



## Primary

### Total enrolments

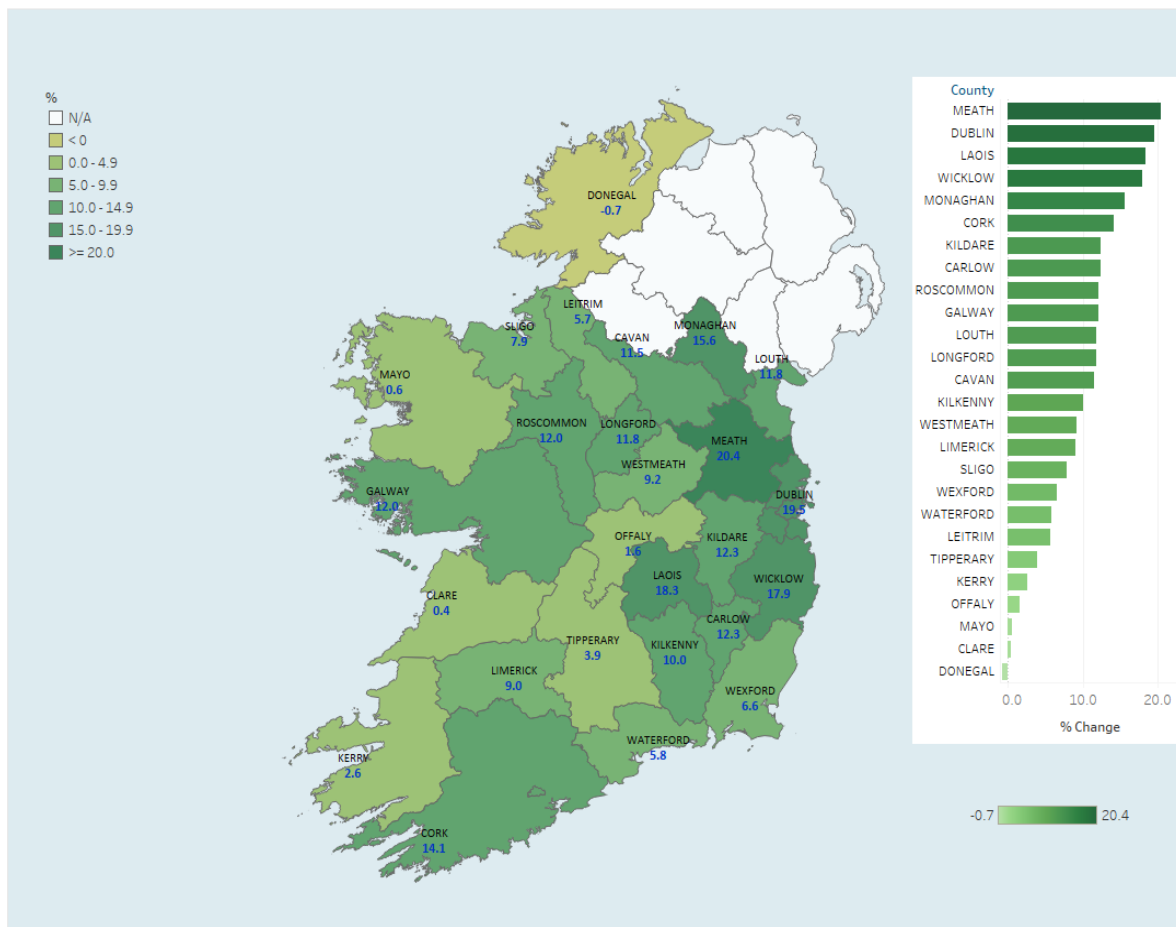
Total enrolments in Primary schools in 2019 stood at 567,716, a fall of 56 on 2018 when the total was 567,772. Over the twenty year period 1999 to 2019 there was an increase of 123,406 (27.8%) in enrolments in primary schools (mainstream and special) and enrolments are projected to fall over the coming fifteen years. *Note: updated projections will be published by the Department in mid-2020.*

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 26.9 per cent, followed by Fingal at 25.8 percent and Meath at 20.4 per cent. The smallest increase occurred in Mayo (0.6%) and Clare (0.4%), while Donegal was the only area that saw a decrease (-0.7%).

Map 1 Percentage change in enrolments in Primary schools, by county, 2009-2019



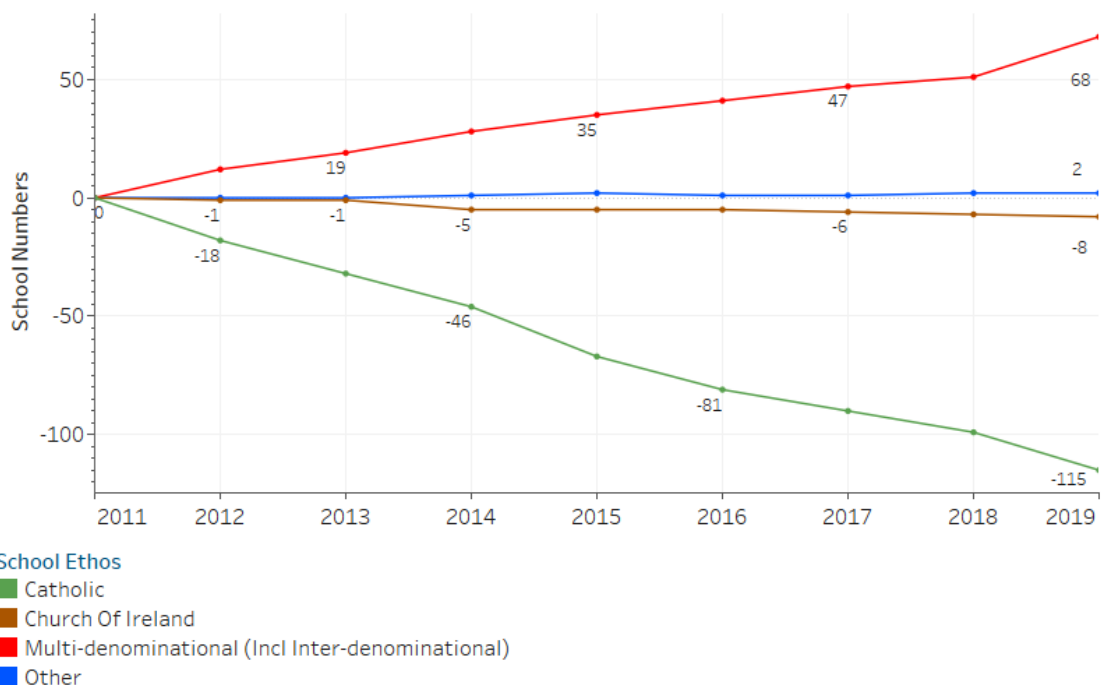
Source: [EDA57](#)

## School Ethos

The total number of mainstream primary schools has declined by 53 since 2011, from 3,159 in 2011 to 3,106 in 2019. However, as can be seen in Figure 1 below, the pattern is not uniform, with 115 Catholic schools and 8 Church of Ireland closing between 2011 and 2019, while the number of multi-denominational schools has increased by 68 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 multid denominational schools in response to parental choice. All 21 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 88.9 per cent of schools having a Catholic ethos in 2019.

