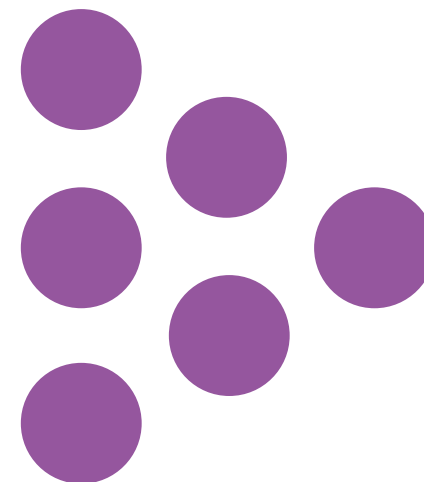

Priorities for initial teacher training in a new policy context

Jack Worth
Education Workforce Lead, NFER

ITET Network Conference, June 2026

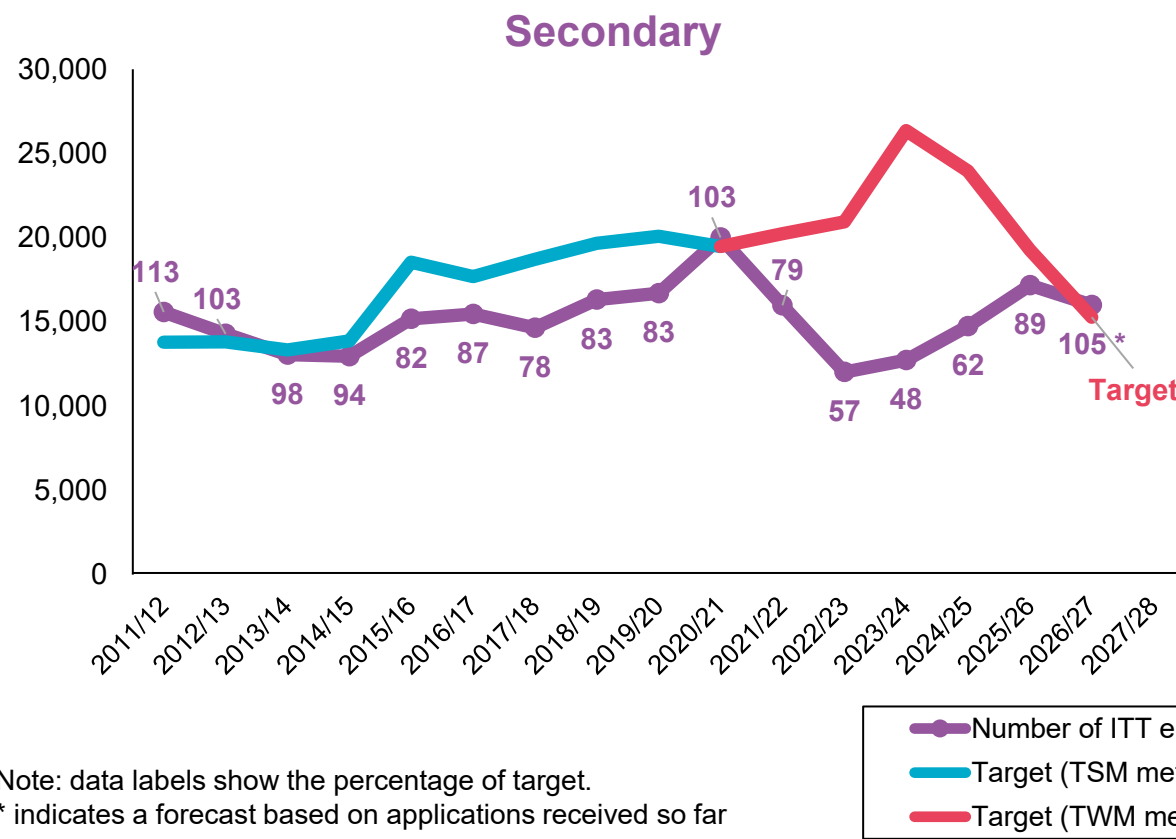


Overview

-
- A new phase of the teacher supply challenge and its policy implications
 - Keeping up momentum with addressing shortages
 - How best to manage supply and secure ‘quality’?
 - New policy priorities and the workforce
 - White Paper provides new policy impetus to improving ethnic diversity

Secondary recruitment may exceed overall target this year

Postgraduate ITT recruitment and target numbers in England



Why is the target much lower?

