

FE Learners Longitudinal Survey Wave 1: Findings from Quantitative Research

Nick Coleman, Rachel Naylor & Elizabeth Kennedy
BMRB Social Research

Research Report

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Survey Wave 1:
Findings from Quantitative Research*

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DfES Department for Education & Skills

ESOL English for Speakers of Other Languages

FE Further Education

GLH Guided Learning Hours

IAG Information, Advice and Guidance

ICT Information and Communications Technology

LSC Learning and Skills Council

NALS National Adult Learning Survey

NQF National Qualifications Framework

Summary

Background

The Further Education (FE) Learners Longitudinal Survey examines the destinations of FE learners over a period of 18-21 months. These findings are from the Wave 1 survey, in which learners taking an FE course in 2003/4 were interviewed around one year after completing their course. The survey examines adult learners (19 or over) only, and focuses mainly on learners who completed their course; a small additional sample of learners at full level 2 and full level 3 who did not complete the course was also included. The sample is also restricted to LSC-funded learners with a minimum of 30 guided learning hours.

In total, 6,909 interviews were conducted in respondents' homes.

Characteristics of FE learners that completed their course

Overall, 39 per cent of learners who completed their FE course were studying below level 2, while 31 per cent were studying at level 2 (five per cent full level 2) and 19 per cent at level 3 (four per cent full level 3). Three per cent were studying at level 4 or above, while the remaining eight per cent were on 'other' courses (either with no qualification aim or where the qualification aim was unknown)¹.

The youngest age profiles were among full level 3 and, to a lesser extent, full level 2 learners, while learners studying below level 2 and on 'other' courses tended to be older than average; a quarter those who did 'other' courses were retired. Overall, 41 per cent of FE learners had children under 16. One in five (19 per cent) had a long-term illness or disability.

Education and employment history

The majority of FE learners (56 per cent) had done some form of learning in the three years prior to their FE course (or since leaving school), and over a third (38 per cent) had been on taught courses leading to a qualification. Participation in previous courses was highest among learners studying at level 3 or above, was higher among those who were doing the course as part of a job, and was also higher among women than men.

¹ This information was taken from LSC administrative data. 'Other' includes both courses with no qualification aim and courses where the qualification aim was missing. Because of the way in which the LSC administrative data is structured it is not possible to split these two subgroups out.

In most cases (83 per cent), this previous learning involved 10 hours or more of face-to-face teaching. A quarter of learners who had done courses in the preceding three years said that these were organised by an employer.

Almost a third of FE learners (29 per cent) were qualified to level 4 or above before taking the FE course, and 58 per cent overall were studying at a lower level than their highest prior qualification; most frequently these were learners on part-level 2 or 'other' courses. One in five (21 per cent) were studying courses at a higher level than their highest prior qualification. Specifically, 44 per cent of those studying at full level 2 were *first* full level 2 learners, and 59 per cent of those studying at full level 3 were *first* full level 3 learners.

The majority of learners were in paid work when they started the course (57 per cent), and this was generally full-time work (41 per cent working 30 hours or more per week, compared with 16 per cent working fewer hours). Learners studying at higher levels were more likely to be working at the start of their course. More specifically, 31 per cent were doing the course as part of a job, and this applied to the majority of learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above. Among those whose course was job-related, 19 per cent said it was compulsory. FE learners whose course was part of their job were in lower occupational groups than those who were working while doing an unrelated course.

Where they were not working at the start of the course, learners were most likely to have been looking after the family or home (14 per cent), and this applied in particular to learners studying below level 2. Most learners who were not working at the start of the course had not worked for at least five years, and this covers two distinct groups: younger learners with no previous work experience, and retired learners who had not worked for some time.

The type of work being done by learners who were working at the start of the course was similar to the GB working population. Learners studying at full level 2 were more likely than other learners to be working in health/social work and construction. Those studying at full level 3 were also more likely to be in health/social work.

FE course details

The majority of learners were on part-time courses (86 per cent), with full-time courses more common among those studying at full level 2, full level 3 and part level 3.

In addition to doing the course as part of a job, there was a range of specific reasons given for undertaking the course, including interest in the subject, to learn skills relevant for a future job or career, and to get a qualification. Interest in the subject was most frequently mentioned as the single main reason for undertaking

the course. Learners on 'other' courses and studying non-vocational subjects were most likely to be doing the course mainly through interest, while gaining a qualification and gaining skills for a future job or career was a greater priority for learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above.

IT or computing was by far the most common subject studied by FE learners (25 per cent overall), with lower level courses in particular containing a large proportion in IT or computing. The majority of part-time open learning courses were in IT or computing, and older learners were more likely than younger learners to have studied this subject.

Information and guidance

Two-thirds of learners said they received some form of information or guidance (IAG) prior to starting their course. The most frequent sources of IAG were colleges and teachers or tutors. Learners were mostly positive towards the IAG that they received, in particular where IAG had been given by specialists in a particular field of work, teachers, tutors or schools.

Nearly half of learners (45 per cent) said that the IAG had helped them 'a lot' to decide what to do next, while 30 per cent said it had helped them a lot in increasing awareness of training and work opportunities. Learners who had taken ESOL and English language courses, and related to this non-white respondents, were particularly positive towards the role of the IAG they had received. More generally, views were most positive among learners studying at full level 3 and level 4 or above.

Course level

Around one in five (22 per cent) did not know the level of the FE course they had been on, and this was highest among learners on 'other' courses and those doing the course as part of their job. Learners on full level 2 and full level 3 courses generally knew the level at which they were studying. Of those who knew the level, 32 per cent said they had a choice as to the level they were studying; this was higher among those doing the course primarily out of interest, and lower among those whose course was part of a job.

A fifth of learners (21 per cent) said that they had wanted to study at a higher level, and this was higher among learners studying at full level 2 and full level 3, particularly those studying in order to gain skills for a future job. Reflecting this, one in seven learners said that the course was too easy, highest among learners studying at full level 2.

Course costs

The majority of learners did not pay for their course, while 31 per cent paid all of the course fees and 12 per cent paid part of them. Learners who were either retired or working (but not doing the course as part of a job) were most likely to have paid for the course. Over a quarter of learners studying below level 2 said the course was free for all learners (27 per cent). Where learners had paid towards the course, they were likely to say it had been good value for money, particularly those that had paid part of the fees only (70 per cent of whom said the course had been very good value for money).

Over half of those who did not contribute towards the cost of the course said they would have been prepared to do so (63 per cent). This was highest among learners studying at higher levels and those in work. When asked how much they would have been prepared to pay for the course, half said they would have paid £100 or more.

Qualifications

Most learners said that their course was designed to lead to a qualification; those that did not were generally studying either below level 2, part level 2 or on 'other' courses. The majority of learners who completed the course also said that they achieved the qualification (90 per cent).

Overall attitudes to FE course

Learners were generally very positive towards their FE course. Most learners said that the course was well taught (81 per cent), with a small minority (six per cent) saying that the teaching had been poor. However, where learners felt that their needs had not been met overall, the quality of teaching was the most common reason given, indicating that the quality of teaching has a strong impact on overall attitudes.

Two-thirds of learners (64 per cent) were very satisfied with their course, with the remainder mostly fairly satisfied. A similar proportion (62 per cent) said that the course met their needs completely, with a further 21 per cent saying the course met their needs very well.

Attitudes were most positive among older learners, and somewhat less positive among those at studying full level 3 and level 4 or above.

Non-completion

Learners studying at full level 2 and full level 3 who did not complete their course said this was either due to a change in their personal or household circumstances (32 per cent), because they started a job (which meant that they either could not or no longer needed to do the course: 11 per cent and 12 per cent respectively), or as result of the course itself, most frequently because they found that the course was not what they wanted to do after all (20 per cent) or because of poor teaching (16 per cent). When asked why the course had not met their needs, poor tuition was again mentioned (31 per cent), along with lack of support (16 per cent).

Whether course increased qualification level

One in five FE learners who completed their course increased their highest level of qualification in doing so (18 per cent). Among those who were working towards a qualification and successfully achieved it, 23 per cent increased their highest level of qualification, reflecting the high proportion of FE learners taking courses at the same or lower level than they were already qualified.

Those studying at full level 2 or 3 were most likely to have increased their highest level of qualification (42 and 50 per cent), reflecting the younger profile of learners at these levels. Those on 'other' courses and courses below level 2 or part level 2 were least likely to have increased their highest level of qualification (11, 12 and 14 per cent) reflecting the low proportions of courses leading to full qualifications being taken at these levels.

Further learning undertaken since course ended

In the relatively short time between completing their course and taking part in the interview (just seven months or so for some), a half of all FE learners (50 per cent) had gone on to start further education or training.

Those more likely than average to have started further learning were women, older learners and the retired, Black learners, those whose highest qualification prior to their original course was level 4 or above, and those on 'other' courses originally.

Those who did not successfully complete their original FE course were, unsurprisingly, less likely than completers to have gone on to do further study. Despite this, a quarter went on to do so (25 per cent).

The additional courses were similar to the original FE courses, with a similar proportion involving a qualification (80 and 82 per cent respectively).

There was a strong feeling that the original FE course had assisted learners in moving on to further education or training (74 per cent agreed it had helped), particularly among those who were least well qualified to start with, and those who originally studied at full level 2, 3 or level 4 or above.

Current activity and whether worked since FE course

The overall level of employment among FE learners at the time of the interview, after completing their course, increased slightly compared to those in work at the start of their course (60 per cent vs. 57 per cent), with a similar split between full-time and part time work (43 and 17 per cent).

Work started since FE course ended

One fifth of learners (19 per cent) had started a new job at some point after completing their course and at an overall level the profile of work being done was similar to the work being done at the time of, and prior to, the course.

Of those **working at the start of the course**, one fifth (19 per cent) went on to start a new job after completing their course. Among those who had worked at the start of their course, those most likely to have started a new job after completing it were: younger learners, those who studied at higher levels, those who studied at a higher level than their highest prior qualification, and learners whose course had not been part of their job.

Compared to the work they were doing at the start of the course, work started after the course was more likely to be in financial intermediation, public administration and defence/compulsory social security and health and social work, and there was a slight shift towards higher level occupations. Self-employment was also higher, and there was a higher proportion of full-time positions, as well as higher hourly pay.

A fifth (22 per cent) of those who had **worked before but not during their course** had gone on to start a job after completing their course. Most of these had worked fairly recently prior to this, but one fifth said their last job had been five or more years before their course. Among those who had worked before but not during their course, those most likely to have started a new job after completing their course were: those who had been in work more recently, non-White learners, younger learners and connected with this, learners who studied at full level 2 or 3 and those studying at a higher level than they were already qualified.

In comparison with the work they were doing before the course, work started after the course was more likely to be in education, health and social work, and there was a related shift towards personal service occupations. Self-employment was higher and there was a lower proportion of full-time positions. Whilst the proportion earning

less than £4 per hour was considerably lower following the course, the proportion at the top end of the earnings scale (i.e. those earning £8 per hour or more) was also lower. As a result, mean hourly pay was unchanged. Possible explanations for this (and the higher proportion of part-time positions) are people going part time or moving into lower level occupations after starting a family, and older people going part-time as they move towards or following retirement.

At the time of the original FE course, nine per cent of FE learners had never worked. Of these, 13 per cent went on to start a job after finishing their course. The remainder did not go into paid work after the FE course, despite the fact that 21 per cent said that their main reason for studying was to learn skills for a job.

Work related benefits gained from the course

The majority of those whose course had been part of their job and had worked since completing their course believed their work situation had benefited in different ways, although a substantial minority (21 per cent) did not. Learning new skills (50 per cent), increased ability to do the job (49 per cent) and greater job satisfaction (34 per cent) were most frequently mentioned. Economic benefits included earning more money (17 per cent), getting a new job (9 per cent), changing type of work (8 per cent) and getting a promotion (9 per cent).

Learners who had studied at the highest levels (full level 3 or 4+) were most likely to feel that their work situation had benefited in at least one way as a result of their course, and among full level 3 learners, it was those doing their first full level 3 who were most likely to feel this way.

Skills and other benefits gained from course

Learners felt that they had gained a number of skills or benefits from taking the course, and the majority of those who had done the course for particular reasons (e.g. to give skills for an existing job) said that it had provided the benefits they had sought in line with those reasons. A third (33 per cent) said that the course had given them the opportunity to progress in education, while two in five (39 per cent) said it had helped them to gain better qualifications and half (53 per cent) said it had encouraged them to do further learning.

Many learners also said that the course had increased their confidence and self-esteem. Half (48 per cent) said they had gained self-confidence and motivation, and a similar proportion said the course had made them feel better about themselves generally (47 per cent). Just under half (45 per cent) said the course had given them the confidence to tackle new things. Multivariate analysis showed that increased self-confidence had a major impact on learners' overall perceptions of the course. Learners with a highest prior qualification below level 2, those with literacy

problems and from non-white ethnic groups were most likely to say the course had helped them in this way.

The social aspect of FE learning was also mentioned, with more than two in five (44 per cent) saying that the course helped them to make new friends or meet people, and a third saying it helped them to do something useful in their spare time (33 per cent).

Wider attitudes to learning

Most learners said they were positive towards learning at the start of the FE course (88 per cent), and 67 per cent said that the experience of the course had made them *more* positive towards learning. Those who were originally negative were particularly likely to become more favourable towards learning, namely: learners who studied at a higher level than they were already qualified, those on English language and ESOL courses, those with literacy problems, non-White learners, the economically inactive at the time of the interview, as well as those who studied full-time for a full year.

A half (47 per cent) of FE learners said that they were very likely to go on to additional learning in the next two years, and this was higher where learners had already undertaken some more learning since the original FE course, particularly those studying at lower levels (below level 2 and part level 2). Overall, learners on full level 2 courses were the least likely to say they would do additional learning in the next two years. Women and younger people were generally most likely to say they would continue with additional learning.

The main barriers that learners faced in carrying out further learning related either to cost (the cost of the training itself or the cost of living while learning), lack of time and family commitments. Costs were mentioned most frequently by those studying at level 3 (part and full level), as well as younger people, women and those who were unemployed. People who mentioned cost as a barrier were also more likely to think they would do further learning in the next two years, indicating that these respondents were keen to take part in further learning, but may not be able to afford it. By contrast, people mentioning time or family commitments were less likely to say they would go onto further learning, indicating either that these were more fundamental barriers or that these respondents were less keen to do further learning.

Help with costs or funding was also the main way that learners felt they would be encouraged to take part in further learning. In addition, learners mentioned learning at more convenient times or locations, advice on the learning available and learning that was more suited to their needs.

Learners generally acknowledged the importance of learning. Some learners, however, said that learning was difficult for them, and these were also the groups that acknowledged lower levels of self-esteem at the time of the survey: learners with a highest prior qualification below level 2, those with literacy problems and from non-white ethnic groups. Although these respondents were also likely to say the FE course had helped to improve their confidence and had made them more positive about learning, these findings indicate that it is an on-going challenge to help these individuals by encouraging participation in learning and training.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and research objectives

The Further Education (FE) Learners Longitudinal Survey is a new survey designed to supplement the range of information that already exists and is used by the Department for Education & Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to monitor and evaluate FE, and to inform policies. Whilst work has been done to examine participation in FE and there is existing information on the characteristics of FE learners, little information is available on the destinations of FE leavers. The overall aim of this Longitudinal Survey is therefore to present new analysis about how FE learners participate and progress within and from learning and the influence this has on their attitudes, employment and income, and wider benefits. The two-wave survey tracks individuals typically over a period of 18-21 months and will therefore be able to assess medium-term, as well as short-term impacts.

The key objectives of the survey are to:

- analyse the nature of the destinations that FE learners take after learning, such as into employment, further learning or training, and the impact this learning has on their future learning participation;
- assess what impact learning has on socio-economic circumstances (employment status, income), particularly the cumulative impact of further learning on the individual's welfare;
- assess what impact learning has on wider outcomes such as health benefits and active citizenship.

The survey focuses on adult learners (aged 19 or over). While the full range of FE courses is covered, there is particular interest in learners studying for full level 2 and full level 3 qualifications, both "intermediate level" qualifications where the UK trails behind a number of major competitor countries. Specifically:

- improving the skills of low-skilled adults is linked to gaining a first full level 2 qualification, which is seen as a platform for employability and progression and is a key aim of the Skills Strategy
- Level 3 is seen as key to improving productivity for businesses and earnings for individuals.

The survey was focused on learners who completed their course, but there was also an interest in full level 2 and full level 3 learners who had failed to complete their course, so small samples of these were included. Unless stated otherwise, the analysis throughout the report focuses on people who completed their course in full (as opposed to 'non-completers').

This report provides the findings from the first wave of this two-wave study. The wave 2 survey takes place 12 months after wave 1, and will attempt to re-interview all wave 1 respondents who agreed to be re-contacted.

1.2 Sample design

1.2.1 Sample population

The aim in designing the sample was to obtain interviews with a representative sample of individuals aged 19 and over who had completed an FE course. The sample population was restricted to:

- learners who completed a FE course in England in the academic year 2003/4
- learners with a minimum of 30 guided learning hours (GLH) over that academic year. This ensured that the survey was examining the impact of substantial FE courses and that the sample was not swamped by the very large numbers of short and “bite size” courses
- LSC-funded learners.

In addition, the survey also covered a small sample of learners who did not complete their course, specifically:

- learners with a course aim of full level 2 or full level 3, who completed at least a quarter, but not all, of their course.

1.2.2 Sample selection

Initial work was carried out using the LSC’s Learning Aims data file, which contained around nine million cases. Aims of learners aged 18 or under were filtered out, removing approximately 34 per cent of cases. The following were then excluded from this file:

- aims that were transferred
- aims that were not ‘live’ (i.e. were enrolled in but not started) and non-LSC funded
- withdrawn aims where the aim was not full level 2 or 3.

Learners were then excluded who were:

- non-live learners
- non-LSC funded learners.

We then merged the learners file with the aggregated aims file. We then excluded:

- learners not expected to finish by 31/7/04.
- learners with less than 30 total Guided learning Hours (GLH).

Of the remaining learners, cases were excluded if they did not have a home postcode or had an obviously invalid postcode (eg start with ZZ9); this comprised just 1 per cent of the total remaining sample.

The resulting file had 851,836 eligible learners that were available for selection.

A sample of individuals was drawn using a disproportionately stratified two-stage design in which postcode sectors comprised primary sampling units (PSUs). PSUs were selected with probability proportional to a weighted number of eligible students (weighted in order to over-sample students who took longer courses), and within PSUs students were selected with variable sampling fractions depending on their stratum membership. The design adopted was chosen to deliver similar cluster sizes and ensure that within each stratum individuals were selected with equal probability.

The sample was clustered on the basis of postcode information in the interest of fieldwork efficiency, and was stratified disproportionately by level of course, to limit the number doing low level and non-qualification bearing learning; and to boost the number of those doing longer courses, in particular full level 2 and full level 3 learners.

1.3 Questionnaire design and pilot survey

1.3.1 Content of the wave 1 questionnaire

The main areas covered by the questionnaire, other than background socio-demographics are:

- employment status and history prior to and since completion of FE course
- learning participation, prior to and since the FE course
- course details, including whether paid towards the course
- information, advice and guidance (IAG)
- reasons for doing the course and benefits gained
- attitudes to the course
- general attitudes to learning and barriers to further learning.

The questionnaire was administered using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and interviews were an average of 37 minutes in length.

1.3.2 Fieldwork period and completed interviews

Fieldwork was carried out between 15th February and 13th July 2005.

The original aim was to conduct 8,000 interviews. During fieldwork this target was revised to 7,000 interviews, because the number of ineligible cases was larger than expected. In the event, the final number of interviews completed was 6,909. Interviews were achieved with 51 per cent of eligible cases, or 71 per cent of cases after excluding ineligible, opt-outs and those who could not be traced to a current address (see Appendix A for detailed response rates).

Further details about the fieldwork procedures are given in Appendix B.

1.4 Data preparation and weighting

Once the interviews had been conducted, they were sent back by email to head office where they were aggregated. Open-ended responses were coded and tabulations of the data were produced and checked. Once the tabulations had been finalised, an SPSS file containing the data was produced.

In order to ensure the representativeness of the sample, design weights and non-response weights were applied. The design weights reflected the differential probability of selection of different course levels. The response weights corrected the differing response rates among various sub-groups. Full details are provided in Appendix C.

1.5 Interpretation of findings

When interpreting the findings for this survey, the following issues need to be borne in mind:

- the survey is based on a sample only, rather than the total population, of FE learners. This means that all findings are subject to sampling tolerances. In the text of the report, differences are reported only when they are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.
- the survey was based on individuals on FE courses in the academic year 2003/4. Respondents were interviewed around seven to thirteen months after completing their course. As a result, the circumstances of the individuals concerned may be affected by the specific timing of the survey. Additionally, their answers are influenced by their recall of events.
- the percentages in the report tables do not always add up to exactly 100 for each column. In some instances this is because multiple responses are possible. In all other cases, where the column total may be 99 per cent or 101 per cent, this is simply due to rounding of individual percentages to the nearest whole number.

Table symbols

| | |
|----|------------------------|
| * | Less than 0.5 per cent |
| 0 | No observations |
| – | Category not available |
| .. | Data not available |

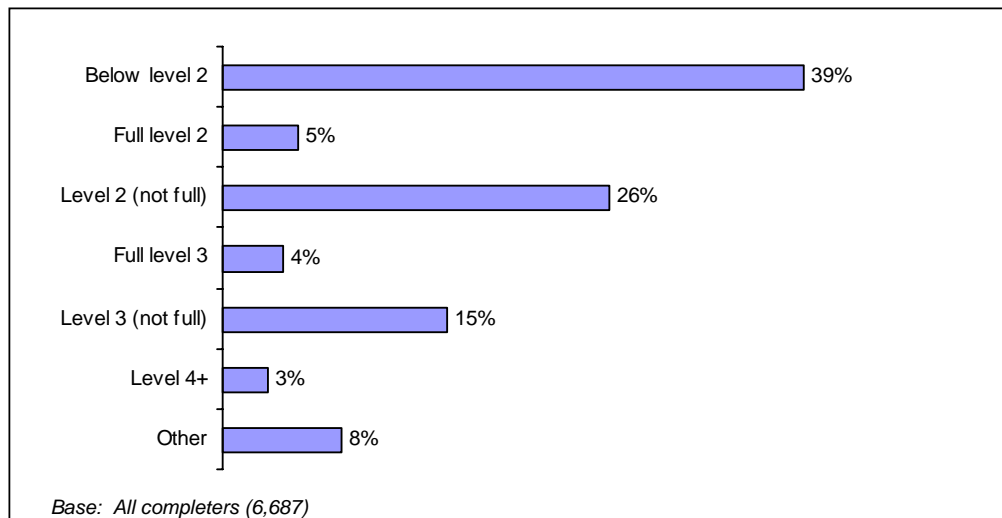
2 Sample characteristics

This chapter examines the characteristics of individuals in the interviewed sample, both in terms of their demographics and their circumstances at the time of the interview, typically between 7 and 13 months after completion of their FE course(s). The analysis focuses on people who completed their FE course, and as such provides a profile of FE course completers in 2003/04 with 30 or more guided learning hours². This chapter provides a context for later findings on experiences of FE learning and subsequent outcomes.

2.1 Course level

Chart 2.1 shows the NQF level at which learners were studying, as part of their FE course³. If they were taking more than one FE course, the designated level refers to the highest level being studied.

Chart 2.1: Level of FE course studied



2.2 Gender and age

Of the sample of learners who completed their FE course, 65 per cent were female. Both the youngest and oldest age groups had a higher proportion of male learners than other age bands (41 per cent of those aged under 25 were male, as were 39 per cent of those aged 60 or over).

² The sample was restricted to learners with 30 or more guided learning hours in total.

³ This information was taken from LSC administrative data. 'Other' includes both courses with no qualification aim and courses where the qualification aim was missing. Because of the way in which the LSC administrative data is structured it is not possible to split these two subgroups out.

Table 2.1 presents the relationship between course level, gender and age and shows that:

- people on 'other' courses were more likely than average to be in the older age bands. Additionally, this group contained a relatively high proportion of men.
- those studying for a qualification below level 2 also had a relatively old age profile.
- the youngest age profiles were among full level 3, and to a lesser extent full level 2, learners. In particular, full level 3 learners contained a high proportion of young men (17 per cent were men under 25).

Table 2.1: Gender and age, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Gender | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 36 | 35 | 32 | 30 | 33 | 32 | 43 | 35 |
| Female | 64 | 65 | 68 | 70 | 67 | 68 | 57 | 65 |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 8 | 20 | 9 | 33 | 16 | 13 | 7 | 11 |
| 25-34 | 20 | 31 | 25 | 23 | 29 | 28 | 18 | 24 |
| 35-49 | 35 | 39 | 38 | 36 | 39 | 45 | 27 | 36 |
| 50-59 | 18 | 9 | 15 | 7 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 15 |
| 60+ | 18 | 1 | 13 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 31 | 14 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6687 |

2.3 Marital status and children

Table 2.2 shows the marital status of FE completers, as well as the presence of children in the household. Respondents who were single/never married were generally younger and more likely to be male than female. As a result, level 3 (especially full level 3) learners and full level 2 learners contained a relatively high proportion of single respondents, reflecting the younger age profile of these learners.

Because of the age profile of people with children (concentrated in the 25-49 age group), full level 2 learners were most likely to have children, and those on 'other' courses were least likely.

Nine per cent of respondents who had completed a course were lone parents. Full level 2 learners contained a relatively high proportion of lone parents (15 per cent).

Table 2.2: Marital status and children, by level studied, gender and age

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Married/living with partner | 63 | 58 | 63 | 52 | 59 | 68 | 58 | 62 |
| Single | 23 | 32 | 25 | 40 | 31 | 26 | 24 | 26 |
| Widowed/divorced/separated | 13 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 17 | 11 |
| Children under 16 in household | 38 | 53 | 44 | 45 | 44 | 46 | 26 | 41 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6687 |

| | Gender | | Age | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Married/living with partner | 60 | 62 | 20 | 56 | 71 | 75 | 66 | 62 |
| Single | 34 | 23 | 80 | 39 | 16 | 9 | 9 | 26 |
| Widowed/divorced/separated | 6 | 15 | * | 4 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 11 |
| Children under 16 in household | 30 | 47 | 18 | 50 | 67 | 16 | 1 | 41 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 2163 | 4524 | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

2.4 Health and disability

Respondents were asked whether they had any long-standing illnesses or disabilities; answers are shown in table 2.3.

Overall, one in five completers (19 per cent) said they had an illness or disability of some kind. As is generally the case, incidence of an illness or disability increased with age. Related to this, learners studying below level 2 and those on 'other' courses were more likely to have an illness or disability (these two groups had an older age profile).

The most common types of illness or disability were problems concerning arms, legs, hands or feet (28 per cent), back or neck (18 per cent), heart, blood pressure or circulation (17 per cent), chest, breathing problems, asthma or bronchitis (13 per cent), learning difficulties (11 per cent) and depression or bad nerves (11 per cent).

The majority (91 per cent) of people with an illness or disability said they expected it to last for a year or more. Respondents were also likely to say that it affected the kind and/or amount of work that they could do.

Table 2.3: Long-term illness or disability, by level studied, gender and age

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Long standing illness/disability | 25 | 9 | 17 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 25 | 19 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6687 |

| | Gender | | Age | | | | Total | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | | 60+ |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | | % |
| Long standing illness/disability | 22 | 18 | 13 | 13 | 17 | 29 | 33 | 19 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 2163 | 4524 | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

2.5 Ethnic origin

Respondents were asked to categorise their ethnic origin, as shown in table 2.4. Older respondents were more likely to be White, with the 25-34 age group containing the highest proportion of non-White respondents. In terms of course level, those on 'other' courses were most likely to be White, reflecting the older age profile of this group. Those studying below level 2 contained the lowest proportion of White respondents, and this applied particularly to learners whose prior qualification was also below level 2.

Table 2.4: Ethnic origin, by level studied, gender and age

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| White | 79 | 84 | 85 | 82 | 86 | 88 | 91 | 83 |
| Black | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Asian | 10 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Mixed/other | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6687 |

| | Gender | | Age | | | | Total | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | | 60+ |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | | % |
| White | 84 | 83 | 78 | 75 | 83 | 89 | 96 | 83 |
| Black | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Asian | 7 | 8 | 12 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Mixed/other | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | * | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 2163 | 4524 | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

2.6 Non-completers

While the main focus of the study was on course completers, a small sample of learners who did not complete their FE course was included. This sample was designed to focus on non-completers studying at either full level 2 or full level 3; the interviewed sample comprised 112 studying at full level 2 and 86 at full level 3. Note that findings for non-completers should be interpreted with caution because of these small sample sizes.

The non-completers in the survey had a similar profile to those who completed their course, with the following exceptions:

- Non-completers tended to be younger than equivalent learners who had completed their course. Among those that did not complete the FE course, 33 per cent of full level 2 learners were under 25, as were 44 per cent of full level 3 learners. This compares with 20 per cent and 33 per cent of completers respectively.
- Full level 2 learners who did not complete their course were more likely to report an illness or disability than full level 2 learners who did complete their course (18 per cent compared with 9 per cent). There was no difference for full level 3 learners.

3 Education and employment history

3.1 Courses undertaken in three years before FE course

The majority (56 per cent) of FE learners who completed their course had undertaken some form of learning in the three years before starting their FE course (or in the case of recent school leavers, in the time since they left school). Details are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Courses undertaken in three years before FE course

| | % |
|--|----|
| Yes | 56 |
| – taught courses leading to qualification (even if not obtained) | 38 |
| – taught courses designed to help you develop skills that you might use in a job | 21 |
| - courses or instruction in driving, in playing a musical instrument, in an art or craft, in a sport or in any practical skill | 10 |
| No | 43 |

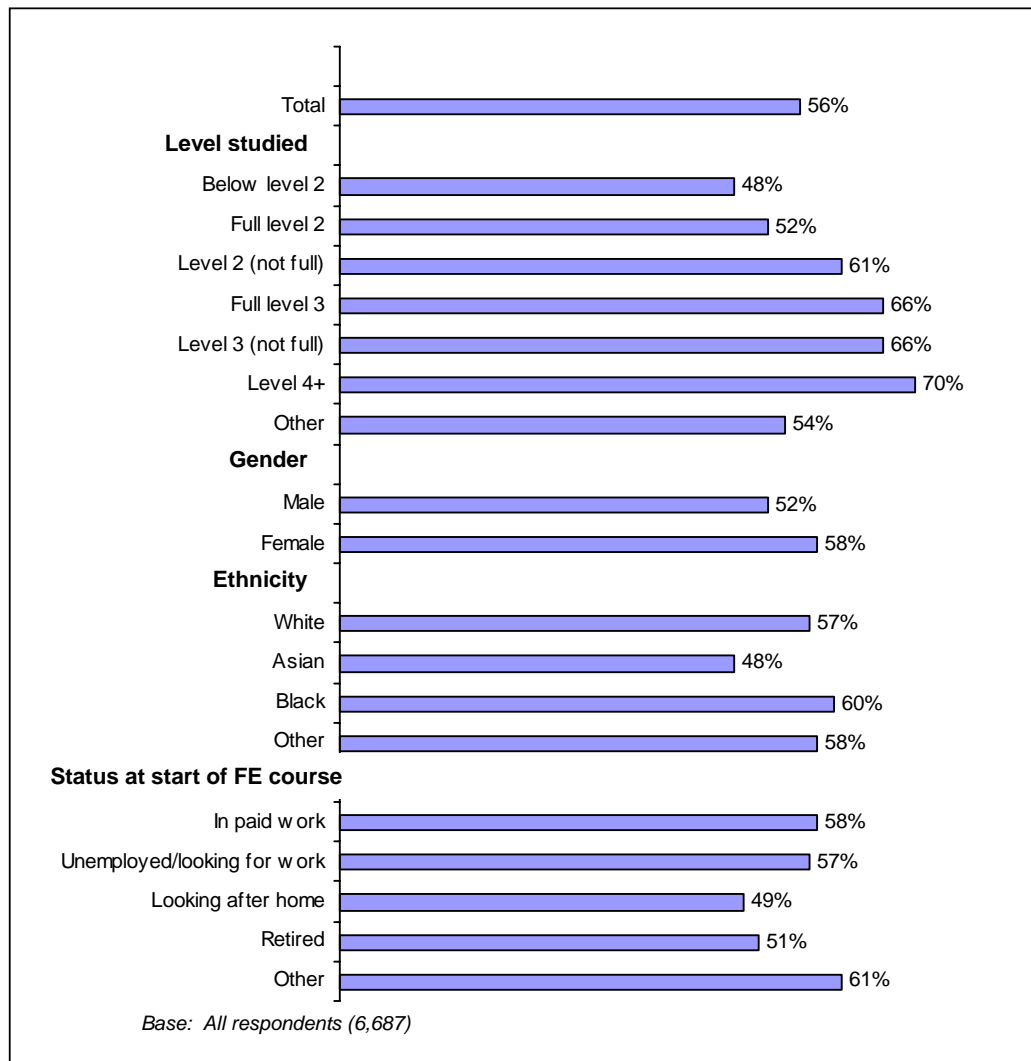
Base: All completers (6,687)

Chart 3.1 shows participation in prior courses by key sub-groups. Participation in some form of prior learning increased with the level of the FE course studied in 2003/04. This applied particularly to taught courses leading to a qualification (as opposed to other forms of learning). Those on 'other' courses in 2003/04, while showing average levels of participation overall, were less likely to have been on taught courses leading to a qualification (27 per cent).

In terms of gender, recent participation in courses was higher among women than men, with the exception of full level 3 learners: within this group, men were more likely than women to have been on courses previously.

Sub-groups showing lower than average participation in some form of prior learning were Asian respondents and respondents who were looking after the family or home at around this time. Figures were similar to average for people who were working at the start of their FE course, although those doing an FE course as part of their job were more likely to have done a course in the previous three years (63 per cent).

