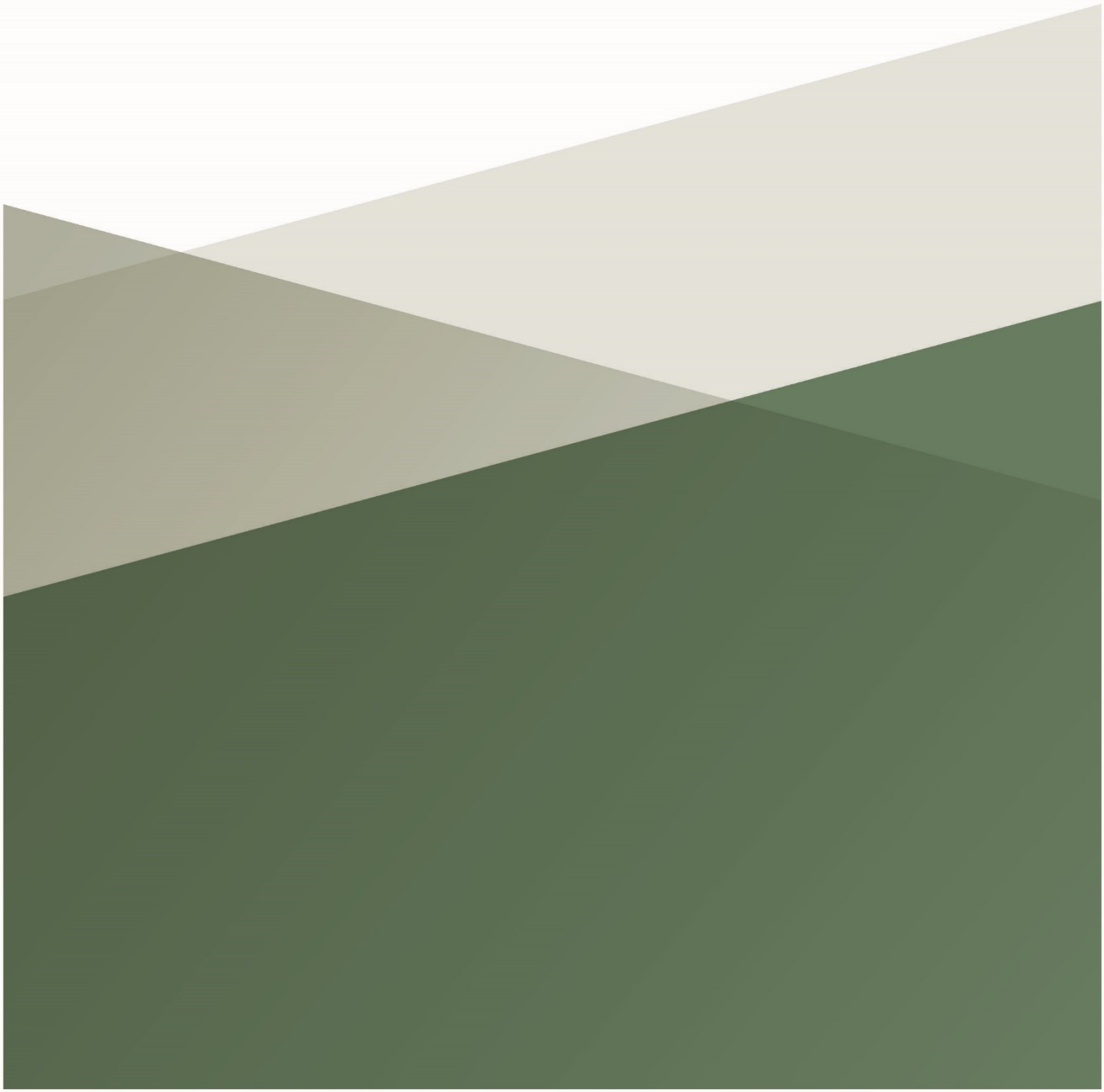
An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Projections of full-time enrolment

Primary and Post Primary level

2023 - 2042



March 2024

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1. Introduction

This report provides the latest set of projections of full-time enrolment in primary and post-primary schools aided[1] by the Department of Education. This report updates the previous set of projections published in November 2021 [1].

Note that this is the first set of projections to be developed after the COVID-19 pandemic and since the start of the war in Ukraine. During COVID-19, prior to the war, net migration in Ireland was at its lowest and has seen its largest increase since. The situation in Ukraine, due to Russian invasion on 24th February 2022, remains volatile and, at this moment, is far from being resolved in any peaceful manner. As a response to the Ukrainian crisis, Ireland, among many other countries, provide full support to refugees from Ukraine, particularly with the primary and post-primary school pupils' enrolments who have arrived since the start of the war. Given the ongoing uncertainty around the impact of the situation in Ukraine on future migration, this report is to be viewed as **interim** and will be updated again at the end of 2024.

2. Background

Projections of pupils' enrolments are an important input into the planning of the education system in Ireland and provide vital information on the likely evolution of school attendance over the coming twenty years.

