

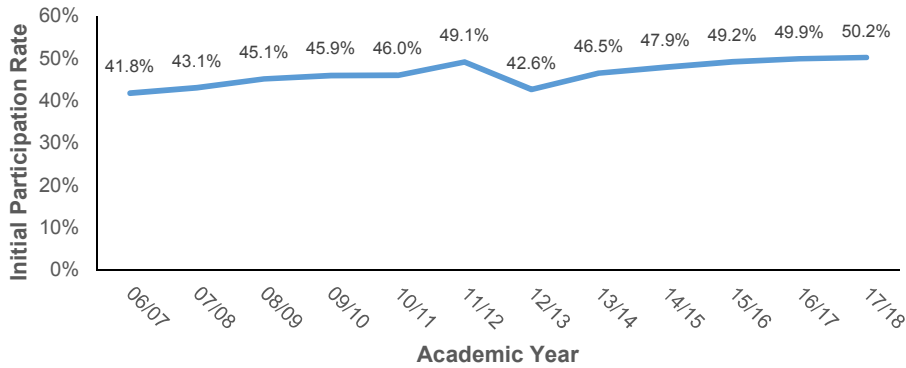


Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 2006/2007 – 2017/2018 (Provisional)



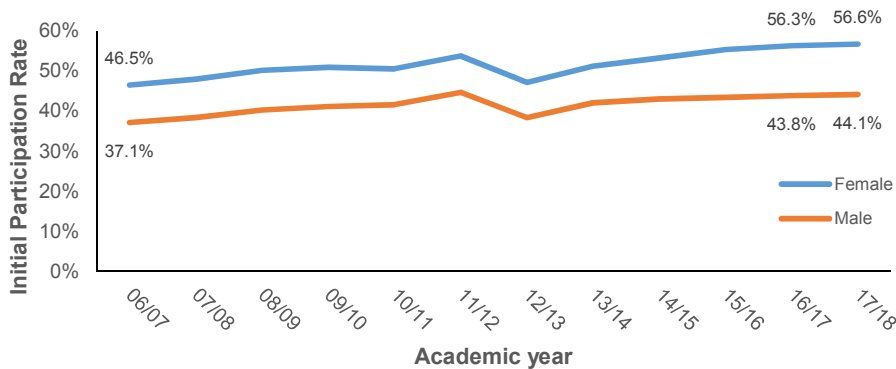
26th September 2019

The HEIPR continues to increase, reaching 50.2% in 2017/18.



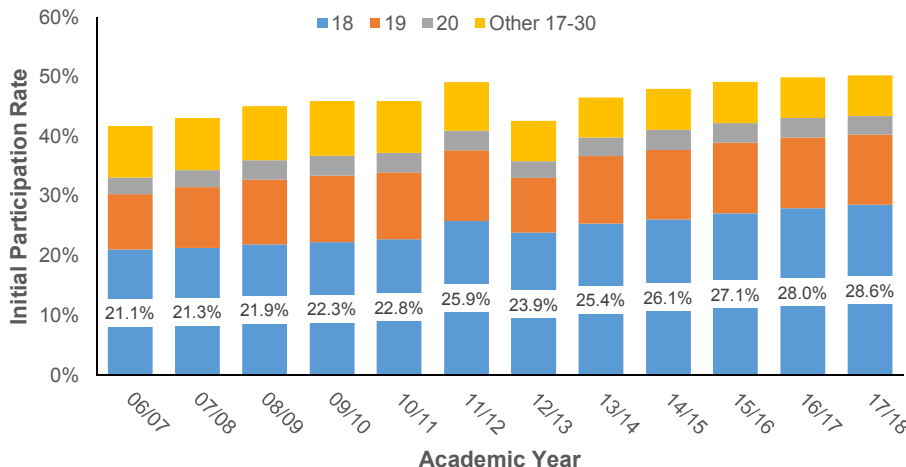
The HEIPR in 2017/18 was 50.2%, an increase of 0.3 percentage points since 2016/17. Apart from a fluctuation in 2011/12 and 2012/13, coinciding with the introduction of a higher tuition fee cap, we have seen a steady rise in the HEIPR since 2006/07 (when the current methodology was introduced).

The gap in female-male participation gap remains at 12.5 percentage points.



Whilst the HEIPR for both males and females has increased since last year, the participation gap in 2017/18 has remained stable compared to 2016/17 and is estimated to be 12.5 percentage points. It continues to be more likely for a female to attend higher education than a male.

The 2017/18 HEIPR (17-30) 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 2017/18 initial participation rate for 18-year-olds is the highest in the series at 28.6%, up by 0.6 percentage points compared to 2016/17.

