

2006 Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey

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Executive Summary

Employment Services requested that Planning & Research carry out a customer satisfaction survey of FÁS registered clients. A similar survey was conducted in 2005. FÁS Employment Services cater to a wide range of customer groups including jobseekers, persons seeking entry to training or employment programmes, and persons referred to FÁS via the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) process.

Planning & Research commissioned Lansdowne Market Research (LMR) to telephone interview FÁS clients who had registered with FÁS six to nine months previously, across all FÁS regions. The survey yielded 1,795 responses. The questionnaire included questions on:

- client backgrounds and outcomes
- frequency and means of contact with FÁS
- satisfaction with FÁS staff and offices
- job-seeker services
- training programme participant satisfaction
- which aspects of service were most important to the client
- overall customer satisfaction.

Overall, most FÁS registered clients were satisfied or very satisfied with FÁS in terms of their interaction with staff, the offices and overall service provision. However, satisfaction ratings were lower for some aspects of service, such as the level of information given on vacancies and FÁS programmes, the practical advice received and how well staff try to find out about client needs.

The proportion of clients stating that they did not have an interview when they registered with FÁS remained similar to last year (18%), despite excluding clients in this year's survey who had registered solely to participate in sponsored training.

Client background: The majority of clients who registered with FÁS wished to seek employment (55%). A significant minority sought to apply or register for a training programme (37%) or an apprenticeship (2%). In terms of the employment status of clients at the time of registration, more than half were unemployed (62%), while 22% were employed on either a full- or part-time basis.

Employment Status at Time of Survey: The table below displays the outcomes for clients at the time of the survey, in particular for clients who were unemployed at the time of registration and NEAP clients. While the majority of clients who registered with FÁS were either employed (38%) or in education/training or FÁS (19%) by the time of the survey, almost one in three clients remained unemployed.

Client Status at the Time of the Survey					
	Employed	Education/ Training/FÁS	Unemployed	Other	Total
Previous Situation					
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	38	18	40	4	100
NEAP	28	6	43	14	100
All clients	38	19	32	11	100

For clients who were unemployed at the time of registration, 38% were employed at the time of the survey, 18% were in education/training or FÁS employment programmes and 40% were

unemployed. In the case of NEAP clients, the proportion unemployed was slightly higher at 43%. More than one in four NEAP clients were employed at the time of the survey and 6% were in education/training or FÁS.

Frequency and Means of Contact with FÁS: Clients were in contact with FÁS on average two and a half times in the six to nine months subsequent to registration. This was higher for NEAP clients (three and a half times). The usual means of contacting FÁS was in person (60%), followed by the telephone (20%), email/Internet (6%) and post (1%).

Staff Interaction: FÁS staff were highly rated in this survey. As found in previous surveys, the vast majority of clients saw FÁS staff as friendly (92% rated positively) and respectful (91% rated positively). There is some room for improvement in level of information given about vacancies and training programmes, and in staff knowledge about services available (79% rated positively) and the practical advice that staff offer (74% rated positively). As with last year, nearly a fifth of clients stated that they did not have an interview with an Employment Services Officer and, of those who did, one in five stated that they did not find it useful.

FÁS Offices: Customer satisfaction with FÁS offices was high. Eighty-four percent of clients agreed that their local office had a pleasant and welcoming environment. The level of privacy afforded by their local office was rated positively by four out of five clients. Accessibility to their local office for people with mobility problems was rated positively by 64% of respondents. Clients with a disability did not give a significantly different rating – 68% rated it positively.

Job-Seeker Services: Over a third of job-seekers (36%) stated that FÁS notified them of a vacancy. Furthermore, more than half of job-seekers (52%) stated that they received some services from FÁS in applying for jobs by, for example, helping with CVs or interview tips. The same level of services was given to NEAP clients and clients who are currently unemployed.

Compared to last year, there was a significant improvement in the rating of the range of vacancies advertised in FÁS. More than half (58%) of job-seekers felt that the range of vacancies notified at FÁS was ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (up from 45% last year). In terms of the level of information provided in the vacancy notifications, six out of ten job-seekers felt that the notifications contained ‘all’ or ‘most’ of the information that they required.

Training Programmes: More than one in four of the clients surveyed (28%) participated in a training programme. The most common reason given for being interested in a training programme was because it was considered useful for obtaining a job (38%). The second most common reason cited for interest in a program was an interest in the subject matter (31%). Waiting times for training programmes (which has been raised as an issue in previous surveys) were significantly reduced. More than half of training programme participants started their programme within four weeks of registering for it.

Overall Satisfaction: Three out of four clients (76%) stated that they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with FÁS Employment Services overall. NEAP clients, and clients who were unemployed at the time of the survey, had similar levels of satisfaction with FÁS. Customer satisfaction with FÁS was most strongly correlated with their satisfaction with FÁS staff, as opposed to their outcomes. Foreign nationals were significantly less satisfied with FÁS services – 65% of non-EU nationals and 68% of EU-nationals were satisfied, compared with 77% of Irish nationals.

Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey 2006

Introduction

FÁS Employment Services requested that Planning and Research carry out a Customer Satisfaction survey of their clients. A similar survey was carried out in 2005. This report presents the results of the 2006 survey.

A telephone survey was conducted by Lansdowne Market Research on behalf of Planning and Research. Eighteen hundred FÁS clients who had registered with FÁS in the previous six to nine months were telephone interviewed in November and December 2006. The survey captured clients from all FÁS regions to allow for regional analyses and covered a wide range of topics. Most of the questions in this year's survey were replicated from the previous survey to allow for comparisons between the two years. Some new questions were added, however. As with the 2005 survey, the survey sought to establish the reasons clients register with FÁS, the experience of clients' interaction with FÁS in terms of staff and their satisfaction with FÁS employment offices. Respondents were asked for details of and their satisfaction with outcomes following FÁS registration. Job-seekers were asked about their satisfaction with, and use of, services directed to them e.g. vacancy information and FÁS assistance with job-seeking. Those seeking access to training and employment programmes were asked questions relating to, for instance, satisfaction with their programme and waiting times. All of those interviewed were also asked a series of questions to assess which aspects of service were important to them. This report summarises the main findings for each of these areas of the survey.

Methodology

The survey was contracted out to Lansdowne Market Research (LMR) who, during November and December 2006, interviewed a random sample of 1,795¹ clients who had registered with FÁS in the previous six to nine months (February to May 2006). The survey was carried out by telephone and lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

FÁS provided the contact details of registered clients to LMR. As the survey was being conducted by telephone, only those persons with a contact telephone number in FÁS records were included in the sample. This has the potential to bias the results of the survey, as 41% of registrants do not have a phone number on file. However, comparison of the distribution of key factors, such as sex, age, region and NEAP status showed that the distribution was largely similar to the population of persons who registered with FÁS in that time period. The sample was weighted by age, sex and region to reflect the overall database distribution. Slightly over half the sample was female (54%), which was an increase from the even split in the last survey. Over a quarter of the sample (27%) was based in Dublin, 30% in the rest of Leinster, a quarter in Munster (26%) and the final 17% in Connaught or Ulster. In terms of the age profile of the sample, 29% were over 45 and 20% were under 21. A quarter of the sample were tagged as NEAP clients by FÁS records.

In terms of characteristics not included in FÁS records, 9% of clients were foreign nationals (of these, 55% were EU nationals) and 2% stated that English was not their first language. Interestingly, the percentage of foreign national clients was not higher in Dublin – 7% of

¹ Lansdowne Market Research were commissioned to interview 1,200 people. However, due to over-sampling, they in fact interviewed 1,795 persons.

clients in Dublin stated they were foreign national, and half of these were non-EU. Twelve percent of respondents stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activity (compared to 3.6% who were in receipt of a disability payment).

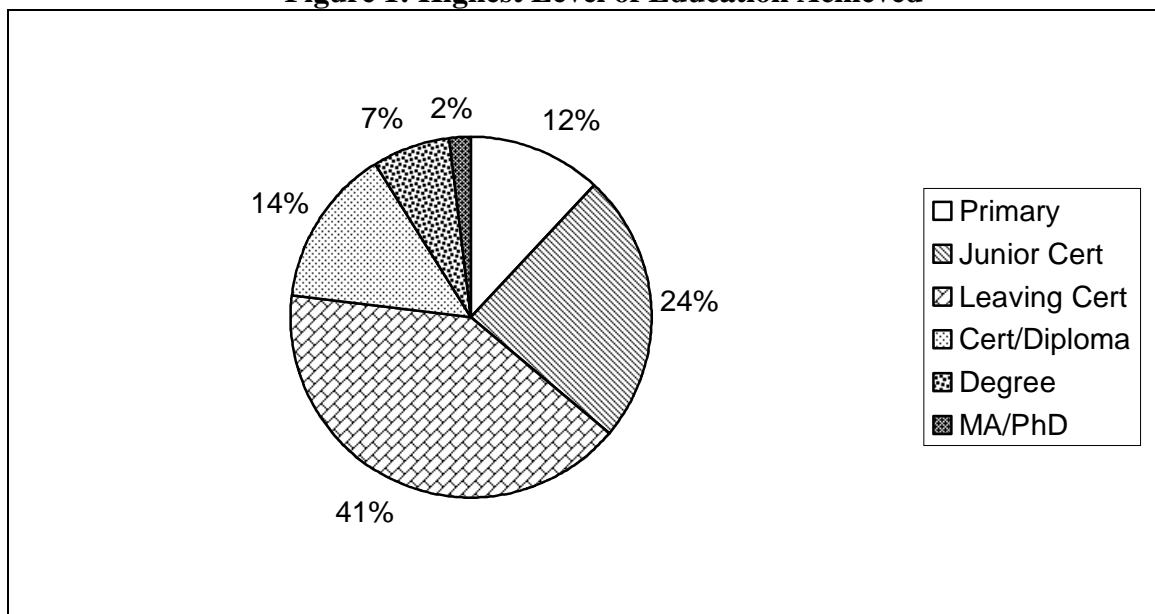
A filter question was added to the survey this year. The focus of this survey is on registered job-seekers. A significant proportion of clients who participated in last year's survey had registered solely to participate in Safepass, Construction Skills Certification Scheme or apprenticeship. It was decided this year to exclude persons who had registered solely to participate in such training. Respondents were asked before the start of the survey if they had registered to participate in any of these programmes. If they answered yes, they were asked if that was the sole reason they had registered. Seventeen percent of respondents mentioned that they had registered for one of these programmes, but that it was not the sole reason for registration – they therefore remained in the sample. The remainder were removed from the survey. As a result of this filtering, the sample this year differs from last year's survey. Therefore, the results of the two surveys are not strictly comparable. References are made to the previous year's results in this report for information purposes only.

