

Further Education Sector Activity in Northern Ireland by Local Government District: 2015/16 to 2019/20



This statistical fact sheet presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector covering academic years 2015/16 to 2019/20.

Further Education Sector Activity in Northern Ireland by Local Government District: 2015/16 to 2019/20

The analysis covers all enrolments, regulated enrolments, Higher Education enrolments as well as qualifications and performance (retention, achievement and success rates) in the FE Sector by Local Government District.

The figures in this statistical fact sheet are based on 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. This is the third edition of this fact sheet and it is released annually. As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication.

This fact sheet is designed to complement our main Further Education Sector Activity bulletin, which is available on the DfE web page:

[Further Education Sector Activity in FE Colleges in Northern Ireland 2019/20](#)

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Detailed Additional Tables covering 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 and performance (retention, achievement and success rates) are available on the DfE web page:

[Further Education Sector Activity in Northern Ireland by Local Government District: 2015/16 to 2019/20](#)

Table 1: All enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District and FE College in 2019/20

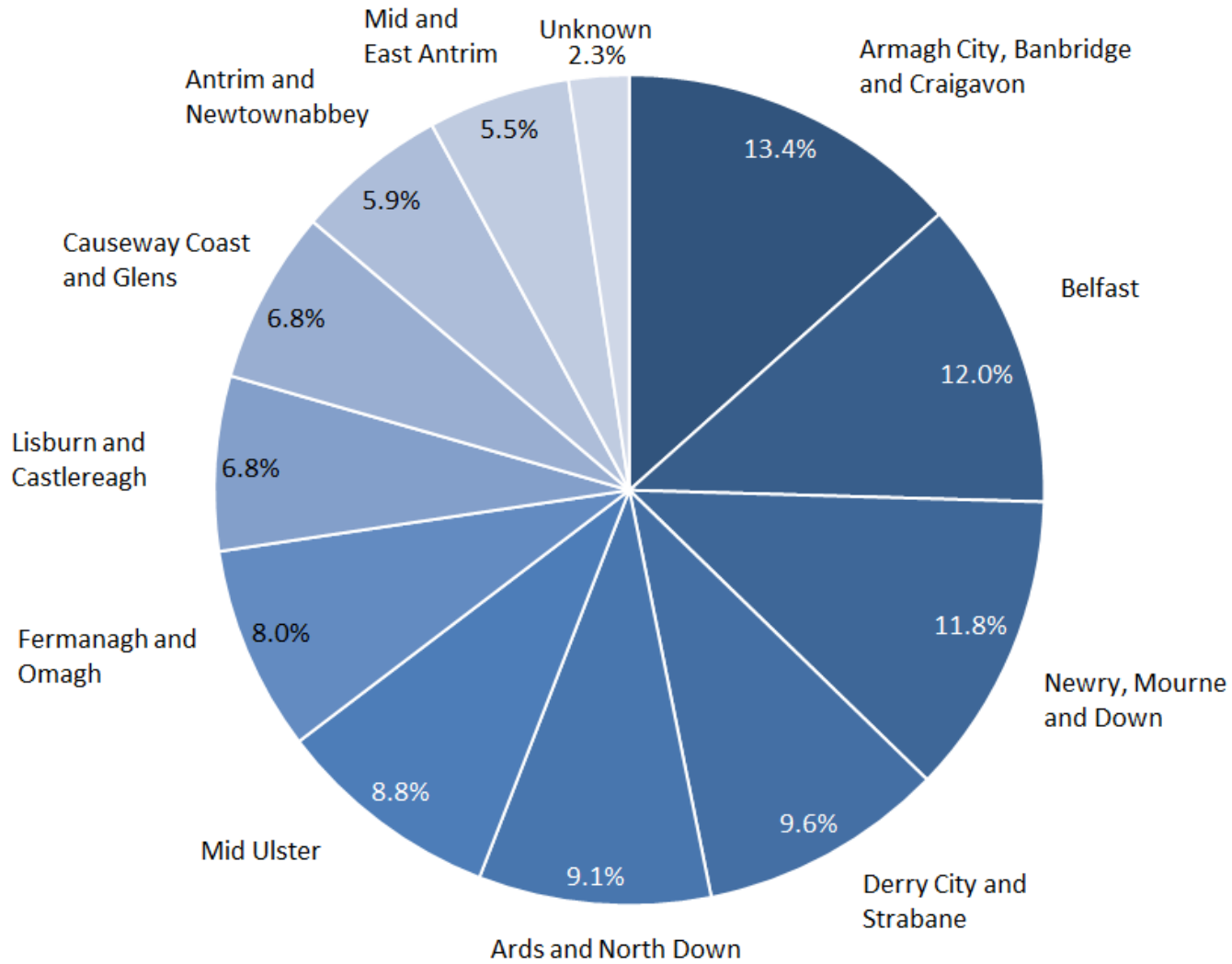
Local Government District	FE College						Total
	Belfast Metropolitan	Northern Regional	North West Regional	South Eastern Regional	Southern Regional	South West	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	2,623	4,389	18	707	49	33	7,819
Ards and North Down	1,731	55	0	10,155	35	5	11,981
Armagh City, Banbridge and	1,168	72	10	1,835	14,032	647	17,764
Belfast	12,781	633	46	2,320	114	24	15,918
Causeway Coast and Glens	317	4,677	3,783	102	21	38	8,938
Derry City and Strabane	149	58	9,485	53	20	2,894	12,659
Fermanagh and Omagh	189	18	121	61	46	10,132	10,567
Lisburn and Castlereagh	2,762	66	30	5,760	348	35	9,001
Mid and East Antrim	1,359	5,595	65	245	30	47	7,341
Mid Ulster	489	2,999	132	133	498	7,361	11,612
Newry, Mourne and Down	973	30	9	5,499	8,832	303	15,646
Unknown*	159	31	1,903	148	307	560	3,108
FE Sector Total	24,700	18,623	15,602	27,018	24,332	22,079	132,354

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled student enrolments (72.4%, 2,249).

