



Further Education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2014/15 to 2018/19

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Statistics and Research Branch
(Tertiary Education)
Department for the Economy
Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD

Lead Statistician:

Allan Matthews;
028 9025 7727

Email:

allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk

Internet:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/further-education-college-statistics>

This statistical bulletin presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments (both regulated and non-regulated) in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector covering academic years 2014/15 to 2018/19. The statistics presented cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE colleges along with analysis of areas of deprivation, funding streams and performance.

Key points:

- Total enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by 15.8%, from 175,818 in 2014/15 to 148,002 in 2018/19; this relates mainly to a reduction in part-time enrolments and coincides with a prolonged 'demographic dip' among 16-19-year-olds (Table A1).
- Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the proportion of regulated enrolments hasn't changed in net terms (79.7% to 79.8%) (Table A5).
- Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments in 2018/19, nearly four-fifths (78.6%) were at 'Level 2' or above (Table A14).
- Higher Education enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by a net 8.7%, from 11,722 in 2014/15 to 10,704 in 2018/19 (Table 3).
- Fewer qualifications were awarded in FE colleges in 2018/19 (74,579) than in 2014/15 (92,479), a fall of 19.4% (Table 7).
- Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, while the retention rate at FE colleges has increased (89.3% to 89.9%), net decreases have occurred in the rates for achievement (88.9% to 86.0%) and success (79.4% to 77.3%) (Table A34).



Reader Information

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Feedback	As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to: Allan Matthews Email: allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk Tel: 028 9025 7727

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About Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) colleges across Northern Ireland (NI) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic individual level administrative systems.

The Head of Branch is the Principal Statistician, Brian French. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the Committee for the Economy, FE colleges, universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within DfE, other educational organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations, as well as the general public.

The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the Higher Education (HE) and FE sectors, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, departmental research projects, development of service frameworks, as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a high volume of ad hoc queries each year. Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications, including: HE enrolments; HE qualifications; Destinations of leavers from Higher Education (DLHE); FE activity; and Essential Skills enrolments and outcomes.

A list of these publications is available from:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-publication-schedule>

An Official Statistics Publication

The statistics within this bulletin have been compiled in accordance with Official Statistics guidelines. They aim to meet identified user needs; are accessible and explained; are produced in accordance with sound methods; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Further information on the Code of Practice for Statistics is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>

Further information on the DfE Statement of Compliance in relation to the 'Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 is available at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/statement-compliance>

Storyboard for Further Education (FE) Activity 2014/15 to 2018/19

FE colleges have fewer enrolments....

Total enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by 15.8%, from 175,818 in 2014/15 to 148,002 in 2018/19; this relates mainly to a reduction in part-time enrolments and coincides with a prolonged 'demographic dip' among 16-19-year-olds (Table A1).

...but no net change in the proportions on regulated courses.

Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the proportion of regulated enrolments hasn't changed in net terms (79.7% to 79.8%) (Table A5).

The student population is becoming younger....

Since 2014/15, the 'aged 19 and under' share of regulated enrolments has increased from 58.4% to 61.4% (Table A6).

...the vast majority are on part-time courses....

Around four-fifths of regulated enrolments are part-time, although this proportion has reduced from 81.1% in 2014/15 to 79.3% in 2018/19 (Table A12).

....and more are studying at 'Level 2' or above.

Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments in 2018/19, nearly four-fifths (78.6%) were at 'Level 2' or above, up from 78.3% in 2014/15. Those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 21.4% (25,310); 43.3% (51,191) were at 'Level 2', 26.2% (30,955) were at 'Level 3' and 9.1% (10,704) were at 'Level 4 and above' (Table A14).

More males than females are studying full-time....

Males accounted for three-fifths (60.4%) of full-time regulated enrolments in 2018/19, whereas part-time regulated provision was fairly evenly split by sex (Table A12).

.....and there is variation in sex, in terms of the regulated course subject area.

In 2018/19, females accounted for the vast majority of 'Health, Public Services and Care' (83.8%) and 'Education and Training' enrolments (78.2%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (97.5%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.4%) (Table A15).

FE sector regulated enrolments are fairly evenly spread across relative deprivation quintiles.....

In 2018/19, although regulated enrolments were fairly evenly spread across the five relative deprivation quintiles, considerable variation occurred at college level.

.....but considerable variation occurs at college level.

For instance, over 50% of regulated enrolments at NWRC and SRC came from the two most deprived areas (Quintiles 1 and 2), whereas SERC's largest share of enrolments (24.4%) came from the least deprived area (Quintile 5).

A third (33.2%) of NWRC's regulated enrolments were from Quintile 1, with 2.8% from Quintile 5. BMC enrolments were quite polarised, in that 52.5% were from either Quintile 1 or Quintile 5 (Table A17).

Most enrolments are mainstream.

Of the 148,002 enrolments in 2018/19, over three fifths (60.1%) were mainstream, 15.9% were funded through government training programmes, 12.3% were cost recovery and 4.9% were funded through the Entitlement Framework programme. For a further 6.8% of enrolments, the funding stream was classed as 'Other' (Table A9).

Higher Education enrolments have decreased over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19....

Higher Education enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by a net 8.7%, from 11,722 in 2014/15 to 10,704 in 2018/19; this includes a 9.7% fall from 11,848 in 2017/18 to 10,704 in 2018/19 (Table 3).

....as have qualifications awarded.

Fewer qualifications were awarded in FE colleges in 2018/19 (74,579) than in 2014/15 (92,479), a fall of 19.4%. Net decreases occurred in all six colleges [SWC (23.2%), NRC (23.2%), BMC (22.9%), SRC (18.0%), SERC (15.8%) and NWRC (12.2%)] (Table 7).

Proportionately more people are staying on and completing their course.....

Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the retention rate at FE colleges has increased in net terms from 89.3% to 89.9% (Table A34).

....but fewer people who complete their course are achieving their qualification.

The achievement rate at FE colleges has fallen by a net 2.9 percentage points, from 88.9% (2014/15) to 86.0% (2018/19).

The success rate (that is, the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) fell by a net 2.1 percentage points, from 79.4% to 77.3%, over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19 (Table A34).

FE College Abbreviations

- Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)
- Northern Regional College (NRC)
- North West Regional College (NWRC)
- South Eastern Regional College (SERC)
- Southern Regional College (SRC)
- South West College (SWC)

Introduction

Further Education (FE) colleges are the main providers of further education and training in Northern Ireland (NI). The sector plays a central role in raising literacy and numeracy levels and in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through a broad range of courses leading to qualifications, particularly at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) levels 2 and 3 and equivalents. Higher Education (at level 4 and above) is also delivered across the FE colleges.

This statistical bulletin has been produced by statisticians based within DfE and presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments in the NI FE Sector covering academic years 2014/15 to 2018/19. The statistics presented in this bulletin cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE colleges and trends across a range of variables, including sex, age, mode of attendance, provision area, level of study, subject area, deprivation quintile, funding stream and performance (retention, achievement and success rates).

The figures in this statistical bulletin are a full year count of enrolments; however, it should be noted that students may be enrolled on more than one course at a given time and may, therefore, be counted as two or more enrolments.

Structure

The bulletin is divided into five sections:

- [Section 1](#) focuses on all enrolments at FE colleges in NI, including:
 - an analysis of all enrolments
 - regulated and non-regulated provision
 - the funding streams of enrolments.
- [Section 2](#) focuses on regulated enrolments only
- [Section 3](#) focuses on mainstream enrolments only
- [Section 4](#) focuses on Higher Education enrolments in FE Colleges only
- [Section 5](#) details the qualifications and performance of final year enrolments at FE colleges in NI.

In most sections, the analysis is broken down into the trend and patterns of the entire FE sector, the individual FE colleges and then a focus on the most recent full 2018/19 academic year.

Explanatory Notes

[Annex A](#) provides the definitions of the terms used within the report, while [Annex B](#) contains 'Technical Notes' on the methodology used to produce the statistics.

Where tables and figures are mentioned within the commentary, these are hyperlinked to their location within the document.

Data Collection

The information presented in this statistical bulletin has been derived from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR), which is provided by FE colleges.

The CDR came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.

The CDR brings together into a single dataset the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely, mainstream, Further Education Statistical Return (FESR), Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and Further Education Leavers' Survey (FELS).

There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all DfE's data requirements into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, while increasing the consistency of analysis across all FE college data by reducing the potential of using several datasets. Data quality is also enhanced with data being generated at the same point in time and a substantial number of validations employed on the data through the CDR process. More information on the CDR process can be found at [Annex B](#).

Additional Tables

Detailed Annex and Supplementary Tables are available on the DfE web page: [Further Education Activity in FE Colleges in Northern Ireland 2018/19](#)

Rounding

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and, as a consequence, some percentages may not sum to 100. Furthermore, the percentage point(s) difference may not equate to the difference between two percentages due to rounding.

Data Quality

All information presented in this bulletin is based on data that have been validated and quality assured by FE colleges prior to publication. FE colleges are given a set period of time to submit the information to Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education), which performs a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns and analyses annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to FE colleges for clarification and, if required, returns may be amended and/or re-submitted. Finally, prior to the publication of this information, the data are presented to FE colleges for final sign-off.

Main Uses of Data

The main uses of these data are: to monitor FE activity; to help assess FE college performance; for corporate monitoring; to inform and monitor related policy; and to respond to Assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public.

DfE is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory FE sector. Analysis of data trends against key strategic priorities remains a crucial component of data development within DfE.

Who will be interested?

The information presented in this statistical bulletin will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example, the statistics within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for the Economy in discharging his or her duties; by the NI Assembly and its Committee for the Economy to scrutinise the FE sector; by other NI government departments, such as the Department of Education; by prospective students to inform their choices around further education; by local businesses to quantify the supply of those qualifying in their business area; and by researchers and academics to try and understand the underlying trends in FE.

2019 Readership Survey – Acknowledgements, Analysis and Next Steps

Alongside this bulletin, we are publishing an analysis of the FE Activity readership survey we conducted in September 2019. We wish to thank our readers for taking time to give constructive feedback and helpful suggestions. We will give careful consideration to each response as we seek to improve the coverage and quality of our FE Activity statistics. We will discuss the feasibility of possible options with DfE policy colleagues, before drawing up an action plan for the 2019/20 edition of the bulletin. At this stage, we anticipate

increasing our focus on students, while consequently reducing our enrolments content, and shortening the commentary somewhat. For the 2018/19 edition, we have adopted some 'quick wins', including enhancing the profile of the storyboard by incorporating it within the main volume and reducing some of the detail in the commentary.

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/further-education-college-statistics>

Contextual Information

For contextual information on the use of FE statistics and comparing levels of qualifications, please see the document:

[Contextual Information for Using Further Education Statistics](#)

Policy and Operational Context

For information on policy and operational context, please refer to:

[Policy and Operational Context](#)

Further Education Activity Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom

Users should be aware that FE activity information in other administrations is not always measured in a comparable manner to that in Northern Ireland. Details of the FE activity information published elsewhere in the UK can be found at the links below:

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr>

Scotland

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/statistics.aspx>

Wales

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en>

Section 1: Further Education college enrolments

1.1 - All enrolments

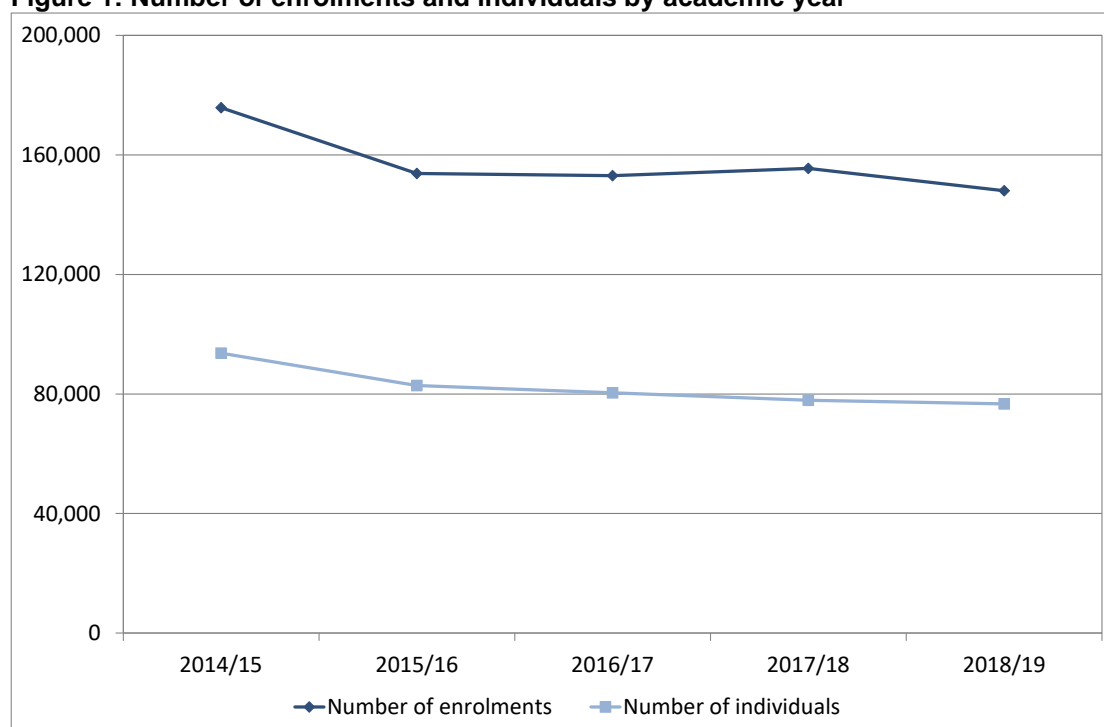
Background

This section provides detail on all Further Education (FE) college enrolments, which include general further education courses, Essential Skills provision and Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE). General FE courses include mainstream enrolments, government training programmes, Entitlement Framework and cost recovery. Most FE college provision includes courses that can potentially lead to a regulated qualification on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ); a smaller proportion are non-regulated, that is, courses that have the potential to lead to a formal qualification not on the RRQ, as well as hobby and leisure (recreational) courses.

Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19

Total enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by 15.8%, from 175,818 in 2014/15 to 148,002 in 2018/19; this includes a 4.8% fall between 2017/18 (155,510) and 2018/19 (148,002). This downturn relates mainly to a reduction in part-time enrolments, in particular relating to students aged 25 and over, and coincides with a prolonged 'demographic dip' among 16-19-year-olds. The number of individual students has also decreased, by 18.2%, from 93,681 in 2014/15 to 76,670 in 2018/19. The number of enrolments per individual (1.9) hasn't changed in net terms over this period (Figure 1, Table A1).

Figure 1: Number of enrolments and individuals by academic year



FE colleges

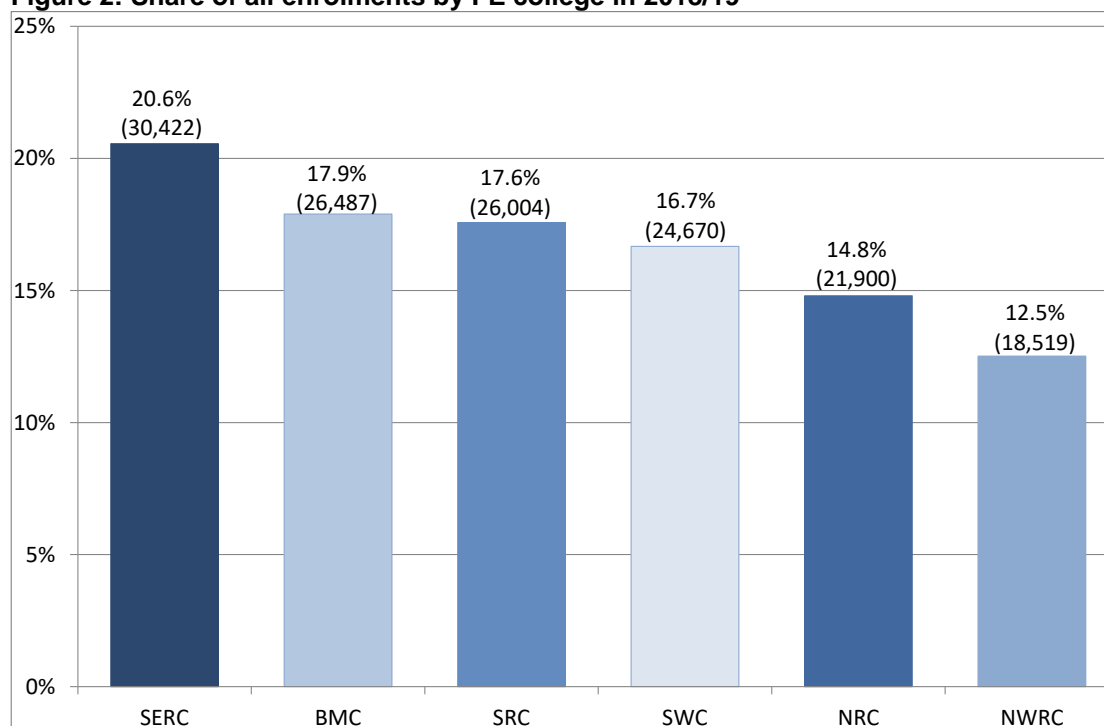
Since 2014/15, enrolments have decreased in each of the six FE colleges [BMC (by 27.8%), NWRC (18.1%), SERC (14.4%), SRC (13.5%), NRC (12.4%) and SWC (4.8%)]. However, between 2017/18 and 2018/19, enrolments increased in four colleges ranging from 0.3% in NRC to 2.4% in SWC (Table 1).

Table 1: All enrolments by FE college and academic year

FE college	Academic Year				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Belfast Metropolitan College	36,685	28,514	30,184	29,728	26,487
Northern Regional College	25,014	21,634	21,879	21,837	21,900
North West Regional College	22,603	19,181	17,577	18,349	18,519
South Eastern Regional College	35,520	32,858	31,999	30,187	30,422
Southern Regional College	30,076	26,967	27,234	31,327	26,004
South West College	25,920	24,663	24,215	24,082	24,670
FE Sector Total	175,818	153,817	153,088	155,510	148,002

In the most recent academic year (2018/19), SERC had the highest share of the 148,002 enrolments, accounting for 20.6% (30,422), and NWRC the lowest, with 12.5% (18,519) (Figure 2, Table 1).

Figure 2: Share of all enrolments by FE college in 2018/19



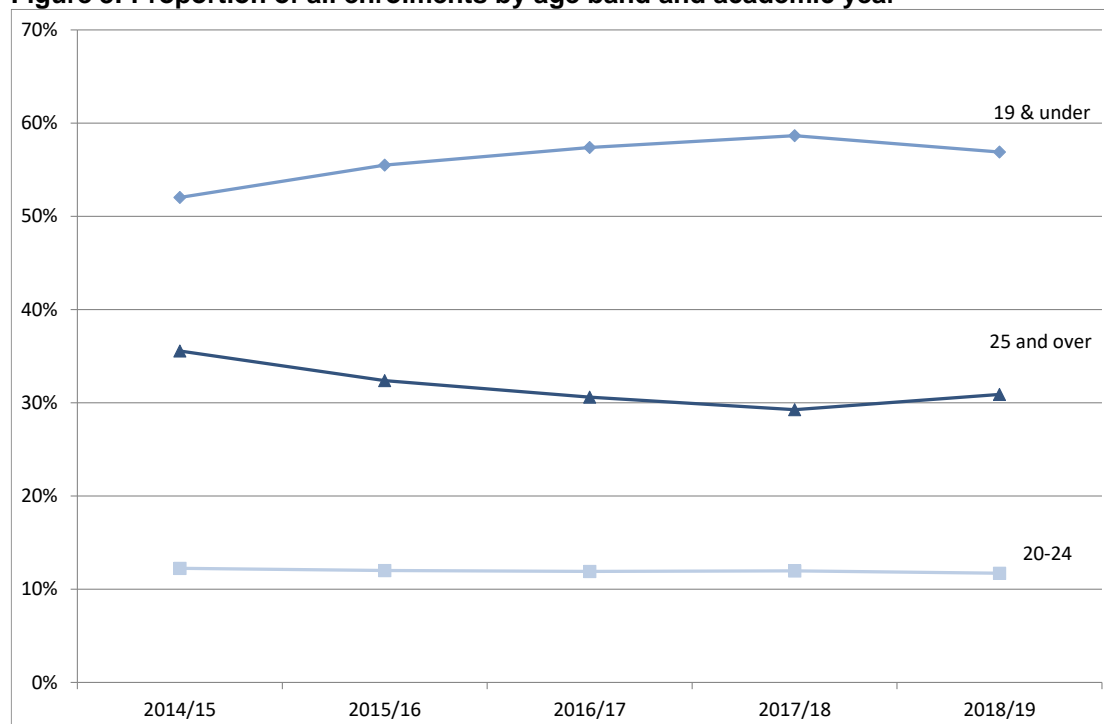
FE College Abbreviations

BMC: Belfast Metropolitan College
 NRC: Northern Regional College
 NWRC: North West Regional College
 SERC: South Eastern Regional College
 SRC: Southern Regional College
 SWC: South West College

Age

Since 2014/15, the proportion of aged '19 and under' enrolments has increased from 52.0% to 56.9%; conversely, the proportions of those in the '20 to 24' and '25 and over' age groups have decreased, from 12.2% to 11.7% and from 35.6% to 30.9% respectively (Figure 3, Table A2).

Figure 3: Proportion of all enrolments by age band and academic year



Please note enrolments with unknown ages (<1.0%) are not reflected in the chart but are included in Table A2.

An individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland, although typically individuals will attend their nearest college. Hypothetical Regional College Catchment Areas (HRCCA) have been created for each of the six colleges to provide information, beyond enrolment data, on all eligible individuals aged 16 and above within the catchment area to each college, who may or may not be enrolled at a FE college. Please refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on HRCCA.

Based on [mid-year population estimates in 2018](#), the age profile in each of the six college HRCCAs indicates that the majority (typically over 80%) of eligible individuals are aged 25 or over. However, this pattern is not reflected in 2018/19 enrolments in any of the colleges. In all six colleges, the highest proportions related to those aged '19 and under', ranging from 45.3% in NWRC to 64.3% in SWC (Table A2).

