

Office for
Students

The logo for the Office for Students, featuring a dark blue square with a yellow square in the top right corner containing the letters 'OfS' in white.

OfS

Equality, diversity and student characteristics data

Students at English higher education providers
between 2010-11 and 2019-20

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Overview

1. This document summarises equality, diversity and student characteristics data at English higher education providers between 2010-11 and 2019-20. It has been published alongside an interactive data dashboard, datafiles and webpages.¹
2. This release extends the coverage of the Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation data dashboard,² to report on sector-level trends in student characteristics for both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and both UK and non-UK domiciled students.
3. The first two sections of this document summarise the key findings behind this data. Details of statistical methodology and population coverage can be found in Annex A. Annex B defines populations and student characteristics. Annex C describes changes in methodology since the previous release of these statistics.

Equality Act 2010

4. The Equality Act 2010³ requires public sector bodies to have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between people who do and do not share a protected characteristic
 - c. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share a protected characteristic.
5. Our duty to comply with the Act is referred to as the 'public sector equality duty' (PSED).⁴ These statistics are published as part of our specific duties under the Equality Act, which applies to the OfS as a provider of public services.
6. As required under this duty, this annual release contains information about students with 'protected characteristics' who are affected by our work as the independent regulator for higher education in England. There are nine protected characteristics under the Act. These are:
 - a. age
 - b. disability
 - c. gender reassignment
 - d. marriage and civil partnership
 - e. pregnancy and maternity
 - f. race

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/.

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/.

³ See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

⁴ For more information on our public sector equality duty, see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/what-does-the-law-say/.

- g. religion or belief
- h. sex
- i. sexual orientation.

7. This release reports sector-level trends for several of these characteristics where data is available. We also include data on several other characteristics to highlight further differences in access between different groups.

Official statistics

8. The OfS is a producer of official statistics, which means we must follow the Code of Practice for Statistics.⁵
9. Some of the student characteristics in this release have been reported on previously and are established as official statistics, whereas other characteristics in this release are newly developed and, as required by the Code of Practice, we report these experimental statistics separately.
10. The separation of official and experimental statistics does not reflect the underlying quality of the data. We assessed all characteristics using the OfS's data quality framework,⁶ to determine whether they were valid to include and the population coverage. Detail on the implementation of this framework can be found in Annex A, while an assessment of each of these characteristics' data quality can be found alongside definitions in Annex B.
11. The characteristics included in this release are listed below. As explained above, those marked with an asterisk (*) relate to one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
12. Throughout these statistics, we refer to these characteristics using the same language as was used in the collection of this data. In some cases, these terms deviate from those used to define the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. For example, 'ethnicity', as reported in this data, is more narrowly defined than 'race', as defined in the Equality Act, which can refer to a person's colour, nationality, or ethnic origins.⁷
13. For some characteristics we have added multiple groupings to make them easier to use. For instance, the data is split by both broad and detailed age groups, where age is presented in two and six groups respectively.

Official statistics

- a. Age (broad and detailed)*
- b. Disability (broad and type)*
- c. Ethnicity (two groups, five groups and 15 groups)*

⁵ See <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>. Further information can be found in our compliance statement: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/official-statistics/compliance-statement/.

⁶ See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

⁷ See <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#race>.

- d. Religion or belief*
- e. Sex*
- f. Sexual orientation*
- g. Gender identity
- h. Parental education
- i. Free school meals (FSM) eligibility, an indicator of financial disadvantage for key stage 4 pupils
- j. Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4)⁸, an area-based measure reflecting higher education participation rates
- k. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), an area-based measure of deprivation in England

Experimental statistics

- l. Care experience, indicating whether a student has been in care
- m. Household Residual Income (HRI), a measure of household income after accounting for certain costs
- n. Estrangement, indicating whether a student is no longer communicating with their parents
- o. Socioeconomic background
- p. Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)⁹, an area-based measure that tracks state-funded mainstream school pupils in England into higher education
- q. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles,¹⁰ grouping young people with certain combinations of characteristics by the likelihood of access to higher education.

We are keen to receive feedback on these statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Stanley Rudkin at official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk.

⁸ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/.

⁹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/.

¹⁰ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/.

Official statistics: Key findings

The findings in this section briefly summarise some of the sector-level trends in our equality, diversity and student characteristics data. You can find all the data on our interactive dashboard with splits by population, domicile, level of study and mode of study or subject of study.¹¹

14. It should be noted that a rise in the proportion of students with a certain characteristic does not always mean the number of these students has risen. If the number of students with a given characteristic has fallen, the proportion may still rise if the number of students with different characteristics has fallen by a greater amount.
15. Where students have refused to provide information, or the data is not applicable or otherwise unknown, these students are generally excluded from the calculation of proportions. A small number of students with unknown age are included in the denominator.
16. For full definitions of each of the student characteristics below, see [Annex B](#).

Age

17. Full-time undergraduate courses are most commonly studied by students under the age of 21 on entry (70.4 per cent of entrants in 2019-20), whereas part-time undergraduate qualifications are most commonly studied by students aged 31 to 40 (25.3 per cent of entrants in 2019-20).
18. Roughly two-thirds of full-time postgraduate entrants in 2019-20 were aged 21 to 25 (69.2 per cent), having risen 6.0 percentage points since 2010-11.¹²

Disability

19. In 2019-20, 14.3 per cent of full-time undergraduate entrants reported having a disability, having risen 5.8 percentage points from 8.5 per cent in 2010-11. In part-time study, the increase in the proportion of disabled entrants has been more pronounced, having risen 11.4 percentage points, from 7.6 per cent in 2010-11 to 19.0 per cent in 2019-20.
20. The proportion of undergraduate entrants reporting a mental health condition has risen by 3.5 percentage points since 2010-11, from 0.7 per cent to 4.2 per cent in 2019-20, which is more than any other disability type.

Ethnicity

21. The proportion of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants who are white has fallen 8.7 percentage points, from 78.7 per cent in 2010-11 to 70.0 per cent in 2019-20. Meanwhile, the proportion of students from each minority ethnic group has risen.

¹¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/.

¹² All percentage point changes in this document have been calculated using rounded proportions, to avoid unintentionally disclosing information about individuals.

22. 13.3 per cent of undergraduate entrants in 2019-20 were from an Asian background, 9.7 per cent were black, 4.8 per cent were from a mixed ethnic background, and 2.2 per cent were from other minority ethnic groups.
23. During the last eight years, black students have seen the biggest percentage point increase in postgraduate study, rising from 5.8 per cent of postgraduate entrants in 2010-11 to 8.3 per cent in 2019-20. The proportion of postgraduate entrants who were Asian also rose 2.4 percentage points, from 9.4 per cent to 11.8 per cent over the same period.

Sex

24. For all years since 2010-11, the majority of undergraduate entrants have been female, standing at 55.7 per cent in 2019-20.
25. The difference in the proportions of male and female students within certain subjects remains large. In 2019-20, 83.5 per cent of engineering, technology and computing undergraduate entrants were male, compared to just 14.3 per cent of those studying courses in education and teaching.

