



Data analysis

August 2017/13

Optional equality and diversity fields report

Analysis of religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender identity fields for 2015-16 entrants

This report investigates the information held through the optional equality and diversity fields that were added to the Higher Education Statistics Agency student data return in 2012-13.



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Optional equality and diversity fields report

Analysis of religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender identity fields for 2015-16 entrants

To	Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
Of interest to those responsible for	Equality and diversity; Human resources; Student services; Governance
Reference	2017/13
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Executive summary

Background and purpose

1. In 2012-13, equality and diversity questions on gender identity, sexual orientation and religion and belief were added as optional fields to the annual return of student data via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).
2. Initially, return rates were low, with this information returned for less than half of all students. However, return rates have recently increased for these fields. This report gives an overview of the information available from these fields.

Key points

Data quality

3. The data quality and coverage for 2015-16 full-time first degree entrants are higher than in previous years. It is of sufficient quality to report high-level patterns for 2015-16, but not for previous years. For all other modes and levels the quality and coverage are more limited and therefore the relevant patterns are not reported in this report.

Characteristics of full-time first degree entrants

Region and belief

4. The breakdown of religion and belief across the full-time first degree entrant population is similar to that of the 2011 census population (the most recently available census information).
5. Overall 46 per cent of full-time first degree entrants in 2015-16 aged between 18 and 29 reported they had no religion; 30 per cent identified as Christian and 10 per cent as Muslim.
6. Across institution type and subject, the distribution of religion and belief varies a little; most of the variation is seen between the Christian, Muslim, no religion and information refused groups.

Gender identity

7. Overall 95 per cent of full-time first degree entrants identified as the same gender identity they were assigned at birth; 3 per cent identified as a different gender identity from that assigned at birth; and 2 per cent refused to answer this field. There is little variation across institution type and subject by gender identity.

Sexual orientation

8. Overall 88 per cent of full-time first degree entrants identify as heterosexual, 6 per cent refused to answer and all other groups make up 2 per cent or less each. There is little variation across institution type and subject for the different sexual orientations.

Action required

9. This document is for information only.

Introduction

10. In 2012-13, equality and diversity questions on gender identity¹, sexual orientation and religion and belief were added as optional fields to the return of student data via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), to monitor equal opportunities issues in the higher education sector and support higher education institutions (HEIs) in meeting their obligations under the Equality Act 2010².

11. As set out in HEFCE's equality and diversity objectives, we report on all equality and diversity fields³. Historically, response rates have been low, with completed information for less than 50 per cent of students, so we have not reported on these fields before.

12. However, in more recent years, return rates have increased. This report gives an overview of the information available from these fields and, where possible, how the student population compares with information collected in the most recent census. Additional data about how these fields relate to other characteristics of applicants and of higher education provision are available on the HEFCE website⁴.

Methodology

Population

13. The HESA 2015-16 student return has been used, with the population restricted to UK-domiciled entrants attending HEFCE-funded institutions. In the rest of the UK the coverage is similar, with full-time undergraduate response rates high but part-time and postgraduate response rates still low. The known data for these countries is proportional to that expected of the general population.

14. For each question, the proportion of entrants with known information is greatest for full-time first degree entrants. Tables 1 to 3 show the extent and level of completed information for each question, by mode (full and part time) and level of study. Responses to these optional questions are classified as 'unknown' when the field is not completed at all; 'information refused' when the student chose not to declare a response; and for the rest 'known'. For the analysis in this report the population is limited to full-time first degree entrants with known data (including the 'information refused' category).

15. Some institutions do not return information in these fields at all or have low response rates. For each question, if the proportion of entrants with unknown responses at an institution is more than 50 per cent, then the institution is excluded from the analysis in this report. Further restrictions have been made to the analysis population for the gender identity question, to exclude the data from institutions where more than 40 per cent of students reported no longer identifying with the gender they were assigned at birth. These restrictions allow for more robust sector-wide comparison across characteristics.

¹ This field indicates whether or not a student identifies as the same gender identity as they were assigned at birth.

² See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c12051/summaryofchanges>.

³ See www.hefce.ac.uk/workprovide/ed/.

⁴ See www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/opthesa/.

