



RETENTION RATES OF PUPILS IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

1991 to 2001 ENTRY COHORTS

November 2009

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www.education.ie and go to [Statistics/Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools](#)

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

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INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth published report, by the Department of Education and Science, on school retention in Ireland. It is based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department's Post-Primary Pupils Database (PPPDB) for the cohort of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in the years from 1991 to 2001. Detailed time series tables containing all of the data presented in this report will also be shortly available on the Department of Education and Science's [education statistics database](#).

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

It is also important to note that while the analysis allows for movement of pupils between schools it does not enable, at this time, the tracking of those who leave State-aided schools including publicly funded fee-paying schools and move to non-aided second-level education providers. In the absence of a comprehensive tracking system encompassing all providers of education, it is only possible to estimate these numbers. The rates were further adjusted at national level to allow for other factors such as emigration and death to account for pupils in the original cohort who left the country or died, in the periods under consideration. These variables (movement to private institutions, emigration and death) are included in the determination of the adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate, which corresponds to a final rate of 84.7% for the 2001 cohort. *See table 1 and Appendix A for further details on the methodology employed.*

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. The ESRI School Leavers Survey of 2004/05 leavers, published in March 2009, indicates that 62% of those who left school prior to the Leaving Certificate participated in various types of further training within a year of leaving school. However, the extent of this difference is difficult to quantify (see the reference in section 6 to the Quarterly National Household Survey data for more on this point).

An analysis of the 2001 cohort shows:

- (a) **Junior Cycle, Year 1 cohort:** The number of pupils enrolled in the 705 second-level schools in Year 1 of the Junior Cycle, on 30th September 2001 was 56,278¹.
- (b) **Junior Cycle, Year 2 cohort:** The number of pupils progressing to the second year of the junior cycle was 55,615. This represented a decrease of 1.2% of the initial cohort.
- (c) **Junior Cycle, Year 3 cohort:** The number of pupils entering year 3 of the junior cycle amounted to 54,922 pupils. This represented a retention rate, from year 1 to year 3, of 97.6%
- (d) **Junior Certificate examination ‘sits’:** The number of pupils, who sat and were graded in at least one subject in the Junior Certificate examination, amounted to 54,067. This corresponds to 96.1% of the initial cohort.
- (e) **Senior Cycle, Year 1:** In their first year of senior cycle, some pupils pursue the first year of the Leaving Certificate while others take the Transition Year Programme. This corresponds to a 2 and 3-year senior cycle respectively. The number of pupils continuing with their education into the senior cycle amounted to 52,710 (or 93.7% of the initial cohort).
- (f) **Senior Cycle, Year 2:** In their second year of senior cycle, some pupils pursue the second year of the Leaving Certificate while others take the first year of the Leaving Certificate (if they had taken the Transition Year Programme). The number of pupils in senior cycle year 2 was 47,912 (or 85.1% of the initial cohort).
- (g) **Leaving Certificate retention:** The final school based retention rate for the 2001 cohort was 81.3% (*This figure is not adjusted for factors such as pupils who left the State-aided schools to pursue their senior cycle education in private non-aided institutions or emigration or death*).
- (h) **Adjusted Leaving Certificate retention:** The final adjusted retention rate for the 2001 cohort was 84.7%. This figure has been adjusted to factor in pupils who emigrated, died or who left the State-aided schools to pursue their senior cycle education in private non-aided institutions. Adjustments have not been made for pupils who left the State-aided schools to pursue alternative educational pathways.

¹ See Appendix A.