Gender identity

26. In 2019-20, 0.9 per cent of all undergraduate entrants to English higher education providers had a gender different to the sex registered at birth.
27. By comparison, the Government Equalities Office (GEO)¹³ tentatively estimates that there are approximately 200,000 to 500,000 trans people in the UK, or between 0.3 and 0.8 per cent of the UK population.

Religion or belief

28. In 2019-20, just under half (47.5 per cent) of undergraduate entrants said they had no religion, followed by 30.9 per cent who identified as Christian, while 12.4 per cent were Muslim.
29. Postgraduate entrants in 2019-20 were marginally more likely to report having no religion (49.3 per cent) than undergraduate entrants.
30. Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, the proportion of postgraduate entrants who were Hindu rose 2.6 percentage points from 4.6 per cent to 7.2 per cent.

Sexual orientation

31. In 2019-20, 7.4 per cent of undergraduate entrants identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, while 2.1 per cent identified with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

¹³ See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf [PDF].

Parental education

32. In 2019-20, just over half (51.3 per cent) of undergraduate entrants had a parent with a higher education qualification, remaining broadly unchanged since 2010-11 (51.5 per cent).
33. Amongst postgraduate entrants, an even greater proportion (57.0 per cent) had a parent with a higher education qualification, although this has fallen 2.2 percentage points since 2010-11, when it stood at 59.2 per cent.

Free school meal eligibility (FSM)

34. Free school meal eligibility data is available for UK domiciled undergraduate students aged under 21 on entry to higher education, who attended English schools. It is commonly used as a marker of potential financial disadvantage.
35. In 2019-20, 17.6 per cent of full-time entrants to higher education were eligible for free school meals when they were in key stage 4. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals are known to be underrepresented in higher education.¹⁴

Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4)¹⁵

36. POLAR4 quintiles are reported for UK domiciled undergraduate students aged under 21 on entry. 29.8 per cent of entrants in 2019-20 came from the most represented areas in the UK, while 12.5 per cent came from the least represented areas.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

37. 21.5 per cent of English undergraduate entrants in 2019-20 were from the most deprived areas, more than any other IMD quintile. This has risen 4.5 percentage points from 17.0 per cent in 2010-11.

¹⁴ See DfE's report 'Widening participation in higher education: 2020' at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2020.

¹⁵ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/.

Experimental statistics: Key findings

The findings in this section very briefly summarise some of the sector-level trends in our equality, diversity and student characteristics data. You can find all the data on our interactive dashboard with splits by population, domicile, level of study, mode of study, or subject of study.¹⁶

38. It should be noted that a rise in the proportion of students with a given characteristic does not always mean the number of these students has risen.

39. Where students have refused to provide information, or the data is not applicable, or otherwise unknown, these students are excluded from the calculation of proportions.

40. For full definitions of each of the student characteristics below, see [Annex B](#).

We are keen to receive feedback on these experimental statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Stanley Rudkin at official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Care experience

41. 1.1 per cent of full-time UK domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2019-20 had been in care at some point prior to their study, compared to 1.5 per cent of part-time entrants.

Household Residual Income (HRI)

42. Household Residual Income (HRI) is assessed based on gross income (before tax and National Insurance) after accounting for certain costs such as dependants and pensions.

43. Information on HRI is restricted to English, Welsh and Northern Irish full-time undergraduates who reported their income to the Student Loans Company from 2011-12 onwards. This excludes those who did not take out a loan or chose not to apply for income-dependent support. In particular, this means both students with HRI too high to qualify for extra support and any students with other indicators of low income would be less likely to report their income and may be underrepresented in the data.

44. In 2019-20, just under half (45.9 per cent) of full-time undergraduate entrants who were dependent on their parents had household residual income between £1 and £25,000.

45. Amongst full-time undergraduate students who were independent,¹⁷ 71.2 per cent reported their HRI as £0 in 2019-20.

Estrangement

¹⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/.

¹⁷ Students classed as independent by the Student Loans Company includes those aged 25 and over, those not living with their parents, and those who are married or a parent.

46. In 2019-20, 0.9 per cent of English, Welsh and Northern Irish undergraduate entrants aged under 25 were estranged from their parents.

Socioeconomic background

47. More than half of all young UK domiciled full-time undergraduate entrants entering via UCAS in 2019-20 had parents from either higher (27.0 per cent) or lower (26.4 per cent) managerial and professional occupations.

48. These proportions are higher than for all UK 20- to 24-year-olds, for whom 13.0 per cent and 20.6 per cent have parents from higher and lower managerial and professional occupations respectively.¹⁸

Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)¹⁹

49. TUNDRA quintiles are reported for English undergraduate students aged under 21 on entry. 29.8 per cent of full-time entrants in 2019-20 came from the most represented areas in England, while 11.4 per cent came from the least represented areas. The proportion from the most represented areas has fallen marginally by 1.2 percentage points since 2010-11, when it stood at 31.0 per cent.

Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles²⁰

50. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles show how likely groups of students are to access higher education based on a set of characteristics.

51. In 2019-20, amongst young English full-time undergraduate entrants from state-funded mainstream schools and independent schools in England, 40.7 per cent were from quintile 5, meaning they had characteristics which were most strongly associated with access to higher education. Meanwhile, 8.5 per cent were from quintile 1 – those least likely to access higher education.

¹⁸ See the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Young people in five-year age band by National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification, UK, April 2017 to March 2018' at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/adhocs/008869youngpeopleinfiveyearagebandbynationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationukapril2017tomarch2018>.

¹⁹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/.

²⁰ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/.

Annex A: Methodology and data coverage

1. This annex summarises the methodology used to produce the statistics in this release and describes the framework used to determine population coverage.
2. Where students have refused to provide information, or the data is missing or otherwise unknown, we have grouped students into a single 'No response' category. Students not included in the population coverage, as defined by Table A1 below, and those who could not be linked to a requisite data source, are described as 'Not applicable'. Both categories are excluded from the calculation of proportions, except for age (broad and detailed), where a small number of students with unknown age are included in the denominator.
3. When statistics are split by subject, students studying more than one subject are partially counted for each subject. For instance, a student studying half English and half history would be counted as 0.5 in each subject.²¹

Rounding and suppression

4. Our approach to rounding and suppression in these statistics is aligned with our Access and Participation data dashboard.²² The data has been rounded as follows:
 - a. Counts have been rounded to the nearest 10.
 - b. Proportions have been rounded to the nearest five when the denominator rounds to 50 or less, rounded to the nearest one when the denominator rounds to 1,000 or less, or to the nearest 0.1 otherwise.
 - c. Totals and proportions are calculated using unrounded figures.
5. In addition, counts and proportions are suppressed where there are fewer than 25 students in the category shown. This suppression may mean the proportions reported do not sum to 100 per cent in total.

