

# Survey of Further Education College Leavers Report

## Academic Year 2016/17

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**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.**

**KEY POINTS:**

- 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**).

## Reader Information

Purpose	Monitor and report on the destinations of students and potential benefits after completing and achieving a regulated qualification, at Level 3 or below, at a Further Education College in Northern Ireland during 2016/17.
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Feedback	The report has been designed to provide the information required by key stakeholders. As we want to engage with report users, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication. First points of contact include:  Louise Buckley – <a href="mailto:Louise.Buckley@economy-ni.gov.uk">Louise.Buckley@economy-ni.gov.uk</a> (Tel: 028 9025 7519) Allan Nesbitt - <a href="mailto:Allan.Nesbitt@economy-ni.gov.uk">Allan.Nesbitt@economy-ni.gov.uk</a> (Tel: 028 9025 7428)
Acknowledgement	We would like to thank all the FE College leavers who took part in the survey. Without your help, this report would not have been possible.

## Contents

<b>Reader Information</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Boxes</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Charts</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary of Findings</b> .....	<b>7</b>
All FE College leavers .....	7
FE College leavers in employment .....	7
FE College leavers in learning.....	8
Unemployed FE College leavers.....	8
<b>Section One: Background and Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
How to use this report .....	9
About the Department for the Economy .....	9
Further Education in Northern Ireland: policy and operational context .....	10
Why has this survey been carried out?.....	11
<b>Section Two: Methodology</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Introduction .....	12
Sampling Strategy .....	12
Accessing email contact details for eligible participants .....	12
Publicity and Fieldwork.....	12
Response Rates .....	13
Questionnaire .....	13
Data coding and weighting .....	13
Interpreting the findings .....	16
<b>Section Three: Main Findings</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>3.1 All FE College Leavers</b> .....	<b>17</b>
How did individuals hear about their course? .....	17
Reasons for undertaking the course .....	18
Activity before and six months after course .....	19
Overall Educational Experience .....	20
Destinations of Leavers by Key Profiling Variables .....	21
FE College .....	21
Sex .....	22
Age Group .....	23
Course Mode of Attendance .....	24

Level of Study .....	25
Subject .....	25
<b>3.2 FE College Leavers in Employment .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Overview of main activity before the course.....	27
How did individuals hear about their course? .....	28
Main reasons for undertaking the course.....	29
Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?.....	30
Subject area .....	30
Employment type.....	30
Salary .....	31
Where did they work?.....	32
Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).....	32
Employed before and after with the same employer.....	33
Why did you decide to take this job?.....	34
Overall Educational Experience .....	35
<b>3.3 FE College Leavers in Learning .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Overview of main activity before the course.....	36
How did individuals hear about their course? .....	37
Main reasons for undertaking the completed course .....	38
Learning progression.....	38
Studying at a higher level.....	40
Studying at the same level .....	40
Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?.....	41
Overall Educational Experience .....	41
<b>3.4 Unemployed FE College Leavers.....</b>	<b>42</b>
Overview of main activity before the course.....	42
How did individuals hear about their course? .....	43
Main reasons for undertaking the course.....	44
Subject area .....	45
Any employment after course? .....	45
Long-term unemployment? .....	45
Not unemployed before the course.....	45
Overall Educational Experience .....	46
<b>Annex A - Commonly used terms and abbreviations .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Annex B - Questionnaire .....</b>	<b>49</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1:	Comparison: key profiling variable proportions for the survey respondents (4,434) and population of interest (27,278).....	15
Table 2:	All FE College leavers: reasons for undertaking course .....	18
Table 3:	All FE College leavers: activity before and six months after completing course .....	19
Table 4:	All FE College leavers: summary movement between main activity groups .....	19
Table 5:	If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would.....	20
Table 6:	FE College leavers in employment: main reasons for undertaking course.....	29
Table 7:	FE College leavers in employment: location of employment .....	32
Table 8:	If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would.....	35
Table 9:	FE College leavers in learning: main reasons for undertaking course .....	38
Table 10:	FE College leavers in learning before and after course: progression to study at a higher level (by location of learning) .....	40
Table 11:	If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would.....	41
Table 12:	Unemployed FE College leavers: main reasons for undertaking course .....	44
Table 13:	Unemployed FE College leavers: subject area studied .....	45
Table 14:	If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would.....	46

## List of Boxes

Box 1:	Population of interest to survey respondents .....	16
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## List of Charts

Chart 1:	FE College leavers in employment: How well did your recent course prepare you for employment? .....	30
Chart 2:	FE College leavers in learning: how well did your course prepare you for further study? ....	41

## List of Figures

Figure 1:	All FE College leavers: how individuals had heard about their course.....	17
Figure 2:	All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by FE College .....	21
Figure 3:	All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by sex.....	22
Figure 4:	All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by age band .....	23
Figure 5:	All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course by mode of attendance .....	24
Figure 6:	All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by level of study .....	25
Figure 7:	All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by subject area .....	26
Figure 8:	FE College leavers in employment: most important activity before.....	27
Figure 9:	FE College leavers in employment: how individuals had heard about their course .....	28
Figure 10:	FE College leavers in employment by employment type: pay bands .....	31
Figure 11:	FE College leavers in employment: Standard Occupational Classification .....	32
Figure 12:	FE College leavers in employment: Did you work for this employer before or during your course? .....	33

Figure 13:	FE College leavers in employment: Why did you decide to take this job? .....	34
Figure 14:	FE College leavers in learning: most important activity before .....	36
Figure 15:	FE College leavers in Learning: how individuals had heard about their course .....	37
Figure 16:	FE College leavers in learning after course: main activity before course and location of additional learning .....	39
Figure 17:	Unemployed FE College leavers: most important activity before .....	42
Figure 18:	Unemployed FE College leavers: how individuals had heard about their course.....	43

## Summary of Findings

### 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**).



## Section One: Background and Introduction

### How to use this report

This report presents findings from the fourth annual Northern Ireland survey of Further Education 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.

The report is divided into three main sections:

- [Section 1:](#) Background and Introduction
- [Section 2:](#) Methodology
- [Section 3:](#) Main Findings

Section 3 is divided into four sub-sections:

[3.1](#) provides a summary overview of how all FE College leavers had heard about their course, their reasons for doing their course, and their main activities before and after their course.

[3.2](#) presents findings for the FE College leavers whose destination was employment.

[3.3](#) presents findings for the FE College leavers whose destination was further learning.

[3.4](#) presents findings for the FE College leavers who were unemployed.

The main findings section should be read in conjunction with the methodology section, and particularly the sub-section on [interpretation](#). It is also recommended that the report findings are read in conjunction with annual FE Activity publications. These provide additional information about the students enrolled on regulated courses at FE Colleges and are available at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/further-education-statistics>

Additional information on definitions and technical aspects of the survey are available in the [Annex](#). Online tables (denoted by the prefixes 'A' and 'S') are available on the [Survey of FE College Leavers web page](#). These tables enable quick comparison of the different FE College leaver groups presented in this report.

### About the Department for the Economy

The Department for the Economy (DfE) is one of nine departments created under [The Stormont House Agreement](#). The **vision** of the Department is a globally competitive economy that works for everyone. Responsibilities include:

- economic policy (including Industrial Strategy)
- employment and skills programmes (including apprenticeships)
- energy
- further education
- higher education
- employment rights
- consumer affairs

- European Fund Management
- telecoms
- tourism
- insolvency service
- minerals and petroleum
- economic briefing, research, appraisal and evaluation
- statistics on higher and further education and training

For additional information on the Department:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/>

### Further Education in Northern Ireland: policy and operational context

FE Colleges in Northern Ireland (NI) aim to deliver high quality, economically relevant, professional and technical provision, and will play a key role in the delivery of the draft [Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) and in developing a globally competitive economy.

There are six regional FE Colleges:

- Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)
- Northern Regional College (NRC)
- North West Regional College (NWRC)
- South Eastern Regional College (SERC)
- Southern Regional College (SRC)
- South West College (SWC)

The FE Colleges are Non-departmental Public Bodies of DfE and operate across 40 campuses. The courses they offer cover a wide variety of subjects and levels, ranging from Entry Level up to Level 8. They have a combined turnover of around £260 million and a professional workforce of around 3,500. Engaging 80,000 learners in the 2016/17 academic year and working with over 10,000 businesses across NI, they have a significant footprint in our economy.

Through implementation of the 'FE Means Success' strategy, FE Colleges will continue to fulfil the important dual role of helping to develop a strong and vibrant economy through helping employers to innovate and upskill, and supporting social inclusion by providing those with low or no qualifications, or who have barriers to learning, with the skills and qualifications they need to find employment. 'FE Means Success' is designed to ensure colleges are fit for purpose to deliver a higher profile skills agenda, and further strengthen quality of provision throughout the sector, which will enable further education to be recognised as an equal and valued pillar of the education system, alongside higher education and the statutory school system.

Within the Northern Ireland Executive, responsibility for the FE Colleges rests with the Minister for the Economy. The Minister is accountable to the NI Assembly and its Committee for the Economy, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to DfE and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

For additional information on FE in Northern Ireland:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/further-education>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/further-education>

### **Why has this survey been carried out?**

The draft [Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) places the focus of the Northern Ireland Executive on creating an inspiring vision of the future, with inclusive growth, prosperity and rebalancing our economy at its core.

A key pillar of this strategic approach, 'Enhancing Education, Skills and Employability', focuses on: improving educational outcomes; improved quality of education; improved skills profile of the population; reduced economic inactivity; and an increased proportion of graduates moving into employment or on to further study.

DfE is monitoring the performance of FE Colleges in terms of the quality and relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the NI economy and the learner. Therefore, there is a need to identify what happens to the thousands of students who complete and achieve their regulated FE courses. In particular, it is hoped that information on the destinations of leavers following successful completion of a programme of study will provide evidence of the relevance of this learning in achieving positive outcomes. This research will inform that process by measuring the impact and outcomes of student learning in terms of progression into further learning and employment. The research also forms a key part of the underpinning evidence for the development of future policy and the FE curriculum in terms of:

- the progression of learners to and within employment
- the progression of learners to higher levels of study
- the development of skills of use within the workplace

## Section Two: Methodology

### Introduction

The Survey of FE College Leavers asks leavers what they are doing approximately six months after qualifying from their course. This publication reports on the fourth sweep of the Survey, conducted with the 2016/17 cohort of FE College leavers; the first sweep related to 2013/14 leavers.

### Sampling Strategy

The first three sweeps of the Survey involved NISRA undertaking telephone interviews with a 10% stratified random sample of eligible leavers, which was proportionately drawn on the basis of their FE College, Gender, Age Group, Course Mode of Attendance and Level of Course Studied.

In contrast, this fourth sweep has entailed a census approach, providing an opportunity for all eligible leavers with up-to-date email contact details to participate in a NISRA online survey using “Snap Survey”.

To minimise survey burden, HE leavers in 2016/17 (Level 4 and above) were not included in the Survey as their cohort would be participating in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey for the first time. Nonetheless, the overall number of leavers to be asked to participate would be much larger than in earlier sweeps.

### Accessing email contact details for eligible participants

In advance of the survey, Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) (SRB (TE)) liaised with all six FE Colleges with a view to obtaining email contact details for the initial overall target list of 32,503 leavers who had completed and achieved a qualification at Level 3 or below in 2016/17.

Before accepting the contact details returned by the Colleges, SRB (TE) performed extensive validation and data cleaning exercises, and queried the particularly low instance of contact details for one of the Colleges to determine whether an error had occurred and whether alternative sources might be available for contact details. To partially mitigate this, it was decided to collect internal email addresses for leavers who had subsequently returned to study at the same College.

In the end, Colleges supplied email contact details for 27,278 leavers, amounting to 83.9% of the initial overall target list; although, because of the issue highlighted above, one College supplied contact details for under 60% of its eligible leavers. Nonetheless, the characteristics of the contactable cohort mirrored closely those of the initial overall target list in most respects.

### Publicity and Fieldwork

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, the FE Colleges issued publicity emails to their leavers. NISRA commenced the online fieldwork on Monday 16th April 2018 by issuing email invitations to all contactable leavers; these included unique links to the dedicated, Snap Surveys website and contained the name and logo of the relevant FE College, the name of the leaver and the title of the course they had completed. Over the course of the following three and a half weeks, until fieldwork closed on Wednesday 9th May 2018, NISRA issued four reminder emails to leavers who had not completed the Survey.

Despite extensive email address checking prior to the fieldwork, 1,841 (6.7%) invitations were classified as undeliverable, either because the address was not known or it was a 'soft bounce back', for instance, a mail server response indicating a non-delivery due to a full inbox. This reduced the valid contactable list of leavers to 25,437.

### Response Rates

Over one in six (17.4%) of this valid contactable list participated in the online survey, resulting in 4,434 completed responses (see Box One). Although this response rate was much lower than those achieved in the earlier, telephone-administered sweeps, the absolute number of responses was higher. It was, therefore, very important to ascertain the extent to which the profile of the achieved responses differed from that of the population of interest.

In this respect, key variations among respondents included:

- Female leavers (64.3%) were more likely to complete than male leavers (35.7%);
- Leavers aged 25+ were most likely to respond (49.1%);
- Leavers who had studied on a part-time basis were more likely to respond (58.8%) than those who had studied full-time (41.2%).

### Questionnaire

The survey captures a snapshot of activities that the leavers from the 2016/17 academic year were engaged in approximately six months after completing their course.

Details were captured on leavers' employment, such as their job role and industry, the nature of their contract and salary. Those engaged in further study were asked where and what they were studying. Leavers were also asked more generally about their satisfaction with aspects of the course.

While the core questionnaire retained some consistency with the 2015/16 sweep of the Survey, some amendments were necessary to improve the wording and layout given the switch from an interviewer-administered approach to an online survey. New sets of questions were also introduced to align the Survey more closely with those used in the DLHE survey. This, it was hoped, would enable an element of comparability between HE and FE leavers.

