Connecting People with Jobs

Impact Evaluation of Ireland's Active Labour Market Policies

OECD

European Commission

An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Connecting People with Jobs

Impact Evaluation of Ireland's Active Labour Market Policies

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Foreword

Giving people better opportunities to participate in the labour market is a key policy objective in all OECD and EU countries. More and better employment increases disposable income, strengthens economic growth and improves well-being. Well-tailored labour market and social protection policies are a critical factor in promoting the creation of high-quality jobs and increasing activity rates. Such policies need to address pressing structural challenges, such as rapid population ageing and evolving skill needs, driven by digitalisation and the green transition. They should also foster social inclusion and mobilise all of society.

A major challenge that policy makers face is to make the most effective and efficient use of limited public funds. Knowing what policy measures work best requires the collection of the necessary data, careful planning of impact evaluations and use of their results to guide policy making. Advances in data collection and storage and modern computer power means that countries now have a greater ability than ever before to conduct evaluations of their policies using high-quality administrative data and survey data. Expertise is needed to conduct robust and credible policy evaluation but also effective communication of their results to inform policy makers.

The OECD is carrying out a set of reviews of labour market and social protection policies to encourage greater labour market participation and promote better employment opportunities, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged who face the greatest barriers to finding quality jobs. This includes a series of country studies, Connecting People with Jobs, which provide an assessment of how well active labour market policies (ALMPs) help all groups to move into productive and rewarding jobs, and policy recommendations for improving their effectiveness.

This report uses rich administrative data from different registers in Ireland to evaluate the impact of two public works (or direct job creation) programmes for long-term unemployed people. The analysis looks at outcomes beyond the probability of employment and examines how the selected ALMPs affect different population groups. It finds a positive impact of both programmes on earnings from employment in the long term. This report is the thirteenth in a series of country reports on policies to connect people with better jobs. It has been undertaken within the framework of the OECD's project with the European Commission to help countries raise the quality of the data collected and their use in the evaluation of the outcomes and effectiveness of labour market programmes.

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Co-operation with Roshin Sen from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) of Ireland and with Katarina Jaksic and Nora Wukovits-Votzi from the European's Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion has been instrumental for the project and the preparation of this report.

The report has also greatly benefited from the information and assessments received from stakeholders in Ireland who the OECD team met with during virtual and in-person fact-finding missions. A number of teams from across the Department of Social Protection were generous with their time, to offer helpful insight into policy formation and delivery. Visits to Jobcare in Dublin and the Balbriggan Community Employment scheme, enabled the project team to listen to Community Employment and Tús participants, supervisors and scheme administrators. Helpful external insights were generously bestowed via meetings with the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Local Development Network, IBEC, Solas, and the Economic and Social Research Institute.

The authors would like to pay particular thanks to the members of the evaluation sub-group of the Labour Market Advisory Council. Not only did they offer their time during the initial fact-finding mission, but also facilitated further sessions with the team to

discuss methodology and emerging results from the analysis. This expertise was vital from both a contextual and technical perspective and permitted the authors to refine the report based on this feedback.

Comments on earlier versions of this report – through virtual meetings and in writing – greatly benefited the report. Comments were provided by various stakeholders in Ireland, the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre / Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation (JRC). Paolo Paruolo at the JRC, Giulia Santangelo at Cedefop, Roshin Sen at DSP and Stefano Scarpetta and Mark Keese at the OECD, all provided comments on the report.

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Executive summary

Ireland's labour market fares well in comparison with other OECD countries. Employment rates, at 74% for the population aged 15-64 in 2022 were well above the OECD average of 69% and the unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in decades in 2022, at 3.4%. Nevertheless, certain challenges remain in the Irish labour market. Even with record-low unemployment levels in 2022, there were still almost 30 000 people in long-term unemployment in Ireland, representing 32% of all unemployed. Many of these people face employment barriers and require tailored support to reconnect with the labour market. In addition, important disparities remain, with people with low education levels and youth facing more barriers in entering the labour market than other groups. One further challenge relates to the labour shortages amid a scarcity of skilled labour.

In this context, active labour market policies (ALMPs) have an important role to play in connecting people with jobs and mitigating the risk of long-term unemployment. Over the past 15 years, Ireland has taken several steps to modernise the public employment service (PES) to streamline services and increase activation requirements for jobseekers and leverage on digitalisation to make the PES more effective and efficient. Nevertheless, Ireland spends 0.21% of GDP (0.37% of the modified GNI) on ALMPs, below the OECD average of 0.43% in 2021 and about half of ALMP spending is focused on direct job creation (public works programmes). This places Ireland in the seventh place among OECD countries in terms of its spending on these ALMPs. This high spending on public works programmes in Ireland, as well as their historical importance for the country, highlight the necessity to evaluate the impact of public works on participants' subsequent labour market outcomes and identify recommendations for improvement.

Drawing on rich data linked across different registers and a methodology that compares programme participants with similar non-participants, this report shows that the Community Employment (CE) scheme and Tús have a positive impact on the earnings of participants in the long-term. In addition, the report shows that long-term unemployed persons can experience a wide range of different labour market journeys, and about half of people eligible for CE and Tús (mainly long-term unemployed) find unaided employment within four years.

Building on the data-related work and the analysis conducted in this report, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) of Ireland could invest in further developing its capacity to link administrative data for research purposes by including additional data from different registers (e.g. data on health and education) and improving the quality of the data currently linked by DSP.

The key policy recommendations emerging from this report for Ireland include:

- Combine CE with other types of support, especially counselling towards the end of the placement, to facilitate quicker transitions into the primary labour market after CE.
- Consider introducing more flexibility in CE working hours, placement types and training.
- While Tús and CE should be maintained, potential future increases in ALMP spending should be channelled towards training programmes that have shown to be effective and other types of ALMPs that perform well to ensure a balanced ALMP suite of provision in Ireland.
- Consider introducing random selection into CE to encourage participation among a broad group of job seekers who are long-term unemployed, including those who have no local knowledge about specific programmes, and maintain random selection for Tús.

Further enhance the value of administrative data by linking Department of Social Protection (DSP) data with data from other registers to provide more detailed policy insights and develop a longitudinal dataset that maximises the power of the available administrative data.

1 Assessment and recommendations

Ireland has reformed its public employment service over the years to streamline delivery and better focus its resources on helping jobseekers. Efficient support to jobseekers is crucial to connect people with jobs, in an economy which exhibits larger than average cyclical fluctuations in its labour market. This support helps most unemployed individuals transition directly to employment. However, for those that do not, a core part of active labour market policy is delivered via two direct job creation schemes, Tús and Community Employment (CE).

This report shows that Tús and CE contribute to higher earnings in the long-term. CE also reduces dependence on unemployment benefits and future reliance on disability allowance. All groups of jobseekers benefit from participation, with the biggest effects on employment outcomes for young and prime-aged participants and women.

Enhancing and improving the collation and availability of data on ALMP participation and programme participants would foster future evaluation work in Ireland. Notably, such efforts would enable comprehensive assessments of the social impacts of the programmes, in addition to employment-related impacts.

1.1. Ireland's labour market has performed well in recent years, but ALMPs remain crucial to help address long term unemployment and reduce labour market disparities

Ireland's labour market has been characterised by three main episodes over the last two decades. Employment grew strongly in the early 2000s, then plummeted as the global financial crisis unfolded, with the employment rate reaching a low of 60% in 2012, before recovering gradually and reaching 74% in 2022. Over this time period, the labour market in Ireland has tended to fluctuate more than in other OECD countries, and unemployment rates have been especially volatile, more so than other labour market indicators. This high level of volatility has led to large changes in the number of unemployed and long-term unemployed persons over the last two decades. For example, the long-term unemployment rate in 2022 stood at 1.5% for men and 1.1% for women, respectively, five times lower than in 2013. In 2013, 61% of the unemployed were long-term unemployed, against 32% in 2022.

Today, the Irish labour market fares well compared to other OECD countries. Employment rates in 2022 were well above the OECD average, with 74% of 15-64 year-olds employed compared to 69% in the OECD and the unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in decades in 2022, at 3.4%, lower than in most other countries. Nevertheless, the problem of unemployment, and in particular long-term unemployment, is not solved. Even with record-low unemployment levels in 2022, there were still almost 30 000 people in long-term unemployment in Ireland, many of whom face employment barriers and require tailored support to reconnect with the labour market. In a future economic downturn, this number could increase quickly.

People with low educational attainment and young people face bigger employment barriers than other groups. The employment gap between those with high and low levels of education is very wide in Ireland, at 48 percentage points, as many people with low levels of education are inactive and long-term unemployment is concentrated among the lower-educated. In addition, in common with other OECD countries, young people in Ireland are confronted with employment obstacles that people with more work experience do not face, leading to a large gap in unemployment between people

aged 25-74 and young people aged 15-24. Therefore, active labour market policies (ALMPs) are particularly important for these groups.

One further challenge in the Irish labour market relates to the labour shortages amid a scarcity of skilled labour. Skills mismatches are high in Ireland, where some 31% of workers are underqualified for their job, more than in any other country for which data are available. In the years to come, Ireland's ageing economy risks intensifying labour market shortages, even though Ireland faces slower ageing dynamics than many other OECD countries and will have more time to adapt to societal and economic consequences of population ageing. The role of ALMPs will be more important than ever in this context to support skills reorientation. In this context, it will be important to continue ensuring that public work schemes do not displace jobs and absorb labour that could have been otherwise used in the open labor market.

1.2. Ireland has modernised its public employment service to streamline services and increased activation requirements for jobseekers

Ireland has gradually reformed its approach to helping jobseekers over the years, to place greater emphasis on jobseekers undertaking activities to support their job search. After the global financial crisis in 2008, a package of measures was agreed between Ireland, the EU and the IMF in response to the rapid rise in unemployment, which increased job-search requirements, improved work incentives and strengthened sanctions for non-compliance with job search requirements.

As a result of this new approach, unemployment benefit administration and active labour market services and measures were brought together into a combined service, which has been named Intreo since 2012. The introduction of Intreo was intended to simplify the pathway of support for jobseekers via the integration of previously disparate services relating to different aspects of employment support and to ensure there were no gaps between the start of an unemployment spell and the commencement of support for jobseekers. Bringing services together under one organisation decreased the number of contact points for customers and meant they

could be delivered in a more joined up manner via a single, unified view of each unemployed person's case. An evaluation of the introduction of Intreo found it introduced better early identification of invalid unemployment benefit claims and also improved exits to employment, although the effect was quantitatively small.

Intreo has modernised its service, both with the introduction of greater service differentiation for jobseekers requiring different levels of support and through enhanced digitalisation. One of the features of the new Intreo service was the introduction of a risk-scoring questionnaire in 2012 (the "Probability of Exiting" the Live Register, that is the unemployment register) for new jobseekers, which aims to categorise individuals based on their risk of long-term unemployment. This profiling allows Intreo to target resources on individuals that they deem at greater risk of extended unemployment. Furthermore, recent developments have centred around removing paper-based administration of benefit claims, to further enhance administrative efficiencies and to ensure seamless service delivery for jobseekers. A re-organisation of back-office functions to create centralised task-based teams means that individual Intreo offices do not have to conduct all aspects of claim administration for their jobseekers and can concentrate on delivering services for them. The specialisation offered by the back-office teams increases claim processing efficiency.

1.3. Ireland's ALMP spending is still heavily focused on public sector direct job creation

Ireland's spending on ALMPs largely targets the long-term unemployed and is heavily focused on direct job creation (public works programmes). In total, 48% of Ireland's expenditure on ALMPs was spent on direct job creation in 2021, much more than in most other OECD countries and a feature that has persisted for approximately the last two decades. Although Ireland's total spending on ALMPs was only 0.21% of GDP, compared to an average in the OECD of 0.43% of GDP, its spending on direct job creation is the 7th highest of OECD countries (0.10% vs. 0.04%).

There are two flagship direct job creation schemes in Ireland, Community Employment (CE) and Tús, both of which are targeted to long-term unemployed people. Placements

in both schemes are usually one year long, with individuals working for 19.5 hours per week in a range of jobs across voluntary sector organisations (for example, as caretakers or cleaners). Supervisors in the programmes offer guidance and support to participants. In CE, voluntary and third sector organisations apply directly to DSP to become approved CE schemes and to gain approval for specific placements. In Tús placements are managed via the use of implementing bodies who have approval from DSP and are then left to manage these placements with their community and third sector partners. There exists flexibility for consecutive placements in CE over multiple years whereas Tús participation is limited to a single year, and CE placements have a designated budget for training.

Since Tús' introduction in 2011, there have been around 30 000 participants annually on either Tús (7 000) or CE (23 000), putting CE ahead of almost all other ALMPs in Ireland in terms of participant numbers. The strong focus of Ireland's ALMPs on direct job creation has been a distinguishing feature for several decades.

1.4. Considerable scope exists to better leverage administrative data for analysis

Ireland's national employment strategy*, Pathways to Work 2021-25*, commits to increasing the support that public employment service (PES) counsellors give to their clients and investing in digitalising PES to maximise its reach through blending in-person and digital service delivery. The PES will be required to invest in education and training and to increase further its engagement with employers to meet future labour market needs. This will play a part in ensuring labour force resilience and mobility in the Irish labour market. Data enhancements could support this ambition by improving the evidence base on PES interventions.

The development of an analytical framework that maximises the power of the available data and additional enhancements from external data could significantly enhance evidence generation on the effectiveness of ALMPs. Currently, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) does not have a longitudinal dataset for analytical purposes, that would enable the analysis of ALMPs and their outcomes within one database.

Information on employment and most social welfare payments was only available as an annual aggregate for this report, limiting the identification of timing and sequences of short periods of work or participation in some support schemes during a year. Incorporating more frequent disaggregated information in future analytical datasets would facilitate the study of such short-term dynamics. The range of operational data available across employment services, benefits claim management, income support payments as well as ALMPs means there is a wealth of information that can be unleashed for analytical purposes. Exploiting this analytical potential requires restructuring operational data into a longitudinal framework suitable for research purposes. DSP has taken steps to achieve this objective and is currently developing the Work and Welfare Longitudinal Data Base (WWLD), with support from the Labour Market Advisory Council. Once the full longitudinal framework is complete, high-quality analysis could be conducted in a way that enables tracking outcomes across different ALMPs, analysing characteristics of shorter or longer unemployment benefit durations and for identifying the causal impact of the ALMPs and employment services to which DSP refers jobseekers. This report has directly contributed to the development of a synthesised analytical data framework, through the assimilation, cleaning and linking of disparate administrative data sources. It will be important to build further on this work to embed these compiled datasets into a strategic analytical framework that permits ongoing maintenance and updates so that future analytical work can utilise them.

Adding information on educational attainment would greatly enhance the capabilities of analytical datasets, and this is largely missing from the present suite of data for analysis. Education variables are critical when controlling for characteristics associated with labour market outcomes. At present, there are no administrative educational data linked to DSP data on unemployment claims. Linking to Department of Education and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science administrative data could allow the PES to better direct jobseekers towards the skills and qualifications that will enhance their employment prospects. Similarly, information on occupations classified according to international standards – e.g. ISCO – would further enrich the description of individual trajectories. Occupations can be merged to task information (e.g. from the European Jobs Monitor of Eurofound) to provide indirect information on qualifications gained outside the educational system.

Information on hours worked should be added to the employment data collected by Revenue as well. Whether an individual is employed on a part-time rather than full-time basis is an important factor in how earnings or weeks of employment are considered as outcomes. Incorporating these pieces of information into the administrative employment data in Ireland could yield a signification improvement to analysis of ALMPs, such as CE and Tús, so that labour market outcomes could encompass a measure of whether hours of work have increased.

A further data enhancement would be the incorporation of data on firms. Sector, size, capital investment, and financial health – to mention a few – are crucial determinants of earnings and of individual trajectories in and out of the labour market. Without them, any analysis is exposed to the risk of misattributing an effect to a policy intervention which is instead due to the sorting of individuals across firms. These data were not available for this study, but data on sector and firm size of the last employer since 2019 are available for future studies.

Incorporation of real-time information on earnings would also permit more timely and disaggregated analysis. The development of real-time taxation of earnings in 2019, where employers report their employees' pay and deductions in real-time to the Revenue Commissioners each time they pay their employees, means administrative earnings data are now available at a periodicity more in line with administrative data on unemployment benefit claims. This will facilitate future examination of labour market status across multiple points in time, enabling the kind of analysis explored in Chapter 5 in a more structural way. It could also facilitate the evaluation of policies, such as labour market services, whose impacts are expected to be greater in the shorter-term.

Finally, the development of better metadata would facilitate a more standardised and consistent approach to different evaluations. Currently the administrative data offer a number of similar but potentially conflicting variables. Moreover, different databases provide information on the same supporting scheme, which are not always coherent across data sources. A one-off data modelling analysis could evaluate these variables and sources and establish a hierarchy of variables and data sources, taking account of the quality and timeliness of each data source, to enable reliable estimates of labour

market status in cases of conflicting information. These data could then be combined into an analytical database suitable for evaluation across many different ALMPs. Sitting alongside enhanced metadata that accurately describe variable characteristics and provide information on data quality, advantages and limitations, this would foster faster and consistent analysis that is less prone to errors in interpretation.

1.5. Long-term unemployed people can receive a range of support, including Tús and CE, and experience different labour market journeys

This report demonstrates the potential of administrative data to shed light on individuals' journeys through the labour market and the support provided by DSP. Combining datasets on CE and Tús eligibility and participations with demographic data, earnings, social security contributions and information on DSP payments, the report studies the individual trajectories of long-term unemployed people (and some individuals with eligibility via family-related benefits) across several different "states". Beyond CE and Tús participation, a further six states are identified. These cover: employment with some kind of extra support via DSP, employment without support, and three other individual supports – Back to Education Allowance (BTEA), JobBridge and JobPath. A final state captures individuals who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis. Outcomes for jobseekers are observed for up to four years after becoming eligible for either CE or Tús.

The analysis of these trajectories reveals that four years after becoming eligible for either CE or Tús, almost half of jobseekers are employed without any form of support. Around 60% of individuals are observed in this state at some point over the four years considered. In contrast to this, 17% of individuals are never observed participating in any of the supporting schemes considered, nor in employment. Some subgroups of eligible individuals tend to move more frequently between different states, such as males, Irish nationals, and those aged under 50. Overall, annual transitions to CE or Tús are relatively infrequent. At most, 3.7% and 1.9% of all eligible individuals move into CE or Tús per year, respectively; only 7.5% of eligible individuals ever participate in

CE over the time period considered, while for Tús the share is even lower at 6.6%. This underlines the importance to ensure that the measures are well targeted, so that those in need of support receive it.

Individuals aged less than 30 participate relatively less in CE, and more in BTEA or JobBridge. Those aged 50 or more, are more likely to go through CE or Tús at least once. Although entries into the programme are not that frequent, persistence in CE is high: 50% of the individuals who start a CE scheme are still observed there after three years and 20% after five years. Persistence in Tús beyond one year since entry into the programme is low due to institutional limits – maximum duration is one year. Month-by-month analysis of CE and Tús episodes reveal that exits to other states occur at specific points in time, namely after 12 months for Tús and at one-, two- and three-year durations for CE. At one-year duration after entry, the probability of moving to a job (either supported or not) is higher for Tús beneficiaries than for those with CE, although overall CE seems a better springboard to employment than Tús in the medium and long-term. In absolute terms, however, transitions to employment are low even at yearly spikes, which suggests that the lock-in into CE and Tús could be more a matter of a lack of alternatives than by choice.

1.6. CE and Tús provide a strategy for the long term unemployed through direct job creation, with less volatility than in the open labour market

CE was introduced in 1994 to provide part-time, temporary paid employment for the long-term unemployed, at a time of high long-term unemployment. It has a dual emphasis on providing opportunities for the long-term unemployed to find work in addition to acting as a resource for local communities. These placements are typically one-year in duration, but participants can take consecutive placements, particularly when they are older or are working towards qualifications.

As long-term unemployment fell from its highs of the mid-1990s, it precipitated a debate as to the appropriate number of participants in CE, as private sector employment opportunities increased and concerns over the lock-in effects of CE increased. As early

as 1998, calls for a reduction in CE placements were made in a government report, at which point CE represented some 3% of total employment in the Irish economy. CE then fell from around 40 000 participants in 1998 to around 20 000 in 2003, a level at which it has hovered around for the last 20 years or so. After the adjustments made following the earlier advice, there was remarkable stability of participant levels over time, even in the face of rapidly changing long-term unemployment levels. A further evaluation in 2015 recommended a number of alterations to the scheme, including linking the number of CE places to changes to the stock of unemployed people. It also suggested formalising the split between “activation” objectives on the one hand, and “social inclusion” objectives on the other hand, though it made no precise definition of the latter and did not suggest metrics by which to measure it. This therefore gave rise to additional questions on how precisely to measure the impact of CE on communities and on this notion of “social inclusion”, as opposed to its role as a tool to help better connect individuals to jobs.

In the midst of these changes in implementation of CE over the years, Tús was introduced as a temporary measure following the Great Financial Crisis, designed to help provide extra support (in the form of more job placements) to the rising numbers of long-term unemployed people. The placements themselves are similar to CE in terms of their weekly working hours and the nature of the organisation and roles attached. However, it differs from CE in several noticeable respects. It has mostly randomly-assigned mandatory participation, a one-year participation limit, the jobs are managed by local development companies, which manage the number of jobs (as opposed to CE schemes, which apply to DSP for approval of individual placements) and there is no training budget. Somewhat similar to CE, and despite its inception as a temporary alleviation measure for the long-term unemployed, Tús participant numbers have remained remarkably steady, despite the large fall in the eligible population over recent years.

To properly assess the effectiveness of Ireland’s spending on ALMPs, it is critical to evaluate the role of these two large direct job creation schemes, their interplay and their function in providing services to long-term unemployed individuals. The last evaluation to offer a counterfactual assessment of the impact of CE was conducted in

2000 and there has yet to be one performed on Tús. Therefore, a large gap in the evidence base for Irish ALMPs exists, which is vital to fill to ensure public money is spent wisely and policy effectively helps to connect people with jobs, especially those individuals who have been unemployed for extended periods of time. This report aims to fill this gap.

1.7. CE improves labour market outcomes in the long-term, after an initial lock-in period

The analysis in this report shows that CE helps to connect participants with the labour market in the longer term and that its effects are better for some groups of individuals than for others. The positive impact of CE on total annual earnings, the probability of any earnings in a given year and annual weeks of employment only occurs from around three years on average once participants have entered the programme. This long lag in effectiveness can be linked to repeated participation in the scheme, whereby the average total duration for individuals on CE is around 2.5 years. The report finds that employment earnings are around EUR 2000 per year higher for CE participants relative to similar non-participants, the incidence of any employment earnings (all unsubsidised) in a year is around 10 percentage points higher and individuals work an average of four weeks longer per year.

CE is more effective for some groups of long-term unemployed people than for others. Unemployed people aged between 30 and 50 and EU mobile workers from Member States that joined the EU during the 2004 and 2007 enlargements experienced higher effects of CE in terms of total earnings, incidence of positive earnings and weeks worked in the longer term. For women, there is also some evidence of a stronger effect on earnings and employment following CE participation in comparison to men. Those participating in the “activation” strand of CE tend to enjoy better outcomes than for those on the “social inclusion” strand. Similarly, those on the Health and Social Care scheme enjoy better outcomes than those on general or Childcare schemes.

The effects of CE on employment outcomes, including earnings, are of a similar magnitude to those found in the past studies of CE, and high when compared to the

international literature on the effectiveness of direct job creation schemes. Nevertheless, these positive effects in the very long term do not necessarily imply that CE and other public works programmes, including Tús, are the most effective and cost-effective policies for long-term unemployed people. International research often concludes that some other types of ALMPs, such as training and employment services, tend to be more efficient in connecting job seekers with employment than public work schemes. This finding might also hold true in Ireland.

1.8. CE also offers some positive outcomes that can be linked to "social inclusion", but available data do not allow a comprehensive assessment

This report also evaluates those outcomes linked to social inclusion more generally that can be assessed using available linked administrative data on disability allowance and training uptake. More specifically, the receipt of the disability allowance is meant to capture, at least partially, the effects of CE on health, while the receipt of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) captures a pathway, through further education, towards a better connection to the labour market in the future.

The results show that CE participants are less likely to receive disability allowance than similar non-participants already shortly after entering CE. In the long run, five years after the start of the programme, the incidence of disability allowance receipt is some 6 percentage points lower for former CE participants. As expected, effects are largest for older age groups who are more likely to receive disability allowance, with an effect of 10 percentage points five years after CE participation for the over-50-year-olds, although some caution is needed on interpreting the absolute magnitude, particularly in the longer-term, as sensitivity analysis using alternative statistical models points to slightly smaller impacts.

Caution is also needed in the overall interpretation of the impact on receipt of disability allowance, as it is likely to be a relatively poor indicator of overall impacts on health. It will only capture those conditions that meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance and

will also reflect individuals' broader preferences and knowledge on whether to apply for it (which may be unrelated to health per se).

CE participation is associated with a higher probability of receiving the BTEA 3 and 4 years after CE participation, which dissipates in the longer term. Contrary to the impact on the disability allowance, this effect is largely focused on the younger age group, with most of the peak impact driven by receipt in the under 30 age group. These results should be interpreted with caution given the small sample sizes involved with BTEA receipt and their temporary nature. But it does suggest that CE can help to re-engage individuals with the labour market in ways that are not solely related to immediate job search or employment and may offer benefits to human capital accumulation that could help individuals enjoy better careers in the long-term. Such long-term outcomes are difficult for this report to evaluate, because an analysis would need to evaluate effects over more extended periods to determine long-term impacts.

Better data on education and training, such as incorporating all of the training organised via the training body SOLAS, would help to provide a more comprehensive picture of the extent to which CE impacts participants' learning outcomes. This is an important element to quantify, particularly given that its dedicated training budget is one of CE's oft-cited features.

Re-orientating the focus and emphasis on the training offered directly in CE may help participants to develop their skills further, regardless of any links to broader education. The dedicated training budget for CE is small and has fallen to less than half of its level in real terms since the scheme's inception in the 1990s. In addition, much of the training undertaken while on CE is quite generic. Establishing better links with employers to focus training on the skills demanded in the local economy could help jobseekers equip themselves with skills that are in demand in the private sector. Increasing the training budget would allow more extensive skills development of individuals to aid re-skilling or to deepen skills and hence access to higher-paying jobs.

However, despite these suggestive positive findings on disability allowance and BTEA receipt, the report cannot fully assess the many outcomes CE might offer in terms of "social inclusion" because data on these outcomes are not available. For example, it cannot evaluate CE's impact on the fabric of local communities, the services delivered

to these communities, the mental and overall physical health of participants or their social isolation and integration.

Going forward, the precise goals of CE with respect to social inclusion should be properly defined and metrics to evaluate these objectives should be implemented as data availability permits, allowing more comprehensive evaluations of CE's social inclusion objectives. Some of this may be achieved through better linkage to existing data (e.g. data on utilisation of health services), whilst others may necessitate data collection via the use of surveys. A rigorous assessment of the scheme's objectives and the data needed to evaluate them is essential to properly determines the overall success of the programme.

1.9. Tús improves participants' earnings

The effect of Tús on earnings from employment is positive. The impact is modest at first but increases over time with former participants experiencing an annual boost to taxable earnings of EUR 1 500, on average, in the fifth year after participation in Tús starts. Alternative outcome measures, such as weeks in unsubsidised employment, are consistent with this finding. Compared to eligible non-participants, Tús participants spend three weeks per year more in unsubsidised employment three years after participation starts, rising to four weeks more in employment in the sixth year.

Tús appears to be more effective in terms of the increase in post-participation earnings for certain groups. The impact on earnings for women is considerably stronger than the impact on men, while participants aged under 30 experience an increase in earnings relative to their peers that is larger than any other age group. In the fifth year after participation, female participants experience an increase in earnings of about EUR 1900 while for their male counterparts the increase is around EUR 1 400. The positive results for women are consistent both with the literature and the findings from the CE analysis.

Former Tús participants do not move on to other DSP-provided benefits when they leave the unemployment register. In fact, participation on Tús appears to decrease the probability of receipt of other (i.e. non-jobseeker) social welfare payments. In the fourth

year after beginning an episode of Tús, participants spend 3.25 fewer weeks a year in receipt of a welfare payment.

Key policy recommendations

Re-balancing the ALMP basket and identifying good practices

- While Tús and CE should be maintained, potential future increases in ALMP spending should be channelled towards training programmes that have shown to be effective and other types of ALMPs that perform well to ensure a balanced ALMP suite of provision in Ireland.
- Regularly report on the performance of individual local Intreo offices to identify good practices and incentivise good performance.

Properly define the objectives for CE and collect the necessary data to monitor and evaluate CE against its objectives

- Define precisely CE's "activation" and "social inclusion" strands. Define specific objectives and outcome metrics for each of them to facilitate ongoing performance management and in-depth evaluations.
- Define specific objectives of CE for different age-groups (notably young and prime-aged participants vs. participants close to retirement age), recognising that the effect of CE varies markedly depending on age and that the "activation" component is particularly important when the remaining time in the labour market is long. Define metrics to monitor and evaluate these objectives.
- Collect all the data necessary to monitor and evaluate CE, including data on a range of social outcomes. Include, where applicable, information gathered via participant and provider surveys, to enable learning and sharing on best practices across schemes to support participants.
- Conduct qualitative assessments of CE to complement the results of this report, especially regarding the effects of CE on social inclusion.

Optimise links between CE placements and ongoing job-search behaviour

- Consider testing different scheme durations (below and above 1 year) to identify optimal scheme duration leading to the best labour market and social outcomes.
- Consider testing lower lifetime limits of CE to reduce the lock-in period needed for positive impacts of CE to unfold, as some of the lock-in effect is likely to be linked to multiple participation.
- Combine CE with other types of support, especially counselling towards the end of the placement, to facilitate quicker transitions into the primary labour market after CE.

Consider more flexibility in CE working hours, placement types and training

- Introduce more flexibility regarding working hours:
- Possibility to work more than 19.5 hours for job seekers close to retirement age for whom the programme is mostly about social inclusion.
- Possibility for younger individuals to deliver more working hours at the beginning of the placement, to gain intensive work experience, and less working time towards the end of the programme to be more available for counselling, other ALMPs or job search.
- Possibility of fewer working hours at the beginning, combined with greater pastoral support (such as guidance and assistance), for individuals with multiple employment barriers, such as health barriers, family barriers or addictions. Increase working hours towards end of placement to aid transition to work.
- Put a stronger focus on training for young participants, either in terms of training on the workplace or classroom training.

Ensure alignment of CE placements with labour market needs

- Continue to offer CE, while continuing to ensure that CE is not in direct competition with open labour market jobs.
- Consider introducing the possibility of random selection of long-term unemployed jobseekers into CE in light of its positive results, as is the case for Tús. Doing so would encourage participation among a broader group of long-term unemployed people, including those who have no knowledge about local CE programmes.
- Give priority to placements that provide specific job skills that are relevant for the primary labour market.
- Work closely with local employers, business organisation and unions to review training content of CE and ensure training provided in specific programmes builds skills for the open labour market.
- Increase training budget and allow schemes more flexibility in application, particularly in distributing training budget across participants.
- Consider adjusting the number of activation and social inclusion placements to the economic cycle, with more activation placements in economic downturns, depending on the needs of CE sponsors and DSP's judgement.

Continue Tús selection model and consider adjusting in light of evaluation results

- Random selection for Tús participation should continue as it offers possibilities for participation in the programme to a broad group of jobseekers, beyond those who have local knowledge of particular programmes or organisations.
- It could be considered targeting the programme more to young and prime-aged long-term unemployed, for whom the impact of Tús on subsequent earnings is higher.
- The process of referring individuals to Tús should be centralised, so that the same processes are followed by all the different Intreo centres. Currently there appears to be variation in how individuals are referred across different Intreo

offices. A standardised referral process would ensure consistency in both data collection and monitoring and equitable access to Tús.

Data collection and storage can be improved to facilitate policy analysis

- Ensure that all new job seekers are assigned a Probability of Exit (PEX) score.
- Continue to develop a longitudinal dataset that maximises the power of the available administrative data to enable analysis of how interventions are associated with outcomes.
- Further enhance the value of administrative data by linking DSP data with data from other registers to provide more detailed policy insights:
- Linking to SOLAS data would permit exploration of how (particularly repeated) CE participation contributes to the attainment of formal qualifications and how this influences employability.
- Capture information on hours worked in administrative employment data.
- Link to Department of Education administrative data on education levels which are necessary data for any analysis of employment outcomes.
- To make best use of administrative data, work is required to reconcile multiple, and sometimes conflicting, data sources. This may be due to non-standardised approaches to data collection or the use of operational data. Such work requires establishing a hierarchy of the data sources, taking account of the quality and timeliness of each source.
- Complement administrative data with data collected through surveys, especially with regards dimensions that are difficult to collect data on from administrative records. This concerns for example health conditions where a survey, especially of older unemployed people, could help to get a detailed understanding of health impacts, e.g. distinguishing between effects on mental health and on physical health.
- Finalise retrospective categorisation of activation and social inclusion job descriptions in CE to permit better historic analysis of the two CE strands.

2 Trends, opportunities and challenges in the Irish labour market

This chapter describes labour market trends in Ireland, presenting the context for the counterfactual impact evaluations of Community Employment (CE) and Tús and the analysis of sequences of referrals to active labour market policies (ALMPs). Ireland's labour market is sound and has markedly improved over the last decade, despite temporary difficulties triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Employment outcomes differ across socio-economic groups, most notably depending on educational attainment. These disparities are also reflected in the profile of long-term unemployed people who are the main target group of the ALMPs examined in the other chapters of this report. In recent months, the Irish labour market has tightened, making it more difficult for firms to recruit skilled labour. More generally, labour shortages risk putting stress on the Irish economy in the years to come, as Ireland is ageing and the level of skill mismatch is high.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter takes stock of labour market trends in Ireland over the last two decades, laying the groundwork for the counterfactual impact evaluations of Community Employment (CE) and Tús and the sequencing of active labour market policies (ALMPs). CE and Tús are ALMPs that provides job opportunities in local communities to jobseekers who struggle to find employment. The chapter pays specific attention to long-term unemployed people, i.e. people who have been out of employment for at least 12 months, as they are the main target group of CE, Tús and many other ALMPs, and any assessment of their effectiveness should take account of the broader labour market context affecting the long-term unemployed.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 2.2 discusses general labour market trends in Ireland, especially trends in employment and unemployment, showing that the Irish labour market has improved markedly over the last decade. Section 2.3 discusses labour market disparities between socio-economic groups with a focus on disparities in long-term unemployment. Following this, Section 2.4 shows how Ireland's labour market has performed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and discusses challenges Ireland is currently facing and expected to face in the future.

2.2. Boom, bust and recovery in the Irish labour market

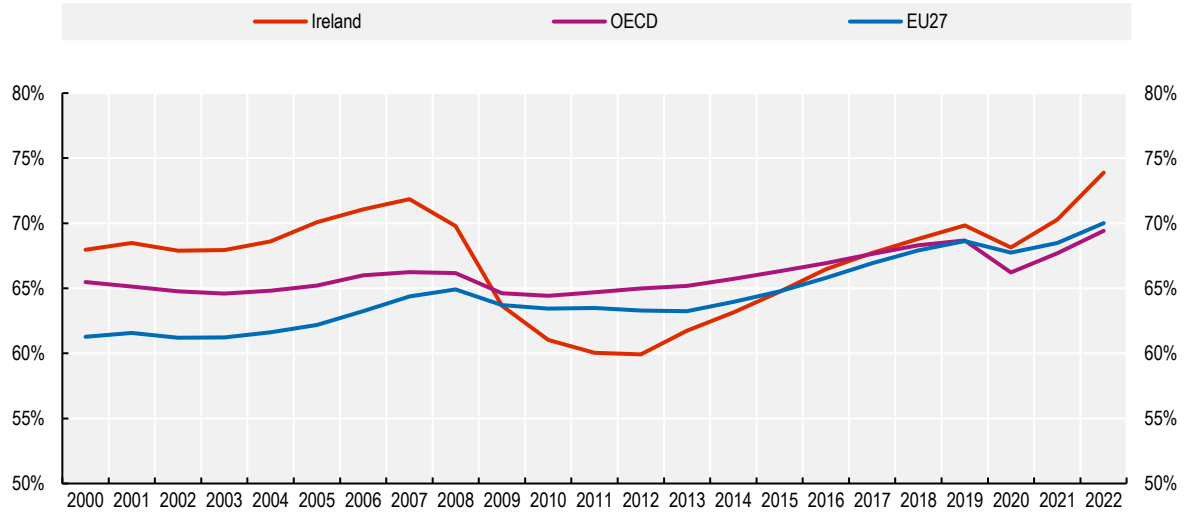
Ireland's labour market has been characterised by three main episodes over the last two decades (Figure 2.1). First, employment levels increased strongly between the early 2000s and the start of the global financial crisis (GFC), with employment rates among 15-64 year-olds rising from 68% in 2000 to 72% in 2007. Ireland's employment rate was 3 percentage points higher than the OECD average in 2000, and exceeded the latter by 6 percentage points in 2007, moving Ireland into the upper third of OECD countries in terms of employment rates. Increases were stronger for female employment rates over this time period (+7 percentage points). Second, between 2007 and 2012, employment rates plummeted as the GFC hit and the European debt crisis unfolded, dwindling to a low of 60% in 2012. In this context, many people decided to leave the country, leading to negative net migration flows between 2010 and 2014.

Outflows of emigrants exceeded inflows of immigrants by more than 25 000 individuals per year between 2010 and 2012 (Central Statistics Office, 2022[1]). Third, as the economy recovered, employment rates experienced another phase of strong growth, from 60% in 2012 to 74% in 2022, despite temporary declines related to the COVID-19 pandemic (see section 2.4).

Overall, employment levels in Ireland have been more volatile than in many other OECD countries (Figure 2.1), requiring flexible labour market policies to adapt to changing circumstances. While Ireland was among the top performers in the OECD in terms of labour market outcomes in the early 2000s, it faced the biggest drop in employment rates among all OECD countries between 2007 and 2012 (-12 percentage points in Ireland against -1 percentage point for the OECD average). After 2012, Ireland resumed outperforming the majority of countries and was one of only seven OECD economies with two-digit employment increases between 2012 and 2022.

Figure 2.1. Employment rates are on the rise, but have been volatile

Employment rate among persons aged 15-64, 2000-22



Note: OECD and EU27 are weighted averages.
Source: OECD LFS by sex and age – indicators dataset, http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=118627.

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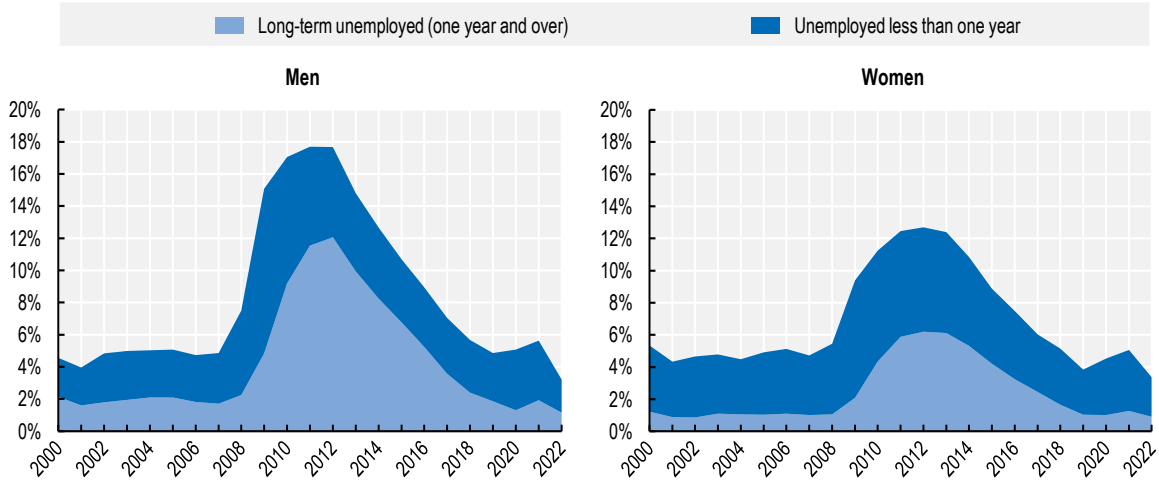
Today, employment rates are slightly above the OECD average. In 2022, 74% of persons aged 15-64 were employed, comparing to 69% in the OECD. There is some scope for further improvements, however. All other Northern European countries except Latvia report higher employment levels than Ireland, with the highest rates in Iceland (83%), the Netherlands (82%) and New Zealand (80%). Further increases could be possible, in particular if macroeconomic conditions develop favourably and Ireland continues its policy efforts in terms of labour market policies.

Fluctuations in unemployment rates were even more pronounced than in employment rates (Figure 2.2). Starting from low levels before the GFC (around 5% for both men and women in 2006), the unemployment rate soared during the GFC and European debt crisis, reaching almost 18% for men in 2012 and almost 13% for women. Most of this increase resulted in long-term unemployment, moving a large number of people further away from the labour market and putting them at risk of loss of human capital/skills. In 2012, 12% of men and 6% of women in the labour force were long-term unemployed, in total about 200 000 people, bringing CE and other ALMPs targeted at long-term unemployed people to their capacity limits.

After the peak in (long-term) unemployment around 2012, the labour market situation started to improve gradually. Unemployment and long-term unemployment kept falling steadily for almost a decade, with temporary interruptions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic (see section 2.4). In 2022, the unemployment rate stood at just under 3.4% in Ireland, far below its peak level, and the long-term unemployment rate amounted to 1.5% for men and 1.1% for women, respectively, five times lower than in 2013. Nevertheless, despite these remarkable improvements, the long-term unemployment rate is still relatively high in Ireland compared to other OECD countries.

Figure 2.2. Long-term unemployment has been falling rapidly after its peak in the early 2010s

Unemployment and long-term unemployment rates in Ireland by sex, as a percentage of the total labour force



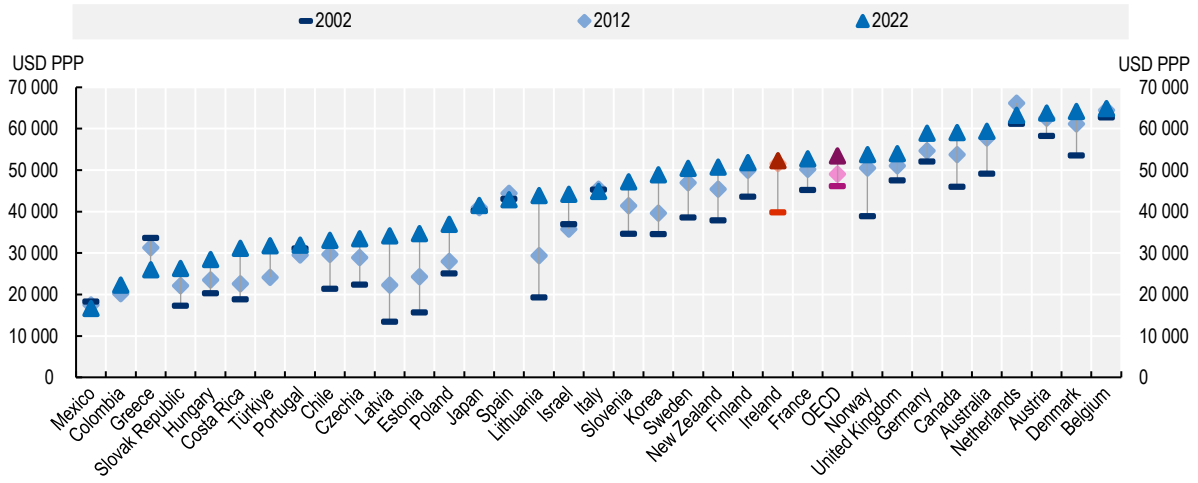
Source: Calculations based on OECD Datasets: LFS by sex and age – indicators, http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=118627 and Incidence of unemployment by duration, http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=9593.

StatLink https://stat.link/1yzg5n

Wage levels are close to the OECD average, with an average real wage[1] in 2022 amounting to an equivalent of USD 52 200, against 53 400 in the OECD (Figure 2.3). Real wages had grown strongly in the early 2000s, from (an equivalent of) USD 39 800 in 2002 to USD 51 600 in 2012. Between 2012 and 2022, real wage increases were much lower, from USD 51 600 to USD 52 200. Both the GFC and the European Debt Crisis have largely contributed to lower wage growth over the last decade. While wages differ across sectors and skill profiles, income inequality is relatively low, notably due to a redistributive transfer system (OECD, 2020[2]; OECD, 2018[3]).

Figure 2.3. Real wage growth has been rather slow over the last decade

Average annual wages (in constant prices at 2022 USD PPPs)



Note: Annual wages per full-time and full-year equivalent employee in the total economy. Data for 2022 refer to 2020 (Türkiye) and to 2021 (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica).
Source: OECD Annual average wages dataset, http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=25148.

StatLink https://stat.link/67rgp3

2.3. Some labour market disparities have improved while others persist

Ireland has made progress in reducing some labour market disparities. Most notably, gender differences are now smaller than in many other countries. The gender-wage gap has shrunk substantially over the last years, from 14.1% in 2010 to 7.3% in 2021, far below the OECD average of 12% (OECD, 2022[4]). In addition, 2022 employment rates for women are comparatively high and well above the OECD average (69% in Ireland against 62.3% in the OECD), while rates for men are 2.2 percentage points above the cross-country average (76.6%). Furthermore, the incidence of involuntary part-time work, which is a major problem for women in some countries, is low, affecting only 2% of employed women against 4.8% in the OECD (OECD, 2024[5]).

There are persisting disparities between individuals with high and low levels of education. The employment gap between people with high and low educational attainment in Ireland showed a 48 percentage points difference in 2022, which is more than in many other countries (40 percentage points in the EU), and especially when

compared to other Northern European countries. The wide gap should be seen in the context of high education outcomes in Ireland, meaning that the share of people with low educational attainment has decreased over the last decades and is small compared to other countries. Nevertheless, people who are in the group of low-educated people often face major difficulties finding employment. For instance, in 2022, just over one-third (39%) of people with low educational attainment were employed in Ireland, against 46% in the EU (and 71% in Iceland) (Eurostat, 2024[6]). Furthermore, the disability employment gap in Ireland is among the highest in the OECD, pointing to significant employment barriers among this group and highlighting the need for effective support. Employment rate differences between people with disabilities and the overall population vary substantially within Ireland, suggesting that local factors play a role (OECD, 2021[7]).

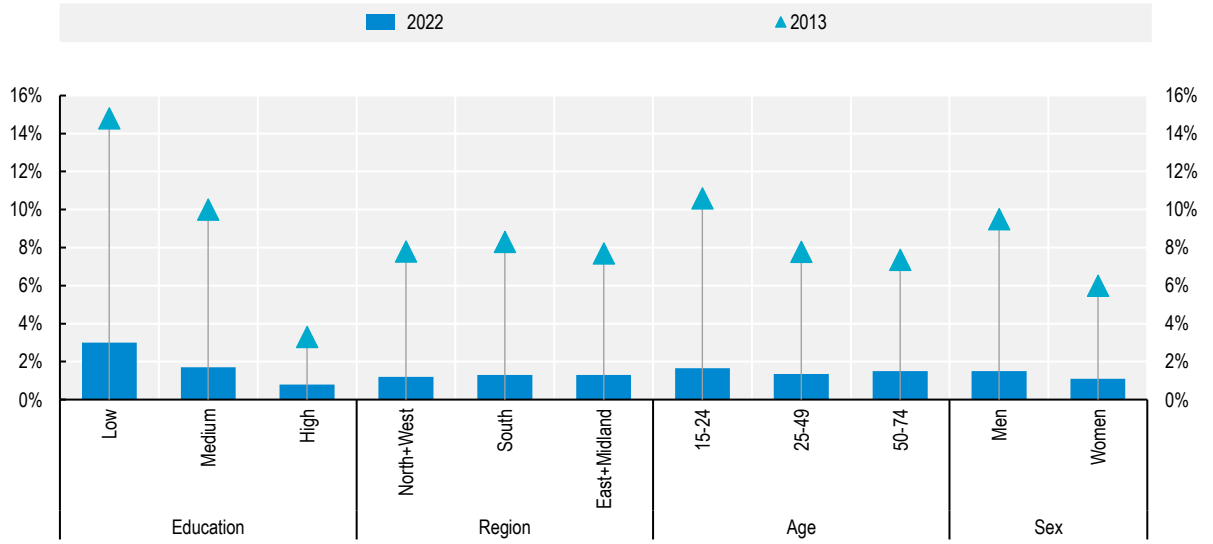
Another labour market disparity relates to age. As in all other OECD countries, unemployment levels among young people are higher than for their prime-aged peers. As of 2022, 9.8% of youth aged 15-24 were unemployed in Ireland, against just 2.4% among persons aged 25-64. This gap of 7.4 percentage points is larger than on average in the OECD (6.5 percentage points), and far above the best-performing countries. For example, unemployment rates among persons aged 15-24 stood at only 4.2% and 6% in Japan and Germany, respectively, and were relatively close to unemployment rates among 25-64 year-olds (1.6% and 3.1%). OECD (OECD, 2024[5]).

