

**2004 ANNUAL SCHOOL LEAVERS' SURVEY
of 2002/2003 LEAVERS**

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2004 ANNUAL SCHOOL LEAVERS' SURVEY

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the 2004 School Leavers' Survey carried out by the ESRI for the Department of Education and Science. 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 2002 thus enabling the analysis of both short-term and long-term trends.¹

School leavers who exited the second-level system in the 2002/03 academic year (between September 2002 and the end of August 2003), provide the reference cohort for this study. 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 1999 and 2002 surveys.

The School Leavers' Surveys are based on a stratified random sample² of those leaving the official second-level system. Respondents were interviewed between 12 and 18 months after leaving school. The interview period for the 2004 survey was September 2004 – April 2005. The effective sample size of the current survey is 2,970 respondents.

The principal focus of this research is to establish the economic status of school leavers one year on. By economic status we mean whether they are i) employed, ii) unemployed, iii) a student, iv) unavailable for work, or v) have emigrated. 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 four main chapters. Chapter 2 presents the economic status of school leavers. Here, variations by educational attainment, gender, social class, and also longer-term trends since the 1980s are examined. Chapter 3 discusses educational attainment and labour market success. This chapter focuses on early school leaving, take up of

¹ The School Leavers' Survey was not carried out in the years 2000 or 2001.

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

Transition Year and also participation in Post Leaving Certificate courses. Chapter 4 examines the employment experiences of school leavers to include distributions by industrial sector, occupation, and earnings alongside satisfaction ratings with employment situation. Finally, the key findings are outlined in Chapter 5.

2. THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

This chapter concentrates specifically on the economic status of school leavers one year after leaving second level education. Section 2.1 examines economic status by gender and looks at short-term (1999–2004) and long-term trends (1980-2004). Labour market participation rates are also analysed. Section 2.2 looks at differences in economic status according to educational attainment and gender. Section 2.3 considers school leavers circumstances at different time periods throughout that year. And finally in Section 2.4 variations are highlighted in the economic status of school leavers according to their social class.

2.1 Economic Status of School Leavers

The economic status of a school leaver is classified into one of six categories outlined as follows:

- 1) Employed.
- 2) Unemployed – after loss of job, also includes those on schemes.
- 3) Unemployed – seeking first job, also includes those on schemes.
- 4) Student.
- 5) Unavailable for work.
- 6) Emigrated.

Employment & Unemployment

Table 1 (in Appendix B) presents details on the employment status of school leavers in the month of May the year after leaving school for the years 1999, 2002 and 2004. Concentrating on the 2004 aggregate figures, school leavers in employment account for 39 per cent, while 11 per cent were unemployed. Of those who were unemployed 4.2 per cent were in this situation resulting from the loss of a previous job and 6.4 per cent were still seeking their first regular job³. One year after leaving school, half of school leavers were in the labour market, 45 per cent were studying, 4 per cent were unavailable for work, whilst 2 per cent had emigrated.

³ In the following, we use the term unemployment *level* to refer to the percentage of *all* school leavers who are unemployed and unemployment *rate* to refers to the percentage of school leavers *in the labour market* who are unemployed. The latter will always be higher than the former because it excludes from the base those out of the labour market or in further study.

Comparing the 2004 data with the years 1999 and 2002, we see a drop in the labour market participation rate and a rise in the level of unemployment. The employment level of school leavers has declined from 48 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2002 and 39 per cent in 2004. Unemployment levels show an increase from 6 per cent in 1999 to 8 per cent in 2002 and 11 per cent in 2004. Of the 11 per cent unemployed in 2004, 2.5 per cent were on schemes, up from 1.2 per cent in 2002. This rise in unemployment from 1999 to 2004 is made up of a 1-percentage point increase in those school leavers seeking their first time job and a 1.6 percentage point increase in those unemployed after the loss of a job.

The percentage engaging in further education rose from 42-43 per cent in 1999 and 2002 to 45 per cent in 2004. From these results it would appear that school leavers in 2004 were somewhat more likely to go on to further education but they were also exposed to less favourable labour market conditions than those prevailing in the late 1990s.

Variations by Gender

Closer inspection of the school leavers' economic status by gender (Appendix Table 1) reveals a difference in the percentages of male and female school leavers in employment. Almost 44 per cent of males were employed one year after leaving school as compared to just 34 per cent of females. However, this gender gap would appear to be narrowing since 1999 where a difference of 14 percentage points was found. This difference dropped to 11 percentage points in 2002 and less than 10 percentage points in 2004.

Whilst males are more likely than females to be in employment one year after leaving school there is a greater chance that females will continue to study. This trend holds up in the 2004 data where we see that two fifths of males as compared to almost half of females are classified as 'student'. This gender differential has reduced from 11 to 9 percentage points from 1999 to 2004. The narrowing of the gender gap has arisen largely because of a rise in the proportion of men going on to further study. The percentage of males classified as a student increased by 3 percentage points between 1999 and 2004, the percentage of females who are students has remained largely constant. Caution must however be exercised when interpreting the figures in Table 1 as they provide only an indication of all leavers who were engaged in education or training at the relevant point in time (May 2004). This also holds true for the interpretation of unemployment figures between males and females to be dealt with in the next paragraph.

With regard to unemployment, the gender differential has increased from 1.2 percentage points in 2002 to 3 percentage points in 2004, with women less likely than men to experience unemployment. The proportion of males who are seeking their first job increased from 4 per cent in 1999 and to 7 per cent in 2002 and 2004. For females the figures are 3 per cent in 1999, 4 per cent in 2002 and 6 per cent in 2004. Table 2.1 below provides a breakdown of labour market participation rates for the years 1998, 1999, 2002 and 2004.

Table 2.1: Labour Market Participation, Employment and Unemployment Rates among School Leavers, 1998,1999,2002 & 2004

	1998	1999	2002	2004
LM Participation Rates	54.8	55.5	53.1	49.8
of which:		Per cent		
Percentage employed	86.5	89.0	84.4	78.9
Percentage unemployed	13.5	11.0	15.6	21.1

Labour market participation rates reached levels of 55 per cent between 1998 and 1999, dipped by 2 percentage points in 2002, and then dipped below the 50 per cent mark in 2004. Turning to a breakdown of those in the labour market by whether they are employed or unemployed, we see an increase in employment of 2.5 percentage points in the period 1998-1999 with a commensurate decrease in the unemployment rate. Conversely in 2002 - 2004 we note a drop in the percentage employed (falling below 80 per cent of those in the labour market in 2004) and a commensurate increase in the unemployment rate of school leavers. By 2004, just over one in five school leavers in the labour market were unemployed in May of the year after leaving school.

Longer Term Trends

Figure 1a illustrates trends in the economic status of school leavers since 1980⁴. We refer to three categories here, i) employed, ii) unemployed and iii) student. From 1980 up to 1999 there has been an upward trend in the proportion of school leavers who have progressed to further study, reaching 45 per cent in 2004. Since 1980 the increase in educational retention has led to a decline in labour market participation rates, most notably between 1980 and 1983 where the percentage of school leavers in employment fell from nearly 70 per cent in 1980 to just 44 per cent in 1983. A stabilisation occurred from 1983 until 1991 where the proportion in employment decreased to 34.5 per cent in 1994 before picking up to the 40 per cent mark

⁴ Note that we do not have data for the years 2000, 2001 or 2003 as the School Leavers' Survey was not carried out in these years.

from 1995 and rising to 48 per cent in 1999. Since 1999 there has been a fall in the proportion of school leavers employed, to 45 per cent in 2002 and 39 per cent in 2004.

Unemployment levels rose sharply from 8 per cent in 1980 to 28 per cent in 1983 falling thereafter to 14 per cent in 1990. Between 1992-1993 unemployment levels rose to 21 per cent and then fell again reaching 6 per cent in 1999. Unemployment levels rose by about 5 percentage points between 1999 and 2004 where the level stands at 11 per cent.

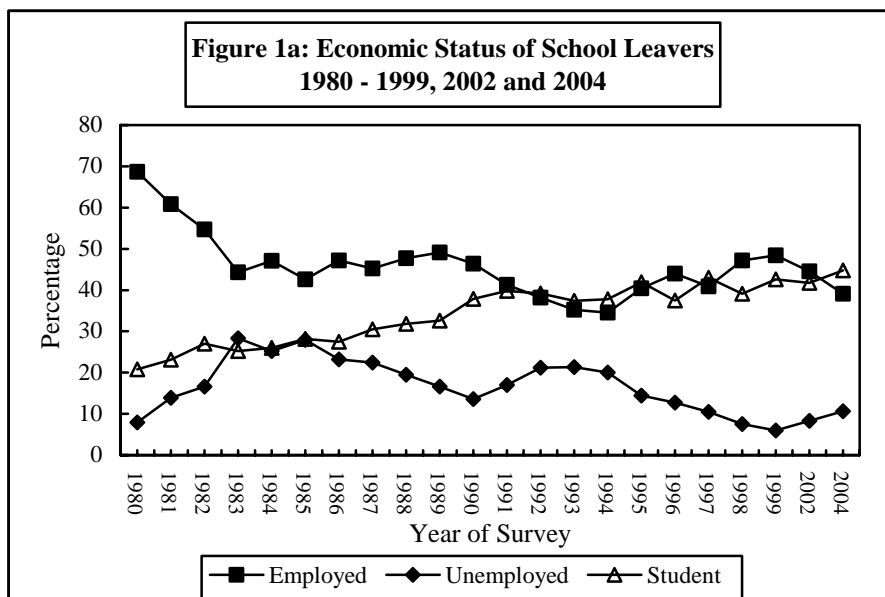
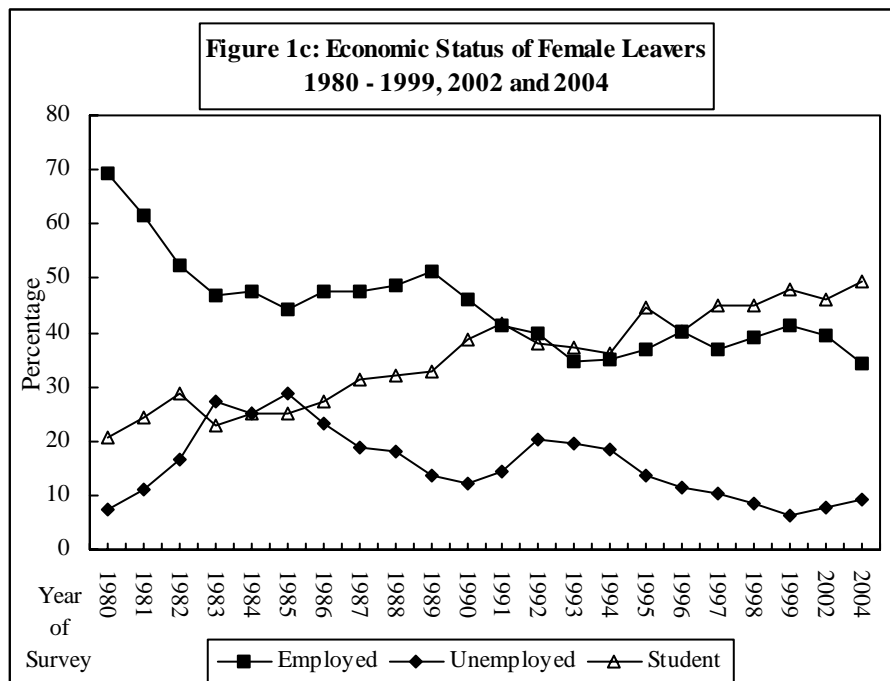
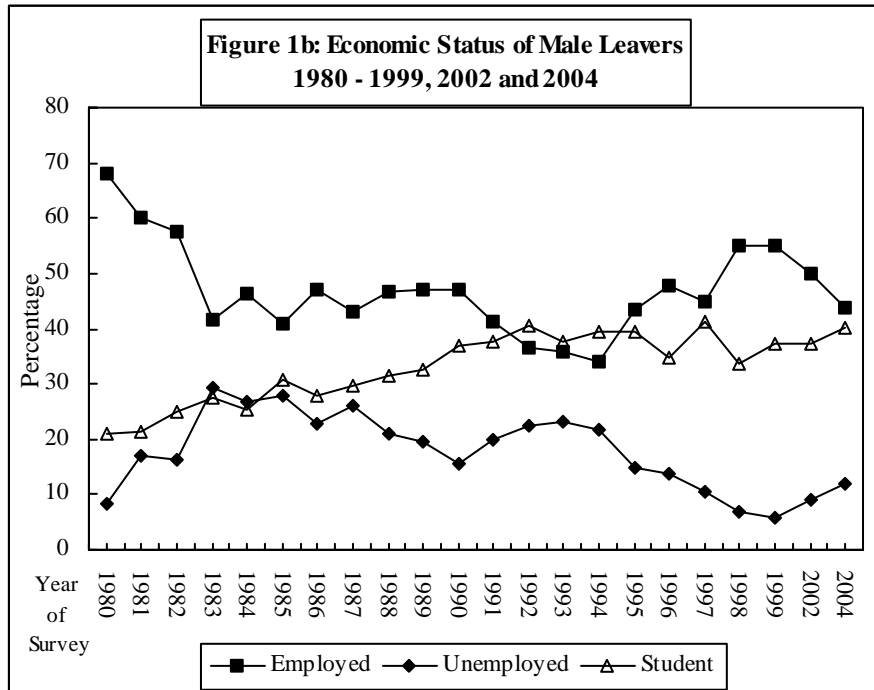


Figure Note: Data missing for years 2000, 2001 and 2003 in Figures 1a, 1b, 1c.

