



RETENTION RATES OF PUPILS IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS

1996 COHORT

September 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction and Methodology	1
Executive Overview 1996 Cohort	4
Chapter 1 Retention Rates for 1996 Cohort - General Trends	6
Chapter 2 Retention Rates and School Type	10
Chapter 3 Variation in Retention Rates	14
Chapter 4 Retention Rates by County	17
Chapter 5 Data on the Educational Attainment of young people in Ireland	21

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Title	Page
1.1	Retention Rates for each Milestone, 1994, 1995 and 1996 cohorts	7
1.2	Retention Rates 1991-1996 cohorts	8
1.3	Adjusted National Leaving Certificate Retention Rate, 1996 cohort	9
2.1	Distribution of 1996 cohort by School Type	10
2.2	Retention Rates by School Type and Sex, 1996 cohort	11
2.3	Retention to Junior Certificate Examination 'sits', 1991 - 1996 cohorts	11
2.4	Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 1991 - 1996 cohorts	12
2.5	Retention Rates for Each Milestones by School Type	12
3.1	Distribution of <u>Junior Certificate</u> Retention, 1995 and 1996 cohorts	15
3.2	Distribution of <u>Leaving Certificate Retention</u> , 1995 and 1996 cohorts	15
3.3	Fluctuations in Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 1995 and 1996 cohorts	16
4.1	Distribution of Junior Certificate Examination 'sits' by County (%)	17
4.2	Distribution of Leaving Certificate Retention Rates by County (%)	18
4.3	Retention Rates for each Milestone in County Dublin, 1995 and 1996 cohorts	19
5.1	Early School Leavers	22
5.2	Persons aged 20-24 who have attained at least the Leaving Cert. (or equivalent)	23

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Title	Page
1	Retention Rates for the 1996 cohort	7
2	Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 1996 cohort	10
3	Distribution of Leaving Certificate Retention Rates across all schools	14

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This is the second published report, by the Department of Education and Science, on school retention in Ireland. It is based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department's Post-Primary Pupils Database (PPPDB) for the cohort of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in each of 1996 and 1995. The first report covered the equivalent cohorts for 1994 and previous years.

The PPPDB gives the Department the capacity to track pupils at various stages through the second-level system. Together with State exams data, it provides a comprehensive picture of a pupil's movement through second-level education.

Individual pupil data are supplied by schools, using a unique pupil identifier. More recently, with the co-operation of the schools, the Department has been in a position to use the Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) as the means to identify and track pupils. As the use of the PPSN becomes more widespread, it will be possible to produce a more complete picture embracing avenues and options such as Youthreach and other programmes for early school leavers, apprenticeship, FAS, CERT and Teagasc training leading to awards under the National Framework of Qualification.

The methodology employed takes the cohort of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in 1996 (64,068) and tracks this cohort through each subsequent year of their participation in State-aided second-level schools. For comparison purposes, the same tracking exercise is undertaken for the 1995 cohort. Pupils are assigned to the school they first entered even though they may have subsequently changed school. Should two schools have amalgamated during the time under consideration, their pupils are assigned to the newly created school.

It is important to recognise that this report is limited in that it deals only with retention within the State-aided schooling system. It does not take account of important educational pathways outside this system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training and, in effect, pupils leaving school to undertake these programmes are treated as early school leavers for the purposes of this analysis.

It is also important to note that while the analysis allows for movement of pupils between schools, it does not enable the tracking of those who leave State-aided schools including publicly funded fee-paying schools and move to non-aided education providers. In the

absence of a comprehensive tracking system encompassing all providers of education, it is only possible to estimate these numbers. Persons availing of such options apply to sitⁱ the Leaving Certificate examination as external candidates, and thus are recorded by the State Examinations Commission. In 2001 and 2002, 2,800 and 3,050 persons respectively, sat at least 5 subjects in the Leaving Certificate as external candidates. This averages as approximately 2,930 in cohort terms. In the absence of precise data on the number of Irish external candidates sitting the L.C. for the **first time**, it was assumed that approximately 30% of the 2,930 above were either repeating the examination, or were foreign students and hence not in our original cohort. We therefore estimate that 2,050 of our 1996 cohort sat the examination for the first time in either 2001 or 2002. This estimate has been incorporated into the determination of a more accurate Leaving Certificate retention rate. However, analysis will be required in the future in association with the State Examinations Commission to provide a more precise estimate of those in the original cohort who subsequently sat the Leaving Certificate as external candidates.

The rate was further adjusted to allow for other factors such as emigration and death to account for pupils in the original cohort who left the country or died, in the period under consideration. Based on data from the Central Statistics Office, an adjustment of 260 was made for these factors.

These variables (private institutions, emigration and death) are included in the determination of the adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate, which corresponds to a final rate of 81.3 percent. A detailed profile of this is contained in Table 1.3 (Page 9).

The ESRI School Leavers Survey of 2000/01 leavers, published in December 2003, indicated that 36% of all unqualified leavers and some 28% of all Junior Certificate only leavers participated in various types of further training within the first year of leaving school. These types of training included Apprenticeship training, FAS, CERT, TEAGASC, Senior Traveller and Community Training Workshop programmes and Youthreach. The combined total of students transferring to such training represented about 5% of the total cohort completing school in 2000/01. In addition, other leavers participate in training programmes later than within one year of leaving school and are not picked up in the School Leavers' Survey. Feedback from the programmes for early school leavers indicates that the majority of early school leavers not in employment are reached over time. There was a major expansion of provision in second chance programmes for early school leavers following the 1998 mid term review of EU Structural Funds. At the end of 2004, there were 5,943 participants on such

ⁱ The term 'sits' is used to denote those pupils who sat and were graded in one of the State examinations

programmes in Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres and FAS funded Community Training Workshops. CSO data presented later in this report indicate that, in 2004, more than 85% of persons aged 20-24 in Ireland had attained upper second-level education (equivalent to Leaving Certificate) or higher.

