

Office for  
Students



# Equality, diversity and student characteristics data

Students at English higher education providers  
between 2010-11 and 2020-21

**Reference** OfS 2022.29

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**Publication date** 7 June 2022

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# Overview

1. This document summarises equality, diversity and student characteristics data at English higher education providers between 2010-11 and 2020-21. It has been published alongside an interactive data dashboard, datafiles and webpages.<sup>1</sup>
2. This release has a wider coverage than our Access and Participation data dashboard<sup>2</sup>. It reports on sector-level trends in student characteristics for both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and both UK and non-UK domiciled students.
3. The first section of this document summarises 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 in June 2021 (OfS 2021.15).<sup>3</sup>

## Equality Act 2010

4. The Equality Act 2010 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.<sup>4</sup>
5. Our duty to comply with the Act is referred to as the 'public sector equality duty'.<sup>5</sup> These statistics are published as part of our specific duties under the Equality Act, which applies to the Office for Students (OfS) as a provider of public services.
6. As required under this duty, this annual release contains information about students with certain '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:
  - age
  - disability

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on our public sector equality duty, see [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/what-does-the-law-say/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/what-does-the-law-say/).

- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- 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.<sup>6</sup> The data in this release is published as official statistics.

9. We previously assessed all characteristics using the OfS's data quality framework,<sup>7</sup> to determine whether they were valid to include and the population coverage. Detail on the implementation of this framework and the assessments of each of these characteristics' data quality can be found in last year's report.<sup>8</sup> Annexes B and C detail some additional adjustments that have been made this year for these characteristics.

10. The characteristics included in this release are listed below. Those marked with an asterisk (\*) relate to one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

- a. Age (broad and detailed)\*.
- b. Disability (broad and type)\*.
- c. Ethnicity (two groups, five groups and 15 groups)\*.
- d. Religion or belief\*.
- e. Sex\*.

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<sup>6</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/official-statistics/compliance-statement/).

<sup>7</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/>.

- f. Sexual orientation\*.
- g. Gender identity.
- h. Parental higher education.
- i. Free school meals (FSM) eligibility, an indicator of financial disadvantage for Key Stage 4 pupils.
- j. Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4),<sup>9</sup> an area-based measure reflecting higher education participation rates.
- k. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), an area-based measure of deprivation in England.
- 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),<sup>10</sup> an area-based measure that tracks state-funded mainstream school pupils in England into higher education (both TUNDRA by Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) and TUNDRA by Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA) are included in this release).
- q. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles,<sup>11</sup> grouping young people with certain combinations of characteristics by the likelihood of access to higher education.

11. 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.<sup>12</sup>

12. 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.

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/).

<sup>10</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

<sup>11</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#race>.

## COVID-19 pandemic

13. This release includes data up to the 2020-21 academic year. The COVID-19 pandemic was declared by the World Health Organisation on 11 March 2020. This being the case, differences between 2019-20 and 2020-21 and earlier academic years may in part be a result of impacts of the pandemic.

**We are keen to receive feedback on these statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Jim Owen at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk).**

## 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.<sup>13</sup>**

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 (68.4 per cent of entrants in 2020-21). However, this proportion has fallen by 2.0 percentage points since 2019-20, when it was 70.4 per cent.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the number of full-time undergraduate students aged between 26 and 30 has increased by 0.8 percentage points, from 4.9 per cent in 2019-20 to 5.7 per cent in 2020-21.
18. Part-time undergraduate qualifications are most commonly studied by students aged 31 to 40 (24.3 per cent of entrants in 2020-21).
19. Roughly two-thirds of full-time postgraduate entrants in 2020-21 were aged 21 to 25 (66.0 per cent), falling by 3.0 percentage points from 2019-20. Between 2019-20 and 2020-21 the proportion of full-time postgraduate entrants age 26 to 30 increased from 15.5 per cent to 17.1 per cent.