### Data coding and weighting

Survey responses were initially collected verbatim, then coded to an official classification (in the case of occupation) and / or to code frames developed by SRB (TE) to classify responses to some of the more open-ended questions, for example, relating to activities engaged in approximately six months after completing their course.

The final phase was to produce a data file by linking information from the Consolidation Data Return to the survey responses. The file was then logic checked, and amendments were made to correct for errors in responses.

Raked weighting was developed to improve the representativeness of estimates produced from the Survey. By using an iterative proportional fitting process, eleven combined raked weights were

produced for Age, Gender and Level of Qualification to provide a closer match between the characteristics of the participants and the population of interest.

As a result of the raked weighting model:

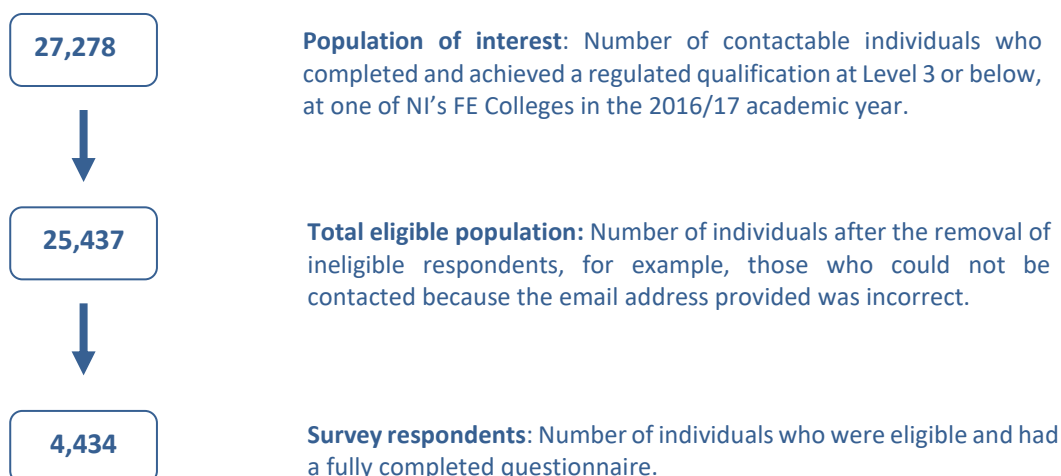
- the male share of respondents increased from 35.7% to 48.4%, identical to their share of the population of interest
- the 19 and under share of respondents increased from 41.0% to 52.6%, whereas the 25 and over share decreased from 49.1% to 34.0%, both in line with their respective population shares
- the full-time study share of respondents increased from 41.2% to 48.5%, some 2.4 percentage points above their share of the population of interest
- the level of course proportions also aligned with their respective population shares

While it is designed to improve the representativeness of survey results, it should be borne in mind non-response weighting assumes the characteristics of non-respondents are like those of respondents.

**Table 1: Comparison: key profiling variable proportions for the survey respondents (4,434) and population of interest (27,278)**

Variable	Variable Categories	% of Population of interest (N=27,278)	Respondent Profile <u>Before</u> Weighting			Respondent Profile <u>After</u> Weighting		
			Survey Respondents	%	Percentage Point Difference	Survey Respondents	%	Percentage Point Difference
FE College	Belfast Metropolitan College	24.9	1,133	25.6	0.7	1,166	26.3	1.4
	Northern Regional College	14.0	620	14.0	0.0	622	14.0	0.0
	North West Regional College	13.6	636	14.3	0.7	579	13.1	-0.5
	South Eastern Regional College	20.5	1,011	22.8	2.3	961	21.7	1.2
	Southern Regional College	15.1	682	15.4	0.3	713	16.1	1.0
	South West College	11.9	352	7.9	-4.0	389	8.8	-3.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Sex	Female	51.6	2,850	64.3	12.7	2,286	51.6	0.0
	Male	48.4	1,584	35.7	-12.7	2,144	48.4	0.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Age (years)	19 and under	52.5	1,817	41.0	-11.5	2,329	52.6	0.1
	20-24	13.6	440	9.9	-3.7	597	13.5	-0.1
	25 and over	33.9	2,177	49.1	15.2	1,504	34.0	0.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Mode of Attendance	Full-time	46.1	1,829	41.2	-4.9	2,147	48.5	2.4
	Part-time	53.9	2,605	58.8	4.9	2,283	51.5	-2.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Level of Course	Entry Level	2.2	79	1.8	-0.4	95	2.1	-0.1
	Level 1	7.8	287	6.5	-1.3	345	7.8	0.0
	Level 2	49.9	2,105	47.5	-2.4	2,211	49.9	0.0
	Level 3	40.1	1,963	44.3	4.2	1,778	40.1	0.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

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**Box 1: Population of interest to survey respondents**

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**Interpreting the findings**

When interpreting the findings presented, it is important to be aware of the following points:

- Individuals in FE Colleges can enrol and achieve on multiple courses simultaneously. The methodology used to determine the population of interest was to select the highest level of regulated qualification (up to and including Level 3) achieved for each individual, which resulted in 27,278 contactable individual FE College leavers being eligible for inclusion in the 2016/17 Survey.
- Although it was intended that everyone within the population of interest would be contacted and provided an opportunity to respond to the survey, not all had valid contact details, and of those participants who responded, not all answered all the questions. Therefore, variation occurs in the total number of responses provided for some questions. This affects the statistics derived from the survey when trying to infer patterns within the population of interest.
- Inferences/statements about the population of interest can be made because the profile of survey respondents has been re-weighted by: Age Band, Gender and Level, so that it is broadly similar to that of the population of interest in respect of these key variables (Refer to **Table 1**).
- Comparison of percentages should be considered with caution when base numbers (the number of valid responses to a particular question) are small (<100). Base numbers (n) are included in charts and tables.
- Due to rounding to one decimal place: some figures may not add to 100%; differences reported may not equate to the difference between the two figures shown in the text; and summing of proportions may not equate to the value reported.



## Section Three: Main Findings

### 3.1 All FE College Leavers

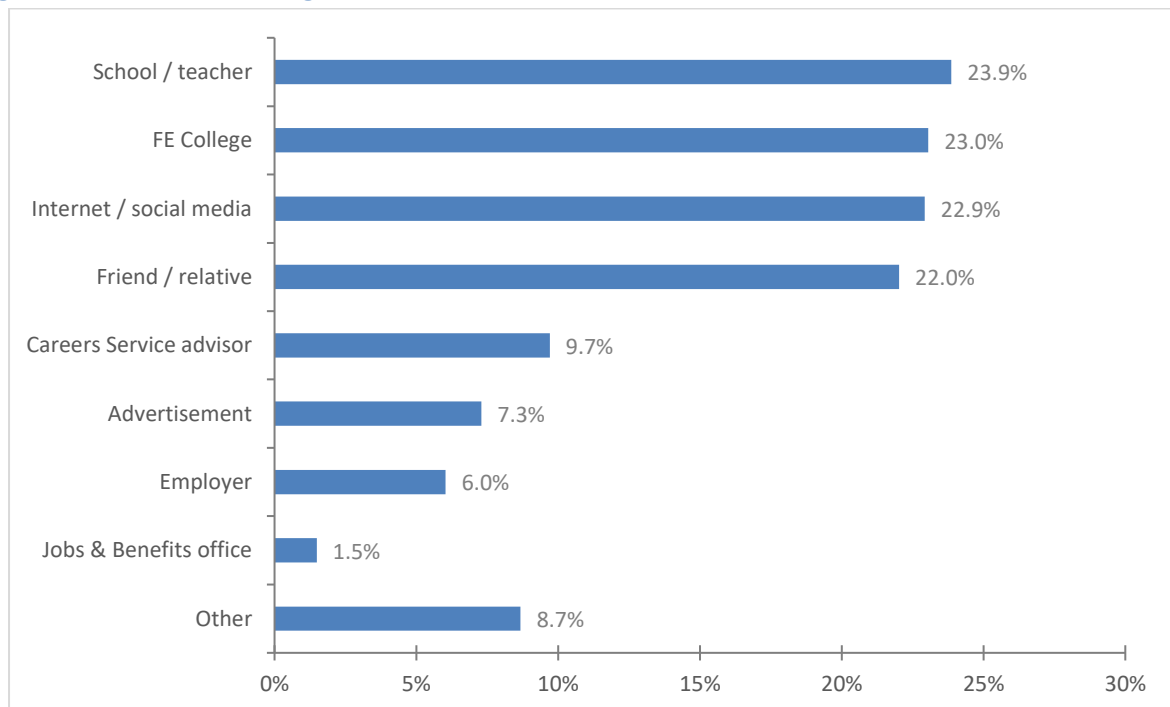
This section presents findings on all participants in the Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17 including:

- how they had heard about their recently completed course
- main reasons for doing their course
- main activities before and approximately six months after their course
- perceived overall educational experience

#### How did individuals hear about their course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The top four ways of hearing about their course were through: 'School / teacher' (23.9%); 'FE College' (23.0%); 'Internet / social media' (22.9%); or 'Friend / relative' (22.0%) (Figure 1 and Table A6).

**Figure 1: All FE College leavers: how individuals had heard about their course**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n = 4,302

Note: 132 invalid responses were excluded.

## Reasons for undertaking the course

An interest in the subject, improved employability and increased skills / qualifications were among the key drivers for undertaking courses at FE Colleges. The five most popular reasons for undertaking their course cited by FE College leavers were: 'I was interested in the subject' (50.8%); 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (48.4%); 'I wanted to gain a qualification' (43.0%); 'I wanted to learn something / gain new skills' (40.8%); and 'I wanted to go on to further / higher learning' (34.6%) (Table 2).

When asked to give the most important reason for undertaking their course, 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%) (Tables 2, A2a and A2b).

**Table 2: All FE College leavers: reasons for undertaking course**

Reason	Overall %	Most Important %
I was interested in the subject	50.8	19.8
I thought it would improve my career prospects	48.4	25.4
I wanted to gain a qualification	43.0	10.4
I wanted to learn something / gain new skills	40.8	13.4
I wanted to go on to further / higher learning	34.6	18.3
I wanted to meet new people and build my self-confidence	16.2	1.4
It was at a time / place that suited me	14.1	0.6
I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job	12.5	4.9
I did not have to pay for it	8.4	0.7
I wanted greater job satisfaction	7.7	1.2
I wanted to increase my income	6.3	0.7
I was encouraged to do so by my employer	3.1	0.4
I was required to do so by my employer	2.6	1.5
Other	2.3	1.4

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

*n* = 4,252 (Overall)

*n* = 4,246 (Most important reason)

Note: 182 (overall) and 188 (most important reasons) invalid responses were excluded.

### Activity before and six months after course

Respondents were asked about their main activities before and after their course, and to state which of these was most important to them. For ease of analysis, interpretation and reporting, the most important of these options are grouped into four main activity groups: employment; learning; unemployed; and other (**Tables 4 and A3**).

As well as the activity that was most important to each leaver, respondents also provided information on what else they were doing at the same time. This information was then combined to get a better understanding of the combinations of working and studying that leavers engage in. Technical notes in the online tables detail how each of these categories were derived (**Table 3**).

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% (**Tables 3 and A5**).

**Table 3: All FE College leavers: activity before and six months after completing course**

Main Activity Group	Activity	Before Completing Course	Six Months After Completing Course
		%	%
Employment	Working full-time	25.4	28.2
	Working part-time (one or more jobs)	10.0	11.0
	Primarily in work & also studying	1.5	3.9
	Employment Sub-total	36.9	43.1
Learning	Studying full-time	41.5	30.1
	Studying part-time	1.5	4.6
	Primarily studying but also in work	3.7	9.1
	Learning Sub-total	46.7	43.8
Unemployed	Unemployed	8.9	5.1
Other	Other	7.4	7.9
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>4,222</b>	<b>3,901</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

Note: Not all respondents answered all questions.

While over one-third (35.5%) of leavers changed main activity group, the majority remained in the same activity group six months after completing their course. In particular, **Table 4** shows that:

- 25.8% remained in Employment
- 32.6% remained in Learning
- 2.3% remained Unemployed
- 3.8% remained as Other

**Table 4: All FE College leavers: summary movement between main activity groups**

Main Activity Before Completing Course	Main Activity Approximately Six Months After Course				Total
	Employment	Learning	Unemployed	Other	
<b>Employment</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	5.8%	0.5%	1.2%	<b>1,604</b>
<b>Learning</b>	12.7%	<b>32.6%</b>	2.0%	2.0%	<b>1,558</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	2.9%	3.3%	<b>2.3%</b>	0.8%	<b>389</b>
<b>Other</b>	1.6%	2.1%	0.3%	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,865</b>	<b>1,489</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>3,901</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n = 3,901 (six months after)

Note: 533 invalid responses were excluded.

## Overall Educational Experience

**Table 5** provides an overview of the overall education experience reported by FE College leavers. Seventy-seven per cent (70.7%) of leavers agreed that 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 three-fifths (58.5%) would be unlikely to do a different kind of qualification, and under one-fifth (18.9%) would do something completely different (**Tables S35 to S42**).

**Table 5: If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would...**

Response	Do a different subject (%)	Study at a different FE College (%)	Do a different kind of qualification (%)	Do something completely different (%)
Very likely	13.2	6.5	9.3	7.9
Likely	12.2	8.1	16.1	11.0
Not very likely	26.3	25.8	23.9	22.2
Not likely at all	35.2	44.9	34.6	43.0
Don't know	13.1	14.7	16.0	15.9
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>3,492</b>	<b>3,492</b>	<b>3,482</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

Note: Not all respondents answered all questions, therefore totals will vary.

