Further Education Sector Activity in Northern Ireland: 2017/18 to 2021/22



This statistical bulletin presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments and students (both regulated and non-regulated) in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector covering academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22. The statistics presented cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE Colleges along with analysis of areas of deprivation, funding streams and performance.

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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 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 key statistical publications, including:

- Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes;
- Further Education Activity;
- Higher Education Enrolments;
- Higher Education Qualifications.

A detailed 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 Sector Activity	
Following a period of decline, FE College enrolments increased in 2021/22....	Following a decline of 57,978 (37.3%) between 2017/18 (155,510) and 2020/21 (97,532), including a 34,822 (26.3%) drop between 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of FE College enrolments increased by 13,301 (13.6%) in 2021/22, to 110,833. While much of this recent increase related to part-time study and to students aged 25 and over, overall enrolments continued to be impacted by a longer-term decrease in part-time enrolments, the relatively low number of 16-19 year-olds and pandemic-related GCSE and GCE grading arrangements (Table 1).
...and the regulated share of enrolments has decreased.	Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, the regulated share of enrolments has decreased in net terms, from 83.0% to 82.5% (Table A5).
The student population is becoming older....	Since 2017/18, the aged 25 and over share of regulated enrolments has increased from 24.5% to 27.5%; conversely, the proportion of those aged 19 and under has decreased from 62.6% to 57.4% (Table A6).
...fewer than before are on part-time courses....	Most regulated enrolments are part-time, although this proportion has reduced from 80.5% in 2017/18 to 75.4% in 2021/22. Including a net 17.6% decrease on 2019/20 (83,653), the number of part-time regulated enrolments has decreased by a net 35,011 (33.7%) between 2017/18 (103,948) and 2021/22 (68,937) (Table A8).
....and more are studying at Level 2 or above.	Of the 91,403 FE Sector regulated enrolments in 2021/22, over four-fifths (83.2%) were at Level 2 or above, up from 79.7% in 2017/18. Those at Level 1 and below accounted for 16.8% (15,339); 42.4% (38,785) were at Level 2, 30.1% (27,497) were at Level 3 and 10.7% (9,782) were at Level 4 and above (Table A19).
More males than females are studying full-time....	Males accounted for over three-fifths (61.3%) of full-time regulated enrolments in 2021/22, whereas part-time regulated provision was fairly evenly split by sex (Table A17).
....and the popularity of different subject areas varies by sex.	In 2021/22, females accounted for the vast majority of 'Health, Public Services and Care' (84.2%) and 'Education and Training' enrolments (73.6%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (97.3%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.4%) (Table A20).
FE Sector regulated enrolments are fairly evenly spread across relative deprivation quintiles..... .....but considerable variation occurs at college level.	In 2021/22, while regulated enrolments were fairly evenly spread across the relative deprivation quintiles, much variation occurred 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 proportion (23.4%) came from the least deprived area (Quintile 5). Almost two-fifths (38.4%) of NWRC's regulated enrolments were from Quintile 1, with 3.6% from Quintile 5. BMC enrolments were quite polarised, in that 52.7% were from either Quintiles 1 or 5 (Table A22).

Most enrolments are mainstream.	Of the 110,833 enrolments in 2021/22, over half (53.7%) were mainstream funded by the Department for the Economy, 17.6% were funded through government training programmes, 9.6% were cost recovery and 5.2% were funded through the Entitlement Framework programme (Table A10).
Proportionately more Higher Education enrolments….	While Higher Education enrolments at FE Colleges have decreased by 17.4%, from 11,848 in 2017/18 to 9,782 in 2021/22, the proportion of regulated enrolments in Higher Education (HE) has increased from 9.2% to 10.7% over the same period (Table A19**Error! Reference source not found.**).
Fewer qualifications are being awarded generally….	Over a third (35.7%) fewer qualifications were awarded in FE Colleges in 2021/22 (53,229) than in 2017/18 (82,770); this includes an 18.9% net decrease on 2019/20. Net decreases have occurred in all six colleges [SRC (by 43.0%), SERC (42.3%), NRC (34.7%), SWC (33.8%), NWRC (30.8%) and BMC (25.4%)] (**Error! Reference source not found.**).
….proportionately fewer people are staying on and completing their course…..	Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, the retention rate at FE Colleges has decreased in net terms from 90.3% to 89.3% (Table A30).
….but more people who complete their course are achieving their qualification.	The achievement rate at FE Colleges has increased by a net 1.3 percentage points, from 85.3% (2017/18) to 86.6% (2021/22). The success rate (that is, the percentage of final year regulated enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification) has increased in net terms, from 77.0% to 77.3%, over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22 (**Error! Reference source not found.**Table A30).
After falling for a sustained period, the number of FE College students increased….	After falling by 21,943 (28.2%) between 2017/18 (77,914) and 2020/21 (55,971), most noticeably between 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of FE College students increased by 5,725 (10.2%) in 2021/22, to 61,696 (Table 6).
….of which, fewer are enrolled on regulated courses	The number of students enrolled on regulated courses at FE Colleges has decreased by a net 19.5%, from 63,926 in 2017/18 to 51,483 in 2021/22 (Table 10).
….although more of these are full-time.	The full-time proportion of students enrolled on regulated courses has increased from 38.4% in 2017/18 to 41.3% in 2021/22 (Table 9).

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 both enrolments and the individual students enrolled on courses in the NI FE Sector covering academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22. 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 Higher Education enrolments in FE Colleges only.
- Section 4 details the qualifications and performance of final year enrolments at FE Colleges in NI.
- Section 5 focuses on all students at FE Colleges in NI, including:
  - non-regulated and regulated provision
  - Higher Education
  - students achieving qualifications.

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 2021/22 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 Sector Activity in Northern Ireland: 2017/18 to 2021/22

Rounding

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

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 are used by DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for the Economy in discharging their duties; by the NI Assembly's 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 the 2018/19 edition of the bulletin, we published an analysis of the FE Activity readership survey we conducted in September 2019. We gave careful consideration to the feedback and have endeavoured to improve the coverage and quality of our FE Activity statistics. We discussed the feasibility of possible options with DfE policy colleagues, before drawing up an action plan for the 2019/20 edition of the bulletin. From that edition, we have increased our focus on students, while consequently reducing our enrolments content. In addition to a section of the bulletin covering student activity, several Annex tables relating to students are listed in the Contents and can be found alongside this document on the website. We intend to conduct a 2023 FE Activity readership survey following this publication.

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

Further education and work-based learning (gov.wales)

Section 1: All enrolments

1.1 - All enrolments

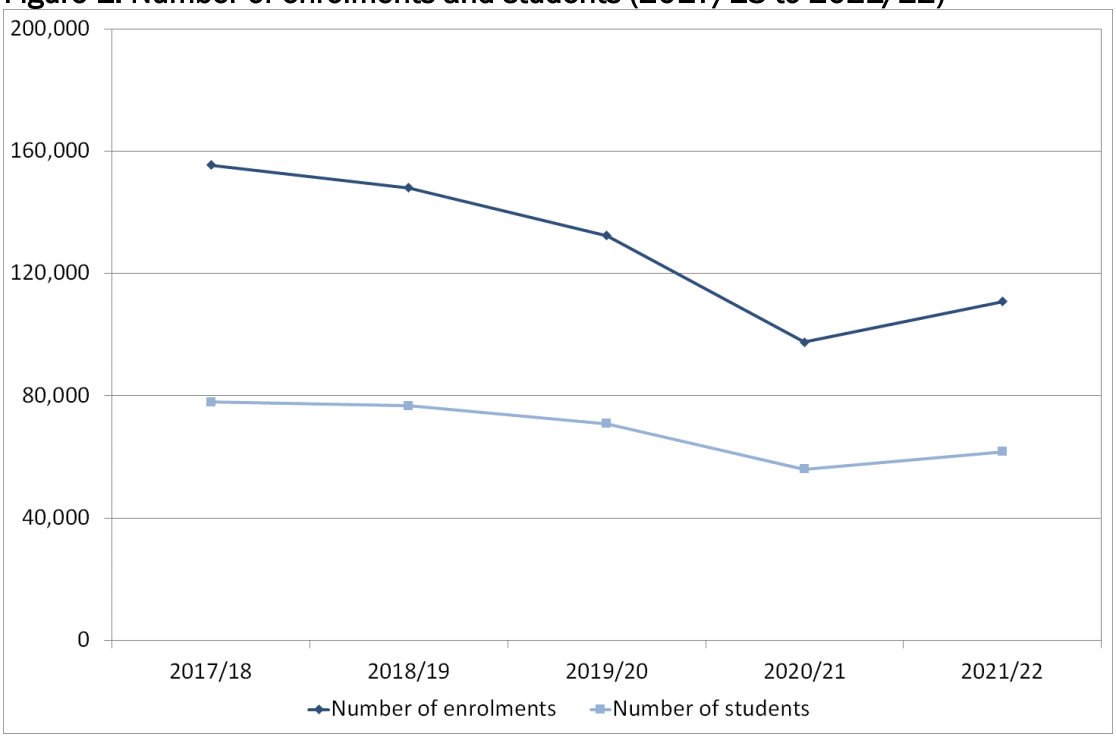
Background

This section provides detail on all 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 is 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 – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Following a decline of 57,978 (37.3%) between 2017/18 (155,510) and 2020/21 (97,532), including a 34,822 (26.3%) drop between 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of FE College enrolments increased by 13,301 (13.6%) in 2021/22, to 110,833. While much of this recent increase related to part-time study and to students aged 25 and over, overall enrolments continued to be impacted by a longer-term decrease in part-time enrolments, the relatively low number of 16-19 year-olds and pandemic-related GCSE and GCE grading arrangements). After falling by 21,943 (28.2%) between 2017/18 (77,914) and 2020/21 (55,971), most noticeably between 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of students increased by 5,725 (10.2%) in 2021/22, to 61,696. The number of enrolments per student has decreased in net terms from 2.0 in 2017/18 to 1.8 in 2021/22 (Figure 1, Table A1).

Figure 1: Number of enrolments and students (2017/18 to 2021/22)



FE Colleges

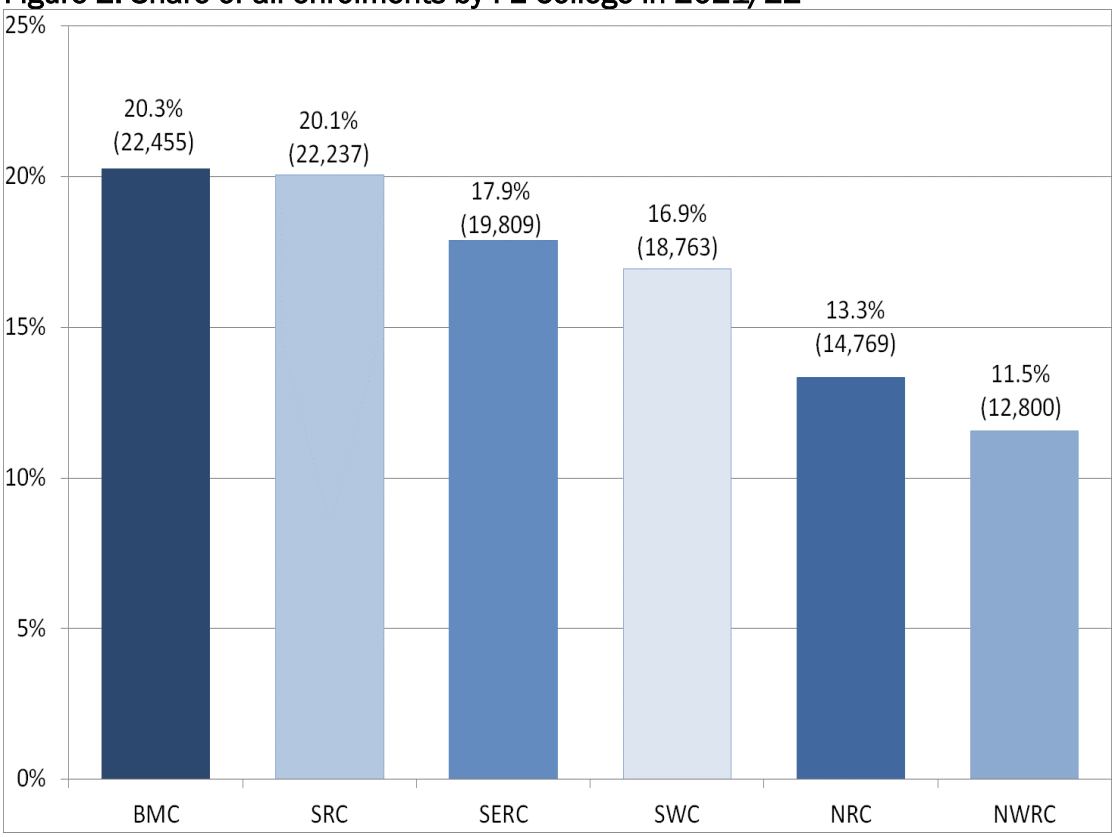
Since 2017/18, enrolments have decreased in net terms in each of the six FE Colleges [SERC (by 34.4%), NRC (32.4%), NWRC (30.2%), SRC (29.0%), BMC (24.5%) and SWC (22.1%)]. (Table 1).

Table 1: All enrolments by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
FE College	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
NRC	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
NWRC	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
SERC	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
SRC	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
SWC	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

In the most recent academic year (2021/22), BMC had the highest share of the 110,833 enrolments, accounting for 20.3% (22,455), and NWRC the lowest, with 11.5% (12,800) (Figure 2, Table 1).

Figure 2: Share of all enrolments by FE College in 2021/22



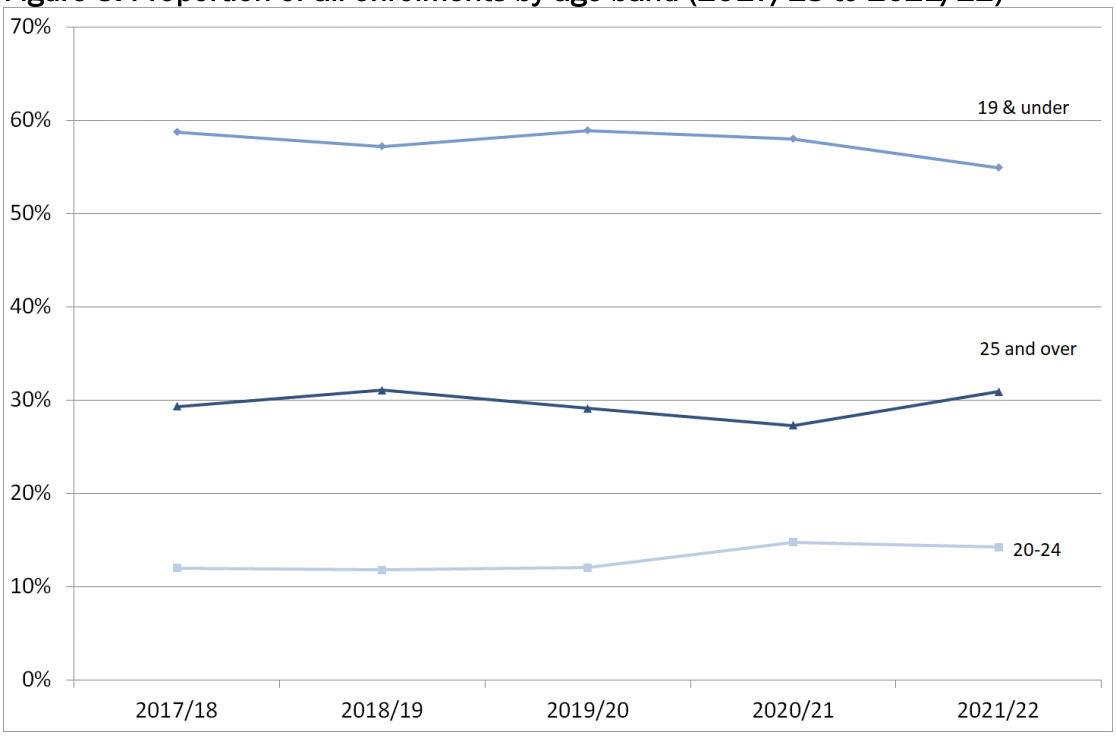
FE College Abbreviations

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 2017/18, the proportions of aged 20-24 enrolments and aged 25 and over enrolments have increased from 12.0% to 14.2% and from 29.3% to 30.9% respectively. Conversely, the proportion of those in the 19 and under age group has decreased, from 58.7% to 54.9% (Figure 3, Table A2).

Figure 3: Proportion of all enrolments by age band (2017/18 to 2021/22)



Please note enrolments with unknown ages (<1.0%) are excluded from 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 (HRCCAs) 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 in enrolled at a FE College. Please refer to Annex B for further details on HRCCAs.

Based on mid-year population estimates in 2020, 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 only reflected in 2021/22 enrolments in NWRC, where the highest proportion of enrolments (43.3%) was in the 25 and over age group. In the other five colleges, the highest proportions related to those aged 19 and under, ranging from 44.0% in BMC to 66.2% in SWC (Table A2).

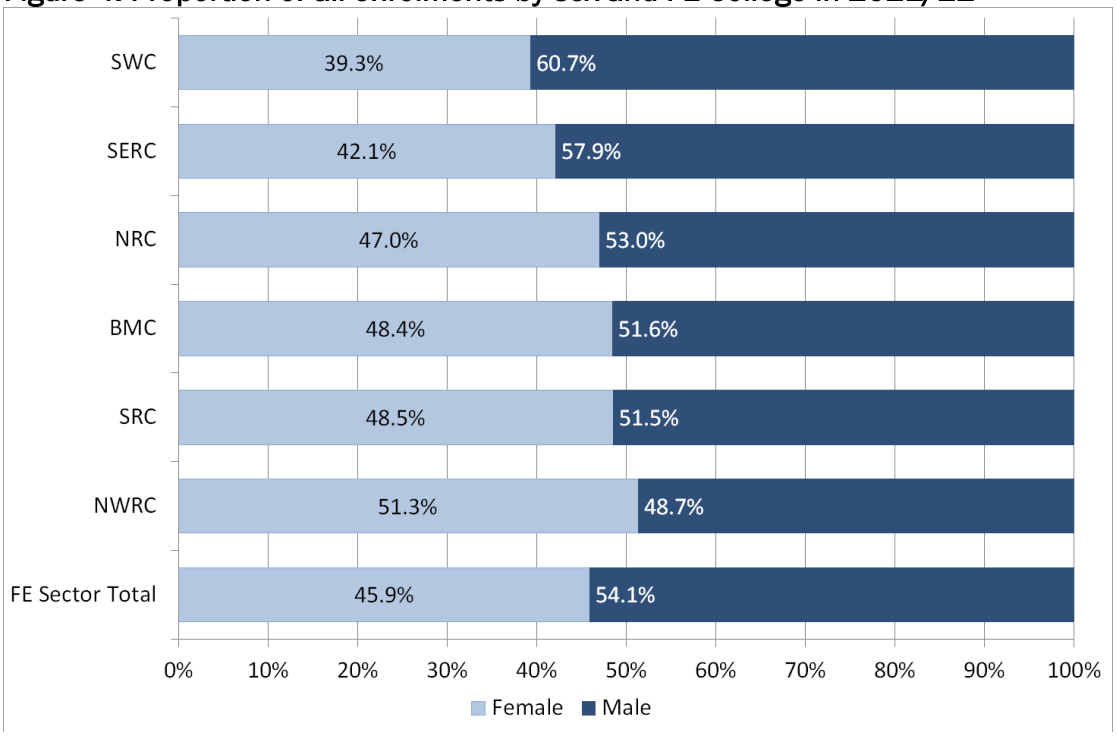
Sex

Although all of the college HRCCA profiles contain more females than males, typically males out-number females across the FE Sector.