It seems reasonable to assume that the ‘true’ retention rate, comparable to completion of upper second-level education, is higher than that shown in Table 1.3 below when participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school is considered. However, the extent of this difference is difficult to quantify (see the reference in Chapter 5 to the Quarterly National Household Survey data for more on this point).

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW 1996 Cohort

The analysis of the 1996 and 1995 school entry cohorts shows little change in overall retention rates since analysis began on the 1991 cohort. However, it is worth noting that retention rates in the VEC sector improved between the 1991 and 1996 cohorts.

Significant differences remained between:

- Females and males at national level (with a gap of 11.7 percentage points);
- Secondary, vocational, and community and comprehensive schools (with higher retention rates in secondary, community and comprehensive schools);
- Counties (with city areas having generally lower rates of retention).
- Junior and senior cycle (where the bulk of early school departure takes place just prior to the final year of the Leaving Certificate programme)

RETENTION TO LEAVING CERTIFICATE

- ▲ Of the 64,068 pupils who commenced the junior cycle programme in 720 schools in September 1996, 77.8 per centⁱⁱ completed the senior cycle and sat the Leaving Certificate examination (established or applied) in either 2001 or 2002 (58.5% and 41.5% respectively, of number sitting L.C.). This represents a decrease of 0.2 of a percentage point over the 1995 retention rate. Hence retention did not change significantly between the 1995 and 1996 cohorts. Indeed, the Leaving Certificate retention rate did not change significantly over the 5 cohorts analysed to date for this series of reports (see Table 1.2 below).
- ▲ When this rate is adjusted to allow for factors such as persons opting to pursue their senior cycle education in private institutions (*estimated 2,050*), and emigration and death (*estimated 260*), the adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate for the 1996 cohort was 81.3 per cent (compared to 81.8% for the 1994 cohort).
- ▲ The Leaving Certificate retention rates for males and females were 72.1 and 83.8 per cent respectively, pointing to a significant gender gap. An international comparison of graduation rates at upper second-level (Leaving Certificate equivalent) shows that this pattern of higher drop-out among boys is mirrored in many OECD countries, although only 4 countries have a gap as large as Ireland, where graduation rates for females exceed those for males by 12 percentage points.

ⁱⁱ Unless specified otherwise, the percentages quoted here have not been adjusted to allow for factors such as: those pupils who left the State-aided school system to pursue their senior cycle education in private institutions, emigration and death.

- ▲ The Leaving Certificate retention rates by school type were 82, 68 and 76 per cent for secondary, vocational, and community and comprehensive schools respectively.

RETENTION TO JUNIOR CERTIFICATE

- ▲ The retention rate to completion of the Junior Certificate examination 'sits' was 94.6 percent. This represents an increase of 0.2 of a percentage point over the equivalent rate for 1995.
- ▲ The retention rates for males and females were 93.4 and 95.8 per cent respectively.
- ▲ The Junior Certificate examination 'sits' rates by school type were 96, 91 and 93 per cent for secondary, vocational, and community and comprehensive schools respectively.

SCHOOL TRENDS

- ▲ If we exclude very small increases and, for example, only include increases of 2 percentage points or more, then 38 per cent of schools recorded an increase in their retention rates to the Leaving Certificate (see Table 3.3).

CHAPTER

1

Retention Rates for 1996 Cohort - General Trends

ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR 1996 COHORT

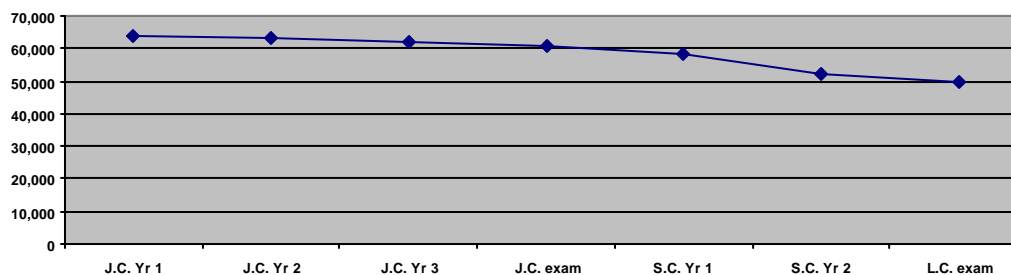
An analysis of the 1996 cohort shows (see also Figure 1):

- (a) **Junior Cycle, Year 1 cohort:** The number of pupils enrolled in the 720 second-level schools, engaged in the provision of the junior cycle, on 30th September 1996 was 64,068ⁱⁱⁱ (51% male, 49% female).
- (b) **Junior Cycle, Year 2 cohort:** The number of pupils progressing to the second year of the junior cycle was 63,223. This represented a decrease of 1.3 per cent on the initial cohort, with the largest decrease occurring amongst male pupils.
- (c) **Junior Cycle, Year 3 cohort:** The number of pupils entering year 3 of the junior cycle amounted to 61,948 pupils. This represented a retention rate, from year 1 to year 3, of 96.7 per cent. Again, the decrease on the initial cohort was larger among the male pupils, at 4.1 per cent compared to 2.4 per cent for females.
- (d) **Junior Certificate examination ‘sits’:** The number of pupils, who sat and were graded in at least one subject in the Junior Certificate examination, amounted to 60,597. This corresponds to 94.6 per cent of the initial cohort.
- (e) **Senior Cycle, Year 1:** In their first year of senior cycle, some pupils pursue the first year of the Leaving Certificate while others take the Transition Year Programme. This corresponds to a 2 and 3-year senior cycle respectively. The number of pupils continuing with their education into the senior cycle amounted to 58,360 (or 91.1% of the initial cohort).
- (f) **Senior Cycle, Year 2:** In their second year of senior cycle, some pupils pursue the second year of the Leaving Certificate while others take the first year of the Leaving Certificate (if they had taken the Transition Year Programme). The number of pupils in senior cycle year 2 was 51,936 (or 81.1% of the initial cohort).
- (g) **Leaving Certificate retention:** The final school based retention rate for the 1996 cohort was 77.8 per cent (*This figure is not adjusted for factors such as pupils who left the State-aided schools to pursue their senior cycle education in private institutions, emigration or death*).