Table 1: Rate of response to the religion and belief question for all UK-domiciled entrants by mode and level of study

Mode	Level	Known		Information refused		Unknown	
		students	%	students	%	students	%
Full-time	First degree	227,135	66%	15,510	4%	103,800	30%
	Other undergraduate	11,310	64%	680	4%	5,780	33%
	Postgraduate research	5,125	42%	1,005	8%	5,960	49%
	Postgraduate taught	32,100	53%	3,180	5%	25,640	42%
Part-time	First degree	18,570	51%	1,665	5%	16,085	44%
	Other undergraduate	26,935	42%	2,025	3%	35,665	55%
	Postgraduate research	1,905	42%	325	7%	2,315	51%
	Postgraduate taught	32,285	41%	3,910	5%	42,345	54%

Table 2: Rate of response to the gender identity question for all UK-domiciled entrants by mode and level of study

Mode	Level	Known		Information refused		Unknown	
		students	%	students	%	students	%
Full-time	First degree	209,625	61%	6,165	2%	130,655	38%
	Other undergraduate	10,780	61%	255	1%	6,735	38%
	Postgraduate research	5,535	46%	725	6%	5,835	48%
	Postgraduate taught	33,190	54%	1,765	3%	25,970	43%
Part-time	First degree	6,745	19%	315	1%	29,255	81%
	Other undergraduate	22,560	35%	1,185	2%	40,885	63%
	Postgraduate research	1,890	42%	225	5%	2,425	53%
	Postgraduate taught	30,700	39%	2,915	4%	44,930	57%

Table 3: Rate of response to the sexual orientation question for all UK-domiciled entrants by mode and level of study

Mode	Level	Known		Information refused		Unknown	
		students	%	students	%	students	%
Full-time	First degree	233,085	67%	16,555	5%	96,805	28%
	Other undergraduate	11,560	65%	910	5%	5,300	30%
	Postgraduate research	5,475	45%	1,235	10%	5,385	45%
	Postgraduate taught	34,845	57%	3,720	6%	22,355	37%
Part-time	First degree	18,470	51%	2,110	6%	15,735	43%
	Other undergraduate	26,445	41%	3,155	5%	35,025	54%
	Postgraduate research	1,950	43%	410	9%	2,180	48%
	Postgraduate taught	33,620	43%	5,275	7%	39,655	50%

16. Figures 1 to 3 illustrate how the entrant population is restricted before analysing each of the questions. There were 621,000 UK-domiciled entrants to HEFCE-funded HEIs in 2015-16, and 346,000 (56 per cent) of these were to full-time first degree courses. For each question, between 62 and 70 per cent of the 346,000 remain once the 'unknown' responses have been removed. Removing institutions with low response rates and, for the gender identity question, unusual response profiles reduces the remaining population by a relatively small amount. For the religion and sexual orientation questions, less than 1 per cent of the remaining population are removed from the analysis, and for the gender identity question 13.5 per cent of the remaining population are removed.

