

# Learning with NALA

Profile and experience of  
Learn with NALA users,  
March 2020 - November 2022



# About this report

This report provides an analysis of the profile and experience of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learners who used the Learn with NALA Tutoring Service and Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment between March 2020 and November 2022.

The findings from the research inform recommendations for NALA to further consider in the evolution and enhancement of Learn with NALA.

The views expressed in this report are not necessarily the views of NALA.

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Research conducted by Straightforward Research

NALA wishes to thank the participants in the research who shared their time and insights.

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# Some acronyms, abbreviations and terms explained

## ALL

Adult Literacy for Life, a ten year adult literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy strategy.

## Blended learning

This refers to a mix of different teaching and learning techniques. For example, a blended learning approach can combine face-to-face tuition with computer-based learning.

## C and V

Community and Voluntary.

## CRM system

Customer Relationship Management system.

## CSO

Central Statistics Office.

## ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages.

## ETB

Education and Training Board.

## FET

Further Education and Training.

## **Furthest behind first**

The furthest behind first (principle in the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) recognises that the needs of those with less than a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 4 qualification would be met first. For the furthest behind first, there must be enhanced and targeted opportunities and supports.

## **GDPR**

General Data Protection Regulation.

## **ICT**

Information and communications technology.

## **Learning opportunities**

The range of literacy learning options, such as individual and group tutoring, workplace literacy programmes and distance education.

## **Level (1 - 10) qualification**

One of the 10 levels of qualifications a person can get in Ireland.

## **LMS**

Learning Management System.

## **LWN**

Learn with NALA.

## **Mean**

In maths the mean is the average of a data set, found by adding all numbers together and then dividing the sum of the numbers by the number of numbers.

## **MOOC**

Massive Open Online Course.

## **NALA**

National Adult Literacy Agency.

## **NFQ**

National Framework of Qualifications.

## No.

Number.

## OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

## P.

Page number.

## PIAAC

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

## PLSS

Programme Learner Support System.

## QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

## Recognition of prior learning

A process used to evaluate skills and knowledge acquired outside the classroom to recognise competence against a given set of standards.

## Spiky profile

A 'spiky profile' (NALA 2018) describes when a learner may be at Level 1 or below in one area of skills, but at higher levels in other areas. For example, a learner may have digital literacy skills at Level 3 or above while having Level 1 or below numeracy skills.

## SOLAS

The authority for further education and training.

## SPSS

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

## TS

Tutoring Service.

## VLE

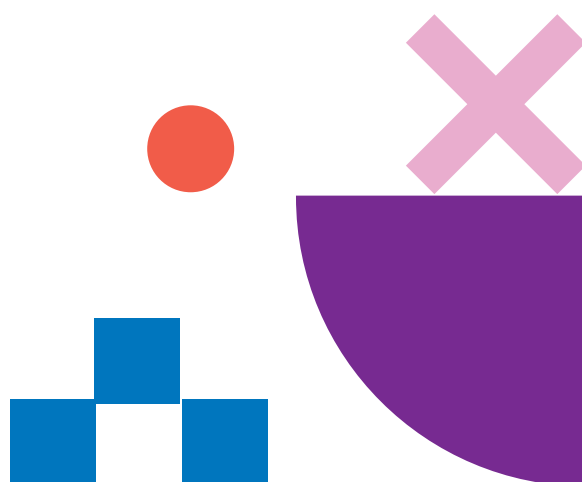
Virtual Learning Environment.

# Executive Summary

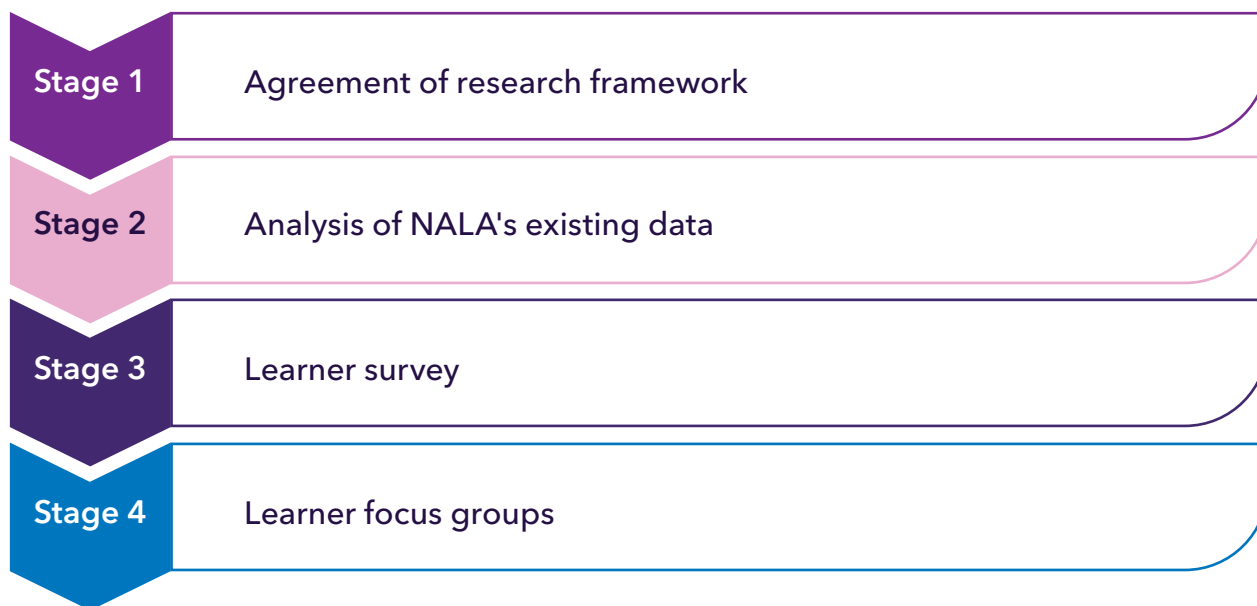
The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) commissioned Straightforward Research to conduct an analysis of the profile and experience of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learners who used the Learn with NALA Tutoring Service and the Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment between March 2020 and November 2022.

## **The three aims of the research were:**

1. To help NALA to better understand adult literacy learners who used Learn with NALA from March 2020, when NALA launched its new Virtual Learning Environment, to end November 2022. The launch coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions in Ireland which created unprecedented challenges for innovation in education.
2. To provide NALA's funders and stakeholders with information on the impact of Learn with NALA on adult literacy learners in Ireland; and
3. To provide NALA with information to inform the future development and promotion of Learn with NALA.



The research methodology had four stages:



The research focused on the following two groups of learners:

1. Learners accessing Learn with NALA's online learning service through the Learn with NALA Learning Management System (LMS). These are referred to as '**online learners**'. There are two types of online learners. The first type are independent learners who are learning online only with support from NALA. The second type are centre learners who are learning online with NALA in a centre registered to use Learn with NALA. These centre learners are supported in their centre by a tutor or a centre staff member.
2. Learners who had engaged in one-to-one personalised over the phone sessions with Learn with NALA's Tutoring service. These are referred to as '**Tutoring Service learners**'.



"NALA helped me because for the small things in my life even to explain to the doctor how I am sick, I can now do this. I can also go out and buy something, or to look for a school for my kids. Everything in life has changed, because of the help I got from NALA."

Learn with NALA learner

## Highlights from the research

A full discussion of the findings can be found in section 5 of the report. A brief overview of key findings is provided below. A discussion of the profile and activity of the online learners is followed by a discussion of the profile and activity of the Tutoring Service learners. Feedback from the learner survey and focus groups is also provided.

### Online learner profiles:



**6,537**

There were 6,537 online learners from 1 March 2020 until 30 November 2022.



**35 - 45**

The highest proportion of learners were within the 35-45 year old age category.



**44%**

44% were 'centre' learners.



**56%**

56% were 'independent' learners.



"For years I was bad in terms of progressing after school. I was very weak in many areas and had to have help. It was quite difficult. My tutors in the ETB has asked me for a couple of months to join NALA and it was very helpful to me."

[Learn with NALA learner](#)

## Online learner activity:



**1,519**

1,519 learners were awarded Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) certificates at Levels 2 and 3.



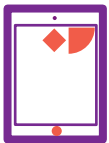
**1,141**

1,141 learners earned certificates of completion by NALA at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3.



**4,563**

4,563 learners received at least one digital badge indicating that they had made progress in their Learn with NALA course.



Similar proportions of learners received digital badges at Level 1 (67%), Level 2 (68%) and Level 3 (69%). A smaller proportion of learners received digital badges at Preparing for Level 3 (45%).

A higher proportion of male learners (57%) than female learners (42%) received digital badges at Level 1 and at Level 3.



## Tutoring Service learner profile:



**1,169**

1,169 learners participated in Learn with NALA's Tutoring Service.



**49**

The average age of learners was 49 years of age.



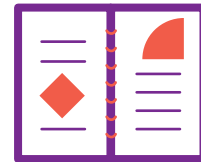
**47%**

47% of learners were early school leavers.



**31%**

31% of learners were migrants.



**23%**

23% of learners were unemployed.



**ETB**

**40%**

40% of learners had previously joined a local literacy service prior to participating in the Tutoring Service.



**75%**

75% of learners indicated that they had access to computers.



**87%**

87% of learners indicated that they had access to broadband.



Self-assessed levels of competence varied across different literacy, numeracy and digital literacy tasks, reflecting the diverse skillsets and 'spiky profiles' (NALA 2018) of learners.

## Tutoring Service learner activity:



# 12,039

There were 12,039 one-to-one learning and assessment sessions between March 2020 and November 2022. This is an average of 10 sessions per learner.



Older learners had more sessions. The average number of sessions for learners over 55 was 15, compared to 7 for those aged 18-24.



Male learners had a higher number of sessions than female learners with 13 sessions on average for men and 9 sessions on average for women.



"NALA are lifesavers for many people throughout Ireland - they are lifesavers for farmers in rural Ireland. They are lifesavers for mums who don't have anything."

Learn with [NALA Centre Tutor](#)

## Learner survey:



**249**

249 learners responded to the survey.



**46%**

46% of respondents indicated that they had a disability.



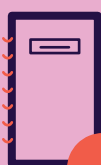
**35% started at Level 1**

The highest proportion of respondents (35%) indicated that their first course with Learn with NALA was at Level 1.



**64% achieved awards**

64% successfully completed their first course receiving either a NALA certificate of completion or a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) certificate.



**46%**

Reading and or writing was the most popular subject area (46%) for first courses.



**64% progressed to another course**

Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) progressed to do another course after they completed their first one with NALA or with another provider.



**85% progressed to another course with NALA**

85% of respondents who chose to do another course following their first course did so with Learn with NALA.



63%

The majority of respondents (63%) heard about the Learn with NALA service online.



57%

The majority of respondents (57%) chose Learn with NALA as they could do it online.

For many respondents, their motivation to learn was:



23%

To attain a qualification.



22%

For career.



22%

For personal development.

The top reasons for not returning to education since leaving school were:



34%

Felt embarrassed.



30%

Didn't know where to go.

### Learner focus group:

Participants in the focus groups expressed the deep and profound impact of using Learn with NALA on their lives in terms of employment, education, personal development, mental health, and community.

They reported positive impact against the following themes:

- ✓ Access and participation
- ✓ Confidence and motivation
- ✓ Skills development
- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Wider benefits

## Key recommendations

A full list of considerations for next steps can be found in section 6. These cover the following themes.



### Strategy

Review the strategy and funding opportunities of NALA's Learn with NALA provision considering this report and the twelve identified vulnerable groups\* for targeted support in the Adult Literacy for Life 10 Year Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).



### Further research

Continue to research Learn with NALA and use findings to inform strategy, programme delivery, support and engagement, user experience (UX) and design, as well as promotional activity.



“The beauty about Learn with NALA is that it is real and authentic. The learning at each level is absolutely correct for what people need, there is no additional material included as you would get in a school curriculum - it is real and what people need.”

**Learn with NALA Centre Tutor**

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\* **Potential vulnerable cohorts for funding (SOLAS 2021a p. 59):** Older Adults (55+), Members of the Traveller Community, Persons with Disabilities, Low-paid Workers, Carers, One-parent households, Incarcerated Persons and Ex-Offenders, Persons Recovering from Addiction, Long-term Unemployed, Migrants, International Protection Applicants, People with Language Needs.



## Programme delivery and supports

Review programme delivery and supports for both the Learn with NALA Tutoring Service and the Virtual Learning Environment considering the findings in the report, relevant research and developments in national strategy.



## Promotion

Create targeted promotion strategies for both Learn with NALA provision informed by this report, relevant research and developments in national strategy.



## Systems

Update NALA systems and data collection to enable improved understanding of learner journeys, support and engagement as well as to demonstrate achievement against the priorities in the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).



"It has gave me great confidence and I work on it through the iPad. I just felt it was something I was doing for myself as I fell through the cracks in school and probably at home as well. I really did enjoy it and got so much from it."

**Learn with NALA learner**

# 1. Background and Introduction

## 1.1 About the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

NALA is a registered charity and membership-based organisation. We are committed to ensuring that people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can fully take part in society.

According to the last international literacy survey, **Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies**, one in six adults in Ireland has an unmet literacy need. One in four adults has an unmet numeracy need and one in two people has an unmet digital skills need (Central Statistics Office 2013).

These unmet needs have devastating consequences for individuals, communities and the economy. People at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels earn less income, have poorer health and are more likely to be unemployed.

Since we were set up by volunteers in 1980, we have been a leading campaigning and lobbying force on adult literacy issues. We have been involved in national policy, tutor training and teaching resources, research and campaigns to support people with these unmet needs. See [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie) and **NALA 1980-2020 - a living history** (NALA 2022a) for more information.

## 1.2 NALA as a provider

Since 2000, NALA has provided direct educational support to adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs in Ireland. Provision was initially in the form of a one-to-one over the phone and distance learning course. In the 24 years since, support has been delivered through a variety of media including printed workbooks, national radio and television series ('Written Off'), and an online learning website ('Write On'). All of these offerings were complemented by one-to-one over the phone support. For more see NALA's **Leading the way in online learning** (NALA 2022b) report.



"Despite this continuous change and considerable recognition, the Distance Learning Service (DLS) ethos remained and still remains as one that is learner-centred and dedicated to making free, high quality literacy learning experiences available to those who want them."

**'Leading the way in online learning' report**

In 2020, NALA launched its new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which is made up of a website **learnwithnala.ie**, where learners can get information on their options and register for courses; and a Learning Management System (LMS) **learn.nala.ie**, where registered learners can take their online courses and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for data management and reporting. Learn with NALA is a sub-brand of NALA which represents its work in providing direct educational supports to adult literacy learners, adult literacy practitioners and other professionals.



Through Learn with NALA, NALA offers the following services:

## 1) Learn with NALA Tutoring Service

A one-to-one personalised over the phone Tutoring Service for adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

## 2) Learn with NALA online learning service

Online courses in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy at Levels 1 to 3 on Ireland's **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**. Courses at Level 2 and 3 lead to **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** national awards. Adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs register for courses on [www.learnwithnala.ie](http://www.learnwithnala.ie) and either:

- a. learn independently online on the Learn with NALA Learning Management System (LMS) with the option of one-to-one personalised support with Learn with NALA's Tutoring Service; or
- b. take the courses on the Learning Management System in a **blended learning** context through registered Learn with NALA centres. Centres provide learners with support with enrolment and support in their online learning.

The screenshot shows the Learn with NALA Learning Management System (LMS) Learner Dashboard. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for home, help, my progress, and awards. Below this is a large banner with the NALA logo and the text 'National Adult Literacy Agency' and 'Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh'. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, there is a 'My Courses' section with a grid of course cards. Each card includes a course title, level, and a list of modules. The courses listed are: 'Computer skills Level 1' (P1GL0 L1 M1I11 D), 'Preparing for Level 3 Numbers' (LEVEL25 L25 NUMBERS D), 'Preparing for Level 3 Reading' (LEVEL25 L25 READING D), 'Personal decision making Level 2' (P2GL0 L2 M2L12 D), 'Listening and speaking Level 2' (P2GL0 L2 M2C03 D), 'Writing Level 2' (P2GL0 L2 M2C02 D), 'Reading Level 2' (P2GL0 L2 M2C01 D), 'Pattern and relationship Level 2' (P2GL0 L2 M2N06 D), and 'Quantity and number Level 2' (P2GL0 L2 M2N05 D). On the right, there is a 'Welcome to Learn with NALA' section with a dropdown arrow, a message 'Press the button below to open the getting started guide.', and a 'Getting started guide' button. Below this is a 'Need help?' section with a circular icon containing a plus sign and a 'Need help?' button. At the bottom right, there is contact information: 'Call us for free on: 1 800 20 20 80', 'Email: learn@nala.ie', and 'Use this online form to report an issue to the Learn with NALA team.'

Learn with NALA Learning  
Management System  
Learner Dashboard

Learners have the option of taking courses aligned at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 1, 2, 3 and Preparing for Level 3 in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Courses at Level 2 and 3 are accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Courses at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3 are unaccredited. Learners receive a NALA Certificate of Completion for successful completion of courses in these two levels.

Both groups of learners are supported through a dedicated Learn with NALA Services Team who provide information, advice, resources, technical support and tuition through a helpline, email and post. Additional resources from NALA's library of resources are made available to learners through this support team. These include worksheets, videos and workbooks.

### 3) Learn with NALA Professional Development

Independent online learning courses for adult literacy tutors to support their practice as well as for professionals who provide services to adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs.

## 1.3 Goal of this report

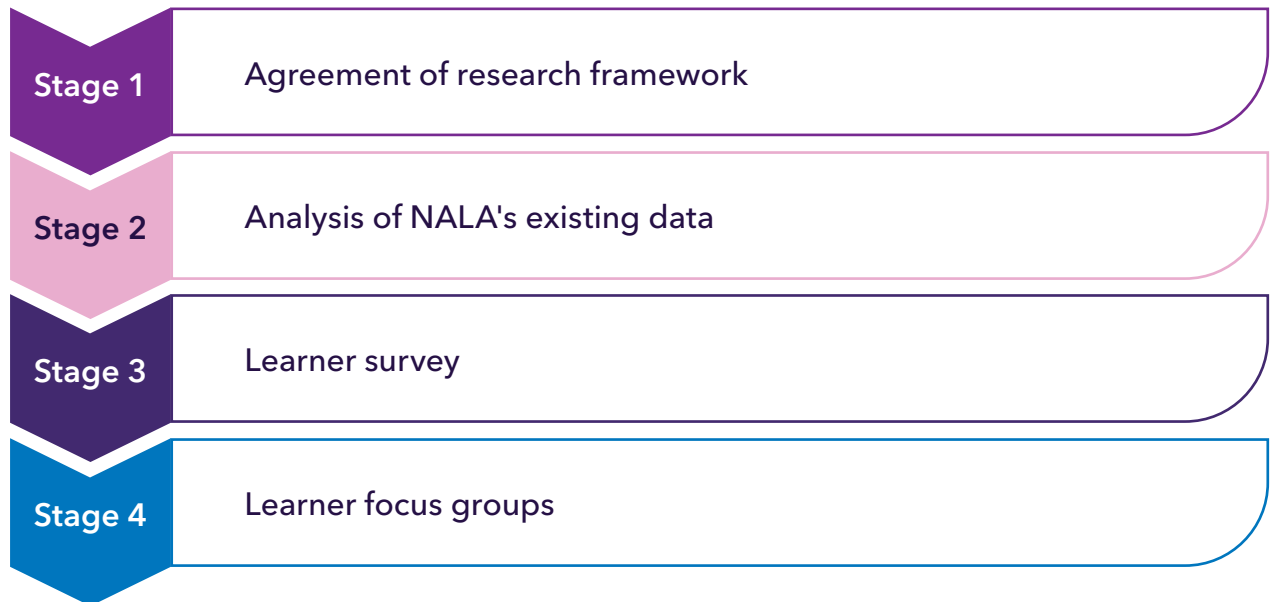
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1. To help NALA to better understand adult literacy learners who used Learn with NALA from March 2020, when NALA launched its new Virtual Learning Environment, to end November 2022. The launch coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions in Ireland which created unprecedented challenges for innovation in education.
2. To provide NALA's funders and stakeholders with information on the impact of Learn with NALA on adult literacy learners in Ireland; and
3. To provide NALA with information to inform the future development and promotion of Learn with NALA.

# 2. Methodology

The following four stages were applied to this research assignment:



## Stage 1 - Agreement of research framework

NALA and Straightforward Research agreed a consultation framework and research parameters based on the invitation to tender document. It was agreed to focus on the below.

- Quantitative data on learners who had engaged in one-to-one personalised over the phone sessions with the Learn with NALA Tutoring Service. This information was extracted by NALA from its Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- Quantitative data on learners who had engaged in online learning through the Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment. This information was extracted by NALA from both its Course Merchant CRM system and its Desire2Learn (D2L) Brightspace Learning Management System (LMS).
- Qualitative data from a survey of learners and follow-up focus groups of learners.

## Stage 2 – Analysis of NALA’s existing data

Data files were made available for analysis following an initial meeting between Straightforward Research and NALA. The following anonymised data sets for the period 1 March 2020 to 30 November 2022 were provided:

Files	Data content
Learn with NALA online learner profile data	Demographic information on all learners who were registered on the Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment during the research period. For example their age, gender, and so on.
Virtual Learning Environment digital badges and certificates issued to learners	Data on 4,563 unique learners with 89,245 badges and 3,295 Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3 certificates issued.
Online learner QQI Award outcomes	Data on 2,430 unique learners who made 1,519 successful and 1,583 unsuccessful QQI attempts.
Tutoring Service learner data	Data on 1,169 unique learners enrolled.

Table 1 Data analysed from NALA's existing data sources

## Stage 3 - Learner survey

A learner survey was designed by Straightforward Research in consultation with NALA.

The following areas were the focus of the survey:

- Who uses Learn with NALA?
- Why do they use Learn with NALA?
- How do they use Learn with NALA?
- When do they use Learn with NALA?
- How does using Learn with NALA impact their learning?
- What other supports would have been helpful to their learning?
- How has using NALA's learning services impacted their lives?

