

Emergent Tensions between Public Trust & Accountability

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Massification, Globalisation & Internationalisation

Combination of demographic growth, economic and labour market changes, globalisation and internationalisation have changed education provision, providers and students, and relationship to the state and society.

Challenges traditional assumptions & practices, enshrined as “principles” of academic life: collegiality, self-assessment, self-reporting, peer review, and self-governance.

- What was possible/normal for small elite systems are challenging for complex systems and high participation societies w/ rates of 60%+.

Trust and (re)assurances around quality are the essential lubricant.

- However, trust - that the system is producing what’s required at reasonable cost & personal/societal value, and can be trusted to deliver – are often missing or under threat.



Global Trust Index

The Trust Index is an average of a country's trust in the institutions of government, business, media and NGOs.

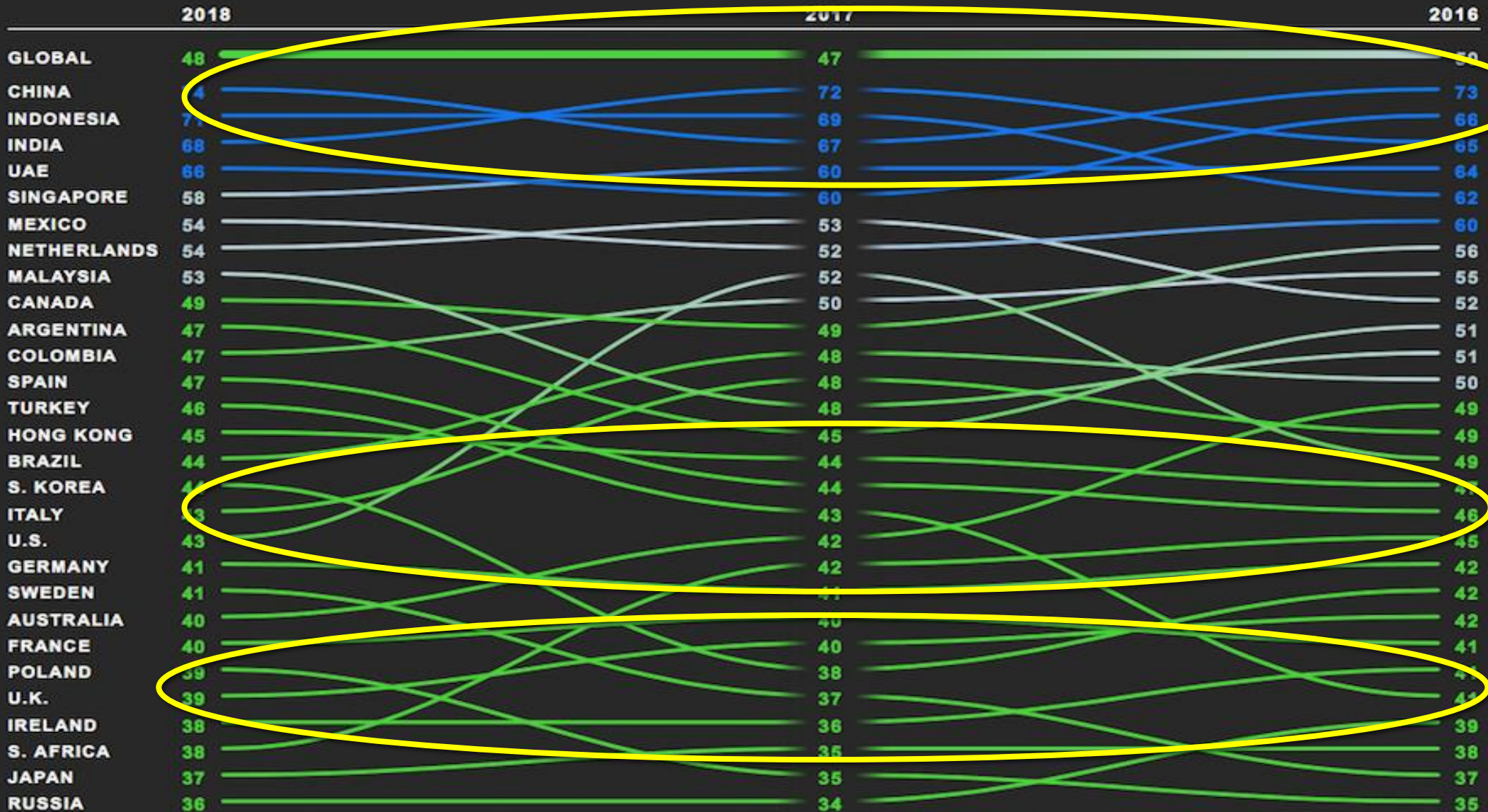
Country Ranking, 2016-2018

KEY

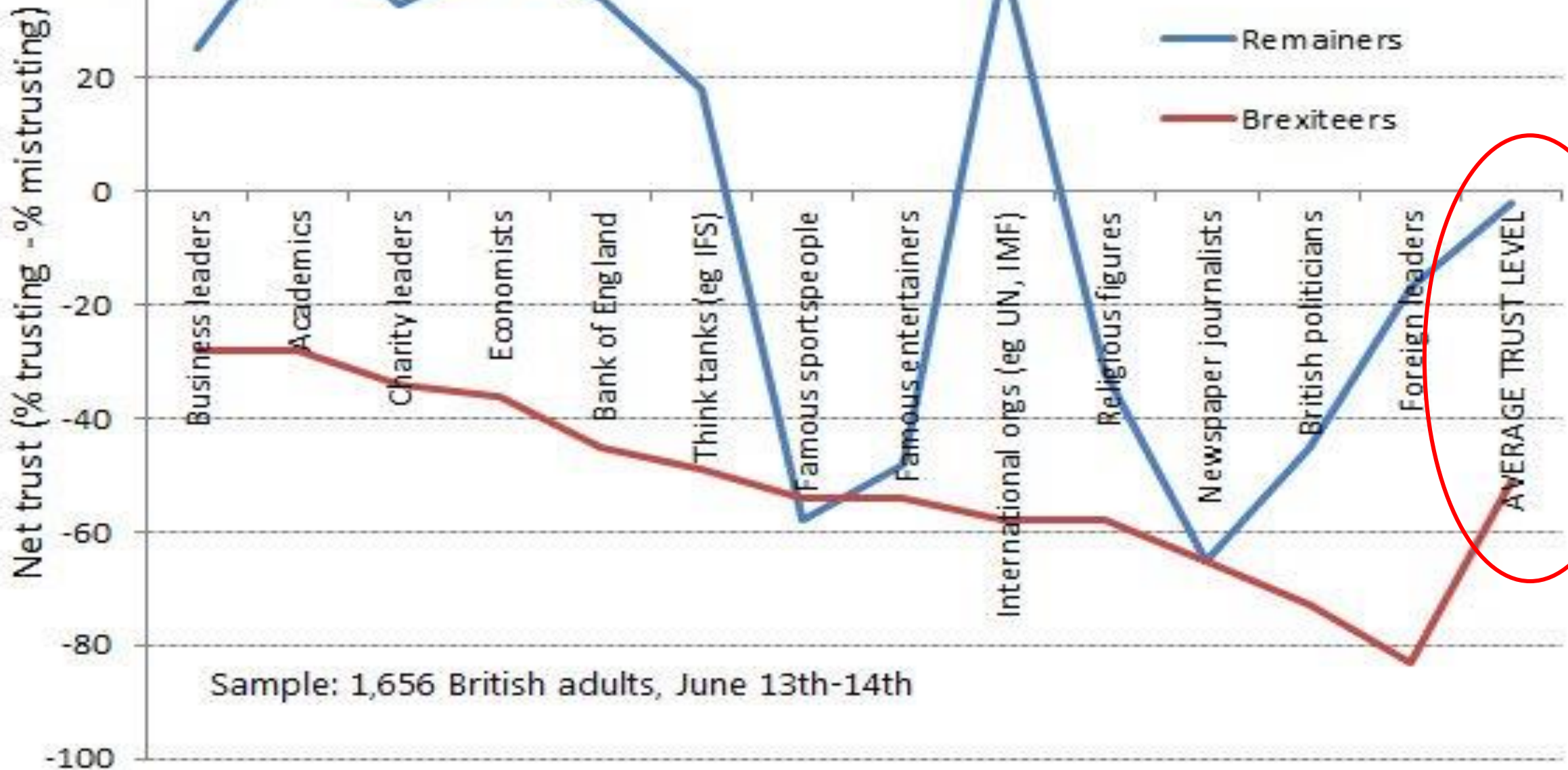
TRUSTERS (60-100)

