

Chef Shortage: An Analysis of the skills  
drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector of  
2017

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## Signed Statement

I hereby certify this material, being submitted for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Business is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited within the text of the work.

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## Abstract

So, you want to be a chef? Your hands will be continuously be cut, burned, skinned. An open book about your life in a kitchen. Your back will be painful all your life. You will always be under pressure, you will be anxious, stressed. You will always be asked to constantly give 110%. You will always be tired. Nobody around you will ever understand how difficult being a chef is. It looks so easy and lovely on TV. (Chauvet 2013). It is widely acknowledged within the hospitality sector that being a chef is a tough career path. Occupational stress modes such as long working hours/shift work that leads to fatigue, unpredictable shifts, few breaks, heavy physical demands, mental and emotional demands, low pay, poor working conditions and lack of resources (Lo 2005).

These factors can be compounded by the leadership in the kitchen. In 1994, Famous French chef Eric Ripert took over the kitchen as executive chef and part-owner of Le Bernardin in New York City. Ripert's style of management was that of the old school tough chef training. *"I was trained in France, from a very young age, in the kitchen. And the way they were teaching me at the time was what they called the 'old-school kind of teaching' -- which was verbal and physical abuse"* (Ripert 2015). He decided to change his leadership style completely, leaving behind the old system of ruling through fear. *"One day, I was thinking, 'Why am I so miserable? Why is everybody leaving?' I realized it was all about me -- all about being angry and scaring the cooks, scaring the employees and making them miserable,"* (Ripert 2015). Today, his kitchen reflects his belief in peace and kindness. There is an absence of the shouting, clatter and music that is typical of busy kitchens in award-winning restaurants, and the staff has been taught to treat each other with the highest respect.



The current skills drain amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector can be resolved by adopting techniques similar to that of Eric Ripert. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was commissioned to compile the ‘Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020’. This report highlights the skills needed to service the increased demand from the hospitality sector over the coming years. Creating a healthy environment such as Eric Ripert in Bernadin may enable Irish hotels and restaurants to retain staff and make a career as a chef more attractive for those entering the industry.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This main aim of this chapter is to provide a brief background and a general overview of the chosen research area – The skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector. The author will outline the aims and objectives of the research project. The author will then outline the rationale for undertaking this specific study and a project outline, followed by a summary of the key components of each chapter within this research dissertation.

### 1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

#### 1.2.1 Research Aim

The aim of this research project is to analyse the opinions of the key stakeholders of the Irish Hospitality sector as to the extent of the current skills shortage of chefs, the factors that may be causing it and the steps being carried out to alleviate this shortage. The aim of this research document will be achieved by following four key objectives. Through the four research objectives, the opinions of the key stakeholders will be gauged in the areas of the extent of the shortage, the factors that may be causing the shortage, the source of training for chefs entering the sector and the key strategies that can be undertaken to alleviate the shortage. The author seeks to produce reference data for the Irish Hospitality sector which may provide a valuable foundation for further studies into this topic area.

### 1.2.2 Research Objectives

The researcher has derived the following four objectives from the research aim;

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

### 1.3 Background to the study

The purpose of this section is to present to the reader with any essential background information required to understand the research topic. The purpose of this study is to review the current skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector. The author will endeavour to achieve this by looking at four key areas that reflect the main objectives of the research project. The main areas will be the extent of the skills drain amongst chefs; The factors that may be causing the skills drain; The quality and sources of training currently being given to chefs entering the industry and the opinions of key stakeholders of the hospitality sector as to the strategies that can be introduced to alleviate the shortage. The four main factors have been derived from a collaboration of the current relevant literature and the authors experience of the industry throughout a ten-year career in both education in the Irish hospitality sector. The focus for the Irish educational institute is to transform its students into culinary graduates and empower them with the skills required to successfully enter the Irish hospitality sector. The empowerment of the skills and knowledge required by the culinary graduates is the

responsibility of the individual student, the educational bodies and the industry combined. The collaboration of all stakeholders in the hospitality sector is required for the accurate and efficient curriculum development of culinary arts programmes that has been argued by (Krause 2013). The author will endeavour to highlight the key areas for collaboration between the education bodies and the industry and recommend areas in which both parties can ease the transition of chefs entering the industry from formal education. Drive, focus, determination, vocation, passion, dedication, sacrifice, volatility, creativity, psychological mind set and patience are the equipment that builds a Chef (Palmer 2010) but requires recognition, identity and challenging learning environment to progress in their career (Hitt 2008). Environmental factors associated with working as a chef such as long working hours/shift work that leads to fatigue, unpredictable shifts, few breaks, heavy physical demands, mental and emotional demands, low pay, poor working conditions and lack of resources (Lo 2005), have led to the increased number of chefs leaving the industry and the poor reputation of chef as a career choice. The author aims to highlight the opinions of chefs as to the factors that may be causing this poor reputation of chef as a career and the poor retention of chefs amongst the industry. There has been a widespread opinion of chefs and key stakeholders to reinstate the CERT programme to alleviate the chef crisis. This opinion is reflected by the chairman of the Irish Restaurant Association, Adrian Cummins. The RAI is calling on the Minister for Education, Jan O'Sullivan to reestablish CERT, the former State Tourism Training Agency. The author aims to gauge the opinions of the key stakeholders as to the best source of training and education of chefs entering the Irish hospitality sector. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was commissioned to compile a report in 2015 to assess the future skills requirement of the Irish Hospitality sector. It was officially known as the 'Assessment of Future Skills

Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020'. Across the sector gaps and skill shortages were identified at junior and entry level positions in particular amongst pastry chefs, product development chefs and sous chefs. The author aims to highlight the areas of development as a result of gauging the opinions of chefs as to where they are finding the greatest difficulty when hiring chefs for their establishments. This study hopes to address the lack of overall data in relation to the opinions of the key stakeholders of the Irish hospitality sector. With data on the opinions of key stakeholders in the Irish hospitality sector on the topic of the current skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector, the author believes there is a gap in the research which needs to be addressed.

#### 1.4 Research Rationale

As outlined in the above sections, the primary aim of this study is to review the chosen research area, the skills drain amongst chefs in the Irish Hospitality Sector. The research will outline the need for further development in terms of training and education of those chefs entering the industry, the need for improved conditions and environmental factors in the industry and the retention of chefs in each premise in the sector. This will enable the industry to endeavour to meet the demands of the ever-increasing hospitality sector and the needs to service the demand. This will help to meet the guidelines set down in the Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020. The author will identify areas in relation to the opinions of the key stakeholders in the hospitality sector and their opinions on the current shortage of chefs in the country. This will enable the author to make recommendations in the concluding chapters and highlight areas for further research.

## 1.5 Research Project Outline

Outlined below are the six chapters of this research dissertation and a brief description of the contents of each chapter.

### 1.5.1 Chapter One: Introduction

The introduction chapter outlines the background to the research document, the contents and the rationale for conducting the study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief background and a general understanding of the author's research area – The skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector.

### 1.5.2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

This Literature Review chapter provides a comprehensive revision of the relevant literature in relation to the skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector. The author analysed the prevailing literature on the subject area. Areas addressed in this section include; Culinary education in Ireland, the environmental factors of the Irish hospitality sector and the future skills requirements of the industry. The literature review chapter provides the reader with context for the research document and explains the data acquired by the researcher in relation to the current skills shortage in the Irish hospitality sector. This data will be originated from studying the relevant secondary research.

### 1.5.3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The purpose of the research methodology chapter is to outline the method undertaken by the author to conduct the research, produce the research dissertation and accomplish the document's primary objectives. In this chapter, the researcher outlines and justifies the research purpose, philosophy, approach and strategy as well as detailing the ethical considerations and research limitations.

#### 1.5.4 Chapter Four: Analysis of Findings

The purpose of the analysis of findings chapter is to present the key data derived from the primary research carried out by the author through both qualitative and quantitative methods in relation to the skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector. Through the distribution of on-line questionnaires and semi structured interviews, the author could obtain the data that will be presented in the analysis of findings chapter.

#### 1.5.5 Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of the discussion chapter is to give a detailed discussion of the main findings of the primary research and link them to the relevant literature discussed in chapter two. The researcher will provide a cross-examination of the overall findings and highlight any relationships that may arise between the primary and secondary research.

#### 1.5.6 Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the conclusion and recommendations chapter is to summarise the research project. The author will present an overall conclusion and recommendation based on the research findings and analysis conducted. The researcher will aim to emphasise the successful fulfilment of the research aims and objectives. The researcher will endeavour to make suggestions as to possible areas for future research in relation to the research topic. Areas for recommendations will also be made as to the ways and means to alleviate the skills drain currently being felt in the Irish hospitality sector.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The main focus of the introduction chapter has been to briefly introduce the research topic, the main aims and objectives of the research and the rationale behind conducting the research document. The following literature review chapter will provide a comprehensive revision of the relevant literature in relation to the skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector.



## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to review and present, the most important and relevant information already published on the subject of training, employment factors and the future skills requirement of chefs in the current hospitality industry of 2017. This literature review chapter will predominantly examine, discuss and critically evaluate existing literature that is relevant to the research objectives which are listed as follows:

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS on methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

The subject proposed will be defined using secondary research for the purposed of this literature review. Information that already exists somewhere having been collected for another purpose (Kotler 2012). The literature review will be founded on academic journals, books, articles and internet sources. The researcher will make use of the services in Athlone Institute of Technology, such as the search engines Emerald, Sage, Dawson Books and The Institute of Hospitality. Additionally, the internet with over 100 million pages accommodates an invaluable service as both a national and international source of information. Relevant reports and studies conducted and compiled in Ireland by bodies such as The Central Statistics office and The National Forum for Teaching and Learning will also be examined. Firstly, the literature review

begins by discussing relevant literature in relation to the history and skills transmission of culinary education in Ireland. The reason for discussing this is to understand the history and importance of culinary education in Ireland. The examination of this literature will give an overview of the sources and types of culinary education available to potential graduates entering the hospitality sector. Secondly, the literature review will examine the literature available in relation to objective two; To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017. This will examine the information available in relation to the environmental factors for chefs in the industry. Furthermore, this section will also examine literature relating to staff retention, leadership and job satisfaction. Finally, the literature review identifies literature available on the future skills requirements of the hospitality sector. The main source of this literature will be from key stakeholders and will mainly link to objective four; To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS on methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017. Key stakeholders such as The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and their 'Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020' will format the main content of this section. The modern iteration of culinary education is beginning to recognise each student as an individual and adapts for learning structures that empower the learner to play an important role in developing and constructing their own education rather than following a vocational style education format. This will involve outlining the role of curriculum development in Culinary Arts education and its relationship with industry training programmes.

## 2.2 Culinary Education in Ireland

The first iteration of a formal culinary course in Ireland began in the late 1800's in the form of evening classes in basic cookery skills held by the Kevin Street Technical School. Following on from this, the Dublin Vocational Education Committee established a range of professional cookery and hospitality service classes based upon French culinary techniques in 1926. These classes were held at the Parnell Square Vocational School in Dublin. The hotel industry in Dublin led the way for chefs of the time, by developing, promoting and participating in these French classical culinary classes (Mac Con Iomaire 2009). The Dublin College of Catering originated in 1941 as the purpose-built St Mary's College of Domestic Science (Duff 2000). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Department of Education on Training of Technicians in Ireland (1964) and Investment in Education (1966) carried out a series of reports, which highlighted the need for higher education courses geared towards manpower requirements. These reports emphasised the future need for technical qualified personnel and in turn led to the establishment of a designated training body to meet these future needs. The Council for Education, Recruitment and Training for the Hotel Industry (CERT) was established in 1963. This national body was responsible for coordinating the education, recruitment and training of staff for the hotel, catering and tourism industries. In 1974 CERT then began providing education, recruitment and training for the entire catering sector and in 1977 CERT modernised their courses and offered a new range of services. In 1982 with the establishment of National Craft Curriculum Certification Board the *"Irish catering education was for the first time able to set their own principles and standards, establishing its own criteria and then paving the way to award its own certificate, a role which was previously carried out by City & Guilds of London"* (Corr, 1987) cited

in (Danaher 2012). The City & Guilds of London programmes in advanced kitchen/larder and pastry (706/3) in 1977 were major developments in Irish culinary history and were later replaced by Advanced Certificate in Larder/Pastry offered by CERT (Mac Con Iomaire 2011). The National Tourism Development Act (NTDA 2003) saw the abolition of CERT and the formation of Fáilte Ireland (Danaher 2012). Fáilte Ireland, with the assistance of Institutes of Technologies around Ireland, developed new courses in culinary arts ranging from certificates to Master's level and with new and diverse modules and programmes (Danaher 2012). This third level education in Ireland is monitored by The National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) and The Higher Education Authority (HEA). *“Technical education was having two main purposes, to train young people for entry to particular employments and to improve the skills of those already employed”* (Coolahan 2002). In the past, culinary education has been associated with vocational education and focused on student mastery of core technical culinary competencies (K. Mandabach 1998); (K. R. Mandabach 2002). However, according to Hegarty, ( Standing the Heat 2004), culinary arts education requires a holistic curriculum designed to develop not only technical skills but also the student's individual, intellectual and moral capabilities. Factors that affect curriculum development are determined by student outcomes and the organisation's ability to provide resources (Harrington 2005). Following this, in September 1999, the BA (Hons.) in Culinary Arts was launched in DIT, Cathal Brugha Street. This changed culinary education from a vocational subject of study to a liberal arts subject (Hegarty 2001). Looking forward, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 allows for the establishment of technological universities in Ireland which will change the way curricula are delivered. This strategy calls for higher education needs to be externally responsive to wider social, economic, environmental

and civic challenges, in addition to being internally responsive to the needs of students and researchers (Department of Education and Skills 2011). The main focus for the Irish educational institute is to transform its students into culinary graduates and empower them with the skills required to successfully enter the Irish hospitality sector. Typically, the annual college intakes of catering students are aged from 18 to 22. Some of these students will already be in part-time employment in the industry and have a clear perception of the requirements needed to succeed, but others could lack any real perception of the rigours of the industry (Lee-Ross 1999). According to Muller, (The Effectiveness of Culinary Curricula: A Case Study 2009), employers expect graduating students to have a set of specified skills and abilities. It is for this reason that the Irish catering industry wanted to influence the curriculum development of the culinary arts programme (Hegarty 2004). Krause, (Essential Tools for Success 2013) argues that to develop professionally or to plan the career activity and getting better at or mastering in a job requires acquisition, attention and refinement of skills and knowledge. The empowerment of the skills and knowledge required by the culinary graduates is the responsibility of the individual student, the educational bodies and the industry combined. The collaboration of all stakeholders in the hospitality sector is required for the accurate and efficient curriculum development of culinary arts programmes that has been argued by Krause (Essential Tools for Success 2013). It is therefore vital that that education and training programmes for chefs and culinary arts students are aligning with, and supporting, industry needs. With the economic downturn, the hospitality industry suffered financially as domestic disposable incomes decreased. This in turn led to a widespread decrease in budgets in relation to training and development in most key hospitality stakeholders (Weyant 2011). Furthermore, (Krause 2013) emphasises the fact that, to decrease recruitment costs and staff turnover, management in the

hospitality sector should consider training as an investment. If the industry is unwilling to change its current practices, then at the training stage students should be made fully aware of the working conditions (O'Leary 2007). It is therefore essential for the industry stakeholders to manage the transition of culinary students from education to the industry and ease access routes with the use of site specific training plans previously devised with the educational bodies. With the increase of independent culinary training centres such as Ballymaloe cookery school, Aniar cookery school and the Cliff at Lyons chef school, which is the first private certified cookery school in Ireland, there is increased competition for the educational bodies for potential students. This increase in educational outlets will invariably increase the number of qualified culinary students entering the industry and increase the skill base at junior roles for the sector. These institutes provide skills training that is in line with the needs of the industry. In studies conducted abroad, it was established that colleges faced issues as a result of the deregulation in the labour market. This created intense competition, and forced the colleges to provide the training that the industry requires (Davis 2004). Deregulation and competition amongst the providers of culinary education, suggested by the Australian example, can enable the increased efficiency of the development of chefs and boost the numbers of graduates entering the sector annually.