- In 2019/20, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon LGD had the highest proportion of the 132,354 enrolments, accounting for 13.4% (17,764), and Mid and East Antrim the lowest, with 5.5% (7,341).
- In all eleven LGDs, over half of student enrolments were at one particular college. However, this ranged from Causeway Coast and Glens, where 52.3% of student enrolments were at Northern Regional College, to Fermanagh and Omagh, where 95.9% of student enrolments were at South West College.
- Around a third of enrolments from students residing in either Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD or Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD were at Belfast Metropolitan College (33.5% and 30.7% respectively).
- Notably, in North West Regional College, a relatively large number of enrolments did not have an associated postcode (1,903), accounted for mainly by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled students (84.6%, 1,609).

Figure 1: Proportion of all enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District in 2019/20



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Table 2: All enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)

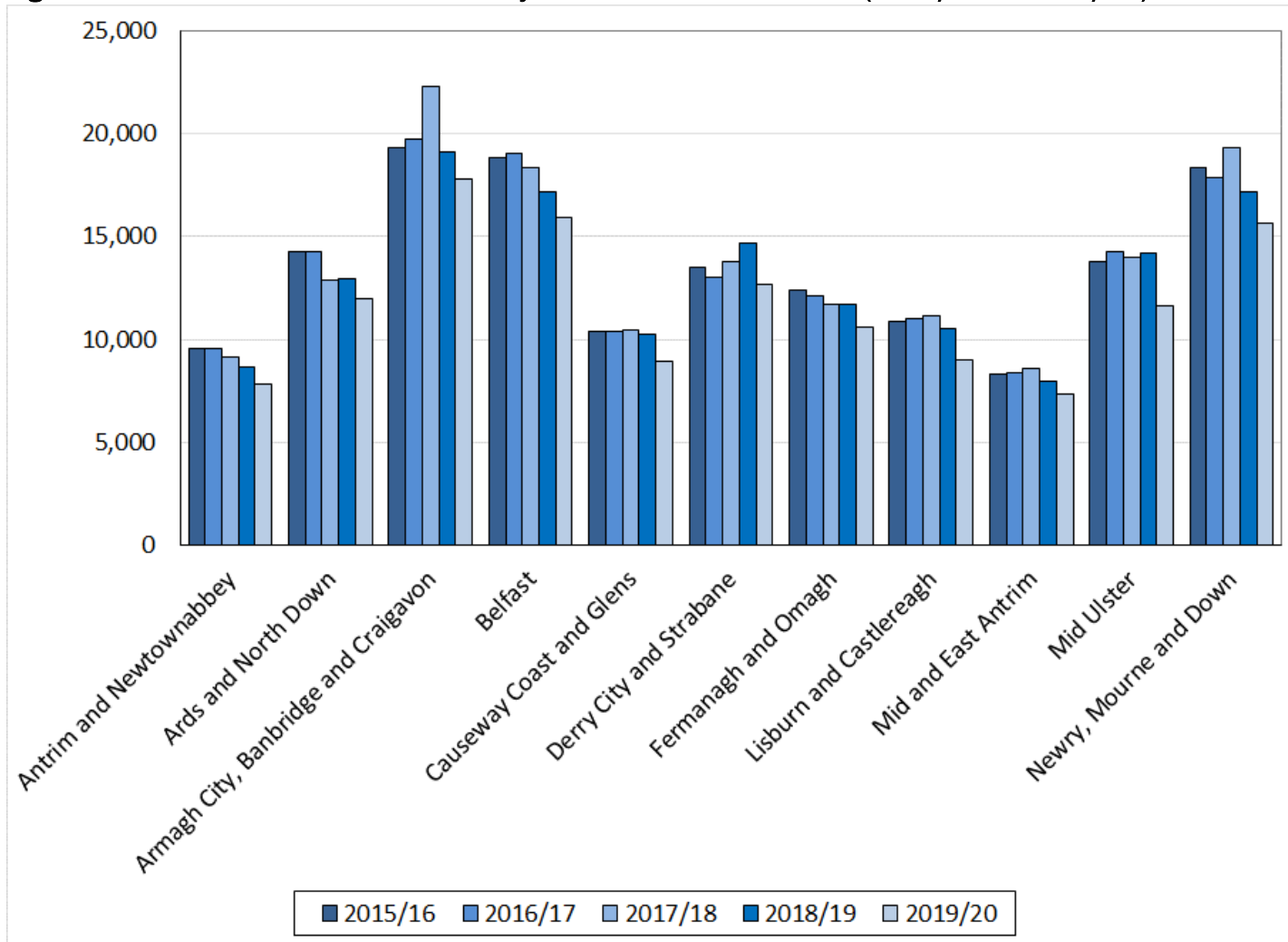
Local Government District	Academic Year				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Antrim and Newtownabbey	9,524	9,586	9,131	8,679	7,819
Ards and North Down	14,267	14,262	12,890	12,949	11,981
Armagh City, Banbridge and	19,314	19,721	22,262	19,084	17,764
Belfast	18,812	18,998	18,369	17,145	15,918
Causeway Coast and Glens	10,374	10,361	10,450	10,270	8,938
Derry City and Strabane	13,528	13,012	13,797	14,705	12,659
Fermanagh and Omagh	12,357	12,094	11,725	11,666	10,567
Lisburn and Castlereagh	10,902	11,011	11,112	10,493	9,001
Mid and East Antrim	8,294	8,404	8,599	7,975	7,341
Mid Ulster	13,761	14,238	13,971	14,176	11,612
Newry, Mourne and Down	18,349	17,853	19,312	17,158	15,646
Unknown*	4,335	3,548	3,892	3,702	3,108
FE Sector Total	153,817	153,088	155,510	148,002	132,354

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled student enrolments. (Over the five year period, this ranged from 70.6% in 2017/18 to 80.7% in 2018/19.)

- FE College enrolments have decreased by a net 14.0%, from 153,817 in 2015/16 to 132,354 in 2019/20; this includes a 10.6% fall on 2018/19 (148,002), linked partly to COVID-19. Medium-term factors include fewer part-time enrolments, improved school exam performance and a 'demographic dip' in 16-19-year-olds.
- Since 2015/16, enrolments have decreased in net terms in each of the 11 Local Government Districts.
- The largest net percentage decrease has been in Antrim and Newtownabbey (17.9%), from 9,524 in 2015/16 to 7,819 in 2019/20, while the smallest has been in Derry City and Strabane (6.4%), from 13,528 to 12,659.

