







CITY & GUILDS  
CENTRE FOR SKILLS  
DEVELOPMENT

# Young people and vocational choices in Ireland

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**City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development**

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**Philip Sheridan**

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# Foreword



At City & Guilds our purpose is to enable people and organisations to develop their skills for personal and economic growth. We put the learners at the heart of everything we do and our central theme this year – “Inspiring Choices” – means we want to build the very best environment for vocational education to create opportunities, develop talent and inspire choices.

The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD) prepared this report for the European headquarters of City & Guilds in Dublin. Our interest in finding out more about young people’s experiences of information, advice and guidance provision, particularly for vocational routes, was in part inspired by a survey by the European Commission in 2011. The survey found that among the general public in the Republic of Ireland, three-quarters thought vocational education has a positive image in the country, but only 10% said they would recommend vocational education to a person who is finishing compulsory schooling (European Commission, 2011). This report confirms that young people lack awareness about the value of vocational education as a progression route into training and employment. Among the 508 young people surveyed, although 90% had received careers information, advice and guidance from their school or college, only around half (46%) had an understanding of the term “vocational education”. The provision of information,

advice and guidance has a clear role to play in bridging the gap between positive perceptions of vocational education and awareness of it as a valuable option for young people.

At City & Guilds, we want to play a part in supporting young people as they make crucial decisions about how to start developing their careers. This aligns with the European vocational educational and training strategy up to 2020, which calls for an active policy to enhance the potential of vocational education and training to support smart and sustainable growth (European Commission, 2010). As a next step of the research project, City & Guilds Europe will invite key stakeholders in Ireland to comment on the findings. This will help us to develop recommendations to improve young people’s awareness and understanding of vocational education options in Ireland.

It is my hope that City & Guilds can play a role in nurturing a supportive environment for vocational education in Ireland – an environment that is creating opportunities, developing talent and inspiring choices.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Sheridan', written in a cursive style.

**Philip Sheridan**

*Accreditations and Recognitions Manager  
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## Introduction

This report sets out the perceptions of vocational education among young people in the Republic of Ireland, their experiences of information, advice and guidance (IAG) and suggestions to improve IAG for vocational options. The research has been conducted by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD) for the City & Guilds Ireland Office. It involved a literature review and an online survey of 508 young people aged 15 to 19 in the Republic of Ireland conducted by Opinium.

Our report findings raise concerns about the perceptions and understanding of vocational education among young people in the Republic of Ireland. The popularity of university and the influence of parents suggest that young people are being encouraged to aspire to university with only limited information about other options available, including studying alongside working.

Young people on the whole seem keen not to restrict their future options, and would benefit from information about vocational options and how transferable they can be. It may be that young people do not consider vocational options because they see them as restrictive in terms of progression into different careers, in a way that they do not consider academic options to be restrictive.

## Perceptions of vocational education

- Only around half (46%) of surveyed young people had an understanding of the term “vocational education”.
- Of those who were unclear about the meaning of “vocational education”, 21% said they didn’t know, and 5% understood it as being religious education to become a priest or nun.
- Most of the young people (60%) planned to attend university or complete another academic qualification as their next course of study or work.
- Of those planning to take an academic qualification next, half (47%) hadn’t considered a vocational qualification because they felt it wasn’t relevant for the job or career they wanted.
- Of those planning to take an academic qualification next, 31% did not consider vocational options because their parents would prefer them to have an academic qualification or attend university. This suggests that parents as well as young people may benefit from information about vocational options and how transferable they can be.

## Information, advice and guidance

- › Most young people surveyed (90%) had received IAG from their school or college, with older respondents being more likely to have received IAG.
- › More young people received IAG at the end of the Junior Cycle (aged 15 or 16) than any other age.
- › Young people felt they should receive IAG earlier, with 44% saying IAG should be provided before the age of 13.
- › Parents were the most popular source of IAG, and the most trusted. School careers guidance counsellors were the second most used and trusted, followed by online sources.
- › Parents were also the role model that young people selected most (44%), closely followed by other family members (32%).

## Online sources of IAG

- › College or school websites are the most commonly used source of online IAG (used by 56%), particularly for those young people seeking to complete a vocational qualification as their next course of study or work (75%).
- › While young people commonly use the internet for IAG (83%), they are less likely to use social media for IAG (48%).

Their propensity to use social media to contact companies about careers (8%) is particularly low.

- › Young people do, however, use social media to exchange information with friends about careers (28%).
- › Young people in rural areas appear less likely to use social media in general than young people in large towns or cities.

## IAG for vocational routes

- › Young people most commonly felt that it was easier to find out about an academic route of study than a vocational route, with 39% giving this response, compared to 24% who thought it was equally easy to find out about both routes.
- › Most of the young people said that this was because they did not ask for information about vocational routes, either because they wanted to pursue an academic option (37%), or because they already had a clear idea of what they wanted to do (31%).
- › Young people typically saw vocational education as less challenging and less prestigious than academic education. For example, 32% saw it as a route for the less able, and 26% saw vocational education as a low status option.



## IAG: What's missing?

- Young people would like to see more information about vocational education, as well as more advice based on experience and real-life examples.
- The majority (64%) of young people would like to see speakers in schools/colleges with different career paths to help them understand the implications of different choices and learn about a range of career paths.

## Conclusions

- Young people consider vocational education to have a lower status than academic education. However, they also lack understanding of vocational education, and know less about vocational routes compared to academic routes. More information should be available to young people in school to help them judge whether vocational education can support their career choices.
- IAG should be offered in school at an earlier age, ideally starting at the age of 13 or earlier. This will help young people make decisions about their future study and career interests before the end of the Junior Cycle, and will help those who would like to find out about vocational routes to do so.

- IAG should provide young people with real-life examples of individuals in a wide range of careers and trades. This will help them to better understand different kinds of work, including work that is not limited to their own family's experience.
- Young people should continue to have access to face-to-face discussions with a career counsellor about career paths and qualifications. Young people appreciate discussing their options with someone who is well informed and who can guide them to the most appropriate IAG to suit their interests.
- Young people also seek IAG online. They commonly seek information on school and college websites, so these should be as accessible as possible. Employers could also use social media to offer information about careers that can be viewed and shared. However, young people mainly use social media to share information with friends, rather than to engage with employers.

# 2

## Introduction

This report sets out the perceptions of vocational education among young people in the Republic of Ireland, their experiences of information, advice and guidance (IAG) and suggestions to improve IAG for vocational options. The research involved a literature review and a survey of 508 young people aged 15 to 19 in the Republic of Ireland. The report draws conclusions and suggests recommendations for vocational IAG, for discussion among City & Guilds stakeholders in the Republic of Ireland.

### 2.1 Aim

The aim of the research is to investigate the sources of information, advice and guidance used by young people in the Republic of Ireland, online and otherwise, particularly relating to vocational education and training. The research also investigates the perceptions of vocational education among young people. It has been conducted by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD) for the City & Guilds Ireland Office.

### 2.2 Research questions

The research aims to establish the role of information, advice and guidance (IAG) in the study and career choices of young people, including identifying:

- › What IAG young people receive about vocational education, and whether it meets their needs;

- › What young people think about vocational education and their future career choices;
- › The most common sources of IAG used by young people and the degree of trust in/impartiality of different sources; and
- › The most useful online sources of IAG, and the use of social media as a source of IAG.

### 2.3 Structure

The report is divided into chapters that discuss our research findings alongside the most relevant charts and data, with conclusions set out in the final chapter. The chapter after this introduction (Chapter 3) sets out the methodology for the research. The fourth chapter briefly describes vocational education in the Republic of Ireland and discusses our findings on young people's perceptions of vocational education. The fifth chapter sets out young people's experience of IAG, and the sixth chapter looks at their experience and use of online IAG. The seventh chapter discusses young people's experience of IAG for vocational options. The last chapters set out our conclusions from the research, and suggest potential ways to improve IAG, particularly IAG for vocational education, in the Republic of Ireland.

This research involved a literature review and an online survey of young people in Ireland. The literature review was conducted by researchers from CSD and informed the development of the survey, which was carried out by a survey company, Opinium, in order to reach 500 young people in Ireland. The survey questions and data from each question, cross-tabulated by age and whether or not young people had considered a vocational option, where appropriate, are provided in the Technical Report.

## 3.1 Literature review

We conducted a short desk-based review of existing literature. Our selection of literature was initially informed by the City & Guilds Ireland Office to ensure we began with recent and well-known pieces of research. We then used a bibliography scan and identified appropriate literature relating to the research questions set out in the introduction. The literature has been combined with the data in the report and is not a separate chapter. The literature review informed our development of the survey, ensuring it was relevant to Irish respondents and that we did not replicate existing research.

## 3.2 Online survey

The online survey was conducted by an external research agency called Opinium. They were able to contact large numbers of young people in Ireland. The survey achieved a sample size of 508 young people aged 15 to 19 with the questions limited to a small number of options, making this small sample size more

robust. Opinium used a random sampling method and monitored the responses to ensure the survey was representative of each different age group. Broadband coverage in the Republic of Ireland, as shown in Chapter 6, has experienced a massive expansion in the past 10 years, and now 90% of the population is covered. However, as the research suggests, in some areas where broadband coverage has become available more recently, it can be used and trusted to different degrees. In order to allow for this potential effect on the survey, we also asked respondents to indicate whether they lived in a large city, the suburbs, a town or a rural area. This has also enabled us to highlight areas where the views of young people around the use of IAG online may be different.

The data, analysed by a certain number of characteristics (eg age, whether the young person considered a vocational option if they are not already pursuing one, and gender) was produced by Opinium and then passed to CSD. We analysed the data using cross-tabulations and simple bar charts. Given the size of the sample, we felt that more complex statistical analysis would have been inappropriate, and we are confident about the robustness of the data presented in this report.

We have produced a technical report (online only) which can be found appended to this report, setting out the results of the questions analysed principally by age. In the main body of the report, charts and tables have been included where they illustrate particular findings.

### 3.3 Profile of respondents

The survey respondents were split almost equally by gender, as 51% of the respondents were male and 49% were female. We were particularly focused on ensuring there was a spread of ages, and we achieved around 20% representation from each of the age groups with 15 year olds making up 21% of the sample, 16 year olds 17%, 17 year olds 22%, 18 year olds 22% and 19 year olds 18%. The biggest group of young people who responded to the survey lived on the East Coast of Ireland (41%), although the split around different kinds of areas was more equal.

Almost a third of the sample (31%) lived in a rural area, a quarter (24%) in a small or middle-sized town, more than 2 in 10 in a suburb of a large town or city (22%) and a similar number in a large town or city (22%). The majority (86%) of the sample stated that they did not have a disability, while the most common disabilities were learning difficulties (2%), speech impairment (2%) and visual impairment (2%). The majority of the young people who responded to the survey described themselves as white Irish (87%) with the next largest ethnic or cultural background being white other (7%).

## Key findings

- › Only around half (46%) of surveyed young people had an understanding of the term “vocational education”.
- › Of those who were unclear about the meaning of “vocational education”, 21% said they didn’t know, and 5% understood it as being religious education to become a priest or nun.
- › Most of the young people (60%) surveyed planned to attend university or complete another academic qualification as their next course of study or work.
- › Of those planning to take an academic qualification next, half (47%) hadn’t considered a vocational qualification because it wasn’t relevant for the job or career they wanted.
- › Of those planning to take an academic qualification next, 31% did not consider vocational options because their parents would prefer them to have an academic qualification or attend university. This suggests that parents as well as young people may benefit from information about vocational options and how transferable they can be.

