

LIFELONG LEARNING IN IRELAND QUARTER 4 2017

July 2018

How many 25-64 year-olds in Ireland participated in learning activities?

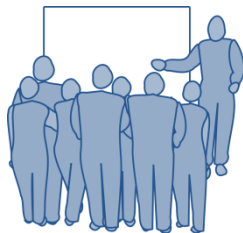
Formal learning



131,400 learners

5%

Non-formal learning



248,500 learners

10%

National Skills Strategy

2020 Target

10%

2025 Target

15%

Lifelong learning rate*

Quarter 4 2017

14%

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO Labour Force Survey data

Introduction

The European Union (EU) has set a target of 15% for adult participation in learning activities to be reached by 2020. In addition, one of the targets set out in the National Skills Strategy is to increase to 10% the share of persons aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 and to 15% by 2025. This paper aims to monitor Ireland's progress towards these targets and is the fourth in a series of short papers produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS, on behalf of the National Skills Council (and formerly the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs).

Data

Measure: in this paper, we use the EU measure of lifelong learning; this is based on the number of adults aged between 25-64 years who had participated in formal and/or non-formal learning activities in the four weeks prior to the survey. The measure excludes participation in informal learning activities. Further details on this measure are provided on page 6.

Timeframe: this paper reports on lifelong learning participation in Ireland in quarter 4 2017. The EU's statistical agency (Eurostat), however, reports lifelong learning participation rates in terms of annual averages. Therefore, there will be differences between rates reported here and those reported at EU level.

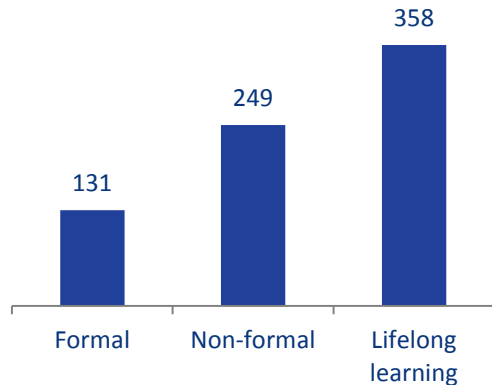
Comparisons: the analysis is based on Central Statistics Office (CSO) Labour Force Survey data. A new Labour Force Survey (LFS) replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in Q3 2017; this has resulted in a break in series and therefore it is not possible to compare lifelong learning estimates before and after this period. For this reason, the analysis presented here focuses on lifelong learning participation in quarter 4 2017 only.

Key Points

- Of the 2.55 million adults aged 25-64 years in quarter 4 2017, 358,000 had participated in learning activities in the four weeks prior to the survey
- This amounts to a lifelong learning rate of 14%
- Over 131,000 adults had participated in formal learning activities, while almost 249,000 participated in non-formal learning activities, translating into participation rates of 5% and 10% respectively. (A small number of adults participated in both formal and non-formal learning; therefore total lifelong learning is slightly less than the sum of the two learning types.)
- While formal learning is approximately half that of non-formal learning, the general patterns are the same, with rates for both learning types increasing with education attainment, and, in the main, declining with age
- As measured in the Labour Force Survey, lifelong learning participation in Ireland in quarter 4 2017 exceeded the target set out in the National Skills Strategy for 2020

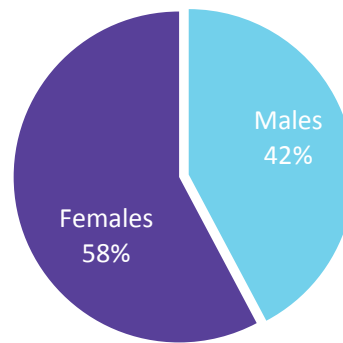
Lifelong learning in quarter 4 2017: participant profile