Adjusted Leaving Certificate Retention Rate

Table 1 compares the adjusted retention rates for the 2001 cohort with the rates for all previous cohorts since 1996. The adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate has increased by 3.4% percentage points in the five years from 1996 to 2001 from 81.3% to 84.7%. *See table 1.*

There is a consistent level of departure by pupils other than ‘early school leavers’ from the State-aided school system. This is due for the most part to pupils going to ‘private’ institutions to complete their senior cycle, and, to a more limited extent, to emigration and death. It is not possible to establish the exact number of persons completing their education in private institutions, however in order to sit the Leaving Certificate examination a person must apply to the State Examination Commission for admission as an external candidate. An adjustment was made, based on estimates, to the overall Leaving Certificate retention rates for the 1996-2001 cohorts, in order to take these external candidates into account. An estimate was also made to take account of pupils in the original cohorts who left the country or died, in the periods under consideration, and the final figure was adjusted accordingly. Adjustments have not been made for pupils who left the State-aided school system to pursue alternative educational pathways. *See table 1.*

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

Table 1: Adjusted National Leaving Certificate Retention Rate¹ for 1996-2001 cohorts

CATEGORY	1996		1997		1998		1999 ^R		2000		2001	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Junior Cycle cohort	64,068		62,105		61,144		60,777		59,345		56,278	
Less emigration and death	260		241		274		288		289		312	
Net cohort	63,808	100.0	61,864	100.0	60,870	100.0	60,489	100.0	59,056	100	55,966	100
Leaving Certificate retention (adjusted for death and emigration)	49,838	78.1	48,864	79.0	49,000	80.5	48,966	81.0	48,214	81.6	45,758	81.8
External Candidates (estimated)	2,050	3.2	2,078	3.4	1,890	3.1	1,723	2.8	1,859	3.2	1,636	2.9
Adjusted National Leaving Certificate Retention	51,888	81.3	50,942	82.3	50,890	83.6	50,689	83.8	50,083	84.8	47,394	84.7

¹ Data are adjusted for students transferring to non-aided schools but not to other destinations.

^R Data for 1999 have been revised. See Appendix A.

Comparison with Previous Cohorts

Table 2a compares the retention rates for the 2001 cohort with the rates for all previous cohorts since 1991. The Leaving Certificate retention rate has remained fairly stable over time with an increasing trend. For the most recent cohorts there has been a slight increase year-on-year in the retention rate. Overall, the national unadjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate, at 81.3% has increased by 4.2% since 1991, and 3.5% since 1996. *See table 2a on following page.*

A significant gender gap remains at national level between male and female cohorts. The retention rate to Leaving Certificate for males in the 2001 cohort was 76.9%, compared with a rate of 85.8 % for females, a difference of 8.9 percentage points. While the gender gap remains, it is slightly lower than in previous years. *See tables 2b and 2c.*

Table 2a: Retention Rates¹ (unadjusted) for each milestone, 1991-2001 cohorts

Milestone	Cohort (%)										
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 ^f	2000	2001
Junior Certificate, Year 1 (No)	70,455	70,851	70,737	69,103	67,254	64,068	62,105	61,144	60,777	59,345	56,278
Junior Certificate, Year 2	n/a	n/a	98.2	98.6	98.7	98.7	98.7	98.6	98.6	98.9	98.8
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.3	95.1	95.7	96.4	96.7	96.7	96.8	96.8	96.8	97.2	97.6
Junior Certificate 'sits'	93.4	92.3	93.4	94.3	94.4	94.6	94.5	94.5	94.6	95.6	96.1
Senior Cycle, Year 1	*	*	*	*	90.9	91.1	90.9	91.3	92.0	93.1	93.7
Senior Cycle, Year 2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	81.5	81.1	81.7	83.1	84.4	85.0	85.1
Final retention Rate	77.1	78.0	78.1	78.3	78.0	77.8	78.7	80.1	80.6	81.2	81.3

¹Data are unadjusted for students transferring to non-aided second level schools and other destinations.

^fData for 1999 have been revised. See Appendix A.

^{na}Data not available

* Data previously published for Senior Cycle Year 1 for the 1991-1994 cohorts are not comparable with data for the 1995-2001 cohorts.

