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Labour Force Survey Revisions in Education: 2010-2020

The National Statistics Office (NSO) is publishing revised educational attainment statistics from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 2010 - 2020. The revision is a result of the realignment of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). This revision was necessary to ensure better compliance with European Regulations governing education statistics and improve comparability of results at the European level.

NSO reviewed the current educational system and the entry requirements at different levels. This exercise mainly focussed on state-run post-secondary institutions since this level of education is experiencing an increase in the range of courses offered to prospective applicants. The outcome of this exercise led to a reclassification by which attainment at ISCED levels 2 and 3 is determined.

This release contains a series of revised LFS indicators concerning education statistics for the period 2010 to 2020.

Educational Attainment

LFS estimates indicated that, in 2020, the number of persons with a low level of education stood at 203,151 accounting for nearly half of those aged 15 and over. Those having a medium level of education amounted to 129,363 (29.5 per cent) while persons with a high level of education totalled 105,750 (24.1 per cent) (Table 1).

The share of persons aged 15 to 64 having a low level of education decreased from 59.6 per cent in 2010 to 37.0 per cent in 2020. Conversely, the share of persons with a medium or high level of education increased by 8.7 and 14.0 percentage points respectively in the last eleven years (Table 3).

On average, over the past eleven years, the number of employed having a low level of education remained relatively stable around 80,317 persons. On the contrary, the share of those employed with a medium level of education almost doubled within a decade. Similarly, employed persons attaining a high level of education increased from 34,234 in 2010 to 88,920 in 2020 (Table 2).

Across the years, persons with a higher level of education were more likely to be in employment when compared to those with low attainment levels. In 2020, out of every 100 persons aged 20 to 64 years with a high level of education, 89 were employed. Similarly, the employment rate for persons with a medium level of education was 81.9 per cent. Persons with a low level of education had the lowest employment rate (64.1 per cent) (Table 4).

Annual Education indicators

Further to this revision, the rate of early leavers from education and training (ELET rate) was updated to 12.6 per cent, in 2020, a drop of 8.8 percentage points from 2010 levels. Among males the rate dropped from 28.3 per cent in 2010 to 14.7 per cent in 2020 while that for females declined by 3.8 percentage points over the last eleven years reaching 10.2 per cent in 2020 (Table 5). Although Malta's levels for the ELET indicator declined significantly over the years, in 2020, the rate was 2.6 percentage points higher than the EU 28 2020 target of 10 per cent.

At the same time, data for 2020 showed that the percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 years achieving at least an upper secondary education was 85.1 per cent. This indicator was higher for females (88.0 per cent) when compared to males (82.6 per cent) (Table 6) ■

Table 1. Distribution of persons aged 15 years and over by education attainment and sex

	Males		Females		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Low						
2010	105,815	62.0	114,805	66.4	220,620	64.2
2011	104,786	61.1	112,835	64.7	217,621	62.9
2012	103,542	59.4	112,141	63.4	215,683	61.4
2013	102,593	57.7	109,348	60.9	211,941	59.3
2014	103,014	56.2	107,682	58.8	210,696	57.5
2015	103,219	54.7	106,105	56.7	209,324	55.7
2016	102,599	53.0	103,409	54.0	206,008	53.5
2017	101,879	50.9	104,809	53.4	206,688	52.1
2018	99,892	47.6	103,044	51.0	202,936	49.3
2019	102,143	46.1	102,396	49.2	204,539	47.6
2020	104,091	45.8	99,060	47.0	203,151	46.4
Medium						
2010	42,183	24.7	35,694	20.6	77,877	22.7
2011	42,276	24.6	38,672	22.2	80,948	23.4
2012	44,807	25.7	38,633	21.8	83,440	23.8
2013	47,610	26.8	41,111	22.9	88,721	24.8
2014	49,039	26.8	44,417	24.3	93,456	25.5
2015	53,634	28.4	47,384	25.3	101,018	26.9
2016	57,017	29.5	52,911	27.6	109,928	28.6
2017	59,519	29.7	54,062	27.5	113,581	28.6
2018	65,976	31.4	55,350	27.4	121,326	29.4
2019	70,645	31.9	55,010	26.4	125,655	29.2
2020	69,995	30.8	59,368	28.1	129,363	29.5
High						
2010	22,805	13.4	22,525	13.0	45,330	13.2
2011	24,449	14.3	22,858	13.1	47,307	13.7
2012	25,998	14.9	26,075	14.7	52,073	14.8
2013	27,743	15.6	29,026	16.2	56,769	15.9
2014	31,150	17.0	30,940	16.9	62,090	17.0
2015	31,902	16.9	33,737	18.0	65,639	17.5
2016	33,938	17.5	35,044	18.3	68,982	17.9
2017	38,891	19.4	37,486	19.1	76,377	19.3
2018	44,108	21.0	43,679	21.6	87,787	21.3
2019	48,797	22.0	50,805	24.4	99,602	23.2
2020	53,267	23.4	52,483	24.9	105,750	24.1
Total						
2010	170,803	100.0	173,024	100.0	343,827	100.0
2011	171,511	100.0	174,365	100.0	345,876	100.0
2012	174,347	100.0	176,849	100.0	351,196	100.0
2013	177,946	100.0	179,485	100.0	357,431	100.0
2014	183,203	100.0	183,039	100.0	366,242	100.0
2015	188,755	100.0	187,226	100.0	375,981	100.0
2016	193,554	100.0	191,364	100.0	384,918	100.0
2017	200,289	100.0	196,357	100.0	396,646	100.0
2018	209,976	100.0	202,073	100.0	412,049	100.0
2019	221,585	100.0	208,211	100.0	429,796	100.0
2020	227,353	100.0	210,911	100.0	438,264	100.0

