



SCHOOL LEAVERS' SURVEY REPORT **2007**

Delma Byrne, Selina McCoy and Dorothy Watson

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The Economic and Social Research Institute & Department of Education and Science

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THE SCHOOL LEAVERS' SURVEY

Since the late 1970s the Economic and Social Research Institute has conducted research on recent school leavers in the Republic of Ireland on behalf of various government departments. The School Leavers' Survey has been in existence since it first surveyed young people who left the second-level education system in the academic year 1978/1979. Since its inception, 24 surveys in all have been carried out either on a yearly or bi-yearly basis, until the most recent survey which surveyed young people who left the second-level education system in the academic year 2004/2005. The information contained in the School Leavers' Survey serves as a nationally representative data source lending itself well as an instrument for educational policy-making. Its social and scientific value lies in increasing our knowledge of young peoples' experiences while at school and their experiences of the transition from second-level education to labour force participation, education or economic inactivity. The public good function of the School Leavers' Survey has been reflected in the publication of widely accessible national reports published each year. In addition, the analysis of data has always been collaborative, involving various Government Departments and Agencies for more specific and/or in-depth analyses of topics of enquiry. Furthermore, it is used in comparative European research alongside School Leavers' Surveys from other European countries

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report draws on the 24th School Leavers' Survey to provide a descriptive account of the experiences of young people as they leave second-level education including Post Leaving Certificate courses. In doing so, it provides valuable insights into young peoples' views and experiences of school life itself, including how key educational decisions are made. Importantly, the survey also documents the post-school experiences of school leavers, in particular focusing on the educational and employment activities of young people after they leave school. In addition, background characteristics are collected such as gender, educational attainment and parents' level of education and socio-economic background which allow us to document trends according to these factors. For those engaged in education and labour market policy, the survey highlights emerging and continuing patterns of how young people fare academically within second-level schooling, their levels of progression to further study and training as well as labour market integration processes.

Using an innovative method of data collection, this report is based on the 2007 School Leavers' Survey, representing school leavers who left school in the academic year 2004/05, and was carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute for the Department of Education and Science. The data used in this report is also supplemented with information from previous School Leavers' Survey reports.

Socio-economic differences in second-level education completion and performance remain wide and so the report recommends the continuation of resources allocated towards combating early school leaving and educational under-achievement. Low educational achievement continues to have serious implications for the life chances of large groups in society, particularly those from households where all parents present are unemployed, both in the short-term in accessing further education and training opportunities and in longer-term labour market and social outcomes. The reliance on particular sectors, such as the construction sector for males, is likely to have serious consequences for vulnerable school leavers in light of the recent decline of this sector at the time of writing. Furthermore, this presents an important challenge for policy makers concerned with integrating young people into the labour market. The principal findings of the report are as follows:

- The percentage of early leavers remains relatively constant and gender differences in the educational attainment of males and females persist. A larger proportion of males continue to exit the education system at an earlier stage relative to females.
- Socio-economic differences in second-level education completion are particularly evident. Young people from professional, employer-manager and farming backgrounds continue to have significantly higher educational attainment than those from other socio-economic backgrounds.
- Socio-economic differences are also particularly evident in terms of the curricular pathways that young

people pursue at senior cycle education, with those who pursue the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and those who pursue the established Leaving Certificate displaying similar backgrounds which contrast quite strongly with the profile of students who pursue the Leaving Certificate Applied.

- Gender differences in examination performance at second-level education are also apparent. Females continue to outperform their male counterparts in both Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. Students from farming, professional and employer-manager socio-economic backgrounds have stronger results in the Leaving Certificate examination than those from other socio-economic backgrounds.
- Students who achieve higher Leaving Certificate grades are also more likely to have completed Transition Year. While these performance differences may reflect the potential impact of participation in the programme, they also reflect the selective nature of participants in the Transition Year programme.
- Rates of part-time job holding continue to be high, particularly in 5th year. Employment levels do, however, reduce among 6th year students. Rates of part-time job holding per se tend to be socially differentiated with higher rates among those from manual/non-manual or unemployed socio-economic backgrounds.
- Persistent truancy is much more prevalent among those who leave school prior to completion of post-compulsory second-level education (i.e. before completing the Leaving Certificate examination).
- In relation to attitudes towards school, school leavers who complete post-compulsory education are more likely to have positive views of the support they got from their teachers and considerably more likely to consider their classroom environment as orderly.
- In terms of post-school Education and Training, participation in Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses is higher among females than males, while participation in State-Sponsored training is dominated by males. Furthermore, in line with recent trends, females continue to have higher rates of progression to Higher Education.
- Entry to post school Education and Training destinations continues to be highly differentiated according to socio-economic background. School leavers from professional backgrounds are less likely to pursue state-sponsored training, and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses but are more likely to be found making the progression to Higher Education.
- The majority of the school leaving cohort enter into student or employment activities one year after leaving school. A substantial proportion (14 per cent) of male school leavers enter Apprenticeships by this stage.
- The economic status position of school leavers one year after leaving school is differentiated according to the educational level attained at second-level education, gender and socio-economic background. School leavers who left school without any qualifications experience the highest levels of unemployment and the lowest levels of employment. Females are more likely to pursue further education than males, and school

leavers from professional socio-economic backgrounds are over-represented in further education while school leavers from manual and non-manual backgrounds are over-represented in employment.

- When apprenticeships are considered as a separate group to those in employment, substantial changes are evident in the labour market participation rate of this cohort of school leavers. Previous surveys have included apprenticeships in the definition of labour market participation. The labour market participation rate stands at 50 per cent when apprentices are included in the definition (similar to previous years) but drops to 43 per cent when they are excluded.
- Long-term trends in the economic position of school leavers indicate that persistent labour market disadvantage is associated with leaving school without any qualifications.
- School leavers in employment are largely found in the industry, distribution and personal services sectors of employment. When apprenticeships are included in the definition of employment, 40 per cent of school leavers are found in the industry sector.
- Gender differentiation in sector of employment is particularly evident among school leavers. Males are largely concentrated in the industry sector while females are largely concentrated in the distribution and personal service sectors.
- School leavers in employment are found mainly in service, skilled and semi-skilled manual and clerical occupations.
- Gender differentiation is also evident in occupations: females are most likely to be found in service and clerical occupations while males are largely concentrated in skilled and semi-skilled manual occupations.
- Among school leavers in employment, job satisfaction is strongly associated with level of education attained at second-level.

1 ■ INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This report presents a descriptive account of the experiences of young people leaving the second-level educational system. It is based on the findings of the 2007 School Leavers' Survey (SLS07), which was carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) for the Department of Education and Science (DES). The School Leavers' Survey provides an insight into the position, experiences, and attitudes of school leavers approximately one year after leaving second-level education. For those engaged in education and labour market policy, this survey highlights emerging and continuing patterns and trends regarding the progression of school leavers one year on. The School Leavers' Survey ran consecutively from 1980 through to 1999 and in 2003, 2004 and 2006, thus enabling the analysis of both short-term and long-term trends.

School leavers who exited the second-level system in the 2004/05 academic year (between September 2004 and the end of August 2005), provide the reference cohort for this study.¹ As in previous years this report presents data from the most current survey, alongside data from the two previous surveys conducted, in this case, the 2004 and 2006 surveys.

The School Leavers' Surveys are based on a stratified random sample² of those leaving the official second-level system, which includes the Post Leaving Certificate sector (PLC). Respondents were interviewed between 20 and 26 months after leaving school. The effective sample size of the current survey is 2,025 respondents. For the first time, the survey adopted a multi-mode response method, allowing respondents the option to complete the survey online, by post or through the traditional face-to-face interview mode. Further discussion of the methodology adopted follows in the next section.

The principal focus of this research is to establish the economic status of school leavers one year on. The following economic status positions are considered:

- Employed.
- Unemployed.
- Student.
- Training.
- Apprenticeship.
- Unavailable for work/Economically Inactive.
- Emigrated.

¹ Analysis contained in this report excludes those aged over 25 years, except the results for, and prior to, 2002 (when the Annual Report was based on the analysis of school leavers of all ages).

² Because the statistics contained in this report are based on a sample, they are consequently subject to usual sampling error variances.

In the course of this report we focus on a number of aspects of the economic and related circumstances of school leavers one year after leaving the full-time educational system. In particular, we examine the relationship between the stage at which the former student left education and their subsequent situation in the labour market or further education as appropriate.

The report is divided into six main chapters, which are all based on bivariate analysis. Chapter 2 examines the second-level educational experiences of school leavers. Among the issues examined are their performance in public examinations, early school leaving, attitudes towards their schooling, participation in Transition Year and engagement in paid employment while at school. Chapter 3 focuses on the post-school educational and training experiences of school leavers, exploring the levels of participation in PLC courses, state-sponsored training and higher education. The report switches attention to the labour market experiences of school leavers in Chapter 4. Here, rates of labour market entry are examined, along with discussion of their relative 'success' in labour market integration. Chapter 5 examines the employment experiences of school leavers to include distributions by industrial sector, occupation, and earnings alongside satisfaction ratings with their economic situation. Finally, the key findings are outlined in Chapter 6.

1.2 Survey Methodology

For the first time, the School Leavers' Survey was undertaken through a multi-mode survey approach. This represented an important departure from the traditional sole reliance on face-to-face interviewing. The School Leavers' Survey is seen as a particularly appropriate area to take advantage of new communications' technologies, particularly on-line access and e-mail. Appropriate use of these technologies has the potential to enhance communication with respondents, ease response burden, increase response rates, accelerate the pace of fieldwork, and reduce data entry and processing costs. In this context, school leavers were offered a number of modes of response to the survey in 2007: online completion, self-completion and postal return, completion over the phone and face-to-face interview. As expected, young people who left school prior to completion of the Leaving Certificate were less likely to respond to the initial web phase of the survey. Subsequent rounds adopting the postal, phone and in person completion allowed for correction of any non-response bias across groups and ensured the target sample was achieved in terms of overall numbers and gender and educational composition. Information on the overall response rate to the survey and weighting methodology can be found in Appendix B.

It is interesting to note that response mode varied quite considerably across gender, educational level and socio-economic groups, as well as across post-school pathway groups, emphasising the importance of adopting a multi-mode methodology to ensure representativeness and minimise sampling bias. The following examines response mode by gender, educational level and parental socio-economic group, to illustrate the strengths of the methodology adopted in the current study.

Young people who left school prior to completion of second-level education are considerably less likely to complete the survey online, with many completing the survey in the later face-to-face interview phase. While overall a higher proportion of females completed the survey online, among those who completed the Leaving Certificate males were more likely than females to have participated in the online phase.

Wide variations in response mode are also apparent across socio-economic groups. Young people from professional and employer/manager backgrounds are considerably more likely to participate in the web survey, while those from unemployed backgrounds were less likely to self-complete (either through the online survey or postal survey) and participated largely through face-to-face interviews. These findings illustrate the disadvantage of relying exclusively on web completion (or self-completion more generally) in surveys of young adults: even among this group where we would expect a greater familiarity with modern information technology, the response pattern was strongly differentiated by academic achievement and social class. The results point to the importance of multiple modes in achieving a representative sample.

Table 1.1: Response Mode by Second-Level Educational Attainment

Response Mode	No Qualifications (%)	Junior Certificate (%)	Leaving Certificate (%)	Total (%)
Web	13.7	23.6	56.1	44.4
Postal	13.1	10.6	14.7	13.6
Phone	14.9	24.0	17.6	19.0
In Person	58.3	41.8	11.6	23.1

Table 1.2: Response Mode by Second-Level Educational Attainment and Gender

Response Mode	No Qualifications (%)		Junior Certificate (%)		Leaving Certificate (%)		Total (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Web	15.2	11.4	20.4	31.7	58.7	53.9	41.6	47.5
Postal	13.3	12.9	10.3	11.3	12.4	16.7	11.8	15.6
Phone	16.2	12.9	26.3	18.3	19.5	16.1	21.4	16.2
In Person	55.2	62.9	43.0	38.7	9.4	13.3	25.2	20.7

Table 1.3: Response Mode by Parental Socio-Economic Group (Dominance Measure)

Response Mode	Farmer	Professional	Employer/ Manager	Non-Manual	Skilled, semi-unskilled	Unemployed	Unknown	Total
Web	35.0	64.1	51.7	40.9	36.5	15.3	47.0	44.4
Postal	22.3	10.8	15.0	12.2	16.1	12.6	11.2	13.6
Phone	27.4	13.3	19.8	19.3	21.4	17.1	18.7	19.0
In Person	15.3	11.8	13.5	27.6	26.0	55.0	23.1	23.1

2. SECOND-LEVEL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND ATTAINMENT



2. SECOND-LEVEL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND ATTAINMENT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the second-level educational experiences of school leavers. Among the issues explored are rates of retention at second-level, performance in state exams, participation in Transition Year and the range of Leaving Certificate programmes, engagement in paid employment outside school, attendance and school leavers' subjective experiences of their schooling.

2.2 Second-Level Attainment Levels

The extent to which school leavers persisted in school to complete the Leaving Certificate (or its equivalent) is the focus of Figure 2.1a. Three categories of educational attainment are referred to:

- (i) those who left with no qualifications,
- (ii) those who left after Junior Certificate and
- (iii) those who left after having completed the Leaving Certificate (or its equivalent).

In any series of data covering an extended time period, it will be necessary to make adjustments from time to time as data collection and analysis techniques improve. From 2007, the Department of Education and Science developed a more precise method of identifying the numbers of young people leaving the second-level system at each stage.³ We used this information in weighting the data for the School Leavers' Survey 2007 prior to analysis. We also used this method to adjust the figures from the 2004 and 2006 surveys. The adjustments to the overall educational attainment levels of the school-leaving population allow for a more precise estimation of levels of early school leaving and for greater accuracy in monitoring retention levels over time. As a consequence, the results reported here differ from those reported in earlier School Leavers' Reports and should be considered a correction to earlier estimates. The adjustment had the effect of marginally boosting retention rates.

In aggregate 86 per cent of school leavers in 2007 had completed the Leaving Certificate, 12 per cent had completed the Junior Certificate examination before leaving school while 2 per cent left without any qualifications (never completing any official second-level examination).

³ The new method allowed a more precise distinction between students leaving school and those moving to other second-level schools, either in Ireland or abroad.

Figure 2.1a: Qualification Level of School Leavers 1980-2007

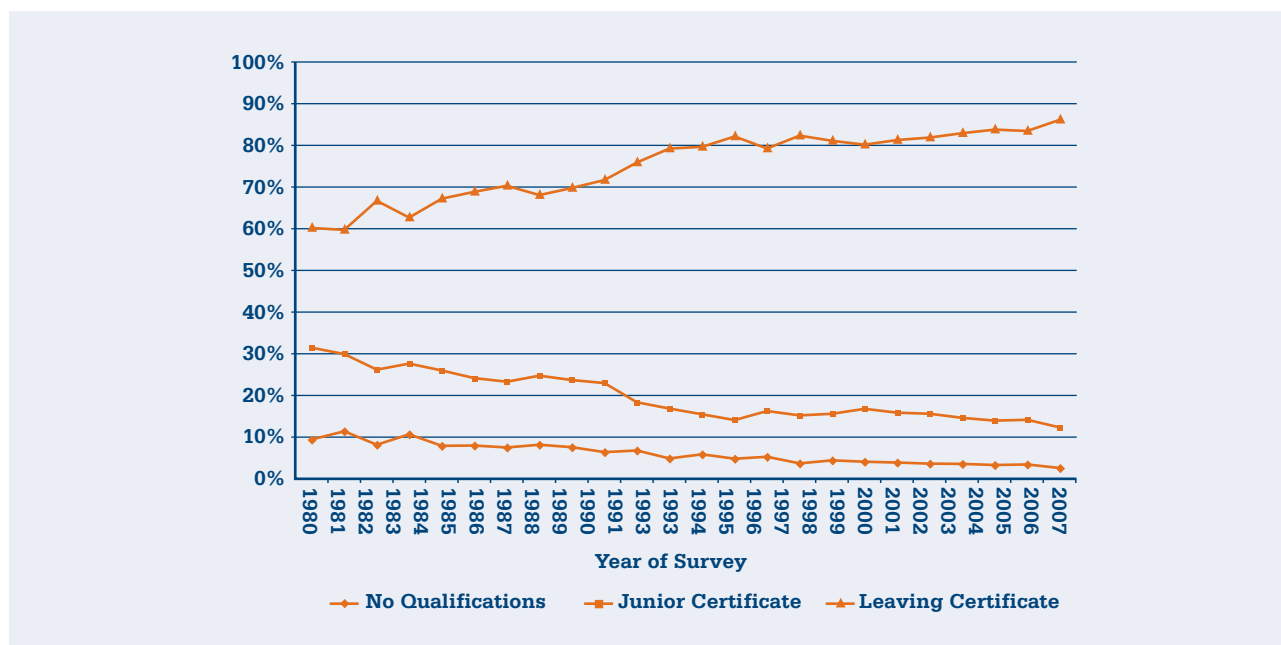
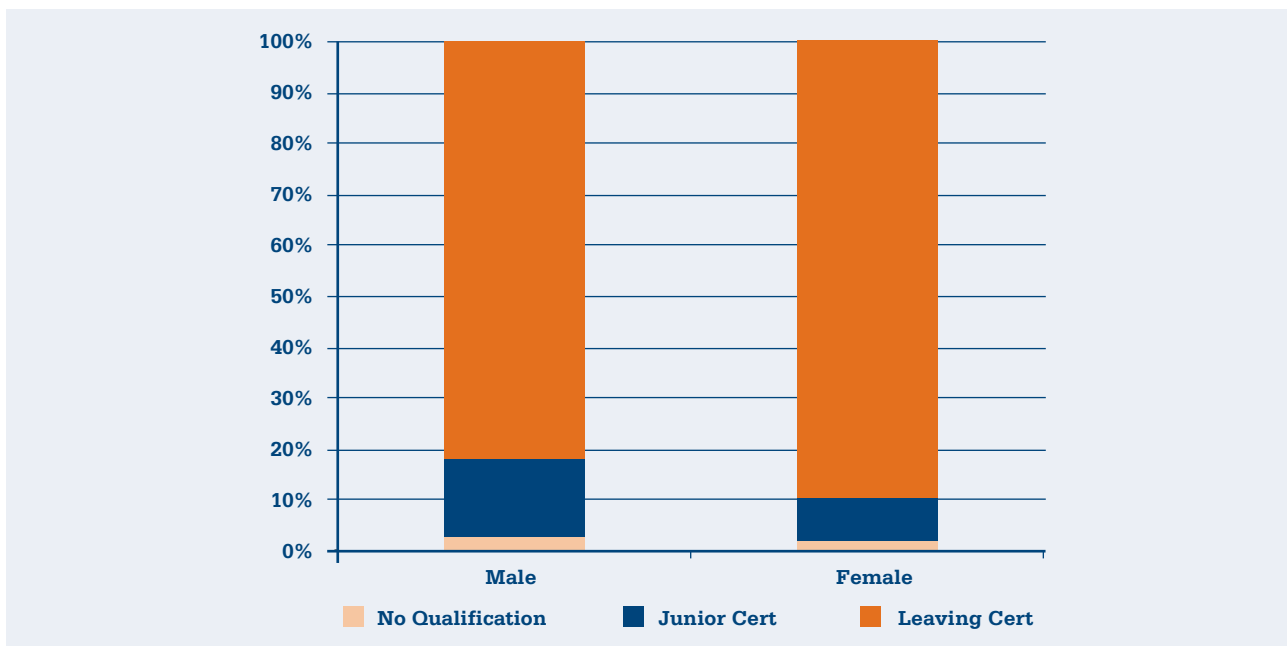


Figure 2.1a also illustrates longer-term trends in the qualification levels of school leavers since 1980. One can see from the graph that the percentage of those leaving school without the Leaving Certificate has fallen steadily since the late 1980s. In 1980, 9 per cent of students left with no qualifications and 31 per cent left after the Junior Cycle. By the 2007 survey, the corresponding figures had dropped to 2 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, so that the proportion leaving school with the Leaving Certificate had risen from 60 per cent to 86 per cent. Furthermore, it should also be noted that some of these early leavers are pursuing alternative educational courses such as through FETAC (Level 4, 5 and 6 courses), Youthreach, Community Training Centres and Senior Traveller Training. Hence, while they have left the official second-level system before completion, they may still be located within the wider educational system.

Figure 2.1b: Second-Level Qualifications by Gender (2007)

Gender differences in the educational attainment of male and female leavers continue to be apparent. Throughout the years, the School Leavers' Survey has shown that males exhibit a greater tendency towards early school leaving than their female counterparts. As illustrated in Figure 2.1b, 3 per cent of males as compared to 2 per cent of females left school without any qualifications in 2007. A greater proportion of females than males obtained a Leaving Certificate qualification – 90 per cent relative to 82 per cent respectively. The proportion of males exiting the second-level system without sitting the Leaving Certificate examination is 8 percentage points higher than for females.

In the following sections, we examine whether socio-economic background (in relation to father's and mother's socio-economic status) has a bearing on the stage at which the school leaver left school. We also present parental socio-economic group, which takes the occupational group of the higher placed parent, where both parents are employed. This measure represents a departure from earlier reports which relied predominantly on father's occupational group. However, it is important to note that large proportions of women are engaged in the labour market, so it is no longer sufficient to consider just father's occupation, since the economic background of school leavers is likely to reflect their mother's occupational position as much as their father's. While we present father's, mother's and highest parental occupation in this section, for illustration purposes, subsequent results are predominantly differentiated by parental socio-economic group only.

Examining educational attainment levels across socio-economic groups in Table 2.1a, retention levels continue to vary quite widely across social groups, with a number of noteworthy results. Young people from professional, employer/manager and farming backgrounds continue to have significantly higher educational attainment, with typically 93 to 96 per cent of females from such backgrounds (based on highest parent's occupation) completing their second-level education. It is interesting to note that males from farming backgrounds are outside this general finding and actually have relatively high levels of early school leaving, relative to the professional and employer/manager groups and females from farming backgrounds. Those from unemployed backgrounds fare substantially worse and display considerably higher levels of early school leaving, with 13 per cent of females with unemployed parent(s) departing school prior to sitting their Junior Certificate examination compared to less than 2 per cent for all other socio-economic groups.⁴ It is also interesting to note that young people with parent(s) employed in intermediate and other non-manual occupations display similar retention levels to the manual groups and actually have a slightly higher level of early school leaving. This represents a deterioration in the relative position of young people from non-manual backgrounds on last year when this group were more likely to complete their second-level education than those from manual backgrounds.

**Table 2.1a: Initial Level of Education Attained by Socio-Economic Background (2007) –
Father's Occupation**

	Male				Female				Total
	No Quals.	Junior Cert.	Leaving Cert.	Total (Col %)	No Quals.	Junior Cert.	Leaving Cert.	Total (Col %)	
Farmer/Agricultural	2.5	13.7	83.8	9.1	1.3	3.9	94.8	8.6	8.8
Higher/Lower Professional	1.7	4.2	94.1	13.5	1.1	6.4	92.5	12.1	12.8
Employer/ manager	0.0	8.2	91.8	14.2	0.3	5.8	93.9	9.1	11.6
Intermediate/other non-manual	2.3	17.0	80.7	19.2	2.0	8.5	89.5	23.9	21.5
Skilled/semi/ unskilled manual	2.4	18.1	79.6	29.4	0.8	9.0	90.1	30.0	29.7
Unemployed	8.3	29.3	62.3	5.9	10.9	15.3	73.8	5.5	5.7
Other/unknown	6.3	23.3	70.4	8.8	2.3	11.3	86.5	10.8	9.8
Total	2.6	15.3	82.0	100	1.8	8.4	89.7	100	100
Est. No. in category	819	4,764	25,515	31,098	583	2,666	28,340	31,589	62,687

Note: Row percentages for each level of education; column percentages for total.

⁴ A school leaver is defined as being from an unemployed background if all parents present in the household are unemployed.

**Table 2.1b: Initial Level of Education Attained by Socio-Economic Background (2007) –
Mother's Occupation**

	Male				Female				Total
	No Quals.	Junior Cert.	Leaving Cert.	Total (Col %)	No Quals.	Junior Cert.	Leaving Cert.	Total (Col %)	
Farmer/Agricultural	0.0	6.6	93.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	1.1	1.2
Higher/Lower Professional	1.9	6.2	92.0	17.7	0.8	3.3	95.9	16.0	16.8
Employer/ manager	1.4	7.6	91.1	4.2	0.8	4.4	94.8	3.3	3.7
Intermediate/other non-manual	2.0	17.4	80.5	38.5	1.2	10.4	88.4	39.8	39.2
Skilled/semi/ unskilled manual	4.4	16.3	79.4	5.7	3.5	10.6	85.9	5.6	5.6
Unemployed	3.3	21.6	75.1	2.1	6.3	10.1	83.6	3.1	2.6
Other/unknown	3.8	18.8	77.4	30.4	2.6	8.7	88.6	31.2	30.8
Total	2.6	15.3	82.0	100	1.8	8.4	89.7	100	100
Est. No. in category	819	4,765	25,515	31,099	584	2,666	28,339	31,589	62,688

Note: Row percentages for each level of education; column percentages for total.

**Table 2.1c: Initial Level of Education Attained by Socio-Economic Background (2007) –
Parental Occupation**

	Male				Female				Total
	No Quals.	Junior Cert.	Leaving Cert.	Total (Col %)	No Quals.	Junior Cert.	Leaving Cert.	Total (Col %)	
Farmer/Agricultural	2.6	15.1	82.3	8.6	1.3	3.1	95.6	8.6	8.6
Higher/Lower Professional	1.5	6.1	92.4	21.2	0.7	4.6	94.7	19.9	20.5
Employer/ manager	0.3	8.5	91.3	13.2	0.3	6.9	92.8	8.6	10.9
Intermediate/other non-manual	2.7	20.7	76.6	32.2	1.9	10.5	87.6	36.9	34.6
Skilled/semi/ unskilled manual	3.2	17.9	78.9	16.7	1.6	9.2	89.3	15.7	16.2
Unemployed	11.9	35.2	52.8	3.1	12.5	10.8	76.7	4.1	3.6
Other/unknown	5.6	17.2	77.1	57.5	2.2	14.2	83.6	6.2	5.6
Total	2.6	15.3	82.0	100	1.9	8.4	89.7	100	100
Est. No. in category	819	4,765	25,515	31,099	585	2,665	28,340	31,590	62,689

Note: Row percentages for each level of education; column percentages for total.

Table 2.2 below presents further details on the highest level of education attained when school leavers left the education system by parental socio-economic background. In particular, it focuses on the three types of Leaving Certificate i.e. the established Leaving Certificate (LCE), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). Looking at different outcomes by parents' socio-economic position, school leavers from unemployed backgrounds are most likely to leave with no qualifications (12 per cent) while the percentage of those from farming, professional, employer/manager, intermediate non-manual or manual backgrounds who do so is 2 per cent or lower.

Table 2.2: Stage Left School by Socio-Economic Background (2007) – Parental Occupation

	No Ouals	Junior Certificate	LC Established	LC Applied	LC Vocational
Farmer/Agricultural	2.0	9.1	47.0	5.2	36.8
Higher/Lower professional	1.1	5.4	68.5	1.2	23.8
Employer/manager	0.3	7.8	74.4	1.1	16.4
Intermediate/other non-manual	2.3	15.2	58.0	4.8	19.7
Skilled/semi/unskilled manual	2.4	13.6	49.0	6.9	28.1
Unemployed	12.3	21.3	30.5	7.1	28.8
Other/unknown	3.7	15.6	52.6	6.4	21.7
Total	2.2	11.9	58.2	4.2	23.5

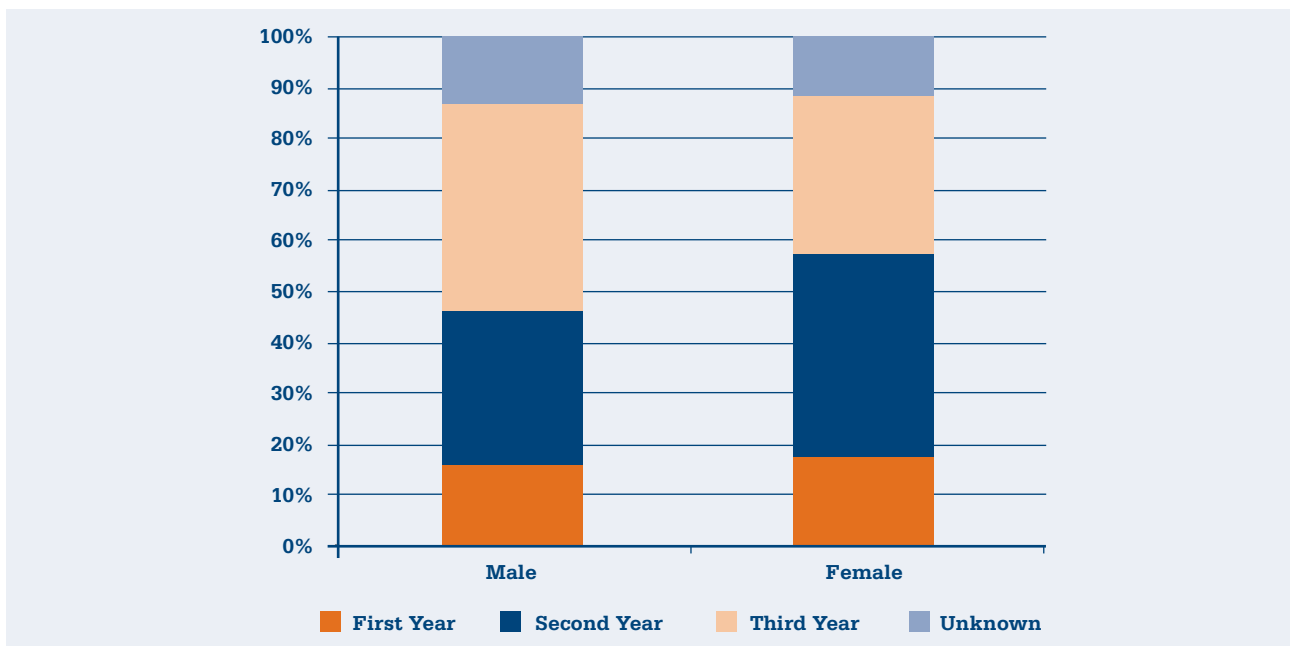
Note: Row percentages for each socio-economic background.

When distinguishing between the different types of Leaving Certificate - the Established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied – we see a clear class differentiation in the case of the Established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied, but a more mixed pattern for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Those from unemployed backgrounds are considerably more likely to pursue the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, as are those from manual, farming and non-manual backgrounds. Among school leavers who complete senior cycle (table not shown here), those with one or both parents in unemployment have the highest levels of participation in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme followed by those from farming backgrounds: 43 per cent and 41 per cent respectively. While manual and non-manual groups have similar retention levels as shown in the previous section, their senior cycle pathways are somewhat distinct with 70 per cent of the employer/manager group taking the Established Leaving Certificate programme, relative to just 58 per cent of those from Intermediate or non-manual backgrounds, significantly more of whom are taking the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

2.3 Early School Leaving

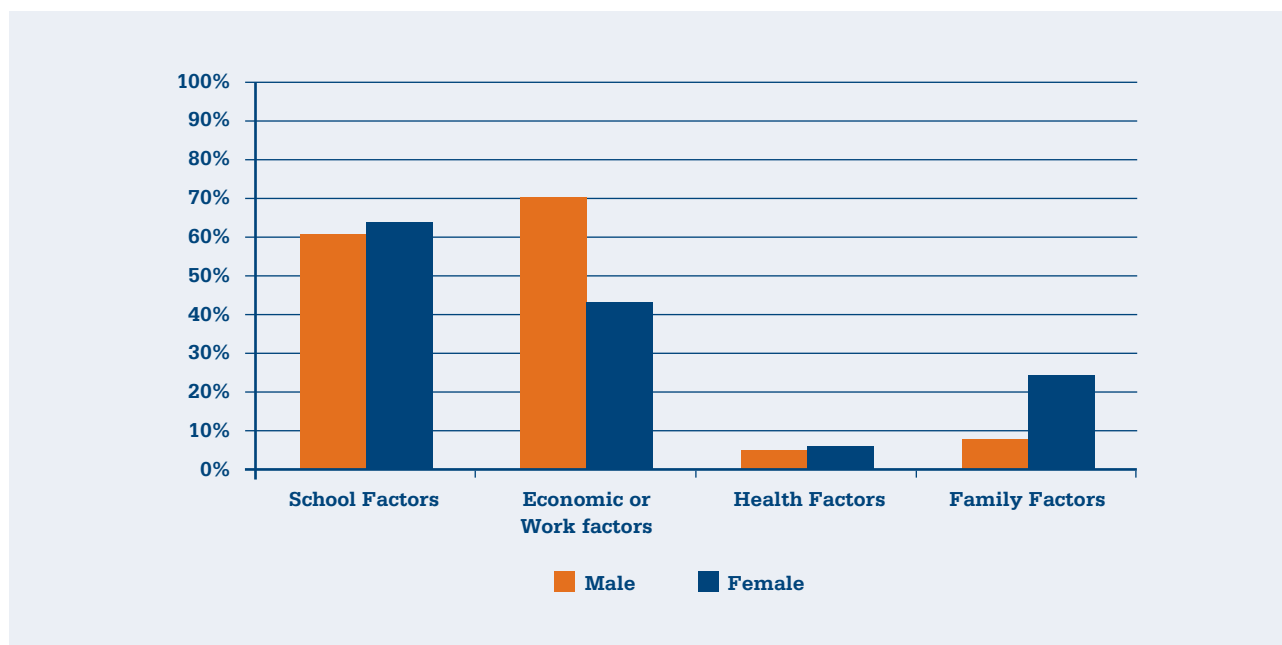
Figure 2.2a shows a breakdown of those who left school⁵ with no formal qualifications by the stage at which they left and gender. As noted earlier, males are more strongly represented than females among those who leave school without any qualifications. In aggregate, 17 per cent of school leavers exit in their first year of secondary school, broadly consistent with figures last year. The percentage departing in second year is down from last year (34 per cent now) while there has been an increase in the proportion leaving in third year (representing 37 per cent of school leavers in 2007). This suggests that while overall retention levels have improved on earlier years, so too has junior cycle retention with more young people remaining in school to third year rather than leaving in first or second year.

⁵ It should be noted that this data is concerned with departure from the official second-level system; some of these early leavers are actually in alternative educational settings, such as FETAC Certificate courses and the Youthreach programme.

Figure 2.2a: Stage at which School Leavers Without Any Formal Qualifications Left School (2007)

Factors Influencing Respondents to Leave

A question was added to the 2004 survey whereby respondents who left school prior to sitting the Leaving Certificate/Leaving Certificate Applied were asked to indicate the main factors influencing their decision to leave. The choices provided were school factors, economic or work factors, family or health factors or 'other' factors. In aggregate, it is clear that the overriding factors influencing a students' decision to leave school relate to 'school factors' (62 per cent), followed by 'economic or work factors' (60 per cent), 'family factors' (14 per cent) and 'health factors' (5 per cent). It is important to note that these factors are not mutually exclusive, respondents could indicate more than one reason and many did so. When concentrating on gender differentials, Figure 2.2b shows a clear distinction can be drawn with respect to the factors underlying early leaving – males are much more likely to cite economic/work factors behind their decision to leave school, while more females cite family factors.

Figure 2.2b: Reasons for Leaving School Prior to Completing Senior Cycle by Gender (2007)

2.4 Examination Performance

In a departure from the traditional reliance on self-reported examination results among school leavers, which was subject to some degree of recall error, the 2007 School Leavers' Survey asked respondents to indicate their consent to researchers accessing their examination results from the State Examinations Commission (SEC). Over 90 per cent of respondents indicated their willingness to us accessing the results for their most recent state examination, analyses of which are discussed in this section.