These disparities are also apparent in the profile of long-term unemployed people. While long-term unemployment has been generally low in recent years, it affects some socio-economic groups more than others (Figure 2.4). In 2022, 3% of the labour force were long-term unemployed among the low-educated, against 0.8% among the high-educated. Differences across other dimensions (i.e. region, age, gender) exist, but are currently relatively small. At the peak of the European debt crises, disparities in long-term unemployment were much more visible. Among the low-educated, an extraordinarily large share – 15% of the labour force – were long-term unemployed in 2013, compared to 10% of the medium-educated and 3% of the high-educated. Similarly, long-term unemployment was more common among young people than among older age-groups, at 11% of the labour force among 15-24 year-olds,

8% among 25-49 year-olds and 7% among 50-74 year-olds, even though it should be noted that the high levels of third level education participation contribute to the high rates among young people. These disparities directly affect the composition of the target group of CE and hence the group examined in the remainder of this report.

Figure 2.4. Long-term unemployment affects low-educated people more than other groups in Ireland

Long-term unemployed as a percentage of the labour force, by individual characteristics, 2013 and 2022



Note: Levels of education according to ISCED 2011. Low educated below upper secondary (levels 0-2); Medium educated: upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary (Levels 3-4); High educated: tertiary (Levels 5-8).
Source: Eurostat datasets: Long-term unemployment (12 months and more) by sex, age, educational attainment level and NUTS 2 regions, and calculations using dataset Unemployment rates by sex, age and educational attainment level.

StatLink https://stat.link/j75iod

2.4. Ireland's labour market since the COVID-19 pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had repercussions on the Irish labour market, like in many other countries. Sectors with jobs requiring face-to-face interactions particularly suffered, such as hospitality, retail, and tourism. In these sectors, many businesses were forced to shut down or reduce their operations due to public health requirements in force at the time.

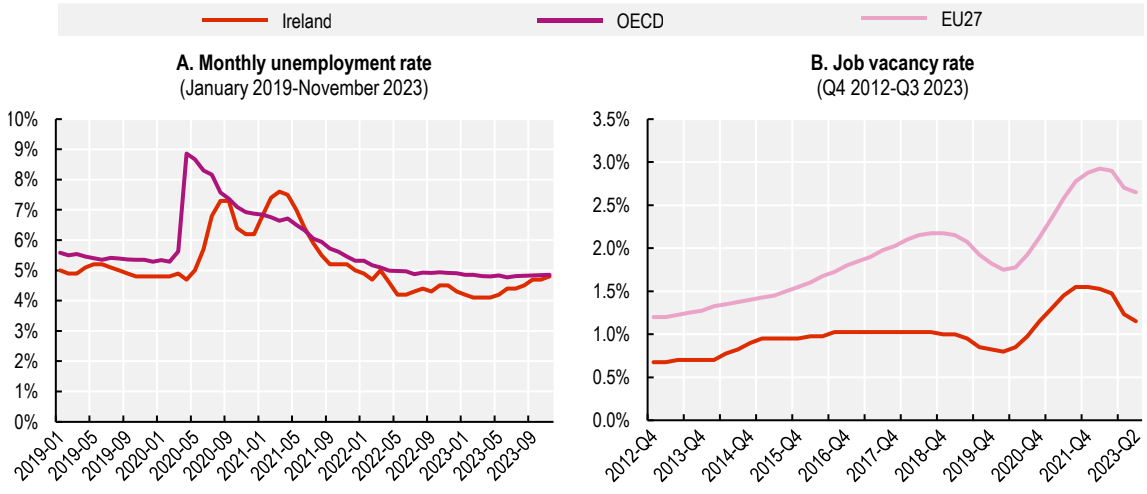
The pandemic did not lead to an immediate surge in unemployment, contrary to the situation in other OECD countries, but rather to a gradual increase (Figure 2.5), in part due to employment protection measures. Nevertheless, the increase in unemployment

was strong, rising from 4.8% in February 2020 to 7.3% in September 2020. After a second spike in unemployment over the winter 2020/21, the situation started to improve steadily as COVID-19 vaccines became widely available and public health restrictions were eased. In November 2023, the unemployment rate stood at 4.8%, just below its pre-pandemic level (4.9% in September 2019).

Due to the improving labour market situation, coupled with limited labour supply, labour shortages started building up. Although the vacancy rate, i.e. the share of positions that are not filled, tends to be lower in Ireland than in other countries, it increased rapidly after 2020, from about 0.8% to above 1.5%, before starting to decline again (Figure 2.5). In Q2 2023, 1.2% of all positions were still vacant. One of the key challenges contributing to labour market tightness is the scarcity of skilled labour. With the economy performing well and the unemployment rate low, many companies are struggling to find workers with the right skills. In addition, the level of skill mismatch is high in Ireland, and 31% of workers are underqualified for their job, more than in any other country for which data are available.

Figure 2.5. COVID-19 had a strong, but short impact

Monthly unemployment rate, (total) and quarterly job vacancy rate (as a percentage of all positions)



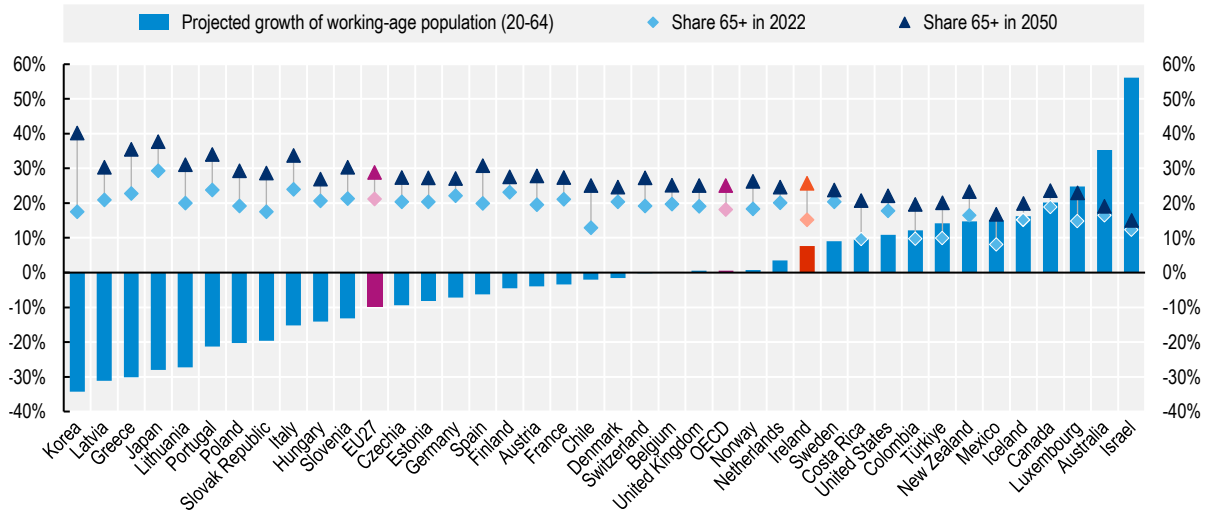
Note: The job vacancy rate is defined as the number of unfilled vacancies as a share of all (filled and unfilled) positions and is a moving average.
Source: OECD dataset: Short-Term Labour Market Statistics, https://stats-3.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=STLABOUR (Panel A) and Eurostat dataset: Job vacancy rate, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EI_LMJV_Q_R2__custom_3932935/default/table (Panel B).

StatLink https://stat.link/04xnqj

In the years and decades to come, labour market shortages are at risk of intensifying. Ireland is ageing rapidly, and the share of people aged 65 and older is projected to grow from 15% in 2022 to 26% in 2050 (Figure 2.6). These ageing patterns are likely to put stress on public finances and could contribute to growing labour shortages. Nevertheless, Ireland's working-age population is not expected to shrink over the next three decades, contrary to most other OECD and EU countries. As a result, Ireland may have more time than other countries to adapt to the profound societal and economic consequences of population ageing and take action to limit skills shortages. Against this background, the role of labour market policies will be ever more important, and it will be crucial to have ALMPs that support skills re-orientation and to ensure that public works schemes do not displace jobs and do not absorb people that could have filled open labour market vacancies.

Figure 2.6. Ireland is ageing rapidly, but its working-age population is projected to grow

Projected growth in the working-age population (20-64 years) between 2022 and 2050 and share of people aged 65 and older among the total population, in 2022 and 2050 (projected)



Note: OECD and EU27 are weighted averages.
Source: Calculations based on the OECD dataset: Population projections http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=88954.

StatLink https://stat.link/s0zij9

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Note

[1] In terms of constant prices at 2022 USD and accounting for purchasing power parities.

3 The role of public employment services and two public works programmes in Ireland

This chapter outlines how the public employment service (PES) in Ireland is set-up to help connect people with jobs and details the active labour market policies that it utilises to help achieve this goal. The chapter goes into detail on two of Ireland's active labour market programmes, its public works schemes called Community Employment (CE) and Tús, to outline the aims, objectives, organisation, and changes over time. The discussion in this chapter sets the context for the impact evaluation of both CE and Tús that follows in the report.

3.1. Introduction

The chapter discusses the system of support Ireland has in place for its jobseekers, covering the services and programmes it provides to jobseekers and their changes over time. It also discusses in more detail the Tús and Community Employment (CE) programmes, two large activation programmes that Ireland has to support its long-term unemployed individuals. These programmes are also evaluated in more detail later in this report.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, the different institutions responsible for supporting jobseekers are outlined and their interactions are described. A description is given on how this has changed over time and the reasons underlying these changes. Second, an outline of the customer journey is provided, to illustrate the path that is taken when jobseekers engage with public employment services in Ireland. Detail is also provided on the main active labour market policies (ALMPs) that are available to support jobseekers, to provide greater qualitative information on the range of support and services that jobseekers can engage with. Third, the discussion moves to Tús and CE, where the history of the programmes is presented, their evolution over time is provided and this is contextualised in the broader objectives that they have. An overview of the previous evidence on the effectiveness of the CE scheme is also presented.

3.2. Intreo provides integrated support to connect people with jobs

Delivery of support to jobseekers is conducted and co-ordinated by a range of stakeholders, but the principal actors are the public employment service (PES), Intreo, and the Department of Social Protection (DSP). DSP is Ireland's ministry with responsibility for the operation of the PES and for implementation of ALMPs for jobseekers. Its main functions across the labour market include formulating policies and advising the government on legislation for employment services, the labour market, social protection and inclusion. This includes the design and development of effective income support policies, provision of employment services and information to its customers, alongside administering an effective regime to mitigate fraud and error in

the social protection system. It aims to discharge these duties seamlessly working alongside the other departments, agencies and bodies with which it delivers services (DSP, 2022[1]).

The delivery of DSP's labour market and income support services to jobseekers is conducted via Intreo, working with Intreo partners who deliver contracted-out employment services. Intreo provides income support while Intreo Employment Services and Intreo Partners provide a streamlined approach offering practical employment support and services. In 2021, there were 62 Intreo Centres spread across Ireland offering services to jobseekers and single parents. Intreo Centres employed around 300 dedicated employment counsellors (known as employment personal advisers and job coaches) and the objective is to increase this number to around 450 as part of its Pathways to Work 2021-25 strategy (DSP, 2021[2]). Contracted-out employment services will bring the total number of counsellors funded by DSP to around 1 000. By the end of 2021, 100 of the extra 150 case officers had been allocated (LMAC, 2022[3]).

3.2.1. The PES has centralised services and increased activation requirements over time

Intreo was introduced to bring together employment services and income support administration

The introduction of Intreo in 2012 was intended to simplify the pathway of support for jobseekers via the integration of previously disparate services relating to different aspects of labour market support. Before services were brought together, jobseekers had to interact with three separate agencies – the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP; now renamed DSP), the Community Welfare Service (CWS) and FÁS (the training and employment body now replaced by SOLAS) (Kelly et al., 2019[4]). Bringing these services together under one organisation decreased the number of contact points for customers and meant that services could be delivered in a more joined up manner.

The integration of benefit administration and employment services, replacing previously separate services, had been shown in other countries to bring economic benefits through increased efficiency (for example, the creation of Jobcentre Plus in the United Kingdom in 2002, see (Riley et al., 2011[5])). Indeed, Kelly et al. (2019[4]) find in their evaluation of the introduction of Intreo, a greater impact on the transition rate from the Live Register (the register dataset of open unemployment benefit claims) to "other" statuses, rather than into work. They attribute this to better early identification of invalid unemployment claims. They also found marginal improvements in exits to employment. The caveat with this research is the short time period (one year only) of post-reform data that the study considered. A study with a longer period of post-reform data would be beneficial to ascertain how these effects have bedded-in over time.

Intreo continued the previous activation regime but augmented it to introduce conditionality earlier in the unemployment spell

In 1997 Ireland introduced its first activation reforms, the National Employment Action Plans (NEAPs), but they had few activation requirements and were still too focused on passive income support (McGuinness et al. (2011[6]); Grubb, Singh and Tergeist (2009[7])). These reforms provided employment services but focused on targeting only certain groups of jobseekers. In the first instance, only jobseekers under 25 years old on the Live Register were subject to activation. This was then expanded to all individuals with over six months of unemployment, before this duration threshold was reduced to three months in 2006. Individuals in scope for activation were referred for a one-to-one counselling interview with a FÁS (Training and Employment Authority) Employment Services Officer. This included guidance and job search assistance and possible (voluntary) referral to an ALMP. If individuals did not attend this meeting, they would go back to their Social Welfare Local Office (DEASP operated centres where benefit administration was conducted), where a DEASP deciding officer would determine whether or not non-attendance was sanctionable and DEASP Job Facilitators could identify barriers to participation and explore other labour market entry routes. In practice, the intended regime was not consistently applied. Indeed, despite the presence of a regime where conditionality and sanctioning existed in principle, the lack of a stringent enforcement has been attributed by some researchers to the fact

that attendance at job search assistance meetings were in fact associated with longer spells of unemployment (McGuinness, O'Connell and Kelly, 2019[8]). A lack of data sharing across organisations precluded effective tracking of a jobseeker through their claim period and fragmentation resulted in re-work and incorrect application of conditionality rules (Kelly et al., 2019[4]).

The introduction of Intreo came as part of a package of measures agreed with the EU and IMF in response to the rapid rise in unemployment following the global financial crisis in 2008. This package aimed to increase job search requirements, improve work incentives, and strengthen sanctions for non-compliance with job-search requirements. The new PES model was introduced in 2011 and its name changed to Intreo in 2012. Alongside the integration of services in this new "one stop shop", activation for claimants began immediately (contrary to starting at month three of claim in the NEAPs) and was underpinned by a principle of mutual jobseeking obligations between jobseekers and the PES. The Intreo reforms formalised the agreements between jobseekers and the PES on what actions to take when looking for work, known as personal progression plans (PPP). PPPs were already available under the NEAP model but weakly enforced. The Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 signed into law reduced rates of pay for any jobseeker declining any type of PES intervention offered to them to assist re-entry to the labour market. This provided clearer guidelines on sanctionable offences and penalties for non-compliance. However, despite these reforms, overall activation requirements for unemployment insurance in Ireland still place it in the bottom quintile of strictness among OECD countries and it has become less strict over time relative to other OECD countries (Immervoll and Knotz, 2018[9]).

Improved case management processes enabled service differentiation

A new case management system in Intreo linked unemployment benefit payments to active engagement with jobseekers, to support them into employment or training. Because all activity relating to a jobseeker's unemployment claim was now undertaken by Intreo, rather than by separate administration, advice and job seeking agencies, it meant that that a unified view of an individual's case was possible. This allowed the end-to-end journey of an individual to be managed at the same time. One key aspect of

the reform to employment services when Intreo was formed was the introduction of a profiling tool, intended to improve the targeting of ALMPs (see Box 3.1). This tool was designed to predict the probability that an individual would become long-term unemployed and so allow greater resources to be focused on those with greater risk. Designing service provision in this manner helps to ensure equity of outcomes (by giving those with greater likely of future labour market disadvantage more support) but its effect on efficiency of government spending is ambiguous (it could be more or less efficient to focus spending on these individuals, depending on the relative change to their outcomes compared to other groups).

Box 3.1. PEX (Probability of exit)– Intreo's tool for customer segmentation

Intreo introduced the "PEX" (probability of exit) score in 2012 to predict the likelihood that a customer exits the Live Register of unemployment before 12 months. It is a tool for segmentation to focus finite resources and deliver more intensive support to customers at greater risk of long-term unemployment.

PEX was designed using a specially designed survey tested during a 13-week period in 2006 on new claimants on the Live Register (34 000 of whom remained in the final model calculations). The survey collected data on factors such as education, literacy/numeracy levels, health, access to transport, employment and unemployment history, and participation in ALMPs, such as CE. Survey data were combined with additional information from directly collected administrative data, such as location, marital status and spousal earnings.

Predictive models were split into male and female. Although many characteristics influenced risk similarly, married or separated females were less likely to leave the Live Register, alongside those whose spouse was a high earner, contrary to the male population. For those with a predicted probability of remaining on the Live Register above 80%, the model correctly predicted long-term unemployment for 83% of males and 85% of females.

Profiling problems: The "un-surveyed" population

Two problems arose with the use of a survey on new entrants for risk scoring. Incomplete compliance left some newly registered jobseekers without a PEX score, and other individuals were already on the Live Register and could not be surveyed. DSP attempted to remedy this by commissioning a model to be built utilising solely administrative data. This was designed to identify the factors associated with remaining on the Live Register for 12 months (in contrast to the PEX score which looks at the probability of exiting prior to 12 months), as a measure of "labour market disadvantage". In this way, DSP had some similar information that could be used to triage support for those jobseekers that had not answered a survey.

2022 update to the PEX model

Although original guidance suggested updates every three years, the first formal update of the model was published in 2022, utilising a sample of jobseekers from 2018. The models remained relatively stable over time. However, in the 2022 update older workers were less likely to exit the Live Register and marital status was no longer an important factor for females, but access to own transport was.

A decomposition analysis on the updated model identified that just eight profiling questions together accounted for 85% of the variance in the data. In order of importance, they were (1) claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JA); (2) recent employment history; (3) education; (4) self-perceived health; (5) a history of long-term unemployment; (6) having previously been on the CE scheme; (7) having access to own transport; and (8) age. The performance of the PEX model was very similar using only this subset of questions, compared to one based on all the data.

Source: O'Connell et al. (2009[10]), National Profiling of the Unemployed in Ireland, https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS10.pdf; McGuinness et al. (2022[11]), Predicting The Probability Of Long-Term Unemployment And Recalibrating Ireland's Statistical Profiling Model, https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS149_0.pdf; McGuinness, Kelly and Walsh (2014[12]), Predicting the Probability of Long-Term Unemployment in Ireland Using Administrative Data, https://www.esri.ie/publications/predicting-the-probability-of-long-term-unemployment-in-ireland-using-administrative-0.

Intreo has continued to modernise systems and service based around harnessing digitisation

In 2021 a review was initiated by Intreo regional operations (centralised DSP teams with regional oversight of local offices) tasked with evaluating the structure of regional operations. The first phase of the review gathered insight from over 450 staff members in local offices and in the regional management teams. The review recognised that the original service model for Intreo was not sustainable in the future. The original service model was based around locally accessed paper records for customers. This created localised and independent geographic centres, where all operations pertaining to a client had to be undertaken by the local office where the paper records were held. This meant that specialisation across services was not possible, as local managers were required to cover all services. For example, administrative tasks could not be completed by a centralised team specialising in only this task because these tasks had to be carried out by local staff in the office at which the client's paper records were held.

The outcome of this review was the creation of a new operating model harnessing the power of digitalisation to increase specialisation of team functions, which commenced in January 2022. Larger functional teams are envisaged, managed by specialist managers. By using digital records, it means that localised processing of paper records will no longer be required. Specialist centralised teams will be able to process similar tasks relating to jobseekers across the entire country and tasks will not be dependent on access to physical records housed in local offices. Instead, tasks can be carried out remotely by the newly created specialised team. This will allow these teams to work with larger volumes of cases, spread across larger geographical areas. The vision is that this specialisation will also increase consistency of decision-making and service provision across the organisation as there will be less scope for local interpretation and divergence, as all similar tasks will be completed by specialist teams.

The new organisation will introduce standardisation of regional reporting, using digital records, which it is hoped will increase accuracy and allow better evaluation of and improvement to local service provision (DSP, 2022[1]).

3.2.2. Customer journeys are tailored to long-term unemployment risk

Table 3.1 provides an illustrative overview of the customer journey that individuals take when applying for unemployment benefits, to show the common service elements and those that are specific to different groups of jobseekers. Service offerings are dependent on PEX scores to profile individual risk of long-term unemployment.

Table 3.1. Jobseekers have differing levels of PES contact in their first year of unemployment

Timing	Low PEX	Medium PEX	High PEX
Start of claim	Group information session: Information provided on range of support available and case management process. Access to Digital Pathway to Work.		
Months 1 to 12: Caseworker meetings	Monthly (fortnightly for those <30)	Every 2 months	1st meeting at month 6 Then every 2 months
Month 12 of claim	Beginning of referral to services for long-term unemployed, including, Intreo Partners (contracted employment service), and most public employment programmes.		

Note: PEX: probability of exiting the Live Register. This is a score which is estimated when jobseekers make a claim for unemployment benefits and estimates an individual's likelihood of exiting the Live Register before one year of unemployment. It is based on a questionnaire integrated into the claim form for unemployment benefits and supplemented with administrative data. A low PEX indicates a high likelihood of remaining unemployed for one year.
Source: OECD adaption of Figure 2.2, Kelly et al. (2019[4]), *An initial evaluation of the effectiveness of Intreo activation reforms*, Research Series, No. 81, The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Dublin, https://doi.org/10.26504/rs81.

When a customer makes a claim for unemployment benefits, they do so in an Intreo office (or via the available online portal, Mywelfare.ie). At this stage, they complete the PEX statistical profiling model which enables the triage of services offered to jobseekers. Individuals are grouped into whether they have a low, medium, or high probability of leaving unemployment prior to 12 months.

After the PEX score has been computed, the next stage is to offer jobseekers a group information session (GIS), which is conducted at local Intreo offices. Approximately 30 people are invited to each GIS, which is undertaken with the intention of achieving a minimum of 20 attendees. On their first day, claimants are also given information about the support that they will receive from the DSP, their role in the PES activation process and what will happen if they do not actively engage with the DSP (Kelly et al., 2019[4])

After attendance at the GIS, claimants will have different levels of contact with EPAs/JCs dependent on the result of their PEX score and age. Table 3.1 shows the prescribed service levels that the risk profiling brings. For individuals with a low probability of finding employment, a meeting with an Intreo case officer is intended

monthly (or more frequently for people under 30), for those with a medium probability of employment within 12 months a meeting with a case officer is prescribed every two months, whilst the most likely to find employment receive their first meeting at month six and then proceed with meetings every two months thereafter. However, whilst this is the intended policy regime, it is difficult to know in practice how rigidly these rules are adhered to by different Intreo offices. Having a set of internal monitoring metrics, to allow DSP to monitor how closely Intreo offices follow this policy regime is important in ensuring that individuals in different geographies can access the same level of support and will also allow better insight into how any policy variation may affect individual job finding rates.

After 12 months of unemployment, the service offering reverts to a unified offering for all jobseekers. At this stage, the customers are predominantly referred to Intreo partners, an external provision that DSP has procured. This can include contact with a range of contracted-out service providers or direct employment via one of the available public employment programmes. More details on schemes are provided in the following section.

3.2.3. Ireland's ALMP spending is heavily focused on direct job creation

The objective of ALMPs is to improve the labour market integration of people – usually unemployed and underemployed people but extending also to people who have left the labour force and to groups distant from the labour market. For Ireland, expenditure on ALMPs is concentrated on the provision of public works for the long-term unemployed. However, ALMPs may also target those in employment, such as people who have low-skills and low-wage workers, younger and older workers. Examples of this kind of support in Ireland, for individuals with some kind of existing work, are described below.

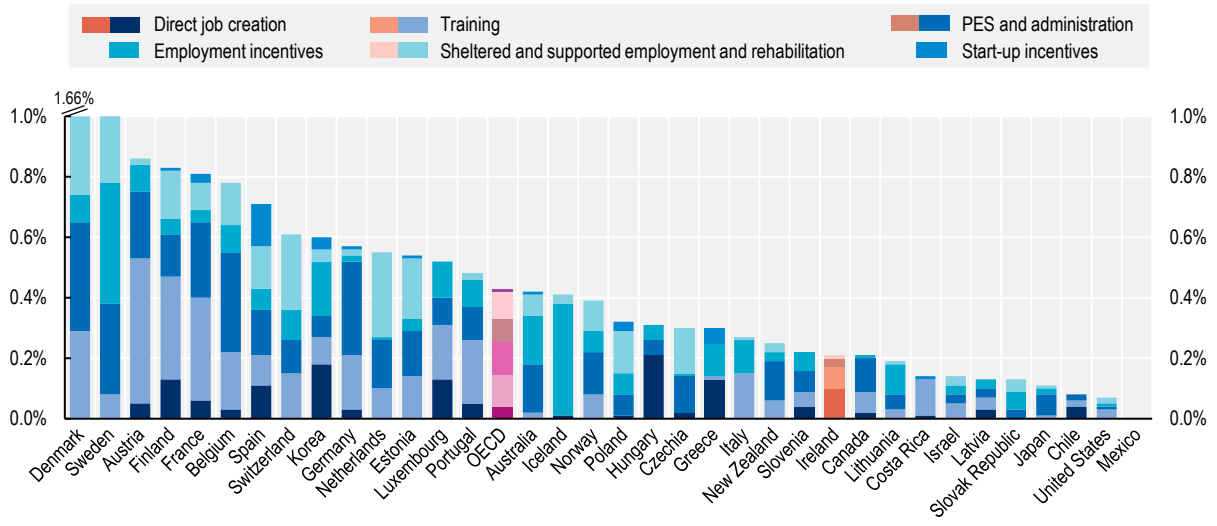
ALMPs can take many different forms: some are focused on the supply side of the labour market, others on the demand side, while yet others are intended to improve the quality of matching of labour supply with demand. Beyond the job search assistance and monitoring that is a part of any reciprocal nature of jobseeker payments, the referral of jobseekers to other ALMPs is an acknowledgment of the need to broaden the effort to find employment, with programmes offering training or education,

experience in a workplace, or skills or support with self-employment. Indeed, despite its relative focus on public works jobs, Ireland provides a range of ALMPs targeting these different needs.

The majority of ALMPs in Ireland become available to PES clients only after they reach one year of unemployment and two of its largest ALMPs are public works jobs schemes. Indeed, a large proportion (50%) of Ireland's spending on ALMPs is on direct job creation. Figure 3.1 shows that in 2021, Ireland spent 0.21% of its GDP (or 0.37% of the modified GNI) on ALMPs, less than half of the average across 33 OECD countries (0.43%). However, despite the relatively lower overall level of spending, it was the 7th highest spending country on direct job creation as a percentage of GDP (0.10%). Ireland's high spending on direct job creation, both as a proportion of GDP and as a proportion of total ALMP spending, relative to other OECD countries, is something that has persisted over the past two decades or so.

Figure 3.1. Ireland spends less than the OECD average on ALMPs in total but has a high share of that spending on direct job creation

Spending on labour market policies and measures as a share of GDP by main categories, 2021



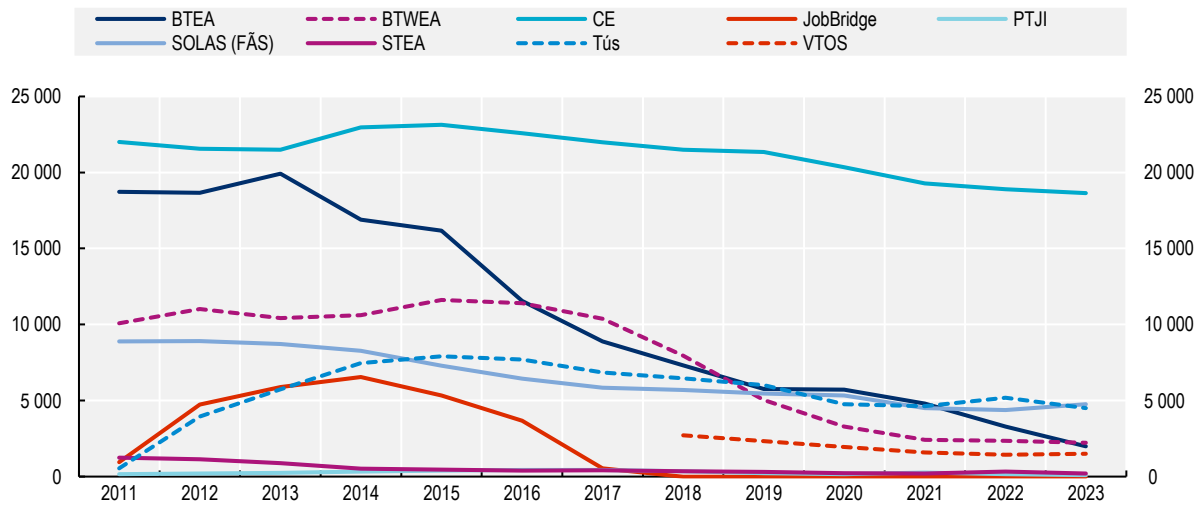
ALMP: Active labour market policies; PES: Public employment service.
Note: Sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation in Denmark continues to 1.66%. OECD is an unweighted average of the 340 countries shown. Employment incentives exclude category 4.2 (Employment maintenance incentives), to remove as much as possible measures that are specific to COVID-19. Data refer to 2020 for Italy.
Source: OECD (n.d.[13]), OECD dataset: *Public expenditure and participant stocks on LMP*, http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=28935.

StatLink https://stat.link/j9bk43

The emphasis on direct job creation in Ireland's overall ALMP spending is observed in the participant numbers of its two large public employment schemes, CE and Tús (Figure 3.2). Since 2004 CE has averaged around 23 000 active participants per year. This figure has been augmented by an extra 7 000 active Tús participants per year since the latter's introduction in 2011. By contrast, the two largest training offers, the Back to Education Allowance and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, averaged only around 17 000 annual participants (58% of the combined CE and Tús participant volumes), despite having a much wider pool of potential participants. Both training schemes are open to all jobseekers regardless of their unemployment duration, whereas CE and Tús require jobseekers to have been registered with Intreo for at least a year. JobBridge is no longer operational, but ran across the period 2011-15, the timeframe in which the analysis later in this report takes place.

Figure 3.2. Community Employment has been the major component of ALMPs

Annual average participant levels by scheme, 2011-23



Note: ALMPs: Active labour market policies; BTWEA: Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, BTEA: Back to Education Allowance, CE: Community Employment, VTOS: Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, PTJI: Part-Time Job Incentive, STEA: Short-Term Enterprise Allowance. Data for VTOS are unreliable pre-2018.
Source: Central Statistics Office (n.d.[14]), CSO.ie Live Register Activation Programmes, https://data.cso.ie/table/LRM14.

StatLink https://stat.link/w1rtgm

When considering the range of ALMPs offered in Ireland, it is worth placing them in the context of the range of supports that cater for individuals who blend some degree of work and income support, which is of particular relevance to Chapter 5.

Jobseekers can work for up to three in seven days and continue to receive a jobseeker's payment in respect of the remaining days (casual claims). Other DSP schemes offer some support to families where a long-term unemployed person is returning to work, to people who are exiting long-term unemployment to self-employment, and to families where earnings from employment fall below a certain threshold (determined by family size).

In the case of start-up supports, the income support continues in the initial period of self-employment, in recognition of the challenge of moving from long-term unemployment to self-employment. In the other cases, there is some degree of employment but the days of employment, or the earnings from employment, fall below a certain threshold, or leading to an entitlement to some form of support. These supports are described below:

- Part-time Job Incentive: The Part-Time Job Incentive (PTJI) Scheme allows certain people getting Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) to take up part-time work and get a special weekly allowance instead of their jobseeker's payment. For people who work for less than 24 hours per week and have been unemployed for at least 15 months, it is intended to be a steppingstone to full-time work.
- Back to Work Family Dividend: The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) helps families to move from social welfare into employment. It gives financial support to people with children who stop claiming a jobseeker's payment or a One-Parent Family Payment because they are in work or start work. Work includes employment or self-employment. BTWFD is paid for up to two years. To qualify for BTWFD, claimants and all family members must sign off all primary social welfare payments.
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance: The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) scheme encourages people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. Those who take part in the BTWEA scheme can keep a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to two years.

- Short Term Enterprise Allowance: A similar scheme is targeted at short-term unemployed people in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit, providing support to people who have lost their job and want to start a business. In addition to income support (a weekly payment), individuals can also get financial support with the costs of setting up a business.
- Working Family Payment: Working Family Payment (WFP) is a weekly tax-free payment for employees with children. It supports people who are on low pay and work at least 38 hours per fortnight.

Alongside these blended supports, a brief overview of the ALMPs and employment services offered by DSP is now provided for further context ahead of the sequence analysis conducted in Chapter 5. A fuller exposition of Tús and CE is presented in sections 3.3 and 3.4, to provide background the individual evaluation of these schemes in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7:

- CE – part-time (19.5 hours per week) and temporary (one year) placements in jobs in local communities for long-term jobseekers and other eligible groups. To qualify for CE, jobseekers must have been getting qualifying social welfare payments for 12 months or more. Participants can undertake repeat placements up to certain limits. More details are given on eligibility in Section 3.4
- Tús – a community work placement providing one year working opportunities for unemployed people. One year limit, contrary to the longer limit in CE. The work is designed to help the community, and it is with community and voluntary organisations. To qualify for Tús individuals must have been continuously unemployed for 12 months, and currently be getting a Jobseeker's Allowance payment, or be in receipt of a Jobseeker's Transitional payment (JST). No qualifying period applies for JST.
- Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) – programmes of full-time educational courses (at 2nd or 3rd level) to get qualifications that will help individuals to find a job. To qualify for Back to Education Allowance, individuals must be: recommended by a case officer, meet the age criteria (usually over 21, or 24 for masters level courses), be in receipt of certain social welfare payments; and accepted onto a qualifying course.

- JobsPlus – a payment to encourage employers to employ jobseekers who have been unemployed for 12 months or more and who satisfy certain conditions. These payments are either EUR 7 500 or EUR 10 000 and Intreo pays employers directly.
- JobBridge – a national internship scheme (no longer in operation) for individuals on the Live Register for over three months offering an additional subsidy on their unemployment benefit for participation. Employers must not have made any redundancies in the previous three months.
- JobPath – contracted employment services programme (no longer in operation) to help long-term unemployed find employment. Two companies – Seetec and Turas Nua – ran the contracts. DSP selected clients on a random basis and referred them to JobPath. Jobseekers were assigned a personal advisor who met with them regularly to help them develop a PP and, provide training guidance and job finding support. Support continued for 3-12 months post-employment.

Box 3.2. "Pathways to Work" and systematic ALMP evaluation

DSP has broad objectives on the promotion of active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment and other services. Its rolling national employment services strategy, Pathways to Work, envisages a continuous programme of formal analytical evaluations of its programmes to support these objectives.

Certain interventions will be of more relevance to particular cohorts given their starting circumstances, such as an education or skills deficits or a lack of recent employment experience, but the objective of the programme of formal evaluations under Pathways to Work is to add evidence on the measured impact of the intervention as well as which ALMPs work best for specific cohorts. With sufficient evidence of programme impact, the PES can not only provide the range of ALMPs but also advise based on the employment trajectories of jobseekers with similar characteristics.

Pathways to Work reviews how governance, reporting and generation of evidence support DSP's objectives. The results of this strategy are designed to feed into evidence-based policy decisions and improvements to the programmes and services offered to jobseekers.

Pathways to Work 2016-20 saw a number of programme evaluations completed

Between 2015 and 2020 evaluations were completed on several of Ireland's ALMPs. Reports were published on BTEA, JobBridge, BTWEA, Intreo (looking at the functioning of the PES service as a whole), JobPath and JobsPlus during this period.

These evaluations all made use of Ireland's extensive administrative micro-data to utilise quasi-experimental techniques such as propensity score matching, difference-in-difference and sequence analysis. These techniques enabled robust counterfactual estimates of programme impacts to identify causal impacts.

Pathways to Work 2021-25 reviews progress and updates the evaluation work programme

Having taken stock of the evaluations conducted in the previous cycle of its employment strategy, the current Pathways to Work cycle focuses on CE as being the initial priority for evaluation due to its importance in the suite of Irish ALMPs and the relatively long period since a counterfactual impact evaluation for the programme was last conducted (in 2000). External expert advice on the evaluations is provided by the evaluation sub-group of Ireland's Labour Market Advisory Council (LMAC).

In addition, twice-yearly customer surveys will be extended to encompass all external service providers to provide detailed feedback on client satisfaction and aid the review of services to jobseekers (having previously been implemented in the last cycle for Intreo and JobPath clients).

This will sit alongside the quarterly reporting of key performance indicators and an annual review and report on the progress of all the commitments made in the Pathways to Work strategy. A breakpoint to review and refresh the strategy was introduced for 2023 and an audit on DSP administrative data comprehensiveness, consistency, reliability and range scheduled to facilitate longitudinal analysis of outcomes.

Note: For information on the LMAC can be found at: www.gov.ie/en/publication/656a27-labour-market-advisory-council/; DSP evaluations are listed here: www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/5683a-labour-market-analytics/#evaluations.
Source: Cronin et al. (2019[15]), JobsPlus evaluation. Technical report, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/986782; Cronin, Hardiman and Judge (2017[16]), Back To Work Enterprise Allowance – a counterfactual impact evaluation (Working paper); DEASP (2019[17]), Evaluation of JobPath outcomes for Q1 2016 participants, https://www.gov.ie/ga/foilsiuchan/0939ba-working-paper-evaluation-of-jobpath-outcomes-for-q1-2016-participant/; Indecon International Research Economists (2016[18]), Indecon Evaluation of JobBridge Activation Programme; Kelly et al. (2019[4]), An initial evaluation of the effectiveness of Intreo activation reforms, Research Series, No. 81, https://doi.org/10.26504/rs81; Kelly, McGuiness and Walsh (2015[19]), An evaluation of the Back to Education Allowance. https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS47.pdf.

3.3. Tús introduced work placements to mitigate large increases to long-term unemployment

The public works programme Tús was launched in December 2010 and became operational in 2011, to provide short-term employment opportunities, and thus income, to beneficiaries while delivering a service that is of value to society. This was in the

aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, where the unemployment rate in Ireland increased from 4.9% at the end of 2007 to 14.5% at the end of 2012. Prior to the official launch of Tús, at the end of November 2010, the number of registered unemployed of at least one year's duration stood at over 150 000.

3.3.1. Tús has a dual objective of supporting jobseekers and managing the numbers on the Live Register

Tús has dual objectives of providing opportunities to long-term unemployed people to re-engage with the labour market and to manage the number of long-term jobseekers on the Live Register, which is Ireland's unemployment register.

Tús aims to provide people with employment related experience to re-enter the labour market. It also aims to boost a person's motivation and confidence and offer them opportunities to experience different work environments.[1] While there is no requirement for participants to engage in job search while on Tús, a key element of the engagement is to identify other work, training and education opportunities. While on Tús, participants can take up other employment and are supported to do this, provided any such work does not interfere with their Tús commitments. Participants may terminate their engagement on Tús at any time to take up full-time work, training and education opportunities once they do not return to the Live Register.

It is a stated objective of Tús that it will contribute to the management of the Live Register. Participants are randomly selected from the Live Register and Live Register sanctions may apply to those who do not avail of an offer of placements. In this way, Tús contributes to the organisation of the Live Register in identifying those who are unemployed but may not be available for, or actively seeking, work.

Eligibility is open to people on the Live Register (that is, who have been unemployed) for at least 12 months and in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JA). Not all of those who are on the Live Register will be eligible for referral to Tús. People signing for credited contributions are not in receipt of a jobseeker payment and are not eligible. Similarly, people who are in part-time employment but are receiving a partial jobseeker payment are not eligible.

Tús placements are delivered and managed at local level

The network of development companies responsible for the administration of Tús are collectively known as the Implementing Bodies (IBs). These are local development companies, or *Údarás na Gaeltachta* in the case of the delivery and management of the initiative in Gaeltacht areas. Each IB is awarded a specific quota of Tús placements at both supervisory and participant level, based on the distribution of registered unemployed in the area.

The IBs manage the day-to-day implementation of Tús and the supervision of participants on behalf of DSP. They are also responsible for advertising and promoting the initiative and identifying suitable work placements and community groups in their respective geographical locations. IBs are responsible for evaluating and selecting organisations to provide work opportunities. Pobal operates a payroll function on behalf of the Department of Social Protection.

3.3.2. There is a randomisation element in the selection but less so in Tús participation

DSP randomly selects a subsample among individuals meeting the eligibility criteria outlined above. Once selected, the DSP writes to each person, offering them the opportunity to be considered for a work placement opportunity in Tús and requesting their consent to have their contact details shared with the IB operating in their area should they agree to participate. Those agreeing to participate and to having their contact details shared with the IB are then referred to the relevant IB.

The IB will then contact the potential participant and invite them for an initial assessment interview to determine their interest, work and educational background and other relevant facts in order to attempt to find a suitable work placement. Failure to participate in the Tús scheme for reasons other than the taking up of full-time employment or education, may be penalised by being disqualified from receiving a Jobseeker's Allowance payment for up to nine weeks under the provisions of Section 147(4) of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 2005.

3.3.3. On average there are around 7 000 Tús participants at any one time

When Tús was introduced in 2011, up to 5 000 placements were initially announced. As part of the 2013 Budget package an additional 2 500 placements were announced in line with the commitments set out in the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work. Table 3.2 below details the scale of the Tús programme since its introduction and throughout the analysis period 2011-18.

Tús participants receive a monthly payment equivalent to their existing jobseeker payment plus a top-up. The amount of the top-up increased from EUR 20 when the programme was launched in 2011 to EUR 22.50 in 2016. Since January 2023 the top-up amount has increased to EUR 27.50. Table 3.2 also captures the weekly payment rates (personal rates) for Tús participants, the additional amounts received for any eligible dependents in the household (qualified child and adult allowances), and the total expenditure associated with the scheme.

Table 3.2. Tús recipients, beneficiaries, rates and expenditure 2011-18

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Recipients	2 077	4 530	6 999	7 877	7 818	7 140	6 256	6 366
Qualified adult	665	1 268	1 895	2 056	1 889	1 703	1 547	1 449
Qualified children	1 600	3 016	4 454	4 782	4 650	4 516	4 263	3 896
Beneficiaries	4 342	8 814	13 348	14 715	14 357	13 359	12 066	11 711
Personal rate, EUR		208	208	208	208	210.5	215.5	220.5
Qualified adult allowance, EUR		124.8	124.8	124.8	124.8	124.8	128.1	131.4
Qualified child increase, EUR		29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	31.8
Expenditure (EUR million)	11.76	67.06	92.06	116.05	124.58	118.6	109.4	105.98

Source: DSP (2020[20]), *Annual Statistics Report 2019*, Department of Social Protection, www.gov.ie/en/publication/02f594-annual-sws-statistical-information-report/.

StatLink https://stat.link/8hqd0b

Participants work 19.5 hours per week and hours of attendance may be spread across the day, including evenings and Saturdays, to meet work requirements.

The Tús placements are set at a maximum of 12-months' duration to allow those who have become distanced from the labour market to avail of short-term quality work placements and break the cycle of unemployment. Participants are required to

complete the full 52 weeks unless they wish to take up an offer of full-time employment, education, or training. Contracts cannot be renewed or extended. Having completed a 52-week placement on Tús, a participant cannot subsequently participate on Tús for a minimum of three years.

3.3.4. Tús placements are community-based delivered by not-for-profit enterprises

Organisations providing Tús placements are community-based. In general, all work undertaken, and services delivered by the community and voluntary sectors for the benefit of the community or specific sectors can be considered eligible as Tús work opportunities.

More specifically, organisations wishing to work with IBs must meet the following criteria:

- Be community, voluntary and not-for-profit in nature.
- Have a recognised informal (parish or community committee, trade, sporting, cultural or other association) or formal or legal structure (a company limited by guarantee, not-for-profit co-operative or friendly society where profits or surpluses are not distributed to members).
- Demonstrate a track record of working with or providing services to and within their communities.
- Demonstrate a capability of managing a participant in a placement with the supervisory support of the Implementing Body.

Community organisations engaged in the provision of local services with the support of other publicly supported programmes such as the Community Services Programme, Community Employment Scheme, Jobs Initiative or the Rural Social Scheme and voluntary organisations funded by the Health Services Executive are considered eligible insofar as the placements do not displace or substitute employment supported under relevant programmes. Additionally, Citizens Information Centres and Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) are eligible.

Public bodies and commercial entities are not eligible to offer Tús placements. The broad categories of organisations not suitable to offer Tús placements include:

- Public bodies (including local authorities and the Health Service Executive) or the functions that are the statutory responsibility of these bodies.
- Individuals, sole traders, corporate or private bodies, commercial entities (for profit bodies or organisations) offering work placements.
- Fee paying schools and colleges.

3.4. CE is Ireland's long-standing job placement scheme for the long-term unemployed

CE was introduced in 1994, also at a time of high long-term unemployment and had a dual emphasis on provision of opportunity for the long-term unemployed to find work in addition to acting as a resource for local communities (DEASP, 2021[21]). CE provides part-time, temporary paid employment to people who are long-term unemployed. The extra material here provides context for the detailed quantitative assessment of the programme that comes later in this report and is particularly relevant given its long history as Ireland's main ALMP.

CE aims to provide participants with work experience, training, and personal development opportunities to help them gain the skills and confidence needed to secure permanent employment. CE schemes are run by local community and voluntary organisations, and the participants' wages are funded by the government. CE placements are typically managed on an annual basis, with participants able to renew placements subject to continuing eligibility and placement needs.

Expenditure on CE has remained relatively consistent over time, averaging EUR 350 million per annum from 2011-18 (Table 3.3), despite large changes to the number of long-term unemployed over this same period. This consistency in expenditure is driven largely by consistent recipient numbers, as the rates for CE were frozen in nominal terms between 2011 and 2015.

Table 3.3. CE recipients, beneficiaries, rates and expenditure 2011-18

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Recipients	22 589	22 445	23 943	23 249	24 218	22 356	21 832	21 424
Qualified adult	2 988	4 152	5 740	6 685	6 748	6 365	6 110	4 760
Qualified children (Full rate)	16 861	10 236	9 327	8 787	8 360	8 073	7 560	6 204
Qualified children (Half rate)	0	4 550	6 092	6 948	6 842	6 326	6 013	1 675
Beneficiaries	42 438	41 383	45 192	45 669	46 565	43 407	42 028	35 419
Personal rate, EUR	208	208	208	208	208	210.5	215.5	220.5
Qualified adult allowance, EUR	124.8	124.8	124.8	124.8	124.8	124.8	128.1	131.4
Qualified child increase, EUR	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	29.8	31.8
Expenditure (EUR million)	349.4	330.4	341.25	359.47	364.99	356.34	350.49	353.07

Source: DSP (2020[20]), *Annual Statistics Report 2019*, Department of Social Protection, www.gov.ie/en/publication/02f594-annual-sws-statistical-information-report/.

StatLink https://stat.link/hgixu9

3.4.1. Sponsors, supervisors and DSP officers interact to deliver CE placements

The implementation of CE has remained fairly stable since the scheme's inception. DSP provides funding for sponsor organisations to employ participants. Supervisors within these organisations are responsible for the management of participants and for ensuring that the scheme is properly administered. DSP staff work with both sponsor's management teams and supervisors to ensure smooth operation of the scheme.

CE sponsors apply to DSP for places and employ participants

CE sponsors are the organisations for which the CE participants work. Sponsors must be non-profit and non-commercial organisations. Criteria for acceptance to become a CE sponsor include the ability to provide work experience or skills that are transferable to the open labour market; having the capacity to provide development and training geared towards job readiness; and the capacity to administer financial and non-financial records for the scheme. Sponsors are a mixture of voluntary community bodies, local authorities or schools. Voluntary bodies make up the bulk of this group, comprising around 95% of all sponsors (including community groups, which entered the classification in 2017 and replaced some of those previously listed as a voluntary body).

Each sponsor has to convene a project management committee, consisting of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and at least two ordinary members to run the affairs of the sponsor project in compliance with the rules laid down by DSP. One of these members must be nominated the Participant Development Officer (PDO). The PDO's role is to be responsible for participant development at the Committee level, engaging with the scheme supervisor to ensure that participants' Individual Learner Plans (ILP) are completed and up-to-date and training is undertaken by participants. They are also the point of liaison with DSP staff on all such matters. CE Sponsors receive funding from DSP for four main areas: participant allowances, supervisor costs, material costs, participant training. In 2014 allowances to participants made up 77% of the budget, supervisor costs 15%, materials 4% and training 2%. As of December 2021, there were 849 CE schemes, supporting 19 240 CE participants (DSP, 2022[1]). This represents an average of 22.7 participants per scheme and has increased since the 1990s, where there were around 14 participants per scheme (Deloitte & Touche, 1998[22]).

