

**AN EXAMINATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING PLACEMENT
FROM FAS PROGRAMMES**

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Executive Summary

This report uses the results of the 1996 to 2001 follow-up placement surveys, conducted by the ESRI for FAS, to examine the factors influencing participants' post-programme success. A total of 8,465 records are available, which provides a rich source of data on the characteristics of programme participants. The results are based on a statistical technique – logistic regression.

FAS programmes are often compared on the basis of placement rates. However, such rates may be influenced more by the characteristics of the participants on the programmes, than by the programmes themselves. For policy purposes, it may be of interest to see whether such factors as age, sex and unemployment status impact on placement or progression outcomes. Differences, if any, between regions can also be assessed. In carrying out the analysis, however, it must be emphasised that a statistical approach is taken. In effect, the analysis derives average impacts - it cannot predict individual outcomes. However, the broad conclusions of the analysis are fairly clear.

The findings in relation to individual characteristics are:

- Educational qualifications have a major impact on placement prospects. The higher the qualification, the more likely one is of getting a job afterwards.
- Males are more likely than females to be placed.
- Aged over 55 is a strong negative factor.
- Long-term unemployment is a negative factor, while being at work before the programme is a positive factor.
- Being on home duties/other the month before the programme is a negative factor.

The findings in relation to FÁS are:

- Linked Work Experience and Specific Skills Training have positive impacts on all three outcomes compared to other FÁS programmes.
- Community Youth Training has a positive impact on 'positive outcome' and Alternance has a positive impact for those who had any job since their programme.
- Those receiving FAS certification are more likely to have a positive outcome.
- The influence of region has varied during the period 1996 to 2001. Broadly speaking, those in Dublin (particularly those in Dublin North) and the North East have had somewhat better placement success. Other regions do not influence participant outcomes.

The conclusion in relation to FAS programmes is the same as found in earlier studies; part of the reason for the relatively high placement from Linked Work Experience and Specific Skills Training is that they have a higher education profile, but, abstracting from that factor, these programmes still have a positive impact compared to other FAS programmes.

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Introduction

Placement is one of the principal performance indicators used for FÁS programmes. Placement is measured at course termination (in respect of training programmes) and through the FÁS Follow-Up Surveys which present participant outcomes one to two years after programme completion.

However, while placement rates may be used as an indicator of the success of different programmes, it is likely that differences between placement rates for different programmes reflect a variety of other factors. The possible roles that characteristics such as age, education, sex, prior employment status and location play in placement should be considered.

The Follow-Up Survey reports¹ provide information on placements rates, participants' educational backgrounds, age, region, previous versus current status etc. This information can be used to analyse factors influencing participant outcomes and to develop statistical models that will predict the outcome for a FÁS participant given certain conditions and his/her profile.

Such an analysis was done by FÁS in 1996² and again in 1998³, the results broadly concurred with a similar study by the ESRI⁴. Each of the studies show that factors external to FÁS were of major importance in placement rates, especially educational qualifications and duration of unemployment. Certification and work experience during training were also factors which were found to assist job prospects.

While long-term unemployment was a negative factor, Live Register status was found to be insignificant in the FÁS studies. Participants' sex was a negative factor in the earlier FÁS study, although the 1998 FÁS study and the ESRI study found males to have a slightly greater success rate in obtaining employment than females. In all studies, age had a slightly negative impact on placement rates.

This paper continues the process of identifying factors influencing placement and of building a model to predict the outcome for particular participant profiles.

Methodology

The study employs the data from six Follow-Up Surveys; 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. This gives a large FÁS participant database with a total of 8,465 respondents who finished their FÁS programmes between 1994 and 2000 and who were surveyed one to two years afterwards.

¹ 1996,1997,2000 Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants - Principal Results, R. Fox, FÁS.

1998 Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants- Principal Results, D. Crowe

1999 Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants- Principal Results, S. Molumby, R. Fox

2001 Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants- Principal Results, A. Byrne, FÁS, 2002.

² Factors Influencing Placement from FÁS Programmes, R. Fox, 1996.

³ An Examination of Factors Influencing Placement from FÁS Programmes, D. Crowe, 1998

⁴ An Evaluation of Measures to Assist Young People and the Long-Term Unemployed, P. O'Connell & J. Sexton, ESRI, 1995.

Information is available on participant characteristics such as age, education, sex, prior employment status and geographical location and whether they had ever got a job since leaving their programme.

