses the data acquired by HEFCE for the DLHE survey carried out on individuals graduating in 2016 in the UK. For this survey, all UK and EU domiciled individuals who had graduated in 2016 were contacted by their respective universities approximately six months after completion of their degree courses. The results of this survey were published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). More information about the DLHE survey of 2016 graduates can be found here: www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16018.

Whilst all first degree, postgraduate (taught) and postgraduate (research) graduates from 2016 were included in the sample, the number of respondents to this survey was 322,810. Of this number, 41,490 (12.9%) identified themselves as having either a disability or learning difficulty during the period of their studies. Details of disclosure figures can be found in Section 2; however, it should be noted that at postgraduate (taught) level and in particular at postgraduate (research) level, the number of graduates responding to the DLHE survey in some disability groups was less than 100. In these cases, a degree of caution should be employed when seeking to draw conclusions from the results, due to the small sample size. Where this has occurred, a note has been added to the relevant bar charts to alert the reader.

1.3 Terminology

This report adopts the definition of disability described within the Disability Discrimination Act (2010): “A disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her disability to carry out normal day-to-day activities” (UK Government, 2018). The term ‘disabled graduates’ refers to those respondents to the 2016 DLHE survey who identified themselves as having a disability or learning difficulty during the time they were a student. In this report, the term ‘non-disabled graduates’ refers to survey respondents who did not disclose that they had a disability (this cohort therefore includes those who did not provide any disability data, as well as those who declared that they did not have a disability).

In the DLHE questionnaire, respondents were provided with a list of categories from which they could select the term which best suited their disability or learning difficulty; these categories can be seen in Table 1 (column 1). For reasons of brevity, throughout this report the authors have presented these categories in the manner shown in column 2.

Table 1: Disability type categories

HESA disability categories	What Happens Next? 2018 category headings
Blind or serious visual impairment	Blind/visual condition
Deaf or serious hearing impairment	Deaf/hearing loss
Physical impairment or mobility issues	Physical/mobility issues
Mental health conditions	Mental health conditions
Long-standing illness or health condition	Long-standing illness or health condition
Two or more conditions	Two or more conditions
Specific learning difficulty	SpLD
Social communication/Autistic Spectrum Disorder	Social/ASD
Another disability, impairment or medical condition	Other disability or condition

In terms of qualification levels referred to in this report, the following should be noted:

- First degree refers to an undergraduate qualification (e.g. BA, BSc and MBChB).
- Postgraduate degree (taught) refers to a postgraduate qualification consisting of a taught programme of lectures or seminars (e.g. MA, MSc and MBA).
- Postgraduate degree (research) refers to a postgraduate qualification involving independent study (e.g. PhD, DPhil, MPhil).

This study does not include graduates of foundation degrees, postgraduate diplomas or certificates (e.g. PGCE) or professional qualifications (e.g. ACA).

In this study, the term 'total employment' figures refers to the sum of the respondents selecting the following categories in the DLHE survey: '*full-time work*', '*part-time work*' and '*primarily in work but also studying*'. Similarly, 'total further study' figures refer to the sum of those selecting the following categories: '*full-time study*', '*part-time study*' and '*primarily studying but also in work*'.

Due to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998, HESA implements a strategy in its publications designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest multiple of five. However, the percentage figures quoted in tables and throughout the text are based on the accurate figures drawn from HESA's raw data.

1.4 The authors of this report

The creators of this report, the sixteenth version of *What Happens Next?*, are careers professionals based at university careers services in the UK, who are part of the AGCAS Disability Task Group (DTG). The DTG helps to shape the careers support available to disabled students in HE through resource development, training delivery and sharing of good practice. AGCAS provided the funding to obtain the DLHE survey data from HESA.

2. Disclosure of disability

This section describes the disclosure of disability at first degree level, postgraduate (taught) and postgraduate (research).

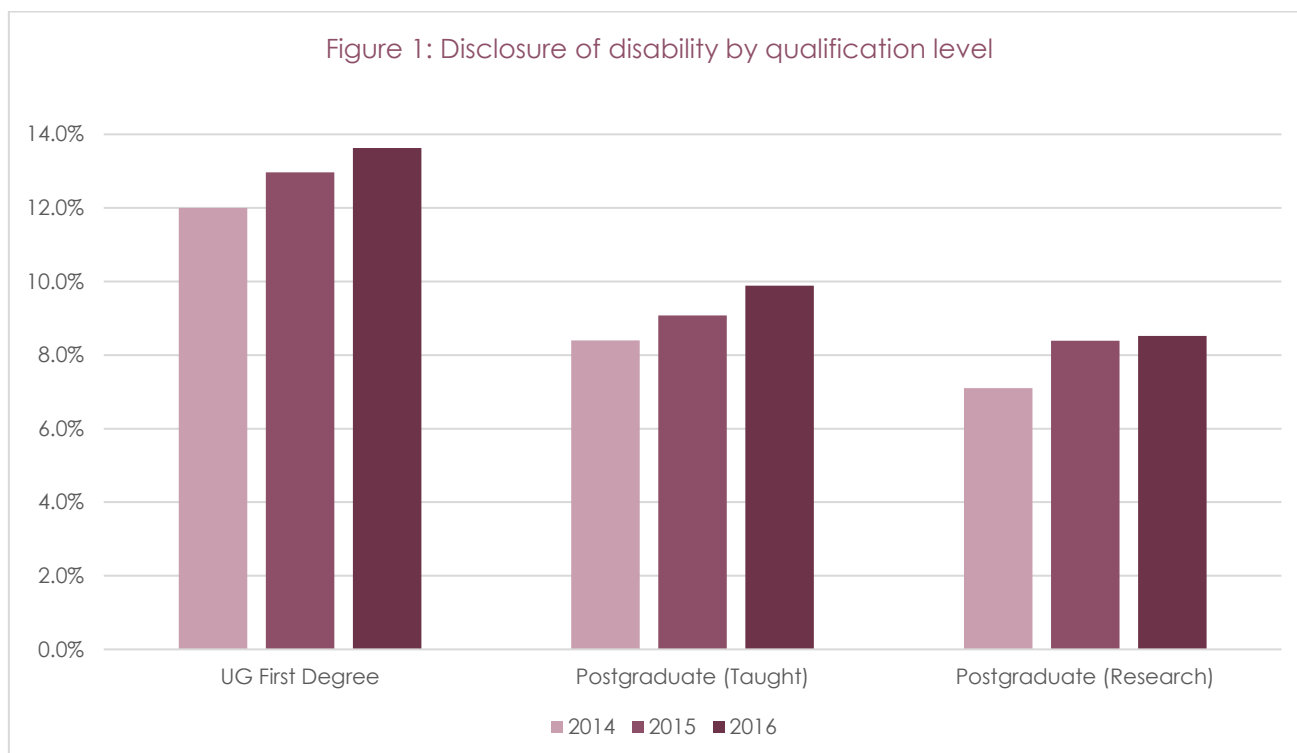
Key findings

- The proportion of graduates disclosing a disability decreased with increasing qualification level.
- Over the past three surveys, there has been a year-on-year increase in the proportion of graduates disclosing a disability at each qualification level.
- As with previous years, the greatest proportion of graduates disclosing a disability at all qualification levels had an SpLD.

Table 2: Disability disclosure for each qualification level

Level of qualification	No known disability	Disabled	Total	Disability disclosure levels
First degree	224,295	35,405	259,700	13.6%
Postgraduate (taught)	46,475	5,100	51,575	9.9%
Postgraduate (research)	10,550	985	11,535	8.5%