## 2.3 Environmental Factors

Critical success factors such as quality of product, employees, quality of service, customer satisfaction, location and the quality of the infrastructure can be measured and benchmarked against the competitor to provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Melia 2010). Flanagan, ( An Investigation into the Performance Measurement Practices of Irish Hotel Groups 2005) has stated that the high contact nature of hotel service would suggest people, both employees and customers, are a critical component of the success of the organisation. In the research conducted by Melia, (2010), it is indicated that staff are a key component of the operation, delivering customer care and service to the standard expected; that training is an investment in the staff to ensure quality of service; and that staff provide the products and services that are critical to the operation. Therefore, one of the critical success factors may include the measurement of employee and customer satisfaction as one of the areas or dimensions of a performance measurement framework specifically designed for the hospitality sector (Flanagan 2005). This research conducted by Flanagan (2005) and Melia (2010) suggests that it is imperative to provide favourable environmental factors for industry staff to boost motivation and performance. This increased motivation and performance suggests the exponential increased efficiency and profitability of the businesses within the hospitality sector. Some literature explains the working environment as a motivator that directly effect the employee and the organisational productivity as well as the progress path (Teh 2013). Motivators (factors directly related to doing a job) are listed as; Recognition, Growth, Nature of the work, Responsibility and Achievement (Hitt 2008). Chefs' motivators are passion, keeping up tradition, recognition and responsibility (Daniel 2011). Drive, focus, determination, vocation, passion, dedication, sacrifice, volatility, creativity, psychological mind set and patience are the

qualities required to be a successful Chef (Palmer 2010) but requires recognition, identity and challenging learning environment to progress in their career (Hitt 2008). Kitchen work is collaborative by nature and requires various degrees of team work, and status is also an area of importance that suggests the type of work undertaken by chefs has a degree of worth in which their personal identity is invested (Fine 1996). The internal force or desire to grow within an individual is regarded as the intrinsic factors such as career progression opportunities (Dickerson 2013). Chefs in high standard hotels might find themselves in the dilemma of reconciling peer approved standards with the commercial demands made by the employing organisation (D. G. Cameron 1999). Culinary work is still considered an extremely challenging, competitive, requires hard work which paves the path in one's career for learning and self- improvement (Chuang 2009). Kitchens were environments that accepted, and to some degree encouraged, aberrant behavior. The temper tantrums and compulsive work habits were seen as a positive sign of professional dedication (Patterson 2016). Punishing long hours' culture in many professional kitchens is putting the mental and physical health of chefs at risk (Unite 2017). Occupational stress modes such as long working hours/shift work that leads to fatigue, unpredictable shifts, few breaks, heavy physical demands, mental and emotional demands, low pay, poor working conditions and lack of resources (Lo 2005). The reasons offered in a study by (Pratten 2003) included low pay and anti-social hours, poor physical conditions of work and excessive discipline in the kitchen. In a survey of 269 London chefs, 44% said they work between 48 and 60 hours a week, with 14% working 60 hours-plus. 69% of chefs believe long hours' culture is harming their health, what's more 79% said they have had had an accident or a near miss at work due to fatigue, while 51% have suffered from depression from being overworked (Jenkins 2017). The culinary profession has one of the highest rates of



mental illness in the country, and its workers are particularly prone to depression. Depression is closely linked to stress, low incomes, exhaustion and hostile work environments, all of which restaurants have in ample supply (Patterson 2016). (Brotherton 2004) Considers critical success factors to be combinations of activities and processes designed to support achievement of such desired outcomes specified by the company's objectives or goals. Consequently, they can be partially controlled by management and thus can potentially be managed. Studies have found problems that could be addressed, namely a shortage of training and lack of career planning, absence of motivation and job satisfaction, and an empirical rather than a managerial approach to running the enterprise (Rutter 1992). The lack of career development programs in the hospitality sector can lead to employers missing out on gaining employee commitment, motivation for better performances and upgrade the general workforce (O'Leary 2005). Employees not only need support but also need reviewing and re-assessing of their goals and activities for which the employer has a vital part in creating such environment and motivating the employees in unlocking the hidden talents (Krause 2013). The most obvious ways of addressing these problems lie in realistic training and persuading employers to improve their "renowned poor employment practices" (Martin 2004). According to the Hospitality Training Foundation (HTF 2002), "*finding chefs and waiting staff is one of the biggest problems facing employers, affecting all sectors of the hospitality industry*". There is no denying that the current employment market is unsustainable and it will take operational creativity to adapt and survive the talent shortage. Many businesses, combating the talent shortage could be a matter of rethinking the kitchen and developing complementary approaches to training and development rather than battle with inflating salaries which are contributing to an industry-wide transient culture of candidates seeking new opportunities on whom

(Butler 2017). Much of the labour turnover was the result of poor management practices, including weak HR policies in many organisations (Pratten 2003). It is essential for the industry to end “*the work until you drop, long hours*” culture. Employers are encouraged to fully comply with the Working Time Regulations, including the right to 11 hours rest a day and one day off a week, as well as dropping the automatic 48-hour week opt-out clauses in workers contracts (Unite 2017). There is an urgent need for the hospitality employers in addressing the high dropout rates within the industry which may lead to the wastage of trained personnel and may also lead to organisational loss (O’Leary 2005). According to (Butler 2017) there are an increasing number of high profile businesses that are taking a more strategic approach to their product offering and kitchen structure to deliver high quality food, while employing the same quality staff you would traditionally see. By implementing highly regimented preparation procedures, intensive staff training programs, clear section break-downs and McDonald’s like order-management systems, these businesses can employ unqualified staff to occupy kitchen positions while maintaining high product and execution standards.

## 2.4 Future Skills requirement

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was commissioned to compile a report in 2015 to assess the future skills requirement of the Irish Hospitality sector. It was officially known as the ‘Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020’. It stated that *“A recovery in the Hospitality sector is leading to increased demand for employees of varying skill levels. The sector offers attractive opportunities to entrepreneurs. A main challenge for the industry is to provide appropriate training and education and clear career progression pathways for those that wish to make hospitality their career”* (EGFSN 2015). Across the sector gaps and skill shortages were identified at junior and entry level positions in addition to a skill shortage identified at senior management positions. Shortages of specialist roles such as; pastry chefs, product development chefs and sous chefs was as a result of the lack of participants at of junior entry level positions. The key stakeholders of the (EGFSN) carried out research in the form of surveys, questionnaires and attended regional meetings. The stakeholders identified numerous reasons for the skills shortage; *“an imbalance between academic and hands-on training, a need for basic and specialised practical skills, and for the provision of greater numbers of accessible and flexible continuing professional development, apprenticeship and career traineeship schemes”* (EGFSN 2015). It was found that several common perceptions of the sector, including, for example, jobs in the hospitality industry are often viewed as a *“stop-gap”* and not as a viable career choice for a student’s future (O'Donovan 2016). To address the skills gap, the (EGFSN) stakeholders identified initiatives such as the following to alleviate the issue: *“Increased emphasis on in-house/on-the-job training tailored to immediate needs; Induction programmes for entry-level jobs; Development of career progression and retention initiatives”* (EGFSN 2015). A key issue addressed by the

(EGFSN) report is “*the output of the culinary education and training systems currently in place for the hospitality industry in Ireland*” (EGFSN 2015). Several areas have been suggested where future potential skills development in the Irish Hospitality sector could learn from international approaches and initiatives. It is sometimes fair to assert that some students are not prepared for the level of theory associated with the culinary programme. There is an enormous amount of knowledge related to food – familiarity with ingredients; their use, the cooking processes, nutrition, customer focus and safety related knowledge. Learner-led education can easily accommodate different learning styles (Lydon 2012). Therefore, according to (O'Donovan 2016) there is a broad consensus about the importance of balance between a strong vocational education and training system (including apprenticeships and traineeships with significant practical work content) to complement more general hospitality management and academically-focussed courses. Comprehensive online hospitality portals are also becoming more common. This may offer the industry the opportunity to achieve the transmission of knowledge and education through a modern delivery system. Ireland can respond to the uncertainty created by the changing international economic environment by pursuing a “*skills incentivisation strategy*” that develops school leavers into the most highly-skilled graduate workforce on the planet (Ross 2017). The (EGFSN) report add further strength to Hegarty’s opinion (Hegarty 2004) suggesting that although there is room for growth in the future for the hospitality industry “*skill demand shortfalls*” are likely to emerge if action isn’t taken to address this problem in the medium to short-term (EGFSN 2015). Currently Ireland is experiencing skills shortages in certain disciplines particularly in the Hospitality sector. There are simply not enough qualified graduates in several disciplines to fill all the jobs available. This situation has occurred because not enough school leavers choose key programmes to study at third-level (Ross 2017).

There is not enough chef training centers. Currently 1800 chefs qualify each year from certified culinary training programs. There is a deficit of 5000 chef trainees annually (Coffey 2017). (Ross 2017) suggested incentives to possibly alleviate the skills shortage; programs associated with skills shortages might cost €2,750 per year, while programs associated without skills shortages could cost €3,250; Educational future tax credit which is effectively a promise of future tax credits for graduates who enroll on designated third-level programs in disciplines with skills shortages. The restaurant sector are calling for the immediate re-establishment of CERT, which the tourism and hospitality sector held in high esteem while it was operational. It was fit for purpose and serviced the industry with skilled labor during its operational years (Cummins 2016). The shortage of chefs it now has come to a stage where restaurants cannot open their doors 7 days a week because they just don't have the chefs. It is obvious we don't have enough chefs in this country and if we must go abroad to recruit the government should ensure this is done without cost and over legislation (Edwards 2017).

## 2.5 Conclusion

The format of culinary education in Ireland has evolved from its inception in the late 1800's at the Kevin Street Technical School from a vocational subject of study to a liberal arts subject that is suggested by (Hegarty 2001). From the literature in relation to the research topic, it can be assumed that this transformation has played a factor in the current chef shortage in the hospitality sector. Colleges have a distinct *“responsibility to actively engage with and support industry and constantly identify ways of improving skills and knowledge for students, industry and lecturers”* (The Irish Hospitality Institute 2011). The goal of industry in relation to its workforce skills requirements is to match human resource requirements to financial resources (Lydon 2012). *“Employers expect students to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited”* (EGFSN 2015). This expectation of employers and the lack of site specific training plans could be the cause of environmental stress factors being felt by chefs in the industry. Factors suggested by (Lo 2005) such as long working hours/shift work that leads to fatigue, unpredictable shifts, few breaks, heavy physical demands, mental and emotional demands, low pay, poor working conditions and lack of resources may be felt by chefs due to a range of employment sources. From the analysis of the relevant literature, the high levels of stress may be the cause of the lack of job satisfaction throughout the industry and the lack of staff retention in each establishment in the sector. There are many recommendations made in the (EGFSN) report as to the future skills requirement of the Industry to help alleviate this issue. One recommendation from Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland is the introduction of flexible accreditation options and life-long training logs including *“skills passports”* to support greater portability of qualifications and mobility of hospitality sector skills

(EGFSN 2015). This would enable the perception of skilled labourers in the hospitality to be on par professionally to skilled counterparts in other fields such as electricians, plumbers and computer technicians.

## 3.0 Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to summarise the steps that will be conducted for the collection of primary data for this research project. Firstly, the researcher will recap on the research aim and objectives. Secondly, the author will discuss the research strategy, the data collection methods, the sampling strategy and the procedure followed to undertake this research project. The chapter will conclude by exploring the limitations and ethical considerations relevant to the research project. According to (Kumar 2008), research methodology refers to “*a way to systematically solve research problems*” whereas research methods refer to the techniques that are utilised when conducting research. According to (Saunders 2012, 674), research methodology refers to the process which should be utilised in order to collect, analyse and interpret data. The research methodology chosen dictates both the “theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adopted” (Saunders 2012, 674). The data gathered during the research conducted will be analysed in order to achieve the research objectives.

#### 3.1.1 Research Aim

Throughout the research process the author was aware, that the research needed to be directed at answering the research aim: To analyse the opinions of stakeholders in the Irish hospitality industry as to the extent of the current skills shortage of chefs in the sector, the factors that may be causing this shortage and the strategies available to alleviate this shortage.



### 3.1.2 Research Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology undertaken by the author in order to conduct the research, produce the research dissertation and accomplish the study's four primary objectives:

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

### 3.2 Research Purpose

According to (McGivern 2006), *“research is often categorised according to its purpose into three types of inquiry: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory”*. An exploratory enquiry is useful for identifying a problem, clarifying it and defining the scope of the problem in order to gain a greater understanding of the issue and identify possibilities for further research (McGivern 2006, 88). Descriptive research can be defined as *“research for which the purpose is to produce an accurate representation of persons, events or situations”* (Saunders 2012, 669). (Saunders 2012, 670) Also define explanatory research as *“research that focuses on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationship between variables”*. The author therefore believes that the research being conducted is exploratory in nature as it endeavours to gauge the opinions of current stakeholders in the Irish hospitality sector with a view to discover

areas for improvement and development in the collaboration of the educational bodies and the industry itself to alleviate the current skills drain in the sector.

### 3.3 Research Philosophy

As outlined in (Saunders 2012, 127) the term research philosophy “*relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge*”. According to (Dyer 2003), “our values can have an important impact on the research we decide to pursue and the way in which we pursue it”. In order to select a suitable research strategy, the researcher must conceptualise an overall research philosophy. This philosophy will provide the necessary foundation for choosing the research methods to be utilised. (Saunders 2012, 678) Defines pragmatism as “a position which argues that the most important determinant of other research philosophy adopted is the research question, arguing that it is possible to work within both positivist and interpretivist positions. It applies a practical approach, integrating different perspectives to help collect and interpret data”. The author endeavours to adopt this pragmatic approach throughout the research conducted.

### 3.4 Research Approach

(Saunders 2012, 48) Maintains that research is usually approached by either testing a theory or developing a theory. These two main approaches to research can be in the form of inductive and deductive research. Through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher chose to conduct both deductive and inductive research in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

### 3.4.1 Deductive Research

*“Deductive research starts with a theory, and proceeds by testing hypothesis derived from that theory”* (S. P. Cameron 2009, 75). Deduction was mainly employed by the researcher throughout the quantitative research. It was mainly used in the design of the questionnaire in the form of questions that tested the common issues and themes that were recurring throughout the review of relevant literature.

### 3.4.2 Inductive Research

*“Inductive research starts with the observations and derives theory from these”* (S. P. Cameron 2009, 75). Induction was mainly carried out by the researcher throughout the collection of qualitative data. The use of open ended questions throughout the semi-structured interview process would allow the researcher to observe and derive theories from the key industry stakeholders.

## 3.5 Research Strategy

A research strategy can be defined as the “general plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question” (Saunders 2012, 680). (Denscombe 2010, 4) Describes research strategies as the “*types of equipment that allow relevant data to be collected*”. As outlined in (Saunders 2012), the selected research purpose, philosophy and approach will subsequently influence the author’s choice of research strategy. The main strategy employed by the researcher will be a mixed method strategy. This mixed method strategy will consist of a questionnaire and semi structured interviews.

### 3.5.1 Mixed Methods Strategy

(Denscombe 2010, 137) Describes a mixed methods strategy as one which “*crosses the boundaries of conventional paradigms of research deliberately combining methods drawn upon from different traditions with different underlying assumptions*”. The main

focus of a mixed methods strategy is its use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The author is in agreement with the belief highlighted by (Denscombe 2010, 138), that “*treating qualitative and quantitative approaches to research as incompatible opposites is neither helpful nor realistic when it comes to research activity*”. Through the research conducted by the researcher in the form of a questionnaire and semi structured interviews, both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used in both styles of data collection.

### 3.6 Data Collection Methods

In order to achieve the four seminal objectives and overall aim of the research project, the author chose to utilise a combination of two data collection tools in order to conduct this research; an on-line, self-administered, structured questionnaire and two semi-structured interviews with key industry stakeholders. Other research tools were available to the author that may have culminated in more detailed data in relation to the objectives such as focus groups. This would have enable key stakeholders to debate the national skills drain and shortage of chefs in the industry. According to (Denscombe 2010, 177) “*focus groups can be costly and time consuming to arrange*”. The limitations of the research in terms of time and funding resulted in the author focusing the research methods to a questionnaire and semi structured interviews.

#### 3.6.1 Triangulation

(Trauth 2001, 165) Defines triangulation as “*the analytic act of identifying act of identifying similar findings from different sets of data*”. For this research project, the author will combine methods from both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The author will triangulate the data from semi-structures interviews along with the distribution of questionnaires to achieve the four objectives of the research project.

### 3.6.2 Questionnaires

The first data collection tool to be used by the researcher was a questionnaire. (Anderson 1998) Explains that questionnaires have become one of the most used means of collecting information. (Saunders 2012, 679) Define questionnaires as a data collection method “*in which a person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order*”. Relevant and reliable data can be easily and cheaply collected with the use of a questionnaire. Particularly the use of an online questionnaire can be the most efficient format for the collection of data. The following chapters will give an overview of the rationale, limitations, design and process of using a questionnaire as a data collection tool.