Table 2b: Male Retention Rates¹ for each milestone, 1995-2001 cohorts

Milestone	Cohort (%)						
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 ^R	2000	2001
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No)	34,416	32,872	31,946	31,158	30,758	30,144	28,445
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.3	98.3	98.4	98.4	98.5	98.9	98.8
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.7	95.9	96.0	96.0	96.2	96.9	97.2
Junior Certificate 'sits'	93.1	93.4	93.3	93.3	93.7	94.9	95.4
Senior Cycle, Year 1	87.8	88.1	87.9	88.3	89.5	91.2	91.8
Senior Cycle, Year 2	76.2	75.6	76.7	78.7	80.0	81.1	81.2
Final retention Rate	72.5	72.1	73.5	75.4	75.5	76.6	76.9

¹Data are unadjusted for students transferring to non-aided second level schools and other destinations.

^RData for 1999 have been revised. See Appendix A.

Table 2c: Female Retention Rates¹ for each milestone, 1995-1999 cohorts

Milestone	Cohort (%)						
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 ^R	2000	2001
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No)	32,838	31,196	30,159	29,986	30,019	29,201	27,833
Junior Certificate, Year 2	99.1	99.0	99.0	98.9	98.7	98.9	98.9
Junior Certificate, Year 3	97.7	97.6	97.7	97.5	97.4	97.6	98.0
Junior Certificate 'sits'	95.8	95.8	95.8	95.8	95.5	96.2	96.8
Senior Cycle, Year 1	94.2	94.3	94.1	94.3	94.5	95.1	95.6
Senior Cycle, Year 2	87.0	86.9	87.0	87.8	88.8	88.9	89.1
Final retention Rate	83.8	83.8	84.2	85.1	85.7	85.9	85.8

¹Data are unadjusted for students transferring to non-aided second level schools and other destinations.

^RData for 1999 have been revised. See Appendix A.

ANALYSIS OF 2001 COHORT

The retention rate to Leaving Certificate for the 2001 cohort for secondary schools was on average 84.3%, which was 3.7 percentage points higher than the average rate for community and comprehensive schools and nearly 10 percentage points higher than the average rate for vocational schools. *See table 3.*

Table 3 shows that across all types of schools, males were less likely on average to complete their Leaving Certificate than females with retention rates of approximately 82% for males in secondary schools, 69% in vocational schools and 76% in community and comprehensive schools compared to approximately 87%, 82% and 87% respectively for females. Vocational schools experienced lower retention rates than other school types, especially with regard to male retention between senior cycle year 1 and the Leaving Certificate examination with a decrease of just under 20 percentage points being recorded between these two milestones. However, many of these transfer to apprenticeships and other forms of training. *See table 3.*

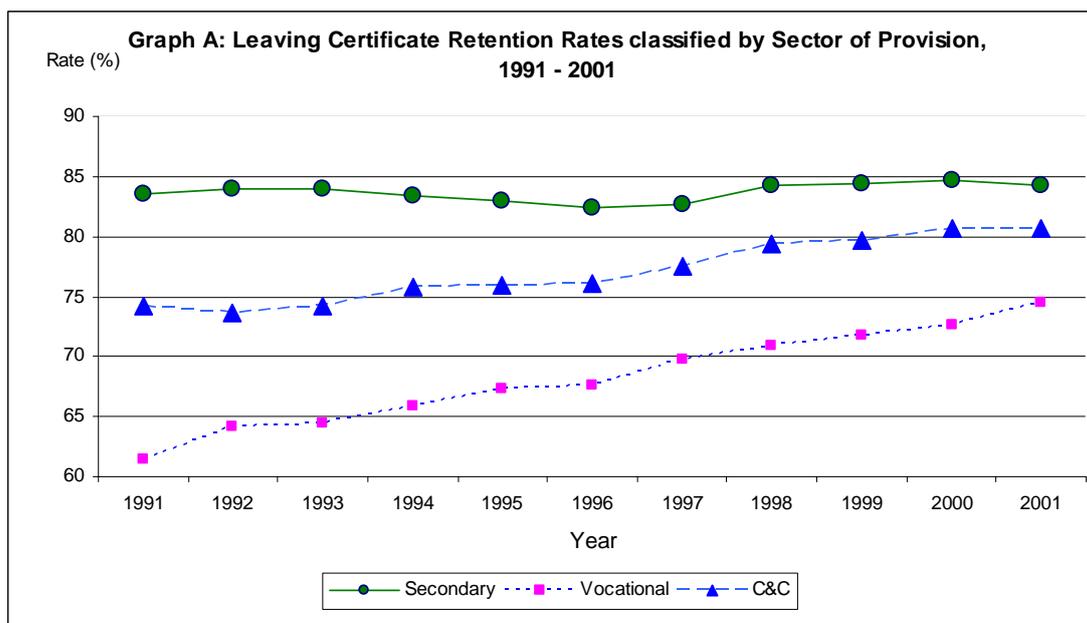
Table 3: Retention Rates¹ by School Type and Sex, 2001 cohort