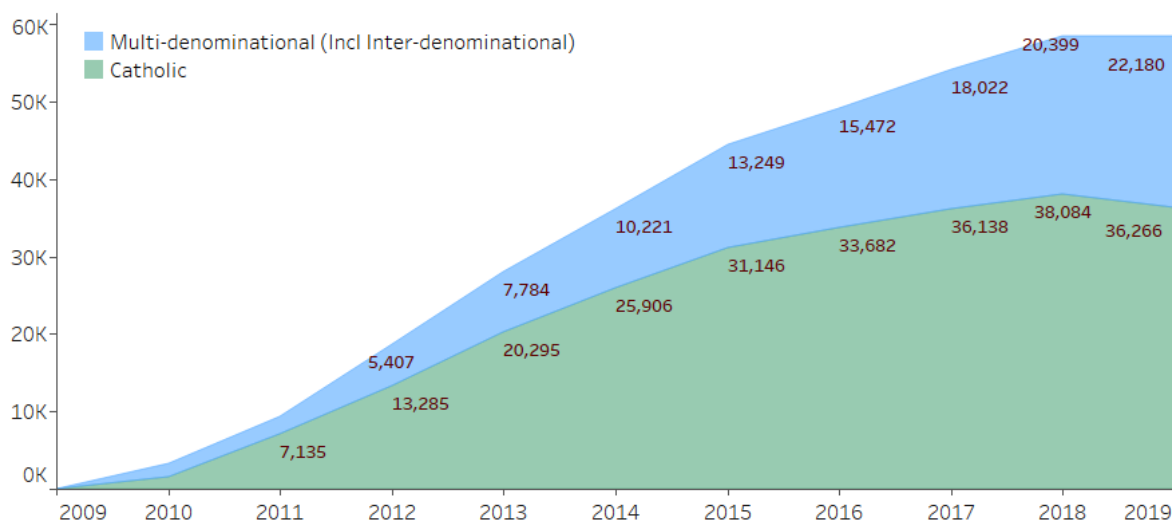
Figure 1 Cumulative change in mainstream school numbers by ethos, 2011-2019



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Looking at enrolments by ethos total enrolments in Catholic schools fell by 1,818 between 2018 and 2019 (from 505,033 to 503,215) while enrolments in multi-denominational schools rose by 1,781 (from 36,336 to 38,117). Enrolments in multi-denominational schools have risen by 22,180 pupils over the ten year period 2009-2019, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Cumulative change in school enrolments by ethos, 2009-2019



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

### Irish Classification

Looking at language of instruction, the number of English-medium primary schools has fallen by 65 over the ten years 2009 – 2019, while Irish-medium schools inside the Gaeltacht fell by three. Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht increased by nine (from 139 to 148). In terms of enrolments Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht have seen an increase in enrolments of almost 10,000 (9,725), representing a 34.4 per cent increase while Irish-medium Gaeltacht schools have seen their enrolments fall by 238 (3.1%) over the last decade.

Table 1 Cumulative changes in school numbers and enrolments by Irish classification, 2009-2019

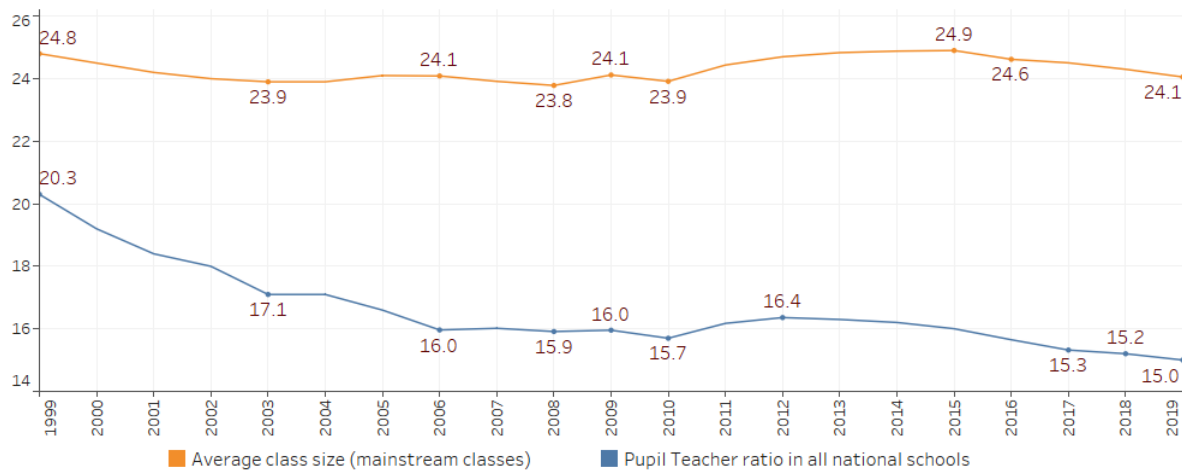
Schools				Enrolments			
Year	Non-Irish/Part-Irish schools	Irish schools within the Gaeltacht	Irish schools outside the Gaeltacht	Year	Non-Irish/Part-Irish schools	Irish schools within the Gaeltacht	Irish schools outside the Gaeltacht
2009	0	0	0	2009	0	0	0
2010	0	0	0	2010	2,385	-126	1,122
2011	-7	0	1	2011	7,647	-130	2,428
2012	-13	-2	2	2012	16,165	-384	3,883
2013	-23	-2	5	2013	24,459	-364	5,374
2014	-31	-2	5	2014	31,474	-401	6,581
2015	-45	-2	6	2015	38,839	-363	7,741
2016	-54	-3	7	2016	42,927	-321	8,501
2017	-58	-4	8	2017	47,480	-273	8,951
2018	-62	-5	8	2018	51,122	-319	9,652
2019	-65	-3	9	2019	50,785	-238	9,725

Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

## Class Size

The change in average class size over the ten-year period 2009-2019 is presented in Figure 3, there has been little change since 1999. 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 20.3 in 1999 to 15.0 in 2019.

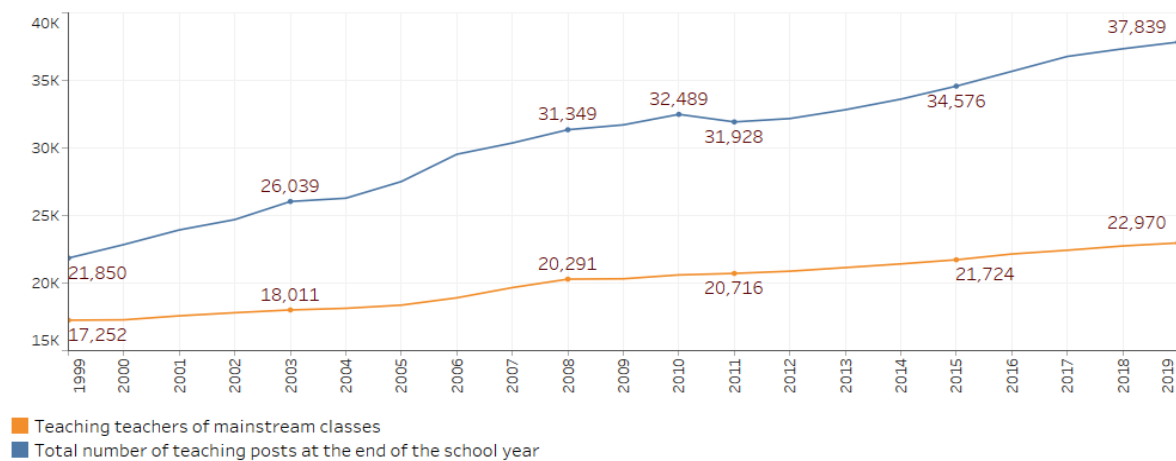
Figure 3 Pupil/Teacher ratio and average class size, 1999-2019