#### 3.6.2.1 Questionnaire Rationale

(Groves 2009, 217) Refers to questionnaires as “*a standardised set of questions administered to the respondents in a survey*”. A self-administered, questionnaire was administered using the online Google Forms tool. This enabled the researcher to save time and funds on distribution yet reach a larger, more diverse sample of the key stakeholders of the Irish hospitality sector. The use of a self-administered, on-line questionnaire also provided the researcher with the advantage of ensuring that key questions in relation to the four objectives of the research project were mandatory and required an answer in order to submit the completed form. The online Google Forms tool provided the researcher to easily analyse the data gathered and represented results into graphical diagrams. Given the nature of the research aim, the author believed questionnaires would enable him to gain a meaningful insight into the key hospitality industry stakeholder’s perceptions of the extent of the skills drains in the sector amongst chefs. The questionnaire respondents were administered the same set of questions across the sample size. As a result of the questionnaire being anonymous, the researcher

believed that this would encourage the respondents to be honest in their responses. Both the anonymity and standardising of questions would maximize the quality of the data collected.

### 3.6.2.2 Questionnaire Limitations

There are limitations that occur as a result of every data collection method. In terms of the utilisation of a questionnaire, the researcher would encounter limitations in relation to the research validity, time allocation of the respondents and the validity of the questionnaire content. Firstly, the researcher would need to justify and validate the research being conducted to the questionnaire respondents. The author provided a cover e-mail with the questionnaire introducing the nature and the purpose of the study, assuring respondent confidentiality and anonymity and thanking participants in advance for their time. Please see appendix one for a copy of the introductory e-mail sent. The validity of the research is imperative for the respondents to not be dismissive of the e-mail once they receive it. This would in turn increase the levels of responses and resulting data. The second limitation the researcher would encounter would come in terms of time; the disposable time available to the respondents in terms of their willingness to participate in the research and the length of time it takes to undertake the questionnaire. The researcher was anxious that due to the busy nature of the key stakeholders of the hospitality industry, and their limited time resources due to the national skills shortage, there was a possibility that the questionnaire may be dismissed and the overall response rate might be low. The third limitation of concern for the researcher was in terms of the validity of the questionnaire design and the validity of the information resulting from the participant's responses. To justify the validity the quality, a pilot questionnaire was carried out amongst a small group of industry experts to test the resulting data.

### 3.6.2.3 Questionnaire Design

Failure to distribute a questionnaire that is clear and concise as may result in participants choosing not to complete the survey (Denscombe 2010). According to (S. P. Cameron 2009, 338), there are two essential elements in successful questionnaire design; the content and the design. In order to ensure that the questions asked were clear and concise, the researcher constructed the majority of the questions with pre-prompted answers. For example, the participant was prompted to select a single pre-prompted answer on certain questions while others required several answers. To ensure the research aims and objectives are being met, the correct questions need to be included in the questionnaire before it is distributed. The resulting questionnaire consisted of 19 questions. A few the questions were structured with an 'other' option which allowed participants to express alternative answers that were not prompted.

### 3.6.2.4 Questionnaire Pilot Testing

(Saunders 2012) Encourages the use of pilot testing to refine, validate and assess the likely reliability of your questionnaire prior to distribution. Ultimately, conducting pilot testing prior to the distribution may identify potential issues thus improving the success of the final questionnaire (Bell 2010). (Schwab 2005, 47) Identifies the value of pilot testing: *“It may help identify items that are difficult to understand, increase response rates, reduce missing data and may obtain more valid responses on the final questionnaire”*. The pilot questionnaire was distributed amongst a small group of both key hospitality industry stakeholders and academics. The feedback generated from the group undertaking the pilot questionnaire was analysed and the necessary adjustments were made to the questionnaire prior to distribution.

### 3.6.2.5 Questionnaire Sampling

(Cooper 1998, 71) Defines a sample as “*a part of the target population, carefully selected to represent the population*”. There are two types of sampling: probability and non-probability. According to (Salkind 2012, 96), probability sampling refers to “*the likelihood of any member of the population being selected is known*” whereas non-probability sampling refers to “*the likelihood of any member of the population being selected is unknown*”. According to (Forzano 2012) in probability sampling the entire population is known, everyone in the population has a chance of selection and sampling occurs by a random process based on the probabilities. Probability sampling was used by the author as the questionnaire was distributed to a known population; in this case 1000 key stakeholders in the hospitality sector. These 100 key stakeholders were “hand-picked for the topic” (Denscombe 2010).

### 3.6.2.6 Questionnaire Distribution

The self-administered on-line questionnaire was generated in the Google Forms online platform. A hyperlink to the questionnaire was then e-mailed to 1000 key stakeholders in the Irish hospitality sector. The cover email containing the hyperlink introduced the researcher, outlined the nature and the purpose of the study, assured participant’s confidentiality and anonymity and thanking participants in advance for their time and valuable input. The questionnaire remained open to participants for one week and then closed to analyse results.



### 3.6.3 Semi-structured Interviews

(Saunders 2012, 372) *Define the research interview as* “a purposeful conversation between two or more people, requiring the interviewer to establish rapport, to ask concise and unambiguous questions, to which the interviewee is willing to respond, and listen attentively”. Interviews are considered by many authors as useful data collection tools which produce “*incredibly rich and illuminating data*” (S. P. Cameron 2009). (Currie 2005) illustrates that a semi-structured interview is one in which the interviewer has a pre-set type and order of question, but is prepared to add to the number of questions, vary the theme of the interview and the order in which the questions are asked if doing so is of benefit to the research objectives. The focus of the semi-structured interview is to gauge the opinions of key industry stakeholders in relation to the four main objectives of the research project. The questions constructed by the author will therefore reflect these objectives to ensure that the relevant overall research aim is achieved.

#### 3.6.3.1 Interview Procedure

Two semi-structured interviews were carried out with key stakeholders currently working in the Irish hospitality sector. The first interview was conducted with a member of Euro-toques Ireland, which is a European community of cooks and chefs, representing over 3,500 professionals (Euro-toques Ireland 2017). The second interview was conducted with a key stakeholder who has been working for several years in both the hospitality industry and an educational body responsible for the education of chefs entering the industry. The interviews were conducted at the participant's place of occupation. The questionnaire consisted of a list of questions which were standardised between the two participants. These questions promoted discussion of the key topics of the project objectives. Subject matter in relation to the training,

employment factors and the future skills requirement of chefs was discussed. This subject matter would enable the researcher to gauge industry opinion of the subject matter. The interview participants were also requested for their permission to record the proceedings.

### 3.6.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews Rationale

According to (S. P. Cameron 2009, 253), semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer “*to reword questions, to draw out discussions or to go through the questions out of sequence if that is the way in which the discussions develop*”. The use of semi-structured interviews enables the researcher to have a degree of flexibility throughout the proceedings. This flexibility will allow for the development of discussion, elaboration on areas of interest, clarification of vague responses and collection of rich data. The semi-structured interview approach was preferred by the author to help facilitate the collection of in-depth, quality data which included participant’s personal views and opinions on the current skills shortage in the Irish hospitality sector.

### 3.6.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews Limitations

The researcher recognises that there may have been other more informed industry stakeholders that could have participated in the interview process. These stakeholders could have provided additional contributions and more informed opinion as the current skills shortage in the Irish hospitality sector. Due to time constraints, limited resources and ability to access further key stakeholders, the interviews were restricted to two participants in order to ensure the study’s feasibility and completion under constrained deadlines. The researcher had additional limitations in terms of the possible personal bias of the participants. Personal bias in terms of historical factors may have arisen

throughout the interviews. The researcher limited this personal bias by constructing questions targeted at the opinions of the chefs as to the effect of the national skills shortage rather than the shortage at their personal places of occupation.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics is defined as “*the standards of the researcher’s behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research project, or who are affected by it*” (Saunders 2012, 680). As outlined in (Denscombe 2010), the core principle of research is that “*the ends do not justify the means in the pursuit of knowledge*”. Fundamentally, the issue of ethics must be given careful consideration during all aspects of a research project in order to ensure all data is obtained voluntarily and with consent, the transparency of the study is upheld and that the welfare of all participants is prioritised and protected at all times (Denscombe 2010, 329-342). The two main areas that were of concern for the researcher came in terms of privacy and confidentiality when carrying out both data collection methods. The privacy of the participants that contributed to the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was paramount for the researcher. Prior to both the questionnaire and interviews, the researcher assured participants that all data collected would be done so in an anonymous manner and treated in the strictest of confidence. The author did not request names or addresses at any stage of data collection. The confidentiality of all data collected was assured as the data was being used for the research project alone.

### 3.8 Research Limitations

Research limitations can be defined as the “*those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the application or interpretation of the results of your study. They are the constraints on generalisability and utility of findings that are the result of the ways in which you chose to design the study and/or the method used to establish internal and external validity*” (University of Southern California 2013). According to Saunders, et al. (2012), four primary threats to the reliability of any study exist, participant error, participant bias, researcher error and researcher bias. Participant error could not be avoided as the participant’s environmental factors could not be controlled by the researcher. The variety of answers available to the participants may vary throughout the day and the researcher could not control these factors in a self-administered questionnaire. Participant bias is a tendency of participants to consciously or subconsciously act in a way that they think the experimenter/researcher wants them to act (Gonzalez 2017). The researcher was able to avoid this limitation in relation to the quantitative research as the questionnaire was administered with the use of a self-administered online forum. Researcher error and researcher bias were avoided by using standardised questions in both the questionnaire and semi structured interviews. The piloting of both these standardised questions allowed the researcher error and researcher bias to be reduced. The validity of the research project was achieved by using a large sample size for the quantitative data collection method.

### 3.9 Conclusion

The main aim of the methodology chapter was to explain and validate the research methodology used during the collection of data for this research project. Firstly, the researcher discussed the research strategy, the data collection methods, the sampling strategy and the procedure followed to undertake this research project. They then outlined the limitations and ethical considerations relevant to the research project. During the course of the methodology chapter the author referred back to the main aim and objectives of the research project. This enabled the researcher to validate that the research methods employed were best suited and would effectively satisfy the three main research objectives. Chapter four will illustrate the key findings of the primary data collected by the researcher during this study.

## 4.0 Analysis of Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

In the analysis of findings chapter, the author will present the results of the research conducted in relation to the current skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector. As discussed in Chapter Three the data presented below was obtained by the researcher through the distribution of an on-line questionnaire using a systematic random sample of Irish veterinary practices as well as from conducting four semi-structured interviews with two key stakeholders from the Irish hospitality sector. This chapter will present the data collected and convert it into valuable information that will enable the author to discuss the findings in chapter five. In a bid to increase the validity and credibility of the research document, the author chose to utilise a method known as triangulation, gathering both qualitative and quantitative data using two main data collection tools; a self-administered on-line questionnaire and semi structured interviews. According to (Bryman 2007), “Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings”.

## 4.2 Research Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the results of the research undertaken by the author. The results were derived from a mixed method strategy, in this case with the use of a questionnaire and semi structured interviews. This method was undertaken in order to accomplish the study's four primary objectives:

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

## 4.3 Quantitative Research

The findings presented below represent data collected with the use of an on-line questionnaire which was distributed to a systematic random sample of Irish hospitality stakeholders. The author will first develop a general profile of the respondents and will then outline this study's findings in relation to their responses addressing each research objective in turn.

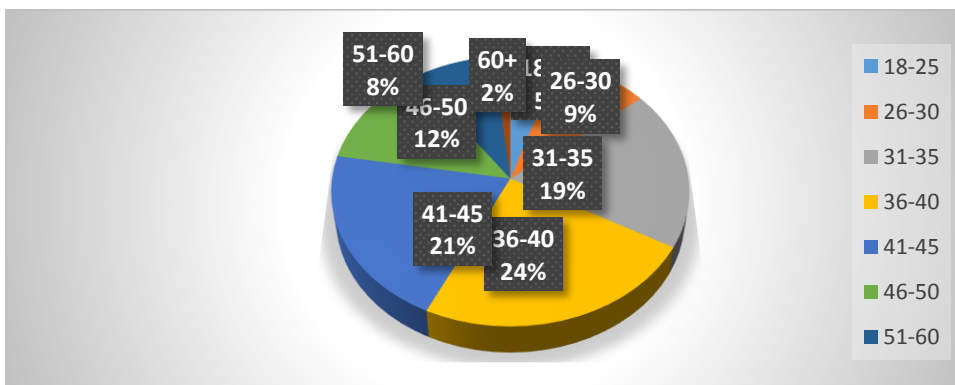
### 4.3.1 Profile of Hospitality Industry Stakeholders

The stakeholders represent a broad range of chefs and stakeholders in the Irish hospitality sector. The participants are of a broad range in terms of age group, gender, nationality, field of catering, industry experience, job title and level of formal qualification. The author will then examine the participant's opinions on the chef shortage in the sector and their opinions of the training and development required to alleviate the shortage.

#### 4.3.1.1 Age

This verifies an approximate age of respondent's and may help to clarify if age influences people's perception of the various concepts being researched. 5% of respondents were aged between eighteen and twenty-five years old. 9% of respondents were aged between twenty-six and thirty. 19% of respondents were aged between thirty-one and thirty-five. 24% of respondents were aged between thirty-six and forty. 21% of respondents were aged between forty-one and forty-five. 12% of respondents were aged between forty-six and fifty, 8% of respondents were aged between fifty-one and sixty. 2% of respondents were aged above sixty years of age.

*Figure 1 Age*



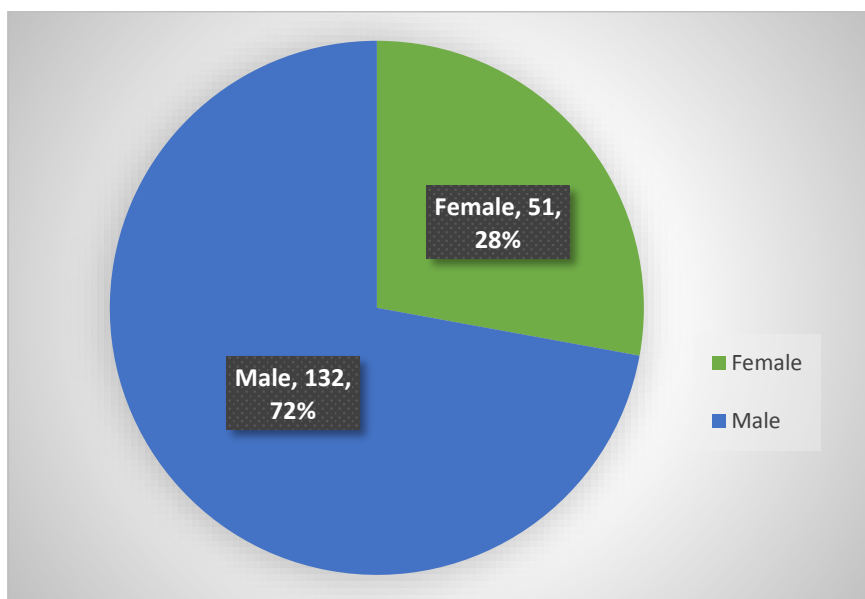


### 4.3.1.2 Gender

What is your gender?

This question establishes the respondent's gender. There was a significant split in the gender of respondents that participated in the research, with 28% being female and 72% being male.