Milestone	SECONDARY			VOCATIONAL			COMMUNITY & COMPREHENSIVE			TOTAL		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Junior Cycle, Year 1 (no.)	15,193	17,666	32,859	7,780	5,628	13,408	5,472	4,539	10,011	28,445	27,833	56,278
Junior Cycle, Year 2	98.9	98.8	98.8	98.5	98.8	98.6	98.9	99.2	99.0	98.8	98.9	98.8
Junior Cycle, Year 3	97.7	98.1	97.9	96.1	97.5	96.7	97.4	98.3	97.8	97.2	98.0	97.6
Junior Certificate 'sits'	96.3	97.0	96.7	93.5	95.8	94.5	95.6	97.1	96.3	95.4	96.8	96.1
Senior Cycle, Year 1	93.9	95.9	95.0	87.8	94.1	90.4	91.6	95.9	93.6	91.8	95.6	93.7
Senior Cycle, Year 2	85.3	89.7	87.7	73.8	86.7	79.2	80.3	89.8	84.6	81.2	89.1	85.1
Leaving Certificate Retention	81.5	86.7	84.3	68.8	82.4	74.5	75.8	86.5	80.6	76.9	85.8	81.3

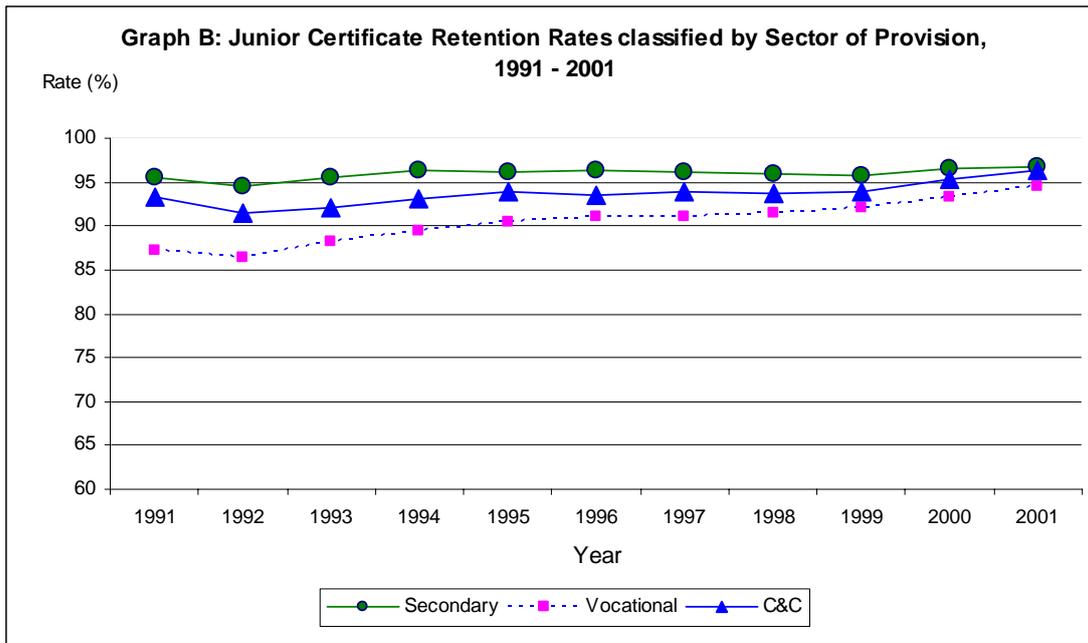
¹Data are unadjusted for students transferring to non-aided schools and other destinations.