Figures 1b and 1c display trends in the economic status of male and female school leavers since 1980. For male school leavers the proportion in employment stabilised at the 47 per cent mark between 1988 and 1990. Thereafter it decreased to 34 per cent in 1994 but then steadily increased from 1995 to 55 per cent between 1998-1999. Between 1999 and 2004 there has been a fall in the employment level of male leavers to 44 per cent. After stabilising at 37 per cent between 1999 and 2002, the proportion of male leavers entering further study has risen to 40 per cent in 2004. From 1995 a significant decrease in unemployment levels can be observed falling to 6 per cent in 1999, but with a steady increase to 12 per cent by 2004.

For female school leavers the percentage at work increased gradually since the early 1990s to reach 41 per cent by 1999, but then fell off to 34 per cent by 2004. While the percentage of female school leavers going on to further study increased from 21 per cent in 1980 to 48 per cent in 1999, since then there has been a further increase in the proportion

going on to further study to 49 per cent in 2004. The percentage of female school leavers unemployed has fallen steadily since the high figure of 20 per cent in 1992, but with an increase in 2004 of 3 percentage points (to stand at 9.1 per cent in 2004) compared to the low figure of 6.1 per cent in 1999.



2.2 Economic Status and Level of Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment Levels

Table 2 (Appendix B) provides information on the economic status of school leavers according to their level of educational attainment upon leaving school. Three categories of educational attainment will be referred to here i) those who left with no qualifications, ii) those who left after Junior Certificate and iii) those who left having completed the Leaving Certificate (or its equivalent). In aggregate 82 per cent of school leavers in 2004 completed the Leaving Certificate, 15 per cent completed the Junior Certificate, while less than 4 per cent left with no qualifications (never completing any official second level exam).

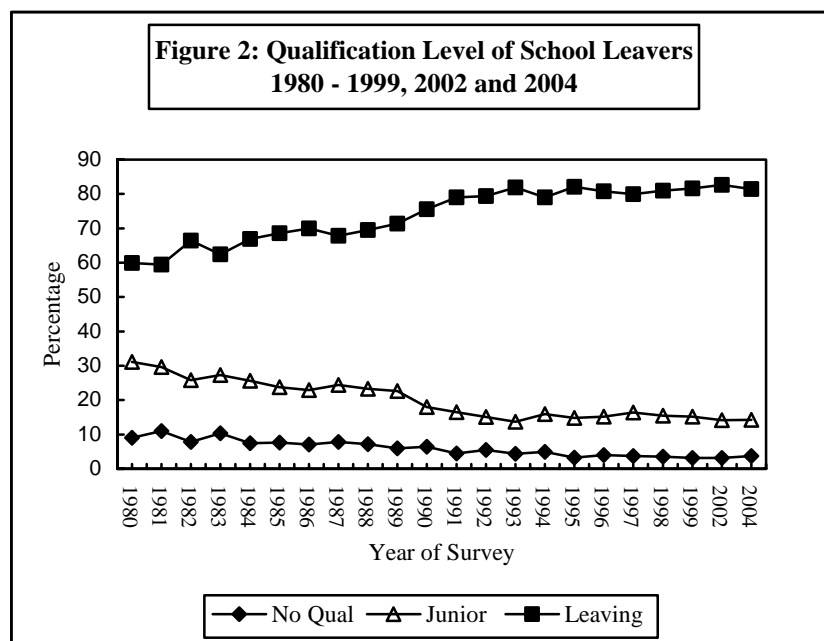


Figure 2 illustrates longer-term trends in the qualification levels of school leavers since 1980. One can see from the graph that the percentage of those leaving school without the Leaving Certificate has fallen steadily. In 1980, 9 per cent of students left with no qualifications and 31 per cent left after the Junior Cycle. By 2004 the corresponding figures had dropped to less than 4 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, so that the proportion leaving school with the Leaving Certificate had risen from 60 per cent to 82 per cent. The percentage of school leavers with the Leaving Certificate has remained relatively stable at 79-82 cent per since 1991.

Employment Status and Educational Attainment

Table 2 (Appendix) provides information on the main economic status of school leavers broken down by educational attainment. A strong relationship persists between educational attainment and economic status. This is particularly evident when one focuses on those classified as unemployed. The proportion of school leavers classified as unemployed increases the lower the level of qualification. In 2004, those who had completed the Leaving Certificate recorded unemployment levels of 6-7 per cent; for those who completed the Junior Certificate the unemployment level increased to 24 per cent. More alarming, the unemployment level rises sharply to over 50 per cent for those school leavers with no qualifications. About half of those unemployed school leavers with no qualifications are on schemes, however, and the percentage on schemes has risen significantly since 2002.

The proportion of school leavers in employment, on the other hand, increases with the level of education on leaving. Of those with no qualifications, 24 per cent were in employment one year after leaving school, rising to 59 per cent for those with a Junior Certificate and 60 per cent for those with a Leaving Certificate (with VPT). In comparison, only 31 per cent of those who sat the Leaving Certificate (no VPT) were in employment, considerably lower than the employment levels among those who sat the Leaving Certificate with the VPT. The lower proportion of those without VPT in employment can be explained by this cohort's greater propensity to continue their education: 58 per cent (those without VPT) versus 26 per cent (with VPT) progress to further study.

We turn to examine more closely those who actually entered the labour market. Table 2.2 below examines labour force participation rates of school leavers (one year after leaving) by level of qualification.

Table 2.2: Labour Force Participation: Employment and Unemployment Rates Among School Leavers, by Level of Education, 2004

	No Quals	Junior Certificate	Leaving Certificate (+ VPT)	Leaving Certificate (no VPT)	Total
LF Participation Rates	73.9	83.5	68.9	37.5	49.8
of which:					
Percentage employed	31.8	71.1	89.5	83.6	78.9
Percentage unemployed	68.2	28.9	10.5	16.4	21.1

Overall, labour force participation rates tend to be highest among those without the Leaving Certificate, largely owing to their lower rate of entry into further education. Among those in the labour force, employment rates are significantly lower among those who leave school with no qualifications, and unemployment rates are commensurately higher. The unemployment rate among those with no qualifications is more than twice the rate for those with the Junior Certificate (68 per cent and 29 per cent respectively) and over six times higher than for school leavers who sat the Leaving Certificate (with VPT: 11 per cent).

Trends in Employment Status and Attainment

Short-term trends regarding labour market experiences of school leavers can be gauged from Appendix Table 2 and Table 2.3. Here we see a rise in the unemployment level for all categories of educational attainment between 1999 and 2004. Appendix Table 2 shows that the percentage going on to further study has increased among those with no qualifications (from 2 per cent in 1999 to 7 per cent in 2004); has remained relatively stable for those leaving with a Junior Certificate (9-11 per cent); has increased slightly for those with the Leaving Certificate and VPT (23-26 per cent); and has remained constant for those with the Leaving Certificate and no VPT (59 per cent in 1999 and 58 per cent in 2004).

Table 2.3 shows changes in the unemployment levels of school leavers by educational attainment for 1999, 2002 and 2004. Here, we witness a rise in unemployment levels from 1999 to 2002 stretching across all qualification levels. These increases are most dramatic at Junior Certificate level where an 86% increase is notable from 1999 to 2002. Unemployment rose again between 2002 and 2004, with the largest relative increase apparent for those with the Leaving Certificate.

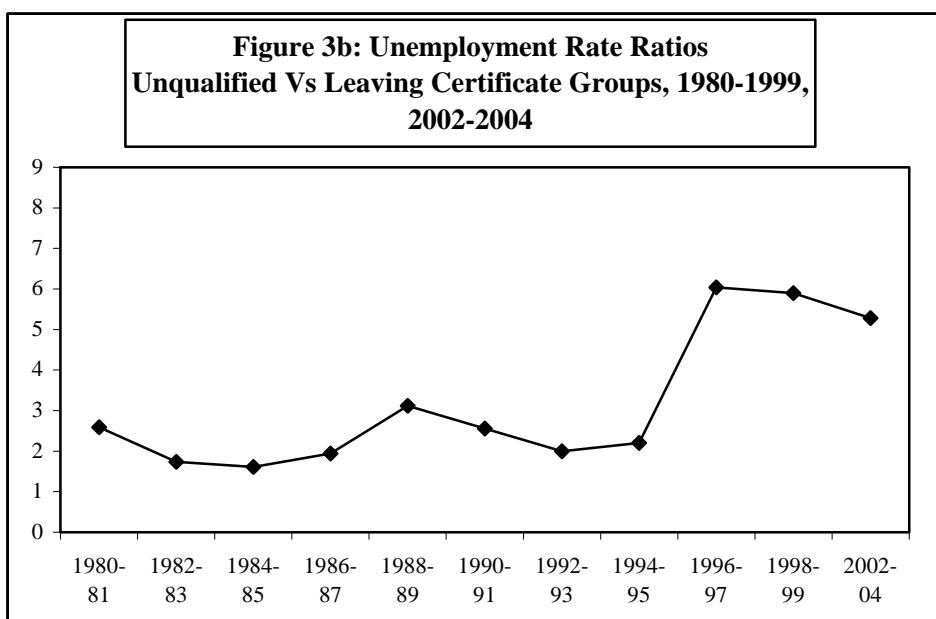
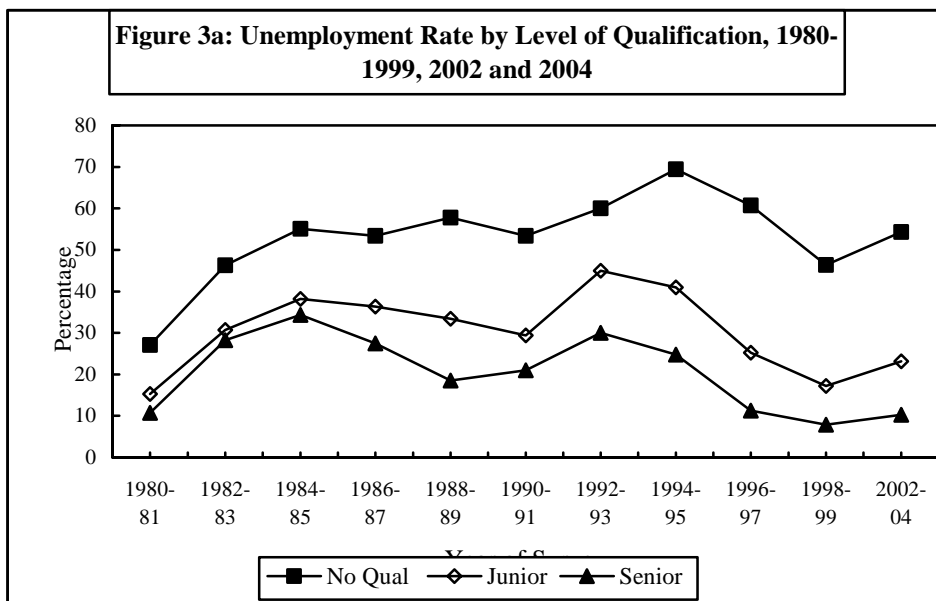
Table 2.3: Changes in Unemployment Levels, 1999, 2002 and 2004

	1999	2002	2004	% change in unemployment level 1999-2002	% change in unemployment level 2002-2004
No Qualifications	41.4	44.5	50.4	7.5%	13.3%
Junior Certificate	11.8	21.9	24.1	85.6%	10.1%
Leaving Certificate + VPT	3.7	5.2	7.2	40.5%	39.3%
Leaving Certificate no VPT	3.4	4.4	6.2	29.4%	39.9%

Note: Unemployed as percentage of all school leavers.