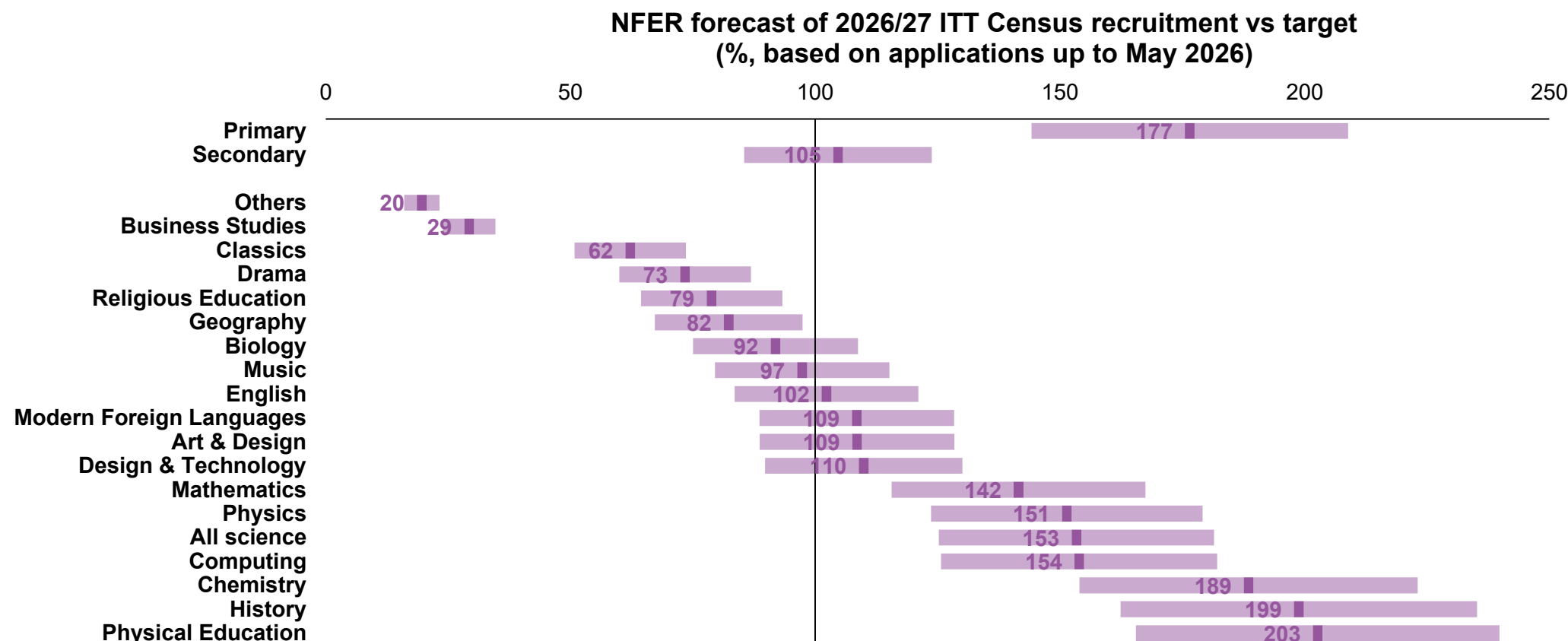
- Improved retention
- Plateauing pupil numbers
- Double-whammy of better recruitment



Why has recruitment been improving?

