



RETENTION RATES OF PUPILS IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

2005 and 2006 ENTRY COHORTS

November 2012

This report and others in the series may be accessed at:
www.education.ie and go to [Statistics/Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools](#)

Detailed tables containing all of the data presented in this report will also shortly be available on the Department of Education and Skills' [education statistics database](#).

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary		3
Section 1	General Trends in Retention rates	5
Section 2	Retention Rates by Milestone, Gender and School Sector	7
Section 3	Retention Rates by Administrative County	9
Section 4	Retention Rates and DEIS	14
Section 5	Data on the Educational Attainment of Young People in Ireland and the EU	16
Appendix	Methodology and Technical Notes	19

Executive Summary

This is the sixth published report, by the Department of Education and Skills, 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 the years 2005 and 2006, who sat the Leaving Certificate Examinations in the years from 2010 to 2012.

Main Results

- In 2005, there were 55,253 first time enrolments to the first year of the junior cycle programme in second level schools. Of this initial cohort, **95.89%** sat the Junior Certificate Exams in 2008 or 2009 and **89.49%** sat the Leaving Certificate Exams in 2010 or 2011.
- In 2006, there were 54,917 first time enrolments to the first year of the junior cycle programme in second level schools. Of this initial cohort, **96.37%** sat the Junior Certificate Exams in 2009 or 2010 and **90.22%** sat the Leaving Certificate Exams in 2011 or 2012.
- A gender gap of 3.14% remains in the retention rates at national level between male and female for the 2006 cohorts. This gender gap continues to decline, the gap was 3.78% for 2005 and 4.1% for 2004 cohorts.
- On average voluntary secondary schools continue to have the highest retention rates at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate stage; however the gap between the different types of schools is closing.
- The average retention rate for DEIS second level schools continues to increase and is at a rate of 80.1% for the 2006 cohorts, this is up from 68.2% for the 2001 cohorts.

It should be noted that this report deals with retention within the State-aided schooling system only. It does not take account of important educational pathways outside this system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training. In effect, pupils leaving school to undertake these programmes are treated as early school leavers for the purposes of this analysis. It seems reasonable to assume that the 'true' retention rate, comparable to completion of upper second-level education (equivalent to NFQ levels 4,5 and 6 Advanced), is higher than that shown in Table 1 when participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school is considered.

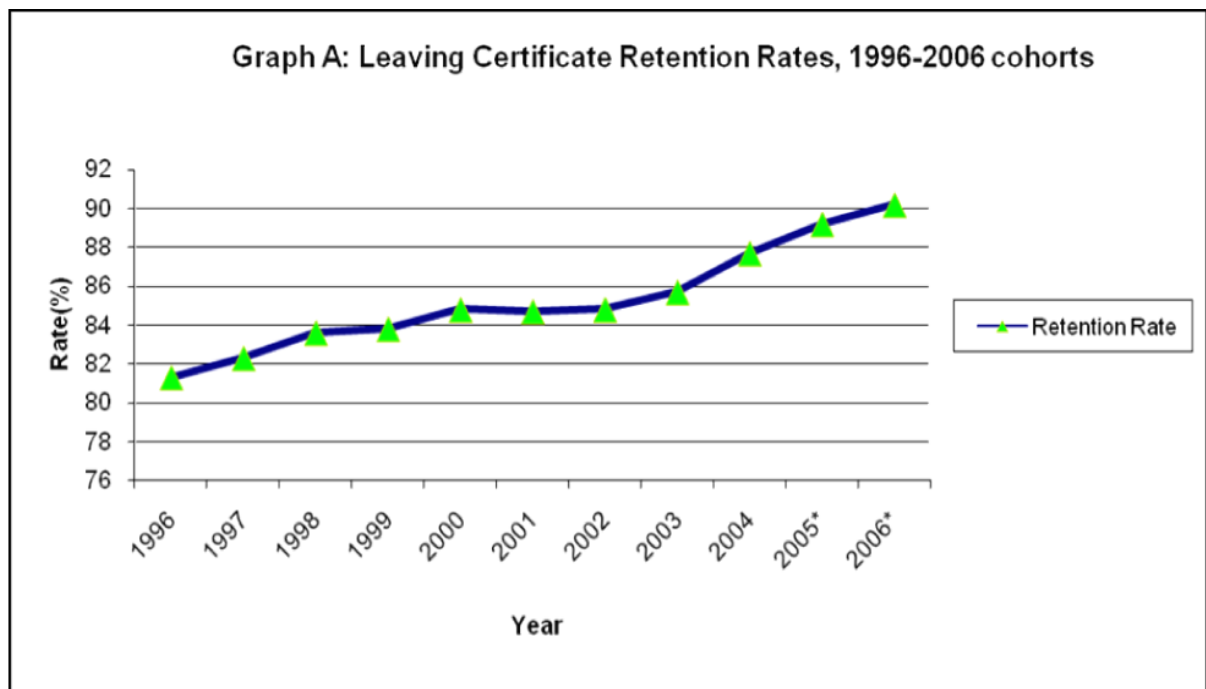
It is also important to note that while the analysis allows for movement of pupils between schools it does not enable the tracking of those who leave State-aided schools including publicly funded fee-paying schools and move to non-aided second-level education providers. However, due to the fact that these students sit the State exams as external candidates, it is possible to provide an adjusted retention rate by matching State Examinations Commission (SEC) external candidate data against the initial cohort data (see Appendix A for more details). A further adjustment is also made to the initial cohort to allow for emigration from the cohort. Therefore, the Leaving Certificate rate is referred to as an “adjusted” rate, in this publication.