Table 2. Distribution of persons aged 15 years and over by education attainment and labour status

	Employed		Unemployed		Inactive		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Low								
2010	81,843	50.3	8,463	70.8	130,314	77.0	220,620	64.2
2011	79,368	47.6	7,823	69.0	130,430	77.7	217,621	62.9
2012	78,278	45.2	8,048	70.3	129,357	77.6	215,683	61.4
2013	77,752	42.8	8,132	68.9	126,057	76.9	211,941	59.3
2014	78,435	41.1	7,724	66.7	124,537	76.0	210,696	57.5
2015	78,590	39.6	7,566	67.2	123,168	74.0	209,324	55.7
2016	79,254	38.1	6,346	62.0	120,408	72.3	206,008	53.5
2017	79,567	36.1	5,117	55.7	122,004	73.1	206,688	52.1
2018	82,096	34.4	4,632	51.1	116,208	70.7	202,936	49.3
2019	85,650	33.6	4,052	42.4	114,837	69.4	204,539	47.6
2020	82,649	31.7	5,204	43.9	115,298	69.7	203,151	46.4
Medium								
2010	46,554	28.6	2,897	24.2	28,426	16.8	77,877	22.7
2011	49,572	29.8	2,851	25.1	28,525	17.0	80,948	23.4
2012	53,119	30.7	2,489	21.8	27,832	16.7	83,440	23.8
2013	57,730	31.8	2,547	21.6	28,444	17.3	88,721	24.8
2014	61,879	32.4	2,518	21.7	29,059	17.7	93,456	25.5
2015	66,201	33.4	2,616	23.2	32,201	19.4	101,018	26.9
2016	72,657	34.9	2,918	28.5	34,353	20.6	109,928	28.6
2017	77,777	35.3	2,794	30.4	33,010	19.8	113,581	28.6
2018	82,695	34.7	3,001	33.1	35,630	21.7	121,326	29.4
2019	86,695	34.0	3,336	34.9	35,624	21.5	125,655	29.2
2020	89,479	34.3	3,943	33.2	35,941	21.7	129,363	29.5
High								
2010	34,234	21.1	597 ^u	5.0 ^u	10,499	6.2	45,330	13.2
2011	37,688	22.6	668 ^u	5.9 ^u	8,951	5.3	47,307	13.7
2012	41,764	24.1	905	7.9	9,404	5.6	52,073	14.8
2013	46,132	25.4	1,131	9.6	9,506	5.8	56,769	15.9
2014	50,557	26.5	1,344	11.6	10,189	6.2	62,090	17.0
2015	53,531	27.0	1,078	9.6	11,030	6.6	65,639	17.5
2016	56,221	27.0	967 ^u	9.5 ^u	11,794	7.1	68,982	17.9
2017	63,145	28.6	1,273 ^u	13.9 ^u	11,959	7.2	76,377	19.3
2018	73,722	30.9	1,426 ^u	15.7 ^u	12,639	7.7	87,787	21.3
2019	82,411	32.3	2,167 ^u	22.7 ^u	15,024	9.1	99,602	23.2
2020	88,920	34.1	2,718	22.9	14,112	8.5	105,750	24.1
Total								
2010	162,631	100.0	11,957	100.0	169,239	100.0	343,827	100.0
2011	166,628	100.0	11,342	100.0	167,906	100.0	345,876	100.0
2012	173,161	100.0	11,442	100.0	166,593	100.0	351,196	100.0
2013	181,614	100.0	11,810	100.0	164,007	100.0	357,431	100.0
2014	190,871	100.0	11,586	100.0	163,785	100.0	366,242	100.0
2015	198,322	100.0	11,260	100.0	166,399	100.0	375,981	100.0
2016	208,132	100.0	10,231	100.0	166,555	100.0	384,918	100.0
2017	220,489	100.0	9,184	100.0	166,973	100.0	396,646	100.0
2018	238,513	100.0	9,059	100.0	164,477	100.0	412,049	100.0
2019	254,756	100.0	9,555	100.0	165,485	100.0	429,796	100.0
2020	261,048	100.0	11,865	100.0	165,351	100.0	438,264	100.0

