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**Abstract**

This paper uses data from the Scottish School Leavers Surveys and the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study to analyse changes over time in gender and social class inequalities in the opportunities of young people to participate in higher education (HE) in Scotland, England and Wales. The results show that in Great Britain, in the period from the end of the 1980s to 2001?2002, HE expansion has benefited more women than men, and in the most recent time points has led to a reduction in social inequalities. However, gender and social class differences persist at degree level and in the choice of subject studied. The results also show that higher proportions of working class students enter HE in Scotland than in England and Wales, but that social inequalities are more marked in Scotland. The larger availability of vocational routes in Scotland, at both sub-degree and degree level, may explain country differences in HE participation rate of working class students. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)