



RETENTION RATES OF PUPILS IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

1991 to 2004 ENTRY COHORTS

May 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the retention rates of pupils in second level schools and is based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department's Post-Primary Pupils Database (PPPDB). The Report provides data relating to pupils who entered the first year of the junior cycle in the years from 1991 to 2004 and completed second level schooling no later than 2010. It should be noted that the analysis is limited in that it relates to students entering the state-aided post primary sector only and does not take account of important educational pathways outside this system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training.

The following are some key points to note:

Overall when an adjustment is made for pupils from in the original 2004 entry cohort who left the state-aided post primary sector, emigrated or died, the national retention rate is 87.7%. This compares to 81.3% in 1996 (the first year for which an adjusted rate is available).

The national unadjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate slowly increased up to the 2003 entry cohort. The 2004 entry cohort showed the biggest annual increase (+2.3%) since the analysis began in 1991. The increase is mostly due to pupils not leaving school in the final years of senior cycle in 2009 and 2010 and this is likely to be associated with changed labour market conditions.

A gender gap (4.1%) remains at national level between male and female cohorts. The unadjusted retention rate to Leaving Certificate for males in the 2004 cohort was 82.4%, compared with 86.5% for females. The gender gap is far lower than in previous years.

On average, voluntary secondary schools continue to have the highest retention rates at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate stage. However the gap between the different types of schools is closing. VEC schools have, on average, lower rates of retention to Leaving Certificate, especially for males (retention rate for 2004 was 77.5%) although it should be noted that many of these transfer to apprenticeships and other forms of training.

Retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the cities tend to be lower than in other areas. Limerick City (77.6%), Dublin City (80.1%) and Cork City (80.6%) had the lowest retention rates to Leaving Certificate for the 2004 cohort in the country. County Longford had the highest retention rate at 89.4% followed by Mayo at 88.6%.

The average Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased by 5 percentage points from 68.2% to 73.2% from 2001 to 2004 while the retention rate in non-DEIS schools increased from 85.0% to 87.4 over the same period.

The rate of retention comparable to completion of upper second-level education (equivalent to NFQ levels 4,5 and 6 Advanced), is higher than presented in the report as participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school is not taken into account in the retention analysis.

The latest available international data on Early School Leavers (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) sourced from the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 13% in 2004 to 10% in 2010. The latest available data for all EU27 member states shows that in 2009 the proportion of early school leavers in Ireland was 11% which compares to the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 14% and 16% respectively.

INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth published report, by the Department of Education and Skills, on school retention in Ireland. It is based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department's Post-Primary Pupils Database (PPPDB) for the cohort of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in the years from 1991 to 2004. Detailed time series tables containing most of the data presented in this report will also be shortly available on the Department of Education and Skills'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. 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. However, due to the fact that these students sit the State exams as external candidates, it is possible to provide an adjusted retention rate by matching in State Examinations Commission (SEC) external candidate data against the initial cohort data. 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 87.7% for the 2004 cohort. *See Table 1 and the Appendix for further details on the methodology used.* 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. While data in the format required for this report on the numbers leaving school to pursue apprenticeships and other training is not available it is worth noting that the ESRI School Leavers Survey of 2004/05 leavers, published in March 2009, indicates that most of those who left school prior to the Leaving Certificate participated in various types of further training within a year of leaving school. Some of this training is likely to be equivalent to NFQ level 4 or 5 (Leaving Certificate standard or equivalent). Data sourced from the Quarterly National Household Survey also provides more information on this point. *See Section 7.*

An analysis of the 2004 cohort shows:

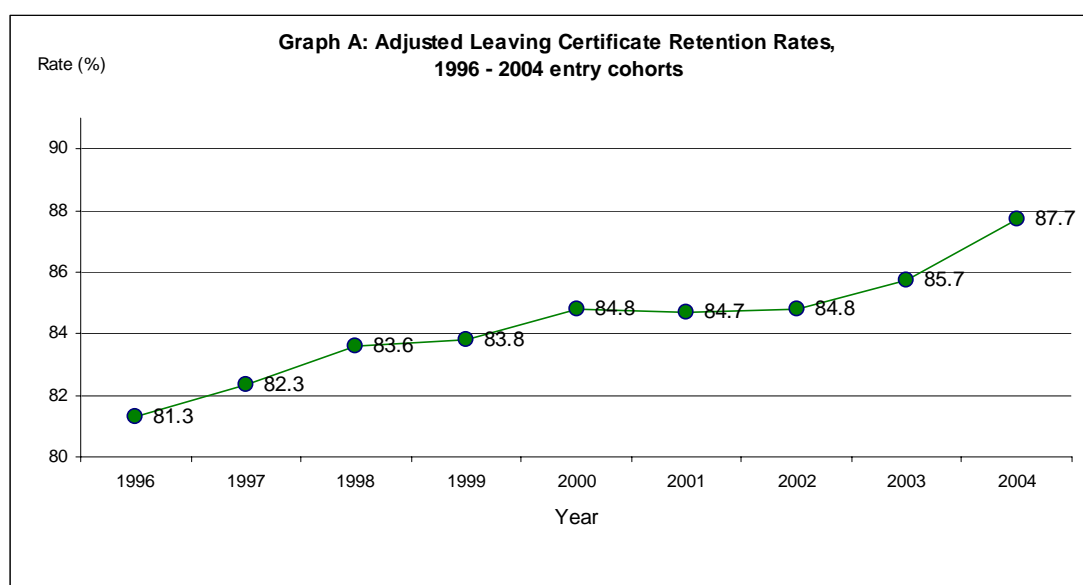
- (a) **Junior Cycle, Year 1 cohort:** The number of pupils enrolled in the 695¹ second-level schools in Year 1 of the Junior Cycle, on 30th September 2004 was 56,948¹.
- (b) **Junior Cycle, Year 2 cohort:** The number of pupils progressing to the second year of the junior cycle was 56,358. This represented a decrease of 1.0% of the initial cohort.
- (c) **Junior Cycle, Year 3 cohort:** The number of pupils entering year 3 of the junior cycle amounted to 55,671 pupils. This represented a retention rate, from year 1 to year 3, of 97.8%.
- (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 53,835. This corresponds to 94.5% of the initial cohort. *This figure may be partly underestimated see section on Junior Certificate examination ‘sits’ in the appendix for more details.*
- (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 53,712 (or 94.3% 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 49,983 (or 87.8% of the initial cohort).
- (g) **Leaving Certificate retention:** The final school based retention rate for the 2004 cohort was 84.5% (i.e. out of the 56,948 pupils enrolled on the 30th of September 2004 in year 1 of the Junior Cycle, 48,100 sat the Leaving Certificate by 2010). 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 2004 cohort was 87.7%. 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.

Adjusted Leaving Certificate Retention Rate

Table 1 compares the adjusted retention rates for the 2004 cohort with the rates for all previous cohorts since 1996. The adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate has increased by 6.4% percentage points in the eight years from the 1996 to 2004 entry cohorts from 81.3% to 87.7%. *See Table 1 and Graph A below.*

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 1996-2004 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, Graph A below and the Appendix.*



For the purposes of this report, the adjusted rates as described 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 1996-2004 cohorts

		Junior Cycle cohort	Less emigration and death	Net cohort	Leaving Certificate retention (adjusted for death and emigration)	External Candidates (estimated)	Adjusted National Leaving Certificate Retention
1996	No.	64,068	260	63,808	49,838	2,050	51,888
	%			100.0	78.1	3.2	81.3
1997	No.	62,105	241	61,864	48,864	2,078	50,942
	%			100.0	79.0	3.4	82.3
1998	No.	61,144	274	60,870	49,000	1,890	50,890
	%			100.0	80.5	3.1	83.6
1999	No.	60,777	288	60,489	48,966	1,723	50,689
	%			100.0	81.0	2.8	83.8
2000	No.	59,345	289	59,056	48,214	1,869	50,083
	%			100	81.6	3.2	84.8
2001	No.	56,278	312	55,966	45,758	1,636	47,394
	%			100.0	81.8	2.9	84.7
2002	No.	56,466	351	56,115	45,880	1,711	47,591
	%			100.0	81.8	3.0	84.8
2003	No.	57,331	372	56,959	47,125	1,700	48,825
	%			100.0	82.7	3.0	85.7
2004	No.	56,948	372	56,576	48,100	1,528	49,628
	%			100.0	85.0	2.7	87.7

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

Comparison with Previous Cohorts

Table 2a compares the retention rates for the 2004 entry cohort with the rates for all previous cohorts since 1991. The Leaving Certificate retention rate increased slowly up to the 2003 entry cohort. The 2004 entry cohort showed the biggest annual increase since the analysis began in 1991. The data shown in table 2a indicate that most of this increase is associated with pupils not leaving school in the final years of senior cycle in 2009 and 2010. This pattern is likely to reflect changed labour market conditions. Overall, the national unadjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate for the 2004 cohort, at 84.5% has increased by 7.4% since 1991, and 6.2% in the ten years since 1994. *See Table 2a on following page.*

A gender gap remains at national level between male and female cohorts. However while the gender gap remains, it is lower than in previous years. The retention rate to Leaving Certificate for males in the 2004 cohort was 82.4%, compared with a rate of 86.5 % for females, a difference of 4.1 percentage points. This compares to a gender difference of 11.3 percentage points for the 1995 entry cohort, 8.9 percentage points for the 2001 entry cohort and 6.1 percentage points for the 2003 entry cohort. *See Tables 2b and 2c.*

Table 2a: Retention Rates¹ (unadjusted) for each milestone, 1991-2004 entry cohorts

Milestone	Cohort (%)													
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
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	56,466	57,331	56,948
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	98.9	99.0	99.0
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	97.6	97.8	97.8
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	93.4	92.3	93.4	94.3	94.4	94.6	94.5	94.5	94.6	95.6	96.1	95.7	95.1	94.5
Senior Cycle, Year 1	*	*	*	*	90.9	91.1	90.9	91.3	92.0	93.1	93.7	93.8	94.2	94.3
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	85.3	86.2	87.8
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	81.3	82.2	84.5

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

²See Appendix

^{n/a} Data not available

* Data previously published for Senior Cycle Year 1 for the 1991-1994 cohorts are not comparable with data for the 1995-2004 cohorts.

