

# LIFELONG LEARNING IN IRELAND

## QUARTER 4 2018

June 2019

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

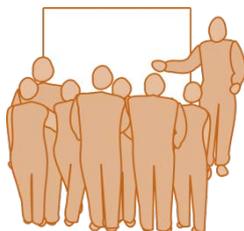
### Formal learning



**131,600 learners**

**5%**

### Non-formal learning



**221,700 learners**

**9%**

National Skills Strategy  
2020 Target

**10%**

2025 Target  
**15%**

Lifelong learning rate  
Quarter 4 2018

**13%**

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 number 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.

## 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. Eurostat (the EU statistical agency) definitions of lifelong learning are as follows:

- Lifelong learning comprises formal, non-formal and informal education and training; however, statistics presented in the CSO's Labour Force Survey 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.

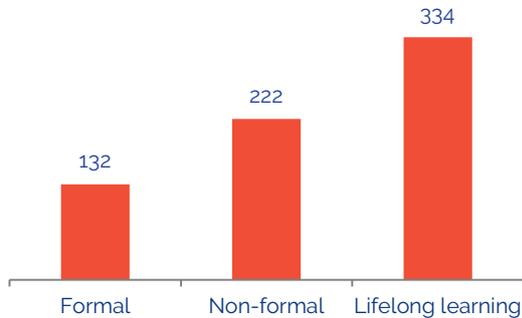
**Timeframe:** this paper reports on lifelong learning participation in Ireland in quarter 4 2018. The EU's statistical agency (Eurostat), however, reports lifelong learning participation rates in terms of annual averages. Therefore, there will be differences between rates reported here and those reported at EU level.

## Key Points

- Of the 2.58 million adults aged 25-64 years in quarter 4 2018, 334,300 had participated in learning activities in the four weeks prior to the survey.
- This amounts to a lifelong learning rate of 13%.
- 131,600 adults had participated in formal learning activities, while 221,700 participated in non-formal learning activities, translating into participation rates of 5% and 9%, 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.)
- Lifelong learning rates increase with education attainment and decline with age
- As measured in the Labour Force Survey, lifelong learning participation in Ireland in quarter 4 2018 exceeded the target set out in the National Skills Strategy for 2020.

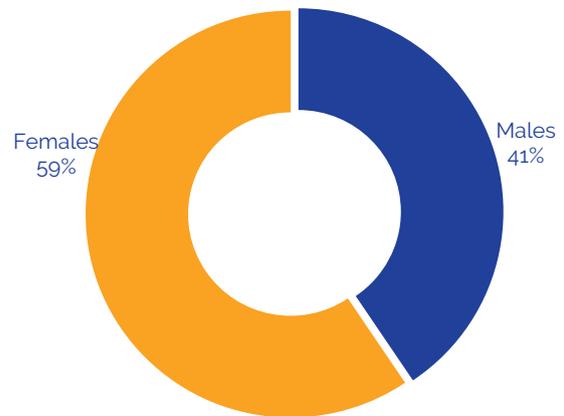
## Lifelong learning in quarter 4 2018: participant profile

Lifelong learning participants (000s) by learning type\*

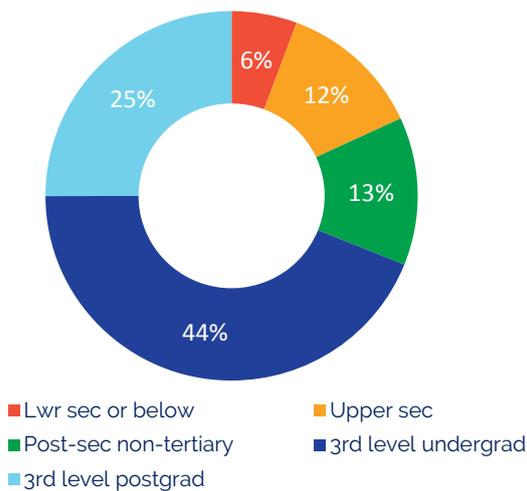


\*Some adults participated in both formal and non-formal learning activities and so total lifelong learning is slightly less than the sum of both learning types