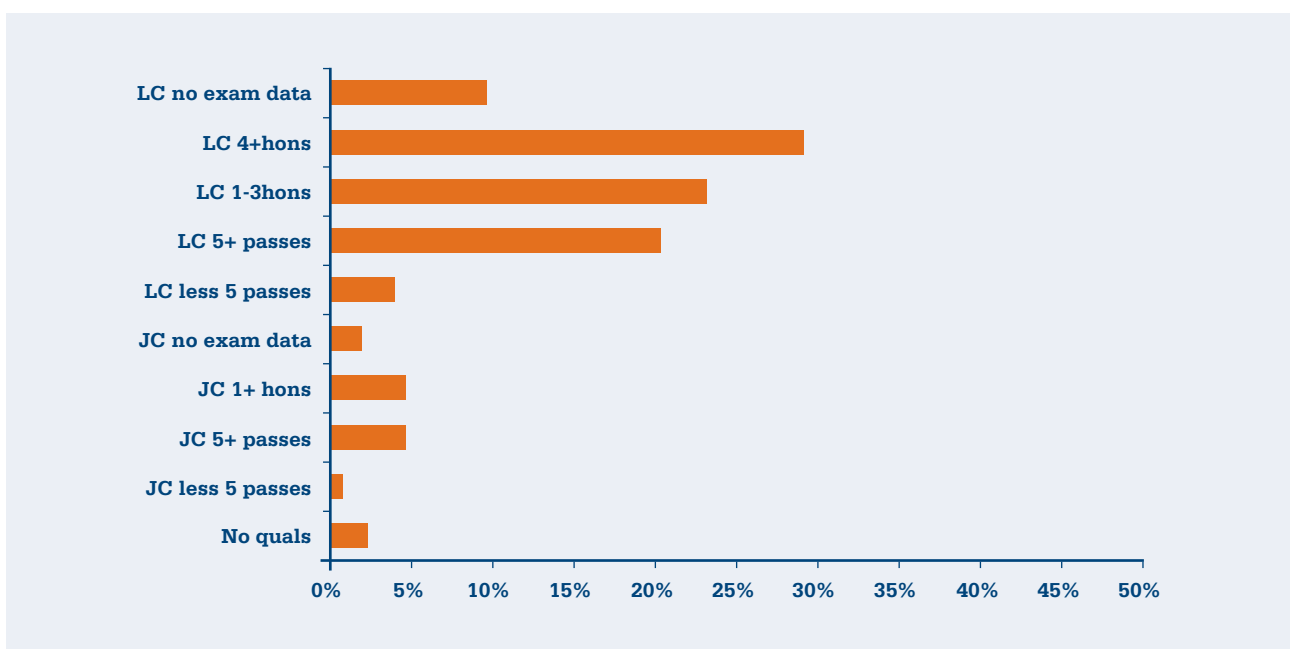
Eight categories of school leavers' examination performance are used throughout this chapter, based on school leavers' performance in their final official examination as recorded by the State Examinations Commission, as follows:

- No qualifications – no formal examinations taken;
- Junior Certificate – less than 5Ds;
- Junior Certificate – 5 or more Ds, but no Cs or better on higher level papers;
- Junior Certificate – 1 or more Cs (or better) on higher level papers;
- Leaving Certificate – less than 5Ds;
- Leaving Certificate – 5 or more Ds, but no Cs (or better) on higher level papers;
- Leaving Certificate – 1 to 3 Cs (or better) on higher level papers;
- Leaving Certificate – 4 or more Cs (or better) on higher-level papers.

To ensure a complete representation of all individuals, those respondents who did not give consent to access their examination data and who did not themselves provide their examination results are also included as either 'Junior Certificate no exam data' or 'Leaving Certificate no exam data'. Students who took the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) final examinations are included in the 'Leaving Certificate no exam data' category, due to the different grading system utilised in the LCA and the small numbers of respondents who took this programme.

Figures 2.3a and 2.3b present the examination results for those who left school in 2004/05, the majority of whom sat their examination in June 2005. From Figure 2.3a we note that the results for the Junior Certificate examination remain relatively constant with those presented in the 2006 report, although there has been a slight rise in the proportion of school leavers performing well and achieving one or more higher level C grades (or better). At Leaving Certificate level, there has been a slight reduction in the percentage who performed less well in the examination and either failed to secure at least 5 pass grades or did not achieve any 'honour' grades, with a commensurate increase in the numbers attaining at least 1 'honour' in the exam.

Figure 2.3a: Outcome of Last Examination Sat, All School Leavers (2007)



We saw earlier that more females than males complete the Leaving Certificate (see Figure 2.1b). Figure 2.3b below illustrates that when we consider male and female examination results, we find that females continue to outperform their male counterparts. Perhaps most notable, females outnumber males in terms of the proportion achieving 4 or more 'honours' in their Leaving Certificate (by 8 percentage points), representing little change in the gender gap since 2006. For school leavers' whose last official exam was the Junior Certificate, females are less likely to fail to achieve 5 pass grades, although males are slightly more likely to secure at least one 'honour'.

Figure 2.3b: Outcome of Last Examination Sat, Males and Females (2007)

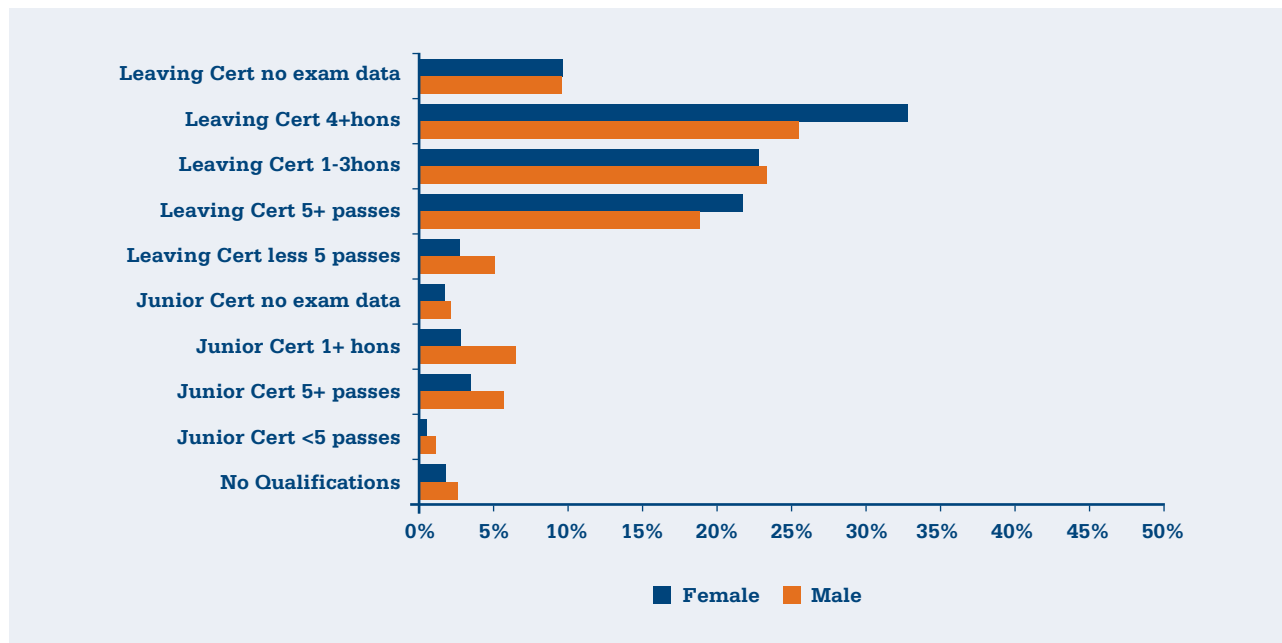


Table 2.3a provides details on the examination results obtained by socio-economic background for those school leavers whose last official examination was the Junior Certificate. Junior Certificate results are broken into 3 categories:

- less than 5 'passes',
- 5 or more passes with no 'honours' and
- 1 or more 'honours'.

Over three-quarters of students who leave at this stage (for whom we have results) achieve at least 5 or more passes, while 39 per cent achieve one or more 'honours'. Those from farming and professional backgrounds (based on the parent with the highest occupation) who leave after the Junior Certificate stand out as being most likely to achieve strong results: 61 and 55 per cent, respectively, achieve at least one 'honour', compared to 39 per cent overall.

Table 2.3a: Junior Certificate Examination Results by Parental Socio-Economic Background (2007)

	< 5 Passes	5 + Passes, No Honours	1+ Honours	Unknown
Farmer/Agriculture	3.1	14.8	60.8	21.4
Higher /Lower professional	6.9	23.1	54.6	15.3
Employer/manager	6.7	51.1	32.0	10.1
Intermediate/other non-manual	4.3	44.3	36.3	15.1
Skilled/semi/unskilled manual	8.8	31.7	46.2	13.3
Unemployed	11.9	44.5	21.6	22.0
Other/unknown	9.5	48.5	14.0	28.0
Total	6.4	38.9	38.5	16.2

Note: Row percentages for each socio-economic background.

Table 2.3b below presents the Leaving Certificate exam results of school leavers by parental socio-economic background. Leaving Certificate results are divided into four categories:

- less than 5 'passes',
- 5 or more passes with no 'honours',
- 1-3 'honours' and
- 4 or more 'honours'.

Table 2.3b: Leaving Certificate Examination Results by Socio-Economic Background – Parental Occupation (2007)

	< 5 Ds	5+ Ds, No Cs	1-3 Honours	4+ Honours	Unknown
Farmer/Agriculture	0.6	22.5	30.6	39.6	6.7
Higher/Lower professional	2.2	10.5	21.1	59.9	6.3
Employer/manager	5.3	23.4	28.2	35.6	7.5
Intermediate non-manual	5.0	27.4	29.6	24.2	13.9
Skilled/semi/unskilled manual	7.3	33.3	27.2	19.0	13.3
Unemployed	8.1	35.6	33.1	9.7	13.6
Other/unknown	7.3	21.9	21.4	27.8	21.7
Total	4.6	23.6	26.9	33.8	11.1

Note: Row percentages for each socio-economic background.

Overall, of those who sit the Leaving Certificate, 5 per cent achieve less than 5 'passes', 24 per cent achieve 5 or more 'passes' (but no 'honours'), almost 27 per cent attain 1-3 'honours' and 34 per cent achieve 4 or more 'honours'. Again, students from farming, employer/manager and, most notably, professional backgrounds stand out as having stronger results, with 40, 36 and 60 per cent respectively achieving 4 or more 'honours', considerably greater than the average and, in the case of those from professional backgrounds, over six times the proportion of students from unemployed backgrounds who do so.

While in 2004 it was noted that those students from manual backgrounds who sit the Leaving Certificate tend to do better than their counterparts from intermediate/other non-manual backgrounds, this pattern was reversed in 2006. For 2007 there is little overall difference in the exam performance of those from non-manual and manual backgrounds and these groups occupy a similar position on the performance gradient.

2.5 Participation in Transition Year

We first consider the relationship between participation in Transition Year and performance in the Leaving Certificate examination and notable patterns are apparent (Table 2.4a). In aggregate, the majority of students do not participate: 61 per cent as opposed to 39 per cent, with participation rates largely in line with earlier years. As was the case in 2006, those who achieved four or more 'honours' are markedly more likely to have participated in the programme (53 per cent compared to 29-32 per cent for those who did not achieve any 'honours' results in the examination).

Table 2.4a: Leaving Certificate Examination Results by Participation in Transition Year (TY) (2007)

Leaving Certificate Results	% Participated in TY	% Did not Participate in TY
< 5 Passes	28.7	71.3
5+ Passes	32.2	67.8
1-3 Honours	40.6	59.4
4+ Honours	53.3	46.7
Results unknown	28.4	71.6
Total	39.1	60.9

While these performance differences may reflect the potential impact of the programme on grades, they also reflect the selective nature of participants. Table 2.4b displays levels of participation in the Transition Year programme among those who completed second-level education across socio-economic groups, based on highest parent's occupation. Clearly levels of participation are significantly higher among those from more affluent backgrounds – young people from professional backgrounds are twice as likely to have participated in Transition Year as those from manual backgrounds and those where all parents present are unemployed. It is also interesting to note relatively low levels of participation in the Transition Year programme among those from farming backgrounds, in line with results from earlier years.

Table 2.4b: Participation in Transition Year Among those who Completed the Leaving Certificate by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)

	Participated in TY	Did not Participate in TY
Farmer/Agriculture	30.8	69.2
Higher/Lower Professional	59.0	41.0
Employer/manager	43.0	57.0
Intermediate non-manual	40.2	59.8
Skilled/semi/unskilled manual	29.5	70.5
Unemployed	27.0	73.0
Other/unknown	26.7	73.3
Total	41.2	58.8

2.6 Part-Time Employment While at School

Table 2.5 below presents information on the prevalence of part-time work among students before leaving school. Information on overall participation rates is given as well as the school year in which pupils engaged in the work and the days of the week they worked. A small minority of students who work while at school do so on weekdays only, so the figure for weekday work includes those who work on weekdays as well as on weekends.

Table 2.5: Participation in Part-Time Work While in School, All School Leavers (2007)

		Male	Female	Total
Held part-time job?	Yes	48.0	57.9	53.0
	No	52.0	42.1	47.0
Year job held	6th year	58.3	68.5	63.9
	5th year	79.7	87.7	84.1
	4th year	35.2	41.9	38.9
	3rd year	46.7	38.0	41.9
	2nd year	27.9	19.3	23.2
	1st year	15.5	6.7	10.6
Days worked	Weekends only	50.1	58.8	55.0
	Weekdays	49.9	41.2	45.0

Note: Few student work only on weekdays so most of those working weekdays also work weekends.

In aggregate, 53 per cent of school leavers participate in part-time work while at school. In line with earlier years, employment rates are highest during fifth year. Of those who work while in second level, 84 per cent did so in fifth year. Employment levels tail off in sixth year as students approach the Leaving Certificate examination. The majority of this work takes place over the weekend, although a sizeable proportion of part-time workers engage in paid work during the week (45 per cent). Gender differences are notable, with females more likely to work while in school (58 compared to 48 per cent) and, among those who work, males are more likely to work on weekdays (50 compared to 41 per cent) and to work at a younger age.

The proportion who work while at school reflects both the propensity to work in any given school year as well as how long someone stays in the school system. To provide a clearer examination of the relationship between part-time employment and social background, we examine the prevalence of part-time work for those who completed second-level education.

Table 2.6 provides a breakdown of those who worked part-time and also those who worked weekdays by socio-economic status of parents. The relationship between the likelihood of participation in part-time work while at school and parental socio-economic background is noteworthy. The highest participation rate is found among those from non-manual and manual backgrounds, some of whom may have availed of opportunities to work in a family business. The participation rate among those from professional and farming backgrounds is lower than the average.

Table 2.6: Participation in Part-Time Work and Weekday Work While in School by Parental Socio-Economic Group, Those Who Completed Senior Cycle (2007)

	Held part-time job	Worked Weekdays
Parental Socio-Economic Group		
Farmer/other Agricultural	50.8	32.2
Higher/Lower Professional	46.1	28.7
Employer/Manager	54.2	52.3
Intermediate/other non-manual	61.8	46.3
Skilled/semi-/unskilled manual	58.7	55.1
Unemployed	57.5	40.7
Unknown	63.6	56.3
Total	55.9	44.6

Those with one or both parents in manual or employer/manager occupations are most likely to have worked during the week (55 and 52 per cent respectively), while those with parents in farming (32 per cent) or professional occupations (29 per cent) are least likely to have done so.

Table 2.7 focuses on those who worked weekdays while at school broken down by gender and their parent's socio-economic group. Largely in line with earlier years, the highest levels of weekday working are found among males with one or both parents in employer/manager, manual and intermediate non-manual occupations. The highest rates among females are found among those from manual backgrounds or those where all parents present are unemployed. The lowest rates among males are for those whose fathers or mothers are in professional occupations. The lowest rates for females are found for those with a parent engaged in the farming sector or those from employer/manager backgrounds.

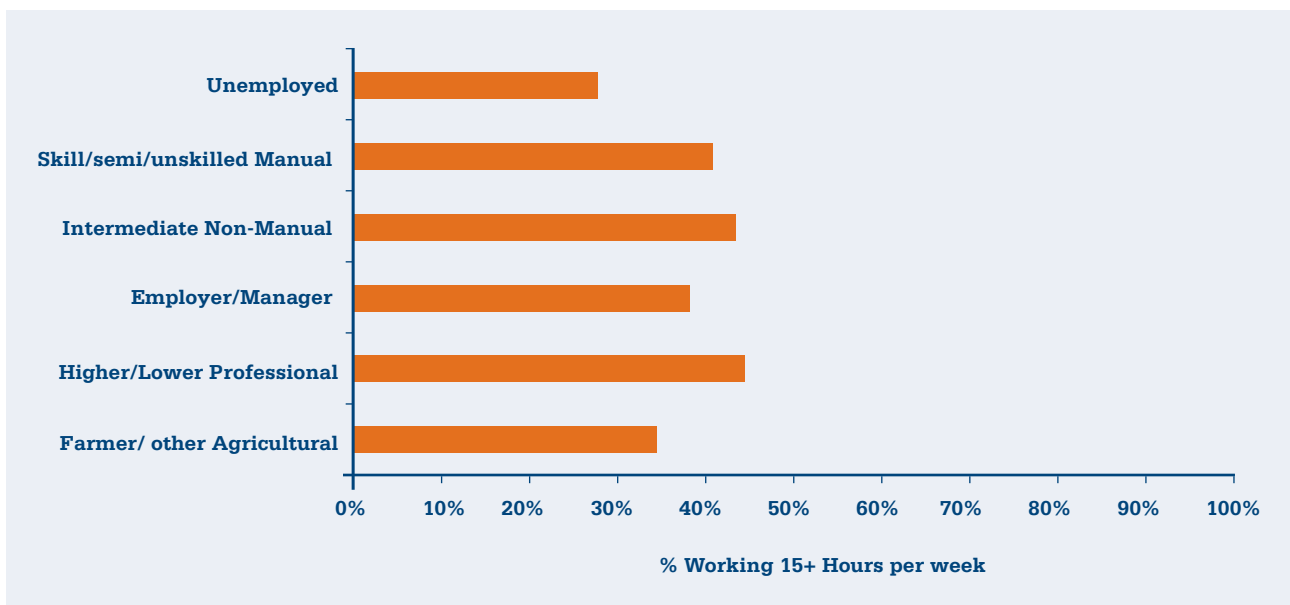
Table 2.7: Participation in Weekday Work While in School by Socio-Economic Group and Gender, Those Who Completed Senior Cycle (2007)

	Male	Female
Parental Socio-Economic Group		
Farmer/other Agricultural	44.0	25.4
Higher/Lower Professional	16.3	38.2
Employer/Manager	80.6	13.4
Intermediate/other non-manual	50.2	44.3
Skilled/semi-/unskilled manual	60.6	51.0
Unemployed	0.0	52.2
Unknown	68.4	51.6
Total	49.9	41.2

Note: Small numbers in the unemployed category make these results unreliable.

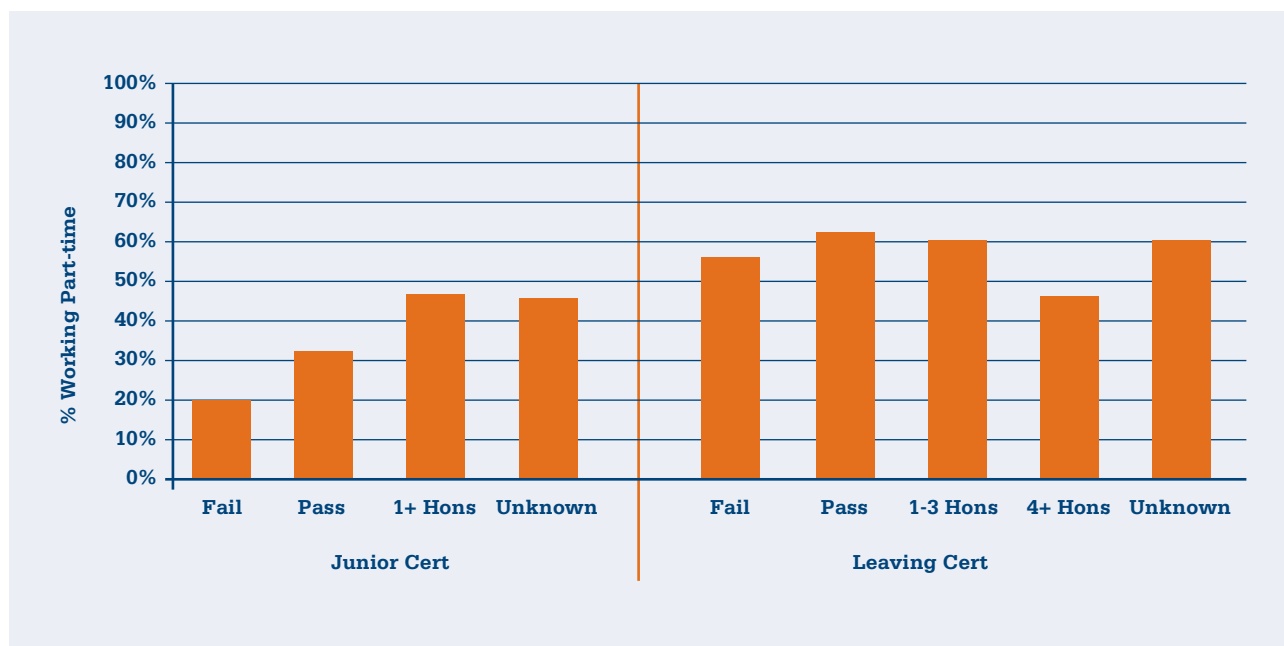
Figure 2.4a shows the proportion of school leavers who completed senior cycle and who are engaged in more intensive employment (15 or more hours per week) by parents' socio-economic group. While the patterns of participation in part-time work across socio-economic groups were notable, it emerges that participation in more time-intensive jobs is less structured by social background factors. While those from manual backgrounds are somewhat more likely to work longer hours, there is little difference across other socio-economic groups. It is interesting to note that those from unemployed backgrounds are less likely to work longer hours.

Figure 2.4a: Percentage Holding a Part-Time Job Working 15+ Hours Per Week by Parental Socio-Economic Group, Those Who Completed Senior Cycle (2007)



While the earlier analysis looked at the school employment patterns of those who completed second-level, the following also examines school leavers who left school at some point after the Junior Certificate examination. Figure 2.4b shows a clear pattern regarding examination performance at Junior Certificate level, with higher levels of participation in paid employment among those who performed well in the examination. However, among those leaving school upon completion of the Leaving Certificate examination, those who achieved high attainment in the examination had lower rates of participation in part-time work while at school.

Figure 2.4b: Participation in Part-Time Work and Performance in Final Examination at School (2007)



2.7 Attendance at School

School leavers participating in the 2007 survey were asked to indicate the extent to which they had missed school during their last year at school. Specifically, questions were asked in relation to their engagement in ‘truancy’ (the extent to which they had ‘skipped school’). Figure 2.5a shows the variation in the extent of truancy by last exam sat. Clearly, persistent truancy (skipping several days or weeks at a time) is much more prevalent among those leaving school prior to completion of the Leaving Certificate and is particularly apparent among those leaving school prior to the Junior Certificate. However, there is no statistically significant relationship between truancy and socio-economic background.

Figure 2.5a: Prevalence of Skipping School During Last Year At School (2007)

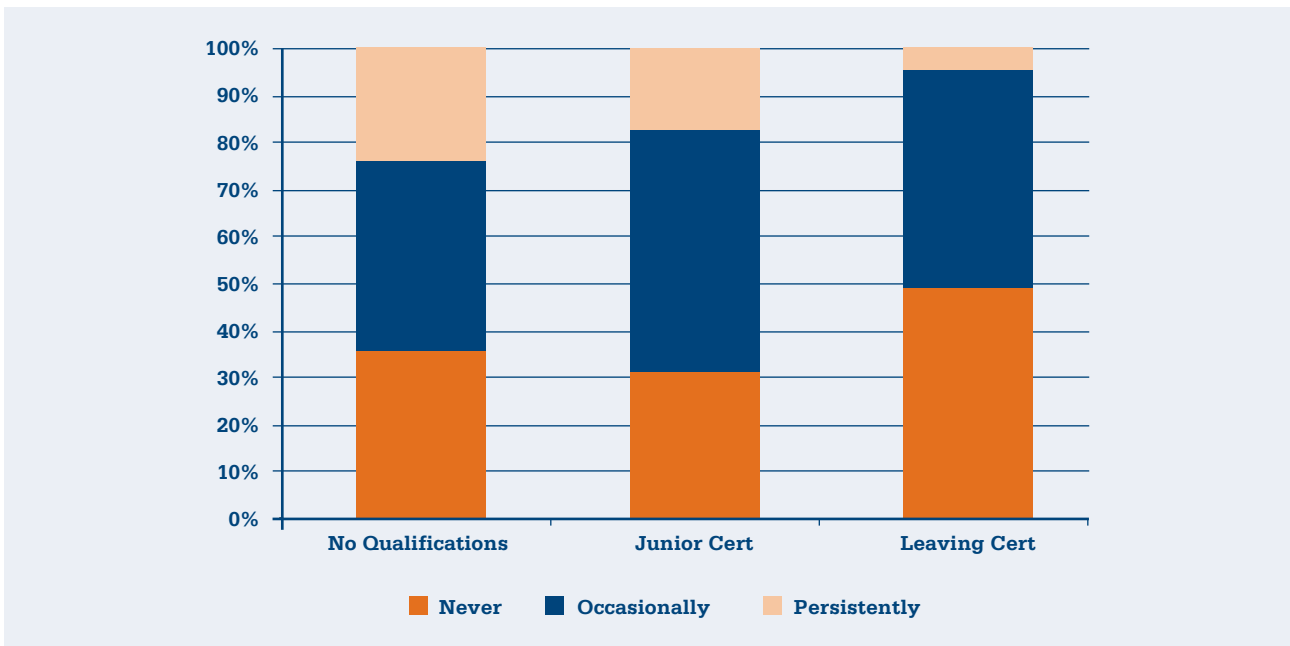
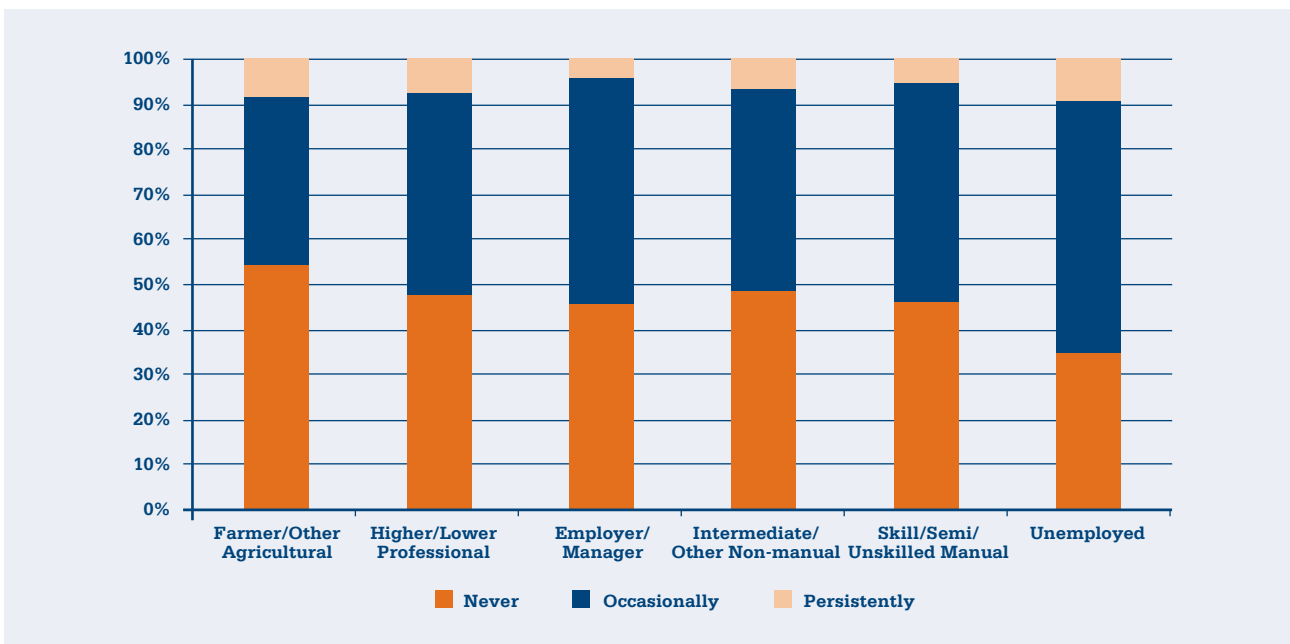


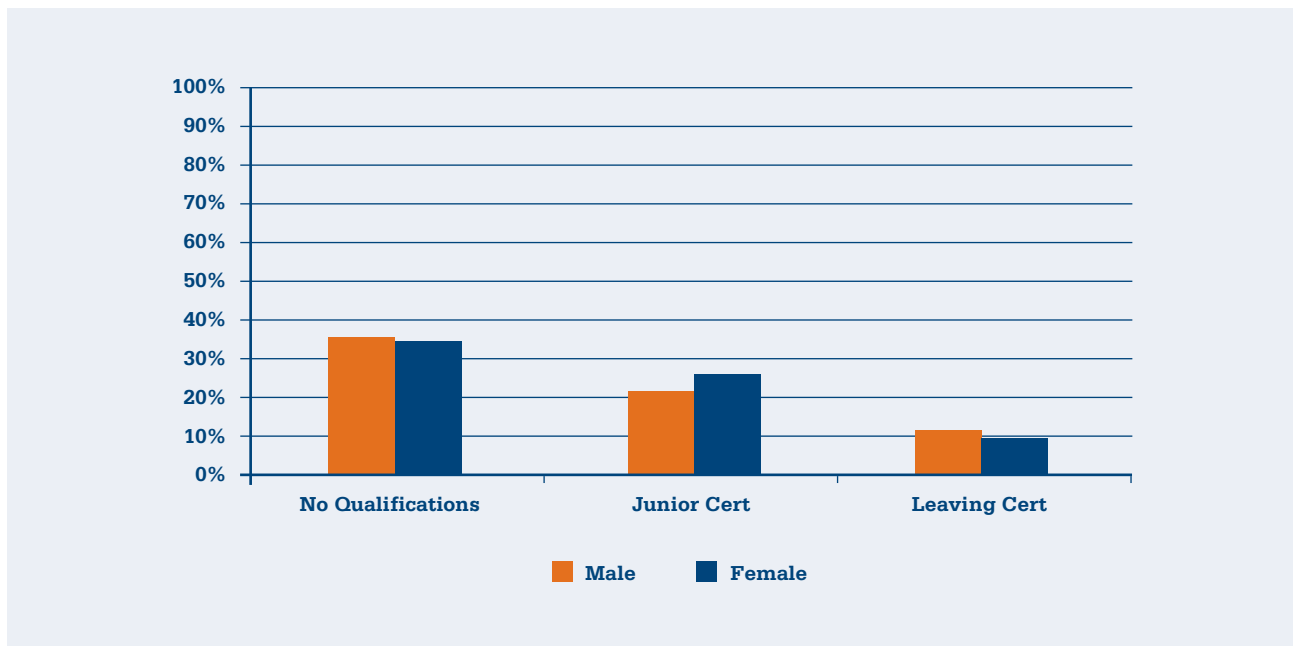
Figure 2.5b: Prevalence of Skipping School during Last Year at School by Parental Socio-Economic Background (2007)



2.8 Attitudes Towards School

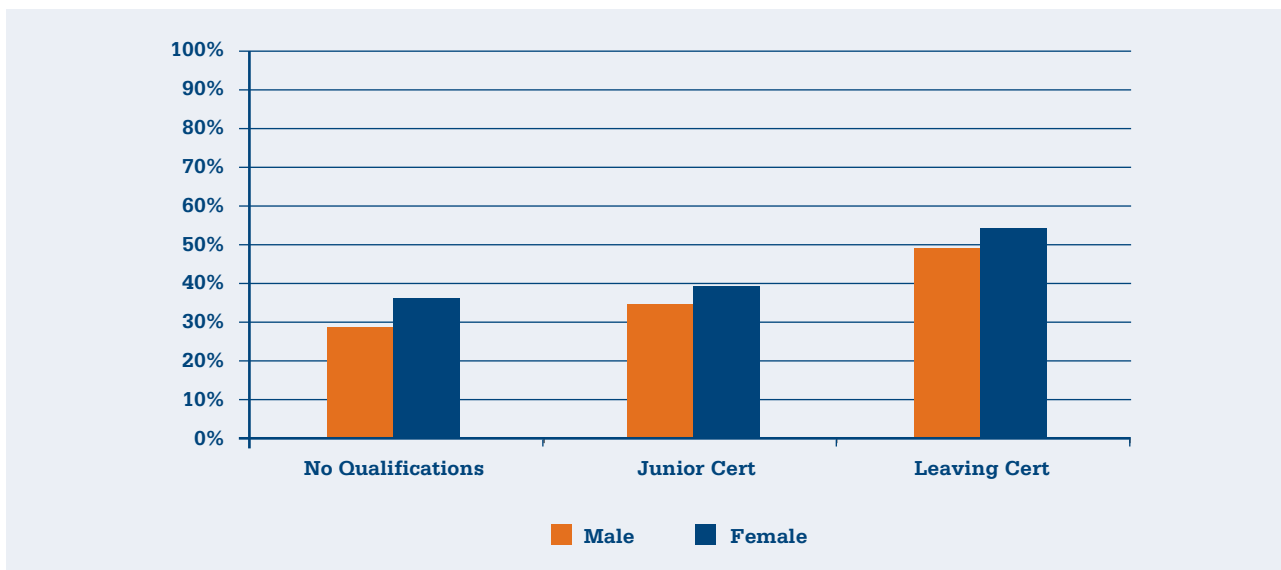
School leavers were asked to reflect on their subjective experiences of school and asked the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements about their school, teachers and peers. Drawing on these statements, two scales were constructed, each combining a number of statements. The first, termed 'support from teachers' amalgamates whether the respondent agreed 'teachers helped me to do my best'; 'teachers listened to my views and ideas'; 'if I had a problem there was always a teacher I could talk to'; and 'my teachers didn't care about me' (reversed). The second, referred to as 'order in their class', draws on responses to statements on 'there were too many troublemakers in my classes' and 'teachers could not keep order in class'. Figures 2.6 and 2.7 reveal sharp variations in views across educational attainment levels – school leavers completing their second-level education were far less likely to have negative views of the support they got from their teachers and considerably more likely to consider their classroom environment as orderly.

Figure 2.6: Percentage with Negative Views of the Support they got from Teachers while at School* (2007)



*Note: Scale based on whether respondent agreed 'teachers helped me to do my best'; 'teachers listened to my views and ideas'; 'if I had a problem there was always a teacher I could talk to'; 'my teachers didn't care about me' (reversed). Alpha .71

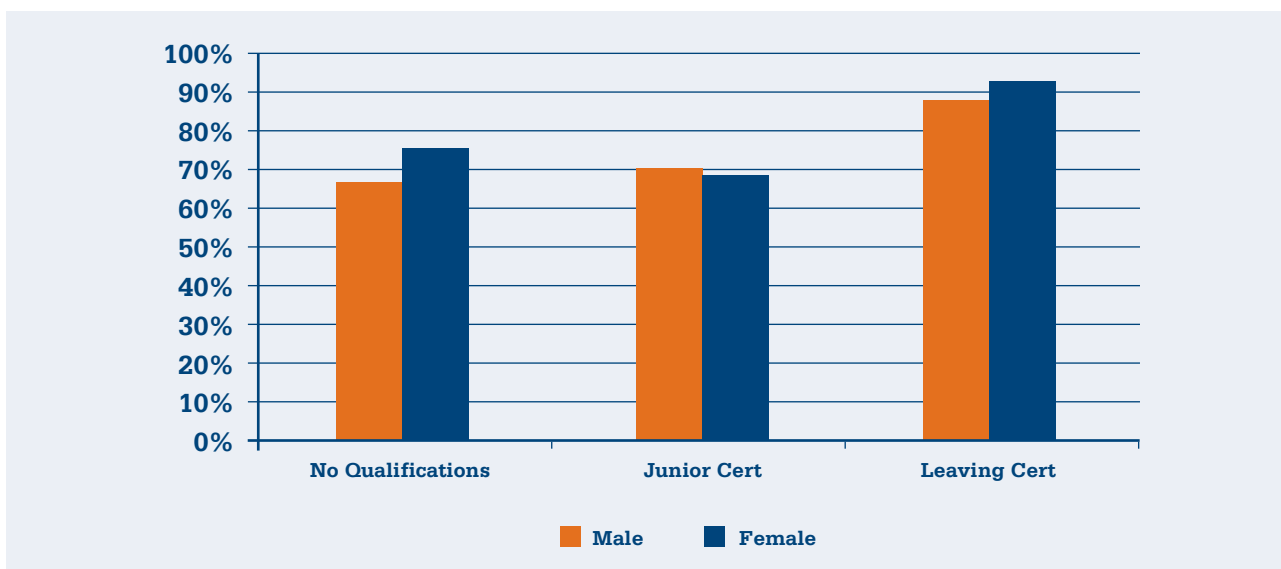
Figure 2.7: Percentage with Positive Views of the Extent of Order in Their Class While at School* (2007)



* **Note:** Scale based on whether respondent agreed 'there were too many troublemakers in my classes' and 'teachers could not keep order in class'. Alpha .54

An additional question was asked about whether the school leavers had felt their school work was 'worth doing' (Figure 2.8). Again results are strongly patterned across educational groups, with those who left school prior to sitting the Junior Certificate examination least likely to have considered their school work as 'worth doing'.