### 4.1 Context of vocational study routes in Ireland, and recent reform

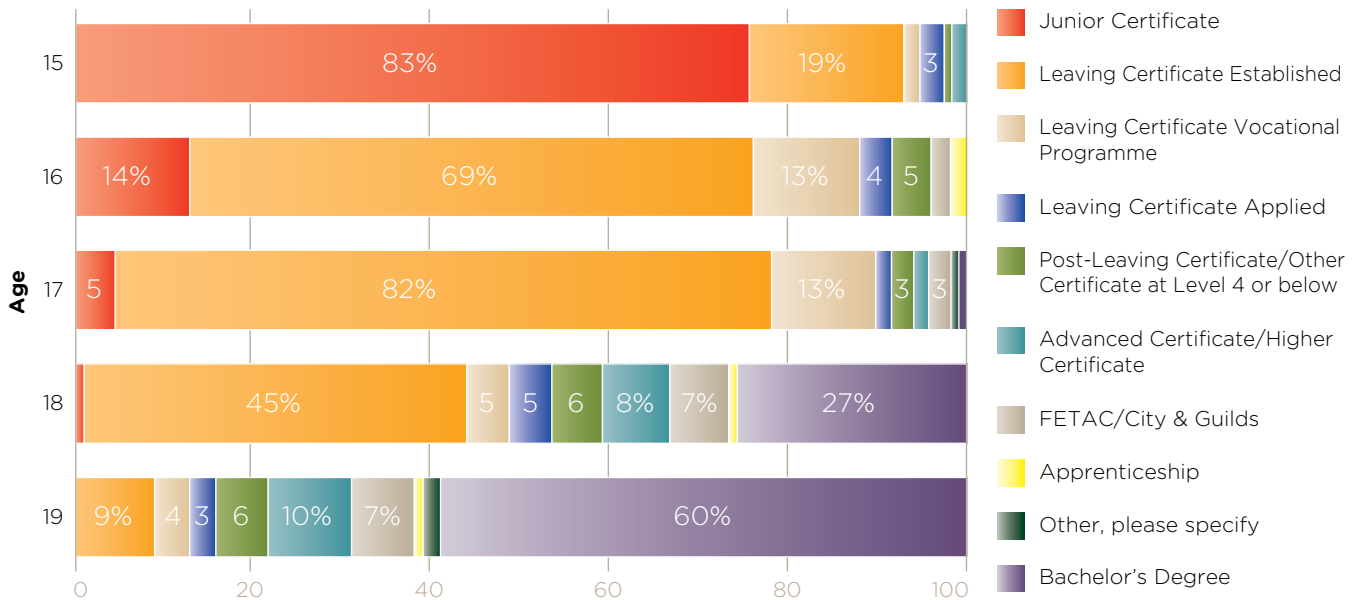
Findings from a previous survey conducted in the UK in 2011 by CSD showed that young people seeking options for vocational study found it particularly difficult to obtain relevant IAG, compared to those pursuing other study routes (Batterham & Levesley, 2011). In this literature review and survey we aimed to explore whether young people in Ireland face similar issues.

As young people in Ireland start their post-primary education, they are all initially on the same three-year study route, which is termed Junior Cycle. Starting typically at the age of 11 or 12, they study for Junior Certificate exams

in at least seven subjects, including English, Irish and maths. After obtaining their Junior Certificate, there is an optional Transition Year. The Transition Year gives a break from study to take part in volunteering, work experience or other enrichment activities, but is not offered by all schools, nor is it taken up by all young people.

Following junior school, at around the age of 15 or 16, most young people start Senior Cycle schooling (Cedefop, 2011). Previous research based on figures from 2010 found that 37% of senior school students in Ireland were enrolled in vocational education (European Commission, 2013). Among our survey respondents, the academic route is more dominant than this earlier figure might

**Figure 1: Q3. What qualification are you studying for? (Base: 486, all respondents in education or training.)**



suggest. As shown in Figure 1 (above), most Senior Cycle respondents pursue the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), which requires study of five academic subjects for two years. The next most popular route is the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). LCVP students similarly study five subjects but choose two vocational subjects and three academic subjects which must include a modern European language. Completion of the LCE or LCVP can qualify the young person for higher education in a university or technical institute, with most leavers going on to Bachelor's Degree courses. An alternative vocational route is the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (LCA). LCA students take a series of short vocational and general educational modules, to prepare for work or for further vocational study.

There are also vocational options available to young people after they leave senior school, although again the majority do not pursue these. Among 18- to 19-year-old students in our survey, 114 had left senior school,<sup>1</sup> of whom 42

were taking a vocational qualification. Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are one-year courses geared toward particular careers (eg hair and beauty, health and social care, construction), that blend general educational content with specific vocational training, including some work experience. Other vocational options include FETAC, City & Guilds and Advanced Certificates.

Interestingly, only four of the young people in our survey said they were on an apprenticeship. In Ireland, apprenticeships are limited to particular crafts (eg construction, mechanics), and require three to four years of training to complete (FÁS, n.d.; Cedefop, 2013). As this type of training route only applies to some careers, it is perhaps not surprising that there are few apprentices. Research also indicates that apprenticeship starts have fallen compared to several years ago, due to a recent fall in employment and training in the construction sector in Ireland (Cedefop, 2011). Apprenticeships are the most established work-based training route in Ireland, but the limited

<sup>1</sup> We did not ask specifically if they had left senior school, however 17 to 18 is the typical school-leaving age, so we surmise that the 114 young people aged 17 to 18 who are not on a Leaving Certificate Programme have left senior school.

<sup>2</sup> We did not ask the young people who were not studying what level of qualification they had obtained. Two people in this group were aged 16. All others were aged 17 to 19.

sectors in which they are available restrict access. Increasing young people's participation in vocational education could be increased by expanding apprenticeships to a wider range of careers (Kis, 2010). The OECD (*ibid.*) has found that some employers see the lack of in-company training as a weakness of PLC courses, which more young people participate in.

Our survey also does not explore the views of young people who do not continue in education, as few respondents were not in some form of education. Young people who were not studying were only 4% of our sample, and most were aged 17 to 19, so may have completed senior school.<sup>2</sup> Other research in Ireland highlights the importance of reaching out to this group, as young people who do not continue their education post 16 are far less likely to be in secure employment (Citizens Information Board, 2013).<sup>3</sup> The rate of early school leaving in Ireland has been falling, and stood at a rate of 10.6% among 18 to 24 year olds in 2011, compared to 14.6% in 2002 (Ireland CSO, 2012).<sup>4</sup> The Government supports community-based training for early school leavers (FÁS, n.d.).

#### 4.1.1 Reforms to vocational education

In Ireland currently, Vocational Education Committees (VECs) are the main promoters of school-based vocational studies. There are 33 of these committees across the country. In a major reform for 2013, these are being restructured into 16 local education and training boards (Cedefop, 2013).

A coordinating agency funds further education and other employment centre-based provision such as YouthReach (training for early school leavers). The coordinating agency is currently known as FÁS, but in October 2013 will be replaced by a new agency, SOLAS (*ibid.*).

## 4.2 Perceptions of vocational education

#### 4.2.1 Awareness of vocational education

CSD's previous research in the UK found that 72% of young people had heard of the term "vocational education", but that out of these, almost a quarter were unsure of what it means (Batterham & Levesley, 2011). To find out how young people in Ireland perceive vocational education, we asked them what they think vocational education means. We then categorised their responses according to the main definitions given in each comment.

<sup>3</sup> In 2011, 18 to 24 year olds who had no qualifications above a Junior Certificate showed an unemployment rate of 63%, compared to 30% among 18 to 24 year olds as a whole (Ireland CSO, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> The early school-leaving rate is measured by the percentage of 18 to 24 year olds not in education or training and with no qualifications above Junior Certificate level (Ireland CSO, 2012).

Figure 2 shows that, similar to the UK research, almost a quarter (24%) of young people did not know what vocational education means. This statistic includes respondents who provided common online definitions, indicating that they looked it up rather than giving their own answer.

Turning to young people who gave their own definition, more than a quarter (29%) recognised that it involves being educated for work. Others mentioned practical, manual or technical learning (9%). Some mentioned being trained in a specific job or skill (5%), and some said that it means being educated toward future goals in work or in life (3%). Taking these responses all together, just under half (46%) of the young people we surveyed had an understanding of vocational education, or were able to give a clear example of it. These responses are shown in Figure 2.

Looking at the remainder of responses, 14% named a type of educational provision, such as “free education”, “secondary school”, “going to the tech!”, “adult education”, “learning outside of school”. This is not the same as giving an example of what vocational education involves or leads to. Others gave a value judgment, eg that they think vocational education is good or bad, more enjoyable or less formal. The word vocational was also quite commonly misunderstood, as 5% thought it is to do with religious vocations (such as being a priest or a nun), while 3% thought that it is to do with being vocal or learning about vocabulary.

Considering the responses we have broadly categorised as showing understanding of vocational education,

young people seemed to have the impression that vocational education is very specific in its scope or focus. There were 56 mentions of the word “specific” or “particular” in the young people’s comments. These comments often suggested that vocational education involves training with a specific job in mind, eg:

*“Education that prepares someone for specific work like a pharmacist.”*

**Girl, 17, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

*“A detailed level of education preparing students for the skills needed for their job of choice.”*

**Girl, 17, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

These young people seem to expect a career plan as a prerequisite for vocational education. One young person even defined vocational education as:

*“Going into a job which you intend to spend the rest of your life carrying out.”*

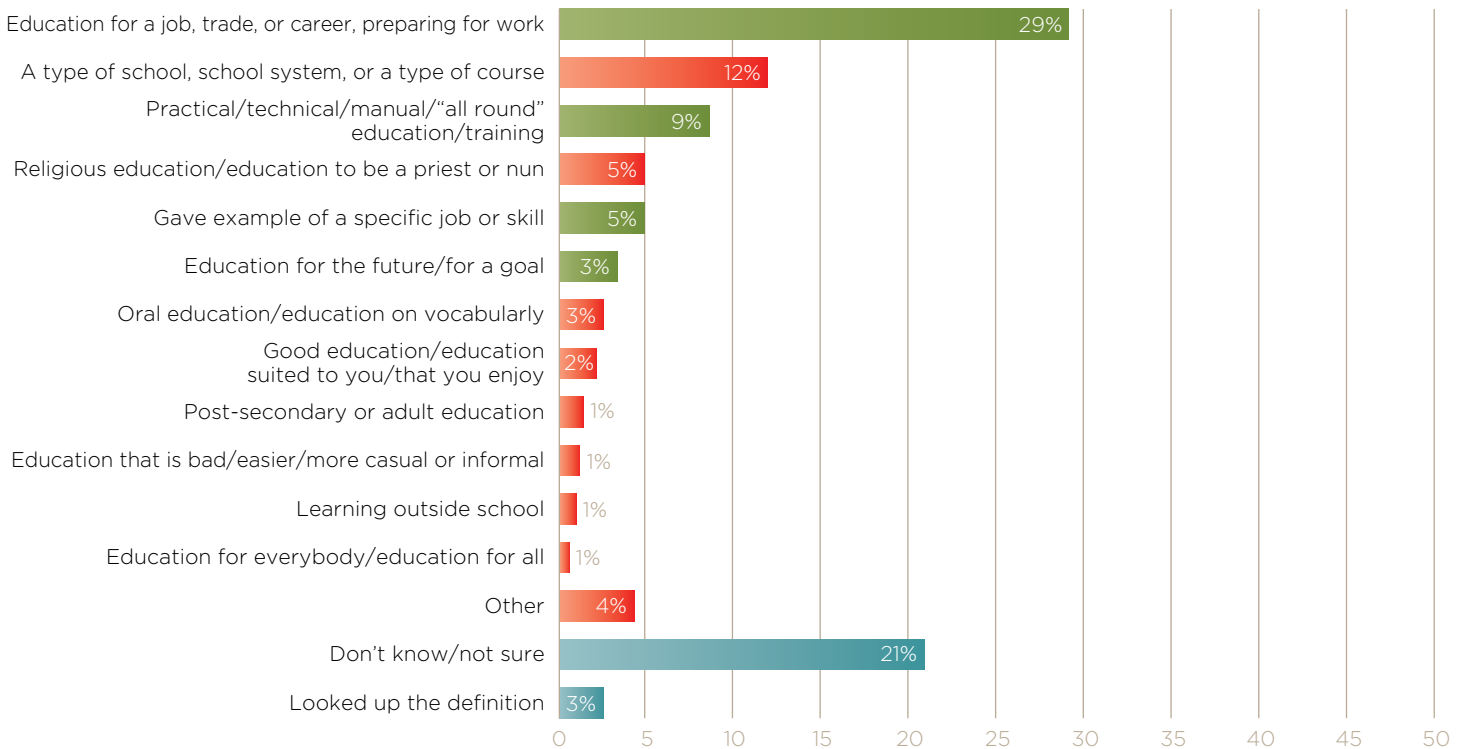
**Boy, 19, studying for a Bachelor’s Degree.**

This is similar to findings in our previous, UK research (Batterham & Levesley, 2011), which found that young people saw vocational education as setting them on the path of a particular career. Some young people may be put off by this as they see vocational education as limiting their options, others see it as positive and as indicating a more certain future.

Some respondents saw vocational education as less specific, but also as something positive. For example some saw vocational education as a first step, with decisions to be made along the way, eg:



**Figure 2: Q4. What do you think the phrase “vocational” means? Please give an example if you can think of one. (Base: 508.)**



*“[Vocational education] gives you an education from which you can then choose to [go] further if you want to.”*

**Boy, 17, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

Others indicated that while they thought vocational education leads to a specific career path, it involves broader study options, for example:

*“It means studying subjects related to the career you want when you leave school, eg taking science subjects when you want to be a doctor.”*

**Boy, 17, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

These respondents seem to see vocational education as encompassing any type of education (academic or

technical) as long as the subject is relevant in preparing someone for a career.