For the first time for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts, an adjusted Leaving Certificate rate has also been calculated for each milestone, administrative county, sector of provision, and for DEIS status, using a breakdown of the matched external State Exams Commission data, and a new methodology to estimate emigration from the cohort at sub-national level.

General Trends in Retention Rates

Table 1 and Graph A show the adjusted retention rates for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts compared to the rates for all previous cohorts since 1996.

Year	Retention Rate (%)
1996	81.3
1997	82.3
1998	83.6
1999	83.8
2000	84.8
2001	84.7
2002	84.8
2003	85.7
2004	87.7
2005*	89.5
2006*	90.2



*Break in series from 2005 onwards due to revised methodology, see Appendix for more details.

Over the 11 years from 1996 to 2006, there has been a continuous gradual improvement in the Leaving Certificate retention rate, with an increase of almost 9% over the period. The rate was 81.3% for the 1996 cohort, and increased incrementally to almost 85% for the 2000 cohort. The rate remained flat at this level for the 2001 and 2002 entry cohorts, before beginning to rise again for the 2003 cohort.

There has been a significant increase in school retention for the most recent entry cohorts to the Junior Cycle, with a final retention rate to the Leaving Certificate in excess of 90% for the 2006 cohort of entrants to the Junior Cycle, who sat the Leaving Certificate for the first time either in 2011 or 2012.

Table 2 shows the retention rates for each milestone and by gender for the cohort of students that entered the Junior Cycle in 2005 and 2006.

Milestone	2005 entry cohort			2006 entry cohort		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Junior Certificate, Year 1 (No.)	28,180	27,073	55,253	28,113	26,804	54,917
Junior Certificate, Year 2 (%)	98.46	98.48	98.47	98.32	98.25	98.28
Junior Certificate, Year 3 (%)	96.85	97.22	97.03	96.88	97.01	96.94
Junior Certificate Retention Rate	95.45	96.35	95.89	96.10	96.66	96.37
Senior Cycle, Year 1 (%)	93.65	95.54	94.58	94.43	95.57	94.99
Senior Cycle, Year 2 (%)	87.9	90.81	89.33	88.69	91.15	89.89
Leaving Certificate Retention Rate*	87.64	91.42	89.49	88.68	91.82	90.22

As can be seen from Table 2, the majority of dropout occurs at second level between senior cycle year 1 and senior cycle year 2, where around 5% of the original cohort is lost. A gender gap remains between the retention rates to the Leaving Certificate at national level between male and female cohorts, of approximately 3%. However while the gender gap remains, it has narrowed substantially in recent years. The retention rate to Leaving Certificate for males in the 2006 cohort was 88.68%, compared with a rate of 91.82% for females, a difference of 3.14%. This compares to a gender difference of 11.3% for the 1995 entry cohort, and 8.9% for the 2001 entry cohort.