### Destinations of Leavers by Key Profiling Variables

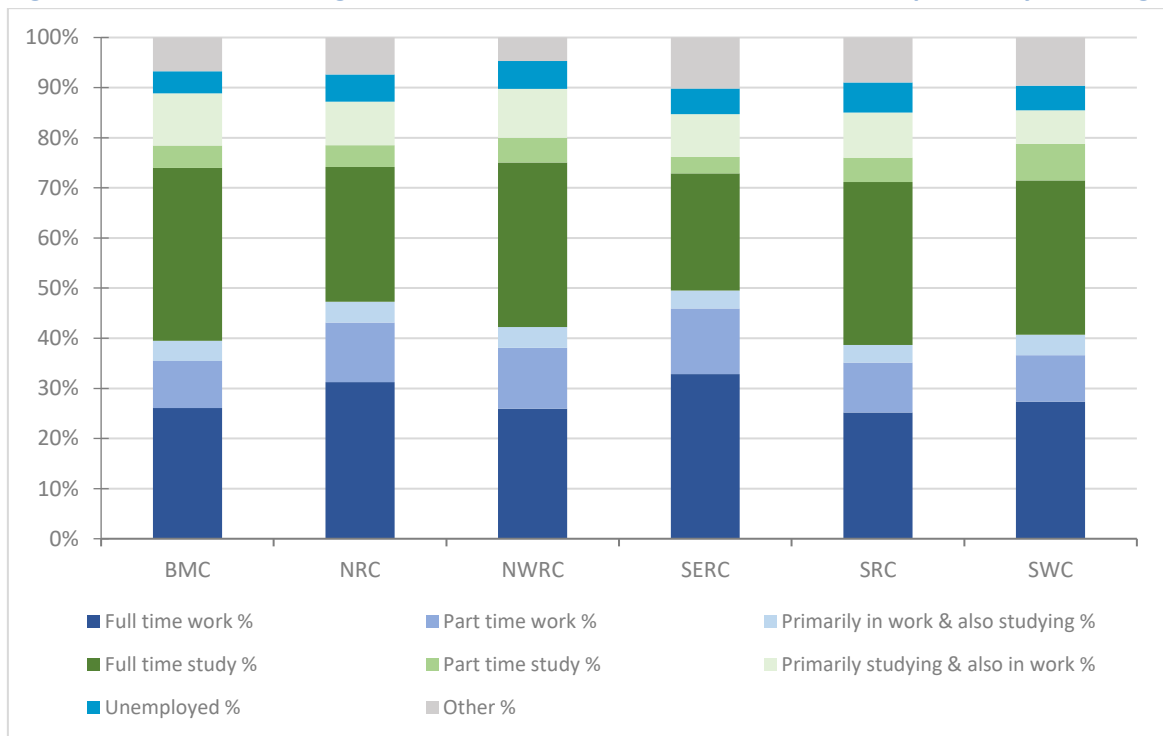
This section provides a comparison of each of the main destinations of the respondents to the Survey of FE College leavers 2016/17 by the key profiling variables (FE College, Gender, Age Group, Course Mode of Attendance and Level of Course Studied). Outputs for each are available in the online tables (**Table S15B**).

#### FE College

As **Figure 2** shows, each cohort of FE College leavers is broadly similar in terms of the activities they move on to after completion of their course. Full-time work and full-time study are the most popular activities 6 months after course completion; however, there are some variations across the colleges.

NRC and SERC have the highest proportions of leavers engaged in full time work. Conversely, NWRC and SRC have the highest proportions of leavers engaged in full time study.

**Figure 2: All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by FE College**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

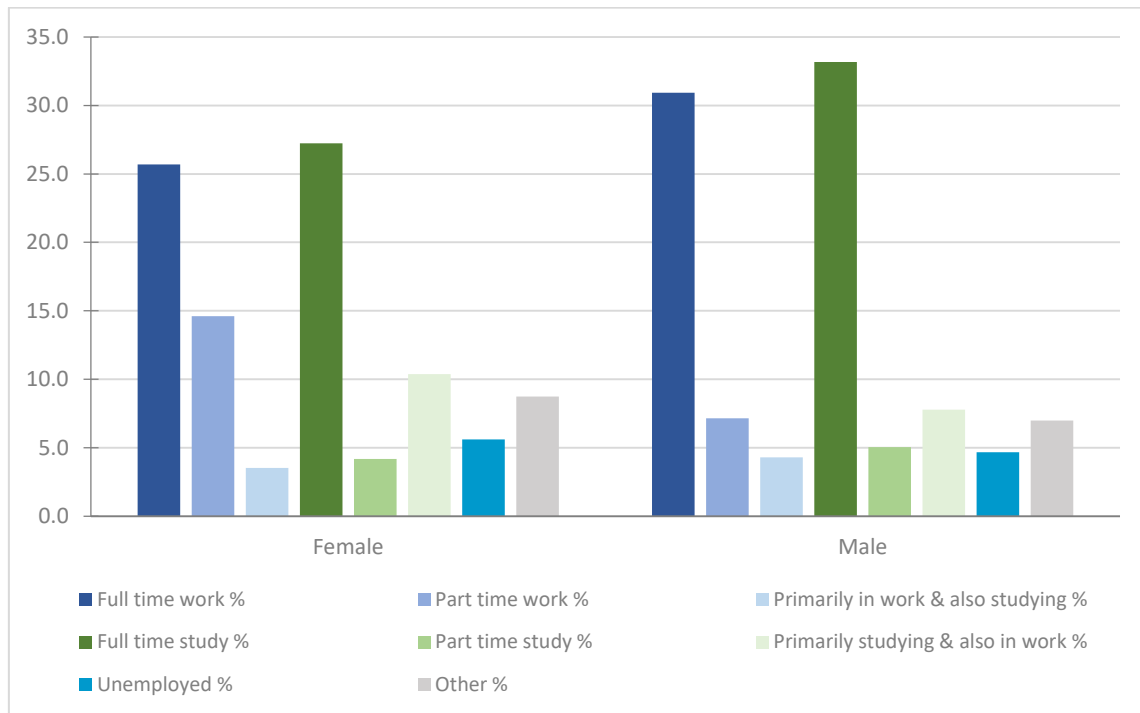
n=3,901

Note: 533 invalid responses were excluded.

Sex

**Figure 3** demonstrates that male leavers were more likely than female leavers to be in full-time work (30.9% vs 25.7%) or full-time study (33.2% vs 27.2%). Conversely, in line with the pattern in the economy more generally<sup>1</sup>, female FE College leavers were more likely than their male counterparts to be in part-time employment (14.6% vs 7.1%).

**Figure 3: All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by sex**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n=3,901

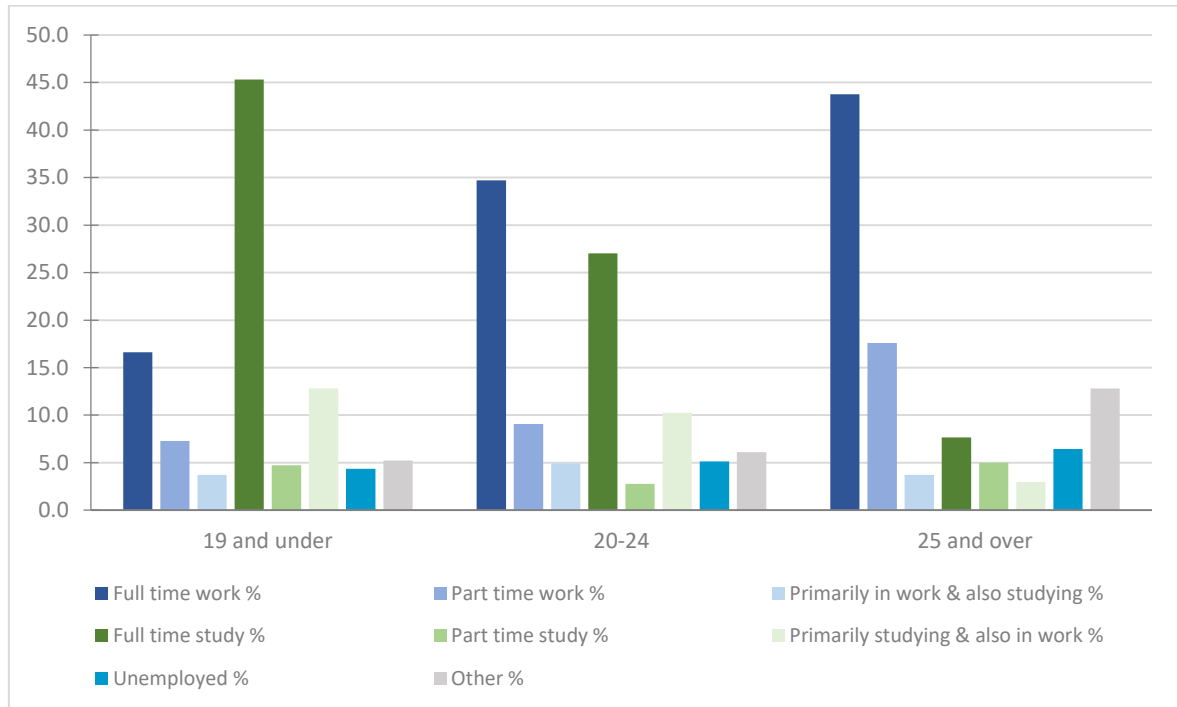
Note: 533 invalid responses were excluded.

<sup>1</sup>Northern Ireland. NISRA. (2017). *Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2017 – data tables*. Available at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/annual-report-tables-2017> (Accessed: 28 August 2018).

### Age Group

As illustrated in **Figure 4**, respondents over the age of 25 were most likely to be working full-time six months after completing their course (43.8%), in contrast to those aged 19 and under (16.6%). Conversely, those aged 19 and under were more than five times as likely to be studying full-time (45.3%) as those aged 25 and over (7.7%).

**Figure 4: All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by age band**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n= 3,901

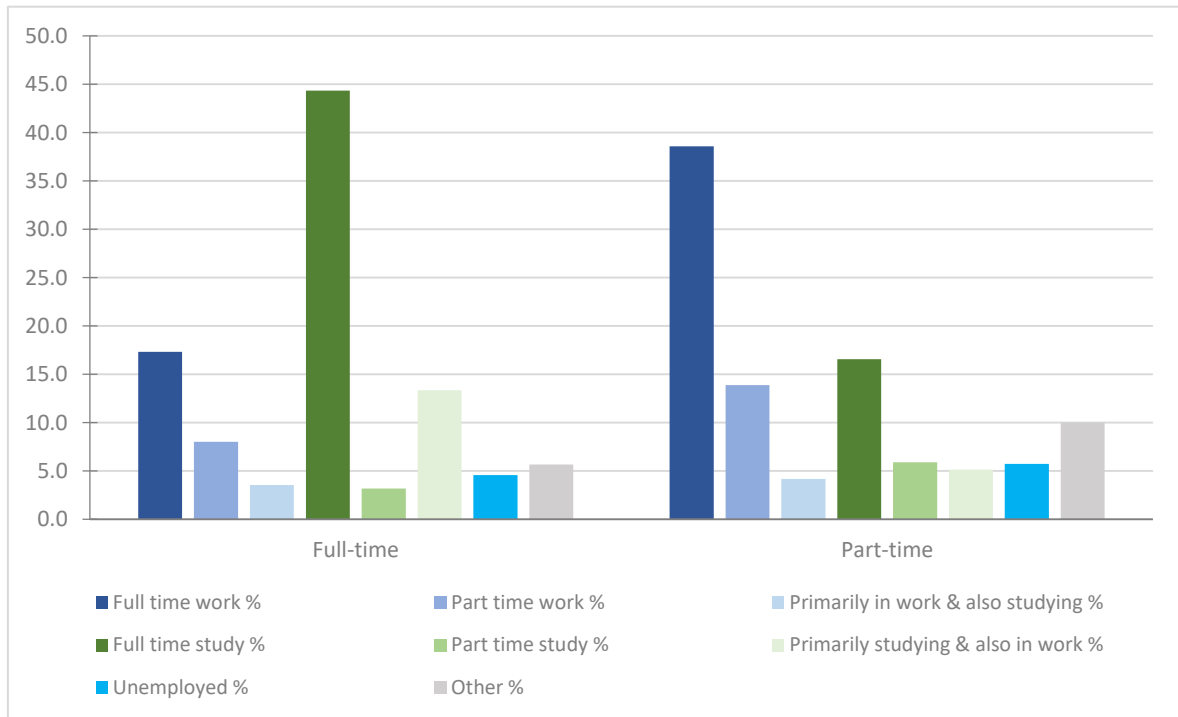
Note: 533 invalid responses were excluded.

**Course Mode of Attendance**

**Figure 5** indicates that the FE College leavers who had completed their studies on a part-time basis were more likely to be in employment either full-time or part-time (38.6% FT vs 13.9% PT) than those who had completed their studies on a full-time basis (17.3% FT vs 8.0% PT).

Leavers who had completed a course on a full-time basis were almost three times as likely as part-time leavers to be in full-time study six months later (44.4% vs 16.6%). They were also more likely to be primarily studying but also working (13.4% vs 5.1%).

**Figure 5: All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course by mode of attendance**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
 n=3,901

Note: 533 invalid responses were excluded.