Figure 2: All enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Please note approximately 3% of all enrolments have unknown postcodes, which are not labelled in the chart but included in Table 2.

Table 3: Regulated enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)

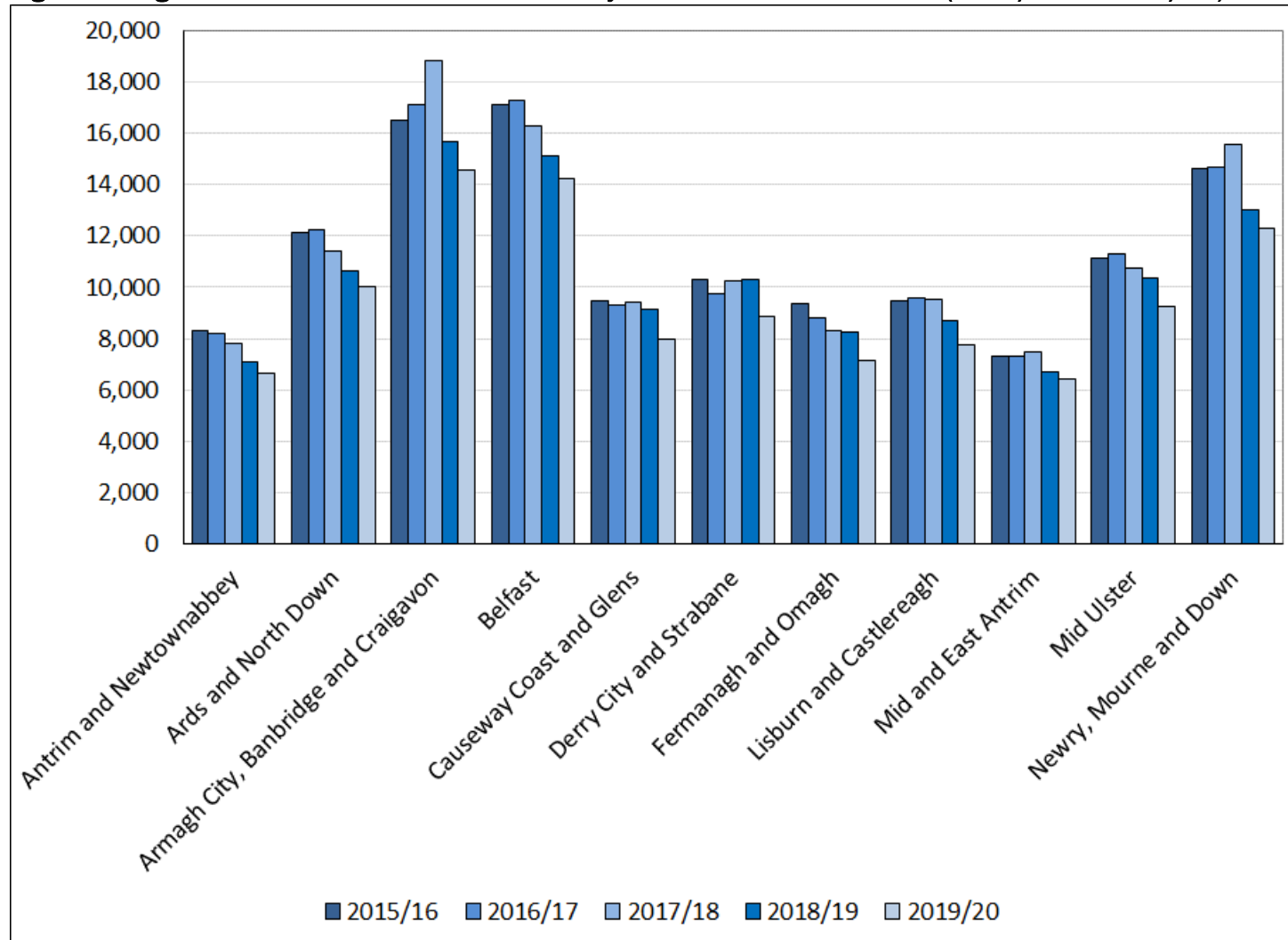
Local Government District	Academic Year				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Antrim and Newtownabbey	8,288	8,222	7,813	7,085	6,647
Ards and North Down	12,134	12,210	11,407	10,624	10,017
Armagh City, Banbridge and	16,494	17,101	18,841	15,639	14,550
Belfast	17,089	17,258	16,256	15,126	14,245
Causeway Coast and Glens	9,454	9,327	9,429	9,137	7,982
Derry City and Strabane	10,277	9,728	10,229	10,286	8,887
Fermanagh and Omagh	9,376	8,829	8,314	8,251	7,150
Lisburn and Castlereagh	9,464	9,608	9,538	8,700	7,745
Mid and East Antrim	7,315	7,327	7,454	6,721	6,421
Mid Ulster	11,140	11,296	10,760	10,363	9,267
Newry, Mourne and Down	14,606	14,665	15,577	13,030	12,289
Unknown*	3,637	3,058	3,436	3,198	2,560
FE Sector Total	129,274	128,629	129,054	118,160	107,760

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled student enrolments. (Over the five year period, this ranged from 70.2% in 2017/18 to 82.3% in 2018/19.)

- Regulated enrolments at FE Colleges decreased by a net 16.6% between 2015/16 (129,274) and 2019/20 (107,760).
- Since 2015/16, regulated enrolments have decreased in net terms in each of the 11 Local Government Districts.
- The largest net percentage decrease has been in Fermanagh and Omagh (23.7%), from 9,376 in 2015/16 to 7,150 in 2019/20.
- The smallest net percentage decrease has been in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (11.8%), from 16,494 in 2015/16 to 14,550 in 2019/20.

Figure 3: Regulated enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Please note approximately 3% of regulated enrolments have unknown postcodes, which are not labelled in the chart but included in Table 3.