Lifelong learning participants (000s) by learning type*

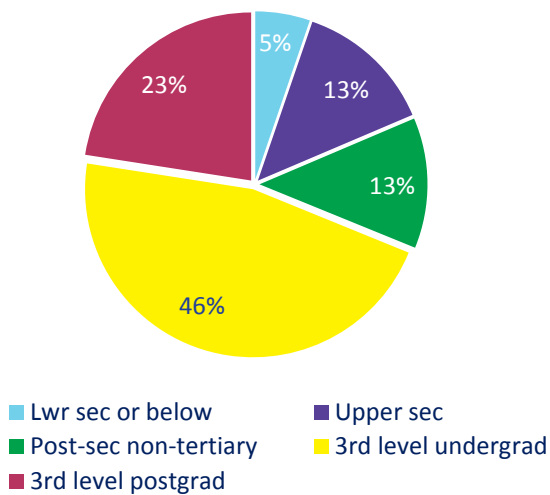


*Some adults participated in both formal and non-formal learning activities and so total lifelong learning is slightly less than the sum of both learning types

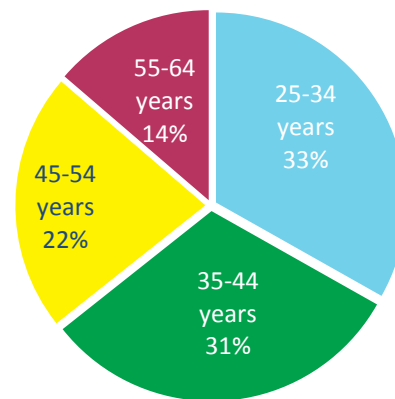
Lifelong learning by gender



Lifelong learning by participant education level



Lifelong learning participants by age

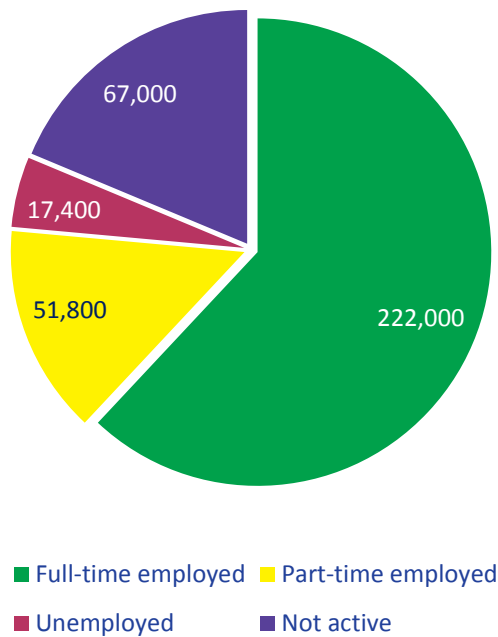


Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO Labour Force Survey data

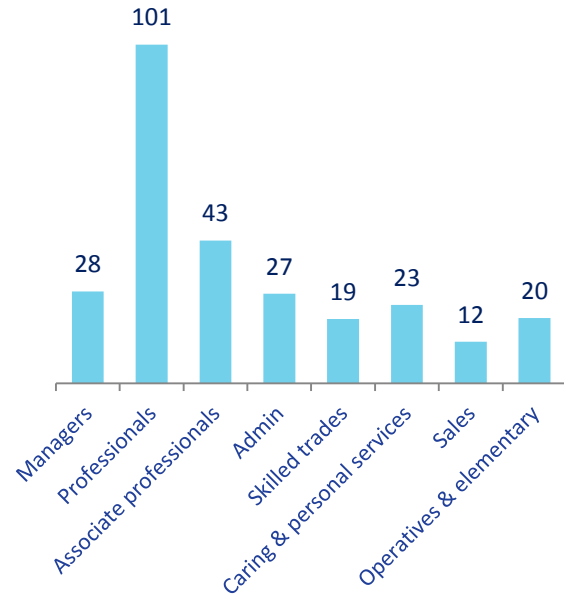
- There were 358,000 adult participants in lifelong learning
- The highest numbers were in non-formal learning activities, with 249,000 learners. There were 131,000 participants in formal learning activities
- With a 58% share, females outnumber males: females outnumber males in both learning types (i.e. formal and non-formal)
- Almost two thirds of lifelong learning participants were aged between 25 and 44 years.
- More than two thirds hold higher education qualifications

Lifelong learning participants in quarter 4 2017: what do they do?