Figure 2.8: Percentage Who Felt Their 'School Work Was Worth Doing' (2007)



The respondents were also asked whether their second-level education had benefited them in a range of areas:

- In increasing self-confidence.
- In being able to communicate well with others.
- In knowing how to go about finding things out for yourself.
- In giving you reading and writing skills.
- In preparing you for the world of work.
- In giving you computer skills.
- In preparing you for adult life.

In assessing their second-level educational experiences and the contribution of their schooling to a range of skills, school leavers are most positive about the reading and writing and communication skills provided. It can also be observed that satisfaction levels increase with attainment levels, with those who completed second level being more positive about the value of their education in enhancing these skills. Three skills domains rate quite poorly, however. Less than one-third of all school leavers contend that their schooling benefited them in terms of preparing them for the world of work, preparing them for adult life and providing computer skills. It is interesting to note that levels of satisfaction with these areas did not vary across attainment levels, suggesting that remaining in school to Leaving Certificate did little to enhance young peoples' skills in these areas. Of those who completed their schooling only 39 per cent felt their education had increased their self-confidence or provided them with an awareness of 'how to find things out'. With the exception of the Junior Certificate group, males are more likely to be positive about the self-confidence they gained while at school, while females are more likely to maintain their schooling was of benefit in gaining reading, writing and computer skills.

Table 2.8: School Leavers' Perceived Benefits of Second-Level Education (2007)

% where a lot benefit from second-level in terms of:	No Qualifications			Junior Certificate			Leaving Certificate or equivalent		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Increasing self confidence	30.1	33.0	26.0	23.5	21.8	26.5	39.0	42.4	35.9
Communication skills	34.7	36.7	31.8	42.1	40.0	45.8	52.2	52.6	51.8
Knowing how to find things out	33.0	39.0	24.3	36.6	37.1	35.9	40.4	38.4	42.3
Reading and writing skills	45.8	45.5	46.2	59.3	54.5	67.7	67.7	64.1	70.8
Preparing for world of work	22.7	22.1	23.7	32.0	30.0	35.6	30.5	30.2	30.7
Computer skills	23.2	21.3	25.8	33.6	25.6	47.7	30.2	28.3	31.9
Preparing for adult life	28.8	28.1	29.6	27.8	24.1	34.3	29.6	30.6	28.7

3 ■ POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



3. POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.1 Introduction

There are an array of post-school education and training pathways that school leavers can engage in. This chapter considers the post-school education and training of school leavers. Section 3.2 begins by providing a breakdown of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course participation and this is followed by participation among school leavers in state sponsored training in Section 3.3. Section 3.4 provides an overview of participation in higher education and Section 3.5 provides details on school leavers' participation in any post-school education or training.

3.2 Participation in Post Leaving Certificate Courses

Table 3.1 provides a breakdown of PLC course participation, completion, certification and receipt of grants by gender. Overall a greater proportion of females than males participate in PLC courses: 26 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. In total 61 per cent of those who participate complete their courses. Completion rates are higher for females than males (65 compared to 51 per cent), which is consistent with the pattern apparent in earlier years. Overall a PLC Certificate is presented to nearly 90 per cent of those participating. Again a higher proportion of females receive a PLC Certificate than males (89 compared to 82 per cent). FETAC is the award received by eight out of ten participants. Overall, 54 per cent of participants receive a grant, an increase on 2004 and 2006 levels. A higher proportion of females (55 per cent) receive grants, relative to males (51 per cent). This reflects the much higher proportion of females entering PLC courses while males are far more likely to enter apprenticeships. In particular, females from less advantaged manual backgrounds are far more likely to enter PLC courses, while their male counterparts pursue apprenticeships (Watson *et al.*, 2006). This results in a greater numbers of female entrants to the PLC sector being eligible for grants.

Table 3.1: Completion and Certification of Post Leaving Certificate Courses and Receipt of Grant by Gender (2007)

	% Participate	% Complete	% Received Certificate on Completion	% Grant	Source of Certificate/Diploma		
					FETAC	Other	Don't Know
Male	12.7	51.4	81.8	51.3	77.6	10.9	11.5
Female	25.6	65.4	88.8	54.7	83.1	9.0	7.9
Total	19.2	60.8	86.6	53.6	81.4	9.6	9.0

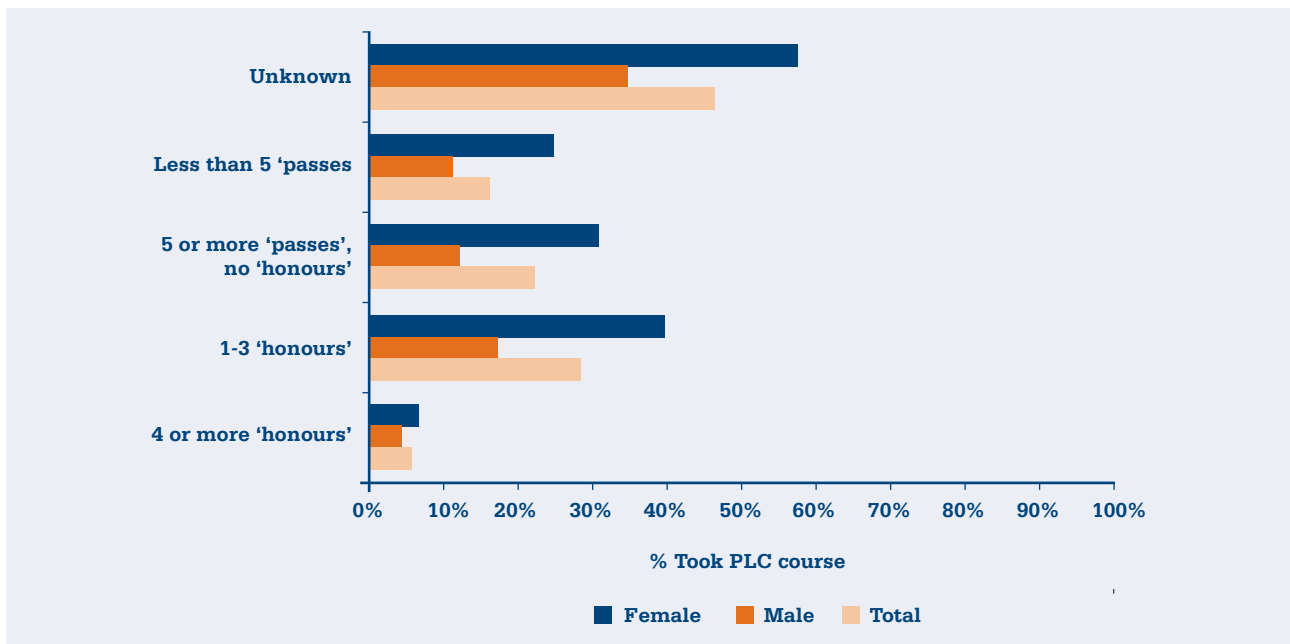
Table 3.2 below provides a further breakdown of PLC course participation, completion, certification and receipt of grant by parental socio-economic status. It is interesting to note participation rates are highest among those from manual backgrounds and, most notably, non-manual backgrounds, which is not surprising given that many PLC courses are within the clerical, sales and services sectors which dominate the non-manual category. Completion rates are somewhat lower among those from professional and employer/manager backgrounds, while grant receipt is, as expected higher for those with one or both parents unemployed.

Table 3.2: Completion and Certification of PLC Courses and Receipt of Grant by Parental Socio-Economic Background (2007)

	% Participate	% Complete	% Certification	% Grant	Source of Certificate/Diploma		
					FETAC	Other	Don't Know
Farmer/Other Agricultural	16.7	75.8	88.0	33.7	77.7	5.0	17.4
Higher/Lower Professional	16.5	46.3	85.5	39.9	74.8	20.4	4.9
Employer/Manager	16.0	49.8	82.5	41.1	75.7	10.6	13.7
Intermediate/other non-manual	22.5	63.8	87.4	58.5	80.5	9.0	10.4
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	18.9	65.8	82.2	60.9	90.9	4.7	4.4
Unemployed	15.7	93.8	98.5	88.1	98.5	1.5	0.0
Total	19.2	60.8	86.6	53.6	81.4	9.6	9.0

Examining the profile of those taking PLC courses, Figure 3.1 shows the levels of participation in further education according to performance in the Leaving Certificate examination. Participants are overwhelmingly drawn from those who performed poorly or moderately in the Leaving Certificate. Among those performing well in the Leaving Certificate, few pursue PLC courses, but rather the bulk of these school leavers progress to higher education, as discussed in Section 3.3. Among those achieving 1-3 'honours' or 'passing' their Leaving Certificate without 'honour' grades, females have particularly strong rates of entry into the PLC sector.

Figure 3.1: Proportion who Participated in a PLC Course by Performance in the Leaving Certificate Examination (2007)

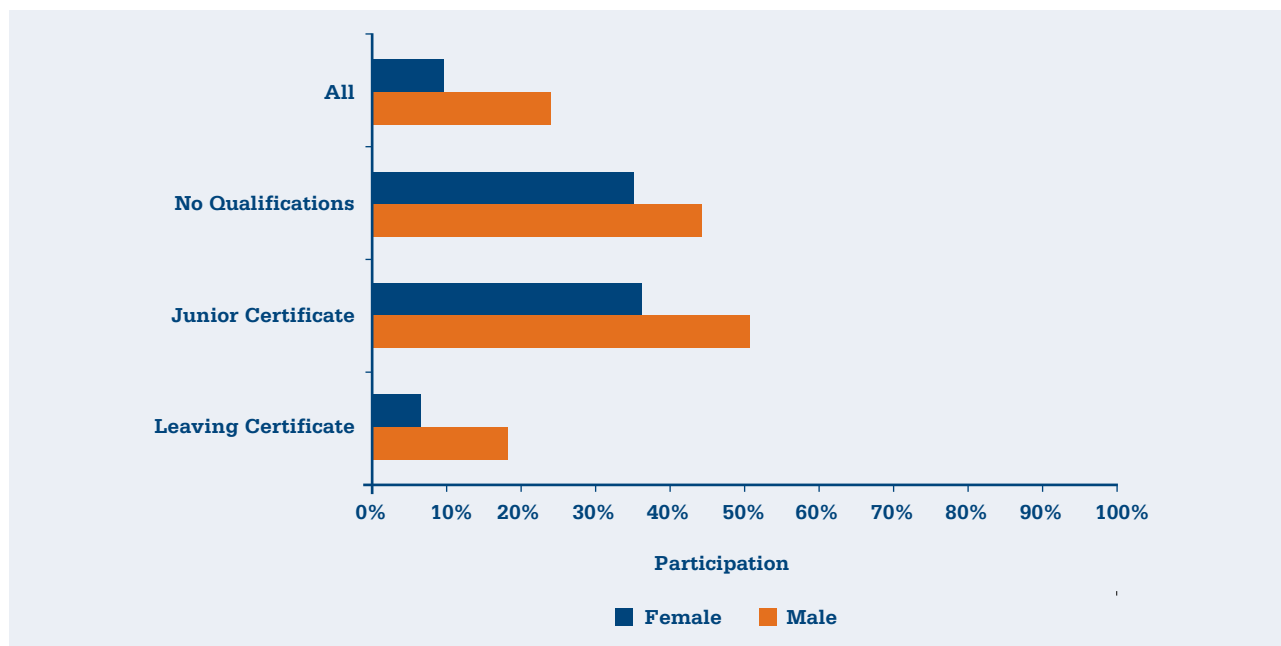


3.3 Participation in State-Sponsored Training

Figure 3.2 displays patterns of participation in state-sponsored training courses, according to gender and educational attainment. State-sponsored training courses include apprenticeships with FÁS, Youthreach, FÁS Specific Skills Courses, Failte Ireland Courses, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Training in Fishing and Teagasc Certificate in Farming. In line with earlier years and converse to the patterns of participation in the Further Education sector, males dominate entry to these courses – with males accounting for 71 per cent of all participants in 2007. Overall participation levels stand at 24 per cent of males and 10 per cent of females. Participants are predominantly drawn from those who left school prior to completion of the Leaving Certificate.

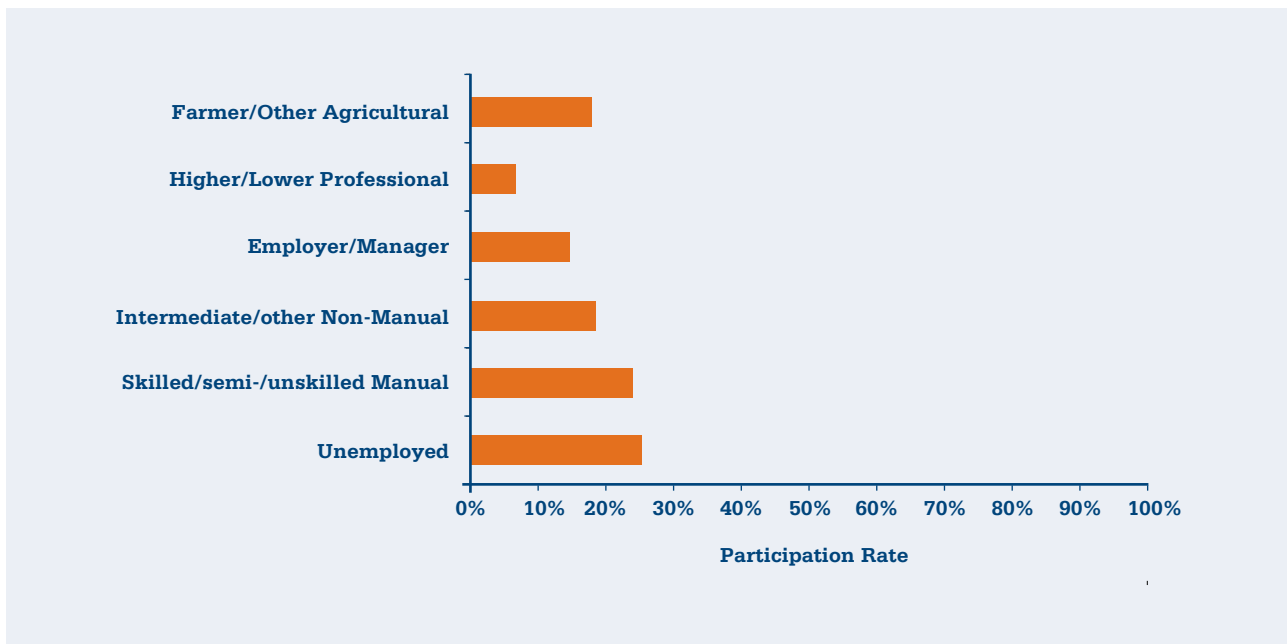
Among those pursuing state training after completion of second level, males are much more highly represented. Again this relates to the high levels of progression to PLC courses among females, as shown in Section 3.1. While one-in-six males participate in state-sponsored training after completing school, one-quarter of females who similarly completed second-level progress to further education.

Figure 3.2: Participation in Any Form of State-Sponsored Training including FÁS Apprenticeship and Youthreach (2007)



It is also interesting to note clear social class patterns in participation in state-sponsored training. As shown in Figure 3.3, school leavers from professional backgrounds are considerably less likely to pursue such training, while those from manual and, most notably, unemployed backgrounds are significantly over-represented among participants. Highest participation rates are found among those from manual and unemployed backgrounds. While 24 per cent of those from manual backgrounds, based on the parent with the highest occupation, have undertaken some state-sponsored training, 25 per cent of those with one or both parents unemployed have similarly participated. Conversely, just 7 per cent of those with at least one parent employed in a professional occupation have taken such courses.

Figure 3.3: Participation in Any Form of State-Sponsored Training by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)



3.4 Participation in Higher Education

Of the total cohort of young people (aged 25 years or younger) leaving the second-level system in 2004/05, 54 per cent subsequently progressed (during the following 2 years) to some form of full- or part-time higher education. In line with recent trends, females have higher rates of progression to higher education (Figure 3.4). When we confine our attention to those who have completed their Leaving Certificate (or equivalent), given the entry requirements for most third-level courses, the overall progression rate now exceeds over 60 per cent. Again females are outperforming their male counterparts with 64 per cent of females who completed second level progressing to higher education relative to just 57 per cent of males. As in earlier reports and in line with the allocation of places in higher education, progression to higher education strongly reflects performance in the Leaving Certificate examination (as illustrated in Figure 3.5). Almost the full cohort of students achieving 4 or more 'honour' grades in the Leaving Certificate examination now progress to higher education, relative to just 30 per cent of those who did not achieve any 'honours'. For the intermediate group who achieve 1 to 3 'honour' grades, just under two-thirds progress to higher education.

Figure 3.4: Rates of Progression to Higher Education (2007)

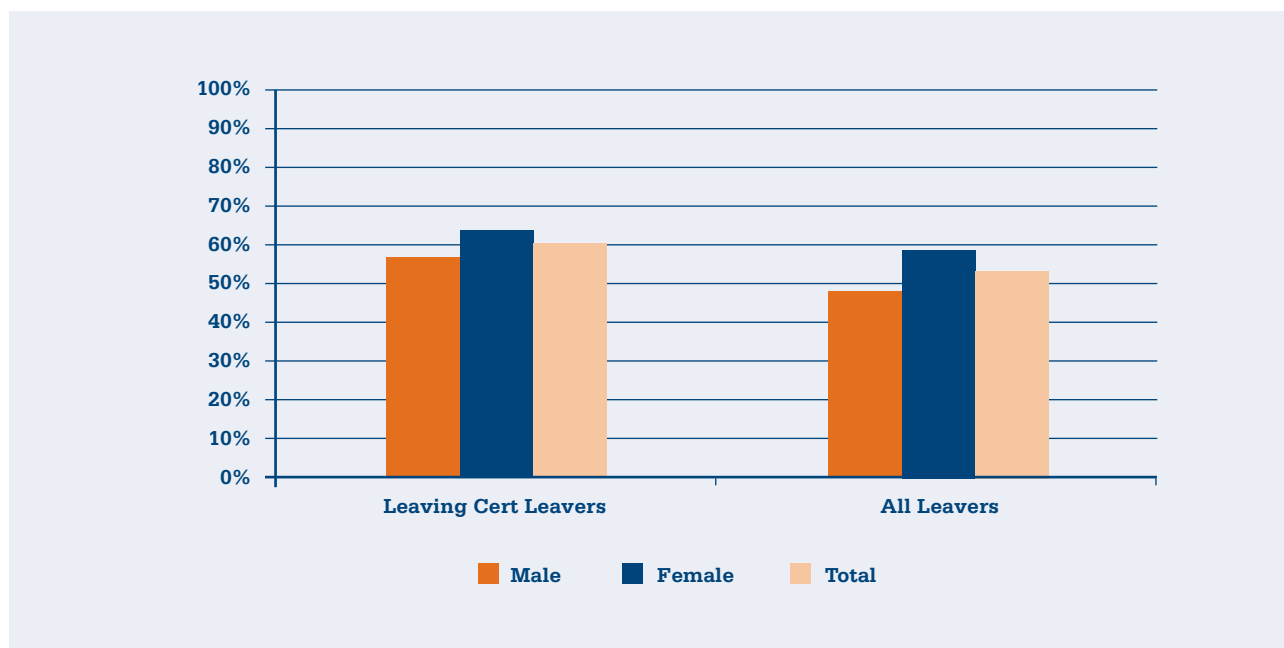
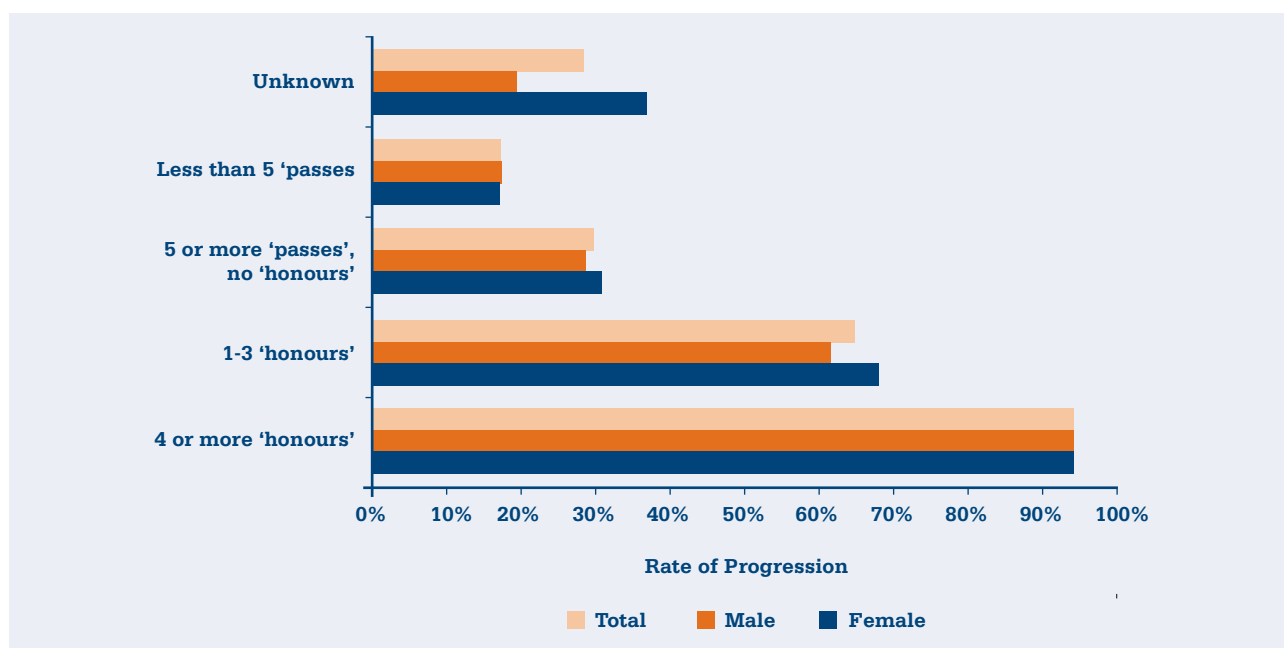
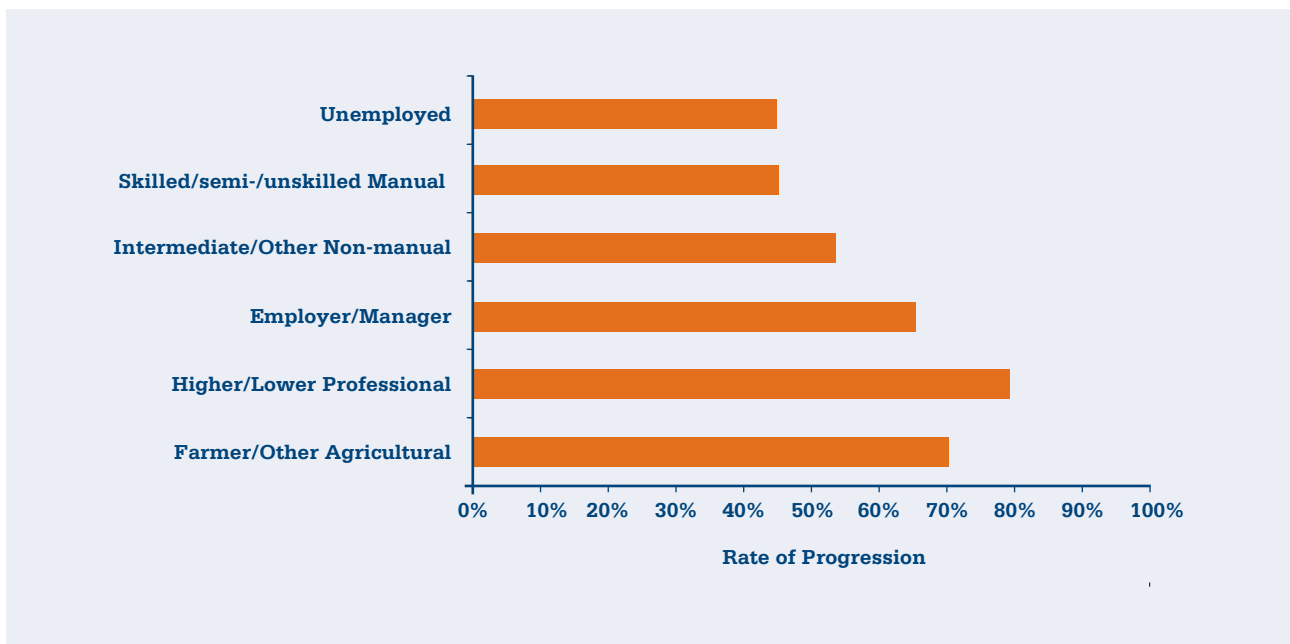


Figure 3.5: Rates of Progression to Higher Education by Performance in the Leaving Certificate Examination (2007)



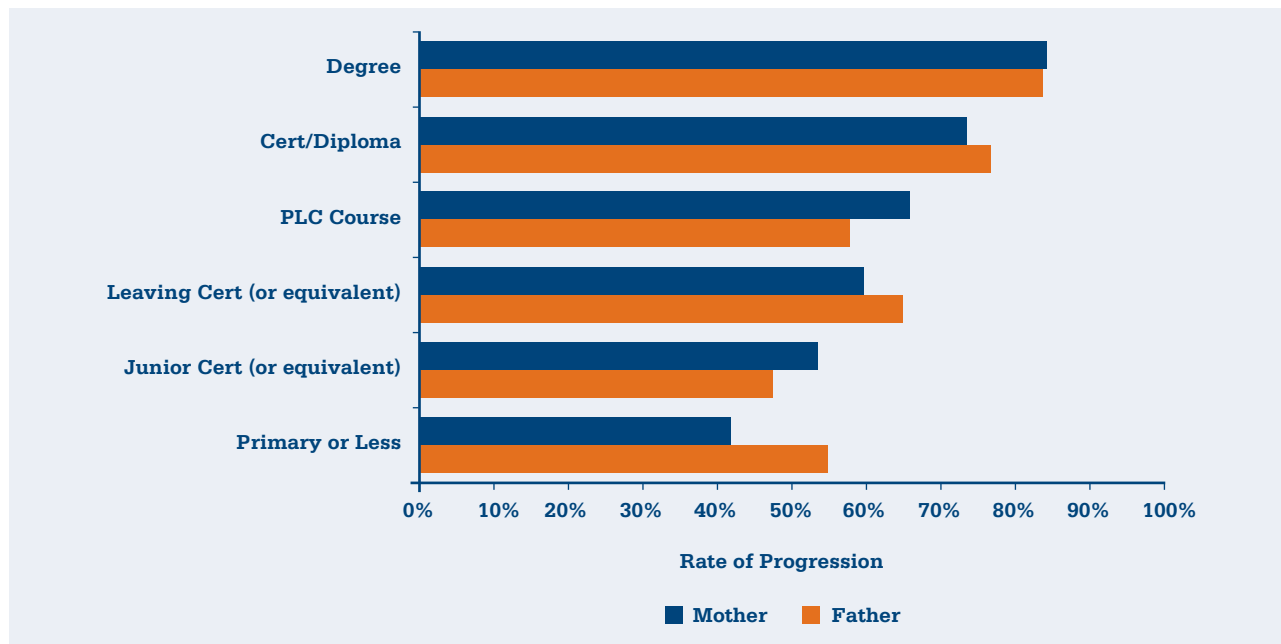
Social differentiation in entry to higher education persists, whether measured in terms of the occupational position or educational attainment of the school leavers' parents. While eight-out-of-ten young people from professional backgrounds completing second-level subsequently progress to higher education, just 45 per cent of those from unemployed and manual backgrounds similarly progress (Figure 3.6). Those from farming and employer/manager backgrounds also display relatively high rates of participation: with 70 and 65 per cent of such young people progressing.

Figure 3.6: Rates of Progression to Higher Education (those who completed second level education) by Parental Socio-Economic Group, 2007



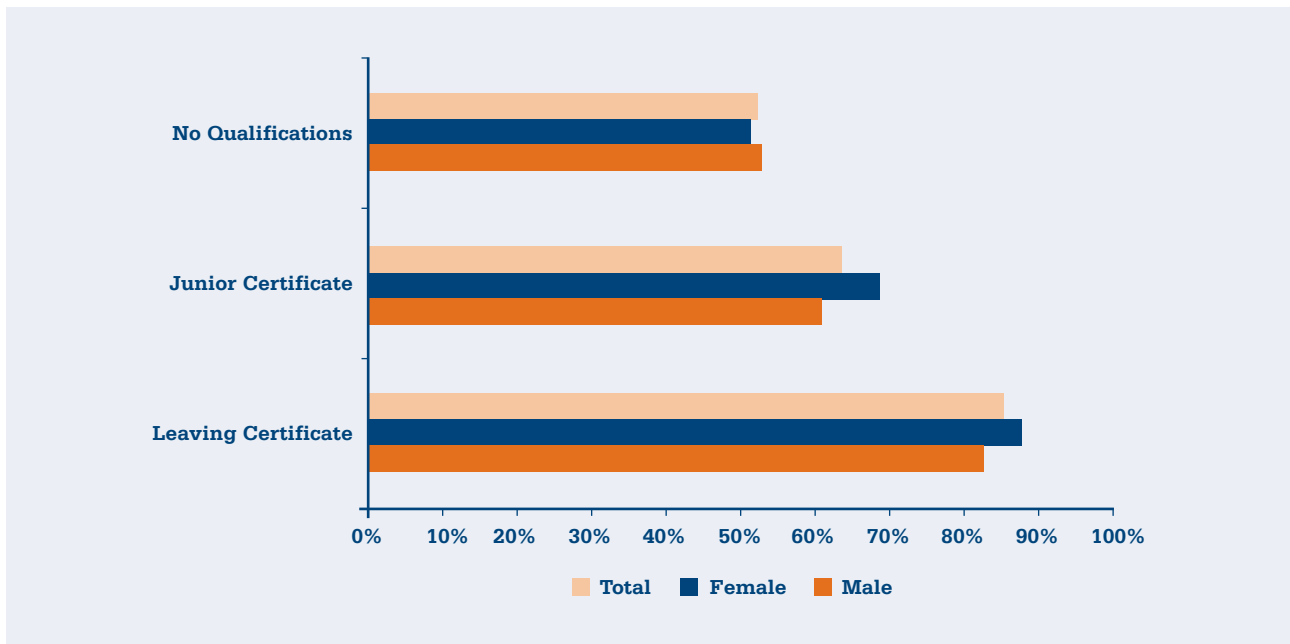
When we consider parental educational attainment in Figure 3.7, again wide disparities are apparent. While 85 per cent of students whose mothers had completed a degree course entered higher education, the rate of entry for those who had left school prior to the Junior Certificate (or equivalent) is just 41 per cent.

Figure 3.7: Rates of Progression to Higher Education (those who completed second level) by Parental Education, 2007



3.5 Participation in Any Form of Post-School Education or Training

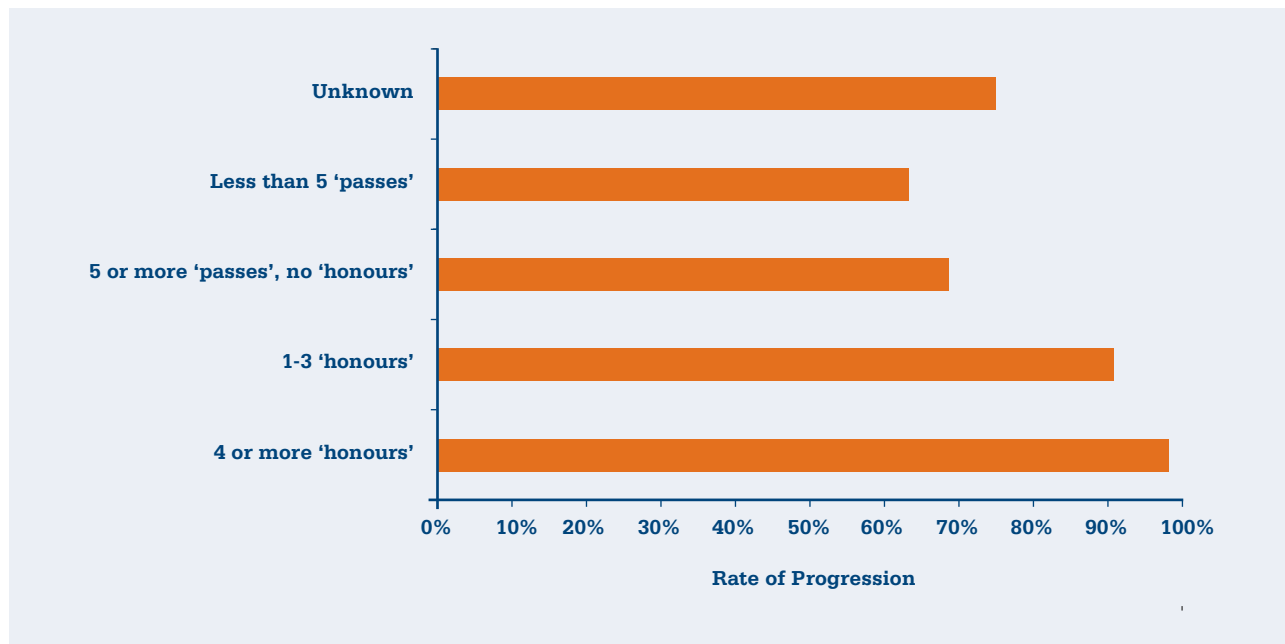
Post second-level education and training refers to participation in any form of formal education or training subsequent to leaving second level. This includes PLC courses; state sponsored training programmes (such as FÁS, CERT, etc.); and third level courses. Figure 3.8 illustrates school leavers' participation rates in post second-level education and training according to the highest level of education attained at second-level education. While rates of participation are strongly related to second-level educational attainment, the major difference appears to be between those who have achieved Leaving Certificate standard and those who have not.

Figure 3.8: Percentage Participating in Some Form of Post School Education or Training (2007)

While 85 per cent of those completing the Leaving Certificate go on to pursue some form of post-school education or training, just 64 and 52 per cent of those leaving following the Junior Certificate or prior to Junior Certificate similarly progress to further study or training. This reflects, to a large extent, the minimum entry requirements for most higher education courses and indeed many further education and apprenticeship opportunities also. It is interesting to note that females leaving school prior to the Leaving Certificate appear to be more successful in accessing education and training courses than their male counterparts: while 68 per cent of females leaving after the Junior Certificate go on to post-school education or training, just 61 per cent of males leaving school at this stage do so.