Table 4: Higher Education enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)

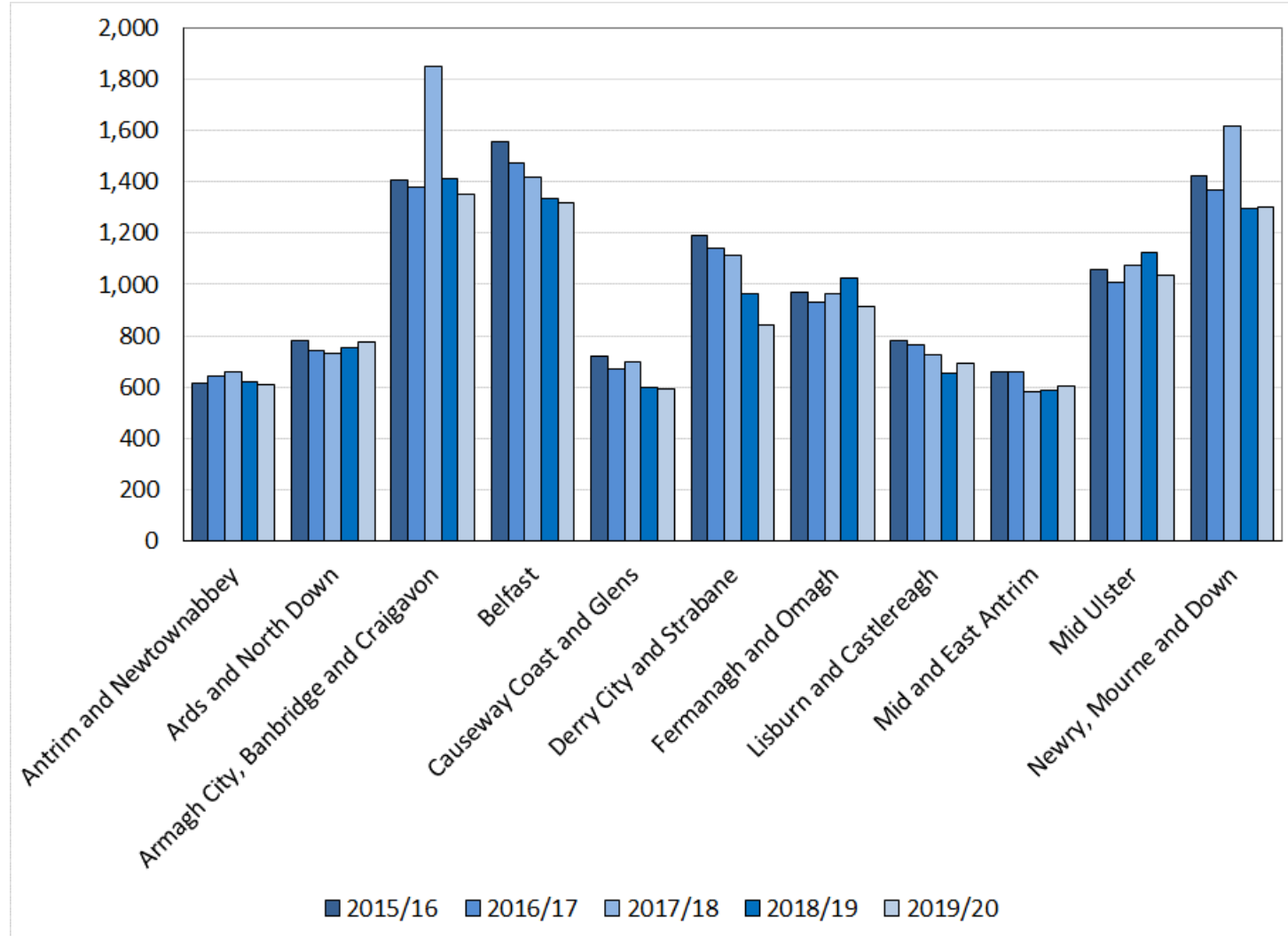
Local Government District	Academic Year				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Antrim and Newtownabbey	614	643	658	623	609
Ards and North Down	779	744	734	752	777
Armagh City, Banbridge and	1,405	1,377	1,849	1,412	1,350
Belfast	1,556	1,475	1,417	1,333	1,319
Causeway Coast and Glens	723	672	699	598	595
Derry City and Strabane	1,190	1,138	1,115	963	841
Fermanagh and Omagh	970	932	966	1,026	913
Lisburn and Castlereagh	782	764	726	654	691
Mid and East Antrim	662	662	583	590	603
Mid Ulster	1,056	1,008	1,075	1,124	1,033
Newry, Mourne and Down	1,422	1,365	1,615	1,296	1,301
Unknown*	472	395	411	333	291
FE Sector Total	11,631	11,175	11,848	10,704	10,323

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled student enrolments. (Over the five year period, this ranged from 72.2% in 2016/17 to 82.9% in 2018/19.)

- Higher Education enrolments at FE Colleges decreased by a net 11.2% between 2015/16 (11,631) and 2019/20 (10,323).
- Since 2015/16, Higher Education enrolments have decreased in net terms in each of the eleven LGDs.
- The largest net percentage decrease has been in Derry City and Strabane (29.3%), from 1,190 in 2015/16 to 841 in 2019/20.
- The smallest net percentage decrease has been in Ards and North Down (0.3%), from 779 in 2015/16 to 777 in 2019/20.

Figure 4: Higher Education enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Please note approximately 3% of Higher Education enrolments have unknown postcodes, which are not labelled in the chart but included in Table 4.