Longer-Term Trends in Employment Status and Attainment

We now look at some long-term trends (since 1980) for those school leavers who entered the labour market. Figures 3a and 3b illustrate the unemployment *rates* of school leavers according to qualification level. Since 1980 there has been a persistent gap between those who leave without qualifications and those who leave on completion of the Leaving Certificate. In 1980/81 the unemployment rate among those with no qualifications was 16 percentage points higher than for those with a Leaving Certificate. By 2004 this differential had exceeded 53 percentage points.



Viewed in terms of odds ratios (or relative unemployment risk differential), Figure 3b illustrates the declining relative position of least qualified school leavers, particularly over recent years. While unqualified school leavers were 2 to 3 times more likely to be unemployed than those qualified to Leaving Certificate standard in the early 1990s, this differential has grown to over 5 times by 2004.

Economic Status, Educational Attainment and Gender

Gender differences in the economic status of male and female leavers can be seen from Appendix Tables 2a and 2b. Throughout the years, the school leavers' survey has shown that males exhibit a greater tendency towards early school leaving than their female counterparts. In 2004, 3.9 per cent of males as compared to 3.4 per cent of females left school without any qualifications. A greater proportion of females than males obtain Leaving Certificate qualifications, 85 per cent relative to 79 per cent. The proportion of males exiting the second level system without sitting the Leaving Certificate is 6 percentage points higher than for females.

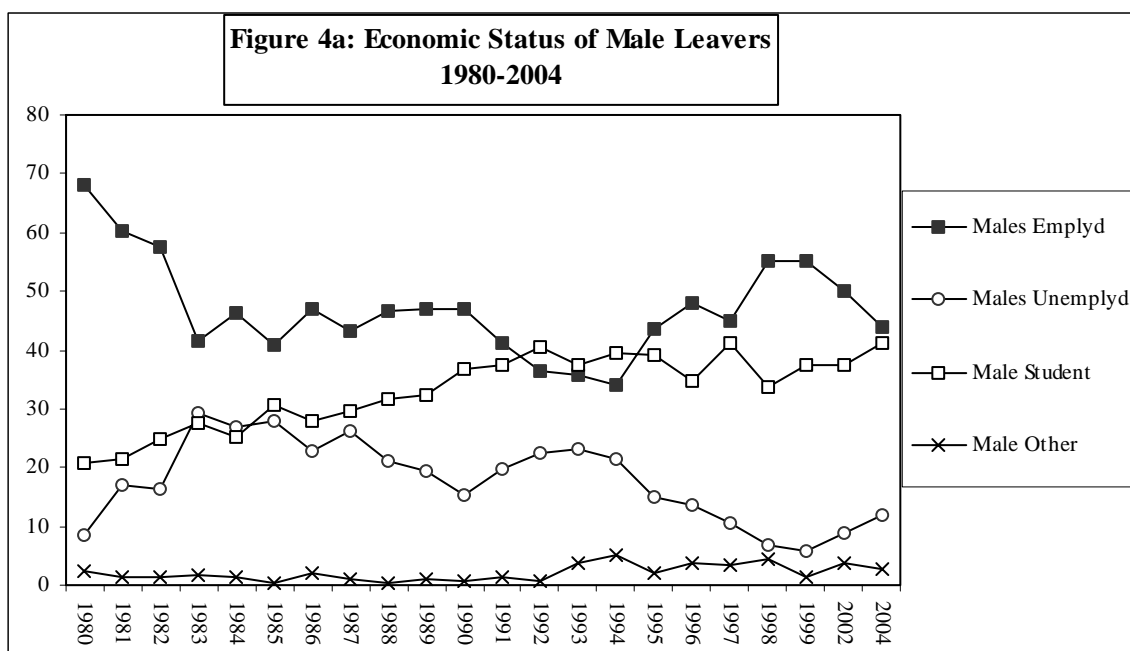
The gender gap is larger in terms of whether the Leaving Certificate is completed with or without VPT qualifications. Females are much more likely to have a Leaving Certificate with VPT (18 per cent of females compared to 9 per cent of males). On the other hand, 70 per cent of males and 67 per cent of females complete the Leaving Certificate without VPT. As with previous years, this reflects the greater take up of PLC courses by females after completing the Leaving Certificate.

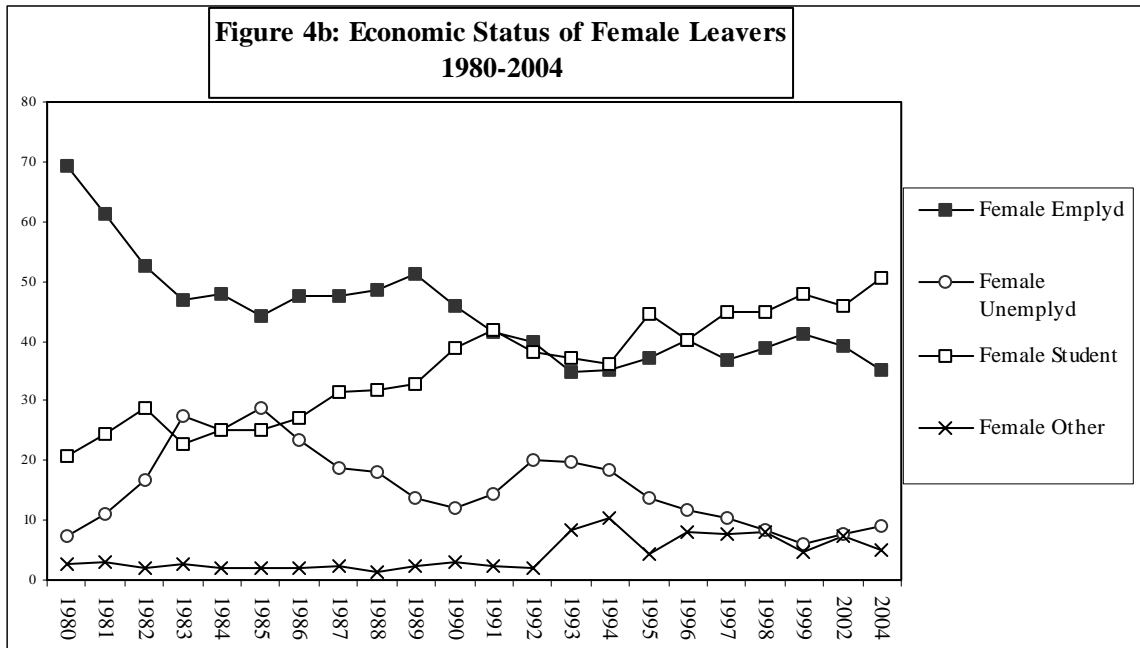
As noted earlier, there has been a continuing increase in the percentage of students going on to further study (from 42 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2004). This increase has occurred among both females (48 to 50 per cent) and males (38 to 40 per cent). The increase is particularly evident for females who left without qualifications. Among males, the increase in participation in further study is also more marked for this group: 5 per cent of males who left unqualified went on to further study in 2004 compared to less than 1 per cent in 1999.

Overall, there has been little change in labour market withdrawal between 2002 and 2004, but the gender gap has narrowed slightly. In 2004, 3 per cent of males were unavailable for work (and not students), compared to 5 per cent of females. For both males and females, this figure is higher for those leaving with no qualifications (about 15 per cent), and it is also higher for females leaving after the Junior Certificate (10 per cent). As in other years, the gender gap is largest for the group leaving after the Junior Certificate (8 percentage points).

In 2004, 2 per cent of school leavers had emigrated, compared to 1 per cent in 2002. The percentage who emigrated is extremely low for both males and females and for those leaving at all stages. The incidence of emigration tends to be a bit higher for those leaving with no qualifications, however (3.4 per cent), and for those achieving the Leaving Certificate (with VPT) at 3.1 per cent. Females are marginally more likely than males to emigrate, but the difference is very small.

Figures 4a and 4b show changes in the economic status of school leavers from 1980-1999 and again in 2002-2004. For most of the period, females have had lower unemployment levels than males with the largest gap in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, the gap has tended to narrow, and currently averages 1-3 percentage points. In 2004, 12 per cent of male leavers and 9 per cent of female leavers were unemployed. The proportion of females participating in further study has increased since 2002 (from 46 to 50 per cent in 2004), while for males the proportion continuing on to further education has grown from 37 per cent in 2002 to 40 per cent in 2004.





2.3 Experience Since Leaving School

Up until now we have been examining the economic status of school leavers at one point in time, approximately one year after having left second level. We now turn to examine specific time periods within those 12 months, namely August 2003, October 2003, January 2004 and May 2004.

In aggregate, we can see from Appendix Table 3 that entry into employment increases from August 2003 (33 per cent) right through to May 2004 (40 per cent). Unemployment is highest in August (16 per cent) decreasing to 11 per cent for each of the other three months. The percentage seeking their first job declines from 11 per cent in August to 7-8 per cent in each of the periods thereafter.

The proportion classified as student reaches its highest in October (49 per cent), the beginning of the academic year. This incidence corresponds with a significant fall of 18 percentage points in those classified as unavailable for work from October. The proportion of males going on to further study has increased by 3 percentage points since 2002. As in previous years the percentage of females continuing on to further study is higher than for males. The proportion classified as students drops back from 49 per cent in October and January to 46 per cent in May, reflecting the completion of short-term courses and also students who drop out of longer-term courses.

2.4 Class Origins

In the following sections we examine whether socio-economic background (in relation to the father's socio economic status) has a bearing on 1) school leavers' economic status one year after leaving school, 2) labour force participation rates of school leavers, 3) the stage at which the school leaver left school and 4) results of the last official examination sat.

Appendix Tables 4a and 4b show the relationship between father's socio economic status and school leavers' economic status one year after leaving school. In aggregate, 11 per cent of school leavers are classified as unemployed. One can see that the highest proportion of unemployed school leavers (28 per cent) come from backgrounds where the father is unemployed; this compares to only 3 per cent of school leavers from a professional background.

Comparisons with the 2002 figures show that the total proportion classified as unemployed has increased by 2 percentage points. While the highest risk of unemployment among school leavers is found among those whose father is unemployed, the proportion of these students who are unemployed having lost a job has remained relatively stable (at 9 per cent). The proportion who are seeking their first job has however increased sharply by 7 percentage points since 2002.

Focusing on the relationship between father's socio-economic status and the chances of a school leaver going on to further study it appears that leavers from professional backgrounds are most likely to progress to further study (69 per cent). Over three fifths of the leavers from employer/manager backgrounds go on to further study (63 per cent) and over half of those from farming backgrounds do so. In contrast, 26 per cent of leavers whose father is unemployed go on to further education. Although the figure is considerably lower than that for the average school leaver, it has increased dramatically from the figure of 12 per cent in 1999 and 2002. Fewer than 40 per cent of those from manual backgrounds go on to further study, a figure which has increased by 5 percentage points since 2002.