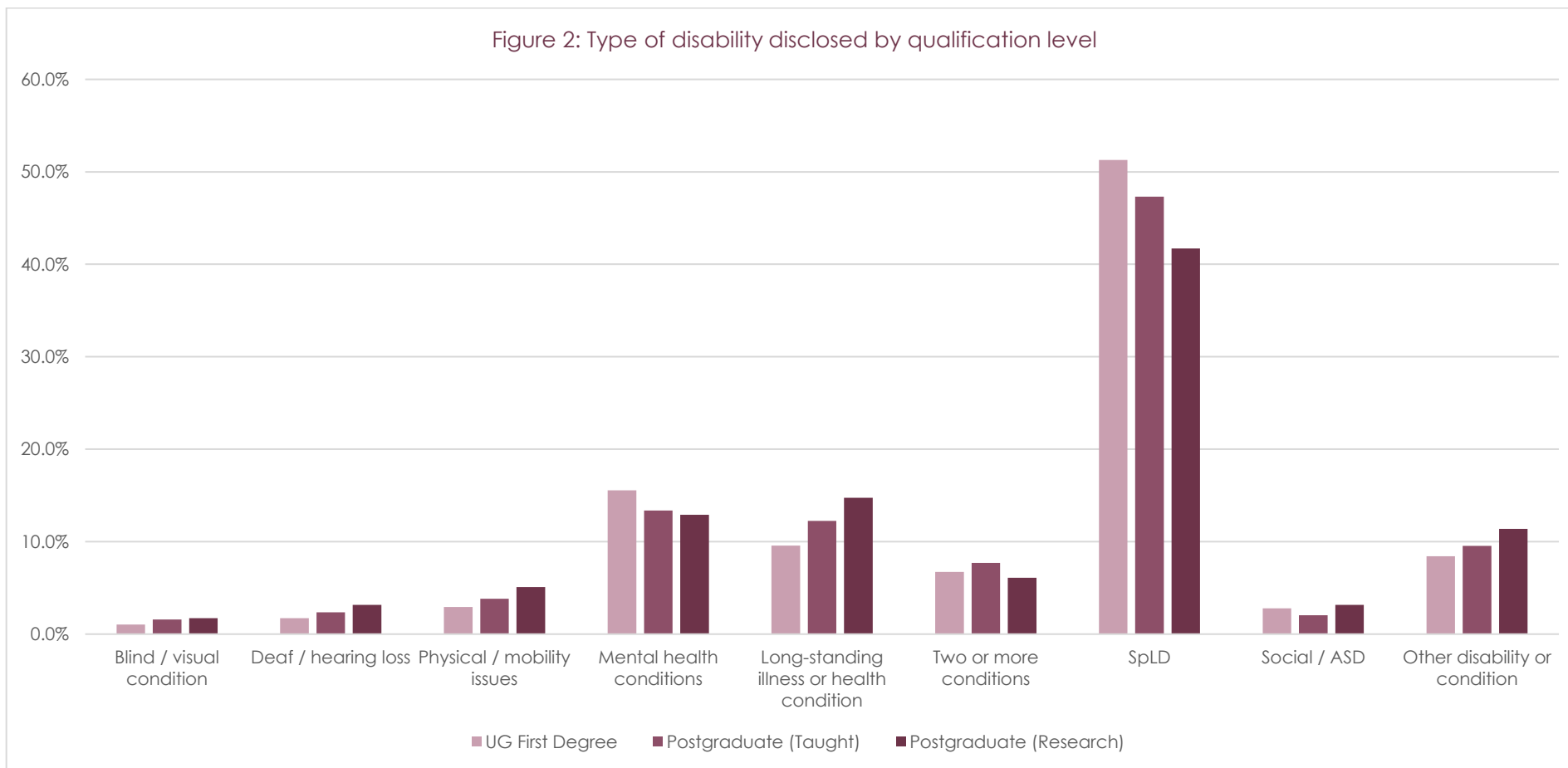
The number of 2016 graduates at each qualification level disclosing a disability is shown in Table 2 above. As with the *What Happens Next?* studies from the past two years (AGCAS, 2016, 2017), disclosure levels were higher at first degree level (13.6%) than at postgraduate (taught) level (9.9%) and postgraduate (research) level (8.5%). Figure 1 (page 10) compares disclosure levels from 2016 with those of 2015 and 2014; as can be seen, there has been a year-on-year increase in disclosure levels at each qualification level.



The type of disability disclosed by disabled graduates at each qualification level is shown in Figure 2 (page 11), as a percentage of the total number of students disclosing a disability. As with previous years, at all qualification levels, the greatest proportion of graduates disclosing a disability had an SpLD. At first degree level, this proportion is highest (51.3%), followed by postgraduate (taught) (47.3%), then postgraduate (research) (41.7%).

For many of the disability types, there were no notable variations in the disability type proportions at different qualification levels. Slight exceptions were seen for mental health conditions, (15.6% for first degree, decreasing to 13.4% at postgraduate (taught) and again to 12.9% at postgraduate (research)), which concurs with the slight decrease in proportions of graduates disclosing mental health conditions with increasing qualification level in the previous study (AGCAS, 2017). Similarly, the proportions of graduates disclosing a long-standing illness or health condition (9.6% for first degree, increasing to 12.3% for postgraduate (taught) and again to 14.8% at postgraduate (research)) show the same slight increase in proportions with qualification level that were found in the previous year's study (AGCAS, 2017).

Figure 2: Type of disability disclosed by qualification level



3. Graduate destinations

In this section, the destinations of graduates at first degree level, postgraduate (taught) level and postgraduate (research) level are described.

Key findings

- At all qualification levels, disabled graduates were less likely to have obtained full-time employment and more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled graduates.
- The gap between the proportion of disabled and non-disabled graduates entering full-time employment has actually decreased at both first degree and postgraduate (research) levels but has increased at postgraduate (taught) level.
- At all qualification levels, disabled graduates were more likely to enter part-time employment and more likely to pursue further study than graduates with no known disability.

3.1 First degree

Figure 3 (page 14) compares the destinations of disabled graduates with non-disabled graduates at each qualification level. As can be seen, the percentage of disabled graduates entering full-time work (50.5%) was lower than those with no disclosed disability (56.6%), although the percentage of disabled graduates obtaining part-time work (14.2%) was higher than the percentage for non-disabled graduates (12.0%). The total figures for further study were slightly higher for disabled graduates than non-disabled graduates (20.2% and 19.5% respectively); however, the percentage of unemployed disabled graduates (6.1%) was higher than the percentage for non-disabled graduates (4.1%).

These figures for first degree graduates have many similarities with those from last year's study (AGCAS, 2017), where disabled graduates were also less likely to be found in full-time employment and more likely to be in part-time employment, or unemployed. However, unlike last year, where the gap between the proportions of graduates in full-time employment had increased when compared to previous years, this year's figures show that there has been a slight decrease in this difference between disabled and non-disabled graduates (from 7.6% in the 2017 study to 6.0% in this study) (AGCAS 2017).

3.2 Postgraduate (taught)

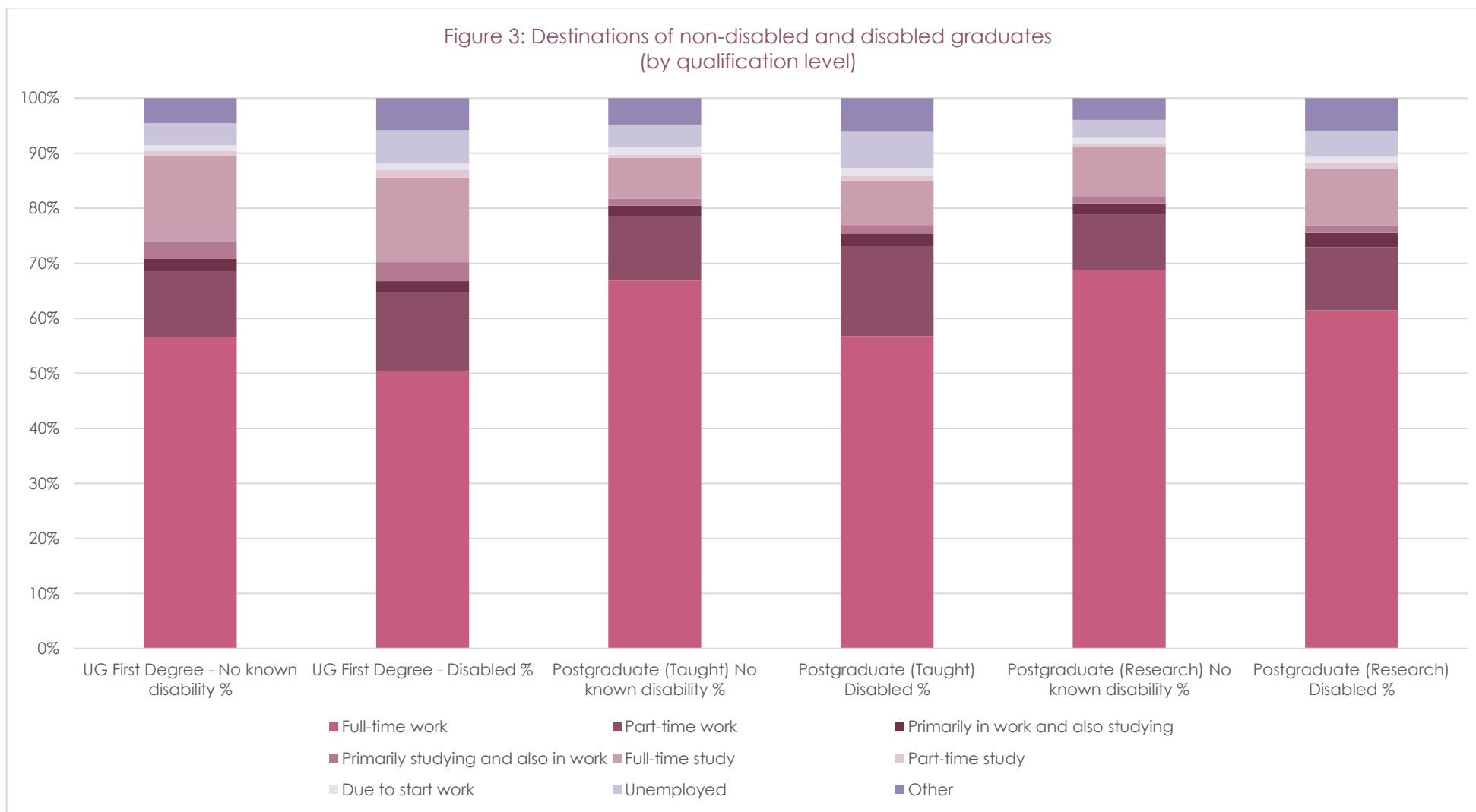
The destinations of postgraduate (taught) graduates are also shown in Figure 3 (page 14), where it can be seen that there was a more marked difference between the disabled and non-disabled graduates entering full time employment than at first degree level (56.6% and 66.9% respectively). However, it should be noted that a larger proportion of postgraduate (taught) graduates disclosing a disability entered part-time employment (16.5%) than those who did not disclose a disability (11.6%). The total further study figures for disabled graduates were slightly higher (10.4% for those with a disability compared to 9.3% for non-disabled graduates) but, as with first degree level graduates, postgraduate (taught) graduates are more likely to be unemployed (6.6%, compared with 4.4% for those with no disclosed disability).