*Figure 2 Gender*

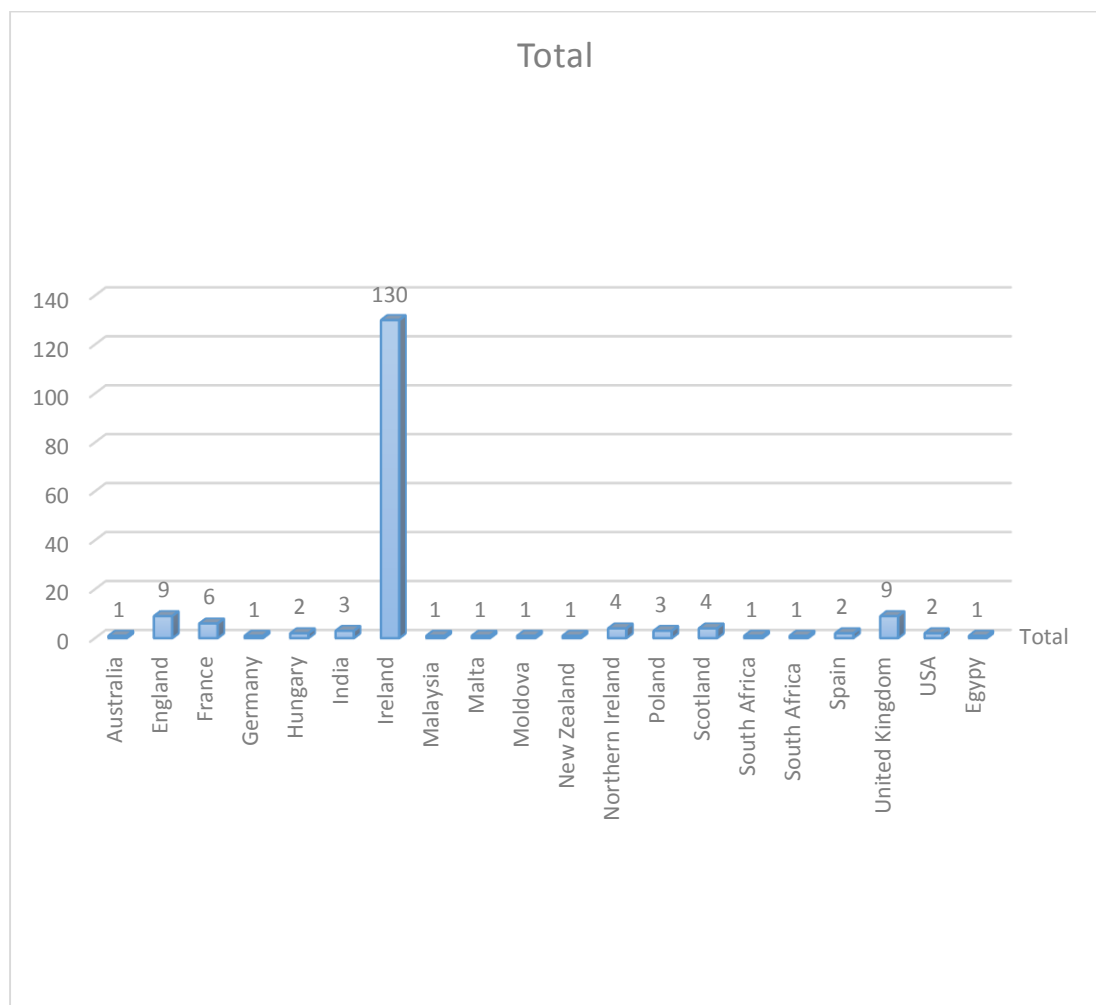


### 4.3.1.3 Nationality

What is your country of birth?

This question establishes the respondent's nationality. There was a significant split of the nationality of respondents that participated in the research, with the majority (130) being from Ireland. There was a wide variety of participants from a further 18 countries.

Figure 3 Nationality

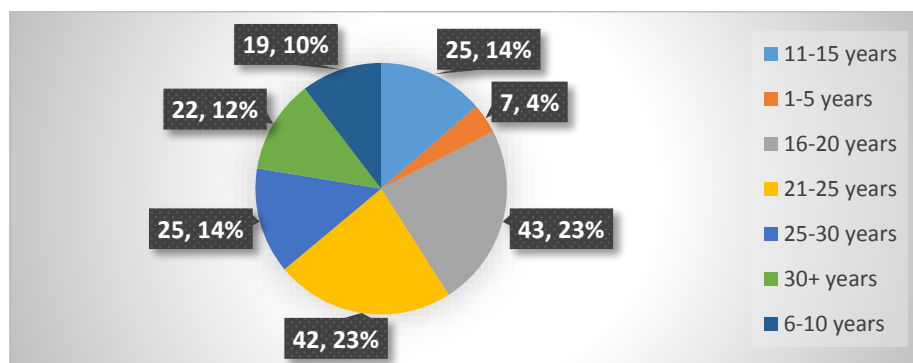


### 4.3.1.3 Industry Experience

How many years Industry experience do you have?

This question establishes the respondent's industry experience. Most respondents (74%) had between 10 and 30 years. 14% of respondents had 11-15 years or 25-30 years' experience. 23% of respondents had between 16-20 or 21-25 years' experience.

Figure 4 Industry Experience

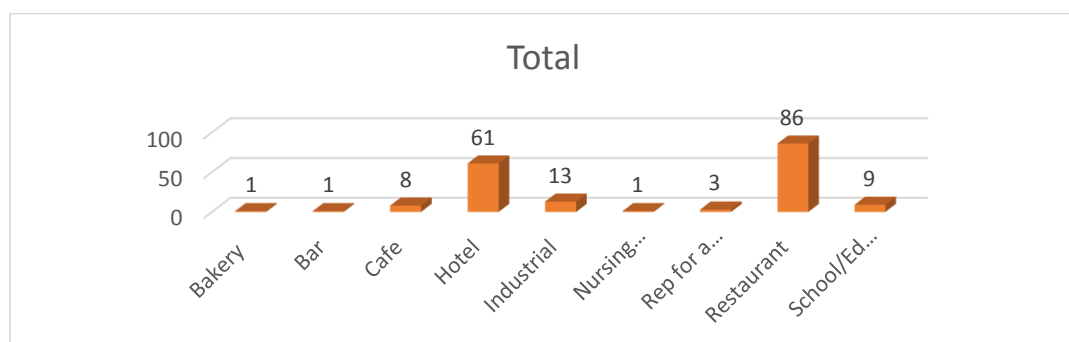


### 4.3.1.4 Field of Catering

What is your field of Catering?

This question establishes the respondent's field of catering. Most of the respondents came from a restaurant (86) or hotels (61). There was a range of other fields including bar's (1), café's (8), industrial catering (13) and education (9).

Figure 5 Field of Catering

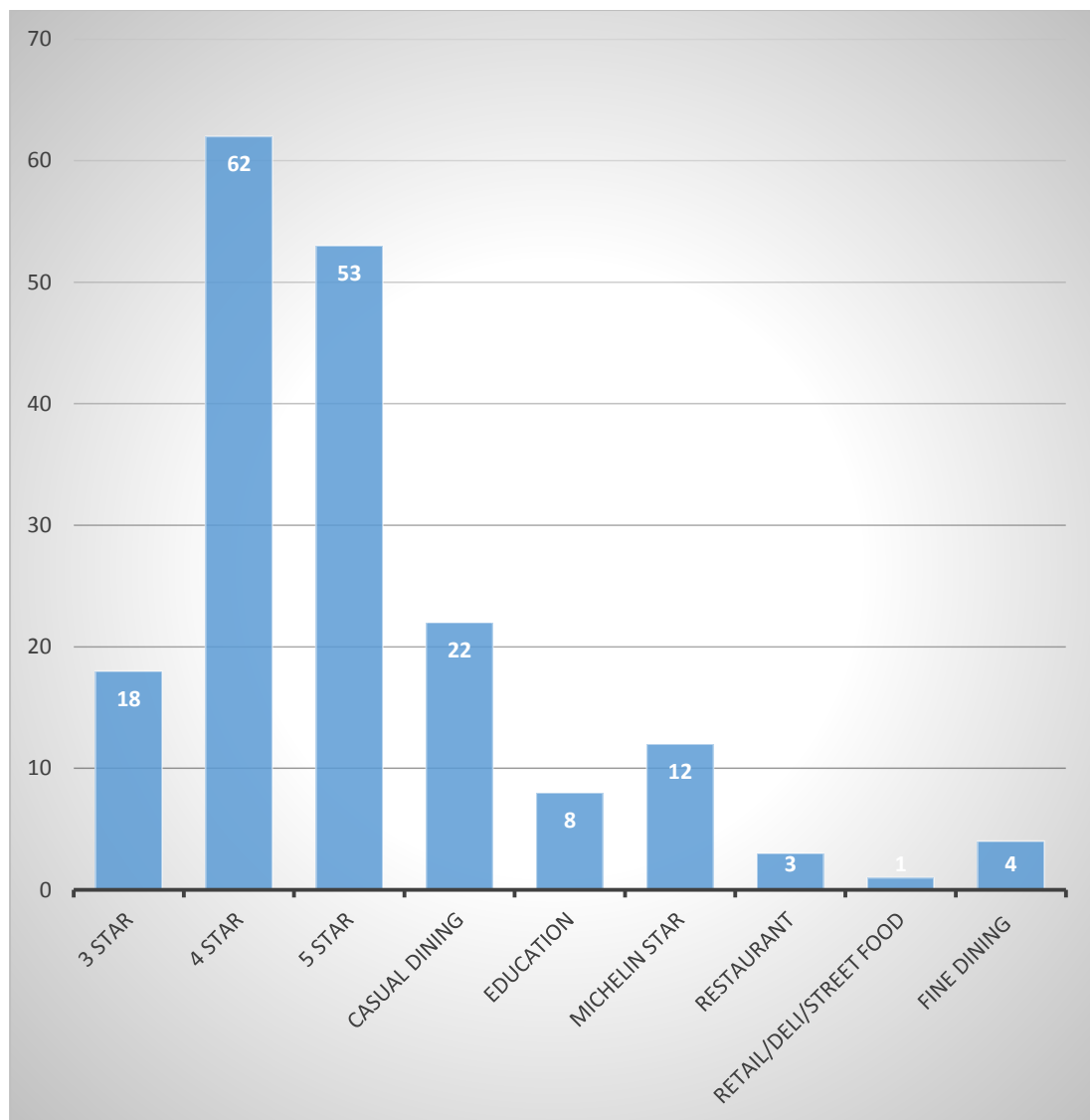


### 4.3.1.5 Status of Premises

How would you best describe your premises in terms of status?

This question establishes the status of the respondent's premises of occupation. Most of the respondents came from a four star (62) or five star (53) premises. There was a range of other status' including casual dining (22), three star (18), education (8) and Michelin star (12).

Figure 6 Status of Premises

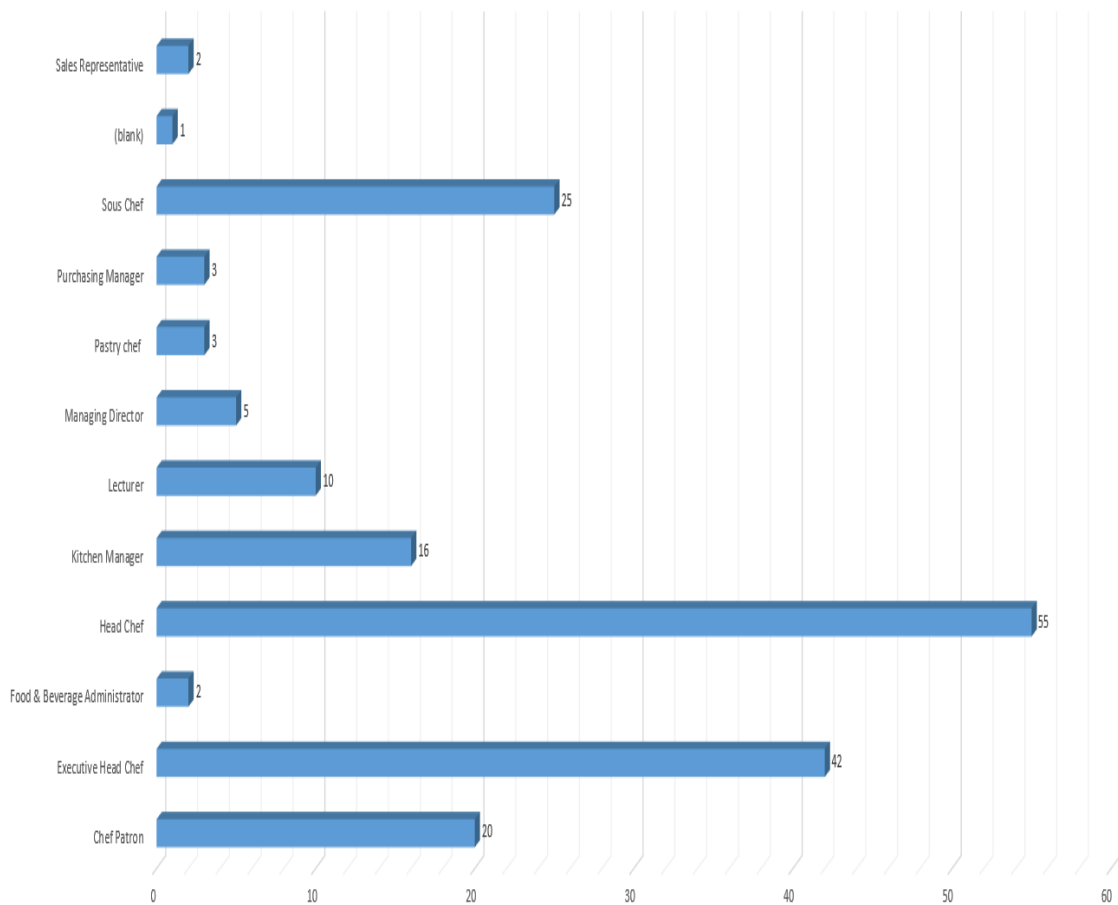


### 4.3.1.6 Job Title

How would you describe your job title?

This question establishes the respondent's Job Title. Most of the respondents were Executive head chefs (42) or head chef (55). There was a range of other job titles including sous chef (25), kitchen manager (16), chef patron (20) and lecturer (10).

*Figure 7 Job Title*

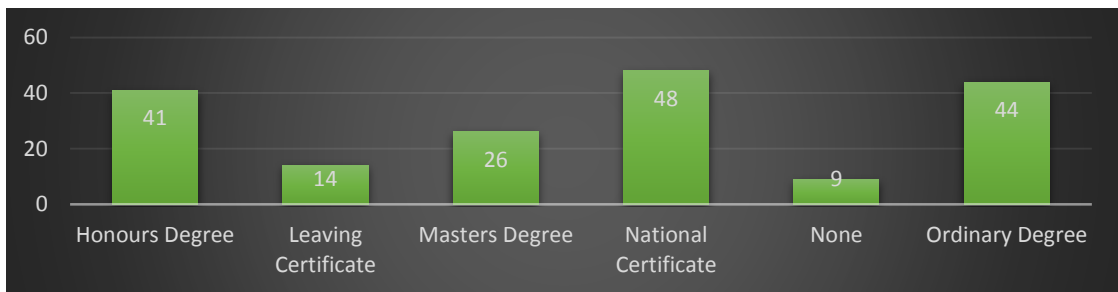


### 4.3.1.7 Formal Qualification

What level of formal qualification do you have?

This question establishes the respondent's level of formal qualification. Most of the respondents had national certificate (48), ordinary degree (44) or an honours degree (41). There was a range of chefs who had a leaving certificate (14) or a masters degree (26). Some of the respondents had no formal qualification (9).

Figure 8 Formal Qualification



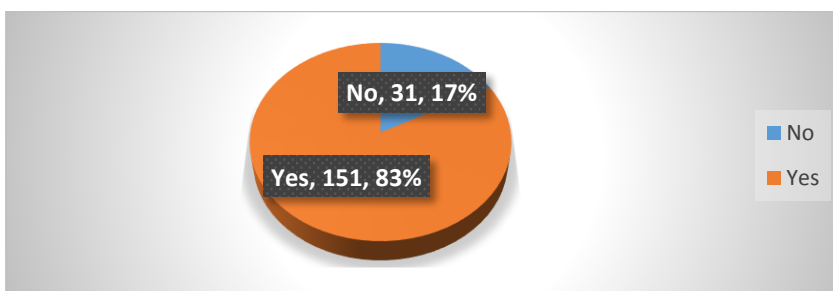
### 4.3.2 The skills shortage extent in 2017

#### 4.3.2.1 Shortage Affect

Have you been directly affected by a shortage of chefs at your premises?

This question establishes the effect of the shortage on the respondent's. There was a significant split in of respondents that participated in the research, with 17% not being affected by the shortage and 83% being directly affected by the shortage.

