Briefing: UCAS deadline applicant statistics for January 2021

Briefing Paper: Nursing applicants at the 29 January deadline – 18 February 2021

UCAS has published data on undergraduate applications processed by UCAS ahead of the 29 January 2021 deadline. It shows a 32% increase in the total number of applicants to nursing courses in the UK compared to 2020.

- The number of applicants for nursing courses at providers in **Scotland** increased by 28% and for those based in **England** by 34%. The number of applicants to providers in **Wales** increased by 29%.

- For the UK overall, there was a double-digit increase in applicants to nursing courses for every age group compared to 2020. The number of **18-year-old** applicants increased by 27% compared to 2020.

- The number of **male** applicants to nursing courses increased by 40% while the number of female applicants increased by 32%.

- The number of **non-EU** applicants increased by 55% and applicants from the **EU** (excluding UK) to providers in England increased by 13%.

Headlines for the whole higher education sector

Overall application rate increases

Overall, there was an 8% increase in the total number of people applying to higher education, to 616,360, compared to the same figure in 2020. This is the highest number of applicants the sector has seen in the last 10 years.

Larger increases in the devolved nations

The number of applicants increased across the UK with 17% more in Wales, 15% more in Northern Ireland, 12% more in Scotland and 8% more in England compared to 2020.

Increase in 18-year-old applicants

Overall, 42.6% of all UK 18-year-olds applied compared to 39.5% last year. The rate is highest for applicants from Northern Ireland where 52.1% of 18-year-olds applied for university in 2021.

More international applicants but drop in EU applicants

The number of international applicants rose by 17% compared to 2020 to a record 85,610 applicants. Providers in Scotland received 27% more applicants from international applicants than in 2020. Providers in Northern Ireland received 21% more, providers in Wales 20% more and providers in England 16% more applications from international applicants.

As this is the first academic year that EU applicants (except Irish) will have to pay international fees, the number of applicants fell by 40% compared to 2020. Only providers in Northern Ireland saw a sharp rise of 38% in EU applicants compared to last year, which is largely due to the higher number of applicants from the Irish Republic.

More 18-year-old applicants from all POLAR4 quintiles

Whilst there was an increase in applicants in all POLAR4 quintiles of the 18-year-old population, the increase was largest in Quintile 5, where 59% of 18-year-olds applied. Therefore, the gap between the least disadvantaged and other groups has widened slightly. The rate for Quintile 1 increased to 26.4%.

Increases across all ethnic groups

The increase in applicants was similar across the main recorded ethnic groups. There was a record number of Black applicants (40,690), a record number of Asian applicants (70,140) and a record number of Mixed applicants (25,830).
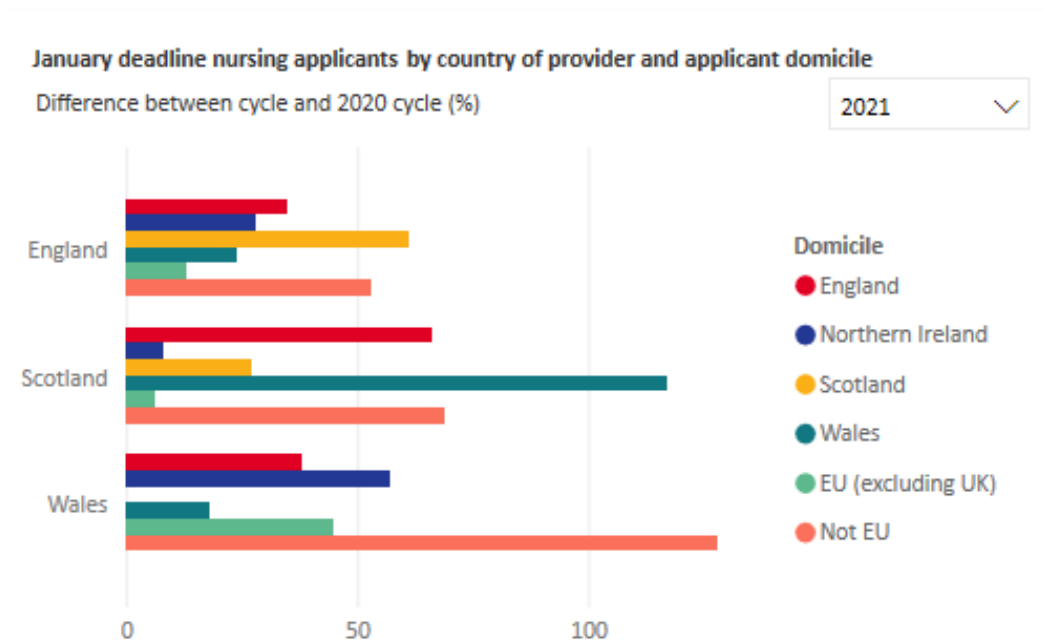
Nursing figures

Compared to the 2020 cycle, the number of applicants to nursing has increased by 32% from 45,430 to 60,130. This is higher than 2014, which had been the year with the highest number of applicants to this date with 58,040.