Table 5: Number of qualifications achieved in the FE Sector by Local Government District and FE College in 2019/20

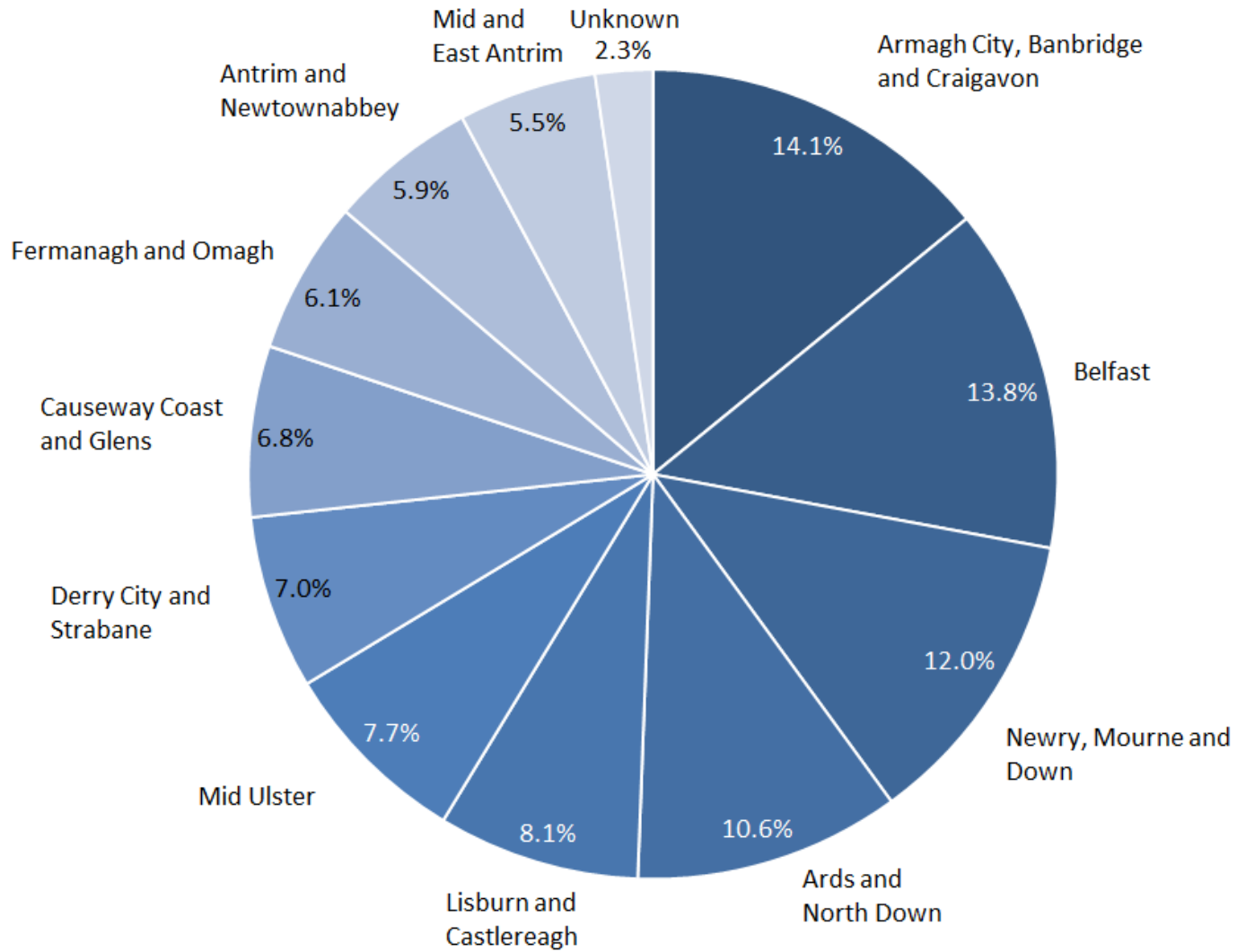
Local Government District	FE College						Total
	Belfast Metropolitan	Northern Regional	North West Regional	South Eastern Regional	Southern Regional	South West	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	1,583	1,879	9	393	16	6	3,886
Ards and North Down	1,072	13	0	5,871	19	5	6,980
Armagh City, Banbridge and	666	18	7	1,149	7,226	202	9,268
Belfast	7,496	204	4	1,284	69	11	9,068
Causeway Coast and Glens	166	2,338	1,904	56	7	11	4,482
Derry City and Strabane	64	15	3,617	32	2	839	4,569
Fermanagh and Omagh	87	3	59	35	16	3,822	4,022
Lisburn and Castlereagh	1,691	16	7	3,396	178	13	5,301
Mid and East Antrim	855	2,585	23	143	11	11	3,628
Mid Ulster	302	1,125	74	83	251	3,198	5,033
Newry, Mourne and Down	575	10	2	2,836	4,473	15	7,911
Unknown*	86	13	953	51	144	264	1,511
FE Sector Total	14,643	8,219	6,659	15,329	12,412	8,397	65,659

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by qualifications gained by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled students (75.4%, 1,139).

- In 2019/20, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon had the highest proportion of the 65,659 qualifications achieved, accounting for 14.1% (9,268), and Mid and East Antrim the lowest, with 5.5% (3,628).
- In ten of the eleven LGDs, over half of student qualifications achieved were at one particular college, with the largest concentration being in Fermanagh and Omagh where 95.0% of qualifications were at South West College. However, in Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD, 48.4% of qualifications were at Northern Regional College.
- Many qualifications achieved by students residing in either Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD or Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD were undertaken at Belfast Metropolitan College (40.7% and 31.9% respectively).
- Notably, in North West Regional College, a relatively large number of qualifications awarded did not have an associated postcode (953), accounted for mainly by those gained by RoI domiciled students (86.0%, 820).

Figure 5: Proportion of qualifications achieved in the FE Sector by Local Government District in 2019/20



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Table 6: Number of qualifications achieved in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)

