

This is FET Facts and Figures 2021



SOLAS
learning works



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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

**Further
Education
& Training**

A Report by the
Data Analytics Unit in SOLAS
June 2023

Authors

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All data is sourced from the Programme and Learner Support Systems (PLSS) database. PLSS collects and processes the personal data of the FET learners who are enrolled in SOLAS funded programmes. This report excludes apprenticeship and eCollege provision.

The Data Analytics Unit would like to acknowledge the assistance of the ETB staff involved in submitting data to SOLAS.

FET Statistics

Enrolments

144,160



Learner Completions

102,475



Learner Certified Completions

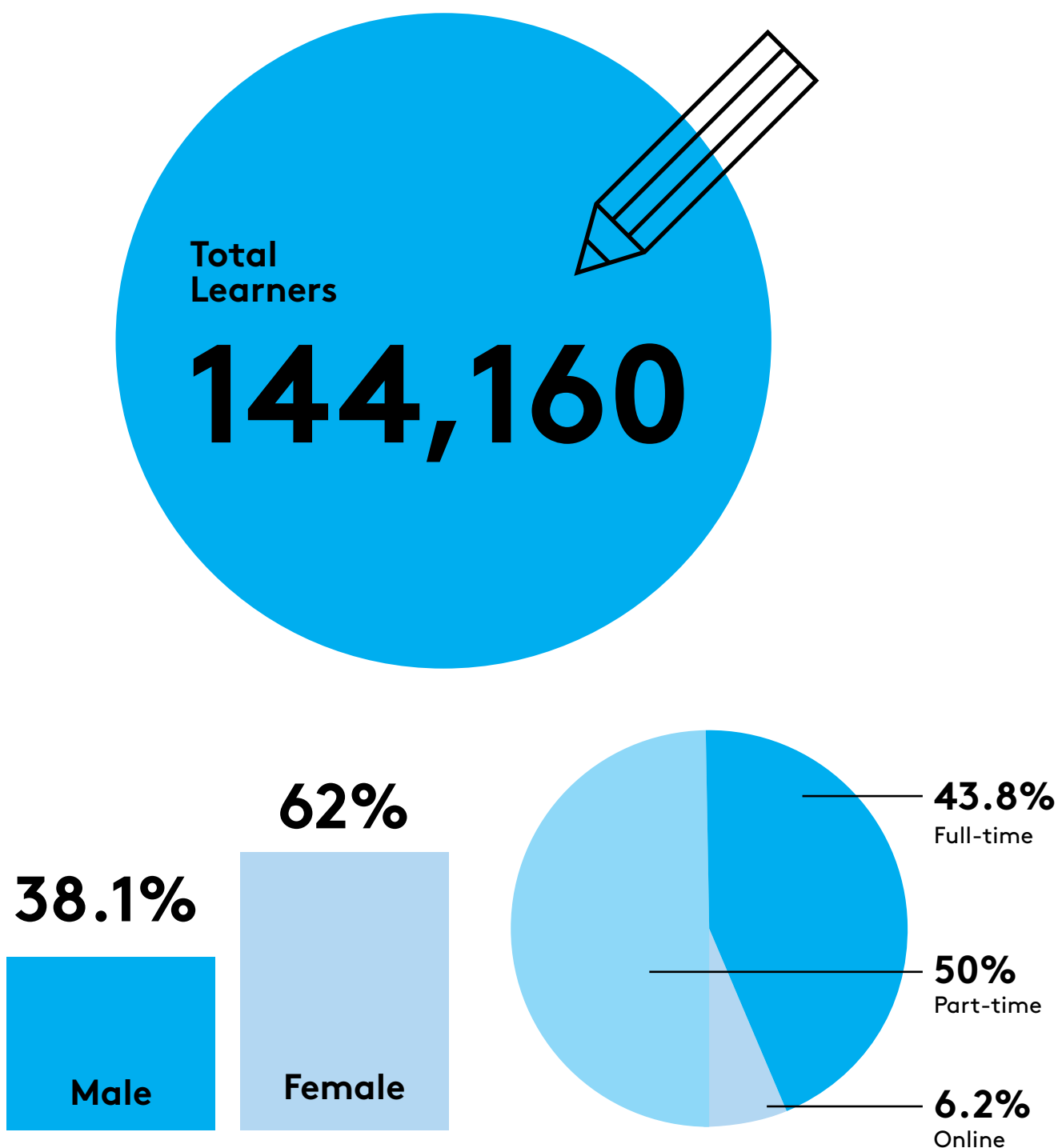
72,562

In 2021, 144,160 unique learners were enrolled in FET courses. Of these enrolments, 102,475 learners partially or fully completed their course(s). Of the 102,475 learner completions, 72,562 of these learner completions were certified.