### Disability

20. In 2020-21, 14.8 per cent of full-time undergraduate entrants reported having a disability, the proportion having risen 6.3 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: 10.8 percentage points, from 7.6 per cent in 2010-11 to 18.4 per cent in 2020-21.

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<sup>13</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/).

<sup>14</sup> All percentage point changes in this document have been calculated using rounded proportions, to avoid unintentionally disclosing information about individuals.

21. The proportion of undergraduate entrants reporting a mental health condition has risen by 3.7 percentage points since 2010-11, from 0.7 per cent to 4.4 per cent in 2020-21. This rate of increase is more than any other disability type.

## **Ethnicity**

22. The proportion of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants who are white has fallen 8.3 percentage points, from 78.7 per cent in 2010-11 to 70.4 per cent in 2020-21. Meanwhile, the proportion of students from each minority ethnic group has risen.

23. 13.2 per cent of undergraduate entrants in 2020-21 were from an Asian background, 9.3 per cent were black, 4.9 per cent were from a mixed ethnic background, and 2.3 per cent were from other minority ethnic groups.

24. During the last 11 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 8.2 per cent in 2020-21. The proportion of postgraduate entrants who were Asian also rose 2.3 percentage points, from 9.4 per cent to 11.7 per cent over the same period.

## **Sex**

25. For all years since 2010-11, the majority of undergraduate entrants have been female, standing at 56.5 per cent in 2020-21. This has increased by 0.9 percentage points, from 55.7 per cent in 2019-20.

26. The difference in the proportions of male and female students within certain subjects remains large. In 2020-21, 82.9 per cent of engineering, technology and computing undergraduate entrants were male, compared with just 13.8 per cent of those studying courses in education and teaching.

## **Gender identity**

27. In 2020-21, 1.4 per cent of all undergraduate entrants to English higher education providers had a gender different from the sex registered at birth.

## **Religion or belief**

28. In 2020-21, just under half (46.2 per cent) of undergraduate entrants said they had no religion, followed by 32.1 per cent who identified as Christian, while 13.0 per cent were Muslim.

29. Postgraduate entrants in 2020-21 were marginally more likely to report having no religion (47.1 per cent) than undergraduate entrants.

## **Sexual orientation**

30. In 2020-21, 8.5 per cent of undergraduate entrants identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, while 2.6 per cent identified with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

## Parental higher education

31. In 2020-21, just under half (48.5 per cent) of UK-domiciled undergraduate entrants had a parent with a higher education qualification, the proportion remaining broadly unchanged since 2012-13 (48.9 per cent).

## Free school meal eligibility

32. 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.

33. In 2020-21, 17.3 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.<sup>15</sup>

## Participation of Local Areas

34. POLAR4 quintiles are reported for UK domiciled undergraduate students aged under 21 on entry.<sup>16</sup> 29.7 per cent of entrants in 2020-21 came from the most represented areas in the UK, while 12.7 per cent came from the least represented areas.

## Index of Multiple Deprivation

35. 21.8 per cent of English undergraduate entrants in 2020-21 were from the most deprived areas, more than any other IMD quintile. This has risen 4.8 percentage points from 17.0 per cent in 2010-11.

## Care experience

36. 1.1 per cent of full-time UK domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2020-21 had been in care at some point prior to their study, compared with 1.5 per cent of part-time entrants.

## Household Residual Income

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

38. 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.

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<sup>15</sup> See the Department for Education's report 'Widening participation in higher education: 2020' at [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2020).

<sup>16</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/).

39. In 2020-21, under half (42.7 per cent) of full-time undergraduate entrants who were dependent on their parents had household residual income between £1 and £25,000.
40. Among full-time undergraduate students who were independent,<sup>17</sup> 69.8 per cent reported their HRI as £0 in 2020-21.

## **Estrangement**

41. In 2020-21, 1.0 per cent of English, Welsh and Northern Irish undergraduate entrants aged under 25 were estranged from their parents.

