

## **2007 Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey**

**Roshin Sen  
Planning & Research  
FÁS  
27-33 Upper Baggot Street  
Dublin 4**

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## Executive Summary

Employment Services requested that Planning & Research carry out a customer satisfaction survey of FÁS registered clients. Similar surveys have been conducted annually since 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 Franklin Research to telephone interview FÁS clients who had registered with FÁS six to ten months previously, across all FÁS regions. The survey yielded 1,513 responses. The questionnaire included questions on:

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

Franklin Research also conducted four focus groups, in Dublin and in Tullamore. These groups comprised two general groups, a group of foreign nationals and a group of clients who were unemployed at the time of the survey. The findings from the focus groups are presented throughout the report, and suggestions are reported in Chapter Four.

As in previous years, registrants' satisfaction with Employment Services remains strong. There was a welcome improvement compared to last year in the satisfaction ratings measuring "service effectiveness" (e.g. practical advice given and the knowledge of staff). The proportion of clients stating that they had an interview when they registered with FÁS also improved, increasing from 81% to 90% (as a result of refining the survey question).

**Client background:** At the time of registration, three-quarters of clients were unemployed (75%), while 15% 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 for NEAP clients. While the majority of clients who registered with FÁS were either employed (45%) or in education/training or FÁS (14%) by the time of the survey, one in three clients remained unemployed.

	<b>Client Status at the Time of the Survey</b>				
	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Education/ Training/FÁS</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Previous Situation</b>					
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	45	13	39	4	100
NEAP	36	12	46	6	100
All clients	45	14	33	7	100

For clients who were unemployed at the time of registration, 45% were employed at the time of the survey, 13% were in education/training or FÁS employment programmes and 39% were unemployed. In the case of NEAP clients, the proportion unemployed was higher at 46%. More than one in three NEAP clients (36%) were employed at the time of the survey and 12%

were in education/training or FÁS. These results show a significant improvement in outcomes for NEAP clients compared to last year.

**Frequency and Means of Contact with FÁS:** Clients were in contact with FÁS on average 3.3 times in the six to ten months subsequent to registration. FÁS contacted the client on average 1.5 times (two times in the case of NEAP clients), and the client contacted FÁS on average 1.8 times. The usual means of contacting FÁS was in person (76%), followed by the telephone (18%), email (4%) and post (1%). Almost one-fifth of clients (19%) said that they had no contact with FÁS at all after registering. The most common reason given for this lack of contact was that the respondent had found a job.

**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 (95% rated positively) and respectful (97% rated positively). There is some room for improvement in level of information given about vacancies and training programmes and in staff trying to find out about the client's needs in order to help (82% rated positively). As with last year, one in five stated that they did not find the registration interview useful.

**Job-Seeker Services:** One-third of job-seekers (34%) stated that FÁS notified them of a vacancy. Furthermore, a half of job-seekers (50%) 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. Job-seekers who remained unemployed at the time of the survey received a significantly higher level of service.

Compared to last year, there was a significant improvement in the rating of the range of vacancies advertised in FÁS. Two-thirds (67%) of job-seekers felt that the range of vacancies notified at FÁS was 'good' or 'very good' (up from 61% last year). In terms of the level of information provided in the vacancy notifications, almost three-quarters (73%) of job-seekers felt that the notifications contained 'all' or 'most' of the information that they required.

**FÁS help in getting a job:** A new question was added this year, asking job-seekers to rate the level of support that they received from FÁS in their job search. Sixty percent of job-seekers rated the support they received as being 'good' or 'very good', while 19% rated it as 'poor' or 'very poor'. Furthermore, clients who were employed at the time of the survey were asked whether FÁS had helped them to get their job. Thirty-one percent of employed clients said that FÁS helped them at least 'a little' in obtaining their job.

**Training Programmes:** One-fifth (20%) of respondents had participated in a training programme. The majority of participants (67%) stated they chose their course because they considered it useful for obtaining a job. Waiting times for training programmes increased from an average of 6.5 weeks last year to 9.7 weeks in this survey. Almost a half (46%) 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 the level of support received by the respondent in their job search. As found last year, foreign nationals were significantly less satisfied with FÁS services – 69% of non-EU nationals and 67% of EU-nationals were satisfied, compared with 78% of Irish nationals.

**Suggestions:** Client feedback in terms of improving services focused on ensuring that vacancy notifications are kept up-to-date, and requests for a more in-depth, personal service.

# Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey 2007

## 1.1. Introduction

FÁS Employment Services requested that Planning and Research carry out a customer satisfaction survey of their clients. Similar surveys have been carried out annually since 2005. This report presents the results of the 2007 survey. It also contains the findings from four focus groups that were conducted in Dublin and Tullamore to gain further insight into customer perceptions of FÁS service.

## 1.2. Survey

A telephone survey was conducted by Franklin Research on behalf of Planning and Research. Fifteen hundred FÁS clients who had registered with FÁS in the previous six to ten months were telephone interviewed in November and December 2007. 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 2006 survey to allow for comparisons between the two years. Some new questions were added, however.

As with the previous surveys, the survey sought to establish the reasons clients register with FÁS and the experience of clients' interaction with FÁS. Respondents were asked about their 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.

### 1.2.1. Methodology

The survey was contracted out to Franklin Research who, during November and December 2007, interviewed a sample of 1,513 clients who had registered with FÁS from January to April 2007. The survey was carried out by telephone and lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

FÁS provided the contact details of registered clients to Franklin Research. 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 11% of registrants do not have a phone number on file. However, quota sampling ensured that the distribution of key factors, such as sex, age and region were similar to the population of persons who registered with FÁS in that time period. Approximately a third of the sample were tagged by FÁS as being part of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) process.

In terms of characteristics not included in FÁS records, 21% of clients were foreign nationals (of these, 81% were EU nationals). This proportion varies by region e.g. in Dublin City, the majority of respondents (54%) were foreign nationals, while in Midlands 86% were Irish nationals.

Eight percent of respondents stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activity (compared to 3.5% who were in receipt of a disability payment).

A filter question was used in the survey, as with last year. The main focus of this survey is on registered job-seekers. Respondents were asked at the start of the survey if they had registered to participate in Safepass, Construction Skills Certification Scheme or apprenticeship. If they answered yes, they were asked if that was the sole reason they had registered. Five 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. This is the same filter as was used in last year’s survey. The results of the two surveys are therefore comparable, and are made throughout the report.

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.

### *1.2.2. Focus Groups*

This year, for the first time since this series of surveys began, focus groups were conducted in order to gain further insight into client perceptions of FÁS service. A total of four focus groups were conducted by Franklin Research in December 2007. Two groups were carried out in Dublin and two groups in Tullamore. Dublin had one mixed group and one group of foreign nationals. Tullamore had one mixed group and a group of clients who were unemployed at the time of the survey. Thirty-one participants were involved overall. In this context of four groups and 31 participants, the feedback is subjective and may not be accurate. The function of this ‘insight’ research is to gain understanding of the users’ perspective and their perceptions of FÁS service.

The discussion structure was finalised in consultation with Franklin Research. Given an hour’s time limit, the range of areas to be discussed was quite limited. The areas to be discussed included: expectations of FÁS service, the experience of the interview with the ESO and the use of self-service options. The foreign national and unemployed groups had some specific questions asking how FÁS could improve its services for them.

All participants were asked what the most important thing that FÁS could improve was, and to complete the following statements:

- The most annoying thing about FÁS is...
- The best thing about FÁS is...
- I’d tell FÁS this...

Findings from the focus groups are presented throughout the report where relevant. The suggestions for improvement are presented in Chapter Four.

## 2. Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

This chapter reports on the overall findings from the survey in terms of the background characteristics of registrants, their outcomes at the time of the survey and their interaction with FÁS. There is a section on job-seekers and on training programme participants, obtaining feedback on their experience of FÁS. Finally, the chapter looks at the overall satisfaction levels of registrants with FÁS.

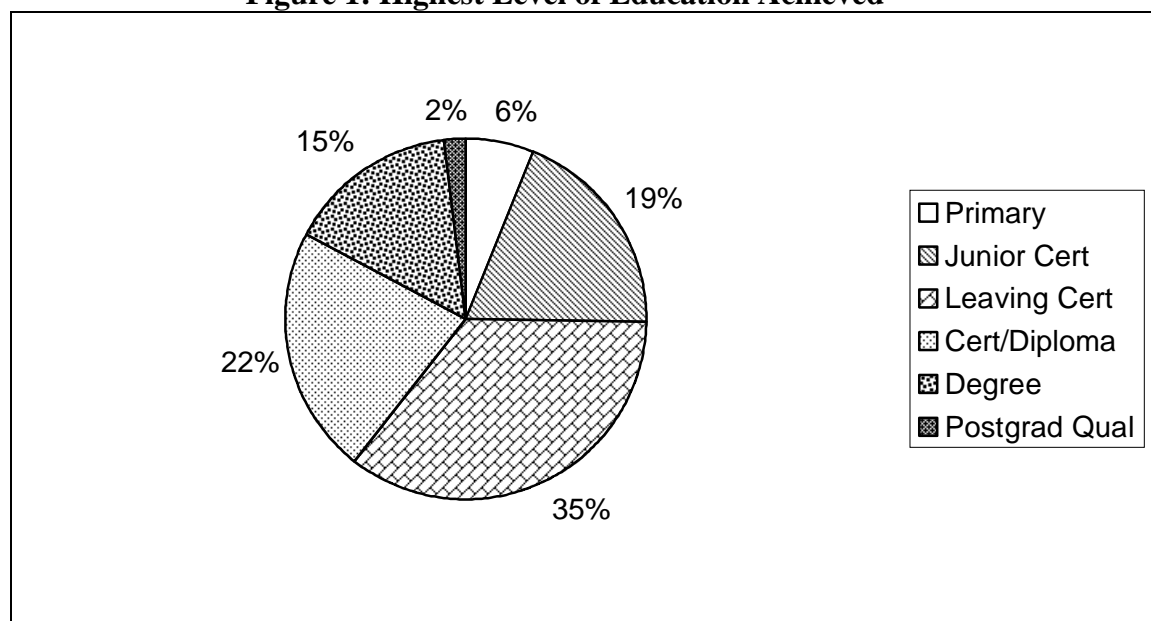
### 2.1. Background characteristics and outcomes

This section reports on the education level of FÁS registrants, their status at the time of registration and their outcomes at the time of the survey.

#### 2.1.1 Education Level

One in four registrants (25%) had attained less than Leaving Certificate level of education (Figure 1). The most common level of education achieved was the Leaving Certificate (35%). Twenty-two percent had a third-level certificate or diploma, 15% had a degree and 2% had a postgraduate qualification.

**Figure 1: Highest Level of Education Achieved**



#### 2.1.2 Reasons for Registering with FÁS

Clients were asked to give the reasons why they had 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, two out of three clients (67%) stated that they registered for jobs. Forty-one percent said that they registered for training and 2% registered for employment programmes. Eight percent registered to get advice on planning their career.

Compared to last year's survey, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of clients who stated that they registered for work (67% compared to 54% last year).

There was also an increase in the percentage interested in training (41% compared to 34% last year).

