



## Statistical Bulletin – June 2019

### Overview of Education 1998 – 2018

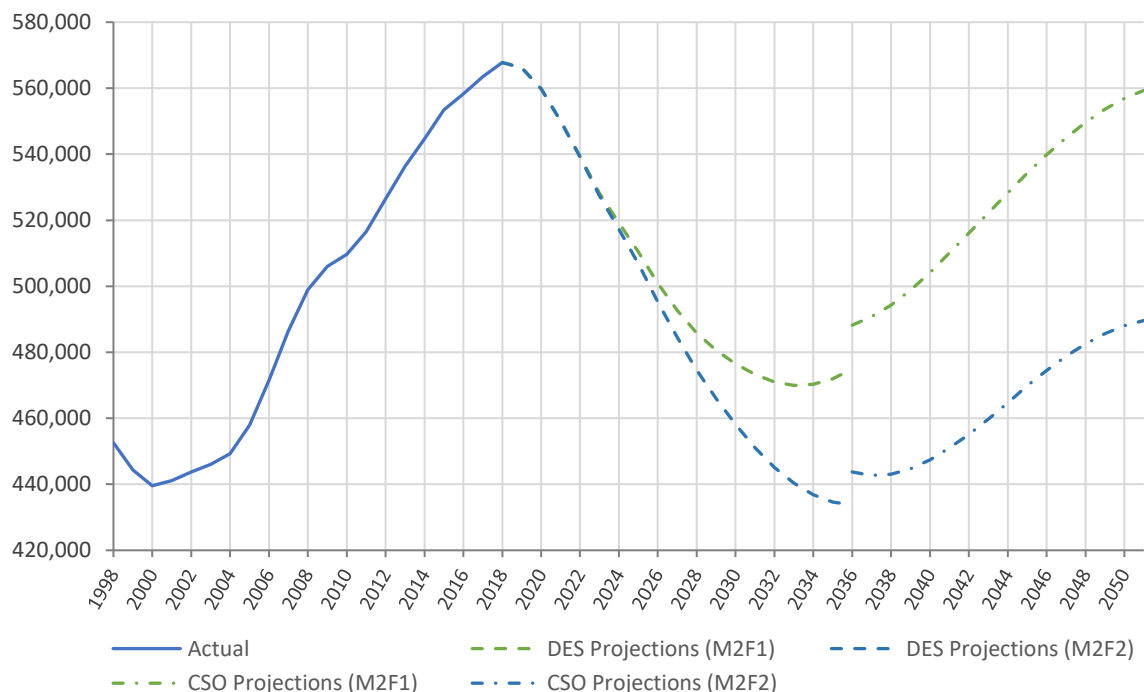
# Primary

## Total and projected enrolments

Between 1998 and 2018 there was an increase of 115,239 (25.5%) in enrolments in primary schools (mainstream and special). The total in 2018 stood at 567,772; the low point over this period was in 2000 with 439,560 pupils.

Looking out to the future, enrolments are projected to fall by 134,000 pupils over the coming years (under the M2F2 scenario)<sup>1</sup>, reaching a low point of 433,795 by 2036. Annual falls will average 11,000 pupils per year between 2021 and 2028. Looking out further, the number of children aged 5 to 12 is projected to increase rapidly and reach 497,200 by 2051 (CSO) under the lower fertility assumption of M2F2. Should fertility remain at today's level (namely hold constant at 1.8 – the F1 scenario) enrolments will return to today's level of 560,000, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Enrolments in DES aided primary schools, actual and projected (M2F1 and M2F2), 1998-2051



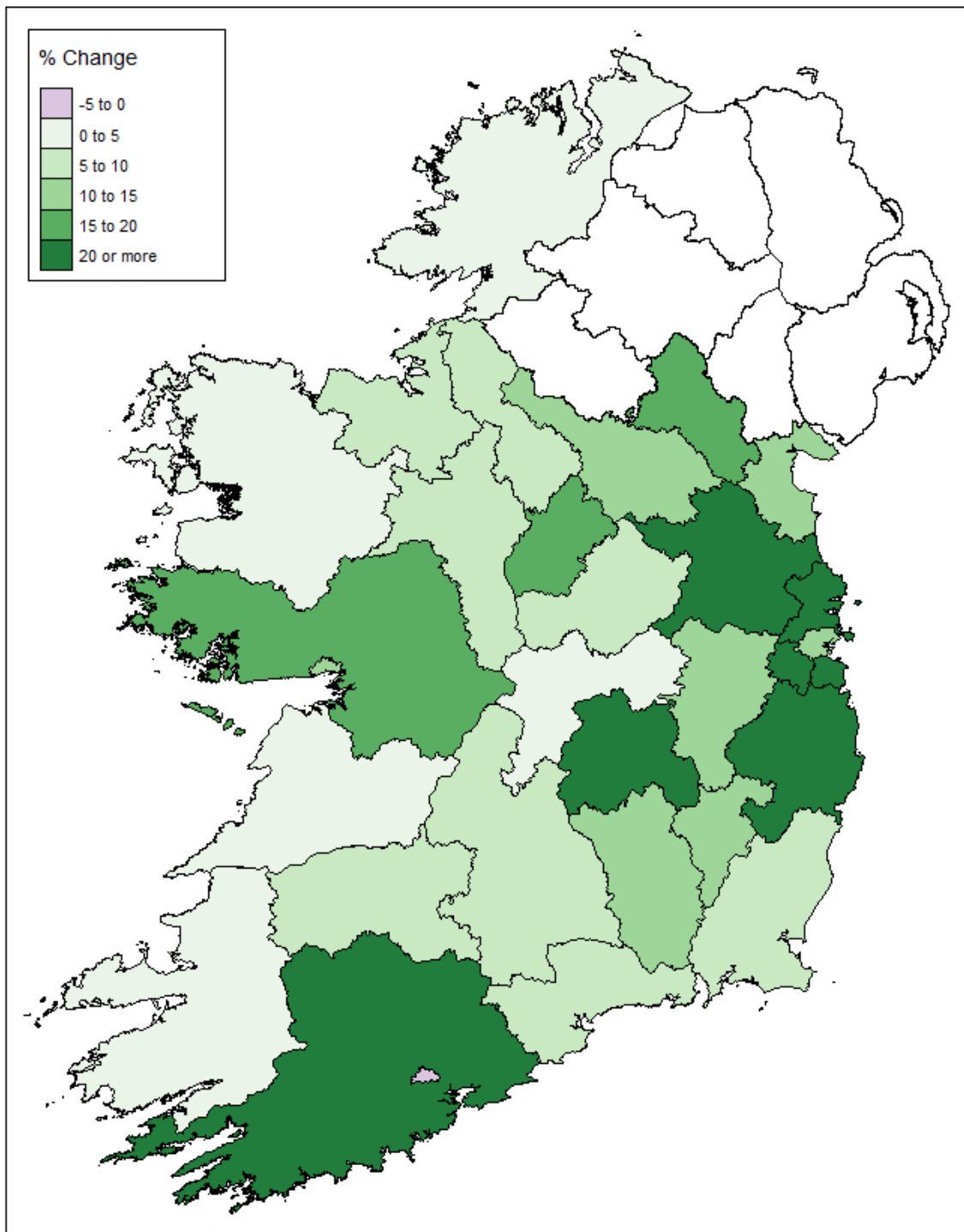
Source: [EDA42](#), [DES Enrolment Projections](#) and [PEA22](#)

<sup>1</sup> M2F2 is a scenario which assumes a moderate level of inward migration, and a decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from 1.8 to 1.6 between 2016 and 2031.

## 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 in Dublin and the surrounding areas, with the highest in Fingal at 32.7 per cent and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown at 25.8 per cent, followed by Meath with an increase of 23.5 per cent. The smallest increase occurred in Donegal (0.9%) and Mayo (0.4%), while Cork City was the only area that saw a decrease (-1.6%).

**Map 1: Percentage change in enrolments in mainstream primary schools, 2008 - 2018**

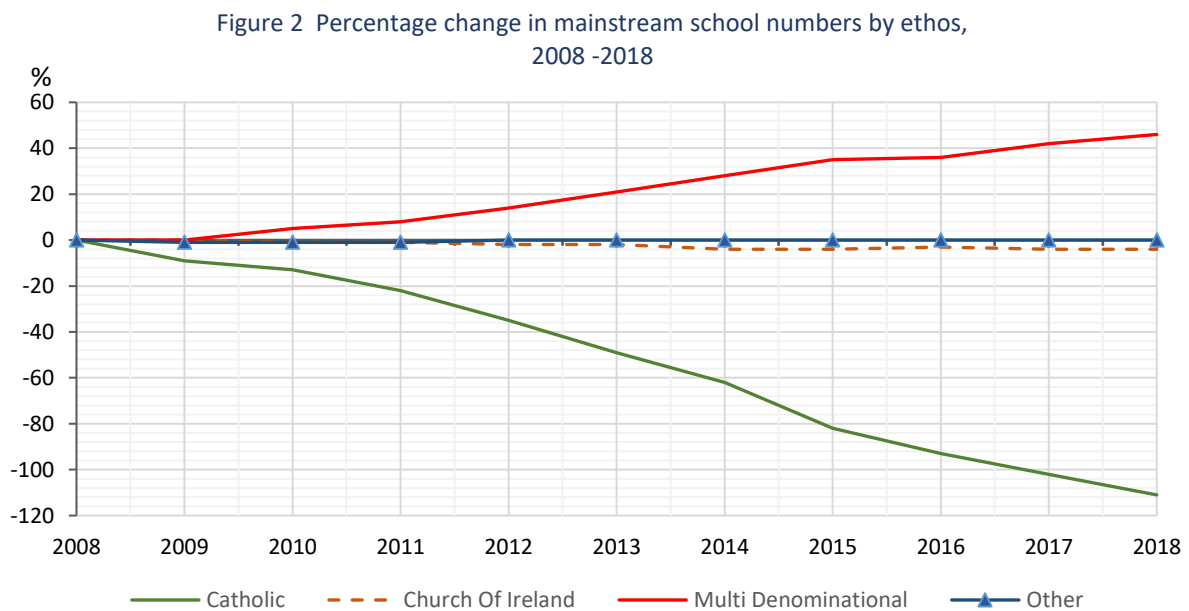


Source: [EDAS7](#)

## School Ethos

The total number of mainstream primary schools has declined by 69 over the past decade, from 3,175 in 2008 to 3,106 in 2018. However, as can be seen in Figure 2 below, the pattern is not uniform, with 111 Catholic schools and 4 Church of Ireland closing between 2008 and 2018, while the number of multi-denominational schools has increased by 46 in the same period.