NEUTRAL (50-59)

DISTRUSTERS (1-49)

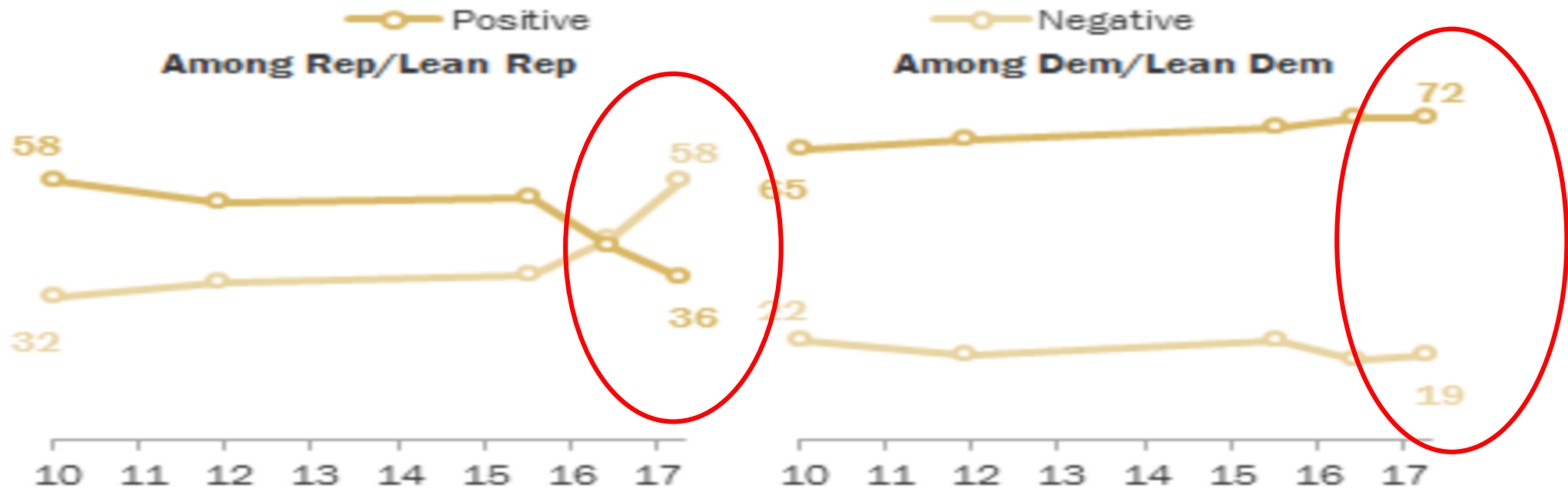


YouGov data: Comparing trust levels of Remain vs Leave voters



Partisan Divisions in Views of US Colleges, 2017

% who say colleges and universities have a ____ effect on the way things are going in the country

