

Education Department Research Programme

**Findings from the Scottish School Leavers Survey:
22 in 2004**

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Introduction

The Scottish School Leavers Survey (SSLS) series aims to describe the experiences of young people at school, the decisions they make about staying on or leaving, and their transitions and experiences after leaving school. The *Scottish Centre for Social Research* (formerly NatCen Scotland) has run the SSLS since the early 1990s when the series succeeded the Scottish Young Persons Survey (SYPS). This summary provides findings from the penultimate survey sweep of this cohort recruited in 1999 (Cohort 3) based on young people aged 22 in 2004.

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Main Findings

- The majority of respondents were in full-time employment (50%) or full-time education (27%). Less than one in ten (8%) classified their main activity as being 'out of work', a similar proportion was reported when this cohort was last surveyed in 2001, and a slightly higher proportion to the 23-24 years olds in the Cohort 2 Sweep 4 survey also surveyed in 2004.
- Those in employment were most likely to be working in the wholesale, retail or repair industries (19% of respondents).
- The average take home pay was £851. Men were more likely than women to earn more than £1000 per month (30% of men compared to 14% of women).
- On average, young people whose main activity was work (full-time and part-time and GTPs) worked a 37-38 hour week. Females were more likely than males to work 38 hours or less (69% compared with 44%) and less likely to work 39 hours or more (56% compared with 32%).
- The majority (89%) of those in employment received some kind of on-the-job/off-the-job training.
- Three quarters (76%) of those engaged in full-time education were studying at a university and 82% of those in full-time education were studying towards a degree. The average total student debt was £6,632; 22% have student debts over £10,000.
- The majority (70%) had already gained qualifications to SVQ level 3 or equivalent. Around half had received or expected to receive qualifications equivalent to SVQ level 4.
- 57% of respondents lived in accommodation owned by their parents, 32% lived in rented accommodation and 9% lived in accommodation they owned.
- The proportion of respondents that had a child by age 21/22 had increased since age 18/19 (3% in 2001 and 8% in 2004).
- Overall the respondents were positive about the level of control they had over their lives and the majority (77%) expected to be in full-time employment in two years' time.

The Scottish School Leavers Survey Series

The current format of the SSLS consists of recruiting a sample of young people in a year-group cohort at S4, on a three yearly cycle, to be surveyed four times - at ages 16-17, 18-19 21-22, and 23-24.

This cohort was recruited in the spring of 1999 as sample of young people who had completed S4 the previous year, and has also been surveyed in 2001. Only those that respond are surveyed in subsequent sweeps. The 2004 survey is the penultimate survey sweep for this cohort¹.

Methods

The sample was drawn from lists of young people who were in their fourth year of secondary school during the academic year of 1997-98, provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. One in five of all eligible young people were selected to take part in the survey and sent a self-complete questionnaire.

Before fieldwork started, addresses were checked for correct postcode and, where telephone numbers could be matched, telephoned to make sure the respondent still lived at that address. If the respondent had moved, correct contact details were collected, where possible.

Having checked addresses, the questionnaire was mailed to 5,003 young people on the 12th May 2004. Those who had not responded within three weeks were sent a reminder postcard. A further two weeks later, non responders were sent a second copy of the questionnaire along with a reminder letter. Finally, attempts were made to contact non-respondents by telephone in order to encourage them to either return their questionnaire or to answer questions over the phone. Telephone follow up continued until August 2004.

Questionnaires were completed by 2,548 young people: 1,953 were received in the post and a further 595 completed over the telephone. This represents 58% of those remaining in the cohort following the last sweep in 2001, taking account of those for whom no valid contact information was available.

To correct for any bias caused by non-response to the survey, the data were weighted; this is described in detail in the technical report.

¹ 2 The technical report and data is available from the ESRC data archive (<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>).

Findings

Main Activity

Employment

Around half of the sample (47%) was in full-time employment in May 2004, 3% were in a job including a GTP and 1% was not working but was involved in a GTP.