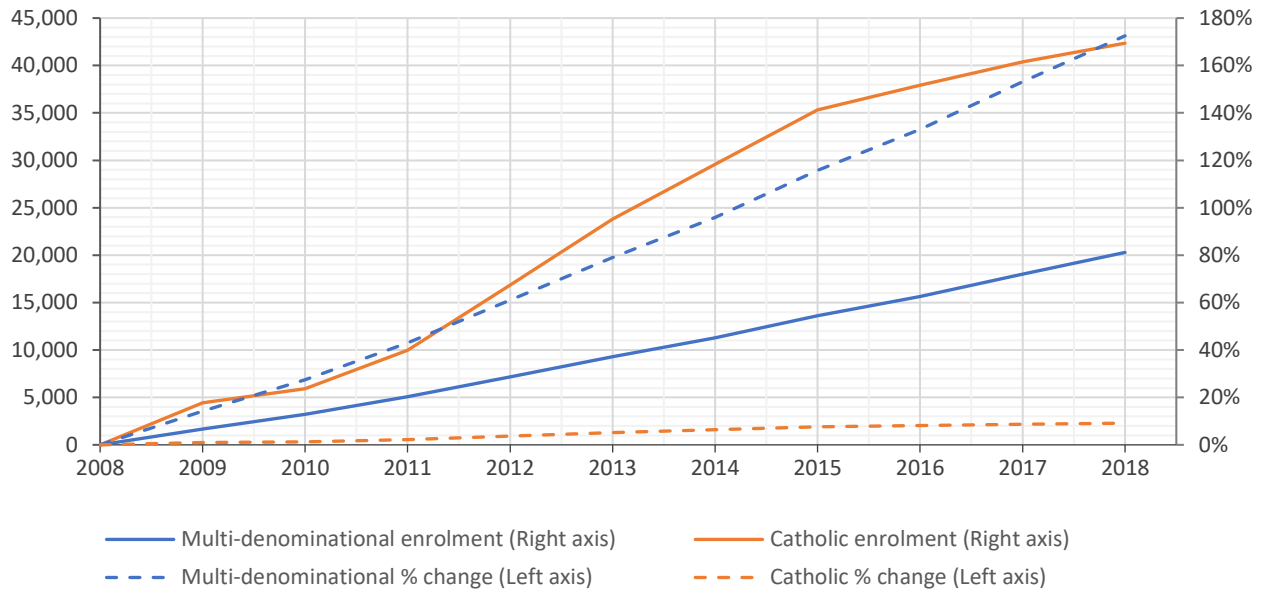
These clear trends in school ethos are a result of the closure of schools with declining enrolments and the amalgamation of schools in close proximity to each other, as well as the opening of new multidenominational schools in response to parental choice. All 24 new mainstream primary schools opened 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 89.4% of schools having a Catholic ethos in 2018.



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Looking at enrolments, Catholic schools have seen by far the largest absolute increase, with the number of pupils enrolled in Catholic schools increasing by 42,000 since 2008 – see Figure 3. This represents a 9.2 per cent increase in pupils in Catholic schools. In multi-denominational schools there has been an increase of 20,000 pupils, representing a 170 per cent increase in the past ten years.

Figure 3 Change in school enrolments by ethos, 2008 - 2018

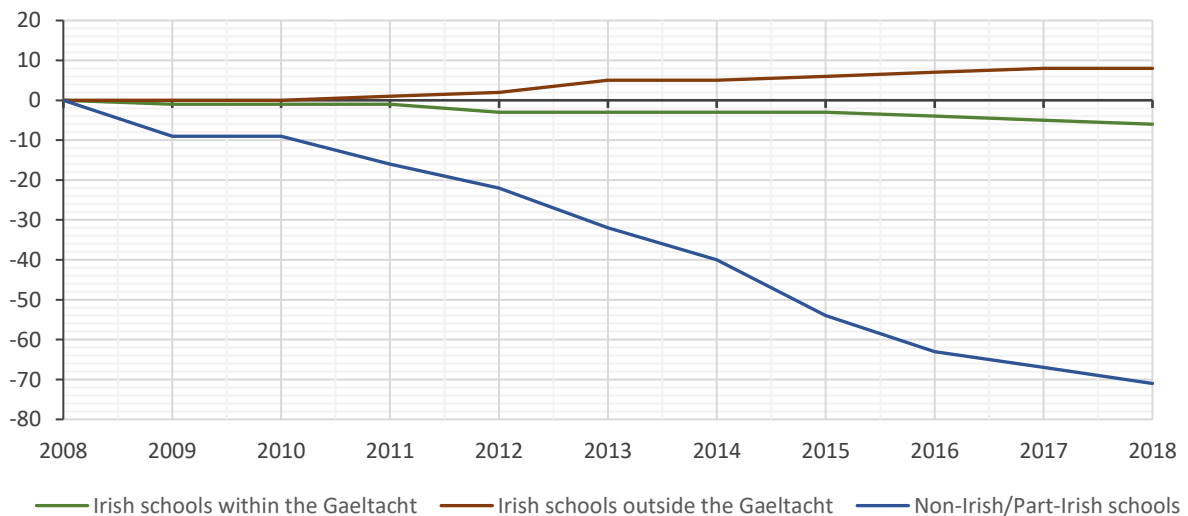


Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

### Irish Classification

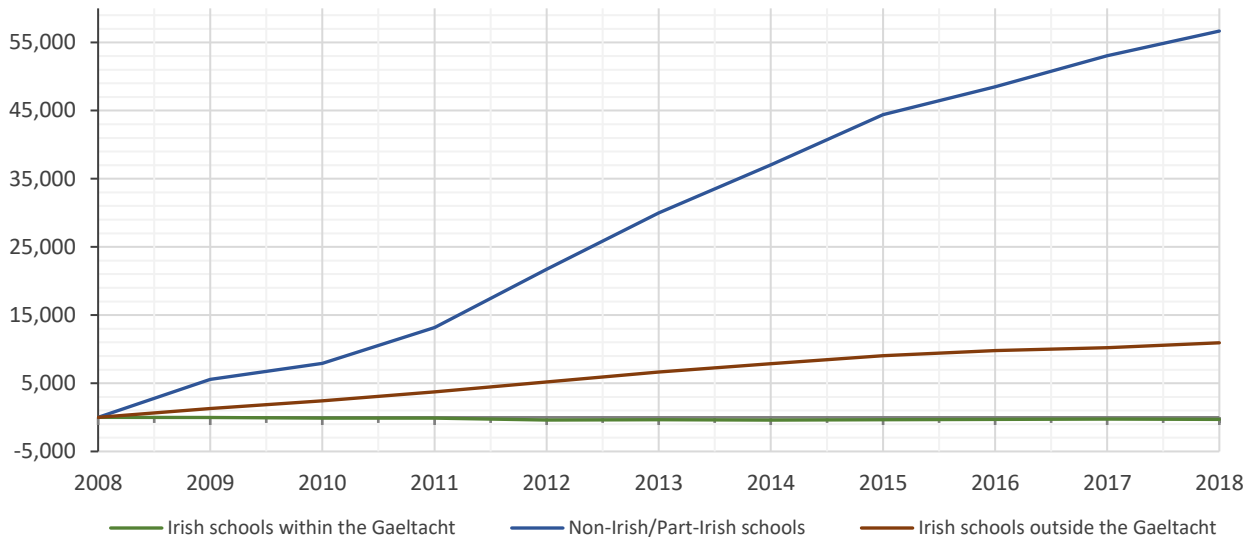
Looking at language of instruction, the number of English-medium primary schools has fallen by 71 over the ten years 2008 – 2018, while Irish-medium schools inside the Gaeltacht fell by six. Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht increased by eight, from 139 to 147.

Figure 4 Changes in school numbers by Irish Classification, 2008 - 2018



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Figure 5 Changes in school enrolments by Irish classification, 2008 - 2018



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

When we look at enrolments by Irish classification, Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht have seen an increase in enrolment of almost 11,000, representing a 40 per cent increase.