ANALYSIS OF TRENDS 1991 - 2001

On average secondary schools continue to have the highest retention rates at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate stage. See graphs A and B. The data used to create these graphs can be accessed on the Department of Education and Science's [education statistics database](#).



The average retention rates to Leaving Certificate for secondary schools have shown relatively little variation since analysis began in 1991. Community and comprehensive schools show a significant increase in average retention rates to Leaving Certificate over the period. The gap in retention rates to the Leaving Certificate between the secondary sector and the community and comprehensive sector has more than halved since 1991. The average Leaving Certificate retention rate for Vocational schools has shown the biggest improvement, with an increase of 13 percentage points on between the 2001 and 1991 cohorts. *As indicated in the previous chapter, all Leaving Certificate retention rates are unadjusted unless otherwise stated. See graph A above.*



Since analysis began in 1991, secondary schools have on average higher rates of retention to Junior Certificate, but as graph B shows, these differences are now very small and there is very little variation in the retention rate to Junior Certificate between the sectors of provision. *See graph B above.*

This section describes the trends in school retention in each administrative county area. Data were analysed by address of schools rather than address of pupils. In general, retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the cities are lower than elsewhere. Wicklow (76.7%) and Dublin City (76.9%) had the lowest retention rates to Leaving Certificate for the 2001 cohort in the country, followed closely by Cork City (77.1%) and Limerick City (77.4%). Leitrim continued to have the highest retention rate at 88.9% followed by Roscommon at 87.0% and Mayo at 86.0%. Waterford City experienced the greatest increase in Leaving Certificate retention rates in the year to 2001, and Longford the greatest decrease. *See table 4.*

Monaghan had the highest retention rate to Junior Certificate for the 2001 cohort at 98.3% and Limerick City had the lowest at 92.7%. *See table 4.*

At a regional level, schools in the Border, Midland and Western region had on average, higher rates of retention to Leaving Certificate at 83.4% compared to those in the Southern and Eastern region at 80.4%. The difference in terms of rates of retention to Junior Certificate was less pronounced with just 0.5 percentage points between the two regions. *See table 4.*

Table 4: Retention Rates¹ classified by region², county and administrative county, 1999 - 2001 cohorts

