



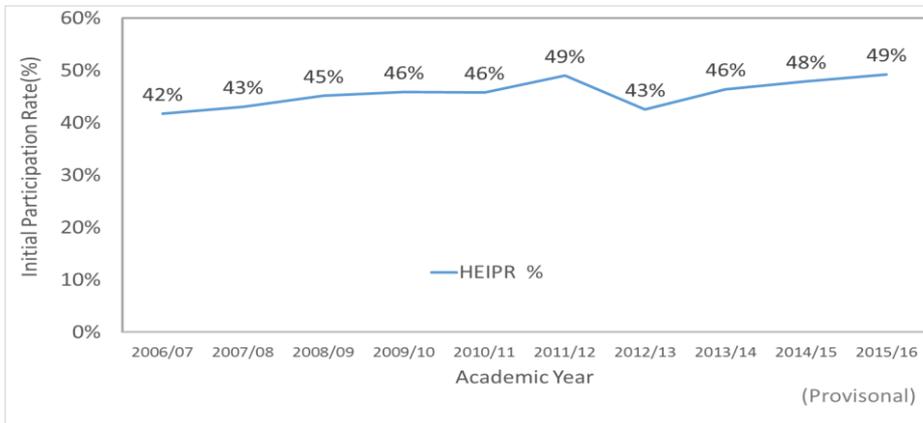
Participation Rates In Higher Education: Academic Years 2006/2007 – 2015/2016 (Provisional)



SFR47/2017, 28th September 2017

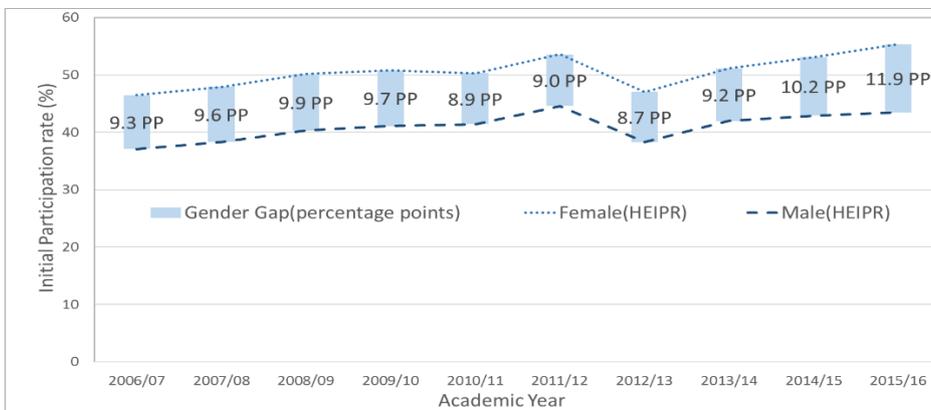
This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides the latest provisional initial participation rates for Higher Education (HE). The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) is an estimate of the likelihood of a young person participating in Higher Education by age 30, based on current participation rates.

Chart 1. The HEIPR continues to increase, reaching 49% in 2015/16 up from 42% in 2006/07



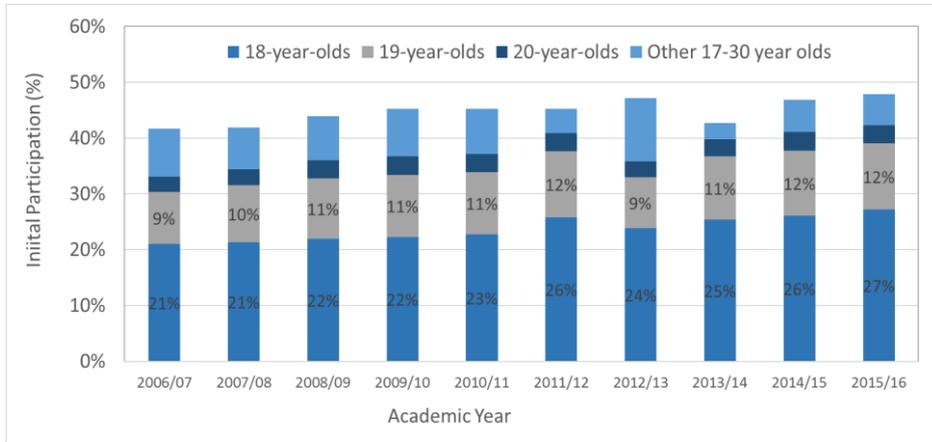
The provisional HEIPR for 2015/16 is 49%, an increase of 1.4 percentage points from last year. Apart from a fluctuation in 2011/12 and 2012/13, coinciding with the introduction of a higher tuition fee cap, we have seen a steady rise in the HEIPR since 2006/07, when the current methodology was introduced.