Figure 1: Religion and belief population diagram

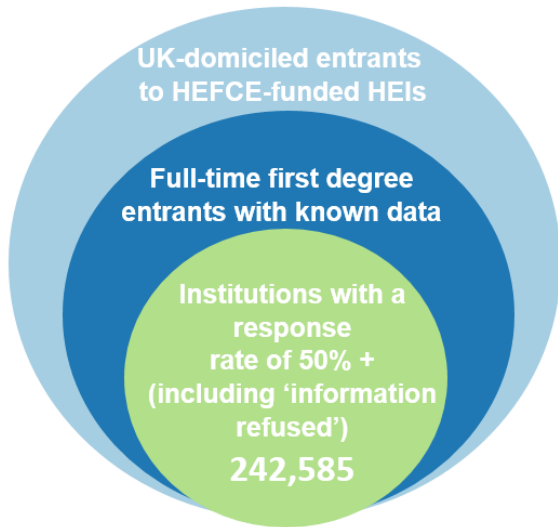


Figure 2: Gender identity population diagram

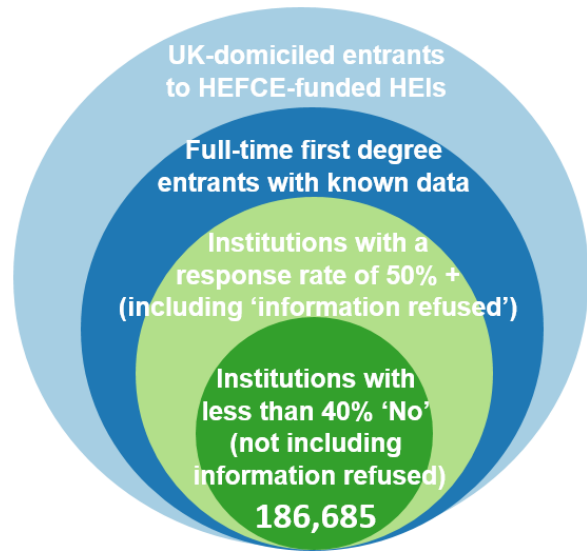
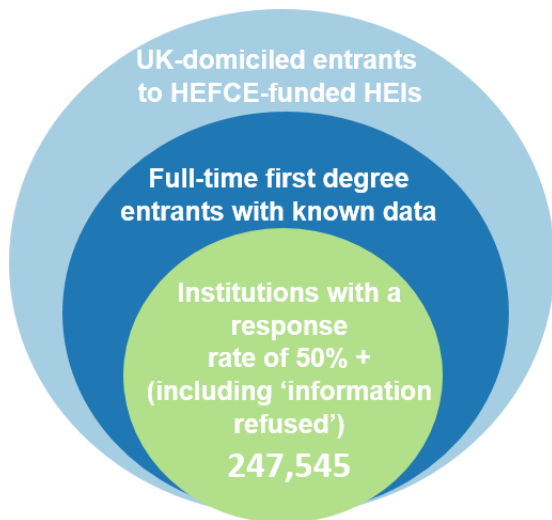


Figure 3: Sexual orientation population diagram



17. Annex A compares the population of all UK-domiciled entrants to HEFCE-funded institutions to the population with known (including refused) responses for each optional field. The composition of the populations is shown for a selected set of characteristics, including ethnicity, age, subject of study and type of institution. For most characteristics the proportions are similar, suggesting that generally there was a low response bias against these characteristics among the entrant population. There are more young entrants in the population of known responses for each question, reflecting the distribution of age between undergraduate and postgraduate courses and full-time and part-time courses, and the corresponding response rates shown in Tables 1 to 3.

Results

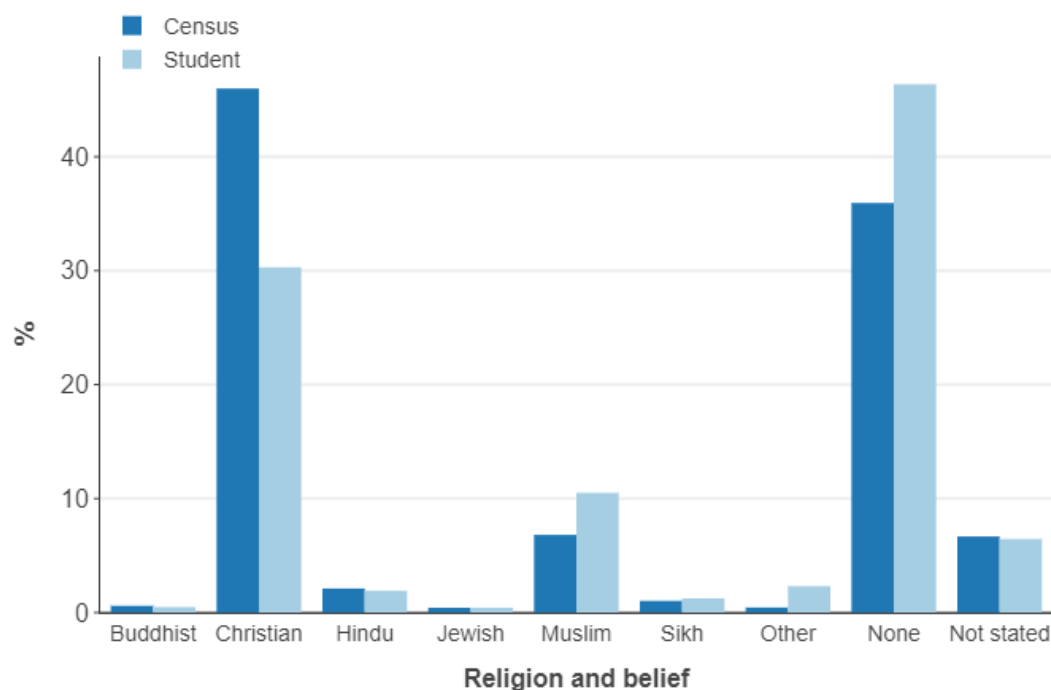
Religion and belief

Census comparison

18. Figure 4 shows the reported religion and belief in the 2011 census⁵ and 2015-16 FT first degree entrant populations. The age of the respondents in both populations has been restricted to 18 to 29 years old. The census population features only respondents from England, and the student population is consistent with the one shown in Figure 1⁶.