Most enrolments related to males in 2017/18 (53.0%), 2018/19 (53.6%), 2019/20 (54.0%), 2020/21 (55.7%) and 2021/22 (54.1%) (Table A3).

In the most recent academic year (2021/22), NWRC (51.3%) had a higher proportion of female enrolments, whereas the other five colleges had higher proportions of male enrolments [SWC (60.7%), SERC (57.9%), NRC (53.0%), BMC (51.6%) and SRC (51.5%)] (Figure 4, Table A3).

Figure 4: Proportion of all enrolments by sex and FE College in 2021/22

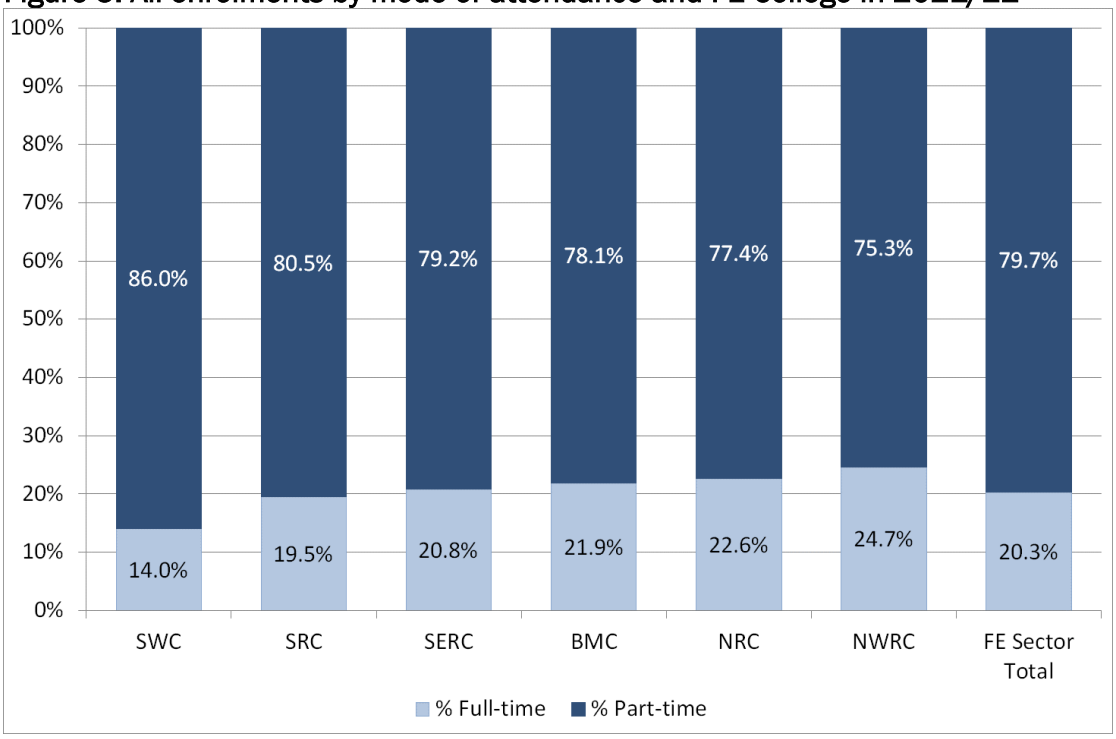


Mode of attendance

Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, the full-time proportion of all enrolments has increased from 16.2% to 20.3% (Table A4).

Comparing the FE Colleges in 2021/22 indicates that NWRC had the highest proportion of full-time enrolments (24.7%), while SWC had the lowest proportion (14.0%) (Figure 5, Table A4).

Figure 5: All enrolments by mode of attendance and FE College in 2021/22



1.2 – Non-regulated and 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 Qualifications[1] (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 2017/18; this is the fifth publication based on five years' trend data since the review on 'regulated' provision. Refer to Annex B for further details on this estimation work.

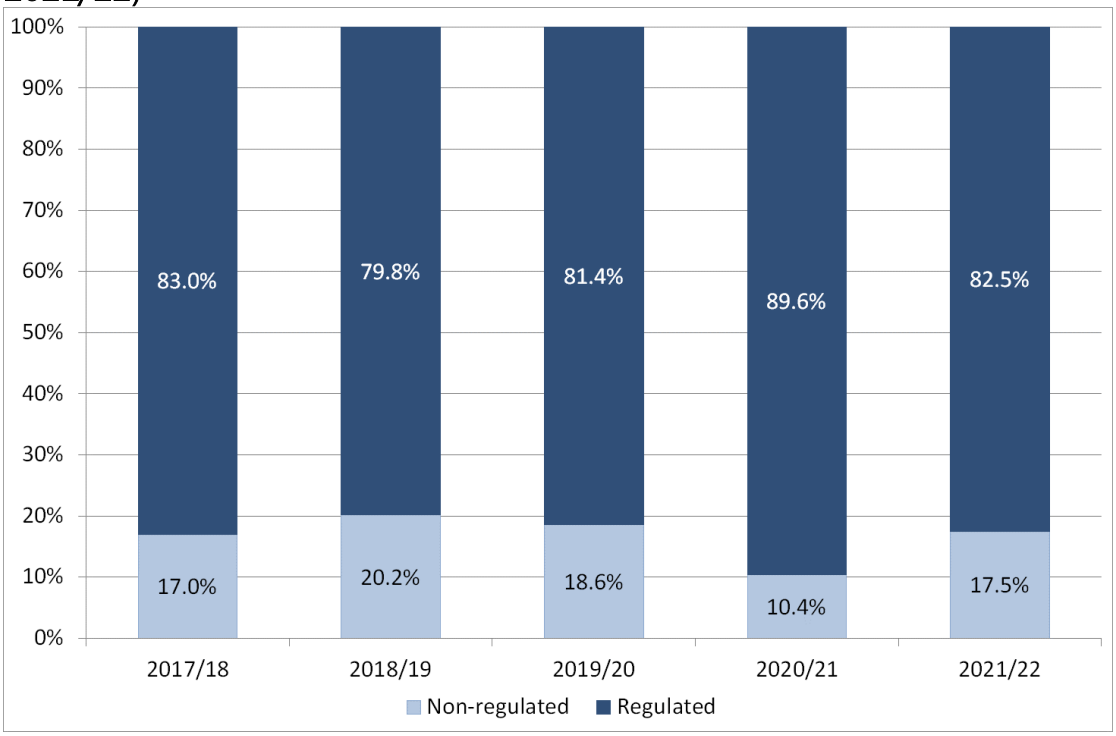
The 'Further Education Means Success' strategy aims to reduce the number of non-regulated enrolments and encourage regulated, economically focused provision. This strategy is being reviewed in light of the new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Skills for a 10X economy.

[1] Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (**Error! Reference source not found.**) are defined within Annex A: Definitions

Trends – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, the regulated share of enrolments has decreased in net terms, from 83.0% to 82.5%. This included an increase from 81.4% in 2019/20 to 89.6% in 2020/21 (Figure 6, Table A5).

Figure 6: Proportion of non-regulated and regulated enrolments (2017/18 to 2021/22)

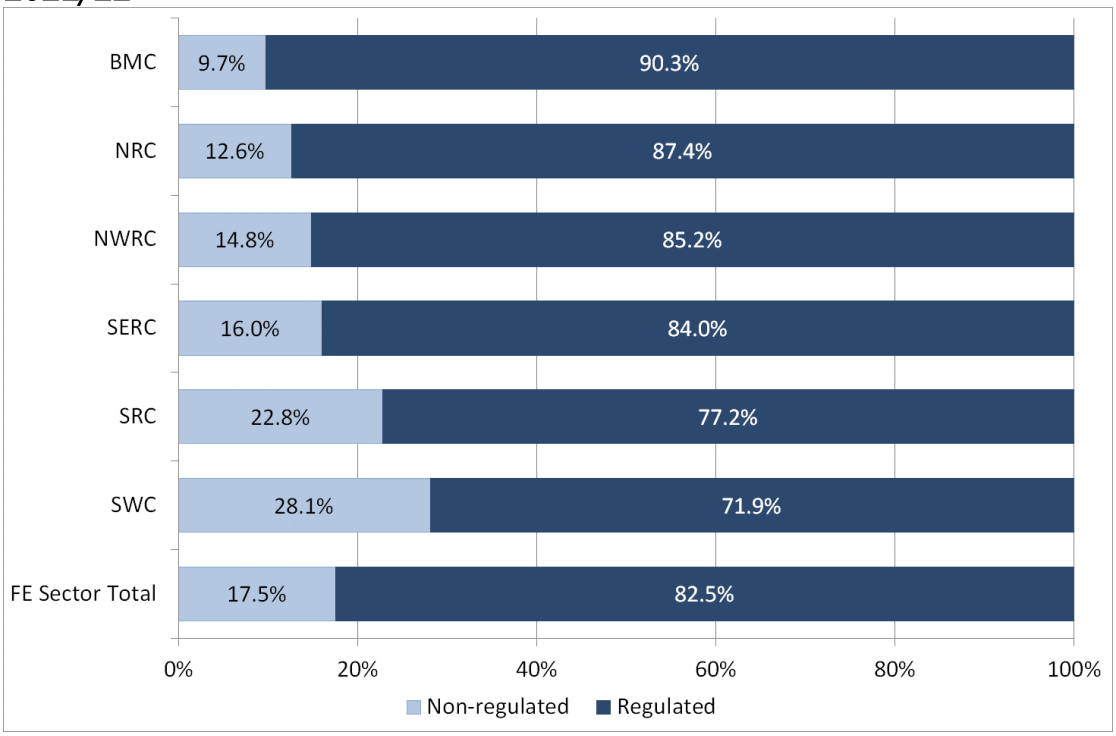


FE Colleges

The majority of enrolments were on regulated courses in all six colleges over the five year period 2017/18 to 2021/22. However, the profile varies across the FE Sector; for instance, in 2021/22, the proportion of regulated enrolments ranged from 71.9% in SWC to 90.3% in BMC (Figure 7, Table A5).

Over the period, NRC reported the largest net increase in the proportion of regulated enrolments (4.4 percentage points), from 83.0% to 87.4%, while SRC reported the largest decrease (7.0 percentage points), from 84.2% to 77.2% (Table A5).

Figure 7: Proportion of non-regulated and regulated enrolments by FE College in 2021/22

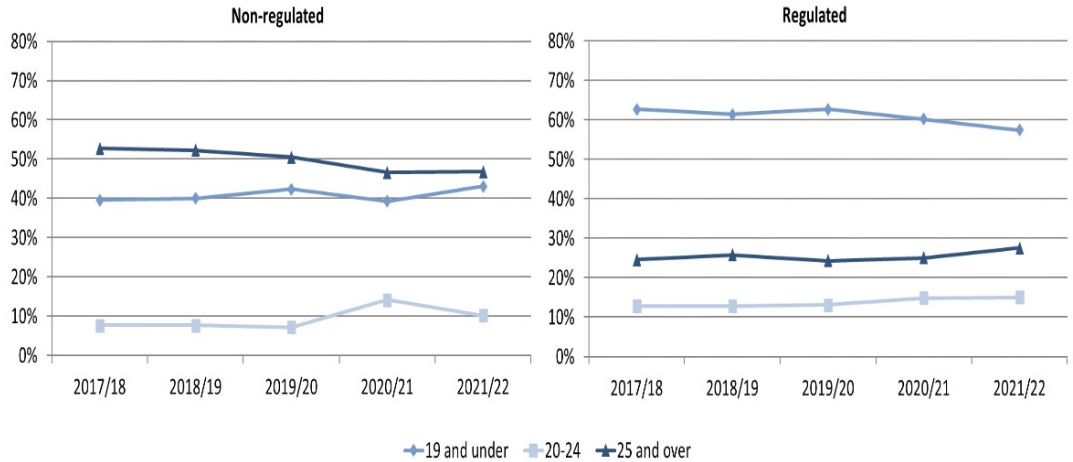


Age

While traditionally the majority of non-regulated enrolments relate to individuals aged 25 and over, this proportion has fallen from 52.7% in 2017/18 to 46.8% in 2021/22. Conversely, the proportions of aged 19 and under enrolments and aged 20-24 enrolments have increased from 39.6% to 43.1% and from 7.7% to 10.2% respectively (Figure 8, Table A6).

Since 2017/18, the aged 20-24 and aged 25 and over shares of regulated enrolments have increased from 12.9% to 15.1% and 24.5% to 27.5% respectively. Conversely, the proportion of those aged 19 and under has decreased from 62.6% to 57.4% (Figure 8, Table A6).

Figure 8: Proportion of non-regulated and regulated enrolments by age band (2017/18 to 2021/22)



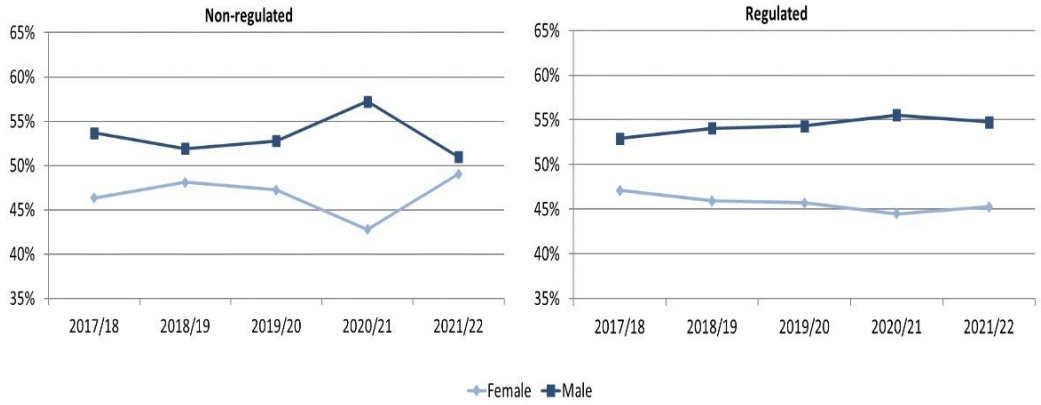
Please note enrolments with unknown ages (<3.0%) are excluded from the chart but are included in Table A6.

Sex

Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, the proportion of female non-regulated enrolments has increased from 46.3% to 49.0%. Conversely, the proportion of female regulated enrolments has fallen from 47.1% to 45.2% (Figure 9, Table A7).

In 2017/18, the sex profile for regulated enrolments was 52.9% male and 47.1% female. By 2021/22, this gap had widened, to 54.8% for males and 45.2% for females (Figure 9, Table A7).

Figure 9: Proportion of non-regulated and regulated enrolments by sex (2017/18 to 2021/22)



Mode of attendance

Most regulated enrolments are part-time, although this proportion has reduced from 80.5% in 2017/18 to 75.4% in 2021/22. Including a net 17.6% decrease on 2019/20 (83,653), the number of part-time regulated enrolments has decreased by a net 35,011 (33.7%) between 2017/18 (103,948) and 2021/22 (68,937). Almost all non-regulated enrolments are part-time, for instance, 99.8% in 2021/22 (Table A8).

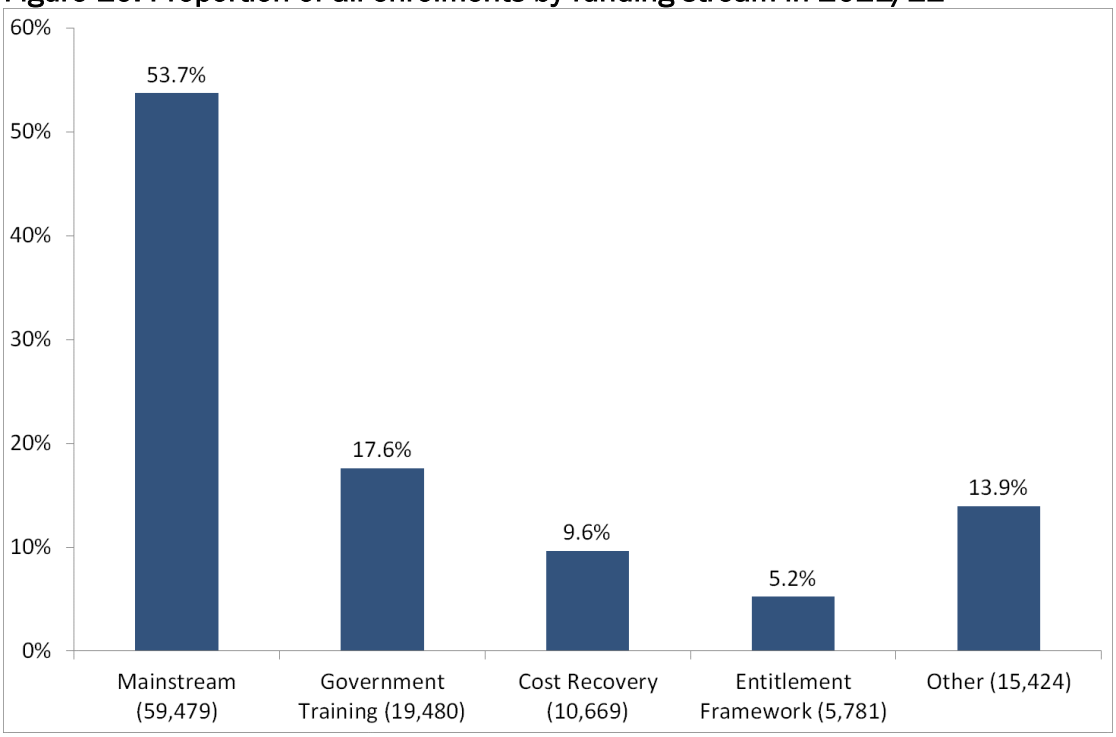
1.3 – Funding streams 2021/22

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 2021/22.

