

Survey of Further Education College Leavers

Report Academic Year 2016/17

Summary of Findings

This report presents findings from the fourth annual Northern Ireland Survey of Further Education (FE) College Leavers. Undertaken approximately six months after course completion, it provides a snapshot of the immediate added value to leavers of completing and achieving a regulated qualification at Level 3 or below in the FE sector during the academic year 2016/17.

All FE College leavers

Over two-fifths (43.1%) of FE College leavers were in employment six months after achieving their 2016/17 qualification, up from 36.9% before their course began; conversely, the proportion in learning fell from 46.7% to 43.8% (Table 3).

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' (25.4%); 'I was interested in the subject' (19.8%); or 'I wanted to go on to further / higher learning' (18.3%) (Table 2).

Seven-tenths (70.7%) of leavers agreed that, were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Over three-fifths (61.5%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while under three-fifths (58.5%) 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 'Education and Training' (54.9%), 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (54.8%) and 'Business, Administration and Law' (52.7%) (Figure 7).

The subject areas with the lowest proportions of FE College leavers in employment were 'Social Sciences' (8.9%) and 'History, Philosophy and Theology' (11.1%), however, these subjects had some of the highest proportions of leavers in further full-time study (Figure 7).

FE College leavers in employment

Two-fifths (40.2%) of the FE College leavers in employment had not been in employment before they started their 2016/17 course – of these, seven-tenths had been in learning (Table A12a).

For leavers in full-time employment, 35.4% were earning less than £300 per week; this rose to 83.9% for those in part-time employment. A further 29.9% of leavers in full-time employment were earning between £300 and £399 per week, while only 6.4% of those in part-time employment earn similar wages (Table S23).

Males (36.4%) were almost twice as likely as females (19.7%) to be earning £400 or more per week (**Table S24**).

The vast majority (95.5%) of FE College leavers in employment were working in Northern Ireland, while 3.0% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 0.7% in Great Britain and 0.8% overseas (**Table 7**).

Seven-tenths (71.9%) of FE College Leavers in employment said the course had prepared them well for employment (**Table S19**).

Two-thirds (65.4%) of the FE College leavers who were in employment six months after their course were working full-time; a further 25.6% had one or more part-time job, while 9.0% were primarily working but also studying (**Table A11**).

Most of the FE College leavers in employment had jobs classified as either: 'Caring, leisure and other service occupations' (24.1%); 'Skilled Trade occupations' (15.7%); or 'Administrative and secretarial occupations' (12.6%) (**Table S18**).

FE College leavers in learning

Three-quarters (74.3%) of FE College leavers in learning had also been in learning before the course they had completed in 2016/17 (**Table A12b**), while four-fifths (80.9%) are now studying towards a higher level qualification (**Table S28**).

Over three-fifths (61.3%) of leavers in learning have continued their learning in the FE sector, while over a third (34.2%) have started university (**Table S29**).

Nine-tenths (90.7%) of FE College leavers in learning stated the course they had undertaken during 2016/17 had prepared them well for further study (**Table S30**).

Unemployed FE College leavers

The proportion of FE College leavers who classified themselves as unemployed six months after completing their course in 2016/17 was 5.1% (**Table A3**).

The full publication, along with associated tables and documents, is available at the following link:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/fe-leavers-survey-2016-17>