ⁱⁱⁱ This is different from the official published statistic for the junior cycle, year 1 pupils, by some 595 pupils. The difference may be accounted for by transactions that have taken place on the Post-Primary Pupils Database subsequent to the generation of the statistical abstracts for the 1996/97 Annual Statistical Report (e.g. late entrants during the school year).

RETENTION OF PUPILS IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS

Figure 1: Retention Rates for the 1996 cohort



COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS COHORTS

Table 1.1 compares the retention rates for the 1994, 1995 and 1996 cohorts and shows that the final Leaving Certificate retention rate for the 1996 cohort is similar to that for previous years. The biggest decrease in pupils for both the 1995 and 1996 cohorts was between senior cycle year 1 and senior cycle year 2 and this was especially the case for boys (4,111 boys compared to 2,313 girls).

Table 1.1: Retention Rates for each Milestone, 1994, 1995 and 1996 cohorts

MILESTONE	1994 COHORT (%)			1995 COHORT (%)			1996 COHORT (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Junior Certificate, Year 1 (no.)	69,103	35,273	33,830	67,254	34,416	32,838	64,068	32,872	31,196
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.6	98.3	98.8	98.7	98.3	99.1	98.7	98.3	99.0
Junior Certificate, Year 3	96.4	95.5	97.3	96.7	95.7	97.7	96.7	95.9	97.6
Junior Certificate 'sits'	94.3	93.1	95.6	94.4	93.1	95.8	94.6	93.4	95.8
Senior Cycle, Year 1	*	*	*	90.9	87.8	94.2	91.1	88.1	94.3
Senior Cycle, Year 2	n/a	n/a	n/a	81.5	76.2	87.0	81.1	75.6	86.9
Final retention Rate	78.3	72.5	84.3	78.0	72.5	83.8	77.8	72.1	83.8

* Data previously published for Senior Cycle Year 1 for the 1994 cohort are not comparable with data for the 1995 and 1996 cohorts.

Table 1.2 compares the retention rates for each cohort from 1991 to 1996 at each of the significant milestones and confirms a pattern of increases in the underlying retention rates at the early milestones, while the final Leaving Certificate retention rates remained at around 78 per cent between the 1992 and 1996 cohorts.

Table 1.2: Retention Rates 1991-1996 cohorts

MILESTONE	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Junior Cycle cohort (no.)	70,455	70,851	70,737	69,103	67,254	64,068
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.3	95.1	95.7	96.4	96.7	96.7
Junior Certificate Exam 'sits'	93.4	92.3	93.4	94.3	94.4	94.6
Leaving Certificate retention	77.1	78.0	78.1	78.3	78.0	77.8

ADJUSTED LEAVING CERTIFICATE RETENTION RATE

There is a consistent level of departure by pupils other than 'early school leavers' from the State-aided school system. This is due for the most part to pupils going to 'private' institutions to complete their senior cycle, and, to a more limited extent, to emigration and death. It is not possible to establish the exact number of persons completing their education in private institutions. However, in order to sit the Leaving Certificate examination, a person must apply to the State Examination Commission for admission as an external candidate. In the summers of 2001 and 2002, 2,807 and 3,049 such candidates respectively, were graded in 5 subjects or more. This averages as approximately 2,930 in cohort terms. In the absence of precise data on the number of Irish external candidates sitting the L.C. for the **first time**, it was assumed that approximately 30% of the 2,930 above were either repeating the examination, or were foreign students and hence not in our original cohort. We therefore estimate that 2,050 of our 1996 cohort sat the examination for the first time in either 2001 or 2002. The final Leaving Certificate retention rate has therefore been adjusted by taking these 2,050 candidates into account.

Furthermore, based on data from the Central Statistics Office, an adjustment of 260 (estimated) was made to take account of pupils in the original cohort who left the country or died, in the period under consideration.

Based on the above, the adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate for the 1996 cohort is set out in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Adjusted National Leaving Certificate Retention Rate, 1996 cohort

CATEGORY	NUMBER	PER CENT
Junior Cycle cohort @ September 1996	64,068	
Less emigration, death etc.	260	
Net cohort	63,808	100
Leaving Certificate retention	49,838	78.1
External Candidates (<i>estimated</i>)	2,050	3.2
Total	51,888	81.3

For the purposes of this report, the adjusted rate described above has been applied to the overall national rate only. It would not be feasible to further disaggregate this rate (*e.g. by county or school type*). Therefore, all rates, other than the national adjusted rate, should be read subject to the understanding that emigration, death and external candidates are not taken into consideration.

Retention Rates and School Type

ANALYSIS OF TRENDS FOR 1996 COHORT

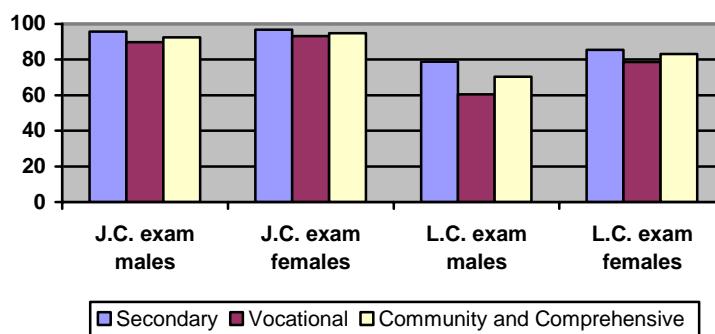
The 1996 junior cycle, year 1 cohort was distributed across the various school types as outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Distribution of 1996 Cohort by School Type

CATEGORY	SCHOOLS		COHORT DETAILS					
	Number	%	Males	%	Females	%	Total	%
Secondary	416	57.8	17627	53.6	20432	65.5	38059	59.4
Vocational	218	30.3	9398	28.6	6027	19.3	15425	24.1
Community & Comp	86	11.9	5847	17.8	4737	15.2	10584	16.5
TOTAL	720	100	32872	100	31196	100	64068	100

Figure 2 shows the retention rates by school type.