Table 3. Percentage distribution (15-64 years) by educational attainment levels and year
(%)

Year	Low	Medium	High	Total
2010	59.6	26.2	14.1	100.0
2011	57.8	27.1	15.1	100.0
2012	55.8	27.6	16.6	100.0
2013	53.2	28.9	17.9	100.0
2014	50.8	29.8	19.4	100.0
2015	48.9	31.2	19.9	100.0
2016	46.3	33.3	20.3	100.0
2017	44.2	33.7	22.1	100.0
2018	41.0	34.4	24.6	100.0
2019	38.8	34.2	27.0	100.0
2020	37.0	34.9	28.1	100.0

Table 4. Employment rate for persons aged 20-64 years by educational attainment levels and year
(%)

Year	Low	Medium	High	Total
2010	48.9	75.3	83.6	60.2
2011	49.8	73.8	86.2	61.7
2012	50.8	76.9	86.8	63.9
2013	52.5	78.0	88.2	66.3
2014	54.1	78.7	87.6	67.9
2015	55.2	78.3	88.1	69.0
2016	57.6	79.0	89.0	71.1
2017	58.7	80.3	90.5	73.0
2018	61.6	81.5	90.7	75.5
2019	64.5	81.8	88.3	76.8
2020	64.1	81.9	89.4	77.3

Table 5. Early leavers from education and training (18-24) by sex
(%)

Year	Males	Females	Total
2010	28.3	14.0	21.4
2011	24.2	13.1	18.8
2012	22.7	13.4	18.1
2013	19.6	14.5	17.1
2014	18.7	15.1	17.0
2015	19.2	13.1	16.3
2016	19.1	11.8	15.6
2017	16.3	11.5	14.0
2018	14.2	13.8	14.0
2019	14.4	13.3	13.9
2020	14.7	10.2	12.6
EU 28 target			10.0

Table 6. Youth educational attainment¹ (20-24) by sex
(%)

Year	Males	Females	Total
2010	67.9	84.2	75.7
2011	73.0	85.0	78.9
2012	74.8	84.0	79.3
2013	77.8	84.1	80.9
2014	77.3	82.4	79.8
2015	76.9	85.7	81.1
2016	76.5	85.7	80.9
2017	79.8	85.8	82.7
2018	82.3	81.0	81.7
2019	81.4	83.1	82.2
2020	82.6	88.0	85.1

¹ Persons with at least upper secondary education (ISCED ≥ 3)

