
Who learns - key participation facts



"The sequence maps a consistent pattern in which the gap between the learning-rich and the learning-poor is clear, and if anything intensifying. This study highlights, additionally, the parallel importance of an information divide which tends to reinforce the learning divide."

The learning divide revisited: a report on the findings of a UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and learning, NIACE, 2000

Sources of Information

This sheet provides a summary of key facts on adult learning from four recent surveys. The surveys vary on definitions of learning, age groups consulted, countries included and methodology. The references for the surveys given below can be found at the end of this briefing sheet.

NIACE/RSGB 2000 Survey

This NIACE survey showed that the gap between the learning-rich and the learning-poor is widening, and is reinforced by an information divide between those with access to the internet, and those without.

MOBA Project (Motivation for and barriers against participation in adult education) NIACE, 2000. Co-operative project to survey the participation of adults undertaking education and training covering Great Britain, Spain and Norway.

The learning divide revisited: a report on the findings of a UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and learning, NIACE, 2000. Identified in omnibus market research interviews what people remembered about their learning and how far they saw themselves as learners.

National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 1997, DfEE, 1998. Resulted in a higher proportion of people recognising themselves as learners as it was home based and consisted of more extensive questions which highlighted their learning activities.

These surveys show a difference in participation figures reflecting the range, we believe, between at one end, an exhaustive exploration of all the education and training undertaken and, at the other, those learning events which learners recognise as significant. The following tables highlight other key differences in these surveys and some of the main findings.

This is the twenty-first in a series of briefing sheets which aim to provide an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues

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	NIACE/RSGB 2000 survey	MOBA, 2000	Learning Divide Revisited, 1999	NALS, 1997
Date carried out	2000	1999	1999	1997
Age group covered	17+	18-79	17+	16-69
Survey type	Research Surveys of Great Britain (RSGB) Omnibus survey	Office of National Statistics, Statistics Norway and Grupos y Grupos (Spain)	Research Surveys of Great Britain (RSGB) Omnibus survey with Ulster Marketing Surveys	Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) survey
Geographical area covered	Great Britain	Great Britain, Norway and Spain	England, Wales, Scotland, N.Ireland	England, Wales
Sample size	Weighted survey of 4,091 adults	Interviews with 1,573 adults in Great Britain, data is weighted. 1,836 adults in Norway and 1,920 adults in Spain. Data for Norway and Spain is unweighted.	Face to face interviews with 5,054 adults. Stratified by region and town size. 143 additional adults in Northern Ireland. Tables weighted by sex and class within region.	Computer assisted interviews with 5,653 adults (taken from 7,144 postal addresses). Data has been weighted to take account of different household selection possibilities, and for non response.
General participation in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22% currently learning • 19% learning in the last 3 years • 41% current or recent learners • 43% of adults with access to the internet are currently studying, 18% with no access to the internet are currently studying. 	<p>Currently learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17% in Great Britain • 17% in Norway • 14% in Spain <p>Learning in last 3 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45% in Great Britain • 70% in Norway • 33% in Spain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22% currently learning • 18% engaged in learning activity during last three years • 40% participating in current or recent learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 76% had undertaken learning during last three years
By gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24% of men and 21% of women are currently learning • 43% of men and 39% of women participating in current or recent learning 	<p>Current or recent learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% of men and 46% of women in Great Britain • 70% of men and 70% of women in Norway • 31% of men and 34% of women in Spain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24% of men and 21% of women currently learning • 41% of men and 40% of women participating in current or recent learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78% of men and 70% of women had undertaken learning during the last three years (excludes those in full time education)

