

Summary of Findings

All FE College leavers

Half (50.0%) of FE College leavers who qualified at Level 3 or below were in employment six months after achieving their 2020/21 qualification, up from 43.4% before their course began; the proportion in learning fell slightly from 41.6% to 40.7% (**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' (29.3%); 'I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job' (13.2%); or 'I wanted greater job satisfaction' (9.7%) (**Table 2**).

Three-quarters (74.9%) of leavers agreed that, were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Just under two-thirds (63.6%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while 57.1% 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 (71.0%), Business, Administration and Law (67.0%) and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (59.0%) (**Figure 8**).

The subject areas with the lowest proportions of FE College leavers in employment were Arts, Media and Publishing (9.2%), Social Sciences (11.9%) and History, Philosophy and Theology (13.3%) (**Figure 8**).

Typically, unemployment rates were lower for those qualifying at higher levels. One-eighth of those who had studied at Entry Level or Level 1 were unemployed (11.7%), in contrast to 5.0% of those who had studied at Level 2 and 2.6% of those at Level 3 (**Figure 6**).

FE College leavers in employment

One-third (33.4%) of the FE College leavers in employment had not been in employment before they started their 2020/21 course (**Figure 9** and **Table A14**) – of these, over two fifths (63.8%) had been in learning.

The vast majority (95.1%) of FE College leavers in employment were working in Northern Ireland, while 2.7% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 2.0% in Great Britain and 0.2% overseas (**Table 7**).

Three-quarters (74.9%) of FE College leavers in employment said they were utilising what they learnt during their course in their current work (**Chart 1** and **Table A26**).

Of the FE College leavers who were in employment six months after their course, seven-tenths (70.7%) were working full-time; a further 21.9% had one or more part-time jobs, while 7.4% were primarily working but also studying (**Table A19**).

Most of the FE College leavers in employment had jobs classified as either: Skilled Trade (20.4%); Caring, leisure and other service occupations (19.4%); or Associate professional and technical occupations (13.3%) (**Figure 13** and **Table A21**).

FE College leavers in learning

Almost seven-tenths (69.3%) of FE College leavers in learning had also been in learning before the course they had completed in 2020/21 (**Figure 15** and **Table A14**), while more than four-fifths (82.2%) were studying towards a higher-level qualification (**Table A31**).

Three-fifths (60.1%) of leavers in learning have continued their learning in the FE sector, while over one-third (34.7%) have started university (**Figure 17** and **Table A32**).

Almost nine-tenths (88.2%) of FE College leavers in learning stated they were utilising what they'd learnt during their course in their current studies (**Chart 2** and **Table A35**).

Unemployed FE College leavers

The proportion of FE College leavers who classified themselves as unemployed six months after completing their course in 2020/21 was 4.4%, down from 10.0% before their course (**Tables 3** and **A11**).

Typically, unemployment rates were lower for those qualifying at higher levels. One-eighth of those who had studied at Entry Level or Level 1 were unemployed (11.7%), in contrast to 5.0% of those who had studied at Level 2 and 2.6% of those at Level 3 (**Figure 6**).