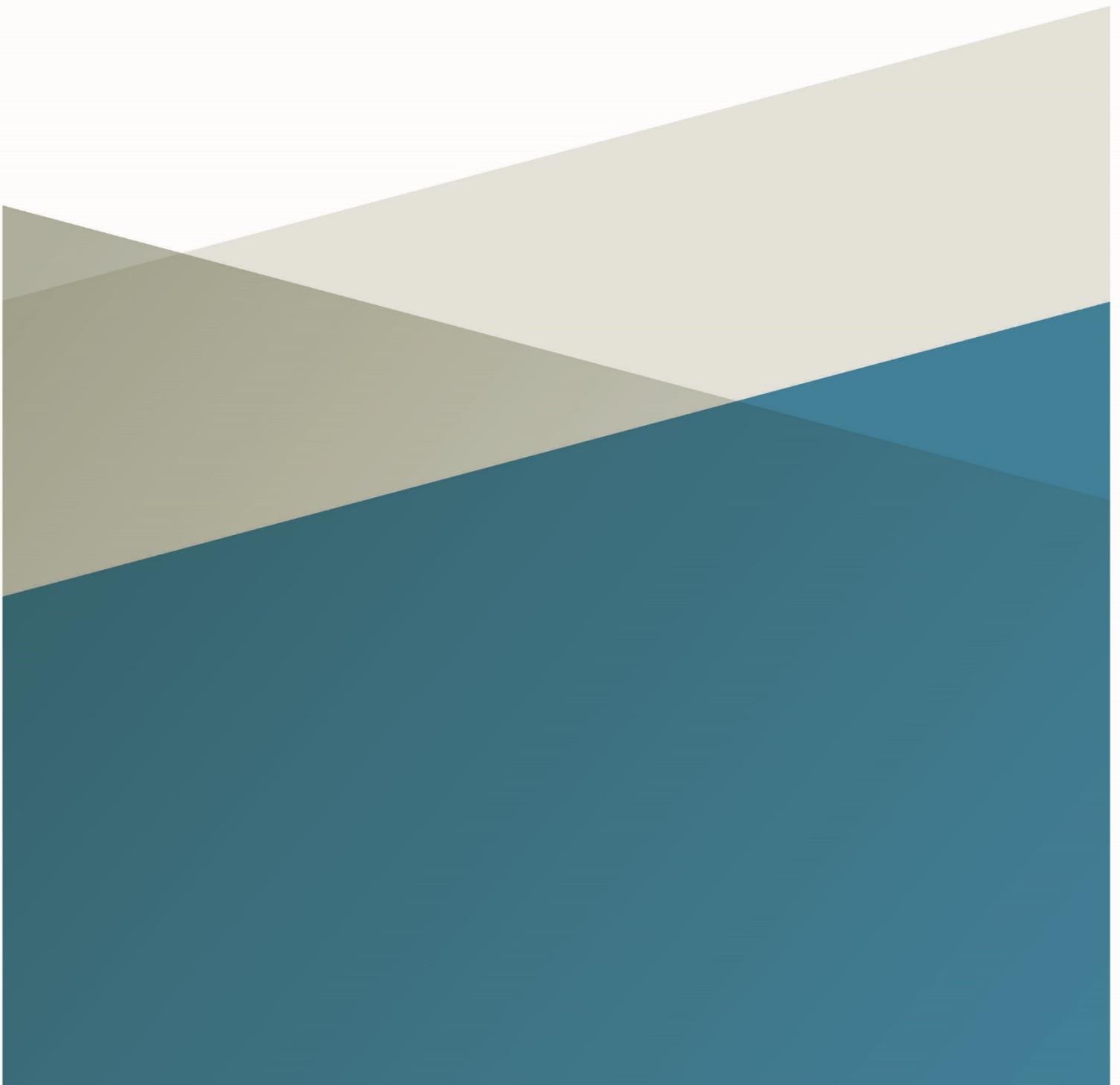




An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Statistical Bulletin – July 2021

Overview of Education 2000 – 2020



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Statistics@education.gov.ie

Primary

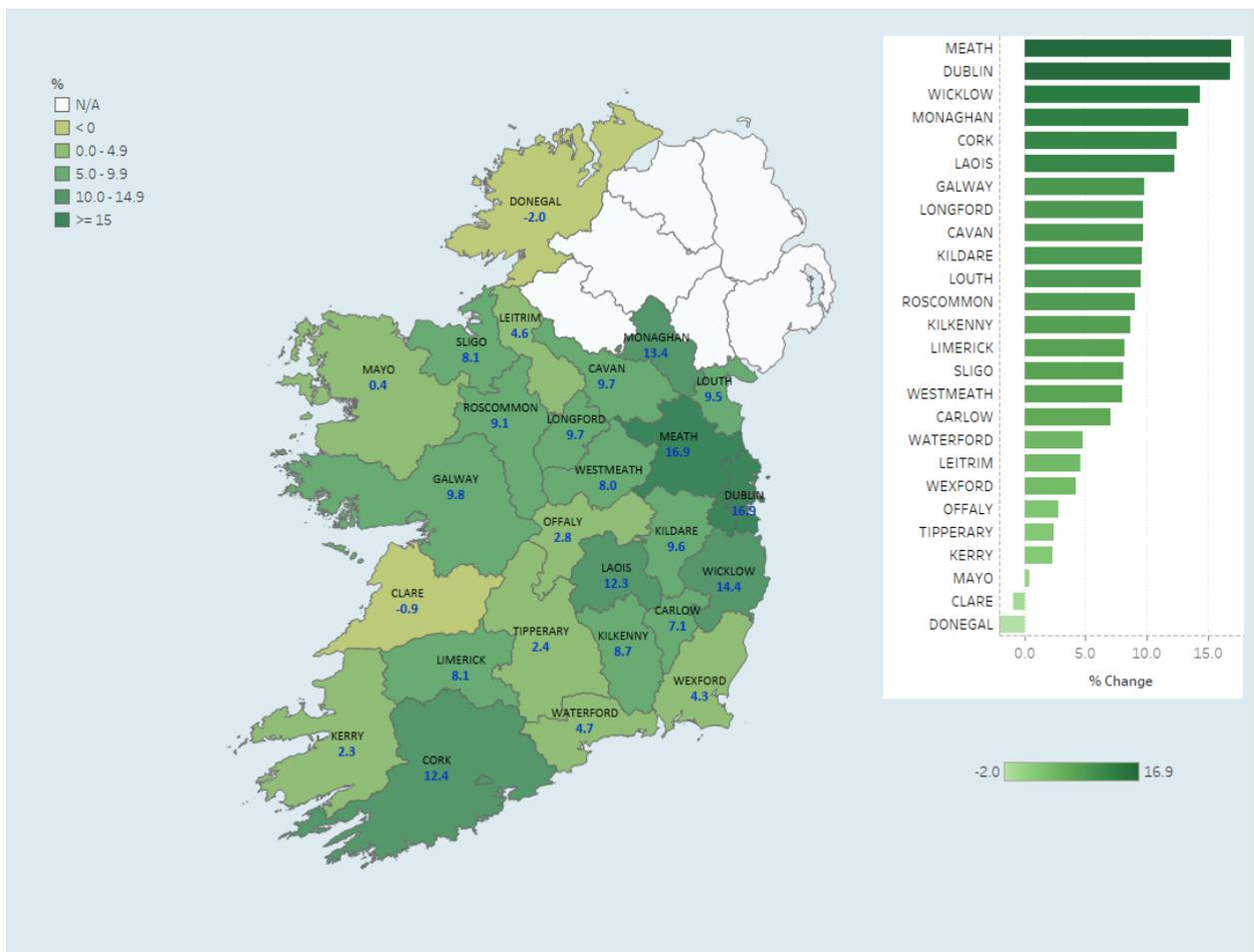
Total enrolments

Total enrolments in Primary schools in 2020 stood at 561,411, a fall of 6,305 on 2019 when the total was 567,716. Over the twenty year period 2000 to 2020 there was an increase of 121,851 (27.7%) in enrolments in primary schools (mainstream and special) and enrolments are projected to fall over the coming fifteen years. *Source:* [EDA42](#)

Change by administrative county

When the change in enrolments by administrative county over the past 10 years is examined, the data shows the largest proportional increases occurred within Dublin and the surrounding areas, with the highest in Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown at 23.0 per cent, followed by Fingal at 21.0 percent and Meath at 16.9 per cent. The smallest increase occurred in Kerry (2.3%) and Mayo (0.4%), while Donegal and Clare were the only areas that saw a decrease by 2.0 per cent and 0.9 per cent, respectively.

