

**Further Education and Skills: Statistical First Release  
Response to Feedback**

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## Introduction

In March 2015 the Further Education Statistics Dissemination Team launched a short online survey asking for feedback about the Statistical First Release for Further Education and Skills (SFR).

The survey was designed to help us understand who the users of our statistics are, what our data are used for and how we could improve our statistical publications. The survey closed at the end of June 2015, and this document provides a summary of the views we received and some changes we will introduce as a result.

We were pleased to receive 56 responses from a range of users - central and local government, FE providers, the media, academia, business and personal users. The information provided was extremely valuable in shaping the statistics we produce.

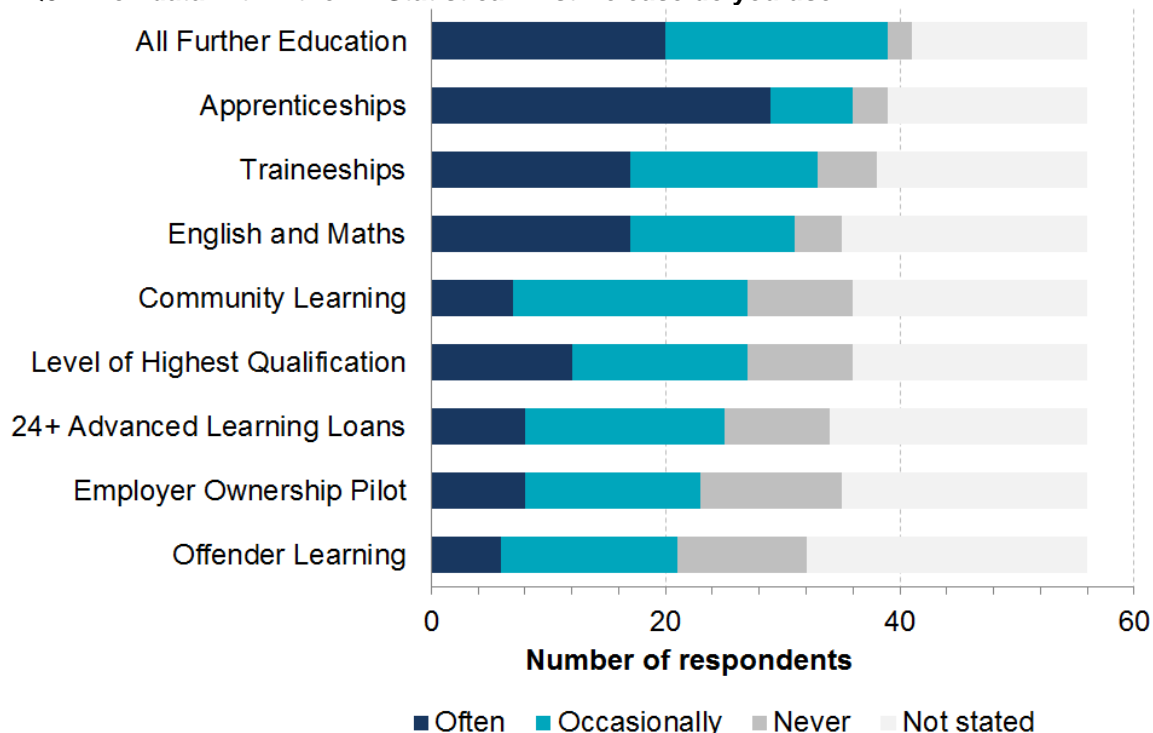
## Current use of the SFR

The results from the survey show that the information provided in the SFR is used by a range of individuals and organisations that have different uses and needs for the data.

Question 3 asked respondents to say how often they use different parts of the SFR. The responses show that all of the breakdowns are used often by users, although some are used more widely than others.