Figure 2: Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 1996 cohort



As outlined in Chapter 1, 95 and 78 per cent of pupils remained in second-level education until completion of the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations respectively. The average retention rates for secondary schools were above the national average at each of these points - 96 and 82 per cent respectively. Vocational schools recorded rates of 91 and 68 per cent at the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations respectively. The corresponding rates for community and comprehensive schools were 93 and 76 per cent respectively. *As indicated in the previous chapter, all Leaving Certificate retention rates are unadjusted unless otherwise stated.*

The retention rates by sex at each milestone are shown in Table 2.2

Table 2.2: Retention Rates by School Type and Sex, 1996 cohort

Milestone	SECONDARY		VOCATIONAL		COMMUNITY & COMPREHENSIVE		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Junior Cycle, Year 1 (no.)	17,627	20,432	9,398	6,027	5,847	4,737	32,872	31,196
Junior Cycle, Year 2	98.6	99.1	97.9	98.9	98.3	98.9	98.3	99.0
Junior Cycle, Year 3	97.4	98.1	93.4	96.2	95.3	96.9	95.9	97.6
Junior Certificate 'sits'	95.7	96.8	89.7	93.2	92.4	94.8	93.4	95.8
Senior Cycle, Year 1	92.8	95.5	80.4	90.9	86.3	93.0	88.1	94.3
Senior Cycle, Year 2	82.3	88.5	64.0	82.3	73.8	85.6	75.6	86.9
Leaving Certificate Retention	78.9	85.4	60.5	78.7	70.3	83.2	72.1	83.8

Table 2.2 confirms that across all schools, males were less likely to complete their Leaving Certificate than females with retention rates of 79 per cent for males in secondary schools, 60 per cent in vocational schools and 70 per cent in community and comprehensive schools compared to 85, 79 and 83 per cent respectively, for females. Vocational schools experienced lower retention rates than other school types, especially with regard to male retention between senior cycle year 1 and the Leaving Certificate examination with a drop of 20 percentage points being recorded between these two milestones.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS COHORTS

Table 2.3 compares the retention rates to completion of the Junior Certificate examination for the 1991 to 1996 cohorts by school type. A comparison of the 1991 and 1996 cohorts indicates an overall increase of 1.2 percentage points in the national average, with a significant narrowing of the gap in retention rates between secondary and vocational schools. Vocational schools recorded a continual increase from 1992 with an overall increase of 4.8 percentage points.

Table 2.3: Retention to Junior Certificate Examination 'sits', 1991 - 1996 cohorts

School type	1991 (%)	1992 (%)	1993 (%)	1994 (%)	1995 (%)	1996 (%)
Secondary	95.6	94.6	95.6	96.4	96.2	96.3
Vocational	87.3	86.3	88.2	89.4	90.4	91.1
Community & Comprehensive	93.2	91.4	92.1	93.1	93.9	93.5
National Average	93.4	92.3	93.4	94.3	94.4	94.6

Table 2.4 compares the retention rates to completion of the Leaving Certificate for the 1991 to 1996 cohorts by school type.

Table 2.4: Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 1991 - 1996 cohorts

School type	1991 (%)	1992 (%)	1993 (%)	1994 (%)	1995 (%)	1996 (%)
Secondary	83.6	84.0	83.9	83.4	83.0	82.4
Vocational	61.5	64.2	64.4	65.9	67.3	67.6
Community & Comprehensive	74.2	73.7	74.2	75.8	75.9	76.1
National Average	77.1	78.0	78.1	78.3	78.0	77.8

The national average Leaving Certificate retention rate remained stable for each of the 1992 to 1996 cohorts. Retention rates in vocational schools and in community and comprehensive schools increased. The retention rate rose by 6.1 percentage points to 67.6 percent in vocational schools, while the equivalent increase was 1.9 percentage points in community and comprehensive schools. Most of the increase in the retention rate in vocational schools occurred between the 1991 and 1992 cohorts. The retention rate in secondary schools decreased by 1.2 percentage points, from 83.6 to 82.4 percent, between the 1991 and 1996 cohorts.

Table 2.5 compares the trends for the 1994, 1995 and 1996 cohorts for each of the critical milestones by school type.

Table 2.5: Retention Rates for Each Milestone by School Type

Milestone	Secondary			Vocational			Community & Comprehensive		
	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996
Junior Cycle, Year 1 (no.)	43233	39,928	38,059	15,837	16,248	15,425	10,033	11,078	10,584
Junior Cycle, Year 2	98.9	99.0	98.9	97.5	98.1	98.3	98.5	98.6	98.6
Junior Cycle, Year 3	97.8	97.8	97.8	93.2	94.0	94.5	95.5	96.4	96.0
Junior Certificate 'sits'	96.4	96.2	96.3	89.4	90.4	91.1	93.1	93.9	93.5
Senior Cycle, Year 1	*	94.1	94.3	*	84.1	84.5	*	89.3	89.3
Senior Cycle, Year 2	n/a	86.4	85.6	n/a	70.9	71.1	n/a	79.2	79.1
Leaving Certificate retention	83.4	83.0	82.4	65.9	67.3	67.6	75.8	75.9	76.1
Treating those who sat the Leaving Certificate as 100%, the distribution was as follows:									
No. of Pupils sitting Leaving Cert.	36,064	33,132	31,358	10,437	10,938	10,429	7,602	8,406	8,051
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Leaving Certificate Applied (2 Year)	1.9	2.6	3.0	6.7	6.6	7.0	5.5	6.1	5.9
Leaving Certificate (2 Year)	48.1	51.7	49.8	59.6	63.2	62.7	52.3	60.3	60.0
Leaving Certificate Applied (3 Year)	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.9
Leaving Certificate (3 Year)	49.6	45.1	46.6	32.3	29.0	29.2	41.1	32.9	33.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* Data previously published for Senior Cycle Year 1 for the 1994 cohort are not comparable with data for the 1995 and 1996 cohorts.

