

## BeLL Survey

### Sampling plan - England

The Institute of Education began discussions with NIACE on the sampling plan for quantitative data collection immediately after the kick-off meeting. These discussions drew on the guidelines developed in the meeting, which state that each country should collect data from a sample of 1,000 adults who had participated in non-formal, liberal adult education courses in a period of 12 months prior to data collection. To ensure that a broad range of course subjects were also included, it was also agreed that approximately 10% of the courses in the sample should come from each of the following topics:

1. Languages / humanities
2. ICT
3. Creative arts
4. Social skills, active citizenship
5. Health and sports
6. Basic skills and competences

The sample should also be diverse in terms of gender, age, level of education and employment status.

In this exercise, the Institute of Education was joined by NIACE. Both organisations have extensive experience of similar data collection exercises with adult learners in England. In particular, we drew on the experience of NIACE's annual Adult Participation in Learning Survey.



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## Types of adult education providers in England

There are no robust surveys in England of the type of learning with which the BeLL survey is concerned, with all relevant data collection aggregating all types of adult learning, vocational and non-vocational. NIACE's annual Adult Participation in Learning Survey does not ask participants where their learning took place, focusing instead on participation and planned, or expected participation in the future.

However, analysis of the Skills Funding Agency Individualised Learner Record (ILR) shows that the majority of the type of liberal adult education that is the focus of the BeLL study is delivered in Further Education Colleges and through Local Authorities (often via independent Adult and Community Learning providers). Higher Education Institutions and Private training providers also play an important role. Accordingly, we aimed to include learners predominantly from the following provider types targeting specific examples of each to ensure that the sample was representative.

- Further education colleges
- Adult and community learning providers
- Local authorities
- Higher education institutions
- Community groups

## Distribution of AE providers

The most recent NIACE annual Adult Participation in Learning survey shows that there is little variation in participation within the English regions. Accordingly, the aim in drawing the sample was to gather data from as many regions of the country as possible.



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## Recruiting the sample

We first went directly to adult learners through a database held by NIACE of learners who have indicated in previous research that they were happy to be contacted for other research purposes. We sent individual, personalized emails to each of these individuals asking them to complete the survey and sent a reminder after three weeks. At the same time NIACE asked a series of large national and regional organizations involved in adult learning to publicise the survey through their newsletters and social media. Alongside this we began the process of gaining agreement from a group of large providers, representative of the provider types described above and which offered a broad enough range of courses to include all of the target topics, to take an agreed number of hard copies of the questionnaire and to administer these to their learners.



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