**Note: Leaving Certificate retention rates shown are in some cases slightly higher than the rate shown for retention to the Senior Cycle Year 2. This is due to the fact that the Leaving Certificate Retention rate includes an estimate for emigrants from the cohort, and also includes external SEC candidates, whereas the rates for each of the milestones (Junior Cycle Year 2, Senior Cycle Year 1 etc, refer to the proportion retained in the second level school system only)*

Table 3: Retention Rates by School Type and Milestone, 2005 and 2006 cohorts						
	2005 entry cohort			2006 entry cohort		
Milestone	Secondary	C&C	Vocational	Secondary	C&C	Vocational
Junior Cycle, Year 1 (no.)	32366	9365	13522	32414	9288	13215
Junior Cycle, Year 2 (%)	98.40	99.04	98.25	98.43	98.60	97.70
Junior Cycle, Year 3 (%)	97.16	97.86	96.16	97.29	97.35	95.79
Junior Certificate Retention Rate	96.35	96.49	94.37	96.82	96.51	94.84
Senior Cycle, Year 1 (%)	95.30	95.21	92.42	95.55	95.48	93.25
Senior Cycle, Year 2 (%)	90.61	89.90	85.86	91.07	90.68	86.45
Leaving Certificate Retention Rate	91.55	89.09	84.85	91.97	90.26	85.88

Average retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the voluntary secondary school sector have continually been the highest since analysis began in 1991, with a rate of approximately 92% for both the 2005 and 2006 entry cohorts.

Community and comprehensive schools and vocational schools show a significant increase in average retention rates to Leaving Certificate between 2005 and 2006, and indeed the retention rate in community and comprehensive schools has increased significantly in recent years. The gap in retention rates to the Leaving Certificate between the secondary sector and the community and comprehensive sector has fallen, for the 1996 Cohort the gap between secondary schools (82.4%) and community and comprehensive schools (76.1%) was 6.3%, this gap is now less than 2.5%.

The average Leaving Certificate retention rate for vocational schools, while lagging behind the rates for the voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools, has shown very substantial improvement. There has been an increase of over 24% between the 1991 cohort, with a retention rate of 61.5% and the 2006 cohort at 85.88%. More recently we can see an increase of over 11% between the 2001 cohort with a retention rate of 74.5% and the 2006 cohort.

**SECTION
3**

Retention Rates by Administrative County

This section describes the trends in school retention in each administrative county (local authority) area for the 2005 and 2006 entry cohorts. Note that data were analysed by address of schools rather than address of pupils.

Table 4: Retention Rates to the Junior and Leaving Certificate by Administrative County, 2005 cohort

County	Cohort Size	Junior Cert Retention (%)	Leaving Cert Retention (%)
Carlow	838	95.82	87.39
Cavan	770	97.01	90.08
Clare	1384	95.95	91.69
Cork County	4311	97.10	90.93
Cork City	1998	97.34	88.84
Donegal	2228	96.59	89.35
Dublin City	5461	95.42	85.15
Dublin Fingal	2818	96.02	90.89
Dublin South	3212	94.11	87.19
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	2403	94.71	90.83
Galway County	2211	96.29	91.86
Galway City	928	94.18	88.30
Kerry	1890	96.03	91.34
Kildare	2599	96.69	90.71
Kilkenny	1180	97.37	91.12
Laois	718	95.40	88.57
Leitrim	427	97.19	91.60
Limerick County	1373	97.45	91.96
Limerick City	1214	94.07	85.63
Longford	563	95.38	88.50
Louth	1696	95.93	89.04
Mayo	1747	96.56	92.43
Meath	1817	94.99	90.82
Monaghan	864	97.45	91.15
Offaly	931	96.56	88.79
Roscommon	558	96.25	91.08
Sligo	799	95.87	89.35
Tipperary (NR)	1111	96.40	90.73
Tipperary (SR)	1109	95.76	91.01
Waterford County	592	97.46	90.23
Waterford City	676	97.04	92.46
Westmeath	1351	94.37	88.89
Wexford	1891	95.76	87.84
Wicklow	1616	93.81	87.37

Table 5: Retention Rates to the Junior and Leaving Certificate by Administrative County, 2006 cohort