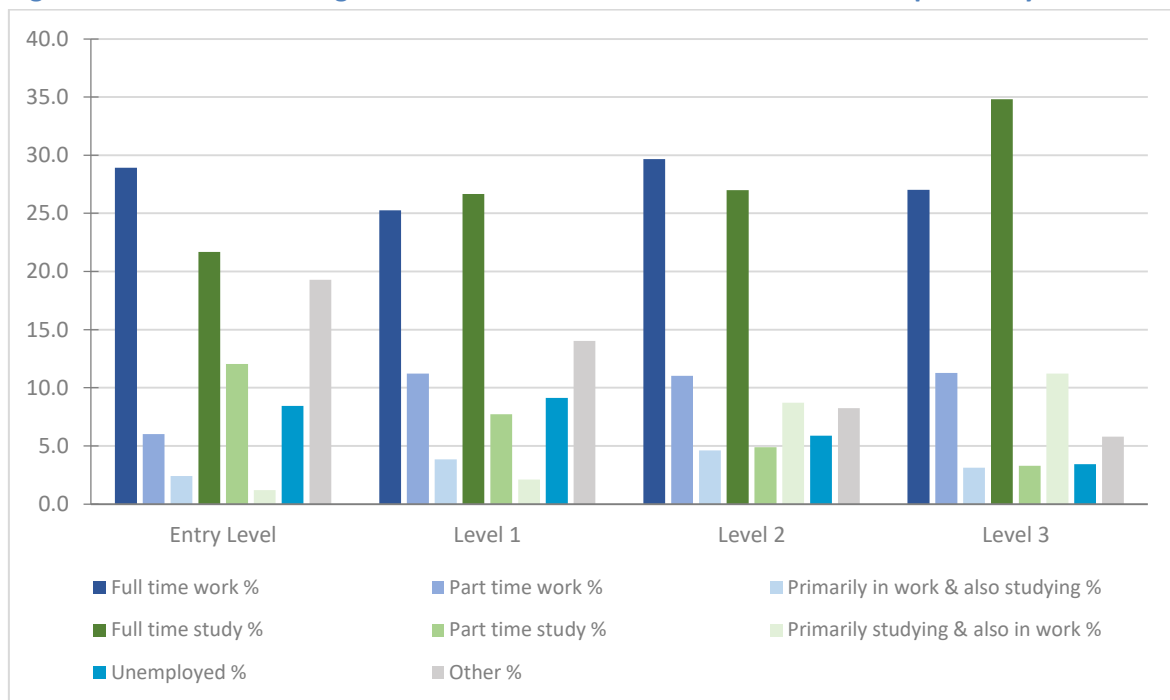


## Level of Study

Approximately six months after completing a course at FE College 21.7% of those who had studied a course at Entry Level were in full-time study, compared with 26.7% of those who had studied at Level 1, 27.0% who had studied at Level 2 and 34.8% who had studied at course at Level 3.

Almost one-tenth of those who had studied at Entry Level or Level 1 were unemployed (Entry Level = 8.4%, Level 1 = 9.1%), in contrast to 5.9% of those who had studied at Level 2, and 3.4% of those at Level 3 (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by level of study**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n=3,901

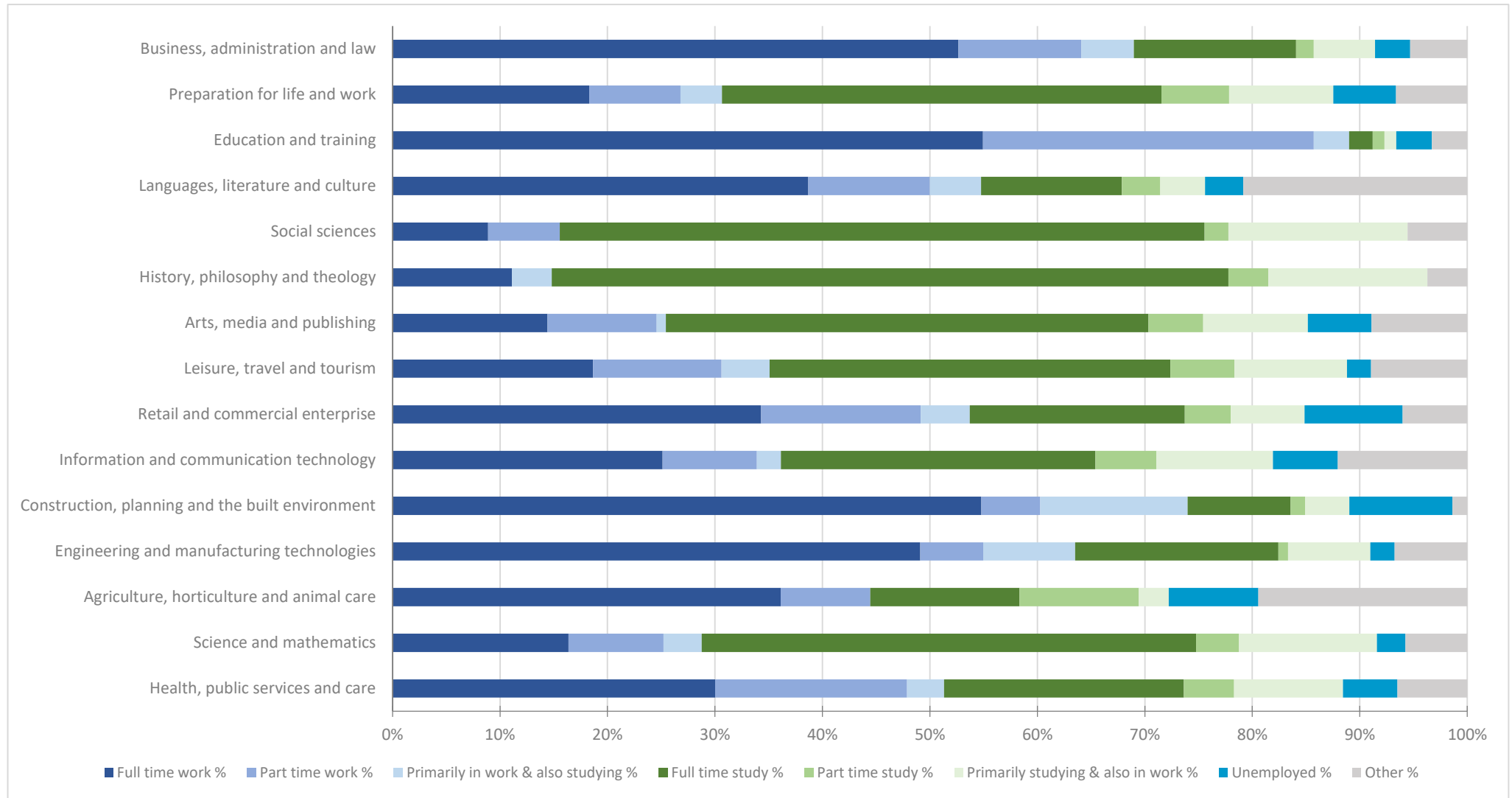
Note: 533 invalid responses were excluded.

## Subject

Approximately six months after leaving, 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%).

The subject areas with the lowest proportions of FE College leavers in full-time 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).

**Figure 7: All FE College leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by subject area**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n=4,434.

## 3.2 FE College Leavers in Employment

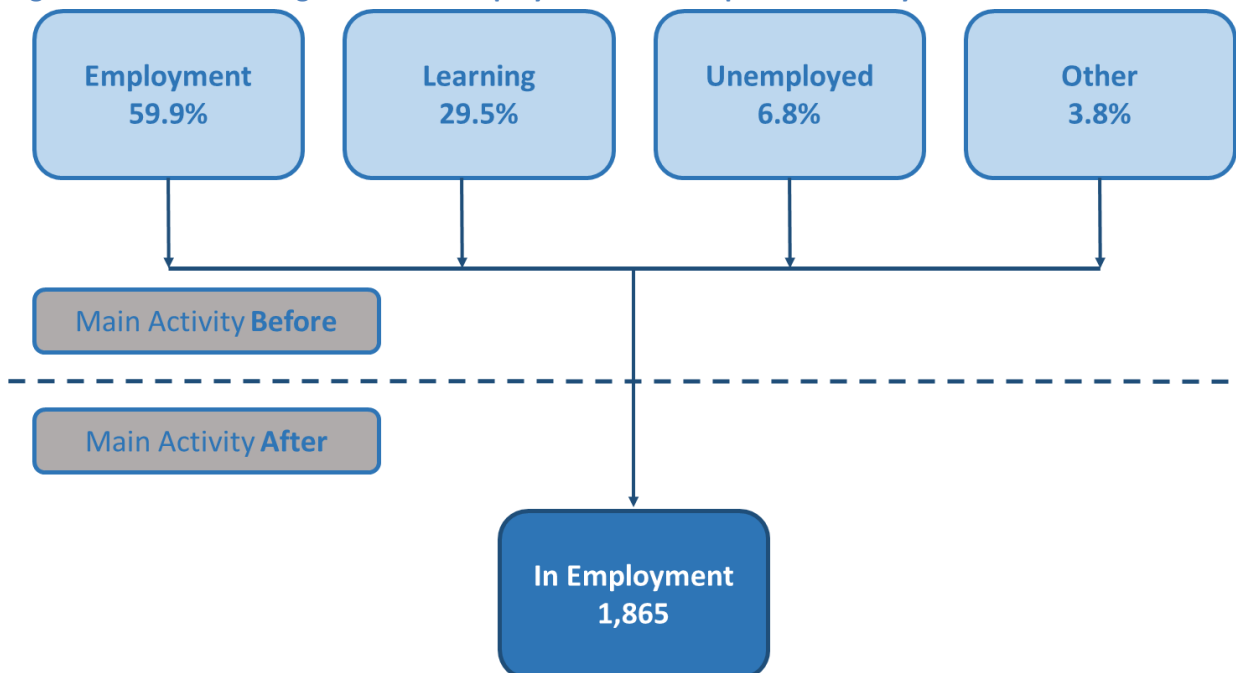
This section presents findings for the FE College leavers in employment six months after their course. This includes those leavers in full-time work, part-time work and those primarily in work but also studying. It provides: an overview of their main activities before the course; whether they have been using the skills and knowledge acquired from the course; their location of employment; whether those in employment before the course have remained with the same employer; how they had heard about the course; and their main reasons for taking the course.

### Overview of main activity before the course

Of the 1,865 FE College leavers in Employment six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 59.9% had previously been in employment
- 29.5% had previously been in learning
- 6.8% had previously been unemployed
- 3.8% had previously been categorised as other (**Figure 8 and Table A12A**)

Figure 8: FE College leavers in employment: most important activity before

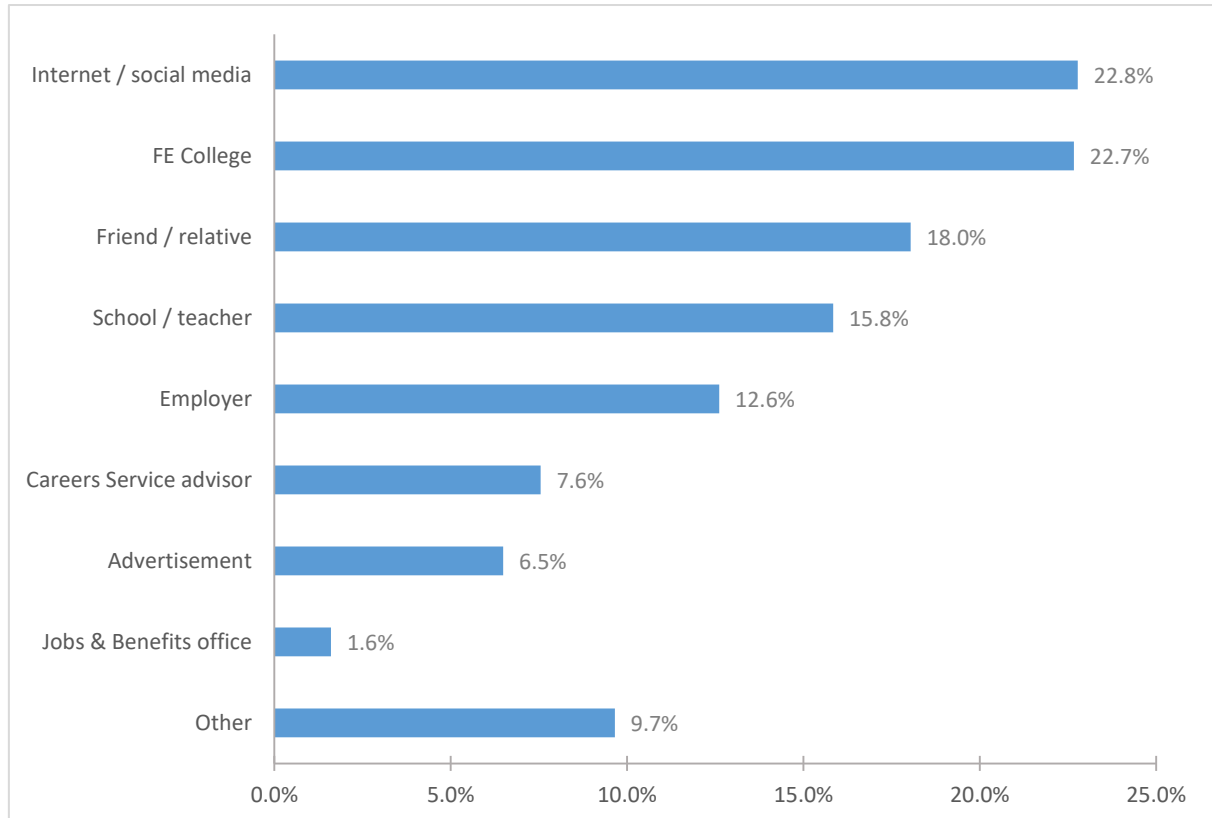


Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

**How did individuals hear about their course?**

FE College Leavers in employment were most likely to have heard about their course through: ‘Internet / social media’ (22.8%); ‘FE College’ (22.7%); ‘Friend / relative’ (18.0%); or ‘School / teacher’ (15.8%). While the same four response categories were also most popular among all FE College leavers, those in employment were less likely than all leavers to have heard about their course through their ‘School / teacher’ (15.8% vs 23.9%) or a ‘Friend / relative’ (18.0% vs 22.0%); although they were twice as likely to have heard through their ‘Employer’ (12.6% vs 6.0%) (**Figure 9 and Table S06**).