The analysis⁵ examines the impact on a *dependent variable* of a number of other variables. In this case the study looks at the impact of various factors on three sets of placement results:

- 1) Working at the time of the survey;
- 2) Ever worked since finishing the programme; and
- 3) Positive outcome (in Employment, FÁS or Education at the time of the survey).

The analysis first calculates the likelihood of placement for an (arbitrary) base profile. The base taken in this study is a female aged 15-19, on the Skills Foundation Programme with none/primary level education, short-term unemployed in the month before the programme and living in the West Region, the year is 1996.

A coefficient (value) is estimated for each variable in the equation so as to best predict the result of the *dependent variable*. The values change with the mix of variables included in the analysis since they all relate to each other. Variables that do not have a significant impact on the result are removed from the analysis.

The objective of the analysis is to see which variables have a significant impact, and the strength of that impact. However, since the strength of the impact varies with the value of all other variables it is not possible to assign a precise, fixed, independent value. The probability of an outcome can be estimated based on the combination of variables and compared to the base outcome. Numerous participant profiles are possible and each combination of variables represents a profile and the probabilities for each profile can be estimated.

It is important to note that only the variables included in the data can be examined, but the results may be influenced by other variables not included in the data and therefore beyond the scope of the analysis.

Results

Variables used in the analysis were: education, age, FÁS region, prior employment status, Live Register status, programme taken, certification and sex.

The three outcomes examined were:

- 1) Working at the time of the survey (**W**)
- 2) Had worked at sometime since their programme (**J**)
- 3) Positive Outcome - In Employment, FÁS or Education at the time of the survey (**P**)

The base participant profile (female, age 15-19, on the Skills Foundation Programme, Short-term Unemployed in the month before the Programme, no/primary Education, living in the west Region, the year is 1996) had a 45% probability of working at the time of the survey, 61% probability of having had any job since leaving the programme and 48% probability of a positive outcome at the time of the survey.

Positive Impact

When compared to the base, factors having a positive influence on all three outcomes were:

⁵ The technique used was Logistic Regression Analysis.

- Level of Education (Junior Certificate, Leaving Cert., Third-level Cert./Diploma & Degree)
- Male
- Aged 20-24
- Region – Dublin North, Dublin South & Wicklow, Dublin West & Kildare, North East
- Working in the month prior to programme participation
- Participation in Linked Worked Experience
- Participation in Specific Skills Training
- Received FÁS Programme Certification

Factors having a positive influence on at least one (but not all three) of the outcomes compared to the base were:

- Aged 25-34 (W & P), 35-44 (P), 45-54 (P)
- In education the month before programme (P)
- Participation in Community Youth Training Programme (P)
- Participation in Alternance Training Programme (J)
- Region – South West (J & P)
- Year – 1999 (P), 2000 (W & P), 2001 (W)

Negative Impact

Factors having a negative influence on all three outcomes compared to the base were:

- Long-term unemployed in the month before programme
- On home duties/other in the month before programme
- Participation in the Community Training Workshop Programme

Factors having a negative influence on at least one (but not all three) of the outcomes compared to the base were:

- Aged 35-44, 45-54 (J), aged 55+ (W & J)
- Participation in Community Youth Training Programme (W)
- Participation in Local Training Initiatives Programme (W & J)
- Participation in Enterprise Training (W & J)
- Participation in Community Employment (W & J)
- Year 1997 (J), 1998 (J), 1999 (J)

No Impact

Factors having no or an insignificant impact on at least one of the three outcomes when compared to the base:

- Regions: Midlands (J, P & W), Mid-West (J, P & W), North East (J & P), North West (J, P & W), South East (J, P & W), South-West (J, P & W).
- Aged 25-34 (J), 35-44 (W), 45-54 (W) aged 55+ (P)
- On Live Register before programme (J, P & W)
- Participation on CYTP (J), Participation on LTI (P), Participation on ENT (P), ALT (W & P)
- In FÁS/education the month before programme (W & J)
- Year 1997 (W & P), 1998 (W&P), 1999 (W), 2000 (J), 2001 (J &P)

- **Strength of Impact**

The extent of the influence of each variable can be estimated⁶ in terms of percentage points either increasing or decreasing the chances of each outcome compared to the base (Table 1). The strength of the impact really depends on the combination of the whole. The figures in Table 1 give an indication of the impact when these variables are changed from the base profile. (Note that all percentages shown below are percentage point differences in probability.)