Chart 3.1: Participation in prior courses in three years before FE course, by level studied, gender and ethnicity



Those who had been on previous forms of learning were asked whether this included a course of 10 hours or more of face-to-face teaching in total. The majority (83 per cent) said that the course (or one of the previous courses) did have 10 hours or more of teaching.

3.1.1 Whether prior courses were organised by an employer

Respondents who had been on courses in the previous three years were asked whether the course(s) were organised by an employer (see table 3.2): overall, 25 per cent said that this was the case. Among those whose FE course was part of their job, 42 per cent had also done an employer-organised course in the previous three years. Reflecting this, figures were higher among full level 2 learners, full level 3 learners and those at level 4 or above; each of these groups were more likely than average to have been on a job-related course previously and to have had recent

work experience. Other sub-group differences were also strongly linked to employment history, learners with recent work experience being more likely to have been on a course organised by an employer (for example men and those in the middle age bands).

If the analysis is restricted to prior courses with 10 hours or more of teaching, the proportion of employer-organised courses goes down (to 22 per cent). Two in five short courses (less than 10 hours) were organised by an employer (43 per cent).

Table 3.2: Whether previous course(s) organised by an employer, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | Other | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Organised by employer | 21 | 38 | 25 | 36 | 23 | 41 | 32 | 25 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> | <i>6687</i> |

3.2 Qualifications

3.2.1 Highest level of qualification before FE course

This section examines the qualifications that learners had prior to their FE course (“prior qualification”). Table 3.3 shows this in terms of the highest level attained. Initially, 23 per cent of learners were classified as ‘other’, i.e. they could not be allocated to a qualification level. These were respondents who were unable to provide sufficient information to allow the level of their highest prior qualification to be determined, as well as those who had non-UK qualifications and a small proportion who did not have any prior qualifications⁴. These cases have been re-allocated in the analysis⁵, to ensure that all respondents are allocated to a level for their highest prior qualification. Re-allocation was carried out as follows:

- 55 per cent allocated to level 1
- 35 per cent allocated to full level 2
- 10 per cent allocated to full level 3.

⁴ Excluding those with no prior qualifications from the ‘other’ category does not have a statistically significant impact on the findings, as the proportion of learners who say they have no prior qualifications is so low (two per cent).

⁵ This is a standard procedure which has been agreed with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the Labour Force Survey.

One in three learners had a prior qualification below level 2; in many cases, these were people who had GCSEs or O Levels but of an insufficient number and/or grade to qualify for level 2 status. Level 2 (23 per cent of the sample) mostly comprised NVQs, O/AO levels, GCSEs and A-levels (insufficient to qualify for level 3) as the highest qualification. Learners at level 3 (15 per cent of respondents) mostly had A levels, NVQs or City & Guilds as their highest qualification, while Level 4 (29 per cent of the sample) mostly comprised degrees, with some diplomas and HNC/HNDs.

Men tended to have slightly higher prior qualifications than women, while the level of the prior qualification was lower among those with an illness or disability (40 per cent below level 2). The prior qualifications of people in work at the start of the course were higher than other learners (for example 33 per cent of those working at the start of the course were at level 4, compared with 24 per cent of those not in work). However, there was no difference when comparing those doing a course related to their job with those who were working whilst on an (unrelated) course.

Older people also tended to have higher prior qualifications. This is related to the large proportion of learners aged 50 or over whose prior qualification was higher than the course they were taking, and who were often studying an FE course primarily through interest in the course rather than for other reasons. These learners can be contrasted with younger learners with lower prior qualifications, who were often taking an FE course specifically to improve their skills or qualifications.

Table 3.3: Highest level of qualification prior to FE course, by gender and age

| Highest level of qualification before FE course | Gender | | Age | | | | | Total |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Below level 2 | 30 | 34 | 35 | 34 | 32 | 29 | 32 | 33 |
| Level 2 | 23 | 24 | 26 | 21 | 25 | 22 | 21 | 23 |
| Level 3 | 16 | 15 | 25 | 17 | 14 | 14 | 10 | 15 |
| Level 4+ | 31 | 28 | 14 | 28 | 28 | 35 | 37 | 29 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>2163</i> | <i>4524</i> | <i>745</i> | <i>1488</i> | <i>2647</i> | <i>973</i> | <i>834</i> | <i>6687</i> |

3.2.2 Relationship between prior qualification and level of course

We can examine the relationship between the learner’s prior qualification and the level of course being studied.

Table 3.4 shows, for each level of study, the proportion of learners whose prior qualification was lower, higher or at the same level as their course. Note that this analysis compares data from different sources: the highest level being studied by

the learner is taken from the LSC administrative data, whereas the data on qualifications was provided by respondents as part of the interview⁶.

This shows that overall 58 per cent of completers had a prior qualification that was higher than the FE course they were taking; this proportion was highest among those on part-level 2 courses and on 'other' courses. It was lowest among full level 2 and full level 3 learners.

Table 3.4: Proportion of learners whose prior qualification was at a higher, lower or the same level as their FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| Level of qualification at the start of the course | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Qualified at higher level | 62 | 26 | 69 | 14 | 52 | n/a | 71 | 58 |
| Qualified at same level | 38 | 30 | 0 | 27 | 0 | 59 | 29 | 21 |
| Qualified at lower level | n/a | 44 | 31 | 59 | 48 | 41 | n/a | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6687 |

Table 3.5 shows the demographic patterns of learners whose prior qualification was at a higher, lower or the same level as their FE course. Men were more likely than women to have a higher prior qualification than the course they were taking, and this was also more prevalent among older learners. Younger learners were more likely to have studied a course at a higher level than their highest prior qualification; this mainly reflects the level of study, with full level 2 and full level 3 learners (generally in the younger age groups) also more likely to have a lower prior qualification than their course.

Learners with a long-term illness or disability were less likely than average to have a higher prior qualification than their course, and this also applied to non-white learners.

⁶ The data on prior qualification includes the re-allocation of 'other' qualifications described in section 3.2.1. For the purposes of this analysis, a part level 2 is taken as lower than a full level 2 (similarly part level 3 is lower than full level 3). 'Other' courses are taken as being below level 2.

Table 3.5: Proportion of learners whose prior qualification was at a higher, lower or the same level as their FE course, by gender, age, illness/disability and ethnicity

| | Gender | | Age | | | | | Total |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| Level of qualification at the start of the course | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Qualified at higher level than course | 61 | 56 | 46 | 55 | 57 | 65 | 66 | 58 |
| Qualified at same level as course | 21 | 21 | 22 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 24 | 21 |
| Qualified at lower level than course | 18 | 23 | 31 | 23 | 23 | 16 | 10 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 2163 | 4524 | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

| | Long-term illness/disability | | Ethnicity | | | | Total |
|--|------------------------------|------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | No | White | Asian | Black | Other | |
| Level of qualification at the start of the course | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Qualified at higher level than course | 55 | 59 | 59 | 50 | 52 | 55 | 58 |
| Qualified at same level as course | 29 | 19 | 20 | 31 | 27 | 24 | 21 |
| Qualified at lower level than course | 16 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 22 | 21 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1125 | 5562 | 5779 | 435 | 265 | 199 | 6687 |

Profile of first full level 2 learners

Overall, 44 per cent of full level 2 learners were studying for their first full level 2. This proportion was similar between men and women. By age, 25-34 year olds were less likely than other age groups to be studying for a first full level 2. Details are shown in table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Whether first full level 2, by gender and age

| | Gender | | Age | | | | Total |
|---|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| First full level 2 | 43 | 45 | 53 | 37 | 45 | 47 | 44 |
| Other full level 2 | 57 | 55 | 47 | 63 | 55 | 53 | 56 |
| <i>Base: All completers studying for full level 2 (955)</i> | 315 | 640 | 142 | 292 | 405 | 116 | 955 |

Profile of first full level 3 learners and level 3 jumpers

Three in five full level 3 learners were studying for their first full level 3 (59 per cent), and 29 per cent were 'jumpers', i.e. their prior qualification was below level 2. There were no significant differences by gender. The youngest age group (under 25) were

most likely to be studying for their first full level 3, while there were no significant age differences for full level 3 'jumpers'. Details are shown in table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Whether first full level 3 or full level 3 'jumper', by gender and age

| | Gender | | Age | | | | Total |
|---|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| First full level 3 | 59 | 60 | 69 | 51 | 60 | 42 | 59 |
| Full level 3 jumpers | 27 | 30 | 27 | 29 | 33 | 24 | 29 |
| <i>Base: All completers studying for full level 3 (889)</i> | 227 | 662 | 196 | 223 | 387 | 83 | 889 |

Profile of learners studying below level 2 who were qualified to a higher level

Learners on courses below level 2 were split between those who had a higher prior qualification (i.e. level 2 or above) and those who did not. Where learners had a higher prior qualification, they were often qualified to level 4 or above (in 47 per cent of cases where the prior qualification was higher).

There was a difference in terms of ethnicity, with Asian learners less likely to have a higher prior qualification. Those with a long-term illness or disability were also less likely to have a qualification at level 2 or above, while older learners were more likely than younger learners to have a higher prior qualification. Details are shown in table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Proportion of learners studying below level 2 with a higher prior qualification level, by gender, age, illness/disability and ethnicity

| | Gender | | Age | | | | Total |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | |
| Level of qualification at the start of the course | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Qualified at higher level than course | 65 | 61 | 54 | 58 | 64 | 67 | 65 |
| Qualified no higher than course | 35 | 39 | 46 | 42 | 36 | 33 | 35 |
| <i>Base: All completers studying below level 2 (1,266)</i> | 443 | 823 | 88 | 222 | 452 | 235 | 269 |

| | Long-term illness/disability | | Ethnicity | | | | Total |
|--|------------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | No | White | Asian | Black | Other | |
| Level of qualification at the start of the course | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Qualified at higher level than course | 54 | 65 | 65 | 51 | 61 | 66 | 62 |
| Qualified no higher than course | 46 | 35 | 35 | 49 | 39 | 34 | 38 |
| <i>Base: All completers studying below level 2 (1,266)</i> | 328 | 938 | 1032 | 121 | 56 | 55 | 1266 |

3.3 Activity before FE course

Over half of the FE learners who had completed their course said that they were in paid employment when they started their FE course (57 per cent), and this was likely to have been full-time work (41 per cent were working 30 hours or more per week, 16 per cent working less than 30 hours per week). This is shown in table 3.9.

Where respondents were not in work at the start of the course, we established what they were doing immediately beforehand. Only two per cent of all respondents left a job to start their FE course. Other respondents were looking after the family or home (14 per cent) or retired (11 per cent) at the start of their FE course.

Table 3.9: Activity before FE course

| | % |
|--|----|
| In work at start of course | |
| Full-time work (30 hours or more) | 41 |
| Part-time work (less than 30 hours) | 16 |
| Not in work at start of course | |
| Full-time work (30 hours or more) | 1 |
| Part-time work (less than 30 hours) | 1 |
| Straight from school | 1 |
| College university (full or part-time) | 3 |
| Voluntary work | 1 |
| Unemployed/looking for work | 6 |
| Looking after family and home | 14 |
| Permanently sick/injured | 3 |
| Retired | 11 |
| Not working for other reason | 3 |

Base: All completers (6,687)

The respondents who were working at the start of the FE course are examined in more detail in the next section. Sub-group findings for other activities were as follows:

- Black and Asian respondents were more likely than average to be looking after the family and home (34 per cent of Asian respondents were doing this at the start of the course, as were 20 per cent of Black respondents). This is linked to the level of the course, in that people on courses below level 2 were most likely to be looking after the family and home, and such courses also contained a high proportion of non-White ethnic groups.
- People on courses below level 2 were also more likely than average to be unemployed (12 per cent).
- The proportion of retired people is particularly high among those on 'other' courses (25 per cent). Among learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4, the proportion of retired respondents is one per cent or less.

3.4 Learners in work at start of FE course

This section examines the profile of learners who were in work at the start of their FE course. Overall, 57 per cent were in paid work at the start of their course; including 31 per cent who were doing the course as part of a job. Table 3.10 breaks this down according to the level studied.

Those studying at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above were most likely to be in work, and to be taking a course as part of their job. Those on 'other' courses were less likely to be in work; where they were working, however, it was likely to be full-time work (44 per cent were working full-time, eight per cent part-time work). Learners studying below level 2 were also less likely to be in work, and in particular were unlikely to be doing the course as part of a job.

Table 3.10: Whether FE course related to job doing at time, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| Whether course was part of a job | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 19 | 58 | 31 | 53 | 36 | 75 | 32 |
| No (but in work) | 27 | 17 | 28 | 16 | 32 | 12 | 21 |
| No (not in work) | 54 | 25 | 41 | 31 | 32 | 12 | 47 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

Within the group of learners studying below level 2, those who had a higher prior qualification were more likely to be in work, as shown in table 3.11. The proportion of first full level 2 learners in work was no different to other full level 2 learners. There were no differences either between first full level 3 learners, or full level 3 jumpers, and other full level 3 learners.

Table 3.11: Whether FE course related to job doing at time, among learners studying below level 2

| | Studying below level 2 | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| | Prior qualification at level 2 or above | Prior qualification below level 2 |
| Whether course was part of a job | % | % |
| Yes | 24 | 15 |
| No (but in work) | 34 | 20 |
| No (not in work) | 42 | 66 |
| <i>Base: All completers studying below level 2 (1,266)</i> | 623 | 643 |

Table 3.12 looks at demographic sub-groups. Respondents aged 35-49 were most likely to be working at the start of their course. Men were more likely than women to be in work at the start of their course. Learners from non-white ethnic groups, and learners with a long-term illness or disability, were less likely to be doing the course as part of a job, or to be in paid work at all at the start of the course.

Table 3.12: Whether FE course related to job doing at time, by gender, age, ethnicity and illness/disability

| | Gender | | Age | | | | | Total |
|---|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| Whether course was part of a job | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 33 | 30 | 26 | 33 | 38 | 35 | 7 | 31 |
| No (but in work) | 29 | 25 | 30 | 27 | 30 | 29 | 10 | 26 |
| No (not in work) | 38 | 46 | 45 | 40 | 32 | 36 | 84 | 43 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 2163 | 4524 | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

| | Long-term illness/disability | | Ethnicity | | | | Total |
|---|------------------------------|------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | No | White | Asian | Black | Other | |
| Whether course was part of a job | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 15 | 35 | 33 | 18 | 24 | 21 | 31 |
| No (but in work) | 14 | 29 | 27 | 21 | 25 | 13 | 26 |
| No (not in work) | 71 | 36 | 40 | 61 | 51 | 66 | 43 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1125 | 5562 | 5779 | 435 | 265 | 199 | 6687 |

3.5 Most recent paid work before FE course

Table 3.13 shows when respondents were last in work, prior to starting their FE course. As noted above, the majority of FE learners were working at the start of the FE course, but of the remainder, a large proportion had not worked for some time: 17 per cent of all course completers had not worked for at least five years before their course, and a further eight per cent had never been in paid work.

This lack of recent work experience was more common among learners studying below level 2 and on 'other' courses, but applied to other levels as well.

Table 3.13: Most recent paid work before FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| In work at start of course | 46 | 75 | 59 | 69 | 68 | 88 | 53 | 57 |
| Immediately before course | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Less than 1 year before course | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 or 2 years before course | 5 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 or 4 years before course | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 years or more before course | 21 | 6 | 16 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 26 | 17 |
| Never in paid work | 15 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 9 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6,687 |

The findings by level studied are heavily influenced by the respondent's age, with over half of those aged 60 or over not having worked for five years or more, and one in five people aged under 25 having never worked; the latter finding is particularly relevant for full level 2 and full level 3 learners, many of whom are aged under 25.

Black and Asian respondents were also less likely to have recent work experience, and this pattern applied across all levels.

Table 3.14: Most recent paid work before FE course, by age and ethnicity

| | Age | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | |
| In work at start of course | 55 | 60 | 68 | 64 | 16 | 57 |
| Immediately before course | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Less than 1 year before course | 10 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 1 or 2 years before course | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| 3 or 4 years before course | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 5 |
| 5 years or more before course | 1 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 58 | 17 |
| Never in paid work | 22 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

| | Ethnicity | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | White | Black | Asian | Mixed/other | |
| | % | % | % | % | |
| In work at start of course | 60 | 39 | 49 | 34 | 57 |
| Immediately before course | 2 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| Less than 1 year before course | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| 1 or 2 years before course | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| 3 or 4 years before course | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| 5 years or more before course | 18 | 8 | 12 | 11 | 17 |
| Never in paid work | 5 | 35 | 19 | 32 | 8 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 5779 | 265 | 435 | 123 | 6687 |

3.6 Type of work at start of course

In this section, we examine in more detail the work being done at the start of the FE course.

3.6.1 Learners working at the start of the course

Industry sector

The distribution of jobs by industry sector was similar to the profile of the working population in Britain as whole. The differences were that there were fewer in the FE learners sample in construction, wholesale/retail, and real estate, renting and business activities, while FE learners were more likely to be in public administration/defence/social security, education and health/social work.

Table 3.15 shows the industry sector of those who were working at the start of the course, analysed by the level studied. This shows that full level 2 learners were more likely than other respondents to be working in health/social work and construction. Full level 3 learners were also more likely to be in health/social work.

Those working in education and health/social work were likely to be doing courses as part of their job, while in the wholesale/retail sector, learners were generally not doing courses related to their job.

Table 3.15: Industry sector of learners in work at the start of the FE course, by level studied and whether course was part of a job

| Industry sector | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Agriculture, hunting, forestry | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | * | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Mining and quarrying | * | 0 | * | 1 | * | 0 | 0 | * |
| Manufacturing | 16 | 15 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Electricity, gas, water | 1 | 0 | * | 1 | * | 0 | 1 | * |
| Construction | 4 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| Wholesale, retail, repair | 9 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 9 |
| Hotels, restaurants | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Transport, storage, communication | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Financial intermediation | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Real estate, renting, business activities | 6 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 7 |
| Public admin, defence, social security | 9 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 12 | 22 | 18 | 12 |
| Education | 11 | 8 | 15 | 14 | 12 | 18 | 10 | 13 |
| Health and social work | 17 | 24 | 18 | 24 | 18 | 9 | 15 | 18 |
| Other community, social, personal service | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Private households | * | 0 | * | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * |
| Unclassified | 9 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 8 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work at the start of the FE course (4,228)</i> | 574 | 741 | 1,033 | 679 | 688 | 166 | 281 | 4,228 |

| Industry sector | Whether course was part of a job | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Course was part of a job | In work but course not part of a job |
| | % | % |
| Agriculture, hunting, forestry | 1 | 1 |
| Mining and quarrying | * | * |
| Manufacturing | 10 | 14 |
| Electricity, gas, water | * | * |
| Construction | 7 | 2 |
| Wholesale, retail, repair | 5 | 15 |
| Hotels, restaurants | 2 | 5 |
| Transport, storage, communication | 4 | 6 |
| Financial intermediation | 1 | 5 |
| Real estate, renting, business activities | 6 | 8 |
| Public admin, defence, social security | 13 | 10 |
| Education | 15 | 10 |
| Health and social work | 22 | 12 |
| Other community, social, personal service | 5 | 4 |
| Private households | * | * |
| Unclassified | 8 | 8 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work at the start of the FE course (4,228)</i> | 2651 | 1511 |

Occupation

Again, the jobs that FE learners were doing at the start of their course were similar to the population as a whole, the differences being that more FE learners were doing personal service occupations, while slightly fewer were in managerial and professional jobs. Table 3.16 shows the full breakdown by occupation. Among FE learners, those in personal service occupations were disproportionately likely to be doing the course as part of their job, whereas those in sales and customers service occupations and elementary occupations were less likely to be doing the course as part of their job.

Table 3.16: Occupation for work conducted at start of FE course

| | Work at start of course | GB total ⁷ |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Occupation | % | % |
| Managers/senior officials | 12 | 15 |
| Professional | 10 | 12 |
| Associate professional and technical | 15 | 14 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 14 | 13 |
| Skilled trades | 9 | 12 |
| Personal service | 17 | 8 |
| Sales and customer service | 7 | 8 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 6 | 8 |
| Elementary occupations | 9 | 12 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work at start of FE course</i> | <i>4228</i> | |

Table 3.17 looks at occupation analysed by the level studied. This shows that:

- Both full level 2 and full level 3 learners were less likely than other learners to be in managerial and professional occupations while doing their course, and were more likely to be in personal service occupations. Full level 2 learners were also more likely than average to be in skilled trades (this particularly applied when the course was part of the job).
- Learners studying at level 4 or above were most likely to be in managerial and professional occupations. These variations are even more clear-cut if learners are analysed in terms of their prior qualification: higher qualified learners were more likely to work in higher occupational groups.

⁷ Data from 2003 Labour Force Survey

Table 3.17: Occupation for work at start of FE course, by level studied and whether course was part of a job

| Occupation | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Managers/senior officials | 14 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 13 | 20 | 13 | 12 |
| Professional | 11 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 12 | 23 | 11 | 10 |
| Associate professional and technical | 13 | 6 | 15 | 9 | 17 | 23 | 17 | 15 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 12 | 11 | 18 | 17 | 14 | 20 | 11 | 14 |
| Skilled trades | 10 | 14 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 13 | 9 |
| Personal service | 13 | 31 | 19 | 34 | 16 | 4 | 13 | 17 |
| Sales and customer service | 6 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 6 |
| Elementary occupations | 12 | 15 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 9 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work at the start of the FE course (4,228)</i> | 574 | 741 | 1,033 | 679 | 688 | 166 | 281 | 4,228 |

| Industry sector | Whether course was part of a job | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Course was part of a job | In work but course not part of a job |
| | % | % |
| Managers/senior officials | 13 | 12 |
| Professional | 10 | 10 |
| Associate professional and technical | 16 | 13 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 13 | 16 |
| Skilled trades | 9 | 9 |
| Personal service | 23 | 10 |
| Sales and customer service | 2 | 12 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 5 | 6 |
| Elementary occupations | 7 | 12 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work at the start of the FE course (4,228)</i> | 2651 | 1511 |

The above analysis by level is strongly influenced by learners' age. Younger people (in particular those aged under 25) were less likely to be in managerial and professional positions and more likely to be in elementary occupations. Because full level 2 and full level 3 learners have a very young age profile, this impacts on the variations in occupation for these learners. Similarly, because of their younger age profile, full level 2 and full level 3 learners were less likely than other FE learners to be in a managerial or supervisory capacity in their job, and tended to work in smaller workplaces (again this is linked to age).

The other main variation in occupation and sector was in relation to learning mode: among those on distance learning, a very high proportion of those in work were in health and social work (53 per cent); related to this, they were also more likely than average to be in personal service occupations. Those on open learning were more likely than average to be in administrative or secretarial occupations. Full-time full-year learners tended to be in lower level occupations.

Hours and pay

The majority of FE learners who were working at the start of their course were working full-time (72 per cent were working more than 30 hours per week). If their course was part of their job, they were even more likely to be working full-time (75 per cent); this is shown in table 3.18. There were no differences by level, except that those on 'other' courses were most likely to be working full-time (in 86 per cent of cases) if they were working at the same time as their course.

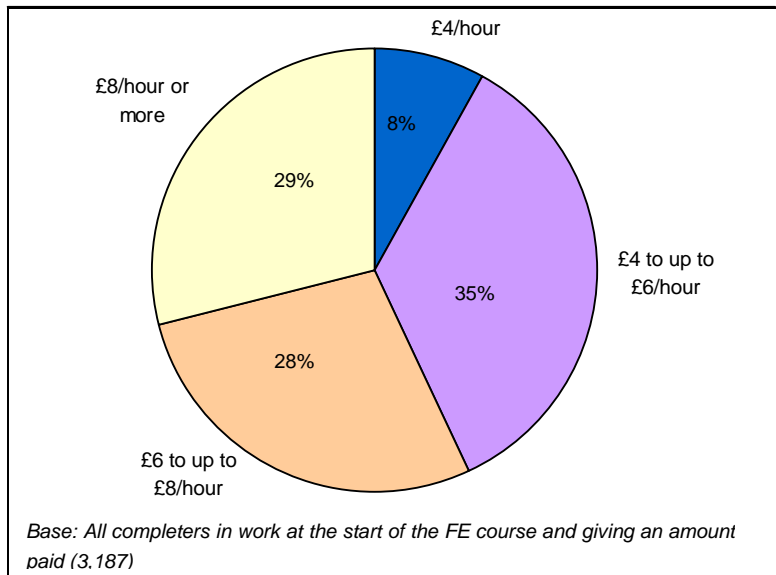
The other difference was related to learning mode. Those on a course full-time for a full year, as well as being less likely to be working at the start of the course, were also likely to be working part-time if they were in work (in 47 per cent of cases).

Table 3.18: Hours worked by learners in paid work at the start of the course, by whether course was part of a job

| | Course was part of a job | In work but course not part of the job |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| | % | % |
| Less than 30 hours per week | 23 | 32 |
| 30 hours per week or more | 75 | 65 |
| Not given | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work at the start of the FE course (4,228)</i> | <i>2,684</i> | <i>1,544</i> |

In terms of pay, the majority of those who gave an amount were earning more than £4 net per hour (92 per cent), with 29 per cent earning £8 net per hour or more. This is shown in chart 3.2. Again, because of the age profiles (younger people generally being on a lower pay), learners studying at full level 2 and full level 3 were on lower wages than other learners, with those studying at level 4 or above on the highest pay.

Chart 3.2: Hourly pay of learners in paid work at the start of the course



Non-completers

The only differences between completers and non-completers on the issues covered in this chapter were that:

- non-completers were less likely to be doing their course as part of a job: 42 per cent compared with 58 per cent for full level 2 learners, and 44 per cent compared with 53 per cent for full level 3 learners.
- full level 3 learners who did not complete their course were more likely to be studying for a first full level 3, when compared with full level 3 learners who completed their course (71 per cent compared with 60 per cent). There was no such difference for full level 2 learners.

4 Experience of the FE course

This chapter examines the details of the FE course, with analysis focusing on people who completed their FE course. The final section in the chapter examines the reasons why non-completers failed to complete their course; otherwise non-completers are only included in the chapter where appropriate.

4.1 Course details

4.1.1 Learning mode

Table 4.1 shows the learning mode (as stated in the LSC's database), analysed by the highest level being studied by the learner. This shows that the majority of courses were part-time (86 per cent across the total sample). Full-time courses were more prevalent among learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 and part level 3. The other variation by level is that part-time evening courses were more likely to be studied by learners at part, rather than full, levels.

Table 4.1: Learning mode, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Full-time full-year | 5 | 20 | 5 | 38 | 19 | 3 | 4 |
| Full-time part-year | 4 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 10 |
| Part-time, open learning | 6 | * | 4 | * | 2 | 0 | * |
| Part-time, distance learning | 2 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Part-time, evening | 27 | 16 | 37 | 18 | 35 | 36 | 23 |
| Part-time: other, including e-learning | 56 | 53 | 43 | 40 | 38 | 52 | 57 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> |

Table 4.2 shows the learning mode analysed by whether the course was part of a job, and whether the course was compulsory. Part-time distance learning was mainly carried out by people doing a course as part of their job, and a relatively large proportion of compulsory courses were conducted in this way. Part-time evening courses were most likely to be taken by people who were working but not doing the course as part of a job.

Full-time full-year courses were more common among learners studying at a higher level than their prior qualification, while part-time evening classes were more common among those whose prior qualification was higher than the course they were taking.

Table 4.2: Learning mode, by whether course was part of a job

| | Whether course was part of a job | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| | Course was compulsory | Course was part of a job, but not compulsory | Working at start of course, course not part of a job | Not working at start of course |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Full-time full-year | 4 | 3 | 8 | 14 |
| Full-time part-year | 16 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Part-time, open learning | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Part-time, distance learning | 17 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| Part-time, evening | 16 | 34 | 47 | 19 |
| Part-time: other, including e-learning | 46 | 47 | 37 | 58 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 572 | 2,112 | 1,544 | 2,459 |

4.1.2 Hours studied per week

In the survey, learners were asked how many hours teaching they received per week. The majority were studying less than five hours per week, and this was particularly common among learners studying below level 2 (74 per cent) and part level 2 (77 per cent). The number of hours per week was considerably higher among full level 3 learners than other levels (40 per cent had 11 hours or more of teaching, compared with between eight per cent and 20 per cent at other levels).

4.1.3 Total learning hours

The LSC database includes the total number of guided learning hours, and this is shown in table 4.3 for the sample of learners who completed their course. This shows that the total number of guided learning hours was highest among full level 2 and full level 3 learners. Those studying below level 2 or on 'other' courses were more likely to be on shorter courses.

Table 4.3: Total learning hours, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| 30-49 ⁸ | 27 | 4 | 18 | 3 | 14 | 10 | 54 |
| 50-99 | 41 | 17 | 44 | 9 | 29 | 12 | 28 |
| 100-199 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 16 | 21 | 33 | 7 |
| 200+ | 12 | 56 | 10 | 69 | 34 | 40 | 8 |
| Not stated | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

⁸ The sample was restricted to learners with 30 or more guided learning hours in total

4.1.4 FE course subject

Learners were then asked about the subject of their course. Here (and throughout this chapter), where learners had completed more than one FE course, answers relate to the main course, as perceived by the learner. It must be borne in mind that this is not necessarily the highest level of course undertaken by the learner, but the course regarded by them as the most important.

As would be expected, a wide variety of subjects was being studied by FE learners. However, by far the most common answer was IT/computer courses. Findings are shown in table 4.4, analysed by the level studied. This analysis indicates that:

- IT/computer courses were likely to be at lower levels, specifically those studying below level 2 or part-level 2
- those whose course was at level 3 were the most likely to have done a health/ social care and public services course, along with those on 'other' courses
- learners studying below level 2 were the most likely to be doing English language or ESOL courses, and this was generally where learners' highest prior qualification was also below level 2
- hairdressing/beauty therapy and engineering/technology/manufacturing were most likely to be done by full level 2 learners
- Humanities subjects were most likely to be done by those on 'other' courses.

Table 4.4: Course subject, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| (top answers) | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| IT / Computers | 35 | 4 | 29 | 8 | 13 | 6 | 12 |
| Health / social care and public services | 3 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 7 | 16 |
| Arts and Crafts | 7 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 9 |
| English / languages and communications | 9 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| Business admin / management and professional | 1 | 10 | 5 | 17 | 11 | 43 | 6 |
| Foreign languages | 8 | * | 5 | * | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| ESOL | 9 | * | 3 | 1 | 2 | 5 | * |
| Literacy or numeracy / basic skills | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Mathematics | 2 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| Care | 1 | 16 | 3 | 17 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Hairdressing / beauty therapy | 1 | 12 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 1 | * |
| Humanities | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | * | 14 |
| Hospitality / sports / leisure / travel | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | * | 3 |
| Health and fitness / yoga / meditation | 1 | * | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Engineering / technology / manufacturing | 2 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Construction | 2 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

Table 4.5 shows subjects where there was a statistically significant gender difference.

Table 4.5: Course subject, by gender

| | Gender | | Total |
|---|--------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | |
| Subjects where gender difference was statistically significant | % | % | % |
| IT / Computers | 27 | 23 | 25 |
| Health / social care and public services | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| Arts and Crafts | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| ESOL | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Care | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Hairdressing / beauty therapy | * | 5 | 3 |
| Hospitality / sports / leisure / travel | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Engineering / technology / manufacturing | 7 | * | 3 |
| Construction | 7 | * | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 2,163 | 4,524 | 6,687 |

Other sub-group findings were as follows:

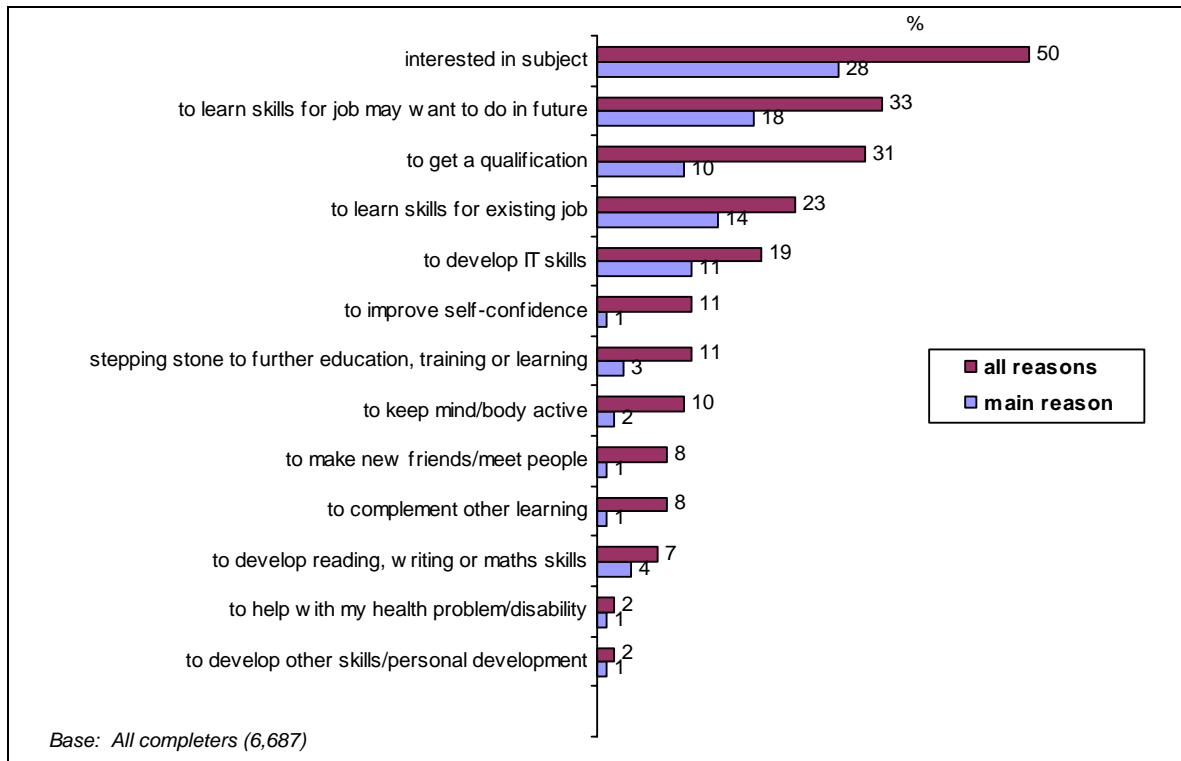
- The majority of part-time open learning courses were in **IT or computers** (88 per cent). Older learners were particularly likely to be on an IT/computer course: around half of learners (46 per cent) aged 50 or more who studied at level two or below were doing an IT/computer course, as were 42 per cent of all retired learners. Related to this, IT/computer courses were more prevalent among learners who were not in work. Where learners with a course aim of full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above were studying this subject, it was very unlikely to be part of a job.
- A third of part-time distance learning courses were in **health/social care and public services**.