Concentrating now on the labour force participation rates of school leavers, a strong correlation with socio-economic background is apparent. The overall rate at 50 per cent has fallen slightly since 2002. The lowest participation rates belong to those from professional (23 per cent), employer/manager (32 per cent) and agricultural (40 per cent) backgrounds.

While the highest participation rates come from manual groups (58 per cent) and from those where the father is unemployed (66 per cent).

Focusing solely on these labour market participants, the average unemployment rate is 21 per cent. The highest unemployment rate is recorded for those school leavers where the father is unemployed (42 per cent) and the lowest among those whose father is in a professional occupation (14 per cent). The unemployment rates have remained relatively stable since 2002 for those from professional, and manual backgrounds, but have increased for those coming from intermediate non-manual backgrounds (by 7 percentage points), employer/manager (by 15 percentage points) backgrounds, with those whose father is unemployed accounting for the largest increase (of 16 percentage points).

Table 2.4 details the relationship between the school leaver's gender, educational attainment and father's socio-economic status. A strong correlation between level of qualification and father's socio-economic background emerges. Both male and female school leavers from professional, employer/manager and agricultural backgrounds have significantly greater chances of obtaining Leaving Certificate qualifications. Those from manual and unemployed backgrounds have considerably higher probability than other groups of leaving before the Leaving Certificate stage.

Table 2.4: Initial Level of Education Attained by Socio-Economic Background (2004)

	Male				Female			
	No Quals	Junior Cert	Leaving Cert	Total (Col %)	No Quals	Junior Cert	Leaving Cert	Total (Col %)
Farmer/Agriculture	2.0	14.3	83.7	12.6	2.3	3.7	94.1	11.1
H/L professional	0.6	8.1	91.2	10.3	1.0	11.4	87.6	10.3
Employer/manager	2.1	10.1	87.7	10.2	1.4	7.4	91.2	11.7
Intermediate non-manual	3.4	16.2	80.4	20.4	2.6	9.9	87.5	18.1
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	3.3	19.5	77.2	34.0	1.7	11.4	86.9	34.3
Unemployed	13.4	26.9	59.7	6.0	15.6	23.5	60.9	5.6
Other/unknown	12.7	32.0	55.3	6.4	11.2	22.8	66.1	9.1
Total	4.0	17.3	78.7	100	3.5	11.5	85.0	100.0
Est. No. in category	1341	5833	26557	33731	1178	3930	29022	34130

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

As noted earlier, a greater proportion of females (85 per cent) than males (79 per cent) obtain the Leaving Certificate. This gender differential is wider for those whose father is working in a manual job. Of females from manual backgrounds, 87 per cent sat the Leaving Certificate as opposed to 77 per cent of males in that category. The differential for females and males from an unemployed background has virtually disappeared in 2004.

Table 2.5a below presents further details on the qualification levels at which school leavers left the education system (including participation in a PLC programme) by father's socio-economic background. In particular it focuses on the three types of Leaving Certificate i.e. the traditional Leaving Certificate, the Vocational Leaving Certificate Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied. Looking at different outcomes by parents' socio economic background, 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. There is also a clear class differential in terms of the probability of leaving at the Junior Certificate Level (including those who drop out before the Leaving Certificate), ranging from 10 per cent of those from unemployed backgrounds and 6 per cent of those from manual backgrounds to 3-4 per cent of those from farming, professional and employer-manager backgrounds.

When distinguishing between the different types of Leaving Certificate, the traditional Leaving Certificate, Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied, we see a clear class differentiation in the case of the traditional Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied but a more mixed pattern for the Vocational Programme. While 49 per cent of students from non-manual backgrounds take the traditional Leaving Certificate, the figure is 25 per cent of students from unemployed backgrounds and 44 per cent of those from manual backgrounds and 42 per cent of students from farm backgrounds. On the other hand, 5-6 per cent of students from manual and unemployed backgrounds take the Leaving Certificate Applied compared to 1-2 per cent of students from professional and employer-manager backgrounds. The figures for intermediate non-manual and farm backgrounds are in between at 4-5 per cent. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme is taken by 18 per cent of students but with substantially higher figures for those from farm backgrounds (28 per cent) and lower figures for those from intermediate non-manual and unemployed backgrounds (13-15 per cent).

PLC participation also shows marked differentiation across socio-economic groups, with considerably higher rates of participation among students from unemployed and intermediate non-manual backgrounds, with lower levels of representation among students from professional backgrounds.

Table 2.5a: Stage Left School by Socio-Economic Background (2004)

	No Quals	Studying for			LC Traditional	LC Applied	LC Vocational	PLC
		Junior Cert	Leaving Cert	LC				
Farmer/Agriculture	0.9	3.7	4.3	42.1	3.8	28.1	17.1	
H/L professional	1.0	3.1	4.4	62.5	0.8	16.6	11.5	
Employer/manager	1.4	4.1	3.7	52.8	1.5	18.9	17.6	
Intermediate non-manual	1.9	5.5	5.8	49.1	3.8	13.3	20.5	
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	1.9	6.2	7.0	43.8	4.5	18.5	18.1	
Unemployed	12.2	10.3	10.6	24.5	5.8	15.3	21.4	
Other/unknown	8.4	12.1	12.9	31.4	6.4	8.5	20.4	
Total	2.7	5.9	6.5	45.5	3.8	17.6	18.1	

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

Table 2.5b below provides details on the exam results obtained by socio-economic background for those school leavers (for whom we have results) whose last official exam 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. Just over half of the students who leave at this stage achieve 5 or more passes, while a further 38 per cent achieve one or more honours. Those from professional backgrounds who leave after the Junior Certificate stand out being most likely to achieve strong results: three quarters achieve at least one honour, compared to 38 per cent overall.

Table 2.5b: Junior Cert Examination Results by Socio-Economic Background (2004)

	<5 Ds	5+ Ds, No Cs	1+ Cs
Farmer/Agriculture	5.3	72.2	22.4
H/L professional	6.1	18.4	75.5
Employer/manager	11.4	39.0	49.6
Intermediate non-manual	11.2	51.0	37.8
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	9.3	55.3	35.4
Unemployed	11.1	52.7	36.2
Other/unknown	7.5	66.9	25.6
Total	9.1	53.1	37.7

Note: Row percentages for each socio-economic background.

Table 2.5c below presents the Leaving Certificate exam results of school leavers (for whom we had the results). In the table Leaving Certificate results are broken down into four categories: i) less than 5 passes, ii) 5 or more passes with no honours, iii) 1-3 honours and iv) 4 or more honours. Overall, of those who sit the Leaving Certificate, about one in 20 achieve less than 5 passes, with a quarter achieving 5 or more passes (but no honours), 30 per cent

attaining 1-3 honours and 40 per cent achieving 4 or more honours. Again, students from professional backgrounds stand out as having stronger results, with 63 per cent achieving 4 or more honours, considerably greater than the average and nearly four times the proportion of students from unemployed backgrounds who do so.

The proportion of students who sit the Leaving Certificate but achieve fewer than five passes is low overall (5.5 per cent) but is considerably higher for those from unemployed backgrounds at 12 per cent.

It is interesting to note that those students from manual backgrounds who sit the Leaving Certificate tend to do better than their counterparts from intermediate non-manual backgrounds, with 39 per cent of the former achieving 4 or more honours compared to 29 per cent of the latter. The differences between these two groups in the percentage who leave at different stages (Table 2.5a) is small, but more of the students from manual than from intermediate non-manual backgrounds take the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Table 2.5c: Leaving Cert Examination Results by Socio-Economic Background (2004)

	< 5 Ds	5+ Ds, No Cs	1-3 Hons	4+ Hons
Farmer/Agriculture	5.0	22.1	31.4	41.5
H/L professional	7.1	8.6	21.7	62.5
Employer/manager	2.5	23.3	26.7	47.5
Intermediate non-manual	7.2	31.7	32.3	28.8
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	3.6	28.5	28.5	39.4
Unemployed	11.7	38.4	32.3	17.6
Other/unknown	11.1	27.3	36.6	24.9
Total	5.5	25.5	29.1	40.0

Note: Row percentages for each socio-economic background.

3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, TRAINING AND LABOUR MARKET SUCCESS

In this chapter, we take a closer look at levels of educational attainment. Section 3.1 focuses on the outcome of school leavers' last official exam, to include an examination of gender differentials. Section 3.2 looks at the relationship between labour market status and outcome of last official second level exam. Section 3.3 deals with whether or not school leavers participated in transition year. Finally, Section 3.4 provides some information on the take up of Post Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs).

3.1 Educational Attainment and Early School Leaving

Eight categories of school leavers' educational attainment are used throughout this chapter, based on school leavers' performance in their final official exam as follows:

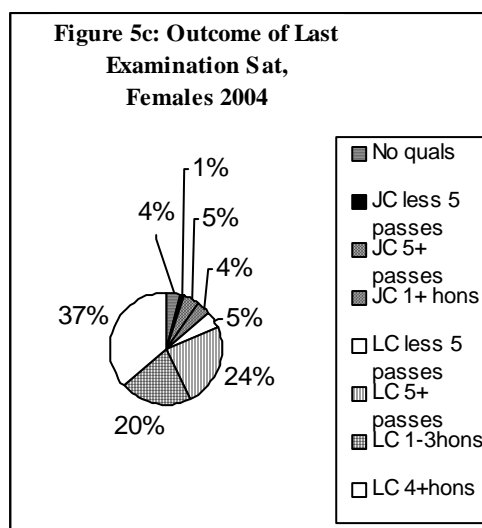
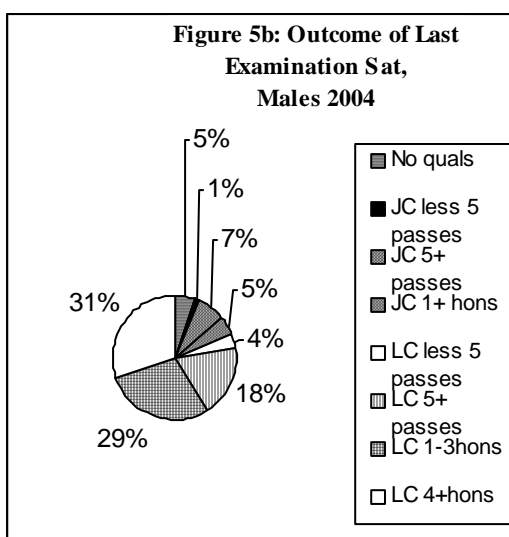
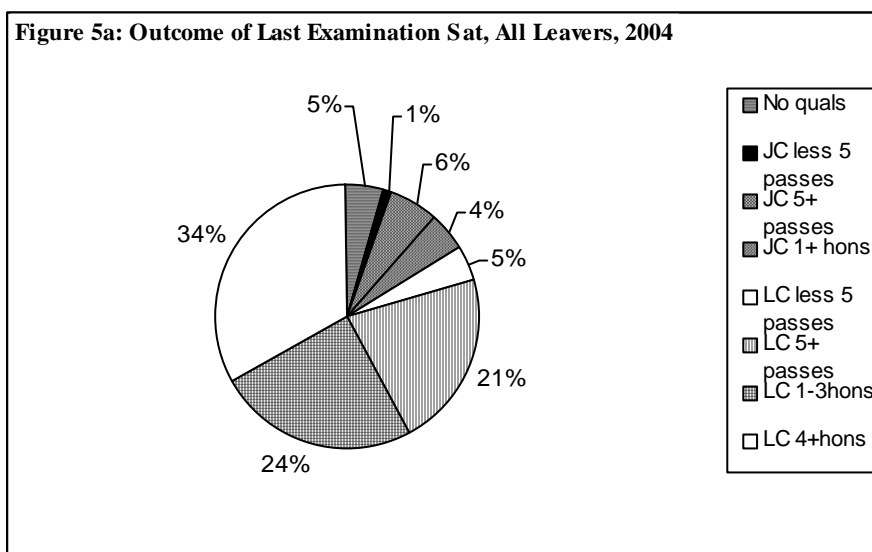
- No qualifications – no formal examinations taken;
- Junior Certificate – less than 5Ds;
- Junior Certificate – 5 or more Ds, but no Cs or better on higher level papers;
- Junior Certificate – 1 or more Cs (or better) on higher level papers;
- Leaving Certificate – less than 5Ds;
- Leaving Certificate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

Figures 5a, 5b, and 5c present the results for those of whom we have exam results. From Figure 5a we see that the results for the Junior Certificate remain relatively constant with those presented in the 2002 report.