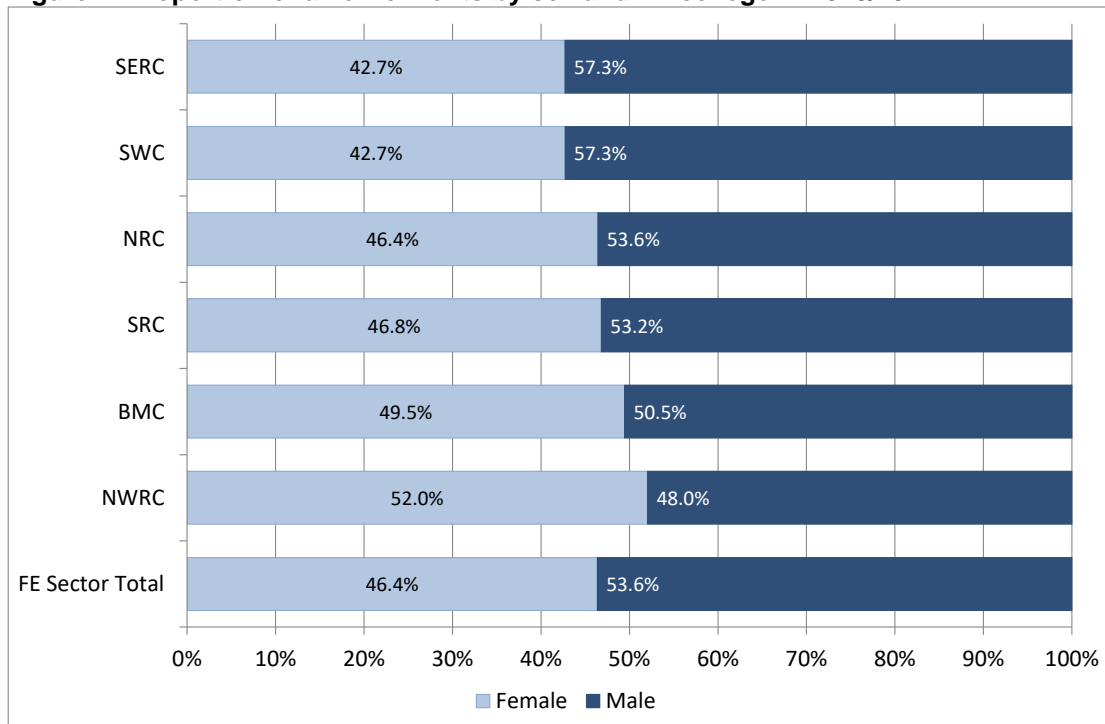
Sex

Overall, there has typically been a fairly even split in terms of the sex profile across the FE sector. In contrast, however, each of the college HRCCA profiles contains more females than males.

Whereas female students accounted for a slight majority of enrolments in 2014/15 (50.4%), most enrolments in 2015/16 (51.8%), 2016/17 (53.2%), 2017/18 (53.0%) and 2018/19 (53.6%) related to males (Table A3).

In the most recent academic year (2018/19), NWRC (52.0%) had a higher proportion of female enrolments, whereas the other five colleges had higher proportions of male enrolments [SERC (57.3%), SWC (57.3%), NRC (53.6%), SRC (53.2%) and BMC (50.5%)] (Figure 4, Table A3).

Figure 4: Proportion of all enrolments by sex and FE college in 2018/19

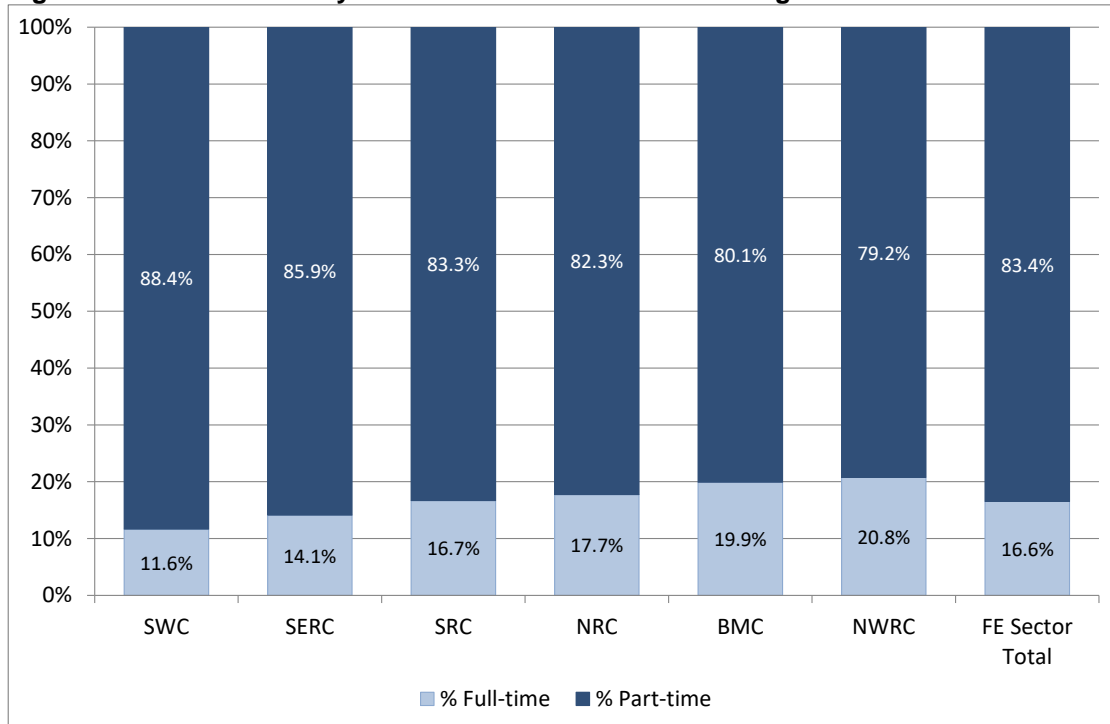


Mode of attendance

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the proportion of all enrolments within full-time provision has increased from 15.1% to 16.6% (Table A4).

Comparing the FE colleges in 2018/19 indicates that NWRC had the highest proportion of full-time enrolments (20.8%), while SWC had the lowest proportion (11.6%) (Figure 5, Table A4).

Figure 5: All enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2018/19



1.2 - Regulated and Non-regulated enrolments

Background

An internal departmental review was conducted in 2014 on the definition of 'regulated' provision to ensure clarity and consistency across data analysis. Consequently, from the academic year 2013/14, 'regulated enrolments' are regarded as:

- those on courses that are at 'Level 3' or below and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), which contains qualifications on both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework or part of the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications¹ (PLAQ/Access list)
- those on courses that lead to Higher Education qualifications ('Level 4 and above').

From 2013/14, 'non-regulated enrolments' are those that either potentially lead to a formal qualification (at 'Level 3' or below) that doesn't appear on the RRQ or don't usually lead to a formal qualification, typically hobby and leisure or recreational courses.

The new definition of 'regulated enrolments' from 2013/14 onwards may result in a change in the number of regulated enrolments and, therefore, comparison with earlier years needs to take this into account. This publication reports on trend analysis over five years from 2014/15; this is the second publication based on five years' trend data since the review on 'regulated' provision. Refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on this estimation work.

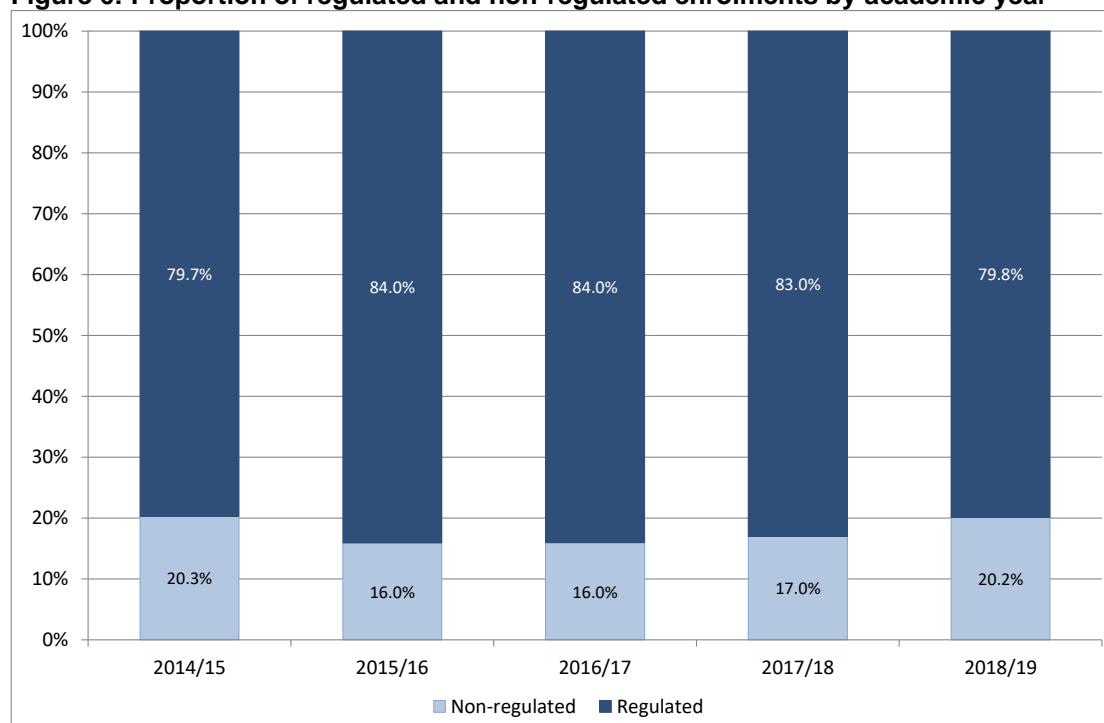
The '[Further Education Means Success](#)' strategy aims to reduce the number of non-regulated enrolments and encourage regulated, economically focused provision.

¹ Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ) are defined within [Annex A: Definitions](#)

Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19

After increasing from 79.7% in 2014/15 to 84.0% in 2015/16, the proportion of regulated enrolments plateaued until 2017/18 (83.0%), before falling back to 79.8% in 2018/19 (Figure 6, Table A5).

Figure 6: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by academic year



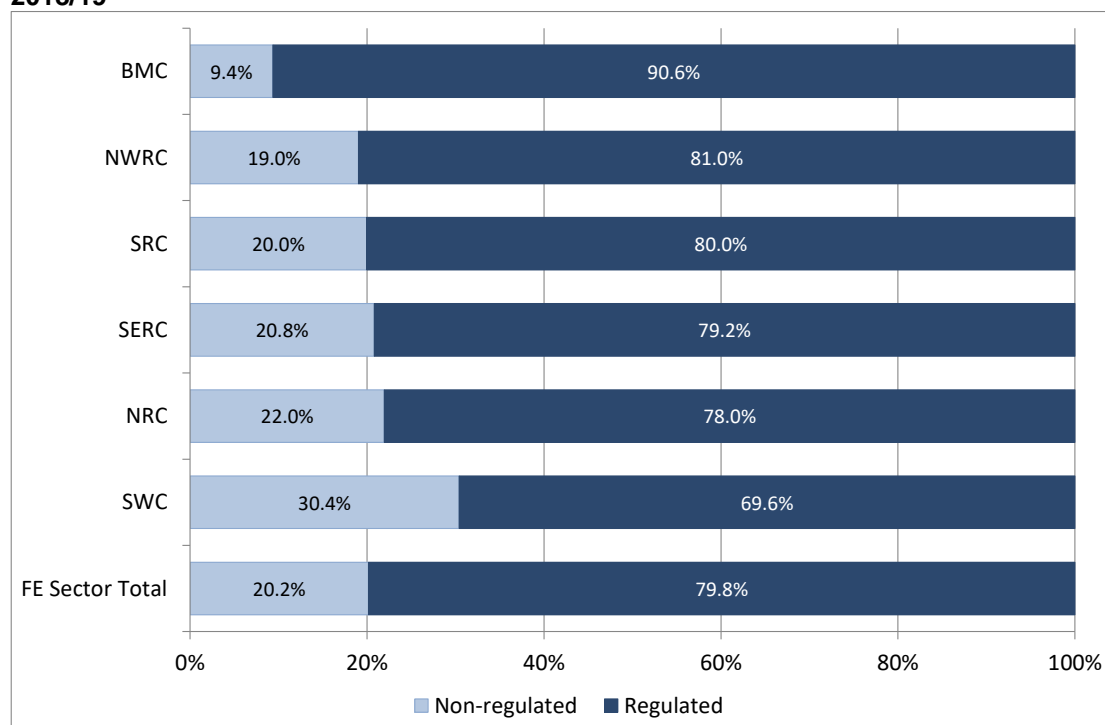
FE colleges

The majority of enrolments were on regulated courses in all six colleges over the five year period 2014/15 to 2018/19 (Table A5).

Over the same period, NWRC reported the largest increase in the proportion of regulated enrolments (10.3 percentage points), from 70.7% to 81.0%, while SWC reported the largest decrease (7.8 percentage points), from 77.4% to 69.6% (Table A5).

In 2018/19, the proportion of regulated enrolments ranged from 69.6% in SWC to 90.6% in BMC (Figure 7, Table A5).

Figure 7: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by FE college in 2018/19

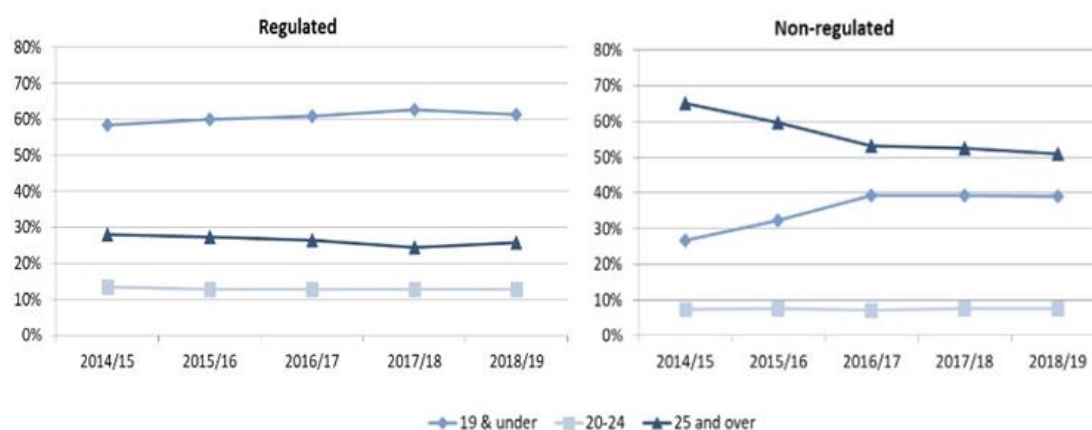


Age

Since 2014/15, the aged '19 and under' share of regulated enrolments has increased from 58.4% to 61.4%; conversely, decreases have occurred in the proportions of those aged '20 to 24' (from 13.5% to 12.8%) and '25 and over' (from 28.1% to 25.8%) (Figure 8, Table A6).

While traditionally the majority of non-regulated enrolments relate to individuals aged '25 and over', this proportion has fallen from 65.0% in 2014/15 to 51.0% in 2018/19. Conversely, the proportion of those in the '19 and under' age group has increased over this period, from 26.8% to 39.1%. The proportion of those aged '20 to 24' has not changed in net terms (7.4% to 7.5%) over the period (Figure 8, Table A6).

Figure 8: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by age and academic year



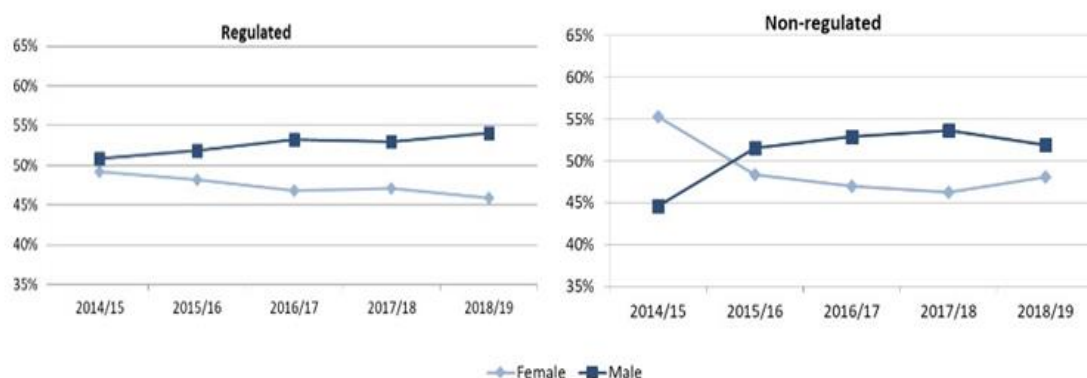
Please note enrolments with unknown ages (<3.0%) are not reflected in the chart but are included in Table A6

Sex

In 2014/15, the sex split for regulated enrolments was fairly even, at 50.9% male and 49.1% female. By 2018/19, however, the gap had widened, at 54.1% for males and 45.9% for females (Figure 9, Table A7).

Until 2014/15, females were more likely than males to enrol on non-regulated courses. Since then, however, the proportion of female non-regulated enrolments has fallen from 55.3% to 48.1% (Figure 9, Table A7).

Figure 9: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by sex and academic year



Mode of attendance

Around four-fifths of regulated enrolments are part-time, although this proportion has reduced from 81.1% in 2014/15 to 79.3% in 2018/19. Almost all non-regulated enrolments over this period have been part-time, for instance, 99.9% in 2018/19 (Table A8).

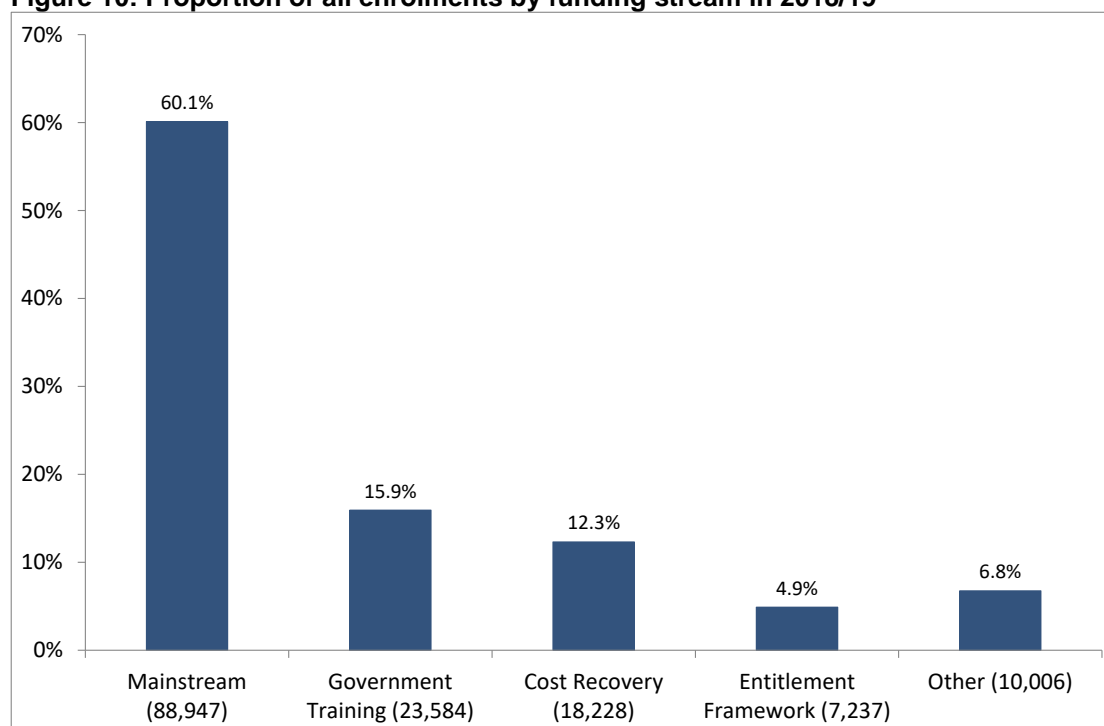
1.3 – Funding streams 2018/19

Several funding streams are available to FE colleges to deliver provision. These include direct funding from DfE, through a mainstream mechanism or government training programmes, such as Training for Success. FE colleges can also receive funding from businesses/individuals, termed as cost recovery, or from other government departments, such as Department of Education (DE), through the Entitlement Framework programme. These main funding streams are analysed below for the academic year 2018/19.

Of the 148,002 enrolments in 2018/19, three-fifths (60.1%) were mainstream, 15.9% were funded through government training programmes, 12.3% were cost recovery and 4.9% were funded through the Entitlement Framework programme. For a further 6.8% of enrolments, the funding stream was classed as 'Other' (Figure 10, Table A9).

In 2018/19, the mainstream proportion of all enrolments in colleges ranged from 46.5% in SWC to 79.0% in BMC (Table A9).

Figure 10: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2018/19



For further information regarding Funding streams, please see the [Funding Streams](#) definition at Annex A (page 62).

Section 2: Regulated enrolments

Background

Most FE college provision includes courses that can potentially lead to a regulated qualification on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). The following section focuses solely on regulated enrolments at FE colleges in the 2018/19 academic year.

The Department's '[Further Education Means Success](#)' strategy emphasises the pivotal role of the further education system in Northern Ireland "in generating a strong and vibrant economy through the development of professional and technical skills, increasingly at higher levels, and by helping employers to innovate". As a result, regulated provision is becoming increasingly important in delivering this role.