**Figure 9: FE College leavers in employment: how individuals had heard about their course**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
 n = 1,865

### Main reasons for undertaking the course

The 1,865 respondents to this question provided an average of 3 reasons for undertaking their course. The four most popular reasons for undertaking the course cited by leavers in employment were: 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (50.8%); 'I was interested in the subject' (48.4%); 'I wanted to learn something / gain new skills' (45.1%); and 'I wanted to gain a qualification' (43.2%) (Tables 6 and S12A).

When asked to give the most important reason for undertaking their course, leavers in employment were most likely to say: 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (29.1%); 'I was interested in the subject' (16.9%) or 'I wanted to learn something / gain new skills' (14.6%) (Tables 6 and S12B).

**Table 6: FE College leavers in employment: main reasons for undertaking course**

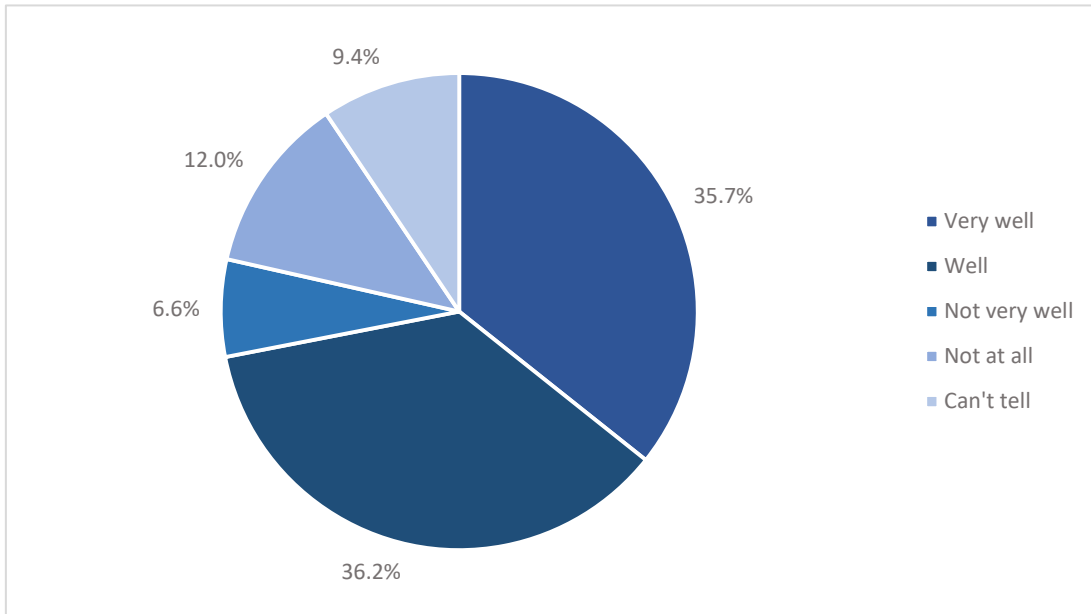
Reason	Overall %	Most Important %
I thought it would improve my career prospects	50.8	29.1
I was interested in the subject	48.4	16.9
I wanted to learn something / gain new skills	45.1	14.6
I wanted to gain a qualification	43.2	10.6
I wanted to go on to further / higher learning	22.9	9.0
I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job	21.9	9.9
It was at a time / place that suited me	13.9	0.8
I wanted to meet new people and build my self-confidence	13.3	1.3
I wanted greater job satisfaction	10.5	1.6
I wanted to increase my income	8.8	0.9
I did not have to pay for it	8.1	0.6
I was encouraged to do so by my employer	6.0	0.7
I was required to do so by my employer	5.1	2.9
Other	1.8	1.1

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n = 1,865

### Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

Seven-tenths (71.9%) of FE College leavers who took part in the survey and who were in employment stated the course they had undertaken at FE College during 2016/17 had prepared them well for employment; in particular, 35.7% said 'very well' (**Chart 1 and Table S19**).

**Chart 1: FE College leavers in employment: How well did your recent course prepare you for employment?**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

*n* = 1,602

Note: 263 invalid responses were excluded.

### Subject area

Two subjects areas accounted for almost a third (31.7%) of the FE College leavers in employment: 'Preparation for Life and Work' (16.6%) and 'Health, public services and care' (15.1%) (**Table A8**).

### Employment type

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% were working in one or more part-time jobs, while 9.0% were primarily working but also studying (**Table A11**).

## Salary

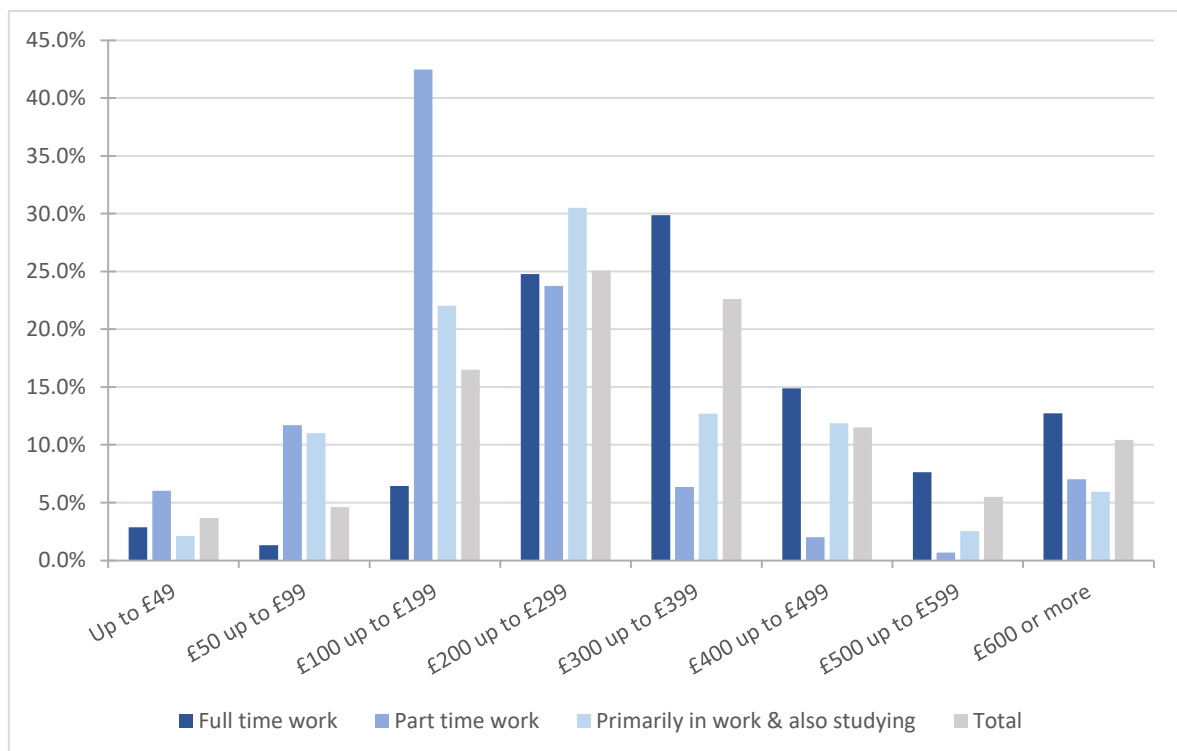
The median weekly salary for all FE College leavers in employment was £300 (£340 for those in full-time work).

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 (**Figure 10** and **Table S23**).

Males (36.4%) were almost twice as likely as females (19.7%) to be earning £400 or more per week (**Table S24**). Men on average work longer hours per week than women as a higher proportion of males work full-time, and full-time workers earn more on average than part-time workers<sup>2</sup>.

Putting these figures into context, the median full-time weekly pay in NI for April 2017 was £501 according to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)<sup>3</sup>, although it should be noted that the age distribution of FE College leavers is much younger than that of the overall working population.

**Figure 10: FE College leavers in employment by employment type: pay bands**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17.

n = 1,441

Note: 163 invalid responses were excluded.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland. NISRA. (2017). *Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*. Available at:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/ashe-headline-statistics-northern-ireland> (Accessed:

Northern Ireland. NISRA. (2017). *Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*. Available at:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/4xu-NI-ASHE-Bulletin-2017.PDF> (Accessed:

<sup>3</sup> Northern Ireland. NISRA. (2017). *Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*. Available at:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/4xu-NI-ASHE-Bulletin-2017.PDF> (Accessed:

### Where did they work?

The vast majority of the FE College leavers in Employment were working in Northern Ireland (95.5%); 3.0% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 0.7% in England, Scotland or Wales, and 0.8% overseas (**Tables 7 and S17**).

**Table 7: FE College leavers in employment: location of employment**

Country	%
Northern Ireland	95.5
Republic of Ireland	3.0
Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales)	0.7
Outside UK	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,584</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n = 1,584

Note: 281 invalid responses were excluded.

### Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)

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%) (**Figure 4 and Table S18**).

**Figure 11: FE College leavers in employment: Standard Occupational Classification**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17.  
n = 1,748

Note: 117 invalid responses were excluded.



In 2017, according to ONS<sup>4</sup> analysis, 61% of non-graduates aged 22 to 29 work in one of four occupation types:

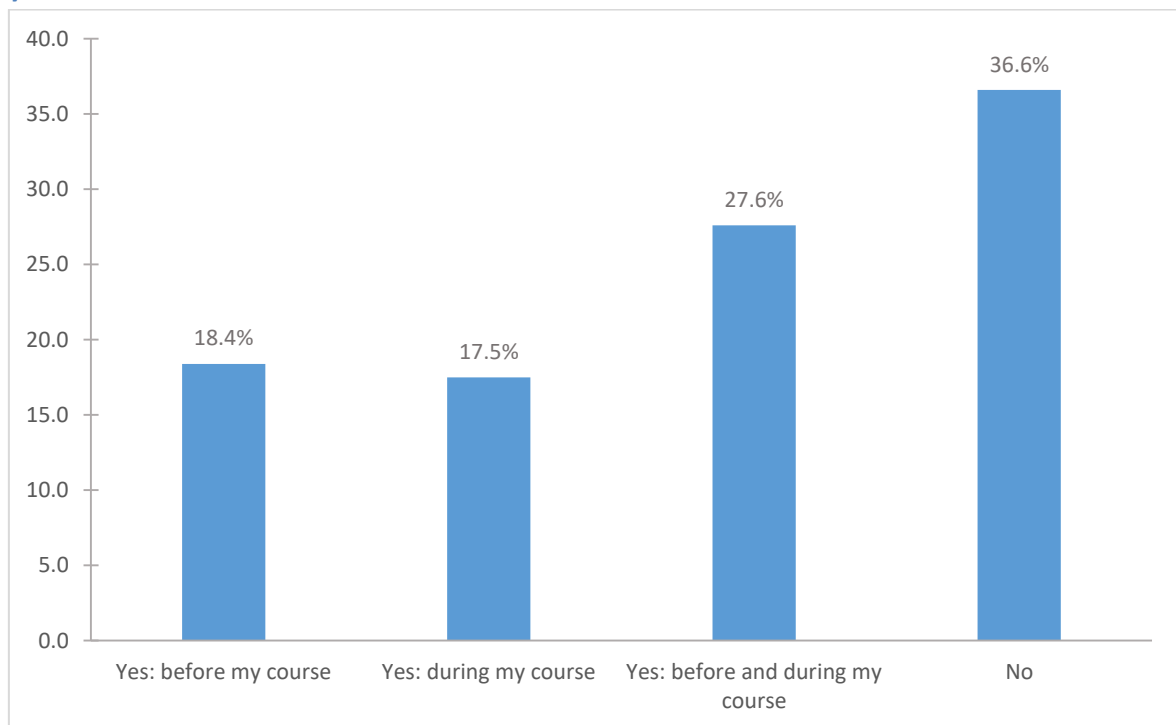
- Elementary occupations eg. cleaner, warehouse work and security guard
- Skilled trade occupations eg. building and plumbing
- Caring, leisure and other service occupations
- Sales and customer service occupations.

While analysis from the Survey of FE College Leavers is not limited to the 22 to 29 age range, findings show a similar 60.5% of respondents are employed in one of these four occupation types.

### Employed before and after with the same employer

Of those in **paid employment before and after** completing their course, almost two-thirds (63.5%) had worked for their employer before and / or during their 2016/17 course (**Figure 12 and Table S20**).