Within the groups of learners studying for full level 2 and full level 3, care courses accounted for a relatively large proportion of the courses done by learners whose course was part of a job, and by *first* full level 2/3 learners (around one in five in each case). Half of the learners at level 4 or above whose course was part of a job were studying a business administration or management course (49 per cent).

4.2 Reasons for doing FE course

Learners were asked for the reasons they did their FE course. If more than one answer was given they were than asked for the main reason. Answers given by more than one per cent of respondents are shown in chart 4.1.

Chart 4.1: Reasons for doing FE course and main reason



A fundamental division in terms of FE learners' reasons for doing a course was whether the course was part of a job (discussed in chapter 3). Table 4.6 shows the different reasons given by respondents, split according to whether the course was part of a job or not.

Among those whose course was part of a job, the main reasons (other than to learn skills for that job) were to get a qualification, or to learn skills for a future job or career more generally. A third said that a reason for doing the course was interest in the subject, although this was more frequently a reason given by learners whose course was not part of their job.

Table 4.6: Reasons for doing FE course by whether course was part of a job

| | All | | Course part of job | | Course not part of job | |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| | All reasons | Main reason | All reasons | Main reason | All reasons | Main reason |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Interested in the subject | 50 | 28 | 31 | 9 | 58 | 36 |
| To learn skills for job may want to do in future | 33 | 18 | 34 | 14 | 33 | 19 |
| To get a qualification | 31 | 10 | 45 | 17 | 24 | 7 |
| To learn skills for an existing job | 23 | 14 | 69 | 42 | 3 | 1 |
| To develop IT skills | 19 | 11 | 15 | 7 | 20 | 12 |
| To improve self-confidence | 11 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 12 | 2 |
| As a stepping stone to further education, training or learning | 11 | 3 | 10 | 2 | 11 | 3 |
| To keep mind/body active | 10 | 2 | 4 | * | 13 | 3 |
| To make new friends/meet new people | 8 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 1 |
| To complement other learning | 8 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 8 | 1 |
| To develop reading, writing or maths skills | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 5 |
| To help with my health problems/disability | 2 | 1 | * | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| To develop other skills/personal development | 2 | 1 | 1 | * | 2 | 1 |
| Learn/improve languages | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| For my children/grand-children | 1 | 1 | * | * | 2 | 1 |
| I am going abroad/will help me abroad | 1 | * | * | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Required by employer/compulsory | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Base: All completers</i> | <i>6,687</i> | <i>6,687</i> | <i>2,684</i> | <i>2,684</i> | <i>4,003</i> | <i>4,003</i> |

We can examine the different reasons for doing courses, in terms of level of study and other aspects of the course (table 4.7 shows analysis by level studied).

Interest in the subject was mentioned most frequently by people on ‘other’ courses, and by those taking subjects that were non-vocational. Course subjects include arts and crafts, visual/performing arts, foreign languages, humanities, hairdressing/beauty therapy and health/fitness/yoga. This was also the main reason among retired learners (78 per cent). For people studying below level 2, this reason tended to be given more frequently by learners whose prior qualification was higher than the course (i.e. had a qualification at level 2 or above).

Those studying at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above were most likely to say that they were doing the course to **gain a qualification** (20 per cent or more at these levels said it was the single main reason for doing the course). This was more relevant to learners on longer courses and those studying vocational subjects, such as construction, business/management, care, classroom assistance and cookery. Learners who were unemployed prior to the course were also more likely to say that they did it to gain a qualification (44 per cent). Among full level 2 and full level 3 learners, this was equally likely to be given as a reason by those studying for their

first full level as by other full level 2/3 learners; this indicates that gaining a qualification can be an important motivation even if this does not increase the learner's NQF level.

As noted above, the most common subject studied by learners was IT and computers, with many courses below level 2 on this subject. This is reflected by the large number of respondents below level 2 who said that **improving IT skills** was a reason for doing the course.

Those studying below level 2 were also most likely to say they did the course to **improve self-confidence**, particularly when their prior qualification was also below level 2 (19 per cent). This was an important factor for those on basic skills, ESOL and English language courses specifically. Related to this, non-White learners were more likely than average to say this, as were people of working age but not in work. *First* full level 2 and *first* full level 3 learners were more likely to mention this than other learners studying for full level 2/3 qualifications.

Level 3 learners (full and part level) were most likely to say that the course they were doing was **a stepping stone to further learning**. This was most likely to be mentioned by learners studying sciences, maths, teaching and classroom assistance, health/social/care services and ESOL courses. It was also mentioned more frequently than average by people who were unemployed before starting the course (18 per cent).

Learners aged 60 or more and (related to this) people on 'other' courses were the most likely to have done their FE course to **keep the mind or body active** and to **make new friends or meet new people**. Women were also more likely than men to have said their course was for these two reasons, while people with an illness or disability were also more likely than other learners to say they did the course to keep their mind or body active.

Table 4.7: Reasons for doing FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Interested in the subject | 50 | 43 | 52 | 48 | 49 | 28 | 59 |
| To learn skills for job may want to do in future | 26 | 47 | 34 | 52 | 45 | 47 | 20 |
| To get a qualification | 18 | 50 | 34 | 58 | 45 | 56 | 19 |
| To learn skills for current / previous job | 15 | 43 | 24 | 38 | 26 | 54 | 25 |
| To develop IT skills | 27 | 3 | 21 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| To improve self-confidence | 14 | 7 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 7 |
| As a stepping stone to further education, training or learning | 8 | 11 | 9 | 18 | 19 | 11 | 7 |
| To keep mind/body active | 11 | 3 | 11 | 7 | 8 | * | 17 |
| To make new friends/meet new people | 10 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 11 |
| To complement other learning | 6 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 10 |
| To develop reading/writing, and/or maths skills | 12 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| To help with my health problems/disability | 3 | * | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| To develop other skills / personal development | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Learn / improve languages | 3 | * | * | 0 | 1 | 0 | * |
| For my children / grand-children | 2 | * | 1 | 1 | * | 0 | 1 |
| I am going abroad/will help me abroad | 1 | * | 1 | 0 | 1 | * | * |
| Required by employer / compulsory | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Other | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> |

4.3 Work-related reasons for doing FE course

As discussed in chapter 3, 31 per cent of learners said their FE course was part of a job. This section provides more details about these courses.

4.3.1 Whether learning was compulsory

One in five learners (19 per cent) who had said their course was work-related said that it was compulsory. Details are shown in table 4.8.

Learners studying for full level 2 and those on 'other' courses were more likely than other learners to say the course was compulsory. Among those studying for full level 2, figures were highest where it was not the learner's first full level 2 (33 per cent). Courses were more likely to be compulsory for learners working in construction, health/social work and community, social and personal service activities. By occupation, compulsory courses were more prevalent among people working in personal service, process/plant/machine and elementary occupations.

Table 4.8: Whether FE course was compulsory, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, it was compulsory | 13 | 28 | 18 | 21 | 17 | 25 | 29 |
| No, I had a choice | 87 | 72 | 82 | 79 | 83 | 75 | 71 |
| <i>Base: All completers whose course was related to job doing at time (2,821)</i> | 270 | 612 | 591 | 610 | 407 | 148 | 183 |

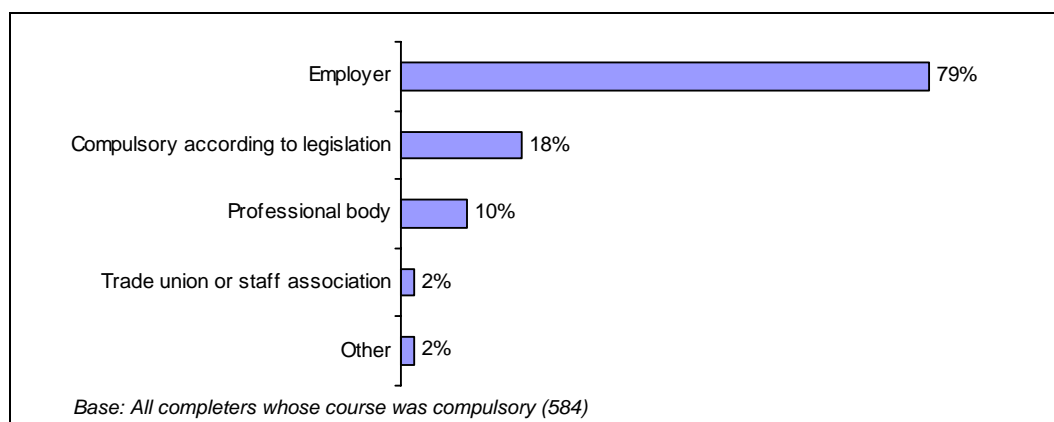
As shown in table 4.9, younger learners were the most likely to have said the course was compulsory, and this was higher among men than women.

Table 4.9: Whether FE course was compulsory, by gender and age

| | Gender | | Age | | | | | Total |
|---|--------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Male | Female | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, it was compulsory | 22 | 17 | 31 | 20 | 17 | 19 | 7 | 19 |
| No, I had a choice | 78 | 83 | 69 | 80 | 83 | 81 | 93 | 81 |
| <i>Base: All completers whose course was related to job doing at time</i> | 920 | 1901 | 264 | 686 | 1336 | 459 | 76 | 2821 |

Learners whose course was compulsory were asked who was responsible for it being compulsory. Findings are shown in chart 4.2. The only significant sub-group differences were that learners studying for a part level 3 were less likely to have said the course was made compulsory by an employer (54 per cent), but rather according to legislation (32 per cent) or a professional body (16 per cent).

Chart 4.2: Responsibility for course being compulsory



4.3.2 Whether course done in employer's time

Learners whose course was part of a job were asked if the course had been done in work time, in their own time or both. The majority said it was done in their own time.

The respondents who said that the learning took place in the employer's time often also said that the course was compulsory, and some of the sub-groups differences follow the same patterns. Learners studying at full level 2 and on 'other' courses were most likely to say the course was done in the employer's time, as shown in table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Whether FE course done in work or own time, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| In own time | 68 | 39 | 68 | 48 | 63 | 56 | 27 |
| In employer's time | 20 | 27 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 12 | 50 |
| Both | 11 | 34 | 17 | 38 | 20 | 32 | 23 |
| Don't know | * | 0 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Base</i> | 270 | 612 | 591 | 610 | 407 | 148 | 183 |

Base: All completers whose course was related to job doing at time (2,821)

Table 4.11 shows the proportion of learners in different sub-groups who said the course was done only in their employer's time. The large gender difference reflects the fact that courses in the employer's time were also more prevalent among full-time workers.

In general, respondents who were studying a course at a lower level than their highest prior qualification were more likely to say they did the course in their own time, and this particularly applied to learners studying below level 2. By sector, construction showed by far the highest figure for courses done in the employer's time, and this was also above average among learners in skilled trades, as well as process/plant/machine and elementary occupations.

Table 4.11: Proportion of learners who said that course was done only in employer's time, by gender, age, hours worked and whether course was compulsory

| Proportion who said course was done only in employer's time | | | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| Total | 20 | | |
| Gender | | Working hours | |
| Male | 29 | 30 hours + per week | 24 |
| Female | 15 | Less than 30 hours per week | 11 |
| Age | | Whether course was compulsory | |
| Under 25 | 25 | Compulsory | 38 |
| 25-34 | 21 | Not compulsory but part of a job | 17 |
| 35-49 | 19 | | |
| 50-59 | 21 | | |
| 60+ | 14 | | |

Base: All completers whose course was related to job doing at time (2,821)

4.3.3 Whether course related to a future job or career

Table 4.12 shows the proportion of learners who said that their FE course was related to a job they were thinking of doing in the future (55 per cent in total). Table 4.12 also shows figures *excluding* learners who said the course was also part of an existing job.

The proportion of learners who said the course was intended to give them skills for a future job was highest among those who studied at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above. There was also a clear age pattern, with younger people more likely to be doing an FE course for a future job. Non-white learners were more likely to say this was a reason for their course than white learners (67 per cent compared with 53 per cent). Figures were also higher among learners who were unemployed immediately before starting the course (82 per cent), in education (75 per cent) or looking after the home (62 per cent).

If respondents are excluded who also said the course was part of an existing job, figures become more consistent by level, and are highest among level 3 learners (full and part level). Those on full-time courses (68 per cent full-time full-year), and in particular those studying maths and sciences, as well as ESOL and hairdressing/beauty, were most likely to say the course was to help with a future job (but not part of an existing job).

In general, learners were most likely to be doing the course for a future job or career if they were studying at a higher level than their highest prior qualification, and this applied in particular to first full level 3 learners and those studying below level 2.

Table 4.12: Whether course related to a future job or career, by level studied and age

| | Level studied | | | | | | Other |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Related to future job or career | 43 | 79 | 59 | 83 | 73 | 83 | 32 |
| Related to future job but not part of existing job | 32 | 37 | 37 | 41 | 45 | 23 | 15 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

| | Age | | | | | Total |
|---|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Related to future job or career | 80 | 70 | 63 | 39 | 9 | 55 |
| Related to future job but not part of existing job | 58 | 46 | 36 | 19 | 6 | 34 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 | 6687 |

4.3.4 Whether did course for specific work-related reasons

Respondents who had said either that their course was part of a job or that they were doing the course for a future job or career were shown a list of specific work-related reasons and asked which applied to them when doing the course. Details are shown in table 4.13, which analyses responses according to whether the course was a compulsory course at work, a course that was part of a job (but not compulsory) or not part of a job (i.e. related to a future rather than an existing job).

Those studying at full level 3, part level 3 and level 4 or above were most likely to say they did the course to **develop their career** (74 per cent, 66 per cent and 78 per cent respectively). This was also more likely to be mentioned by learners working in construction, and in either associate professional/technical or personal service occupations. Those studying at level 4 or above were also the most likely to want to **get a promotion**.

Those studying for part level 3 were the most likely to have done the course in order to **increase their job satisfaction**, in particular those working in the education and real estate/renting/business sectors.

Learners whose course aim was full level 2 or full level 3 were the most likely to say they were doing the course to **get a new job**, while those studying for full level 2 or part level 3 were most likely to say they did the course to **get a different type of job**. Learners studying for full level 2 were the most likely to say they did the course to set up their own business.

Younger learners (under 35) were most likely to say that they were doing the course to **develop their career** (64 per cent) or to **get a pay rise** (17 per cent of those whose course was part of a job).

There was a general pattern whereby learners who were on a course at a lower level than their prior qualification were more likely to mention reasons relating to their existing job (e.g. get more satisfaction out of my work), whereas those on a course at a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely to think of future jobs or their career.

Table 4.13: Whether did FE course for any of the following reasons, by whether course was compulsory or part of a job

| | Total | Course compulsory | Not compulsory but part of existing job | Not part of existing job |
|---|-------|-------------------|---|--------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Develop my career | 55 | 64 | 65 | 46 |
| Gain new skills for new job | 44 | 61 | 66 | 26 |
| Get a new job | 25 | 8 | 11 | 39 |
| Change to a different type of work | 25 | 8 | 12 | 37 |
| Get more satisfaction out of my work | 23 | 23 | 34 | 15 |
| Get a pay-rise | 8 | 14 | 11 | 4 |
| Set up my own / family business | 7 | 2 | 4 | 11 |
| Get promotion | 6 | 10 | 12 | 2 |
| Stay in job which might have lost without doing course | 4 | 29 | 3 | * |
| Helped me with work problems related to my health problem or disability | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| None of these | 9 | 4 | 6 | 12 |
| Don't know | * | * | * | * |
| | 4,846 | 584 | 2,108 | 2,154 |

Base: All completers whose FE course related to current or future job

4.4 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

4.4.1 Sources of IAG

All respondents were asked which sources of information, advice and guidance (IAG) about education, training and work opportunities they had used before starting their FE course. Respondents were able to cite as many sources as applied, although a third of learners said they had not sought any IAG prior to starting their course. People who said they did not use any IAG were more likely to be doing the course out of interest in the subject rather than for other reasons.

The most commonly mentioned source of IAG was a college, given by almost a quarter of all FE learners (see table 4.14 for details).

Table 4.14: Sources of IAG, by reason for course

| | Total | Reason for course | | |
|--|--------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Course part of job | Course for a future job/career | Course for other reasons |
| | % | % | % | % |
| A college | 23 | 20 | 27 | 20 |
| A teacher / tutor | 11 | 10 | 14 | 9 |
| Friend / relative / colleague | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| A specialist in particular field of work | 5 | 9 | 4 | 2 |
| A careers adviser | 4 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| My employer | 3 | 9 | * | * |
| Professional body | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Local education authority (LEA) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| A school | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| A community / religious centre | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Jobcentre / employment service | 2 | * | 4 | * |
| Local council | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Other | 13 | 12 | 14 | 13 |
| None of these | 32 | 32 | 29 | 37 |
| Don't know | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>6,687</i> | <i>2,684</i> | <i>4,050</i> | <i>2,637</i> |

By level studied (see table 4.15), full level 3 learners were most likely to have been to a teacher or tutor for IAG. Learners on 'other' courses and those studying below 2 were most likely to have gone to friends and relatives for help and advice. Learners studying for full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above were more likely than other learners to have gone to a specialist (in a particular field of work) or to a careers adviser for IAG. Furthermore, full level 2 learners were the most likely to have gone to their employer for such help. Learners studying at level 4 or above were more likely than others to have gone to a professional body or a trade union.

Table 4.15: Sources of IAG, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| A college | 21 | 26 | 24 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 11 |
| A teacher / tutor | 8 | 11 | 12 | 20 | 16 | 15 | 6 |
| Friend / relative / colleague | 7 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| A specialist in particular field of work | 3 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 12 | 5 |
| A careers adviser | 3 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 2 |
| My employer | 2 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Professional body | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> |

Asian learners were more likely than White learners to have visited a teacher or tutor for IAG (one in six compared with one in ten White learners). They were also more likely than White learners to have been to a community or religious centre to seek information, advice or guidance (five per cent and two per cent respectively) or to a jobcentre (six per cent). Black learners were more likely to have seen a careers adviser (eight per cent) or been to Learndirect (four per cent).

4.4.2 Attitudes to IAG

FE learners were mostly satisfied with different aspects of the IAG that they received, as shown in table 4.16. Respondents were most likely to be very satisfied with specialists in a particular field of work, teachers/tutors and schools.

Attitudes were consistently positive among different sub-groups, and there were no significant differences by level. However, within the group of learners on a course aimed at full level 3, first full level 3 learners and in particular full level 3 jumpers were particularly likely to be very satisfied.

Table 4.16: Percentage very satisfied with aspects of IAG, by most frequent IAG sources

| | Total | Most frequent IAG sources | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| | | College | Teacher/ tutor | Friend/relative/ colleague | Specialist |
| Percentage very satisfied | % | % | % | % | % |
| Level of knowledge | 56 | 57 | 68 | 49 | 68 |
| How helpful they were | 61 | 64 | 71 | 55 | 68 |
| How friendly they were | 67 | 73 | 79 | 61 | 73 |
| Their professionalism | 62 | 67 | 76 | 46 | 70 |
| <i>Base: All completers who had IAG</i> | <i>4,569</i> | <i>1562</i> | <i>828</i> | <i>287</i> | <i>401</i> |

Learners were then asked to what extent **the IAG had helped them to decide what to do in terms of learning and work**, and findings are in table 4.17. This shows that full level 3 learners and those studying at level 4 or above were most likely to say the IAG helped them a lot, while this was lower among people on 'other' courses, this group containing a relatively high proportion of older and retired learners, who were less likely to need this type of advice.

Most positive ratings were given by learners who had used a careers adviser (56 per cent helped a lot), a specialist in a particular field of work (58 per cent) or a teacher (59 per cent). In addition, learners taking ESOL, English language and basic skills courses were also more likely than average to say the IAG helped them a lot in this way. This is also linked to the fact that non-White respondents were most likely to say that the IAG had helped them a lot (50 per cent) in this respect.

Table 4.17: Extent to which IAG helped to decide what to do next in terms of learning and work, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Helped a lot | 45 | 47 | 45 | 53 | 47 | 51 | 38 | 45 |
| Helped a fair amount | 25 | 27 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 24 | 27 | 25 |
| Helped a little | 11 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 10 |
| Did not help at all | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| Had already decided | 11 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 10 |
| Don't know | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| <i>Base: All completers who had IAG</i> | 840 | 673 | 1163 | 658 | 723 | 148 | 364 | 4569 |

The majority of FE learners also said that the IAG helped at least a fair amount to **increase their knowledge of training and job opportunities**, as shown in table 4.18. Learners studying for a full level 2, full level 3 or at level 4 or above were most likely to say their awareness had increased. Learners were more likely to appreciate the IAG they received (in terms of both what to do next and awareness of training and work opportunities) if they were on a course at a higher level than their highest prior qualification; this particularly applied to first full level 3 learners.

Non-White learners were more likely than White respondents to say their knowledge had increased a lot (38 per cent).

Views were most positive on this issue among learners who had used a careers adviser (41 per cent), a specialist in a particular field of work or a professional body (40 per cent in each case). Once again, ratings were also higher among people on ESOL and English language courses.

Table 4.18: Extent to which IAG increased awareness of training and job opportunities, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| A lot | 29 | 39 | 30 | 41 | 33 | 42 | 21 | 30 |
| A fair amount | 26 | 35 | 28 | 34 | 31 | 26 | 29 | 28 |
| A little | 15 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 16 | 16 | 14 | 15 |
| Not help at all | 24 | 10 | 22 | 12 | 17 | 13 | 30 | 21 |
| Don't know | 7 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| <i>Base: All completers who had IAG</i> | 840 | 673 | 1163 | 658 | 723 | 148 | 364 | 4569 |

4.5 Location of course

In almost all cases, the teaching in the course was carried out face-to-face (in 95 per cent of cases it was the main teaching method), the exceptions being distance and open-learning courses which make up a small proportion of FE courses in total.

All learners who said the main method of teaching on their FE course was face-to-face were asked where this teaching had taken place. A showcard was used with a list of options from which the learner could select as many that applied. Answers are displayed in table 4.19, which analyses answers by level studied. This shows that a relatively high proportion of learners with a course aim of full level 2 or full level 3 were taught at their workplace.

Table 4.19: Where face to face teaching took place, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| School / college / university / adult education / evening institute | 73 | 73 | 77 | 88 | 88 | 95 | 54 | 76 |
| Workplace | 4 | 23 | 6 | 13 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| Community centre | 9 | 2 | 6 | * | 2 | * | 11 | 6 |
| Training centre | 5 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 5 |
| Learning resource centre | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Other | 6 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 5 |
| <i>Base: All completers who received face to face teaching</i> | 1225 | 917 | 1695 | 857 | 1010 | 192 | 539 | 6435 |

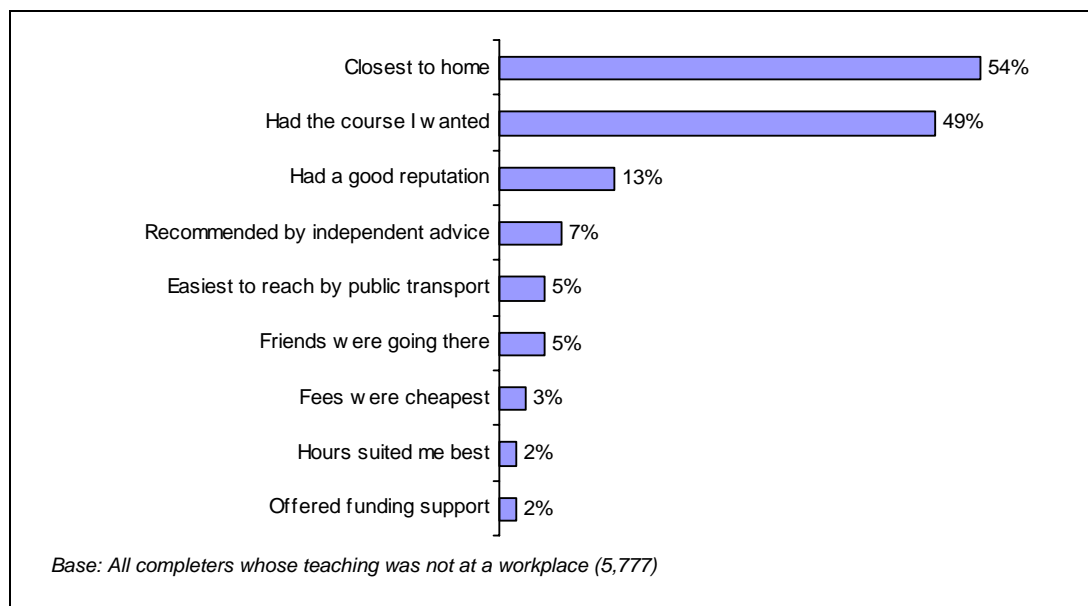
4.5.1 Reason for choosing institution

Chart 4.3 shows the reasons for choosing a particular institution; again, respondents were able to give more than one answer. Sub-group differences were as follows:

- The most commonly cited response was that the institution was **closest to home**; 56 per cent of women and 48 per cent of men gave this answer, and it was mentioned more frequently by learners studying IT, ESOL courses or on part-time open-learning courses.
- Having the **course they wanted** was more likely to be mentioned by learners taking vocational subjects.
- The institution's **good reputation** was mentioned more frequently by learners studying full-time full-year (24 per cent), and related to this by younger learners (16 per cent of those aged under 35) and those studying at full level 3 (24 per cent).

- Unemployed learners were more likely than average to have said that the institution was **recommended by independent advice** and this was the (main) reason they chose it (13 per cent), as were people on ESOL courses (17 per cent) and therefore Asian and Black learners (16 per cent and 13 per cent respectively).
- The fact that their **friends were going to the same institution** was mentioned most frequently by people who were not working at the start of the course.
- Also note that while only one per cent of learners overall chose the location because it had **crèche facilities**, this was concern among nine per cent of women with a youngest child under five.

Chart 4.3: Reasons for choosing institution (reasons given by two per cent of respondents or more)



4.6 Perceptions of course level

4.6.1 Awareness of course level

Learners were asked if they knew the level of the course they had studied, and answers are shown in table 4.20. This shows the proportion of cases where the answer was 'correct' (if the answer matched the highest level of study as recorded in the LSC database), where a different answer was given, and where the respondent did not know. Note that if learners had completed more than one course, they answered about the course deemed by them as the most important. Again, it must be borne in mind that this is not necessarily the highest level of course undertaken by the learner, and therefore may not be the course it is being compared with from the LSC database. Because of this, some caution should be used in analysing the findings in table 4.20.

Knowledge of the level studied was lower among people doing the course as part of a job and in particular where the course was compulsory (33 per cent of the latter did not know the level).

Table 4.20: Knowledge of courses level, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Correct answer | 69 | 69 | 34 | 61 | 36 | 50 | n/a |
| Other answer | 14 | 24 | 43 | 29 | 37 | 33 | 57 |
| Not known | 17 | 7 | 23 | 10 | 27 | 17 | 43 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> |

Note: for those studying below level 2, any answer of a level below level 2 has been taken as correct; similarly for those studying at level 4 or above, any answer of level 4 or 5 has been taken as correct.

4.6.2 Whether had a choice as to level studied

A third of FE learners who said they knew the level of the course (32 per cent) said that prior to starting their FE course they had had a choice as to the level that they studied. Learners studying for a full level 3 qualification were more likely to have said they could have chosen another level, as shown in table 4.21. This particularly applied where it was not learners' first full level 3 (51 per cent, compared with 42 per cent first full level 3).

Table 4.21: Whether had a choice as to level studied by level of FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 31 | 31 | 34 | 45 | 32 | 28 | 23 |
| No | 66 | 68 | 64 | 54 | 66 | 71 | 75 |
| Don't know | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers who knew the level of the course (5,362)</i> | <i>1046</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1382</i> | <i>814</i> | <i>759</i> | <i>160</i> | <i>312</i> |

If the course was compulsory for a job, learners were less likely to say they had a choice as to level. Otherwise, those doing the course as part of a job were no different to other learners, as shown in table 4.22.

Table 4.22: Whether had a choice as to level studied, by whether course was part of a job

| | Total | Course compulsory | Not compulsory but part of existing job | Not part of existing job |
|--|-------|-------------------|---|--------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 32 | 16 | 35 | 32 |
| No | 66 | 84 | 63 | 65 |
| Don't know | 2 | * | 2 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers who knew the level of the course</i> | 5,362 | 449 | 1727 | 3186 |

Other sub-group differences were that:

- Learners studying foreign languages, IT/computers, maths, sciences and business/management were most likely to say they had a choice of level, while those studying construction and engineering/manufacturing were least likely
- Learners doing the course to help their self-confidence, keep active and to meet new people were more likely than average to say they had a choice
- When looking at payment of fees, a higher proportion of learners who paid for all or part of their FE course said they had a choice: 36 per cent compared with 29 per cent who had either not contributed, were exempt from paying or whose course was free. This is because those not paying for the course tend to either be those studying a compulsory course as part of their job, or studying at a lower level.

4.6.3 Whether wanted to study at a higher level

All FE learners were asked whether (at the time when they started their course) they had wanted to or had asked about studying the same subject at a higher level. A fifth of learners said that this was the case (21 per cent), highest among learners studying for full level 2 and lowest among those on 'other' courses, as shown in table 4.23.

A preference for studying at a higher level was more common among learners taking courses to help them with a future job or career. Looking at course subject, learners studying maths, sciences, English language/ communications and classroom assistance were most likely to say they would have liked to study at a higher level.

Black respondents (34 per cent) were more likely than White or Asian learners to have said they wanted to study at a higher level. Figures were also higher among learners who were unemployed or looking after the family or home immediately before/at the start of the course.

As noted in section 3.2.2, 24 per cent of learners were taking an FE course at a higher level than their highest prior qualification. This question indicates that additional learners whose course was not intended to raise their qualification level may have wanted to do so, by studying at a higher level. This group comprises:

- Five per cent overall whose course level was the same as their highest prior qualification, but who said they wanted to study at a higher level
- Ten per cent overall whose course level was *lower* than their highest prior qualification, again who wanted to study at a higher level. This group is less conclusive, in that raising the level of the course may only have taken them to the same level, rather than above, their highest prior qualification.
- In total, therefore, between five per cent and 15 per cent of learners effectively said they wanted to raise their highest qualification level, but were not doing so in their FE course.

Table 4.23: Whether had wanted to study at a higher level, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 20 | 32 | 23 | 27 | 21 | 22 | 12 |
| No | 79 | 67 | 76 | 72 | 78 | 76 | 87 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

4.6.4 Reasons for not studying at a higher level

Learners who said that they had wanted to study the same subject at a higher level were asked why they had not done so (see table 4.24). Again, this question was multi-coded to enable learners to give more than one answer if required.

- Those most likely to say that they were told they **couldn't study at the level they wanted** were on a course aimed at full level 2, full level 3 (32 per cent in each case) and level 4 or above (45 per cent)
- Learners studying below level 2 were the most likely to say that the **college recommended they study at a particular level** (31 per cent)
- **Times not being suitable** was most likely to be mentioned by those on 'other' courses.

Table 4.24: Why decided not to study at higher level

| | % |
|---|----|
| I was told I could not study at higher level | 25 |
| College / provider recommended I study at lower level | 24 |
| Higher level course was not available locally | 14 |
| I decided it would be too much effort for me / might be too demanding | 13 |
| Times of higher level course were not suitable | 8 |
| I decided it would be of no benefit to get the higher qualification | 4 |
| I needed the lower level before moving onto higher level | 3 |
| Cost / funding | 3 |
| Higher level course content not suitable / not what I wanted to do | 2 |
| Other | 6 |
| Don't know | 5 |

Base: All completers aware of level who had wanted to study same subject at higher level (1,481)

4.7 Cost of FE course

4.7.1 Whether learners paid towards course fees

Learners were **more likely to have paid** for their course⁹ if they were on a course at a lower level than their highest prior qualification (52 per cent compared with 34 per cent of other learners). This applied in particular to learners below level 2 (49 per cent compared with 26 per cent). In addition:

- First full level 2 learners were less likely to pay towards the course than other full level 2 learners (25 per cent compared with 41 per cent).
- Similarly, first full level 3 learners were less likely to pay towards the course than other full level 3 learners (26 per cent compared with 40 per cent).

Related to this, as shown in table 4.25, learners were more likely to have paid course fees if they were retired or working but not doing the course as part of a job. Figures were also higher than average among people doing part-time evening classes (51 per cent), as well as part level 2 and 3 learners and on 'other' courses.

Those **less likely to have paid** for the course were:

- Those who did the course as part of a job they were doing, particularly if the course was compulsory. Related to this, learners at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above were most likely to say that they did not pay for the course as their employer did so.

⁹ This is based on learners' *perceptions* of having paid for all or part of their courses.

- Those not working but of working age, in particular those who were unemployed before the course. In addition, non-White learners and those taking basic skills courses were more likely to be exempt from course fees.

