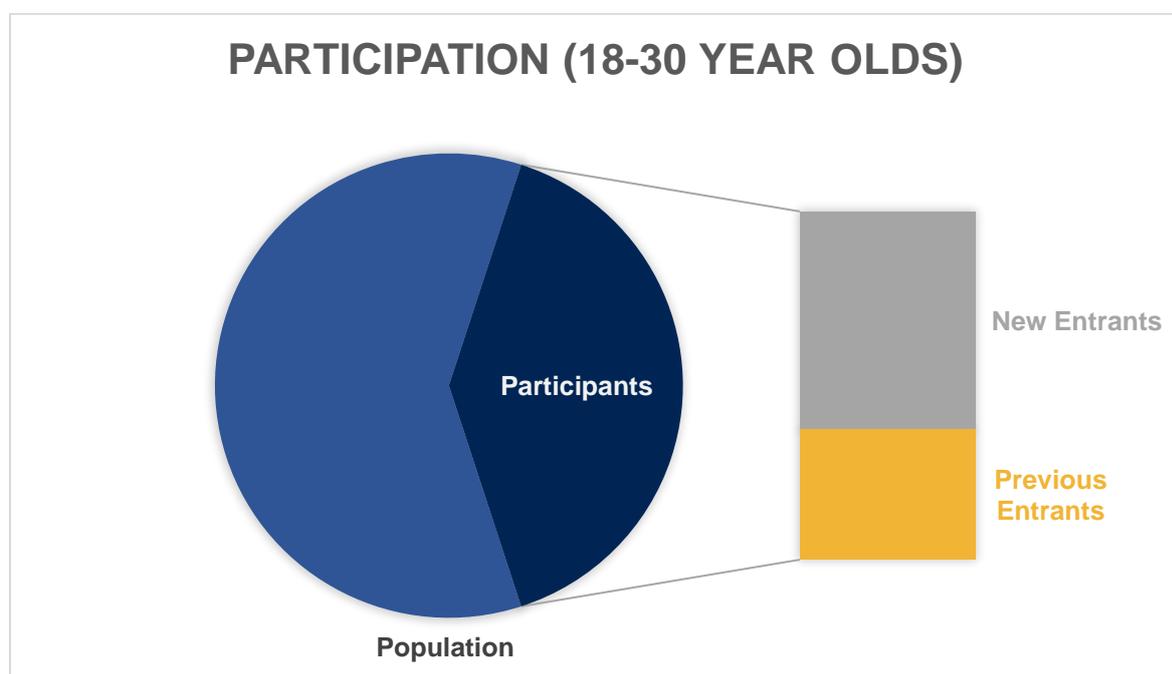


Key Performance Measures (KPM) 1 and 2: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the measure of participation used?

Higher education participation rates refer to the proportion of people aged 18-30 who have been in or are currently in higher education.

How is participation calculated?



Participation Rate

The participation rate is the proportion of the population who have participated in higher education. Because the number of participants consist of both new entrants and previous entrants to higher education, the number of higher education participants who are new and who have previously participated is added together. Dividing this by the total population count will result in the proportion of 18-30 year olds who have attended or are currently in higher education – which is the measure of participation for the year (see Annex A).

Participation rates can be calculated for different groups. In these key performance measures they are calculated for 18-30 year olds across all of the small geographical areas that comprise each [POLAR4](#) quintile. More details of the method are found in Annexes A - D.

How is population calculated?

The total population is an estimate of the total number of people aged 18-30. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) [mid-year population estimates](#) are used to estimate the population of 18-30 year olds across each [POLAR4](#) quintile.

POLAR4 is a classification of small geographical areas across the UK that describes the relative representation in higher education of young people (19 and under) from each area. Each small area is assigned to one of five quintiles, with each quintile representing around a fifth of the young population. POLAR4 quintile 1 areas have the lowest levels of entry to higher education and POLAR4 quintile 5 areas have the highest levels of entry to higher education.