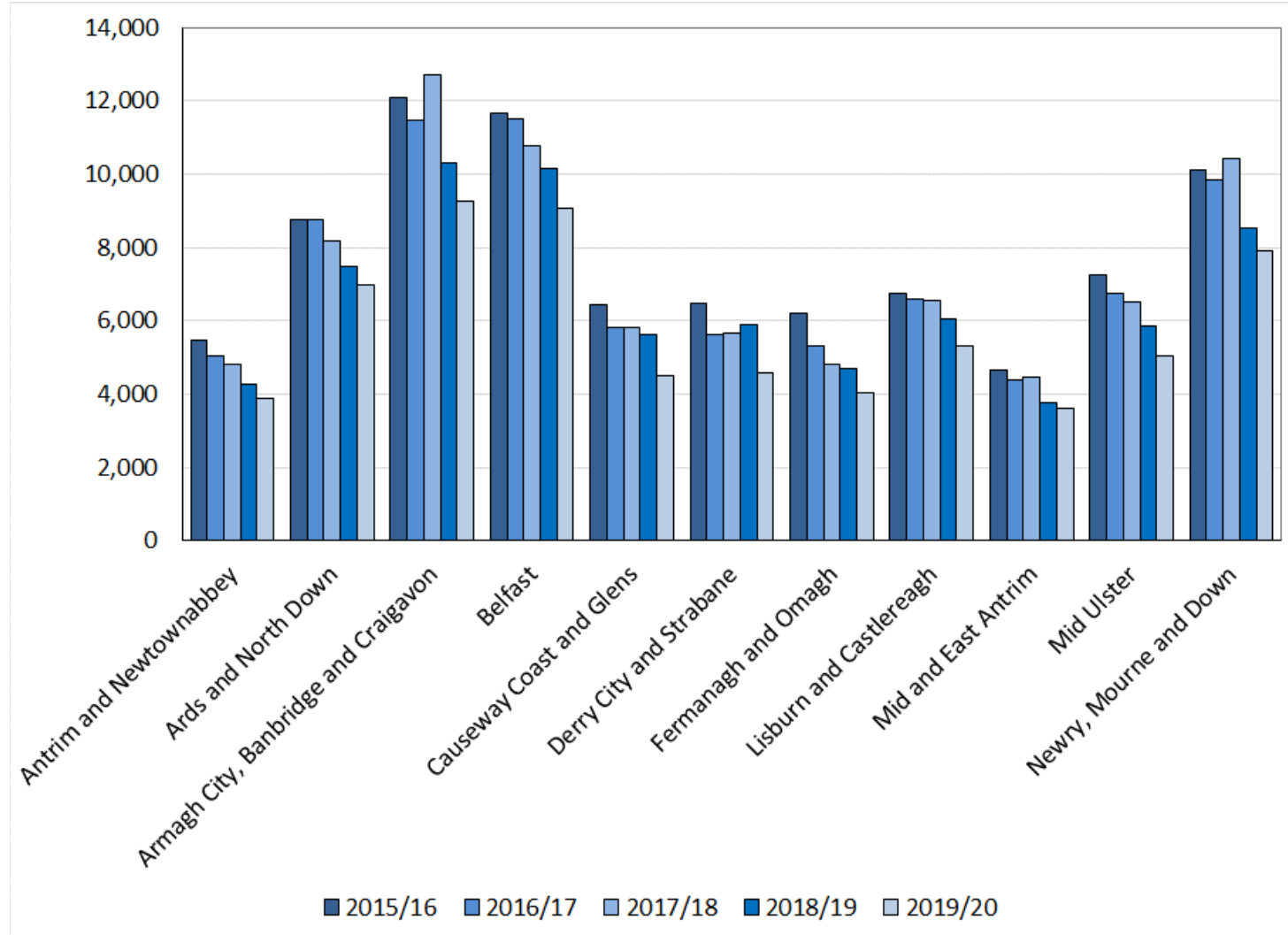
Local Government District	Academic Year				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Antrim and Newtownabbey	5,452	5,041	4,794	4,268	3,886
Ards and North Down	8,765	8,748	8,195	7,479	6,980
Armagh City, Banbridge and	12,075	11,449	12,723	10,322	9,268
Belfast	11,667	11,496	10,752	10,162	9,068
Causeway Coast and Glens	6,431	5,827	5,798	5,632	4,482
Derry City and Strabane	6,456	5,633	5,673	5,880	4,569
Fermanagh and Omagh	6,217	5,308	4,812	4,693	4,022
Lisburn and Castlereagh	6,747	6,599	6,549	6,043	5,301
Mid and East Antrim	4,652	4,402	4,480	3,780	3,628
Mid Ulster	7,234	6,745	6,512	5,845	5,033
Newry, Mourne and Down	10,102	9,854	10,408	8,526	7,911
Unknown*	2,355	1,913	2,074	1,949	1,511
FE Sector Total	88,153	83,015	82,770	74,579	65,659

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by qualifications gained by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled students. (Over the five year period, this ranged from 69.0% in 2017/18 to 80.7% in 2018/19.)

- The number of qualifications achieved at FE Colleges decreased by 25.5% between 2015/16 (88,153) and 2019/20 (65,659).
- Since 2015/16, the number of qualifications awarded has decreased in net terms in all eleven Local Government Districts.
- The largest net percentage decrease has been in Fermanagh and Omagh (35.3%), from 6,217 in 2015/16 to 4,022 in 2019/20.
- The smallest net percentage decrease has been in Ards and North Down (20.4%), from 8,765 in 2015/16 to 6,980 in 2019/20.

Figure 6: Number of qualifications achieved in the FE Sector by Local Government District (2015/16 to 2019/20)



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Please note approximately 2% of all qualifications achieved have unknown postcodes, which are not labelled in the chart but included in Table 6.