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About this release

This Statistical publication 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 Providers. The figure for 2017/18 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 but likely to be relatively minor. Population estimates can also be revised which can lead to updates to the measure. 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-2018>

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Table F: (Experimental) Higher Education Initial Participation Rate by Qualification Level (HEIPR) 2014/15 to 2017/18

To follow at a later date

Table G: (Experimental) Higher Education Initial Participation Rate by Region of domicile (HEIPR) 2013/14 to 2017/18

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 Publication provides the latest provisional initial participation rates for Higher Education. 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 Providers. 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 and updates to the underpinning data, 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 7) of this publication.

Figures for the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) are rounded to the nearest five to reflect the degree of accuracy inherent in the data. Percentages are rounded to the first decimal place in the tables to inform comparisons over time.

2. Key points

Headline measure – HEIPR (for 17 to 30 year-olds)

The provisional HEIPR estimate in the 2017/18 academic year was 50.2%, up by 0.3 percentage points compared with the estimate for 2016/17. Whilst the number of initial entrants fell from 334,205 in 2016/17 to 333,315 in 2017/18, a decrease of approximately 41,215 in the population aged 17 to 30, down from 10,105,820 in 2016/17 to 10,064,600 in 2017/18, meant that the entry rate grew by 0.3 percentage points.²

Age specific rates

In 2017/18 the initial participation rate for 18-year-olds, the largest contributing age group, was the highest in the series at 28.6%, up by 0.6 percentage points compared to 2016/17. The increase in the number of participating 18-year-olds, from 182,275 to 184,820, combined with a decrease in the 18-year-old population, caused the 18-year-old HEIPR to increase.

For other ages in the 17-30 group, the percentage point changes from 2016/17 to 2017/18 in initial participation rates have largely remained stable. The only exceptions were 19 and 27-year-olds, where there were 0.2 and 0.1 percentage point falls respectively.

Time series since 2006/07

Since the current methodology was introduced in 2006/07, first-time participation rates for 17 to 30 year-olds have seen year-on-year increases. The series reached a temporary high point in 2011/12, which was largely due to students choosing not to defer entry in order to avoid the higher tuition fees that came into effect in 2012/13. There has been a return to the gradually increasing trend, confirmed by a first time participation rate of 50.2% in 2017/18, which is the highest the measure has ever been.

¹ 2006/07 is the first year for which data are available using the current methodology. The latest figures (for 2006/07 to 2017/18) 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.

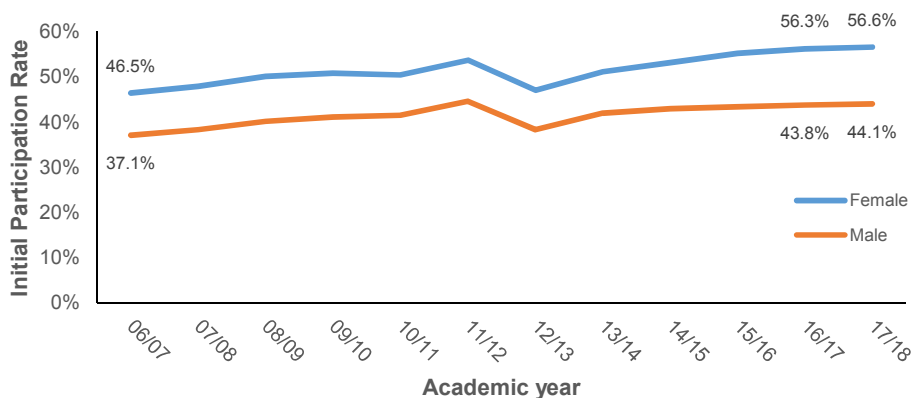
² This population is adjusted to reflect the age of individuals during the academic year.

Sex comparisons

Since 2006/07, HEIPR estimates have always been larger for females. The 2017/18 provisional HEIPR estimates are 56.6% for females and 44.1% for males. This represents a difference in initial participation rates between males and females of 12.5%.

Over time, the HEIPR has increased faster for females, from 46.5% in 2006/07 to 56.6% in 2017/18 (up 10.1 percentage points). For males, HEIPR estimates have increased from 37.1% in 2006/07 to 44.1% in 2017/18 (up 7.0 percentage points).

Comparing most recent estimates between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the provisional HEIPR estimate grew slightly faster for females (up 0.4 percentage points) than males (up 0.3 percentage points).³



Mode of study comparisons

The provisional HEIPR estimate for full-time study in 2017/18 is 46.4%, up by 0.3 percentage points compared with the estimate in 2016/17 of 46.1%. The provisional HEIPR for part-time study in 2017/18 is 3.8%, which is the same as in 2016/17. The initial participation rate for part-time students was estimated to be about 6% from 2006/07 to 2011/12, following which it began to decrease in 2012/13.