Enrolments

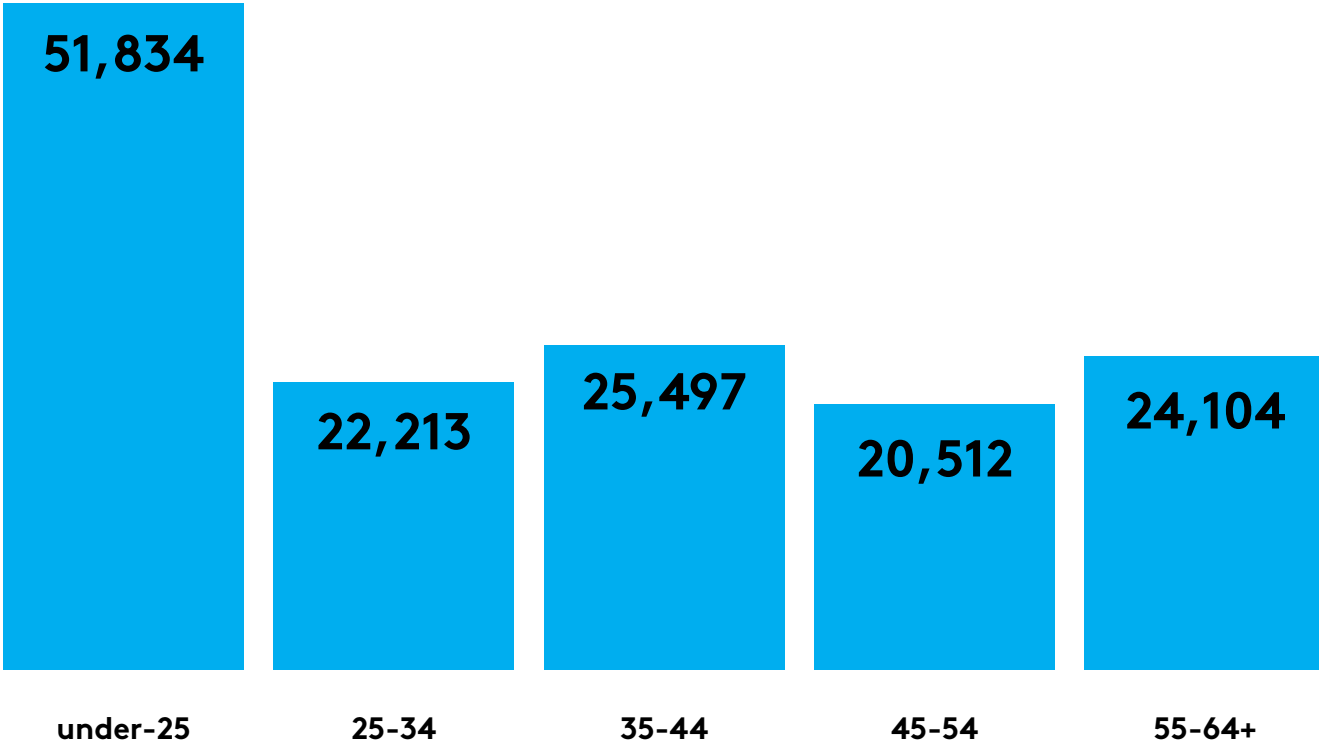


Enrolments



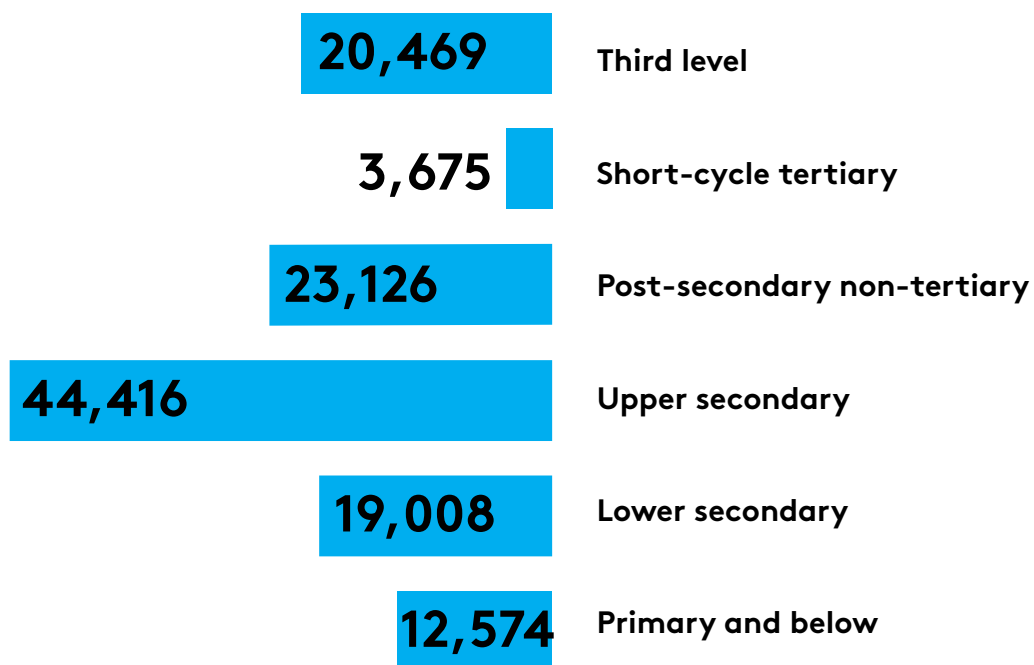
In 2021, there were 144,160 learner enrolments. Of these learner enrolments, 62% were female and 38.1% were male. The distribution of enrolments was higher among part-time courses (50%), than full-time courses (43.8%), with a small percentage (6.2%) also undertaking online courses.

Start Age



Enrolments were primarily concentrated among the under-25s, representing over one third of all enrolments in 2021.

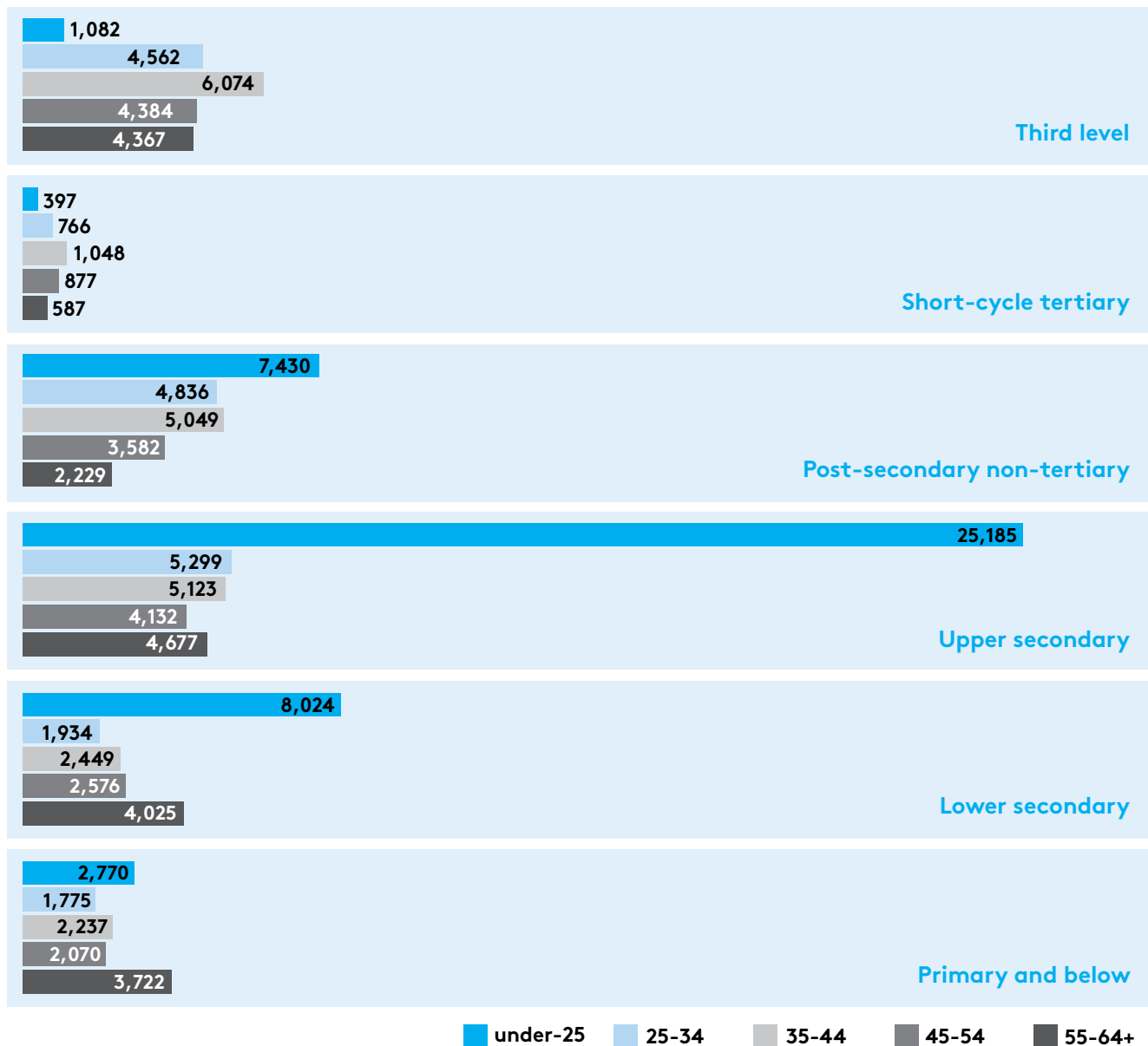
Highest Level of Formal Education¹



In 2021, 31,582 (25.6%) of learners had a lower secondary education or below when enrolling in a FET course, whereas 44,416 (36%) learners had an upper secondary education. The figure also shows that 23,126 (18.8%) of learners had a post-secondary non-tertiary education, an education group primarily comprised of individuals enrolled in FET level 4-6 courses (e.g. Post Leaving Certificate and Back to Education Initiative). In addition, the figure shows that 3,675 (3%) learners had a short-cycle tertiary education and 20,469 (16.6%) learners had a third level degree education.

¹ It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and includes only those cases where previous levels of education were captured.

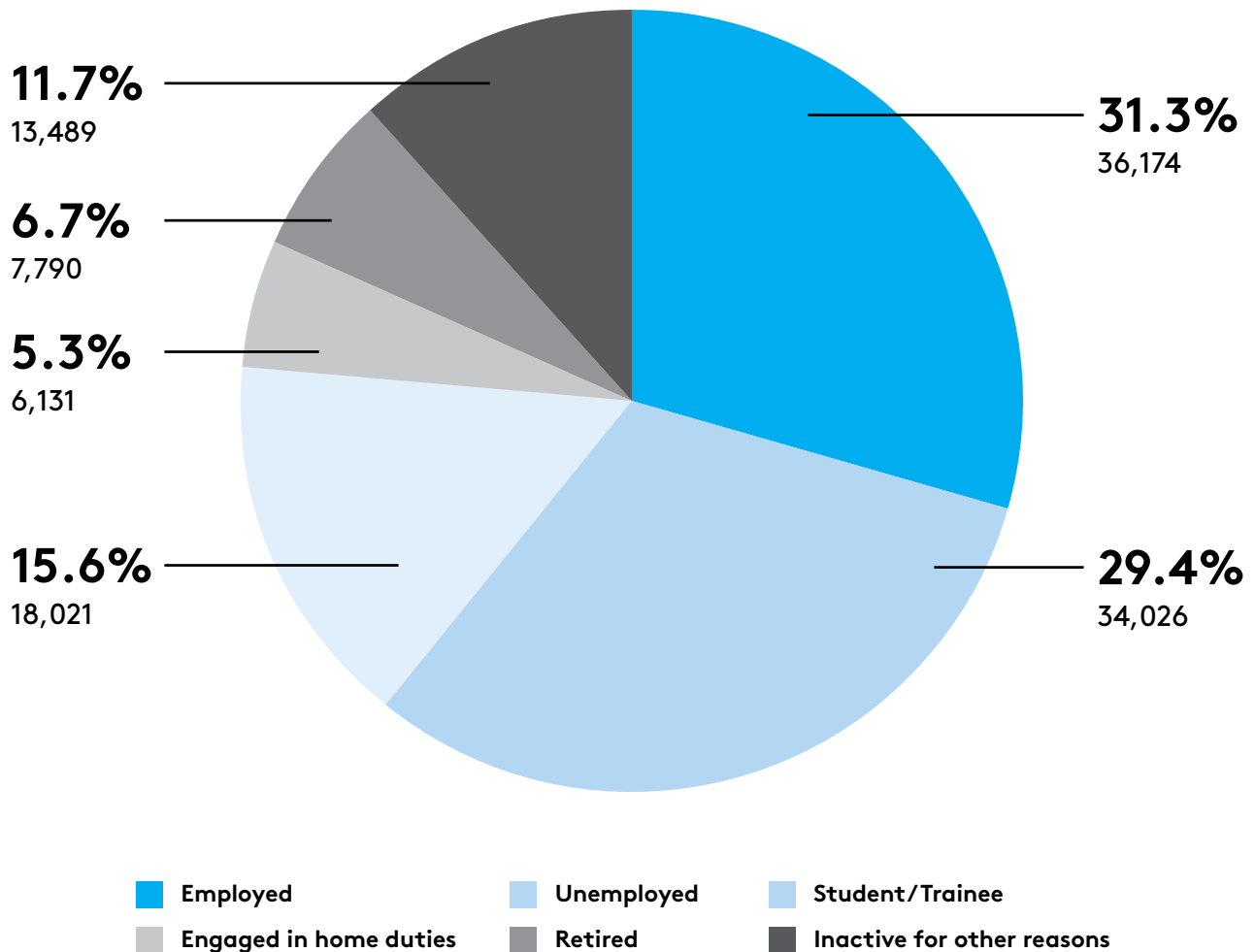
Highest Level of Formal Education by Start Age²



