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Issued by
Department for Education
and Skills
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington
DL3 9BG

Telephone:

Press Office
020 7925 6789
Public Enquiries
0870 000 2288

Statistician
Stephen Cook

Email
info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Internet
[http://www.dfes.gov.uk/
rsgateway/DB/SFR/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

PARTICIPATION RATES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ACADEMIC YEARS 1999/2000 - 2004/2005 (Provisional)

INTRODUCTION

1. This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides a historic time series of initial participation rates for 17-30 year old English domiciled first-time entrants to Higher Education courses since 1999/2000.

KEY POINTS

2. 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 nearest decimal place are also provided to inform comparisons over time.
3. The provisional figure for the HEIPR for 2004/05 was 42%, no change from the final figure for 2003/04 of 42%. The figure for 2003/04 was down from 43% in 2002/03.
4. The provisional figure for males for 2004/05 was 37%; the final figure for 2003/04 was 38% but the difference between these figures was only 0.2 percentage points. The figure for 2003/04 was down from 39% in 2002/03.
5. For females, the provisional figure for 2004/05 was 47%; the final figure for 2003/04 was also 47% but the difference between these figures amounted to a decrease of 0.6 percentage points between 2003/04 and 2004/05. The figure for 2002/03 was also 47%.

6. The provisional figure for full-time students in 2004/05 was 35%, no change from the final figure for 2003/04 of 35%. The final figure for 2003/04 was down from 36% in 2002/03.
7. The provisional figure for part-time students was 7% in 2004/05, no change from the final figure for 2003/04. The figure for 2002/03 was also 7%.
8. The provisional figures for 2004/05 on the age specific initial participation rates for males and females show that participation rates for females were higher than those for males for all ages from 17 to 30.
9. The figures in this SFR supersede figures released earlier as they have been updated with revised data from all sources.

TABLES

**Table 1 Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) for English domiciled first time entrants to Higher Education Courses at UK Higher Education Institutions and English Further Education Colleges
1999/00 – 2004/05**

Academic Year	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05 (provisional)
HEIPR (male and female) %	41 (40.5)	42 (41.5)	42 (42.3)	43 (43.4)	42 (42.3)	42 (42.0)
Initial entrants (thousands)	246	249	255	268	269	271
HEIPR (male) %	38 (37.9)	38 (37.9)	38 (38.2)	39 (39.2)	38 (37.5)	37 (37.3)
Initial entrants (thousands)	116	115	118	124	122	123
HEIPR (female) %	43 (43.2)	45 (44.8)	46 (46.0)	47 (47.3)	47 (47.4)	47 (46.8)
Initial entrants (thousands)	131	134	138	144	147	147
HEIPR (full-time) %	34 (34.4)	36 (35.5)	36 (36.1)	36 (36.3)	35 (35.3)	35 (35.3)
Initial entrants (thousands)	207	210	216	223	224	228
HEIPR (part-time) %	6 (6.1)	6 (6.0)	6 (6.2)	7 (7.1)	7 (7.0)	7 (6.7)
Initial entrants (thousands)	39	38	39	44	44	43

Figures for the 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 nearest decimal place are also provided to inform comparisons over time. Figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are shown in parentheses. Figures for the counts of initial entrants are rounded to the nearest thousand. Rounding may result in apparent inconsistencies between totals and sums of constituent parts.

**Table 2 Higher Education Initial Participation Rates by Age
2004/2005 (provisional)**

Age	Initial Entrants	Population	Initial Participation Rate (%)
17	2,250	655,250	0.3
18	127,495	648,920	19.8
19	61,930	662,150	9.4
20	17,370	643,355	2.7
21	10,635	633,155	1.7
22	8,170	623,415	1.3
23	6,980	650,615	1.1
24	6,635	664,110	1.0
25	6,060	645,765	0.9
26	5,360	611,260	0.9
27	4,690	604,905	0.8
28	4,505	622,245	0.7
29	4,260	643,445	0.7
30	4,280	667,030	0.6
17 - 30 (Overall)	270,630		42.0

The HEIPR is defined as the sum of the initial participation rates by age over ages 17-30. It has been rounded to one decimal place, the initial participation rates by age have been rounded to one decimal place, and the counts of the initial entrants and the relevant population have been rounded to the nearest 5. Rounding may result in apparent inconsistencies between totals and sums of constituent parts.

**Table 3 Higher Education Initial Participation Rates by Gender and Age
2004/2005 (provisional)**

Age	Males			Females		
	Initial Entrants	Population	HEIPR (%)	Initial Entrants	Population	HEIPR (%)
17	840	336,895	0.3	1,410	318,355	0.4
18	57,450	334,205	17.3	70,045	314,715	22.4
19	30,215	342,320	8.9	31,720	319,830	10.0
20	8,770	331,245	2.7	8,605	312,105	2.8
21	5,205	322,575	1.6	5,435	310,580	1.8
22	3,750	312,230	1.2	4,420	311,185	1.4
23	3,000	323,565	0.9	3,980	327,050	1.2
24	2,680	330,355	0.8	3,950	333,755	1.2
25	2,525	322,365	0.8	3,540	323,400	1.1
26	2,135	306,420	0.7	3,230	304,835	1.1
27	1,815	303,375	0.6	2,875	301,530	1.0
28	1,710	313,405	0.5	2,795	308,840	0.9
29	1,650	324,195	0.5	2,615	319,250	0.8
30	1,650	334,295	0.5	2,630	332,740	0.8
17-30 (Overall)	123,390		37.3	147,395		46.8

The HEIPR is defined as the sum of the initial participation rates by age over ages 17-30. It has been rounded to one decimal place, the initial participation rates by age have been rounded to one decimal place, and the counts of the initial entrants and the relevant population have been rounded to the nearest 5. Rounding may result in apparent inconsistencies between totals and sums of constituent parts.