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 21,850 to 37,839), the number of mainstream classroom teachers has risen by just 33.1 per cent (from 17,252 to 22,970) while the number of non-classroom teachers has risen from 4,598 to 14,869. This increase in 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 4 Classroom teachers vs. teaching posts, 1999-2019

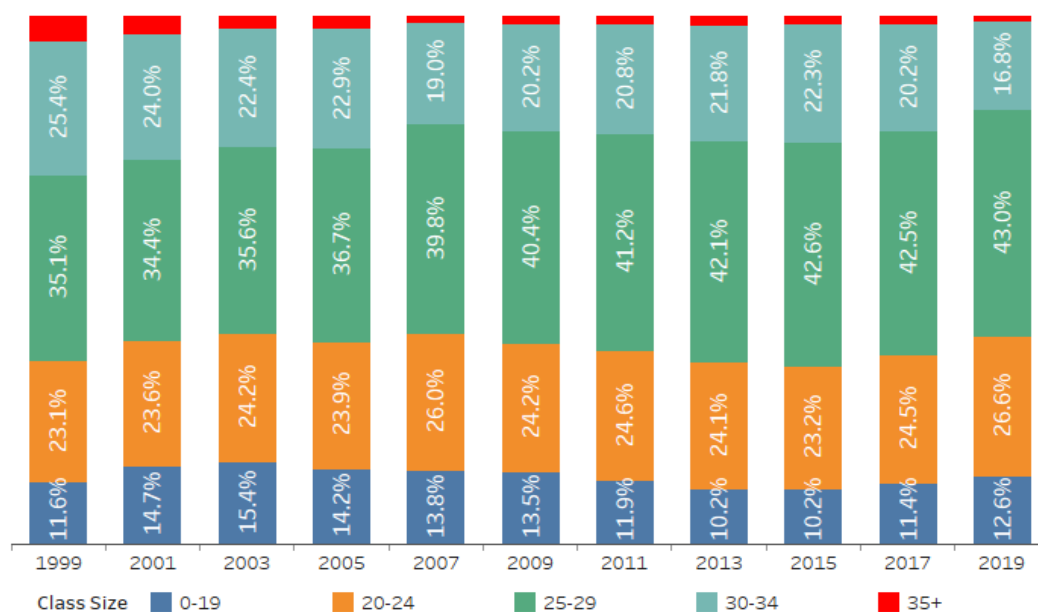


Source: [EDA44](#)

## Large classes

While the overall average class size has varied little since 1999, the number of pupils in classes of 35 or more fell sharply between 1999 (20,697) and 2019 (5,128) while those in the next-largest category (30-34) stood at 93,045 in 2019, down from 110,295 in 2016.

Figure 5 Pupils by class size, 1999-2019



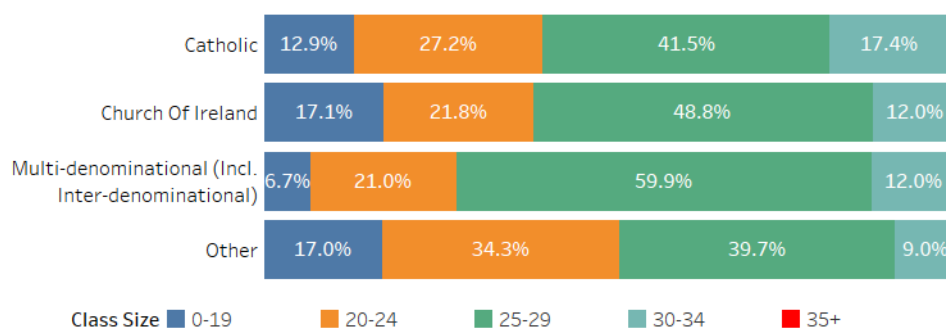
Source: [ED105](#)

## 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 18.4 per cent of pupils in Catholic schools were in classes of 30 pupils or more, compared with just 12.3 per cent of those in in multi-denominational schools. However, the average class size in Catholic schools was 24.0, compared with 25.0 in multi-denominational schools. *Note: the category multi-denominational includes inter-denominational schools.*

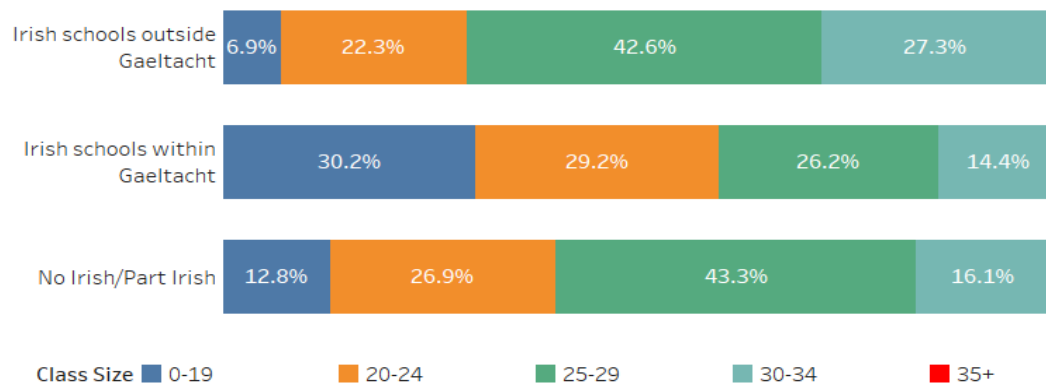
Figure 6 Pupils by class size and school ethos, 2019



Source: [Class Size Data 2019](#)

When looked at by Irish classification the data shows 28.3 per cent of pupils were in large classes (30+) in Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht, compared with only 17.0 per cent in English or part-English-medium schools and 14.4 per cent in Irish-medium schools within the Gaeltacht.

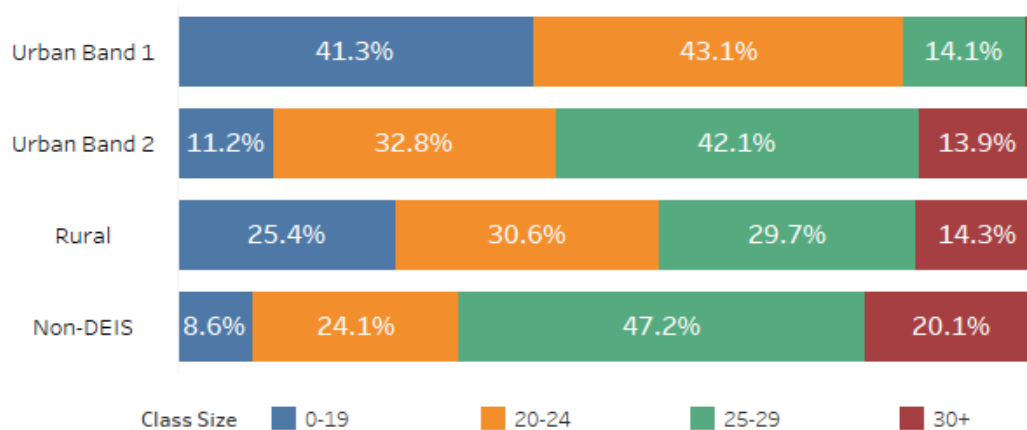
Figure 7 Pupils by class size and Irish Classification, 2019



Source: [Class Size Data 2019](#)

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 84.4 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.