Finally, some of the young people did not see vocational education as linked to a career route, and instead perceived it as preparation for working life in a broader sense, or as preparation for life in general. For example:

*“[It means] studying more practical subjects for the purpose of gaining skills for the working environment.”*

**Girl, 19, studying for a Bachelor’s Degree.**

*“[Vocational education] deals with requirements needed [in the] country and [a] person’s ability to achieve results not just academic but practical.”*

**Girl, 18, studying for a Higher Certificate.**

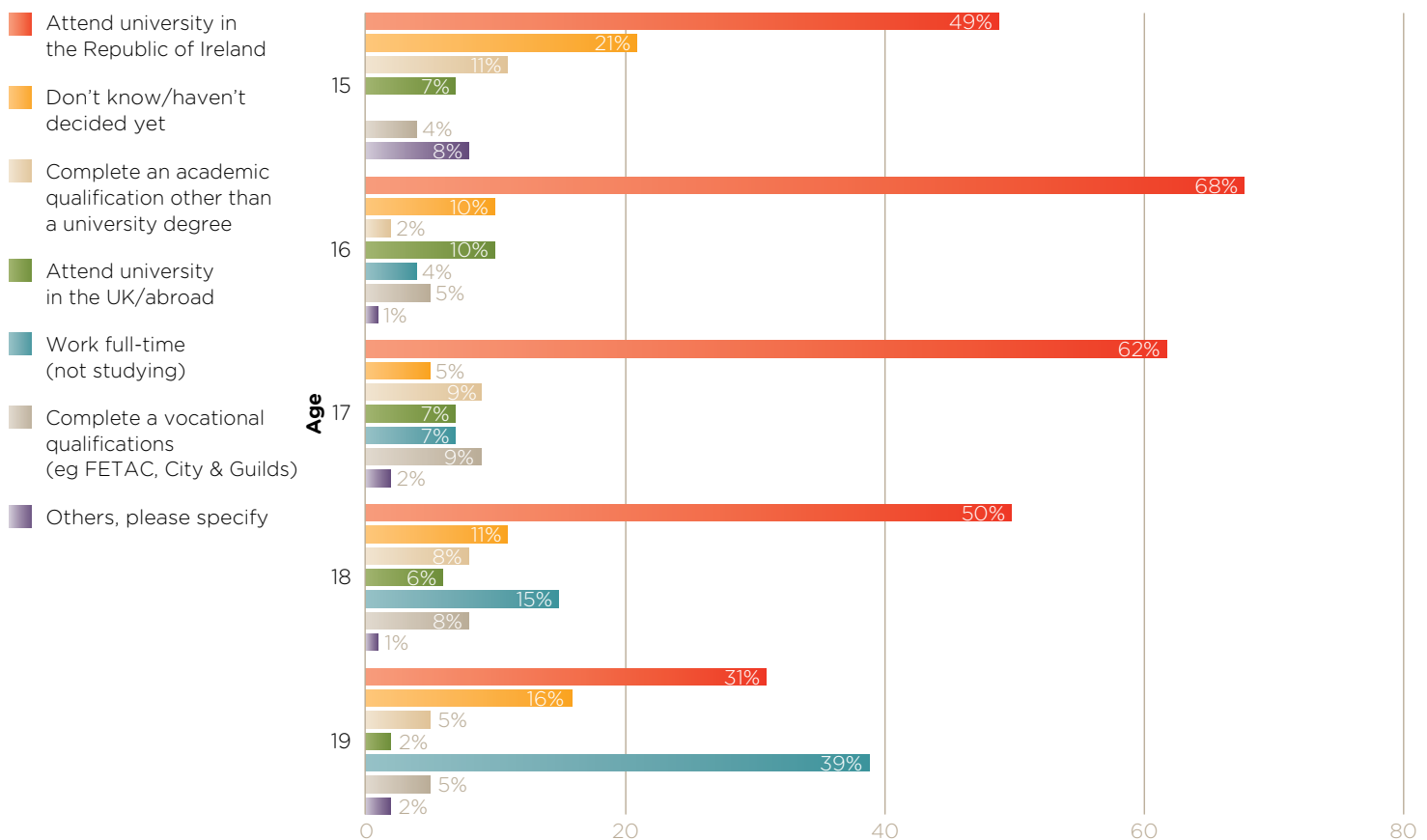
### 4.2.2 Consideration of vocational options

Our findings on awareness of vocational education suggest that about half of young people do not know very much about it. In Figures 3 to 5 below it is also clear that a lot of young people do not perceive vocational options as relevant in the near future. Our survey found that with regard to their immediate future after their current qualification, about 6% of young people plan to study a vocational course. In contrast, two-thirds (66%) plan to take an academic route.<sup>5</sup>

In Figure 3, it is clear that young people commonly expect to attend university. It is only among 18 to 19 year olds (many of whom are on degree courses) that it is more typical to aim for full-time work.

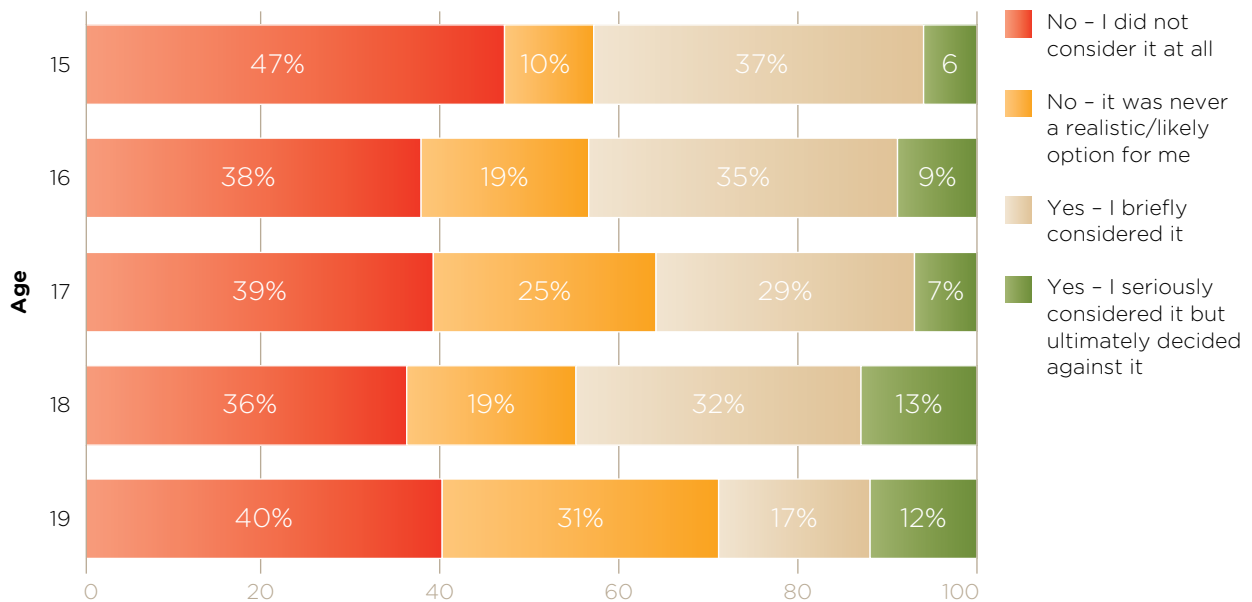
It is also worth noting that a large minority of the young people surveyed do not know what they are going to do next. Among 15 year olds, 21% said they didn't know or hadn't decided yet, and among 19 year olds, 16% gave the same answer.

**Figure 3: Q5. What are your plans for the immediate future after you finish your current course/ programme? (Base: 486, all respondents who are in school or training.)**

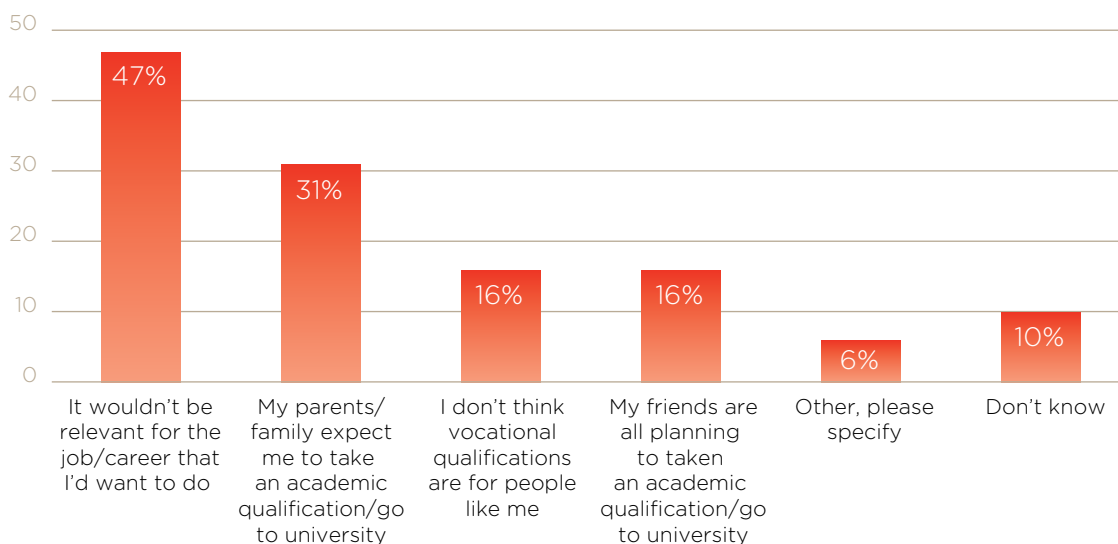


<sup>5</sup> Sum of all those who plan to attend university in Ireland or in the UK/abroad and those who plan to complete an academic qualification other than a university degree.

**Figure 4: Q6. When choosing what to do next, did you consider taking a vocational qualification at all? (Base: 323 respondents in school or training and likely to take an academic qualification.)**



**Figure 5: Q7. You said that you didn't really consider a vocational qualification when choosing what to do next. What were the main reasons for this? (Participants could choose multiple options.) (Base: 293 respondents in school or training, likely to take an academic qualification.)**

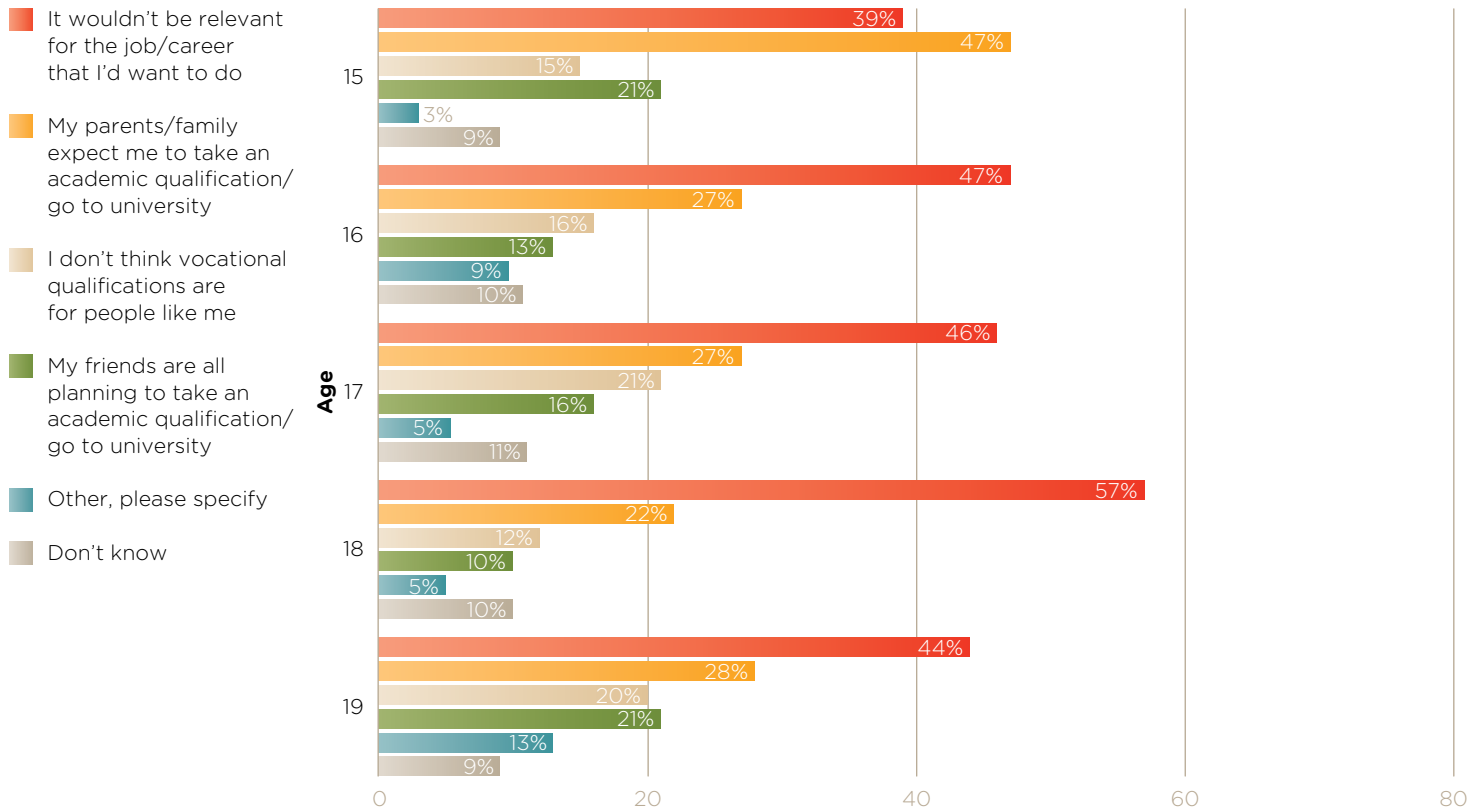


From Figure 4 above, we can also see that more than half (60%) of the young people pursuing an academic route – ie aiming to attend university, or to complete an academic qualification – either did not consider taking a vocational<sup>6</sup> qualification at all, or did not consider it a realistic or likely option.