These figures concur with the findings in the 2017 study (AGCAS 2017), where a greater difference in the proportions of graduates entering full time work was noted at postgraduate (taught) level than at first degree level (in fact, this gap between disabled and non-disabled graduates has widened from 8.2% in 2017 to 10.3% in this most recent survey). The larger proportion of disabled graduates entering part-time work is also in accord with last year's study, as is the larger percentage in unemployment (again, this gap has increased, from 2.0% in the 2017 study, to 2.5% in this study) (AGCAS 2017).

3.3 Postgraduate (research)

Finally, Figure 3 (page 14) also shows the destinations of graduates at postgraduate (research) level. As at other qualification levels, disabled graduates were less likely to be in full-time employment (61.1%, compared with 68.8% for those not disclosing a disability) and more likely to be in part-time work (11.5%, compared with 10.1% for non-disabled graduates). Disabled graduates were more likely to pursue further study than non-disabled graduates (total further study figures are 12.8% for those with a disability, compared with 10.8% with no disability) and also more likely to be unemployed (4.8%, compared with 3.3%). There are no notable differences in these findings with those from the 2017 study (AGCAS, 2017).

Figure 3: Destinations of non-disabled and disabled graduates (by qualification level)



4. Destinations by disability

This chapter describes the destinations of disabled graduates by examining the findings for different disability group at each qualification level.

Key findings

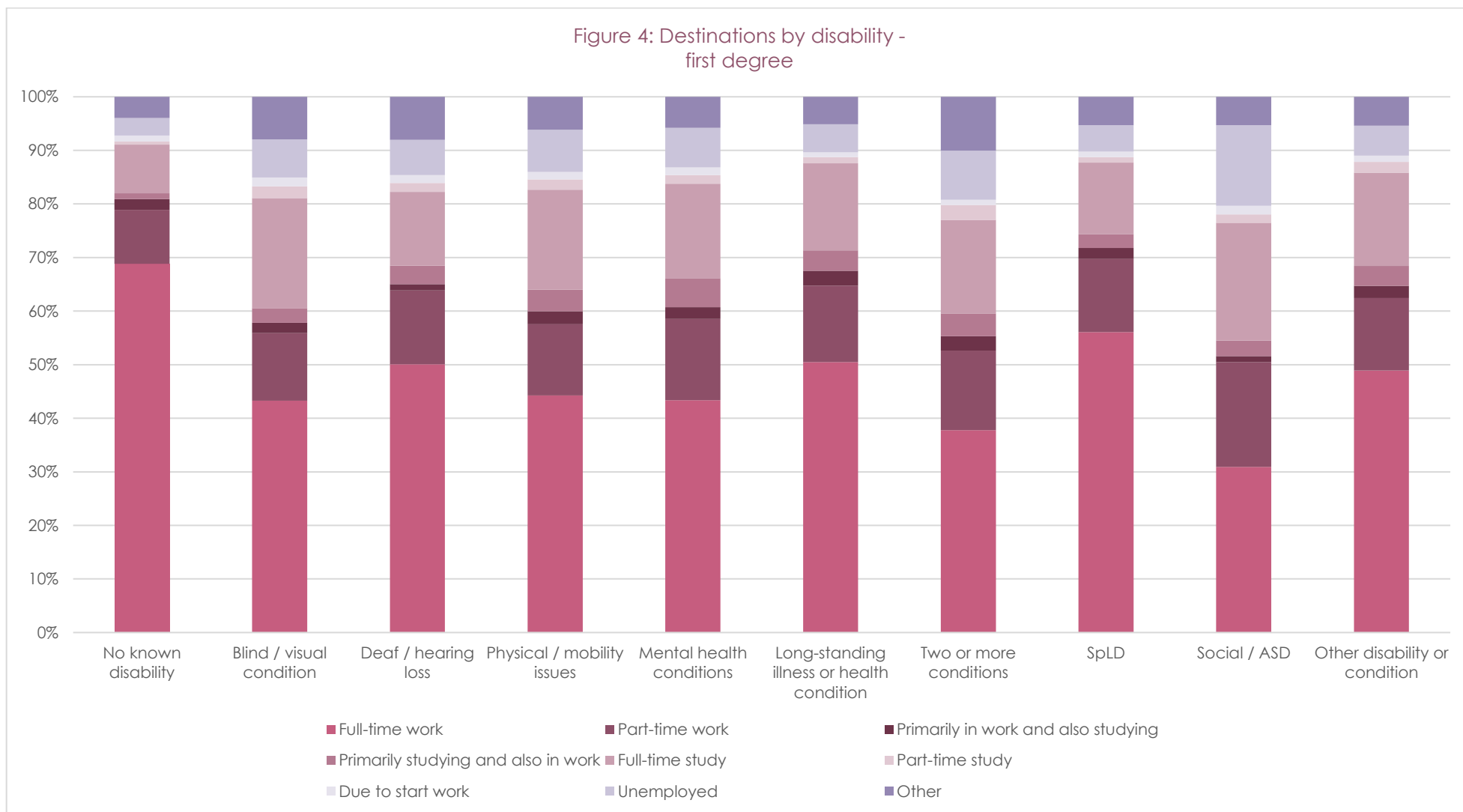
- There was a general increase in total employment figures (full and part-time employment combined) for disabled graduates with increasing qualification level.
- At all qualification levels, graduates disclosing a social/ASD condition were least likely to be in full-time employment.
- Of all graduates with a disability, those with a social/ASD condition were most likely to be unemployed; in fact, unemployment figures actually increased with increasing qualification level.
- At all qualification levels, graduates disclosing an SpLD were the most likely to be in full-time employment and the least likely to be unemployed.
- Although at first degree level those with a social/ASD condition were most likely to pursue further study, at postgraduate (taught) level those who had disclosed two or more conditions had the highest proportions in further study and, at postgraduate (research) level, graduates with mental health conditions were most likely to have opted for further study.

4.1 First degree

The destinations of disabled first degree graduates by disability are shown in Figure 4 (page 17). As can be seen, a number of the different disability groups have noticeably lower full-time employment figures than non-disabled graduates (these include those with a blind/visual condition, physical/mobility issues, mental health conditions or two or more conditions). However, those with a social/ASD were least likely of all disabled graduates to be in full-time work (30.9%, which is markedly smaller than 68.8%, the percentage of non-disabled graduates entering full-time employment); these graduates with a social/ASD condition were the most likely of all disabled first-degree graduates to be in part-time employment (19.5%). This same group of graduates were also the most likely to be unemployed (15.1%, which is more than double the percentage for many of the other disability groups). These findings concur with those of the 2016 and 2017 studies (AGCAS 2016, 2017). Conversely, graduates with an SpLD were the most likely of all disability groups to be in full-time employment (56.1%) and the least likely to be unemployed (4.9%).

Total further study figures show that graduates with a social/ASD condition were the most likely to pursue further study (26.5%), closely followed by graduates with a blind/visual condition (25.4%) and those with two or more conditions (24.5%).

