



Ministry
of Justice

Technical Document:
**Prison Education Statistics April
2019 to March 2020**

Ministry of Justice

Official Statistics Bulletin

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Guide to Prison Education Statistics

Introduction

In 2016, responsibility for the budget which was used to commission most prison education in England moved from the Department of Education to the Ministry of Justice and in April 2019 new education contracts were established. This document provides a technical guide and glossary to accompany the statistics presented in the report Prison Education Statistics 2019/20.

Data have been drawn from an administrative IT system called CURIOUS. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the level of detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Details of all administrative data sources used in the production of this release can be found in the Ministry of Justice Statement of Administrative Sources¹.

Data sources and data quality

Coverage

All public prisons, and some private prisons, in England are included within CURIOUS. At present, the Welsh estate is not included within CURIOUS. They are currently looking to introduce CURIOUS into their prisons. This work is ongoing, but it is hoped that it will be introduced by the end of 2021. The youth estate is also not included, although again discussions are ongoing in this area.

Only Prisoner Education Framework (PEF) commissioned education is captured on CURIOUS and the Prisoner Education Statistics 2019 – 20 only covers CURIOUS data. The PEF delivers a core curriculum of English, Maths, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), digital skills and a range of relevant vocational training and *is* included on CURIOUS. Alongside this, Governors can choose to purchase additional specialist provision to meet learner needs *via* use of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). Information on DPS *is not* included on CURIOUS. Information is only entered on CURIOUS if someone has gone through an education induction or enrolled on a course. **CURIOUS does not capture information on all offenders.**

Quality

Data presented in the publication cover those prisoners who self-select into education that has been procured within prisons through PEF contracts and is recorded on the CURIOUS IT system. The content of data available through this IT system therefore present two limitations.

First, self-selection into education is problematic because no information is gathered on those who do not participate. Data on both participants and non-participants could provide insight into both who receives education and why prisoners participate in education.

Second, while all prisons provide education through PEF contracts which is recorded on the CURIOUS IT system, receipt of DPS procured education is not recorded on the system. The

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ministry-of-justice-statistics-policy-and-procedures>

amount of funding a Governor chooses to allocate to education procurement through DPS varies by prison. As a result, high numbers of prisoners could be engaged in education procured through DPS instead of PEF but available data does not count this. The data presented in this publication is therefore a likely understatement of all education provided and received in prisons.

Disclosure policy

It is MoJ disclosure policy to assess the risk of disclosure of sensitive information about identifiable individuals and the consequent harm that disclosure could cause. This risk is then balanced against the loss of utility of statistics that have been suppressed.

Sensitive information includes protected characteristics such as race, disability, sexuality or religion of the individuals, or incidents that happen to staff that could cause distress to the individual or their family if they were disclosed.

In this publication, it has been assessed that the risk of identification of individuals is minimal and that much of the information presented is not sensitive. In most cases it has been concluded that the utility to users of unsuppressed statistics outweighs the small risk to individuals involved.

Revisions

In accordance with Principle 2 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the Ministry of Justice is required to publish transparent guidance on its policy for revisions. A copy of this statement can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/mojstats/statistics-revisions-policy.pdf>

The reasons for statistics needing to be revised fall into three main categories. Each of these and their specific relevance to the Prison Education Statistics bulletin are addressed below:

1. Changes in source of administrative systems or methodology

There are no changes in the source of administrative systems or methodology to report.

2. Receipt of subsequent information:

The nature of any administrative system is that there may be time lags between when data is recorded and when it is available for analysis. This means that any revisions or additions may not be captured in time to be included in the subsequent publication.

3. Errors in statistical systems and processes:

Occasionally errors can occur in statistical processes; procedures are constantly reviewed to minimise this risk. Should a significant error be found, the publication on the website will be updated and an errata published documenting the revision.