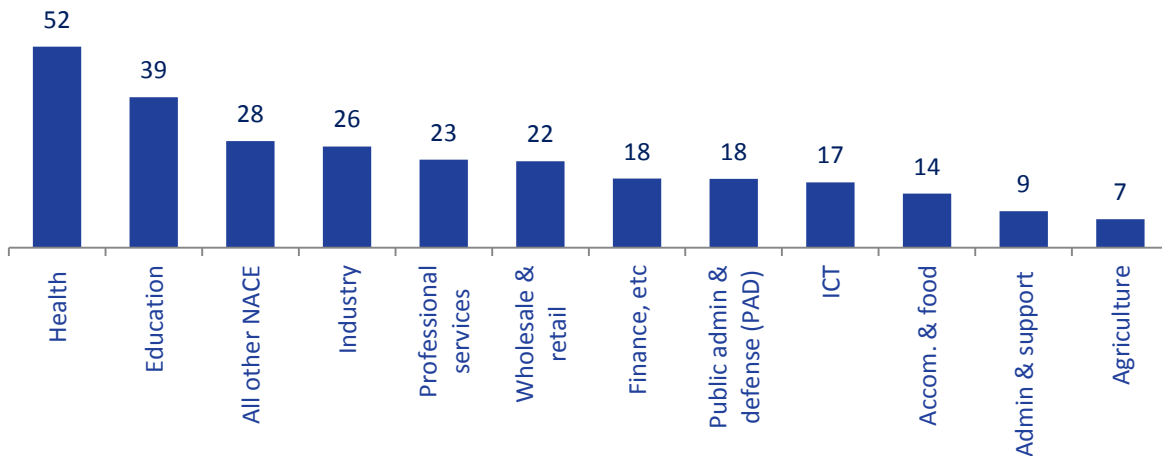
Lifelong learning participants by work status