Figure 9 Shortage Affect

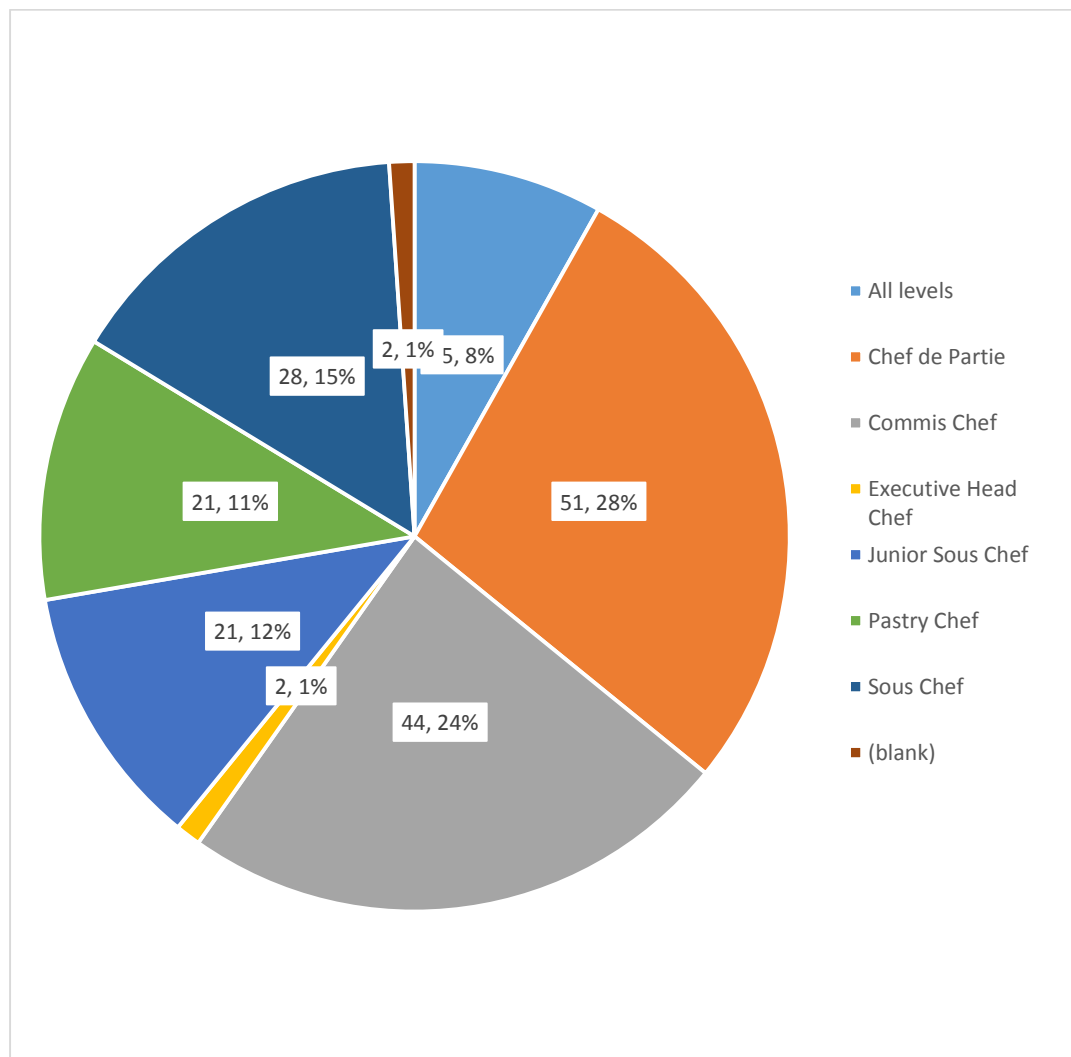


### 4.3.2.2 Shortage Levels

From what level of chef is there a greatest shortage?

This question establishes what level of chef is there a greatest shortage in the opinion of the respondent's. Most of the respondents felt that the greatest shortage was at the chef de partie (28%) or at commis chef (24%). The respondents felt that there is a shortage at junior sous chef (12%), sous chef (15%) and at pastry chef (11%). (8%) of respondents felt that there is a shortage at all levels of chefs.

*Figure 10 Shortage Levels*

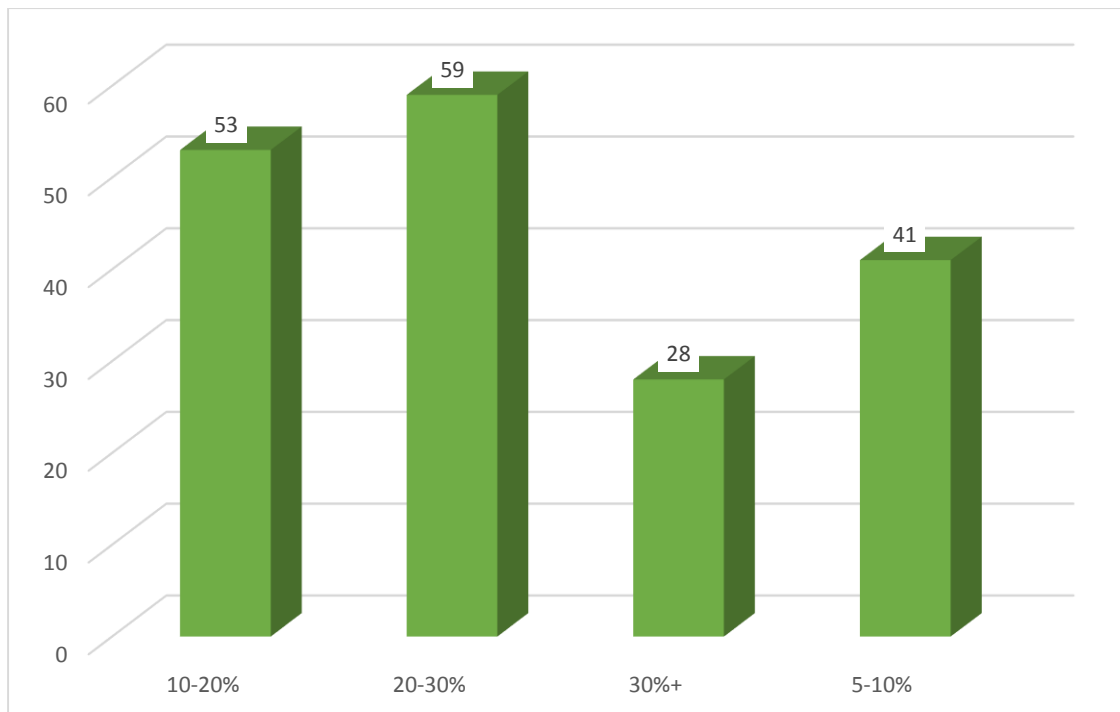


### 4.3.2.3 Percentage of Shortage

What would you feel the level of shortage of chefs at your premises would amount to?

This question establishes what level of shortage in the respondent's premises of occupation. Most of the respondents (59) felt that their kitchens were 20-30% understaffed. (53) of respondents felt that their kitchen was 10-20% understaffed. (28) respondents felt that their kitchen was understaffed by more that 30% of their full team.

*Figure 11 Percentage of Shortage*



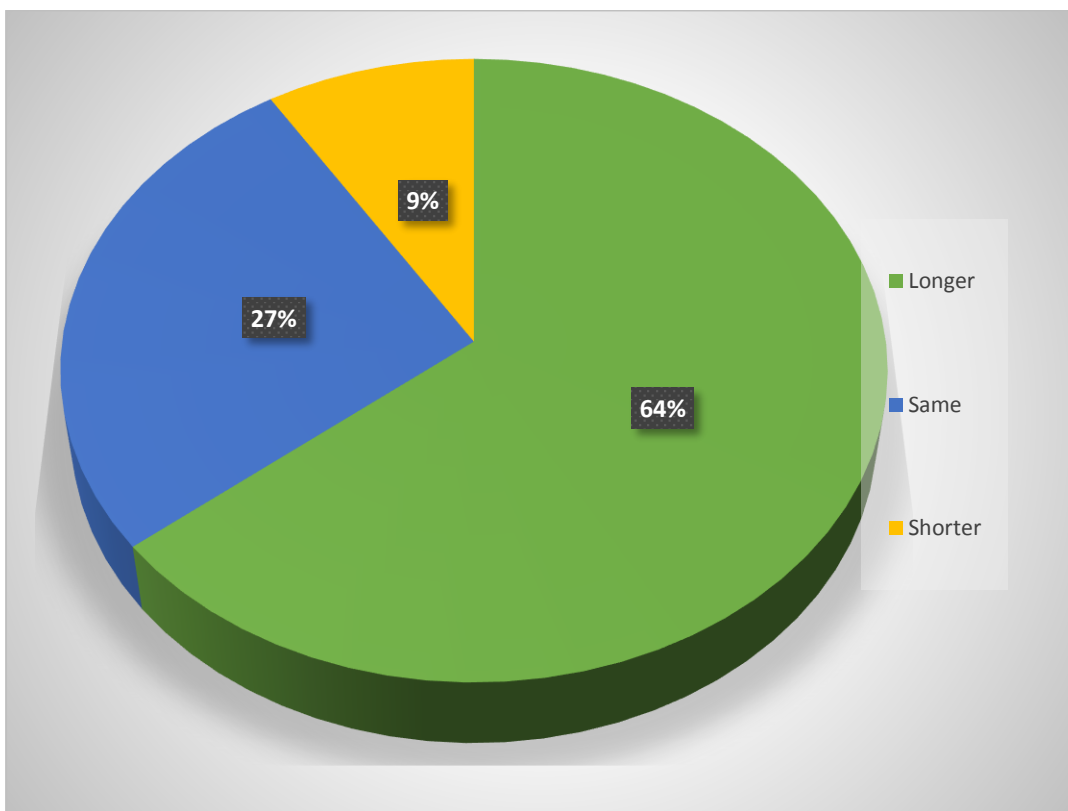


#### 4.3.2.4 Chef recruitment timeline.

Compared to previous years, is your organisation's chef recruitment timeline getting

This question establishes the length of the recruitment timeline at the participants place of occupation. (64%) of respondents felt that their recruitment timeline when hiring staff was getting longer. (27%) of respondents felt that there has been no change in the length of the recruitment timeline at their premises. (9%) of respondents felt that their recruitment timeline has shortened.

*Figure 12 Recruitment Timeline*



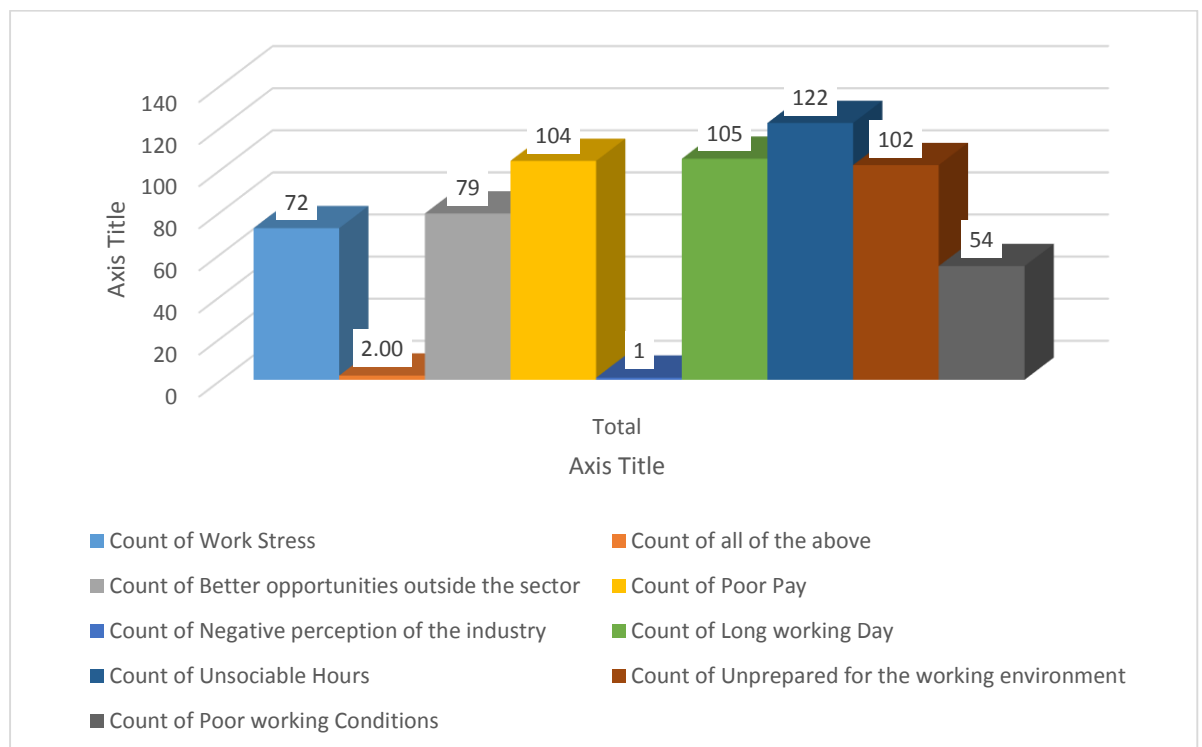
### 4.3.3 The factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector.

#### 4.3.3.1 Shortage Factors

What do you feel are the key factors for the shortage of chefs in the sector?

This question gauges the opinions of the respondents as to the factors that may be causing the shortage of chefs in the hospitality sector. (122) respondents felt that the unsociable hours are a key factor. (105) respondents felt that long working days are key factor. (104) respondents felt that poor pay is a key factor. (102) respondents felt that being unprepared for the working environment is a key factor. (79) respondents felt that better opportunities outside the industry is a key factor. (72) respondents felt that work stress is a key factor and (54) respondents felt that poor working conditions are a key factor for the shortage of chefs in the Irish hospitality sector.

Figure 13 Shortage Factors



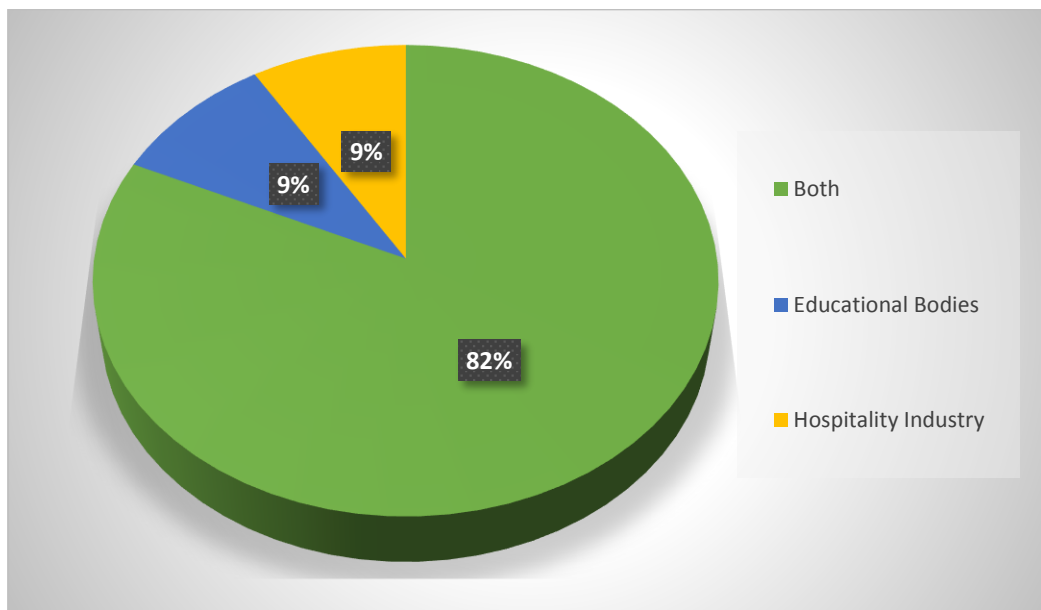
4.3.4 To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.

#### 4.3.4.1 Training Responsibility

Who do you feel is responsible for the training of new chefs entering the sector?

This question establishes the opinions of the respondents as to who is responsible for the education and training of chefs entering the hospitality sector. (9%) of respondents felt that the educational bodies are responsible. (9%) of respondents felt that the industry bodies are responsible. (82%) of respondents felt that both the educational bodies and the industry bodies are responsible for the training and education of the chefs.

*Figure 14 Training Responsibility*

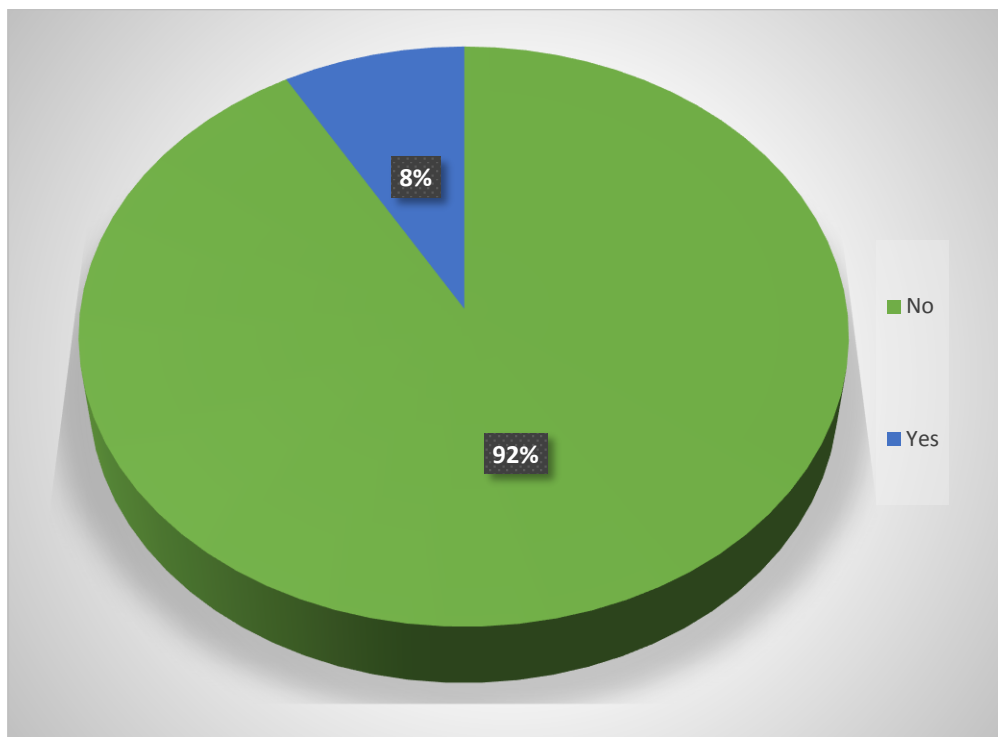


#### 4.3.4.2 Industry/Education Collaboration

Do you feel there is enough collaboration between the educational bodies and the industry?