The survey was hosted on **Typeform**, an online survey platform. The survey was designed and tested with a number of learners in advance of issuing to ensure it was accessible and appropriate.

NALA invited 2,601 online learners by email to respond to the survey. The email was sent on 9 February 2023 and the deadline for completing the survey was 3 March 2023. In that period, 108 learners had sessions on the Tutoring Service and were offered the opportunity to complete the survey with their tutor over the phone. There were a total of 249 responses, indicating a response rate of 9%.

After potential participants were contacted about the focus groups (see Stage 4 below) and survey data was exported from Typeform to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), personally identifying information was deleted to ensure confidentiality.

## Stage 4 - Learner focus groups

A "consent to be contacted" question was included in the Learn with NALA survey. It noted if learners were happy to be contacted to discuss their experience of Learn with NALA they would be invited to a focus group.

As a result, 14 learners and 1 tutor attended two focus groups in March 2023. Draft findings of the survey were presented to learners and facilitated discussion on the findings and the learners' experience of the Virtual Learning Environment. Storyboarding techniques were used to capture case studies of the impact of Learn with NALA on learners.

# 3. Analysis of NALA's existing data

## 3.1 Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment

This section provides a high-level analysis of demographic data captured for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learners who registered for online courses on the Virtual Learning Environment between 1 March 2020 and 30 November 2022.

Online learners register for courses on Learn with NALA's website, [www.learnwithnala.ie](http://www.learnwithnala.ie) and take their courses on Learn with NALA's Learning Management System (LMS) which is accessed through the <https://learn.nala.ie> website.

The data provides an insight into:

- the learners enrolled with the Virtual Learning Environment;
- those who progressed to receive digital badges; and
- those who achieved certificates of completion or accredited awards.

## 3.1.1 Online learner profiles

### 3.1.1.1 Online learner age

The table below highlights the age profile of enrolled online learners:

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent*
<b>Under 18</b>	433	6%	8%
<b>18 - 24</b>	1,218	19%	21%
<b>25 - 34</b>	983	15%	17%
<b>35 - 45</b>	1,342	20%	23%
<b>46 - 54</b>	857	13%	15%
<b>55 - 64</b>	630	10%	11%
<b>Over 65</b>	299	5%	5%
<b>Valid Total</b>	<b>5,762</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	775	12%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,537</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 2 Online learner age profile

Table 2 shows that 18-45 year-olds make up the majority of learners using the Virtual Learning Environment (61%) with the 35-45 age category having the highest proportion of learners (23%). This is expected since, anecdotally, people aged 18-45 have access to and capacity for digital learning and may not have time to avail of traditional learning opportunities. This finding indicates that NALA's promotional activity of the Virtual Learning Environment as a flexible service that busy adult learners can take in their own time at their own pace is working well. It is engaging learners who may not otherwise be able to return to education due to work, family, other commitments and constraints.

The **Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy** (SOLAS 2020) sets a priority for the number of lifelong learners aged 25-64. 66% of online learners within the study period were within this FET age category. 16% of learners were in the **Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy's** (SOLAS 2021a) priority target age range of 55 and over.

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\* Throughout this report, the column labelled 'Percent' lists the actual percentages of the total sample. 'Valid Percent' is the percentage when missing data is excluded from calculations.

### 3.1.1.2 Online learner gender

The table below provides the gender of learners who enrolled on the Virtual Learning Environment throughout this timeframe:

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Female	3,510	54%	54%
Male	2,906	44%	45%
Other	5	0.08%	0.1%
Prefer not to say	28	0.4%	0.4%
Valid Total	<b>6,449</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unknown	88	1%	
Total	<b>6,537</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 3 Online learner gender profile

More women (54%) than men (45%) are registering on the Virtual Learning Environment. This is less of a gender imbalance than is found in FET enrolments overall in Ireland, which were 62% female in 2022 (SOLAS 2023).

While people of other genders are a small minority (0.01%) of online learners, it is important to note that they are also part of the learner community.



### 3.1.1.3 Online learner type

As outlined in section 1.2, adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs either:

- Learn independently with the option of one-to-one personalised support with Learn with NALA's Tutoring Service. These learners are classified as 'independent learners'
- Take the courses in a blended learning context through registered Learn with NALA centres. These learners are classified as 'centre learners'.

	Number	Percent
<b>Independent Learner</b>	3,640	56%
<b>Centre Learner</b>	2,897	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,537</b>	

Table 4 Online learner type

More independent learners registered as online learners (56%) in the period than centre learners (44%).

This is expected since the new Virtual Learning Environment was launched at the onset of COVID-19 and NALA mainly promotes the Virtual Learning Environment to independent learners who have an unmet literacy, numeracy or digital literacy need and are not already receiving support. NALA also offers the Virtual Learning Environment as a resource for use in a blended learning context in centres. Since there are over 250 registered Learn with NALA centres, it is expected that learners in centres would also make up a significant proportion of learners using the Virtual Learning Environment.

The finding indicates that NALA is reaching its independent learner target audience through promotional activity.

Separate analysis of learner type found that almost half (49%) of centre learners are in Education and Training Board (ETB) centres. The other half (51%) are in Community and Voluntary (C and V) centres. C and V centres work with marginalised groups and provide a variety of services, including educational services. ETBs, on the other hand, are statutory education authorities with responsibility for education and training and youth work. For more information visit the [etbi.ie/etbs](https://etbi.ie/etbs) website.

### 3.1.1.4 Online learner level

As outlined in section 1.2, online learners have the option of taking courses at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 1, 2, 3 and Preparing for Level 3 in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Courses at Level 2 and 3 are accredited by QQI. Courses at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3 are unaccredited.

The table below highlights the number and percentage of learners at each level, overall and broken down by learner type (centre or independent).

	Total		Centre Learner		Independent Learner	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Level 1</b>	1,555	23.8%	691	23.9%	864	23.7%
<b>Level 2</b>	1,786	27.3%	801	27.6%	985	27.1%
<b>Preparing for Level 3</b>	203	3.1%	88	3%	115	3.2%
<b>Level 3</b>	2,866	43.8%	1,257	43.4%	1,609	44.2%
<b>Unknown</b>	127	1.9%	60	2.1%	67	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,537</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,897</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 Online learners by level and type

The most popular course level is Level 3 (44% of online learners) and the least popular course level is Preparing for Level 3 (3% of online learners). There is very little difference in the popularity of different course levels between centre and independent learners.

Level 2 courses are the second most popular with 27% of enrolments, followed by Level 1 with 24%. The enrolment rate for Preparing for Level 3 courses is low at 3%. It is an expected finding that Level 3 courses are the most popular courses since many adult learners returning to education already have Level 1 and or Level 2 skills in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. This finding also indicates that adult literacy learners with Level 2 skills are able to successfully register for and use the Virtual Learning Environment independently or in a supported environment.

There is little difference in enrolment rates between independent learners and centre learners. It is unexpected that the enrolment rate for courses at Level 1 is the same for both centre learners and independent learners (24%). This indicates that adult literacy learners with Level 1 skills or below can use the Virtual Learning Environment independently or in a supported environment. Some independent learners may be receiving support from a family or community member. This finding also reinforces the idea of the 'spiky profile' (NALA 2018) of adult literacy learners which means that a learner may be at Level 1 or below in one area of skills, but at higher levels in other areas. For example, a learner may have digital literacy skills at Level 3 or above while having Level 1 or below numeracy skills.

The Level 1 course registration rate (24%) is higher than expected since these unaccredited courses became available after Level 2 and 3 courses. The finding suggests that there would be strong interest in an accredited option for courses at Level 1.

The registration rate for Preparing for Level 3 courses is lower than expected (3%). These unaccredited courses were the last to become available on the Virtual Learning Environment as a support to learners wishing to progress from Level 2 to Level 3. It was expected that the rate would be lower than other levels but not this low.

### 3.1.1.5 Online learner location

Throughout this report we will examine the geographic spread of learners and the extent to which NALA has been able to reach learners throughout Ireland. The table below shows the county of location of online learners:

	Total		Percent of Ireland population	Variance from population (percentage points)
	Number	Percent		
Dublin	1,492	23%	28%	-5
Galway	703	11%	4%	+7
Cork	509	8%	11%	-3
Tipperary	398	6%	3%	+3
Kerry	270	4%	3%	+1
Limerick	269	4%	4%	0
Waterford	260	4%	2%	+2
Kilkenny	223	3%	2%	+1
Wexford	208	3%	3%	0
Kildare	206	3%	5%	-2
Meath	195	3%	4%	-1
Louth	184	3%	3%	0
Donegal	140	2%	3%	-1
Wicklow	134	2%	3%	-1
Westmeath	126	2%	2%	0
Roscommon	123	2%	1%	+1
Carlow	114	2%	1%	+1
Clare	112	2%	2%	0
Mayo	99	2%	3%	-1
Laois	95	2%	2%	0
Longford	89	1%	1%	0
Monaghan	78	1%	1%	0
Leitrim	76	1%	1%	0
Offaly	66	1%	2%	-1
Sligo	64	1%	1%	0
Cavan	63	1%	2%	-1
<b>Valid Total</b>	<b>6,409</b>	<b>96%</b>		
Outside Ireland (26 counties)	113	2%		
Unknown	128	2%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,537</b>	<b>100%</b>		

Table 6 Online learner county of residence

There is a broad spread of learners across Ireland, largely aligned with population statistics.

Almost half (48%) of learners using the Virtual Learning Environment are located in the four counties of Dublin, Galway, Cork and Tipperary.

There are higher numbers of online learners in Galway and Tipperary than expected against population statistics. This is not surprising because there are strong concentrations of Learn with NALA registered centres in these two locations.

The findings indicate that promotion across Ireland is reaching adult learners across the country.

A number (2%) of online learners were also located outside the Republic of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, Britain, the United States and northern African countries.

## 3.1.2 Return after first login

This section deals with the number of learners who returned to Virtual Learning Environment after their first registration and login. This means that once logged in to the Virtual Learning Environment, they accessed the Virtual Learning Environment again at least once after the date on which they first logged in.

### 3.1.2.1 Return after first login by learner type

	Total		Centre Learner		Independent Learner	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Returned</b>	4,330	<b>66%</b>	1,901	66%	2,429	67%
<b>Did not return</b>	2,080	<b>32%</b>	936	32%	1,144	31%
<b>Unknown</b>	127	<b>2%</b>	60	2%	67	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,537</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,897</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 Online learner progress past login

32% of registered learners did not log in again after their first visit (registration and login) to the Virtual Learning Environment. Since the Virtual Learning Environment is a free service, some drop-off after registration is expected. Many learners may simply be curious about what is on offer. Others may decide once they have signed up and seen the offering, that it is not suitable to their needs. Equally, a learner may register for a course and complete it or they get what they need from the Virtual Learning Environment in one login.

Interestingly, there is little difference between the drop-off rates of centre learners (32%) and independent learners (31%). This is an unexpected finding. Learners in a centre have in-person support available to advise, support and motivate them to chose a learning opportunity and to engage with their learning. Independent learners do not necessarily have in-person support available to them but can reach out to NALA for support. The finding suggests that availability of in-person support is not necessarily a factor in the likelihood of a learner returning to the Virtual Learning Environment after their first login.

### 3.1.2.2 Return after first login by level

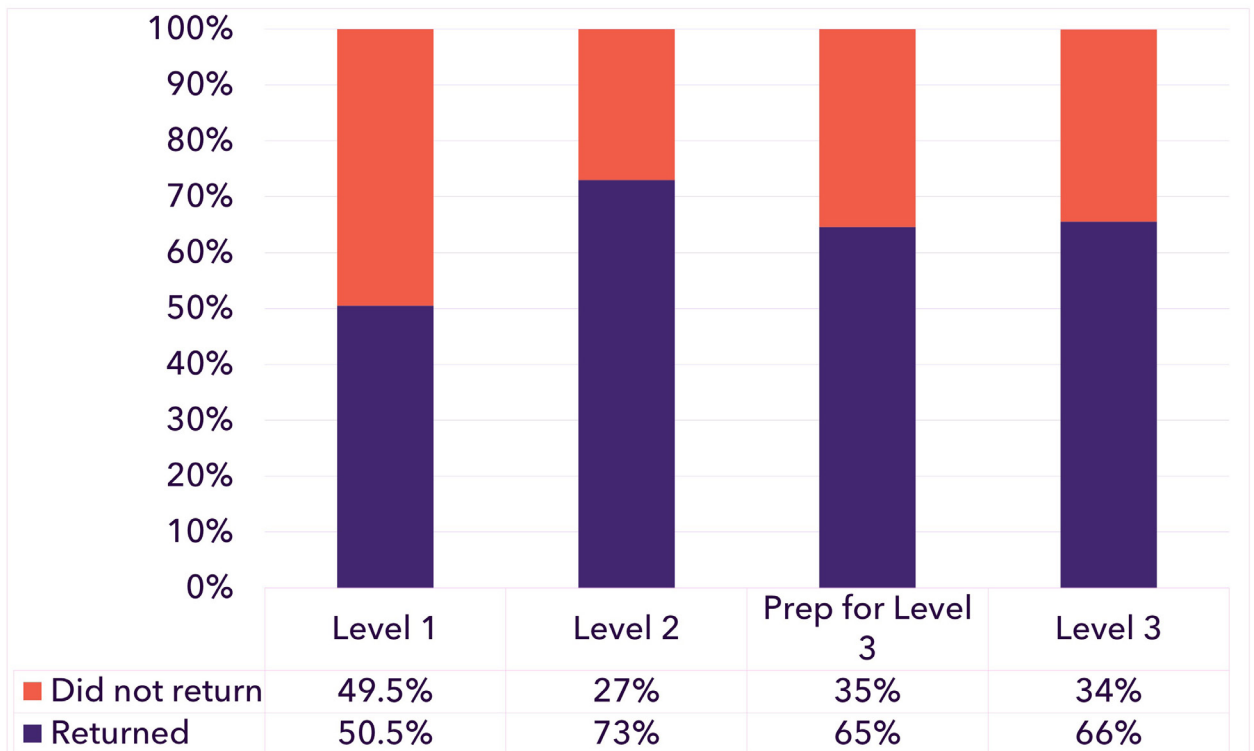


Figure 1 Online learner return after first login, by course level

This chart shows the percentage of learners who returned and did not return after their first login, for each course level.

The biggest drop-off happens with learners in Level 1 courses (50%). This is expected particularly with independent learners who may not have the support they need to continue.

The second biggest drop-off happens with learners in Level 3 courses (35%). This is expected since Level 3 courses are longer and have more assessment requirements than the other levels. Learners may decide that completing a Level 3 course is too much of an undertaking and they cannot commit.

### 3.1.2.3 Return after first login by course

The table below presents the proportion of logins after the first login date for each course. This data was extracted from the 33,494 records on file. This means that a learner registered for a course returned to that same course at least once after the day that they first logged in. This table is sorted by level and subject area.

Level	Subject area	Course	Returned		Did not return		Total No.
			No.	%	No.	%	
Level 1	Technology	Data Handling	360	93%	28	7%	388
		Using Technology	378	91.5%	35	8.5%	413
		Computer Skills	805	82%	177	18%	982
		Total	1,543	87%	240	13%	1783
Level 1	Maths	Quantity and Number	371	93%	29	7%	400
		Pattern and Relationship	331	92%	28	8%	359
		Problem-Solving	309	91%	29	9%	338
		Shape and Space	500	88%	68	12%	568
		Total	1,511	91%	154	9%	1665
Level 1	Reading and writing	Writing	481	84%	92	16%	573
		Reading	735	80%	182	20%	917
		Listening and Speaking	582	80%	149	20%	731
		Total	1,798	81%	423	19%	2,221
Level 1	Personal development	Personal Decision-Making	448	91%	42	9%	490
		Setting Learning Goals	282	90%	31	10%	313
		Total	730	91%	73	9%	803

Table 8 Online learner return after first login by course



Level	Subject area	Course	Returned		Did not return		Total
			No.	%	No.	%	No.
Level 2	Technology	Computer Skills	461	<b>93.5%</b>	32	<b>6.5%</b>	492
		Using Technology	1,715	<b>81%</b>	410	<b>19%</b>	2,125
		Data Handling	184	<b>33%</b>	6	<b>67%</b>	190
		Total	2,360	<b>84%</b>	448	<b>16%</b>	2,807
Level 2	Maths	Shape and Space	158	<b>99%</b>	2	<b>1%</b>	160
		Quantitative Problem-Solving	170	<b>94%</b>	10	<b>6%</b>	180
		Quantity and Number	638	<b>86%</b>	102	<b>14%</b>	740
		Pattern and Relationship	1,634	<b>81%</b>	394	<b>19%</b>	2,028
		Total	2,600	<b>84%</b>	508	<b>16%</b>	3,108
Level 2	Reading and writing	Listening and Speaking	1,483	<b>80%</b>	364	<b>20%</b>	1,847
		Writing	1,687	<b>79%</b>	458	<b>21%</b>	2,145
		Reading	1,834	<b>77%</b>	541	<b>23%</b>	2,375
		Total	5,004	<b>79%</b>	1,363	<b>21%</b>	6,367
Level 2	Personal development	Setting Learning Goals	390	<b>91%</b>	38	<b>9%</b>	428
		Personal Decision-Making	1,503	<b>82%</b>	323	<b>18%</b>	1,827
		Total	1,893	<b>84%</b>	361	<b>16%</b>	2,255

Table 8 Online learner return after first login by course continued

Level	Subject area	Course	Returned		Did not return		Total
			No.	%	No.	%	No.
Preparing for Level 3	Maths	Numbers	232	<b>90%</b>	27	<b>10%</b>	259
		Algebra	207	<b>88%</b>	29	<b>12%</b>	236
		Problem-Solving	191	<b>87%</b>	28	<b>13%</b>	219
		Measurement	448	<b>85%</b>	77	<b>15%</b>	525
		Total	1,078	<b>87%</b>	161	<b>13%</b>	1,239
Preparing for Level 3	Reading and writing	Reading	291	<b>88%</b>	38	<b>12%</b>	329
		Writing	234	<b>88%</b>	32	<b>12%</b>	266
		Total	525	<b>88%</b>	70	<b>12%</b>	595
Preparing for Level 3	Personal development	Personal Skills	226	<b>89%</b>	26	<b>10%</b>	252

Table 8 Online learner return after first login by course continued

Level	Subject area	Course	Returned		Did not return		Total
			No.	%	No.	%	No.
Level 3	Technology	Internet Skills	949	86%	156	14%	1,105
		Digital Media	549	85%	94	15%	643
		Computer Literacy	1,127	85%	202	15%	1,329
		Total	2,625	85%	452	15%	3,077
Level 3	Maths	Managing Personal Finances	1	100%	0	0%	1
		Application of Number	230	85%	42	15%	272
		Functional Mathematics	410	82%	88	18%	498
		Mathematics	1,296	81.5%	295	18.5%	1,591
		Total	1,937	82%	425	18%	2,362
Level 3	Reading and writing	Communications	1,224	83.5%	241	16.5%	1465
Level 3	Personal development	Self-Advocacy	103	89%	13	11%	116
		Personal and Interpersonal Skills	546	87%	79	13%	625
		Career Preparation	1,083	85%	186	15%	1,269
		Personal Effectiveness	1,252	84%	233	16%	1,485
		Total	2,984	85%	511	15%	3,495

Table 8 Online learner return after first login by course continued

At Level 1, learners were most likely to return after their first visit to one of the Maths or Personal Development courses. Both of these subject areas had 91% return rates on average. The most popular course to return to was Data Handling or Quantity and Number (both 93%). Learners were least likely to return to the subject area of Reading and Writing (81%), specifically the courses on Reading and Listening and Speaking (both 80%).

At Level 2, learners were least likely to return to courses in Reading and Writing (79% average return rate) and equally likely to return to courses in any of the other three subject areas (all 84%). The highest return rate of any course at Level 2 was Shape and Space (99%) and the lowest was Data Handling (33%), by far the lowest return rate for any course. More investigation into the low return rates for the Level 2 Data Handling course is required.

At Preparing for Level 3, there are no Technology courses and just one Personal Development course (Personal Skills - 89% return rate). The return rates for Maths courses (87%) and Reading and Writing courses (88%) at this level are very similar.

At Level 3, return rates by subject area are very similar. The rates were 82% in Maths and 85% in Technology and in Personal Development. Excluding Managing Personal Finances which only had one registered learner, the most popular Level 3 course to return was Self-Advocacy (89%) and the least popular was Mathematics (81.5%).

Overall, return rates are high, ranging from 77% to 99%, apart from the outlier of Level 2 Data Handling (33%). It appears that Maths courses have the highest return rates at Levels 1 and 2, but the lowest return rates at Level 3. This analysis should be treated with caution as the numbers registered for each course vary significantly and the percentage differences between courses and subject areas are not very large.

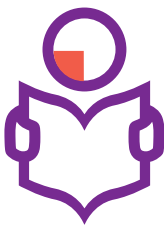
### 3.1.3 Digital badges

Each course on the Virtual Learning Environment has a number of learning outcomes. A learner taking an online course on the Virtual Learning Environment receives a digital badge once they have completed content for a learning outcome.

A learner may receive a digital badge for a learning outcome on the first day of registration and login if they successfully complete content for a learning outcome. Receipt of a digital badge represents progress in a course.

Data was extracted by NALA from the Virtual Learning Environment outlining the number of digital badges issued to learners. This data represents 4,563 unique learners who received badges for progression through various components of their chosen course. This means that 70% of those who registered on the Virtual Learning Environment (6,537 learners, see section 3.1) achieved at least one digital badge.

In some tables below, for example Table 9, the number of learners at each level is counted. This means that some learners are counted more than once because they are registered on courses at different levels. This is why the total number of learners across all levels in these tables is more than 4,563.