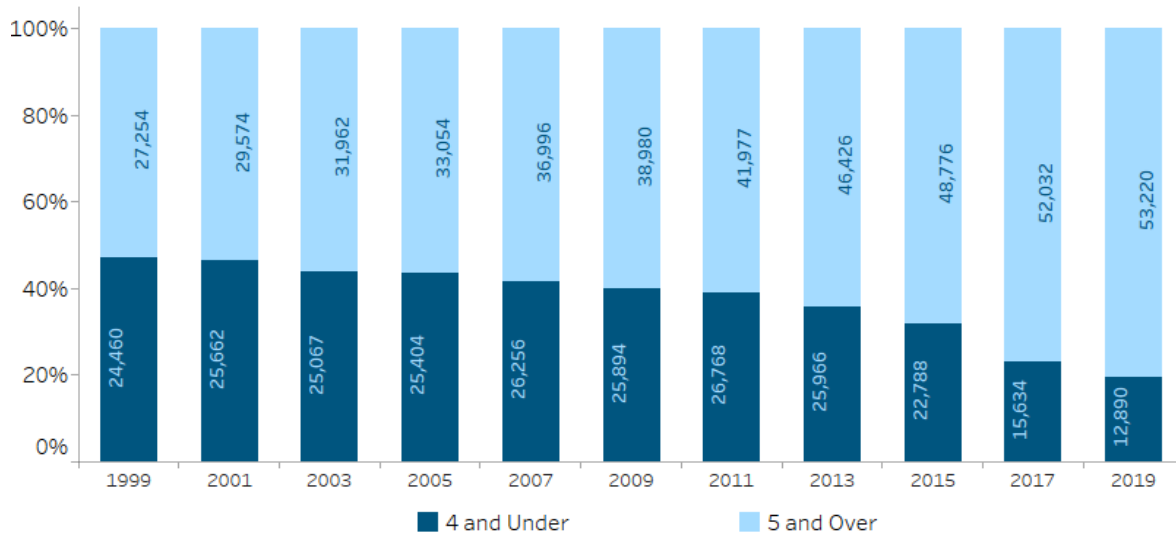
Figure 8 Pupils by class size and DEIS status, 2019



Source: [Class Size Data 2019](#)

## Age of Junior Infants

Figure 9 Junior Infants under and over 4 years of age, at 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1999-2019



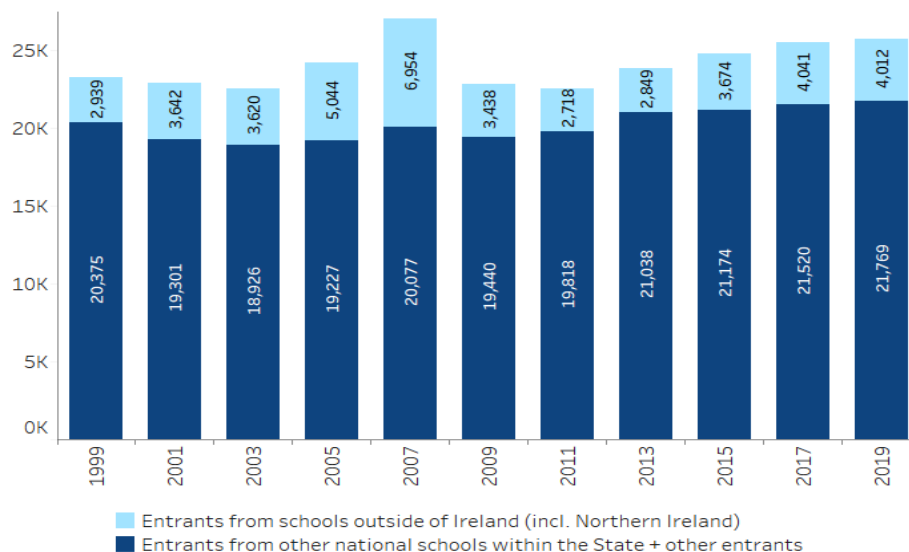
Source: [EDA42](#)

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 47.3 per cent in 1999 to 19.5 per cent in 2019.

## 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 2019 21,769 pupils changed school while a further 4,012 arrived from outside Ireland. The peak year for entrants from abroad was 2007, with just under 7,000 arrivals.

Figure 10 New entrants to 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class by source, 1999-2019

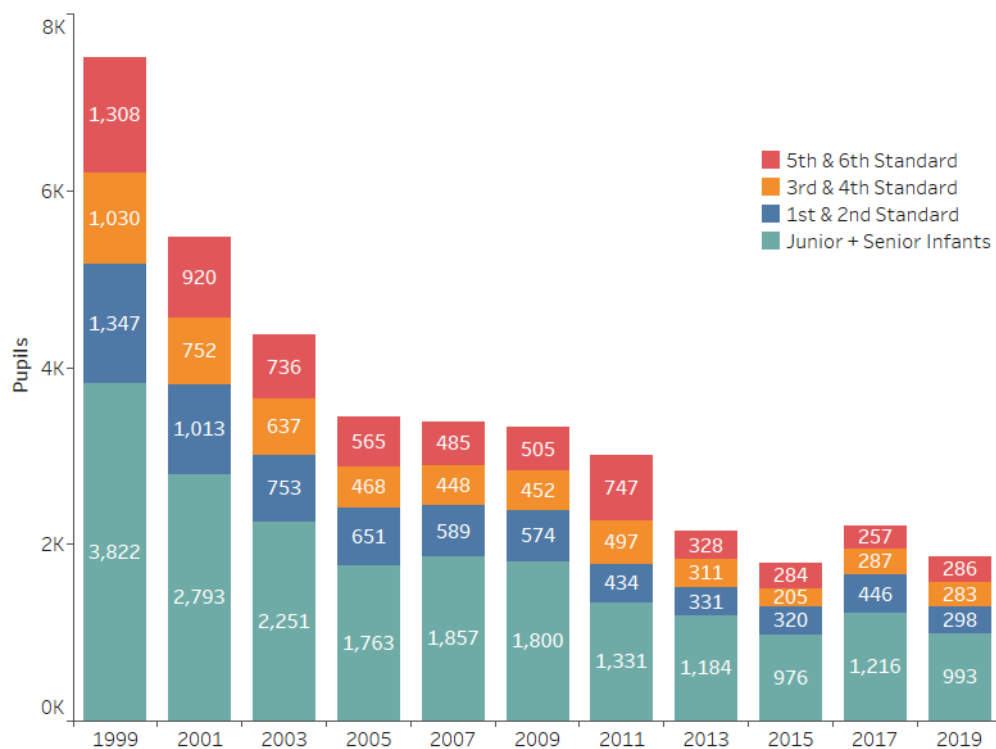


Source: [EDA52](#)