Data quality framework and population coverage

6. For student characteristics which are new to this release (see [Annex C](#)), and for newly official statistics which were previously published as experimental statistics (gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and parental education), we have assessed each against the OfS's data quality framework.²³ The framework provides a standardised method of investigating the quantity and quality of student characteristic data to aid in making decisions whether or not to publish data and whether to use it in further analyses.

²¹ See 'What are the differences between a count of students, full-person equivalent (FPE) and full-time equivalent (FTE)?' at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions>.

²² See 'Rounding and suppression of access and participation data' under 'Regulatory indicators, methodology and rebuild instructions' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

²³ See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

7. For this analysis, the framework allowed us to make consistent judgements around the appropriate population coverage for each of the student characteristics included in this release. While the previous release of these statistics sought to ensure data quality was sufficient by suppressing low quality provider-level data (see [Annex C](#)), this new approach aims to ensure that the data is reported as it is collected, but only when we are confident in its accuracy.
8. When making these decisions, we prioritised breadth of coverage and consistency over time, as opposed to reporting for a longer time series. For example, for characteristics where data collection is limited to those who began their course after a particular point in time, we only report the rates for qualifiers when the majority would be included. This means we need to allow time for those with the characteristic collected to complete their course. We felt it was more important to report a consistent time series than to include data for earlier years which may not accurately represent 'all students', since qualifiers would be underrepresented in these earlier years.
9. For each of the characteristics assessed against the framework, a table can be found alongside their definitions in Annex B, summarising some of the contextual information we used to determine the final population coverage relating to that characteristic.
10. Table A1 below shows a summary of the population coverage for each of the student characteristics included in this release.
11. As shown in the table, the data included in this release are derived from the following sources: the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA's) individualised learner record (ILR)²⁴; the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) Student record²⁵; HESA's Student Alternative (SA) record²⁶ (formerly known as the Alternative Provider record); the Student Loans Company (SLC) data; and the National Pupil Database (NPD) provided by the Department for Education.²⁷ In addition, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles are produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)²⁸ and are merged with the ILR and HESA records.

²⁴ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>.

²⁵ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051>.

²⁶ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054>.

²⁷ The DfE does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the NPD data by third parties.

²⁸ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

Table A1: Summary of population coverage of each student characteristic

Official statistics	Characteristic	Data source(s)	First year included	Domicile	Level of study	Other
Official statistics	Age (broad and detailed)	HESA and ILR	2010-11	All	All	-
	Disability (broad and type)	HESA and ILR	2010-11	All	All	-
	Ethnicity (2 groups, 5 groups, and 15 groups)	HESA and ILR	2010-11	UK	All	-
	Sex	HESA and ILR	2010-11	All	All	-
	Religion or belief	HESA Student & SA	2017-18	All	All	-
	Sexual orientation	HESA Student & SA	2015-16	All	All	-
	Gender identity	HESA Student & SA	2018-19	All	All	-
	Parental education	HESA Student	2012-13	All	All	-
	Free school meals eligibility	NPD	2014-15 entrants, 2016-17 qualifiers, 2016-17 all students	UK	UG	Under 21 on entry
	Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4)	OfS, HESA and ILR	2010-11	UK	UG	Under 21 on entry
	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	MHCLG, HESA and ILR	2010-11	English	All	-
Experimental statistics	Care experience	HESA Student	2014-15 entrants, 2016-17 qualifiers, 2016-17 all students	UK	UG	-
	Household Residual Income (HRI)	SLC	2011-12	English, Welsh, Northern Irish	UG	Full-time
	Estrangement	SLC	2014-15	English, Welsh, Northern Irish	UG	Under 25 in year
	Socioeconomic background	HESA Student	2015-16	UK	UG	Full-time
	Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)	OfS, HESA and ILR	2010-11	English	UG	Under 21 on entry
	Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles	OfS, HESA and ILR	2014-15 entrants, 2016-17 qualifiers, 2016-17 all students	English	UG	Under 21 on entry

Note: UG = Undergraduate students only. Other acronyms are defined in the paragraph above.

12. Table A2 shows, for each of the three base populations in this release (all students, entrants, and qualifiers), the number of providers reporting in each of the main data sources: the HESA Student record, the HESA Student Alternative (SA) record, and the ILR. Providers formerly known as Alternative Providers (APs) were first required to return data to HESA in 2014-15.²⁹ This means there may be some higher education provision prior to 2014-15 which was not reported and is not included in these statistics.
13. In two cases, providers reported data in multiple sources. These providers were included in the count for the HESA Student record only, which ensures they are counted in the total only once. Some providers have very few students, and in some cases providers with no entrants may have a small number of students in the qualifier population, which is why in some years the number of providers with qualifiers exceeds the number of providers with entrants.

Table A2: Number of providers reporting in the HESA Student record, the HESA Student Alternative (SA) record, and the ILR

Population	Data source	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
All students	HESA Student record	131	131	134	136	133	133	135	136	137	137
	HESA Student Alternative record	-	-	-	-	62	97	96	98	97	101
	ILR	137	140	174	180	201	247	244	229	240	229
	Total	268	271	308	316	396	477	475	463	474	467
Entrants	HESA Student record	131	131	134	136	133	133	135	135	137	137
	HESA Student Alternative record	-	-	-	-	61	97	92	95	93	92
	ILR	131	133	169	178	191	235	227	217	221	212
	Total	262	264	303	314	385	465	454	447	451	441
Qualifiers	HESA Student record	131	131	132	136	133	133	135	136	137	137
	HESA Student Alternative record	-	-	-	-	58	95	95	93	93	99
	ILR	137	141	174	180	205	249	244	229	240	229
	Total	268	272	306	316	396	477	474	458	470	465

²⁹ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/ap-student>.

Annex B: Definitions

1. This annex defines the various populations and characteristics used in these statistics.

Throughout this annex, definitions of variables with the prefix 'IP' can be found in the OfS '2021 core algorithms' document.³⁰

Populations and study characteristics

'All students' population

2. The 'all students' population includes all those studying higher education courses at English higher education providers who either were active in the academic year reported (see IPSTULOAD in the OfS '2021 core algorithms' document)³¹ or who had just begun their course.
3. Users should be cautious when using proportions based on the 'all students' population, because students are counted once for each academic year of their course. This means students on longer courses or courses which span over two academic years are counted more times than those on shorter courses. For this reason, the default view of the interactive dashboards is for the entrant population.

Entrant population

4. The entrant population is defined as students in their first year of study, active for at least 14 days from their commencement date, registered on courses that aim for a formal qualification, as well as a number of other restrictions to remove incoming exchange students and other atypical provision (see IPACCEXCL).³²
5. For UK domiciled undergraduate entrants, this population is aligned with our Access and Participation data dashboard.³³

Qualifiers population

6. Qualifiers include those awarded a higher education qualification in the reporting year (see IPBASEQUALPOP).

Domicile

7. In the official statistics, as well as reporting for all domiciles combined, UK domiciled and non-UK domiciled students are reported separately.

³⁰ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

³¹ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

³² Restrictions relating to the level of study are not applied to postgraduate students (see IPACCEXCL8).

³³ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/.