The under-25 age group had the highest concentration among lower secondary, upper secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary levels of education prior to enrolment, whereas the 55-64+ age group had the highest concentration among those learners with primary and below education. For short-cycle tertiary non-degree education and third level degree education, the age groups were distributed relatively evenly, with the exception of the under-25 age group among those learners with a third level degree education.

² It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and includes only those cases where previous levels of education and age were captured.

Principal Economic Status³

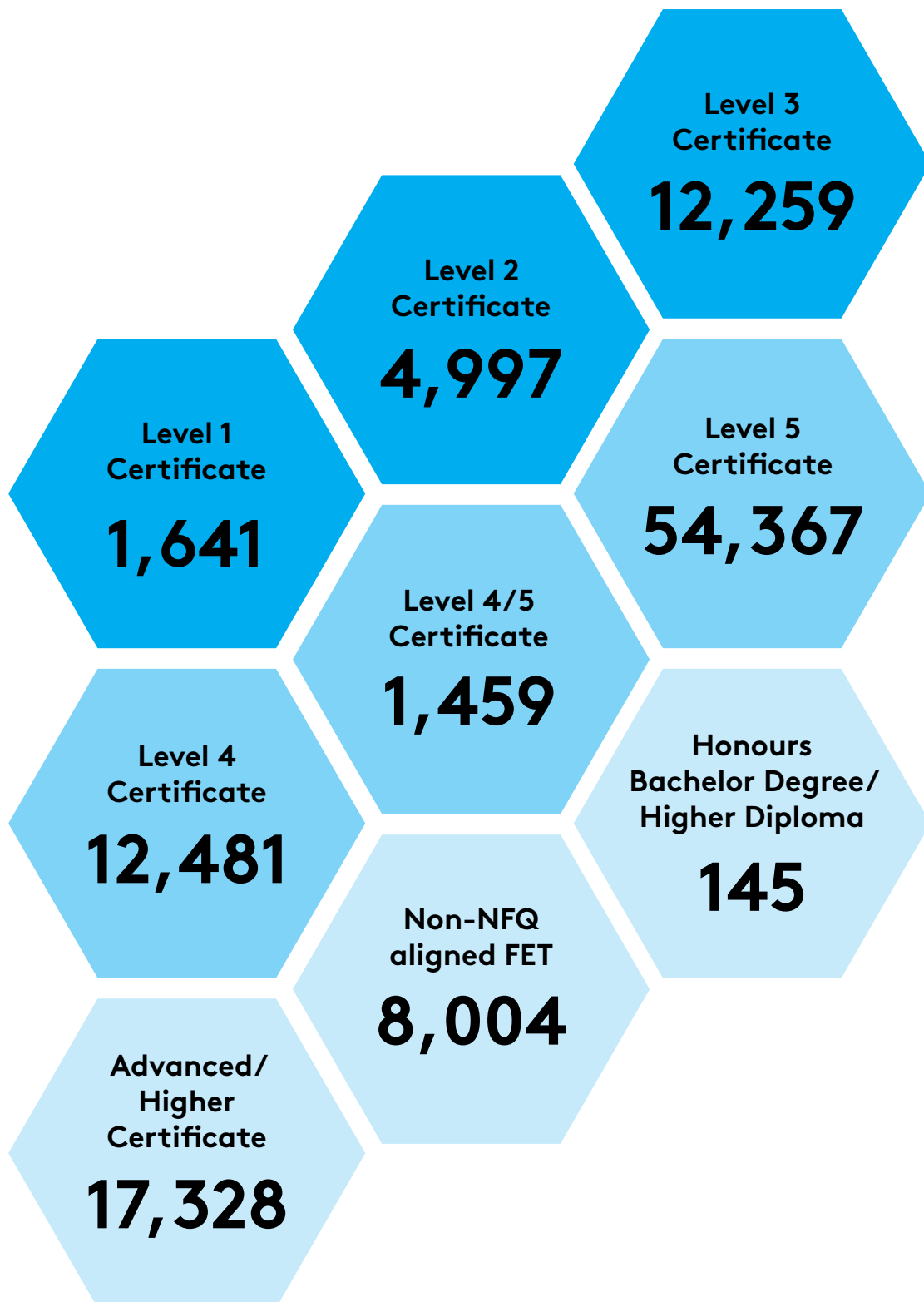


In 2021, 29.4% of learners were unemployed prior to enrolment, while 31.3% were employed. The remaining 39.3% of learners were inactive prior to enrolment.

Of those learners who were unemployed, **52.9% were long-term unemployed.**⁴

³ It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and includes only those cases where previous principal economic status was captured. The principal economic status response rate for learner enrolments was 80.2%.
⁴ It should be noted that this only captures those cases where the previous start date of principal economic status was captured.

Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or Equivalent⁵



⁵ This excludes learners enrolled in courses that do not lead to an award through a recognised awarding body.