Table 2b: Male Retention Rates¹ for each milestone, 1995-2004 cohorts

Milestone	Cohort (%)									
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No.)	34,416	32,872	31,946	31,158	30,758	30,144	28,445	28,723	29,288	28,738
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.3	98.3	98.4	98.4	98.5	98.9	98.8	98.8	98.9	98.9
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.7	95.9	96.0	96.0	96.2	96.9	97.2	97.2	97.5	97.5
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	93.1	93.4	93.3	93.3	93.7	94.9	95.4	95.1	94.7	94.2
Senior Cycle, Year 1	87.8	88.1	87.9	88.3	89.5	91.2	91.8	92.0	92.7	93.2
Senior Cycle, Year 2	76.2	75.6	76.7	78.7	80.0	81.1	81.2	81.7	83.6	85.9
Final retention Rate	72.5	72.1	73.5	75.4	75.5	76.6	76.9	77.3	79.2	82.4

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

²See Appendix

Table 2c: Female Retention Rates¹ for each milestone, 1995-2004 cohorts

Milestone	Cohort (%)									
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No.)	32,838	31,196	30,159	29,986	30,019	29,201	27,833	27,743	28,043	28,210
Junior Certificate, Year 2	99.1	99.0	99.0	98.9	98.7	98.9	98.9	99.1	99.1	99.0
Junior Certificate, Year 3	97.7	97.6	97.7	97.5	97.4	97.6	98.0	98.0	98.1	98.0
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	95.8	95.8	95.8	95.8	95.5	96.2	96.8	96.3	95.5	94.9
Senior Cycle, Year 1	94.2	94.3	94.1	94.3	94.5	95.1	95.6	95.6	95.7	95.4
Senior Cycle, Year 2	87.0	86.9	87.0	87.8	88.8	88.9	89.1	89.0	89.0	89.7
Final retention Rate	83.8	83.8	84.2	85.1	85.7	85.9	85.8	85.4	85.3	86.5

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

² See Appendix

ANALYSIS OF 2004 COHORT

The retention rate to Leaving Certificate for the 2004 cohort for secondary schools was 86.3%, which was 2.6 percentage points higher than the average rate for community and comprehensive schools and 6 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 for the 2004 cohort of 85.3% for males in secondary schools, 77.5% in vocational schools and 81.0% in community and comprehensive schools compared to 87.2%, 84.2% and 86.8% respectively for females. As in previous years, vocational schools experienced lower retention rates than other school types, especially with regard to males between senior cycle year 1 and the Leaving Certificate examination with a gap of 12.5 percentage points being recorded between these two milestones. Many male students leave school before sitting the Leaving Certificate to take up apprenticeship training or employment. The data indicate that the number of males leaving school early has fallen in 2009 and 2010. *See Table 3.*