The report is one of a series of reports published regularly by the Department covering national and regional projections of enrolments at primary and post-primary level. This report updates the previous reports, i.e., national, and regional projections, published in 2021. The results in this report will be used in the areas of teacher demand and supply modelling.

While the national trend for primary school enrolments show a peak in 2018, this enrolment trend is not universal across all School Planning Areas or primary schools. It must be noted that enrolments in 24% of SPAs and 21% of individual primary schools have not reached peak enrolment and continue to rise. In addition, enrolments in schools change from year to year: the number of pupils increased in 2023 for 43% of primary schools and 65% of post primary schools.

The national projections indicate a peak in post primary school enrolments by 2026, however enrolments in 29% of SPAs are projected to peak in 2026 and beyond. Changes in enrolments in both primary and post primary schools are directly related to changes in population in the areas that

[1] Aided means state funded. For the primary sector this includes religious schools, non-denominational schools, multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna (Irish-medium schools). A small number of private primary schools (35 in 2022) are not state funded, and they are excluded from this analysis. In the post-primary sector fee charging schools are included but not private 'grind' colleges.

they serve. New residential development or inward migration, for example, can create upward pressure on enrolments in certain areas, even as enrolments in other areas are declining.

3. Assumptions

This report has traditionally presented results under two fertility and three migration scenarios, generating, six sets of tables. This multiple scenario approach is more suited to projections models that are run every five years, so that the user can select the scenario that is arising in between reports' releases. As F1, i.e., rising fertility, is thought be highly unlikely, only F2 is considered in the current projections compilation. Accordingly, this report focusses on M1F2, M2F2 and M3F2 only, and indicates M1F2 as the most likely. These M1F2 results will be taken on board for the next iteration of the Teacher Demand report.

The latest published article by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) on Ukrainian population projections considers three migration scenarios [2]. In this study, the researchers oversee the possible second wave of refugees from Ukraine. The different scenarios range from 500,000 to 4 million persons (into EU and other European countries), and contingency plans must be prepared for such high numbers. Based on this study, the proportioned arrival to Ireland is taken and school-age children are extracted.

The outward Ukrainian pupils' migration is based on recently published results of the "Ukrainians in Ireland" survey, and additionally, on the latest study of the future of Ukraine's population in which four return to Ukraine migration scenarios were considered [3, 4].

For primary level, the historical migration data is extracted from the primary online database (POD) and analysed, whereas for post-primary level, the pupils data on inflows is extracted from the post-primary pupil database (PPOD). The post-primary inflows comprise of inward migration, movers from Northern Ireland, and transfers from home tutored and private schools. The four-year average (2018-21) post-primary inflow at each programme is taken and is increased for 2024 in accordance with the published Ukrainian population projections [2]. The post-primary flows out of the system are estimated based on the results of the annual retention report. Additionally, as the situation in Ukraine improves, the three migration scenarios assume the following to account for Ukrainian pupils leaving the country -

- M1 - zero per cent leave the country for lifetime of projections
- M2 - 10 per cent will leave during three years 2024 – 2026
- M3 - 20 per cent will leave during three years 2024 – 2026

The leaving migration assumptions (0%, 10% and 20%) are applied to primary and post-primary levels.

The resulting net migration (primary level) and flow in (post-primary level) for each scenario, based on assumed increased inward migration and a gradual reduced outward migration (Ukrainian pupils), as outlined above, can be seen in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 Net migration assumptions into Primary (number per annum)

	M1	M2	M3
	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
2024-2026	6,000	2,000	zero
2027-2042	6,000	2,500	500

Table 2 Migration and other inflow assumptions into Post-Primary (number per annum)

	M1	M2	M3
	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
2024-2042	10,597	7,065	3,532

The fertility assumptions used in the official Population and Labour Force Projections published by the CSO in June 2018 set the high fertility assumption, F1, at 1.8 for the lifetime of the projections, and set F2 as fertility falling steadily to 1.6 by 2031 [5]. These assumptions are now out of date as fertility is falling faster than projected.

Births in 2020 fell to 56,812, down from 59,294 in 2019, and the TPFR (total period fertility rate) in Ireland for 2020 was 1.6. While TPFR increased to 1.7 in 2021 and 2022, generally there has been a decreased trend in TPFR observed since 2008 (2.07) [6]. A return to higher fertility, the F1 assumption, is now thought to be highly unlikely. F2 has been set at 1.7 for years 2023 and 2024, set at 1.6 for year 2025, and held steady for the lifetime of the model (Table 3).

Table 3 Fertility assumptions

F2	2023-2024	2025-2042
LOW	1.7	1.6

Further detail on both migration and fertility assumptions can be found in Appendix sections **6.1.1** and **6.1.2** respectively.

4. Projections results

4.1. Primary level projections

While projections are presented for all three migration scenarios, the Department believes that the M1F2 scenario is the most likely outcome. This assumes slightly higher than current rates of migration, and that fertility remains at 1.6.

