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Education, Training & Schooling in Ballymun

Part 3

Young people not in education, training or employment

All respondents were asked if there was anyone in the household aged between 14 and 18 who was not in education, training or employment. Only nine respondents, which equates to 90 households in Ballymun, reported having at least one early school leaver who was not in employment or training. The interviewer asked what these people were currently doing. The responses included: looking after children, looking for work, and nothing.

It should be noted that these figures on early school leaving should be used as a bare minimum as it is thought the self reported questionnaire encountered some under-reporting on this question. Further research is needed to examine the nature and extent of young people leaving school without going into employment or training.

“Nearly all parents said they would like their children to go on to third level education”

Various reasons were given for this, but they can be summarised as follows:

- Originally lived elsewhere – use the same school.
- Better schools elsewhere.
- Bad behaviour by children in Ballymun schools.
- Attend a special needs school.

As Table 7 shows, although some parents prefer schools outside Ballymun, nearly three-quarters (74.3%) rate schools in Ballymun as good or very good.

Table 7 Rate Ballymun schools

Rate	%
Very good	47.8
Good	26.5
Average	16.1
Poor	6.5
Very poor	3.0

Indicator of Importance of Education

Nearly all parents (99.6%) said they would like their children to go on to Third Level education. The reasons given for wanting their children to go onto further and higher education are as follows:

- Better career potential.
- More opportunities with an education.
- Improves future prospects.
- To fulfil potential.
- Because the parents didn't themselves have the opportunity of a Third Level education.

Education and Training

This section has some interesting data and findings

It confirms the huge gap in mainstream educational performance between Ballymun and the national average. This should never be forgotten. The data also reveal a high level of access to second chance, on-the-job and work-related training. This concurs with my experience of working with the Ballymun Job Centre.

The data on training deliverers is interesting but fails to highlight the critical role of the Local Employment Service especially the Job Centre in mobilising and channelling over 600 people a year into these courses. Indeed the higher than national average uptake of this type of training is testament to a dramatic change in the last decade and the critical role of Local Employment Services.

In my experience young adults take up these courses with a much different energy than they previously approached schooling. High levels of commitment produce high levels of performance too. This reality reaffirms the question marks over the appropriateness of the school system. One of the best examples of this is the Tramlines initiative. Young adults with weak formal schooling are achieving professional qualifications and entering well paid jobs.

Schooling

This section of the responses is very weak. Self reporting about issues that can carry great stigma is unreliable. The survey reveals high educational aspirations for children but these aspirations fly in the face of reality - actual achievement is very poor. Below I present some data and findings from a recently released analysis of the 1996 cohort of 199 students who entered the Ballymun Comprehensives. These are very revealing data about the state of schooling in Ballymun and they raise some very important questions.

Basically the information tracks 199 young people (almost all Ballymunners) who entered the only secondary schools in Ballymun in 1996.

The first thing that jumps out is why only 199? Given that the Census data for that year implies about 370 young people in the appropriate age group, we have to ask where are the others and why are they not in the Comp?

Following the progress of these 199 individuals we see that 141 (71%) sat the Junior Cert three years later. We don't have information on what happened to the 58 young people who didn't sit the exam. From the direct experience of BRYR most of these young people are either expelled or drop out of school. It would be very revealing to track their experience in detail. Of the 141 who sat the Junior Cert in the Junior Comps, 120 moved over the road to the Senior school the following September to take up one of the three options: Leaving Cert Applied (28), Leaving Cert (10) and Transition Year (82). Two years later, 23 of these sat either the Leaving Cert or the Leaving Cert Applied. However, most would be expected to sit these exams the following year given that the Transition year is now a popular option. At the start of the following school year (Sept. 2001) 62 of the original cohort started either the final year of the LC or the LCA. We don't have the data concerning how many of these completed the year and sat the exams. However, even if all 62 completed the year it means that 6 years after entering the Comprehensives the maximum number of people who sat the Leaving Cert or Leaving Cert Applied was 85 or about 42%. It is important to note that while we have some data on exam sits we do not have information about the level of success or failure in these exams. It may be possible that some students repeated a year and went on to sit the LC or LCA in the following year. These data raise a bundle of questions that a survey of parents and students, and possibly teachers and other concerned professionals, could complement. These are some examples:

Primary level

How many Ballymunners attend primary school outside the area? We know that over 90% of Our Lady of Victories students, which is close to but actually outside modern Ballymun, are children from Ballymun.