Mid-year estimates are of the usual resident population on the 30 June each year, therefore for many will represent term-time addresses or temporary addresses. The participation rates we are estimating are based on permanent or home addresses therefore we need to adjust the population estimates to account for this.

From 2009 onwards, both the permanent and temporary addresses of students are available in the higher education data. Having this data allows us to calculate the proportion of students whose POLAR4 quintile (based on postcodes) is incorrectly assigned. This information allows us to adjust population estimates to reflect the correct quintile for individuals whose addresses may be inaccurate (see Annex B).

How is the number of participants calculated?

Higher education participants consist of people (18-30 year olds) who are new to higher education and people who have participated in higher education in the past. It is the sum of the number of people who have experienced higher education at some point during their lives between the age of 18 and 30. Using student records ranging multiple years ([Higher Education Statistics Agency, Individualised Learner Record](#)) which includes information on student, course, and institution characteristics, students can be identified as either a new entrant in the current year, or a previous entrant. In order to identify whether a particular student is new to higher education in the particular year, the year's records for students currently in higher education would have to be compared to historical student records. For instance, a match of a current participant in an earlier year would indicate that the student is not a new entrant to higher education and therefore should not be counted as a new entrant in the current year, but as a new entrant in the year that the student was found as a match in historical records (see Annex C).

Example A demonstrates how participation rates are calculated. In this example, there are 7 people in the total population. Of this, there are 5 people who have participated in higher education: 2 new entrants for the current year (person A and D) and 3 people who have previously attended higher education (person B, C, and E). As a result, the participation rate is $\frac{5}{7}$, which is equal to 0.71, suggesting that 71% of the population in the year have experienced or are currently experiencing higher education.

Example A:

Person	Age in 2016	In Higher Education?			New/Previous?	Explanation
		2014	2015	2016 (current)		
A	18	no	no	yes	new	Entered first time
B	19	no	yes	yes	previous	Entered in 2015
C	25	yes	no	yes	previous	Participated in 2014
D	30	no	no	yes	new	Entered first time
E	28	yes	yes	no	previous	Participated in 2014
F	22	no	no	no	N/A	Never participated - exclude
G	21	no	no	no	N/A	Never participated - exclude

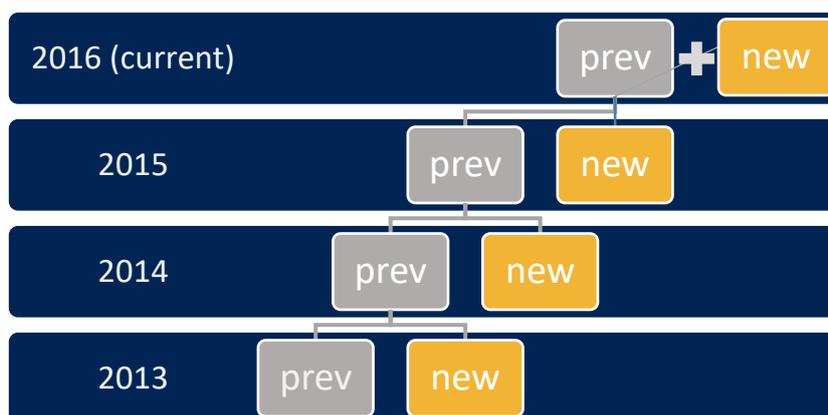
	Person	Count
New	A+D	2
Previous	B+C+E	3
Total Participants	A+B+C+D+E	5
Total Population	A+B+C+D+E+F+G	7

	Calculation	Rate
Participation Rate	5/7	0.71%

Identifying whether an individual has been to, or is currently in, higher education requires counting the individual at the year they were new to higher education in order to avoid counting the same individual for every year they have participated in higher education. Example B displays how the concept works. Bearing in mind that the total number of participants in 2016 consists of new and previous attendants, the previous attendants in

2016 are either new entrants in 2015 or previous attendants of 2015. Likewise, the previous attendants of 2015 are either new entrants in 2014, or previous attendants in 2014, and so on. By counting participants the year they were new entrants, we are able to avoid double counting participants who are current participants but have also participated in the past, as well as count previous attendants who are not currently attending higher education.