Level of study

8. Various groupings of level of study are available in these statistics, in addition to all levels of study combined. These groupings are listed below:
- a. All undergraduate
 - i. First degree
 - ii. Undergraduate with postgraduate components
 - iii. Other undergraduate
 - b. All postgraduate
 - iv. Postgraduate research
 - v. Postgraduate taught masters
 - vi. PGCE
 - vii. Other postgraduate.
9. These levels of study are defined by IPLEVEL for all students apart from qualifiers, for whom the awarding level (IPAWARDLEVEL) is used instead.
10. Note that only include students aiming for a full qualification are included. This means that those studying only for credit are not in scope.

Subject of study

11. A new subject coding system, the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS), was introduced in the 2019-20 academic year. This replaced the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) used in previous years. In this analysis, subject codes (both JACS and HECoS) are mapped to Version 1.3 of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH).
12. Level 1 (CAH1) codes are used for splits by 'Subject of study (detailed)', which are then further aggregated into 10 groups for 'Subject of study (broad)'.³⁴ Table B1 shows how these subject groupings relate to one another.

Table B1: Subject groups

Subject of study (broad)	Subject of study (detailed) – CAH1 groups
Medicine, dentistry and veterinary sciences	Medicine and dentistry (CAH01) Veterinary sciences (CAH05)
Nursing, allied health and psychology	Subjects allied to medicine (CAH02) Psychology (CAH04)
Natural and mathematical sciences	Biological and sport sciences (CAH03) Physical sciences (CAH07) Mathematical sciences (CAH09)

³⁴ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos>.

Subject of study (broad)	Subject of study (detailed) – CAH1 groups
Engineering, technology and computing	Engineering and technology (CAH10) Computing (CAH11)
Natural and built environment	Agriculture, food and related studies (CAH06) Architecture, building and planning (CAH13) Geography, earth and environmental studies (CAH26)
Law and social sciences	Social sciences (CAH15) Law (CAH16)
Business and management	Business and management (CAH17)
Humanities and languages	Language and area studies (CAH19) Historical, philosophical and religious studies (CAH20) Combined and general studies (CAH23) Media, journalism and communications (CAH24)
Education and teaching	Education and teaching (CAH22)
Design, and creative and performing arts	Design, and creative and performing arts (CAH25)

13. The change from JACS to HECoS causes some additional variation in the distribution of subjects between 2018-19 and 2019-20 on top of the usual year-on-year variation, which can also be due to changes in the providers reporting to HESA. Therefore, this should be taken into consideration when drawing comparisons between these two academic years.

Mode of study

14. Mode of study is defined by IPMODE for all students apart from qualifiers, for whom the qualifying mode (IPEMPMODE) is used instead. Modes of study are grouped as follows:

- Full-time or apprenticeship
- Part-time
- Other mode or writing up.

15. There are roughly 50,000 postgraduate students with 'other mode or writing up' in each academic year, while there are only a handful of undergraduates in this category. There are no entrants or qualifiers with this mode, since entrants cannot be dormant by definition and the qualifying mode is given by the final mode before the student became dormant.

Official statistics

Age on entry

16. Age (both broad and detailed) refers to the age of the student on 31 August in the year they commence their studies (see IPSTARTAGEBAND). A small number of students with unknown age are included in the denominator for the calculation of these proportions.

Disability

17. Disability (both broad and detailed) is self-reported by students at the point of starting their course (see IPDISABLETYPE).

Ethnicity

18. Ethnicity information is provided by the student on the basis of their own self-assessment (see IPETHNICDETAIL). For this release, we report ethnicity in three different groupings: two groups, five groups, and 15 groups.

19. Ethnicity information is restricted to UK domiciled students in this release, as it is collected in the HESA Student record.³⁵

Sex

20. Sex is reported by the student as 'Male', 'Female', or 'Other sex'. See IPSEX.

21. Gender identity information is collected and reported separately, as defined below.

Gender identity

22. Gender identity information is collected on the HESA Student record³⁶ and HESA Student Alternative (SA) record³⁷ only. Students should, according to their own self-assessment, indicate if their gender identity is the same or different to the sex registered at birth. The field is optional for all students.

23. Having assessed the quality of this data against the OfS data quality framework³⁸ (see Table B2), it was decided to report this data for all students from 2018-19 onwards.

Table B2: Summary of applying data quality framework to gender identity data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA Student record and HESA SA record (GENDERID)
Year data collection started	2012-13
Summary of data field	Records the gender identity of the student, according to the student's own self-assessment
Student population data available for	All students (optional)
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Over 54% since 2018-19 for all students
I.C – provider response	Reported by more than 76% of English providers

³⁵ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ethnic>.

³⁶ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/genderid>.

³⁷ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054/a/genderid>.

³⁸ See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

Framework criteria	Summary
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Before 2018-19, several large providers reported nearly all their students as having a different gender to the sex registered at birth, with many others reporting proportions well above those seen in the wider population
II.B – reporting consistency³⁹	Inconsistency score around 2 in 2018-19
II.C – comparisons to public	As reported by the Government Equalities Office (GEO), ⁴⁰ there is no robust data on the UK-wide trans population, although the Office for National Statistics did include a question on gender identity in the 2021 Census. ⁴¹ The GEO tentatively estimates that there are approximately 200,000 to 500,000 trans people in the UK, or between 0.3 and 0.8 per cent of the UK population. This compares to 0.9 per cent of students at English providers in 2019-20.
Final coverage decision	All students from 2018-19 onwards

Religion or belief

24. Religion or belief is collected on the HESA Student record⁴² and HESA SA record⁴³ only. It records the religious belief of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment. The field is collected for all students, having become compulsory in 2017-18.

25. Having assessed the quality of this data (see Table B3), it was decided to report this data for all students from 2017-18 onwards.

Table B3: Summary of applying data quality framework to religion or belief data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA Student record and HESA SA record (RELBLF)
Year data collection started	2012-13
Summary of data field	Records the religious belief of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment

³⁹ Calculated as the weighted standard deviation of differences in reporting between one academic year and the next. For more information, see 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

⁴⁰ See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721642/EO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf [PDF].

⁴¹ See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/genderidentity>.

⁴² See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/reblf>.

⁴³ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054/a/reblf>.

Framework criteria	Summary
Student population data available for	All students
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	At least 80% of students from 2017-18 onwards
I.C – provider response	Reported by more than 95% of English providers
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Collection became compulsory in 2017-18, leading to significant improvement in disclosure rate.
II.B – reporting consistency	Inconsistency score falling from 2.1 in 2017-18 to 1.2 in 2018-19 as disclosure rates began to settle after introduction of compulsory collection
II.C – comparisons to public	Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey ⁴⁴ showed that 35.3 per cent of people aged 20 to 24 years old in England in December 2019 were Christian, while 52.3 had no religion. This is similar to the 30.7 per cent and 48.4 per cent (respectively) of students in 2019-20 in these groups.
Final coverage decision	All students from 2017-18 onwards

Sexual orientation

26. Sexual orientation information is collected on the HESA Student record⁴⁵ and HESA SA record⁴⁶ only. It records the sexual orientation of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment. The field is optional for all students.