19. The two populations, shown in Figure 4, are similar, with around 6 per cent in both choosing not to state a religion or belief. There is a higher proportion reporting 'No religion', 46 per cent, in the student population, and a smaller proportion of Christians, 30 per cent. Most other groups are similar in proportion, with the exception of Muslims and 'Other religion or belief' making up slightly greater shares of the student population.

Figure 4: Proportion of census and student population made up by each religion or belief



Note: The age of both populations has been restricted to 18-29 years.

⁵ See

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/DC2107EW/view/2092957699?rows=c_age&cols=c_relpuk11.

⁶ . To compare the religion of these two populations, the category of 'Spiritual' from the student population has been grouped into 'Other religion or belief' as it does not exist as an option in the census. Additionally, 'Information refused' has been renamed 'Religion not stated' as it is in the census.

Religion and belief by characteristics of higher education provision

20. This section considers the analysis population (as shown in Figure 1) by institution type and subject. Additional data about how this field relates to other characteristics of applicants is available on the HEFCE website.

21. There are some small variations across institution types between the proportions of entrants from the different religion and belief categories. The greatest variation between institution types is seen in the categories with the most students, such as Christian, Muslim, 'No religion' and 'Information refused'. Students identifying as Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh, 'Spiritual' or 'Other religion or belief' made up around 7 per cent of high-tariff and specialist institutions, and 4 and 6 per cent of medium- and low-tariff institutions respectively.

Table 4: Institutional tariff groupings split by religion and belief

Religion	HEIs with high average tariff scores		HEIs with medium average tariff scores		HEIs with low average tariff scores		Specialist HEIs	
	students	%	students	%	students	%	students	%
Buddhist	285	0%	385	0%	435	1%	115	1%
Christian	18,180	29%	25,075	31%	29,890	35%	4,045	28%
Hindu	1,655	3%	1,165	1%	1,515	2%	125	1%
Jewish	630	1%	150	0%	140	0%	65	0%
Muslim	3,885	6%	9,070	11%	11,225	13%	895	6%
Sikh	910	1%	670	1%	1,200	1%	90	1%
Spiritual	590	1%	960	1%	935	1%	360	2%
Other religion or belief	655	1%	1,035	1%	1,120	1%	285	2%
No religion	30,715	49%	35,370	44%	35,885	42%	7,370	50%
Information refused	4,885	8%	6,125	8%	3,240	4%	1,260	9%
Totals	62,390		80,000		85,580		14,610	

22. Table 5 shows the broad subject of study by the reported religion and belief of entrants using the population shown in Figure 1. A greater proportion of entrants to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects reported their religion to be Muslim, Hindu or 'No religion' compared with entrants to arts, humanities and social sciences. Christian students make up a much smaller proportion of STEM students than those studying arts, humanities and social sciences.

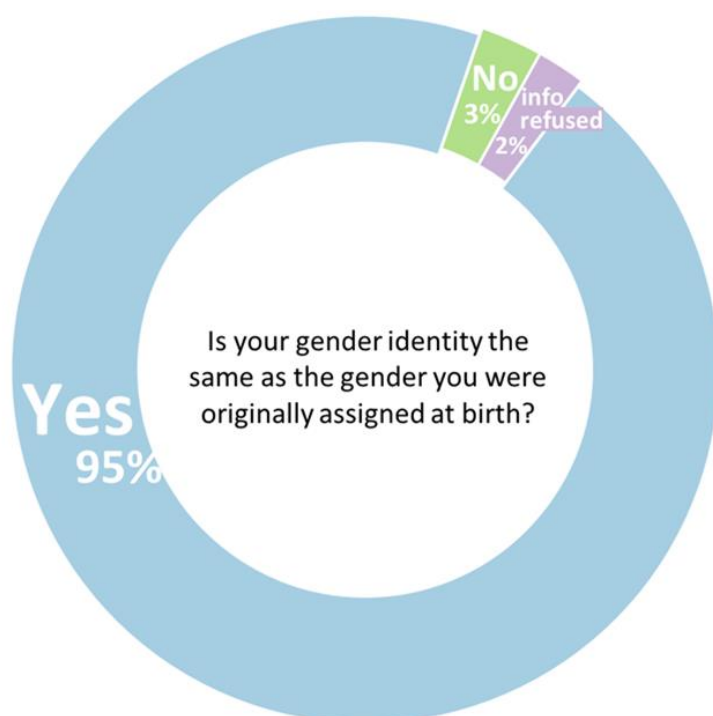
Table 5: Subject split by religion and belief