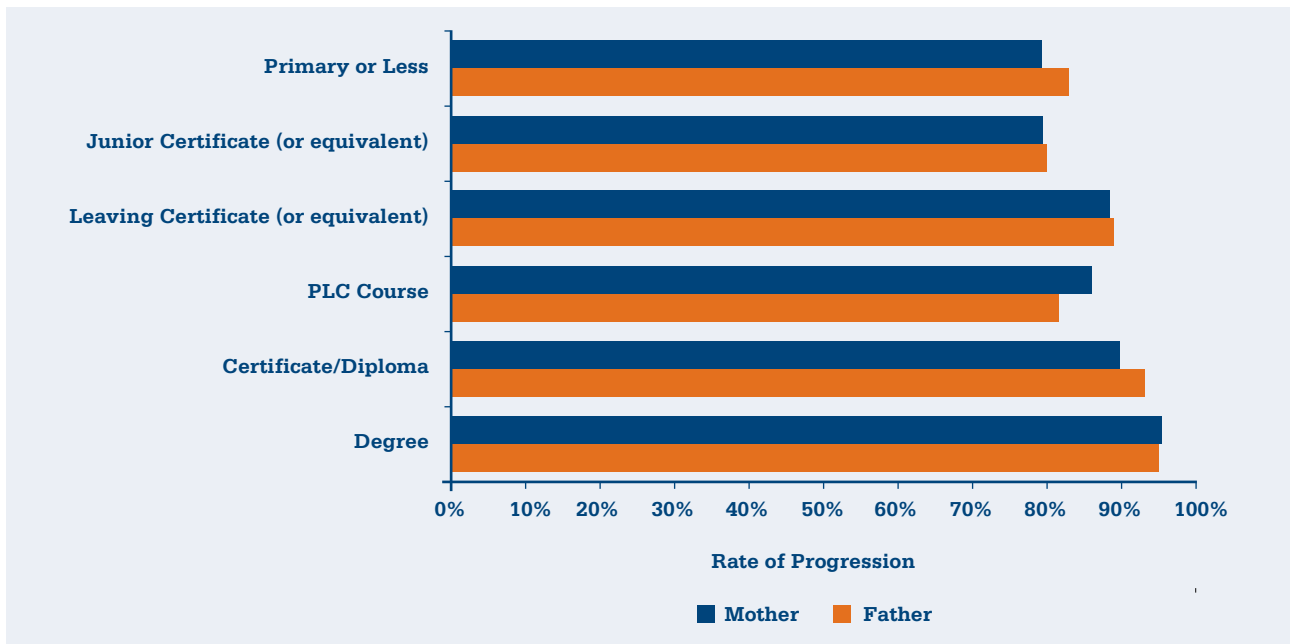
Figure 3.9 illustrates school leavers' participation rates in post second-level education and training according to the result of their last second-level examination. It is particularly evident that rates of participation are strongly related to performance in the Leaving Certificate examination, substantial differentiation is evident between those who have achieved less than five passes in the examination and those who have achieved four or more honours (see Figure 3.9 below).

Figure 3.9: Percentage Participating in Some Form of Post School Education or Training by Performance in the Leaving Certificate Examination (2007)



As in earlier analyses, patterns of entry to post-school education and training are strongly related to social class background and parental educational attainment. As shown in Figure 3.10, among those completing second level, 95 per cent of those with mothers educated to degree-level go on to some form of post-school education and training, compared to 79 per cent of respondents whose mother's left school at or prior to the Junior Certificate exam (or equivalent).

Figure 3.10: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate Examination and who Participated in Some Form of Post School Education or Training by Father and Mother's Highest Level of Education Attained (2007)



4. ECONOMIC STATUS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS



4. ECONOMIC STATUS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the economic status of school leavers who left school during the academic year 2004/2005, the reference cohort for this study. In doing so, this chapter is structured as follows. Section 4.2 provides an overview of the change in definition in recording the economic status of school leavers. Section 4.3 considers the economic status of school leavers one year after leaving school. In doing so, it considers economic status by gender, parental socio-economic background and educational attainment at second-level. Section 4.4 then compares the economic status of school leavers in the short term, comparing 2004/2005 school leavers with previous cohorts of school leavers, paying particular emphasis on gender. Section 4.5 then considers labour market participation and outlines short-term trends specifically. Finally, Section 4.6 considers long-term trends in the economic status of school leavers.

4.2 Change of Definition

The post-school economic status of this cohort of school leavers has been classified into the following eight economic status positions:

- Employed, working for payment.
- Apprenticeship.
- Unemployed, having lost or given up previous job.
- Unemployed, seeking 1st job since leaving school.
- Training: on FÁS/CERT or private training.
- Student in further studies.
- Unavailable for work (engaged in home duties, unable to work due to illness or disability).
- Emigrated.

The definition of these status positions has changed from those used in the survey in previous years in order to derive more precise estimates of the status of school leavers. The changes in definition that have occurred since the previous School Leavers' Survey report are as follows. The main modification is in the form of a new category for 'apprenticeships'. In previous reports, school leavers participating in apprenticeships have been categorised with those who are 'employed, working for payment'. Given the slow-down in the construction sector, it was deemed necessary to consider those on apprenticeships as a separate group rather than in employment, and this is an approach we deem to be particularly useful and important in going forward. There is one set-back from this approach, findings from the previous surveys included in this report, 2004 and 2005 cannot be amended precisely to reflect this new economic status classification system. As a result, the employment rate among school leavers will appear to have decreased as a consequence of this change. However, attempts will be made to explain how the change in definition affects the findings of the current survey relative to the earlier survey findings.

4.3 The Economic Status of School Leavers One Year After Leaving School

This section considers the economic status of young people who left the second-level education system during the academic year 2004/2005. The economic status position of school leavers is considered one year after leaving school and so the time-point in question is May 2006. Particular attention will be paid to economic status position according to gender and social class background.

4.3.1 The Economic Status of School Leavers in May 2006

Table 4.1 presents information on the economic status of school leavers in May 2006, approximately one year after leaving school for all school leavers and for males and females separately.⁶

Table 4.1: Economic Status of All School Leavers, Excluding Emigrants, May 2006

Economic Position:	All	Males	Female
Student	41.6	37.0	46.3
Employed	37.7	38.1	37.3
Apprenticeship	7.5	13.7	1.4
Unemployed, after loss of job	3.5	3.7	3.2
Unemployed, seeking 1st job since leaving school	1.8	1.7	1.9
Training	3.0	2.8	3.3
Unavailable for Work/Inactive	4.8	3.0	6.6
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100
Total (Number)	62,021	30,826	31,193

What is particularly evident is that student activities in the further/higher education sector (41.6 per cent) attract the highest percentage of school leavers, followed by employment (37.7 per cent) and this pattern holds true for both males and females. However, the percentage of females pursuing further study is higher than the corresponding percentage for males (46.3 per cent compared to 37 per cent respectively). Approximately 43 per cent of school leavers are in the labour market (employed or unemployed) one year after leaving school, the majority of whom are in employment. The remaining 57 per cent of school leavers are outside the labour market, either in training, apprenticeships, further education or are economically inactive.

Unemployment levels are also rather similar for males and females, and it is evident that the majority of school leavers who are in unemployment at the time of the survey have had some experience of work in the labour market since leaving school.

⁶ For those who left the education system at the beginning of the year rather than completing the year, the actual amount of time spent since leaving school may be longer than one year.

Just 3 per cent of school leavers are in training at the time of the survey and levels are similar for males and females. The percentage of school leavers who are inactive and unavailable for work due to home duties, illness or disability stands at 4.8 per cent and the percentage of females in this status position is considerably higher than the percentage of males (6.6 per cent compared to 3.0 per cent respectively).⁷

Table 4.1 also provides new information on the share of school leavers in apprenticeships by May 2006. In all, approximately 7.5 per cent of school leavers are in apprenticeships in May 2006 and, in line with expectations, the percentage of males in apprenticeship activities is significantly higher than the corresponding percentage of females 14 per cent compared to 1 per cent respectively. These gender differences persist despite the existence of grants to encourage employers to recruit and register female apprentices.⁸ Supplementary data from the FÁS Quarterly *Labour Market Commentary* (1st quarter 2007) suggests that the number of apprenticeship starts peaked in 2005 (8,800) and began to decline thereafter. At June 2006, the Commentary indicated that the profile of new apprenticeships continued to be dominated by the construction and electrical trades, accounting for over 80 per cent of all apprenticeships starts in 2006. By the third quarter of 2008 there had been a fall of over 50 per cent in construction related apprenticeship starts from over 4,000 to just over 2,000. While the current School Leavers' Survey does not yet gauge this decline in apprenticeship starts amongst school leavers, it is likely that many school leavers will face uncertainty and limited options as a result of the decline in the construction sector. The sectors in which school leavers are employed will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

4.3.2 Economic Status by Educational Attainment

The economic status of school leavers is now considered according to the level of education reached at second level. Table 4.2 provides information on the economic status of school leavers according to their level of educational attainment on leaving school. Three categories of educational attainment are referred to:

- No qualifications,
- Junior Certificate qualification and
- Leaving Certificate qualification.

⁷ Figure 3.2 illustrated that 24 per cent of males had/were currently participating in any form of state-sponsored training. We now see that 17 per cent of males were in Apprenticeships/Training specifically at the May 2006 time-point.

⁸ To promote the entry of women into the designated apprenticeships, FÁS offers a bursary to employers in both the public and private sectors to encourage an increased level of recruitment of women apprentices.

Table 4.2: Economic Status of 2004/05 School Leavers One Year After Leaving School by Level of Educational Attainment

May 2006	No Qualifications	Junior Certificate	Leaving Certificate
Employed	30.8	39.2	37.7
Unemployed	28.2	11.8	3.8
Apprenticeship	4.5	21.9	5.6
Training	16.6	6.8	2.2
Student	9.7	11.3	46.6
Unavailable for Work/Inactive	10.3	8.9	4.1
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100
Total (Number)	1,293	7,324	53,404

The main picture that emerges from Table 4.2 is that there is a strong relationship between educational attainment and economic status. It is evident that school leavers who left school without any qualifications experience the highest levels of unemployment and the lowest levels of employment. Over one-fifth of school leavers who leave school with a Junior Certificate are found in apprenticeships and this represents a considerably higher proportion than school leavers at other levels of education. A decline in access to apprenticeships in the future will impact strongly on this group of school leavers. School leavers without any qualifications represent the highest proportion in training while those who have achieved a Leaving Certificate represent the highest proportion in student activities. In addition, 10 and 9 per cent of school leavers who have no qualifications and who have a Junior Certificate respectively are unavailable for work one year after leaving school. Gender differences in economic status positions according to educational qualifications are shown in Table 4.3 below.

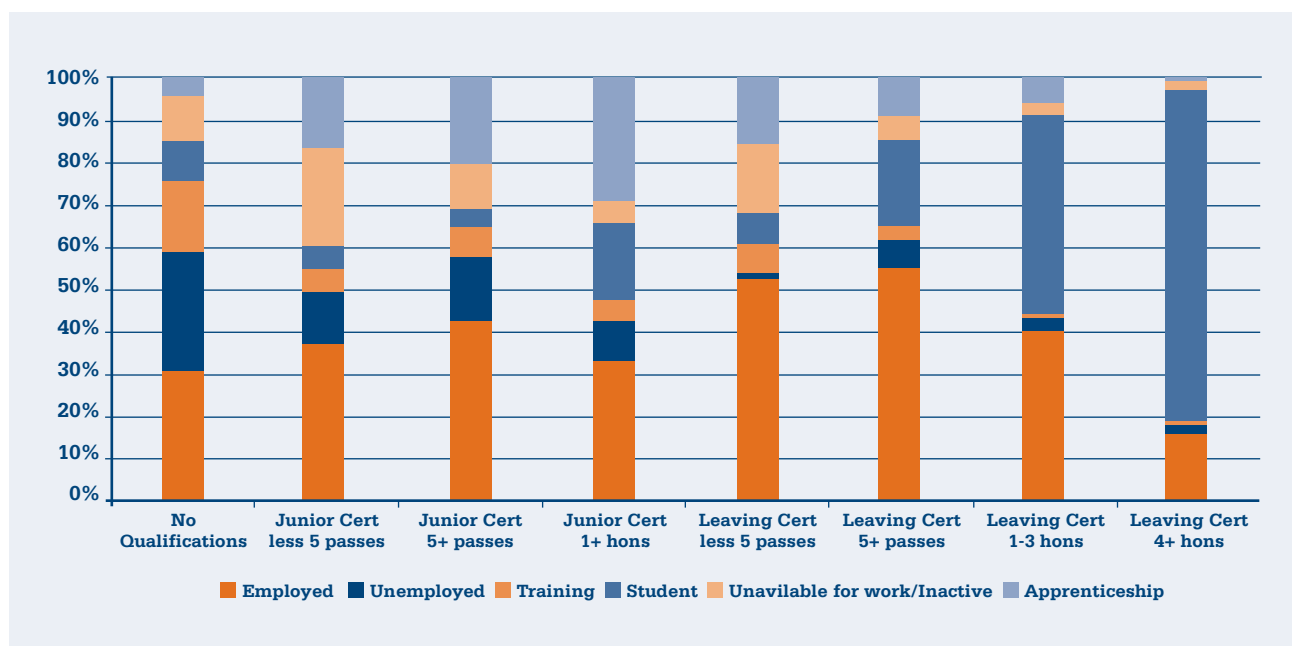
Table 4.3: Economic Status of 2004/05 School Leavers One Year After Leaving School by Level of Educational Attainment, Males and Females

May 2006	No Qualifications		Junior Certificate		Leaving Certificate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employed	35.0	24.1	42.4	33.4	37.4	37.9
Unemployed	27.8	28.7	10.7	13.9	3.8	4.0
Apprenticeship	7.3	0.0	28.6	9.6	11.1	.6
Training	13.8	21.1	7.1	6.4	1.6	2.7
Student	10.2	8.8	5.6	21.8	43.7	49.2
Unavailable for Work/Inactive	5.8	17.3	5.6	15.0	2.5	5.6
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	791	502	4,733	2,592	25,303	28,100

While the percentage of male and female school leavers with a Leaving Certificate in employment is similar, among those with no qualifications and a Junior Certificate qualification, a higher proportion of males are in employment than females. We then see that among these groups unemployment tends to be marginally higher among females than males. Furthermore, among these groups, females are more likely to be unavailable for work/economically inactive than males. Gender differences in student activities are also evident among those who completed the Junior Certificate and those who completed the Leaving Certificate.

Further differentiation in economic status positions in relation to educational attainment is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below. What is particularly evident is that labour market participation is highest among those with lower levels of qualifications while entry to student activities is highest among those with high achieving Leaving Certificate results. The proportion in unemployment is particularly evident among those with no qualifications and a low level Junior Certificate.

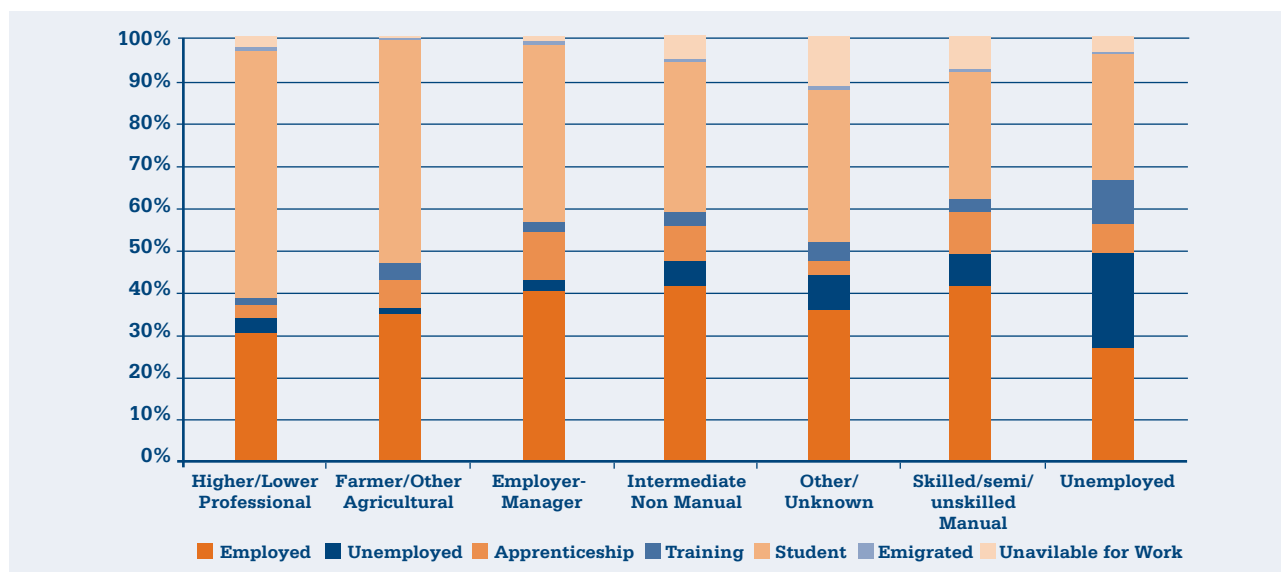
Figure 4.1: Economic Status of 2004/05 School Leavers One Year After Leaving School by Level of Educational Attainment



4.3.3 Economic Status by Socio-Economic Background

Figure 4.2 illustrates the economic status of school leavers according to parental socio-economic background. What is particularly notable is the share of school leavers from professional backgrounds in further education relative to those from other socio-economic backgrounds while those from manual and non-manual backgrounds have a high representation in employment. Those from unemployed backgrounds have similar labour market participation levels as these manual and non-manual groups, but a greater share of these young people are themselves unemployed.

Figure 4.2: Economic Status by Parental Socio-Economic Background



4.4 Comparison of Economic Status: Variation in Short-Term Trends

4.4.1 Changes in Economic Status Among Cohorts of School Leavers

A strength of the School Leavers' Survey is that these economic status positions can be compared to previous results from the School Leavers' Survey pertaining to both short-term and long-term trends. Table 4.4 below provides an overview of the short-term trends in the economic position of school leavers using the common time point of one year after leaving school, that is, May 2004, May 2005 and May 2006. Thus, the cohorts of school leavers represent young people who left the second-level education system in the academic years 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05. Consistent with our expectations, over the three cohorts, the further/higher education and labour market sectors attract the vast majority of school leavers.⁹ Furthermore, entry to further/higher education has remained relatively stable.

⁹ These patterns also correspond to the patterns of economic activity of young people aged 15-19 years derived from Census of Population figures.

Table 4.4: Economic Status of 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 School Leavers One Year After Leaving Second Level Education, May 2004, 2005 and 2006

	TOTAL		
	May 2004	May 2005	May 2006
Employed	39.1	41.5	37.4
Apprenticeship	N/A ⁹	N/A	7.5
Total Employment + Apprenticeship	39.1	41.5	44.9
Unemployed, After Loss of Job	4.1	2.4	3.4
Unemployed, Seeking First Job	2.6	4.4	1.8
Training	3.8	4.3	3.0
Student	44.7	41.9	41.4
Unavailable for Work/Inactive	3.8	4.3	4.8
Emigrated	1.8	1.3	0.7
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100
Total (Number)	67,890	65,828	62,460

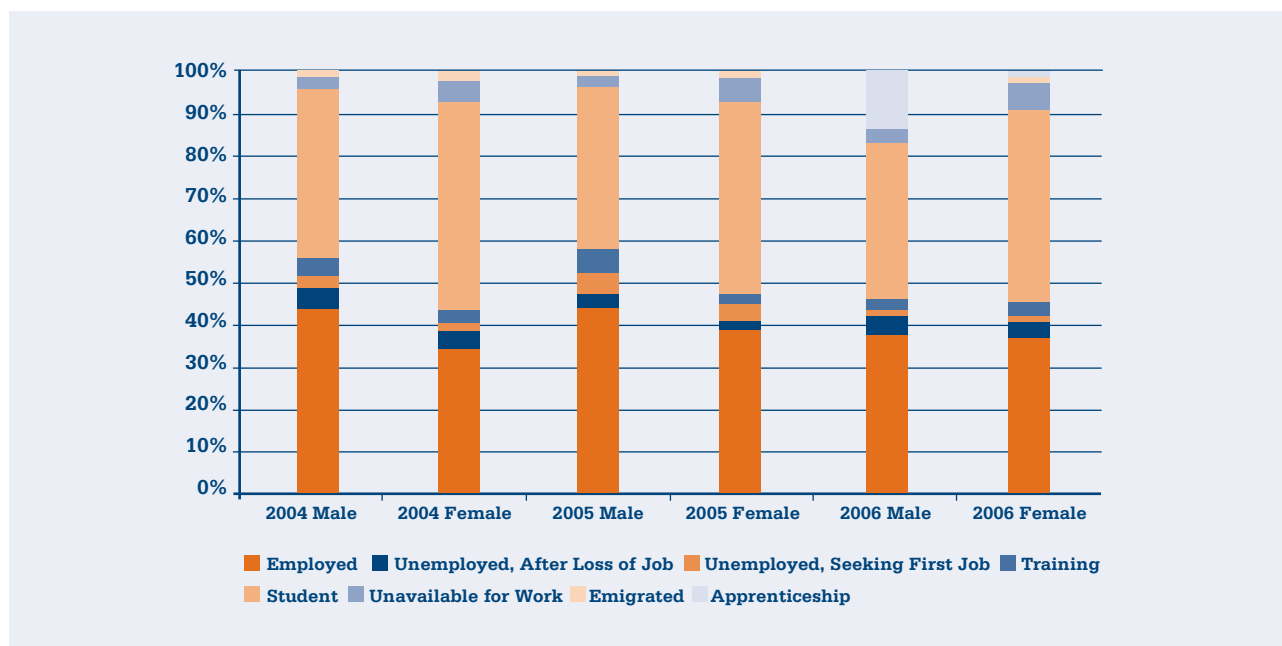
The change in the definition of employment and the addition of the apprenticeship category has implications for estimating the percentage of school leavers who enter the labour market each year. We can see from Table 4.4 that in relation to the most recent cohort, 37 per cent of 2004/2005 school leavers' were in employment one year after leaving school, which is four percentage points lower than the 2003/04 cohort and two percentage points lower than the 2002/03 cohort. While it would seem from the most recent survey that there has been a decrease in the percentage of school leavers in employment one year after leaving school relative to previous years, it is important to consider how the change in definition of 'employment' has influenced this decrease. If we consider the definition of employment in previous years (employment + apprenticeship), by considering school leavers in apprenticeships as a separate group in the current survey, we are effectively reducing the total number of school leavers in employment. By adding the percentage of school leavers in employment and in apprenticeships together, (44.9), we could conclude that the share of young people in employment including apprenticeships has increased slightly from 41.5 per cent in 2005 to 44.9 per cent in 2006. However, we should exert caution in making inferences of this kind, as we do not know the actual percentage of school leavers who were in apprenticeships in May 2005 or in May 2004. Furthermore, in previous surveys, school leavers in apprenticeships may have been categorised as 'training' or 'student'.

¹⁰ Information on the share of school leavers in apprenticeships one year after leaving school was not available for the 2002/03 and 2003/04 school leavers.

4.4.2 Gender Variation in Short-Term Trends

This section now presents gender variations in short term trends. Data on the economic status position of school leavers by gender over the past three cohorts of school leavers is also presented in Figure 4.3 below. The most striking gender variation in economic status positions occur in the further education and training sectors. These patterns will be discussed in more depth in the following sections and the corresponding table (Table A4.1) can be found in the Appendix.

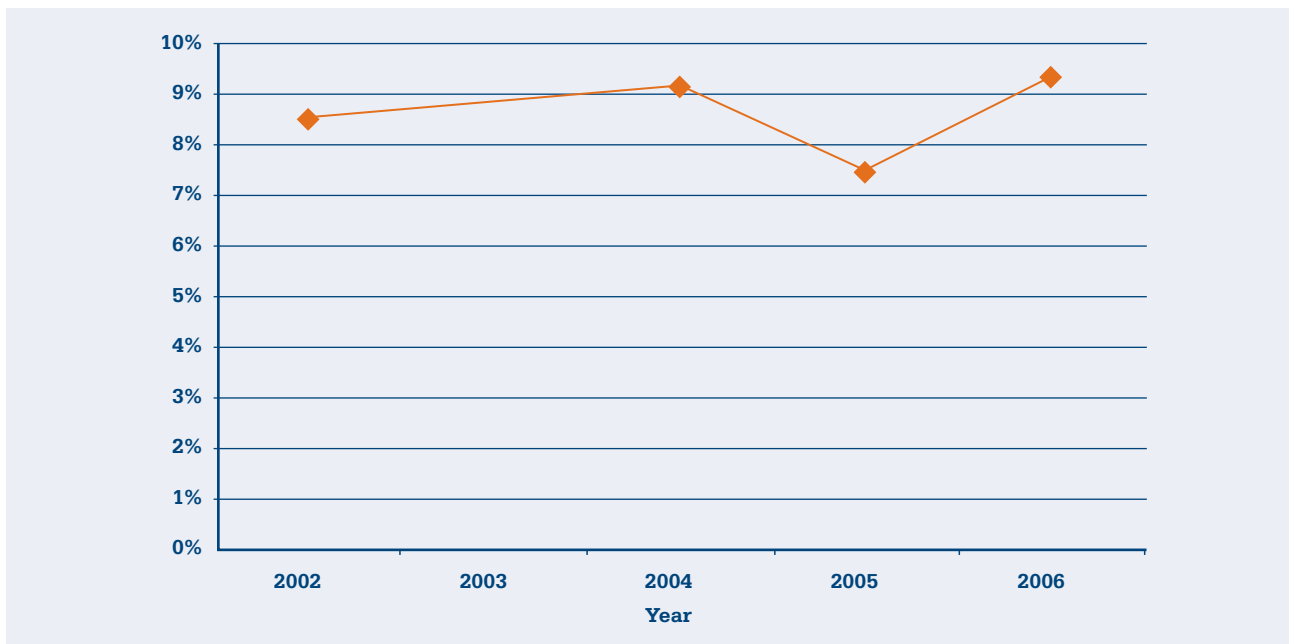
Figure 4.3: Economic Status of 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 Male and Female School Leavers One Year after Leaving Second-Level Education – May 2004, 2005 and 2006



Further/Higher Education

Table 4.1 indicated that further/higher education attracts the highest percentage of school leavers, but that the share of female school leavers entering further/higher education is higher than that for males. Figure 4.3 above now illustrates that the pattern of participation in further/higher education one year after leaving school has remained relatively stable, particularly in relation to gender. However, gender differences in entry to further/higher education in the short term do exist and are illustrated further in Figure 4.4 below. While the gender difference in participation in further/higher education had begun to decline between 2004 and 2005, with the most recent cohort it is on the increase once again. Figure 4.2 also outlined that participation in further education activities upon leaving school is clearly differentiated according to parental socio-economic background, with school leavers from professional backgrounds representing a higher share relative to those from other socio-economic backgrounds.

Figure 4.4: Trends in Gender Differences in Entry to Further Education (Female Participation Rate – Male Participation Rate)



Training

Training in the School Leavers' Survey is defined as FÁS training other than apprenticeships, CERT training or any private training. Table 4.1 indicated that approximately 3 per cent of school leavers are in training at the time of the survey and Figure 4.3 illustrated that participation in training activities among school leavers has remained relatively stable according to recent trends. Furthermore, while a higher proportion of males have engaged in training than females across the previous two cohorts, the recent survey suggests that a higher proportion of females than males are participating in training. The gender differential is particularly striking in the current survey and is most likely due to the separation of apprenticeships into a separate category. Figure 4.2 also illustrated that training is most prevalent among those from households where parents are unemployed and Table 4.3 indicates that training is most prevalent among those who left school without any qualifications.

Labour Force Participation

While a gender disparity has been reported in relation to employment in previous School Leavers' Surveys, there is no evidence of the existence of such a disparity in the current survey (see Table 4.1). That is, males and females have similar rates of employment and unemployment. The higher rate of employment among males in previous surveys is likely due to the predominance of males in apprenticeships which was included in the definition of employment in these previous surveys. Furthermore, Table 4.2 indicated that school leavers who left school without any qualifications experience the highest levels of unemployment as do those from families where all parents present are unemployed.

Inactivity/Unavailable for work

Table 4.1 showed that the share of female school leavers who are inactive/unavailable for work because of home duties, illness or disability one year after leaving school is higher than the share of male school leavers. Figure 4.3 now illustrates that this pattern has prevailed over the last three cohorts of school leavers.

4.5 Labour Market Participation: Short-Term Trends

This section considers labour market participation among school leavers one year after leaving school for a number of cohorts of school leavers. Before entering into a discussion of this analysis it is important to clarify that the school leaver employment rate discussed in this section and in the report in general differs from the official employment rate definition. In this report the employment rate is calculated as 'the number of school leavers who are employed as a proportion of the population of school leavers who entered the labour market'. The standard employment rate on the other hand is calculated as 'the number of people employed as a proportion of the population of working age'. The school leaver unemployment rate that is used in this report, however, is calculated in the same way as the standard unemployment rate: the percentage of school leavers in the labour market who are unemployed.¹¹

Table 4.5 provides a breakdown on labour market participation rates for the years 2002-2006 considering labour market participants as school leavers who are in employment (not apprenticeships) or unemployment one year after leaving school. From this table it would seem that the 2006 labour market participation rate of school leavers has declined from 48 per cent in May 2005 to 43 per cent in May 2006. As a result, among labour force participants in May 2006, one year after leaving school, a slight increase is evident in the share of school leavers in employment and this is accompanied by a decrease in the share of school leavers in unemployment.

Table 4.5: Labour Market Participation (Employment and Unemployment) Rates Among School Leavers, May 2002-2006

	May 2002	May 2004	May 2005	May 2006
LM Participation Rates of Which:	49.2	45.6	48	42.6
Employed	90.4	85.3	86	87.6
Unemployed	9.6	14.7	14	12.3

Note: Bold line between 2005 and 2006 reflects a change in definition of economic status position.

¹¹ The standard unemployment rate is calculated as the percentage of people in the labour market who are unemployed.

Table 4.6 then replicates the previous table to include apprenticeships in the definition of labour market participation. We now see that the labour market participation rate is 50.1, which is more similar to that of previous years. However, this demonstrates that it is likely that the labour market participation rate of school leavers has been overstated over the years, because of the inclusion of apprenticeships in the definition of employment.

Table 4.6: Adjusted Labour Market Participation Rates (Employment, Apprenticeships and Unemployment) Among School Leavers May 2002-2006

	May 2002	May 2004	May 2005	May 2006
LM Participation Rates of Which:	49.2	45.6	48.0	50.1
Employed	90.4	85.3	86.0	74.6
Unemployed	9.6	14.7	14.0	10.5
Apprenticeship	N/A	N/A	N/A	14.8

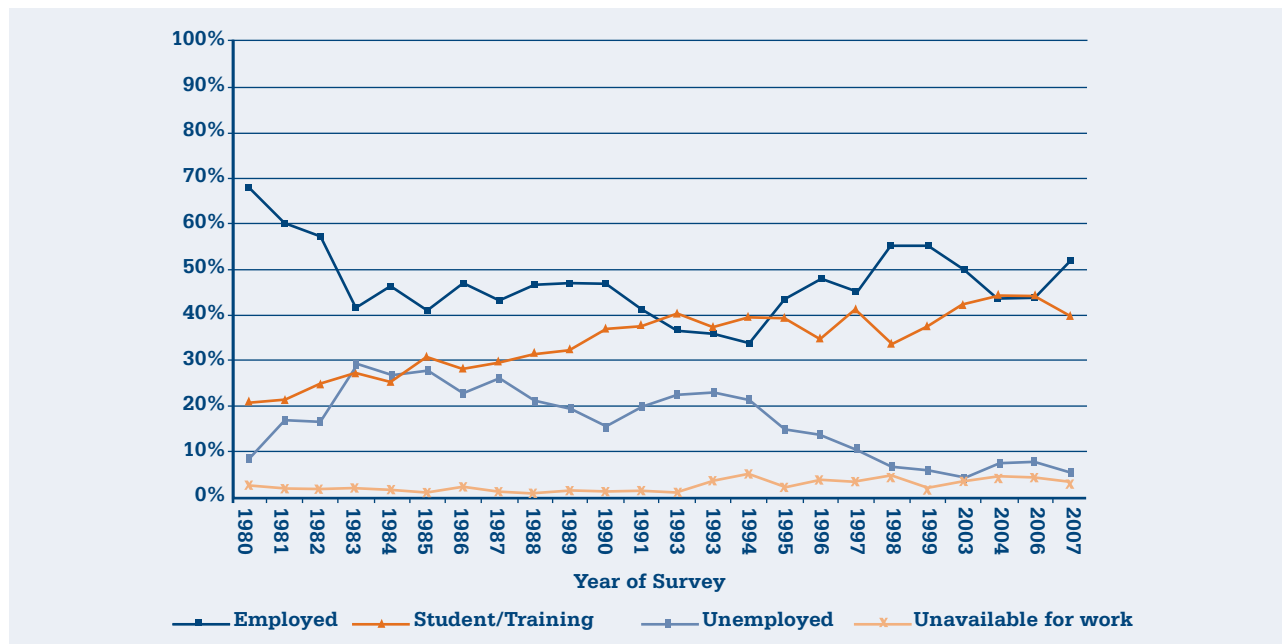
Note: Bold line between 2005 and 2006 reflects a change in definition of economic status position.

4.6 Long-Term Trends in the Economic Status of School Leavers

4.6.1 Gender Variation in Long-Term Trends: 1980 to 1999 and 2003 to 2007

Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 illustrate the long-term trends in the distribution of economic status among males and females respectively one year after leaving school since the inception of the School Leavers' Survey. Those in employment are defined as being in employment, receiving payment and this category also includes apprenticeships. In the current survey, school leavers in unemployment constitute those who have been unemployed since leaving school or who are currently unemployed having given up or lost a previous job. Participation in student or training activities includes school leavers in further or higher education, or other training. Finally, the category 'unavailable for work' includes school leavers who are on home duties, illness or disability.

Figure 4.5: Trends in the Economic Status of Male School Leavers One Year After Leaving School 1980-2007 (Apprentices included with those in Employment, 2007 Survey)

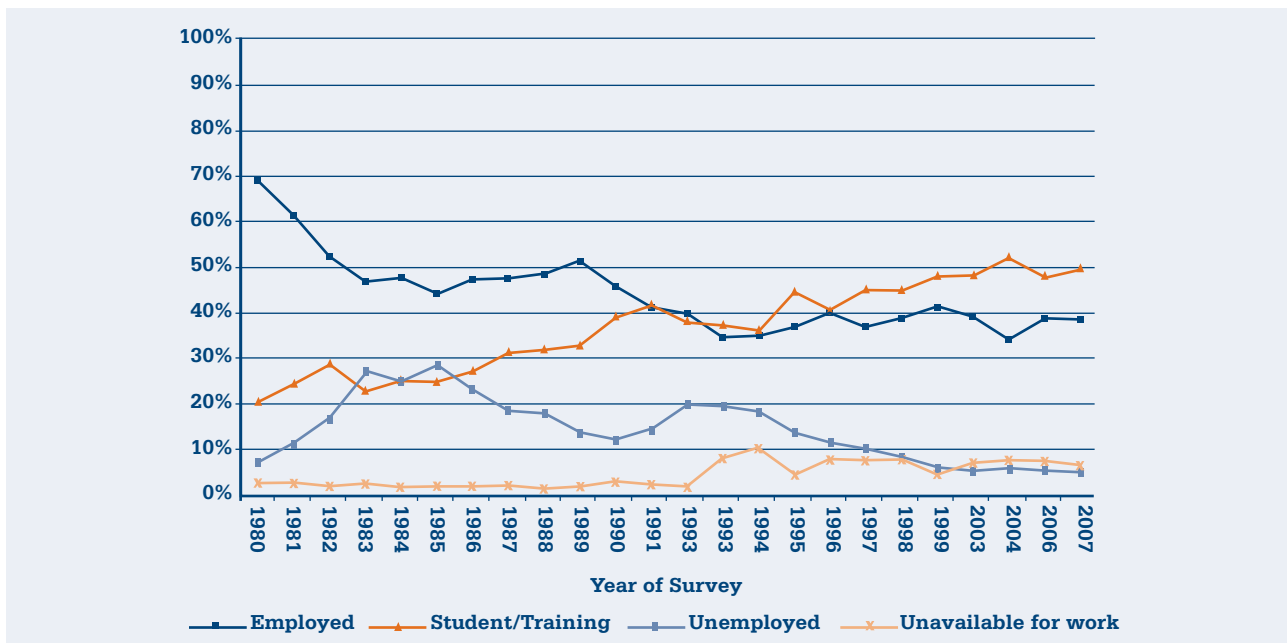


Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

The employment of level of male school leavers fell from a high of 68 per cent in 1980 to a low of 41 per cent in 1985. During the same period female school leavers' employment fell from 69 per cent to 44 per cent. For the remainder of the 1980s, however, there was an improvement for both groups, with females averaging slightly higher employment levels to males. A significant drop in male and female school leavers' employment levels occurred again in the first half of the 1990s, bottoming out in 1994 at 34 per cent for males and 35 per cent for females. Ever since, male school leavers have experienced higher employment levels to females, peaking at 55 per cent in 1989/99. The highest employment level females have had since 1994 was 41 per cent in 1999, a gap of 14 percentage points on the peak level of male school leavers. Between 2003 and 2004 male school leavers' employment levels fell by 6 percentage points to 44 per cent. Female school leavers' employment levels also fell over this period from 39 per cent to 34 per cent. Part of the male and female school leavers' employment and unemployment patterns can be explained by the economic climate that existed at the time: recessionary period in the early to mid 1980s; slight improvement in the late 1980s, after the introduction of strict budgetary policies around 1986/87; a downturn again in economic growth at the beginning of the 1990s; and the acceleration that took place from the mid 1990s to produce the 'Celtic Tiger' years. However, it is also important to note the substantial increase in the share of male and female school leavers entering further study and training as opposed to the labour market. The proportion of male and female school leavers entering further study and training has been increasing steadily since 1980 and this has been particularly evident among females. Figure

4.5 indicates that male employment levels have increased between the 2006 and 2007 surveys by 8 percentage points from 44 per cent to 52 per cent. It is however, important to keep in mind that the definition of employment includes young males on apprenticeship courses and so levels of male employment are likely to be over-stated.