## **Socioeconomic background**

42. More than half of all young UK domiciled full-time undergraduate entrants entering via UCAS in 2020-21 had parents from either higher (26.9 per cent) or lower (27.5 per cent) managerial and professional occupations.

## **Tracking underrepresentation by area**

43. TUNDRA quintiles are reported for English undergraduate students aged under 21 on entry.<sup>18</sup>
44. For the version of TUNDRA based on LSOAs, 29.4 per cent of full-time English undergraduate entrants in 2020-21 came from the most represented areas in England, while 11.9 per cent came from the least represented areas. The proportion from the most represented areas has fallen marginally by 1.6 percentage points since 2010-11, when it stood at 31.0 per cent.
45. For the version of TUNDRA based on MSOAs, 30.1 per cent of full-time English undergraduate entrants in 2020-21 came from the most represented areas in England, while 12.2 per cent came from the least represented areas.

## **Associations between characteristics of students**

46. ABCS access quintiles show how likely groups of students are to access higher education based on a set of characteristics.
47. In 2020-21, among young English full-time undergraduate entrants from state-funded mainstream schools and independent schools in England, 40.5 per cent were from quintile 5, meaning they had characteristics that were most strongly associated with access to higher education. Meanwhile, 7.7 per cent were from quintile 1, those least likely to access higher education.

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<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

## Annex A: Methodology and data coverage

48. This annex summarises the methodology used to produce the statistics in this release.
49. 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.
50. 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.<sup>19</sup>

### Rounding and suppression

51. Our approach to rounding and suppression in these statistics is aligned with our Access and Participation data dashboard.<sup>20</sup> The data has been rounded as follows:
- Counts have been rounded to the nearest 10.
  - 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.
  - Totals and proportions are calculated using unrounded figures.
52. 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

53. Many of the student characteristics in this release have previously been assessed against the OfS's data quality framework.<sup>21</sup> The framework provides a standardised method of investigating the quantity and quality of student characteristic data, to aid in making decisions about whether or not to publish data and whether to use it in further analyses. Unless stated otherwise below, population coverage for each of the student characteristics was the same as in the previous publication, and the data quality framework has not been applied again.

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<sup>19</sup> 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>.

<sup>20</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).

<sup>21</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

54. For further details on how the data was assessed, please refer to last year's report, which includes for each characteristic a table summarising the application and outcomes of applying the framework.<sup>22</sup>
55. When we made decisions about reporting data, 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.
56. Table A1 shows a summary of the population coverage for each of the student characteristics included in this release.
57. As shown in the table, the data included in this release are derived from the following sources: the Education and Skills Funding Agency's individualised learner record (ILR);<sup>23</sup> the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) Student record;<sup>24</sup> HESA's Student Alternative (SA) record (formerly known as the Alternative Provider record);<sup>25</sup> the Student Loans Company (SLC) data; and the National Pupil Database (NPD) provided by the Department for Education.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles are produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>27</sup> and are merged with the ILR and HESA records.
58. 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 SA record, and the ILR. Providers formerly known as alternative providers were first required to return data to HESA in 2014-15.<sup>28</sup> This means some higher education provision prior to 2014-15 may not have been reported and is not included in these statistics.
59. 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

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<sup>22</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051>.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054>.

<sup>26</sup> The Department for Education does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the NPD data by third parties.

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

<sup>28</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/ap-student>.

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 A1: Summary of population coverage of each student characteristic**

Characteristic	Data source(s)	First year included	Domicile	Level of study	Other
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 higher education	HESA Student	2012-13	All (UK from 2020-21)	All (UG from 2020-21)	-
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	-
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 2017-18 qualifiers	UK	UG	Full-time

Characteristic	Data source(s)	First year included	Domicile	Level of study	Other
		2017-18 all students			Under 21 on entry
Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA) LSOA and MSOA	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 paragraph 10.

