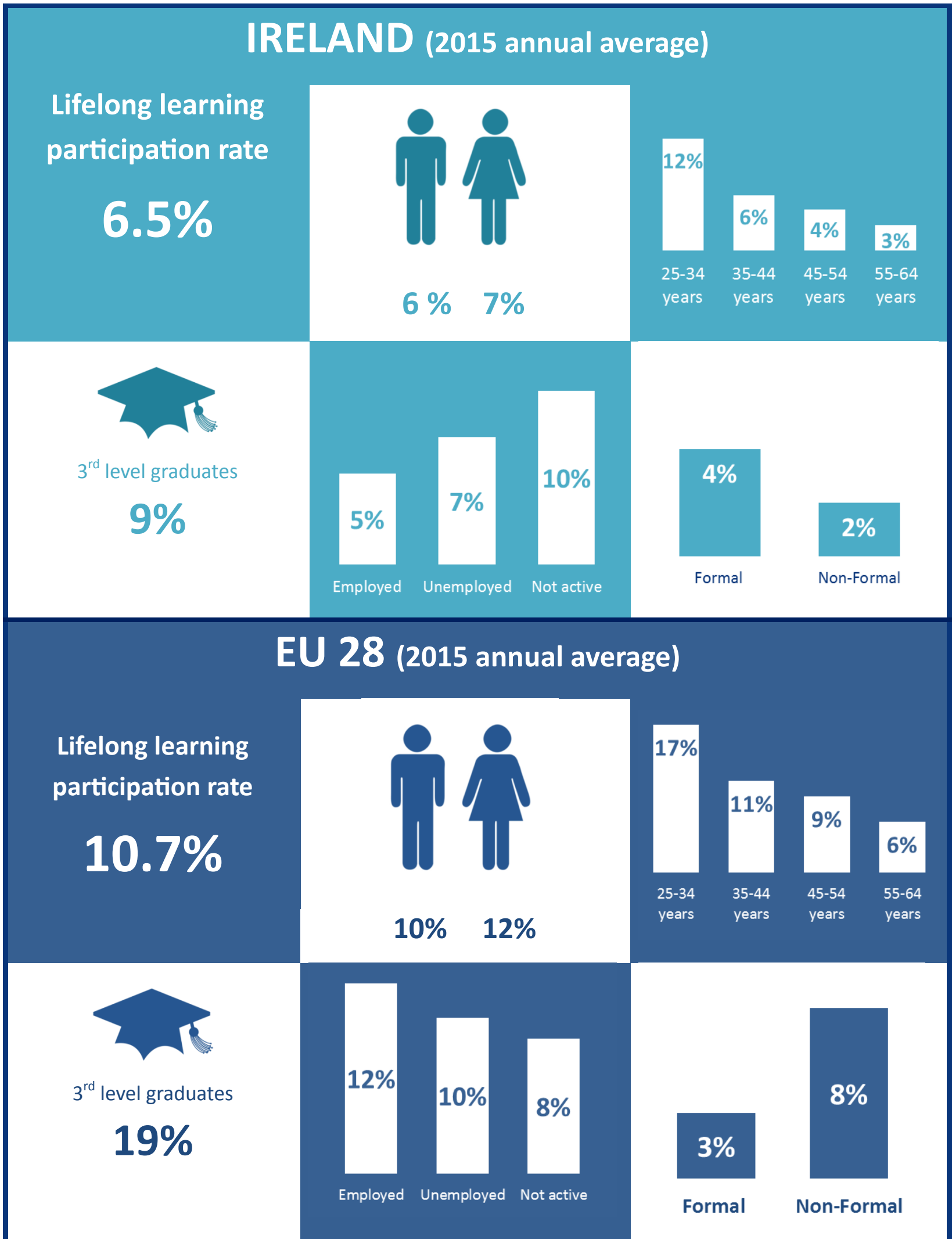


# Lifelong Learning Participation Among Adults

March 2017



Source: Eurostat (last accessed March 2017); data refers to the share of adults aged 25-64 who participated in formal and/or non-formal learning activities. See page 6 for a definition of formal and non-formal learning.