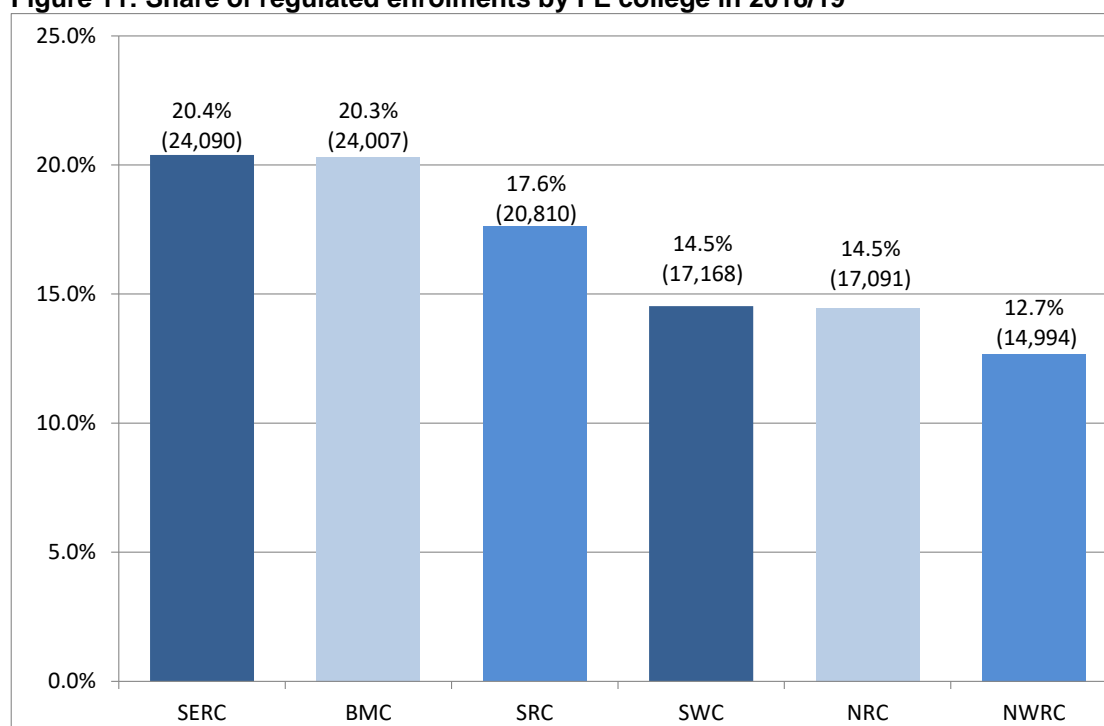
Academic year 2018/19

FE colleges

In 2018/19, the 118,160 enrolments on regulated courses at FE colleges in Northern Ireland related to 61,057 individual students. Over 27,000 of these students were enrolled on more than one programme of study, resulting in 1.9 enrolments on regulated courses per individual in 2018/19 (Table A1).

Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments, SERC accounted for the highest share, with 20.4% (24,090), and NWRC the lowest, with 12.7% (14,994) (Figure 11, Table A5). This distribution of regulated enrolments is very similar to the pattern within all enrolments (Figure 2).

Figure 11: Share of regulated enrolments by FE college in 2018/19

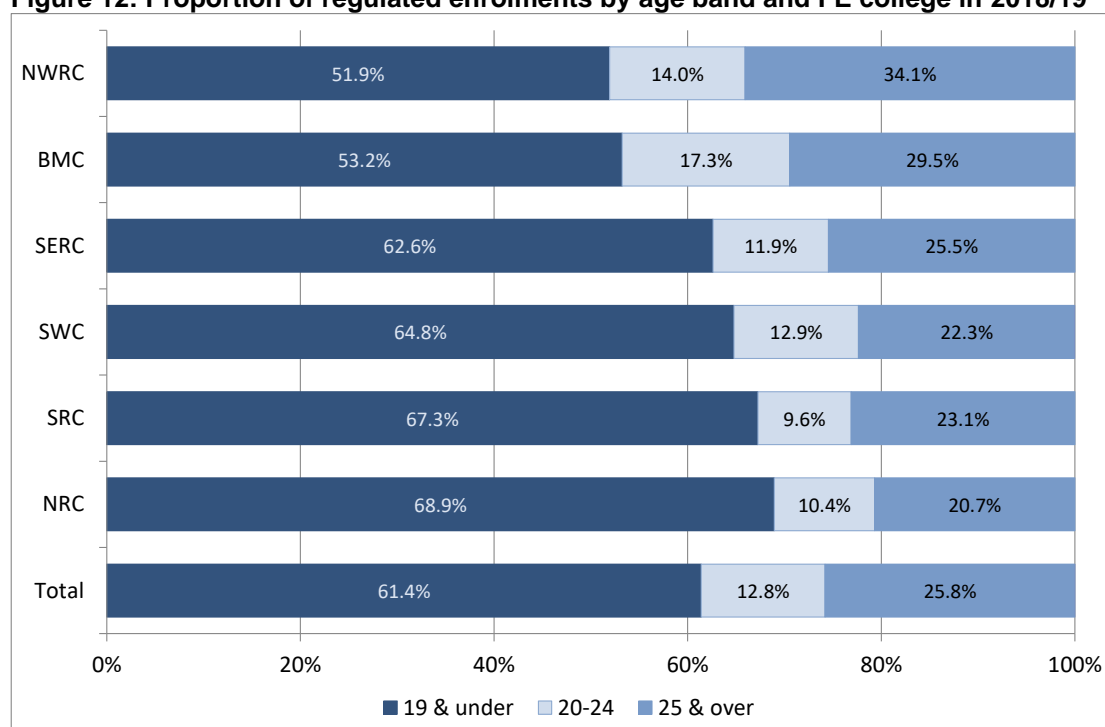


Age

Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments in 2018/19, over three-fifths (61.4%) related to students aged '19 and under', 12.8% to those aged '20 to 24' and 25.8% to the '25 and over' age band. All six FE colleges showed a similar pattern, with aged '19 and under' having the highest proportions and '20 to 24' the lowest (Figure 12, Table A10).

In 2018/19, NRC (68.9%), SRC (67.3%), SWC (64.8%) and (SERC (62.6%) had larger proportions aged '19 and under' and smaller proportions in the '25 and over' age band than those for the FE sector (Figure 12, Table A10).

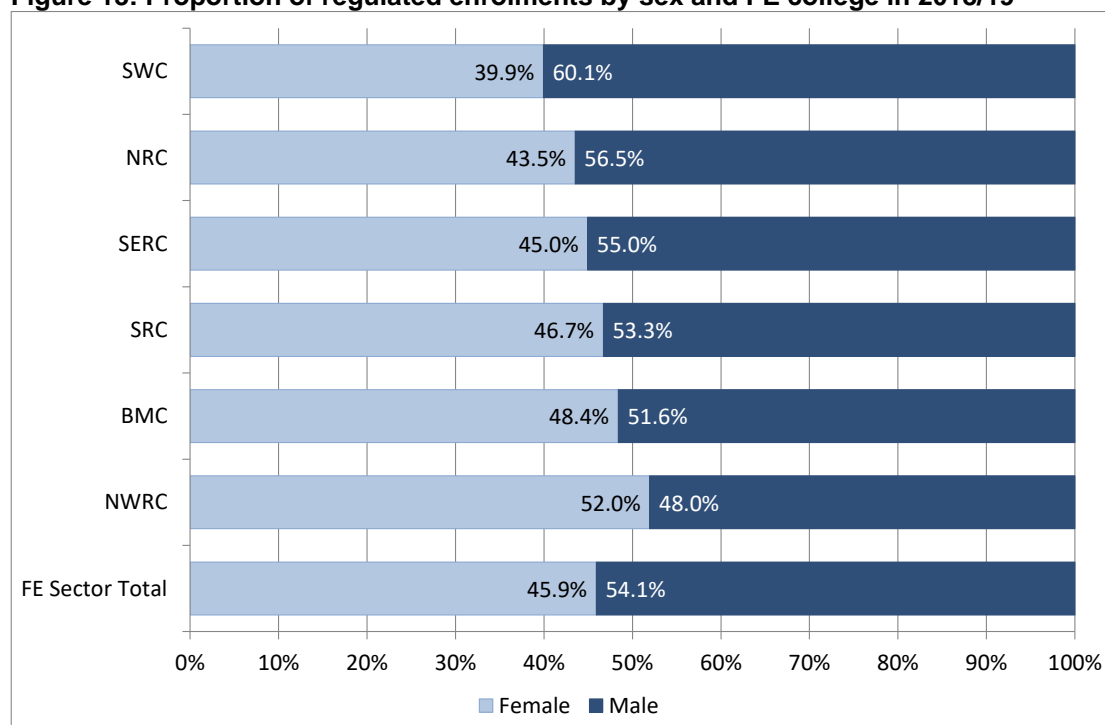
Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE college in 2018/19



Sex

The sex profile of regulated enrolments varied across the six colleges in 2018/19. Five colleges had a higher proportion of males [SWC (60.1%), NRC (56.5%), SERC (55.0%), SRC (53.3%) and BMC (51.6%)], while NWRC (52.0%) had a higher proportion of females. As a result, the majority (54.1%) of regulated enrolments were male; the same pattern as for all enrolments (Figure 13, Table A11).

Figure 13: Proportion of regulated enrolments by sex and FE college in 2018/19



Mode of attendance

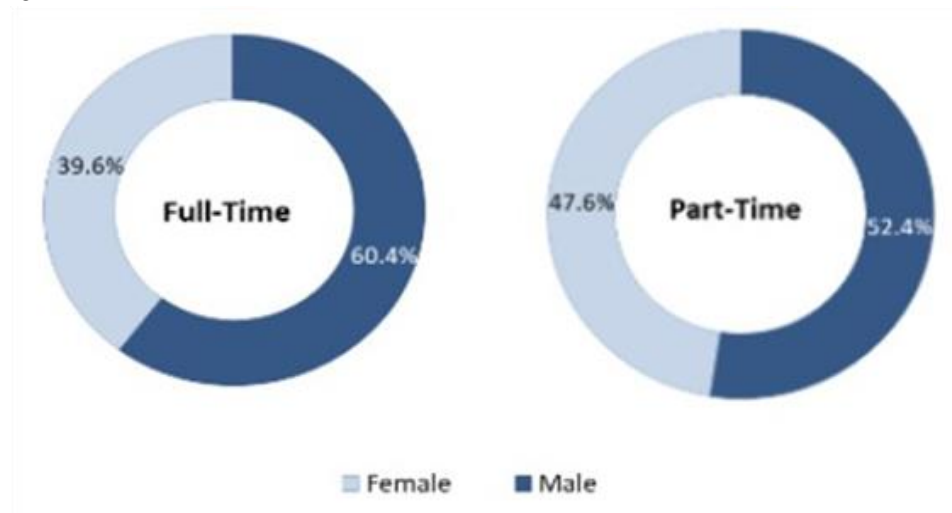
In 2018/19, 20.7% (24,500) of regulated enrolments were on a full-time basis and almost four fifths (79.3%, 93,660) were part-time. In comparison with the FE sector, NWRC (25.7%) had the highest proportion of full-time enrolments, while SWC (16.7%) and SERC (17.8%) had lower proportions (Table A12).

Mode of attendance and sex

Males accounted for three-fifths (60.4%) of full-time regulated enrolments in 2018/19, whereas part-time regulated provision was fairly evenly split by sex (Figure 14, Table A12).

In contrast to the overall FE sector sex profile for part-time provision in 2018/19, female enrolments were in the majority in NWRC (53.2%) and BMC (50.9%). In full-time provision, all six colleges followed the FE sector profile, with a majority of males. (Table A12).

Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by sex and mode of attendance in 2018/19



Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19 and Academic Year 2018/19

Provision area

Three main provision areas are delivered within FE colleges:

- i. Further Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 3 or below', such as: professional and technical provision; A-Levels; GCSEs and Apprenticeships.
- ii. Higher Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 4 or above', such as: Certificate of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelor's degrees; Master's degrees; Postgraduate certificates; and Doctorates.
- iii. Essential Skills provision can be at Entry Level up to Level 2, which is equivalent to GCSEs. This cohort is separate from (i) Further Education (above). Further information on Essential Skills provision is available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/essential-skills-statistics>

Trend – 2014/15 to 2018/19

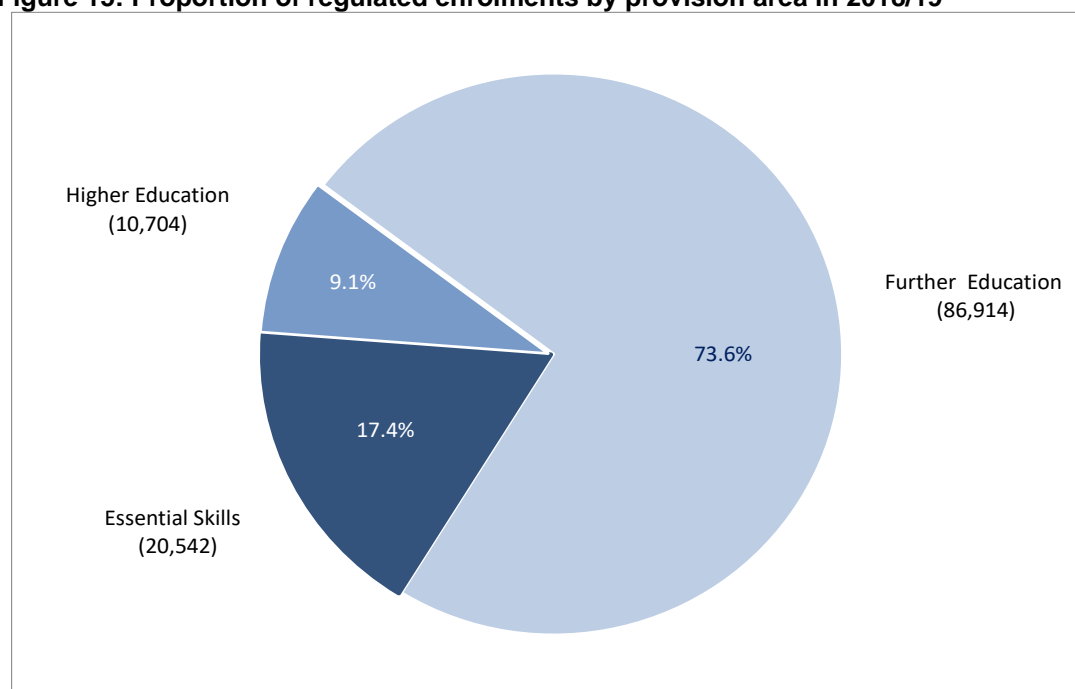
Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the proportion of regulated enrolments in Further Education (FE) courses has increased from 72.1% to 73.6%; conversely, the proportion of those in Essential Skills has decreased, from 19.5% to 17.4%. The proportion of regulated enrolments in Higher Education (HE) has increased from 8.4% to 9.1% over this period (Table A13).

Academic year 2018/19

Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments in 2018/19, nearly three-quarters (73.6%) were in FE courses, 9.1% were in HE courses and 17.4% in Essential Skills. Across each of the FE colleges, the proportions for each provision area generally followed the overall FE sector (Figure 15, Table A13).

In 2018/19, SERC's share of enrolments in FE courses (77.5%) was the highest across all colleges, while its HE proportion (6.2%) was the lowest. BMC's proportion of enrolments in HE courses (12.6%) was the highest across all colleges, while its Essential Skills share (14.5%) was the lowest. NRC had the highest proportion of enrolments in Essential Skills (22.2%) while SWC had the lowest share in FE (70.3%) (Table A13).

Figure 15: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2018/19



Level of study

Each enrolment on a regulated course is assigned a level between 'Entry Level' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level have a similar level of demand or difficulty, for example at:

- 'Level 1 and Entry Level' includes, Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D–G, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Essential Skills;
- 'Level 2' includes Vocational Qualifications Level 2, GCSEs at grade A*–C, ESOL and Essential Skills;
- 'Level 3' includes Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Level;
- 'Level 4 and above' includes Vocational Qualifications Levels 4 to 8; Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND), Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) and degrees.

Trend – 2014/15 to 2018/19

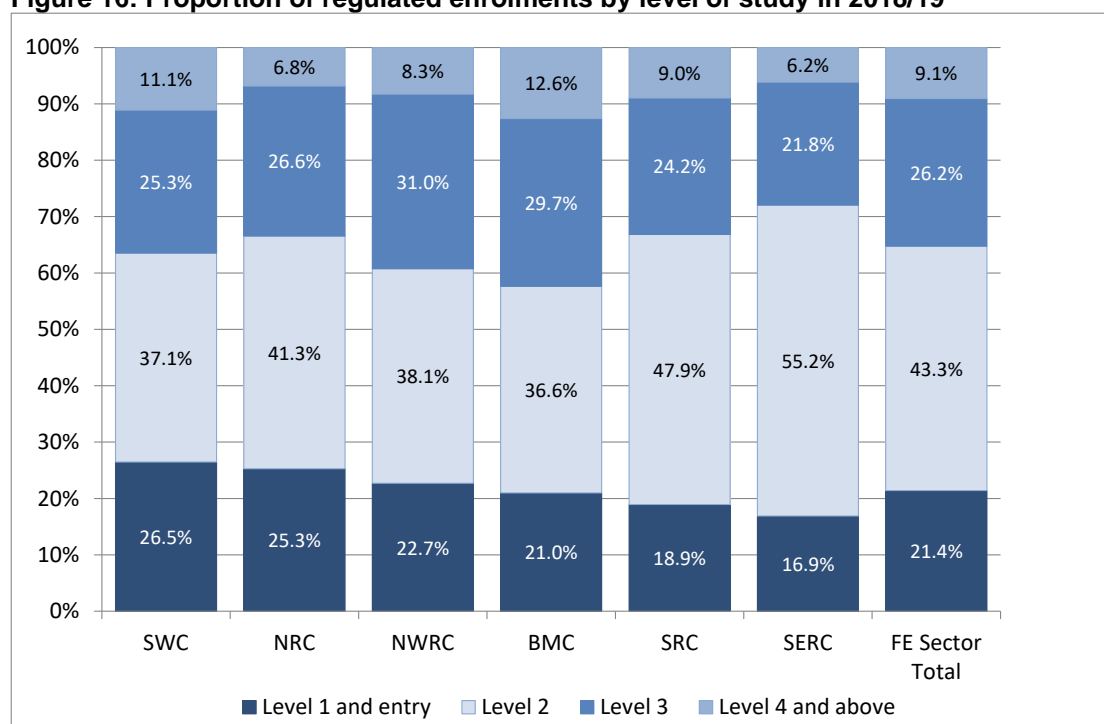
Since 2014/15, the proportion of 'Level 1 and below' regulated enrolments hasn't changed in net terms (21.4%). Whereas the proportion of 'Level 2' has decreased from 46.2% to 43.3% over the period, the proportions of 'Level 3' and 'Level 4 and above' enrolments have increased from 23.7% and 8.4% respectively to 26.2% and 9.1% respectively (Table A14).

Academic year 2018/19

Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments in 2018/19, nearly four-fifths (78.6%) were at 'Level 2' or above. Those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 21.4% (25,310); 43.3% (51,191) were at 'Level 2', 26.2% (30,955) were at 'Level 3' and 9.1% (10,704) were at 'Level 4 and above' (Figure 16, Table A14).

There was a notable variation across the six colleges in terms of the level of study. While all colleges had their largest proportion of enrolments at 'Level 2', this ranged from 36.6% in BMC to 55.2% in SERC. SERC was the only college where the majority of enrolments were at 'Level 2', whereas BMC (42.4%) was the only college where over two-fifths of provision was at 'Level 3' and above (Figure 16, Table A14).

Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2018/19



Subject area

Trend – 2014/15 to 2018/19

Since 2014/15, the proportions of regulated enrolments by subject area have been in a steady state. Notably, the proportion of regulated enrolments in the subject area 'Construction, Planning & the Built Environment' increased from 4.2% in 2014/15 to 6.9% in 2018/19. In contrast, the proportion of Languages, Literature & Culture enrolments decreased from 4.2% to 1.7% over the same period (Table A15).

Academic year 2018/19

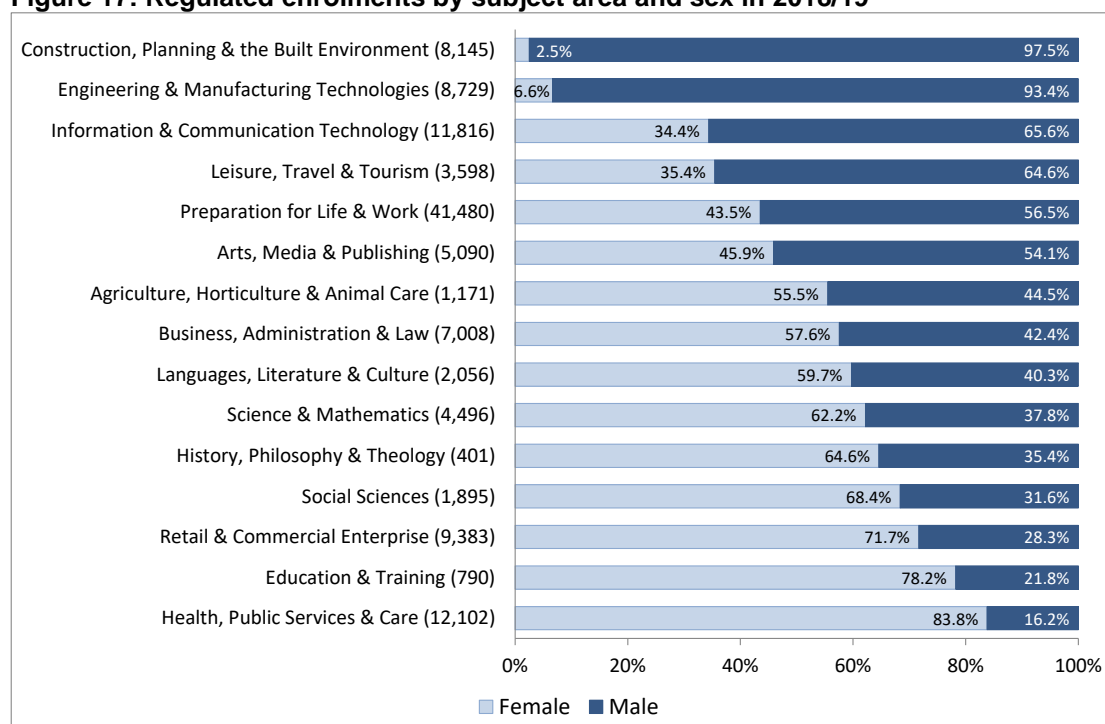
Of the 118,160 regulated enrolments in 2018/19, the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' had the largest share (35.1%). This was followed by 'Health, Public Services and Care' (10.2%) and 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT)' (10.0%). Over one-third (36.1%, 14,978) of regulated enrolments within the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' were Essential Skills courses in Literacy and Numeracy (Table A15).