27. Having assessed the quality of this data (see Table B4), it was decided to report this data for all students from 2015-16 onwards.

Table B4: Summary of applying data quality framework to sexual orientation data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA Student record and HESA SA record (SEXORT)
Year data collection started	2012-13
Summary of data field	Records the sexual orientation of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment

⁴⁴ See

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/adhocs/12137religionbysexandagegroupgreatbritainjanuarytodecember2019>.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sexort>.

⁴⁶ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054/a/sexort>.

Framework criteria	Summary
Student population data available for	All students (optional)
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	At least 47% of all students responding from 2015-16 onwards, rising to 64% in 2019-20
I.C – provider response	More than 73% of eligible providers responding since 2015-16
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Issues associated with optional reporting including providers not reporting any data or reporting data for a small proportion of their students
II.B – reporting consistency	Inconsistency score below 1.2 since 2015-16
II.C – comparisons to public	Office for National Statistics (ONS) data from the Annual Population Survey ⁴⁷ shows that 4.6 per cent of 16-24 year-olds in the UK in 2018 (excluding those refusing information) were gay, lesbian or bisexual. This compares with 6.1 per cent of UK domiciled full-time undergraduate students in 2018-19.
Final coverage decision	All students from 2015-16 onwards

Parental education

28. Parental higher education data is collected on the HESA Student record only, indicating whether one or more of the student's parents have a higher education qualification.⁴⁸ This data is primarily collected as part of Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications. Providers are also expected to collect this information for eligible students who did not use UCAS.

29. Table B5 shows a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of parental education data in this analysis. It was decided to report this data for all students from 2012-13 onwards.

Table B5: Summary of applying data quality framework to parental education data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA student record (PARED)
Year data collection started	2007-08
Summary of data field	Whether one or more of the student's parents have a higher education qualification

⁴⁷ See Office for National Statistics (ONS) Sexual Orientation, UK dataset (Table 3) at www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/datasets/sexualidentityuk.

⁴⁸ See www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/pared.

Framework criteria	Summary
Student population data available for	Compulsory for UK domiciled undergraduate entrants but available for significant proportion of postgraduate and non-UK domiciled students
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Disclosure rate of at least 61% for all students from 2012-13 onwards
I.C – provider response	At least 92% of providers responding from 2012-13 onwards
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Some issues in first year of collection caused by a misunderstanding related to response categories but no obvious issues in subsequent years
II.B – reporting consistency	Inconsistency scores well below 2 since 2012-13
II.C – comparisons to public	In 2017, 42 per cent of the UK population (aged 21 to 64) had a higher education qualification. ⁴⁹ This is very similar to the 49 per cent of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2017-18 whose parents held a higher education qualification.
Final coverage decision	All students from 2012-13 onwards

Free school meal eligibility

30. The free school meal (FSM) measure is based on the population of students matched to the Department for Education's National Pupil Database (NPD)⁵⁰ who were identified as having ever been eligible for FSM in school. Where a student has a linked NPD record, but their FSM status is not recorded, they are assumed to have never been eligible for free school meals.
31. The NPD census for key stage 4 (KS4) covers pupils attending maintained and independent schools in England, and censuses for academic years from 2009-10 to the latest, have been matched to HESA and ILR student records. From academic year 2013-14, the NPD data includes local authority maintained Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision academies, including alternative provision free schools. Since pupils are generally 15 years old in their last year of KS4, 2014-15 is the earliest academic year that a full cohort of young entrants (under 21 on entry) can be tracked back to the NPD.
32. Consequently, FSM measures are reported for 2014-15 onwards for entrants. For the qualifiers and all students populations, the first year reported is 2016-17, since these cohorts are older and so fewer students can be linked to an NPD record in earlier years.

⁴⁹ See Office for National Statistics (ONS) report 'Graduates in the UK labour market: 2017' at www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017.

⁵⁰ See <https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/>.

33. Table B6 shows a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of free school meals data in this analysis. The data is limited to those aged under 21 on entry to higher education, studying undergraduate courses, who are domiciled in the UK. The vast majority of students with linked NPD records are English domiciled, since the NPD collects data from English schools only.

Table B6: Summary of applying data quality framework to free school meals data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	National Pupil Database (EVERFSM_6_SPR)
Year data collection started	2009-10
Summary of data field	Whether a pupil has ever been recorded as eligible for free school meals in the last 6 years up to the pupil's current year
Student population data available for	Students who attended school in England
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Available for >99% of young UK domiciled undergraduate students who attended school in England
I.C – provider response	Not applicable
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Data not reported by providers but linked via NPD. Reporting of free school meal eligibility is low for pupils who attended independent schools
II.B – reporting consistency	Data not reported by providers so does not reflect whether data is being reported inconsistently. However, inconsistency scores are below 2.1 for entrants since 2014-15, and below 1.1 for all students since 2016-17
II.C – comparisons to public	The proportion of young UK domiciled full-time undergraduate entrants in 2019-20 who were ever eligible to receive free school meals (17.6 per cent) is lower than the proportion of pupils studying KS4 at English schools between 2014-15 and 2016-17 who were ever eligible to receive free school meals. This aligns with other research showing that pupils who are eligible for free school meals are underrepresented in higher education. ⁵¹
Final coverage decision	Reported for all UK domiciled undergraduate students aged under 21 on entry, from 2014-15 onwards for entrants and 2016-17 onwards for qualifiers and all students populations.

⁵¹ See DfE's report 'Widening participation in higher education: 2020' at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2020.

Participation of local areas (POLAR4)

34. The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification⁵² groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education. It looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and shows how this varies by area. POLAR classifies local areas into five groups – or quintiles – based on the proportion of 18-year-olds who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old. Quintile 1 shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile 5 shows the highest rate of participation. In England it is calculated at middle-layer super output area (MSOA). See ‘IPPOLAR4’.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

35. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is a measure of deprivation for small areas within England. It is calculated at lower-layer super output area (LSOA) level and uses a number of different measures to determine levels of deprivation. It is produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).⁵³ In this analysis, we group areas into quintiles (as opposed to deciles), where the most deprived areas are in quintile 1 and the least deprived are in quintile 5.

36. For more information on how these IMD quintiles differ from the 2015 version, see Appendix C of the MHCLG ‘English indices of deprivation 2019: technical report’.⁵⁴

Experimental statistics

We are keen to receive feedback on these experimental statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Stanley Rudkin at official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Care experience

37. Data on care experience is collected for entrants on the HESA Student record only.⁵⁵

38. For English providers, care experience can be recorded as one of two categories. Firstly, data is recorded as part of the UCAS application via student self-disclosure. Providers are then able to verify care status and, where they confirm the student was in care, this is recorded as a different category which takes precedence over the UCAS category. Providers can choose to what extent they verify care status and they may use different verification criteria. For the purposes of this analysis these two categories are combined into one called ‘care experienced’.