#### Progressed

- 4,563 learners
- 70% of those who enrolled

### 3.1.3.1 Digital badges issued by level

The table below shows the number of digital badges issued to online learners by level:

	Learners who achieved badges	Percent of badge recipients	Total number of badges achieved	Percent of badges
<b>Level 1</b>	1,683	25%	15,038	17%
<b>Level 2</b>	2,664	39%	30,619	34%
<b>Prep for Level 3</b>	390	6%	2,860	3%
<b>Level 3</b>	2,032	30%	40,716	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,769</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>89,233</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 Online learner badge achievement by level

This table shows that the highest proportion of learners who achieved badges were on Level 2 courses (39%), while just 6% of learners who achieved badges were on Preparing for Level 3 courses. However, considering that just 3% of registered learners were taking Preparing for Level 3 courses (see Table 5), this is actually a high rate of learners achieving at least one badge at Preparing for Level 3. On the other hand, Level 3 is the level with the most registered learners (44%) so the fact that just 30% of those who achieved at least one badge were on Level 3 courses suggests some drop-off at this level.

### 3.1.3.2 Gender of digital badge recipients

The chart below illustrates the gender profile of learners achieving digital badges at various levels of courses. It is based on 4,563 unique learners.

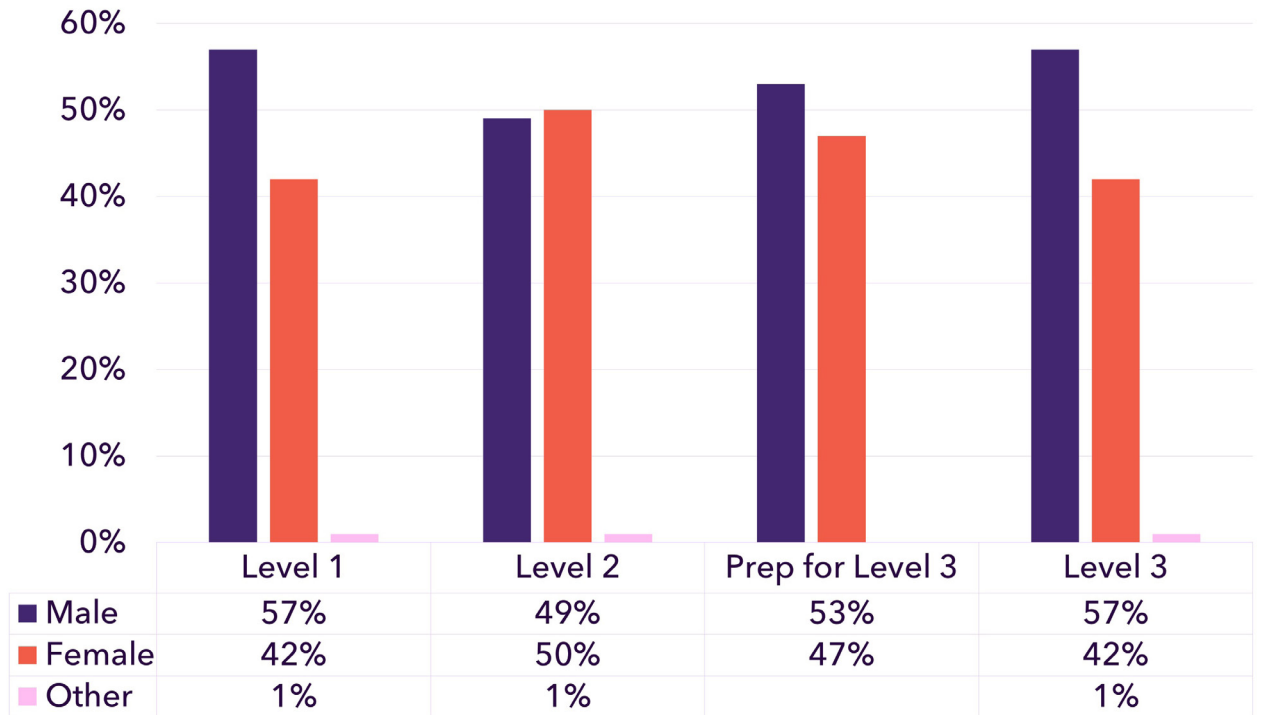


Figure 2 Gender profile of badge recipients by level

The chart illustrates a higher proportion of male participants at Levels 1 and 3.

### 3.1.3.3 Age of digital badge recipients

The chart below illustrates the age profile of digital badge recipients achieving digital badges at various levels of courses. It is based on 4,563 unique learners.

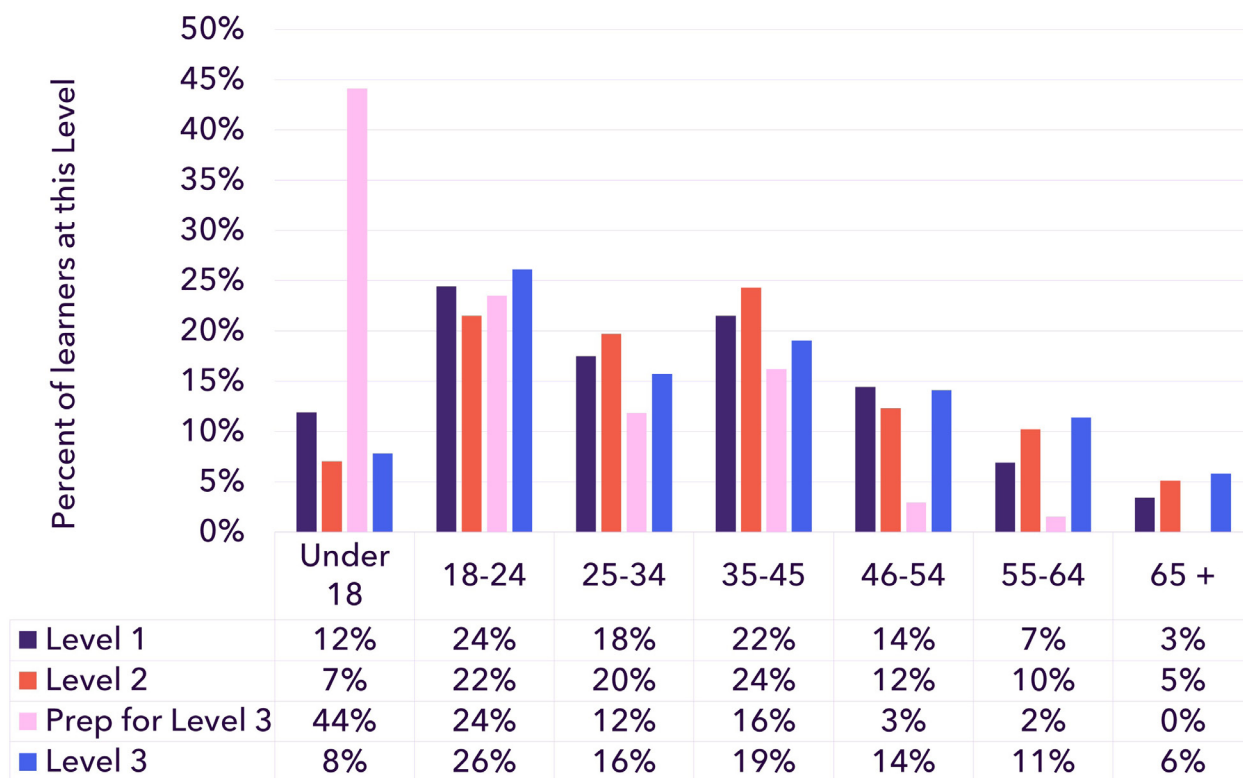


Figure 3 Age profile of badge recipients, by level

At Preparing for Level 3, under-18s are strongly represented among badge recipients. 44% of all badge recipients at Preparing for Level 3 are under 18 even though only 8% of online learners overall are under 18 (see section 3.1.1.1).

This may relate to the content available at Preparing for Level 3. NALA developed these courses to support learners to prepare to progress from Level 2 to 3 courses after it became apparent that learners who were successful at Level 2 struggled to complete courses at Level 3. Four of the seven courses at this level are in mathematical subjects. Having a qualification in Maths can assist with learners' progression into further or higher education, apprenticeship or employment, which may be of particular interest to younger learners.



On the other hand, there are no courses on digital skills at Preparing for Level 3, which might be more attractive to older learners. Further research is required to ascertain the reasons for the high representation of under-18s at Preparing for Level 3.

The spread of age groups among badge recipients is similar across Levels 1, 2 and 3. At these levels, around two-thirds of badge recipients are in the FET category. This means that they are between 25 and 64 years old, as discussed in section 3.1.1. Older age groups make up a smaller percentage of the badge recipients at each level. As shown in Table 2, this is in line with the percentage of older age groups who are registered.

### 3.1.3.4 Digital badge recipients by learner type

The table below illustrates the profile of digital badge recipients at all levels by learner type. It is based on 4,563 unique learners.

	Centre Learner			Independent Learner		
	Total	Achieved badges	%	Total	Achieved badges	%
<b>Level 1</b>	691	551	80%	864	633	73%
<b>Level 2</b>	801	649	81%	985	789	80%
<b>Preparing for Level 3</b>	88	33	38%	115	43	37%
<b>Level 3</b>	1,257	802	64%	1,609	1,063	66%
	<b>2,897</b>	<b>2,035</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>2,528</b>	<b>69%</b>

Table 10 Badge recipients by learner type

This table illustrates that very similar proportions of centre learners (70%) and independent learners (69%) achieved at least one badge. All centre learners receive proactive in-class, in-person local support, advice and motivation in their centre. Independent learners, however, can choose to access support over the phone through the Learn with NALA helpline and up to 30 minutes of tuition a week through the Tutoring Service (see section 3.2). It was expected that learners in centres would have been significantly more likely to make progress than independent learners, but the data indicates very little difference. This finding warrants further investigation.

More centre learners (80%) than independent learners (73%) achieved badges at Level 1. The support of a centre may be particularly valuable at this level.

Separate analysis of the number of badges achieved by learner type found that the number of badges achieved by centre learners (44,440) was very similar to the number of badges achieved by independent learners (43,849). However, among centre learners more badges were achieved in Community and Voluntary centres (24,953 badges, 56% of badges) than in ETBs (19,488 badges, 44% of badges). There are slightly fewer Community and Voluntary centre learners than ETB learners (see section 3.1.1.3) so this is an unexpected finding.

### 3.1.4 NALA certificates

Online learners who successfully complete the content for all learning outcomes on courses at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3 automatically receive a personalised NALA certificate of completion.

This section contains data analysis on 1,141 learners who achieved at least one NALA certificate at Level 1 or Preparing for Level 3. In total, 3,295 NALA certificates were issued. Demographic data (gender, age, learner type) was available for 1,138 of 1,141 learners who received NALA certificates.

In some tables below the number of learners per level is counted. This means that some learners are counted more than once because they are registered on courses at different levels. If you add up the number of learners at each level in those tables, it makes more than 1,141.

### 3.1.4.1 NALA certificates achieved by level

	Learners who achieved badges	Learners who achieved NALA certs	% of badge recipients who achieved NALA certs	NALA certs issued	Average number of NALA certs per learner*
<b>Level 1</b>	1,683	1,001	59%	2,689	2.7
<b>Prep for Level 3</b>	390	258	66%	606	2.3

Table 11 NALA certificates achieved by level

This table shows that the majority of learners who achieved at least one badge, at Level 1 (59%) and Preparing for Level 3 (66%), went on to achieve at least one certificate from NALA. This means that they successfully completed the course content at least one course. Some learners (118) achieved certificates in courses at both Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3.

On average, learners at these levels completed more than two courses each. These findings show a strong completion rate for learners who get started on a NALA-certified course. They indicate that learners who do get started generally have the supports and resources they need to complete.

It seems that the Virtual Learning Environment course completion rates are higher than average. For example, Jordan (2015) found that completion rates of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are just 12.6% on average (median). According to Reich and Ruiperez-Valiente (2019), average MOOC completion in Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is between 3% and 6%. Although Learn with NALA's Virtual Learning Environment courses are not MOOCs, the course completion rates of 59% (at Level 1) and 66% (at Preparing for Level 3) on NALA-certified courses compares favourably to these findings.

There is not much difference between the levels in terms of the percentage of badge recipients who achieved NALA certificates or the average number of NALA certificates earned by each learner.

### 3.1.4.2 NALA certificates achieved by course

The table below outlines the courses for which certificates were issued and number of certificates by course:

Course category	Course name	Frequency	Percent
<b>Maths</b>	Level 1 Shape and Space	251	8%
	Level 1 Quantity and Number	205	6%
	Level 1 Pattern and Relationship	174	5%
	Level 1 Problem-Solving	169	5%
	Level 1 Maths	799	24%
	Preparing for Level 3 Numbers	92	3%
	Preparing for Level 3 Measurement	94	3%
	Preparing for Level 3 Algebra	79	2%
	Preparing for Level 3 Problem-Solving	77	2%
	Preparing for Level 3 Maths	342	10%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Reading and writing</b>	Level 1 Reading	360	11%
	Level 1 Writing	239	7%
	Level 1 Listening and Speaking	230	7%
	Level 1 Reading and Writing	829	25%
	Preparing for Level 3 Reading	112	3%
	Preparing for Level 3 Writing	80	2%
	Preparing for Level 3 Reading and Writing	192	6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,021</b>	<b>31%</b>

Table 12 NALA certificates achieved by course

Course category	Course name	Frequency	Percent
<b>Technology</b>	Level 1 Computer Skills	313	10%
	Level 1 Using Technology	212	6%
	Level 1 Data Handling	164	5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>689</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Personal development</b>	Level 1 Personal Decision-Making	226	7%
	Level 1 Setting Learning Goals	146	4%
	Level 1 Personal Development	372	11%
	Preparing for Level 3 Personal Skills	72	2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>444</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>All courses - total</b>		<b>3,295</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 12 NALA certificates achieved by course continued

This table shows that overall, more NALA certificates were achieved on Maths courses (35%) than on other categories of courses. The Reading and Writing category (31%) is not far behind and the highest number of certificates achieved in any single course was in Level 1 Reading (11% of all certificates).

The numbers of certificates achieved may relate to the number of courses available in each category. There are 8 Maths courses which offer NALA certificates but only 3 courses each in Technology and in Personal Development. The table also shows the relative popularity of Level 1 courses compared to Preparing for Level 3 courses.

### 3.1.4.3 Gender of NALA certificate recipients

48% of NALA certificate recipients were female and 52% were male. The percentage of NALA certificate recipients who were female (48%) is lower than the total percentage of online learners who were female (54%), see section 3.1.1.2. This finding indicates that men are more likely to successfully complete their courses than women and warrants further investigation. The table below breaks down the gender of recipients by level of certificate. It is based on 1,138 unique learners.

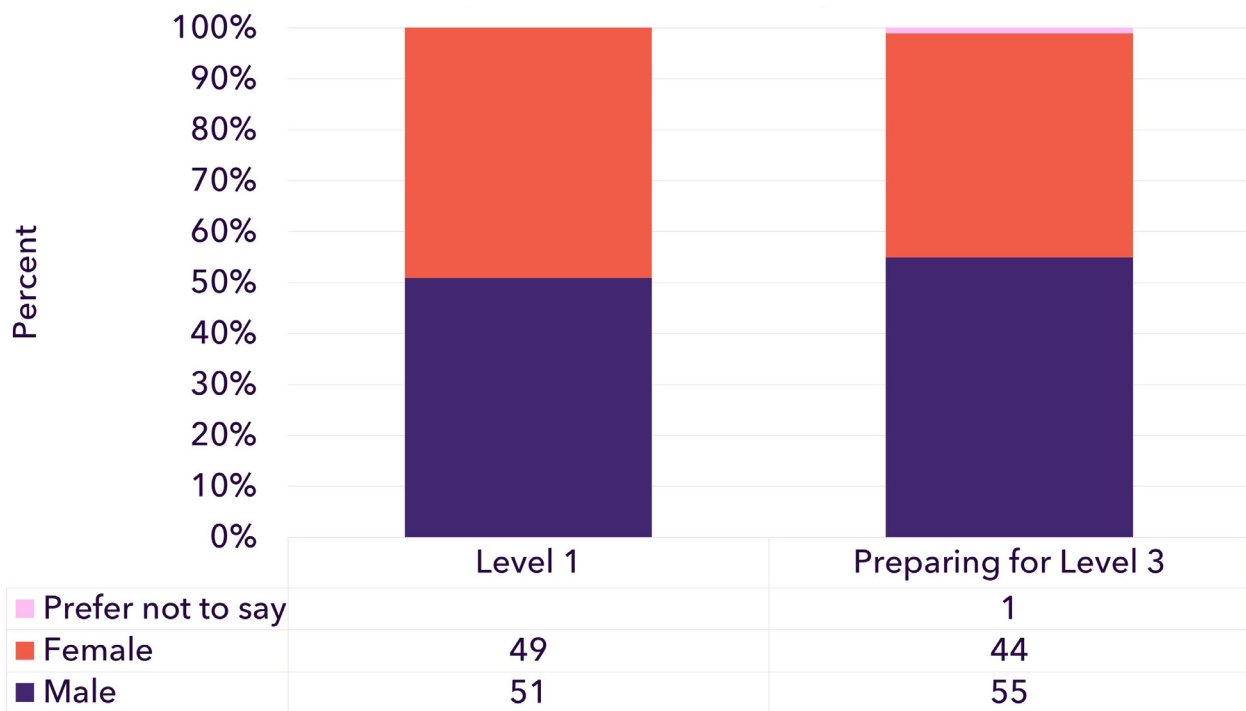


Figure 4 Gender of online learners who achieved certificates

The chart above illustrates a higher percentage of female certificate recipients for Level 1 courses than at Preparing for Level 3. This contrasts with female representation among badge recipients which was higher at Preparing for Level 3 (47%) than Level 1 (42%) - see section 3.1.3.2.

### 3.1.4.4 Age of NALA certificate recipients

The chart below presents the age profile of NALA certificate recipients. It is based on 1,138 unique learners.

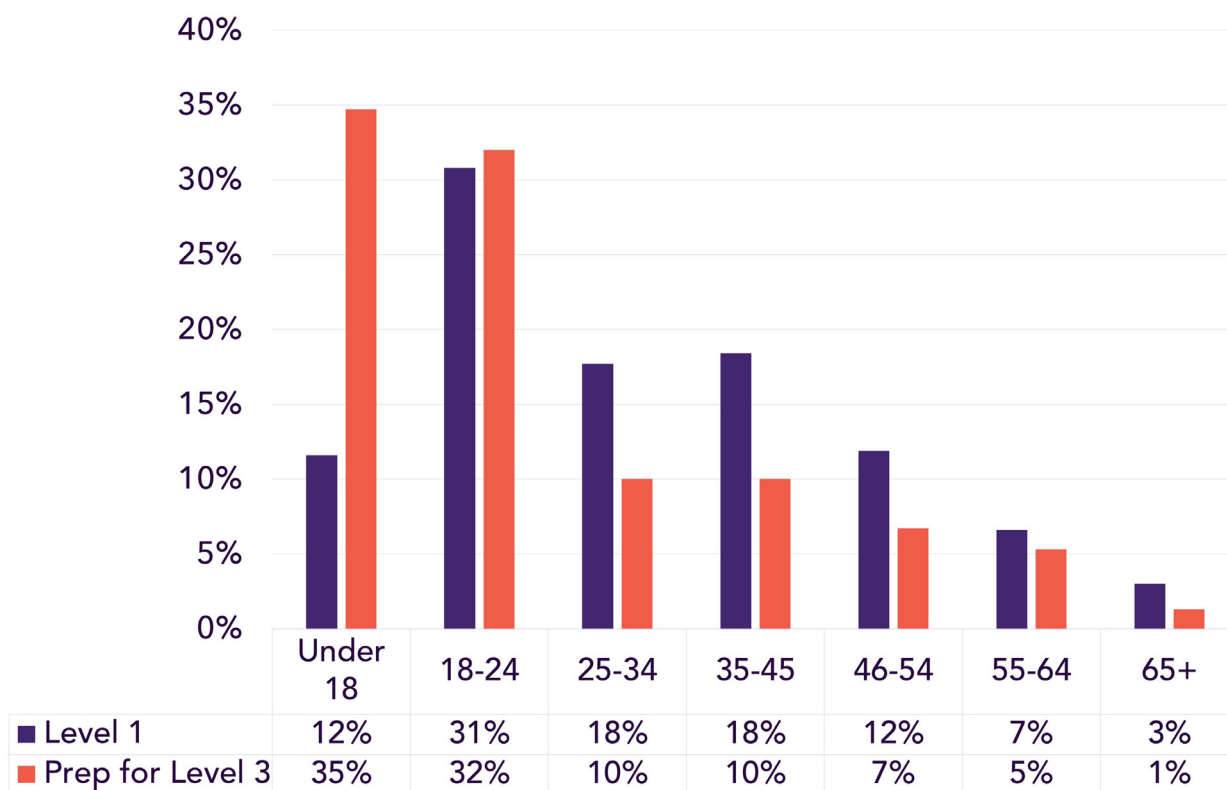


Figure 5 Age profile of NALA certificate recipients

A key finding from this chart is that a very high proportion (35%) of Preparing for Level 3 certificate recipients were in the Under 18 category which only makes up 8% of overall registrations (see section 3.1.1.1). This may relate to the content available at Preparing for Level 3 as discussed in section 3.1.3.3.

There was also a high representation of younger learners at Level 1. 18-24 year olds achieved 31% of NALA certificates at Level 1 but they made up only 21% of overall registrations (see section 3.1.1.1). Learners over 65 achieved 3% of certificates at Level 1 but made up 5% of overall registrations (see section 3.1.1.1). The finding that younger learners may be somewhat more likely to complete Level 1 courses than older learners warrants further investigation.

At Level 1, a slight majority (55%) of NALA certificate recipients are in the FET age category. This means that they are between the ages of 25 and 64 as discussed in section 3.1.1. However, at Preparing for Level 3, FET category learners are a minority (32%) of NALA certificate recipients, due to the high representation of under-18s at that level.

### 3.1.4.5 NALA certificate recipients by learner type

The chart below highlights the proportion of centre learners and independent learners who achieved at least one NALA certificate at each level. It is based on 1,138 unique learners.