Subject area and sex

Although the overall sex profile was fairly evenly split for all regulated enrolments in 2018/19, wide variation occurred between male and female enrolments across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority of 'Health, Public Services and Care' (83.8%) and 'Education and Training' enrolments (78.2%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (97.5%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.4%) (Figure 17, Table A15).

Across the FE colleges, there was a similar pattern in the subject area by sex profile. Any college variations from the sector were mainly in 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care', which accounted for 1,171 enrolments across the FE sector. In NWRC, SWC and SRC, the male share of this subject area was 100.0%, 78.3% and 71.4% respectively, compared with the 'FE sector male' share of 44.5%. (Figure 17, Table A15).

Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and sex in 2018/19



Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

The 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' publication highlights a need to address subject imbalances, as forecasts predict that degree subject requirements will become more skewed towards STEM. The 'Report of the STEM Review' examines ways in which Government and business can increase the number of people with STEM qualifications entering the workplace.

This section examines the level of enrolments within STEM subject areas to illustrate the further education contribution towards those undertaking STEM courses.

STEM or 'Broad' STEM provision is identified by subject category. 'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of: 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects'; 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture; Mathematics and IT'; 'Engineering and Technology'; and 'Architecture, Building and Planning'.

A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses of: 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT'; and 'Engineering and Technology'.

Trend – 2014/15 to 2018/19

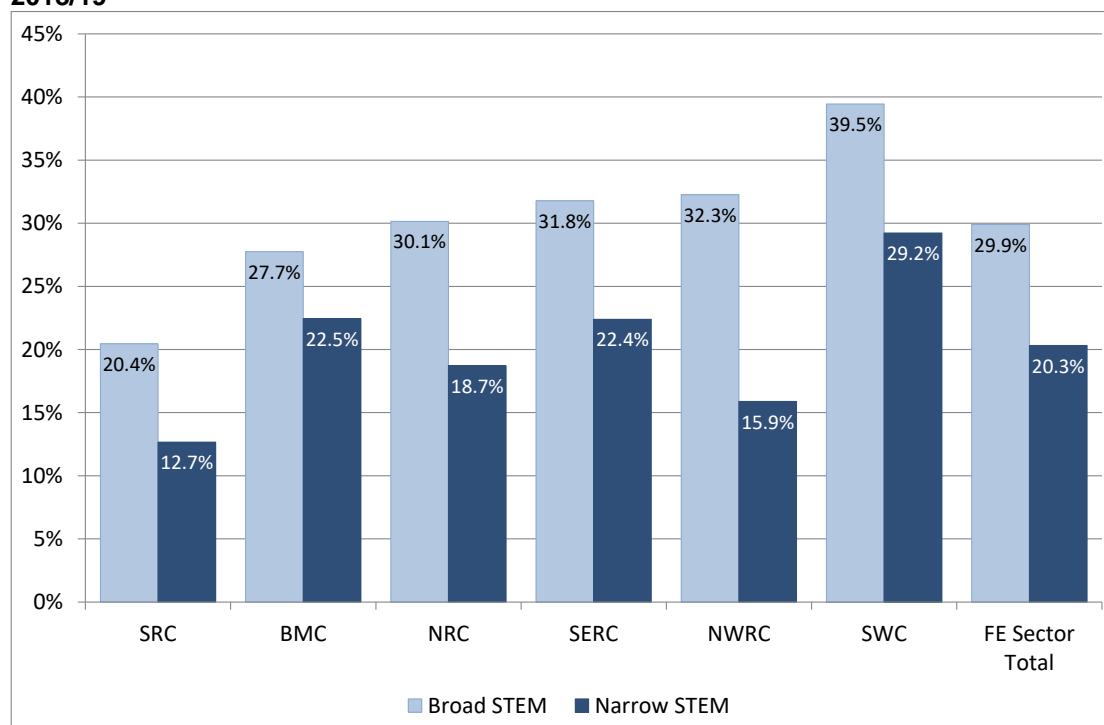
Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the proportion of regulated enrolments in 'Broad' STEM subjects increased from 27.9% to 29.9%. The proportion of regulated enrolments in 'Narrow' STEM subjects also increased, from 19.5% to 20.3%, over the same period (Table A16a and Table A16b).

Academic year 2018/19

In 2018/19, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 29.9% (35,330) of all regulated enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 20.3% (24,011). Males accounted for almost three-quarters of 'Broad' STEM (74.2%) enrolments and over three-quarters of 'Narrow' STEM (77.4%) enrolments (Table A16a and Table A16b).

Across the FE colleges the proportion of enrolments in 'Broad' STEM subjects ranged from 20.4% in SRC to 39.5% in SWC while the proportion in 'Narrow' STEM subjects ranged from 12.7% in SRC to 29.2% in SWC (Figure 18, Table A16a and Table A16b).

Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2018/19



Deprivation

Relative deprivation has been measured using the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises areas across Northern Ireland into five geographical groups, termed 'quintiles', each accounting for 20% of the 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs). Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and Quintile 5 is the least deprived group of areas.

Trend – 2014/15 to 2018/19

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19 little change occurred in the proportions of regulated enrolments from each deprivation quintile. The proportions of Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 decreased from 20.7% and 14.5% to 19.9% and 13.6% respectively. Conversely the proportions of Quintile 2, Quintile 3 and Quintile 4 increased from 22.3%, 20.8% and 18.2% to 22.9%, 21.8% and 19.0% respectively over the five year period to 2018/19 (Table A17).

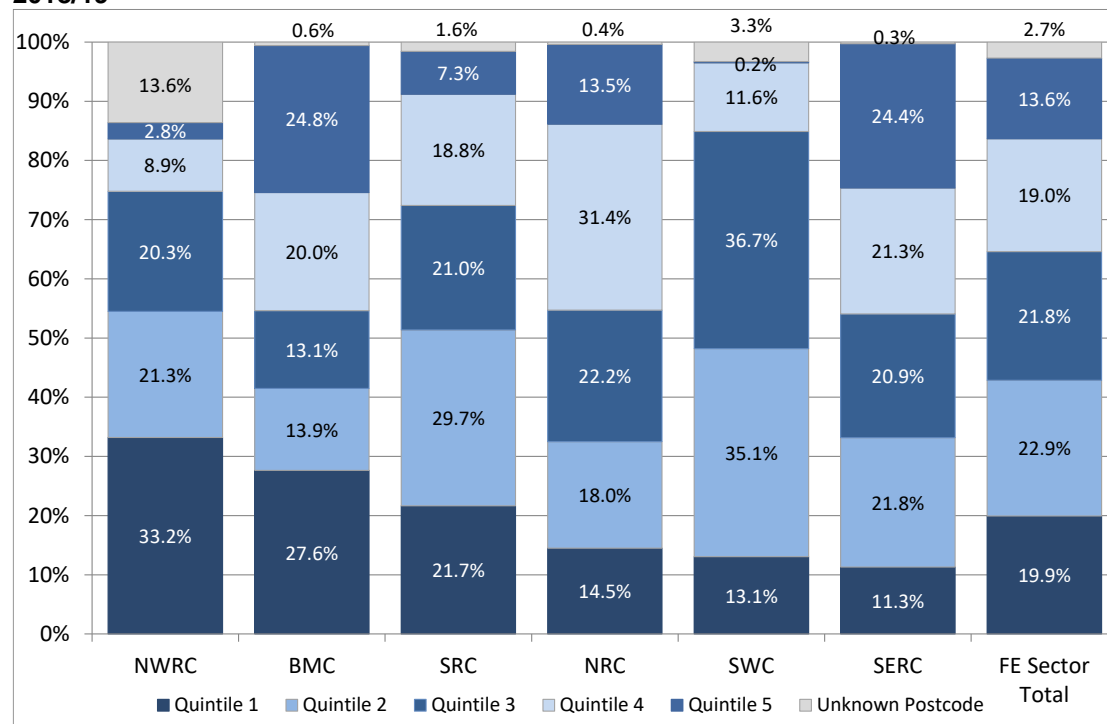
Academic year 2018/19

In 2018/19, over two-fifths (42.9%) of regulated enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. Almost one-fifth (19.9%) of regulated enrolments came from Quintile 1, compared with 13.6% from Quintile 5 (Table A17).

Considerable variation occurred at college level in 2018/19. For instance, over 50% of regulated enrolments at NWRC and SRC came from the two most deprived areas (Quintiles 1 and 2), whereas SERC's largest share of enrolments (24.4%) came from the least deprived area (Quintile 5).

A third (33.2%) of NWRC's regulated enrolments in 2018/19 were from Quintile 1, with 2.8% from Quintile 5. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, was quite polarised in terms of deprivation levels of intake. Over half of BMC regulated enrolments (52.5%) were from either Quintile 1 or Quintile 5 (Figure 19, Table A17).

Figure 19: Proportion of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile and FE college in 2018/19



Notably, NWRC had a relatively large proportion of enrolments with unknown postcodes (13.6%). This is mainly due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 2,038 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 1,804 were RoI domiciled student enrolments, accounting for 12.0% of regulated enrolments in NWRC (14,994). Excluding these enrolments from the NWRC analysis, 37.7% of enrolments were from Quintile 1 and 3.1% were from Quintile 5 (Table 2 and Table A17).

Table 2: Proportion of regulated enrolments with and without RoI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintile in 2018/19

Domicile	Quintile 1- Most Deprived	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 - Least Deprived	Unknown Postcode
Including RoI	33.2%	21.3%	20.3%	8.9%	2.8%	13.6%
Excluding RoI	37.7%	24.2%	23.1%	10.1%	3.1%	1.8%

Section 3: Mainstream enrolments

Background

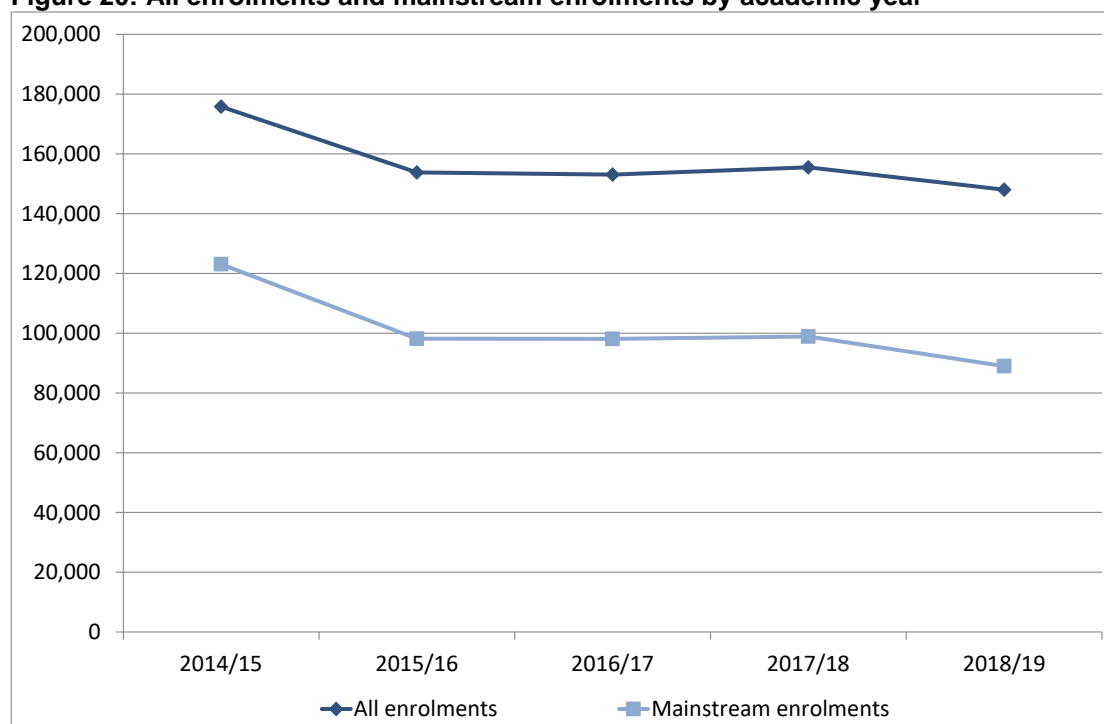
Until 2017/18, FE colleges were funded through the FLU funding model, a distributive funding mechanism designed to support DfE's strategic priorities for further education, which have previously been outlined. It provided funding to enable colleges to deliver Further Education, Essential Skills and Higher Education within FE colleges.

This section refers to mainstream college provision, funded through recurrent grant-in-aid. The enrolments are a subset of all enrolments at FE colleges and include both regulated and non-regulated provision. Most enrolments in FE colleges (60.1% in 2018/19) are mainstream each year (Figure 10).

Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, mainstream enrolments followed a similar pattern to all enrolments, decreasing by 27.7% from 123,060 to 88,947; this includes a fall of 10.1% between 2017/18 (98,915) and 2018/19 (88,947) (Figure 20, Table A18).

Figure 20: All enrolments and mainstream enrolments by academic year

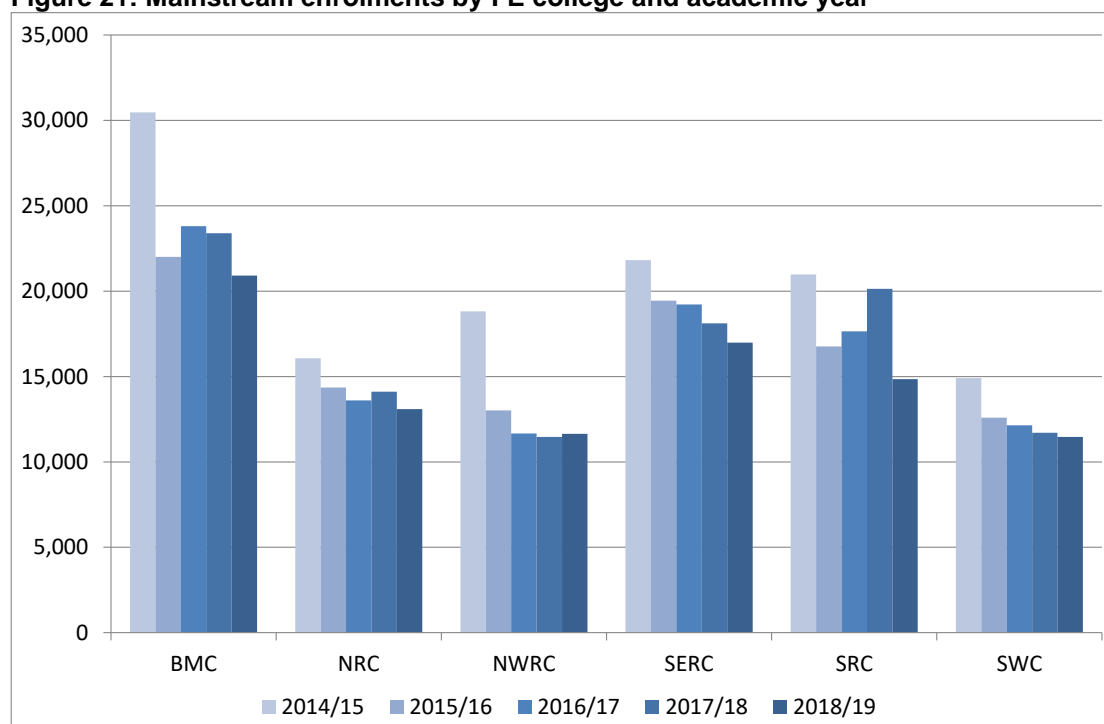


FE colleges

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the number of mainstream enrolments decreased in each of the six colleges, with the reductions ranging from 18.5% in NRC to 38.1% in NWRC (Figure 21, Table A18).

Of the 88,947 mainstream enrolments in 2018/19, BMC accounted for the highest proportion (23.5%, 20,917), while the lowest proportion was in SWC (12.9%, 11,464) (Figure 21, Table A18).

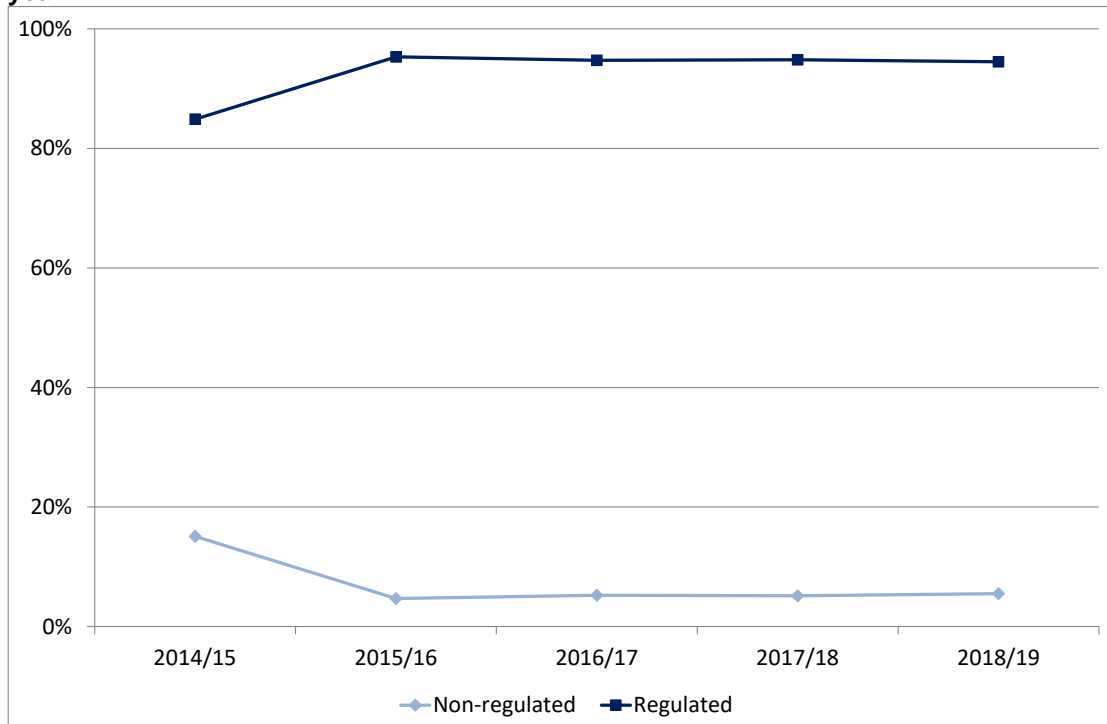
Figure 21: Mainstream enrolments by FE college and academic year



Regulated and non-regulated

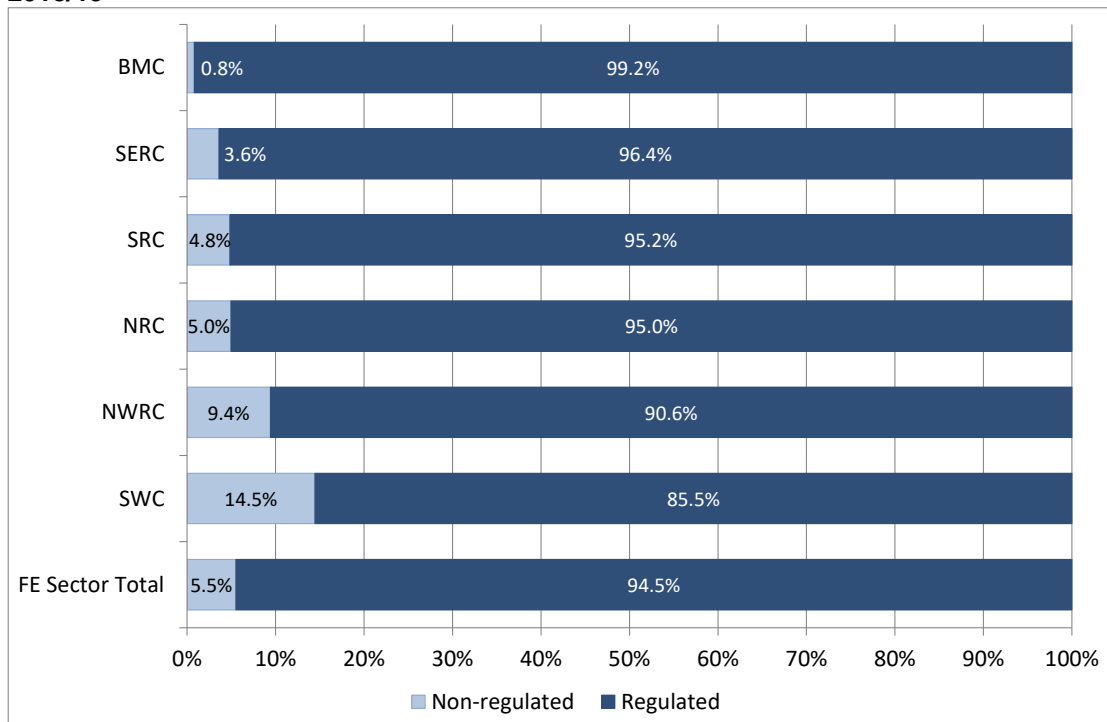
Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the regulated proportion of mainstream enrolments increased by a net 9.6 percentage points, from 84.9% to 94.5%. Notably, this included a 10.4 percentage point increase from 84.9% in 2014/15 to 95.3% in 2015/16. These changes in the proportions of regulated and non-regulated mainstream enrolments reflect the vision of the [‘Further Education Means Success’](#) strategy, aimed at encouraging more economically-focused regulated provision (Figure 22, Table A18).

Figure 22: Proportion of mainstream enrolments by regulated status and academic year



The regulated proportions of mainstream enrolments varied across the six colleges in 2018/19, ranging from 85.5% in SWC to 99.2% in BMC (Figure 23, Table A18).