# Lifelong Learning Participation Among Adults in Ireland

## 1. Introduction

One of the key targets set out by the Action Plan for Education (September 2016) includes an ambition to increase Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate to 10% by 2020 and to 15% by 2025. The EU has also set a lifelong learning target of 15% by 2020. This paper aims to monitor Ireland's progress toward these targets; its findings are based on an analysis of two separate but related data sources. First, results from the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) are used to estimate the extent of lifelong learning participation in Ireland and to provide a profile of lifelong learning participants. Secondly, data from the EU's statistical office, Eurostat, is used to show how Ireland compares internationally in terms of lifelong learning participation rates. It is important to note that the two data sets are not directly comparable as the QNHS data is a quarterly figure based on quarter 4 2016, while the Eurostat figure is an annual average with the latest available at the time of writing being 2015.

In this paper, we use the EU measure of lifelong learning: the number and share of adults aged 25-64 years who had participated in formal and/or non-formal learning activities in the preceding four weeks. Further details on this measure are provided on page 6.

### Lifelong learning participation rates in Ireland in quarter 4 2016

- Of the almost 2.5 million adults aged 25-64 years in Ireland in quarter 4 2016, there were **167,100 lifelong learning participants** (Figure 1), giving a **lifelong learning participation rate of just under 7%** (Figure 2)
- Age, education level and employment status were the strongest predictors for lifelong learning participation, with rates significantly above the national average for
  - 25-34 year-olds (Figure 2)
  - third level postgraduate qualification holders (Figure 2)
  - those who are not economically active (e.g. full-time students, those engaged in home duties etc) (Figure 3)

### Changes in Ireland's lifelong learning participation between quarter 4 2012 and quarter 4 2016

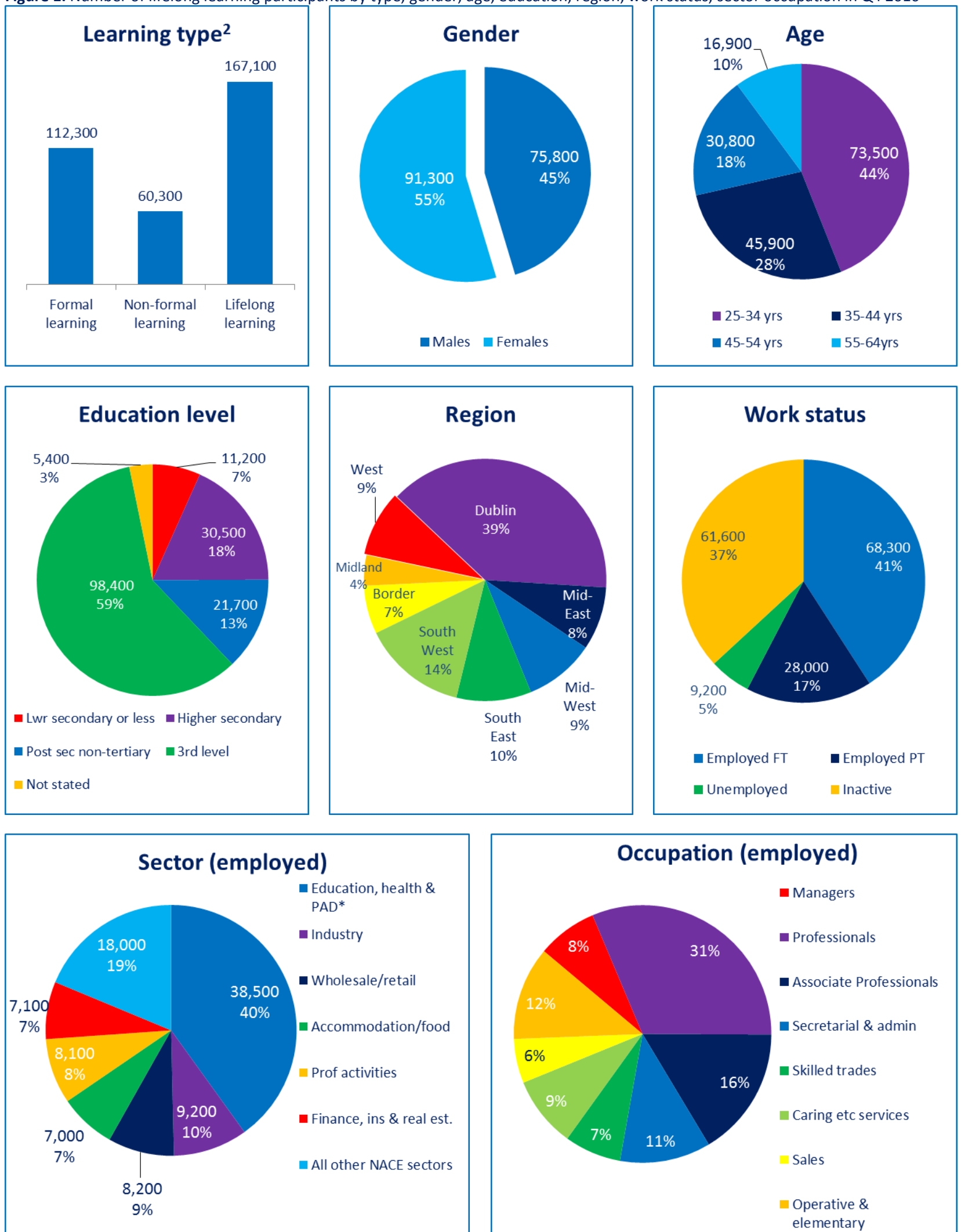
- Lifelong learning participation declined slightly between quarter 4 2012 and quarter 4 2016, going from 8% to almost 7% (Figure 4)
- With the exception of those aged 55-64 years and the unemployed, the **lifelong learning participation rate declined** for most cohorts, regardless of learning type (i.e. formal or non-formal), gender, age, work status or education level

