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## **METHODOLOGICAL REVISIONS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION INITIAL PARTICIPATION RATE (HEIPR)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides details of revisions to the methodology for the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR), and shows the impact of this new methodology on the figures.

### **KEY POINTS**

#### **Key methodological revisions:**

2. The key methodological revisions are as follows:
  - Students studying for higher education qualifications at Scottish and Welsh further education colleges are now included in the measure.
  - The matching technique now excludes only those students with at least six months' prior HE experience;
  - In addition to matching back to students attending higher education institutions in earlier years, matching is also done against higher education students at further education colleges in previous years;
  - The matching technique has been extended back to 1995/96 for the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record, and 1997/98 for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Individualised Learner Record (ILR);
  - Duplicate students within and across the HESA and ILR datasets are now counted only once;
  - The false matching correction has been re-calculated in light of the above revisions. The new methodology is now sufficiently accurate that the false matching correction does

not need to be applied when quoting the HEIPR to the nearest integer or to the first decimal place.

### **Impact of revisions:**

3. The impact of the methodological changes was as follows:

- The revisions have reduced the figures across the whole time series by one to two percentage points. This is due to the increased accuracy of the HEFCE matching technique, the removal of duplicate students, and the additional matching across the HESA and ILR datasets and against earlier years of the ILR.
- Over the period 1999/2000 – 2004/05, the HEIPR figures in Table 1, calculated using the original methodology, show a one percentage point increase from 41% to 42% when quoted to the nearest integer. The figures quoted to one decimal place show an increase of 1.5 percentage points from 40.5% to 42.0%.
- Over the period 1999/2000 – 2004/05, the HEIPR figures in Table 2, calculated using the revised methodology, show a two percentage point increase from 39% to 41% when quoted to the nearest integer. The figures quoted to one decimal place also show an increase of two percentage points: from 39.3% to 41.3%.
- While the revised HEIPR time series in Chart 1 contains lower figures than those calculated using the original methodology, the trend shows a slightly steeper increase over the period from 1999/2000 to 2004/05.

### **Key figures in the new time series**

4. The key figures following revisions are as follows:

- The revised provisional figure for the HEIPR for 2004/05 was 41%, an increase of one percentage point on the revised final figure of 40% in 2003/04. The figure for 2003/04 was down from 41% in 2002/03.
- The revised provisional figure for males for 2004/05 was 37%; this is an increase of one percentage point on the revised final figure of 36% in 2003/04. The figure for 2003/04 was down from 37% in 2002/03.

- For females, the revised provisional figure for 2004/05 was 46%; this is an increase of one percentage point on the revised final figure of 45% in 2003/04. The figure for 2002/03 was also 45%.
- The revised provisional figure for full-time students in 2004/05 was 35%, no change from the revised final figure for 2003/04. The figure for 2003/04 was down from 36% in 2002/03.
- The revised provisional figure for part-time students in 2004/05 was 6%, no change from the revised final figure for 2003/04. However, the rounding to one percentage point conceals an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 2003/04 to 2004/05. The figure for 2002/03 was also 6%.

5. These and the figures in Table 2 of this SFR supersede figures released earlier as they have been updated with revised methodology.

6. Figures for the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) are rounded to the nearest whole number to reflect the degree of accuracy inherent in the data. As this can conceal changes or trends, figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are also provided in the tables to inform comparisons over time.

## **INDEX OF TABLES AND FIGURES**

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

**Table 2:** Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) for English domiciled first time entrants to Higher Education Courses at UK Higher Education Institutions and English, Welsh and Scottish Further Education Colleges 1999/00 – 2004/05 – REVISED METHODOLOGY

**Chart 1:** Impact of revised methodology on total HEIPR

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

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

This table is taken from Statistical First Release 14/2006, "Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 1999/2000 - 2004/05 (provisional)".

Figures for the HEIPR are rounded to the nearest whole number to reflect the degree of accuracy inherent in the data. As this can conceal changes or trends, figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are also provided to inform comparisons over time. Figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are shown in parentheses.

Figures for the counts of initial entrants are rounded to the nearest thousand. Rounding may result in apparent inconsistencies between totals and sums of constituent parts.