Programme Category

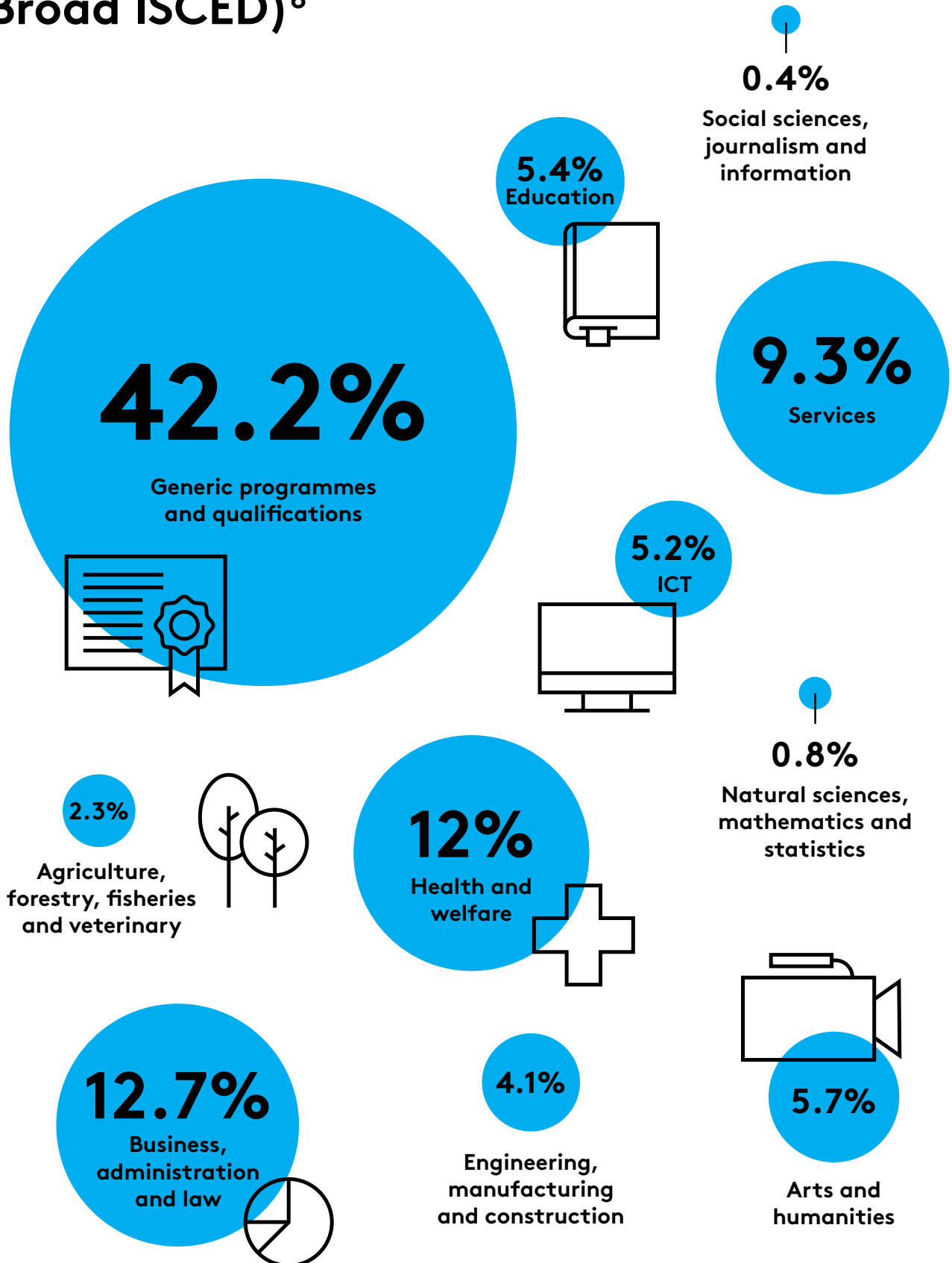
	Programme Category ⁶	Learners
Full-time	Blended Training	1,273
	Bridging and Foundation Training	336
	Community Training Centres	2,082
	Justice Workshop	166
	Local Training Initiatives	1,854
	PLC ⁷	42,817
	Specialist Training Providers	2,757
	Specific Skills Training	8,470
	Traineeship Employed	1,547
	Traineeship Training	3,093
	VTOS Core	3,425
	Youthreach	3,835
Part-time	Adult Literacy Groups	18,020
	BTEI Groups	14,727
	Community Education	22,278
	ESOL	9,095
	Evening Training	5,431
	FET Cooperation Hours	2,067
	FET Pathways from School	326
	ITABE	965
	Libraries Training	34
	Other Funding	3,264
	Recognition of Prior Learning	239
	Refugee Resettlement	553
	Skills for Work	3,167
	Voluntary Literacy Tuition	98
Part-time & Full-time	Skills to Advance	8,872

Among full-time programmes, enrolments were concentrated among Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, Specific Skills Training and Youthreach programmes. For part-time programmes, enrolments were concentrated among Community Education, Adult Literacy Groups, and BTEI Groups. In addition, there were 8,872 learners enrolled in the mixed, full-time and part-time, programme Skills to Advance.

⁶ Learners here are unique within programmes, but not necessarily across programmes.

⁷ PLC courses run on an academic year, whereas this figure includes two groups of starters from two academic years. Therefore, this figure for PLC courses is higher than that of a normal academic year.

Field of Study (Broad ISCED)⁸



⁸ Field of study is defined according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

Field of study (Broad ISCED)	Examples of courses
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	Animal care
	Horticulture
Arts and humanities	Art, craft and design
	Film and TV production
Business, administration and law	Business studies
	Office administration
Education	Early childhood care and education
	Special needs assisting
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Engineering technology
	Welding
Generic programmes and qualifications	Arts and crafts Employability skills
	Employability skills
	ESOL English language
	Health and wellbeing
ICT	Computer science
	Information and communications technology
Health and welfare	Infection, prevention and control
	Nursing studies
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	Applied science/laboratory techniques
	Pre-university science
Services	Hotel and restaurant skills
	Sports, recreation and exercise
Social sciences, journalism and information	Cultural and heritage studies
	Journalism for the digital age

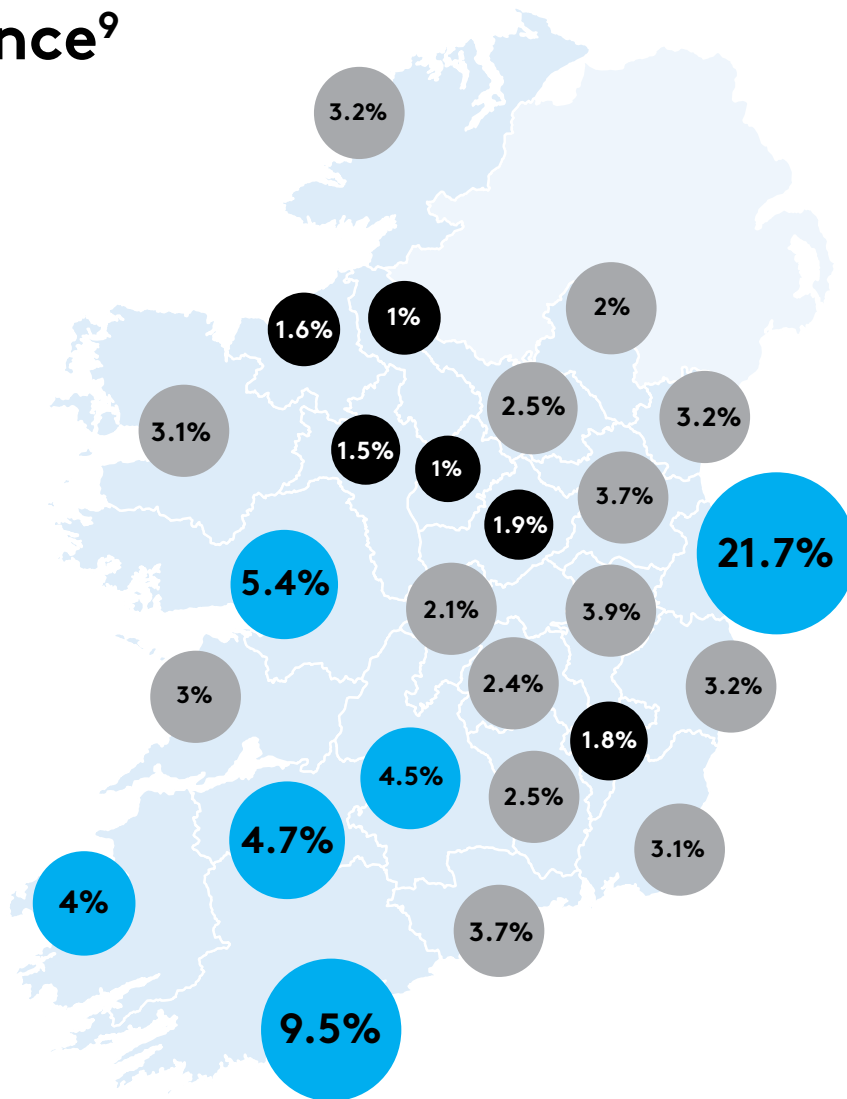
Field of Study (Broad ISCED) by Delivery Type

	Full-time	Part-time	Online	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2,484	847	0	3,331
Arts and humanities	7,595	632	0	8,227
Business, administration and law	9,156	5,495	3,586	18,237
Education	3,471	4,011	307	7,789
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	3,983	1,770	132	5,885
Generic programmes and qualifications	9,983	48,642	2,171	60,796
Health and welfare	11,529	5,350	444	17,323
ICT	3,505	2,075	1,881	7,461
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	1,124	14	20	1,158
Services	9,874	3,127	453	13,454
Social sciences, journalism and information	431	68	0	499
Total	63,135	72,031	8,994	144,160

Overall, enrolments were primarily concentrated among the generic programmes and qualifications ISCED field of study, representing close to half (42.2%) of all enrolments in 2021. This was followed by business, administration and law (12.7%), health and welfare (12%), and services (9.3%).