Of the 110,833 enrolments in 2021/22, over half (53.7%) were mainstream funded by DfE, 17.6% were funded through government training programmes, 9.6% were cost recovery and 5.2% were funded through the Entitlement Framework programme. For a further 13.9% of enrolments, the funding stream was classed as 'Other'. These 'Other' enrolments include programmes such as Skills Up, Skills Focus, European Social Fund and Assured Skills (Figure 10, Table A10 and Table A12).

In 2021/22, the mainstream proportion of all enrolments in colleges ranged from 36.5% in SWC to 73.9% in BMC (Table A10).

Figure 10: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2021/22



For further information regarding Funding streams, please see the Funding streams definition at Annex A (page 75).

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 2021/22 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.

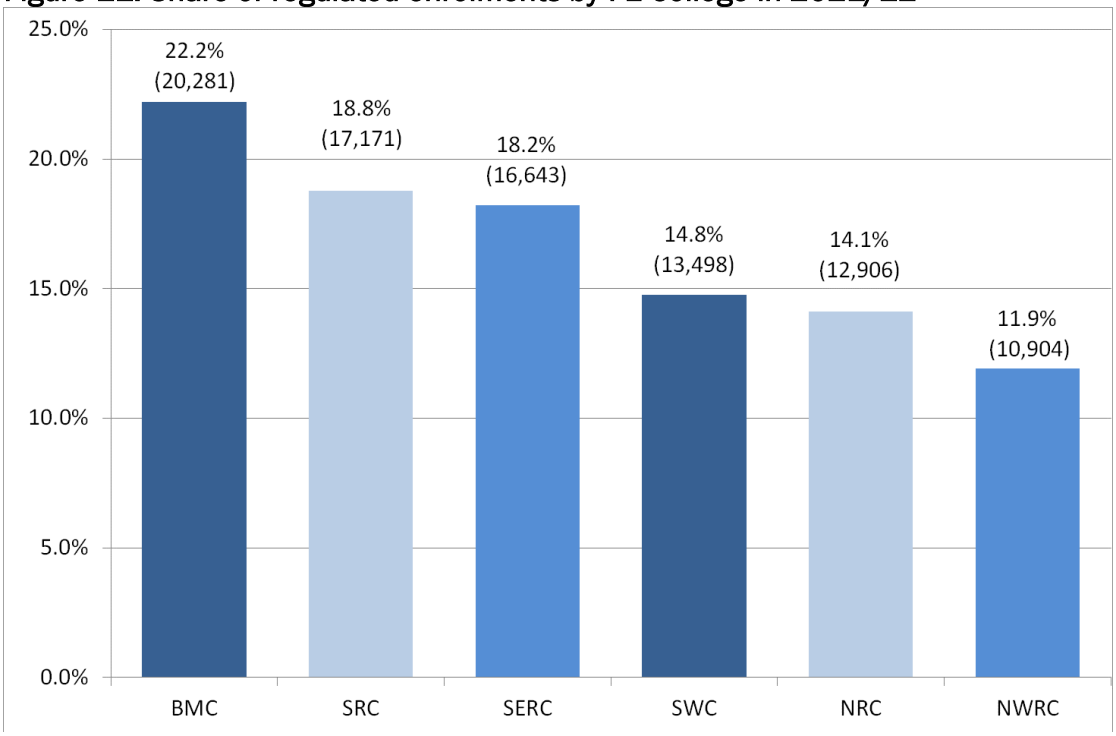
Academic year 2021/22

FE Colleges

In 2021/22, the 91,403 enrolments on regulated courses at FE Colleges in Northern Ireland related to 51,483 individual students. Over 22,000 of these students were enrolled on more than one programme of study, resulting in 1.8 enrolments on regulated courses per student in 2021/22 (Table A1).

Of the 91,403 regulated enrolments, BMC accounted for the highest share, with 22.2% (20,281), and NWRC the lowest, with 11.9% (10,904) (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 2021/22

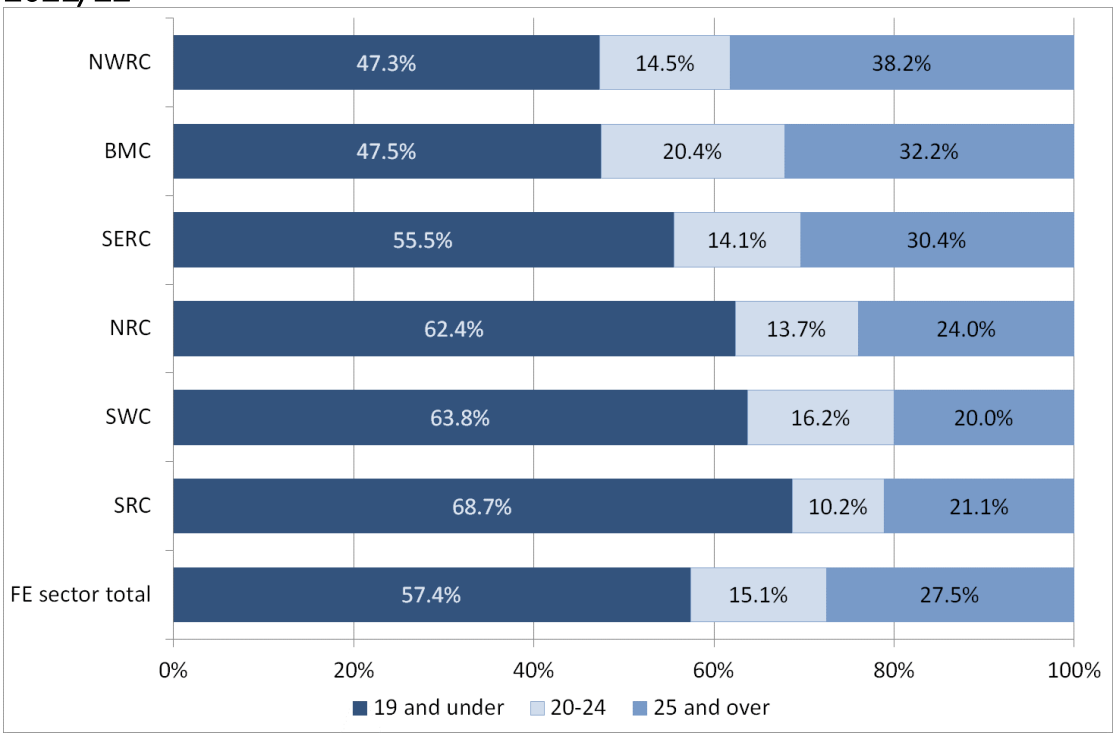


Age

Nearly three-fifths (57.4%) of regulated enrolments in 2021/22 related to students aged 19 and under, 15.1% to those aged 20 to 24 and 27.5% 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 A15).

In 2021/22, SRC (68.7%), SWC (63.8%) and NRC (62.4%) 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 A15).

Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE College in 2021/22

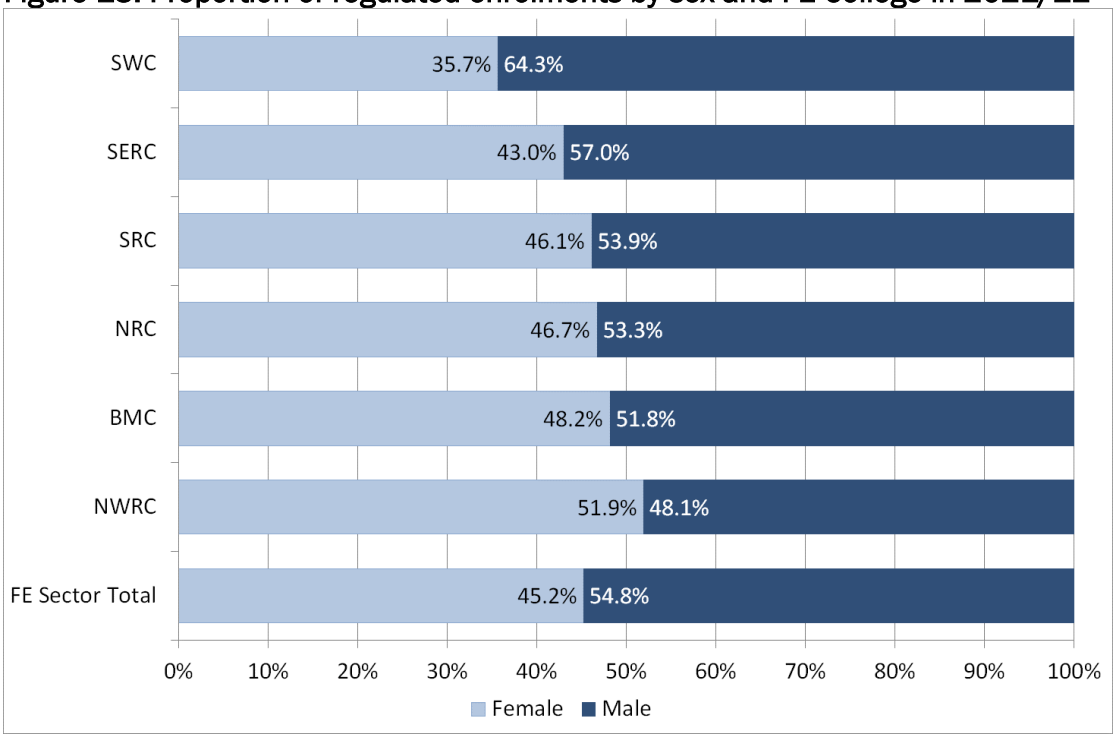


Please note enrolments with unknown ages (<0.1%) are excluded from the chart but are included in Table A15.

Sex

The sex profile of regulated enrolments varied across the six colleges in 2021/22. At five colleges, a higher proportion of enrolments were of males [SWC (64.3%), SERC (57.0%), SRC (53.9%), NRC (53.3%) and BMC (51.8%)], whereas at NWRC over half of enrolments (51.9%) were of females. As a result, the majority (54.8%) of regulated enrolments were of males; the same pattern as for all enrolments (Figure 13, Table A16).

Figure 13: Proportion of regulated enrolments by sex and FE College in 2021/22



Mode of attendance

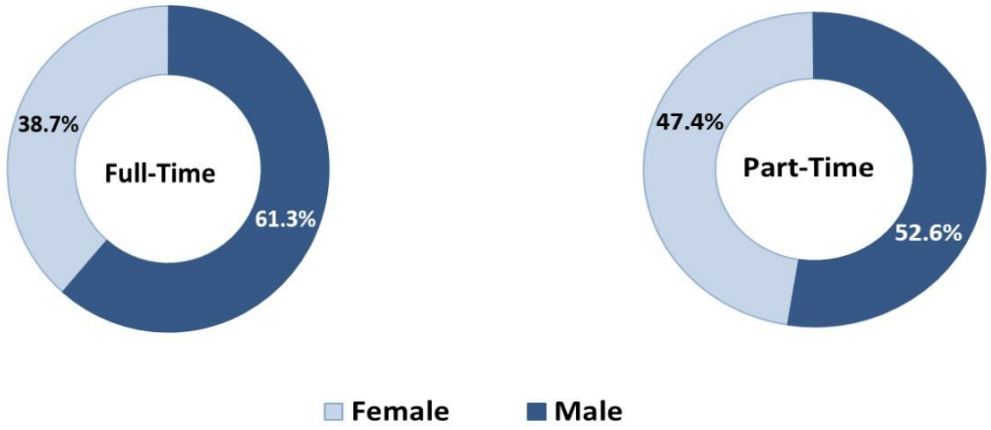
In 2021/22, 24.6% (22,466) of regulated enrolments were on a full-time basis and three quarters (75.4%, 68,937) were part-time. Across the colleges, NWRC (29.0%) had the highest proportion of full-time enrolments, while SWC (19.5%) had the lowest proportion (Table A17).

Mode of attendance and sex

Males accounted for over three-fifths (61.3%) of full-time regulated enrolments in 2021/22, whereas part-time regulated provision was fairly evenly split by sex (Figure 14, Table A17).

In contrast to the overall FE Sector sex profile for part-time provision in 2021/22, female enrolments were in the majority in NWRC (53.5%), BMC (51.5%) and NRC (50.7%). In full-time provision, all six colleges followed the FE Sector profile, with a majority of male enrolments (Table A17).

Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by sex and mode of attendance in 2021/22



Trends – 2017/18 to 2021/22 and Academic Year 2021/22

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: 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.

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 – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Between 2017/18 (74.9%) and 2021/22 (75.1%), the proportion of regulated enrolments in Further Education (FE) courses hasn't changed in net terms; whereas the proportion of regulated enrolments in Higher Education (HE) has increased from 9.2% to 10.7%. The proportion of those in Essential Skills has decreased, from 16.0% to 14.2% over this period (Table A18).

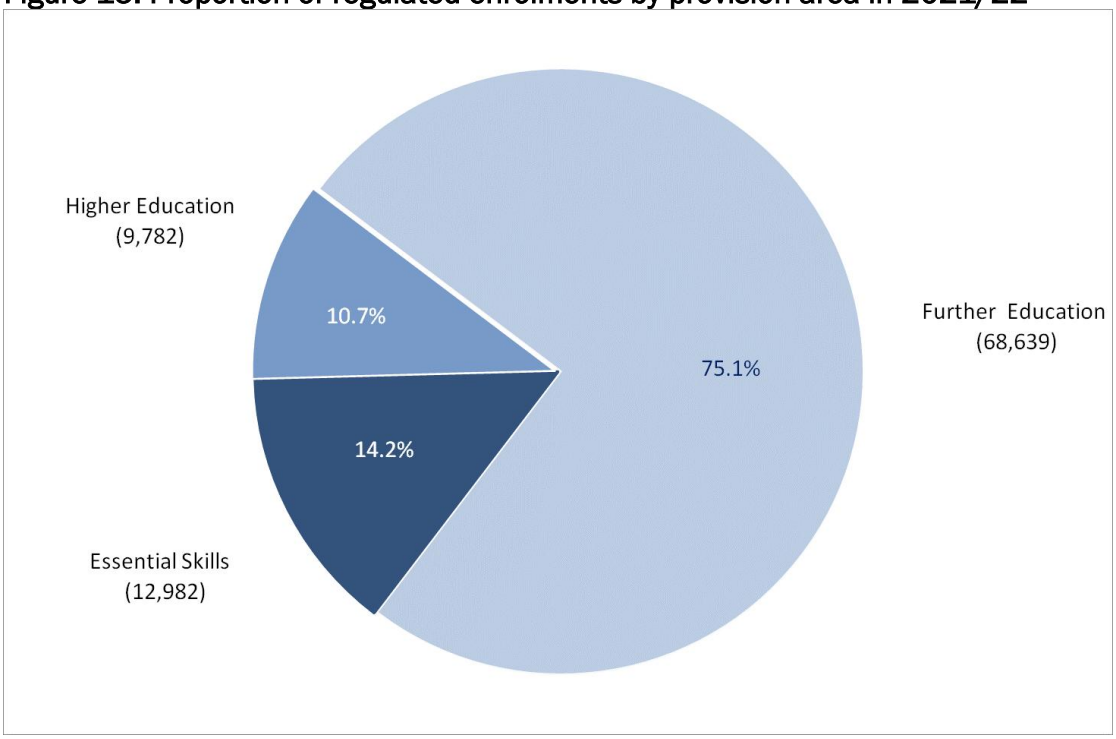
Academic year 2021/22

Of the 91,403 regulated enrolments in 2021/22, 75.1% were in FE courses, 10.7% were in HE courses and 14.2% in Essential Skills (Figure 15, Table A18).

Across each of the FE Colleges, the proportions for each provision area generally followed the overall FE Sector, however, in BMC, the proportion of regulated enrolments in HE courses (12.6%) was greater than those in Essential Skills (11.2%) (Table A18).

In 2021/22, BMC's proportion of enrolments in HE courses (12.6%) was the highest across all colleges, while its Essential Skills share (11.2%) was the lowest. NRC and NWRC had the highest proportions of enrolments in Essential Skills (16.4%), while NRC's HE share (8.1%) was the lowest. SRC's share of enrolments in FE courses (77.3%) was the highest and SWC's the lowest (72.1%) across all colleges (Table A18).

Figure 15: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2021/22



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 Certificates (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND), Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) and degrees.

Trend – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Since 2017/18, decreases have occurred in the proportions of regulated enrolments at Level 1 and below (20.3% to 16.8%) and Level 2 (46.4% to 42.4%).

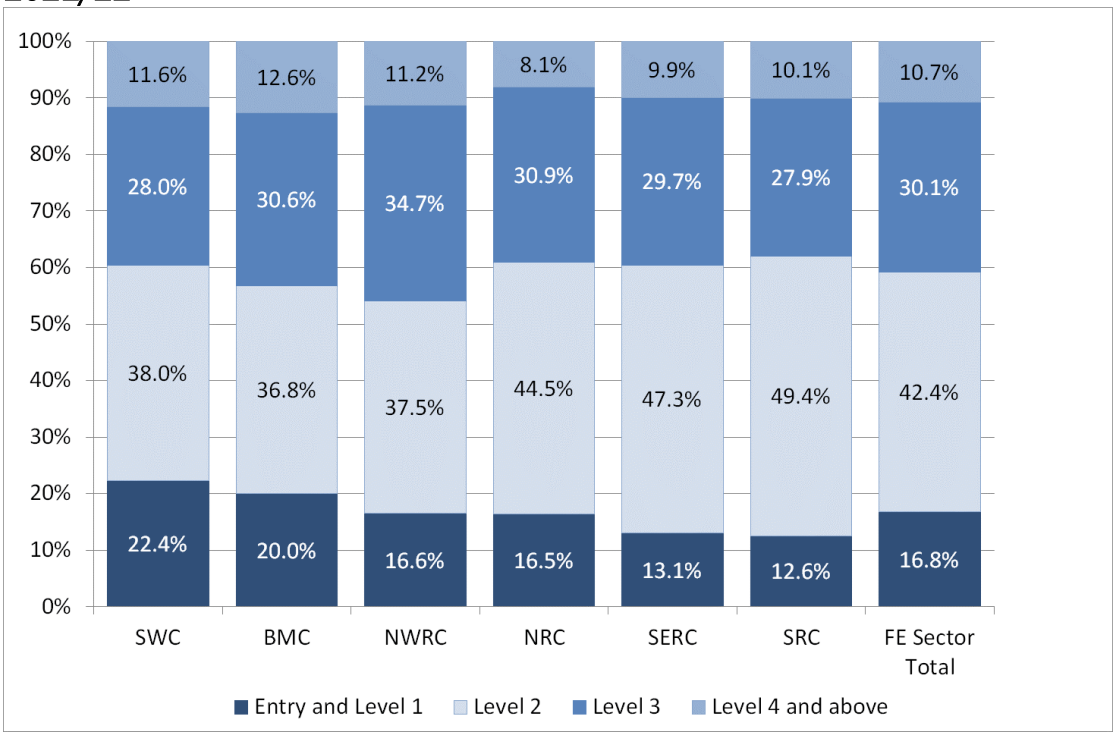
Conversely, over the same period, increases have occurred in the proportions at Level 3 (24.1% to 30.1%) and Level 4 and above (9.2% to 10.7%) respectively (Table A19).