Figure 23: Proportion of mainstream enrolments by regulated status and FE college in 2018/19



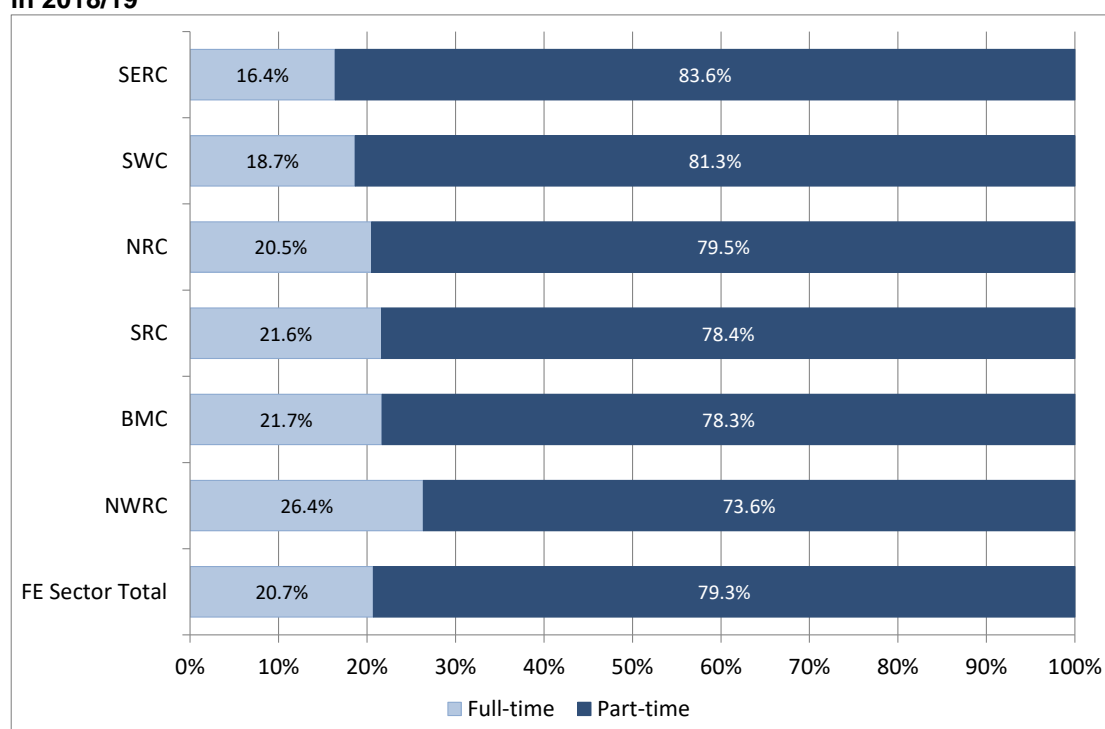
Mode of attendance

Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the part-time proportion of mainstream enrolments decreased by 3.4 percentage points, from 82.7% to 79.3% (Table A21).

The part-time proportion of mainstream enrolments also fell in all six colleges between 2014/15 and 2018/19; the largest being a 6.0 percentage point decrease in BMC, from 84.3% to 78.3% (Table A21).

In the latest academic year (2018/19), across the colleges, proportions of part-time provision ranged from 73.6% in NWRC to 83.6% in SERC (Figure 24, Table A21).

Figure 24: Proportion of mainstream enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2018/19

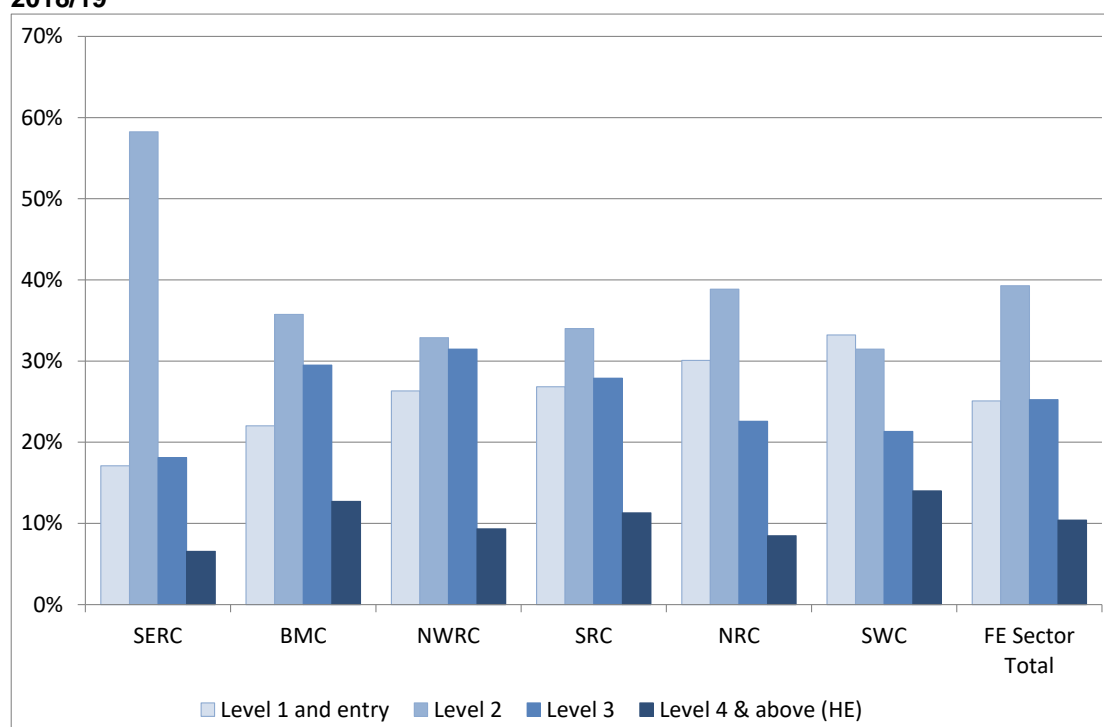


Level of study

Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' mainstream enrolments fell by 7.9 percentage points, from 33.0% to 25.1%. Conversely, increases occurred in the proportions of mainstream enrolments at 'Level 2' (from 36.1% to 39.3%), 'Level 3' (from 21.8% to 25.2%) and 'Level 4 and above' (from 8.8% to 10.4%) (Table A23).

While 'Level 2' accounted for the largest proportion of mainstream enrolments (39.3%) across the FE sector in 2018/19, SWC's largest proportion was in 'Level 1 and entry' (33.2%). As Figure 25 illustrates, almost three-fifths (58.2%) of SERC's mainstream enrolments were at 'Level 2' (Table A23).

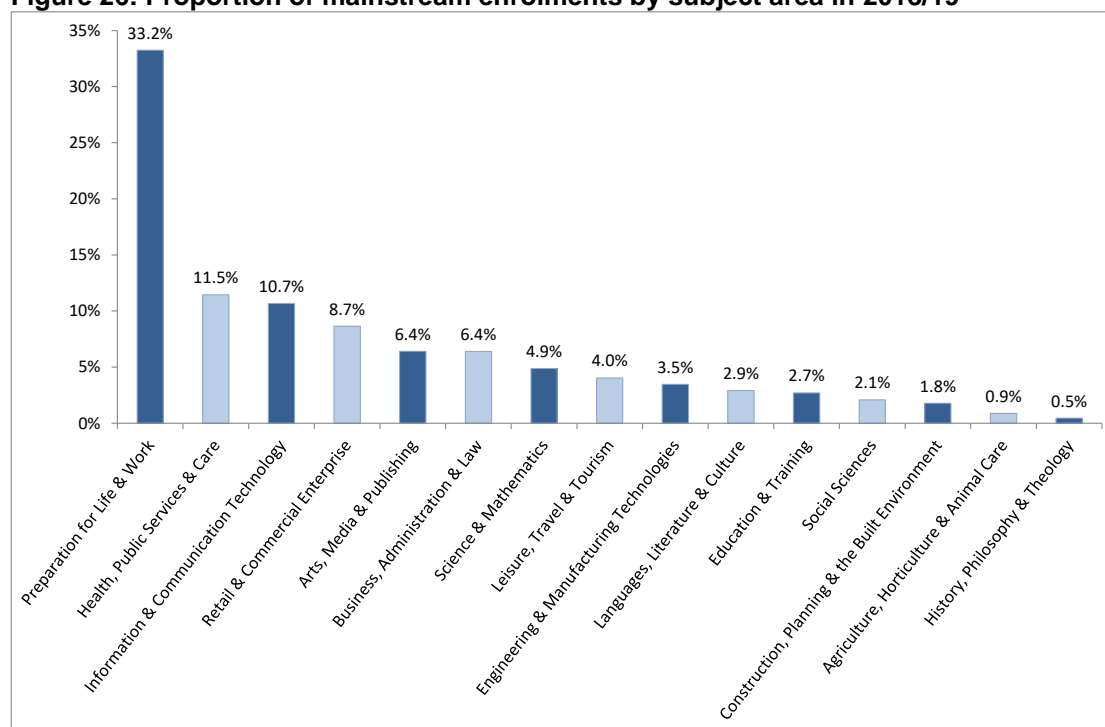
Figure 25: Proportion of mainstream enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2018/19



Subject area

In 2018/19, the largest proportion (33.2%) of mainstream enrolments was in the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work'. This was followed by 'Health, Public Services & Care' (11.5%) and 'Information and Communication Technology' (10.7%) (Figure 26, Table A24).

Figure 26: Proportion of mainstream enrolments by subject area in 2018/19



In five of the six colleges, 'Preparation for Life and Work' had the highest proportions of mainstream enrolments in 2018/19. This share of the subject area ranged from 22.4% in SWC to 51.5% in SERC. In NWRC, 'Health, Public Services and Care' (22.3%) had the highest proportion of mainstream enrolments (Table A24).

Section 4: Higher Education enrolments

Background

Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) enrolments form a subset of all regulated provision at 'Level 4 or above'. They include: Certificates of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelor's degrees; Master's degrees; Postgraduate certificates; and Doctorates. For further details on HE provision at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), please click [Higher Education Statistics](#).

Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19

HE in FE enrolments have decreased by a net 8.7% (1,018), from 11,722 in 2014/15 to 10,704 in 2018/19: this includes a 9.7% fall from 11,848 in 2017/18 to 10,704 in 2018/19 (Table 3).

Four of the six colleges experienced net decreases in the number of HE in FE enrolments [NWRC (28.4%), NRC (22.4%), BMC (9.5%) and SRC (2.9%)] between 2014/15 and 2018/19. SWC and SERC, however, experienced net increases of 9.3% and 1.7% respectively (Table 3).

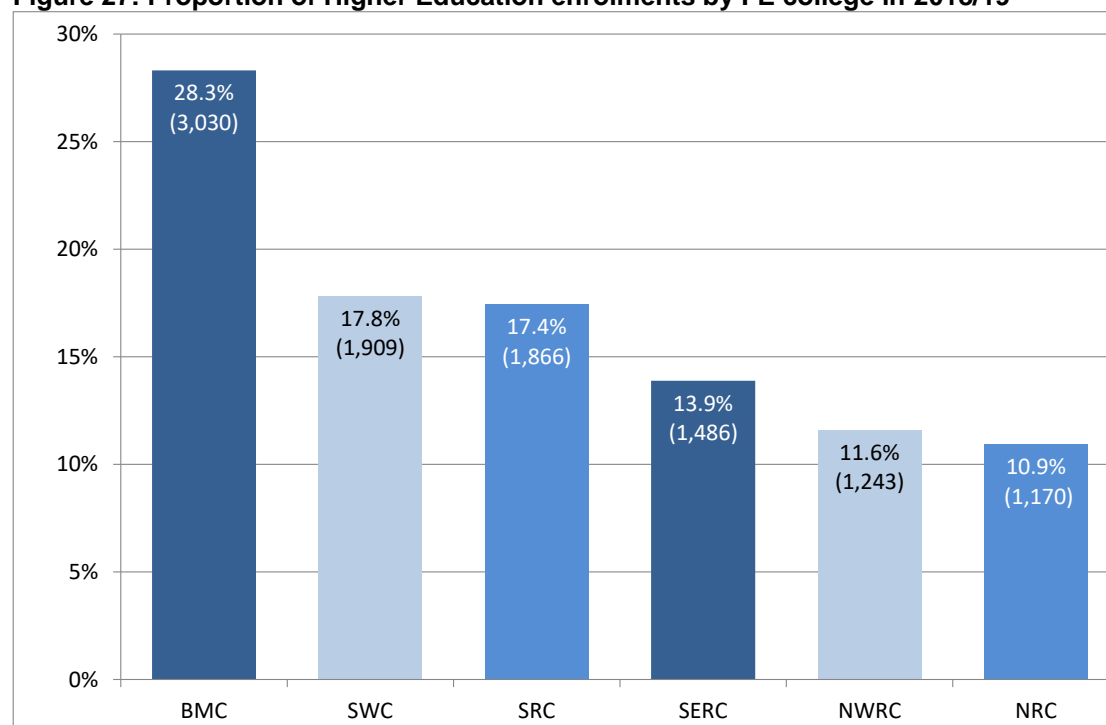
Table 3: Higher Education enrolments by FE college and academic year

FE college	Academic Year				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
BMC	3,348	3,188	3,178	3,146	3,030
NRC	1,508	1,502	1,399	1,299	1,170
NWRC	1,736	1,594	1,534	1,524	1,243
SERC	1,461	1,560	1,564	1,454	1,486
SRC	1,922	2,030	1,836	2,683	1,866
SWC	1,747	1,757	1,664	1,742	1,909
FE Sector Total	11,722	11,631	11,175	11,848	10,704

Higher Education enrolments in 2018/19

In 2018/19, BMC accounted for the highest proportion of all HE in FE enrolments (28.3%, 3,030) and NRC the lowest with 10.9% (1,170) (Figure 27, Table 3).

Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by FE college in 2018/19



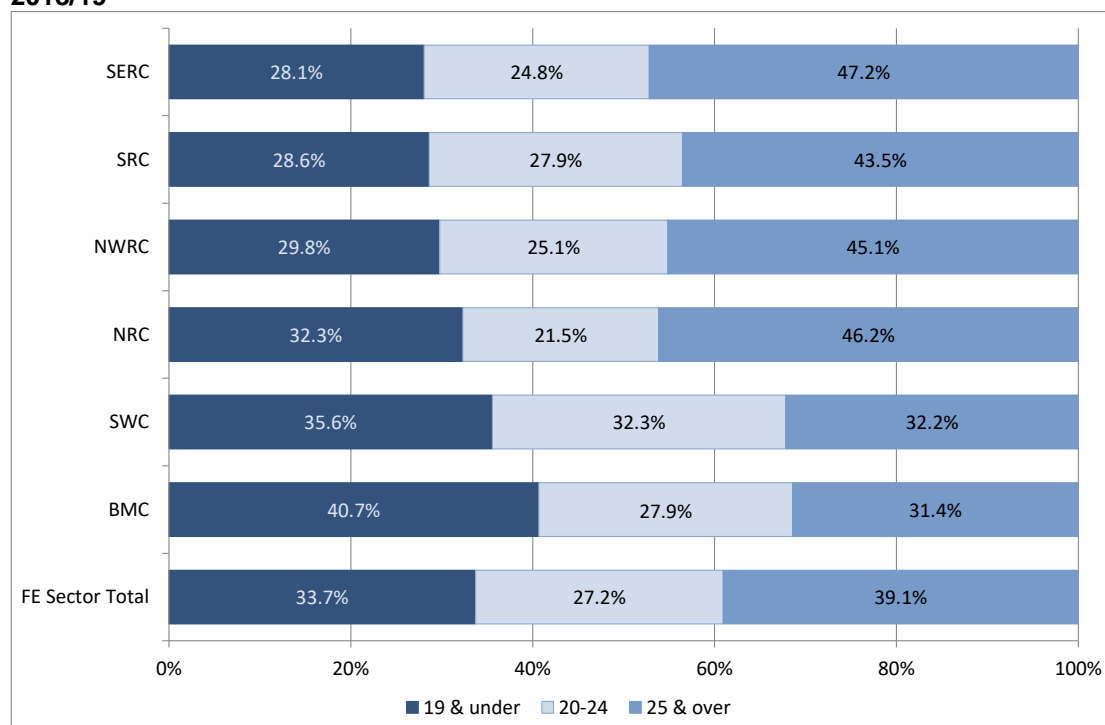
Age

Of the 10,704 HE in FE enrolments in 2018/19, the highest proportion was in the age group '25 and over' (39.1%), followed by those aged '19 and under' (33.7%) and those aged '20 to 24' (27.2%) (Table A27).

Four of the six FE colleges (SERC, NRC, NWRC and SRC) showed a similar trend to the overall FE sector in 2018/19, with those aged '25 and over' having the highest proportions of HE in FE enrolments (47.2%, 46.2%, 45.1% and 43.5% respectively) and those aged '20 to 24' the lowest (24.8%, 21.5%, 25.1% and 27.9% respectively) (Table A27).

In 2018/19 BMC (40.7%) had the highest proportion of HE in FE enrolments of those aged '19 and under' and also had the lowest proportion within the '25 and over' group (31.4%) (Figure 28, Table A27).

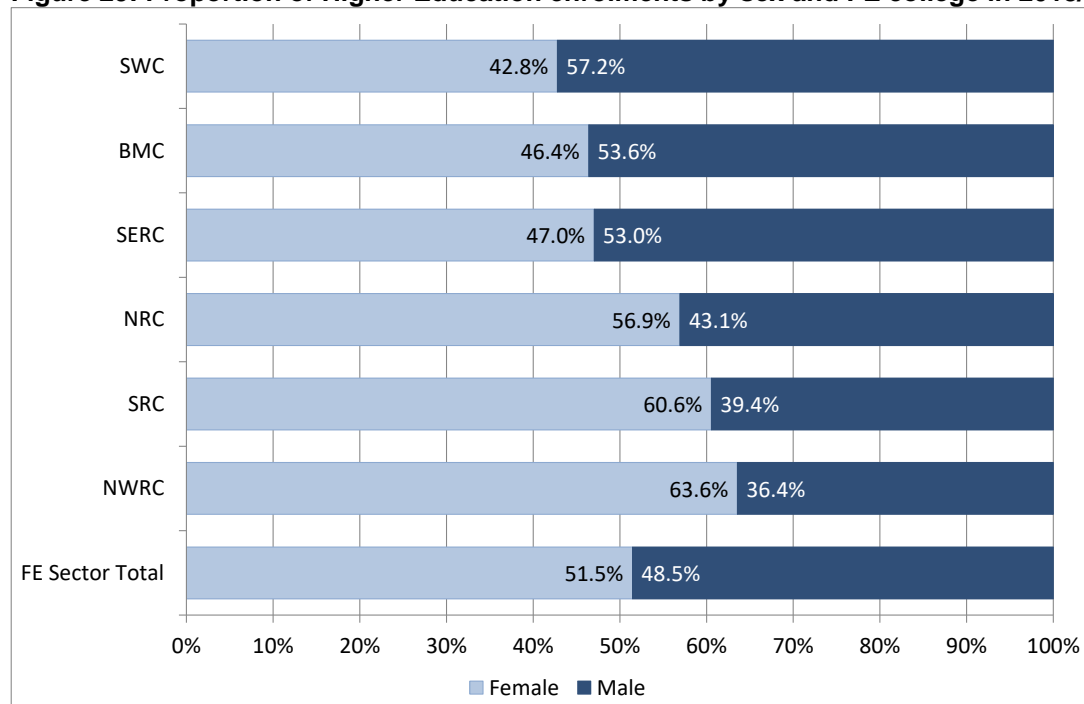
Figure 28: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE college in 2018/19



Sex

The sex profile of HE in FE enrolments varied greatly across the six colleges in 2018/19. Three colleges had higher proportions of male enrolments [SWC (57.2%), BMC (53.6%) and SERC (53.0%)], while the others had higher proportions of female enrolments [NWRC (63.6%), SRC (60.6%) and NRC (56.9%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly even split in the HE in FE sex profile, at 51.5% female and 48.5% male (Figure 29, Table A28).

Figure 29: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by sex and FE college in 2018/19



Mode of attendance

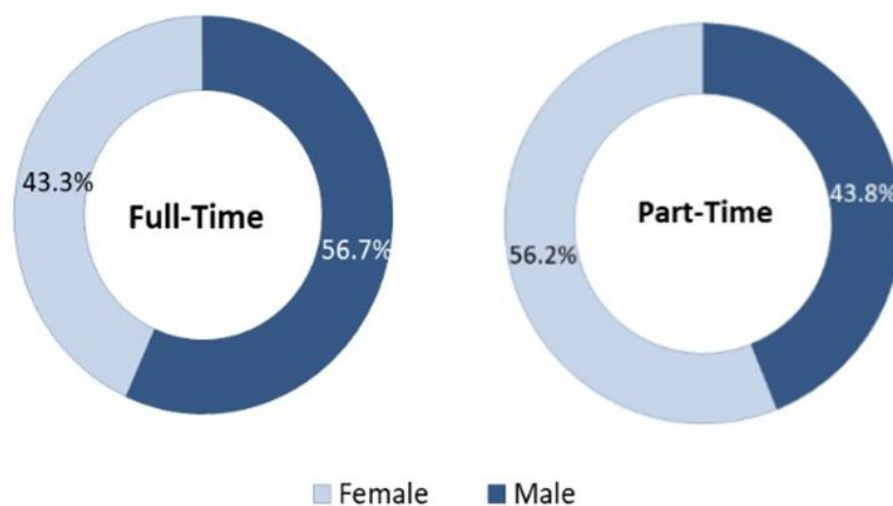
In 2018/19, 36.5% (3,912) of HE in FE enrolments were on a full-time basis and 63.5% were part-time (6,792). In comparison with the FE sector, BMC (49.1%) and NWRC (48.1%) had above average proportions of full-time enrolments, while NRC (26.1%), SRC (26.3%), SWC (27.9%) and SERC (33.5%) had lower proportions (Table A29).

Mode of attendance and sex

For part-time provision, females made up the majority of HE in FE enrolments (56.2%) in 2018/19, while in full-time provision males (56.7%) accounted for the majority (Figure 30, Table A29).

In terms of the part-time provision and sex profile for each college, only SWC deviated from the overall HE in FE pattern in 2018/19, with a majority of male enrolments (55.1%). In full-time provision, only NWRC differed from the FE sector pattern, with a majority of female enrolments (60.5%) (Table A29).