The variables having the greatest impact are education and the level attained. Even a Leaving Certificate level of education increased the base participant's prospects of placement by 9-16 percentage points and a degree increased the chances by as much as 20 percentage points.

Participants who were at work in the month before their programme were between 8-14 per cent more likely than the base (short-term unemployed) participant to be in employment at the time of the survey while being long-term unemployed decreased placement prospects by 3-6 per cent. Those on home duties in the month before their programme had equally negative results, they were 5 per cent less likely to have had any job since their programme and 6 per cent less likely to have a positive outcome compared to the base.

Males were up to 5 per cent more likely to have a favourable outcome. The impact of age was greatest for those over 55 years with lower prospects for those currently working (an 8 per cent less chance than the base) and those who had any job since their programme (an 18 per cent less chance than the base). Those aged 35 or more had negative results for any job placement since leaving the programme. Participants aged up to 54 were more likely than the base (aged 15-19) to have a positive outcome (in employment, FÁS or education at the time of the survey).

Compared to the Skills Foundation programme CTW, CYTP, LTI, ENT and CE had 3-7 per cent negative impacts for those currently working. Overall CE had the most negative impact when compared to the base profile.

Positive impacts of 2 per cent, 8 per cent and 4 per cent for current employment, any job since their programme and positive outcome were found for Linked Work Experience. Specific Skills Training also had positive impacts of 2 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. While the Community Youth Training Programme had a slightly negative impact on current employment it had a positive impact for those participants who had a positive outcome (5 per cent).

Each of the Dublin Regions as well as the South West and the North East gave positive results compared to the West (base) Region.

Since all these factors may vary independently with each participant, numerous combinations are possible giving rise to many different participant profiles. The strength of the impact of each variable is not independent and will depend on the combination as a whole. The analysis allows the probabilities of the three outcomes to be predicted for each profile compared to the base profile.

⁶ The actual coefficients used in the calculations can be seen in Table 2 at the end of this report.

Table 1			
Factors Influencing Three Participant Outcomes & How the Probabilities are affected Compared to the Base Participant Profile* 1996-2001			
	Currently Working	Any Job Since Programme	Positive Outcome
Base Participant Probability (%)	45	61	48
Influential Variables	Difference from Base (%)		
Education (Base = Primary/none)			
Junior cert.	+7	+10	+5
Leaving cert.	+11	+16	+9
Third level cert./diploma	+13	+18	+13
Degree	+14	+20	+16
Age (Base = Age 15-19)			
age 20-24	+4	+5	+6
age 25-34	+2		+4
age 35-44		-7	+6
age 45-54		-9	+5
age 55+	-8	-18	
Regions (Base = West)			
Dublin North	+5	+7	+9
Dublin South	+2	+5	+6
Dublin West	+4	+6	+7
South West		+3	+5
North East	+3	+3	+5
Month Before Programme (Base = Short-term Unemployed)			
Long-term unemployed	-3	-6	-3
At work	+8	+14	+8
In education			+5
Home Duties/Other	-3	-5	-6
Programmes (Base = SKF)			
CTW	-6	-4	-6
CYTP	-3		+5
LWE	+2	+8	+4
LTI	-4	-4	
SST	+2	+7	+3
ENT	-3	-5	
ALT		+5	
CE	-7	-10	+2
FÁS Certification	+4	+6	+3
Sex = Male	+4	+5	+4
Year			
1997		-3	
1998		-5	
1999		-4	+4
2000	+3		+4
2001	+2		
Non-Significant Variables			
Programmes	ENT, ALT, CYTP, LTI, WRKPLCE		
Regions	Midlands, Mid-West, North-West, South-East, SW		
Other	Live Register Status, in education, '97,'98,'99,'01		
* Base Profile = 1996, Female, Aged 15-19 with Primary/no Education, short-term unemployed in the month before programme, on Skills Foundation Programme, no certification and living in the West Region			