CE supervisors are employed by sponsors to manage participants

CE supervisors are employed directly by the CE sponsors, though the funding for their post is also paid for by DSP. There is usually one supervisor per scheme, unless the scheme participants rise above (circa) 25. With over 25 participants it is possible, with agreement from DSP, for the scheme to hire an assistant supervisor. Supervisor roles are advertised in the open labour market, but in practice many supervisors have previously been participants in CE, with their experience of the scheme providing them with a first-hand insight into work undertaken by participants.

Supervisor contracts are governed by guidance laid down by DSP. The contracts are full-time, for 39 hours per week (excluding lunch breaks). The duration of the contract is decided upon by the CE sponsor and the supervisor, but funding from DSP is guaranteed only for the duration of the CE agreement between DSP and sponsor organisation. Supervisors are excluded from Section 9 provision of the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003, which means that contracts cannot be of indefinite duration. It is stipulated that job performance reviews must be completed at months three, six and nine for new (assistant) supervisors. Wages for supervisors are determined by scales set by DSP and depend on the number of participants that

supervisors are responsible for (fewer than 15, or 15 and above) and how many years of experience a supervisor has (on a 4-point scale, which is incremented annually for each year of service). For example, in 2023 a supervisor with fewer than 15 participants would earn a weekly salary of EUR 524 on point 1 of the experience scale and EUR 696 on point 4 of the scale (these amounts would by EUR 710 and EUR 859 respectively for supervisors with 15 or more participants) (DSP, 2023[23])

A supervisor's role is to manage the training and development, pastoral and administrative details for the participants in their scheme. For instance, they have the responsibility of ensuring that all participants in their scheme have an up-to-date ILP. In practice this means developing an ongoing relationship to guide and mentor participants through the CE scheme, in addition with preparing them for the labour market after CE participation. CE supervisors will meet regularly – usually weekly or fortnightly – with their participants, though this can be more frequent and ad hoc, as the particular scheme, supervisor and participant dictate.

Community Development Officers provide the bridge between DSP and CE sponsors

Community Development Officers are DSP staff members who act as co-ordinators and manage the relationships with CE scheme sponsors. This can range from renewal of contracts to run CE schemes, approving additional job placements in a scheme and managing training and materials costs with the scheme. Community Development Officers are responsible for a geographical area and manage the related CE schemes in that area.

3.4.2. CE eligibility is dependent on individual characteristics

The programme is open to individuals who are over 21 years old and in receipt of certain social welfare payments for 12 months or more. There are a number of qualifying welfare payments, relating to different individual statuses. The main routes for eligibility are receipt of Jobseekers Allowance (social assistance), Jobseekers Benefit (unemployment insurance) and One-Parent Family Payment (lone parent

benefits). In December 2014 recipients of these benefits accounted for 87.6% of all participants (DSP, 2015[24]).

There is a lifetime participation limit which caps the maximum number of permitted years of participation. This is six years up to State Pension Age, or seven years for those with a qualifying disability-linked Social Welfare Payment. For individuals that enter the scheme after the age of 62, no limit to participation applies, allowing them to continue to retirement age. All participation prior to 2007 is disregarded for these limits.

Eligibility for CE has changed over the years, using some combination of length of receipt of qualifying benefits and age of participant. For example, prior to 2017 individuals aged under 55 had a lifetime participation limit of three years, those aged from 55-65 years had a limit of six years and all participation before the year 2000 was disregarded. The lower age limit for participants at this point was 25.

Some specific types of CE schemes target different client groups

Alongside the core offering of CE schemes, there are three specifically designed scheme types to cater for different client groups:

- Childcare Programme – In this scheme participants work in childcare services and work towards accreditation as an approved childcare assistant. The genesis of this scheme was geared particularly towards lone parents, so that they could easily combine their own childcare needs with a job in the sector.
- Health and Social Care Programme – This scheme was introduced following a review which recommended strengthening defined progression pathway for CE participants. CE Sponsors are organisations in the disability and care sector and participants undertake training to become carers in the social care sector.
- Drug Rehabilitation Programme – A dedicated programme to help those participants recovering from substance misuse. There is a much greater emphasis placed on these schemes to link in with local ancillary services, to support the participants as they recover from addiction.

In 2015, out of around 23 000 total available CE places there were 2 200 ring-fenced places for Childcare, 2 800 for Health and Social Care and 1 000 for Drug

Rehabilitation (DSP, 2015[24]). Due to the difficulty in the analysis of the Drug Rehabilitation programme, this programme is not included in the subsequent quantitative analysis later in the report.

3.4.3. Training is a core component of CE

A key difference in CE, breaking with the Social Employment Scheme that it replaced, was the incorporation from the outset of training provision. CE was intentionally designed as an integrated training and employment programme. This design made it clear that the scheme was to be primarily a labour market scheme and only secondarily a community development scheme (Grubb, Singh and Tergeist, 2009[7]).

Training is managed at an individual level using the ILPs, which record the agreement made by the CE participant and the sponsoring organisation. These plans are reported to DSP for monitoring purposes and managed through the relationship with the CDO, scheme supervisors and the PDO committee member.

A dedicated training budget is available for participants annually, though the amount per person has reduced substantially in both nominal and real terms over time. At the inception of CE in 1994, a budget equivalent to EUR 300 was available annually to spend on participants. However, at the 2012 Budget, training allowances were reduced by two-thirds and although some of this was restored the following year, the per person budget was only increased back to just EUR 250, where it remains now. In 2022, this is equivalent to a 55% real terms reduction in training budget per person compared to the amount at scheme inception.

Given the small budgets available, the majority of training within CE takes place on small-scale modular level. In 2014, “minor” training awards- which can be standalone or modular elements of “major” awards (usually contributing 15 credits towards a major award requiring 120 credits)- comprise over 96% of training taken in courses recognised by Ireland’s national education awarding body, FETAC. There were some 16 779 of these minor awards, in contrast to just 280 major awards. A further 22 230 training courses were completed which fell outside of the scope of FETAC and were largely focussed on mandatory training like health and safety and employment skills

(DSP, 2015[24]). Chapter 4 provides a more extensive review of CE training utilising the administrative data available in this report.

Increasing training budgets, allowing more scope for discretionary extra training budgets for individual cases, or aggregation of funding between participants would permit more individuals to undertake recognised major training awards and to build the skills necessary on their CV to unlock more jobs in the open labour market. Considering the mode of training, particularly with reference to greater online or virtual training, may also provide a means to more value-for-money training provision, that could facilitate greater skills accumulation, even in the absence of increased budget.

3.4.4. Over the years the scale and objectives of CE have been debated and augmented

As long-term unemployment fell from its highs of the mid-1990s, it precipitated debate as to the appropriate number of participants for the CE scheme, as private sector employment opportunities increased and concerns over the lock-in effects of CE increased. As early as 1998, an evaluation suggested that CE be reduced by around 6 000-8 000 places, from its level at the time of 41 000 participants (Deloitte & Touche, 1998[22]). This represented some 3% of total employment in the Irish economy at the time, which promoted an expansion of the community and voluntary sector. Following the earlier recommendations, CE fell from around 40 000 participants in 1998 to around 20 000 in 2003 (Grubb, Singh and Tergeist, 2009[7]), a level of which it has hovered around for the last 20 years or so. After the adjustments made following the earlier advice, there was remarkable stability of participant levels over time, even in the face of rapidly changing long-term unemployment levels (see Chapter 2 for details). This, alongside emerging evidence on the efficacy of public employment schemes relative to other ALMPs (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2018[25]) led to a further review of the placement of CE within the suite of ALMP provision in Ireland.

DSP published a review in 2015, which recommended several alterations to the scheme (DSP, 2015[24]). These included linking the number of CE places to changes in the Live Register. Given the stability of CE participant levels and the corresponding fall in the Live Register (both all Live Register claims and those open for more than one

year), it does not appear this recommendation has been fully implemented. This recommendation goes to the heart of the problem of operating a scheme with dual objectives as a tool for labour market integration on the one hand and a means to provide local services on the other. What makes sense from a labour market perspective (reducing scheme numbers as private-sector employment opportunities open up) is less obvious from a provision of local services perspective (whereby the effective funding of third-sector organisation labour would be removed via reductions in CE numbers and would need to be found elsewhere).

A dual strand approach was implemented to separate out CE disparate objectives

The DSP review (DSP, 2015[24]) grappled directly with this thorny issue of dual CE objectives, by proposing distinct “activation” and “social inclusion” strands within CE. Distinctions were made in the report between the expected proportion of individuals finding a job following a social inclusion placement (20%) and those following an activation placement (50%). The review was careful to detail that it was expected that CE placements that were defined as social inclusion or activation, rather than participants themselves. This was to avoid stigmatism of participants. However, it is a troublesome logical stance to take. It is individuals that find jobs. It was also historic job finding rates of specific groups of individuals that the report documented when proposing its strand targets. Furthermore, suggested eligibility for individuals for the two strands was based around an individual’s PEX score – their personalised risk score of becoming long-term unemployed. It seems difficult to reconcile the concept of the strands being defined around job roles when all of the dynamics sitting underneath them are inherently based around individuals.

The practical implementation of placement strands, following the evaluation, also gives some clues as to the difficulty of prescribing this distinction to job roles, and then to its underlying credibility once made. The report proposed that the distribution of the two strands was 34% activation and 66% social inclusion (DSP, 2015[24]). However, after its implementation these proportions have been inverted, with the activation strand accounting for 66% of places and the social inclusion strand accounting for 34%. Such

a wide swing in the relative proportions suggests the underlying fundamentals of such an approach are delicate at best. The recommendation (66% social inclusion roles) also provides a very stark illustration of the gradual morphing over time of CE, from a scheme designed primarily as a labour market support, to one where proposed changes move its main focus to be social inclusion.

To provide some supporting context on the peculiarities of the strand calculations, the estimation strategy used in DSP (2015[24]) to produce them is briefly discussed. The proportions in either activation or social inclusion were first estimated by sector. It was proposed that in the Childcare sector 65% of places would be in activation and in the Environment/Local Amenities sector 20% of places would be in activation. The realised employment rate after CE participation in both of those sectors was 24.8% and 24.4% respectively. So, despite large expected compositional differences in the make-up of CE jobs in those two sectors, almost no employment rate differences occurred prior to the strand distinction. The newly defined strands, alongside their expected employment rates (50% for activation and 20% for social inclusion) would imply a DSP employment rate target for Childcare CE of 39.5% and Environmental/Local Amenities CE of 26%, quite divorced from their previous realised employment rates. This feature was common across all sectors outlined in the report. Indeed, the recently published Inter-departmental report consultations found that stakeholders thought that activation and social inclusion were so intertwined it would be impossible to separate the two and 75% of respondents were in favour of every CE scheme having a mixture (DEASP, 2021[21]). With all of this in mind, it is hard to identify rational practical uses for the strand distinctions as they currently stand.

What can best be done to best manage this scheme with dual and divergent objectives?

An important step in the development of CE should be to take a step back in the policy making cycle, to define precisely what is meant by social inclusion. This should be absent of any link to outcomes related to individuals finding jobs (i.e. those related to activation not social inclusion). Once these objectives are precisely determined, then a set of metrics can be formulated upon which to measure them. For example, this may

be as simple as metrics on whether local services are provided effectively by CE, be that in volume or via customer satisfaction metrics. It could focus on social cohesion, measured via local surveys or captured indirectly through, e.g. participation intensity with local community groups. But whatever these objectives are, they need to be explicit; to be about social inclusion not activation; and they need the correct information captured to ensure their proper measurement. Until that is done, it is likely that opaque debate will continue that is largely masked by and conflated with labour market outcomes. When complete, it will then facilitate the correct debate as to whether CE is the correct vehicle to drive both of these ambitions forward and whether any modifications are necessary in order to help it achieve them.

3.4.5. Previous analysis of CE has found mixed evidence of labour market links

Despite the international evidence that public works schemes have negligible effects on employment (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2018[25]), previous analysis of CE has provided some re-assurance of its beneficial labour market impacts. The first evaluation of CE suggested that employment rates for males were some 6.5 percentage points higher after CE participation, and 8 percentage points higher for females, in comparison to the control group of long-term unemployed individuals on the Labour Force Survey (Deloitte & Touche, 1998[22]). However, this study relied on quite small sample sizes of CE participants for estimation and a crude methodology to create a counterfactual group of non-participants. A later study (Denny, Harmon and O'Connell, 2000[26]), using different survey data for the control group population, failed to detect significant employment effects for men but estimated a 12 percentage points increase in female employment rates, although at marginal statistical significance levels. Given the changing nature of CE over time, particularly as it became to coalesce more around its social inclusion objective, as the broader Irish economy evolved and as ALMP provision in Ireland modernised and expanded, it is important to update these analyses to determine to what extent these findings are replicated in the present day. The use of rich, linked administrative data and more recent counterfactual impact evaluation offer the possibility of more precision in the estimates than was the case with these two earlier studies.

3.5. Conclusion

Ireland has modernised its PES over the years, with a welcome streamlining of administrative processes and an increased focus on support that aims to help its jobseekers connect with jobs. However, its ALMP spending is still focussed primarily on direct job creation schemes, which have a mixed reputation among ALMPs, due to their long lock-in effects on participation and weaker links to private sector jobs.

There is mixed evidence from previous studies of the CE scheme itself, including some which do not find any effects and others which report positive results (particularly for women). However, there have been no studies of the scheme in the recent past. There has been no evaluation of Tús since its introduction in mid-2011.

CE schemes themselves are integral to providing a range of support services across both urban and rural communities in Ireland and because of this their role has always been more than just as a tool for labour market activation. This has resulted in continued debate on how best scheme meets its social objectives alongside its labour market objectives. Updating the relatively old previous analysis to illustrate how CE continues to meet its labour market objectives will be important to informing its continual operation.

In the case of Tús, it is important to establish how the scheme is performing, after a decade of referrals of long-term registered unemployed (Live Register) individuals to the scheme. These aspects are the focus of later chapters in this report.

Alongside these employment-related considerations, it will be important for CE to consider exactly what its objectives for social inclusion and how best to monitor and record progress of them.

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Note

[1] www.gov.ie/en/publication/e67506-operational-guidelines-tus-community-work-placement-initiative/

4 Administrative data sources for sequences of active labour market policies and public works programmes evaluation

This chapter presents an overview of the data that have been compiled for use across the analysis of sequences of active labour market policies and the evaluations of Tús and Community Employment, two public works programmes in Ireland. It outlines all the different datasets that are used in the analysis and presents information on what information they contain. The chapter then goes on to report descriptive statistics for the Tús and Community Employment schemes, to contextualise the counterfactual evaluation that is conducted later in the report. It concludes by reviewing how the data for this evaluation have been compiled and what improvements may facilitate further data analysis.

4.1. Introduction

This report makes use of rich linked administrative data that enable the construction of a detailed picture on jobseekers' individual characteristics, their labour market history and what kind of support they have received from the Department of Social Protection (DSP). More specifically, DSP data on unemployment, broader benefit receipt and detailed participation data on Tús and Community Employment (CE) are merged to Office of the Revenue Commissioners (Revenue) data on earnings and weeks of employment.

The data allow the report to compare the histories of individuals prior to unemployment and look at employment-related (and broader) outcomes subsequent to it. Individuals' journeys over time are constructed, so that different sequences of employment, unemployment and associated labour market services for individuals can be observed. The data also enable the report to consider what impact participation in both Tús and CE have on individuals' subsequent journeys through the labour market.

Substantial efforts were required by DSP to extract and compile the data necessary for this evaluation, as a previously collated internal dataset – the Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset – was no longer available. These efforts have laid the groundwork for a possible re-implementation of a core analytical database, which would facilitate timely and recurrent counterfactual policy analyses. Other OECD countries, such as Canada, have adopted this kind of approach in order to reduce the costs of evaluation and to ensure reliable and repeatable analyses are easy to implement (OECD, 2022[1]). More details on the administrative data used and the methodology and issues in compiling them are provided in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[2]).

This chapter documents the data that underpin the report, to provide insight on how they support all of the analysis conducted. The chapter starts by describing the administrative data that are used for the different evaluations conducted in this report. Later sections provide some more detailed statistics for each of the separate analytical topics of the report. The final section reviews how the administrative data were

compiled for this report and potential innovations that would further enhance future data analysis.

4.2. The analysis is based on rich linked administrative data

This section provides information on the different data that are used to conduct the analysis and presents descriptive statistics on the participants of both CE and Tús schemes. It starts by detailing the different sources for the data in 4.2.2, and then provides an explanation of the different cohorts of participants that are chosen for each of the analytical sections in the report.

4.2.1. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) ensured data security was at the heart of the project

In preparing the data for transfer and use in the analysis, the DSP completed a data protection impact assessment (DPIA). The assessment detailed the reasons for which the data was required, how it would be transferred and stored and persons requiring access. The DPIA ensured that the pseudonymisation, data minimisation and simplification steps proposed were sufficient to minimise and mitigate any risks identified in transferring the data.

The project model was considered in the context of seven privacy principles which are set out by Article 5 of the GDPR. These principles incorporate the data protection and privacy requirements within EU and Irish legislation. The DPIA identified any risks to data subject privacy resulting from carrying out the evaluation and outlined mitigation and security procedures taken by the DSP to ensure secure processing of the data. Aggregation and simplification steps include grouping location, age, and other data to less granular levels, such as dates of birth being reduced to only the month and year of birth. The Local Office code, while known and used only within DSP, was replaced with a pseudonymised string. A pseudonymised ID was provided to link data.

4.2.2. Combinations of DSP register data and Revenue data build rich compiled datasets

The administrative data used for the report are sourced from the DSP (Table 4.1). The population of individuals for which information is drawn is all individuals (primarily long-term unemployed people) who were eligible for CE and Tús between 2011 and 2018. The data include information on the Tús and CE schemes, providing a rich picture of participants' activities on the schemes and the categorisation of the placement as "activation" or "social inclusion" in the case of CE. In addition, a payments dataset captures the weekly social welfare payments made to individuals over the relevant period. Data on the receipt of benefits provide details of the type of benefit and claim duration (i.e. how long a benefit was paid) of both participants and eligible non-participants, as well as information on several other programmes that individuals participated in. All these data are underpinned by demographic information on age, sex and nationality. In addition, the Probability of Exit (PEX) dataset contains the responses to the PEX questionnaire and the associated PEX value and date which it was recorded for a subset of the individuals in the data.

DSP also holds information on social insurance contributions and earnings, collected by Revenue. These large data on claims of benefits, payments and earnings are typical examples of register data, whereas PEX is closer to a survey dataset, albeit a survey where the target is the population of newly registered unemployed people, rather than a sample.

Table 4.1. Administrative data are sourced from the Department of Social Protection and Revenue

Data source	Information available	Periodicity	Sample	Coverage
CE scheme data (DSP)	CE start and end dates, CE provider identifier, reasons for eligibility, reason for CE termination, associated DSP local office, participation or social inclusion placement, scheme type, job description, presence of child or adult's dependence allowance	Start and end dates of CE episodes. Multiple episodes per individual	All CE participants	2007-20
Tús scheme data (DSP)	Tús start and end dates, exit reason, job description and sub-description, company identifier, self-referrals	Start and end dates of Tús episodes. Multiple episodes per individual	All Tús participants	2011-20
Claims data (DSP)	Detailed background characteristics of registered unemployed, participation in ALMPs and unemployment benefits	All long-term unemployment episodes (continuous, longer than one year) and One Family Payment episodes giving rise to CE eligibility	Registered LTU and those with OFP eligibility for Tús or CE	2008-21

Data source	Information available	Periodicity	Sample	Coverage
Benefits data (DSP)	DSP benefits such as Carer's Allowance, Disability Allowance, Working Family Payment, Maternity and Paternity Benefits, One Parent Family Payment, Rent Supplement, State Pensions, Tús, JobsPlus	Start and end dates of benefit episodes. Multiple episodes per individual	All individuals identified as eligible for Tús or CE	2008-21
Social Welfare payments (DSP)	Payment weeks and amounts for payments related to employment supports; family and children; illness, disability, caring; jobseeker income supports	Annual	All individuals identified as eligible for Tús or CE	2010-21
Historical benefit episode count and duration (DSP)	Live register, BTEA, One Parent Family Payment, Community Employment, Other	All cumulated benefit durations and counts until date of Tús or CE eligibility	All individuals identified as eligible for Tús or CE	All available historic data for individuals until CE eligibility
Person Information Data (DSP)	Age, gender, office location – county and district, marital status	Updated for any changes to personal details (usually marital status or residence)	All individuals identified as eligible for Tús or CE	1980-2020
Earnings Data (Revenue)	Employment, self-employment, CE, other earnings and annual weeks.	Annual	All individuals identified as eligible for Tús or CE	2008-21
Social security classes A8/A9 contributions (Revenue)	Annual A8/A9 social class contributions to identify previous CE spells	Annual. Episode based. Individual can have multiple records per year	All CE/Tús or Rural Social Scheme Participants	2000-21
JobPath history dataset (DSP)	Records of JobPath episodes	Start and end dates of JobPath episodes. Multiple episodes per individual	All individuals identified as eligible for Tús or CE	2015-23
PEX (DSP)	PEX score, responses to questions in PEX questionnaire	Single observation	All individuals eligible for Tús or CE who responded to PEX questionnaire	All available historic data.

Note: LTU stands for long-term unemployed, defined as individuals unemployed for 12 months of longer; ALMPs for Active labour market programmes; BTEA for Back to Education Allowance; CE for community employment. "Other" summarises incidence and duration of all other DSP benefits excluding the separately listed benefits (in the lifetime benefit episode dataset).
Source: Based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

One additional dataset, the Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset (JLD) was also used to construct condensed summaries of individuals' labour market histories. Although no longer updated, it is an example of a dataset explicitly designed for analytical purposes, constructing episodic longitudinal views from weekly benefits and employment data sources.

The analytical teams of the DSP, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) and the OECD worked together to define the scope of analysis and outline the data specification required. DSP then applied concerted resources to compile, quality assure and integrate disparate administrative data sources for this report. The descriptions of the data sources below leverage these pre-compiled datasets rather than referring to the original underlying data. That is, the descriptions abstract from any cleaning and compilation that has occurred within DSP. Additional

information on the original data can be found in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[2]). The technical report also presents further descriptive statistics on the number of observations and individuals and the underlying characteristics of each of the compiled dataset.

CE scheme data provide detailed insights into CE programmes and participants

The CE scheme dataset held by DSP provides information on jobseeker placements on CE and details of CE programmes. Each observation in this dataset relates to one placement on CE, i.e. individuals may have multiple records if they have participated in more than one CE scheme. The dataset includes information on the start and end date for the placement in question, the job description (from which retrospective categorisations into social inclusion or activation categories can be derived), whether the CE scheme operates as part of the dedicated Childcare or Health and Social Care strands, as well as the administrative type, which details the underlying institutional structure of the CE provider. The latter allows to investigate whether scheme characteristics are associated with different outcomes for participants.

Tús scheme data are structured similarly to CE scheme data

The Tús scheme dataset held by DSP provides information on jobseeker placements on Tús. Each observation in this dataset relates to one placement on Tús, i.e. individuals may have multiple records if they have participated in more than once in Tús. The dataset has information on start and end date of each placement, the reason for exit from the placement, a description of the job that individuals are engaged with and a company identifier to indicate which provider has organised the placement. Information is also held that identifies those individuals that have self-referred to the programme. One important feature to note for this dataset is that the job descriptions for Tús are different to those for CE. The analysis in this report aligns the two by re-categorising Tús job descriptions so that they align to those in CE. In future, it would facilitate better comparison and evaluation of the two programmes jointly, if the administrative definitions for job types in the two schemes were aligned.

The datasets identify all jobseekers who qualify for Tús or CE

Individuals qualify for participation in Tús or CE if they have received a qualifying social welfare payment for at least 12 months and comply with all other eligibility criteria, e.g. in terms of age and previous participation. Qualifying payments include jobseeker's benefits, jobseeker's allowance, jobseeker's transitional payment and a few other types of payments. Exact eligibility criteria changed over the timeframe of the study. For the majority of the eligible populations, eligibility stems from being long-term unemployed (as defined by an unemployment register episode of over one year with a qualifying payment). For Tús, 87% of the sample qualify for eligibility through receipt of Jobseekers' Allowance (JA) and 12% through Jobseekers' Benefit (JB), with a further 1% via the receipt of a qualifying One-Parent Family Payment. CE-eligible individuals are similarly weighted towards the long-term unemployed (69% JA and 16% JB), though a greater proportion of individuals qualify through One-Parent Family Payments (15%), which can be paid irrespective of a person's labour market status.

There are two separately compiled eligibility datasets, which contain all qualifying episodes for individual entitlement for Tús or CE. The datasets condense information on both unemployment and broader social benefits, for all of which DSP has responsibility. Individuals can have more than one record in this dataset if they have more than one distinct eligibility spell, e.g. in case they have two different episodes in their life where they were in receipt of unemployment benefits or other qualifying benefits for more than 12 months. There is a large degree of crossover in the two separate datasets, as very often individuals are eligible for both Tús and CE at the same time. However, there remain several important distinctions between the two datasets, where crossover does not occur. For example, an individual that had recently participated in Tús may be eligible for CE but not Tús again. Similarly, there are some DSP benefits that give rise to CE eligibility but not Tús eligibility (or vice versa).

The eligibility dataset provides information on the start and end dates of all eligibility periods, thereby allowing the construction of a panel dataset to compare individuals that start CE or Tús at a given point in time, to those who do not start but are eligible to start at the same time, which enables counterfactual comparisons. In addition to these data, information such as the benefit payment amounts for the individual, their month of

birth, nationality and marital status are also available. Another variable allows identifying casual claims (i.e. jobseeker benefits received while in employment).

Benefits data contain information on all benefits that are administered by DSP

Alongside the eligibility dataset, a benefits dataset which contains all periods of DSP benefit receipt is utilised in the analysis, including benefit periods that do not lead to CE or Tús eligibility. It is populated for all individuals who are identified in the Tús or CE eligibility data and contains one observation for every episode of benefit receipt. For example, an individual who received JA for a period of time and Carer's Allowance later on, would have two distinct observations in this dataset, which may chronologically overlap if the benefits are not mutually exclusive. Each observation contains a start and end date, a claim status stipulating whether the benefit claim is ongoing, stopped or closed, and a description of the benefit in question. The datasets cover benefits that DSP is responsible for administering, namely Carer's Allowance, Disability Allowance, One-parent Family Payment, Maternity and Paternity Benefits and Rent Supplement for all benefit claims between 2008 and 2021. It also reports information on contributory and non-contributory pensions. The coverage both in terms of benefits and time period allows to generate a comprehensive picture of each individuals' benefit history.

Social welfare payments data contain information on all payments related to employment supports; family and children; illness, disability, caring; jobseeker income supports

The social welfare payments dataset covers information on different types of payments made in respect of the benefits data outlined above. These relate to employment supports (e.g. Back to Education Allowance, JobBridge), family and children (Back to Work Family Dividend, Child Benefit), illness, disability and caring (Carer's Allowance, Disability Allowance, Illness Benefit), jobseeker's income supports (JA and JB), but also other types of income support such as maternity and paternity benefits, and contributory pensions. Data are provided as annual records, covering the period from 2010 to 2021. Each observation records an annual amount and the number of weeks it relates to, for each individual payment. An individual can therefore have multiple observations per year, in case of receipt of multiple payments. For the purposes of the

analysis presented in this report, this dataset represents the main source of information for receipt of Back to Education Allowance, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Back to Work Family Dividend, Part-Time Job Incentive, and JobBridge.

Historic Benefit Episode data complement eligibility data and benefits data

A separate dataset provides individuals' cumulated benefit history prior to the start of their eligibility period. This dataset contains one record per episode in the Tús and CE eligibility datasets and provides information on Back to Education Allowance, Live Register, One-parent Family Payment, Tús or CE, and "other" benefits counts and sums. While the count variable reflects the number of separate episodes for each type of benefit, the sum variable contains the cumulative weeks of receipts across all individual spells. Importantly, this dataset also includes information on instances of JA or JB receipt that led to spells on the unemployment register (the "Live Register") of less than one year, which would not otherwise be captured, neither in the eligibility datasets, which only record episodes above one year, nor in the benefit dataset, which does not capture JA or JB.

Demographic data provide individual background characteristics

The demographic dataset contains data on individuals in the Tús and CE eligibility datasets and can contain multiple observations per individual in case demographic information changes over time. It provides information on gender, county and region of residence, nationality group, marital status and month of birth. Most changes between records for an individual represent changes to marital status but can also detail where claimants have moved residence. Personal identifiers were removed from the dataset prior to data transfer.

Earnings data record income from employment, self-employment, CE, Tús and other income sources

Annual earnings data are available for all individuals on the Tús and CE eligibility datasets and distinguish between income from employment, self-employment, CE, Tús and "other" earnings sources, with "other" as a default category for earnings that do not fall in one of the other categories. The annual records run from 2008 to 2021, and each

observation records an annual amount for each individual payment source. An individual can have multiple observations per year if they have earnings from more than one payment source, such as an individual earning income from employment and self-employment in the same year. Each observation records the total nominal earnings amount and the number of weeks it relates to.

Social security classes A8/A9 contributions allow to identify previous CE spells

In addition to the main dataset on earnings, a second DSP dataset on social insurance subclasses A8/A9 details contributions made in a particular year in the social security subclasses A8 or A9, which relate to either payments for Community Employment, Tús or the Rural Social Scheme. It contains information on all individuals in the CE eligibility data and covers the years 2000-21. Individuals may have more than one observation per year. The dataset is important because it has a longer time horizon than the CE programme data, which allows for the computation of a cumulated CE history from 2000 and to account for lifetime limits on the number of years on CE in the CE eligibility dataset.

The JobPath history dataset provides records of all JobPath episodes

The JobPath history dataset allows the identification of individuals that are referred to JobPath for specific periods. It provides information on start and end dates of JobPath episodes for all individuals who are identified in the CE and Tús eligibility datasets. It contains one record for each episode of JobPath, therefore allowing for multiple episodes per person. It covers the time period 2015-23.

The combination of all DSP and Revenue datasets allows tracking an individual through time

The combination of all DSP and Revenue datasets allows the tracking of an individual through time regarding their labour market status and DSP benefits. This makes it possible to build a picture of the extent to which individuals experience spells of employment and unemployment over time, how much they earn, whether they might have children, care for someone, have a long-term limiting disability or receive help with their housing payment. With this information at hand, it is possible to accurately

estimate the effects of participation in CE and Tús, as a very varied group of participants can be compared to other individuals with similar traits and labour market and benefit histories.

4.2.3. The analysis focuses on ALMP participation between 2011 and 2018

The analysis in the report uses a range of cohorts depending on the precise analytical question, starting in the early 2010s. As the analytical needs are different for each of the analytical sections, the precise cohorts used change slightly.

Tús participants are analysed from 2011, which means that individuals are counted from the inception of the scheme. As slightly fewer individuals start Tús per year, relative to CE, it also allows the analysis to utilise sufficient participants to facilitate more precise estimates.

By contrast, the sequence analysis analyses cohorts from 2012 onwards. This choice is made so that a full year of information is available on Tús cohorts, as the policy was introduced only halfway through 2011. This is to ensure Tús participants can be captured on a consistent basis with the other states that are analysed in the sequence analysis on an annual basis.

The CE analysis starts analysing cohorts from 2013 onwards. The larger pool of available participants meant that it was not necessary to go all the way back to 2011, whilst analysing individuals from 2013 onwards still provided a long time series stretching over a number of years, which could provide information on CE over time and at different points in the labour market cycle. For these cohorts, supporting administrative data are available from 2008, i.e. the analysis can make use of five years of pre-eligibility data for all CE participants and eligible non-participants. These data are necessary to ensure that participants are compared to non-participants with similar characteristics (and are arguably more important for the CE analysis, which does not have random selection like Tús). Using ALMP participation cohorts that start in 2013 provides a good balance between large enough samples and the practical consideration on data.

Participants on Tús and CE are included until the end of 2018 only, and not beyond, to allow for a sufficiently long series of post-participation outcome data. As annual

outcome data are available until 2021, participants that joined at the latest date that is considered (December 2018) will have two years of annual post-participation outcome data, given that Tús and CE schemes run for one year. Shorter durations of outcome data would not provide any insights into their medium and long-term effects.

As an example, putting together these start and end dates for cohorts, allows the construction of a CE participation dataset between 2013-18 that observes around 28 000 CE participants (Table 4.8). This number is large enough, and the time span is long enough, to allow for sub-group analysis, enabling the report to disentangle the impact of CE on different groups of jobseekers, compare impacts of CE at different stages of post-participation and determine whether there are diverging effects depending on the economic cycle. Similarly, this is also possible for Tús.

Finally, CE and Tús participants potentially include members of sensitive groups, such as people with a history of drug misuse, people who have been convicted of crimes or members of groups that face discrimination such as members of the Traveller and Roma Communities. People on CE schemes where participation indicates a particular racial or ethnic origin, or where it reveals information about a person's health, were not included in the evaluation. No data associated with participation in schemes aimed at these particular cohorts were analysed and the individuals were not included as potential comparison group candidates if they later became eligible (or had previously been eligible) through other routes (e.g. as a jobseeker). This aimed to eliminate the risks associated with sensitive data, such as data relating to racial or ethnic origin, or data concerning health.

4.3. Tús scheme data provide a detailed picture of participants

The following section describes the sample used in the Tús analysis including the nature of the referral data (4.3.1), and the process of assembling the sample (4.3.2). The section also includes a description of the quarterly analysis approach and a breakdown of the number of individuals beginning a Tús episode in each quarter and the respective number of eligible candidates in that quarter (4.3.3). Section 4.3.4 details

the differing characteristics of the participants and non-participants and 4.3.5 illustrates the categories of work Tús participants are involved in while on the scheme.

4.3.1. *The recording and collation of selection and referral data to Tús vary by region*

The recording and collation of data relating to Tús referrals vary widely across DSP divisions (operational units aggregated into geographic areas). Each division is responsible for the random selection process, which is not automated or coded, potentially allowing for some variation in how the selection process is run, even before considering how referral and follow-up is handled.

A more consistent set of practices relating to data entry and processes (perhaps hosted centrally rather than within each division) would result in a more consistent dataset for the management and analysis of the scheme (Table 4.2). Better recording of processes at the referral stage could also inform analysis of the relationship between referral to Tús and subsequent claim closures.

Table 4.2. Recording of Tús referrals varies by division

Division	Eligible for Tús	Participated	Expected referrals	Referred, where data available	Difference	Proportion of expected referral where data available
Cork Central	36 371	3 180	9 540	1 849	7 691	0.19
Dublin Central	52 786	3 834	11 502	9 291	2 211	0.81
Dublin North	39 902	3 111	9 333	7 034	2 299	0.75
Dublin South	50 712	4 376	13 128	10 138	2 990	0.77
Mid Leinster	40 144	4 015	12 045	492	11 553	0.04
Mid West	39 440	3 373	10 119	171	9 948	0.02
Midlands North	48 538	4 455	13 365	3 857	9 508	0.29
Midlands South	44 615	4 387	13 161	1 538	11 623	0.12
North East	39 915	3 207	9 621	5 884	3 737	0.61
North West	36 883	4 312	12 936	115	12 821	0.01
South East	42 687	4 518	13 554	9 122	4 432	0.67
South West	30 817	3 649	10 947	1 369	9 578	0.13
West	40 752	4 581	13 743	12 468	1 275	0.91
Not applicable	5 011	534	1 602	285	1 317	0.18
Total	548 573	51 532	154 596	63 613	90 983	0.41

Note: To ensure enough participants are captured in the referral process to fill the number of vacancies, the number of initial invitations offered is set at three times the envisaged number of places in each locality. Therefore, the "Expected referrals" column is estimated as 3x the number of participants.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/h3mout

4.3.2. The quarterly analysis approach reflects the dynamic nature of enrolment and eligibility

This section presents a brief outline of how the administrative data were compiled into an analytical dataset for Tús that is used for the counterfactual impact evaluation in Chapter 7.

Eligibility is determined by registered unemployment and is assessed on a quarterly basis

To qualify for Tús the individual must be registered as unemployed and meet all eligibility criteria (in receipt of a payment where the relevant claim is counted on the Live Register). Individuals receiving credited contributions or people on casual claims (i.e. receiving benefits while employed) are not eligible for selection to Tús. Eligibility begins when the individual has been in receipt of the qualifying benefit for at least one year.

In assembling the eligible population for Tús only individuals meeting the above requirements were included. Using the Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset (JLD), 469 725 individuals met the criteria outlined above for the analysis period 2011-18 (Table 4.3). The size of the population was further reduced when some individuals who were missing essential demographic data were removed from the sample. In constructing the eligible population for CE, individuals were excluded from the analysis based on their qualifying route or membership of a minority group (as described in section 4.2.3 above). The same individuals were excluded from the Tús analysis.

Selection and referral to Tús occurs on an ongoing basis and therefore there is no enrolment period (as there may be with education courses for example). The analytical approach is to assess eligibility for the treatment (Tús participants) and eligible population on a quarterly basis. The approach captures the dynamic nature of the evaluation where people move in and out of eligibility throughout the analysis period.

Before conducting the quarterly analysis there were 462 815 individuals in the population (including participants). In order to be included in the eligible non-participant

group for any given quarter the individual must remain eligible for the duration of the quarter.

Once individuals have been assigned to quarterly groups, they are compared to JobPath participation records for the same quarter. If someone who is otherwise considered eligible in that quarter is simultaneously engaged with JobPath providers, they are subsequently removed from the control population in that quarter. This restriction only applies to the comparison groups from Q3 2015 to Q2 2018. When JobPath was first introduced it was not possible for someone to be engaged with JobPath providers while also participate on Tús. This rule was changed on 1 June 2018 to allow simultaneous participation on both. Accordingly, the restriction no longer applies in quarters three and four of 2018.

At the end of the quarterly analysis, the sample comprises 331 643 individuals who are either treated for at least 30 days or eligible for a full quarter (and not ineligible through JobPath participation).

Table 4.3. Assembling the Tús population and the control population

Tús eligible population	Unique IDs
LR jobseeker claims ending post-2011	1 069 664
Non-casual claims >365 days	469 725
Pseudonymise & add demographic information	468 280
Remove based on qualifying route (e.g. ethnicity)	463 463
Remove if turn 65 before end of episode	462 817
Remove if no relevant qualifying episode	462 815
Eligible for a full quarter (and not ineligible through JobPath participation) or treated for at least 30 days	331 660
Remove if qualifying claim is OFP	331 643
Of which: PEX coverage	190 517
JobPath	**Unique IDs**
Tús eligible population who have a JobPath start date before June 2018 (where the episode >30 days)	124 852
Tús participants	**Unique IDs**
Starting an episode 2011-18	48 449
Exclude self-referrals (i.e. people not randomly selected)	46 601
Episode > 30 days	46 063
Episode ends within 90 days of Tús start	42 428
Relevant qualifying episode	42 426
Of which: PEX coverage	34 860

Note: PEX: Probability of exit. LR: Live Register. OFP: One-parent family payment.
Source: Based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

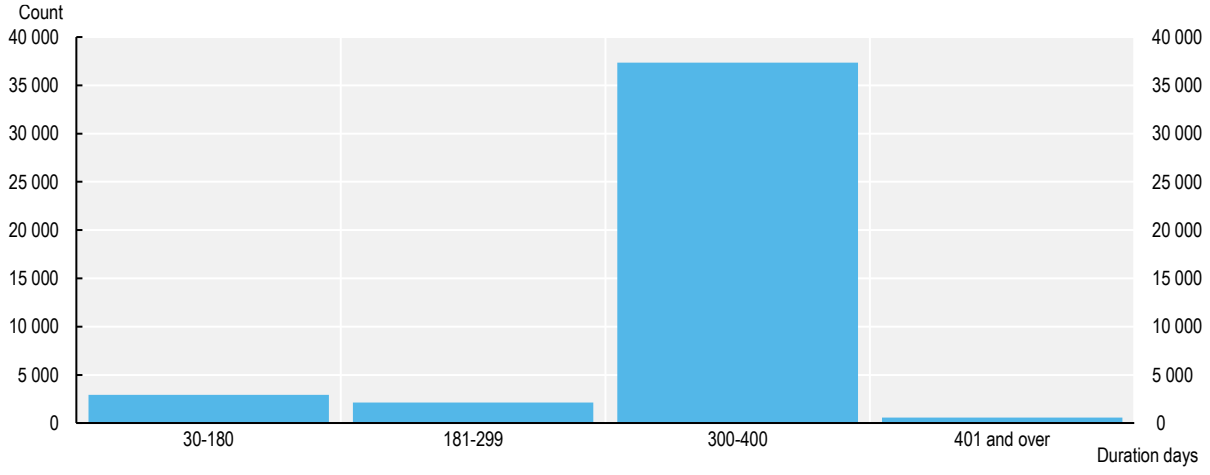
StatLink https://stat.link/n290ya

Individuals with at least 30 days of participation are counted as having undertaken Tús

At the outset the treatment group (i.e. those participating in Tús between 2011-18) comprises 48 449 individuals. Participants who self-refer to Tús (i.e. who were not randomly selected but decided to apply for Tús on their own initiative) are excluded, reducing the treatment group to 46 601 individuals. The minimum treatment threshold was set at 30 days and any Tús episode below that threshold was removed from the analysis leaving 46 063 people in the treatment group. However, as evidenced in Figure 4.1, the majority of Tús episodes are one year long. The sample was restricted to participants whose qualifying claim ended within 90 days of the Tús start date. Allowing for some degree of data entry error, the sample was restricted to participants whose benefits ceased at most 30 days after the Tús start date. After removing participants without a “relevant” qualifying episode there are 42 426 individuals who start at least one episode of Tús between 2011-18.

Figure 4.1. The majority of Tús episodes are one year long

Tús episode duration (days)



Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/6krjy8

4.3.3. A quarterly Tús sample is compiled between 2011-18

The evaluation covers 328 879 individuals who are either in the eligible population or commence Tús between 2011-18. Of this, the number of Tús participants beginning an episode between 2011-18 (where the episode lasts at least 30 days) is 42 426. The analysis is conducted on a quarter-by-quarter basis. For each quarter, the eligible population is identified as the number of people who remain eligible throughout the quarter. The number of individuals commencing Tús in each quarter is presented in Table 4.4, as well as the number of those eligible in each quarter and, of these people, the number who, in subsequent quarters, commence Tús.

The number of people who commence Tús each quarter ranges from 664 when the scheme first became operational in Q3 2011 before climbing to a high of 2 318 in Q3 2014. It declines over the period after that and by 2018 there were 970 people beginning Tús in Q4. The consistent distribution of participants on Tús across the analysis period shows no indication of seasonal variation in commencements on the scheme. However, the number of Tús participants as a share of individuals eligible for Tús increased markedly, from 0.6% in Q3 2011 to 5.1% in Q2 2018, highlighting that the number of Tús participants is not directly linked to labour market conditions, such as the number as long-term unemployed people.

As represented in Table 4.4, Tús participants make up a small proportion of the eligible population in each quarter with just 1-5% of the eligible population in each quarter starting an episode of Tús. The number of people eligible for Tús in any quarter over the analysis period peaked at 128 254 in Q4 2012.

Table 4.4. Both the number of individuals beginning Tús and the number of individuals eligible for Tús varies over time

Year and quarter	Number of unique IDs commencing Tús	Number of unique IDs in the control population (eligible for Tús but not commencing)	Of which, the number of unique IDs in the control group in this quarter, who do not commence in the quarter but will start in a future quarter.
Q3 2011	664	118 467	17 502
Q4 2011	1 054	122 123	17 894
Q1 2012	1 080	124 190	18 119
Q2 2012	1 191	125 934	18 216
Q3 2012	897	126 066	18 651
Q4 2012	1 168	128 254	18 900
Q1 2013	1 223	127 986	18 840

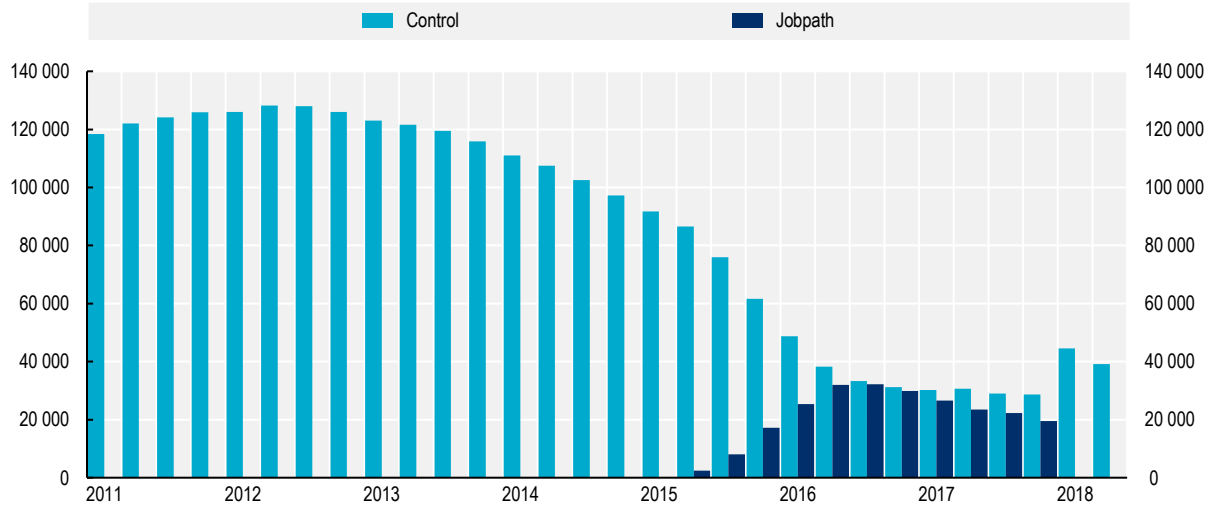
Year and quarter	Number of unique IDs commencing Tús	Number of unique IDs in the control population (eligible for Tús but not commencing)	Of which, the number of unique IDs in the control group in this quarter, who do not commence in the quarter but will start in a future quarter.
Q2 2013	1 598	126 093	18 219
Q3 2013	2 226	123 069	17 300
Q4 2013	1 340	121 682	17 084
Q1 2014	1 447	119 523	16 716
Q2 2014	1 655	115 865	16 029
Q3 2014	2 318	111 086	15 004
Q4 2014	1 556	107 490	14 407
Q1 2015	1 561	102 591	13 598
Q2 2015	1 755	97 244	12 685
Q3 2015	2061	91 775	11 756
Q4 2015	1 479	86 553	10 993
Q1 2016	1 347	76 023	9 744
Q2 2016	1 695	61 613	7 832
Q3 2016	1 645	48 783	6 274
Q4 2016	1 461	38 245	4 947
Q1 2017	1 331	33 264	4 237
Q2 2017	1 391	31 151	3 885
Q3 2017	1 309	30 175	3 853
Q4 2017	1 183	30 621	4 019
Q1 2018	1 214	29 038	3 853
Q2 2018	1 456	28 662	3 537
Q3 2018	1 498	44 555	5 157
Q4 2018	970	39 123	4 390

Note: An individual is considered future-treated if they are eligible in that quarter but have a recorded Tús episode at some point after that quarter (up to end 2021).
Source: Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/5i4gqa

The DSP introduced the contracted employment service JobPath in Q3 2015 for long-term unemployed individuals. Until June 2018 anyone who was engaged with JobPath could not simultaneously participate on Tús. For this reason, an individual's JobPath participation is factored into their eligibility status for Tús. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the number of people eligible for Tús decreases significantly following the introduction of JobPath. Consequently, the number of people eligible for Tús was at its lowest after JobPath was introduced, most notably in the second half of 2017 and the first half of 2018, when it remains below 31 000 in each quarter.

Figure 4.2. Eligible population for Tús and those ineligible because they were on JobPath



Note: From Q3 2015-Q2 2018 it was not possible to simultaneous participate on Tús while engaged with JobPath providers. From Q3 2018 it was allowed.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/h9azku

4.3.4. Tús participants and non-participants differ across key characteristics

Having established how the analytical sample was introduced, this section turns to look at the degrees of similarity and dis-similarity between Tús participants and eligible non-participants. This comparison prepares the grounds for the analysis in Chapter 7, which relies on a weighting procedure that corrects for observed differences between both groups. The section first looks at the characteristics of Tús participants as a group and then goes on to present some comparisons to non-participants.

Tús participants are male, prime-aged and Irish

Table 4.5 outlines some basic demographics for Tús participants. It shows that across the analysis period, the modal age group is those in prime age (ages 30-50). However, this average disguises some cohort ageing over time – at the scheme's inception in 2011 just under a third (28%) of participants were aged under 30, however by the end of the period, this had decreased to one in five (20%). On the contrary, those aged over 50, whilst comprising only 20% of the 2011 cohort, accounted for 30% of the 2018 cohort.

Similarly for gender, there has been a drift towards lower male participation over the analysis period, though men still make up the majority of participants. In 2011 almost three-quarters (73%) of participants were male, but by 2018 this had fallen to two-thirds (67%).