County	No. of Schools ³	No. of Pupils ³	1999 ^R (%) cohort		2000 (%) cohort		2001 (%) cohort	
			Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention	Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention	Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention
Border, Midland and Western	213	16,256	94.8	83.0	95.9	84.0	96.4	83.4
Border	85	7,123	94.4	81.1	95.8	82.6	96.8	83.1
Cavan	10	788	96.9	84.0	95.7	82.4	97.2	84.4
Donegal	26	2,261	93.4	80.3	95.4	81.1	96.2	81.2
Leitrim	8	460	97.1	91.5	98.0	91.3	97.8	88.9
Louth	16	1,779	92.5	78.2	94.7	80.6	96.2	82.9
Monaghan	11	909	95.4	79.0	96.8	81.7	98.3	82.1
Sligo	14	926	95.6	83.2	96.8	87.3	97.2	85.4
Midland	46	3,686	94.1	82.6	95.6	83.1	94.9	82.3
Laoighis	11	812	93.3	81.7	95.8	84.2	95.4	81.8
Longford	9	585	93.9	85.0	96.3	88.4	93.8	83.6
Offaly	11	986	94.2	78.2	95.2	76.9	95.0	80.5
Westmeath	15	1,303	94.7	85.0	95.6	84.5	95.0	83.3
West	82	5,447	95.8	85.7	96.3	86.3	96.8	84.6
Galway	46	3,066	96.1	85.9	96.2	87.1	97.1	83.4
Galway City	10	906	94.2	81.4	95.9	84.5	96.8	83.6
Galway County	36	2,160	96.9	87.6	96.4	88.1	97.2	83.4
Mayo	28	1,873	95.3	85.5	96.6	85.0	96.4	86.0
Roscommon	8	508	95.8	85.9	95.8	86.4	97.0	87.0
Southern and Eastern	492	40,022	94.5	79.6	95.4	80.0	95.9	80.4
Dublin	170	14,608	93.8	76.0	95.1	76.9	95.9	78.6
Dublin city	81	5,877	92.7	71.8	94.5	73.0	95.4	76.9
Fingal	25	2,850	95.4	80.8	95.6	81.7	96.7	79.2
Dún Laoighaire Rathdown	31	2,470	94.7	83.4	95.3	83.3	95.6	81.0
South Dublin	33	3,411	93.8	74.6	95.5	75.3	96.2	79.1
Mid-East	64	5,546	95.0	80.2	95.6	80.9	96.0	80.8
Kildare	26	2,341	95.2	80.0	96.3	82.6	96.8	82.2
Meath	18	1,673	96.1	83.1	94.9	80.9	95.9	82.5
Wicklow	20	1,532	93.6	77.4	95.3	78.3	94.8	76.7
Mid-West	67	5,017	94.1	81.9	95.4	81.9	95.4	82.2
Clare	18	1,388	93.1	84.2	95.4	84.6	95.6	83.5
Limerick	34	2,547	93.5	79.1	94.8	79.1	94.7	80.1
Limerick City	15	1,281	92.9	78.4	93.0	75.6	92.7	77.4
Limerick County	19	1,266	94.3	79.9	96.5	82.7	96.7	82.7
North Tipperary	15	1,082	96.7	85.5	97.0	85.3	96.9	85.5
South-East	80	6,472	94.8	81.0	95.7	81.0	96.3	81.7
Carlow	11	800	97.5	82.2	96.8	82.4	96.6	81.5
Kilkenny	16	1,175	96.6	84.1	97.4	85.3	97.5	80.9
South Tipperary	16	1,194	95.4	78.1	96.4	80.5	96.6	82.4
Waterford	17	1,395	94.6	81.3	95.3	80.3	95.5	84.0
Waterford City	8	782	93.3	78.2	94.1	77.6	94.4	83.5
Waterford County	9	613	96.4	85.7	96.9	83.9	96.9	84.7
Wexford	20	1,908	92.5	80.3	94.1	78.5	96.0	80.2
South-West	111	8,379	95.4	82.7	95.7	82.9	96.0	81.5
Cork	85	6,423	95.3	81.8	95.6	82.4	95.7	81.1
Cork City	26	2,122	95.2	80.3	95.2	79.4	95.2	77.1
Cork County	59	4,301	95.3	82.5	95.8	83.8	96.0	83.0
Kerry	26	1,956	95.9	85.9	96.0	84.9	96.8	82.9
Total	705	56,278	94.6	80.6	95.6	81.2	96.1	81.3

¹ Data are unadjusted for students transferring to non-aided schools and other destinations.

^R Data for 1999 have been revised. See Appendix A.