Table 3: Retention Rates¹ by School Type and Sex, 2004 cohort

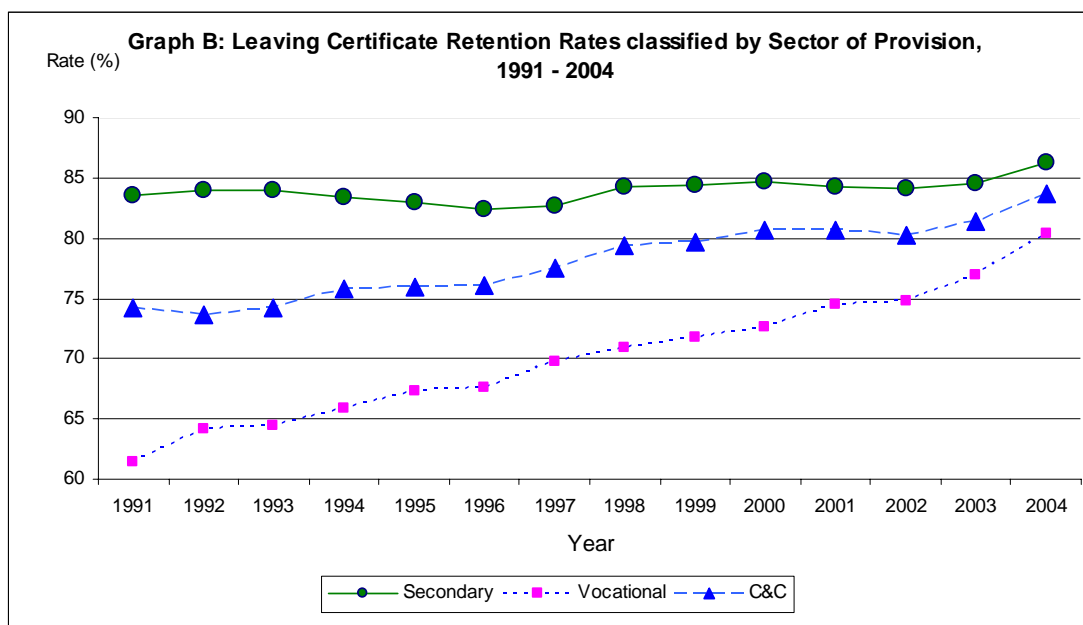
Milestone	<u>SECONDARY</u>			<u>VOCATIONAL</u>			<u>COMMUNITY & COMPREHENSIVE</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Junior Cycle, Year 1 (no.)	15,753	17,990	33,743	7,611	5,631	13,242	5,374	4,589	9,963	28,738	28,210	56,948
Junior Cycle, Year 2	99.0	99.1	99.1	98.8	98.7	98.8	98.8	99.2	98.9	98.9	99.0	99.0
Junior Cycle, Year 3	98.0	98.1	98.0	96.7	97.6	97.1	97.5	98.2	97.8	97.5	98.0	97.8
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	95.2	95.3	95.2	92.3	93.7	92.9	93.9	94.9	94.4	94.2	94.9	94.5
Senior Cycle, Year 1	94.8	95.8	95.3	90.0	94.3	91.9	93.2	95.4	94.2	93.2	95.4	94.3
Senior Cycle, Year 2	88.5	90.2	89.4	81.0	87.7	83.8	85.0	90.3	87.4	85.9	89.7	87.8
Leaving Certificate Retention	85.3	87.2	86.3	77.5	84.2	80.3	81.0	86.8	83.7	82.4	86.5	84.5
Leaving Certificate Retention 2003 for comparison	82.8	86.1	84.6	73.1	82.3	76.9	77.8	85.9	81.4	79.2	85.3	82.2

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

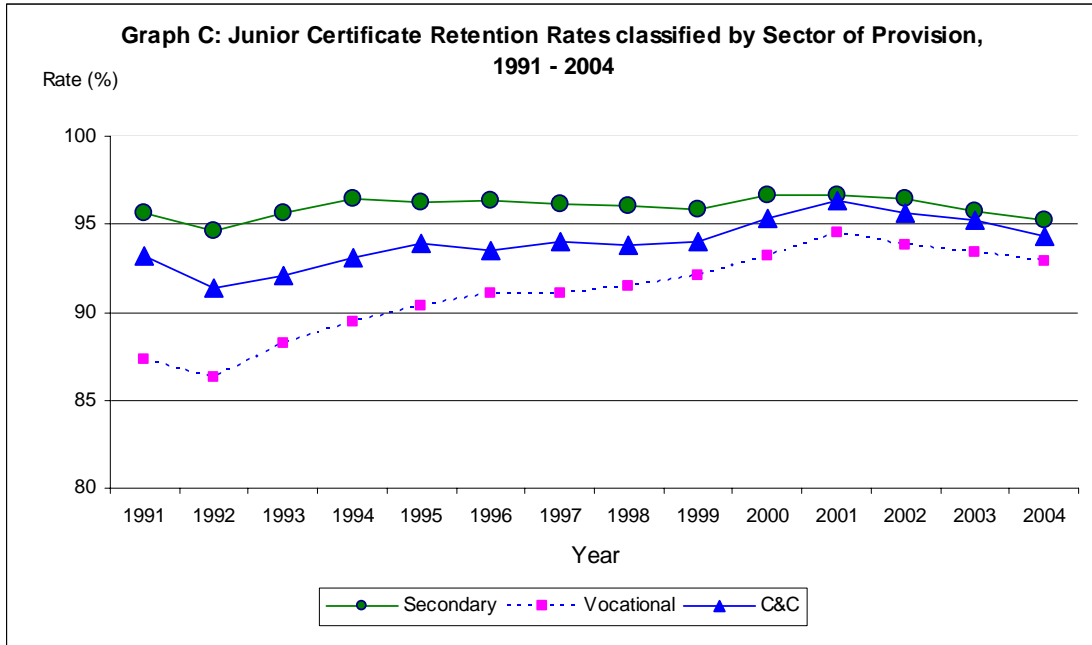
² See Appendix

ANALYSIS OF TRENDS 1991 - 2004

On average secondary schools continue to have the highest retention rates at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate stage. However the gap between the different types of schools is closing. See Graphs B and C. The data used to create these graphs can be accessed on the Department of Education and Skills's [education statistics database](#).



