

# Barriers & Bottlenecks: Understanding Youth Transitions in the Post-Compulsory Phase of School

Kathryn S. Isdale, Vijay Reddy & Lolita Winnaar



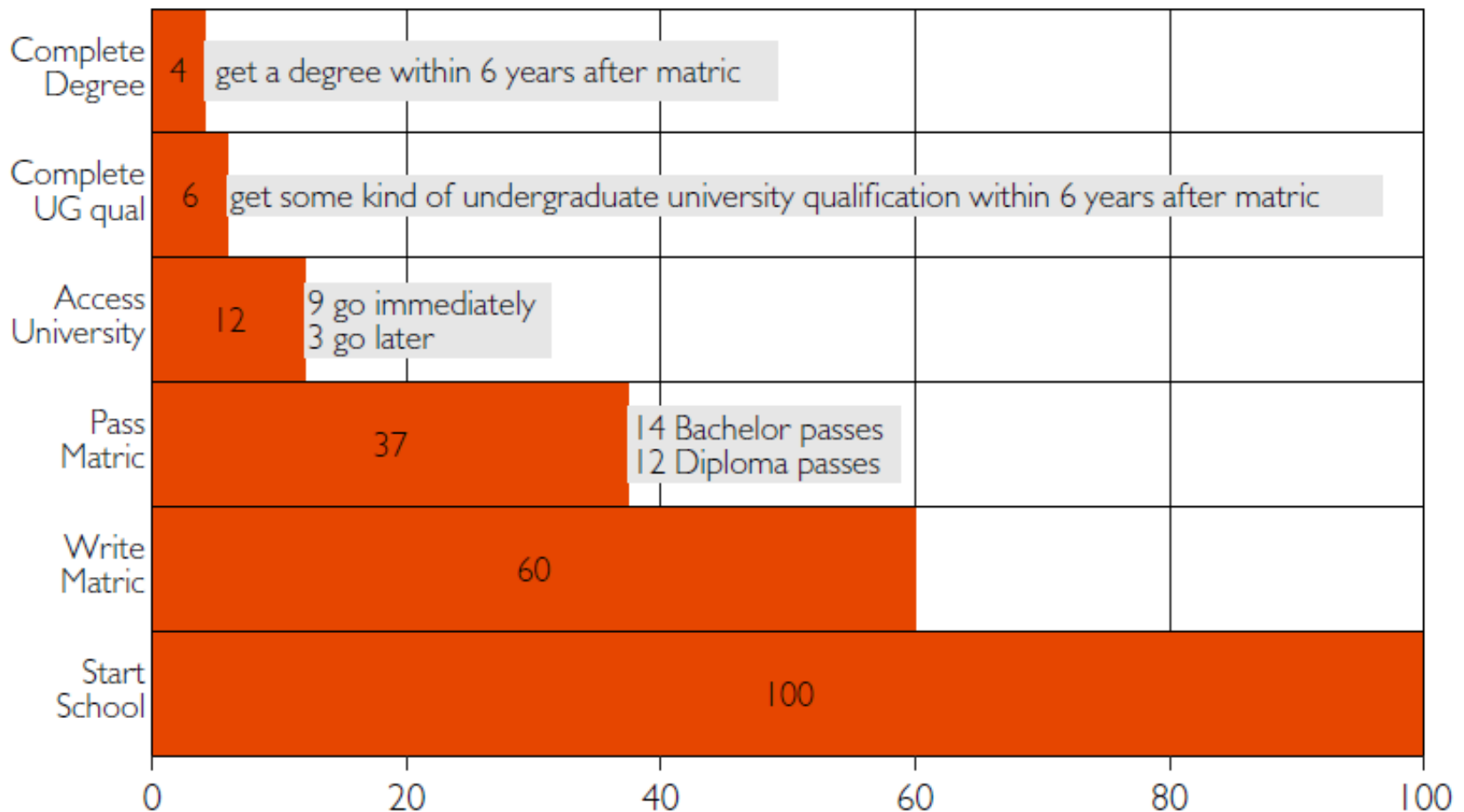
# Research Background

- Throughput rate of learners to Grade 12 is of concern
  - Increasingly staggered progression as learners move through school
- High and growing level of unemployment amongst youth population
  - 60% of unemployed South Africans are without a Grade 12 certificate (LMIP, 2016)
  - Majority of those unemployed come from the youth group
- Need to understand transitions through school to matric, and into Higher Education

# The Qualifications Hierarchy:

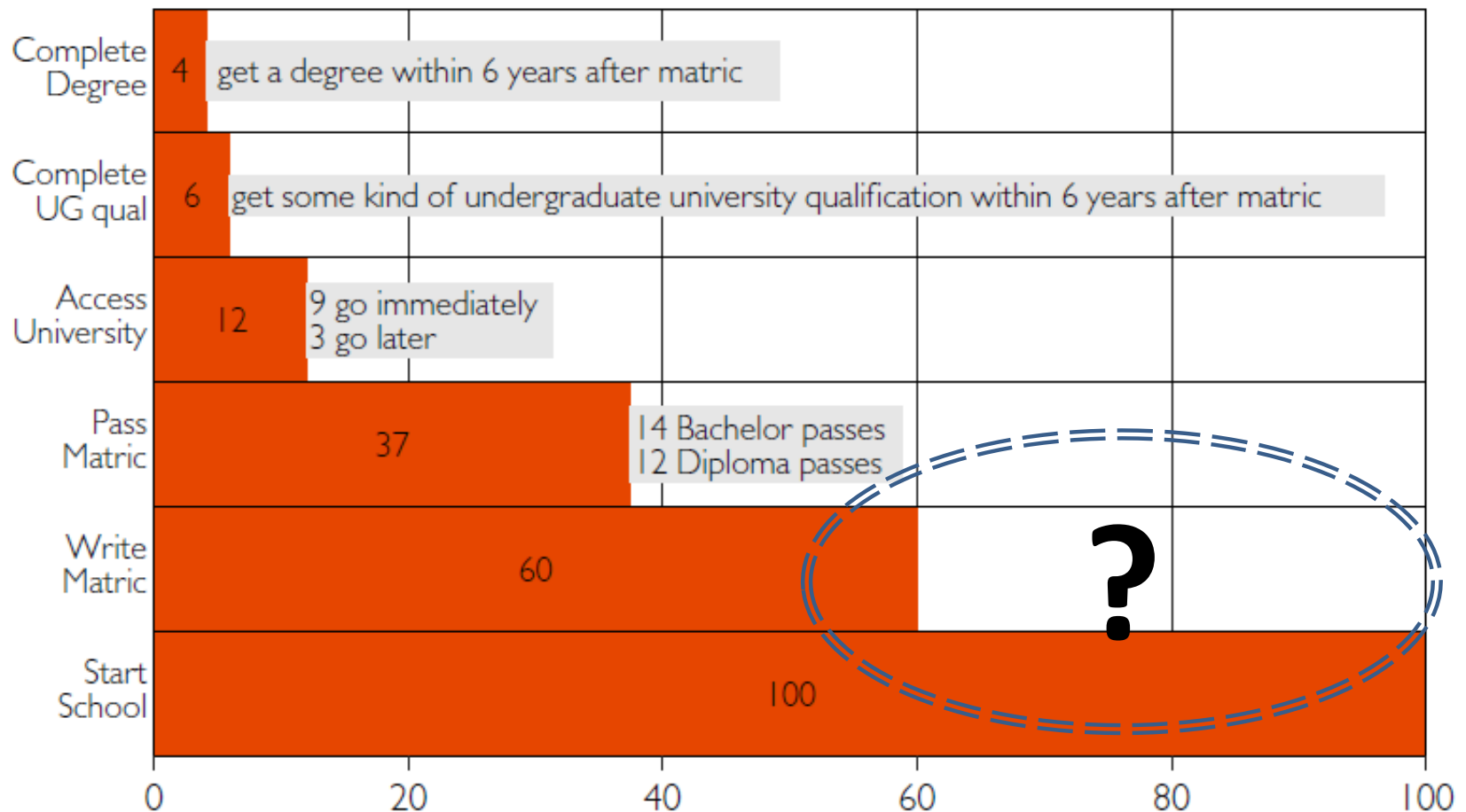
## How many reach the top of the pyramid?