Figure 5 above indicates that career interests were the most common reason that young people gave for not considering vocational education options: 47% thought that vocational qualifications would not be relevant for the job or career that they want to do. This may partly be

<sup>6</sup> In Q6, the term “vocational education” was explained prior to the question, to ensure all young people had a minimum level of understanding, and were able to interpret the question in the same way. The full text of the survey can be found in the Technical Report.

**Figure 6: Q7. You said that you didn't really consider a vocational qualification when choosing what to do next. What were the main reasons for this? (Participants were allowed to select multiple options.) (Base: 293.)**



due to a common view that vocational education is highly specific, in comments discussed in Section 4.2.1. Although there were contrasting views expressed, it was often the case that young people saw vocational education as preparation for a specific career, rather than seeing it as a route that opens up access to a range of careers.

Figure 5 also shows that 31% of the young people did not consider vocational options because their parents would

prefer them to have an academic qualification or attend university, while 16% were influenced by friends taking an academic route. It may be that young people and their parents are not aware that vocational qualifications can lead to university, even though Ireland's education system does have this flexibility.<sup>7</sup> Figure 6 suggests that parental expectations are more important for the 15 year olds than for older young people.

<sup>7</sup> As discussed at Figure 1, students studying for the LCVP take vocational and academic subjects, and can qualify directly for degree level courses. Students who take an LCA vocational route can also access higher level courses over the longer term, either by progressing through the levels of vocational certificates they achieve, or by demonstrating a high level of work-based experience relevant to a university course.

# Information, advice and guidance

# 5

## Key findings

- › Most young people surveyed (90%) had received IAG from their school or college, with older respondents being more likely to have received IAG.
- › More young people received IAG at the end of the Junior Cycle (aged 15 or 16) than any other age.
- › Young people felt they should receive IAG earlier, with 44% saying IAG should be provided before the age of 13.
- › Parents were the most popular source of IAG, and the most trusted. School careers guidance counsellors were the second most used and trusted, followed by online sources.
- › Parents were also the role model that young people selected most (44%), closely followed by other family members (32%).

## 5.1 IAG in Ireland

Ireland's 1998 Education Act instructs schools to "ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices" (Darbey, n.d.), using the resources that are available to them. Schools therefore have a legal duty to provide the service. Guidance counselling is also a recognised profession in Ireland, with a longstanding professional association – The Institute of Guidance Counsellors. On the other hand, previous research suggests that guidance in Ireland's post-primary schools is already of varied quality. Schools manage their provision in different ways, and in a lot of schools, teachers take counselling on as a part-time role (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2012; Hayes & Morgan, 2011). Students also seek counselling for a wide range of different concerns. A 2011 paper highlights the variability of guidance provision:

"There was variation between guidance counsellors with regard to the number of students they saw for counselling, the number of counselling sessions and the percentage of time that they spent on prevention, crisis or individual counselling. Schools differed in terms of the number of guidance counsellors they had, the hours they had available, and the emphasis they placed on the counselling aspect of the role."

**(Hayes & Morgan, 2011)**

This paper also highlights other aspects of the guidance counsellor's role that are not to do with IAG on careers, and that may compete for the counsellor's time.

"Students come to them for counselling on a wide range of issues [including]: Family concerns[,] Peer issues such as bullying[,] concerns about exams, teachers and future career, and issues to do with the self [eg suicidal thoughts, aggression, self-harm]."

**(ibid.)**

With regard to careers guidance in Ireland, it may also not be based on an up-to-date understanding of jobs or the job market for young people. An OECD review of “Learning for Jobs” in Ireland, published in 2010, notes a tendency for school counsellors to ignore job market information, and to focus more on students’ psychological development and preferences (Kis, 2010).

From this year onwards, reforms to school funding in Ireland may also affect the quantity and quality of careers guidance provided in schools. The Government has recently changed the funding criteria for IAG, the result of which will be that more schools pay for careers guidance from their teaching budget (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2012).

## 5.2 Accessibility and availability of IAG

### 5.2.1 IAG provision

Our survey suggests that the vast majority of 15 to 19 year olds (90% of respondents) have received IAG through their school or college during their education. This indicates that almost all young people receive IAG from their school or college, despite changes to funding for careers education in the Republic of Ireland. However, 19% of the 15-year-old young people surveyed reported receiving no guidance, compared to only 5% of the 19 year olds, as shown in Figure 7 below. At 15 most young people are starting or completing their final year of Junior Cycle, and choosing options for senior school study. Among those currently

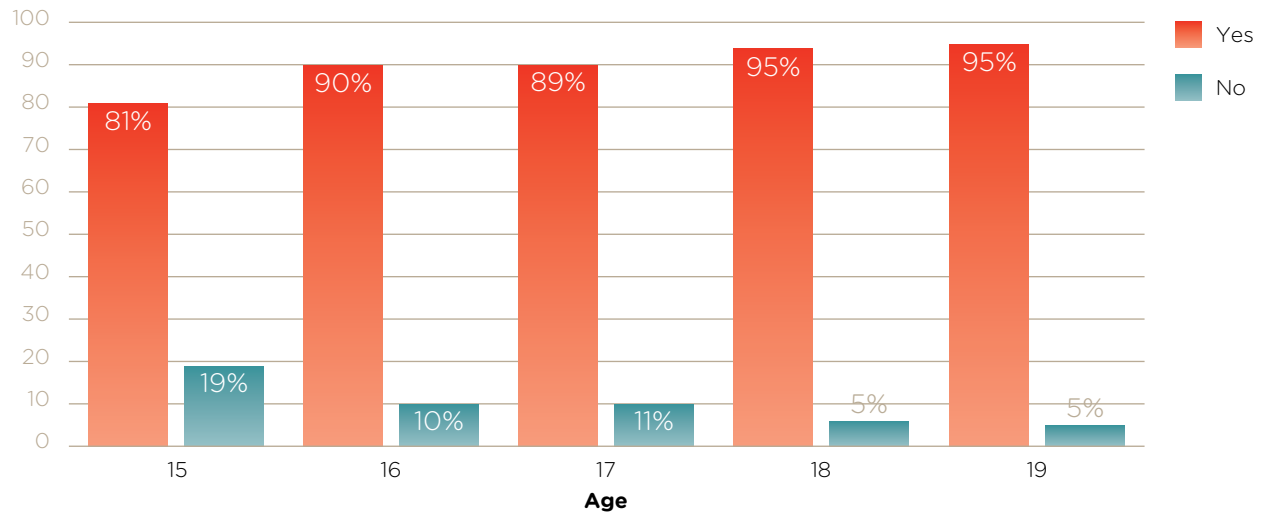
studying at a senior school almost all (88%) of respondents had received IAG, suggesting that IAG is available in the vast majority of second level provision, which is attended by young people aged 15 or over.

The age at which young people receive IAG can be crucial to the formation of their plans for future study and work. Figure 8 shows that, in general, the older the respondent, the later they recall receiving IAG.

Looking at our survey results overall, most young people recall IAG starting at the end of Junior Cycle. However, among 15 year olds who had received IAG, half (50%) of respondents reported receiving IAG in the middle of the Junior Cycle and most of them (71%) recall it starting before their final year of Junior Cycle. In contrast, among 16 year olds and upwards, “at the end of Junior Cycle” was the most common choice. In particular, less than 1 in 5 19 year olds (18%) reported receiving IAG in the middle of the Junior Cycle, with more than half (52%) stating that they received IAG at the end of the Junior Cycle. This suggests that the majority of IAG takes place towards the end of the Junior Cycle at the ages of 15 and 16, and helps young people in Ireland make decisions about the kind of Leaving Certificate or other qualification (or indeed work) they will pursue at the second level.

Our survey asked when respondents thought young people should start receiving IAG, and their responses suggest that they think young people would benefit from an earlier intervention.

**Figure 7: Q8. When you were at school or college did you receive any information, advice and guidance about your future study options and career options? (Base: 508.)**



**Figure 8: Q9. At roughly what age did you first receive information, advice and guidance about your future study options and career options? (Base: 458.)**

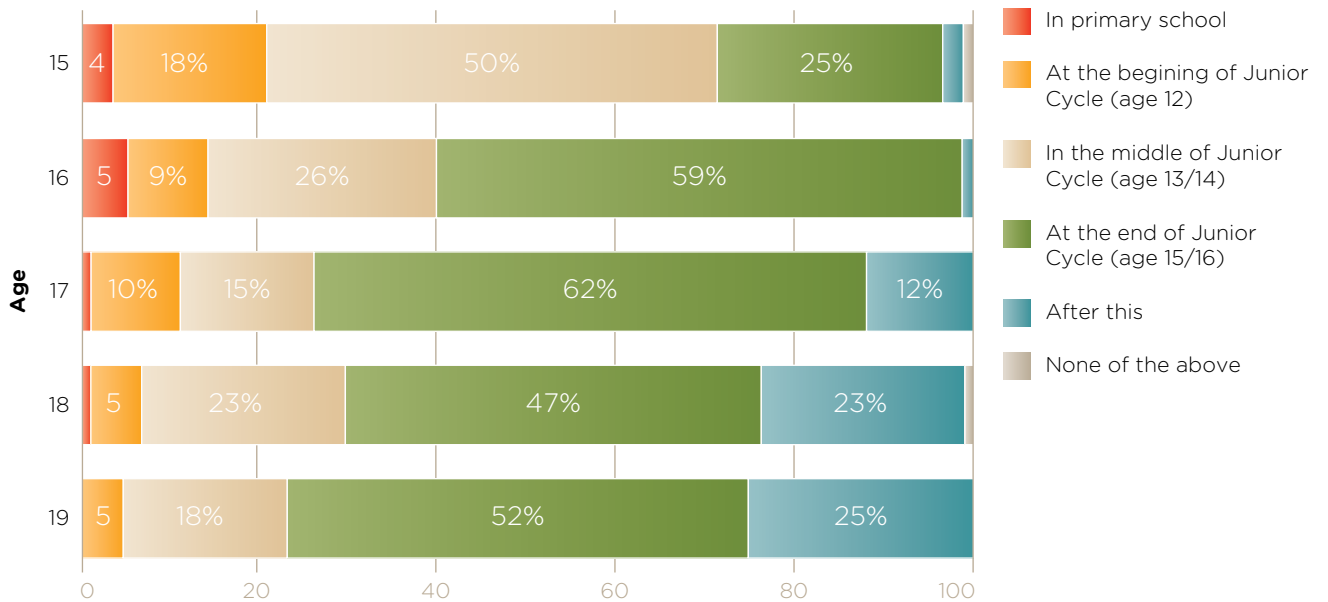


Figure 9 shows that more than 4 in 10 (44%) of the respondents felt that IAG in Ireland should be provided before the age of 13. Less than a third (28%) thought that IAG should be received by young people aged 15 or over. Among those aged 15 to 17 receiving IAG aged 12 was most popular, while those aged 18 or 19 most frequently chose the middle of the Junior Cycle as the best time to receive IAG.

### 5.2.2 Sources of IAG

Our survey asked about the sources of IAG that young people use, and the ones that they trust. In a question in which young people were asked to select all the sources of IAG they had used from a list, nearly two-thirds of young people (59%) reported using their parents as a source of IAG, making parents the most popular source of IAG. More than half

of young people (53%) used their school careers guidance counsellor as a source of IAG, and nearly half (48%) selected the internet as a source.