Irish individuals make up the majority of Tús participants (85%) and they have remained a fairly constant proportion of the participants across the evaluation time horizon. Across time, the proportion of participants from new EU member states has increased from around 7% to 9-10%. Whilst this increase being relatively small, compared to the group of Tús participants as a whole, it represents a larger proportional change to individuals from EU member states themselves, indicating that the Tús participant make-up has become slightly more inclusive from a nationality perspective over time.

Table 4.5. Characteristics of Tús participants

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Average
Total eligible population	129 687	159 436	159 067	148 906	126 783	93 936	57 070	57 329	116 527
Tús participants	1 718	4 336	6 383	6 975	6 856	6 142	5 214	5 134	42 7 58[1]
Tús Participants:									
Age									
Under 30	28%	28%	26%	28%	27%	27%	23%	20%	26%
30-50	52%	54%	52%	52%	50%	49%	49%	50%	51%
Over 50	20%	18%	22%	20%	23%	24%	28%	30%	23%
Sex									
Male	73%	73%	73%	71%	68%	66%	65%	67%	70%
Female	27%	27%	27%	29%	32%	34%	35%	33%	30%
Nationality									
Irish	85%	87%	87%	85%	84%	86%	82%	83%	85%
United Kingdom	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%	5%
EU pre 2004 (except IRL and GBR)	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
New EU member states since 2004	7%	7%	7%	8%	9%	8%	10%	9%	8%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%

Note: Records number of Tús episodes (may be more than one per person over the analysis period).
1. Total across periods.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/0ls1xv

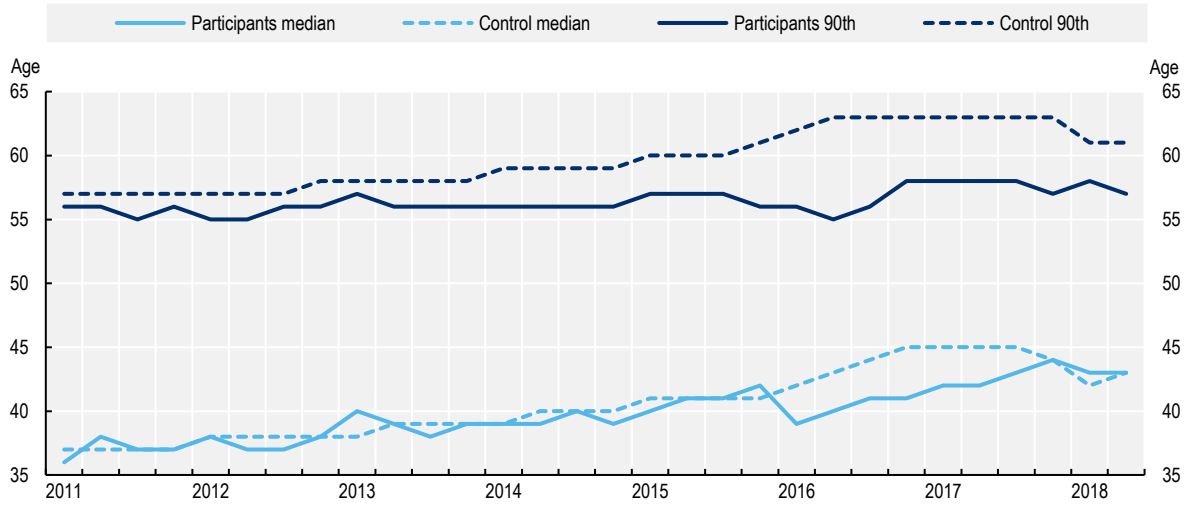
The median age for Tús participants and non-participants is similar but varies over time

The register of unemployed people (the Live Register) counts jobseekers between the ages of 18-65 years. As eligibility for Tús is based on the set of Live Register claims where duration is at least one year, there is no other upper or lower age limit for participants on Tús other than that for registered unemployment upper and lower limits.

Over the analysis period (2011-18), while participants and non-participants are of a similar age when it is averaged over the quarters, subtle differences in the age distribution emerge when each quarter is examined separately. In the beginning, the median age of the control group is older than the participants and the reverse is true at the end. At the top of the distribution however, the control group is always older (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Tús participants are less concentrated at higher ages

Median and 90th percentile age of participants and non-participants



Note: The "control" group refers to non-participants.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

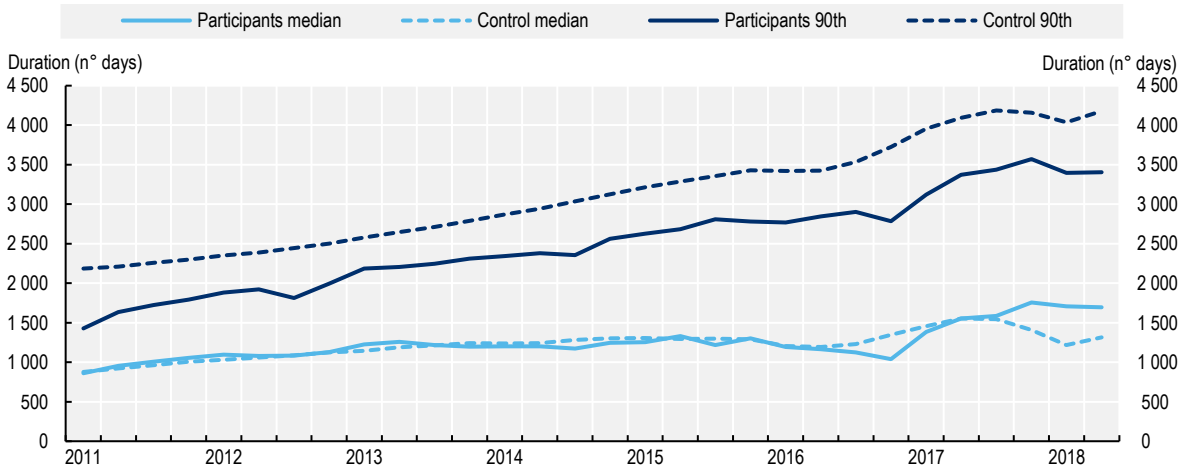
StatLink https://stat.link/qdayh2

The median qualifying period for Tús is of similar duration for both participants and non-participants

Figure 4.4 shows both the median and 90th percentile values of the unemployment duration spell that made jobseekers eligible for Tús. While both groups appear to have similar median durations throughout the analysis period, as with age, unemployment duration values are always higher for non-participants at the top of the distribution.

Figure 4.4. Tús participants are more concentrated at lower unemployment duration

Median and 90th percentile values of unemployment duration



Note: The "control" group refers to non-participants.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/175alw

PEX coverage is high amongst Tús participants

PEX (Probability of Exit) is a statistical profiling model that predicts the likelihood that a claimant will remain unemployed one year after opening a claim. A PEX "score" is generated based on answers to a questionnaire provided by the jobseeker at claim commencement. PEX information is recorded for 82% of Tús participants (Table 4.6). This is a significant level of coverage compared to the PEX information available for 57% of all candidates in the eligible population (190 493). When conducting sub-group analysis using PEX, it is important to bear in mind this difference in coverage because it may mean that the sub-sample is not more broadly representative of the population in general.

Table 4.6. Share of Tús participants and non-participants in each year with PEX

Proportion with PEX information	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Eligible non-participants	37%	39%	41%	44%	47%	49%	46%	40%
Tús participants	60%	73%	83%	88%	92%	89%	70%	68%

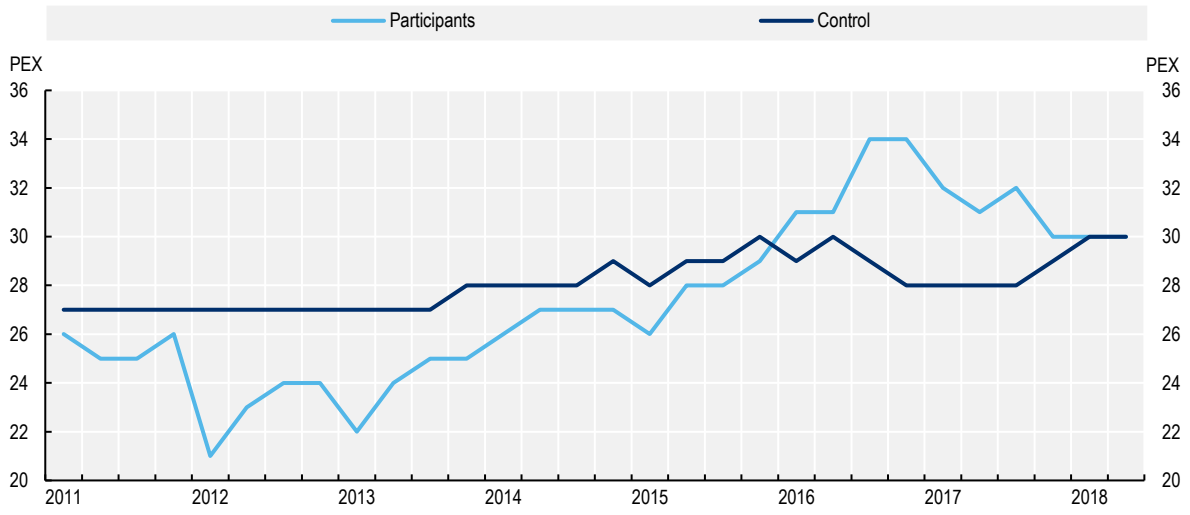
Note: PEX: Probability of exit. Data are averages for annual cohorts in each year.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/xpocb3

For both the participant and non-participant groups, where PEX records exist, the values are concentrated in the range 10-40 (out of a maximum of 99). Figure 4.5 illustrates the difference in median PEX values between the two groups for each quarter. For the majority of the analysis period, the median PEX value for non-participants is marginally higher than the respective participant group in that quarter. This changed in 2016 and up to the end of 2018 the median PEX value of the participants was higher than non-participants in that quarter.

Figure 4.5. Differences in PEX scores for Tús participants and non-participants change over time

Median PEX values for control and treatment



Note: PEX: Probability of exit. Median values are taken in each quarter. The "control" group refers to non-participants.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

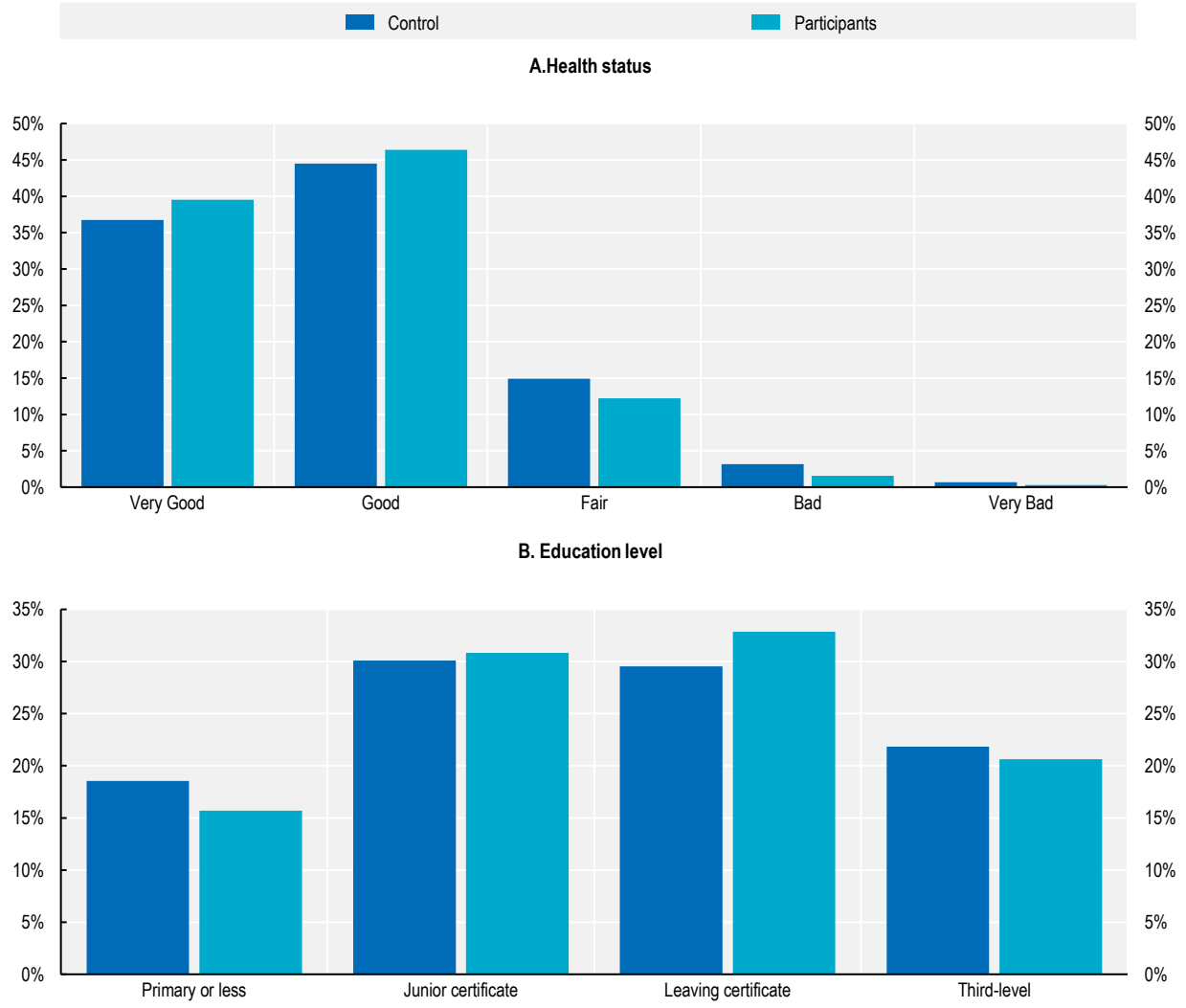
StatLink https://stat.link/7q42xv

When looking at information on self-reported health, a higher proportion of Tús participants reported "Good" and "Very Good" levels of health than non-participants (Figure 4.6, Panel A). This means that is imperative that variables exist, such as previous income, receipt of health and unemployment benefits, that are able to proxy

for this difference in health outcomes for the estimation on the full sample of Tús participants, for whom this data is not captured. Similarly, when look at education, Tús participants reported a higher proportion of junior and leaving certificate than non-participants, with fewer participants having primary education or less (Figure 4.6, Panel B). However, some of these differences – towards greater education for Tús participants – are negated when looking at tertiary (third level) education. Here individuals in the eligible population having slightly higher tertiary attainment.

Figure 4.6. Tús participants are slightly better educated and in better health than non-participants

Health status and level of education among Tús participants and the control group



Note: The "control" group refers to non-participants.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/9wqcnu

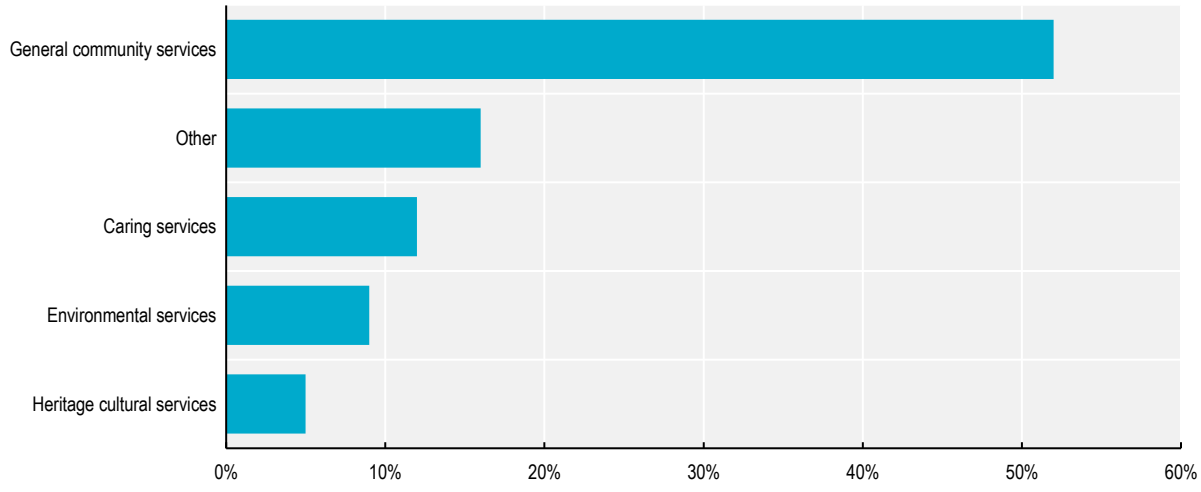
4.3.5. Tús work placements fall into five broad categories

Tús programme data has information on the type of job placements, with the placements falling into the following categories: Environmental services, General community services, Heritage cultural services, Para-educational services and Caring services.

A breakdown of work placements completed by Tús participants in 2011-18 is illustrated in Figure 4.7. “General Community Services” is the largest category for participants throughout the analysis period and includes activities such as administration, community development and community media and radio.

Figure 4.7. Tús placements are largely for general community services

Tús placements by work type, 2011-18



Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/ubrqwp

Box 4.1. Spatial Distribution of Tús service provision

Spatial information on the location of Tus services can be mapped to information on the social deprivation of areas. This can provide insight on whether the delivery of services provided by Tús participants is located in more affluent or disadvantaged areas.

A deprivation index assesses social conditions in a given area using a single indicator. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index is a census-based deprivation index for the Republic of Ireland. The index is used by Departments, State and semi-State agencies, as well as voluntary and non-governmental organisations (Haase and Pratschke, 2016[3]). Pobal is a state-sponsored intermediary agency that works on behalf of the government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving policy goals in relation to social inclusion, reconciliation, and equality.

The index draws on indicators from three dimensions of affluence and disadvantage – demographic profile, social class composition and labour market situation – to assign a deprivation score along the spectrum of affluence-disadvantage in each area relative to the mean at a specific point in time. The index contains an absolute and relative score. The relative index score details how deprivation in that area relates to all other areas at that point in time. The relative scores are derived by subtracting the underlying trend from the absolute scores and rescaling them so that they have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of ten at each Census wave.

The index used for the analysis below is based on the 2016 Census, as that was recorded in the middle of the analysis period and provides the best reference point. The relative deprivation scores used in the analysis are based on electoral divisions, the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the State. Some 3 409 boundary features are defined as electoral divisions, of which 1 209 are associated with activities carried out by Tús participants in the evaluation dataset.

Table 4.7. Location of activities carried out by Tús participants

Level of deprivation	Share of participants	Share of total population
Extremely disadvantaged		<1%
Very disadvantaged	1%	<1%
Disadvantaged	13%	7%
Marginally below average	57%	41%
Marginally above average	24%	42%
Affluent	6%	10%
Very affluent		<1%

Note: Not all placements map to a relevant electoral division. Some 79% of Tús placements in the analysis map to an electoral division and therefore can be assigned a deprivation level.
Source: Haase and Pratschke (2016[3]), Pobal HP Deprivation Index, based on Population of Ireland (Census 2016), http://trutzhaase.eu/.

StatLink https://stat.link/kynxip

The majority of Tús placements that map to electoral divisions fall in areas whose relative index score is either marginally above or marginally below average. A greater proportion of Tús placements are in areas that are marginally below average on the HP Index compared to the population overall. In short, Tús placements are under-represented in affluent areas and over-represented in disadvantaged areas, thereby contributing some degree of redistribution at the level of services provided.

4.4. CE scheme data encompass information on participants, CE scheme characteristics and training

This section provides more details on the individuals that participate in CE schemes and information on the CE schemes that they participate in. The section starts with descriptive statistics on CE participants (4.4.1) before it discusses the types of CE positions undertaken (4.4.2) and then compares CE participants to eligible non-participants (4.4.3).

4.4.1. Linked administrative data allow a detailed picture of CE participants to be drawn

The linked administrative data provided by DSP and Revenue provides a detailed picture of the characteristics of CE participants and eligible non-participants. There is a high degree of variability among CE participants, in terms of both personal characteristics and CE scheme characteristics (Table 4.8) highlighting that there is no "typical" CE placement but that CE is a programme supporting jobseekers in many different circumstances.

CE participant numbers remain relatively steady in the face of a large fall in the number of CE eligible jobseekers over time

The number of CE participants in the evaluation sample stays roughly stable throughout the entire period with moderate increases between 2013-15 followed by a moderate decline between 2015-18. By contrast, the number jobseekers eligible for CE per year has fallen sharply over time from 184 000 in 2013 to 98 000 in 2018, reflecting a decrease in the number of long-term unemployed people amid major labour market improvements (see Chapter 2).

The difference between the trends in the number of eligible jobseekers and CE participants is due to the role of CE for communities. While the number of eligible jobseekers directly depends on the number of long-term unemployed people, thus narrowly reflecting labour market developments, the number of CE positions is influenced by local needs for community work which is not directly linked to labour market demand in the private market. Therefore, the pool of eligible jobseekers who could potentially fill a CE vacancy was much higher in 2013 when long-term unemployment was still record-high than in 2018 and it was more challenging for long-term unemployed jobseekers to secure a CE position at the beginning of the observation period than towards its end.

Most CE participants are prime-age or older jobseekers and male participants are on average older than their female peers

Turning to the characteristics of the CE participants, the majority of CE participants fall in the age group 30-50 years, with an average age of 43 (Table 4.8). The age profile over time remains fairly constant although the proportion of young participants under 30 and that of older participants over 50 increase somewhat between 2013-18, from 14% to 17% and from 29% to 35% respectively. The distinction between age groups is important as the role of CE is not the same for jobseekers of different ages. While CE for young and prime-age participants always aims at a reintegration into the primary labour market later on, older participants just below retirement age are more likely to experience CE as a pathway from the labour market into retirement.

The gender profile too has been fairly stable over time. It is weighted more towards men who comprise 57% of total participants reflecting that there are more long-term unemployed men than women in Ireland (Chapter 2). Male participants tend to be older than female participants, with 39% of male participants being aged over 50, compared to only 22% for females. Conversely, 20% of the female participants are aged under 30 whereas they are only 10% of men.

Table 4.8. Community employment (CE) scheme data provide information on programme and participants' characteristics

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Average
Total eligible population	183 700	177 700	163 700	149 900	145 400	97 500	**153 000**
CE participants	3 900	5 000	5 200	4 800	4 700	4 300	**4 650**
Among CE participants:							
Age							
Under 30	14%	14%	13%	13%	16%	17%	**14%**
30-50	58%	58%	57%	54%	51%	49%	**55%**
Over 50	29%	27%	29%	33%	33%	35%	**31%**
Gender							
Male	58%	56%	57%	58%	55%	57%	**57%**
Female	42%	44%	43%	42%	45%	43%	**43%**
Geography							
Urban	65%	66%	66%	67%	66%	68%	**66%**
Rural	35%	34%	34%	33%	34%	32%	**34%**
Nationality							
Irish	89%	86%	85%	85%	84%	86%	**86%**
United Kingdom	4%	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	**5%**
EU pre 2004 (except IRL and GBR)	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	**1%**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Average
New EU member states since 2004	5%	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%	**7%**
Other	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	**2%**
Job classification							
Activation	62%	62%	64%	66%	56%	48%	**60%**
Social inclusion	24%	20%	21%	22%	20%	24%	**22%**
Unclassified	15%	18%	15%	12%	23%	27%	**18%**
Scheme type							
Mainstream CE	81%	80%	81%	83%	85%	91%	**84%**
Health social care	10%	11%	11%	10%	7%	4%	**9%**
Childcare	9%	9%	8%	7%	8%	5%	**7%**
Provider type							
Voluntary bodies	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%	89%	**95%**
Public bodies	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%	**4%**
Community group	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	6%	**1%**
Local authority	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	**0%**
With risk-scoring (PEX) data	9%	53%	62%	68%	73%	75%	**58%**

Note: Urban classification using counties based on 2016 Census. CE participants and associated statistics represent the number of individuals who start their first observed period of CE participation in the period 2013-18 so an individual is counted only once (an individual who had episodes of CE in 2013, 2014 and 2015 would be counted in 2013 only). PEX: Probability of exiting the Live Register. Group percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding to the nearest whole percent.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/qf872h

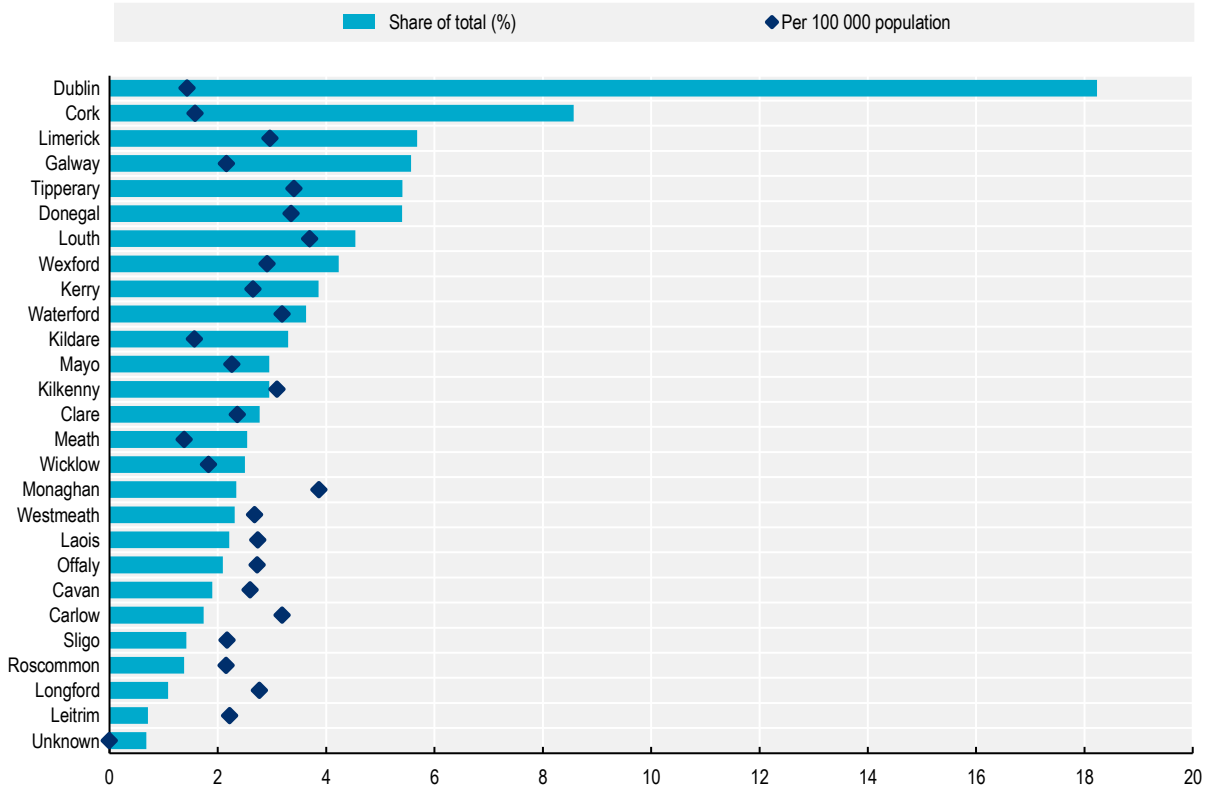
Participants are mainly located in urban areas in all parts of the country

Around two-thirds of CE participants reside in urban areas largely reflecting differences in population size between urban and rural parts of the country. More specifically population size accounts for approximately two-thirds of the variation in the number of CE participants across counties (Figure 4.8), whereas the remaining variation is driven by other factors such as local labour market conditions and the number of CE sponsors in the area.

CE is present all around the country. While most CE placements are found in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway due to their large population, less populated areas also have, relatively speaking, a high CE density. For example, County Monaghan has the highest number of CE participants per 100 000 of population in the data at 3.87 but is only 17th out of the 26 counties in terms of its absolute number of participants due to its small population.

Figure 4.8. Most CE placements are in or around big cities but in per capita terms CE is spread equally around the country

Community employment (CE) placements absolute values and per 100 000 inhabitants



Note: County populations based on 2016 census population data (www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsdgi/regionalsdgsireland2017/nt/). All CE schemes starting 2013-18. Ordered by total proportion.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/5x9mwr

Similar to Tús, CE participants are more likely than the average Irish person to be located in deprived areas. According to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index classification, 21.7% of participants live in disadvantaged areas and a further 37.2% live in areas marginally below the average (this compares to 7% and 41% respectively for all Irish citizens). A further 10% of CE participants live in affluent areas and 31.2% in areas marginally above the average (compared to 10% and 42% respectively for all Irish citizens). In this sense then, CE is supportive in a socially inclusive manner through the provision of greater support to more deprived areas.

However, the limitation of this analysis (and the corresponding analysis for Tús) is that this information is available for participants only and this dynamic may simply reflect

more eligible individuals in these areas. It cannot provide insight as to whether Tús and CE are better targeted to those individuals actually eligible in deprived areas.

Most CE participants are Irish but in relative terms British and EU migrants are more likely to take up CE

In absolute terms Irish participants make up 86% of the total CE population followed by jobseekers from “recent” EU member countries (2004 or later) who account for 7% of participants, whilst individuals with British nationality comprise a further 5% of participants. Only 2% come of participants come from other countries. The distribution of CE participants by nationality has remained broadly stable over the evaluation window.

The picture appears different when employing relative metrics, i.e. comparing participant prevalence relative to overall population size using population and migration estimates (CSO, 2016[4]). British nationals residing in Ireland are twice as likely to participate in CE than the overall population, while EU nationals from post-2004 accession countries are 30% more likely and those from pre-2004 EU countries are 23% more likely. Conversely, Irish nationals are slightly less likely (98%) to participate in CE than the overall population, and “other” nationals are significantly less likely (37%). These differences may be the result of differences in labour market outcomes and eligibility across nationalities as well as other possible factors such as knowledge of the programme integration into the community, desire to participate and the availability of CE positions in the place of residence.

Most CE positions are activation placements, fall into the general CE scheme and are provided by voluntary bodies

CE positions can be distinguished according to their main objective (activation in the primary labour market or improved social inclusion), the type of work that is carried out (general CE schemes or positions in Childcare or Health and Social Care) and the type of CE provider that offers the position (voluntary bodies, public bodies or other).

Activation placements make up the majority of the places offered on CE. Around 60% of the total CE places are categorised as activation placements, whilst 22% are

classified as social inclusion and for 18% information on their classification is missing. Without further knowledge on unclassified placements, the activation strand could account for anywhere between 60-78% of placements and social inclusion between 22-40%. The share of activation placements seems to be falling at the end of the observation period from 66% in 2016 to 48% in 2018. However, there is a trend towards more missing information on categorisation over time making statements on the evolution of the distribution of activation and social inclusion jobs less reliable. In 2018 for instance more than a quarter (27%) of jobs were unclassified.

Most CE participants (84%) are in general CE schemes. In addition, a significant minority of CE schemes cater to the specific Childcare (7%) or Health and Social Care (9%) programmes. While these two programme types make up 16% of total CE placements on average between 2013-18, their role is decreasing over time. In 2013 almost one-fifth (19%) of total CE placements were catered to one of these two schemes against only 9% in 2018. The prevalence of these schemes in the data is high enough to determine whether better outcomes are associated with these specific programmes. This is an important piece of evidence to review given that places for both of these schemes are generally ring-fenced and better or worse relative performance may lead to review of the extent to which these programme streams are fostered by DSP in terms of overall CE places.

The overwhelming majority (95%) of CE providers are classified as voluntary bodies. These bodies are typically charities and provide a range of health, social care and homeless services to the Irish population. The remaining 5% of CE sponsors are public bodies (4%), community groups (1%) and local authorities (<1%). In practice the sponsor type of the CE placement has a lower relevance than the exact job type.

Risk-scoring information on CE participants is limited historically but growing over time

Since the introduction of Ireland's current public employment service (PES) Intreo in 2012, newly unemployed individuals entering registered unemployment should have completed a risk scoring questionnaire, known as the Probability of Exiting (PEX) questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to estimate the likelihood of an individual

exiting the Live Register prior to one year of unemployment. The questionnaire asks a raft of questions on a jobseeker's background and skills that provide useful contextual information for CE participants. In particular, it provides an additional set of socio-economic questions that allow to test the sensitivity of the central methodology to omitted information. PEX information is available for an average of 58% of CE participants, although the availability is heavily weighted towards the latter end of the sample (Table 4.8). While individuals that were already unemployed in 2012 do not have PEX information at all 75% of the 2018 cohort had answered the questionnaire.

4.4.2. CE placements cover a wide range of different job roles

In addition to the high-level categorisation of CE placements into activation and social inclusion placements lower-level job descriptions are available in the data providing more detailed insight into typical CE jobs and how they provide a range of services to local communities. These job descriptions have been compiled by DSP for this project, to reduce the dimensionality of the longer job description titles held in the CE programme administrative records (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[2]).

Detailed job descriptions are available for about four-fifths (82%) of placements (Table 4.9). The CE placements without any job description are the same placements that do not allow for a higher-level categorisation into activation and social inclusion strands. The top 30 job descriptions account for the vast majority of all CE placements (91%) for which a job description is available.

The most common CE jobs are caretaker, general operative, childcare worker, administrator and environmental worker. These jobs descriptions provide a hint to the extent to which CE can provide opportunities for the use of human capital accumulation to prepare for the broader labour market after CE participation. In the case of caretakers and general operatives, it is likely that CE participants help to perform routine maintenance and domestic support to service provision in most cases. Such placements offer an opportunity to sharpen general skills such as reliability, punctuality and teamwork but they may have limited ability to contribute to the accumulation of

specific job-related knowledge and competences even with the embedded CE training budget.

CE positions for childcare workers or administrators arguably offer greater scope for the development of job-specific skills that could be useful for obtaining further private-sector employment via the provision of training that is tailored to the needs of employers. This is precisely the idea behind the Childcare CE programme where there is a requirement for applicants to demonstrate a commitment to engage in sector-specific certified training which would lead to the achievement of a certified Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) major award . Similarly, for administrators, already small modular courses might offer the opportunity to gain skills required by employers. For example, a short course in basic excel use or database management for administrators might be enough alongside the experience offered on CE to open up job opportunities across a range of private-sector jobs. These types of courses have been shown to be effective in other OECD countries (OECD, 2023[6]).

Further jobs in the list of top 30 CE jobs include secretaries, accounts clerks and information officers. Many of these jobs similarly offer the possibility for the development of career paths based on the start of accumulation of skills and experience in these roles. In order to be effective, CE has to allow participants to acquire skills and competences in line with labour market needs and the way CE schemes operate should be informed by evidence on what works well for other active labour market policies (ALMPs).

Table 4.9. Top 30 Community Employment job descriptions

Sorted by total frequency across the period 2013-18

#	Job description	Frequency	Share of total (including unknowns)	Cumulative share of available job descriptions (excluding unknowns)
	Known	22 817	82%	
	Unknown	5 126	18%	
1	Caretaker	2 529	9%	11%
2	General Operative	2 240	8%	21%
3	Childcare Worker	1 809	6%	29%
4	Administrator	1 682	6%	36%
5	Environmental Worker	1 601	6%	43%
6	Maintenance	1 543	6%	50%
7	Care Assistant	1 158	4%	55%

#	Job description	Frequency	Share of total (including unknowns)	Cumulative share of available job descriptions (excluding unknowns)
8	Grounds-Person	1 082	4%	60%
9	Cleaner	950	3%	64%
10	Receptionist	708	3%	67%
11	Support Worker	570	2%	70%
12	Clerical Assistant	513	2%	72%
13	Gardener	395	1%	74%
14	Kitchen Operative	376	1%	75%
15	Catering Assistant	372	1%	77%
16	Sales Assistant	346	1%	78%
17	Shop Assistant	309	1%	80%
18	Information Officer	292	1%	81%
19	Driver	271	1%	82%
20	Sports-Ground Worker	262	1%	83%
21	Youth Worker	236	1%	84%
22	Programme Assistant	194	1%	85%
23	Day Care Worker	186	1%	86%
24	Security	184	1%	87%
25	Personal Assistant	182	1%	88%
26	Housekeeper	179	1%	88%
27	Accounts/Wage Clerk	174	1%	89%
28	Secretary	174	1%	90%
29	After School Assistant	121	0%	90%
30	Tidy Town	116	0%	91%

Note: Cumulative share only adds up to 91% because jobs with lower frequencies are omitted from the table. The full list of job titles runs to 101. Reflects only the first observed CE participation for each individual in the evaluation data.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/itr942

The fieldwork for this report uncovered promising practices from CE schemes, some of which have been able to establish strong business links with leading technology firms and structure their placements with a view to equip participants, through appropriate training and experience, with the skills and competences required to join these firms. For example, in some schemes, private-sector staff from big private companies are available to provide motivational talks and help candidates with interview preparation. While this level of connection with big tech companies is not possible for all CE schemes, better links to local employers can help tailor skill development during CE participation and increase the chances of finding employment after CE.

The current application procedure for approving CE placements is mostly based on whether a placement meets certain criteria on the type of job (such as the voluntary nature of the work and its necessity, and the training provided to the individual) rather

than the extent to which the placement enhances the candidate's further job prospects. Additional efforts to prepare participants to the realities of the local labour market could be worthwhile. For example, this could take the form of some kind of learning forum for the DSP regional managers, the CE supervisors or scheme administrators to ensure that targeting takes place where it can.

The availability of training budget also distinguishes CE from Tús

Unlike Tús, CE includes an annual training budget of EUR 250 per person. The uptake of training towards a major award is also one of the conditions for repeating CE participation for younger participants. Table 4.10 presents an overview of the types of training associated with CE schemes. Over half (56%) of CE schemes have an associated training record attached to them. However, most commonly there is little information on what this training comprises with over 60% of those CE schemes with training having "other or unknown" training (34% of all CE schemes) recorded in the data. Of the training with existing underlying information on the content of the training, the most common type is for QQI minor awards. This training is featured on 12% of all CE schemes. The most common types of training within this category are for occupational first aid and training related to horticulture. Another significant training category is for non-certified training. These training courses are most likely to be associated with jobs requiring training in manual handling, safety training or health-related training.

Table 4.10. Community Employment training comprises vocational modular courses

	QQI Major	QQI Minor	Non-certified	Other or unknown training	None (or less than 2 days)
Share of CE spells (%)	1	12	9	34	44
Median length of training (in days)	185	60	17	37	0
Most common training title	Occupational first aid	Occupational First Aid	Manual handling		
2nd most common	Childcare	Pesticide Use	Safe pass		
3rd most common	Healthcare support	Horticulture Tools and Equipment	Health & Safety		

Note: QQI stands for "Quality and Qualifications Ireland" and refers to the National Framework of Qualifications in Ireland.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/8comeb

4.4.3. CE participants and eligible non-participants are not alike

This section presents descriptive statistics on the characteristics of CE participants relative to the eligible population that did not participate in CE. It complements section 4.4.1, which provides a description of CE participants but not the eligible population as a whole.

CE participants are older and more likely to be men, Irish and have experienced worse labour market outcomes in the past than the broader eligible population (Table 4.11). The average age of CE participants when they start the scheme is 43 years old which is two years older than the average eligible non-participant. They also have slightly fewer dependent children (0.82 vs. 0.89 on average) and are more likely to be married (40% vs. 29%).

The larger proportion of male CE participants than female participants is primarily driven by the fact that there are more long-term unemployed men than women, with men accounting for 55% of the eligible population but also because they have a greater tendency to participate once eligible, raising the final proportion of male participants to 57%.

Similarly, when accounting for eligibility, people with Irish nationality are proportionally more likely to take up CE than foreigners, as Irish nationals account for only 82% of the eligible population but 86% of all CE participants. Irish nationals may have a higher tendency to participate in CE as they have better social networks including friends or family who have completed the scheme or because they are more familiar with the Irish benefit system.

In terms of labour market outcomes, CE participants have worse recent earnings and unemployment histories. In total they experienced more registered unemployment and have earned less in the labour market than their peers. In the two and three years prior to eligibility, CE participants had employment earnings of about three-quarters (74%) of that of eligible non-participants and, for those who were self-employed, less than two-thirds (63%) of their self-employment earnings. CE participants also have more weeks of receipt of unemployment benefits for both JA and JB. Two and three years prior to eligibility, they average 13% more weeks of JA receipt and 34% more of JB.

They have experienced a higher number of instances in registered unemployment (Live Register) and have spent more time in registered unemployment.

There are also systematic differences between CE participants and eligible non-participants in the use of the wider ALMP and benefit system. Most strikingly, the likelihood of having been a Tús participant is much higher for CE participants than for eligible non-participants. Tús appears as a strong entry point for CE participants, with 16% of CE participants having previously completed Tús relative to only 3% in the broader eligibility population (see Chapter 7 for a detailed evaluation of how Tús helps jobseekers). In addition, CE participants have spent almost twice as long in receipt of Back to Education Allowance than eligible non-participants, suggesting that, for some CE participants, there is strong motivation and willingness to engage in ALMPs that will help to foster better links to labour market opportunities. Finally, CE participants are also less likely to have recently been recipients of Carer's or Disability Allowance or Family Benefits.

These differences give rise to a vastly different qualitative description of CE participants relative to eligible non-participants in terms of their previous labour market characteristics, their demographics and their receipt of benefits. Any analytical strategy to determine the impact of CE will need to ensure that it is the programme driving difference in outcomes, rather than innate differences between participants and non-participants. This is an issue that Chapters 6 and 7 will address.

Table 4.11. Community Employment (CE) participants differ to eligible non-participants

		CE participants	All non-participants	Matched non-participants
Demographics	Age	43.1	40.8	42.9
	Number of children	0.82	0.89	0.78
proportion:	Married	40%	29%	39%
	Single	60%	70%	61%
	Irish	86%	82%	85%
	Female	43%	45%	45%
	Urban	66%	69%	66%
Employment history	Employment Earnings Year-1	900	3 600	1 100
	Employment Earnings Year-2	2 800	4 300	2 800
	Employment Earnings Year-3	4 100	4 900	4 100
	Self-employment Earnings Year-1	100	200	100
	Self-employment Earnings Year-2	100	300	200
	Self-employment Earnings Year-3	200	400	300
	Lifetime Social Insurance Weeks	424	288	420
Unemployment history	Jobseekers' Allowance Weeks Year-1	44.3	36.7	44.8
	Jobseekers' Allowance Weeks Year-2	35.8	31.6	35.7
	Jobseekers' Allowance Weeks Year-3	30.7	27.0	30.7
	Jobseekers' Benefit Weeks Year-1	5.2	3.4	5.2
	Jobseekers' Benefit Weeks Year-2	4.8	3.6	5.1
	Jobseekers' Benefit Weeks Year-3	4.8	3.7	4.8
	Lifetime Live Register Spells	1.3	1.2	1.5
	Lifetime Live Register Duration (Weeks)	607	514	690
Other DSP benefits	Total DSP Payments Year-1	52 900	42 900	53 000
	Total DSP Payments Year-2	44 200	38 100	43 500
	Total DSP Payments Year-3	37 700	31 400	37 600
	BTEA weeks Year-1	0.46	0.26	0.52
	BTEA weeks Year-2	0.93	0.53	0.97
	BTEA weeks Year-3	0.98	0.59	0.90
	Count of past BTEA spells	0.13	0.10	0.15
	Count past OFP spells	0.09	0.12	0.09
proportion with:	Maternity Benefit in Year-1	0.20%	0.24%	0.12%
	Maternity Benefit in Year-2	0.23%	0.20%	0.13%
	Maternity Benefit in Year-3	0.19%	0.15%	0.10%
	Carer's Benefit in Year-1	0.23%	2.05%	0.29%
	Carer's Benefit in Year-2	0.78%	1.75%	0.81%
	Carer's Benefit in Year-3	0.90%	1.56%	1.19%
	Disability Allowance in Year-1	0.03%	0.46%	0.18%
	Disability Allowance in Year-2	0.03%	0.05%	0.06%
	Disability Allowance in Year-3	0.04%	0.04%	0.06%
	Family Benefits in Year-1	0.03%	2.22%	0.13%
	Family Benefits in Year-2	0.04%	1.61%	0.09%
	Family Benefits in Year-3	0.01%	1.12%	0.00%
	Previous Tús participation	15.9%	3.0%	17.6%

Note: Earnings and payments in Euros in 2023 price terms adjusted using personal consumption expenditure deflator (https://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=125857). Data are mean average all CE eligible non-participants and participants in the years 2013-18. DSP: Department of Social Protection; BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; OFP- One-parent Family Payment.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/txyn51

4.5. Improvements to data availability could further support policy analysis

Despite the richness of the data on which this evaluation draws, a number of data limitations are worth highlighting. This section outlines some immediate improvements that could be made to the administrative data and highlights longer term developments.

4.5.1. Implementing a structured analytical data framework would facilitate timely and consistent analysis

Linked administrative data form the bedrock of any analysis of ALMPs but substantial efforts had to be made to clean, link and assimilate disparate data for this report. Ensuring that such data cleaning, linking and manipulation is performed routinely in DSP would lower the costs of evaluation of different policies, by making it quicker and easier for analysts to perform counterfactual impact evaluations.

The replacement of the previously maintained Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset, which was compiled for this reason, would help to re-establish such data for analysis. This would make any future DSP policy evaluations more nimble, more consistent and require less analytical resources to undertake. Of course, there would be an analytical cost to the establishment and maintenance of such a data architecture, alongside the concomitant need for strong supporting metadata to aid analysts. A choice would have to be made as to the appropriate scope and update frequency of such a system, taking in views from analytical and policy staff across DSP (and wider government agencies). However, once done, it would significantly enhance the ability of analysts (both internal to DSP and the Irish Government, but also to any approved external researchers) to provide policy-relevant analysis and evidence quickly and efficiently.

4.5.2. Improving data quality and data scope would also support future policy analysis

The compilation of administrative microdata for this report, also revealed several areas whereby improvements could be made to aid policy evaluation. A few examples are described in this section to provide some information on the type of error and conflict

that emerged in the analysis. More details can be found in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[2]).

Data sometimes had incompatible start and end dates, where different programmes could not be undertaken simultaneously, but were reported as such in the data. For example, there were individuals with seemingly overlapping Tús and JobPath episodes, which, prior to June 2018 was not possible. Administrative efforts to clean and reconcile such inconsistencies would be helpful to any collated evaluation data, so that all analysts make the same assignment rules on which dates are correct.

Data coverage was limited on some different administrative data sources; improving this would enable more precise and detailed policy evaluation. For example, PEX data is either missing completely, or there are consistent question responses missing, even where individuals should have this information completed. There is no unified database that collates information on the receipt of the range of benefits that DSP offers. These are instead contained on disparate datasets. Having a unified and consistent record of such receipt would enable a consistent view of the totality of DSP support and would decrease analytical re-work. Lastly, historic information on DSP benefit receipt and payment amounts is sometimes limited. For example, payment information goes back to 2010 only, which make it challenging to construct individuals' payment histories prior to this point in time.

The incorporation of administrative datasets from other ministries would also enhance the quality and scope of policy evaluation. Education data from the Department of Education would provide information about education and training could also be a useful addition to DSP's data on labour market status and interventions. Education data provide critical information to control for individuals' background, particularly for young people where past labour market outcomes cannot be used a proxy for this. Alongside supporting broader ALMP analysis, a reduction in the number of questions addressed to the jobseeker on the PEX questionnaire is taking place following an ESRI review. Already having education data would allow questions on education to be removed from the PEX questionnaire. Turning to outcomes, incorporating information on hours worked to the administrative employment data in Ireland could yield a significant

improvement to analytical capacity. Similarly, at present there are no linked health or justice data available to examine the wider impacts of ALMPs and how the participation in an ALMP affects usage of health services or criminal acts.

A more consistent set of practices relating to data entry and processes would result in a more consistent dataset for management and analysis, as manually collected data are often quite variable at a regional level. For example, the variation in the data on how people are referred to Tús and any subsequent actions appears to hinge on data recording and data collation practices in different geographical divisions. Bringing some kind of central co-ordination and collation to these statistics, to ensure that different areas are recording and reporting information in the same manner, would bring more consistency to any monitoring and evaluation and ensure that any differences between delivery are the result of actual differences in operation rather than in reporting.

Metadata on administrative data was often limited. Therefore, the quality of variable responses, the inference on any missing data and the preference for utilisation (of the same underlying characteristic) from two (or more) separate but inconsistent sources, was indeterminable. Ensuring that data quality, data limitations and more generally data sources are fully documented across all sources will help to ensure that the right data are used for the right purposes with the right caveats.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how individual-level microdata from the DSP and Revenue have been leveraged to permit a rich analysis of how individuals eligible for Tús and CE navigate their way through the system of support offered by DSP and how those that participate in either scheme are able to enjoy the benefits from this participation. At its core, detailed programme information on entry into different ALMPs and wider DSP services, the receipt of benefits from DSP and on related labour market outcomes are linked together to enable the analysis to build detailed pictures of individuals' journeys over time.

The data show some similarities and some differences between Tús and CE participants. Both schemes are more likely to have men participate in the sample used for the evaluation, particularly so for Tús where 70% of all participants are male. The age distribution for the Tús participants is slightly younger, where around one-quarter (26%) of participants are aged under 30 (contrasting to only 14% of CE participants). Whilst Irish nationals make up the vast majority of Tús and CE participants, in relative terms those with British or EU nationality are more likely to take up a place on the scheme. Both schemes are more likely to operate in areas with a higher-than-average level of deprivation compared to the broader Irish population, underlying their benefit to society in a redistributive sense.