Enrolments in primary schools in Ireland in 2022 stood at 558,143, up by over 3,500 on 2021 (554,788). This increase was due to increased inward migration, including recent enrolments of Ukrainian pupils who arrived since the crisis began. In general, as a reflection of the school age population demographic trends, the enrolments are projected to fall over the coming years under all scenarios, and under the M1F2 scenario to reach a low point of 478,152 by 2036 (Table 4). This is almost 80,000 lower than 2022's figure. Enrolments will rise again thereafter and are projected to reach 502,166 pupils by 2042, a rise of some 24,000 over the seven years 2036 to 2042.

Table 4 Projected enrolments in primary schools, 2023-2042

	M1F2	M2F2	M3F2
2022	558,143	558,143	558,143
2023*	556,104	556,104	556,104
2024	549,633	545,467	543,383
2025	542,260	534,184	530,147
2026	533,163	521,550	515,743
2027	524,539	510,304	502,925
2028	516,685	500,251	491,527
2029	507,689	489,442	479,589
2030	499,072	479,341	468,548
2031	491,030	470,150	458,615
2032	485,693	465,057	453,505
2033	482,451	462,045	450,493
2034	480,310	460,090	448,537
2035	478,509	458,292	446,740
2036	478,152	457,935	446,383
2037	479,342	459,126	447,574
2038	482,058	461,842	450,290
2039	485,937	465,721	454,168
2040	490,729	470,512	458,960
2041	496,201	475,985	464,432
2042	502,166	481,950	470,398

* 2023 figures are preliminary

Note: ☐ indicates the low point in the series

4.1.1. Annual rises and falls (Primary)

Table 5 presents projected annual changes in enrolments out to 2042. As can be seen, the sharpest falls will be in the early period and will average 8,150 pupils per year between 2024 and 2030.

Following the low point in 2036, the enrolments will rise more slowly in 2037-2038 before accelerating in 2042 (+5,965).

Table 5 Absolute annual change in primary enrolments, 2023-2042

	M1F2	M2F2	M3F2
2023*	-2,039	-2,039	-2,039
2024	-6,471	-10,637	-12,721
2025	-7,373	-11,282	-13,237
2026	-9,097	-12,635	-14,403
2027	-8,624	-11,246	-12,819
2028	-7,854	-10,053	-11,398
2029	-8,996	-10,809	-11,938
2030	-8,617	-10,101	-11,041
2031	-8,042	-9,191	-9,933
2032	-5,337	-5,093	-5,110
2033	-3,241	-3,012	-3,012
2034	-2,141	-1,955	-1,955
2035	-1,802	-1,797	-1,797
2036	-357	-357	-357
2037	1,190	1,190	1,190
2038	2,716	2,716	2,716
2039	3,879	3,879	3,879
2040	4,792	4,792	4,792
2041	5,472	5,472	5,472
2042	5,965	5,965	5,965

** 2023 figures are preliminary*

4.1.2. Projections by standard

Table 6 shows the projected intake into junior infants and their progression through all standards of primary school out to 2042 under the M1F2 scenario. Intake into junior infants is projected to fall from the 2022 level of 63,455 down to 54,465 by 2032, i.e., the lowest value, before starting to rise again. In 2026 it is projected there will be some 6,540 fewer children entering junior infants than in September 2022.

Table 6 Projected enrolments in primary schools (M1F2), by standard, 2023-2042 (Excel file)

	Junior Inf	Senior Inf	1st Std	2nd Std	3rd Std	4th Std	5th Std	6th Std
2022	63,455	64,775	64,895	67,259	68,281	68,492	69,771	72,147
2023*	62,154	64,198	65,641	65,884	68,209	69,186	69,425	70,436
2024	59,518	62,390	64,681	66,190	66,519	68,766	69,756	69,828
2025	57,670	59,769	62,877	65,233	66,822	67,077	69,337	70,158
2026	56,917	57,926	60,261	63,432	65,867	67,377	67,650	69,740
2027	56,982	57,172	58,418	60,821	64,067	66,424	67,946	68,056
2028	56,068	57,233	57,662	58,978	61,458	64,626	66,995	68,348
2029	55,300	56,327	57,721	58,220	59,614	62,018	65,197	67,399
2030	54,742	55,563	56,818	58,277	58,855	60,173	62,589	65,604
2031	54,506	55,006	56,054	57,377	58,911	59,412	60,742	62,998
2032	54,465	54,770	55,497	56,613	58,012	59,466	59,978	61,150
2033	54,604	54,728	55,260	56,057	57,249	58,569	60,031	60,384
2034	54,884	54,866	55,217	55,818	56,692	57,805	59,135	60,436
2035	55,260	55,144	55,355	55,776	56,453	57,248	58,370	59,542
2036	55,740	55,518	55,632	55,912	56,410	57,009	57,812	58,777
2037	56,446	55,995	56,005	56,189	56,546	56,965	57,572	58,219
2038	57,341	56,697	56,481	56,561	56,823	57,101	57,528	57,978
2039	58,210	57,587	57,181	57,036	57,194	57,377	57,664	57,933
2040	59,038	58,452	58,069	57,735	57,669	57,748	57,939	58,068
2041	59,826	59,276	58,933	58,622	58,368	58,223	58,311	58,344
2042	60,575	60,060	59,757	59,485	59,254	58,921	58,785	58,714