Map 1 Percentage change in enrolments in Primary schools, by county, 2010-2020



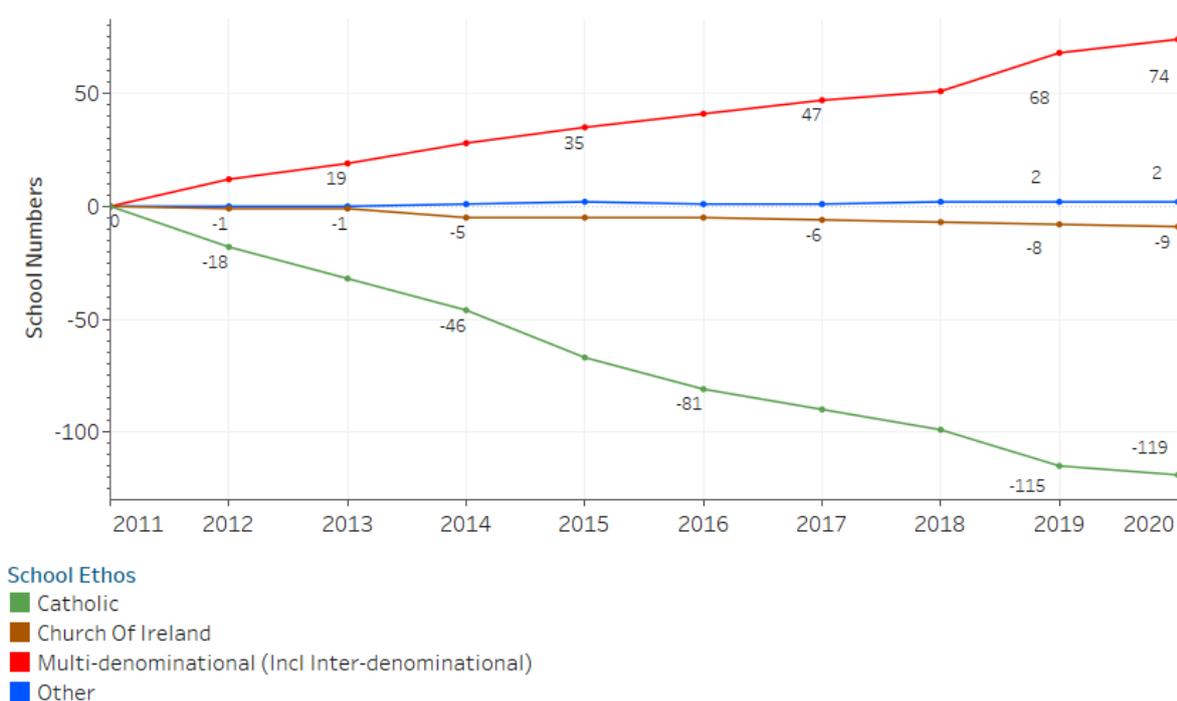
Source: [EDA57](#)

School ethos

The total number of mainstream primary schools has declined by 52 since 2011, from 3,159 in 2011 to 3,107 in 2020. However, as can be seen in Figure 1 below, the pattern is not uniform, with 119 Catholic schools and 9 Church of Ireland closing between 2011 and 2020, while the number of multi-denominational schools has increased by 74 in the same period. *Note: the category multi-denominational includes inter-denominational schools.*

These clear trends in school ethos are a result of the closure of schools with declining enrolments and the amalgamation of schools in close proximity to each other, as well as the opening of new multidenominational schools in response to parental choice. All 25 new mainstream primary schools opened in the last five years have been multi-denominational in ethos, spread over various patrons. Despite these changes, Catholic schools still comprise the vast majority of primary schools, with 88.7 per cent of schools having a Catholic ethos in 2020.

Figure 1 Cumulative change in mainstream school numbers by ethos, 2011-2020

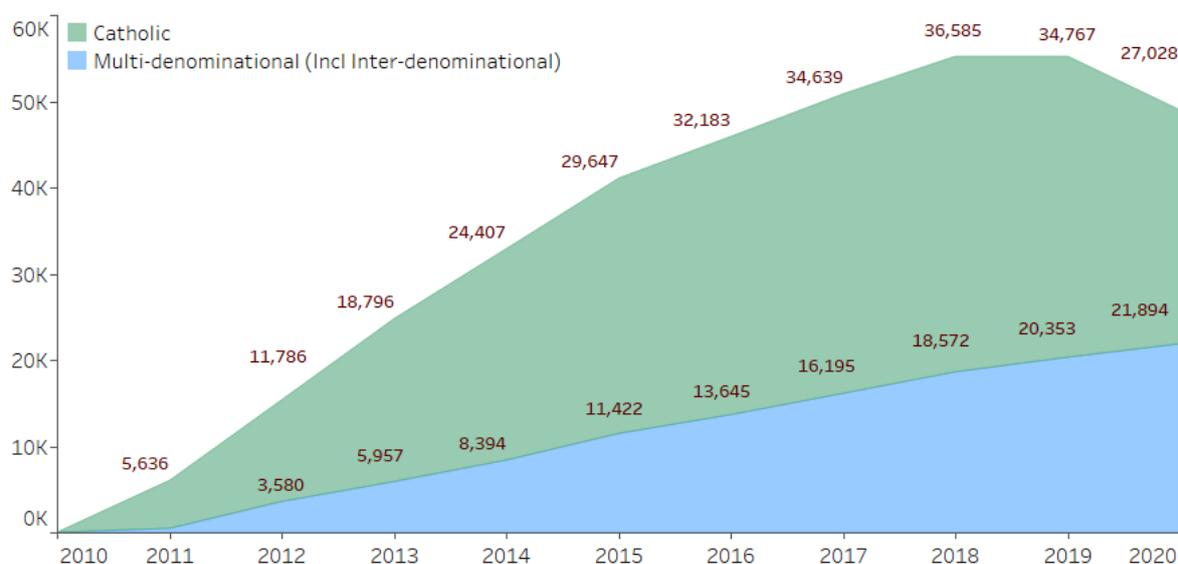


Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Looking at enrolments by ethos total enrolments in Catholic schools fell by 7,739 between 2019 and 2020 (from 503,215 to 495,476), compared with a fall of 1,818 between 2018 and 2019, while enrolments in multi-denominational schools rose by 1,541 (from 38,117 to 39,658).

Figure 2 shows cumulative change in enrolments by ethos. The graph shows total enrolments falling as a result of falling Catholic enrolments, represented by the total area under the graph, while multi-denominational enrolment continue to rise, represented by the blue section of the graph.

Figure 2 Cumulative change in school enrolments by ethos, 2010-2020



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Irish classification

Looking at language of instruction, the number of English-medium primary schools has fallen by 63 over the ten years 2010 – 2020, while Irish-medium schools inside the Gaeltacht fell by five. Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht increased by ten (from 139 to 149). In terms of enrolments Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht have seen an increase in enrolments of almost 8,500 (8,339), representing a 28.4 per cent increase while Irish-medium Gaeltacht schools have seen their enrolments fall by 434 (5.8%) over the last decade.

Table 1 Cumulative changes in school numbers and enrolments by Irish classification, 2010-2020

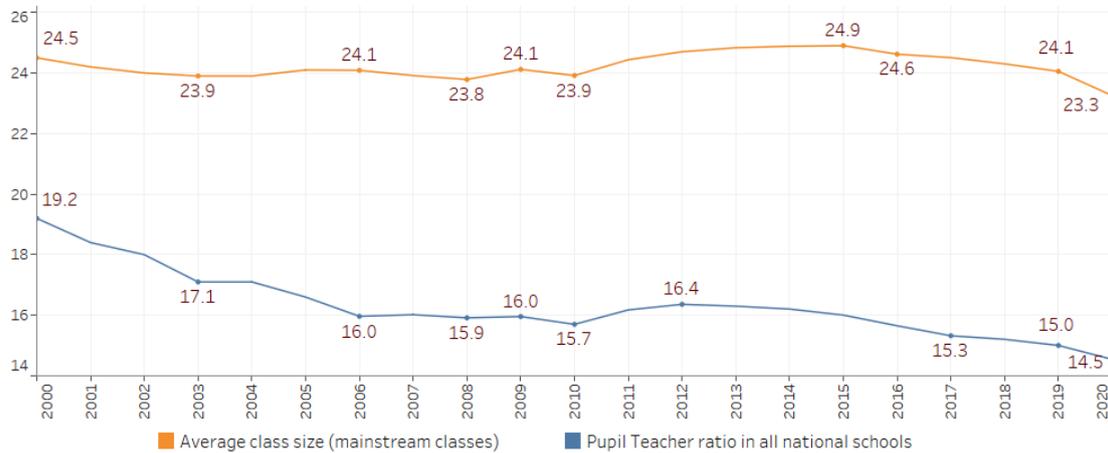
Schools				Enrolments			
Year	Non-Irish/Part-Irish schools	Irish schools within the Gaeltacht	Irish schools outside the Gaeltacht	Year	Non-Irish/Part-Irish schools	Irish schools within the Gaeltacht	Irish schools outside the Gaeltacht
2010	0	0	0	2010	0	0	0
2011	-7	0	1	2011	5,262	-4	1,306
2012	-13	-2	2	2012	13,780	-258	2,761
2013	-23	-2	5	2013	22,074	-238	4,252
2014	-31	-2	5	2014	29,089	-275	5,459
2015	-45	-2	6	2015	36,454	-237	6,619
2016	-54	-3	7	2016	40,542	-195	7,379
2017	-58	-4	8	2017	45,095	-147	7,829
2018	-62	-5	8	2018	48,737	-193	8,530
2019	-65	-3	9	2019	48,400	-112	8,603
2020	-63	-5	10	2020	42,624	-434	8,339

Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Class size

The change in average class size over the twenty-year period 2000-2020 is presented in Figure 3 and shows there has been little change since 2000. It reached its lowest point in 2020 at 23.3. The Pupil Teacher Ratio on the other hand has fallen consistently over the same period, from 19.2 in 2000 to 14.5 in 2020.