Figure 4: Destinations by disability - first degree



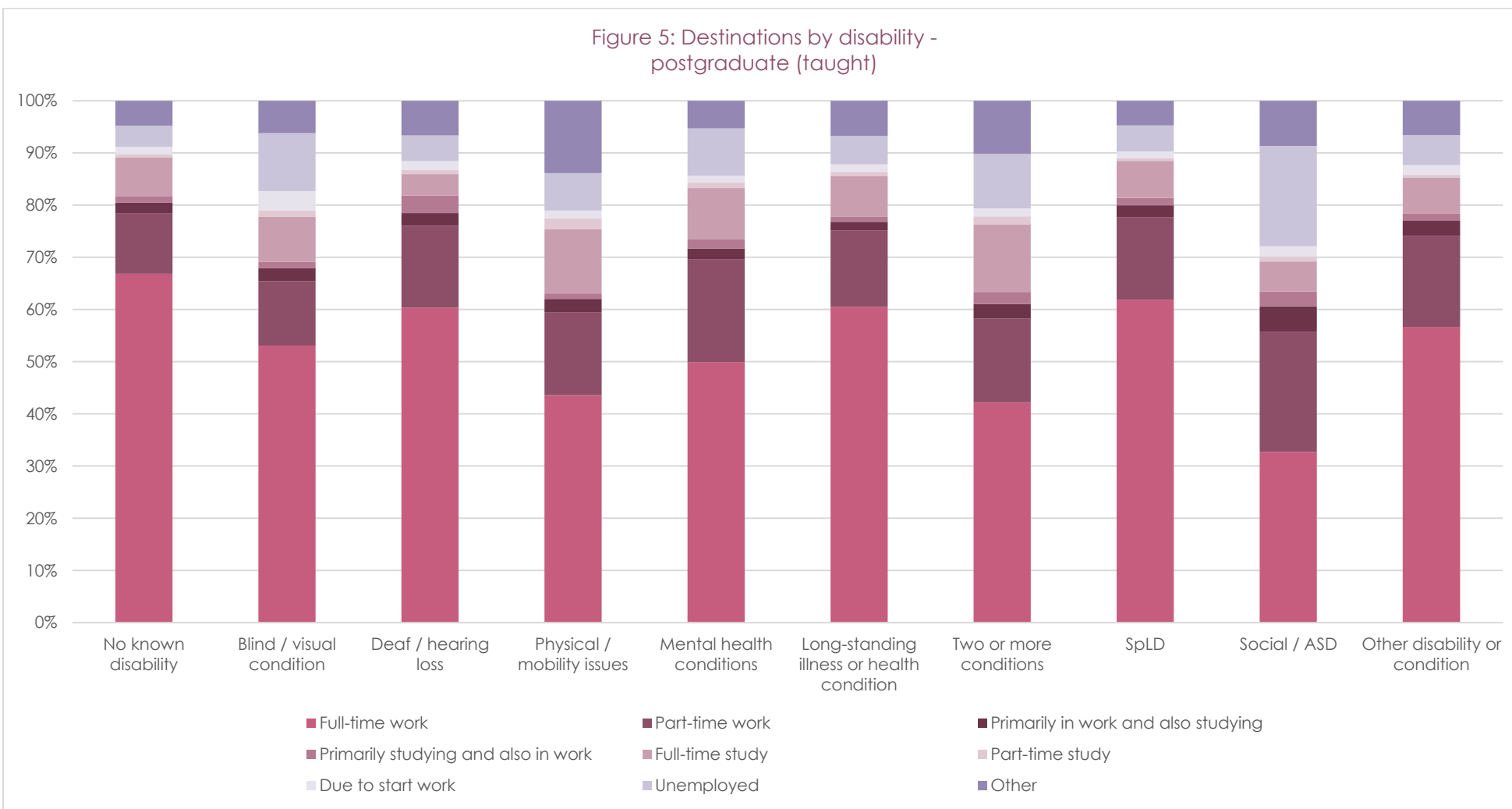
4.2 Postgraduate (taught)

Figure 5 (page 19) shows the destinations of disabled graduates at postgraduate (taught) level. As can be seen, there was a general increase in total employment figures compared to first degree graduate figures. However, as at first degree level, graduates with a social/ASD condition again had the lowest levels of full-time employment (32.7%) and the highest levels of part-time employment (23.1%). This group of disabled graduates again had the highest proportions in unemployment (19.2%, which is significantly greater than the figure for any other disability group and is also higher than the level of unemployment for first degree graduates with a social/ASD condition (15.1%)). These findings all reiterate those found in the 2017 study (AGCAS, 2017).

As at first degree level, graduates with an SpLD from postgraduate (taught) degrees were most likely to be in full-time employment (61.9%) and had the lowest proportion in unemployment (5.0%). Disabled graduates with two or more conditions had the greatest proportion pursuing further study (19.6% for total study), followed by those with physical/mobility issues (18.0% for total study).

**Please note that the total number of respondents to this question at postgraduate (taught) level with a blind/visual condition was less than 100.*

Figure 5: Destinations by disability - postgraduate (taught)



4.3 Postgraduate (research)

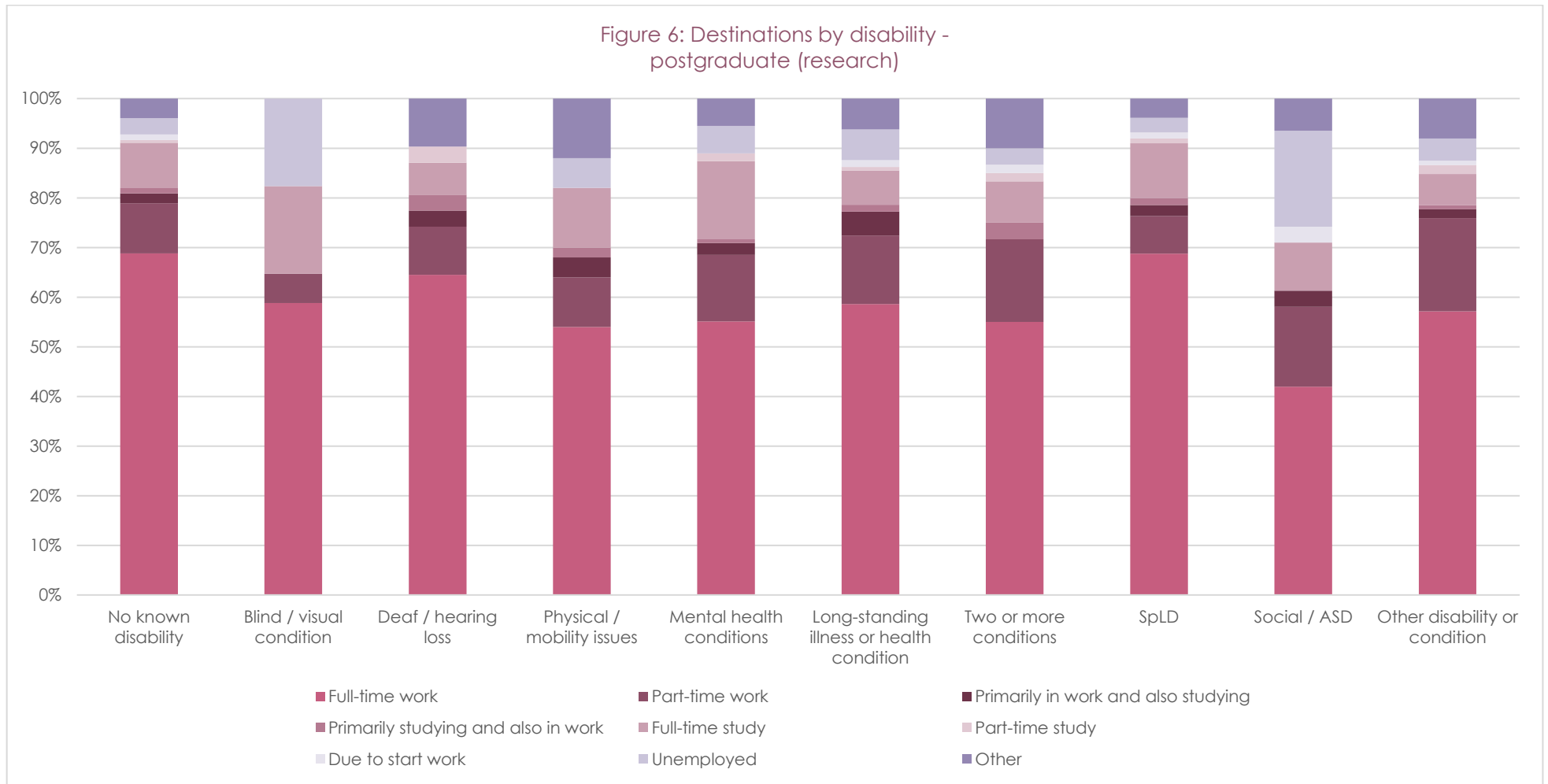
The destinations for disabled postgraduate (research) graduates by disability are shown in Figure 6 (page 21). As in the previous two studies (AGCAS 2016, 2017), disabled graduates from this qualification level were generally more likely to be in employment (part-time or full-time) than those from lower qualification levels.