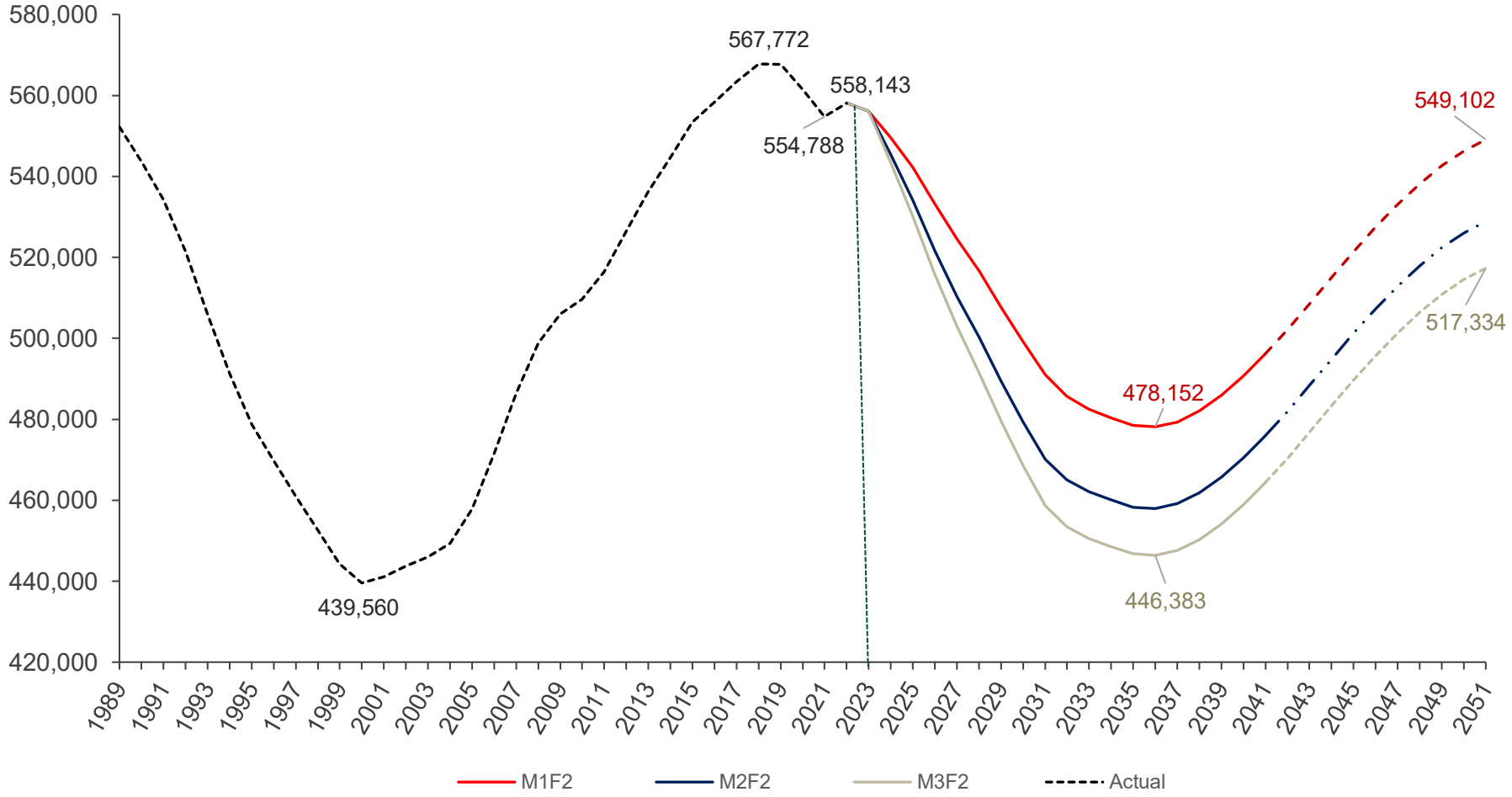
* 2023 figures are preliminary

Note: ☐ indicates the low point in the series

Figure 1 presents projected enrolments under the three scenarios (see Table 4), and also includes extended projections out to 2051.

These longer-term projections illustrate how the projected falls in enrolments will be temporary in nature. The graph clearly demonstrates the cyclical nature of the rises and falls in projected pupil numbers in Ireland for the coming thirty years.

Figure 1 Actual and projected enrolments in primary schools, 1989-2051



4.2 Post-primary level projections

Enrolments in post-primary schools have risen by 43,493 (12%) from 2018 to 2022 and are projected to continue rising over the short term. Under M1F2 they are projected to peak in 2025 with 433,268 pupils, 26,876 higher than in 2022.

Under the M2F2 scenario (which takes into account the assumption that 10% of Ukrainian pupils return home in 2024 - 2026) enrolments will peak in 2025 with 425,654 pupils, 7,600 less pupils than the peak under the high migration scenario. This difference between the high and medium migration scenarios in post-primary illustrates the importance of migration, particularly on assumptions of Ukrainian pupils returning home, in the model.