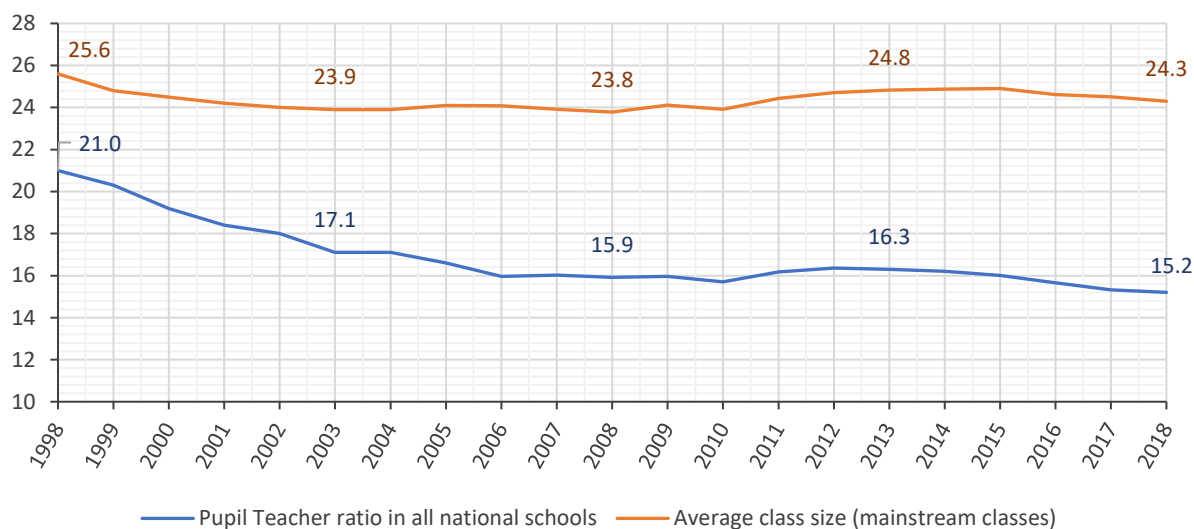
Irish-medium Gaeltacht schools have seen their enrolments fall by 322 over the last decade, which translates to a 4.2 fall in enrolments due to the small size of this sector.

English-medium schools have seen the largest absolute increase in enrolments – an increase of 56,700 since 2008.

## Class Size

The change in average class size over time is presented in Figure 6 and shows little change since 1998. It reached its lowest point in 2008 at 23.8. The Pupil Teacher Ratio on the other hand has fallen consistently over the same period, from 21.0 in 1998 to 15.2 in 2018.

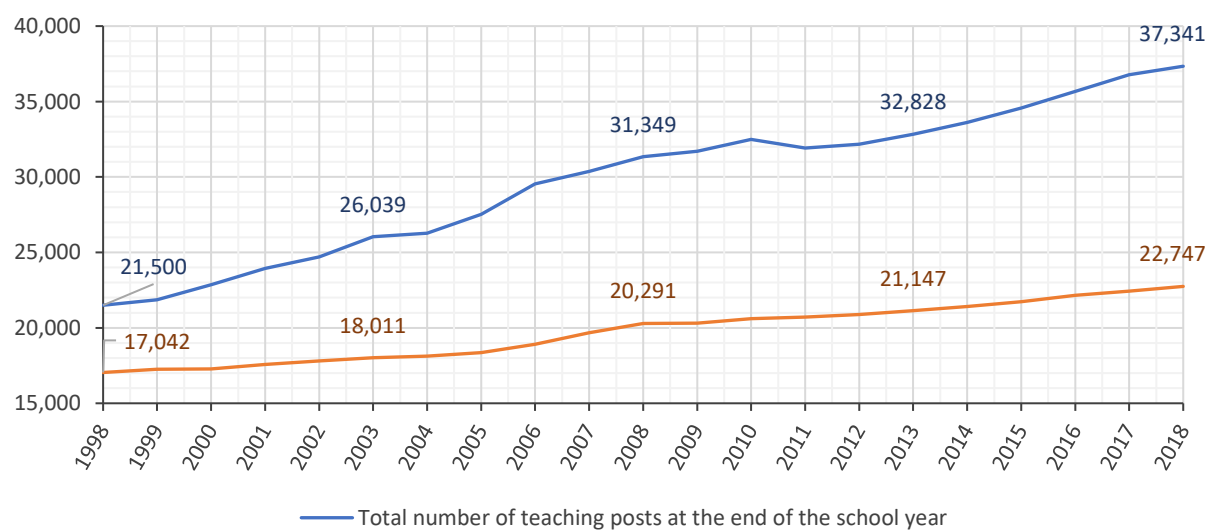
Figure 6 Pupil/Teacher ratio and average class size, 1998-2018



Source: [EDA44](#)

The difference between these two measures is explained by Figure 7, which shows that although the total number of teaching posts has almost doubled over the twenty year period (from 21,500 to 37,515), the number of mainstream classroom teachers has risen by just 33 per cent (from 17,042 to 22,747). This increase in the number of non-classroom teachers is mostly a result of the increase in the number of special educational needs (SEN) teachers in the system, although this group also includes administrative principals and home school community liaison (HCSL) teachers.

Figure 5 Classroom teachers vs. teaching posts, 1998 - 2018

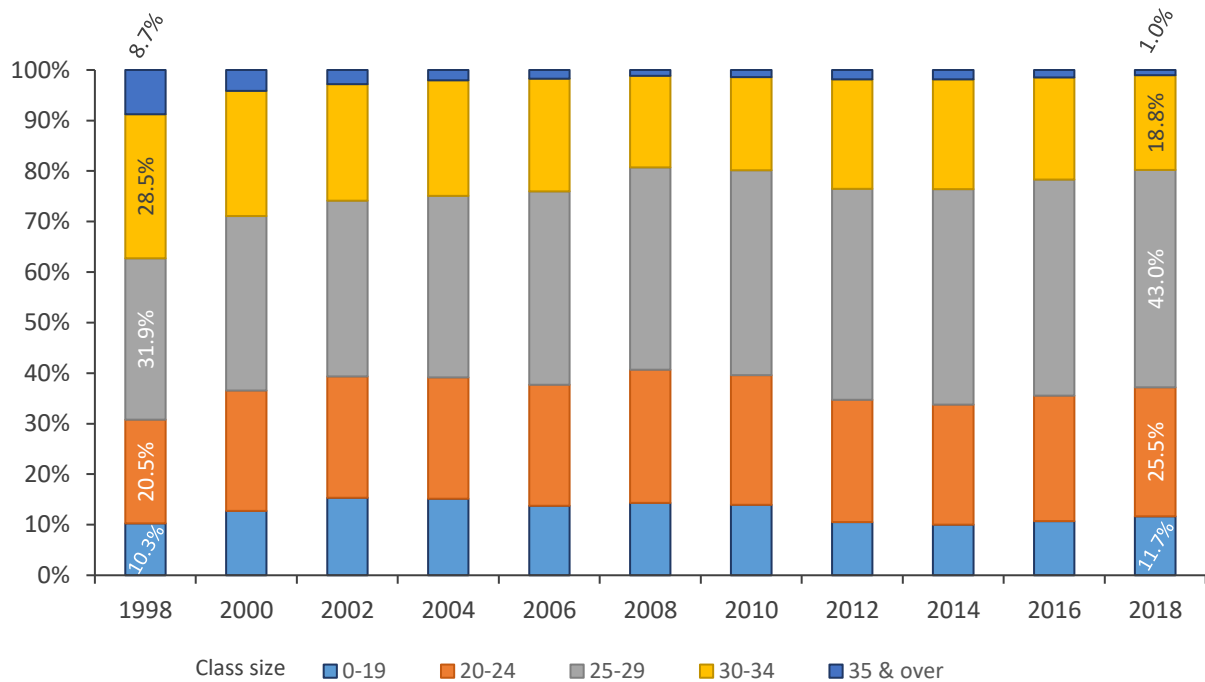


Source: [EDA44](#)

## Large classes

While the overall average class size has varied little since 1998, there has been some significant variation in class sizes over the years. The number of pupils in classes of 35 or more fell sharply between 1998 (38,160) and 2018 (5,670) while those in the next-largest category (30-34) stood at 104,000 in 2018, down from 110,000 in 2016 and 124,600 in 1998.

Figure 8 Pupils by class size, 1998 - 2018



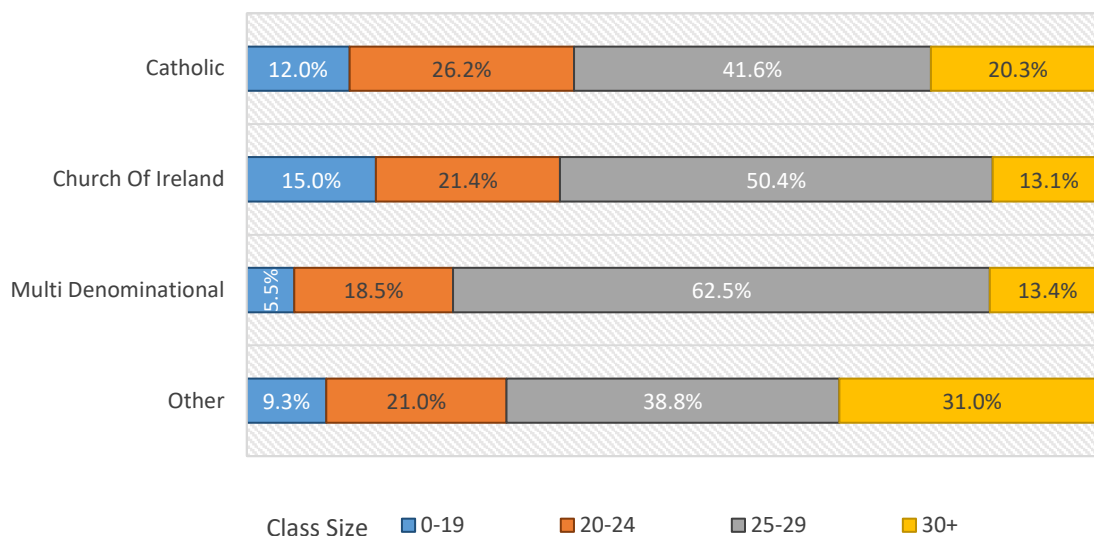
Source: [ED105](#)

## 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 20.3 per cent of pupils in Catholic schools were in classes of 30 pupils or more, compared with just 13.4 per cent of those in multi-denominational schools. However, the average class size in Catholic schools was 24.3, compared with 25.5 in multi-denominational schools.