**Table 1: Reasons given for registering with FÁS**

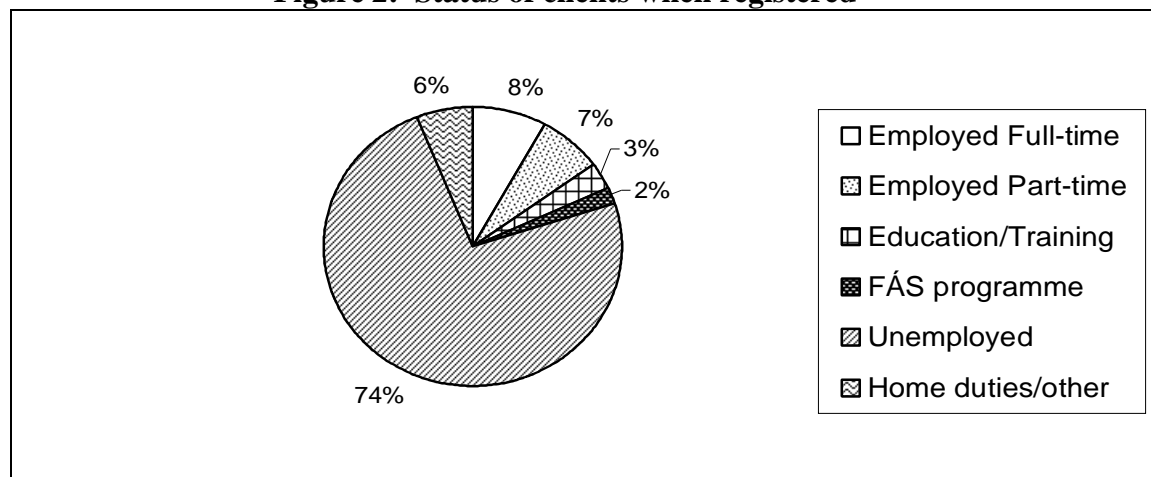
Reason	Percent
Jobs	67
Training programme	41
Referred by social welfare	12
Advice on career planning	8
Employment programme	2

Twelve percent said that they registered as a consequence of being referred to FÁS by the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA). Not all of these clients were part of the National Employment Action Plan; seven percent of all clients stated that they registered with FÁS because they were referred by DSFA but they were not NEAP clients.

### 2.1.3 Status of Clients at Time of Registration

In terms of the status of clients at the time of registering, Figure 2 below shows that three out of four clients (74%) were unemployed, 15% were employed (of these, a half were employed full-time), 3% were in school/college or other training, 2% were on a FÁS programme and 6% were on home duties/other. Compared to last year's sample, there was a significant increase in the proportion who were unemployed at the time of registration – up from 62% to 74%.

**Figure 2: Status of clients when registered**



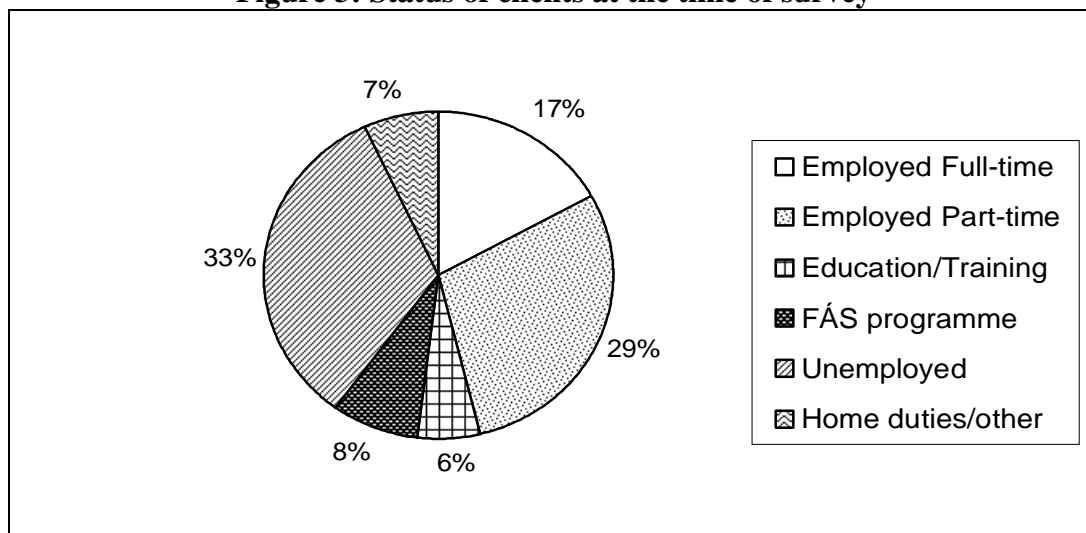
### 2.1.4 Status of Clients at the Time of Survey

In terms of clients' current situation (i.e. at the time of the survey, six to ten months after registering with FÁS), 46% of clients were employed (of those, 37% were employed full-time), 8% were on a FÁS training or employment programme, 6% were in school/college or other training. One in three clients were unemployed (33%) and 7% were on home duties or other. These results are displayed in Figure 3 below.

The most notable difference from last year's results is the increase in the proportion of respondents who were employed at the time of the survey (46% compared to 38% last year). It is also worth noting that the type of employment gained has changed significantly. Last year, almost two-thirds of the jobs (63%) were full-time, while this

year the inverse is true – 63% of the jobs are part-time. The level of respondents unemployed at the time of the survey remained the same as last year. The proportion in FÁS/education/training dropped from 19% to 14% and the proportion in home duties fell from 10% to 7%.

**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. Forty-five percent were employed, 8% were in education or training, 6% were on a FÁS programme, 4% were on home duties/other and 39% were unemployed. Due to the high proportion of unemployed clients in the sample (74%), 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
<b>Previous Situation</b>						
Unemployed	45	8	6	39	4	100
NEAP clients	36	6	6	46	6	100
All clients	45	8	6	33	7	100

The current situation of NEAP clients is also displayed in Table 2. Thirty-six percent of NEAP clients were employed at the time of the survey, 8% were in education/training, 6% were on a FÁS programme and 6% were on home duties/other. Forty-six percent of NEAP clients remained unemployed at the time of the survey which is six to ten months after registering with FÁS<sup>1</sup>. There was an improvement in the employment outcomes for NEAP clients compared to last year's survey (up from 28% to 36%).

<sup>1</sup> This figure is very similar to that found in the *Employment Action Plan, Monthly Progress Report No. 112* (January 2008) where it was found that 43% of NEAP clients who were interviewed by FÁS from January to December 2007 were still on the Live Register in January 2008 (p.2).

## 2.2 Interaction with FÁS

This section looks at the client's interaction with FÁS, in terms of the frequency and means of contact, the interview with the Employment Services Officer (and its perceived usefulness) and the client's rating of his or her interaction with FÁS staff. Comparisons with the previous survey are made.

### 2.2.1 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. The average number of contacts per client was 3.3 times since registration, up from 2.4 times in the previous survey. A third of clients (35%) had one or two contacts with FÁS in the six to ten months after registering. A third of clients (34%) had more than three contacts with FÁS after registering. Fifteen percent of clients were in contact with FÁS seven or more times subsequent to registration, up from 11% last year.

**Table 3: Frequency of contact with FÁS since registration (%)**

Number of times	Total Contacts
None	19
Once	15
Twice	20
Three times	13
4 – 6 times	19
7 + times	15
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.3</b>

A distinction was made in this year's survey between the client contacting FÁS and FÁS contacting the client. Two-thirds (67%) of registrants had contacted FÁS at least once, with an average of 1.8 contacts per client. FÁS had contacted 63% of registered clients at least once since registration, with an average of 1.5 contacts per client. The level of contact made by FÁS has increased since the last survey. In the previous survey, 52% of clients said that they had been contacted by FÁS subsequent to registration.

Almost one-fifth of respondents (19%) said that they had no further contact with FÁS at all after registering, which is a reduction from last year's survey (24%). A question was added this year, asking clients why they did not contact FÁS again after registering (33% of clients). A welcome finding was that the most common reason for not contacting FÁS was because the client had found a job (39%). A quarter said that they had no particular reason for not contacting FÁS. Thirteen percent were on a training or employment programme so there was no need for further contact at that time. Nine percent said that they were waiting for FÁS to contact them. Two percent said they didn't contact FÁS because they felt that FÁS had nothing to offer them. Other reasons included personal reasons (4%), in college/education (2%), or that they were still considering what they wanted to do (2%).

As with previous surveys, personal contact remains the most popular means of contact with FÁS. Three-quarters of respondents (76%) stated that they were usually in contact with FÁS in person. Almost one in five (18%) stated that their usual method

of contact was by telephone, 4% said that email was their usual medium and a further 1% said they usually corresponded by mail. This contact refers to both FÁS contacting the client and the client contacting FÁS.

### 2.2.2. *Interview with ESO*

FÁS policy is that all clients who register with FÁS undergo an interview with an Employment Services Officer (ESO). In the 2005 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. However, even when clients who registered solely for these programmes were filtered out in 2006, the survey still found that almost one in five (18%) clients stated that they did not have an interview with an ESO.

The results from this year's survey were similar to previous years – 79% of respondents stated that they had an interview with an Employment Services Officer. This year, however, a further probe was added, asking clients whether they spoke to a person other than the receptionist when they were registering and, if they had, for how long they spoke with this person. The purpose of these additional questions was to capture those persons who had had an interview but had not considered it an interview. Persons who stated that they had spoken with someone other than the receptionist for longer than five minutes – 10% of respondents – were considered to have had an interview. This raises the proportion that had an interview to 89%. Thus, one in ten registrants (11%) did not have an interview at the time of registration.

As would be expected, NEAP clients (92%) were significantly more likely to state that they had undergone an interview with an ESO (or had spoken with somebody other than the receptionist for longer than five minutes).

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 work experience (82%), skills (78%), education background (76%) and interests (75%). Three out of five clients (61%) stated that they received career guidance.

### 2.2.3 *Usefulness of Interview*

As with last year's survey, four out of five (81%) respondents who had 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.

Respondents were asked why they found their interview useful or not useful. The majority of clients who found their interview useful stated that it was because of the information that they received (mentioned by 71% of respondents who commented). The most mentioned kinds of useful information were career advice (mentioned by 35% of respondents), followed by information on courses (21%) and jobs (20%). Ten percent commented that the staff were friendly, nice and/or listened.

Some positive comments on the interview made by clients included:

- *“Lady knew her stuff, knew the market place, pointed me in the right direction”*

- *“Very good – there were things interviewer suggested that I wouldn’t have thought of”*
- *“Yes, because they pointed out job vacancies to me”*
- *“The interviewer pinpointed an area that I could improve my skills on and told me what course I could do to improve my skills”*
- *“Good advice on how to do my CV properly. She made me confident that I could get a job with the skills I have.”*

The negative comments, made by a minority of clients, centred on the lack of information (12% of respondents), in particular the lack of advice (6%) and the lack of information on jobs (such as inadequate job descriptions, 5%). Six percent made negative comments about the staff not listening and three percent commented on the lack of follow-up. The comments included:

- *“All I was told was to go to the notice board”*
- *“No guidance, no direction, quite brief”*
- *“I feel that it is directed more toward unqualified job seekers”*
- *“They never gave me much advice about jobs, they just put my name on file and said that they would get back to me but they didn’t”*
- *“They didn’t get back with job offer”*

#### *2.2.4 Perceptions of FÁS Staff*

FÁS staff rated very highly in terms of client satisfaction. Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of their interaction with FÁS staff. As with previous years, the questions were taken from the UK Jobcentre Plus 2005 *National Customer Satisfaction Survey*. Table 4 below displays the percentage of clients who rated various staff attributes as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Ninety-five percent of clients stated that the friendliness and politeness of FÁS staff was good or very good. Similarly, 94% of clients positively rated the extent to which they were treated with respect as an individual. Furthermore 97% 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 (85%), how well staff provided the help that the client needed (83%), how well the staff tried to find out about the client’s needs and circumstances in order to help (82%) and the practical advice that the client received from staff (85%).

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 & Change from 2006**

Aspects of Interaction	Rating				Change
	Very good	Good	Poor/ V. Poor	Neither	
Friendliness and politeness of staff	69	26	2	4	0%
Extent to which staff respected privacy	65	32	1	2	+3%*
Treated with respect as an individual	65	29	2	4	+2%
Time-frame in which business was dealt with	54	34	5	7	+7%*
The practical advice you received	51	34	8	8	+8%*
How well staff provide the help you need	50	33	8	9	+5%*
How well staff try to find out about needs	49	33	8	11	+5%
Knowledge of staff about help & services	49	36	7	8	+4%*
Level of info given about training programmes	34	48	9	10	
Level of information given about vacancies	25	48	10	17	+9%*

\*Statistically significant at 95% confidence level. 2006 revised to exclude “don’t know” responses.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents 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, 73% positively rated the level of information given to them about vacancies and 82% positively rated the level of information given relating to training and employment programmes.