**Figure 12: FE College leavers in employment: Did you work for this employer before or during your course?**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n = 1,604

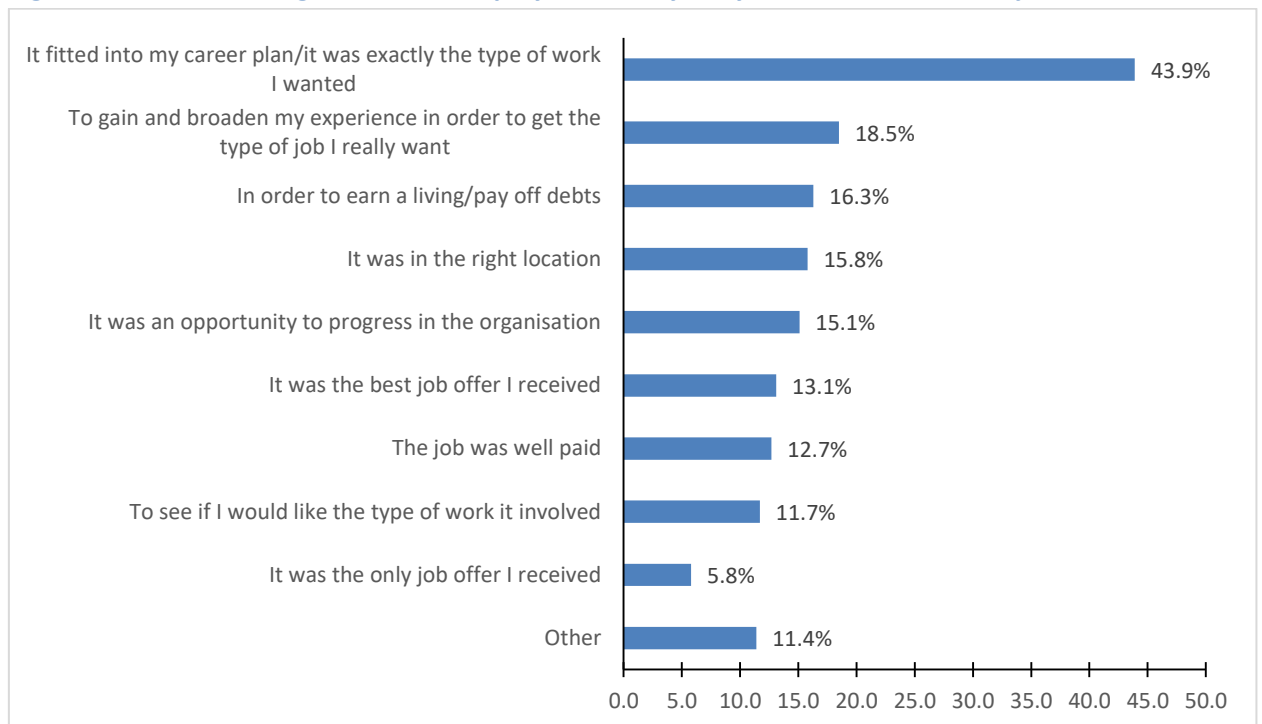
Note: 261 invalid responses were excluded.

<sup>4</sup> UK. ONS. (2018). *One in eight young people without degrees work in graduate jobs*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/oneineightyoungpeoplewithoutdegreesworkinggraduatejobs/2018-09-18> (Accessed: 19 October 2018).

### Why did you decide to take this job?

Gaining the type of job they wanted was more important to FE College leavers than a high level of income according to 2016/17 survey respondents. 'It fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted' (43.9%) was more than twice as popular as the second most common response, 'to gain/broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want' (18.5%). 'The job was well paid' (12.7%) was the fourth least popular response (**Table S21**).

**Figure 13: FE College leavers in employment: Why did you decide to take this job?**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n = 1,604.

Note: 261 respondents did not answer this question.

## Overall Educational Experience

**Table 8** provides an overview of the overall education experience reported by FE College leavers in learning. Over two-thirds (68.2%) of respondents agreed that, were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Almost two-thirds (57.5%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while just over half (51.0%) would be unlikely to do a different kind of qualification, and over one-fifth (22.3%) would do something completely different (**Tables S35, S37, S39 and S41**).

**Table 8: If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would...**

Response	Do a different subject (%)	Study at a different FE College (%)	Do a different kind of qualification (%)	Do something completely different (%)
Very likely	15.2	6.9	12.1	9.4
Likely	14.2	8.7	19.6	12.9
Not very likely	25.0	27.3	20.8	22.5
Not likely at all	32.5	40.9	30.2	37.1
Don't know	13.0	16.2	17.4	18.2
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>1,581</b>	<b>1,582</b>	<b>1,577</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

Note: As not all respondents answered all questions, totals will vary.

### 3.3 FE College Leavers in Learning

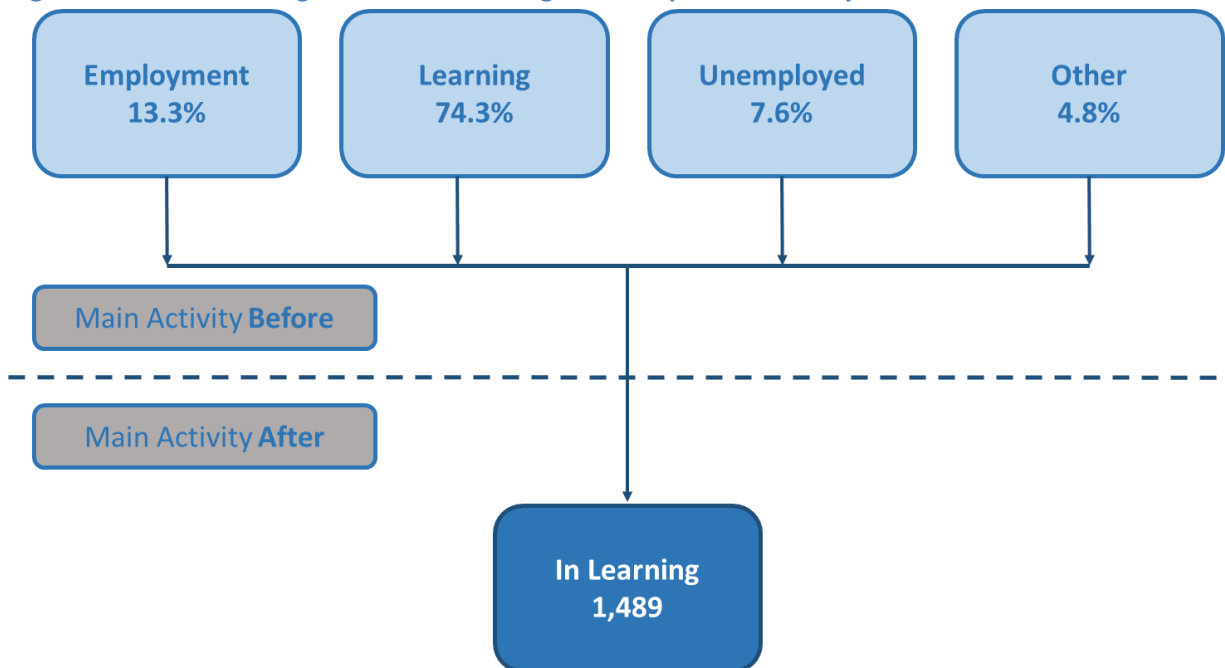
This section presents findings for FE College leavers in learning six months after their 2016/17 course, including those in full-time study, part-time study or primarily studying but also in work. It contains an overview of: their main activities before the course; their learning progression; whether they have been using the skills and knowledge acquired from the course; how they had heard about the course; and their main reasons for taking the course.

#### Overview of main activity before the course

Of the 1,489 FE College leavers in learning six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 13.3% had previously been in employment
- 74.3% had previously been in learning
- 7.6% had previously been unemployed
- 4.8% had previously been categorised as other (**Figure 14 and Table A12b**).

Figure 14: FE College leavers in learning: most important activity before

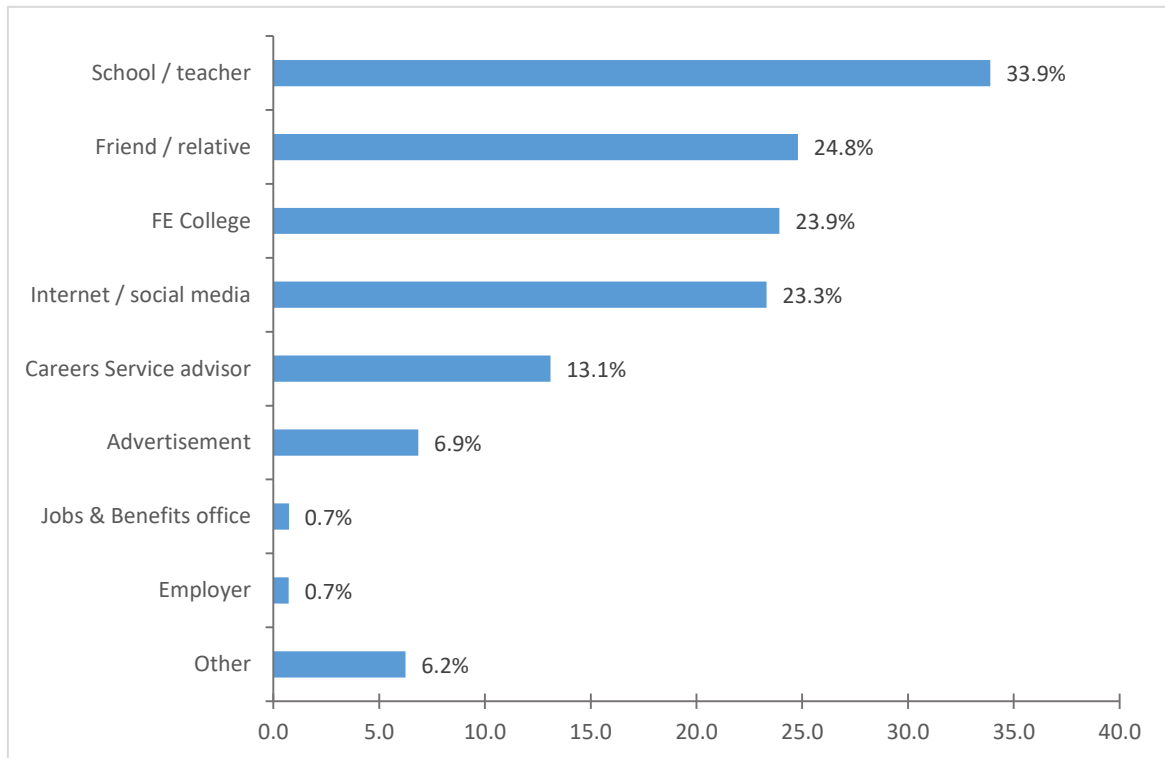


Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

**How did individuals hear about their course?**

FE College Leavers in learning were most likely to have heard about their course through: ‘School / teacher’ (33.9%); ‘Friend / relative’ (24.8%); ‘FE College’ (23.9%); or ‘Internet / social media’ (23.3%). While the same four response categories were also most popular among all FE College leavers, those in learning were more likely than all leavers to mention these information sources, in particular ‘School / teacher’ (33.9% vs 23.9%) (Figure 15 and Table S06).

**Figure 15: FE College leavers in Learning: how individuals had heard about their course**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n = 1,489

### Main reasons for undertaking the completed course

The 1,489 leavers in learning who responded to this question provided an average of 3 reasons for undertaking their course. The four most popular reasons cited were: 'I was interested in the subject' (54.7%); 'I wanted to go on to further / higher learning' (51.8%); 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (48.7%); and 'I wanted to gain a qualification' (46.5%) (**Tables 9 and S12A**).

When asked to give the most important reason for undertaking their course, leavers in learning were most likely to say: 'I wanted to go on to further / higher learning' (30.8%); 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (21.9%); or 'I was interested in the subject' (21.1%) (**Tables 9 and S12B**).

**Table 9: FE College leavers in learning: main reasons for undertaking course**

Reason	Overall %	Most Important %
I was interested in the subject	54.7	21.1
I wanted to go on to further / higher learning	51.8	30.8
I thought it would improve my career prospects	48.7	21.9
I wanted to gain a qualification	46.5	10.0
I wanted to learn something new / gain new skills	34.9	9.4
I wanted to meet new people and build my self-confidence	18.6	1.5
It was at a time / place that suited me	13.7	0.6
I did not have to pay for it	8.1	0.5
I wanted greater job satisfaction	6.2	0.9
I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job	4.9	0.7
I wanted to increase my income	4.3	0.4
I was encouraged to do so by my employer	0.9	0.2
I was required to do so by my employer	0.7	0.4
Other	2.5	1.6

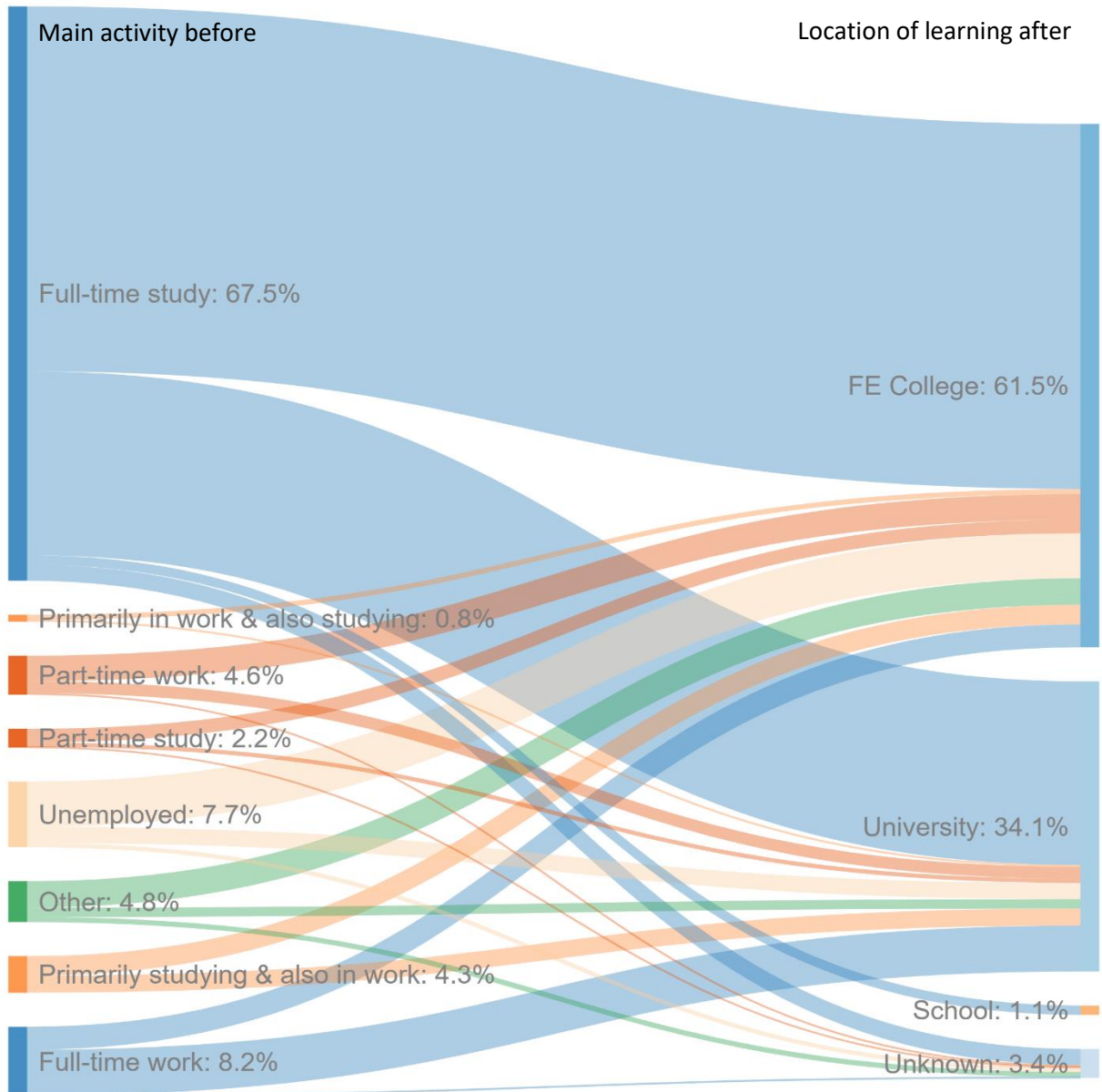
Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n = 1,489

### Learning progression

Of the 1,489 FE College leavers in learning six months after their course, almost three-quarters (74.3%) had also been in learning before the course they had completed in 2016/17 (**Figure 14**).