39. Since collection of this data began in 2013-14 for entrants only, and the quality for entrants is deemed sufficient from 2014-15 onwards, it was decided that coverage for qualifiers and all students (for whom collection will be lagged) should begin from 2016-17 onwards.

⁵² For more details of the POLAR measure, see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/.

⁵³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

⁵⁴ Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019-technical-report>.

⁵⁵ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/careleaver>.

40. For providers in England, HESA collects care experience information for all Home/EU undergraduate and PGCE students. However, to maintain consistency and avoid misrepresenting the non-UK domiciled and postgraduate populations, it was decided to report for UK domiciled undergraduate students only.
41. Table B7 gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of care experience data in this analysis.

Table B7: Summary of applying data quality framework to care experience data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA Student record (CARELEAVER)
Year data collection started	2013-14
Summary of data field	Records whether student was in care
Student population data available for	For English providers, UK domiciled and EU undergraduate and PGCE students
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Available for more than 73% of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants since 2014-15 and more than 71% of all UK domiciled undergraduate students since 2016-17
I.C – provider response	Reported by more than 98% of eligible providers
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Some incorrect reporting in 2013-14 resulting from some providers only reporting data for their care experienced students but no identified issues in all subsequent years
II.B – reporting consistency	Inconsistency scores well below 1 for all available years
II.C – comparisons to public	In 2018 there were close to 630,000 18-year-olds in England. ⁵⁶ In the same year there were 10,440 18-year-old care leavers in England, ⁵⁷ suggesting around 1.7 per cent of 18 year olds were care leavers. By comparison, around 1.1 per cent of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2019-20 (of all age groups) were care leavers. Given that people who have been in care are underrepresented in higher education, we would anticipate this lower proportion when compared with the general population.

⁵⁶ See Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'UK population estimates, 1838 to 2018' (Table 11) at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>.

⁵⁷ See Department for Education 'National tables: children looked after in England including adoption 2018 to 2019' (Table F3) at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019.

Framework criteria	Summary
Final coverage decision	UK domiciled undergraduates, from 2014-15 onwards for entrants, from 2016-17 onwards for qualifiers and all students

Household Residual Income (HRI)

42. Household Residual Income (HRI) is assessed based on gross income (before tax and National Insurance) after accounting for certain costs such as dependants and pensions. It is based on Student Loans Company (SLC) data, and so is only available for those who have applied for income-dependent financial support. Further details of the collection of HRI are published by the SLC.⁵⁸
43. HRI data is collected on continuous scale so we have condensed the data into four groups for this analysis. The groups we have chosen are: £0, £1-£25,000, £25,001-£42,600 and £42,601 and over. These boundaries were determined based on values of HRI used when assigning loans and bursaries.
44. The assessment of HRI differs depending on the student's dependency status. If a student is dependent on their parents, then HRI is based on parental income. However, if the student is independent then HRI is based on their income (and their partner's income, if they have one). Dependency status is determined by the SLC. Examples of why a student may be considered independent include being 25 years old and over, not living with their parents, being married, having children, and being a care leaver. A full list of reasons is published by the SLC.⁵⁹ The background, experiences and outcomes of dependent and independent students are different, so we treat the HRI data for these two groups of students separately, creating separate measures for each.
45. The disclosure of HRI is not a compulsory part of a student loan application. If a student or their parents are aware that their HRI is at a level that means their student loan entitlement will not be increased by income assessment, or if they have other evidence of low income which means submitting income is not necessary, then their financial information will not be recorded. This leads to a reduction in disclosure rates, which could mean the data presented is not representative of the wider student population.
46. For some courses, such as nursing prior to 2017-18, a student may have an SLC record but receive finance that is not assigned using HRI. Again, these students would not be required to provide this information.
47. Income-dependent maintenance loans were only introduced for part-time students from 1 August 2018 onwards.⁶⁰ This means that, before this point, very few part-time students reported any HRI information. We are therefore waiting for a consistent time series to be established before reporting HRI data for part-time students. In addition, because part-time

⁵⁸ See document 'How you're assessed and paid', available at www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents.

⁵⁹ See document 'How you're assessed and paid', available at www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents.

⁶⁰ See 'Student finance: how you're assessed and paid', page 25, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid>.

distance learners are only eligible for a maintenance loan if they are studying long distance because of a disability,⁶¹ it may be that the data will still not be a fair reflection of the profile of part-time students, even once a time series is well established.

48. While HRI data is collected for those studying towards a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), we do not report this information in this release, since these courses are not representative of the wider postgraduate population.
49. The HRI data in this release applies to students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. Students domiciled in Scotland are not included because they do not submit their financial information to the SLC as part of their student support applications.
50. Table B8 gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of HRI data in this analysis. It was decided to report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish full-time undergraduates from 2011-12 onwards, with separate measures according to dependency status.

Table B8: Summary of applying data quality framework to HRI data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	Student Loans Company (SLC)
Year data collection started	Not confirmed but assessed from 2011-12 onwards
Summary of data field	The income of the student's household after certain allowances have been taken into account, depending on dependency status.
Student population data available for	Students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who have an SLC record
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Available for at least 50% of independent students, rising to 86% in the most recent year, while rates vary between 45% and 69% for dependent students
I.C – provider response	Not applicable
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Data is not reported by providers but linked via the SLC. Data not available for Scottish students. Highly inconsistent time series for part-time students. Reporting HRI to the SLC is not compulsory so may not be representative of the wider student population.
II.B – reporting consistency	Data not reported by providers so inconsistency score does not reflect whether data is being reported inconsistently. However,

⁶¹ See 'Student finance: how you're assessed and paid', page 25, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid>.

Framework criteria	Summary
	inconsistency scores are below 1.2 for dependent students and below 2.1 for independent students.
II.C – comparisons to public	Comparable statistics for the general population could not be found.
Final coverage decision	Reported for English, Welsh and Northern Irish full-time undergraduates from 2011-12 onwards. Separated by dependency status.

Estrangement

51. Student estrangement is recorded by the SLC on a case-by-case basis. To be recorded as estranged, a student must be irreconcilably estranged from their living biological or adoptive parents for a considerable period of time (usually at least 12 months). This being the case, there will be students who are estranged but are not recorded as such, because they do not have an SLC record or have chosen not to declare their estrangement to the SLC. There may also be students who consider themselves to be estranged from their parents but do not fulfil the requirements of the SLC to be recorded as estranged.
52. Furthermore, the SLC only records estrangement for students under 25 and there will be students who are 25 and over that are estranged from their parents but not recorded as such in the data. For this reason, these statistics are limited to students who are under 25 as of 31 August in their academic year reported.
53. Estrangement status can change during a student's course, but if a student was recorded as estranged at any point during their time at the provider we include them as part of the estranged population.
54. The SLC data is a record of the estranged students in the current year and does not record students as not estranged. We have therefore assumed that all students with a linked SLC record who are not recorded as estranged are not estranged. This results in us calculating a disclosure rate of 100 per cent for students with an SLC record relating to their current provider when applying our data quality framework. As mentioned above, there may be cases where a student considers themselves to be estranged but they are not recorded as such with the SLC and will be included in the 'not estranged' population in these calculations.
55. For more information on our use of estrangement data from the SLC, see 'Annex G: Estrangement' to our report 'Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics'.⁶² Note that, while the methodology behind estrangement information is the same, the population coverage in that report differs from this release.
56. While estrangement data is collected for those studying towards a PGCE, we do not report this information in this release, since these courses are not representative of the wider postgraduate population.