County	Cohort Size	Junior Cert Retention (%)	Leaving Cert Retention (%)
Carlow	801	96.25	90.01
Cavan	800	96.75	90.29
Clare	1402	95.51	90.15
Cork County	4367	97.21	92.26
Cork City	1814	96.91	91.45
Donegal	2228	96.10	88.99
Dublin City	5460	96.32	85.72
Dublin Fingal	2856	96.53	91.19
Dublin South	3282	95.70	88.31
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	2400	95.38	91.50
Galway County	2101	96.29	91.21
Galway City	878	94.99	88.70
Kerry	1776	96.28	92.04
Kildare	2561	96.76	91.71
Kilkenny	1124	98.22	94.17
Laoighis	778	96.92	90.46
Leitrim	404	97.03	91.40
Limerick County	1331	96.84	92.74
Limerick City	1128	95.57	86.63
Longford	586	94.37	87.12
Louth	1791	96.48	89.56
Mayo	1677	97.08	91.83
Meath	1843	96.36	92.78
Monaghan	871	97.01	90.68
Offaly	945	96.51	88.12
Roscommon	531	97.36	93.96
Sligo	760	98.16	93.04
Tipperary N.R.	1088	97.06	90.07
Tipperary S.R.	1077	96.84	90.68
Waterford County	651	97.54	92.88
Waterford City	698	97.56	92.22
Westmeath	1319	95.83	90.54
Wexford	1959	95.46	90.56
Wicklow	1630	94.11	86.05

For the 2005 Cohort, Waterford City had the highest retention rate at 92.46% followed by Mayo at 92.43% and Limerick County at 91.96%. Dublin City (85.15%), Limerick City (85.63%), and Dublin South (87.19%) had the lowest retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the country, when an adjustment for emigration was taken into account

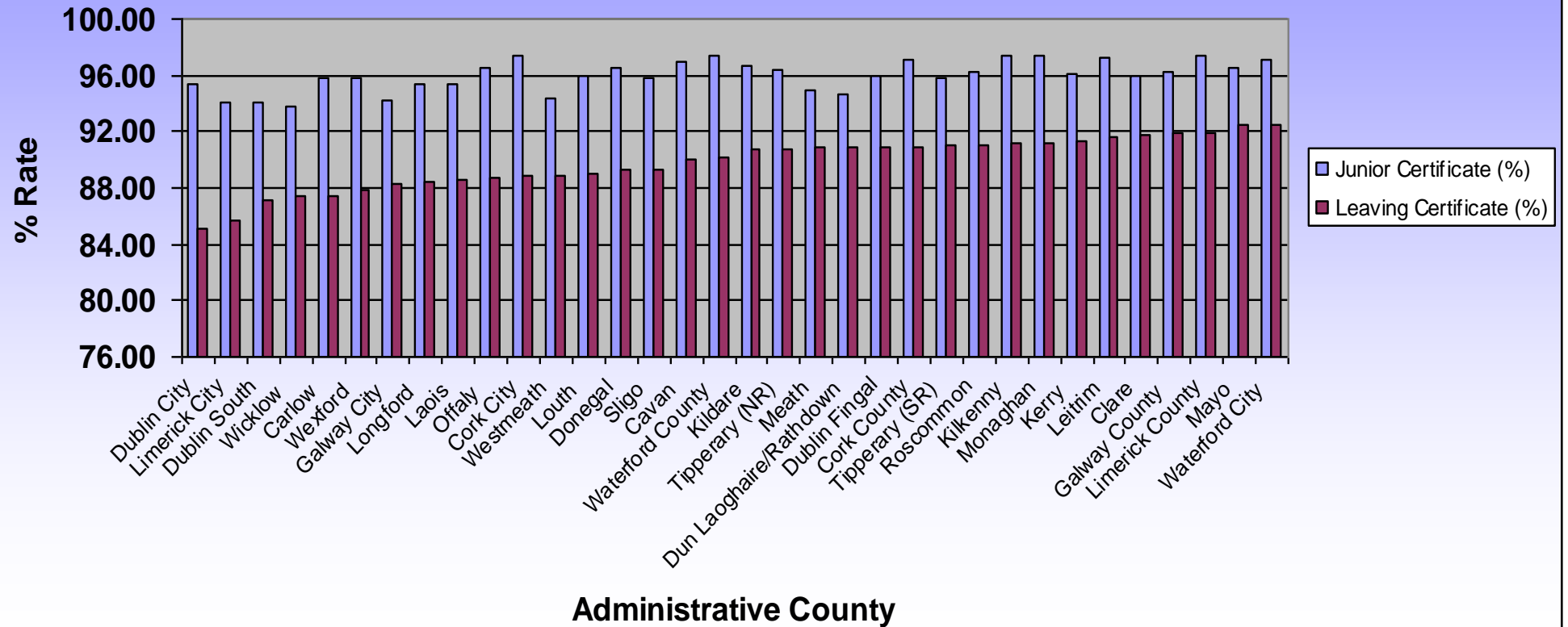
In 2006 the highest Leaving Certificate retention rate was in Kilkenny, with a rate of 94.17%, followed by Roscommon with a rate of 93.96%. Dublin City and Limerick City were again amongst those with the lowest Leaving Certificate retention rates in the 2006 entry cohort, with rates of 85.72% and 86.63% respectively when an adjustment for emigration is taken into account. Wicklow had the second lowest retention rate in the country for 2006, with a rate of 86.05%.