### EU Comparison

- At almost 7% in 2015, Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate was **below the EU 28 average of nearly 11%** and well behind the top performers, Denmark (31%), Sweden (29%) and Finland (25%) (Figure 5)
- Overall, Ireland ranked 20th out of 28 EU countries; this is **a fall of four places** when compared to 2011 (Table 1)
- Ireland **performs comparatively well** when participation in **formal learning** activities is considered, ranking 9<sup>th</sup> overall; this remains unchanged when compared to 2011 (Table 1)

## 2. Who were the lifelong learning participants in Ireland in quarter 4 2016?

**Figure 1.** Number of lifelong learning participants by type, gender, age, education, region, work status, sector occupation in Q4 2016



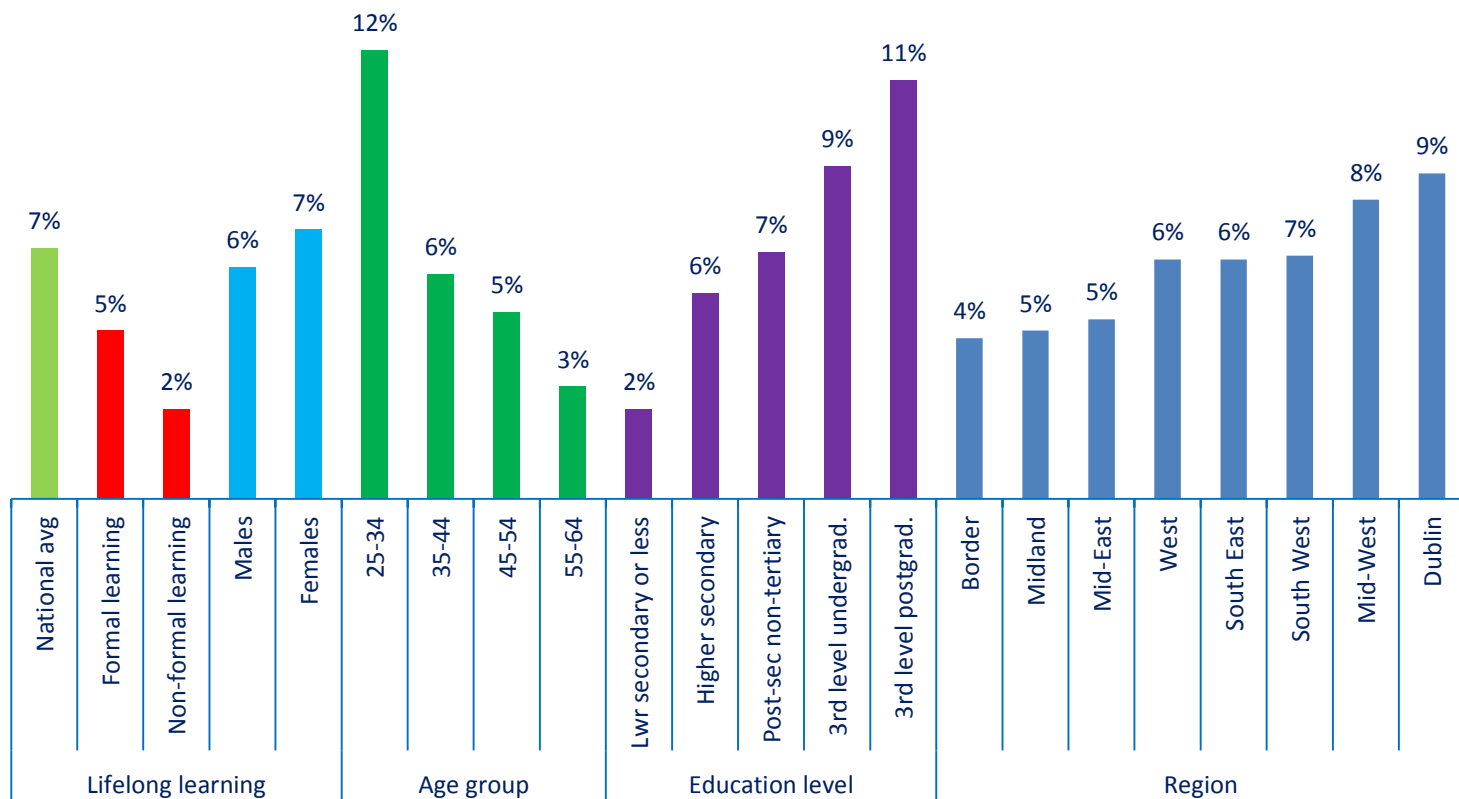
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (QNHS data)

\*PAD: Public administration and defence

<sup>2</sup>A small number of persons participated in both formal and non-formal learning activities and, as a result, the total number of lifelong learning participants is less than the sum of formal and non-formal learning.