Table 4.25: Whether made financial contribution towards FE course, by level studied, whether part of a job and status at start of FE course

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------|---|-------------------|--------------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full Level 2 | Level 2, not full | Full level 3 | Level 3, not full | Level 4+ | Other |
| Paid fees | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes – I paid for all of it | 27 | 20 | 35 | 16 | 39 | 24 | 34 |
| Yes – I paid for part of it | 10 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 12 |
| Did not pay fees | | | | | | | |
| No – Course fees paid by another individual | * | 1 | * | 1 | * | * | 1 |
| No – Course fees paid by my employer | 8 | 38 | 16 | 30 | 18 | 48 | 21 |
| No – Course fees paid by another organisation/body | 7 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 10 |
| I am exempt from course fees | 19 | 14 | 14 | 18 | 13 | 9 | 8 |
| Course fees not charged – the course is free for all | 27 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |
| | Course compulsory | Not compulsory but part of existing job | | In work, but course not part of existing job | | Total | |
| | % | % | | % | | % | |
| Paid fees | | | | | | | |
| Yes – I paid for all of it | 9 | 26 | | 54 | | 31 | |
| Yes – I paid for part of it | 5 | 8 | | 10 | | 12 | |
| Did not pay fees | | | | | | | |
| No – Course fees paid by another individual | 1 | * | | 1 | | 1 | |
| No – Course fees paid by my employer | 70 | 43 | | 5 | | 16 | |
| No – Course fees paid by another organisation/body | 7 | 7 | | 6 | | 7 | |
| I am exempt from course fees | 3 | 5 | | 9 | | 15 | |
| Course fees not charged – the course is free for all | 5 | 10 | | 16 | | 17 | |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 572 | 2,112 | | 1,544 | | 6,687 | |
| | Status at start of FE course | | | | | | |
| | In paid work | Unemployed/ looking for work | Looking after home | Retired | Other | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| Paid fees | | | | | | | |
| Yes – I paid for all of it | 37 | 12 | 20 | 41 | 11 | | |
| Yes – I paid for part of it | 9 | 16 | 14 | 20 | 15 | | |
| Did not pay fees | | | | | | | |
| No – Course fees paid by another individual | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | | |
| No – Course fees paid by my employer | 28 | 1 | * | 0 | 1 | | |
| No – Course fees paid by another organisation/body | 7 | 11 | 7 | 4 | 10 | | |
| I am exempt from course fees | 6 | 34 | 31 | 12 | 36 | | |
| Course fees not charged – the course is free for all | 12 | 27 | 26 | 22 | 23 | | |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 4,399 | 313 | 794 | 622 | 558 | | |

4.7.2 Amounts paid

Learners who had paid for all or part of their FE course fees were asked for the amount they had paid. Those who were unable, or who refused, to give an exact figure were asked to give a range, after being prompted with banded figures. Raw and banded figures have been combined and displayed in two tables; table 4.26 representing those who paid all course fees and table 4.27 those who paid a part.

Learners who paid all of course fees

Looking firstly at completers who paid all course fees, the most commonly mentioned amount was in the range of £50 or less, given by one in five learners; a further one in seven paid between £50 and £75. A small proportion (seven per cent) paid more than £500.

Learners below level 2 were the most likely to have paid less than £75 for their course. There was a strong tendency for those at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above to have paid more for the course: all were more likely than other learners to have paid £300 or more. See table 4.26 for more details.

Table 4.26: How much paid for FE course (if paid for all), by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Less than £50 | 31 | 2 | 15 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 41 |
| £50 - £75 | 20 | 2 | 17 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 15 |
| £76 - £99 | 14 | 3 | 15 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 12 |
| £100 - £149 | 19 | 6 | 20 | 6 | 21 | 2 | 7 |
| £150 - £199 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 16 | 9 | 6 |
| £200 - £299 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 16 | 9 | 3 |
| £300 - £499 | 3 | 33 | 8 | 42 | 15 | 24 | 6 |
| £500 up to £750 | 2 | 14 | 3 | 17 | 9 | 28 | 3 |
| More than £750 but less than £1000 | 2 | 14 | 3 | 17 | 9 | 28 | 3 |
| £1000 or more | 0 | 13 | 1 | 13 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| Refused/don't know | * | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Base: All completers who paid all course fees (1,973)</i> | 352 | 190 | 636 | 153 | 398 | 46 | 198 |

Learners who paid part of course fees

Looking now at learners who paid part of their FE course fees, the majority paid £50 or less (56 per cent). A further one in six paid between £50 and £75, while only three per cent paid more than £500.

There was a strong tendency for those studying at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above to have paid more for their course: they were more likely than other learners to have paid £150 or more. This is shown in table 4.27.

Table 4.27: How much paid towards FE course (if paid for part), by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Less than £50 | 70 | 24 | 65 | 21 | 40 | 8 | 62 |
| £50 - £75 | 18 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 12 | 10 |
| £76 - £99 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| £100 - £149 | 3 | 18 | 6 | 24 | 11 | 8 | 3 |
| £150 - £199 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 12 | 7 |
| £200 - £299 | 0 | 21 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 4 |
| £300 - £499 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 12 | 3 |
| £500 up to £750 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 20 | 2 |
| More than £750 but less than £1000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| £1000 or more | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 12 | 0 |
| Don't know | 3 | 0 | * | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers who paid towards course fees (845)</i> | 131 | 115 | 247 | 124 | 131 | 23 | 73 |

4.7.3 Whether learners would have been prepared to pay towards fees

Respondents who had not paid towards their course fees at all were asked whether they would have been prepared to do so. The majority said that they would, and this was higher among learners aged 60 or more, as shown in table 4.28. This table also shows that the proportions prepared to pay towards course fees increased with higher levels of study. In terms of learning mode, those on part-time evening courses were most likely to say they would have been prepared to pay (75 per cent).

Answers were also affected by work status: learners who were working at the start of the course tended to have been more prepared to pay (69 per cent), as were retired people (75 per cent). Willingness to pay was considerably lower among people on ESOL courses (26 per cent), and reflecting this was lower among Asian learners (36 per cent).

There were no differences in results, according to whether the course was free, paid for by an employer or other organisation, or whether the learner was exempt from course fees.

Table 4.28: Whether would have been prepared to pay, by level studied and age

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 59 | 59 | 65 | 71 | 72 | 74 | 54 |
| No | 36 | 34 | 30 | 24 | 23 | 21 | 39 |
| Don't know | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| <i>Base: All completers who have not paid towards course (3,869)</i> | 783 | 650 | 906 | 611 | 498 | 123 | 298 |

| | Total | Age | | | | |
|--|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 63 | 58 | 60 | 66 | 57 | 74 |
| No | 32 | 38 | 34 | 29 | 37 | 21 |
| Don't know | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| <i>Base: All completers who have not paid towards course</i> | 3,869 | 490 | 909 | 1571 | 573 | 326 |

All learners who had not paid towards their FE course but said they would have been prepared to pay, were asked to give the maximum amount they would have paid. In addition, those who paid (part or all) of the course fees were also asked what was the maximum they would have been prepared to pay. Once again, respondents not giving an exact figure were prompted with banded ranges.

Respondents who had paid all of the fees tended to give a higher amount than either those who had paid part or none of the fees; details are shown in table 4.29. Comparing these amounts with what they actually paid for their course, learners who paid for all of the course tended to say they would have been prepared to pay *slightly* more (48 per cent said they would have paid £150 or more, compared with 35 per cent who did actually pay this amount), while those who paid for part of the course said they would have been prepared to pay *considerably* more (30 per cent said they would have been prepared to pay £150 or more, compared with 13 per cent who actually paid this amount). These patterns applied across different levels of study.

Table 4.29: How much would have been prepared to pay towards FE course, by amount paid

| | Whether paid towards course fees | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | Paid all | Paid part | Paid none |
| | % | % | % |
| Less than £50 | 9 | 25 | 23 |
| £50 – 75 | 16 | 21 | 23 |
| £76 - £99 | 6 | 5 | 2 |
| £100 - £149 | 21 | 18 | 19 |
| £150 - £199 | 10 | 6 | 5 |
| £200 - £299 | 15 | 8 | 12 |
| £300 - £499 | 11 | 7 | 7 |
| £500 up to £750 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| More than £750 but less than £1000 | 1 | 1 | * |
| £1000 or more | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| <i>Base: All completers who paid towards course or would have been prepared to, and were able to give an amount (5,142)</i> | <i>1,931</i> | <i>819</i> | <i>2,392</i> |

Overall, those on full-time courses gave the highest figures, in particular those studying full-time for a full year (61 per cent said they would have paid £150 or more). Those studying for full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above were also more likely to say they would pay more, as shown in table 4.30. Learners studying below level 2 and on ‘other’ courses tended to give lower figures; the latter finding is related to the fact that retired learners also gave lower figures.

Table 4.30: How much would have been prepared to pay towards FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Less than £75 | 54 | 14 | 36 | 8 | 16 | 7 | 54 |
| £75-£149 | 25 | 15 | 30 | 18 | 22 | 8 | 20 |
| £150 or more | 21 | 71 | 34 | 75 | 62 | 85 | 27 |
| <i>Base: All completers who paid towards course or would have been prepared to, and were able to give an amount (5,322)</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>704</i> | <i>1482</i> | <i>703</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>159</i> | <i>430</i> |

4.7.4 Importance of costs in choosing FE course

Completers who had paid for all or part of their course were asked how important a role the costs had played in choosing the course. One in five said this had played a very important part, as shown in table 4.31.

Learners who had paid for part (rather than all) of the course fees were more likely to have said cost was very important. Learners who were on a course full time for a full year were also more likely to say the costs had been very important (32 per cent). There were no differences by level.

Table 4.31: Whether costs played an important part when choosing FE course, by proportion of fees paid

| | Total | Proportion of fees paid | |
|---|-------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | | Paid all fees | Paid part of fees |
| | % | % | % |
| Very important | 19 | 15 | 31 |
| Quite important | 33 | 35 | 29 |
| Made no difference | 21 | 22 | 18 |
| Not very important | 15 | 17 | 12 |
| Not important at all | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Don't know | * | * | 0 |
| <i>Base: All completers who paid towards course</i> | 2,818 | 1,973 | 845 |

Table 4.32 shows these findings broken down by gender and age.

Table 4.32: Proportion of learners who said that costs played an important part when choosing course, by gender and age

| Total | Proportion who said costs were very/quite important | |
|---------------|---|----------|
| | Age | |
| | 52 | |
| Gender | | |
| | | Under 25 |
| Male | 47 | 25-34 |
| Female | 54 | 35-49 |
| | | 50-59 |
| | | 60+ |
| | | 54 |
| | | 46 |
| | | 43 |

Base: All completers who paid towards course (2,818)

4.8 Whether learners achieved qualifications on FE course

Virtually all completers who were studying at full level 2, full level 3, part level 3 and level 4 or above confirmed that the course was designed to lead to a qualification; this was lower among learners studying below level 2 (75 per cent), part level 2 (89 per cent) and on 'other' courses (50 per cent). Specifically, the types of courses that learners said did not lead to qualifications were arts and crafts (64 per cent of learners studying this said the course led to a qualification), English language and communications (81 per cent), ESOL (77 per cent), foreign languages (65 per cent), health/fitness/yoga (80 per cent), humanities (58 per cent), literacy/numeracy/basic skills (73 per cent), and visual/performing arts/media (68 per cent).

Most completers (90 per cent) also said that they had achieved the qualification (where the course was designed to lead to one). This was similar across levels, but slightly lower among those studying at level 4 or above (see table 4.33). The proportion who achieved a qualification was very consistent across course subjects and other variables, but was slightly lower among those on ESOL courses (85 per cent) and among people who were unemployed at the start of the course (83 per cent).

Table 4.33: Whether achieved qualification, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | Other |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 89 | 93 | 91 | 93 | 92 | 87 | 91 |
| No | 10 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 9 |
| Don't know | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | * | * |
| <i>Base: All completers whose course led to a qualification (5,805)</i> | 942 | 943 | 1582 | 886 | 985 | 192 | 275 |

4.9 Rating of teaching

The remaining sections in this chapter (4.9 to 4.14) examine learners' overall perceptions of the FE course; findings show consistently positive views among learners. Four in five said that the course was well taught (81 per cent), while six per cent said it was badly taught. Overall, 13 per cent said 'neither', and this was higher among people on distance learning courses (28 per cent). Because of this, people who were doing the course as part of a job (who made up the majority of distance learning) were also more likely not to express a view on the teaching.

By level studied, those studying below level 2 and on 'other' courses were most positive about the course. Learners on a course aimed at level 4 or above were most negative, while those studying for full level 3 were also less positive than average (see table 4.34). Within the group of learners studying for a full level 3, first full level 3 learners (73 per cent) and level 3 jumpers (76 per cent) were more positive than others studying for full level 3.

Table 4.34: Rating of teaching, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | Other |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Well taught | 84 | 77 | 81 | 71 | 77 | 67 | 89 |
| Badly taught | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 2 |
| Neither/don't know | 11 | 17 | 15 | 21 | 14 | 21 | 9 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

The subjects that were most frequently rated as well taught included foreign languages, hospitality/sports/leisure/travel, sciences, English language/communications and basic skills. Hairdressing/beauty therapy courses were said to be badly taught by 12 per cent. Table 4.35 shows findings analysed by gender and age.

Table 4.35: Rating of teaching, by gender and age

| | Proportion who said course was well taught | Proportion who said course was badly taught |
|---------------|--|---|
| Total | 81 | 6 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 85 | 4 |
| Female | 79 | 7 |
| Age | | |
| Under 25 | 78 | 7 |
| 25-34 | 80 | 7 |
| 35-49 | 81 | 5 |
| 50-59 | 82 | 4 |
| 60+ | 87 | 4 |

Base: All completers (6,687)

Although views were generally positive towards teaching, section 4.13 indicates that where learners felt that their needs had not been met, they were most likely to say this was because of poor teaching. Quality of teaching is therefore a critical element of learners' overall perceptions of the course.

4.10 Whether course was at the right level

The majority of learners said that the course was at the right level, although one in seven said it was too easy. There was a clear age pattern, with younger people more likely to say that the course was too easy, as shown in table 4.36. Full level 2 learners were more likely than other learners to say that the course was too easy (20 per cent).

Views were less positive when the course was part of a job and in particular when it was compulsory (21 per cent said the compulsory course was too easy). Related to this, people on part-time distance learning courses were also more likely than average to say the course was too easy (28 per cent).

Learners on basic skills courses were less likely than average to say the course was at the right level, with 16 per cent saying it was too easy and 10 per cent too difficult.

Table 4.36: whether course was at the right level, by level studied and age

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| About right | 81 | 76 | 80 | 82 | 84 | 84 | 86 |
| Too easy | 12 | 20 | 16 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 11 |
| Too difficult | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Don't know | 1 | * | 1 | 1 | * | 1 | * |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

| | Total | Age | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| About right | 81 | 73 | 78 | 82 | 85 | 90 |
| Too easy | 14 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 9 | 4 |
| Too difficult | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Don't know | 1 | 1 | * | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers</i> | 6687 | 745 | 1488 | 2647 | 973 | 834 |

4.11 Whether course was good value for money

Respondents who paid at least part of their course fees were asked whether they thought the FE course had been value for money. More than nine in ten learners said that it was. Those who paid part of their fees were more likely to have rated their course as very good value, when compared with those who paid all fees, as shown in table 4.37.

Table 4.37: Whether felt FE course was good value for money, by proportion of fees paid

| | Total | Proportion of fees paid | |
|---|-------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | | Paid all fees | Paid part of fees |
| | % | % | % |
| Very good value | 60 | 56 | 70 |
| Quite good value | 32 | 36 | 22 |
| Not very good value | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Not good value at all | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Should not have to pay | 1 | 1 | * |
| Don't know | * | * | * |
| <i>Base: All completers who paid towards course</i> | 2,818 | 1,973 | 845 |

Table 4.38 shows the sub-groups who were most likely to say their course was very good value for money. In addition:

- Learners on shorter courses (less than 50 hours in total) were most likely to say the course was very good value (66 per cent).

- Those on ESOL courses (73 per cent), English language/communications (68 per cent) and IT courses (67 per cent) were most likely to say the course was very good value. This is related to findings on level, as these courses tend to be at the lower levels.

Table 4.38: Proportion of learners who said that course was very good value for money, by level studied, age and whether course was part of a job

| Proportion who said course was very good value for money | | | |
|--|----|---|----|
| Total | 60 | Age | |
| Level studied | | Under 25 | 43 |
| Below level 2 | 65 | 25-34 | 55 |
| Full level 2 | 44 | 35-49 | 57 |
| Level 2 (not full) | 61 | 50-59 | 64 |
| Full level 3 | 40 | 60+ | 75 |
| Level 3 (not full) | 51 | Whether course was part of a job | |
| Level 4+ | 60 | Compulsory | 46 |
| Other | 71 | Not compulsory but part of a job | 55 |
| | | Not part of a job | 62 |

Base: All completers who paid towards course (2,818)

4.12 Satisfaction with course

Learners expressed high levels of satisfaction with their courses overall, as shown in table 4.39. These figures are very similar to the satisfaction levels measured in the National Learner Satisfaction Survey¹⁰. Those who did 'other' courses were particularly positive, while the proportion 'very satisfied' was lower among those whose course aim was full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above; in particular, learners studying at full level 3 and at level 4 or above were more likely to be dissatisfied with the course. However, first full level 3 learners, and in particular full level 3 'jumpers' were more satisfied than others whose course aim was full level 3 (66 per cent, 60 per cent and 49 per cent very satisfied respectively). Similarly, first full level 2 learners were more satisfied than others studying at full level 2 (58 per cent compared with 51 per cent).

¹⁰ National Learner Satisfaction Survey, Further Education Summary Report 2002/3, Learning and Skills Council, page 7

Table 4.39: Satisfaction with course

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Very satisfied | 66 | 55 | 65 | 55 | 60 | 46 | 73 | 64 |
| Fairly satisfied | 26 | 34 | 27 | 32 | 29 | 37 | 22 | 27 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 3 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 4 |
| Very dissatisfied | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 | 6687 |

As shown in table 4.40, learners were less likely to say they were very satisfied when the course was part of a job, particularly if it was compulsory. Connected with this, learners studying through part-time distance learning in particular were less likely to be very satisfied (55 per cent). (As mentioned in section 4.1.1, a relatively high proportion of compulsory courses were conducted via part-time distance learning). These findings also partly explain the differences by level shown above (work-related courses being more common among learners at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above). Within the group of learners doing the course as part of a job, those studying below level 2 were most positive (68 per cent), and related to this those in lower occupational groups (70 per cent of process/plant/machine operatives and 69 per cent in elementary occupations). Table 4.40 also analyses findings by age and ethnicity.

Views were also a little less positive among learners who had been in education or training before the FE course (49 per cent very satisfied), while attitudes were most positive among those who were economically inactive prior to the course (68 per cent looking after the family or home, 69 per cent permanently sick or disabled and 72 per cent retired).

Looking at specific subjects, learners were most likely to be very satisfied when studying maths, sciences and humanities, as well as hospitality/sports/leisure/travel. Ratings were lower for ESOL courses, hairdressing/beauty/therapy and construction.

Table 4.40: Proportion of learners who were very satisfied with FE course, by age, ethnicity and whether course was part of a job

| | | Proportion very satisfied with FE course | |
|--------------|----|---|----|
| Total | 64 | Ethnicity | |
| Age | | White | 65 |
| Under 25 | 54 | Asian | 58 |
| 25-34 | 62 | Black | 68 |
| 35-49 | 64 | Other | 53 |
| 50-59 | 65 | | |
| 60+ | 72 | Whether course was part of a job | |
| | | Compulsory | 55 |
| | | Not compulsory but part of a job | 61 |
| | | Not part of a job | 66 |

Base: All completers (6,687)

4.13 Whether course met needs

The majority of learners said that the course met their needs completely, as shown in table 4.41. The table also shows that learners at level 4 or above were least likely to say the course met their needs completely, and this was also lower than average among full level 3 learners.

The following groups of learners were more likely than average to say the course met their needs completely:

- Within those whose course aim was full level 3, first full level 3 learners and level 3 'jumpers' were more positive (60 per cent and 66 per cent respectively). There was no difference between first full level 2 and others with a course aim of full level 2.
- Among learners doing the course as part of a job, attitudes were most positive among those in personal service and process/plant/machine operative work, and least positive among those in professional or associate professional/technical occupations. More specifically, those who were doing the course to set up their own business were less likely to say the course met their needs completely (49 per cent).
- Views were more positive among older learners (ranging from 55 per cent of those aged under 25 to 66 per cent of learners aged 60 or over).
- Learners studying maths, sciences or humanities were most likely to say that the course met their needs completely.

Table 4.41: How well course met needs, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Met them completely | 62 | 61 | 64 | 58 | 62 | 50 | 65 | 62 |
| Met them very well but not completely | 21 | 19 | 20 | 24 | 23 | 25 | 21 | 21 |
| Met them quite well | 12 | 16 | 12 | 16 | 12 | 20 | 10 | 13 |
| Didn't meet them at all | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Don't know | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | * | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> | <i>6687</i> |

Chapter 7 looks at the specific ways in which learners felt they had benefited from the course. This chapter also examines the impact of these individual aspects on overall perceptions of whether needs were met by the course.

Attitudes of non-completers

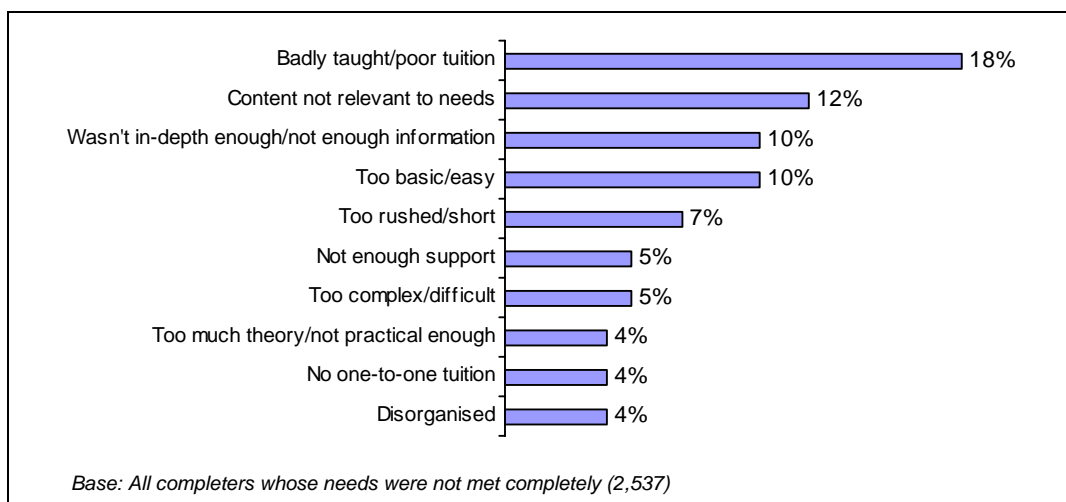
Looking at learners who did not complete their course, attitudes were less positive than for completers, as might be expected. Around a quarter of non-completers said the course met their needs completely (27 per cent full level 2 and 22 per cent full level 3), while similar proportions said that it did not meet their needs at all (24 per cent full level 2 and 31 per cent full level 3). Non-completers were also less satisfied with the course, and more likely to say it was badly taught. They were no more likely than completers, however, to say that the course was not at the right level.

4.13.1 Why needs were not met completely

Chart 4.4 shows the reasons why learners felt that their needs were not met completely by the FE course. The chart shows answers given by more than three per cent of respondents.

It is possible to analyse answers according to how well respondents felt the course met their needs, given that all respondents were asked this question unless they said the course met their needs completely. While most responses did not vary (ie were similar whether respondents said the course met their needs very well, quite well or not at all), the one exception was poor tuition. This was particularly high among learners who said the course did not meet their needs at all (34 per cent).

Chart 4.4: Why needs were not met completely



Learners who did not complete their course were more likely to mention poor tuition (31 per cent) and lack of support (16 per cent) than those who completed. More detailed reasons for non-completion are covered below.

4.14 Reasons for not completing course

Table 4.42 shows the reasons given by people that did not complete the course for failing to do so. Reasons can broadly be divided into three: starting a job, some other change in circumstances or because of the course itself.

Table 4.42: Reasons for not completing course

| | Total | Full level 2 | Full level 3 |
|---|-------|--------------|--------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Change in circumstances (moved house, change in home/family life) | 32 | 36 | 25 |
| Found that course was not what wanted to do after all | 20 | 23 | 15 |
| Teaching was not good enough | 16 | 12 | 19 |
| Got a job that meant no longer needed to do the course | 12 | 12 | 14 |
| Got a job that did not allow time to complete course | 11 | 10 | 12 |
| Health reasons | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Could not afford to keep doing the course | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Did part of course that was useful and then stopped | 4 | * | 8 |
| Too busy with other things | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| Don't know | 1 | - | 1 |
| <i>Base: All non-completers</i> | 223 | 112 | 86 |

5 Qualifications and further learning since FE course

This chapter examines the current qualifications and further learning undertaken following the FE course. This takes into account the further learning started up to the time of the survey, typically between 7 and 13 months after the end of the FE course. The analysis focuses mainly on people who completed their course, but also includes details of non-completers where appropriate.

5.1 Current qualifications

Chapter 3 has examined the extent to which learners were studying at a higher or lower level than their highest prior qualification. This section looks at the qualifications that learners had obtained by the time of the survey, both from the FE course(s) and any subsequent learning.

As shown in table 5.1, 18 per cent of learners who completed their course had a higher qualification at the time of interview compared to at the start of their main FE course¹¹. Of course not all courses that were taken were designed to lead to a qualification and not everyone successfully achieved the qualifications they were working towards.

When the analysis is restricted to learners who took courses designed to lead to a qualification and successfully achieved the qualification they were working towards, the percentage that increased their highest level of qualification rises only slightly to 23 per cent. This reflects the high proportion of learners that were studying at the same or lower level than they were already qualified. As noted in section 3.2.2., 58 per cent of learners studied at a lower level than they were already qualified and a further 21 per cent studied at the same level.

Table 5.1: Percentage whose highest level of qualification had increased since start of FE course

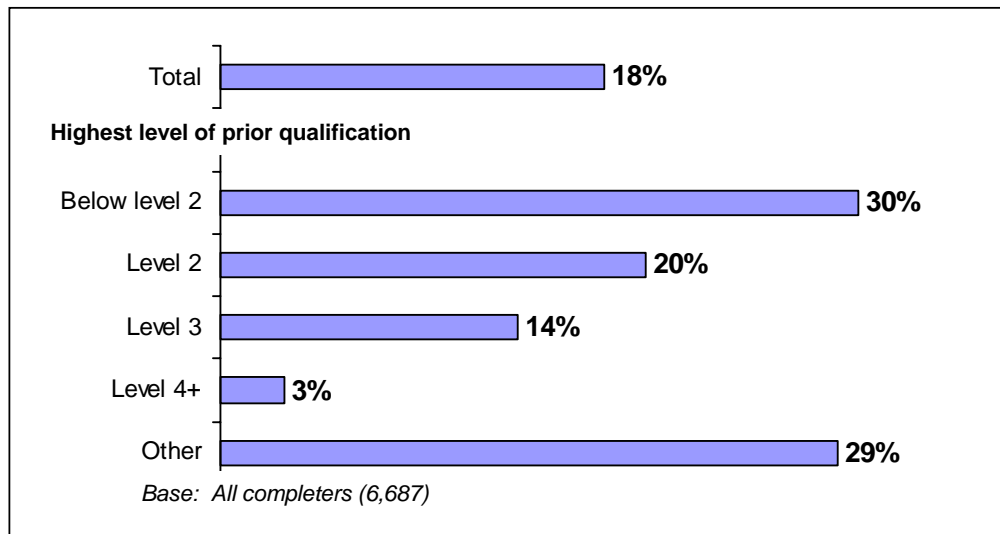
| | |
|---|----|
| | % |
| Total | 18 |
| FE course designed to lead towards qualification | 21 |
| Successfully achieved qualification FE course was designed to lead to | 23 |

Base: All completers (6,687)

¹¹ This is based on the respondent's *perception* of whether or not they held a higher level of qualification at the time of the interview compared to at the start of their main FE course. It is also important to note that, because of the way the questions were asked, for those who did more than one FE course and/or went on to do further learning after completing their main FE course, it is not possible to attribute the increase in level of qualification to a particular course.

Chart 5.1 shows the proportion of completers who had increased their highest level of qualification since starting their course, broken down by highest level of prior qualification.

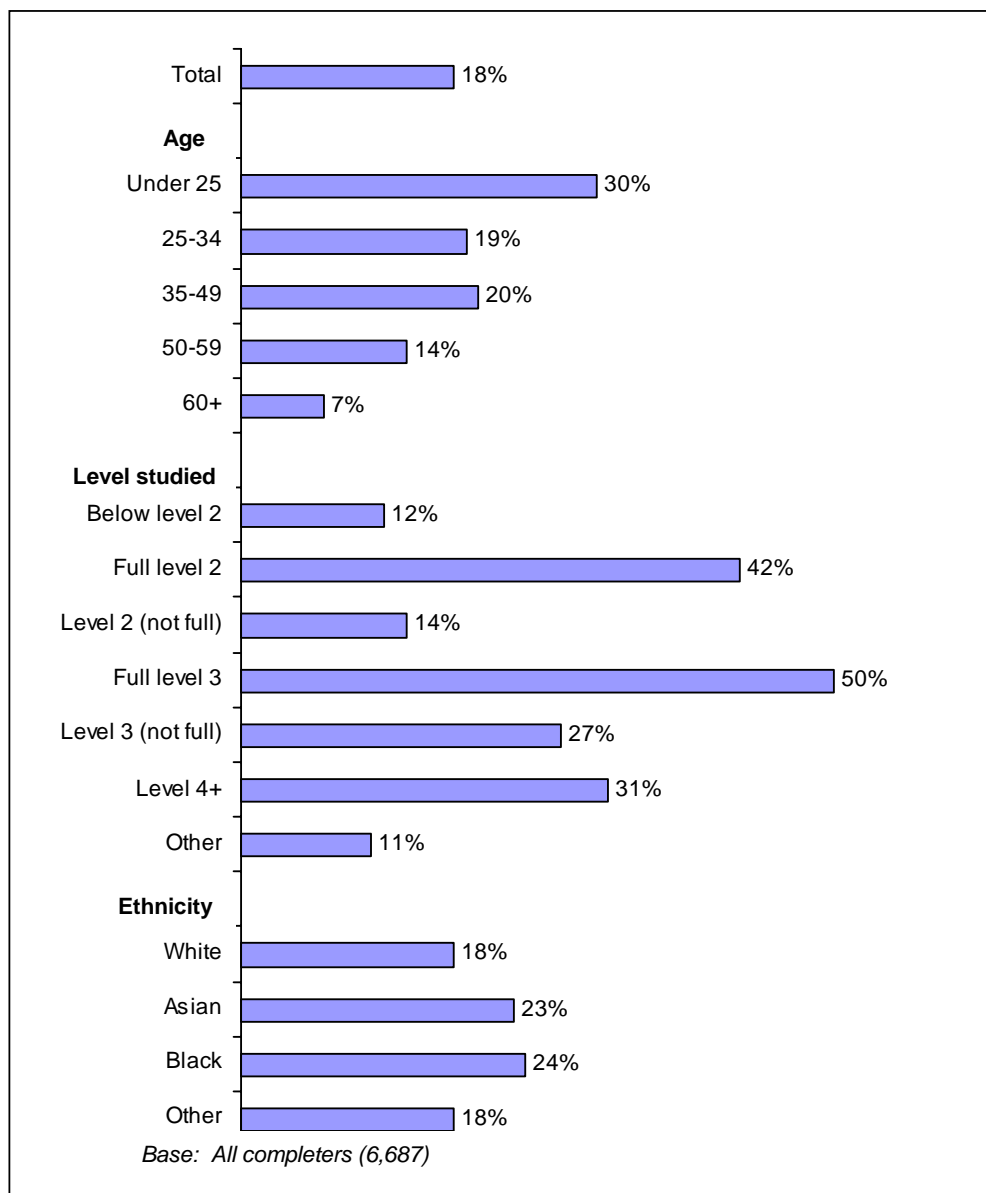
Chart 5.1: Percentage who had increased their highest level of qualification since the start of their FE course, by highest level of prior qualification



Unsurprisingly, respondents with lower levels of prior qualification were most likely to have increased their level of qualification since starting their FE course. This ties in with the fact that the more highly qualified learners were to start with, the more likely they were to have studied at the same or lower level than they were already qualified.

At an overall level there were no differences observed between men and women. However, among those who did a course designed to lead to a qualification and successfully achieved it, women were slightly more likely than men to have increased their highest level of qualification (24 per cent versus 22 per cent respectively). This follows on from women being more likely than men to be qualified at a lower level than the course they were taking (see table 3.5).

Chart 5.2: Percentage who had increased their highest level of qualification since the start of their FE course, by age, level studied and ethnicity



As chart 5.2 shows, differences were noted by age, level studied and ethnicity:

- **Older learners** were less likely than younger learners to have increased their highest level of qualification. This follows on from older learners being more likely to have taken courses which did not lead to qualifications and generally having a higher level of prior qualification than younger learners.
- Those **studying at full level 2 or 3** were more likely than those studying at other levels to have increased their highest level of qualification. This ties in with the younger age profiles of full level 2 and 3 learners in comparison to those learning at other levels.

- Those who did **'other' courses, courses at below level 2 or part level 2** were least likely to have increased their highest level of qualification. Even though learners studying at these levels were just as likely as learners in general to achieve the qualification they were working towards, they were least likely to be doing courses designed to lead to qualifications in the first place. In addition to this, relatively high proportions of these groups were studying at lower level than they were already qualified (see table 3.4).
- **Black and Asian learners** were more likely than average to have increased their highest level of qualification.

In terms of subject studied, learners who did **IT or computing** courses were less likely than average to have increased their highest level of qualification. Even though they were more likely than learners in general to be on a course designed to lead to a qualification, a higher than average proportion were studying at a lower level than they were already qualified.

If we examine the findings by **main reason for doing the course**, those most likely to have increased their highest level of qualification were those who did the course either to complement other learning or as a stepping stone to further education, training or learning (29 per cent of this group held a higher post-course qualification). This is followed by those who did the course for employment related reasons (22 per cent of whom held a higher post-course level of qualification). Whilst learners studying for these reasons were no more likely than learners in general to achieve the qualification they were working towards, they were more likely to be doing courses designed to lead to qualifications in the first place.

