

2024

This is FET Lifelong Learning

SOLAS
learning works



Co-funded by
the European Union



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

**Further
Education
& Training**

A report by the
The Data Analytics Unit in SOLAS
September 2025

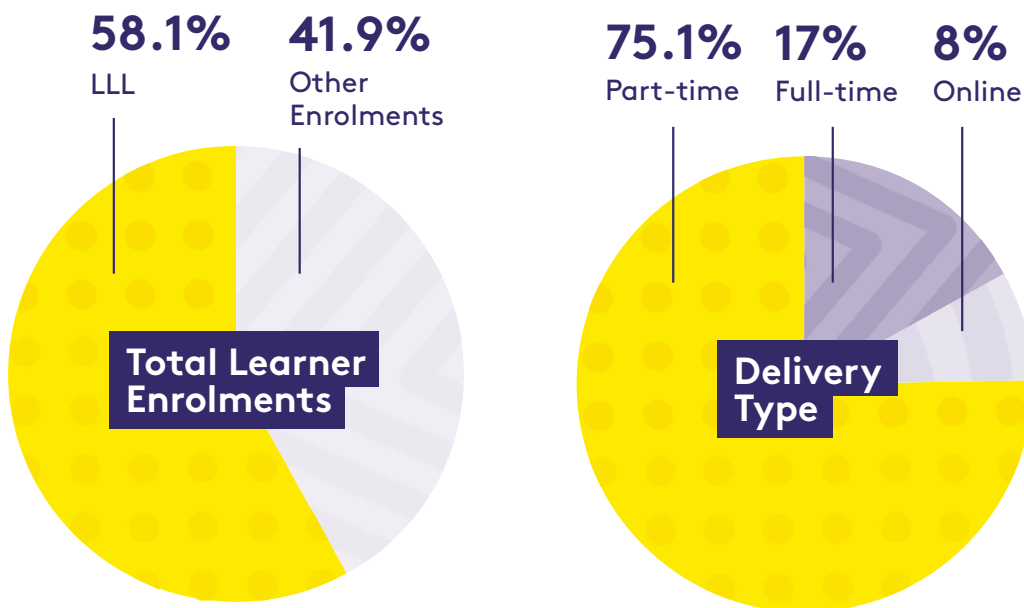
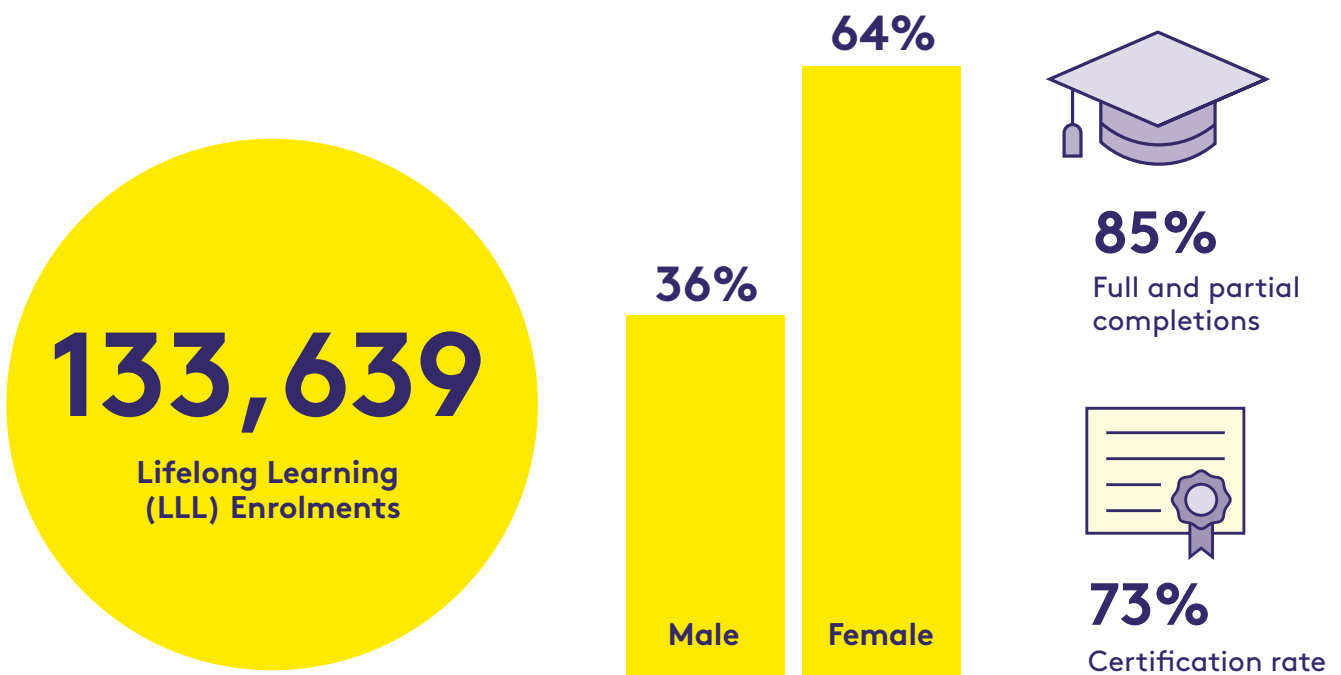
Authors