Figure 30: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by sex and mode of attendance in 2018/19



Level of study

Each enrolment on a Higher Education course is assigned a level between 'Level 4' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty:

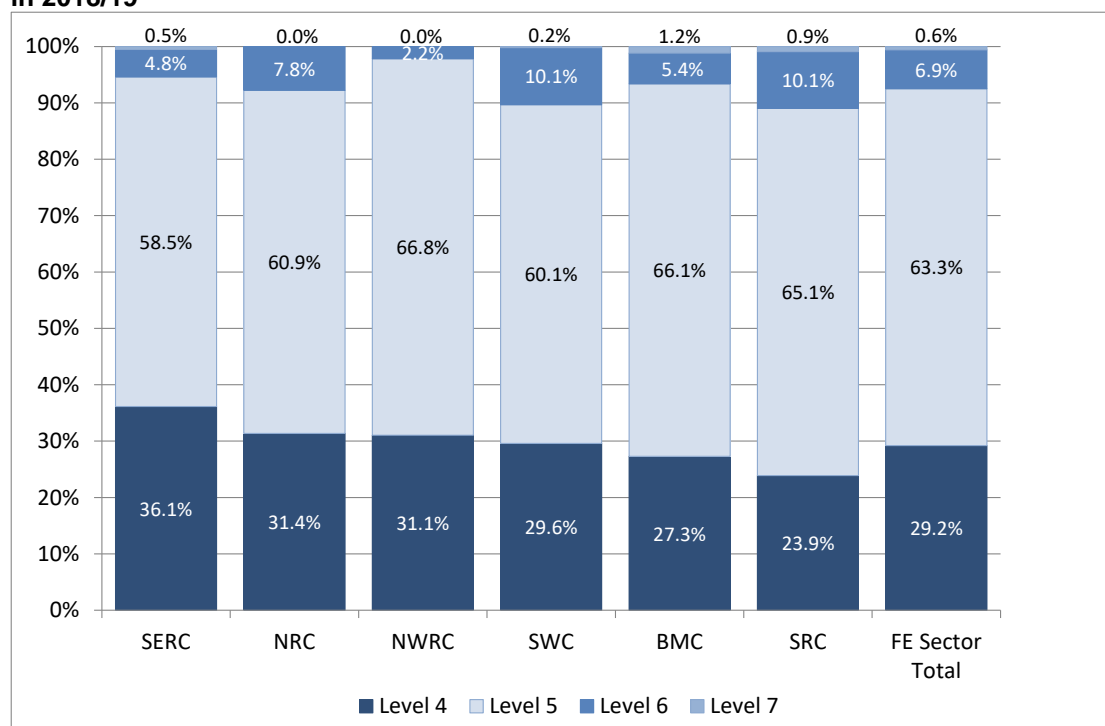
- 'Level 4' are Vocational Qualifications Level 4 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education and Higher National Certificate (HNC);
- 'Level 5' are Vocational Qualifications Level 5 and qualifications at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications, such as Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide direct access to postgraduate programmes

- 'Level 6' are Vocational Qualifications Level 6 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Bachelor's degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas
- 'Level 7' are Vocational Qualifications Levels 7 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas
- 'Level 8' are Vocational Qualifications Levels 8 and qualifications at a level equivalent to doctorates.

Of the 10,704 HE in FE enrolments in 2018/19, the vast majority (92.5%) were at levels 4 or 5. 'Level 5' accounted for 63.3% (6,775) of enrolments and 'Level 4' 29.2% (3,128), while 6.9% (736) were at 'Level 6' and 0.6% (65) at 'Level 7' (Table A30).

There is some variation across the six colleges in terms of the level of HE in FE study. While all colleges had their largest share of enrolments at 'Level 5' in 2018/19, this ranged from 58.5% in SERC to 66.8% in NWRC. In all six colleges, over four-fifths of HE enrolments were at 'Level 4' or 'Level 5', ranging from 89.0% in SRC to 97.8% in NWRC (Figure 31, Table A30).

Figure 31: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2018/19



Subject area

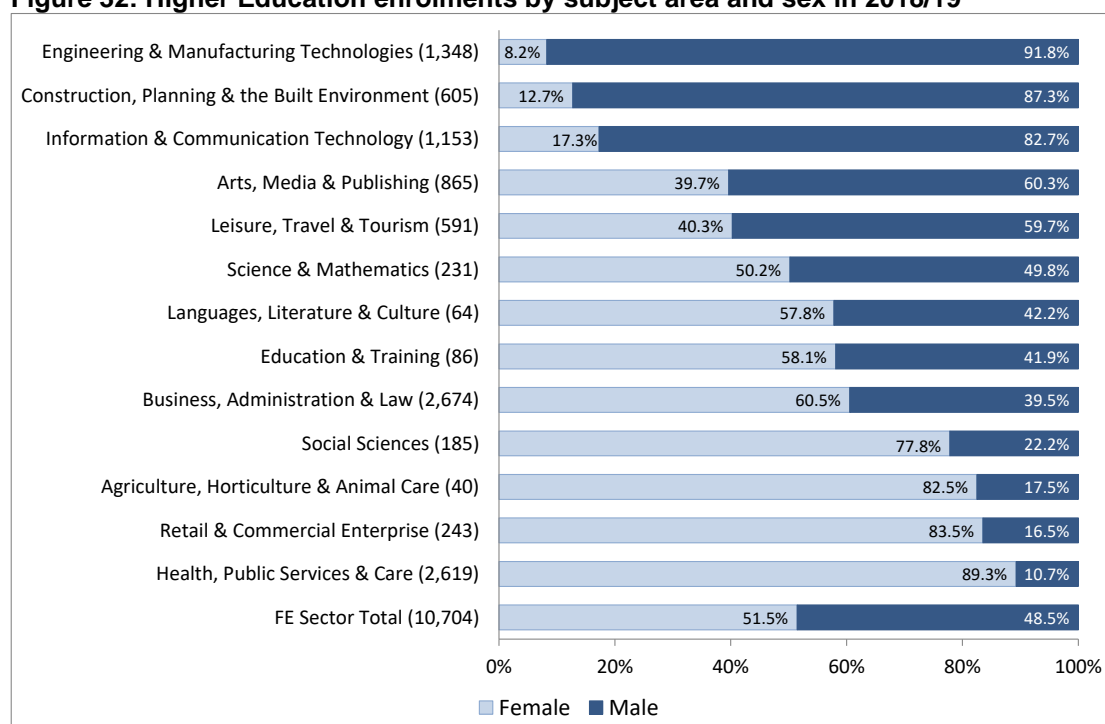
Of the 10,704 HE in FE enrolments in 2018/19, over three-fifths (62.0%, 6,641) fell within three subject areas: 'Business, Administration and Law' (25.0%, 2,674); 'Health, Public Services and Care' (24.5%, 2,619); and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (12.6%, 1,348). (Table A31).

Subject area and sex

While the overall sex profile was fairly evenly split for all HE in FE enrolments in 2018/19, there was wide variation between male and female enrolment shares across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (89.3%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (83.5%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (91.8%) and 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment (87.3%) (Figure 32, Table A31).

Across the FE colleges, there was a similar trend to the FE sector subject area by sex profile in 2018/19. Some notable differences were in NRC and SWC, where the proportions of male HE in FE enrolments in 'Leisure, Travel and Tourism' were 82.8% and 75.0% respectively, in comparison with 59.7% in the FE sector. In contrast, the female share of the same subject area was 53.2% in NWRC, as opposed to 40.3% in the FE sector (Table A31).

Figure 32: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and sex in 2018/19



Please note there were no HE in FE enrolments in the subject areas of 'History, Philosophy & Theology' and 'Preparation for Life & Work'.

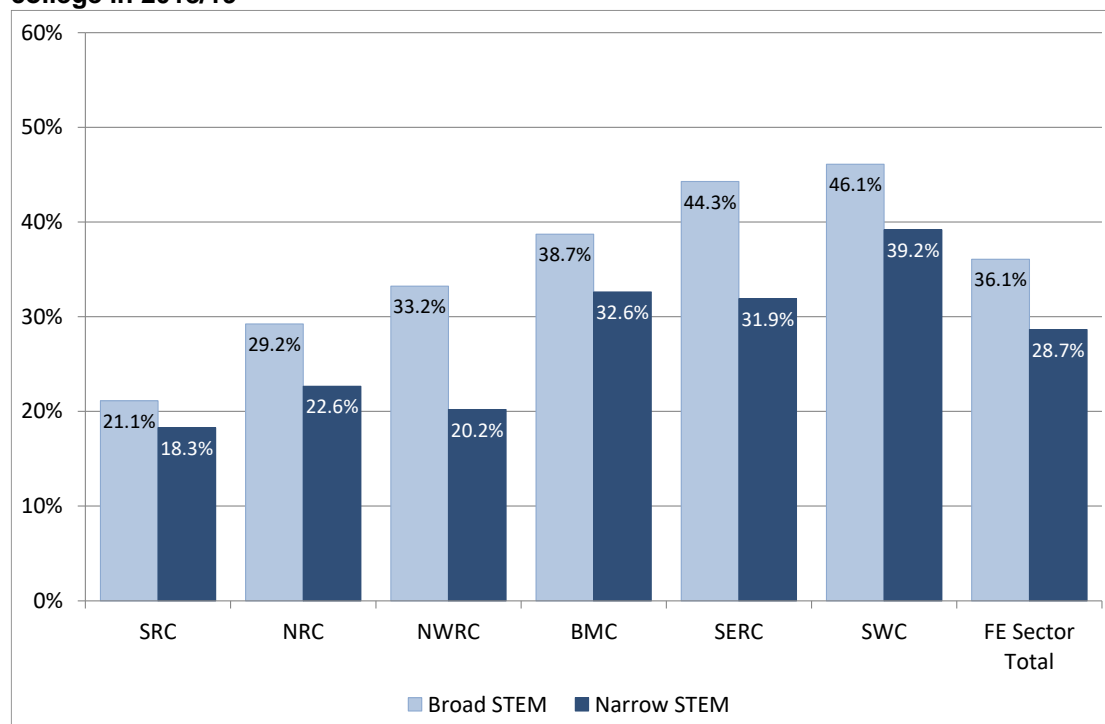
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of: 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects'; 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture'; 'Mathematics and IT'; 'Engineering and Technology; and 'Architecture, Building and Planning'. A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses classed as: 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT'; and 'Engineering and Technology'.

In 2018/19, 'Broad' STEM accounted for 36.1% (3,860) of all HE in FE enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM accounted for 28.7% (3,067). Males accounted for nearly four-fifths of 'Broad' STEM (78.7%) and for over four-fifths of 'Narrow' STEM (83.0%) enrolments (Table A32a and Table A32b).

In comparison with the FE sector, SWC (46.1%), SERC (44.3%) and BMC (38.7%) had higher 'Broad' STEM proportions of HE enrolments in 2018/19. The same three colleges also had above average 'Narrow' STEM proportions: SWC (39.2%); BMC (32.6%); and SERC (31.9%) (Figure 33, Table A32a and Table A32b).

Figure 33: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2018/19



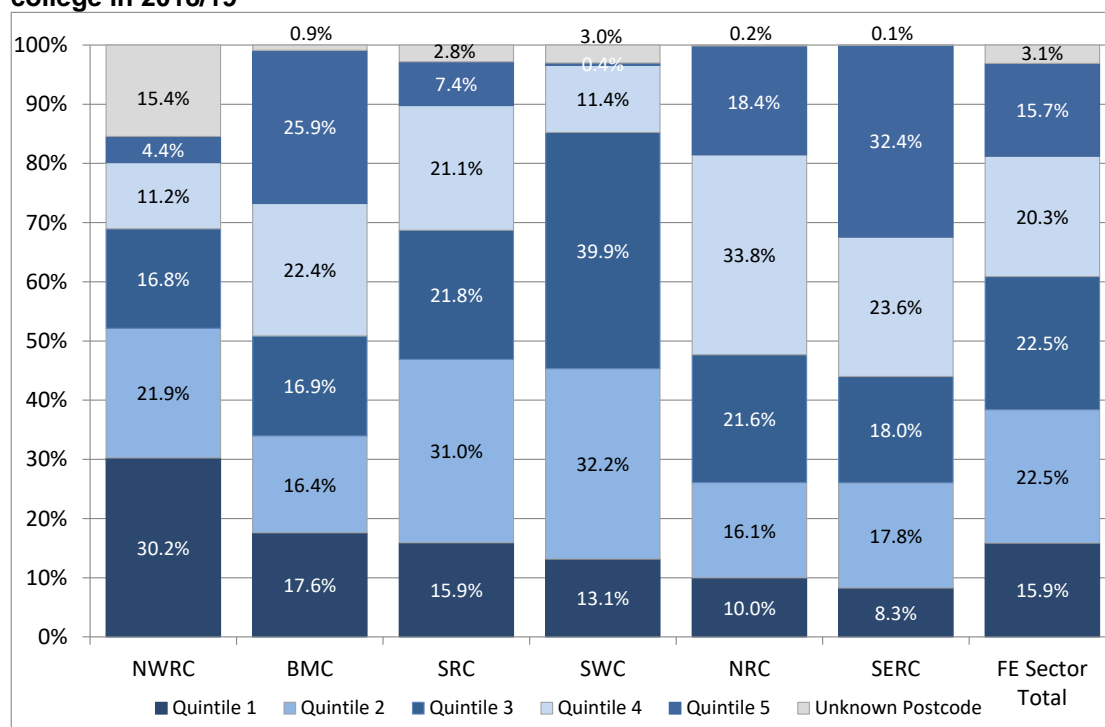
Deprivation

Relative deprivation has been measured on the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises geographical areas across Northern Ireland into five groups, termed 'quintiles', each accounting for 20% of the 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs). Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and Quintile 5 is the least deprived group of areas.

Almost two fifths (38.4%) of 2018/19 HE in FE enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. Almost a sixth (15.9%) of enrolments came from Quintile 1, compared with 15.7% from Quintile 5 (Figure 34, Table A33).

When considering HE in FE enrolments from different deprivation quintiles across the six colleges, there was a lot of regional variation in 2018/19. NWRC had 30.2% of enrolments from Quintile 1, compared with 4.4% from Quintile 5. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, is quite polarised in terms of deprivation levels of its intake, with 43.5% of enrolments being from either the most or least deprived quintile. In contrast, 13.5% of SWC enrolments came from these two quintiles (Figure 34, Table A33).

Figure 34: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by deprivation quintile and FE college in 2018/19



Notably, NWRC had a relatively large proportion of HE in FE enrolments with unknown postcodes (15.4%) in 2018/19. This is mainly due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 192 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 172 were RoI domiciled student enrolments, accounting for 13.8% of HE enrolments in NWRC (1,243). If these RoI enrolments were excluded from the NWRC analysis, the resultant figures would indicate that 35.1% of enrolments were from Quintile 1 and 5.1% were from Quintile 5; and that three-fifths (60.5%) of enrolments were from the two most deprived areas (Table 4 and Table A33).

Table 4: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments with and without RoI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintile in 2018/19

Domicile	Quintile 1- Most Deprived	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 - Least Deprived	Unknown Postcode
Including RoI	30.2%	21.9%	16.8%	11.2%	4.4%	15.4%
Excluding RoI	35.1%	25.4%	19.5%	13.0%	5.1%	1.9%

Section 5: Qualifications and Performance

5.1 - Final year enrolments

A student can enrol on a course that is multiple years in length, but will only have the opportunity to achieve within the final year. Regulated enrolments are those that potentially result in a formal qualification at the end of the study. Consequently, performance analysis is only focused on final year regulated enrolments, for example, regulated enrolments on a one year course, or the second year of a two year course. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further details on the definitions and changes to these in regard to performance analysis.

Trends - 2014/15 to 2018/19

In each year between 2014/15 and 2018/19, over four-fifths of all regulated enrolments were in the final year and as such are included in any performance analysis over this period. The percentage of final year enrolments within all regulated enrolments has decreased from 83.1% in 2014/15 to 81.7% in 2018/19 (Table 5).

In line with regulated enrolments, final year enrolments have decreased (17.1%), from 116,477 in 2014/15 to 96,524 in 2018/19. The number of individuals enrolled in their final year has also fallen, by 18.4%, from 64,162 to 52,359 over the same period (Table 5).

Since 2014/15, final year enrolments have decreased in each of the six FE colleges [BMC (26.9%), SWC (18.7%), SERC (14.3%), SRC (13.1%), NWRC (12.9%) and NRC (11.3%)] (Table 5).

Table 5: Number of final year enrolments by FE college and academic year

FE college	Academic Year				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
BMC	27,629	22,765	23,351	22,246	20,188
NRC	15,581	15,484	14,985	15,103	13,826
NWRC	13,128	12,785	11,336	11,520	11,431
SERC	24,244	23,317	23,386	22,228	20,765
SRC	20,112	19,606	19,607	22,769	17,487
SWC	15,783	15,346	14,428	13,609	12,827
Total Final Year enrolments	116,477	109,303	107,093	107,475	96,524
Total Regulated enrolments	140,137	129,274	128,629	129,054	118,160
Final Year/Regulated (%)	83.1%	84.6%	83.3%	83.3%	81.7%
Total Final Year individuals	64,162	60,907	57,944	55,830	52,359

5.2 – Qualifications

The following section focuses solely on qualifications from final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can fully achieve, partially achieve or fail their qualification. The number of qualifications presented within this section includes both full and partial achievements. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further information on partial and full achievement.

Table 6: Number of achievements in FE colleges by academic year

Achievements	Academic Year				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Partial achievements	5,435	4,637	3,942	4,025	3,310
Total achievements	92,479	88,153	83,015	82,770	74,579
Partial achievement proportion	5.9%	5.3%	4.7%	4.9%	4.4%

As a proportion of all achievements, partial achievements fell from 5.9% in 2014/15 to 4.4% in 2018/19.

Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19

Fewer qualifications were awarded in FE colleges in 2018/19 (74,579) than in 2014/15 (92,479), a fall of 19.4%; this includes a decrease of 8,191 (9.9%) between 2017/18 (82,770) and 2018/19 (74,579) (Table 7).

Decreases have occurred in qualifications awarded in all of the six colleges over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19 [SWC (23.2%), NRC (23.2%), BMC (22.9%), SRC (18.0%), SERC (15.8%) and NWRC (12.2%)] (Table 7).

Table 7: Number of qualifications by FE college and academic year

FE College	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
BMC	20,811	17,766	18,403	17,457	16,051
NRC	12,113	12,022	10,431	10,443	9,304
NWRC	10,291	10,029	8,382	8,687	9,032
SERC	20,176	19,416	19,115	18,151	16,994
SRC	16,626	16,575	15,770	17,910	13,631
SWC	12,462	12,345	10,914	10,122	9,567
FE Sector Total	92,479	88,153	83,015	82,770	74,579

5.3 - Performance

Originally related to a Programme for Government (2011-2015) commitment, FE college performance is measured across three indicators:

- **Retention rate** is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'.
- **Achievement rate** relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study. Please note that, within this publication, achievement rate is presented within the trend analysis and FE College sections below, but, to minimise repetitiveness, not in the remaining sections of the 2018/19 analysis; these figures are available in the accompanying online tables.
- **Success rate** is recognised as the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of final year enrolments.

Trends – 2014/15 to 2018/19

Retention rate

Over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19, the retention rate in FE colleges has increased in net terms, from 89.3% to 89.9%. Compared with 2014/15, this implies that proportionately more people stayed on and completed their course in the most recent year (Figure 35, Table A34).

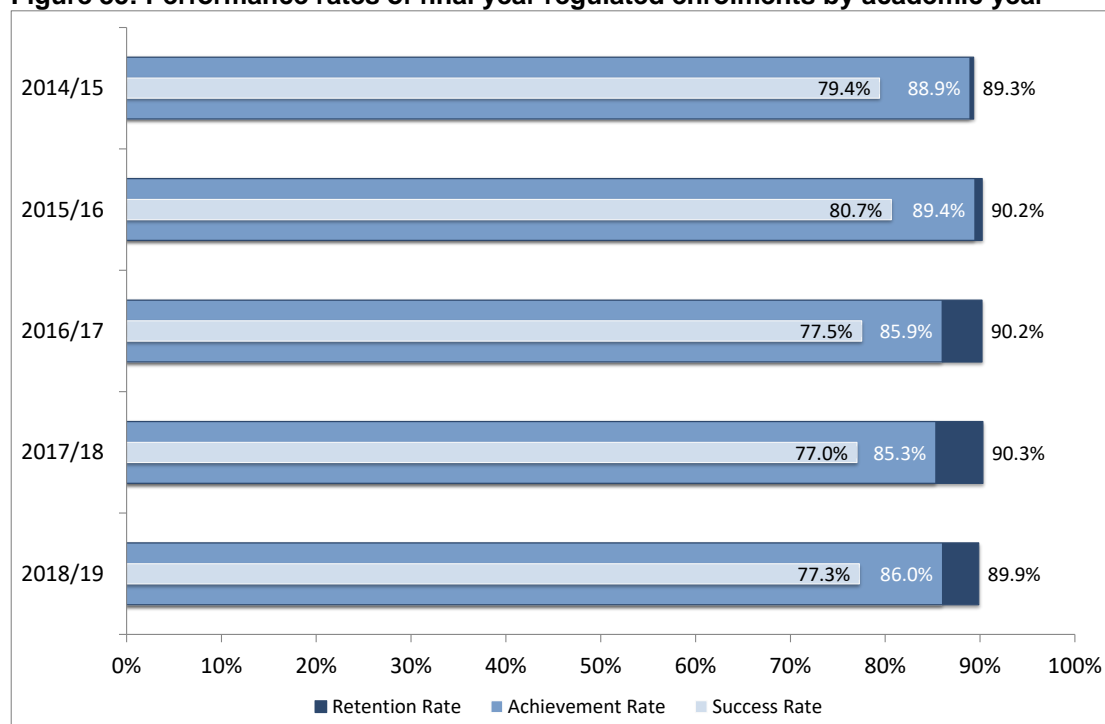
Achievement rate

The achievement rate at FE colleges has fallen by a net 2.9 percentage points, from 88.9% (2014/15) to 86.0% (2018/19). This indicates that, of those who completed their course, proportionately fewer people achieved their qualification in 2018/19 than in 2014/15 (Figure 35, Table A34).

Success rate

The success rate (that is, the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) fell by a net 2.1 percentage points, from 79.4% to 77.3%, over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19 (Figure 35, Table A34).

Figure 35: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by academic year



FE colleges

Retention rate

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, increases in retention rates occurred in NWRC and BMC (5.0 percentage points and 3.2 percentage points respectively), while decreases occurred in the other four colleges, ranging from 0.6 percentage points in SERC to 1.9 percentage points in SRC (Table A34).