Figure 3 Pupil/Teacher ratio and average class size, 2000-2020



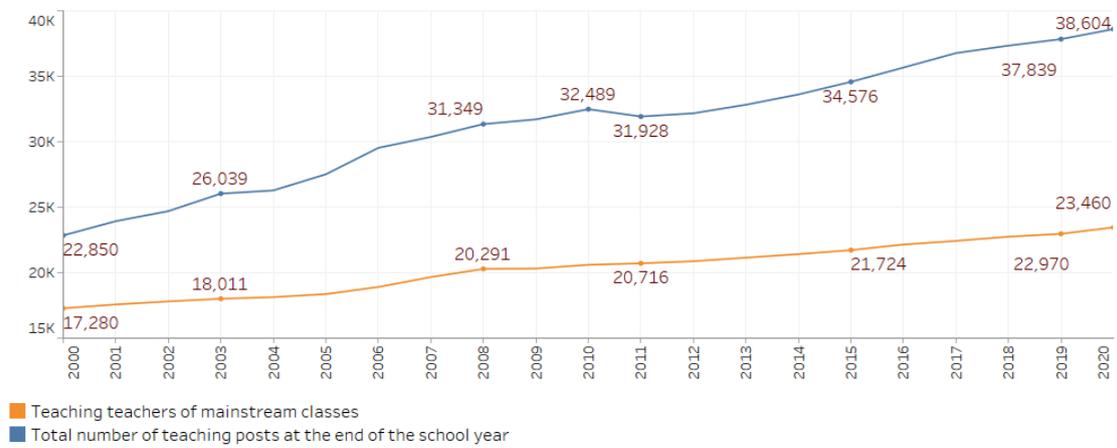
Source: [EDA44](#)

The difference between these two measures is explained by Figure 4, which shows that although the total number of teaching posts has almost doubled over the twenty-year period (from 22,850 to 38,604¹), the number of mainstream classroom teachers has risen by just 35.8 per cent (from 17,280 to 23,460) while the number of special educational needs (SEN) teachers has risen from 5,570 to 15,144. Note that for the purpose of this graph the category

¹ The total of 38,604 includes 727 COVID-19 support teaching posts.

of SEN teachers includes administrative principals and home school community liaison (HCSL) teachers.

Figure 4 Classroom teachers vs. teaching posts, 2000-2020



Source: [EDA44](#)

Large classes

While the overall average class size has varied little since 2000, the number of pupils in classes of 35 or more fell sharply between 2000 (17,592) and 2020 (3,608) while those in the next-largest category (30-34) stood at 74,622 in 2020, down from 120,665 in 2015.

Figure 5 Pupils by class size, 2000-2020



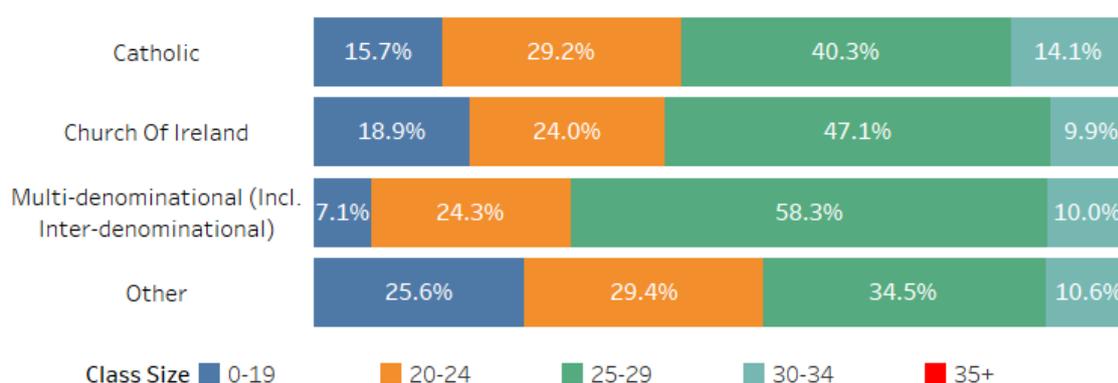
Source: [ED105](#)

Class size by type of school

Variation in class sizes can be seen when we look at schools by characteristics such as Ethos, Irish Classification and DEIS Status.

When examined by Ethos, the data shows that 14.8 per cent of pupils in Catholic schools were in classes of 30 pupils or more, compared with just 10.3 per cent of those in in multi-denominational schools. However, the average class size in Catholic schools was 23.1, compared with 24.7 in multi-denominational schools. *Note: the category multi-denominational includes inter-denominational schools.*

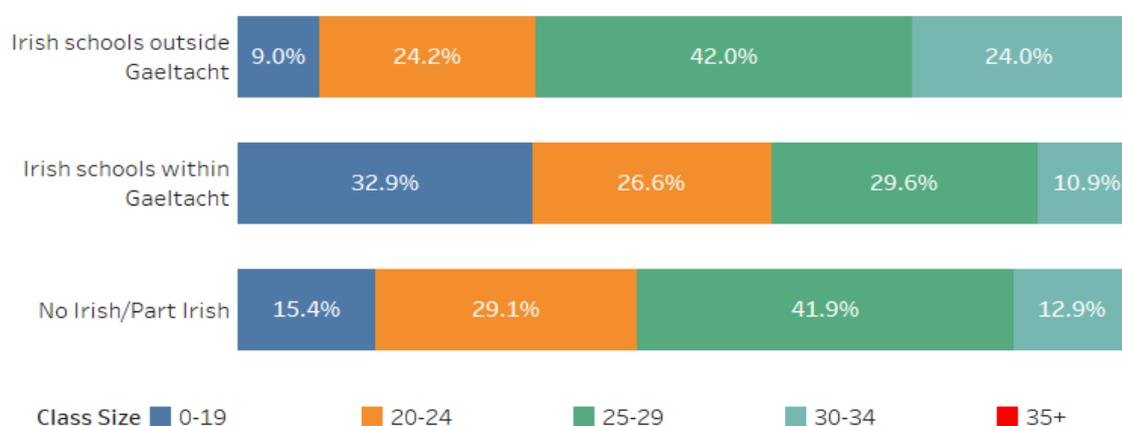
Figure 6 Pupils by class size and school ethos, 2020



Source: [Class Size Data 2020](#)

When looked at by Irish classification the data shows 24.8 per cent of pupils were in large classes (30+) in Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht, compared with only 13.6 per cent in English or part-English-medium schools and 10.9 per cent in Irish-medium schools within the Gaeltacht.

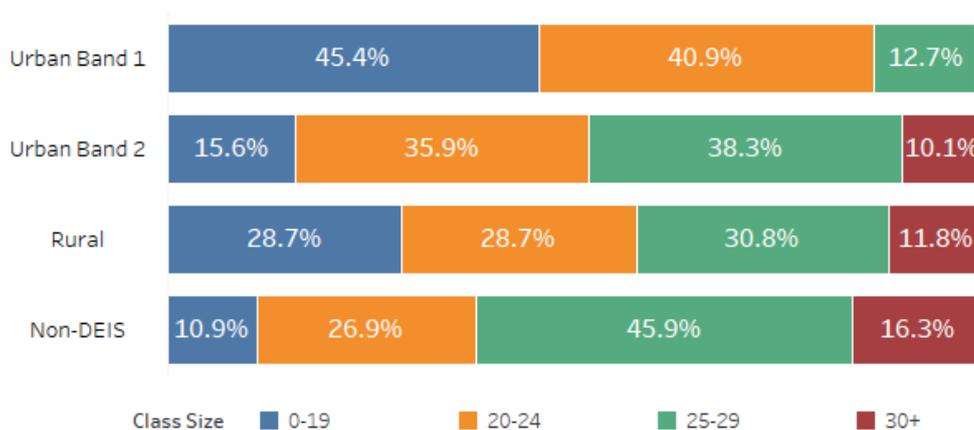
Figure 7 Pupils by class size and Irish Classification, 2020



Source: [Class Size Data 2020](#)

Finally, when examined by DEIS status, the data shows that DEIS Urban Band 1 schools, which have a separate staffing schedule to other school types, have by far the smallest classes with 86.3 per cent of pupils in classes of fewer than 25. Rural schools also have a high proportion of small classes, with more than half of pupils in classes of fewer than 25.