## 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 1999, when more than 7,500 pupils repeated compared with just under 1,900 in 2019. 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, 1999-2019



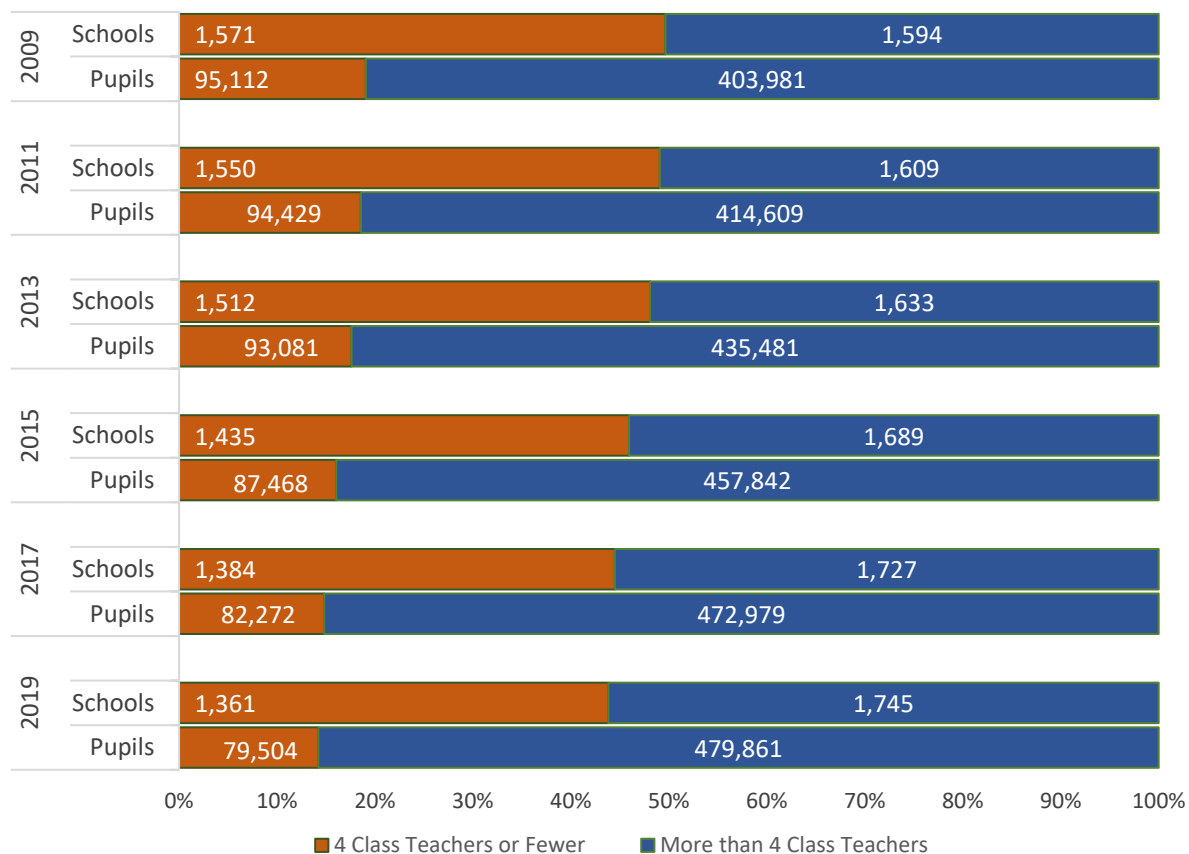
Source: [EDA52](#)



## School Size

Small schools – here defined as schools with 4 mainstream class teachers or fewer – comprise a large proportion of primary schools in Ireland. 43.8 per cent of all schools in the 2019 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.

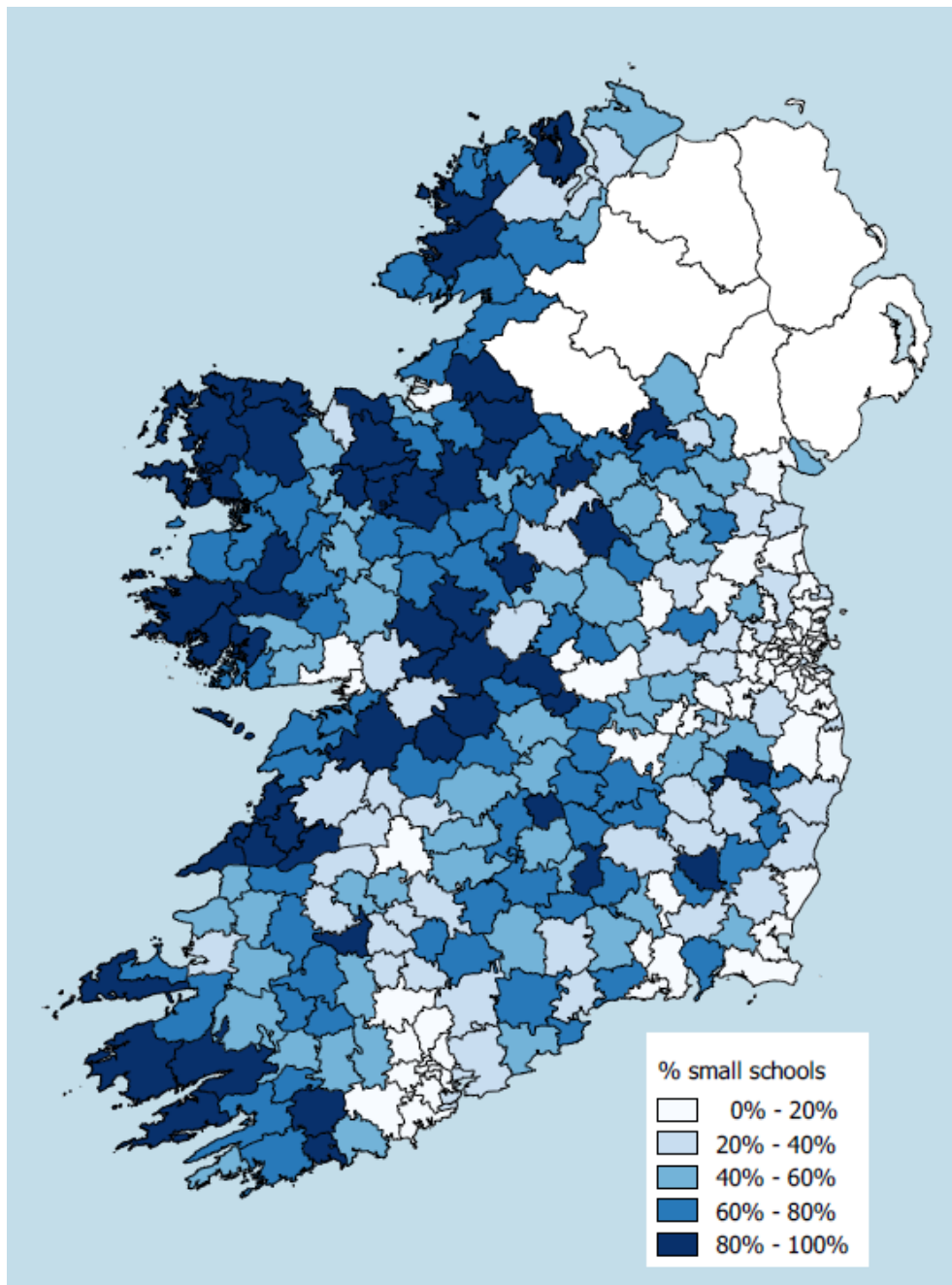
Figure 12 Mainstream primary schools and pupils classified by size of school, 2009-2019