**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	2020-21
<b>All students</b>	HESA Student record	131	131	134	136	133	133	135	136	137	137	137
	HESA Student Alternative record	-	-	-	-	62	96	95	97	96	100	111
	ILR	135	138	172	178	199	245	242	233	248	240	229
	Total	266	269	306	314	394	474	472	466	481	477	477
<b>Entrants</b>	HESA Student record	131	131	134	136	133	133	135	135	137	137	137
	HESA Student Alternative record	-	-	-	-	61	96	91	94	92	91	102
	ILR	130	131	167	176	189	233	225	221	227	220	200
	Total	261	262	301	312	383	462	451	450	456	448	439
<b>Qualifiers</b>	HESA Student record	131	131	132	136	133	133	135	136	137	137	137
	HESA Student Alternative record	-	-	-	-	58	94	94	92	92	98	106
	ILR	135	139	172	178	203	247	242	233	248	240	229
	Total	266	270	304	314	394	474	471	461	477	475	472

## 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 '2022 core algorithms' document.<sup>29</sup>

### 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 '2022 core algorithms' document)<sup>30</sup> 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).<sup>31</sup>
5. For UK domiciled undergraduate entrants, this population is aligned with our Access and Participation data dashboard.<sup>32</sup>

#### 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.

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<sup>29</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).

<sup>30</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).

<sup>31</sup> Restrictions relating to the level of study are not applied to postgraduate students (see IPACCEXCL8).

<sup>32</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://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
    - i. Postgraduate research.
    - ii. Postgraduate taught masters.
    - iii. PGCE.
    - iv. 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).<sup>33</sup>
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)'. Table B1 shows how these subject groupings relate to one another.

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<sup>33</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos>.

**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)
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 and IPAPPRENTICE for all students apart from qualifiers, for whom the qualifying mode (IPEMPMODE) is used instead of IPMODE. 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.

## **Student characteristics**

### **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.<sup>34</sup>

### **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 record and HESA Student Alternative (SA) record only<sup>35</sup>. Students should, according to their own self-assessment, indicate whether their gender identity is the same as or different from the sex registered at birth. The field is collected for all students.

23. Having assessed the quality of this data against the OfS data quality framework,<sup>36</sup> it was decided to report this data for all students from 2018-19 onwards. For detailed results of the

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<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/ethnic>.

<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/genderid> and <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/genderid>.

<sup>36</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>37</sup>

24. Reporting of gender identity data became mandatory in 2020-21, having been optional in previous years. As a result, interpreting direct time series trends should be avoided, and for this reason the charts in our interactive dashboard only include gender identity data for 2020-21. However, data for 2018-19 to 2020-21 can still be found in the dashboard table. In 2020-21 there were large increases in counts for the different categories and some small changes in proportions.

## **Religion or belief**

25. Religion or belief is collected on the HESA Student record and HESA SA record only<sup>38</sup>. 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 mandatory in 2017-18.
26. Having assessed the quality of this data, it was decided to report this data for all students from 2017-18 onwards. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>39</sup>

## **Sexual orientation**

27. Sexual orientation information is collected on the HESA Student record and HESA SA record only.<sup>40</sup> It records the sexual orientation of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment. The field is collected for all students.
28. Having assessed the quality of this data, it was decided to report this data for all students from 2015-16 onwards. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>41</sup>
29. Reporting of sexual orientation data became mandatory in 2020-21, having been optional in previous years. As a result, interpreting direct time series trends should be avoided, and for this reason the charts in our interactive dashboard only include sexual orientation data for 2020-21. However, data for 2015-16 to 2020-21 can still be found in the dashboard table. In 2020-21 there were large increases in counts for the different categories and some changes in proportions.

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<sup>37</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/reblf> and <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/reblf>.

<sup>39</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/sexort> and <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/sexort>.