This question examines the stakeholder's opinion of the collaboration between both the industrial and educational bodies in terms of the training and education of chefs entering the Irish hospitality sector. An overwhelming (92%) of respondents felt that there is not enough collaboration between the two bodies, (8%) of respondents felt that there is enough collaboration between the two bodies.

*Figure 15 Industry/Education Collaboration*

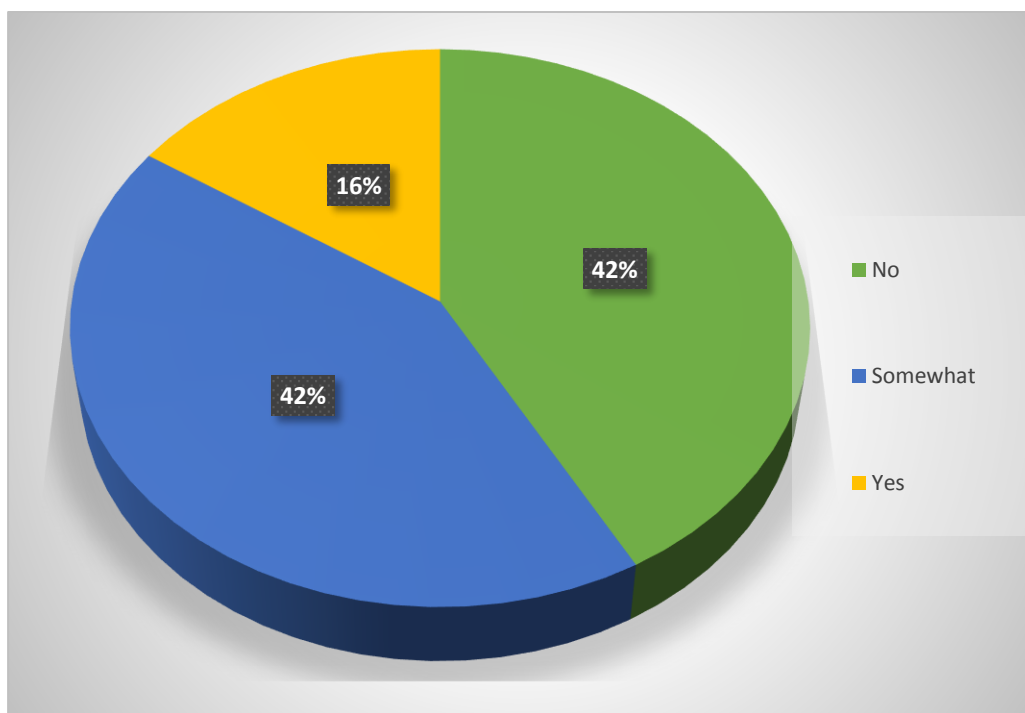


#### 4.3.4.3 Skills Possession

In your experience do you feel that the chefs graduating from culinary institutes possess the necessary technical skills to enable them to enter the industry?

This question examines the opinion of the respondents as to the skill level of the chefs graduating from educational bodies. (42%) of respondents felt that the graduates do not possess the necessary technical skills to enable them to enter the industry. (42%) of respondents felt that the graduates somewhat possess the necessary technical skills to enable them to enter the industry. (16%) of respondents felt that graduated do possess the necessary technical skills to enable them to enter the industry.

*Figure 16 Skills Possession*

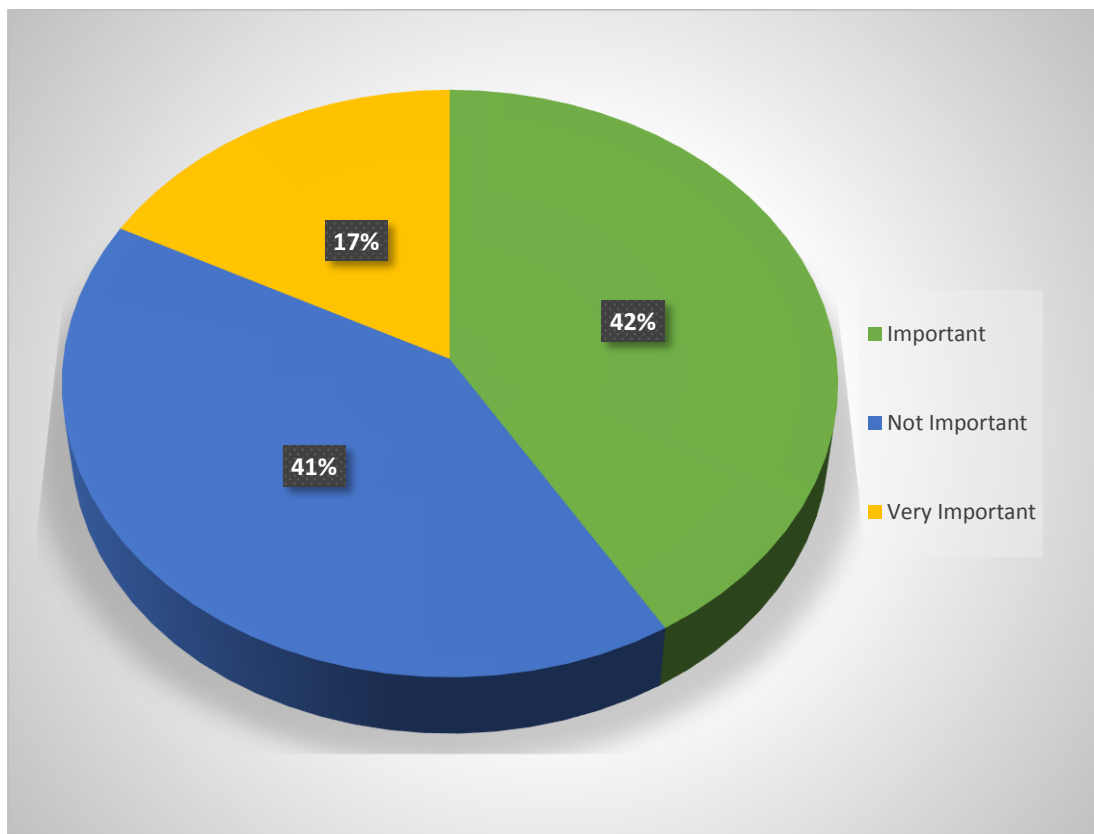


#### 4.3.4.4 Skills Certification

What importance do you place on certifications?

This question examines the opinions of the respondents as to the importance of certification of chefs entering the industry. (17%) of respondents felt that certification is very important for chefs entering the industry. (41%) of respondents felt that the skill certification was important. (41%) of respondents felt that certification was not important for chefs entering the industry.

*Figure 17 Skills Certification*

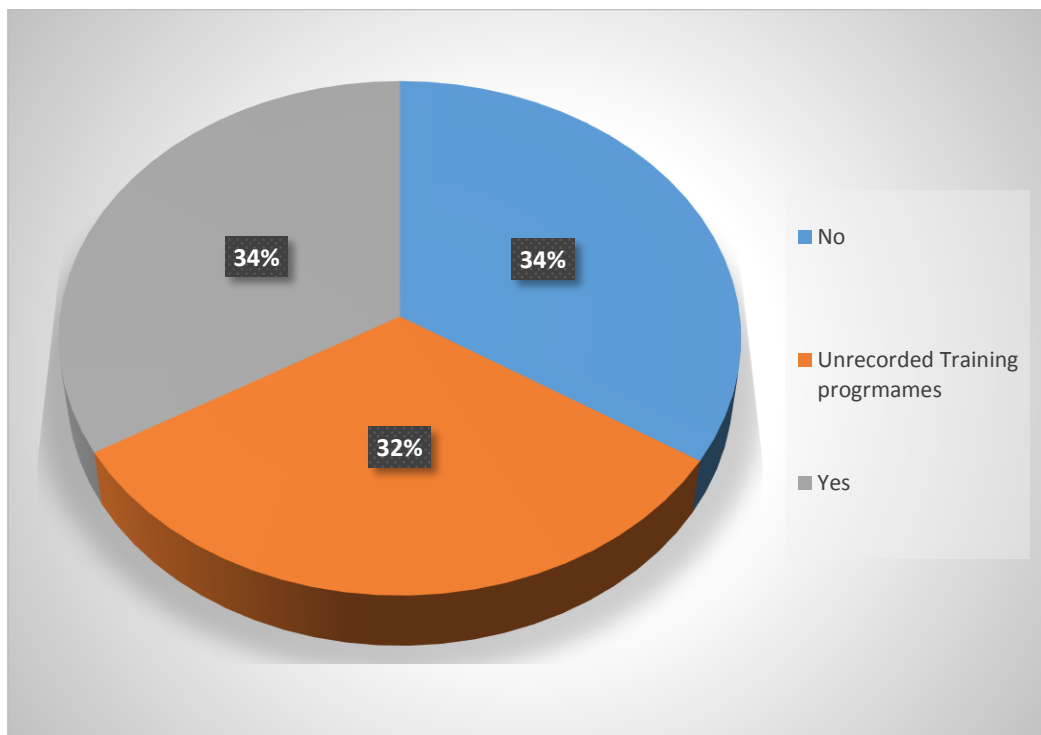


#### 4.3.4.5 Recorded Training Programmes

Does your organisation currently use any specific recorded training programs for its chefs?

This question examines the prevalence of recorded training programmes amongst the premises of the respondents. (34%) of respondents claimed that their premises have recorded training programmes. (32%) of respondents claimed that their premises have unrecorded training programmes. (34%) of respondents claim that their premises do not have any form of recorded training.

*Figure 18 Recorded Training Programmes*

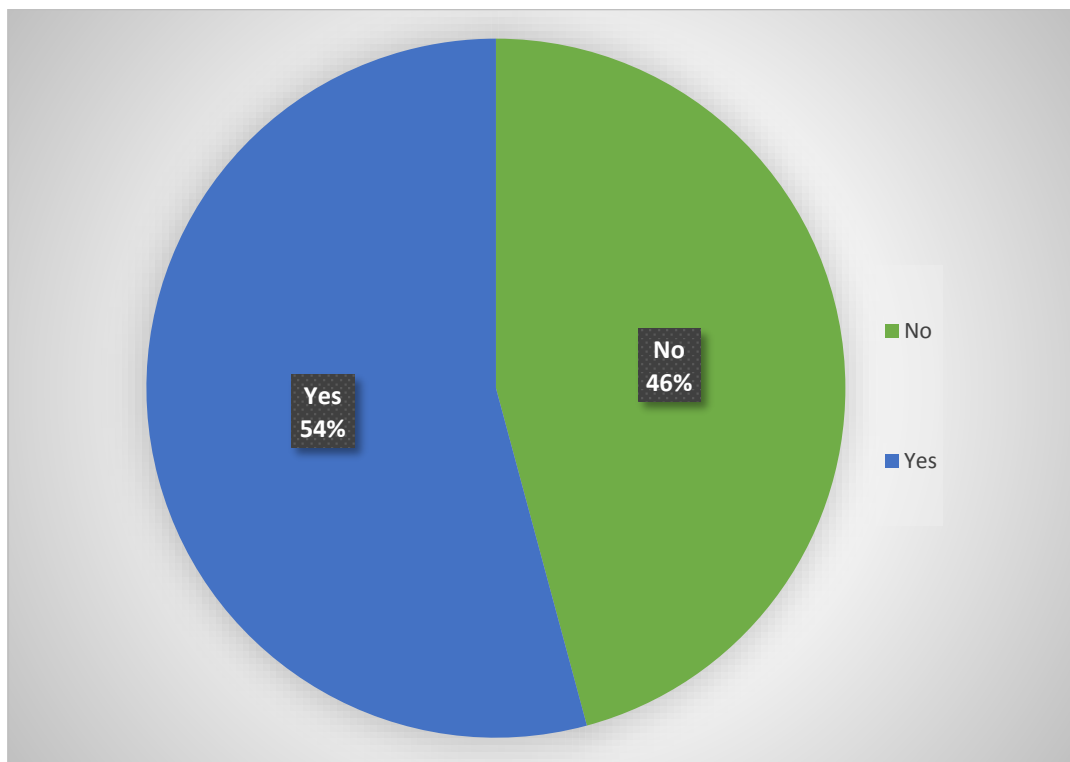


#### 4.3.4.6 Training Sponsorship

Does your organisation provide sponsorship for unqualified staff who wish to undergo training to qualify as a chef?

This question examines the willingness of the respondents to provide sponsorship for the future training of their staff to become certified chefs. (54%) of respondents claim that their premises provide sponsorship for their staff to undergo training as a chef. (46%) of the respondents claim that their premises do not provide for their staff to undergo training to qualify as a chef.

*Figure 19 Training Sponsorship*





## 4.4 Qualitative Research

The findings presented below represent the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews conducted by the author with two key stakeholders of the Irish Hospitality Industry. The author will provide an interviewee profile for both participants. Following this, the author will outline the findings from the interviews under the format of the documents four research objectives:

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

The format of the interview questions was guided by these research objectives and used as conversation topics in the semi-structured interviews.

### 4.4.1 Interviewee Profiles

The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews using the methodology previously described in Chapter Three, section 3.6.3.1. The interviewee profiles are as follows;

Interviewee One: The first interview was conducted with a member of Euro-toques Ireland, which is a European community of cooks and chefs, representing over 3,500

professionals (Euro-toques Ireland 2017). He is a chef with 25 years' experience in the Irish and International Hospitality Industry

Interviewee Two: The second interview was conducted with a key stakeholder of the Irish Hospitality Industry, in this case a chef who has been working for several years in both the hospitality industry and an educational body responsible for the education of chefs entering the industry. This interviewee's experience in relation to the education and training of chefs enables them to have a key insight into the chef shortage from both the industry and educational points of view.

4.3.2 Research Objective One: To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.

During the semi-structured interviews, the author sought to ascertain the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017. The responses gathered from both interviewees were of similar vein as to the extent of the skills shortage particularly amongst chefs. Interviewee number one stated *“we are in crisis mode at the minute. The shortage has hit the chef industry hardest. When the economy has gotten better and the tourist have returned, the shortage in chefs seemed to get worse”*. Similarly, Interviewee number two stated *“the lack of chefs has really hit our business here. Chefs are like gold dust. They just can't be found. If I had a position open in the kitchen in the past, I might have 12 CV's, call in 3 or 4 to interview in the kitchen, and make a decision on who to hire; now it's the other way around; there's one cook and 12 restaurants chasing that chef”*. Both interviewees had similar views on the influx of chefs into the sector during the Celtic tiger era of the Irish

economic boom. Interviewee one stated *“During the mid 2000’s the demand for chefs was made up of employees from Eastern Europe. Chefs of all grades were available and willing to learn, but jobs in other industries and better wages on the continent have meant that all those chefs have left the country or left cheffing”*. Similar to this interviewee two stated *“Hiring senior chefs at the moment and it’s a much more difficult task than it would have been a few years ago. During the boom, many young, well trained Polish chefs came to Ireland but now they’re no longer coming this way and we’re stuck.”*

When questioned in relation to the full extent of the shortage, both interviewees claimed that all their associates in the industry are *“feeling the pinch”*. Interviewee two claimed that some of his associates have closed their establishments on days during the week as they cannot find the chefs to enable them to open.

#### 4.3.3 Research Objective Two: To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.

To achieve objective two of the research document, the author used the most prominent factors that may be causing the shortage of the Irish hospitality sector. These factors were derived from the most popular factors highlighted by the questionnaire participants in the quantitative research. The main factors that may be causing the shortage of chefs derived from the qualitative research were unsociable hours, long working days, poor pay, unprepared for the working environment and better opportunities outside the industry. These factors were then used as discussion topics in the semi structured interviews with the two participants.

