

# Entrants to A-level physics in 2017

## In England, Wales and Northern Ireland



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This briefing outlines a short set of statistics on A-level entrants to physics, analysed by area of the UK, gender, and against comparable A-level subjects and previous years. The data includes all students taking physics A-level in the 2016–17 academic year, including all 16- to-19 year olds and adult learners.

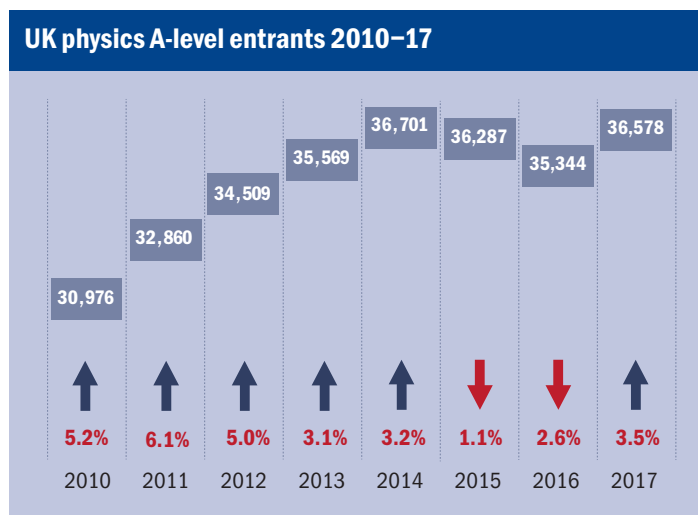
The data is published annually by the Joint Council for Qualifications. Separate briefs are produced for Scottish Higher results and the Leaving Certificate in Ireland.

### 2017 entrants in summary:

- Entrants to A-level physics rose by 3.5% on 2016 levels to 36,578 entries
- In Wales, entrants rose by 3.8% on 2016
- In Northern Ireland, entries were down 8.6% on 2016
- Females made up 21.5% of all entrants
- As a proportion of all A-level entries, physics made up 4.4% of all entries in England, 4.7% in Wales and 4.2% in Northern Ireland

### Entrants to A-level physics

The number of physics A-level entrants in 2017 was 36,578. 88% of those were in England. In 2017, the number of entrants to physics A-level rose by 3.5% after two years of falling numbers of entries. The increase this year was in spite of a fall in the population of 18 year olds, and overall A-level entries.

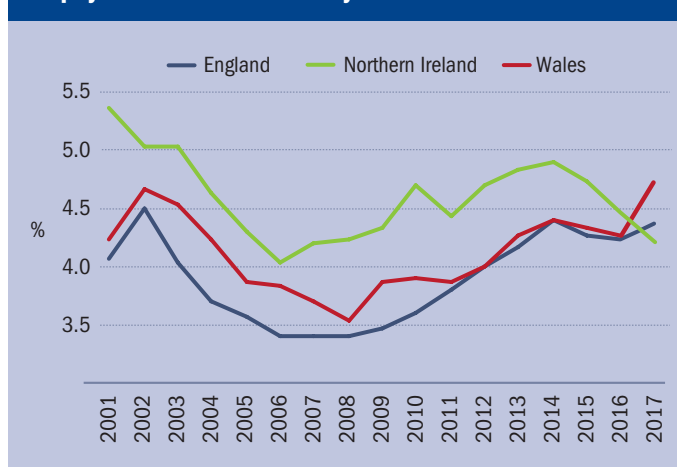




As a proportion of all entries, physics entrants made up 4.4% of total A-level entries in England in 2017. In Wales, the proportion was 4.7%. In Northern Ireland it was 4.2%.

The number of entries to A-level physics rose by 3.3% in England in 2017 from 2016. In Wales, numbers rose by 3.8% but in Northern Ireland entries dropped by 8.6%, its lowest proportion of total entries since 2007.

UK physics A-level entrants by nation 2001–17\*



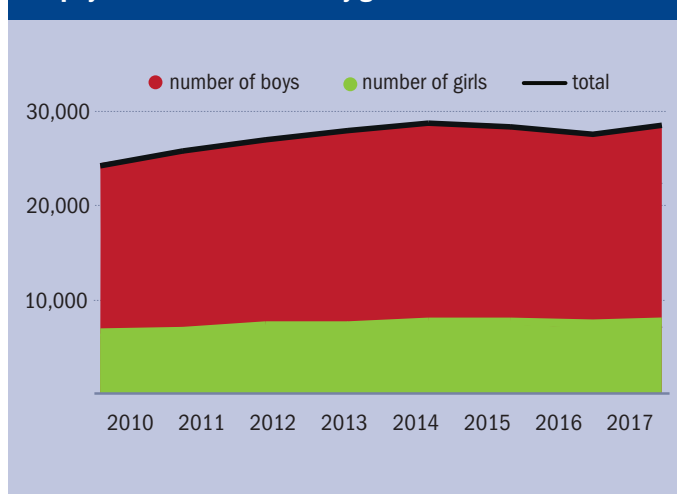
\* as a proportion of total entrants

### Entrants by gender

21.5% of entrants to A-level physics in 2017 were female. The number of girls taking A-level physics has increased since 2010, in line with the overall rise in the number of entrants. Since the early 1990s, the proportion of girls has remained between a minimum of 20.7% and a maximum of 23.1%.