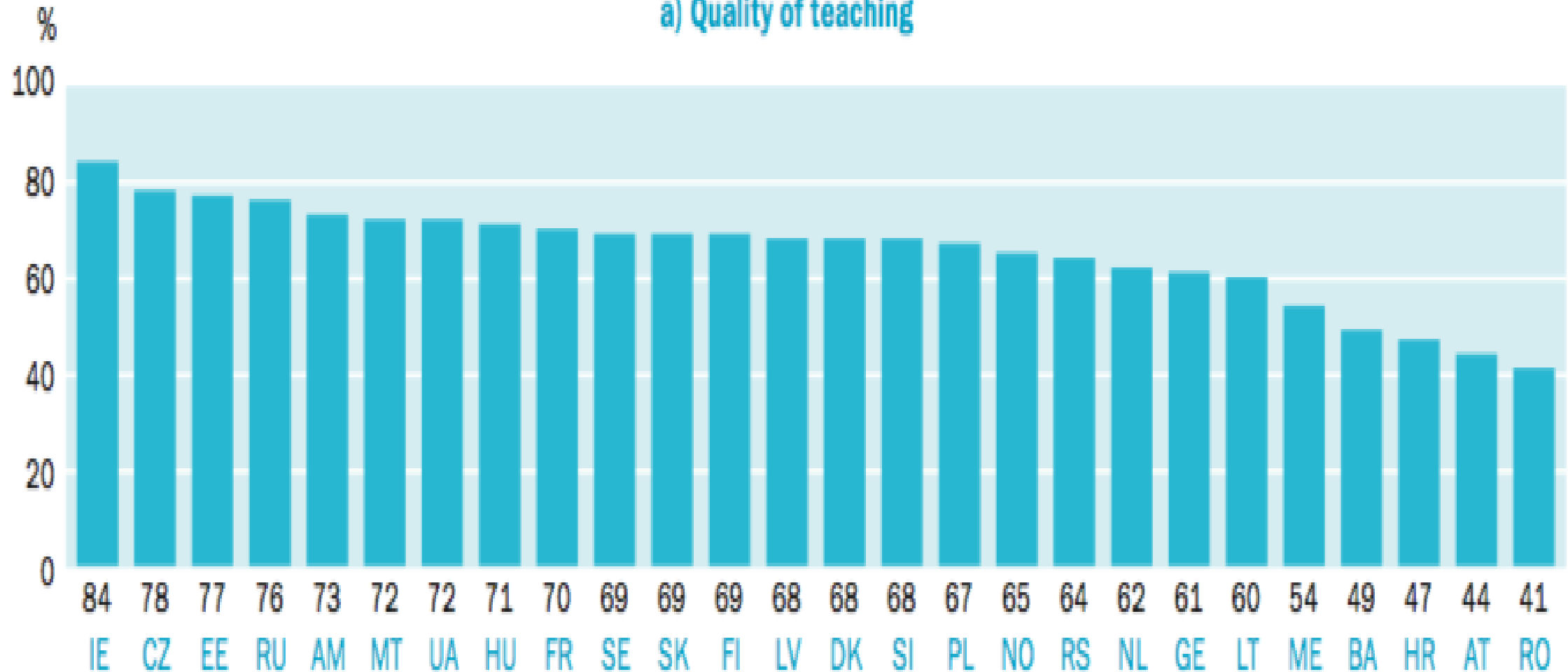


Note: Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 8-18, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Euro Student Attitudes to Studies, 2012-2015

a) Quality of teaching



British Social Attitudes 32: Higher Education (2014)

Table 8. Whether think a degree is value for money, by age, 2014 (England only)

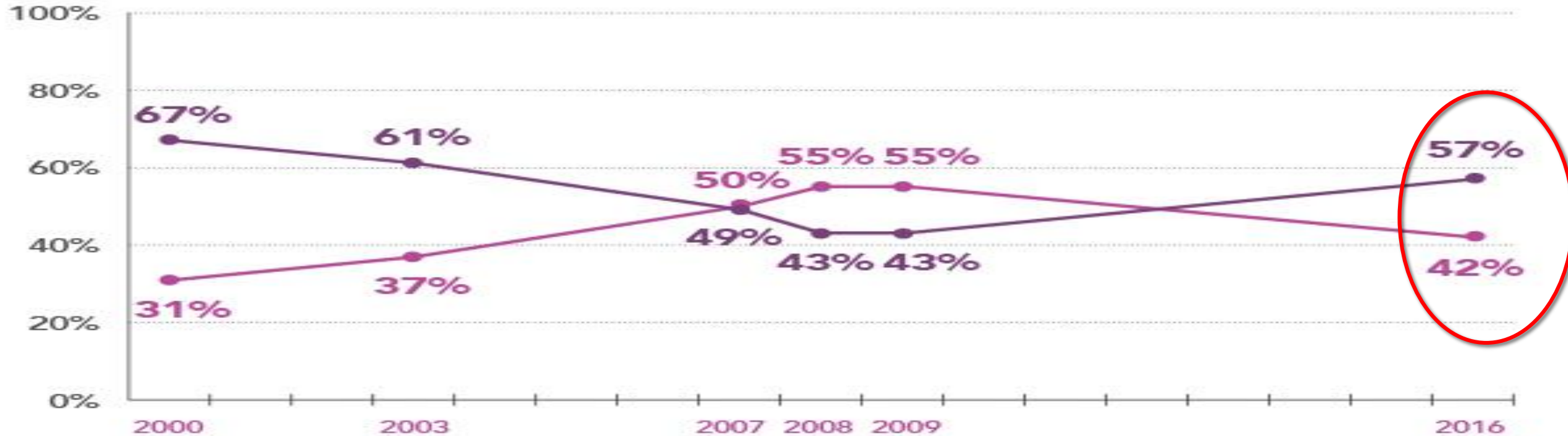
Do you think getting a degree represents good value for money?