Postgraduate (research) graduates with a social/ASD condition were least likely to be in full-time employment and actually had slightly lower levels of total employment than in the previous survey (58.0%, compared with 60.0%). Unlike at other qualification levels, graduates with a social/ASD condition did not have the highest proportions in part-time work (graduates who had selected the 'other disability' option in the survey had the highest part-time employment figures (18.8%), followed by those with two or more conditions (16.7%))* . As at other qualification levels, graduates with an SpLD were most likely to be in full-time employment (68.8%, which is the same percentage as non-disabled graduates at postgraduate (research) level); graduates in this disability group were also the least likely to be unemployed (2.9%).

Postgraduate (research) graduates with mental health conditions were the most likely to pursue further study (total study figures for this group are 20.5%), followed by those with physical/mobility issues (18.0%) and those in the blind/visual condition group (17.6%)*. Graduates with a social/ASD condition were the most likely to be unemployed (19.4%); although this figure is lower than in the 2017 study (25.0%) (AGCAS 2017), it is actually higher than this year's findings for first degree and postgraduate (taught) graduates disclosing this disability (15.1% and 19.2% respectively).

**Please note that the total number of respondents to this question at postgraduate (research) level in the following disability groups was less than 100: blind/visual condition, deaf/hearing loss, physical/mobility issues, a social/ASD condition and two or more conditions.*

Figure 6: Destinations by disability - postgraduate (research)



5. Employment basis

In this chapter, the basis on which disabled graduates are employed is described for each qualification level.

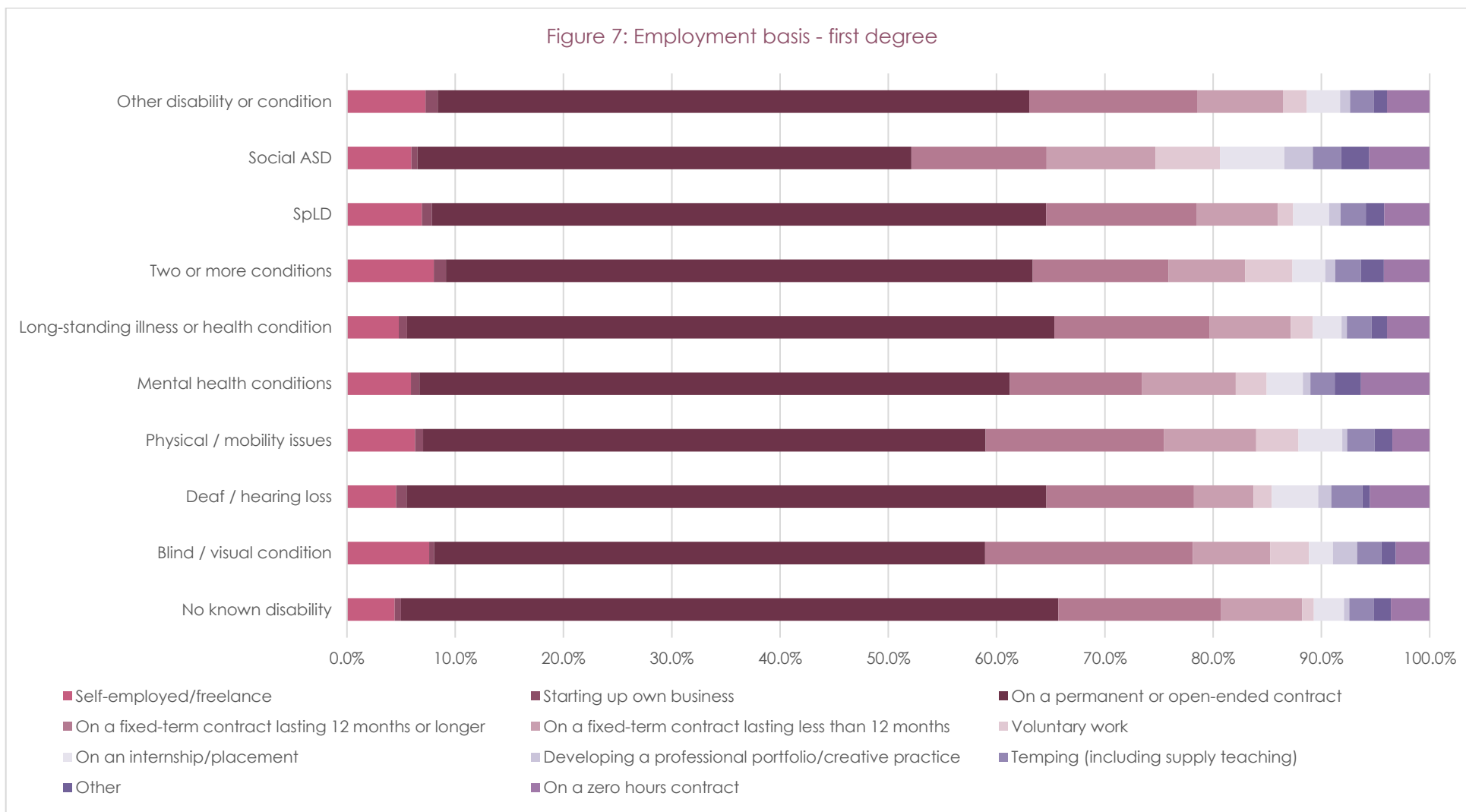
Key findings

- At all qualification levels, disabled graduates were generally more likely to be self-employed or in the process of starting their own business than non-disabled graduates.
- At first degree and postgraduate (taught) qualification levels, disabled graduates were less likely to be employed on a permanent basis, however, this was not the case at postgraduate (research) level, where several disability groups had higher proportions than non-disabled graduates.
- At all qualification levels, graduates disclosing a social/ASD condition were least likely to be in permanent employment; this group also had the highest proportions in voluntary work (at all qualification levels).
- All graduates (disabled and non-disabled) at postgraduate (research) level were less likely to be in permanent employment than graduates from other levels of qualification.

5.1 First degree

Figure 7 (page 23) shows the basis on which first degree graduates were employed. Interestingly, graduates of all disability types were more likely to be self-employed or in the process of starting their own business than non-disabled graduates. As was found in the previous year's study (AGCAS, 2017), graduates of all disability types were less likely to be employed on a permanent contract than non-disabled graduates (although this year, there were only small differences in the proportions for graduates with a long standing illness and deaf/hearing loss graduates compared with non-disabled graduates). Of the disability groups, graduates with a social/ASD condition were least likely to be permanently employed (45.6%), which concurs with the results of the previous year's study (AGCAS, 2017). However, this same group (graduates with a social/ASD condition) had the highest proportions on an internship (6.0%), participating in voluntary work (6.0%) and developing a portfolio (2.6%). Graduates with a mental health condition were most likely to be on a zero hours contract (6.3%), followed by those disclosing a social/ASD condition (5.6%).