Compared to other sectors, the average retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the voluntary secondary school sector have shown 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 fallen by more than two-thirds since 1991. The average Leaving Certificate retention rate for vocational schools has shown the biggest improvement, with an increase of 16.1 percentage points between the 1991 and 2004 cohorts. As indicated in the previous chapter, all Leaving Certificate retention rates are unadjusted unless otherwise stated. See Graph B above.



Since analysis began in 1991, secondary schools have recorded higher rates of retention to Junior Certificate compared to other school sectors. However, as Graph C shows, differences between sectors of provision are now very small and there is very little variation in the retention rate to Junior Certificate between the sectors. *See Graph C above.*

This section describes the trends in school retention in each administrative county area for the 2004 entry cohort. 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. Limerick City (77.6%) and Dublin City (80.1%) and Cork City (80.6%) had the lowest retention rates to Leaving Certificate for the 2004 cohort in the country. Longford had the highest retention rate at 89.4% followed by Mayo at 88.6%. Carlow and Longford experienced the greatest increase in Leaving Certificate retention rates when comparing the 2003 and 2004 entry cohorts, and Tipperary North the greatest decrease. Carlow, Cavan and Kilkenny had the highest Junior Certificate rates at 97.1%, 96.8% and 96.5% respectively. *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 86.3% compared to those in the Southern and Eastern region at 83.7%. The difference in terms of rates of retention to Junior Certificate was less pronounced with just 0.4 percentage points between the two regions. *See Table 4.*

Table 4: Retention Rates¹ classified by region², county and administrative county, 2002 - 2004 cohorts

County	No. of Schools ³	No. of Pupils ³	<u>2002 (%) cohort</u>		<u>2003 (%) cohort</u>		<u>2004 (%) cohort</u>	
			Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention	Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention	Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention
Border, Midland and Western	209	16,268	95.7	83.1	95.5	84.1	94.8	86.3
Border	85	7,000	95.6	82.3	95.6	83.8	94.5	85.6
Cavan	10	756	96.9	85.8	96.4	86.5	96.8	87.7
Donegal	26	2,162	95.1	80.7	96.0	83.5	94.5	84.9
Leitrim	7	454	96.9	88.8	95.1	85.9	95.2	87.0
Louth	16	1,843	95.3	81.4	94.8	80.9	93.4	83.6
Monaghan	12	926	96.3	81.3	96.4	85.6	94.3	86.9
Sligo	14	859	95.2	83.2	94.8	85.9	95.0	87.8
Midland	44	3,732	95.3	82.8	95.0	83.6	94.7	86.5
Laoighis	9	806	96.1	83.8	94.6	79.7	94.7	82.3
Longford	9	593	96.5	85.9	95.1	83.3	94.9	89.4
Offaly	11	952	96.9	82.6	95.9	84.3	94.3	86.1
Westmeath	15	1,381	93.4	81.1	94.6	85.7	94.9	88.0
West	80	5,536	96.0	84.3	95.7	84.6	95.3	87.0
Galway	44	3,161	95.6	83.8	95.7	83.0	95.5	86.2
Galway City	10	917	93.9	78.3	93.9	77.2	95.5	81.9
Galway County	34	2,244	96.2	86.0	96.4	85.2	95.5	87.9
Mayo	28	1,810	96.9	85.4	96.2	87.3	95.2	88.6
Roscommon	8	565	95.8	83.5	93.9	84.7	94.7	86.7

Table 4: Retention Rates¹ classified by region², county and administrative county, 2002 - 2004 cohorts contd.

County	No. of Schools ³	No. of Pupils ³	<u>2002 (%) cohort</u>		<u>2003 (%) cohort</u>		<u>2004 (%) cohort</u>	
			Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention	Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention	Junior Certificate Retention	Leaving Certificate Retention
Southern and Eastern	486	40,680	95.7	80.5	95.0	81.5	94.4	83.7
Dublin	167	14,627	95.3	79.1	94.6	80.1	93.4	81.7
Dublin city	78	5,852	94.6	77.1	94.1	78.0	93.0	80.1
Fingal	25	2,987	97.0	80.1	95.7	81.8	93.7	82.9
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown	31	2,501	95.8	83.3	95.2	84.5	93.9	85.0
South Dublin	33	3,287	94.8	78.7	94.0	78.9	93.4	81.1
Mid-East	65	6,082	96.2	81.1	95.1	82.4	94.6	85.4
Kildare	27	2,530	96.0	81.1	95.4	82.8	95.1	85.7
Meath	17	1,890	97.0	84.3	94.7	84.1	94.3	87.0
Wicklow	21	1,662	95.7	77.9	95.3	79.6	94.2	83.1
Mid-West	66	5,083	95.3	82.1	95.0	83.2	94.0	83.8
Clare	18	1,315	95.4	83.9	95.1	85.3	94.6	85.6
Limerick	33	2,642	94.6	80.4	93.9	79.9	93.2	81.9
Limerick City	14	1,347	92.7	77.2	92.6	76.2	90.7	77.6
Limerick County	19	1,295	96.4	83.4	95.1	83.4	95.8	86.5
North Tipperary	15	1,126	97.0	84.2	97.2	88.4	95.2	86.1
South-East	78	6,595	95.6	80.3	95.4	82.4	95.3	85.0
Carlow	11	804	96.4	78.0	96.5	79.5	97.1	85.7
Kilkenny	15	1,198	97.4	81.5	96.8	83.8	96.5	84.6
South Tipperary	15	1,151	95.5	80.5	95.4	83.0	95.0	84.7
Waterford	17	1,422	94.7	80.9	94.7	83.2	94.0	84.5
Waterford City	8	765	93.1	78.2	93.9	83.3	92.4	82.2
Waterford County	9	657	96.8	84.6	95.8	83.2	95.9	87.2
Wexford	20	2,020	94.8	80.0	94.6	81.7	94.8	85.5
South-West	110	8,293	96.3	81.7	95.1	81.4	95.6	84.9
Cork	84	6,398	96.2	81.4	94.8	80.9	95.5	84.8
Cork City	25	1,889	96.3	76.6	94.6	76.8	95.6	80.6
Cork County	59	4,509	96.1	83.7	95.0	82.8	95.5	86.6
Kerry	26	1,895	96.5	83.0	96.0	83.0	96.1	85.3
Total	695	56,948	95.7	81.3	95.1	82.2	94.5	84.5