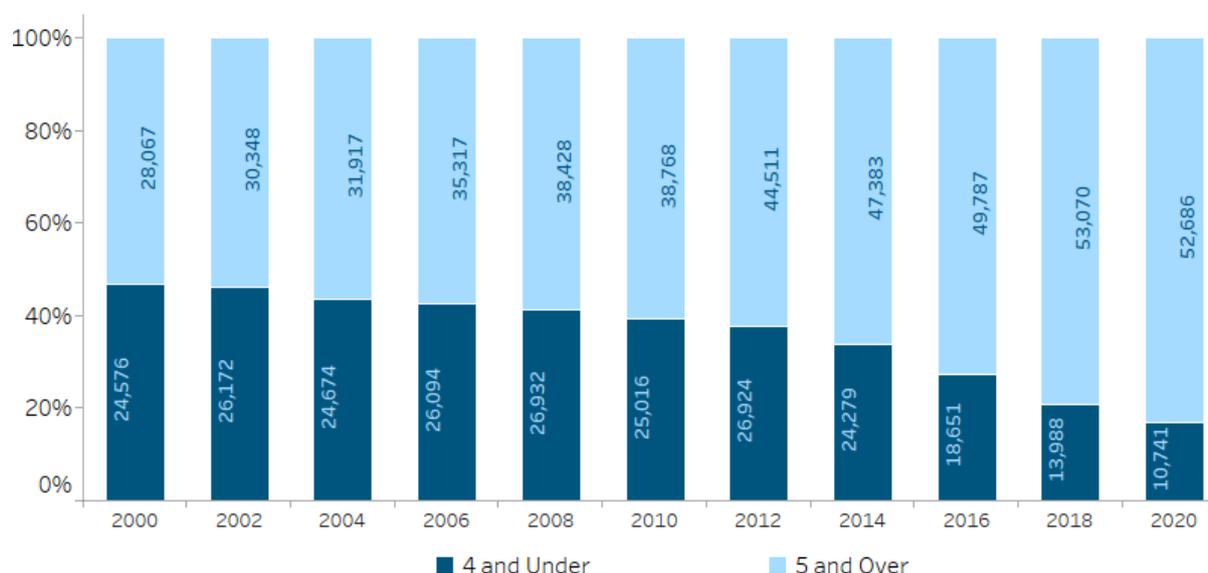
Figure 8 Pupils by class size and DEIS status, 2020



Source: [Class Size Data 2020](#)

Age of Junior Infants

Figure 9 Junior Infants under and over 4 years of age, at 1st January, 2000-2020



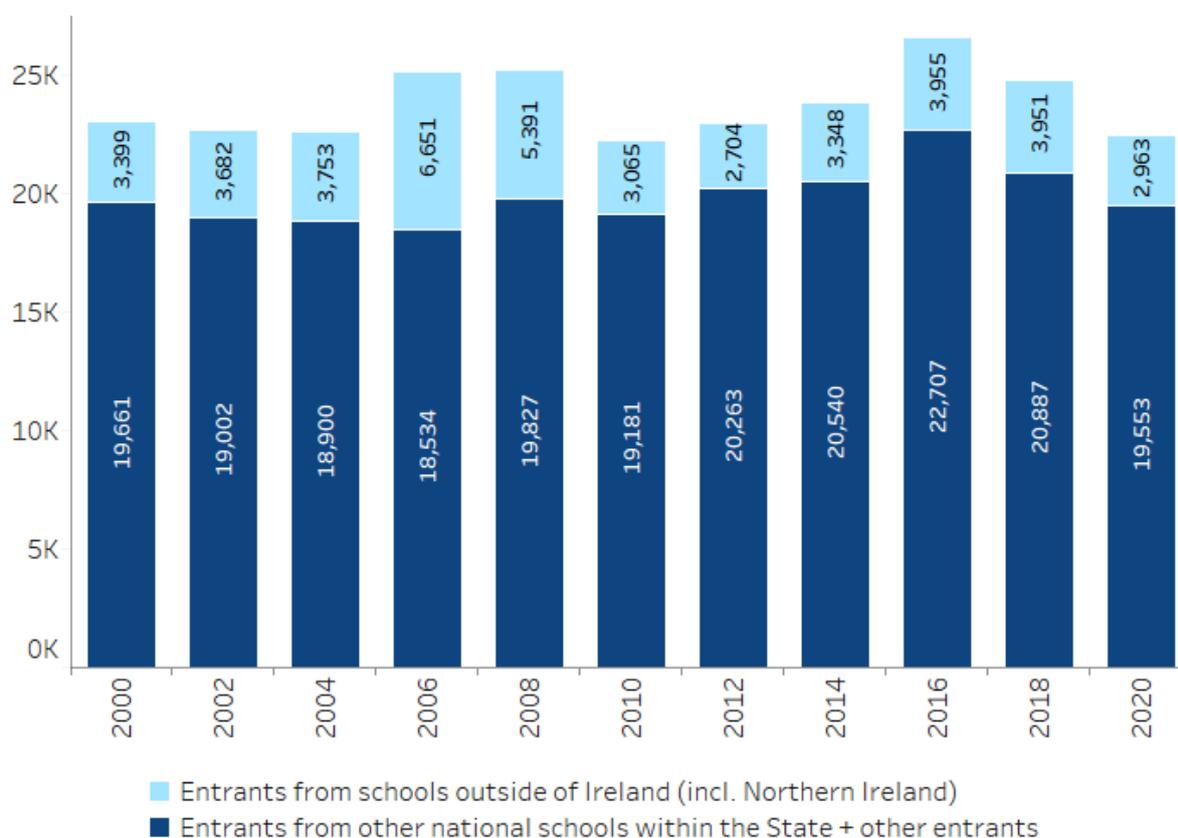
Source: [EDA42](#)

The age of junior infants has been steadily increasing for the past twenty years, although the trend has accelerated in recent times. This is most likely due to the introduction of the ECCE scheme in 2010, and its expansion to two years in 2016. Overall, the proportion of four year olds (and younger) in junior infants has fallen from 46.7 per cent in 2000 to 16.9 per cent in 2020.

Pupils changing school and entrants from abroad

Every year up to 25,000 pupils change primary school and enter into a grade other than junior or senior infants, having moved from another school in the State, or arrived from outside Ireland. In 2020 19,553 pupils changed school while a further 2,963 arrived from outside Ireland. The peak year for entrants from abroad was 2007, with almost 7,000 arrivals.

Figure 10 New entrants to 1st – 6th class by source, 2000-2020

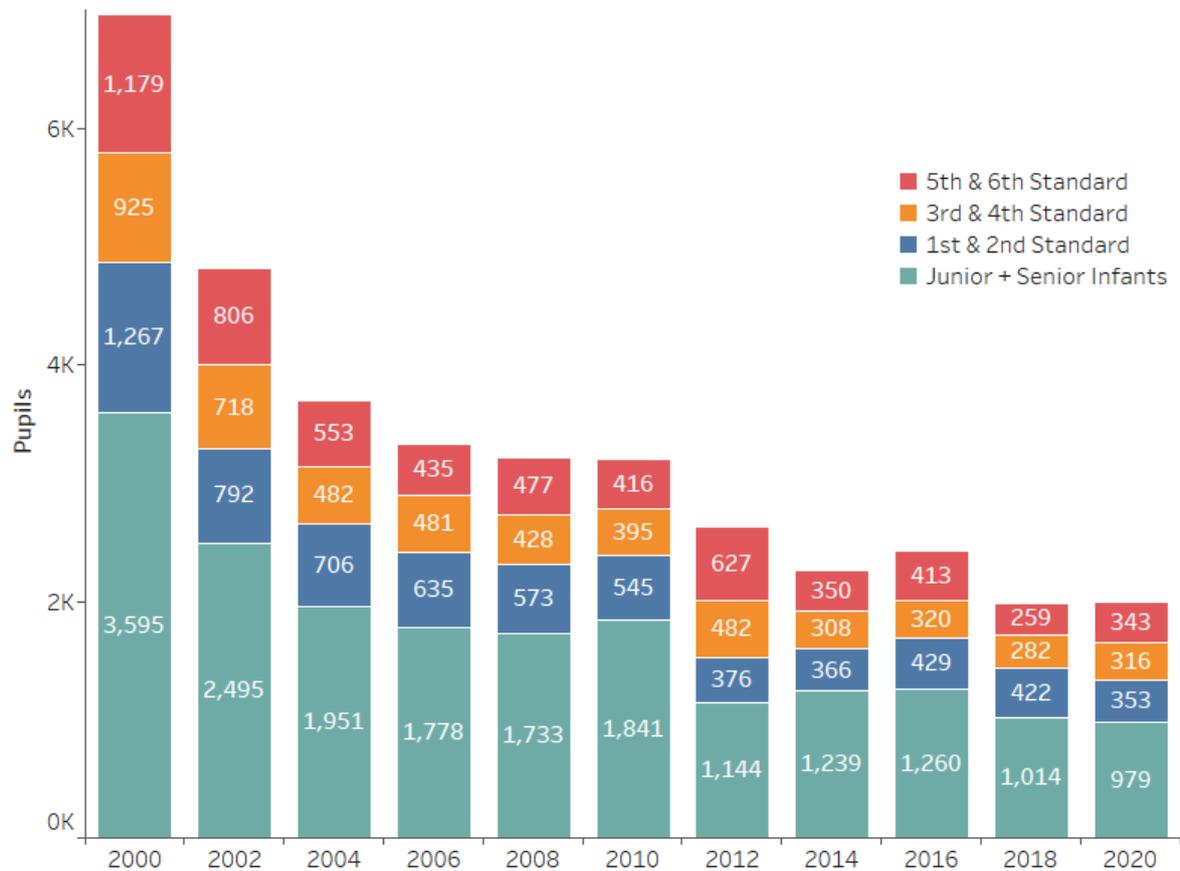


Source: [EDA52](#)

Repeating a year

The number of pupils who repeat a year in primary school is presented in Figure 11 and shows a dramatic fall since 2000, when more than 6,950 pupils repeated compared with just under 2,000 in 2020. As can be seen, pupils are most likely to repeat junior or senior infants compared to other grades.