Lifelong learning participants (000s) by occupational group



Lifelong learning participants (000s) by sector

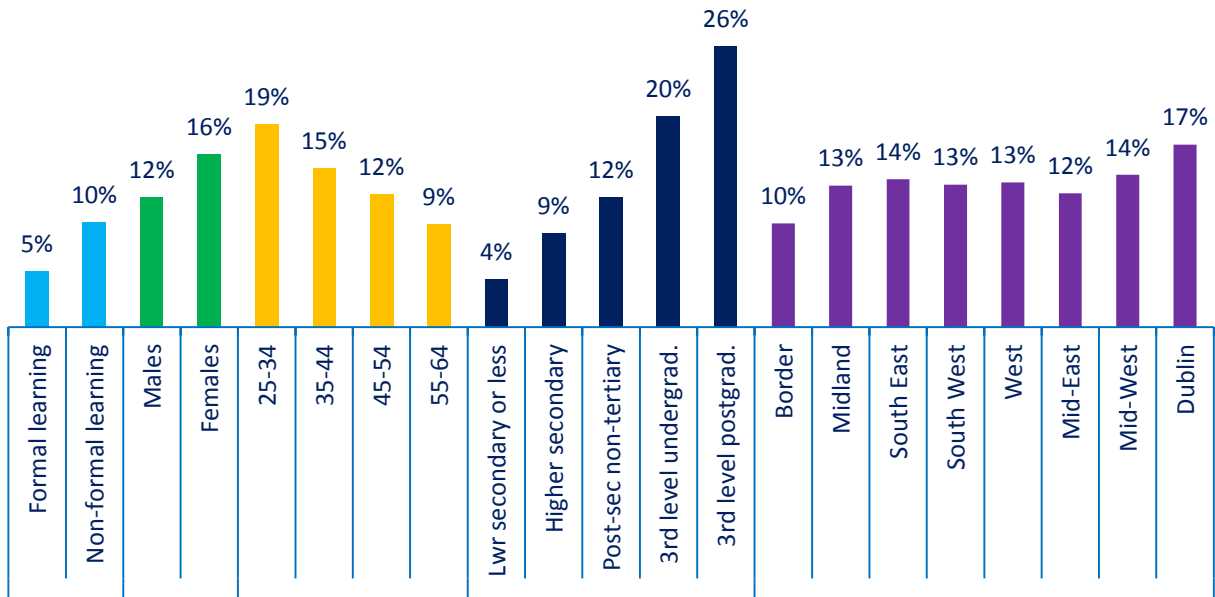


Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO Labour Force Survey data

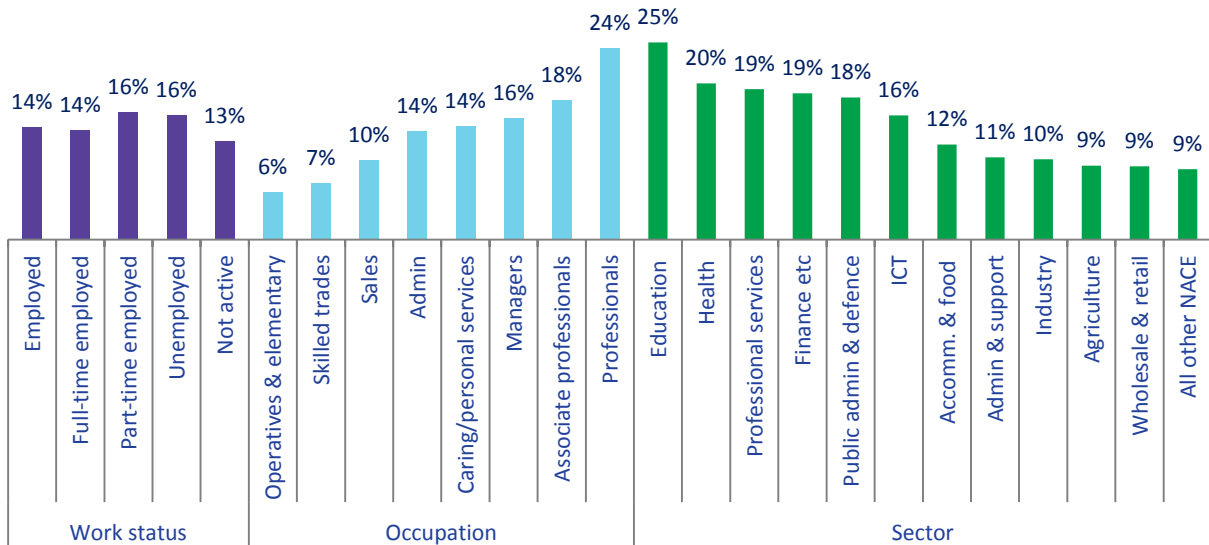
- Most lifelong learning participants are **in employment**
- Of the **economically inactive**, approximately 32,000 (almost a half) classified themselves as students
- Those working in **professional occupations** form by far the largest group amongst the employed who participated in lifelong learning activities
- The highest numbers of lifelong learning participants were working in the health and education sectors

Who was most likely to participate in lifelong learning in quarter 4 2017?

Participation rates by learning type, gender, age group, education level and region



Participation rates by work status, occupational group and sector



Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO Labour Force Survey data

- Those most likely to participate in lifelong learning include 3rd level graduates, younger cohorts and females, each with participation rates above the national average; those living in the Dublin region also have above average participation rates
- Amongst the employed, those working in **professional occupations** and those working in the **health and education sectors** have the highest participation rates

Definitions

In this paper, the terms lifelong learning, formal learning and non-formal learning are used according to Eurostat (the EU statistical agency) definitions:

- Lifelong learning comprises formal, non-formal and informal education and training; however, statistics presented in the CSO's LFS as well as in the Eurostat data do not cover informal learning and the data presented here refers to individuals aged 25-64 years who had engaged in formal and/or non-formal learning activities only
- Formal education corresponds to education and training in the regular system of schools, universities, colleges and other formal educational institutions that normally constitute a continuous 'ladder' of full-time education for children and young people
- Non-formal education and training is defined as any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond to the definition of formal education. It may or may not take place in educational institutions and cater to persons of all ages. It may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills and general culture
- Informal learning activities (not captured in the data) are defined as intentional but less organised and structured than either formal or non-formal learning activities. They may include activities that occur in the family, in the workplace, or local community, among others.

Data issues

In quarter 3 2017, the CSO introduced a new Labour Force Survey (LFS) which replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). This move from QNHS to LFS involved a number of changes in how the survey is carried out, including, among others, the introduction of computer assisted telephone interviewing, a modernised questionnaire, updated population estimates from Census 2016, and revised sample allocation.

A break in series has occurred in the lifelong learning data following these modifications; as a result, it is not possible to accurately compare data for some variables before and after quarter 3 2017.

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