If, in comparisons between groups, a result was found to be statistically significant, then it is highlighted as such in the report. Otherwise, the results presented are variations in responses without being statistically significant. As a result of this introduction of the filter question, care must be taken in comparing the results of this year's survey with last year's survey, as the characteristics of persons interviewed have changed.

Background characteristics and outcomes

A question was added this year asking respondents the highest level of education that they had achieved at the time of registration. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, 36% of registrants had attained less than Leaving Certificate level of education. The most common level of education achieved was the Leaving Certificate (40%). Fourteen percent had a third-level certificate or diploma, 7% had a degree and 2% had a Masters or PhD.

Figure 1: Highest Level of Education Achieved



Clients were asked to give the reasons they registered with FÁS. As respondents were allowed to choose more than one reason, the totals do not add up to 100%. As seen in Table 1 below, fifty-five percent of clients stated that they registered for job-search purposes. Thirty-four percent said that they registered to sign up for a training course, 3% wished to sign up for an employment programme and 2% to register for an apprenticeship.

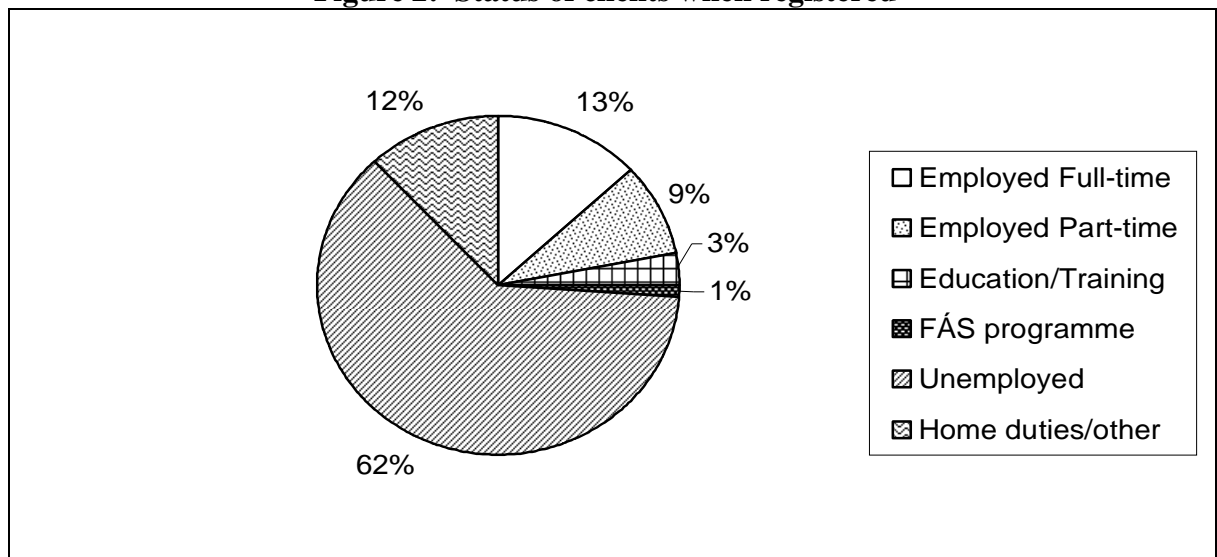
Compared to last year’s survey, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of clients who stated that they registered to apply or register for a training course (34% compared to 27% last year). There was a significant decrease in the proportion who stated that they registered because of apprenticeship (down from 11% to 2%) – this can be attributed to the filter question that was outlined in the methodology.

Table 1: Reasons given for registering with FÁS

Reason	Percent
Job search	55
Training course	34
Referred by social welfare	13
Apprenticeship	2
Employment programme	3

Thirteen percent said that they registered as a consequence of being referred to FÁS by social welfare. This is interesting as only a quarter of clients tagged as NEAP stated that they registered with FÁS for this reason. Thus, 8% of all clients stated that they registered with FÁS because they were referred by social welfare but they were not NEAP clients.

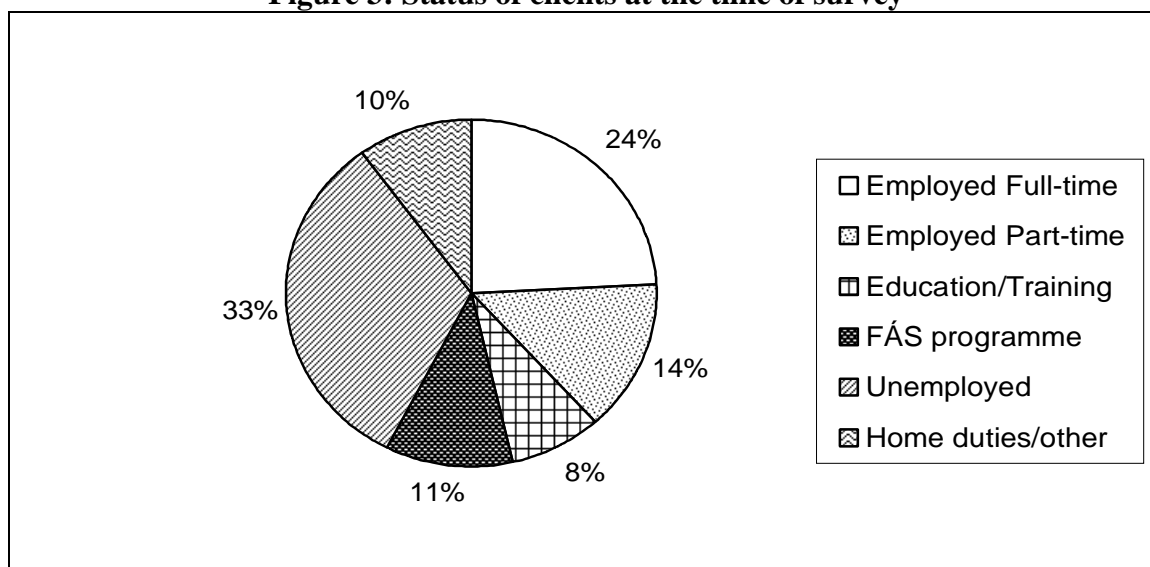
Figure 2: Status of clients when registered



In terms of the status of clients at the time of registering, Figure 2 above shows that 62% of clients were unemployed, 22% were employed (of these, 59% were employed full-time), 3% were in school/college or other training, 1% were on a FÁS programme and 12% were on home duties/other. Compared to last year’s sample, the most noticeable difference is an increase in the proportion who were unemployed at the time of registration – up from 54% to 62%. Again, this may be attributed to the filter question that was added this year.

In terms of clients' current situation i.e. at the time of the survey (6 – 9 months after registering with FÁS), 38% of clients were employed (of those, 63% were employed full-time), 11% were on a FÁS training or employment programme, 8% were in school/college or other training. Almost one in three clients were unemployed (32%) and 10% were on home duties or other. These results are displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Status of clients at the time of survey



The clients' outcomes, compared to their situation at the time of registering, are displayed for persons who were unemployed or NEAP clients, as well as for all clients, in Table 2 below. Three out of five clients who were unemployed at the time of registering with FÁS were no longer unemployed at the time of the survey. Thirty-eight percent were employed, 8% were in education or training, 10% were on a FÁS programme, 4% were on home duties/other and 40% were unemployed. Due to the high proportion of unemployed clients in the sample (62%), the outcomes for unemployed clients are broadly similar to those of all clients.

Table 2: Previous situation by current situation (%)

	Employed	Education/ Training	FÁS	Unemployed	Home Duties/ Other	Total
Previous Situation						
Unemployed	38	8	10	40	4	100
NEAP clients	28	6	9	43	14	100
All clients	38	8	11	32	11	100

The current situation of NEAP clients is also displayed in Table 2. Twenty-eight percent of NEAP clients were employed at the time of the survey, 6% were in education/training, 9% were on a FÁS programme and 14% were on home duties/other. Forty-three percent of NEAP clients remained unemployed at the time of the survey which is six to nine months after registering with FÁS.

Contact with FÁS

Frequency and means of contact

Respondents were asked how many times they had been in contact with FÁS since registering. The results are displayed in Table 3 below. This ‘contact’ includes both the client contacting FÁS and FÁS contacting the client. The average number of contacts per client was 2.4 times since registration. More than half of clients (53%) were in contact with FÁS between one and three times in the six to nine months after registering. Almost one in four respondents (23%) said that they had no further contact with FÁS at all after registering. Eleven percent of clients were in contact with FÁS seven or more times subsequent to registration.