- Van Broekhuizen, van der Berg & Hofmeyr (2016)



# The Qualifications Hierarchy: How many reach the top of the pyramid?

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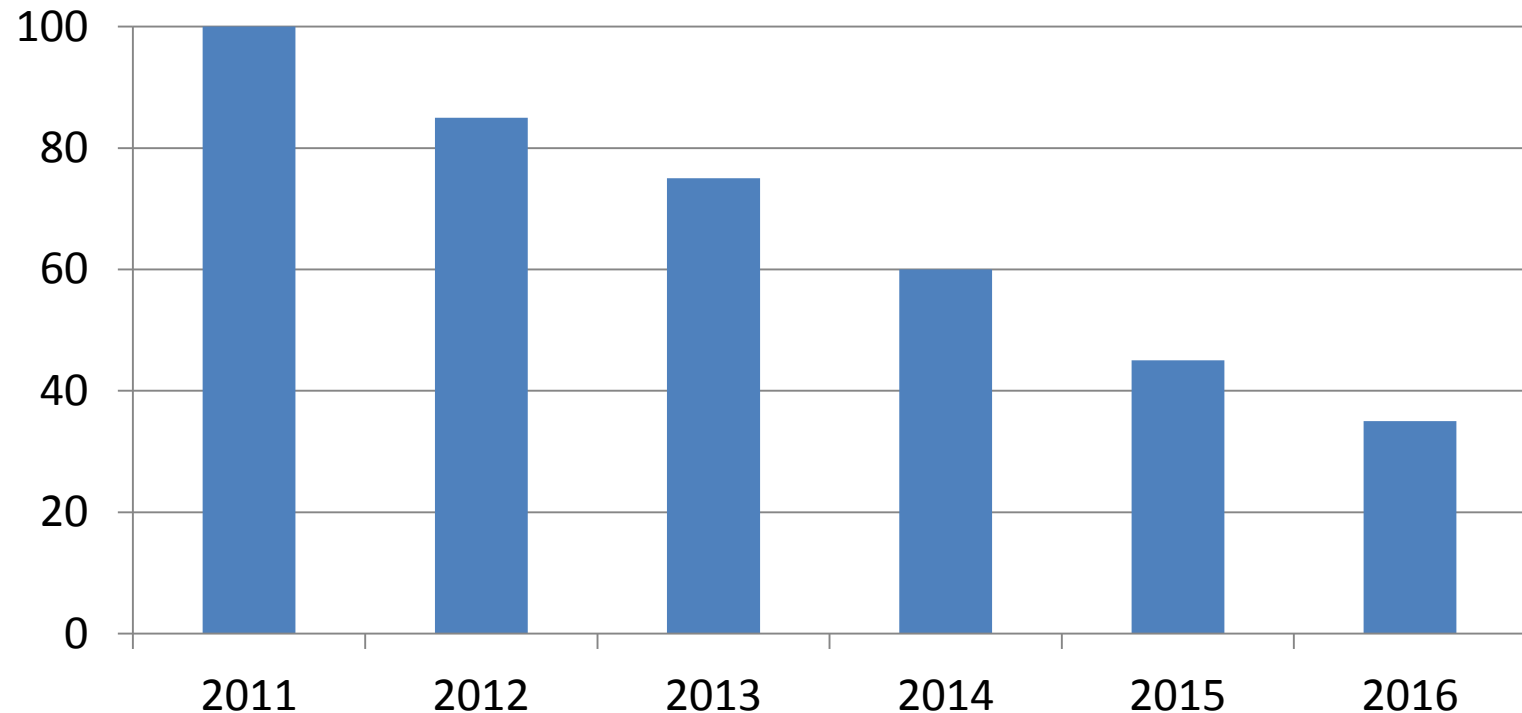


# Barriers & Bottlenecks

- So why are so few people successfully moving through the school system?
- Although enrolment in Grade 1 is almost universal...
- Grade repetition is high:
  - Successful progression rates hover between 65% & 80% until Grade 9, after which they drop considerably
- A high proportion of learners exit the school system prematurely

# Barriers & Bottlenecks

- Cross-sectional data can only give a snapshot of what is happening at any one point



# Barriers & Bottlenecks

- Cross-sectional data can only give a snapshot of what is happening at any one point
- We need to know what happens as learners move, or get stuck, in the system:
  - Who is progressing and who isn't?
  - What are the barriers?
  - Where are the bottlenecks?
  - Where are the biggest leaks in the pipeline?
  - Are they the same for everyone?

# So what did we do?

- The report uses SAYPS to examine the throughput of the educational system for a cohort of current South African youth
  - Used the TIMSS study as a baseline
  - The International Mathematics and Science Study
    - International assessment across more than 60 countries worldwide
    - Learners in Grade 8 or 9: roughly aged 15 years



# South African Youth Panel Study (SAYPS)

A five year, longitudinal panel study of Grade 9 learners in South Africa starting in 2011

**2011: Wave 1**

## **TIMSS 2011**

- Grade 9 learner assessments in maths & science
- Learner qu'naire
- Parent qu'naire
- Teacher qu'naire
- Head qu'naire

**SAYPS:  
Learner qu'naire**

*Achieved sample*

**11,898**

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At baseline, when learners were in Grade 9, their median age was 15.7 years

In the original sample, the sex split is equal: males = 50.7%

**SAYPS:  
Learner qu'naire**

*Achieved sample*

**11,898**

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2011: Wave 1

2012: Wave 2

2013: Wave 3

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SAYPS:  
Learner qu'naire

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11,898

SAYPS:  
Learner qu'naire

5,946

5,872

In 2013 , learners were asked about their current activities and retrospectively about those for 2012

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2013: Wave 3

2014: Wave 4

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# South African Youth Panel Study (SAYPS)

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2012: Wave 2

2013: Wave 3

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2015: Wave 5

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SAYPS:  
Learner qu'naire

2,224

By the wave 5 data, the sample over represents females (58.3%)

