

## **2005 Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey**

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## Executive Summary

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

Planning & Research commissioned Lansdowne Market Research (LMR) to telephone interview 800 FÁS clients who had registered with FÁS six to nine months previously, across all eight FÁS regions. The questionnaire included questions on:

- client backgrounds and outcomes
- frequency and means of contact with FÁS
- satisfaction with FÁS staff and offices
- job-seeker services
- training programme participant satisfaction
- whether the client felt like complaining about FÁS
- overall customer satisfaction.

Overall, most FÁS registered clients were satisfied or very satisfied with FÁS in terms of their interaction with staff, the offices and overall service provision. There is scope for improving the level of services provided to clients, in particular to job-seekers and NEAP clients, as a significant proportion of these clients remained unemployed at the time of the survey. Related to this, an area that may require attention is the client interview with the Employment Services Officer. In terms of training programmes - as found in previous surveys - waiting times and the notice given to participants were the main issues raised.

**Client background:** The majority of clients who registered with FÁS wished to seek employment (54%). A significant minority sought to apply or register for a training programme (28%) or an apprenticeship (10%). In terms of the employment status of clients at the time of registration, more than half were unemployed (54%), while 27% were employed on either a full- or part-time basis.

**Employment Status at Time of Survey:** The table below displays the outcomes for clients at the time of the survey, in particular for clients who were unemployed at the time of registration and NEAP clients. While the majority of clients who registered with FÁS were either employed (43%) or in education/training or FÁS (18%) by the time of the survey, three out of ten 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	37	13	46	3	100
NEAP	25	11	55	8	100
All clients	43	18	30	9	100

For clients who were unemployed at the time of registration, 37% were employed at the time of the survey, 13% were in education/training or FÁS and 46% were unemployed. In the case of NEAP clients, the proportion unemployed was much higher at 55%. One in four NEAP clients were employed at the time of the survey and 11% were in education/training or FÁS.

**Frequency and Means of Contact with FÁS:** Clients were in contact with FÁS approximately two and a half times in the six to nine months subsequent to registration. This was higher for NEAP clients (three and a half times). The usual means of contacting FÁS was in person (62%), followed by the telephone (19%), email (7%) and post (2%). With regard to the registration form, most clients felt that it was easy to complete. A third of respondents did feel that the registration form required a lot of irrelevant information, however.

**Staff Evaluation:** FÁS staff were highly rated in this survey. As found in previous surveys, the vast majority of clients saw FÁS staff as friendly (92% rated positively) and respectful (89% rated positively). There is some room for improvement in staff knowledge about services available (77% rated positively) and the practical advice that staff offer (75% rated positively). Related to this, a fifth of clients stated that they did not have an interview with an Employment Services Officer and, of those who did, one in five stated that they did not find it useful.

**FÁS Offices:** Customer satisfaction with FÁS offices was high. The vast majority of clients (94%) stated that it was easy to get to their local office and felt that their local office was modern, bright, warm and well-laid out.

**Job-Seeker Services:** Almost a half of clients stated that they received some services from FÁS in applying for jobs by, for example, helping with CVs, interview tips, etc. Furthermore, almost a third stated that FÁS notified them of a vacancy. NEAP clients did not receive more services than other clients and two-thirds stated that they received no vacancy notifications from FÁS.

Less than half of job-seekers felt that the range of vacancies notified at FÁS was 'good' or 'very good' – in fact, almost one in four (23%) felt that the range of vacancies was 'poor' or 'very poor'. In terms of the level of information provided in the vacancy notifications, six out of ten job-seekers felt that the notifications contained 'all' or 'most' of the information that they required.

**Training Programmes:** Approximately one in six of the clients surveyed participated in a training programme. The most common reason given for being interested in a training programme was because of an interest in the subject matter (51%). The second most common reason cited for interest in a program was a belief that the course would be useful for getting a job (29%).

Waiting times for training programmes (which has been raised in previous surveys) emerged again as an issue in this survey. Three out of ten training programme participants waited over three months to start their training programme and 39% felt that the waiting times were too long. In addition to this, 30% felt that they received too short a notice of the course's commencement date.

**Complaints:** One in ten FÁS clients felt like complaining about some aspect of their experience of FÁS. This is similar to findings in the UK, where 12% of Jobcentre Plus clients felt like making a complaint. The majority of clients who felt like complaining had not and did not intend to make a complaint (61%), mainly due to apathy. Of the small percentage that did make a complaint (2% of the overall sample), one in two were dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled. The most common reason for wanting to complain was with regard to the lack of follow-up.

**Overall Satisfaction:** Three out of four clients stated that they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with FÁS Employment Services overall. NEAP clients, and clients who were unemployed at the time of the survey, had similar levels of satisfaction with FÁS. Customer satisfaction with FÁS was most strongly correlated with their satisfaction with FÁS staff, as opposed to their outcomes.

## **Employment Services Customer Satisfaction Survey 2005**

### **Introduction**

FÁS Employment Services requested that Planning and Research carry out a Customer Satisfaction survey of their clients. FÁS values feedback from its customers as it is important to get an accurate assessment of customer views on the various services offered by Employment Services.

This survey differs from previous customer satisfaction reports as it is carried out on a random sample of FÁS registered clients. It encompasses 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. Previous FÁS customer satisfaction surveys have focused on participants of training and employment programmes (e.g. Follow-Up Surveys; Lansdowne Market Research 1990) or on persons exiting Employment Services Offices (e.g. MRBI 2001). A qualitative report on FÁS registered clients' satisfaction with the quality of services provided by Employment Services was produced by Weafer and Associates in 2001. Comparisons of findings in this survey with previous reports and with results from a UK survey are made throughout the body of the report.

A telephone survey was conducted by Lansdowne Market Research on behalf of Planning and Research. Eight hundred FÁS clients who had registered with FÁS in the previous 6 – 9 months were telephone interviewed in January and February 2005. In total, almost 24,000 persons registered with FÁS during this period. The survey captured clients from all FÁS regions to allow for regional analyses and covered a wide range of topics. In particular, the survey sought to establish the reasons clients register with FÁS, the experience of clients' interaction with FÁS in terms of staff and their satisfaction with FÁS employment offices. Respondents were asked for details of and their satisfaction with outcomes following FÁS registration. Job-seekers were asked about their satisfaction with, and use of, services directed to them e.g. vacancy information and FÁS assistance with job-seeking. Those seeking access to training and employment programmes were asked questions relating to, for instance, satisfaction with their programme and waiting times. All of those interviewed were also asked a series of questions on whether they had any reason to complain about their experience with FÁS. This report summarises the main findings for each of these areas of the survey.

### **Methodology**

The survey was contracted out to Lansdowne Market Research (LMR) who, over the period 26<sup>th</sup> January to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2005, interviewed a random sample of 806 clients who had registered with FÁS in the previous 6 to 9 months (May to July 2004). The survey was carried out by telephone and lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

FÁS provided the contact details of registered clients to LMR. As the survey was being conducted by telephone, only those persons with a contact telephone number in FÁS records were included in the sample. This has the potential to bias the results of the survey, as 42%

of registrants<sup>1</sup> do not have a phone number on file. However, comparison of the distribution of key factors, such as sex, age, region and NEAP status showed that the distribution was largely similar to the population of persons who registered with FÁS in that time period. The sample was evenly split between males and females. A third of the sample was based in Dublin, 24% in the rest of Leinster, a quarter in Munster and the final 17% in Connaught or Ulster. In terms of the age profile of the sample, 25% were over 45 and 18% were under 21. Twenty-four percent of the sample were tagged as NEAP clients.

In terms of characteristics not included in FÁS records, 7% of clients were non-nationals (of these, 70% were EU nationals) and 3% stated that English was not their first language. Interestingly, the percentage of non-national clients was not higher in Dublin – 6% of clients in Dublin stated they were non-national, and half of these were non-EU. Thirteen percent of respondents stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activity (compared to 2.6% who were in receipt of a disability payment).

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.

### **Background characteristics and outcomes**

Respondents were asked to give the reasons they registered with FÁS. As respondents were allowed to choose more than one reason, the totals do not add up to 100%. As seen in Table 1 below, fifty-four percent of clients stated that they registered for job-search purposes. Twenty-eight percent said that they registered to sign up for a training course, 2% wished to sign up for an employment program and 10% to register for an apprenticeship. Eighteen percent said that they registered as a consequence of being referred to FÁS by social welfare. This is interesting as only one-third of clients tagged as NEAP stated that they registered with FÁS for this reason. Thus, 10% of all clients stated that they registered with FÁS because they were referred by social welfare but they were not NEAP clients.