The retention rate in secondary schools was fairly stable at each milestone up to the Junior Certificate Examination stage for the 1994, 1995 and 1996 cohorts. Vocational schools showed small increases at each of these milestones, with the biggest increase of 1 percentage point in the retention rate to Junior Certificate 'sits', occurring between the 1994 and 1995 cohorts. Community and comprehensive schools showed small increases in retention to junior cycle year 3 and Junior Certificate 'sits' between the 1994 and 1995 cohorts, but then showed small decreases at these stages between 1995 and 1996 cohorts.

The Leaving Certificate retention rate in secondary schools showed small decreases each year between the 1994 and 1996 cohorts (0.6 of a percentage point decrease between 1995 and 1996), while the rate in community and comprehensive schools showed small increases. Vocational schools increased their Leaving Certificate retention rates with the biggest increase of 1.4 percentage points occurring between the 1994 and 1995 cohorts.

The overall trend from the 1991 cohort to the 1996 cohort shows that the Junior Certificate retention rate in secondary schools increased by 0.7 of a percentage point while the Leaving Certificate retention rate decreased by 1.2 percentage points. Vocational schools showed the most progress with increases of 3.8 and 6.1 percentage points in retention rates to Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate respectively. Community and comprehensive schools showed increases of 0.3 and 1.9 percentage points in the equivalent rates.

GENERAL TRENDS

There were 455 (63%) schools with a retention rate, to the Junior Certificate examination, in excess of the national average of 94.6 percent. It should be noted that this measures any excess, no matter how small. Of the remaining 265 schools with rates below (no matter how small) the national average, 124 (47%) were vocational schools (57% of all vocational schools). A further 99 were secondary schools (24% of all secondary schools), while the remaining 42 were community and comprehensive schools (49% of all community and comprehensive schools).

There were 413 (57%) schools with a Leaving Certificate retention rate in excess of the unadjusted national average of 77.8 per cent (note again that this measures any excess no matter how small). Of the remaining 307 schools with rates below the national average, 146 were vocational schools (67% of all vocational schools). A further 121 schools were secondary schools (29% of all secondary schools), while 40 were community and comprehensive schools (46% of all community and comprehensive schools).

Figure 3 shows the distribution of Leaving Certificate retention rates across all schools.

Figure 3: Distribution of Leaving Certificate Retention Rates across all schools

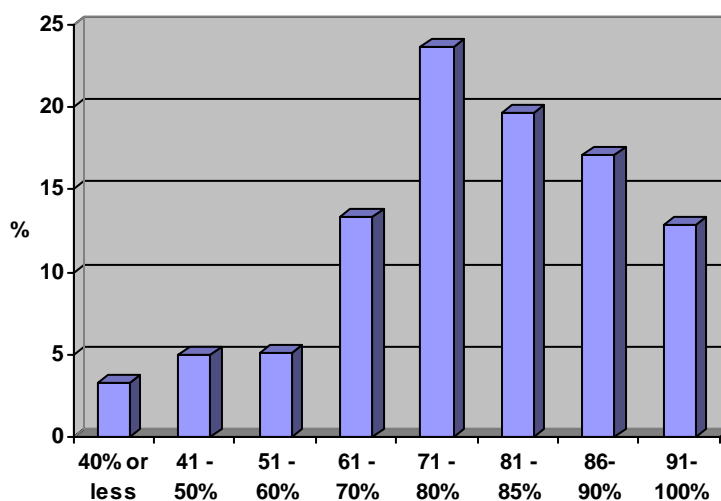
**COMPARING THE 1995 AND 1996 COHORTS**

Table 3.1 compares the distribution of schools by sector, within certain retention rate bands for completion of the Junior Certificate examination, for the 1995 and 1996 cohorts.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Junior Certificate Retention, 1995 and 1996 cohorts

SCHOOL TYPE	YEAR (NO. OF SCHS.)	DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS WITH RETENTION RATES IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES (%)							
		60% or less	61 - 70%	71 - 80%	81 - 85%	86-90%	91-95%	96-100%	
Secondary	1996 (n = 416)	0.2	0.0	1.7	1.7	4.3	20.9	71.2	100%
	1995 (n = 418)	0.0	0.5	1.0	1.2	6.2	21.5	69.6	100%
Vocational	1996 (n = 218)	0.9	1.8	11.5	7.3	14.2	27.1	37.2	100%
	1995 (n = 217)	0.9	1.4	11.5	12.4	15.7	24.9	33.2	100%
Comm & Comp.	1996 (n = 86)	0.0	1.2	2.3	4.7	9.3	39.5	43.0	100%
	1995 (n = 85)	0.0	1.2	2.4	4.7	15.3	24.7	51.8	100%
Total	1996 (n = 720)	0.4	0.7	4.7	3.8	7.9	25.0	57.5	100%
	1995 (n = 720)	0.3	0.8	4.3	5.0	10.1	22.9	56.5	100%

Overall, the percentage of schools with retention rates to Junior Certificate remained fairly stable in each category, over the 2 cohorts. The percentage of both vocational schools and community and comprehensive schools, with retention rates, to Junior Certificate, greater than 90 per cent increased by 6 percentage points since the previous year's cohort.

Table 3.2 contains a similar analysis for the rate of retention to the Leaving Certificate.

Table 3.2: Distribution of Leaving Certificate Retention, 1995 and 1996 cohorts

SCHOOL TYPE	YEAR (NO. OF SCHS.)	DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS WITH RETENTION RATES IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES (%)									
		40% or less	41-50%	51-60%	61-70%	71-75%	76-80%	81-85%	86-90%	> 90%	
Secondary	1996 (n = 416)	0.7	1.2	1.9	10.8	9.1	13.0	20.4	23.3	19.5	100%
	1995 (n = 418)	0.2	0.7	2.6	7.2	7.7	14.1	20.8	26.8	19.9	100%
Vocational	1996 (n = 218)	9.2	12.4	11.5	17.9	10.1	12.8	16.1	6.0	4.1	100%
	1995 (n = 217)	9.7	10.6	12.9	19.8	8.8	15.2	12.9	7.8	2.3	100%
Comm & Comp.	1996 (n = 86)	1.2	4.7	4.7	14.0	16.3	16.3	24.4	15.1	3.5	100%
	1995 (n = 85)	2.4	2.4	9.4	11.8	14.1	18.8	23.5	11.8	5.9	100%
Total	1996 (n = 720)	3.3	5.0	5.1	13.3	10.3	13.3	19.6	17.1	12.9	100%
	1995 (n = 720)	3.3	3.9	6.5	11.5	8.8	15.0	18.8	19.3	12.9	100%

RETENTION OF PUPILS IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS

For the 1996 cohort, almost 50 per cent of schools had Leaving Certificate retention rates of 81 percent or higher, which represents a slight decrease (1.4 percentage points) on the 1995 cohort. 63 per cent of secondary schools had rates of 81 percent or more, a decrease of over 4 percentage points from the 1995 cohort. However, the corresponding figures increased for vocational and community and comprehensive schools by 3.2 and 1.8 percentage points respectively.