5.2 Further learning undertaken since FE course ended

This section examines the courses that learners went on to start after completing their main original FE course. It is worth noting that, for some learners, the interview was carried out just seven months following the end of their FE course. It is therefore early to draw conclusions with regard to the further study. Many may be intending to do more learning, but may have not had chance to enrol on a course by the time of the interview. Similarly, many of those who *had* started further courses were still on those courses at the time of the interview. As such, the section that follows serves to give an early indication of further study undertaken, in advance of the second wave of the research which will serve to investigate this area in more detail.

5.2.1 Whether went on to start any further learning

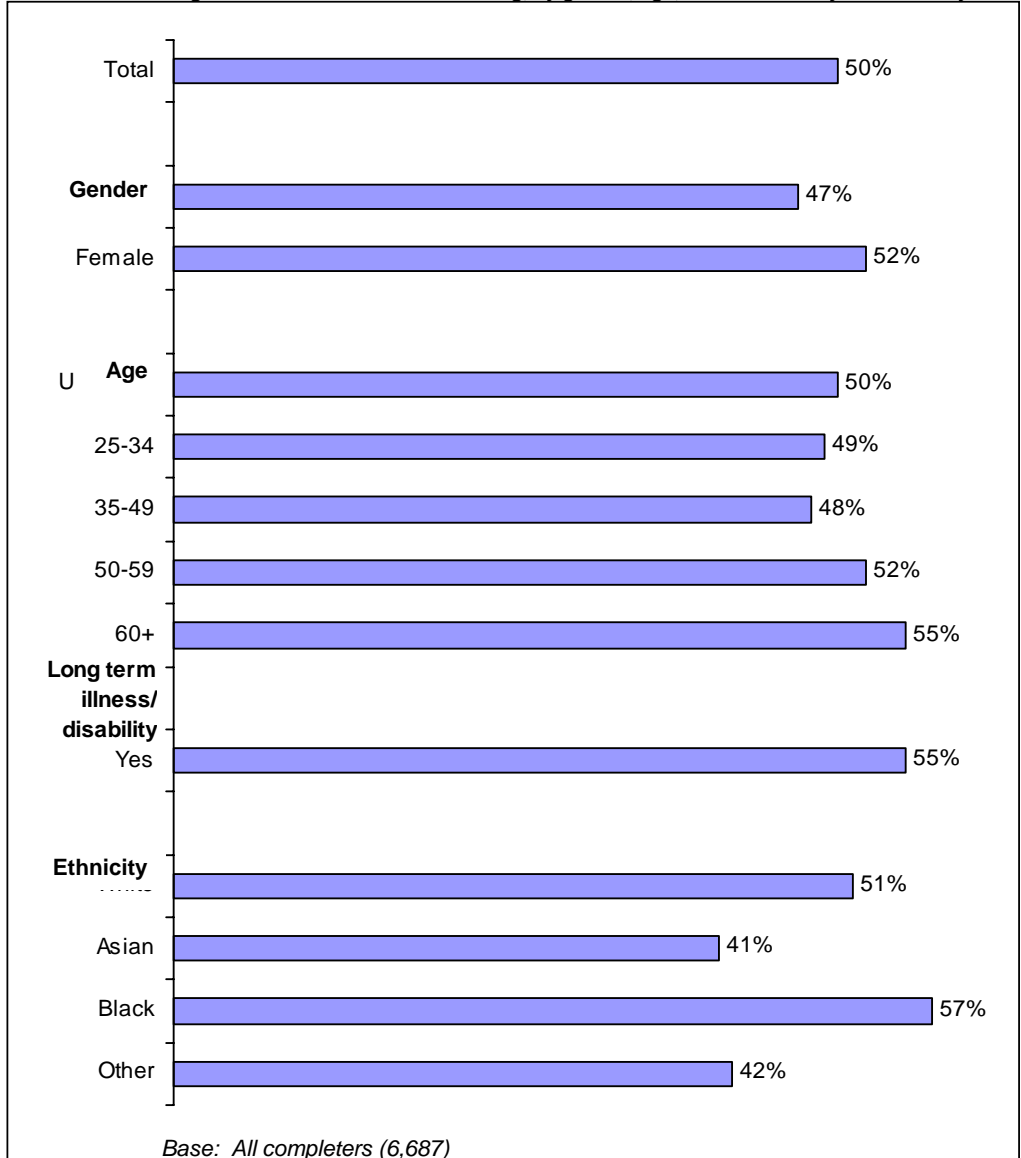
Since completing their main original FE course, 50 per cent of all learners had gone on to start further learning. Predictably, the proportion was higher among those whose **main reason for studying originally had been as a stepping stone to further learning** (68 per cent).

Learners whose **main original FE course was part of their job** were less likely than average to have gone on to do a further course (44 per cent), as were those who were **looking after the family/home** (44 per cent) or **unemployed** (39 per cent) at the time of the interview. In contrast, those who were **retired** were more likely to have done so (57 per cent).

In terms of gender, chart 5.3 shows that **females** were more likely to have gone on to do further learning than males and with regard to age, it was the **eldest FE learners** (aged 60 or over) who were most likely to have done so.

Others more likely than average to have gone on to do further study were those with **long-term illnesses or disabilities** and **Black learners**. Conversely, **Asian learners** were less likely. This can be linked to current activity, in that people who were looking after the home or family were less likely than average to have gone on to do further study, and there was a relatively high proportion of Asian learners looking after the home or family at the time of the interview following their main original FE course.

Chart 5.3: Percentage that had started further learning, by gender, age, illness/disability and ethnicity



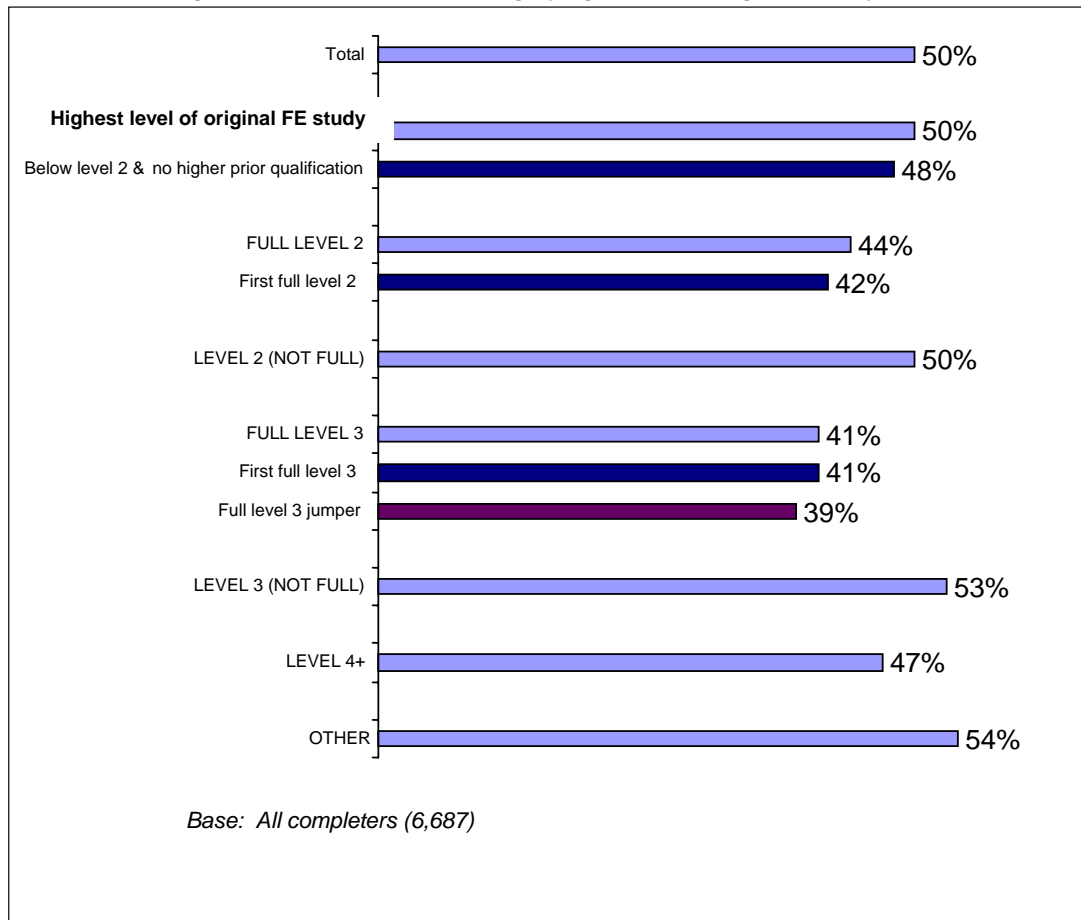
Analysing by **highest prior qualification** (Table 5.2) reveals that those who were most likely to go on to further study, were those who were most highly qualified to start with (i.e. qualified to level 4 or above at the start of their main original FE course). Those least likely were those whose highest level of prior qualification was full level 3 or 'other' (i.e. those who were unable to provide sufficient information for their level of highest prior qualification to be determined, as well as those with non-UK qualifications and a small proportion who did not have any prior qualifications).

Table 5.2: Whether started further learning, by highest prior qualification

| | Highest prior qualification | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Full level 3 | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Had started further learning | 51 | 51 | 45 | 53 | 47 | 50 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1387</i> | <i>1137</i> | <i>991</i> | <i>1794</i> | <i>1372</i> | <i>6687</i> |

In terms of **level studied at the original FE course**, chart 5.4 shows that it was those who originally did ‘other’ courses who were most likely to go on to do further learning and those who originally studied at full level 2 or 3 who were least likely.

Chart 5.4: Percentage that had started further learning, by highest level of original FE study



This ties in with current activity, in that people who did ‘other’ courses originally were more likely than average to be retired (and this group was more likely than average to have started further learning). Similarly, those who studied at higher levels were most likely to be working at the time of the interview and to have done the original FE course as part of a job, and these groups were less likely than average to have started further learning.

Differences can also be observed with regard to **main original FE subject studied**. Those who originally studied the following subjects were more likely than average to have gone on to do further learning:

- *arts and crafts* (59 per cent), *foreign languages* (60 per cent), *humanities* (59 per cent), *mathematics* (61 per cent), *sciences* (68 per cent) and *cookery* (60 per cent).

Those who studied the following were less likely than average:

- *engineering/technology/manufacturing* (41 per cent), *hospitality/sports/leisure/travel* (38 per cent), *IT/computers* (47 per cent), *classroom assistant* (34 per cent) and *construction* (40 per cent).

Non-completers

It is hardly surprising that learners who did not complete their main original FE course were less likely than those who did to have gone on to further study, although 25 per cent had done so. Because of the small numbers of respondents answering the questions, it is not possible to analyse the further learning undertaken by non-completers.

5.2.2 Whether main further course was designed to lead to a qualification

Table 5.3 illustrates that among learners who had gone on to do further study, it was those who had *originally* studied towards a qualification who were most likely to be on a *further course* designed to lead to a qualification.

Those who had not originally studied for a qualification were less likely to be on such courses, but nonetheless, a third were. Compared to those who had gone on to further study as a whole, this group (i.e. the 35 per cent of those who had not *originally* studied for a qualification that had gone on to *further* study involving a qualification) had an older age profile, was less likely to have been studying originally for employment related reasons and more likely to have been studying as a stepping stone to further education.

Table 5.3: Whether further course was designed to lead to qualification, by whether original FE course was

| | Main original FE course designed to lead to qualification | | Total |
|---|---|------------|--------------|
| | Yes | No | |
| Main further course designed to lead to qualification | % | % | % |
| Yes | 89 | 35 | 80 |
| No | 10 | 63 | 19 |
| <i>Base: All completers who went on to do further study (3,252)</i> | <i>2,787</i> | <i>435</i> | <i>3,252</i> |

As chart 5.5 shows, the additional courses that learners had gone on to do were similar to the original FE courses, in that the majority were designed to lead to a qualification¹². There were also similar patterns among subgroups.

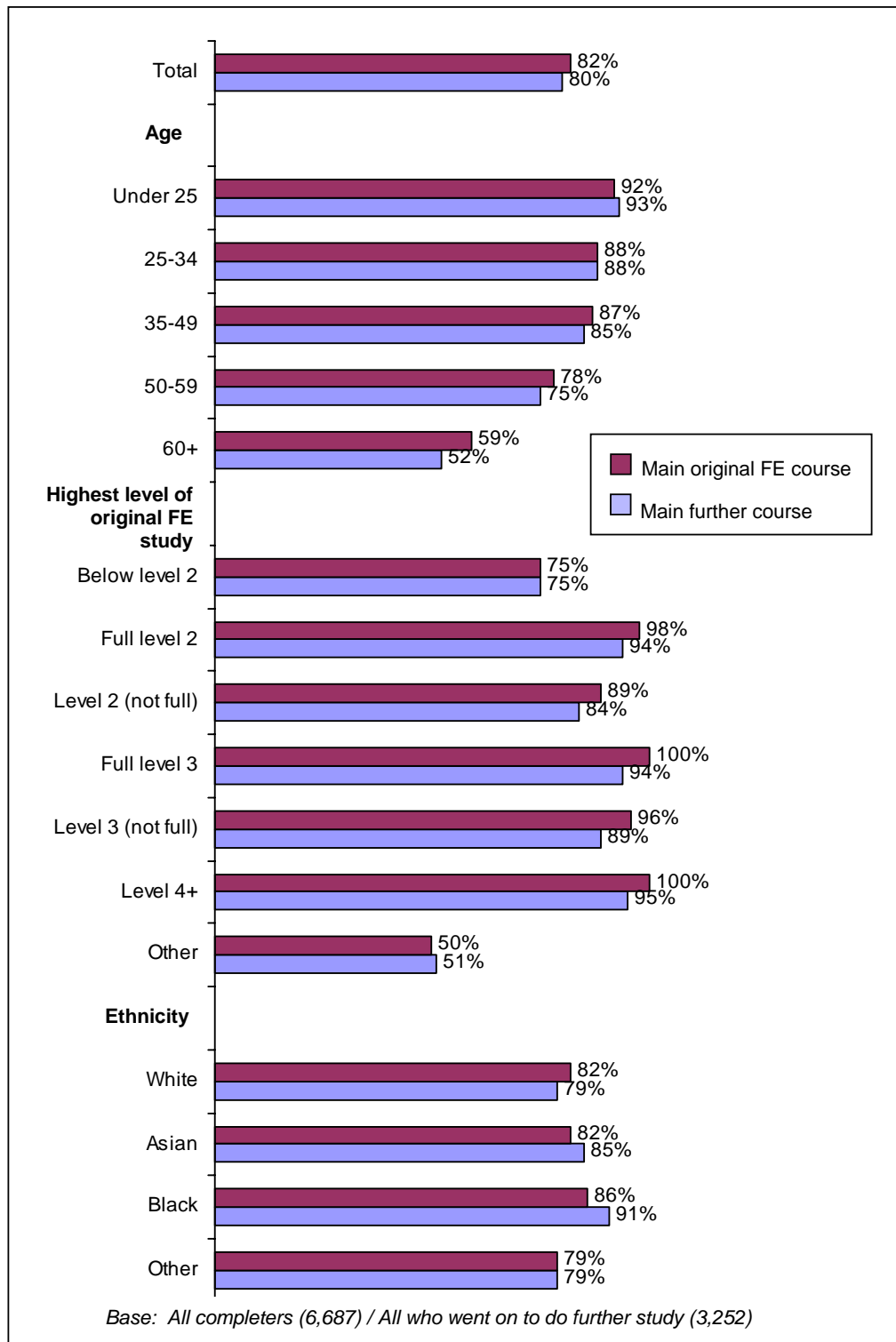
- No differences were noted by gender, but participation in courses designed to lead to a qualification fell with **age**.
- Those who had **originally studied at level 2 (full or part), level 3 (full or part) or level 4 or above** were most likely to be doing courses designed to lead to a qualification.
- Conversely, those who **originally studied at lower levels (below level 2 and ‘other’)** were least likely.
 - This can be linked with age, as those originally studying at full level 2, 3 or level 4 or above (and to a lesser extent part level 2 and 3) tended to be younger than those studying at below level 2 or on ‘other’ courses.
- In terms of **ethnicity**, Black learners were most likely to say their main additional course was designed to lead to a qualification.

Learners whose FE course in 2003/04 was at a higher level than they were already qualified were more likely than average to say their main *further* course was designed to lead to a qualification (89 per cent).

- However, among those who originally studied at full level 2 the opposite was true. Those who had been studying at a *lower* level than they were already qualified were more likely to be doing a further course designed to lead to a qualification than those who had originally studied for their first full level 2.

¹² If they had started more than one further course, they were asked about the course they felt was most important. This may or may not be the highest level course they went on to do.

Chart 5.5: Percentage whose course was designed to lead to a qualification, by age, original level studied and ethnicity



5.2.3 Reasons for doing further study

Learners who had embarked on further study following completion of their main original FE course were asked why they had done so. Respondents were able to give more than one answer and table 5.5 shows the wide variety of reasons given. 'Interest in the subject' was the most common reason, mentioned by over half.

Motivations varied by **highest level of original FE study**:

- Those who originally studied at the lowest levels (**below level 2 or 'other'**) were more likely than average to say they had embarked on further study out of interest for the subject, to make friends or meet people, to keep their mind and body active or to help with their health problems or disability. Additionally, those who had studied previously at **below level 2** were more likely than average to say that they were doing further study to develop their IT skills or reading, writing and/or maths skills or to improve their self-confidence.
- Learners who had originally studied at higher levels (**full level 2, level 3 (full and part) or level 4+**) were more likely than average to say that they started further learning to get a qualification, to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future, or to learn skills for an existing job. Additionally, learners who studied at **full level 2 or 3** originally were more likely than average to say that they had gone on to do further study as a stepping stone to further education, training or learning, and those who studied at **level 4+** were more likely than average to say that they were trying to get a promotion, pay rise or more money.

Table 5.5: Reasons for going on to do further study, by highest level of original FE study

| | Highest level of original FE study | | | | | | | Total | Original FE Course |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Interested in the subject | 62 | 38 | 53 | 48 | 55 | 28 | 62 | 56 | 50 |
| To get a qualification | 28 | 57 | 37 | 62 | 47 | 64 | 21 | 36 | 31 |
| To learn skills for job may want to do in future | 27 | 55 | 34 | 51 | 48 | 45 | 18 | 34 | 33 |
| To learn skills for current/previous job | 15 | 32 | 21 | 40 | 25 | 37 | 16 | 21 | 23 |
| To complement other learning | 15 | 18 | 20 | 19 | 17 | 8 | 16 | 17 | 8 |
| To develop IT skills | 20 | 4 | 15 | 13 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 15 | 19 |
| As a stepping stone to further learning | 9 | 16 | 12 | 16 | 13 | 11 | 6 | 11 | 11 |
| To improve self-confidence | 13 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 10 | 11 |
| To keep mind/body active | 12 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 16 | 10 | 10 |
| To make new friends/meet new people | 10 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| To develop reading/writing and/or maths skills | 9 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| To help with my health/disability | 4 | * | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| To develop other skills/personal development | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Hobby/fun | 2 | * | * | * | 1 | - | - | 1 | * |
| Other answers | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers who went on to do further study (3,252); All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>628</i> | <i>390</i> | <i>909</i> | <i>376</i> | <i>552</i> | <i>88</i> | <i>309</i> | <i>3,252</i> | <i>6,687</i> |

Whilst the reasons given for starting further learning did not vary greatly by **gender**, motivations did vary by **age**:

- **Older learners** were more likely than younger learners to have embarked on further study for reasons of personal fulfilment or wellbeing, or to develop IT skills.
- **Younger learners** were more likely than older learners to say they had started further learning to get a qualification (59 per cent of those aged 24 or under and 49 per cent of those aged 25-34), or were studying for work reasons or as a stepping stone to further learning.

Differences by **ethnicity** were also observed:

- **Black** and **Asian** respondents were more likely than average to say that they had gone on to do further study to get a qualification (48 per cent each) or to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future (50 per cent and 43 per cent respectively).

Those who **originally studied IT or computing** and had gone on to start further learning were significantly more likely than average to say that they had done so to develop their IT skills (41 per cent vs. 15 per cent). However, this does not appear to be because their original course had failed to meet their expectations, as those who said this were more likely than learners in general to be 'very satisfied' with their original FE course (78 per cent vs. 64 per cent) and to feel that it had met their needs 'completely' (72 per cent vs. 62 per cent).

In terms of **prior qualifications**, it was those with the highest prior qualifications (those qualified to **level 4 or above** at the start of their main original FE course) who were most likely to say that were doing further learning out of interest in the subject.

The patterns noted above correspond closely to those for the main original FE course. The final column in table 5.5 shows the reasons for taking the original FE course, as a comparison.

5.2.4 Whether original FE course helped learners move onto further study

Learners who had gone on to start further study were asked whether they felt that their main original FE course had assisted them with this. Seventy-four per cent agreed that it had. Those more likely than average to agree were:

- Learners whose **main reason for doing their original FE course** was either to complement other learning or as a stepping stone to further learning (85 per cent);
- Learners who had **originally studied English language and communications**, and **ESOL courses** (84 and 88 per cent respectively);
- Those with **lower prior qualifications** (80 per cent of those whose highest prior qualification was below level 2).
- Learners who **originally studied at a higher level than they were already qualified** (81 per cent).

In terms of level studied, table 5.6 shows that those who were originally studying at full level 2, 3 or 4+ were more likely than average to feel that their original FE course had helped them progress on to further learning. This probably reflects the relatively

high proportions originally studying at these levels who were studying at a higher level than they were already qualified (see Table 3.4).

Table 5.6: Whether main original FE course helped the move on to further learning, by highest level of original FE study

| | Highest level of original FE study | | | | | | Total | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Helped | 77 | 80 | 73 | 84 | 74 | 80 | 61 | 74 |
| Did not help | 23 | 17 | 27 | 16 | 24 | 20 | 38 | 25 |
| <i>Base: All completers who went on to do further study (3,252)</i> | 628 | 390 | 909 | 376 | 552 | 88 | 309 | 3252 |

6 Economic activity since FE course

This chapter examines the economic activity of learners following their FE course. Again, this takes into account the activities undertaken up to the time of the survey, typically between 7 and 13 months after the end of the FE course. Once more, the analysis focuses mainly on people who completed their course, but also includes details of non-completers where appropriate.

In section 6.1 we start by examining the **current activity** of learners (i.e. whether they are in work, studying, retired, etc...) and compare this, at an overall level, to the **activity of learners immediately prior to the start of their FE course**. While this does not give any information on progression, it does indicate the overall profile of economic activity among the FE learner population at both of these points in time.

Sections 6.2 to 6.5 look at the learners who *started* a new job *following* their course and the type of work they have done, specifically:

- Section 6.2 looks at this group as a whole;
- Section 6.3 focuses on learners who had also worked *at the time of* their FE course (in a different job);
- Section 6.4 focuses on learners who had also worked *prior* to their FE course, but not during it;
- Section 6.5 focuses on learners who had *never worked* prior to the course.

Towards the end of the chapter we look at the work related benefits gained from the FE course, among those who had worked at any point since completing the course (section 6.6). We finish by looking at the job satisfaction of learners who are currently in work and how long they plan to stay in their current role (section 6.7).

6.1 Current activity

Sixty per cent of learners who completed their main original FE course were in paid employment at the time of the interview. This is a slight increase compared to the proportion in work when they started their course (57 per cent). However, taking into account the 2 per cent who had left a job to do their course, the overall trend is rather flat, which is in line with the flat trend in employment reported by the Labour Force Survey since 2000 among the population as a whole¹³.

¹³ Labour Force Survey trends as reported in the Office for National Statistics publication 'Labour Market Trends Volume 113 Number 6'

Forty-three per cent of learners were working 30 hours or more per week at the time of the interview and 17 per cent were working less than 30 hours per week. This is similar to the split between those working full-time and part-time observed at the start of the main original FE course.

Table 6.1 shows the range of activities undertaken at the time of the interview, by level of original FE study. Overall, the same proportion of learners were retired as were immediately before the start of their course (11 per cent), but the proportion of those in education had increased (from 4 per cent to 8 per cent) while the proportions unemployed/looking for work and looking after the family and home had decreased (from 6 per cent to 3 per cent and 14 per cent to 10 per cent respectively).

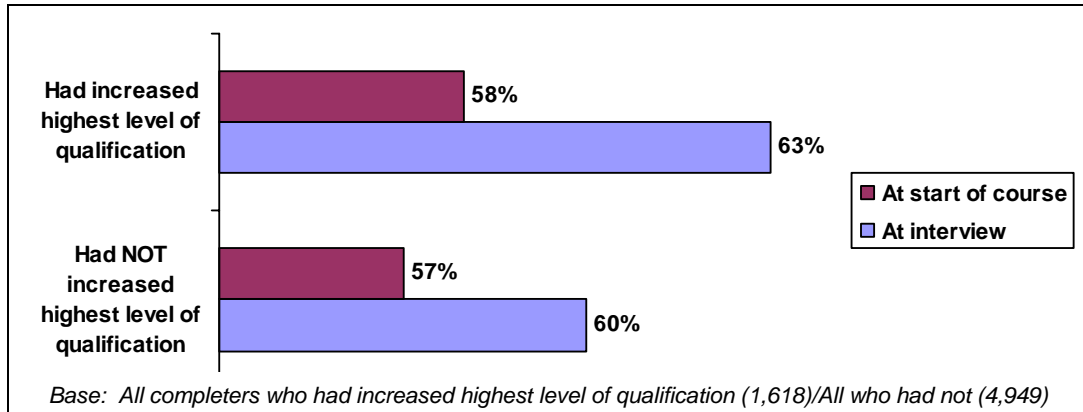
Table 6.1: Current activity, by highest level of original FE study

| | Highest level of original FE study | | | | | | Other | Total |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| In work at the time of the interview | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time work (30 hours or more) | 35 | 55 | 44 | 58 | 48 | 69 | 45 | 43 |
| Part-time work (less than 30 hours) | 14 | 23 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 9 | 17 |
| Not in work at the time of the interview | | | | | | | | |
| School / college / university (full or part time) | 7 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 16 | 5 | 4 | 8 |
| Government programme (e.g. New Deal) | * | * | * | * | * | - | * | * |
| Voluntary work | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Unemployed/looking for work | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Looking after family and home | 15 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 10 |
| Permanently sick or injured | 5 | * | 3 | 1 | 1 | - | 4 | 3 |
| Retired | 15 | * | 11 | * | 4 | 1 | 26 | 11 |
| Not working for some other reason | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> | <i>6,687</i> |

All levels of learners were either just as likely or slightly more likely to be working at the time of the interview compared to at the start of their course, apart from those studying at **full level 3**. Full level 3 learners were much more likely to now be working (78 per cent were working at the time of the interview compared with 69 per cent at the start of their course) and this was particularly true of those studying for their **first full level 3** (including level 3 jumpers). This overall trend in employment reflects both new jobs which have been started since the course and also people leaving jobs that they were in at the start of their course.

Chart 6.1 shows that those who had increased their level of highest qualification since the start of their FE course were slightly more likely to be working at the time of the interview than those who had not. Although both groups were more likely to be working at the time of the interview than they were at the start of the course, the increase in likelihood was greater among the former group.

Chart 6.1: Percentage working, by whether highest level of qualification had increased



Restricting the analysis to those whose **main reason for study had been to learn skills for a job they may have wanted to do in the future**, reveals a larger increase in likelihood of being in work at the time of the interview compared to at the start of the course (64 per cent vs. 55).

6.2 Work started since FE course ended

In this section we compare, at an overall level, the type of work started since the FE course with both the type of work done at the start of the FE course and the type of work done prior to the FE course. While this does not give any information on progression, it does indicate the overall profile of work being done by the FE learner population.

As table 6.2 shows, 19 per cent of learners had started a *new* job since completing their FE course. Of these, the majority had worked at some point before, either at the time of, or prior to, their course. In terms of level of study, it was those who studied at full level 2, 3 or 4+ who were most likely to have started a new job.

Table 6.2: Work started since completing FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Started work since course | 14 | 27 | 21 | 40 | 23 | 30 | 13 | 19 |
| Started work since course and... | | | | | | | | |
| also worked at time of course (in a different job) | 7 | 19 | 11 | 22 | 13 | 25 | 9 | 11 |
| also worked before course (but not at time of course) | 6 | 8 | 9 | 15 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 8 |
| had never worked before | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Base: All completers (6,687) | 1,266 | 955 | 1,789 | 889 | 1,027 | 192 | 569 | 6,687 |

Industry sector

Table 6.3 shows that the distribution of jobs started since the course by industry sector was similar to the profile of those jobs being done at the start of the course and, to a slightly lesser degree, the most recent work done prior to the course by those who were not working during it.

The most notable difference was the lower proportion that had started work in the manufacturing sector following the course.

Table 6.3: Industry sector for work conducted before, at start of or after FE course

| | Work before course | Work at start of course | Work started after course |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Agriculture, hunting and forestry | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Mining and quarrying | 1 | * | * |
| Manufacturing | 14 | 12 | 7 |
| Electricity, gas, water | * | * | * |
| Construction | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Wholesale, retail trade, repair | 14 | 9 | 11 |
| Hotels, restaurants | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| Transport, storage, communication | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Financial intermediation | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Real estate, renting, business activities | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Public administration, defence, social security | 8 | 12 | 11 |
| Education | 10 | 13 | 13 |
| Health and social work | 12 | 18 | 16 |
| Other community, social, personal service | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| Private households | * | * | * |
| Unclassified | 8 | 8 | 9 |

Base: All completers who worked before but not during their course (2,036); those in work at start of their course (4,228); those who had started work since their course (1,445)

Analysing the jobs started after the course by reason for doing the course reveals that:

- Those who started jobs in **manufacturing** and **construction** following their course were more likely than average to have been doing the course **to learn skills for a job they may have wanted to do in the future**. People who started jobs in **construction** were also more likely than average to say that they had done their course **to get a qualification** and those who started work in **manufacturing** were also more likely than average to have done their course **to develop skills such as reading, writing and maths**.
- People working in **public administration/defence/social security** were more likely than average to have done their course out of **interest for the subject** or **to learn skills for their current or previous job**.
- Those working in **health or social work** were more likely than average to have done their course as a **stepping stone to further education, training or learning**.

Table 6.4 looks at the work started following the course by **highest level of study**:

- Those who studied at **full level 2** and started work following their course were **more likely than average to be working in construction** (20 per cent of full level 2 workers who had started work following their course worked in construction vs. 5 per cent of all of those who had started work following their course);
- Those who studied **full level 3** and started work following their course were **more likely than average** to be working in **health/social work** (20 per cent of full level 3 completers who had started work vs. an average of 16 per cent) and **other community, social & personal service activities** (14 per cent vs. 5 per cent).

Table 6.4: Industry sector of learners who started work following their FE course, by level studied

| Industry sector | Level studied | | | | | | Other | Total |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| Agriculture, hunting, forestry | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Mining and quarrying | - | - | * | - | - | - | - | * |
| Manufacturing | 6 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| Electricity, gas, water | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | * |
| Construction | 4 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 5 |
| Wholesale, retail, repair | 15 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 10 | 2 | 11 | 11 |
| Hotels, restaurants | 9 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Transport, storage, communication | 6 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 11 | 5 |
| Financial intermediation | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Real estate, renting, business activities | 10 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 13 | 9 | 9 |
| Public admin, defence, social security | 11 | 7 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 8 | 11 |
| Education | 9 | 12 | 15 | 13 | 16 | 15 | 7 | 13 |
| Health and social work | 15 | 15 | 14 | 20 | 18 | 12 | 17 | 16 |
| Other community, social, personal service | 4 | 6 | 6 | 14 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Private households | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | * |
| Unclassified | 7 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 15 | 9 | 9 |
| <i>Base: All completers who had started work since their FE course (1,445)</i> | 174 | 264 | 357 | 299 | 226 | 58** | 67** | 1,445 |

**caution: low base

Occupation

The jobs that were started after completion of the FE course were also broadly similar in terms of occupation to the jobs being done at the start of the course (and to a lesser extent the most recent work done before the course for those who were not working during their course).

Table 6.5: Occupation for work conducted before, at start of or after FE course

| | Work before course | Work at start of course | Work started after course |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Managers/senior officials | 10 | 12 | 8 |
| Professional | 11 | 10 | 8 |
| Associate professional and technical | 11 | 15 | 13 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 17 | 14 | 17 |
| Skilled trades | 7 | 9 | 9 |
| Personal service | 10 | 17 | 18 |
| Sales and customer service | 10 | 7 | 9 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| Elementary occupations | 17 | 9 | 12 |
| <i>Base: All completers who worked before but not during their course (2,036); those in work at start of their course (4,228); those who had started work since their course (1,445)</i> | | | |

As table 6.5 shows, the main differences between the work started after the course and the work being done at the start of the course were that after the course there were:

- slightly less working in **managerial/senior official**, and **professional roles**
- and
- slightly more working in **administrative/secretarial**, **sales/customer service** and **elementary occupations**.

This is surprising as we would not expect those who go through Further Education to downgrade in occupational terms. However, we need to remember that this represents the profile of work started shortly after the course was completed and may not necessarily reflect what happens in the longer term. We also need to remember that these findings are at aggregate level and as such, do not give any indication of progression. (As noted earlier, sections 6.3 and 6.4 will examine progression among the two main groups who started work following their course.)

Looking at occupation by main reason for studying reveals that:

- Those who had started **management or senior roles** were more likely than average to have been doing their main FE course **to learn skills for an existing job, or for a job they wanted to do in the future**, with those in **skilled trades** more likely than average to have been **studying for a possible future role**.
- Those in **process, plant and machinery roles** were more likely than average to have been **studying as part of an existing job**.
- People who had started working in **sales and customer service or personal service occupations** since completing their course were more likely than average to have been doing their course **as a stepping stone to further education, training or learning**, and those working in **associate professional or technical or process, plant and machinery roles** were more likely than average to have studied **to improve their IT skills**.