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, 2019



# Post-primary

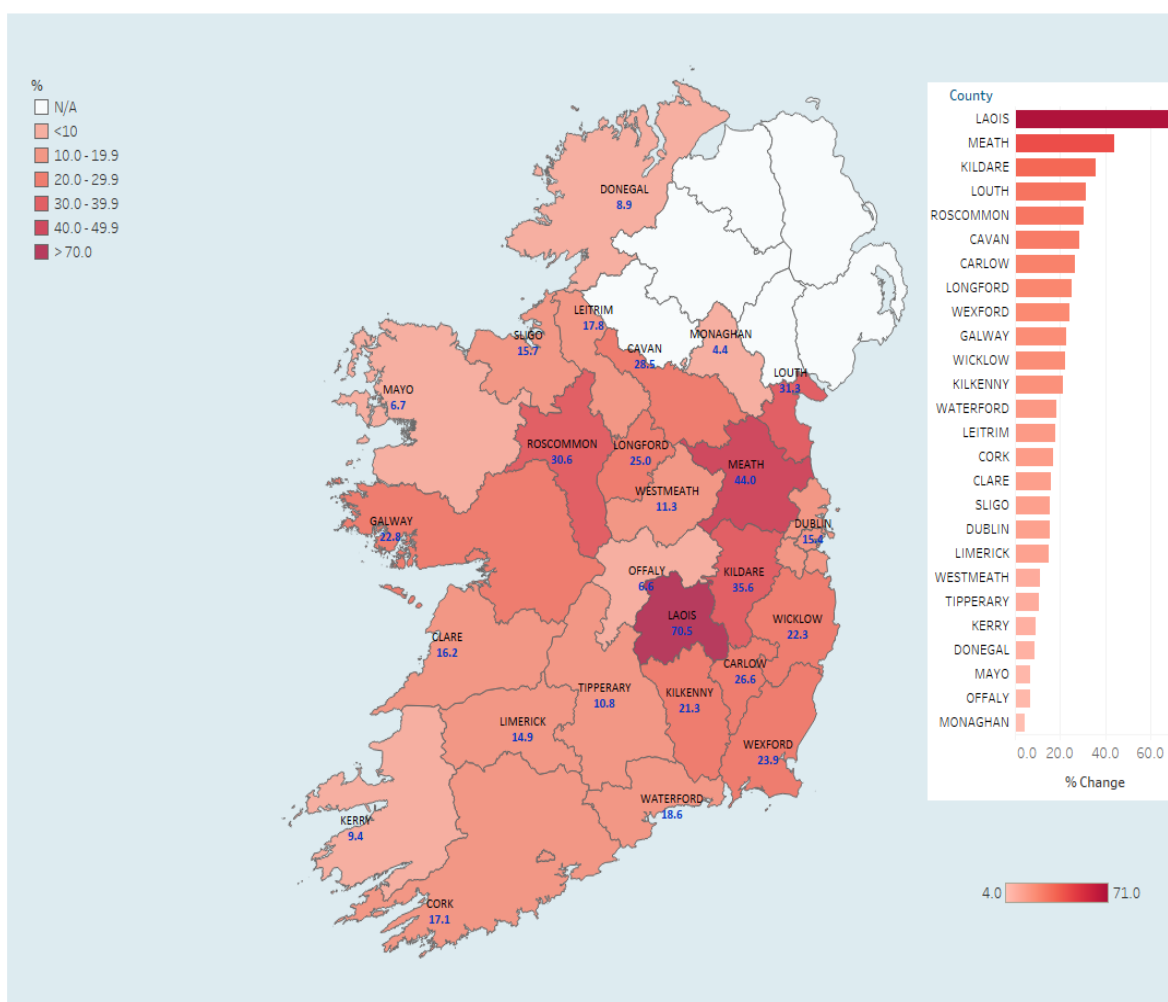
## Enrolments

While enrolments in primary schools peaked in 2018 (and are now projected to fall over the coming 15 years) enrolments in post-primary<sup>1</sup> schools continue to rise. Total enrolments stood at 371,450 in 2019, an increase of 8,551 on 2018. Enrolments have risen by 32,252 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 (70.5%), Meath (44.0%) and Kildare (35.6%) all increased by over 35 per cent while Offaly (6.6%) and Monaghan (4.4%) saw smaller increases.

The only decrease in enrolments over the ten years was in Dublin City, which saw a fall of 2.5 per cent while Fingal rose by 47.2 per cent and South Dublin rose by 23.5 per cent.

Map 3 Percentage change in post-primary enrolments by county, 2009-2019



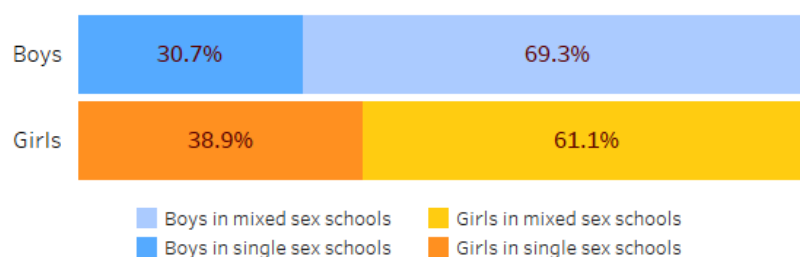
Source: [EDA69](#)

<sup>1</sup> The CORE VTOS and PLC enrolments are not included in data presented in the current report.

## School gender

More boys than girls consistently attend mixed-sex schools, with 69.3 per cent of boys in a mixed school in 2019 compared with just 61.1 per cent of girls, as seen in Figure 13. This is reflected in the number of schools by gender category – in 2019 there were 129 all girls post-primary schools, compared with 101 all boys schools.

Figure 13 Post-primary enrolments by school gender, by sex, 2019

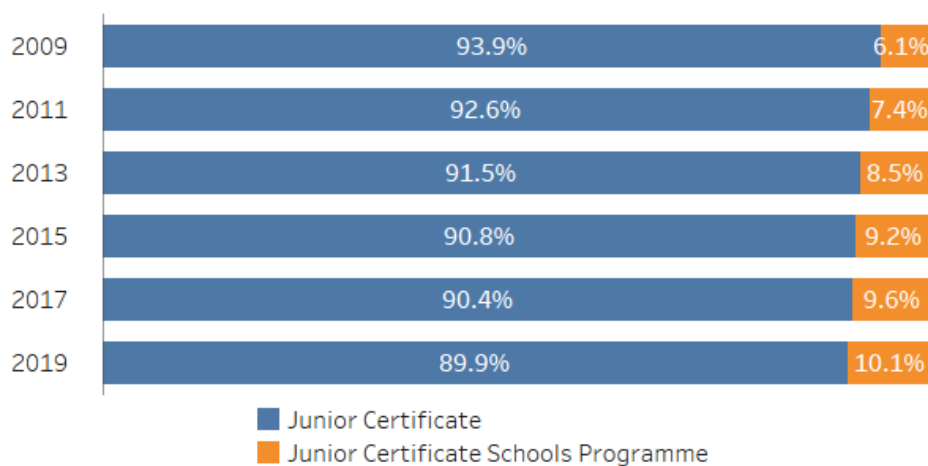


Source: [EDA72](#)

## School Program

Figure 14 shows how an increasing share of all Junior Certificate pupils follow the JCSP, accounting for 10.1 per cent in 2019.