At Leaving Certificate level, there has been a slight increase in the percentage achieving 4 or more 'honours' (from 29 to 34 per cent), with a commensurate fall in the numbers attaining 5 or more passes with no 'honours'. No change is apparent in the percentage achieving 1-3 'honours' (24 per cent) or failing to secure 5 passes (5 per cent).

We saw earlier that more females than males complete the Leaving Certificate (Table 2.4). Compared to 2002 the proportion of males achieving honours in their Leaving Cert (60 per cent) has increased by 9 percentage points, while for females the proportion remains stable at 57 per cent. However, females still appear to outnumber males in terms of the

proportion achieving 4 or more honours in their Leaving Cert (by 6 percentage points), although, the differential has decreased by 2 percentage points since 2002.



However, the exam performance of males has improved between 2002 and 2004, while that of females has dropped back so that the gap is now narrower than it was in 2002.

School Leavers with No Qualifications

Appendix Table 5 provides us with a breakdown of those who left school with no formal qualifications by the stage at which they left and also by gender. It must be noted that the distributions presented show fewer school leavers departing without qualifications than in 2002. As discussed earlier, males (53 per cent) are more strongly represented than females

(47 per cent) among those who leave school without any qualifications. In aggregate, 21 per cent of school leavers exit in their first year of secondary school representing a slight decrease of 2 percentage points since 2002. The percentage departing in their second year remains constant with 2002 figures (43 per cent) and accounts for the highest single proportion of school leavers. An increase of 4 percentage points is notable from 2002 in the proportion that leave in their third year, representing one third of school leavers in 2004.

In terms of gender differentials, a significant shift is notable from the pattern, which emerged in 2002, when more males (46 per cent) than females (38 per cent) left school during second year. In 2004, 49 per cent of females left school in second year displaying a marked increase of 11 percentage points from 2002, while for males this incidence displays a decrease of 8 percentage points.

Factors Influencing Respondents to Leave

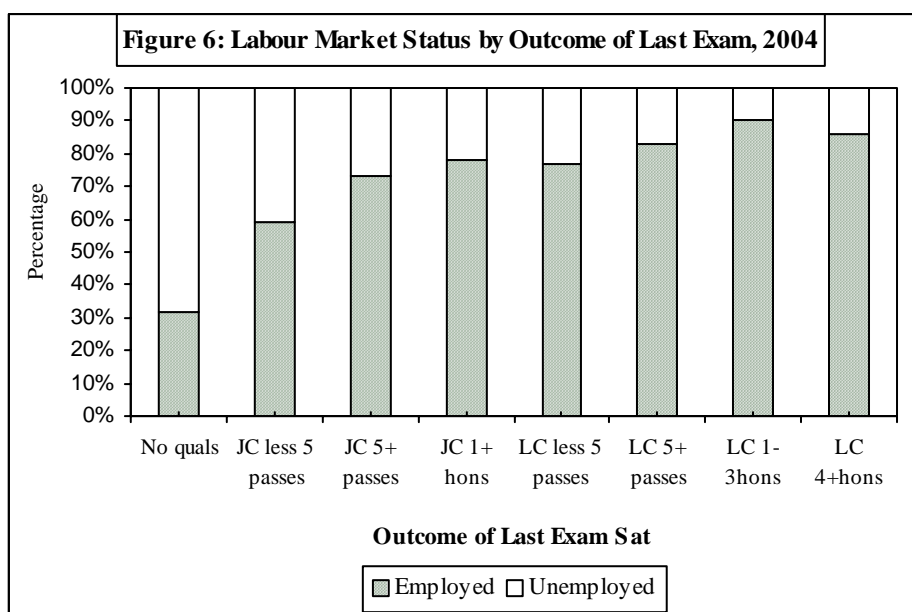
A question was added to the 2004 survey whereby respondents who left school prior to sitting the Leaving Certificate/ Leaving Certificate Applied were asked about the main factors influencing their decision to leave. The choices provided were school factors, economic or work factors, family factors, health factors and other. In aggregate, it is clear that the overriding factors influencing students to leave school relate to school factors (39 per cent), followed by economic or work factors (23 per cent), other reasons (22 per cent), family factors (11 per cent), and health factors (4 per cent). When concentrating on gender differentials a clear distinction can be drawn with respect to family factors – chosen as the second most important factor (one fifth) for females as opposed to only 4 per cent of males.

3.2 Level of Attainment and Unemployment

Appendix Table 6 details the relationship between labour market status (in terms of employment/unemployment rates) by outcome of last exam sat before leaving school. In keeping with the trends of recent years we see a strong relationship between labour market status and qualification level. In general, it would appear that the higher the level of education the lower the chance of becoming unemployed. This trend is all the more obvious from the 2004 data as the proportion of school leavers with no qualifications who are unemployed (68 per cent) has risen sharply by 13 percentage points from the 2002 figures (55 per cent). Less dramatic increases are notable for those who left with the Junior Certificate (3 percentage points) and those who left with the Leaving Certificate (5 percentage points).

Compared to the 2002 survey the employment rates for all categories of qualification have decreased while the respective unemployment rates have increased. In 2004 school leavers with no qualifications are 4.6 times more likely than those with the Leaving Certificate to be unemployed. This differential represents a slight fall on the 2002 figures when those with no qualifications were 5.6 times more likely to be unemployed than those with the Leaving Cert.

As in previous years, the strength and direction of the relationship between qualification level upon leaving school and labour market status for both males and females remains stable. The 1999 report recorded higher incidences of unemployment among females than males, 13 per cent compared to 10 per cent. The 2002 report recorded a levelling off, as a mere 1 percentage point difference existed between the proportion of females (16 per cent) and males unemployed (15 per cent). In the current report the proportion of males unemployed (22 per cent) exceeds the proportion of females (21 per cent) by just 1 percentage point. For females a 5-percentage point increase in unemployment is notable since 2002 while a 6-percentage point increase is evident for males.



We turn now to look more closely at the labour market status of school leavers for each of the eight categories of educational attainment as measured by outcome of last exam. These results are presented in Appendix Table 7 and Figure 6. As in previous years Table 7 clearly shows the strong and directional relationship between labour market status and, not alone level of attainment, but also outcome of last exam within each level. Again we see the incidence of unemployment decreases favourably as the level of educational attainment, in

terms of last exam results, increases. The rates of unemployment have increased again since 2002 in all categories of educational attainment. These increases in unemployment rates appear to be most marked for those who left school with no qualifications (a 13 percentage point increase from 55 per cent in 2002 to 68 per cent for the 2004 leavers).

3.3 Level of Attainment and Participation in Transition Year

Table 3.1a presents the Junior Certificate exam results differentiated by those who participated in Transition Year (TY) and those who did not. Note that students recorded as participating in the TY programme could have left the second level system before completing it. In aggregate, of those for whom the Junior Certificate represents the last official second level exam the majority (74 per cent) did *not* participate in Transition Year. Nevertheless, the participation rate for this group of students has increased substantially compared to the 2002 figures (from 20 to 28 per cent). Like the 2002 results, there is some tendency for those with higher exam results to be more likely to participate: while 26 per cent of those who attained less than 5 passes participated in the programme, 40 per cent of those with 1 or more honours did so. The group of Junior Certificate leavers with 5 or more passes (but no honours) appear least likely to participate in the Transition Year programme (20 per cent), and show the smallest increase in participation rates since 2002 (17 per cent).

Table 3.1a: Junior Cert Examination Results by Participation in Transition Year (2004)

JC Results	Participated in TY	Did not Participate in TY
< 5 passes	25.6	74.4
5+ passes	19.9	80.1
1+ Honours	40.0	60.0
Total	28.0	72.0

Note: Student may have left before completing the TY programme.

Turning now to the Leaving Certificate results and their relationship to TY participation rates a notable pattern is apparent from Table 3.1b. In aggregate, the majority of students do not participate: 62 per cent as opposed to 38 per cent and there has been a growth of 3 percentage points in participation since 2002. However, as was the case in 2002, those who achieved four or more honours are markedly more likely to have participated in the programme (47 compared to 30-35 per cent for the other groups). The gap is somewhat narrower than in 2002, however: participation in TY programmes increased by 4 to 7 percentage points for

those with fewer than 5 passes, those achieving 5 or more passes and those securing 1-3 honours, but it dropped (by 4 percentage points) for those with 4 or more honours.

Table 3.1b: Leaving Cert Examination Results by Participation in Transition Year (2004)

LC Results	Participated in TY	Did not Participate in TY
< 5 passes	33.4	66.6
5+ passes	29.5	70.5
1-3 Hons	35.1	64.9
4+ Hons	47.3	52.7
Total	38.5	61.5

Note: Student may have left before completing the TY programme.

3.4 Level of Attainment and Post Second Level Education

Appendix Table 8 provides details on school leavers' participation rates in post second level education and training according to the result of their last second level exam. Post second level education and training refers to participation in any form of education or training subsequent to leaving second level. This could include VPT/PLC courses; state sponsored training programmes (such as FAS, CERT, etc.) and third level courses. Again as in previous surveys one sees the participation rate in post second level courses increase with level of attainment in the last official school exam. The level of participation increases to 92 per cent for those who have achieved 4 or more honours in the Leaving Certificate, thus reflecting the entry requirements for many third level courses.

Comparison with the 2002 survey shows an overall increase of between 4-7 percentage points in participation rates among both males and females. Substantial increases are notable for those achieving one or more honours in the Junior Certificate (17 percentage point increase), followed by those with no qualifications (15 percentage points). Increases of 3 and 7 percentage points respectively can be seen for those who achieved less than 5 passes in the Leaving Cert and those who achieved no honours in the same exam.

Table 9 in the Appendix details the participation rates of school leavers in state sponsored schemes according to whether or not they undertook a Vocational Preparation (VPT) or a Post Leaving Course (PLC) upon leaving school. In 1999 one fifth of students participated in (VPT/PLC) upon leaving school, however in 2002 participation rates fell to 16 per cent. The 2004 figures indicate that participation rates have remained constant with 2002 participation levels. Of this number 5 per cent participated in a state sponsored course

(training programmes run by FAS or CERT) indicating no real change since 2002. Overall, 15 per cent of males and 5 per cent of females participated in state sponsored courses, representing no change on 2002 figures.

PLC Completion, Certification and Receipt of Grant

Table 3.2 provides a breakdown of PLC course participation, completion, certification and receipt of grant by gender. One can see that a greater proportion of females than males participate in PLC courses: 21 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. In total nearly three quarters of those who participate complete their courses. Completion rates are slightly higher for females than males (74 compared to 68 per cent), which is a reversal of the pattern apparent in 2002. Overall certification is presented to 76 per cent of those participating. Again a slightly higher proportion of females receive certification than males (78 compared to 71 per cent). FETAC/NCVA is the certification received by almost nine out of ten participants, a substantial increase from the figure of 76 per cent in 2002. Overall, 35 per cent of participants receive a grant, with a substantially higher figure (37 per cent) for females than for males (28 per cent).

Table 3.2: Completion and Certification of PLC/VPT Courses and Receipt of Grant by Gender

		% Participate	% Complete	% Certification on complete	% Grant	Source of cert/diploma		
						FETAC/ NCVA	Other	Dont Know
Sex	Male	9.8	68.3	71.2	28.4	86.7	4.6	8.7
	Female	21.1	74.1	78.4	37.3	84.1	5.6	10.3
Total		15.5	72.3	76.2	34.6	84.8	5.3	9.8

Table 3.3 below provides a further breakdown of PLC course participation, completion, certification and receipt of grant by father's socio economic status. The relationship between participation and socio-economic status is not as strong as in the 2002 data. In 2002, compared to the average level of participation, those from professional backgrounds were only half as likely to participate while those from semi-skilled manual backgrounds were 1.7 times as likely. In 2004, the corresponding figures are 0.6 times as likely for those from professional backgrounds and 1.09 times as likely for those from manual backgrounds.

