

**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE DESIGN, WEIGHTING AND SAMPLING ERRORS**

*Sample Design*

Each Annual School Leavers Survey is based on a national stratified random sample of school leavers, who are interviewed approximately one year to 18 months after leaving school. A school leaver is defined as someone who left full-time education in an official secondary, vocational, community or comprehensive school in the course of the previous academic year, i.e., the period September of t-3 to August of t-2 where t is the year the survey is being carried out. The present survey, conducted in 2006, covers those who left the second level system between September 2003 and August 2004.

The sample design used in 2006 was considerably modified and improved compared with that utilised in earlier years. A stratified (by programme) random sample of school leavers was selected from a database provided for this purpose by the Department of Education and Science<sup>1</sup>.

Stratification was based on programme code and programme year. As in previous years, the non-Leaving Cert group was oversampled to provide a higher number of cases for analysis of their early labour market experiences.

Rows 1 and 2 of Table A1 below show the estimated numbers of leavers in each stratum and the size of the target field sample selected. Only those under age 25 are included, as this is the group to which the present report refers<sup>2</sup>.

*Fieldwork and Response*

Trained interviewers, who were fully instructed on the survey, attempted to contact and interview these selected school leavers throughout the country. The final row of Table A1 show the response achieved by these interviewers. Overall, the response rate achieved was 46 per cent. The response rate varied from 60 per cent among Leaving Cert students to 24 per cent among those who left before the Junior Cert. The low response rate in the latter category is mainly due to the large numbers of leavers and their families who had left the area and left no forwarding address (36 per cent).

The fifth row of Table A1 shows the sampling fraction in each stratum, i.e., the proportion of pupils sampled in each sub-group<sup>3</sup>. This varies from 59 per cent of leavers with no

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<sup>1</sup> In previous years, a two stage, random stratified design was used, with selection of schools at the first stage and pupils from the selected schools in the second stage. The schools were then requested to provide the contact details for the selected students.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from PLC leavers, very few students are over age 25. .

<sup>3</sup> This is the proportion selected for the field sample, before those ineligible were identified

qualifications to 3 per cent of those leaving with the Leaving Certificate. All the tables in the report have been re-weighted taking account of these sampling fractions to give unbiased estimates of the relevant population percentages, averages and totals.

*Table A1: Estimated Numbers of Leavers under Age 25 in Various Categories and Details of Sample*

	Stratum (Stage Left)					Total
	Before Junior Cert year	Junior Cert Program year	LC program, year 1	LC program, year 2	PLC program	
No. in Population	1733	3752	7193	40034	13587	66299
Total Field Sample	1018	1251	891	1057	965	5182
Not eligible*	341	202	129	70	134	876
Eligible Field Sample	677	1049	762	987	831	4306
Sampling Fraction	59%	33%	12%	3%	7%	8%
Achieved Sample	165	459	385	589	401	1999
Response Rate	24%	44%	51%	60%	48%	46%

\*Excludes those over age 25 and VTOS students. Ineligible=deceased, address while at school outside Ireland, left school outside the reference period, still in school. Note that the stratum refers to the programme and year in which the person left school: the examination might not have been taken.