		Yes	No	It depends on the degree	Unweighted bases
Age group					
8-29	%	24	57	16	194
30-39	%	24	56	15	237
40-49	%	27	55	14	316
50-59	%	27	47	22	265
60-69	%	31	46	19	292
70-79	%	37	36	24	220
80+	%	40	35	18	96
All	%	28	51	18	1626

Americans Uncertain About HE (2016)

Percent who say that:

- There are many ways to succeed in today's world without a college degree
- College education is necessary



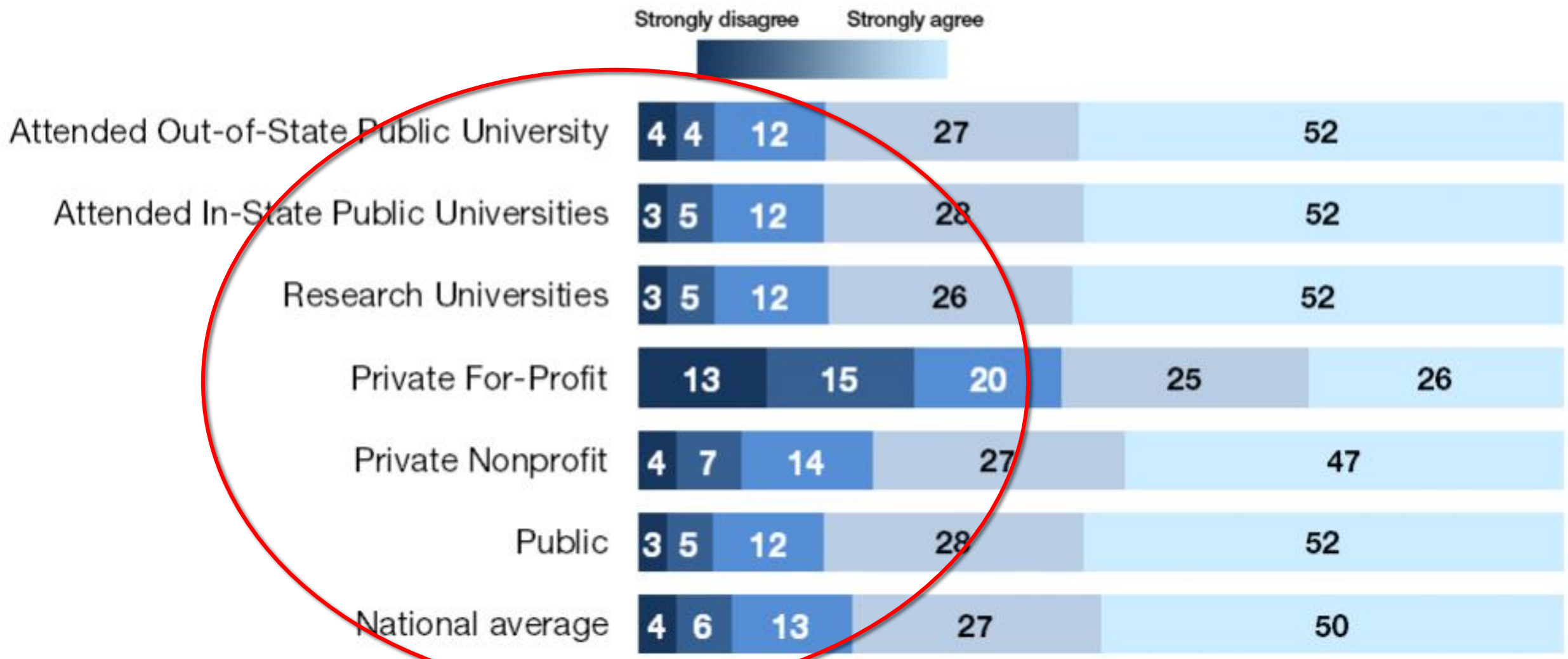
2016 base: All respondents, July survey, N=1,006.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent. Chart does not include the small number of respondents who replied with "Don't know" or refused the question.