Turning to those sources of IAG that were most trusted by young people, our survey suggested that parents were the most trusted source of IAG, with more than a third of young people (37%) opting to trust their parents above other sources. The second most trusted source of IAG was the school/college careers guidance counsellor, cited by a quarter (25%) of young people, while the third most trusted source was the internet, mentioned in nearly 2 in 10 responses (17%). Those respondents aged 15 and 16 place greater trust on the advice provided by their parents (46%) than those aged 18 and over (31%).

**Figure 9: Q10. At what age do you think you people should start to receive information, advice and guidance about future study options and career options? (Base: 508.)**

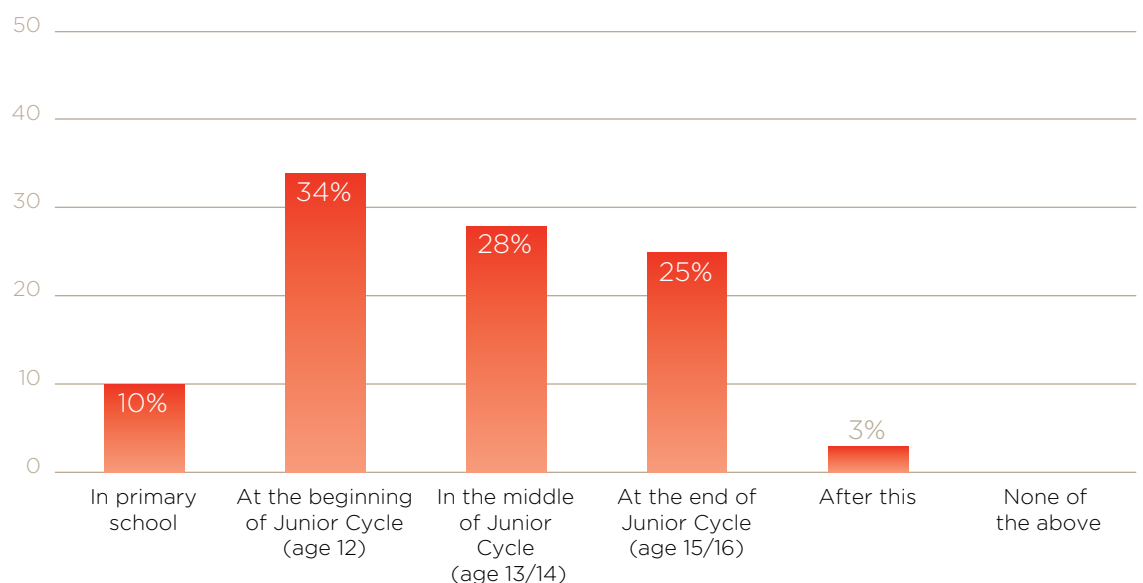
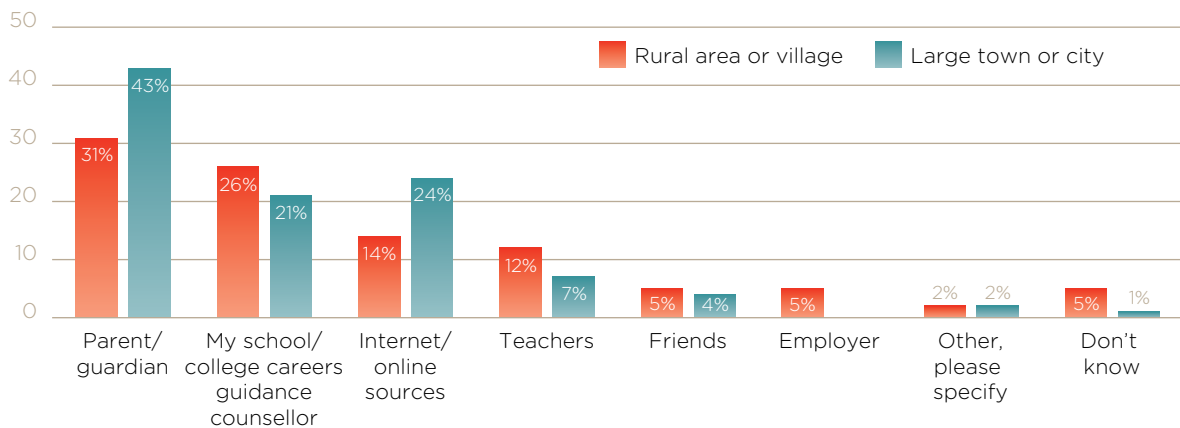




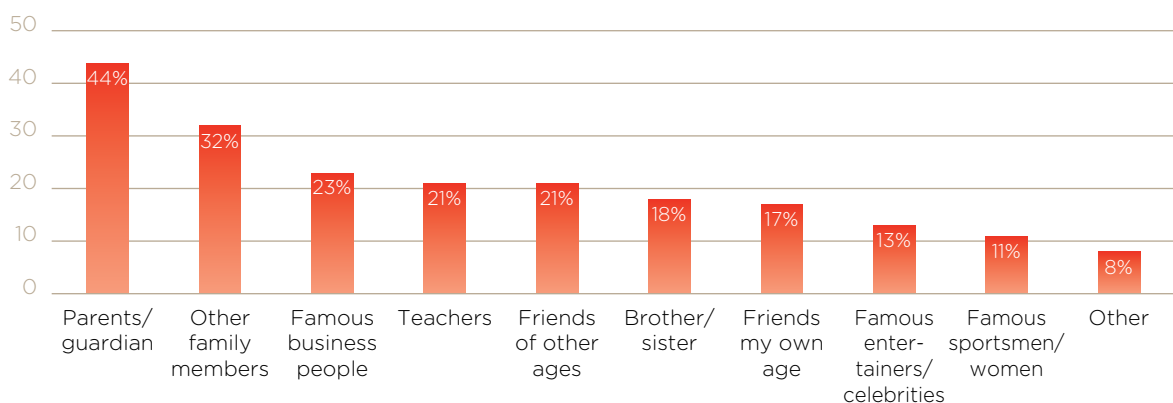
Figure 10 shows differences in the sources of IAG trusted by those young people from a rural area or village, and those from a large town or city. In rural areas, young people placed a lot of trust in school/college careers guidance counsellors and teachers, compared to young people living in large towns or cities who more commonly trusted online sources.

We also asked the young people about their role models, as these may have an influence on career ambitions. Figure 11 shows once again that most young people look to their parents/guardians (44%) or to other family members (32%). Famous entertainers or sportspeople were a much less popular choice (13% and 11% respectively), although famous business people were held in high esteem (23%).

**Figure 10: Q12. When you were deciding on your next course of study or work, which sources of information, advice or guidance did you trust the most? (Base: 272 who lived in Rural area or Large town/city)**



**Figure 11: Q21. When thinking about your future career path, who do you tend to look to as a role model? (Base: 508.)**



# 6

## Online sources of IAG

### Key findings

- › College or school websites are the most commonly used source of online IAG (used by 56%), particularly for those young people seeking to complete a vocational qualification as their next course of study or work (75%).
- › While young people commonly use the internet for IAG (83%), they are less likely to use social media for IAG (48%). Their propensity to use social media to contact companies about careers (8%) is particularly low.
- › Young people do, however, use social media to exchange information with friends about careers (28%).
- › Young people in rural areas appear less likely to use social media in general than young people in large towns or cities.

### 6.1 Context for online IAG in Ireland

Internet use has grown dramatically in Ireland over the past 10 years. Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) data indicates that in 2003, only 39% of young people aged 16 to 24 in Ireland reported having used the internet in the preceding three months. In comparison, in 2012, 90% of 16 to 24 year olds reported that they go online on at least a weekly basis, and 93% reported doing so within the preceding three months (Quarterly National Household Survey, 2003-2012).<sup>8</sup> QNHS data from 2011 also shows that young people's participation in online social networking is quite high, at 79% of the age group, and that social media usage does not seem to differ between young people with different levels of education (*ibid.*, 2011).

Communication is the most common reason for using the internet. In 2008, 90% of 16 to 24 year olds indicated that they used it for this purpose (*ibid.*, 2008).

Young people also use the internet to seek information, but this seems to be less common: the QNHS in 2012 found that 30% of 16 to 24 year olds had sought information on "public authority websites" in the preceding 12 months. In 2011 the QNHS asked specifically about job search or application activities, and found that one-third (34%) of 16 to 24 year olds were using online sources for this.

A review of vocational education and training in Ireland by the OECD, completed in 2010, identified online careers information as a particular weakness (Kis, 2010). The report highlighted the fragmented nature of online career guidance, with several websites available

<sup>8</sup> Data from 15,600 households.

each covering only some elements of the full range of vocational education options. The report also references a previous study undertaken in 2006, which found that between 40% and 60% of young people had never heard of the most high profile careers guidance websites, which at the time consisted of Qualifax, Career World, Career Directions, and www.school.ie.

## 6.2 Use of online IAG

### 6.2.1 Sources of online IAG

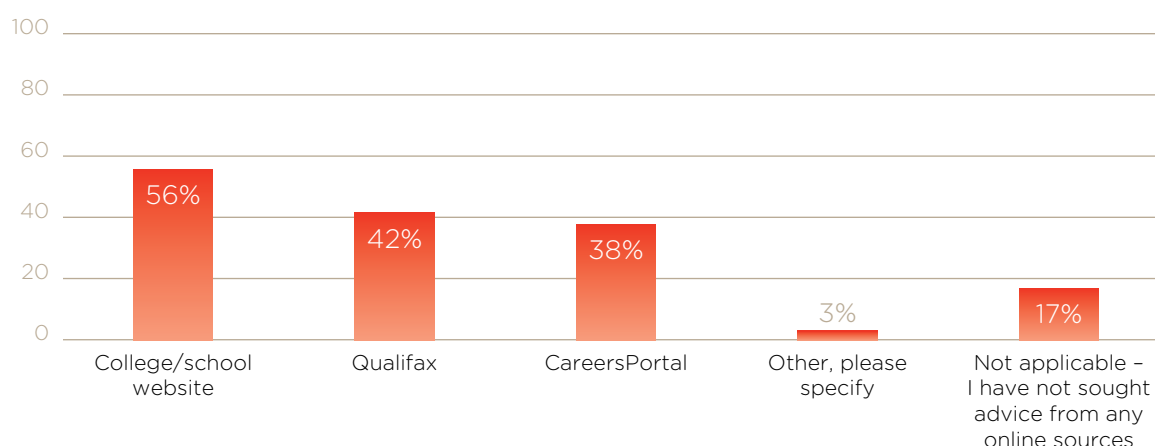
Our survey shows that although most young people (83%) use online IAG (Q13, Figure 12 below), not all of them have found it useful. While nearly half (48%) of the young people in our sample selected online IAG as one of their top three most

used sources of IAG (Q11, Section 5.2 above), only 17% selected online IAG as their most trustworthy source of IAG (Q12, Figure 10 above). This suggests that most young people use online IAG, around half find it useful, but only a minority of young people trust online IAG more than other sources such as parents and teachers.

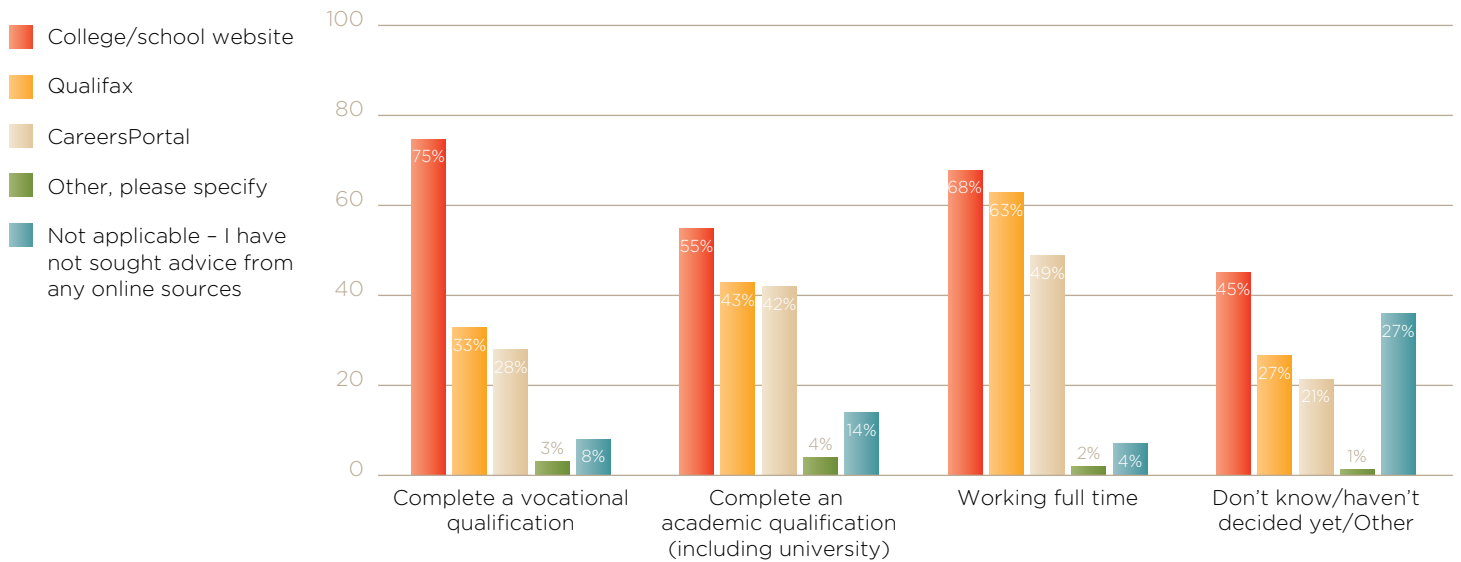
Figure 12 below shows that 83% of young people surveyed had used the internet for IAG, and that only 17% had not sought advice from any online sources.