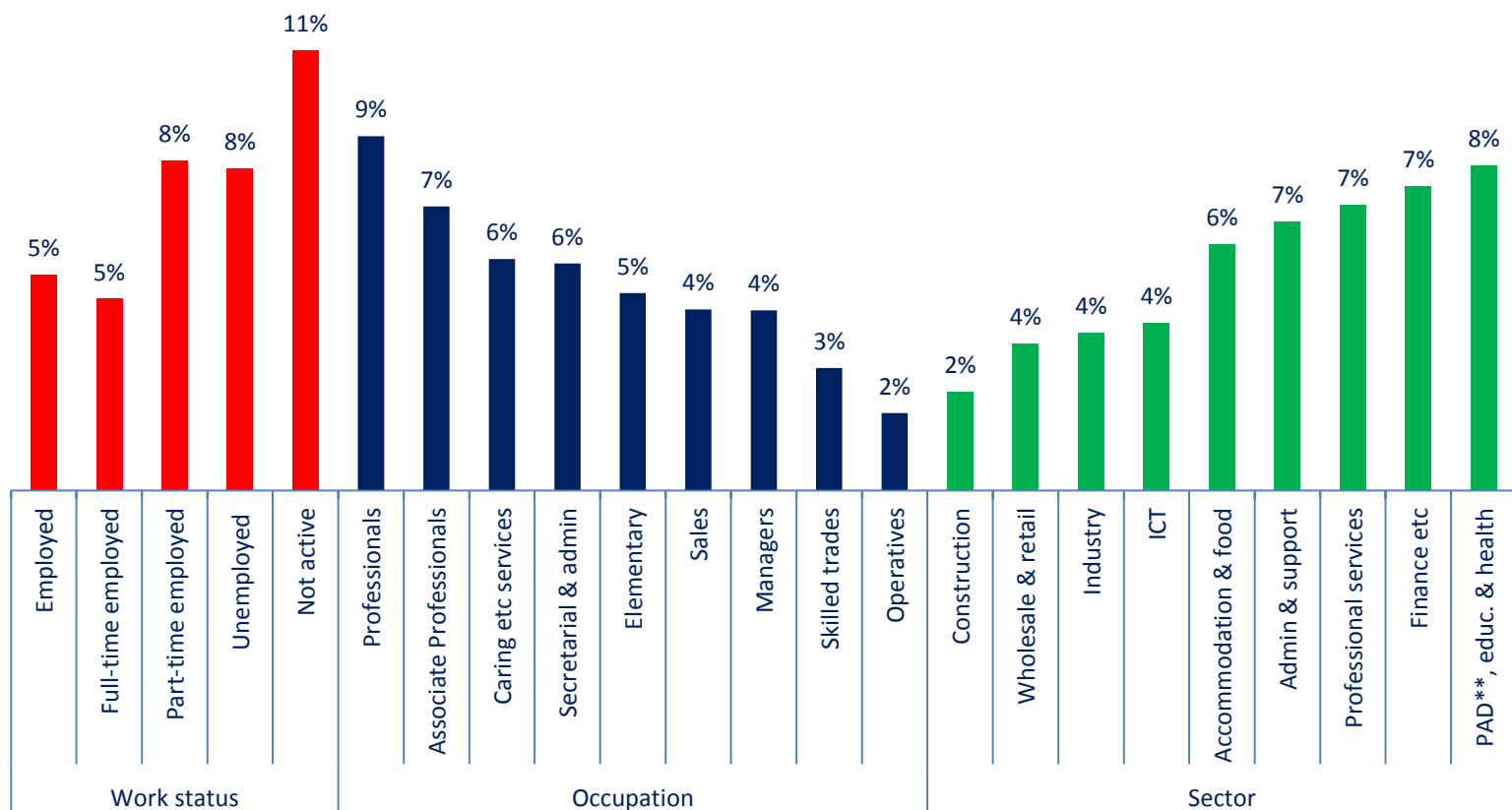
### 3. Who was most likely to participate in lifelong learning activities in quarter 4 2016?

Figure 2. Lifelong learning participation rates by learning type, gender, age, education level and region in quarter 4 2016



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (QNHS data)

Figure 3. Lifelong learning participation rates by work status, sector and occupation (for the employed) in quarter 4 2016