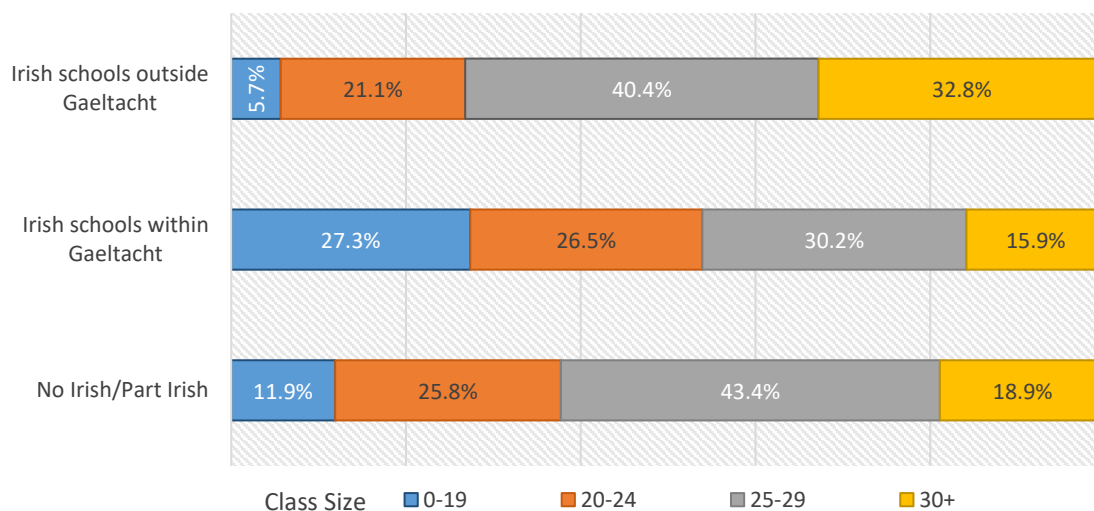
Figure 9 Pupils by class size and school ethos, 2018



Source: [Class Size Data 2018](#)

When separated by Irish classification the data shows 32.8 per cent of pupils were in large classes (30+) in Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht, compared with only 18.9 per cent in English or part-English-medium schools and 15.9 per cent in Irish-medium schools within the Gaeltacht.

Figure 10 Pupils by class size and Irish Classification, 2018

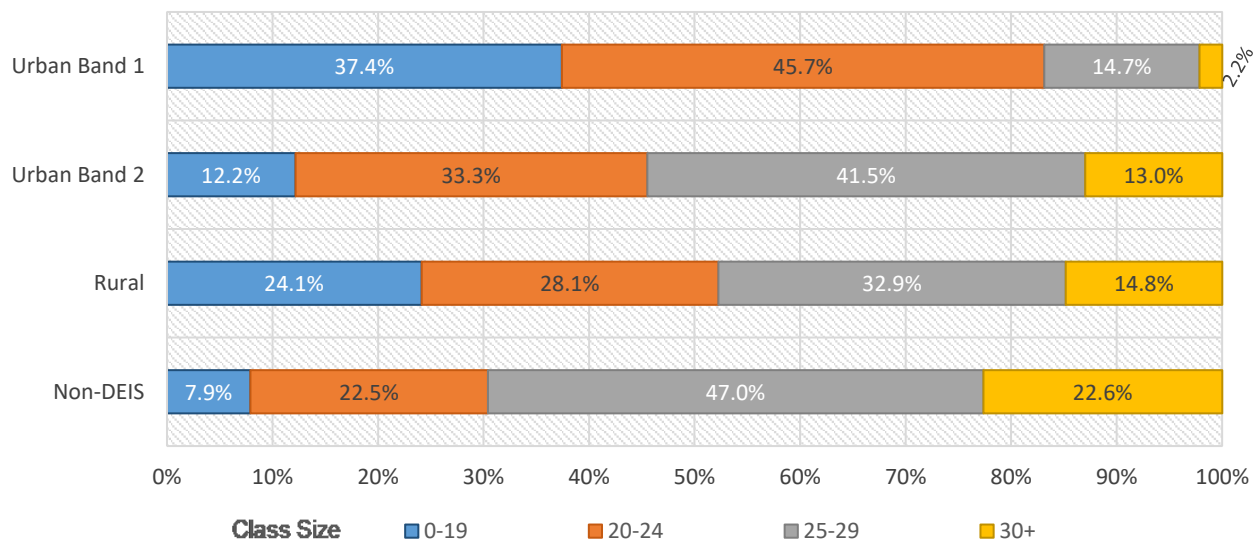


Source: [Class Size Data 2018](#)



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 83.1 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.

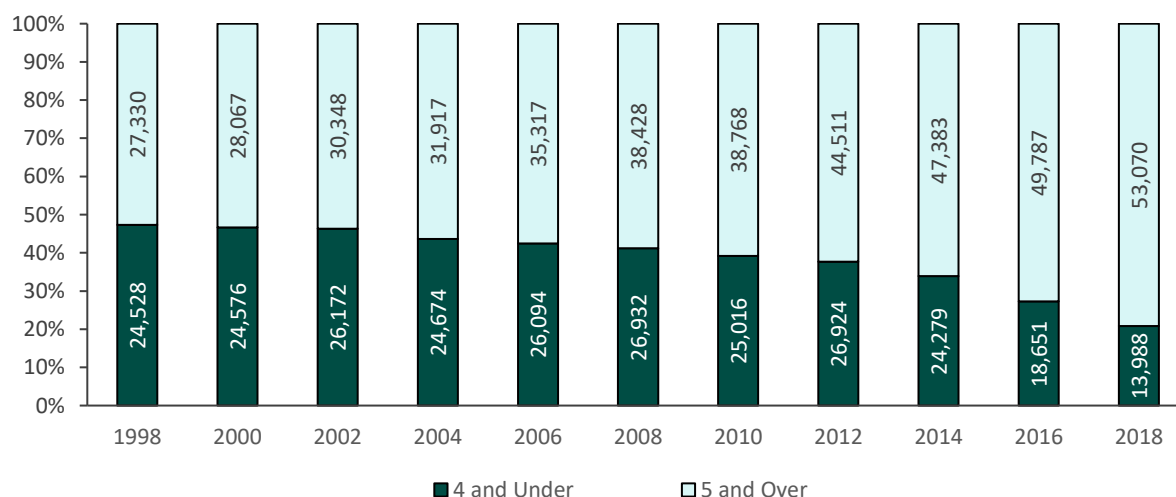
Figure 11 Pupils by class size and DEIS status, 2018



Source: [Class Size Data 2018](#)

## Age of Junior Infants

Figure 12 Age of Junior Infants at 1st January, 1998 - 2018



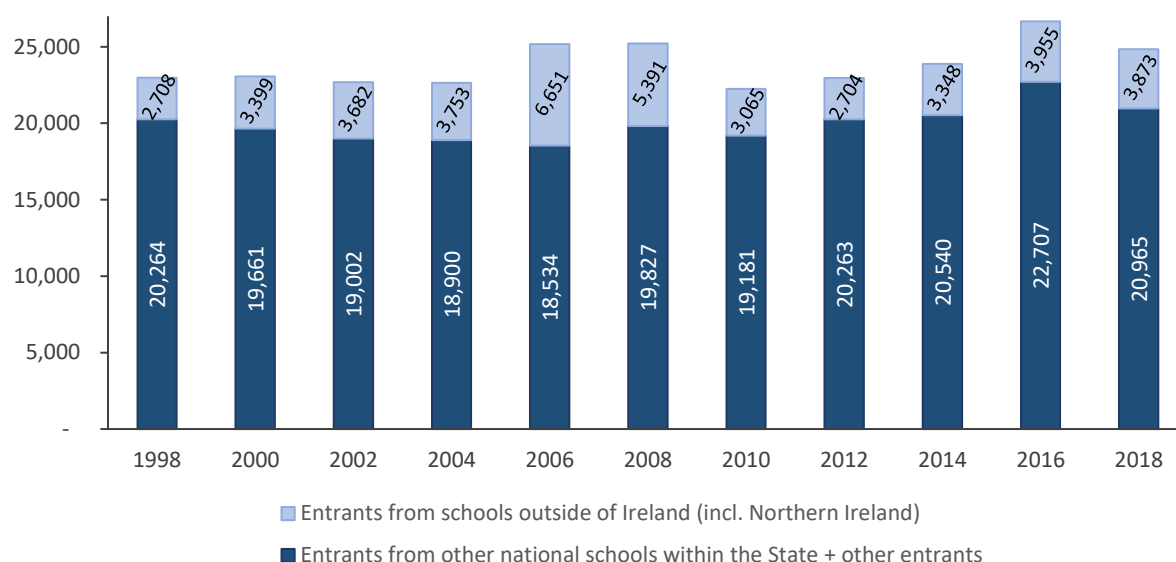
Source: [EDA42](#)

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 in junior infants has fallen from 47 per cent in 1998 to 21 per cent in 2018.