#### 2.2.5. Comparison with Other Surveys

Overall, these results show a marked improvement from the previous year’s findings (as can be seen from the final column of Table 4 above). Most of the ratings have increased by an average of five percentage points from last year. The previous surveys have commented on the scope for improvement in the area of “service effectiveness” i.e. the quality of the help provided as opposed to how the customer is treated in an interaction (the “service encounter”). The most welcome improvement has been in the significant increases in the ratings for service effectiveness. For example, the proportion of positive ratings for the practical advice received by clients increased by eight percentage points to 85% and the positive ratings for the knowledge of staff about the help and services available increased by four percentage points to 85%.

These results have previously been compared to the UK *Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey*. However, their survey stopped asking detailed questions on rating aspects of customer service this year. Compared to the 2006 *Jobcentre Plus Customer Survey*, the ratings for customer service are substantially higher across the board.

#### 2.2.6. Focus Group Feedback

Focus groups were asked for their feedback on the interview with the Employment Services Officer. The feedback was very mixed. Some people felt that the meeting was very helpful. They were advised on what steps they should next take, on job opportunities, on courses that may help upskill, etc. Others stated that they were never called back, that there was no encouragement and that their personal circumstances were not being taken into account. It was felt that they “*there needs to be more time at the interview*”. Some people also felt that there was no relationship with the Employment Services Officer, and that there was no follow-up.

### 2.3. Job-seekers

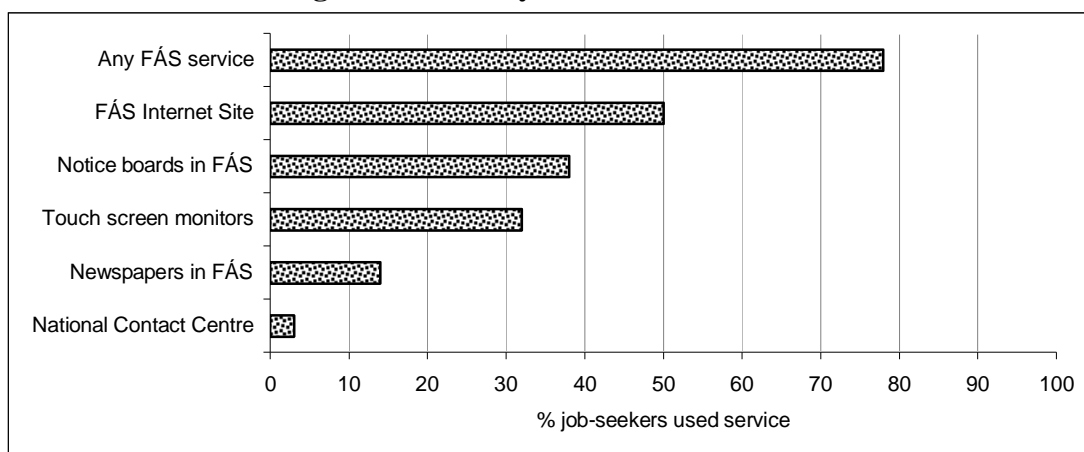
This section on job-seekers refers to those persons (66%) who specifically stated that they have looked for jobs since registering with FÁS. As would be expected, the group most likely to have stated that they have looked for work since registering with FÁS were people who were unemployed at the time of registering (71% had sought jobs) and in particular, NEAP clients (75% had sought jobs).

This section looks at the use of FÁS vacancy notification services, how job-seekers rate the range of vacancies on offer in FÁS, how many positions for which job-seekers have applied and the services received from FÁS in applying for jobs. A new question was added to this year's survey asking job-seekers to rate the level of support that they received from FÁS in their job search. Another question was added asking persons who obtained employment whether FÁS helped them at all in obtaining the job.

#### 2.3.1. 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. A half of job-seekers had used the FÁS website to look for jobs (50%). Approximately a third of job-seekers had used the notice-boards (38%) and touch-screen monitors (32%) in FÁS offices. One in seven job-seekers (14%) had used the newspapers in FÁS offices to look up jobs and three percent had called the National Contact Centre. Almost four out of five job-seekers (78%) had used at least one FÁS job notification service in their job search.

**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 – 89% of clients found the touch screen monitors easy to use, 85% stated the same for the internet site and 82% found the notice-boards easy to use.

Focus groups were asked what they thought of the self-service options available in employment offices. Feedback includes that neither the website nor the touch screen monitors were user-friendly. Many felt that the internet site was “*atrocious*” and “*difficult to use and difficult to understand*”. They felt that the touch screen monitor was initially very confusing, but that once you get the hang of it, it was very helpful.

It was said that “they should show us how to use them. It’s assumed that they are obvious to use but they aren’t.” They would like staff to be more approachable and helpful and not send them all the time over to the touch screen monitors.

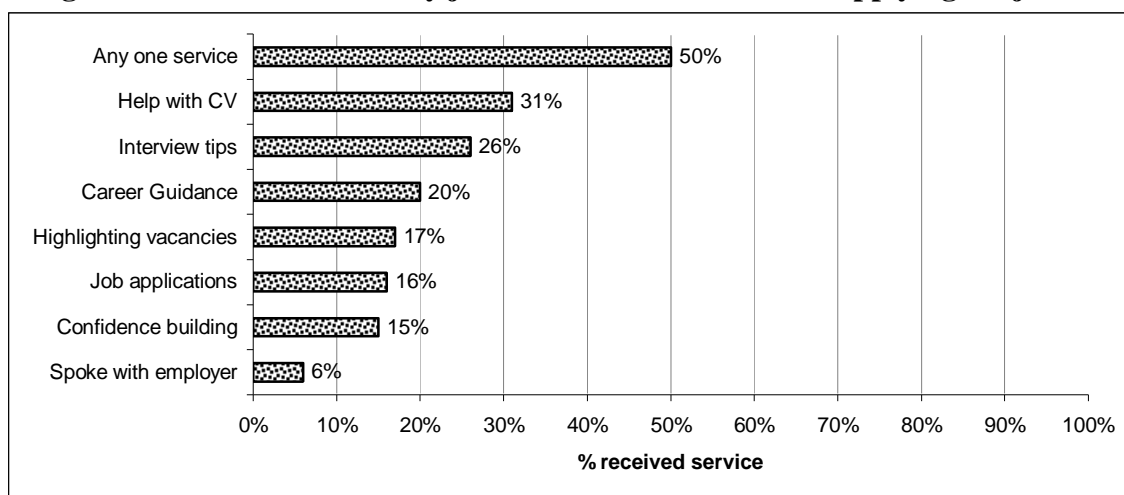
### 2.3.2. Rating the Range of Vacancies

Job-seekers were asked to rate the range of vacancies notified at FÁS. Two-thirds of job-seekers (67%) rated the range of vacancies as ‘good’ or ‘very good’, up six percentage points from last year, which is a significant improvement. One in five (19%) rated them as ‘fair’ and 15% rated them as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ (a significant reduction from last year). The continued 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.

### 2.3.3. 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 (Figure 5 below). A half of clients (50%) stated that they received some service, which was the same as last year. In terms of the services received, almost one in three job-seekers received help with their CV (31%). One in four respondents stated that they received help with interview tips (26%). One in five said that they received help with career guidance (20%). Approximately one in six job-seekers received help in: highlighting relevant vacancies (17%), help with job applications (16%) and confidence building (15%). Six percent of job-seekers said that FÁS spoke to an employer on their behalf.

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



As with previous years, 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. Looking at job-seekers who remained unemployed at the time of the survey, 60% had received some services from FÁS when applying for jobs, which is higher than the average rate. 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.

However, it would appear that a job-seeker who has remained unemployed six months after registering should be in receipt of additional job-seeker services from FÁS.

Respondents were asked the number of vacancies for which they applied. The average number of vacancies applied for was 6.3. The median number was four applications i.e. a half of job seekers applied for less than four jobs and a half of job-seekers applied for more than four jobs. One in five (19%) 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<sup>2</sup>. One in five (19%) had applied for one or two vacancies, a further 41% had applied for between three and ten vacancies and 21% had applied for eleven or more vacancies.

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 these respondents (54%) stated that they had applied for a FÁS notified vacancy. Overall, 27% of respondents had applied for a vacancy advertised on the FÁS website, 17% had applied for a vacancy notified on the notice-boards and 15% had applied for a vacancy found on the touch-screen monitor. One percent of respondents applied for a job notified to them by the National Contact Centre. One in five respondents had applied for a vacancy notified to them by FÁS.

#### 2.3.4. Notification of Vacancies

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 (%)**

<b>Means of vacancy notification</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Post	26
Telephone	6
Email	3
In person	2
Text alert	<1%
<b>Any one</b>	<b>34</b>

A third of job-seekers (34%) received a vacancy notification from FÁS. One in four job-seekers (26%) stated that they were notified of vacancies by FÁS by post, 6% by telephone, 3% by email and 2% in person. These figures are displayed in Table 6 above. NEAP clients were more likely to have been notified by letter (32%), but overall, they received the same level of notifications as other job-seekers.

<sup>2</sup> Further analysis reveals that of these 19% of job-seekers who did not apply for jobs, a half of them were employed at the time of the survey. This suggests that more informal methods of finding employment were prevalent among this group.

### 2.3.5 Satisfaction with job-seeker services

A new question was added to the survey this year, asking job-seekers how they rated the level of support that they received from FÁS in their job search. Twenty-three percent of respondents rated the support they received as ‘very good’ and 37% rated it as ‘good’. Twenty-one percent rated it as ‘fair’, while 19% rated it as being ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. Job-seekers who remained unemployed at the time of the survey gave similar ratings for the level of support received – 62% rated the support as positive, compared to 60% of all respondents. NEAP clients gave slightly higher ratings, with 68% positive ratings.

Respondents were asked why they had rated the level of support as they did. Job-seekers who were happy with their level of support (60%) made comments such as:

- *“They contacted me about three or four jobs”*
- *“I go to the FÁS office once a week and they always speak to me about the job opportunities”*
- *“They got me a job really fast. I’m happy with the job.”*
- *“I’m from Slovakia and was very surprised by the level of help and assistance in this country”*
- *“They have contacted me several times to see how I have done”*

Job-seekers who rated the level of support as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ (19%) commented that:

- *“FÁS were never in contact with me or returned my emails or tried to support me in any way”*
- *“Services could be more proactive, feel being left alone by FÁS with job search”*
- *“They were always very busy and didn’t have time to take care of their client’s questions”*
- *“They did notify me about jobs by letter but the jobs were basic”*
- *“Register and you look for it yourself”*

Overall, the main bulk of comments made by people who rated the level of support in their job search as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ centred on the lack of communication or contact (49% of comments; 5% of the total sample), followed by a lack of advice and information (44% of comments). Eight percent of those who negatively rated the support given to job-seekers (less than 1% of the total sample) commented that staff were unavailable, impersonal or unfriendly.

Franklin Research found that this aspect of service – the level of support offered to clients in their job search – was the main driver of satisfaction with FÁS services overall. There is scope for improvement in this aspect of service provision.

### 2.3.6 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 - 48% were employed at the time of the survey, 9% were in education or training (including FÁS) and 39% were unemployed.

All persons who were in employment at the time of the survey were asked how important FÁS services were in helping to get the job. Almost one in three (31%) employed persons said that FÁS services helped at least ‘a little’ in obtaining employment.