Figure 11 Pupils retained in the same standard/grade, 2000-2020

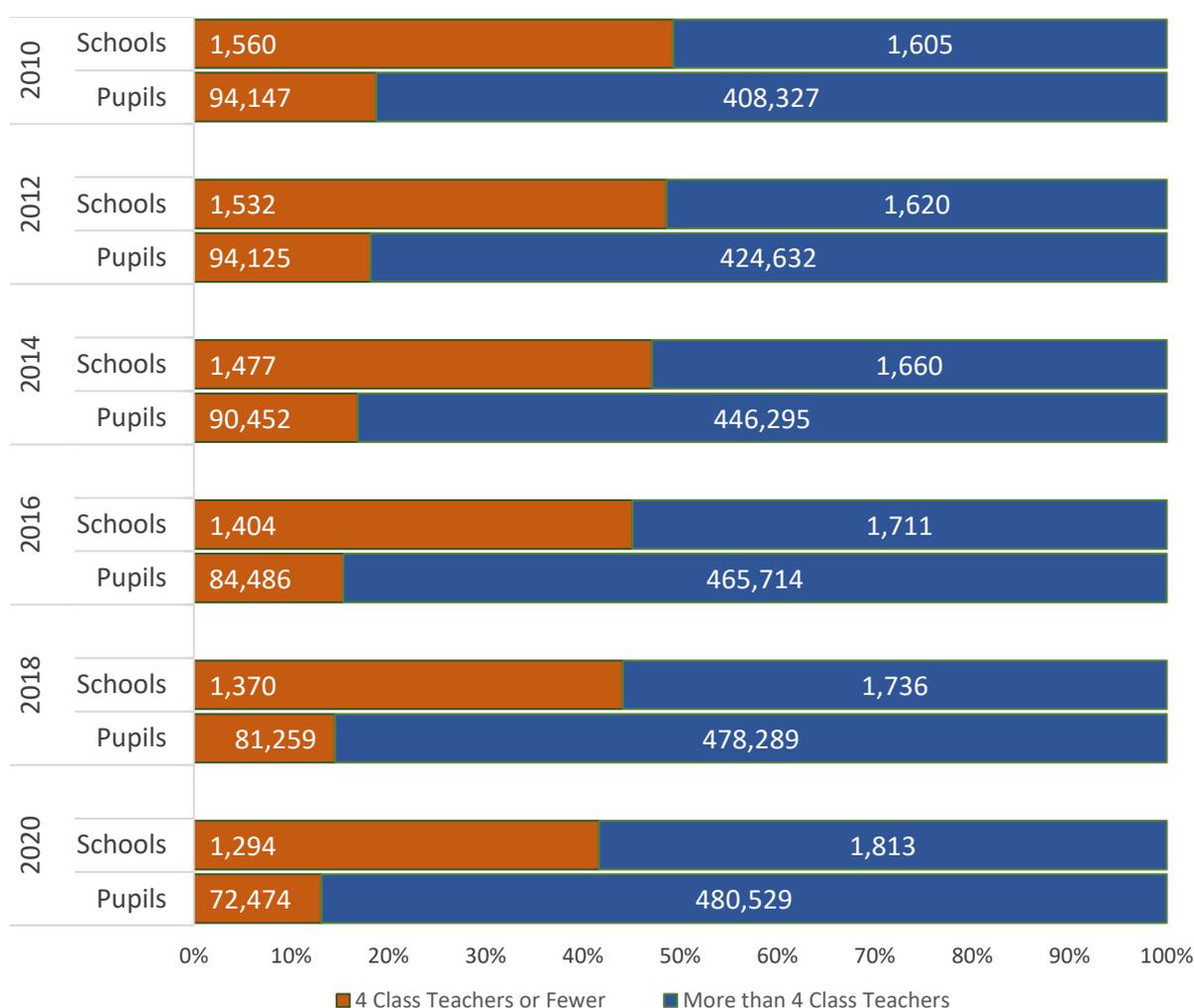


Source: [EDA52](#)

School size

Small schools – here defined as schools with 4 mainstream class teachers or fewer – comprise a large proportion of primary schools in Ireland. 41.6 per cent of all schools in the 2020 academic year had 4 mainstream classes or fewer, although only 14.2 per cent of pupils were enrolled in small schools. While the number of small schools has been declining in recent years they nonetheless remain very prominent, particularly in rural areas, as illustrated in Map 2 over.

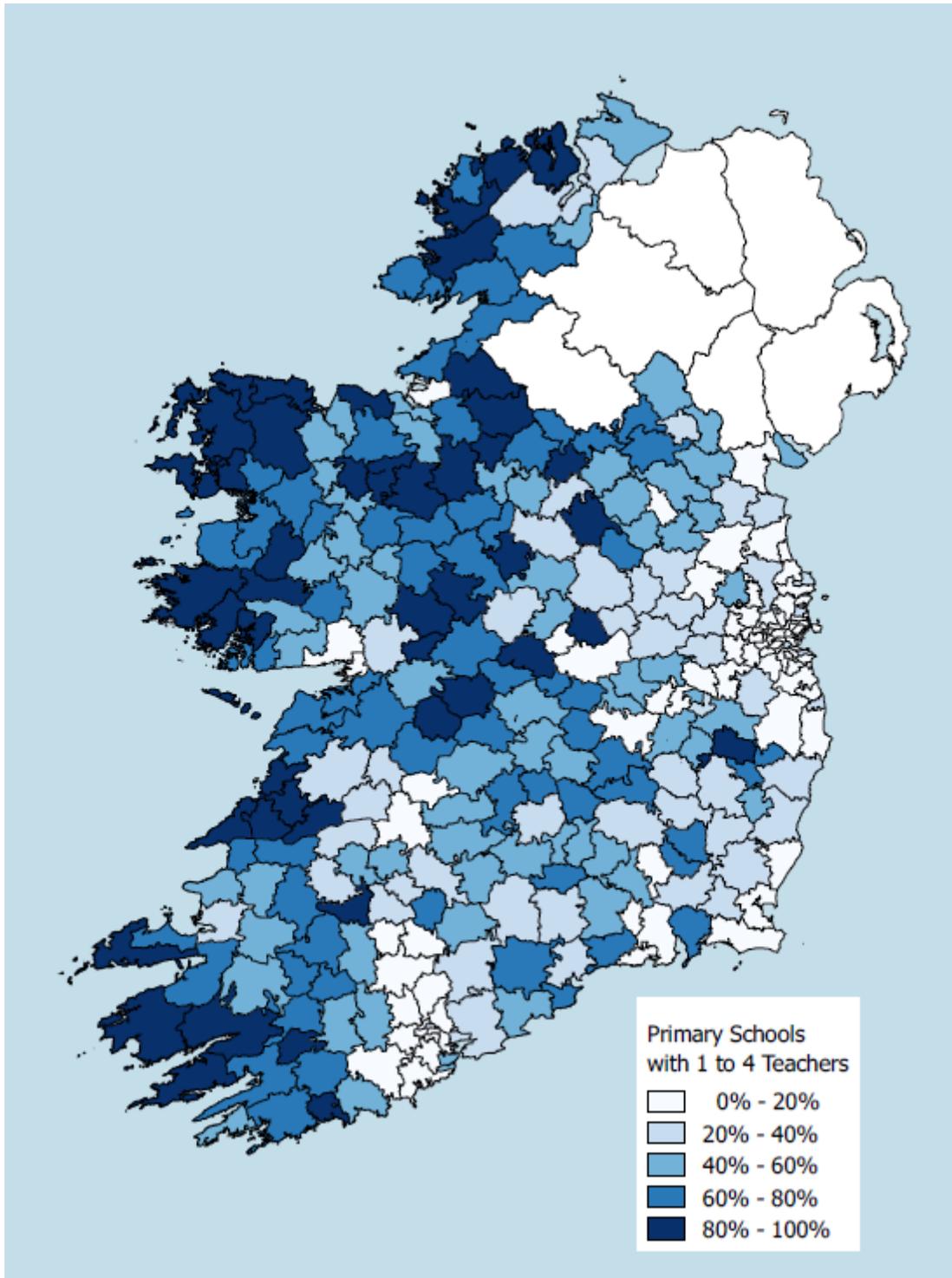
Figure 12 Mainstream primary schools and pupils classified by size of school, 2010-2020



Source: [Class Size Data](#)

Small schools comprise the majority of primary schools in many parts of the west of Ireland, while they are relatively rare in Dublin and its surrounding areas.

