

**2002-2003 ANNUAL SCHOOL LEAVERS' SURVEY of 2000/2001
LEAVERS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 2002-2003 School Leavers' Survey was carried out by the ESRI for the Department of Education and Science. The School Leavers' Survey provides an insight into the position, experiences, and attitudes of school leavers approximately one year after leaving second level education. For those engaged in education and labour market policy this survey highlights emerging and continuing patterns and trends regarding the progression of school leavers one year on. The School Leavers' Survey ran consecutively from 1980 through to 1999 thus enabling the analysis of both short-term and long-term trends.¹

School leavers who exited the second-level system in the 2000/01 academic year (between September 2000 and the end of August 2001), provide the reference cohort for this study. As in previous years this report presents data from the most current survey, alongside data from the two previous surveys conducted, in this case, the 1998 and 1999 surveys.

The School Leavers' Surveys are based on a stratified random sample of those leaving the official second-level system. Respondents were interviewed between 12-18 months after leaving school. The interview period for the 2002 survey was February – May 2003. The effective sample size of the current survey is 2,332 respondents.

Sample

The sample of school leavers was chosen at random from the Department of Education's lists of school leavers for the year in question. The Department wrote to all respondents in late 2002 telling them about the survey and giving them the option of not being included in the sample. The names and addresses of the sample approached by interviewers included only those who did not say they wanted to opt out of the survey. Just over 80 per cent of the school leavers contacted did not opt out of the survey.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the survey was carried out in Spring 2003. Interviewing was completed face-to-face with the school leaver. The group of respondents concerned is extremely mobile – particularly those who left school at the Leaving Certificate stage, many of whom will be attending third level courses, or working away from the family home. Interviewers were

¹ The School Leavers' Survey was not carried out in the years 2000 or 2001.

instructed to make strenuous attempts to contact the school leaver in person. When this proved impossible, the questionnaire was filled out with the assistance of a parent or other family member. In the case of emigrants, information was sought from parents or other family members.

In all, 2332 questionnaires were completed, representing a response rate of 47 per cent of eligible school leavers.