Graphs B and C below show the Junior and Leaving Certificate retention rates for each county, ranked in ascending order of Leaving Certificate retention rates, for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts respectively.

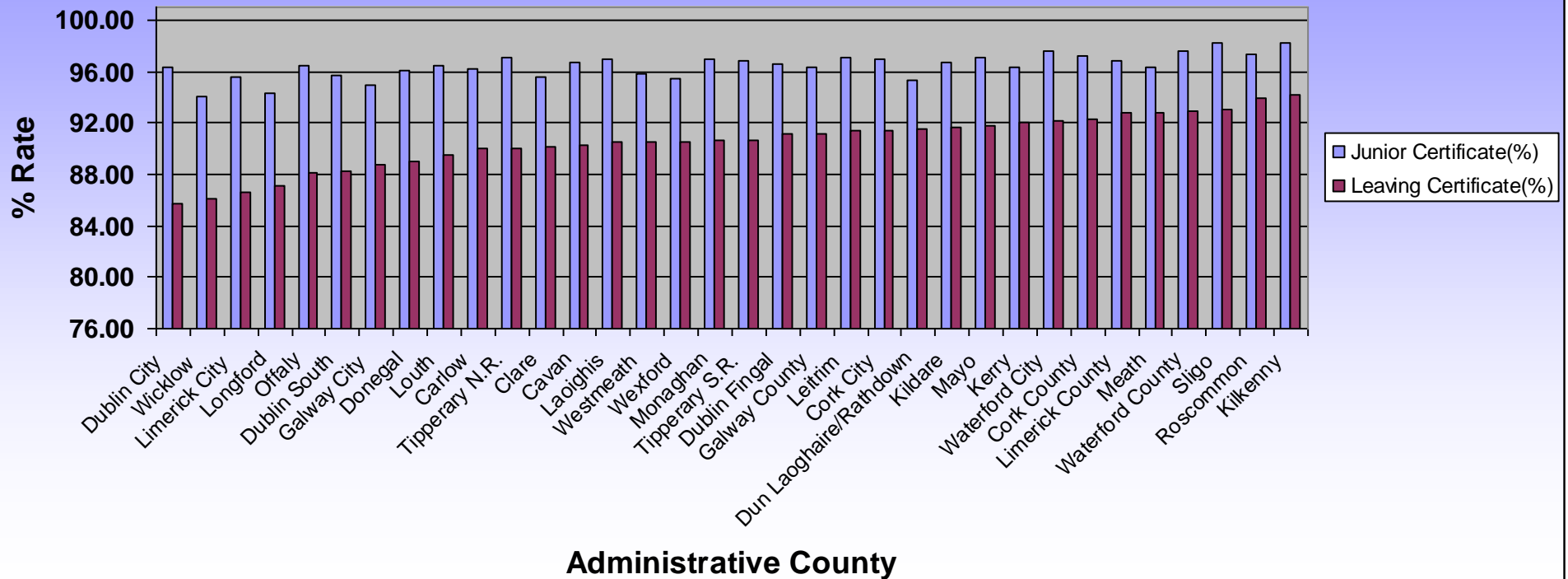
Note that the Leaving Certificate retention rates have been adjusted in order to take into account estimated emigration from the cohort in each county, and data on external candidates from the State Exams Commission have also been matched directly in to give a more accurate picture of the transfer to the non-aided second level education providers, therefore these rates should not be read as being directly comparable to the data in previous reports.