Table 7 Projected enrolments in post-primary schools, 2023-2042

	M1F2	M2F2	M3F2
2022	406,392	406,392	406,392
2023*	416,634	416,634	416,634
2024	428,723	424,962	421,200
2025	433,268	425,654	418,179
2026	430,890	420,139	409,848
2027	428,783	415,975	404,142
2028	424,266	409,301	396,010
2029	420,562	403,522	389,010
2030	417,965	398,976	383,455
2031	413,214	392,306	375,758
2032	405,886	382,088	363,988
2033	397,640	371,347	351,867
2034	389,916	361,572	340,932
2035	382,548	352,716	331,135
2036	375,610	344,598	322,254
2037	369,861	338,207	315,397
2038	365,808	334,385	311,573
2039	362,983	331,750	308,938
2040	360,648	329,532	306,720
2041	358,690	327,575	304,763
2042	357,839	326,723	303,911

* 2023 figures are preliminary

Note: ☐ indicates the high point in the series

4.2.1 Annual rises and falls (Post Primary)

Table 8 presents projected annual rises and falls in enrolments out to 2042. While enrolments at primary level are projected to decrease, the projections suggest there will be a corresponding increase at post-primary level. As illustrated in the table, there will be 10,242 more pupils in 2023 than in 2022, a further 12,088 in 2024, and by the peak year of 2025 it is projected there will be 26,876 more pupils in post-primary schools than 2022 under the M1F2 scenario.

The fall in pupil numbers after 2026 will be more gradual with numbers falling by 2,107 in 2027 and by 8,246 in 2033.

Table 8 Absolute annual change in post-primary enrolments, 2023-2042

	M1F2	M2F2	M3F2
2023*	10,242	10,242	10,242
2024	12,088	8,327	4,566
2025	4,545	693	-3,022
2026	-2,377	-5,515	-8,331
2027	-2,107	-4,165	-5,706
2028	-4,517	-6,674	-8,132
2029	-3,705	-5,779	-7,000
2030	-2,597	-4,546	-5,555
2031	-4,751	-6,670	-7,697
2032	-7,328	-10,218	-11,770
2033	-8,246	-10,740	-12,121
2034	-7,724	-9,775	-10,936
2035	-7,368	-8,856	-9,797
2036	-6,937	-8,118	-8,881
2037	-5,749	-6,391	-6,857
2038	-4,053	-3,822	-3,824
2039	-2,826	-2,635	-2,635
2040	-2,334	-2,218	-2,218
2041	-1,958	-1,958	-1,958
2042	-851	-851	-851

* 2023 figures are preliminary

4.2.2 Projections by programme type

Table 9 presents projections for each year by programme type under the M1F2 scenario. The number of pupils entering first year is projected to fall by 2,854 between 2023 and 2024. Numbers will then begin to fluctuate until 2029, with a greater fall from 2030 to 2033, and will show further fluctuations again until 2042. By the end of the projection period, there will be 14,800 fewer pupils entering first year than in 2022. Looking at LC2, Leaving Certificate, there will be 67,054 pupils enrolled in the year 2024, some 5,300 more than in 2022, while the projected peak year for Leaving Certificate participation is 2025 with 74,179 pupils.

Table 9 Projected enrolments in post-primary schools (M1F2), by standard, 2023-2042 (Excel file)

