



Dual Credit in Kentucky: A Profile of Participants

The first of six research briefs on dual credit in Kentucky

Who is Taking Dual Credit?

Enrollment in high school dual credit has risen 75% in the last five years, but participation has not increased equally among all demographic categories. This brief examines the underrepresented minority,¹ gender and income² status of dual credit participants who subsequently enrolled in a Kentucky public university between 2014-17.³

More Likely Female

The study found that dual credit participants in Kentucky were more likely to be female. Figure 1 shows that women comprised 60.5% of dual credit participants, whereas non-participants were more evenly split along gender lines (51% female versus 49% male). Interestingly, women also outnumber men on college campuses (56% versus 44%),⁴ which suggests more work may be needed to instill a college-going mindset among young men.

Less Likely to be a Minority

Only 11.4% of dual credit students identified as part of an underrepresented minority group, compared to 18.9% of non-participants (Figure 2). This participation gap matters because dual credit is linked to higher first-year GPAs and increased rates of second-year persistence in college. Increasing minority participation in high school dual credit may be a promising strategy for closing postsecondary achievement gaps.

Less Likely to Be Both URM and Low-income

Surprisingly, dual credit students were slightly more likely to come from low-income families. As Figure 3 illustrates, 38.8% of dual credit students came from low-income families, while 38.6% of non-participants did. However, students who were both low-income and URM were underrepresented in dual enrollment courses. While 6.8% of participants were both low-

Figure 1. Gender of Dual Credit Participants and Non-Participants

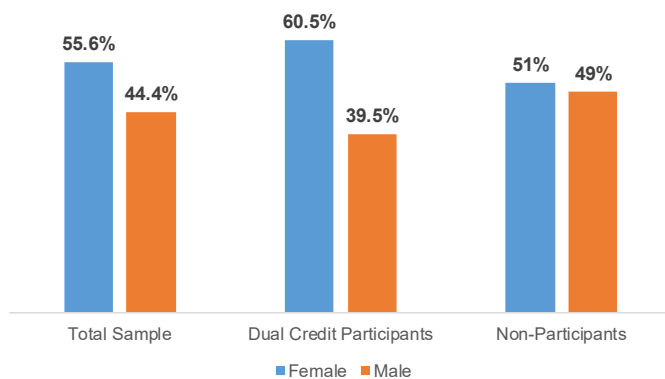
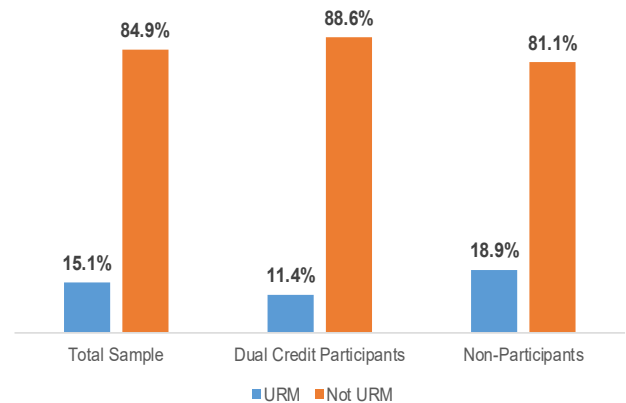


Figure 2. URM Status of Dual Credit Participants and Non-Participants



¹CPE defines underrepresented minority as: (a) Hispanic or Latino, (b) American Indian or Alaska Native, (c) Black or African American, (d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or (e) Two or more Races.

²The study characterized students as low-income or not low-income, based on their federal Pell Grant status.

³The sample in this research project included 51,995 students who graduated from Kentucky high schools and were enrolled full-time in Kentucky four-year public institutions for the first time during the cohort years of fall 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

⁴Source: <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

Figure 3. Low-Income Status Dual Credit Participants and Non-Participants

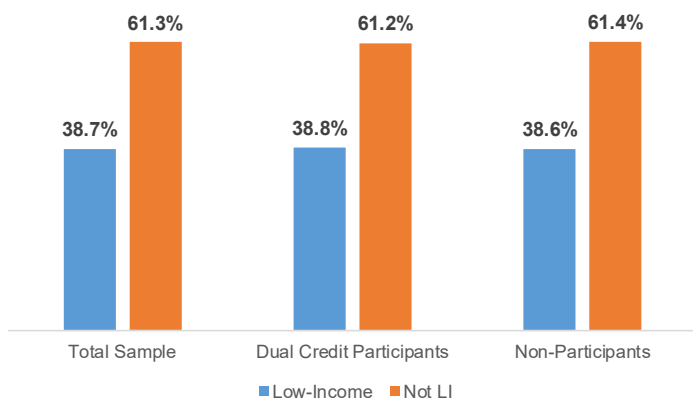
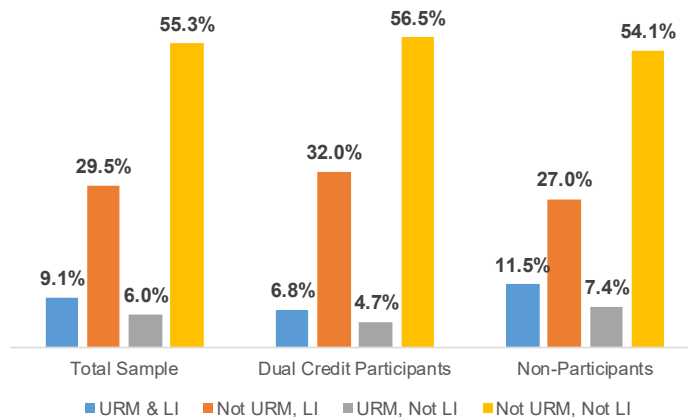


Figure 4. URM and Low-Income Status of Dual Credit Participants and Non-Participants



income and URM, 11.5% of non-participants were (Figure 4).

These data suggest there may be fewer opportunities for dual credit participation among students of color and lesser means. In response, policy makers should focus on equity, accessibility, and affordability of dual credit programs.

Dual Credit Participation Surpasses Non-Participation

The percentage of high school dual credit participants increased rapidly from fall 2014 to fall 2017. Starting in fall 2016, more students in the sample had taken dual credit courses than had not. Figure 5 highlights this trend.

This increase reflects the influence of two key policy changes made during that time. Effective fall 2016, CPE enacted a dual credit policy recommending that eligible high school students be provided with a minimum of three general education or career or technical courses during their high school career. That same year, Kentucky established a dual credit scholarship, enabling high school juniors and seniors to take two dual credit courses for free.

These policies and their influence on student participation highlight the importance of continued state investment in dual credit as a strategy to increase college access and success in the Commonwealth.

Figure 5. Dual Credit Enrollment Across Cohorts