# So what did we do?

- The report uses SAYPS to examine the throughput of the educational system for a cohort of current South African youth
  - Used the TIMSS study as a baseline
  - Five years of annually collected data at the individual level, plus Year 1 data from schools, teachers, family members
  - Key information at each annual survey:
    - Main activity: School; Moved to TVET College; Working; NEET
    - Grade
  - Explore detailed transition patterns over five years
    - Including the first year possible post-matric
    - Taking into account important background data on individuals, families & schools at baseline

# Isdale et al. (2016)

## Summary of W1 to W4 transitions

Smooth	Staggered	Stuck	Stopped
<p>Neat, year-on-year grade progression through school.</p>	<p>Learners in school for all 4 waves of SAYPS, but have at least one episode of grade repetition or a move to FET college;</p> <p>Individuals who return to school in Wave 4 but are out of education (either working or NEET) for at least one wave.</p>	<p>Learners in school for all four waves of SAYPS, but stuck in grade 9 or 10 for three or more periods</p>	<p>Individuals who leave school before Wave 4 and do not return</p>
<p><b>47%</b></p>	<p><b>39%</b></p>	<p><b>7%</b></p>	<p><b>7%</b></p>

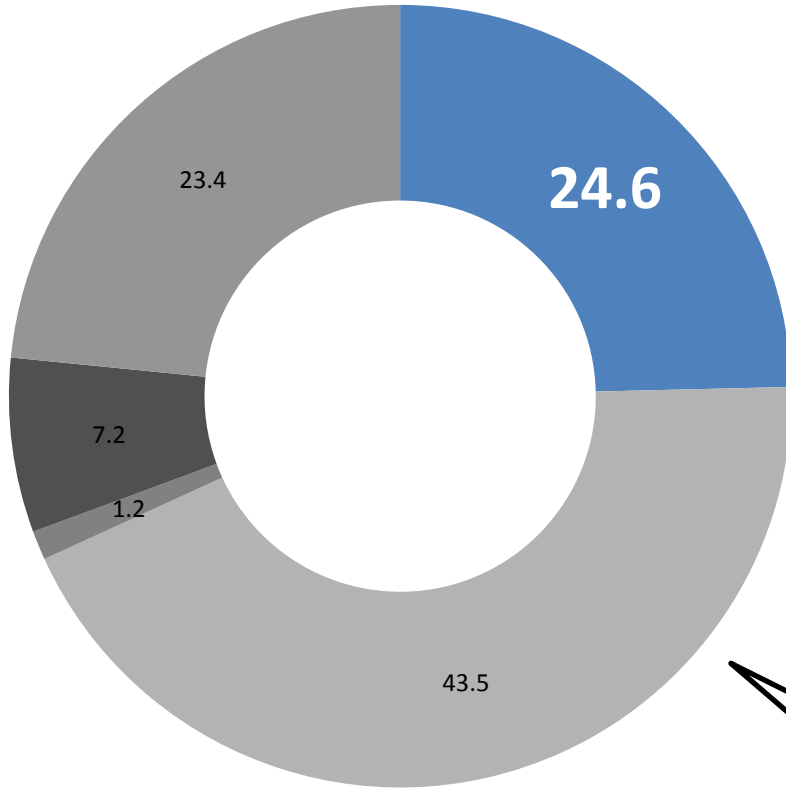
# Transitions to wave 5: One year post-matric...

	Wave 4: 2014	Wave 5: 2015
Still at school	92.3	43.5
Moved to TVET college	1.1	-
Post-school institution	-	24.6
Learnership / Apprenticeship / Traineeship	-	1.2
Working	1.0	7.2
Not studying and not working	5.6	23.4

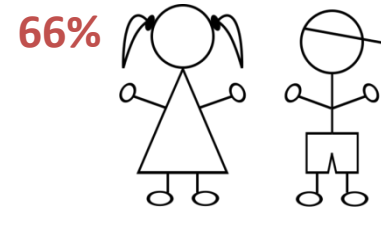
- More than one in four remain in school
- Nearly a quarter have moved into a post-school institution
- Almost a quarter are not studying or working



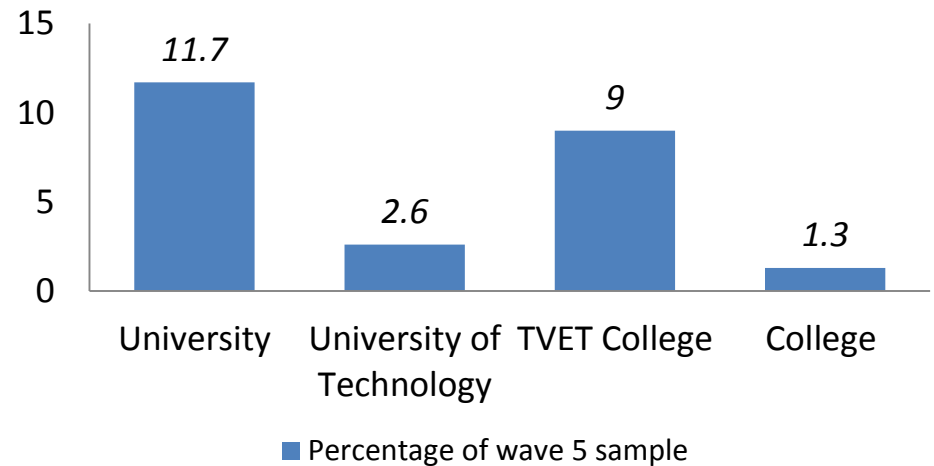
# Post-school institutions



- Post-school institution
- Still at school
- Learnership
- Working
- Not studying & not working



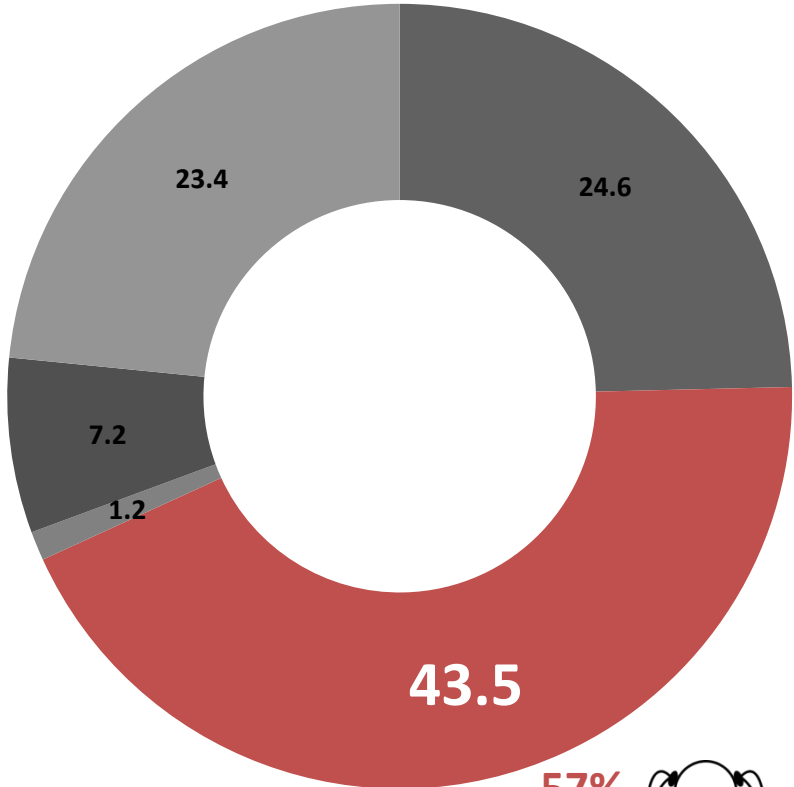
Type of post-secondary institution



91% of learners in post-school settings have successfully matriculated.