For full-time learner enrolments, health and welfare and generic programmes and qualifications had the highest numbers of learners. In addition, services and business, administration and law also had high numbers of full-time enrolments. For part-time enrolments, generic programmes and qualifications had the highest numbers of learners. This was followed by business, administration and law, health and welfare and education. Among online enrolments, business, administration and law had the highest number of learners. This was followed by generic programmes and qualifications and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

County of Residence⁹

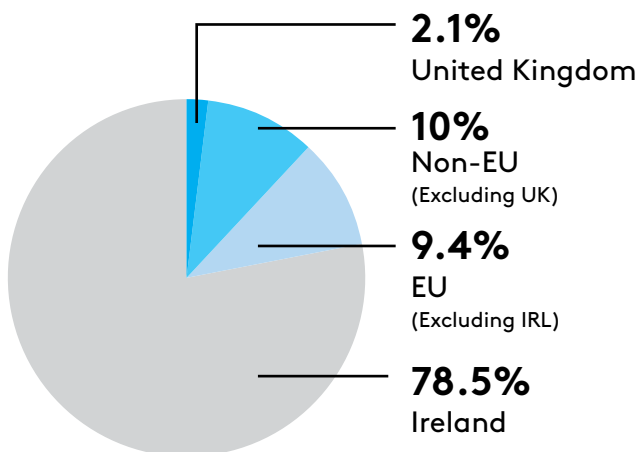
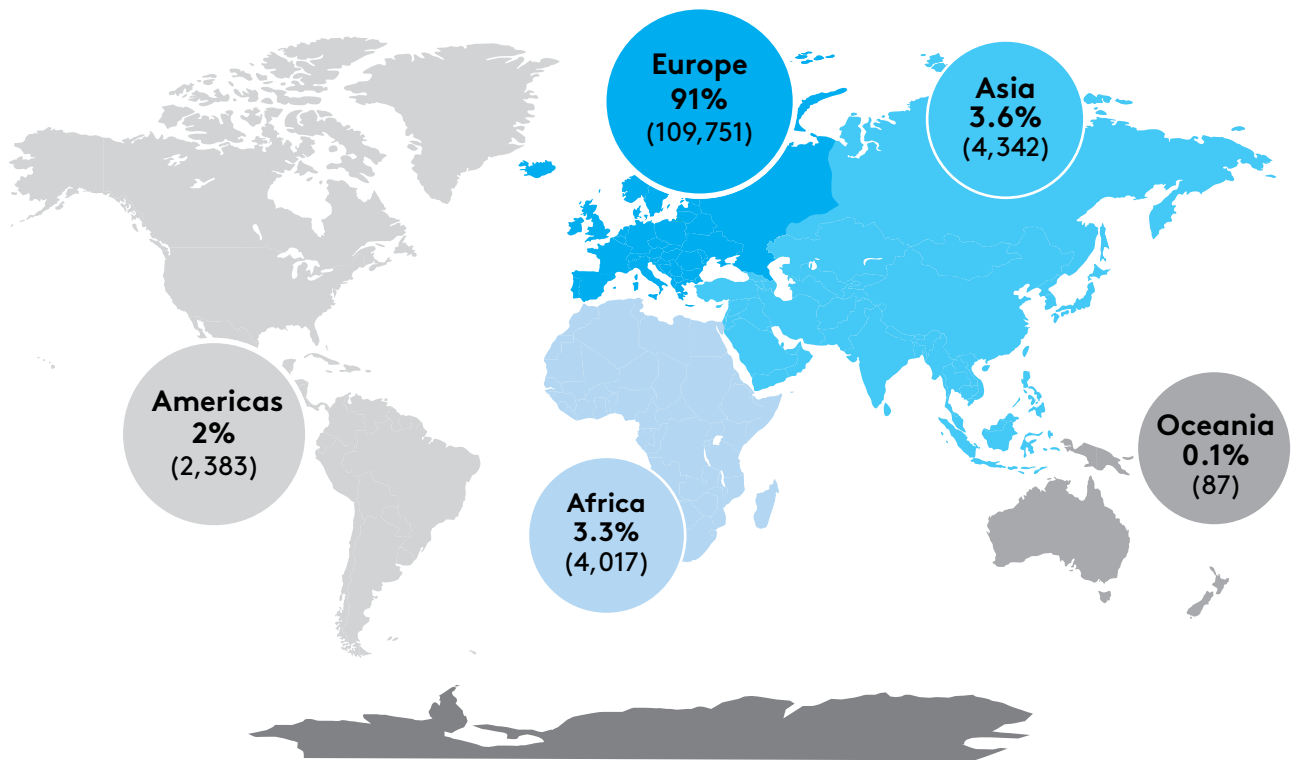


Carlow	2,401	1.8%	Longford	1,420	1%
Cavan	3,467	2.5%	Louth	4,369	3.2%
Clare	4,129	3%	Mayo	4,252	3.1%
Cork	13,064	9.5%	Meath	5,034	3.7%
Donegal	4,411	3.2%	Monaghan	2,758	2%
Dublin	29,757	21.7%	Offaly	2,918	2.1%
Galway	7,419	5.4%	Roscommon	2,052	1.5%
Kerry	5,510	4%	Sligo	2,177	1.6%
Kildare	5,314	3.9%	Tipperary	6,134	4.5%
Kilkenny	3,379	2.5%	Waterford	5,074	3.7%
Laois	3,347	2.4%	Westmeath	2,552	1.9%
Leitrim	1,346	1%	Wexford	4,218	3.1%
Limerick	6,494	4.7%	Wicklow	4,349	3.2%
Total				137,345	100%

⁹ It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and excludes non-responses, unknown responses and those learners with a county of residence in Northern Ireland.

Nationality¹⁰

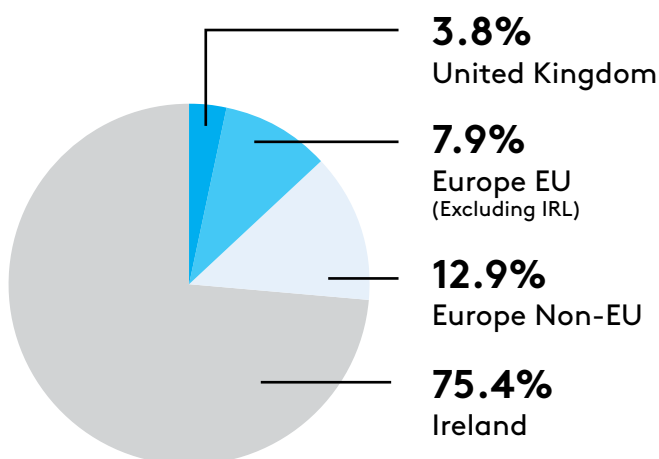
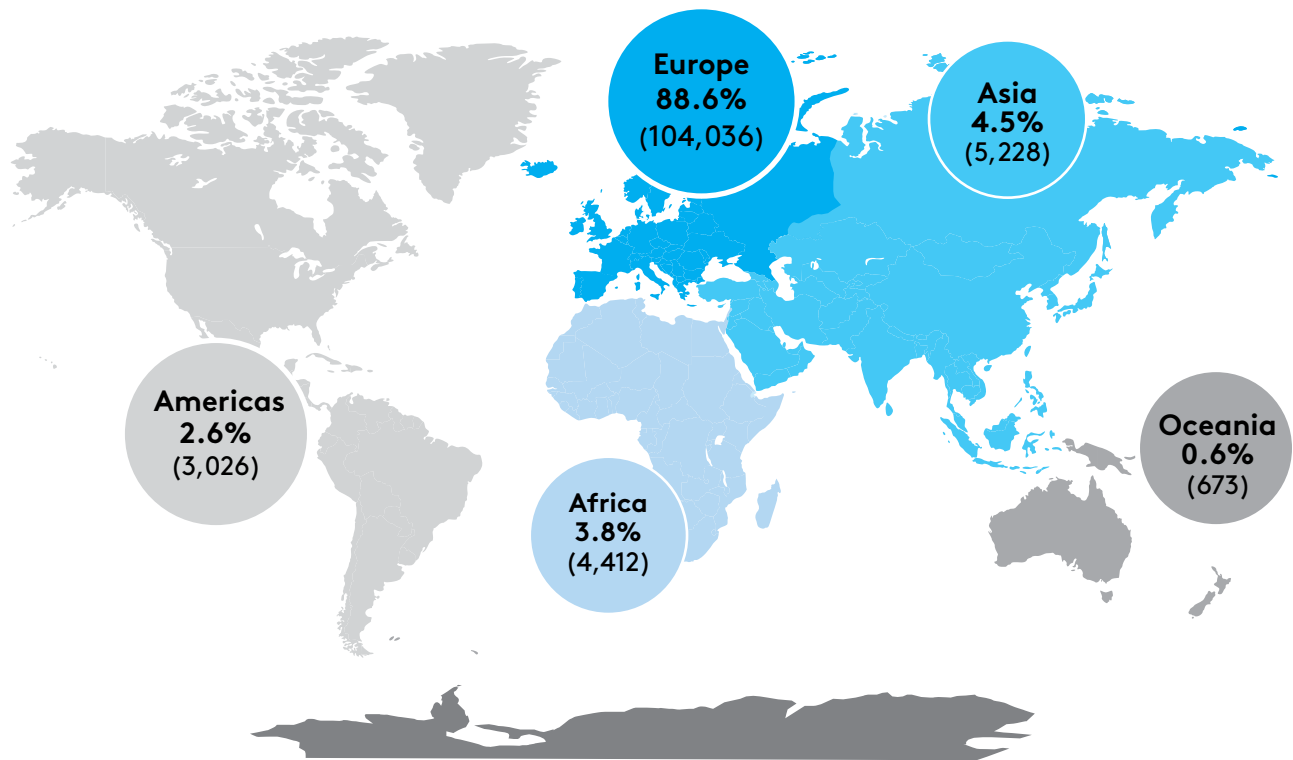
In 2021, there were **179 different** nationalities enrolled in FET.