HEIPR for 17 to 60 year-olds

HEIPR for 17 to 60 year-olds (HEIPR 60) cannot be calculated to the same degree of accuracy as HEIPR for the 17 to 30 year-olds as data matching to identify previous HE participation cannot be extended for the number of years that would be necessary. This is however included in our supplementary tables to provide added context. In 2017/18 the HEIPR 60 was 54.9%

The gap between the HEIPR for 17 to 30 year-olds and HEIPR 60 has narrowed from 9.7 percentage points in 2006/07 to 4.7 percentage points in 2017/18, which suggests that while many young people will go on to study Higher Education after age 30, this is becoming relatively less likely compared to studying before that age.

HEIPR 60 also shows a larger decline in the contribution of part-time entrants to the overall rate. Part-time entrants contributed 13.9 percentage points to the HEIPR 60 estimate of 51.5% in 2006/07, but only 6.1 percentage points of the 54.9% HEIPR 60 in 2017/18, a decline of 7.8 percentage points. In comparison, the contribution to HEIPR from part-time study by 17 to 30 year-olds fell just 2.3 percentage points from 6.1% in 2006/07 to 3.8% in 2017/18.

³ The 0.3 and 0.4 percentage point changes referred here come from unrounded percentages.

Postgraduate Initial Participation Rate (PGIPR) (for 17 to 30 year-olds)

The initial participation rate for postgraduate study has increased by 0.2 percentage points from 2016/17 to 2017/18. Similar to the HEIPR (17-30), most of this increase comes from females, who have had a 0.4 percentage point increase, whereas males had a 0.1 percentage point increase from 2016/17.

The female-male gap in participation at postgraduate level has widened from 4.8 percentage points to 5.1 percentage points between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

There has been an increase in full-time initial entrants from 58,085 in 2016/17 to 60,790; for part-time study, this has fallen from 20,575 to 19,045.

Since 2006/07, there has been a larger increase of 2.5 percentage points in full-time study compared to part-time study, where it has fallen from 2.8% to 2.6%.

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-2018>

3. Experimental new breakdowns

For the second time, experimental statistics tables have been included to provide additional context around the HEIPR statistic. These tables show the contribution of different provider-types and qualification levels to the headline measure.

It is also intended to repeat the breakdowns of the HEIPR (17-30) measure by region; these will be added in an update to this release pending further quality assurance checks on the figures.

For these tables, the total figures can differ slightly to earlier tables [1-4] as information was not obtained for these breakdowns for the small number of English entrants (68 in 2017/18) to FE providers in Scotland.

We are seeking feedback on these new tables on how they could be improved and to inform whether they should become a more formal part of the publication in future. Please email he.statistics@education.gov.uk with any views.

Provider-type

Provider-type has been defined based on which organisation has collected the data. Entrants reported to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) have registered for study at a Higher Education Institution (HEI); entrants reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) are typically registered at a Further Education Provider (FEP).

Higher Education Institutions, contributed 46.5 percentage points to the total HEIPR of 50.2% in 2017/18, and Further Education Providers (FEPs) contributed the remaining 3.7 percentage points. The most interesting aspect of this new breakdown is that there is a much smaller gender gap of 0.1 percentage points in participation at FEPs, compared with a 12.4 percentage point gap at HEIs.

Further splits by gender can be seen in Table E of the supplementary tables

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-rates-in-higher-education-2006-to-2018>

Qualification Level

Qualification level is defined from the course aim of the student. The breakdown provided illustrates the contribution of each different qualification level towards the overall HEIPR for that year; it is not the first time

entry rate for each qualification. If a HE participant has already entered a Foundation Degree they would not feature again in the statistics when they entered a First Degree at a later date because they had already undertaken an “initial” higher education experience.

The majority of initial participants are studying towards a First Degree; the contribution of first degrees to the HEIPR has increased steadily from 36.0% in 2013/14 to 45.0% percentage points in 2017/18.

A longer time series is available in table F in the supplementary tables.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-rates-in-higher-education-2006-to-2018>

4. 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 Statistical release 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 Providers (FEPs) 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) at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/analysisofpopulationestimatestool>.

These have been converted to an academic year basis using their data on the month of birth for each cohort. Regional population estimates are calculated in the same way, however the data on month of birth relates to all of England rather than individual regions.