Table 3: Frequency of contact with FÁS since registration

Number of times in contact with FÁS	Percent
None	23
Once	19
Twice	19
Three times	15
4 – 6 times	12
7 + times	11
Can't recall	1
Average	2.4

As with the previous survey, personal contact remains the most popular means of contact with FÁS. The majority of respondents (60%) stated that they were usually in contact with FÁS in person. One in five stated that their usual method of contact was by telephone, 6% said that the internet or email was their usual medium and a further 1% said they usually corresponded by mail. Finally, twelve percent said that they did not contact FÁS. This contact refers to both FÁS contacting the client and the client contacting FÁS.

A new question was added to the survey this year. It was noted from last year's survey results that it was not possible to determine the extent to which FÁS had proactively contacted registered clients. This year, a question was added that asked, ‘Has FÁS contacted you since you registered?’ More than half of respondents (52%) stated that they had been contacted by FÁS since registering. This was significantly higher for NEAP clients (68%), as would be expected.

Taking from the UK Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey, two further questions relating to service quality were added in respect of contact with FÁS.

Firstly, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement, ‘I have experienced problems getting directed to the right person’. Seventy percent of respondents disagreed. Sixteen percent of persons did agree (of whom 50% strongly agreed) – therefore almost one in six respondents find that they experience problems getting directed to the appropriate person when contacting FÁS.

Secondly, with regard to telephone contact with FÁS, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, ‘The telephone is generally answered very promptly’. The majority agreed with this statement (62%); 6% disagreed.

Interview with ESO

FÁS policy is that all clients who register with FÁS undergo an interview with an Employment Services Officer (ESO). In the previous survey, approximately one in five clients stated that had not had an interview, which was attributed to clients who had registered solely for sponsored training, such as Safepass, the Construction Skills Certification Scheme or Apprenticeship. This year, as stated previously in the methodology section, clients who registered solely for these programmes were filtered out. However, the survey still found that almost one in five (18%) clients stated that they did not have an interview with an ESO. Clients who gave Safepass as a reason for registering were significantly less likely to have had an interview – even so, the proportion that did not have an interview from these programmes only constituted 4 percentage points of the 18% that did not have an interview. It would appear more likely that clients are either (a) misunderstanding the question or (b) not undergoing an interview at registration or (c) a combination of the two.

As would be expected, NEAP clients (86%) were significantly more likely to state that they had undergone an interview with an ESO.

Clients were also asked whether they completed their registration form during the course of the interview. Of those clients who did take part in an interview, four out of five (79%) stated that the registration form was completed during the course of the interview

In order to determine whether the interview was a substantial interaction or simply a formality, respondents were asked what areas were covered during the course of the interview. The majority of clients who had participated in an interview stated that the interview covered their skills (80%), education background (78%), work experience (74%) and interests (72%). More than half of clients (52%) stated that they received career guidance.

As with last year's survey, four out of five (81%) respondents who had an interview stated that they found it useful. Conversely, one in five (19%) clients did not find the interview useful, which can be considered a source of concern. Women found the interview significantly more useful than men, as did early school leavers. Ninety-six percent of non-EU nationals found the interview useful, compared to 81% of Irish nationals and 64% of EU nationals.

Perceptions of FÁS Staff

FÁS staff rated very highly in terms of client satisfaction. Table 4 below displays the percentage of clients who rated various staff attributes as 'good' or 'very good'. Ninety-two percent of clients stated that the friendliness and politeness of FÁS staff was good or very good. Similarly, 91% of clients positively rated the extent to which they were treated with respect as an individual. Furthermore 89% were positive about the extent to which the staff were respectful of their privacy.

As with last year's results, where FÁS staff rated slightly less positively was in the knowledge of staff of the help and services available to clients (79%), how well staff provided the help that the client needed (76%), how well the staff tried to find about the client's needs and circumstances in order to help (73%) and the practical advice that the client received from staff (74%). However, these results are still positive overall, as approximately three out of four clients rated staff competence in these areas positively.

Respondents were also asked to rate three further aspects of service (also taken from the UK Jobcentre Plus Survey): the time-frame in which their business was dealt with, the level of information they were given about vacancies, and the level of information they were given about training and employment programmes. The emphasis of these questions was on the quality of service provision rather than the rating of staff themselves.

Table 4: Interaction with FÁS Staff (& Importance of Aspects)

	Very good	Good	Negative	Neither/DK	% 'Very Important'
Friendliness and politeness of staff	66	26	2	6	75
Treated with respect as an individual	63	28	3	7	83
Extent to which staff respected privacy	58	31	2	8	81
Knowledge of staff about help & services	44	35	7	14	75
How well staff provide the help you need	43	33	8	15	73
How well staff try to find out about needs	42	31	10	16	71
The practical advice you received	39	35	10	16	68
Time-frame in which your business was dealt with	40	38	7	14	63
Level of information you were given about vacancies	29	28	16	27	71
Level of information you were given about training and employment programmes	36	31	14	19	72

More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) felt that the time-frame in which their business was dealt with was either 'very good' or 'good'. Seven percent of respondents felt that it was 'poor' or 'very poor'.

In terms of the level of information given, 57% positively rated the level of information given to them about vacancies and 67% positively rated the level of information given relating to training and employment programmes.

Consistent with last year's findings, these results are very similar to the results found in the UK Jobcentre Plus *National Customer Satisfaction Survey* 2005. Even the distribution of ratings are similar, whereby the highest performance ratings are given to aspects relating to the way in which customers were treated in the interaction (or "service encounter") and slightly lower performance ratings were given to aspects relating to the quality of the help provided (or "service effectiveness").

Last year, Lansdowne Market Research commented that satisfaction with FÁS services was more strongly correlated with staff interaction than with the actual services received (i.e. with the service encounter rather than service effectiveness). This year, a question was added asking respondents to rate how important various aspects of FÁS service were to them. As can be seen in the right-most column of Table 6, the aspects which were rated the most highly were: the extent to which they were treated with respect (83%) and also that staff respected their privacy (81%). The time-frame in which business was dealt with (63%) and the level of practical advice received were rated the least highly in terms of importance (68%) out of the various aspects of service. Staff friendliness was rated as highly as staff knowledge (75%). This underscores the argument put forward that the experience of client's interaction with FÁS staff is more important in determining client satisfaction.

FÁS offices

The questions relating to FÁS offices were changed this year, and taken from the UK Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey 2005. Table 5 below presents the results for these questions.

Firstly, FÁS offices fared well in terms of having a pleasant and welcoming environment in the office – 84% rated it positively and a half of clients rated this aspect as “very good”. The level of privacy of their local office was also rated positively by respondents, with 80% rating it as “very good” or “good”. This is a feature that has come up in previous surveys as being important to clients, so it is reassuring that it is rated positively. Clients were also asked to rate the accessibility of the office to people with mobility problems. This was rated less positively – 64% of respondents rated it positively and 9% rated it negatively. A large proportion rated it as “don’t know” (18%). Clients with a disability did not rate accessibility significantly differently to other clients – 68% rated it positively.

Table 5: Service in Local FÁS Office

	Very good	Good	Negative	DK/ Fair	% ‘Very important’
Pleasant and welcoming environment in the office	50	34	4	12	70
Level of privacy in the office	48	32	7	14	77
Accessibility of office to people with mobility problems	34	30	9	27	73

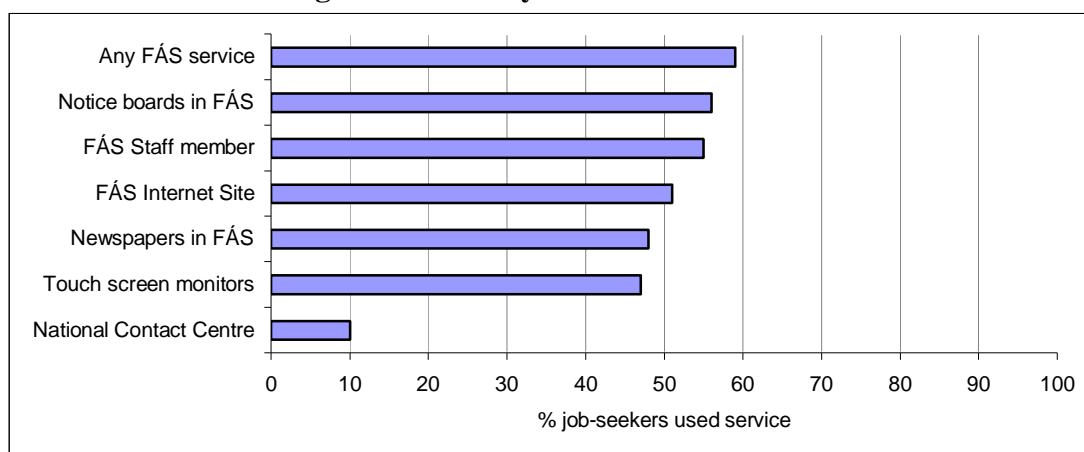
Job-seekers

This section on job-seekers refers to those persons (66%) who specifically stated that they have looked for jobs since registering with FÁS. As would be expected, the group most likely to have stated that they have looked for work since registering with FÁS were people who were unemployed at the time of registering (72% had sought jobs) and in particular, NEAP clients (77% had sought jobs).

Use of FÁS Vacancy Notification Services

Job-seekers were asked which of a number of FÁS services they had used in looking for jobs. This information is displayed in Figure 4 below. The majority of clients who had looked for jobs stated that they had used the notice-boards in FÁS offices (56%), spoken to a FÁS staff member (55%) or used the FÁS Internet site (51%). There was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who stated that they used the FÁS Internet site compared to last year’s survey – up thirteen percentage points from 38%. A sizeable minority of job-seekers used the touch screen monitors (47%) and the newspapers on display in FÁS offices (44%). One in ten job-seekers used the National Contact Centre, which is a significant increase from the previous survey (4%). Fifty-nine percent of job-seekers had used at least one of these services, showing that most persons used more than one service when looking for jobs. The majority of job-seekers used three or more of these job notification sources (66%).