⁶² Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

57. The estrangement data in this release applies to students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. Students domiciled in Scotland are not included because of a lack of data availability. Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales and Student Finance Northern Ireland have the same criteria for a student to be considered estranged.
58. Table B9 gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of estrangement data in this analysis. It was decided to report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish undergraduates aged under 25 in the academic year reported, from 2014-15 onwards.

Table B9: Summary of applying data quality framework to estrangement data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	Student Loans Company (SLC)
Year data collection started	2014-15
Summary of data field	Whether a student has been irreconcilably estranged from their parents for a substantial amount of time
Student population data available for	Students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who have had an SLC record while at their current provider
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Documentation available
I.B – disclosure rate	Not applicable (all students in SLC data without a record of estrangement are assumed to be not estranged)
I.C – provider response	Not applicable
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Data not reported by providers but linked via the SLC. Data not available for Scotland-domiciled students. No identified issues with available data.
II.B – reporting consistency	Data not reported by providers so inconsistency score does not reflect whether data is being reported inconsistently. However, inconsistency scores are well below 1 for all years, indicating that there is low variability in the proportions of estranged students attending providers.
II.C – comparisons to public	Comparable statistics for the general population could not be found
Final coverage decision	Report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish undergraduates aged under 25 in the academic year reported, from 2014-15 onwards

Socioeconomic background

59. National Statistics socioeconomic classification (NS-SEC)⁶³ data is collected on the HESA student record and further details regarding its collection can be found on their website.⁶⁴ NS-SEC data is also available on the ILR; however, this data is not currently considered useable by the OfS due to quality concerns.⁶⁵
60. The collection of the NS-SEC data differs depending on the student's entry age. For students aged 21 and over at entry, it is based on their occupation prior to starting their course. For students under 21, it is based on the occupation of their parent, step-parent or guardian who earns the most. However, because collection of socioeconomic background data by HESA is limited to UK domiciled undergraduates who entered their higher education instance via a UCAS scheme,⁶⁶ and only the minority of mature students enter higher education in this way, we report this information for young students (under 21 on entry) only.
61. In addition, because there are few young part-time students entering higher education through UCAS, socioeconomic background data is reported for full-time (or apprenticeship) students only.
62. Table B10 gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of socioeconomic background data in this analysis. It was decided to report this data for young full-time UK domiciled undergraduates, who entered their higher education instance via a UCAS scheme, from 2015-16 onwards.

Table B10: Summary of applying data quality framework to socioeconomic background data

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA Student record (SEC)
Year data collection started	2002-03
Summary of data field	The socioeconomic background of the student based on NS-SEC
Student population data available for	UK domiciled undergraduates who entered their higher education instance via a UCAS scheme
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Available for more than 84% of young full-time UK domiciled undergraduates entering via UCAS since 2015-16
I.C – provider response	Information reported by 100% of eligible providers

⁶³ See

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010>.

⁶⁴ See www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sec.

⁶⁵ See 'Annex F: Socioeconomic background' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

⁶⁶ Defined by the HESA field 'UCASAPPID'. See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ucasappid>.

Framework criteria	Summary
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Some historic concerns about NS-SEC data quality. ⁶⁷ How this data is collected changed between 2014-15 and 2015-16
II.B – reporting consistency	Inconsistency scores below 1 since 2015-16
II.C – comparisons to public	Significant differences between the student population and general population statistics published by the ONS. ⁶⁸ However, this is anticipated as deprivation and socioeconomic background are known to influence access to higher education. ⁶⁹
Final coverage decision	Young full-time UK domiciled undergraduates, who entered their higher education instance via a UCAS scheme, from 2015-16 onwards

Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)

63. TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) is an area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation.⁷⁰

64. TUNDRA classifies local areas across England into five equal groups – or quintiles – based on the proportion of 16-year-old state-funded mainstream school pupils who participate in higher education aged 18 or 19 years. Quintile 1 shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile 5 shows the highest rate of participation.

65. TUNDRA is a different measure to POLAR4 because it focuses on the participation rate of state-funded mainstream school pupils and only applies to England.

66. In this release, we use Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) as the definition of a local area for TUNDRA quintiles.

67. Although TUNDRA is calculated using data from English state-funded mainstream schools only, TUNDRA quintiles exist for all local areas in England, which means they can be applied to any pupil with a known English postcode, even if they did not attend a state-funded mainstream school. For this reason, in this release, we present two versions of the measure: one for all young English undergraduates (from 2010-11 onwards), and one restricted to young English undergraduates from state-funded mainstream schools only.

⁶⁷ See 'Update on progress in the review of the WP indicators, and next steps', available at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/governance/archive>.

⁶⁸ See the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Young people in five-year age band by National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification, UK, April 2017 to March 2018' at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/adhocs/008869youngpeopleinfiveyearagebandbynationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationukapril2017tomarch2018>.

⁶⁹ See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/>.

⁷⁰ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/.

68. For the version of this measure that is restricted to pupils from state-funded mainstream schools in England, this can only be applied to students with a linked NPD record. Therefore, for the same reason that free school meals data is reported for different years for entrants and qualifiers, we report from 2014-15 onwards for entrants and from 2016-17 onwards for the qualifiers and all students populations.
69. Throughout this release, state-funded mainstream schools in England are defined by the NPD field 'KS4_NFTYPE'.⁷¹
70. TUNDRA quintiles are assigned according to home postcodes, for which coverage exceeds 99 per cent of young English undergraduates. See Table B11 for a summary of applying the data quality framework against this measure. For the version of this measure which is restricted further to young English undergraduates from state-funded mainstream schools only, the conclusions of the data quality framework were the same as for other linked NPD data used in this release; see Table B6 for a summary of the data quality framework applied to free school meals data.

Table B11: Summary of applying data quality framework to TUNDRA quintiles

Framework criteria	Summary
Data sources	OfS analysis, HESA records, ILR, and the NPD
Year data collection started	Calculated using data for KS4 pupils between 2012 to 2016
Summary of data field	An area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation
Student population data available for	All students with English postcodes
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Postcodes available for over 99% of young English undergraduates
I.C – provider response	Not applicable
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	One version of this measure is applied to those with a linked NPD record, so data coverage changes over time for different cohorts of students according to age on entry
II.B – reporting consistency	Not applicable as not reported by providers – inconsistency score below 1 for all young English undergraduates
II.C – comparisons to public	No equivalent measure for general population

⁷¹ This includes the values: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 51, 52, 57, 58, 59, 63 and 64. See https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data_elements/1267f84a-3913-4358-bebe-17959988bf26.