At the lower end of the scale, the percentage of schools with Leaving Certificate retention rates of 50 percent or less increased by 1 percentage point from the 7.2 per cent recorded for the 1995 cohort. In 1996, 1.9 per cent of secondary schools had rates of 50 percent or less (0.9% in 1995), compared with 21.6 per cent of vocational schools (20.3% in 1995). The corresponding figure for community and comprehensive schools was 5.9 per cent (4.8% in 1995). Overall, 13.4 per cent of schools had retention rates of 60 per cent or less for the 1996 cohort compared to 13.7 per cent for the 1995 cohort (and 15.6 for the 1993 cohort).

Allowing for school closures and amalgamations, it is possible to compare the trends for 718 schools. If we exclude very small increases and, for example, only include increases of 2 percentage points or more, then 38 per cent of schools recorded an increase in their retention rate to the Leaving Certificate (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Fluctuations in Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 1995 and 1996 cohorts

Percentage Point Change		SECONDARY (N = 416)	VOCATIONAL (N = 217)	COMM. & COMP'IVE (N = 85)	TOTAL (N = 718)	
16 or more	INCREASE	1.9%	6.9%	–	3.2%	INCREASE
11 – 15		3.4%	8.8%	2.4%	4.9%	
6 – 10		9.9%	9.2%	11.8%	9.9%	
3 – 5		17.1%	14.3%	17.6%	16.3%	
0 – 2		15.1%	10.1%	20.0%	14.2%	
No change		0.2%	0.5%	–	0.3%	
0 – 2	DECREASE	14.4%	9.7%	17.6%	13.4%	DECREASE
3 – 5		12.7%	11.5%	11.8%	12.3%	
6 – 10		16.1%	17.5%	14.1%	16.3%	
11 – 15		6.0%	7.4%	4.7%	6.3%	
16 or more		3.1%	4.1%	–	3.1%	

More than four-fifths (82%) of schools recorded fluctuations of up to +/- 10 percentage points. 58 schools (8%) recorded increases of more than 10 percentage points and correspondingly 67 schools (9%) recorded decreases of more than 10 percentage points in their Leaving Certificate retention rates.

This chapter describes the trends in school retention in each county. Data were analysed by address of schools rather than address of pupils.

RETENTION RATES BY COUNTY

The detailed distributions by county are shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

TABLE 4.1: Distribution of Junior Certificate Examination ‘sits’ by County (%)

COUNTY	NO. OF SCHOOLS	AVERAGE J.C. EXAM SITS (%)	60% or less	61% - 70%	71% - 80%	81% to 90%	91% or more
Carlow	11	96.7	-	-	-	-	100.0
Cavan	10	95.2	-	-	-	-	100.0
Clare	18	94.8	-	-	-	22.2	77.8
Cork City	26	95.4	-	-	-	11.5	88.5
Cork County	60	95.6	-	-	1.7	6.7	91.7
Donegal	22	92.3	-	-	13.6	13.6	72.7
Dublin City	86	92.4	2.3	2.3	12.8	11.6	70.9
Dublin South	30	94.3	-	-	3.3	23.3	73.3
Dublin Fingal	23	95.0	-	-	-	26.1	73.9
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	32	93.0	-	3.1	6.3	15.6	75.0
Galway City	11	95.6	-	-	-	9.1	90.9
Galway County	36	96.2	-	-	11.1	5.6	83.3
Kerry	27	95.5	-	-	7.4	3.7	88.9
Kildare	27	95.3	-	3.7	3.7	14.8	77.8
Kilkenny	16	96.2	-	-	6.3	12.5	81.3
Laois	12	94.7	-	-	-	25.0	75.0
Leitrim	8	96.8	-	-	-	-	100.0
Limerick City	15	92.2	6.7	-	6.7	13.3	73.3
Limerick County	20	95.5	-	-	-	25.0	75.0
Longford	10	92.4	-	-	10.0	30.0	60.0
Louth	17	93.1	-	5.9	5.9	11.8	76.5
Mayo	29	96.2	-	-	-	13.8	86.2
Meath	18	96.0	-	-	5.6	5.6	88.9
Monaghan	11	93.9	-	-	-	18.2	81.8
Offaly	13	92.6	-	-	7.7	15.4	76.9
Roscommon	9	97.0	-	-	-	-	100.0
Sligo	14	96.1	-	-	-	7.1	92.9
Tipperary NR	16	96.2	-	-	-	6.3	93.8
Tipperary SR	18	95.2	-	-	-	16.7	83.3
Waterford City	8	95.5	-	-	-	25.0	75.0
Waterford County	11	97.4	-	-	-	9.1	90.9
Westmeath	15	94.4	-	-	6.7	13.3	80.0
Wexford	20	94.5	-	-	5.0	15.0	80.0
Wicklow	21	94.5	-	-	4.8	9.5	85.7
TOTALS	720	94.6	0.4	0.7	4.7	11.7	82.5

Table 4.2: Distribution of Leaving Certificate Retention Rates by County (%)^{iv}