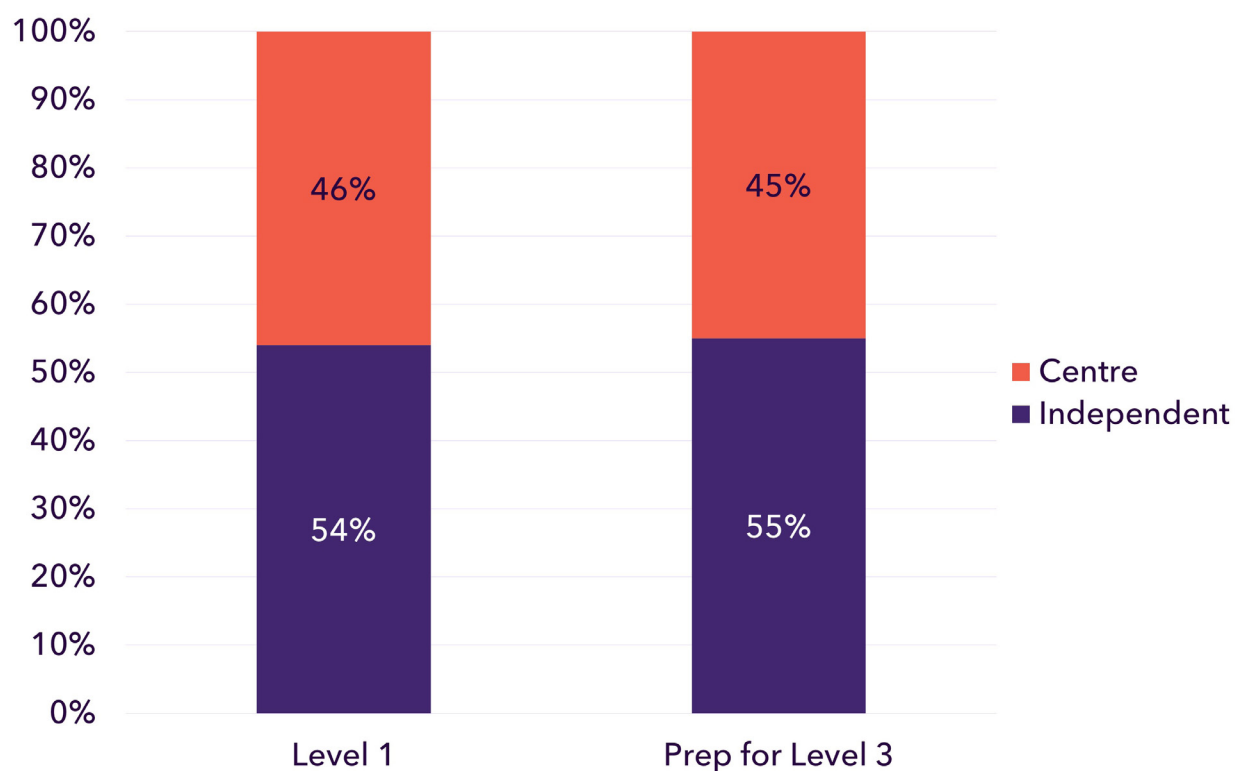


Figure 6 NALA certificate recipients by learner type



Online learners who achieved certificates were mostly independent learners, 54% at Level 1 and 55% at Preparing for Level 3. This is very similar to the breakdown of online learners overall (56% independent learners - see section 3.1.1.3). The figure shows that there is very little difference in NALA certificate achievement between centre and independent learners.

Separate analysis of the number of NALA certificates achieved showed that centre learners and independent learners achieved very similar numbers. 1,667 NALA certificates were achieved by centre learners and 1,628 NALA certificates were achieved by independent learners. Of the certificates achieved by centre learners, 1,194 (72%) were achieved by learners in Community and Voluntary centres and 473 (28%) were achieved by learners in ETB centres.

This finding may seem unexpected as around half of all online learners are in Community and Voluntary centres and half in ETB centres (see section 3.1.1.3). However, centres use Learn with NALA in different ways. For example, ETBs are education providers in their own right and develop and deliver their own programmes that lead to QQI awards. Some ETBs may be using Learn with NALA as a supplementary classroom resource. Learners would complete the ETB programme and certification locally but register for Learn with NALA courses to access content but not necessarily complete the full courses. Further research could reveal the different uses of Learn with NALA by different types of centres.

### 3.1.5 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) certificates

This section looks at learners' success in achieving QQI certificates. A "successful" learner in this section is an online learner who has completed a QQI-level course (a course at Level 2 or Level 3) and passed the final assessment in that course. Some of these learners may have achieved several QQI certificates. They are counted once as "successful" if they have achieved at least one QQI certificate within the study period.

An "unsuccessful" learner is an online learner who has started a QQI-level course but has either not yet completed the course on Learn with NALA or not passed the final assessment. Only learners who have logged in after they first enrolled in a course to engage with the course material are included here. This is because many online learners register for several courses at once and then complete them in turn. Some "unsuccessful" learners may have gone on to achieve QQI certification after the end of the study period or outside of Learn with NALA in their local ETB. Some may be successful in the sense that they achieved what they wanted from the course.

NALA provided Straightforward Research with an Excel spreadsheet containing 3,102 cases of successful and unsuccessful learners on QQI-level courses between 1 March 2020 and 30 November 2022. Most (2,430) of the learners were listed as either "successful" or "unsuccessful" only. The other 672 cases were learners who appeared as both "successful" and "unsuccessful" had been successful in at least one course and unsuccessful in at least one other course. This means that 336 learners (672 divided by 2) are counted twice in the numbers in this section.

Of the 3,102 cases, 1,519 were successful and 1,583 were unsuccessful. A total of 4,568 certificates were issued.

96% of the QQI certificates involved some Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This means that the learner achieved some marks in the initial assessment for the course and was able to skip the course content where they had demonstrated prior learning. These learners may choose to take the full course content if they wish. RPL is an option for adults who already have certain skills but don't have formal qualifications for those skills. It allows learners with 'spiky profiles' (NALA 2018) to focus on new learning rather than relearning content they are already familiar with.

### 3.1.5.1 QQI certificates and digital badges

The table below captures progression of learners at Levels 2 and 3 from registration, to achieving digital badges, to achieving QQI certificates.

Course level	Learners who achieved badges	Learners who achieved QQI certs	% of badge recipients who achieved QQI certs	QQI certs issued	Average no. of QQI certs per learner*
Level 2	2,664	1,030	39%	3,388	3.3
Level 3	2,032	489	24%	1,180	2.4

Table 13 QQI certificates achieved by level

This table shows that learners were more successful at Level 2 than Level 3 in the number of learners who achieved at least one QQI certificate (39% at Level 2, 24% at Level 3) and the average number of QQI certificates that learners achieved (3.3 at Level 2, 2.4 at Level 3). This is expected since the assessment requirements at Level 3 are higher than Level 2. Many courses at Level 3 include both an end test and portfolio submission requirement. The fact that learners were more likely to success at Level 2 than Level 3 suggests additional content and support might be helpful in Level 3 courses. Additionally, the lower than expected registration rate for Preparing for Level 3 courses (3%), see section 3.1.1.4, Table 5, and the 24% success rate for learners in Level 3 courses suggests that the purpose of courses at Preparing for Level 3 is not well understood by learners. This warrants further investigation.

At both levels, only a minority of learners who achieve at least one badge go on to achieve at least one QQI certificate (39% at Level 2, 24% at Level 3). This contrasts with the high success rates for NALA certificates (see section 3.1.4). This finding indicates that a review of Level 2 and 3 content and supports is warranted to ensure that learners have what they need to complete the course successfully.

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\* Per learner who achieved at least one badge

The overall FET certification rate in 2022 was 24% of all those who enrolled on FET courses; not including partial certification. SOLAS use the term partial certification to refer to situations where learners achieve some certification on their course, for example a Minor Award, but do not complete all certification offered in the course, for example, a Major Award. The certification rate including partial certification was 43% (SOLAS 2023, p. 3 and p. 22). While not directly comparable, this does suggest that the Virtual Learning Environment success rates at QQI certificates are broadly in line with QQI certificates generally.

### 3.1.5.2 Success at QQI certificates by age

As outlined above, 2,430 online learners were either successful or unsuccessful in their attempts at QQI certification during the study period. Date of birth was available for 2,141 of these learners.

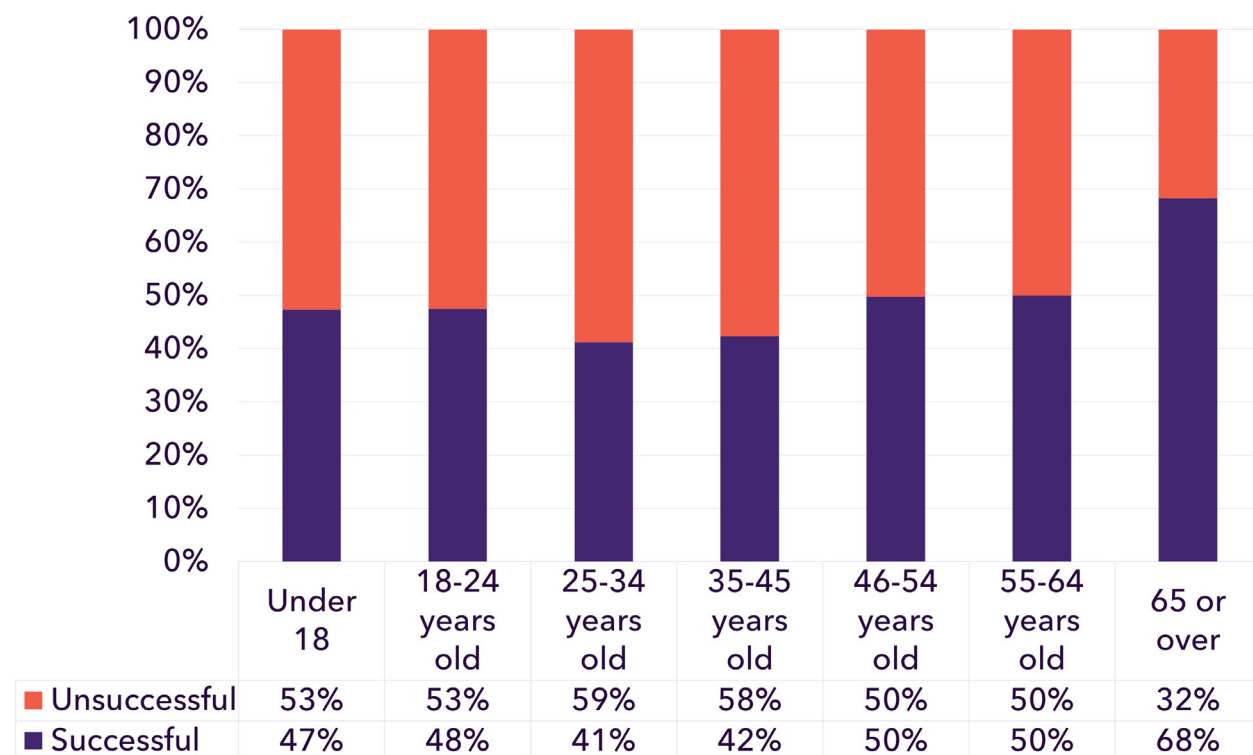


Figure 7 QQI success rates by age

This figure shows that learners aged 65 and over were the most likely to achieve a QQI certificate, 68% of this age group were successful. 46-54 and 55-64 year-olds were equally likely to be successful or unsuccessful. All younger age groups were more likely to be unsuccessful than successful. The 25-34 and 35-45 age groups were the least likely to achieve a QQI award, 41% of 25-34 year olds and 42% of 35-45 year olds were successful.

Most (62%) of the online learners are aged 18-45 (section 3.1.1.1) but this figure shows that learners aged 45+ are more successful in achieving QQI awards. It suggests that while the Virtual Learning Environment attracts more younger learners, older learners who do register are more likely to be successful. Since 25-45 year-olds are more likely to be working and have family and caring responsibilities, it may be the case that learners in this age bracket do not complete their courses due to external factors. This finding is worth further investigation.

This figure shows that learners in the FET age category (25-64 years old) made up slightly more (58%) of the learners who were unsuccessful in their QQI certificate attempt than the learners who were successful (53%). This ties in with the finding that learners aged 25-45 were the least likely to be successful and learners aged 65 and over were the most likely to be successful.

### 3.1.5.3 Success at QQI certificates by gender

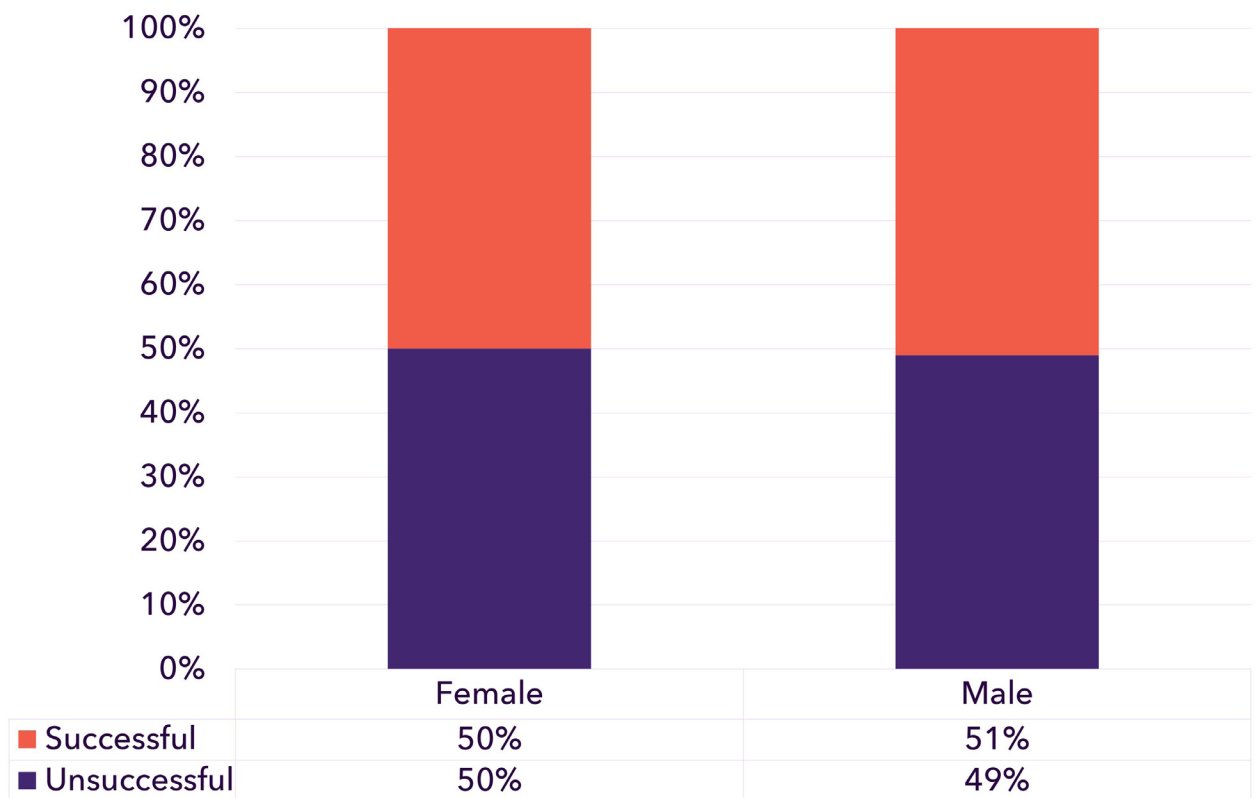


Figure 8 QQI success rates by gender

This figure shows that male learners were only very slightly more likely than female learners to succeed in their attempts at achieving QQI certificates. 51% of male learners and 50% of female learners who attempted QQI certificates were successful.

### 3.1.5.4 Success at QQI certificates by learner type

The table below provides an analysis of success rate by learners who made successful or unsuccessful attempts at QQI Certification. This is different to the figures in 3.1.5.1 as it concentrates on those who actually enrolled on a Level 2 or 3 course with a successful or unsuccessful outcome.

	Total Learners	Successful	Unsuccessful	Successful %	Unsuccessful %
<b>Centre</b>	1288	860	428	66.8%	33.2%
<b>Independent</b>	1816	661	1155	36.4%	63.6%

Table 14 QQI success rate by learner type

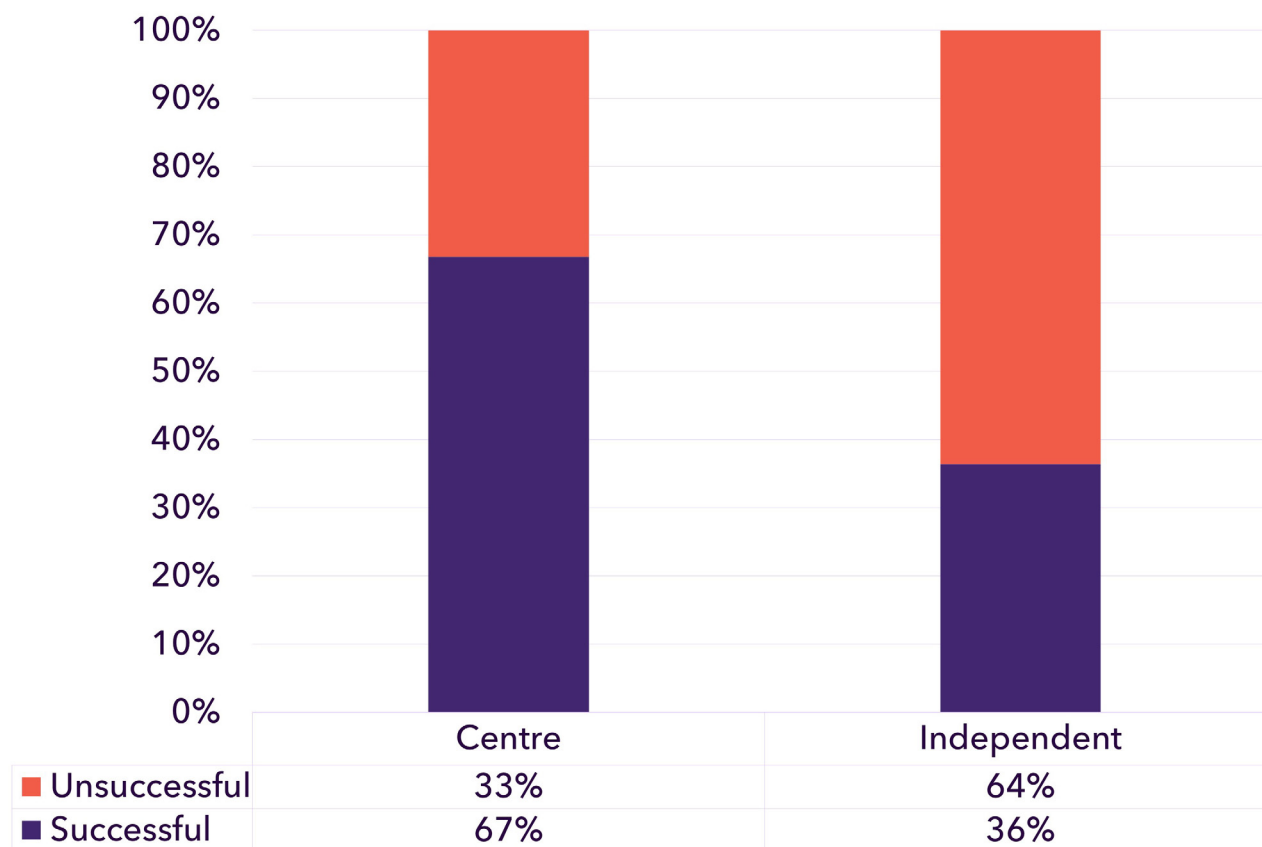


Figure 9 QQI success rates by learner type

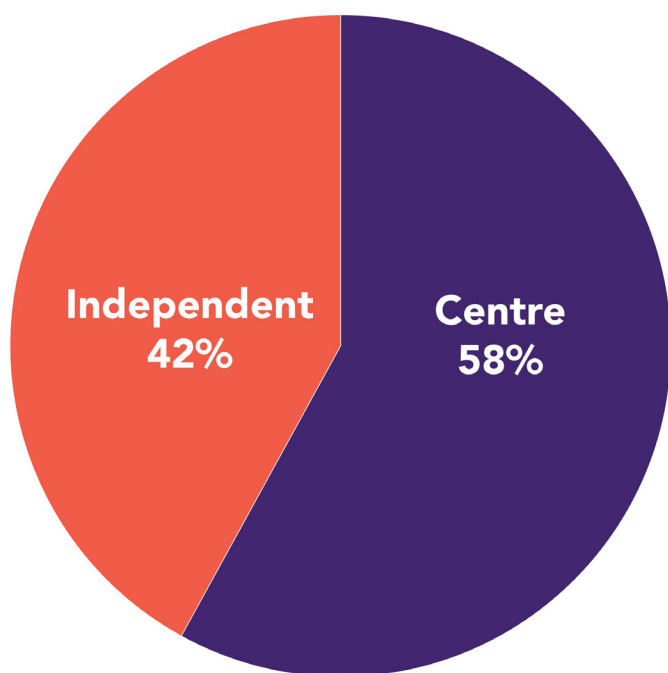


Figure 10 QOI attempts by learner type

This figure shows that centre learners are more likely to achieve QOI certificates (67% of them were successful) than independent learners (36% were successful). This is expected since learners in a centre learning context receive in-person support from expert staff. This finding suggests that improved supports to independent learners could enable more of them to succeed in their courses.

Breaking down the total number of successful learners at QOI levels (Levels 2 and 3) shows that 58% of those successful learners were in centres and 42% were independent. This measure also shows that centre learners are more successful than independent learners.

Of the successful centre learners, 57% are in Community and Voluntary centres and 43% are in ETB centres, despite the fact that centre learners are split almost evenly between Community and Voluntary and ETB centres (see section 3.1.1.3). As discussed in section 3.1.4.5, this finding may seem unexpected. However, centres can use the Virtual Learning Environment in different ways. Some ETBs may be using the Virtual Learning Environment as a supplementary classroom resource but not as an assessment tool as they are QOI providers. This means that they can deliver their own programmes that lead to QOI awards. Further research could reveal the different uses of the Virtual Learning Environment by different types of centres.