Religion	Arts, humanities and social sciences		STEM		Other	
	students	%	students	%	students	%
Buddhist	860	0%	295	1%	60	1%
Christian	61,655	34%	12,580	25%	2,955	31%
Hindu	2,675	1%	1,430	3%	355	4%
Jewish	750	0%	165	0%	70	1%
Muslim	17,435	10%	6,980	14%	660	7%
Sikh	2,050	1%	710	1%	110	1%
Spiritual	2,395	1%	335	1%	115	1%
Other religion or belief	2,375	1%	600	1%	120	1%
No religion	81,300	44%	23,745	47%	4,295	45%
Information refused	11,255	6%	3,405	7%	845	9%
Total	182,750		50,245		9,590	

Gender identity

23. Figure 2 shows how the population was restricted for analysis in an effort to improve the data quality of this field. Figure 5 shows that 95 per cent of the FT first degree population (with the restrictions illustrated in Figure 3) answer 'Yes' to the gender identity question.

Figure 5: Gender Identity of full-time first degree entrants



Gender identity by characteristics of higher education provision

24. This section considers the analysis population (as shown in Figure 2) by institution type and subject. Additional data about how this field relates to other characteristics of applicants is available on the HEFCE website.

25. There is little variation across institution types and subjects, as shown in Table 6 and 7. However, 4 per cent of low-tariff entrants answered 'No' to the gender identity question. This is a slightly higher proportion than the medium- and high-entry tariff institutions. Additionally, a higher proportion of entrants to high-tariff and specialist HEIs refuse to answer this field.

Table 6: Institutional tariff groupings split by gender identity

Is your gender identity the same as that assigned at birth?	HEIs with high average tariff scores		HEIs with medium average tariff scores		HEIs with low average tariff scores		Specialist HEIs	
	students	%	students	%	students	%	students	%
Yes	47,575	94%	55,335	96%	64,775	95%	9,570	93%
No	1,335	3%	1,220	2%	2,400	4%	310	3%
Information refused	1,975	4%	1,040	2%	705	1%	455	4%
Total	50,880		57,595		67,875		10,330	

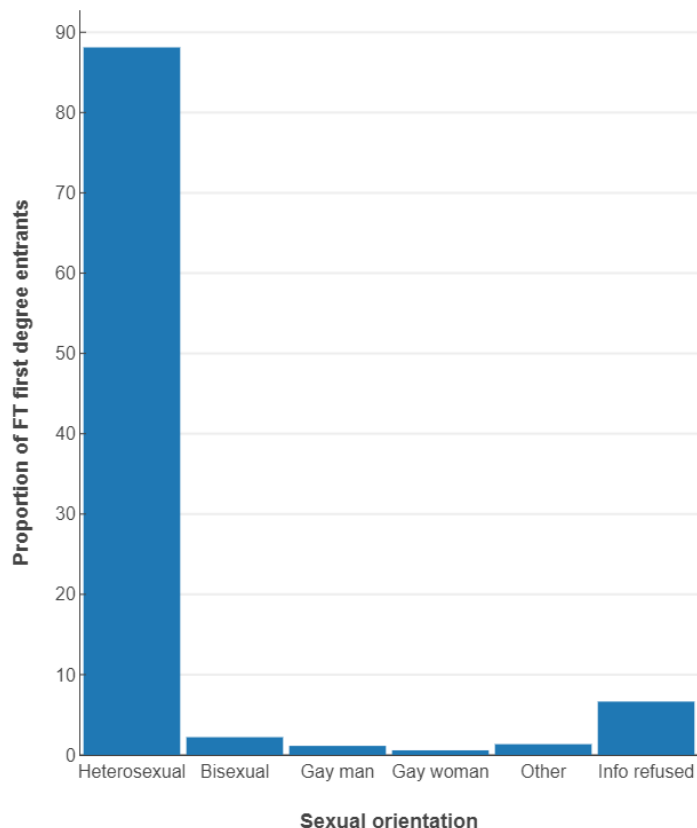
Table 7: Subject split by gender identity