Table 6.6: Occupation for work started after FE course, by level studied

| Occupation | Level studied | | | | | | Other | Total |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Managers/senior officials | 8 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 9 | 8 |
| Professional | 5 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 23 | 7 | 8 |
| Associate professional and technical | 14 | 2 | 13 | 8 | 19 | 17 | 9 | 13 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 16 | 12 | 20 | 19 | 14 | 33 | 11 | 17 |
| Skilled trades | 10 | 24 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| Personal service | 13 | 27 | 16 | 35 | 24 | 3 | 11 | 18 |
| Sales and customer service | 9 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 3 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 18 | 5 |
| Elementary occupations | 22 | 12 | 10 | 4 | 4 | - | 20 | 12 |
| <i>Base: All completers who had started work since their FE course (1,445)</i> | <i>174</i> | <i>264</i> | <i>357</i> | <i>299</i> | <i>226</i> | <i>58**</i> | <i>67**</i> | <i>1,445</i> |

**caution: low base

Table 6.6 shows that in terms of **highest level of study**:

- Both **full level 2** and **full level 3 learners** were less likely than average to have started work in higher level roles such as **managers/senior officials, professional or associate professional/technical** and more likely than average to have started work in roles such as **personal service or skilled trades**. This reflects the older age profile of those doing the higher level roles and the younger age profile of those doing full level 2 and 3 courses.
- Learners who studied at **below level 2** or did ‘**other**’ courses were more likely than average to have started work in **elementary roles** since completing their course, with those who did ‘**other**’ courses also more likely than average to have started a **process, plant or machinery role**.
- Learners who studied at **level 4 or higher** and had started work since completing their job were more likely than average to have started an **administrative or secretarial, an associate professional/technical, a professional or managerial/senior official** role.

If the same analysis is conducted using **highest prior level of qualification**:

- Those who were most highly qualified (i.e. **level 4+**) and had started work since completing their course were more likely to have started work in **higher occupational groups** compared with other learners.
- Those least well qualified (**below level 2** or ‘**other**’) were more likely to have started work in **lower occupational groups** compared with other learners.

Hours and pay

The majority of those who started work after completing their FE course said their most recent job was full-time (62 per cent were working more than 30 hours per week), although this is slightly less compared to those working at the start of their FE course or prior to this (72 per cent and 71 per cent respectively).

As shown in chart 6.2, among those who gave an amount, pay levels for those who had started work following their course were generally:

- higher compared to those who hadn't worked during their course but had worked before it

and

- lower compared to those who were working during their course.

The latter finding reflects the slightly lower proportions of those working in higher level occupations (which tend to be more highly paid) compared to those working at the start of the course, and the slightly higher proportions working in lower level occupations (which tend to be less well paid). Again, we need to remember that these findings are at aggregate level only, and only reflect the profile of work started shortly after the course was completed, as opposed to the longer term picture.

Chart 6.2: Hourly pay of learners in paid work before, at start of or after their course

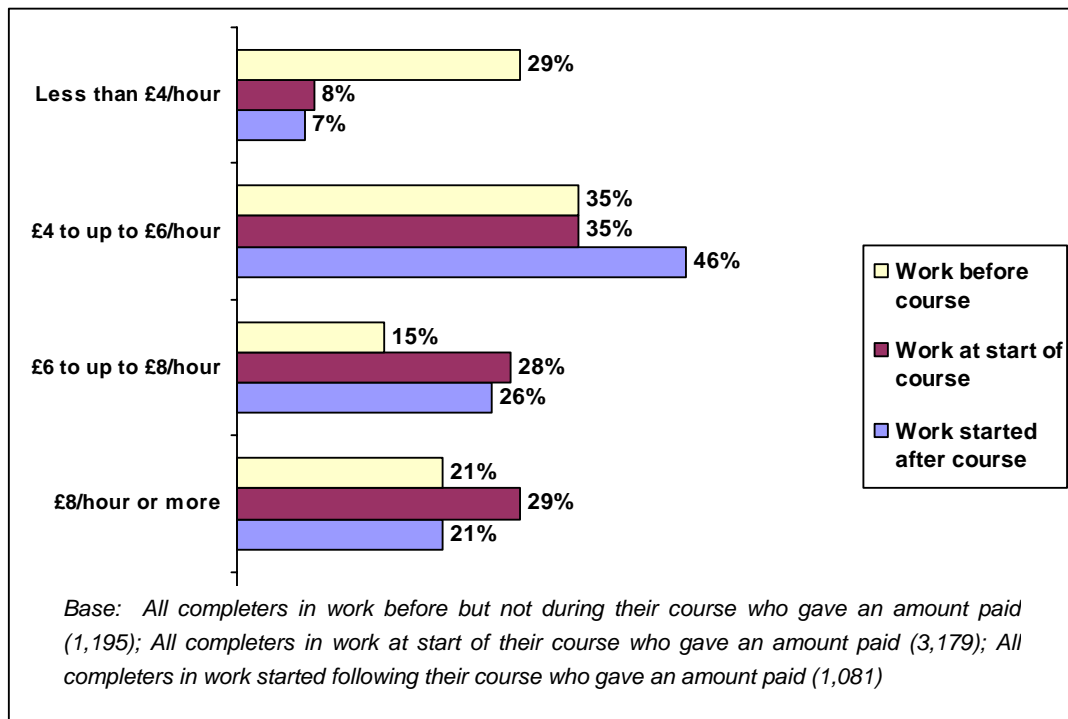


Table 6.7 shows the full breakdown of pay by level studied. Among those who had started work following their course, those on lower than average pay were:

- learners who had studied at below level 2;
- learners who studied at full level 2 and 3, (which can be linked to age, as those studying at these levels tended to be younger than average and younger people tend to be on lower pay).

Those who studied at level 4 or above were on the highest pay.

Table 6.7: Hourly pay for work started after FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | | Total |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Less than £4/hour | 12 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 17 | 7 |
| £4 to up to £6/hour | 49 | 57 | 50 | 59 | 40 | 13 | 24 | 46 |
| £6 to up to £8/hour | 22 | 29 | 27 | 22 | 34 | 25 | 17 | 26 |
| £8/hour or more | 17 | 10 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 58 | 41 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers in work started following their course who gave an amount paid (1,081)</i> | 129 | 194 | 267 | 233 | 161 | 50** | 47** | 1,081 |

**caution: low base

Non-completers

Learners who did not complete their course were more likely than those who did to have started new work following the course (49 and 19 per cent respectively). As indicated in section 4.14, 23 per cent of non-completers left the course because they had started work. Because of the small numbers of respondents answering the questions, it is not possible to analyse the type of work started.

6.3 Learners in work at start of their course who went on to start a new job after completing their course

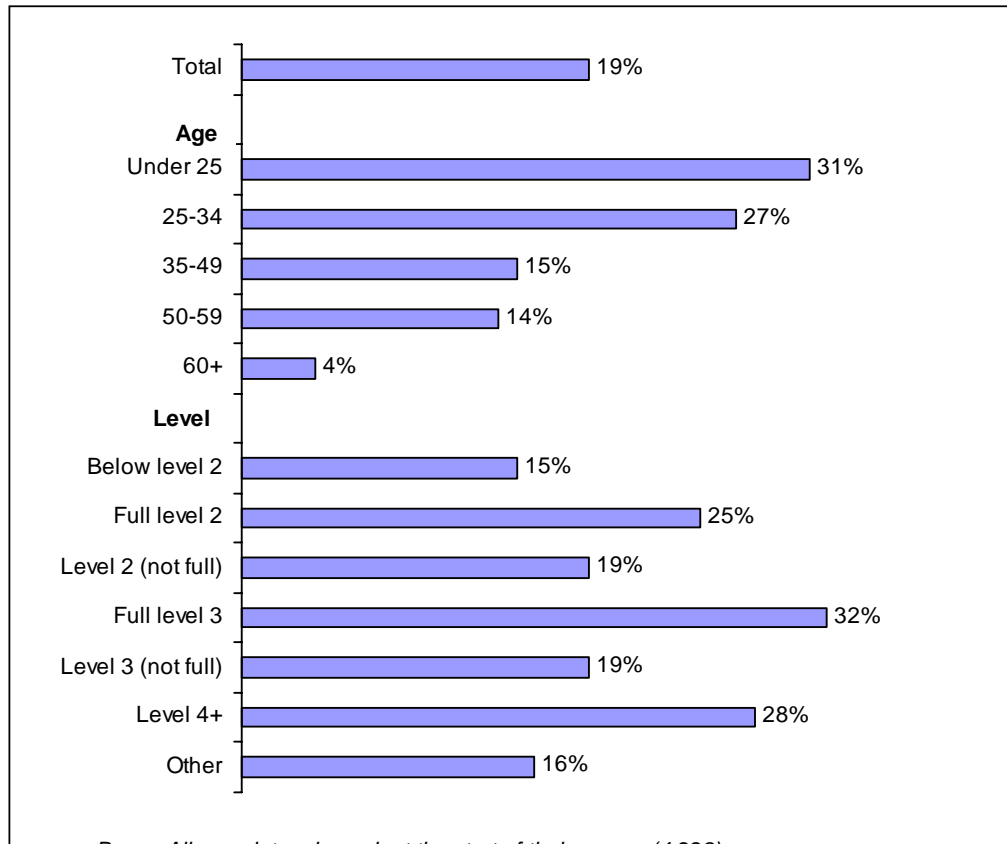
Of those working at the start of the course, 19 per cent went on to start a new job after completing it. In this section we examine the profile of these people and compare their jobs at the start of and after the course.

Profile

As chart 6.3 shows, among those in work at the start of their course, **younger learners** were more likely than older learners to go on to start a new job at some point after completing their course, and likelihood decreased progressively with age. There was no difference between men and women, or with regard to ethnicity, but in terms of highest level studied, those who **studied at full level 2, 3 or level 4+** were

more likely than those studying at other levels to switch to a new job after completing their course.

Chart 6.3: Percentage of those working at the start of their course who started a new job after their course, by age and level studied

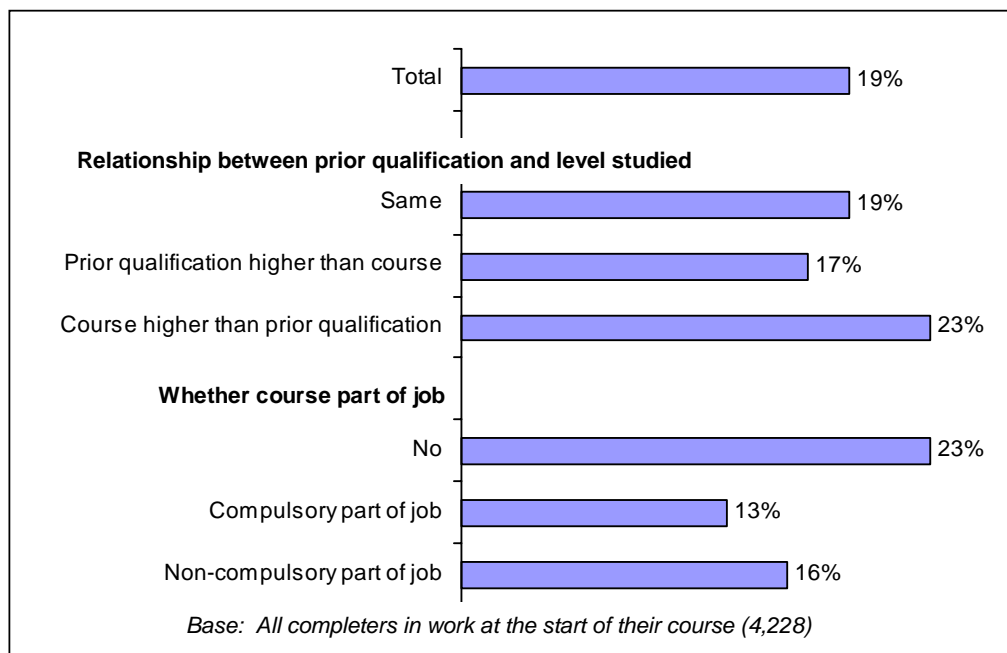


Base: All completers in work at the start of their course (4,228)

Looking at the relationship between level studied and prior qualification (Chart 6.4), those who were working at the start of the course and who were **studying at a higher level than they were already qualified** were most likely to move into a new job following their course. Among this group it was those studying at full level 3 and level 4+ who were most likely to have started a new job.

Learners whose **course had not been part of their job** were more likely to have started a new job after completing their course than those whose course *had* been part of their job at the time (either compulsory or non-compulsory). This is connected to main reason for doing the course, with the former group being more likely to have done their course to learn skills for a job they may have wanted to do in the future (and those who had done their course for this reason were more likely than average to have moved into a new job following their course (34 per cent vs. 19 per cent of those working at the start of their course)).

Chart 6.4: Percentage of those working at the start of their course who started a new job after their course, by relationship between prior qualification and level studied, and whether course part of job



Industry sector

As table 6.8 shows, those in work at the start of their FE course who started a new job after completing their course were less likely to be working in manufacturing and the wholesale/retail/repair trade following their course than beforehand. Conversely, they were slightly more likely than before to be working in financial intermediation, public administration/defence/social security and health/social work.

A similar pattern can be observed among those who said that their **main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future**. Restricting the analysis to this group helps to show changes which are more likely to be linked to the FE course itself. The one key difference was that this group were also more likely to be working in education following their course (13 per cent following the course versus six per cent at the start of the course).

Table 6.8: Industry sector for those who were working at start of FE course and started a new job after

| | Work at start of course | Work started after course |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | % | % |
| Agriculture, hunting, forestry | 1 | 1 |
| Mining and quarrying | * | - |
| Manufacturing | 15 | 7 |
| Electricity, gas, water | * | * |
| Construction | 5 | 7 |
| Wholesale, retail, repair | 14 | 9 |
| Hotels and restaurants | 6 | 4 |
| Transport, storage, communication | 5 | 5 |
| Financial intermediation | 2 | 4 |
| Real estate, renting, business activities | 10 | 9 |
| Public administration, defence, social security | 7 | 11 |
| Education | 10 | 11 |
| Health and social work | 14 | 17 |
| Other community, social, personal service | 4 | 6 |
| Private households | 1 | - |
| Unclassified | 9 | 10 |

Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked at start of course (851)

Occupation

A comparison of the work started after the course with the work done at the start of the course (for those that worked at both of these points) reveals a slight shift away from lower level occupations such as sales and customer service, and a slight shift towards higher level occupations such as professional/associate professional and technical. Table 6.9 shows the full breakdown by occupation.

Once again, the story is very similar among those who said that their **main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future**, with the exception of personal service occupations. Those who did their course to learn skills for a future possible job were a lot more likely to be working in a personal service role following their course than at the start of the course (19 per cent versus 8 per cent respectively). People who started work in personal service roles and had been studying to learn skills for a future job, studied mainly subjects such as classroom assistant courses, health/social care and public services, IT, English/languages and communications, care and hairdressing.

Table 6.9: Occupation for those in work at the start of their FE course and started a new job after

| | Work at start of course | Work started after course |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | % | % |
| Managers/senior officials | 12 | 11 |
| Professional | 6 | 8 |
| Associate professional and technical | 12 | 15 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 17 | 17 |
| Skilled trades | 8 | 10 |
| Personal service | 15 | 16 |
| Sales and customer service | 11 | 7 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 7 | 6 |
| Elementary occupations | 11 | 9 |

Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked at start of course (851)

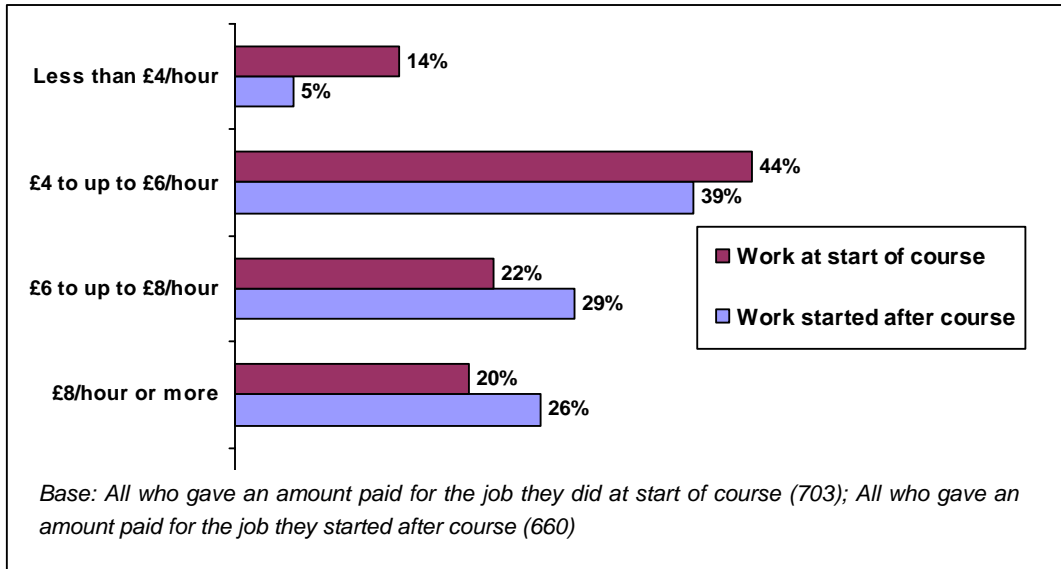
There was also a **higher level of self-employment** among this group following their course (eight per cent were self-employed following the course compared with three per cent at the start of the course). Predictably, the increase was greater among those who said that they had been doing their course to set-up their own or family business (32 per cent were self-employed following the course compared with five per cent working at the start of the course).

Hours and pay

Learners who worked both after and at the start of the course (in a different job) were more likely to be working full time following the course than previously (74 per cent worked thirty hours a week or more following the course compared with 70 per cent at the start of the course).

Hourly pay levels were generally higher following the course, which reflects the slight shift towards higher level occupations (which tend to be more highly paid).

Chart 6.5: Hourly pay of learners in paid work both at the start of and after their course



Because of the small numbers of people in each group, it is not possible to analyse the trends in hourly pay by level studied. However, the upward trend in pay was seen for all age groups, as well as by gender, ethnicity, whether the course was part of a job or not and whether learners were studying at the same, higher or lower level than their highest prior qualification.

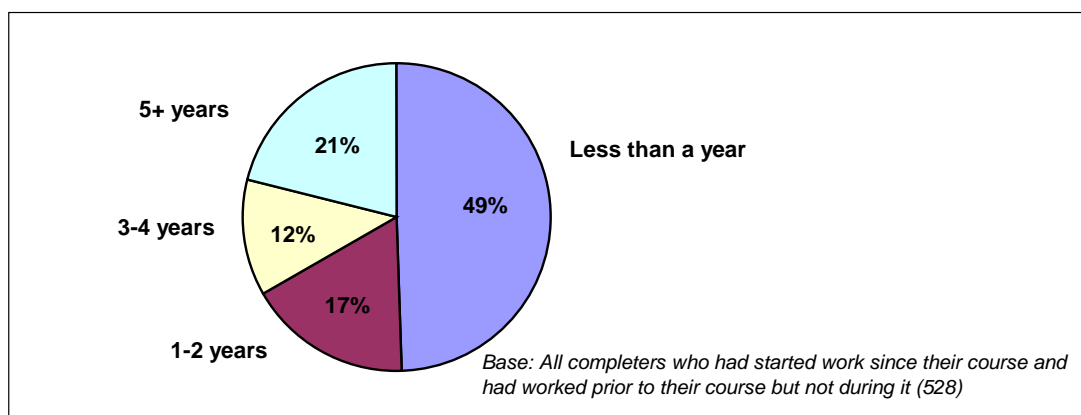
6.4 Learners who worked before but not during their course and went on to start a new job after completing their course

Twenty-two per cent of those who worked before but not during their FE course, went on to start a new job after completing their course. In this section we examine the profile of these people and compare their jobs before and after the course.

Profile

The majority of those who started work after completing their course and had also worked before their course said their last work prior to the course was relatively recent (66 per cent had worked within the 1-2 years prior to starting their course). However, as chart 6.6 shows, for some the period they had been out of work was longer.

Chart 6.6: Number of years since last paid work before starting course



Among those who had worked prior to but not during their course, those most likely to have gone on to start a new job following the course were:

- learners who had worked most recently before their course;
- non-White learners;
- younger learners and connected with this, those who had studied at a higher level than they were already qualified and those who studied at full level 2 or 3;
 - Although among full level 2 learners, it was those who had studied at a *lower* level than they were already qualified who were more likely than those who had done their *first* level 2 to have started a new job).

Industry sector

Those who worked both before their course and started a new job after completing it were less likely to be working in manufacturing and the wholesale/retail/repair trade following their course than before. Conversely, they were more likely than before to be working in education and health and social work.

A similar pattern can be observed among those who said that their main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future, with the increased likelihood to be working in education particularly pronounced for this group (16 per cent following the course versus 5 per cent before).

Those who started work in education who said their main reason for studying had been for a future job were most likely to have been studying: care, ESOL, IT/computing, health/social care & public services and classroom assistants.

Occupation

Comparing the roles that were started after the course with roles before the course for those that worked at both of these points reveals a shift away from sales and customer service, manager/senior official roles and a shift towards personal service occupations. Table 6.10 shows the full breakdown by occupation.

Among those who said that their main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future the story is very similar, apart from the following two differences: they were just as likely to be working as managers/senior officials following the course compared to before (10 per cent in each case) and were less likely to be working in process, plant and machine operative roles (4 per cent versus 10).

Table 6.10: Occupation for those who worked before but not during their FE course and started a new job after

| | Work before course | Work started after course |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| | % | % |
| Managers/senior officials | 12 | 6 |
| Professional | 6 | 8 |
| Associate professional and technical | 10 | 11 |
| Administrative and secretarial | 18 | 18 |
| Skilled trades | 7 | 8 |
| Personal service | 9 | 21 |
| Sales and customer service | 15 | 10 |
| Process, plant and machine operatives | 6 | 4 |
| Elementary occupations | 16 | 14 |

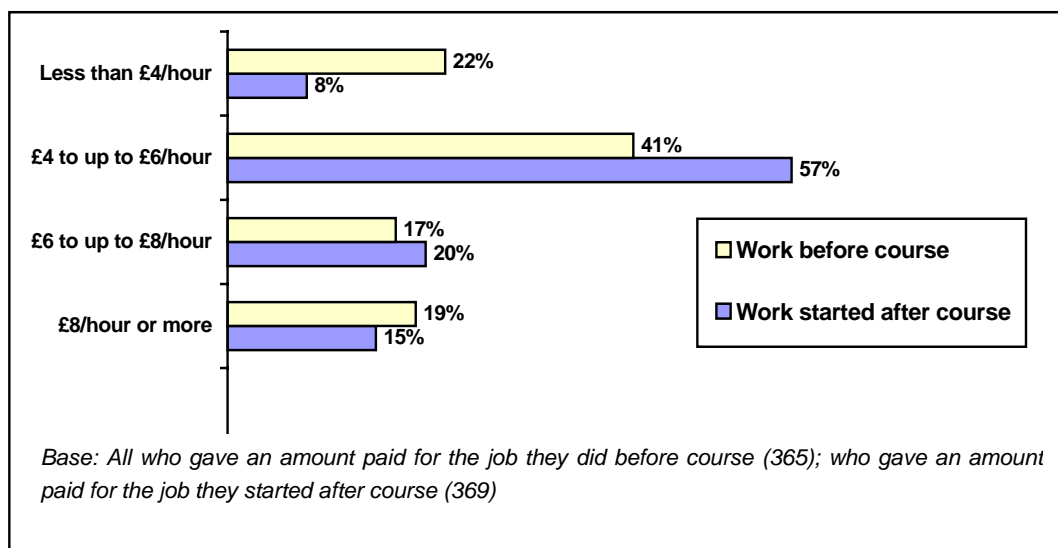
Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked before but not during (528)

Evidence of higher levels of self-employment exists for this group following their course (15 per cent said that they were self-employed following the course compared with 8 per cent prior to the course).

Hours and pay

The proportion of full time positions was considerably lower following the course: 65 per cent of those who worked both before and after their course in a new job worked thirty hours a week or more before their course compared with 48 per cent after completing their course. There was also a higher level of contract work being done for a limited period after the course compared to before the course (12 per cent versus 5 per cent).

Chart 6.7: Hourly pay of learners in paid work both before and after their course



Among those who had worked at both points, mean hourly pay for jobs started after the course was unchanged when compared to pay for jobs done before the course. However, as chart 6.7 shows, there was a significantly lower proportion earning less than £4 per hour following the course.

The lack of change in mean hourly pay is likely to reflect the less stable employment patterns among this group, compared to those who had worked both *at the start of* and after their course. Other possible explanations for this and the higher proportion of part-time positions following the course may be:

- People returning to work and going part-time and/or moving into lower level occupations after starting a family (this group were more likely to have financially dependent children than those who had worked both *at the start of* and after their course);
- Older people going part-time and slowing down as they move towards retirement, or starting part-time work after retiring, to boost their income (this group had a higher proportion of 60+ year olds compared with those who had worked both *at the start of* and after their course).

Again, we also need to remember that these results only reflect the short-term activities of learners following their courses and that this may not necessarily reflect the longer-term picture.

6.5 Learners who had not worked prior to the course

At the time of the original FE course, nine per cent of learners had never worked:

- Thirteen per cent of these went on to start a job after completing their course. Compared to those who had never worked, overall they:
 - were **less likely to be studying at a low level** (40 per cent said their highest level of study was below level 2 compared with 66 per cent of those who had never worked);
 - tended to be **more highly qualified to start with** (14 per cent said their highest prior qualification was level 4 or above compared with 6 per cent of those who had never worked).

Given the small number of respondents answering the questions, it is not possible to conduct further analysis on this group and the type of work they went on to do.

- The remaining 87 per cent of those who at the time of the original FE course had never worked, did *not* go on to start a job after completing their course. This was despite 21 per cent of this group saying that their main reason for doing the course was to learn skills for a job.

Table 6.11 shows the current activity of those who had never worked but had stated their main reason for doing their FE course was to learn skills for a job. Just over a third had gone on to further education, training or were doing voluntary work, indicating that their FE course may have just been the initial step towards getting a job. Of the remainder, the majority were looking after the family or home, with the rest not working for some other reason. Because of the small numbers answering the questions, it is not possible to further analyse these groups, but it will be interesting to see what they have gone on to do at the time of the next wave of research.

Table 6.11: Current activity

| | % |
|---|----|
| School / college / university (full or part time) | 25 |
| Government programme (e.g. New Deal) | 3 |
| Voluntary work | 3 |
| Unemployed/looking for work | 14 |
| Looking after family and home | 46 |
| Permanently sick or injured | 4 |
| Retired | - |
| Not working for some other reason | 7 |

Base: All completers who had never worked but whose main reason for doing the FE course was to learn skills for a job (79)

6.6 Work related benefits gained from the course

Respondents who had been in paid work at some point following their FE course (whether this was a continuation of a job they had done during the course or a new job they had started) were shown a list of work related benefits. They were asked to say which of these, if any, had happened to them as a result of doing the course. The rank order of benefits was virtually the same for all those who had worked since the course, as for those who had worked since the course and whose course had been part of their job at the time; however the proportions mentioning each benefit tended to be higher among the latter group.

Table 6.12 shows that **gaining new job skills** and **being able to do their job better** were most likely to be mentioned and by similar proportions of people, followed by **getting more job satisfaction**. These results reflect the most frequently mentioned work-related benefits in NALS 2002 among adults aged 16-69 who had done taught learning in the past three years related to their current or future job (50 per cent developed new skills, 48 per cent were able to do their job better, 33 per cent got more job satisfaction).¹⁴

Also similar to the NALS 2002 findings, smaller proportions said that their course had helped them **earn more money**, **get a new job**, **change to a different type of work** or **get a promotion** and a substantial minority (21 per cent of those whose course had been part of their job) said that they had not gained *any* work-related benefits.

¹⁴ Fitzgerald R, Taylor R & LaValle I (2003) National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2002 [Carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the DfES] DfES Research Report 415

Table 6.12: Things which happened as a result of the FE course

| | All | All whose course was part of job | All whose course was part of job & compulsory | All whose course was part of job & non-compulsory |
|---|--------------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time | 29 | 50 | 46 | 51 |
| Was able to do my job better | 29 | 49 | 49 | 50 |
| Got more satisfaction out of my work | 22 | 34 | 26 | 36 |
| Earned more money | 12 | 17 | 19 | 16 |
| Got a new job | 12 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Changed to a different type of work | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Got a promotion | 5 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course | 3 | 6 | 21 | 2 |
| Set up my own/family business | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| None of these | 43 | 21 | 19 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course (4,635)</i> | <i>4,635</i> | <i>2,671</i> | <i>570</i> | <i>2,051</i> |

Compared to learners whose course had been an optional part of their job, learners whose course had been a compulsory part of their job were:

- more likely to say they had **kept their job** as a result of the course;
- less likely to say they had **gained more satisfaction out of their work** as a result of their course.

Predictably, benefits gained were often linked to the main reason for studying. For example, among learners whose course had been part of their job:

- Those who had studied to **improve their IT skills** were more likely than average to say they were **able to do their job better** as a result of the course.
- Those who had studied to **learn skills for a job they wanted in the future** were more likely than average to say they had **got a new job** or **changed to a different type of work** as a result of the course.

Achievement of work-related benefits among those whose course was part of their job at the time can be examined further by subgroup analysis.

Table 6.13 shows that the majority felt that their work situation had benefited in some way as a result of their course and this did not vary by **age**. Some patterns are apparent however in terms of the individual benefits:

- Younger learners were more likely than older learners to have **earned more money, got a new job, changed to a different type of work** or **got a promotion** as a result of their course, and likelihood decreased progressively with age.
- Learners aged 35 or over were more likely than younger learners to have gained **more satisfaction out of their work** as a result of their course.

Table 6.13: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by age

| | Age | | | | Total |
|---|----------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| | Under 25 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time | 46 | 49 | 51 | 51 | 50 |
| Was able to do my job better | 44 | 49 | 50 | 50 | 49 |
| Got more satisfaction out of my work | 27 | 30 | 36 | 36 | 34 |
| Earned more money | 28 | 20 | 16 | 9 | 17 |
| Got a new job | 14 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| Changed to a different type of work | 13 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Got a promotion | 12 | 11 | 9 | 5 | 9 |
| Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course | 6 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 6 |
| Set up my own/family business | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| None of these | 20 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i> | 236 | 642 | 1,287 | 504 | 2,671 |

In terms of **gender**, there were no significant differences. The same was true with regard to **ethnicity**, apart from non-White learners being slightly less likely than White learners to have **gained new skills for the job they were doing at the time** (44% of non-White learners whose course was part of their job compared with 51% of White learners).

Table 6.14 shows the work related benefits gained by **level studied**:

- Learners at the lower levels (i.e. who did ‘other’ courses or studied at below level 2 or full/part level 2), were most likely to feel that their work situation had not benefited in *any* way as a result of their course.
 - Those who did ‘**other**’ courses were least likely to say that they were **able to do their job better, got more satisfaction out of their work** or had **earned more money** as a result of their course.
 - Learners who studied at **full level 2** were more likely than average to say they **earned more money** or had **managed to keep their job**.
- Those who studied at the higher levels (**full level 3** and **level 4 or above**) were most likely to report at least one work related benefit:
 - Both groups were more likely than average to feel they had **earned more money, got a new job** or **got a promotion** as a result;

Additionally:

- Those who studied at **full level 3** were more likely than average to feel they had **gained more satisfaction from their work** and **managed to stay in their job** as a result;
- Those who studied at **level 4 or above** were more likely than average to feel that they had **changed to a different type of work** as a result.

Table 6.14: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | | |
| Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time | 52 | 43 | 51 | 50 | 50 | 51 | 46 | 50 |
| Was able to do my job better | 50 | 46 | 49 | 51 | 54 | 51 | 38 | 49 |
| Got more satisfaction out of my work | 33 | 33 | 34 | 38 | 36 | 35 | 27 | 34 |
| Earned more money | 11 | 27 | 11 | 35 | 18 | 33 | 7 | 17 |
| Got a new job | 4 | 10 | 7 | 15 | 13 | 21 | 6 | 9 |
| Changed to a different type of work | 4 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 16 | 6 | 8 |
| Got a promotion | 5 | 11 | 6 | 16 | 12 | 19 | 4 | 9 |
| Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course | 5 | 14 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| Set up my own/family business | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| None of these | 23 | 20 | 21 | 15 | 18 | 13 | 32 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i> | 242 | 589 | 553 | 580 | 383 | 144 | 180 | 2,671 |

Looking at the relationship between level studied and prior qualification (Table 6.15), those who studied at a higher level than they were already qualified (and whose course was part of their job) were most likely to feel that their work situation had benefited as a result of their course.