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All data is sourced from the Programme and Learner Support Systems (PLSS) database. PLSS collects and processes the personal data of the FET learners who are enrolled in SOLAS funded programmes. This report excludes apprenticeship provision and eCollege.

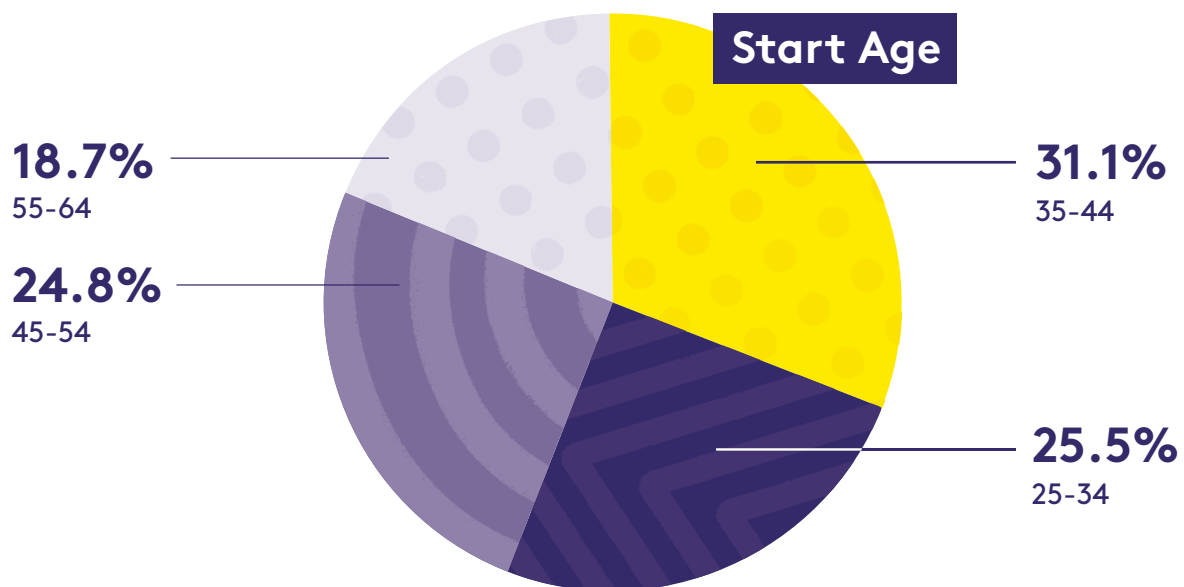
The Data Analytics Unit in SOLAS would like to acknowledge the assistance of the ETB staff involved in submitting data to SOLAS.