Additionally, it should be noted that relatively minor changes in pupil numbers or a very small number of pupils choosing a different pathway in counties with smaller entry cohorts can cause large changes in the percentages retained year-on-year for those counties. Therefore any year on year changes in Junior or Leaving Certificate retention rates in the less populous counties should be read in this context.

Graph B: Junior and Leaving Certificate Retention Rates, 2005 entry cohort



Graph C: Junior and Leaving Certificate Retention rates, 2006 entry cohort



SECTION**4****Retention and DEIS**

The Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative is an action plan for educational inclusion. DEIS focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities throughout their school careers. The plan provides an integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which brings together, and builds upon a range of interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with concentrated levels of educational disadvantage.

Table 6a shows the retention rates for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts of entrants to the Junior Cycle in designated DEIS second level schools compared to schools that are not under the DEIS programme.

Table 6a: Retention Rates by milestone and DEIS designation, 2005 and 2006 entry cohorts						
Milestone	2005 entry cohort			2006 entry cohort		
	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No.)	11068	44185	55253	10934	43,983	54917
Junior Certificate, Year 2 (%)	97.78	98.64	98.47	97.14	98.57	98.29
Junior Certificate, Year 3 (%)	94.97	97.55	97.03	94.77	97.49	96.94
Junior Certificate Retention Rate	92.28	96.59	95.89	93.77	97.01	96.37
Senior Cycle, Year 1	89.56	95.83	94.58	90.95	95.99	94.99
Senior Cycle, Year 2	82.16	91.12	89.33	82.69	91.69	89.89
Leaving Certificate Retention Rate	78.41	91.69	89.49	80.10	92.72	90.22

In 2005 and 2006, there is approximately a 4% difference in the Junior Certificate rate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The Leaving Certificate retention rate for the 2006 cohort in DEIS schools is just over 80%, which is just over 10% lower than the national average rate.

The majority of the loss of the cohort in DEIS schools occurs between Senior Cycle Year 1 and Senior Cycle Year 2. For the 2006 entry cohort, around 875 pupils dropped out of DEIS schools between Senior Cycle Year 1 and Senior Cycle Year 2.

Table 6b shows a comparison of the Junior and Leaving Certificate retention rates from the 2001 to 2006 cohorts.

Table 6b: Leaving Certificate retention rates by DEIS designation, 2001-2006 cohorts						
	Junior Certificate Rate (%)			Leaving Certificate Rate (%)		
Year	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All schools
2001	92.6	97.1	96.1	68.2	85.0	81.3
2002	91.6	96.8	95.7	68.6	84.7	81.3
2003	91.2	96.1	95.1	69.9	85.5	82.2
2004	89.6	95.8	94.5	73.2	87.4	84.5
2005*	92.3	96.6	95.9	78.4	91.7	89.5
2006*	93.8	97.0	96.4	80.1	92.7	90.2

The retention rate to the Leaving Certificate for DEIS schools, while still significantly lower than the rate for non-DEIS schools, continues to improve, with a rate of 78.4% for the 2005 cohort and a rate of 80.1% for the 2006 cohort. The improvement has mainly taken place from the period of entry of the 2004 cohort onwards. The corresponding rates for non-DEIS schools for 2005 and 2006 are 91.7% and 92.7% respectively.

A gap remains of approximately 12% in the Leaving Certificate retention rates between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, however the improvement in DEIS schools' retention rates has been significantly higher than the overall improvement nationally.

**2005 and 2006 rates have been adjusted for emigration and transfer to the private sector.*

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) conducted by the Central Statistics Office collects information on the educational attainment of the population, which is supplied to Eurostat and used for the compilation of European comparative statistics on early school leavers. 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. As part of the EU2020 agenda on education and training, Ireland has adopted a target of further reducing early school leaving to no more than 8% by the year 2020.

Graph D shows the proportion of persons aged 20-24 years who had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent (QNHS data). Almost eighty-seven per cent of persons aged 20-24, in 2011, had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent, an increase from 82.6% in 2000. There has been a growth in the proportion of young people with at least the Leaving Certificate or equivalent in recent years, possibly due to the increasing numbers of students now participating in second chance Further Education and Training programmes.