Notwithstanding the good data that have enabled the analysis in this report, further efforts could be made that would better support any future policy evaluations. Better data assimilation to create and maintain datasets for analysis would lower future research costs. Expanding the provision of data across a number of areas would permit richer analysis. Supporting all of this with detailed and informative metadata is imperative to maintain consistency and improve analysis quality.

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5 Sequences of support schemes in Ireland

This chapter sets the scene for the evaluation of the impact of participation in two public works programmes in Ireland, CE and Tús, that will be presented in the next chapters. It presents an overview of the main patterns in participation in active labour market policies (ALMPs) observed in the data for those eligible for CE and Tús, mostly long-term unemployed.
It shows the typical individual trajectories across selected ALMPs and labour market states, the time spent in three highly relevant conditions – namely CE, Tús, and eligibility to the two schemes – and the probability of moving to other states, taking into account the role played by individual characteristics like gender, age, nationality, and marital status.
The depiction of trajectories can offer a more comprehensive narrative on how specific patterns can lead to better or worse outcomes over time and provide a good introduction to the analysis of more specific events – e.g. participation in CE or Tús – that will be covered in the next chapters.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an empirical framework for the evaluation of the impact of participation in Community Employment (CE) and Tús, presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Instead of looking at the impact of participation vs. non-participation in a single programme, it takes a broader perspective and analyses the typical sequence of programmes in which individuals participate, therefore considering different types of schemes, and the specific timing of each of them in a sequence. The present chapter, therefore, treats CE and Tús simply as one of the many events that may occur within an individual's life, making clear which are the most common prequels and outcomes, and assessing their relevance, in terms of the number of people involved and for how long, within the overarching context of the Irish social protection system.

Coherently with the analysis in the rest of the report, the reference population for the analysis presented in this chapter is composed of all people who have been eligible, either for CE or Tús, for at least one day between 2012 and 2018. This is mostly long-term unemployed – i.e. individuals who have been unemployed for at least a year – but also includes a small share of people (around 10%) who qualify to CE because they are in receipt of One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP). In the rest of the chapter, for the sake of clarity, eligible individuals might be called "long-term unemployed" or "jobseekers", even though a minority of this group is not technically in this category. It should be noted that the reference population for the analysis includes also individuals who are observed participating in CE or Tús, despite not being formally eligible through the long-term unemployment or OPFP paths; these individuals likely qualify through alternative paths, not observable in the data available. Eligible individuals and participants, hence, do not fully overlap.[1] Of this target population, a "snapshot" is created that portrays each individual for the 96 months from January 2012 to December 2019, on a monthly basis. Starting from this reference population, each analysis described in the rest of the chapter will further sample individuals from this dataset, according to specific aims and methodologies of the analysis in question.[2]

5.2. Eight different states are identified

This chapter defines a limited number of possible states in which individuals can find themselves during the course of their personal trajectories through the labour market and associated support services, and categorises peoples according to these states. The possible states are eight, and were selected on the basis of relevance, as well as data availability and reliability: CE, Tús, employment with support (EWS), employment without support (EWoS), Back to Education Allowance (BTEA), JobBridge, JobPath, and a residual state capturing no participation in employment nor in any of the supporting schemes mentioned (see Table 5.1 for a summary).

The first two states considered in the analysis are participation in CE and Tús, which will be the focus of analysis in Chapters 6 and 7. The other categories capture engagement of eligible individuals in other relevant schemes. The first one of these alternative states is defined as “employment with support” (EWS). This category covers the scenario where participants are employed in the open labour market, but still receive some sort of support, either in terms of income support to complement earnings from employment, or incentives for employers hiring jobseekers, in order to be able to access or maintain this employment. While this state still captures participation in an ALMP, EWS can also be seen as a step out: the experience gathered while supported, indeed, can provide the worker with the skills needed to stay employed anyway. The schemes included under this heading are the following:

- JobsPlus: this is a subsidy paid to the employers which encourages and rewards those who offer employment opportunities to individuals who are unemployed. It provides employers with two levels of payment: EUR 7 500 or EUR 10 000 over two years, with the level of payment depending on factors such as the age of the jobseeker and the length of time in receipt of a qualifying payment.
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA): this scheme encourages people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. It allows people to develop a business while retaining a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to two years.

- Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD): this is a weekly payment to help people with children move from social welfare into work. It gives financial support to people with qualified children who are in or take up employment or self-employment and stop claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) or Benefit (JB), One-Parent Family Payment or Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST, a social welfare payment for people who are parenting alone, whose youngest child is aged between 7 and 14).
- Part-Time Job Incentive (PTJI): this scheme allows certain people getting Jobseeker's Allowance to take up part-time work and get a special weekly allowance instead of their jobseeker's payment. It is intended to be a stepping stone to full-time work.
- Casual jobseeker claims: these are unemployment claims under which jobseekers can work for up to three in seven days, and receive an unemployment payment for the remaining days.

This list demonstrates that EWS category encompasses very different situations, from strictly speaking ALMPs such as JobsPlus, to schemes facilitating the take-up of part-time work as a stepping stone to full-time work, and income supports making employment economically more viable. It should be noted that this category only includes types of support where employment is part of the design, i.e. where employment is required for receiving a certain support; this rule leads to the exclusion of some forms of income support that are designed to encourage employment but where employment is not a prerequisite of receipt, e.g. One-Parent Family Payment.

Other schemes considered as separate states are:

- Back to Education Allowance (BTEA): this scheme helps people who are unemployed, are getting a One-Parent Family Payment or have a disability, to attend approved second- or third-level education courses;
- JobBridge: this was a national internship scheme, in place between 2011 and 2016, offering six or nine-month placements in organisations in the private, public and community and voluntary sectors;

- Referral to other Employment Services – JobPath. JobPath is a contracted employment services programme to help people who are long-term unemployed find employment.
- The last substantive state considered is employment without any type of support. This captures a condition in which an individual is found with employment-related contribution weeks, without being at the same time in receipt of "accompanying" benefits or under subsidised schemes like the ones mentioned above.
- A residual state, capturing the situation in which individuals in the reference sample are not observed in any of these states in the period under analysis, is added to the list of states in the sequence analysis. For simplicity, this will be labelled as "Other", which can also be considered as "none of the above". One can imagine this category encompasses a number of possible states. These individuals might still be registered as unemployed, possibly participating in schemes which are not captured in the data available; for example, participating in training schemes, or assigned to alternative employment services. They could have moved abroad, or simply be inactive. As will be explained in the next section, however, this state should largely exclude inactivity due to receipt of state or widow(er)'s pension, maternity or paternity leave, disability or caring for others, as all individuals in receipt of related benefits are excluded from the analysis. Deceased individuals are also excluded from the analysis.

Before explaining how the dataset for the analyses was built, and presenting the results of the analyses, it is worth highlighting two points to be considered in the study:

- Each of the schemes included under the various states have specific target groups and eligibility rules; these are not taken into account in the analysis, which only considers as target group those eligible for CE/Tús. Participation in other schemes is only considered as an alternative state observed in the data for this group.
- The list of possible states is not exhaustive. In the preparation phase, many other schemes were explored as options to include in the analysis. However, data imitations made it impossible to cover more states than those in the list above. More information on these limitations and options explored will be

provided in the next section, as well as in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[1]).

Table 5.1. States are collated from several data sources

State	Short description	Sources of raw data
CE	See Chapter 6	CE scheme data
Tús	See Chapter 7	Tús scheme data
Employment with support (EWS), including:		
JobsPlus	A subsidy paid to employers who offer job opportunities to the unemployed. It ranges from EUR 7 500 to EUR 10 000 over two years	Benefits data
Back to work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)	Social welfare payments encouraging people to become self-employed, allowing them to develop a business while retaining a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to two years	Social welfare payments
Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD)	Payment to help people with children move from social welfare into work; provides financial support to people with qualified children who are in or take up employment or self-employment and stop claiming JA/JB, OPFP or JST	Social welfare payments
Part-time Job Incentive (PTJI)	Scheme allowing certain people getting JA to take up part-time work and get a special weekly allowance instead of their jobseeker's payment	Social welfare payments
Casual claims	Unemployment claims under which jobseekers can work for up to three in seven days, and receive an unemployment payment for the remaining days	CE eligibility data
Employment without support (EWoS)	A condition where a person has a job and does not receive any kind of support	Earnings and Social Insurance Contributions
Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)	Helps unemployed people and those with disabilities or receiving One-Parent Family Dividend to attend second- or third-level courses	Social welfare payments
JobBridge	Internship scheme (between 6 and 9 months) in force between 2011 and 2016	Social welfare payments
JobPath	Outsourced employment service for the long-term unemployed	JobPath History
Other	A condition where a person, in the period after becoming eligible for CE or Tús, is neither employed nor in receipt of any of the support schemes listed above (residual state)	CE eligible, Tús eligible, but not found in earnings and social insurance contributions, social welfare payments, benefits data, JobPath history data

Notes: Overall information is complemented with demographic data.
Source: Author's representation.

5.3. Data construction

To analyse sequences, a dataset is constructed in which every individual, at each moment in time, is uniquely attributed to a state, according to the rules described above. The dataset is constructed into a "grid" with person timelines and variables on the columns. Table 5.2 provides an artificial example of such structure in which

individual identified by identifier ("ID") 50 is observed in March 2016 under state "Other". In June of the same year, he moves to a job with no support (EWoS), a state persisting until December 2016. In January 2017, he moves again to "Other", and in April he enters JobPath (even though the variables on gender, age and marital status are observed in the data, the ones reported in the table are invented values to ensure data protection). The choice of this person-month structure for the data is mainly dictated by the flexibility it provides with duration analysis (see section 5.6); hence, it was decided to preserve this structure for all the analyses for the sake of comparability.

Table 5.2. Example of data structure

ID	Year	Month	State	Gender	Age	Marital Status
50	2016	3	other	Male	33	Single
50	2016	4	other	Male	33	Single
50	2016	5	other	Male	34	Single
50	2016	6	Employment without support	Male	34	Single
50	2016	7	Employment without support	Male	34	Single
50	2016	8	Employment without support	Male	34	Single
50	2016	9	Employment without support	Male	34	Single
50	2016	10	Employment without support	Male	34	Married
50	2016	11	Employment without support	Male	34	Married
50	2016	12	Employment without support	Male	34	Married
50	2017	1	other	Male	34	Married
50	2017	2	other	Male	34	Married
50	2017	3	other	Male	34	Married
50	2017	4	JobPath	Male	34	Married
50	2017	5	JobPath	Male	35	Married
50	2017	6	JobPath	Male	35	Married

Note: Simulated data to show the structure of actual data.

The database used for the analysis builds upon nine different individual sources of raw data, which are visually represented in Figure 5.1. Since raw data provide complete information for eight consecutive years from 2012-19, each of the 466 152 individuals included in the final dataset is observed for 96 consecutive months. In this sense, the data constructed is what is known as a *balanced* panel.

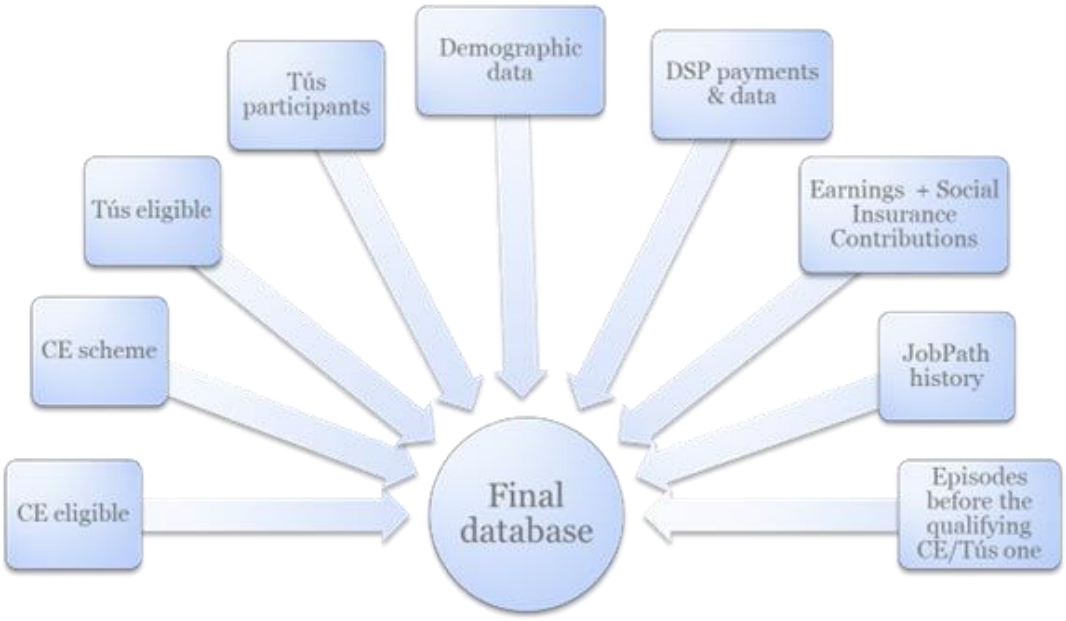
The starting point for the analysis is the identification of individuals who were eligible for either CE or Tús at any point in the period between 2012-18, which represents the reference population in this chapter. This information is retrieved from the eligibility dataset provided by the Department of Social Protection (DSP), as explained in

Chapter 4. Once this group is selected, the next step is defining the main state in which each individual is found in each month of the panel described above.

Information on the possible states is retrieved from several different data sources: CE and Tús participants (scheme) data, DSP benefits data, social welfare payments data, earnings data (Revenue), and JobPath history data. These datasets can be broadly grouped in two categories, based on whether they contain records relative to spells – with start and end dates for each single episode – or annual records.

CE and Tús participants data, DSP benefits data and JobPath history data belong to the first category. They all contain detailed information on exact start and end dates of CE and Tús schemes, DSP benefits and JobPath referrals, making it easy to assign the relevant states to specific points in time during each year. CE and Tús scheme data were used to define periods when individuals were participating in these schemes; episodes were merged when the gap between them was shorter than 30 days.

Figure 5.1. Feeders of the final database



Source: Author's representation.

The DSP benefits dataset is the main source of information for JobsPlus participation, i.e. for one of the schemes that falls under the supported employment status. It also provides information on individuals who, during the period of analysis, have been in receipt of maternity/paternity benefits, carer's allowance, disability allowance,

contributory pensions; as mentioned below, this information will be used to select individuals for analysis. JobPath history data also show exact periods when individuals were referred to this employment service. In addition, CE eligibility data provide information on precise periods of casual claims.

The earnings and contributions and the social welfare payments datasets posed a different set of challenges. The former is the source for information on employment without support. For the purposes of the analysis presented in this chapter, the social welfare payments dataset represents the main source for data on receipt of Back to Education Allowance, three of the supported employment types (Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Back to Work Family Dividend, Part-Time Job Incentive), JobBridge. These two datasets are only available on an annual basis, with no information on start and end dates for benefit/employment spells. In order to reconcile this with the monthly structure of the dataset built for the analysis of sequences, some rules of thumb had to be implemented to allocate weeks of benefits/employment to specific weeks of the year. This required to make hypotheses on start and end dates of EWoS, BTWEA, BTWFD, PTJI, JobBridge and BTEA, that needed to be co-ordinated among them and with (known) end and start dates of JobPath and JobPlus; the allocation rules are presented in detail in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[1]).

The main operations performed on each of the raw data sources, with an emphasis on the loss of observations implied by the main steps, are described in the Technical Report, while the final merging procedure is summarised below.

5.3.1. Data are merged together into a unified dataset defining spells

Taking these separate source datasets and combining them together in the grid structure previously described involves several steps. First, each cleansed feeder is turned into the person-month structure described above in Table 5.2, so that merging can be performed using a unique identifying key which combines an individual identifier, the year and the month. Second, information is merged on individuals eligible to CE or Tús, to build the core of the reference population. There are 364 831 people

who appear both as eligible to CE and to Tús, during at least a month within the target timeframe and not necessarily in the same moment; another 215 464 are eligible to CE only, while 59 648 to Tús only. CE (Tús) episodes are then added to the pool of eligible persons. For 16 491 (1 050) individuals with CE (Tús) episodes, there is no corresponding eligible spell even partially falling within the period from January 2012 to December 2019. Although no eligibility period potentially related to these CE or Tús episodes is observed, these episodes are anyway retained in the data. Of the resulting dataset, 1 167 persons have missing demographic information: these persons are not dropped, unless the corresponding piece of demographic information is needed for the analysis (e.g. breakdowns by gender where gender is missing).

Individuals that may have a reduced or unstable labour supply or availability to participate in full to the interventions are dropped from the analysis. Individuals are dropped in this order:

- People observed to receive maternity or paternity benefits: 57 288;
- People observed to receive a contributory state pension or a widow(er)'s pension: 43 485;
- People receiving disability allowance: 50 905;
- People with carer's allowance: 39 654.

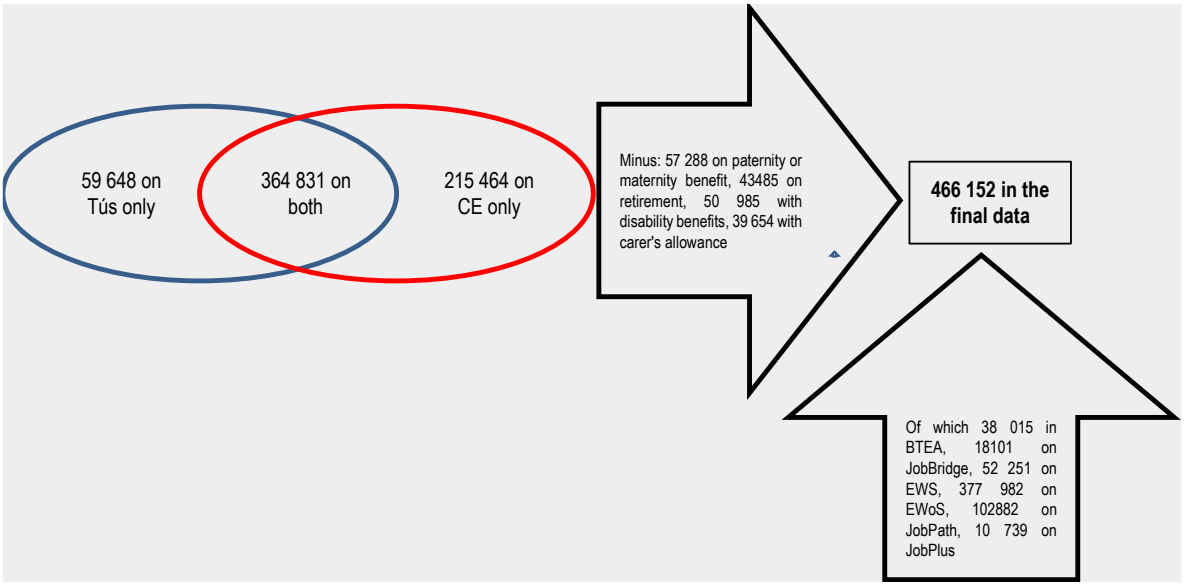
Finally, to the remaining individuals, a number of data are added which allow the calculation of the different labour market states. These data are the computed CE and Tús caps; all cumulated benefit durations and counts until date of Tús or CE eligibility (including time spent in the Live Register, i.e. on registered unemployment); Back to Education Allowance (38 015 individuals involved during at least a month within the relevant period); JobBridge (18 101); employment with (52 251) and without support (377 982); JobPath (102 889); JobsPlus (10 739).

After this processing, 466 152 individuals are left in the data (see Figure 5.2 for a visual representation), for a total of 44 750 592 person-month observations (i.e. lines in the "grid" mentioned above). As a final step, since in the same month a person can be observed in two different – although compatible – states, rules are applied to select the prevailing one. The following lexicographic ordering (which gives preference to one

state over another if they both appear in the same month) across states is applied, which gives precedence to CE and Tús, as they are the focus of this report:

1. Community Employment (CE)
2. Tús
3. Employment with support (EWS)
4. Employment without support (EWoS)
5. Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)
6. JobBridge
7. JobPath
8. Other (residual state, applying whenever an individual is not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis)

Figure 5.2. Choices made to merge the data determine some loss of information



Source: Author's representation.

What has been described so far is the dataset that represents the starting point for the analyses in this chapter. For each part of the analysis, however, individuals are then selected based on year of eligibility start, so that individuals starting eligibility e.g. in 2012 can be considered as the "2012 entry cohort". Once this selection is done, the starting time point of the analysis becomes the month of eligibility start. This becomes time t, and all individuals histories are aligned starting from this moment. Months

observed in the dataset before this moment are dropped, and the subsequent points in time considered in the analysis are chosen starting from the entry month.

5.3.2. The choices made to build the data for the analysis point towards a few possible recommendations to improve the current data availability

Before moving to the results of the analysis, it is worth pointing out a few data-related caveats to bear in mind, together with possible recommendations for improving the current situation.

In building the dataset for the analysis, information was frequently available on the same benefit or scheme participation in more than one data source. For example, information on JobsPlus was available both in the benefits and in the social welfare payment datasets. Information on JobPath assignments was provided in a specific JobPath history dataset but was also available as part of a dataset on referrals. Data on receipt of BTEA was extensively available in the social welfare payments dataset, but also sparsely appeared in the benefits and referral datasets. Piecing together these different sources of information was never easy, as very rarely the two sources were providing coherent information. The working solution to this issue was to identify what could be considered the “main” source of information on each scheme or benefit, in terms of coverage and likely reliability of data. This leaves however an open question on comparability between different datasets, reliability of the information provided, and in general, an impression that availability of more comprehensive meta-data would help interpreting the information found when exploring the data sources. As the source datasets are built for operational purposes, developing comprehensive meta-data documentation will assist in re-using them for analytical purposes. Furthermore, the development of a longitudinal database that can consider a variety of data points and use them to come to some determination of labour market status, would alleviate many of the data construction challenges outlined in this section.

In order to test the coherence and consistency of the data used in the analysis, several checks were done throughout the data construction phase. Moving from the rules that in theory apply to participation in different schemes and overlapping receipt of benefits, these checks were aimed at identifying the rules that could be implemented in the

construction of the data to identify the relevant cases to be considered (or discarded) for analysis. This was especially useful whenever the information available was not complete – for example, for data on social welfare payments and earning data on employment, which are only available on an annual basis. Despite the carefully selected allocation rules set in place, the annual nature of part of the data limits the precision that can be used in properly allocating statuses over the different points in time. This is one of the main shortcomings to be kept in mind in carrying out the analysis of sequences. More detailed information on the specific time periods these benefits/employment records refer to would allow for more reliable analysis.

Moreover, it is worth noting that employment data not only do not contain information on exact periods, but they also do not provide details on hours worked. As a consequence, the analysis will likely overestimate the amount of employment without support in the analysis of sequences.

Finally, as already highlighted, the choice of states considered was also largely due to data availability. Most notably, it was impossible to retrieve information on support received from Local Employment Services, as well as on many other possibly relevant schemes, for which information was very sparse (e.g. for JobClub).

5.3.3. Data describe a diverse pool of individuals in the sample

Individuals in the sample vary across several characteristics, both demographic and related to the episodes that make them eligible for either CE or Tús; these characteristics are considered in the analysis to identify differences in patterns across different population groups.

As shown in Table 5.3, 41% of the individuals under analysis are women, 80% of the sample is composed of Irish nationals, 13% of other EU27 nationals, and 4% from the United Kingdom. Seventy-two percent are single when starting the eligibility period, while most of the others are married (around 28%), with very few widowed. More than one-third are below 30 years of age at the start of the first episode, while 14% are aged 50 and above.

Individuals in the sample are then further classified based on several characteristics, such as the reason why they qualify for CE or Tús (what is labelled “claim type”), and

previous history in registered unemployment (on the Live Register). These characteristics are defined at the time of start of the first qualifying episode for CE or Tús in the period under consideration – i.e. the first eligibility spell starting between 2012-18. Individuals in the final sample may have more than one eligibility spell starting in this period; indeed, 73% of those in the sample have one spell start only, while 21% have two, 5% have three and 1% more than three. However, since this analysis aims to follow individuals since their first entry into eligibility, only the characteristics attached to the first eligibility spell are considered. When both a qualifying episode for CE and one for Tús start at the same time, the information linked to the CE episode prevails.

As far as claim type is concerned, 67% of individuals in the sample qualify from the Jobseeker's path (Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Benefit Credits), with a further 19% of episodes linked to casual jobseeker claims. Some 10% qualify from family-related payments (One Parent Family Payment). Information is missing or referred to other categories for 4% of eligibility starts.

Table 5.3. Overview of characteristics of individuals in the sample

		Number	%
Demographics	Total	347 761	
Proportion:	Married	96 424	28
	Single	249 250	72
	Irish	279 428	80
	Female	142 582	41
Age group	Less than 30	124 365	36
	30 to 49	176 281	51
	50 and above	47 071	14
	Not available	44	0
Months of duration on the Live Register (i.e. of registered unemployment) prior to the qualifying episode	0	34 159	10
	1-12	70 570	20
	13-24	48 806	14
	25-60	66 112	19
	More	25 210	7
	Not available	102 904	30
Claim type – including casual claims	Jobseekers' path (JA, JB, JB Credits)	234 355	67
	Family-related (OPFP)	34 139	10
	Casual Claims	65 539	19
	Other	13 728	4

Note: Characteristics refer to the moment when the first qualifying episode to CE or Tús starts in the period 2012/18.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/6go04w

Individuals in the sample also vary by summed duration on the Live Register (LR) prior to the qualifying episode – i.e. duration of past registered unemployment. Live Register duration comprises periods with i) means-tested Jobseekers Allowance, ii) social insurance contributions-based Jobseekers Benefit, iii) credited social security contributions, and iv) receipt of part-time unemployment payments (casuals). Around 10% of individuals in the sample begin the qualifying episode with no previous time on the LR. 20% have been on the LR for up to a year before, 14% for a period between 1 and 2 years, and 19% between 2 and 5 years. Nearly 30% of episodes do not have information on previous duration on the LR. Individuals becoming eligible under family-related claims tend to have less previous duration on the LR, with around 45% of the relative sample having no past episode, against only around 10% of those qualifying from the jobseekers' path, irrespective of whether they come from casual claims or not.

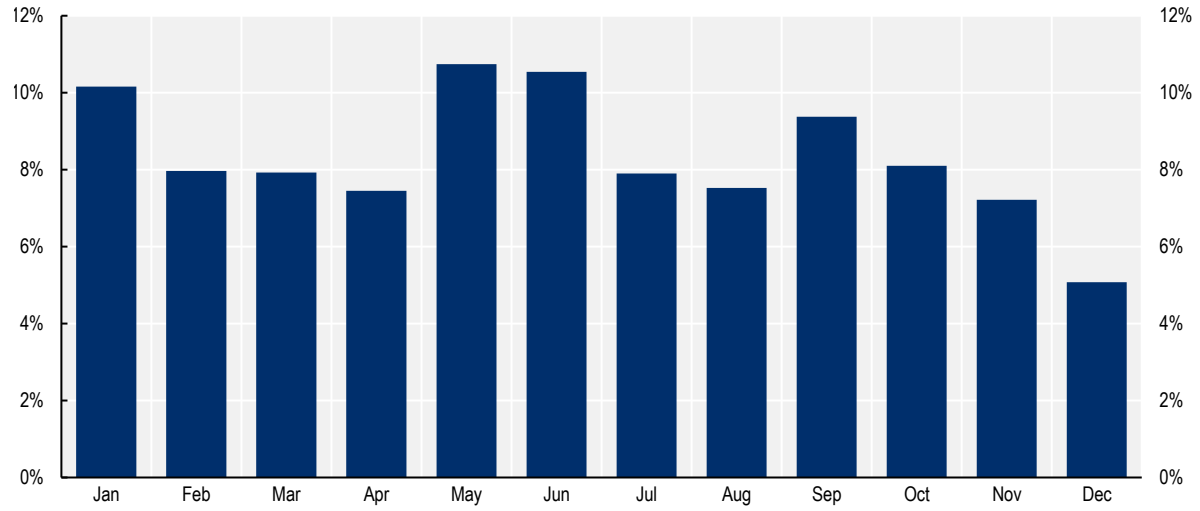
5.4. Descriptive analysis

As a way to introduce the analysis of the paths walked by long-term unemployed individuals in Ireland, the sample of the 253 578 individuals who became eligible either for CE or for Tús between January 2012 and December 2015 is drawn. They are followed for four years at 12-month intervals from eligibility. In other words, the status of a person who entered eligibility, for example in March 2014, is observed also in March 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Although entry into eligibility (as well as any other state) is hence observed on a monthly basis and month-by-month changes can be observed, doing so would imply the comparison of 60 points in time (12 months in each year multiplied for the five-year length or the interval we are considering) with nearly unreadable graphs. Averaging over four different entry years – and hence over four different time spans to observe the individual paths' evolution – makes then this descriptive analysis less dependent over specific features of the business cycle.

Figure 5.3 displays entries by month, to check for the existence of any seasonality in eligibility. Entries span rather evenly across months, with peaks in January, May, June and possibly in September, and a clear fall in December.[3]

Figure 5.3. No clear seasonality for CE and Tús eligible individuals emerges

Community employment (CE) or Tús eligibility entrants in 2012-15



Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/grzl2x

Figure 5.4 provides with a visual representation of individuals' status across time. Each vertical bar sums to the 253 578 individuals who became eligible between 2012-15 and is normalised to 100%. Further, it is split proportionally according to the status observed. The bar at the extreme left (labelled *t)* represents the conditions observed at entry into eligibility, while those on its right represent the states observed one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.[4]

At entry, 68% of eligible individuals combine eligibility with no other social protection provision or employment state. Another relevant share (28% of entrants) either becomes employed (with or without support) in the same month in which it enters eligibility or is already so. Employment is indeed compatible with the eligibility for CE or Tús under certain conditions – e.g. in cases of casual claims for CE, or where the person self-refers under OFP or JST for Tús.

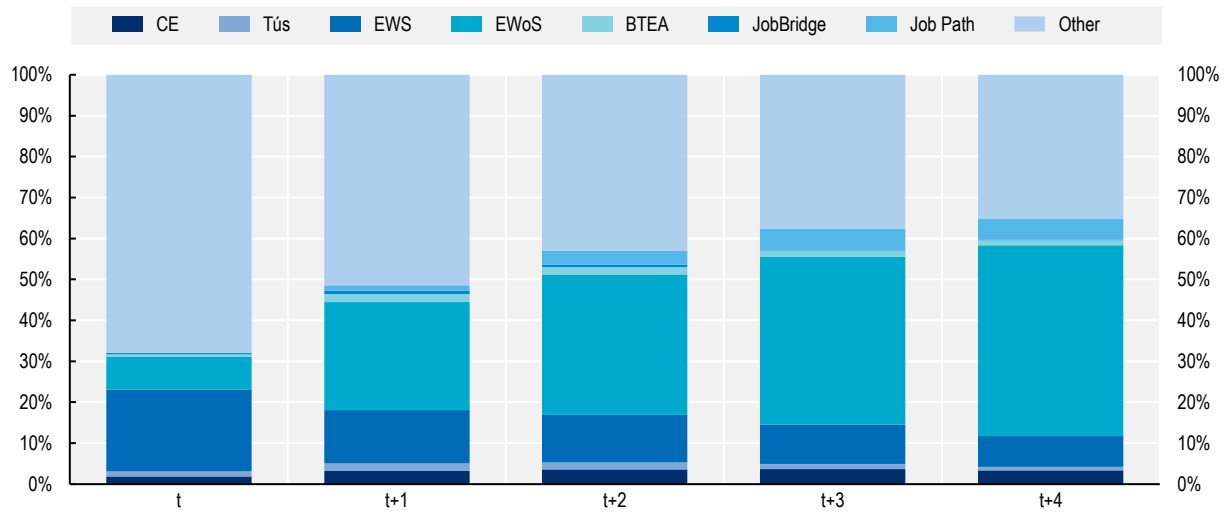
The main message carried by Figure 5.4 emerges when the five bars are compared dynamically. Indeed, the share of those who entered eligibility without any kind of support or a job ("Other") almost halves after four years, from 68% to 35%. This evolution is paralleled by the increase in the number of eligible individuals who get a job without support: their share jumps from 8.1% to 46.6% over the same time span.

Transitions to CE or Tús peak at 3.7% and 1.9% after three and one year respectively, and fall smoothly afterwards, possibly after the maximum allowed stay in the programme is reached. After four years, the other states represent 14% of the initial eligible population, with EWS at 7.5% and JobPath at 5%.

On the one hand, this picture suggests that a good deal (more than 54%) of those who become eligible to CE or Tús are able to get some form of employment (in a large majority of cases without any public support). On the other hand, transitions to the public scheme they have become eligible to (i.e. CE and Tús) represent a small fraction of the initial population. After four years since entry into eligibility, 35% of the initial population appears as "other", i.e. either eligible or not eligible to CE or Tús, but without benefitting from any kind of supporting scheme or working activity.

Figure 5.4. A smooth evolution towards employment without support over time

Observed state over time for individuals becoming eligible to CE or Tús in 2012-15



Note: Each vertical bar sums to the 253 578 individuals who became eligible between 2012 and 2015 and is normalised to 100%. They are split proportionally according to the state observed. The bar at the extreme left (labelled *t*) represents the conditions observed at entry into eligibility, while those on its right represent the states observed one (*t+1*) to four (*t+4*) years later.
BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/erd57c

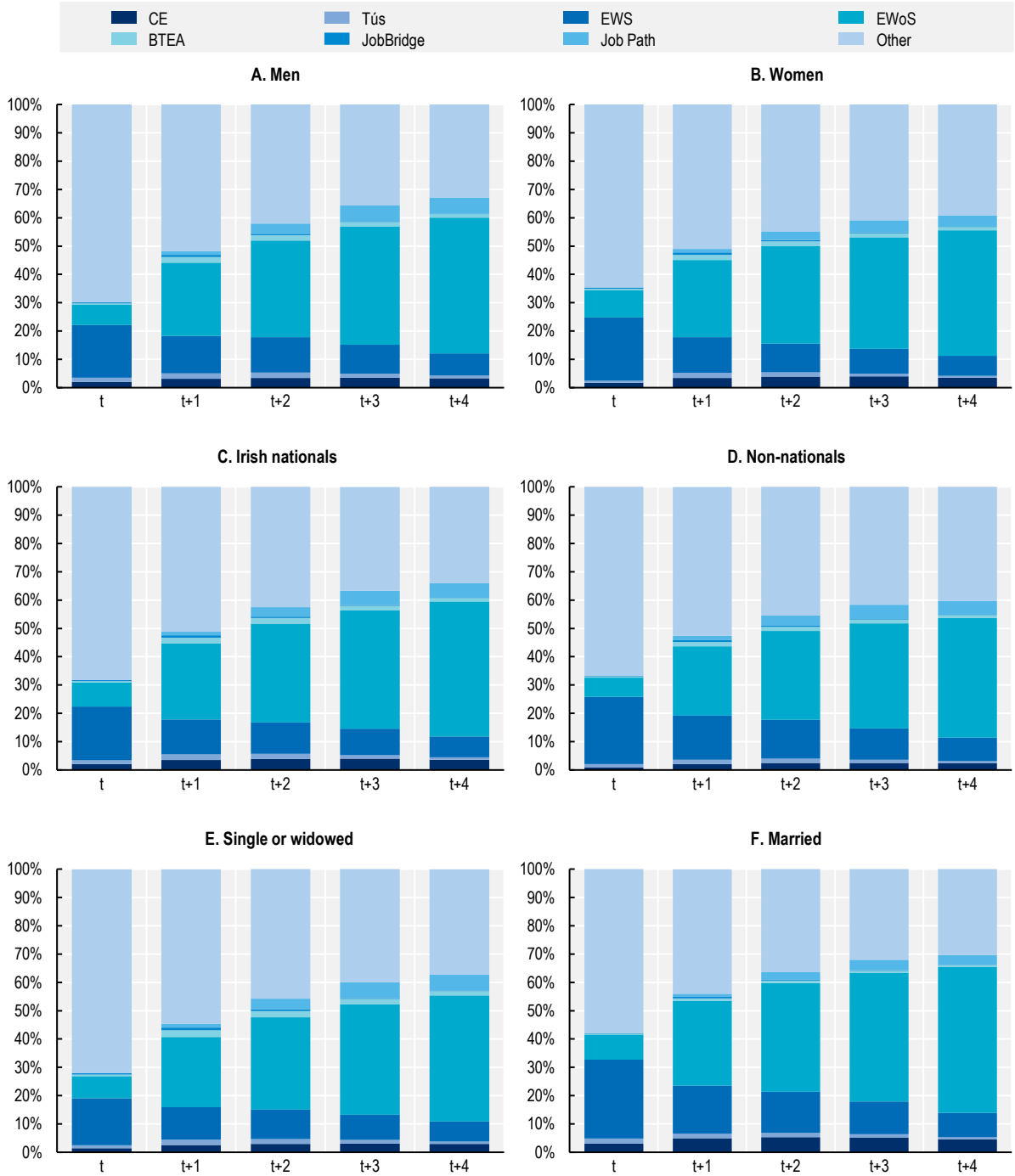
The figures below break down the numbers set out above by demographics (gender, nationality and marital status at first observed eligibility, Figure 5.5), two broad measures of experience (namely age and duration in the Live Register at first observed eligibility, Figure 5.6) and eligibility claim type (Figure 5.7).

5.4.1. Demographic breakdowns are consistent with aggregate dynamics

The aggregate dynamics described above broadly hold in each panel, however, some differences emerge in terms of levels. Men, for instance, although entering eligibility as employed less frequently than women (26% vs. 32%), fill the gap in less than three years, and after four years display a higher share of employed persons (56% vs. 51%: Figure 5.5, Panels A and B). A similar trend is apparent also for the Irish nationals vs. the non-nationals (27% vs. 30% at entry, 55% vs. 51% four years later: Panels C and D), while the married persons display a higher share of employed both at entry (37% vs. 24%) and in the following years (60% vs. 52%: Panels E and F). In all cases these differences mainly mirror into the share of “Other” (eligible or not, but without supports or employment), while differences in terms of the other states appear less relevant, also due to their much smaller shares.

Figure 5.5. Breakdown by demographics

Observed state over time for individuals becoming eligible to CE or Tús in 2012-15



Note: Each vertical bar sums to the 253 578 individuals who became eligible between 2012 and 2015 and is normalised to 100%. They are split proportionally according to the state observed. The bar at the extreme left (labelled *t)* represents the conditions observed at entry into eligibility, while those on its right represent the states observed one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later. BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/v10qi2

5.4.2. The youngest move to employment at a faster pace

Figure 5.6 considers two proxies of experience (age and years accrued in the Live Register) which provide complementary views on the evolution of the pool of eligible individuals over time. The left panels suggest that the share of individuals who are employed (either with or without support) upon becoming eligible for CE or Tús grows with age, although at decreasing rates (20% for under 30, 33% for the prime-aged, and 34% for those aged 50 or more). However, the dynamics are more pronounced for the youngest. Indeed, while the share of employed for the elderly grows by around 13 percentage points in four years, it almost doubles to 59% for those aged 30-49 and grows by a factor of 2.5 for the under 30. Although potentially positively correlated with age, the number of years of presence in the Live Register (right panels) – accrued at the first observed eligibility period since 2012 – tells a partially different story. The share of those employed at entry into eligibility grows from 30% for those with no duration, to 32% for those with between one and two years. It is instead lower (27%) for those who have been in the Live Register more than five years. The dynamics mirrors the initial levels, with shares of 50%, 58% and 42% for the three groups respectively. Again, such differences mostly mirror into the “other” category.

5.4.3. Casual claimants rarely enter CE or Tús

Figure 5.7[5] shows that among those becoming eligible as jobseekers (Panel B), 85% (compared to 68% in the aggregate sample) are observed under the “other” state – meaning eligible without any employment relationship or support scheme – 10% appear as EWoS – possibly because they switch from eligibility to employment within the very first month of eligibility[6] with the remaining 5% on Tús, BTEA, JobBridge or JobPath. By the end of the observed timeframe, these figures respectively change to 39% (“Other”) and 42% (EWoS), with a 6% on some sort of EWS. Conversely, 100% of casual claimers enters eligibility as EWS by construction (see above). Panel A shows however that such share falls to 14% in four years, with EWoS growing to 66%. Less than 1% of those who entered as casual claimants move to either CE or Tús at any time span.

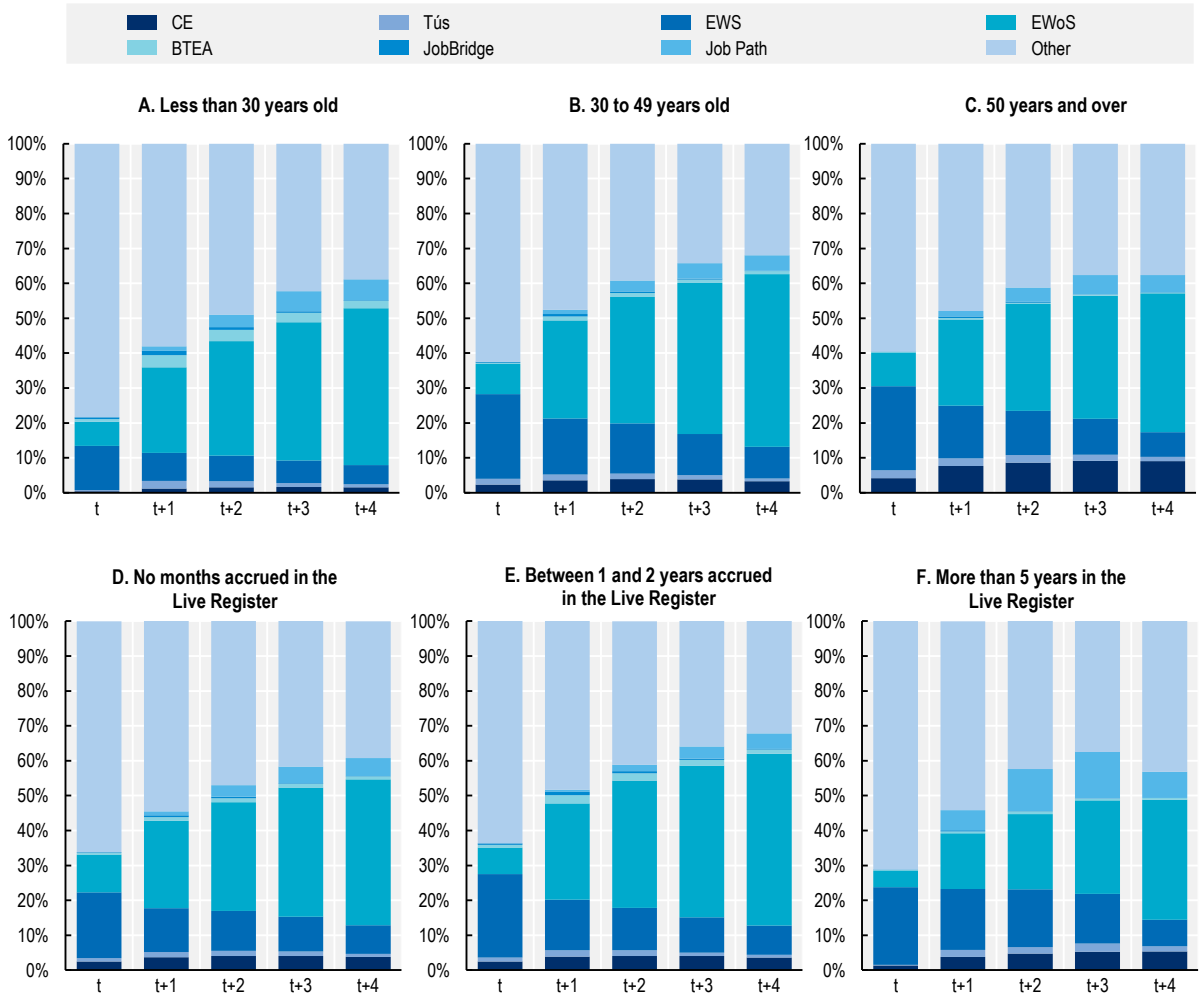
This initial descriptive analysis of sequences carries three main messages. First, within all subgroups the bulk of the dynamics appears driven by transitions to EWoS. Among the non-casual claims, while the initial share of persons holding a job with no support is as low as 10%, after four years since entry it grows more than fourfold, to 42%. Second, the shares of individuals on CE or Tús appear on aggregate minor, topping 3.7% after three years since eligibility for CE, and 1.9% after one year for Tús; even when focusing on the most typical claimants, i.e. non-casual claimants, such shares only mildly grow to 4.4% and 2.3% respectively. Third, the subgroups displaying the lowest initial shares of employment, often show the most pronounced transitions to such state; this holds true for men vs. women, Irish nationals vs. non-nationals, the young and prime-aged as compared to older individuals.

The analysis portrayed above meets two major limitations. On the one hand, it does not exploit a valuable feature of the data, i.e. that unemployed people can be followed over time individually, while so far the data have been used purely as repeated cross-sections. On the other, even when the sample is broken down by subgroups, composition effects cannot be excluded, which means, for instance, that even when the analysis is run separately by gender, the observed dynamics are at least partially explained by age, because, e.g. women are on average younger than men.

The following sections will try to overcome such limitations, first through an analysis of personal trajectories, and then through duration analysis.

Figure 5.6. CE and Tús eligibility entrants: Breakdowns by age and registered unemployment duration

Observed state over time for individuals becoming eligible to CE or Tús in 2012-15



Note: Each vertical bar sums to the 253 578 individuals who became eligible between 2012 and 2015 and is normalised to 100%. They are split proportionally according to the state observed. The bar at the extreme left (labelled *t)* represents the conditions observed at entry into eligibility, while those on its right represent the states observed one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later. BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis. Time spent on the Live Register captures duration of past registered unemployment.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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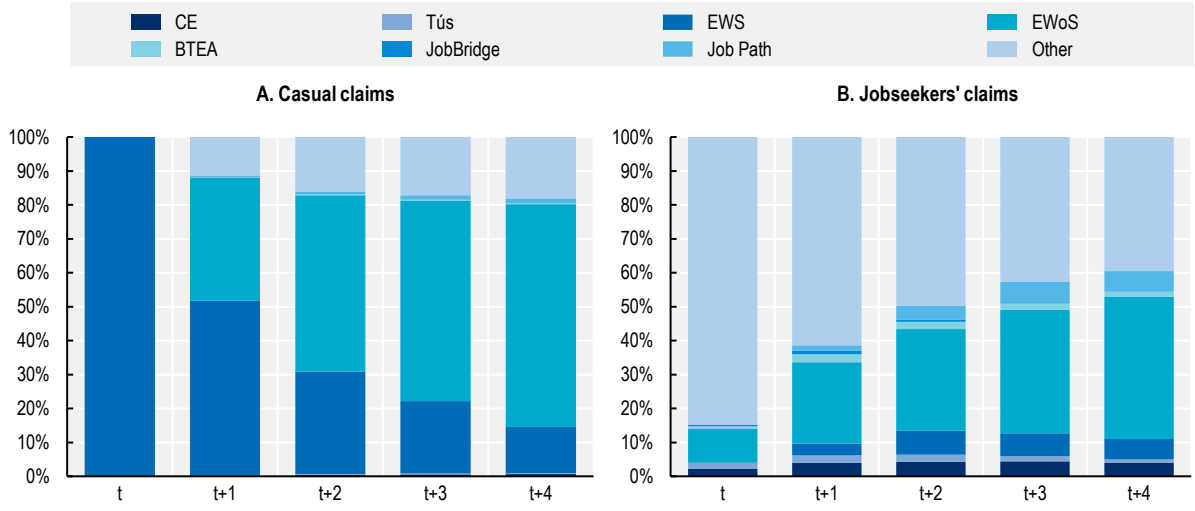
Figure 5.7. CE and Tús eligibility entrants: Breakdown by type of initial claim

Observed state over time for individuals becoming eligible to CE or Tús in 2012-15



Note: Each vertical bar sums to the 253 578 individuals who became eligible between 2012 and 2015 and is normalised to 100%. They are split proportionally according to the state observed. The bar at the extreme left (labelled t) represents the conditions observed at entry into eligibility, while those on its right represent the states observed one (t+1) to four (t+4) years later.
BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis. The category of casual claims includes individuals who became eligible through unemployment claims of a specific type, under which jobseekers can work for up to three in seven days and receive an unemployment payment for the remaining days. Jobseekers' claims are related to individuals becoming eligible through receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance or Benefit, but not on a casual claim. Family-related claims (i.e. claims related to OPFP) not shown here.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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5.5. Analysis of personal trajectories

This section provides an overview of personal trajectories of the individuals in the sample. It looks more in detail into individual sequences, considering the specific order of states, combinations of states over time, as well as their timing. The depiction of trajectories can offer a more comprehensive narrative on how specific patterns can lead to better or worse outcomes over time, and provide a good introduction to the analysis of more specific events – e.g. participation in CE or Tús – that will be covered in the next chapters.