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

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Job search	54
Training course	28
Referred by social welfare	18
Apprenticeship	10
Employment program	2

In terms of the status of clients at the time of registering, Table 2 below shows that 54% of clients were unemployed, 27% were employed (of these, 59% were employed full-time), 7% were in school/college or other training, 3% were on a FÁS programme and 9% were on home duties/other.

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<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, this is also the case for clients tagged as NEAP in the system – 47% of NEAP clients had no phone number inputted in the FÁS Client Database.

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

Status when registered	Percent
Employed full-time	16
Employed part-time	11
Education/Training	7
FÁS programme	3
Unemployed	54
Home duties/other	9

In terms of clients' current situation i.e. at the time of the survey (6 – 9 months after registering with FÁS), 43% of clients were employed (of those, 63% were employed full-time), 10% were on a FÁS training or employment programme, 8% were in school/college or other training. Three out of ten clients were unemployed and 9% were on home duties or other. These results are displayed in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Status of clients at the time of survey**

Status when registered	Percent
Employed full-time	27
Employed part-time	16
Education/Training	8
FÁS programme	10
Unemployed	30
Home duties/other	9

The clients' outcomes, compared to their situation at the time of registering, are displayed for persons who were unemployed or NEAP clients in Table 4 below. More than half of all the clients who were unemployed at the time of registering with FÁS were no longer unemployed at the time of the survey. Thirty-seven percent were employed, 5% were in education or training, 8% were on a FÁS programme, 3% were on home duties/other and 46% were unemployed.

**Table 4: Previous situation by current situation (%)**

	Employed	Education/ Training	FÁS	Unemployed	Home Duties/ Other	Total
<b>Previous Situation</b>						
Unemployed	37	5	8	46	3	100
NEAP clients	25	7	4	55	8	100
All clients	43	8	10	30	9	100

The current situation of NEAP clients is also displayed in Table 4. One in four NEAP clients were employed at the time of the survey, 7% were in education/training, 4% were on a FÁS programme and 8% were on home duties/other. More than half of NEAP clients (55%) remained unemployed at the time of the survey, however, which is six to nine months after registering with FÁS.

## Contact with FÁS

### *Frequency and means of contact*

The level of contact with FÁS subsequent to registration appears to be quite low. Respondents were asked how many times they had been in contact with FÁS since registering. The results are displayed in Table 5 below. This 'contact' includes both the client contacting FÁS and FÁS contacting the client. Almost half of clients (48%) were in contact with FÁS between one and three times in the six to nine months after registering. One-fifth of respondents said that they had no further contact with FÁS at all after registering. Fifteen percent of clients were in contact with FÁS seven or more times subsequent to registration.

**Table 5: Frequency of contact with FÁS since registration**

<b>Number of times in contact with FÁS</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	21
Once	21
Twice	14
Three times	13
4 – 6 times	16
7 + times	15
Can't recall	1

There were some variations in the frequency of contact. Clients living in the Dublin region and non-national clients had statistically significantly more contact with FÁS, with 20% and 24% respectively in contact with FÁS 7 or more times since registration.

Personal contact remains the most popular means of contact with FÁS. The majority of respondents (62%) stated that they were usually in contact with FÁS in person. One in five (19%) stated that their usual method of contact was by telephone, 7% said that the internet was their usual medium and a further 2% said they usually corresponded by mail. Finally, one in ten said that they had no usual method of contact.

In addition to this, respondents were asked whether they had registered with FÁS at any other time in the past. It is interesting that more than one in four clients (27%) stated that they had registered with FÁS in the past. Of these, approximately a half (49%) had registered with FÁS more than seven years ago, 23% had registered 4 to 6 years previously and 21% had registered with FÁS 1 to 3 years previously.

### *Registration form*

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements concerning the registration form. One-third of respondents felt that the registration form required a lot of irrelevant information, which was an issue that was emphasised in the report by Weafer and Associates in 2001. Clients in the Midlands were significantly more likely to feel this (46%). In terms of the complexity of filling out the form, 83% of respondents agreed that the form was easy to complete. Clients with primary level education were significantly less likely to agree that the form was easy to fill out (72%). Finally, the respondents were asked about the layout of the registration form. The majority of respondents (72%) disagreed that the form was poorly laid out.

### *Interview with ESO*

FÁS policy is that all clients who register with FÁS undergo an interview with an Employment Services Officer (ESO). It has been contended that this is not the case in practice and, as a result, the survey queried whether the respondent had undergone an interview. One in five clients (21%) stated that they did not have an interview with an ESO. This varied slightly by region, although the difference was not statistically significant. One in three clients (30%) in the South East stated that they did not have an interview, compared to 12% of clients in the Mid West. As would be expected, NEAP clients (96%) were significantly more likely to state that they had undergone an interview with an ESO. Males were significantly less likely to have had an interview than females (73% compared to 85%). Young people were also significantly less likely to have had an interview – one-third of clients aged under 21 stated that they did not have an interview with an ESO. A possible explanation for the lack of interview is that the client could have registered solely to participate in sponsored training, such as Safepass.

Clients were also asked whether they completed their registration form during the course of the interview. Of those clients who did take part in an interview, less than half (48%) stated that the registration form was completed during the course of the interview.

In order to determine whether the interview was a substantial interaction or simply a formality, respondents were asked what areas were covered during the course of the interview. The vast majority of clients who had participated in an interview stated that the interview covered their skills (88%), education background (84%), work experience (82%) and interests (78%).

Almost four out of five respondents who had an interview stated that they found it useful. Correspondingly, one in five clients did not find the interview useful, which can be considered a source of concern. Clients with a long-term illness or disability found the interview statistically significantly more useful. Clients were also more likely to find the interview very useful if they had lower levels of education (primary or junior certificate level) or if they were under 21, although the difference was not significant. NEAP clients were similar to other clients in how useful they found the interview – 77% found it useful, while 23% did not find it useful.

### *Perceptions of FÁS Staff*

FÁS staff rated very highly in terms of client satisfaction. Table 6 below displays the percentage of clients who rated various staff attributes as 'good' or 'very good'. Ninety-one percent of clients stated that the friendliness and politeness of FÁS staff was good or very good. Similarly, 89% of clients positively rated the extent to which they were treated with respect as an individual. Furthermore 84% were positive about the extent to which the staff were respectful of their privacy.

Where FÁS staff rated slightly less positively was in the knowledge of staff of the help and services available to clients (76%), how well staff provided the help that the client needed (78%), how well the staff tried to find about the client's needs and circumstances in order to help (74%) and the practical advice that the client received from staff (75%). However, these results are still positive overall, as approximately three out of four clients rated staff competence in this area positively.

**Table 6: Perception of FÁS Staff**

	Very good	Good	Negative	Neither/ DK
Friendliness and politeness of staff	70	22	2	7
Treated with respect as an individual	66	24	3	8
Extent to which staff respected privacy	61	23	4	12
Knowledge of staff about help & services	49	28	9	15
How well staff provide the help you need	47	30	8	14
How well staff try to find out about needs	45	29	13	13
The practical advice you received	43	32	11	14

These results are very similar to the results found in the UK Jobcentre Plus *National Customer Satisfaction Survey* 2004. Even the distribution of ratings are similar, whereby the highest performance ratings are given to aspects relating to the way in which customers were treated in the interaction (or “service encounter”) and slightly lower performance ratings were given to aspects relating to the quality of the help provided (or “service effectiveness”) (p. 22).

Given that NEAP clients are referred to FÁS by DSFA and therefore do not voluntarily approach FÁS, it was considered possible, if not likely, that NEAP clients would be more negative in their ratings of FÁS staff than other clients. A welcome finding is that this is not the case. In fact, in the cases of rating the friendliness and politeness of staff, and how well staff provided the help needed, NEAP clients were statistically significantly more likely to rate FÁS staff as ‘very good’. For example, 77% of NEAP clients rated the friendliness and politeness of FÁS staff as ‘very good’ compared to 67% of non-NEAP clients. Similarly, a half of NEAP clients (50%) rated FÁS staff as ‘very good’ in trying to find out about their circumstances in order to help, compared to 42% of non-NEAP clients.

#### *FÁS offices*

Respondents were asked a number of questions about FÁS offices, namely, the distance to their nearest office, whether it was easy to get to and whether they agreed or disagreed that a number of descriptive words applied to their local office.