Figure 4: Vacancy Notification Sources



Job-seekers were asked how easy they found it to look for jobs using the notice-boards, the touch screen monitors and the FÁS internet site. The majority of clients found them easy to navigate – 83% of clients found the touch screen monitors easy to use, 82% stated the same for the internet site and three-quarters found the notice-boards easy to use.

Respondents were also asked whether there was adequate vacancy information provided in each of the facilities. Less than one in five job-seekers said that the vacancy notifications contained ‘all’ the information that they required (a significant reduction from the 25% last year). Job-seekers were most likely to say that the notifications contained ‘most’ of the information needed (44%). Eleven percent stated that the notifications contained ‘very little’ or ‘none’ of the information that they required.

Job-seekers were asked to rate the range of vacancies notified at FÁS. Fifty-eight percent of job-seekers rated the range of vacancies as ‘good’ or ‘very good’, up thirteen percentage points from last year. One in five (21%) rated them as ‘fair’ and 16% rated them as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ (a significant reduction from last year). The improvement in these results may be attributed to the increase in the number of vacancies notified to FÁS by employers as a result of the FÁS Employer Strategy.

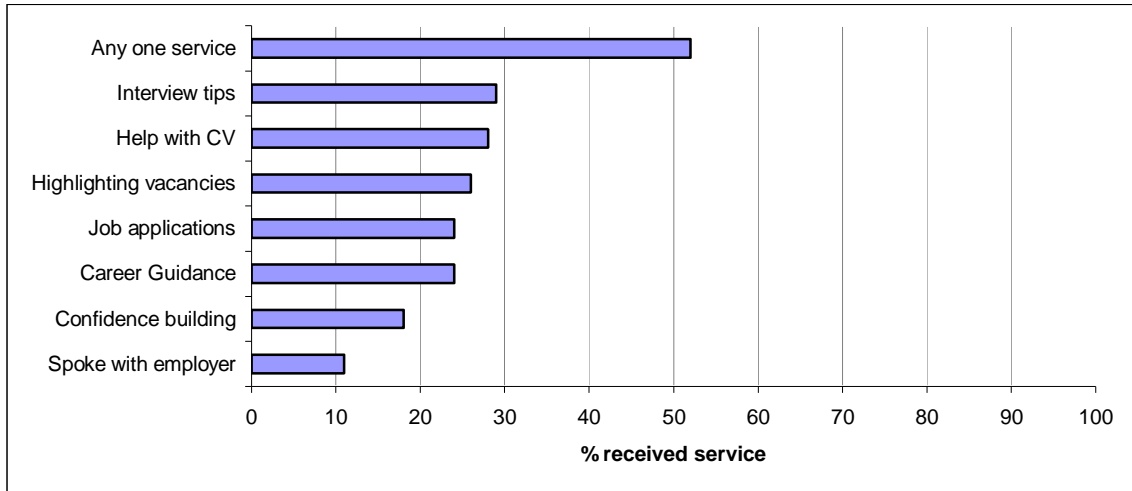
Applying for vacancies

All job-seekers were asked to detail the areas in which they received assistance from FÁS in applying for jobs. Respondents were asked which, if any, services they received from FÁS in applying for jobs. More than half of clients stated that they received some service, which was a significant increase from last year. In terms of the services received, almost one in three job-seekers received help with interview tips (29%) and their CV (28%). One in four respondents stated that they received help in the following areas: help in highlighting relevant vacancies (26%), help with job applications (24%) and career guidance (24%). Eighteen percent stated that they benefited from confidence building and 11% stated that FÁS spoke with an employer on their behalf. This information is presented in Figure 5 below.

As with last year, there was no significant difference in the level of services received by NEAP clients - 49% of NEAP clients who stated that they were looking for a job stated that they received no services from FÁS in applying for jobs. It should be emphasised that if a client is considered to be job-ready by the Employment Services Officer, it is FÁS policy

that the client need not receive additional assistance. Thus, the finding that active help from FÁS is not received by all job-seekers does not necessarily translate into poor service provision to clients.

Figure 5: Services received by job-seekers from FÁS when applying for jobs



Respondents were asked the number of vacancies for which they applied. The average number of vacancies applied for was 4.3 (slightly down from 4.6 last year, due to a smaller proportion of clients applying for more than ten vacancies). One in five (22%) job-seekers stated that they had not applied for any jobs – therefore although they stated that they had been looking for employment, they had not applied to fill any vacancies. Approximately three out of ten (29%) had applied for between one and three vacancies, a further 31% had applied for between four and ten vacancies and 15% had applied for eleven or more vacancies. Three percent could not recall how many vacancies for which they had applied.

Respondents who had applied for at least one vacancy were asked if they had applied for any vacancies which had been notified in FÁS. A half of respondents (52%) stated that they had applied for a FÁS notified vacancy. Overall, thirty-six percent of respondents had applied for a vacancy advertised on the FÁS Internet site, 31% had applied for a vacancy found on the touch-screen monitor and 28% had applied for a vacancy notified on the notice-boards. Five percent of respondents applied for a job notified to them by the National Contact Centre. The ranking of the sources of notification have changed since last year. In the 2005 survey, the notice-boards were the most common source for vacancy applications, followed by the touch-screen monitors, then the Internet. Internet usage has clearly grown in importance.

Respondents who had applied for a job were also asked whether they were actively notified of any vacancies by FÁS, either by a FÁS staff member in person, by telephone, by letter, by email or by text alert. It must be highlighted that it is not FÁS policy that all job-seekers who register with FÁS receive services from FÁS in job-seeking, but only those clients who need particular assistance.

Table 6: Job-seekers receipt of vacancy notification from FÁS (%)

Means of vacancy notification	Percent
Post	26
In person	16
Telephone	7
Email	2
Text alert	1
Any one	36

Over a third of job-seekers (36%) received a vacancy notification from FÁS. One in four job-seekers (26%) stated that they were notified of vacancies by FÁS by post. Sixteen percent were notified in person, 7% by telephone, 2% by email and 1% by text alert. These figures are displayed in Table 6 above. NEAP clients were significantly more likely to have been notified by letter (36%), but overall, they received the same level of notifications as other job-seekers.

Outcomes for job-seekers

The survey also wished to uncover the outcomes of job-seekers who were registered with FÁS. Of all job-seekers - i.e. all persons who stated that they had looked for a job since registering with FÁS - 40% were employed at the time of the survey, 12% were in education or training (including FÁS) and 40% were unemployed.

Training

All respondents were asked whether they had considered participating in a training or employment programme. Forty-three percent of respondents stated that they had considered participating in a training or employment programme and, of those, 65% (or 28% of the total) actually participated in a programme. This is a considerable increase from last year when only 42% of those who had considered participating subsequently participated. The majority participated in a training (89%) rather than employment (11%) programme.

Clients who did not participate in a training or employment programme although they had considered it were asked to give the reason why they did not participate. This was to determine whether the non-participation was client-driven or due to some attribute of FÁS. The most common reasons given were related to the client e.g. found employment (20%) and personal reasons (15%). However, a long list of reasons was provided including: none of the programmes on offer appealed (11%), the client wasn't offered a programme (11%), the programme's dates/times didn't suit (7%), or the client was waiting to participate in a programme (5%). The absolute numbers in these instances are quite small – the reasons are given for illustrative purposes only.

Seventy percent of clients (who had considered participating in a training programme) had been interested in a particular programme when they registered. Respondents were asked to state the most influential factor in making them interested about a programme. The most common reason given for being interested in a course was the belief that the programme was useful for jobs (38%), followed by an interest in the subject matter (31%). This is significantly different from last year's results, where the majority of respondents said the most influential reason was an interest in the subject matter (51%). Other factors influencing a client's interest in a programme were mentioned by a small minority, namely:

recommended by the Employment Services Officer (4%), recommended by family/friends (3%), or a convenient location (2%). Again, some of these reasons apply to a very small absolute number and they are listed for information purposes only.

A concern from previous surveys has been the waiting times for clients wishing to attend a course. This issue was highlighted in a 1990 FÁS Customer Survey carried out by LMR, where 27% of participants on training/employment programmes stated that it took more than 3 months before they commenced their programme and also in a report by Weafer and Associates. These waiting times were confirmed once again in last year's survey, where 29% of clients waited for three months or more to start their training programme after registering.

Table 7 below displays the results from this year's survey. There was a significant improvement in the waiting times experienced by clients who participated in training programmes. However, it should be highlighted that the question was changed in this year's survey. Rather than ask what the waiting time was before starting the programme, respondents were explicitly asked the waiting time since *applying* for the course. This was felt to be a more appropriate indicator of waiting times.

What is immediately evident is that the majority of respondents (52%) waited for four weeks or less before commencing their programme. There was a significant decrease compared to last year in the percentage of clients who waited for three to six months – down from 24% last year to 16% this year. The average waiting time decreased from 7.4 weeks to 6.5 weeks.

Table 7: Waiting times to participate in training programmes

Waiting time	Percent
Less than a week	8
A week	12
Two to four weeks	32
One to two months	22
Three to six months	16
Seven months or more	6
Can't recall	3

In addition to the waiting times experienced by those persons who participated in a training programme, the reason given by 5% of persons who had considered participating in a training programme but had not, was that they were waiting to participate in a training programme. This is a decline from 14% last year.