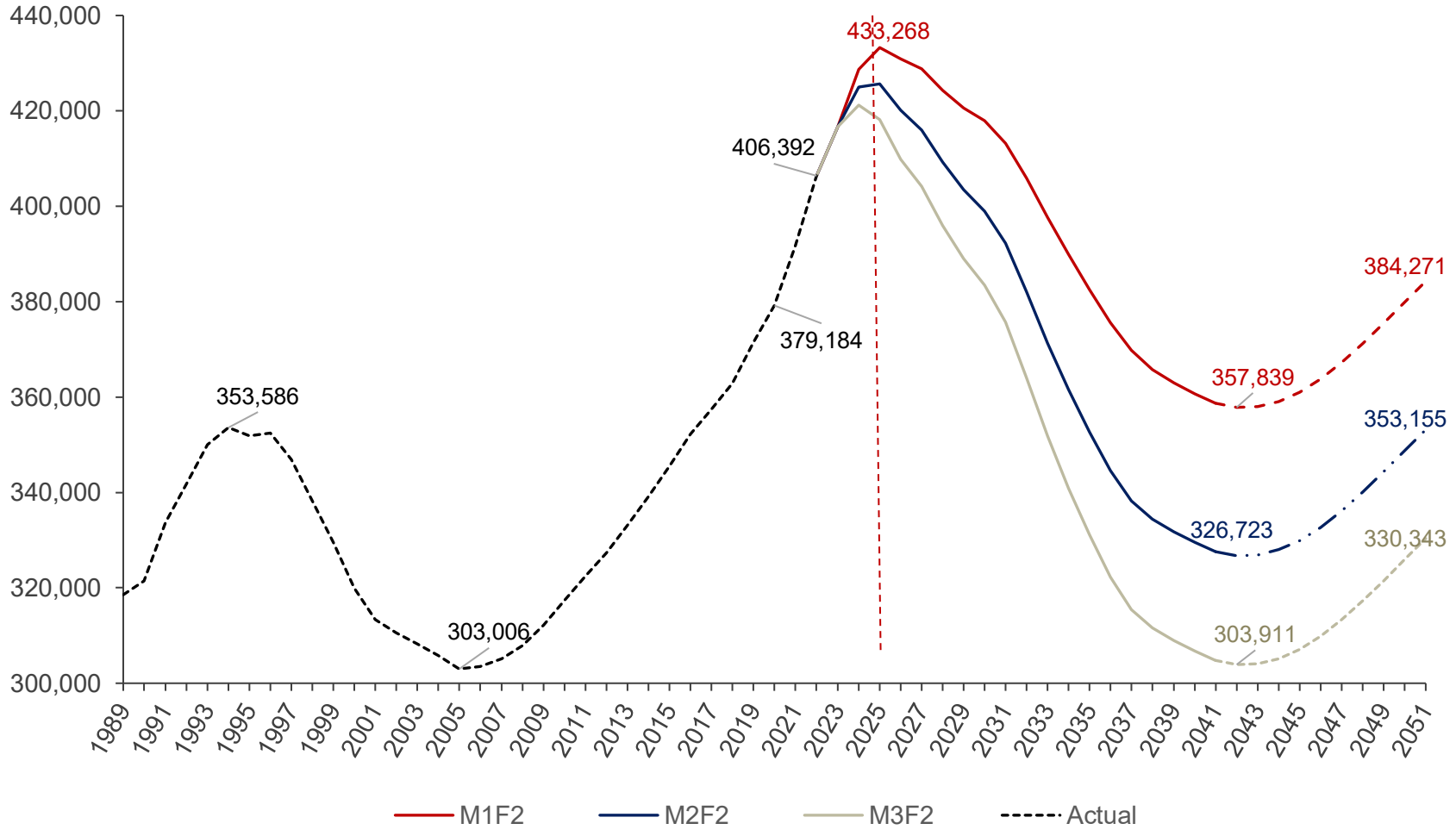
	JC1	JC2	JC3	TY	LC1	LC2 (including repeats)
2022	73,799	74,477	72,345	54,375	65,573	61,741
2023*	74,348	74,941	74,458	58,027	69,504	60,565
2024	71,494	75,166	75,301	57,219	76,915	67,054
2025	70,778	72,335	75,525	57,826	76,126	74,179
2026	70,991	71,621	72,716	57,988	76,805	73,445
2027	70,457	71,831	72,005	55,964	76,285	74,094
2028	68,686	71,301	72,214	55,453	74,106	73,597
2029	68,850	69,544	71,688	55,603	73,697	71,507
2030	67,803	69,704	69,944	55,224	73,732	71,108
2031	66,068	68,665	70,102	53,968	72,940	71,141
2032	63,522	66,942	69,071	54,082	71,741	70,381
2033	61,716	64,414	67,361	53,339	71,639	69,229
2034	60,967	62,619	64,851	52,107	70,495	69,128
2035	61,015	61,874	63,069	50,300	68,697	68,031
2036	60,143	61,920	62,327	49,016	66,511	66,304
2037	59,397	61,055	62,373	48,482	65,105	64,203
2038	58,855	60,314	61,514	48,515	64,616	62,849
2039	58,624	59,775	60,779	47,896	64,458	62,376
2040	58,585	59,545	60,244	47,367	63,669	62,222
2041	58,723	59,506	60,015	46,981	63,032	61,466
2042	58,997	59,643	59,976	46,816	62,608	60,853

* 2023 figures are preliminary

Note: The ☐ indicates the high point in the series

The extended (2051) projections for three migration assumptions are shown in Figure 2. As with the primary long-term projections results, the second level enrolment projection results also show a likely increase in future enrolments.

Figure 2 Actual and projected enrolments in post-primary schools, 1989-2051



5. Review of 2021 projections

This section presents a short review of the last published projections and outlines the updates to the projected figures made for the 2021 iteration.

The percent error of a prediction is defined as follows:

$$\frac{|Predicted\ Value - Actual\ Value|}{Actual\ Value} * 100$$

Table 10 shows the actual enrolment in 2021/22 and 2022/23 at primary and second level compared to the projected enrolments under M1F2 scenario for the same academic years, and gives the percentage error for each level. As can be seen, the error is less than 0.5% for year 2021 for each level, but higher (<3.0%) for 2022. In both cases, the enrolments were under-projected. This was due to an increased post-COVID inward migration, but mainly due to Ukrainian pupils' enrolments who arrived to Ireland since February 2022. Note that previous sets of projections had been developed in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic and prior to Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022. Currently, given the enormous uncertainty around migration during Ukrainian crisis, the results of all scenarios should be considered. In order to incorporate the latest available migration data (POD/PPOD), the latest study by ICMPD on post-war migration, and recently published results of "Ukrainians in Ireland" survey [2; 3], the new model has been updated accordingly.