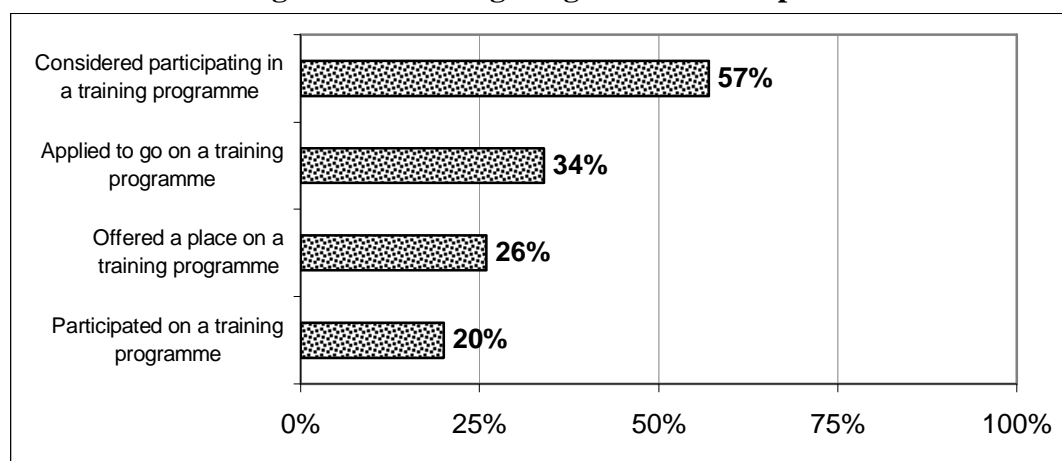
## 2.4 Training Programmes

All respondents were asked whether they had considered participating in a training or employment programme.

Looking first at employment programmes, 12% had considered participating in an employment programme; of those, one in four of those who considered participating were offered a place on a programme (3% of total sample) and 2% of the total sample participated in an employment programme. The remainder of this section deals with training programmes as the sample size for employment programmes is too small to comment on.

Fifty-seven percent of respondents stated that they had considered participating in training (Figure 6); of those, 60% applied to go on a training course (or 34% of the total). Twenty-six percent of all respondents had been offered a place on a course and of those, 77% actually participated in a programme (20% of all respondents).

**Figure 6: Training Programme Participation**



This section looks at the reasons why respondents did not participate in a training programme, the waiting times for programmes and the ratings given for various aspects of training programmes.

### 2.4.1 Reasons for Not Participating in Training

Clients who did not participate in a training 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 reason given was that the client had found employment (19%). A range of other reasons were given e.g. the respondent was still planning to apply (13%), in other training/education (12%), the course they wanted wasn't available (10%), and personal reasons (9%).

Respondents who had been offered a training programme but had not attended (6% of all respondents) were asked why they had not attended. The most common reason was that the course had not yet started (35% of instances). One in five did not attend because the date, time or location did not suit. A further one in five had found employment. One in ten did not attend because the course they were offered did not interest them.

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 (67%), followed by an interest in the subject matter (27%).

#### 2.4.2 *Waiting Times*

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 for FÁS. These waiting times improved in last year's survey, where 22% of clients waited for three months or more to start their training programme after registering. However, this figure increased to 29% in this year's survey and average waiting times increased from 6.5 weeks in last year's survey to 9.7 weeks this year.

**Table 7: Waiting times to participate in training programmes**

<b>Waiting time</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A week or less	19
Two to four weeks	27
One to two months	25
Three to six months	21
Seven months or more	8

Table 7 above displays the results from this year's survey. Almost a half of participants (46%) waited less than a month to start their training programme. One in four waited for one to two months. Twenty-nine percent waited for three months or more. It should be noted that one in five participants who waited for more than three months had been offered an earlier date that was not convenient to them.

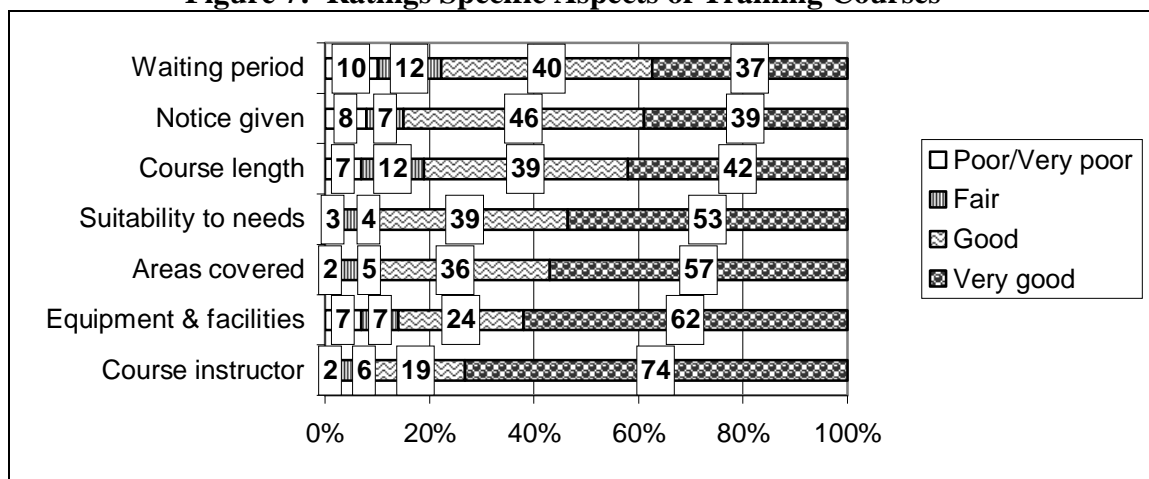
In addition to the waiting times experienced by those persons who participated in a training programme, the reason given by 35% of persons who had been offered a place in a training programme but had not participated was that the course had not started yet. This percentage corresponds to 2% of the total sample.

#### 2.4.3 *Rating Aspects of Training Provision*

All persons who had considered participating in a training course were asked to rate the range of training courses on offer at FÁS, the availability of information on training courses and the level of information that was given to them on training courses. Eighty-three percent of persons who had considered participating in a training course positively rated the range of courses on offer at FÁS. Eighty-two percent positively rated the information available on training courses (9% rated it as poor/very poor) and eighty-two percent positively rated the level of information given to them about training courses. These figures are very positive.

Training programme participants were also asked a range of questions rating specific aspects of their training programmes. The results are presented in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7: Ratings Specific Aspects of Training Courses**



The results overall were very positive, in particular regarding the course instructor – 93% gave positive ratings, with 74% rating their instructor as ‘very good’. More than nine out ten participants positively rated the suitability of the course to their needs (92%) and the areas covered within the course (93%). The amount of notice given of the course start date, which has been considered an issue in previous reports, does not appear to be problematic this year, as 85% positively rated the amount of notice given.

While 77% of participants positively rated the waiting time, one in ten participants considered it ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. This could imply that the increase in waiting times experienced by participants is not necessarily negative. Further analysis shows that less than a third (29%) of participants who waited for three months or more for their course gave a poor rating of the waiting time and almost a half (47%) rated the waiting time as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

Men were more negative 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.

#### 2.4.4 Focus Group Feedback

The focus groups said that FÁS is very good for courses. However, there was a feeling that FÁS doesn’t care who does what course as long as the places are being filled. Some people said that FÁS was not targeting the right people – that some people who really wanted to do the course couldn’t go on it, because the course was full of people who were only there for the training allowance.

When the focus group participants were asked what the best thing was about FÁS, the most common response was the training and attention from course instructors. They were considered to be helpful and it was appreciated that they did their best to help. The courses themselves were also cited as being very helpful and the people on the courses were very nice. The subsidised canteen was also appreciated.

Focus group participants were annoyed at not being able to do more than one specific skills training course in a row.

## 2.5 Overall Satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services

Clients were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services. In terms of overall satisfaction, 38% of clients were ‘very satisfied’ and 38% were ‘fairly satisfied’. Twelve percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 9% were ‘fairly dissatisfied’ and 3% were ‘very dissatisfied’. Thus, 3 out of 4 clients were satisfied with FÁS services, while 12% were dissatisfied. These results remain largely unchanged from last year’s survey, although the percentage that was dissatisfied dropped from 16% to 12% (and the percentage that was ‘very dissatisfied’ fell from 8% to 3%).

In terms of bench-marking, these ratings were similar to those found in the UK 2005 *Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction Survey*, where 80% of clients were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied and 11% were dissatisfied.

### 2.5.1 Expectations of Service

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 very high.

To address this issue, two further questions were included in the survey. Firstly, respondents were asked to rate FÁS services on a 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, 40% of respondents rated the service offered by FÁS as ‘very good’, 37% rated it as ‘good’ and 13% rated it as ‘fair’. Seven percent rated it as ‘poor’ and another two percent as ‘very poor’.

In terms of expectations, the standard of service received by clients in general exceeded their expectations. Thirteen percent of clients stated that the standard of service provided to them by FÁS was ‘much better’ than they had expected and 49% stated that it was ‘better’ than expected. A quarter said that the service was about what they had expected, while 11% said it was ‘worse’ and 2% said it was ‘much worse’.

### 2.5.2 Service Quality Gaps

The UK *Jobcentre Plus National Customer Survey 2005* defines a “service quality gap” as the difference between “very important” and “very good” ratings. By asking these questions over time, it allows for the measurement of improvements in perceived service quality. This is the second 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. Comparing the final two columns shows how the gaps have changed in the past year.

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 for training and employment programmes. The smallest service quality gap was in the friendliness and politeness of staff. The size of the gaps has decreased significantly for almost all aspects of service provision. It is worth noting that the decrease in the size of the gaps this year is due to a combination of an increase in the proportion of clients rating aspects as “very good” and a decrease in the proportion of clients rating aspects as “very important”.

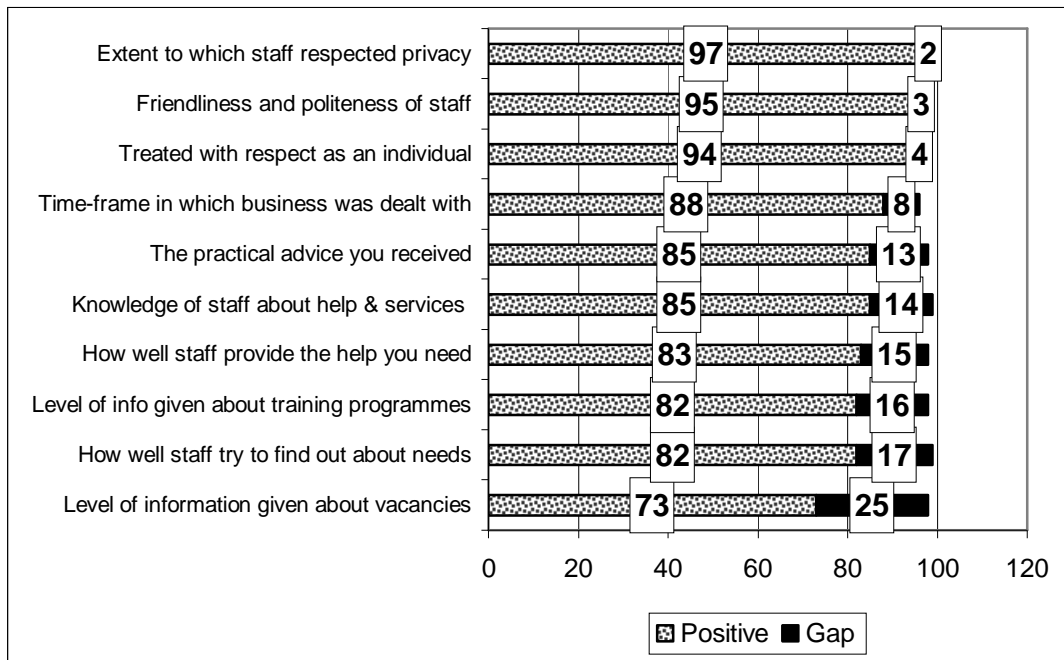
**Table 8: Service Quality Gaps**

	<b>%Very Important</b>	<b>%Very good</b>	<b>2007 Gap</b>	<b>2006 Gap</b>
Level of information given about vacancies	67	25	42	42
Level of info given about training programmes	65	34	31	36
Knowledge of staff about help & services	69	49	19	31
The practical advice you received	70	51	19	30
How well staff try to find out about needs	67	49	19	29
How well staff provide the help you need	67	50	17	29
Time-frame in which business was dealt with	66	54	12	23
Extent to which staff respected privacy	73	65	8	23
Treated with respect as an individual	71	65	5	20
Friendliness and politeness of staff	74	69	5	9

Another approach can be taken in measuring service quality gaps. Rather than comparing ‘very important’ with ‘very good’, as is used in the UK reports, we can combine ‘important’ and ‘very important’ and compare it with the total of ‘good’ and ‘very good’. This approach reflects the high overall positive scores. However, when ‘important’ and ‘very important’ are combined, the totals add up to 98% or 99% in each case. There is very little variation. The results are therefore very similar to those presented in Table 4 previously. The gaps found with this method of calculation are presented in Figure 8 below.