Overall those in employment were most likely to be found in the wholesale, retail or repair industries (19%), although this varied by gender. Very few young people, aged 21/22, were working in professional occupations (3%) or as managers/administrators (4%). Around 15% of those in employment were working with a temporary contract. Men were more likely than women to be working with a temporary contract (16% men compared to 13% women).

The average take home pay for those aged 21/22 and in employment was £851. Men were more likely than women to earn more than £1000 per month (30% of men compared to 14% of women).

On average, young people whose main activity was work (this includes full-time and part-time work and GTPs) worked a 37-38 hour week. This increased to a 39-40 hours per week for those who worked full-time without a GTP. The average number of hours part-time workers worked was just under 21 per week. Females were more likely than men to work 38 hours or less (69% compared with 44%) and men were more likely than women to work 39 hours or more (56% compared with 32%).

The majority of those in employment (89%) were receiving some kind of on-the-job or off-the-job training. Table shows the training received by job type.

Only 8% reported that they were in part time employment. However, a further 19% said they had a part-time job in addition to their main activity. A higher proportion of females were in part-time employment (32%) compared to males (21%). This was due to the larger proportion of women that had a part-time job in addition to their main activity.

Eighty-six percent said their current job taught them useful skills, 80% said that it was a good experience and 51% said that they would like to be involved in the work they do in the future. Approximately three quarters (72%) of people in employment or on GTP said they would leave their job if they could get a better job. This varied slightly with gender (75% of men compared with 69% of women). However, the majority of respondents reported positive comments about their current employment.

Full-time education

Around one quarter (27%) were involved in full-time education. The likelihood of being in full-time education at age 21/22 was strongly linked to parental social class, with respondents not from Professional/Intermediate socio-economic groups much less likely to have engaged in further or higher education (15% for unskilled and 58% for professional). Females were more likely to be in full-time education than males (30% compared to 24%).

Three quarters of people (76%) engaged in full-time education were studying at a university, 20% at a further education college and 3% at another form of institution. Around four in five (82%) of those in full-time education were studying towards a degree.

The average total amount of combined student debt (from a student loan or other source) was £6,632. However, 22% of respondents studying had debts amounting to over £10,000. Table 1 shows the level of student debt of those aged 22 in 2004.

Table 1: Student debt

Respondents who had studying debt	Student loan	Other studying debt	Total student debt
	%	%	%
Amount of debt:			
£500 or less	2	17	3
Between £501 and £1000	5	22	6
Between £1001 and £2500	14	40	14
Between £2501 and £5000	27	15	23
Between £5001 and £7000	17	2	14
Between £7001 and £10,000	17	2	18
Between £10,001 and £15,000	14	2	16
More than £15,000	3	-	6
Mean	6262	2138	6632
Base (weighted)	997	516	1108
Base (unweighted)	1336	692	1465

Comparison over time

Comparison with the same cohort in an earlier sweep shows that more respondents are in full-time employment and fewer people are in full-time education. The differences in main activity of those aged 22 in 2004 and those aged 19 in 2001 (i.e. the same cohort of people) is shown in more detail in table 2.

Table 2: Change in main activity

All respondents	Cohort aged 19 in May 2001	Cohort aged 22 in May 2004
Main Activity:	%	%
Full-time job	27	47
Job with GTP	3	3
No job but GTP	11	1
Part-time job	3	8
Out of work	8	8
Full-time higher education	37	25
Other full-time education	7	2
Looking after family/home	24	
Other	2	3
Bases (weighted)	5003	2548
Bases (unweighted)	5003	2548

Qualifications of 21-22 year olds

At the age of 21/22, 79% of respondents had obtained some form of qualification since S4.

The majority of young people (71%) had already attained qualifications to the equivalent of SVQ level 3 or above by the age 21/22 and 31% had received qualifications to SVQ level 4 or equivalent. However, the data suggests a polarisation between a majority who have achieved a significant level of qualification success and a minority (around one fifth) who have not achieved any qualifications beyond standard grades. Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents with different levels of qualification.