Chart 2. The gender gap in participation has increased to 12 percentage points.



Whilst the HEIPR for both males and females has increased since last year, the gender gap in 2015/16 has widened and is estimated to be 11.9 percentage points, up from 10.2 percentage points a year earlier. It continues to be more likely for a female to attend university than a male.

Chart 3. The 2015/16 HEIPR participation rate for 18 year olds is the highest in the series.



Individuals are more likely to participate in higher education for the first time at age 18 than at any other age. The 2015/16 initial participation rate for 18-year-olds is the highest in the series at 27%, up by 1.1 percentage points compared to 2014/15. This is the third year in a row that this measure has increased.

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About this release

This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides the latest provisional initial participation rates for Higher Education (HE). It covers 17 to 30 year old English domiciled first-time participants in HE at UK HE Institutions, and at English, Welsh and Scottish Further Education Colleges. The figure for 2015/16 is provisional due to the fact that HESA keep their collection open for between 6 and 15 months following the closure of the corresponding live data collection, so revisions to the initial participant counts are possible.

The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) has been published by DfE (and former Departments) since 2004, and the measure is an estimate of the likelihood of a young person participating in Higher Education by age 30 based on current participation rates.

In this publication:

The following tables are available from the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-rates-in-higher-education-2006-to-2016>

Main tables

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Table 2. Higher Education Initial Participation Rates by Age, 2014/15 and 2015/16 (provisional)

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Supplementary tables

Table A. Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR), 1999/00 to 2006/07 (based on old methodology)

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Table C. Higher Education Initial Participation Rate for 17-60 year olds (HEIPR60), 2006/07 to 2015/16

Table D. Postgraduate Initial Participation Rate for 17-30 year olds (PGIPR), 2006/07 to 2015/16

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at he.statistics@education.gov.uk

1. Introduction

This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides the latest provisional initial participation rates for Higher Education (HE). It covers 17 to 30 year old English domiciled first-time participants in HE at UK HE Institutions, and at English, Welsh and Scottish Further Education Colleges. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) has been published by DfE (and former Departments) since 2004¹, and the measure is an estimate of the likelihood of a young person participating in Higher Education by age 30 based on current participation rates.

Due to ongoing methodological improvements in the estimation of the number of initial participants in Higher Education, the complete time series of participation rates provided in this release has been recalculated. Further information on any resulting revisions and their impact on the HEIPR can be found in the Revisions section (section 6) of the SFR.

Figures for the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) are rounded to the nearest whole number to reflect the degree of accuracy inherent in the data. As this can conceal changes or trends, figures rounded to the first decimal place are also provided in the tables to inform comparisons over time.

2. Key Points

Headline measure – HEIPR 17 to 30

The provisional HEIPR estimate for the 2015/16 academic year was 49% (Chart 1), up by 1.4 percentage points compared with the estimate for 2014/15. This growth was driven by an increase of about 10,000 initial entrants aged 17 to 30, up from 322,710 in 2014/15 to 332,915 in 2015/16.

Age specific rates

In 2015/16 the initial participation rate for 18-year-olds, the largest age group, was the highest in the series at 27%, up by 1.1 percentage points compared to 2014/15, this is the third year in a row that this measure has increased. The increase in the number of participating 18-year-olds outstripped the rate of population growth thus causing the rate to increase.

Time series since 2006/07

The HEIPR has followed an increasing trend since the existing methodology was introduced in 2006/07, increasing by 7.5 percentage points from 42% to 49% in 2015/16. In 2011/12, there was a break in the trend as the HEIPR increased to 49% followed by a large decrease in 2012/13 to 43%, the first time that the initial participation rate had fallen since 2006/07. The 2011/12 increase appears to have been predominantly driven by more students choosing not to defer entry in that year in order to avoid having to pay a higher tuition fee, with a consequent reduction in participation among 19 year olds in 2012/13. Information available from UCAS shows that deferrals returned to more typical levels since 2012/13.

