

Higher Education Statistical Fact Sheet 4: Enrolments at NI Higher Education Institutions by available equality categories: 2016/17 to 2020/21

- In 2020/21, 13% of students enrolled at NI HEIs self-reported as having a disability; an increase from 12% in 2019/20.
- In 2020/21, of those NI domiciled students enrolled at NI HEIs who were asked to provide the religion they were brought up in, 32% of students stated 'Protestant', 53% stated 'Roman Catholic' and the remainder were categorised as 'Other' (1%), 'No Religion' (10%) or 'Unknown' (4%).

| Disability Status ⁽¹⁾ | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Known disability | 5,220 | 5,610 | 6,165 | 7,215 | 8,465 |
| No known disability | 48,975 | 48,410 | 49,120 | 51,860 | 57,780 |
| Total | 54,195 | 54,020 | 55,290 | 59,075 | 66,245 |

| Religion ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾ | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Protestant | 12,810 | 12,525 | 12,960 | 13,145 | 13,915 |
| Roman Catholic | 20,340 | 20,210 | 20,640 | 21,180 | 22,960 |
| Other | 3,570 | 2,190 | 1,105 | 510 | 400 |
| Not known | 3,670 | 3,605 | 3,355 | 2,910 | 1,840 |
| No Religion | 1,745 | 2,800 | 3,650 | 4,010 | 4,360 |
| Total | 42,140 | 41,325 | 41,705 | 41,755 | 43,480 |

| Age | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 20 and under | 19,125 | 18,875 | 18,810 | 19,135 | 20,745 |
| 21 to 24 | 15,305 | 15,745 | 16,280 | 16,840 | 18,795 |
| 25 and over | 19,765 | 19,405 | 20,195 | 23,100 | 26,705 |
| Unknown | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Total | 54,195 | 54,020 | 55,290 | 59,075 | 66,245 |

| Sex | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Male | 23,440 | 23,085 | 23,160 | 24,350 | 27,105 |
| Female | 30,750 | 30,935 | 32,130 | 34,725 | 39,140 |
| Total | 54,195 | 54,020 | 55,290 | 59,075 | 66,245 |

| Ethnicity ⁽⁴⁾ | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| White | 48,260 | 47,610 | 48,250 | 47,390 | 50,130 |
| Irish Traveller | 15 | 10 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| Black | 370 | 340 | 430 | 435 | 475 |
| Indian | 295 | 275 | 355 | 480 | 695 |
| Pakistani | 185 | 150 | 180 | 185 | 250 |
| Bangladeshi | 115 | 55 | 60 | 50 | 90 |
| Chinese | 355 | 370 | 375 | 345 | 275 |
| Other Asian | 300 | 280 | 340 | 375 | 440 |
| Mixed | 375 | 405 | 440 | 460 | 545 |
| Other | 235 | 200 | 235 | 265 | 275 |
| Unknown | 3,690 | 4,325 | 4,615 | 9,080 | 13,065 |
| Total | 54,195 | 54,020 | 55,290 | 59,075 | 66,245 |

| Marital Status ⁽²⁾ | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Single (never married or never in civil partnership) | 35,580 | 34,160 | 34,460 | 34,490 | 37,085 |
| Married or in civil partnership | 4,095 | 3,850 | 4,065 | 4,350 | 4,505 |
| Separated (but still legally married or in civil partnership) | 245 | 230 | 240 | 270 | 260 |
| Divorced or civil partnership dissolved | 225 | 215 | 220 | 260 | 275 |
| Widowed | 45 | 40 | 40 | 80 | 45 |
| Co-habiting | 680 | 650 | 710 | 875 | 1,080 |
| Unknown | 1,265 | 2,180 | 1,975 | 1,430 | 240 |
| Total | 42,140 | 41,325 | 41,705 | 41,755 | 43,480 |

| Dependants ⁽²⁾ | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Young people/children (YP/C) | 4,100 | 3,930 | 4,095 | 4,185 | 4,650 |
| Other relative/friends (OR/F) | 285 | 280 | 290 | 340 | 305 |
| Both YP/C and OR/F | 400 | 370 | 400 | 450 | 475 |
| No dependants | 36,010 | 35,365 | 35,605 | 34,935 | 37,460 |
| Unknown | 1,345 | 1,380 | 1,310 | 1,840 | 590 |
| Total | 42,140 | 41,325 | 41,705 | 41,755 | 43,480 |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

1. Information on disability and ethnicity is collected on the basis of a student's self assessment.
2. Information on religion, marital status and dependants is only collected for NI domiciled students studying at NI HE institutions.
3. Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate.
4. A new coding framework was added to the HESA data collection for the Religion question in 2016/17, which includes an additional category for 'No Religion'. More information can be found at: [HESA Religion](#)
5. From the 2014/15 academic year onwards, within DfE publications, Open University students are counted within the country where the national centre is located. Figures for the previous academic years have been updated to reflect this change.
6. Enrolments at the OU (where the national centre is located in NI) have been removed from the figures for religion, marital status and dependants due to high levels of unknowns.
7. To avoid a duplication of foundation year figures across HE institutions and Further Education Colleges, Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College changed their return to HESA during 2019/20 and no longer report on foundation degrees that are offered as part of a validated collaborative arrangement with Further Education Colleges. Historical figures in this fact sheet have been backdated to reflect this change.
8. To prevent the identification of individuals, figures in the attached table are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown.
9. Percentages are based on unrounded figures and rounded to the nearest integer.

Links

Data from this fact sheet are available in open data format at the following link:

[Higher Education Statistical Factsheets](#)

More Higher Education statistics are available from:

[Higher Education Statistics and Research](#)