Academic year 2021/22

Of the 91,403 FE Sector regulated enrolments in 2021/22, over four-fifths (83.2%) were at Level 2 or above, up from 79.7% in 2017/18. Those at Level 1 and below accounted for 16.8% (15,339); 42.4% (38,785) were at Level 2, 30.1% (27,497) were at Level 3 and 10.7% (9,782) were at Level 4 and above (Figure 16, Table A19).

All colleges had their largest proportion of enrolments at Level 2; this ranged from 36.8% in BMC to 49.4% in SRC. In two colleges [NWRC (45.9%) and BMC (43.2%)], at least two-fifths of provision was at Level 3 and above (Figure 16, Table A19).

Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study and FE College in 2021/22



Subject area

Trend – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Since 2017/18, the proportions of regulated enrolments by subject area have been in a largely steady state. Notably, the proportion of regulated enrolments in the subject area 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' has increased from 5.4% in 2017/18 to 9.3% in 2021/22. In contrast, the proportion of 'Preparation for Life and Work' enrolments has decreased from 36.9% to 27.2% over the same period (Table A20).

Academic year 2021/22

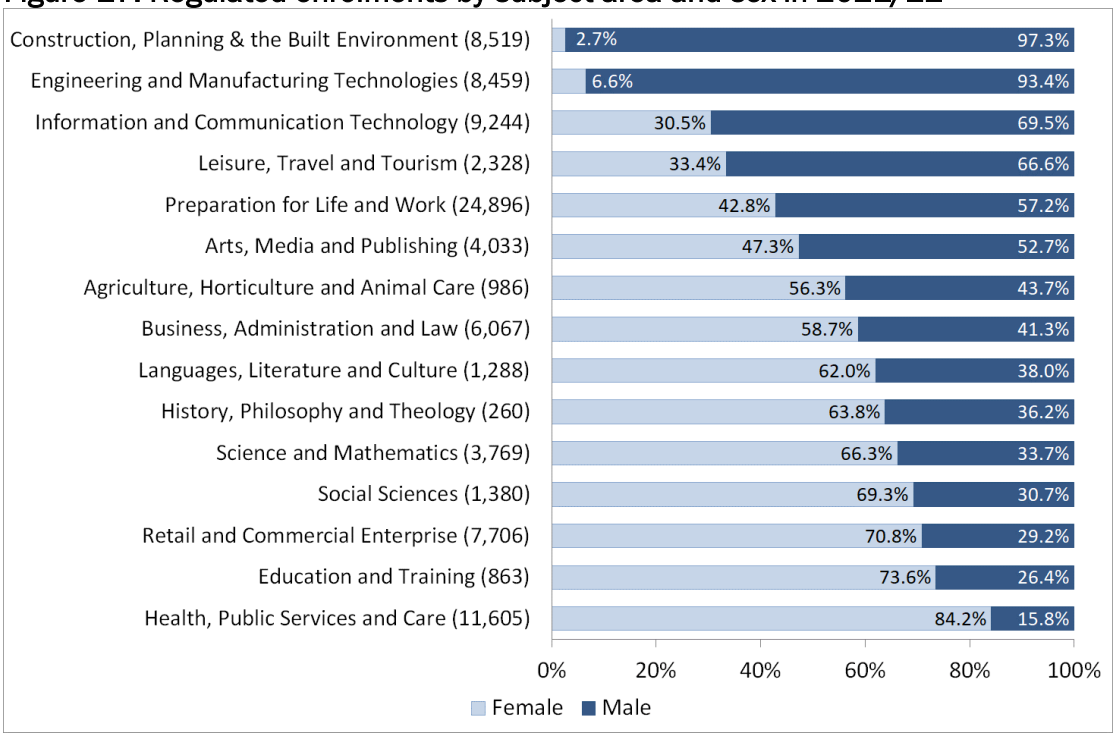
Of the 91,403 regulated enrolments in 2021/22, the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' had the largest share (27.2%). This was followed by 'Health, Public Services and Care' (12.7%) and 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT)' (10.1%). Almost two-fifths (37.6%, 9,372) of regulated enrolments within the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' were Essential Skills courses in Literacy and Numeracy (Table A20).

Subject area and sex

Although the overall sex profile was fairly evenly split for all regulated enrolments in 2021/22, wide variation occurred between male and female enrolments across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority of 'Health, Public Services and Care' (84.2%) and 'Education and Training' enrolments (73.6%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (97.3%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.4%) (Figure 17, Table A20).

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 986 enrolments across the FE Sector. In SWC and SRC, the male share of this subject area was 80.0%, and 79.1% respectively, whereas in BMC and SERC, the male share was 16.4% and 26.5% respectively. This compared with the 'FE Sector male' share of 43.7% (Table A20).

Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and sex in 2021/22



Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

This section examines the level of enrolments within STEM subject areas to illustrate the FE Sector 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'.

The new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Skills for a 10X economy emphasises "the need to drive increased participation in the 'Narrow STEM' subjects, which have particular economic relevance in Northern Ireland and include some of the best opportunities for individuals to develop rewarding careers". It also draws attention to the relatively low female 'Narrow STEM' participation rates, especially as these qualifications "are expected to offer the most significant employment opportunities in the coming decades".

Trend – 2017/18 to 2021/22

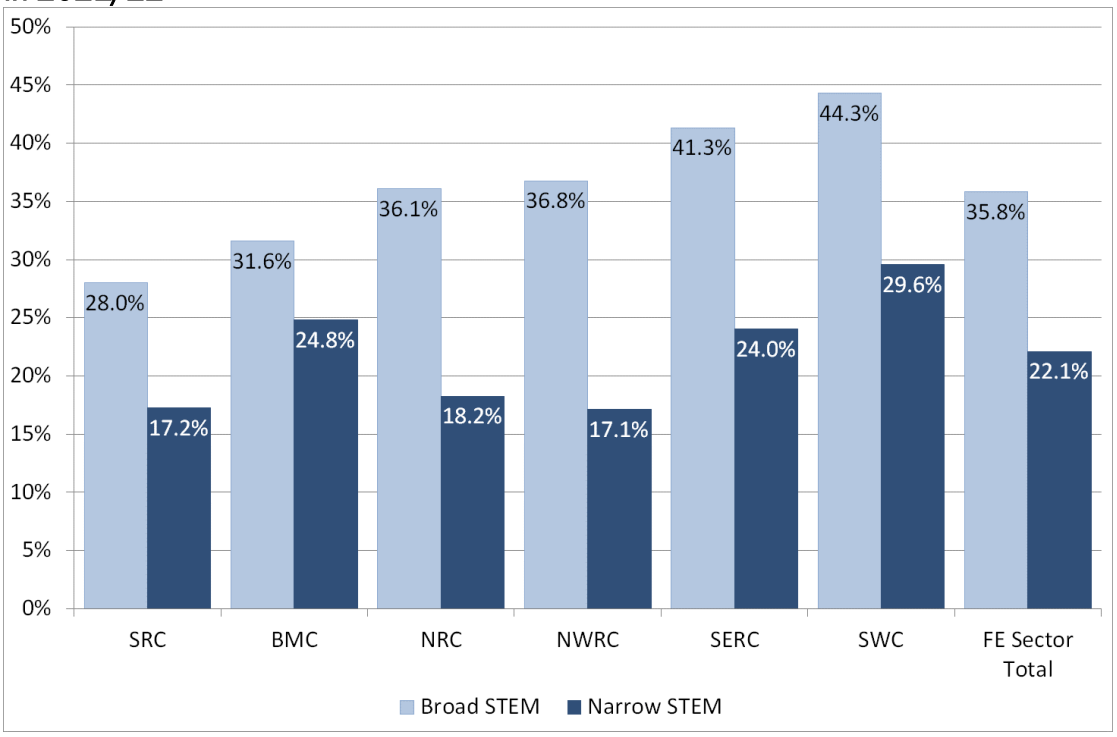
Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, the proportion of regulated enrolments in 'Broad' STEM subjects increased from 27.1% to 35.8%. The proportion of regulated enrolments in 'Narrow' STEM subjects also increased, from 18.3% to 22.1%, over the same period (Table A21).

Academic year 2021/22

In 2021/22, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 35.8% (32,732) of all regulated enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 22.1% (20,205). Males accounted for almost three-quarters of 'Broad' STEM (73.2%) enrolments and over three-quarters of 'Narrow' STEM (78.3%) enrolments (Table A21).

Across the FE Colleges, the proportion of enrolments in 'Broad' STEM subjects ranged from 28.0% in SRC to 44.3% in SWC, while the proportion in 'Narrow' STEM subjects ranged from 17.1% in NWRC to 29.6% in SWC (Figure 18, Table A21).

Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE College in 2021/22



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. Only enrolments of Northern Ireland domicile students have been included; these have been identified by a known, valid Northern Ireland postcode in this analysis.

Trend – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, little change occurred in the proportions of regulated enrolments from each relative deprivation quintile. The proportions of Quintile 4 and Quintile 5 decreased from 19.5% and 14.2% to 19.3% and 13.5% respectively. Conversely, the proportions of Quintile 1 and Quintile 3 increased from 20.5% and 22.2% to 21.2% and 22.3% respectively. There was no net change in Quintile 2 (23.6%) over the same period (Table A22).

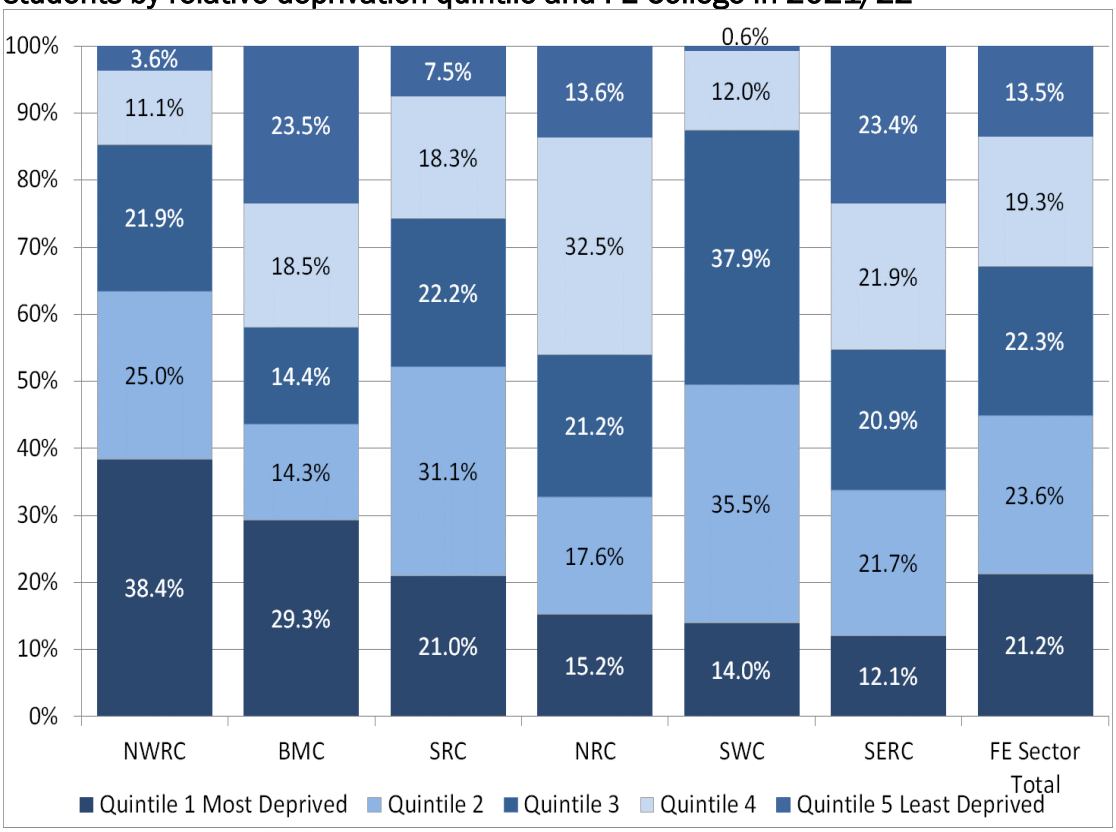
Academic year 2021/22

In 2021/22, over two-fifths (44.9%) of regulated enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. One-fifth (21.2%) of regulated enrolments came from Quintile 1, compared with 13.5% from Quintile 5 (Figure 19, Table A22).

Considerable variation occurred at college level in 2021/22. 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 proportion (23.4%) came from the least deprived area (Quintile 5) (Figure 19, Table A22).

Almost two-fifths (38.4%) of NWRC's regulated enrolments in 2021/22 were from Quintile 1, with 3.6% from Quintile 5. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, was quite polarised in terms of relative deprivation levels of intake. Over half of BMC regulated enrolments (52.7%) were from either Quintile 1 or Quintile 5 (Figure 19, Table A22).

Figure 19: Proportion of regulated enrolments of Northern Ireland domiciled students by relative deprivation quintile and FE College in 2021/22



Please note enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes are not reflected in the chart and are excluded from Table A22.

The 2,112 2021/22 enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes have been excluded from this relative deprivation analysis. Notably, 58.3% (1,231) of these enrolments were in NWRC. This is mainly due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 1,231 enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes in NWRC, 1,132 were RoI domiciled student enrolments.

Section 3: Higher Education enrolments

Background

Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) enrolments account for most 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 – 2017/18 to 2021/22

While HE in FE enrolments have decreased by 17.4% (2,066), from 11,848 in 2017/18 to 9,782 in 2021/22 (Table 2), the proportion of regulated enrolments in Higher Education (HE) has increased from 9.2% to 10.7% over the same period (Table A19).

Five of the six colleges experienced net decreases in the number of HE in FE enrolments [SRC (35.3%), NWRC (19.6%), NRC (19.4%), BMC (18.7%) and SWC (10.1%)] between 2017/18 and 2021/22. The sole net percentage increase over this period has been at SERC (13.5%) (Table 2).

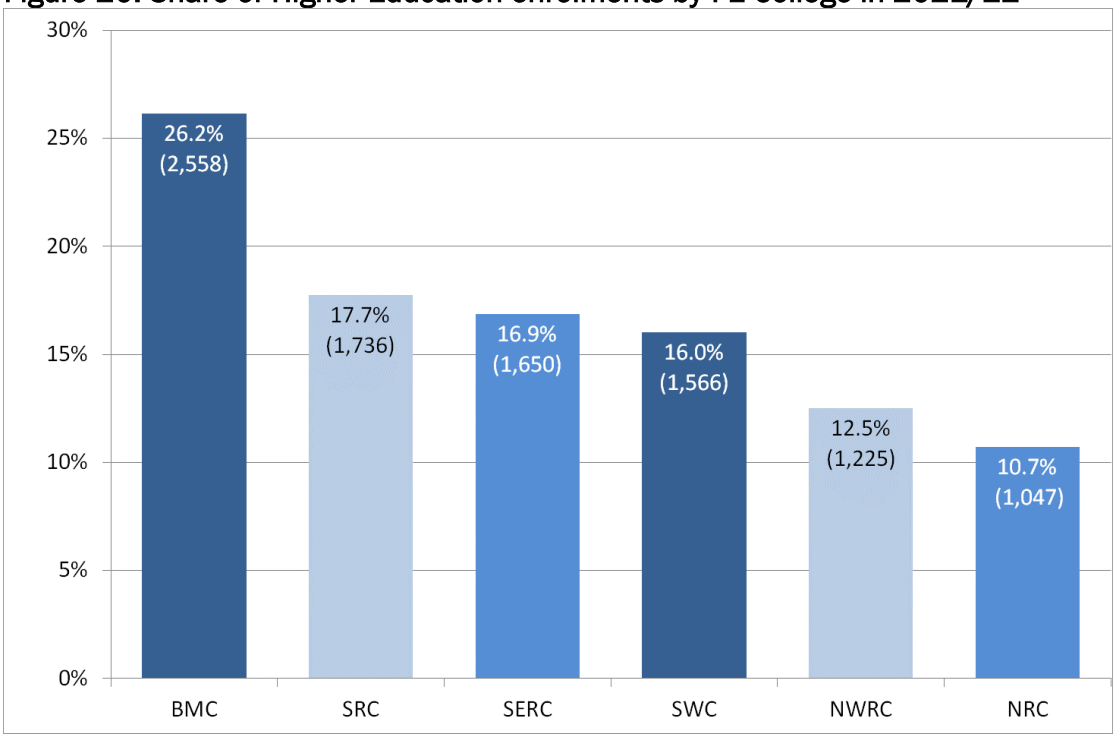
Table 2: Higher Education enrolments by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
FE College	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	3,146	3,030	2,933	2,638	2,558
NRC	1,299	1,170	1,161	1,019	1,047
NWRC	1,524	1,243	1,102	1,286	1,225
SERC	1,454	1,486	1,607	1,659	1,650
SRC	2,683	1,866	1,807	1,794	1,736
SWC	1,742	1,909	1,713	1,638	1,566
FE Sector Total	**11,848**	**10,704**	**10,323**	**10,034**	**9,782**

Higher Education enrolments in 2021/22

In 2021/22, BMC accounted for the highest proportion of all HE in FE enrolments (26.2%, 2,558) and NRC the lowest, with 10.7% (1,047) (Figure 20, Table 2).