The size of the gaps decreases when this approach is taken, ranging from two to twenty-five down from five to forty-two. The ordering of the various aspects of service remains quite similar. The largest gap is still found for the level of information given about vacancies (rated positively by 73% of respondents, but as important by 98%, giving a gap of 25 percentage points). The smallest gaps relate to the friendliness of staff and privacy. How well staff try to find out about needs has the second biggest gap with this approach (17% - rated positively by 82% of respondents).

**Figure 8: Service Quality Gaps**



### **3. Survey results by client group and by region**

#### **3.1 Client groups**

In order to assess customer satisfaction for various client groups, separate analyses were carried out examining the results for the following groups: sex, 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.

##### *3.1.1. Sex*

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, the importance attached to aspects of FÁS service, the extent to which FÁS helped them to get a job 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 (44% compared to 37% of men), while a significantly higher proportion of men had registered to find a job (72% compared to 64% of women).

In general, women attached significantly more importance to most aspects of their interaction with FÁS staff than men. For example, it was ‘very important’ to 85% of women that staff were friendly and polite, compared to 59% of men.

Men were more negative 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.

Employment rates for men and women were very similar – 46% of men and 44% of women were employed at the time of the survey. Surprisingly, a significantly higher proportion of women than men were in full-time employment (20% compared to 12% of men). A significantly higher proportion of men compared to women were unemployed at the time of the survey (37% compared to 31% of women).

A significantly higher proportion of women in employment stated that FÁS services helped them to get a job – 35% compared to 26% of men.

##### *3.1.2. NEAP*

One in three respondents (35%) were tagged as NEAP clients by FÁS records. NEAP clients differed significantly from other FÁS clients in their responses to a number of questions: their current employment status, their level of contact with FÁS, and their level of interest in training programmes.

A significantly higher proportion of NEAP clients were unemployed at the time of the survey (46% unemployed compared to 26% of non-NEAP clients) and significantly

smaller proportion were employed at the time of the survey (36% employed compared to 51% of non-NEAP clients). A significantly smaller proportion of NEAP clients were in part-time employment at the time of the survey (22% compared to 33% of non-NEAP clients), while the proportion in full-time employment was very similar (13% compared to 15% of non-NEAP clients).

A significantly higher proportion of NEAP clients stated that they had an interview with an ESO (92% compared to 87% of non-NEAP clients).

NEAP clients rated the extent to which FÁS staff try to find out about their needs and circumstances in order to help significantly higher than non-NEAP clients (86% rated positively compared to 79% of non-NEAP clients). NEAP clients experienced significantly higher level of contact from FÁS subsequent to registration, with an average of two contacts compared to 1.2 for non-NEAP clients.

In terms of job-seeking behaviour, a significantly higher proportion of NEAP clients stated that they had looked for work since registering (75% compared to 62% of non-NEAP clients). A significantly higher proportion of NEAP clients were notified of vacancies than non-NEAP clients (40% compared to 30%). NEAP clients had also applied for a greater number of vacancies, in particular those vacancies that had been notified to them by FÁS.

In terms of training programmes, a significantly smaller proportion of NEAP clients were interested in a training programme when they registered with FÁS (33% compared to 44% of non-NEAP clients), and consequently, a smaller proportion applied for a training programme after registering.

A significantly higher proportion of NEAP clients (compared to non-NEAP clients) found their interaction with FÁS better than they had expected.

### *3.1.3. Early School Leavers*

Early school leavers are defined as those persons aged under 21 with less than Leaving Certificate level education. In this survey, 5% of the sample was classified as belonging to this group. There were significant differences in the responses given, mainly in terms of the job-seekers services.

A significantly lower proportion of early school leavers gave positive ratings for:

- the range of vacancies on offer at FÁS (67% compared to 80% of under 21s with the Leaving Certificate)
- the level of information given to them about vacancies (70% versus 81% of under 21s with the Leaving Certificate)
- the level of support received in their job search (43% compared to 66% of under 21s with the Leaving Certificate)

A significantly higher proportion of early school leavers were unemployed at the time of the survey – 45% compared with 25% of persons aged under 21 with the Leaving Certificate.

### *3.1.4. Foreign nationals*

Foreign national clients constituted 21% of the sample. This is much higher than the proportion in last year's survey (9%) because more telephone numbers were available.

However, the proportion remains slightly lower than what we would consider the 'true' population proportion. FÁS conducted a census of clients visiting FÁS offices in November 2007. Forty-three percent of visitors to FÁS offices were non-Irish nationals. This 43% included both registered and non-registered clients, however. Of all clients who visited the office, 59% were registered with FÁS. Therefore, assuming that there is no difference in the rate of registration between Irish and non-Irish national clients, we would assume that 25% of registered clients were non-Irish nationals, which is statistically significantly higher than the 21% found in this survey.

There were a number of differences in the responses made by foreign national clients compared to Irish clients.

Franklin Research grouped nationalities into: Ireland/Northern Ireland, Britain, Poland, Other Europe and Africa. There were no significant differences in the results for British clients. This section therefore refers to Polish, Other Europe and African nationals. Polish clients are treated separately because there are sufficient numbers in the sample (5% of the total sample).

In terms of client backgrounds, the education levels achieved by foreign nationals were significantly higher than that of Irish clients – over 30% of Polish and other European nationals and over 20% of African nationals had a degree or higher, compared to 14% of Irish clients.

As found in last year's survey, foreign nationals were significantly less satisfied with FÁS services than Irish nationals – just over 20% of foreign national clients were 'very satisfied' with FÁS services compared with 42% of Irish nationals. The service provided by FÁS was "much worse" than expected for 21% of African nationals, compared with 11% of Irish clients.

It is difficult to ascertain from where the lower satisfaction levels stem. In terms of employment outcomes, 84% of Polish clients and 66% of other European clients were employed at the time of the survey, which is significantly higher than the 41% of Irish clients (and 46% of African clients). In terms of ratings aspects of staff interaction, foreign national clients gave similar, if not higher, ratings almost across the board. There are some variations e.g. 93% of Polish nationals positively rated the practical advice received, compared to 87% of Irish nationals. However, this aspect was rated significantly lower by other European clients (73%) and African clients (75%).

There are two aspects that are rated significantly lower by foreign national clients: the extent to which FÁS staff try to find about the client's needs in order to help and the level of support offered to clients in their job search.

The focus group feedback found that foreign nationals had higher expectations of the service from FÁS, which could lead to lower satisfaction levels.

A final contributing factor as to why the overall satisfaction ratings could be lower for foreign national clients, as suggested by Franklin Research, is the lower proportion that participate in training programmes (15% compared to 21% of Irish nationals). Training programme participants tend to be positive about their experience with FÁS and the lower participation rates could impact on satisfaction levels.

### *3.1.5. 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. Eight percent of respondents stated they did (which is lower than last year's figure of 12%). 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, a significantly lower proportion of clients with a disability were employed at the time of the survey – 25% were employed compared to 47% of other clients. Correspondingly, a higher proportion of clients with a disability were unemployed than other clients – 41% were unemployed compared to 33% of all clients.

A significantly smaller proportion of clients with a disability had looked for a job since registering with FÁS (47% compared to 68% of others).

Clients with a disability had attained less educational qualifications than other clients – 17% had primary level education (compared to 5% of others) and 39% had less than Leaving Cert level, compared to 24% of others.

In terms of employment programmes, a significantly higher proportion of clients with a disability had considered participating in an employment programme – 22% compared to 11% of others.

There was an improvement in the rating of accessibility to the local office by clients with a disability – 75% rated it positively compared to 68% last year.

### *3.1.6. Unemployed Job-Seekers*

This section looks at job-seekers who were unemployed when they registered with FÁS and were unemployed at the time of the survey. This group comprised over one in five clients (22%) of the total sample, and a third (33%) of all job-seekers<sup>3</sup>.

There were significant differences in the composition of this group, compared to the other job-seekers. More than half (56%) were NEAP clients (compared to 31% of the other job-seekers). Their education level was lower, with a third (33%) having a lower than Leaving Certificate-level of education compared to a fifth (21%) of the other job-seekers. Eighty-two percent were Irish nationals, compared to 74% of the other job-seekers. More than half (55%) were men (compared to 45% of the other job-seekers). The age profile of this group was slightly older as well – one in five (19%) were over 50 (compared to 13% of the other job-seekers).

There were few significant differences in the survey results for this group compared to other job-seekers.

Looking at whether there was any contact after registration, there is a significant difference. FÁS contacted 70% of the clients in this group, which is significantly higher than its level of contact with other job-seekers (60%). Three-quarters of

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<sup>3</sup> It is possible that these persons obtained work in the interim period between registering and the survey but were out of work again by the time of the survey.

unemployed job-seekers had contacted FÁS subsequent to registration, which was significantly higher than the level of contact initiated by other job-seekers (68%). The average level of contact with FÁS was the same as other job-seekers.

Unemployed job-seekers used the self-service options significantly more than other job-seekers. They also found the self-service options easier to use, with the exception of the FÁS website (which 16% found difficult to use, compared to 9% of other job-seekers).

FÁS notified vacancies to a significantly higher proportion of unemployed job-seekers (37% compared to 33% of other job-seekers).

Unemployed job-seekers applied for a higher number of vacancies. The level of services received by unemployed job-seekers when applying for jobs was significantly higher than that received by other job-seekers (59% received some service e.g. help with CVs, highlighting relevant vacancies, etc.).

The satisfaction level for the overall service provided by FÁS was exactly the same as other job-seekers, as was the rating of interaction with staff. The level of support received from FÁS in their job-search was also rated the same.

## 3.2 Regions

The terms of reference for this survey specified the need to carry out regional analyses. A minimum of 80 responses were obtained from each region. Tables of responses to the survey questions by region are in the Appendix. A table with the employment outcomes for all clients, in particular for those who were unemployed at the time of registration and NEAP clients, is provided for each region. 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.

### 3.2.1 Dublin City

Ten percent of the sample was based in the Dublin City region. Clients in the Dublin region differed significantly in their responses to the rest of the country in a number of aspects. In terms of the composition its client base, Dublin City is striking in that the majority of respondents were non-Irish nationals.

Looking first at the employment outcomes of respondents (displayed in Table 9.1 below), 60% of all clients were employed at the time of the survey, which is the highest employment rate found in any of the region (with a national average of 45% in employment). Part-time work constituted three-quarters (77%) of all employment in this region, which is higher than the national average (64%). Analysis of the composition of clients in Dublin City shows that the region had the highest proportion of persons employed at the time of registration (23% compared to 15% nationally), which may go some way in explaining the high rate of employment.

**Table 9.1: Dublin City Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education /training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	57	31	6	4	4	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	32	49	11	0	8	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 157*

Similarly, the rate of unemployment (26%) is the lowest rate found across the regions. Sixty-nine percent of respondents in Dublin City were unemployed when they registered, however, which is the lowest rate across the regions (with a national average of 75%). A third of NEAP clients (32%) in the Dublin City region were working at the time of the survey and a half were unemployed (49%), which is similar to the national average.