All of those who have not are in TVET colleges

# Still at school



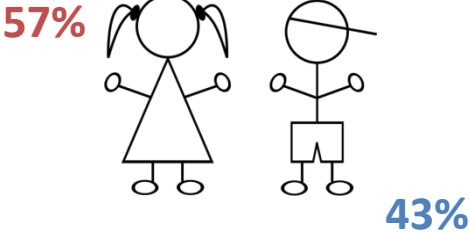
W5 grade for learners in school



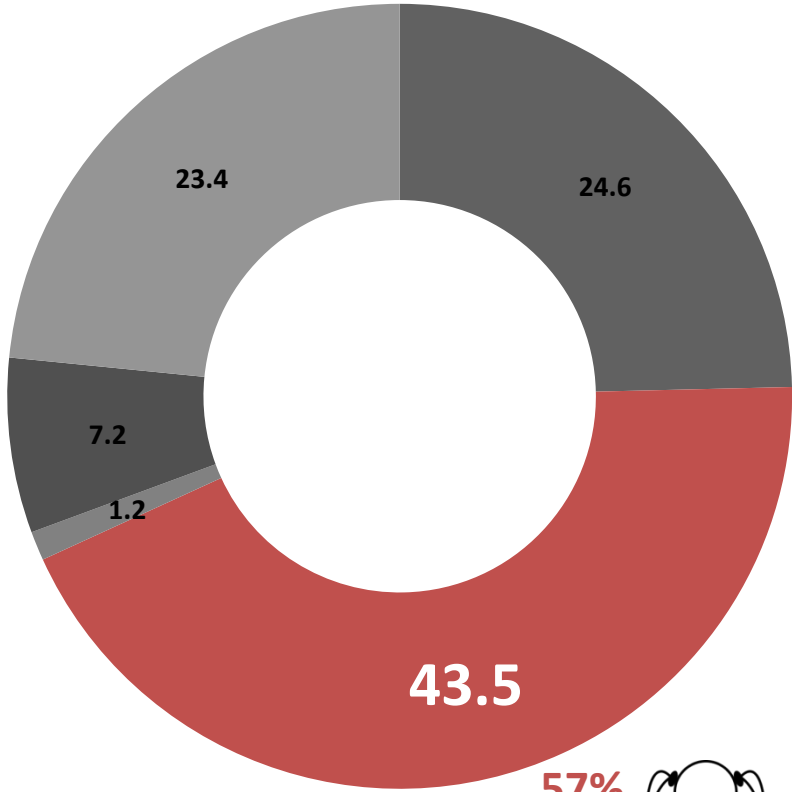
**Only 6% of learners progress from Grade 11 to Grade 12 between waves 4 & 5**

**This final year transition represents a clear hurdle in the path to successful matric for a large proportion of learners**

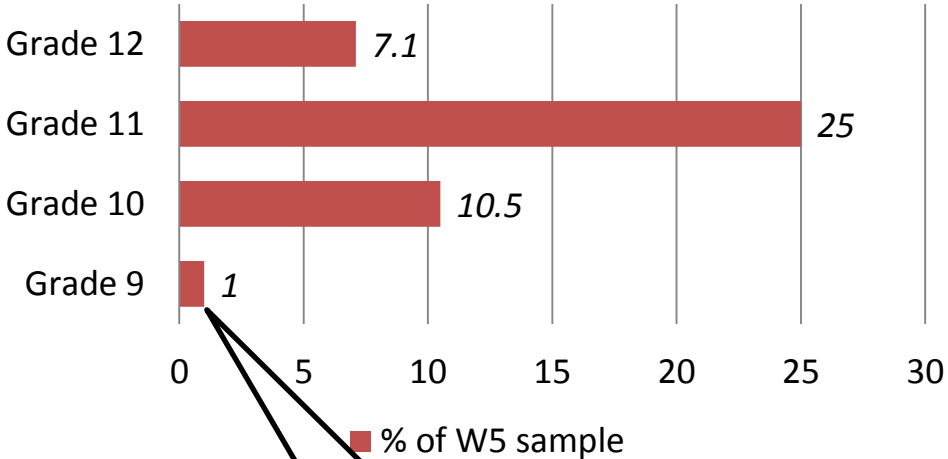
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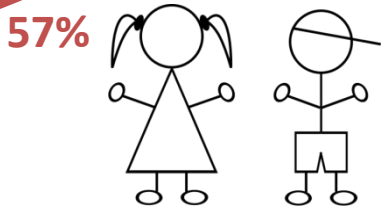


W5 grade for learners in school



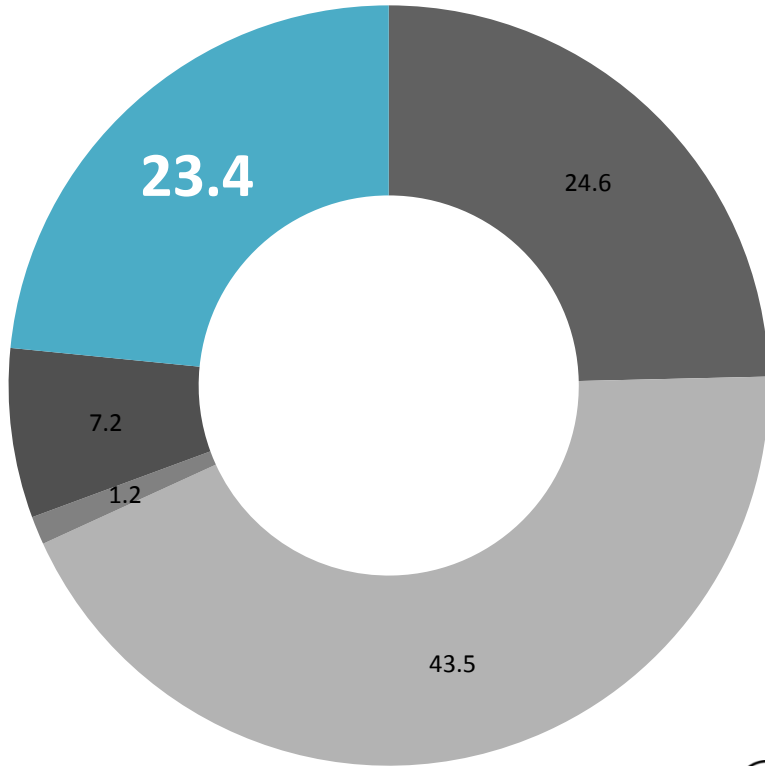
**9 learners remain in Grade 9 across all five waves of SAYPS data!**