- Bursaries increasing/ expanding
- Wider labour market slowing down

Many shortage subjects are set to recruit above target

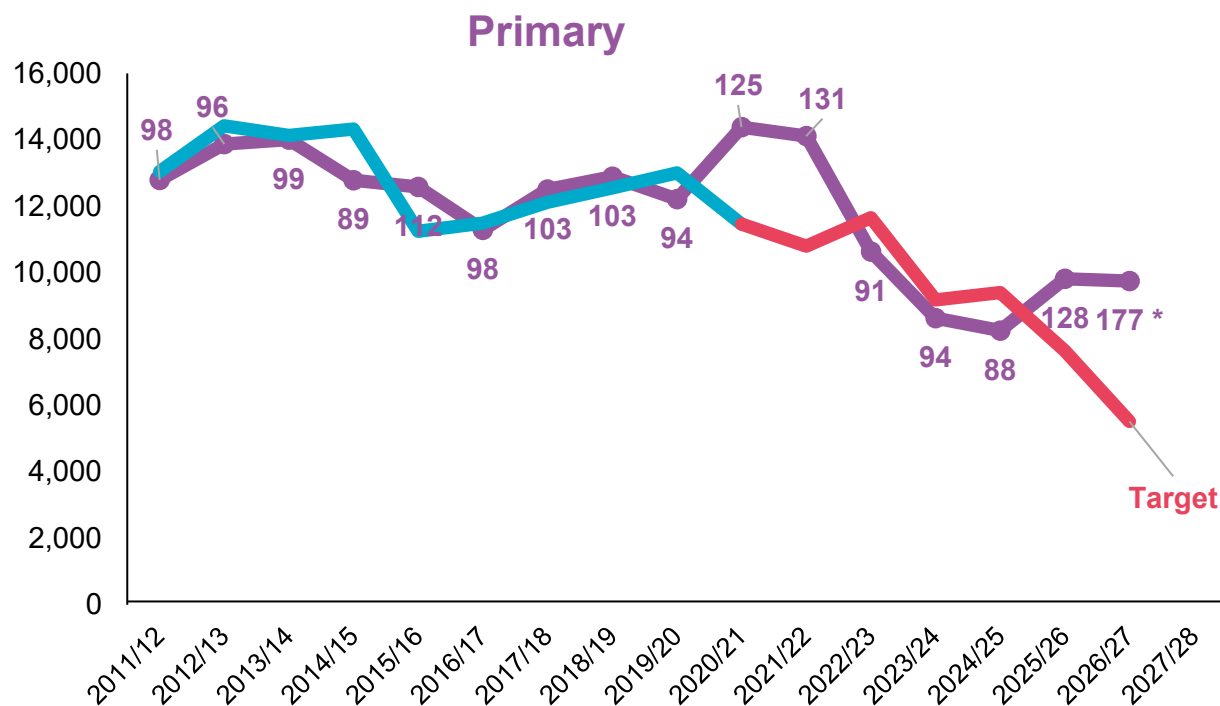


5 out of 17 secondary subjects predicted to be below target (6 above; 6 somewhat uncertain).

Note: forecasts represent the central estimate, with the shaded bands showing the predictions'

Primary target is much lower, while recruitment has stabilised

Postgraduate ITT recruitment and target numbers in England



Why is the target much lower?

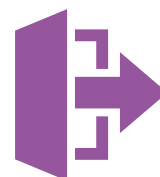
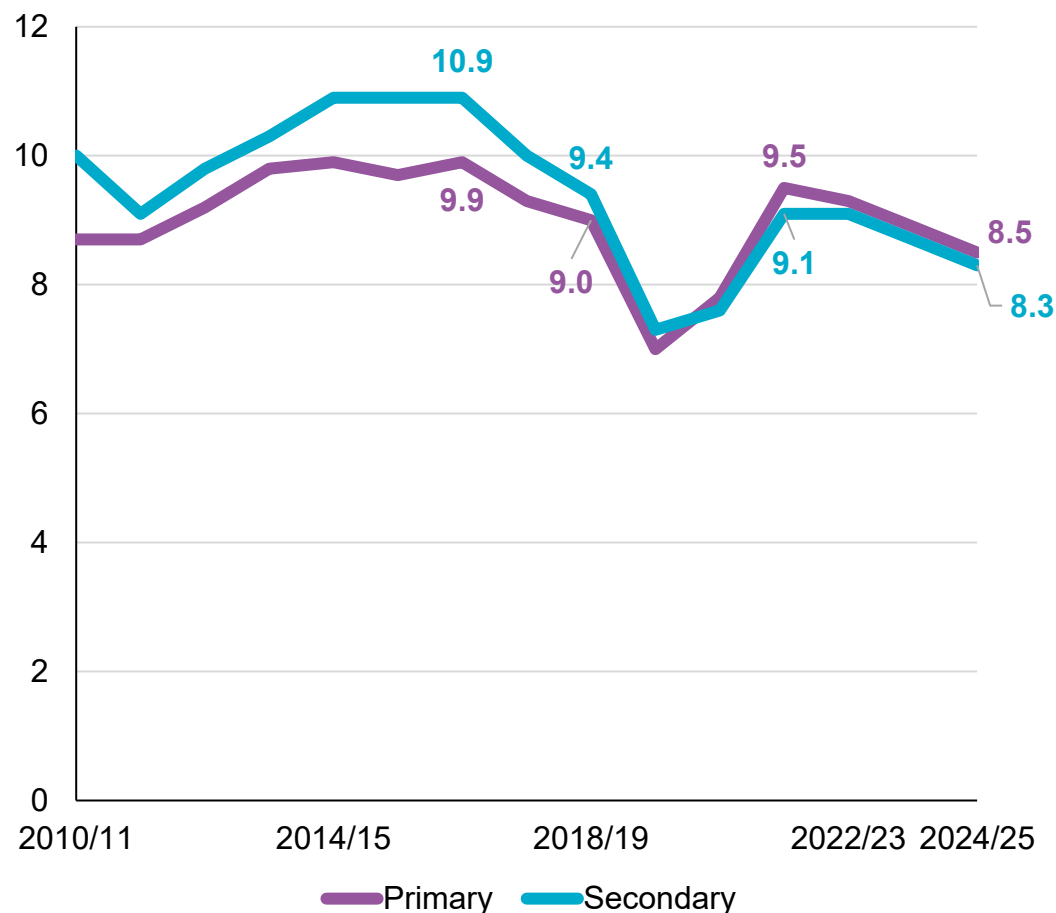
- Improved retention
- Rapidly falling pupil numbers

Note: data labels show the percentage of target.