#### 4.3.3.1 Unsociable Hours

When questioned about unsociable hours, both interviewees were in agreement that unsociable hours are a key factor for the shortage of chefs in the Irish hospitality sector. They both agreed that although unsociable hours are a giant factor however they concurred that it is the nature of the career choice. The hospitality industry is traditionally based upon weekends and evenings which are usually unsociable. Interviewee one stated that *“At the end of the day hospitality is not really considered a career choice by many people unfortunately and that’s down to things such as unsociable hours, weekend work and relatively low pay”*. Both interviewees felt that the nature of the Irish hospitality sector, and the unsociable hours that is associated with a career choice in this sector, can place a huge burden on a chefs personal life and relationships outside of the kitchen. Interviewee two felt that this burden can be a factor for driving chefs away from a career in the sector. He stated that *“There are a huge amount of very talented people that want to work in hospitality but the this type of business doesn’t permit it to fit in with their lives”*. Both interviewee felt that an increase in the numbers of chefs in the sector and in each establishment would allow chefs to rotate unsociable shifts however they both were not optimistic that this is achievable in the short term.

#### 4.3.3.2 Long Working Days

There was a slight deviation in opinions of the interviewees when it came to the topic of long working hours. Interviewee two was predominantly not in favour of long working hours in the careers of chefs. Interviewee one felt that it was part of the *“right of passage”* for chefs when starting their careers. He stated that *“Working long hours at the beginning is the same as if you are training to be a doctor, solicitor, or an accountant. It is all part of the learning curve.”* This opinion was not in line with data

gathered from the quantitative research where 105 out of 183 respondents felt that long working days was a key contributor for the shortage of chefs in the industry. In contrast to this, interviewee one was not in favour of the long working days associated with being a chef. He stated that *“Cheffing means long hours, and it is very pressurised. This is not ideal for any chef who wants to be with her family.”* However, interviewee one stated that although long hours are not sustainable, they are vital for the success of any business in the Irish hospitality sector. He stated that *“Long hours and hard work were always basic elements in being a chef. Now, they're a matter of life”*.

#### 4.3.3.3 Poor Pay

In relation to poor pay, both interviewees were in agreement that poor pay in the industry seems to be a main factor for the shortage of chefs. Interviewee one stated that *“In the hospitality industry and particularly in cheffing roles where the main shortage is, pay is often low”*. Interviewee two had a similar opinion but highlighted the difference of pay in relation to other professions, *“People don't question how much solicitors or GPs get. I know they're well-qualified, but so are chefs. We put hours and hours of effort into what we're doing.”* The topic of poor pay continued throughout the interview and overlapped with discussions about the hiring of senior chefs. Interviewee one stated that *“We are governed by the minimum pay rate and people working in the sector can move on to senior positions in a much shorter timeframe than in other professions”*. This rapid progression of young chefs through the ranks was highlighted from interviewee one and he stated that *“young chefs are reaching senior chef positions far too early and do not possess the technical skill required to train those under them”*. During the interview with participant number two, he highlighted the pay gap between chef jobs in Ireland and similar jobs on the continent. He stated that *“chef jobs are for life, but, in Ireland, I think some people feel they will just do them to get by until their*

*dream profession comes along. The sector is different too. On the continent, a chef will be paid twice what a retail worker gets. The perception in Ireland is that the wages in those jobs is still poor."* Poor pay in the hospitality sector has led to a lack of quality chefs at all levels in the sector. The consistent theme throughout the interviews with both participants was that chefs are "overworked and underpaid" as stated by interviewee two.

#### 4.3.3.4 Unprepared for the Working Environment

The focus of this discussion topic was to begin the interviewees opinions of the level of preparation that chefs entering the sector have and also their appreciation for the type of work involved in being a chef. The topic of chef training in terms of quality and type of training will be discussed as part of objective three in section 4.3.4. This topic was used to gauge the opinions of the interviewees as to the impact of the chef's preparation on their overall successful retention within the sector. Both interviewees felt that there is a vast gap between the education bodies and the hospitality sector in Ireland. Interviewee one stated that *"it's so important we need to ensure those chefs our kitchens receive a solid and practical foundation, based on what those in the industry need."* Interviewee one also elaborated that *"it is tough for chefs entering a sector that is already short staffed across the board. Businesses put pressure on new chefs to deliver straight away. This pressure can be too much for some and they get lost from the industry as a result"*. Interviewee two concurred with interviewee two that new chefs are not prepared for the *"pressure cooker"* that is the kitchens of the Irish hospitality sector. He also stated that *"chefs entering our kitchen can find the first few months very tough. They are aware of the physical and mental demands that they face. It's hard for them as we are usually short staffed like all other kitchens. The time for them to be properly trained isn't there sometimes"*. He also stated that they aren't

prepared for the other factors in this section such as the long unsociable hours and poor pay. It can be hard for new chefs to adjust to this and they may have to make life choices. He stated that *“At a certain point, chefs have to decide how much they want their career versus spending time with family”*. He also expressed that *“The overall pressure that young chefs experience when they enter the industry needs to be either eased or conveyed to them by the education bodies”*.

#### 4.3.3.5 Better Opportunities Outside the Industry

In relation to the topic of better opportunities outside the industry, both interviewees felt that the industry is losing out to competitive industries such as the high-tech computing industry, finance industries and in the past the construction industry. Factors such as better rates of pay and working conditions such as regular working hours and shorter days have contributed to attraction candidates to those industries. Interviewee two stated that *“everyone nowadays wants to work for Google or Facebook when they leave school. It’s hard to compete with these multinational companies when attracting staff”*. He also stated that *“the industry doesn’t help itself with the unsociable hours and long working days. Fixing these issues might help the career as a chef more attractive for those leaving school”*. Interviewee one agreed with interviewee two in the fact that the industry is not attractive to those wishing to enter the sector. He also stated that chefs in the industry are being lost to the international market place as it is more attractive to high skilled workers like chefs. He felt that chefs are leaving the Irish hospitality sector for better working conditions abroad. He stated that *“If you reach the top of the tree as a chef, in this country, the world is your oyster and you could name your price to work anywhere in the world. People don’t realise you get experience as a head chef in a busy restaurant or hotel”*. He also felt that the influx of chefs who have supplemented the stock of chefs in the country are leaving the Irish hospitality

sector. He stated that *“Part of the reason is that there’s been an exodus. A lot of eastern European workers have gone back to their home countries”*.

4.3.4 Research Objective three: To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.

Both interviews agreed that training of chefs is essential for the success of all kitchens in the Irish hospitality sector. They were in agreement with the quantitative data in that both the education bodies and the hospitality sector were responsible for this training and education of new chefs. Interviewee one stated that *“there needs to be more collaboration between the IT’s and the industry, chef need to be well trained in terms of technique and requirements in the industry. They need to have recorded training programmes for the first few years when they are out in the industry too”*. Interviewee two also agreed that collaboration between the two bodies is essential however he stated that *“as much as it is important for the collaboration, it is more important for the chef to want to get ahead in the industry. They need to have that internal drive to succeed. Very few young chefs have that drive for success and can handle the stress of the trade”*. Interviewee one felt that there needed to be more inspection in the first few years after a chef enters the industry as to the training and progression that is being given to them. Interviewee felt that the lack of collaboration between the two bodies has led to the lack of applicants to the sector and the lack of retention of those who do make it that far. He stated that *“we are finding ourselves in a position where we have a severe shortage of chefs in Ireland which is now threatening the success of the tourism industry's recovery. This shortage will affect both the education bodies and more importantly the businesses in the sector”*. Both interviewees were in favour of a national body such as CERT taking



control of the situation. Interviewee two stated that *“Cert was fit for purpose to supply chefs to the industry, perhaps a new more suitable modern body such as Solas may help the situation and relieve the shortage”*.

#### 4.3.5 Research Objective Four: To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

When it came to gauging the opinions of the interviewees as to the methods to alleviate the shortage of chefs in the Irish hospitality sector, both participants had a wide variety of solutions to alleviate aspects of the problem. There didn't seem to be one solution to the issue, rather than a wide range of methods to solve the wide variety of problems such as the poor pay, long working days and unsociable hours. Interviewee one stated that to alleviate the shortage *“some restaurants across the country are being forced to close on Mondays and Tuesday due to the shortage of chefs”*. The interviewees were in agreement that the pay structures for chefs need to be increase, the long working days needs to be reduced and the unsociable hours needs to be addressed for the sustainability of the industry. Both interviewees also concurred that a career as a chef should be similar to that of an electrician or plumber and respected in similar veins. Interviewee one stated that *“if an electrician wires your house he gets paid well because you trust him to do a good job because he is highly skilled and is paid accordingly, yet a chef cooks food that can affect your health and is paid a faction of that of an electrician”*.

## 4.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present the findings from the primary research conducted by the author in relation to the opinions of stakeholders in the Irish hospitality industry as to the extent of the current skills shortage of chefs in the sector, the factors that may be causing this shortage and the strategies available to alleviate this shortage. Throughout this research project the researcher referred to the aim and objectives to ensure that both the data gathered because of the methodology employed satisfied the three main research objectives. The data collected in this chapter was presented and converted it into valuable information that will enable the author to discuss the findings in chapter five.

## 5.0 Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

The function of this chapter is to provide a detailed discussion of the main findings in relation to the relevant literature previously discussed in chapter two. The researcher sought to relate the overall findings back to the main research aim and objectives. The author intends to compare and contrast the documents findings with those from previous research on the shortage of chefs in the industry and the culinary education of chefs. All knowledge derived from this study will be highlighted by the author and form part of the discussion in this chapter.

### 5.2 Research Aim

The main aim of this research document is to investigate the opinions of a cross section of key stakeholders in the Irish hospitality as to the cause, effect and solution to the skills drain amongst chefs in 2017. The author achieved this by fulfilling the four main objectives of the research. The author carried out primary research in the form of both qualitative and quantitative research. This was in the format of an on-line questionnaire and two semi-structured interviews. These methods allowed the researcher to fulfill the principal research aim. The following sections will summarise and discuss the research's key findings in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two and the overall research objectives.

#### 5.2.1 The Extent of the Skills Shortage in 2017.

According to the Hospitality Training Foundation (HTF 2002), “*finding chefs and waiting staff is one of the biggest problems facing employers, affecting all sectors of the hospitality industry*”. The vast majority of respondents to the online questionnaire

(83%), stated that they have been directly affected by the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector in 2017. 32% of the respondents felt that their kitchen was 20-30% understaffed; 29% of the respondents felt that their kitchen was 10-20% understaffed; and 15% of the respondents felt that their kitchen was understaffed by more than 30% of their full team. This is a significant shortage amongst the establishments of the Irish hospitality sector. The respondents felt that the greatest shortage was at the chef de partie (28%) or at commis chef (24%). From the qualitative research, it was evident that both the interviewee and colleagues of theirs in the industry have been affected by the shortage. Interviewee number one stated *“we are in crisis mode at the minute. The shortage has hit the chef industry hardest. When the economy has gotten better and the tourists have returned, the shortage in chefs seemed to get worse”*. Similarly, Interviewee number two stated *“the lack of chefs has really hit our business here. Chefs are like gold dust. They just can't be found. If I had a position open in the kitchen in the past, I might have 12 CV's, call in 3 or 4 to interview in the kitchen, and make a decision on who to hire; now it's the other way around; there's one cook and 12 restaurants chasing that chef”*. Across the sector gaps and skill shortages were identified at junior and entry level positions in addition to a skill shortage identified at senior management positions. Shortages of specialist roles such as; pastry chefs, product development chefs and sous chefs was as a result of the lack of participants at of junior entry level positions. It is vital to address this lack of junior chefs to ensure the sustainability and future success of the hospitality industry.

## 5.2.2 The Factors Causing the Skills Shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.

The focus for this section is to give an overview of the results of the factors that may be causing the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector in 2017. The results have been triangulated between the qualitative and quantitative research methods. This triangulation was then compared with the relevant literature from chapter two that is associated with each factor. The factors that will be addressed will be; unsociable hours, long working days, poor pay, unprepared for the working environment and better opportunities outside the industry.

### 5.2.2.1 Unsociable Hours

122 (66.3%) of respondents of the on-line questionnaire felt that the unsociable hours are a key factor causing the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector. This level of respondents claiming that unsociable hours in the on-line questionnaire are reiterated in the semi structured interview by interviewee one who stated *that “At the end of the day hospitality is not really considered a career choice by many people unfortunately and that’s down to things such as unsociable hours”*. The data from the online questionnaire and the semi structured interviews is in line with the survey carried out by Pratten (The training and retention of chefs 2003) which stated that anti-social hours, poor physical conditions of work and excessive discipline in the kitchen can lead to chefs leaving the industry. The high level of unsociable hours is in the nature of the hospitality industry but this must be addressed for the sustainability and progress of the sector. The future of the industry is under pressure and this is reiterated by Unite (Two-thirds of London chefs believe long hours’ culture is harming their health, Unite survey reveals 2017) who believe that Punishing long hours’ culture in many professional kitchens is putting the mental and physical health of chefs at risk.

### 5.2.2.2 Long Working Days

105 (57%) of respondents of the on-line questionnaire felt that long working days are a key factor causing the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector. The qualitative data from the interviews slightly contradicted this data as interviewee two stated that *“Working long hours at the beginning is the same as if you are training to be a doctor, solicitor, or an accountant. It is all part of the learning curve.”* This shows an acceptance amongst a group of chefs that there is acceptance of the long hours at the beginning of a chef’s career but less of an acceptance in the latter stages of a chef’s career when external work factors come in to play. The data from the online questionnaire is in line with the survey carried out by Jenkins (LONG HOURS CULTURE IS MAKING CHEFS SICK 2017) of 269 London chefs, 44% said they work between 48 and 60 hours a week, with 14% working 60 hours-plus. 69% of chefs believe long hours’ culture is harming their health, what’s more 79% said they have had had an accident or a near miss at work due to fatigue, while 51% have suffered from depression from being overworked. According to Unite (2017), the Irish hospitality employers are encouraged to fully comply with the Working Time Regulations, including the right to 11 hours rest a day and one day off a week, as well as dropping the automatic 48-hour week opt-out clauses in worker’s contracts. However, the industry does not always have the best perception when it comes to long working days. Interviewee two stated that *“the industry doesn’t help itself with the unsociable hours and long working days. Fixing these issues might help the career as a chef more attractive for those leaving school”*. It is essential for the industry to end *“the work until you drop, long hours”* culture for the future sustainability of the sector.

### 5.2.2.3 Poor Pay

104 (56.5%) of respondents of the on-line questionnaire felt that poor pay is a key factor causing the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector. This data was concurred in the qualitative research by interviewee two who had a similar opinion but highlighted the difference of pay in relation to other professions, *"People don't question how much solicitors or GPs get. I know they're well-qualified, but so are chefs. We put hours and hours of effort into what we're doing."* Poor pay in comparison to other skilled based industries seems to be a continued factor throughout the research. This is also seen in a study by Lo (Occupational Stress in the Hospitality Industry - An Employment Relations Perspective 2005) who stated that occupational stress modes such as low pay can impact the retention levels of staff. Interviewee one stated that *"chef jobs are for life, but, in Ireland, I think some people feel they will just do them to get by until their dream profession comes along"*. He followed on by saying that *"the perception in Ireland is that the wages in those jobs is still poor."* This perception of the industry as a poorly paying employment opportunity can affect the long-term future of the sector and minimise the potential chefs entering a career path in the industry.

### 5.2.2.4 Unprepared for the Working Environment

102 (55.4%) of respondents of the on-line questionnaire felt that being unprepared for the working environment is a key factor causing the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector. As in the poor pay section above, Lo (Occupational Stress in the Hospitality Industry - An Employment Relations Perspective 2005), also stated that occupational stress modes such as heavy physical demands, mental and emotional demands can leave the chefs unprepared for the working environment. The stressful nature of the industry and in particular when the majority of establishments in the sector

and currently understaffed, it is hard for new chefs to gain stability when entering the work place. Interviewee one elaborated that *“it is tough for chefs entering a sector that is already short staffed across the board. Businesses put pressure on new chefs to deliver straight away. This pressure can be too much for some and they get lost from the industry as a result”*. This pressure can affect both new chefs entering the sector and long established chefs who are feeling the pressure of being constantly understaffed as a result of the widespread chef shortage. Interviewee two also expressed that *“The overall pressure that young chefs experience when they enter the industry needs to be either eased or conveyed to them by the education bodies”*. This will only inform the new chefs as to the pressures that they may face when they enter the sector but it is up to the establishments themselves to create a sustainable environment for these chefs to establish a good retention level in the industry.

#### 5.2.2.5 Better Opportunities Outside the Industry

79 (42.9%) of respondents of the on-line questionnaire felt that better opportunities outside the industry is a key factor causing the skills shortage amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector. This qualitative data from the online questionnaire coincides with the data from the semi structured interviews where both interviewees felt that the hospitality industry is losing new chefs to other industries such as technology, finance and construction industries. Interviewee two stated that *“everyone nowadays wants to work for Google or Facebook”*. Established chef in the sector are leaving the Irish hospitality industry are also leaving as a result of better opportunities elsewhere. Interviewee one stated that *“if you reach the top of the tree as a chef, in this country, the world is your oyster and you could name your price to work anywhere in the world. On the continent, a chef will be paid twice what a retail worker gets”*. The exodus of chef from the industry for better opportunities can only be addressed by the sector by



addressing the previous four main factors stated above. Solving the issues of poor pay, long working days, unsociable hours and being unprepared for the working environment, can solve the mass exodus of the chefs from the sector and stop them from seeking better opportunities in other industries in domestic and international industries.