Example B:



For this measure of participation, the participation rates are calculated separately for each age group and [POLAR4 quintile](#). The number of new entrants for each year are calculated separately for each group and the overall participation rate is then calculated by dividing the number of total participants for each group by the total adjusted population (see Annex D).

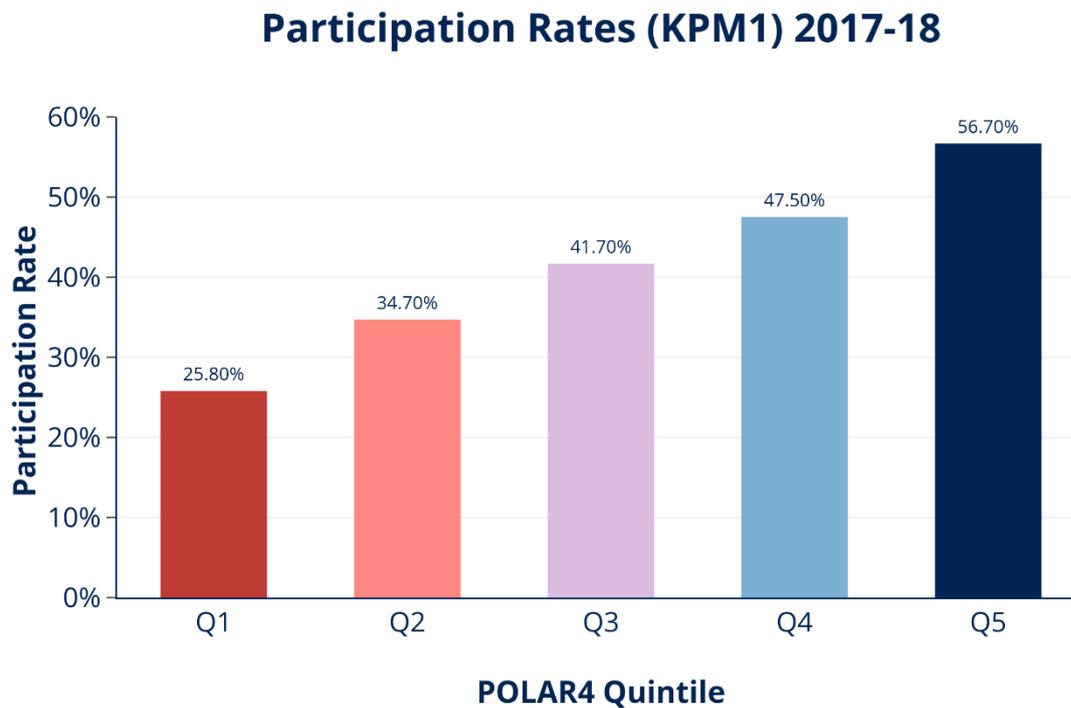
How do the measures of participation align with the Office for Students' objectives?

As the regulator of higher education, one of the Office for Students' objectives is to ensure that 'all students, from all backgrounds, with the ability to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education'. The participation rate calculated could be grouped in different ways in order to identify whether any particular groups are participating in higher education more than others, and consequently close the gap in participation between the groups.

POLAR4 classifies small geographical areas across the UK by the relative representation of young people from those areas in higher education. Each small area is assigned to one of five quintiles, with each quintile representing around a fifth of the young population. POLAR4 quintile 1 areas have the lowest levels of entry to higher education and POLAR4 quintile 5 areas have the highest levels of entry to higher education. This makes it a highly appropriate method for grouping the population to assess gaps in access to higher education.