Methodological Notes

1. Reason for Revision

a. Realignment of education attainment levels

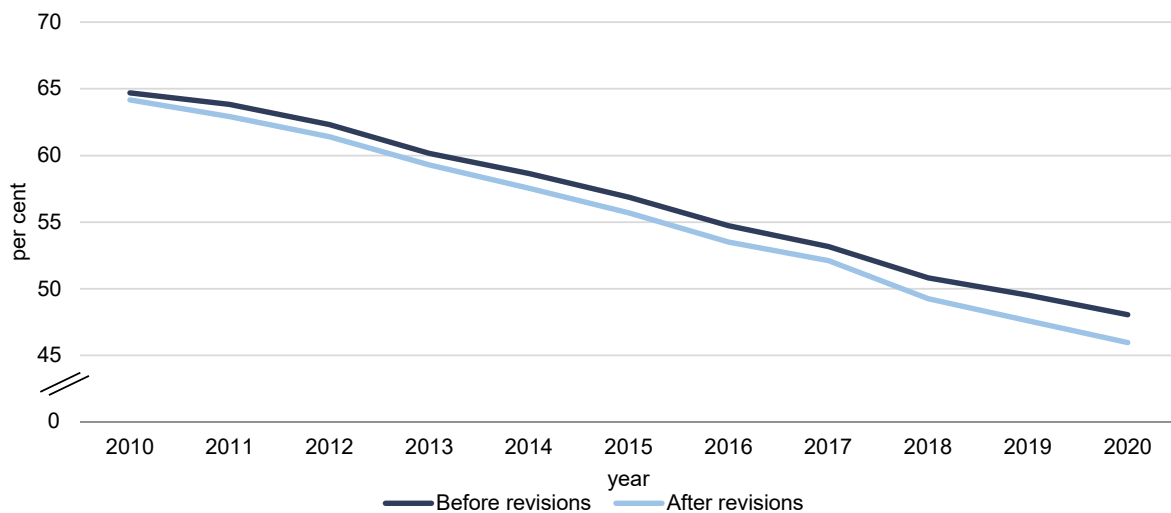
The NSO reviewed the current educational system and the entry requirements at different levels. This exercise mainly focused on state-run post-secondary institutions since this level of education is experiencing an increase in the range of courses offered to prospective applicants. The outcome of this exercise led to a reclassification by which attainment at ISCED levels 2 and 3 is determined. In this regard, persons having finished a secondary level of education and obtained at least 2 O levels or equivalent will be classified to ISCED 3 rather than ISCED 2 (see Definitions section 4 below).

This exercise led to an improved mapping between ISCED and MQF levels and consequently impacted all indicators related to education attainment based on ISCED levels 2 and 3, which are presented in this release. It is important to note that the source and methodology used to compile these indicators remains unchanged and in line with Eurostat's definition. This revision is also being carried out in the education graduates statistics and in other social surveys.

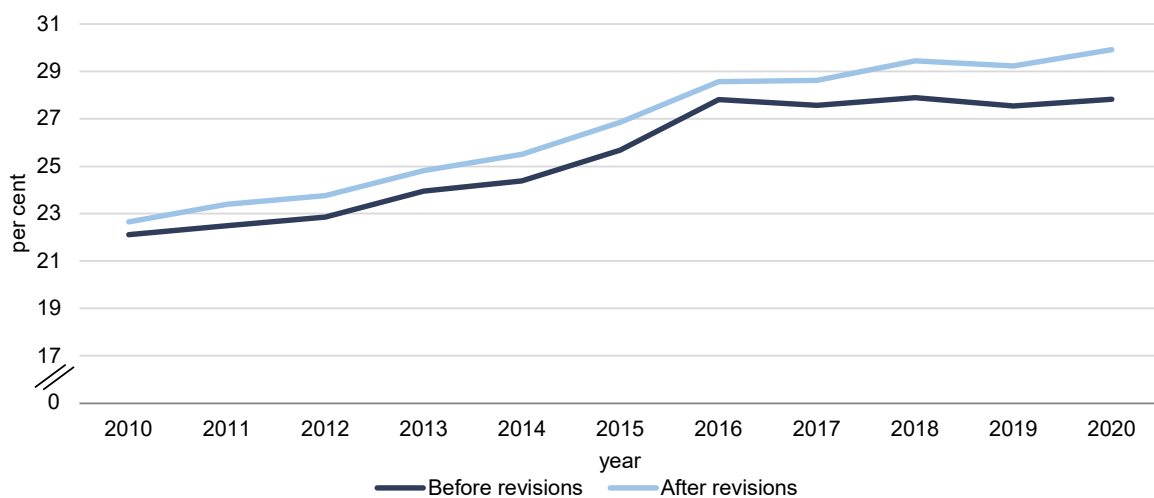
Before embarking on the changes, the NSO informed Eurostat to ascertain that the changes were in line with the ISCED and UOE manuals. The NSO already informed Eurostat about these changes and transmitted the new datasets with revised ISCED variables. Revised figures will be updated on Eurostat's database by October 2021.

Across the period 2010-2020, shifts were recorded in low and medium levels of education. On the whole, trends remained the same. No revisions were done on persons with high level of education.