<sup>41</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

## Parental higher education

30. Parental higher education data was collected on the HESA Student record only up to 2019-20.<sup>42</sup> From 2020-21 onwards it is collected on the HESA student record and the HESA SA record.<sup>43</sup> It indicates whether one or more of the student's parents has a higher education qualification. On the HESA Student record this data is primarily collected as part of UCAS applications. Providers are also expected to collect this information for eligible students who did not use UCAS.
31. Having assessed the quality of this data, it was decided to report this data for all students from 2012-13 onwards. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>44</sup>
32. However, as a result of changes to data collection requirements, the reporting of parental education data for most postgraduate students and non-UK domiciled students dropped considerably in 2020-21. Because of this change, from 2020-21 onwards, parental education data is only provided in this release for UK-domiciled undergraduate students.
33. As noted in paragraph 30, in 2020-21 parental education data was included on the HESA SA record for the first time. An initial assessment of the quality of this data showed low disclosure rates for some levels of study. Our data quality framework recommends that 'caution should be applied when using newly collected characteristic data as applying this framework has shown that the first year of reporting is often of inconsistent quality.'<sup>45</sup> This being the case, we will assess the quality of this new source of data once we have more years available, but in this 2022 release the HESA SA data for parental education is not included.

## Free school meal eligibility

34. The FSM measure is based on the population of students matched to the Department for Education's NPD<sup>46</sup> who were identified as having ever been eligible for FSM in school during the last six years (EVERFSM\_6\_SPR).<sup>47</sup> 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.
35. 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. Since pupils are generally 15 years old in their last

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<sup>42</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/pared](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/pared).

<sup>43</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/pared](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/pared).

<sup>44</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>45</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>46</sup> See <https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/>.

<sup>47</sup> See [https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data\\_elements/a446155e-871b-4906-a11b-c56bdbc71a62](https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data_elements/a446155e-871b-4906-a11b-c56bdbc71a62).

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.

36. 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.
37. Last year's report contains a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of free school meals data in this analysis.<sup>48</sup> 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.

### **Participation of local areas (POLAR4)**

38. The participation of local areas (POLAR4) classification<sup>49</sup> 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. POLAR4 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 level. See 'IPPOLAR4'.

### **Index of Multiple Deprivation**

39. The IMD 2019 is a measure of deprivation for small areas within England. It is calculated at lower-layer super output area level and uses a number of different measures to determine levels of deprivation. It is produced by MHCLG.<sup>50</sup> Areas are grouped into quintiles (as opposed to deciles), where the most deprived areas are in quintile 1 and the least deprived are in quintile 5. See 'IPIMD'.

### **Care experience**

40. Up to 2019-20, data on care experience was collected for entrants on the HESA Student record only.<sup>51</sup> From 2020-21 it is also collected for entrants on the HESA SA record.<sup>52</sup>
41. 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

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<sup>48</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>49</sup> For more details of the POLAR measure, see [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/).

<sup>50</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

<sup>51</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/careleaver](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/careleaver).

<sup>52</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/careleaver](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/careleaver).

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'.

42. 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. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>53</sup>
43. For providers in England, the HESA Student record collects care experience information for all Home and EU undergraduate and PGCE students. However, to maintain consistency and avoid misrepresenting the non-UK domiciled and postgraduate populations, we decided to report for UK domiciled undergraduate students only.
44. As noted in paragraph 40, in 2020-21 care experience data was included on the HESA SA record for the first time. An initial assessment of the quality of this data showed low disclosure rates for some levels of study. Our data quality framework recommends that 'caution should be applied when using newly collected characteristic data as applying this framework has shown that the first year of reporting is often of inconsistent quality.'<sup>54</sup> This being the case, we will assess the quality of this new source of data once we have more years available but in this 2022 release the HESA SA data for care experience is not included.