Looking at other results in the survey, there are some differences in Dublin City compared to the rest of the country:

- A significantly higher proportion of clients in Dublin City registered with FÁS because they wanted to get a job (75% compared to 68% nationally)

- A significantly lower proportion of clients said that they had an interview with an Employment Services Officer (or spoke with a staff member other than the receptionist) when they registered (83% compared with 89% nationally)
- The time-frame in which the client's business was dealt with was positively rated by 91% of clients in Dublin City, the second highest rating in the country
- 62% of job-seekers in Dublin City used the FÁS website to look for jobs, which is highest proportion in the country (with a national average of 50%)
- The level of information given about job vacancies was positively rated by 83% of job-seekers in Dublin City, which is higher than the national average of 73% and the highest positive rating in the country
- Almost a third of job-seekers (32%) stated that they received career guidance from FÁS, which is significantly higher than the national average (20%)
- 90% of clients interested in a training programme in Dublin City said the reason they wanted to do the course was because it was useful for jobs (compared to 67% nationally)
- The waiting times between applying for a training programme and starting it were longer in Dublin City – 43% waited for more than three months, compared to 29% nationally
- As stated previously, the majority of clients in Dublin City were non-Irish nationals (54%). One in four respondents in Dublin City were Polish.
- 5% of participants stated that they have a health problem, long-term illness or disability in Dublin City, which is the lowest in the country (with a national average 8%).

### 3.2.2 Dublin North

The employment outcomes for clients registered in Dublin North are presented in Table 9.2 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, almost a half were working by the time of the survey (47%) and 37% remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was lower (36%) and 42% were unemployed. The employment outcomes for Dublin North are similar to the national average; there are no significant differences.

**Table 9.2: Dublin North Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	47	37	6	5	5	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	36	42	6	8	8	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 231*

Looking at other results in the survey, there are some differences in Dublin North compared to the rest of the country:

- Clients in Dublin North differed significantly in their means of contact with FÁS. 83% usually contacted FÁS by going into their local office, compared with 76% in the country as a whole. A significantly smaller proportion used the telephone as their usual means of contact (11% compared to 18%). The use of email was more prevalent in Dublin North – it was the usual means of contact for 6% of clients in the region, which was the highest rate found in any region
- Dublin North had a significantly lower proportion of clients stating that they had an interview at registration (82% compared to 89% nationally)
- 57% of respondents in Dublin North rated the practical advice they received as being ‘very good’, which is the second highest rating in the country.
- 28% of job-seekers rated the level of support they received from FÁS in their job search as ‘very good’, which was the highest rating of any region (with a national average of 23%). Positive ratings were given by 65% of respondents, compared with 60% nationally.
- 35% of job-seekers received help from FÁS in getting interview tips and 22% received help with confidence-building, which were the highest rates in the country (national averages of 26% and 15% respectively).
- The range of vacancies was rated as ‘very good’ by a significantly higher proportion of job-seekers in Dublin North (25% compared to 19% nationally)
- Clients in Dublin North gave the most positive ratings for the range of training courses available (85%).
- The availability of information on training courses was also rated the most highly in the country (89% positive compared to 82% nationally)
- Dublin North had the second highest level of non-Irish nationals in a region (23%)
- The age profile of clients in Dublin North was higher than the national average – 20% were aged 50 or over, compared to 15% in the country as a whole.

### 3.2.3. Dublin South

The employment outcomes for clients registered in Dublin South are presented in Table 9.3 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 37% were working by the time of the survey and almost a half (47%) remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was lower again (32%) and 54% were unemployed. The overall employment outcomes for all clients in Dublin South is similar to the national average (47% compared to 45% nationally), but its employment rates for unemployed and NEAP clients were lower than the national averages.

The overall unemployment rate was higher in Dublin South (39% compared to 33% nationally). This can be partially attributed to the lower level of clients reporting that they were on home duties or other (3% compared to 8% nationally).

**Table 9.3: Dublin South Outcomes for Unemployment and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	37	47	7	6	2	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	32	54	6	6	2	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 128*

Looking at other results in the survey, there were a number of differences in Dublin South compared to the rest of the country:

- One in five job-seekers in Dublin South was notified of a vacancy by FÁS – this is the lowest proportion out of any region (with a national average of 34% of job-seekers being notified of vacancies)
- However, for job-seekers who applied for jobs, 67% applied for a vacancy notified to them by FÁS, which is the highest percentage in the country.
- Job-seekers in Dublin South found the jobs notice-board in their local offices more difficult to use (19% compared to 11% nationally). Similarly, 16% found the website difficult to use, compared to 11% nationally.
- 40% of job-seekers received help with their CV from FÁS and 23% received help with their job applications, which are the highest levels found of any region
- One in four job-seekers (24%) in Dublin South said that the level of support they received from FÁS in their job search was ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, which is significantly higher than the national average of 19%.
- Of persons who had applied for a training course, Dublin South had the highest rate of then offering a course – 94% had been offered a course compared to the national average of 77%
- In terms of the demographic characteristics of the client group in Dublin South, one in three respondents (32%) had a less than Leaving Certificate level of education, compared to 25% nationally. This can be understood when looking at the age profile of respondents – 26% were aged 21 and under, compared to 19% nationally

### 3.2.4. Midlands

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the Midlands are presented in Table 9.4 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, a half (50%) were working by the time of the survey and a third (33%) remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was lower (43%) and 41% were unemployed. The employment outcomes for all clients in the Midlands is higher than the national average (49% compared to 45% nationally), as are its employment rates for unemployed and NEAP clients. The unemployment rate for clients was lower than national averages for all groups.

**Table 9.4: Midlands Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	50	33	10	5	2	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	43	41	6	8	2	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 161*

Looking at other results in the survey, there are a number of differences in the Midlands compared to the rest of the country:

- A smaller proportion of clients in the Midlands registered with FÁS for job-related reasons than the rest of the country (56% compared to 68% nationally).
- The Midlands had the significantly highest proportion of clients who were ‘very satisfied’ with the overall service that FÁS provided (51% compared to 38% nationally).
- The Midlands had the highest proportion of clients who said that their usual means of contact with FÁS was by telephone (30% compared to 18% nationally)
- The registration interview was rated as being ‘very useful’ by 53% of clients in the Midlands (compared with 44% nationally).
- Across many aspects of staff interaction with FÁS, clients in the Midlands had the highest proportion rating them as ‘very good’: how well staff try to find out about needs and circumstances in order to help (55%), being treated with respect (77%), how well staff provide the help they need (57%), and the practical advice received (58%).
- Training programme participants in the Midlands had the lowest proportion of clients waiting for three or more months before starting their course (14% compared with 30% nationally).
- The range of training courses on offer was rated as ‘very good’ by 50% of clients, which was the highest of any region (with the national average of 37%).
- The level of information given to clients about training programmes was rated the highest in the country – 89% rated this positively, compared to 81% nationally.
- The instructor on the course was rated as ‘very good’ by 85% of training programme participants (compared to 74% nationally).
- In terms of demographic characteristics, the Midlands had a higher proportion of women than other regions (60% compared to 54% nationally).

### 3.2.5. Mid-West

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the Midwest are presented in Table 9.5 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 46% were working by the time of the survey and 39% remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was lower 40% and 40% were unemployed. The employment rate for all clients in the Midlands is the same as the national average (45%) and the unemployment rate is similar (36% compared to 38% nationally).

**Table 9.5: Mid-West Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	46	39	6	5	5	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	40	40	8	6	8	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 148*

Looking at other results in the survey, there are a number of differences in the Midwest compared to the rest of the country:

- The Midwest had the (significantly) highest proportion of clients saying that they had an interview when they registered (96% compared to 89% nationally).
- The Midwest had the highest proportion of clients who stated that they had no contact with FÁS at all since registering .
- Clients in the Midwest gave the poorest rating for the range of vacancies on offer in FÁS – 27% of job-seekers rated the range of vacancies as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, compared to 15% nationally.
- The percentage of people in school or college at the time of the survey was the lowest in the Midwest (3%) compared to all other regions (5%).
- The Midwest had the highest percentage of clients who stated that they were ‘very dissatisfied’ with the service provided by FÁS (6% compared to 3% nationally).
- 22% of clients who had obtained a job in the Midwest said that FÁS had helped them at least ‘a little’ in getting the job, compared to 31% nationally.
- The Midwest had the highest proportion of clients who were interested in a training programme because of the subject matter (45% compared with 27% nationally).
- 93% of training programme participants in the Midwest positively rated the level of notice given before the start of their course (compared to 85% nationally).
- In terms of the client profile, the Midwest had the second highest proportion of clients stating that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability (13% compared with 8% nationally).
- In terms of its age profile, one in five respondents were over 50 years of age (compared with 15% nationally).

### 3.2.6. North-East

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the North-East are presented in Table 9.6 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 47% were working by the time of the survey and 36% remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was 44% and the same percentage was unemployed. The employment rate for NEAP clients is significantly higher than the national average (36%). The employment rate for all clients in the North-East is similar to the national average (46%) but the unemployment rate is lower (30% compared to 38% nationally).

**Table 9.6: North-East Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	47	36	6	5	5	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	44	44	0	10	2	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 123*

Looking at other results in the survey, there are some differences in the North-East compared to the rest of the country:

- A significantly lower proportion of clients in the North-East registered to get information on training programmes (34% compared to 41% nationally) or because they were referred by social welfare (8% compared to 12% nationally).
- The North-East had the highest percentage of clients working full-time at the time of the survey (20% compared to 17% nationally).
- The North-East had the lowest percentage of positive satisfaction ratings compared to other regions (72% compared to 76% nationally).
- A higher proportion of clients in the North-East were not contacted at all by FÁS after registering (45% compared to 38% nationally).
- Almost one in ten clients (9%) in the North-East stated that staff were ‘very poor’ in trying to find out about their needs and circumstances in order to help, which is higher than the 2% average nationally.
- 61% of job-seekers positively rated the level of information given to them about vacancies, which is lower than other regions (73%).
- The North-East had the highest percentage of job-seekers who did not, in fact, apply for any vacancies (32% compared with 19% nationally).
- For those job-seekers who applied for jobs, a significantly smaller proportion received services such as help with their CV, job applications etc. (31% compared to 50% nationally).
- 13% of job-seekers said the level of support that they received from FÁS in their job search was ‘very poor’, which is almost double the national average (7%).
- 16% of clients stated that the level of information available on training programmes was ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, which is higher than the national average (9%).
- A higher proportion of clients in the North-East who obtained employment stated that FÁS services helped them to get their job – 39% compared to 31% nationally.

### 3.2.7. North-West

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the North-West are presented in Table 9.7 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 39% were working by the time of the survey and approximately a half (52%) remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, one in three were working and 60% were unemployed. The unemployment rate for NEAP clients is significantly higher than the national average (46%). The employment rate for all clients in the North-West is significantly lower than the national average (37% compared to 46% nationally) and the unemployment rate is significantly higher (48% compared to 38% nationally). The North-West had a significantly higher (in fact, the highest) proportion of clients who were unemployed when they registered, however (83% compared with 75% nationally). Almost a half of all clients (49%) were tagged as being part of the NEAP process compared to 35% nationally.

**Table 9.7: North-West Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	39	52	5	3	2	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	33	60	3	3	3	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 81*

Looking at other results in the survey, there were a few differences in the North-West compared to the rest of the country:

- The North-West had the smallest proportion of clients that registered for career advice (3% compared with 8% nationally).
- A significantly higher proportion of clients in the North-West contacted FÁS at least once after registering (73% compared to 64% nationally).
- The North-West had the highest proportion of clients who stated that their usual means of contact with FÁS was by letter (9% compared to 1% nationally).
- The time-frame in which their business was dealt with was rated as ‘very good’ by a significantly higher proportion of clients in the North-West (67% compared to 54% nationally).
- The friendliness and politeness of staff was rated as ‘very good’ by 77% of clients in the North-West, which is higher than the national average (69%).
- The knowledge of staff was also rated as ‘very good’ by a higher percentage in the North-West (58% compared to 49% nationally).
- The North-West had the highest proportion of job-seekers of any region (74% compared to 66% nationally).
- A smaller proportion of job-seekers in the North-West used the jobs notice-boards to look up vacancies (25% compared to 38% nationally).
- A smaller proportion of training programme participants in the North-West attended their programme because it was useful for jobs (47% compared to 67% nationally).
- In terms of the profile of its clients, a higher percentage of clients in the North-West had a third level qualification (27% compared to 17% nationally).