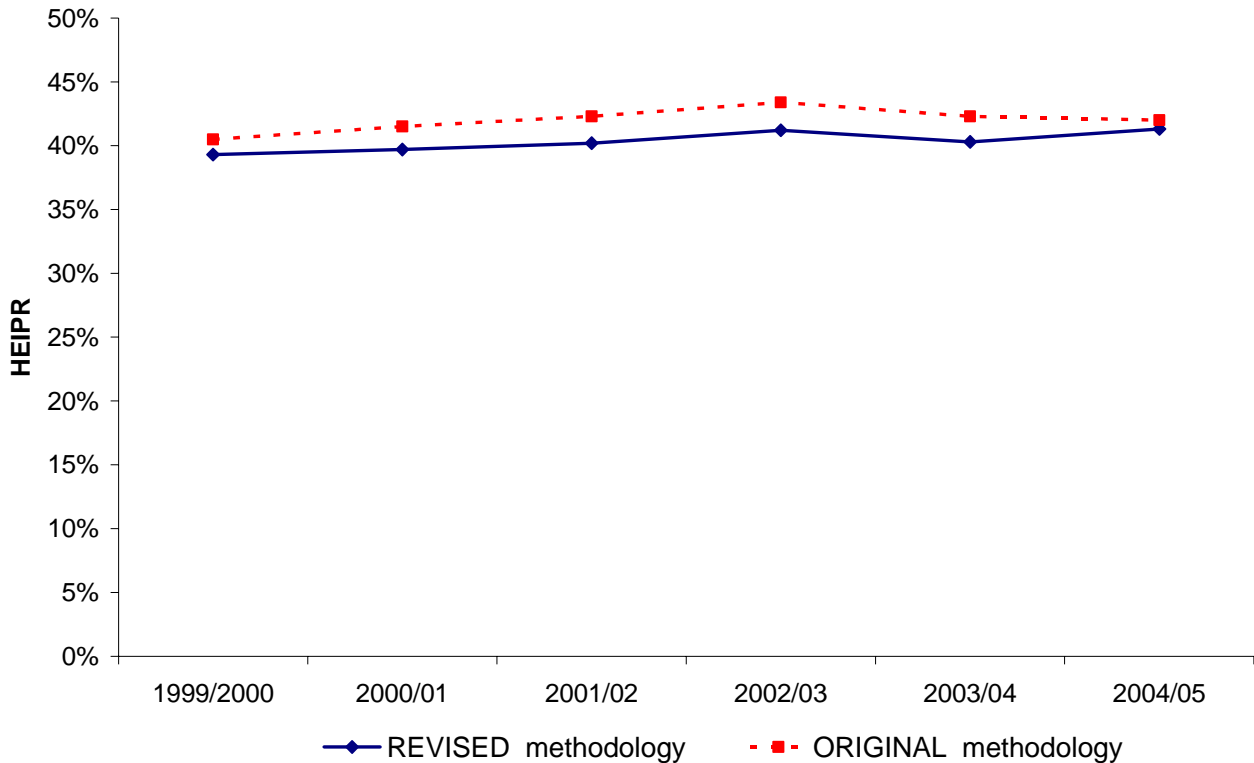
**Table 2 Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) for English domiciled first time entrants to Higher Education Courses at UK Higher Education Institutions and English, Welsh and Scottish Further Education Colleges  
1999/00 – 2004/05 (provisional) – REVISED METHODOLOGY**

Academic Year	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05 (provisional)
HEIPR (male and female) %	39 (39.3)	40 (39.7)	40 (40.2)	41 (41.2)	40 (40.3)	41 (41.3)
Initial entrants (thousands)	239	239	244	255	257	268
HEIPR (male) %	37 (37.1)	37 (36.7)	37 (36.6)	37 (37.1)	36 (35.6)	37 (36.5)
Initial entrants (thousands)	113	111	112	117	116	121
HEIPR (female) %	41 (41.4)	43 (42.7)	44 (44.0)	45 (45.4)	45 (45.3)	46 (46.3)
Initial entrants (thousands)	125	127	132	138	141	147
HEIPR (full-time) %	34 (33.6)	34 (34.4)	35 (35.1)	36 (35.6)	35 (34.6)	35 (35.0)
Initial entrants (thousands)	203	205	211	220	222	228
HEIPR (part-time) %	6 (5.6)	5 (5.3)	5 (5.2)	6 (5.6)	6 (5.7)	6 (6.3)
Initial entrants (thousands)	36	34	33	35	36	40

Figures for the HEIPR are rounded to the nearest whole number to reflect the degree of accuracy inherent in the data. As this can conceal changes or trends, figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are also provided to inform comparisons over time. Figures rounded to the nearest decimal place are shown in parentheses.

Figures for the counts of initial entrants are rounded to the nearest thousand. Rounding may result in apparent inconsistencies between totals and sums of constituent parts.

**Chart 1 Impact of revised methodology on total HEIPR**



**NOTES TO EDITORS**

7. The HEIPR is the National Statistic that the Government uses to measure progress in participation in relation to the Public Service Agreement target: by 2010, increase participation in higher education towards 50% of those aged 18 to 30 and also make significant progress year on year towards fair access, and bear down on rates of non-completion. It roughly equates to the probability that a seventeen year old will participate in higher education by age thirty given the age specific participation rates.
8. In November 2002, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a National Statistics Quality Review of Higher Education participation statistics. The review was carried out independently and in accordance with Office for National Statistics guidelines and was designed to ensure rigour and transparency. The report on the review was published in July 2003 and is available on the Office for National Statistics website, at: [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods\\_quality/quality\\_review/education.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/quality_review/education.asp)
9. The National Statistics Quality Review included two recommendations for revisions to the HEIPR:

- Students studying for higher education qualifications at Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish further education colleges should be included.
- Students studying for higher education qualifications at private and overseas institutions should be investigated.