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 have participated for at least 6 months. Students at FEPs 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 FEPs in Northern Ireland;
- at alternative providers⁴;
- 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 5.

⁴ 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

The HEIPR includes students studying via both Full-time (FT) and Part-time (PT) modes. FT study is defined by the Office for Students (OfS) 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 data⁵. 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 2017/18 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 OfS.

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 statistical publication, 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).

5. 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 four 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.⁶

The latest estimates, show that there were approximately 19,000⁷ initial participants on designated courses at English Alternative Providers (plus one Scottish AP, Ballet West) in 2017/18 (this excludes students at the University of Buckingham, who are included in the main HEIPR statistics). In the context of the 2017/18 HEIPR, these entrants could add an estimated 1.7 percentage points to the participation rate. We plan to incorporate initial participants at APs into the overall HEIPR estimate in the future once their impact on the series can be properly assessed.

The HESA Experimental Statistical Release on Higher Education Student Statistics for the 2017/18 AP Student Record is available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/14-02-2019/sb254-higher-education-student-statistics-APs>

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

⁵ FE datasets are matched back no further than 2002/03 in this publication.

⁶ Subsequent Alternative Provider Student Record returns for 2018/19 data onwards will be incorporated into HESA's National Statistics for enrolments and qualifications.

⁷ This figure has been rounded to the nearest 1,000 to reflect that a more simplified methodology is used here.

Students' webpage. Latest data shows that there were an estimated 35,252 UK students studying wholly overseas in 2016/17. This can be accessed at the following link: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>

Approximately 6,026 of the 35,252 UK students studying wholly overseas in 2016/17 are English domiciled initial entrants to HE. This would add an estimated 0.9 percentage points to the initial participation rate.

As 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.

6. 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

Although UCAS entry rates for 18-year-olds are higher than the equivalent initial participation rates reported in this publication, the percentage point growth is comparable. The size of the estimates is different as UCAS measure the acceptance of a place, not physical participation on a course for at least 6 months, and there are other differences in coverage, with UCAS covering full-time undergraduate acceptances only.

The latest available entry rates from UCAS refer to the 2018 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-olds entering HE increased by 0.4 percentage points to 33.7%. Entry rates for 2019 will be released in December this year. The comparable full-time initial entry rate for 18-year-olds calculated as part of the HEIPR was 26.6% in 2015/16, and 27.4% in 2017, a 0.8 percentage points increase.

OECD Estimates of Initial Entry to Tertiary-Level Education

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) publishes first time entry rates to tertiary education on an internationally comparable basis in their annual publication Education at a Glance (EAG). The reported UK participation rate in EAG 2019 was 66% and referred to the academic year 2016/17. The participation rate across all OECD-reporting countries was 58%. The EAG rate for the UK differs to HEIPR because

- It identifies initial entrants based on prior qualifications, whereas HEIPR discounts students who have participated for a minimum of 6 months;
- It includes a larger age range, while the headline HEIPR estimate refers to just 17 to 30 year-olds;
- It includes some entrants to vocational studies at 'tertiary education' level who do not meet the conditions for inclusion in HEIPR i.e. study regulated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA);
- It provides the entry rate for students domiciled in all UK administrations, rather than just England.

Office for Students Young Participation Rates

Maps of young HE participation rates for local areas are published by the Office for Students at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/>

7. Revisions

As revisions and updates to the source data from HESA, OfSofS, 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 2017/18 will be published as soon as the provisional figures for 2017/18 are available. The Department is planning to publish the provisional figures for 2017/18 in autumn 2019.

This year there has been a necessary revision to the HEIPR estimates from 2012/13 to 2014/15. The key change was to improve identification of duplicate people in the ILR datasets. This has improved the matching of students across years.

The biggest impact across the entire time series of this change is a 0.5 percentage point increase in our headline HEIPR (17-30). This was in 2012/13, where there was a 4,105 increase in total entrants.

8. 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 publication 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>

9. 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 2017/18 (provisional)

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Table C Higher Education Initial Participation Rate for 17-60 year-olds (HEIPR60), 2006/07 to 2017/18

Table D Postgraduate Initial Participation Rate for 17-30 year-olds (PGIPR), 2006/07 to 2017/18

Experimental tables

Table E (Experimental) Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) by Provider Type for 2013/14 to 2017/18

Table F (Experimental) Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) by Qualification Level for 2014/15 to 2017/18

To follow at a later date

Table G (Experimental) Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) by Region of domicile for 2013/14 to 2017/18

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.

10. 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.

Tables E and F are classified as experimental statistics and have been produced in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, but have not been designated as National Statistics by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority.

11. Get in touch

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