Figure 20: Share of Higher Education enrolments by FE College in 2021/22



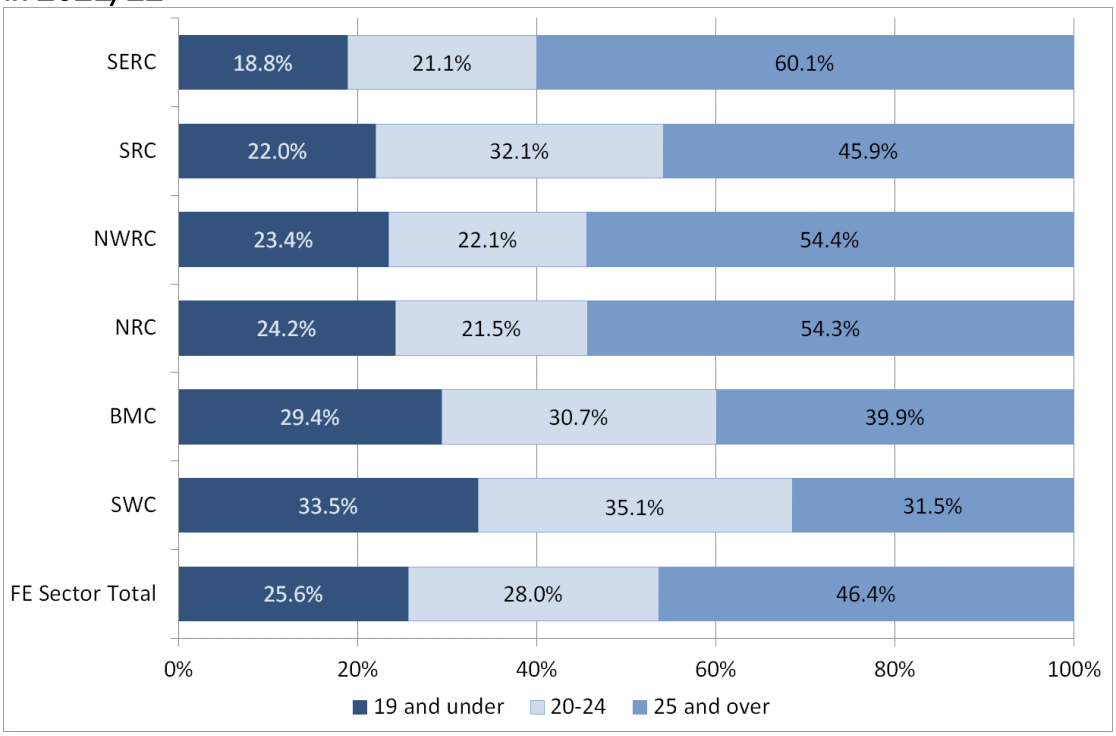
Age

Of the 9,782 HE in FE enrolments in 2021/22, the highest proportion was in the age group 25 and over (46.4%), followed by those aged 20 to 24 (28.0%) and those aged 19 and under (25.6%) (Figure 21, Table A23).

Three of the six FE Colleges (SERC, SRC and BMC) showed a similar trend to the overall FE Sector in 2021/22, with those aged 25 and over having the highest proportions of HE in FE enrolments (60.1%, 45.9% and 39.9% respectively) and those aged 19 and under the lowest (18.8%, 22.0% and 29.4% respectively) (Figure 21, Table A23).

In 2021/22 SWC had the highest proportion of HE in FE enrolments of those aged 19 and under (33.5%) and those aged 20 to 24 (35.1%), and also had the lowest proportion within the 25 and over group (31.5%) (Figure 21, Table A23).

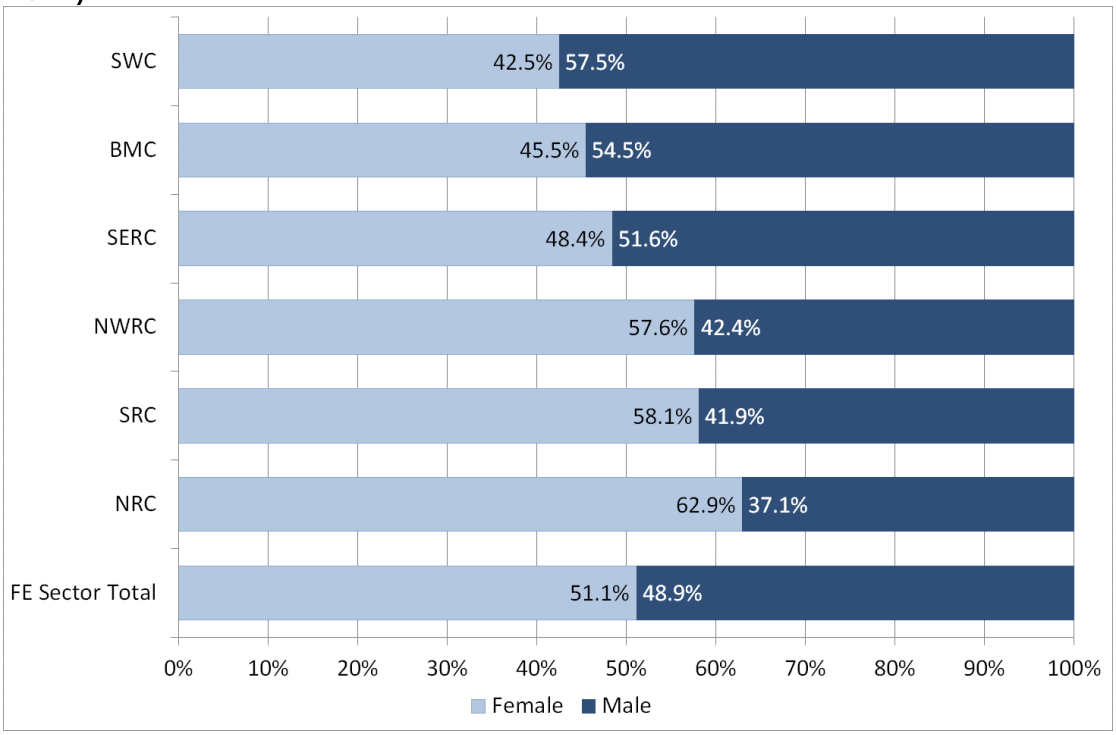
Figure 21: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE College in 2021/22



Sex

The sex profile of HE in FE enrolments varied greatly across the six colleges in 2021/22. Three colleges had higher proportions of male enrolments [SWC (57.5%), BMC (54.5%) and SERC (51.6%)], while the others had higher proportions of female enrolments [NRC (62.9%), SRC (58.1%) and NWRC (57.6%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly even split in the HE in FE sex profile, at 51.1% female and 48.9% male (Figure 22, Table A24).

Figure 22: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by sex and FE College in 2021/22



Mode of attendance

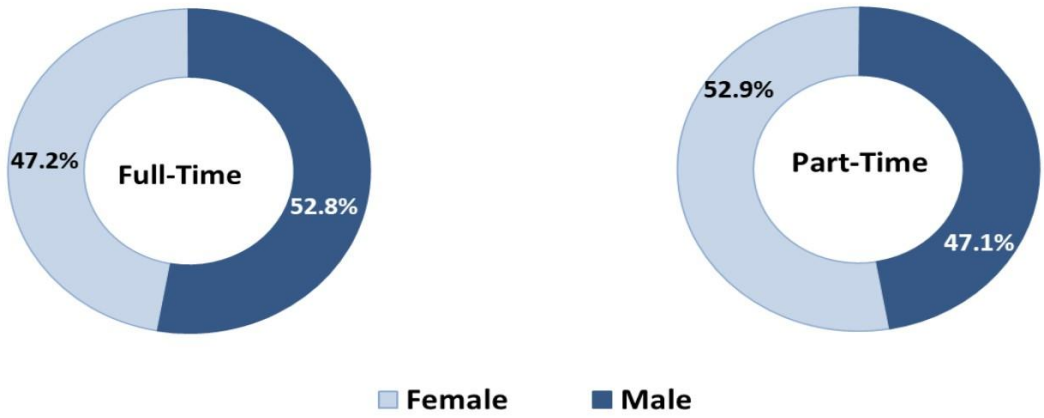
In 2021/22, 30.5% (2,988) of HE in FE enrolments were on a full-time basis and 69.5% were part-time (6,794). In comparison with the FE Sector, BMC (45.1%), NWRC (35.8%) and SWC (33.6%) had above average proportions of full-time enrolments, while SRC (16.0%), NRC (17.5%) and SERC (24.9%) had lower proportions (Table A25).

Mode of attendance and sex

For part-time provision, females made up the majority of HE in FE enrolments (52.9%) in 2021/22, while in full-time provision males (52.8%) accounted for the majority (Figure 23, Table A25).

In terms of the part-time provision and sex profile for each college, SWC, BMC and SERC deviated from the overall HE in FE pattern in 2021/22, with a majority of male enrolments (58.2%), (53.1%) and (50.5%) respectively. In full-time provision, NRC (62.3%) and NWRC (55.3%) differed from the FE Sector pattern, with a majority of female enrolments (Table A25).

Figure 23: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by sex and mode of attendance in 2021/22



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:

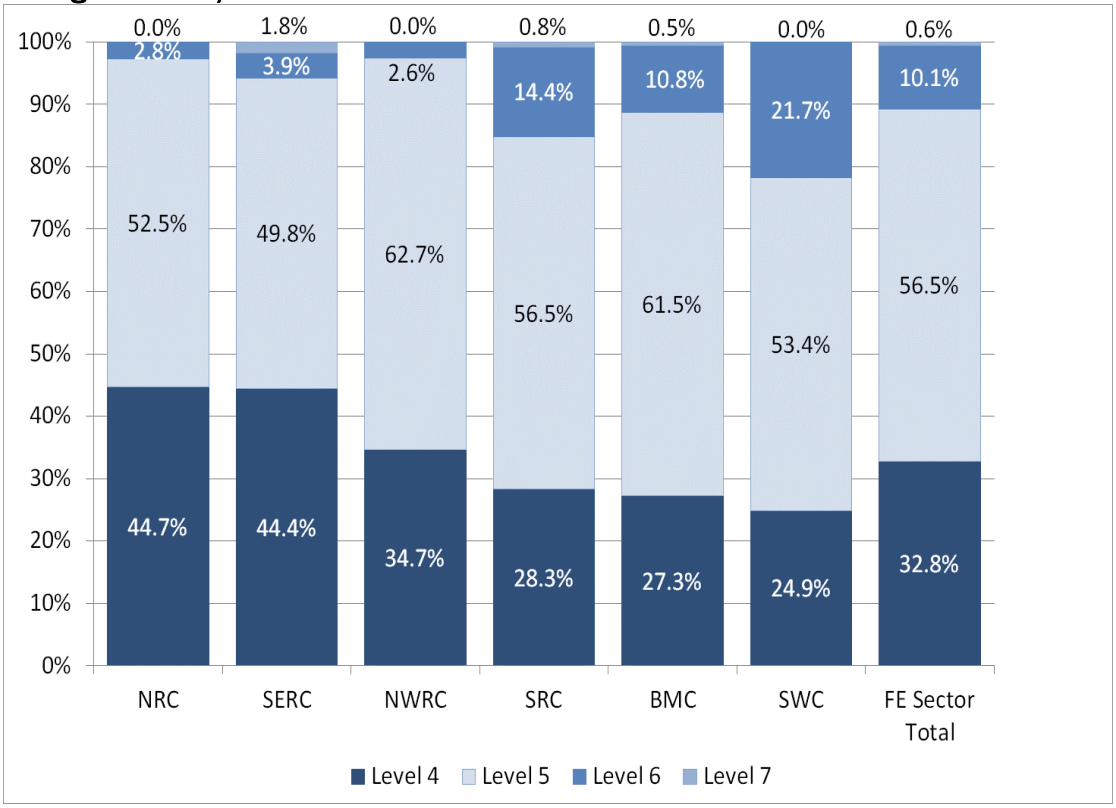
- Level 4 are Vocational Qualifications Level 4 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education and Higher National Certificates (HNC);
- Level 5 are Vocational Qualifications Level 5 and qualifications at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications, such as Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation Degrees 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 Level 7 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas;
- Level 8 are Vocational Qualifications Level 8 and qualifications at a level equivalent to doctorates.

Of the 9,782 HE in FE enrolments in 2021/22, the vast majority (89.3%) were at levels 4 or 5. Level 5 accounted for 56.5% (5,529) of enrolments and Level 4 32.8% (3,205), while 10.1% (991) were at Level 6 and 0.6% (57) at Level 7 (**Error! Reference source not found.**, Table A26).

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 2021/22, this ranged from 49.8% in SERC to 62.7% in NWRC. Across colleges, HE enrolments at Level 4 or Level 5 ranged from 78.3% in SWC to 97.4% in NWRC (**Error! Reference source not found.**, Table A26).

Figure 24: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by level of study and FE College in 2021/22



Subject area

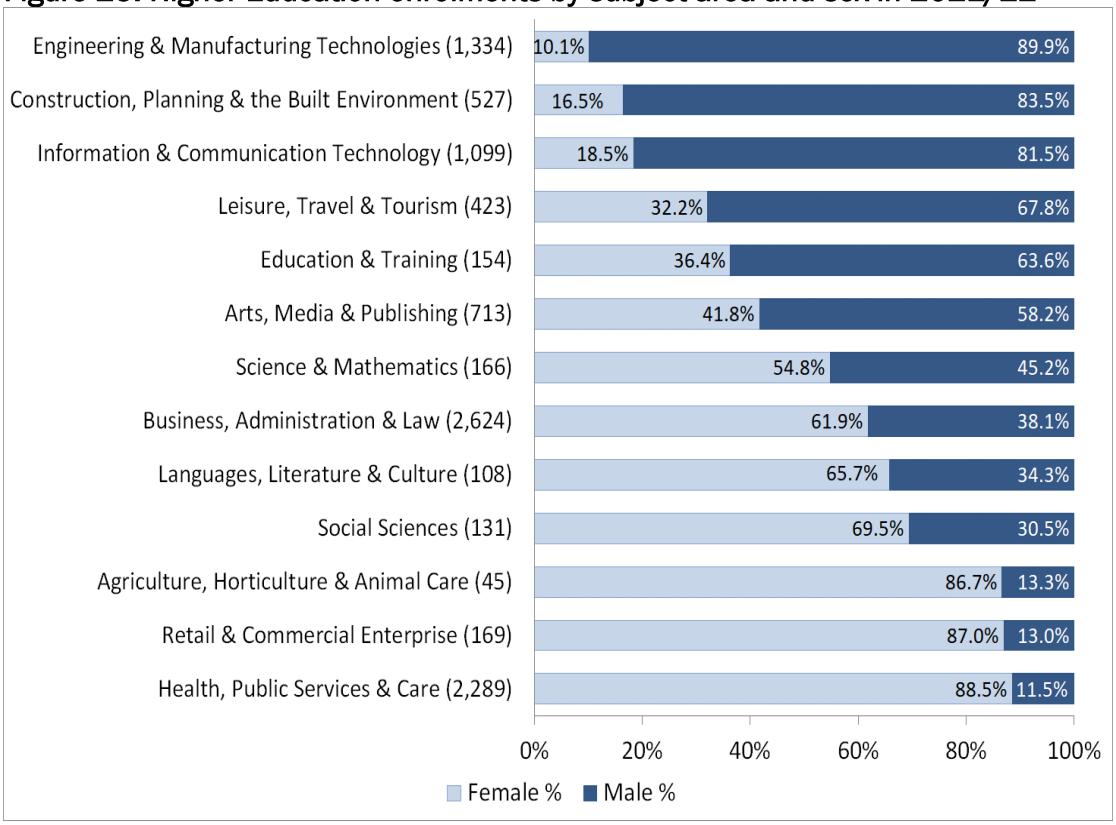
Of the 9,782 HE in FE enrolments in 2021/22, three-quarters (75.1%, 7,346) fell within four subject areas: 'Business, Administration and Law' (26.8%, 2,624); 'Health, Public Services and Care' (23.4%, 2,289); 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (13.6%, 1,334) and 'Information and Communication Technology' (11.2%, 1,099) (Table A27).

Subject area and sex

While the overall sex profile was fairly evenly split for all HE in FE enrolments in 2021/22, 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' (88.5%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' (87.0%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (89.9%) and 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment (83.5%) (Figure 25, Table A27).

Typically, the FE Colleges followed a similar pattern to the FE Sector subject area by sex profile in 2021/22. Notably in BMC the proportion of female HE in FE enrolments in 'Education and Training' was 67.6%, in comparison with 36.4% in the FE Sector. In contrast, the male share of the same subject area was 89.2% in SWC, as opposed to 63.6% in the FE Sector. In NWRC, the proportion of female HE in FE enrolments in 'Science and Mathematics' was 77.1% in comparison with 54.8% in the FE Sector. In contrast, the male share of the same subject area was 65.1% in SRC, as opposed to 45.2% in the FE Sector (Table A27).