Figure 4.6: Trends in the Economic Status of Female School Leavers One Year After Leaving School 1980-2007 (Apprentices included with those in Employment, 2007 Survey)



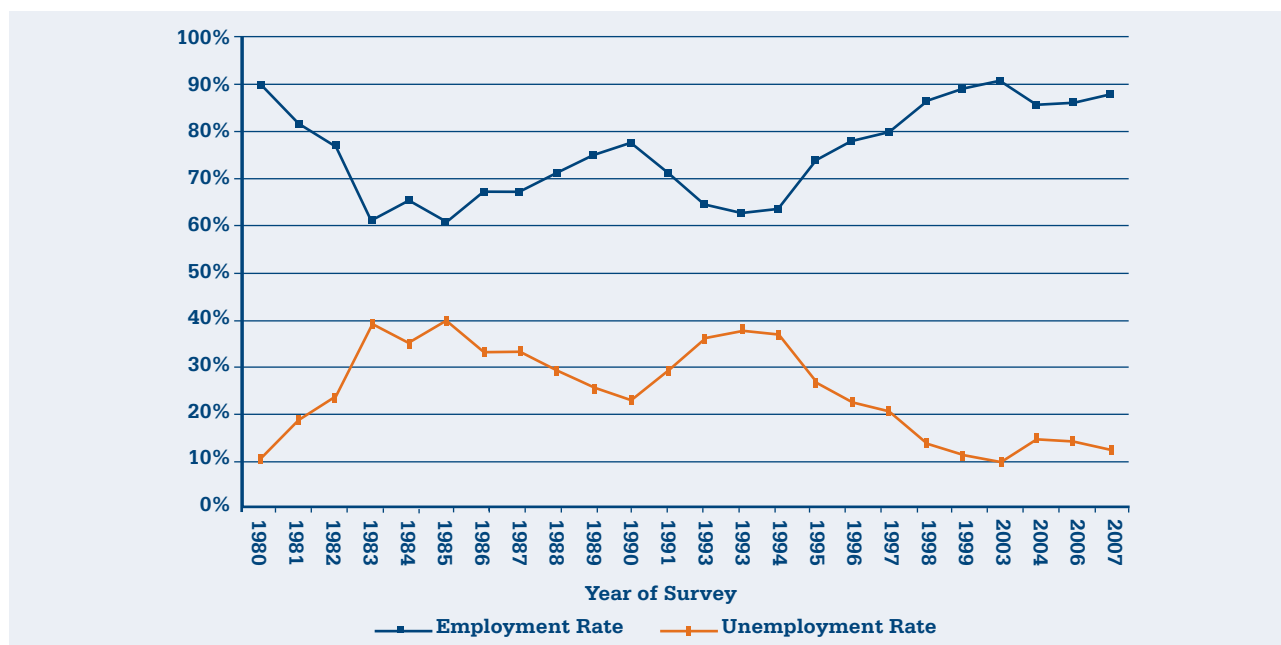
Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

What is particularly evident from Figure 4.6 in relation to the most recent survey is that the share of female school leavers in student or training activities has increased, while the share of female school leavers in employment has remained relatively stable. Again, the change in definition will influence these patterns, but because apprenticeships tend to be male dominated, changes are less evident among females. In the long-term what is particularly evident is the substantial decline in the proportion of female school leavers in employment one year after leaving school, accompanied by a substantial increase in student/training activities over the period. Over this period, there has also been a substantial decrease in the share of female school leavers in unemployment, but it should be noted that the proportion of females who are in unemployment or inactivity remains relatively stable since 2002. These gender patterns can now be explored in more depth in the following section.

4.6.2 Employment and Unemployment Rate: Long-Term Trends

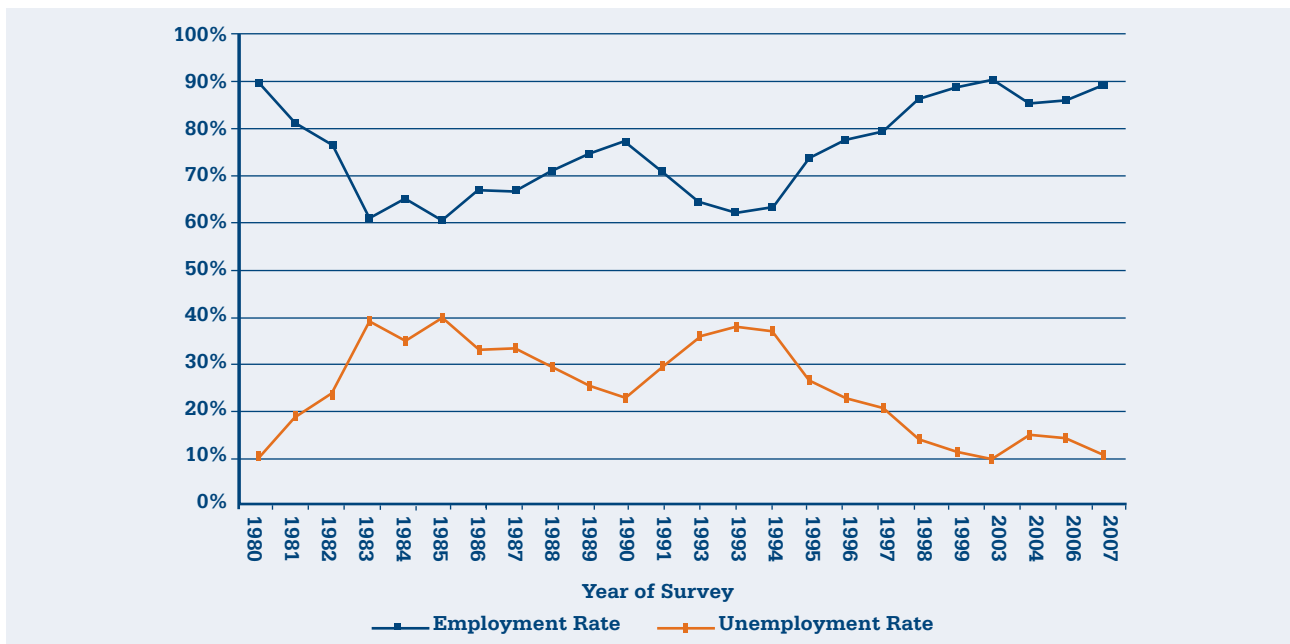
Figure 4.7a and Figure 4.7b illustrate the long-term trends in school leavers' employment and unemployment rates from 1980 to 2007. The employment rate of school leavers' was at its lowest ever in 1985; when it stood at 60 per cent. The highest recorded unemployment rate by the School Leavers' Survey was also in 1985. After 1985 the employment rate increased reaching a high in the 1990 survey (77 per cent) with a corresponding decrease in the unemployment rate. Between 1991 and 1994 the trends again reversed with the employment rate decreasing and the unemployment rate increasing. With an improvement of economic conditions led by the Celtic Tiger the employment rate of school leavers began to significantly increase until 2003 with a corresponding decrease in the unemployment rate. Since 2003 we see that employment and unemployment rates have remained relatively stable. Figure 4.7a shows that the unemployment rate has decreased three percentage points from 15 per cent in 2004 to 12 per cent in 2007 while the corresponding employment rate has increased from 85 per cent to 88 per cent. Figure 4.7b then illustrates the long-term trends in the employment and unemployment rates of school leavers when school leavers in apprenticeships are included in the definition of labour force participation for the 2007 cohort. The inclusion of apprentices from the definition of labour force participation results in a substantial decrease in the unemployment rate of school leavers from 15 per cent in 2004 to 10 per cent in 2007 while the corresponding employment rate has increased from 85 per cent to 90 per cent. The inclusion of apprentices in the definition of labour force participation results in a substantial decrease in the unemployment rate of school leavers and a corresponding increase in the employment rate of school leavers.

Figure 4.7a: Long-Term Trends in School Leavers' Employment and Unemployment Rates 1980-2007 (Labour Market Participants Defined as Those in Employment or Unemployment Only in 2007 Survey)



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

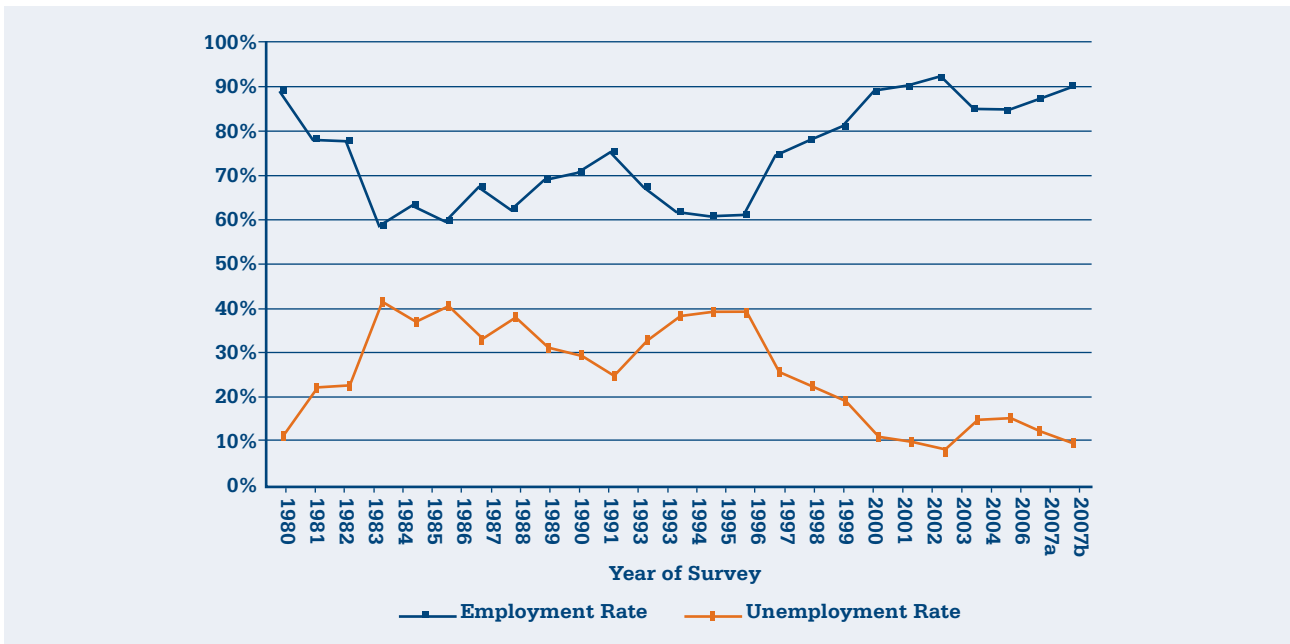
Figure 4.7b: Long-Term Trends in School Leavers' Employment and Unemployment Rates 1980-2007 (Employed, Apprentices and Unemployed Defined as Labour Market Participants in 2007 Survey)



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

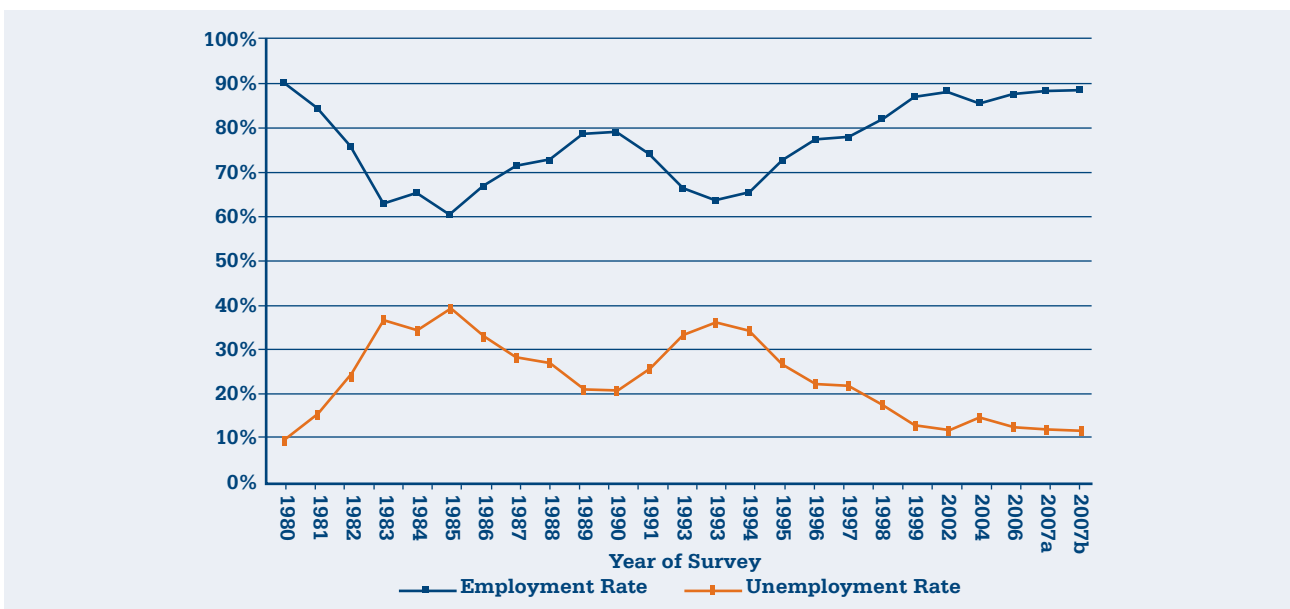
Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9 illustrate the employment and unemployment rates for males and female school leavers respectively since the 1980 survey. Over the period, male and female school leavers have experienced relatively similar employment and unemployment rate patterns. Male and female employment rates peaked in 2002, the corresponding rate being 92 per cent of males and 88 per cent of females. Employment rates then declined in 2004, with males experiencing a larger fall to females. Between the 2006 and 2007 surveys, male employment rates have increased once again. Furthermore, Figure 4.8 illustrates the difference in male employment rates when apprenticeships are (2007b) and are not (2007a) included in the definition of labour market participation. We see that the inclusion of apprenticeships to the definition of labour market participation raises the male employment rate by 3 percentage points. Figure 4.9 also illustrates that female employment rates have increased steadily since the 2002 survey, however, the inclusion of apprentices in the definition of labour market participation has little effect on the employment rate of female school leavers.

Figure 4.8: Long-Term Trends in Male School Leavers' Employment and Unemployment Rates 1980-2007 (Rates shown without (2007a) and with (2007b) Apprenticeship for 2007 Survey)



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

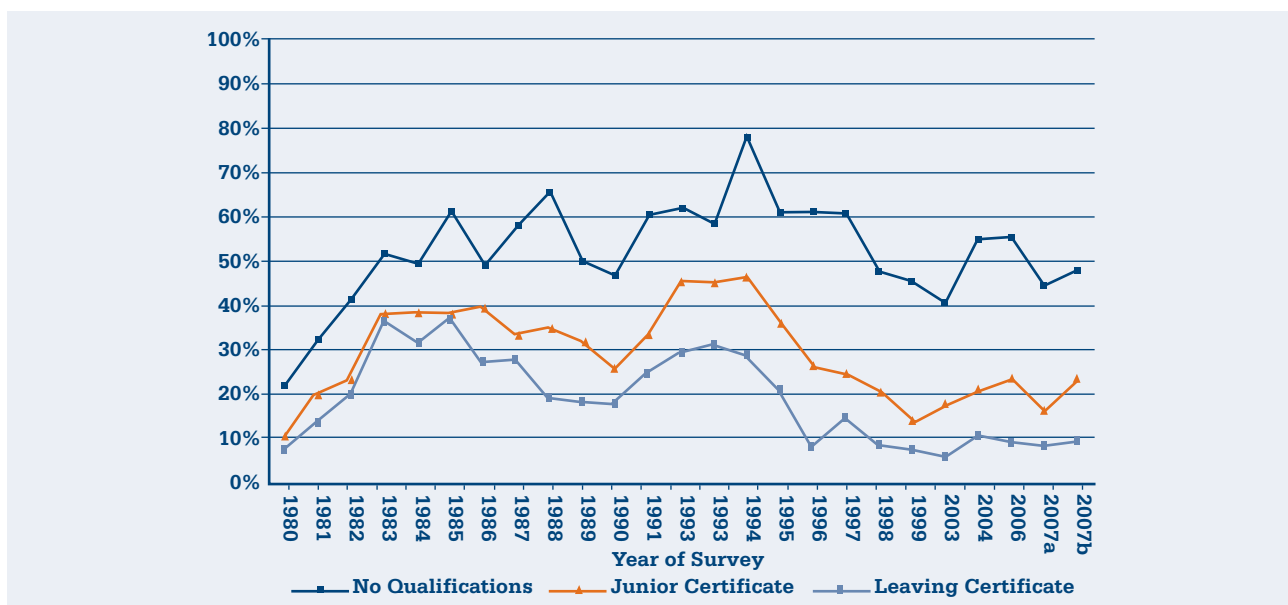
Figure 4.9: Long-Term Trends in Female School Leavers' Employment and Unemployment Rates 1980-2007 (Rates shown without (2007a) and with (2007b) Apprentices for 2007 Survey)



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

Figure 4.10 illustrates the unemployment rates of school leavers according to educational qualification level attained at second-level since the 1980 survey. Three education qualification categories are referred to here: (1) no qualifications, (2) Junior Certificate qualification and (3) Leaving Certificate qualification. Figure 4.10 illustrates that since 1980 there has been a persistent gap in the unemployment rate of those who leave school without any qualifications and those who leave school upon completion of the Leaving Certificate, and that this gap has grown over time. For example, in 1980 the unemployment rate among those without any qualifications was 14 percentage points higher than for those with a Leaving Certificate. By 2006, however, this differential had exceeded 46 percentage points. Figure 4.10 also illustrates the unemployment rate for school leavers when school leavers in apprenticeships are included in the definition of labour market participation (2007a) and when school leavers in apprenticeships are not included in the definition of labour market participation (2007b). What is particularly evident is that the unemployment rate of school leavers who do not hold any qualifications has reduced between 2006 and 2007, and this pattern is pronounced when apprentices are included in the definition of labour market participation. The unemployment rate of school leavers with a Junior Certificate qualification also appears to have reduced when apprentices are included in the definition, but a reduction is less evident when they are excluded from the definition of labour market participation. In comparison, the inclusion or exclusion of apprentices in the definition of labour market participation has little influence on the employment rate of school leavers who completed second-level education and obtained a Leaving Certificate. These patterns suggest the importance of the apprenticeship route for young people who leave school early.

Figure 4.10: Unemployment Rate by Educational Level Achieved 1980-2007 (Adjusted to Include Apprentices (2007a) and Exclude Apprentices (2007b) for 2007 Survey)



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

It is clear that there has been a consistent gap in unemployment rates according to educational level achieved. Figure 4.11 illustrates that among the 2007 cohort of school leavers, those who leave school without any qualifications have the highest rate of unemployment, followed by those who leave school with a Junior Certificate. This differences are particularly apparent when apprentices are included in the definition of labour market participation. While not shown here, the unemployment rate for females who leave school without any qualifications is substantially larger than that for corresponding males.

Figure 4.11: Unemployment Rate and Adjusted Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, May 2006

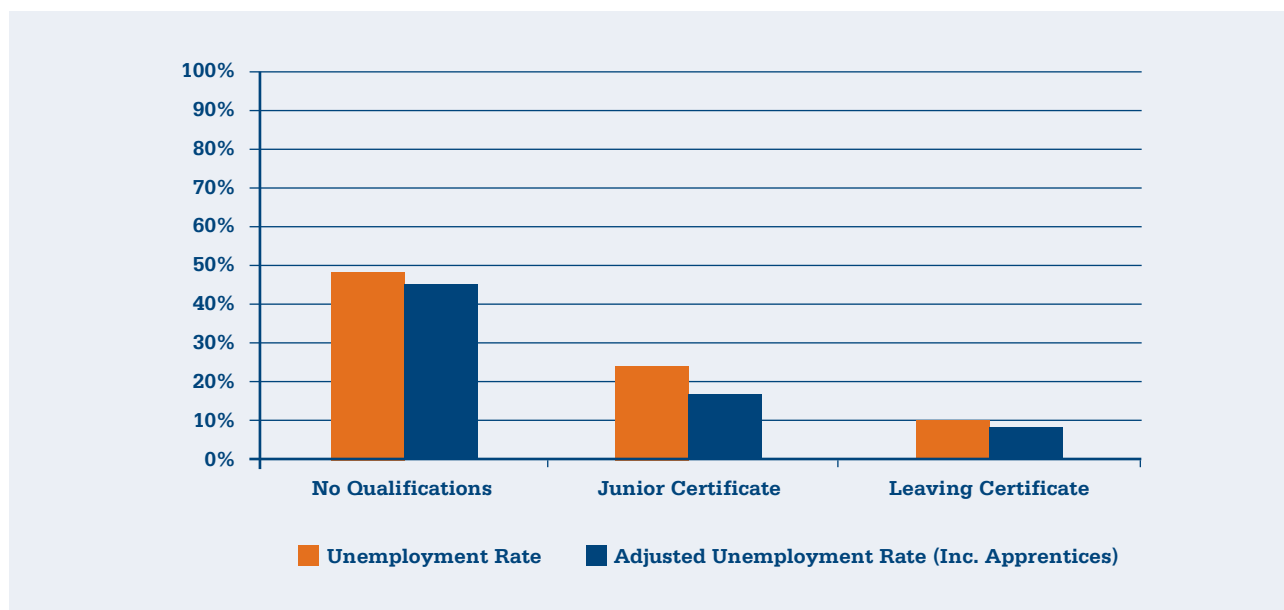
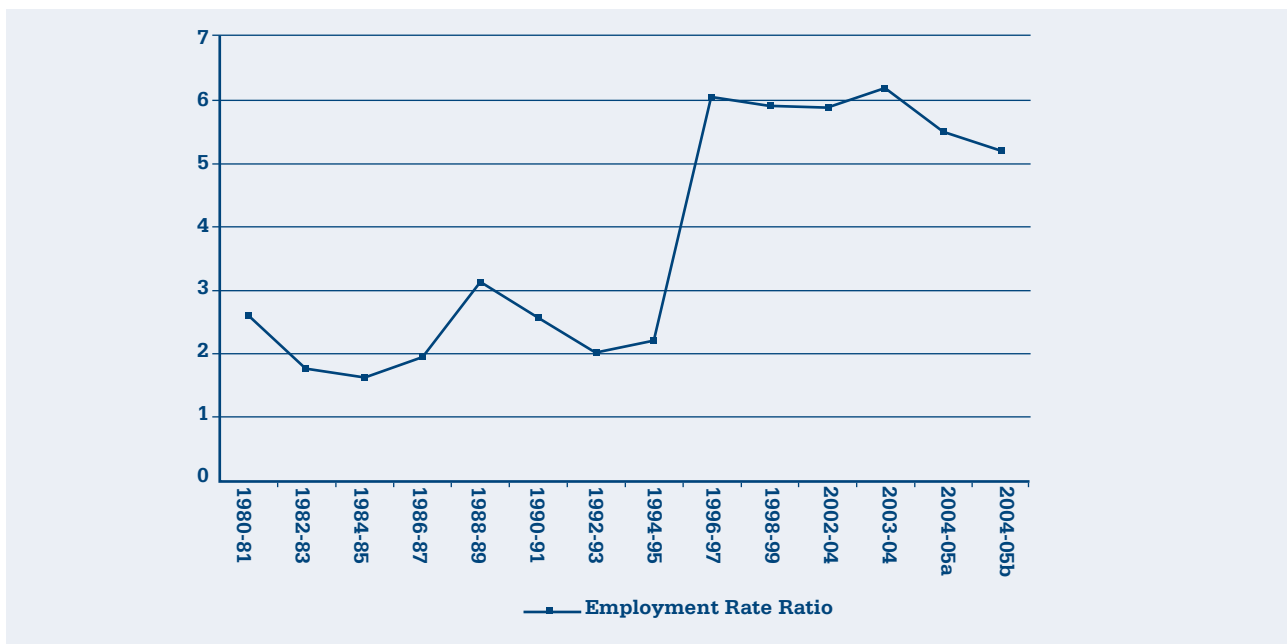


Figure 4.12 then illustrates the relative unemployment risk differential between those who leave school with no qualifications and those who leave with a Leaving Certificate qualification. Viewed in terms of ratios, this figure clearly shows the declining relative position of the least qualified school leavers, particularly since 1996/97. However, the current survey indicates that the risk differential is declining. School leavers who leave school without any second level qualification are 5.5 times more likely to be unemployed than those with a Leaving Certificate qualification which represents a decrease from 6.2 for the previous cohort. Furthermore, when apprentices are excluded from the definition of labour market participation, there is a decrease in the relative unemployment risk differential to 5.2 between those who leave school without any qualifications and those who leave with a Leaving Certificate qualification.

Figure 4.12: Unemployment Rate Ratios – The Ratio of School Leavers Without a Second-Level Qualification Versus a Leaving Certificate Qualification (with (2004-2005a) and without Apprentices (2004-05b) for 2007 survey)

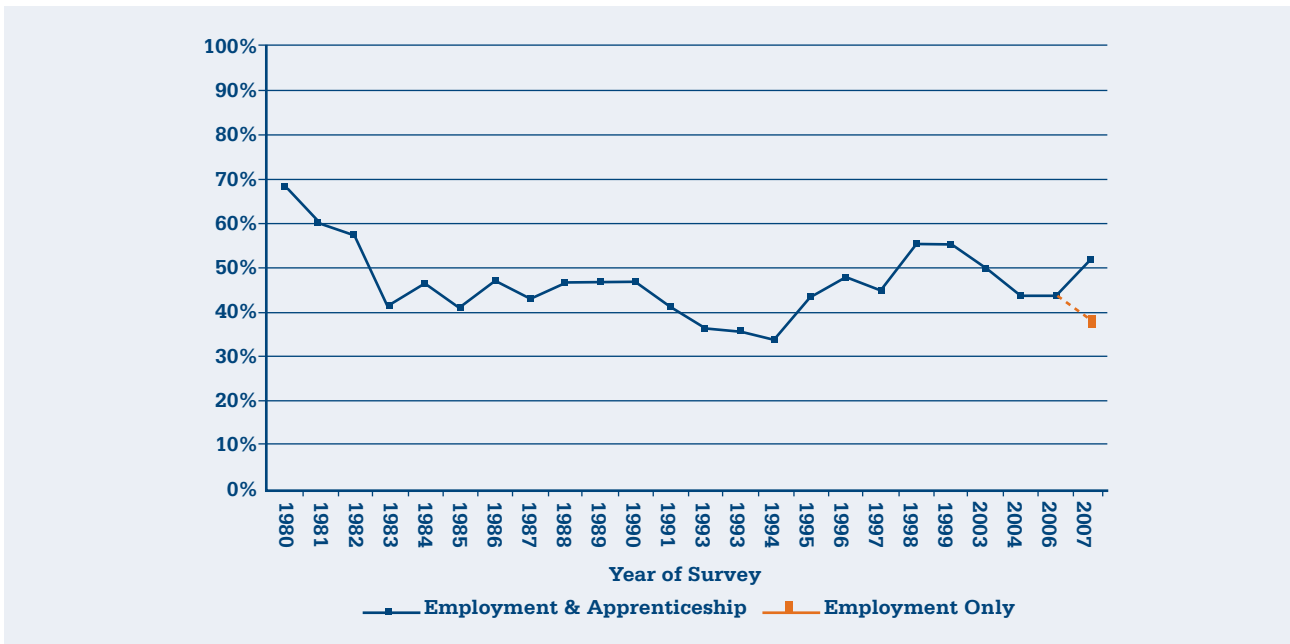


Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

4.6.3 Long-Term Employment and Unemployment Trends among Males and Females

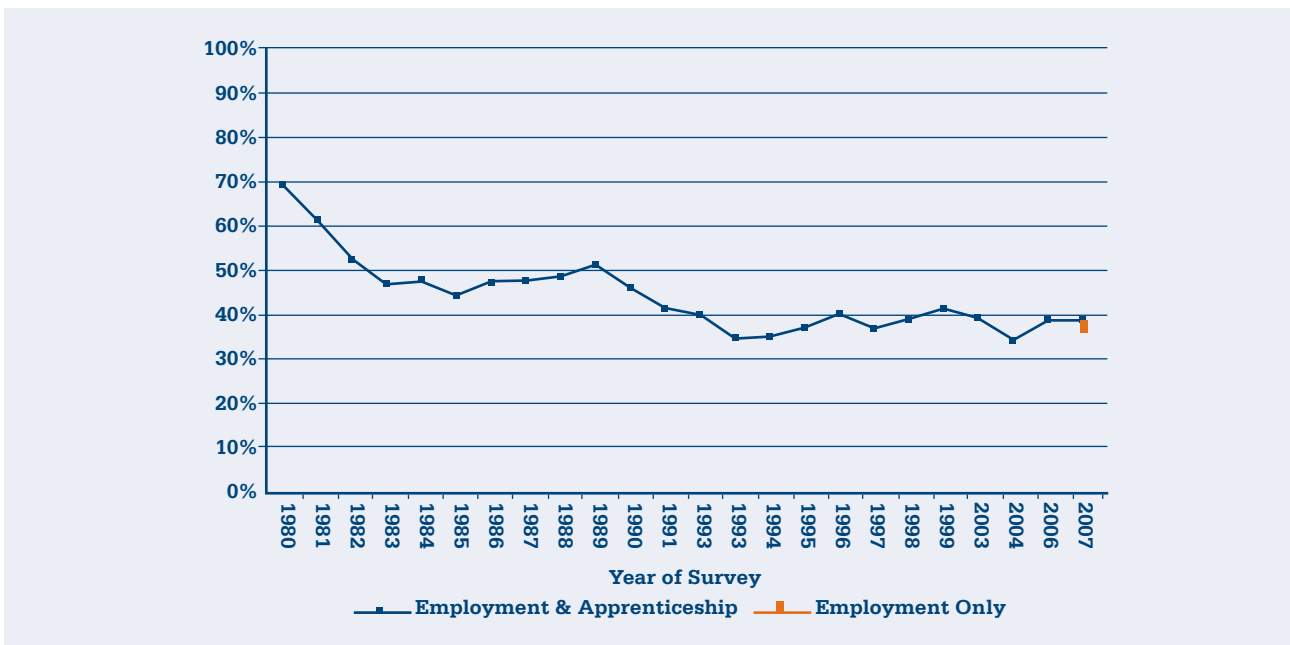
Figure 4.13a and Figure 4.13b illustrate the long-term patterns of the share of male and female school leavers who are in employment one year after leaving school. While previous surveys have indicated that there is a substantial gender gap in employment, with males more likely to be in employment than females, the most recent survey suggests that when apprenticeships are considered a separate group, the gender gap disappears. That is, males and females have similar rates of employment. Furthermore, Figure 4.13a and Figure 4.13b illustrate how the share of school leavers who enter employment one year after leaving school changes when apprenticeships are included in the definition of employment. Figure 4.13a illustrates that the patterns change considerably for males. When school leavers who are in apprenticeships are considered as being in employment, we find that the share of male school leavers in employment increases from 44 per cent in 2006 to 52 per cent in 2007. However, when apprentices are excluded from the definition of employment the share of male school leavers in employment decreases from 44 per cent in 2006 to 38 per cent in 2007. Figure 4.13b illustrates that changes in the share of female school leavers in employment one year after leaving school is not affected to the same degree as male school leavers when apprentices are considered in the definition of employment.

Figure 4.13a: Long-Term Trends Among Male School Leavers in Employment One Year after Leaving School, 1980-2007



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

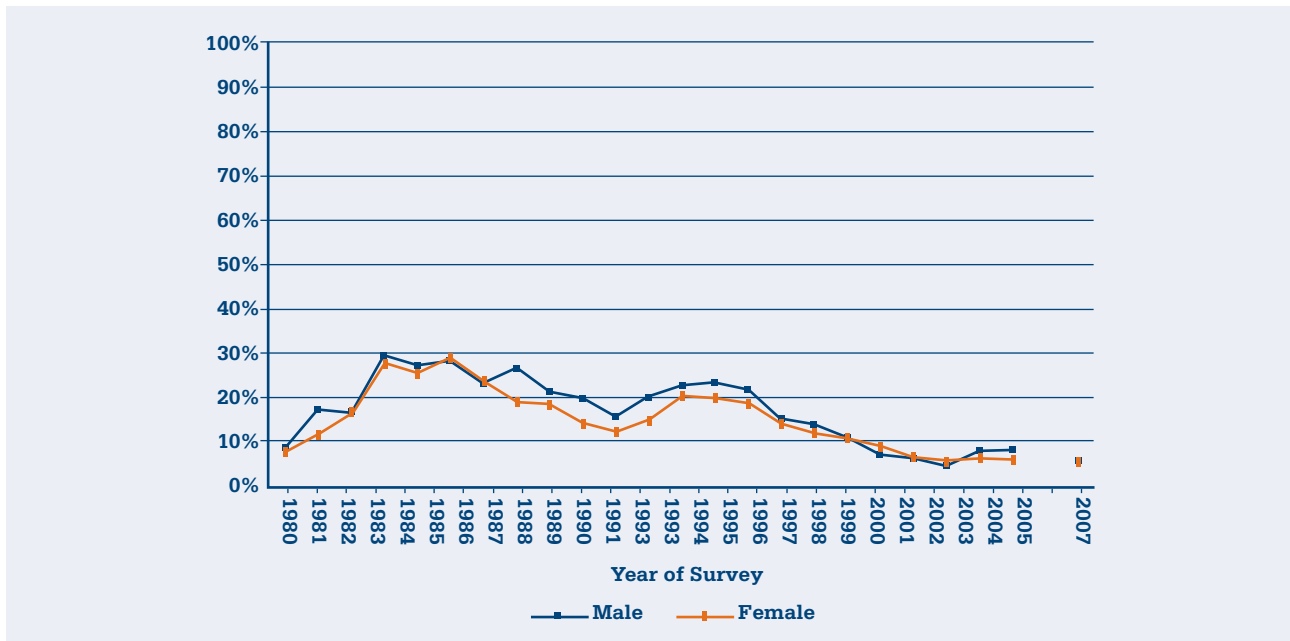
Figure 4.13b: Long-Term Trends Among Female School Leavers in Employment One Year after Leaving School, 1980-2007



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

Figure 4.14 illustrates the long-term patterns of the share of male and female school leavers in unemployment one year after leaving school. The most recent survey suggests that levels of unemployment among males and females are relatively similar, indicating that males no longer have higher unemployment levels than females.