Map 2 Small schools as percentage of all schools by School Planning Area, 2020



Post-primary

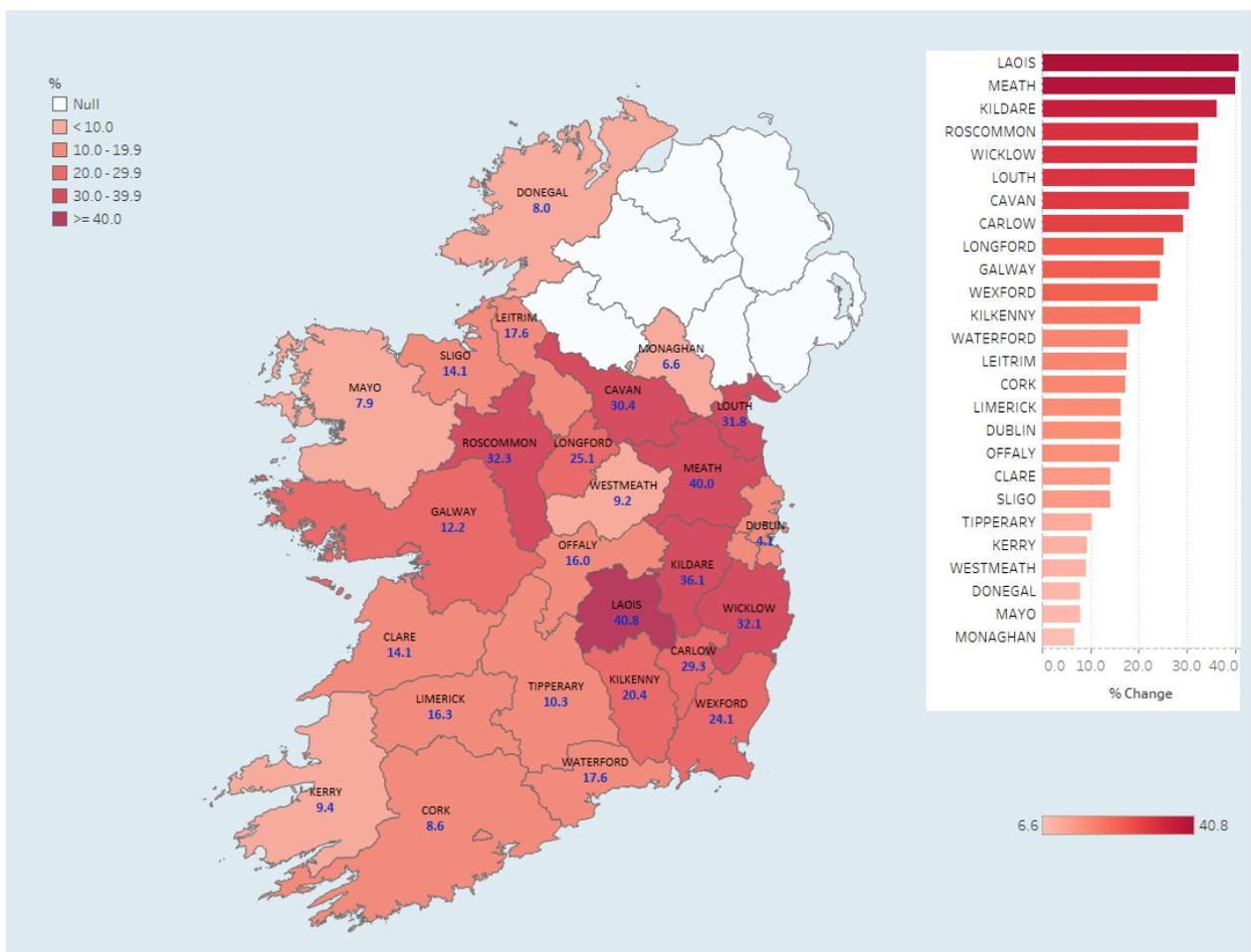
Enrolments

While enrolments in primary schools peaked in 2018 enrolments in post-primary¹ schools continue to rise. Total enrolments stood at 379,184 in 2020, an increase of 7,734 on 2019. Enrolments have risen by 33,641 over the past five years.

Map 3 shows the change in enrolments over the past ten years. The largest increases can be seen in the counties surrounding Dublin; Laois (40.8%), Meath (40.0%) and Kildare (36.1%) all increased by over 35 per cent while Mayo (7.9%) and Monaghan (6.6%) saw smaller increases.

The only decrease in enrolments over the ten years was in Dublin City and Cork City, which saw a fall of 1.4 and 0.8 per cent, respectively, while Fingal rose by 49.8 per cent and South Dublin rose by 23.7 per cent.

Map 3 Percentage change in post-primary enrolments by county, 2010-2020

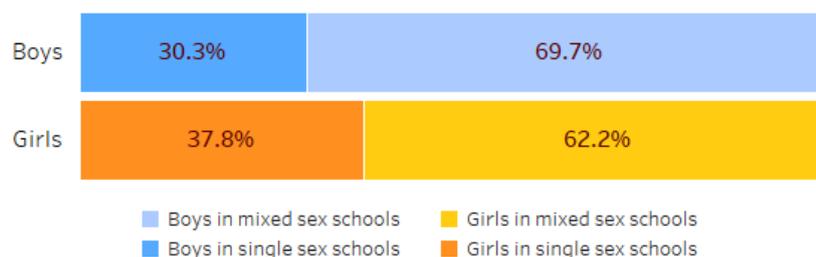


Source: [EDA69](#)

School gender

More boys than girls consistently attend mixed-sex schools, with 69.7 per cent of boys in a mixed school in 2020 compared with just 62.2 per cent of girls, as seen in Figure 13. This is reflected in the number of schools by gender category – in 2020 there were 128 all girls post-primary schools, compared with 101 all boys schools.

Figure 13 Post-primary enrolments by school gender, by sex, 2020

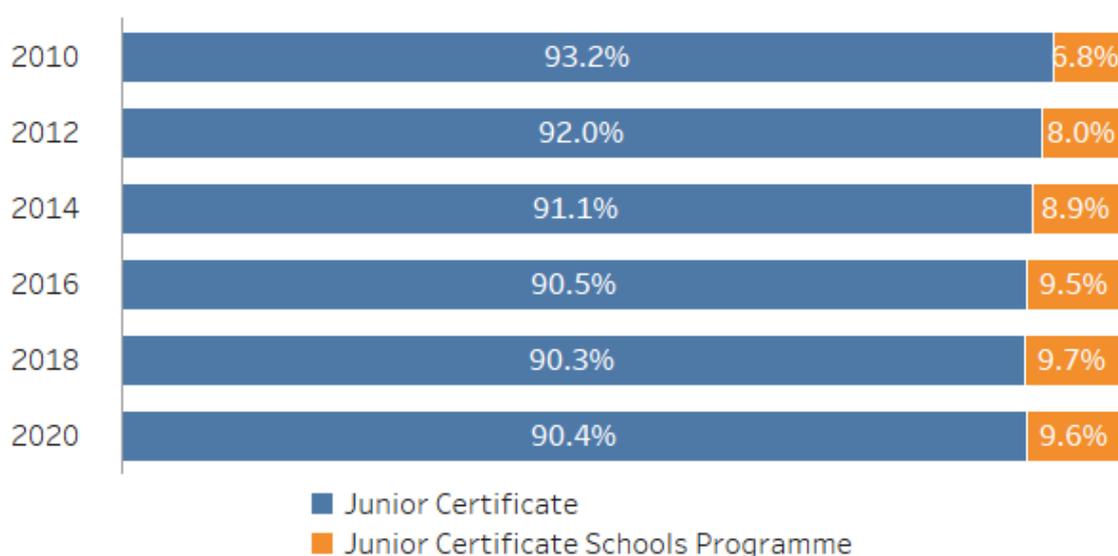


Source: [EDA72](#)

School programme

Figure 14 shows junior cycle enrolments by programme. As can be seen there is a general trend towards increasing participation in the JCSP program, with 9.6 per cent in 2020.

Figure 14 Junior Cycle enrolments by programme, 2010-2020

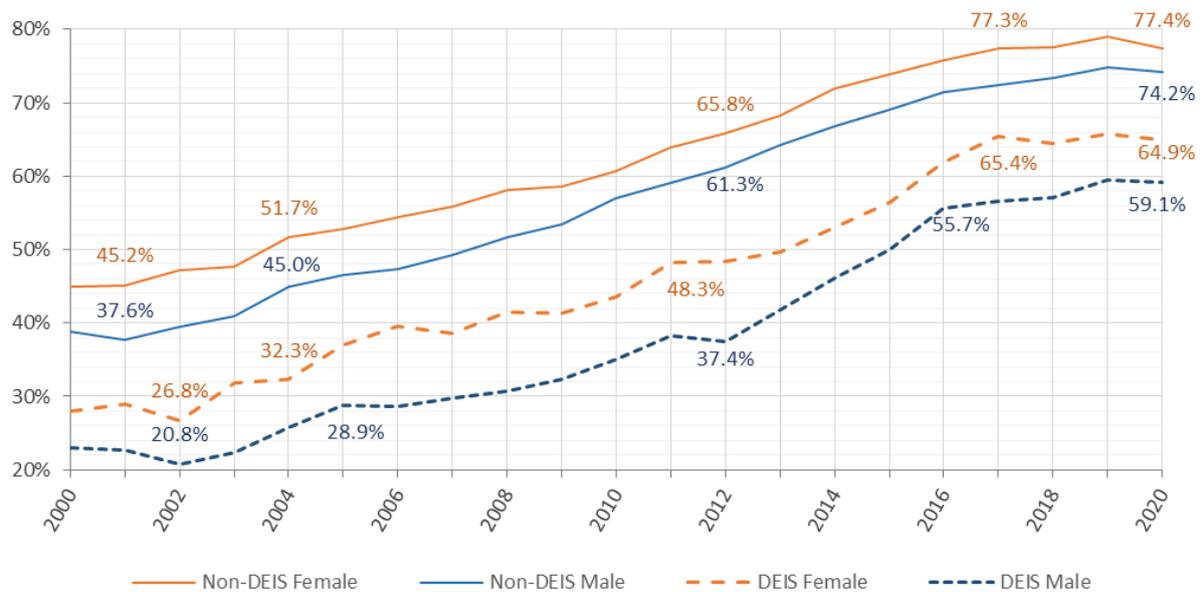


Source: [EDA70](#)

Transition year

Figure 15 shows the growing percentage of pupils who participate in TY by gender and DEIS status. More females than males consistently do TY, and uptake is lower in DEIS schools than in non-DEIS schools. However, there has been a small fall in TY participation in both school categories between 2019 and 2020.