The highest percentage of learner enrolments were nationals of Europe (91%). This was followed by Asia (3.6%), Africa (3.3%), the Americas (2%) and Oceania (0.1%). The majority of unique learners were nationals of Ireland (78.5%), followed by the EU (9.4%), the Non-EU (10%) and the United Kingdom (2.1%).

¹⁰ It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and includes only those cases where nationality was captured.

Country of birth¹¹



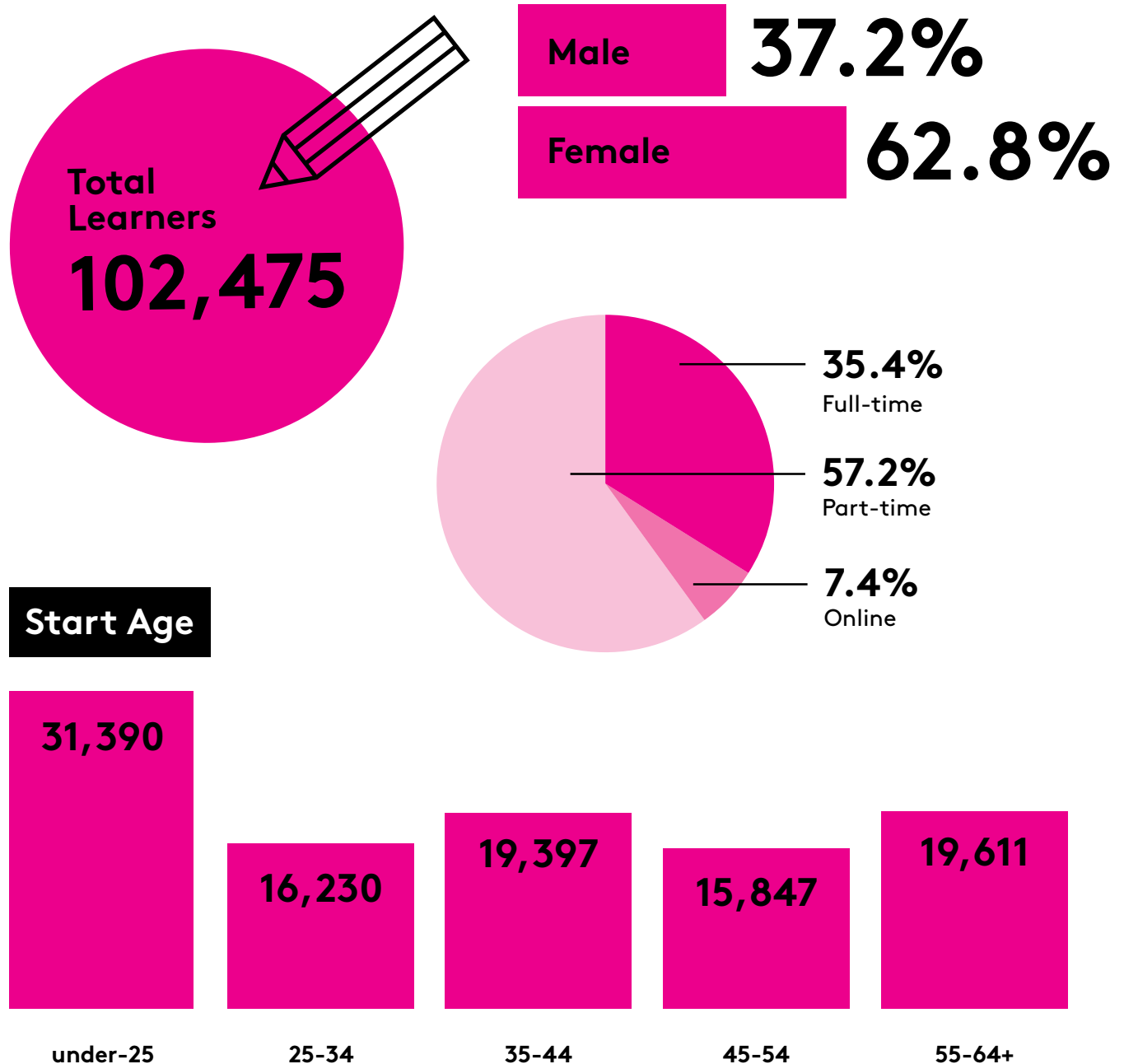
The highest percentage of unique learner enrolments were born in Europe (88.6%). This was followed by Asia (4.5%), Africa (3.8%), the Americas (2.6%), and Oceania (0.6%). The majority of learners were born in Ireland (75.4%), followed by Europe Non-EU (12.9%), Europe EU (7.9%) and the United Kingdom (3.8%).

¹¹ It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and includes only those cases where country of birth was captured.

Completions

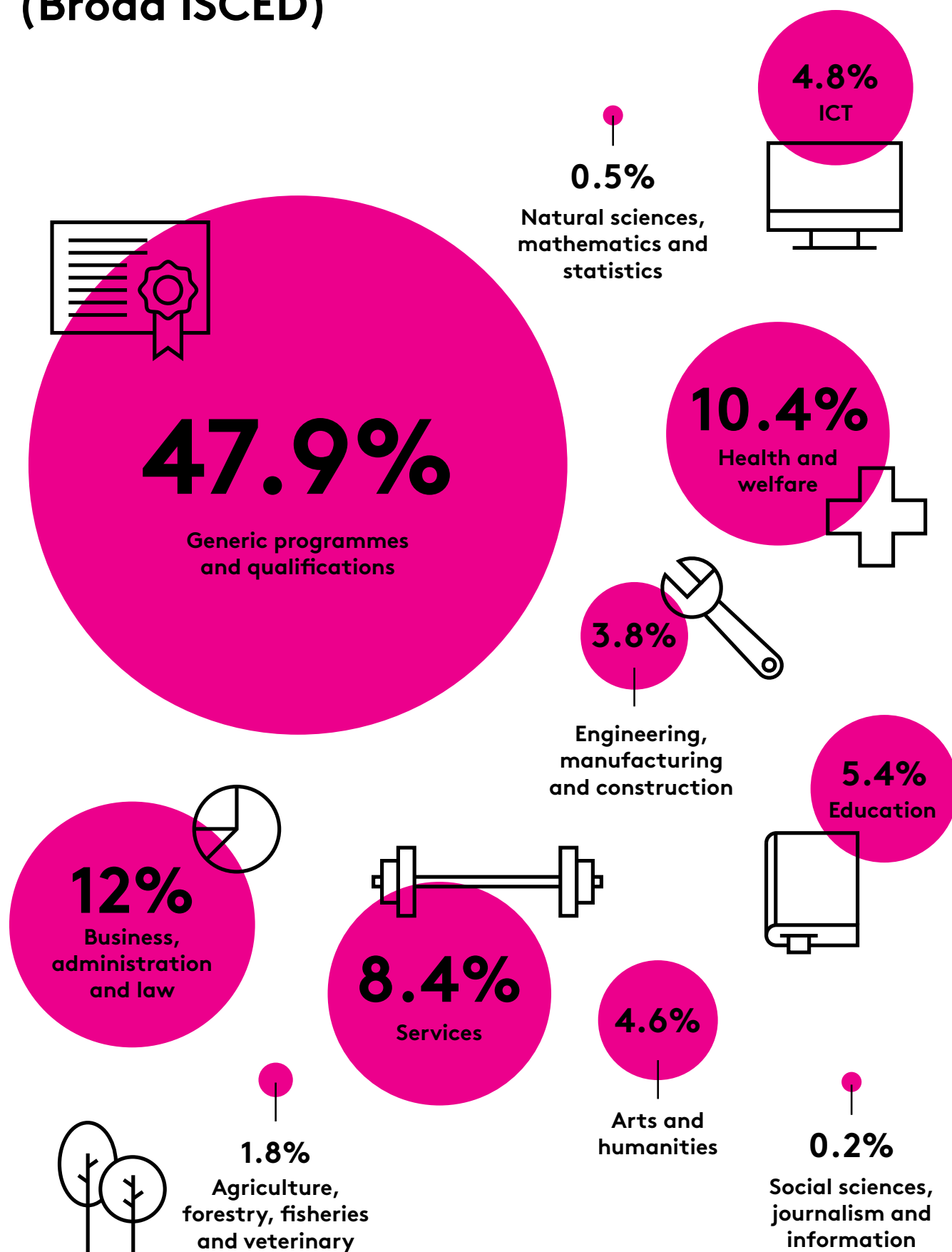


Completions



In 2021, there were 102,475 learner completions. Of these learner completions, 62.8% were female and 37.2% were male. The distribution of completions was higher among part-time courses (57.2%), than full-time courses (35.4%), with a small percentage (7.4%) completing online courses. Approximately half of all completions were among the under-25 and 55-64+ age groups.