Applications by country of provider

The number of applicants for nursing courses at providers in **Scotland** increased by 28% (7,790 in 2020; 9,970 in 2021) and for those based in **England** by 34% (35,960 in 2020; 48,300 in 2021). The number of applicants to providers in **Wales** increased by 29% (4,830 in 2020; 6,240 in 2021).

Figure 1: The percentage change in the number of applicants by domicile to providers in England, Scotland and Wales

January deadline nursing applicants by country of provider and applicant domicile

Difference between cycle and 2020 cycle (%)

Applicants by domicile group

There was a 35% increase overall in **English domiciled applicants** compared to 2020, rising from 32,490 to 43,830. The number of **Scottish domiciled applicants** rose by 27% (5,910 in 2020; 7,510 in 2021). The number of **Welsh domiciled applicants** increased by 20% (2,720 in 2020; 3,270 in 2021) and the number of applicants domiciled in **Northern Ireland** rose by 26% (2,420 in 2020; 3,050 in 2021).

- The overall number of applicants from the **UK** increased by 32% (43,530 in 2020; 57,660 in 2021). The number of **EU** (excluding the UK) applicants increased by 12% (1,080 in 2020; 1,210 in 2021), which is largely due to an increase of 24% in applicants from the Republic of Ireland (830 in 2020; 1,030 in 2021). The number of **non-EU** applicants increased by 55% (820 in 2020; 1,260 in 2021) with most notable increases in applicants from Nigeria (250 in 2020; 430 in 2021), the United States (50 in 2020; 120 in 2021), Zimbabwe (80 in 2020; 120 in 2021), India (80 in 2020; 100 in 2021) and Hong Kong (40 in 2020; 70 in 2021).

- Applicants from the **EU** (excluding UK) to providers in England have increased by 13% (640 in 2020; 720 in 2021), to providers in Scotland by 6% (660 in 2020; 700 in 2021) and to providers in Wales by 45% (90 in 2020; 140 in 2021).

- Providers in England did receive 53% more applications from **non-EU** applicants than last year rising from 780 to 1,190. Scottish providers saw a 69% increase (130 in 2019; 220 in 2020) and providers in Wales received applications from more than twice as many **non-EU** applicants (50 in 2020; 120 in 2021).

First-time and reapplicants

The number of **first-time applicants** to nursing courses was 34% higher (39,270 in 2020; 52,580 in 2021), and the number of **reapplicants** increased by 23% from 6,160 in 2020 to 7,550 in 2021.

The number of **first-time applicants** from **Northern Ireland** was 32% higher than last year (1,940 in 2020; 2,570 in 2021), the number of those from **Scotland** was 28% higher (4,980 in 2020; 6,390 in 2021), the number of those from **England** was 36% higher (28,280 in 2020; 38,490 in 2021) and the number of those from **Wales** was 23% higher (2,350 in 2020; 2,880 in 2021). The number of first-time applicants from the EU (excluding the UK) was 11% up (970 in 2020; 1,080 in 2021) and the number of **non-EU** first-time applicants was 55% higher (750 in 2020; 1,170 in 2021).
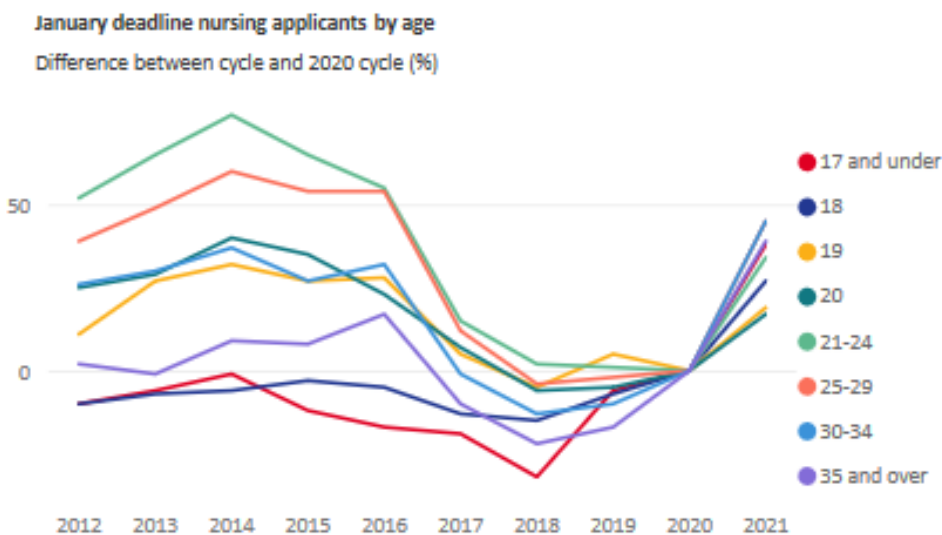
At the same time, the number of **reapplicants** from **Wales** increased by 7% to 400, of those from **England** by 27% to 5,340, and those from **Scotland** by 20% to 1,100 individuals. The number of reapplicants from **Northern Ireland** by remained almost the same at 470. The number of reapplicants from the **EU** (excluding the UK) rose by 18% to 130and the number of **non-EU** reapplicants by 49% to 100.