NOTES TO EDITORS

10. The HEIPR is the National Statistic that the Government uses to measure progress in participation in relation to the Public Service Agreement target: by 2010, increase participation in higher education towards 50% of those aged 18 to 30 and also make significant progress year on year towards fair access, and bear down on rates of non-completion. It roughly equates to the probability that a seventeen year old will participate in higher education by age thirty given the age specific participation rates.
11. 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 and 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.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/quality_review/education.asp
12. The report recommended that the HEIPR be a measure of initial participation in higher education.
13. 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. The report on this review was published in August 2005 and is available at:
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectid=14567&keyword=&type=5&resultspage=61>
14. It is recommended that figures for the HEIPR are rounded to the nearest whole number to reflect the degree of accuracy inherent in the data. However, figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are also provided to inform comparisons over time.

DEFINITIONS

15. 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 for the first time in 2004/05 from the University of Buckingham by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and from Further Education Colleges (FECs) in England by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Population estimates were provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and population projections by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD).

16. The HEIPR counts English-domiciled 17-30 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 entered Higher Education previously. Students at FECs in England are counted if they are on courses designated as National Vocational Qualification Level 4 or above, or listed as Higher Education on the LSC's Learning Aims Database.

17. The HEIPR does not count English domiciled Higher Education students (as defined above):
 - at FECs in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland;
 - at privately funded institutions, with the exception of the University of Buckingham from 2004/05 (which makes no practical difference to the figures because of its relatively small number of English-domiciled students aged 18-30);
 - 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. Estimates produced for the National Statistics Quality Review suggested that the inclusion of such students would not significantly increase the HEIPR and the report recommended that these estimates are not included in the calculation.

18. 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.

19. The HEIPR depends on the “entry code” fields in the HESA and LSC data. This field determines whether a student is recorded as “New to HE”, “Not new to HE” or “Unknown prior HE”. HEFCE have determined that the field is not entirely accurate and have developed algorithms to correct for students on the HESA Student Record declaring themselves as “New to HE” when they actually have prior HE experience. HEFCE have provided DfES with the results of the algorithms that identify and remove any such entrants who have experience of initial study in previous years. Students who do not have records in previous years, but who have “Unknown prior HE”, qualify for the HEIPR on a pro-rata basis in relation to those with known background.

20. The estimated population by individual age (as used in the denominator of the calculation of the HEIPR) is based on ONS mid-year population estimates and population projections provided by GAD, converted to an academic year basis by DfES.

REVISIONS

21. The Department will evaluate potential changes to the methodology and the source data and release any revised figures in an orderly manner consistent with the principles set out in the National Statistics Protocols on Release Practices and Revisions and the Department's own Statement of Compliance with the Protocol on Release Practices, ensuring that changes are subject to suitably rigorous quality assurance procedures. The revisions will take into account the recommendations from the National Statistics Quality Review and the forthcoming National Audit Office review of the data systems underpinning the Department's PSA targets.

22. Methodological developments:

As techniques for matching records of students across sources and retrospectively over successive years of the time series improve, the Department will be able to more accurately identify students with previous experience of higher education. As students only count in the HEIPR if they participate in higher education for at least six months, improvements in matching will also make it possible to discount students with previous experience lasting six months or more rather than any previous experience as now. This will mean that students not counted in the HEIPR in previous years because they did not participate for at least six months could be counted in the HEIPR on return to higher education.

Where there are multiple enrolments for the same student within the same academic year, it may be feasible to develop algorithms to exclude all but one of the enrolments, and this would affect the HEIPR.

23. Coverage:

The Department is working with the devolved administrations to gain access to data on English-domiciled Higher Education students at Further Education Colleges in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for incorporation into the HEIPR. These students should be included in the HEIPR but are not because the data are not currently available to the Department. The Department will continue to consider the

scope for including data on Higher Education provided privately or overseas.

24. National Audit Office Review of Data Systems:

The National Audit Office (NAO) review of the data systems underpinning the Department's Public Service Agreement targets considered the HEIPR. The NAO report will be published later this year.

25. Updates to the underlying data:

As revisions and updates to the source data from HESA and LSC and the population estimates and projections from ONS and GAD are made available at different times during the year, any revisions to the provisional figures for 2004/05 will be published as soon as the provisional figures for 2005/06 are available. The Department is planning to publish the provisional figures for 2005/06 in March 2007.

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