In other subjects, the proportion of girls taking biology is higher than boys, with 61.7% of the cohort female in 2017. In chemistry, girls also surpassed boys in 2017 as 50.9% of the entrants were female, up from 49.9% in 2016. The only subject to have a smaller proportion of girls than physics in 2017 was computer science, where females made up only 9.8% of the 8,299 entrants.

UK physics A-level entrants by gender 2010–17



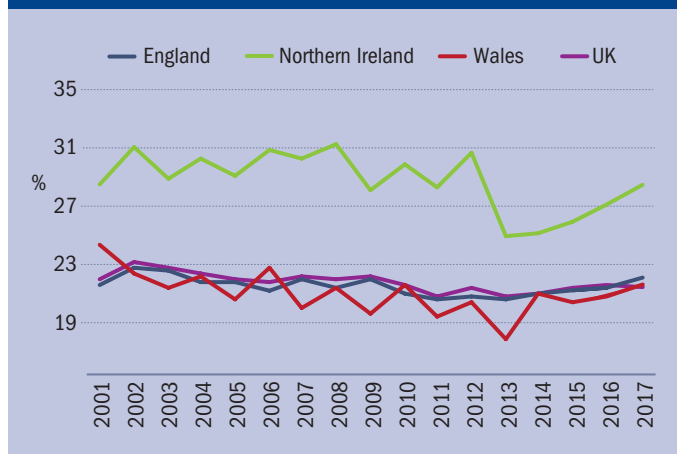


When dividing up entrants by UK area, in England 22% of entrants to A-level physics were female in 2017. This represents little deviation from the average proportion of female entrants in England between 2001 and 2017 in England, which was 21.5%.

In Wales, 21.6% of entrants were female in 2017. Wales has seen a similar trend to England in the proportion of entrants to A-level physics who were girls, but within a slightly wider range: between 17.9% in 2013 and 24.4% in 2001.

Northern Ireland has consistently seen a higher proportion of girls entering A-level physics than England or Wales. The proportion of female A-level physics entrants in Northern Ireland was 28.5% in 2017.

### UK physics A-level entrants by gender and nation 2001-17\*



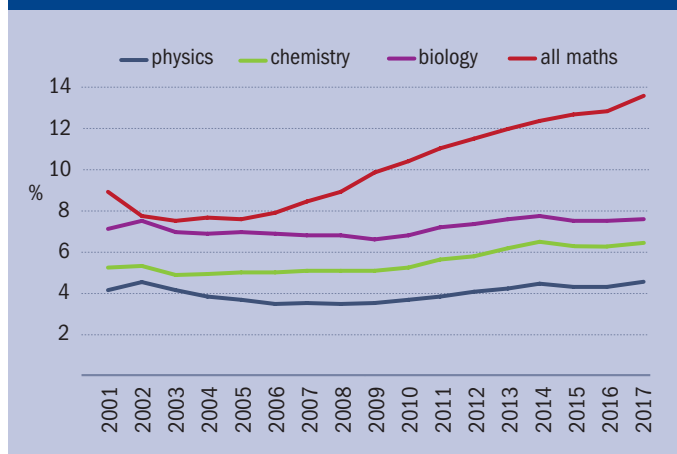
\*Female students as a proportion of all physics entrants

### Comparisons with chemistry, biology and maths

Since 2001, physics has had a smaller proportion of all entrants than chemistry, biology and mathematics. However, there was a small rise in the number of entrants as a proportion of the total entries this year.

Entrants to physics as a proportion of all entrants was 4.4% in 2017, compared to 6.3% in chemistry, 7.5% in biology and 13.5% in maths and further maths combined.

### UK physics, mathematics, chemistry and biology A-level entrants 2001-17\*



\*As a proportion of total entrants



**Institute of Physics**

76 Portland Place, London W1B 1NT

Tel +44 (0)20 7470 4800

Fax +44 (0)20 7470 4848

**policy@iop.org**

**iop.org**

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Registered charity number 293851 (England & Wales) and SC040092 (Scotland)