The most useful online source was the college/school website, which was used by more than half of the young people (56%). Qualifax and CareersPortal were both used by around 4 in 10 of the young people (42% and 38% respectively).

**Figure 12: Q13. When looking for advice or guidance about further study or career options, which, if any, of the following online sources have you used? (Base: 508.)**



**Figure 13: Q13. When looking for advice or guidance about further study or career options, which, if any, of the following online sources have you used? Analysed by responses to Q5, “What are your plans for the immediate future after you finish your current course/programme?” (Base: 508.)**



The analysis in Figure 13 above suggests that young people seeking to complete a vocational qualification or work full time were more likely to use their college/school website as a source of IAG, compared to young people seeking to complete an academic qualification.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, those looking to complete an academic qualification were more likely to use both Qualifax and CareersPortal than those looking to complete a vocational qualification. This may be because Qualifax and CareersPortal cater more to those who want to complete academic qualifications, or because the specific school/college website is more relevant to those young people seeking to complete a vocational qualification. Young people who didn't know what their next course of study or work would

be, or who hadn't decided yet, were less likely to seek advice from online sources.

### 6.2.2 Social media and IAG

As internet use in Ireland has grown, there have been discussions about how young people's time on the internet can be put to good use (O'Neill & Dinh, 2012). The use of social network sites such as Facebook and Myspace is an important part of that discussion. Social media is becoming an important and public way to communicate with the wider world, and stories in the Irish media show some incidents in which people have underestimated this, with consequences for their education and careers. For example, in March 2013, 28 students at a Limerick school were suspended from school for the

<sup>9</sup> Please note the differing size of these groups: base for “complete a vocational qualification” is 29, base for “complete an academic qualification” is 323, base for “working full time” is 59, base for “don't know/haven't decided yet/other” is 75.

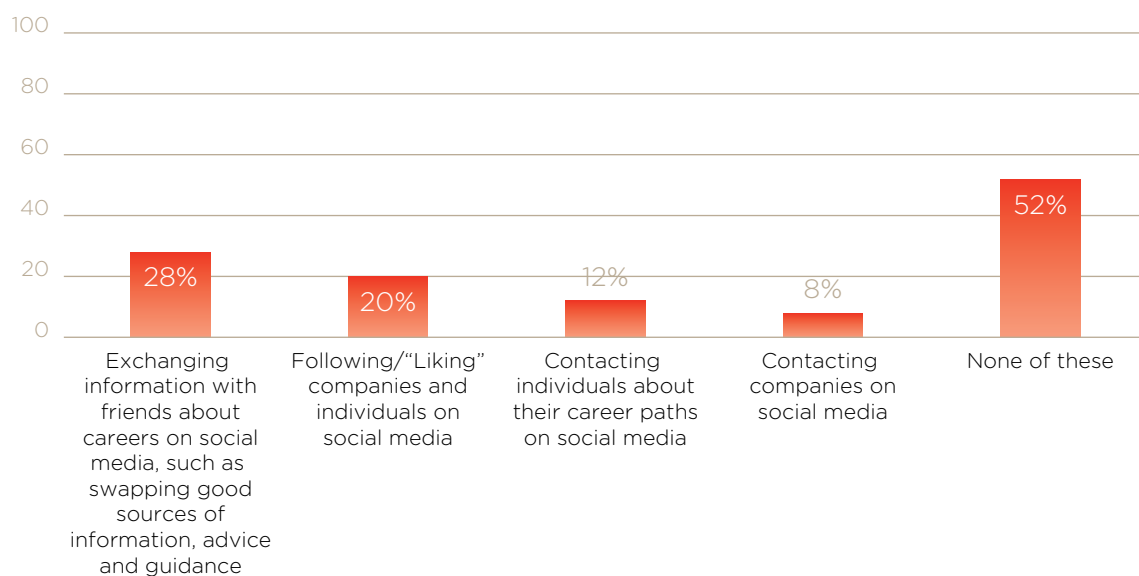
content of a comment about a teacher on Facebook (Irish Independent, 2013), and in 2011 a woman in Cork was suspended from an insurance firm for a comment she posted about her boss on her Facebook page (McCárthaigh, 2011).

With regard to IAG, there are suggestions that young people do not primarily use online social networking to find IAG on careers. For example a YouthNet survey in 2011 found that although young people often “passively” gather information from the internet as part of their studies (as an additional source of reading), they do not commonly seek information “actively” by asking questions or seeking information on discussion forums (Di Antonio, 2011). As might be expected from this prior

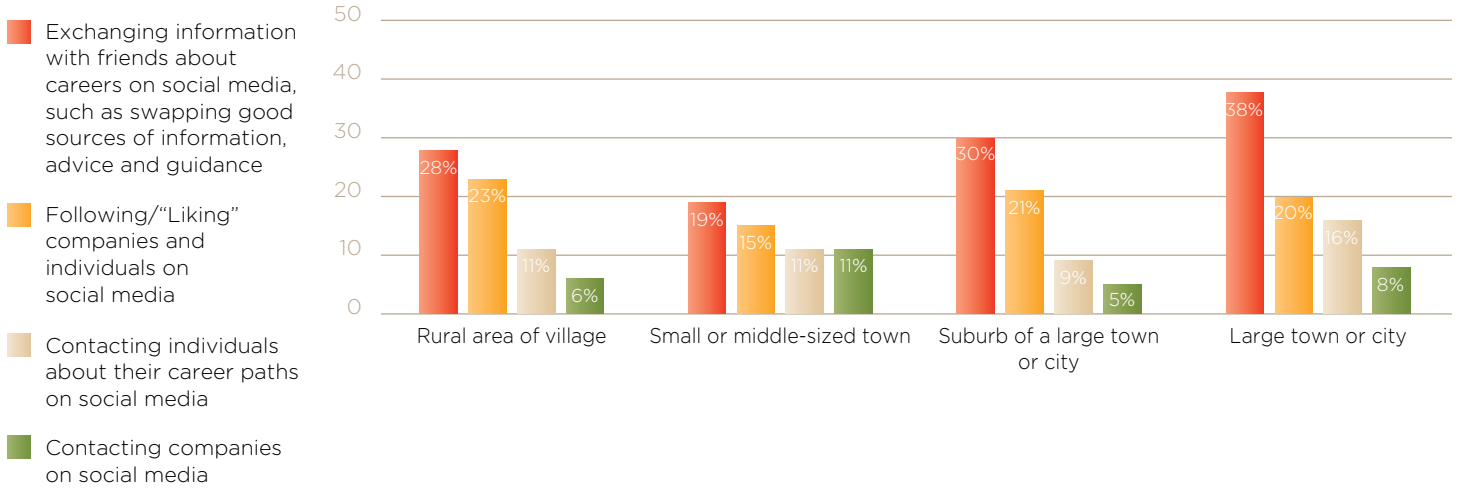
research, our survey finds that when asked about their use of social media, over half of the young people we surveyed (52%) stated that they did not use social media in the ways suggested to get IAG about careers (shown in Figure 14, below).

Of the young people in our survey who said that they do use social media as a source of IAG, the most popular option was exchanging information with friends about careers (28% of the total). Only a minority of the young people had contacted companies (8%) or individuals about career paths (12%) through social media, although 20% reported using social media to follow or “like” companies and individuals.

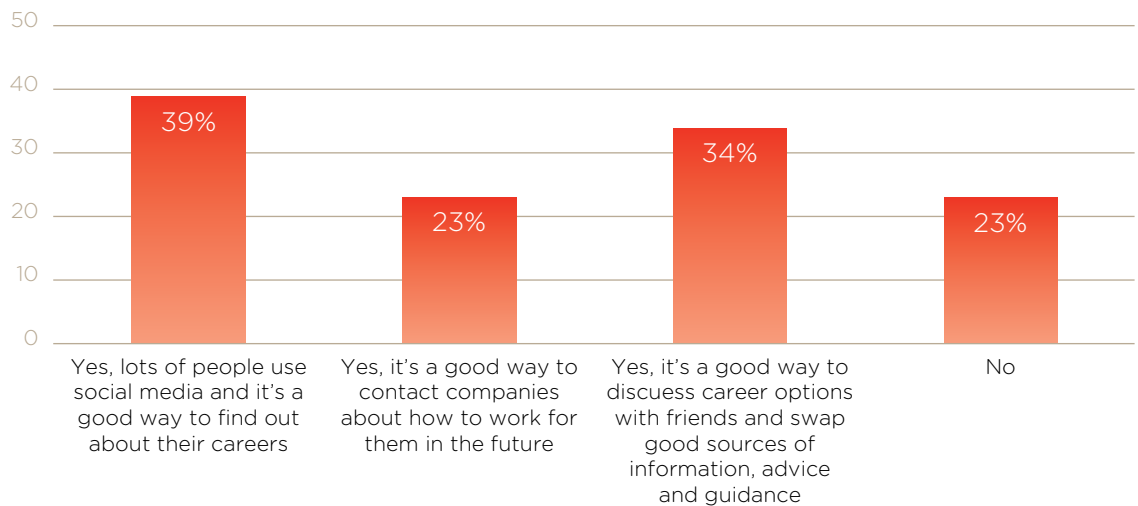
**Figure 14: Q15. Have you used social media in any of the following ways to get information, advice and guidance about careers? (Base: 508.)**



**Figure 15: Q15. Have you used social media in any of the following ways to get information, advice and guidance about careers? Analysed by Q3b, "Would you say that you live in a...?" (Base: 506.)**



**Figure 16: Q16. Do you think social media is generally a good way to get information, advice and guidance about careers? (Base: 508.)**



In Chapter 5, we found that young people in rural areas place greater trust in online sources. Given this, it is interesting to note in Figure 15 above that young people in small towns and rural areas do not exchange careers information with friends online to quite the same extent as young people in a large town or city.

Figure 16 shows that, when asked about whether they thought social media was a good source of IAG, nearly a quarter of the young people surveyed said no (23%), while more than three-quarters said yes (77%). Two-fifths (39%) felt that social media is a good way to find out about the career paths of others, while 34% said it is a good way to discuss career

options with friends. Less than a quarter (23%) of the young people who responded feel that social media is a good way to contact employers.

With regard to social media and IAG, it is worth considering potential ways that use of social media can improve young people's insight into careers. Future research might also explore how employers want to communicate via social media. If they are mostly interested in providing information to young people, then social media could be useful, but if they want to engage with young people through social media, guidance on how young people would interpret this may be helpful.

# Information, advice and guidance for vocational routes



## Key findings

- › Young people most commonly felt that it was easier to find out about an academic route of study than a vocational route, with 39% giving this response, compared to 24% who thought it was equally easy to find out about both routes.
- › Most of the young people said that this was because they did not ask for information about vocational routes, either because they wanted to pursue an academic option (37%), or because they already had a clear idea of what they wanted to do (31%).
- › Young people typically saw vocational education as less challenging and less prestigious than academic education. For example, 32% saw it as a route for the less able, and 26% saw vocational education as a low status option.

## 7.1 Information on vocational routes

Comments that we received in response to question 22 (“In an ideal world, are there any changes you would make to the information, advice and guidance given to young people?”), and question 23 (“Do you have any further comments?”) suggest that some young people felt that IAG provided in school was geared primarily toward academic routes and university study, and that the vocational route was less often a focus.

For example, this respondent said that he knows that he wants to be an electrician, but that IAG providers had not tailored their advice to his interests. He also said he would like to be told more about apprenticeships:

*“I think you should be told more about apprenticeships. I have only been told about going to uni. I like construction and mechanical engineering but I get told to be a teacher. I want to be an electrician.”*

**Boy, 16, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

Another respondent had a similar view, adding that apprenticeships were not only difficult to find out about at school, but that it was also difficult to find information when researching them. This might suggest an issue with online IAG about apprenticeships, which is perhaps not tailored with young people in mind.