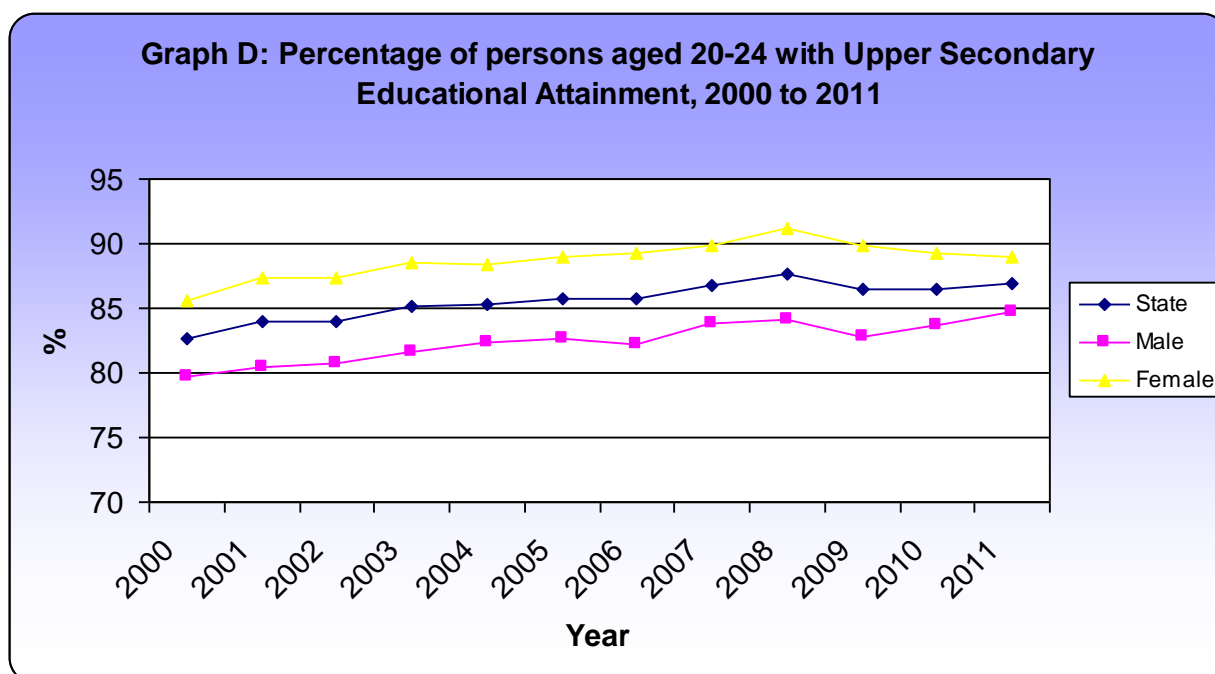


Table 7 shows the same information at EU level, which ranks Ireland 7th among the EU27 member states.

Table 8a presents data on early school leavers from 2004 to 2011. It shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 13.1% in 2004 to 10.6% in 2011 (however, some of this decrease may be due to changes in methodology). The proportion of female early school leavers decreased from 10% to 8.7% over the same period and the proportion of males decreased to 12.5%.

Table 8b presents the latest available figures for all EU27 member states which are for 2011. These show that the proportion of early school leavers in Ireland in 2011 was 11% which compares to the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 14% and 15% respectively and ranks Ireland as joint twelfth in the list of EU member states.

Table 7: Percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 with at least a higher secondary education, in EU member states, classified by sex, 2011			
	% of persons		
	Males	Females	Total
EU-27	77	82	80
Austria	84	87	85
Belgium	78	85	82
Bulgaria	86	85	86
Cyprus	85	90	88
Czech Republic	91	93	92
Denmark	64	77	70
Estonia	79	86	83
Finland	84	87	85
France	82	86	84
Germany	74	78	76
Greece	80	87	84
Hungary	82	85	83
Ireland²	85	89	87
Italy	74	81	77
Latvia	76	85	80
Lithuania	83	91	87
Luxembourg	68	79	73
Malta	53	67	59
Netherlands	75	82	78
Poland	87	93	90
Portugal	58	71	64
Romania	78	81	80
Slovakia	93	94	93
Slovenia	87	94	90
Spain	55	69	62
Sweden	87	90	89
United Kingdom	79	82	80