Figure 7: Employment basis - first degree



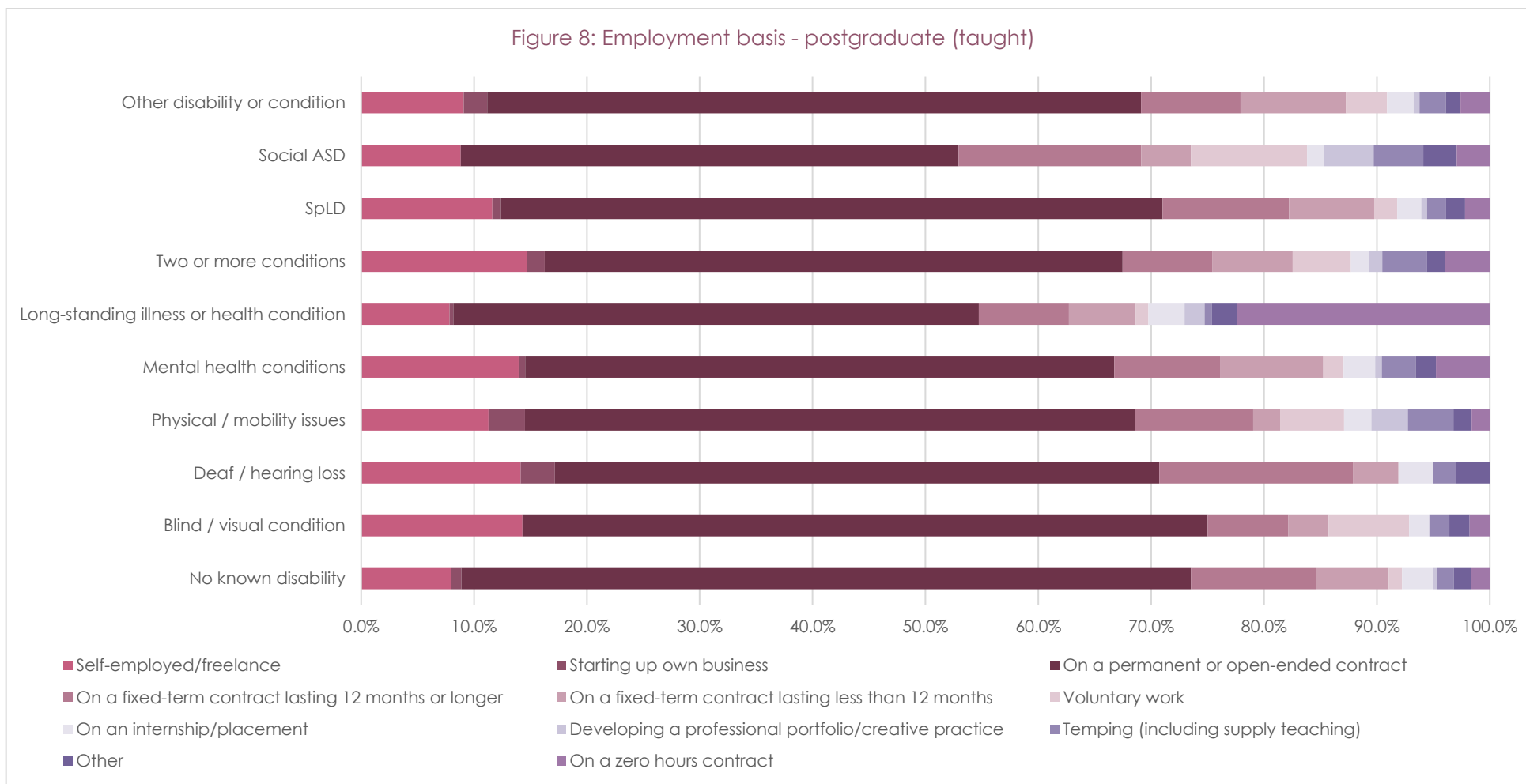
5.2 Postgraduate (taught)

The employment basis figures for postgraduate (taught) graduates are shown in Figure 8 (page 25). As with first degree graduates, all disability groups (with the exception of those with a long-standing illness or health condition) had higher proportions of graduates in self-employment or starting their own business than graduates with no known disability. Some disability groups, such as the deaf/hearing loss group and those disclosing two or more conditions had substantially higher proportions in self-employment or starting their own business (17.1% and 16.3% respectively, compared to 8.8% for non-disabled graduates)*. Graduates with a long standing illness were the most likely to be on zero hours contracts (22.4%); this figure is substantially higher than that of any other disability group.

Postgraduate (taught) graduates from all disability groups were less likely to be on permanent contracts than non-disabled graduates and of these groups, those with a social/ASD condition were the least likely (44.1%)*; this is in accordance with the findings from last year's report (AGCAS, 2017). As at first degree level, graduates with a social/ASD condition were most likely to be volunteering (10.3%) and developing a creative portfolio (4.4%)*. Again, these results were found in the previous year's survey (AGCAS, 2017).

**Please note that the total number of respondents to this question at postgraduate (taught) level in the following disability groups was less than 100: bind/visual condition, deaf/hearing loss and social/ASD condition.*

Figure 8: Employment basis - postgraduate (taught)



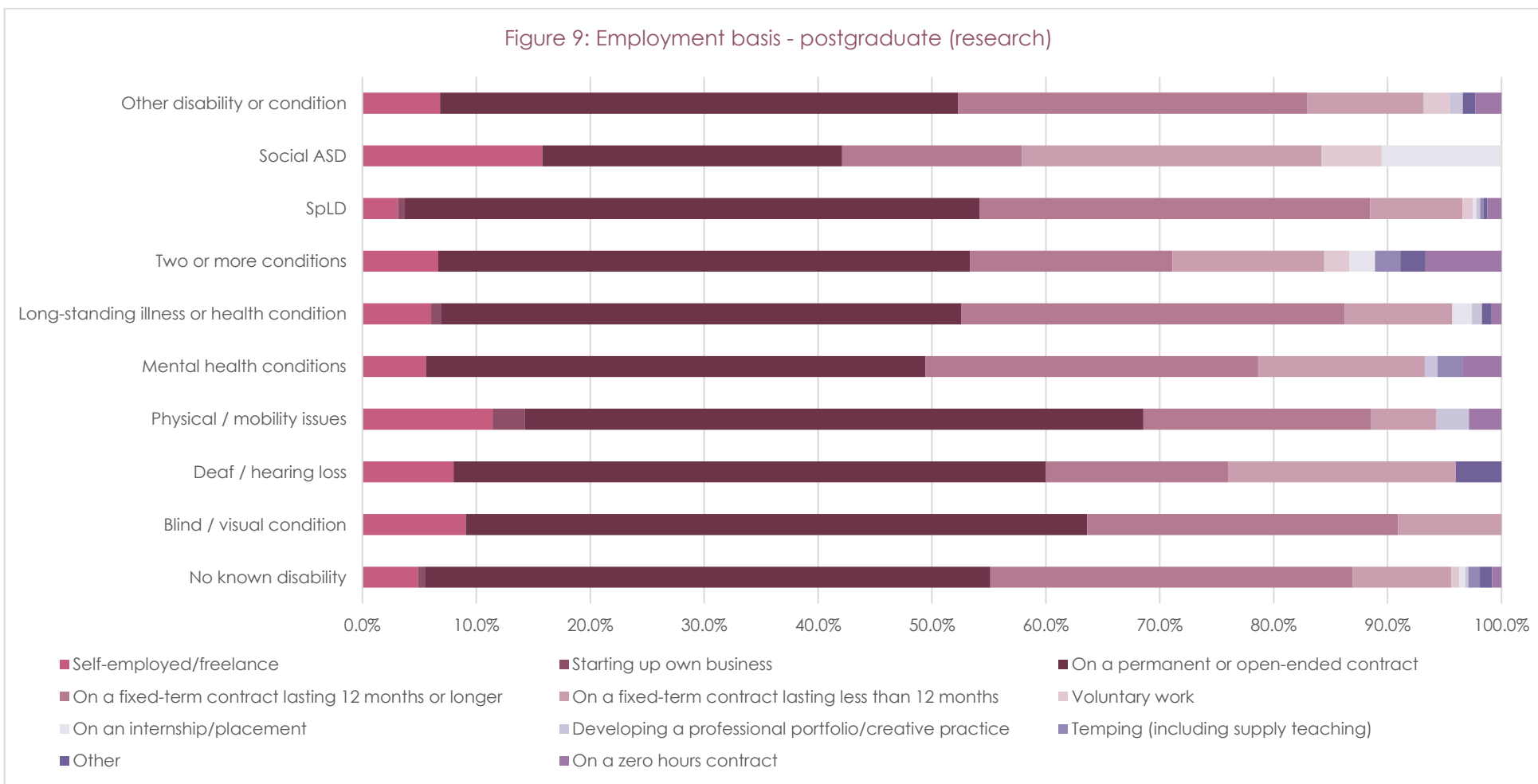
5.3 Postgraduate (research)

The employment basis figures for postgraduate (research) graduates can be found in Figure 9 (page 27). As with previous qualification levels, graduates with a disability were generally more likely to be self-employed or starting their own business (with the exception of those disclosing SpLD or mental health conditions). Graduates with a social/ASD condition had the highest proportions of self-employment (15.8%), followed by those with physical/mobility issues (11.4%)*.

Unlike at other qualification levels, non-disabled postgraduate (research) graduates were less likely to be in permanent employment than some disability groups (those disclosing a blind/visual condition (54.5%), those with physical/mobility issues (54.3%), those disclosing as deaf/hearing loss (52.0%) and those with an SpLD (50.5%) had greater proportions in permanent employment than non-disabled graduates (49.6%)*. However, graduates with a social/ASD condition were significantly less likely to be in permanent employment (26.3%)*. This group also had the highest proportions employed in voluntary work (5.3%), which concurs with the findings from the previous year's study (AGCAS, 2017).