### 3.2.8. South-East

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the South-East are presented in Table 9.8 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 41% were working by the time of the survey and 42% remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was 28% and 61% were unemployed. The unemployment rate for NEAP clients is higher than the national average (36%). The employment rate for all clients in the South-East is lower than the national average (40% compared to 46% nationally) but the unemployment rate is the same (38%).

**Table 9.8: South-East Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	41	42	8	5	4	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	28	61	4	1	7	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 221*

Looking at other results in the survey, there were very few differences in the South-East compared to the rest of the country:

- The South-East had the highest proportion of clients who contacted FÁS seven or more times since registering (10% compared to 7% nationally).
- Across a range of ratings of staff interaction, a significantly lower proportion of clients in the South-East gave ratings of ‘very good’ e.g. the time-frame business was dealt with (43% compared to 54% nationally), being treated with respect (49% compared to 65%), how well staff provide the help you need (41% compared to 50% nationally). The overall positive ratings (‘good’ and ‘very good’ combined) did not differ significantly from national averages, however.
- 83% of job-seekers in the South-East used FÁS vacancy notification services in order to look for work, which is higher than the national average (78%). The jobs notice-boards were used by 49% of job-seekers (higher than the 38% national average) and 36% used the website (lower than the 50% national average).
- The range of training courses on offer by FÁS was rated more poorly in the South-East – 12% rated it poorly compared to 8% nationally. Equally, 75% rated it positively, compared to 82% in the country as a whole.
- 30% of clients rated the overall service provided by FÁS as ‘very good’, which is significantly lower than the 37% national average.

### 3.2.9 South-West

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the South-West are presented in Table 9.9 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 40% were working by the time of the survey and 36% remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was 31% and 38% were unemployed. The employment rate for all clients in the South-West was lower than the national average (37% compared to 46% nationally) but the unemployment rate was also lower (31% compared to 38% nationally). This can be partly explained by the percentage of clients on FÁS programmes or education/training, which was higher than found in other regions (20% compared to 14% nationally).

**Table 9.9: South-West Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	40	36	13	6	5	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	31	38	15	7	9	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 150*

Looking at other results in the survey, there were some differences in the South-West compared to the rest of the country:

- The South-West had the highest proportion of clients who said that they registered with FÁS because they were referred by social welfare (17% compared to 12% nationally). It also had the highest percentage interested in employment programmes (4% compared to 2% nationally).
- There was a higher proportion of clients dissatisfied with FÁS services overall in the South-West (17% compared to 12% nationally). One in five clients in the South-West stated that the service they received from FÁS was ‘worse’ or ‘much worse’ than they had expected (compared to 13% nationally).
- FÁS had been in contact with clients in the South-West the most of any region – 5% of clients had been contacted seven or more times since registering (compared to 2% nationally).
- The knowledge of FÁS staff received the most positive ratings in the South-West (91% compared to 85% nationally).
- Job-seekers in the South-West used the touch screen monitors to look up jobs much less than in other regions (18% compared to 32% nationally).
- The percentage of job-seekers rating the level of information given to them about vacancies as ‘very good’ was the highest in the country (36% compared to 25% nationally).
- Two out of three clients had considered participating in a training programme since registering with FÁS, which is higher than the national average (57%).
- The South-West had the highest proportion of Irish nationals (89%).

### 3.2.10 West

The employment outcomes for clients registered in the West are presented in Table 9.10 below, with results shown in particular for clients who were unemployed when they registered and for NEAP clients. Of clients who were unemployed when they registered, 42% were working by the time of the survey and 36% remained unemployed. For NEAP clients, the percentage working was 44% and 34% were unemployed. The West is unique in being the only region where the employment rate for NEAP clients was higher than that of other clients. This can most likely be explained by the sample size – there were 41 NEAP clients in the sample for the West, of whom 18 were employed at the time of the survey.

The employment rate for all clients in the West is lower than the national average (42% compared to 46% nationally) but the unemployment rate is also lower (32% compared to 38% nationally). This can be partially understood by the percentage of clients on FÁS programmes or education/training, which is higher than found in other regions (19% compared to 14% nationally).

**Table 9.10: West Outcomes for Unemployed and NEAP Clients**

Previous Situation	Current Situation of Clients					Total
	Working	Unemployed	FÁS	Education or training	Home Duties/ Other	
Unemployed (incl. NEAP)	42	36	7	10	5	<b>100</b>
NEAP clients	44	34	7	7	7	<b>100</b>
<b>All clients</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>

*Base: 113*

Looking at other results in the survey, there were some differences in the West compared to the rest of the country:

- Most clients in the West said that they registered with FÁS for more than one reason (employment, training, career advice and referred by social welfare).
- The West had the highest percentage of clients who had been contacted by FÁS at least once since registering (74% compared to 62% nationally).
- A higher proportion of clients in the West gave their interview with an Employment Services Officer a positive rating (87% compared to 81% nationally).
- Across a number of aspects of staff interaction, the West had the highest proportion of positive ratings: being treated with respect (98%), providing the help needed (87%), the practical advice received (89%), and the time-frame in which their business was dealt with (92%).
- Job-seekers in the West used FÁS vacancy notification services the least – 30% did not use any, compared to 22% nationally. This could be due to the fact that 52% of job-seekers stated that FÁS had notified them of a vacancy (compared to 34% of clients nationally). 90% of these notifications were by letter.
- 71% of job-seekers positively rated the level of support that they received from FÁS in their job search, which is the highest proportion across all regions (60% of job-seekers nationally positively rated this aspect of service)
- 65% of clients interested in a training programme had been offered a course by the time of the survey (compared to 77% nationally)

## 4. Suggestions for Improvements

There are two sources of feedback for suggestions for improvements from clients: open-ended questions were included in the survey and focus groups were conducted by Franklin Research. The feedback from these sources is reported below.

### 4.1 Feedback from Survey

A new question was added to the survey this year, asking clients if they had any suggestions for improvement. Sixty percent of clients made some comment. The suggestions can be grouped into three main categories: training programmes, improved communication and more personal service.

#### 4.1.1. Suggestions re: Training Programmes

Thirty-one percent of clients who made a comment suggested improvements to courses. These suggestions mainly referred to course availability (i.e. waiting times and training centre location, mentioned by 8% of clients) and the range of courses offered (mentioned by 7% of clients). The other comments related to: the times of courses (e.g. make it more convenient for care-givers, mentioned by 3% of clients), better information on courses (3%), and equipment for courses (3%). Some comments made included:

- *Have extra courses rather than long waiting times*
- *We need a training centre in the area. I know a lot of people who would like to attend a course but cannot drive. It would be very useful.*
- *More part-time courses are needed*
- *A more flexible starting time*
- *They should specify the levels of their courses*
- *The training course that I took had a mixed ability of people and age groups... they can be more specific to target different groups of people*
- *Open courses to all people, not preferential for unemployed*
- *The training should be more practical. Instead of getting the person into training over and over again, FÁS training should target more on job finding*
- *Booklets or handouts that could be taken home and read at your leisure, detailing various training courses available*

#### 4.1.2. Suggestions re: Communication

One in five clients who made a comment, mentioned an aspect of improving communication between FÁS and its clients. Some comments made included:

- *Would be better if they got back to clients faster, especially making phone calls or emailing instead of sending letters*
- *Get back to customers after they have registered*
- *Check up after interview, like a three month follow-up*
- *Staff should be more proactive in contacting people*

It is FÁS policy to follow-up on all caseload clients (e.g. NEAP clients, people with disabilities, early school leavers, redundant workers, etc) but not with other registered clients. It would appear from the feedback from clients that they were unaware that they were not going to be contacted by FÁS and the onus for further contact rested

with them. This is something that can be addressed, in order to manage client expectations of the service provided by FÁS.

#### 4.1.3. *Suggestions re: More Personal Service*

Seven percent of clients who made a comment mentioned the need for a more personal service. The comments made included:

- *They should make more time for people and not rush the meetings*
- *The staff should stop running through a learned monologue, they should listen more and bring a greater personal touch*
- *They need to talk to people face-to-face instead of making them fill out forms. The human touch is very important*
- *Always fobbed off by staff to go and check things out for yourself on the net*

#### 4.1.4. *Other Suggestions/Comments*

On a positive note, one in five comments made by clients were that they were happy with the service as it is. Some comments included:

- *They're the number one job agency in my mind*
- *Very good service. Was very depressed when made unemployed, staff kept in contact and helped me through. Doing a course now.*
- *Felt looked after. They did their best for you*
- *They put in a lot of effort to get me a job*
- *They were excellent to deal with*
- *Expected 'sign here and go away' but it wasn't like that. They did follow-up and the computer course was excellent*

There were suggestions that more attention be given to specific groups e.g.

- *foreign nationals – they could have some multilingual staff in the office*
- *graduates – they could have more options for people with higher qualifications*
- *experienced workers – the courses could be sped up for more qualified people trying to re-certify*
- *older workers – they should not ignore people my age*
- *lone parents – they should try to help single parents families more by explaining about part-time options.*

Also, one in ten clients who made a comment referred to job-seeker services. The main suggestion was regarding updating the vacancies that are notified in FÁS, as when clients called the employer, the vacancy was already filled. The comments included:

- *When you receive a letter to say there is a vacancy, when you ring then invariably the position is filled. This is also true of the touch screen vacancies – positions are not cleared quickly*
- *A lot of the jobs are gone really fast. I don't know how they can improve that*
- *Concentrate more on sourcing jobs for people who have completed courses*
- *Make more jobs available in all fields of work*
- *Higher wages*
- *Create more jobs*

While some of these suggestions are beyond the control of FÁS, it may be worth exploring whether time should be allocated to clearing filled vacancies from the FÁS system.

## 4.2 Feedback from Focus Groups

The second source of feedback is from the four focus groups that were undertaken by Franklin Research. As feedback, the desirability or the feasibility of these suggestions is not assessed. The suggestions are grouped into: job-seekers services, communication, needs of foreign nationals, and training provision.

It should be noted that in general, the feedback from the Dublin groups were more negative than the feedback from the Tullamore groups.

### 4.2.1. Job-Seeker Services

- Fix the website. Make it simpler, less cluttered, and more user-friendly
- Maintain jobs database by removing out of date jobs. Indicate how long the job has been advertised and when last renewed.
- Improve the job description (“*limited to a few lines and often it does not match correctly the actual job*”)
- Facilitate the understanding of the self-service options by an adjacent sign based system (e.g. user instruction signs on photocopy machines)

### 4.2.2. Communication

- The interview with the Employment Services Office could be more in-depth and the details could be kept on the database
- Assign each client an Employment Services Officer so that a relationship could be established
- Employment Services could initiate ongoing communications (email, newsletter)

### 4.2.3. Needs of Foreign Nationals

- Google map to show job location. Link to (public) transport information. (“*they should have a Google map and some transport info. Then I wouldn’t waste time looking at stuff that I couldn’t get to anyway*”)
- Special section on the website for foreign nationals
- Information on how to start work in Ireland (e.g. how to get PPS number, tax system, etc.)
- Information on cultural issues/differences (e.g. one foreign national said that in his country, eye contact is seen as a lack of respect whereas in Ireland it is important in an interview)
- Facilitate networks so foreign nationals can meet others like themselves, which is a good way to get a job

### 4.2.4. Training Provision

- Course descriptions should be accurate and consistent (e.g. ECDL comes under different names)
- Schedule a post-course interview with an Employment Services Officer
- Increase flexibility for those who want to do another course

As stated previously, the desirability or the feasibility of these suggestions is not assessed. This section simply presents the suggestions that were put forward in the focus groups.