¹ 2006/07 is the first year for which data are available using the current methodology. The latest figures (for 2006/07 to 2015/16) are not comparable to the historical time series provided in Supplementary Table A. Details of the methodological changes can be found in the Notes to Users section.

Gender comparisons

The provisional HEIPR estimate grew faster for females between 2014/15 and 2015/16 than for males. The estimate for females in 2015/16 was 55%, up by 2.2 percentage points compared with the estimate of 53% in 2014/15. For males the estimate in 2015/16 increased by 0.5 percentage points compared with the estimate in 2014/15, but remained at 43% to the nearest whole number. The difference in the initial participation rates of males and females has increased by 1.7 percentage points in 2015/16 compared with a year earlier; the difference is now estimated to be 11.9 percentage points (Chart 2).

Mode of study comparisons

The provisional HEIPR estimate for full-time study in 2015/16 was 45%, up by 1.4 percentage points compared with the estimate for 2014/15 of 44%. The provisional HEIPR for part-time study in 2015/16 was 4%, similar to 2014/15, the lowest in the series. The initial participation rate for part-time students was estimated to be 6% from 2006/07 to 2011/12, following which it began to decrease in 2012/13.

Tables from the release are available in Excel format by accessing the documents here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-rates-in-higher-education-2006-to-2016>

3. Note to Users

The HEIPR National Statistic has been published by DfE (and former Departments) since 2004, and the measure is an estimate of the actual entry rate in the current year of people who had not previously entered higher education at each age from 17 to 30, based on the current entry rate of previous non-entrants.

The figures in this SFR were derived from data on Higher Education students collected from publicly funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom and from the University of Buckingham (from 2004/05) by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and from Further Education Colleges (FECs) in England by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), in Wales by the Welsh Government, and in Scotland by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Population estimates were acquired from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which have been converted to an academic year basis by the Department for Education (DfE).

The HEIPR is a sum of the participation rates for each age from 17 to 30 inclusive. For each age from 17 to 30, the initial participation rate is calculated as the fraction of the academic year population that are initial entrants. These rates are added to create the total HEIPR. The HEIPR is not a sum of the total number of initial entrants divided by the total academic year population. Doing this would make the false assumption of an equal likelihood of participation across all ages. Further information about the methodology can be found in the National Statistics Quality Review of Higher Education participation statistics (2003) at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-reviews/theme/children--education-and-skills/nsqr-24/index.html>.

The HEIPR counts English-domiciled 17 to 30-year-old higher education students. Students are counted if they participate for at least six months on a course expected to last for at least six months, except that students are not counted if they have participated in Higher Education previously for at least six months. Students at FECs in England, Scotland and Wales are counted if they are on courses designated as National Vocational Qualification Level 4 or above, or are listed as Higher Education courses.

The HEIPR does not count English domiciled Higher Education students (as defined above):

- at FECs in Northern Ireland;
- at alternative providers²;
- at institutions outside the UK.

Information on these students is not currently available to the Department in sufficient detail to be included in the calculations; however, some estimates of their likely impact are made in Section 4.

The HEIPR includes students studying via both Full-time (FT) and Part-time (PT) modes. FT study is defined by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as attendance at an institution for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks per year, with learning activity amounting to an average of at least 21 hours per week. The PT mode refers to study which is less intensive than this definition. There is no lower limit on the intensity of PT courses for inclusion in the HEIPR.

In order to ensure that only initial participants are counted in the HEIPR in a given year, algorithms are applied to match back over 12 years for HE data and FE data³. This is in addition to filtering based on qualifications declared at entry. This matching looks back over the previous years' HE and FE datasets and checks whether a student appears in these datasets, recorded as studying at HE level for a minimum period of six months. If so, they are eliminated from the calculations as they are not initial participants in the current year. Matching the 2015/16 figures back over 12 years ensures that any 30-year-old in the dataset, who has at least six months' prior HE experience, can be detected all the way back to when they were 18-years-old. The matching algorithms are provided to DfE by HEFCE.

² The University of Buckingham is an exception as this provider has supplied a full and quality assured HESA Student Return since the Academic Year 2004/05

³ FE datasets are matched back no further than 2002/03 in this publication.