Table 8a: Early school leavers¹ as a percentage of 18 to 24 year olds classified by sex, 2004 to 2011								
% of persons								
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Males	16	15.4	15.2	14.6	14.6	14.7	13.5	12.5
Females	10	9.5	9	8.4	8	8.5	9.4	8.7
Total	13.1	12.5	12.1	12	11.6	11.3	11.4	10.6

Table 8b: Early school leavers¹ in EU member states classified by sex, 2011			
	% of persons		
	Males	Females	Total
EU-27	15	12	14
Austria	9	8	8
Belgium	15	10	12
Bulgaria	12	14	13
Cyprus	15	8	11
Czech Republic	5	4	5
Denmark	12	7	11
Estonia	13	9	10
Finland	11	8	11
France	14	10	10
Germany	12	11	12
Greece	16	10	12
Hungary	12	10	13
Ireland²	13	9	11
Italy	21	15	18
Latvia	16	8	12
Lithuania	11	5	8
Luxembourg	8	5	6
Malta	39	28	34
Netherlands	11	7	9
Poland	7	4	6
Portugal	28	18	23
Romania	19	17	18
Slovakia	5	5	5
Slovenia	6	3	4
Spain	31	22	27
Sweden	8	5	7
United Kingdom	16	14	15

Source: Eurostat. (epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu)

¹Early school leavers are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 whose highest level of education attained is lower secondary or below and have not received education (either formal or non formal) in the four weeks prior to the survey.

²The Eurostat figures for Ireland (and other countries) are based on an annual average for 2011 and are rounded to the nearest whole number

The Post Primary Pupil's Database 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 the vast majority of second level pupils.

The methodology employed takes the cohorts of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in each year and tracks these cohorts through each subsequent year of their participation in State-aided second-level schools.

For the 2005 and 2006 Cohorts, approximately half of each entry cohort progress from Junior Certificate Year 3 straight to Senior Cycle Year 1, while the other half progress from Junior Certificate Year 3 to Transition Year.

Table A: Entry Cohorts classified by the academic year they were enrolled in each programme and by the year they sat the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations

Entry Cohort	Junior Certificate, Year 1	Junior Certificate, Year 2	Junior Certificate, Year 3	Junior Certificate 'sits'	Transition Year	Senior Cycle, Year 1	Senior Cycle, Year 2	Leaving Certificate 'sits'
2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011
				2009		2008/2009	2009/2010	2010
2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012
				2010		2009/2010	2010/2011	2011

Adjusted Leaving Certificate Retention Rate

For the most recent entry cohorts (2005 and 2006), a number of adjustments in methodology have been employed, as follows:

- 1) The procedure for extracting the retentions data has been rewritten, as a result of the Department's PPPDB being upgraded. This has led to some minor changes in the way pupils are tracked throughout the system.
- 2) For the 2005 and 2006 entry cohorts, direct data matching with State Exams Commission external candidate data has led to a more accurate adjustment for those who have entered the private sector (and subsequently entered for the State Exams as an external candidate). Previous to the 2005 entry cohort, an estimate was made for the proportion of external candidates which were sitting the Leaving Certificate Exam for the first time.
- 3) Data on emigration from the PPPDB was used as the basis for estimating emigration from the cohort in the period under consideration. This replaces the previous method of calculating average emigration rates using CSO single year of age estimates.
- 4) A method was developed to allow for calculation of adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rates to be disaggregated by geographic area, sector of provision and gender, using emigration data from the PPPDB as a basis for the adjusted estimates. This represents a significant improvement on previous analyses, whereby it was only possible to provide an adjusted Leaving Certificate rate nationally, and all other rates were unadjusted for emigration and transfer to the private sector.

In practice, this means that there is a break in the retention rates time series, beginning with the 2005 entry cohort, and the rates for the period pre-2005 should not be read as being directly comparable to rates for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts.

Technical points

The following technical points should be noted:

- For the purposes of the retentions process, 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. If a school closes and is amalgamated with another school, pupils are assigned to the new school.
- When a school closes and there is no associated amalgamation, the school and pupils in the school are excluded from the retentions process.

A further adjustment is made to take into account those from the cohort who may have emigrated in the period under consideration.

The average annual number of deaths in the age group under consideration in the analysis of retention (approximately 12-17 year olds inclusive) is approximately 80. This number has a negligible effect (roughly 0.1 of one percentage point) on the national retention rate.