The average distance for clients to their nearest office was 6½ miles. The average distance to the nearest employment office was, unsurprisingly, significantly less in Dublin (2¾ miles). Clients in the South-West lived on average 11 miles away from their local FÁS office, which was significantly more than the national average. Clients in the North-East, Mid-West and West also lived significantly further from their local FÁS office than the national average. A half of clients within 3 miles of a FÁS office, while 20% lived more than ten miles away. The vast majority of respondents (94%) stated that it was easy to get to their local FÁS office. Nine out of ten clients with a long-term illness or health problem also stated that it was easy to get to their local FÁS office. Almost one in ten clients in the Midlands and the South-West stated that it was not easy to get to their local office (9%).

In order to ascertain the impression that clients have of FÁS offices, respondents were asked whether or not they felt a number of descriptive words applied to their local office. The majority of respondents felt that positive words, such as professional (90%), warm (87%), bright (87%), modern (81%), provides privacy (85%) and well-laid out (86%), all applied to their local office. Furthermore, a minority of respondents felt that negative descriptives,

such as cold (11%), intimidating (13%), old-fashioned (18%), in need of repair (20%) and disorganised (8%), applied to their local office. More than half of clients (59%) felt that their local office was busy.

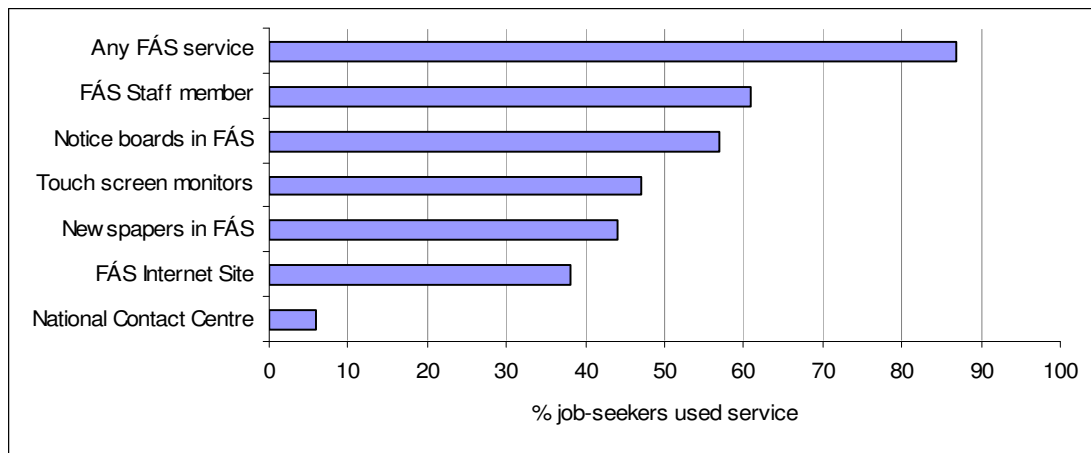
### Job-seekers

As stated previously, 54% of respondents stated that one of the reasons that they registered with FÁS was for job-search purposes. However, 35% of those persons who gave this as a reason for registering with FÁS also said that they have not looked for jobs since registering with FÁS. The remainder of this section on job-seekers refers to those persons (55%) 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 (64% had sought jobs) and in particular, NEAP clients (73% had sought jobs).

#### *Use of FÁS Vacancy Notification Services*

Job-seekers were asked which of a number of FÁS services they had used in looking for jobs. This information is displayed in Figure 1 below. The majority of clients who had looked for jobs stated that they had spoken to a FÁS staff member (61%) and used the notice-boards in FÁS offices (57%). A sizeable minority of job-seekers used the touch screen monitors (47%), the newspapers on display in FÁS offices (44%) and the FÁS Internet site (38%). Eighty-seven percent of job-seekers had used at least one of these services.

**Figure 1: Use of FÁS services by Job-Seekers**



Only a small proportion used the National Contact Centre (6%) but this is not surprising, given that the job-seeker services in the National Contact Centre have only been in operation since February 2004 and have not been widely advertised.

Job-seekers were asked how easy they found it to look for jobs using the notice-boards, the touch screen monitors and the FÁS internet site. The majority of clients found them easy to navigate – 83% of clients found the touch screen monitors easy to use, 82% stated the same for the internet site and 74% found the notice-boards easy to use. Given that almost 1.5 million job notifications were printed from the touch screen monitors in 2004, it is worth highlighting that 17% of clients did not find the machines easy to use.

Respondents were also asked whether there was adequate vacancy information provided in each of the facilities. Only one in four job-seekers said that the vacancy notifications

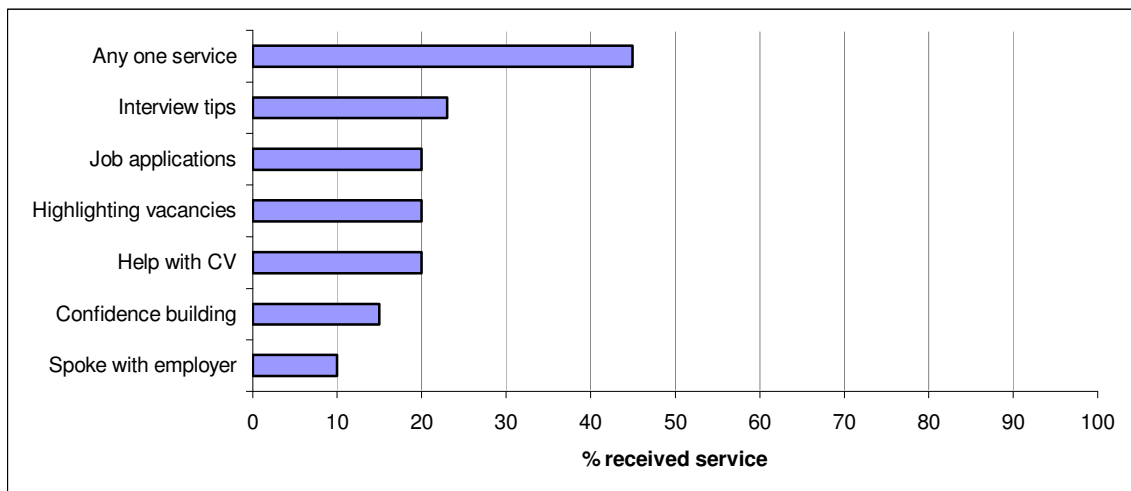
contained ‘all’ the information that they required. Job-seekers were most likely to say that the notifications contained ‘most’ of the information needed (36%). Fourteen percent stated that the notifications contained ‘very little’ or ‘none’ of the information that they required. All of the job-seekers were asked what information was missing or could be added to the vacancy notification to make it easier to look for jobs. Rather opaquely, a significant minority (41%) requested ‘more information on jobs’, which may be read as a demand for more detailed job descriptions. The lack of contact details (particularly on the notice-boards) was mentioned by 6% of job-seekers. There were also some complaints that the vacancies were not up-to-date, so that when job-seekers called to apply for a job, the vacancy had already been filled (3%). The range of vacancies of offer was also criticised (12%). Thirty percent of job-seekers stated that there was no need for additional information.

Job-seekers were asked to rate the range of vacancies notified at FÁS. Less than half of job-seekers (45%) rated the range of vacancies as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. One in four (26%) rated them as ‘fair’ and almost one in four (23%) rated them as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. Younger people (aged under 25) were significantly more likely to positively rate the range of vacancies on offer – approximately 65% of job-seekers under 25 rated the vacancies notified in FÁS as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. NEAP clients were slightly more likely to negatively rate the range of vacancies on offer - 27% felt that the vacancies were ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.

*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. In terms of the services received, approximately one in four job-seekers (23%) received help with interview tips. One in five respondents stated that they received help in the following areas: help with their CV, help in highlighting relevant vacancies and help with job applications. Fifteen percent stated that they benefited from confidence building and 10% stated that FÁS spoke with an employer on their behalf. This information is presented in Figure 2 below. For each of these specific services, there is no significant difference in the percentage of NEAP clients who mentioned the service, except in the case of speaking with an employer on the client’s behalf. Four percent of NEAP clients stated that FÁS spoke to an employed on their behalf, compared to 10% of clients overall.

**Figure 2: Services received by job-seekers from FÁS when applying for jobs**



More than half of job-seekers stated that they received none of the services listed from FÁS. Surprisingly, and possibly warranting concern, this latter point also holds true for NEAP clients - more than half of NEAP clients (52%) who stated that they were looking for a job stated that they received no services from FÁS in applying for jobs. It should be emphasised that if a client is considered to be job-ready by the Employment Services Officer, it is FÁS policy that the client need not receive additional assistance. Thus, the finding that active help from FÁS is not received by all job-seekers does not necessarily translate into poor service provision to clients.