## 5. Conclusions

As with other surveys, it must be highlighted that the findings from this survey concern a particular group of clients, i.e. clients who registered with FÁS from January to April 2007. 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 (68%). A significant minority sought to apply or register for a training programme (41%). In terms of the employment status of clients at the time of registration, the majority (74%) were unemployed, while 15% 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 (59%), almost one-third of clients remained unemployed (33%). In the case of NEAP clients, the proportion unemployed was higher at 46%.

FÁS staff continue to be extremely highly rated in this survey. Clients see FÁS staff as friendly, polite and respectful. There have been significant improvements in the ratings for “service effectiveness” e.g. the practical advice given to clients and the knowledge of staff about help and services.

Looking at job-seeker services, there was an improvement in the rating of job vacancies. Two-thirds of job-seekers (67%) 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.

Sixty percent of job-seekers rated the level of support they received from FÁS in their job search as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. This aspect of FÁS service was the main driver of satisfaction with FÁS services overall.

In terms of the level of proactive help offered to clients, almost two-thirds of clients (62%) were contacted by FÁS subsequent to registration. One in three job-seekers stated that FÁS notified them of relevant vacancies. Furthermore, a 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 follow-up services to all job-seekers; however, given that 39% of job-seekers – and 46% of NEAP clients – were unemployed at the time of the survey, there may be more scope for helping these persons to seek employment.

One in five of the clients surveyed participated in a training programme. The majority stated that they were interested in a training programme because of a belief that the course would be useful for getting a job (67%). The average waiting times for starting a training programme (which has been raised in previous surveys) increased in this year’s survey from 6.5 weeks to 9.7 weeks.

Client feedback in terms of suggestions for improvement focused on ensuring that vacancy notifications are up-to-date, reducing waiting times for courses, and providing more information for foreign nationals on how to navigate the Irish labour market. It appears also that clients are looking for a more in-depth, personal service.

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
<b>Present Situation</b>											
Working full-time	17	13	16	14	19	16	20	15	17	16	20
Working part-time	29	47	31	33	30	29	25	22	24	21	22
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYED</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>42</b>
School/college	5	3	6	5	6	3	7	5	5	7	9
FÁS	8	7	7	6	10	6	7	6	7	12	9
Other training	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Home Duties	4	1	4	1	4	4	6	1	6	9	6
Unemployed	33	26	32	39	30	36	30	48	38	31	32
Other	3	3	4	2	0	5	3	3	3	3	2
<b>When registered</b>											
Working full-time	8	8	5	7	9	7	11	9	10	9	7
Working part-time	7	15	9	9	6	5	4	3	6	5	6
School/college	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	3
FÁS	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	2	3	3
Other training	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
Home Duties	4	2	4	2	4	7	3	4	7	5	4
Unemployed	75	69	75	76	75	74	76	83	72	73	78
Other	2	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	0
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>											
Very satisfied	38	32	43	44	51	40	33	35	32	38	35
Satisfied	38	45	33	33	16	35	39	46	45	39	43
Neither	12	15	15	9	10	11	18	10	13	6	11
Dissatisfied	9	7	7	11	11	8	7	9	8	12	9
Very dissatisfied	3	1	2	3	3	6	3	1	2	5	3
<b>Overall Experience</b>											
Very Good	37	33	41	41	52	36	31	41	30	37	35
Good	40	43	40	38	27	39	42	39	43	41	46
Fair	13	15	11	14	11	17	18	10	13	13	10
Poor	7	7	5	6	9	6	5	8	11	5	8
Very Poor	3	2	3	2	1	2	5	3	2	4	1
<b>Reason registered</b>											
Referred by social welfare	12	9	13	15	10	12	8	14	11	17	16
Job-search	68	75	71	66	56	62	69	73	69	61	76
Training programme	41	40	38	38	46	43	34	36	37	48	56
Career guidance	8	11	4	7	3	8	6	3	6	17	19
Employment programme	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	3	4	1
<b>INTERACTION WITH FÁS</b>											
<b>Number of contacts (total)</b>											
None	19	17	20	28	18	25	26	13	14	15	12
Once	15	19	9	14	18	15	17	17	14	14	19
Twice	20	22	18	20	12	18	23	24	19	24	26
3 times	13	11	19	5	16	12	5	13	16	15	6
4 to 6 times	19	17	21	18	20	15	15	22	20	17	22
7 or more times	15	14	13	15	16	15	14	11	17	15	15
<b>Usual means</b>											
In person	76	76	83	74	69	78	76	69	78	76	76
Phone	18	14	11	24	30	15	17	22	15	18	21
Email/internet	4	6	6	1	1	3	6	0	5	4	3
National Contact Centre	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0
Mail/post	1	2	0	1	0	5	0	9	0	1	0
<b>Average number of times FAS contacted client</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>Interview with ESO?</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>94</b>

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
<b>Areas covered in interview</b>											
Work experience	80	92	79	76	78	79	90	83	78	74	81
Education Background	75	88	74	64	75	76	82	76	69	70	77
Skills	77	84	76	69	82	75	81	75	70	79	79
Interests	74	76	72	69	81	71	80	79	64	76	77
Career Guidance	59	58	62	59	65	53	54	67	56	69	53
<b>Interview useful?</b>											
Not at all useful	6	7	6	7	6	7	7	2	4	7	3
Not very useful	14	15	11	19	11	14	18	14	15	12	9
Quite useful	37	42	35	33	31	44	28	35	39	39	40
Very useful	44	36	48	41	53	36	48	49	41	42	48
<b>Staff attributes (% positive)</b>											
Friendliness and politeness	95	94	94	92	96	93	90	97	94	97	98
How well try to find out about needs	82	80	81	81	87	79	76	84	83	85	79
Knowledge of staff re: services	85	81	86	84	88	77	84	88	86	91	88
Treated with respect	94	93	93	91	96	90	91	94	92	96	98
Provided the help needed	83	82	85	80	83	78	82	86	83	87	87
Respectful of privacy	97	97	96	97	97	99	98	96	95	98	97
Practical advice received	85	86	85	82	87	81	82	84	84	88	89
Time-frame business was dealt with	88	91	89	90	88	89	87	91	81	90	92
<b>JOB SEEKERS</b>											
Looked for jobs since registered?	66	70	66	62	60	66	62	74	64	71	70
<b>Which FÁS services used:</b>											
Notice-board	38	32	48	33	50	31	40	25	49	26	27
% Found difficult to use?	11	9	6	19	14	7	12	13	18	4	0
Touch screen monitors	32	34	42	43	47	34	25	22	26	18	23
% Found difficult to use?	8	8	7	6	13	9	11	0	11	0	11
FÁS Internet	50	62	50	60	57	57	44	41	36	55	39
% Found difficult to use?	11	8	12	16	7	12	9	13	13	9	14
Newspapers in FÁS	14	6	11	10	19	12	13	17	15	17	19
National Contact Centre	3	2	5	0	4	2	1	3	1	4	4
None of the above	22	19	20	19	18	25	28	22	18	22	31
<b>Range of vacancies - good</b>	67	80	69	73	65	46	52	62	73	67	72
<b>Range of vacancies - poor</b>	15	6	15	16	14	27	15	19	13	13	11
<b>Apply for any vacancies</b>	81	84	76	76	76	87	68	86	84	87	79
On FÁS noticeboard?	46	36	53	48	50	43	47	46	51	36	27
On touchscreen monitors?	43	41	47	67	40	39	50	46	35	41	20
On FÁS Internet?	52	59	42	51	50	47	54	50	59	60	52
From National Contact Centre?	42	50	43	0	67	0	0	0	50	50	50
<b>Offered any of these jobs?</b>	31	30	33	27	36	40	23	35	31	26	26
<b>Did FÁS notify any vacancies</b>	34	32	35	19	39	39	31	32	31	33	52
<b>Receive services applying for jobs?</b>											
Help with CV	31	38	38	40	23	33	19	22	25	35	24
Interview tips	26	27	35	23	26	33	16	22	20	26	19
Highlighting relevant vacancies	17	14	25	19	26	14	13	12	11	18	13
Help with job applications	16	17	21	23	20	16	10	9	8	19	11
Confidence building	15	18	22	16	18	12	10	12	12	8	10
Speaking with employer	6	8	6	8	9	4	3	3	2	6	7
Career Guidance	20	32	17	19	18	20	15	16	17	24	20
None	50	43	45	40	58	49	69	59	53	44	50
<b>Level of info given about vacancies</b>											
% positive	67	80	69	73	65	46	52	62	73	67	72
<b>Level of support in job search</b>											
% positive	60	61	65	56	64	55	55	60	56	60	71
<b>People in jobs: FÁS helped get job?</b>	31	25	26	35	37	23	39	28	28	37	35

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DC	DN	DS	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
<b>TRAINING PROGRAMMES</b>											
Considered participating?	57	50	51	57	65	59	59	61	54	67	59
Of these, applied for course?	59	64	61	49	53	63	53	67	54	71	61
Of these, offered a place?	77	78	74	94	79	77	87	88	72	72	65
Of these, participated?	77	74	79	85	86	71	79	66	70	73	85
Total: participated	20	18	18	22	23	20	21	24	15	25	20
<b>Why interested in training prog?</b>											
Useful for jobs	67	90	69	59	76	48	73	47	59	66	77
Subject matter	27	10	24	38	18	45	19	37	31	32	18
Recommended by ESO	2	0	5	0	0	0	4	5	6	3	0
<b>Waiting time</b>											
None	6	7	13	4	6	0	12	0	3	3	9
A few days	4	7	5	4	3	0	4	6	6	6	5
A week	9	0	5	4	11	13	12	0	22	8	5
2 - 4 weeks	27	14	13	22	44	33	27	28	25	36	27
1 - 2 months	25	29	23	44	22	23	19	28	22	17	23
3 - 6 months	21	39	28	15	8	26	23	22	16	17	23
6+ months	8	4	13	7	6	3	4	17	6	14	9
Offered an earlier date?	21	17	19	14	50	11	29	43	29	17	0
<b>Rating Information (% positive)</b>											
Range of courses on offer in FÁS	82	85	85	80	82	77	85	83	75	83	76
Availability of info on courses	82	83	89	83	89	74	75	85	77	78	85
Level of info given on training courses	81	83	84	81	89	81	71	85	73	85	84
<b>Rating Programmes (% positive)</b>											
Waiting period	77	74	79	87	80	74	73	63	81	81	72
Notice given on courses	85	89	88	87	89	93	81	69	86	86	73
Suitability of courses offered	93	92	98	96	100	90	100	100	87	83	82
Areas covered in course	93	100	93	100	100	91	96	100	94	86	81
Course length	81	86	85	85	86	87	73	78	80	75	68
Instructor for the course	93	97	100	92	94	86	96	74	93	89	100
Equipment and facilities on course	86	86	95	92	81	72	81	78	87	89	91
<b>Standard of service provided by FÁS</b>											
Much better than expected	13	11	17	15	10	15	12	11	7	11	19
Better than expected	49	53	47	44	60	49	44	58	49	43	46
About what expected	25	25	26	30	16	19	29	24	29	26	24
Worse than expected	11	9	6	8	14	15	12	7	14	17	10
Much worse than expected	2	1	4	3	1	3	2	1	2	3	0
<b>CLIENT PROFILE</b>											
Male	46	51	47	49	40	42	50	48	47	45	45
Less than Leaving Cert-level education	25	19	27	32	26	33	24	25	26	21	20
Degree or Post-grad-level education	17	25	17	15	16	15	15	27	16	16	13
Irish National	79	46	77	86	86	82	81	86	86	89	79
Long-term illness or disability	8	5	7	10	6	13	8	15	10	8	7