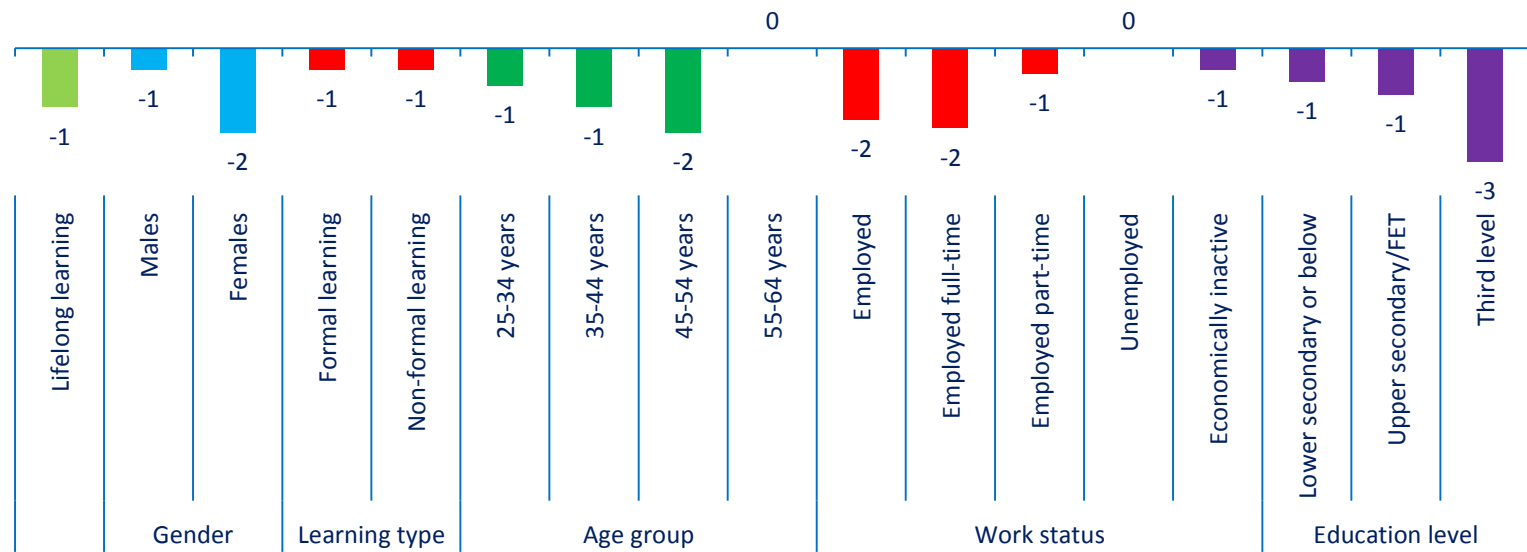


Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (QNHS data)