* indicates a forecast based on applications received so far

- Number of ITT enrolments
- Target (TSM methodology)
- Target (TWM methodology)

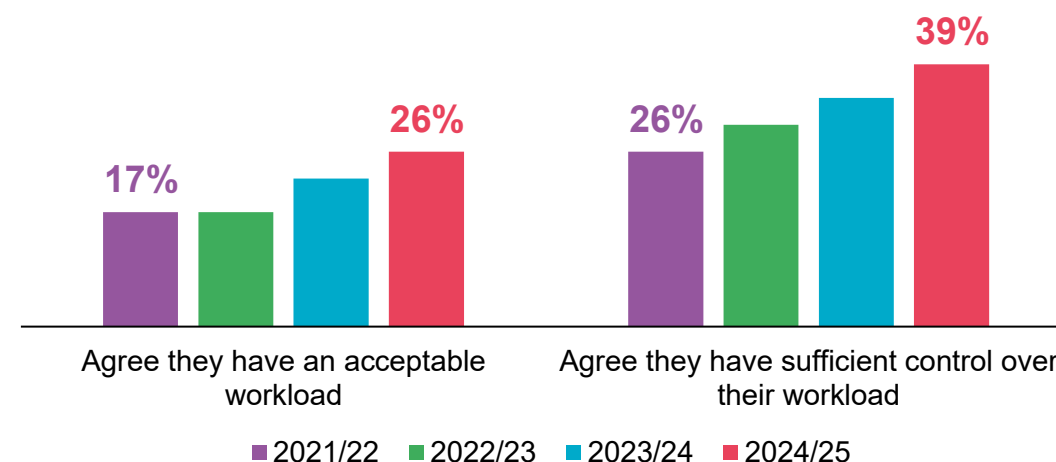
Teacher retention has improved



Why might retention be improving?

- Improved perceptions of workload (Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders)
- Pay competitiveness improving (slightly)
- Wider labour market slowing down
- Relative policy stability

The proportion of teachers who:



What do these trends mean for policy?

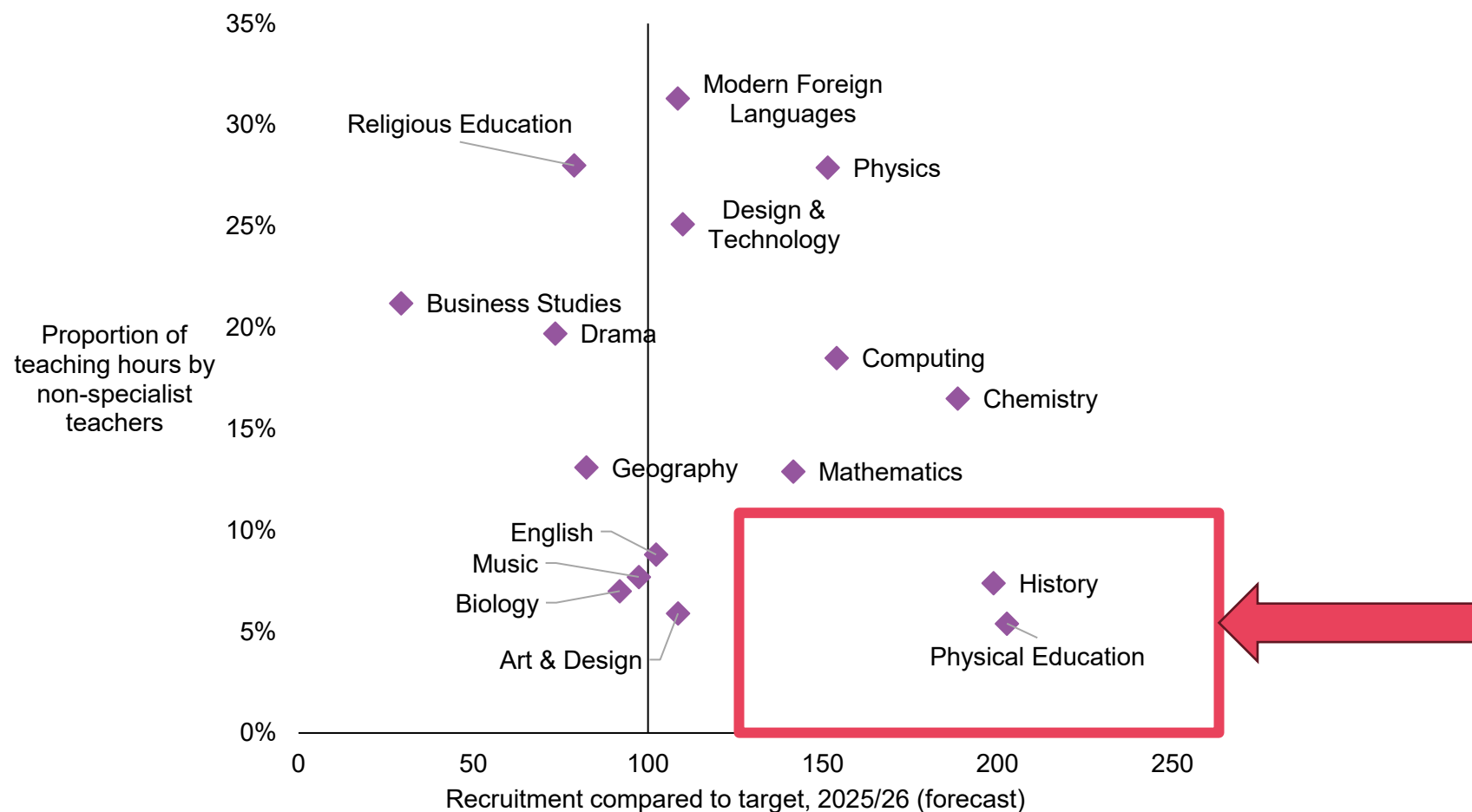
Reduce expenditure on teacher supply measures

- Bursary spend reduced by ~£75m for 2026/27
- Closed Chemistry SKE and international bursary eligibility (physics and MFL)

Is there a risk of teacher over-recruitment that demands further policy intervention?