## Household Residual Income

45. 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 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.<sup>55</sup>
46. 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. As described in 'Annex H: Household residual income' to our report 'Differences in student outcomes: Further characteristics'<sup>56</sup>, HRI is not fixed as part of the student entry profile and can change each year. For the purposes of this analysis the first recorded HRI from the student's current period of study at their provider is used rather than the HRI in the current year. This allows greater consistency and in doing so we are measuring a student's background prior to higher education.

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<sup>53</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>54</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>55</sup> See document 'Student finance: How you're assessed and paid', available at [www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents).

<sup>56</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

47. 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.
48. The disclosure of HRI is not a mandatory 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.
49. 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.
50. Income-dependent maintenance loans were only introduced for part-time students from 1 August 2018 onwards.<sup>58</sup> 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 distance learners are only eligible for a maintenance loan if they are studying long distance because of a disability,<sup>59</sup> 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.
51. 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.
52. 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.
53. After applying our data quality framework it was decided to report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish full-time undergraduates from 2011-12 onwards, with separate measures

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<sup>57</sup> See document 'Student finance: How you're assessed and paid', available at [www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents).

<sup>58</sup> 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>.

<sup>59</sup> 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>.

according to dependency status. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>60</sup>

## Estrangement

54. Student estrangement is recorded by the SLC on a case-by-case basis.<sup>61</sup> 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.
55. 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.
56. 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.
57. The SLC data is a record of the estranged students in the current year and we have therefore assumed that all students with a linked SLC record who are not recorded as estranged are not estranged. 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.
58. 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'.<sup>62</sup> Note that, while the methodology behind estrangement information is the same, the population coverage in that report differs from this release.
59. 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.
60. 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.

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<sup>60</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>61</sup> See [www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/estrangement/](http://www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/estrangement/).

<sup>62</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

61. After applying our data quality framework it was decided to report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish undergraduates aged under 25 in the academic year reported, from 2014-15 onwards. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>63</sup>

## Socioeconomic background

62. National Statistics socioeconomic classification (NS-SEC)<sup>64</sup> data is collected on the HESA student record and further details regarding its collection can be found on their website.<sup>65</sup> Since 2020-21 it has also been collected as part of the HESA SA record.<sup>66</sup> NS-SEC data is also available on the ILR; however, this data is not currently considered useable by the OfS based on quality concerns.<sup>67</sup>

63. 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,<sup>68</sup> and only the minority of students aged over 21 enter higher education in this way, we report this information for young students (under 21 on entry) only.

64. 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.

65. After applying our data quality framework, 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 for entrants. For detailed results of the application of our data quality framework, see our June 2021 Equality, diversity and student characteristics data report.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>64</sup> See <http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonsoc2010>.

<sup>65</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/sec](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/sec).

<sup>66</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/sec](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20054/a/sec).

<sup>67</sup> See 'Annex F: Socioeconomic background' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>68</sup> Defined by the HESA field 'UCASAPPID'. See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c20051/a/ucasappid>.

<sup>69</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

66. This decision to include data from 2015-16 onwards was in part influenced by the change in NS-SEC coding between 2014-15 and 2015-16.<sup>70</sup> As a result of this change, for the qualifiers and 'all students' populations, the first year reported is 2017-18. In the years prior to 2017-18, the majority of the cohorts will have had their NS-SEC value recorded prior to 2015-16.
67. As noted above, in 2020-21 NS-SEC data was included on the HESA SA record for the first time. An initial assessment of the quality of this data showed low disclosure rates for some levels of study. Our data quality framework recommends that 'caution should be applied when using newly collected characteristic data as applying this framework has shown that the first year of reporting is often of inconsistent quality.'<sup>71</sup> This being the case, we will assess the quality of this new source of data once we have more years available but in this 2022 release the HESA SA data for NS-SEC is not included.