### 5.2.3 Methods to Alleviate the Skills Drain of 2017.

From the triangulation of primary research in the format of qualitative and quantitative methods and secondary research in the analysis of relevant literature on the current skills drain amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector; the author was able to identify a wide variety of factors that may be causing the shortage. There was not an obvious single solution to the issue, however a wide range of small solutions as part of an overall strategic strategy may have a positive effect on the numbers of chefs in the sector. From the qualitative research the interviewees were in agreement that the pay structures for chefs need to be increase, the long working days needs to be reduced and the unsociable hours needs to be addressed for the sustainability of the industry. Both interviewees also concurred that a career as a chef should be similar to that of an electrician or plumber and respected in similar veins. Interviewee one stated that *“if an electrician wires your house he gets paid well because you trust him to do a good job because he is highly skilled and is paid accordingly, yet a chef cooks food that can affect your health and is paid a faction of that of an electrician”*. One recommendation from Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland is the introduction of flexible accreditation options and life-long training logs including *“skills passports”* to support greater portability of qualifications and mobility of hospitality sector skills (EGFSN 2015). This *“skills passports”* could possibly enable chefs to be perceived as a highly skilled professional just like those in other industries

such as electricians and plumbers. Ireland can respond to the uncertainty created by the changing international economic environment by pursuing a “*skills incentivisation strategy*” that develops school leavers into the most highly-skilled graduate workforce on the planet (Ross 2017). The main responsibility for this skills development lies with both the educational bodies and the hospitality sector. Colleges have a distinct “*responsibility to actively engage with and support industry and constantly identify ways of improving skills and knowledge for students, industry and lecturers*” (The Irish Hospitality Institute 2011). “*an imbalance between academic and hands-on training, a need for basic and specialised practical skills, and for the provision of greater numbers of accessible and flexible continuing professional development, apprenticeship and career traineeship schemes*” (EGFSN 2015). The main focus for the industry is to provide a stable environment for those chefs entering the sector and ensure that they are not affected by the main factors causing the shortage in the industry such as poor pay, long working days and unsociable hours. “*A main challenge for the industry is to provide appropriate training and education and clear career progression pathways for those that wish to make hospitality their career*” (EGFSN 2015). In the past, the industry has placed a high degree of pressure on those entering the sector. This is due to the extensive shortage of staff in the industry so junior staff may have to fill more senior roles as a result of a lack of available talent. “*Employers expect students to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited*” (EGFSN 2015). The future of the industry will be based on alleviating the main factor that have been highlighted by the qualitative and quantitative research methods. Solving the issues of poor pay, unsociable hours and long working days can make the industry a more attractive environment to attract and retain staff.

## 5.3 Research Objectives

Throughout the course of this study the author has endeavored to fulfil the research objectives. As previously stated the four main research objectives are as follows;

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

The following sections framework the four research objectives and encapsulate how the author has fulfilled them.

### 5.3.1 Research Objective One: To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.

In the author's opinion research objective one was achieved as a result of both the questionnaire and the interviews. The researcher was able to establish quantifiable data from the questionnaire and through experiential data from the interviews with key stakeholders of the Irish hospitality sector as to the extent of the shortage and how it may be affecting business in the sector.

### 5.3.2 Research Objective Two: To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.

This objective was achieved as a result of the data collected during the quantitative research of the study. The participants compiled a list of factors from a preselected list of the main factors that may be causing the skills drain amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector in 2017. This list was then compiled and the results are detailed in Figure 13. From these discoveries of the factors, the author established the greatest effect that these factors are having on the sector and established recommendations from the qualitative research for the improvement of these factors.

### 5.3.3 Research Objective Three: To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.

The third objective was achieved with the use of the online questionnaire. Data from the survey as to the opinions of chefs in terms of the importance, quality and source of training was developed through a series of questions. This data was then used as a discussion topic in the semi structured interviews. The data derived from these interviews concurred with the data from the questionnaires. Triangulation allowed the author to give an overall portrayal of the importance, quality and source of training derived from the opinions of the key stakeholders.

#### 5.3.4 Research Objective Four: To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

This objective was derived from initially finding the main factors, in the opinions of the key stakeholders, that are causing the shortage of chefs in the sector in 2017. These factors were then used as discussion topics in the semi structured interviews to develop methods to alleviate each factor and in turn the overall shortage in the industry. The author then discussed each topic and the proposed solution to each.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In reviewing the relevant literature available on the current skills drain amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector and producing Irish data for comparison the author has provided an insight into the opinions of the key industry stakeholders. The author established a common trend through the primary and secondary research as to the factors that may be causing the current skills drain amongst chefs. The author believes that the main research aim and objectives has been satisfied

## 6.0 Conclusion

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the reader with the conclusions reached throughout the research process. These conclusions are based on all the data gathered, analysed and examined throughout the primary and secondary research. Recommendations, potential areas for future research and the limitations of this study will also be outlined within this chapter.

### 6.2 Research Conclusions

This research project is the first study to provide an opinion of the key stakeholders as to the main factors that may be causing the skills drain amongst chefs in the Irish hospitality sector in 2017. This research document provides a collection of these main factors, the extent that they have caused the shortage and possible areas for addressing these factors and methods to alleviate the shortage. The author believes that this will satisfy the four main objectives of the research which are:

1. To investigate the opinions of chefs currently working in the Irish Hospitality Sector as to the extent of the skills shortage in 2017.
2. To examine the factors that may be causing the skills shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.
3. To explore the opinions of the chefs currently working in the IHS as to the importance, quality and source of chef training.
4. To investigate the opinion of Key Stakeholders in the IHS as to methods to alleviate the skills drain of 2017.

From these, the author has drawn the following recommendations.

## 6.3 Recommendations

This section discusses the author's key recommendations and highlights possible areas for further research that could be conducted in the area.

### 6.3.1 The Factors Causing the Skills Shortage in the Irish Hospitality Sector in 2017.

From the primary and secondary research, five main factors for the shortage of chefs in the Irish hospitality industry in 2017. The main factors are unsociable hours, long working days, poor pay, better opportunities outside the industry and the chefs being unprepared for the stress of the working environment. The following sections will explain the recommendations made by the author in relation to each factor that may be causing the chef shortage.

#### 6.3.1.1 Unsociable Hours

From the primary and secondary research, unsociable hours was a key factor for the shortage of chefs in the hospitality sector. These unsociable hours will need to be addressed in the future to allow for the sustainability of the sector and for the numbers of chefs to increase to service the ever-growing tourism industry. Although the hospitality industry is a predominantly seasonal operation with the busy time coming in the times when the majority of the population is off such as the summer and weekend trades, there needs to be a move away from unsociable hours in Irish kitchens. There are ways in which this may occur; increased numbers of chefs in the sector would allow for there to be a rotation policy in all of the kitchens of the sector. Legislation could be brought in to govern businesses enforcing them to minimise the number of unsociable hours an individual chef may work. Although unsociable hours will never be eradicated

due to the nature of the business, a reduction may entice further chef to enter and remain in the sector.

#### 6.3.1.2 Long Working Days

Just as with unsociable hours, the factor of long working days has placed a great burden on the numbers of chefs in the sector. Chefs working 12 and 13 hours as a basic working day have been a necessity in the industry due to the shortage of chefs in the country. For the sustainable future of the industry there needs to be a move away from this practice. Some restaurants have taken step away from this practice by closing two days a week to reduce the amount of staff that they need to service the business on a weekly basis. The whole industry needs to follow practices such as this to enable chefs to get a work life balance and allow them to reduce the the long working days and weeks that are currently propping up the industry.

#### 6.3.1.3 Poor Pay

Poor pay seems to be the main factor that is associated with the shortage of chefs in the industry. Highly skilled chefs are looking at their highly skilled counterparts in other industries such as electricians, plumbers and software engineers; and their comparative rate of pay is much lower that they would expect. The industry is currently losing potential chefs to other industries and established chefs to other counties. The influx of highly skilled chefs that entered the sector throughout the mid 2000's from eastern Europe have begun returning back to the continent to jobs with greater pay and benefits. The only solution for the industry is to pay accordingly for highly skilled labour or to generate an influx of cheaper labour from stocks outside the European marketplace from countries such as India or the Middle East.



#### 6.3.1.4 Unprepared for the Working Environment

In terms of the chefs being unprepared for the stresses of the working environment that is in the Irish hospitality sector, it is essential for both the educational bodies and the individual hospitality outlets to both prepare the chefs for the mental and physical pressures that will be placed on them and to create an environment that will enable them to settle, learn and develop into a highly skilled workforce. This highly skilled workforce will enable the industry to build a sustainable environment for the ever-growing tourism industry to be serviced.

#### 6.3.1.5 Better Opportunities Outside the Industry

The main focus for the industry to retain and attract chefs is to make the industry an attractive place to have a career as a chef. The main way to do this is by finding a solution to the first three factors stated above. Increase in the levels of pay, reducing the long working days and minimising the levels of unsociable hours will help to increase the positive perception of a career as a chef. In lieu of this there will always be better opportunities outside the hospitality sector. Many of the graduates from Irish institutes want to work for the big multinational companies like Google and Facebook or the large financial firms. The hospitality sector needs to learn from these big firms and their method for attracting staff and making their workplaces an enjoyable place to work.

#### 6.3.2 Methods to Alleviate the Skills Drain of 2017.

The main method to alleviate the skills drain amongst chefs is to address the factors that have arisen from the primary research of this study. As stated above the hospitality needs to address the low levels of pay, long working days and minimise the unsociable hours that are affecting the chefs in the sector. A major way for alleviating this issue is

introduce a concept suggested by the Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland is the introduction of flexible accreditation options and life-long training logs including “*skills passports*” to support greater portability of qualifications and mobility of hospitality sector skills (EGFSN 2015). This would enable the perception of skilled labourers in the hospitality to be on par professionally to skilled counterparts in other fields such as electricians, plumbers and computer technicians. Collaboration between both the educational bodies and the hospitality sector needs to increase in relation to the on the job training. Recorded training programmes need to be in place following a chef’s graduation to assess the level of development and training that the individual chefs are receiving.

### 6.3.3 Recommendations for areas of future research

Future research in this area can be addressed from two directions. Firstly, research is needed in terms of the training and development of chefs from an educational background. This research would involve examining the quality of training given to chefs through their culinary arts program. Other areas for this research could examine the possibility of post-graduation assessments of the training and development given to each individual chef and their career progress following their entry into the industry. This research could investigate the concept of the “skills passport” to record this career progression. Secondly, research is needed in terms of the working environments being created by the industry in terms of the conditions that the current chefs are being forced to work under. Long working days, unsociable hours and poor pay were the main factors in the opinions of the key stakeholders of the industry as to the reasons for the shortage of chefs. Research into the actual effect of these factors on

the welfare of the chefs in the sector may enable change to be introduced and to alleviate the issues.

## 6.4 Limitations

Despite systematic preparation every research project has unavoidable limitations. The research limitations of this study, as identified by the author, have been outlined previously in section 3.8 of this dissertation. The following are the main limitations that the author has been faced with in undertaking this research project.

The author found limitations in the number of respondents to the on-line survey. Having sent out 1000 email to key stakeholders of the hospitality sector, only 184 surveys were returned. A greater number of respondents would have allowed the author to gain a more accurate figure across the large population size. The nature of the limited disposable time available to the key stakeholders responding to the on-line survey limited the number of questions that could be included in the survey. A greater number of questions may have given the author to elaborate on the key factors causing the chef shortage in the country.

The author found that the main limitation to affect the scope of this study was the time constraints. Extensive research of the subject matter was not feasible under the tight deadline and the authors personal commitments. Therefore, the research was constrained in terms of volume and extent of research to fit within the timeframe allotted.

Throughout this study, the author was mindful of these limitations and strived to address them to the best of his ability.

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## Appendix

### Appendix One

#### Questionnaire Cover E-Mail

Hi there,

I am currently undertaking my Master's degree in Athlone Institute of Technology. Having worked in the hospitality sector for many years, many of those as a chef, I've decided to carry out research on the current chef shortage in the Irish hospitality sector.

Please could you take 3 minutes of your day to fill out a questionnaire on this subject? The questionnaire can be accessed via the link below. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential.

Thank you in advance for helping me with this research and giving your valuable opinion on the shortage.

Warm regards

David McKane

Athlone IT

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUg5jJrhTLMFSNqR8r1Y9tfta8iehbX5UCXPszewJcoM2ypQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUg5jJrhTLMFSNqR8r1Y9tfta8iehbX5UCXPszewJcoM2ypQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

## Appendix Two

### Questionnaire

#### Chef Shortage

This Section will give an overview of the participants

##### **Age?**

- 18-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-60
- 60+

##### **What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

##### **What is your country of birth?**

##### **How many years Industry experience do you have?**

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 25-30 years
- 30+ years

##### **What is your field of Catering?**

- Hotel
- Restaurant
- Cafe
- Bar
- Industrial
- School/Education
- Other:

**How would you best describe your premises in terms of status?**

- Michelin Star
- 5 star
- 4 star
- 3 star
- Other:

**How would you describe your job title?**

- Kitchen Manager
- Executive Head Chef
- Head Chef
- Sous Chef
- Other:

**What level of formal qualification do you have?**

- PhD
- Masters Degree
- Honours Degree
- Ordinary Degree
- National Certificate
- Leaving Certificate
- None
- Other:

**Chef Retention**

This section will explore the extent of the current chef shortage.

**Have you been directly affected by a shortage of chefs at your premises?**

- Yes
- No

**From what level of chef is there a greatest shortage?**

- Commis Chef
- Chef de Partie
- Junior Sous Chef
- Sous Chef
- Pastry Chef
- Other:

**What would you feel the level of shortage of chefs at your premises would amount to?**

- 5-10%
- 10-20%
- 20-30%
- 30%+

**Compared to previous years, is your organisation's chef recruitment timeline getting:**

- Longer
- Shorter
- Same

**What do you feel are the key factors for the shortage of chefs in the sector?**

- Poor Pay
- Unsociable Hours
- Long working Day
- Poor working Conditions
- Unprepared for the working environment
- Work Stress
- Better opportunities outside the sector
- Chef seen as unfashionable occupation
- Other:

### Chef Training

This section will examine current and future sources of chef training.

**Who do you feel is responsible for the training of new chefs entering the sector?**

- Educational Bodies
- Hospitality Industry
- Both

**Do you feel there is enough collaboration between the educational bodies and the industry?**

- Yes
- No

**In your experience do you feel that the chefs graduating from culinary institutes possess the necessary technical skills to enable them to enter the industry?**

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

**What importance do you place on certifications?**

- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

**Does your organisation currently use any specific recorded training programs for its chefs?**

- Yes
- No
- Unrecorded Training programmes

**Does your organisation provide sponsorship for unqualified staff who wish to undergo training to qualify as a chef?**

- Yes
- No

## Appendix Three

### Interview application letter

Dear (Interviewees contacts name is inserted here),

My name is David McKane and I am currently studying on the Masters of Business Studies in Athlone Institute of Technology, Co Westmeath. I am a qualified chef and have worked in the Irish hospitality sector for the past 10 years.

As part of my masters I must complete a research thesis. I have chosen to conduct research into the current skills drain amongst chefs in the industry. During this research I have chosen to carry out a series of semi-structured interviews. I am writing to you to ask if you would be kind enough to participate in this research, which I envisage will highlight the factors causing the shortage amongst chefs. The interview responses will be completely anonymous - there are no identifying questions, codes, numbers etc. in use. All the data collected will be utilised for research purposes only. The interview will consist of a series of questions over a 20 minute period at your place of work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and I hope you will choose to assist me and our profession by partaking in this research project.

Regards,

David McKane

Athlone Institute of Technology

## Appendix Four

### Interview Participant Consent Form

Name of Researcher: David McKane

Name of Participant:

Title of Study: Chef Shortage: An Analysis of the skills drain in the Irish Hospitality Sector of 2017

I, (Participant/Subject) agree to take part in the above named research project, the details of which have been fully explained to me and described. I also certify I understand the details of this study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_(Participant/Subject)                      Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

I, David McKane (Researcher) certify that the details of this study have been fully explained and described to the best of my knowledge, to the subject named above and have been understood by them. All material gathered will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be exclusively available to the researcher, the research supervisor and the marking examiners.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Researcher) Date: \_\_\_\_\_