*“I would have liked to have had more information about apprenticeships at school. When I did try to research it I found very little information available.”*

**Boy, 17, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

Similar to the comment about becoming an electrician, above, some young people also felt that certain career paths were neglected.

*“I feel in school there is little encouragement to become a cook or a carpenter.”*

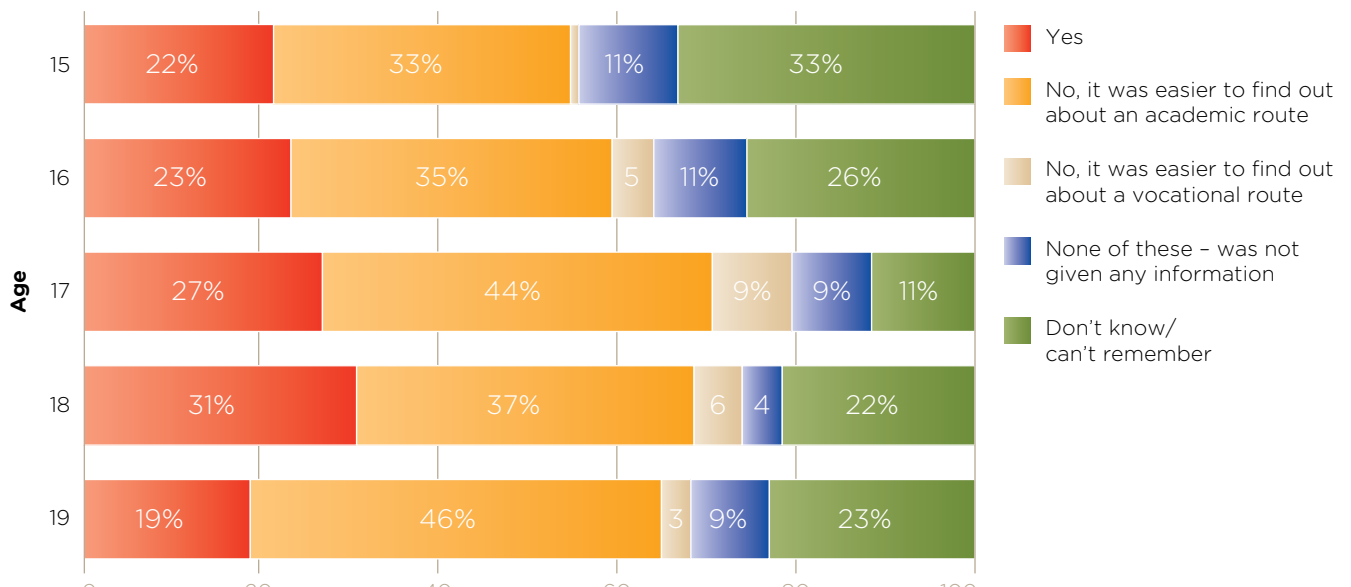
**Girl, 15, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

Our survey results back up these comments to some extent, as they show that, broadly speaking, young people find it easier to find out about academic routes compared to vocational routes. Across all age groups, only 24% of young people thought they had received the same level of information for vocational and for academic routes, and only 5% thought it was easier to find out about a vocational route. In Figure 17, we can see that from the age of about 17 to 18 young people seem to be the most broadly informed,

but that there is still not parity between vocational and academic routes.

The responses shown in Figure 18 help to explain further why this might be. They show that although it was quite often the case that schools were seen as having less information about vocational routes, the young people more often stated that they did not have the same level of information on vocational routes because they did not demand it. Taking up about two-thirds of the total response, young people felt the balance of IAG they received was guided

**Figure 17: Q17. Did you receive the same level of information for vocational as for academic routes? (Base: 508.)**

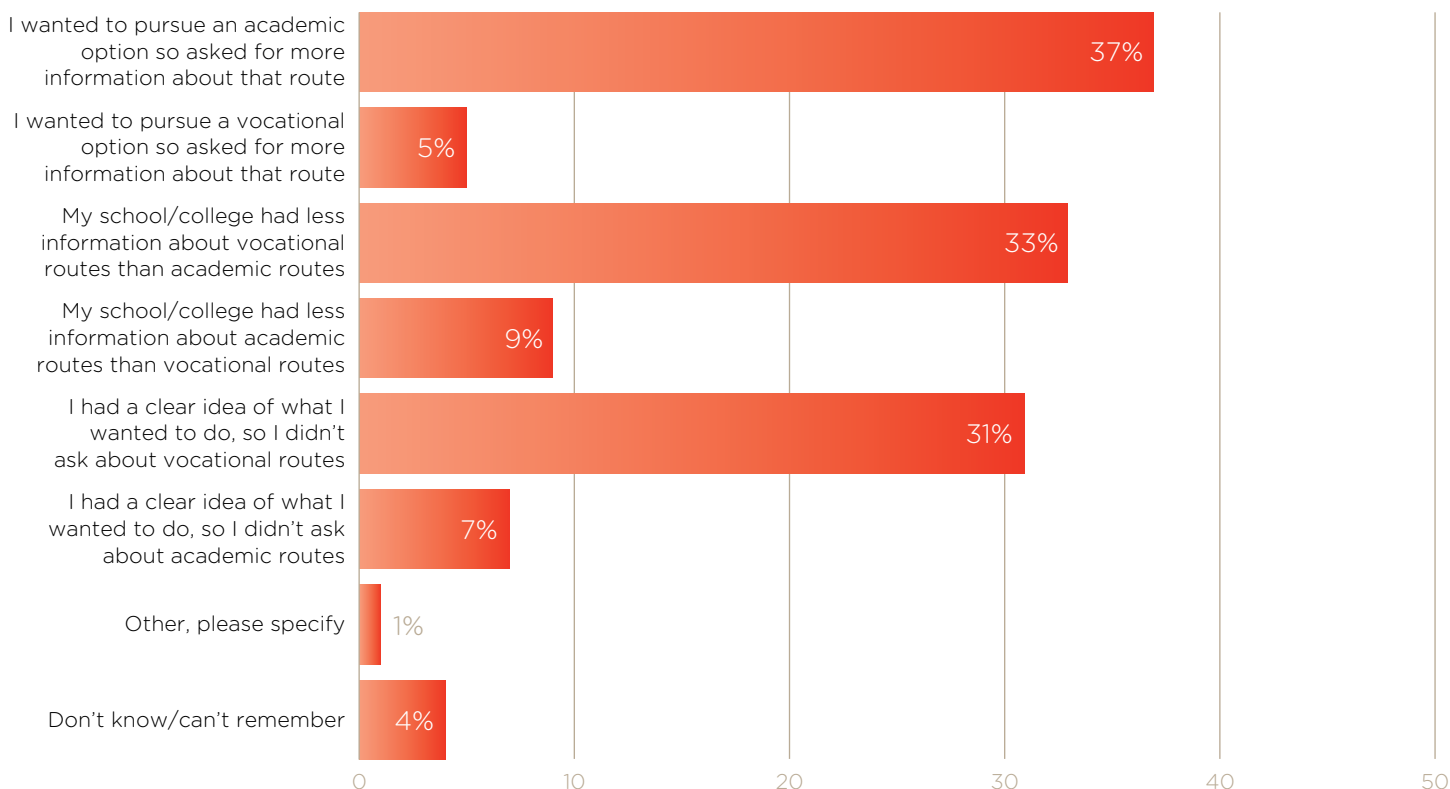




by what they asked for. So, 37% said they asked for more information on academic options, and 31% said they did not ask about vocational routes.

Separately or in addition to this, one-third (33%) said their school or college had less information about vocational routes compared to academic routes. It is this group which is likely to be more in line with the first commenter above, who felt that IAG provision did not match his interests.

**Figure 18: Q18. You said you weren't given the same amount of information about academic and vocational routes. Why was this? (Respondents could choose multiple options.) (Base: 224 who responded "No..." in Q17.)**



## 7.2 Perceptions of vocational routes

Table 1 and Figure 19 appear to show a common bias against vocational education among young people, which is likely to affect their interest in asking for IAG on vocational options. Where young people had a strong point of view about vocational routes, they perceived it as less challenging and less prestigious

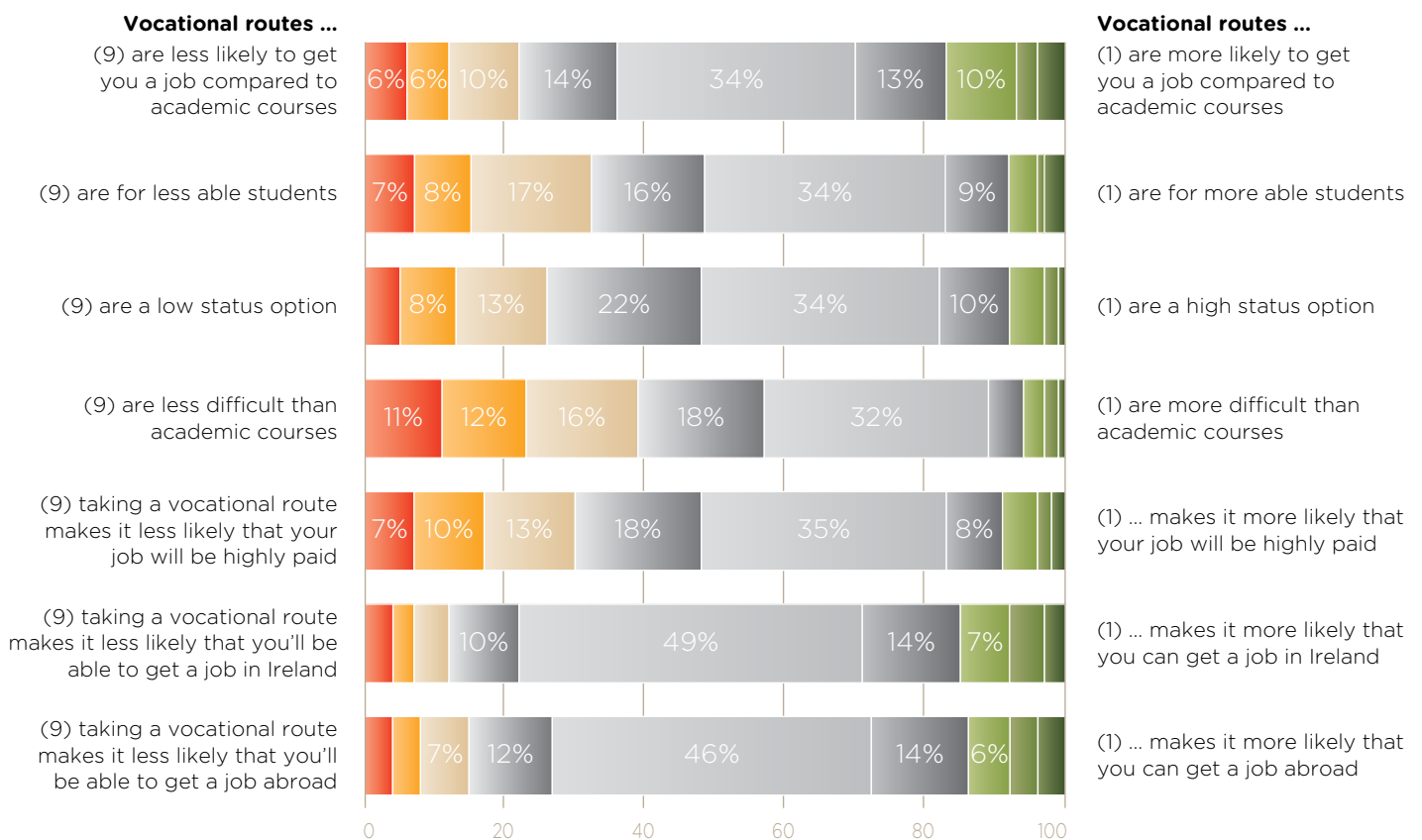
than academic education. For example, 32% thought vocational routes are for less able students, and very few thought that a vocational route is a high status option (8%) compared to those who thought it is a low status option (26%). Similarly, only 9% thought that taking a vocational route makes it more likely that your job will be highly paid.