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

² See Appendix Methodology and Technical Notes

³ Number of schools and pupils refer to number as per 2004 cohort calculations

The Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative is designed to ensure that within schools with the highest number of disadvantage among their pupil that the most disadvantaged schools benefit from a comprehensive package of supports, while ensuring that others continue to get support in line with the level of disadvantage among their pupils. The following tables show the retention rates for the 2001 – 2004 entry cohorts in designated DEIS schools compared to schools that are not under the DEIS programme. The tables show that the average (unadjusted) Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased by 5 percentage points from 68.2% to 73.2% between the 2001 to 2004 entry cohorts while the (unadjusted) retention rate in non-DEIS schools increased from 85.0% to 87.4% for the same entry cohorts. There was a marked increase in the retention rate for the 2001 to 2004 entry cohorts for males in DEIS schools at nearly 8 percentage points. *See Tables 5a, 5b and 5c below.*

Table 5a: Retention Rates¹ by whether the school has been designated as a DEIS school or not, 2001 - 2004 entry cohorts

Milestone	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No.)	12,414	43,864	56,278	12,118	44,348	56,466	11,985	45,346	57,331	11,763	45,185	56,948
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.2	99.0	98.8	98.3	99.1	98.9	98.6	99.1	99.0	98.3	99.1	99.0
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.6	98.2	97.6	95.5	98.2	97.6	96.3	98.2	97.8	95.7	98.3	97.8
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	92.6	97.1	96.1	91.6	96.8	95.7	91.2	96.1	95.1	89.6	95.8	94.5
Senior Cycle, Year 1	87.9	95.3	93.7	87.7	95.4	93.8	88.8	95.6	94.2	88.7	95.8	94.3
Senior Cycle, Year 2	74.6	88.1	85.1	74.7	88.2	85.3	76.5	88.8	86.2	78.5	90.2	87.8
Final retention Rate	68.2	85.0	81.3	68.6	84.7	81.3	69.9	85.5	82.2	73.2	87.4	84.5

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

² See Appendix

Table 5b: Male Retention Rates¹ by whether the school has been designated as a DEIS school or not, 2001 - 2004 entry cohorts

Milestone	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No)	7,267	21,178	28,445	7,135	21,588	28,723	6,880	22,408	29,288	6,882	21,856	28,738
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.2	99.0	98.8	98.0	99.0	98.8	98.5	99.0	98.9	98.3	99.1	98.9
Junior Certificate, Year 3	95.1	97.9	97.2	95.1	97.9	97.2	95.7	98.1	97.5	95.3	98.2	97.5
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	91.6	96.7	95.4	90.8	96.5	95.1	90.6	96.0	94.7	89.1	95.7	94.2
Senior Cycle, Year 1	85.2	94.1	91.8	85.1	94.3	92.0	86.2	94.7	92.7	86.7	95.3	93.2
Senior Cycle, Year 2	68.9	85.4	81.2	69.3	85.9	81.7	71.8	87.3	83.6	75.3	89.2	85.9
Final retention Rate	62.5	81.9	76.9	63.4	81.8	77.3	65.2	83.6	79.2	70.3	86.3	82.4

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

² See Appendix

Table 5c: Female Retention Rates¹ by whether the school has been designated as a DEIS school or not, 2001 - 2004 entry cohorts