## Pupils changing school and entrants from abroad

Every year some 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 2018 20,000 pupils changed school while a further 4,000 arrived from outside Ireland. The peak year for entrants from abroad was 2007, with just under 7,000 arrivals.

Figure 13 New entrants to 1st - 6th class by source, 1998 - 2018

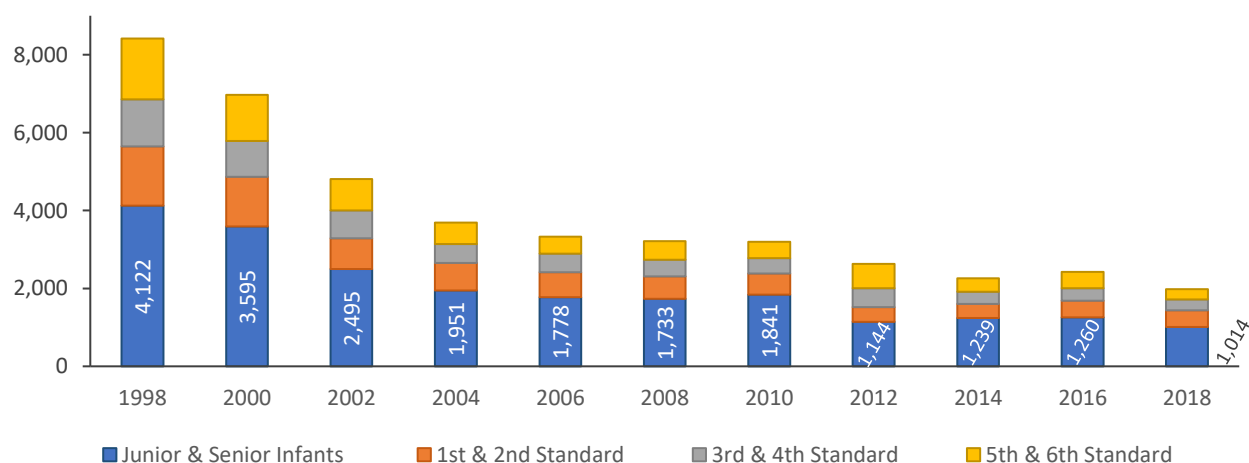


Source: [EDA52](#)

## Repeating a year

The number of pupils who repeat a year in primary school is presented in Figure 14 and shows a dramatic fall since 1998, when more than 8,000 pupils repeated compared with just under 2,000 in 2018. As can be seen, pupils are most likely to repeat junior or senior infants compared to other grades.

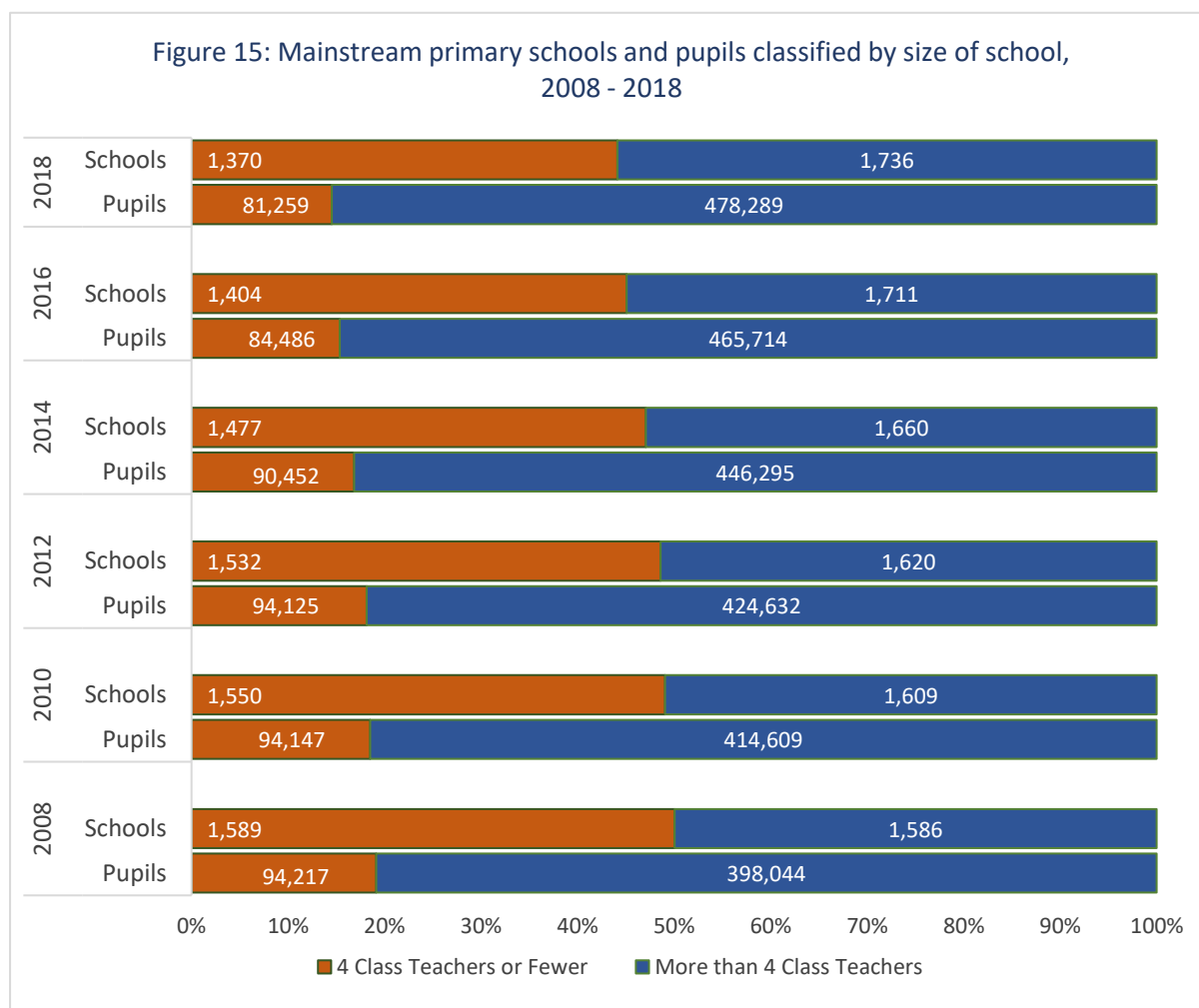
Figure 14 Pupils retained in the same standard/grade, 1998-2018



Source: [EDA52](#)

## School Size

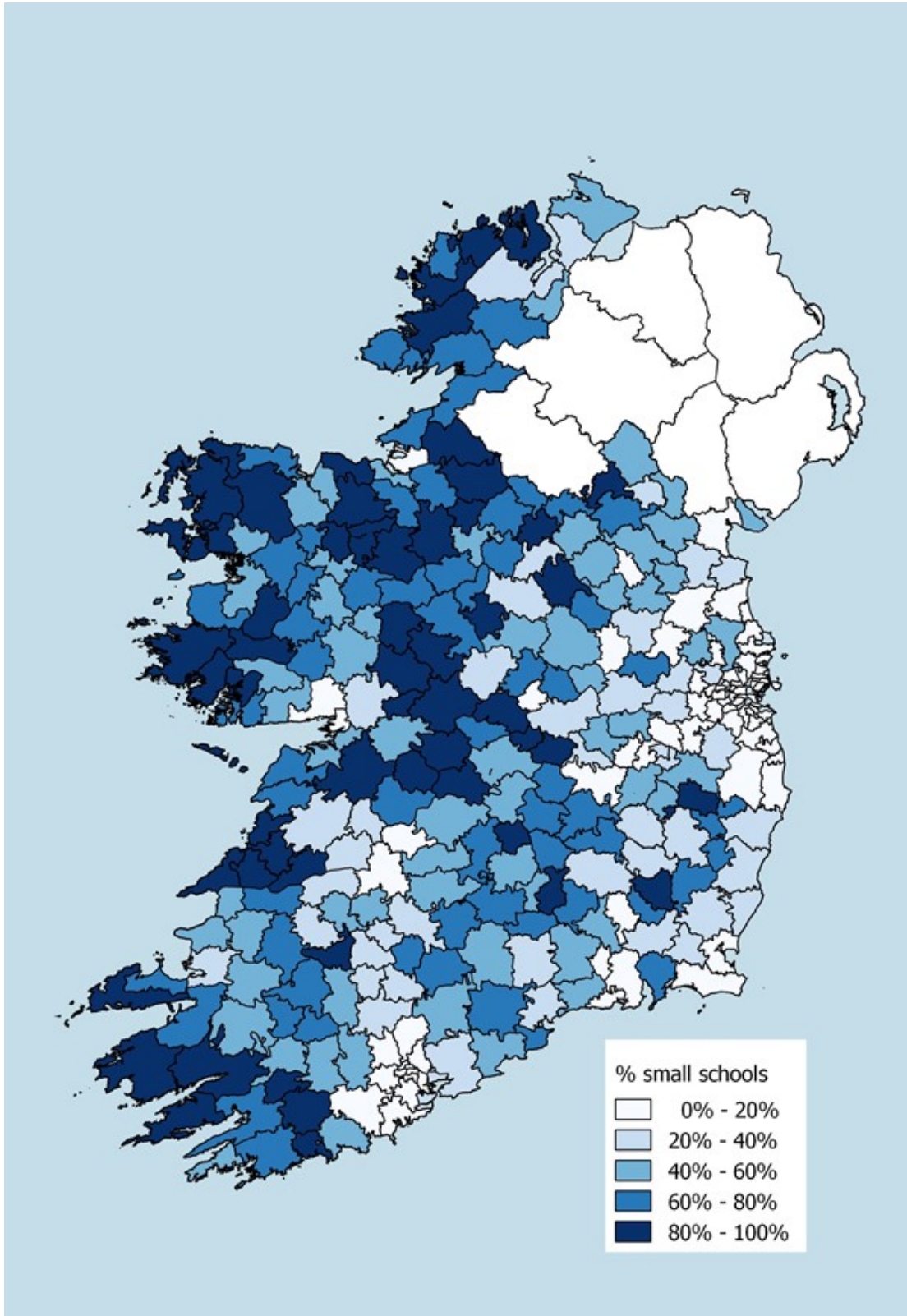
Small schools – here defined as schools with 4 mainstream class teachers or fewer – comprise a large proportion of primary schools in Ireland. 44.1 per cent of all schools in the 2018 academic year had 4 mainstream classes or fewer, although only 14.5 per cent of pupils were enrolled in small schools. While the number of small schools has been declining in recent years – they comprised just over half of all mainstream school in 2008 – they nonetheless remain very prominent, particularly in rural areas.



