4 QUALITY EDUCATION

"The value of an EDUCATION... is not the learning of many FACTS, but the training of the mind to THINK."

— Albert Einstein

I was inspired to build an education platform after witnessing the uneven playing field of education globally.

— Zubair Junjunia

UN SDG 4
https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4

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@ saolta.ed

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Targets and Indicators
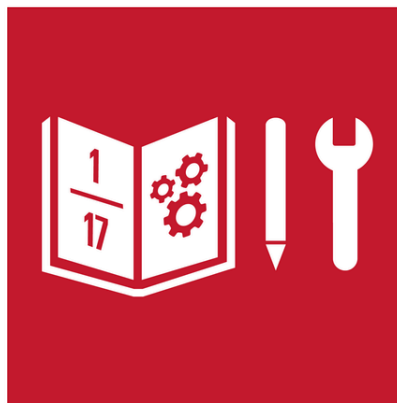https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4#targets_and_indicators

TARGET 4·1
FREE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

TARGET 4·2
EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

TARGET 4·3
EQUAL ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE TECHNICAL, VOCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

TARGET 4·4
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH RELEVANT SKILLS FOR FINANCIAL SUCCESS

TARGET 4·5
ELIMINATE ALL DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

TARGET 4·C
INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

TARGET 4·A
BUILD AND UPGRADE INCLUSIVE AND SAFE SCHOOLS

TARGET 4·B
EXPAND HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

TARGET 4·6
UNIVERSAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY

TARGET 4·7
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

UN SDG 4
https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

Irish Rural Link
Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann

Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth

development perspectives

AONTAS The Voice of Adult Learning

CONCERN worldwide

cetb

What does Quality Education mean?

The UN explains its fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."
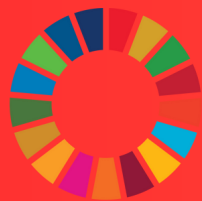
(Concern Worldwide, 2024)

Education is a human right. It is fundamental to individual wellbeing, to sustainable development and to social cohesion.

(Irish Aid, 2025)

"Quality education is the most important of all the SDGs because it is the goal that underpins each of the other sustainable development goals."

(Aontas, 2024)

Community learning can also be outside the formal education sector and not seek certification. It aims to enhance learning and empower people who will contribute to society. The adult education sector in Ireland and has the capacity to reach marginalized people in disadvantaged communities.

(CETB, 2024)

Education is one of the most fundamental and important activities in any society. For individuals, quality education enables the development of intellectual, social and cultural potential. Is gné ríthábhachtach i measc pobail ar bith é an t-oideachas. Cuireann ardchaighdeán oideachais ar chumas daoine a n-acmhainn intleachtúil, sóisialta agus cultúrtha a fhorbairt.

(Maynooth University, 2025)

