

# Lifelong Learning For All In Ireland

Paper 2



## Challenges for Lifelong Learning in Employment

Participating in lifelong learning varies drastically between Irish citizens depending on their highest level of educational attainment and employment. According to statistics published by SOLAS in March 2017, during 2015 only 6.5% of Irish citizens between the ages of 25 to 64 participated in lifelong learning. However, 9% of third level graduates participated in lifelong learning.

Bucking the EU trend, it was more likely for unemployed (7%) and economically inactive (10%) people in Ireland to participate in lifelong learning than it was for employed (5%) people to participate. This differs from the EU average where 12% of employed people participated in lifelong learning.

Lower participation rates in lifelong learning in Ireland as compared to the EU average for employed persons could be signaling a greater need for societal and employer supports so that employed persons can continue to learn and therefore maintain and improve upon their earning potential and productivity.

**“I have enjoyed doing my course. I feel that it has prepared me for the workforce and updated my skills  
Learner at the National FET Learner Forum in Dublin 2018**

## Acknowledgements

AONTAS would like to acknowledge the work of the Learning and Work Institute in the UK, and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) for work on issues of adult education and lifelong learning.

## Employment and the Economy

This series on the value of Lifelong Learning For All In Ireland was inspired by presentations and conversations at the AONTAS Lifelong Learning for All policy event held 9 March 2018 at Buswell’s Hotel, Dublin, as part of the 2018 Adult Learners’ Festival week.

### The Macro-Economic Benefits

The positive connection between education and the economy is clear: educated employees and entrepreneurs are important for innovation, inclusive labour markets, productivity, competitiveness, stable employment and entrepreneurship.

Studies by the OECD and World Bank amongst many others show that educational performance has positive macro-economic impacts. While research does not prescribe what policy options should be taken across countries, it is clear that policy inaction and underfunding of education has negative economic consequences.

Based on international macro-economic research the case is clear; long-term economic gains from consistently well-funded education programs far outstrip the short-term economic benefits of cutting programme funding in response to recessions or the short-term demands of industry for funding in one policy area over another. While creating a well-educated population takes time and investment, a society committed to lifelong learning is a society that is more adaptive to the macro-economic shocks the global economy continues to

### Earning Potential

Beyond employment rates, education affects earning potential. Across the OECD, 25-64 year-old adults with a tertiary degree earn on average 56% more than those with only upper secondary education, while those with below upper secondary education earn on average 22% less. These stats show the importance of lifelong learning and progression to current and future earning potential.

### Inequality of Access

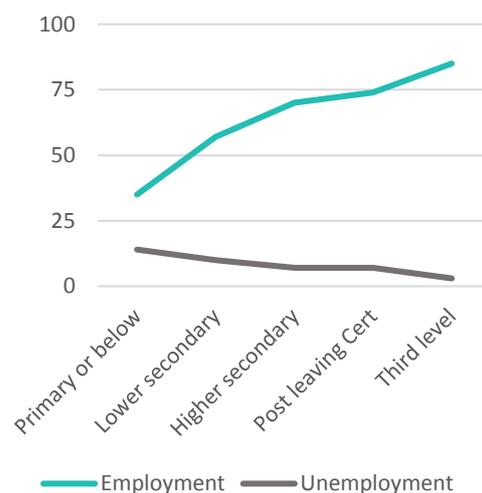
Education determines personal and societal economic performance. Yet in Ireland we leave the most vulnerable behind in terms of educational opportunities.

- Non-permanent full-time employees are likely to be women; receive less training; and have less employment stability.
- Part-time employees are 40% less likely than full-time employees to receive training from employers.
- Immigrants and low skill workers receive less training than all other demographic groups.

### Employment Opportunities

There is a close correlation between educational attainment and labour market outcomes, particularly in the highly educated Irish economy. The table and chart below show that for learners in Ireland, their chance of employment increases by nearly 20 percentage points for each additional level of education achieved. The table also shows a comparison with the OECD average and UK, where learners in other countries are more likely to find employment with less education than if they lived in Ireland. This comparison provides a strong case for investing in lifelong learning and upskilling for Irish workers as Ireland works to stay globally competitive.

Below upper secondary	
Ireland	48.81
OECD - Average	56.74
United Kingdom	61.63
Upper secondary, non-tertiary	
Ireland	68.9
OECD - Average	74.98
United Kingdom	80.25
Tertiary	
Ireland	82.14
OECD - Average	84.29
United Kingdom	84.82



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