### **Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)**

68. TUNDRA is an area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation.<sup>72</sup>
69. 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.
70. 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.
71. There are two versions of TUNDRA: TUNDRA LSOA, based on Lower Super Output Areas and TUNDRA MSOA, based on Middle Super Output Areas. This release includes data for both TUNDRA LSOA and TUNDRA MSOA.
72. 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 for both TUNDRA LSOA and TUNDRA MSOA: one for all young English undergraduates (from 2010-11 onwards), and one restricted to young English undergraduates from state-funded mainstream schools only.
73. 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

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<sup>70</sup> For a full description of this change see 'Annex F: Socioeconomic background' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>71</sup> 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/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>72</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

qualifiers, we report from 2014-15 onwards for entrants and from 2016-17 onwards for the qualifiers and all students populations.

74. Throughout this release, state-funded mainstream schools in England are defined by the NPD field 'KS4\_NFTYPE'.<sup>73</sup>

75. TUNDRA quintiles are assigned according to home postcodes, for which coverage exceeds 99 per cent of young English undergraduates. See last year's report for a summary of applying the data quality framework against this measure.<sup>74</sup>

### **Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles**

76. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) access quintiles<sup>75</sup> 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, gender, IMD, TUNDRA MSOA, and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)<sup>76</sup>. This measure was created using five years of aggregated data from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

77. 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.

78. As with the previous release, we report ABCS access quintiles for two populations: first for young (under 21 on entry) English undergraduates from English state-funded mainstream schools, and secondly for young (under 21 on entry) English undergraduates from English state-funded mainstream schools and English independent schools combined. Access rates for independent students are sufficiently high that on average they would fall under quintile 5 (the most likely to access higher education).<sup>77</sup> For this reason, the latter measure assigns all independent school pupils to ABCS access quintile 5.

79. Throughout this release, independent schools in England are defined by the NPD field 'KS4\_NFTYPE'.<sup>78</sup>

80. Since the ABCS measure is applied only to those with a linked NPD record, 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

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<sup>73</sup> 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](https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data_elements/1267f84a-3913-4358-bebe-17959988bf26).

<sup>74</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>75</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/).

<sup>76</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

<sup>77</sup> See 'TUNDRA methodology', available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

<sup>78</sup> 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](https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data_elements/1267f84a-3913-4358-bebe-17959988bf26).

(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.

81. Last year's report gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of ABCS access quintiles in this analysis.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

## Annex C: Summary of changes since previous release

82. This release has some minor differences compared with our 2021 equality and diversity data publication. These changes are described below.
83. Data for the academic year 2020-21 has been added.
84. The data on ABCS access, care experience, estrangement, HRI, socioeconomic background and TUNDRA is now published as official statistics.
85. Socioeconomic background (NS-SEC) data for all students and qualifiers in 2015-16 and 2016-17 is no longer included as the majority of students in these years will have had their NS-SEC value recorded prior to 2015-16. Coding of NS-SEC values changed between 2014-15 and 2015-16, and this new restriction means the data included better represents the academic years of data that pass our data quality framework.<sup>80</sup>
86. As a result of changes in the collection requirements, from 2020-21 parental higher education data is provided only for UK-domiciled undergraduate students, as opposed to all levels and all domiciles.
87. Data on student numbers and proportions by TUNDRA MSOA is now included, in addition to TUNDRA LSOA.
88. The ABCS access quintiles have been updated to use the latest version of ABCS access published in October 2021.<sup>81</sup>
89. In last year's statistics, the student characteristic 'ABCS access quintile (state-funded mainstream school pupils)' was not limited to state-funded mainstream school pupils as described, and included all school types. This error has been corrected in this update and this data now only concerns these students. Students who did not attend a state-funded mainstream school are set as 'Not applicable'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See 'Annex F: Socioeconomic background' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>81</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/associations-between-characteristics-of-students-abcs-2021/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/associations-between-characteristics-of-students-abcs-2021/).

<sup>82</sup> State-funded mainstream school is defined by KS4\_NFTYPE values: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 51, 52, 57, 58, 59, 63 and 64.



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