### 3.1.5.5 Success at QQI certificates by course type

The table below illustrates successful compared to unsuccessful attempts by course type at Levels 2 and 3. The table groups courses by literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and personal development courses.

		Yes	%	No	%	Total
<b>Level 2 Reading and Writing</b>	Listening and speaking	170	39%	270	61%	440
	Reading	143	61%	91	39%	234
	Writing	21	15%	122	85%	143
	<b>Total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>817</b>
<b>Level 2 Technology</b>	Computer skills	186	70%	79	30%	265
	Using technology	113	76%	36	24%	149
	<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>414</b>
<b>Level 2 Personal Development</b>	Setting learning goals	12	48%	13	52%	25
	Personal decision-making	151	59%	105	41%	256
	<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>Level 2 Numeracy</b>	Quantitative problem solving	4	22%	14	78%	18
	Pattern and relationship	174	66%	88	34%	262
	Quantity and number	33	49%	35	52%	68
	Data handling	19	54%	16	46%	35
	Shape and space	4	100%	0	0%	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>Total Level 2</b>		<b>1,030</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>1,899</b>

Table 15 QQI success rates by course



		Yes	%	No	%	Total
<b>Level 3 Numeracy</b>	Application of number	7	21%	27	79%	34
	Functional mathematics	0	<b>0%</b>	31	100%	<b>31</b>
	Maths	23	21%	87	79%	110
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Level 3 Reading and Writing</b>	<b>Communications</b>	118	48%	126	52%	244
<b>Level 3 Technology</b>	Digital media	25	30%	59	70%	84
	Internet skills	54	58%	39	42%	93
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Level 3 Personal Development</b>	Career preparation	114	43%	153	57%	267
	Personal and interpersonal skills	19	26%	53	74%	72
	Personal effectiveness	62	59%	43	41%	105
	Self- advocacy	9	45%	11	55%	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>464</b>
<b>Total Level 3</b>		<b>489</b>		<b>714</b>		<b>1203</b>
<b>Level 2 and 3 Total</b>		<b>1,519</b>		<b>1,583</b>		<b>3,102</b>

Table 15 QOI success rates by course continued

The table above shows that a higher proportion of the Level 2 courses were passed than those taken in Level 3 (54% compared to 44%). The highest success rate was in Level 2 digital literacy courses, followed by Level 2 numeracy courses.

Learners were most likely to succeed in Level 2 technology courses (72%). This is expected as many learners already have the digital literacy skills needed to engage with the Virtual Learning Environment and use them in everyday life.

Learners were least likely to succeed in Level 3 numeracy courses (17%). Since Level 3 maths skills are not always used in everyday life, it is expected that learners would find these courses to be the most challenging. However, the low rate of success indicates that there may be improvements to content and supports that could support improved success rates.

### 3.1.5.6 Time to complete QQI certificate

We analysed the time it took learners to complete QQI certificates, calculating the difference in time between the date they enrolled on the course and the date they passed the final assessment. We had time-stamped data for 1,511 of the 1,519 learners who successfully achieved QQI certificates. The table below outlines the results for those learners:

Time taken to complete QQI certificate	No.	%
Less than 1 month	752	50%
1 to 3 months	409	27%
4 to 6 months	190	13%
7 to 12 months	118	8%
Over a year	42	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,511</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 16 Time taken to complete QQI certificate from enrolment on course

The majority (76%) of learners who achieved a QQI certificate did so within three months of starting, with 50% completing within one month. Many learners are benefitting from the flexibility of the courses which can be taken at any pace, with 21% taking between four months and a year to complete a course and 3% taking more than a year.

This implies that undertaking a QQI certificate course on the Virtual Learning Environment is not typically a long-term time commitment. Learners can expect to achieve certification within a short timeframe. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) features may also be allowing learners to progress quickly through levels they are already comfortable with.

### 3.1.5.7 Time to complete QQI certificate by level

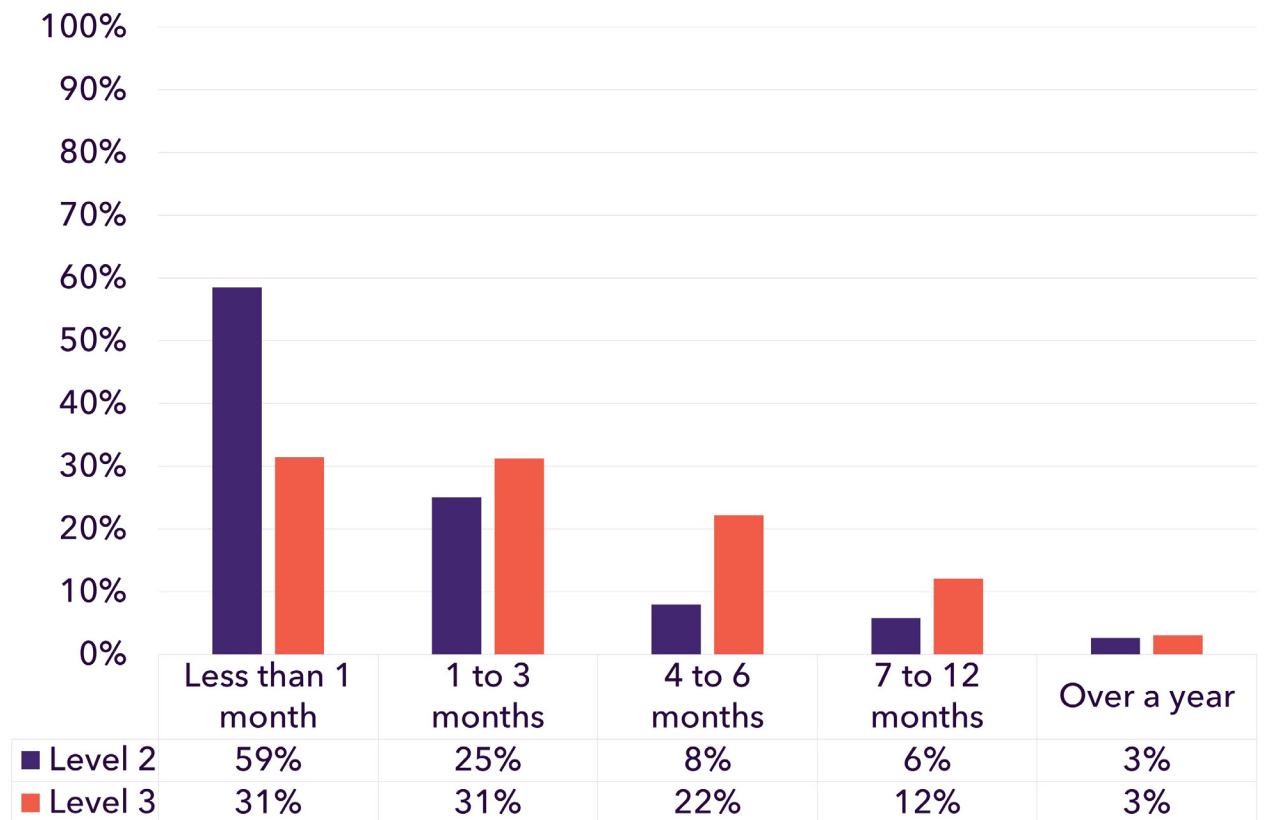


Figure 11 Time taken to complete QQI certificate from enrolment on course, by level

Learners are completing Level 2 courses faster than Level 3 courses. For example, 59% of learners taking Level 2 courses complete within a month compared to 31% of learners taking Level 3 courses. The average time taken to complete a Level 2 certificate was 1.4 months and the average time for Level 3 was 2.7 months.

This is expected since Level 3 courses are longer and have more assessment requirements than Level 2 courses. This finding suggests that learners require supports for longer periods at Level 3.

### 3.1.5.8 Time to complete QQI certificate by age

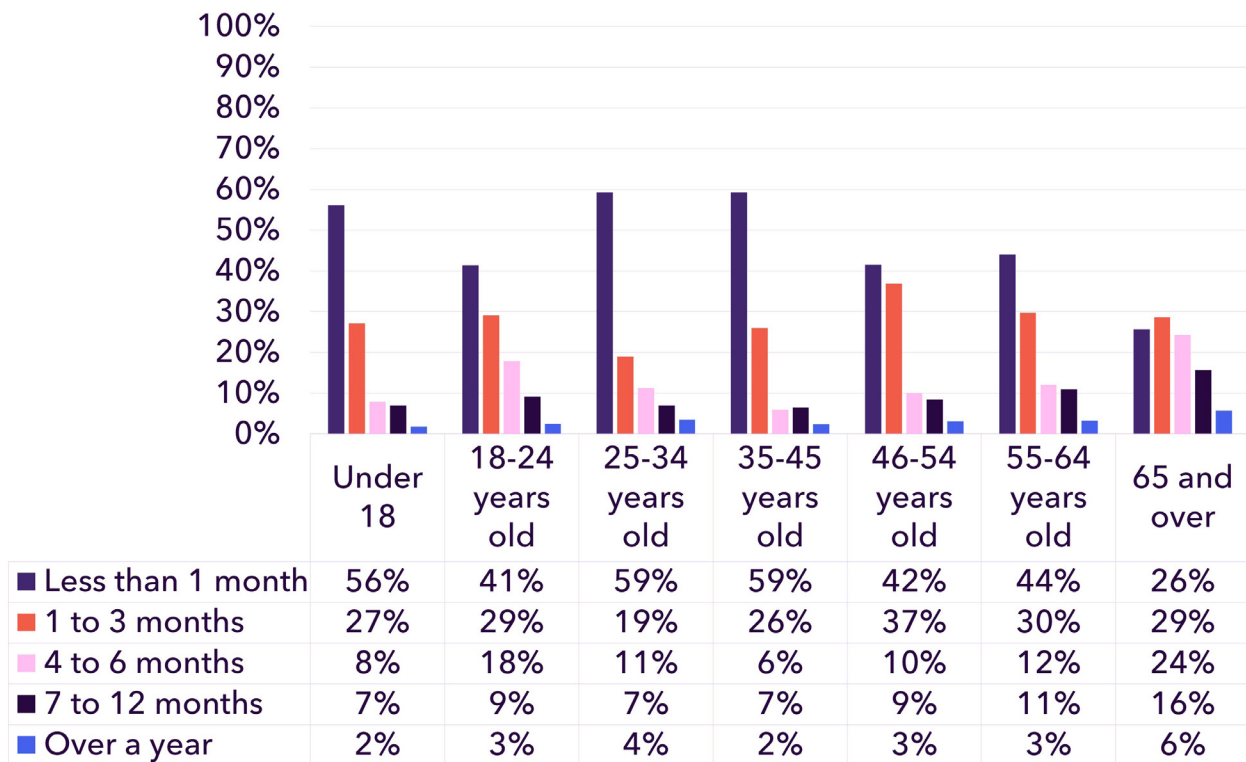


Figure 12 Time taken to complete QQI certificate from enrolment on course, by age

Successful learners aged 25-34 and 35-45 were the most likely to complete their QQI certificates in less than one month. 59% of both age groups completed in less than one month. Successful learners under age 18 (56%) were also very likely to complete in less than one month.

Learners aged 65 and over were the most likely to take four months or longer (46%). Taken together with the finding that learners aged 65 and over are also most likely to succeed in their courses (section 3.1.5.2), this finding suggests that adults who spend more time completing their course may be more likely to successfully complete.

The chart below shows the time taken to complete QQI certificates by learner type.

### 3.1.5.9 Time to complete QQI certificate by learner type

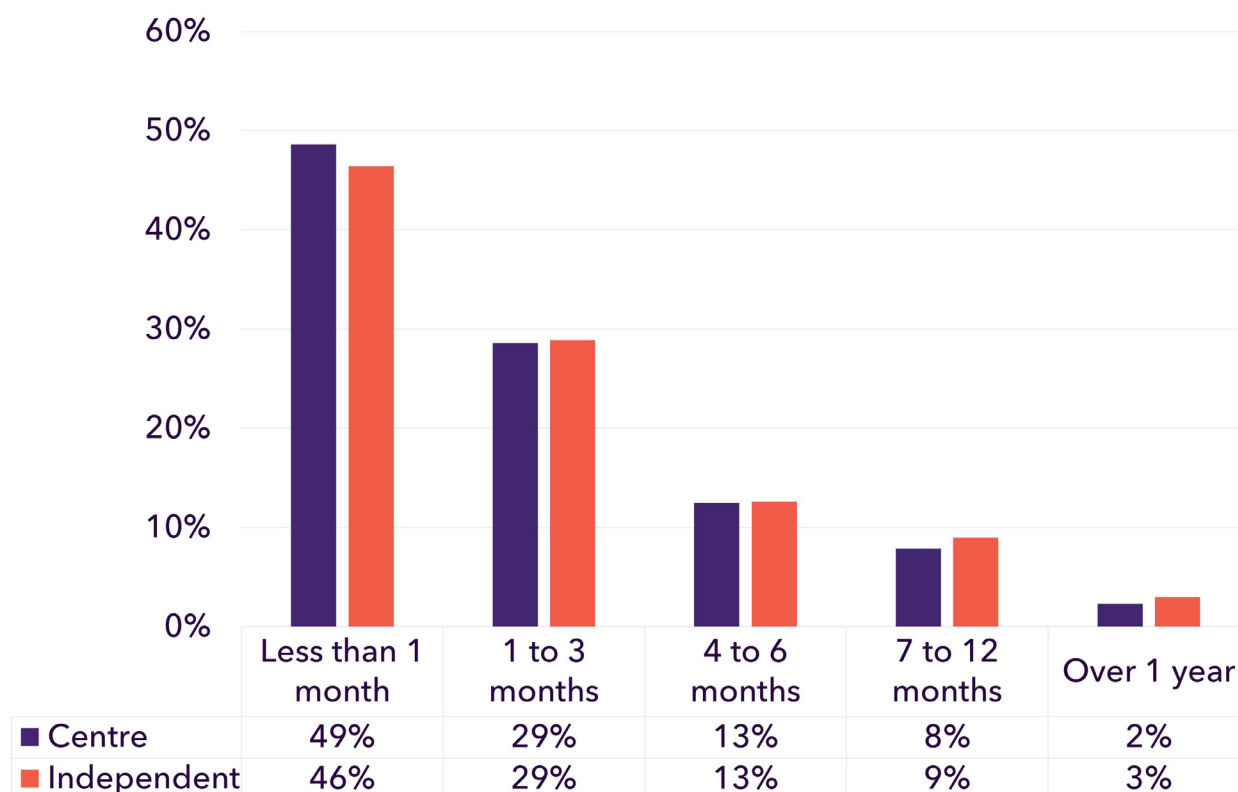


Figure 13 Time taken to complete QQI certificate from enrolment on course, by learner type

This figure shows that successful centre learners and independent learners spend similar amounts of time completing their QQI certificates. Centre learners take only very slightly less time. Section 3.1.5.4 showed that centre learners are more likely than independent learners to succeed in their course. Together, these findings suggest that the higher success rate of centre learners is could be due to the supportss that centres provide, not any extra time spent on the courses.

It is clear that those independent learners who do complete QQI certificates do so at the same pace as centre learners. These learners may have 'spiky profiles' (NALA 2018, they have high-level skills in some areas with low levels in others) and their higher-level skills could help them to progress quickly with new learning. They may simply be brushing up on skills they already have, or they may have acquired skills in their everyday life and now wish to have those formally recognised.

## 3.2 Learn with NALA Tutoring Service

As outlined in section 1.2, Learn with NALA offers a one-to-one personalised over the phone Tutoring Service to adults with unmet literacy, numeracy or digital literacy needs. Typically, learners who engage with this service receive a thirty-minute tuition session over the phone with a NALA tutor once a week. The sessions are personalised to the needs and goals of the learner. The learner receives follow-up resources and worksheets by email or post.

Learn with NALA's Tutoring Service may be taken up by learners in isolation, as a support to their online learning or in combination with their learning in a centre.

This section of the report presents an analysis of Tutoring Service learners captured on NALA's Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system between the dates of 1 March 2020 and 30 November 2022.

The file contained data on 1,169 learners. Analysis in this section of the report is based on analysis of 1,169 records unless otherwise stated. Data capture for some variables in the file was limited. To ensure accuracy of interpretation, we indicate where analysis is based on limited data entry.

## 3.2.1 Tutoring Service learner profiles

### 3.2.1.1 Tutoring Service learner age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
<b>Under 18</b>	9	0.8	1.1
<b>18-24 years old</b>	14	1.2	1.7
<b>25-34 years old</b>	81	6.9	9.9
<b>35-45 years old</b>	247	21.1	30
<b>46-54 years old</b>	208	17.8	25.3
<b>Over 55 years of age</b>	263	22.5	32
<b>Total</b>	822	70.3	100
<b>Unknown</b>	347	29.7	

Table 17 Age profile of Tutoring Service learners

The vast majority (87%) of learners availing of the Tutoring Service are over 35 with 30% aged 35-45, 25% aged 46-54 and 32% aged 55 and over. Section 3.1.1.1 showed that learners under 25 made up 29% of online learners, but they make up just 3% of Tutoring Service learners. Learners aged 55 or over, on the other hand, make up twice as many (32%) of the Tutoring Service learners as online learners (16%).

These findings are expected since the Tutoring Service is promoted to learners who may not be able to engage in online learning due to access to and capacity to engage with technology. It appears that the promotion of the Tutoring Service is attracting older learners while the promotion of the Virtual Learning Environment is attracting younger learners.

Separate analysis of Tutoring Service learner age data showed that the average age of learners was 49 years of age. The oldest learner recorded was 88 and the youngest was 17. 85% of learners were aged between 25 and 64, the priority target group for the Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS 2020).

### 3.2.1.2 Tutoring Service learner gender

The table below provides a profile of Tutoring Service learners by gender:

	Number	Percent
Female	699	60%
Male	470	40%
Total	1,169	100%

Table 18 Gender profile of Tutoring Service learners

The table outlines that 60% were female and 40% were male.

Women make up 60% of Tutoring Service learners but 54% of online learners. This means that women are more likely than men to use the Tutoring Service. This finding is unexpected and warrants further investigation.



### 3.2.1.3 Tutoring Service learner location

The table below provides a profile of learners by county. Location data was available for 81% of learners on the file.

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent of population in Ireland	Variance
Dublin	288	25%	<b>30.5%</b>	28.3%	2.2
Cork	99	8.5%	<b>10.5%</b>	11.3%	-0.8
Kildare	47	4.0%	<b>5.0%</b>	4.8%	0.2
Meath	46	3.9%	<b>4.9%</b>	4.3%	0.6
Galway	41	3.5%	<b>4.3%</b>	5.4%	-1.1
Limerick	39	3.3%	<b>4.1%</b>	4.0%	0.1
Wexford	39	3.3%	<b>4.1%</b>	3.2%	0.9
Donegal	34	2.9%	<b>3.6%</b>	3.3%	0.4
Kerry	32	2.7%	<b>3.4%</b>	3.0%	0.4
Louth	27	2.3%	<b>2.9%</b>	2.7%	0.2
Laois	25	2.1%	<b>2.6%</b>	1.8%	0.8
Westmeath	25	2.1%	<b>2.6%</b>	1.9%	0.7
Tipperary	23	2.0%	<b>2.4%</b>	3.3%	-0.9
Wicklow	22	1.9%	<b>2.3%</b>	3.0%	-0.7
Kilkenny	19	1.6%	<b>2.0%</b>	2.0%	0.0
Mayo	19	1.6%	<b>2.0%</b>	2.7%	-0.7
Waterford	18	1.5%	<b>1.9%</b>	2.5%	-0.6
Offaly	16	1.4%	<b>1.7%</b>	1.6%	0.1
Cavan	15	1.3%	<b>1.6%</b>	1.6%	0.0
Roscommon	14	1.2%	<b>1.5%</b>	1.4%	0.1
Carlow	12	1.0%	<b>1.3%</b>	1.2%	0.1
Clare	11	0.9%	<b>1.2%</b>	2.5%	-1.3
Sligo	11	0.9%	<b>1.2%</b>	1.4%	-0.2
Monaghan	10	0.9%	<b>1.1%</b>	1.3%	-0.2
Leitrim	7	0.6%	<b>0.7%</b>	0.7%	0.0
Longford	5	0.4%	<b>0.5%</b>	0.9%	-0.4
<b>Valid Total</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>100%</b>		
Unknown	225	19%			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>100%</b>			

Table 19 Tutoring Service learners by county

The highest proportion of learners were located in County Dublin (31%) and County Cork (11%).

The proportion of learners from each county was broadly representative of what would be expected given the proportion of population in each county (CSO 2022a). In Dublin, there was a variance of +2. While not a significant variance, since NALA is based in Dublin and many events are in Dublin there may be more awareness of services in Dublin. Local availability of services may also be a factor.

### 3.2.1.4 Tutoring Service learners in vulnerable groups\*

Data on vulnerable groups was captured for 360 learners. Learners are not asked for this information. If a learner happens to disclose that they are part of a vulnerable group, this is recorded with their consent. However, it is very likely that more than 360 learners are in vulnerable groups. The total in the table below is 380 (106%) indicating that a number of learners identified with more than one vulnerable group.

Pillar 4 of the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy (SOLAS 2021a) identifies twelve vulnerable groups and suggests prioritising a 'Furthest Behind First' approach to funding and delivery to target these particular groups who are most at risk of marginalisation. The vulnerable groups specified in the ALL Strategy and the vulnerable groups recorded by NALA are not all the same, although there is some overlap. Vulnerable groups which are specified in the ALL Strategy are shaded pink in the table below.