No clear class patterns are evident with regard to completion of, or receipt of certification from, Post Leaving Certificate courses. Those from unemployed and intermediate non-manual backgrounds are somewhat less likely to complete and receive certification than the other groups, while those from professional and employer/manager backgrounds appear better placed with regard to both completion and certification. Of those who received certification, those from professional backgrounds account for the lowest percentage in receipt of FETAC/NCVA certification (71 per cent compared to an average of 85 per cent). The percentage in receipt of a grant is highest for those whose father is unemployed (63 per cent), followed by those from farming and manual backgrounds (40 per cent) and lowest for those from professional backgrounds (16 per cent).

Table 3.3: Completion and Certification of PLC/VPT Courses and Receipt of Grant by Socio-Economic Background

	%	%	%	% Grant	Source of cert/diploma		
					FETAC/ NCVA	Other	Dont Know
Farmer/Agriculture	13.8	75.9	85.8	40.3	89.8	1.7	8.5
H/L professional	9.7	80.2	87.1	15.5	70.9	22.9	6.2
Employer/manager	15.5	79.4	83.7	15.2	77.9	1.3	20.8
Intermediate non-manual	14.7	66.7	70.4	24.1	88.6	5.5	5.9
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	16.9	69.6	73.4	39.2	87.6	2.9	9.5
Unemployed	19.5	65.1	62.3	62.9	87.3	0.0	12.7
Other/unknown	18.3	82.6	82.5	48.9	80.2	13.0	6.9
Total	15.5	72.3	76.2	34.6	84.8	5.3	9.8

4. EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

This chapter focuses on the employment characteristics of those school leavers who had secured jobs one year after leaving school. Section 4.1 looks at the distribution of this cohort classified by the industrial sector in which they are employed. Section 4.2 then follows by examining occupational distribution. Section 4.3 examines the earning potential of school leavers. Section 4.4 reviews school leavers' satisfaction levels with their employment situation. Section 4.5 takes a look at prevalence of part-time work prior to leaving school, while Section 4.6 examines the incidence of part-time work while at third level.

4.1 Industrial Sector

The distribution of school leavers in employment (one year after leaving school) by industrial sector is provided in Appendix Table 10. Here we see that no real change has taken place in the distribution of employed school leavers according to economic sector since 2002. Mirroring the situation over the last few years, the industrial sector remains the largest employer of school leavers with just over one third employed in Industry in 2004. This is followed by Distribution (30 per cent) where an increase of 4-percentage points is visible. As in previous years Personal Services account for the third largest proportion of school leavers in employment (21 per cent). Little change is observable in the proportions of school leavers entering jobs in the Agriculture and Fisheries sector since 1999 (2.2 per cent).

Educational Attainment

Variation according to educational attainment is also evidenced from Appendix Table 10. As in 2002, entry into Distribution, Banking, and Professional Services are higher for those with the Leaving Certificate. An increase of 7 percentage points can be seen for those with the Leaving Certificate (VPT) employed in the Personal Services sector. The Professional Services sector shows a decline of 4-percentage point in the employment of those with the Leaving Certificate (with VPT) as well as a 2-percentage point decrease for those with the Leaving Certificate (no VPT).

As in recent years the Industrial sector employs the greater proportion of those without Leaving Certificate qualifications: this sector accounts for 40 per cent of those with no formal qualifications and just over half of those with Junior Certificate only. This

compares to 12 per cent of those with the Leaving Certificate (with VPT) and (35 per cent) of those with the Leaving Certificate (no VPT).

Gender

Gender differentials within sector appear to mirror the trends of the late 1990s (Appendix Tables 10a and 10b). The most dramatic gender differentials are marked by entry into the Industrial sector where over half of male school leavers enter jobs in this sector relative to only 9 per cent of females. For females a 3-percentage point decrease is evident in their employment in Industry since 2002. Females are more strongly represented in Distribution (37 per cent) than males (25 per cent). Personal Services account for one third of females as opposed to 12 per cent of males while the Banking Sector accounts for 8 per cent of female school leavers in employment as opposed to 2 per cent of males.

4.2 Occupational Distribution

Table 11 classifies the occupational categories of school leavers. As in previous rounds of this survey we can see that the bulk of school leavers work in Service occupations (44 per cent). This marks a 15-percentage point increase since 1999. This is followed by Skilled/Semi-Skilled Manual occupations (one third) and Clerical occupations (12 per cent) which both remain largely consistent with the 2002 results.

Educational Attainment

Variations are apparent in the occupational distribution of school leavers according to educational attainment. The trends found do not depart considerably from the findings of the 1999 and 2002 surveys. The likelihood of taking up a Manual job is far higher for those with pre-Leaving Certificate qualifications. Those with the Leaving Certificate with VPT are more highly represented in the Clerical group (23 per cent), although a significant fall of 27 percentage points is evident in this proportion since 1999, it still accounts for a significantly higher proportion than in the pre-Leaving Certificate categories (whose representation ranges 4-11 per cent). Those with the Leaving Certificate are most likely to obtain Managerial/Professional occupations. Entry into Agricultural jobs remains more likely among those with no qualifications or Junior Certificate (4 per cent) as opposed to 1-2 per cent for those with the Leaving Certificate. Albeit a decline of 4 percentage points is evidenced for school leavers with no qualifications taking up Agricultural occupations since the 2002

survey. Over a third of school leavers in each educational cohort are employed in Service occupations; this most probably reflects the broad range of jobs in the Services category. Since 1999 the proportion of Leaving Certificate holders employed in Services jobs has steadily increased. This holds true in particular for those who obtained the Leaving Certificate with VPT where over half are now employed in Services occupations.

Gender

Gender difference can be observed in Tables 11a and 11b in the Appendix. As in previous rounds of the survey female leavers remain over-represented in Clerical (21 per cent as opposed to 6 per cent of males) and Service (67 per cent of females relative to 28 per cent of males) occupations. The proportion of females entering Clerical jobs has been declining since 1999. The latest 2004 figures indicate a further decline of 6 percentage points in this incidence. Males as in recent years account for significantly higher proportions entering Manual occupations (they are now ten times more likely than females to enter such jobs).

4.3 Earnings

Appendix Table 12 records school leavers' average gross weekly earnings in employment. Since 1999 a rise in average earnings is apparent with a further increase of €31 between 2002 and 2004. It is clear as in previous studies that there is a strong relationship between educational attainment and earnings, with earnings increasing steadily as educational attainment increases. On average, when viewed in terms of *weekly* earnings, males receive higher earnings than females. This differential increased sharply from €5 in 2002 to €21 in 2004. Gender differences are clearly evident from Junior Certificate upwards with males receiving higher *weekly* earnings. This trend is however reversed in the no qualifications category as female average gross weekly earnings for 2004 show a sizable increase on 2002 figures (€63) and average female weekly earnings in 2004 exceed males by around €28.

From Table 13 one can see that the average gross *hourly* income in 2004 was €3.31, compared to €7.47 in 2002. Focusing on hourly earnings according to educational attainment the same pattern is notable whereby earnings rise as educational attainment increases. Those who left school with no qualifications received €6.99 an hour while those with the Leaving Certificate (with VPT) received over €9 an hour. Slight gender differences again emerge as females receive a slightly lower average hourly income than males: €3.19 as against €3.39 for males.

Table 14 attempts to capture the effects of school leavers' performance in their last exam as well as their educational attainment. The overall pattern reflected here again is that of increasing earnings with improvements in educational exam performance. Those with no qualifications earned on average €6.99 per hour while those with the Leaving Certificate with 4 or more honours earned on average €8.49 per hour. However caution is advised when interpreting these results owing to a high level of non-response in the reporting of earnings.

4.4 Satisfaction with Employment Situation

In Appendix Table 15 we examine school leavers' satisfaction levels with their current employment situation. In aggregate, 77 per cent of school leavers are happy with their employment situation while just under one quarter are unhappy. In comparison with the 2002 figures we see an increase in dissatisfaction levels across all categories of educational attainment. An increase in dissatisfaction is most marked among those with the Leaving Certificate (no VPT), which is up 15 percentage points followed by those with no qualifications which is up by 13 percentage points. In line with previous findings the results show that a larger proportion of more qualified school leavers are more likely to be satisfied with their labour market circumstances one year after leaving school.



Figure 7 illustrates levels of satisfaction with economic situation by gender. Satisfaction levels for males had stabilised at 87 per cent between 1998 and 2002 but dropped back to 78 per cent in 2004. For females an increase was evident from 82 per cent in 1998 to 87 per cent in 2002, but dropped to 77 per cent by 2004. Hence, satisfaction levels appear to have stabilised between males and females.

Table 4.1 indicates satisfaction levels by current employment status. One can see that 81 per cent of those school leavers in employment record being satisfied as opposed to over one half of school leavers who are unemployed. Since 2002, levels of satisfaction have dropped 10 percentage points among those in employment but, paradoxically, have increased 23 percentage points among those who are unemployed.

Table 4.1: Satisfaction With Economic Situation by Employment Status (2004)

	Employed	Unemployed
Very Satisfied	22.9	10.1
Satisfied	57.9	44.0
Dissatisfied	14.6	31.0
Very Dissatisfied	4.7	14.9

Perceived Importance of Education and Training

Respondents of the 2004 survey were asked about their perceptions of the importance of education and training completed in actually getting a job. And also how useful the education and training completed in second level has been in securing their present job. The findings are presented in Table 4.2 below. Overall, more than half considered their education and training (very) important in getting their current job, with no gender variation in opinion.

When examined according to educational attainment, we see that the proportion considering their education/training important increases with attainment level: 38 per cent of those with no qualifications as compared to 52 per cent of those with the Leaving Certificate. Focusing on males and females separately we see that only 22 per cent of males with no qualifications consider their education/training to be important in getting their job. We note that the proportion of males who hold this view increases to 47 per cent for those with the Junior Certificate and to 52 per cent for those with the Leaving Certificate. For females no significant variations are apparent according to educational attainment. The gender gap is greatest for those with no qualifications (35 percentage points).

Turning to consider school leaver's perceptions of the importance of education and training in carrying out their present job, approximately two-thirds of males and females believe their education/training to be important in this regard, with more females than males holding positive views (67 compared to 60 per cent). Examining such views by qualification

level illustrates an increasing prevalence of positive views with rising educational attainment level. Again, the gender gap is greatest among those with no qualifications (69 per cent of females and 34 per cent of males felt their education/training was useful in their present work).

Table 4.2 Perceived Importance of Education/Training in Getting Job and in Present Work (2004)

		Per cent where Education/Training (very) important in ...	
		getting job?	Useful in present work?
No Qualifications			
	Male	22.3	34.3
	Female	57.0	69.0
	Total	38.0	49.0
Junior Certificate			
	Male	47.0	58.0
	Female	55.0	65.0
	Total	50.0	60.0
Leaving Certificate or equiv.			
	Male	52.0	61.0
	Female	51.0	67.0
	Total	52.0	64.0
All Levels			
	Male	51.0	60.0
	Female	51.0	67.0
Total	Total	51.0	63.0

The respondents were further asked how useful they felt the education and training they received was in preparing them for work and life in four specific areas: (i) interpersonal communications, (ii) computer skills/ability, (iii) the work experience it provided before leaving school, and (iv) the subjects/disciplines taken as a preparation for life skills. Table 4.3 provides details for those who found their education/training useful or very useful to areas of work and life.