Milestone	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools	DEIS	Non-DEIS	All Schools
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No)	5,147	22,686	27,833	4,983	22,760	27,743	5,105	22,938	28,043	4,881	23,329	28,210
Junior Certificate, Year 2	98.2	99.0	98.9	98.7	99.2	99.1	98.7	99.1	99.1	98.4	99.1	99.0
Junior Certificate, Year 3	96.4	98.4	98.0	96.1	98.4	98.0	96.9	98.4	98.1	96.4	98.3	98.0
Junior Certificate 'sits' ²	94.0	97.4	96.8	92.7	97.1	96.3	92.1	96.3	95.5	90.1	95.9	94.9
Senior Cycle, Year 1	91.6	96.5	95.6	91.5	96.5	95.6	92.2	96.5	95.7	91.6	96.2	95.4
Senior Cycle, Year 2	82.6	90.6	89.1	82.5	90.4	89.0	82.9	90.3	89.0	83.0	91.1	89.7
Final retention Rate	76.1	88.0	85.8	76.1	87.4	85.4	76.2	87.3	85.3	77.4	88.4	86.5

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

² See Appendix

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) conducted by the Central Statistics Office collects, amongst other things, 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. It should be noted that, as part of the EU2020 agenda on education and training, Ireland has adopted a target of further reducing early school leaving to no more than 8% by the year 2020.

Table 6a presents data on early school leavers from 2004 to 2010. It shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 13% in 2004 to 10% in 2010 (however, some of this decrease may be due to changes in methodology). The proportion of female early school leavers decreased from 10% to 7% over the same period and the proportion of males decreased by a similar amount to 12%. *See Table 6a.*

Table 6b presents the latest available figure for all EU27 member states which are for 2009. These show that the proportion of early school leavers in Ireland in 2009 was 11% which compares to the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 14% and 16% respectively and ranks Ireland as joint ninth in the list of EU member states. *See Table 6b.*

Table 7a provides a time series from 2000 onwards with the proportion of persons aged 20-24 years who had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent (QNHS data). Eighty-nine per cent of persons aged 20-24, in 2010, had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent, an increase from 83% in 2000. 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 7b shows international comparisons for the same data, and shows that Ireland's rate for 2009, at 87%, is higher than the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 79% and 76% respectively. *See Table 7b.*

Table 8 presents data on the highest level of education attained for 15- to 24-year-olds, and for 25- to 64-year-olds classified by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This shows that in

2009 and 2010 over 40% of young persons had obtained a qualification at NFQ levels 4, 5, or 6 Advanced. In addition, other young people in this age-group had higher education qualifications at NFQ levels 6 (Higher) and upwards. When qualifications higher than NFQ level 6 Advanced are taken into account 55% of persons aged 15 to 24 had achieved at least NFQ level 4 in 2010. Data classified by the NFQ is not available for earlier years. *See Table 8.*

Table 6a: Early school leavers¹ as a percentage of 18 to 24 year olds classified by sex, April-June 2004 to April-June 2010

	% of persons						
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Male early school leavers	16	15	16	15	15	13	12
Female early school leavers	10	9	9	8	8	7	7
Total early school leavers	13	12	13	12	11	10	10

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

Source: CSO, QNHS Educational Attainment Quarter 2 2000 to Quarter 2 2010, page 14

Table 6b: Early school leavers¹ in EU member states classified by sex, 2009

	% of persons		
	Males	Females	Total
EU-27	16	13	14
EU-15	18	14	16
Austria	9	9	9
Belgium	13	9	11
Bulgaria	14	16	15
Cyprus	15	9	12
Czech Republic	6	5	5
Denmark	13	8	11
Estonia	18	9	14
Finland	11	9	10
France	14	10	12
Germany	12	11	11
Greece	18	11	15
Hungary	12	10	11
Ireland²	14	8	11
Italy	22	16	19
Latvia	18	10	14
Lithuania	12	6	9
Luxembourg	9	7	8
Malta	40	34	37
Netherlands	13	9	11
Poland	7	4	5
Portugal	36	26	31
Romania	16	17	17
Slovakia	6	4	5
Slovenia	7	3	5
Spain	37	25	31
Sweden	12	10	11
United Kingdom	17	15	16

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

² The Eurostat figures for Ireland are based on an annual average for 2009 and so may differ slightly from the values in Table 6a.

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

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

Table 7a: Percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 with at least higher second level education, classified by sex, April-June 2000 to April-June 2010

	% of persons										
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Males	80	81	80	82	82	84	81	83	84	84	86
Females	86	88	88	88	88	89	89	90	91	91	92
All persons	83	84	84	85	85	86	85	86	88	88	89

Source: CSO, QNHS Educational Attainment Quarter 2 2000 to Quarter 2 2010, page 13

Table 7b: Percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 with at least a higher secondary education¹, in EU member states, classified by sex, 2009

Country	% of persons		
	Males	Females	Total
EU-27	76	81	79
EU-15	73	79	76
Austria	86	86	86
Belgium	81	86	83
Bulgaria	85	83	84
Cyprus	84	90	87
Czech Republic	92	92	92
Denmark	62	78	70
Estonia	78	86	82
Finland	84	86	85
France	81	86	84
Germany	72	76	74
Greece	78	87	82
Hungary	82	86	84
Ireland¹	83	91	87
Italy	73	80	76
Latvia	76	85	81
Lithuania	83	91	87
Luxembourg	76	78	77
Malta	48	57	52
Netherlands	72	81	77
Poland	89	93	91
Portugal	50	61	56
Romania	78	79	78
Slovakia	93	94	93
Slovenia	86	93	89
Spain	53	67	60
Sweden	85	88	86
United Kingdom	77	81	79

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

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

¹ The Eurostat figures for Ireland are based on an annual average for 2009 and so may differ slightly from the values in Table 7a.