Respondents were asked the number of vacancies for which they applied. The average number of vacancies applied for was 4.6. One in ten job-seekers stated that they had not applied for any jobs – therefore although they stated that they had been looking for employment, they had not applied to fill any vacancies. Approximately three out of ten (29%) had applied for between one and three vacancies, a further 31% had applied for between four and ten vacancies and 18% had applied for eleven or more vacancies. Two percent could not recall for how many vacancies they had applied.

Respondents who had applied for at least one vacancy were asked if they had applied for any vacancies which had been notified in FÁS. Almost two-thirds of respondents stated that they had applied for a FÁS notified vacancy. Respondents aged over 45 were significantly more likely not to have applied to a vacancy notified in FÁS (49%). Overall, thirty-one percent of respondents had applied for a vacancy advertised on the FÁS notice-board, 29% had applied for a vacancy found on the touch-screen monitor and 26% had applied for a vacancy notified on the FÁS internet site. Five percent of respondents applied for a job notified to them by the National Contact Centre.

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 email or by text alert. From FÁS records, it is possible to determine whether FÁS sent a vacancy notification letter to the client. 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 7: Job-seekers receipt of vacancy notification from FÁS (%)**

<b>Means of vacancy notification</b>	<b>Percent</b>
In person	23
Telephone	10
Post	6
Email	2
Text alert	1
None	69

Thirty-one percent of job-seekers received a vacancy notification from FÁS. Twenty-three percent of job-seekers stated that they were notified of vacancies by FÁS in person. Ten percent were notified by telephone, 6% by post, 2% by email and 1% by text alert. These figures are displayed in Table 7 above. NEAP clients were significantly more likely to have been notified in person (28%), but overall, they received the same level of notifications as other clients.

*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 - 38% were employed at the time of the survey, 10% were in education or training (including FÁS) and 44% were unemployed.

When asked how satisfied they were with the jobs that they were offered, 28% said that they were very satisfied, 36% said they were quite satisfied, 10% were quite dissatisfied and 17% were very dissatisfied. The remainder stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or they didn't know if they were satisfied. It is unfortunate that more than one in four persons (27%) were dissatisfied with the jobs that they were offered.

### **Training**

All respondents were asked whether they had considered participating in a training or employment programme. Forty-one percent of respondents stated that they had considered participating in a training or employment programme, but only 42% of them (or 17% of the total) actually participated in a programme. It is interesting that only half of the respondents who stated that they registered in order to apply or register for a training or employment programme subsequently participated in a programme. The majority of those who went onto a FÁS programme participated in a training (88%) rather than employment (12%) programme.

Clients who did not participate in a training or employment programme although they had considered it were asked to give the reason why they did not participate. This was to determine whether the non-participation was client-driven or due to some attribute of FÁS. The most common reasons given were related to the client e.g. found employment (22%) and personal reasons (15%). However, a long list of reasons was provided including: the client was waiting to participate in a programme (14%), the dates/times didn't suit (12%), none of the programmes on offer appealed (11%), the client was ineligible to attend (6%) or the training centre was inaccessible (5%). The absolute numbers here are quite small – the reasons are given for illustration purposes only.

Three out of four clients had been interested in a particular programme when they registered. Respondents were asked to state the most influential factor in making them interested about a programme. The majority of clients were interested in a programme because of an interest in the subject (51%), followed by a belief that the programme was useful for jobs (29%). Other factors influencing a client's interest in a programme were mentioned by a small minority, namely: recommended by the Employment Services Officer (4%), recommended by family/friends (4%), a convenient location (3%), it was something to do (2%) or social reasons (1%). Again, some of these reasons apply to a very small absolute number and they are listed for information purposes only.

A concern from previous surveys has been the waiting times for clients wishing to attend a course. Table 8 below displays the waiting times experienced by clients who participated in training programmes. What is immediately evident is that 29% of participants waited for more than three months to participate in a training programme. While no statement is being made regarding what constitutes an acceptable waiting period, a three month waiting period might be considered excessive. This issue with waiting times has been highlighted previously 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 the report by Weafer and Associates.

**Table 8: Waiting times to participate in training programmes**

Waiting time	Percent
Less than a week	8
A week	10
Two to four weeks	26
One to two months	23
Three to six months	24
Seven months or more	5
Can't recall	5

It must be noted that in addition to the waiting times experienced by those persons who participated in a training programme, the reason given by 14% of persons who had considered participating in a training programme but had not, was that they were waiting to participate in a training programme. Given that these persons had registered 6 – 9 months earlier, the waiting times experienced by them is high.

NEAP clients are priority clients in terms of participation in training programmes. As such, it would be expected that the average waiting time experienced by NEAP clients would be lower than for other clients. Surprisingly, there is no significant difference in waiting times experienced by NEAP clients compared to non-NEAP client on FÁS training<sup>2</sup>. Judgements must be cautious as the absolute numbers are quite small; however, 34% of NEAP clients who participated in a programme waited for three months or more compared to 29% of non-NEAP clients.

Participants of training programmes were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements regarding their experience of training programmes. Thirty-nine percent of participants agreed that there is too long a waiting period to participate in a programme with FÁS. In addition to this, 29% agreed that very little notice to participate in a training programme is provided. Both these issues of waiting times and notice for participation were highlighted in the report by Weafer and Associates in 2001.

In terms of the length of the training programme, almost one in five participants (19%) felt that the programme was too short. In contrast to this, 15% of participants felt that the programme was too long. With regard to the content of the course, 85% of participants agreed that the course covered the areas that they needed, which is a positive finding. One in five participants felt, however, that the course covered very little new ground. This suggests that some work possibly needs to be done in better matching training programme participants to courses that suit their level of need.

### **Complaints**

A range of questions on whether FÁS registered clients had ever wished to complain about their experience with FÁS was asked in this survey, based on questions asked in the Jobcentre Plus *National Customer Satisfaction Survey 2004* in the UK. These questions

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<sup>2</sup> NEAP clients were not asked specifically about Customised Training.

have previously not been asked to FÁS clients and as such, provide a fresh insight into customer satisfaction with FÁS.

Firstly, clients were asked if they had ever felt like complaining about FÁS. Ten percent of clients stated yes to this question. These respondents were then asked whether they had, or intended to, make a complaint. Sixty-two percent said that they had not and did not intend to make a complaint. Twenty-one percent (i.e. 2% overall) said that they had made a complaint. Six percent intended to make a complaint and 11% had not decided if they were going to make a complaint or not.

All persons who had felt like making a complaint (10%) were then asked what it was that they had wanted to complain about. The largest group wanted to complain about the lack of follow-up (35%), followed by staff attitudes (30%) and standards of service in general (21%). The Weafer report (2001) also cited lack of follow-up as a criticism. Nineteen percent felt like complaining about training, 15% about the staff's lack of knowledge, 8% about discrimination and 5% about waiting times. These items are listed in Table 9 below. It must be remembered that the absolute number here in terms of sample size is quite small as the breakdown refers to 80 persons overall.

**Table 9: Reasons clients felt like making a complaint**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lack of follow-up	35
Staff attitudes	30
Standards of service in general	21
Training	19
Staff's lack of knowledge	15
Job vacancies	11
Discrimination	8
Waiting times	5
Delays	5
Lack of privacy	2
Other	4

Respondents who felt like complaining and did not were asked why they did not make a complaint. The majority (52%) stated that they could not be bothered. Twelve percent felt that the complaint was not serious enough. Seventeen percent stated that there was no point because the office can't (10%) or won't (7%) do anything about it. Eight percent were worried about the repercussions, while another 8% felt that it wasn't the staff's fault or that they were just too busy to make a complaint. Again, these figures are based on a small section of the sample, so the smaller percentages are presented for illustration purposes only.

Finally, those persons who did make a complaint - 2% of the total sample - were asked whether they were satisfied with how the complaint was handled. Four out of ten persons who made a complaint were satisfied with the complaints process; however, almost half (49%) were dissatisfied. In fact, 41% (i.e. less than 1% of the total sample) were very dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled.

Given that these questions are based on questions from the UK Jobcentre Plus survey, it is worth noting their results for information purposes. It must be borne in mind that the sample

used in the UK survey was different to this survey and as such the figures are not strictly comparable. It is interesting that the figures are quite similar, however. Twelve percent of Jobcentre Plus clients felt like complaining compared to ten percent of FÁS registered clients. Four percent of clients in the UK made or intended to make a complaint, which is very similar to the 3% figure for FÁS clients. The most common reason for wanting to make a complaint in the UK was staff attitudes (23%). Lack of follow-up – the most common reason given by FÁS clients – was not an option in the UK survey.