Lifelong learning by gender

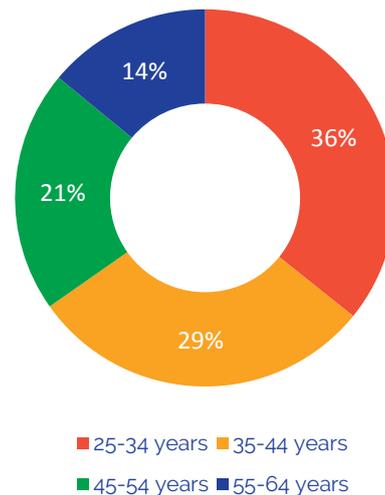


Lifelong learning by participant education level\*



\*Excludes not stated

Lifelong learning participants by age

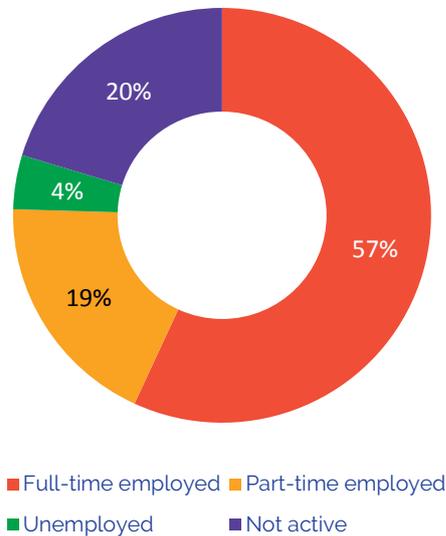


Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO Labour Force Survey data

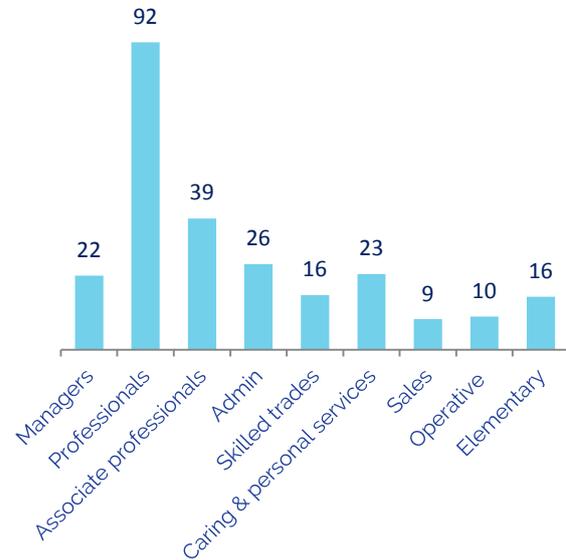
- Of the 2.58 million adults aged 25-64 years in quarter 4 2018, 334,300 had participated in learning activities in the four weeks prior to the survey. 131,600 adults had participated in formal learning activities, while 221,700 participated in non-formal learning activities.
- With 198,700 participants, females made up 59% of all lifelong learning participants.
- Lifelong learning participants tend to be in the younger cohorts, with more than a third being aged between 25 and 34 years.
- More than two thirds (69%) of lifelong learning participants held third level qualifications. for those engaged in formal learning activities (131,700 persons), more than one half (57%) undertook courses at degree level or higher; where a field of learning was stated, 24% of lifelong had studied social science, business & law subjects, 23% who had studied health related subjects and 21% STEM related subjects.