As illustrated in the Sankey Diagram overleaf (**Figure 16**), six months after completing and achieving their course, most FE College leavers in learning were continuing their learning at FE Colleges (61.5%), while over one-third (34.1%) had started university (**Table S29**).

**Figure 16: FE College leavers in learning after course: main activity before course and location of additional learning**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n=1,421

Note: 68 invalid responses were excluded.

### Studying at a higher level

Over four-fifths (80.9%) of FE College leavers in learning said their additional learning is at a higher level than the course they had completed in 2016/17 (**Table S28**).

Of the FE College leavers in learning who had been in full-time study before their 2016/17 course, almost four-fifths of each group have progressed to additional learning at a higher level after their course (**Tables 10 and A10**).

Of the 1,421 respondents undertaking additional learning, over nine-tenths (94.7%) had completed a course at Level 2 or 3 (**Table S28**).

**Table 10: FE College leavers in learning before and after course: progression to study at a higher level (by location of learning)**

Main Activity (Learning) <u>before</u> Course	Attending additional Learning <u>after</u> Course at:			Total (Before)	Undertaking additional learning at a higher level
	University	FE College	School		
Full-time study	39.6%	57.4%	1.2%	1,092	79.5%
Part-time study	25.0%	71.9%	0.0%	35	88.9%
Primarily studying but also in work	53.4%	46.6%	0.0%	69	84.1%

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17.

Note: Excludes those studying at locations other than those listed above

### Studying at the same level

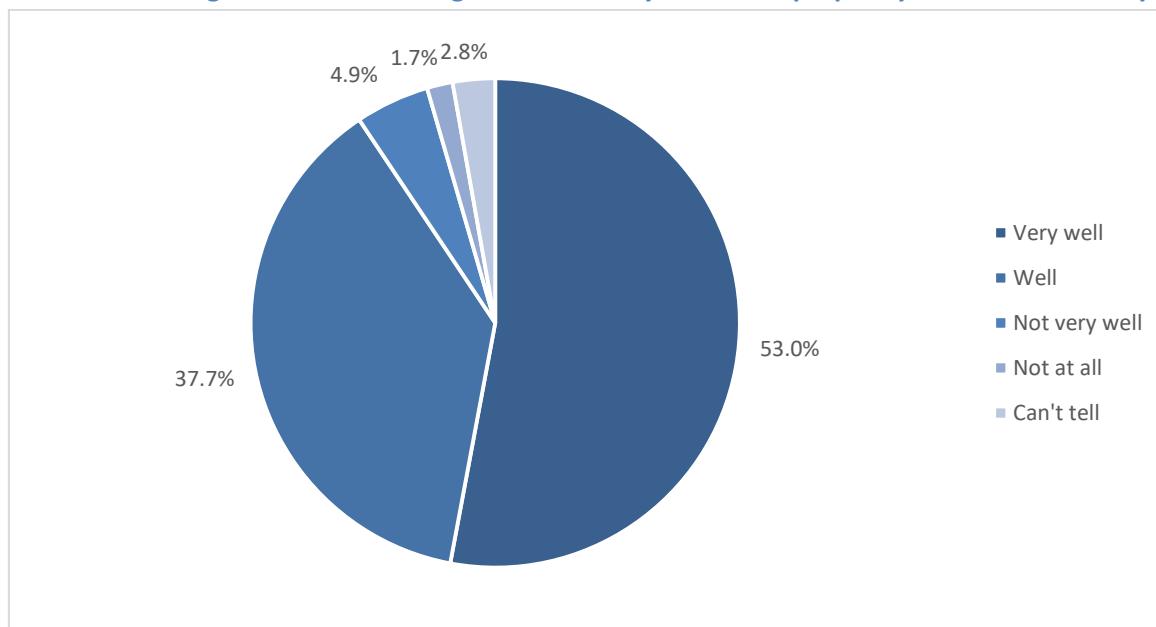
Of the FE College leavers who provided details about their additional learning, 1.2% said this would lead to a qualification at the same level as the course they had undertaken in 2016/17 (**Table S28**).



### Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

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; in particular, 53.0% said ‘very well’ (**Chart 2 and Table S30**).

**Chart 2: FE College leavers in learning: how well did your course prepare you for further study?**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

n = 1,421

Note: 68 invalid responses were excluded.

### Overall Educational Experience

**Table 11** provides an overview of the overall education experience reported by FE College leavers in learning. Three-quarters (74.3%) of respondents agreed that, were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Over two-thirds (68.1%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while two thirds (67.5%) would be unlikely to do a different kind of qualification, and one in seven (13.6%) would do something completely different (**Table S35**).

**Table 11: If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would...**

Response	Do a different subject (%)	Study at a different FE College (%)	Do a different kind of qualification (%)	Do something completely different (%)
Very likely	9.6	5.5	5.8	5.4
Likely	10.4	7.4	12.0	8.2
Not very likely	28.4	25.5	27.6	22.9
Not likely at all	39.7	48.8	39.9	50.3
Don't know	11.9	12.7	14.7	13.2
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>1,402</b>	<b>1,398</b>	<b>1,396</b>	<b>1,391</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

Note: As not all respondents answered all questions, totals will vary.

### 3.4 Unemployed FE College Leavers

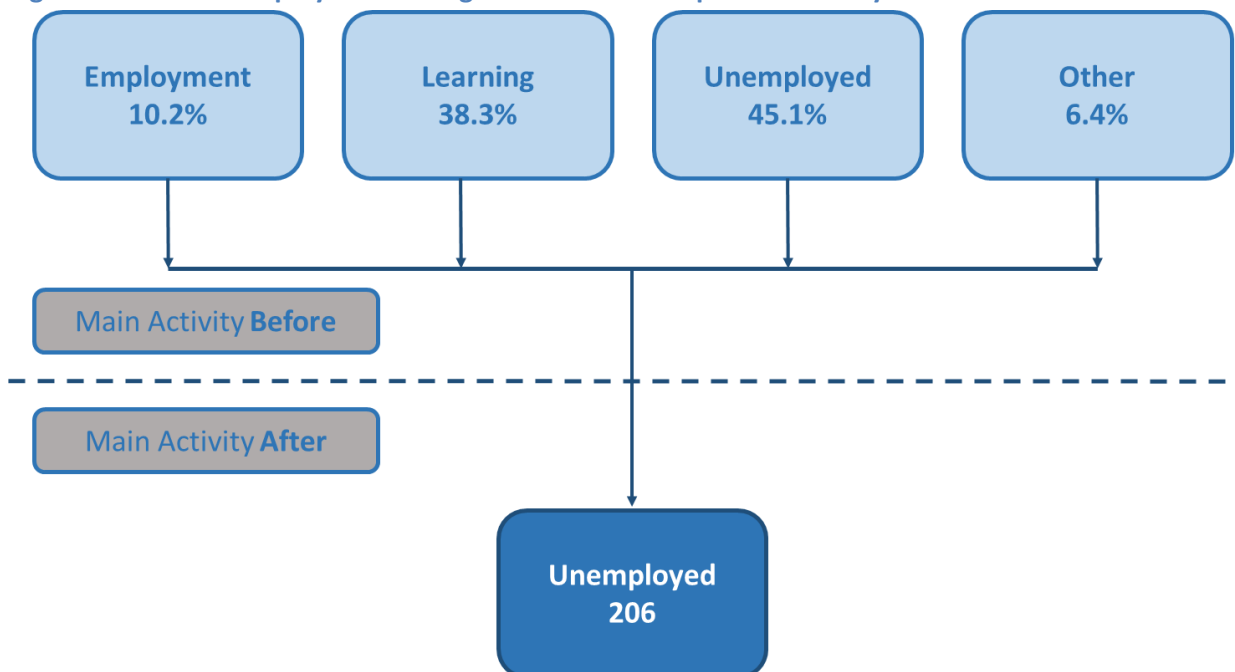
This section presents findings for FE College leavers who were unemployed and looking for work six months after their course, including: an overview of their main activities before the course; how long they have been unemployed; how they had heard about the course; and the main reasons for taking the course.

#### Overview of main activity before the course

Of the 206 FE College leavers who were unemployed six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 10.2% had previously been in employment
- 38.3% had previously been in learning
- 45.1% had previously been unemployed
- 6.4% had previously been categorised as other (Figure 17 and Table A12c).

Figure 17: Unemployed FE College leavers: most important activity before

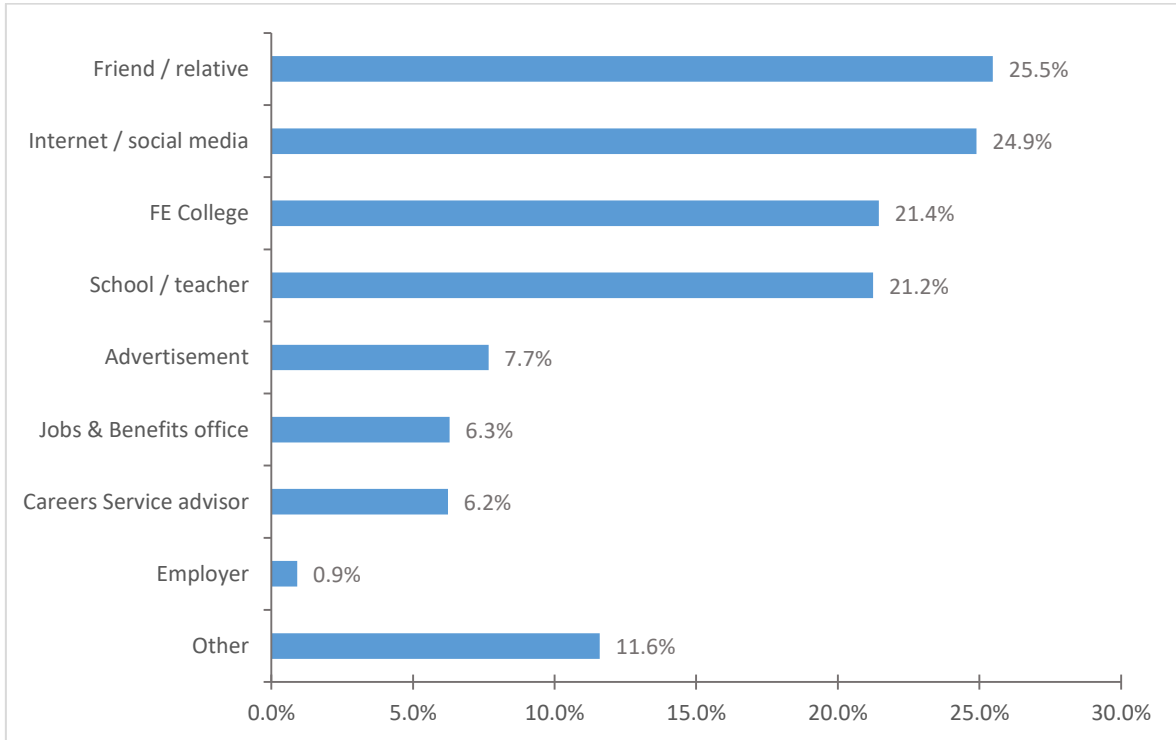


Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

**How did individuals hear about their course?**

Unemployed FE College Leavers were most likely to have heard about their course through: ‘Friend / relative’ (25.5%); ‘Internet / social media’ (24.9%); ‘FE College’ (21.4%); or ‘School / teacher’ (21.2%). These top four reasons were also the most popular among all FE College leavers (**Figure 18 and Table S06**).

**Figure 18: Unemployed FE College leavers: how individuals had heard about their course**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n = 206

### Main reasons for undertaking the course

The 206 unemployed leavers who responded to this question provided an average of 3 reasons for completing their course. The four most popular reasons cited were: 'I was interested in the subject' (48.7%); 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (46.8%); 'I wanted to learn something / gain new skills' (44.5%); and 'I wanted to gain a qualification' (41.7%) (**Tables 12 and S12A**).

When asked to give the most important reason for undertaking their course, unemployed leavers were most likely to say: 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (28.5%); 'I was interested in the subject' (23.5%); or 'I wanted to learn something / gain new skills' (17.9%) (**Tables 12 and S12B**).