Symbols and conventions

..	Not available
0	Nil
-	Not applicable or unreliable (less than 30 observations – used when calculating rates/percentages).
~	Denotes suppressed values of 2 or fewer or other values which would allow values of 2 or fewer to be derived by subtraction. Low numbers are suppressed to prevent disclosure in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998.
(p)	Provisional data
(r)	Revised data

Glossary

Initial assessments

All prisoners undertaking education in prison have an initial educational assessment. There are initial assessments for Maths and English, with most prisoners sitting both. These assessments are designed to assess a prisoner's level of knowledge in these subjects. Prisoners often receive a new initial assessment when they move prison in the new PEF system recorded through CURIOUS. This is different to the old Offender Learning & Skills Service (OLASS), where prisoners had to wait 6 months before taking another one.

CURIOUS data count the number of people that received each grade at initial assessment for English and Maths. This means that prisoners taking more than one initial assessment will be counted once in the sub totals if the results are at the same grade or twice in the sub totals if the results are at different grades across the Maths and English tests.

Learning Difficulty / Disability assessments

Learning Difficulty / Disability (LDD) assessments take place using both rapid and in-depth screeners. Not all prisoners taking initial assessments or participating in courses have received an LDD assessment. We do not distinguish between these in the publication tables. It is possible there are more prisoners with LDDs that have not been assessed.

Data cleaning was carried out to remove self-declared LDDs from the data set.

Ethnicity

Prisoner records in the CURIOUS IT system have been matched with NOMIS data system records. Ethnicity recorded in NOMIS has been used in this analysis. There are a small proportion of prisoners whose CURIOUS ethnicity record has been used as they could not be matched to the NOMIS data system.

Age Group

Prisoners under 18 on the 31st March 2020 have been excluded from the analysis presented in this publication. Remaining prisoners have been divided into three age group categories

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 49
- 50 and over

Some prisoner records on CURIOUS have more than one recorded date of birth. If the age was the same or within 1 year of the earliest recorded date of birth, then that date of birth was chosen for all records associated with that prisoner. Those prisoners with more than one date of birth and the age was not within those boundaries mentioned previously, were allocated to unknown age group.

Gender

There were some prisoner records on CURIOUS which have more than one gender which was not transgender. For the small number of prisoners, the gender was allocated as not known. Due to the low number of transgender prisoners' figures have been suppressed to prevent disclosure.

Participation in courses

A prisoner counts as participating in courses they have registered to attend and the course has start and end date between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 but does not track actual attendance.

When considering the number of prisoners participating in courses by level of course, each prisoner is counted once at each level.

e.g. If a prisoner participates in two level 1 courses, they count as one prisoner taking a level one course. If a prisoner participates in one level 1 course and one level 2 course they count as one prisoner participating at each level.

Achievement

An individual may achieve a course, partially achieve a course or withdraw from a course:

- Achieving a course - is to complete all the work and get a grade or level;
- Partially achieving a course - indicates the prisoner has completed all work required for the course to date, but is awaiting a final exam or coursework;
- Withdrawal from a course – means the prisoner stopped taking the course at that prison.

Statistics in the publication are based on number of prisoners achieving. Like for participation, when considering the number of prisoners achieving in courses by level of course, each prisoner is counted once at each level.

When a prisoner is transferred between establishments, they are withdrawn from the course in the establishment they are leaving and will appear as a fresh participation at the new establishment – if they decide to continue taking the course. If a new CURIOUS record is created this could lead to this prisoner being double counted.

Rate of Achievement

Rate of achievement is the proportion of prisoner participating in courses that achieve or partially achieve a grade or level in at least one course.

Functional Skills Courses

Functional skills courses are offered as part of the core curriculum. Functional skills are the fundamental English, Maths and ICT skills that people need for their working and personal lives. Prisoners study for the qualifications in practical ways and apply core skills to real-life situations. A functional skills level 2 is equivalent to a GCSE.

Initial Assessment and Course Levels

Initial Assessment Level / Course Level	Example
Entry level 1,2 and 3	Entry level functional skills Entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
Level 1	GCSE - grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G Level 1 functional skills Level 1 ESOL
Level 2	GCSE - grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 or grades A*, A, B, C Level 2 functional skills Level 2 ESOL
Level 3	A level Level 3 ESOL Level 3 NVQ
Level 4 +	All higher-level courses

A complete list of levels and examples can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>