## Lifelong learning participants in Q4 2018: what do they do?

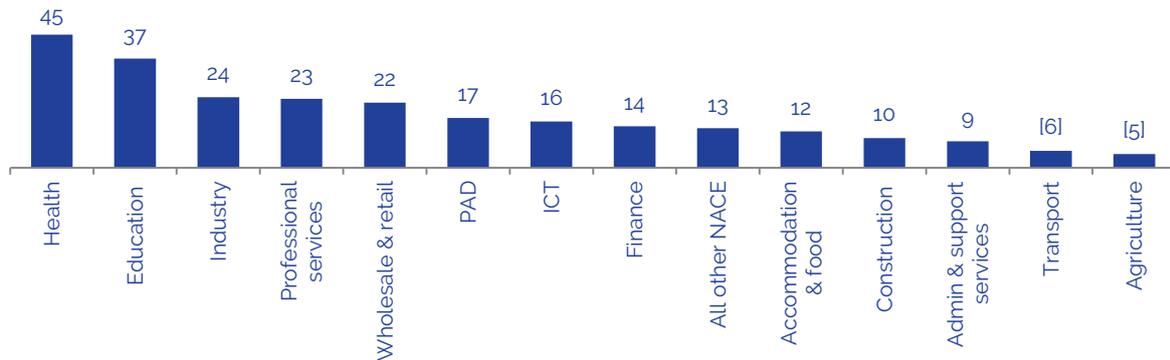
Lifelong learning participants by work status



Lifelong learning participants (000s) by occupational group



Lifelong learning participants (000s) by sector



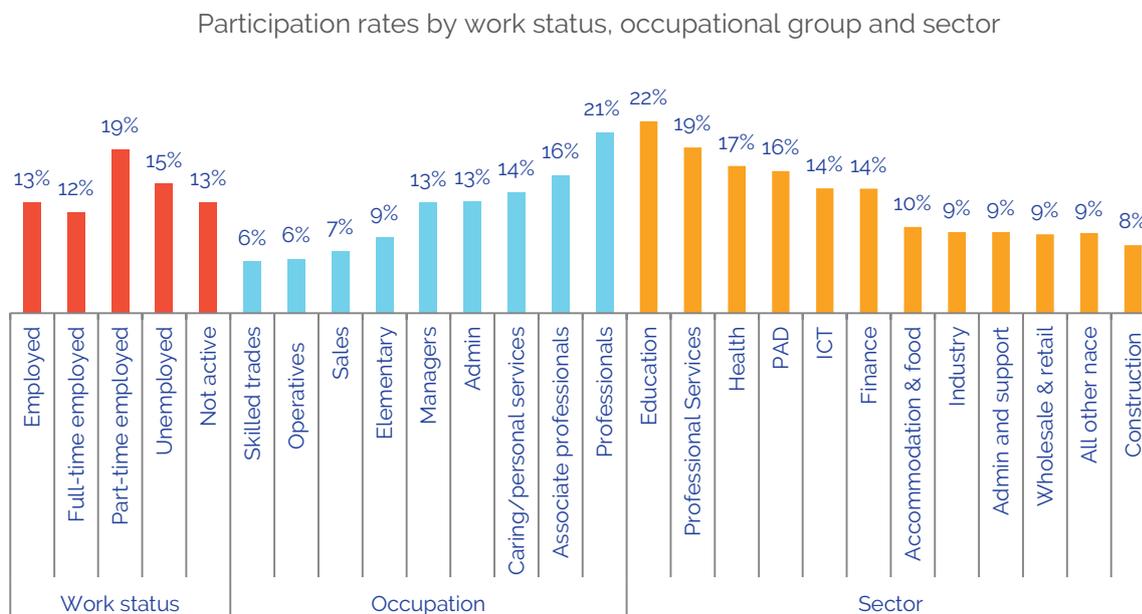
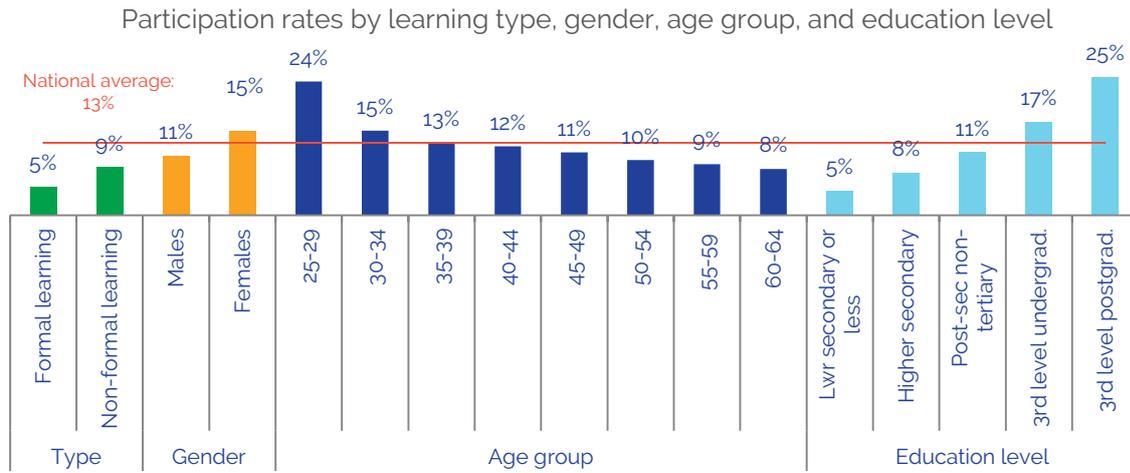
PAD = Public Administration and Defence