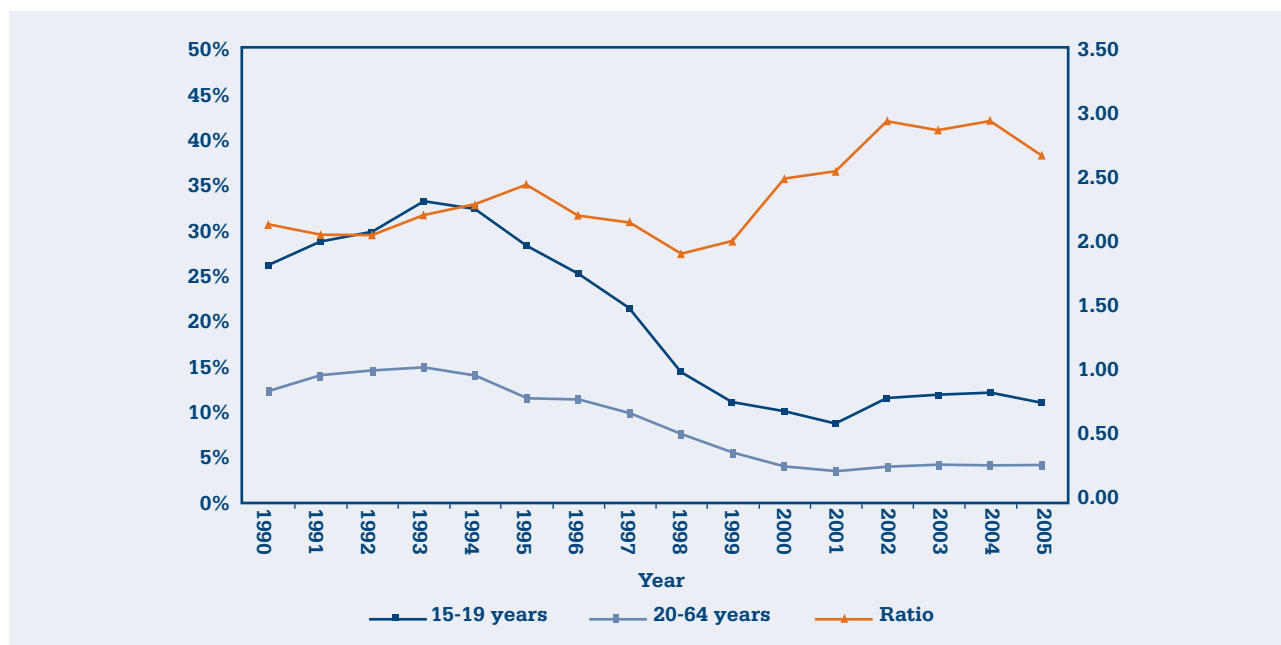
Figure 4.14: Long-Term Trends Among Male and Female School Leavers in Unemployment One Year After Leaving School, 1980-2007



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

While the share of school leavers in unemployment appear to be low according to Figure 4.14, it is important to note that the rate of youth unemployment has a tendency to be much higher (generally double) the rate of adult unemployment. In the context of an economic downturn, it is likely that youth unemployment levels will rise, as youth are particularly vulnerable in such climates. These patterns offer an insight into the importance of policy measures to combat youth unemployment in the coming years.

Figure 4.15: Adult and Youth Unemployment Rate and Ratio, 1990-2005



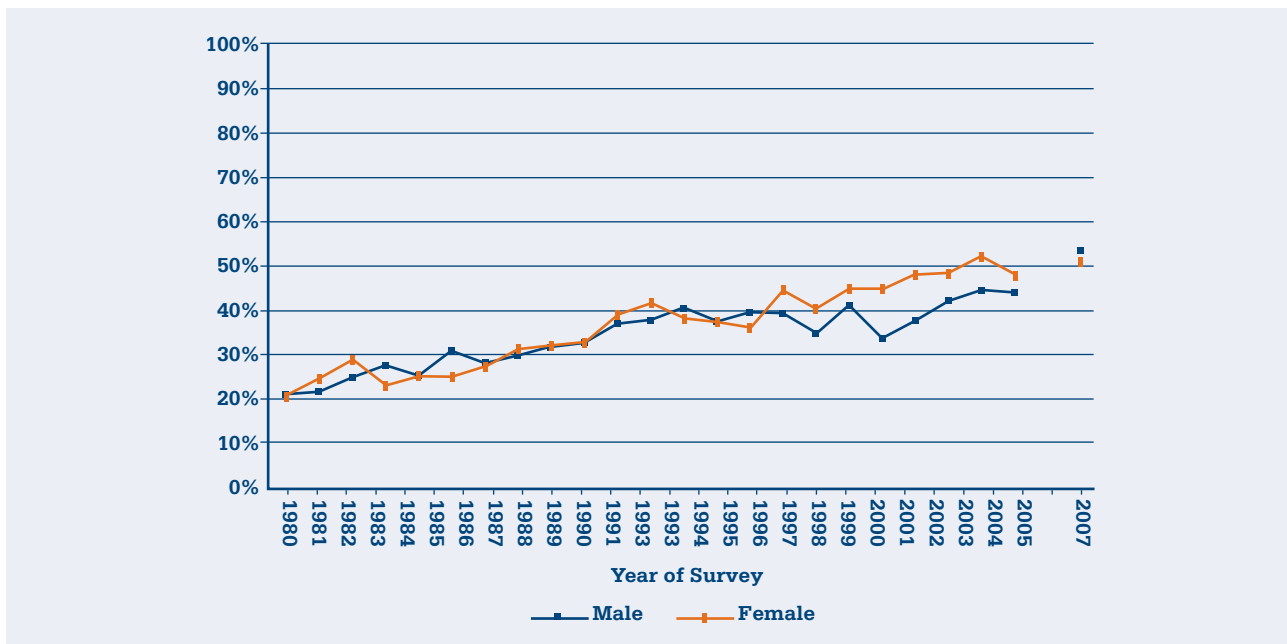
Source: Smyth 2008 based on Census of Population Figures.

To illustrate this point, Figure 4.15 shows the trends in unemployment levels for the adult and youth population. Adult unemployment rates peaked in 1993 and declined thereafter to a low in 2001 with a very slight increase thereafter. Unemployment rates among young people aged 15-19 years have broadly mirrored those among the adult population, albeit at much higher levels. The increase in unemployment in the early 1990s was more dramatic among youths than adults, and there has been some increase in youth unemployment levels in recent years in spite of the overall boom. Overall, adult unemployment declined by 66 per cent over the period while youth unemployment declined by 55 per cent. The ratio between youth and adult unemployment rates was 2.2 at the height of unemployment but has been around 2.9-3 since 2002.

4.6.4 Long-Term Student/Training Trends Among Males and Females

Figure 4.16 illustrates the long-term patterns among males and females in student/training one year after leaving school. Earlier surveys have indicated an increase in the student/training activities of males and females over time and this pattern continues to persist (see McCoy *et al.*, 2007). Figure 4.16 illustrates that since 1995, a higher share of female school leavers have entered student/training activities than males. The most recent survey suggests that a higher share of male school leavers are in student/training activities at the time of the survey than female school leavers. However, in this graph school leavers in apprenticeships are included among those in student/training activities. It is likely that because young people in apprenticeship were included with those who were in employment the proportion in student/training activities was under-reported for males in previous surveys.

Figure 4.16: Long-Term Trends Among Male and Female School Leavers in Student/Training Activities One Year after Leaving School, 1980-2007

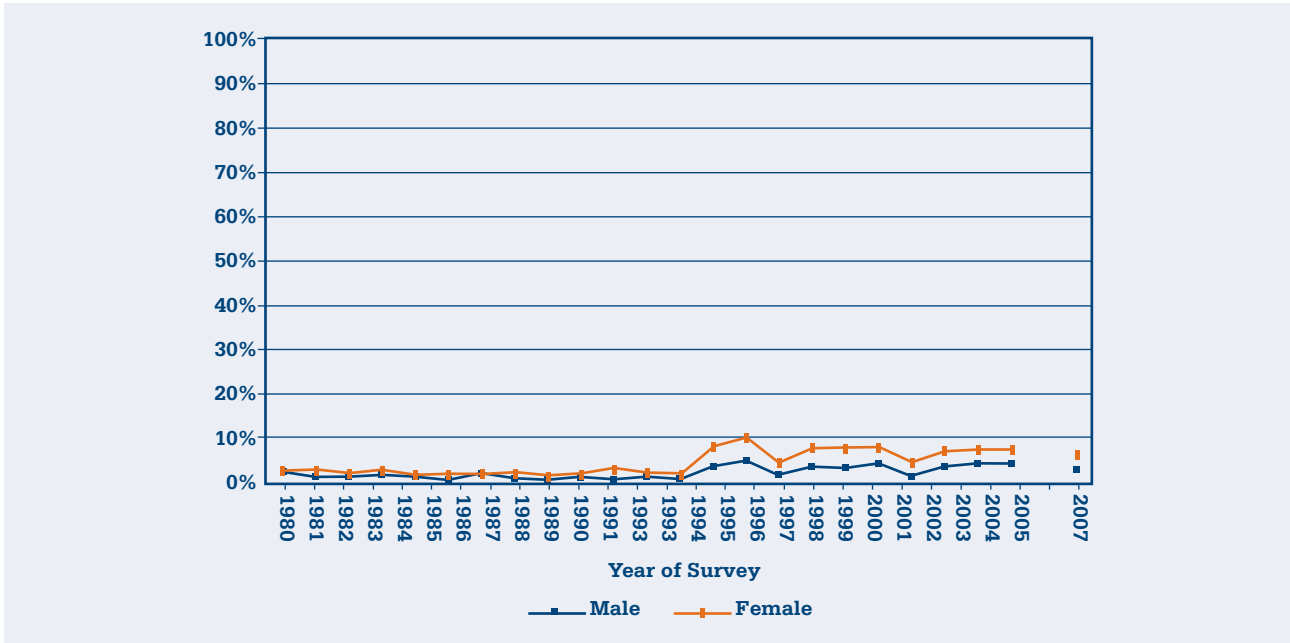


Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

4.6.5 Long-Term Inactivity Trends Among Males and Females

Figure 4.17 illustrates the long-term patterns among males and females who are inactive one year after leaving school. It should be noted that the share of school leavers who are inactive at the time of the survey tends to be in the region of 4 per cent. Figure 4.17 illustrates substantial increases in the share of school leavers who 'opted-out' of the labour market in 1993, a time of high youth unemployment. While over the mid-1990s the share of female school leavers who were inactive was higher than the share of male school leavers, we find that more recently the share of female school leavers who are inactive at the time of the survey continues to be higher than the corresponding share of male school leavers.

Figure 4.17: Long Term Trends Among Male and Female School Leavers who are Unavailable for Work One Year after Leaving School, 1980-2007



Note: The Break in the trend line reflects the change in definition.

5. EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER LABOUR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS



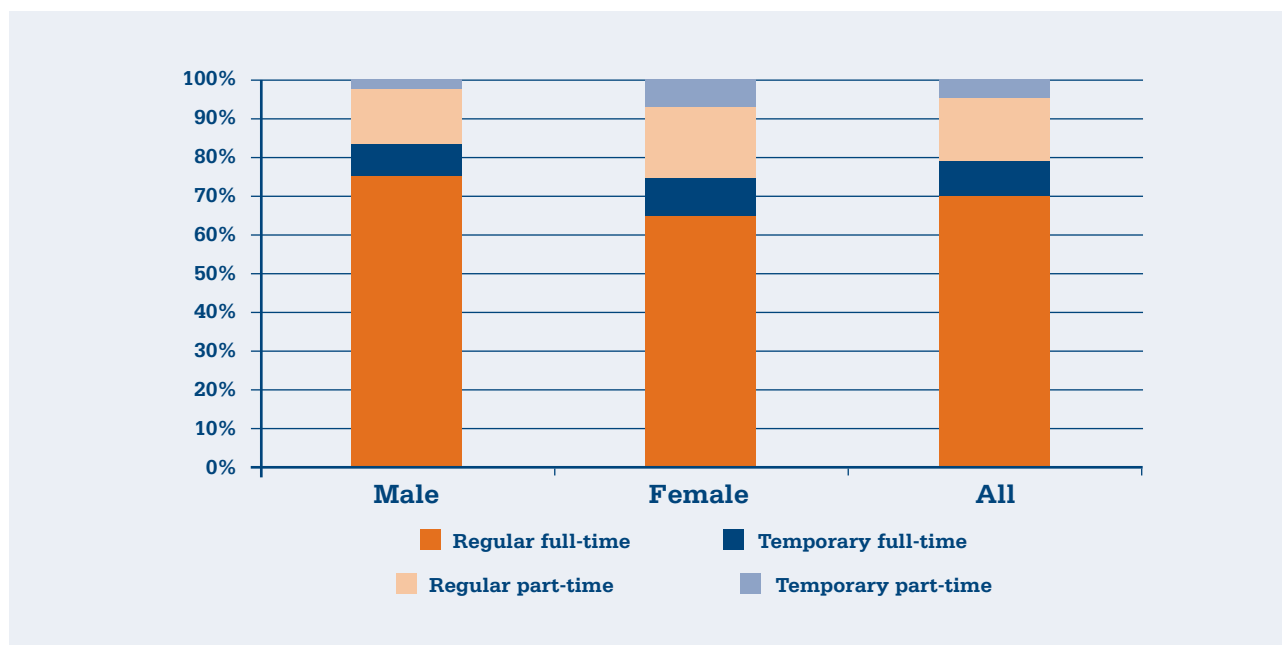
5. EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER LABOUR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, detailed analyses are undertaken on school leavers who are in employment one year after leaving school and those who are in employment 20-26 months after leaving school, at the time the survey was conducted. This chapter is set out as follows. Section 5.2 considers the conditions of employment among school leavers in employment in May 2006. Section 5.3 examines the distribution of this cohort across eight industrial sectors, while Section 5.4 focuses on their occupational distribution. In both analyses the overall distributions and variations by both educational attainment and gender are examined. Section 5.5 considers the changing status position of school leavers between May 2006 and the time of the survey, placing particular emphasis on those in employment at the time of the survey. Additional labour market characteristics of this cohort are examined in Section 5.6, specifically, trade union membership, job security and employer-provided training. Finally, Section 5.7 considers the perceptions of school leavers in employment at the time of the survey with regard to the relationship between education/training and their job including perceptions of satisfaction with their present economic situation.

5.2 Conditions of Employment in May 2006

Figure 5.1 illustrates the conditions of employment of school leavers in employment in May 2006. The vast majority (70 per cent) of school leavers in employment are in regular full-time employment with a further 9 per cent in temporary full-time employment. In all, 21 per cent of school leavers in employment in May 2006 are in either regular part time or temporary part-time employment. For the purpose of this chapter, school leavers defined as being in 'full-time employment' will include those in either regular full-time employment or those in temporary full-time employment. School Leavers defined as being in 'part-time employment' will include those in either regular part-time or temporary part-time. We find that males have higher levels of full-time employment relative to females – 83 per cent and 75 per cent respectively.

Figure 5.1: Employment Conditions of School Leavers in Employment, May 2006

5.3 Sector of Employment of School Leavers in Full Time Employment May 2006

Table 5.1 details the distribution of school leavers who were in employment one year after leaving school by sector of employment for four cohorts of school leavers; those who left school in the academic years 2000/01, 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05. The eight sectors specified are:

- Agriculture & Fisheries.
- Industry (Mining, Food, Textiles, Wood Processing, Chemicals, Cement, Engineering, Building, Utilities).
- Distribution (Wholesale & Retail: food, drink, pubs, clothes shops, petrol stations).
- Banking.
- Transport and Communications.
- Public Administration.
- Professional Services.
- Personal Services.

5.3.1 Implications of Change in Definition

The previous chapter indicated the implications of separating school leavers on apprenticeships from those in employment. We now consider the implications of the change in definition on the sector of employment of school leavers. Table 5.1 outlines the sector of employment of school leavers in full-time employment in May 2002-2006 but also the sector of employment of school leavers either in full-time employment or in apprenticeships in

May 2006. Two columns are shown for the 2004/05 school leavers. The first column for 2004/05 school leavers represents the distribution of school leavers who were in employment one year after leaving school by sector of employment. The second column for 2004/05 school leavers represents the distribution of school leavers who were in employment or in an apprenticeship one year after leaving school. What is particularly evident is that school leavers are largely concentrated in the industry, distribution and personal services sectors of employment respectively. However, when school leavers in full-time employment are considered as a separate group, they tend to be equally distributed in the distribution and industry sectors. Overall, when we consider school leavers who are either in full time employment or in apprenticeships together, we find that the sector of employment follows patterns rather similar to those of earlier school leaver cohorts.

Table 5.1: Sector of Employment of All School Leavers in Full-Time Employment May 2002-2006

				Employed Only	Employed + Apprentices
	May 2002	May 2004	May 2005	May 2006	May 2006
Industry	33.2	33.9	40.0	31.3	40.1
Distribution	26.4	30.4	28.3	31.3	26.9
Personal Services	19.4	20.9	15.2	16.7	15.3
Banking	7.5	4.4	5.8	8.1	6.9
Professional Services	5.7	3.9	4.1	4.7	4.1
Transport & Communications	3.4	3.1	3.3	4.0	3.4
Public Administration	2.9	1.3	1.2	2.0	1.6
Agriculture & Fisheries	1.6	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.7
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	33,434	28,634	27,415	16,819	20,981

5.3.2 Overall results

Considering full-time school leavers in employment only, we find that school leavers are equally distributed in the industry and distribution sectors with almost one-third of school leavers in each sector. Estimates of participation in the personal services sector now reveal that the distribution of school leavers in this sector is marginally higher than previously observed. This is also true of the banking, professional services, transport and communications and public administrations sectors. These changes have been accompanied by a decrease in the agriculture and fisheries sector. These changes are broadly in line with our expectations. Given that we have now taken apprenticeships out of the definition of employment, we would expect that the share of school leavers in the industry sector (which includes building and construction) would decrease. Likewise, we now see a greater concentration of school leavers in wholesale and retail distribution sectors, which are likely to be low skilled, entry level jobs.

Patterns from previous cohorts of school leavers can be compared using the distribution of school leavers either in full-time employment or in apprenticeships in May 2006. Estimates of participation in the industry, personal services, professional services and transport and communications remain largely stable compared to estimates from May 2005. This holds while estimates of participation in the distribution and agricultural and fisheries sectors seem to be marginally lower from May 2005 while the estimate of participation in public administration is marginally higher than previously expected. This is also true of the banking, professional services, transport and communications and public administration sectors.

5.3.3 Sector of Employment by Gender

Previous school leavers' surveys have indicated that there is quite a strong gender differential in relation to the sector of employment pursued by school leavers. Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3 and Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 present gender variations in the distribution of school leavers in employment across sectors for the four most recent cohorts of school leavers, those who left school in the academic years 2000/01, 2002/03, 2003/04, 2004/05. As before separate columns are presented for school leavers who were in full-time employment in May 2006 and for school leavers who were either in full-time employment or apprenticeships in May 2006.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the distribution of male and female school leavers who were in full-time employment in May 2006. What is particularly evident from Figure 5.2 is that over half (51 per cent) of males in full time employment are found in the industry sector, the majority of whom (60 per cent) are found in the construction sector. Overall, 30 per cent of males in full-time employment are found in the construction sector (not shown here). The industry sector is particularly dominated by male school leavers, as less than 10 per cent of female school leavers in full-time employment are found in this sector. Female school leavers in full-time employment are largely concentrated in the distribution and service sectors. These gender differences become more apparent when the definition of employment is extended to include school leavers in apprenticeships, as illustrated by Figure 5.3. We now find that 60 per cent of males are found in the industry sector, the majority of whom (62 per cent) are found in the construction sector. Overall, 37 per cent of males in full-time employment or apprenticeships are found in the construction sector (not shown here).

Figure 5.2: Distribution of Male and Female School Leavers in Full-Time Employment, May 2006

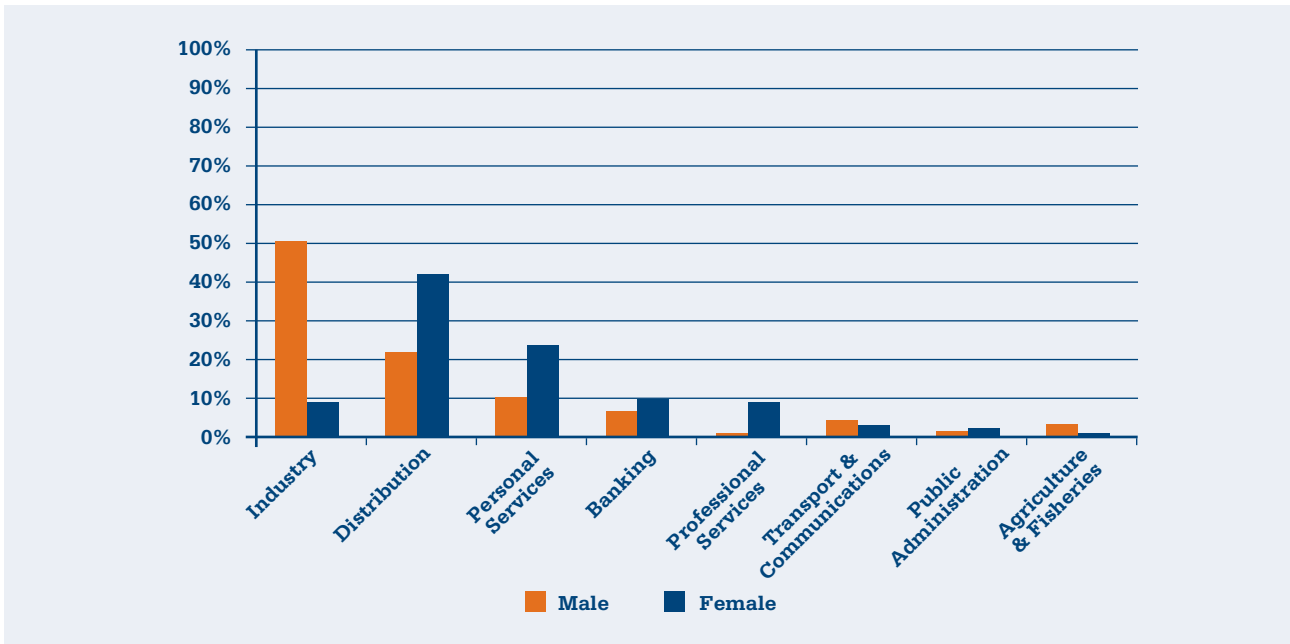


Figure 5.3: Distribution of Male and Female School Leavers in Full-Time Employment or in Apprenticeships, May 2006

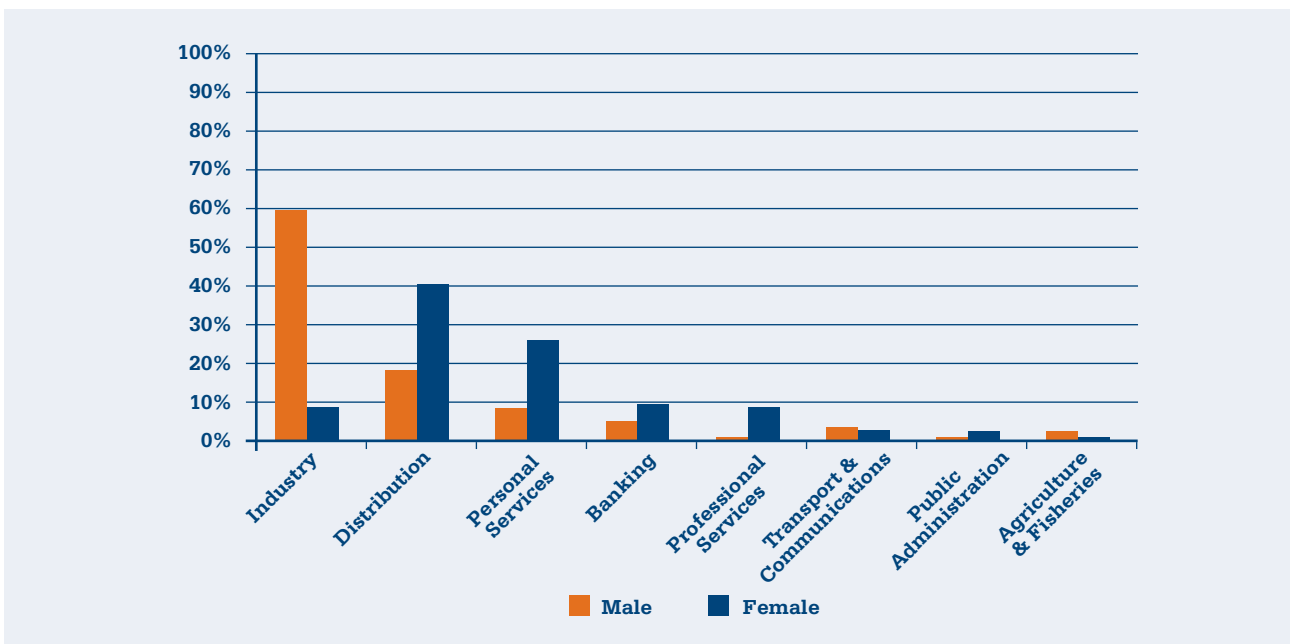


Table 5.2: Sector of Employment of Male School Leavers, May 2002-2006

	Males May 2002	Males May 2004	Males May 2005	Males May 2006	Males May 2006
				Employment	Employment + Apprenticeship
Industry	48.8	52.1	62.7	50.6	59.7
Distribution	22.8	25.4	23.0	21.9	18.2
Personal Services	12.3	11.9	5.0	10.5	8.5
Banking	6.3	2.1	1.9	6.6	5.2
Professional Services	3.1	1.7	1.4	0.9	1.1
Transport & Communications	2.5	3.5	1.8	4.7	3.6
Public Administration	2.0	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.1
Agriculture & Fisheries	2.2	2.4	2.8	3.2	2.5
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	19,234	16,637	15,534	8,990	12,875

Table 5.3: Sector of Employment of Female School Leavers, May 2002-2006

	Females May 2002	Females May 2004	Females May 2005	Females May 2006	Females May 2006
				Employment	Employment + Apprenticeship
Industry	12.1	8.7	10.3	9.3	8.9
Distribution	31.3	37.4	35.2	42.0	40.6
Personal Services	29.0	33.2	28.4	23.7	26.1
Banking	9.1	7.5	10.8	9.9	9.6
Professional Services	9.1	7.1	7.7	9.1	8.8
Transport & Communications	4.6	2.6	5.2	3.1	3.0
Public Administration	4.0	1.7	0.8	2.4	2.4
Agriculture & Fisheries	0.7	1.8	1.8	0.5	0.5
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	14,199	11,998	11,883	7,829	8,107

Overall, the main picture emerging from this analysis is that employment of male school leavers is becoming increasingly concentrated in one sector, specifically industry, whereas female school leavers are more evenly spread across a range of sectors – distribution, banking, industry and professional services. It is important for policy makers to consider the implications of an over-reliance of young males in a particular sector of employment.

**Table 5.4: Sector of Employment of School Leavers in Full-Time Employment or Apprenticeships One Year After Leaving School
2002-2006 (Percentage)**

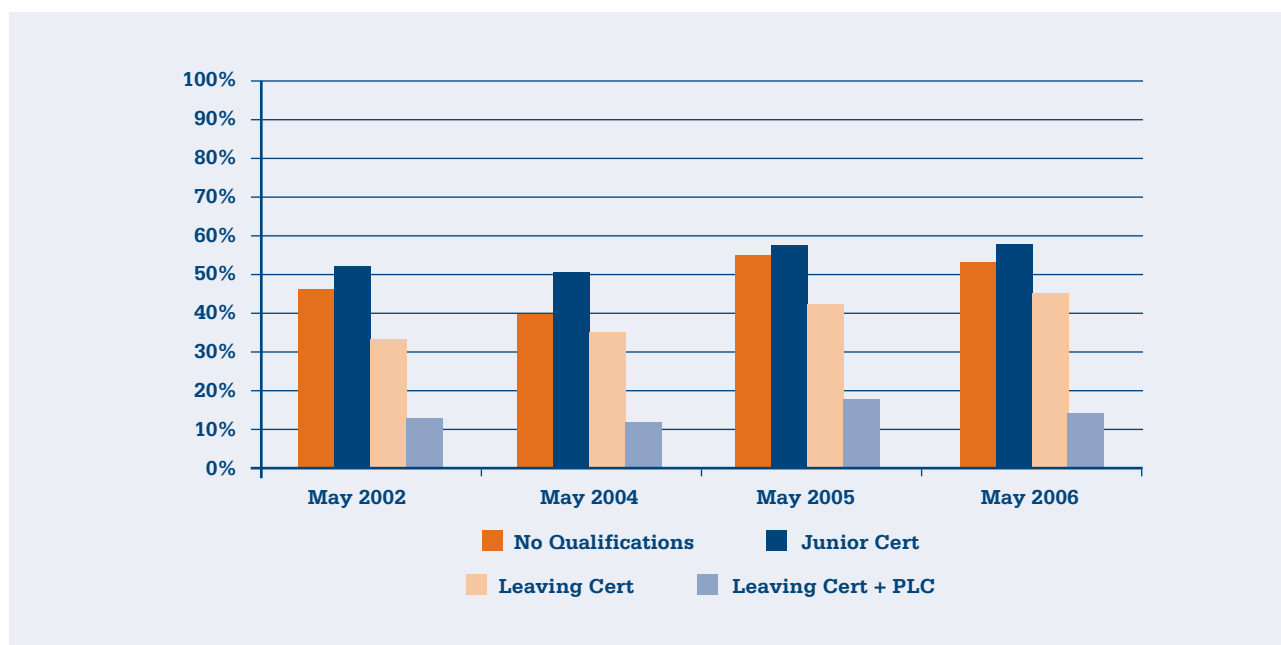
Sector:	NO QUALIFICATIONS			JUNIOR CERTIFICATE			LEAVING CERTIFICATE			LEAVING CERTIFICATE PLUS PLC		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Agriculture & Fisheries	3.8	4.2	6.6	4.1	3.5	2.1	1.9	2.4	1.3	0.8	0.5	2.1
Industry	39.6	54.8	53.2	50.8	57.4	58.0	35.2	42.3	45.1	12.2	18.2	14.5
Distribution	19.0	28.2	32.4	20.4	19.1	24.5	32.6	28.3	25.4	34.6	35.8	31.7
Banking	3.0	0.0	3.8	0.8	1.9	1.2	3.5	5.7	6.9	10.8	9.8	11.2
Transport & Communications	2.9	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.5	0.2	3.5	3.1	2.8	3.3	6.4	7.2
Public Administration	4.4	0.0	0.0	0.4	2.2	0.2	1.4	0.5	0.9	1.5	2.2	4.5
Professional Services	2.5	1.4	0.0	1.7	0.4	1.1	2.9	4.6	3.5	9.4	6.4	7.9
Personal Services	24.8	11.5	4.0	20.0	14.9	12.7	18.9	13.2	14.1	27.2	20.7	20.9
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	525	504	346	5,593	5,198	3,591	16,982	15,534	11,984	5,534	6,179	5,061

5.3.4 Variation by Educational Attainment

Table 5.4 considers variation in the distribution of school leavers across sectors of employment according to their levels of educational attainment. It is evident that not only are school leavers who leave school without any qualifications at greater risk of unemployment, but we see now that they are also confined to certain sectors of the labour market. Those without any formal second-level qualifications clearly have less variation in the option of sectors available to them. We see that a larger share of school leavers who left school without any qualifications are confined to the wholesale and retail distribution sector in contrast with other school leavers. As in recent years, the industry sector is the main employer of those who leave school without a Leaving Certificate qualification.

Figure 5.4 illustrates the percentage of school leavers who were in full time employment or in apprenticeships in May 2002-2006 working in the industry sector according to their highest level of education attained at second-level education. What is particularly evident is the reliance of school leavers with lower levels of education on the industry sector. We see that in May 2006, 53 per cent of school leavers who left school without any qualifications and 58 per cent who left school with a Junior Certificate qualification were either working or held an apprenticeship in this sector. This compares to 45 per cent of those with a Leaving Certificate and 14 per cent with a Leaving Certificate plus a PLC qualification.

Figure 5.4: School Leavers Employed in the Industry Sector by Educational Qualification Level Achieved May 2002-2006



5.4 Occupational Distribution of School Leavers in Full-Time Employment in May 2006

The occupational distribution of school leavers in employment one year after leaving school is presented in Table 5.5 below. Results are shown for four cohorts of school leavers – those who left school in the academic years 2000/01, 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05. Six occupational categories are defined:

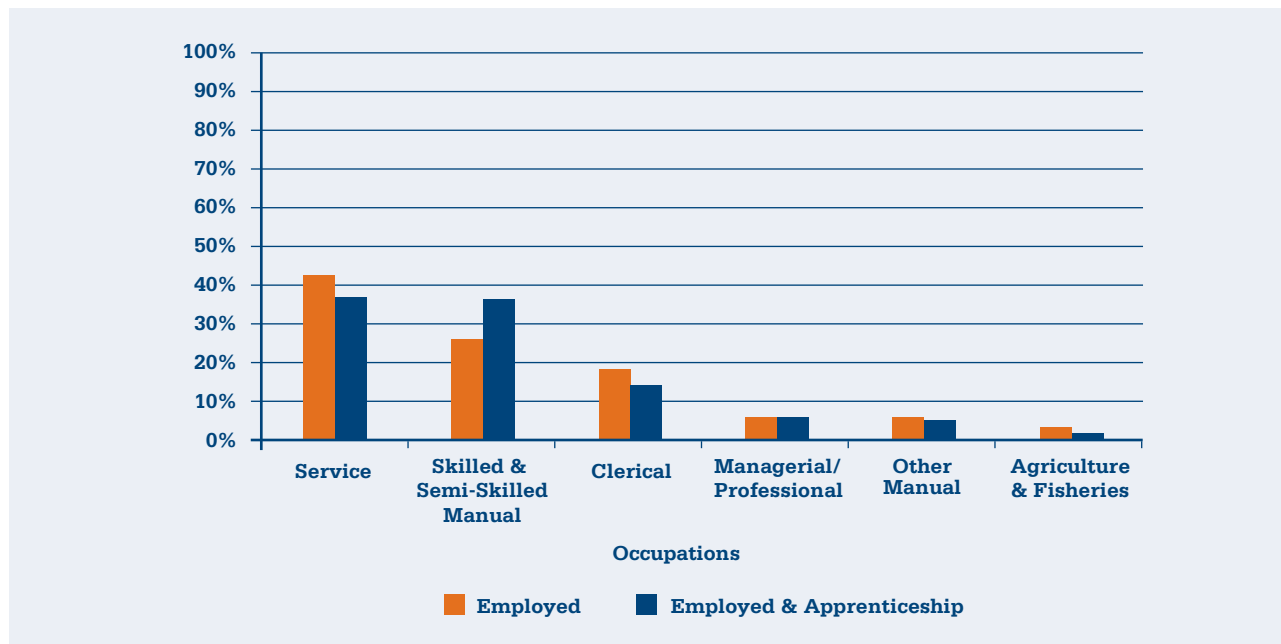
- Managerial/Professional.
- Clerical.
- Service (Shop Assistants, Barbers, Hairdressers, Laundry Workers, Cleaners, Chefs, Cooks).
- Agriculture and Fishery.
- Skilled and Semi-Skilled Manual.
- Other Manual.

Table 5.5: Occupational Status of School Leavers in Employment One Year After Leaving School, May 2002-2006

				Employed	Employed + Apprenticeship
Occupation:	May 2002	May 2004	May 2005	May 2006	May 2006
Service	39.7	44.2	35.8	42.7	36.9
Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	31.6	33.2	39.0	25.9	36.3
Clerical	15.5	12.3	15.1	18.2	14.6
Managerial/Professional	6.7	4.7	5.7	5.9	5.6
Other Manual	4.5	3.5	2.1	5.4	4.8
Agriculture and Fishery	2.0	2.1	2.3	1.9	1.8
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	33,755	28,655	27,570	17,033	21,196

In earlier surveys service occupations and skilled and semi-skilled manual occupations (2005) emerged as the occupations in which the majority of school leavers were employed one year after leaving school. Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5 illustrate that when school leavers in full-time employment are taken into account, school leavers are largely concentrated in service occupations. However, when the definition of employment includes those in apprenticeships, we find that school leavers are distributed equally in service and skilled and semi-skilled manual occupations.

Figure 5.5: Occupational Status of School Leavers in Employment One Year After Leaving School: School Leavers in Employment or Apprenticeships, May 2006



5.4.1 Variation by Gender

Gender differences in the occupational distribution of school leavers are illustrated by Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7 and presented in Table 5.6 and Table 5.7. Figure 5.6 illustrates gender differences amongst those in employment in May 2006. What is particularly evident is that male school leavers are over-represented in skilled and semi-skilled manual occupations – 45.4 per cent of males compared to 4.2 per cent of females work in these occupations – while females are over-represented in service occupations – 25.2 per cent compared to 62.2 per cent. These gender differences are even more evident when apprenticeships are included in the definition of employment as illustrated by Figure 5.7 below.