Source: [Class Size Data](#)

This can be seen in Map 2 below, which shows how 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 3: Small schools as a % of all schools by School Planning Area, 2018**

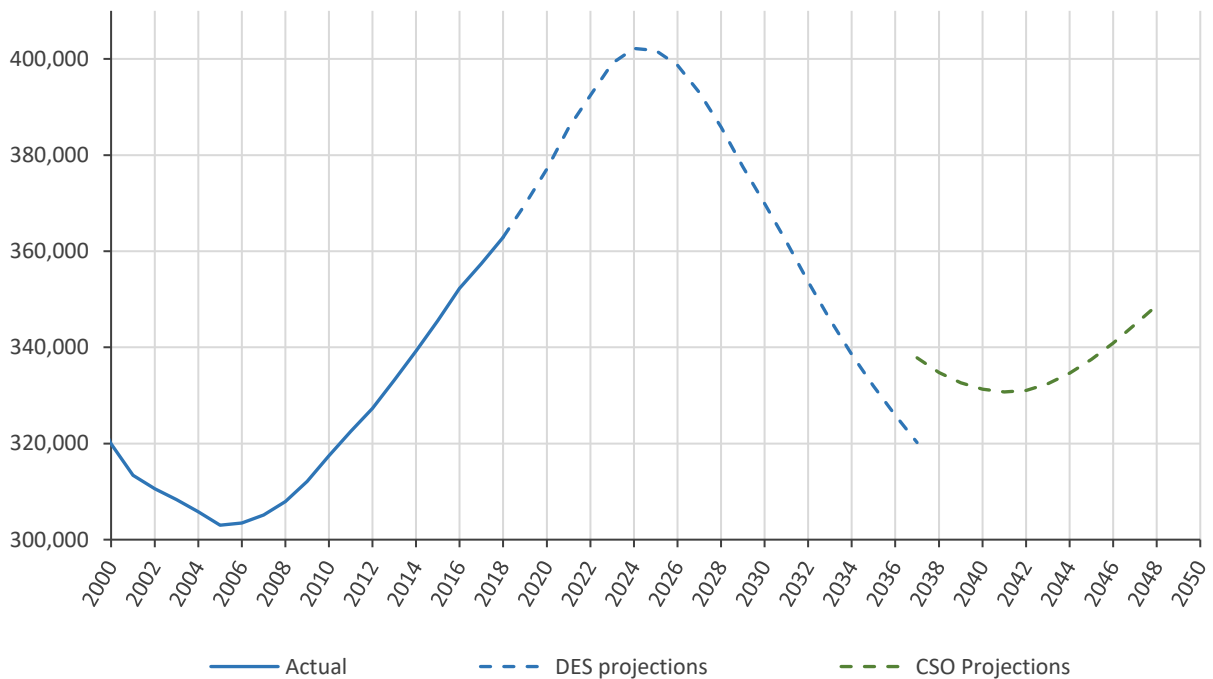


# Post-primary

## Enrolments

Total enrolments in post-primary<sup>2</sup> schools stood at 362,899 in 2018, an increase of almost 60,000 (19.0%) over the thirteen years since their low point in 2005 (303,006 pupils). The dotted line represents projected enrolments and shows that numbers are due to increase sharply up to 2024 (rising by 45,000) before starting to fall again. The end of the projections period in 2036 represents the low point for enrolments when there will be 42,000 fewer pupils in secondary schools than today; thereafter numbers will begin to rise again, as represented by the CSO population projections<sup>3</sup> out to 2051.

Figure 17 Enrolments in DES aided post-primary schools, actual and projected (M2F2), 2000-2048



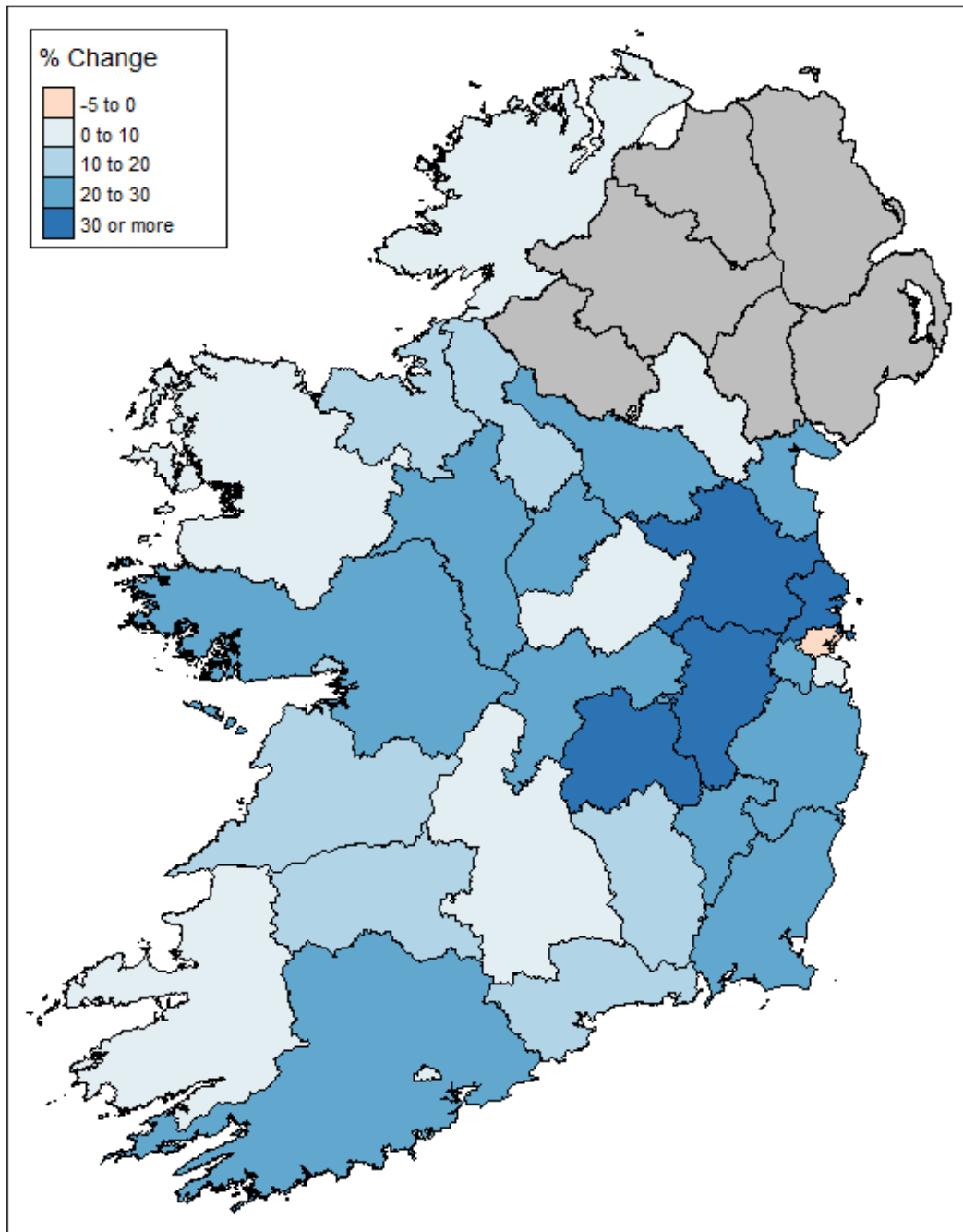
Source: [EDA70](#), [DES Enrolment Projections](#) and [PEA22](#)

<sup>2</sup> The CORE VTOS and PLC enrolments are not included in data presented in the current report.

<sup>3</sup> 12-18y.o. age group was considered of which, 34.5 per cent of 12y.o cohort was used and 41.9 per cent of 18y.o.

Map 3 shows the change in enrolments since 2008 and shows a similar picture to the primary sector, with the largest increases seen in the counties surrounding Dublin, although changes within Dublin itself vary by local authority area. The largest ten-year increase was seen in Meath (45.5%), Fingal (44.4%) and Laois (42.2%) with the smallest increases seen in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown (3%) and Monaghan (2.9%). The only decrease in enrolments was in Dublin City, which saw a fall of 1.9 per cent.