\*\* PAD – public administration and defence

## 4. What has changed since quarter 4 2012?

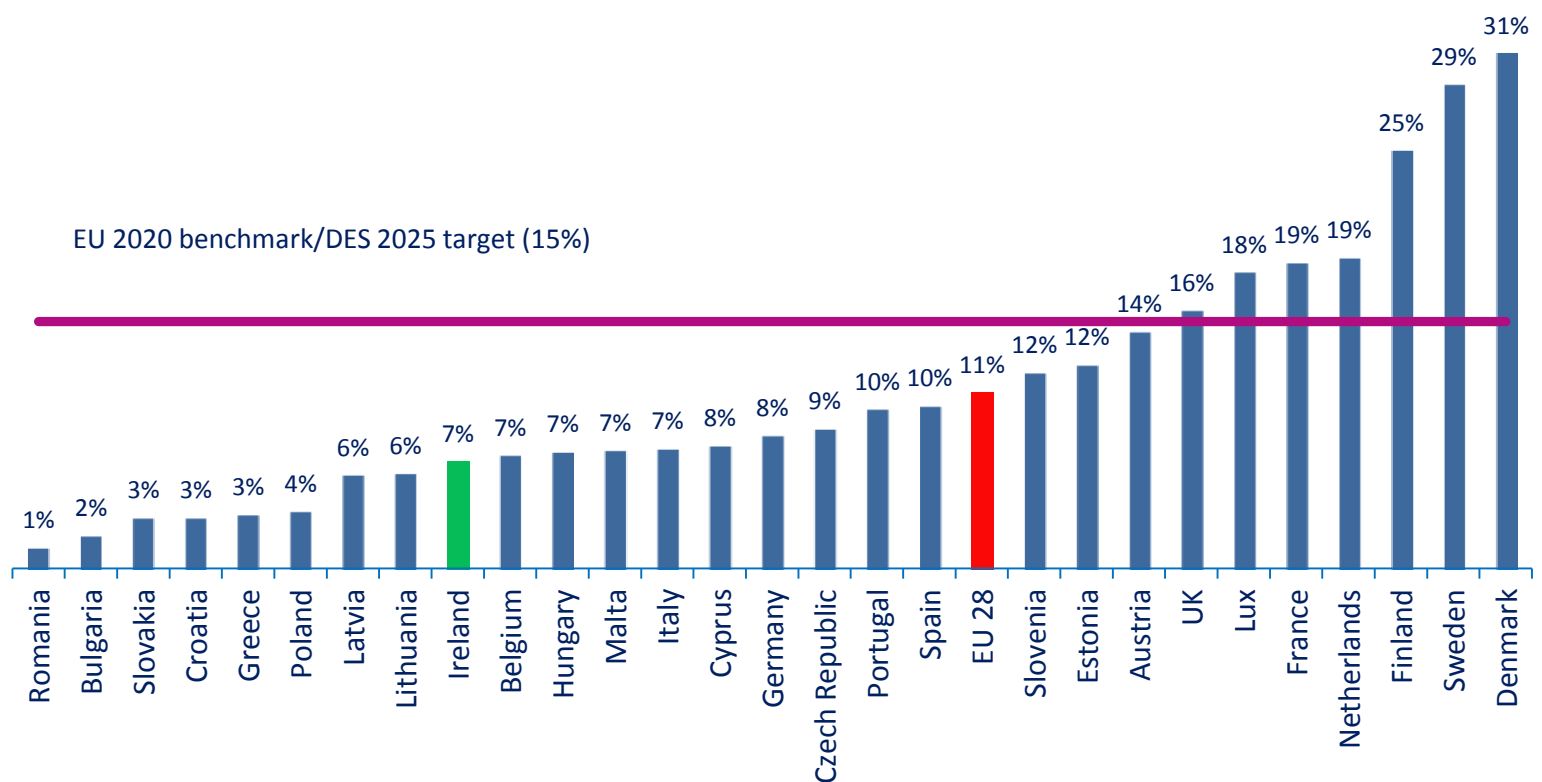
Figure 4. Percentage point change in lifelong learning participation rates, Q4 2012 - Q4 2016



Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of QNHS (CSO) data

## 5. How does Ireland rank amongst EU 28 countries?

Figure 5. Lifelong learning participation rates (%) in EU countries, based on 2015 annual average



Source: Eurostat (last accessed March 2017))

## 6. How has Ireland's EU ranking changed between 2011 and 2015?

**Table 1.** Ireland's ranking among EU countries (based on 2015 annual average) & rank change (compared to 2011)

Indicator		Ireland rank (EU 28) 2015	Rank change (no. of places) compared to 2011
Overall rate	Lifelong learning	20	-4 ↓
Learning type	Formal learning	9	No change
	Non-formal learning	22	-1 ↓
Gender	Males	20	-4 ↓
	Females	21	-5 ↓
Age group	25-34 years	17	+1 ↑
	35-44 years	21	-6 ↓
	45-54 years	<sup>†</sup> 20	-6 ↓
	55-64 years	<sup>†</sup> 21	-6 ↓
Work status	Employed	22	-4 ↓
	Unemployed	<sup>†</sup> 14	-2 ↓
	Economically inactive	7	+3 ↑
Education level	Secondary or below	<sup>†</sup> 16	-2 ↓
	Upper secondary/FET	18	-2 ↓
	Third level	22	-3 ↓

Source: Eurostat (last accessed March 2017)

<sup>†</sup> data unavailable for some countries; rank is out of fewer than 28 countries

## 7. Definitions

Throughout this paper, the terms lifelong learning, formal learning and non-formal learning are used according to Eurostat (and Labour Force Survey) definitions:

- Lifelong learning comprises formal, non-formal and informal education and training; however, statistics presented in the QNHS and Eurostat data do not cover informal learning and the data in this paper refers to the 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.

The data from the QNHS and Eurostat, while derived from the same survey data, are not entirely comparable as the QNHS is a quarterly figure whereas the Eurostat figure is an annual average.

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