### **Overall Satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services**

Clients were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services. In terms of overall satisfaction, 35% of clients were very satisfied, 41% were fairly satisfied. Nine percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 9% were fairly dissatisfied and 6% were very dissatisfied. Thus, 3 out of 4 clients were satisfied with FÁS services, while 15% were dissatisfied<sup>3</sup>. These ratings were broadly similar to those found in the UK, there 81% of clients were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied and 11% were dissatisfied.

The rates of satisfaction experienced by clients varied by demographic factors, the reason for registering and outcomes. Persons aged under 21 were significantly more likely to be satisfied than other age groups. Also, clients who registered with FÁS in order to register or apply for a training or employment program were more likely to be satisfied than persons who registered for any other reason. Moreover, clients who were studying or in training at the time of the survey were also the more satisfied than clients with other outcomes. There was no significant difference in overall satisfaction by sex, or if the respondent had a long-term illness or health problem.

Clients living in Leinster (excluding Dublin) were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied than clients living in other regions. Interestingly, NEAP clients were not significantly more dissatisfied than other clients. Clients who stated that the reason that they registered with FÁS was because they were referred by social welfare (i.e. a combination of NEAP clients and other unemployed persons who were referred by the DSFA) were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with FÁS. Non-Irish EU citizens were more likely to be dissatisfied (although not significantly) - one in five EU nationals were dissatisfied with FÁS Employment Services. Of those persons who stated that English was not their first language, only one stated that they were dissatisfied with FÁS and 85% rated FÁS Employment Services positively.

From the analysis carried out by Lansdowne Market Research, it emerged that the factors most likely to influence overall satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services are:

- how well the staff provide the help the client needs
- how well the staff try to find out about client needs and circumstances in order to help
- the knowledge of staff about the help and services available and,
- the practical advice received.

Therefore, it appears that customer satisfaction with FÁS Employment Services is driven by satisfaction with FÁS staff and not necessarily by outcomes.

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<sup>3</sup> These figures exclude clients who responded “don’t know” (5.3%).

## **Client groups**

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

### *Gender*

The sample was evenly split between men and women – 52% of respondents were male and 48% were female. The main differences in the responses by men and women were in their employment status, their participation in an interview with an ESO and their attitudes towards training programmes. In terms of employment outcomes, while a similar proportion of men and women were employed at the time of the survey (46% and 41% respectively), there were significant differences in the nature of employment. The majority of women were employed on a part-time basis (54%), while men were largely employed on a full-time basis (80%). Women were significantly more likely than men to have an interview with an ESO – 85% of women stated that they had an interview, compared to 73% of men.

With regard to training programmes, men were more likely than women to state that they did not participate in a training programme because they found employment (26% of men compared to 18% of women), while women were significantly more likely not to have participated for personal reasons (21% of women compared to 7% of men). Women were more likely than men to be interested in a training programme because it was useful for jobs (34% compared to 24% of men). More women than men felt that their training programme was too short (25% compared to 12% of men), while more men than women felt that the training programme covered very little new ground (29% compared to 13% of women) and that there was too long a waiting period before starting training (46% of men compared to 31% of women).

### *NEAP*

Twenty-four percent of respondents were tagged as NEAP clients. NEAP clients differed from other FÁS clients in their responses to a number of questions: their employment situation at the time of the survey, whether or not they had an interview with an ESO, their attitude to staff attributes and their attitudes towards training programmes.

NEAP clients were significantly more likely than other clients to be unemployed at the time of the survey (55% unemployed compared to 22% of non-NEAP clients) and significantly less likely to be employed (25% employed compared to 49% of non-NEAP clients). NEAP clients were significantly more likely to state that they had an interview with an ESO (95% compared to 74% of non-NEAP clients). NEAP clients rated FÁS staff significantly more positively than other clients – 95% of NEAP clients felt that they had been treated with respect, compared to 90% of non-NEAP clients, and 81% felt that the practical advice that they received was ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared to 73% of non-NEAP clients. Unfortunately, NEAP clients who gained employment were slightly more dissatisfied than their non-NEAP counterparts with the job that they had obtained (35% dissatisfied compared to 25% of non-NEAP clients), but not significantly so. With regard to training programmes,

NEAP clients were more likely than non-NEAP clients to feel that their course was too short (38% compared to 13% of non-NEAP clients).

### *Educational Background*

Clients' education levels were extracted from FÁS records. Fourteen percent of respondents had primary level education, 21% had completed to Junior Certificate level and 46% had attained the Leaving Certificate. Twenty percent of clients had no information inputted for their education level and they are excluded from this analysis.

Differences in educational background appear to have considerable effect on the responses to survey questions. Clients with primary level education, compared to clients with Leaving Certificate Level education, experienced significantly higher unemployment (46% unemployed compared to 26%) and significantly lower levels of employment (33% employed compared to 50% employed). Clients with primary level education were more satisfied with FÁS overall – 81% were 'fairly' or 'very' satisfied with FÁS services overall compared with 66% of clients with a Leaving Certificate level of education. Clients with primary level education had more frequent contact with FÁS – 41% were in contact with FÁS 4 or more times since registering, compared to 30% of clients with the Leaving Certificate. The means of contact with FÁS also differed by education level – clients with primary level education were significantly more likely to state that their usual means of contact with FÁS was in person (77% compared to 62% overall).

In terms of the registration form, clients with primary level education were significantly less likely than others to think that the form was easy to complete (72% compared to 86% of clients with the Leaving Certificate) and more likely to believe that the form required a lot of irrelevant information (39% compared to 25% of clients with the Leaving Certificate). Among job-seekers, clients with lower levels of education were significantly more likely to speak with an ESO regarding vacancies (73% compared to 62% of clients overall) and to receive some services from FÁS in applying for jobs. While 63% of clients who had completed second-level stated that they received no services from FÁS in applying for jobs, less than half of clients with primary level stated the same (45%). Clients with primary level education who obtained employment were more likely to be dissatisfied with their job – 40% were dissatisfied, compared to 23% of clients who had completed second level. With regard to waiting times experienced for training courses, clients with lower levels of education experienced shorter waiting times than others – while 30% of clients overall waited for more than three months to participate in a training programme, 15% of clients with primary level education waited for this length of time.

### *Older clients*

Older clients (i.e. clients aged 55 and above) constituted 10% of the sample and had noticeable differences in their responses across the range of questions in this survey. In terms of outcomes, significantly fewer older clients were employed at the time of the survey (29% compared to 42% overall), and of those that were employed, four out of five were employed on a part-time basis. In addition, almost a half of older clients (48%) were unemployed at the time of the survey, which is significantly higher than the 30% unemployment rate for clients overall. While satisfaction with FÁS services overall did not vary greatly from other clients, older clients were more likely to be very dissatisfied than other groups – one in ten older clients stated that they were 'very' dissatisfied with FÁS, compared to 6% of clients overall.

In terms of interaction with FÁS, older clients showed a significant preference for maintaining contact in person – three out of four older clients stated that their usual means of contact was in person, compared to 62% of all clients. Interestingly, while a smaller proportion of older job-seekers used the FÁS Internet site for searching vacancies (22% compared to 37% overall), all of those who did use it found it easy to use – 100% of older clients stated that the internet site was easy to use, compared to 82% of clients overall. Older job-seekers were significantly less likely to think that the range of vacancies on offer in FÁS were good – 36% of older job-seekers rated the range of vacancies positively, compared to 46% of clients overall. A large proportion of older workers stated that they received no assistance from FÁS when applying for jobs (64% compared to 58% overall). Unfortunately, 38% of those who did obtain a job were dissatisfied with their job (compared to 28% overall).

With regards to training programmes, older clients were the most likely of all age groups to be interested in a training programme because of the subject matter (65% compared with 52% overall) or because it was recommended by friends or family (12% compared with 4% overall). The waiting time experienced by older clients was longer than the average – 41% waited for three months or more (compared to 30% overall). Finally, a significant proportion of older clients felt that the training programme that they participated in was too short (41% compared to 19% overall), but they were significantly less likely to feel that the waiting period was too long (12% as opposed to 39% overall) or that there was very little notice to participate (12% compared with 40% overall).

#### *Younger clients*

Younger clients (i.e. clients aged under 25) constituted 34% of the sample. In terms of outcomes, younger people were statistically significantly more likely to be employed and less likely to be unemployed. The majority of younger clients were in employment at the time of the survey (54% compared to 42% overall). Seventeen percent of younger clients were unemployed at the time of the survey, compared to 30% of all clients.

Younger clients were significantly less likely than other age groups to say that their usual means of contact was in person (54% compared to 62% overall) and more likely to state that they contacted FÁS by phone (24% compared to 19%). Significantly fewer younger clients stated that they had an interview with an ESO – 29% stated that they did not have an interview, compared to 20% overall.