**Map 3: Percentage change in post-primary enrolments, by administrative county, 2008 – 2018**

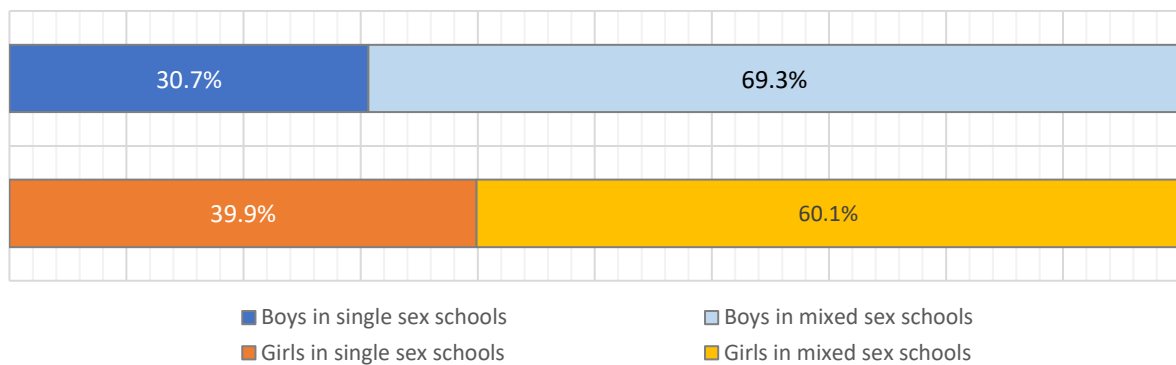


Source: [EDA69](#)

## School gender

More boys than girls consistently attend mixed-sex schools, with 69.3 per cent of boys in a mixed school in 2018 compared with just 60.1 per cent of girls, as seen in Figure 18. This is reflected in the number of schools by gender category – in 2018 there were 132 all girls post-primary schools, compared with 100 all boys schools.

Figure 18 Post-primary enrolments by school gender, by sex, 2018

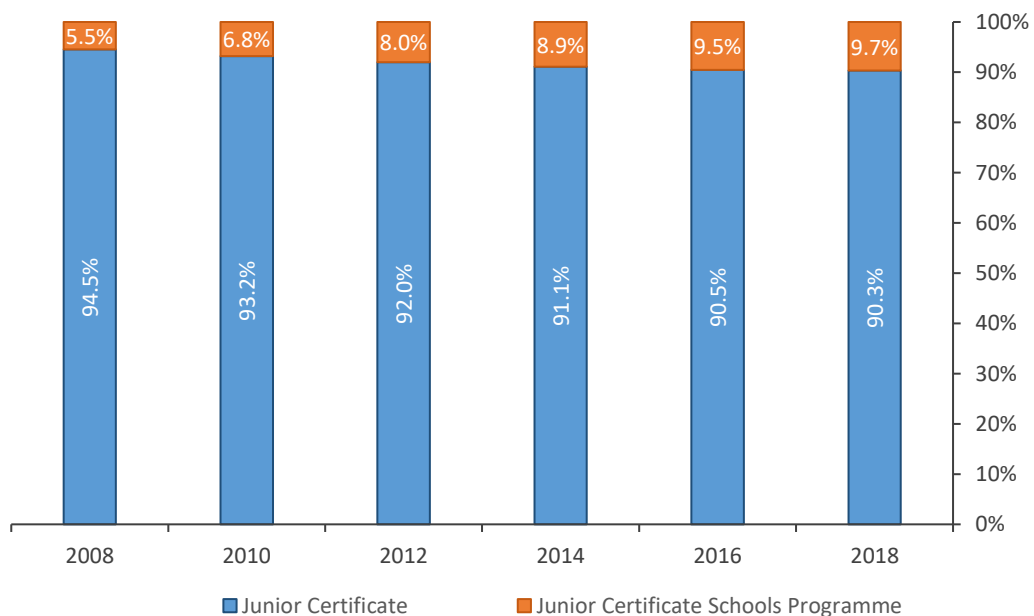


Source: [EDA72](#)

## School Program

Figure 19 shows how an increasing share of all Junior Certificate pupils follow the JCSP, accounting for 9.7 per cent in 2018.

Figure 19 Junior Cycle Enrolments by Programme, 2008 - 2018

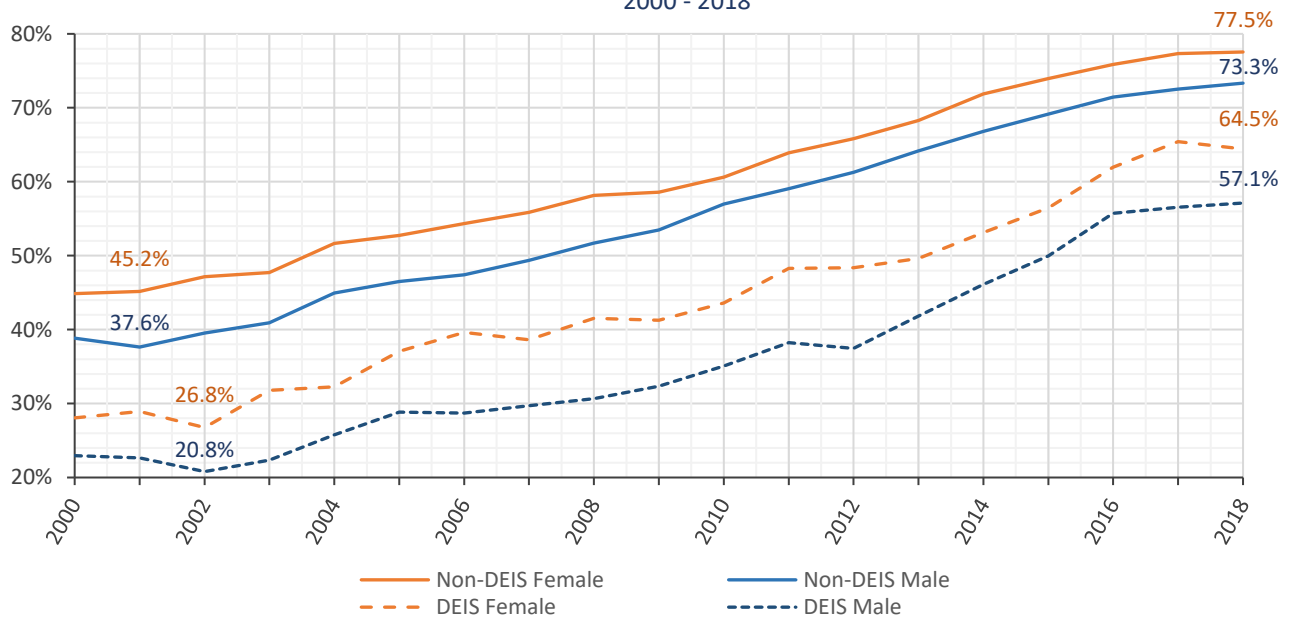


Source: [EDA70](#)

## Transition year

Figure 20 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.

Fig 20 Transition Year as a % of previous Junior Cycle Year 3, by gender, by DEIS status, 2000 - 2018



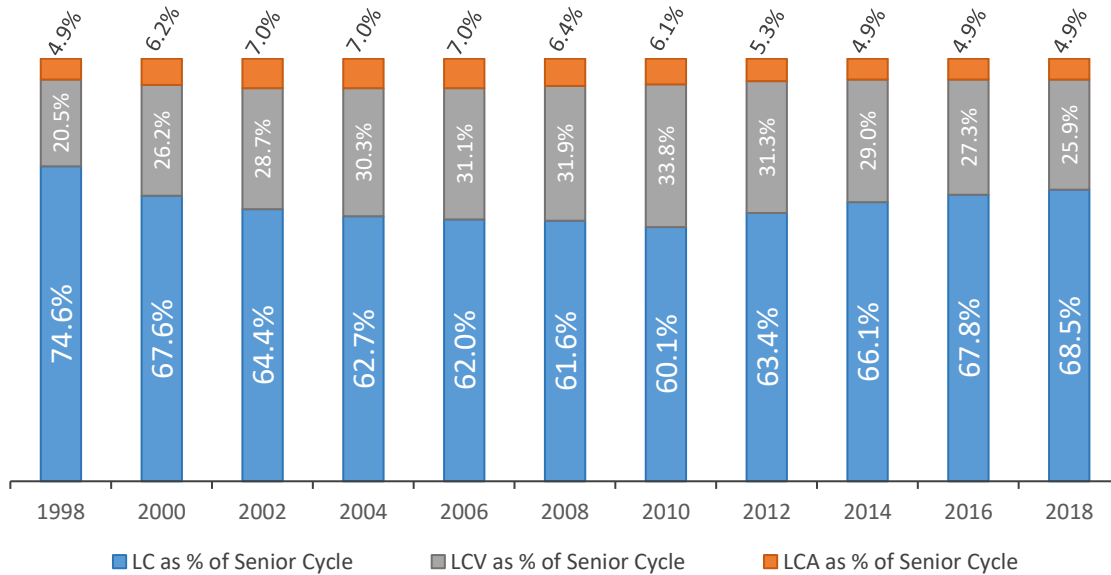
Source: [EDA70](#)



## Leaving Certificate programme

Figure 21 shows the changing participation rates in LC, LCV and LCA since 1998. The percentage of pupils following the LCA program has fallen from its peak of 7.0 per cent in 2006 to 4.9 per cent in 2018, while LCV has also fallen from 34 per cent in 2010 to just under 26 per cent in 2018.