- Post-school institution
- Still at school
- Learnership
- Working
- Not studying & not working

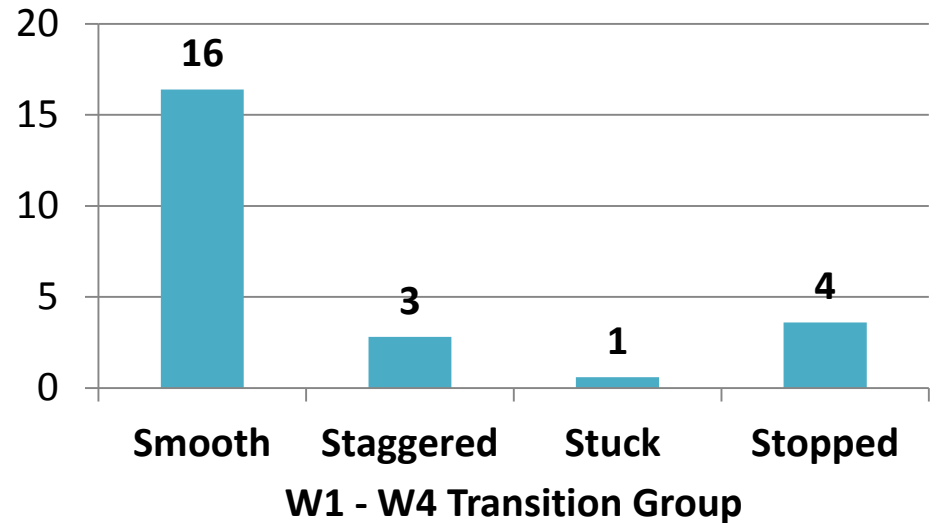


43%

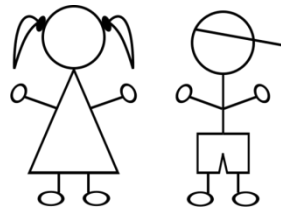
# Not working, not studying



- Post-school institution
- Still at school
- Learnership
- Working
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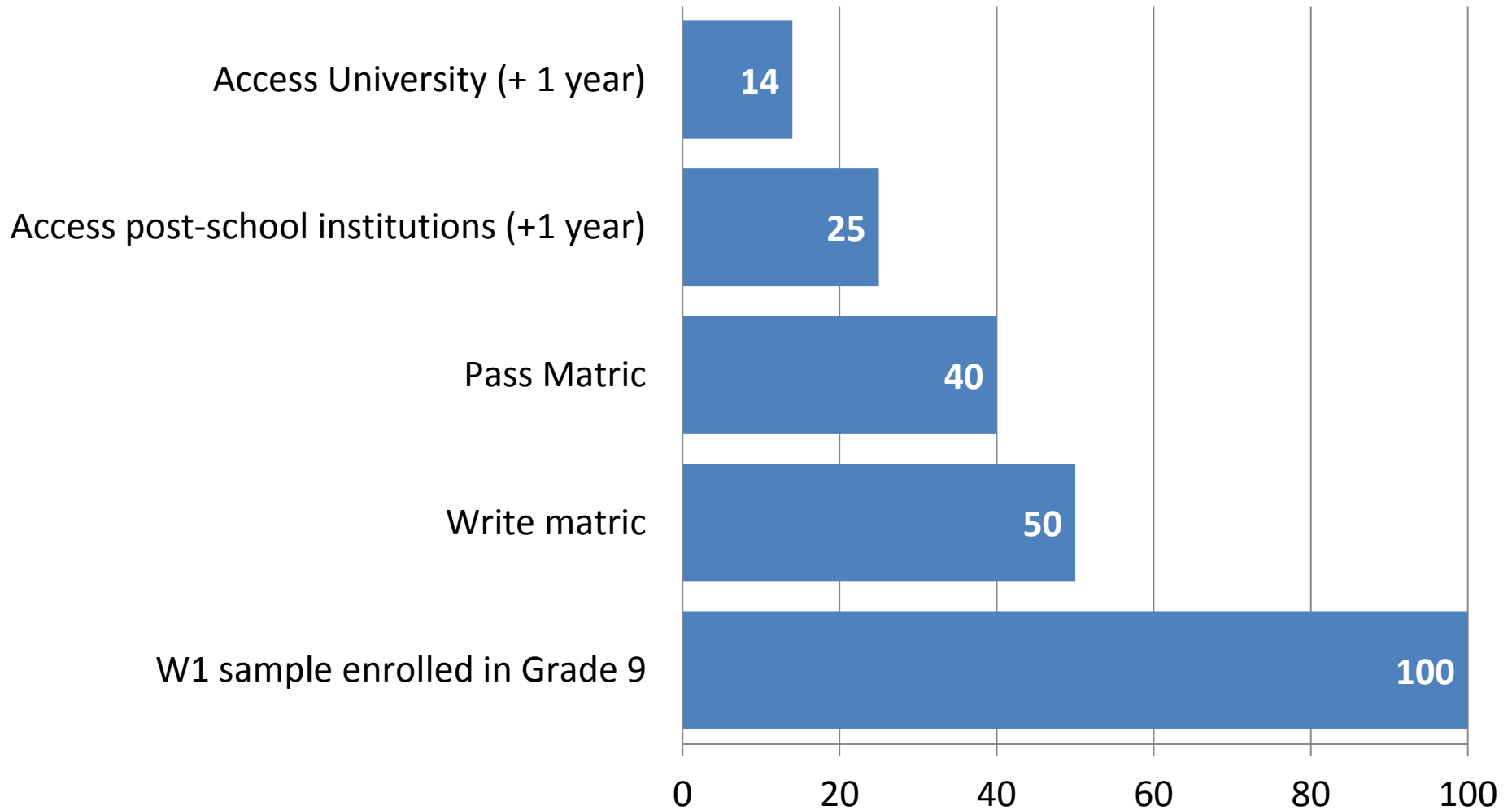
59%