Why are all of these students' parents taking their children to OLV?

Why do they drive, walk or take the bus past the primary school nearest their home? Apart from the OLV we also need to ask: how many are going to other primary schools outside Ballymun?

Secondary level

What is the proportion of Ballymun children who actually transfer from primary to secondary school in any location?

What proportion of these transfer to the Ballymun Junior Comprehensives?

Why do pupils/parents make these decisions?

What is the drop out rate from the Comprehensive? What are the reasons?

Can we do an analysis of attendance rates as distinct to registration rates?

What about actual exam achievements?

Communication Levels

As Tables 4 and 5 show over 80% of people rate their communication skills as good or very good, however this drops to below 60% when rating numeracy skills.

Table 4 Self rated ability – communication skills

<i>Communication skills</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very Poor</i>
Spoken	56.3	34.4	8.7	0.4	0.2
Reading	54.5	32.2	9.3	2.7	1.2
Writing	50.8	32.4	11.0	3.9	1.9

Table 5 Self rated ability – numeracy

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very Poor</i>
Numeracy	24.2	32.9	28.1	11.2	3.7

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not the household has a home computer/PC. In total 34.9% indicated having a computer, this is higher than the State average at 32.4% (Source: Central Statistics Office – National Quarterly Household Survey, 4th Quarter 2000). Table 6 shows that a lower proportion of people from Ballymun use their computers for education or work.

Table 6 Use of home computer (as % of homes with a computer)

<i>PC use</i>	<i>2002 Survey</i>	<i>State*</i>
	%	%
Work	31.2	47.4
Education	57.4	80.9
Leisure	79.2	89.3

Source: CSO – NQHS, 4thQ 2000

Satisfaction levels with local schools

Respondents with children attending primary or secondary schools were asked questions about schooling.

Over a third (36.1%) of households, with children attending primary or secondary school, use schools outside Ballymun for at least one of their children.

Interest in further education and training

Three in five people (60.5%) indicated that they would like to participate in an education or training course. Nearly three quarters (72.4%) of unemployed people indicated wanting to participate in an education or training course, and nearly two thirds (62.6%) of those currently working would like to undertake a course of some kind. Table 3 shows that over a third (33.8%) of those who would like to do a course would like to undertake computer related training.

Table 3 Type of course in which people would like to participate

Course type	%	Number of people
Computer related	33.8	970
Childcare/social services	11.5	330
Trade/craft related	11.5	330
Third level	9.4	270
Other job specific	8.4	240
School subjects	7.0	200
Driving related	4.9	140
Basic education	3.8	110
Other	9.8	200

Barriers to Education and Training

People were asked if there was anything preventing them from participating in training and nearly half (46.1%) said there was. Various reasons for not undertaking course were given but the most frequently cited were:

- Childcare responsibilities.
- Cost.
- Time constraints.
- Health problems.

Respondents were asked to suggest ways of overcoming these barriers to training. The following suggestions were made:

- Cheaper/better childcare facilities.
- Financial assistance.
- Courses run at a more convenient time.

These are just starter questions. Qualitative questions regarding the effectiveness of what is in effect a huge investment in the area need to be asked and answered. And this research should be undertaken not to criticise but to inform and ultimately to complement a wider strategy of education reform in Ballymun.

Donnacadh Hurley, Manager Ballymun Regional Youth Resource.

Introduction to the facts and figures

To gather the key data for this Fact File, Ballymun Partnership commissioned a company called Vision 21 to conduct a survey with ten percent of Ballymun residents, over the Christmas period 2002.