Participants on training programmes were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements regarding their experience of training programmes. Twenty-nine percent of participants agreed that there is too long a waiting period to participate in a programme with FÁS (a significant decrease from the 40% who agreed in last year's survey). In addition to this, one in four agreed that very little notice to participate in a training programme is provided. Both these issues of waiting times and notice for participation were highlighted in the report by Weafer and Associates in 2001 – there appear to have been significant improvements since that time in this regard.

In terms of the length of the training programme, almost one in five participants (18%) felt that the programme was too short while 14% of participants felt that the programme was too long. With regard to the content of the course, 84% of participants agreed that the course covered the areas that they needed, which is a positive finding. One in five participants felt, however, that the course covered very little new ground. This suggests that some work possibly needs to be done in better matching training programme participants to courses that suit their need. These results are very similar to last year's survey.

Overall Satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services

Clients were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services. In terms of overall satisfaction, 42% of clients were 'very satisfied', 34% were 'fairly satisfied'. Eight percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 8% were 'fairly dissatisfied' and 8% were 'very dissatisfied'. Thus, 3 out of 4 clients were satisfied with FÁS services, while 16% were dissatisfied².

In terms of bench-marking, these ratings were slightly lower than those found in the UK *2005 Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction Survey*, where 86% of clients were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied and 8% were dissatisfied. The Irish Civil Service commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out a Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2006 with persons who had contact with any civil service department or office in 2006. The results were very similar to this survey. When asked to rate overall how satisfied or dissatisfied the respondent was with the service received, 42% were 'very satisfied' and 36% were 'fairly satisfied'. Six percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 6% were 'fairly dissatisfied' and 9% were 'very dissatisfied'.

Some additional questions were asked in this area. From the literature in the area of interpreting satisfaction ratings, it emerged that satisfaction is closely linked to a person's expectations. Thus, a person may express satisfaction with FÁS services, despite receiving a poor level of service, because his or her expectations are very low. Conversely, a person may express dissatisfaction with FÁS services, despite receiving every service available, if his or her expectations are unrealistically high.

To address this issue, two further questions were added to the survey. Firstly, respondents were asked to rate FÁS services on an objective five-point scale ranging from very good to very poor. This would allow us to see whether clients rate FÁS services as either good or poor, rather than their levels of satisfaction with FÁS services, which is subjective depending on expectations. Secondly, a question was added to ascertain the client's expectations by asking, was the service you received from FÁS better or worse than you expected? This was rated on a five point scale from much better to much worse. The addition of this question allows for an assessment of whether high satisfaction ratings are due simply to low expectations or because the service provided was good.

In terms of how good or poor clients rated FÁS services, 43% of respondents rated the service offered by FÁS as 'very good', 33% rated it as 'good' and 15% rated it as 'fair'. Four percent rated it as 'poor' and another four percent as 'very poor'. Females rated FÁS significantly higher than males, as did younger people (under 25s) and those who had registered for a training or employment programme.

² These figures exclude clients who responded "don't know" (5.3%).

In terms of expectations, the standard of service received by clients in general exceeded their expectations. Eighteen percent of clients stated that the standard of service provided to them by FÁS was ‘much better’ than they had expected and 47% stated that it was ‘better’ than expected. Eighteen percent said that the service was about what they had expected, while 12% said it was ‘worse’ and 3% said it was ‘much worse’.

The UK *Jobcentre Plus National Customer Survey 2005* define a “service quality gap” as the difference between “very important” and “very good” ratings. By asking these questions over time, they measure improvements in perceived service quality. As this is the first year that this FÁS survey has asked these questions, Table 8 below displays the gaps as indicators of areas where service improvements could be made. As with the UK results, the service quality gap is larger for aspects of service effectiveness than with service encounters. The largest gaps can be found regarding the level of information clients were given concerning vacancies and training and employment programmes. The smallest service quality gap was in the friendliness and politeness of staff. The size of the gaps are also similar to those found in the UK.

Table 8: Service Quality Gaps

	%Very Important	%Very good	Gap
Level of information you were given about vacancies	71	29	42
Level of information you were given about training and employment programmes	72	36	36
Knowledge of staff about help & services	75	44	31
How well staff provide the help you need	73	43	30
How well staff try to find out about needs	71	42	29
The practical advice you received	68	39	29
Time-frame in which your business was dealt with	63	40	23
Extent to which staff respected privacy	81	58	23
Treated with respect as an individual	83	63	20
Friendliness and politeness of staff	75	66	9

Client groups

In order to assess customer satisfaction for various client groups, separate analyses were carried out examining the results for the following groups: gender, NEAP clients, early school leavers, foreign nationals and clients with a disability (i.e. whether the respondent had any long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activity). Some of these results have been reported in the preceding sections. Only those results which differ considerably from the overall results are presented here. As stated previously, if a result was found to be statistically significant, then it is highlighted as such in the report. Otherwise, the results presented are variations in responses without being statistically significant.

Gender

There were many significant differences in the responses given by men and women in this survey. The main differences were in their reasons for registering with FÁS, their attitudes towards various aspects of FÁS and in their current employment status.

In terms of their reasons for registering with FÁS, a significantly higher proportion of women than men registered to apply for a training course (39% compared to 28% of men), while significantly more men had registered to find a job (58% compared to 52% of women).

With regard to satisfaction with their experience of FÁS, women stated significantly higher levels of satisfaction with FÁS than men – 46% of women stated that they were “very satisfied” with FÁS compared to 37% of men. Women also found their interview with the Employment Services Officer significantly more useful than men (86% rating it as useful compared to 72% of men). In general, women rated most aspects of their interaction with FÁS staff significantly higher than men. Furthermore, women were significantly more positive about their experience with training programmes. For example, while 15% of women believed that their training programme covered very little new ground, this sentiment was expressed by 29% of men.

Looking at job-seekers, women were significantly less likely to say that they had looked for work since registering with FÁS (61% compared to 71% of men). This is reflected in the employment outcomes for the two groups – 34% of women were employed at the time of the survey compared to 42% of men. Significantly more men than women were unemployed at the time of the survey (39% compared to 27% of women). This can be attributed to the significantly higher proportion of women than men who were in education/training, FÁS or on home duties.

NEAP

One in four respondents were tagged as NEAP clients by FÁS records. NEAP clients differed significantly from other FÁS clients in their responses to a number of questions: the current employment status, the level of practical advice they received, and their experience of training programmes.

NEAP clients were significantly more likely than other clients to be unemployed at the time of the survey (43% unemployed compared to 29% of non-NEAP clients) and significantly less likely to be employed (28% employed compared to 40% of non-NEAP clients). NEAP clients were significantly more likely to state that they had an interview with an ESO (86% compared to 81% of non-NEAP clients).

NEAP clients rated the levels of practical advice/help that they received from FÁS significantly higher than non-NEAP clients. In terms of the level of contact from FÁS, 68% of NEAP clients stated that FÁS had contacted them subsequent to registration (compared to 46% of non-NEAP clients). NEAP clients rated the practical advice they received from FÁS significantly more positively than non-NEAP clients (a rating of 4.1 out of a possible high of 5, compared to 3.9 by non-NEAP clients). With regard to the level of information they received about vacancies, and about training/employment programmes, NEAP clients rated these significantly higher e.g. 61% of NEAP clients positively rated the level of information they were given about job vacancies compared to 55% of non-NEAP clients. Furthermore NEAP clients rated the level of privacy and the atmosphere in their local FÁS office significantly higher than non-NEAP clients.

A significantly higher proportion of NEAP clients (compared to non-NEAP clients) stated that they had looked for work since registering (77% compared to 62% of non-NEAP clients).

In terms of training programmes, a significantly lower proportion of NEAP clients agreed that their training programme covered the areas that they needed (77% compared to 86% of non-NEAP clients)

Early School Leavers

Early school leavers are defined as those persons aged under 21 with less than Leaving Certificate level education. In this survey, 7% of the sample was classified as belonging to this group. There were significant differences in the responses given in terms of the reasons given for registering with FÁS, current employment status, and the means of contact with FÁS.

Significantly higher numbers of early school leavers (compared with non-early school leavers) registered with FÁS to apply for a training or employment programme (38% compared to 34%), while a significantly lower proportion applied to find a job (46% compared with 55%). As would be expected, a significantly higher number of early school leavers registered to apply for an apprenticeship – 16% compared to 1% of non-early school leavers.

FÁS contacted early school leavers significantly less than non-early school leavers – 36% of early school leavers stated that FÁS had contacted them since registration, compared to 52% of non-early school leavers. Early school leavers were in contact with FÁS significantly more than others, however. Early school leavers rated the time-frame in which their business was dealt with significantly lower than others – 28% of early school leavers rated this as “very good” compared to 41% of non-early school leavers.

Early school leavers received significantly more services when applying for jobs than non-early school leavers, however. For example, 44% received help with their CV (compared to 28% of non-early school leavers), 38% received help with job applications (compared to 23% of non-early school leavers), 19% had FÁS speak to an employer on their behalf (compared to 11% of non-early school leavers) and 27% gained from having their confidence improved (compared to 19% of non-early school leavers).

With regard to employment status at the time of the survey, early school leavers were significantly more likely to be in education/training (15% compared to 7% of non-early school leavers). A lower proportion of early school leavers were employed at the time of the survey (31% compared to 39% of non-early school leavers) and a higher proportion were unemployed (40% compared to 32%), although these differences were not significant.

Foreign nationals

Foreign national clients constituted 9% of the sample. This proportion is lower than would be expected; there is a possibility that there is a bias in the survey methodology in capturing foreign nationals, as foreign nationals with less proficiency in English could be less willing to participate in a telephone survey. There were a number of differences in the responses made by foreign national clients compared to Irish clients.