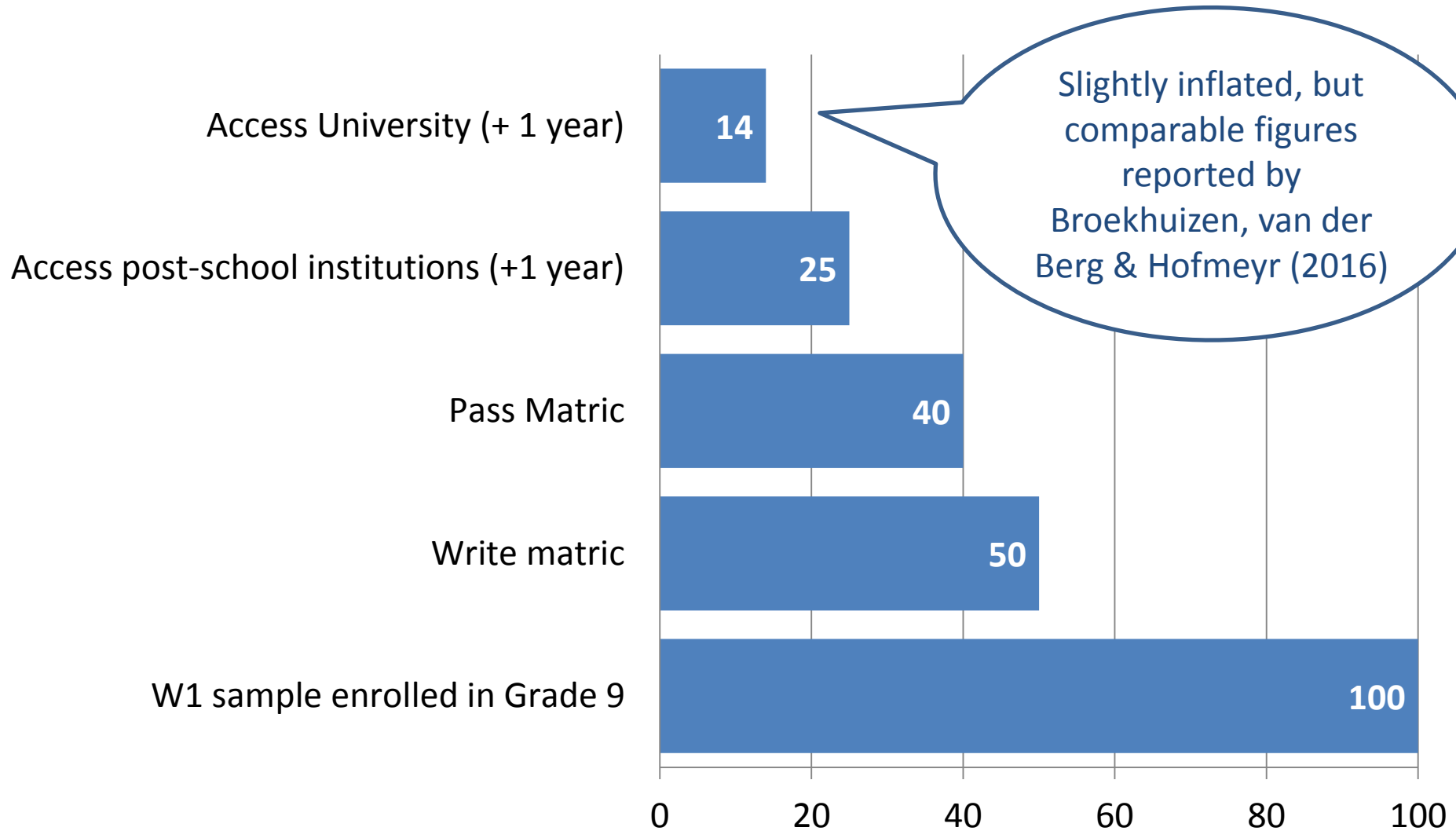
41%

The majority of this group are made of learners with a previously **SMOOTH** transition through school