Table 3: Highest level of qualification achieved at age 21/22

All Respondents	Male	Female	Total
None	1	2	1
Standard Grades	22	19	20
SVQ Level 1-2	12	7	9
Highers	31	33	32
SVQ Level 3	8	6	7
SVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND		14	15
15			
Ordinary Degree	5	8	7
Honours/Higher Degree	8	11	9
Bases (weighted)	1240	1236	2476
Bases (unweighted)	987	1516	2503

Gender and qualifications

Reflecting their higher levels of education attainment in general, females were more likely to have obtained a higher level qualification. 75% of females had obtained a qualification equivalent to SVQ level 3 compared to 68% of males. Thirty-four percent of females had achieved a SVQ level 4 or equivalent qualification compared to 27% of males. However, males were over-represented among those with vocational qualifications normally associated with traineeships – 20% of males had a SVQ qualification at levels 1 to 3 compared with 13% of females.

School leaving age and qualifications

There was an association between the stage that people had left school and whether or not they had obtained additional qualifications. Over half (53%) of those that left school at the end of S4 had not obtained any qualifications beside those achieved at standard grade. Despite this low level of qualifications among minimum school age leavers, leaving at this stage was not necessarily associated with low attainment – one quarter of S4 leavers and over a third of S5 leavers had gone on to achieve a qualification equivalent to SVQ level 3 or above by the age 21/22.

Parental social class and qualification

There were significant differences between the highest qualifications obtained according to the young person's parental social class, which was based upon the highest ranked occupation of either the mother or father. Those from skilled, and semi/unskilled classes were over-represented among the lower level of qualifications. Table 4 shows the percentage of people from different social backgrounds and the qualifications obtained.

Table 4: Qualification and parental social class

All respondents	Professional & Intermediate	Skilled	Semi & Unskilled
	%	%	%
None	1	0	3
Standard Grades	11	22	24
SVQ Level 1-2	5	10	12
Highers	42	29	29
SVQ Level 3	3	10	10
SVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND	11	16	15
Ordinary Degree	10	6	3
Honours/Higher Degree	17	7	5
Bases (weighted)	794	852	302
Bases (unweighted)	1060	853	258

Qualification and main activity

One third (36%) of those with no qualifications were working in full-time employment, around a quarter (23%) were out of work and 19% were looking after the home or a family.

People with no qualifications beyond standard grades are less likely to be engaged in full-time education than those with highers (53% of young people with highers are engaged in full-time education, 4% of those with standard grades are engaged in full-time education).

Domestic Circumstances

Accommodation and living arrangements

Around two-thirds (66%) of respondents said they were staying with their parents. This was more prevalent among young men than young women (73% of men and 59% of women). Men are also less likely to live with their partner or live on their own than women.

Around one tenth (9%) of young people aged 21/22 owned their own accommodation, one third (32%) lived in rented accommodation, and 57% lived in accommodation owned by their parents or other people they lived with.

Children

The proportion of respondents who had a child by age 21/22 had more than doubled in three years (3% in 2001 and 8% in 2004). Those who had stayed on at school longer were less likely to have children.

Women were more likely to have their children living with them than men (99% and 61% respectively).

Respondents with children are less likely to take part in further education once they leave school and more likely to be found in part-time work or looking after the home or family.

The Disadvantaged

The evidence suggests that those from the 15% most deprived areas and those who leave school at an early age with fewer qualifications had an increased likelihood of unemployment at age 21/22. Those who leave school early are more likely to experience difficult transitions.

While for most unemployment is fleeting, a small group of young people seem to experience prolonged and repeated unemployment. Those who were unemployed at age 21/22 tended to remain fairly confident about future prospects and the majority were actively seeking employment.

The Future

On the whole respondents were positive about the level of control that they had over their lives.

Those with parents in professional occupations felt they had more control than those with parents in other social class groups. Respondents in full-time employment and education were more positive about the control they had compared to those whose main activity was not education or employment.

In terms of employment, the majority (77%) thought that they would be in a full-time job in two years. Ninety percent of those in full-time employment anticipated that they would still be in full-time work in two years time and over three quarters of those in full-time education were of this view. Respondents with children were less likely than those without children to expect to be in work in two years' time and more likely to consider they would be looking after the home/family.

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