Figure 25: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and sex in 2021/22



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

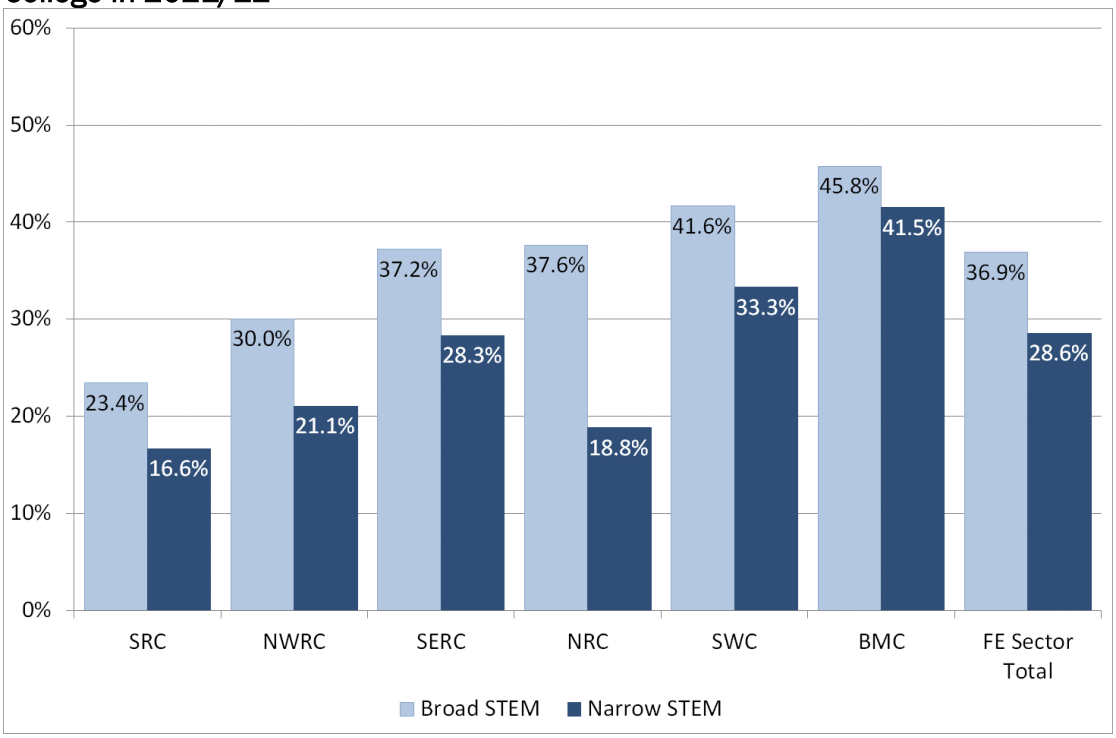
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

'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 2021/22, 'Broad' STEM accounted for 36.9% (3,606) of all HE in FE enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM accounted for 28.6% (2,794). Males accounted for over three-quarters of 'Broad' STEM (76.0%) and for over four-fifths of 'Narrow' STEM (83.0%) enrolments (Table A28).

In comparison with the FE Sector, BMC (45.8%), SWC (41.6%), NRC (37.6%) and SERC (37.2%) had higher 'Broad' STEM proportions of HE enrolments in 2021/22. BMC (41.5%) and SWC (33.3%) also had above average 'Narrow' STEM proportions (Figure 26, Table A28).

Figure 26: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE College in 2021/22



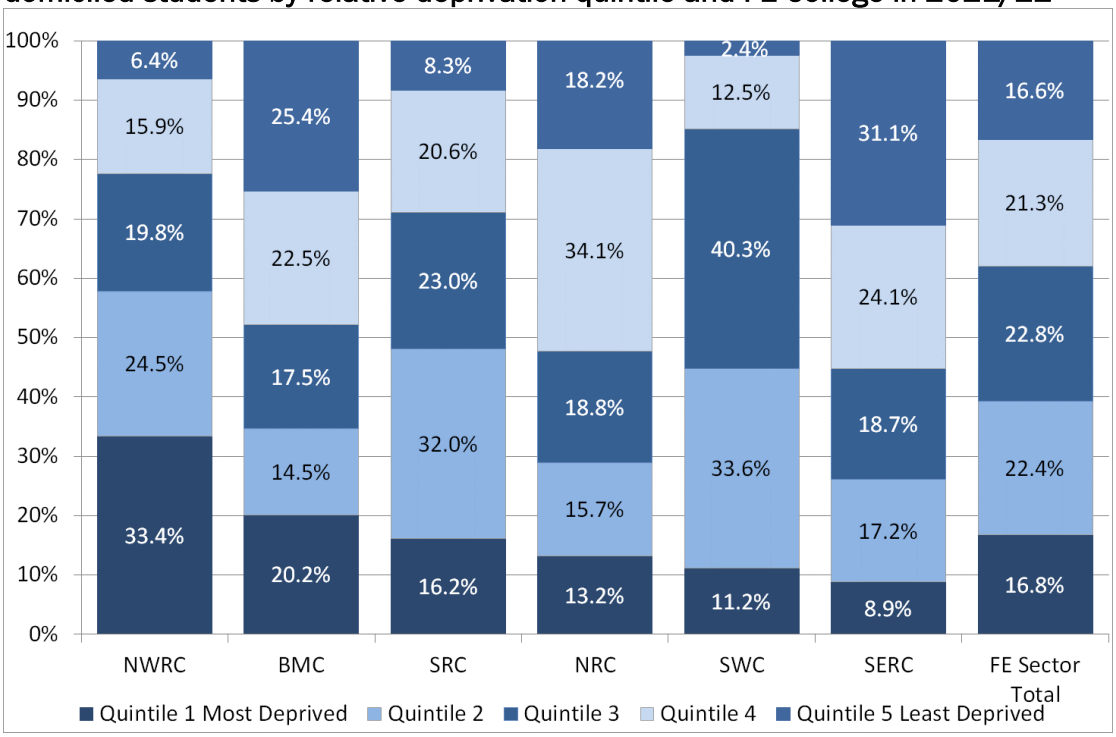
Deprivation

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. Only enrolments of Northern Ireland domicile students have been included; these have been identified by a known, valid Northern Ireland postcode in this analysis.

Almost two-fifths (39.3%) of 2021/22 HE in FE enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. One sixth (16.8%) of enrolments came from Quintile 1, similar to the proportion from Quintile 5 (16.6%) (Figure 27, Table A29).

When considering HE in FE enrolments from different deprivation quintiles across the six colleges, there was a lot of regional variation in 2021/22. NWRC attracted 33.4% of its HE enrolments from Quintile 1, compared with 6.4% from Quintile 5. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, is quite polarised in terms of deprivation levels of its intake, with 45.5% of enrolments being from either the most or least deprived quintile. In contrast, 13.6% of SWC enrolments came from these two quintiles (Figure 27, Table A29).

Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments of Northern Ireland domiciled students by relative deprivation quintile and FE College in 2021/22



Please note enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes are not reflected in the chart and are excluded from Table A29.

The 272 2021/22 HE in FE enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes have been excluded from this relative deprivation analysis. Notably, 50.7% (138) of these HE in FE enrolments were in NWRC. This is mainly due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 138 enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes in NWRC, 126 were RoI domiciled student enrolments.

Section 4: Qualifications and Performance

4.1 - 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 of an enrolment. Regulated enrolments are those that potentially result in a formal qualification at the end of the study. Consequently, performance analysis is only focused on the final year of 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 - 2017/18 to 2021/22

In each year between 2017/18 and 2021/22, over three-quarters 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 83.3% in 2017/18 to 75.3% in 2021/22 (Table 3).

Final year enrolments have decreased (by a net 35.9%), from 107,475 in 2017/18 to 68,859 in 2021/22. The number of students on final year enrolments has also fallen, by a net 25.0%, from 55,830 to 41,851 over the same period (Table 3).

Since 2017/18, net decreases have occurred in final year enrolments at each of the six FE Colleges [SRC (by 43.3%), SERC (41.3%), NRC (38.0%), SWC (35.9%), NWRC (28.6%) and BMC (25.5%)] (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of final year enrolments by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
FE College	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	22,246	20,188	18,242	15,332	16,580
NRC	15,103	13,826	11,705	8,977	9,361
NWRC	11,520	11,431	8,519	6,773	8,222
SERC	22,228	20,765	18,607	15,011	13,056
SRC	22,769	17,487	15,384	11,775	12,913
SWC	13,609	12,827	11,072	8,169	8,727
Total Final Year Enrolments	**107,475**	**96,524**	**83,529**	**66,037**	**68,859**
Total Regulated Enrolments	**129,054**	**118,160**	**107,760**	**87,368**	**91,403**
Final Year/Regulated (%)	**83.3%**	**81.7%**	**77.5%**	**75.6%**	**75.3%**
Total Students on Final Year Enrolments	**55,830**	**52,359**	**46,942**	**40,501**	**41,851**

4.2 – Qualifications

The following section focuses solely on qualifications from final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE Colleges. A student 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 4: Number of achievements in FE Colleges (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
Achievements	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Partial achievements	4,025	3,310	2,430	2,118	2,473
Total achievements	82,770	74,579	65,659	51,999	53,229
Partial achievement proportion	**4.9%**	**4.4%**	**3.7%**	**4.1%**	**4.6%**

As a proportion of all achievements, partial achievements fell from 4.9% in 2017/18 to 4.6% in 2021/22 (Table 4).

Trends – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Over a third (35.7%) fewer qualifications were awarded in FE Colleges in 2021/22 (53,229) than in 2017/18 (82,770); this includes a net decrease of 12,430 (18.9%) between 2019/20 (65,659) and 2021/22 (53,229) (Table 5).

Net decreases have occurred in qualifications awarded in all six colleges over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22 [SRC (by 43.0%), SERC (42.3%), NRC (34.7%), SWC (33.8%), NWRC (30.8%) and BMC (25.4%)] (Table 5).

Table 5: Number of qualifications achieved by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
FE College	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	17,457	16,051	14,643	12,159	13,017
NRC	10,443	9,304	8,219	6,969	6,818
NWRC	8,687	9,032	6,659	4,926	6,010
SERC	18,151	16,994	15,329	12,260	10,472
SRC	17,910	13,631	12,412	9,558	10,213
SWC	10,122	9,567	8,397	6,127	6,699
FE Sector Total	**82,770**	**74,579**	**65,659**	**51,999**	**53,229**

4.3 - 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 percentage of final year regulated enrolments completed by students. 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 final year regulated enrolments completed by students who achieve a qualification. 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 2021/22 analysis; these figures are available in the accompanying online tables.

- Success rate is recognised as the overall measure of performance, which is the percentage of final year regulated enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification.

Trends – 2017/18 to 2021/22

Retention rate

Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, the retention rate at FE Colleges has decreased in net terms, from 90.3% to 89.3%. Compared with 2017/18, this implies that proportionately fewer people stayed on and completed their course in the most recent year (Figure 28, Table A30).

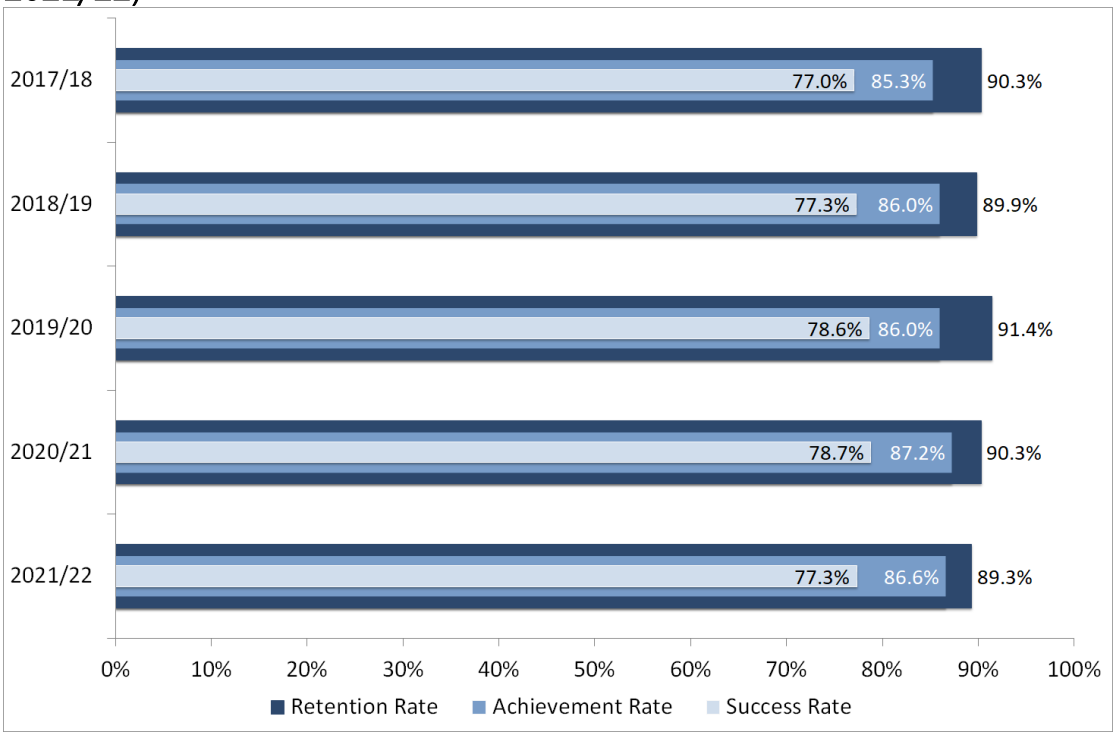
Achievement rate

The achievement rate at FE Colleges has increased by a net 1.3 percentage points, from 85.3% (2017/18) to 86.6% (2021/22). This indicates that, of those who completed their course, proportionately more people achieved their qualification in 2021/22 than in 2017/18 (Figure 28, Table A30).

Success rate

The success rate (that is, the percentage of final year regulated enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification) has increased in net terms, from 77.0% to 77.3%, over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22 (Figure 28, Table A30).

Figure 28: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments (2017/18 to 2021/22)



FE Colleges

Retention rate

Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, increases in retention rates occurred in NRC and BMC (over 2.4 and over 0.9 percentage points respectively). In contrast, retention rates decreased in SERC, NWRC, SRC and SWC (4.8, 2.9, 0.9 and over 0.4 percentage points respectively) (Table A30).

Achievement rate

Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, achievement rates increased in five colleges, SERC, SWC, NRC, SRC and NWRC (nearly 3.3, 3.0, almost 2.0, over 1.3 and 0.2 percentage points respectively). In contrast, the achievement rate in BMC decreased by almost 0.9 percentage points (Table A30).

Success rate

Success rates increased in three colleges, NRC, SWC and SRC (3.7, 2.4 and 0.4 percentage points respectively). BMC had no net change over the period, while decreases occurred in two colleges, NWRC and SERC (2.3 and over 1.4 percentage points respectively) (Table A30).

Academic Year 2021/22

Performance rates by age

Retention rate

In 2021/22, the retention rate for those aged 19 and under was 88.3%, for the 20 to 24 age group it was 90.0%, and for those aged 25 and over it was 90.6% (Figure 29, Table A31).

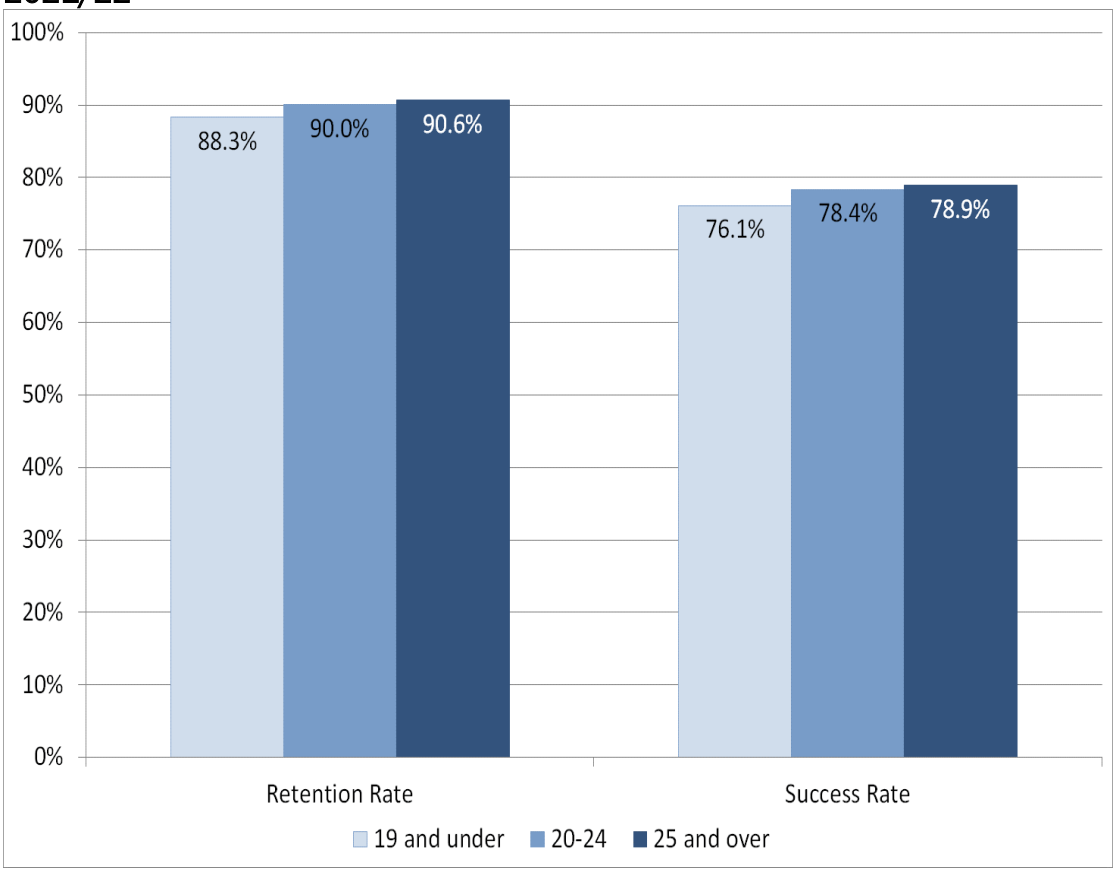
In BMC, SWC, SERC, NRC and NWRC, the highest retention rates were in the 25 and over age group, at 92.7%, 92.4%, 89.7%, 89.6% and 88.4% respectively. In SRC the highest retention rate was in the 20-24 age group, at 92.3% (Table A31).

Success rate

In 2021/22, the success rate for those aged 19 and under was 76.1%, for the 20 to 24 age group it was 78.4%, and for those aged 25 and over it was 78.9% (Figure 29, Table A31).

The success rates for the 19 and under age group ranged from 70.0% in NWRC to 79.0% in SRC. For the 20 to 24 age group, they ranged from 74.0% in NRC to 80.6% in SERC, while those for the 25 and over age group ranged from 74.1% in NRC to 84.5% in SERC (Table A31).

Figure 29: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by age band in 2021/22



Performance rates by sex

Retention rate

In 2021/22, within the FE Sector, males (90.6%) had a higher retention rate than females (88.0%) (Figure 30, Table A32).

