

## Summary of Findings

### All FE College leavers

More than four-tenths (43.6%) of FE College leavers who qualified at Level 3 or below were in employment six months after achieving their 2019/20 qualification, up from 40.9% before their course began; the proportion in learning fell slightly from 43.1% to 42.0% (**Table 3**).

Linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion in employment (43.6%) was lower than that for the 2018/19 cohort at the equivalent stage (47.7%) and included 2.9% who were on furlough. In addition, the unemployment rate (7.7%) was higher than for those who qualified in 2018/19 (4.0%).

When asked to give the most important reason for doing their course, FE College leavers were most likely to say: 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (21.9%); 'I was interested in the subject' (17.3%); or 'I wanted to learn something new / gain new skills' (15.6%) (**Table 2**).

Less than two-thirds (65.7%) of leavers agreed that, were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Just over half (51.6%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while 53.8% would be unlikely to do a different kind of qualification (**Table 5**).

Employment rates for FE College leavers varied depending on subject area studied. The subject areas with the highest proportions of FE College leavers in full-time employment were Construction, Planning and the Built Environment (62.6%), Business, Administration and Law (55.3%) and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (51.5%) (**Figure 8**).

The subject areas with the lowest proportions of FE College leavers in employment were Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care (8.8%), History, Philosophy and Theology (11.5%) and Social Sciences (13.5%) (**Figure 8**).

Typically, unemployment rates were lower for those qualifying at higher levels. One-sixth of those who had studied at Entry Level or Level 1 were unemployed (15.6%), in contrast to 8.5% of those who had studied at Level 2 and 4.7% of those at Level 3 (**Figure 6**).

### FE College leavers in employment

Over one-third (34.3%) of the FE College leavers in employment had not been in employment before they started their 2019/20 course (**Figure 9** and **Table A14**) – of these, three-quarters (74.8%) had been in learning.

For leavers in full-time employment, 42.4% were earning less than £300 per week. For leavers in part-time employment this was 90.3%. A further 31.6% of leavers in full-time employment were earning between £300 and £399 per week, while 6.5% of those in part-time employment were on similar wages (**Figure 11** and **Table A23**).

Males (26.2%) were more than twice as likely as females (9.9%) to be earning £400 or more per week (**Table A24**).

The vast majority (95.0%) of FE College leavers in employment were working in Northern Ireland, while 4.2% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 0.5% in Great Britain and 0.3% overseas (**Table 7**).

Over five-sevenths (73.3%) of FE College leavers in employment said the course had prepared them well for employment (**Chart 1** and **Table A28**).

Of the FE College leavers who were in employment six months after their course, three-fifths (62.1%) were working full-time; a further 20.5% had one or more part-time jobs, while 10.9% were primarily working but also studying (**Table A19**).

Most of the FE College leavers in employment had jobs classified as either: Skilled Trade (21.0%); Caring, leisure and other service occupations (20.8%); or Sales and customer service occupations (13.5%) (**Figure 13** and **Table A21**).

## FE College leavers in learning

Over seven-tenths (71.2%) of FE College leavers in learning had also been in learning before the course they had completed in 2019/20 (**Figure 16** and **Table A14**), while more than four-fifths (81.5%) were studying towards a higher-level qualification (**Table A33**).

Over two-thirds (67.2%) of leavers in learning have continued their learning in the FE sector, while three-tenths (29.6%) have started university (**Figure 18** and **Table A34**).

Just under nine-tenths (89.7%) of FE College leavers in learning stated the course they had undertaken during 2019/20 had prepared them well for further study (**Chart 2** and **Table A37**).

## Unemployed FE College leavers

The proportion of FE College leavers who classified themselves as unemployed six months after completing their course in 2019/20 was 7.7%, down from 8.2% before their course (**Tables 3** and **A11**).

Typically, unemployment rates were lower for those qualifying at higher levels. One-sixth of those who had studied at Entry Level or Level 1 were unemployed (15.6%), in contrast to 8.5% of those who had studied at Level 2 and 4.7% of those at Level 3 (**Figure 6**).