Table 8: Percentage of persons aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 64, classified by the highest level of education attained National Framework of Qualifications classification (NFQ), April-June 2009 to April-June 2010

Highest education level attained (NFQ)	% of persons			
	15-24		25-64	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
No education or training	0	1	1	1
NFQ Levels 1/2	12	13	12	11
NFQ Level 3	31	31	16	15
NFQ Level 4/5	41	40	31	30
NFQ Level 6 Advanced Certificate	2	2	5	7
NFQ Level 6 Higher Certificate	2	1	5	4
NFQ Level 7 Ordinary Bachelor Degree	4	3	11	12
NFQ Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree & Higher Diploma	7	7	14	15
NFQ Level 9 Masters Degree & Post-graduate diploma	1 ¹	1 ¹	5	6
NFQ Level 10 Doctoral Degree & Higher Doctorate			1	1
Total	100	100	100	100

¹ NFQ Levels 9 and 10 have been grouped together for those aged 15-24 due to sample size restrictions.
Source: CSO, QNHS Educational Attainment Quarter 2 2000 to Quarter 2 2010, page 17.

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'
2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008
						2005/2006	2006/2007	2007
2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009
						2006/2007	2007/2008	2008
2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010
						2007/2008	2008/2009	2009

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.

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.

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 695 post primary schools (presented on page 4) differs from the official published statistic for the total number of post primary schools of 742. This is due to the fact that not all of these 742 schools offer a full junior and senior cycle, e.g. some schools offer only post leaving certificate courses where as others do not offer first year etc. The figure of 56,948 pupils enrolled in Year 1 on the Junior Cycle in 2004 (presented on page 4) differs from the official published statistic for total enrolment at Junior Cycle year 1 of 57,227 by 279 pupils. This is due to differences in the methodology employed in the creation of the two sets of data.

Junior Certificate examination 'sits'

The analysis the 2004 cohort revealed that 1,181 students did not sit the Junior Certificate exam but progressed to Senior Cycle Year 1 (616 Female and 565 Male) while 1,304 students sat the JC exam and did not progress to Senior Cycle Year 1 (465 Female and 839 Male).

The effect of this on the retention rates presented in the report means that for females, the senior cycle year 1 retention rate is slightly higher than the junior certificate examinations sits rate.

This may be due to a number of reasons which include:

- a) Pupils who did not turn up for the Junior Certificate
- b) Pupils who were too ill to sit the Junior Certificate
- c) Possible incomplete coverage of Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSN) for all candidates sitting the Junior Certificate.

The Rules for Secondary Schools do not make it obligatory to sit an examination. They set out what schools must offer, and the conditions under which students may be admitted to exams.

Further analysis of the data on Junior Certificate “sits” in 2007 and 2008 showed that 1,273 and 1,300 candidates respectively did not provide a PPSN. Hence it is possible that some of the 1,181 students who did not sit the JC but progressed to Senior Cycle Year 1, did in fact sit the JC and consequently the true JC sit rate may be higher than shown in the tables in this report.

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 sit the Leaving Certificate examination as external candidates, and thus are recorded by the State Examinations Commission. In 2009 and 2010, 2,311 and 2,054 persons respectively, sat at least 5 subjects in the Leaving Certificate as external candidates. This averages as approximately 2,183 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 2,183 above were either repeating the examination, or were foreign students and hence not in our original cohort. It was therefore estimated that 1,528 of our 2004 cohort sat the examination for the first time in either 2009 or 2010. 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.

Preliminary investigations matching data on external candidates against those pupils in the 2002, 2003 and 2004 entry cohorts produces figures that are in line the estimation technique used above. The preliminary data matching exercise involved matching data, using the PPSN, on the number of external LC candidates against data from the initial cohort. For the 2004 entry cohort this yielded 1,356 matches. There were also 256 records of external LC candidates in 2009 and 2010 that were missing a PPSN or had an incorrect value for a PPSN. Hence the actual number of external candidates that sat the LC from the initial entry cohort lies between 1,356 and 1,612. Similar patterns emerged for the 2002 and 2003 entry cohorts. It is planned that future work on data matching will be carried out for the next Report on Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools to further refine the adjusted Leaving Certificate retention rate.