

Participation in lifelong learning in Ireland is lower than the EU average; *Eurostat* figures for employed persons aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning in 2011 showed the percentage for Ireland was only 6.2% or 18th place out of the 27 Member States.

In relation to figures for Inactivity rates for prime-aged people by level of education (persons aged 25-54) in 2011, *Eurostat* showed the following for Ireland and the average across the EU 27:

Educational levels	EU 27 (average)	Ireland
Low (ISCED 0-2)	27%	22%
Medium (ISCED 3-4)	14%	21%
High (ISCED 5-6)	8%	11%

Eurostat figures for unemployment rates by highest level of educational attainment (persons aged 25-64) in 2011 showed the following for Ireland and the average across the EU 27:

Educational levels	EU 27 (average)	Ireland
Low (ISCED 0-2)	14.9%	35%
Medium (ISCED 3-4)	7.5%	15%
High (ISCED 5-6)	5%	7.5%

The Adult Literacy Service

The Adult Literacy Service is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and is delivered by Education and Training Boards nationwide. It is focused on those with low levels of literacy skills and includes basic education services and English language tuition. In addition to reading and writing, adult literacy covers numeracy, social and personal development, learning to learn and IT skills. The adult literacy service is free and confidential.

Adult Literacy is available as a stand-alone tuition programme in a variety of formats (intensive, family and workplace) and for specific cohorts (deaf people, people with dyslexia and native Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas). It is delivered on a one-to-one and group basis, in classrooms or outreach or other atypical settings, for between 2 and 6 hours weekly up to 40 weeks annually.

Adult Literacy Programme

Annual funding for adult literacy increased from €1 million in 1997 to €30 million in 2012. Funding has been at the level of €30 million since 2007. The total spend on adult literacy since 2000 has been in the region of €300 million.

The annual number of participants has increased from 5,000 in 1997 to over 57,000 in 2012 and total participant numbers availing of adult literacy programmes since 2000 is over half a million participants, including over 100,000 availing of English language tuition.

NALA also developed an interactive website www.writeon.ie that allows adults the freedom to study in their own time to improve their reading, writing and number skills and get a national qualification. Almost 30,000 learners have accessed the website.

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time courses for over 16s, aimed principally at those who have not completed Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) qualification. It gives individuals the opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Anyone who has left full-time education can take part in a course, but priority will be given to those with less than upper second level education.

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2013

	Male:	Female:	Total:	
Primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2)	7,031	11,426	18,457	58.70%
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	2,833	7,826	10,659	33.90%
Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	577	1,750	2,327	7.40%
Tertiary education (ISCED 5 AND 6)	0	0	0	