Gender differences in the level of engagement with mathematics support in higher education in Ireland.


Summary: Over the past couple of decades, mathematics support centres have become widespread in higher education, most notably in Ireland, the U.K. and Australia. These centres generally offer a range of free support services to students who feel they need additional help with their mathematics modules. A major large-scale survey of first-year higher education students was undertaken in Ireland to ascertain students’ evaluation of mathematics support. There were significant differences in self-reported attendance between male and female students, with a binary logistic regression model showing that female students were almost two and a half times more likely to engage with mathematics support than male students, while controlling for other factors such as prior mathematical achievement, degree, and institution attended. In this paper, the engagement levels of 1633 students with mathematics support across nine Higher Education Institutes are analysed. The reasons given by both genders for either using or not using the services provided across a range of disciplines and higher education institutes are explored, with the aim of ensuring that the optimum support is provided to all students who may need such help.

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