As in section 5.4, to simplify interpretation, the state of the individuals under analysis is observed at yearly intervals after the moment they became eligible to either CE or Tús. Given the focus on the analysis of order and timing of different states, in this first part of

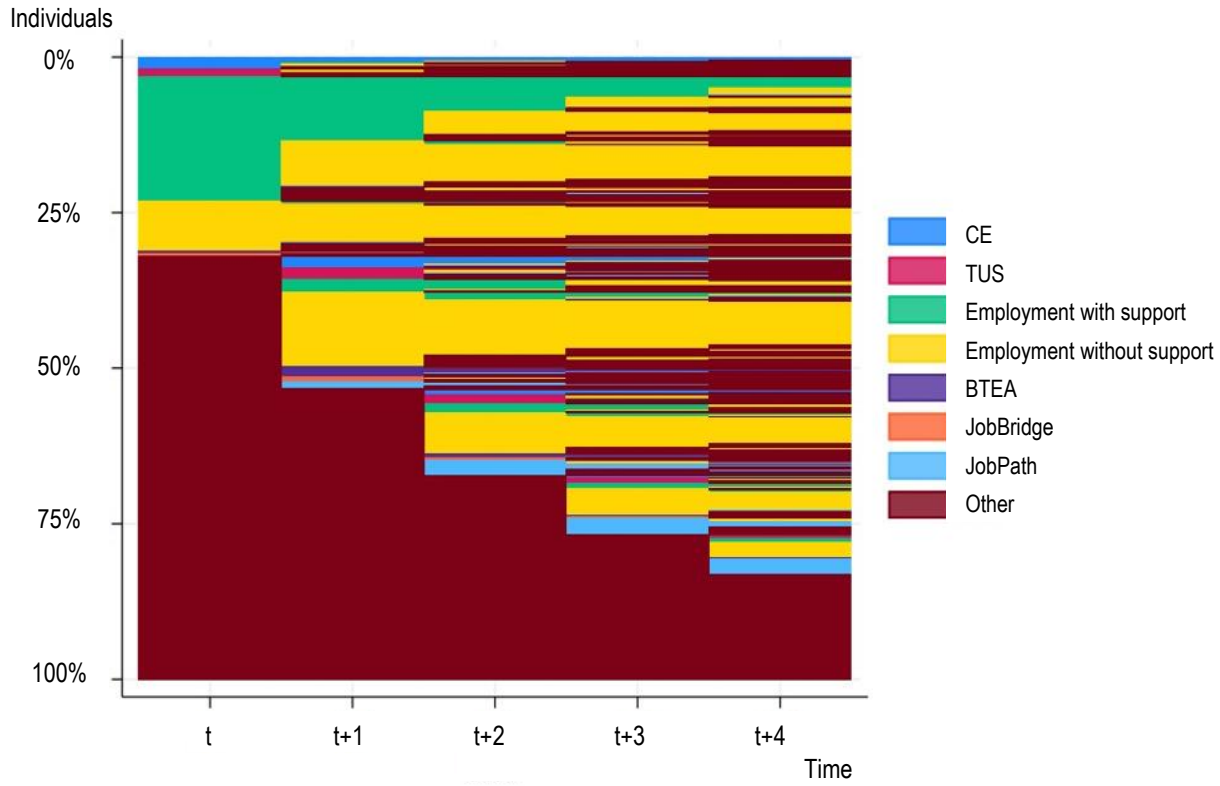
analysis it is particularly relevant to be able to compare sequences of the same length. To ensure a long enough observation period, coherently with the previous section, the analysis focuses on those who became eligible either to CE or to Tús between January 2012 and December 2015. Individuals are then observed at 12, 24, 36 and 48 months after the month of start of eligibility.[7] In practice, individuals are followed at yearly intervals from the moment they become eligible, up till four years after this date; they are therefore observed at five different time points.

The analysis presented in this section will provide an overview of the individual trajectories. Sequences can be described in many ways; each figure will look at them from a different perspective.

Figure 5.8 shows the sequence index plot of the sequences observed in the data. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state.

Figure 5.8. One-fifth of individual trajectories start while being employed with some form of support, and more than half of these then move onto being employed without support

5-year sequences of states for individuals becoming eligible between 2012-15



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Sequence index plot of the sequences observed in the data for the 253 578 individuals becoming eligible between 2012 and 2015. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state. The Y axis shows one line per individual. The X axis represents time points from the moment individuals become eligible; *t* represents the conditions observed when becoming eligible, while the other points represent the states observed one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

Several interesting patterns emerge from the individual trajectories in Figure 5.8. First, a large share – 17%, corresponding to the homogenously red rectangle at the bottom of the graph – of individuals are never observed participating in any of the schemes considered, nor in employment. This implies that the targeting of measures could be improved to be more inclusive. Second, a fairly large share of individuals (16%) become employed without support without ever participating in any support scheme, even after prolonged unemployment spells. These are shown in the chart by rows starting with a red spell (i.e. the residual state of non-participation in any scheme), and then become yellow (EWoS). Third, 19% of those becoming eligible are already

employed with some form of support – most likely, under casual claims; more than half of these individuals then move onto being employed without any support. Finally, around 60% of individuals are employed without any type of support at some point over the time span considered.

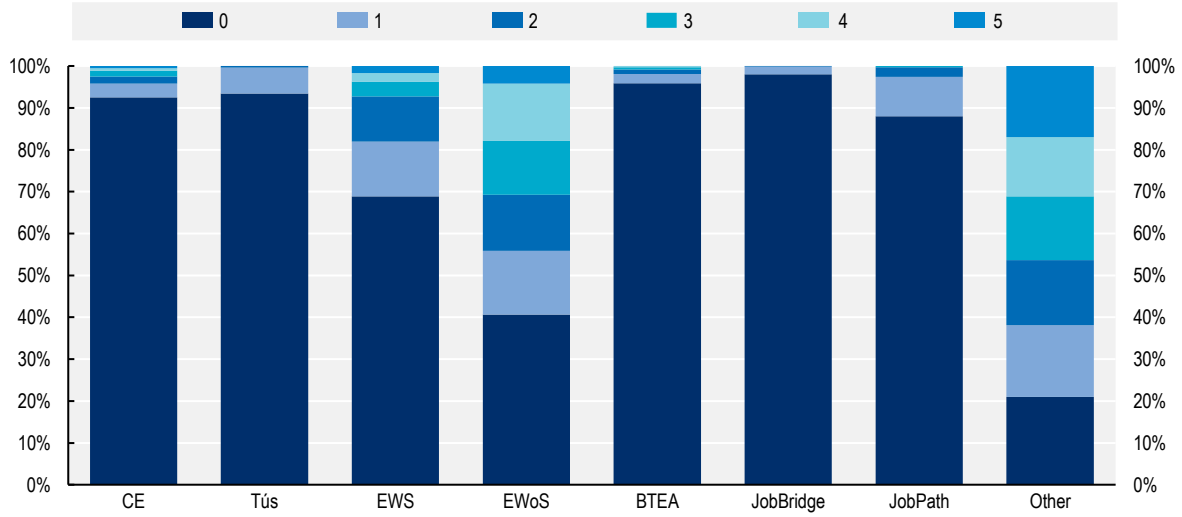
A different perspective is provided by Figure 5.9, which shows how many times individuals are found in the eight different states over the five years considered. The figure clearly shows that a vast majority of individuals never participate in any of the schemes considered in the analysis.

Some 93% of individuals never participated in CE; 3% had a one-year participation. The same share of individuals never participated in Tús; 6% participated once, while a small share – less than 1% – had two Tús episodes. Only 4% of the individuals in these entry cohorts have been recipients of BTEA, and only 2% of JobBridge while 12% have been at some point assigned to JobPath.

The situation is different when considering employment with support: around one-third of individuals shows participation in these schemes. Despite a lack of involvement in the schemes taken into account, most individuals in the cohort register spells of employment without any support over the time period considered. Some 4% appear as always in employment and 41% are never employed. The others are relatively equally distributed across number of years of employment.

Figure 5.9. The vast majority of individuals never participate in any of the support schemes considered

Number of years spent in each state (from never to 5 years) for individuals becoming eligible for CE or Tús between 2012-2015



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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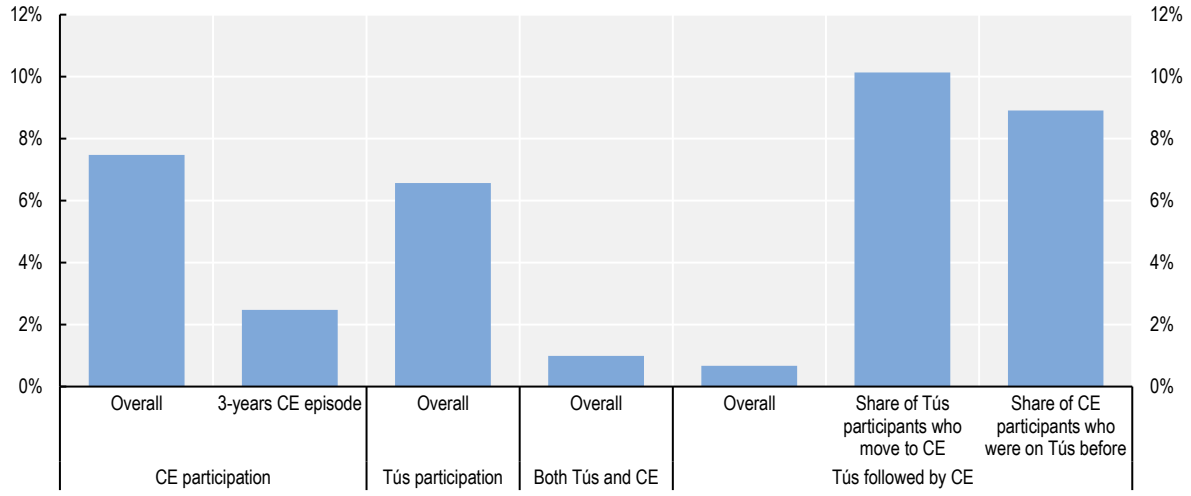
Figure 5.10 goes into more detail on participation in the two main schemes analysed in this report. As mentioned above, 7% of individuals participated in CE; 2.5% participated in the scheme for at least three years in a row. Overall, only 1% of the sample participated in both Tús and CE at some point over the period considered. Only 0.7% of the sample – or less than 1 700 individuals in the 2012/15 cohort – went directly from Tús to CE. This represented 10% of Tús participants, while 9% of CE participants were on Tús before starting CE.

Figure 5.10. Only 1% of the reference population starts with Tús and then moves on to CE

Share of individuals in the 2012/15 entry cohort who participated in CE and/or Tús



Note: CE: Community Employment. The figure shows: (i) participation in CE, (ii) participation in Tús, (iii) participation in both, and (iv) participation in the specific Tús-to-CE sequence. The latter is shown both overall, and as a share of those who participate in Tús – and then move to CE – and those who are in CE – and were in Tús right before.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/jwl2d3

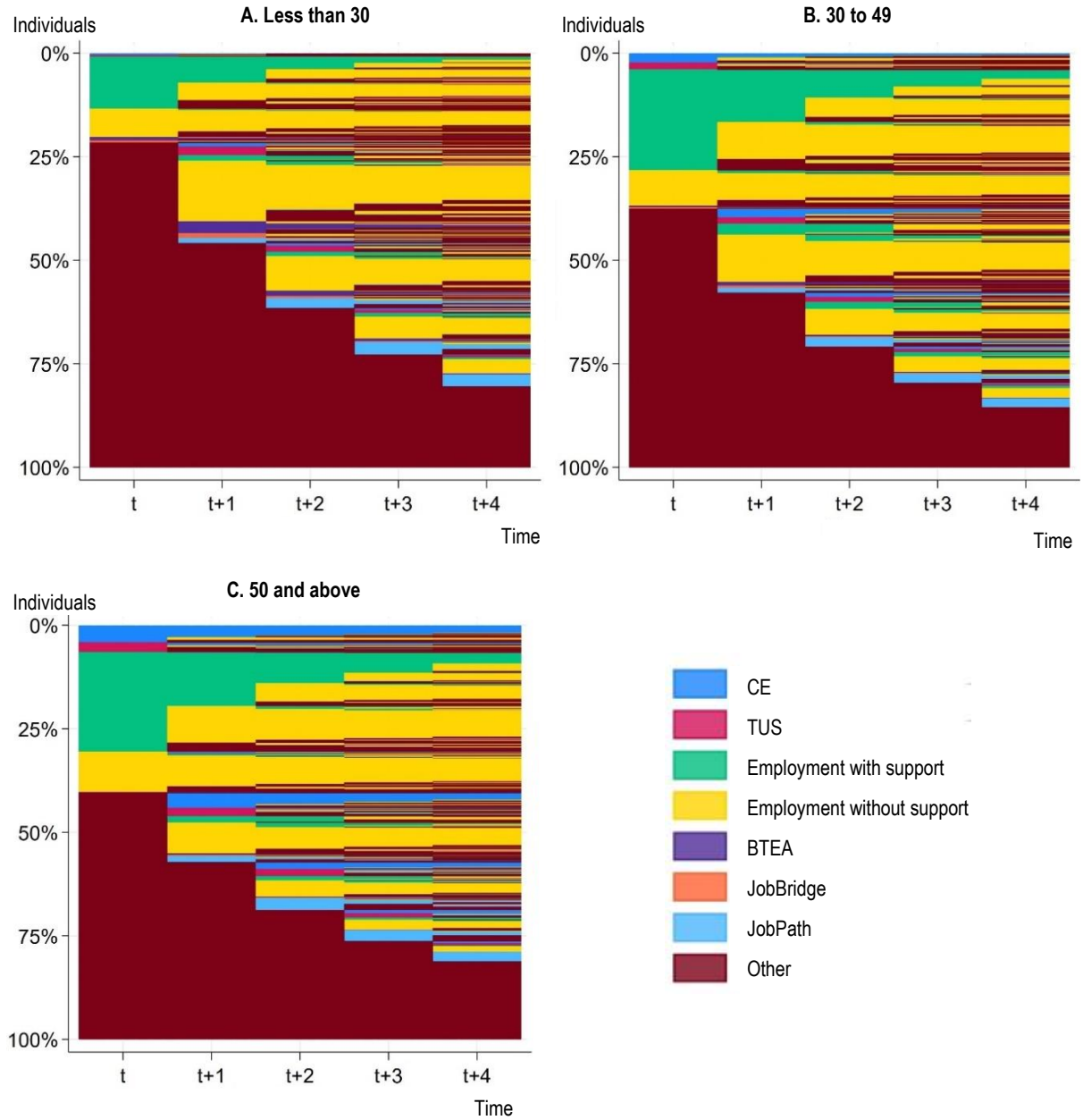
5.5.1. Individual trajectories vary significantly by age

Personal trajectories vary a lot depending on age. As shown in Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12, younger people tend to participate less in CE, with only 4% of individuals below 30 having been on a CE scheme in the period considered. On the other hand, as expected, a relatively higher share has been in receipt of BTEA (7%) and JobBridge (3%). Those in their prime working life, aged 30-49, are more likely to be in some form of employment with support (38%) during the observed timeframe, while the share is the lowest among young people. This is partly linked to the higher presence of casual claims among those above 30 (around 24% of individuals, against the 13% among the youth). The highest share of participants in CE schemes is found among those aged 50 or above: 15% of them is indeed observed at least once in CE over the period under scrutiny. Similarly, LTU individuals aged 50 or more are also slightly more likely (9%) to be observed on Tús placement.

The highest frequency of employment without support is found among those aged 30-49 (62%), followed by younger people (59%), while only 50% of those aged 50 or above registered unsupported employment.

Figure 5.11. Trajectories vary a lot across age groups

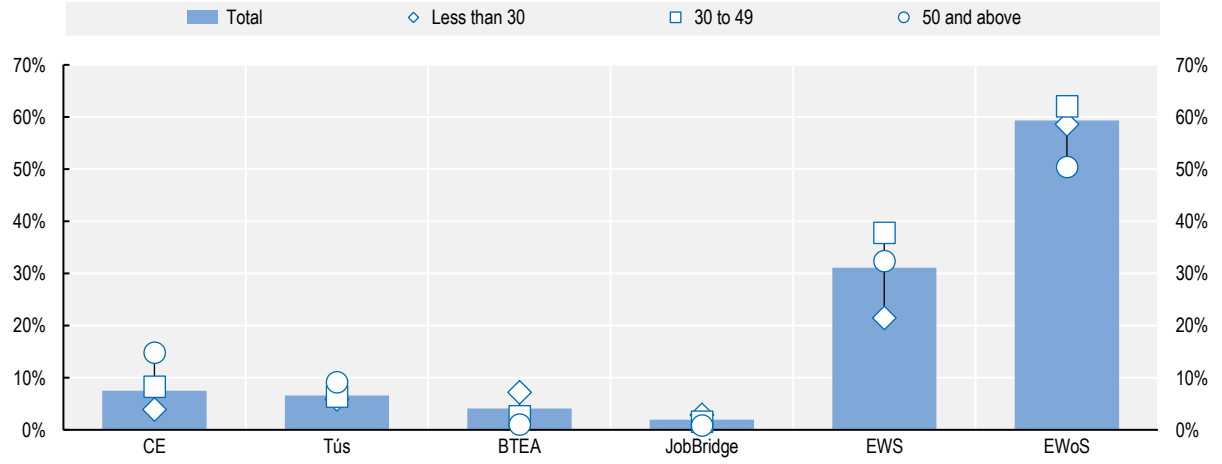
5-year sequences of states for individuals becoming eligible between 2012-15, by age group



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Sequence index plot of the sequences observed in the data for the 253 578 individuals becoming eligible between 2012 and 2015, and for whom information on age upon becoming eligible is available. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state. The Y axis shows one line per individual; while the number of individuals varies across age groups, the Y axis is rescaled to show percentages, to facilitate comparison across groups. The X axis represents time points from the moment individuals become eligible; *t* represents the conditions observed when becoming eligible, while the other points represent the states observed one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

Figure 5.12. Older people are more likely to be on a CE placement, while youth are more likely to participate in BTEA

Share of individuals becoming eligible between 2012-15 who participate in the different schemes within four years from eligibility, by age group



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community Employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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5.5.2. Individual trajectories also vary depending on the path through which individuals became eligible

The typical sequences observed are also very different depending on the type of claim for the first qualifying episode, and on whether they were casual claims or not. Indeed, Figure 5.13 shows that individuals becoming eligible through a casual claim have a strong attachment to the labour market; while by definition they are all found in employment with support when starting to be eligible, 78% of them experience employment without support over the period considered, showing they successfully manage to progress towards more stable forms of employment. Of those who qualify through other types of claims, only around 55% register unsupported employment.

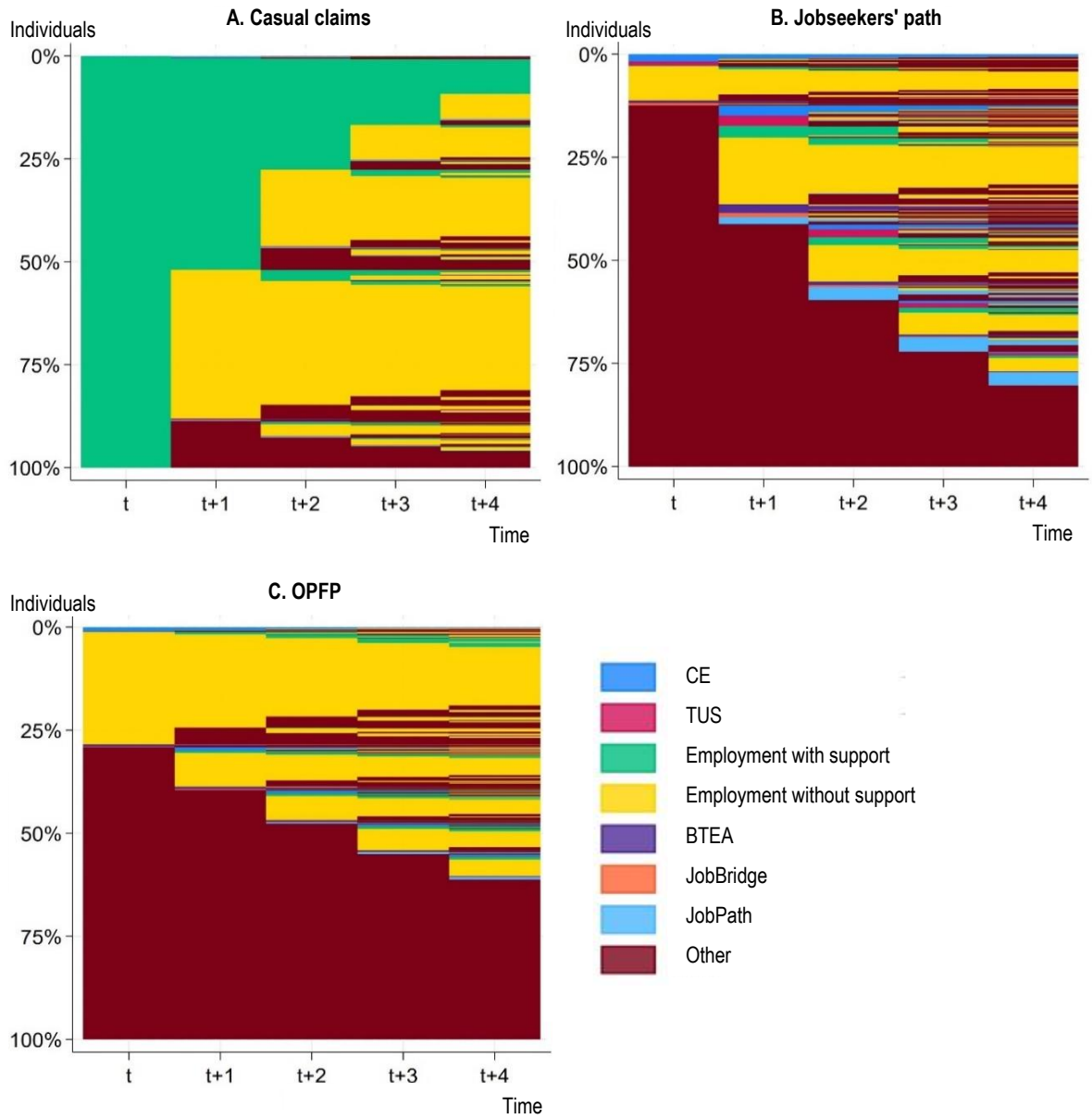
On the other hand, Figure 5.14 suggests that overall, individuals entering eligibility through casual claims show very low participation in every scheme considered in the analysis apart from employment with support (1% in CE, Tús and BTEA, and nobody in JobBridge), while those from jobseekers' path (i.e. qualifying through receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance of Benefit) show much higher rates. For the latter, Figure 5.13

also shows a relatively quick progression of jobseekers to some form of activation; within a year from eligibility, almost half of the jobseekers are either employed or participating in one of the support schemes considered, including in CE and Tús.

Finally, those qualifying through receipt of OPFP show very low participation in the support schemes considered; 10% are at some point over the period employed with support, while 4% participate in CE, and 3% in BTEA. This can be explained by several reasons: OFP recipients can access student maintenance and fee grants while receiving OFP, hence are less in need to come off the payment. Also, after 2012 a person in receipt of OFP was not allowed anymore to get CE payments, while they were until 2012. Finally, this category is not composed of jobseekers strictly speaking, and is therefore less likely to engage in support schemes due to family circumstances and caring responsibilities. Nevertheless, more than half of these individuals are employed without support within four years of becoming eligible.

Figure 5.13. Individuals becoming eligible through a casual claim show a strong attachment to the labour market

5-year sequences of states for individuals becoming eligible between 2012-15, by type of qualifying claim

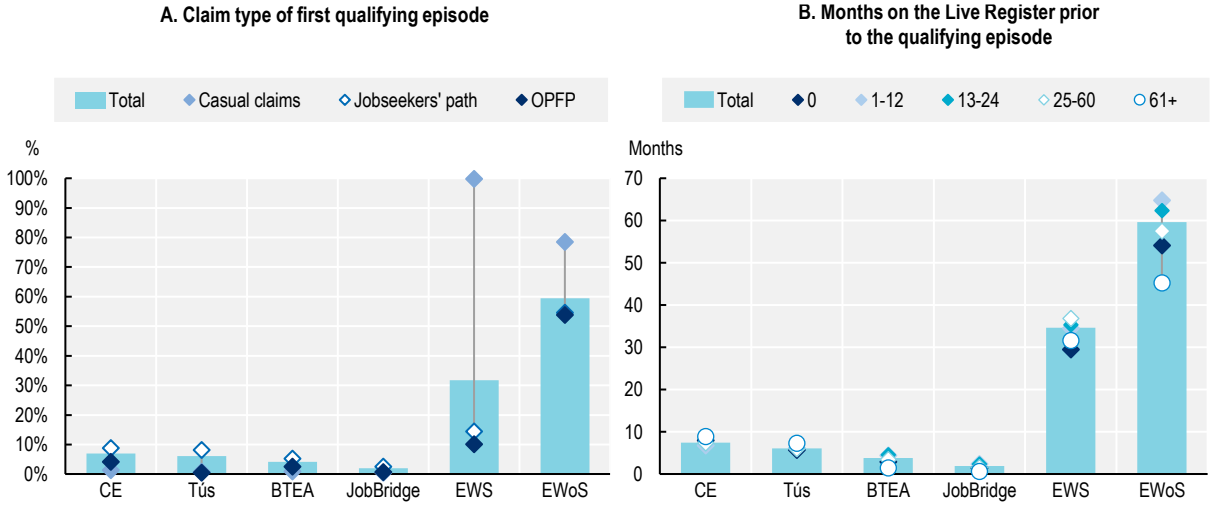


Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis. Sequence index plot of the sequences observed in the data for the 253 578 individuals becoming eligible between 2012 and 2015, and for whom claim type of first qualifying episode is one between Casual claims, Jobseekers' path, One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP). The category of casual claims includes individuals who became eligible through unemployment claims of a specific type, under which jobseekers can work for up to three in seven days, and receive an unemployment payment for the remaining days. The jobseekers path covers individuals becoming eligible through receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance or Benefit for over a year, but not on a casual claim. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state. The Y axis shows one line per individual; while the number of individuals varies across claim type, the Y axis is rescaled to show percentages, to facilitate comparison across groups. The X axis represents time points from the moment individuals become eligible; *t* represents the conditions observed when becoming eligible, while the other points represent the states observed one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

Figure 5.14, Panel B also shows that the share of CE and Tús participants is slightly higher among those who have been registered as unemployed for more than five years (9% for CE and 7% for Tús). On the other hand, participation in supported employment is lowest among those who have never been registered as unemployed, with 30% of individuals on such schemes. For all other groups, participation is between 32% and 37%.

Figure 5.14. Individuals qualifying through the jobseekers' path show higher participation in CE, Tús and BTEA

Share of individuals becoming eligible between 2012-15 who participate in the different schemes within four years from eligibility, by claim type and months in registered unemployment



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community Employment; EWS: Employment with support; EWoS: Employment without support; OPFP: One-Parent Family Payment. The category of casual claims includes individuals who became eligible through unemployment claims of a specific type, under which jobseekers can work for up to three in seven days and receive an unemployment payment for the remaining days. The Jobseekers' path covers individuals becoming eligible through receipt of Jobseekers Allowance or Benefit for over a year, but not on a casual claim.
Share of individuals becoming eligible in 2012 who participate in the different schemes over the time period considered, by claim type of first qualifying episode and months on the Live Register (i.e. duration of registered unemployment) prior to the qualifying episode. Information on claim type is not available for 3% of the sample, info on duration on the Live Register for 34%.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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5.5.3. Individual trajectories of CE participants

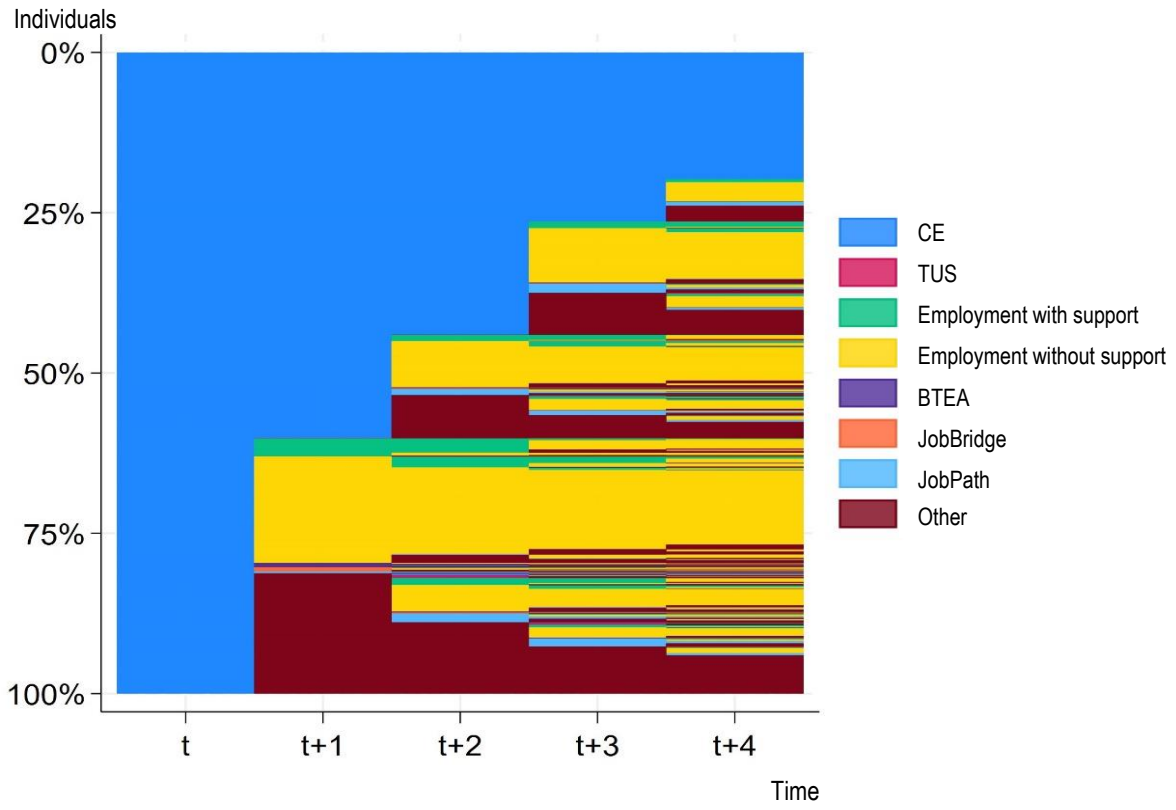
This section provides a snapshot of trajectories for individuals who participate in CE, starting from the moment they are first observed on a CE scheme. The purpose of this part of analysis is to observe typical patterns in CE participation, and the transitions towards subsequent states in the sequences. For this reason, the analysis considers only CE episodes that start early enough in the sequence to ensure the possibility to follow individuals for at least four points in time after the first CE participation. This rule of thumb is adopted to cover a period long enough to allow for participation on a three-year CE scheme, while still observing at least two time points after participation. As in the previous section, the analysis covers cohorts that enter eligibility between 2012-15. This ensures the presence of 12 141 individuals in the sample.

Figure 5.15 shows that almost half of the individuals observed starting CE are on a CE scheme for at least three years. Around one fifth appear to be on CE for the whole five-year period considered in this part of the analysis.

One year after being first recorded on CE, 63% of the sample appears to be still on a CE scheme and 17% are employed without support. The share of individuals employed without support grows over time, reaching 45% four years after being first observed in a CE scheme. On the same year, another 6% of the sample is employed with some form of support, while around one fourth of the sample is not employed nor engaged in any other scheme.

Figure 5.15. CE participants often stay on CE for several years; four years after starting participation, almost half of them are employed without support

5-year sequences of states for individuals starting a CE episode between 2012-15



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Sequence index plot of the sequences for individuals who participate in CE, starting from the moment they are first observed on a CE scheme. Sequences are shown for the 12 141 individuals becoming eligible between 2012/15, who can be observed for at least 5 time points starting from the first CE participation. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state. The Y axis shows one line per individual. The X axis represents time points from the moment individuals are first observed on a CE scheme *(t)*, and then one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

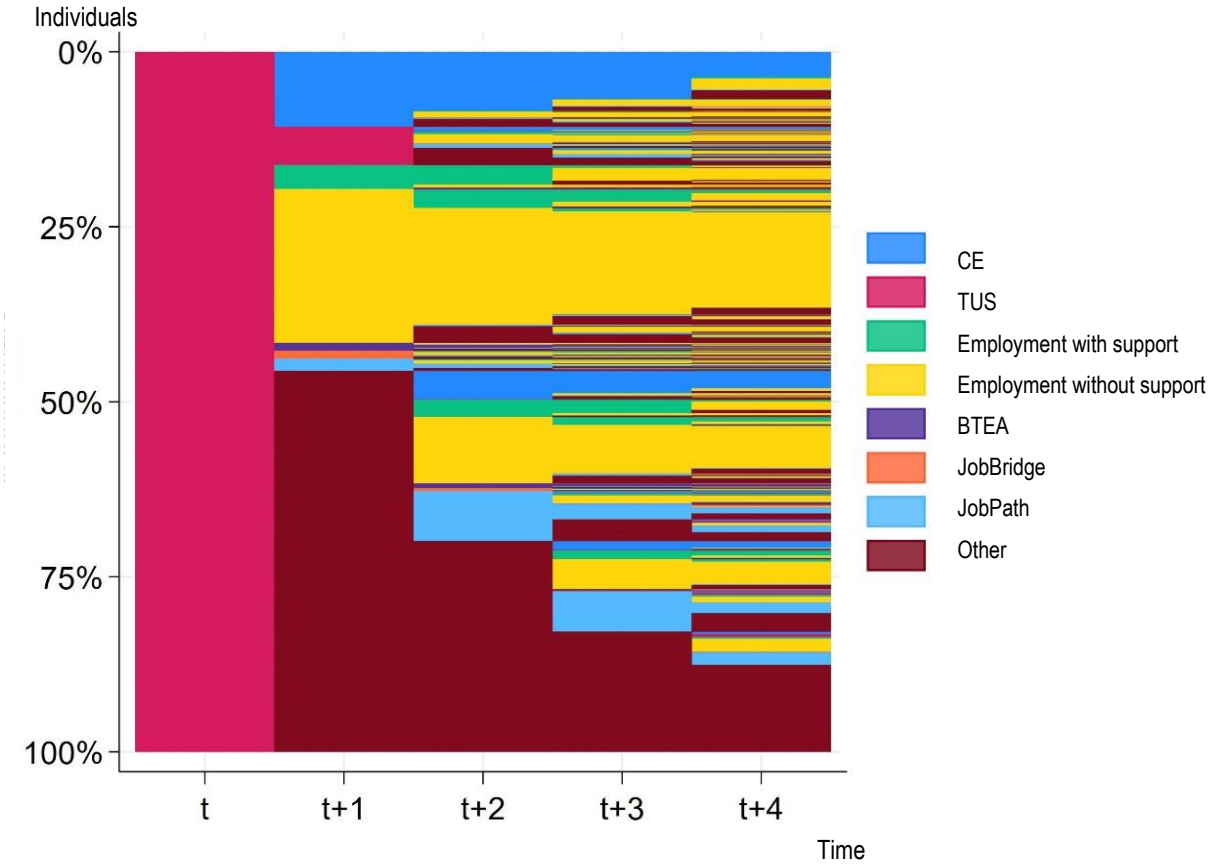
5.5.4. Individual trajectories of Tús participants

Similar to section 5.5.3, this section provides a snapshot of individual trajectories for individuals participating in a Tús scheme, starting from the moment they are first observed on Tús. As before, the analysis considers only Tús episodes that start early enough in the sequence to ensure the possibility to follow individuals for at least four points in time after the first Tús participation. While Tús schemes normally last one year, the five-year time frame is still useful, in that it allows to follow individuals potentially moving on to CE – or sequences of other schemes. As in the rest of this section, this analysis takes into account cohorts that enter eligibility between 2012-15; the final sample is composed of 9 899 individuals.

Figure 5.16 shows that 12 months after being first observed on Tús, more than half of participants are not employed nor engaged in any of the support schemes considered, while 22% are employed without any support. After two years, the share of employed goes up to 30%, reaching 37% after three years and 44% after four. Around 5% of the individuals under analysis are still observed on Tús one year after being observed on the scheme for the first time; this might be connected to scheme participations which have been suspended in between the two time points.

Figure 5.16. One year after being first observed on Tús, more than half the participants are not employed nor on any scheme, while one-fifth are employed

5-year sequences of states for individuals starting a Tús episode between 2012-15

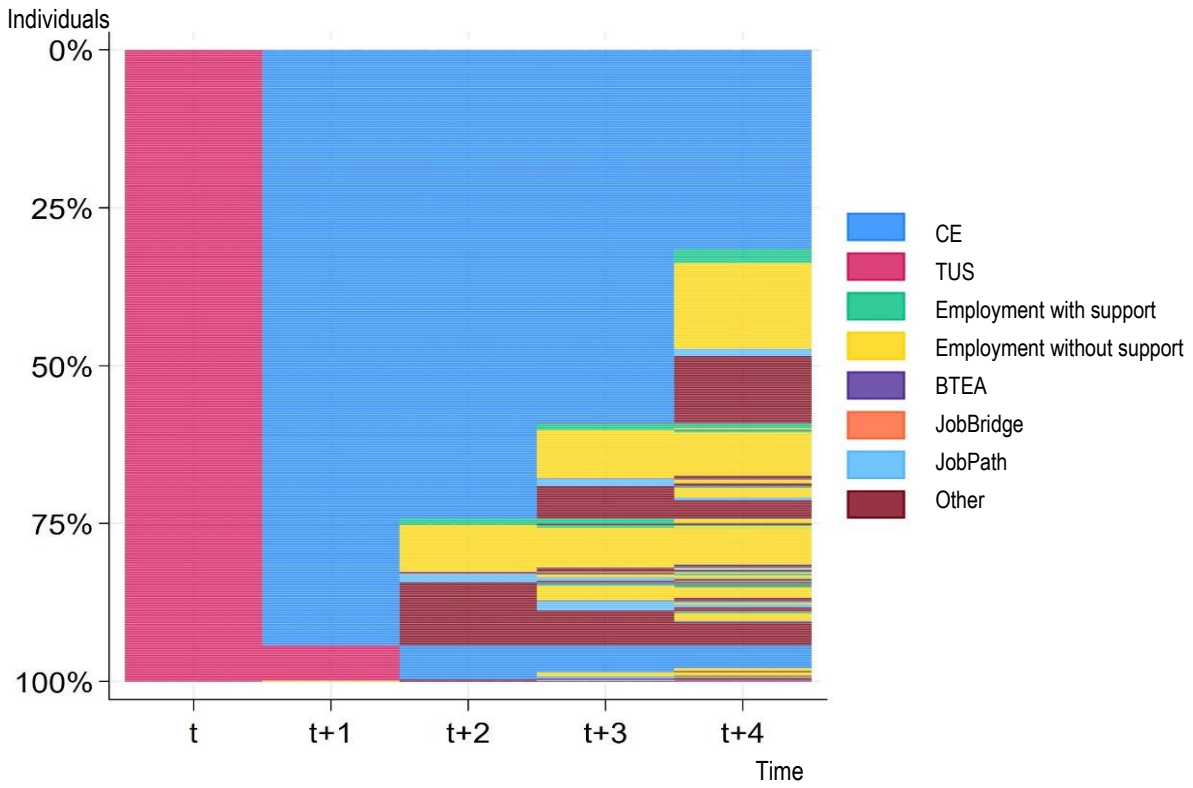


Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Sequence index plot of the sequences for individuals who participate in Tús, starting from the moment they are first observed on a Tús scheme. Sequences are shown for the 9 899 individuals becoming eligible between 2012/15, who can be observed for at least 5 time points starting from the first Tús participation. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state. The Y axis shows one line per individual. The X axis represents time points from the moment individuals are first observed on Tús (*t*), and then one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

Some 11% of those initially observed under Tús move on to a CE scheme one year later. Figure 5.17 shows that most of these individuals (around 60%) stay on CE for three years. Some 34% of those moving from Tús to CE are observed as employed without support four years later, while another 5% is employed with some form of support.

Figure 5.17. Tús participants moving to CE often stay on a CE scheme for several years

5-year sequences of states for individuals starting a Tús episode – followed by a CE one – between 2012-15



Note: BTEA: Back to Education Allowance; CE: Community employment. "Other" refers to persons who are not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes covered in the analysis.
Sequence index plot of the sequences for individuals who participate in Tús and then move on to CE, starting from the moment they are first observed on a Tús scheme. Sequences are shown for the 1 127 individuals becoming eligible between 2012/15, who can be observed for at least five time points starting from the first Tús participation followed by CE. Sequence index plots use line segments to show how individuals move between states over time. Changes of colour represent changes in state. The Y axis shows one line per individual. The X axis represents time points from the moment individuals are first observed on Tús (*t*), and then one (*t+1)* to four (*t+4)* years later.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

5.6. Duration analysis aims to capture the effect of persistence in a given state while taking into account the effect of individual characteristics

Duration analysis concerns all those methods for the analysis of the length of time until the occurrence of some event. Applications in the social sciences are pervasive, including – but not limited to – economics (e.g. time spent in unemployment until one finds a job), education studies (e.g. time spent in education after completion of compulsory schooling), and demography (e.g. time to divorce since marriage).

Three reasons lie behind the decision to undergo a duration analysis. First, the duration analysis solves the problem of the so-called *dynamic selection*: the composition of any given sample changes over time, e.g. because best connected individuals find a job earlier – hence the "surviving" sample evolves towards one with lower quality of connections with respect to the original sample – or because students with better parental background survive longer at the university, possibly to completion. Whenever these variables are not observed – labour market connections, parental background – any analysis is at risk to return biased results, due to the fact that the sample evolves over time towards one which is on average different from the one originally chosen for the analysis. Duration analysis techniques control for dynamic selection. Second, duration analysis is informative on the so-called "duration dependence", i.e. on the fact that in some cases it is persistence in a state *per se* that determines a higher or a lower probability to move to a different state. Third, through formal modelling durations and estimation techniques described in the Technical Report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[1]), composition effects due to gender, age, marital status, nationality and years of registered unemployment are excluded.

In the following, this approach is applied to the study of durations of i) periods of eligibility to CE or Tús, until the eligible individual moves to another of the eight states classified in the present chapter, e.g. CE; ii) CE episodes; iii) Tús episodes. What changes with respect to the above is that instead of fixing ex ante the intervals at which the (potentially new, but not necessarily) state of an individual trajectory is observed, an individual is followed as long as the chosen state (eligibility, CE, Tús) persists, and until some event (a transition to another state) occurs. In the following, duration models are estimated assuming that transitions out of the current state occur discretely at monthly intervals, i.e. that in each month of the process under scrutiny (CE/Tús eligibility, CE, Tús) observed individuals undergo some probability to move out of the current state, and that such probability is constant within the month. In addition, the analysis distinguishes multiple destination states, the specific list of which depends on the process under scrutiny (i.e. CE/Tús eligibility, CE, Tús). So, when CE/Tús eligibility is under scrutiny, each individual in the sample is allowed to persist into the eligibility condition, move to CE, to Tús, to EWS, to EWoS or to any other state. When the

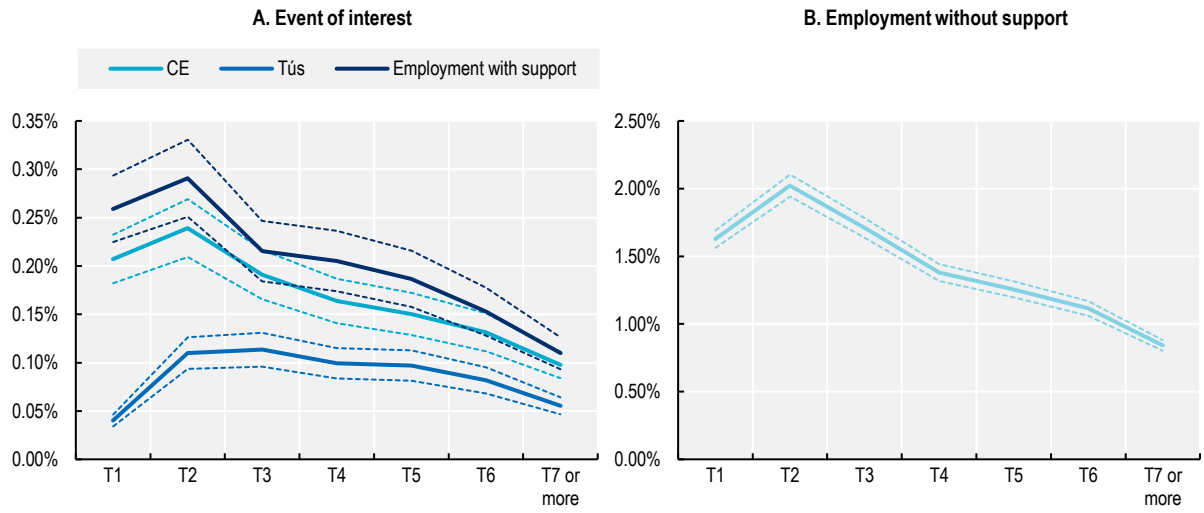
duration of CE (Tús) is instead analysed, possible exit states are – beyond persistence – Tús (CE), employment (EWS or EWoS), or the state which has been labelled “other”, and that includes eligibility and non-eligibility to CE/Tús. As anticipated above, all estimated models include controls for gender, age, nationality and marital status. Models of eligibility to CE/Tús also include years accrued in the Live Register. Models of CE/Tús include the initial type of claim. Further details, in particular on how the structure of duration dependence is modelled, are provided in the related Technical Report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[1]).

5.6.1. Duration of eligibility spells is hump-shaped

To study the duration of CE/Tús eligibility spells, and consistently with the previous analyses, only the individuals who became eligible to CE or Tús between January 2012 and December 2015 are retained in the data, under the condition, however, that they were not receiving any kind of support nor were holding a job. The latter aims at focusing on a homogeneous subsample with a comparable incentive to exit from the current state of long-term unemployment. Based on the descriptive analysis above, this subsample is very close to that of jobseekers’ claims. The analysis distinguishes among terminations due to i) CE, ii) Tús, iii) EWS, iv) EWoS, v) any other state. Alternatively, when individuals are not observed moving to any of the states above, they remain into the initial state, which is CE/Tús eligibility. Control variables in the model include age, gender, marital status, nationality, years accrued in the Live Register, calendar years (to account for the business cycle) and calendar quarters (to account for seasonality). Figure 5.18 plots the probability of an individual eligible to CE/Tús to exit to different states for a benchmark profile, i.e. a male, married, Irish national with mean age (37 years old), no experience accrued in the Live Register and experiencing the event of interest (one of the exits) in the first quarter of 2012.

Figure 5.18. Duration since entry into eligibility exhibits a hump-shaped time profile

CE or Tús eligibility entrants in 2012-15, by destination state



Note: CE: Community employment. Benchmark individual: male married Irish national with mean age (37 years old), no experience accrued in the Live Register and experiencing the event of interest in the first quarter of 2012. T1,...,T6 are four-month (i.e. quarterly) time intervals, T7 is elapsed time since 25th month onwards. Estimates are based on a discrete-time competing risks model. Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/njzv0u

In Figure 5.18 the horizontal axis represents the time (measured in four-month intervals) since entry into eligibility, while the vertical axis the estimated probability to exit to CE, Tús, EWS (employment with support, Panel A) or EWoS (employment without support, Panel B).[8] The reader should first focus on the shape of the four lines. Irrespective of the type of exit (except Tús, described below), the likelihood grows until the second four-month interval, and then falls, exhibiting a negative duration dependence (meaning that the longer one stays into the initial condition, the lower is the probability to find a position in CE or any kind of employment). In other words, after an initial period in which people “learn how to do” and increase their chances to exit from long-term unemployment, the probability of exiting long-term unemployment gradually falls for reasons related to the time elapsed (e.g. loss of human capital or of motivation).

For Tús the argument is partially different: the profile is flatter, grows and reaches a plateau until the sixth period (i.e. two years since entry into eligibility), and then falls. In terms of levels, the probability to exit towards some EWoS is always higher than to other states; this is consistent with the descriptive analysis above. Exits to CE and EWS are never statistically different. On the contrary, those to Tús are always lower than to CE and to EWS.[9]

Individual characteristics like gender, age and the other variables included in the model (see above and the Technical Report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[1])), can move the plots commented above up or down, but cannot modify its shape. For instance, a woman – instead of a man – with the same characteristics of the benchmark case assumed above, will exhibit a plot with the same shape, but shifted up or down depending on the destination state considered.[10]

Table 5.4 provides a summary view of these “shifting” effects. Variables appear on the rows, the different destination states in columns. While studying why different individual features differently affect the probability of exit to the four destination states goes beyond the scope of the present analysis, it is anyway worth noting that such heterogeneity emerges clearly: for instance, the second row (”Women”) of the column under “CE“ has a “+“. This means that women – other things being equal and with respect to men – enjoy a higher probability to move from the initial state (CE/Tús eligibility) to CE at any elapsed time since entry into CE/Tús eligibility. The next column (Tús), however, has a “-“, meaning that women have a lower probability with respect to men to move to Tús. Using models that allow to control for such heterogeneity is hence crucial.