Table 6.15: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by level studied/prior qualification

| | Relationship between level of course and prior qualification | | | Total |
|---|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| | Same | Qualification higher than course | Course higher than qualification | |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time | 47 | 50 | 52 | 50 |
| Was able to do my job better | 43 | 50 | 51 | 49 |
| Got more satisfaction out of my work | 31 | 31 | 40 | 34 |
| Earned more money | 18 | 11 | 24 | 17 |
| Got a new job | 8 | 6 | 15 | 9 |
| Changed to a different type of work | 9 | 6 | 12 | 8 |
| Got a promotion | 9 | 7 | 13 | 9 |
| Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course | 8 | 4 | 9 | 6 |
| Set up my own/family business | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| None of these | 25 | 22 | 16 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i> | <i>513</i> | <i>1050</i> | <i>1108</i> | <i>2,671</i> |

Table 6.16 shows that those who had taken their **first full level 3 course** (including full level 3 jumpers) were particularly likely to feel that their work situation had benefited. At an individual benefit level, compared to other full level 3 learners:

- they were more likely to feel that they were **able to do their job better** and had **been able to change to a different type of work** as a result of their course and the only benefit they were less likely to have gained was:
- **staying in their job which they might have lost without the course.**

Table 6.16: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by prior qualification of those studying at full level 3

| | Studying at full level 3 | | | Total |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------|
| | Full level 3 jumper | First full level 3 | Not first full level 3 | |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time | 50 | 52 | 48 | 50 |
| Was able to do my job better | 52 | 51 | 51 | 49 |
| Got more satisfaction out of my work | 40 | 44 | 30 | 34 |
| Earned more money | 35 | 36 | 33 | 17 |
| Got a new job | 15 | 16 | 15 | 9 |
| Changed to a different type of work | 14 | 14 | 8 | 8 |
| Got a promotion | 17 | 18 | 13 | 9 |
| Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course | 6 | 7 | 13 | 6 |
| Set up my own/family business | 6 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability | - | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| None of these | 14 | 13 | 18 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i> | 210 | 358 | 222 | 2,671 |

No significant differences were noted between first full level 2 learners and other full level 2 learners, apart from **first full level 2 learners** being more likely to feel they had got **more satisfaction out of their job** as a result of the course (39 per cent of first full level 2 learners whose course was part of their job vs. 25 per cent of other full level 2 learners whose course was part of their job).

There were also no differences among those studying below level 2 between those who were qualified to a higher level and those who were not.

6.7 Satisfaction with current work and future plans

Those in work at the time of the interview were asked how satisfied they were with their current job, all things considered, and how long they expected to stay in it. Whilst the majority were satisfied with their current work, as table 6.17 shows, those whose current job was a continuation of work they were doing at the start of their FE course were slightly more dissatisfied than those who were in a job which they had started since completing their course.

Table 6.17: Satisfaction with current job

| | Continuation of work done at start of course | Work started after course |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | % | % |
| Very satisfied | 42 | 50 |
| Fairly satisfied | 42 | 36 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 8 | 7 |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 6 | 3 |
| Very dissatisfied | 3 | 4 |

*Base: All completers currently working whose work is a continuation of work they did at start of FE course (3,055);
All completers currently working who started the job after the FE course ended (1,412)*

Despite being slightly more likely to be dissatisfied with their current job, those whose current work was a continuation of work they were doing at the start of their FE course said they were likely to stay in their job longer than those who had started their job since ending their course (52 per cent said that they were likely to stay in their job five or more years compared with 36 per cent respectively). This is shown in table 6.18. By their very nature, those who were still in the job they were doing at the start of their course were either more loyal or less willing or able to change jobs. Therefore this is not a surprising contradiction. They tended to be older (70 per cent were 35 or older compared with 50 per cent of those who had started their current jobs after their course) and were more likely to be doing permanent jobs (97 per cent said their job was permanent versus 81 per cent of those who had started their current jobs after their course).

Table 6.18: How long expect to stay in current job

| | Continuation of work done at start of course | Work started after course |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | % | % |
| Less than a month | 1 | 3 |
| One month but less than three months | 2 | 4 |
| Three months but less than six months | 3 | 5 |
| Six months but less than a year | 6 | 7 |
| One year but less than two years | 9 | 12 |
| Two years but less than five years | 17 | 17 |
| Five years or more | 52 | 36 |
| Don't know | 11 | 16 |

*Base: All completers currently working whose work is a continuation of work they did at start of FE course (3,055);
All completers currently working who started the job after the FE course ended (1,412)*

7 Skills and other benefits gained from course

This section looks at the specific benefits that learners say they gained from the course, and other ways that the course has helped them. This covers a broad range of issues, from job-related skills, other skills, qualifications, further learning, self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

Findings in this chapter are often strongly linked to the reasons for undertaking the course (for example those doing the course to keep their body active were most likely to say this is something they gained from the course). The approach in the questions was to show the respondent a list of items and ask which applied to them. This means that the findings do not rate the course's ability to achieve these objectives; rather it shows the benefits most strongly associated with the FE course. For example, the respondents who did the course to keep their body active but who did not say the course helped them in this way were not necessarily saying that the course failed them in this respect; rather that there were other things that they felt more strongly the course had helped them to achieve.

7.1 Gaining skills relevant to an existing job

Respondents were shown a list of things they may have gained from the FE course, and were asked which applied to them. Overall, 29 per cent of learners said that the FE course had given them **skills that were relevant to a job they were doing at the time**. However, this is more meaningful when based only on those who said that the course was related to a job they were doing: amongst this group, 72 per cent said that the course had given them relevant skills.

Table 7.1 shows that respondents were more likely to say that the course had given them relevant skills if the course was compulsory; in particular this was true where their employer had made it compulsory (82 per cent, compared with 59 per cent where it was compulsory for other reasons). There are no differences when examining the specific reasons for doing the course in more detail (e.g. to get a promotion).

Table 7.1 also shows that findings were similar by level, although the figure was highest among learners studying at level 4 or above. It was also higher than average among people on part-time distance learning (79 per cent). People in the 50-59 age group were most likely to say the course had given them job-related skills.

We can also analyse the findings by the type of job that people were doing. Respondents were more likely than average to say that the course gave them skills that were relevant to their job if they were in professional occupations (78 per cent), in the construction or education sectors (81 per cent and 79 per cent respectively).

Table 7.1: Proportion of learners who said they gained job-related skills relevant to an existing job, by level studied, age and whether course was compulsory

| | | | |
|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| All whose course was part of a job | 72 | | |
| Learners whose course was part of a job in the following sub-groups: | | | |
| Level studied | | Age | |
| Below level 2 | 69 | Under 25 | 70 |
| Full level 2 | 74 | 25-34 | 72 |
| Level 2 (not full) | 73 | 35-49 | 71 |
| Full level 3 | 73 | 50-59 | 78 |
| Level 3 (not full) | 73 | 60+ | 59 |
| Level 4+ | 77 | Whether course was compulsory | |
| Other | 71 | Yes, compulsory | 78 |
| | | Not compulsory but part of a job | 70 |
| <i>Base: All completers whose course was part of a job (2,684)</i> | | | |

7.2 Gaining skills relevant to a future job or career

Over a third of all respondents (37 per cent) said that the course had given them skills that were **relevant to a future job or career**, and this rises to 68 per cent of those who said that the main reason for doing the course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future. More specifically, respondents were most likely to say that the course gave them these skills when they did the course in order to get a job (68 per cent) or to set up their own business (67 per cent).

Table 7.2 shows sub-group analysis based on the level studied and age; this is restricted to those who said that they thought the course would help them with a future job or career.

Table 7.2: Proportion of learners who said they gained job-related skills relevant to a future job/career, by level studied and age

| | | | |
|---|----|------------|----|
| All who did the course to help them with a future job | 58 | | |
| Learners who did the course to help them with a future job, in the following sub-groups: | | | |
| Level studied | | Age | |
| Below level 2 | 49 | Under 25 | 58 |
| Full level 2 | 65 | 25-34 | 60 |
| Level 2 (not full) | 59 | 35-49 | 59 |
| Full level 3 | 67 | 50-59 | 52 |
| Level 3 (not full) | 65 | 60+ | 30 |
| Level 4+ | 67 | | |
| Other | 51 | | |
| <i>Base: All completers who did the course to help them with a future job (4,050)</i> | | | |

7.3 Giving ideas for a career change or idea for preferred type of job

Respondents were asked whether the FE course had given them any ideas for a career change or an idea of the type of job they would like to do. Overall, 30 per cent said that this was the case, with a further 11 per cent saying it “maybe” helped in this way.

Again, it is possible to analyse results according to the reasons why individuals went on the course. Over half said the course gave them an idea for a career change or the type of the work they would like to do, where the reason was to change to a different type of work (59 per cent), get a new job (58 per cent), set up their own business (59 per cent) or help with work problems to do with health (62 per cent).

Table 7.3 analyses findings by the level studied, status at the start of the FE course, and age. In addition, respondents were most likely to say the course had helped them in this way if they were studying full-time, for a full year (51 per cent). The course subject is also relevant, with people on more vocational courses more likely to say the course helped them to identify a new career. Related to this, learners were more likely to have said they benefited in this way if their FE course was aimed at a higher level than their prior qualification (41 per cent), and this particularly applied to full level 3 ‘jumpers’ (56 per cent).

Table 7.3: Proportion of learners who said course had given them any ideas for a career change or of the type of job they would like to do, by level studied, age and status at start of FE course

| Proportion of learners who said course had given them any ideas for a career change or of the type of job they would like to do | | | |
|---|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| Total | 30 | Age | |
| Level studied | | Under 25 | 44 |
| Below level 2 | 22 | 25-34 | 38 |
| Full level 2 | 37 | 35-49 | 34 |
| Level 2 (not full) | 31 | 50-59 | 19 |
| Full level 3 | 50 | 60+ | 4 |
| Level 3 (not full) | 43 | Status at start of FE course | |
| Level 4+ | 37 | In paid work | 29 |
| Other | 19 | Unemployed/ looking for work | 48 |
| | | Looking after home | 40 |
| | | Retired | 4 |
| | | Other | 37 |

Base: All completers (6,687)

7.4 Progressing in education and gaining qualifications

This section examines the extent to which learners felt the course helped them to progress in education, specifically by:

- gaining the opportunity to progress in education/onto qualifications
- gaining improved or better qualifications
- encouraging them to do more learning.

Findings are shown in table 7.4, analysed by sub-groups. This table shows that findings are linked to the reason for doing the course, specifically where learners did the course as a stepping stone to future learning, to learn skills that would help them with a future job or career or to obtain qualifications. Those studying at higher levels were also more likely to say the course helped them to progress and gain better qualifications, although findings were similar by level in terms of whether the course encouraged further learning.

Learners who were likely to say they benefited in this way also included those who were unemployed, aged under 50 and Black (see table 7.4).

Looking at other sub-group findings, learners on longer courses were more likely to say that the course had helped them to **progress in education or onto further qualifications** (48 per cent full-time, full year). As might be expected, learners who were studying at a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely to say this, although there was no difference when looking specifically at first full level 2 or 3 learners (when compared with others studying for full level 2 or 3).

The type of course is also relevant, with learners on more vocational courses, as well as those studying maths or science, more likely to say that the course had allowed them to progress. The figure for lone parents was also higher than average (46 per cent).

Overall, 39 per cent said that the course had enabled them to **gain better qualifications**. Sub-groups patterns generally followed those noted above for gaining the opportunity to progress in education. Again, learners were more likely to say this if they were studying at a higher level than their prior qualification (55 per cent), and this also applied specifically to first full level 3 learners (but not first full level 2). However, a third of learners said they gained better qualifications even when they were not studying at a higher level than their highest prior qualification. As noted in section 4.2, this confirms that learners do not necessarily perceive 'better' qualifications as moving up a level.

People whose course was part of a job were also more likely than average to say the course had helped them by giving them a qualification; the same was true of

people who had moved jobs since the course (either in a job at the time of the course and then changed jobs, or not working and then started a job).

Over half of learners who completed their course said that the experience had **encouraged them to do more learning**. As well as being more frequently mentioned by learners who did the course as a stepping stone or to help with a future job or career, it was also more likely to be mentioned by learners who did the course to improve their self-confidence (64 per cent).

The lower figure among learners studying at level 4 or above (see table 7.4) reflects the fact that people doing the course as part of a job were less likely to say the course had encouraged them to do more learning (48 per cent). Figures were also higher where the course level was higher than the learner's prior qualification, specifically for first full level 2 (55 per cent) and first full level 3 (59 per cent) learners, as well as level 3 jumpers (63 per cent). The same was true of learners studying below level 2 (55 per cent whose prior qualification was also below level 2).

Again, full-time learners were more likely to say they had benefited (61 per cent full-time full-year). Learners studying English language or communications, ESOL, humanities, maths and sciences were most likely to say the course had encouraged them to take part in further learning.

Table 7.4: Proportion of learners who said course had helped them to progress in education/ qualifications, by key sub-groups

| | Gained opportunity to progress in education/ onto qualifications | Gained improved/ better qualifications | Encouraged me to do more learning |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Total | 33 | 39 | 53 |
| Level studied | | | |
| Below level 2 | 25 | 26 | 53 |
| Full level 2 | 38 | 56 | 53 |
| Level 2 (not full) | 34 | 42 | 52 |
| Full level 3 | 53 | 67 | 56 |
| Level 3 (not full) | 47 | 56 | 57 |
| Level 4+ | 51 | 69 | 44 |
| Other | 17 | 23 | 47 |
| Age | | | |
| Under 25 | 44 | 48 | 53 |
| 25-34 | 40 | 47 | 53 |
| 35-49 | 35 | 43 | 54 |
| 50-59 | 27 | 32 | 49 |
| 60+ | 12 | 13 | 51 |
| Status at start of FE course | | | |
| In paid work | 35 | 44 | 50 |
| Unemployed/ looking for work | 42 | 52 | 61 |
| Looking after home | 36 | 39 | 60 |
| Retired | 11 | 11 | 52 |
| Other | 33 | 32 | 56 |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| White | 32 | 39 | 52 |
| Asian | 31 | 37 | 53 |
| Black | 41 | 41 | 64 |
| Other | 36 | 36 | 58 |
| Main reason for doing course | | | |
| As stepping stone to further learning | 70 | 54 | 72 |
| To give skills for future job/career | 46 | 54 | 60 |
| Obtain qualifications | 45 | 66 | 54 |

Base: All completers (6,687)

7.5 Improving skills

The majority of FE learners said that the course had improved their knowledge or skills in the subject concerned and had taught them new skills. Those who were doing their course as part of a job were most likely to say that the course **improved their knowledge or skills** (85 per cent). The courses where learners were most likely to say that their knowledge or skills had been improved were business/management courses, health, social care and public services.

The proportion of learners who said that the course had **taught them new skills** was consistent across many sub-groups. Those on IT, arts/crafts and hairdressing/beauty courses were particularly likely to say the course had taught them new skills.

The questionnaire also examined **specific skills**, and answers were closely linked to the courses being undertaken. For example, those who said they had gained literacy skills were generally those on English, ESOL or basic skills courses, and consequently learners studying – and qualified - at lower levels. Overall, 17 per cent said that they gained literacy skills from their course, 10 per cent numeracy skills, and 31 per cent IT skills.

Learners who said that they had gained **problem solving skills** and **team working skills** were more likely than average to be on vocational courses related to a job they were doing. As with literacy and numeracy skills, full-time learners were also more likely to say they gained these skills. Team working skills were also most frequently mentioned by younger learners (35 per cent aged under 25).

Table 7.5 shows findings analysed by the level studied. In addition, learners who were studying at a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely to mention literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and team working skills. In particular:

- First full level 2 learners were more likely (than others studying at full level 2) to mention literacy, problem solving and team working skills
- First full level 3 learners were more likely (than others studying at full level 3) to mention literacy, IT, problem solving and team working skills, as well as improved knowledge/skills generally. Full level 3 jumpers were also more likely to mention literacy, IT problem solving and team working skills.

Table 7.5: Whether FE course has taught new skills, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Taught new skills | 70 | 70 | 71 | 73 | 72 | 70 | 58 |
| Improved my knowledge/skills in the subject | 69 | 81 | 83 | 86 | 86 | 87 | 77 |
| Gained literacy skills | 21 | 13 | 15 | 19 | 17 | 17 | 10 |
| Gained numeracy skills | 9 | 12 | 11 | 18 | 9 | 17 | 3 |
| Gained IT skills | 35 | 17 | 34 | 32 | 28 | 26 | 15 |
| Gained problem solving skills | 16 | 23 | 20 | 30 | 22 | 28 | 20 |
| Gained team working skills | 15 | 37 | 18 | 43 | 27 | 31 | 21 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

7.6 Self-esteem and confidence

As noted in section 4.2, increasing self-esteem and confidence are often strong motivations to do an FE course. This is reflected in the high proportions of respondents who said that the course helped them in this way. Findings are shown in table 7.6, analysed by level studied.

Around half said the course helped them to gain **self-confidence and motivation** (48 per cent). This was highest among those whose prior qualification was below level 2 (55 per cent). People on the following courses were most likely to say this:

- care, health/social care, classroom assistant, hairdressing/beauty, performing arts and literacy/numeracy/basic skills courses.

Among respondents who said that they did the course to improve their self-confidence, 73 per cent said that they did gain self-confidence and motivation, and 76 per cent said the course **made them feel better about themselves generally** (mentioned by 47 per cent overall). This was more likely to be mentioned by:

- learners on basic skills courses and ESOL courses, and therefore those qualified at less than level 2 before the course, and those in non-White ethnic groups
- people who were of working age but not working during or immediately before the course.

Around a third (32 per cent) also said that the course **gave them confidence socially**, and one in ten (10 per cent) said that the course helped them to **deal with personal problems**. On these two items, sub-group patterns were similar to those saying that the course made them feel better about themselves.

Over a third (37 per cent) said they had gained **personal or social skills** from the course. This was consistent by level and demographic sub-groups, but was concentrated in particular subjects:

- foreign languages, English language and communications, health/fitness, hairdressing/beauty, and health/social care.

More generally, it was more likely to be cited by learners who did the course because of interest in the subject (46 per cent), as well as by those who did the course to make new friends and meet people (72 per cent).

Two in five respondents (41 per cent) said that the course **made them feel they were better at doing things**. Findings did not vary dramatically by course subject, but were higher in some vocational and practical subjects, such as arts/crafts, business/management, care and classroom assistance. Findings were very similar in terms of gaining the **confidence to tackle more things**, cited by 45 per cent

overall. Course subjects were more vocational, with higher figures among learners studying business/management, classroom assistance and health/social care. Two in five respondents (42 per cent) said that the course **gave them the sense that they had more opportunities**. Figures were higher among the same vocational subjects mentioned above (for confidence to tackle more things), as well as those studying maths, sciences and health/yoga. More generally, learners were likely to say the course had given them the sense of having more opportunities if they did the course to learn skills for a future job or career (57 per cent).

One in nine (11 per cent) said the course **helped them to get the services they needed**. This was consistent by different sub-groups. In terms of course subject, figures were highest among people studying ESOL courses and IT/computing.

Table 7.6: Whether FE course has increases self-esteem and confidence, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | Other |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Gained personal/social skills | 38 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 34 | 29 | 41 |
| Gained self-confidence and motivation | 47 | 50 | 47 | 57 | 49 | 52 | 43 |
| Made me feel better about myself generally | 49 | 46 | 48 | 53 | 47 | 45 | 38 |
| Made me feel that I'm better at doing things | 40 | 47 | 42 | 47 | 40 | 40 | 34 |
| Gave me confidence socially | 34 | 38 | 30 | 36 | 31 | 25 | 29 |
| Gave me confidence to tackle more things | 44 | 50 | 44 | 53 | 47 | 47 | 40 |
| Helped me to deal with personal problems | 10 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| Helped me to get the services I need | 12 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 5 | 9 |
| Gave me sense that I have more opportunities | 35 | 50 | 43 | 60 | 55 | 51 | 29 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

Learners whose prior qualification was lower than their course were more likely to mention the various items, and this also applied specifically to first full level 2 and first full level 3 learners, level 3 jumpers and those studying below level 2 whose prior qualification was also below level 2.

Learners studying full-time for a full year were more likely than other learners to cite a number of these benefits: feeling better about themselves generally, giving confidence socially, feeling better at doing things, and giving the sense of having more opportunities. Lone parents and learners with a long-term illness or disability were also particularly likely to mention these items.

7.7 Network and community skills, and improving health

Finally, a wider group of impacts were examined, covering network and community skills, and improved health. Findings are shown in table 7.7, analysed by level studied.

Over two in five (44 per cent) said that the course had helped them to **make new friends or meet new people**, and this was 79 per cent among people who did the course for this reason. Figures were higher among those studying full-time for a full year (57 per cent), and for a range of different subjects, including foreign languages, arts/crafts, humanities, sciences, hairdressing/beauty and classroom assistance. This was also higher where learners' prior qualification was lower than the course they were studying (and this applied specifically to first full level 2, first full level 3 and full level 3 jumpers).

A third of learners (33 per cent) said that the course **gave them something useful to do in their spare time**. This was highest among retired people (55 per cent). People were most likely to say this where they were studying shorter courses and were doing so because they were interested in the subject; specifically those studying foreign languages, arts/crafts, sports/leisure and arts/media.

One in nine learners (11 per cent) said the course **helped them to keep their body active**, and this applied to 40 per cent of those who said this was the main reason for doing the course. Findings are closely linked to the subject of the course (in particular health/fitness and sports/leisure). Six per cent of learners said that the **course helped them with a health problem or disability**, and this applied to 21 per cent with a long-term illness or disability, and more specifically 27 per cent with an illness or disability that affected the type or amount of work they could do. The majority (70 per cent) of learners who did the course to help them with a health problem or disability said that it did so. The courses concerned were either related to health or fitness, or basic skills. Respondents with a long-term illness or disability were also more likely to say that the course had helped them to make new friends/meet new people and to do something useful in their spare time.

Ten per cent of learners said that the course **helped them to take part in voluntary or community activities**. The subjects where people were more likely to say this were care work, health/social care, classroom assistance and hospitality/sports/leisure, indicating that respondents were often referring to work in the community (including as part of a job) rather than voluntary activities.

Among people with financially dependent children living in the household, a quarter (24 per cent) said the course **enabled them to help their children with their school work**. This was higher among people who were not working. The subjects where respondents were likely to say this were generally those that were relevant to school subjects: maths, English, basic skills, ESOL and IT.

Table 7.7: Whether FE course has helped with network and community skills, and improving health, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Encouraged me to take part in voluntary or community activities | 9 | 10 | 14 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 10 |
| Helped me to make new friends/meet new people | 44 | 40 | 44 | 51 | 48 | 42 | 41 |
| Enabled me to help my child(ren) with their school work | 26 | 15 | 30 | 21 | 19 | 14 | 12 |
| Helped me to do something useful with my spare time | 36 | 22 | 37 | 22 | 27 | 11 | 36 |
| Helped me to keep my body active | 11 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 2 | 17 |
| Helped me with me health problems/disability | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | <i>1266</i> | <i>955</i> | <i>1789</i> | <i>889</i> | <i>1027</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>569</i> |

Note: figures for helping children with school work based on respondents with children aged under 18

7.8 Summary by level

This section summarises the detailed findings above according to the level studied, by showing the items most frequently mentioned at any of the questions in this chapter. Learners at all levels were likely to say that the course improved their knowledge in the subject and taught them new skills. Table 7.8 below excludes these items, and shows the other items that were frequently mentioned. Generally, this shows that the importance of qualifications increased for higher levels, as did the relevance to work or a career. For learners studying at lower levels, confidence and self-esteem were more important.

Table 7.8: Summary of benefits gained from course, by level studied

| Level | Factors mentioned most frequently |
|---------------------------|--|
| Below level 2 | Made me feel better about myself generally (49 per cent), gained self-confidence and motivation (47 per cent), made new friends/met people (44 per cent), confidence to tackle more things (44 per cent) |
| Full level 2 | Improved/better qualifications (56 per cent), job-related skills for a future job or career (56 per cent), encouraged to do more learning (53 per cent), job-related skills for existing job (51 per cent) |
| Level 2 (not full) | Encouraged to do more learning (52 per cent), made me feel better about myself generally (48 per cent), gained self-confidence and motivation (47 per cent) |
| Full level 3 | Improved/better qualifications (67 per cent), job-related skills for a future job or career (62 per cent), gave a sense of having more opportunities (60 per cent) |
| Level 3 (not full) | Encouraged to do more learning (57 per cent), improved/better qualifications (56 per cent), gave a sense of having more opportunities (55 per cent) |
| Level 4+ | Improved/better qualifications (69 per cent), job-related skills for existing job (65 per cent), job-related skills for a future job or career (61 per cent) |
| Other | Encouraged to do more learning (47 per cent), gained self-confidence and motivation (43 per cent), made new friends/met people (41 per cent), personal/social skills (41 per cent) |

7.9 Impact of specific benefits on overall perceptions of the course

In order to assess the impact of individual items on how well the course was felt to meet learners' needs overall, we conducted logistic regression analysis. This approach attempts to predict the probability of an event occurring (in this case needs being met), taking into the account the responses to other independent variables (the specific benefits), and after controlling for other factors. As such, the analysis indicates the relative impact of individual factors on the overall measure.

The highest correlation was with learners who said the course had made them feel better about themselves generally; i.e. this item had the greatest impact on needs being met overall. The correlation was also high among those who said that the course gave them the confidence to tackle more things. It is clear therefore that increasing confidence and self-esteem are important factors in learners' perceptions of the course. The other item that had a high impact on learners' perceptions of the course was whether the course had taught them new skills or not.

7.10 Non-completers

As one would expect, learners who did not complete the course were less likely to say they had gained specific skills or were helped in various ways. Looking at the findings for non-completers in more detail:

- Job-related skills: non-completers were less likely than completers to say the course had given them job-related skills, although a reasonable number still said that the course had given them skills for a future job or career (35 per cent full level 2, 34 per cent full level 3) and skills for an existing job (23 per cent and 36 per cent respectively).
- Progressing in education and gaining qualifications: as expected, non-completers were less likely to say the course had helped them in this way than learners who had completed the course. However, while lower than completers, a third of non-completers said that doing the course had encouraged them to do more learning (34 per cent for full level 2, 31 per cent full level 3).
- Improving skills: as with completers, the majority of non-completers said that the course had improved their skills or knowledge in the subject (63 per cent full level 2, 64 per cent full level 3) and taught them new skills (66 per cent and 56 per cent respectively). They also mentioned a number of other specific skills (although figures were lower than completers), in particular team working skills (30 per cent for full level 2, 33 per cent full level 3).
- Self-esteem and confidence: the proportion who said that they gained personal or social skills (30 per cent for full level 2 and 33 per cent full level 3) was similar to completers. Otherwise, the figures for non-completers were lower than for completers, but not dramatically so.

- Network, community and improving health: findings for non-completers were similar to those who had completed the course, with nearly half saying the course had helped them to make new friends or meet new people (47 per cent for full level 2 and 40 per cent for full level 3).

8 Wider attitudes to learning

This chapter looks at respondents' perceptions of learning and whether this has changed since the FE course. It also examines whether respondents are likely to undertake further learning, the barriers they face, and the things that would encourage them to do so.

8.1 Whether positive about learning before and after course

In order to assess whether the FE course had made respondents more positive towards learning in general, they were asked firstly how they felt about learning when they started the course, and then whether their views had changed when they had completed the course.

The majority of respondents (88 per cent) said they had generally positive views of learning when they started the course, and only five per cent said they held negative views. Findings are shown in table 8.1, analysed by level studied. In addition:

- the most positive views were held by learners who did the course out of interest in the subject, and those who paid all of the course fees (92 per cent in each case).
- less positive views were held by those whose prior qualification was lower than the course they were studying, including first full level 2 and first full level 3 learners. People on basic skills courses and those who were unemployed at the time of the interview were less positive, as were long-term sick or disabled people (83 per cent were generally positive). Less positive views were also held by those whose course was compulsory as part of their job (82 per cent generally positive).

Table 8.1: Feelings about learning when started FE course, by level studied

| | Level studied | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | Below level 2 | Full level 2 | Level 2 (not full) | Full level 3 | Level 3 (not full) | Level 4+ | Other |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Generally positive | 87 | 83 | 90 | 87 | 89 | 91 | 88 |
| Generally negative | 4 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Not bothered either way - indifferent | 8 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| <i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i> | 1266 | 955 | 1789 | 889 | 1027 | 192 | 569 |

Overall, two-thirds of respondents (67 per cent) said that they were more positive about learning after completing the course, with learners who were originally negative particularly likely to become more favourable towards learning (82 per cent); see table 8.2 for details. Specifically, these tended to be:

- learners whose prior qualification was lower than their course, and this applied specifically to first full level 2, first full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers, as well as those studying below level 2 with a prior qualification also below level 2.
- those on English language courses and ESOL, those with literacy problems and those from non-White ethnic groups
- economically inactive people, including those who were looking after the family or home at the time of the interview, and lone parents
- people studying full-time for a full-year. This group overlaps with those above (e.g. basic skills courses tending to be full-time), but it is not possible to identify which element is driving the findings (i.e. whether it is the full-time commitment of learning that is making respondents more positive towards learning, the nature of the course, or the characteristics of respondents themselves).

Table 8.2: Feelings when completed FE course

| | Feelings when started course | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| | Positive | Negative | Indifferent |
| | % | % | % |
| More positive | 68 | 82 | 53 |
| Less positive | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| No different | 27 | 10 | 41 |

Base: All completers (6687)

8.2 Likelihood of undertaking future learning

The majority of respondents (75 per cent) said (at the time of the interview) that they were at least quite likely to undertake further education or training courses in the next two years, and 47 per cent said they were very likely to do so. In terms of predicting actual participation, it is most sensible to focus on respondents who answered ‘very likely’. This is an issue that the second wave of the survey can examine further, by recording whether these respondents have actually taken part in further learning (or if not whether they still intend to do so in a year’s time).

As shown in table 8.3, respondents who had moved onto additional learning since the FE course were most likely to say they would do more again (compared with those who had not done further learning since the FE course). In particular, learners at lower levels (below level 2, and level 2 but not a full level) who had done learning subsequent to the original FE course were most likely to say they would continue learning in the next two years. In general, this appears to draw a divide between FE learners taking a one-off course, many of whom are unlikely to do more learning in the near future, and those who continue on to a series of further learning aims or programmes.

Table 8.3 shows the findings analysed by key sub-groups. This shows a lower figure among learners with a course aim of full level 2, and this was lower still among *first* full level 2 learners (37 per cent). The gender difference (higher among women) was most pronounced among learners below level 2. In addition, the following sub-groups were more likely than average to say they were very likely to undertake further learning:

- lone parents
- those studying English language/communications, humanities, maths, sciences.

It is also clear that learners were most likely to be considering further learning where the FE course helped them to make a change related to their job, for example where it gave them an idea for a career change, helped them to set up their own business or get a promotion, changes which may have then brought about the need for further training.

Table 8.3: Proportion of learners who said they were very likely to undertake any further education or training courses in the next two years, by level studied, whether any additional learning, gender and age

| Proportion very likely to undertake any further education or training courses in the next two years | | | |
|---|----|---------------|----|
| Total | 47 | | |
| Level studied | | Gender | |
| Below level 2 | 44 | Men | 44 |
| Full level 2 | 42 | Women | 48 |
| Level 2 (not full) | 48 | Age | |
| Full level 3 | 48 | Under 25 | 58 |
| Level 3 (not full) | 49 | 25-34 | 60 |
| Level 4+ | 50 | 35-49 | 59 |
| Other | 49 | 50-59 | 52 |
| Additional learning since FE course | | 60+ | 30 |
| Yes | 59 | | |
| No | 35 | | |

Base: All completers (6687)

8.3 Barriers to further learning

Chart 8.1 shows the barriers that learners said they had when considering further learning. It needs to be borne in mind that these findings apply to people who have recently completed a course; the barriers are likely to be different for people who have not done any learning recently.

The three barriers most frequently mentioned were cost (of the training itself and of living while training), time (generally and time away from work) and family commitments. We look at these in turn below.

The **cost** of training was most frequently mentioned by:

- learners whose original course aim was level 3 (part and full level)
- those unemployed at the time of the interview
- those aged under 35
- women and in particular lone parents
- those who had got a new job since the course, and (if they were working) where they were doing part-time work.
- those who did the FE course for future work skills, to get a qualification or as a stepping stone to future learning.

The same sub-group patterns applied in relation to the cost of living while training.

Lack of **time** (in general) was most frequently mentioned by:

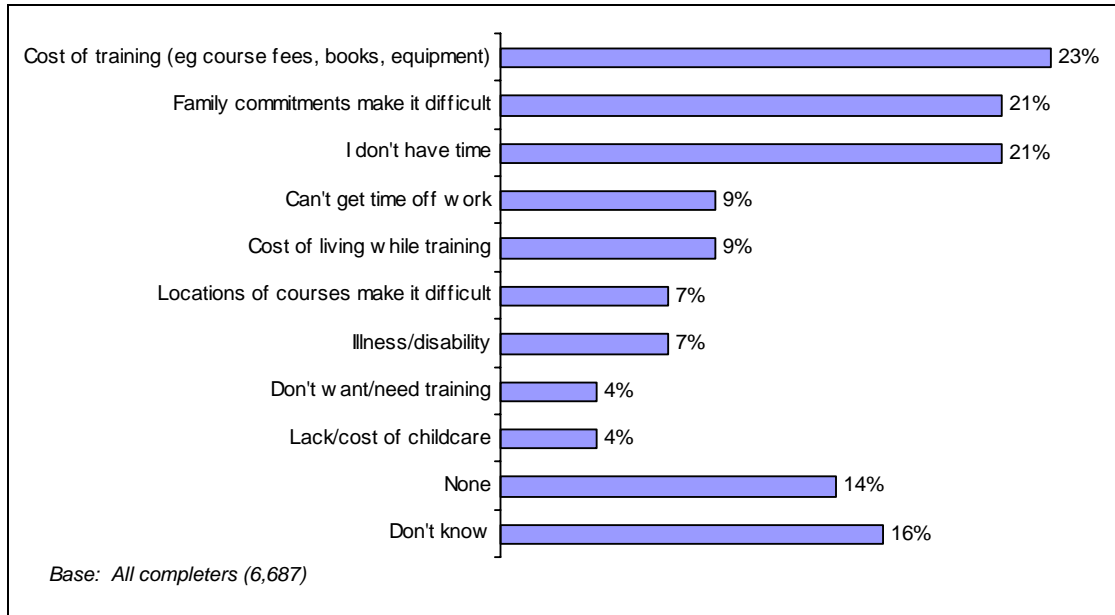
- people in work, increasing along with the number of hours worked per week.
- those whose original course aim was level 4 or above, and (related to this) people working in managerial positions.

The sub-groups patterns for not being able to get time off work were slightly different: overall, 15 per cent of people in work cited this as a barrier, and this was higher among those working as process, plant and machine operatives and among non-White ethnic groups.