Field of Study (Broad ISCED)



Field of Study (Broad ISCED)	Examples of courses
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	Animal care
	Horticulture
Arts and humanities	Art, craft and design
	Film and TV production
Business, administration and law	Business studies
	Office administration
Education	Early childhood care and education
	Special needs assisting
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Engineering technology
	Welding
Generic programmes and qualifications	Arts and crafts
	Employability skills
	ESOL English language
	Health and wellbeing
Health and welfare	Infection, prevention and control
	Nursing studies
ICT	Computer science
	Information and communications technology
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	Applied science/laboratory techniques
	Pre-university science
Services	Hotel and restaurant skills
	Sports, recreation and exercise
Social sciences, journalism and information	Cultural and heritage studies
	Journalism for the digital age

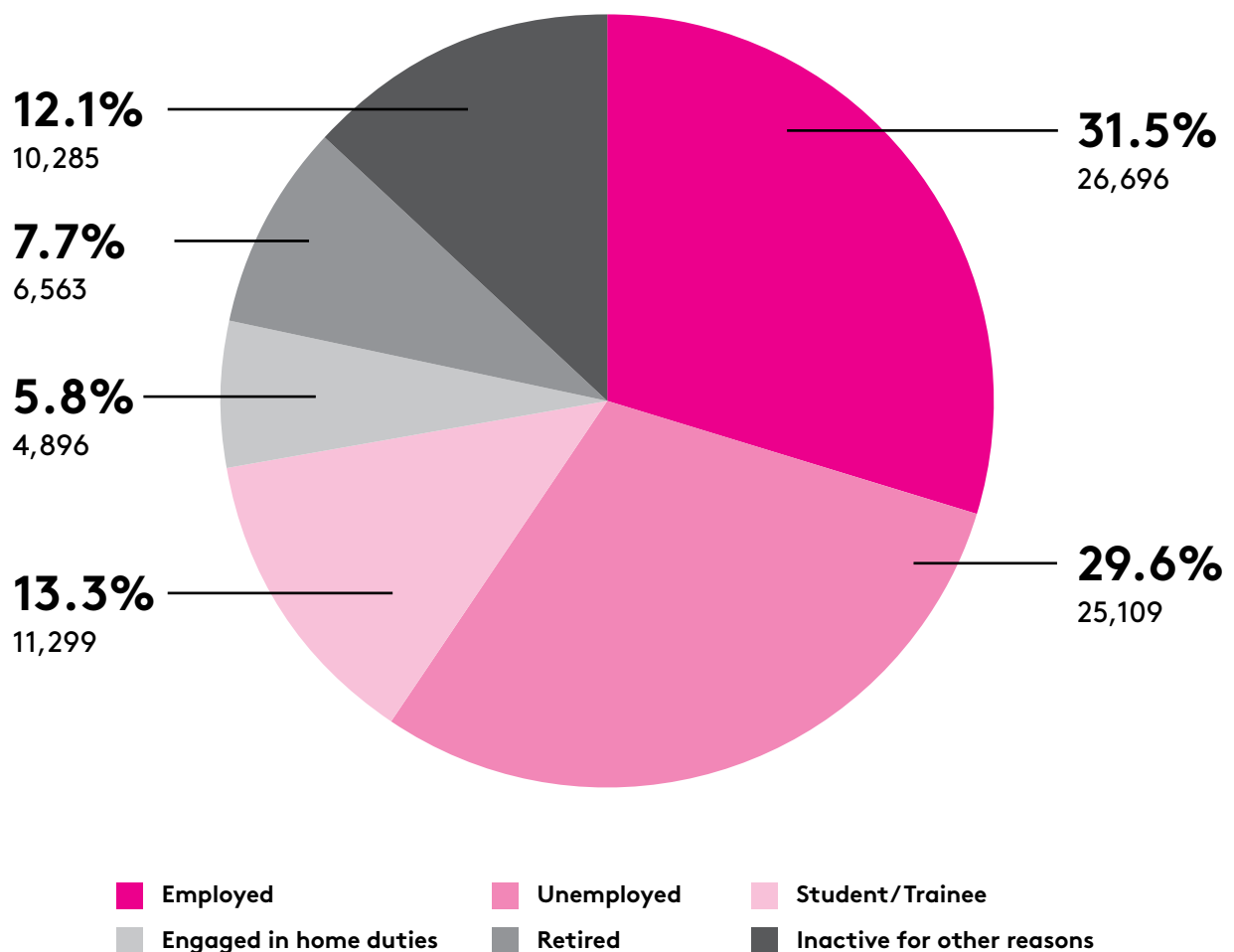
Field of Study (Broad ISCED) by Delivery Type

	Full-time	Part-time	Online	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	1,281	578	0	1,859
Arts and humanities	4,315	415	0	4,730
Business, administration and law	5,261	4,235	2,840	12,336
Education	2,048	3,267	252	5,567
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	2,269	1,592	68	3,929
Generic programmes and qualifications	6,490	40,444	2,178	49,112
Health and welfare	6,076	4,153	402	10,631
ICT	2,079	1,421	1,425	4,925
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	518	8	3	529
Services	5,723	2,430	456	8,609
Social sciences, journalism and information	214	34	0	248
Total	36,274	58,577	7,624	102,475

Overall, generic programmes and qualifications had the highest numbers of learners, with 47.9% of learner completions in this field of study. This was followed by business, administration and law (12%), health and welfare (10.4%), and services (8.4%).

For full-time learner completions, generic programmes and qualifications and health and welfare had the highest numbers of learners. In addition, services and business, administration and law also had high numbers of full-time completions. For part-time completions, generic programmes and qualifications accounted for 69% of all part-time completions. This was followed by business, administration and law, health and welfare, and services. Among online completions, business, administration and law had the highest number of learners. This was followed by generic programmes and qualifications and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Principal Economic Status¹²



In 2021, 29.6% of learners were unemployed prior to completion, while 31.5% were employed. The remaining 39% of learners were inactive prior to completion.

¹² It should be noted that this calculation is an estimate and includes only those cases where previous principal economic status was captured. The principal economic status response rate for learner completions was 82.8%.

Certified Completions

Certified Completions by Outcomes¹³

	Learners	Percent
Fully certified	40,607	56%
Partially certified	11,879	16.4%
No certification achieved	15,956	22%
Waiting for certification details	4,120	5.7%
Total	72,562	100%

In 2021, the certification rate (full + partially certified) was 72.3%. Of the remaining certified learner completions, 5.7% were waiting for certification details, and 22% did not achieve certification.

Certified Completions by Award Level

	Learners	Percent
Non-NFQ Aligned FET ¹⁴	4,186	8%
Level 1 Certificate	397	0.8%
Level 2 Certificate	1,821	3.5%
Level 3 Certificate	4,450	8.5%
Level 4 Certificate	5,749	11%
Level 4/5 Certificate	698	1.3%
Level 5 Certificate	26,589	50.7%
Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate	8,526	16.2%
Honours Bachelor Degree/Higher Diploma	70	0.1%
Total	52,486	100%

In 2021, 50.7% of certified completions were at level 5, whereas 16.2% were at an advanced or higher certificate level, 11% were at level 4 and 8.5% at level 3. In addition, 8% of certified completions were non-NFQ aligned FET awards.

¹³ This excludes completions where the course did not have an award through a recognised awarding body.

¹⁴ This includes full and partial learner completions that gained an award through a recognised awarding body, but the awards were not aligned with the NFQ.