² See Appendix A Methodology and Technical Notes

³ Number of schools and pupils refer to number as per 2001 cohort calculations

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

Table 5a presents data on early school leavers from 2002 to 2008. It shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 14.3% in 2002 to 11.4% in 2008 (however, some of this decrease may be due to changes in methodology). The proportion of female early school leavers decreased from 10.9% to 8.0% over the same period and the proportion of males decreased by a similar amount to 14.8%. *See table 5a.*

Table 5b present the latest available figure for all EU27 member states which are for 2007. These show that proportion of early school leavers in Ireland in 2007 was 11.5% which compares to the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 15.2% and 16.9% respectively. *See table 5b.*

Table 5a : Early school-leavers - Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training classified by sex 2002 - 2008

	% of persons						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Male early school leavers	18.4	15.0	16.1	14.9	15.7	14.2	14.8
Female early school leavers	10.9	9.5	9.7	9.6	9.2	8.7	8.0
Total early school leavers	14.7	12.3	12.9	12.3	12.5	11.5	11.4

Source: Eurostat (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Table 5b: Early school leavers in EU member states by sex and country, second quarter 2007

	% of persons		
Country	Males	Females	All persons
EU-27	17.2	13.2	15.2
EU-15	19.9	14.5	16.9
Belgium	13.9	10.7	12.3
Bulgaria	16.3	16.9	16.6
Czech Republic ¹	5.7	5.4	5.5
Denmark	15.7	8.9	12.4
Germany	13.4	11.9	12.7
Estonia ²	21.0	10.7	14.3
Greece	18.6	10.7	14.7
Spain	36.1	25.6	31.0
France	14.6	10.9	12.7
Ireland	14.2	8.7	11.5
Italy	22.6	15.9	19.3
Cyprus	19.5	6.8	12.6
Latvia	19.7	12.3	16.0
Lithuania	11.4	5.9	8.7
Luxembourg	19.2	11.1	15.1
Hungary	12.5	9.3	10.9
Malta	41.1	32.9	37.3
Netherlands	14.4	9.6	12.0
Austria	11.6	10.2	10.9
Poland	6.4	3.6	5.0
Portugal	42.0	30.4	36.3
Romania	19.2	19.1	19.2
Slovenia	5.7	2.7	4.3
Slovakia	8.1	6.3	7.2
Finland	9.7	6.3	7.9
Sweden	10.2	7.0	8.6
United Kingdom	18.2	15.8	17.0

¹ Data for Czech Republic relate to Q2 2006 as updated details are not available at present.

² Data for Estonia for females relate to Q2 2005 as updated details are not available at present

Source: Eurostat (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Note: Trends in some member states may be affected by changes in methodology.

Table 6a provides a time series with the proportion of persons aged 20-24 years who had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent (QNHS data). Over 87% of persons aged 20-24, in 2008, had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent, up from 82% in 1999. This suggests that there has been a growth in the proportion of young people with at least the Leaving Certificate or equivalent, possibly due to the increasing numbers of students now participating in second chance Further Education and Training programmes. Table 6b shows international comparisons for the same data, and shows that Ireland's rate for 2008, at 87.4%, is higher than the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 78.5% and 75.8% respectively. See table 6b.

Table 6a Percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 with at least higher secondary level education by sex, March-May 1999 to March-May 2008

	% of persons									
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Males	79.1	79.7	80.4	80.7	81.6	82.3	82.6	82.0	83.7	83.9
Females	85.0	85.6	87.4	87.3	88.5	88.4	88.9	89.3	89.9	91.0
All persons	82.0	82.6	83.9	84.0	85.1	85.3	85.8	85.7	86.8	87.4

Source: Eurostat (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Table 6b Percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 with at least higher secondary level education, in EU member states by sex and country, second quarter 2008