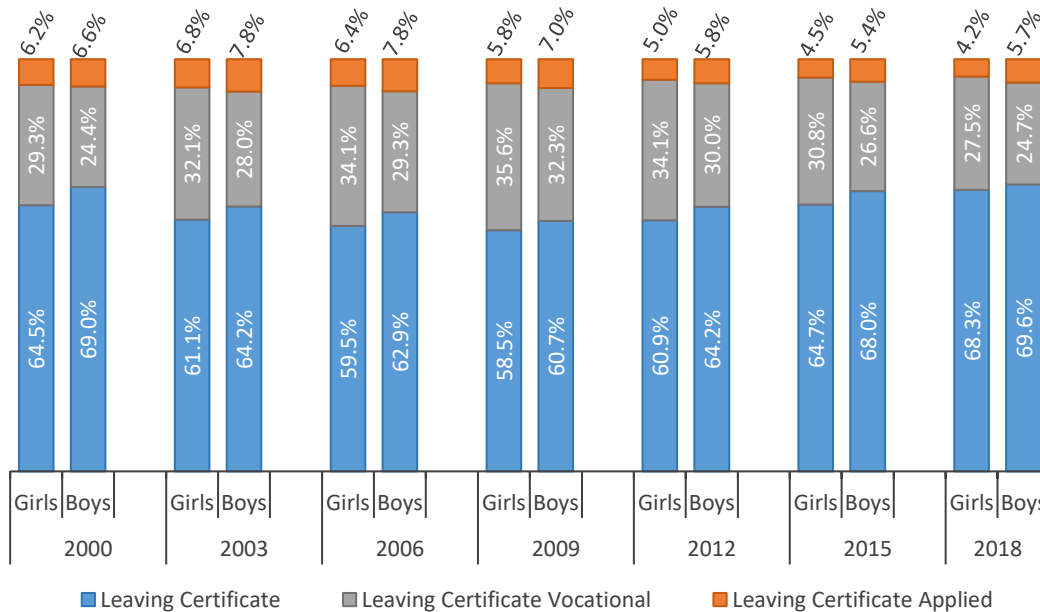
Figure 21 Senior Cycle enrolments by Programme, 1998 - 2018



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 22).

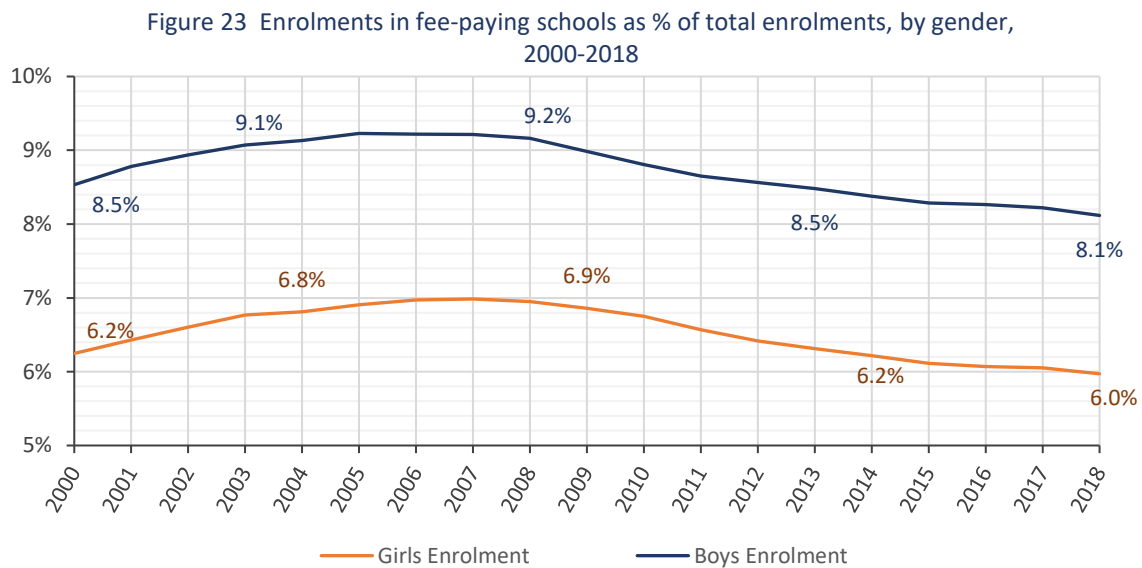
Figure 22 Senior Cycle enrolments by Programme, by gender, 2000 - 2018



Source: [EDA70](#)

## Fee-paying schools

There is a consistent pattern of more boys than girls attending fee-paying schools. Overall, 8.1 per cent of boys were enrolled in a fee-paying school in 2018, compared with 6 per cent of girls. This represents a decline from a peak of 9.2 per cent of boys and seven per cent of girls in 2007. There are 16 fee-paying boys' schools and 14 fee-paying girls' schools (down from 16 in 2004)



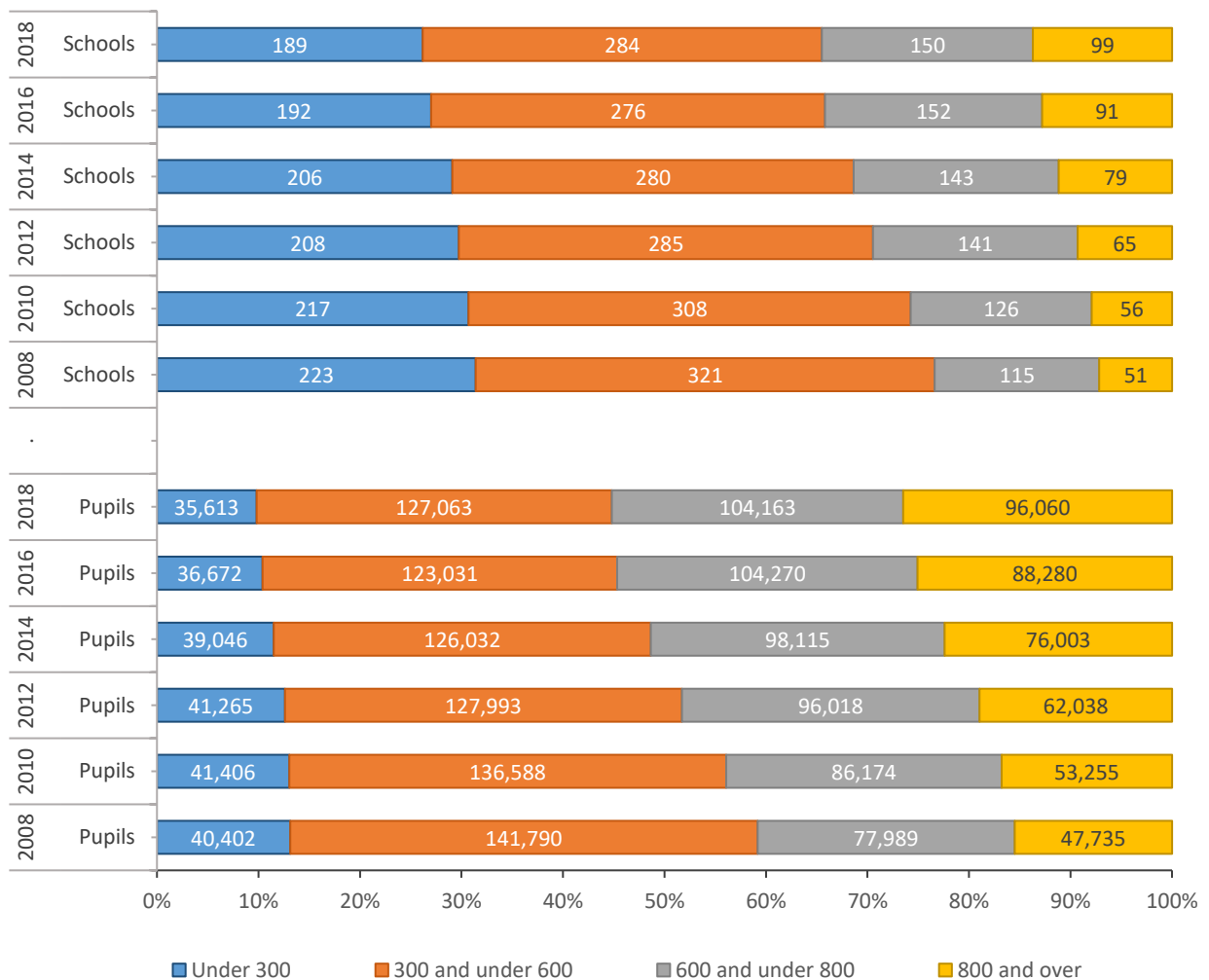
Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

## School size

Figure 24 illustrates the growing importance of large schools in the post-primary system. While small schools (less than 300 pupils) made up 31.4 per cent of all schools in 2008, this has dropped to 26.2 per cent in 2018, while the number of very large schools (800+ pupils) almost doubled.

The number of pupils attending small schools fell by 4,800 over this period, while the number of pupils attending large schools has doubled from 47,735 to 96,060.

Figure 24: Second Level Schools and Pupils classified by school enrolment size, 2008-2018



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Background Notes:

The source for this data is the Annual Census for 2018/2019, 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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Note that only schools aided by the Department of Education and Skills are included in this report.

This data was published on 04 July 2019, and replaces the provisional data published in January 2019.

Queries should be sent to [statistics@education.gov.ie](mailto: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 Statbank which can be accessed here:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/databases/departmentofeducation/>

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

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