Table 5.4. Individual characteristics and macroeconomic conditions determine different probabilities to move to the different destination states

Sign of the covariates in CE and Tús eligibility duration analysis, by destination state

Covariates	CE	Tús	Employment with support	Employment w/o support
Age (linear)	+	+	+	-
Women (benchmark: men)	+	-	-	-
Married (benchmark: single or widowed)	+	n.s.	+	+
Irish nationals (benchmark: non-nationals)	+	+	-	+
Previous months in the Live Register (benchmark: missing information)				
Less than 1	-	-	-	-
1 – 12	+	+	+	+
13 – 24	+	+	+	+
25 – 60	+	n.s.	-	+
More than 60	+	-	-	-
Business cycle (benchmark: 2019)				
2012	+	n.s.	+	+
2013	+	n.s.	+	+
2014	+	n.s.	+	+
2015	+	n.s.	+	+
2016	+	n.s.	+	+
2017	+	n.s.	+	+
2018	+	n.s.	+	+
Seasonality (benchmark: fourth quarter)				
First quarter	n.s.	-	+	-
Second quarter	-	n.s.	-	-
Third quarter	n.s.	+	-	-

Note: Estimations are based on the same discrete-time competing risks duration model which was used for the main analyses. The Live Register keeps track of registered unemployment. More specifically, Live Register duration comprises periods with i) means-tested Jobseeker's Allowance, ii) social insurance contributions-based Jobseeker's Benefit, iii) credited social security contributions, and iv) receipt of casual (part-time) unemployment payments. CE: Community employment; N.s.: non-significant estimate.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

5.6.2. For CE and Tús episodes, spikes at most common durations emerge

The present subsection replicates the analysis in Section 5.6.1 on CE/Tús eligibility, on CE and Tús episodes. In this case all the CE and Tús episodes started from 2012-15 are drawn from the data, irrespectively on whether the corresponding qualifying periods are observed or not. The specification described for duration of eligibility is kept as similar as possible, for the sake of comparability. Nonetheless some changes have been necessary:

- Beyond persistence in the current state (CE or Tús, depending on the specific case), the exit states are reduced to three, namely the state we labelled "Other" in the construction of the data (i.e. being not employed nor engaged in any of the

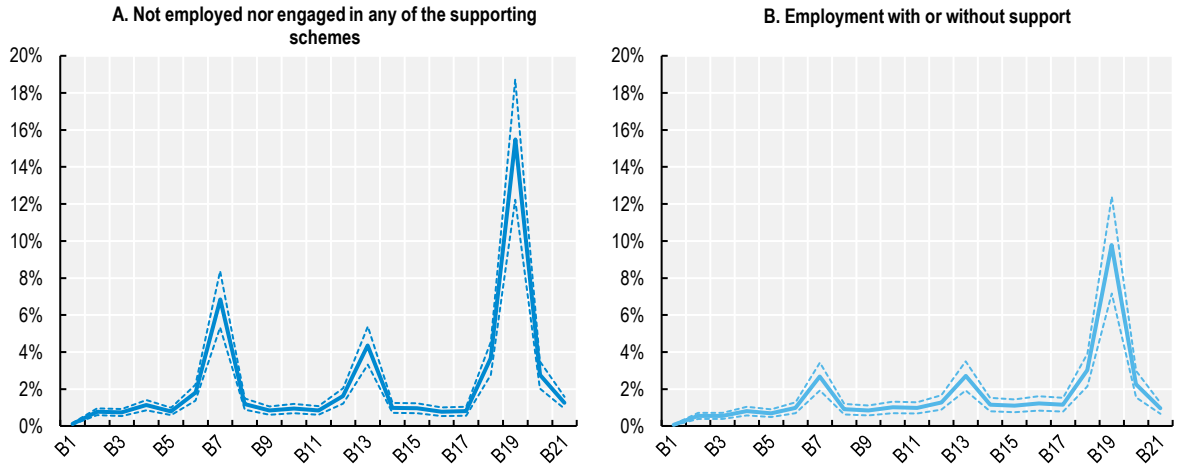
supporting schemes covered in the analysis), employment (with or without support), and a residual state indicating participation in one of the other schemes (not shown in the graphs), namely Back to Education Allowance, JobBridge, JobPath and Tús (when duration in CE is studied) or CE (when duration in Tús is under scrutiny).

- The duration dependence structure is now specified in bimesters and not in four-month intervals. This is aimed to highlight exits in some well-defined turning points, i.e. when CE or Tús reach the maximum statutory duration for a subset of the sample under scrutiny.[11]
- Information on previous presence in the Live Register is dropped, as its inclusion makes estimation troublesome. On the contrary, a series of dichotomous variables are included to capture the type of initial claim.

Figure 5.19 and Figure 5.20 plot the duration dependence profile as in Figure 5.17, for CE and Tús episodes respectively. As for exits to a condition of being not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes (Panel A in both figures) and to employment (with or without support, Panel B), the two figures display very similar patterns. They suggest that there are “typical” durations of CE/Tús episodes, either driven by institutional features (typically, the maximum duration of the programme) or recurrent behaviours (e.g. sponsors of CE episodes typically propose job periods the duration of which is a multiple of a year). Profiles are flat before these typical durations, and spikes appear thence. At this stage of the analysis, it is hard to say whether this “lock-in effect” is more a matter of a choice, or of lack of alternatives. However, the fact that at spikes fewer of the beneficiaries move to some form of employment than to the residual state, suggests that the latter may be the right interpretation.

Figure 5.19. Exits from CE spike at one-year intervals after starting CE

Community employment (CE) entrants in 2012-15 by destination state



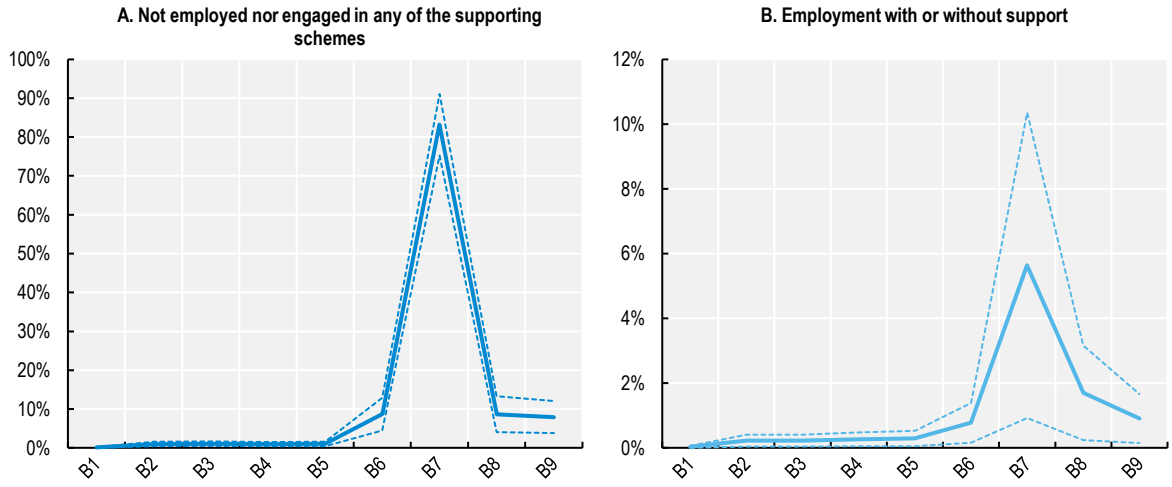
Note: Benchmark individual: male married Irish national with mean age (46.3 years old), reaching CE as a jobseeker and experiencing the event of interest in the first quarter of 2012. B1,...,B21 are bimesters. Estimates are based on a discrete-time competing risks model. Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/ezhkfu

Indeed, profiles are rather flat at quite low probability levels (around 1% for CE and even lower for Tús) during most of the time spent in CE or Tús, but at yearly durations, when exits jump up. In the case of CE, exits to employment (no employment nor engagement in any of the supporting schemes) reach 3% (7%), 3% (4%) and 10% (15%) at one-, two- and three-year durations respectively. For Tús – which lasts one year for a vast majority of individuals – the spike reaches 6% and 83% after one year for exits to employment and the "other" state (no employment nor engagement in any of the supporting schemes) respectively. Afterwards, almost no one continues to receive Tús and the duration profile drops almost to zero.[12] In both the cases of CE and Tús durations, the profiles of exits to Tús/CE, BTEA, JobBridge and JobPath are never statistically different from zero at the 5% confidence level, hence are not shown.

Figure 5.20. Exits from Tús spike at one year after entry into Tús

Tús entrants in 2012-15 by destination state



Note: Benchmark individual: male married Irish national with mean age (39.0 years old), reaching Tús as a jobseeker and experiencing the event of interest in the first quarter of 2012. Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Vertical axes have different scales to improve readability of the two panels.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/xu4dyr

Finally, Table 5.5, which can be read in the same way as Table 5.4, shows again the relevance of taking heterogeneity of individuals into account. Broadly speaking, the Table shows that younger individuals and women stay longer both in CE and in Tús. Married people and casual claimants move to employment more frequently than singles and jobseekers respectively, and they go (back) to a state of no employment nor engagement in any of the supporting schemes less frequently. In terms of nationality, no clear pattern emerges.

Table 5.5. Individual characteristics and macroeconomic conditions determine different probabilities to move to the different destination states

Sign of the covariates in CE and Tús duration analysis, by destination state Covariates	Duration of CE		Duration of Tús	
	Not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes	Employment with or without support	Not employed nor engaged in any of the supporting schemes	Employment with or without support.
Age (linear)	-	-	+	-
Women (benchmark: men)	-	-	-	-
Married (benchmark: single or widowed)	-	+	-	+
Irish nationals (benchmark: non-nationals)	-	n.s.	n.s.	+
Last observed type of claim (benchmark: jobseekers)				
Other	-	-	-	-
Casual	-	+	-	+
Family-related	+	+	n.s.	n.s.
Business cycle (benchmark: 2019)				
2012	n.s.	n.s.	+	n.s.
2013	n.s.	n.s.	+	+
2014	n.s.	n.s.	+	+
2015	n.s.	n.s.	+	+
2016	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	+
2017	-	n.s.	-	-
2018	n.s.	n.s.	-	-
Seasonality (benchmark: fourth quarter)				
First quarter	+	-	-	-
Second quarter	+	-	-	-
Third quarter	+	-	-	-

Note: CE: Community employment; N.s.: non-significant estimate. Estimations are based on the same discrete-time competing risks duration model which was used for the main analyses.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter draws from the wealth of information provided by DSP to study the main patterns in participation in employment and ALMPs over a five-year period for individuals eligible for CE and Tús, mostly long-term unemployed.

Combining datasets on CE and Tús episodes and eligibility with demographic data and information on DSP benefits, social welfare payments, earnings and social security contributions, the analysis showed that four years after becoming eligible to either CE or Tús, almost half of the individuals are employed without any form of support. Around 60% of individuals are observed in this state at some point over the five years considered. On the opposite side, 17% of individuals are never observed participating in any of the schemes considered, nor in employment. Four years after becoming

eligible, 35% of eligible individuals are found in this state, irrespective of what happened in between the two years. Only 7.5% of eligible individuals participate in CE over the time period considered, while for Tús the share is lower at 6.6%. Individuals aged less than 30 participate relatively less in CE, and more in BTEA or JobBridge. Those aged 50 or more are more likely to participate in CE (15%) or Tús (9%) at least once. Although entries into the scheme are not that frequent, persistence in CE is high: 50% of the individuals who start a CE scheme are still observed there after three years and 20% after five years.

With this evidence, this chapter sets the scene for the evaluation of the impact of participation in two public works programmes in Ireland, CE and Tús, that will be presented in the next chapters.

Reference

OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre (2024), "Technical report: Impact Evaluation of Ireland's Active Labour Market Policies", OECD, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/Ireland_ALMP_Technical_Report.pdf. [1]

Notes

[1] Out of all the CE (Tús) episodes starting since 2012, 30% (25%) begin during a non-eligibility period.

[2] Time boundaries are dictated by raw data availability. The analysis starts from the reference period for eligibility considered for the evaluation of CE and Tús, i.e. 2012-18. Year 2019 is added to the panel as a way to have a longer period for observing states in what can be considered as a purely "post-participation" year. The decision not to expand the panel further in time is due to the fact that 2020 saw the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the introduction of different programmes; these schemes might not be fully captured by the data this analysis relies on, as all post-2018 information was collected to have "outcomes" relevant for the CE/Tús evaluation; for this reason, the period from 2020 onwards was not taken into account in this chapter. Tús episodes starting since 2019 are indeed not available, what leads to a fall in the frequency of transition towards such state. However, as will be seen below, they represent a minor share of the overall observed dynamics, with limited potential to affect the narrative of the findings.

[3] Entries by calendar year are not reported as this exercise would be biased. Indeed, if a person enters eligibility, for instance, in 2012, then loses it and becomes eligible again before the end of 2015, s/he appears in the data as entered in 2012 only. As a consequence, a breakdown by calendar year would mechanically show a fall in the number of entries, which nonetheless would have no economic meaning.

[4] For a right interpretation of Figure 5.4 – and of the others alike that follow – one should bear in mind that people are not followed over time *individually*, but only as a group. This implies that people observed in a given status in two different periods are not necessarily the same. For instance, the individuals observed as employed without support in period *t+1* are not necessarily the same observed as employed without support in period *t+4*. Figure 5.4, hence, gives an idea of how the population of entrants into eligibility evolves over time, without implying that the aggregate pattern should be true for each single entrants as an individual.

[5] Paths originating from family-related forms of support represent 7% (17 838) of the individuals in our sample. Their trajectories are similar to the jobseekers', and hence aggregated to the latter. For another 3% (7 657) of the eligible individuals the type of initial claim is missing.

[6] Another explanation is that the choices we made to allocate the employment periods across months were not always correct: see above.

[7] The selection of yearly intervals implies the loss of information on short-term movements that might happen within the year. For the cohort becoming eligible in 2012, for example, this choice implies the loss on information on CE participation for around 8% of individuals with CE spells, and around the same share for Tús participation; by definition, all these spells would be shorter than the standard one-year scheme. While in theory it would be possible to fully exploit the monthly structure of the dataset, this would produce an explosion in the number of possible sequences observed in the data, making it very difficult to interpret the evidence produced. With the choice of yearly intervals, the analysis allows to retain a strategic view of the main patterns observed. The Technical Report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[1]) shows examples of similar analysis with high-frequency intervals.

[8] The choice to use two different panels is then dictated by the different magnitudes of the estimated exit probabilities, much higher for exits to EWoS.

[9] The reasoning in terms of levels is related to the specific benchmark individual chosen, as the vertical position of the time profiles are affected by control variables; the Technical Annex provides more details on this. In addition, it also depends on that we look at 95% confidence intervals, whose width depends on the level of significance – the higher the level of significance, the larger the confidence intervals.

[10] This happens by construction, as the duration model is specified with no interactions between the control variables like gender, age, etc. and the time dummies which define the spline: see the Technical Report.

[11] For the sake of completeness, the reader should be aware that the first bimester actually covers the first three months in the data. This is done because a period of 12 months in real-world continuous time (e.g. from 15 April 2012 to 14 April 2013) spans over 13 discrete months in the data (April 2012 would be month 1, while April 2013 would be month 13). In order to allow the specification to visualise the discontinuity at yearly intervals – an institutional feature of both CE and Tús – we need to compare (discrete) months 12-13 with (discrete) months 14-15. The same holds at two- and three-year durations.

[12] If someone had to pause the placement to take sick leave for example, Tús episodes would be longer than one year.

6 Impact evaluation of the Community Employment programme

This chapter presents an evaluation of the Community Employment (CE) programme, a large public works programme in Ireland. The evaluation is based on a rich set of administrative data, which include background information on jobseekers, details on their participation in CE, and individual outcomes after participation. Using a methodological approach to correct for selection into the programme, the evaluation shows that CE is effective at improving medium and long-term labour market outcomes, and additionally has beneficial effects on non-labour market outcomes. The impact of CE on labour market and social inclusion outcomes is not the same for all types of CE participants but varies markedly across subgroups of jobseekers.

6.1. Introduction

Community Employment (CE) is a public work programme that has been at the heart of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Ireland for several decades (see Chapter 3). CE is one of the most widely used ALMPs for long-term unemployed people provided by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and has supported an average of 22 000 participants at any one point in time over the last 20 years.

CE has two major objectives. On the one hand, it aims at connecting jobseekers with the labour market to increase employment levels, and ultimately at boosting economic growth. But on the other hand, CE has a social inclusion objective, as it seeks to reduce social isolation and social barriers of jobseekers. In addition, it plays a central role in the provision of important local services to communities, via the financing of labour for voluntary and third sector service organisations.

Over time, the social aspect of CE has taken on a more formal role, to the extent that separate activation and social inclusion strands have been introduced for CE placements. This distinction makes it possible to formally differentiate roles that are mostly aimed at providing job experience and enhancing employability from roles which are important for the provision of local services and reducing social difficulties but may be less likely to be a direct pathway to private sector jobs.

This chapter provides evidence on both the activation objective and, to the extent data availability permits, the social inclusion objective of CE. By doing so, the chapter aims to provide insights into the efficiency of the policy, thereby enabling more informed discussion on what aspects of the programme might benefit from further reviewing. Such evidence is crucial as the Irish economy and CE have strongly evolved over the last years while the last counterfactual analysis of the programme dates back to the early 2000s.

One major challenge of this evaluation relates to the assessment of “social inclusion” as one of the twin aims of CE. Firstly, there is no sharp and precise definition of social inclusion in the context of the programme. Previous research categorises the social inclusion aspect of CE as the objective to reduce social exclusion and social isolation, noting that social inclusion is about assisting individuals who encounter structural

obstacles to employment and who are distant from the labour market (DSP, 2021[1]; 2015[2]). While insightful, this definition remains too vague to make social inclusion quantitatively measurable. A more tractable approach to the "social inclusion" objective, i.e. in the form of a set of SMART[1] objectives, would enable precise operational metrics to be formulated in the future. Second, data on people's inclusion in society is either sparse or even entirely unavailable. Against this backdrop, further data collection, including qualitative data, would be worthwhile for further analyses.

A second challenge of the evaluation relates to ensuring reliable estimates of the effects of CE. The programme was not run as a randomised experiment, but individual jobseekers make choices on whether or not to apply for a CE vacancy. This type of selection into the programme can give rise to systematic differences between jobseekers that choose to participate and those that do not. Therefore, the report uses a methodology to ensure that participants are compared only to non-participants that are similar to them, by building typologies of participants and non-participants, to remove potential bias. The accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]), provides alternatives to the baseline specification to ensure that the general narrative presented here is not overly dependent on either the analytical technique or the time period and content of the data that was utilised.

Recognising that labour market programmes do not necessarily have the same impact on all types of participants, the report also compares the results on the effectiveness of CE for different groups of jobseekers. Such comparisons are important to avoid sweeping conclusions that only apply to some, but not all types of jobseekers. Sub-group analysis is also of use for policy makers in determining whether further targeting of the programme is desirable, or where improvements to enhance effectiveness might be needed.

The chapter starts by describing the methodology that applied, including possible limitations of the approach (6.2). It then presents the main results in section 6.3, as well as results for subgroups, and discusses the findings in the context of similar studies in other countries. Section 6.4 concludes.

6.2. Community Employment impact evaluation methodology

This section discusses the analytical challenges that evaluating a live-running programme like CE presents and outlines the methodology that is used in the report to ensure a high degree of reliability of the evaluation.

6.2.1. A world without CE is never observed for participants

To assess the impact of CE on an individual's labour market and non-labour market outcomes, it is necessary to know what would have happened to that individual had they never participated in the programme. This "counterfactual" is impossible to observe because individuals either participate or they do not. Assessments of programme impacts therefore rely on estimation methods to construct this counterfactual scenario. The simplest estimation method would be to simply compare outcomes of participants against non-participants but, unless the programme is set up as a randomised experiment, results would be biased.

In the case of CE, jobseekers can decide whether they would like to apply for CE or not, i.e. participation is not random, and simply comparing labour market outcomes of participants after CE and of eligible non-participants would produce unreliable results. In fact, participants and eligible non-participants differ in many respects, which can be linked to the probability of taking up CE, but also to labour market outcomes later on. For example, long-term unemployed people with very low previous earnings are more likely to start CE than eligible jobseekers with higher previous earnings. This differential in past earnings may very well affect earnings trajectories in the longer run, and failing to account for this difference would not allow to estimate the true causal impact of CE, leading to wrong conclusions. In order to produce unbiased results, it is necessary to remove the "selection bias" between participants and non-participants that occurs when participation is not random and participants self-select into the programme.

For CE, several sources of selection bias may be present. For example, it could be the case that more motivated and job-ready individuals are more likely to participate in training or employment programmes and have better employment outcomes for reasons besides their participation in CE. Conversely, certain individuals who face

additional barriers to employment, and therefore have worse employment outcomes, may be more likely to be directed towards ALMPs by caseworkers. Many of those who do not participate in an ALMP may not be included simply by virtue of the fact they find a job quickly and exit unemployment without support from Intreo. This latter group of individuals may have better future employment outcomes than ALMP participants by construction: if they exit unemployment quickly, they have a good chance of keeping that job, and are much more likely to be employed in several years or months than if they had remained unemployed.

6.2.2. Matching is used to compare similar CE participants and non-participants

To address such sources of bias, the approach in this report uses a matching technique. This approach is possible because the administrative data utilised are sufficiently rich and cover several important dimensions of individual characteristics and labour market histories, which is a key requirement to ensure correct causal estimates of the programme impacts (Lechner and Wunsch, 2013[4]).

The approach controls for differences in demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, education, age, etc.) and observed labour market and benefit history between CE participants and eligible non-participants. Doing so aims to produce an estimate of the "treatment effect" (the effect of participating in CE) by comparing participants (the "treatment" group) only to eligible non-participants that are very similar in their observable characteristics (the "control" group).

More specifically, the econometric approach imposes several restrictions in order to ensure the comparability of the treatment and control groups and to provide unbiased results:

- **Only individuals in the same calendar year quarter are compared with each other**. The method compares the labour market outcomes of those who entered CE in a given quarter with those jobseekers with similar characteristics who have not (yet) entered CE in the same quarter but were eligible to enter. The application of this "dynamic selection-on-observables" methodology – initially adopted by Sianesi (2004[5]) – is explained in greater detail in Box 6.1. Because

there are CE participants across the years 2013 to 2018, ensuring that individuals are compared to one another in the same quarter accounts for effects due to differences in the economic cycle.

- **Each participant is compared to a non-participant with a similar probability of entering CE based on their individual characteristics**. Individuals are matched with similar individuals based on an estimate of the probability that they enter into CE. This approach – based on a "propensity score" – is commonly used in the literature to tackle for the difficulty of otherwise accounting for a wide array of additional personal characteristics (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2018[6]). The propensity score is a measure of the probability of participating in a programme. In this analysis, it estimates the likelihood that individuals start CE in a given quarter for all jobseekers that are eligible to start CE in that quarter. The calculations of the propensity score take into account the following factors: (i) an individual's employment history, including employment and self-employment earnings in the calendar years prior to long-term unemployment, (ii) Live Register history (receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit in each of the three years prior to long-term unemployment. Total lifetime Live Register spells and duration are also accounted for), (iii) demographic characteristics (age, gender, marital status, location), (iv) wider benefit histories (receipt of other DSP benefits such as illness and disability payments, One-Parent Family Payment, Rent Supplement and Maternity Benefit). In addition, a sub-group analysis is conducted for those individuals for whom the Probability of Exit (PEX) questionnaire is available to control for factors like self-reported health, education and access to transport. Further details on these administrative data and PEX questions is provided in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]).
- **The outcome estimates are derived using "doubly robust" analytical techniques.** Utilisation of a second stage regression to estimate programme impacts allows any residual differences stemming from observables that remain between participants and their matched non-participant to be accounted for. For example, if there are remain differences between the participants and non-

participants for pre-unemployment earnings, entering the latter into the outcome regressions accounts for any impact these might have on outcomes and removes this effect from the estimated “programme effect”. Doing so provides a second layer of protection to the analysis, as only one of the two techniques (matching or the second stage regression) has to correctly construct the proper counterfactual in order for the estimates to be valid. The difference in the estimates is small, providing reassurance that the matching has done a good job in comparing alike non-participants to participants.

The choice of the research design is driven by the relatively broad eligibility criteria for CE coupled with the availability of rich administrative data. Alternative approaches, e.g. regression discontinuity designs, would have been feasible, but turned out to be less well suited in this context. Instead, the research design makes use of the rich available administrative data to match similar individuals along a number of dimensions. Capturing a person’s individual situation with precision is crucial for the matching. For example, the approach takes account of duration at the precise calendar quarter an individual enters CE. If this was not done, there would be a likelihood of comparing e.g. an individual with five years of registered unemployment to an individual with only one year. These individuals may then have very different lived experience of unemployment, with the individual at five years having already had the opportunity to participate in the range of DSP employment services for a long period of time yet still being subsequently unemployed. Correcting for unemployment duration is often used in impact evaluations and was also employed in a recent OECD evaluations of ALMPs in Latvia (OECD, 2019[7]) and Lithuania (OECD, 2022[8]).

Reviewing statistics from the evaluation demonstrates that matching has been successful in pairing CE participants to similar non-participants to ensure a solid comparison of the two groups. Table 4.4 of Chapter 4 shows that after matching, the imbalance that is seen between participants and all non-participants across different observable characteristics is significantly reduced. For example, earnings three years before participation are EUR 4 100 for participants and matched non-participants, compared to EUR 4 900 for all non-participants. Similarly on age, CE participants (mean age of 43.1 years) compare favourably to the matched non-participants (mean

age of 42.9 years), relative to all non-participants (mean age of 40.8 years). The technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]), provides further detail on this and on the accompanying sensitivity analyses conducted. The aggregated bias across all variables in the matched non-participant group compares favourably to thresholds in the academic literature, suggesting a good balance is achieved.

Box 6.1. Econometric approach: Dynamic selection-on-observables

When individuals begin ALMPs (are "treated") at different times in their unemployment spells, selecting "dynamically" into such measures, the set of individuals who were *never* treated may not provide a suitable comparison group to those who were treated. Individuals only become available for treatment if they stay in unemployment long enough. Conversely, one of the main reasons that some individuals do not get treated is because they are able to find jobs and exit unemployment quickly. This motivates an approach that does not simply compare the ever treated with the never treated, but rather compares those who begin treatment at a given point in their unemployment spell with those who have been unemployed for a similar duration but have not yet entered an ALMP. Note that individuals in both the treatment and control groups are potentially eligible to enter treatment, but individuals in the control group who are paired with individuals in the treatment group do not enter treatment in the same quarter as the individual entering treatment (although they may subsequently enter treatment). This ensures that the probability distribution of individuals subsequently finding a job or of later joining a programme is the same as the distribution for the similar treated individuals had they decided to wait longer as well. This "dynamic selection-on-observables" method was developed by Sianesi (2004[5]).

In this report, the dynamic selection-on-observables approach is implemented in conjunction with nearest neighbour propensity score matching. This entails the following:

1. Calculating propensity scores based on a rich set of covariates.
2. Matching exactly on calendar quarter and using elapsed duration in long-term unemployment to control for differences in the duration profile of participants and non-participants.
3. Within the groups defined in the second step, conducting nearest neighbour matching – pairing individuals with similar propensity scores.
4. Estimating treatment effects separately for each time horizon of interest (t, the amount of time elapsed since the start of the CE, when the employment and earnings are measured). Denoting *potential* labour market outcomes (such as employment or earnings) for an individual (i) as Y_{imt}^{d}, where $d = 1$ under treatment and $d = 0$ otherwise, the average treatment effect on the treated ($D_{im} = 1$) for each t is then:

$$\gamma_t = E[Y_{imt}^{1} | D_{im} = 1] - E[Y_{imt}^{0} | D_{im} = 1].$$

The γ_ts are the key treatment effects reported for labour market outcomes in this analysis, looking at individuals annually until eight years after entering treatment (for individuals in the treatment group) or after being matched to an individual in the treatment group (for individuals not entering treatment). Given the exact matching on calendar quarter and year and the nearest neighbour matching, any time -specific effects are differenced out by construction.

A key identifying assumption in propensity score matching is that all outcome -relevant differences between programme participants and non-participants are captured in their observed characteristics. In other words, conditional on observed covariates, the selection into the treatment can be considered random (e.g. Imbens (2000[9])). If selection into programme is governed not only by observable characteristics but also by unobservable characteristics, which are correlated with the potential outcomes, then propensity score matching cannot produce unbiased estimates of treatment effects. To address this issue, the technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]) includes a sensitivity analysis which combines propensity score matching with a difference–in-

differences approach (Heckman et al. (1998[10]); Smith and Todd (2005[11])). Intertemporal changes in outcomes between participants are compared to changes in outcomes for the comparison group, where changes are measured relative to a pre-programme benchmark period.

Given the large sample sizes involved in the analysis, with several thousand participants per year starting CE, the analysis uses direct matching estimators. This has the benefit of exhibiting the smallest bias for all sample sizes, even though nearest neighbour matching has the drawback of higher variance estimates (Huber, Lechner and Wunsch, 2013[12]). With large sample sizes, the superior bias properties gain in importance given that the absolute difference in precision relative to more efficient estimators diminishes as the variances tend to zero asymptotically. The technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]) reports variations of the estimation approach, using both regression weight adjustment (inverse-probability weighting) and alternative matching estimators (Kernel and n-nearest neighbours).

Under this framework, the dynamic selection-on-observables approach can only be used to estimate the treatment effect of the first CE participation in which individuals participate. Everything that happens after starting participation in the first ALMP measure is effectively treated as part of an individuals' outcome, even if that entails not working due to further CE participation.

6.2.3. The report evaluates a comprehensive set of outcomes

The effects of ALMPs on employment probability have been widely studied, as documented by a meta-analysis by Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[6]) including employment probability estimates from 111 impact evaluations of ALMPs. While directly labour market related outcomes are crucial in the context of CE, there are wider considerations for CE in light of its social inclusion objective, such as impacts on outcomes such as health and engagement in education.

In the case of Ireland, the rich and comprehensive data available enable the CE evaluation to track a set of labour market outcomes, and to a lesser extent social

inclusion outcomes, for a relatively long period. The outcomes are tracked continuously up to the eight years post the start of the programme for the cohort starting in 2013. Outcomes are calculated on an annual basis and tracked over time relative to the year of the programme start date, which is defined using the quarter of entry for the CE participants (for the treatment group) or that same calendar quarter for an individual in the control group who is matched to someone in the treatment group.

The fact that outcome data are only available annually limits the extent to which granular analysis of the timing of impacts is possible. However, this is not a major problem in the analysis of CE. CE is a long programme and has long-term objectives, i.e. short-term temporal impacts are much less of an analytical concern than in the case of support like job counselling, where the treatment primarily targets the ability of jobseekers to secure work rapidly. The administrative data allow the analysis of a long time series of post-participation outcomes, and whether e.g. an individual finds work some weeks earlier or later is of limited relevance to what their employment status looks like several years later.

Several outcomes' variables are used to capture both the activation and the social inclusion objectives of CE (Table 6.1). Employment outcomes are captured by four indicators, namely gross annual earnings from dependant employment or self-employment, the probability of working at least one day in a given year, annual weeks in (most unsupported) employment and annual weeks in unemployment. The four indicators are complementary to each other, and jointly paint a detailed picture of labour market outcomes after CE participation.

Social inclusion outcomes are difficult to evaluate using the current administrative data

As for social inclusion outcomes, while they cannot be captured as directly as activation outcomes, health outcomes can be proxied by the receipt of the Disability Allowance, and engagement in further education after being eligible for CE is captured through the receipt of the Back to Education Allowance.

Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people aged 16-66 who have a disease or disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, for at least 1 year and

significantly restricts their ability to work. Whilst the receipt of Disability Allowance can provide insight into underlying health conditions, it may not cover all aspects of them. Substantial mental disability is covered by Disability Allowance, but it is unlikely that it provides much insight into moderate mental health issues of participants, which can be barriers to engagement in local communities or social networks. All of these things might reasonably be considered a part of "social inclusion".

Similarly, the services provided to local communities, the fabric of society in these communities and the usefulness of CE to social inclusion in these respects is not currently measured or observed. This will only be remedied with a proper definition of what social inclusion means for CE, with metrics defined to measure success and data collected to evaluate progress.

Table 6.1. Different outcome variables aim to capture the activation and social inclusion objectives of CE

Outcome variables and the community employment (CE) objective they capture

Outcome indicator	Description	CE objective
Annual earnings	Employment (as an employee) and self-employment earnings, gross of taxes and contributions. All earnings are measured in 2023 price terms, adjusted using personal consumption expenditure deflators for Ireland.	Activation
Probability of employment in a given year	Probability of employment measured using a binary outcome variable which is equal to 1 if individual has positive earnings report in the year, and equal to 0 otherwise.	Activation
Annual employment weeks	Cumulative duration of all jobs held during a given year. This measure is reported only for employee, as data on self-employment is not reliable as they mainly record the number 52.	Activation
Registered unemployment	Annual weeks of receipt of the two main unemployment benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit)	Activation
Receipt of Disability Allowance	Receipt of Disability Allowance in a given year as a proxy for health and disability impacts of CE. Receipt of Disability Allowance is contingent on having a physical or mental disability that has continued for at least one year and which substantially restricts the ability to work, i.e. it captures severe conditions.	Social inclusion
Receipt of Back to Education Allowance	Receipt of Back to Education Allowance as a proxy for engagement in further education with the training and education system.	Social inclusion

6.3. Community Employment impact evaluation results

This section presents the main findings on the impact of CE on labour market and social inclusion outcomes. The analysis shows that CE improves labour market prospects of participants in the medium and long run, after a short initial negative lock-in effect. Additionally, CE contributes to enhancing social inclusion, notably by reducing the dependency on disability benefits of former participants. The results differ markedly across different subgroups of participants, highlighting that the programme does not play the same role for all types of jobseekers.

6.3.1. After initial lock-in effects, CE leads to more employment and higher earnings

The impact of CE on labour market outcomes follows a U-shaped pattern, initially showing a short negative effect directly after CE participation before generating positive outcomes in the medium and long-run (Figure 6.1). The phenomenon is observable in both employment among former CE participants, as well as their employment earnings. In the first two years after starting CE, there is a discernible decline in the number of weeks worked in the open labour market and employment earnings, highlighting the initial challenges faced by individuals when transitioning from CE to employment. This pattern can be explained by a “lock-in effect” wherein individuals have temporarily restricted access to the labour market during and directly after CE, as they might be unable to carry out part-time work in parallel to CE, have less time for job search activities, and might not receive other ALMPs in addition to CE that could be beneficial.

Figure 6.1. The impact of CE on labour market outcomes turns positive a few years after participation

Impact of community employment (CE) participation on annual earnings, the number weeks worked and the likelihood of having any employment earnings

Note: 95% confidence intervals shown on vertical bars.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/sil4gw

Following this initial decline, the effect of CE on employment outcomes becomes positive. In the 4th year after starting CE, a former participant is predicted to work about three weeks more per year in the regular labour market, and to have annual earnings that are about EUR 1 000 higher as a result of CE. While the effect might seem relatively small, it is important to bear in mind that many CE participants face major employment barriers and would have been expected to work little and have low earnings, i.e. relatively speaking, these levels are not negligeable. In addition, it is important to notice that the estimates reflect the effect of CE as compared to other eligible non-participants, who may or may not benefit from other ALMPs, and not just jobseekers who do not receive any ALMPs. Put differently, the estimates should be interpreted as the effect of CE versus the effect of the average support pathway of an eligible jobseeker, and not the effect of CE versus no support at all.

The cumulative number of weeks in employment (taking account of negative impact directly after the start of CE) starts turning positive after five years, and cumulative earnings after six years. That is, the negative initial impact is more than outweighed after five and six years, respectively, pointing to a positive long-term effect of CE. For example, within seven years after starting CE, former participants are estimated to have worked a total of eight weeks more as a result of participating in CE and have had additional earnings of EUR 2 500.

This positive shift becomes apparent more rapidly when considering an indicator variable based on whether a person has any employment earnings in a given year. With this metrics, the impact turns positive as early as from the second year following CE, indicating a quick assimilation of former CE participants into some form of employment. In the third year after starting CE, former participants are 7 percentage points more likely to be in employment at some point during the year, and it takes only four years for the cumulative measure to become positive. The quicker convergence of this indicator of employment than the other labour market outcomes indicators might hint to a gradual move towards employment, with some former participants taking up intermittent or part-time work first after finalising CE, before moving on to more stable jobs.

Overall, the estimated effects of CE on labour market outcomes are encouraging. They all hint to improvements of the labour market situation after CE, suggesting that the programme can reconnect jobseekers with jobs in the open labour market in the medium and long run. One way of reducing the lock-in effect and decreasing the time it takes for the positive effect of CE on employment outcomes to unfold could be to explore making working hours more flexible throughout the CE spell and introduce counselling elements towards the end of the placement. For instance, some more "job-ready" participants could begin their placement working more than 19.5 hours per week to gain more intensive experience at the start of the programme. They could then reduce working hours to put a stronger focus on job search activities and e.g. benefit from counselling sessions with DSP counsellors, to maximise the chances of finding a job rapidly. Conversely those with multiple barriers might start with fewer hours and increase their weekly hours towards the end of their placement.

There are no long-term effects on unemployment benefits

In addition to the effects on employment and earnings, there are no discernible impacts on long-run registered unemployment. There is some increase to receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit (JB), as CE participation confers social insurance contributions towards JB entitlement. Extra annual weeks of JB receipt peak at just over two in years 3 and 4, before falling back towards 0 over the estimated period and ending as insignificant in year 8 (see Figure 6.3, Panel F). However, when looking at unemployment benefits as a whole (considering both Jobseeker's Allowance and JB together), this extra JB entitlement makes only a statistically significant impact in years 4 and 5 (at 2 weeks and 0.9 weeks respectively) before becoming insignificant later on.

Coupled with the results on incidence of employment, this suggests that much of the impact of CE falls on inactivity, via moving individuals who would previously have entered into inactivity into employment.

6.3.2. CE reduces disability receipt and enhances take-up of education subsidies

Besides the impact on labour market outcomes, the effect of CE on other outcomes, especially social outcomes, is also crucial considering the programme's explicit

objective to enhance social inclusion. Disability Allowance receipt and take-up of the back-to-education allowance post-CE participation are indicators of the broader effects CE generates, providing insights into possible health and education effects.

Participating in CE has an immediate and persisting positive effect on disability allowance receipt, which is paid to people with long-lasting injuries and disability (Figure 6.2). Already one year after starting CE, the probability of claiming disability benefits is lower among CE participants than in the comparison group, and the difference is statistically significant. That is, fewer former CE participants than comparable non-participants are in need of income support because they have a serious disease or disability that is expected to last for at least 1 year and prevents them from working. This effect continues to grow and cumulate over time. For instance, six years after starting CE, former participants are 6 percentage points less likely to receive disability allowance than people with similar characteristics, but who did not take part in CE. The accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]) details some variation on the magnitude of the impacts on Disability Allowance receipt on different sensitivity analyses. This means care should be taken on being overly precise on the point estimate of the impact, though lower receipt was common across the different specifications.

There are several reasons that could explain this result. From a methodological perspective, it cannot be excluded with certainty that there is some residual unobserved difference between CE participants and eligible non-participants that persists despite the matching approach (see 6.2). For example, individuals with underlying unobserved health conditions might be less likely to take up CE, and these health problems could subsequently lead to the need for disability allowance receipt.

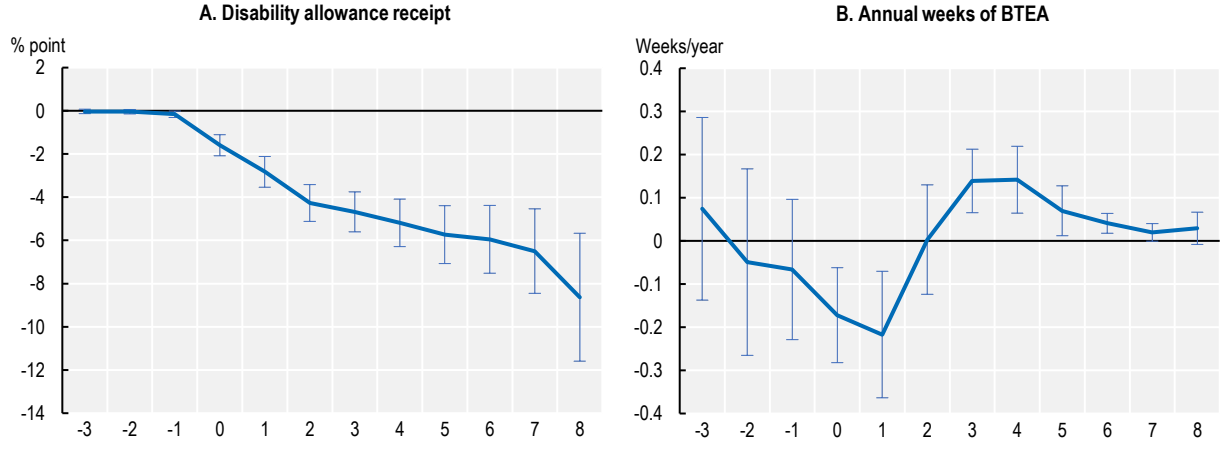
However, while some unobserved variable bias cannot be excluded, the matching procedure corrects for a lot of the differences between CE participants and eligible non-participants, and it is likely that other factors drive or at least contribute to the results. For example, past receipt of Disability Allowance, past employment and earnings and past occupation are all controlled for in the analysis. These may all help to explain present health. In addition to this, the impact on Disability Allowance receipt grows over

time, which is less expected if individuals were already unhealthy at the beginning of the comparison period (where an immediate gap might be expected).

There is a significant body of economic and public health literature documenting a link between physical and mental inactivity and health (for example, see (OECD, 2015[13]; 2012[14]). Inactivity can lead to mental health issues, e.g. by increasing anxiety and reducing social connections, and is also associated with physical health effects, including through unhealthy behaviours. Positive links between employment and health have also been found (OECD, 2008[15]). CE keeps participants physically and mentally active, ensures that they have regular social interactions with CE co-workers and supervisors, and also provides a sense of purpose. All of these factors can benefit health outcomes, even more so in comparison to non-participants who do not engage in another activity or ALMP.

Figure 6.2. CE reduces disability allowance receipt immediately and boosts take-up of the Back to Education Allowance with a lagged effect

Effect of community employment (CE) on the probability of disability allowance receipt and annual weeks of Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)



Note: 95% confidence intervals shown on vertical bars.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/dqkr3f

Besides likely beneficial effects on health, CE also has some impact on jobseekers' probability of engaging in education. More specifically, CE increases the likelihood of receiving the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) in the medium term. BTEA, which can be granted for second and third level courses with a Quality and Qualifications

Ireland accreditation, is in most cases only available to participants whose highest educational attainment level increases through the course. That is, BTEA is associated with an increase in human capital.

As is in the case of employment outcomes, the small positive effect of CE on BTEA receipt is not immediate. In the first year after starting CE, annual weeks of BTEA are lower for CE participants than for comparable non-participants. This initial reduction in BTEA take-up can be explained by the fact that CE participants are not available for BTEA while they are still on the programme, and might prioritise other activities, such as job search activities, directly after CE. However, already from year two after starting CE, the impact of CE on annual weeks of BTEA turns positive, highlighting that all else equal, participating in CE increases BTEA take-up, even though the effect is small. Three and four years after the start of CE, when the effect is strongest, it increases the expected time spent receiving BTEA by about 0.1 weeks per year, which is small, but statically different from 0. After that, the effect starts ebbing away over time, slowly approaching zero. Whilst the overall effect is relatively small when averaged over all participants, it does suggest that there is potential to help a small subset of CE participants engage better with education incentives offered by DSP.

6.3.3. Impacts of CE differ dependent on the characteristics of the participant

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of CE, it is useful to break down the data into different sub-groups. The analysis on these sub-groups offers valuable insights into how different segments of the population are affected by the programme. The administrative data that are available allow for disentangling the effect of CE depending on age, gender, nationality, location (urban vs. rural) and family status.

Furthermore, for a subset of the population for whom PEX information is available, the impact can be separated depending on education, access to transport, level of English, willingness to travel, and other personal characteristics. However, as the limited number of individuals with PEX scores in the sample poses a challenge in establishing solid conclusions, the report only provides a brief overview of these results.

It is important to notice that the differences in the results between different subgroups do not correct for correlation between sub-groups. For example, the effects of CE vary

depending on age and on gender, and, at the same time, female participants tend to be younger than their male peers. It is impossible to disentangle which subgroup (age or gender) drives the difference in the strength of the effects. Therefore, instead of interpreting the difference in results as being causal effects of belonging to a specific subgroup, they should rather be interpreted descriptively: The effects of CE are not the same for men and women, which may be due to gender or any other difference between the pool of male and female participants.

Prime-age individuals benefit particularly strongly from the programme

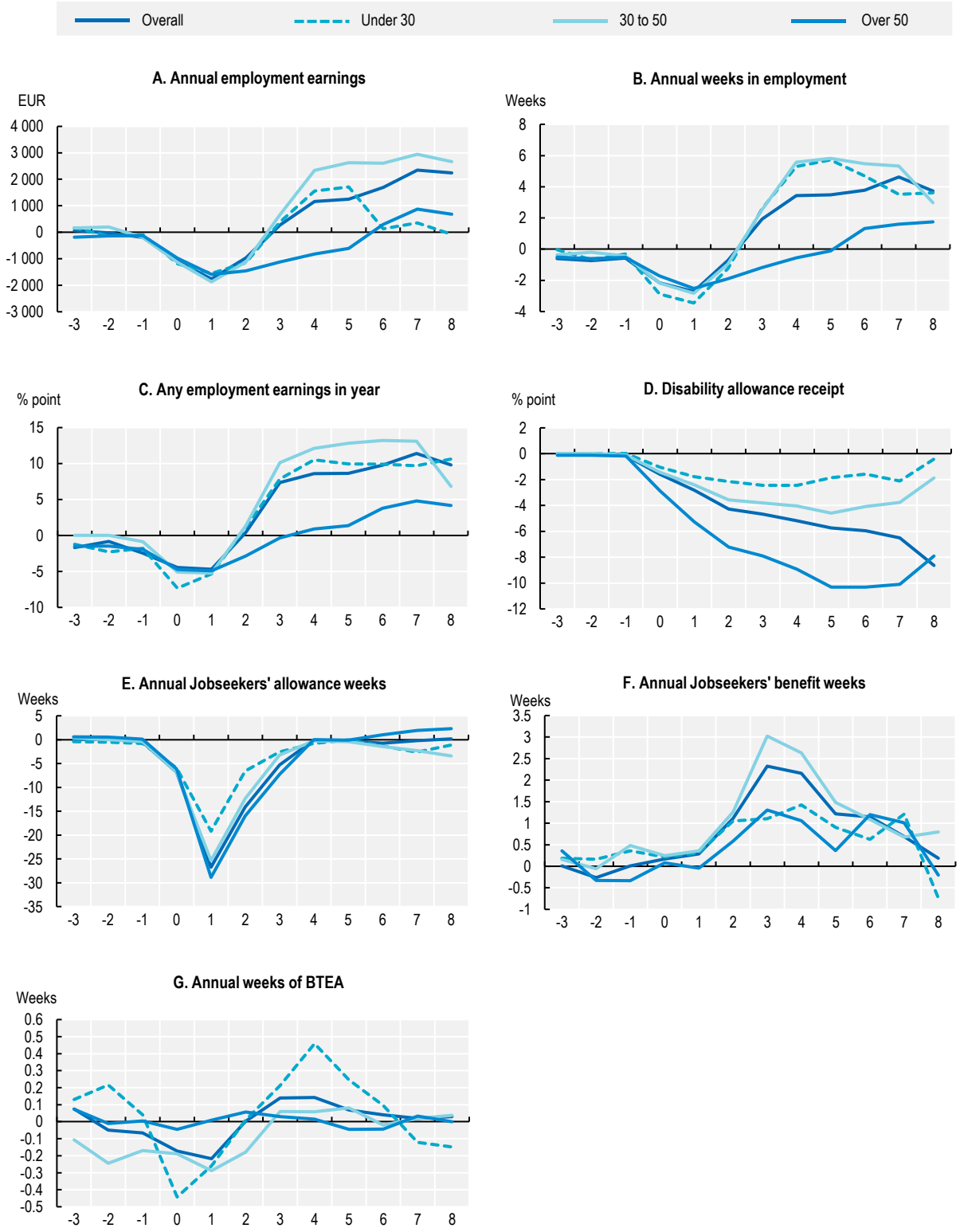
The effect of CE varies markedly across age groups (Figure 6.3). Employment outcomes improve strongly for prime-age individuals and young jobseekers under 30, while participants over 50 benefit a lot less from better labour market prospects after CE. For example, 4-5 years after CE, total annual weeks worked are expected to be six weeks higher due to CE participation for people under 30 as well as 30-50 year-olds, whereas the effect is close to zero for the 50+. Similarly, annual employment earnings are predicted to increase only very moderately due to CE participation for older jobseekers, and only six years after starting CE, while increases are stronger and faster for younger participants, in particular prime-age participants who seem to benefit from rapid and sustained income increases. Prime-aged participants can expect to earn EUR 2 300 more per year four years after starting CE, and EUR 3 000 after seven years, against EUR 800 and EUR 900 for the 50+, respectively.