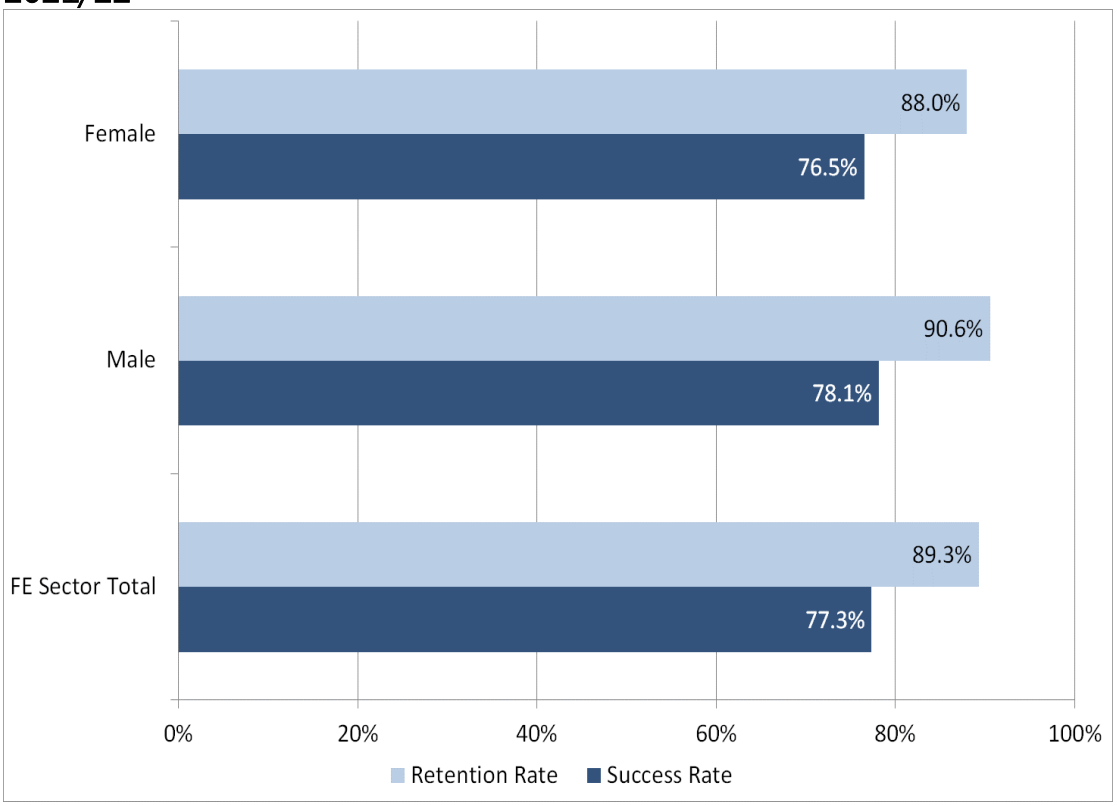
In five of the six colleges, the male retention rate was higher than the female rate in 2021/22. However, in NRC the female retention rate (88.6%) was higher than the male retention rate (88.1%). Across all colleges, the female retention rate ranged from 84.8% in NWRC to 90.3% in BMC, while the male retention rate ranged from 88.1% in NRC to 93.9% in SRC. (Table A32).

Success rate

In 2021/22, within the FE Sector, males (78.1%) had a higher success rate than females (76.5%) (Figure 30, Table A32).

Across all colleges, the female success rate ranged from 71.7% in NWRC to 78.8% in BMC, while the male success rate ranged from 71.3% in NRC to 82.2% in SERC (Table A32).

Figure 30: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by sex in 2021/22



Performance rates by mode of attendance

Retention rate

In 2021/22, the part-time retention rate (89.7%) was higher than that for full-time enrolments (87.6%) (Figure 31, Table A33).

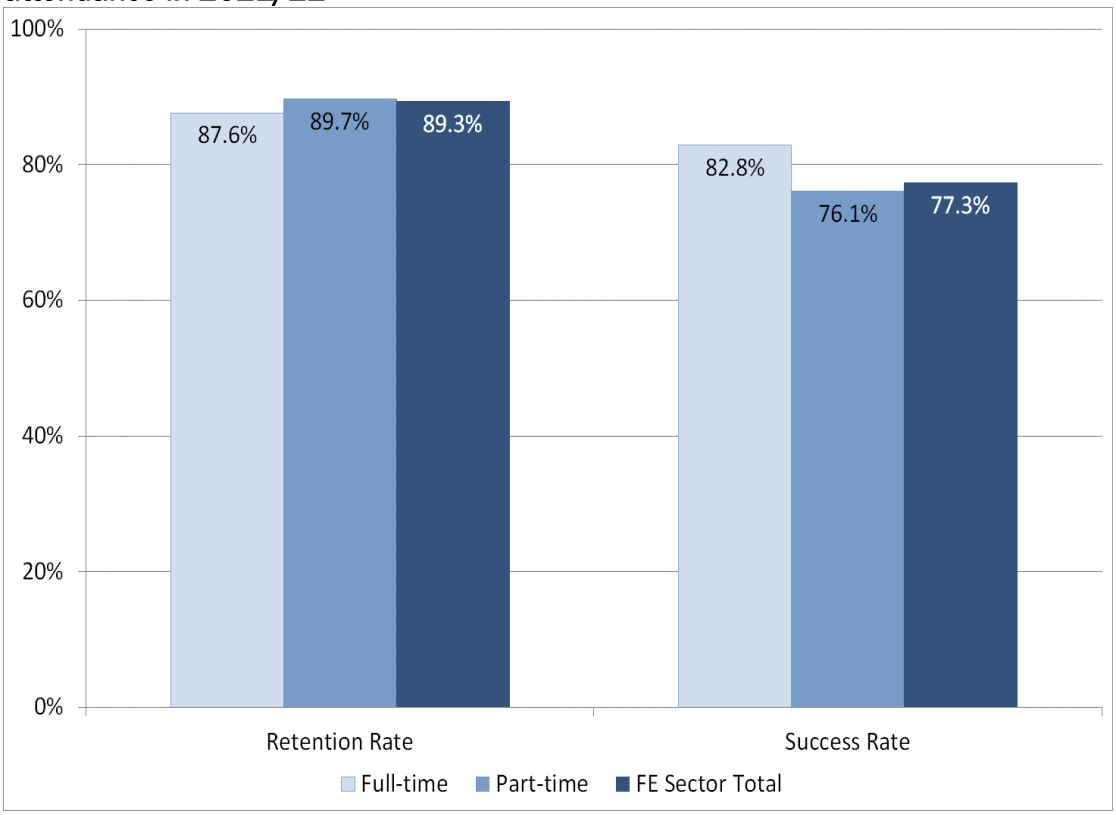
In five of the six colleges, the part-time retention rate was higher than the full-time rate in 2021/22. However, in BMC the full-time retention rate (92.7%) was higher than the part-time retention rate (90.2%). Across all colleges, the full-time retention rate ranged from 82.9% in NWRC to 92.7% in BMC, while the part-time retention rate ranged from 87.3% in SERC to 91.8% in SWC. (Table A33).

Success rate

In 2021/22, the full-time success rate (82.8%) was higher than that for part-time enrolments (76.1%) (Figure 31, Table A33).

In all six colleges, the full-time success rate was higher than the part-time rate in 2021/22. Success rates within part-time provision ranged from 71.6% in NWRC to 79.8% in SERC, while those for full-time provision ranged from 77.3% in SWC to 89.9% in BMC. The largest difference in success rates between full-time (89.9%) and part-time (76.6%) provision occurred in BMC (13.3 percentage points) (Table A33).

Figure 31: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2021/22



Performance rates by provision area

Retention rate

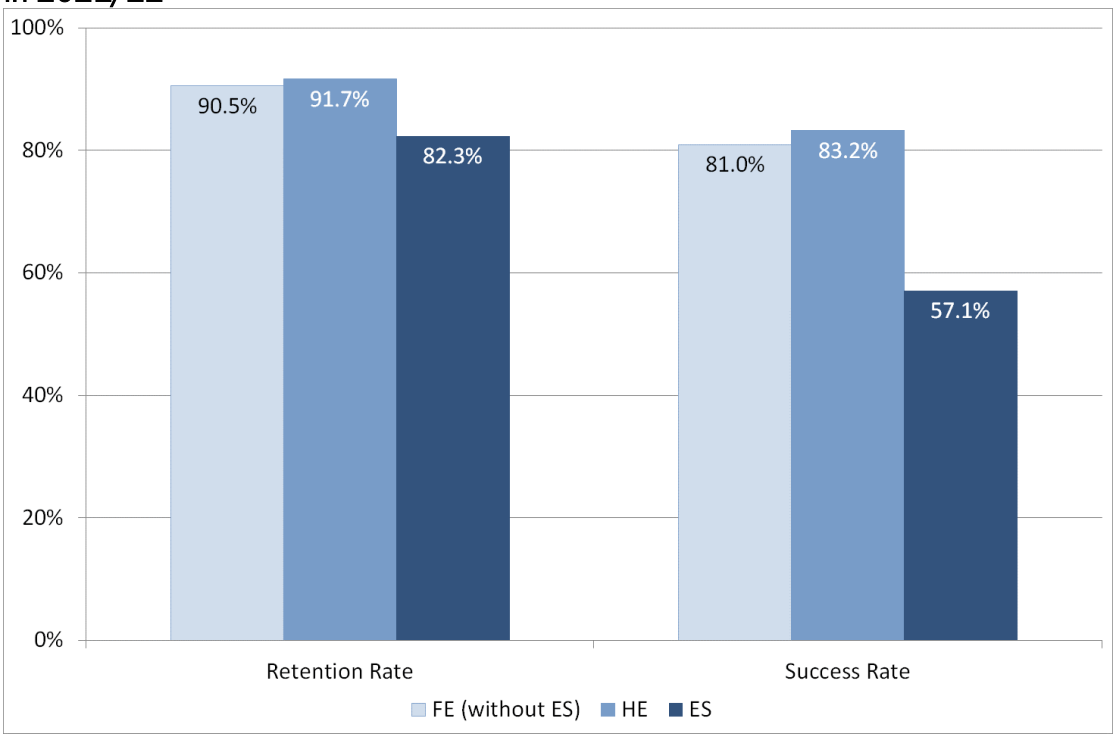
In 2021/22, within the FE Colleges, HE students were more likely than Further Education (FE) or Essential Skills (ES) students to complete their courses. The retention rates across the three main provision areas were 91.7% for HE, 90.5% for FE and 82.3% for ES regulated enrolments (Figure 32, Table A34).

Within FE provision, retention rates ranged from 88.3% in NWRC to 92.9% in SRC, while those for HE provision ranged from 86.9% in SRC to 96.8% in BMC. Retention rates within ES provision ranged from 76.5% in NWRC to 86.8% in SRC. In three colleges, the highest retention rates were within HE provision [BMC (96.8%), NRC (94.5%) and NWRC (90.3%)], while in, SRC (92.9%), SWC (92.4%) and SERC (88.5%) the highest retention rate was within FE (Table A34).

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 2021/22 were 83.2% for HE, 81.0% for FE and 57.1% for ES (Figure 32, Table A34).

Figure 32: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by provision area in 2021/22



In 2021/22, success rates within FE provision ranged from 78.2% in NRC to 83.8% in SERC, while those for HE provision ranged from 77.9% in SRC to 89.7% in BMC. Success rates within ES provision ranged from 46.0% in NWRC to 62.6% in BMC. In four of the six colleges, the highest success rates were within HE provision. The exceptions were SRC (83.6%) and NWRC (78.9%), where the highest success rates were within FE (Table A34).

Performance rates by level of study

Retention rate

In 2021/22, the retention rate in FE Colleges generally increased as the level of study increased, ranging from 87.9% at Entry and Level 1 to 91.7% at Level 4 and above (Figure 33, Table A35).

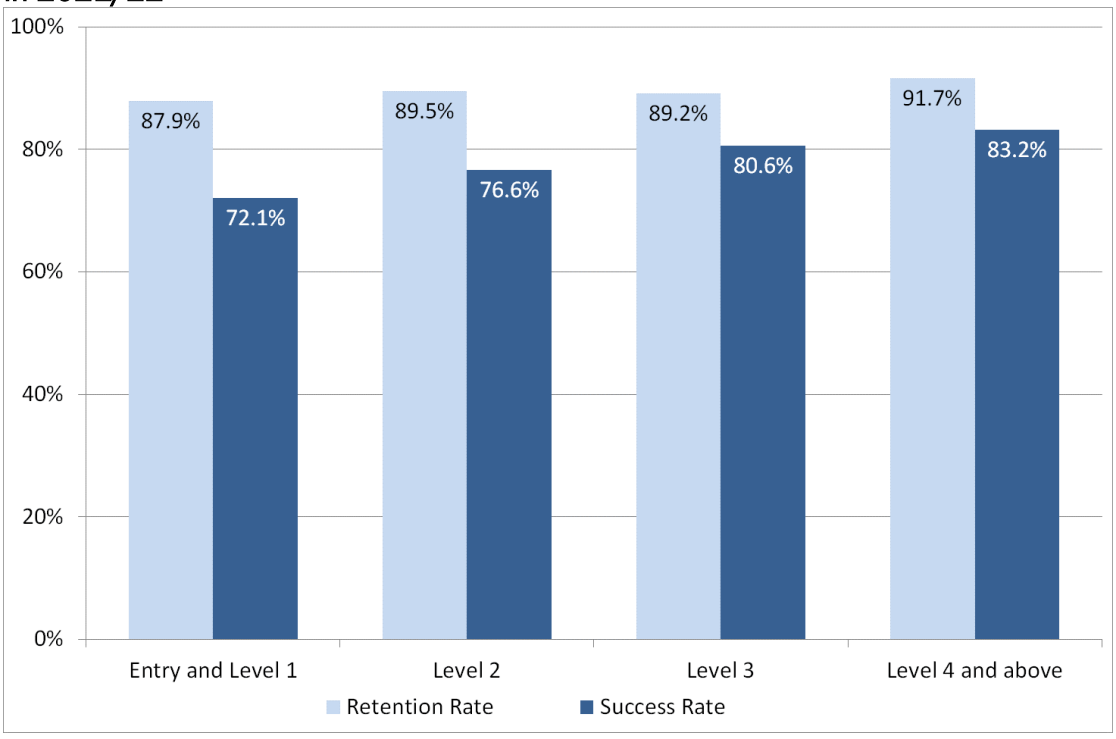
Two colleges followed the FE Sector pattern of the lowest retention rates being at Entry and Level 1 [SERC (81.8%) and NWRC (84.1%)]. Three colleges followed the FE Sector pattern of the highest retention rates being at Level 4 and above [BMC (96.8%), NRC (94.5%) and NWRC (90.3%)]. Across all colleges, the lowest retention rate was at Entry and Level 1 in SERC (81.8%) and the highest retention rate was at Level 4 and above in BMC (96.8%) (Table A35).

Success rate

In 2021/22, success rates in FE Colleges increased as the level increased, ranging from 72.1% (Entry and Level 1) to 83.2% (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 33, Table A35).

In five colleges, the lowest success rates in 2021/22 were at Entry and Level 1, ranging from 67.1% in NWRC to 72.8% in BMC. In SWC, the lowest success rate was at Level 2 (71.8%). In five colleges, the highest success rates were at Level 4 and above, with BMC the highest at 89.7%, the exception was SRC, where the highest rate (81.3%) was at both Level 3 and Level 2 (Table A35).

Figure 33: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by level of study in 2021/22



Performance rates by subject area

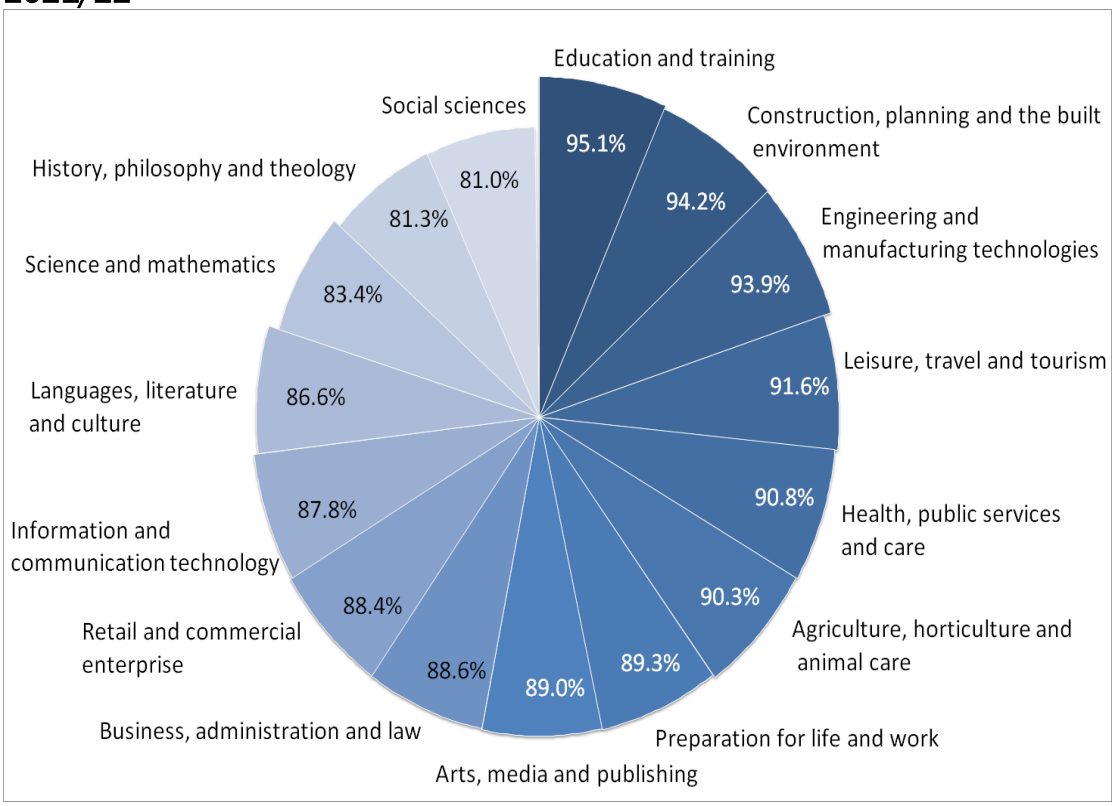
Retention rate

Subject area retention rates ranged from 81.0% in 'Social sciences' to 95.1% in 'Education and training' in 2021/22 (Figure 34, Table A36).

In 2021/22, the highest retention rates were also in 'Education and training' at SRC (100.0%), SWC (100.0%) and NRC (95.9%) (Table A36).

Across all colleges, subject area retention rates ranged from 76.6% at SERC in 'History, philosophy and theology' to 100.0% at SRC in both 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care' and 'Education and Training' as well as 100.0% at SWC in 'Education and Training' (Table A36).