% of persons

Country	Males	Females	Total
EU-27	75.7	81.4	78.5
EU-15	72.6	79.1	75.8
Belgium	80.5	83.9	82.2
Bulgaria	84.0	83.4	83.7
Czech Republic	91.0	92.2	91.6
Denmark	63.6	78.6	71.0
Germany	71.9	76.4	74.1
Estonia	76.0	88.3	82.2
Greece	78.0	86.6	82.1
Spain	52.7	67.6	60.0
France	81.4	86.0	83.7
Ireland	83.9	91.0	87.4
Italy	73.5	79.7	76.5
Cyprus	80.1	89.5	85.1
Latvia	74.3	86.0	80.0
Lithuania	85.9	92.3	89.1
Luxembourg	68.3	77.4	72.8
Hungary	81.7	85.5	83.6
Malta	50.5	58.3	54.2
Netherlands	71.9	80.6	76.2
Austria	84.2	84.8	84.5
Poland	89.3	93.3	91.3
Portugal	47.1	61.9	54.3
Romania	77.9	78.6	78.3
Slovenia	87.4	93.6	90.2
Slovakia	91.0	93.6	92.3
Finland	84.6	87.6	86.2
Sweden	86.2	89.7	87.9
United Kingdom	76.4	80.0	78.2

Source: Eurostat (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Note: Trends in some member states may be affected by changes in methodology.

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.

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'
2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006
						2003/2004	2004/2005	2005
2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007
						2004/2005	2005/2006	2006

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.

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.

The figure of 56,278 pupils enrolled in Year 1 on the Junior Cycle in 2001 (presented on page 2) differs from the official published statistic for total enrolment at Junior Cycle year 1 of 56,674 by 396 pupils. This is due to differences in the methodology employed in the creation of the two sets of data.

Revisions to 1999 data and adjustments to 1998, 1999 and 2000 data

Revisions to 1999 data:

Following minor revisions to the PPPDB the results for the 1999 cohort were revised. The effects of the revisions were very minor, and resulted in a difference of just nine pupils in the 1999 cohort. Following the revisions, the overall rate of retention to Leaving Certificate increased by 0.1 percentage points from 80.5% pre-revisions to 80.6%.

Adjustments to 1998, 1999 and 2000 data:

Incomplete coverage of Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSN) for all candidates sitting the Leaving Certificate Applied in 2004 and 2005 resulted in an underestimation of Leaving Certificate “sits” for the 1998, 1999 and 2000 cohorts. Adjustments have been made to the data at a national, sectoral and geographic level to compensate for this. Users should therefore be cautious when interpreting annual changes in retention rates at a county level.

Regions

The regional classifications in this release are based on the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units) classification used by Eurostat. The NUTS3 regions correspond to the eight Regional Authorities established under the Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order, 1993, which came into operation on 1 January 1994. The NUTS2 regions, which were proposed by Government and agreed by Eurostat in 1999, are groupings of the NUTS3 regions.

Adjusted Leaving Certificate Retention Rate

In the absence of definitive information on the numbers of students who leave State-aided schools including publicly funded fee-paying schools and move to non-aided education providers, it is only possible to estimate these numbers. Persons availing of such options apply to sitⁱⁱ the Leaving Certificate examination as external candidates, and thus are recorded by the State Examinations Commission. In 2006 and 2007, 2,330 and 2,344 persons respectively, sat at least 5 subjects in the Leaving Certificate as external candidates. This averages as approximately 2,337 in cohort terms. In the absence of precise data on the number of Irish external candidates sitting the L.C. for the **first time**, it was assumed that approximately 30% of the 2,337 above were either repeating the examination, or were foreign students and hence not in our original cohort. We therefore estimate that 1711 of our 2001 cohort sat the examination for the first time in either 2006 or 2007. This estimate has been incorporated into the determination of a more accurate Leaving Certificate retention rate.

A further adjustment is made to take into account those from the cohort who may have emigrated or died in the period under consideration. An estimate of these numbers is made using CSO data for deaths and emigrants among 12-18 year olds.

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

The next publication in the series of the series of Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools which relates to the 2002 and 2003 entry cohorts will be published no later than the end of March 2010. Following that, an annual Report on Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools relating to the next years cohort will be published on a regular basis.