The Academic year 2007/08 was the first year for which this approach was possible (as 12 years' worth of HE data is available up to that point). In order to provide some time series comparison, and to demonstrate the impact of this change, the 2006/07 figure was also calculated using this methodology – although this used one less year of matching due to data availability. The 2006/07 HEIPR measure created using the new methodology can be found in Table 1 of this SFR, and the 2006/07 HEIPR measure using the old methodology can be found in Supplementary Table A (see Background and Methodology Section for more details).

4. Initial Participants not covered by HEIPR

Whilst sufficient detail to include initial participants at Alternative Providers or studying wholly overseas in the HEIPR is not available, we have investigated how much these groups could contribute to the HEIPR estimate.

Alternative Provider students

HESA now has two years of the Alternative Provider Student record. This is person-level data very similar to the Student record and allows the estimation of initial participation rates for students enrolled at Alternative Providers (AP). This data continues to be published as Experimental Statistics by HESA and so has still to be incorporated into the main estimate of initial participation. The AP record shows that there were approximately 18,000 initial participants at Alternative Providers in 2015/16. In the context of the 2015/16 HEIPR, these entrants could add an estimated 1.5 percentage points to the participation rate.

We plan to incorporate initial participants at Alternative Providers into the overall HEIPR estimate in the future once their impact on the series can be properly assessed.

The HESA Experimental Statistical First Release on enrolments and qualifications from the 2015/16 AP Student Record is available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/08-02-2017/sfr244-ap-student-enrolments-and-qualifications>

Students taking Courses wholly overseas

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) produces figures on the number of students studying wholly overseas by country of origin on their 'Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students' webpage. Latest data shows that there were an estimated 31,100 UK students studying wholly overseas in 2014/15. This can be accessed at the following link: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>

If we assume that the 31,100 UK students overseas have a similar profile to students enrolled at UK institutions with a study year abroad (as recorded by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)), then approximately 5,300 would be English domiciled initial entrants to higher education studying wholly overseas. In the context of the 2015/16 HEIPR, these entrants could add an estimated 0.8 percentage points to the participation rate. Since the data necessary to disaggregate these students appropriately to the HEIPR criteria are not available, these participants are not included in the main HEIPR measure.

5. Other Data Sources

There are various other publications that provide estimated participation rates and show how these contribute to the skill levels of the working population in England which are described in this section.

UCAS Entry Rates

UCAS statistics provide an early indication of Higher Education entry rates, at least a year ahead of the HEIPR release. The entry rates published by UCAS can be taken as being very close to all recruitment to full-time undergraduate higher education; they do not however include part-time entrants and there may be additional differences from the HEIPR caused by UCAS' method of calculating the population estimates. Full details can be found at the following link: <https://www.ucas.com/file/86541/download?token=PQnaAI5f>

UCAS entry rates for 18-year-olds are higher than the equivalent initial participation rates reported in this publication, but the percentage point growth is comparable. In 2014/15 the 18-year-old entry rate from UCAS was 31.3%, and in 2015/16 32.5%, a 1.2 percentage point increase. The comparable full-time initial entry rate for 18-year-olds calculated as part of the HEIPR was 25.5% in 2014/15, and 26.6% in 2015/16, a 1.1 percentage points increase. The size of the estimates is different as UCAS measure acceptance of a place, not physical participation on a course for at least 6 months, and there are other differences in coverage.

The latest available entry rates from UCAS refer to the 2016/17 academic year and show that 18-year-olds living in England are more likely than ever to enter Higher Education. The proportion of the 18-year-old-entry rate increased by 1.2 percentage points to 32.5% in 2016/15. In addition, over 40% of young people in England had been accepted to higher education by age 19. The proportion of young people who enter higher education by the time they are aged 19 has increased to record levels for England (43%).

OECD Estimates of Initial Entry to Tertiary-Level Education

The 'Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development' (OECD) publishes entry rates to tertiary education on an internationally comparable basis in their annual publication 'Education at a Glance'. (EAG). The 2017 edition was published on 12 September this year. The reported UK entry rate to Tertiary Level education in 2014/15 was 61%, which compared to an average of 57% across OECD-reporting countries. The methodology for calculating this rate is largely in-line with the HEIPR60, shown in Supplementary Table C (calculated as the sum of age specific participation rates), however it differs in that:

- It provides the entry rate for students domiciled in all UK administrations prior to study, and so is not restricted to English domiciled entrants alone;
- It identifies initial entrants solely based on prior qualification information declared to HESA in administrative data; additional students are discounted as initial entrants in HEIPR through matching to records of study periods in earlier years.