Figure 1 displays the estimated participation rates for the 2017-18 academic year, from each of the five POLAR4 quintile areas. As can be seen, quintile 1 which represents the most underrepresented areas, has the lowest participation rate of 25.8%, while quintile 5 has the highest participation rate of 56.7%.

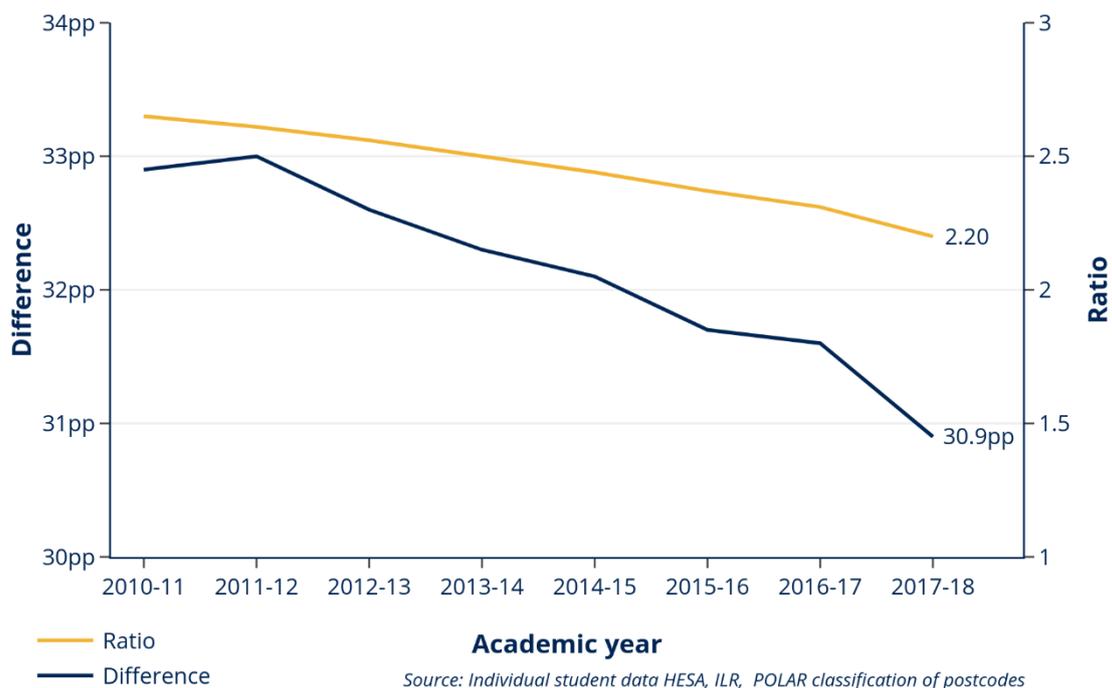
Figure 1:



What are Key Performance Measures (KPM) 1 and 2?

The difference between participation for most and least represented groups enables the measurement of the gaps in access to higher education, with the goal of closing the gaps completely. Key performance measures 1 and 2 (KPM1 and KPM 2) are indicators of this gap. They measure the difference in participation between the most and least represented groups for a particular year, which can be measured as percentage point differences or as a ratio of one another (30.9pp and 2.2 for the 17/18 academic year). Figure 2 displays the difference in participation rates between quintile 5 (least underrepresented) and quintile 1 (most underrepresented). By examining such gaps over a period of time, KPM 1 and 2 allows for trends over time to be observed, and relevant policies employed to attempt at closing the gap.

Figure 2:



How do KPM 1 and KPM2 differ from one another?

KPM 1 measures the overall difference in participation rates between those living in areas with lowest participation and areas with highest participation. KPM 2, on the other hand, takes a less general approach and investigates the gap in participation for selective higher education providers (indicated by a higher entry tariff). KPM 1 examines the participation rate for all HE providers. KPM 2 investigates the gap in participation only for higher education providers with high entry tariffs (see Annex E), which is merely a segment of the total higher education institutions.