The vast majority consider their education/training useful for interpersonal communications, with high percentages recorded for both males (85 per cent) and females (90 per cent). This perception is more prevalent with increasing educational level: rising from 54 per cent for those with no qualifications to 90 per cent for those with the Leaving Certificate. Broken down further by gender within qualification level the main difference

emerges among the unqualified where 46 per cent of males as opposed to 63 per cent of females consider their education/training useful for interpersonal communications.

A greater proportion of females (72 per cent) than males (63 per cent) consider the education/training they received as being very useful to their computer skills/ability. The proportions holding such positive views rises from just over one-third among those with no qualifications through to 72 per cent among those with the Leaving Certificate, with females more likely to consider their education/training useful at all levels of attainment.

The proportion of school leavers who consider their education/training as useful for the work experience it provides is somewhat lower at 60 per cent. Females are, again, more positive than males with 66 per cent regarding their education as useful in terms of the work experience it provided compared to a figure of 53 per cent for males. When focusing on qualification level we see a steady increase in perceived usefulness as educational attainment increases.

Over three-quarters indicate that their education/training was useful in terms of the subjects/disciplines taken as a preparation for life skills. Proportions indicating such a favourable response can be seen to increase as qualification level increases. One can see that 47 per cent of those with no qualifications hold this belief as opposed to 81 per cent of those with the Leaving Certificate.

Table 4.3 Perceived Usefulness of Education/Training in Other Areas of Work and Life (2004)

		Per cent where Education/Training (very) useful in ...			
		Interpersonal Communications	Computer Skills-Ability	Work Experience provided	Subjects taken as a preparation for life
No Qualifications					
	Male	45.7	27.1	20.6	40.9
	Female	63.0	49.2	38.5	54.0
	Total	53.8	37.3	28.8	46.8
Junior Certificate					
	Male	76.6	44.0	46.6	64.5
	Female	81.0	61.6	57.6	68.7
	Total	78.3	50.9	51.2	66.1
Leaving Certificate or equiv.					
	Male	88.5	69.4	56.1	80.3
	Female	92.3	74.4	67.8	81.9
	Total	90.4	72.1	62.3	81.1
All Levels					
	Male	84.7	63.4	53.3	76.0
	Female	90.1	72.1	65.8	79.5
Total	Total	87.5	67.8	59.7	77.8

4.5 Student Participation in Part-Time Employment

Participating in Part-Time Work while attending Second level Education

Table 4.4 below presents information on the prevalence of part-time work among pupils 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 of their work. Very few students who worked while at school worked on weekdays only, so the figure for weekday work includes those who worked on weekdays as well as on weekends.

In aggregate, 53 per cent of school leavers participated in part-time work while at school, slightly below the figure of 58 per cent for 2002. In line with 1999 and 2002 results, employment rates are highest during 5th year. Of those who worked while in second level, nearly three fifths worked in sixth year. 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 small, with females slightly more likely to work while in school (54 compared to 51 per cent) but, among those who work, males are more likely to work on weekdays (49 compared to 42 per cent).

Table 4.4: Participation in Part-Time Work While in School(2004)

		Male	Female	Total
Held part-time job?	No	48.8	46.2	47.5
	Yes	51.2	53.8	52.5
Year job held	6th year	57.1	59.8	58.5
	5th year	74.6	79.8	77.3
	4th year	34.7	38.4	36.6
	3rd year	38.8	36.3	37.5
	2nd year	20.1	14.6	17.3
	1st year	10.5	6.3	8.3
Days worked	Weekends only	51.5	58.0	54.8
	Weekdays	48.5	42.0	45.2

(Note: very few work only on weekdays so most of those working weekdays also work weekends)

Table 4.5 provides a breakdown of those who worked part-time and also those who worked weekdays by socio-economic status of both parents. The relationship between likelihood of participation in part-time work while at school and parent's socio-economic background is less clear than in 2002. Turning first to father's occupation, the highest participation rate is found among those from an employer/managerial background (perhaps working in the family business), at 62 per cent and the lowest participation rates are found

among those from farming and unemployed (42 per cent) backgrounds. The participation rate among those whose father is in a professional occupation is lower than average while it is above average for those from an intermediate non-manual or manual background. When we consider mother's occupation, the highest participation in work while at school is found among those whose mother is in an intermediate non-manual occupation (60 per cent) and the lowest among those whose mothers are in professional occupations (47 per cent).

Table 4.5: Participation in Part-Time Work and Weekday Work While in School by Father's and Mother's Socio-Economic Background (2004)

	<i>Per cent of all Leavers who ...</i>	
	Held Part-time Job	Worked Weekdays
<i>Father Grouped Occupational Segments</i>		
Farmer/Agriculture	42.3	15.8
H/L professional	47.6	19.7
Employer/manager	62.3	31.1
Intermediate non-manual	55.6	26.4
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	55.3	22.9
Unemployed	42.4	20.1
Other/unknown	48.4	25.6
<i>Mother Grouped Occupational Segments</i>		
Farmer/Agriculture	54.9	13.9
H/L professional	47.3	17.2
Employer/manager	51.9	25.2
Intermediate non-manual	59.6	25.0
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	56.7	27.7
Unemployed	47.7	33.5
Other/unknown	45.1	21.9
Total	52.5	23.3

Those whose fathers are in employer/manager or intermediate non-manual occupations are most likely to have worked during the week (31 and 26 per cent respectively), while those whose fathers are in farming (16 per cent) or in professional occupations (20 per cent) are least likely to do so. In terms of mother's occupation, those whose mothers are unemployed have the highest rate of weekday working (34 per cent), while those whose mothers are in farming (14 per cent) or professional occupations (17 per cent) have the lowest rates.

Table 4.6 focuses on those who worked weekdays while at school broken down by gender and their parent's socio-economic group. Again, the class pattern is less clear than in 2002 when the greatest levels of weekday employment while at school occurred among those from manual backgrounds. In 2004, the highest levels of weekday working are found among males whose fathers are in employer/manager (33 per cent) occupations. The highest rates among females are found among those whose fathers are in employer/manager or intermediate non-manual occupations (28-29 per cent) or whose mothers are unemployed (40 per cent) or in manual (30 per cent) or employer/manager occupations (27 per cent). The lowest rates among males are for those whose fathers are in farming (15 per cent) or unemployed (19 per cent) or whose mothers are in farming (13 per cent) or unemployed (15 per cent). The lowest rates for females are found for females whose fathers are in professional occupations (13 per cent) or whose mothers are in professional occupations (13 per cent) or farming (15 per cent). Overall, there is a tendency for weekday working while at school among females to be more class differentiated in the expected direction (i.e. more prevalent among the lower socio-economic groups) than is the case for males. Further, the differentiation by mother's occupation appears to be at least as great as the differentiation by father's occupation.

Table 4.6: Participation in Weekday Work While in School by Social Class and Gender (2004)

	Male	Female
<i>Father Grouped Occupational Segments</i>		
Farmer/Agriculture	14.5	17.1
H/L professional	26.3	13.3
Employer/manager	33.3	29.3
Intermediate non-manual	24.9	28.1
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	26.4	19.5
Unemployed	18.8	21.5
Other/unknown	21.1	28.8
<i>Mother Grouped Occupational Segments</i>		
Farmer/Agriculture	12.7	15.0
H/L professional	21.5	12.8
Employer/manager	22.7	27.0
Intermediate non-manual	27.1	22.7
Skilled/semi/skilled manual	25.5	29.6
Unemployed	15.3	40.2
Other/unknown	22.8	21.1
Total	24.5	22.2

Figure 8 shows the proportion of workers who are engaged in more intensive jobs (15 or more hours per week) by father's socio-economic group. While the patterns of participation in part-time work across socio-economic groups were unclear, it emerges that participation in more time-intensive jobs is more clearly structured by social background factors. One-third of 'workers' from professional and farming backgrounds worked 15 or more hours per week, a considerably smaller share than students from unemployed (55 per cent) and intermediate non-manual (43 per cent) backgrounds.

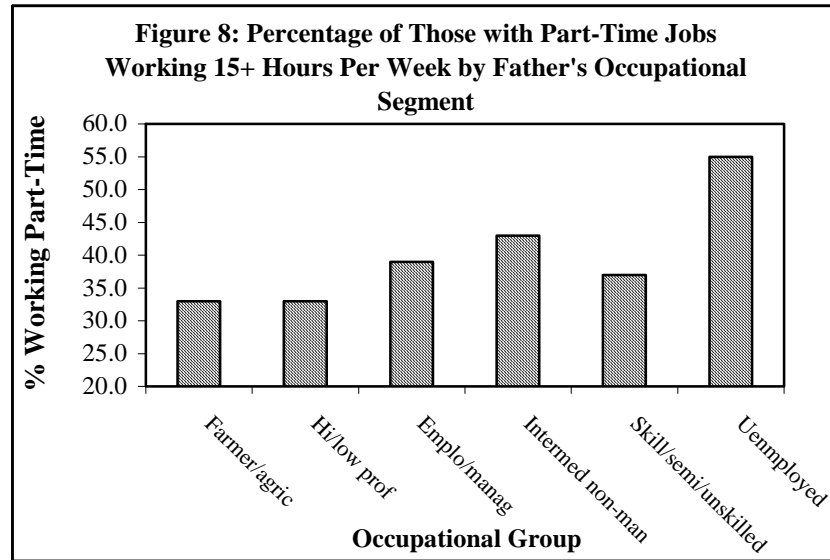
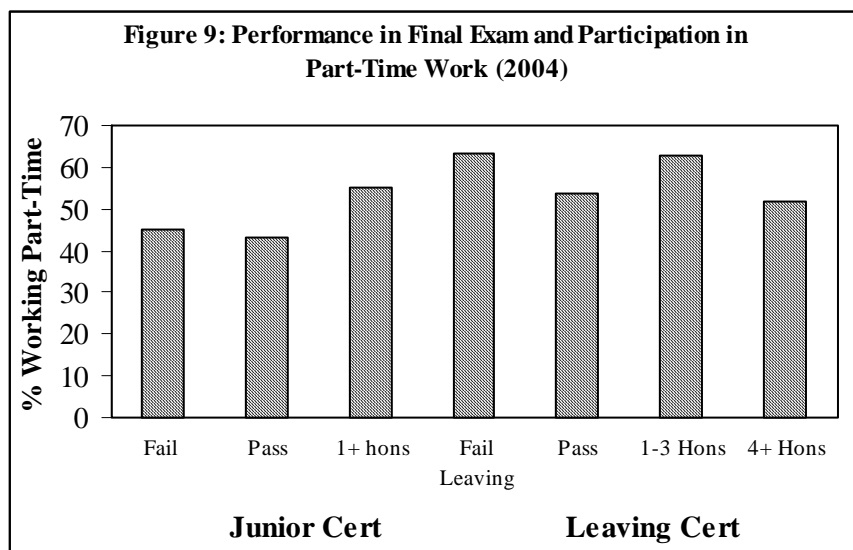


Figure 9 shows no clear pattern regarding examination performance and part-time work while at school. This lack of a clear pattern was also observed in 2002.



4.6 Participation of Third Level Students in Part-Time Employment

Figures 10 and 11 provide information on the proportion of full-time third level students working. In aggregate, 26 per cent of full-time third level students among the 2002/2003 leavers work part-time and 7 per cent work full-time. This represents a further drop from the previous survey in 2002, where 40 per cent of third level students are reported to have worked. This may be due in part to a later survey time point compared to the 2004 survey.⁵ As was the case in 2002, more females (35 per cent) than males (31 per cent) combine full time third level education with work, but the gap has narrowed considerably since 2002 when the figures were 46 per cent for females and 34 per cent for males.

Figure 10 illustrates the changes in the proportion of full-time third level students working by class background between 1999 and 2004. In 2004, a decrease in the proportion of students working is evident across almost all categories of social background compared to the 2002 figures. The exception is the employer/manager category, where the percentage working has increased slightly between 2002 and 2004 – to 40 per cent – but it is still below the 1999 level. The decrease between 2002 and 2004 is most dramatic for those third level students where the father is unemployed, with their employment rates falling from 47 to 22 per cent.

