

Summary of equality and diversity experimental data

May 2019

Background

1. This data release contains equality and diversity data for UK-domiciled entrants at English higher education institutions. The data source was the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record¹.
2. The data reports the proportions and numbers of students in higher education by gender identity, parental education, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Additionally the data is provided by various levels of higher education study. This data is reported for a subset of higher education provision that is defined by the data availability for these fields. This data is updated annually and constitutes Experimental Statistics.
3. This information is published as part of a broader approach to equality and diversity, which includes Office for Students policies and action plans².

Population and methodology

4. This release includes students in higher education in the academic years 2015-16 to 2017-18. The student numbers are available for UK-domiciled entrants (first year of study) only.
5. The equality and diversity characteristics included in this experimental data are reported for students attending providers that return data to the HESA student return. To be included, the data from providers has to be returned for a sufficient number of students and be of sufficient quality. The methodology document associated with this release gives details of how data was limited as well as additional methodology and population information³.

Findings

6. Information in addition to these highlighted findings can be found in the interactive charts and tables associated with this release⁴. Note, this release only applies to UK-domiciled entrants.

Undergraduate entrants

Gender identity

7. In 2016-17 and 2017-18, less than 1 per cent of undergraduate entrants had a gender different from assigned at birth (0.9 per cent and 0.8 per cent, respectively). The data suggests this represents a large drop from 2015-16 (when 2.8 per cent of undergraduate entrants had a gender different from assigned at birth) but the data quality for 2015-16 was low and we believe

¹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17051>

² See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/>

³ Methodology document available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/>

⁴ See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/>

that the values for 2016-17 and 2017-18 are more representative of the undergraduate population.

Parental education

8. The proportion of undergraduate entrants who have a parent with a higher education qualification is slowly increasing (41.9 per cent in 2015-16, 43 per cent in 2017-18).
9. The proportion of students who have a parent with a higher education qualification is higher for full-time students (45.3 per cent in 2017-18) compared to part-time students (30.5 per cent in 2017-18).

Religion or belief

10. In the academic year 2017-18, for undergraduate entrants, no religion was the most common response when reporting religion or belief (44.5 per cent) followed by Christianity (29.1 per cent). Information refused was the third most common response (10.4 per cent) followed by Muslim (9.3 per cent).

Sexual orientation

11. The proportion of students identifying as bisexual, gay man or gay woman/lesbian has been increasing slowly and in 2017-18, 5.4 per cent of undergraduate entrants identified as one of these sexual orientations. The biggest increase was for those identifying as bisexual, which increased from 2.1 per cent in 2015-16 to 3.3 per cent in 2017-18.

Postgraduate entrants

Gender identity

12. In the academic year 2017-18, 0.6 per cent of postgraduate entrants reported that their gender was different from assigned at birth. This suggests there has been a drop compared to 2015-16 (1.4 per cent) but like undergraduate entrants, this is more likely a result of low data quality in 2015-16 and not a time series trend.

Parental education

13. Unlike undergraduate entrants, there is little difference between the proportions of postgraduate entrants who have or do not have a parent with a higher education qualification (39.9 per cent and 41.1 per cent respectively in 2017-18).
14. For full-time postgraduate entrants, a larger proportion of students have a parent with a higher education qualification (42.2 per cent in 2017-18) than those who do not (40.4 per cent in 2017-18). Whereas, for part-time postgraduate entrants the opposite is true and more students have parents who do not have a higher education qualification than do (41.9 per cent vs. 37.5 per cent in 2017-18).

Religion or belief

15. Like undergraduate entrants, no religion was the most common response for postgraduate entrants (39.1 per cent in 2017-18) followed by Christian (30.4 per cent), information refused (18.2 per cent) and Muslim (5.6 per cent).

Sexual orientation

16. Like undergraduate entrants, the proportion of students identifying as bisexual, gay man or gay woman/lesbian has been increasing slowly and in 2017-18, 5.7 per cent of undergraduate entrants identified as one of these sexual orientations.

Contact

17. If you have any questions or feedback on these pages, please contact William Rimmington at william.rimmington@officeforstudents.org.uk or the Foresight and Insight team at qapt@officeforstudents.org.uk