- Original purpose of supply model was to cap/ allocate training places
- Although key limitations of (current) modelling assumptions:
 - estimates the bare minimum to replenish status quo
 - takes no account of additional requirements due to e.g. curriculum changes

Less justification for place capping in secondary, given lack of specialists



Is there a risk of teacher over-recruitment that demands further policy intervention?

- **Secondary – probably premature at the moment**
 - financial levers left to adjust
 - back-filling lack of subject specialists from under-recruitment
 - **Primary – highest risk**
 - historically healthy teacher supply
 - few financial levers left to pull
 - pupil numbers expected to continue falling, keeping the need for new teachers low
- **How best to manage supply in a way that encourages high teacher ‘quality’?**
- Skills tests? National/regional caps? Provider place allocations?

Ethnic diversity of teaching

From evidence...

Tackling ethnic disparities could help 6,500 new teachers target

The NFER has suggested that discrimination may be a factor behind the 'significant ethnic disparities' in initial teacher training rejection rates

MISSION44

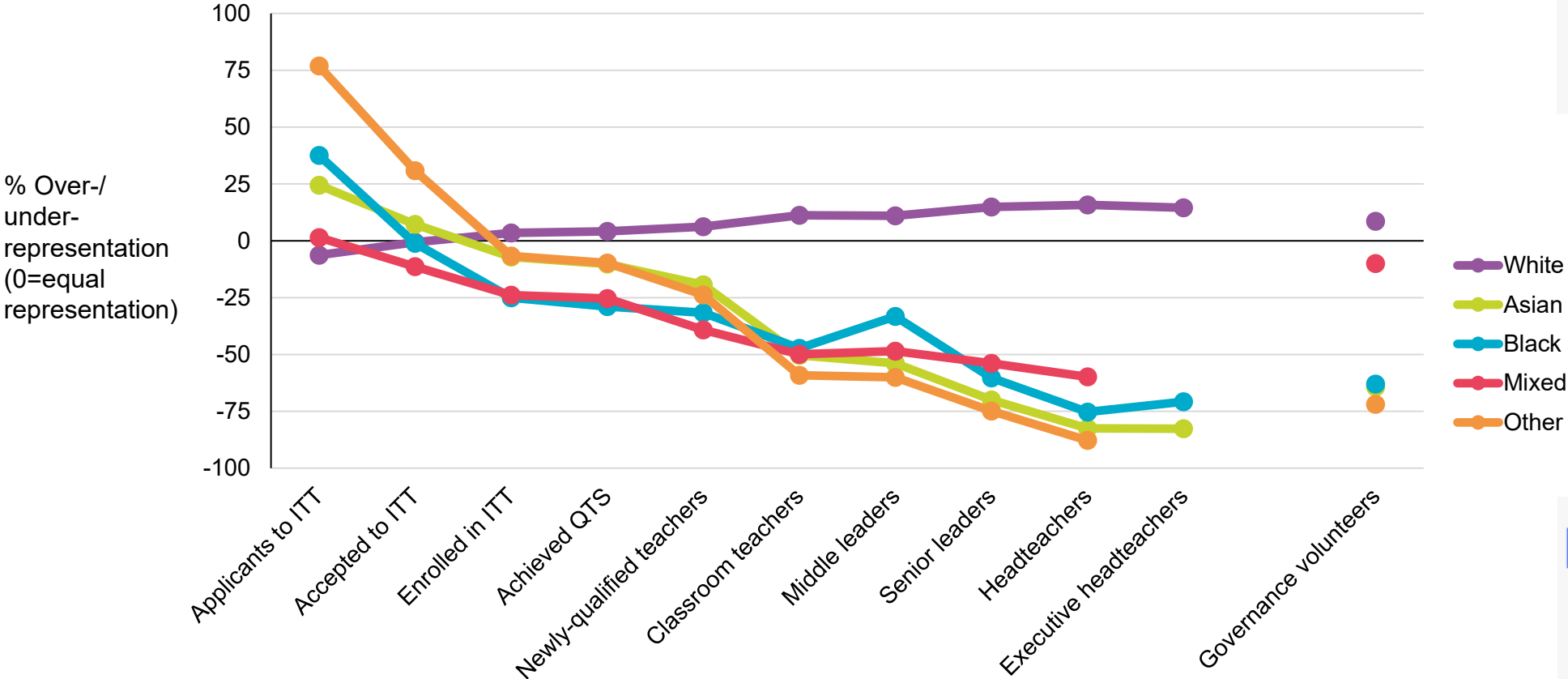
... to policy

Attract: We will optimise routes into teaching

We want to optimise routes into school and FE teaching so that a broader range of high-quality candidates are attracted to a teaching career; can find a path into the profession that suits them; and receive evidence-backed training and mentoring to set them up for success in the classroom. We will not only improve teacher supply but diversify it, so that the workforce better reflects the communities they serve. In recent years, key subjects have struggled to recruit the teachers they need, and too many recruits have left in the early years of their career, a trend that is particularly worse for applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds.