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Early School Leaver	169	14%	<b>47%</b>
Migrant	111	9%	<b>31%</b>
Disabled	39	3%	<b>11%</b>
Asylum Seeker	17	1%	<b>5%</b>
Member of the Traveller community	15	1%	<b>4%</b>
Ex-offender	2	0.2%	<b>0.6%</b>
Minority	2	0.2%	<b>0.6%</b>
One Parent Family	2	0.2%	<b>0.6%</b>
Homeless	1	0.1%	<b>0.3%</b>
Other	24	2%	<b>7%</b>
<b>Valid Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>106%</b>
Not recorded	787		
Total	1,169		

Table 20 Tutoring Service learners in vulnerable group

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\* **Potential vulnerable cohorts for funding (SOLAS 2021a p. 59):** Older Adults (55+), Members of the Traveller Community, Persons with Disabilities, Low-paid Workers, Carers, One-parent households, Incarcerated Persons and Ex-Offenders, Persons Recovering from Addiction, Long-term Unemployed, Migrants, International Protection Applicants, People with Language Needs.

Early school leavers and migrants make up high proportions of learners using the Tutoring Service (47% and 31% respectively). Given that NALA targets early school leavers with its Tutoring Service, that finding is not surprising. However, the number of migrant learners is surprising as NALA does not target this group with its services. It may reflect the high number of English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) learners in Ireland during the research timeframe. For example, in 2022 there were 29,000 ESOL learners in ETBs and 26,000 adult literacy learners (SOLAS 2023, p. 9).

11% of learners indicated that they had a disability. This figure is below Census figures which indicate that 22% of people in Ireland have a disability (CSO 2022a). This may be expected since learning over the phone is not always suitable for some people with disabilities depending on the nature of their disability. It is however above the rate of enrolment by people with disabilities in FET nationally. 8% of those enrolled in FET in 2020 had at least one disability (SOLAS 2021b).

4% of learners registered with the Tutoring Service across the research timeframe were members of the Traveller community. Census 2022 found that 0.7% of the population of Ireland are members of the Traveller community (CSO 2022a) and across FET in Ireland 0.75% of learners enrolled in 2020 were members of the Traveller community (SOLAS 2021c). Although the number registered with the Tutoring Service was small (15), this suggests that members of the Traveller community are disproportionately availing of the Tutoring Service, especially as the Tutoring Service figures for vulnerable groups are almost certainly under-estimations.

### 3.2.1.5 Tutoring Service learners' employment status

Data on employment status was captured for 672 learners.

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
<b>Employed</b>	286	25%	<b>43%</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	157	13%	<b>23%</b>
<b>On disability allowance</b>	72	6%	<b>11%</b>
<b>Retired</b>	66	6%	<b>10%</b>
<b>Stay at home</b>	54	5%	<b>8%</b>
<b>Self-employed</b>	37	3%	<b>6%</b>
<b>Valid total</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Not recorded</b>	497	43%	
<b>Total</b>	1,169	100%	

Table 21 Employment status of Tutoring Service learners

Almost half (49%) of learners were in employment with 43% employed and 6% self-employed. This shows the need for workplace literacy initiatives and literacy-friendly workplaces.

23% of learners were unemployed, which is more than five times higher than the average proportion of people (4.4%) who were unemployed in Ireland at the end of November 2022 (CSO 2022b). This is expected since adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs are more likely to be unemployed.

### 3.2.1.6 Tutoring Service learners' educational attainment

Data on educational attainment was captured for 476 learners.

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
No formal education	27	2%	6%
Primary	137	12%	29%
Lower Secondary (Level 3)	133	11%	28%
Upper Secondary (Levels 4-5)	94	8%	20%
Advanced Certificate / Higher Certificate (Level 6)	25	2%	5%
Other	60	5%	13%
<b>Valid total</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Not recorded	693	59%	
Total	<b>1,169</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 22 Educational attainment to date of Tutoring Service learners

The majority (62%) of learners are at Level 3 or below in previous educational attainment. All learners who are admitted to the Tutoring Service first discuss their needs over the phone with a member of the Learn with NALA Services Team. Based on the data collected in this call, NALA's Learn with NALA Coordinator assesses the learners' suitability for the service before the admission is complete. This means that only learners who have unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs between Levels 1 and 3 can register with the service.

This table also shows that many learners (38%) have 'spiky profiles' (NALA 2018) where they may have Level 4+ formal education levels, but less than Level 3 in their literacy, numeracy or digital literacy skills.

### 3.2.1.7 Tutoring Service learners' previous adult education

The table below outlines the number and percentage of learners who had previously joined a different literacy service such as a local Education and Training Board service (ETB) prior to participating in the Tutoring Service. This data was captured for 489 learners.

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
<b>First time in adult education</b>	293	25%	<b>60%</b>
<b>Previously in adult education</b>	196	17%	<b>40%</b>
<b>Valid total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Not recorded</b>	680	58%	
<b>Total</b>	1,169		

Table 23 Previously joined a different literacy service before using the Tutoring Service

For the majority of learners (60%), the Tutoring Service was their first step in returning to education. This finding indicates that the Tutoring Service is an appropriate first step back to education for many learners and potentially also a useful bridge to other adult education opportunities. It also highlights the importance of an empathetic, understanding approach to contacts (phone calls, texts, emails, letters) from people who want to join the Tutoring Service. NALA promotion and awareness work appears to be helping learners who may not have otherwise returned to education to work with the Tutoring Service.

40% of learners engaged in other services prior to the Tutoring Service. This finding suggests that many learners may engage with the Tutoring Service because they did not find what they needed elsewhere. This warrants further investigation.

### 3.2.1.8 Tutoring Service learners' computer and broadband access

Data on computer and broadband access was captured for 555 and 537 learners respectively. 75% of learners indicated that they had access to computers and 87% indicated that they had access to broadband to learn online.

These findings suggest that access to technology might not be as much of a barrier for adult literacy learners returning to education as might be assumed.

## 3.2.2 Self-ratings

Tutoring Service learners are asked to rate their own skills and confidence in a range of areas, presented below. This self-rating method shows learners' perceptions of their own skills. It is not an objective measure of skills.

### 3.2.2.1 Confidence and skills ratings

The table below presents learners' own rating of their overall confidence:

	Number	Valid Percent
Good	157	25%
OK	328	52%
Poor	151	24%
<b>Valid total</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>100%</b>
Not recorded	533	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,169</b>	

Table 24 Tutoring Service learners' confidence self-rating

The majority (75%) of learners rated their confidence levels as 'poor' (25%) or 'OK' (52%) with the remaining 25% rating their confidence as 'good'. This finding is not surprising and indicates that support should focus on building confidence in basic skills and ability as well as the skills themselves.



The table below presents learners' own rating of their overall skills:

	Number	Valid Percent
Good	203	28%
OK	319	44%
Poor	202	28%
<b>Valid total</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>100%</b>
Not recorded	445	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,169</b>	

Table 25 Tutoring Service learners' skills self-rating

The table illustrates that the highest proportion of learners felt that their skills were 'OK' (44%) and more than a quarter felt their skills were 'good' (28%).

### 3.2.2.2 Digital literacy skills

The following table outlines responses to questions which indicate the levels of digital literacy of Tutoring Service learners. This data was not recorded for all participants. Therefore, the number on which the percentage is based is included in the table. It is also important to note that this is self-reported and self-assessed by learners:

The learner can...	Number	Percent
Use a mobile phone	580	99%
Surf the internet	746	89%
Top up a mobile phone	338	87%
Send an email	775	82%
Use a computer	582	70%
Use a printer	367	56%
Save files	425	51%
Take a screen grab	330	32%

Table 26 Digital literacy skills of Tutoring Service learners

This table shows that almost all (99%) of Tutoring Service learners can use a mobile phone, but just 32% can take a screen grab. Overall, skills relating to mobile phones are more common among the learners than skills relating to desktop computers. This is significant considering that the latest data for digital literacy skills (CSO 2013) comes from a survey designed in 2007/2008, before smartphones and tablets were common.

Overall, self-reported digital literacy skills are high. The majority of learners can use a mobile phone (99%), use a computer (70%) and use the internet (89%). This is an unexpected finding as the Tutoring Service is targeted at those who cannot access local services and cannot learn online. This warrants further research.

Taking together these findings with sections 3.2.1.8 and 3.2.2.1 we can deduce that, for adult literacy learners, the main barrier to engaging in online learning opportunities may be learner confidence rather than access to technology, broadband or digital literacy skills. This warrants further research and consideration for the content delivered on the Tutoring Service.

### 3.2.2.3 Literacy skills

The following table outlines responses to questions which indicate the literacy levels of Tutoring Service learners. This data was not recorded for all participants therefore the number on which the percentage is based is included in the table. It is also important to note that this is self-reported and self-assessed by learners:

The learner can or does...	Number	Percent
<b>Know the alphabet</b>	609	95%
<b>Read medicine instructions</b>	483	82%
<b>Fill in a form</b>	525	66%
<b>Help children with homework</b>	134	63%
<b>Spell the days of the week</b>	551	55% (all days) 33% (some of them)
<b>Read newspapers</b>	498	52%
<b>Reply to a letter in writing</b>	513	48%
<b>Spell the months of the year</b>	526	42% (all months) 42% (some of them)
<b>Read books</b>	470	40%
<b>Read magazines</b>	382	35%

Table 27 Literacy skills of Tutoring Service learners

The majority of learners had some basic everyday literacy skills when they started working with the Tutoring Service. 95% of learners knew the alphabet, 82% could read medicine instructions, and 66% could fill in a form. However, long-form writing skills and reading for pleasure were less common.

This finding indicates that the service is reaching those learners who are furthest behind, with unmet literacy needs at Levels 1 to 3 and reinforces the 'spiky profile' (NALA 2018) of adult literacy learners.

### 3.2.2.4 Numeracy skills

The following table outlines responses to questions which indicate numeracy levels of Tutoring Service learners. This data was not completed for all participants therefore the number on which the percentage is based is included in the table. It is also important to note that this is self-reported and self-assessed by learners:

The learner can...	Number	Percent
Do addition	399	93%
Use a calculator	401	86%
Understand bills	362	78%
Understand payslips	324	74%
Estimate shopping costs	377	66%
Do multiplication	377	65%
Work out a weekly budget	318	57%
Do short and long division	370	44%

Table 28 Numeracy skills of Tutoring Service learners

The majority of learners had basic everyday numeracy skills when they started working with the Tutoring Service. 93% of learners could do addition, 86% could use a calculator, 78% could understand bills and 74% could understand their payslip. For deeper levels of numeracy, learners were also likely to be able to complete everyday numeracy tasks such as estimating shopping costs (66%) and working out a weekly budget (57%). However, given these skills are essential for financial wellbeing, the percentages who could **not** understand a bill (22%), estimate shopping costs (34%) or work out a weekly budget (43%) are noteworthy.

The high levels of numeracy skills are surprising, since the level of unmet numeracy needs in Ireland stands at 1 in 4 (CSO 2013). This suggests that the Tutoring Service service is not always successfully reaching learners with unmet numeracy needs who are furthest behind.

### 3.2.3 Learning and assessment sessions

Learners who engage with Learn with NALA’s Tutoring Service take part in a number of types of sessions including:

- 1) A learning session where one-to-one tuition is based on the learner’s needs and goals.
- 2) A learning support session where the learner and tutor discuss the needs and goals of the learner and reflect on their progress to date.
- 3) An assessment support session where the tutor supports the learner in completing a QQI assessment for their online course.

The table below outlines the number of learning and assessment sessions (sessions) for Tutoring Service learners during the period of the research.

	Learners	Total sessions	Average
Number of sessions (March 2020 - November 2022)	1,169	12,039	10.3

Table 29 Total number of learning and assessment sessions

The number of sessions includes all types (1-3) above between the dates of 1 March 2020 and 30 November 2022.

The table above shows that there were 12,039 sessions. This is an average of 10.3 sessions per Tutoring Service learner within the research period.

	Learners	Percent
<b>1-5 sessions</b>	730	<b>62%</b>
<b>6-10 sessions</b>	118	<b>10%</b>
<b>11-20 sessions</b>	135	<b>12%</b>
<b>More than 20 sessions</b>	186	<b>16%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 30 Number of learning and assessment sessions per Tutoring Service learner

The table on the previous page outlines that the majority (62%) of Tutoring Service learners had between 1 and 5 learning and assessment sessions between 1 March 2020 and 30 November 2022. This is an expected finding because the intention of the service is to provide support with an immediate literacy need, build up the learner's confidence and refer them onto local or independent learning opportunities.

Around 1 in 5 learners (22%) took part in 6-20 sessions. This is not surprising as learners may sometimes need more support and confidence-building before they are ready to be referred on.

A significant minority (16%) of Tutoring Service learners had more than 20 sessions, indicating a more long-term reliance on the service. There are occasions where a learner cannot avail of local options due to confidence, transport, work and caring responsibilities. Equally, there are occasions where a learner cannot avail of independent learning opportunities due to access to technology or skills. However, this figure is higher than expected and warrants further investigation since the service is not designed for long-term learning.

### 3.2.3.1 Learning and assessment sessions by age

The table below shows the mean number of learning and assessment sessions by age profile for learners on file:

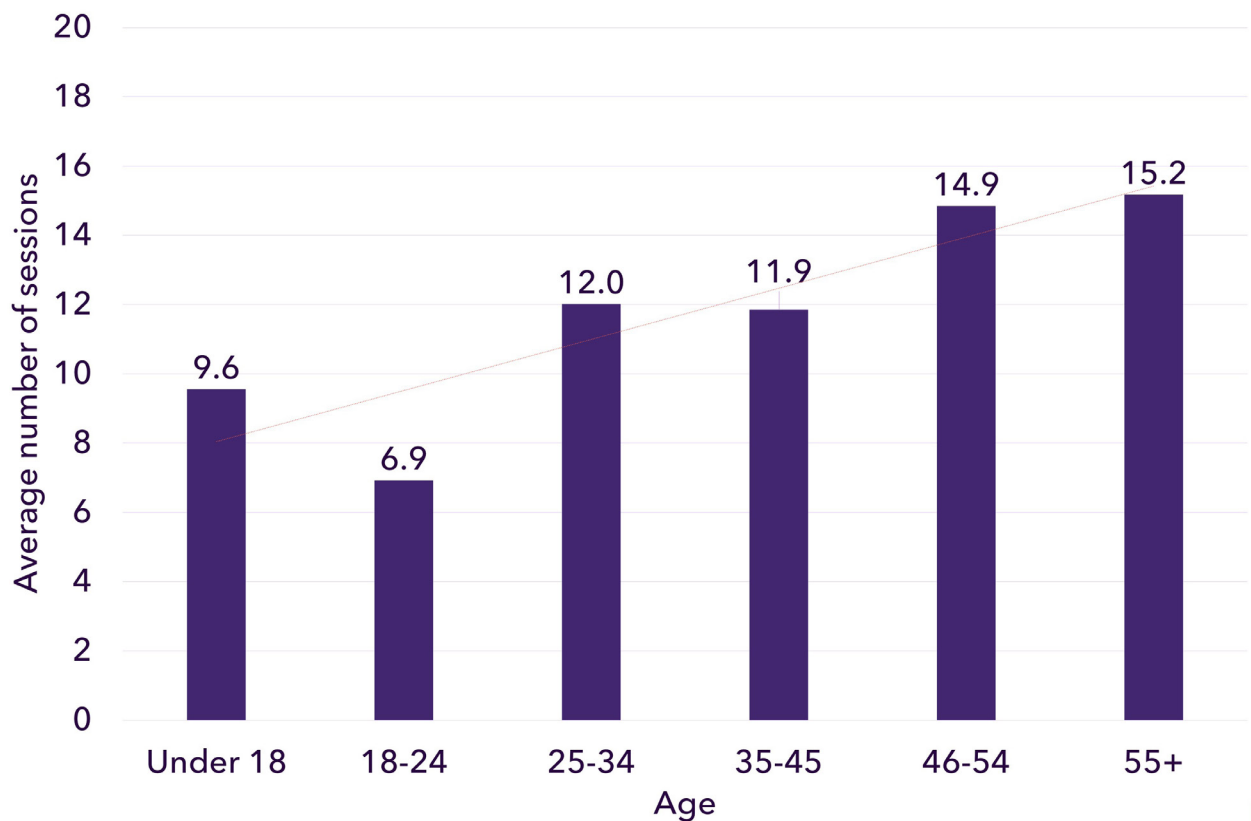


Figure 14 Average number of sessions per Tutoring Service learner by age

Older learners tend to have more sessions with the Tutoring Service. Learners aged 55 or older took part in an average of 15 sessions, while learners 18-24 took part in an average of 7 sessions. This is expected since the service is targeted at the needs of older learners who may not have access or skills to use technology.

However, the findings in sections 3.2.1.8 and 3.2.2.1 imply that access to technology may not be a significant barrier for learners. Taken together with the findings about confidence in section 3.2.2.2, we can infer that focus on confidence with using technology within the Tutoring Service programme would support older learners in progressing to online learning opportunities. This warrants further research.

### 3.2.3.2 Learning and assessment sessions by gender

The chart below shows the mean number of learning and assessment sessions by gender for learners on file:

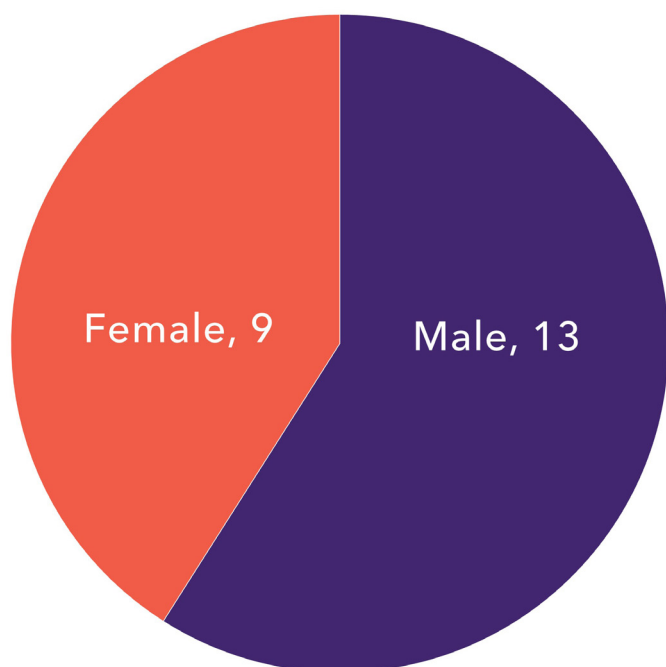


Figure 15 Average number of sessions per Tutoring Service learner by gender

Men were likely to take part in more sessions than women. On average, male learners took part in 13 sessions while female learners took part in 9 sessions. This finding suggests that men taking part in the Tutoring Service may have more acute unmet literacy needs than women.

Taken together with the findings in sections 3.1.1.2, 3.1.3.2, 3.1.4.3 and 3.1.5.3 where more women than men registered on the Virtual Learning Environment but more men than women achieved success with their courses, it also suggests that women who engaged with Learn with NALA services may have been less likely to stay with their learning. More research is warranted here.



### 3.2.3.3 Learning and assessment sessions by vulnerable group

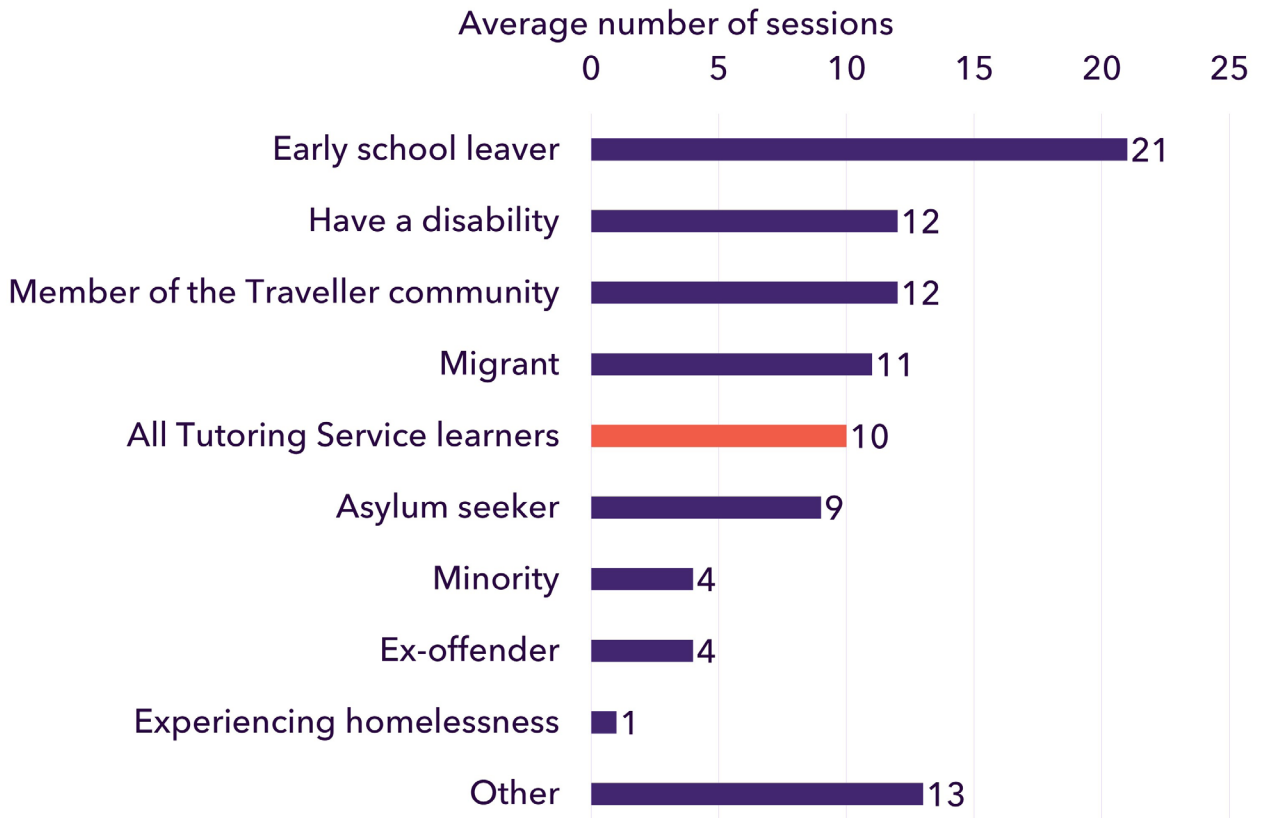


Figure 16 Average number of sessions per Tutoring Service learner by vulnerable group

Early school leavers participated in, on average, the most number of sessions on the Tutoring Service (21). Learners experiencing homelessness participated in, on average, the least number of sessions on the Tutoring Service (1). The “minority” category is used by NALA tutors when they understand that a student belongs to one of the listed vulnerable groups, but the learner has not self-declared this.