	NIACE/RSGB 2000 survey	MOBA, 2000	Learning Divide Revisited, 1999	NALS, 1997
By age of leaving full-time education / qualification	Data not available	<p>Currently or recently learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal qualifications: 20% in Great Britain, 7% in Spain • O Level/GCSE/Equivalent: 45% in Great Britain, 40% in Norway, 27% in Spain • A Level/GNVQ/Equivalent: 64% in Great Britain, 72% in Norway, 54% in Spain • College/University: 67% in Great Britain, 83% in Norway, 60% in Spain 	<p>Percentage participating in current or recent study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28% of those leaving school at 16 or earlier • 53% of those leaving at 17 or 18 • 55% of those leaving at 19 or 20 • 61% of those leaving at 21+ 	<p>Percentage participating in current or recent study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% of those leaving full time education at 16 or earlier • 84% of those leaving at 17 or 18 • 86% of those leaving at 19 or 20 • 93% of those leaving at 21+
By age	<p>Percentage of age groups participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79% of 17-19s • 65% of 20-24s • 51% of 25-34s • 47% of 35-44s • 43% of 45-54s • 32% of 55-64s • 16% of 65-74s • 9% of 75+s 	<p>Percentage of age groups participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-29s – 67% in Great Britain, 88% in Norway, 64% in Spain • 30-45s – 50% in Great Britain, 76% in Norway, 33% in Spain • 46-59s – 45% in Great Britain, 73% in Norway, 18% in Spain • 60-79 – 34% in Great Britain, 28% in Norway, 7% in Spain 	<p>Percentage of age groups participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% of 17-19s • 70% of 20-24s • 50% of 25-34s • 47% of 35-44s • 41% of 45-54s • 30% of 55-64s • 16% of 65-74s • 9% of 75+ 	<p>Percentage of age groups participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82% of 16-19s • 85% of 20-29s • 82% of 30-39s • 78% of 40-49s • 67% of 50-59s • 47% of 60-69s
By employment status	<p>Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52% of full-time workers • 46% of part-time workers • 44% of unemployed people • 28% of those not working • 18% of retired people 	<p>Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed – 58% in Great Britain, 80% in Norway, 37% in Spain • Unemployed people – 61% in Great Britain, 63% in Norway, 43% in Spain • Not seeking work – 23% in Great Britain, 43% in Norway, 16% in Spain • Retired – 14% in Great Britain, 23% in Norway, 6% in Spain 	<p>Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51% of full-time workers • 50% of part-time workers • 41% of unemployed people • 30% of those not working • 16% of retired people 	<p>Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of those in paid work • 72% of unemployed people • 47% of those looking after home and family • 43% of retired people • 41% of those with long-term sickness

	NIACE/RSGB 2000 survey	MOBA, 2000	Learning Divide Revisited, 1999	NALS, 1997
By social class and/or occupation	Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of upper and middle class (AB) • 52% of lower middle class (C1) • 35% of skilled working class (C2) • 24% of unskilled working class and those on limited incomes (DE) 	Data not available	Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% of upper and middle class (AB) • 51% of lower middle class (C1) • 36% of skilled working class (C2) • 24% of unskilled working class and those on limited incomes (DE) 	Percentage of those participating in current or recent learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of professional/managerial workers • 86% of other non-manual workers • 70% of skilled manual workers • 69% of semi-skilled manual workers • 50% of unskilled manual workers
Attitudes to learning	34% said they have not studied or learnt since leaving full-time education	65% of participants in the last 3 years in Great Britain had a high self-perceived learning need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94% think that learning is something people do throughout their lives • 72% were confident about learning new skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% agreed that learning is interesting and that learning about new things is enjoyable • 50% of non-learners said that nothing would encourage them to learn
Future learning	Likelihood of future learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27% very likely • 17% fairly likely • 11% fairly unlikely • 41% very unlikely • 3% don't know <p>70% of people with access to the internet expect to take up learning in the next 3 years, against 39% of those without.</p>	Likelihood of starting a course in the next three years: <p>Very/Fairly likely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% in Great Britain • 64% in Norway • 34% in Spain <p>Not very/Not at all likely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% in Great Britain • 36% in Norway • 66% in Spain 	Likelihood of future learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22% very likely • 16% fairly likely • 12% fairly unlikely • 47% very unlikely • 3% don't know 	Likelihood of future job-related learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% very likely • 21% fairly likely • 19% not very likely • 26% not at all likely • 1% unclear • Likelihood of future non-job-related training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% very likely • 23% fairly likely • 33% not very likely • 28% not at all likely • 1% unclear

Definitions of Learning

The following definitions were used in the above surveys:

NIACE surveys - "Learning can mean practising, studying, or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. Learning can also be called education or training. You can do it regularly (each day or month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full or part time, done at home, at work, or in another place like college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. We are interested in any learning you have done, whether or not it was finished."

National Adult Learning Survey – "Taught learning which could be: any courses that were meant to lead to qualifications; any taught courses designed to help you develop skills that you might use in a job; any courses, instruction or tuition in driving, in playing a musical instrument, in an art or craft, in a sport or in any practical skill; evening classes; learning which has involved working on your own from a package of materials; any other taught course, instruction or tuition."

"Non-taught learning which might be: studying for qualifications without taking part in a taught course; supervised training while you were actually doing a job; time spent keeping up to date with developments in the type of work you do without taking part in a taught course; deliberately trying to improve your knowledge about anything or teach yourself a skill without taking part in a taught course."