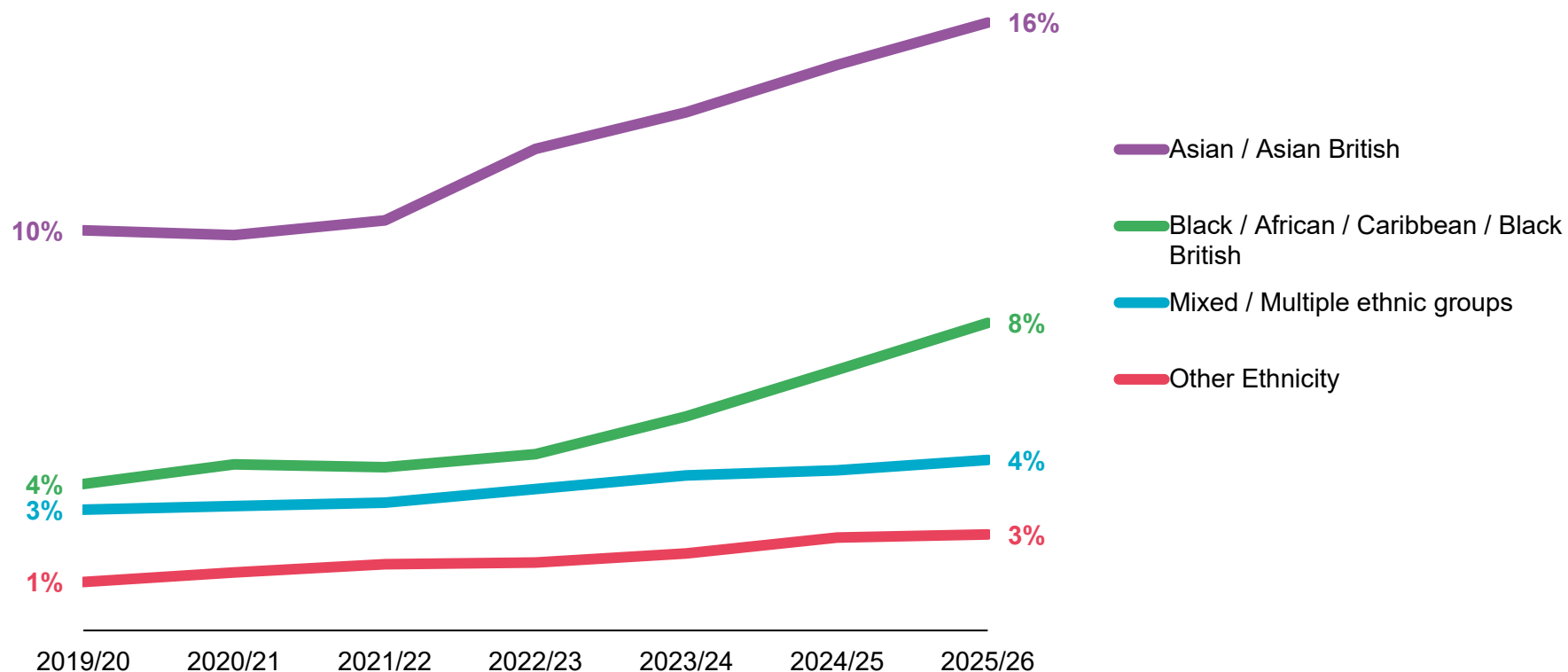
People from ethnic minority backgrounds are under-represented in teaching

Percentage of under-/over-representation of teachers compared to age-adjusted population (%)
in 2020/21