Figure 15 Transition Year as a % of previous Junior Cycle Year 3, by gender, by DEIS status, 2000-2020

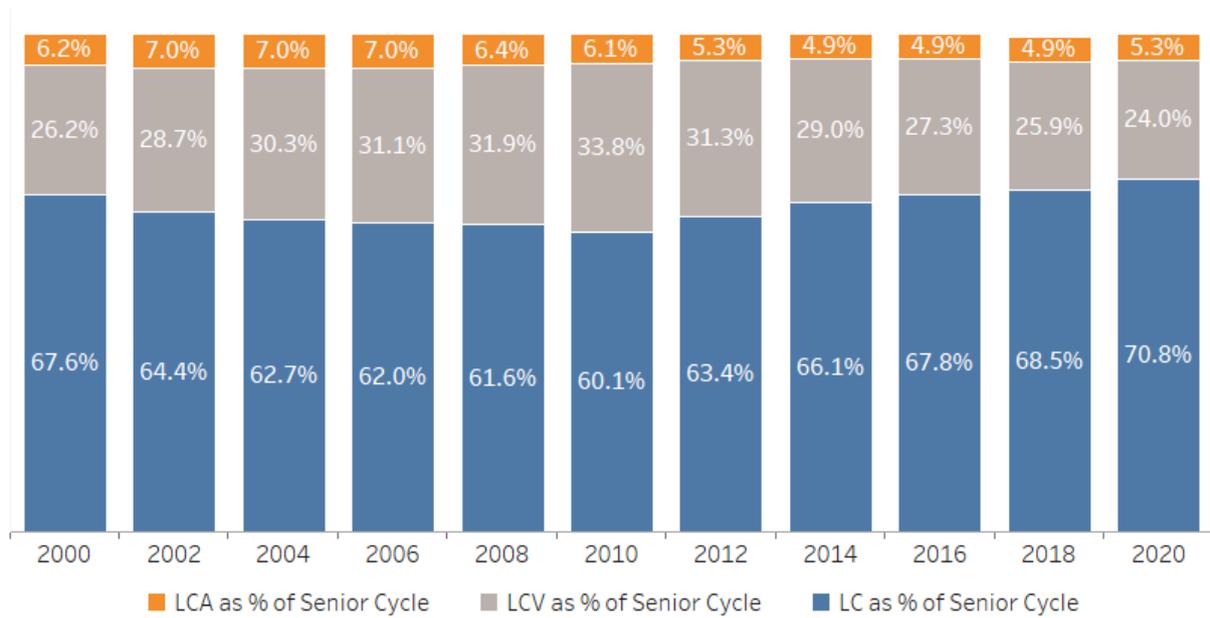


Source: [EDA70](#)

Leaving Certificate programme

Figure 16 shows the changing participation rates in LC, LCV and LCA since 2000. The percentage of pupils following the LCA program stood at 5.3 per cent in 2020, up slightly on 2019 (5.1%); participation in the LCV program stood at 24.0 per cent, representing a continuing downward pattern for this program, while LC stood at 70.8 per cent, a slight increase on 2019.

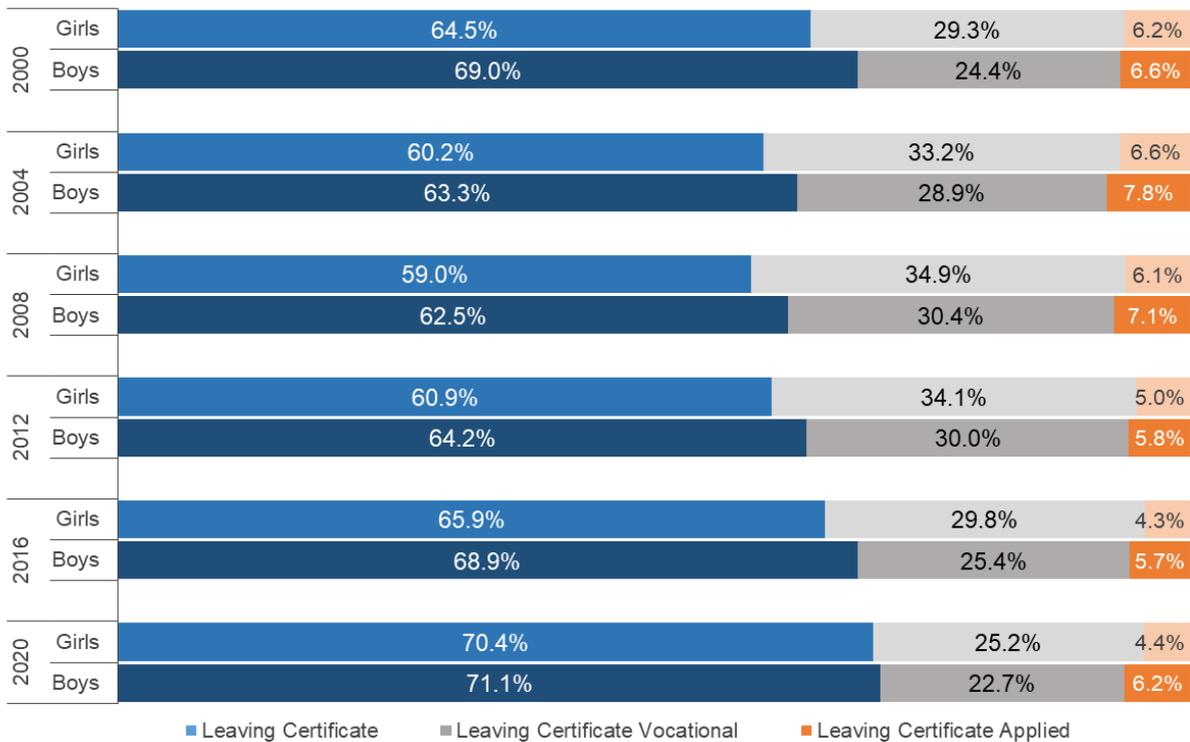
Figure 16 Senior Cycle enrolments by Programme, 2000-2020



Source: [EDA70](#)

There are some variations in programme uptake by gender, with a higher percentage of boys taking the Leaving Cert Applied programme, and girls more likely to follow the Leaving Cert Vocational programme (Fig 17).

Figure 17 Senior Cycle enrolments by programme, by gender, 2000-2020

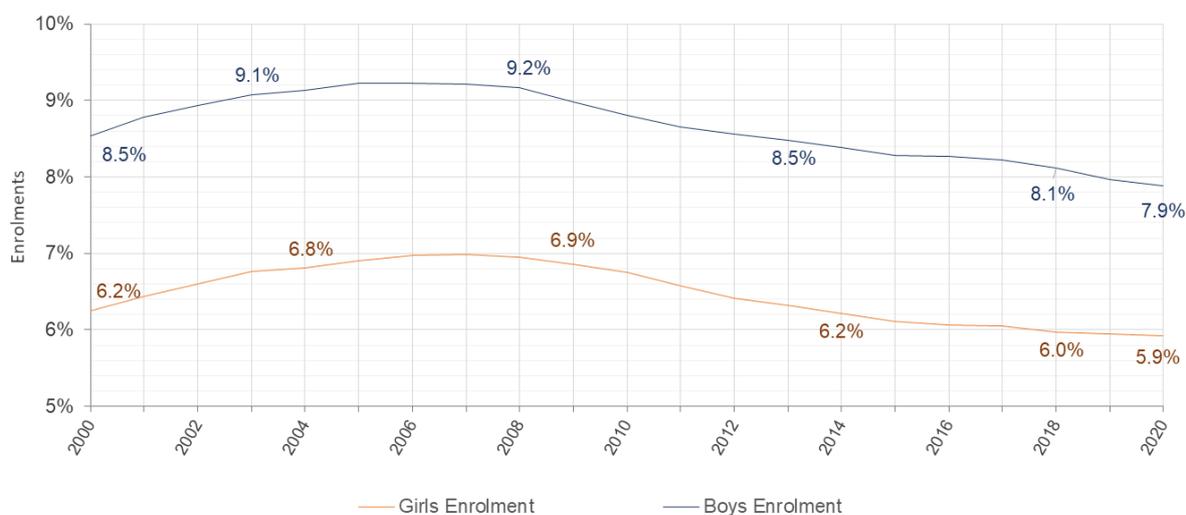


Source: [EDA70](#)

Fee-charging schools

There is a consistent pattern of more boys than girls attending fee-charging schools. Overall, 7.9 per cent of boys were enrolled in a fee-charging school in 2020, compared with 5.9 per cent of girls; as illustrated in Figure 18 both are down on 2019 and represent a continuing pattern of falling attendance at fee-charging schools.