Looking specifically at job-seekers, younger job-seekers were significantly more likely to use the FÁS Internet site for job search purposes than other age groups – 44% stated that they had used it, compared to 37% overall. There was a clear delineation in FÁS Internet usage even among younger clients – 55% of clients aged 21 to 24 stated that they used the FÁS Internet site, compared to 31% of clients aged under 21. Younger clients were significantly more positive about the range of vacancies on offer in FÁS than other clients – 64% felt that the range was ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (compared to 46% of all clients). Younger job-seekers were also significantly more likely to state that they had received some services from FÁS in applying for jobs (52% compared to 45% overall). With regard to training programmes, younger clients were less likely to be interested in a course because it was useful for jobs (18% compared to 29% overall). Almost one in four younger clients felt that the training programme they participated in was too long (24% compared to 15% of all clients).

### *Non-nationals*

Non-national clients constituted 7% of the sample. Given that this client group has been growing in importance in recent years, it is important to determine how well they feel FÁS Employment Services are meeting their needs. There were a number of differences in the responses made by non-national clients compared to Irish clients.

In terms of client outcomes, more non-national clients were employed at the time of the survey than Irish clients (51% compared to 43%) – the difference in employment was made up by significantly greater participation in part-time employment by non-nationals.

The level of interaction of non-national clients with FÁS was significantly higher than with Irish clients. Almost a half of non-national clients stated that they had been in contact with FÁS 4 or more times since registration, compared to 30% of Irish clients who stated the same. Visiting in person was the preferred means of contact for non-national clients – 72% compared to 62% of Irish clients. In terms of staff attributes, non-national clients rated some aspects significantly more negatively than Irish clients – while three-quarters of clients overall positively rated the practical advice they received from FÁS staff, two-thirds of non-national clients shared the sentiment.

Non-national clients were significantly more likely to state that they had looked for jobs since registering with FÁS (79% compared to 55% overall), but were less likely to state that they received services from FÁS in applying for jobs. For example, while one in five of all job-seekers who had applied for a job stated that they received help with their CV or job applications, the same figure was one in ten for non-national clients.

With regard to training programmes, the majority of non-national clients were interested in their training programme because it was useful for jobs (57% compared to 29% of all clients). The waiting time experienced by non-national clients was higher than average – 43% waited for more than three months before starting their programme (compared to 30% of clients overall). In terms of their attitudes about the courses themselves, 29% felt that the course was too short (compared to 19% of all clients) and 57% felt that the waiting time was too long (compared to 39% of all clients).

### *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. Thirteen percent of respondents stated they did. For the remainder of this section, this group will be referred to as ‘clients with a disability’.

In terms of employment outcomes, clients with a disability were significantly less likely than other clients to be employed at the time of the survey – 26% were employed compared to 42% of all clients. Correspondingly, clients with a disability were significantly more likely to be unemployed than other clients – 41% were unemployed compared to 30% of all clients.

The frequency and means of interaction with FÁS for clients with a disability differed from other clients. Clients with a disability were in contact with FÁS more frequently than other clients - 22% stated that they were in contact 7 or more times, compared to 15% of all clients. They were also significantly more likely to state that their usual means of contact with FÁS was in person (72% compared to 62% of all clients). Clients with a disability were more likely to have had an interview with an ESO – 87% stated that they had an

interview, compared to 79% of all clients. They were also significantly more likely to state that this interview was useful (86% compared to 76% of all clients).

Clients with a disability were slightly less likely than other clients to state that their local FÁS office was easy to get to – one in ten did not find it easy, compared to 6% of all clients.

With regard to training programme participants, clients with a disability had shorter waiting times than that for other clients – 20% of clients waited for 3 or more months, compared to 30% of all clients.

## **Regions**

The terms of reference for this survey specified the need to carry out regional analyses. As such, a minimum of fifty responses were obtained from each of the eight regions. Tables of responses to the survey questions by region are in the Appendix. As stated previously, if a result was found to be statistically significant, then it is highlighted as such in the report. Otherwise, the results presented are variations in responses, without being statistically significant.

### *Dublin*

The results for the Dublin region mirror the national results in most areas, partly due to the high proportion of registered clients based in the Dublin region – 35% of respondents were based in Dublin. The results do vary in a number of areas, however. Clients in Dublin had the most interaction with FÁS – 21% of clients were in contact 7 or more times with FÁS since registering, compared to 15% nationally, which was a statistically significant difference. With regard to job-seekers, clients in the Dublin region were significantly the most frequent users of the touch-screen monitors to search for jobs (61% used compared to 46% nationally). Clients in Dublin were also significantly less likely to be notified of vacancies by FÁS staff (either in person or by telephone). In terms of waiting times for training courses, clients in the Dublin region experienced the longest waiting times prior to participation – 46% waited for more than three months before participating in a programme, compared to 30% nationally. However, they were less likely to state that there was very little notice prior to participation (25% compared to 40% nationally).

### *Midlands*

Clients in the Midlands constituted 10% of the sample. In terms of the client's situation at the time of registration, clients in the Midlands were the most likely to be employed, compared to the rest of the nation (38% compared to 27% nationally) and the least likely to be unemployed (44% compared to 54%). Clients in the Midlands experienced the lowest rate of unemployment at the time of the survey (25% compared to 30% nationally). When asked about the registration form, clients in the Midlands were most likely to feel that the form required irrelevant information (46%) compared to the rest of the country (32%), which was a significant digression. Staff in the Midlands were noted for being particularly respectful of the client's privacy (91% positively rated, compared to 84% nationally). In terms of training programmes, clients in the Midlands were significantly more likely to state that they did not participate in a training programme because the dates and times did not suit (33% compared to 19% nationally). However, the waiting times experienced by those who did participate were significantly lower than the rest of the country – three-quarters of participants started their training programme less than a month after registering. Clients that participated in a training programme were more likely than the rest of the country to state

that the course was too short (33% compared to 19% nationally) and that it covered very little new ground (33% compared to 21% nationally).

#### *Mid-West*

Eight percent of respondents were based in the Mid-West. There were very few significant differences in the responses from clients in the Mid-West, with the exception of client outcomes. Clients in the Mid-West were significantly less likely to be in full-time employment at the time of the survey (14% compared to 27% nationally). Looking at client satisfaction with FÁS, fewer clients in the Mid-West were satisfied with FÁS services overall (65% satisfied compared to 71% nationally). With regard to interviews with Employment Services Officers, clients in the Mid-West were the most likely to state that they had undergone an interview (87% compared to 79% nationally). Clients in the Mid-West were also most likely to have found their ESO interview useful (84%). Job-seekers in the Mid-West found the touch-screen monitors particularly difficult to use – more than one in five job-seekers (21%) found them difficult, compared to 10% nationally. They were less likely to feel that the range of vacancies on offer in FÁS were poor, however – 11% compared to 23% nationally. Training programme participants in the Mid-West were very satisfied with the content of their training programmes – 100% stated that the content of their course provided what they needed.

#### *North-East*

Ten percent of respondents were located in the North-East. Of the regions, clients in the North-East had among the least frequent contact with FÁS – 51% stated that they had one interaction or less with FÁS subsequent to registration, compared to 42% nationally. For job-seekers, looking at newspapers in FÁS for job notifications was used significantly more often than elsewhere in the country (56% compared to 45% nationally). Job-seekers in the North-East rated the range of vacancies on offer in FÁS the most positively – 54% stated that the vacancies on offer in FÁS were ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared to 45% nationally. Job-seekers in the North-East who obtained employment were significantly more satisfied than the national average – 100% were satisfied with the job they had obtained, compared to 62% nationally. Participants on training programmes were significantly more job-focussed in the North-East – the majority of training programme participants were interested in their training programme because it was useful for jobs (56%), compared to 29% nationally. The waiting times experienced by training programme participants was better than in other areas – 11% waited for three months or more, compared to 30% nationally. The only negative comment made by training programme participants was with regard to course length – one in three participants felt that the course was too long, compared to 15% nationally.

#### *North-West*

Seven percent of the sample was based in the North-West. The highest proportion of clients unemployed at the time of the survey were found in the North West (46% compared to 30% nationally), which was significantly higher than the national average. Of the regions, clients in the North-West had the least frequent contact with FÁS – 56% stated that they had one interaction or less with FÁS subsequent to registration, compared to 42% nationally. For their usual means of contact with FÁS, clients in the North-West were less likely to engage with FÁS in person (52% compared to 62% nationally). While 2% of clients nationally state that the postal system is their usual means of contact with FÁS, the proportion is much higher in the North-West (8%). In terms of staff attributes, clients in the North-West rated the friendliness and politeness of staff the most highly, with 98% positively rating this trait, compared to 92% nationally. Clients in the North-West also rated the staff the most highly

in how well the staff tried to find out about client needs and circumstances in order to help – 81% compared to 74% nationally. Job-seekers in the North-West were significantly less likely to use either FÁS notice-boards (30% compared to 57% nationally) or the touch-screen monitors (19% compared to 46% nationally) when looking for job notifications.