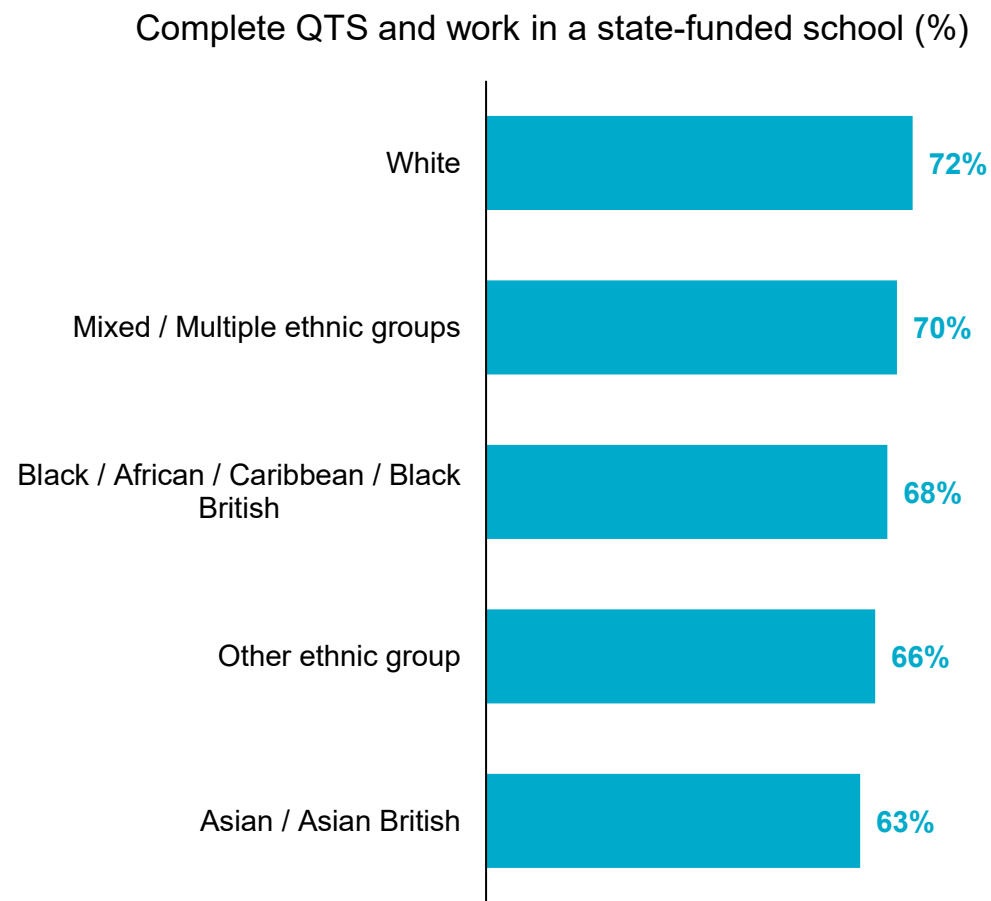
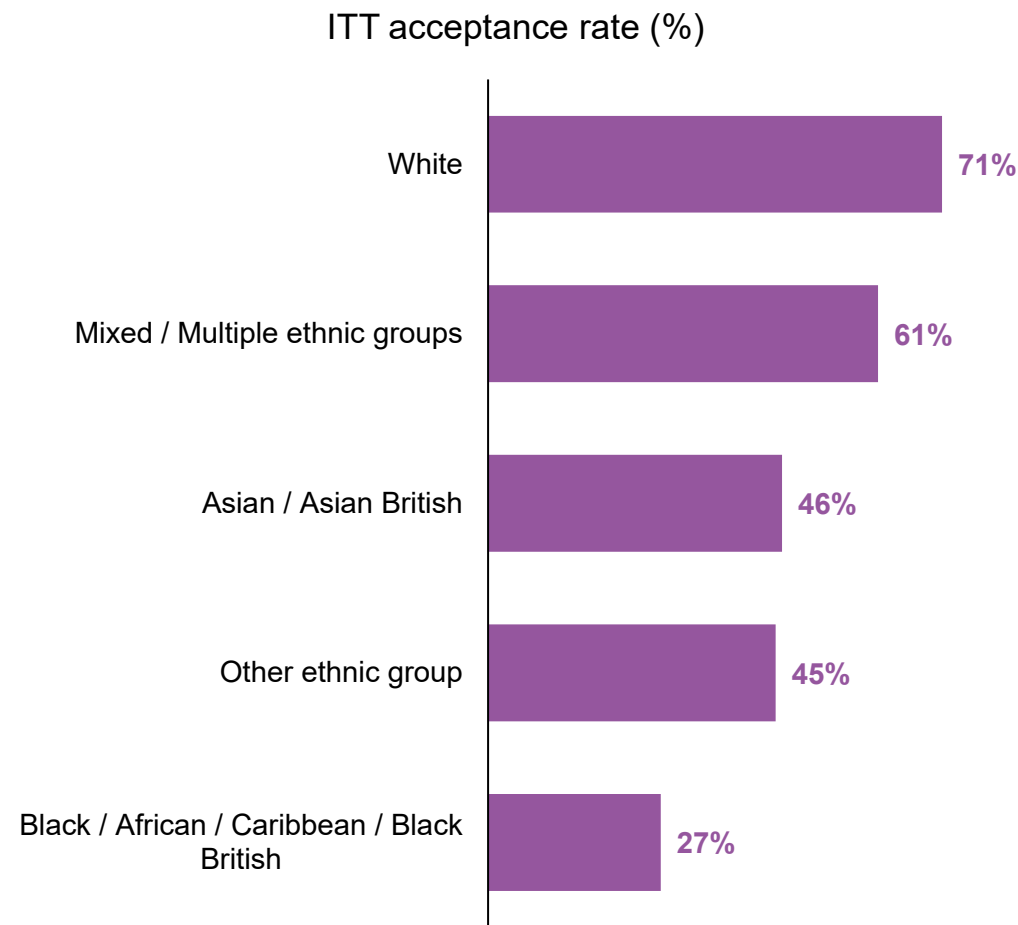