Figure 5.6: Gender Differences in the Occupational Distribution of School Leavers in Employment May 2006 (All in Employment)

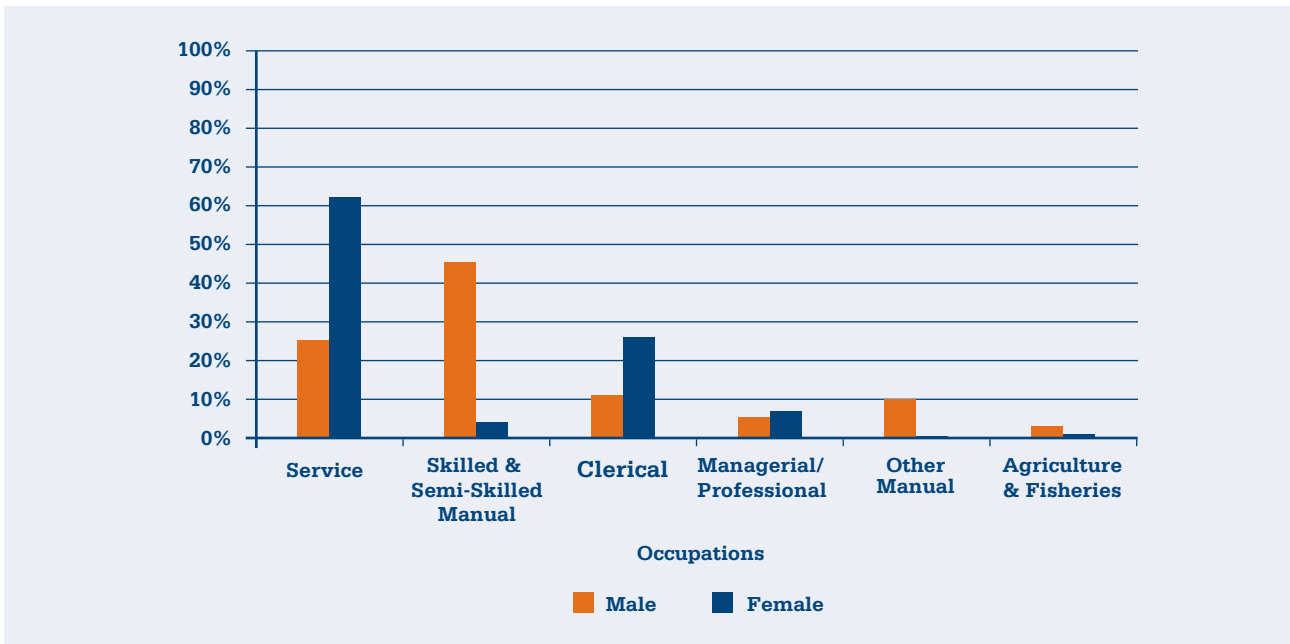


Figure 5.7: Gender Differences in the Occupational Distribution of School Leavers in Employment May 2006 (All in Employment or Apprenticeship)

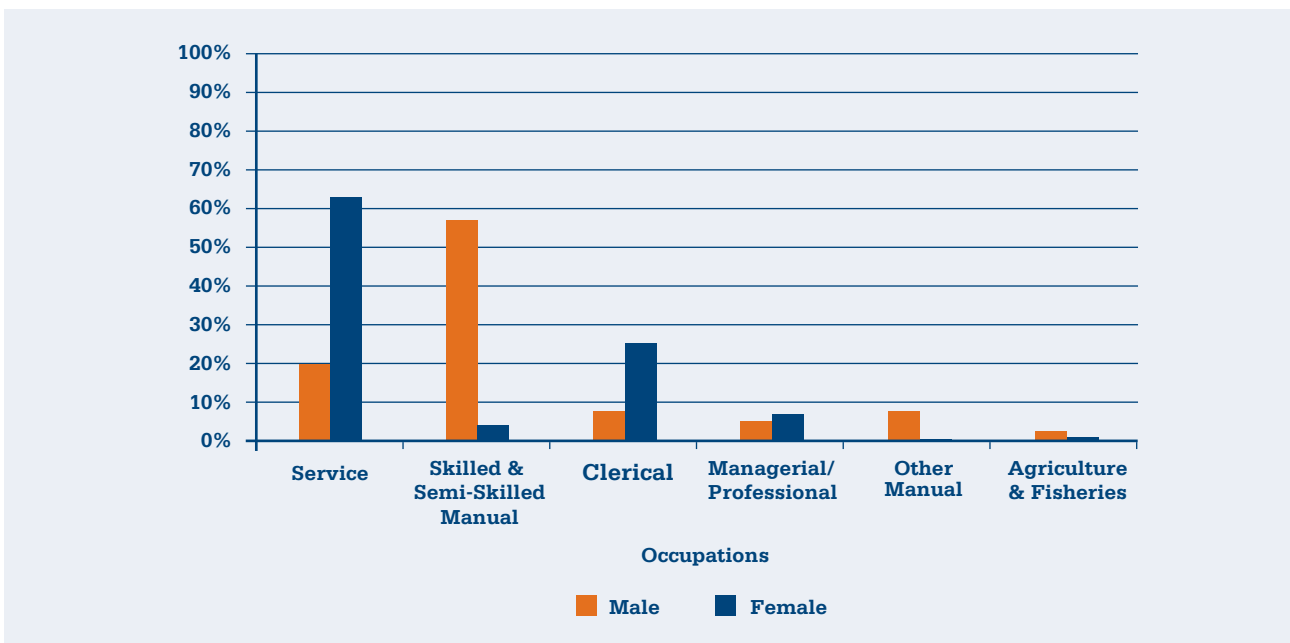


Table 5.6: Type of Work Undertaken by Male School Leavers in Employment, May 2002-2006

Occupation:	Male	Male	Male	Employed	Employed+ Apprenticeship
	May-02	May-04	May-05	May-06	May-06
Service	28.1	27.7	18.1	25.2	20
Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	48.9	54	62.5	45.4	57
Clerical	6.9	6.0	9.2	11.1	7.7
Managerial/Professional	6.6	4.5	4.3	5.3	4.9
Other Manual	6.5	5.2	3.3	9.9	7.8
Agriculture & Fishery	3.0	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.6
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	19,461	16,634	16	8,995	12,880

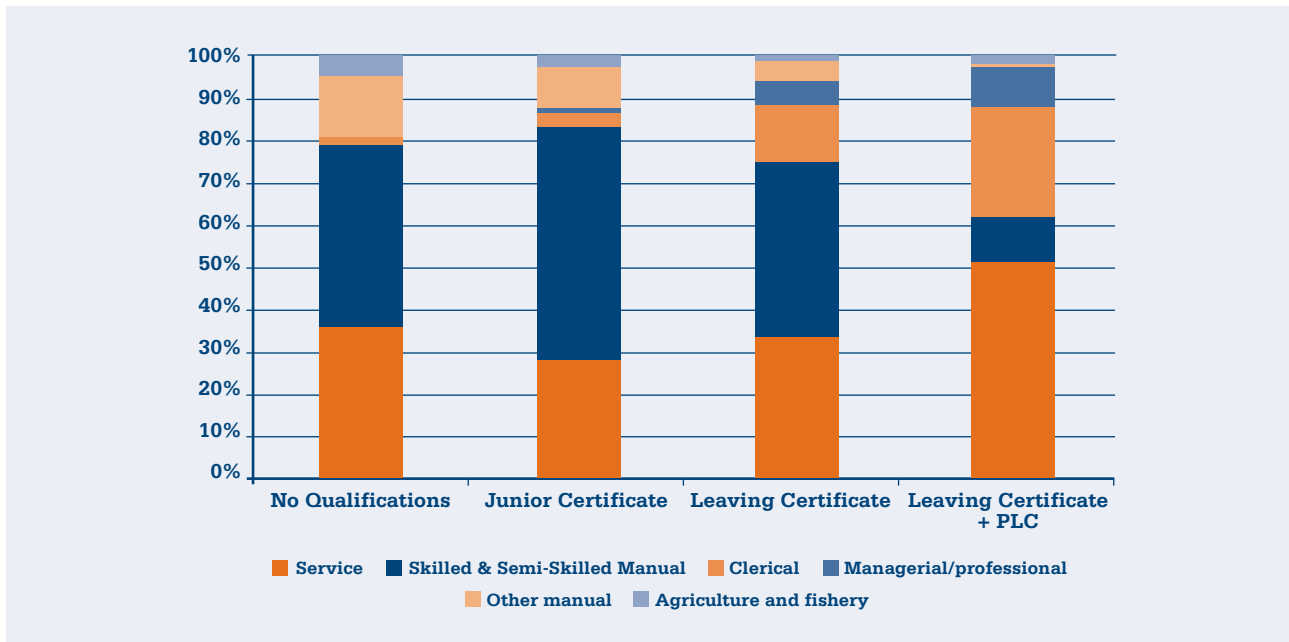
Table 5.7: Type of Work Undertaken by Female School Leavers In Employment May 2002-2006

Occupation:	Female	Female	Female	Employed	Employed + Apprenticeship
	May 2002	May 2004	May 2005	May 2006	May 2006
Service	55.6	67.1	59.0	62.2	63.0
Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	8.0	4.5	8.4	4.2	4.2
Clerical	27.4	21.0	22.7	26.2	25.3
Managerial/Professional	6.8	5.0	7.6	6.7	6.7
Other Manual	1.8	1.1	0.6	0.2	0.2
Agriculture & Fishery	0.5	1.3	1.7	0.5	0.5
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	14,296	12,021	11,969	8,038	8,316

5.4.2 Variation by Educational Attainment

Variations in the occupational distribution of school leavers according to second-level educational attainment are illustrated in Figure 5.8. As in recent School Leavers' Surveys, skilled and semi-skilled manual occupations are the jobs in which the majority of 2004/05 school leavers who left school without a Leaving Certificate qualification were employed (when the definition of employment includes apprenticeships). By May 2006, 43.2 per cent of school leavers who left school without any qualifications and 55.2 per cent who left school with a Junior Certificate qualification were employed in these occupations. 41.3 per cent of school leavers who left school with a Leaving Certificate qualification were also concentrated in semi-skilled manual occupations while just 10 per cent of those who left school with a Leaving Certificate and a PLC qualification were concentrated in these occupations. Over 50 per cent of school leavers who left school with a Leaving Certificate and a PLC qualification were found in service occupations. This group also had the highest representation in managerial and professional occupations while entry into agricultural and fishery jobs tended to be higher among school leavers without any qualifications or a Junior Certificate as in other years

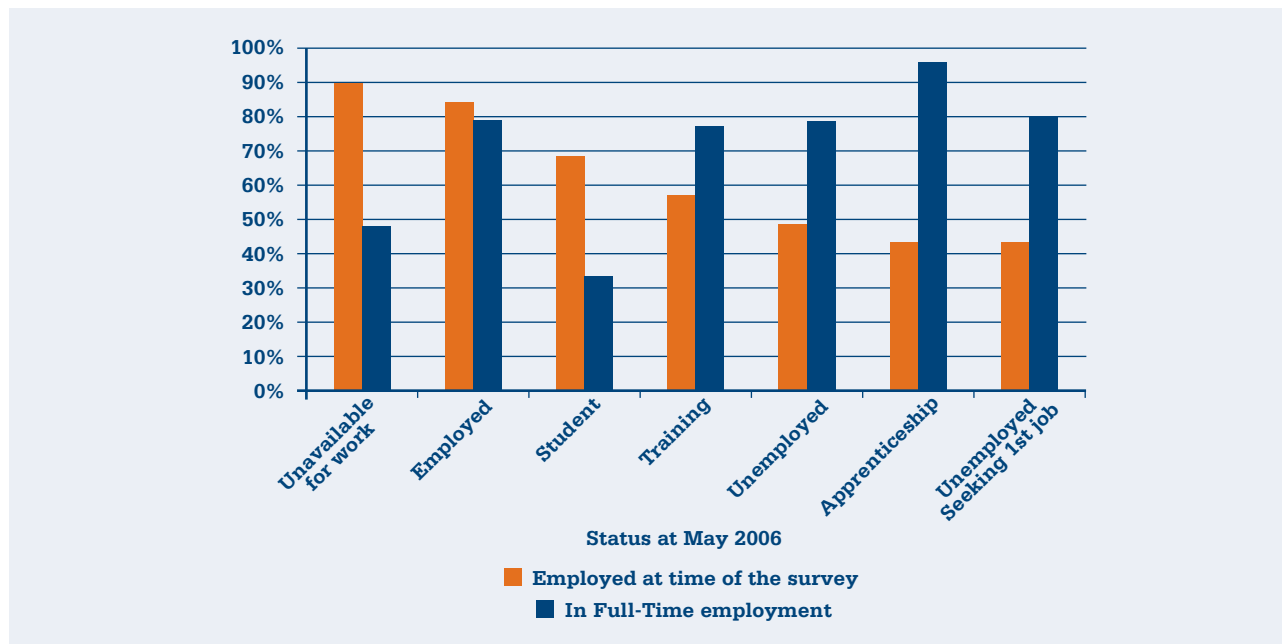
Figure 5.8: Type of Work Undertaken by School Leavers Who Left School in 2004/05 by Educational Attainment (all School Leavers in Employment or Apprenticeship)



5.5 Changing Status Between May 2006 and the Time of the Survey

We now consider the changing status of school leavers between May 2006 and the time of the survey, placing particular emphasis on school leavers in employment at the time of the survey (20-26 months after leaving school). Figure 5.9 illustrates the percentage of school leavers who were in (1) employment and (2) the percentage of school leavers who were in employment in full-time jobs at the time of the survey according to their status in May 2006. In all 73 per cent of school leavers reported being in employment by the time of the survey 20-26 months after leaving school, of these 91 per cent were in full-time employment. Figure 5.9 illustrates that employment levels were particularly high among those who were in employment in May 2006, with over 80 per cent remaining in employment between these two time points. Furthermore, we find that a significant proportion of school leavers who were in education or training in May 2006 had made the transition to employment by the time of the survey – 69 per cent and 57 per cent respectively.

Figure 5.9: Percentage of School Leavers in Employment and among those Percentage in Full-Time Employment at the Time of the Survey by Economic Status in May 2006



Just under 50 per cent of school leavers who were unemployed in May 2006 having given up a previous job had made the transition to employment by the time the survey was conducted. Among those almost three-quarters were in full time employment. The transition to employment was lower among those who were unemployed seeking their first job in May 2006. Just over 40 per cent of school leavers in apprenticeships were in employment at the time of the survey. The following sections now consider the other employment characteristics among those in employment at the time of the survey.

5.6 Further Employment Characteristics Among those in Employment at the Time of the Survey

Participants in the 2007 School Leavers' Survey were asked a number of additional questions about their labour market status, including questions relating to their membership of a trade union, their job security and their participation in employer-provided education/training if they were in employment at the time of the survey.

5.6.1 Trade Union Membership

Overall 15 per cent of 2004/05 school leavers who were in employment at the time of the survey were members of a trade union, representing a stable participation rate in Trade Union membership based on what was reported last year. Trade union participation is highest among those in full-time employment. In line with last year there is no significant gender variation in trade union membership, as illustrated in Figure 5.10.

Figure 5.10: Trade Union Membership of School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey, 2007

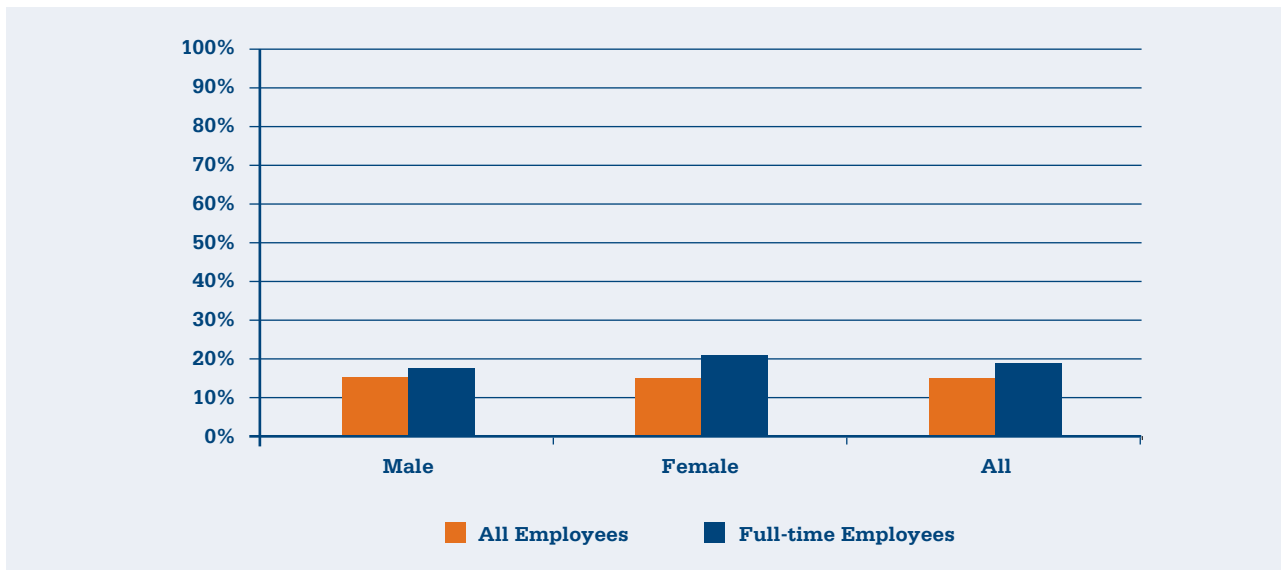
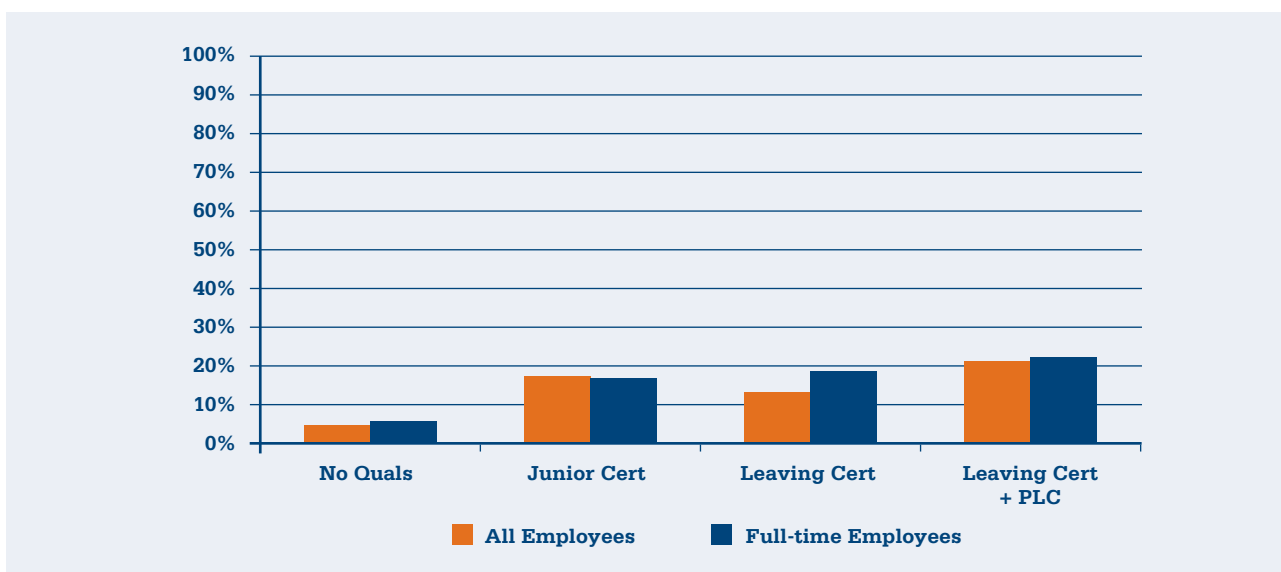


Figure 5.11 illustrates that trade union membership does, however, vary quite dramatically across educational groups, with higher levels of participation among school leavers who achieved higher levels of second-level education, and this pattern is particularly evident among full-time employees. Levels of trade union membership are particularly low among those who left school prior to sitting the Junior Certificate examination.

Figure 5.11: Trade Union Membership of School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey by Level of Education, 2007



5.6.2 Job Security

School leavers who were in employment at the time of the survey were asked 'How secure do you feel your job is? In all, 45 per cent felt that their job was 'very secure'. An additional 45 per cent indicated that they felt it was 'fairly secure', leaving just 10 per cent feeling that their current job was 'insecure', as outlined in Table 5.8. Females continue to be more likely to report that their job is insecure relative to males.

Table 5.8: Extent to Which School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey Feel Secure in their Job, 2006 and 2007

Job Security:	2006			2007		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
"Very Secure"	48.3	44.9	46.6	45.4	44.7	45.1
"Fairly Secure"	44.5	46.0	45.2	46.2	43.7	45.0
"Insecure"	7.3	9.1	8.2	8.4	11.6	9.9

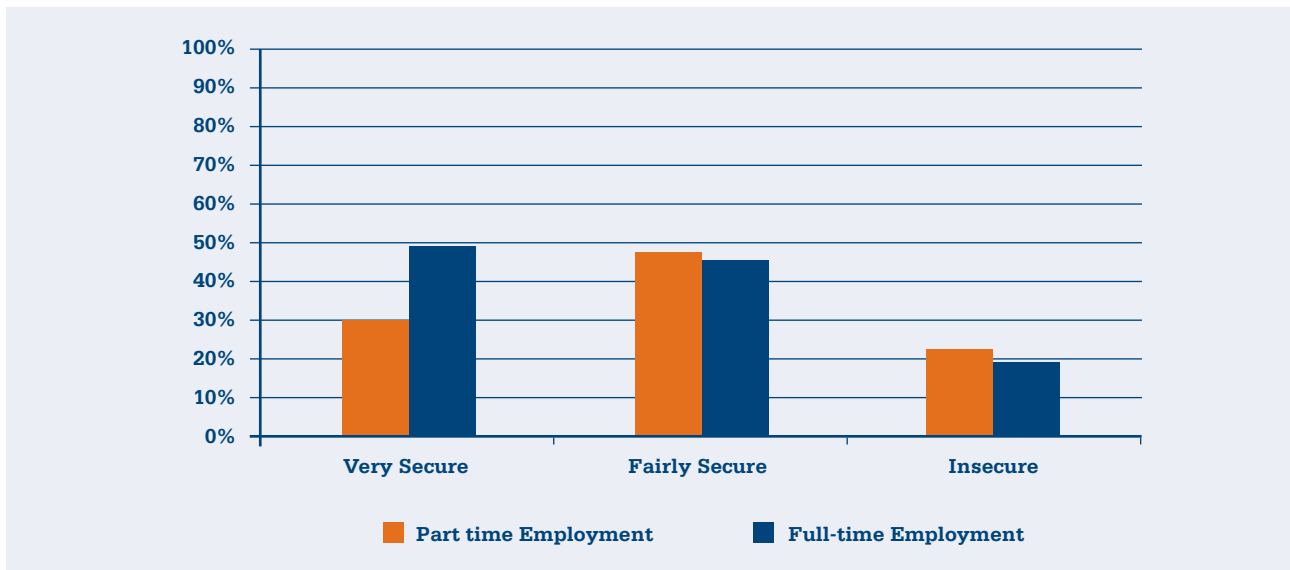
Table 5.9 shows differences in school leavers' feelings of job security according to their educational attainment. School leavers who left school with a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate qualification are the groups most likely to feel 'very secure' in their job. This compares to just 34 per cent of those who left school without having sat an official examination, significantly more of whom feel 'fairly secure' and 'insecure' in their current position.

Table 5.9: Extent to Which School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey Feel Secure in their Job by Level of Education, 2007

Job Security:	No Qualifications	Junior Certificate	Leaving Certificate	Total
"Very Secure"	34.3	46.7	45.0	45.1
"Fairly Secure"	54.4	42.6	45.2	45.0
"Insecure"	11.3	10.7	9.8	9.9

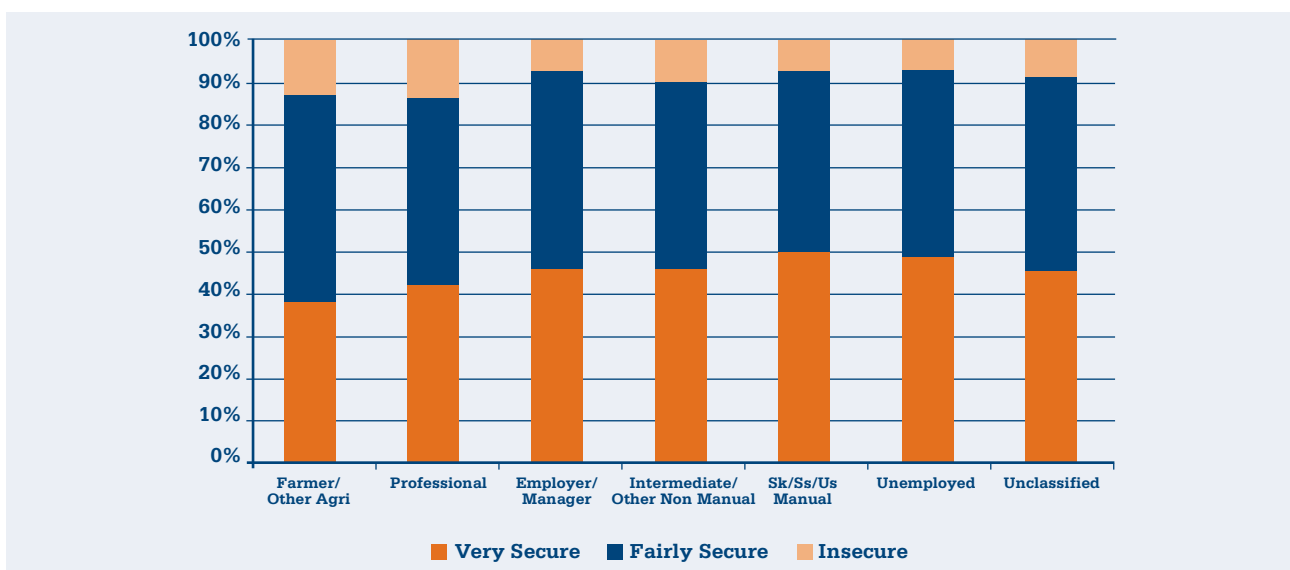
Figure 5.12 illustrates job security according to job type, specifically for those in full-time employment versus part-time employment. A higher proportion of school leavers in full-time employment at the time of the survey recorded feeling 'very secure' in their job relative to school leavers in part-time employment. Furthermore, a greater share of school leavers in part-time employment recorded feeling 'insecure' about their job relative to those in full-time employment.

Figure 5.12: Extent to Which School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey Feel Secure in their Job by Conditions of Employment, 2007



Finally, Figure 5.13 illustrates school leavers' feelings of job security according to their socio-economic background. What is particularly evident is that the vast majority of school leavers from all socio-economic backgrounds felt either very secure or fairly secure about their job, reflecting the favourable economic conditions for school leavers at the time.

Figure 5.13: Extent to Which School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey Feel Secure about their Job by Parental Socio-Economic Background, 2007



5.6.3 Employer-Provided Education/Training

Over 30 per cent of the 2004/05 school leaver cohort in employment at the time of the survey indicated that they had received (paid) employer-provided education/training in the last year in their job. As shown in Figure 5.14 gender variations are apparent with females being less likely to be in receipt of such training. When we consider whether such training was complete or continuing, males are more likely to indicate that their training was still continuing at the time of the survey (Figure 5.15).

Figure 5.14: Employer-Provided Education/Training Received by School Leavers in Employment in the past year (All Employees) (2007)

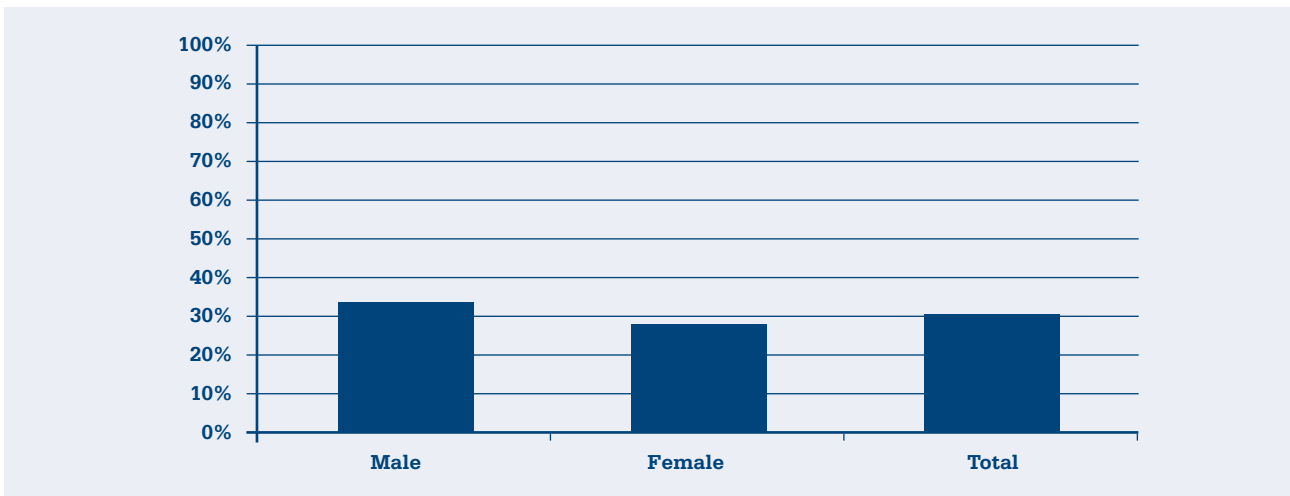
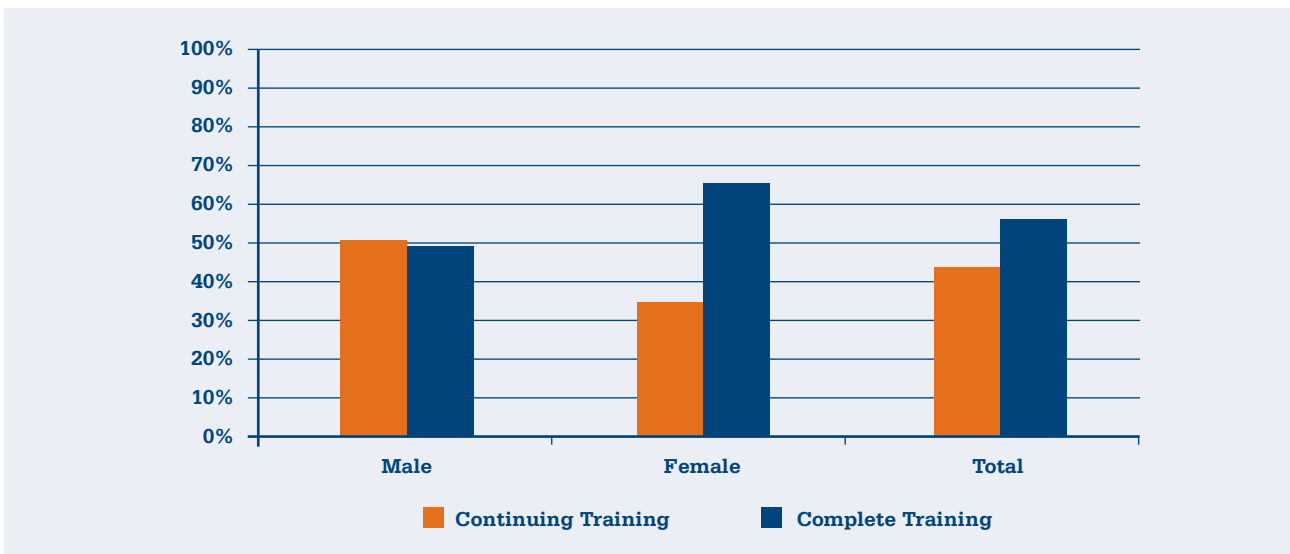
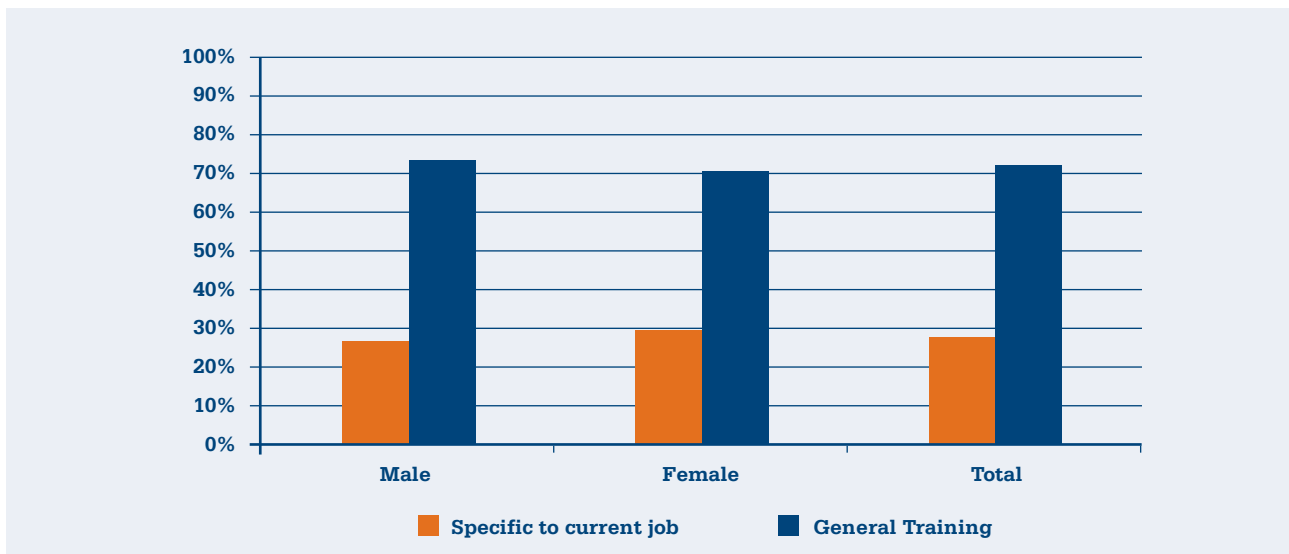


Figure 5.15: Employer-Provided Education/Training Received by School Leavers in Employment at the Time of the Survey (2007) - Continuing or Complete



The respondents who received employer-provided education/training were asked if they felt the knowledge and skills that they had acquired during the course of their education/training was of use to them in their current job only or whether it would be of use to them in getting a job with another employer. In the labour economics literature on employer-provided training these two types of training are distinguished with the former referred to as 'specific' training and the latter 'general' training (Becker 1975). We adopt the same terminology for the current discussion.

Figure 5.16: Employer-Provided Education/Training Specific to Current Job or General, 2007



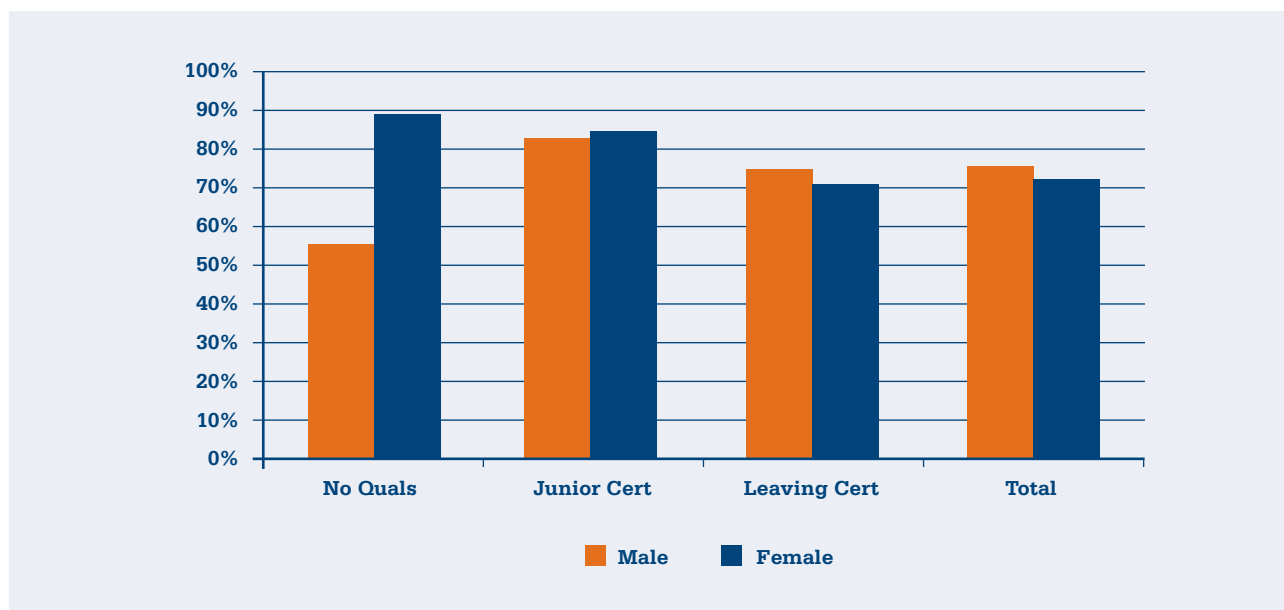
In total 70 per cent of the school leavers who received employer-provided education/training felt their training was general and, therefore, of use to them in getting a job with another employer, while 30 per cent felt that the education and training was more specific to their current job. While this finding runs counter to the expectations of the Human Capital approach, it is in line with the findings of other research on training patterns (see O'Connell 2007). As illustrated by Figure 5.16, and in line with results last year, a higher proportion of females felt the education/training that they had received was specific to their current job, one-third of females relative to 27 per cent of males.