Estimates of the Level of Highest Qualification Held by Adults in England

It has been estimated that in Quarter 4 of 2016, that 43.8% of 19-64 year olds in England held a qualification at level 4 and above (which roughly equates to higher education level). Highest qualifications held by people aged 19-64 are published by the Department for Education in Table 15 of the Further Education and Skills Statistical First Release at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr>

HEFCE Young Participation Rates

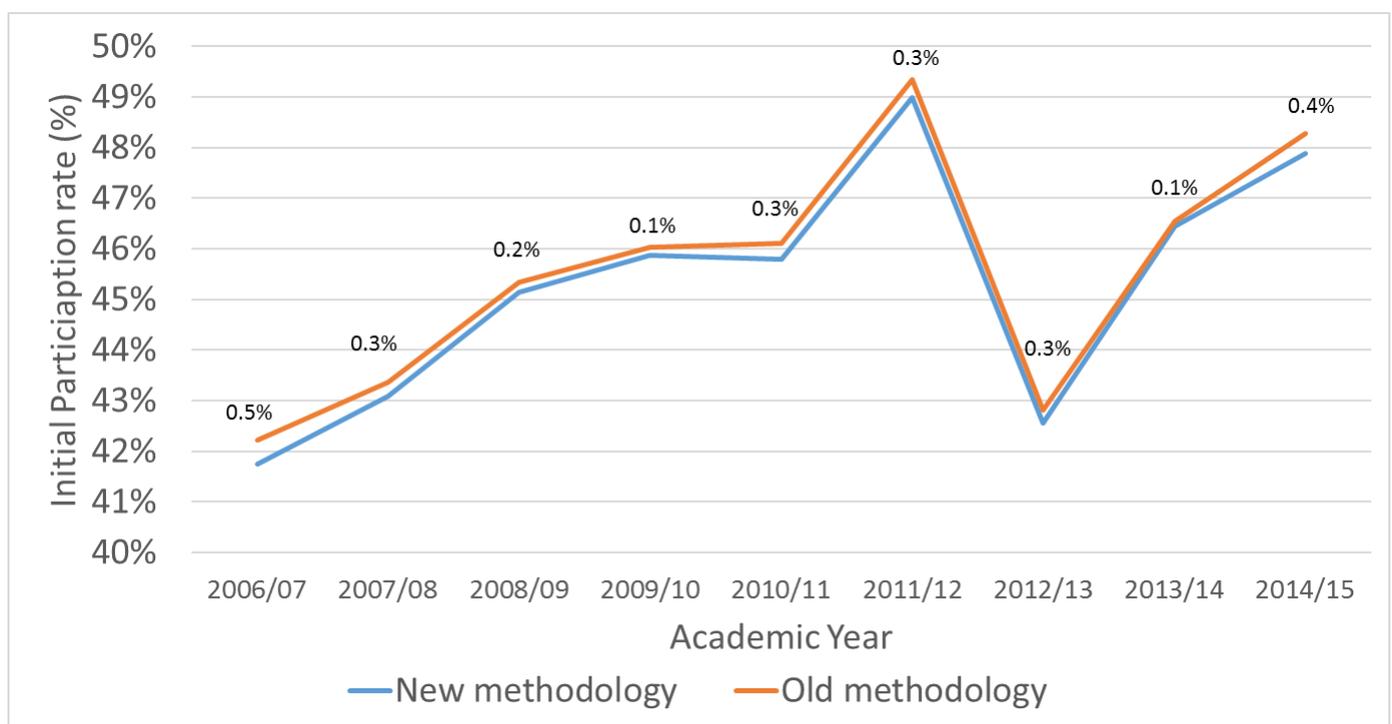
Maps of young HE participation rates for local areas are published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/>

6. Revisions

As revisions and updates to the source data from HESA, HEFCE, ESFA, Scottish Funding Council, the Welsh Government; and the population estimates and projections from ONS and the Government Actuary's Department are made available at different times during the year, any revisions to the provisional figures for 2015/16 will be published as soon as the provisional figures for 2016/17 are available. The Department is planning to publish the provisional figures for 2016/17 in Autumn 2018.

