

Briefing: UCAS applicant statistics for January 2026

Briefing Paper: UCAS data release 28 January 2026

UCAS has published its statistical release providing core numbers for the January equal consideration deadline 2026. The [full data set](#) including a breakdown for nursing and midwifery courses by applicant domicile, age, and country of provider is available. This paper highlights some key trends as the data stands today.

Headlines for the higher education sector overall

- New data released today shows the number of UK 18-year-olds applying by the January Equal Consideration Deadline (ECD) has reached 338,940, up from 323,610 in 2025 — an increase of 4.8%. This returns to the proportion of 18 year olds applying to pre-pandemic levels.
- Total applicant rates to UK undergraduate courses have increased by 3.1% at 619,360 applicants. This is an increase of 18,700 from 2025.
- International applicant rates have increased by 5.1%
- The number of UK mature applicants (aged 21 years and over) has fallen from 61,280 last year to 57,570 this year (-6.1%), reflecting the ongoing trend of lower mature applicant numbers at this point in the cycle, as this group typically applies later in the year.

Headlines for nursing

The number of applicants to UK undergraduate nursing courses has decreased slightly by 0.7% from 30,550 applicants in 2025 to 30,350 in 2026.

Applicants by country of provider

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **England** have decreased slightly by 0.2% compared to 2025.

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **Northern Ireland** has increased by 5.3% compared to 2025.

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **Scotland** has increased by 2.2% compared to 2025.

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **Wales** has decreased by 6.0% compared to 2025.

Country of provider	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
England	24,950	26,750	36,410	33,410	27,370	24,680	23,730	23,670
Northern Ireland	2,570	2,430	3,120	2,880	2,380	2,260	2,350	2,480
Scotland	6,140	6,410	7,920	6,690	5,070	4,650	4,560	4,660
Wales	3,300	3,090	4,090	3,630	2,820	3,050	3,480	3,270

Applicants by age

Application rates across the age groups are mixed. There has been an increase in applicants for the age groups of: **18 year-olds** (7.1%), **19-year-olds** (1.2%), **20-year-olds** (5.4%) and **21–24-year-olds** (2.6%).

Meanwhile there has been a decrease in applicant rates for the age groups: **17 and under** (0.5%), **25–29-year-olds** (5.3%), **30–34-year-olds** (9.1%) and **35 and over** (15.8%).

Applicants by gender

Applicants who identify as female increased by 0.5% from 26,800 in 2025 to 26,940. The number of male applicants has decreased by 8.5%, from 3,620 in 2025 to 3,310 in 2026.

50 applicants selected that they would prefer not to disclose their gender, this is a decrease from 70 applicants in 2025. The data shows that 60 applicants identified that they use another term gender other than male or female. This is a decrease from 70 in 2025.

Applicants by domicile

The number of domestic UK applicants is 27,710. This has decreased by 0.5% from 27,580 applicants in 2025.

The number of international applicants has decreased by 11.3% from 2,970 in 2025 to 2,640 in 2026.

Applicants by ethnicity

Application rates across ethnic groups were mixed. 14,850 identified as white, 7,100 identified as black, 1,120 as mixed, 3,820 as Asian and 660 as 'other'. In addition, 160 applicants selected 'unknown or prefer to not say'.

Headlines for midwifery

The number of applicants to UK undergraduate midwifery course has increased slightly by 0.9% from 7,710 in 2025 to 7,780 in 2026. Midwifery applicant rates have remained relatively steady since 2024.

Applicants by country of provider

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **England** are on par with the 2025 cycle with 6,380 applicants.

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **Northern Ireland** has increased by 2.5% compared to 2025.

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **Scotland** has increased by 8.1% compared to 2025.

The number of applicants to nursing courses in **Wales** has decreased by 2.6% compared to 2025.

Country of provider	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
England	7,350	7,520	10,510	9,520	7,360	6,360	6,390	6,380
Northern Ireland	580	530	810	800	730	670	630	650
Scotland	1,200	1,220	1,630	1,330	960	820	720	770
Wales	1,170	1,220	1,640	1,390	1,080	910	950	920

Applicants by age

Applicant rates across the age groups are mixed. There has been an increase across the age groups of **18-year-olds** (10.3%), **19-year-olds** (4.5%) and **20-year-olds** (12.2%). In comparison there has been a decrease in the **17 and under** age group (23.7%), **21–24-year-olds** (0.2%), **25–29-year-olds** (10.4%), **30–34-year-olds** (18.3%) and 35 years and over (20.1%).

Applicants by gender

The number of applicants who identify as female increased by 1.1% from 7,660 in 2025 to 7,740 in 2026. Meanwhile there was an 11.1% decrease in applicants who identify as male from 40 in 2025 to 30 in 2026. Rates of male applicants have been trending downwards since 2021 but it should be noted that percentage trends look more significant due to the small numbers.

In addition, 10 applicants out of 7,740 identified that they use another term.

Applicant by domicile

International applicant rates have remained the same as the 2025 cycle at 220 applicants. UK domicile applicants have increased by 0.9% from 7,490 in 2025 to 7,560 in 2026.

Applicants by ethnicity

Application rates across ethnic groups were mixed. 4,670 identified as white, 1,510 identified as black, 330 as mixed, 850 as Asian and 170 as 'other'. In addition, 30 applicants selected 'unknown or prefer to not say'.

For more information contact

Emma Shone-Bell, Policy Officer, Emma.ShoneBell@cod-health.ac.uk