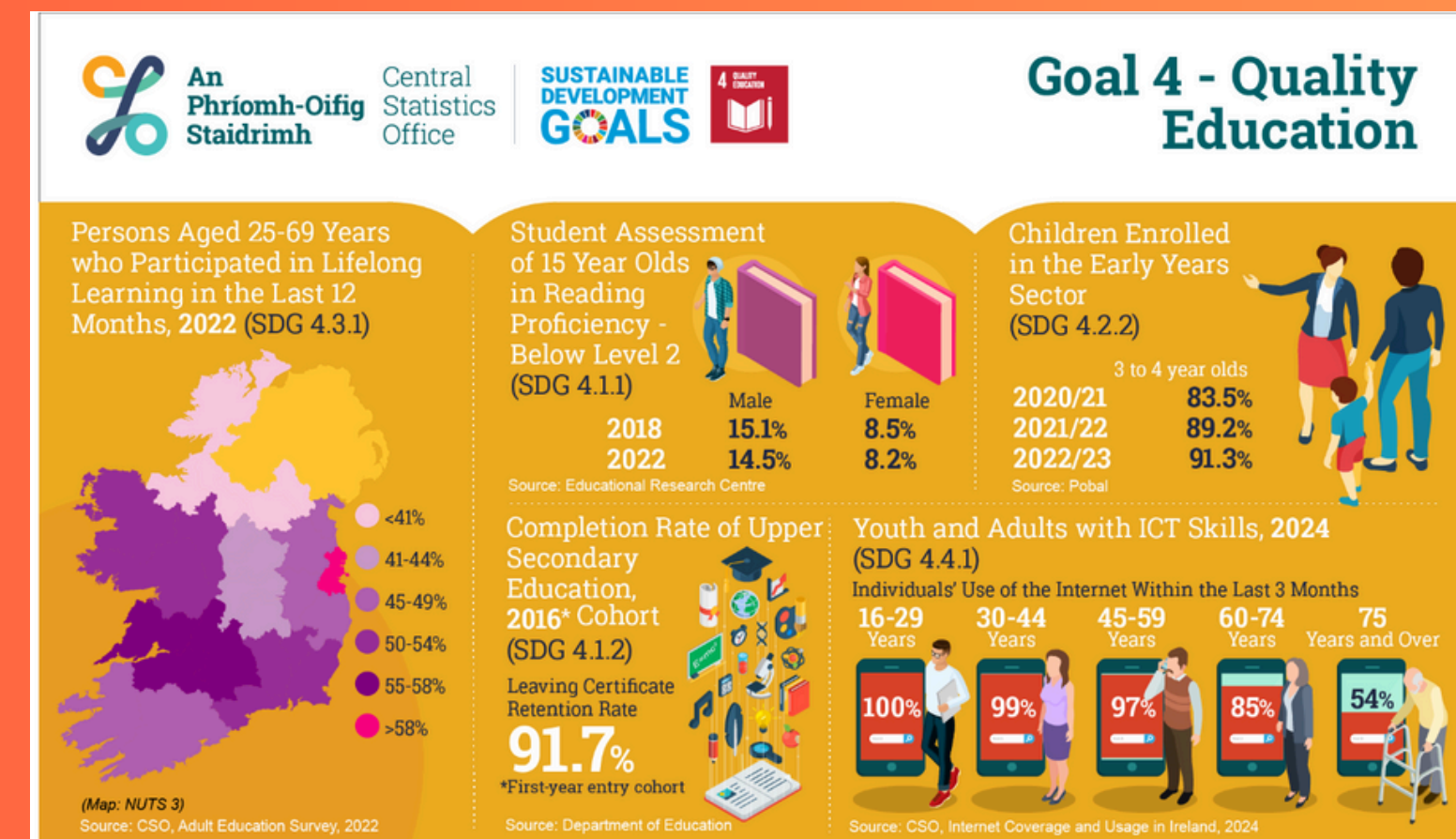# Ireland's UN SDGs - Goal 4 Quality Education

Key Findings

In 2024, 65% of 25- to 34-year-olds held a third level qualification, similar to the rate for 35- 44-year-olds (61%).

Almost two-thirds of adults (64%) aged 25 to 34 years, participated in lifelong learning in 2022, compared with one-third (35%) of people aged 55 to 69 years, in 2022.

The retention rate of pupils sitting the Junior Certificate was 97.6%, for those who started secondary education in 2016 (2016 Cohort). The Leaving Certificate retention rate was 91.7%.
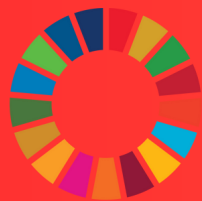
Over 91% of three- to four-year-olds were enrolled in the early years sector in 2022/23, up from 83.5% two years previously.

Nearly four-fifths (78%) of early years educators working with groups of three- to five-year-olds in 2021 had a qualification at level 6 or higher, while it was three-fifths (60%) of early years educators for the younger age groups.

(cso.ie, 2024)

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Update of new Government appointments in Education 2025

Minister for Education and Youth Minister

Helen McEntee

https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

James Lawless

https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/

CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND
Article 42

EDUCATION

ARTICLE 42

1 The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

2 Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognised or established by the State.

3   1° The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any particular type of school designated by the State.

    2° The State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social.