MOBA - "...formal education as well as any short courses or educational activities which require some kind of instruction or supervision. This includes distance learning which you can do from home".

Participation Surveys and Statistics

Across the learning divide - adults learning in the arts and crafts

Shiela Carlton and Naomi Sargant. NIACE, 1998. ISBN 1 86201 061 7. £6.00.

Adult education in Great Britain, Norway and Spain. A comparative study of participation, motivation and barriers. Report from the Leonardo da Vinci Supported "MOBA" project
E. M. Skaalvik and L. Finbak, L. Trondheim: VOX, 2001

Adults learning in pre-schools

Veronica McGivney, NIACE/Pre-School Learning Alliance, 1998. ISBN 1 86201 040 4. £6.00

Attitudes to learning '98: MORI State of the Nation Survey: summary report

Campaign for Learning, 1998. ISBN 0 901 469 32 7. £8.00

Beyond the boundaries - exploring the potential of widening participation in higher education

Julia Preece (ed), with Cal Weatherald and Maggie Woodrow. NIACE, 1998. ISBN 1 86201 047 1. £12.95

DfEE Statistical Bulletins and First Releases

Wide range of statistics covering education, training and employment including post-16 learning
Web Site: www.dfee.gov.uk/statistics

Education statistics actuals and estimates

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. CiPFA, Tel: 0171 543 5600
Web Site: www.ipf.co.uk/sis

Education and training statistics for the United Kingdom

The Stationery Office, 2000. ISBN 0 11 2711006. £15.95

Education at a glance: OECD indicators 2000

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2000. ISBN 92 64 17199 1. £26.00.
Web Site: www.oecd.org

Eighth report: access for all?: a survey of post-16 participation

Two volumes: reports and proceedings; minutes of evidence and appendices. House of Commons, Education and Employment Committee. Stationery Office, 1999. ISBN 0105564796 and 0105564656. £9.75 and £19.50

Fees survey 1999/2000: indicators of fee levels charged to part-time adult students by Local Education Authorities and colleges
NIACE, 2000. ISBN 1 86201 113 3. £14.00

Further Education Funding Council student statistics
For statistical first releases and publications
Further Education Funding Council. Web Site:
www.fefc.ac.uk

Higher education statistics for the United Kingdom 1998/99
Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2000. ISBN 1841770132. 3.5 disk version available. Web site:
www.hesa.ac.uk

Labour market and skill trends 2000
DfEE, 2000 (ref: SEN 373).
Web Site: www.dfee.gov.uk/skillnet/lmst2000.pdf

Labour market quarterly report
DfEE. ISSN 0952-2506. (ref: SEN 317). Tel: 0114 259 4075. DfEE Skills and Enterprise Network, Level 3 North, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ

Labour market trends
Monthly journal. ISSN 1361 4819. £95.00. Office for National Statistics, Tel: 0171 533 6126.

The learning divide – a study of participation in adult learning in the UK
Naomi Sargant with John Field, Hywel Francis, Tom Schuller and Alan Tuckett
NIACE, 1997. ISBN 1 86201 016 1. £20.00

The learning divide revisited: a report of a UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and learning
Naomi Sargant, NIACE, 2000. ISBN 1 86201 088 9 1. £22.95

Marking time – The NIACE survey on adult participation in learning 1999
Alan Tuckett and Naomi Sargant. NIACE, 1999. ISBN 1 86201 072 2. £5.00

Motivation for and barriers to participation in adult learning – a study across Norway, Spain and Great Britain.
Naomi Sargant. NIACE, 2000

National Adult Learning Survey 1997
Research report 49. DfEE, 1998. ISBN 0 85522 720 6 (NALS97). Summary also available.

NIACE/RSGB Survey. Reported in NIACE press release: The learning divide is being reinforced by the information divide. Alan Tuckett. NIACE, 2000. Also reported in The increase in the learning divide in Adults Learning, NIACE, June 2000, pp12-13

Pathways in adult learning
National Centre for Social Research
DfEE, 2000. ISBN 1 841580640. £4.95

Regional trends 35
Includes a section on education and training. The Stationery Office, 2000. ISSN 0261 1783. £39.50
Also available 30 years of Regional trends on CD-ROM, 1996

Social trends 31
Includes a section on education and training. The Stationery Office, 2000. ISBN 0 11 6213841. £39.50
Also available 25 years of Social Trends on CD-ROM, 1996.

Statistics of education: student support in England and Wales
The Stationery Office, 2001. ISBN 0 11 2711 06 5. £15.95

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient resources. Registered charity number 1002775; Company registration number 2603322