**Table 1: Q19. Thinking about vocational routes after compulsory education, which of the following phrases do you most associate with them? (Response given on a sliding scale, from 1 to 9.) (Base: 508.)**

	Response on a 9-point sliding scale			
	7 to 9 (agrees more with statement on left)	4 to 6 (neutral/undecided)	1 to 3 (agrees more with statement on right)	
(9) Vocational routes are less likely to get you a job compared to academic courses	22%	61%	17%	(1) Vocational routes are more likely to get you a job compared to academic courses
(9) Vocational routes are for less able students	32%	59%	8%	(1) Vocational routes are for more able students
(9) A vocational route is a low status option	26%	66%	8%	(1) A vocational route is a high status option
(9) Vocational routes are less difficult than academic courses	39%	55%	6%	(1) Vocational routes are more difficult than academic courses
(9) Taking a vocational route makes it less likely that your job will be highly paid	30%	61%	9%	(1) Taking a vocational route makes it more likely that your job will be highly paid
(9) Taking a vocational route makes it less likely that you'll be able to get a job in Ireland	12%	73%	15%	(1) Taking a vocational route makes it more likely that you'll be able to get a job in Ireland
(9) Taking a vocational route makes it less likely that you'll be able to get a job abroad	15%	72%	14%	(1) Taking a vocational route makes it more likely that you'll be able to get a job abroad

However, it is also important to note that a large proportion of young people are relatively undecided on these points. For example most (72 to 73%) of the young people did not have a strong opinion as to whether taking a vocational route would make it more likely or less likely that you would get a job, as they did not clearly indicate agreement with either of the paired statements (see Table 1).

**Figure 19: Q19. Thinking about vocational routes after compulsory education, which of the following phrases do you most associate with them? (Response given on a sliding scale, from 1 to 9. Percentage figures.) (Base: 508.)**



# 8

## IAG: What's missing?

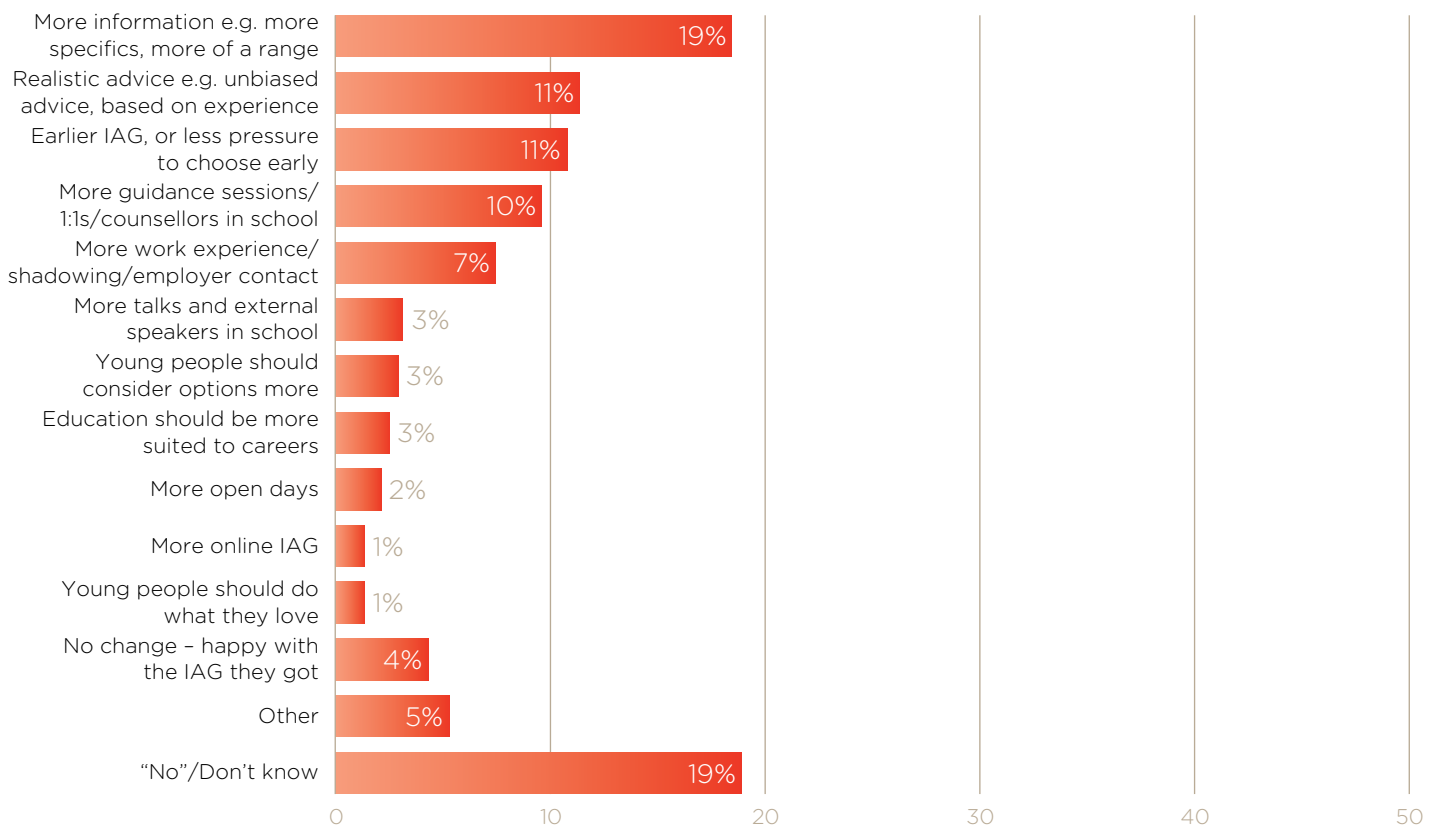
### Key findings

- Young people would like to see more information about vocational education, as well as more advice based on experience and real-life examples.
- The majority (64%) of young people would like to see speakers in schools/colleges with different career paths to help them understand the implications of different choices and learn about a range of career paths.

The preceding chapters have established that young people see vocational routes as being less of a priority within IAG provision – in some cases they see this as reflecting their own priorities and interest in an academic route, but in other cases they see schools as lacking sufficient information on the subject.

Toward the very end of the survey, we asked young people to give their own ideas about changes that might improve IAG and help them make the right study and career decisions. In Figure 20 we have categorised these responses, to indicate what young people are in favour of.

**Figure 20: Q22. In an ideal world, are there any changes you would make to the information, advice and guidance given to young people, to help you make the right study choices and career decisions? (Unweighted coded responses.) (Base: 508.)**



The most popular preference, expressed by about 19% of the young people, was to have more information. By this various things were meant: some wanted IAG for a greater range of options, others wanted IAG that is more up to date, or IAG that is more specific.

For example, this respondent from a Junior Certificate Programme expressed concern about her lack of understanding of careers, and indicated that making a decision on this subject is very difficult. The reason she requests more information is to make her decision-making easier. This also underlines how important it is that IAG should be easy to understand and to use, so as not to confuse young people further.

*“[I would like] just to understand careers properly, [there is] never enough information to help make decision-making easy.”*

**Girl, 15, studying for Junior Certificate.**

Another respondent, taking some vocational subjects as part of her Leaving Certificate, expressed concern about the lack of breadth of IAG available, especially to suit students with unusual ambitions. In question 22, she said that she sees zoologists as her role model.

*“[IAG providers] don't cover enough choices, especially if a student wants to pursue something different than the norm.”*

**Girl, 16, studying for Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.**

Being selective with the information given is also important, as some respondents feel overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive, yet feel that it is not thorough enough to help them decide, as indicated in this example:

*“[I would like] more thorough specific info. You are bombarded with too much information and it makes it difficult to focus on areas you may want to pursue.”*

**Girl, 19, studying for a Bachelor's Degree**

Young people also mentioned the timing of IAG, in comments that generally favoured early provision. For example, one respondent says that IAG wasn't built into her school programme until after she had started her Leaving Certificate, and suggests that it would be useful to have this level of provision earlier on.

*“There should be far more emphasis put on this at a younger age. It was only in Leaving Cert that I had a specific class for [IAG].”*

**Girl, 18, studying for a Bachelor's Degree**

Similarly, this degree student seems to have some regrets about the timing of his IAG, and how much information he received.

*“I would like to have been given more info earlier in my educational life.”*

**Boy, 19, studying for a Bachelor's Degree**

Finally, comments from the survey strongly show realistic advice would be highly valued as part of young people's "ideal" IAG experience. Young people varied slightly in the sources they thought would be "realistic", but experience was widely considered to be important. For example, this respondent suggests advice should be personal, which perhaps indicates that she would feel inspired by someone's own story of their education or career path.

*"[I would like to hear] from experienced people who could give me more personal and realistic advice."*

**Girl, 17, studying for Baccalaureate.**

Others, such as the boy below, suggest one-to-one discussion, perhaps because this would enable them to ask their own questions and get feedback on their plans.

*"One-on-one [discussion] with someone who has been through the career you are interested in."*

**Boy, 16, studying for Leaving Certificate Established.**

Some young people also made it clear that they see experienced people as a more honest source, such as this commenter below:

*"[I would like] honesty, real people with real lives."*

**Girl, 17, studying for a Bachelor's Degree**

Other survey responses also back up these findings. In a separate question which asked the young people about a range of sources of IAG, respondents overwhelmingly chose the option "speakers in schools/college with different career paths" with nearly two-thirds (64%) of young people selecting that option. Those in second level provision were particularly keen on this option, with 67% of those in state provision and 68% of those in privately funded provision selecting it. The survey results, along with the comments given here, are a clear steer that despite the rise of the internet and social media, young people want to hear from individuals with different career paths as a face-to-face opportunity.

## Key findings

- › Young people consider vocational education to have a lower status than academic education. However, they also lack understanding of vocational education, and know less about vocational routes compared to academic routes. More information should be available to young people in school to help them judge whether vocational education can support their career choices.
- › IAG should be offered in school at an earlier age, ideally starting at the age of 13 or earlier. This will help young people make decisions about their future study and career interests before the end of the Junior Cycle, and will help those who would like to find out about vocational routes to do so.
- › IAG should provide young people with real-life examples of individuals in a wide range of careers and trades. This will help them to better understand different kinds of work, including work that is outside of their own family's experience.
- › Young people should continue to have access to face-to-face discussions with a career counsellor about career paths and qualifications. Young people appreciate discussing their options with someone who is well informed and who can guide them to the most appropriate IAG to suit their interests.
- › Young people also seek IAG online. They commonly seek information on school and college websites, so these should be as accessible as possible. Employers could also use social media to offer information about careers that can be viewed and shared. However, young people mainly use social media to share information with friends, rather than to engage with employers.

Our findings raise concerns about the perceptions and understanding of vocational education among young people in the Republic of Ireland. The popularity of university and the influence of parents suggest that young people are being encouraged to aspire to university with only limited information about other options available, including studying alongside working.

While the internet and online sources are used by young people, they still trust the advice of their parents and school/college guidance counsellors more. Current policy and funding changes in Ireland around the provision of IAG in

schools may push more IAG provision online, at a time when young people are asking for face-to-face interactions with their guidance counsellors, but also with adults who have experienced a range of different career paths.

Young people seem keen not to restrict any future options, and would benefit from information about vocational options and how transferable they can be. It may be that young people do not consider vocational options because they see them as restrictive in terms of progression into different careers, in a way that they do not consider academic options to be restrictive.

## 9.1 Perceptions and understanding of vocational education

The survey suggests that young people in Ireland commonly lack awareness and understanding of vocational education, with less than half (46%) of young people correctly describing vocational education. The survey also shows that most aspire to take an academic route. Only 6% (29 young people) among those surveyed were planning to pursue a vocational qualification when their current course was complete, while more than half (52%) of the young people who responded were planning to attend university in the Republic of Ireland and 7% planned to attend university in the UK. Of those who were planning to pursue an academic qualification, more than half (60%) never even considered a vocational option. We can conclude that vocational qualifications have a limited profile in Ireland and are considered a realistic option by only a minority of young people. This may be linked to parental expectations (31% did not consider vocational options due to their parents' preference for an academic route), which was also a clear finding from CSD's previous research report *New Directions* (Batterham & Levesley, 2011).

Young people who completed the survey reported receiving lower levels of information about vocational education (33% said their school had less information on that route), and they demonstrated less understanding of the phrase at younger ages. They also felt that they should receive IAG at earlier ages, with

the most popular choice being around the age of 12. Earlier IAG would allow young people more time to decide on the most appropriate Leaving Certificate or alternative qualification to pursue at second level.

## 9.2 More specific and face-to-face IAG

Although young people use the internet and online sources of IAG, they have higher levels of trust in the advice of their parents and school/college guidance counsellors. Young people surveyed highlighted their support for face-to-face IAG with people who have experienced different career paths, as learning about different career paths can help young people consider different course options and what may or may not help them work in a particular sector.

It could be suggested that some of the misconceptions about vocational education among young people were linked to the common perception that vocational education trains you to do a specific job. In a world where individuals are likely to have a number of different jobs and potentially more than one career, there is a need to present vocational education as a route into more than just one job, and to focus on the transferable aspects of vocational education. A topic for discussion in the IAG sector in Ireland could be how to effectively present the experiences of those who have completed vocational education and the potential career paths open to those selecting a vocational option.



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