**Please note that the total number of respondents to this question at postgraduate (research) level in the following disability groups was less than 100: blind/visual condition, deaf/hearing loss, physical/mobility issues, mental health conditions, two or more conditions, a social/ASD condition and other disability or condition.*

Figure 9: Employment basis - postgraduate (research)



6. Commencement of current employment

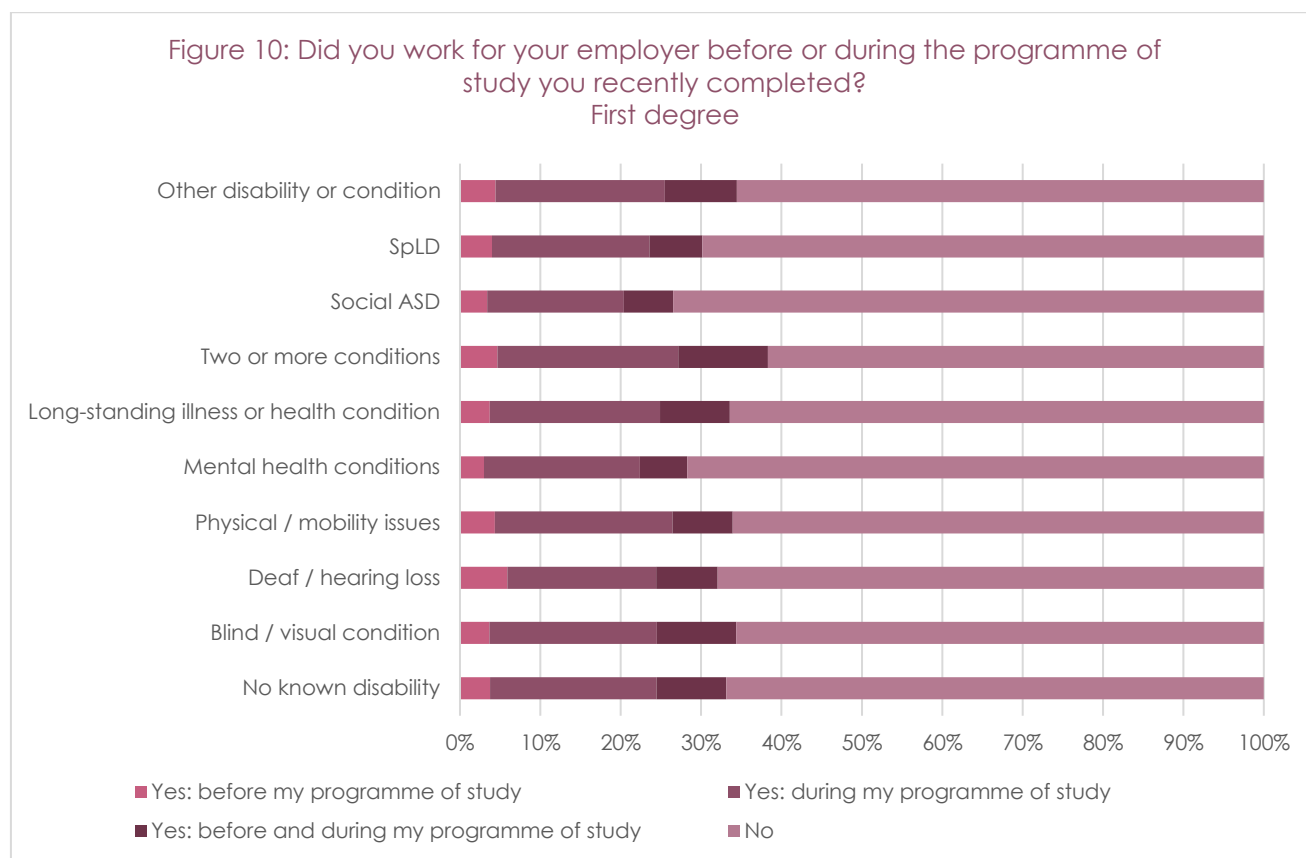
This section describes when the respondents to the survey first worked for their current employer: before, during, or after the study they had recently completed.

Key findings

- There was an increase in likelihood for graduates to have obtained their employment before or during their studies at postgraduate (taught) level than at first degree level; however, this pattern did not continue with increasing qualification level to postgraduate (research) level.
- At first degree and postgraduate (taught) levels, graduates with a social/ASD condition were the least likely to have obtained their current employment before or during their studies. At postgraduate (research) level, those disclosing mental health conditions were least likely to have started their work before or during the time they were a student.

6.1 First degree

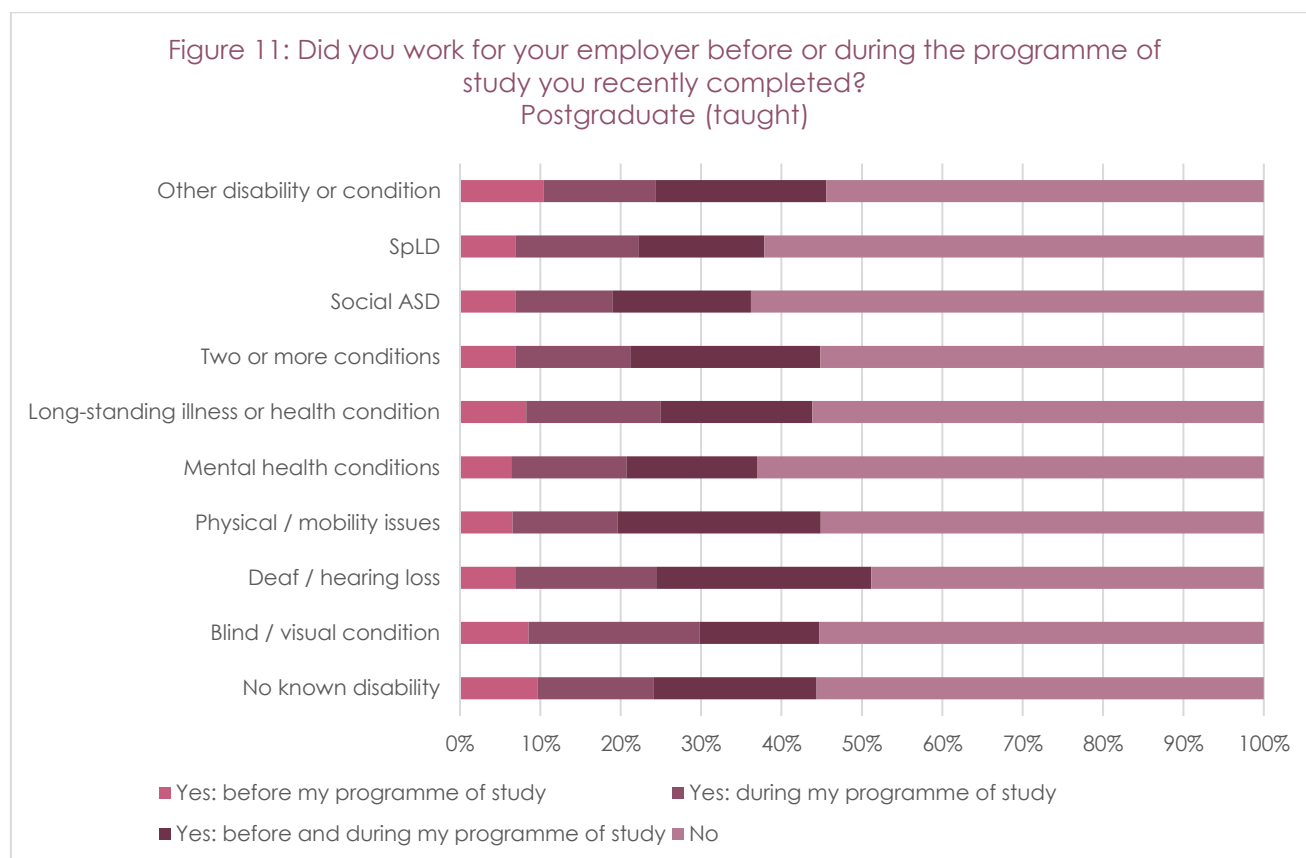
Figure 10 (page 29) shows the figures for when first degree graduates commenced their employment. As can be seen, graduates from some disability groups were more likely to have worked for an employer before or during their studies than non-disabled graduates (these include those disclosing two or more conditions (38.3%) and blind/visual condition graduates (34.4%), compared with 33.1% of non-disabled graduates). The disability group least likely to have obtained employment before or during their studies were those with a social/ASD condition (73.5% found their current employment after their most recent studies), followed by those with mental health conditions (71.7%).