4 The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation.

(ISB, 2020)

Developing a Strategy for Adult and Community Education Provision in North East Inner City Dublin

(Hyland et al., 2022)

CHAPTER 2
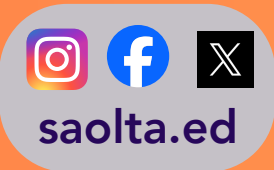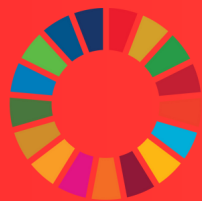
The National System of Education, 1831–2000

Tom Walsh

(Walsh, 2016)

Irish Aid
Global Citizenship Education Strategy
2021-2025

(Ireland.ie, 2021)

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

Irish Rural Link
Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann

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CONCERN worldwide

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Irelands performance
Sustainable Development Report 2024
SDG 4

SDG4 – Quality Education

Participation rate in pre-primary organized learning (% of children aged 4 to 6)	97.5	2021	●	↑
Net primary enrollment rate (%)	99.2	2021	●	→
Lower secondary completion rate (%)	100.0	2021	●	●
Literacy rate (% of population aged 15 to 24)	NA	NA	●	●
Tertiary educational attainment (% of population aged 25 to 34)	63.3	2022	●	↑
PISA score (worst 0–600 best)	503.8	2022	●	→
Variation in mathematics performance explained by socio-economic status (%)	13.0	2022	●	↗
Underachievers in mathematics (% of 15-year-olds)	19.0	2022	●	↓

■ Major challenges	■ Significant challenges	■ Challenges remain	■ SDG achieved	■ Information unavailable
↓ Decreasing	→ Stagnating	↗ Moderately improving	↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement	● Information unavailable

(SDSN, 2024)

The European Commision:
European Education Area - Strategic Framework

European Education Area
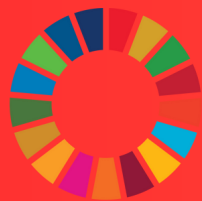Quality education and training for all

Strategic framework
Seven targets
Peer learning methods
Education and Training Monitor

Global Statistics SDG 4

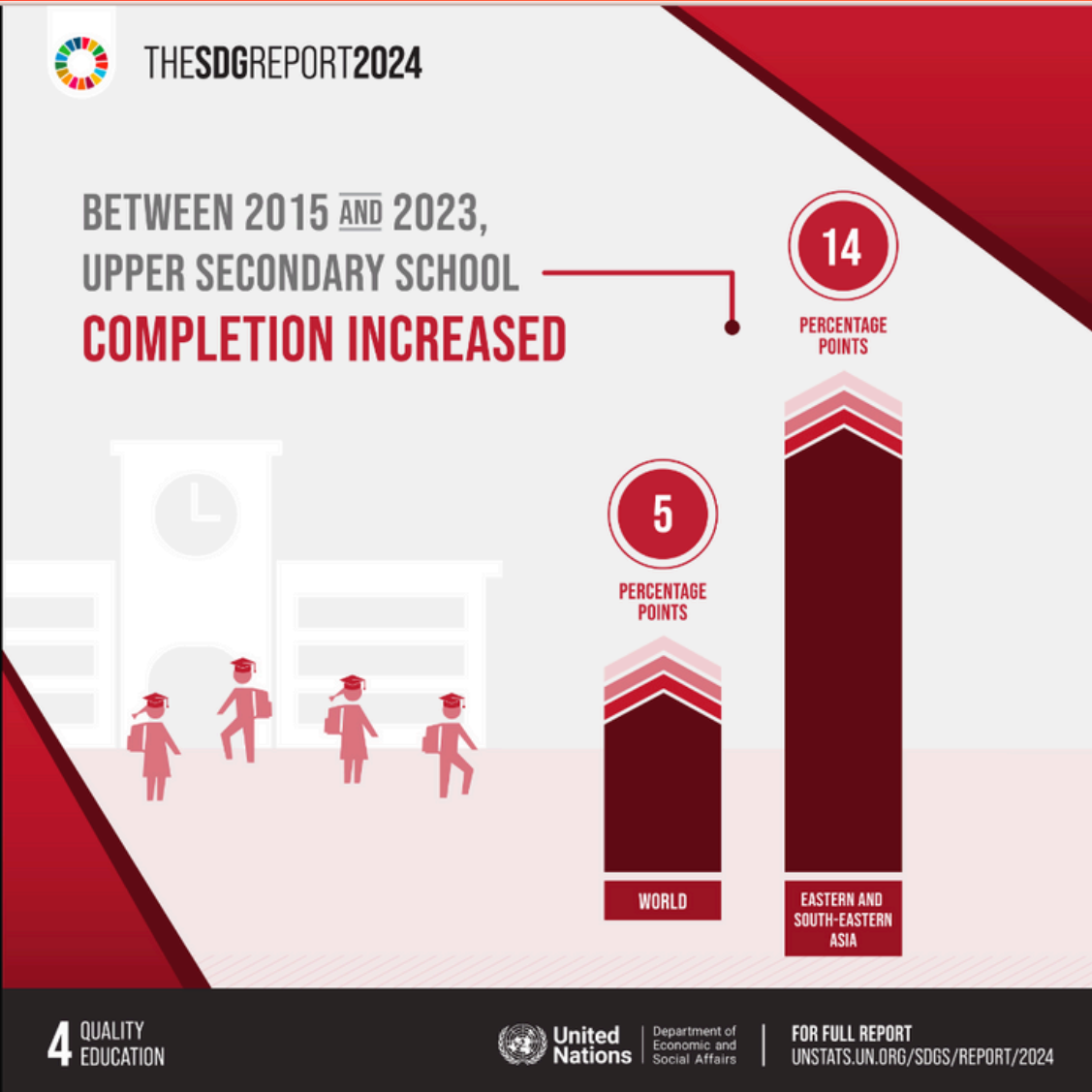COVID-19 and other factors have exacerbated declines in reading and mathematics