This year the calculation of the HEIPR has been moved into a new programming language. In reviewing the principles of the calculation we discovered that the code was not working as expected for participants at Further Education Colleges (FECs). Some initial participants were included in the HEIPR who may not have studied for the minimum period of six months. The impact of the changes made to the calculation has little impact on the overall trend in the measure between 2006/07 and 2014/15, but reduces the annual estimates by an average of 0.3 percentage points. The scale of the impact on the annual HEIPR estimates is shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Difference in the Initial Participation Rate (old methodology and new methodology)



7. Background and Methodology

In November 2002, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a National Statistics Quality Review of Higher Education participation statistics. The review was carried out independently by Professor Ramsden in accordance with Office for National Statistics guidelines and was designed to ensure rigour and transparency. The report on the review was published in July 2003 and is available on the Office for National Statistics website, at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-reviews/theme/children--education-and-skills/nsqr-24/index.html>. The report recommended that the HEIPR be a measure of initial participation in higher education.

In August 2004, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a further review to assess the feasibility of disaggregating the HEIPR by ethnicity, disability, social class and region. This review was also carried out by Professor Ramsden. The report on this review was published in August 2005 and is available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/publicationDetail/Page1/RR676>

In December 2006, the National Audit Office published a review of the data systems underpinning target measurement in a number of Government Departments. The HEIPR methodology was reviewed as part of this process. The report is available on the National Audit Office website, at: http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0607/third_validation_compendium_re.aspx

The methodology for calculating the HEIPR was revised in 2007, in line with recommendations set out in the National Statistics Quality Review and the recent National Audit Office review. The details of the revisions and their impact on the HEIPR time series were reported in Statistical First Release 03/2007, "Methodological Revisions to the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR)", which is available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206224126/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000714/index.shtml>

The methodology for calculating the HEIPR was further revised in 2009 due to a change in the underlying data. Details of the revisions were reported in the Statistical First Release 03/2009, "Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 1999/00-2007/08 (Provisional)" which is available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206224126/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000839/index.shtml>

Details of the impact of the revisions on the HEIPR time series were detailed in an appendix to the main Statistical First Release which is available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206224126/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000839/index.shtml>

In December 2010, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published an assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics for Higher Education statistics in England and the UK. The Participation Rates in Higher Education Statistical First Release was covered as part of this assessment. The full assessment report is available on the UKSA website at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-77---higher-education-in-england-and-the-uk.pdf>

8. Accompanying Tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-higher-education-initial-participation-rates>

Main tables

- Table 1 Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR), 2006/07 to 2015/16 (provisional)
- Table 2 Higher Education Initial Participation Rates by Age, 2013/14 and 2015/16 (provisional)
- Table 3 Higher Education Initial Participation Rates for Males by Age, 2013/14 and 2015/16 (provisional)
- Table 4 Higher Education Initial Participation Rates for Females by Age, 2013/14 and 2015/16 (provisional)

Supplementary tables

- Table A Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR), 1999/00 to 2006/07 (based on old methodology)
- Table B Higher Education Initial Participation Rate for 17-20 year olds (HEIPR20), 2006/07 to 2015/16
- Table C Higher Education Initial Participation Rate for 17-60 year olds (HEIPR60), 2006/07 to 2015/16
- Table D Postgraduate Initial Participation Rate for 17-30 year olds (PGIPR), 2006/07 to 2015/16

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

- The figures in Supplementary Table A show the historical HEIPR time series, prior to the methodology change in 2006/07. These figures are not comparable to the figures in Table 1.
- The figures in Supplementary Tables B, C and D have been derived using similar methods to the HEIPR. The figures for the HEIPR20 are the sums of the age specific initial participation rates for 17 to 20 year olds and are at least as robust as the figures for the HEIPR itself. The figures for the HEIPR60 are the sums of the age specific participation rates for 17 to 60 year olds and are not as robust as the figures for the HEIPR itself because it is not possible to check as thoroughly whether participants aged 31 to 60 are initial participants. The HEIPR20 and HEIPR60 provide estimates for a narrower and wider definition of first-time participation and enable comparability with statistics published by other countries.

9. National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

10. Get in touch

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Department
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<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics?departments%5B%5D=department-for-education>

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