Figure 18 Enrolments in fee-charging schools as % of total enrolments, by gender, 2000-2020



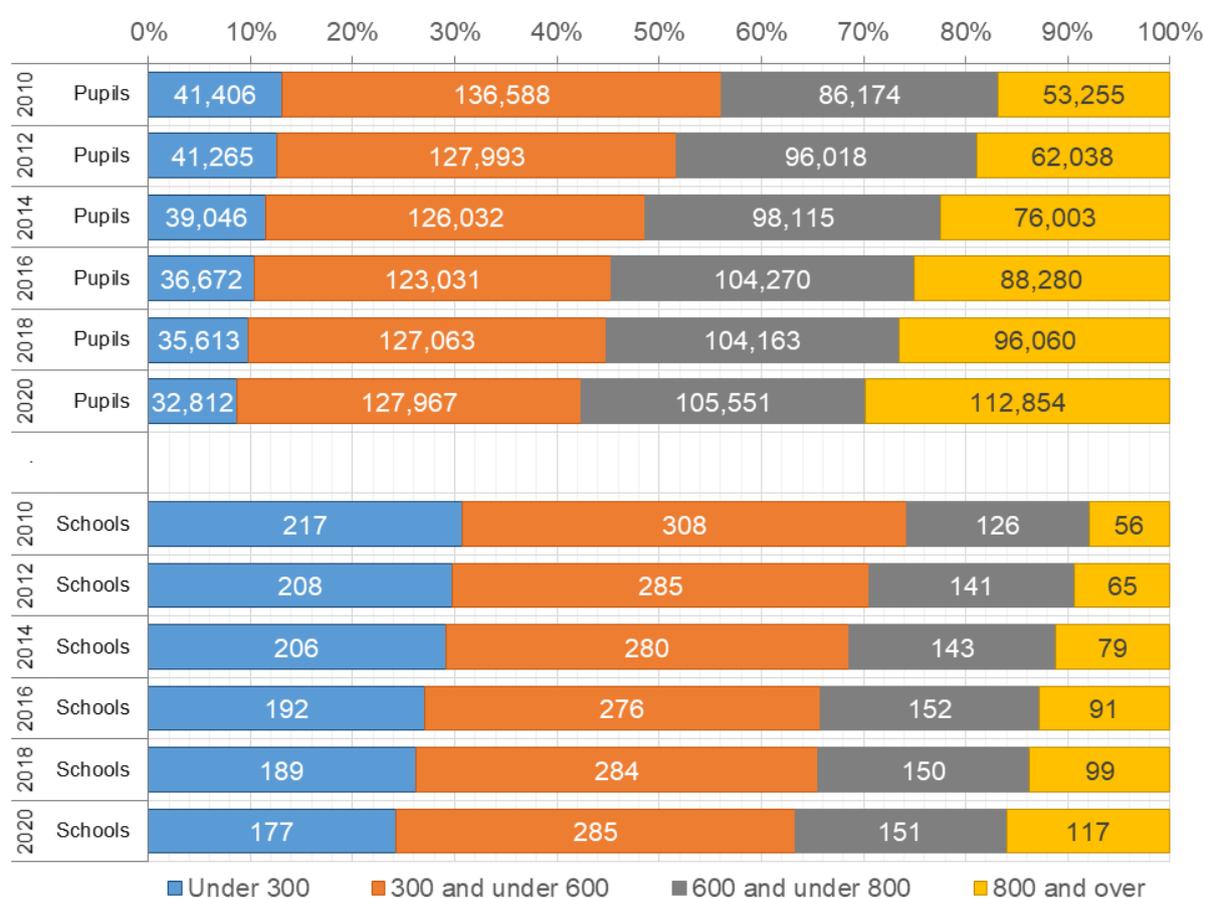
Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

School size

Figure 19 illustrates the growing importance of large schools in the post-primary system. While small schools (less than 300 pupils) made up 30.7 per cent of all schools in 2010, this has dropped to 24.2 per cent in 2020, while the number of very large schools (800+ pupils) has more than doubled (from 56 to 117).

The number of pupils attending small schools fell by 8,600 over this period, while the number of pupils attending large schools has increased from 53,255 to 112,854.

Figure 19 Second level schools and pupils classified by school enrolment size, 2010-2020



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Enrolments by programme

Data on enrolments by programme for each individual school have been published for the first time as part of the annual statistics reports.

Comparing the total enrolments in Leaving Certificate Year 1 (LC1) with Leaving Certificate Year 2 (LC2) in 2020 provides an estimate of expected growth in LC2 numbers for the coming school year. The results have been summarised by Local Authority and are presented in Figure 20. Overall enrolments in all schools are expected to rise by 5,217 while enrolments in Cavan are expected to increase by 34.6%, with a rise of 293 pupils. Limerick City and Offaly can both expect enrolments to fall in the coming school year by 1.1 and 3.9 percent, respectively. The five Local Authorities with the largest expected growth in LC2 2021 are presented in Table 2.

Figure 20 Expected growth rate in LC2 enrolments in 2021/22 based on LC1 2020/21 enrolments, by Local Authority

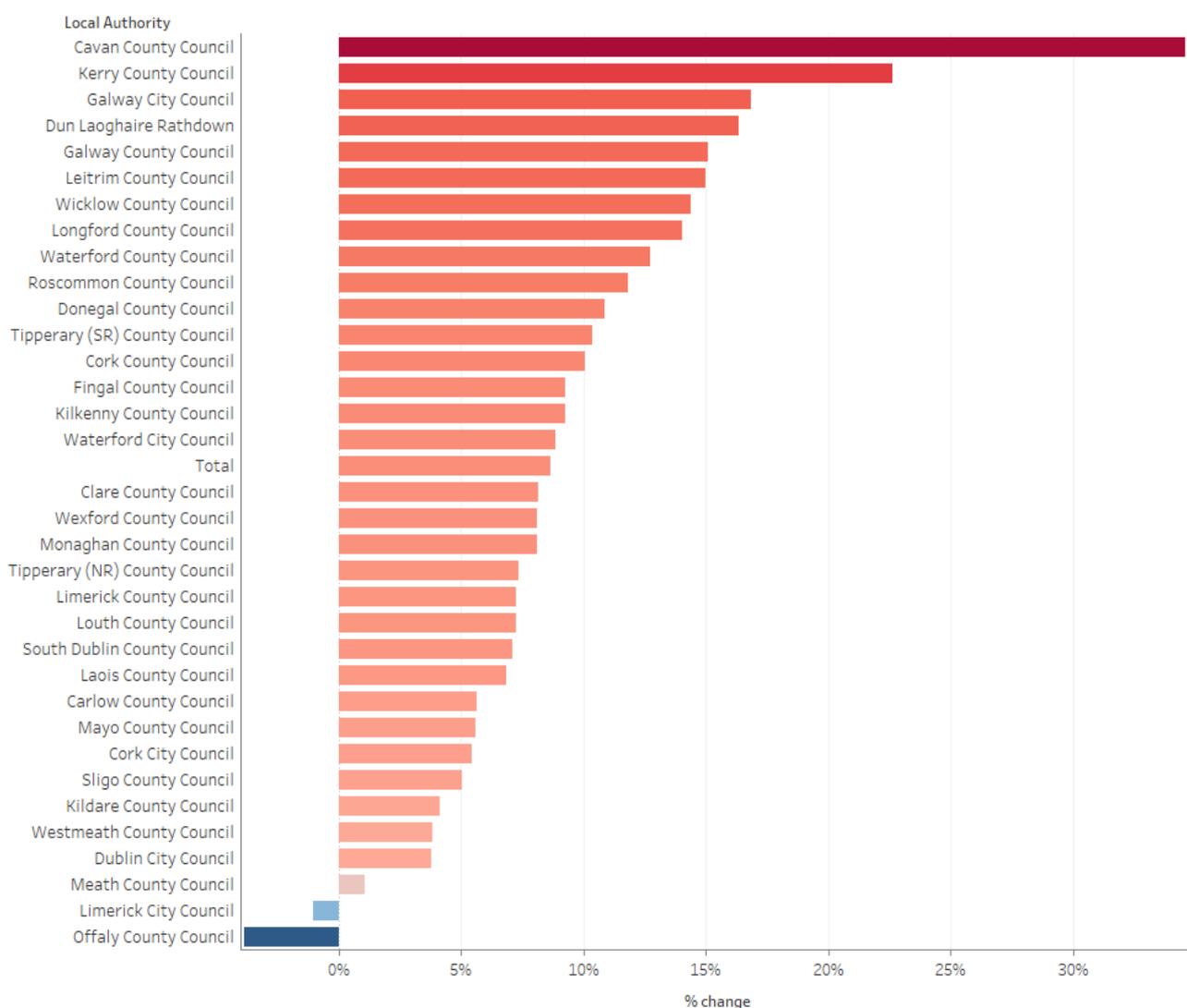


Table 2 Local Authorities with the largest expected growth in LC2 enrolments in 2021/22

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>			
	<i>Year 1 2020</i>	<i>Year 2 2020</i>	<i>expected growth in LC2 2021</i>	<i>growth rate</i>
Cavan County Council	1,140	847	293	34.6%
Kerry County Council	2,242	1,828	414	22.6%
Galway City Council	1,019	872	147	16.9%
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	2,618	2,250	368	16.4%
Galway County Council	2,716	2,360	356	15.1%

Background notes:

The source for this data is the Annual Census for 2020/2021, which is returned via the Primary/Post-Primary Online Database (POD/P-POD). Unless otherwise stated, the primary level data is reporting enrolments in mainstream schools only. Data is anchored on the census data of 30th September 2020. Note that only schools aided by the Department of Education and Skills are included in this report.

This data was published on 6th July 2020, and replaces the provisional data published in March 2020.

Queries should be sent to statistics@education.gov.ie or by phone at 01-889 2085.

In previous years the data reported in this bulletin was published in excel format as the Department's Annual Statistical Reports (ASR). The excel format of the ASR is now being discontinued and the data will be hosted on the CSO PxStat which can be accessed here: <https://data.cso.ie/>

The ASRs from previous years, and an explanatory document mapping the ASR tables to the PxStat tables, can be found on the Department's website here:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/>