Enrolments

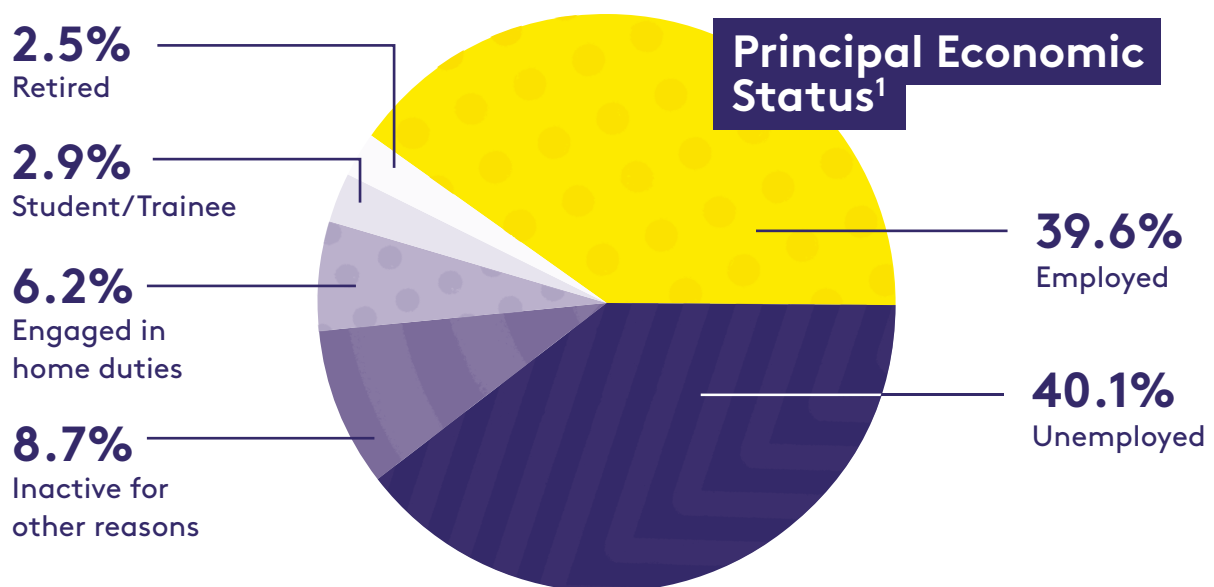


In 2024, there were 133,639 Lifelong Learning (LLL) enrolments, representing 58.1% of the total learner enrolments. Females made up 64% of all LLL enrolments. Of the 133,639 LLL enrolments, 85% partially or fully completed their course. The certification rate for Lifelong Learners that completed certified courses was 73%.

The distribution of LLL enrolments was highest among part-time courses (75.1%), followed by full-time courses (17%), with a small percentage (8%) also undertaking online courses. Part-time LLL learner enrolments were notably higher when compared to the overall FET population of learners enrolled in part-time courses (64.9%) in 2024.



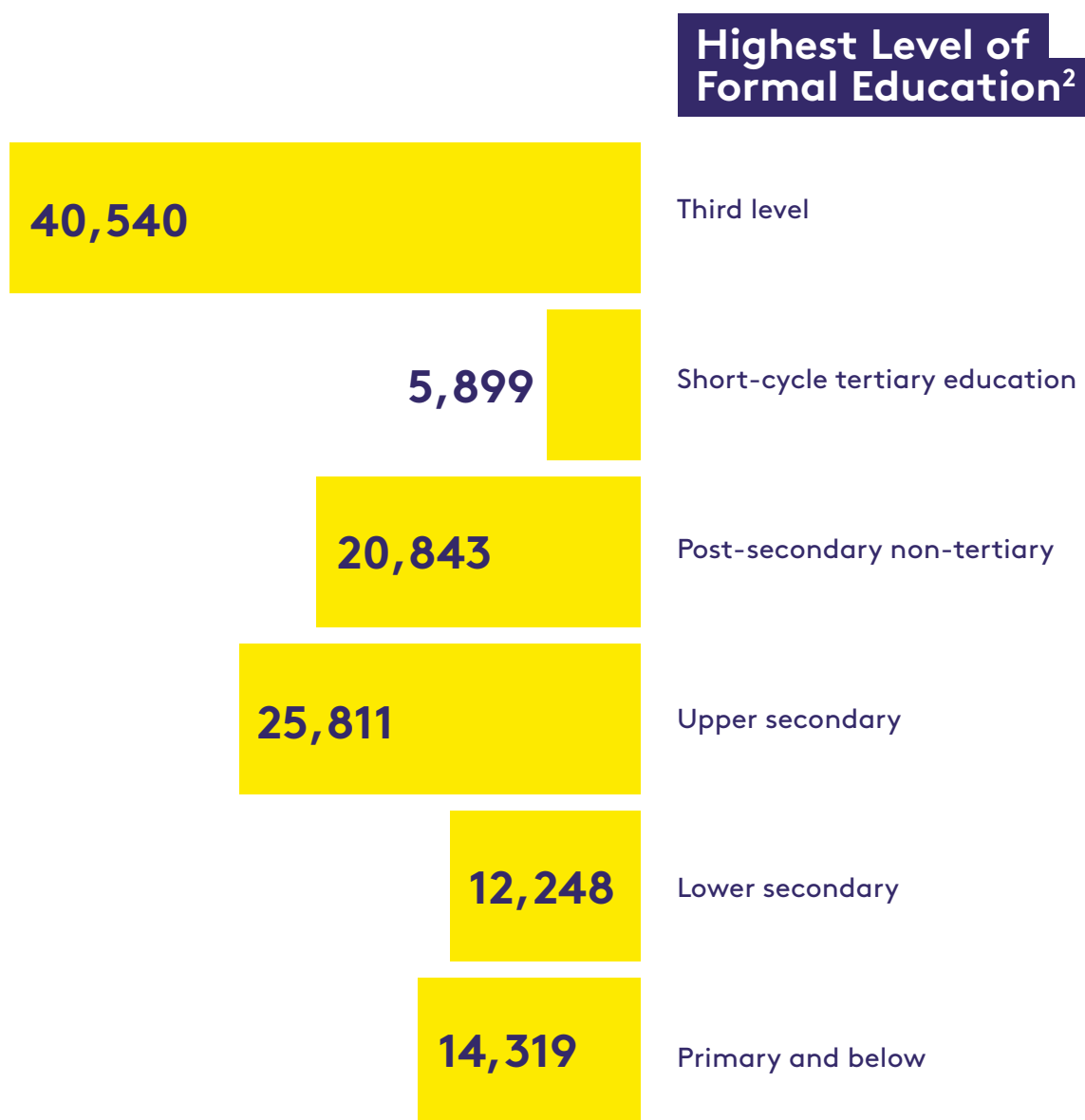
LLL enrolments were fairly evenly distributed among the age bands, with those aged 55-64 having the lowest percentage of LLL enrolments.