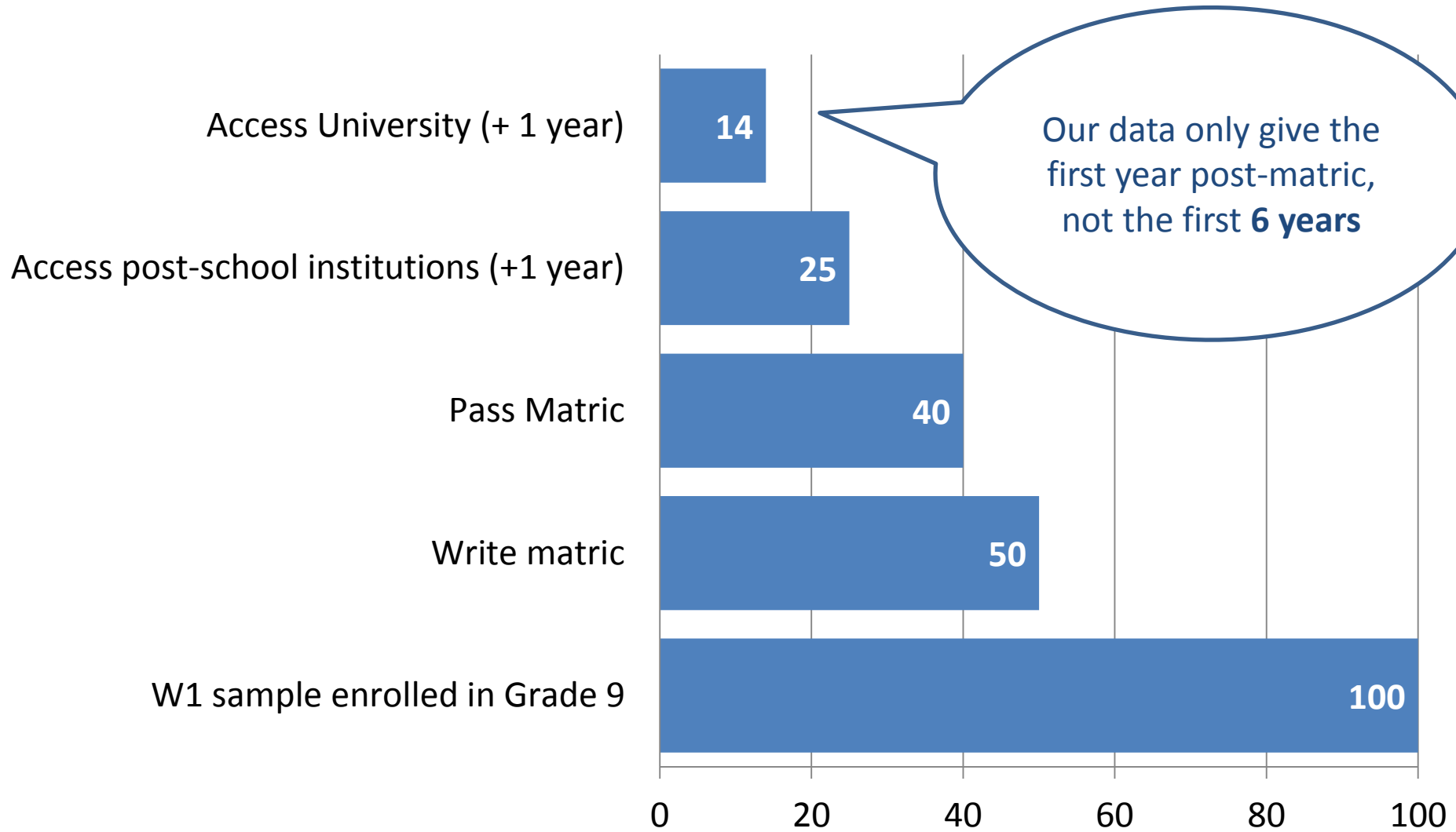
# Educational participation in SAYPS



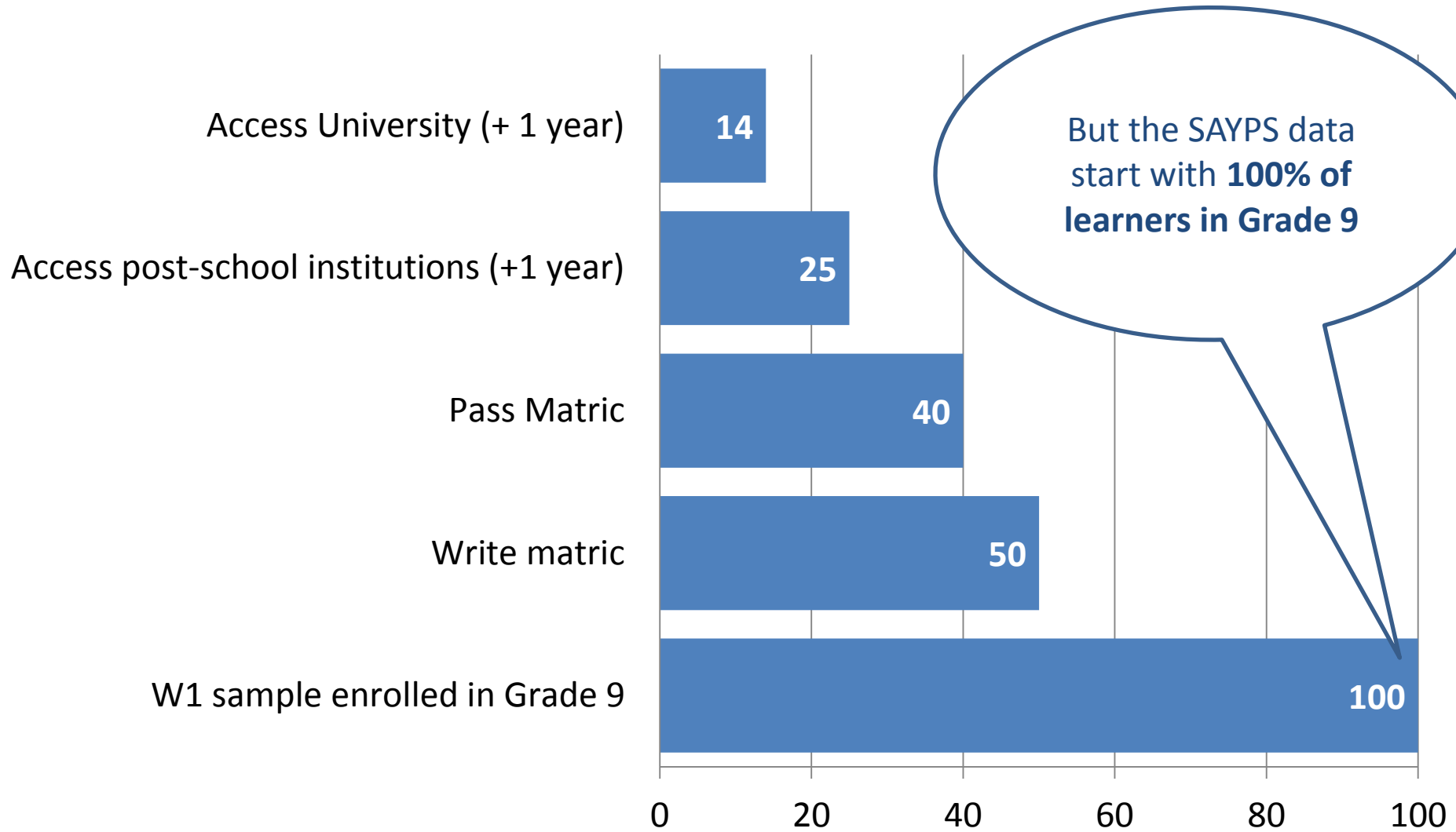
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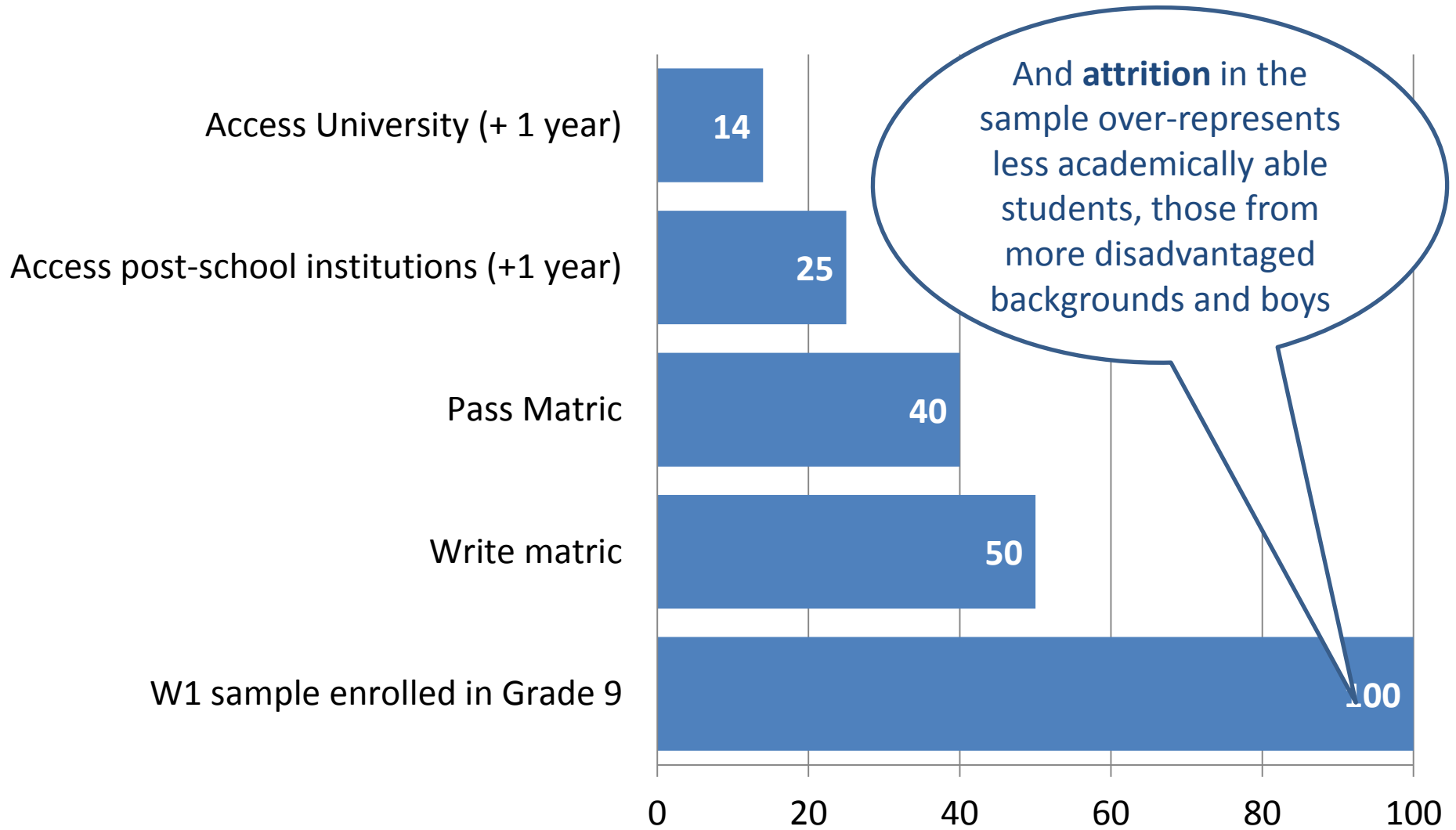


# Educational participation in SAYPS





# Educational participation in SAYPS



# So why aren't learners reaching matric?

- Many learners are simply getting stuck in the system:
  - Grade repetition policies are not being adhered to
  - Progressively staggered pathways post-Grade 9
- Actually getting to Grade 12 is a huge achievement: 94% of learners in Grade 11 at wave 4 do not progress to Grade 12 a year later!