Is your gender identity the same as that assigned at birth?	Arts, humanities and social sciences		STEM		Other	
	students	%	students	%	students	%
Yes	133,210	95%	37,180	95%	6,865	94%
No	4,190	3%	915	2%	155	2%
Information refused	2,825	2%	1,050	3%	295	4%
Total	140,225		39,145		7,315	

Sexual orientation

26. Figure 6 shows the proportion of the FT first degree entrant population (limited as defined in Figure 3) reporting each category of sexual orientation. Amongst this entrant population, 88 per cent stated that they are heterosexual, 6 per cent refused to answer and each of the other groups represent 2 per cent or less.

Figure 6: Sexual orientation of full-time first degree entrants



Note: FT first degree entrant population used subset as shown in Figure 3

Sexual orientation by characteristics of higher education provision

27. This section considers the analysis population (as shown in Figure 3) by institution type and subject. Additional data about how this field relates to other characteristics of applicants is available on the HEFCE website.

28. There is little variation across institution types and subjects, as shown in Tables 8 and 9. There appears to be a slightly higher proportion of heterosexual students in medium-tariff institutions, but this seems to be balanced by a similar difference between the proportions of students who refused to answer this field across the institution types. The proportion of entrants at higher-tariff institutions and to STEM subjects who identify as gay women is under 1 per cent, lower than to other institution types and subjects.

Table 8: Institutional tariff groupings split by sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	HEIs with high average tariff scores		HEIs with medium average tariff scores		HEIs with low average tariff scores		Specialist HEIs	
	students	%	students	%	students	%	students	%
Heterosexual	51,600	87%	79,515	90%	74,655	88%	12,350	83%
Bisexual	1,380	2%	1,865	2%	1,740	2%	480	3%
Gay man	730	1%	985	1%	795	1%	275	2%
Gay woman	230	0%	575	1%	505	1%	110	1%
Other	475	1%	1,095	1%	1,475	2%	270	2%
Information refused	4,730	8%	4,505	5%	5,765	7%	1,450	10%
Total	59,145		88,535		84,930		14,930	

Table 9: Subjects split by sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	Arts, humanities and social sciences		STEM		Other	
	students	%	students	%	students	%
Heterosexual	164,705	88%	45,265	88%	8,145	86%
Bisexual	4,230	2%	1,010	2%	230	2%
Gay man	2,135	1%	510	1%	145	2%
Gay woman	1,195	1%	175	0%	55	1%
Other	2,630	1%	595	1%	85	1%
Information refused	11,925	6%	3,725	7%	795	8%
Total	186,820		51,275		9,450	

Annex A: Coverage table

Table A1 All 2015-16 UK-domiciled entrants to HEFCE-funded institutions

Category		All students		Known religion		Known gender identity		Known sexual orientation	
		students	%	students	%	students	%	students	%
Ethnicity	White	455,480	73%	281,080	73%	240,725	72%	290,885	73%
	Black	50,565	8%	32,425	8%	29,780	9%	34,155	9%
	Asian	70,090	11%	44,100	11%	40,450	12%	46,195	12%
	Mixed or other	34,735	6%	21,820	6%	19,955	6%	23,005	6%
	Unknown	10,390	2%	4,245	1%	3,660	1%	4,585	1%
Age	Young	290,980	47%	201,830	53%	177,660	53%	206,555	52%
	Mature	330,155	53%	181,810	47%	156,885	47%	192,245	48%
Subject	Arts, humanities and social sciences	472,780	76%	296,440	77%	260,415	78%	307,810	77%
	STEM	111,200	18%	69,065	18%	59,980	18%	72,240	18%
	Other	37,285	6%	18,165	5%	14,180	4%	18,775	5%
Institution type	HEIs with high average tariff scores	175,485	28%	89,835	23%	84,795	25%	94,775	24%
	HEIs with medium average tariff scores	199,455	32%	115,810	30%	104,870	31%	127,385	32%
	HEIs with low average tariff scores	182,700	29%	139,410	36%	123,400	37%	137,480	34%
	Specialist HEIs	63,620	10%	38,615	10%	21,510	6%	39,185	10%

Note: 'STEM' = 'science, technology, engineering and maths'; 'HEI' = 'higher education institution'.