The highest percentages of LLL enrolments were among those learners who were employed (39.6%) or unemployed (40.1%) prior to enrolment. The remaining (20.3%) LLL enrolments were inactive prior to enrolment.

Of those who were unemployed, 54.6% were long-term unemployed. This compares to 49.5% of learner enrolments who were long-term unemployed in the overall FET population.

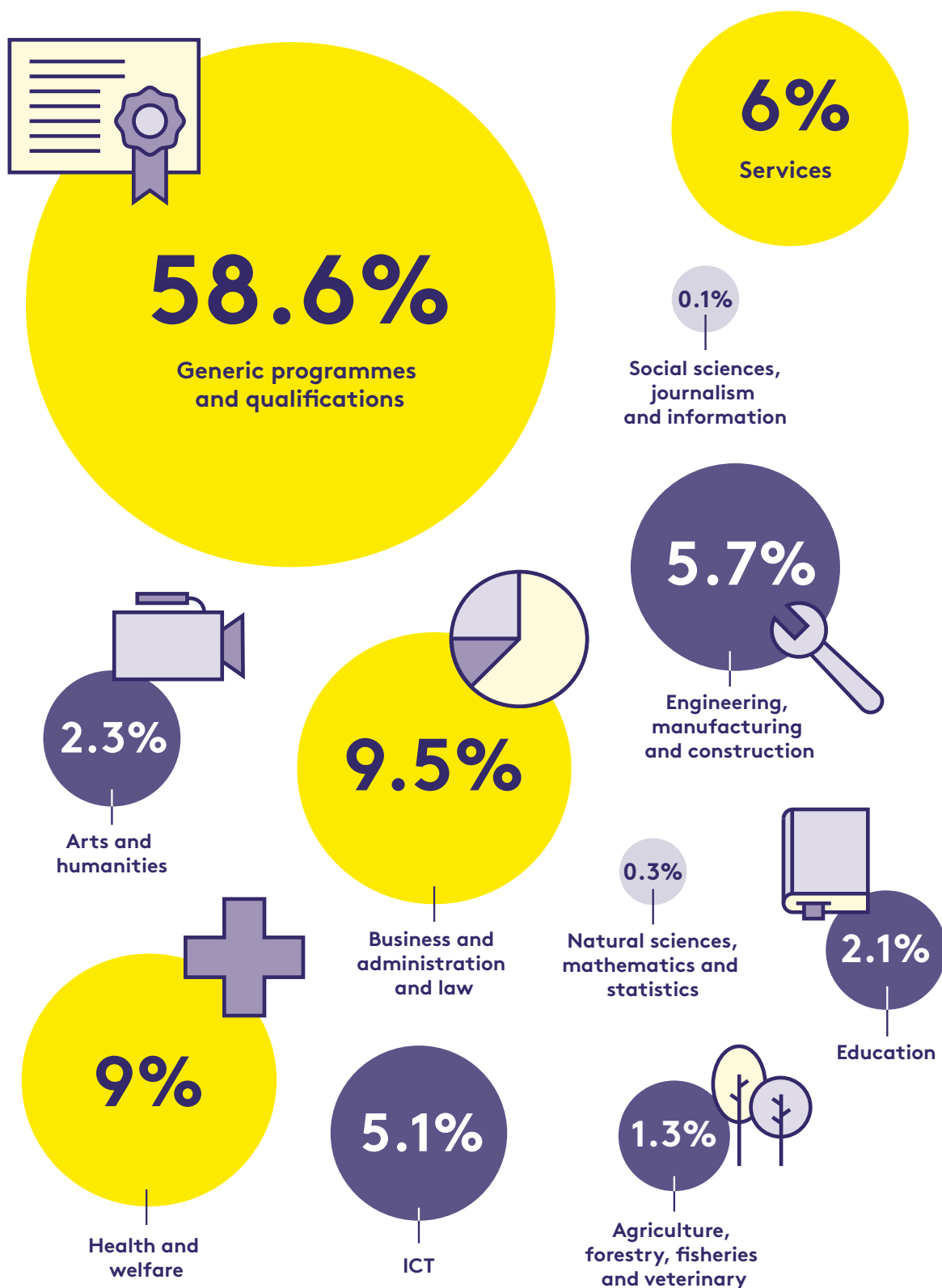
¹ It should be noted that this figure is an estimate and includes only those cases where previous principal economic status was captured. The principle economic status response rate for LLL enrolments was 89.8%.