10. In December 2006, the National Audit Office published a review of the data systems underpinning target measurement in a number of Government Departments, including the Department for Education and Skills. The report is available on the National Audit Office website, at: [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao\\_reports/06-07/0607127ii.pdf](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/06-07/0607127ii.pdf)

11. The National Audit Office review included the following recommendations for revisions to the HEIPR:

- Duplicate students should be removed from the HEIPR;
- The matching technique should exclude only those students with at least six months' prior HE experience;
- In addition to matching back to students attending higher education institutions in earlier years, matching should also be done against higher education students at further education colleges in previous years;
- The recommendations to include students at non-English further education colleges and private and overseas higher education institutions were also included.

12. SFR 14/2006 "Participation rates in higher education: academic years 1999/2000 – 2004/05 (Provisional)", published on 4 April 2006, included advance warning of the planned improvements to the HEIPR both methodological and in terms of coverage, with reference to the NAO report. This SFR is available on the Department for Education and Skills website: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000648/SFR14-2006.pdf>

## **METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES**

13. The coverage of the HEIPR has now been improved due to the inclusion of students who are studying for higher education qualifications at further education colleges (FECs) in Scotland and in Wales.
14. The matching technique for detecting students with prior HE experience in higher education institutions (HEIs) has been revised such that only students with at least six months' prior experience of HE are discounted from the HEIPR via matching. This is in keeping with the definition of 'participation' in HE as a minimum of six months of study.
15. The matching technique has been extended back to 1995/96. Previously, this was only done as far back as 1999/2000 for each year of the time series, such that the 2004/05 figure had been matched back by five years while the 1999/2000 figure had not been matched at all. All years of the time series are now matched back consistently by four years: the 1999/2000 figure is matched back as far as 1995/96 while the 2004/05 figure is matched back as far as 2000/01.
16. A linking file has now become available, courtesy of the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE), for students on the Learning and Skills Council's Individualised Learner Record (ILR). The availability of this data has allowed the methodology to incorporate further matching to students studying for HE qualifications at English further education colleges as far back as 1997/98. For each year of the time series, all HEIPR-qualifying students are matched back consistently by four years to both the HESA and ILR datasets. (Exceptions to this include the 2000/01 figure which is matched back to the ILR by three years to 1997/98, and the 1999/2000 figure which is matched back to the ILR by two years to 1997/98).
17. The additional linking file allows students to be matched across the HESA and ILR datasets in each year of the time series in order to discount duplicate cases. The students who are included in the final HEIPR figures are counted only once.
18. The false matching correction, which was added to the final HEIPR figure for each year of the time series, has been re-calculated by HEFCE with the revised methodology in place. Across the time series, the revised matching methodology was found to be accurate enough not to require a false matching correction when quoted to the nearest integer or to the first decimal place.

## **DEFINITIONS**

19. The figures in this SFR were derived from data on Higher Education students collected from publicly funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom and for the first time in 2004/05 from the University of Buckingham by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and from Further Education Colleges (FECs) in England by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), in Wales by the National Assembly for Wales, and in Scotland by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Population estimates were provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and population projections by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD).
  
20. The HEIPR counts English-domiciled 17-30 year old Higher Education students. Students are counted if they participate for at least six months on a course expected to last for at least six months, except that students are not counted if they have participated in Higher Education previously for at least six months. Students at FECs in England, Scotland and Wales are counted if they are on courses designated as National Vocational Qualification Level 4 or above, or listed as Higher Education.
  
21. The HEIPR does not count English domiciled Higher Education students (as defined above):
  - at FECs in Northern Ireland;
  - at privately funded institutions, with the exception of the University of Buckingham from 2004/05 (which makes no practical difference to the figures because of its relatively small number of English-domiciled students aged 18-30);
  - at institutions outside the UK.

Information on these students is not currently available to the Department in sufficient detail to be included in the calculations.

## REVISIONS

### 22. Coverage:

The Department will continue to work with the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DELNI) to gain access to data on English-domiciled Higher Education students at Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland for incorporation into the HEIPR. These students should be included in the HEIPR but are not because the data are not currently available to the Department. The Department will continue to consider the scope for including data on Higher Education provided privately or overseas.

### 23. Updates to the underlying data:

As revisions and updates to the source data from HESA, LSC, SFC and the National Assembly for Wales, and the population estimates and projections from ONS and GAD are made available at different times during the year, any revisions to the provisional figures for 2004/05 will be published as soon as the provisional figures for 2005/06 are available. The Department is planning to publish the provisional figures for 2005/06 on 27 March 2007.

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