Achievement rate

Five of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of a net decrease in achievement rate between 2014/15 and 2018/19. The largest decrease (11.3 percentage points) over this period was in NRC, from 90.6% to 79.3%, while the smallest decrease was in SERC (1.0 percentage points), from 91.3% to 90.3%. BMC's achievement rate improved from 86.2% in 2014/15 to 87.8% in 2018/19 (1.6 percentage points) (Table A34).

Success rate

Success rates in four colleges (NRC, SRC, SWC and SERC) decreased between 2014/15 and 2018/19, with the largest decrease (10.4 percentage points) being in NRC, from 77.7% to 67.3%. Success rates in BMC and NWRC increased by 4.2 percentage points (to 79.5%) and 0.6 percentage points (to 79.0%) respectively (Table A34).

Academic Year 2018/19

Performance by age

Retention rate

In 2018/19, the retention rate for those aged '19 and under' was 89.2%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 90.0%, and for those aged '25 and over' it was 91.2% (Figure 36, Table A35).

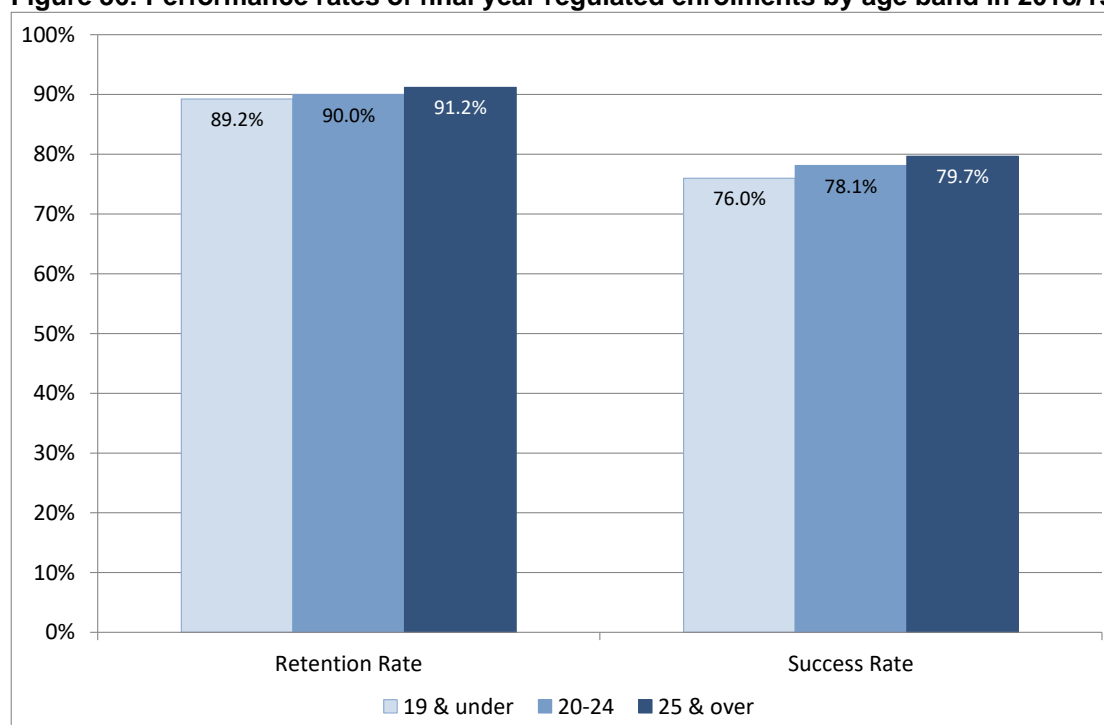
In three of the six colleges (BMC, SWC and NRC), the highest retention rates were in the '20 to 24' age group, at 92.0%, 91.2% and 85.1% respectively. In the other three colleges (NWRC, SERC and SRC), the highest retention rates were in the '25 and over' age group at 94.3%, 92.8% and 91.5% respectively (Table A35).

Success rate

In 2018/19, the success rate for those aged '19 and under' was 76.0%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 78.1%, and for those aged '25 and over' it was 79.7% (Figure 36 , Table A35).

The success rates for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 66.3% in NRC to 81.1% in SERC. For the '20 to 24' age group, they ranged from 65.8% in NRC to 82.6% in BMC, while those for the '25 and over' age group ranged from 71.0% in NRC to 83.4% in SERC (Table A35).

Figure 36: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by age band in 2018/19



Performance by sex

Retention rate

In 2018/19, within the FE sector, males (90.5%) had a slightly higher retention rate than females (89.2%) (Figure 37, Table A36).

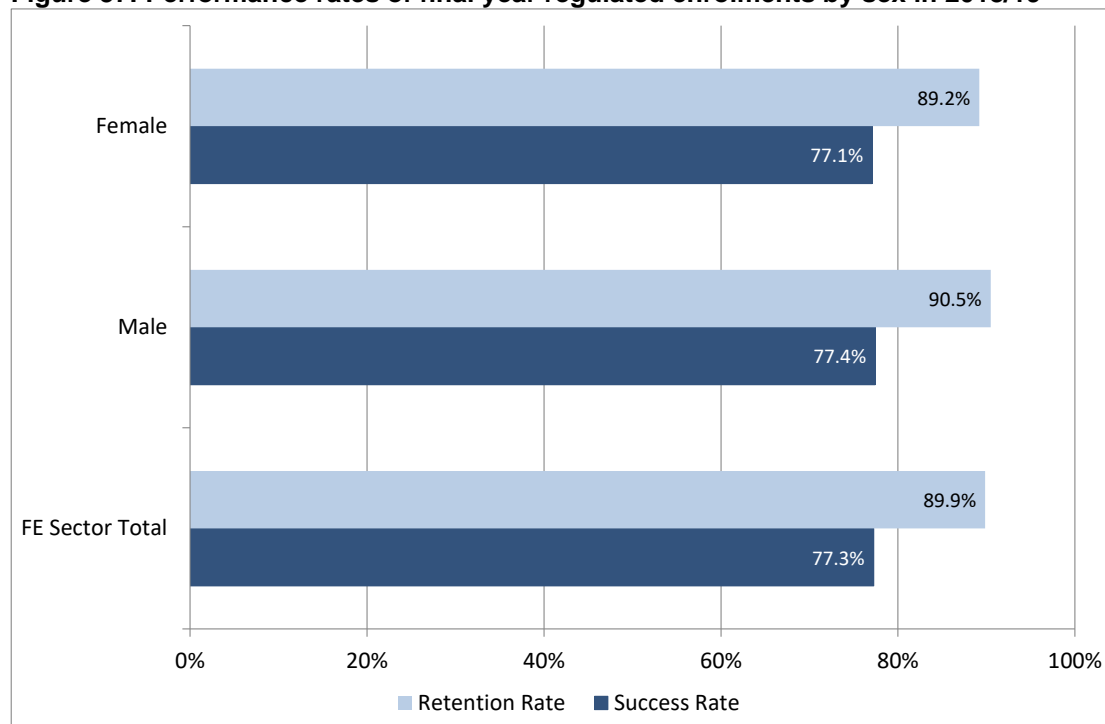
All six colleges followed the FE sector pattern of the male retention rate being higher than the female rate, with the largest difference between males (86.1%) and females (83.3%) being in NRC (Table A36).

Success rate

The FE sector success rates by sex were similar, at 77.4% for males and 77.1% for females (Figure 37, Table A36).

The largest difference in success rates by sex was in NRC, at 69.1% for males and 65.1% for females (Table A36).

Figure 37: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by sex in 2018/19



Performance by mode of attendance

Retention rate

In 2018/19, retention rates for part-time regulated enrolments (90.2%) were higher than those for full-time (88.2%) (Figure 38, Table A37).

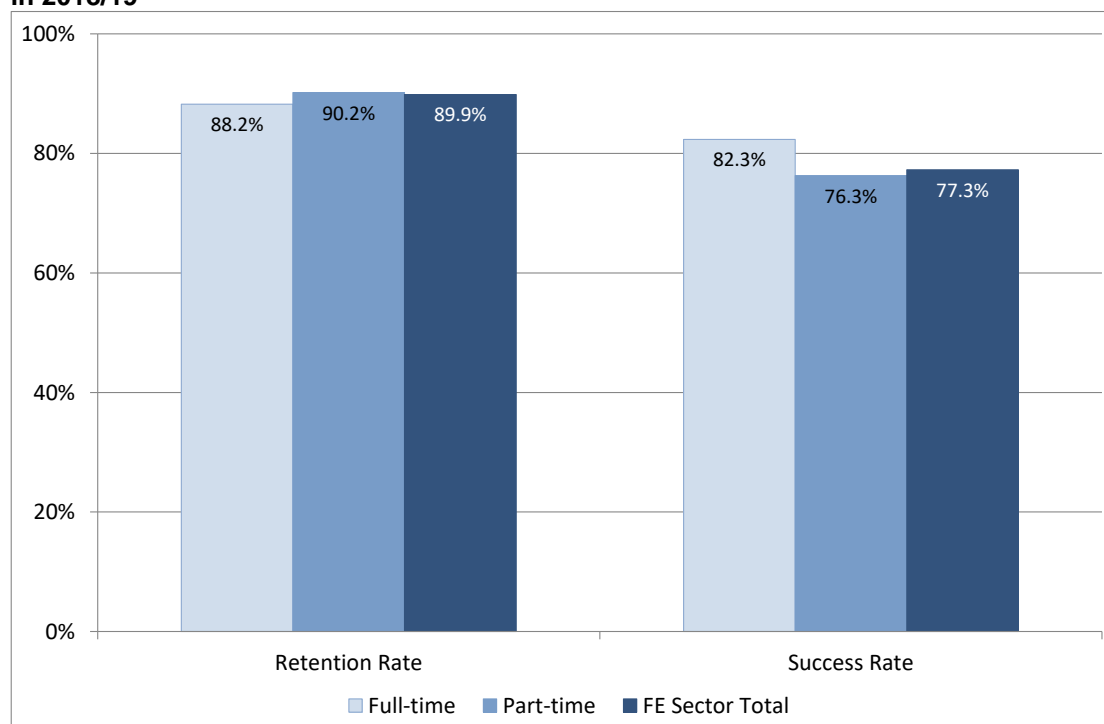
In two colleges (BMC and NRC), the full-time retention rate was greater than the part-time rate in 2018/19. At nearly 8.7 percentage points, NWRC had the biggest difference between part-time (94.1%) and full-time (85.3%) retention rates (Table A37).

Success rate

In 2018/19, success rates for full-time regulated enrolments (82.3%) were higher than those for part-time (76.3%) (Figure 38, Table A37).

In five of the six colleges, the full-time success rate was higher than the part-time rate in 2018/19. However, in NWRC the part-time success rate (79.1%) was greater than the full-time success rate (78.8%). Success rates within part-time provision ranged from 65.5% in NRC to 81.8% in SERC, while those for full-time provision ranged from 75.9% in NRC to 88.5% in BMC. The largest difference in success rates between full-time (88.5%) and part-time (78.0%) provision occurred in BMC (10.5 percentage points) (Table A37).

Figure 38: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2018/19



Performance by provision area

Retention rate

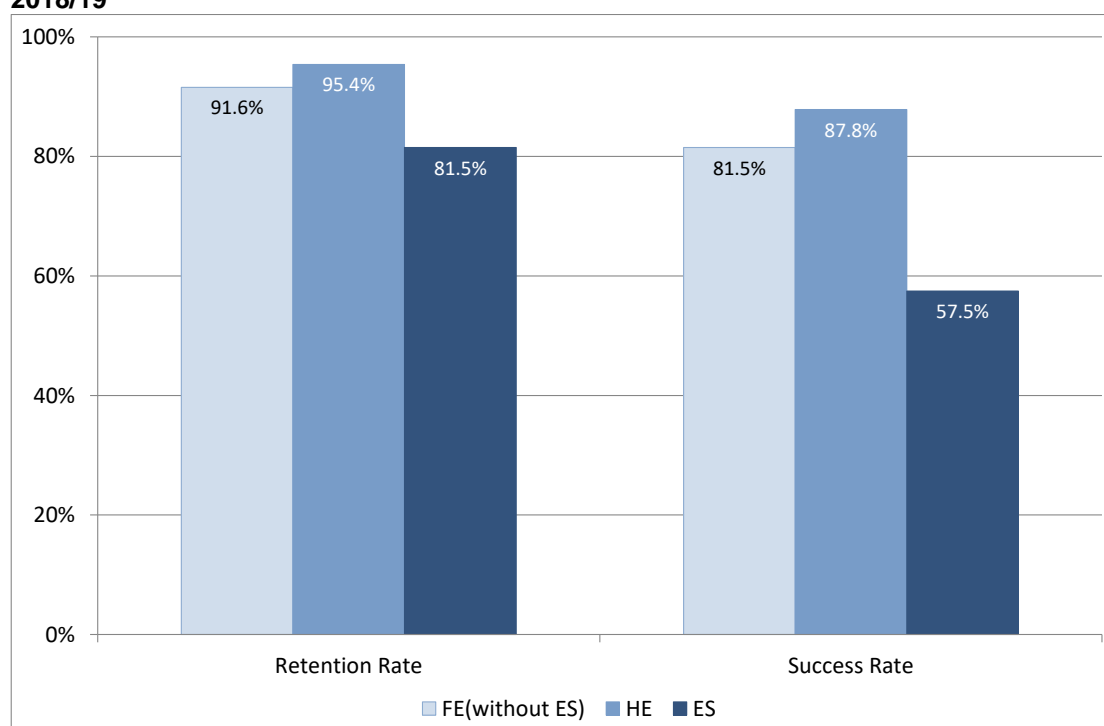
In 2018/19, within the FE colleges, HE students were more likely than Further Education (FE) or Essential Skills (ES) students to complete their courses. The retention rates across the three main provision areas were 95.4% for HE, 91.6% for FE and 81.5% for ES regulated enrolments (Figure 39, Table A38).

The HE provision area had the highest retention rates in all six colleges in 2018/19, ranging from 93.3% in NRC to 96.8% in BMC. Within FE provision, retention rates ranged from 87.3% in NRC to 92.9% in SERC. Retention rates within ES provision ranged from 77.1% in NRC to 86.7% in NWRC (Table A38).

Success rate

Within the FE sector, higher proportions of people stayed on and achieved qualifications within HE than in either FE or ES; the respective success rates in 2018/19 were 87.8% for HE, 81.5% for FE and 57.5% for ES (Figure 39, Table A38).

Figure 39: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by provision area in 2018/19



In 2018/19, success rates within FE provision ranged from 74.5% in NRC to 85.7% in SERC, while those for HE provision ranged from 81.6% in NRC to 92.5% in BMC. Success rates within ES provision ranged from 46.5% in NRC to 69.4% in BMC. In five of the six colleges, the highest success rate was within HE provision. The exception was SRC, where the highest success rate was in FE (84.2%) (Table A38).

Performance by level of study

Retention rate

In 2018/19, the retention rate in FE colleges increased as the level of study increased, ranging from 86.0% at 'Level 1 and Entry' to 95.4% at 'Level 4 and above' (Figure 40, Table A39).

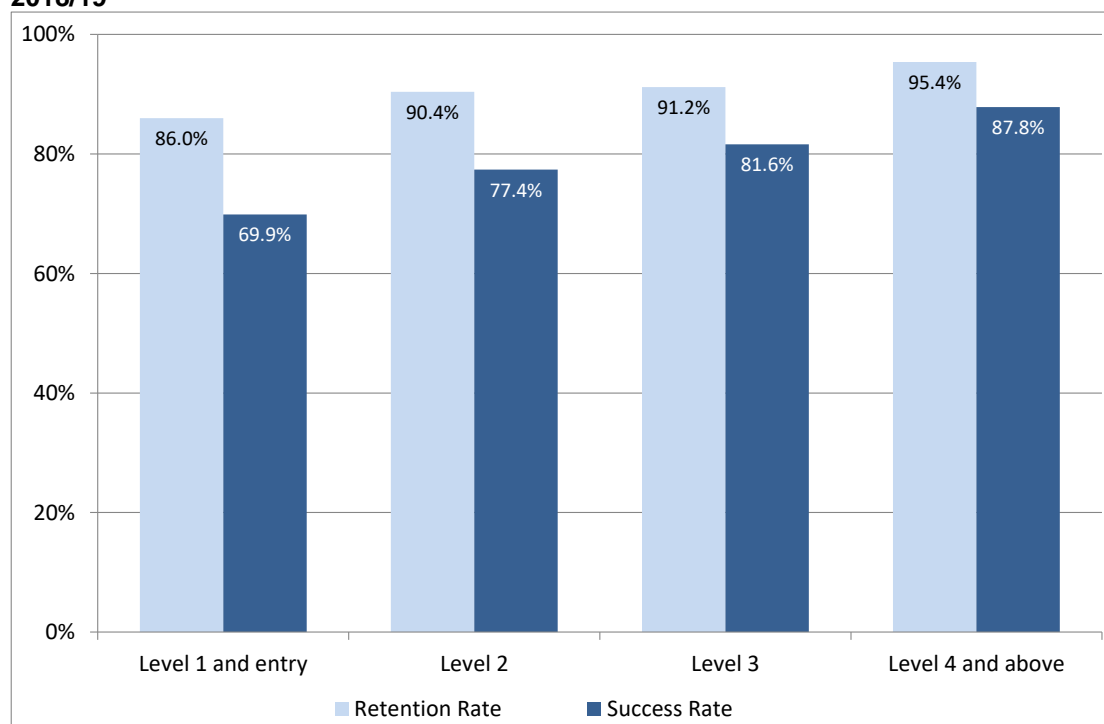
This same pattern of increasing retention rates as the level increased generally occurred across all the colleges in 2018/19. In five of the six colleges, the lowest retention rates were at 'Level 1 and Entry', ranging from 81.7% in NRC to 88.2% in SWC. The lowest retention rate in NWRC was at 'Level 3' (90.3%). In all six colleges, the highest retention rates were at 'Level 4 and above', ranging from 93.3% in NRC to 96.8% in BMC (Table A39).

Success rate

In 2018/19, success rates in FE colleges increased as the level increased, ranging from 69.9% ('Level 1 and Entry') to 87.8% ('Level 4 and above'). Following on from the patterns seen within retention rates, it seems those on higher levels of study are more likely to stay on and achieve in their courses (Figure 40, Table A39).

In five colleges, the lowest success rates in 2018/19 were in 'Level 1 and entry', ranging from 64.1% in NRC to 74.3% in NWRC. In all but one college, the highest success rates were in 'Level 4 and above', with BMC the highest at 92.5%; the exception was SRC, where the highest rate (85.3%) was at 'Level 3' (Table A39).

Figure 40: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by level of study in 2018/19



Performance by subject area

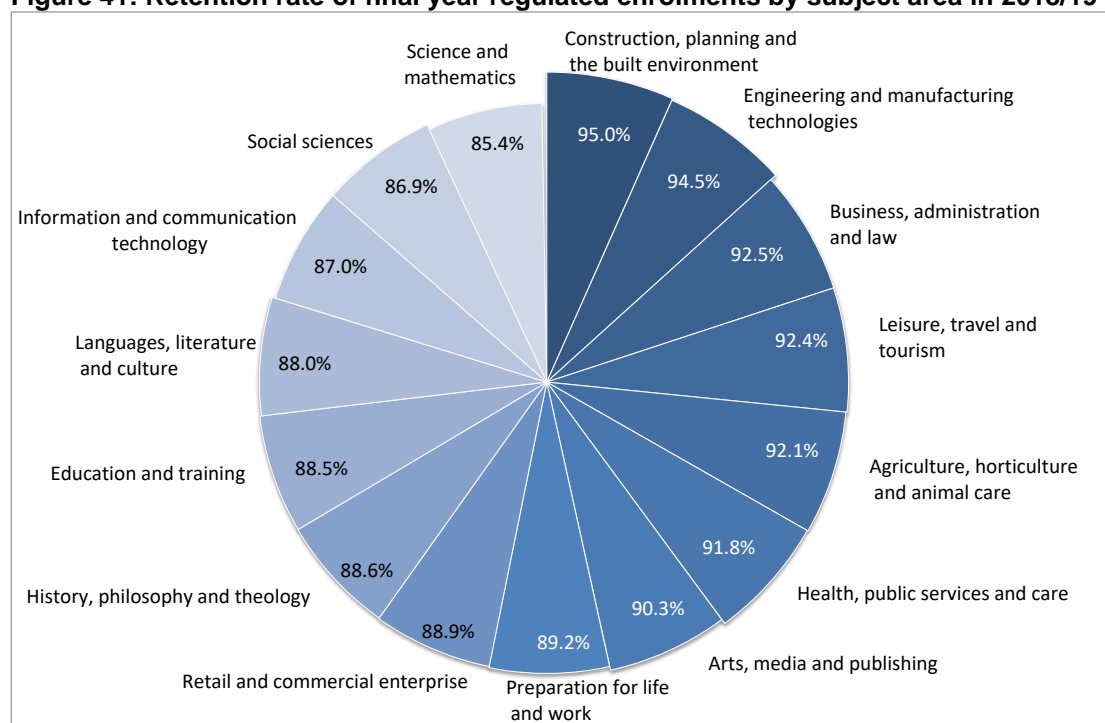
Retention rate

Subject area retention rates ranged from 85.4% in 'Science and Mathematics' to 95.0% in 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' in 2018/19 (Figure 41, Table A40).

In 2018/19, BMC (97.3%), SWC (96.8%) and NRC (94.3%) the highest retention rates were also in 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (Table A40).

Across all colleges, subject area retention rates ranged from 80.4% in 'Education and Training' in NRC to 100.0% in both 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care' and 'Education and Training' at NWRC (Table A40).