In 2024, over one third (33.9%) of LLL enrolments had a third level education when enrolling in a FET course, while 21.6% had an upper secondary education. This differs from the overall population of FET learner enrolments, where learners with an upper secondary level education had the highest percentage (31.6%) when enrolling in FET, while third level learner enrolments had the second highest percentage (21.6%).

² It should be noted that this figure is an estimate and includes only those cases where previous levels of education were captured. The highest level of formal education response rate was 89.5%.

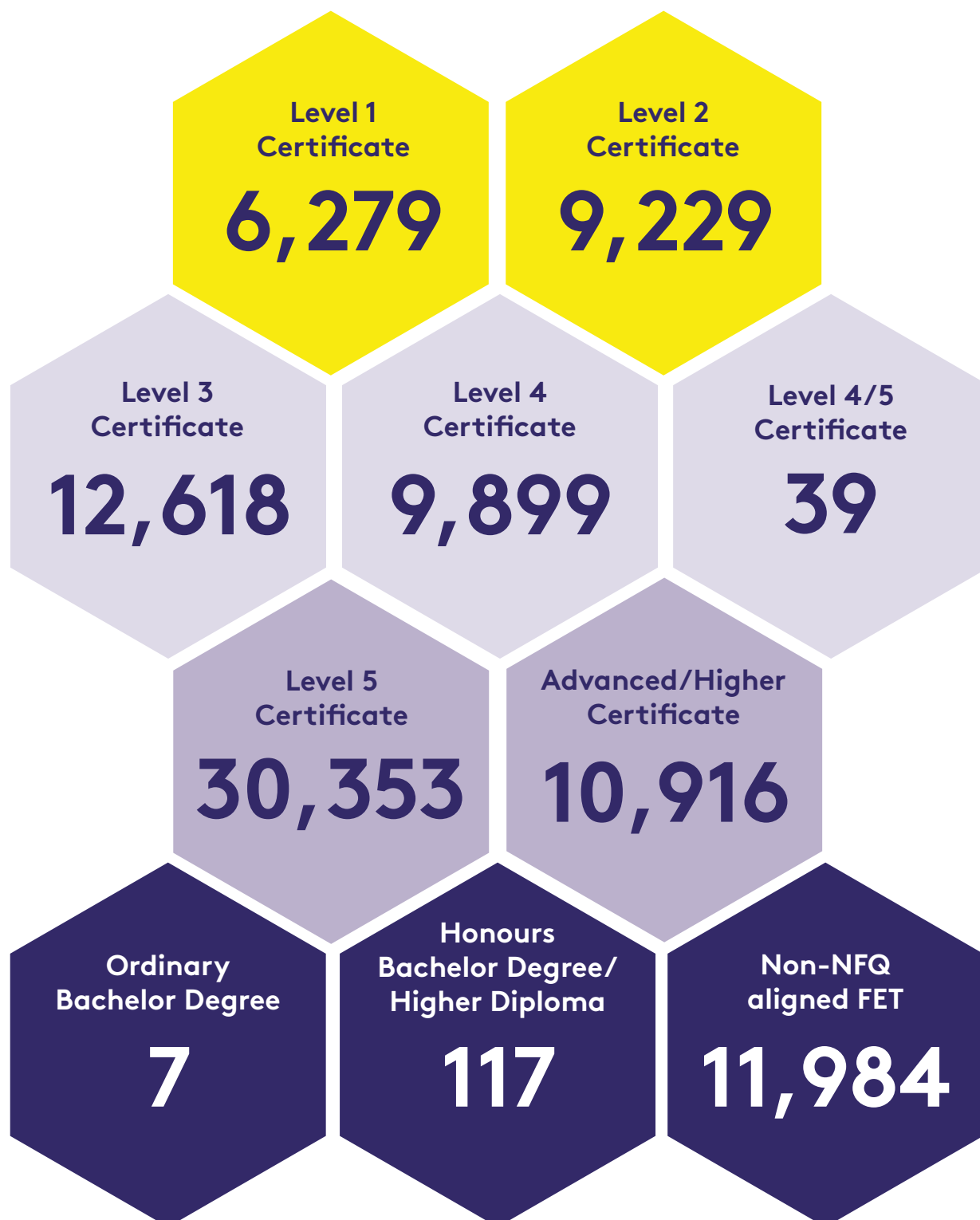
Field of Study (Broad ISCED)³



Overall, generic programmes and qualifications had the highest numbers of learners, with 58.6% of learner enrolments in this field of study. This was followed by business, administration and law (9.5%), health and welfare (9%) and services (6%).

³ Learners here are unique within ISCED field of study but not necessarily across fields of study.

Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or Equivalent⁴



⁴ This excludes learners enrolled in courses that do not lead to an award through a recognised awarding body.

Definition of Terms

Certified Completions

In the FET sector, not all learner completions lead to an award through a recognised awarding body in the FET sector. Therefore, certified completions refer only to the total number of certified completions in 2024.

Certification Rate

The proportion of full and partial learner completions who achieved certification to all learners who completed a certified course in 2024.

Completions

Completions include the total number of learners who fully or partially completed their course during 2024. Completions exclude those learners who may have left their course early (e.g. early leavers).

Enrolments

Enrolments are defined as learners who are on course or have completed a course during 2024.

Field of Study

This is defined and categorised by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). In this report, only broad (2-digit) fields of study are used for categorising Further Education and Training courses.

Full Completions

Learners who have completed 90 per cent or more of the course and its requirements in 2024.

