the uk GRAD programme

what do PhDs do?

2005 - Location and Mobility of PhD graduates

Executive Summary

In 2004 the UK GRAD Programme launched the first ever analysis of first destinations of PhD graduates. Produced in partnership with Graduate Prospects and written by Sara Shinton, 'What Do PhDs Do?' (WDPD) analyses the Higher Education Statistical Agency first destination statistics for UK domiciled PhD graduates in 2003.

WDPD has significantly improved understanding of the range of employment sectors and occupations that our doctoral graduates go into following graduation, as well as contributing to the debate on issues such as PhD employability, skills training and careers guidance. It presented information about the PhD population as well as clear evidence of the broad appeal of a PhD and other doctoral qualifications to employers across the labour market.

WDPD 2005
Location and Mobility of PhD Graduates

During 2005, the GRAD Hub network organised a series of regional events focussed on WDPD that provided additional insights into employment destinations of PhD graduates from within a particular region of the UK [see www.grad.ac.uk/hubs]. These regional analyses have proved particularly valuable to institutions wanting to understand the flows of doctoral graduates within their region, engage with regional development agendas and promote the value of PhD graduates to local labour markets.

In response to requests from institutions and other users of WDPD, we now aim to present a detailed analysis of the location and mobility of UK researchers by region to be available from spring 2006. This briefing document presents the key findings from the preliminary analysis. This report should be a useful addition to the "Regional Profiles" produced by HEFCE[1].

[1]See http://www.hefce.ac.uk/regions/

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Graduate Prospects

Regional Distribution of PhD Graduates

Table 1 shows the regional distribution of the 7270 UK domiciled doctoral graduates eligible for the 2004 survey and the respective response rates. The largest producers of doctoral graduates are the South East (including the University of Oxford), Scotland, London, Yorkshire & the Humber and the East of England (including the University of Cambridge), – reflecting the number of large, research active universities in these regions.

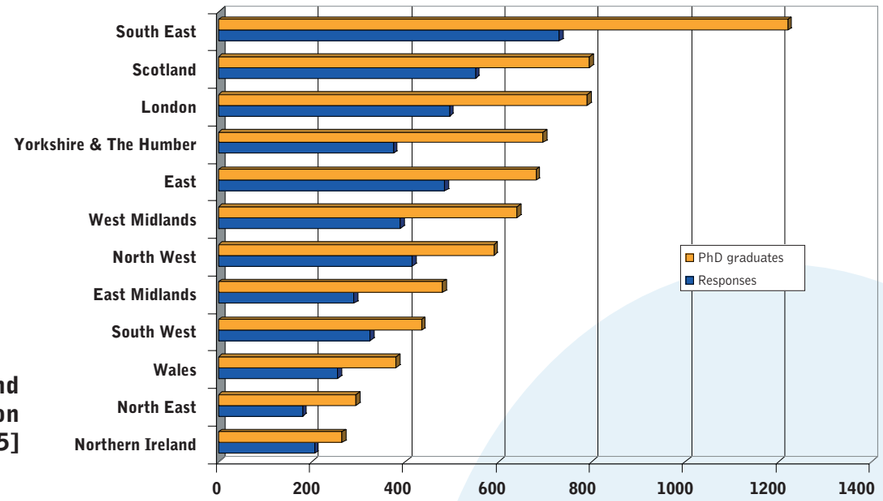


Table 1: UK Domiciled Doctoral Graduates and DLHE respondents from each region [PhD graduates 7270, respondents 4695]

Doctoral Graduates – First destinations by region

Table 2 demonstrates the mobility of PhD graduates going into employment by region. It presents the percentage of PhD graduates from each region moving to another region or overseas for work and the inflow of PhD graduates to each region. It also identifies whether there is a net gain or loss to the region in terms of the number of PhD graduates entering work.

Notes on Table 2

All figures relate to UK domiciled PhD graduates graduating in 2003 and in work or working and studying on 1 January 2004 (4155 respondents). Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.

1. Number of PhD graduates from each region going into employment and as a percentage of the total number of UK domiciled PhD graduates entering employment
2. Percentage of the PhD graduates from each region entering employment that move to another region
3. Percentage of the PhD graduates from each region entering employment that move outside the UK
4. The number of PhD graduates entering each region for employment expressed as a percentage of the total number of 2003 PhD graduates employed in each region (column 6)
5. The net flow of PhD graduates to or from each region expressed as a percentage of the total number of PhD graduates in each region entering work (column 1)
6. Number of PhD graduates entering employment in each region and as a percentage of the total number of PhD graduates entering employment in the UK