In terms of client backgrounds, the education levels achieved by foreign nationals were significantly higher than that of Irish clients – 45% of non-EU clients and 35% of EU clients had a third level qualification compared with 27% of Irish clients.

Foreign nationals were significantly less satisfied with FÁS services than Irish nationals – 65% of non-EU clients and 68% of EU clients were satisfied with FÁS services compared with 77% of Irish nationals. The service provided by FÁS was “much worse” than expected for 23% of non-EU nationals, compared with 15% of EU and Irish clients.

The practical advice received from FÁS staff was rated significantly lower by foreign nationals than by Irish clients – 67% of EU clients and 70% of non-EU clients rated this positively, compared with 75% of Irish clients. The time-frame in which their business was dealt with was also rated significantly worse – it was rated positively by 66% of EU clients compared with 79% of Irish clients. The level of information given about training and employment programs was also rated significantly lower – it was positively rated by 53% of EU clients and 57% of non-EU clients, compared with 69% of Irish clients. Continuing this trend, the extent to which staff attempted to find out about their needs and circumstances in order to help was rated significantly lower as well – 60% of non-EU clients and 65% of EU clients rated this positively compared to 74% of Irish clients. The interview with an Employment Services Officer was rated highly by non-EU clients – 94% of non-EU clients rated their interview as “useful” or “very useful” compared with 81% of Irish clients. However, EU clients were dissatisfied in this regard – 64% found the interview useful.

Health problems, illness or disability

As stated previously, clients were asked if they had any long-term illness, health problems, or disability that limited their daily activities. Twelve percent of respondents stated they did. For the remainder of this section, this group will be referred to as ‘clients with a disability’. There were very few significant differences in the responses from this group compared to all others, apart from employment outcomes.

In terms of employment outcomes, clients with a disability were significantly less likely than other clients to be employed at the time of the survey – 26% were employed compared to 39% of all clients. Correspondingly, clients with a disability were significantly more likely to be unemployed than other clients – 41% were unemployed compared to 31% of all clients. In addition, significantly fewer clients with a disability were in education/training at the time of the survey (4% compared to 9% overall). Those clients who were offered jobs were significantly more satisfied with them – 88% of clients with a disability stated that they were satisfied with their job compared to 70% of all clients.

In terms of training programmes, a significantly higher proportion of clients with a disability had considered participating in a training or employment programme – 50% compared to 43% overall.

Clients with a disability rated FÁS services significantly better than the national average – 53% rated it as “very good” compared to 43% of all clients. There was no significant difference in the rating of accessibility to the local office by clients with a disability– 68% rated it positively compared to the overall average rating of 64%.

Regions

The terms of reference for this survey specified the need to carry out regional analyses. Last year, a minimum of fifty responses were obtained from each of the eight regions. This year, because of the level of interest in regional information, this was increased to a minimum of 80 responses from each region. Tables of responses to the survey questions by region are in the Appendix. A table with the percentage of clients who were unemployed at the time of

the survey, in particular for clients who were unemployed at the time of registration and NEAP clients, is also in the Appendix. As stated previously, if a result was found to be statistically significant, then it is highlighted as such in the report. Otherwise, the results presented are variations in responses, without being statistically significant.

Dublin

One-fifth of the sample was based in the Dublin region. Clients in the Dublin region differed significantly in their responses to the rest of the country in a number of aspects. Looking at the overall figures, clients based in Dublin made a significantly higher number of contacts with FÁS subsequent to registration than other regions (44% contacting three or more times compared to 38% nationally) and were more likely to contact FÁS in person rather than by other means (67% compared to 60% nationally). A significantly lower proportion of clients in Dublin had registered with FÁS for job search reasons (50% compared to 55% nationally). Accessibility to offices for people with mobility problems was rated significantly lower in Dublin, with 55% of clients rating it positively compared to 64% nationally.

There are further variations in the different parts of Dublin, though many are not statistically significant. Looking at Dublin City, fewer clients were employed at the time of the survey (31% compared to 38% nationally). Persons in Dublin City were significantly less likely to state that they registered with FÁS because they were referred by social welfare (5% compared to 13% nationally). The average number of contacts made by the client subsequent to registration was the highest in this region, significantly higher than the national average. The rating given for the friendliness and politeness of staff was the (joint) highest in the country, with 96% rating staff positively in this regard. Similarly, staff received the (joint) highest rating in terms of providing the help needed by the client, with 80% of respondents positively rating this staff attribute.

With regard to job-seekers, Dublin City had the highest proportion of clients reporting that they received help with highlighting relevant vacancies (31%), job applications (28%), confidence-building (24%) and having FÁS speak with an employer on their behalf (18%). Dublin City had the highest rate of clients who were unemployed at the time of registration remaining unemployed at the time of the survey (51% compared to 40% nationally). In terms of training programmes, 36% of respondents agreed that the waiting time was too long (compared to 29% nationally) and 35% agreed that there was very little notice given before starting their course (compared to 25% nationally). It must be borne in mind that the number of respondents involved for these latter questions is quite small.

Clients based in Dublin North were the most satisfied with FÁS services, with the highest proportion of clients stating they were 'very satisfied' with the overall service provided by FÁS (50% compared to 42% nationally). NEAP clients in this region had the lowest rate of unemployment by the time of the survey (35% unemployed compared to 43% nationally). Dublin North had the lowest proportion of clients who registered for job-search purposes (46% compared to 55% nationally). A significantly higher proportion of clients in this region were usually in contact with FÁS in person (72% compared to 60% nationally). In terms of access to FÁS offices for people with mobility problems, offices in Dublin North were rated the lowest in the country, with only 51% of clients rating this aspect positively (compared to 68% nationally). With regard to training programmes, clients in Dublin North had the highest proportion of persons who stated that they were interested in their training programme primarily because of the subject matter (47% compared to 31% nationally).

Clients in this region were more likely to say that very little notice was given prior to the commencement of their training programme (33% agreed compared to 25% nationally) and that their training programme was too short (29% compared to 18% nationally). Finally, the service provided FÁS exceeded the expectations of clients in Dublin North – almost one in four clients (24%) stated that the service provided was “much better” than they had expected (compared to 18% nationally).

With regard to Dublin South, there were few significant differences in the response given compared to the rest of the country. Clients in Dublin South had the (joint) highest proportion stating that they had undergone an interview with an Employment Services Officer (86% compared to 81% nationally). In terms of job-seeking behaviour, clients in this region had the lowest usage of the FÁS Internet site in their job search compared to the rest of the country (37% compared to 51% nationally). Dublin South had the highest proportion of clients stating that the job notifications “had all the information I needed” – 28% compared to 18% nationally. Finally, in terms of training programme participation, Dublin South had the (joint) highest rate of persons who had considered training subsequently actually participating – 43% compared to 36% nationally.

Midlands

There were few significant differences between the responses given in the Midlands and the rest of the country. In terms of contact with FÁS, the Midlands had the highest proportion of clients stating that they had no further contact with FÁS subsequent to registration (27% compared to 23% nationally). A significantly lower proportion of clients in the Midlands stated that their usual means of contact was by telephone (12% compared to 20% nationally). In terms of job-seeking, more clients in the Midlands looked for jobs after registering than any other region (72% compared to 66% nationally). Those who found employment were the most satisfied with their job (80% satisfied compared to 70% nationally). Midlands-clients rated the FÁS Internet site as significantly easier to use than the rest of the country (91% rated as easy compared to 84% nationally). Clients in this region were the most positive in rating the extent to which offices were accessible to those with mobility problems (74% rated as positive compared to 68% nationally). Finally, clients in the Midlands rated their satisfaction with the time frame in which their business was dealt with significantly higher than the national average (84% rated positively compared to 78% nationally).

Mid-West

There were very few significant differences in the responses from clients in the Mid-West. In terms of contact, a significantly higher proportion of clients in this region had been contacted by FÁS subsequent to registration (60% compared to 52% nationally). Clients in the Mid-West rated staff knowledge of services significantly higher than the national average (82% rated positively compared to 75% nationally). The level of privacy in FÁS offices in this region was rated the highest in the country (83% rated positively compared to 79% nationally). Mid-Westerners were significantly less likely to use the touch-screen monitors in their job search efforts (36% compared to 47% nationally).

North-East

A significantly higher proportion of clients in the North-East had registered for job search purposes (64% compared to 55% nationally) and a significantly lower proportion had registered to apply for a training course (27% compared to 35% nationally). The extent to which staff treated clients with respect was rated the highest in the country, with 94% rating this aspect of staff behaviour positively (compared to 90% nationally). Staff were also rated

highly in terms of their knowledge regarding FÁS services – 83% rated this aspect positively, compared to 75% nationally, which was the highest positive rating given in the country.

In terms of employment outcomes, NEAP clients in this region had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country by the time of the survey (37% compared to 43% nationally).

Job-seekers in the North-East gave the highest positive rating to the range of vacancies offered in FÁS – 64% rated them as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared to 56% nationally. More than one in three job-seekers (36%) in the North-East received help in the form of interview tips from FÁS, which was significantly higher than the overall rate of 29%. However, this region also had the lowest proportion of clients who were notified of job vacancies by FÁS (28% notified of a vacancy by any means, compared to 36% nationally). A significantly lower percentage of clients in the North-East were notified of a job vacancy by letter from FÁS (19% compared to 26% nationally).

With regard to training programmes, the North-East had the highest proportion of clients stating that they were interested in a training programme primarily because it was useful for jobs (50% compared to 38% nationally).