COUNTY	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	AVERAGE LEAVING CERTIFICATE RETENTION (%)	50% OR LESS	51% - 60%	61% - 70%	71% - 80%	81% OR MORE
Carlow	11	79.3	-	9.1	9.1	36.4	45.5
Cavan	10	82.0	-	-	10.0	30.0	60.0
Clare	18	81.1	-	5.6	5.6	27.8	61.1
Cork City	26	75.1	7.7	7.7	15.4	34.6	34.6
Cork County	60	81.1	-	3.3	15.0	26.7	55.0
Donegal	22	77.5	9.1	4.5	9.1	31.8	45.5
Dublin City	86	69.0	18.6	11.6	22.1	22.1	25.6
Dublin South	30	70.3	16.7	10.0	20.0	16.7	36.7
Dublin Fingal	23	76.8	13.0	-	13.0	39.1	34.8
Dun Laoghaire-	32	78.1	6.3	6.3	15.6	21.9	50.0
Galway City	11	79.8	9.1	-	9.1	18.2	63.6
Galway Co	36	83.0	5.6	-	13.9	8.3	72.2
Kerry	27	83.0	7.4	3.7	7.4	3.7	77.8
Kildare	27	77.5	11.1	7.4	7.4	40.7	33.3
Kilkenny	16	79.9	12.5	-	25.0	6.3	56.3
Laois	12	78.9	16.7	-	-	41.7	41.7
Leitrim	8	87.1	-	-	-	25.0	75.0
Limerick City	15	72.9	13.3	-	26.7	33.3	26.7
Limerick Co	20	81.5	5.0	5.0	20.0	10.0	60.0
Longford	10	79.7	20.0	-	10.0	10.0	60.0
Louth	17	76.5	11.8	5.9	11.8	29.4	41.2
Mayo	29	84.6	6.9	0.0	0.0	17.2	75.9
Meath	18	80.9	11.1	11.1	-	11.1	66.7
Monaghan	11	73.8	-	-	63.6	0.0	36.4
Offaly	13	79.8	-	7.7	7.7	30.8	53.8
Roscommon	9	85.9	-	-	-	33.3	66.7
Sligo	14	82.7	7.1	0.0	0.0	42.9	50.0
Tipperary NR	16	83.1	-	6.3	6.3	12.5	75.0
Tipperary SR	18	78.4	11.1	-	5.6	27.8	55.6
Waterford City	8	77.3	-	-	25.0	50.0	25.0
Waterford Co	11	79.4	-	9.1	18.2	27.3	45.5
Westmeath	15	84.6	-	6.7	13.3	13.3	66.7
Wexford	20	79.5	5.0	15.0	10.0	25.0	45.0
Wicklow	21	75.3	4.8	4.8	23.8	33.3	33.3
TOTALS	720	77.8	8.3	5.1	13.3	23.6	49.6

Reader's note:

Using Donegal in Table 4.1 as an example, of the 22 schools in that county, 13.6 per cent of schools had retention rates of between 71 and 80 per cent at the Junior Certificate examination stage. A further 13.6 per cent had rates between 81- 90 percent, while the remaining 72.7 per cent had rates in excess of 91 percent. Overall, the average Junior Certificate retention rate for Donegal was 92.3 per cent compared to the national average of 94.6 percent. Similarly, using Cavan in Table 4.2 as an example, the average Leaving Certificate retention rate for this county was 82 per cent compared to the national average of 77.8 percent. Of the 10 schools, 10 per cent (1 school) had Leaving Certificate retention rates between 61 and 70 percent. A further 30 per cent (3 schools) had rates between 71 and 80 percent, while the remaining 60 per cent of schools (6 schools) recorded rates in excess of 81 percent.

^{iv} Unless specified otherwise, the percentages quoted here have not been adjusted to allow for factors such as: those pupils who left the State-aided school system to pursue their senior cycle education in private institutions, emigration and death.

Table 4.2 shows that, in general, retention rates in the cities are lower than elsewhere (Dublin City had the lowest Leaving Certificate retention rate in the country followed by Dublin South). Because of this, the retention rate in the BMW region (80.7%), which only has one city, was higher than that in the S&E region (76.6%). In fact, Leitrim and Roscommon have the highest retention rates in the country (87.1% and 85.9% respectively).

RETENTION RATES in DUBLIN

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the schools in County Dublin.

Some general trends in the Dublin area are examined with Table 4.3 showing the retention rates for each milestone by sex for the 1995 and 1996 cohorts.

Table 4.3: Retention Rates for each Milestone in County Dublin, 1995 and 1996 cohorts

MILESTONE	1995 COHORT			1996 COHORT		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Junior Certificate, Year 1 (No.)	17,532	8,876	8,656	16,623	8,608	8,015
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.2%	97.6%	98.8%	98.3%	97.7%	98.9%
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.6%	94.4%	96.8%	95.9%	94.7%	97.3%
Junior Certificate 'sits'	92.8%	91.1%	94.6%	93.3%	92.0%	94.8%
Senior Cycle, Year 1	88.6%	85.6%	91.7%	89.1%	86.3%	92.1%
Senior Cycle, Year 2	76.3%	71.4%	81.3%	75.9%	70.9%	81.4%
Final retention Rate	72.4%	67.5%	77.4%	72.1%	67.1%	77.5%

Retention rates increased in Dublin between 1995 and 1996 at each of the first 4 milestones, with the largest percentage point increases for pupils sitting the Junior Certificate and entering year 1 of senior cycle. However, the Leaving Certificate retention rate in Dublin decreased by 0.3 of a percentage point between the 1995 and 1996 cohorts.

For the 1996 cohort, the retention rate at each milestone was lower on average for County Dublin than for the country as a whole (see also Table 1.1). This difference increased for each milestone so that by the Leaving Certificate stage the retention rate for County Dublin was 72.1 per cent, compared with the national rate of 77.8 per cent (a difference of 5.7 percentage points).

Less males than females remained in County Dublin schools to sit their Leaving Certificate - 67.1 per cent of males compared to 77.5 per cent of females. This compares with the national rates of 72.1 and 83.8 per cent for males and females respectively.