Table 2			
Factors Influencing Three Participant Outcomes (1996-2001)			
Coefficients			
Influential Variables	Currently Working	Any Job Since Programme	Positive Outcome
Education			
Junior cert.	.680	.661	.299
Leaving cert.	.985	1.030	.521
Third level cert./diploma	1.188	1.179	.753
Degree	1.274	1.300	.952
Age			
age 20-24	.324	.303	.352
age 25-34	.178		.252
age 35-44		-.440	.378
age 45-54		-.570	.302
age 55+	-.737	-1.151	
Regions			
Dublin North	.428	.441	.543
Dublin South	.213	.315	.334
Dublin West	.396	.391	.448
South West		.222	.312
North East	.259	.214	.318
Month Before Programme			
Long-term unemployed	-.311	-.374	-.153
At work	.733	.918	.496
In education			.319
Home Duties/Other	-.273	-.331	-.356
Programmes			
CTW	-.582	-.228	-.340
CYTP	-.234		.311
LWE	.197	.497	.240
LTI	-.350	-.281	
SST	.165	.478	.153
ENT	-.303	-.317	
ALT		.327	
CE	-.644	-.682	.148
FÁS certification	.341	.419	.155
Sex = Male	.387	.340	.262
Year			
1997		-.224	
1998		-.349	
1999		-.252	.255
2000	.245		.256
2001	.222		
Constant Term	-.980	.037	-.434
Base Probability* (%)	45%	61%	48%
Non-significant Variables			
Programmes	ENT, ALT, CYTP, LTI, WRKPLCE		
Regions	Midlands, Mid-West, North-West, South-East, SW		
Other	Live Register Status, in education, '97,'98,'99,'01		
* Base Profile = 1996, female aged 15-20, Primary/no Education, short-term unemployed in the month before programme, on Skills Foundation Programme and living in the West Region			

Conclusions

The results broadly concur with those of the 1996 and 1998 FÁS study and the ESRI study. Education has the greatest impact on participant placement rates. The higher the level of achievement the greater the prospects for employment. Other factors external to FÁS which influence participant outcomes are participants' employment situation in the month before the programme and age. Long-term unemployment has a negative impact. Age over 55 is a negative factor and over 35 negative in some cases. The work prospects for male participants are more favourable than for females and this finding agrees with the ESRI findings.

Factors within FÁS control, and which influence placement outcomes, include the actual programmes undertaken. Programmes with a link to labour market skills needs are more likely to give positive placement results. Certification from FÁS also plays a positive role. However it should be remembered that factors beyond the scope of the data will also influence placement outcome.

Table 3
Factors Influencing Placement – 1996 - 2001 Follow-Up Survey Results

Outcomes: Working at time of survey (W), Any Job since Programme (J), Positive Outcome (P)

Base Profile: 1996, Female, aged 15-19, SKF, no certification, short-term unemployed in the month before programme, no/primary education, West region.

Positive Impact

Factors having a positive influence on all three outcomes were:

- Education (Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Third level Certificate/Diploma, Degree)
- Age 20-24
- Region – Dublin North, Dublin South & Wicklow, Dublin West & Kildare, North East
- At work in the month before programme
- Participation in Specific Skills Training
- Participation in Linked Work Experience Training Programme
- FÁS Certification
- Male

Factors having a positive influence on any of the three outcomes were:

- Aged 25-34 (W & P), 35-44 (P), 45-54 (P)
- Region – South West (J & P)
- In education in the month before programme (P)
- Participation in Community Youth Training Programme (P)
- Participation in Alternance Training Programme (J)
- Year – 1999 (P), 2000 (W & P), 2001 (W)

Negative Impact

Factors having a negative influence on all three outcomes were:

- Long-term unemployed in the month before programme
- On home duties/other in the month before programme
- Participation in the Community Training Workshop Programme

Factors having a negative influence on any of the three outcomes were:

- Aged 35-44 (J), aged 45-54 (J), aged 55+ (W & J)
- Participation in Community Youth Training Programme (W)
- Participation in Linked Training Initiative Programme (W & J)
- Participation in Enterprise Training (W & J)
- Participation in Community Employment (W & J)
- Year 1997 (J), 1998 (J), 1999 (J)

No Impact

Factors having no or an insignificant impact on any of the three outcomes when compared to the base

- Regions: Midlands (J,P & W), Mid-West (J,P & W), North-East (J,P), North-West (J,P & W), South-East (J,P & W), South-West (J,P & W)
- Aged 25-34 (J), 35-44 (W), 45-54 (W) aged 55+ (P)
- On Live Register (J,P & W)
- Participation on CYTP (J), Participation on LTI (P), Participation on ENT (P), ALT (W & P)
- In FÁS/education the month before programme (W & J)
- Year 1997 (W & P), 1998 (W & P), 1999 (W), 2000 (J), 2001 (J & P)