Table 10 Comparisons with 2021 model projections

Year	***2021/22***	
Education level	*Primary Level*	*Second Level*
Actual enrolment	554,788	391,698
Most likely scenario (M1F2)	552,491	390,317
Difference	-2,297	-1,381
Percent error	*-0.41%*	*-0.35%*
Year	***2022/23***	
Actual enrolment	558,143	406,392
Most likely scenario (M1F2)	542,192	397,837
Difference	-15,951	-8,555
Percent error	*-2.86%*	*-2.10%*

Due to all factors mentioned above, there was a moderate difference between the projected and the actual figure in 2021 by M1F2, i.e., an under-projection of 2,297 pupils at primary level and of 1,381 pupils at second level. At primary level this difference was mainly due to the combination of two factors: the post-COVID inward migration was higher than projected, while the number of children participating in the ECCE scheme increased, leading to a fall in the enrolment rate of 4 year olds in school (down from 0.42 in 2020 to 0.40 in 2021) [8]. As a result, the actual enrolment figures were slightly higher compared to the projected ones. The model has been updated accordingly.

At post-primary level there is an increasing number of pupils choosing to do Transition Year. In 2020/21, almost 71% of Junior Cycle Year 3 pupils went on to do Transition Year, compared to 68% and 69% in 2017/18 and 2018/19, respectively. In 2022/23, this figure reached almost 73%. This higher proportion has been carried through the model, increasing the numbers expected to remain in the system over time.

When projections results are compared to the actual enrolments in year 2022, both levels, primary and post-primary, were under-projected. This was due to the errors carried from the previous year, i.e., 2021, but mainly due to unforeseen large inward migration of Ukrainian refugees.

6. Appendix

6.1 Methodology and assumptions

In the sections that follow, the main assumptions and how they are integrated into the national model are outlined in some detail.

6.1.1 Migration

The most recent estimates of migration published by the CSO show net inward migration of 77,600 in the year to April 2023, up from 51,700 in April 2022 [9]. Notwithstanding the recent dip in migration due to pandemic, this is the ninth consecutive year to show strong net inward migration and follows a period of outward migration between 2010 and 2014.

The current model described in the report includes Ukrainian pupil enrolments arising from the conflict (note that other pre-conflict Ukrainian enrolments are treated the same as all other enrolments of foreign nationals). (According to EU rules *"Ukrainian refugees have the right to temporary protection in any EU country if they are permanent residents of Ukraine and have left the country to escape the war from the 24th of February, 2022. The temporary protection can be extended till the 4th of March 2025, if needed"* [10].)

For primary level, the 2021 report also had three migration assumptions - M1 at 1,500, M2 at 700 and M3 at zero. The most recent data shows that, in the year to the end of June 2022, the net migration was 10,132 (incl. Ukrainian pupils), or 4,180 (excl. Ukrainian pupils). In June 2021 it was 1,962, and in June 2020 it was just under 1,400 (during COVID-19 pandemic).

For years 2024-2042 M1 scenario assumes "business as usual" inward migration, i.e., net zero migration from Ukraine, and an assumption that all Ukrainian pupils will stay in Ireland. For years 2024-2026 the M2 and M3 scenarios assume that 10 per cent (3.3% per year) and 20 per cent (6.6% per year), respectively, of Ukrainian pupils return home. As a result, the temporary dip in the net migration, due to returning Ukrainian population, can be see just for these years, and shows a further stabilisation in the data in the following years, i.e., 2027-2042.

Table A.1 Projected net migration at primary level under each migration assumption

Scenario	2024-26	2027-42	Description of net migration
M1	6,000	6,000	Representing strong inward migration, assuming 0% of Ukrainian pupils leave
M2	2,000	2,500	Representing moderate inward migration, assuming 10% of Ukrainian pupils leave in 2024-2026 (3.3% per year)
M3	0	500	Representing the scenario of low inward migration, assuming 20% of Ukrainian pupils leave in 2024-2026 (6.6% per year)

At post-primary level, it is difficult to determine the true number of immigrants and emigrants from the education system based on the data available, given the higher numbers of departures from the second-level system compared to those from first level, particularly after the ending of compulsory school age.

At post-primary level, therefore, data on inflows is extracted from the post-primary pupil database. These inflows comprise inward migration, movers from Northern Ireland, and transfers from home tutored and private schools. For future years, i.e., 2024-2042, M2 is taken as the average inflow of 2018-2021 (6,478) plus “business as usual” inward migration (net zero migration from Ukraine). Under M1 the rate is increased by 50 per cent of the M2 rate, while M3 is decreased by 50% of M2. Inward migration is by far the most important component of these inflows and the report presents three scenarios for post-primary inflows. Note that this is a change on the previous methodology in order to account for a higher post-pandemic inward migration and the current crisis due to situation in Ukraine.