#### *South-East*

Ten percent of clients were based in the South-East. Clients in the South East had the highest unemployment rates at the time of registration (64% compared to 54% nationally) and the lowest employment rates (15% compared to 27% nationally). Both of these rates were statistically significantly different from the national average. In terms of client outcomes at the time of the survey (6 – 9 months after registration), clients in the South East attained the highest percentage employed (50% compared to 42% nationally), despite the high proportion of clients being unemployed at the time of registration. Clients in the South-East had the smallest proportion of clients dissatisfied with FÁS services (6% compared to 11% nationally). For their usual means of contact with FÁS, clients in the South East were more likely to engage in person (71%) than the rest of the country (62%). Interestingly, clients in the South-East were least likely to state that they had undergone an interview (69%) and those who did participate in an interview were significantly less likely – in fact, the least likely in the country - to state that the interview was useful (68% compared to 76% nationally).

Job-seekers in the South-East favoured more traditional methods of job notification. They were significantly less likely to use either the touch-screen monitors (28% used them to search for jobs, compared to 46% nationally) or the FÁS Internet site (24% compared to 37% nationally). While clients in the South-East used the notice-boards (66% compared to 57% nationally), one in five found them difficult to use. Clients in the South-East preferred looking at the newspapers in FÁS offices (56% compared to 45% nationally).

#### *South-West*

Thirteen percent of respondents were located in the South-East. Looking at the satisfaction of clients, clients in the South-West were significantly more satisfied with FÁS than the national average and were, in fact, the most satisfied with FÁS services overall (77% satisfied compared to 71% nationally). Correspondingly, clients in the South-West had the smallest proportion of clients dissatisfied with FÁS services (6% compared to 11% nationally). Clients in the South-West also interacted more frequently with FÁS than most other regions – 40% had four or more interactions with FÁS since registering, compared to 31% nationally. However, clients in the South-West were less likely to state that they were treated with respect than clients in the rest of the country (79% compared to 90% nationally). With regard to training programme participants, 100% of participants felt that the course they participated in covered what they needed, which was significantly higher than the national average. However, a half of clients felt that the waiting time was too long. This is surprising given that training programme participants had significantly shorter waiting times -81% of training programme participants started their course within four weeks of registering.

#### *West*

Eight percent of respondents were based in the West. There were no significant differences in the responses from clients in the West compared to the rest of the country. The means of contact with FÁS differed in the West compared to the rest of the country. Clients in the West were less likely than most of the country to contact FÁS in person (53% compared to

62% nationally) and to use the phone as their usual means of contact (26%) more so than the rest of the country (19%). Clients in the West were most likely to be interested in a training course because of the subject matter (67% compared to 52% nationally). A half of training programme participants felt that the waiting time to participate was too long (compared to 39% nationally).

## Conclusions

The wide range of topics covered by this survey provides a quantitative basis in many areas where anecdotal evidence previously had to suffice. It must be highlighted that the data concerns a particular group of clients, i.e. clients who registered with FÁS from May to July 2004. 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 (54%). A significant minority sought to apply or register for a training programme (28%) or an apprenticeship (10%). In terms of the employment status of clients at the time of registration, more than half were unemployed (54%), while 27% 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 (61%), three out of ten clients remained unemployed. In the case of NEAP clients, the proportion unemployed was much higher at 55%<sup>4</sup>.

Clients who were unemployed at the time of the survey were not significantly more dissatisfied with FÁS. Customer satisfaction with FÁS is most strongly correlated with clients' satisfaction with FÁS staff, as opposed to client outcomes. FÁS staff are highly rated in this survey. As found in previous surveys, clients see FÁS staff as friendly, polite and respectful. There is room for improvement in staff knowledge about services available and the extent to which staff try to find out about individual client needs and circumstances in order to help. The scope for improvement lies not in staff attitudes and behaviour, therefore, but in the practical advice that staff offer (i.e. the "service effectiveness" rather than the "service encounter", as described by the UK report). Related to this, an area that may require attention is the client interview with the Employment Services Officer. A fifth of clients stated that they did not have an interview and, of those who did, one in five stated that they did not find it useful.

The level of proactive help offered to clients, in particular to NEAP clients, must also be highlighted. More than half of all clients (including NEAP clients) stated that they received no services from FÁS in applying for jobs by, for example, helping with CVs, interview tips, etc. Furthermore, the majority of job-seekers stated that FÁS did not notify them of any relevant vacancies – 67% of NEAP clients who had applied for at least one job stated that they received no vacancy notifications from FÁS. While it is not FÁS policy that FÁS should actively provide services to all job-seekers, given that 30% of job-seekers – and 55% of NEAP clients – were unemployed at the time of the survey, there is probably more scope for helping these persons to seek employment.

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<sup>4</sup> For information purposes, this is higher than the unemployment rate found for NEAP clients in the 2003 Follow-Up Survey (41%). The Follow-Up Survey differs as it only includes NEAP clients who participated in a training or employment programme. However, the recent review of NEAP by Indecon found an unemployment rate of 41% also.

Less than half of job-seekers felt that the range of vacancies notified at FÁS were ‘good’ or ‘very good’ – in fact, almost one in four (23%) felt that the range of vacancies were ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. In terms of the level of information provided in the vacancy notifications, six out of ten job-seekers felt that the notifications contained ‘all’ or ‘most’ of the information that they required.

Customer satisfaction with FÁS offices is high. The vast majority of clients (94%) stated that their local office is easy to get to and feel that that their local office is modern, bright, warm and well-laid out. With regard to the registration form, most clients feel that it is easy to complete. A third of respondents did feel that the registration form required a lot of irrelevant information, however.

Approximately one in six of the clients surveyed participated in a training programme. The most common reason given for being interested in a training programme was because of an interest in the subject matter (51%) as opposed to a belief that the course would be useful for getting a job (29%). Waiting times for training programmes (which has been raised in previous surveys) emerged yet again as an issue in this survey. Three out of ten training programme participants waited over three months to start their training programme and 39% felt that the waiting times were too long. In addition to this, 30% felt that they received too short a notice of the course’s commencement date.

Finally, one in ten FÁS clients felt like complaining about some aspect of their experience of FÁS. The majority of clients who felt like complaining had not and did not intend to make a complaint (61%), mainly due to apathy. Of the small percentage that did make a complaint (2% of the overall sample), one in two were dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled. The most common reason for wanting to complain was with regard to the lack of follow-up, which reinforces the need to address the issue of the level of practical advice and assistance given.

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DUBLIN	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
<b>Present Situation</b>									
Working full-time	27	33	30	14	20	27	28	27	23
Working part-time	16	12	16	14	17	14	22	19	26
School/college	6	6	7	10	9	2	5	4	3
FÁS	10	11	9	21	9	8	5	12	10
Other training	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	1	3
Home Duties	6	5	5	8	8	2	7	6	5
Unemployed	30	28	25	30	32	46	30	31	27
Other	3	3	5	2	0	2	2	2	3
<b>When registered</b>									
Working full-time	16	16	20	10	9	17	19	18	16
Working part-time	11	10	18	8	8	10	6	18	8
School/college	6	6	7	10	13	8	6	2	2
FÁS	3	3	3	5	3	2	1	2	3
Other training	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	2
Home Duties	6	5	7	10	8	2	4	7	8
Unemployed	54	54	44	56	54	62	64	49	57
Other	3	5	3	2	5	0	0	4	5
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>									
Very dissatisfied	6	6	5	6	6	6	2	4	5
Fairly dissatisfied	9	8	10	3	9	6	4	2	3
Neither	9	7	13	8	10	10	16	6	8
Fairly satisfied	38	7	4	18	6	8	10	12	10
Very satisfied	33	36	30	35	48	48	35	35	48
Don't know/refused	5	6	5	6	6	6	2	4	5
<b>Reason registered</b>									
Referred by social welfare	18	18	20	21	15	23	19	16	16
Job-search	54	48	57	56	62	46	61	58	52
Apply for training course	28	31	30	33	27	27	15	25	32
Apply for apprenticeship	10	12	10	8	11	2	8	10	11
Apply for employment	2	3	1	3	1	4	0	0	2
<b>INTERACTION WITH FÁS</b>									
<b>Times contacted (average)</b>	2.4	2.7	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.6	1.9
None	21	20	25	18	28	21	19	15	24
Once	21	18	20	18	23	35	23	20	24
Twice	14	12	14	24	9	10	21	13	18
3 times	13	12	13	14	13	12	15	12	13
4 to 6 times	16	15	12	16	19	6	15	24	13
7 or more times	15	21	16	11	8	17	8	16	8
Can't recall	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Usual means</b>									
In person	62	63	65	68	66	52	71	57	53
Email/internet	7	10	7	5	4	4	2	7	7
Phone	19	17	20	18	14	19	17	22	26
National Contact Centre	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mail/post	2	1	0	3	4	8	0	5	0
Don't contact	10	9	8	6	13	17	10	9	13
<b>Registered previously?</b>									
Yes	27	33	22	19	24	33	23	21	24
<b>How long ago?</b>									
Less than a year	6	4	0	25	5	18	5	0	7
1 to 3 years	21	19	47	17	32	6	11	13	33
4 to 6 years	23	21	24	42	26	6	37	26	13
7 or more	49	53	29	17	37	71	47	57	47