Table 7: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District in 2019/20

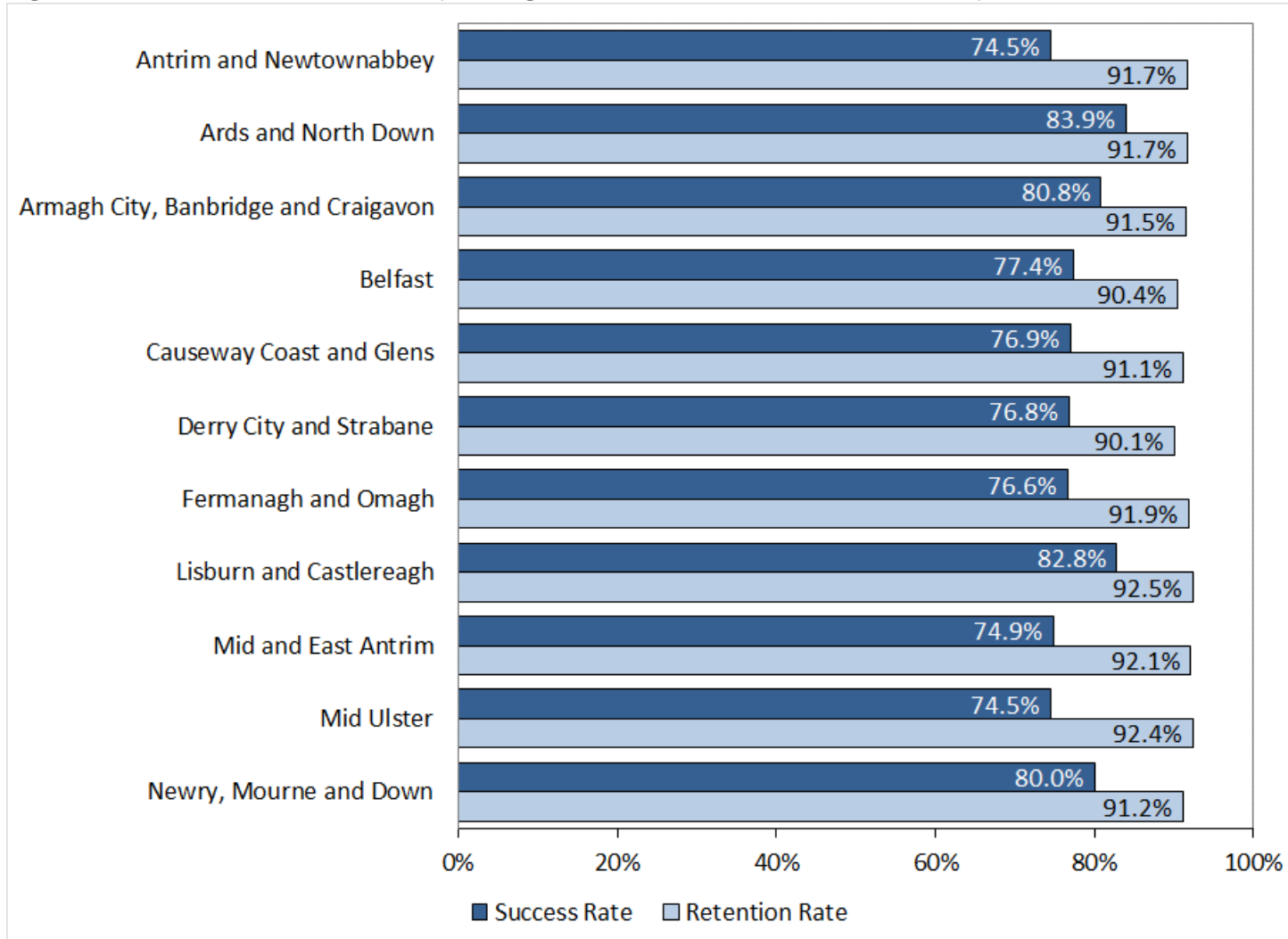
Local Government District	Final Year enrolments	Final Year Completers	Retention Rate	Achievements	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
Antrim and Newtownabbey	5,213	4,779	91.7%	3,886	81.3%	74.5%
Ards and North Down	8,318	7,627	91.7%	6,980	91.5%	83.9%
Armagh City, Banbridge and	11,466	10,489	91.5%	9,268	88.4%	80.8%
Belfast	11,720	10,596	90.4%	9,068	85.6%	77.4%
Causeway Coast and Glens	5,825	5,309	91.1%	4,482	84.4%	76.9%
Derry City and Strabane	5,946	5,358	90.1%	4,569	85.3%	76.8%
Fermanagh and Omagh	5,252	4,824	91.9%	4,022	83.4%	76.6%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	6,403	5,920	92.5%	5,301	89.5%	82.8%
Mid and East Antrim	4,844	4,462	92.1%	3,628	81.3%	74.9%
Mid Ulster	6,752	6,242	92.4%	5,033	80.6%	74.5%
Newry, Mourne and Down	9,893	9,021	91.2%	7,911	87.7%	80.0%
Unknown*	1,897	1,742	91.8%	1,511	86.7%	79.7%
Total	83,529	76,369	91.4%	65,659	86.0%	78.6%

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled students [final year enrolments (75.8%), final year completers (75.8%) and qualifications achieved (75.4%)].

- The retention rate for the FE Sector was 91.4% in 2019/20, while those across the eleven LGDs ranged from 90.1% in Derry City and Strabane to 92.5% in Lisburn and Castlereagh.
- While the success rate for the FE Sector was 78.6% in 2019/20, the success rates across the eleven LGDs ranged from 74.5% in both Mid Ulster and Antrim and Newtownabbey to 83.9% in Ards and North Down.
- In 2019/20, while retention rates were relatively similar across the eleven LGDs (a range of over 2.3 percentage points), the success rate range was 9.4 percentage points.

Figure 7: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments in the FE Sector by Local Government District in 2019/20



Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Please note approximately 2% of final year enrolments/completers/achievements have unknown postcodes, which are not labelled in the chart but included in Table 7.

Table 8: All enrolments in the FE Sector and NI Population aged 16+ by Local Government District in 2019/20