6.2 Postgraduate (taught)

The results for postgraduate (taught) graduates can be seen in Figure 11 (page 30). These show that for all groups, graduates at this qualification level were more likely to have obtained employment before or during their studies than at first degree level. Graduates from the deaf/ hearing loss group were most likely to have obtained employment before or during their studies (51.2%), which was notably higher than other graduate groups, including those with no known disability (44.4%)*. As with first degree graduates, the disability group least likely to have obtained employment before or during their studies were those disclosing a social/ASD condition (63.8% found their employment after their studies)*.

**Please note that the total number of respondents to this question at postgraduate (taught) level in the following disability groups was less than 100: blind/visual condition, deaf/hearing loss and social/ASD condition.*

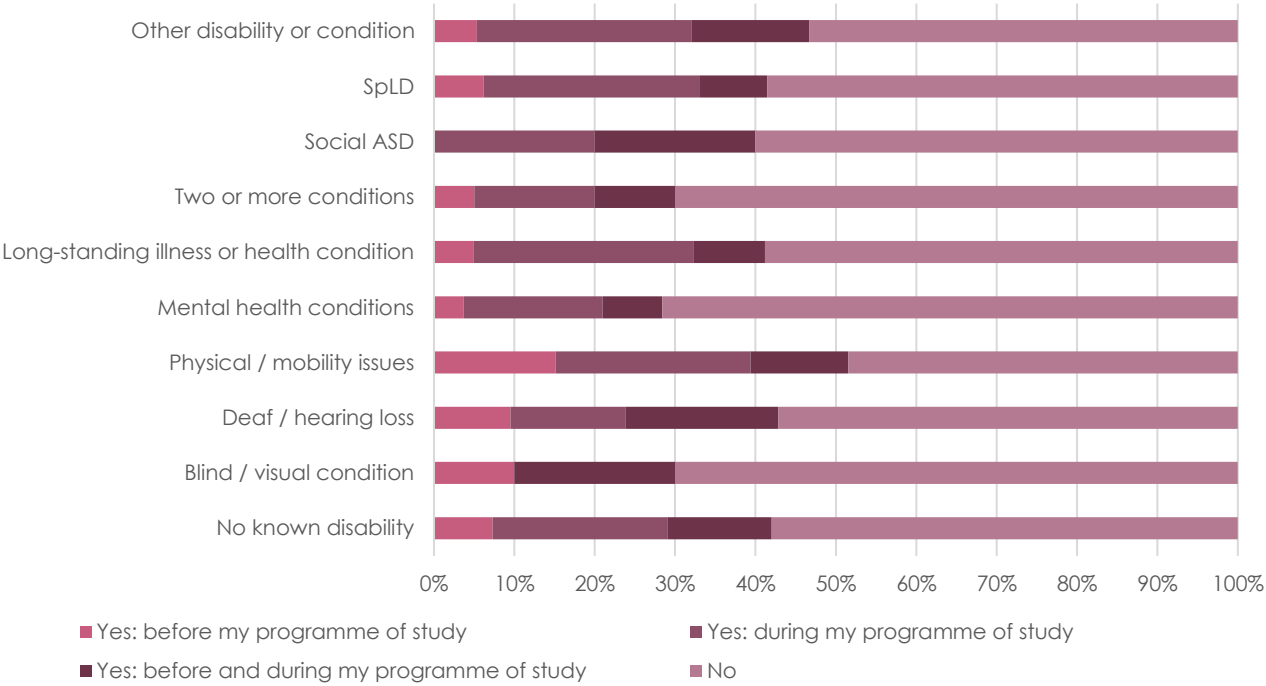


6.3 Postgraduate (research)

Figure 12 (page 31) shows the results for postgraduate (research) students. When compared to postgraduate (taught) graduates, there is no clear pattern: for some groups, there is an increase in likelihood to have obtained employment before or during their studies with increasing qualification level, but for other groups, there is a decrease in likelihood. The disability group most likely to have obtained work with their current employer before or during their studies were those with physical/mobility issues (51.5%); the least likely were those with mental health conditions (28.4%)*.

**Please note that the total number of respondents to this question at postgraduate (research) level in the following disability groups was less than 100: blind/visual condition, deaf/hearing loss, physical/mobility issues, mental health conditions, two or more conditions, a social/ASD condition and other disability or condition.*

Figure 12: Did you work for your employer before or during the programme of study you recently completed?
Postgraduate (research)



7. Conclusions

This report has described the findings of an investigation into the destinations of disabled students graduating in 2016 in the UK. The figures included in this report show that there has been an increase in the proportion of disabled graduates at all qualification levels, following the trend of the past few years. This increase is in line with the fact that the proportion of disabled students entering higher education in England has increased by 56% between the academic years of 2010/11 and 2015/16 (HEFCE, 2017). The proportion of graduates disclosing a disability decreased with increasing qualification level, concurring with the trend in former *What Happens Next?* studies (AGCAS 2016, 2017). Another recurring theme is that of the difference in proportions of disabled and non-disabled graduates progressing to full-time employment subsequent to completing their studies (with the former group showing lower levels). This difference has existed for a number of years; poorer progression rates experienced by disabled graduates are also noted by Weedon (2017) and Riddell *et al* (2005).

As with the 2017 *What Happens Next?* report (AGCAS 2017), total employment levels for disabled graduates increased with increasing qualification level. For the first time in the AGCAS investigations of destinations of disabled graduates, an examination of when this employment commenced has been included. This revealed that trends are generally (with just one or two exceptions) related to qualification level rather than disability, with postgraduate (taught) graduates found to be more likely to have obtained their employment before or during their studies than either first degree or postgraduate (research) graduates. One reason for this could be that a number of employed individuals are released from, or even sponsored by, their employer to study for a one-year Masters programme to assist in progressing in their chosen career. This is less likely to occur with postgraduate research programmes, which tend to be longer in duration.

This study also explored the basis on which the graduates were employed. One interesting finding, which concurs with the figures from the previous year's study (AGCAS 2017), is that disabled graduates are generally more likely to be self-employed or in the process of starting their own business than non-disabled graduates, at all qualification levels. This finding is concurrent with UK statistics as a whole, where the proportion of individuals with disabilities in self-employment (16%) is higher than the proportion of disabled individuals who are in other forms of employment (13%) (Lockey, 2018). A study by the Resolution Foundation suggests that since 2014, the number of disabled individuals in self-employment has grown at a faster rate than non-disabled individuals and during this period is responsible for nearly a quarter (24%) of the net growth in self-employment (Resolution Foundation, 2018). This research also found that disabled self-employed people earned on average 23% less than the non-disabled self-employed and 42% less than disabled people

employed by an organisation; these statistics are a cause for concern and, as recommended by Lockey (2018), more data should be collected on this important group to ensure that an increased vulnerability towards exploitation is avoided.

It was found that at two qualification levels (first degree and postgraduate (taught)), there was a notable difference between the proportions of disabled and non-disabled graduates entering permanent employment (with non-disabled graduates more likely to be employed on a permanent basis). This trend, however, is not found at postgraduate (research) level. This could be due to the heightened specialist knowledge gained through studying a PhD (or similar qualification), which perhaps contributes to a 'closing of the gap' between disabled and non-disabled graduates at this level. However, further research would need to be carried out in this area to be certain about the causal factors.

One key theme which has emerged in this study is the disadvantage experienced by graduates with a social/ASD condition. Graduates disclosing this disability are the least likely to have found full time employment and the most likely to be unemployed (in fact, in this study it was found that unemployment proportions increased with increasing qualification level). In addition, those with a social/ASD condition had the highest proportions employed on a voluntary basis and were the least likely to have secured a permanent employment contract. These findings concur with other research in this area (Hendricks, 2010, Van Hees *et al*, 2015), in addition to the results of previous *What Happens Next?* studies (AGCAS 2016, AGCAS 2017). Chen *et al* (2015) note that employment involves a social dynamic which is complex, constantly changing and requires flexible coping strategies and add that these features increase the challenges for individuals with an ASD, "*who are characterised as experiencing lifelong difficulties in social interactions*". Lack of work has been demonstrated to result in adverse effects on the mental health and life prospects of people with an ASD (Howlin and Moss, 2012); it is clear that something should be done to provide much-needed support to this group of graduates, to help them succeed after they leave university.

This study has found that there are notable differences in the outcomes of disabled and non-disabled graduates; this echoes the findings of previous *What Happens Next?* studies (AGCAS 2016, 2017) and that of the government commissioned Equalities Review in 2007, which states that "*disabled people as a group have suffered from persistent employment disadvantage*". As noted by Emerson *et al* (2009), this disadvantage related to employment encountered by disabled individuals is linked to social mobility. This represents an issue that should be tackled not only for moral purposes, but also for economical reasons: disabled graduates represent a talented group who have the potential to contribute to the UK economy and so be of benefit to all society.

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