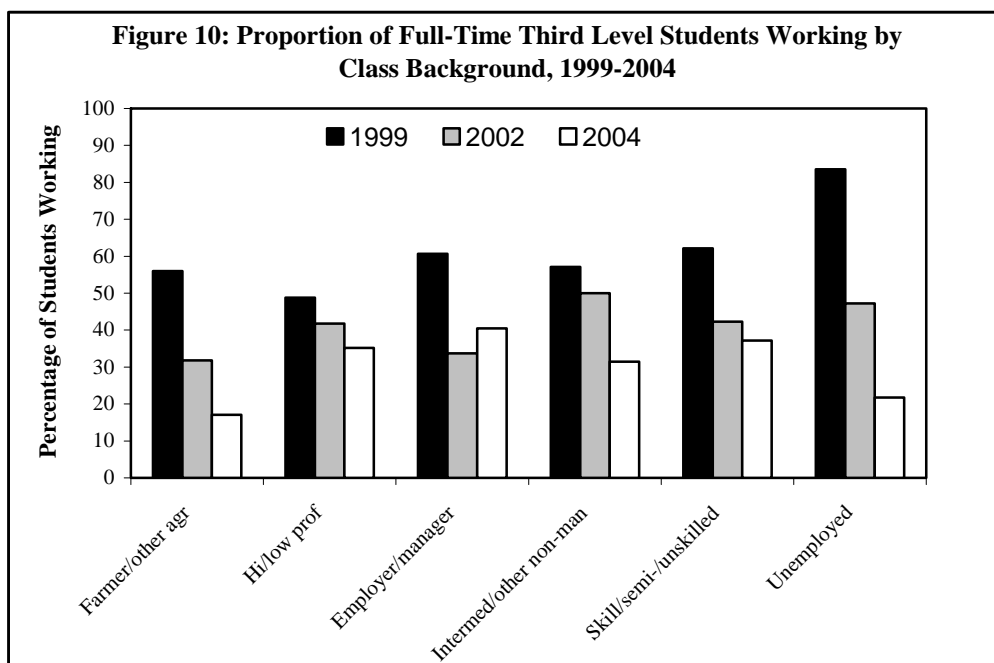
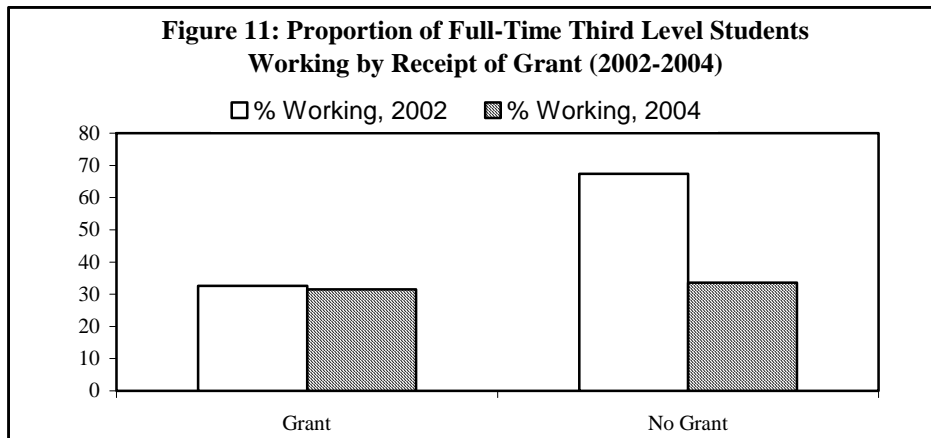


Figure Note: Declining Part-Time work levels are partly related to a change in the timing of the 2004 Survey compared to the 2002 Survey, as noted in Footnote 5.

⁵ The interview period for the 2002 survey was February to May 2003. For the 2004 survey, the interview period ran from September 2004 to April 2005.

From Figure 11 we see that employment rates for those without a grant are very close to employment rates for those third level students with a grant, at 32 and 34 per cent, respectively. This contrasts to the situation in 2002, when third level students without a grant were twice as likely as those with a grant to hold jobs.



5. SUMMARY

This report presented the key findings from the 2004 Annual School Leavers' Survey. The main purpose of this survey is to examine the progression of school leavers one year after leaving school. This final chapter serves to summarise the main findings of the 2004 School Leavers' Survey.

5.1 The Economic Status of School Leavers

In aggregate, 39 per cent of those who left second level education during the academic year 2002/2003 had successfully progressed to a job one year on. Unemployed school leavers accounted for 11 per cent, producing a labour market participation rate of 50 per cent. Of those not included in the labour market the majority (45 per cent) had progressed to further study.

As mentioned earlier the economic climate of recent years has been less favourable overall, and this has had its impact on school leavers entering the labour market for the first time. The improved labour market situation experienced by school leavers towards the end of the 1990s is being slowly reversed. This becomes apparent in the decrease in the proportions of school leavers in employment, accompanied by increases in those classified as unemployed. The overall unemployment rate of school leavers rose sharply from 11 per cent in 1999 to 16 per cent in 2002 and 21 per cent in 2004.

5.2 Level of Educational Attainment

The trends in educational attainment show little change on more recent surveys: a total of 82 per cent of school leavers obtained the Leaving Certificate, while for 15 per cent the Junior Certificate represented the last official second level examination sat. Less than four per cent of school leavers left school without qualifications. As in previous rounds of the survey, males tend to be over-represented among those who leave school pre-Leaving Certificate, but the gap has narrowed somewhat since 2002. In 2004, 85 per cent of females left with the Leaving Certificate compared to 79 per cent of males.

5.3 Economic Status and Level of Attainment

Labour market situation continues to be highly correlated with level of educational attainment. Unemployment rates are higher among the least qualified school leavers, while those who have obtained the Leaving Certificate dominate among those who continue

studying. An unemployment rate of 68 per cent among those without qualifications compares with 29 per cent for those with the Junior Certificate and between 11 and 16 per cent for those who achieved the Leaving Certificate. The unemployment rate among school leavers with no qualifications has increased by 13 percentage points since 2002.

As in previous years the proportion of school leavers in employment increases as educational attainment increases; 24 per cent for those with no qualifications rising to 59 per cent for those with a Junior Certificate and 60 per cent for those with a Leaving Certificate (with VPT). The lower proportion recorded for those with the Leaving Certificate (no VPT) record (31 per cent) can be explained by the greater propensity of this cohort to go on to further study. For those in the labour force, employment rates are significantly lower among those who leave school with no qualifications accounting for less than half the rate for those with the Junior Certificate (32 per cent and 71 per cent respectively).

5.4 Changes in Status Over First Year after Leaving School

During the course of the year after leaving school the proportions classified as employed increases and unemployment falls from 16 per cent in August to between 11 per cent for the other three months. In October of 2004 we see a rise in the proportion classified as students with the beginning of the academic year. One notices a small fall in student numbers over the 7-8 months to May, largely due to the ending of short-term courses and students dropping out of longer-term courses.

5.5 Employment Status and Class Origins

Previous school leavers' surveys have displayed a correlation between socio-economic status of the school leaver's father and economic status. The 2004 survey proves no different; the highest incidence of unemployment occurs where the fathers' socio-economic status is unemployed (28 per cent). This compares to only 3 per cent unemployment among those from professional backgrounds. Compared to 2002 the unemployment level is up by 2 percentage points. School leavers from higher and lower professional (69 per cent), managerial (63 per cent) and farming (54 per cent) backgrounds continue to dominate entry into further study. Although a lower proportion of school leavers from unemployed backgrounds go on to further study (26 per cent) this figure has more than doubled since 1999 and 2002 when it stood at 12 per cent. There has been a small increase since 2002 in the proportion of those from manual backgrounds who go on to further study.

5.6 Employment Characteristics

As in recent years the Industry and Distribution sectors continue to account for the majority of school leavers in employment in 2004. An increase of 4 percentage points can be seen in the proportion of school leavers working in the Distribution sector. No real changes emerge in terms of occupational distribution; Service occupations and semi skilled manual jobs capture most of those school leavers taking up their first job.

As in previous surveys, industrial sector and occupational attainment is strongly delineated across educational lines. Entry into Distribution, Banking, and Professional Services is more prevalent among those with the Leaving Certificate. Those without the Leaving Certificate are more highly represented in the Industrial sector accounting for 40 per cent of those with no qualifications and just over half of those with the Junior Certificate only. In terms of occupational distribution those without the Leaving Certificate are most likely to take up jobs in Services and skilled/semi skilled manual occupations.

With regard to gender, female school leavers are over-represented in Distribution, Banking, and Personal Services sectors, while males are over represented in the Industry sector where half of male leavers enter jobs as opposed to only 9 per cent of females. Females tend to dominate entry into Service occupations representing 74 per cent relative to 28 per cent of males. Males continue to be greatly over-represented in manual occupations (59 per cent).

Average weekly earnings have risen from €275 in 2002 to €306 in 2004. A strong relationship is apparent between educational attainment and earnings, with earnings increasing steadily as educational attainment increases. This rise is most marked for those with Leaving Certificate qualifications. On average males receive higher gross weekly earning than females, this differential increased from €5 in 2002 to €21 in 2004. In the no qualifications category females' weekly earnings are higher on average than males in the region of €28 in 2004, while average male earnings are higher than females as qualification level increases.

Turning to hourly pay, average hourly earnings have risen from €7.37 in 2002 to €8.31 in 2004. Again increases are visible as educational attainment increases. On average females receive a slightly lower average hourly income than males. Little pay differential exists between males and females according to qualification level.

5.7 Perceptions of Labour Market Situation and Usefulness of Second Level Education/Training

In terms of being satisfied with ones labour market conditions, we see that in line with previous findings satisfaction levels appear highest among the most qualified. In 2004, 81 per cent of school leavers in employment record being satisfied with their labour market situation as compared to just over half of those who are unemployed. Satisfaction rates of those school leavers in employment have however dropped by 10 percentage points since 2002 while a 23 percentage point increase is notable for those who are unemployed. More than half of employed school leavers felt that their education/training was ‘very important’ in getting their job. As with the 2002 data this incidence increased with level of educational attainment – 38 per cent of those with no qualifications as compared to 52 per cent of those with the Leaving Certificate expressed such positive views.

Similar educational differentiation is observable for those who consider their second level education/training important in their present work. The percentage finding their education/training useful for specific areas of work and life also increased steadily as the level of qualification increased.

5.8 Student Participation in Part-Time Employment

No real differences emerge here from the 1999 findings. In 2004, 53 per cent of school leavers participated in some form of paid employment while at school. This is down by 5 percentage points from 2002. As was the case since 1999, participation rates were highest during 5th year and most of this work was carried out at weekends. Slight gender differences are observable with females (54 per cent) displaying higher levels of participation in paid work relative to males (51 per cent).

When participation levels are examined alongside parents’ socio-economic background the situation is less clear than was the case in 2002 where we saw that school leavers from professional backgrounds were less likely to work part time while at school than those from a manual background. The highest proportions of second level students are found to work part-time work where the father is an employer/manager (62 per cent). The lowest proportions are accounted for by students whose fathers are work in farming/agriculture and among those whose fathers are unemployed (42 per cent). With regard to mother’s socio economic background the highest proportion of students work when the mother is in an intermediate non-manual occupation (60 per cent) and the lowest among those whose

mothers are in professional occupations (47 per cent). Stronger delineation across socio-economic groups does emerge when we examine hours of work: the proportions working longer hours are higher among those from unemployed and intermediate non-manual backgrounds.

At third level a further decline in employment rates is apparent from the 2002 data, with such decline appearing across all socio-economic groups with 26 per cent working part time and only 7 per cent working full time. As noted earlier, this decline since 2002 could be explained in part by the earlier timing of the 2004 survey compared to the 2002 survey. The decrease in the proportions of third level students working part-time since 1999 is most dramatic amongst those whose father is unemployed with rates falling from 47 to 22 per cent. We find similar proportions of students working among those with a grant (32 per cent) and without a grant (34 per cent). This finding contrasts with the 2002 results where students without a grant were twice as likely to hold jobs as those with a grant.