Figure 14 Junior Cycle enrolments by programme, 2009-2019

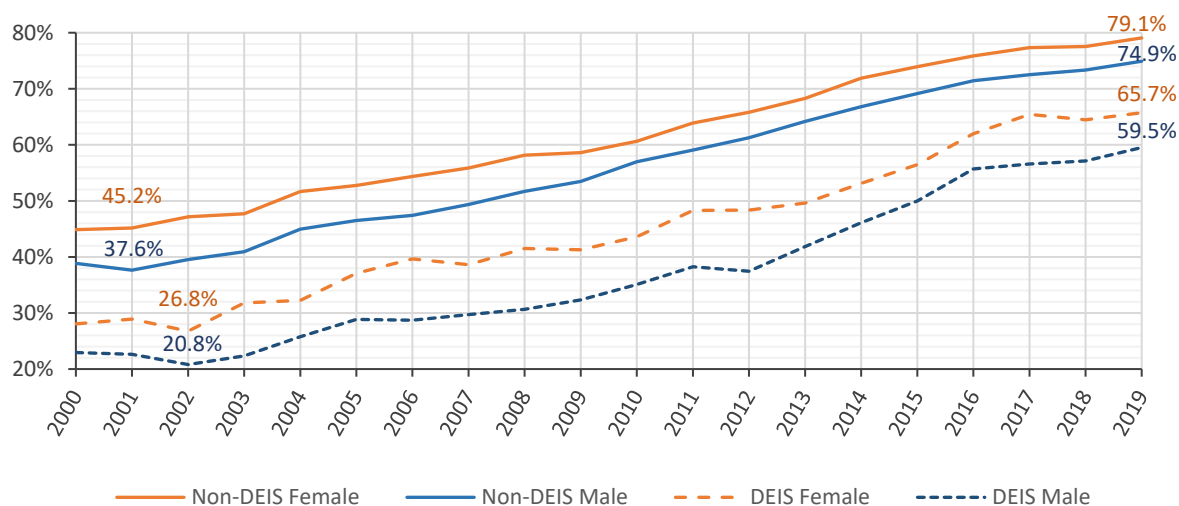


Source: [EDA70](#)

## 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.

Figure 15 Transition Year as a % of previous Junior Cycle Year 3, by gender, by DEIS status, 2000-2019

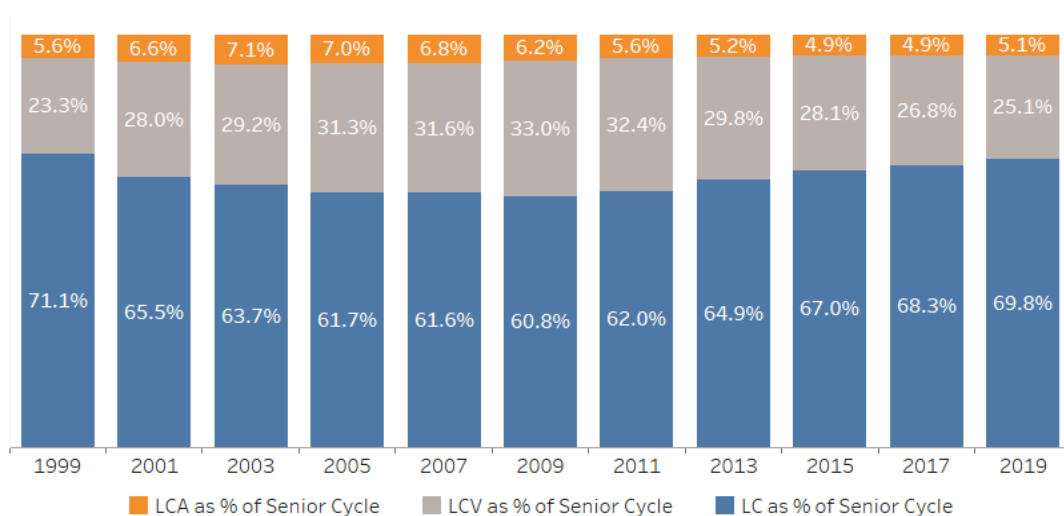


Source: [EDA70](#)

## Leaving Certificate programme

Figure 16 shows the changing participation rates in LC, LCV and LCA since 1999. The percentage of pupils following the LCA program stood at 5.1 per cent in 2019, up slightly on 2018 (4.9%); participation in the LCV program stood at 25.1 per cent, representing a continuing downward pattern for this program, while LC stood at 69.8 per cent, a slight increase on 2018.

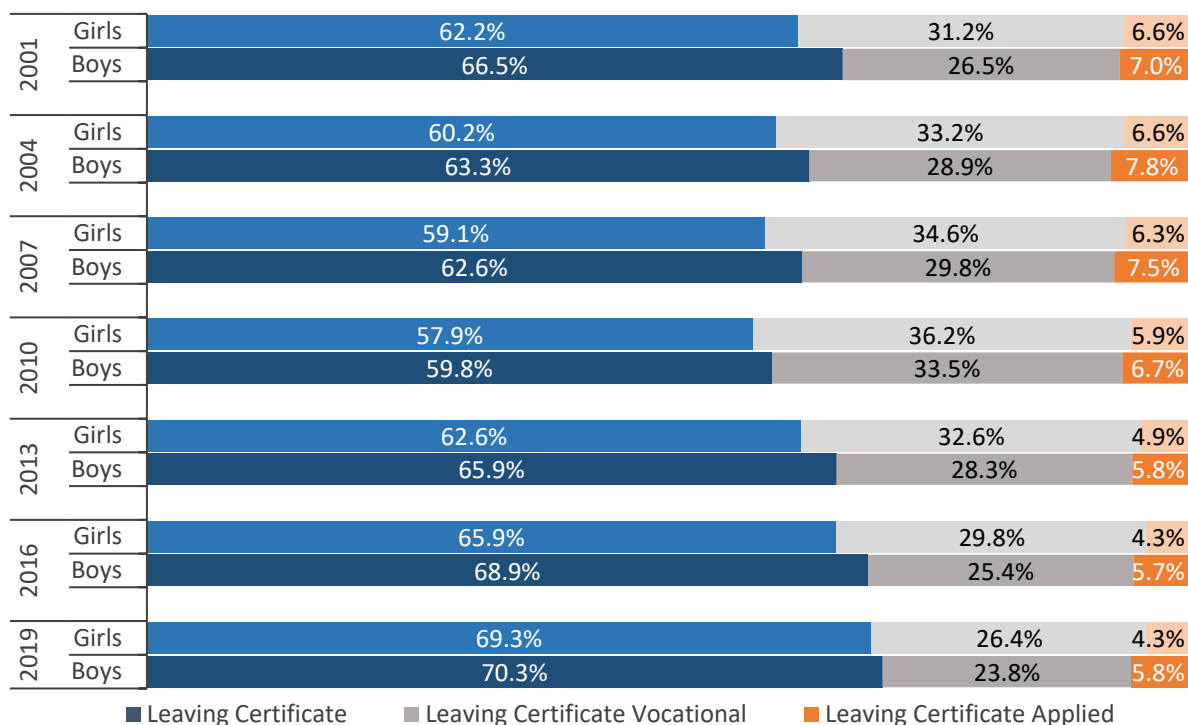
Figure 16 Senior Cycle enrolments by Programme, 1999-2019