Region	PhD graduates going into employment[1]		Outflow to another Region[2]	Outflow from UK[3]	Inflow to Region for Work[4]	Net flow[5] +/-	PhD graduates employed in UK[6]	
	Number	%	%	%	%	%	Number	%
North East	165	3.9	42.7	6.1	30.0	-26.8	120	3.3
North West	355	8.6	39.9	6.5	41.6	-8.1	325	8.9
Yorkshire & The Humber	325	7.9	44.6	7.0	32.5	-28.4	235	6.4
East Midlands	260	6.2	47.9	6.9	44.8	-18.1	210	5.7
West Midlands	345	8.3	47.4	7.3	35.5	-29.7	240	6.5
East	445	10.7	40.0	14.2	47.0	-13.5	385	10.5
London	425	10.2	31.5	9.6	57.2	37.4	585	16.0
South East	655	15.7	44.0	10.2	45.1	-16.7	545	14.9
South West	300	7.2	36.6	10.4	49.2	4.4	310	8.5
Scotland	480	11.6	23.5	13.3	18.1	-22.9	370	10.1
Wales	215	5.2	40.0	6.0	30.5	-22.3	165	4.5
Northern Ireland	185	4.5	10.7	5.9	7.7	-9.6	170	4.6
GRAND TOTAL	4155	100	37.9	9.4	40.2	-11.7	3665	100

Table 2: Mobility of UK Domiciled Doctoral Graduates going into employment.

Key messages

PhD graduates are more mobile than first degree graduates. On average 47% Of PhD graduates move to another region or overseas after graduation compared to 41% of bachelor graduates.

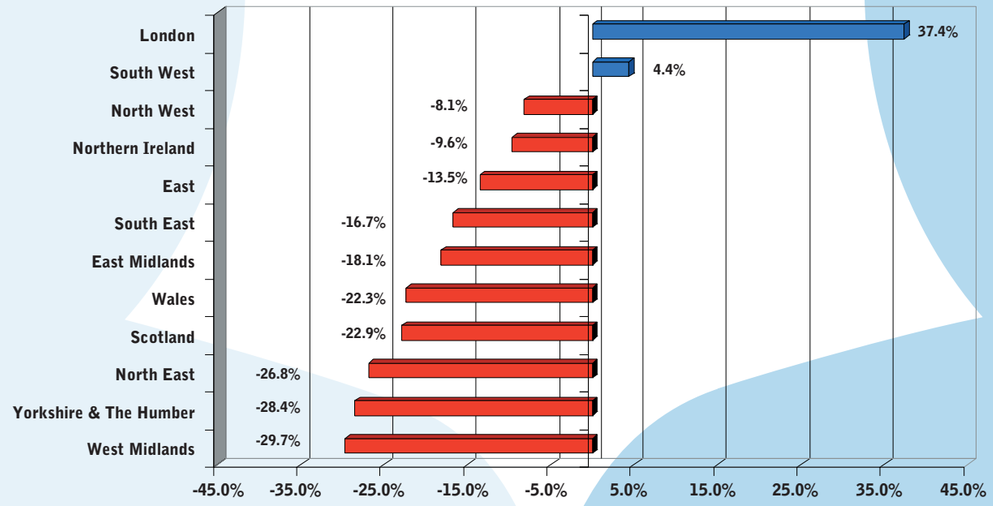
Northern Ireland (83.4%) and Scotland (63.2%) are best at retaining their PhD graduates. The South-East, East of England, West and East Midlands are least likely to retain their PhD graduates: more than 54% of PhD graduates leave from these regions for employment.

9.4% of PhD graduates go into employment overseas: a third to the EU and the balance to other overseas destinations. Approximately a half of the PhD graduates who move abroad are employed as postdoctoral researchers. PhD graduates from the East (14.2%) and Scotland (13.3%) are most likely to move outside the UK for employment.

London (37.4%) and the South West (4.4%) are the only two regions with a net gain in PhD graduates entering employment. The North-East (-26.8%), Yorkshire and The Humber (-28.4%) and the West Midlands (-29.7%) are the largest percentage losers in PhD graduates.

51% of all PhD graduates employed in the UK are concentrated in the South-East (15%), London (16%), East of England (10%) and Scotland (10%).

Table 3: Net flows of UK domiciled PhD graduates in employment by region. Figures include emigration from the UK as well as migration between regions.



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Graduate Prospects

The full regional analyses will include first destination details of UK domiciled PhD graduates from each region by category, e.g. working, studying, unemployed. It will look at the employment sectors and occupations of doctoral graduates in each region and the mobility of various occupations. The data will also be analysed for any variations in regional employment and mobility by subject groupings and gender.

In 2005 UK GRAD will also be publishing the methodology used to produce 'What Do PhDs Do?' to enable institutions to compare their own data with both publications.

The Regional debate

This information raises a number of strategic questions for a range of stakeholders. What are the implications of almost 50% of our PhD graduates moving out of the region they were studying in? Does this support or hinder regional development agendas? Is a mobile postgraduate researcher population important for the UK? What role should HEIs be playing in this agenda?

By raising these questions, we hope that the publication will be contribute to a strategic debate about how we train and prepare our researchers for their professional careers. Our postgraduate researchers make a significant contribution to the UK labour market across a wide range of employment sectors and occupations – only by understanding the picture more fully can we both support our researchers effectively, and harness their contribution to the regions and to the UK as a whole.

To add your name to the distribution list for WDPD 2005, please email admin@grad.ac.uk or visit www.grad.ac.uk/wdpd

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