For the 1996 cohort, two schools in Dublin had Junior Certificate examination 'sits' rates of 60 per cent or less (the equivalent figure for the 1994 cohort was five schools). However, almost three quarters (72.5%) of schools had rates in excess of 91 percent - 10 percentage points less than the national average - with 20 schools retaining all of their pupils at this point (as compared with 15 for the 1994 cohort).

For the 1996 cohort, 26 schools in Dublin had Leaving Certificate retention rates of 50 per cent or less (the equivalent figure for the 1994 cohort was 30 schools). A further 20 schools had rates of between 51 and 60 percent. A third of schools (32.7%) had rates of 81 per cent or more. 10 schools had rates of 90 per cent or more (as compared with 16 for the 1994 cohort).

Only a third of Dublin schools achieved a Leaving Certificate retention rate of 81 per cent or more compared with the national profile in Table 4.2 where half of the schools (49.6%) had rates of 81 per cent or more. Correspondingly, Dublin had proportionally more schools with retention rates of 50 per cent or less than the national average. There were 8.3 per cent of all schools nationally in this category, compared to 15.2 per cent of all Dublin schools.

101 schools (59% of Dublin schools) were below the national average Leaving Certificate retention rate of 77.8 percent.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the biggest loss of pupils was between senior cycle year 1 and senior cycle year 2 and this was also a factor in schools with low retention rates.

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) conducted by the Central Statistics Office collects information on the educational attainment of the population. Data on early school leavers aged 18-24 are available from this survey. Early school leavers are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 whose highest level of education or training is the Junior Certificate or equivalent, and who had not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. The information collected relates to all education or training received including initial education, further education, continuing or further training, training within a company, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, seminars, distance learning, evening classes, self-learning etc.

Table 5.1 presents data on early school leavers from 1993 to 1997 and from 2002 to 2004. It shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 18.9 per cent in 1996 to 12.9 per cent in 2004 (however, some of this decrease is undoubtedly due to breaks in the time series, see footnote under table). In any case, we can say that 87.1 per cent of persons in Ireland aged 18-24 had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent or they had participated in education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey, a higher rate than the EU-25 rate of 84.3 per cent.

While the QNHS data show that early school leavers represented 12.9 per cent of the 18-24 age group in Ireland in 2004, the unemployment rate for early school leavers in this age group was 21.8 per cent in 2004 (9,200 persons) compared with an unemployment rate of 7.9% for all persons aged 18-24.

Table 5.1: Early school-leavers - Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997		2002	2003	2004
EU-25	:	:	:	:	:		16.6 i	16.1 b	15.7 i
Belgium	17.4	16.1	15.1	12.9	12.7		12.4	12.8	11.9 b
Czech Republic	:	:	:	:	:		5.5	6.0 b	6.1
Denmark	8.5	8.6	6.1	12.1	10.7		8.4	10.0 b	8.1
Germany	:	:	:	13.3	12.9		12.6	12.8 i	12.1
Estonia	:	:	:	:	:		12.6	11.8	13.7
Greece	25	23.2	22.4	20.7	19.9		16.7	15.5 b	14.9 p
Spain	37.7	36.4	33.8	31.4	30		29.5	30.8	31.1
France	17.2	16.4	15.4	15.2	14.1		13.4	13.7 b	14.2
Ireland	24	22.9	21.4	18.9	18.9		14.7 i	12.3 b	12.9
Italy	37.1 b	35.1	32.8	31.7	30.1		24.3	23.5	22.3
Cyprus	:	:	:	:	:		14	15.1 b	18.4
Latvia	:	:	:	:	:		19.5	18.1	15.6
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:		14.3 b	11.8	9.5 b
Luxembourg	36.8	34.4	33.4	35.3	30.7		17	17.0 p	:
Hungary	:	:	:	:	17.8		12.2	11.8 b	12.6
Malta	:	:	:	:	:		53.2	48.2	45.0 b
Netherlands	:	:	:	17.6	16		15	14.5	14.5 p
Austria	:	:	13.6	12.1	10.8		9.5	9.2 b	9.2 p
Poland	:	:	:	:	:		7.6	6.3	5.7 b
Portugal	46.7	44.3	41.4	40.1	40.6		45.1	40.4	39.4 b
Slovenia	:	:	:	:	:		4.8	4.3 u	4.2 u
Slovakia	:	:	:	:	:		5.6	4.9 b	7.1
Finland	:	:	:	11.1	8.1		9.9	8.3 b	8.7
Sweden	:	:	:	7.5	6.8		10.4	9.0 b	8.6
United Kingdom	36.3	32.3	:	:	:		17.7 i	16.7 i	16.7 p
Iceland	:	:	:				27.3	22.3	26.3
Norway	:	:	:	10.9	7.3		14.0	6.6 b	4.5

b: Break in series

u: unreliable or uncertain data

p: provisional value

i: Footnotes:

Ireland: before 1998, data relate only to education and training which was relevant for the current or possible future job of the respondent. In addition, data for Ireland are not strictly comparable between 2003 and earlier years as modifications to the questionnaire in 2003 increased capture of information on receipt of education in the four weeks prior to the survey.

Cyprus: the reference population (denominator) excludes students abroad.

DK, LU, IS, NO, EE, LV, LT, CY, MT and SI: the high degree of variation of results over time is partly influenced by a low sample size.

Source: Eurostat

Table 5.2 gives a time series with the proportion of persons aged 20-24 years who had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent (QNHS data). More than 85 per cent of persons aged 20-24, in 2004, had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent, up from 82 per cent in 1999. This suggests that there is a growth in the proportion of young people with at least the Leaving Certificate or equivalent, probably due to the increasing numbers of students now participating in second chance Further Education and Training programmes.

Table 5.2: Persons aged 20-24 years who have attained at least the Leaving Certificate or equivalent

YEAR	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
1999	82.0%	79.1%	85.0%
2000	82.5%	79.5%	85.5%
2001	84.6%	81.2%	87.9%
2002	83.9%	79.9%	88.0%
2003	85.3%	82.2%	88.5%
2004	85.3%	82.1%	88.6%

Source: CSO, Quarterly National Household Survey