**Figure 1: Use of data in the SFR**

**Q3 which data within the FE Statistical First Release do you use?**



Based on the total of 56 responses:

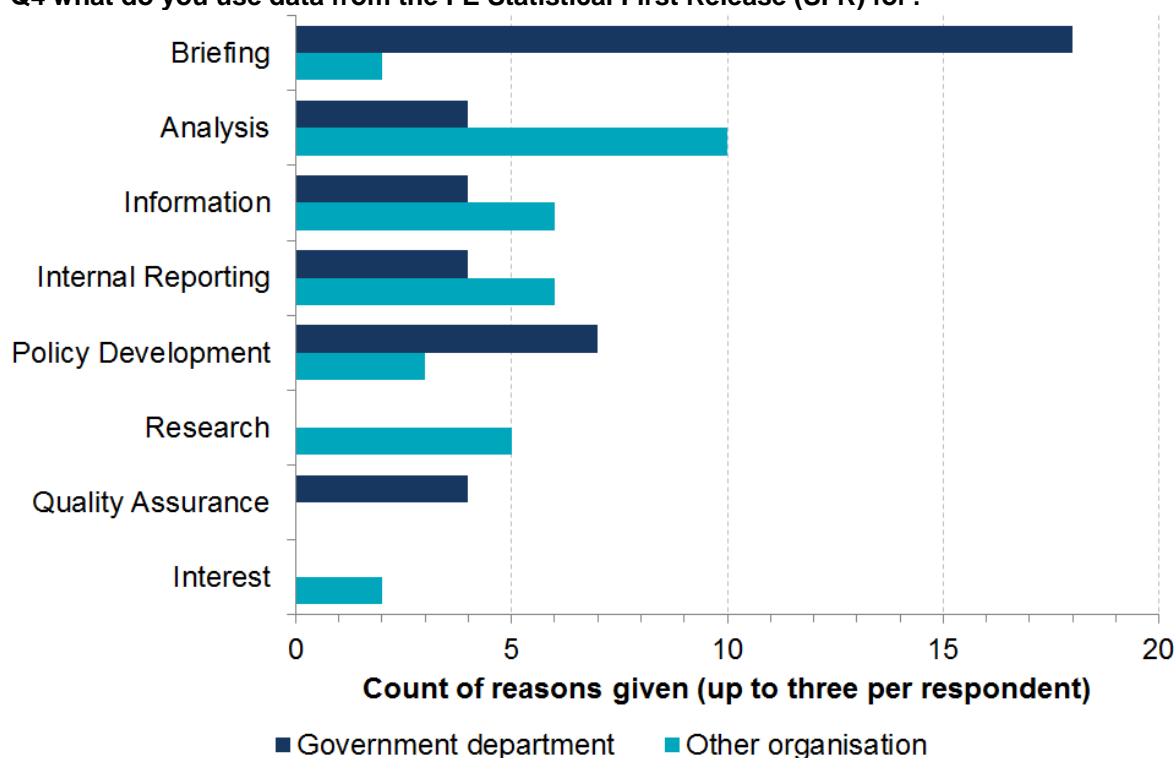
- The further education, apprenticeship, traineeship, and English and maths, breakdowns are used by more than half of respondents at least occasionally
- More than half of respondents use the apprenticeship tables often
- The Offender Learning and Employer Ownership tables are used by the smallest number of respondents

Question 4 asked respondents to list up to three reasons for using the data. The responses have been grouped into a number of categories ranging from research purposes and policy development, to quality assurance and general interest. The most common reasons for using the SFR are for briefing and analysis purposes.

Responses to question 4 differ depending on the type of organisation respondents belong to. Briefing and policy development were the top reasons for Government departments, while analysis, internal reporting, and general information were the top reasons for other organisations.

**Figure 2: Reasons for using the SFR**

Q4 what do you use data from the FE Statistical First Release (SFR) for?



### Suggested improvements to the SFR

The survey asked for suggestions regarding further information to include in the SFR and general improvements we could make to the publication. The responses show that users are broadly content with the breadth and detail of the information we currently publish. However, there are clear themes that emerge from the responses:

- Improved access to information beyond the main SFR

- Inclusion of contextual information about the sector and information about the impact of FE
- Simplification of the information presented in the main SFR

A number of responses suggest including additional information that is already available online via the FE Data Library. These suggestions have been grouped with the improved access theme above.

### **Next steps**

Work to improve access to our statistics is already underway and is focussing on two areas:

- Better signposting within the SFR to the detail published in the FE Data Library
- Improving the structure of the FE Data Library to simplify the journey to data tables

We are also working on a new document that will outline in more detail the definitions for the statistics we use in our publications.

Going forward we will investigate how best to include both contextual information about the further education sector and information about the impact of the sector.

We are continually looking at ways we can improve the content of the SFR and how the statistics are communicated. Given that there are many different users of the SFR, there is a need to balance any changes to content or simplification of the publication with maintaining the range of statistics we provide. In the event of any major changes to the SFR we will hold a formal consultation.

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