[.] values in square brackets are small and should be treated with caution

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

- More than three quarters of lifelong learning participants were **in employment**
- At 92,000, those working **in professional occupations** formed by far the largest group of lifelong learning participants amongst the employed
- One third of all employed lifelong learning participants were working in either the health (almost 45,000 persons) or education (approximately 37,000 persons) sectors

## Who was most likely to participate in lifelong learning in Q4 2018?

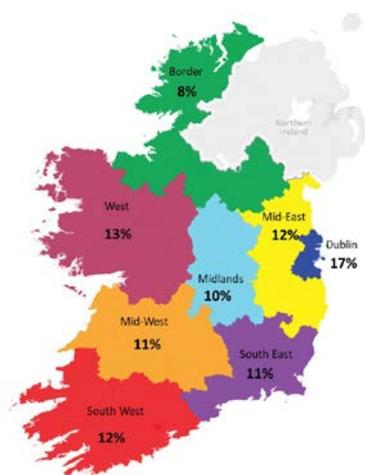


PAD = Public Administration and Defence  
 All other NACE includes here: agriculture, transport, arts and other services

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

- Females were more likely than males to participate in lifelong learning activities. The gender gap was even wider for those in employment (10% for males compared to 16% for females); in contrast for the economically inactive, males (at 14%) had a higher participation rate than females (12%), although the numbers were smaller given that females are more likely to be economically inactive in the first place.
- Lifelong learning rates increase with educational attainment but decrease with age.
- Lifelong learning rates are highest for those working in high skilled occupations (e.g. professionals and associate professionals) or high skilled sectors (e.g. education, professional services and finance).

## Lifelong learning participation rates by region in Q4 2018



- The highest lifelong learning participation rates were in the Dublin (17%) and West (13%) regions
- The lowest rate was in the Border region (8%)

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

## Other ways of measuring adult participation in learning activities

There are a number of different measures of adult engagement in learning activities. The three most prominent measures are detailed below. The rates produced by each of these surveys are not comparable for a number of reasons, most importantly due to

- **Reference period:** for both the CVTS and the AES respondents are asked about their learning activities in the previous 12 months; this compares the previous 4 weeks for LFS respondents.
- **Population:** for both the LFS and the AES, all persons aged 25-64 are included, regardless of employment status and sector employed; the CVTS, in contrast, has no age restrictions but excludes all those employed in small enterprises as well as those working in agriculture, education, and health. It also excludes those still in continuous education (e.g. apprentices).

Survey	Labour Force Survey (LFS)	Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS)	Adult Education Survey (AES)
Population surveyed	Household (LFS sample)	Business economy	Households (General Household Survey sample)
Population included in measure	Population 25-64 years	Enterprises with 10 or more employees	All persons aged 25-64 not in continuous education
Learning type	Formal and non-formal	Training activities (excludes apprentices)	Formal and non-formal
Reference period	Previous 4 weeks	Previous 12 months	Previous 12 months
Frequency conducted	Quarterly & annually	Every 5 years	Every 5 years
Rate (latest available)	13% in quarter 4 2018 12% in 2018 (annual average)	57% (2016)	54% (2017)
Publication (date)	Lifelong Learning in Ireland Quarter 4 2018 (2019)	Continuing Vocational Training 2015 (2017)	Adult Education Survey 2017 (2018)

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