Applicants by age

For the UK overall, there was a double-digit increase in applicants to nursing courses for every age group compared to 2020.

Figure 2: The percentage change in the number of applicants by age at 29 January deadline compared to previous years

Applicants aged 18

Overall, the number of 18-year-old applicants increased by 27% compared to 2020.

The number of 18-year-old applicants resident in **England** increase from 9,700 in 2020 by 28% to 12,370 in 2021. Similarly, 18-year-old **Scottish domiciled applicants** increased by 27% (1,250 in 2020; 1,590 in 2021), **Northern Irish domiciled applicants** by 26% (990 in 2020; 1,240 in 2021), and **Welsh domiciled applicants** by 24% (680 in 2020; 850 in 2021).

Applicants aged 19

The overall number of 19-year-old applicants saw an increase of 19%.

The number of 19-year-old applicants domiciled in **England** was 21% higher (3,810 in 2020; 4,630 in 2021), from those domiciled in **Northern Ireland** it was 15% higher (380 in 2020; 440 in 2021) and from **Scotland** 15% higher (550 in 2020; 630 in 2021). There was an 8% increase in 19-year-old **Welsh domiciled** applicants (310 in 2020; 340 in 2021).

Applicants aged 20 and over

The overall number of applicants **aged 20** increased by 17%, those **aged 21-24** by 34%, those aged **25-29** and **30-45** by 45%, and those **aged 35 and over** by 39%.

There was a 19% increase in **English domiciled applicants aged 20** (2,200 in 2020; 2,610 in 2021), a 36% increase **in English domiciled applicants aged 21-24** (4,430 in 2020; 6,020 in 2021) and a 52% increase in those aged **25-29** (3,640 in 2020; 5,530 in 2021). The number of applicants resident in **England aged 30-34** increased by 50% compared to 2020, from 2,800 to 4,220, and the number of applicants resident in **England aged over 35** increased by 43% compared to 2020, from 5,890 to 8,440.

There was a 12% increase in **Scottish domiciled applicants aged 20** (360 in 2020; 400 in 2021), a 26% increase in **Scottish domiciled applicants aged 21-24** (950 in 2020; 1,200 in 2021) and a 37% increase in those aged **25-29** (970 in 2020; 1,330 in 2021). The number of applicants resident in **Scotland aged 30-34** increased by 38% compared to 2020, from 660 to 910, and the number of applicants resident in **Scotland aged over 35** increased by 23% compared to 2020, from 1,120 to 1,380.

There was a 25% increase in **Welsh domiciled applicants aged 20** (170 in 2020; 210 in 2021), a 28% increase in **Welsh domiciled applicants aged 21-24** (420 in 2020; 540 in 2021) and a 20% increase in those aged **25-29** (440 in 2020; 530 in 2021). The number of applicants resident in **Wales aged 30-34** increased by 13% compared to 2020, from 330 to 370, and the number of applicants resident in **Wales aged over 35** increased by 21% compared to 2020, from 370 to 450.

There was a 4% increase in **Northern Irish domiciled applicants aged 20** (180 in 2020; 190 in 2021), a 39% increase in **Northern Irish domiciled applicants aged 21-24** (330 in 2020; 460 in 2021) and a 35% increase in those aged **25-29** (210 in 2020; 280 in 2021). The number of applicants resident in **Northern Ireland aged 30-34** increased by 24% compared to 2020, from 150 to 190, and the number of applicants resident in **Northern Ireland aged over 35** increased by 38% compared to 2020, from 170 to 230.

Male and female applicants

The number of **male** applicants to nursing courses increased by 40% from 4,110 to 5,750 whilst the number of female applicants increased by 32% from 41,320 to 54,370.

The number of **male** applicants **aged 18** increased by 43% from 640 in 2020 to 910 in 2021. Similarly, the number of **male** applicants aged **35 and over** increased by 37% from 1,350 in 2020 in 1,860 in 2021.

Due to the low number of male applicants, one should be careful not to place too much emphasis on developments by age group for the four nations of the UK. The same applies to the breakdown of EU and non-EU applicants by age group and sex. A few variations are worth noting though:

- In **England,** there was a larger increase in the number of male applicants to nursing courses than in the number of female applicants with 44% and 34% respectively. There were almost as many male applicants to nursing courses in 2021 (4,130) than at the previous peak in 2014 and 2016 (4,280). The number of 18-year-old male applicants from England was higher in 2021 (630) than at the previous peak in 2019 (440).

- In **Scotland**, the increase in male applicants was also higher than the increase in female applicants with 35% and 26% respectively. This brings the number of Scottish domiciled male applicants to 770, which is the highest it has been. Increases were notably for male applicants aged 18 and aged 21 and over.

- In **Wales**, the increase is female applicants was higher than the increase in male applicants with 21% and 11% respectively. 240 male applicants domiciled in Wales applied, which is similar to number in 2012-2016.

- In **Northern Ireland** the increase in male applicants was also higher than the increase in female applicants with 41% and 25% respectively. 260 male applicants domiciled in Northern Ireland applied, which is slightly higher than previous years.

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