Family commitments applied to 44 per cent of respondents with financially dependent children, and by 56 per cent of those with children under five. This was also mentioned more frequently by:

- people who were not working, particularly those were not economically active
- among those in work, it tended to be women working part-time who gave this as a barrier.
- Asian respondents and (related to this) people taking ESOL courses.

Chart 8.1: Barriers to further learning



We can examine barriers to further learning in relation to the likelihood of undertaking further learning in the next two years, using logistic regression analysis.

This shows that cost was more likely to be mentioned by people who said they were very likely to do further learning; i.e. these respondents were keen to do more learning but had concerns over cost. The same applied to the location of the course. By contrast, people saying that lack of time or family commitments were a barrier to further learning were less likely to say that they intended to do further learning, indicating that either these were more fundamental barriers or were reasons given by respondents who were actually less keen to do further learning.

8.4 Ways of encouraging further learning

Following on from the barriers that learners face, they were also asked to consider things that would encourage them to do further learning; again these findings relate to recent learners, and may differ from the issues faced by non-learners.

Funding was most frequently chosen from the list of things shown to respondents, while a range of other items was chosen, as shown in chart 8.2.

Funding to help pay for learning was mentioned more frequently by:

- learners whose original course aim was full level 2 or full level 3
- people who had paid part (but not all) of the course fees
- those who had done 100 hours or more in total as part of their FE course
- those doing vocational subjects.
- those who were unemployed at the time of the interview

- those who had done further learning since the FE course.

Again there was a link between funding and likelihood of doing more learning: those who said they were very likely to do further learning in the next two years were particularly likely to mention this as something that might encourage them.

Having **learning organised at more convenient times** was mentioned most frequently by:

- those with barriers relating to childcare or the family, and specifically by women in the middle age bands, especially lone parents
- those whose FE course had been part-time.

A third of those who were in work said that **time off work to do learning** would encourage them. Among those in work, this was highest among:

- people working full-time
- in higher occupational groups
- (related to this) people studying at level 4 or above.

Learning organised in the workplace was mentioned most frequently by:

- people whose FE course had been done as part-time distance learning
- people in personal service occupations (but generally consistent by occupational group).

Learning which helped to improve their employment prospects was mentioned most frequently by:

- people who had taken courses in vocational subjects
- lone parents
- Black respondents.

The same sub-group patterns applied among respondents who said they would be encouraged by **learning which was more relevant to what they needed**.

Advice on the types of learning available was most frequently requested by:

- people who were unemployed at the time of the interview
- those whose FE course had been on basic skills or ESOL.

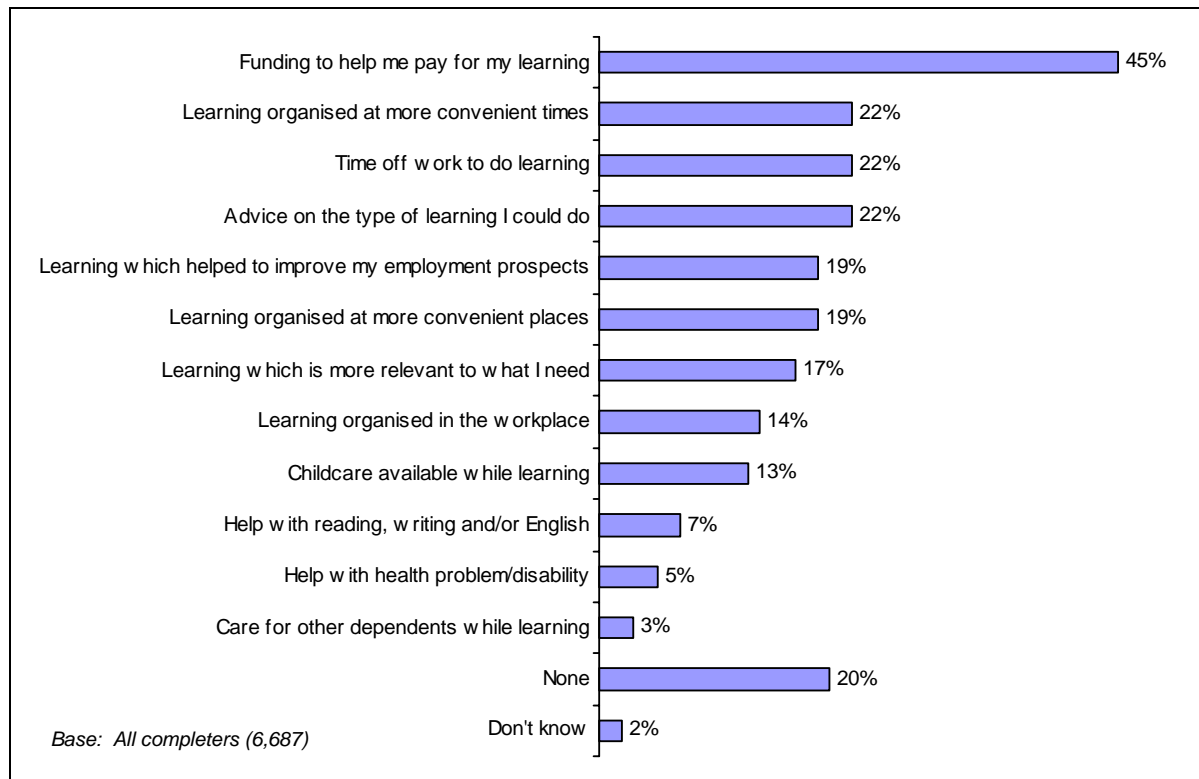
Other items were relevant to specific groups of learners. Among those with financially dependent children, 30 per cent said that **childcare** would be an encouragement, and this was higher among:

- those with children aged under five
- parents who were not in work and who had done a full-time FE course
- lone parents (44 per cent)
- those whose FE course was in hairdressing/beauty, English language/communications or ESOL
- related to this, the figure was also higher among non-White respondents.

Help with reading or writing English was chosen by 37 per cent of those with literacy problems, in particular those who had subsequently moved onto further learning.

A quarter (23 per cent) of those with a long-term illness or disability said that **help with the illness or disability** would encourage them to take part in further learning. Among these respondents, those whose FE course had been full-time were most likely to say this would help them, as were those on Basic Skills courses and with literacy problems.

Chart 8.2: Ways of encouraging further learning or training



8.5 General attitudes to learning

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of general statements about learning. This provides a wider perspective on the attitudes that people have to learning, beyond the barriers and possible encouragements discussed earlier in this chapter. Findings are shown in table 8.4.

Overall, findings indicate positive views towards learning, but identify some concerns or worries about undertaking learning in the future.

The majority agreed that **learning new skills is something that they will need to do throughout their working life**, and this only declined among older learners (50 per cent among those aged 60 or over). Those most likely to agree strongly with the statement were:

- those whose FE course was in a vocational subject
- those in work
- those studying at level 3 or above
- those studying full-time for a full year
- those unemployed at the time of the interview
- lone parents.

However, figures were lower for people studying below level 2.

Overall findings were similar when people were asked whether they agreed that you are **more likely to get a better job if you do some learning**, training or education, and again people on vocational courses were most likely to agree, while with limited previous work experience were less likely to agree.

Over-two thirds agreed strongly that they **enjoyed learning new skills**, and this was highest among:

- people qualified to level 4 or above
- those who had spent time before and/or after the FE course in education/training
- lone parents.

While most respondents disagreed that **spending time learning is too much effort**, those on ESOL and English languages, as well as those with literacy problems and from Asian backgrounds (these groups overlap) were more likely to agree with this.

People studying ESOL and English language courses were also more likely than average to agree that they **hadn't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job they wanted**, as were:

- people on basic skills courses
- younger people (under 25)
- non-White ethnic groups
- those who were unemployed at the time of the interview
- those with a long-term illness or disability
- those qualified below level 2 (these groups overlap).

A number of these groups were also more likely to say that **school did not prepare them for the learning they needed in their life today**: those who were unemployed at the time of the interview, those with literacy problems, people with a long-term illness or disability and those qualified to below level 2.

These findings establish a pattern for a number of disadvantaged groups, although there are two separate themes. For those with literacy problems, and to an extent those on ESOL courses and from non-White ethnic groups, the findings confirm that there are a number of barriers to further learning, including a feeling that learning is difficult. Other groups, such as unemployed people and lone parents, also mentioned barriers to learning, but also acknowledged the importance of learning and in the case of lone parents, expressed a positive desire for further learning. For unemployed respondents and lone parents, the priority would therefore appear to be in identifying appropriate courses, while for those with literacy problems, there is a more fundamental challenge in encouraging further learning. It is also worth noting that all of these groups were more likely than average to say that the FE course they had done had made them more positive towards learning (despite often being negative beforehand); the challenge is to sustain this enthusiasm through participation in additional learning in the near future.

Table 8.4: General attitudes towards learning

| | Whether agree/disagree with statements | | |
|---|--|----------|--------------------|
| | Agree | Disagree | Neither/no opinion |
| | % | % | % |
| Learning new skills is something that I will need to do throughout my working life | 84 | 5 | 11 |
| I am too old to learn new skills | 4 | 92 | 4 |
| School did not prepare me for the learning I need to do in my life today | 44 | 39 | 17 |
| I enjoy learning new skills | 96 | 1 | 3 |
| I haven't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job I want | 28 | 49 | 23 |
| You're more likely to get a better job if you do some learning, training or education | 91 | 3 | 6 |
| For getting jobs, knowing the right people is more important than the qualifications | 34 | 38 | 28 |
| Spending time learning is too much effort | 8 | 84 | 8 |

Base: All completers (6687)

8.6 Self-esteem

In chapter 7, it was clear that many FE learners felt that they had had gained self-confidence and improved self-esteem from their FE course. At the time of the interview (i.e. after the FE course), the majority said that they could usually get what they wanted from life, had free choice and control and were able to run their life as they wanted to (details are in table 8.5).

On each measure, a number of sub-groups were likely to be more negative: those who were unemployed at the time of the interview, those with literacy problems, people from Asian ethnic groups, those with a long-term illness or disability, and those with limited work experience. Related to this, those qualified to level 2 or below level 2 were more negative, as well as those studying at full level 2 or below. On the first measure only (whether respondents usually get what they want from life), younger people (under 25) and men were also more negative.

These findings reinforce those in the previous section. The above groups clearly face a number of barriers to further learning, but the process of learning itself can have a positive impact, as shown by the number who said that learning had increased their confidence and self-esteem (section 7.6).

Table 8.5: Self-esteem

| Which statement is more true | % |
|--|----|
| I never seem to get what I want from life | 16 |
| I usually get what I want from life | 71 |
| Don't know | 13 |
| I usually have a free choice and control over my life | 83 |
| Whatever I do has no real effect on what happens | 7 |
| Don't know | 9 |
| Usually I can run my life more or less as I want to | 85 |
| I usually find life's problems just too much for me | 7 |
| Don't know | 8 |

Base: All completers (6687)

8.7 Non-completers

Findings in this chapter were similar for completers and non-completers, with the following exceptions:

- as expected, non-completers were less likely to say they had become more positive about learning after the course (37 per cent of non-completers said this, compared with 67 per cent of completers).

- a third of non-completers said that they were very likely to do another course in the next two years (34 per cent full level 2, 39 per cent full level 3). Although a smaller proportion than completers, this indicates that many learners are keen to do further learning despite failing to complete a course.
- Non-completers were even more likely to mention funding as something that would encourage them to do further learning, and were also more likely to mention childcare than completers. Full level 3 learners who did not complete their course were more likely than completers to say that time off work to do learning and learning which helped to improve employment practices would make a difference, but this did not apply to full level 2 learners.
- On general attitudes to learning, a higher number of non-completers said that they had insufficient skills and experience for the job they wanted, and that spending time learning was too much effort.
- Non-completers expressed a lower self-esteem than completers. Figures were similar between those who did not complete at full level 2 and at full level 3.

9 Conclusions

Motivations for taking FE course

Overall, 21 per cent of FE learners were on a course that aimed to increase their level of qualification. This proportion was higher among learners studying for full level 2 and level 3 (full and part-level). Among learners studying below level 2, there was a clear split between:

- those whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2, including a relatively high proportion from non-white ethnic groups and with a health problem or disability
- those whose highest prior qualification was at level 2 or above: these learners were often qualified to level 4 or above, tended to be older and were more likely to be in work.

In addition, we can identify a group of learners who were not increasing their level of qualification, but said that they wanted to study at a higher level. Analysis suggests that between five per cent and 15 per cent of learners were not increasing their qualification level but would like to have done so. However, it is difficult to infer from the survey the extent to which these learners' desire to study at a higher level was realistic (i.e. whether they could have done so but were not allowed to).

While the majority of learners were not aiming to increase their *level* of qualification, many of these learners (31 per cent overall) said that gaining a qualification was a reason for doing the FE course. This indicates that even those who were not increasing their qualification level may have felt that they were gaining qualifications which were important to them personally.

When considering motivations to take part in FE learning, it is important to bear in mind that around a third of learners (31 per cent) were taking the course as part of a job, and this applied to the majority of learners studying for full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or above. A relatively large proportion of full level 2 courses were funded by the employer and took place at work.

More generally, the survey confirmed that learners have a wide variety of reasons for taking FE courses. The survey also showed that courses were mostly successful in providing the benefits that learners sought.

Attitudes towards FE course

Leading on from this, learners expressed very positive attitudes towards their course. It is clear that most learners were positive towards the quality of teaching, but equally that teaching is a key factor in their overall perception of the course

(poor teaching was the most commonly cited reason for the course not meeting learners' needs).

The findings indicated that learners may be willing to pay more for their courses. Those who paid for all of their course fees said they would have paid a little more, those who paid part of the fees said they would have paid a lot more, and those that did not pay mostly said they would have been willing to do so. While the findings cannot be taken at face value (respondents are likely to exaggerate their willingness to pay in a survey interview), the positive attitudes towards the course suggest that at least some groups of learners may be amenable to paying more.

Benefits gained

There were a number of benefits that learners felt they had received from their FE course. Some key issues were as follows:

- 48 per cent of learners overall said that the course had helped them to gain self-confidence and motivation, and the analysis indicated that this benefit had a direct bearing on overall attitudes to the course. This was particularly relevant to learners who were qualified below level 2 (as well as sub-groups who were more likely to be qualified to that level, such as those with literacy problems and non-white ethnic groups). While these learners were likely to say they gained self-confidence from the course, and that the course had made them more positive about learning, they still expressed relatively low levels of self-esteem, and continued to have barriers to further learning.
- in general, first full level 2 and first full level 3 learners were similar to other learners studying at the same level. However, they were more likely to mention a number of benefits: gaining self-confidence, gaining literacy, problem-solving and team-working skills, making new friends or meeting people and being encouraged to do more learning. First full level 3 learners also expressed very high levels of satisfaction with their course.

Progression into work

The survey cannot isolate the impact of FE learning on employment. However, a comparison between work done after the FE course and work done at the time of, or before, the course indicates changes that are likely to relate to the learning undertaken:

- where learners were in work at the start of the course and then changed jobs after the course, the types of jobs were similar, although there was a slight shift towards higher occupational groups, and more jobs in financial intermediation, public administration /defence/compulsory social security and health/social work.

This was accompanied by a higher proportion of full time positions and higher hourly pay.

- where learners were not in work at the time of the course but moved into work subsequently, the work they started was less likely to be full-time compared with the most recent job before the course, and there was more self-employed work,. This is likely to reflect changes in circumstances (e.g. new or different childcare needs) rather than any direct impact of the course.

Further learning

There is a divide between people doing one-off courses and those likely to do more learning in the future. In the relatively short time between completing their course and taking part in the interview, a half of all FE learners (50 per cent) had gone on to start further learning. Among those that had, there was a strong feeling that the original FE course had assisted them in doing so. Those who had originally studied at lower levels (below level 2 and full level 2) were least likely to say they intended to do more learning in the future. Wave 2 of the survey will allow us to see whether those who said they were likely to do further learning actually went on to do so (or if not, whether they still intend to).

Cost is seen as a barrier to further learning, particularly by those who are keen to take more courses. To some extent this finding contradicts the one above on payment for courses (that learners would be willing to pay more). The implication is that while increased fees may be feasible in some cases, it is vital to consider them carefully in relation to individual types of course (and the learners who are likely to participate).

Appendices

| | |
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| Appendix A | Response rates |
| Appendix B | Fieldwork procedures |
| Appendix C | Weighting |
| Appendix D | Summary of key groups |

Appendix A Response rates

The wave 1 survey set out to achieve 8,000 interviews, with the aim of following up the entire wave 1 sample at wave 2. It was assumed that the contact details would be sufficiently good to allow 85 per cent to be traced; that 95 or more of sampled individuals would be eligible (i.e. completed their course) and that of those traced and eligible, wave 1 interviews would be achieved with 70 per cent.

In practice, whilst the proportion of addresses traced was broadly in line with expectations, the proportion of ineligible cases was higher than expected. The reasons for ineligibility included:

- Individuals who had never been on the specified course(s) at all;
- Individuals who were still on the course or who had not completed it within the eligible time period;
- Individuals who had not completed the course (i.e. who left before it ended), including those who were on level 2 or 3 courses but had completed less than a quarter of the course.

Reflecting the large number of cases that were ineligible (1,540), the target number of interviews was reduced from 8,000 to 7,000, and two further batches of sample were issued in order to boost the number of interviews. The fieldwork period was extended by 4 weeks to maximise response rates, allowing for additional re-issuing of sample addresses for extra visits, beyond the standard five calls. A detailed analysis of final field outcomes is presented in table A1.

Table A1: Response rates

| | Number | Per cent of total | Per cent of total, excl ineligible | Per cent of total, excl ineligible, opt-out and not traced |
|---|---------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| Total sample | 15171 | | | |
| Opt-outs | 1565 | 10 | | |
| Issued into the Field | 13606 | | | |
| Ineligible (screened out) | 1540 | 10 | | |
| Not traced | 2276 | 15 | | |
| Moved, new address not traced | 1949 | 13 | | |
| Insufficient/incomplete address details / empty | 296 | 2 | | |
| In prison / died | 31 | * | | |
| Interviews | 6922 | | | |
| Full interviews | 6909 | 46 | 51 | 71 |
| Partial interviews (unusable) | 13 | | | |
| Unsuccessful | 2868 | 19 | 21 | 29 |
| Refusals | 1053 | 7 | 8 | 11 |
| No contact after 5+ calls | 1031 | 7 | 8 | 11 |
| Away/in hospital/ill | 217 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Other unproductive | 567 | 4 | 4 | 6 |

* = less than 0.5 per cent

Appendix B Fieldwork procedures

Pilot survey

After discussions with DfES and reference to the questionnaires used for NALS (National Adult Learning Survey), the Labour Force Survey and other sources, an initial draft questionnaire was developed. A pilot survey was conducted from Tuesday 7th to Thursday 16th December 2004, in order to test the effectiveness of the questionnaire. A sample of individuals was selected from the ILR and was grouped into four sample points. Sampling points were purposively selected in order to ensure that a variety of area types were included (inner city, rural etc). One interviewer was allocated to each sample point and a total of 44 interviews was carried out. The pilot exercise demonstrated that the interview was slightly shorter than predicted and raised several questionnaire issues to be addressed before the main stage fieldwork.

Fieldwork operation

All fieldwork was carried out by fully-trained interviewers on the Random Panel of the face-to-face field division of The Operations Centre (TOC), which provides operational services to the Kantar Group of research companies in the UK, of which BMRB is part.

Briefing of interviewers

Before starting work on the main stage of the wave 1 survey, all interviewers and supervisors were briefed by the research team and field executives, as well as receiving a set of written instructions. The briefings covered:

- the background to the survey, the role of the DfES and the planned use of the survey findings;
- information about the sampling and screening procedures and the importance of high response rates;
- how to introduce the survey and deal with sensitivities that might arise, including the importance of confidentiality;
- a detailed explanation of key questions on the questionnaire and topics covered;
- any questions that the interviewers or supervisors had for the researchers.

Advance letters

In accordance with Data Protection legislation, advance letters were sent out to learners who had been selected. This gave them the opportunity to opt out if they did not wish to take part in the survey. Those who opted out were removed from the final sample issued.

Managing and monitoring fieldwork

Interviewers made a minimum of 5 calls at each eligible address, if necessary, to achieve contact. A record of the calls made and the outcome of each call was kept on a paper contact sheet, which was subsequently checked by field management. Calls which counted towards the five had to be on different days and at different times of day, and at least two calls had to be made on a weekday evening after 6pm.

Tight control was exercised over the flow of FE interviews to ensure that interviewers worked consistently to achieve a similar number of interviews each month in sampling points across the country. Each interviewer was required to work for a minimum of 6 days in one sampling point.

The interviewer payment scheme was structured to incentivise interviewers to achieve a high response rate, by paying a bonus sum for interviews achieved above a minimum threshold level. The higher the response rate, the higher the payment was for each additional interview.

Telephone contact

Telephone numbers were obtained either from the sample database or by linking addresses to a computerised telephone directory. This information was used to assist interviewers in making contact with hard-to-find addresses or elusive respondents. Interviewers were also encouraged to obtain telephone numbers (or check them, if they had already been provided in the sample), where a contact had been established but an interview not yet achieved with the selected person. The use of telephone numbers also enabled an attempt at conversion, at a later stage, of individuals who had initially refused to take part in the survey.

Recontacting at wave 2

As a matter of routine, if a respondent had moved during wave 1, the current occupants of the contact address were asked to provide a forwarding address which the interviewer then followed up.

In an attempt to reduce attrition between the two fieldwork waves, interviewers asked wave 1 respondents if they intended to move before the next round of fieldwork (as well as asking for their permission for a future interview). Those that said they did intend to move were asked to provide their future address and telephone number (if known). Interviewers also collected contact details for all respondents of someone living at a 'stable' address – an address where someone who knows the respondent lives. If respondents are found to have moved in the second wave of the survey and have given no new contact details themselves, the occupants of the stable address can be contacted to provide a forwarding address and telephone number.

Supervision and quality control

Throughout the fieldwork, measures were taken to ensure high standards of interviewing. Our interviewer recruitment, training, quality control and supervision standards meet those stipulated by the market research industry's Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS), of which we are founder members. We employ a rigorous and objective back-checking system, the results of which are always fed back to interviewers.

Data protection

With regard to conducting the survey, BMRB ensured that it fully complied with the Data Protection Act of 1998 (and was registered for this purpose). BMRB asked respondents for their permission to link their survey data to data held by DfES or its partners.

Appendix C Weighting details

Design weighting

Design weights were applied to correct for the unequal probabilities of selection. They were calculated as the inverse of the selection probability and as such, differed by type of course.

Non-response weights

Having applied the design weights, we examined the distribution of our achieved sample on key variables against that of the issued sample (using information from the ILR database). On this basis, we decided it was necessary to weight by region, gender, level of course, age and ethnicity as these variables were related to both non-response and key survey variables.

CHAID was used to identify these weighting variables and split the sample into weighting classes. The non-response weight was then calculated as the inverse of the response rate within the weighting class. Extreme weights were capped at the 99th percentile to avoid loss of precision.

Finally the weights were scaled so that the weighted number of respondents was equal to the unweighted number.

Appendix D Summary of key groups

This section provides a summary of the findings for the following groups:

- Learners studying below level 2, distinguishing between learners who are studying at a lower level than their highest prior qualification, and those with a highest prior qualification which is also below level 2
- First full level 2 learners: learners with a course aim of full level 2 whose highest prior qualification was below level 2, part level 2 or 'other'
- First full level 3 learners: learners with a course aim of full level 3 whose highest prior qualification was below level 2, part level 2, full level 2 or 'other'
- Level 3 'jumpers': learners with a course aim of full level 3 whose highest prior qualification was below level 2, part level 2 or 'other' (i.e. they miss out the full level 2).

In each case, the analysis below compares the relevant group with other learners studying at the same level (e.g. first full level 2 learners are compared with other learners studying at full level 2).

Learners below level 2

Characteristics

Learners on courses below level 2 were split between those who had a higher prior qualification (i.e. level 2 or above) and those who did not. Where learners had a higher prior qualification, they were often qualified to level 4 or above (in 47 per cent of cases where the prior qualification was higher). The demographic profile of these two groups differed as follows:

- in terms of ethnicity, non-white learners were considerably less likely to have a higher prior qualification;
- those with a long-term illness or disability were also less likely to have a qualification at level 2 or above;
- older learners were more likely than younger learners to have a higher prior qualification;
- those who had a higher prior qualification were more likely to be in work at the time of the course.

FE course

There were differences in terms of the subjects studied: learners whose highest prior qualification was below level 2 were more likely to study English language and

ESOL courses. Learners studying at a lower level than their highest qualification were more likely than average to be on foreign language courses.

When asked for the reasons for doing the course, interest in the subject tended to be mentioned more frequently by learners whose prior qualification was higher than the course. Those with a highest prior qualification below level 2 were more likely than average to say they did the course for a future job or career, or to improve self-confidence.

Where learners were doing the course as part of a job, respondents who were studying a course at a lower level than their highest prior qualification were more likely to say they did the course in their own (rather than the employer's) time.

Learners were more likely to have paid towards the FE course if they were studying at a lower level than their highest prior qualification (49 per cent compared with 26 per cent of other learners studying below level 2).

Attitudes to the course were similar to average among learners studying below level 2, and there were no differences according to highest prior qualification.

Benefits gained from the FE course

Learners studying below level 2 whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2 were more likely than average to say that the course:

- encouraged them to do more learning;
- made them feel better about themselves generally, and helped in other ways in relation to their self-confidence.

General attitudes to learning

Learners were more likely to say they were more positive about learning after completing the course if their highest prior qualification was below level 2. However, these learners were more likely than average to agree that they hadn't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job they wanted, and that school did not prepare them for the learning they needed in their life today. They also tended to express lower levels of self-esteem.

Further learning

Learners who were originally studying below level 2 and did not have a higher prior qualification were slightly less likely than those with higher prior qualifications to have gone on to do further learning. However, when they had done so, those with a prior qualification below level 2 were more likely than average to agree that the original course they had done had helped them move onto further study.

Whether worked since FE course

Those who studied below level 2 were less likely than average to have started a *new* job following their course. There was no difference in this respect between those who had a prior qualification that was higher than the course, and those who did not. Learners below level 2 who had started new jobs following their course were:

- more likely than average to have started work in elementary roles;
- were on lower than average pay;

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

Learners studying below level 2 who had been in work at some point following their FE course were less likely than those studying at higher levels to feel that their work situation had benefited in some way as a result of their course. They were less likely than average to feel that as a result of their course they had:

- earned more money;
- got a new job;
- changed to a different type of work;
- got a promotion.

There were no significant differences between those whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2 and those who had a higher prior qualification.

First full level 2 learners

Characteristics

Overall, 44 per cent of full level 2 learners were studying for their *first* full level 2. This proportion was similar between men and women. By age, 25-34 year olds were less likely than other age groups to be studying for a first full level 2.

The proportion of first full level 2 learners in work at the time of the course was no different to other full level 2 learners.

FE course

Within the group of learners studying for full level 2, care courses accounted for a relatively large proportion of the courses done by *first* full level 2/3 learners (around one in five). Compared with other learners studying at full level 2, first full level 2 learners were less likely to be on a course that was compulsory as part of a job.

First full level 2 learners were more likely to say they did the course to improve self-confidence than other learners studying for full level 2 qualifications. Gaining a qualification was equally likely to be given as a reason for doing the course by first full level 2 learners as by others studying at full level 2.

First full level 2 learners were less likely to pay towards the course than other full level 2 learners (25 per cent compared with 41 per cent).

Overall, first full level 2 learners were more satisfied with the course than others studying at full level 2 (58 per cent compared with 51 per cent).

Benefits gained from the FE course

Among learners as a whole, those who were studying at a higher level than their highest prior qualification were more likely to say that the course had enabled them to gain better qualifications, although there was no difference between first full level 2 learners and others studying at full level 2.

First full level 2 learners were more likely than others with a course aim of full level 2 to say they had benefited from the FE course in a number of ways:

- encouraged them to do more learning;
- gained literacy, problem solving and team working skills;
- gained self-confidence;
- make new friends or meet new people.

General attitudes to learning

Compared with others studying at full level 2, first full level 2 learners said they were less positive about learning when they started the course. However, following the general pattern they tended to become more positive about learning after completing the course.

The proportion saying they were very likely to undertake further learning in the next two years was lower than average among full level 2 learners as a whole, and this was lower still among *first* full level 2 learners (37 per cent).

Further learning

The findings above were echoed in terms of what people had actually done since completing their original FE course. Those who studied at full level 2 were less likely than average to have gone on to do further learning following their FE course and those who were doing their first full level 2 were less likely than other full level 2 learners to have done so.

Among learners who had originally studied at full level 2 and had gone on to further study, those who had originally studied for their first full level 2 were less likely to say their main further course was designed to lead to a qualification. There was no difference between these two groups in terms of the proportion agreeing that the original course they had done had helped them move onto further learning.

Whether worked since FE course

Those who studied at full level 2 were more likely than average to have started a *new* job following their course and those that had were:

- more likely than average to have also been in work at the start of their course;
- more likely than average to have started work in personal service or skilled trade roles (reflecting the younger age profile of those learning at these levels and younger learners being less likely to work in higher level roles);
- on lower than average pay.

There was no difference between first full level 2 learners and other full level 2 learners in terms of overall likelihood to have started a new job following the course. However, among those who had worked before but not during their course, those who had studied for their first full level 2 were less likely than other full level 2 learners to have gone on to start a new job following their course.

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

Learners studying at full level 2 who had been in work at some point following their FE course were less likely than those studying at higher levels to feel that their work situation had in any way benefited as a result of their course. But despite this, they were more likely than average to feel that as a result of their course they had:

- earned more money;
- managed to keep their job.

There were no significant differences between first full level 2 learners and other full level 2 learners, apart from first full level 2 learners being more likely to feel that they had got more satisfaction out of their job as a result of the course.

First full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers

Characteristics

Three in five full level 3 learners were studying for their *first* full level 3 (59 per cent), and 29 per cent were 'jumpers', ie their prior qualification was below level 2. The youngest age group (under 25) were most likely to be studying for their first full level 3, while there were no significant age differences for full level 3 'jumpers'. There were no differences by gender.

First full level 3 learners, full level 3 jumpers and other full level 3 learners were equally likely to be in work at the start of the FE course.

FE course

Within the group of learners studying for full level 3, care courses accounted for a relatively large proportion of the courses done by *first* full level 3 learners (around one in five).

Gaining a qualification was equally likely to be given as a reason for doing the FE course by first full level 3 learners as others studying at full level 3. First full level 3 learners were more likely to be doing the course to help with a future job or career, as well as to do the course to improve their self-confidence.

While in the survey generally, attitudes to IAG were consistently positive among different sub-groups, within the group of learners on a course aimed at full level 3, first full level 3 and in particular full level 3 jumpers were particularly likely to be feel that the IAG had helped them.

First full level 3 learners were less likely to pay towards the course than other full level 3 learners (26 per cent compared with 40 per cent).

Overall attitudes to the FE course were more positive among first full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers, when compared with others studying at full level 3. Specifically, this applied to:

- the quality of teaching;
- overall satisfaction with the course;
- the extent to which the course met their needs.

Benefits gained from the FE course

As one would expect, learners were more likely to say that the course had enabled them to gain better qualifications if they were studying at a higher level than their prior qualification, and this applied specifically to first full level 3 learners.

A number of other benefits were mentioned more frequently by first full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers than others with a course aim of full level 3:

- the course encouraged them to do more learning;
- improved literacy, IT, problem solving and team working skills;
- improved self-confidence;
- the course helped them make new friends or meet new people.

In addition, full level 3 jumpers were more likely than other first full level 3 learners, and full level 3 learners overall, to say the course had given them ideas for a career change or of the type of job they would like to do.

General attitudes to learning

First full level 3 learners, and full level 3 jumpers, said they were less positive about learning when they started the course, compared with others studying at full level 3. However, they were more likely to say they became more positive about learning after completing the course. This was a pattern that applied to other learners who were studying at a higher level than their highest prior qualification.

Further learning

Learners who originally studied at full level 3 were less likely than average to have gone on to do further learning following their FE course, and those who were doing their first full level 3 or level 3 jumpers were less likely than other full level 3 learners to have done so.

Among those who had gone on to further learning, those who were originally doing their first full level 3 were more likely than other full level 3 learners to say their main further course was designed to lead to a qualification. There was no significant difference between these groups in terms of the proportion agreeing that the original course that they had done had helped them move onto further learning.

Whether worked since FE course

While learners generally were as likely (or slightly more likely) to be in work at the time of the interview compared to at the start of their course, those studying at full level 3 were considerably more likely to now be working (and this applied particularly to those doing their first full level 3 and level 3 jumpers).

Those who studied at full level 3 were also more likely than average to have started a *new* job following their course and those that had were:

- likely to have also worked before (either during their course or at some point before it), although 8 per cent of full level 3 learners who started a new job following their course had never worked before;
- less likely than average to have started work in higher level roles and more likely to have started work in personal service roles (reflecting the younger age profile of those learning at these levels and younger learners being less likely to work in higher level roles);
- were on lower than average pay.

There was no significant difference between first full level 3 learners, level 3 jumpers and other full level 3 learners in terms of overall likelihood to have started a new job following the course. However, among those who had worked either during or before their course, those who studied at full level 3 were more likely than average to have gone on to start a new job following their course, particularly those who were doing their first full level 3.

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

Learners studying at full level 3 who had been in work at some point following their FE course were more likely than average to report at least one work related benefit as result of their course. They were more likely than average to feel that as a result of their course they had:

- earned more money;
- got a new job;
- got a promotion;
- gained more satisfaction from their work;
- managed to keep their job.

Those who had taken their first full level 3 course (including level 3 jumpers) were particularly likely to feel that their work situation had benefited in at least one way as a result of their course. Compared to other full level 3 learners they were more likely to feel that as a result of their course they:

- were able to do their job better;
- had been able to change to a different type of work.

The only work related benefit they were less likely to have gained was:

- staying in their job which they might have lost without the course.

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