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, 2001-2019

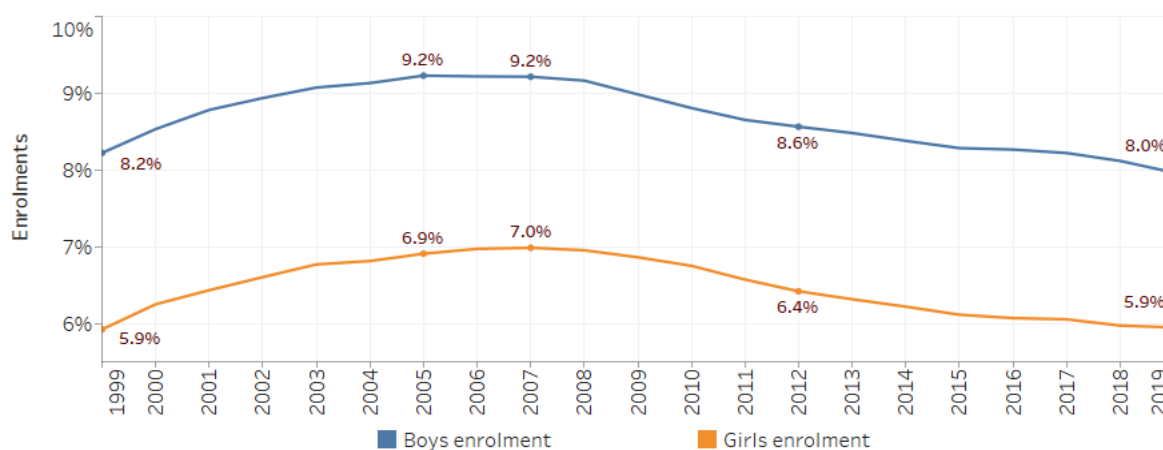


Source: [EDA70](#)

### Fee-charging schools

There is a consistent pattern of more boys than girls attending fee-charging schools. Overall, 8.0 per cent of boys were enrolled in a fee-charging school in 2019, compared with 5.9 per cent of girls; as illustrated in Figure 18 both are down on 2018 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, 1999-2019



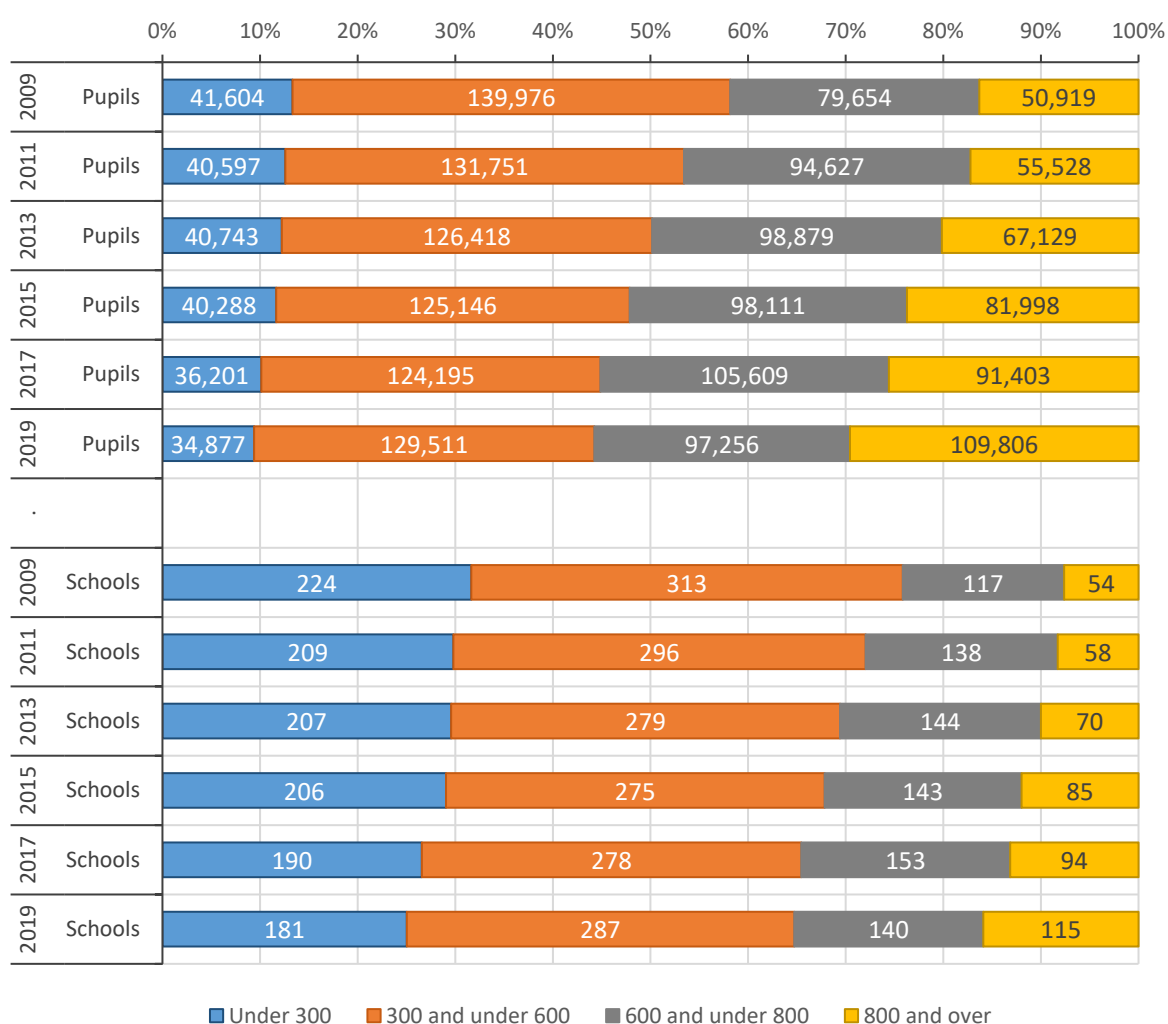
Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

## 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 31.6 per cent of all schools in 2009, this has dropped to 25.0 per cent in 2019, while the number of very large schools (800+ pupils) has more than doubled (from 54 to 115).

The number of pupils attending small schools fell by 6,700 over this period, while the number of pupils attending large schools has increased from 50,900 to 109,800.

Figure 19 Second level schools and pupils classified by school enrolment size, 2009-2019



Source: [Data on Individual Schools](#)

Background Notes:

The source for this data is the Annual Census for 2019/2020, 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 2019. 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 December 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/>