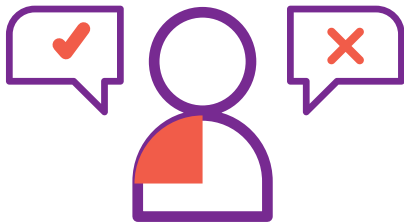
While these findings are not surprising, they do indicate that specific access barriers may exist for some learner groups. These barriers may lead to high support needs (as with early school leavers) or difficulties engaging with the service at all (as with homeless or ex-offender learners). This warrants more research to inform programme delivery and supports.

# 4. Learner survey and focus groups

This section of the report provides an analysis of an online survey completed with Learn with NALA Tutoring Service and online learners and in-person focus groups made up of survey respondents.

NALA staff and learners were consulted in the survey design to ensure the relevance of the questions and ease of understanding among various levels of learners.

249 learners responded to the online survey providing an insight into their motivations, experiences, progression and future ambitions.



## Survey and focus groups

- 249 survey respondents
- 15 focus group participants

## 4.1 Survey respondents

This section outlines the characteristics of Learn with NALA learners who responded to the online survey.

### 4.1.1 Survey respondent age

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Under 18	12	5%	5%
18 - 24 years old	25	10%	10%
25 - 34 years old	26	10%	11%
35 - 45 years old	57	23%	23%
46 - 54 years old	57	23%	23%
55 years +	59	24%	24%
Prefer not to answer	9	4%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Missing	4	2%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 31 Age of survey respondents

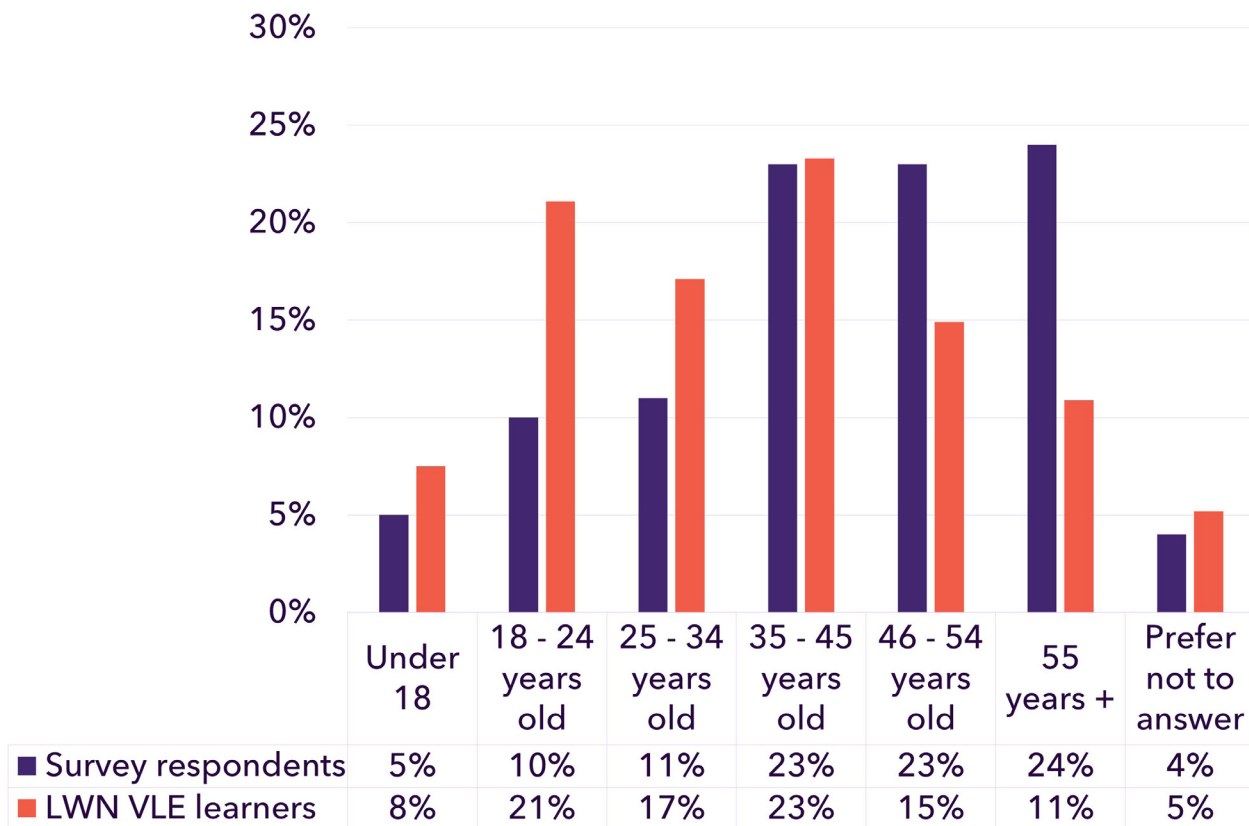


Figure 17 Age of survey respondents and total online learners

Figure 17 shows that older age groups were more likely to respond to the survey than younger age groups. This should be taken into account when considering the survey findings.

## 4.1.2 Survey respondent gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
<b>Female</b>	154	62%	63%
<b>Male</b>	81	33%	33%
<b>Non-binary</b>	3	1%	1%
<b>Prefer not to answer</b>	5	2%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Missing</b>	6	2%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 32 Gender of survey respondents

This table shows that women were more likely than men to respond to the survey. However, 54% of online learners and 63% of survey respondents were women. This should be taken into account when considering the survey findings.

### 4.1.3 Survey respondent location

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Dublin	71	29%	31%
Cork	24	10%	10%
Wexford	16	6%	7%
Galway	12	5%	5%
Limerick	11	4%	5%
Tipperary	10	4%	4%
Laois	9	4%	4%
Cavan	8	3%	4%
Kerry	7	3%	3%
Meath	7	3%	3%
Monaghan	7	3%	3%
Roscommon	7	3%	3%
Wicklow	7	3%	3%
Donegal	6	2%	3%
Kildare	6	2%	3%
Kilkenny	5	2%	2%
Clare	4	2%	2%
Offaly	4	2%	2%
Louth	3	1%	1%
Leitrim	2	0.8%	1%
Longford	1	0.4%	0.4%
Mayo	1	0.4%	0.4%
Sligo	1	0.4%	0.4%
Waterford	1	0.4%	0.4%
Westmeath	1	0.4%	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Missing	18	7%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 33 County of residence of survey respondents

Section 3.1.1.5 showed that 23% of online learners live in Dublin. Dublin respondents are over-represented in the survey as they make up 31% of survey respondents. This should be taken into account when considering the survey findings.

#### 4.1.4 Survey respondent employment status

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
<b>Employed full-time</b>	60	24%	28%
<b>Unemployed</b>	55	22%	26%
<b>Employed part-time</b>	46	19%	22%
<b>Student</b>	30	12%	14%
<b>Retired</b>	16	6%	8%
<b>On a Work Placement Scheme</b>	4	2%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Missing</b>	38	15%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 34 Employment status of survey respondents

52% of survey respondents were in employment or were on a work placement scheme, 28% employed full-time, 22% employed part-time and 2% on work placement schemes. This indicates that Learn with NALA services have a role in supporting adult learners in retaining their existing employment.

On the other hand, more than a quarter (26%) of respondents to the survey were unemployed. This is significantly higher than the 4.4% proportion of the general public in Ireland who were unemployed throughout the study period (CSO 2022b). This indicates that Learn with NALA services also have a role in helping adults upskill or reskill for new jobs.

## 4.1.5 Survey respondents in vulnerable groups

The table below shows the proportion of respondents who indicated that they identify with ten of the twelve vulnerable groups prioritised in the ALL Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).\*

	Number	Percent	Percent of cases*
A person with a disability	82	35%	46%
Long-term unemployed	31	13%	17%
A low-paid worker	29	12%	16%
A carer for child or older person	25	11%	14%
A person with language needs	21	9%	12%
An immigrant	15	6%	8%
A member of the Traveller Community	11	5%	6%
A person recovering from addiction	8	3%	4%
A person who is subject to International Protection	7	3%	4%
An ex-offender or ex-prisoner	4	2%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>129%</b>

Table 35 Survey respondents in vulnerable groups

46% of respondents indicated that they had a disability, compared with 8% of those enrolled in FET nationally in 2020 (SOLAS 2021b). This suggests that Learn with NALA services are a vital educational resource for adults with disabilities who have finished or aged out of state education options.

17% of respondents indicated that they were long-term unemployed, compared with 1.2% in the population (CSO 2022b). This suggests that Learn with NALA services are an important bridge to education and employment for those who are long-term unemployed.

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\*The other vulnerable groups prioritised in the ALL Strategy are older adults (55+) and one-parent households.

\* In this report, where someone could choose more than one response to a question, we have two percent columns. The first one is called percent and it shows the percentage out of all the responses. The second one is called percent of cases and it shows the percentage out of all the respondents. For example, in this table 35% of the answers were "a person with a disability", and 46% of people chose that answer.



14% of respondents indicated that they were a carer for a child or older person. According to the Irish Health Survey 2019 (CSO 2020) 13% of people in Ireland are carers. This suggests the flexibility of Learn with NALA services enables some learners who may not otherwise be able to engage in education to do so.

## 4.2 Journey to Learn with NALA

### 4.2.1 History of education and training

We asked survey respondents if, prior to signing up to Learn with NALA services, they had completed any education course since they left school.

Education / training since leaving school?	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	138	55%	60%
No	92	37%	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unknown	19	8%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 36 Completion of any other education or training since leaving school

The table highlights that 60% of respondents had completed other education or training since they left school and before signing up to Learn with NALA services. While Learn with NALA was the first return to education for many (40% of) learners, it was not the first port of call for the majority of learners. Further research into the learner participation in and experience of education and training taken between school and Learn with NALA is warranted.

The table below outlines the reasons why respondents chose not to participate in learning between the point at which they left school and signing up to Learn with NALA services. Not all participants answered this follow up question.

Reasons for not doing other education / training	Number	Percent	Percent of cases
Embarrassed to join other learning courses	44	21%	34%
Didn't know where to go	39	19%	30%
Hadn't got the time	26	13%	20%
I just wasn't interested	24	12%	19%
Affordability	23	11%	18%
Lack of childcare to enable you to participate in learning	23	11%	18%
Wasn't able to get transport to learning courses	18	9%	14%
I didn't have broadband or equipment	11	5%	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>160%</b>

Table 37 Reasons why survey respondents may not have done other education or training since leaving school

When asked why they may not have participated in learning since school, 34% cited embarrassment and 30% were not aware of their learning opportunities. These findings can usefully inform Learn with NALA's promotion and awareness work and warrant further research.

## 4.2.2 Motivation to learn

We asked respondents to outline their motivation to learn. This was an open text question and the responses have been grouped into themes into the table below.

Motivation	Number	Percent	Percent of cases
Get a qualification	38	20%	23%
Career	37	20%	22%
Personal development	37	20%	22%
Improve English / reading	32	17%	19%
Mental health / rehabilitation	15	8%	9%
Improve ICT skills	14	7%	8%
Help my children	11	6%	7%
Improve Maths	2	1%	1%
Don't know	1	0.5%	0.6%
Help others	1	0.5%	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>112%</b>

Table 38 Survey respondents' motivation to learn

Learners identified a number of motivations to learn. The most popular were getting a qualification (23%) and career (22%). This indicates that learners primarily engage with Learn with NALA services to improve their career prospects. Other motivators such as personal development (22%) and mental health / rehabilitation (9%) indicate personal goals; improving English / reading (19%), information and communications technology (ICT) skills (7%) and Maths (1%) indicate educational goals; while helping children (7%) and helping others (1%) indicate social goals.

### 4.2.3 Hearing about Learn with NALA

How did you hear about NALA?	Number	Percent	Percent of cases
Online	130	53%	63%
Word of mouth	70	29%	34%
TV	20	8%	10%
Print (poster or paper)	11	5%	5%
Radio	9	4%	4%
Event, like the Ploughing Championships	4	2%	2%
	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>119%</b>

Table 39 How survey respondents heard about NALA

The majority of learners found Learn with NALA services online (63%) indicating that promotional activity online is working to reach the target learners. A large proportion (34%) of learners heard about Learn with NALA by word of mouth, indicating that many learners are happy to recommend Learn with NALA to others.

## 4.2.4 Choosing Learn with NALA

The table below shows the reason why respondents chose Learn with NALA services rather than taking up a learning opportunity with another provider:

	Number	Percent	Percent of cases
<b>I could do it online</b>	135	24%	57%
<b>It was free</b>	107	19%	45%
<b>I could work by myself</b>	89	16%	38%
<b>I could do it at a time that suited me</b>	77	14%	33%
<b>My centre was using Learn with NALA</b>	66	12%	28%
<b>I didn't have to travel</b>	56	10%	24%
<b>I didn't want to work in a group</b>	20	4%	8%
<b>I didn't need childcare to do the course</b>	19	3%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>240%</b>

Table 40 Why survey respondents chose Learn with NALA

Learners chose Learn with NALA services because it is online (57%), free (45%), they could work by themselves (38%) and they could do it at a time that suited them (33%). This indicates that the flexibility of the service is a key benefit to learners who may not otherwise be able to engage with a learning opportunity.

## 4.3 Learning with NALA

### 4.3.1 Method of engagement

	Number	Percent	Percent of cases
<b>Online (Virtual Learning Environment)</b>	175	62%	75%
<b>In a centre (For example an ETB, National Learning Network, or special school)</b>	52	18%	22%
<b>By telephone with a NALA Tutor (Tutoring Service)</b>	44	16%	19%
<b>NALA Freephone</b>	12	4%	5%
	<b>283</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122%</b>

Table 41 Survey respondents' method of engagement with NALA

The table above illustrates that 75% of the respondents to the survey had completed their NALA courses online through the Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment. Almost one in four had completed courses in a centre and almost one in five used the Tutoring Service. There was a higher response rate from independent learners than centre learners. Centre learners make up 44% of online learners (see section 3.1.1.3) but just 22% of respondents to the survey.

### 4.3.2 Time of engagement

The table below highlights when respondents worked on their Learn with NALA course or with a NALA tutor:

	Number	Percent	Percent of Cases
<b>In the morning (weekday)</b>	107	33%	44%
<b>In the evening (weekday)</b>	105	33%	43%
<b>In the afternoon (weekday)</b>	75	23%	31%
<b>At the weekend</b>	35	11%	15%
<b>Total</b>	322	100%	133%

Table 42 Time of engagement with Learn with NALA by survey respondents

Learners are using Learn with NALA services at all times of the day, with most activity taking place during weekdays in the morning or the evening.

### 4.3.3 Subject area of first course with NALA

The table below shows the subject area of the first courses that respondents took with the Virtual Learning Environment or the first area they worked on with their tutor on the Tutoring Service:

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
<b>Reading/writing</b>	105	42%	45%
<b>Computers</b>	62	25%	27%
<b>Maths</b>	37	15%	16%
<b>Personal Development</b>	29	12%	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unknown	16	6%	
	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 43 Subject area first taken by survey respondents on Learn with NALA

The table shows that reading/writing was the most popular first subject for respondents with 45%, followed by computers, maths and personal development. This suggests adult learners are more likely to be influenced to get started with Learn with NALA through promotion of reading and writing learning opportunities.

### 4.3.4 Level of first course with NALA

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
<b>Level 1</b>	85	34%	35%
<b>Level 2</b>	57	23%	24%
<b>Level 3</b>	54	22%	22%
<b>Preparing for Level 3</b>	26	10%	11%
<b>Don't know</b>	21	8%	9%
Total	<b>243</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Missing	6	2%	
Total	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 44 Level of first NALA course taken by survey respondents

The table illustrates that, for those respondents who completed a course on the Virtual Learning Environment, the highest proportion (35%) started on a Level 1 course. This suggests that learners are more likely to be influenced to get started with Learn with NALA through promotion of lower level courses.

### 4.3.5 Completion of first course with NALA

The table below outlines whether or not respondents who took a course on the Virtual Learning Environment completed the first course they started:

Completed first course?	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Did not complete	87	35%	36%
Completed and received a NALA certificate	93	37%	39%
Completed and received a QOI certificate	59	24%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unknown	10	4%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	
	<b>249</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 45 Completion of first Virtual Learning Environment course taken by survey respondents

The table illustrates that the majority of respondents (64%) completed the first course they started on the Virtual Learning Environment and received either a certificate from NALA or a QOI Certificate.

### 4.3.6 Further course

Did another course?	Number	Percent	Valid percent
No	86	35%	36%
Yes with Learn with NALA	132	53%	55%
Yes with another provider	23	9%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unknown	8	3%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	
	<b>249</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 46 Survey respondents' progression to another course



The table above highlights that almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) progressed to do another course after they completed their first one, either with Learn with NALA or with another provider.

This indicates that the majority of learners have the skills, confidence and motivation to continue on their learning journey after an initial course on Learn with NALA. 85% of respondents who chose to do another course following their first course, did so with Learn with NALA, indicating a high level of trust in NALA from learners.

	Number	Percent	Percent of Cases
<b>ICT</b>	43	31%	34%
<b>Advanced Level</b>	30	22%	24%
<b>English</b>	25	18%	20%
<b>Maths</b>	21	15%	17%
<b>Communication skills</b>	3	2%	2%
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	2	1%	2%
<b>Personal Effectiveness</b>	2	1%	2%
<b>Other</b>	13	9%	10%
<b>Total</b>	139	100%	111%

Table 47 Subject area of survey respondents' second courses

The most popular follow-up course after the initial one was in information and communications technologies (ICT) (34%) indicating that learners are more likely to be influenced to continue their learning journey with an offer of an ICT course. 24% of respondents indicated that they moved on to an 'Advanced Level' course, where they moved on to a 'higher level' course or specified 'Level 2' or 'Level 3'. The next most popular type of further courses were English (20%) and Maths (16%).

## 4.4 Focus groups

We completed two focus groups with learners who had indicated on the online survey that they would be willing to meet and discuss their experience of Learn with NALA services. These focus groups gave the opportunity for participants to tell the story of Learn with NALA's impact on their learning journey.

## 4.4.1 Focus group participants

In total, 14 learners and 1 tutor participated in the focus groups. They had signed up to Learn with NALA services at various levels, mostly Level 1. There were more participants aged 55+ (9 out of 15) in the focus groups than among Tutoring Service learners (32% - see section 3.2.3.1) or online learners (15% - see section 3.1.1). Women (13 out of 15) were also over-represented among focus group participants.

The focus groups attracted participants from diverse backgrounds, including a range of learners from the vulnerable groups prioritised by the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).

Number of learners	
<b>Level of entry to Learn with NALA services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 entered at Level 1</li> <li>• 2 entered at Level 2</li> <li>• 2 entered at Preparing for Level 3</li> <li>• 3 entered at Level 3</li> <li>• 1 couldn't recall their level of entry</li> </ul>
<b>Course completion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 had completed their course at the time of participating in the workshop</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 were aged 25-34</li> <li>• 2 were aged 45-54</li> <li>• 9 were aged 55+</li> <li>• 1 didn't want to indicate their age</li> </ul>
<b>Learning needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 had learning needs, for example, dyslexia, dyspraxia and so on</li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerable groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 had physical disabilities</li> <li>• 1 was a tutor acting on behalf of people with learning and physical disabilities</li> <li>• 2 were members of the Traveller community</li> <li>• 2 were low-paid workers</li> <li>• 2 were part-time workers</li> <li>• 2 were retired</li> <li>• 1 was an asylum seeker</li> </ul>

Table 48 Focus group participants

## 4.4.2 Summary of key themes

Participants in the focus groups expressed the deep and profound impact of using Learn with NALA services on their lives in terms of employment, education, personal development, mental health, and community. They reported positive impact against the following themes:

### Access and participation

Participants highlighted the ability of Learn with NALA services to enable people who are socially and geographically isolated to feel part of a 'community' by participating in learning activity. Participants indicated that Learn with NALA services provided a positive and rewarding learning environment for individuals who had fallen 'through the cracks' of an education system that is too rigid. Learn with NALA also provides flexibility for people with learning needs.

### Confidence and motivation

Participants pointed to the boost in confidence that they enjoyed due to the independent, self-direction of their learning and acknowledgment of their achievements through certification.

### Skills development

Participants referred to the practical everyday skills they are developing as a result of using Learn with NALA services.

Participants discussed the ability of Learn with NALA to provide options for people with disabilities who cannot participate in classroom-based learning. This was evident from representatives taking part in the focus group on behalf of people who were non-verbal. The format of the Virtual Learning Environment and the support available through the text to speech facility provided an alternative and suitable learning format for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. A number of participants indicated if this had not been available they would not have completed their learning and would not otherwise have been able to progress in their employment as a result.

### Wider benefits

Participants highlighted the positive impact of Learn with NALA in assisting with mental health, recovery from illness and work. Focus group participants also suggested improvements to the Virtual Learning Environment interface, including:

- more positive language around courses that are in progress; and
- simplified log-in and printing processes.

### 4.4.3 Sample cases

Not all participants were willing to have their story captured as a sample case, however those who did are reflected in the extracts below. They illustrate the range of learners engaged with Learn with NALA and its impact.

#### Migrant to Ireland



"English is not my first language. I speak Portuguese. When I started the Learn with NALA Programme I couldn't even call to ask for the lessons, I asked friend. I used my phone to translate in Google and I told her please help me to call them and ask them to help me. I couldn't say any words in English.

"I am here since 2019 and I started with NALA in March 2020. I know I have loads more to do in working toward English but at least now I can talk a bit and I can explain the words I need. When I started with NALA, most of the things I couldn't say. The only words I had were 'thank you' and 'sorry'. When I started with NALA, it was all OK until December 2020 and after that we stopped. I then went to the ETB and continued to study English, Office Administration.