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DUBLIN	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
<b>Registration form (% AGREE)</b>									
Easy to complete?	83	82	84	86	89	79	84	78	84
Irrelevant information?	32	29	46	29	39	42	37	22	33
Poorly laid out?	20	20	26	13	19	25	30	11	19
<b>Interview with ESO?</b>									
Yes	79	81	78	87	80	81	69	76	82
Don't know	2	1	1	0	3	0	4	1	2
<b>Areas covered in interview</b>									
Work experience	82	81	80	86	86	74	74	87	92
Education Background	84	83	85	84	89	83	72	93	80
Skills	88	86	83	89	92	83	88	92	94
Interests	78	75	88	75	79	81	79	77	77
<b>Interview useful?</b>									
Don't know	2	1	0	6	0	0	7	2	2
Not at all useful	6	7	12	2	11	5	7	4	4
Not very useful	14	17	10	9	11	17	18	15	10
Quite useful	39	36	35	42	44	45	35	42	45
Very useful	38	40	43	42	33	33	33	38	39
<b>Registration form filled?</b>	48	42	45	55	46	67	53	49	53
<b>Staff attributes (%rated positive)</b>									
Friendliness and politeness	92	89	92	95	95	98	89	88	92
How well try to find out about needs	74	69	77	79	82	81	72	74	74
Knowledge of staff re: services	77	73	81	81	77	83	77	76	79
Treated with respect	90	87	94	92	94	90	92	79	90
Provided the help needed	77	76	78	78	82	79	76	72	84
Respectful of privacy	84	81	84	91	86	81	88	87	84
Practical advice received	75	69	78	79	81	79	78	72	81
<b>FÁS OFFICES</b>									
<b>Distance to office (miles)</b>	6.4	2.8	7.3	8	8.1	8.2	5.7	10.9	9.2
Less than 3 miles	50	77	29	37	34	46	46	35	29
4 to 6 miles	18	17	26	19	20	6	21	13	23
7 to 10 miles	13	3	21	24	15	27	16	13	16
More than 10 miles	19	4	25	21	30	21	18	39	32
<b>Easy to get to? (%Yes)</b>	94	94	91	98	95	94	94	91	94
Modern	81	84	86	78	85	87	72	73	86
Well-laid out	86	87	84	87	91	89	83	82	82
Provides privacy	85	86	83	84	81	87	90	80	82
Busy	59	65	65	44	43	56	54	69	45
Disorganised	8	8	9	8	5	14	5	7	8
Old-fashioned	13	14	13	10	10	12	13	18	13
Warm	87	85	92	84	91	85	88	86	89
Bright	87	85	92	84	91	85	88	86	89
Cold	6	8	1	5	5	2	4	8	2
Professional	90	88	90	89	96	85	93	93	92
Intimidating	8	9	3	5	10	6	8	8	11
In need of repair	15	17	10	16	8	10	19	17	18
<b>JOB-SEEKERS</b>									
<b>Looked for jobs since registered?</b>	55	50	52	60	61	52	60	57	52
<b>Which FÁS services used:</b>									
Noticeboard	57	59	55	58	60	30	66	60	56
Easy to use?	75	77	64	77	88	88	73	86	78
Touch screen monitors	46	61	53	50	40	19	28	39	41
Easy to use?	84	85	91	74	90	86	86	83	69
Difficult to use	10	8	5	21	5	20	14	13	15

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DUBLIN	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
FÁS Internet	37	42	35	34	31	41	24	44	38
Easy to use?	82	77	93	92	87	82	84	78	83
Newspapers in FÁS	45	39	40	34	56	41	56	55	34
Spoke with ESO	61	61	63	68	60	52	50	69	66
National Contact Centre	6	8	8	8	4	0	0	7	16
None	13	10	15	21	17	15	14	10	9
<b>Range of vacancies - good</b>	45	45	43	47	54	52	48	36	38
<b>Range of vacancies - poor</b>	23	25	20	11	21	26	24	16	34
<b>Information available</b>									
Had all the info I needed	25	29	33	32	25	22	24	15	19
Had most of the info I needed	35	35	25	37	35	37	34	31	59
Had some of the info I needed	25	23	28	13	21	26	32	40	13
Had very little of the info I needed	7	8	10	8	6	7	2	8	0
<b>Apply for any vacancies</b>									
On FÁS noticeboard	31	33	26	40	30	29	39	26	28
On touchscreen monitors	28	39	44	36	16	14	15	22	12
On FÁS Internet	26	26	26	24	19	33	20	31	28
From National Contact Centre	5	5	0	4	0	10	5	7	8
<b>Did FÁS notify any vacancies</b>									
In person	21	13	13	26	29	19	28	27	28
By telephone	9	6	5	16	8	26	6	11	9
By email	2	2	0	0	0	7	2	3	3
By text alert	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
<b>Receive services applying for jobs?</b>									
Help with CV	20	22	18	21	0	19	14	24	25
Interview tips	21	25	20	24	21	19	14	19	22
Highlighting relevant vacancies	18	17	23	21	23	11	20	15	16
Help with job applications	18	19	18	11	23	19	16	16	19
Confidence building	14	18	18	5	10	15	10	15	16
Speaking with employer	8	11	0	5	8	4	6	11	16
<b>Offered any jobs?</b>	24	26	15	36	16	19	22	26	24
<b>Satisfied with job?</b>	62	48	100	78	100	25	67	57	83
<b>TRAINING PROGRAMMES</b>									
Considered participating?	42	41	34	48	39	39	43	42	52
Of these, participated in:									
Training programme	36	39	42	47	26	35	22	40	34
Employment programme	5	3	4	7	7	15	8	0	6
<b>Why did you not participate?</b>									
No training programme appealed	11	16	7	0	9	10	4	8	20
Dates/times didn't suit	12	3	14	33	5	40	20	19	0
Found employment	21	24	14	7	14	10	28	27	20
Participated in alternative org	5	9	0	0	9	0	0	0	5
Delay in programme	2	3	7	7	0	0	0	0	0
Personal reasons	16	9	14	13	18	30	28	15	15
Waiting to participate	11	8	21	7	14	10	4	12	20
<b>Why interested in training prog?</b>									
Useful for jobs	29	23	25	40	56	20	27	28	33
Subject matter	52	58	42	53	44	50	36	44	67
Recommended by friend/family	4	4	8	2	0	0	1	6	0
Recommended by ESO	4	2	8	0	0	10	18	6	0
<b>Waiting time</b>									
None	4	4	17	7	0	0	9	0	0
A few days	3	4	0	7	0	1	0	0	0
A week	10	10	0	7	0	30	36	6	0

## APPENDIX: REGIONAL RESULTS

	NATIONAL	DUBLIN	MR	MW	NE	NW	SE	SW	WR
2 - 4 weeks	25	23	58	7	33	30	36	6	0
1 - 2 months	22	8	8	47	56	10	9	39	33
3 - 6 months	26	38	8	27	11	20	18	17	33
7+ months	4	8	8	0	0	0	0	6	0
<b>Training programme comments</b>									
Course too long	15	15	17	20	33	10	0	17	8
Course too short	19	19	33	20	22	10	18	6	25
Content provided what needed	76	79	83	100	89	100	73	700	75
Covered very little new ground	21	17	33	20	11	40	27	28	8
Too long waiting period	39	40	33	33	22	30	36	50	50
Too short notice before starting	40	25	33	20	44	40	27	28	42
<b>Ever felt like complaining?</b>	10	14	9	10	11	8	6	6	11