Progress has been made on attraction of ethnically diverse candidates

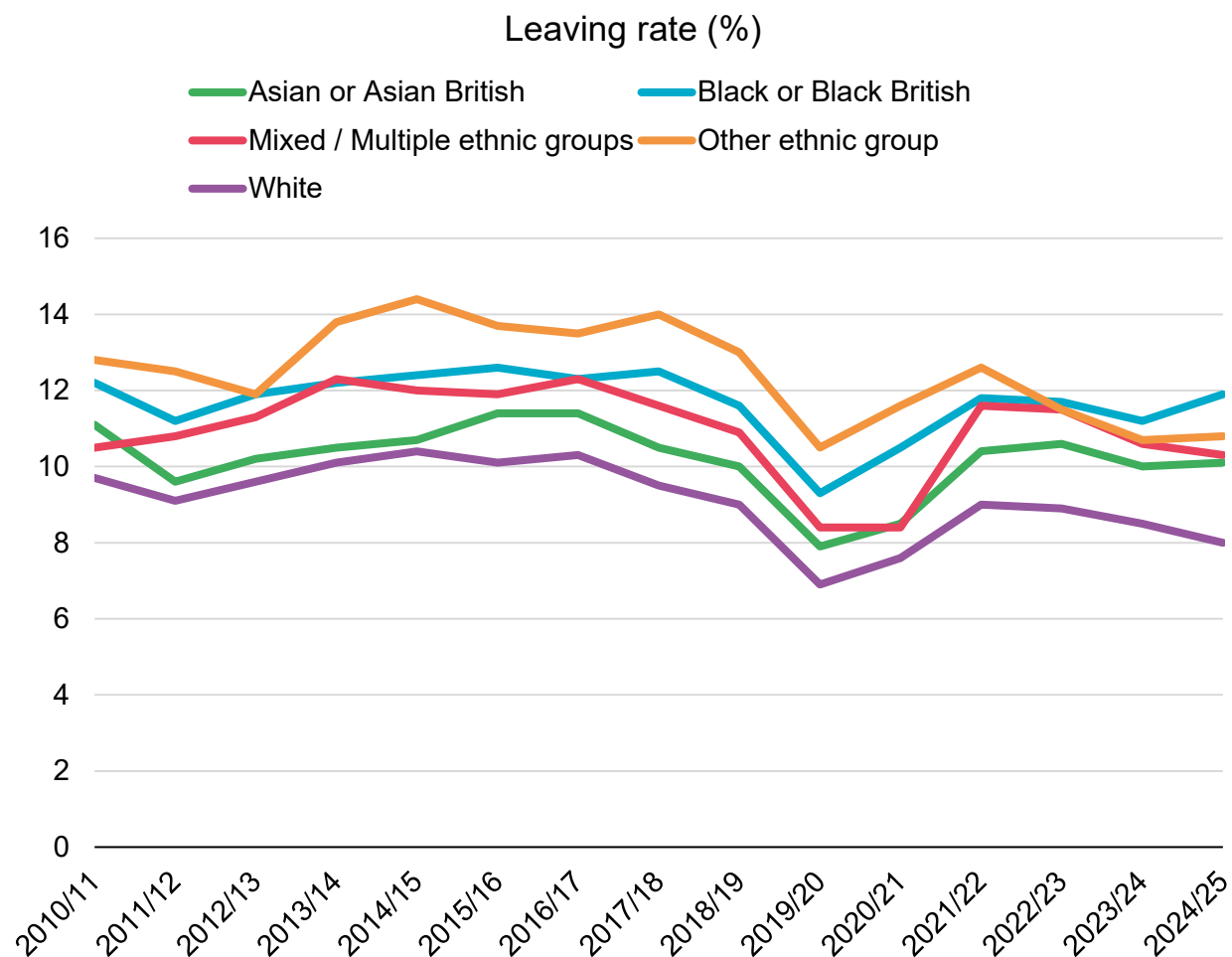
Proportion of postgraduate trainees, by ethnic background



Significant ethnic disparities remain throughout the ITT system



...and disparities remain in the teacher career pipeline



New research project



Supported by the Nuffield Foundation

1. Update our analysis of representativeness and progression disparities
2. Expand analysis to also cover FE and support staff workforces
3. Enhance our analysis of key intervention points through the teacher career pipeline
4. Analyse ethnicity pay gaps
5. Evaluate impact of 'Increasing Diversity in ITT' project (Chartered College of Teaching; Chiltern Learning Trust; Being Luminary) to develop evidence base of 'what works' in this space

Part of #1 involves a new data collection on the ethnic composition of ITT provider admissions staff

- Aim to fill an important evidence gap
- Grateful for any support and/or constructive challenge you can give us with that

Conclusions

-
- **Economic, demographic and policy trends mean teacher supply challenges are easing**
 - **Underlying workforce fragility means any policy easing should be cautious**
 - **But important to shape how a future system that is more ‘managed’ best ensures:**
 - High quality teachers are recruited and trained
 - Opportunities to train as a teacher are equitable and open to people of all backgrounds

Thank you! Questions?



**<<< Read more of NFER's
Teacher workforce research**