Revision Chart 1. Percentage share of persons having low educational attainment by year



Revision Chart 2. Percentage share of persons having medium educational attainment by year



2. Description of the Survey

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is carried out on an ongoing basis using a quarterly gross sample of 3,200 private households. The objective is to have a continuous assessment of labour market trends given that the reference weeks are evenly spread throughout the 13 weeks of the quarter. One-fourth of the sample is made up of households who have been selected to participate in the LFS for the first time. Three-fourths of the quarterly sample is made up of households who were selected to participate in the survey in previous instances, either one quarter before, or one year before, or one year and a quarter before (2-(2)-2). Figures provided in this release refer to persons aged 15 and over and living in private households during the reference period. All criteria used for this survey match international methodologies used by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The LFS is designed to satisfy the concepts and definitions as outlined by Eurostat, which is the EU Statistical Agency. This allows the comparability of results with other EU member states and countries following ILO definitions of employment and unemployment. Occupations are classified according to the ISCO - 08 classification (International Standard Classification of Occupations) whereas the economic activity is classified according to NACE Rev. 2 (Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés Européennes).

3. Availability of Revised Quarterly Data

Quarterly data in respect of 2010 to 2020 are available as an Annex in the online Excel version of this release. Quarterly information is not available for yearly indicators.

Annual estimates are not equal to the average of the four quarters since annual weights are computed separately.

4. Definitions:

• Education Attainment categories:

- **low:** comprising persons with no schooling, primary education, special schools for disabled, and persons who attained a secondary level education and have less than 2 O levels or equivalent qualifications. In the context of the ISCED classification, low includes ISCED 0 to 2.
- **medium:** comprising persons with a secondary level education and having 2 O levels or equivalent qualifications or more, persons with a post secondary level attainment who have at least obtained 1 Intermediate or A level or equivalent qualification. In the context of the ISCED classification, medium refers to ISCED 3 and 4.
- **high** - comprising persons with a tertiary level education and with qualifications ranging from University diploma to doctorate level. In the context of the ISCED classification, high refers to ISCED 5 to 8.

• Employment: All persons aged 15 and over who, during the reference week, were in one of the following categories:

- **paid employment:** includes those who during the reference week worked for at least one hour for a wage or salary, in cash or in kind.
- **were employed but absent from work:** due to sick leave, bad weather, were undergoing training or education, did not work due to a labour dispute, were on maternity or parental leave, did not work due to slack work for technical or economic reasons, were absent from work for a period of less than 3 months, or were not working because on layoff and receiving at least 50 per cent of the salary/wage.
- **self-employed:** covers persons who run a trade or business, rather than working as an employee for someone else. A person is self-employed if s/he is a sole proprietor or a partner working in a business.
- **unpaid family workers:** refers to people who worked without pay in a family business or farm. Excluded from this definition are housewives.

• Early leavers from education and training rate: the percentage of persons aged 18-24 who achieved secondary education or less (ISCED \leq 2) and are not pursuing further education or training.

• Employment rate: Persons in employment (20-64) for each ISCED category as a percentage of the population of working age (20-64) in each ISCED category.

• Inactive persons: All persons who are not classified as employed or unemployed are defined as inactive.

• Reference week: The week to which the collected data relate.

• Unemployment: All persons above 15 years of age who, during the reference week, satisfied the following criteria:

- **without work**
- **actively seeking work during the previous 4 weeks:** example of active job search include contacting Jobsplus, applying directly with an employer, contacting a private employment agency, inserting or answering to an advert in a newspaper.
- **currently available for work:** available to start work within 2 weeks of the reference week.

- **Youth educational attainment rate:** the percentage of persons aged 20-24 years having achieved at least upper secondary education (ISCED ≥ 3).

5. Sampling variability

Data included in this release are based on sample data and are therefore subject to sampling error. Sampling error is measured by a quantity known as the margin of error, which in turn, expresses the variability between the true population parameters and their corresponding sample estimates.

Key

- : Unreliable - less than 20 sample observations.
- “ Under represented - between 20 and 49 sample observations.

6. Percentage Totals may not add up due to rounding.
7. Absolute changes between one survey estimate and another must be treated with caution since minor changes (i.e. less than 2,100 persons) might be the result of sampling error.
8. More information is available from the NSO upon written request.
9. More information relating to this news release may be accessed at:

Sources and Methods: https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Sources_and_Methods/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Pages/Labour-Force-Survey.aspx
Statistical Concepts: <https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/concepts.aspx>
Metadata: <https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/reports.aspx?id=33>
Classification: <https://metadata.nso.gov.mt/classificationdetails.aspx?id=ISCED%202011>
10. References to this news release are to be cited appropriately.
11. A detailed news release calendar is available on https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Release_Calendar/Pages/News-Release-Calendar.aspx
12. Click [here](#) to access the revised quarterly data.