**Table 12: Unemployed FE College leavers: main reasons for undertaking course**

Reason	Overall %	Most Important %
I thought it would improve my career prospects	62.5	28.5
I was interested in the subject	48.7	23.5
I wanted to learn something / gain new skills	44.5	17.9
I wanted to gain a qualification	41.7	12.8
I wanted to go on to further / higher learning	19.8	10.2
I wanted to meet new people and build my self-confidence	19.8	2.4
I did not have to pay for it	10.9	1.8
I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job	4.3	0.6
I wanted to increase my income	3.9	0.0
I wanted greater job satisfaction	3.3	0.0
I was encouraged to do so by my employer	1.5	0.5
It was at a time / place that suited me	0.0	0.9
I was required to do so by my employer	0.0	0.0
Other	3.5	0.9

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17  
n = 206

## Subject area

Four subject areas account for almost three-quarters (72.6%) of unemployed FE College leavers: 'Preparation for life and work' (26.5%); 'Information and Communication Technology' (17.4%); 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (16.1%); and 'Health, public services and care' (12.6%) (**Tables 13 and A13**).

**Table 13: Unemployed FE College leavers: subject area studied**

Subject Area	% of All Subjects
Preparation for life and work	26.5%
Information and communication technology	17.4%
Retail and commercial enterprise	16.1%
Health, public services and care	12.6%
Arts, media and publishing	7.0%
Business, administration and law	4.0%
Construction, planning and the built environment	3.3%
Languages, literature and culture	3.2%
Science and mathematics	3.0%
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2.5%
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	1.6%
Leisure, travel and tourism	1.4%
Education and training	1.4%
History, philosophy and theology	0.0%
Social sciences	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17.  
n = 206.

## Any employment after course?

Less than one-fifth (19.9%) of the unemployed FE College leavers said they had had some employment in the six months since completing their course (**Table S32**).

## Long-term unemployment?

Over four-fifths (86.7%) of those unemployed before and after their course report being in long-term unemployment<sup>5</sup>. Of these, almost three quarters (72.1%) were aged 25 years and over and nearly four-fifths (78.3%) had studied their course at Level 2 or below (**Table S34**).

## Not unemployed before the course

The largest group of leavers to move into unemployment had previously been in learning (38.3%), while one-tenth (10.2%) had been in employment (**Figure 17**).

<sup>5</sup> Long-term unemployment refers to the number of people who are out of work and have been actively seeking employment for at least a year. (Europe. eurostat (2015) *Statistics Explained*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Long-term\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Long-term_unemployment) (Accessed: 6 September 2018))

## Overall Educational Experience

**Table 14** provides an overview of the overall education experience reported by unemployed FE College leavers. Three-fifths (60.1%) of leavers agreed that were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Almost two-fifths (38.4%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while a similar proportion (40.7%) would be unlikely to do a different kind of qualification, and over a third (34.7%) would do something completely different (**Tables S35, S37, S39 and S41**).

**Table 14: If you were to do your course again, how likely or unlikely is it that you would...**

Response	Do a different subject (%)	Study at a different FE College (%)	Do a different kind of qualification (%)	Do something completely different (%)
Very likely	31.2	11.0	18.9	18.8
Likely	11.7	9.5	24.6	15.9
Not very likely	17.9	18.6	16.7	18.8
Not likely at all	20.5	41.5	24.0	27.2
Don't know	18.7	19.3	15.9	19.3
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>194</b>

Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2016/17

Note: Not all respondents answered all questions, therefore totals will vary.

## Annex A - Commonly used terms and abbreviations

<b>Academic year:</b>	1st August to 31st July.
<b>Course:</b>	A course leading to a regulated qualification at Level 3 or below.
<b>Further Education sector:</b>	The six FE Colleges in NI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)</li> <li>• Northern Regional College (NRC)</li> <li>• North West Regional College (NWRC)</li> <li>• South Eastern Regional College (SERC)</li> <li>• Southern Regional College (SRC)</li> <li>• South West College (SWC)</li> </ul>
<b>FE College leavers:</b>	FE College leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification at Level 3 or below during the 2016/17 academic year.
<b>FE College leavers in employment:</b>	This includes: working in paid employment; self-employed; and waiting to start a confirmed job.
<b>FE College leavers in learning:</b>	This includes: on a scheme/training scheme; waiting to start a confirmed scheme; at school in sixth form; at FE College; at university; or waiting to start a confirmed course at college/university.
<b>FE College leavers who were unemployed:</b>	This includes FE College leavers who were unemployed and looking for work.
<b>FE College leavers classed as other:</b>	This includes any FE College leavers not included in 'employment', 'learning' or 'unemployed'.
<b>Main activity:</b>	Respondents were asked to select the activity they spent the majority of their time doing both before and after their course. See <b>Table 3</b> .
<b>Main activity group:</b>	The 7 main activities (above) are grouped into four main activity groups: 'employment'; 'learning'; 'unemployed'; and 'other'. See <b>Table 4</b> .
<b>Qualification level:</b>	Each regulated qualification has a level between Entry Level and Level 8. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different. For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Republic of Ireland and overseas please refer to the link: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean">https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean</a>
<b>Regulated Qualification:</b>	Any course at Level 3 or below offering a qualification that has a qualification code on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or any course at Level 4 or above.

**Sector Subject Area:** Sector Subject Areas (SSAs) were developed according to industry sector and academic subject area by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Department for Education and Skills (Wales), along with other key educational bodies. They aim to allow more consistent reporting of data across the UK. SSA codes are derived from the OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications, based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation: <http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/>



## Annex B - Questionnaire

According to our records you attended [insert college name] College during the 2016/17 academic year and you completed the course [insert course title].

### SECTION A: What were you doing before your 2016/17 course at FE College

#### ASK ALL

1. How did you hear about your course? *(please select all that apply)*

- School/teacher
- Careers Service advisor
- FE College
- Internet / social media
- Employer
- Jobs & Benefits office
- Advertisement
- Friend / relative
- Other

2. What were your reasons for undertaking this course? *(please select all that apply)*

- I thought it would improve my career prospects
- I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job
- I wanted to increase my income
- I wanted greater job satisfaction
- I was encouraged to do so by my employer
- I was required to do so by my employer
- I wanted to learn something new / gain new skills
- I was interested in the subject
- I wanted to go on to further / higher learning
- I wanted to meet new people & build my self-confidence
- I wanted to gain a qualification
- It was at a time / place that suited me
- I didn't have to pay for it

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE SELECTED AT Q2  
IF JUST ONE RESPONSE AT Q2 AUTOMATICALLY CODE THIS TO Q3 AND GO TO Q4

3. What was your most important reason for undertaking your course *(please select one)*

- I thought it would improve my career prospects
- I wanted to improve my ability to do my current job
- I wanted to increase my income
- I wanted greater job satisfaction
- I was encouraged to do so by my employer
- I was required to do so by my employer
- I wanted to learn something new / gain new skills
- I was interested in the subject
- I wanted to go on to further / higher learning
- I wanted to meet new people & build my self-confidence
- I wanted to gain a qualification
- It was at a time / place that suited me
- I didn't have to pay for it

## ASK ALL

4. What were you doing BEFORE your course (please select all that apply)

- Working full-time
- Working part-time (one or more jobs)
- Studying full-time (15 or more hours per week)
- Studying part-time (less than 15 hours per week)
- Taking time out to travel
- Unemployed
- Doing something else

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE SELECTED AT Q4  
IF JUST ONE RESPONSE AT Q4 AUTOMATICALLY CODE THIS TO Q5 AND GO TO  
ROUTING BEFORE Q6

5. What were you doing BEFORE your course? (please select the ONE which was most important to you)

- Working full-time
- Working part-time (one or more jobs)
- Studying full-time (15 or more hours per week)
- Studying part-time (less than 15 hours per week)
- Taking time out to travel
- Unemployed
- Doing something else

IF EMPLOYED (Q5=1 OR 2) ASK SECTION B

### **SECTION B: Your employment before your 2016/17 FE College course**

**For the following questions, please provide details of what you considered to be your MAIN job. Your main job might be the one that you spent the most time doing, the one which paid you the most money or was related to your future plans.**

6. What was your job title?

7. Briefly describe what you did in your main job

8. Which best describes the basis on which you were employed?

- Paid employee on a permanent or open ended contract
- Paid employee on a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer
- Paid employee on a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months
- Temping (including supply teaching)
- On an internship / placement
- Voluntary work
- Self-employed / freelance
- Starting up own business
- Developing a professional portfolio / creative practice
- Other

**Any information you provide in relation to salary will assist us in determining the financial benefits of completing a course at FE College. No individual will be identified by these figures.**

9. We would like to ask you some general questions about your salary/earnings before tax. What payment period would you prefer to give this as?

- Annually
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Hourly
- Other (eg. fortnightly, per project)

10. In Pounds Sterling (£), what was your approximate gross pay before tax, for the payment period selected in Q9?

11. How many hours per week did you normally work? If this varied, please give an average.

12. Including all sources of employment, what do you estimate your annual gross pay before tax would be (£)?

13. Where was your place of work?

- Town / city / area
- Country (if not in Northern Ireland)

**IF UNEMPLOYED (Q5=6) ASK SECTION C**

**SECTION C: Your unemployment before your 2016/17 FE College course**

14. Were you unemployed for over a year before starting your course?

- Yes
- No

## ASK ALL SECTION D

### SECTION D: What were you doing last week?

15. What are you doing now? *(please select all that apply)*

- Working full-time
- Working part-time (one or more jobs)
- Studying full-time (15 or more hours per week)
- Studying part-time (less than 15 hours per week)
- Taking time out to travel
- Unemployed
- Doing something else

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE SELECTED AT Q15  
IF JUST ONE RESPONSE AT Q15 AUTOMATICALLY CODE THIS TO Q16 AND GO  
TO ROUTING BEFORE Q17

16. What are you doing now? *(please select the ONE which was most important to you)*

- Working full-time
- Working part-time (one or more jobs)
- Studying full-time (15 or more hours per week)
- Studying part-time (less than 15 hours per week)
- Taking time out to travel
- Unemployed
- Doing something else

IF EMPLOYED (Q16=1 OR 2) ASK SECTION E

### SECTION E: Your employment before your 2016/17 FE College course

**For the following questions, please provide details of what you consider to be your MAIN job as at last week. Your main job might be the one that you spend the most time doing, the one which pays you the most money or is related to your future plans.**

17. What is your job title?

18. Briefly describe what you do in your main job

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19. Which best describes the basis on which you are employed?

- Paid employee on a permanent or open ended contract
- Paid employee on a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer
- Paid employee on a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months
- Temping (including supply teaching)
- On an internship / placement
- Voluntary work
- Self-employed / freelance
- Starting up own business
- Developing a professional portfolio / creative practice
- Other

ASK ALL EXCEPT THOSE WHO WERE DOING VOLUNTARY WORK (Q19=6)  
ALLOW BLANKS FOR THOSE UNWILLING TO ANSWER

**Any information you provide in relation to salary will assist us in determining the financial benefits of completing a course at FE College. No individual will be identified by these figures.**

20. We would like to ask you some general questions about your salary/earnings before tax. What payment period would you prefer to give this as?

- Annually
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Hourly
- Other (eg. fortnightly, per project)

21. In Pounds Sterling (£), what was your approximate gross pay before tax, for the payment period selected in Q20?

22. How many hours per week did you normally work? If this varied, please give an average.

23. Including all sources of employment, what do you estimate your annual gross pay before tax would be (£)?

24. Where was your place of work?

- Town / city / area
- Country (if not in Northern Ireland)

25. Why did you decide to take this job?

- It fitted into my career plan / it was exactly the type of work I wanted
- It was the best job offer I received
- It was the only job offer I received
- It was an opportunity to progress in the organisation
- To see if I would like the type of work it involved
- To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want
- It was in the right location
- The job was well-paid
- In order to earn a living / pay off debts

26. Did you work for this employer before or during the course you recently completed?

- Yes: before my course
- Yes: during my course
- Yes: before and during my course
- No

**IF WORKED FOR EMPLOYER DURING OR BEFORE COURSE (Q26=1,2 or 3)  
OTHERWISE GO TO Q28**

27. In which of the ways listed below did you work for this employer?

- On a sandwich placement
- On another kind of placement or project work
- As a holiday job
- Full-time or part-time work all year round
- Full-time or part-time work during term time
- On an internship
- Zero hours contract
- In other ways

## ASK ALL IN EMPLOYMENT

28. How well did your recent course prepare you for employment?

- Very well
- Well
- Not very well
- Not at all
- Can't tell

IF IN ENGAGED IN STUDY OR TRAINING LAST WEEK (Q16=3 or 4) ASK SECTION F, OTHERWISE GO TO ROUTING BEFORE Q32

### SECTION F: Your additional learning

**For the following questions, please provide details of what you consider to be your MAIN course. Your main course might be the one that you spend the most time doing, or the one which is related to your future plans. 'Course' includes all forms of study, training scheme or apprenticeship.**

29. Where are you attending this course?

- Further Education College
- School
- University (including Open University)
- Other

30. Will this lead to a qualification that is higher, lower or the same level as the course you took in 2016/17?

- Higher
- Same
- Lower
- Unsure

31. How well did your recent course prepare you for further study?

- Very well
- Well
- Not very well
- Not at all
- Can't tell

IF UNEMPLOYED LAST WEEK (Q16=6) ASK SECTION G

### SECTION G: Unemployment

32. Have you had any employment since completing your course?

- Yes
- No

## ASK ALL SECTION H

### SECTION H: Non-economic benefits

33. If you were to choose now whether or not to do your course, how likely or unlikely is it that you would.....?

Do a different subject?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Don't know
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

Study at a different FE College?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Don't know
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

Do a different kind of qualification?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Don't know
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

Do something completely different?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Don't know
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

34. Do you know your Unique Learner Number (ULN)?

- Yes
- No

**I accept that my responses will be linked to other data held about me by DfE for statistical and research purposes**