For outflows the retention rate, as published by the Department annually, is used. It is not possible to separate emigrants out from other leavers and so a single retention rate is applied by programme [12]. Since the retention rate tracks the 2016 entry cohort (prior to the war) and thus excludes future Ukrainian pupils returning to Ukraine, for future years the outward migration assumptions factor in zero per cent (M1), 10 per cent (M2), and 20 per cent (M3) of Ukrainian post-primary age students returning.

Table A.2 Projected inflows for the years 2024-2042, by programme

Programme	M1	M2 (avg. 2018-22)	M3
JC1	1,621	1,081	540
JC2	1,301	867	434
JC3	890	593	297
TY	3,589	2,393	1,196
LC1	2,960	1,973	987
LC2 (including repeats)	236	157	79
Total	10,597	7,065	3,532

6.1.2 Fertility

The most recent evidence shows the TPFR in Ireland fell sharply from the 2008 level of 2.07 to 1.6 in 2020 and 1.7 in 2022 [6].

The following fertility scenario is used:

F2: TPFR as 1.7 is used for year 2023 with a gradual decrease to 1.6 by year 2025, and is kept steady for the lifetime (up to 2042) of the projections in line with the latest CSO data. Note: The impact of recently increased inward migration on births is unknown and has not been factored into this iteration of the model.

Table A.3 shows the projected births under F2 fertility assumption for the period 2023 to 2042 where the lowest value is outlined accordingly.

Table A.3 Projected smoothed births under F2 fertility assumption, 2023-2042

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
F2	57,290	56,525	55,967	55,641	55,518	55,601	55,850	56,218	56,658	57,261
	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042
F2	58,214	59,144	60,031	60,875	61,675	62,441	63,156	63,820	64,420	64,943

Note: ☐ indicates the low point in the series

6.1.3 Deaths

Assumptions on deaths are taken directly from the CSO projections for each single year of age [13]. The effect of deaths on the overall projections is negligible given the small number of deaths (about 110 every year) involved.

6.1.4 Primary Level Other Factors

A number of other factors, which have a smaller impact on overall figures at primary level, are included in the model, including transfers to and from the private sector and special education, as well as repeat rates in junior infants and 6th class in primary school.

6.1.5 Students enrolled in a special education placement

Students enrolled in special classes and special schools, being a sub-set of the total demographics, are estimated as a percentage of projected total enrolments. The methods for estimating pupils in special classes and schools were revised to align them with special education policy. As a result, this report includes estimates of students in special classes in mainstream post-primary schools. Previous projections did not report on these pupils separately as they accounted for a small percentage of total post-primary students (0.4% in 2016, 0.8% in 2021).

In earlier reports, the percentage of students in special schools and special classes in mainstream primary schools was calculated solely on primary school estimates. To align with special education policy, the percentage is now calculated from both primary and post-primary estimates, from the 2023 preliminary rate of 2.65% raising to 4% in 2030.

The rising trend in this cohort is being kept under close appraisal and will be reviewed again in next year's report. The impact on numbers of pupils in a special education placement for all scenarios is shown in Table A.5.

Table A.4 Enrolments in primary schools and special education as % of total, 2016-2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pupils in special schools	7,567	7,662	7,728	8,035	8,018	8,682	8,945
Pupils in special classes in mainstream primary schools	4,836	5,572	6,229	6,822	7,510	8,740	10,123
Pupils in special classes in mainstream post-primary schools	1,560	1,814	2,136	2,406	2,856	3,178	4,028
Pupils in mainstream classes (primary and post-primary)	896,608	905,819	914,578	921,903	922,211	925,886	941,386
Total primary & post-primary	910,571	920,867	930,671	939,166	940,595	946,486	964,482
Special education as % of total enrolment	1.53%	1.63%	1.73%	1.84%	1.95%	2.18%	2.39%

Table A.5 Projected enrolments in Special Education, 2023-2042

	% of total M1F2 enrolment	M1F2	M2F2	M3F2
2022	2.4%	23,096	23,096	23,096
2023*	2.6%	25,762	25,762	25,762
2024	2.8%	27,559	27,343	27,211
2025	3.1%	29,816	29,355	29,069
2026	3.2%	31,317	30,612	30,176
2027	3.4%	32,800	31,888	31,316
2028	3.6%	34,227	33,108	32,401
2029	3.8%	35,565	34,243	33,406
2030	4.0%	36,900	35,379	34,419
2031	4.0%	36,355	34,726	33,701
2032	4.0%	35,889	34,200	33,135
2033	4.0%	35,511	33,772	32,673
2034	4.0%	35,204	33,424	32,296
2035	4.1%	34,925	33,107	31,956
2036	4.1%	34,732	32,886	31,715
2037	4.1%	34,652	32,789	31,606
2038	4.1%	34,694	32,837	31,655
2039	4.1%	34,829	32,977	31,794
2040	4.1%	35,025	33,175	31,993
2041	4.1%	35,266	33,417	32,234
2042	4.1%	35,561	33,711	32,529

* 2023 figures are preliminary

Note: ☐ indicates the high point in the series

6.1.6 PLC

The projected enrolments refer to the school-based enrolments up to Leaving Certificate only and do not include PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) students.

7 References

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[12] https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/retention/

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