Addresses were randomly selected from a database which we constructed using information from Dublin City Council Regional Office, from Ballymun Post Office and Ballymun Regeneration Limited. The target sample size was 485 households, which was 10% of the total number of households, 4,850, in Ballymun at the time of the survey. The survey results tell us that out of these 485 households, there were 1,516 members. If we multiply this figure by 10 we can estimate that the total population for Ballymun is 15,160 people. On average there are 3.14 persons per household.

When reading the facts that follow you can refer to the total household number 4,850, and the total population number, 15,160, where relevant, in order to get a real understanding of the actual numbers of people from the percentages given.

The facts and figures

Education Levels

All respondents were asked to indicate at what age they ceased education. Nearly one in ten (9.3%) of respondents were still in education. Of those who had finished their studies nearly half (48.2%) left education before the age of 16, and more than eight in ten (81.1%) had left before turning eighteen, and only 18.9% were still in education at the age of 18.

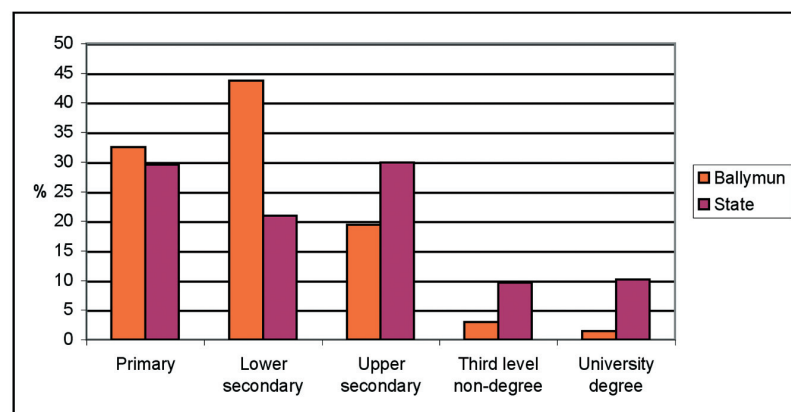
Table 1 illustrates the highest level of education completed to date by the respondents no longer in full-time education. As the table shows, proportionally the State has over twice as many people than Ballymun who have completed upper secondary level education (46.9% compared to 23.8%).

Table 1 Highest level of education

Level of education	2002 Survey %	State* %
Primary education (incl. No formal education)	32.5	29.5
Lower secondary	43.7	20.9
Upper secondary	19.4	29.9
Third level non-degree	3.0	9.6
University degree	1.4	10.1

**Source: CSO – 1996 Census of Population*

Chart 1 Highest level of education



As can be seen in Chart 1, on average Ballymun people achieve an educational level far lower than the national average. However, as was pointed out in the last section, Ballymun has a slightly greater proportion of people, aged fifteen and over, who describe themselves as students. This is due to the high numbers who are undertaking training courses and participating in 'second chance' education.

Types of Work Skills Among Residents

Although the majority of respondents had not completed upper secondary level education, over two-thirds (68.4%) had work skills. In terms of skills of those in work, 66.7% of those who described their current occupation as general operative reported having work skills. These skills, along with the high numbers in second chance education, would obviously be attractive to potential employers or firms considering locating in Ballymun. Various skills were described, but those that were cited most often were as follows:

- Computer related.
- Management/ team leadership.
- Clerical/secretarial.
- Trade skills (e.g. plumbing, electrical, welding, plastering, painting and decorating).
- Catering.
- Childminding.

Training Providers

Nearly a third of people (30.4%) had participated in an education or training programme in the past 12 months. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the type of organisation that ran the courses that were undertaken. As the table shows, of those who had participated in a training course a third had been provided by the employer, and nearly two in ten (19.9%) were provided by FÁS. A proportion of the people undertaking training would have accessed the course through the Local Employment Services.

Table 2 Education and training providers

Provider	%
Employer	27.0
FÁS	19.9
Still in 2nd level ed	12.1
VEC – PLC	7.8
Third level	7.1
Private training company	5.7
Ballymun Job Centre	4.9
Comm/vol organisation	3.5
Ballymun Comp – night courses	3.5
Other VEC	2.8
Other	13.5

The high numbers of people undertaking these courses illustrates the importance of 'second chance' education in Ballymun.