Inactive

This term is used according to the Eurostat and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition which defines inactive as individuals who are neither employed nor unemployed and are not working and not available or looking for work. Inactive in this report includes those learners engaged in home duties, retired, student/trainees, and those inactive for other reasons.

Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

This is a framework through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way. The many different types and sizes of qualifications included in the NFQ are organised based on their level of knowledge, skill and competence. In some cases, where awards have not been placed on the Irish NFQ, equivalent levels are assigned based on the document 'Qualifications can cross boundaries' and the level assigned to the award on the relevant country's framework (e.g. Cf. Ofqual, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, etc.).

Learner

A unique individual who has progressed onto a course in the application process. The total number of learners is the sum of all unique individuals in Further Education and Training in 2024.

Lifelong Learning (LLL)

Lifelong Learning is based on the EU measure of lifelong learning, the number of adults that are 25-64 years of age.

Long-term Unemployed

This refers to any person who is unemployed for 12 months or more.

Non-NFQ Aligned courses

This includes completions with certification not aligned with the NFQ.

Partial Completions

Learners who have completed more than 25 per cent but less than 90 per cent of a course and its requirements in 2024.

Post-secondary non-tertiary

This refers to Post Leaving Certificate NFQ Level 4 or 5, Advanced Certificate NFQ Level 6, other non-NFQ aligned FET, Certificate NFQ Level 4, or Certificate NFQ Level 5.

Short-cycle tertiary education

This refers to third level non-degree courses and includes higher certificate NFQ level 6 courses and diploma NFQ level 7 courses. These courses are usually of one year in duration and are often vocational in nature.

Third Level

This refers to Ordinary Bachelor degree, Honours Bachelor degree, Professional, Post-Graduate, Doctorate or Higher degree courses.



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