"I have now applied to study law at University, because I have a law degree from my country. I think the best thing with NALA was during COVID, I couldn't go out and I did everything from my room and felt sick. NALA helped me because for the small things in my life even to explain to the doctor how I am sick, I can now do this. I can also go out and buy something, or to look for a school for my kids. Everything in life has changed, because of the help I got from NALA."

## Worker with learning difficulty



"I have a learning difficulty and reading and writing was a big problem for me. I am in a job part-time and getting some support here as well.

"I found it very helpful for me and lets me do the books in my job now.

"For years I was bad in terms of progressing after school. I was very weak in many areas and had to have help. It was quite difficult.

"My tutors in the ETB has asked me for a couple of months to join NALA and it was very helpful to me."

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## Learner making progress with Maths



"I used to find a problem with maths, but since I went to NALA I found it very helpful to do maths step by step. I am learning maths now and it helps my line of work in an office. I was looking at the courses online and I think it would be good to have more progression available at higher level than is there at the minute."



"I am a teacher with the home education network. Single handedly NALA has saved children who have been dropping out of school due to lack of support being available to them. Kids are falling through the cracks of an education system and NALA is the only organisation there to save them.

"While we may not still have a lockdown here in Ireland, people still have locked down in their rooms and NALA has been the point of difference for many of them. I see this on a daily basis where NALA is helping with the mental health of these young people who are working from their room all the time.

"While we are working with people who are all over the age of 18, there is nothing for those who are under 18 and that is a serious gap in provision. There is also a huge gap for people with disabilities if they are under 18 as they cannot access education if they are non-verbal. There is a real need for provision for these groups.

"NALA are lifesavers for many people throughout Ireland. They are lifesavers for farmers in rural Ireland. They are lifesavers for mums who don't have anything.

"One thing that is very sad is that the unfortunate reality is that these courses are for people who are over 18. Young people are dropping out of schools at a horrendous level and there is no way we are going to get them back into education. The beauty about Learn with NALA is that it is real and authentic. The learning at each level is absolutely correct for what people need. There is no additional material included as you would get in a school curriculum. It is real and what people need.

"It is something that young people can identify with and get the feeling of accomplishment. We are dropping the ball with our youths in society and I beg NALA to reconsider its age limit and the levels it is offered in education for. We need support for young people as well.

"NALA could support the online community to enable people to bond together [...] to get people who are isolated in rural Ireland to learn together in a collaborative process to produce collective wisdom. It could be amazing!"

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#### Learner recovering from a brain injury



"I started NALA in Headways after a brain injury. At the beginning I found it difficult but I'm now at Level 3 and almost finished it. I worked my way all the way up from Level 1.

"I found it very good. My concentration and short time memory went and I'm now getting back there now.

"I have double vision and the fact that the website reads the text out to me is a godsend and it is very helpful. At the beginning when my vision was very bad, I was finding it very hard to do anything on the computer. I used the microphone to read it out to me and I don't think I would have been able to complete the course if it wasn't there for me.

"We learn in different ways and when it read it out to me, I could remember it better. For me to be able to understand and see mistakes, I had to have it read out to me."

## Learner with feedback for the Virtual Learning Environment



"I'm still working on the programme. I find some parts of it OK, but some parts I'm getting wrong and find it frustrating. Sometimes it is very hard to navigate the website. I find it hard to log in at times and when you get a log in wrong you have to ring Dublin to get help.

"Printing can be difficult to do. The website just wouldn't allow me to do it.

"It would be good if there was a quiz on the website to reinforce what you have learned that week."

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## Parent of child with disability



"My child is a wheelchair user with multiple complex disability and a mild learning disability. She has a very short working memory which causes her problems when learning. School environment was never going to work out well for her, so she is home schooled.

"I heard about NALA from another home-schooler and left it would be a useful way for her to get a QQI Certificate so she would have some pre-work training as she moves into her later teens.

"We like the fact she can sit down at her laptop and work away. She has done 10 courses like this so far. She likes the fact that it is accessible and she can just sit down and work on it.



"She also likes the fact that there are Irish accents and imagery on the website. So much of the online educational content online is American generated.

"The daily living skills she has encountered on the website have been really useful. Just the fact that she is listening and speaking is very useful."

"She likes the independence of it and the fact she can get a certificate in the post – she has been absolutely tickled with that and was delighted. It has given her a boost of confidence.

"I have been working through the Learn with NALA courses for her and it is just fab. It gives her something to get feedback on.

"One piece of feedback is that when a user looks at their progress page, if something is not finished, it shows up as unsuccessful. This is tremendously demotivating. It needs to say in progress or incomplete. It sounds like you've failed and the first time my daughter seen that she was really upset. It is genuinely demotivating.

"The website itself is not the most straightforward to operate. Often I find I have to have two windows open which is really frustrating."

## Tutor in a centre



"I am a tutor in a centre and it is a centre for people who learn differently. I'm here speaking on their behalf.

"I have 5 groups that I help to work on the courses. I love the course for the people I am working with. Often they do not have access for any kind of mainstream education programs as some are non-verbal, some have poor movement so they can't go into a school or centre situation. To me, this is the only option for this kind of group and it has really given such confidence to people that their view of self has changed completely. I even have one person writing a book now that had never had proper mainstream education.

"I also have a group of people who are looking at how we can help people who are non-verbal to access information on suicide prevention services."

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## Learner who joined during the COVID-19 Pandemic



"I started with a group before COVID started and we were doing reading and writing. It was really good and very enjoyable, I loved it and couldn't get enough of it. I was so disappointed when it all came to an end due to COVID. When I was isolated, I saw NALA online and I went for it. It has gave me great confidence and I work on it through the iPad. I just felt it was something I was doing for myself as I fell through the cracks in school and probably at home as well. I really did enjoy it and got so much from it. I think it is a wonderful course. I did Level 2 computers."

# 5. Discussion

This section further discusses key findings from Sections 3 to 4 in terms of what is working well for learners on Learn with NALA and what could potentially be improved. The analysis is guided throughout by NALA's Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work (2012) and research on the wealth model in adult literacy, "the simple idea that adult learners bring many different experiences and strengths into the class with them" (NALA 2018, p. 7).

## Principles for good adult literacy work (NALA 2012, p. 7)

- Adult literacy work is based on a philosophy of adult education which is concerned with personal development and social action.
- Adult literacy learning is an active and expressive process. Students have the right to explore their own needs and interests, set their own goals and decide how, where and when they wish to learn.
- Adult literacy work respects different beliefs, cultures and ways of being. An ethical code of trust and confidentiality underpins all aspects of the work.
- Students' knowledge and skills are vital for the effective organisation of adult literacy work. Students should have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of provision.
- Adults learn best when the decision to return to education is their own and the environment is supportive, relaxed and friendly.

## 5.1 What is working well

The following five themes emerge from the research indicating the significant success and impact of Learn with NALA services for adult literacy learners:

- Targeting and spend
- Meeting learners' needs
- Programme flexibility
- Progression and success
- Recognition of achievements

### 1. Targeting and spread

A significant proportion of learners using the Tutoring Service were returning to education for the first time (60%). Additionally, a higher representation of marginalised groups were participating in the Tutoring Service than the general population (for example, 23% unemployed, 31% migrants). These findings indicate that the Tutoring Service is reaching those “furthest behind” including target groups identified in the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).

Findings from respondents to the survey also indicate a higher representation of marginalised learners than the general population using Learn with NALA services. For example, 46% of respondent said they had a disability, 26% said they were unemployed, 14% said they were carers, 6% said they were members of the Traveller community and 2% said they were ex-offenders or ex-prisoners.

There is a relatively equitable spread of learners throughout Ireland for both services (Virtual Learning Environment and Tutoring Service) when considering the proportion of population in each county. Participation is also approximately gender-balanced (54% female). There does not appear, therefore, to be any notable geographical or gender bias in the recruitment of learners.

Most learners who responded to the survey had found out about Learn with NALA online and were primarily motivated by career goals, personal development goals or to get a qualification. These findings can be used to inform Learn with NALA's promotional and awareness campaigns.

## 2. Meeting learners' needs

The Virtual Learning Environment had over 6,500 learners in its first 18 months. The survey results indicate that most chose Learn with NALA because it is an online service. This demonstrates the demand for online learning at Levels 1 to 3 and the success of NALA's promotion of the service.

There were also over 1,100 learners using the Tutoring Service in the research period. This shows a continued demand for distance learning over the phone. 72% of those learners worked with NALA for up to 10 learning sessions. As the Tutoring Service is not intended for long-term learning, this suggests that many learners' needs were met within a few sessions, or they progressed on to long-term provision.

85% of survey respondents who did another course after their first course, did so with Learn with NALA. This finding implies that the service is meeting these learners' needs as they are choosing to continue their learning journey with NALA.

Focus group participants commented that Learn with NALA fills gaps in services for adults with disabilities, people living in rural areas and parents. The service is also used by home-educated children and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners. However there are no ESOL courses nor are there any courses designed using teaching and learning approaches for children's literacy on the Virtual Learning Environment. Learn with NALA does not specifically target home education or ESOL learners, but the service appears to be meeting the needs for some members of these groups.

## 3. Programme flexibility

The self-directed nature of Learn with NALA services enable adult learners to take ownership of their learning. It allows them to make decisions about their learning journey and progression options, particularly for independent learners, who make up the majority of learners on the Virtual Learning Environment. Online learners can dip in and out of courses in literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and personal development at whatever level they choose. Tutoring Service sessions are tailored to the individual learner and the number of interventions can vary significantly, depending on how the learner wants to use the service. Tutoring Service learners can choose what they want to learn based on their specific needs and interests at times that work for them. This flexibility takes account of the 'spiky profile' (NALA 2018) of adult literacy learners who may have different levels of skills and confidence in different areas.

This research has found that learners use Learn with NALA services at various times of day, including weekends, and a third of learners chose the service because they could work at a time that suited them. It has also found that most learners who achieve Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) certification make swift progress; allowing learners to work at their own pace enables rapid progression.

## 4. Progression and success

The Virtual Learning Environment completion rates at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3, and the QQI certification success rates at Level 2 and Level 3, indicate a high degree of success and impact for learners.

Independent and centre learners have very similar rates of completing course components (digital badges) across all levels, and very similar rates of completing courses at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3 (NALA certificates). This suggests that online learners can make their way through course material independently.

Learners' success also goes beyond measurable achievements on the Virtual Learning Environment. One focus group participant, a tutor in a centre working with people with disabilities, described the personal impact on confidence and self-image and how learning on Learn with NALA can provide the skills and confidence to go on to further achievements:



**“It has really given such confidence to people that their view of self has changed completely. I even have one person writing a book now that had never had proper mainstream education.”**

**Learn with NALA Centre Tutor**

Success on the Tutoring Service is not quantifiable as the service is tailored to each individual learner. However, a primary aim of the service is to address immediate learning needs and to refer learners on to other services. The finding that 62% of learners on the Tutoring Service have no more than 5 interventions suggests that this aim could be being achieved for many learners.

## 5. Recognition of achievements

The most common motivation to learn in the survey was to attain a qualification. By offering NALA certificates at Level 1 and Preparing for Level 3, and courses leading to QQI certificates at Levels 2 and 3, Learn with NALA supports these learners' ambitions. Receiving a certificate can boost learner confidence, as reported in focus group feedback.

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) feature on Level 2 and 3 courses allows learners to focus on new learning and progress quickly to assessment if they wish. The vast majority (96%) of learners on Level 2 or Level 3 courses were eligible to benefit from this feature.

### 5.2 Considerations for improvement

Three themes emerge from the research indicating opportunities for improvement of Learn with NALA services.

#### 1. Retention, progression and success

While some drop-off is expected from any free online service, a return rate of 66% of Virtual Learning Environment users to the site after their first visit can be improved. It is of particular interest that return rates for Level 1 courses are lower than the other levels. This suggests that learners at lower levels may have particular needs that the Virtual Learning Environment does not currently meet.

Level 3 emerges as a particularly challenging level for learners. On the other hand, Preparing for Level 3 courses have low uptake and low progression rates. It is not clear that these courses are having the intended effect of helping learners to achieve their goals at Level 3.

A small number of individual courses had unusually low return or success rates. For example, Level 2 Data Handling had a return rate of 33% and Level 2 Writing had a QQI award success rate of 15%. These findings, used in tandem with course feedback forms received from learners, are helpful for course planning and development.

Despite progressing equally well through courses on the whole as discussed above, independent and centre learners differ in their rates of achievement of QQI certificates. It appears that the expert support available in a centre context is helping centre learners to achieve QQI certificates, which is positive, but also implies a need for more support for independent learners with meeting the requirements of QQI assessment.

Recognition of achievement has been shown to be an important motivator for online learners. NALA should consider how best to recognise the diverse achievements of Tutoring Service learners. In terms of progression, tutors currently record the planned next steps of learners when they finish their time on the service. There could be a more systematic approach to measuring progression and success, including callbacks to see what next steps learners actually took, and certificates of achievement for learners who have finished with the service.

## 2. Equality and vulnerable groups

Different groups are having different experiences of Learn with NALA. Further investigation could identify practical actions that NALA could take to attract under-represented groups and to improve outcomes for groups who are currently less likely to succeed.

For example, more women than men engage with the Virtual Learning Environment, and particularly the Tutoring Service (60% of Tutoring Service learners are female). However, those men who are working with the Tutoring Service have more sessions on average (13) than women (9). Evidence suggests that on average, men have greater literacy needs than women (for example, ERC 2023, p. 79), so the higher number of sessions for male learners may reflect the learners' needs, and the need to attract more male learners to the service.

Alternatively (or additionally), it may be that women are disengaging from the Tutoring Service early because they are more likely to be time-poor due to the unequal distribution of caring duties in society (McGinnity and Russell 2008). AONTAS (2023) in a study of learners across Further Education and Training in Ireland found that "for some learners, a lack of affordable childcare was a barrier to their learning" (p. 22).



Male learners are more likely than female learners to complete course outcomes (digital badges) and complete courses (NALA certificates) which suggests that there may be some disadvantage for female online learners regarding course completion. Based on statistical findings only, it is not possible to provide a definitive explanation of these gender differences.

Some vulnerable groups may have barriers to accessing the Virtual Learning Environment and or the Tutoring Service in the first place. For example, just one learner in the research timeframe was experiencing homelessness, and that learner had just one session. Learn with NALA is reaching vulnerable groups as discussed in the previous section, but it has scope to reach more.

### 3. Potential for expanded reach

Learners participating in the focus groups and responding to the survey indicated that they would like to see increased offerings at the higher levels. There is also evidence of demand for QQI certification at Level 1.

The Virtual Learning Environment reached over 6,500 literacy learners in its first 18 months of operation. In the same period, over 1,100 learners engaged with the Tutoring Service. Assuming that the 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) results (CSO 2013) remain roughly accurate, and 18% of adults in Ireland have literacy needs, there must be tens of thousands more people with literacy needs in Ireland. Many of those are learning elsewhere; however, it is most likely that there is a large cohort of people with literacy needs who are not yet engaging with any literacy services. Learn with NALA services can continue to grow and reach new learners.

Older adults are under-represented among online learners, yet older adults typically do better than other age groups on the Virtual Learning Environment. Targeted advertising and coaching Tutoring Service learners in digital skills, could help bring more older adults onto the Virtual Learning Environment.

This research has identified barriers for adults to return to learning. Embarrassment was the most common barrier expressed in the survey and the issue of stigma was also discussed by focus group participants. Practical barriers such as access to equipment appeared to have had less effect. These findings can inform NALA's communications and outreach work.

# 6. Considerations for next steps

There are 23 recommendations running across the following five themes that have emerged from the research:

- Strategy
- Further research
- Programme delivery and supports
- Promotion
- Systems

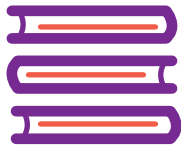
Specific recommendations under each theme are outlined below.



## Strategy

**Review the strategy and funding opportunities of NALA's Learn with NALA provision considering this report and the twelve identified vulnerable groups for targeted support in the Adult Literacy for Life 10-Year Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).**

1. Agree a new targeted strategy in line with the Adult Literacy for Life 10-Year Strategy priority groups, actions and timelines that target identified priority groups for Learn with NALA services. This strategy will inform programme delivery, support and engagement, user experience (UX) and design as well as promotional activity.
2. Identify opportunities to explore new sources of funding that align with NALA's mission and could help to expand the potential reach of Learn with NALA.
3. Identify relevant opportunities to advocate for flexible learning opportunities for learners outside of the scope of NALA's provision but where gaps were identified in the research including:
  - a. children, under the age of 18, who have been 'failed by the system';
  - b. learners who are non-verbal and cannot participate in mainstream; and
  - c. home schoolers.



## Further research

**Continue to research Learn with NALA and use findings to inform strategy, programme delivery, support and engagement, user experience (UX) and design, as well as promotional activity.**

4. Scope a monitoring and evaluation framework that will inform future development of the service.
5. Monitor key indicators as identified from this report on an annual basis.
6. Further investigate why learners of different profiles (age groups, gender, level, learner type and so on) vary in their enrolment, retention, progress, completion and award achievement outcomes on the Virtual Learning Environment and Tutoring Service, perhaps through qualitative methods.
7. Consider a targeted piece of research with learners on the Tutoring Service who have had more than 20 sessions to understand their needs and barriers to progression.
8. Gather feedback about the user of the Virtual Learning Environment perhaps with user testing, usability studies or an accessibility audit and action as appropriate.



## Programme delivery and supports

**Review programme delivery and supports for both the Learn with NALA Tutoring Service and the Virtual Learning Environment considering the findings in the report, relevant research and developments in national strategy.**

9. Put in place a process to quickly identify and follow up with learners who sign up to Learn with NALA but do not take up the learning opportunity (do not login again after registering or do not take any sessions).
10. Create and implement a framework for success on both the Virtual Learning Environment and the Tutoring Service that will support learners to identify and achieve their goals and that aligns with NALA's Literacy Impact report (NALA 2020) - to include qualitative indicators of success.
11. Consider live support options in line with learner activity times on the Virtual Learning Environment.
12. Consider Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) validation of Level 1 programmes on the Virtual Learning Environment.
13. Prioritise programmes on the Virtual Learning Environment with the lowest levels of return, progress and completion for course reviews in 2024.



## Promotion

**Based on the outcome of recommendation 1, create targeted promotion strategies for both Learn with NALA provision informed by this report, relevant research and developments in national strategy.**

14. Consider promoting the Virtual Learning Environment learning opportunity to 18-45 year olds and people with disabilities, online and offline. Use images from these cohorts in promotion, course content and the website. Use findings from this report on the positive impacts of using the Virtual Learning Environment along with further research to inform messaging on motivators and enablers.
15. Consider promotion of the Tutoring Service to learners aged 55 and above offline.
16. Ensure that advertising combats stigma and encourages learners to overcome any embarrassment they may feel about returning to learning.
17. Consider geo-targeted campaigns. While most counties are proportionately represented, the ability of NALA to provide inclusion opportunities for isolated communities was stressed by focus group participants. This may provide an opportunity for NALA to have an increased impact on learners in particularly isolated and disadvantaged communities.
18. Prioritise promotional activity online for those target groups that are most likely to find information online. Two-thirds of learners interviewed through the survey indicated that they learned about Learn with NALA online and almost one third heard about it by word of mouth.



## Systems

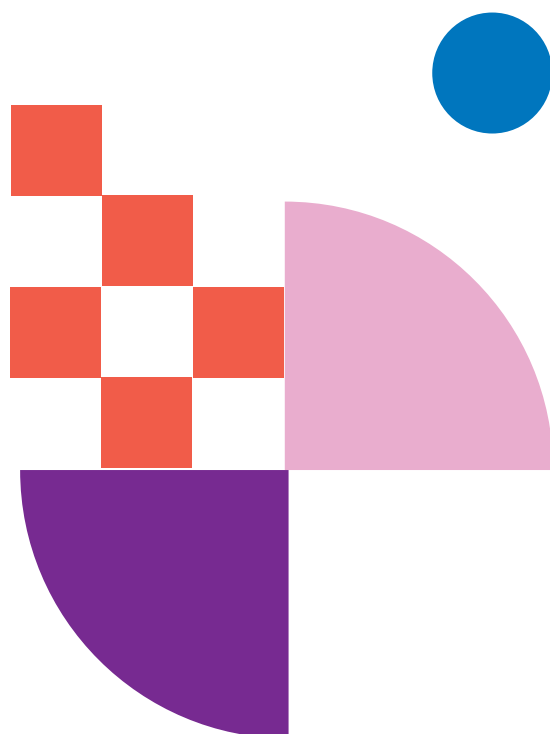
**Update NALA systems and data collection to enable improved understanding of learner journeys, support and engagement as well as to demonstrate achievement against the priorities in the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy (SOLAS 2021a).**

19. Integrate data from the Virtual Learning Environment, Customer Relationship Management system, Learning Management System and the NALA Salesforce system into one system.
20. Update data collection fields to improve consistency and enable NALA to demonstrate achievement against its strategic objectives and against the priorities of the ALL Strategy (SOLAS 2021a). For example, by aligning “vulnerable group” categories on Salesforce with ALL Strategy target groups. Additionally, collecting new data such as Eircodes could potentially enable new insights like the extent to which the programme is targeting people living in the more deprived areas in the country.
21. Create improved reporting and dashboards which could potentially enable targeted supports for individual learners.
22. Incorporate controls and balances for data entry and provide training for NALA staff inputting the data.
23. Ensure the default format of extracted data is suitable for reporting and analysis.

# 7. Conclusion

This report provides an invaluable snapshot and set of recommendations of the profile and experience of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learners who used the Learn with NALA Tutoring Service and the Learn with NALA Virtual Learning Environment between March 2020 and November 2022.

The data, initial discussion and recommendations will be further considered by NALA to ensure that we are providing the most effective and impactful service to our learners. It provides us with an evidence base to set our future ambitions and activities.



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The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing online learning courses, providing a tutoring service and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

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National Adult Literacy Agency

Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



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