Certified Completions by Field of Study (Broad ISCED), Award Level and Outcomes (Learner Activity)¹⁵

	Fully Certified	Partially Certified	Total
Non-NFQ aligned FET			
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	3		3
Arts and humanities	81	7	88
Business, administration and law	552	93	645
Education	6		6
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	870	54	924
Generic programmes and qualifications	600	19	619
Health and welfare	24		24
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	1,327	363	1,690
Services	1,004	228	1,232
Total	4,467	764	5,231
Level 1 Certificate			
Generic programmes and qualifications	515	35	550
Total	515	35	550
Level 2 Certificate			
Generic programmes and qualifications	2,159	648	2,807
Total	2,159	648	2,807
Level 3 Certificate			
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	57	3	60
Generic programmes and qualifications	3,709	1,781	5,490
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	25	11	36
Services	26	5	31
Total	3,817	1,800	5,617

¹⁵ Learner activity refers to the sum of instances of learner full and partial completions that gained an award through a recognised awarding body in 2021. For example, a learner may be enrolled and attain a certified completion in multiple courses (e.g. an ESOL course and an evening training course).

Certified Completions by Field of Study (Broad ISCED), Award Level and Outcomes (Learner Activity)

	Fully Certified	Partially Certified	Total
Level 4 Certificate			
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	373	238	611
Arts and humanities	12		12
Business, administration and law	694	329	1,023
Education	36	12	48
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	590	70	660
Generic programmes and qualifications	1,951	1,183	3,134
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	450	264	714
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	4	1	5
Services	880	189	1,069
Total	4,990	2,286	7,276

Level 4/5 Certificate			
Generic programmes and qualifications	662	127	789
Total	662	127	789

Level 5 Certificate			
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	684	244	928
Arts and humanities	1,874	667	2,541
Business, administration and law	4,794	1,413	6,207
Education	3,219	696	3,915
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	1,172	274	1,446
Generic programmes and qualifications	603	231	834
Health and welfare	8,530	2,815	11,345
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	683	421	1,104
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	395	77	472
Services	2,159	926	3,085
Social sciences, journalism and information	111	37	148
Total	24,224	7,801	32,025

Certified Completions by Field of Study (Broad ISCED), Award Level and Outcomes (Learner Activity)

	Fully Certified	Partially Certified	Total
Advanced Certificate/Higher Certificate			
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	228	65	293
Arts and humanities	886	228	1,114
Business, administration and law	2,569	470	3,039
Education	2,699	529	3,228
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	234	11	245
Health and welfare	394	129	523
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	227	59	286
Services	703	191	894
Social sciences, journalism and information	67	2	69
Total	8,007	1,684	9,691
Honours Bachelor Degree/Higher Diploma			
Arts and humanities	70		70
Total	70		70

Certified Completions by Field of Study (Detailed ISCED) and Award Level (Learner Activity)

	Non-NFQ Aligned FET	Level 1 Certificate	Level 2 Certificate	Level 3 Certificate	Level 4 Certificate	Level 4/5 Certificate	Level 5 Certificate	Advanced /Higher Certificate	Honours Bachelor Degree/Higher Diploma	Total
Accounting and taxation	281							527		808
Agriculture							30	30		60
Architecture and town planning	5				21		71	23		120
Arts							394	6		400
Audio-visual techniques and media production							963	401	70	1,434
Basic programmes and qualifications	589	512	2,807	3,862	2,517	789	821			11,897
Biological and related sciences							433			433
Biology							7			7
Building and civil engineering	28			14	291		236			569
Business and administration							1,773	742		2,515
Child care and youth services							215			215
Computer use	1,171			28	3		333	50		1,585
Crop and livestock production								5		5
Database and network design and administration	301						385	109		795
Dental studies	11									11
Education	6							513		519
Education and training not elsewhere classified							52	25		77
Education science								77		77
Electricity and energy	11				202		357	94		664
Electronics and automation	13				13		13	99		138
Engineering and engineering trades	23			31	77		407			538
Engineering, manufacturing and construction				15						15
Fashion, interior and industrial design					12		357	139		508
Finance, banking and insurance	28						22			50
Fine Arts	68						397	305		770
Fisheries							7			7
Food processing					9		60			69
Generic programmes and qualifications				24						24
Hair and beauty services	99				262		1,280	202		1,843
Handicrafts							133	12		145
Health							1,962	170		2,132
Horticulture					611		259	59		929
Hotel, restaurants and catering	302			31	685		360	36		1,414
Humanities (except languages)							6			6
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	106				702					808
Journalism and reporting							85			85

Certified Completions by Field of Study (Detailed ISCED) and Award Level (Learner Activity)

	Non-NFQ Aligned FET	Level 1 Certificate	Level 2 Certificate	Level 3 Certificate	Level 4 Certificate	Level 4/5 Certificate	Level 5 Certificate	Advanced /Higher Certificate	Honours Bachelor Degree/Higher Diploma	Total
Language acquisition	20									20
Law							274			274
Literacy and numeracy				471						471
Management and administration	257						2,268	1,424		3,949
Manufacturing and processing	10									10
Marketing and advertising	71						206			277
Materials (glass, paper, plastic and wood)					2		68	29		99
Mechanics and metal trades	724				6		38			768
Medical diagnostic and treatment technology	13									13
Motor vehicles, ships and aircraft	110				39		196			345
Music and performing arts							276	274		550
Natural environments and wildlife							32			32
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics					5					5
Nursing and midwifery							6,453			6,453
Occupational health and safety	6						12			18
Personal skills and development		38		1,141	623					1,802
Pharmacy							14			14
Philosophy and ethics							15			15
Protection of persons and property							143	24		167
Secretarial and office work					790		1,496	330		2,616
Social and behavioural sciences								69		69
Social work and counselling							1,174	204		1,378
Sociology and cultural studies							63			63
Software and applications development and analysis	120						379	127		626
Sports	66				86		922	302		1,376
Therapy and rehabilitation							59	14		73
Training for pre-school teachers					48		3,863	2,654		6,565
Transport services	764						11			775
Travel, tourism and leisure	25				39		371	303		738
Veterinary	3						632	199		834
Welfare							1,455	114		1,569
Wholesale and retail sales					233		187			420
Total	5,231	550	2,807	5,617	7,276	789	32,025	9,691	70	64,056

Definition of Terms

Activity

The sum of learners multiplied by the number of courses which they have been enrolled in or completed within a programme or across different programmes, or providers during 2021.

Certified Completions

In the FET sector, not all learner completions lead to an award through a recognised awarding body in the FET sector. Therefore, certified completions refer only to the total number of certified completions in 2021.

Certification Rate

The sum of only full and partial learner completions that gained an award through a recognised awarding body in 2021.

Completions

Total number of learners who have a finish date of a course (regardless of whether the course is certified or not) in 2021. Completions include partial and full completers, but exclude early leavers.

Enrolments

Enrolments are defined as learners who are on course or have completed a course during 2021.

Field of Study

This is defined and categorised by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Both broad (2-digit) and detailed (4-digit) fields of study are used for categorising Further Education and Training course fields of study.

Full Completions

Learners who have completed 90 per cent or more of the course and its requirements in 2021.

Inactive

This term is used according to the Eurostat and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition which defines inactive as individuals who are neither employed nor unemployed and are not working and not available or looking for work. Inactive in this report includes those learners engaged in home duties, retired, student/trainees, and those inactive for other reasons.

Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

This is a framework through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way. The many different types and sizes of qualifications included in the NFQ are organised based on their level of knowledge, skill and competence. In some cases, where awards have not been placed on the Irish NFQ, equivalent levels are assigned based on the document 'Qualifications can cross boundaries' and the level assigned to the award on the relevant country's framework (e.g. Cf. Ofqual, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, etc.).

Learner

A unique individual who has progressed onto a course in the application process. The total number of learners is the sum of all unique individuals in Further Education and Training in 2021.

Long-term Unemployed

This refers to any person who is unemployed for 12 months or more.

Non-NFQ Aligned courses

This includes completions with certification not aligned with the NFQ.

On Course

This refers to those learners who were still on course as of December 31st, 2021.

Partial Completions

Learners who have completed more than 25 percent but less than 90 percent of a course and its requirements in 2021.

Post-secondary Non-tertiary

This refers to Post Leaving Certificate NFQ Level 4 or 5, Advanced Certificate NFQ Level 6, other non-NFQ aligned FET, Certificate NFQ Level 4, or Certificate NFQ Level 5.

Short-cycle Tertiary

This refers to third level non-degree courses and includes higher certificate NFQ level 6 courses and diploma NFQ level 7 courses. These courses are usually of one year in duration and are often vocational in nature.

Third Level

This refers to Ordinary Bachelor degree, Honours Bachelor degree, Professional, Post-Graduate, Doctorate or Higher degree courses.

For further information, please contact:

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