5.6.4 Satisfaction with Present Economic Situation

Overall, 72 per cent of respondents in employment at the time of the survey indicated that they were satisfied with their current economic situation. While not shown here, males in employment are slightly more likely to indicate that they are satisfied with their current situation, although the gender difference is not statistically significant. When examined according to educational attainment, it is clear that those who left school prior to completing the Junior Certificate (i.e. those without any qualifications) are substantially less likely to be satisfied

with their current economic situation relative to those with higher levels of qualification. Figure 5.17 illustrates satisfaction levels across the educational groups: almost one third of those who leave school unqualified are satisfied relative to over 80 per cent or over 70 per cent respectively of those who secure either Junior or Leaving Certificate qualifications. It is interesting to note that male school leavers who leave school pre-Junior Certificate are particularly less likely to be satisfied with their current employment situation, reflecting their high unemployment risk as shown in Chapter 4.

Figure 5.17: Percentage of School Leavers Satisfied with their Present Economic Situation by Gender and Educational Level Achieved (2007)

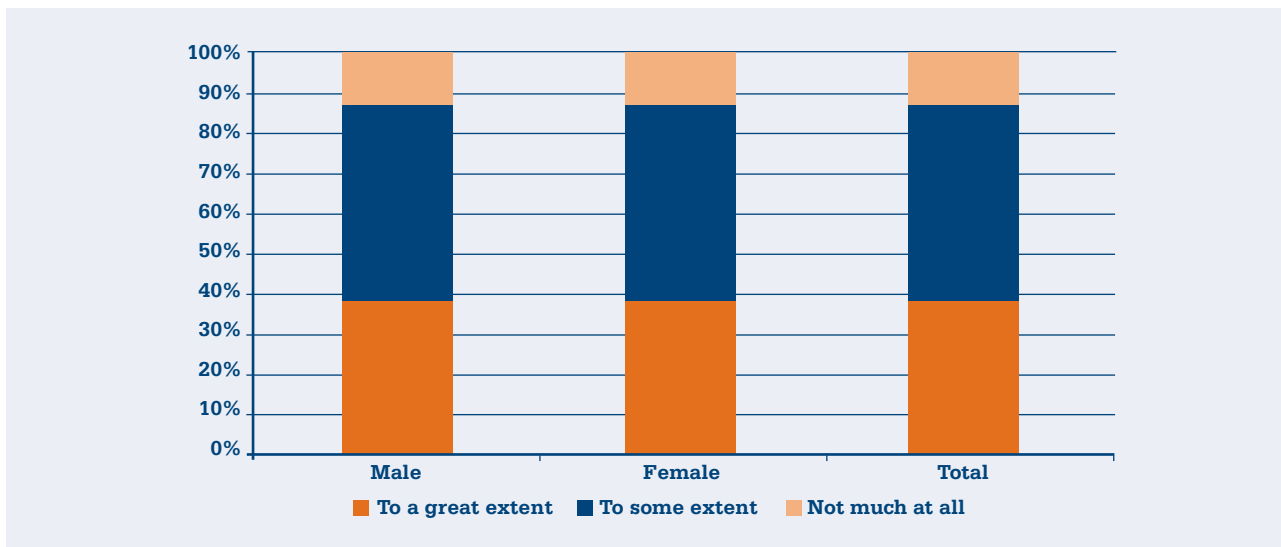


5.7 Relationship Between Education/Training and Job

5.7.1 Perception of Usefulness of Education/Training for the Job

Participants in the 2007 School Leavers' Survey, who were in employment at the time of the survey, were asked some questions about the relationship between their education and training and their current job. First, they were asked to what extent they used the knowledge and skills acquired during the course of their education and training in their job and, second, to what extent they considered their current job appropriate to their level of education. Figure 5.18 illustrates that overall 39 per cent of employed school leavers felt they used the knowledge and skills they had acquired during the course of their education and training 'to a great extent', with 12 per cent indicating that they did not use these skills 'much at all'.

Figure 5.18: Extent to Which the Knowledge and Skills Acquired in the Course of Education and Training is Used in Current Job (2007)



Also illustrated in Figure 5.18, there is little difference by gender in the extent to which school leavers feel they use their knowledge and skills in their job. However, differences are apparent across educational groups as shown in Figure 5.19, with school leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate and subsequently entered employment more likely to feel they do not use the knowledge and skills they acquired during their education in their job in contrast to young people who left school early.

Figure 5.19: Extent to Which the Knowledge and Skills Acquired in the Course of Education and Training is Used in Current Job by Educational Level (2007)

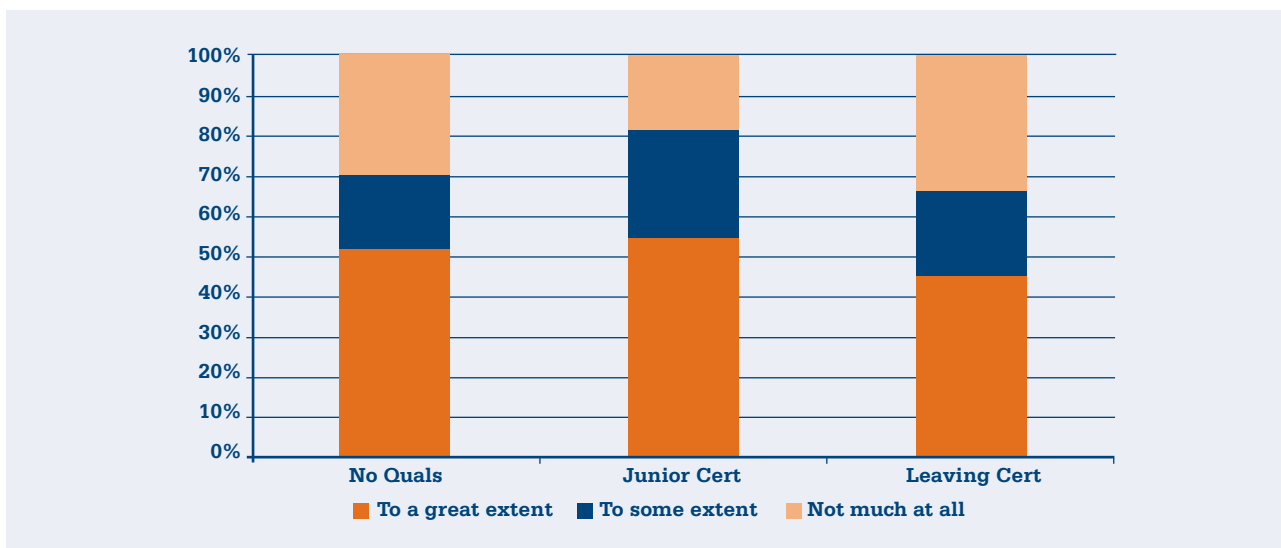
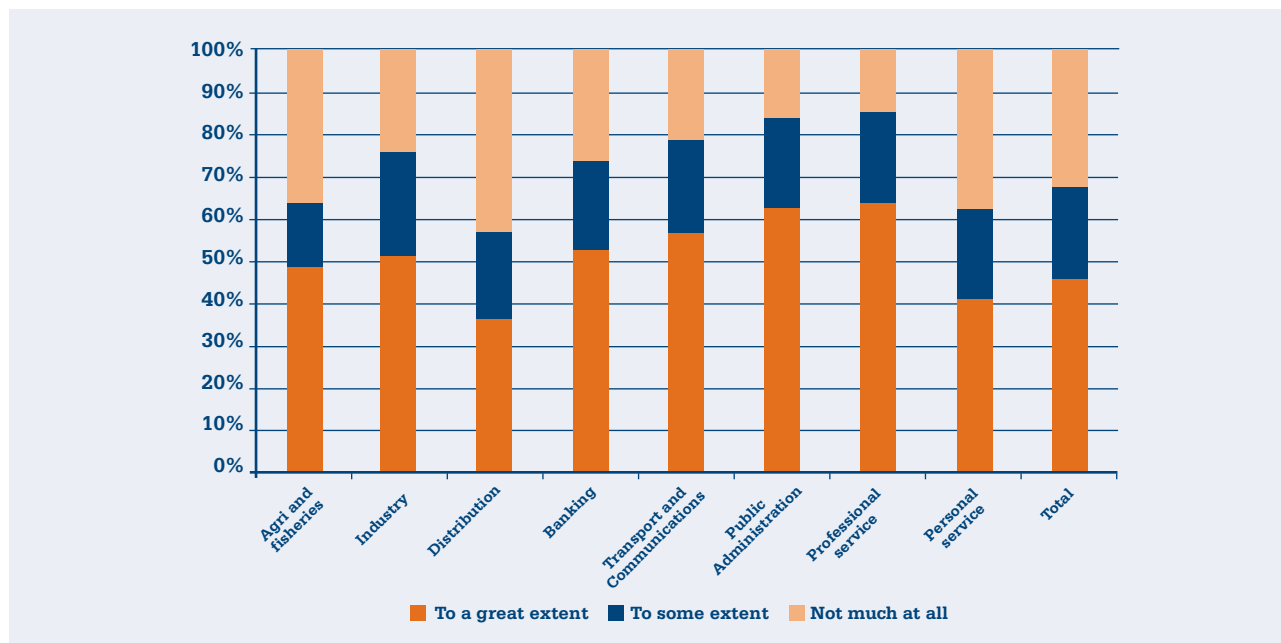


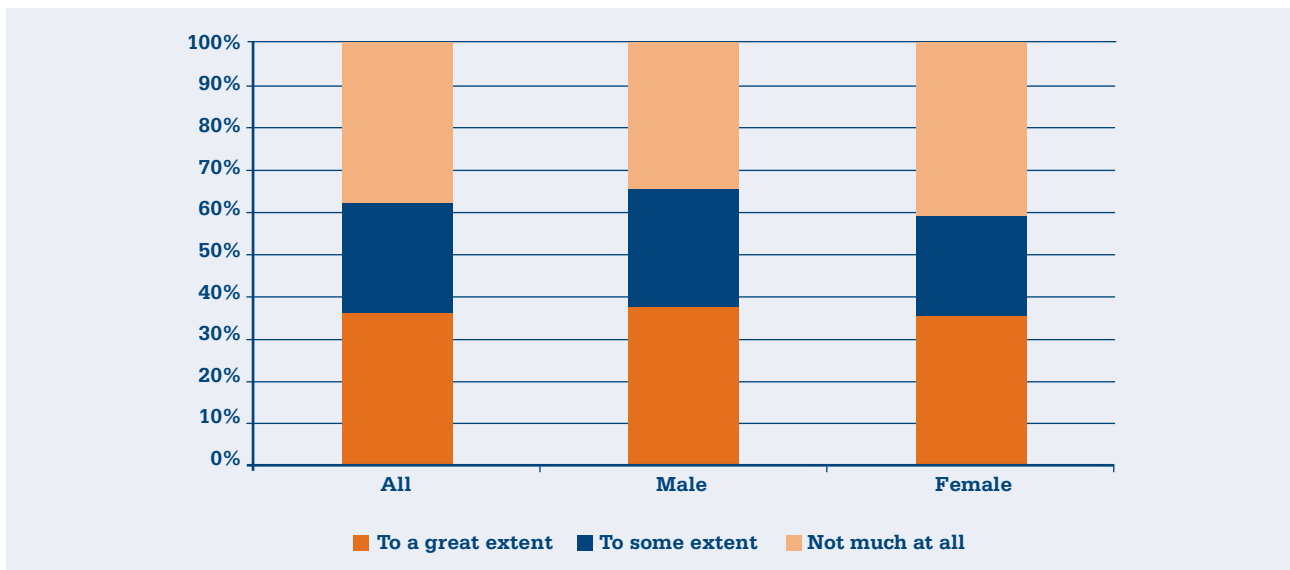
Figure 5.20 also illustrates that there is considerable variation across sub-groups of school leavers with regard to the sector in which they are employed. School leavers working in public administration and professional services sectors emerge as the group who use the skills they developed through their education and training to the greatest extent, with over 60 per cent expressing such a view. More than half of those employed in industry, banking and transport and communications sectors also expressed that they use the skills they developed through their education and training in their current job. However, school leavers employed in agriculture, distribution and personal services sectors were more likely to express that they do not use their knowledge and skills acquired in their education/training in their current employment, indicating that they used their skills 'not much at all'.

5.20: Extent to which the Knowledge and Skills Acquired in the Course of Education and Training is Used in Current Job by Work Sector, 2007

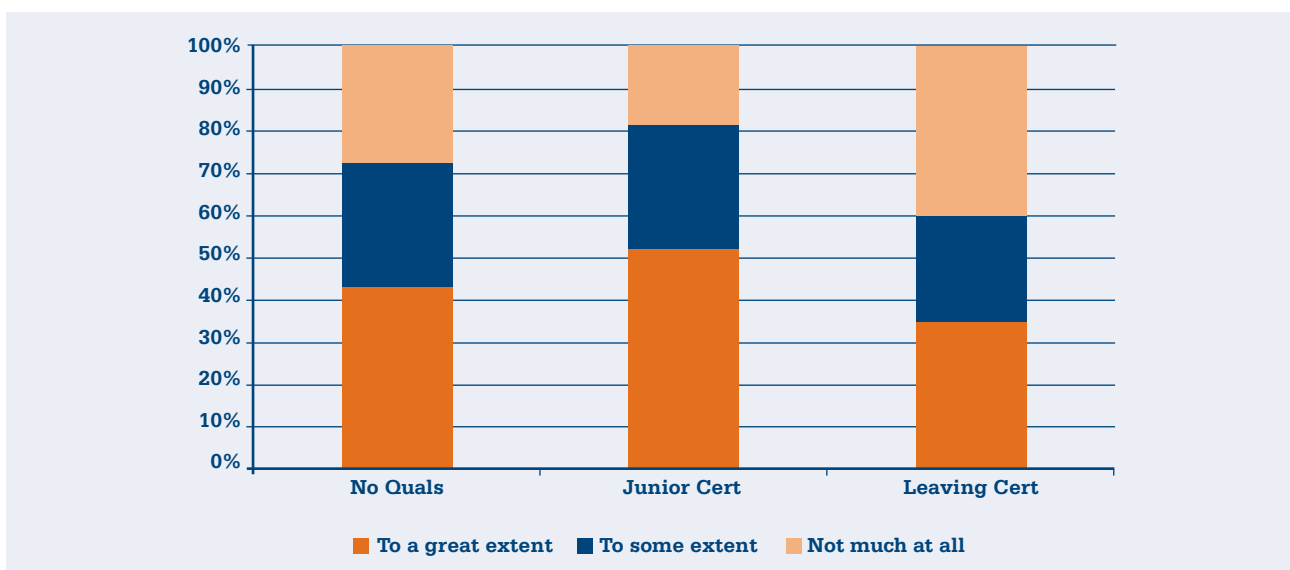


5.7.2 Perception of Job-Education Match

Just over one-third of the 2004/05 school leaver cohort who were in employment at the time of the survey felt their current job was appropriate to their level of education, with a similar proportion maintaining that their job was not appropriate to their level of education. As illustrated in Figure 5.21, a higher proportion of female respondents felt their job was not very appropriate to their level of education, 41 per cent of females relative to 35 per cent of males.

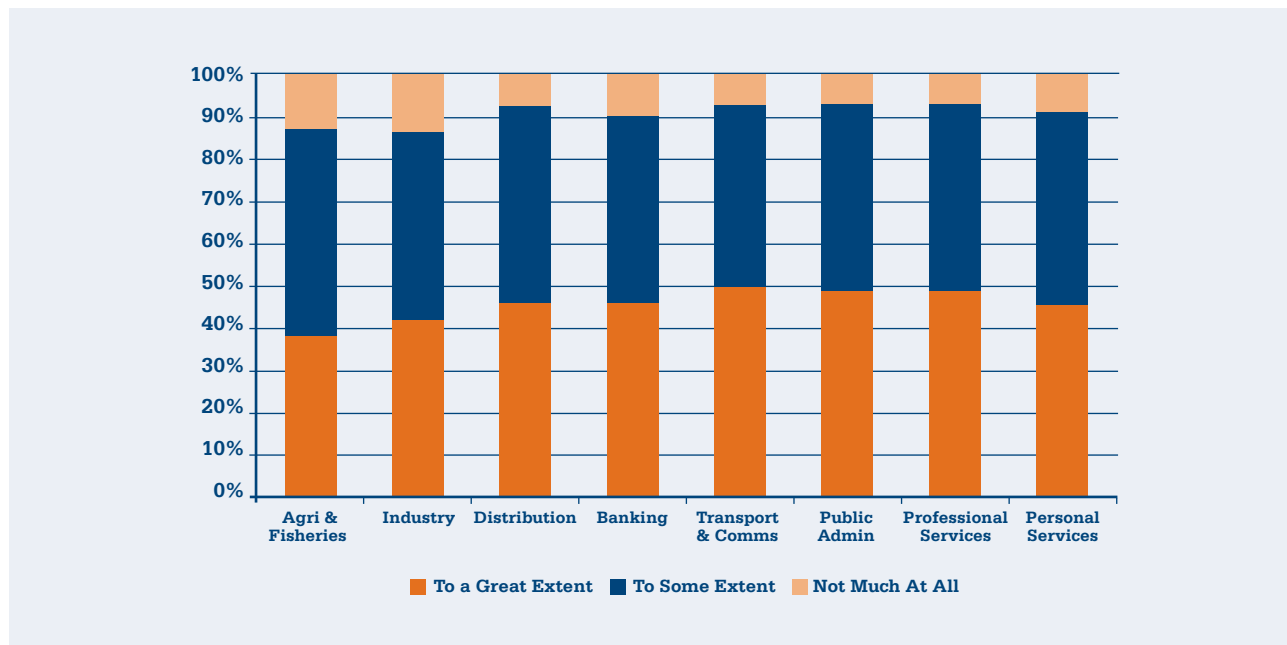
Figure 5.21: Extent to which Current Job is Appropriate to Level of Education by Gender, 2007

Again we find wide differences across educational groups, with school leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) far more likely to feel that their job was not very appropriate to their level of education, as shown in Figure 5.22. While 40 per cent of the Leaving Certificate group consider that their job is not appropriate to their level of education, less than 20 per cent of those whose highest qualification is the Junior Certificate similarly rate their employment not appropriate to their level of education (Figure 5.22).

Figure 5.22: Extent to which Current Job is Appropriate to Level of Education by Educational Level Achieved at Second Level, 2007

Finally, Figure 5.23 illustrates variations across industrial sectors, with young people employed in public administration considerably more likely to consider their job appropriate to their level of education. Conversely, those employed in distribution and agriculture are least likely to feel that their current job is appropriate to their level of education.

Figure 5.23: Extent to Which Current Job is Appropriate to Level of Education by Work Sector, 2007



6 ■ SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings from the 2007 Survey of School Leavers representing school leavers who left the second-level education system between September 2004 and August 2005. For the first time, the school leavers' survey adopted a multi-mode survey methodology whereby respondents were given four response options; to respond online, to complete the survey themselves and return by post, to complete the survey by telephone or through the traditional face-to-face interview mode. As expected, young people who left school prior to Leaving Certificate level were less likely to respond to the initial web phase of the survey. Subsequent rounds adopting the other methodologies allowed for correction of any non-response bias across groups and ensured the target sample was achieved in terms of overall numbers, gender and educational composition. Analyses revealed wide variations in response mode across school leavers differentiated by, for example, educational level and social background. These findings illustrate the disadvantage of relying exclusively on web completion (or self-completion more generally) and point to the importance of multiple modes in achieving a representative sample. This chapter serves to summarise some of the main findings of the 2007 School Leavers' Survey. The overall response rate was 54 per cent, and the results were re-weighted to render them representative of the national population of school leavers in 2004-05.

6.2 Educational Attainment

Educational attainment patterns show some improvement over time in overall retention levels. In total 86 per cent of school leavers in 2007 completed the Leaving Certificate or equivalent, while for 12 per cent the Junior Certificate represented the last official second-level exam sat. Just 2 per cent of the cohort left school prior to sitting the Junior Certificate examination. As in previous years, males are considerably over-represented among those who leave school prior to completion of the Leaving Certificate, with 10 per cent of females relative to 18 per cent of males leaving prior to this benchmark, which could be considered the minimum requirement for accessing many post-school education and training opportunities. Alongside improved second-level completion levels, young people leaving school prior to the Junior Certificate are more likely to leave school in their third year as opposed to second year. Hence, overall retention levels and junior cycle retention levels have improved. Among those leaving school before completion, school factors and economic or work factors are the most prominent factors influencing their decision.

Educational retention continues to strongly mirror social background, while type of Leaving Certificate programme followed also reflects some degree of social differentiation. Participation in the Transition Year programme is highest among those who achieve higher grades in the Junior Certificate examination and, in line with a selective participant profile, Leaving Certificate results are higher among those who had participated in

the programme, with those who achieved four or more honours, markedly more likely to have participated in the programme. Participation in part-time employment remains central to young people's lives, with employment levels peaking in fifth year. A sizeable proportion of school leavers engage in paid work during the school week, and males are more likely to work on weekdays and to work at a young age.

In reflecting on their school experiences and the contribution of their schooling to a range of skills, school leavers highlight some important issues. As expected, those who left school early are far more critical of their school experiences and are, for example, more negative about the level of support they received from their teachers. In assessing the contribution of their schooling to a range of skills, school leavers are most positive about the reading, writing and communication skills provided. They are, however, less positive about the benefits of their schooling in preparing them for the world of work, preparing them for adult life and providing them with computer skills.

6.3 Post-School Education and Training

In considering the post-school pathways of school leavers, the Further Education and state-sponsored training sectors are serving similar functions for female and male school leavers, respectively. Participants in the PLC programme continue to be predominantly female, while entrants to the state-sponsored training sector are overwhelmingly male. Entrants to PLC courses are less likely to come from more 'advantaged' backgrounds, with these courses more likely to draw young people from intermediate/other non-manual backgrounds. The typical entrant to the PLC programme is someone who performed moderately well in the Leaving Certificate examination, with females who achieved 1-3 'honours' in the examination particularly likely to pursue a PLC course. Conversely, males are much more likely to enter state-sponsored training programmes, although in this case those whose highest qualification is the Junior Certificate examination have highest participation levels. Furthermore, while those from non-manual backgrounds were most likely to progress to PLC courses, entry to training programmes is highest among those from unemployed and manual backgrounds.

Entry to higher education in contrast continues to be highest among those from more advantaged backgrounds, although overall rising participation rates appear to have coincided with some reduction in differentials across social groups. Progression to higher education continues to strongly reflect performance in the Leaving Certificate examination, while females continue to have higher levels of progression than their male counterparts, partly reflecting their higher rates of school completion and higher performance levels in the Leaving Certificate examination.

6.4 Economic Status of School Leavers

As with previous school leaver surveys, the economic status of school leavers who left school during the

academic year 2003/04 was considered twelve months after leaving school. A new economic status category was added to this year's survey, allowing young people on apprenticeships to be identified as a separate group (in previous surveys these young people have been classified as being 'in employment').

As in previous years school leavers are largely concentrated in the higher/further education sector and employment sector, and this pattern holds true for both males and females. As expected the share of females entering post-school education is higher than that for males, and the gender gap in entry to post-school education seems to be on the increase. As expected, the share of males entering apprenticeships is considerably higher than that for females, indicating the gendered nature of apprenticeship as a transition from school. Employment and unemployment levels are similar for males and females and this represents a departure from previous trends. Employment levels seem to have decreased for this cohort of school leavers, however, the change in definition of employment – the removal of young people in apprenticeships from the employment category – is likely to explain this decrease. When the share of school leavers in apprenticeships and employment are taken together, we find that employment levels have increased marginally among this cohort of school leavers. Inactivity levels among school leavers remain persistent relative to school leavers in previous years and are particularly evident among females. These trends have also been considered in relation to long-term trends and implications of the change in definition in the most recent survey.

The 2007 School Leavers' Survey suggests that the 2006 labour market participation rate of school leavers has declined to 43 per cent (when apprentices are not included as labour force participants). When apprentices are included as labour force participants as in previous years of the survey, the labour market participation rises to 50 per cent, which is similar to the rate of previous years. It is likely that the labour market participation rate of school leavers has been overstated in previous years because of the inclusion of apprenticeships in the definition of employment. Furthermore, when apprentices are included in the definition of labour market participants, the unemployment rate stands at 10 per cent while the corresponding rate when apprentices are not included is 12 per cent.

As with previous surveys, the relationship between educational attainment and economic status remains strong. That is, school leavers who leave school without any qualifications experience the highest levels of unemployment and the lowest levels of employment, even in favourable economic conditions. While the gap between the unemployment rates of school leavers with different levels of education persists, the unemployment rate ratio – the gap between those with no second level qualification and those with a Leaving Certificate qualification – has declined.

6.5 Employment Characteristics

In terms of the industry in which school leavers are employed, distribution and industry account for the bulk of these young people, although the share of school leavers in jobs in the distribution sector has grown quite considerably. This partly reflects the re-classification of apprentices in the current report, the majority of whom are located within the industry sector. With regard to occupational sector, manual employment continues to account for the largest proportion of school leavers, with a fall-off evident in the proportions entering jobs in the service occupations since 2004.

When we consider other characteristics of school leavers' employment, we find most young people are generally satisfied with their economic situation and feel secure in their job. Nearly one-in-five are members of a trade union, an increase on last year's figures, and 30 per cent report having received employer-provided education or training in the last year.

7 ■ REFERENCES



7. REFERENCES

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Appendices



APPENDIX A

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

List of Craft Apprenticeships

- Agricultural Mechanics
- Aircraft Mechanics
- Brick and Stonelaying
- Cabinetmaking
- Carpentry & Joinery
- Construction Plant Fitting
- Electrical
- Electrical Instrumentation
- Electronic Security Systems
- Farriery
- Fitting
- Floor & Wall Tiling
- Heavy Vehicle Mechanics
- Industrial Insulation
- Instrumentation
- Metal Fabrication
- Motor Mechanics
- Painting & Decorating
- Plastering
- Plumbing
- Print Media
- Refrigeration & Air Conditioning
- Sheet Metalworking
- Toolmaking
- Vehicle Body Repairs
- Wood Machining

Table A4.1: Economic Status of 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 Male and Female School Leavers One Year after Leaving Second Level Education – May 2004, 2005 and 2006

	2004 Males	2004 Females	2005 Males	2005 Females	2006 Males	2006 Females
Employed	43.9	34.5	44.1	39.0	38.0	36.9
Unemployed, After Loss of Job	4.7	3.6	2.9	1.9	3.7	3.2
Unemployed, Seeking First Job	2.9	2.3	5.0	3.7	1.7	1.9
Training	4.4	3.2	6.1	2.5	2.8	3.3
Student	40.2	49.3	38.1	45.6	36.8	45.8
Unavailable for Work	2.8	4.9	3.1	5.4	3.0	6.5
Emigrated	1.2	2.3	0.7	1.9	0.3	1.1
Apprenticeship					13.7	1.4
Total (Percentage)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (Number)	33,719	34,171	32,856	32,972	30,929	31,589

APPENDIX B

Sample Design, Weighting and Sampling Errors

Sample Design

Each Annual School Leavers' Survey is based on a national stratified random sample of school leavers, who are interviewed approximately one year to 18 months after leaving school. A school leaver is defined as someone who left full-time education in an official secondary, vocational, community or comprehensive school in the course of the previous academic year, i.e., the period September of t-3 to August of t-2 where t is the year the survey is being carried out. The present survey, conducted in 2007, covers those who left the second level system between September 2004 and August 2005. The majority of school leavers would have left school in June 2005.

As in 2006, the 2007 sample was selected as a stratified (by programme and gender) random sample of school leavers from a database provided for this purpose by the Department of Education and Science.¹²

Stratification was based on programme code and programme year and gender. As in previous years, the non-Leaving Certificate group was oversampled to provide a higher number of cases for analysis of their early labour market experiences.

Rows 1 and 2 of Table B1 below show the estimated numbers of leavers in each stratum and the size of the target field sample selected. Only those under age 25 years are included, as this is the group to which the present report refers.¹³

Fieldwork and Response

A multi-mode approach was taken to the fieldwork in 2007, an innovation to the survey which has been conducted by face-to-face interview in earlier years. The 2007 survey offered students the option to complete the survey by web,¹⁴ by post, by telephone or through face-to-face contact with an interviewer. As noted in Chapter 1, young people who left school prior to Leaving Certificate level were less likely to respond to the initial web phase of the survey. Subsequent rounds adopting the postal, phone and in person completion allowed for correction of any non-response bias across groups and ensured the target sample was achieved in terms of overall numbers and gender and educational composition.

¹² Prior to 2006, a two stage, random stratified design was used, with selection of schools at the first stage and pupils from the selected schools in the second stage. The schools were then requested to provide the contact details for the selected students.

¹³ Apart from PLC leavers, very few students are over age 25 years.

¹⁴ An incentive was offered to encourage school leavers to participate in the survey in the form of entry in a raffle.

For the telephone and face-to-face phases, trained interviewers, who were fully instructed on the survey, attempted to contact and interview those school leavers who had not self-completed by web or post.

Table B1 shows the details of response to the survey. The first row shows the numbers of school leavers who left at each stage. It excluded those over 25 years (mainly PLC leavers), those with an address while at school that was outside Ireland and an estimated number of 'ineligible' leavers. These are cases where, on contact, it emerged the student was still in school, had left school outside the reference period (i.e. before September 2004 or after August 2005) or was deceased.

The second row shows the total field sample and the third row shows the number of these who were 'ineligible'. It is clear that the 'ineligible' students were mainly concentrated in those leaving before the Leaving Certificate year.

Overall, the response rate achieved was 54 per cent, a substantial increase over the 46 per cent achieved in the 2006 survey. The response rate varied from 81 per cent among Leaving Certificate students to 20 per cent among those who left before the Junior Certificate. The low response rate in the latter category is mainly due to the large numbers of leavers and their families who had left the area and left no forwarding address (36 per cent).

The fifth row of Table B1 shows the sampling fraction in each stratum, i.e., the proportion of pupils sampled in each sub-group.¹⁵ This varies from 82 per cent of leavers with no qualifications to 3 per cent of those leaving with the Leaving Certificate. All the tables in the report have been re-weighted taking account of these sampling fractions to give unbiased estimates of the relevant population percentages, averages and totals.

¹⁵ This is the proportion selected for the field sample, after those ineligible were identified and excluded.

Table B1: Estimated Numbers of School Leavers under Age 25 Years in Various Categories and Details of Sample

	Stratum (Stage Left)					Total
	Before Junior Certificate year	Junior Certificate programme year	Leaving Certificate programme year 1	Leaving Certificate programme year 2	PLC programme	
No. in Population *	688	2,018	4,778	42,390	12,813	62,687
Total Field Sample	995	1008	724	1183	754	4,665
Not eligible **	434	245	90	65	94	928
Eligible Field Sample	562	763	634	1118	660	3,737
Sampling fraction	82%	38%	13%	3%	5%	6%
Achieved Sample	111	326	289	907	392	2,025
Response Rate	20%	43%	46%	81%	59%	54%
Of those completed, % completed by each mode						
Web self-completion	18%	23%	17%	66%	40%	44%
Postal self-completion	14%	15%	6%	15%	15%	14%
Telephone interview	10%	20%	30%	13%	27%	19%
Face-to-face interview	59%	42%	48%	6%	19%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Excludes those over age 25, VTOS students and students whose home address while at school was outside Ireland.

Note that the stratum refers to the programme and year in which the person left school: the examination might not have been taken.

* Number in population adjusted using estimates from survey of numbers of leavers' ineligible (still in school etc.).

** Ineligible = still in school, moved to another school, left school outside reference period, deceased.

The final panel of Table B1 shows the response achieved by each method. Overall, 44 per cent of the completed sample used the first mode offered, self-completion on the web, ranging from about one-fifth of those leaving in the Junior Certificate year or earlier to two-thirds of those leaving in the Leaving Certificate year. About one respondent in seven completed the survey by post, the second mode offered. Just under one-fifth completed by telephone and almost one-quarter completed in a face-to-face interview. In the telephone and face-to-face phases, a special emphasis was placed on reaching early leavers, as their response by web and post was very low. Thus, almost three-in-five of those completing the survey among those leaving before the Junior Certificate year and over two-in-five of those leaving in the Junior Certificate year completed through face-to-face interview.

Margins of Error for Key Statistics

Given the nature of the sample design, the calculation of sampling errors is quite complex. It was also felt that the presentation of the margin of error for all the figures given in the report would make it difficult to read. In order to give the reader an appreciation of the likely magnitude of the sampling errors involved, we carried out calculations for a number of the key percentages presented in the text and these are shown in Table B2. In the first of these examples, we show the margin of error (at the 95 per cent confidence interval) for the hypothetical case of a variable which was observed to have a value of 50 per cent in each stratum. The overall confidence interval is seen to be plus or minus 2 percentage points, i.e., given the observed value of 50 per cent in each stratum of the sample, there is a 95 per cent probability that the true value (in the population) lies in the range 48 to 52 per cent. The confidence interval is, of course, wider in the strata where the sample is smaller. Thus, the margin of error is 4 per cent in the stratum "Junior Certificate" where only 500 respondents were interviewed.

The other lines of Table B2 show similar figures for actual percentages observed in the survey. The first of these is the percentage of all leavers unemployed in May 2005. Here the margin of error varies from 1 per cent for the sample as a whole to 7 per cent for those leaving with no qualifications. The other three variables considered are based on sub-groups of the sample (those in the labour force, those at work and situations where the school leaver personally responded to the survey). Note that for sub-groups such as these the sampling errors tend to be larger. In general, readers should bear in mind that the sample size is relatively small for such sub-groups and that figures based on small sub-groups of the sample must be treated with great caution.

Table B2: Illustrative Sampling Errors by Self-Reported Highest Qualification of School Leavers Age 25 and Under (2007 Survey)

Illustrative Sampling Errors	No Qualifications	Junior Certificate	Leaving Certificate	Total
Illustrative Observed Percentage	50%	50%	50%	50%
Number of cases	175	500	1350	2025
Margin of error at 95% Confidence Level	7%	4%	3%	2%
Unemployment Level	27%	12%	4%	5%
N cases, all economic statuses	168	496	1345	2009
Margin of error at 95% Confidence Level	7%	3%	1%	1%
Unemployment Rate	48%	23%	9%	12%
N cases in labour market	93	237	517	847
Margin of error at 95% Confidence Level	10%	5%	2%	2%
Percentage Employed in Manufacturing	48%	55%	29%	33%
N cases employed	51	298	531	880
Margin of error at 95% Confidence Level	14%	6%	4%	3%
Percentage in Professional Services sector	0%	1%	5%	4%
N cases employed	51	298	531	880
Margin of error at 95% Confidence Level	0%	1%	2%	1%
Percentage Satisfied with Employment Situation	51%	72%	72%	72%
N cases responding	142	424	1129	1695
Margin of error at 95% Confidence Level	8%	4%	3%	2%

Note: Self-reported qualification may differ from stage left if the person did not take the exam at the end of the period.

Note: Unemployment level refers to the percentage of all leavers who are unemployed; unemployment rate refers to the percentage of leavers in the labour market who are unemployed.



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