# Key Findings

- Smooth-smooth highflyers with matric: 22% of SAYPS sample
  - 14% of the cohort access University in the first year post-matric

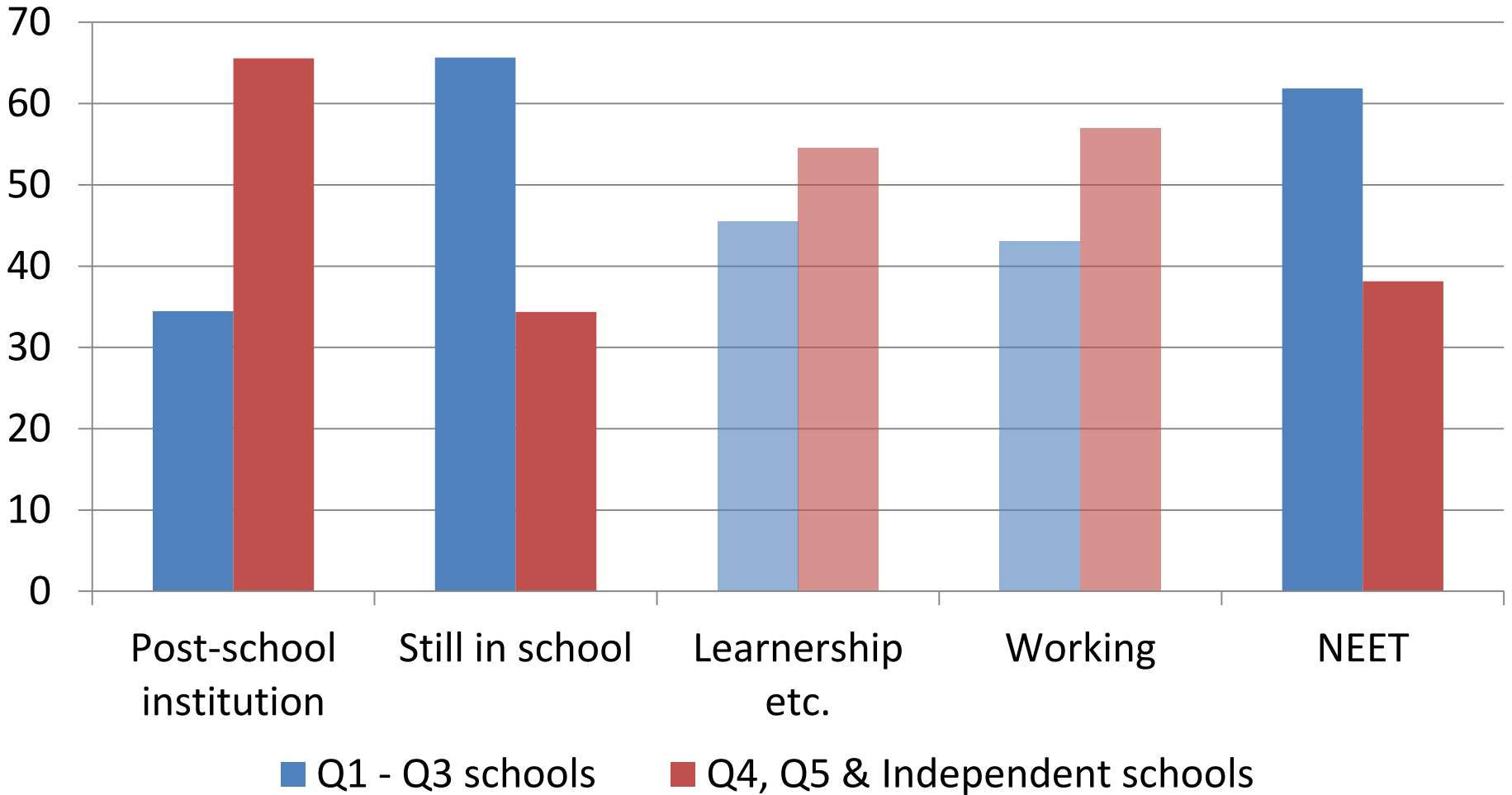
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  - Two-thirds of the total NEET group

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- A third of learners in post-school institutions come from Q1-Q3 schools
  - And learners from Q4, Q5 & Independent schools are not immune from becoming NEET

# Beating the odds?



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# Conclusions

- Considerable diversity and heterogeneity in learner transitions
- Systemic failures
  - # learners matriculating failed to remain proportionate to increased enrolment rates more generally
  - Stuck at Grade 11: 94% more than just struggling learners held back from high stakes exams
  - Smooth group learners poorly prepared for post-matric
- “Staggered” pathways become the new norm?
- Predictable stories of social advantage operating through school characteristics
  - But evidence of learners “beating the odds” too



# Policy Implications

- The number of learners who qualify for post-secondary education but are NEET is too high if SA is to achieve its 20% target of HE participation
- Limited progression for learners in grade 11
  - Only 6% of Grade 11 learners progress into Grade 12
  - Just under 25% of the SAYPS cohort have a smooth-smooth post-school pathway
  - Challenge to increase this % across all school types

# Policy Implications

- More than a third of SMOOTH learners become NEET
  - Pathways into this group are not straightforward
  - Rethinking the traditional view of who is NEET
- Is there sufficient knowledge of the possible post-school routes available to learners?
  - Single pathway from grade 10 to 12 as highly academic and clearly not suited to all learners

# Learning from longitudinal studies

- Longitudinal studies aren't quick, but they tell richer, more nuanced stories just not possible from cross-sectional data
- Early leavers: over-sampling learners from lower SES households and those in no-fee schools
- Data linkage and ease of access
- Design of any new studies should be set up with administrative linkage as a basic assumption

Isdale, K., Reddy, V., Winnaar, L. & Zuze, T.L. (2016). *Smooth, Staggered or Stopped: Educational Transitions in the South African Youth Panel Study*. An LMIP Publication. Human Sciences Research Council

Isdale, K., Reddy, V., & Winnaar, L. (forthcoming). *Youth transitions over five years in SAYPS: Where next for South African youth?* An LMIP Publication. Human Sciences Research Council

**[www.lmip.org.za](http://www.lmip.org.za)**

Policy brief also available on the TIMSS-SA website:

[http://www.timss-sa.org.za/?wpfb\\_dl=66](http://www.timss-sa.org.za/?wpfb_dl=66)

Any further questions?

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