

HeppSY Annual Learner Survey 2020/21: Ethnicity Summary

This summary report outlines the findings of the 2020/21 Partnership Report that are related to student ethnicity. The 2020/21 Partnership Report reviewed the outcomes from Wave 3 of the Uni Connect survey. The survey was completed by students in Years 9–13 and Level 3 Years 1 and 2 online and in HeppSY schools and colleges during October to January of 2020/2021, and forms part of the national evaluation being conducted by CFE research. Overall, 4,421 complete student responses across 43 schools/colleges were included in the final dataset.

Additional information can be found in the 2020/21 HeppSY Partnership Report. HeppSY Partnership Reports from previous years can be found at www.heppsy.org/schools/publications.

Likelihood of applying to HE at age 18/19

School students in Years 9–12 and Level 3 Year 1 college students were asked how likely they were to apply to HE at age 18 or 19. Responses were given on a six-point ordered scale from “definitely won’t apply” to “definitely will apply”, with an additional “don’t know” option available.

- A high proportion of Black students reported that they intend to apply to HE, with 90% saying that they were “fairly likely”, “very likely” or “definitely will apply”. This was 10 percentage points more likely than any other ethnic group.
- White students had the lowest aspiration to apply to HE, with 71% of White students saying that they were “fairly likely”, “very likely” or “definitely will apply”. White male students were the least likely demographic to have HE aspirations, with 62% of White male students reporting that they were “fairly likely”, “very likely” or “definitely will apply”, compared to 76% of White female students.
- The most common aim for all ethnic groups after finishing their current studies was to “study at a local university or another HE institution” or to “study away from home at university or another HE institution”. Black, Asian and Other Minority Ethnicity students were more likely to plan to study at a local HE institution than White and Mixed Ethnicity students. White, Black and Mixed Ethnicity students were more likely than Asian and Other Minority Ethnicity students to want to study at a HE institution away from home.
- White students were most likely to be unsure about what they would most like to do after their current studies, with 10% of White students selecting the response “don’t know”, which was 1.6 times higher than any other ethnic group. This was primarily driven by White male students from UCP postcodes, with 16% of White male students from UCP postcodes selecting this response.

HE knowledge and perceived benefits

Respondents were asked to report how much they knew about various aspects of HE on a three-point scale, including “nothing”, “a little”, and “a lot”. This included statements surrounding knowledge of HE, student life, and the benefits of HE.

- Black students were the most likely ethnic group to say that they knew “a lot” about all of the HE knowledge statements, particularly surrounding the qualifications and grades they would need to get into HE. 48% of Black students said they knew “a lot” about this topic, which was 9 percentage points higher than any other ethnic group.
- Mixed Ethnicity and Other Minority Ethnicity students were the most likely groups to report they knew “nothing” about any of the HE knowledge statements.
- Black students were the most likely ethnic group to say they knew “a lot” about all of the student life statements, particularly surrounding how it leads to careers they may be interested in. The number of Black students who said they knew “a lot” about this statement was over 1.6 times greater than the average.

- Students of Mixed or Other Minority ethnicity were the most likely groups to say they knew “nothing” about the student life statements, with Mixed Ethnicity students being 1.4 times more likely than average to say they knew “nothing” about the options to live when studying.
- There was little difference between the responses of students from different ethnic groups surrounding their perceptions of the benefits of HE. Other Minority Ethnicity students were slightly less likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statements, and Black and Asian students were slightly more likely to respond positively.

Perceived sense of belonging and fit within HE

School students in Years 9–12 and Level 3 Year 1 college students were asked to rate their agreement with statements relating to their perceived academic and social fit within HE. Responses were given on a five-point ordered scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, with an additional “don’t know” option available.

- Black students tended to have the strongest sense of belonging and fit compared to other ethnic groups; particularly for the statements “I would fit in with others” and “I have the academic ability to succeed”.
- Responses from Asian students were slightly less positive than observed during the Wave 2 survey, bringing this group more in line with White, Mixed Ethnicity and Other Minority Ethnicity students. This was most notable for the statement “I would fit in well with others”, as the proportion of Asian students who reported that they “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement decreased by 11 percentage points to 49%.

Covid-19 impact

Students who reported that they had studied from home between March and July 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown (N = 4,258) were asked to respond to seven statements surrounding challenges they may have experienced during home working.

- White and Mixed Ethnicity female students were more likely than other groups to say that their parent/carer was unable to help with school/college work, with 27% of White and Mixed Ethnicity females reporting this challenge compared to an average of 22%.
- Asian female students were 13 percentage points most likely to report being asked to help out with other family members compared to an average of 22% for all students.
- Mixed Ethnicity male students were more likely to experience challenges due to being asked to help out with other family members than male students from other ethnic groups, with 24% of Mixed Ethnicity males reporting this challenge compared to 16% of all male students.
- Black students were 1.5 times more likely than the average to report experiencing poor Wi-Fi as an issue, and 1.2 times more likely to report lack of other equipment as a problem.
- The number of challenges experienced by male students did not vary greatly depending on ethnicity, however, over a third of Asian, Black and Mixed ethnicity female students experienced three or more issues, compared to 19% of male students.
- All students were also asked whether COVID-19 has “influenced your decision about what to do next?”. When split by ethnicity, 34% of Asian students reported that their decision had been influenced by COVID-19, compared to 27% of White students, 21% of Mixed Ethnicity and Other Minority Ethnicity students, and 20% of Black students.