One likely driver of this discrepancy is the role CE plays for different ages. While the activation angle is central for most young and prime-aged jobseekers, for whom the main objective is to prepare them for the primary labour market, CE is sometimes used as a pathway into retirement in the case of older participants. For jobseekers just a few years below retirement age, the focus might lie on other aspects of CE, such as contributing to the community and increasing social inclusion, rather than connecting them with a job in the open labour market.

The supposedly larger focus of CE on outcomes other than employment for older CE participants also matches results of the social inclusion outcome indicators, most notably the receipt of Disability Allowance as a proxy for health outcomes. Indeed, the probability of receiving Disability Allowance decreases strongly due to CE participation among older jobseekers, much more so than among their younger peers. For instance, former CE participants aged 50+ face a probability of claiming Disability Allowance five years after starting CE that is 10 percentage points lower than it would have been without CE participation, pointing to substantial beneficial health effects. This effect is quantitatively large and persistent, as after eight years, the predicted probability of needing Disability Allowance is still reduced by 8 percentage points. For younger age-groups, the effect is lower, in line with a lower baseline probability of claiming Disability Allowance at younger ages. Nevertheless, the effect is negative for all age-groups, i.e. lowering the probability of claiming Disability Allowance, suggesting that CE has beneficial health effects at all ages.

There is also some evidence that CE helps young participants to invest in their human capital. Four years after starting CE, participants under 30 claim the Back-to-Education-Allowance on average 0.4 weeks more than comparable peers of the same age who did not take up CE. While small, this effect is statistically significant. For older groups of CE participants, the effect is close to zero.

Figure 6.3. Community employment (CE) impacts show important dynamics across age



Note: Back to Education Allowance (BTEA).
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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EU migrants and women benefit from CE participation

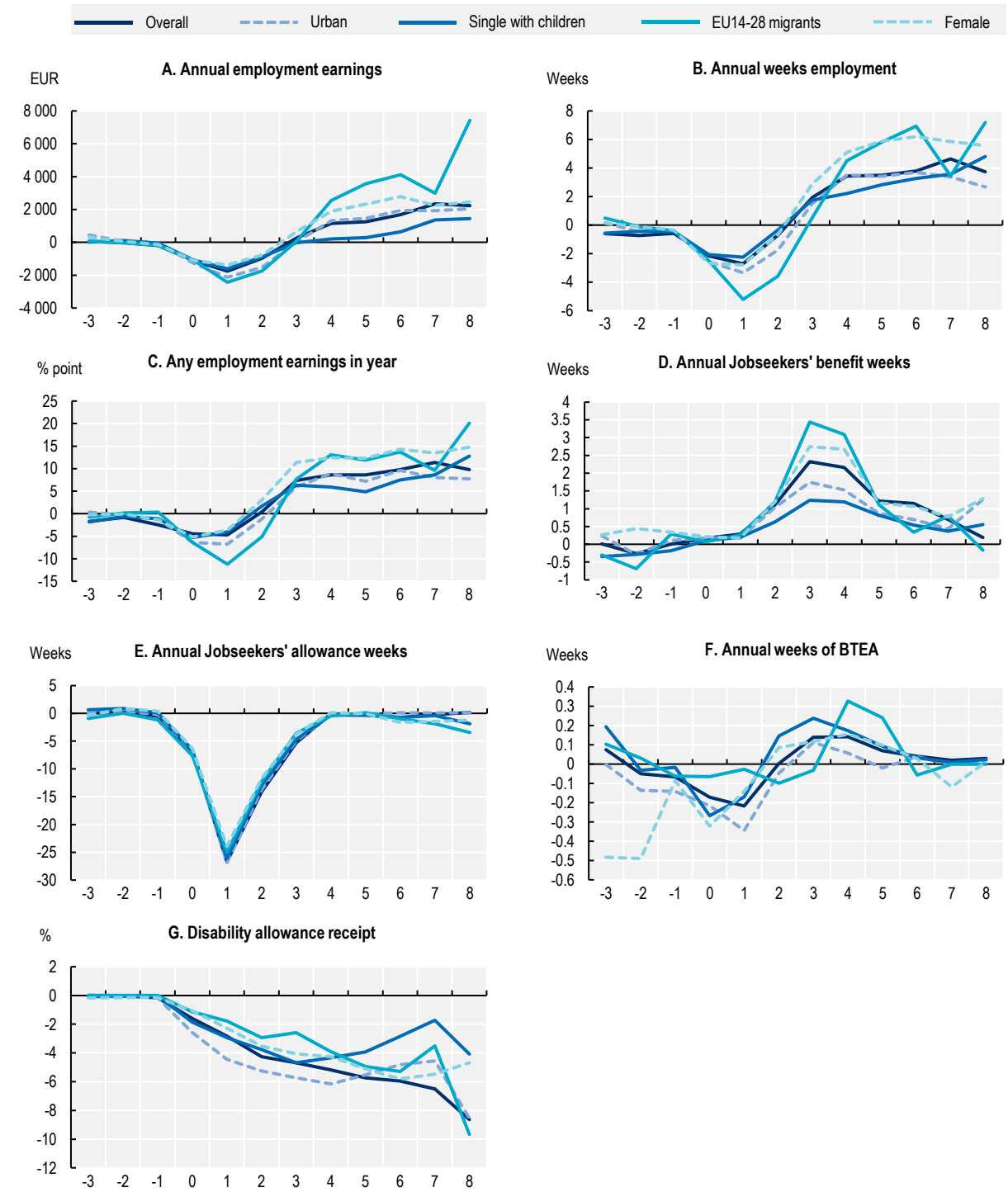
In terms of labour market outcomes, most notably weeks of employment and the receipt of any positive earnings in the year, post-2004 EU accession country migrants (hereafter “EU migrants”) and women benefit more than the average CE participant (Figure 6.4). Five years after the programme, EU migrants are earning an average of around EUR 3 600 per year more than non-participants, far above the cross-group average of EUR 1 250. For women this figure is around EUR 2 300. Both groups also see decreases to receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance, hinting to positive effects, even though this decrease is only statistically significant for women in years six and seven after participation.

In contrast to this, in the medium term, three to four years after participation, both EU migrants and women see above average increases to receipt of Jobseeker’s Benefit. These increases may represent stronger engagement with the labour market, with previous participation on CE qualifying towards Jobseeker’s Benefit eligibility. However, the impact on Jobseeker’s Benefit abates by year five, while positive employment effects persist (e.g. in terms of weeks worked), suggesting that the benefit is assisting individuals well in the transition period between CE participation and job entry.

As stated above, the larger employment effects for EU migrants and women could be due to a correlation with other subgroups rather than to the fact of being a migrant or female, respectively. For example, differences in the age structure between male and female participants, as well as EU migrants and non-migrants are possible factors contributing to these differences, and results should be interpreted cautiously.

Figure 6.4. EU migrants and women have particularly good outcomes following CE participation

Activation and social inclusion outcomes for different sub-groups of participants over time, relative to comparable non-participants



Note: Community employment (CE); Back to Employment Allowance (BTEA).
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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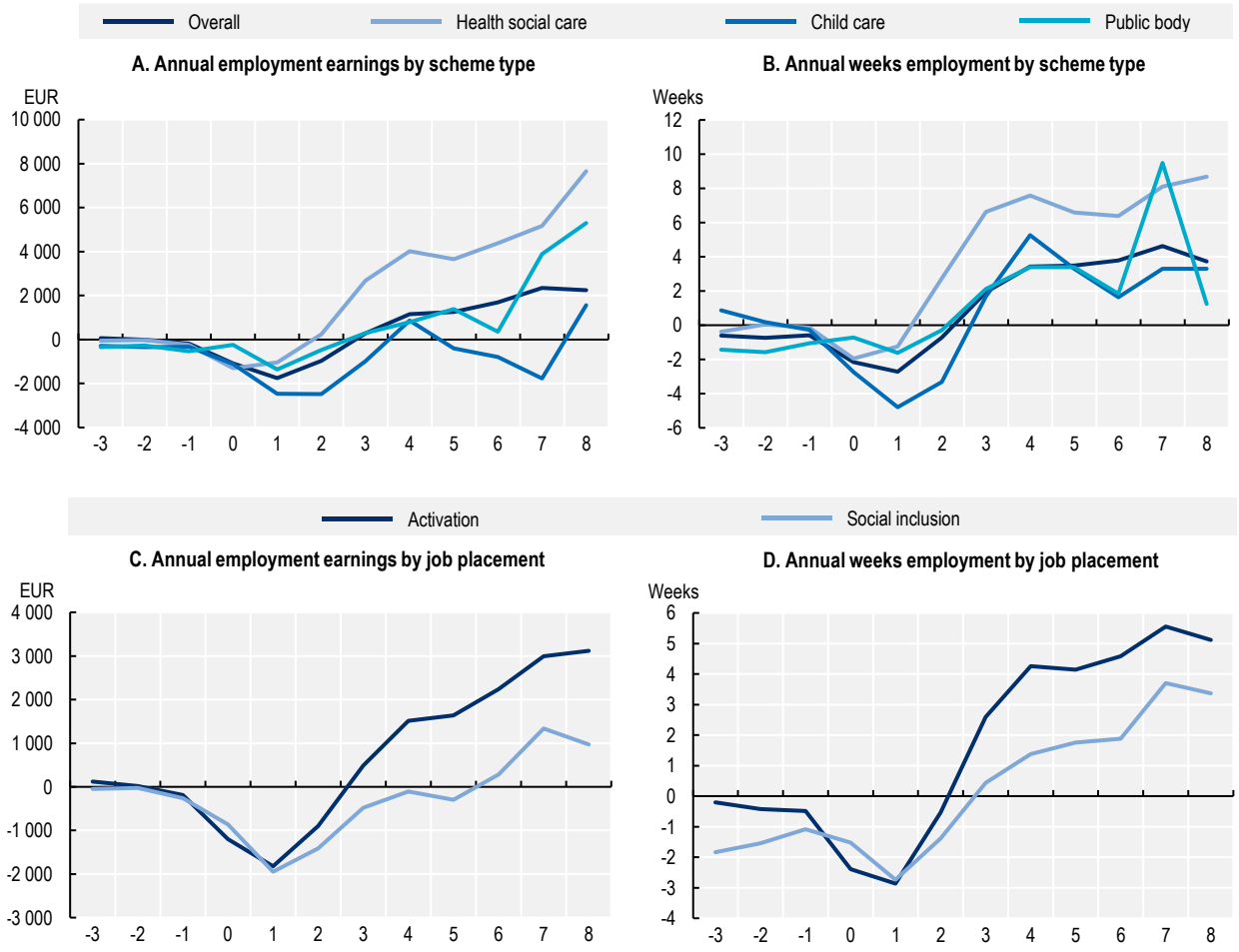
Participants in activation jobs and on the health and social care schemes earn more

In terms of labour market outcomes, participants in the activation strand benefit more than CE participants in social inclusion placements (Figure 6.5). For example, five years after starting CE, participants in an activation CE placement benefit from an estimated increase of EUR 2 000 in annual earnings due to the programme, whereas the effect is close to 0 for social inclusion participants. One possible explanation for this is the stronger focus on reconnecting jobseekers with the labour market in the activation strand than in the social conclusion strand. On average, participants in social inclusion placements tend to face bigger barriers to employment than their peers on activation placements, with earnings that are 7% lower in the five years prior to the scheme. However, it may be that this differential in outcomes is driven by unobserved differences between participants in the two placement types. Attempts to compare similar participants in the two schemes were not fruitful, so it is likely that innate differences do explain some of the differences in programme effectiveness. This gives further weight to considering what activation and social inclusion mean in practice and how they apply to individuals, not to jobs, as is the current policy practice. Bringing the focus back to the individual may also pave the way for case officers to have more structured conversations and engagement with their clients about their journey back to the labour market.

Figure 6.5. Activation participants and those on the health and social care scheme have better earnings and more weeks of employment

Selected employment outcomes over time by scheme and placement type



Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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As for scheme types, labour market outcomes post participation tend to be better for participants in Health and Social Care. For example, four years after participating in CE, participants of one of these specific schemes have estimated annual income increases of about EUR 4 000, much higher than the average impact for all scheme types. One of the reasons may lie in the higher degree of specialisation of these specific schemes, which may make it easier for participants to identify job vacancies in need of the job skills they acquired during CE.

PEX subgroups highlight importance of education

The sub-group analysis presented thus far has been conducted without making use of PEX information. This is due to the limited availability of PEX data, particularly for early CE cohorts, resulting in a relatively small sample size of sub-groups with PEX data and, consequently, less reliable findings.

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that when conducting subgroup analysis with the inclusion of PEX data, there is some preliminary evidence suggesting that the program's impact could be stronger among participants with higher levels of education. More details on these findings are included in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[3]).

A higher effectiveness of the programme for people with higher educational attainment, which is in line with the greater labour market impact for participants in the activation strand rather than the social inclusion strand, highlights the important role training modules during CE can play, as a means of increasing educational attainment of participants. It provides some evidence that CE may be effective at helping to unlock latent labour market potential for individuals that have skills to succeed in the labour market, but who may be lacking confidence after a period of extended unemployment. In addition, it also underscores the need to ensure the CE has sufficient support mechanisms in place that are tailored to participants with the largest labour market barriers.

6.3.4. The positive long-term effects of CE compare favourably with estimates from studies of similar programmes in other countries

This section compares the estimated effects of CE in Ireland with those of similar studies in other countries, placing them in the context of the results of two meta-analyses. The first, conducted by Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[6]), covers a total of 49 countries and- summarises estimates from over 200 impact evaluations of ALMPs. Of these, 34 impact evaluations include point estimates of the employment effects of public works programmes comparable to the ones in Ireland. The second meta-analysis covers projects funded by the EU's European Social Fund (ESF) and

includes estimates from seven studies examining public works programmes as well as three classified as mixed interventions, combining e.g. public employment with training components (European Commission and Ismeri Europa, 2023[16]).

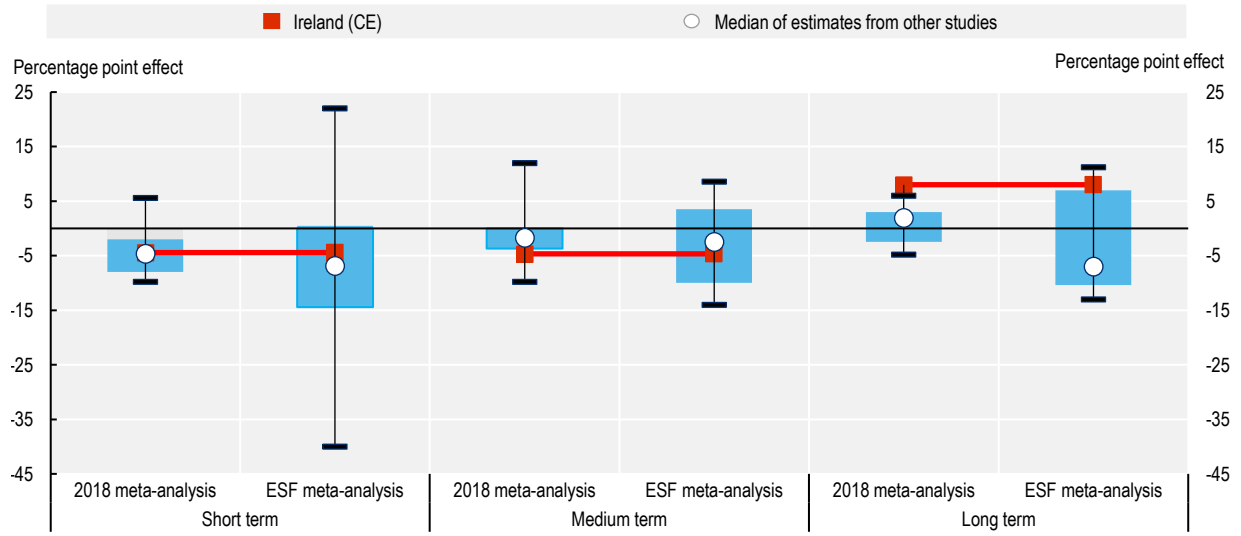
The discussion in this section focuses only on the results for employment. The meta-analysis by Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[6]) does not provide estimates of the effects on other outcomes analysed for Ireland, such as earnings or weeks worked. While the meta-analysis of the ESF programmes does contain some estimates on measures such as earnings, the number of estimates is insufficient to make meaningful comparisons by programme type.

Compared with the results of the meta-analyses, the estimated effects for Ireland are in the middle of the distribution for shorter-time horizons and toward the upper end of the distribution for long-time horizons (Figure 6.6). The effects in the first two years after entering the programme are very close to the median estimates of the other studies, with negative effects on employment probability ranging from negative two and negative 6 percentage points. The effects at time horizons longer than two years, by contrast, are considerably more positive in the case of Ireland. The average estimated effect for CE over time horizons longer than two years is 8 percentage points, higher than any of the estimates reported in the Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[6]) meta-analysis and at the 75th percentile of the ESF programme estimates.

One possible explanation for the relatively high positive effect in Ireland relates to the fact that CE targets long-term unemployed people (those unemployed for at least 12 months). If one focuses only on the studies (in the meta-analyses) that examine the effect of public works programmes on the long-term unemployed, the results are more favourable than the overall estimates. For example, at time horizons of between one and two years after entry into the programme, the median estimate for this subset of studies is 3.0 percentage points in the ESF programme estimates (compared to -2.5 percentage points when including also other groups of unemployed in the analysis). However, these conclusions are tentative given the relatively small number of estimates pertaining only to the long-term unemployed (9, compared to 16 for all the estimates in the ESF programme study relating to public employment programmes).

Figure 6.6. Compared to similar studies in other countries, the long-term effects of CE on employment probability are particularly positive

Percentage point effect of public works programmes on employment probability



CE: Community Employment. ESF: European Social Fund.
Note: Short, medium and long-term effects respectively refer to effects up to one year, 1-2 years, and more than two years after programme completion. For Ireland, results refer to 0-12, 13-24 and 24-108 months after beginning the programme. As such, the observation periods are similar, but potentially not fully aligned. The box and whisker plots for the other studies refer to the 5th, 25th, 75th and 95th percentiles of the estimates (i.e. the black line at the bottom refers to the 5th percentile and the bottom of the blue box refers to the 25th percentile). Point estimates are included in the chart even if they are statistically insignificant. The studies presented adopt various research designs and econometric techniques – the results for Ireland use nearest-neighbour propensity score matching.
Source: Card, D., Kluve, J. and Weber, A. (2018[6]), "What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations", Journal of the European Economic Association, Vol. 16/3, pp. 894-931, https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvx028; European Commission and Ismeri Europa (2023[16]), Meta-analysis of the ESF counterfactual impact evaluations – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, https://doi.org/10.2767/580759 and calculations based on administrative data from Greece.

StatLink https://stat.link/zjui0s

In interpreting the results, it is worth noting that, while the point estimates in the comparison studies are generally positive, they are not necessarily statistically significant. Figure 6.6 plots all the point estimates in the studies found in the meta-analysis by regardless of statistical significance. In fact, only a minority (3 out of 11) of the studies in the Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[6]) meta-analysis find positive and statistically significant results over the long term for public works programmes.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter presents evidence of CE's efficacy in supporting long-term unemployed people. It shows that the programme contributes to improving labour market outcomes

in the medium-to-long term, especially for younger and prime-aged participants. After an initial lock-in effect during and shortly after CE, former participants benefit from significantly more employment and higher earnings a few years after starting the programme. The employment effects after two years are remarkably strong also in an international context, with the long-term effects higher than three-quarters of similar studies done in other countries. CE also contributes to improving some non-labour market related outcomes, in particular a lower likelihood of receiving Disability Allowance and a somewhat higher probability of receiving the Back to Education Allowance, pointing to possible beneficial effects on health and engagement in education. These latter outcomes can be seen as an indication that CE also contributes to improving social inclusion.

The effects of CE vary markedly across different groups of participants. While the effects of CE on labour market outcomes are generally better for younger participants, the programme is less effective at connecting older jobseekers with jobs in the open labour market. Nevertheless, jobseekers close to retirement age seem to benefit from social inclusion effects of CE. As a result, further scrutiny will be worthwhile to ensure that CE is tailored to individual needs and maximises the benefits it can achieve for different types of jobseekers. For example, more flexibility in terms of working hours, job tasks and training, could allow enhancing the match between CE placements and the profile of specific jobseekers.

While positive, the results also reveal that there is a lock-in period during and a few years after CE. During this lock-in period, CE has a negative effect on labour-market outcomes before giving way to medium and long-term beneficial effects. Therefore, it will be important to take action to shorten this lock-in period as much as possible. For example, combining CE with other types of support, e.g. counselling services by DSP, could help making participants job ready more swiftly after the end of CE. Smooth transitions into the labour market could also be facilitated by strong involvement of employers and business organisations, to provide insights on skill needs and help review the match between CE placements and training during CE and local labour market needs.

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Note

[1] Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant; Timebound.

7 Impact evaluation of Tús

This chapter presents an evaluation of Tús, a small-scale public works programme in Ireland. The evaluation is based on a rich set of administrative data, which includes background information on jobseekers, details on their participation in Tús, and individual outcomes after participation. Using a methodological approach to correct for selection into the programme, the evaluation shows that Tús has a modest positive impact on jobseekers exiting the unemployment register and a long-lasting positive effect on earnings from employment.

7.1. Introduction

As a policy response to the dramatic increase in the unemployment rate in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), where a large volume of jobseekers registered with Ireland's Public employment service (PES) developed into a large number of long-term unemployment people some years later, a number of new active labour market programmes (ALMPs) were introduced along with a reconfiguration of how employment services would be delivered. Tús, a community work placement scheme offering short-term work opportunities for long-term unemployed people, was one of these measures. Tús was launched in December 2010, became operational in mid-2011 and remains in operation. Up to 5 000 work placements opportunities were initially announced, with an additional 2 500 Tús placements added as part of the 2013 Budget package, in line with the commitments set out in the Action Plan for Jobs (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2012[1]) and Pathways to Work 2013 (Department of Social Protection,, 2013[2]). The counterfactual impact evaluation (CIE) presented in this chapter is the first evaluation of Tús since its introduction in mid-2011.

As is discussed earlier in Chapter 6, research in many countries has shown that despite the (generally) negative findings on public work programmes, for long-term unemployed individuals, the effects are better in some countries and cases (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2018[3]). Among estimates of over 800 separate programmes, recent findings on public employment programmes are relatively rare but the average impacts from ALMP participation for participants entering from long-term unemployment and women are larger.

The evaluation compares participants in Tús between mid-2011 and the end of 2018 with similar individuals who were eligible for selection to Tús during the same period but did not participate. The chapter outlines the choice of the analysis period, the outcomes and the outcome period and the background information available, and the methodology to model participation in Tús and labour market outcomes. After presenting the main results, as well as results for subgroups, the chapter concludes with a discussion of findings.

7.2. The methodology relies on finding a group of jobseekers who are comparable to Tús participants

This section discusses the analytical approach to evaluating Tús and the methodology that is used in the report. It outlines the relevance of the selection and referral process and how the eligibility criteria for Tús influence the methodology.

7.2.1. The differences in scheme characteristics between CE and Tús underpin the variation in empirical approaches

Table 7.1. CE and Tús are similar programmes but have important differences

	CE	Tús
Minimum qualifying duration	12 months	12 months
Random selection for referral	✗	✓
Maximum consecutive duration	3 years	1 year
Jobseeker only	✗	✓
Training component	✓	✗
Sector-specific streams	✓	✗

Inverse probability weighting is the method applied in the Tús evaluation after propensity scores have been generated. Inverse probability weighting retains all units and weights the control group to resemble the treatment observations. The appropriateness in the weighting approach for Tús is that all long-term jobseekers are liable to be referred to Tús through the random referral mechanism. Accordingly, all eligible jobseekers are retained in the sample. In contrast, the matching approach adopted in the Community Employment (CE) evaluation reflects participants' capacity to self-select into the scheme.

7.2.2. Enrolment to Tús is ongoing, with no seasonal pattern

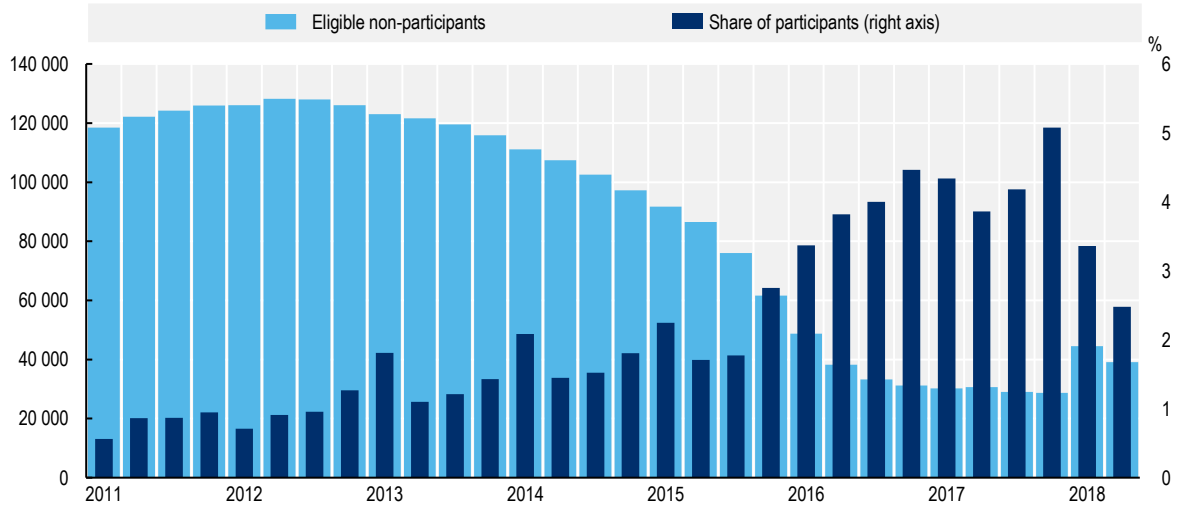
The eligible population consists of those who, from the administrative data available, meet the eligibility criteria for Tús participation (Chapter 3) which is an eligible unemployment spell (and registered on the Live Register) of at least 12 months. Figure 7.1 depicts the number of individuals who were eligible for selection to Tús in each quarter but did not participate in Tús. The rapid decrease from late 2015 is due to

referrals to JobPath as until mid-2018, people who were referred to JobPath could not participate on Tús (or CE, see Chapter 6).

Tús participants make up a small proportion of the eligible population in each quarter with just 1-5% of the eligible population in each quarter starting an episode of Tús. As noted in Chapter 3, Tús participants are defined as those whose episode meets the minimum treatment threshold of 30 days, as is the case with the evaluation of CE.

Figure 7.1. The number of individuals eligible for Tús declines sharply

Eligible non-participants and share of participants for Tús by quarter 2011-18



Note: Only Tús episodes meeting the minimum treatment threshold of 30 days are included in the analysis.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

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7.2.3. Referral to Tús is random but participation is not

As outlined in Chapter 3, jobseekers are randomly selected from the Live Register, Ireland's register of jobseeker claims, and referred to Tús for interview by the Implementing Body (IB). Random selection approximates the conditions for a randomised control trial (RCT), where, on average, both arms of a trial have identical values across relevant variables and so there is no specific selection into the treatment. In an RCT, the treatment variable is disconnected from variables that influence the outcome, with no other avenue for treatment to be connected to outcome. Consequently, any differences in observed outcomes between the treated and the control group can only be due to the treatment.

Even where referral to Tús is random, participation is not. After jobseekers are referred to Tús, they decide whether to participate or not. Their willingness to take up a Tús placement may be due to greater motivation (in which case participants are positively selected with regard to the other eligible jobseekers) or due to greater need of the placement (in which case participants are negatively selected with regard to other eligible jobseekers).

Indeed, the descriptive statistics in Chapter 4 illustrate some differences between Tus participants and other eligible jobseekers across key variables. Given that these differences may correspond to better or worse outcomes, an appropriate methodology is required to account for selection into Tús. This adjustment results in a treatment group (Tús participants starting in a given quarter) and a control group (jobseekers who are eligible but do not start). Comparing the treatment and control groups reveals the impact of the programme.

The "Future Treated" are included in the analysis

In any given quarter, several members of the control group may participate in Tús in the future. The choice of how to account for the future treatment is between excluding all future treated cases from the control group and allowing all future treated cases into the control group. The main results for Tús in this evaluation include the future treated in the control group. The accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[4]) develops further sensitivity analyses in this regard and confirms that the result is not dependent on this choice.

Administrative data underpin the validity of the analysis

All of the analytical work rests upon a set of assumptions about the background data and how Tús participation is represented in the data, which are considered further in the technical report. A key feature of this OECD-EC project is the use of administrative data. Indeed, the availability of rich and comprehensive administrative data is often essential for counterfactual analysis, facilitating a detailed account of people's previous labour market experience. The absence of education data (outside of the subset with

complete values for PEX) is one notable data weakness given the objective of estimating the impact on employment outcomes.

However, the analysis proceeds on the basis that the detailed data on social insurance contributions, jobseeker claims and employment history and the long period it covers are satisfactory to model the effect of Tús participation on outcomes, even in the absence of complete coverage of education levels. The availability of longitudinal data, which allows complex histories to be documented, is critical in meeting the assumptions on which counterfactual analysis is built.

7.2.4. The probability of starting Tús is calculated by quarter

Selection and referral to Tús occurs on an ongoing basis and therefore there is no enrolment period (as there may be with education courses for example). The analytical approach is to assess eligibility for the treatment and control population on a quarterly basis capturing movements in and out of eligibility throughout the analysis period.

As with Chapter 6, the analysis of Tús applies the dynamic selection-on-observables approach to compare people who commence Tús in a quarter to people who are eligible but have not commenced Tús. Given the labour market variability over the period 2011 to 2018, the employment prospects of long-term unemployed people were perhaps different in 2011 to those facing long-term unemployed people in 2018. For this reason, each quarter is treated entirely separately for the purposes of modelling participation in Tús. Only individuals in the same calendar year quarter are compared with each other when allocating probability of participant in Tús in that quarter.

The first step is to model participation in Tús by comparing participants in each quarter between Q3 2011 and Q4 2018 to the set of non-participants in the same quarter. This generates a set of propensity scores, which is a measure of the probability of starting Tús in a given quarter. The status of beginning Tús in a given quarter is a binary outcome and the score that is generated is a continuous measure between 0 and 1, taking into account employment history, including earnings in the calendar years prior to long-term unemployment, unemployment duration, a measure of total duration in receipt of unemployment benefits and, separately, the number of unemployment spells over which this duration accrued. Demographic characteristics such as age, sex,

nationality and location are also included. The output of this exercise is a set of weights generated from the propensity score. These weights are used to ensure the control group is similar to the treatment group on the basis of the probability of each individual starting Tús in a given quarter.

Having generated propensity scores, as is done in Chapter 6, inverse probability weighting is the method applied in the Tús evaluation. Rather than selecting control units to be in the comparison between treatment and control, inverse probability weighting retains all units and weights the control group to resemble the treatment observations. In this sense, the only distinction between the eligible population (described in Chapter 4) and the control group (described here) is the application of weights. The appropriateness for Tús is that, as outlined in Chapter 3, all long-term jobseekers are liable to be referred to Tús. Accordingly, all eligible jobseekers are retained in the sample. In contrast, eligible candidates self-select into Community Employment (CE).

Once each participant and eligible non-participant has been allocated a weight based on the likelihood of starting Tús in a given quarter, the second step is the outcome estimation, using weighted least squares regression. This takes the same “doubly robust” approach as Chapter 6, where the second stage regression also controls for a range of characteristics.

7.2.5. Adjusting for differences between participants and non-participants allows similar individuals to be compared to each other

The re-weighting that is conducted to account for differences in individuals is successful in ensuring that only similar treatment and control individuals are compared to each other. The effectiveness of the re-weighting using propensity scores can be examined by looking at how similar control and treatment groups are in the periods before programme eligibility – for example, by looking at how similar past earnings and unemployment histories are for the treatment and control groups. Doing this for the Tús evaluation confirms that the re-weighting procedures are successful in achieving this similarity (further details of these comparisons are provided in the accompanying technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European

Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[4])). This has two implications. Firstly, it shows that despite random selection for referrals, there is non-random selection into participation, such that participants (the treated) differ systematically from non-participants (the controls). Second, it shows that the evaluation methodology is successfully able to adjust for this non-random selection, such that estimates for Tús impacts can be considered "as good as random" and show causal impacts of Tús participation.

7.2.6. Outcomes are labour-market focussed and, for the early years of Tús, are observed over eight years

Tús resembles in many ways CE in respect of the placement types, and eligible organisations, the increase on the weekly jobseeker payment rate, the social insurance sub-class and the 19.5 hours per week requirement. In contrast to CE, which categorises placements as "activation" or "social inclusion", Tús does not categorise any of its placements as "social inclusion". For that reason, the main outcomes the evaluation of Tús focusses on are labour market outcomes. Annual earnings from employment, weeks of employment and weeks on the unemployment register (the Live Register) are the primary outcomes considered in this chapter. Outcomes are observed until the end of 2021 and include earnings and receipt of jobseeker payments measured at various points after the start of Tús participation, or the point at which jobseekers are eligible for Tús but not participate and form part of the control. This allows for a longer-term view of outcomes, acknowledging that the return to employment from long-term unemployment may not be immediate and that the employment benefits of public works programmes may take time to accrue. For the earliest quarters of Tús participation, in 2011, outcomes are available up to eight years later; for later quarters, those commencing in 2018, only a shorter horizon up to 2021 is available.

7.3. Tús has positive labour market outcomes

This section presents the results from the counterfactual impact evaluation of Tús, looking at the impact of Tús participation on different outcome measures and across different groups of individuals.

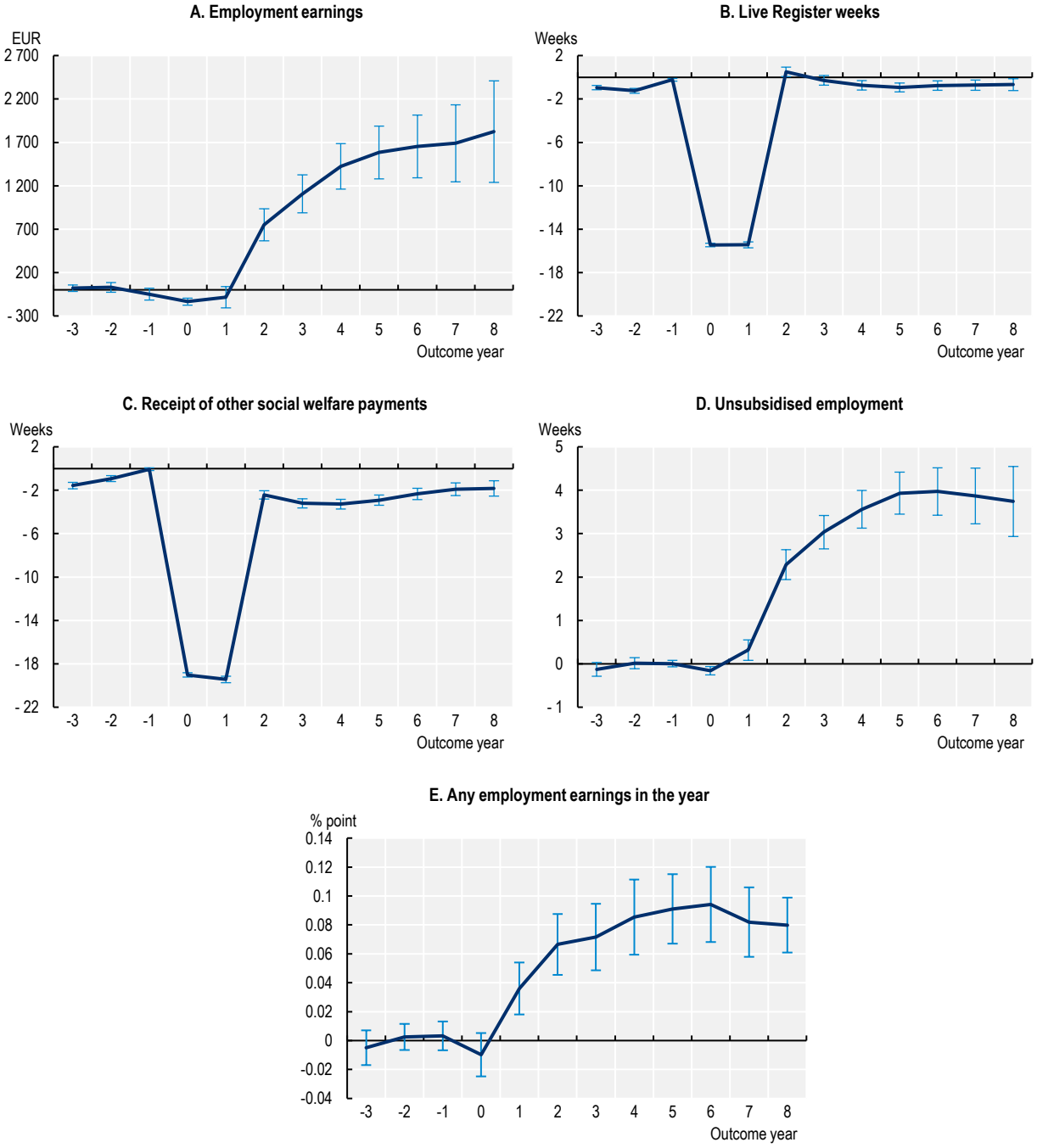
7.3.1. Tús has a small positive and long-lasting effect on earnings

Participation on Tús has a positive impact on earnings from employment in the years following participation (Figure 7.2, Panel A). There is a moderate decline in earnings in the year following participation before the positive effect of Tús participation is reflected in earnings from employment in subsequent years. Earnings of participants continue to rise gradually in the years after Tús participation. Earnings data are available for all participants for at least three years following participation. In the 3rd year after starting Tús, a former participant has, on average, annual earnings from employment that are over EUR 1 100 greater than an eligible non-participant. While earnings information up to eight years after beginning Tús is not available for every participant, for participants from the earlier years of the analysis period, the positive effect on earnings from Tús continues for many years after participation. Former participants experience earnings of approximately EUR 1 600 higher than eligible non-participants in the 7th year after beginning Tús.

Alternative outcome measures, such as weeks in unsubsidised employment, are consistent with this finding. Compared to eligible non-participants, Tús participants spend three weeks per year more in unsubsidised employment three years after participation starts, rising to four weeks more in employment in the 6th year. The binary measure of any earnings from employment in a year tells a similar story. This is the same probability of employment outcome measure as in Chapter 6. In the 3rd year after starting Tús, former participants are 7 percentage points more likely to be in employment at any point in the year.

Figure 7.2. Participation in Tús has a positive impact on earnings and a small impact on returning to unemployment

Impact of Tús on annual earnings, weeks on the Live Register and social welfare, the number weeks of unsubsidised employment, and the likelihood of having any employment earnings



Note: 95% confidence intervals shown on vertical bars. The earnings data for the 8th year outcomes are not available every participant, resulting in a smaller number of observations, which is reflected in the increasing confidence intervals for the 5th-7th years. The count of Live Register weeks is the annual sum of weeks signing for credits, weeks on a casual claim or a core Live Register claim. Data in Panel C includes only primary welfare payments per year.
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/sf1y7g

7.3.2. Tús modestly lowers the likelihood of becoming unemployed

Tús has a more modest impact on returns to the unemployment register. Following participation in Tús, participants spend fewer weeks on the unemployment register. In the 4th year after participation former participants spend one week less on the Live Register than eligible non-participants (Figure 7.2, Panel B). An alternate outcome measurement is the probability of being in employment, measured as the presence or absence of earnings from employment in a given year. This shows an increase in the incidence of employment for Tús participants. This rises to 8 percentage points after four years and remains positive thereafter. This is considered further in the technical report (OECD/Department of Social Protection, Ireland/European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2024[4]).

As illustrated in Figure 7.2, Panel C the reduced presence on unemployment register attributable to Tús is not due to receipt of other benefits provided by DSP. In the years following the start of Tús participation, participants spend fewer weeks in receipt of another welfare payment than eligible non-participants (a difference of approximately three weeks in the 3rd year after participation). Thus, the decrease in unemployment benefit claims is not associated with an increase in other (non-unemployment-related) benefits.

7.3.3. The effects of Tús vary slightly across different groups of participants

While the overall result provides an estimate of the impact of Tús, a key policy question is how the effect is distributed across certain groups. For example, a programme may have a particularly strong or weak effect on particular age groups – which should inform how the intervention should be targeted.

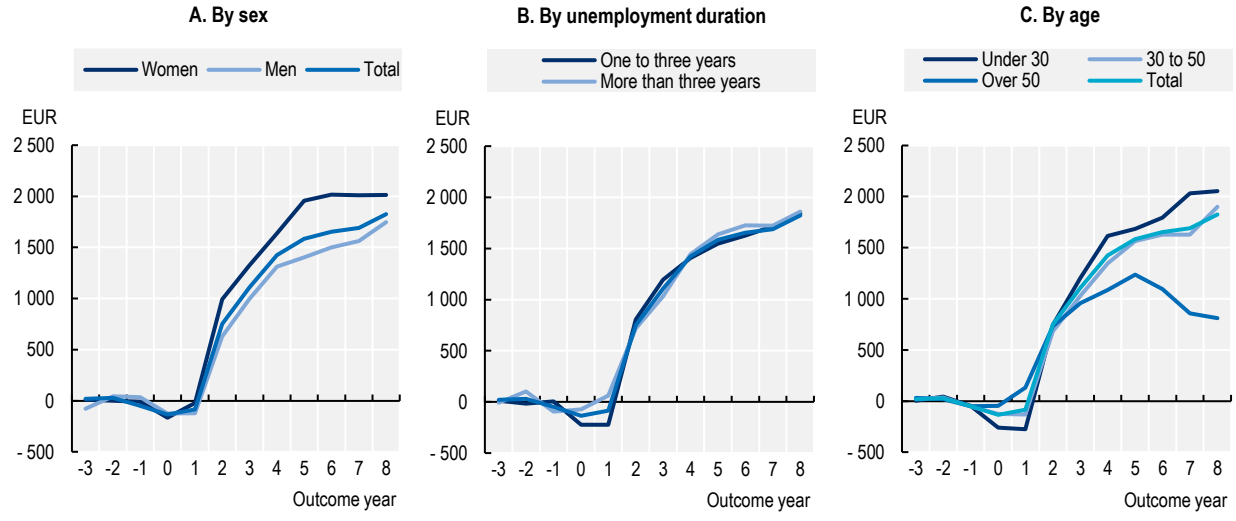
One caveat that should be attached to this is that interpretation is not as straightforward once results are disaggregated by sub-group. Sub-group analysis places the focus solely on the characteristic that differentiates the levels of the sub-group but any difference in outcome is not solely attributable to this. In other words, the fact of being under 30 or female is not necessarily the sole attribute driving better (or worse) results – female Tús participants may also be younger and so the sub-group analyses should not be interpreted in an exclusively causal way.

The impact of Tús varies slightly by gender, with women experiencing a slightly greater boost to their earnings in comparison with men. Figure 7.3, Panel A shows that, compared to the non-participants, women who completed Tús earned approximately EUR 1 300 more in the 3rd year, while men in the same position earned just under EUR 1 000 more than similar men who did not participate in Tús. The result for both genders combined is also included for reference.

The impact of Tús is similar when comparing people with unemployment durations of 1-3 years and those with durations greater than three years. (Figure 7.3, Panel B). When analysed by broad age groups, the youngest cohort experience the greatest boost in earnings following Tús participation. In the 4th year after starting Tús, those in the youngest cohort see a EUR 1 600 increase in earnings from employment whereas 30-50 year-olds see a EUR 1 300 increase. Earnings of participants over 50 years rise by only EUR 1 000 (Figure 7.3, Panel C). The effect is enduring, in particular for the youngest cohort, whose earnings in the 7th year after Tús are almost EUR 2 000 greater than eligible non-participants of the same age.

Figure 7.3 The results differ across groups

Impact of Tús on earnings, by sex, unemployment duration and age



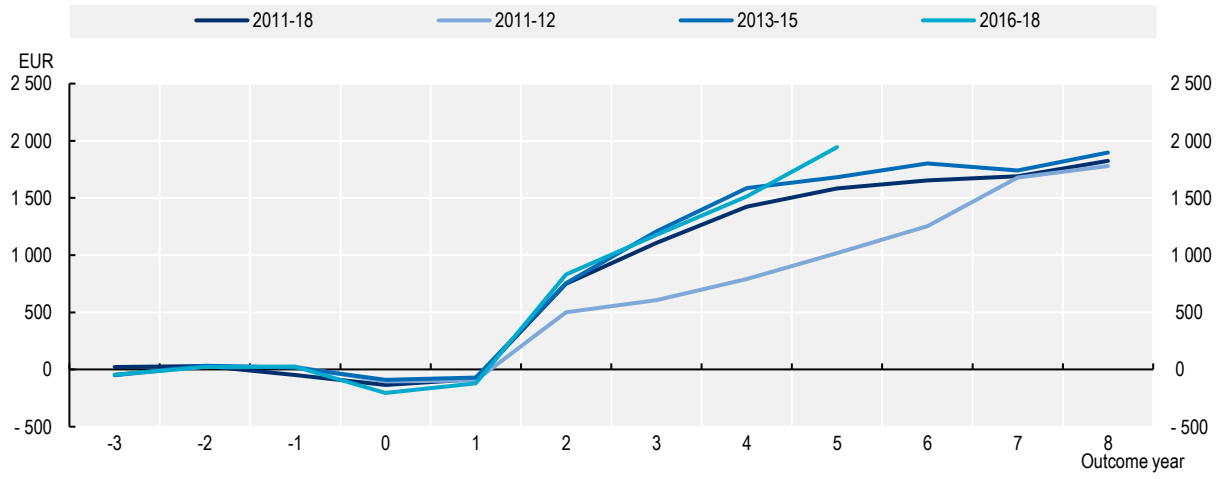
Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/cj94f0

The period in which participants commence Tús is also examined. These are periods of time when labour market conditions varied significantly. As Tús was rolled out, long-term unemployment was on the increase, then peaked in 2014 and declined sharply over the 2016-2018 period (Chapter 2). For this reason, each era is considered separately in Figure 7.4 which shows that the positive impact of Tús is broadly similar across very different labour market conditions. The exception is the 2011-12 period, with a much smaller sample size and when the programme was ramping up, the impact remains positive but occurs more gradually, and remains lower, than in other periods.

Figure 7.4. The impact of Tús is quite similar across years

Impact of Tús on earnings, by year of programme start



Source: Calculations based on Department of Social Protection (DSP) data.

StatLink https://stat.link/2cimal

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter presents evidence of the impact of Tús on the employment prospects of long-term unemployed people. It shows that the programme contributes to increasing the earnings of participants and this effect persists in the long-term.

Over the analysis period 2011-18, eligibility for the Tús programme was restricted to jobseekers (primarily people in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance) who have been unemployed for 12 months. Since 1 July 2022, people claiming Disability Allowance once they are over 18 years of age and unemployed are allowed to participate without

a qualifying period in terms of the duration of benefit receipt. This analysis focusses on the impact of Tús on jobseekers and not cohorts who became eligible more recently.

The findings on Tús hold across the economic cycle. The period under consideration ranges from the peak in the number of registered unemployed (short-term and long-term together) – 470 284 in July 2011 – through to the peak in long-term unemployment in mid-2014 and onwards to the end of 2018 when the number of long-term unemployed people in receipt of unemployment benefits fell below 80 000.

While this analysis is an estimation of the difference Tús makes to the employment prospects of jobseekers, these positive results should also be contextualised by the geographical distribution of Tús schemes, which are predominantly located in less affluent areas. Accordingly, in its provision of services, Tus could have a re-distributive impact (see Chapter 4).

A prerequisite of successfully moving from being unemployed to employment is that the public employment services have a range of programmes from which to choose a suitable progression pathway for each jobseeker. As the evidence base for the effectiveness of ALMPs offered to jobseekers grows, the analysis in this chapter suggests that Tús could be considered as a programme with a positive, albeit small, impact on earnings.

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Connecting People with Jobs

Impact Evaluation of Ireland's Active Labour Market Policies

This report analyses the sequence of labour market support that individuals receive and evaluates two large public works programmes. It uses rich administrative data and finds positive labour market impacts of the Community Employment and Tús employment programmes. Building on the results of the analyses, the report makes recommendations on how Ireland can further adapt its active labour market policies (ALMPs) to better support its current and future jobseekers. This report on Ireland is the thirteenth country study published in a series of reports on policies to connect people with jobs, and is part of a joint project with the European Commission to strengthen countries' capacity to evaluate ALMPs. The report is written jointly by the OECD, the Department of Social Protection of Ireland and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

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