North-West

In terms of the client’s previous situation, a significantly higher proportion of clients in the North-West were employed prior to registration (32% compared to 21% nationally) and significantly fewer were on home duties or other (7% compared to 13% nationally). In terms of the reasons given for registering with FÁS, the North-West had the highest percentage of clients in the country stating that they registered because they were referred by social welfare (18% compared to 13% nationally) or to apply for a training course (40% compared to 35% nationally). Clients in this region also differed in terms of their method of usual contact with FÁS, with a significantly lower percentage contacting FÁS in person (37% compared to 60% nationally) and a significantly higher percentage stating that their usual method of contact was by phone (39% compared to 20% nationally).

For those job-seekers who had applied for a vacancy, the North-West had the highest proportion of clients who had not applied for a FÁS-notified vacancy (48% compared to 34% nationally). This is interesting given that clients in this region used the notice-board and touch screen monitors significantly more than the rest of the country to look for job vacancies. With regard to training programme participants, the North-West had the highest proportion of clients agreeing that there was very little notice given prior to starting their course. The numbers involved in these latter questions are quite small and the differences are not statistically significant; the results are presented for information purposes only.

South-East

There were few significant differences in the responses given by clients this region compared to the national results. The proportion of clients in the South-East who were unemployed at the time of the survey was significantly lower than that found in the overall results – 20% compared to 32% nationally. This also applies to clients who were unemployed when they registered with FÁS – 27% remained unemployed at the time of the survey compared to 40% nationally. Fifty-eight percent of job-seekers in this region stated that they received no services when applying for jobs (compared to 48% nationally)

although, in the context of lower unemployment rates, this is possibly not a source of concern. The South-East had the highest proportion of clients stating that their interview with the Employment Services Officer was “very useful” (48% compared to 41% nationally), although, interestingly, it also had the highest proportion stating that it was “not at all useful” (11% compared to 7% nationally). Clients in the South-East were significantly less satisfied with the level of information given about training and employment programmes in their local office (58% rated positively compared to 68% nationally). Finally, there may be a need for expectations’ management in this region as one in five clients (21%) stated that the service provided to them by FÁS was worse than they had expected.

South-West

There were few significant differences in the responses from clients in this region compared to the rest of the country. In terms of client backgrounds, the South-West had the lowest proportion of clients stating that they were unemployed prior to registration (48% compared to 62% nationally). However, this region also had the highest proportion of clients remaining unemployed – 54% of clients who were unemployed when they registered with FÁS remained unemployed at the time of the survey (compared to 40% nationally).

With regard to their interaction with FÁS staff, the South-West gave the highest rating to staff in respect of providing the help needed (80% compared to 76% nationally) and to how well staff tried to find out about the client’s needs (77% rated positively compared to 73% nationally). Furthermore, staff received the highest ratings with regard to the time-frame in which they dealt with the client’s business (86% rated positively compared to 78% nationally). A significantly lower proportion of clients believed that there was a pleasant and welcoming environment in their local office (77% rated positively compared to 84% nationally).

In terms of looking up job notifications, clients in the South-West used the FÁS Internet site the most – 63% used it compared to 51% nationally. A significantly lower proportion of clients in the South-West stated that they had looked for jobs since registering with FÁS (55% compared to 66% nationally – the lowest rate in the country). Of those who had looked, however, a higher proportion received help from FÁS – 57% received some service from FÁS in applying for jobs compared to 52% nationally.

With regard to training programmes, clients in the South-West had the highest levels of criticism regarding aspects of their courses. Almost one in four agreed that their course was too long (24% compared to 14% nationally), while 27% believed that their course was too short (compared to 18% nationally). Furthermore, almost one in three (31%) agreed that their programme covered very little new ground. It must be emphasised that in the questions pertaining to job-seekers and to training programme participants, the sample size is small and the results are presented for information purposes only. None of the latter results are statistically significant.

West

There were few significant differences in the responses given by clients in the West compared to the national results. In terms of the FÁS offices, the West had the highest proportion stating that there was a pleasant and welcoming environment in their local office – 94% rated this positively compared to 84% nationally. With regard to vacancies, clients rated the range of vacancies on offer significantly lower than the rest of the country – 42% rated them positively compared to 56% nationally. More than half of job-seekers in the

West were notified of a vacancy by FÁS compared to 36% nationally, which is the highest percentage for a region in the country. This was across the board, via all means of notification – for instance, 39% of clients in the West stated that they were advised of a vacancy by post, which was significantly higher than the national average of 26%. In terms of services received from FÁS when applying for jobs, the West had the highest proportion of clients stating that they received career guidance services (30% compared to 24% nationally). With regard to training programmes, clients in the West rated the content the highest – 94% agreed that their course provided what they needed, compared to 84% nationally. However, 39% believed that the waiting period was too long (compared to 29% nationally) and that there was very little notice before starting their programme (44% compared to 25% nationally). Clients in the West experienced significantly longer waiting periods for their courses than the national average, with a half of clients waiting for three months or more. Finally, one in four clients (26%) found that the service provided by FÁS was “much better” than they had expected.

Conclusions

The wide range of topics covered by this survey continues to provide a quantitative basis in many areas where anecdotal evidence previously had to suffice. As with last year’s survey, it must be highlighted that the data concerns a particular group of clients, i.e. clients who registered with FÁS from January to April 2006. As economic and social conditions change over time, the reasons clients register, their outcomes and their satisfaction with FÁS can be expected to change accordingly.

The majority of clients who registered with FÁS wished to seek employment (55%). A significant minority sought to apply or register for a training programme (34%). In terms of the employment status of clients at the time of registration, the majority (62%) were unemployed, while 22% were employed on either a full- or part-time basis. While the majority of clients who registered with FÁS were employed or in further education/training by the time of the survey (57%), almost two out of three clients remained unemployed (32%). In the case of NEAP clients, the proportion unemployed was higher at 43%.

FÁS staff continue to be highly rated in this survey. Clients see FÁS staff as friendly, polite and respectful. As with last year, there is room for improvement in the “service effectiveness” i.e. in the level of information given about vacancies and training programmes, and the knowledge of staff about help and services.

In terms of the level of proactive help offered to clients, more than half of clients were contacted by FÁS subsequent to registration. One in three job-seekers stated that FÁS notified them of relevant vacancies. Furthermore, more than half of job-seekers stated that they received some service from FÁS in applying for jobs by, for example, helping with CVs, interview tips, etc. It is not FÁS policy that FÁS should actively provide services to all job-seekers; however, given that 40% of job-seekers – and 43% of NEAP clients – were unemployed at the time of the survey, there may be more scope for helping these persons to seek employment.

There was a significant improvement in the rating of job vacancies. More than half of job-seekers (58%) stated that the range of vacancies notified at FÁS were ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Six out of ten job-seekers felt that the notifications contained ‘all’ or ‘most’ of the information that they required.

Customer satisfaction with FÁS offices is high. Eighty-four percent of clients agreed that their local office had a pleasant and welcoming environment. The level of privacy afforded by their local office was rated positively by four out of five clients. Accessibility to their local office for people with mobility problems was rated positively by most respondents (64%), including those with a disability.

Approximately one in six of the clients surveyed participated in a training programme. The most common reason given for being interested in a training programme was because of a belief that the course would be useful for getting a job (38%). Waiting times for training programmes (which has been raised in previous surveys) were greatly reduced in this year's survey. This can perhaps be attributed to a reformulation of the survey question to a more appropriate indicator of waiting time – the length of time between registering for a course and its commencement. More than half of participants started their course within four weeks of registering for it.

APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

Survey Results By Region

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
Present Situation											
Working full-time	14	11	14	13	14	13	12	14	15	25	14
Working part-time	24	20	27	20	27	27	26	27	21	15	15
School/college	6	6	7	6	4	5	6	6	10	7	7
FÁS	11	10	16	13	8	11	9	6	15	12	14
Other training	2	3	0	0	2	2	1	2	3	0	4
Home Duties	8	3	9	9	6	8	12	5	11	7	9
Unemployed	32	41	24	36	33	31	33	36	20	33	36
Other	3	6	3	3	4	3	2	2	5	0	1
When registered											
Working full-time	9	5	11	6	11	9	6	12	10	12	10
Working part-time	12	13	9	17	7	10	19	20	4	14	6
School/college	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	3	4	6	3
FÁS	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	2
Other training	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	3	0	0
Home Duties	9	7	12	7	8	9	11	6	15	10	5
Unemployed	62	68	58	63	66	65	59	54	58	48	73
Other	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	1	4	5	2
Overall satisfaction											
Very satisfied	42	35	50	44	41	39	43	37	41	46	42
Fairly satisfied	34	36	32	34	33	36	34	34	29	36	39
Neither	8	9	7	6	8	8	8	10	8	6	4
Fairly dissatisfied	8	10	8	10	10	8	7	7	9	4	5
Very dissatisfied	6	5	3	5	7	6	5	9	9	2	5
Don't know/refused	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	4	7	4
Overall Experience											
Very Good	43	40	46	47	45	43	43	38	36	46	37
Good	33	33	30	29	30	37	33	39	33	31	38
Fair	15	18	14	17	15	12	16	12	15	14	16
Poor	4	4	6	3	5	4	4	5	4	3	5
Very Poor	4	5	4	4	2	3	4	6	4	4	2
Reason registered											
Referred by social welfare	13	5	17	10	10	13	14	18	17	16	16
Job-search	55	47	46	58	58	54	64	50	50	49	58
Apply for training course	35	37	38	32	34	36	27	40	38	33	23
Apply for apprenticeship	2	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	4	4	1
Apply for employment	3	6	3	1	2	1	3	2	5	4	2
INTERACTION WITH FÁS											
Times contacted (average)	2.4	2.9	2.5	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.7
None	23	22	16	23	27	26	23	23	20	21	25
Once	19	7	23	12	17	19	21	27	19	24	13
Twice	19	19	18	17	18	21	18	14	25	23	19
3 times	15	18	22	14	12	15	15	12	17	6	14
4 to 6 times	12	17	9	16	15	9	10	15	13	12	11
7 or more times	11	15	10	15	11	10	11	8	5	13	17
Can't recall	1	2	1	4	0	1	2	1	1	2	1
Usual means											
In person	60	62	72	64	67	60	61	37	61	58	48
Email/internet	6	5	4	6	8	6	6	6	4	8	8
Phone	20	18	17	20	12	21	17	39	24	19	29
National Contact Centre	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Mail/post	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	4	1
Don't contact	12	13	6	8	12	11	16	14	11	11	14
FAS contacted you?	52	51	51	45	50	60	48	47	43	48	58

APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
Interview with ESO?	81	74	86	86	79	83	82	81	79	71	70
Areas covered in interview											
Work experience	73	69	75	72	69	77	78	76	70	65	70
Education Background	80	62	80	84	74	80	82	82	76	71	73
Skills	80	78	84	80	77	80	84	80	67	79	73
Interests	72	64	78	76	65	70	78	75	60	65	67
Career Guidance	55	48	59	55	54	51	58	60	53	54	47
Interview useful?											
Don't know	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Not at all useful	7	9	5	5	8	6	8	4	11	9	3
Not very useful	12	9	12	8	13	12	12	18	17	6	9
Quite useful	39	42	40	39	40	41	39	42	24	38	42
Very useful	41	40	43	46	40	41	41	36	48	47	42
Registration form filled?	79	83	74	79	79	80	85	78	72	77	76
Staff attributes (% positive)											
Friendliness and politeness	92	96	89	92	92	92	94	90	90	90	96
How well try to find out about needs	73	73	68	74	77	75	75	66	68	77	72
Knowledge of staff re: services	75	78	76	75	81	82	83	76	72	77	74
Treated with respect	90	91	87	86	92	93	94	85	89	86	89
Provided the help needed	76	80	78	75	77	74	76	74	72	80	78
Respectful of privacy	90	87	87	86	94	92	92	83	91	92	87
Practical advice received	74	73	76	69	75	75	78	66	70	78	78
Time-frame business was dealt with	78	77	74	78	84	77	80	71	83	86	77
Level of information re: vacancies	57	58	51	55	59	59	60	51	53	60	50
Level of info re: training & emp programs	68	70	65	68	72	69	70	64	58	63	62
FÁS OFFICES (% positive)											
Pleasant & welcoming environment	84	87	84	84	87	85	82	80	77	82	94
Level of privacy	79	73	81	74	82	83	79	77	83	74	81
Accessibility	68	57	51	60	74	65	70	62	67	62	62
Staff attributes (%important)											
Friendliness and politeness	97	95	93	94	97	96	95	97	98	94	97
How well try to find out about needs	93	92	90	86	91	91	93	91	95	88	94
Knowledge of staff re: services	93	93	88	94	96	93	96	94	97	90	94
Treated with respect	96	97	95	95	97	97	98	97	98	90	97
Provided the help needed	94	90	90	93	94	94	95	97	96	92	96
Respectful of privacy	96	93	95	96	96	96	98	94	98	93	96
Practical advice received	91	92	88	89	91	92	92	92	97	91	96
Time-frame business was dealt with	91	90	88	93	91	92	91	92	95	88	92
Level of information re: vacancies	89	89	90	83	90	90	90	87	92	86	87
Level of info re: training & emp programs	90	94	88	87	91	92	92	89	90	84	89
FÁS OFFICES (% important)											
Pleasant & welcoming environment	93	96	91	91	92	95	94	93	95	90	96
Level of privacy	93	92	93	88	93	94	94	95	92	91	96
Accessibility	88	89	83	86	89	87	90	91	87	85	90
JOB-SEEKERS											
Looked for jobs since registered?	66	60	61	62	72	69	67	70	56	55	66
Which FÁS services used:											
Noticeboard	56	44	65	56	59	58	58	41	58	65	40
Easy to use?	74	75	66	73	78	73	84	79	58	64	72
Touch screen monitors	47	43	66	61	56	36	50	31	37	39	44
Easy to use?	85	88	70	90	92	80	92	88	67	83	86
FÁS Internet	51	58	54	37	47	51	57	49	49	63	47
Easy to use?	84	75	80	80	91	83	85	89	68	85	97

APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
Newspapers in FÁS	48	43	44	34	53	46	54	49	56	48	48
Spoke with ESO	55	68	56	54	59	53	48	49	61	63	55
National Contact Centre	10	15	7	10	12	11	8	9	10	11	7
None											
Range of vacancies - good	56	59	57	60	61	59	64	51	43	51	42
Range of vacancies - poor	16	19	19	14	15	16	13	17	24	18	15
Information available											
Had all the info I needed	18	14	13	28	22	21	16	12	12	26	8
Had most of the info I needed	44	51	47	39	46	43	42	43	32	49	40
Had some of the info I needed	27	19	25	24	22	24	32	34	41	18	33
Had very little of the info I needed	8	16	10	7	6	8	5	7	11	5	12
Apply for any vacancies											
On FÁS noticeboard	28	31	42	24	19	32	29	20	25	24	21
On touchscreen monitors	31	35	41	43	32	26	32	23	20	21	26
On FÁS Internet	36	48	39	18	39	42	40	32	22	32	41
From National Contact Centre	6	8	0	5	9	8	3	5	9	3	3
None of these	34	22	29	32	34	30	32	48	44	45	38
Did FÁS notify any vacancies											
By letter	26	24	30	22	31	31	19	24	19	20	39
In person	16	27	15	14	19	15	11	13	16	14	30
By telephone	7	12	6	11	5	7	6	9	7	9	9
By email	2	6	2	4	2	0	2	2	0	2	2
By text alert	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
Any of the above	36	42	39	32	42	39	28	32	30	29	54
Receive services applying for jobs?											
Help with CV	28	40	23	30	28	25	34	24	20	35	26
Interview tips	29	29	30	31	25	29	36	27	16	26	28
Highlighting relevant vacancies	26	31	24	22	23	31	27	27	10	23	29
Help with job applications	24	28	22	33	26	19	23	23	16	19	24
Confidence building	18	24	22	12	20	16	21	17	16	13	18
Speaking with employer	11	18	11	9	12	9	10	14	7	8	13
Career Guidance	24	31	23	21	26	24	23	27	19	18	30
None	48	47	49	48	49	47	47	45	58	43	48
Offered any jobs?	32	32	36	32	32	34	31	33	27	21	21
Satisfied with job?	70	79	71	57	80	71	69	69	73	41	47
TRAINING PROGRAMMES											
Considered participating?	43	44	44	45	42	44	38	46	43	30	45
Of these, participated?	36	32	36	43	38	38	38	25	43	31	30
Offered a place? (Base: All)	44	45	51	49	43	46	38	42	37	37	47
Why did you not participate?											
No training programme appealed	11	15	13	9	9	12	9	12	17	10	12
Dates/times didn't suit	7	5	5	5	7	6	9	13	3	8	9
Found employment	20	19	15	18	21	23	26	16	18	22	15
Participated in alternative org	4	3	5	3	6	4	4	5	7	2	6
Personal reasons	15	7	19	21	15	13	18	9	14	9	16
Wasn't offered a course	11	16	14	10	13	9	6	13	11	14	14
Why interested in training prog?											
Useful for jobs	38	32	34	32	39	38	50	32	44	30	35
Subject matter	31	30	47	31	26	34	23	28	26	32	26
Recommended by friend/family	3	0	2	3	2	2	3	6	3	5	4
Recommended by ESO	4	11	3	0	6	6	6	0	0	0	6
Waiting time											
None	3	0	2	6	2	4	5	0	7	0	0
A few days	5	4	10	4	5	3	4	5	6	15	4
A week	12	12	21	24	13	5	14	12	8	0	5

APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
2 - 4 weeks	32	34	36	27	30	33	39	27	16	39	17
1 - 2 months	22	21	12	15	20	25	28	37	20	9	23
3 - 6 months	16	13	9	18	20	19	7	11	31	31	30
6+ months	6	6	7	3	4	9	2	60	11	0	16
Training programme comments											
Course too long	14	20	14	13	12	15	9	10	20	24	13
Course too short	18	19	29	15	12	15	15	17	22	27	27
Content provided what needed	84	66	89	83	82	86	87	82	84	82	94
Covered very little new ground	21	17	17	22	20	25	21	22	17	31	22
Too long waiting period	29	36	28	29	26	35	21	28	22	26	39
Very little notice before starting	25	35	33	28	19	24	19	35	9	19	44
Standard of service provided by FÁS											
Much better than expected	18	19	24	15	15	21	18	14	14	16	26
Better than expected	47	46	46	51	50	44	47	47	39	52	43
About what expected	18	8	15	21	19	18	17	21	25	21	19
Worse than expected	12	23	10	8	11	12	12	14	14	7	7
Much worse than expected	3	5	3	2	3	2	3	2	7	0	4

% Unemployed at Time of Survey (i.e. 6 – 9 months after registration)

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
Of previously unemployed	40	51	35	44	38	39	37	44	27	54	41
NEAP Clients	43	65*	35	52*	39	40	37	45	42*	50*	50*
All clients	32	41	24	36	33	31	33	36	19	33	36

*There are less than 30 responses in these cases; results are presented for information purposes only