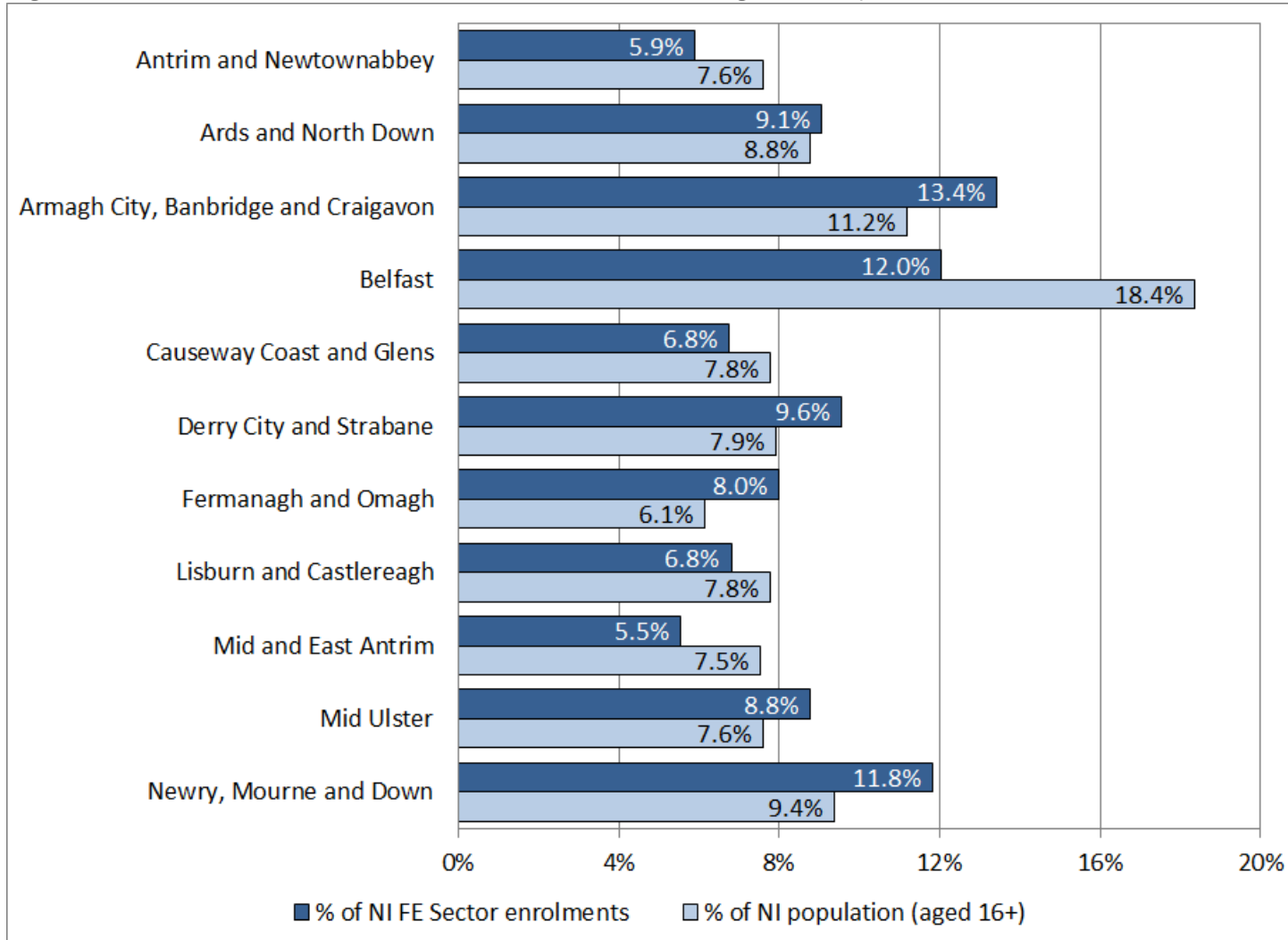
Local Government District	Enrolments	% of NI FE Sector enrolments	Population aged 16+	% of NI population (aged 16+)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	7,819	5.9%	113,583	7.6%
Ards and North Down	11,981	9.1%	131,544	8.8%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	17,764	13.4%	167,448	11.2%
Belfast	15,918	12.0%	275,075	18.4%
Causeway Coast and Glens	8,938	6.8%	116,427	7.8%
Derry City and Strabane	12,659	9.6%	118,473	7.9%
Fermanagh and Omagh	10,567	8.0%	91,965	6.1%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	9,001	6.8%	116,414	7.8%
Mid and East Antrim	7,341	5.5%	112,537	7.5%
Mid Ulster	11,612	8.8%	113,899	7.6%
Newry, Mourne and Down	15,646	11.8%	140,377	9.4%
Unknown*	3,108	2.3%	0	n/a
Northern Ireland	132,354	100.0%	1,497,742	100.0%

Sources: Consolidated Data Return (CDR) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2019

Unknown*: Postcodes with unassigned LGDs are mainly accounted for by Republic of Ireland (RoI) domiciled student enrolments (72.4%, 2,249).

- In 2019/20, almost a fifth (18.4%) of the NI population (aged 16 and over) lived in the Belfast LGD, whereas Belfast residents made up 12.0% (15,918) of the 132,354 enrolments in the NI FE Sector.
- In contrast, while 9.4% of the NI population (aged 16 and over) lived in Newry, Mourne and Down, people living in this LGD accounted for 11.8% (15,646) of the 132,354 enrolments in the NI FE Sector.
- When considering the LGD proportions of the NI population against the LGD proportions of NI FE Sector enrolments, it should be noted there are no unknown postcodes for population, but there are 2.3% unknown postcodes with regards to FE Sector enrolments. Of the 3,108 enrolments with unknown postcodes in the FE Sector, 2,249 were RoI domiciled student enrolments, accounting for 1.7% of enrolments within the sector.

Figure 8: All enrolments in the FE Sector and NI Population aged 16+ by Local Government District in 2019/20



Sources: Consolidated Data Return (CDR) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2019
 Please note 2.3% of all enrolments have unknown postcodes, which are not labelled in the chart but included in Table 8.

Notes

1. Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020.
2. The Local Government District is based on the postcode provided by the student at the time of enrolment.
3. The level of study indicates the nationally recognised qualification level of the course.
4. 'Regulated enrolments' consist of Higher Education courses ('Level 4 or above') and courses at 'Level 3 or below' that appear on either the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or DfE's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ).
5. Geographical data have been sourced from the Central Postcode Directory to assign Local Government Districts to each enrolment. Approximately 3% of all enrolments are not assigned to a Local Government District due to invalid geo-referencing or non-Northern Ireland domiciled students.
6. Performance analysis is based on Final Year Enrolments and excludes transfers.
7. Withdrawals are included where there is an achieved outcome.
8. Enrolments of students in their final year of a course who have completed the course and subsequently achieve are regarded as final year achievements.
9. Retention rate is defined as the percentage of final year regulated enrolments completed by students.
10. Achievement rate relates to the percentage of final year regulated enrolments completed by students who achieve a qualification.
11. Success rate (or overall measure of performance) is the percentage of final year regulated enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification.
12. Achievement and success rates are based on final year full and partial achievements.
13. Tables for lower geographies, for example, Assembly Area, District Electoral Area and Ward are available from [NISRA's Neighbourhood Information Service \(NINIS\)](#) and [Open Data NI](#).

More Further Education Sector statistics are available from:-

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/further-education-statistics>