Source: Public Agenda, 2016. www.publicagenda.org/pages/public-opinion-higher-education-2016

“My education from university was worth the cost”

Percentage of 30,000 US graduates answering the question “My education from (University name) was worth the cost”



Public Attitudes, Trust & Interest

Three inter-dependent issues:

Public attitudes towards public services, vis-à-vis level/quality of service, taxation/public funding required, etc.

Degree of *public trust* between different sectors of society,

Public interest in effective and efficient use of public resources, and contribution and value to society.



1. Quality Assurance/Accreditation

Quality guided by norms of peer review has underpinned academic-professional self-regulation and self-governance

- Based on promotion/embedding quality culture with ownership and responsibility resting with autonomous HEIs;

But, inability provide evidence in usable, transparent and comparable format has become a major handicap.

QA often seen as too process-oriented and insufficiently focused on real measurable outcomes.

- Inefficient use of public resources and people's time,
- Not scalable in any meaningful way.



2. Performance and Productivity

Performance asks how well HEIs operate vis-à-vis their goals and those of society;

- Focus on actual outcomes and outputs rather than simply the process;
- Attention shifted onto academic and professional staff and students.

Productivity asks about what academics produce through their teaching, and issues of academic outputs and outcomes, such as progression and graduate employment.

Welcome rejoinder to global rankings but speaks directly to public and political perceptions about *what academics do all day or all year*.

What people want to know is how effectively students are learning, what they are achieving, and how personnel, institutions and the systems overall help students to succeed.



3. Value and Impact

For people in developed/OECD countries, underlying belief was each generation would be better off than the previous one; that progress was a birth-right.

However, at a time when HE is in growing demand, more people & communities feel left behind, and struggling to live up to societal and personal expectations.

- HE not a route to social mobility due to complex issues of wealth, access and selection (Piketty, 2014, Clottfelter 2017);
- Institutional diversity was seen as way forward, but this has often become social stratification by another name.

What people want to know is engagement with/contribution to economic growth and regional and national innovation, role in talent maximisation and knowledge production.



Accountability & Transparency

Traditional approaches have relied on collegiality, expert judgment, and peer review.

More quantitative and externally-driven approaches have emerged in recent decades, with greater emphasis on measuring outcomes and learning gain.

- Participation of third-parties, including students, business and employers, becomes inevitable.
- New technologies make the participation of citizens/civil society easier;
- International comparability a significant driver.



Some Policy Responses

Rankings have filled the gap because of their ease, comparability & scalability

- But hugely flawed in terms of methodology and focus on elite universities and research.

Some Policy Responses

- UK – TEF and KEF, Learning Gain
- US – Obama “ScoreCard”, Reauthorisation/“College Dashboard,” GAO report
- Europe/US States: Performance-based funding and targets
- Australia – QILT (Quality Indicators for Learning & Teaching)
- EU – Transparency Tools as part of Bologna, U-Map, U-Multirank, Engagement
- OECD – Benchmarking, PISA, AHELO



Are Traditional Formats Fit for Purpose?

Questions being asked:

- Is HE sufficiently accountable to students and society for learning outcomes, graduate attributes and life-sustaining skills in exchange for the funding and public/political support they receive?
- Is there a gap between what HE could, and should, be and what HE is currently about and doing?
- Is there sufficient transparency and accountability about what HEIs, both public and private, are doing about these matters?
- Is self-reporting or peer review adequate anymore? How could external verification and greater transparency respond to concerns around the quality of institutional and student performance?
- What forms could/should this take?