Framework criteria	Summary
Final coverage decision	All young English undergraduates (from 2010-11 onwards), and separately for young English undergraduates from state-funded mainstream schools only (from 2014-15 onwards for entrants and from 2016-17 onwards for the qualifiers and all students populations)

Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles

71. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles⁷² show how likely groups of 18 or 19-year-olds are to access higher education based on a set of characteristics. The characteristics used are ethnicity, free school meals, sex, IMD, POLAR4, and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)⁷³. This measure was created using five years of aggregated data from 2014-15 to 2018-19.
72. According to a given combination of these six characteristics, students were assigned to one of five equal groups – or quintiles – based on the likelihood of young people with that combination of characteristics accessing higher education.
73. In this release, we report ABCS access quintiles for two populations: first, for young (under 21 on entry) English undergraduates from English state-funded mainstream schools, then secondly for young (under 21 on entry) English undergraduates from English state-funded mainstream schools and English independent schools combined. Internal OfS analysis has shown that if the ABCS access quintiles were calculated for independent school pupils, all would fall under quintile 5 (the most likely to access higher education). For this reason, the latter measure assigns all independent school pupils to ABCS access quintile 5.
74. Throughout this release, independent schools in England are defined by the NPD field ‘KS4_NFTYPE’.⁷⁴
75. Since the ABCS measure is applied only to those with a linked NPD record, because free school meals eligibility is part of the definition, consideration must be given to how data coverage for different cohorts of students changes over time. As with free school meals data, 2014-15 is the earliest academic year that a full cohort of young entrants (under 21 on entry) can be tracked back to the NPD. Consequently, ABCS access quintiles are reported for 2014-15 onwards for entrants. For the qualifiers and ‘all students’ populations, the first year reported is 2016-17, since these cohorts are older and so fewer students can be linked to an NPD record in earlier years.
76. Table B12 gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of ABCS access quintiles in this analysis.

⁷² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/.

⁷³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

⁷⁴ This includes the values: 28, 29, 30 and 48. See https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data_elements/1267f84a-3913-4358-bebe-17959988bf26.

Table B12: Summary of applying data quality framework to ABCS access quintiles

Framework criteria	Summary
Data sources	OfS analysis, HESA records, ILR, and NPD data
Year data collection started	Calculated between 2014-15 and 2018-19
Summary of data field	Shows how likely groups of 18 or 19-year-olds are to access higher education based on a combination of characteristics
Student population data available for	Calculated using data for young English undergraduates who attended state-funded mainstream schools
Part I – Data availability	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Not applicable
I.C – provider response	Not applicable
Part II – Data quality	
II.A – identified data issues	Applied to those with a linked NPD record, so data coverage changes over time for different cohorts of students according to age on entry
II.B – reporting consistency	Not applicable – this measure is calculated using aggregated data between 2014-15 and 2018-19, so an inconsistency score will only reflect changes over time in the six characteristics used to calculate the ABCS access measure, as opposed to changes in the measure itself
II.C – comparisons to public	No equivalent measure for general population as ABCS access quintiles indicate likelihood of accessing higher education
Final coverage decision	Young (under 21 on entry) English undergraduates from English state-funded mainstream schools (and separately including independent schools). Reported for 2014-15 onwards for entrants and 2016-17 onwards for the qualifiers and all students populations

Annex C: Summary of changes since previous release

77. This release has several differences compared to our 2020 equality and diversity data publication, the data and documentation for which can still be accessed under 'Previous releases'⁷⁵ on our webpages. These changes are described below.

Populations

78. Population definitions have changed since the previous release. Where previously student populations were limited to the standard registration population at English higher education providers (see IPXPSR),⁷⁶ we now more closely align with the populations used for our access and participation data resources where possible. Full definitions can be found in [Annex B](#).
79. For entrants, this change makes little difference to the overall number. In the previous release, using the standard registration population, the total number of entrants in 2018-19 was 903,185. In this release, the total number of entrants in 2018-19 is given as 908,170.
80. Meanwhile, the 'all students' population has been extended to include all students who were actively studying in the academic year reported, even if they were previously excluded from the standard registration population. This includes roughly 100,000 more undergraduate students and 250,000 more postgraduate students, of which approximately 150,000 were studying full-time postgraduate taught masters' courses.
81. In most cases these are students whose final year of their course spanned two academic years, and so were in the standard registration population for the first 'part' of their year but not the second. We are also now including a greater number of students who were 'writing up' during the academic year in question.
82. Statistics for non-UK domiciled students are now reported separately, in addition to the existing groupings for all domiciles and UK domiciled students.

Characteristics

83. Several new student characteristics were added to this release, including:
- a. Free school meal eligibility
 - b. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
 - c. Care experience
 - d. Household Residual Income (HRI)
 - e. Estrangement
 - f. Socioeconomic background
 - g. Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)

⁷⁵ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity-student-data/equality-and-diversity-data/ and www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity-student-data/experimental-data/.

⁷⁶ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

h. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles.

84. The most detailed grouping of ethnicity now aggregates 'White – Irish', 'White – other', and 'White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British' into a single category: 'White'.

Data quality

85. Our approach to data quality has changed following the development of the OfS data quality framework.⁷⁷ Where previously we suppressed data that appeared to be incorrect at the provider level, we now instead assess data quality for each characteristic against the framework at the sector level, using provider-level data for context where the overall quality appears to be poor. When it appears that the data for a given characteristic is of insufficient quality in a given year or for a given cohort (e.g. non-UK domiciled or postgraduate students), instead of suppressing data for individual providers, we choose not to report this data at all.

86. For example, in the case of gender identity, we previously reported this data for the 2017-18 academic year, after removing providers with seemingly inaccurate data. We now report gender identity data from 2018-19 onwards only, since data quality was deemed sufficient from this year onwards after assessment against the framework.

87. The final population coverage for each characteristic is summarised in Table A1 in Annex A.

COVID-19 pandemic

88. This release includes data up to the 2019-20 academic year. There may be some expectation that these statistics will reflect changes due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

89. However, since the first lockdown in the UK was not declared until late March 2020, there was limited chance for this to impact the number of entrants between September 2019 and August 2020. While some courses may have commenced after March 2020, most standard academic years will have begun in the autumn of 2019 for this data reporting period, well before the pandemic.

Other changes

90. In the previous release, counts were rounded to the nearest five and proportions were rounded to the nearest 0.1. In this release:

- a. Counts have been rounded to the nearest 10
- b. Proportions have been rounded to the nearest five when the denominator rounds to 50 or less, rounded to the nearest one when the denominator rounds to 1,000 or less, or to the nearest 0.1 otherwise.

⁷⁷ See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/.

91. As described under the definition of 'Subject of study' in Annex B, the change in subject coding from JACS to HECoS causes some additional variation in the distribution of subjects between 2018-19 and 2019-20 on top of the usual year-on-year variation, which can also be due to changes in the providers reporting to HESA. Therefore, this should be taken into consideration when drawing comparisons between these two academic years.



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