An urgent need for enhanced climate change and sustainability education and teacher training

Universal pre-primary education is hindered by inadequate legal guarantees and financial barriers

Lags in basic services in schools continue to marginalize girls and students with disabilities

To meet national 2030 education targets, which have been scaled back compared to the original Goal 4 targets, countries must annually enrol 1.4 million children in early childhood education, admit a new child to school every 2 seconds until 2030 and triple annual progress in primary completion rates

A substantial number of teachers are not trained according to minimum standards in their country

Global upper secondary school completion growth slows yet Eastern and South-Eastern Asia displays remarkable progress

Progress towards Goal 4 has been slow since 2015, with only 58 per cent of students worldwide achieving a minimum proficiency in reading by 2019.

Many countries face challenges such as inadequate education infrastructure, teacher shortages and insufficient teacher training. While technology has expanded educational opportunities, it has also widened inequalities, leaving millions of people, especially in marginalized and low-income communities, without access to education.

THE SDG REPORT 2024

BETWEEN 2015 AND 2023, UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION INCREASED

14 PERCENTAGE POINTS

5 PERCENTAGE POINTS

WORLD

EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN ASIA

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

FOR FULL REPORT
UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/REPORT/2024

(UNDESA, 2024)

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saolta.ed

Development Education.ie
51 Resources for SDG 4

International day of Education 2025

Good schools need good school leaders

Emily Chepkoech Cheruiyot
Keringet Comprehensive School, Kenya

and working together so that we improve the teaching

Watch on YouTube

(UN, 2025)

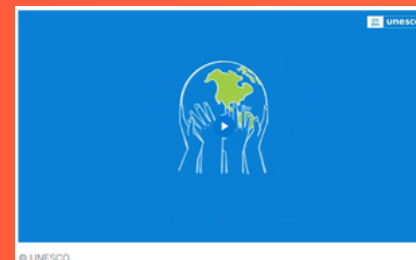**SDG 4 Embedding GCE in ACE**

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Resources

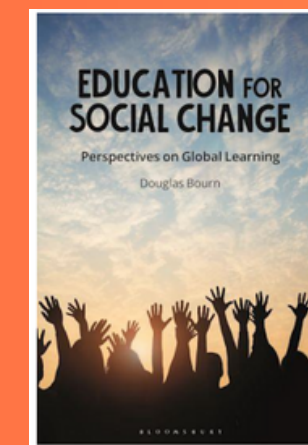**UNESCO in action:
Education highlights in 2024**

(UNESCO, 2025)

SDG Knowledge Hub

Goal 4 – Quality Education
SDG Knowledge Hub

(IISD, 2025)

ESD to 2030:
Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development

Priority Action Areas
1. Advancing Policy
2. Transforming Learning Environments
3. Building Capacities of Educators
4. Empowering and Mobilising Young People
5. Accelerating Local Level actions

(Gov.ie, 2023)

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
Perspectives on Global Learning
Douglas Bourn

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL LEARNING

(Douglas, 2022)

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SDG 4
Bonus Material