Figure 41: Retention rate of final year regulated enrolments by subject area in 2018/19



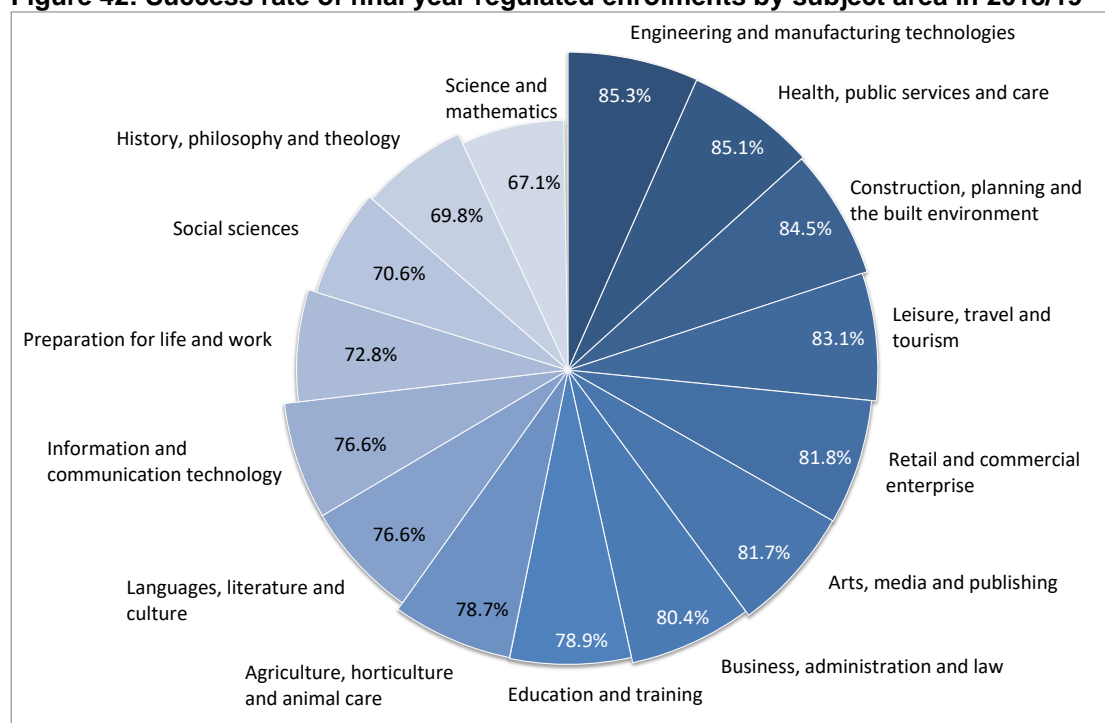
Success rate

In 2018/19, subject area success rates ranged from 67.1% in 'Science and Mathematics' to 85.3% in Engineering and manufacturing technologies (Figure 42, Table A40).

Across all colleges, subject area success rates ranged from 50.8% in 'Science and Mathematics' at SWC to 98.8% in 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care' at NWRC (Table A40).

In BMC (95.6%) and NRC (81.1%) the highest success rates were in the subject area, 'Construction, planning. and the built environment'. In NWRC (98.8%) and SRC (92.5%) the highest success rates were in 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care', whereas this subject had the lowest success rate in SERC (70.1%) (Table A40).

Figure 42: Success rate of final year regulated enrolments by subject area in 2018/19



Performance by STEM

Retention rate

In 2018/19, the FE sector retention rate was higher for 'Broad' STEM (91.7%) than either 'Narrow' STEM (91.0%) or non-STEM (89.2%) (Figure 43, Table A41a and Table A41b).

In comparison with the FE sector average, three colleges [SWC (93.5%), NWRC (93.4%) and SRC (92.6%)] had higher retention rates for 'Broad' STEM in 2018/19. The same three colleges also had above average 'Narrow' STEM retention rates [NWRC (93.0%), SWC (92.6%) and SRC (91.5%)] (Table A41a and Table A41b).

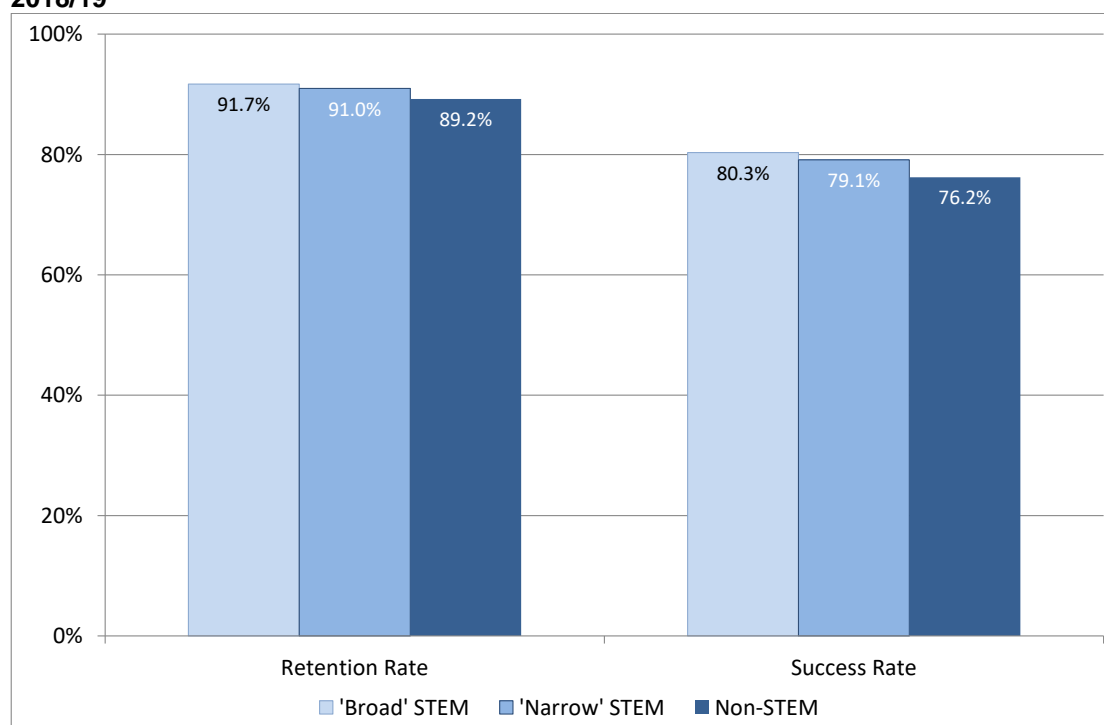
Success rate

The 2018/19 FE sector success rates for 'Broad' STEM (80.3%) and 'Narrow' STEM (79.1%) were higher than that for non-STEM (76.2%) (Figure 43, Table A41a and Table A41b).

For 'Broad' STEM, five colleges had higher success rates than the FE sector average ranging from 80.5% in BMC to 82.6% in NWRC. In NRC, however, the success rate (75.1%) was 5.2 percentage points below the sector average (Table A41a).

In 2018/19, success rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 71.8% in NRC to 81.3% in SRC (Table A41b).

Figure 43: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2018/19



Performance by deprivation quintile

Retention rate

Across the FE sector, 2018/19 retention rates were higher for less deprived areas, ranging from 87.5% for the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1) to 91.8% for the least deprived quintile (Quintile 5) (Figure 44, Table A42).

In four colleges, final year enrolments from Quintile 5 had the highest retention rates in 2018/19, ranging from 87.3% in NRC to 95.8% in SWC. The highest retention rate in SERC (92.7%) related to Quintile 4, while in NWRC, the highest retention rate related to Quintile 3 (95.1%) (Table A42).

In all six colleges, final year enrolments from Quintile 1 had the lowest retention rates in 2018/19, ranging from 79.9% in NRC to 89.5% in NWRC. The range in retention rates for final year enrolments from the five quintiles varied little across the colleges (Table A42).

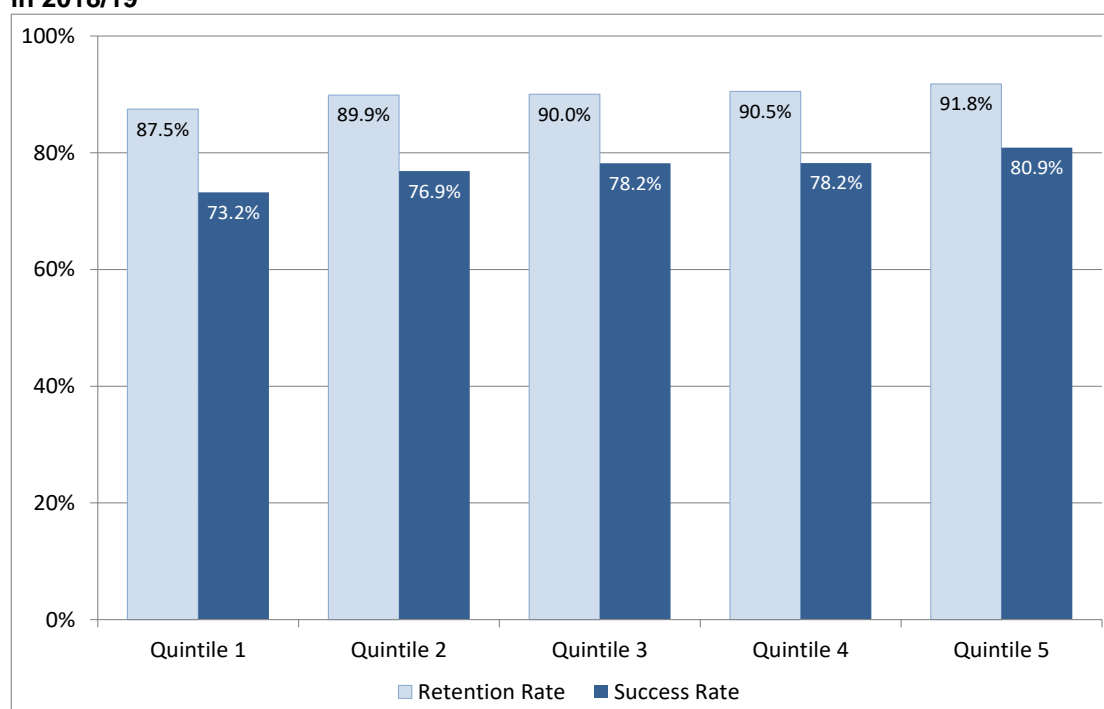
Success rate

In 2018/19, success rates in the FE sector ranged upwards from 73.2% for final year enrolments from Quintile 1 to 80.9% for those from Quintile 5 (Figure 44, Table A42).

In five colleges, final year enrolments from Quintile 5 had the highest success rates in 2018/19, ranging from 69.7% in NRC to 83.9% in SERC. In NWRC the highest success rate was in Quintile 3 (87.7%) (Table A42).

In all six colleges, final year enrolments from Quintile 1 had the lowest success rates in 2018/19, ranging from 61.8% in NRC to 76.6% in SERC (Table A42).

Figure 44: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile in 2018/19



Annex A: Definitions

Academic Year

Each academic year period is defined by each FE college and potentially will differ across all six colleges. An academic year traditionally starts in August and finishes in July the following year.

Achievement rate

Achievement rate relates to the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study.

Achievement rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}$$

Age

Age is at 1st July of the previous academic year, based on the start date of the course.

Deprivation

The analysis presented in the publication utilises 5 groups or quintiles of Super Output Areas (SOAs), based on relative level of deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM). Enrolments are assigned to SOAs using the postcodes provided on enrolment records.

On 23rd November 2017, NIMDM 2017 replaced NIMDM 2010 as the official measure of relative deprivation in Northern Ireland. This provides a mechanism for ranking the 890 SOAs from the most deprived (rank 1) to the least deprived (rank 890). Accordingly, SOAs ranked 1 to 178 form the most deprived group relative to all other SOAs (Quintile 1), while those ranked 713 to 890 form the least deprived group (Quintile 5).

For further details on deprivation measurement in Northern Ireland, please follow this link:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017>

Enrolments

Total enrolments are taken to be the sum of all regulated and non-regulated enrolments within FE colleges during each academic year. The enrolment figures are simply a count of the number of enrolment records within the data return.

Essential Skills

The former Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) launched the [Essential Skills for Living Strategy](#) and action plan in April 2002. The Essential Skills for Living Strategy aims to improve adult literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Northern Ireland. Essential Skills courses, which are funded by DfE (formerly DEL), are free to participants and delivered by accredited tutors working in FE colleges, private training providers and community organisations.

Final year enrolments

A student can enrol on a course that is multiple years in length, but will only have the opportunity to achieve within the final year. Enrolments of students on a one year course or in the second year of a two year course are regarded as final year enrolments.

Final year completers

Enrolments of students in their final year who do not withdraw from their course are regarded as final year completers.

Final year achievements

Enrolments of students in their final year who have completed the course and subsequently achieve are regarded as final year achievements.

Funding streams

Several funding streams are available to FE colleges to deliver provision. These include direct funding from DfE, through a mainstream mechanism or government training programmes, such as Training for Success. Enrolments can also be funded through non-DfE funded provision, such as Entitlement Framework (EF) or Cost Recovery (CR). EF includes Discrete Special Education/Needs. CR can either be public or private.

From 2018/19, government training programmes also include Into Work Training Support, Youth Training (Level 2) and Apprenticeships (Level 3) and Higher Level Apprenticeships.

Further Education College

Please refer to the link below for further detail about FE colleges in Northern Ireland.

[Contextual Information regarding the FE Sector](#)

Individual

The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Student Reference and FE college as the unique identifier) within the specific academic year period. The total number of individuals calculated over the entire time period, therefore, does not equal the summation of all individual academic years. This is due to the fact an individual may be enrolled in a number of academic years.

Level

If the enrolment is regulated, the level is derived from the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). If the enrolment is not part of the RRQ, the level is based on the information entered against the enrolment by the FE college.

Each regulated qualification has a level between entry level and Level 8. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different.

For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, RoI and overseas, please refer to the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>

Mode of Attendance

Mode of attendance identifies enrolments studying full-time or part-time.

For enrolments from 2014/15:

- (a) Full-time enrolments include all enrolments where attendance is:
- i. full-time (for at least 15 hours and at least 7 sessions per week, or for more than 21 hours per week, with no sessional requirement);
- (b) Part-time enrolments include all enrolments where attendance is:
- i. on sandwich courses;
 - ii. on short courses (single self-contained periods of full-time study of under 4 weeks' duration, within one academic year, which do not have to satisfy the hour and session requirement of (a) above).
 - iii. part-time day;
 - iv. block release;
 - v. evening only;
 - vi. open/distance learning; or
 - vii. linked to their attendance at a school on a full-time basis.

Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ)

Access courses and courses included on DfE's PLAQ reside outside those recognised by OFQUAL, but comply with quality criteria specified by the Department. DfE has granted all such qualifications the same status as those qualifications on the OFQUAL register for the purposes of funding and performance measurement.

Provision Area

For the purposes of this analysis, the three Provision Areas are Further Education, Higher Education and Essential Skills:

- Further Education provision is identified by the qualification aim code and level entered. If the code is 500 or higher and the level is 3 or lower, this indicates that the enrolment is Further Education. This excludes Essential Skills provision, which is identified by the codes 960, 961 or 962.
- Higher Education provision is identified by the qualification aim and level entered. If the code is lower than 500 and the level is 4 or higher, this indicates that the enrolment is Higher Education.
- Essential Skills provision is identified by the qualification aim entered. If the code is 960, 961 or 962, this indicates that the enrolment is Essential Skills. Only Essential Skills enrolments in FE colleges are included in this analysis. For further details on all Essential Skills enrolments, please refer to the Essential Skills publications at:
- <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/essential-skills-enrolments-and-outcomes>

Qualifications

Qualifications are counted for those final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can fully achieve, partially achieve or fail their qualification.

The underlying principle is that full achievement and partial achievement should be measured against the programme of study on which a student is enrolled, for example, what is agreed in the learner's Individual Learning Programme. Therefore, full and partial achievements are defined as:

- Full achievement will be recorded when those enrolling on a full qualification achieve that qualification, and when those enrolling on a part/unit of a qualification achieve that part/unit.
- Partial achievement should be recorded when the qualification for which a student has enrolled has not been achieved in full and either: (a) a student achieves a certified component of the intended qualification, for example, a Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Award instead of a QCF Certificate, or a QCF Certificate instead of a QCF Diploma; or (b) a student does not achieve a certified component of the intended qualification, but still achieves 50% or more of the intended qualification, for example, 50% or more of the QCF units. It should be noted that 50% or more of QCF qualifications is based on units achieved and not on credits; even though credits would be a more accurate measure of achievement, credit information is not readily available to colleges from the examination results provided by awarding organisations.

Regulated

From academic year 2013/14, only those courses on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or DfE's Prescribed List of Approved Non NQF/QCF Qualification (PLAQ) list (for Level 3 and below), or are Higher Education (HE) in FE courses (Level 4 and above), will be deemed as 'regulated' by the Department. Anything that falls outside this definition is not considered as 'regulated', regardless of whether it is considered to produce 'outcomes', for example, internal college certification.

The term 'regulated' is comparable with the previous figures for Professional and Technical used in publications covering years prior to 2013/14.

As students can be enrolled in multiple courses, the same individual can have enrolments in regulated and non-regulated courses within the one academic year.

Retention rate

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'. This may inflate the retention rate from 2012/13 onwards in comparison with earlier academic years.

The number of non-withdrawals includes any enrolments that have not been classified as a withdrawal, namely those options within Course Status - 'Continuing', 'Completed' or the status is unknown.

Retention rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}}$$

Sector Subject Area

The Sector Subject Area (SSA) code is derived from the OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications, which is based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. The SSAs were developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Department for Education and Skills (Wales), along with other key educational bodies according to industry sector and academic subject area. They aim to allow more consistent reporting of data across the UK.

Further information on SSAs is available at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.ofqual.gov.uk/research-and-statistics/statistics/429-sector-subject-area-classification-system-ssac>

STEM

STEM provision is identified by the subject code entered by the FE college. If the subject code starts with a letter between A and K (that is, Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology; and Architecture, Building and Planning), it is regarded as 'Broad' STEM. 'Narrow' STEM comprises those enrolment records with a subject code starting with a letter C, F, G, H or J (that is, Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT; and Engineering and Technology).

Success rate

Success rate is recognised as the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of final year enrolments.

Success rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of Final Year Enrolments}}$$

OR

Retention rate x Achievement rate

Annex B: Technical Notes

1. The information presented in this statistical bulletin has been derived from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR), which is provided by FE colleges.
2. Extensive work has been carried out to develop the CDR, which brings together into a single dataset the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely Mainstream, Further Education Statistical Return (FESR), Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and Further Education Leavers' Survey (FELS).
3. The CDR came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.
4. Substantial benefits have been realised from collating all the data requirements of the Department into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, while increasing the consistency of analysis across all FE college data. Data quality is also enhanced with data being generated at the same point in time and a substantial number of validations employed on the data through the CDR process.
5. The number of enrolments is simply a count of the number of enrolment records within the relevant data return.
6. The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Student Reference and FE college as the unique identifier) within the specific academic year period.
7. The enrolment information is correct as at 11th October 2019.
8. The SLDD field indicates if a student has any Special Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities and requires special teaching instruction, for example, taught in a reduced class number. Students who indicate a learning need on their enrolment form are assessed accordingly by learning support through the student's FE college. For this analysis, a student has been identified, using the SLDD field within the Mainstream return, as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities if the codes '02' (Mainstream - Do require extra support) or '03' (Discrete) are recorded by the FE college. This group of students is funded through the Additional Support Fund (ASF), which is provided to facilitate SLDD students to attend college.
9. A student can also be registered as '04' (Day Centre). This provision is delivered outside of FE college campuses. As there are no overheads or adjustments to be made to those registered as '04' (Day Centre), these are not included as part of the ASF and, therefore, excluded from this analysis. Further information is available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/participation-by-and-provision-students-learning-difficulties-and-disabilities-sldd>

10. A student can enrol on a course for a matter of weeks (sometimes months) and then transfer to another course. Due to the original course incurring teaching hours and funding, it is included within the overall enrolment count. It is, therefore, a measurable component of enrolment activity actually delivered. The recording of transfers is also important due to particular interest in transferred students and linking this to careers guidance.
11. In terms of outcome, the original enrolment recorded as a transfer will not have any outcome recorded against it and, therefore, the transferred enrolment cannot be measured in terms of performance. Consequently, any enrolments recorded as transfers are excluded from performance analysis and are not included in final year enrolment counts.
12. Full-time provision consists of either: at least 15 hours and at least 7 sessions per week; or more than 21 hours per week, with no sessional requirement. All other mode of attendance options are regarded as part-time.
13. Regulated enrolments' relate to courses at 'Level 3 or below' that appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), which contains qualifications on both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework or part of the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ)/Access list) and Higher Education qualifications ('Level 4 and above').

Non-regulated enrolments are those that potentially lead to a formal qualification (at 'Level 3 or below'), but do not appear on the RRQ, or where a qualification is not expected, typically hobby and leisure or recreational courses.
14. For all enrolments, the Sector Subject Area (SSA) categorisation was revised during 2013/14. Derived from the RRQ, the SSA code registered against each qualification or unit code has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. Prior to this, it was derived from the subject code entered by the FE college.
15. Equality related data, such as political opinion, religious belief and sexual orientation, were introduced to the data capture process within FE colleges in 2013/14. Due mainly to an ongoing large number of 'rather not say' responses, statistics on political opinion are no longer included in the supplementary tables.
16. Since 2013/14, additional dependant categories (older people, disability, no care required) have been added to the data collection process. In previous academic years, only dependant adults and children were recorded (Table S2).
17. Although typically individuals will attend their local college, an individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland. 'Hypothetical Regional College Catchment Areas' (HRCCAs) have been created for each of the six colleges to provide information, beyond enrolment data, on all

individuals within the catchment area to each college, who may or may not be in contact with the FE college.

18. The HRCCAs were established by merging certain pre-2014 Local Government District (LGD) areas together based on enrolments over a five academic year period. The FE college with the highest percentage of enrolments from a particular LGD was assigned that LGD.
19. The 2018 mid-year population estimates have been examined in terms of the age and sex profile to compare against the profiles within the enrolments of each FE college.
20. Further information on the mid-year population estimates, please visit: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>

Further Enquiries

Further details about any of the statistics in this statistical bulletin can be obtained from:

Allan Matthews
Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)
Department for the Economy
Adelaide House
39/49 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8FD

Telephone: 028 9025 7727
E-mail: allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk

Media enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office:

Department for the Economy
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
BELFAST
BT4 2JP

Telephone: 028 9052 9604
Email: pressoffice@economy-ni.gov.uk

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