Figure 34: Retention rates of final year regulated enrolments by subject area in 2021/22



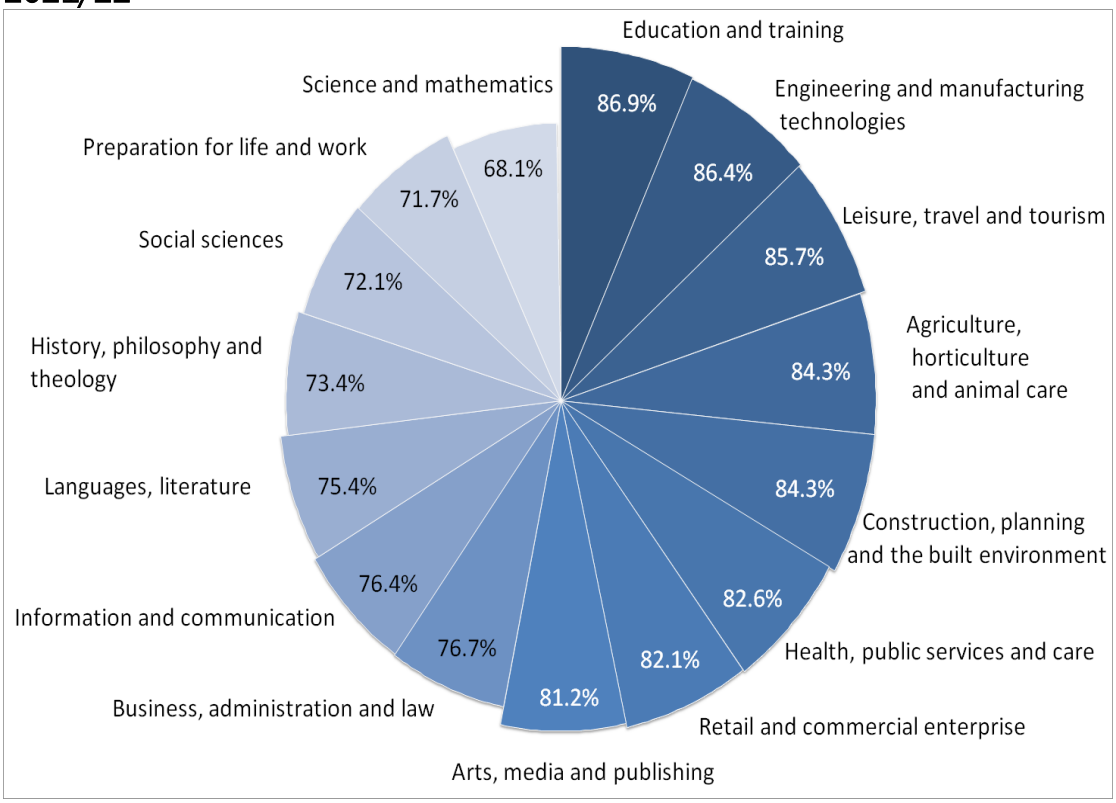
Success rate

In 2021/22, subject area success rates ranged from 68.1% in 'Science and mathematics' to 86.9% in 'Education and training' (Figure 35, Table A36).

Across all colleges, subject area success rates ranged from 54.1% in 'Preparation for life and work' at NWRC to 100% at SRC in 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care' (Table A36).

In SRC (100.0%), SWC (91.2%) and NRC (89.0%), the highest success rates were in the subject area, 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care'. In NWRC (54.1%), NRC (61.9%) and SRC (75.6%), the lowest success rates were in the subject area, 'Preparation for life and work' (Table A36).

Figure 35: Success rates of final year regulated enrolments by subject area in 2021/22



Performance rates by STEM indicator

Retention rate

In 2021/22, the FE Sector retention rate was higher for 'Broad' STEM (90.8%) than those for either 'Narrow' STEM (89.7%) or non-STEM (88.7%) (Figure 36, Table A37).

In comparison with the FE Sector average, three colleges [SRC (93.8%), BMC (91.4%) and NWRC (91.1%)] had higher retention rates for 'Broad' STEM in 2021/22. Two of these colleges also had above average 'Narrow' STEM retention rates [SRC (94.7%) and BMC (89.8%)] (Table A37).

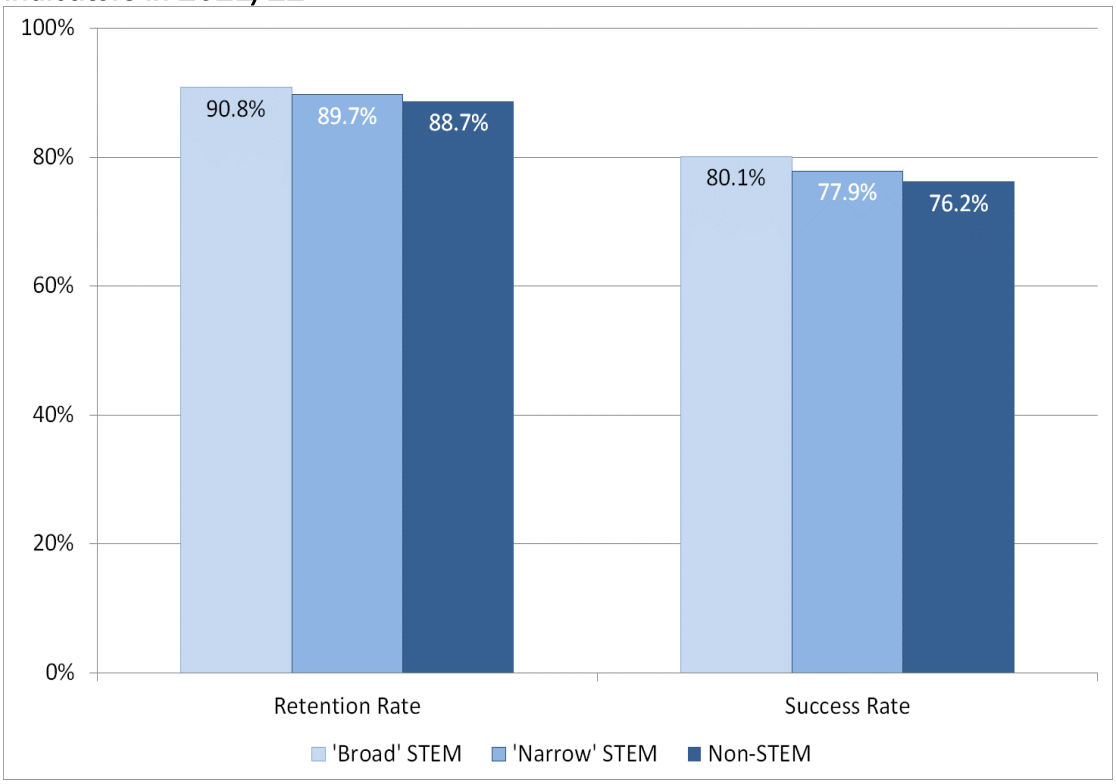
Success rate

In 2021/22, the FE Sector success rate was higher for 'Broad' STEM (80.1%) than those for either 'Narrow' STEM (77.9%) or non-STEM (76.2%) (Figure 36, Table A37).

Across all colleges in 2021/22, the success rate for 'Broad-STEM' ranged from 73.6% in NRC to 85.5% in SERC (Table A37).

In 2021/22, success rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 66.9% in NRC to 85.4% in SERC. NRC's 'Narrow' STEM success rate (66.9%) was over 10.9 percentage points below the FE Sector average (77.9%) in 2021/22 (Table A37).

Figure 36: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2021/22



Performance rates by deprivation quintile

Retention rate

Across the FE Sector, 2021/22 retention rates were higher for less deprived areas; ranging from 87.3% for the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1) to 91.3% for the least deprived quintile (Quintile 5) (Figure 37, Table A38).

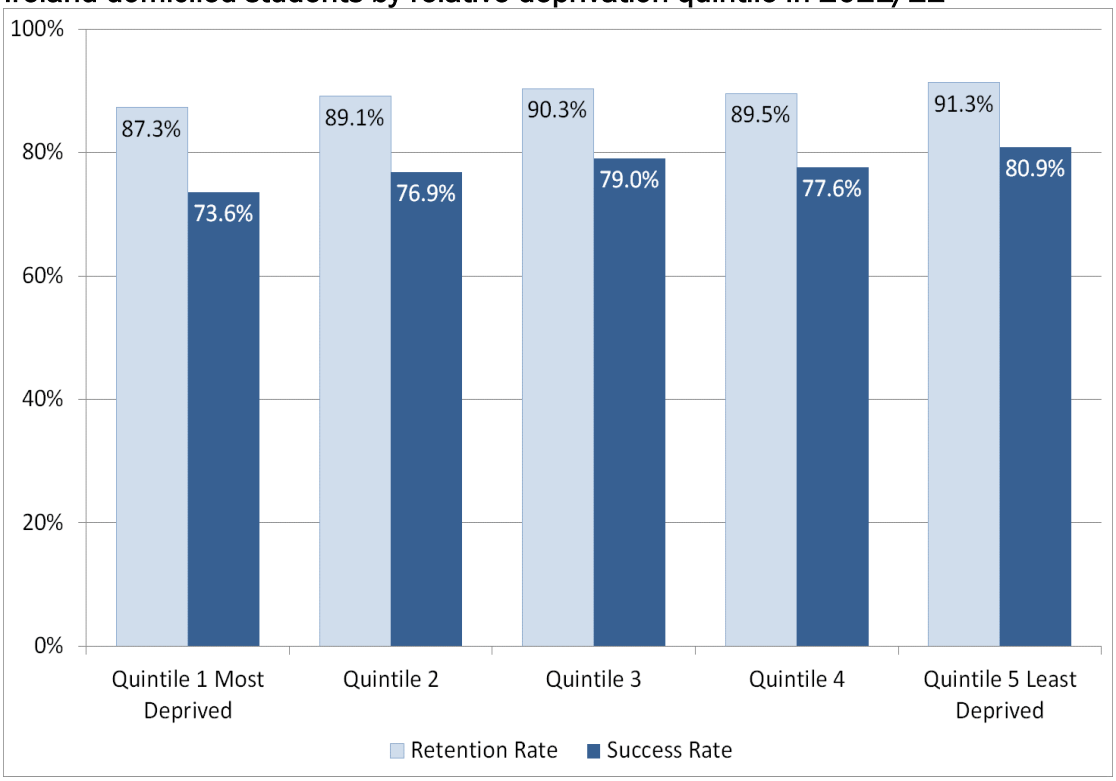
In 2021/22, final year enrolments from Quintile 5 had the highest retention rates at five colleges, ranging from 89.1% in SERC to 100.0% in SWC. At NWRC the highest retention rate was in Quintile 3 (89.7%). Across colleges, the retention rate ranged from 84.4% in Quintile 1 at both NWRC and SERC to 100.0% in Quintile 5 at SWC (Table A38).

Success rate

In 2021/22, success rates in the FE Sector ranged upwards from 73.6% for final year enrolments from Quintile 1 to 80.9% for those from Quintile 5 (Figure 37, Table A38).

Across the colleges, the success rate ranged from 68.5% in Quintile 1 at NWRC to 83.1% in Quintile 5 at SERC. NWRC had the widest range (10.6 percentage points) between quintiles with the lowest and highest success rates [Quintile 1 (68.5%) and Quintile 3 (79.1%)] (Table A38).

Figure 37: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments of Northern Ireland domiciled students by relative deprivation quintile in 2021/22



Please note enrolments with unknown or invalid postcodes are not reflected in the chart and are excluded from Table A38.

Section 5: Students

Background

The analysis in this section relates to activity with regard to all FE Sector students, those enrolled on regulated and higher education courses and the qualifications they have achieved. This analysis has been produced in response to feedback received from the FE Activity readership survey we conducted in September 2019 and has now been incorporated into this bulletin. In addition to the tables below, further Annex tables relating to students are listed in this publication's contents and can be found alongside this document on the website.

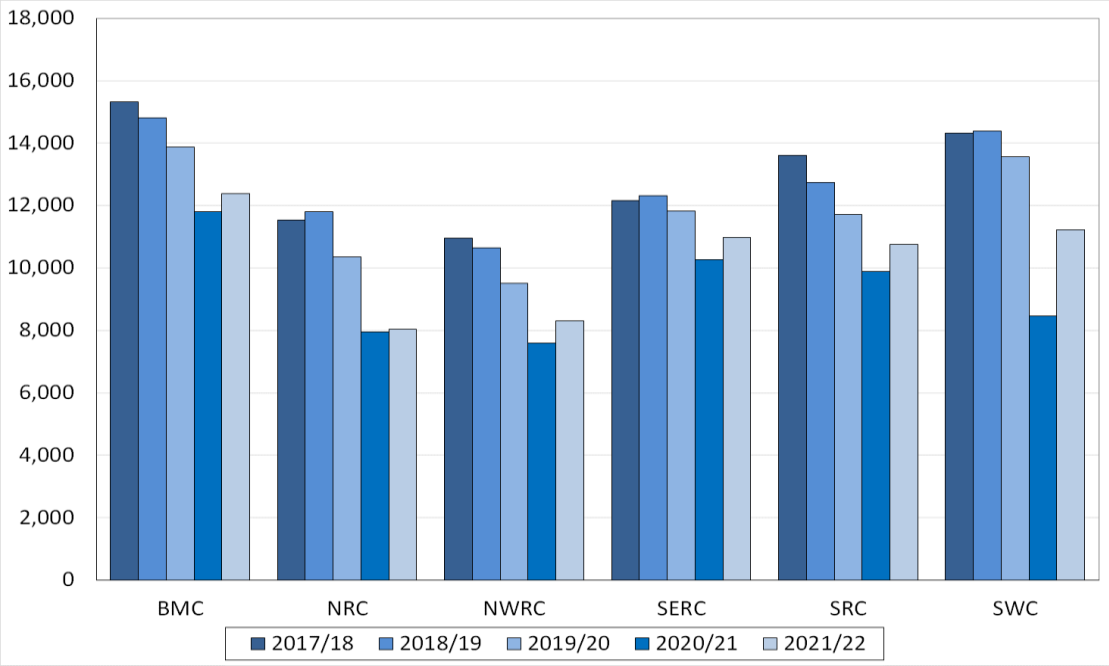
5.1. All students enrolled

Table 6: All students enrolled by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
FE College	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	15,321	14,812	13,882	11,794	12,384
NRC	11,540	11,795	10,350	7,955	8,042
NWRC	10,960	10,641	9,507	7,592	8,309
SERC	12,166	12,305	11,815	10,268	10,983
SRC	13,599	12,737	11,720	9,889	10,753
SWC	14,328	14,380	13,573	8,473	11,225
FE Sector Total	**77,914**	**76,670**	**70,847**	**55,971**	**61,696**

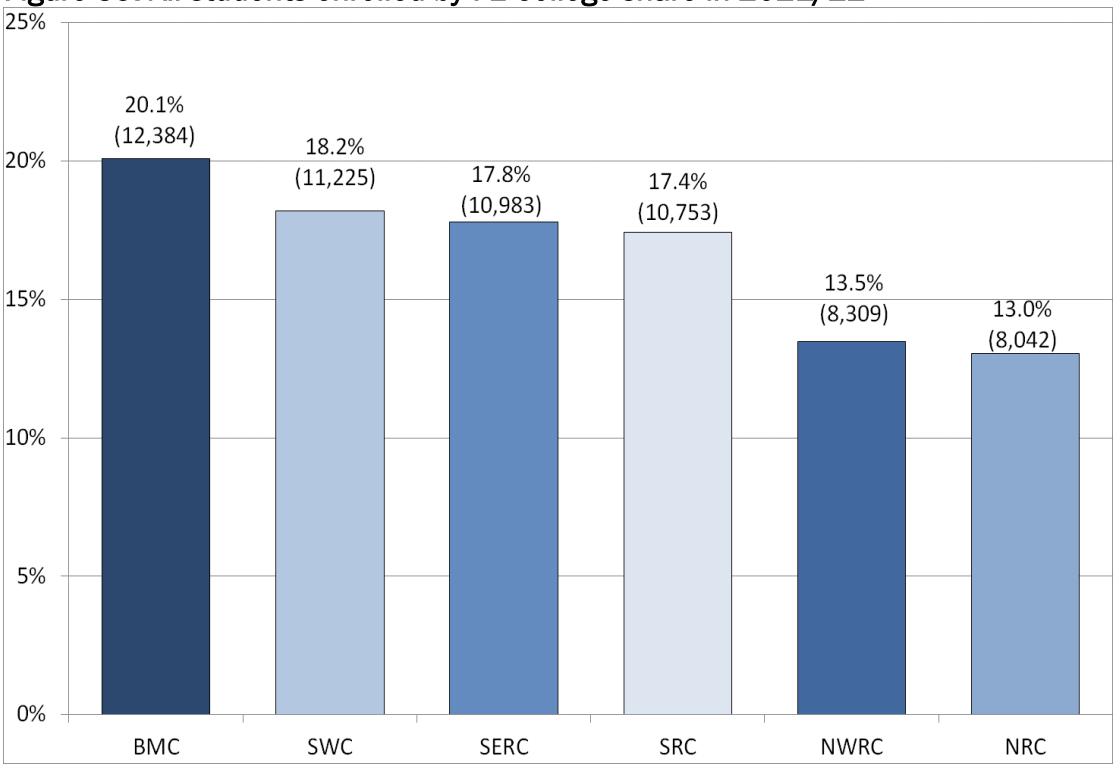
After falling by 21,943 (28.2%) between 2017/18 (77,914) and 2020/21 (55,971), most noticeably between 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of students increased by 5,725 (10.2%) in 2021/22, to 61,696. While much of this recent increase related to part-time students and to students aged 25 and over, overall student numbers continued to be impacted by a longer-term decrease in part-time study, the relatively low number of 16-19 year-olds and pandemic-related GCSE and GCE grading arrangements (Figure 38, Table 6).

Figure 38: All students enrolled by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)



Since 2017/18, student numbers have decreased in net terms at all six FE Colleges. Over this period, the largest net percentage decrease has occurred at NRC (30.3%), from 11,540 in 2017/18 to 8,042 in 2021/22, while the smallest decrease has been at SERC (9.7%), from 12,166 to 10,983 (Figure 38, Table 6).

Figure 39: All students enrolled by FE College share in 2021/22



In the most recent academic year (2021/22), BMC had the highest share of the 61,696 students, accounting for 20.1% (12,384), and NRC the lowest, with 13.0% (8,042) (Figure 39, Table 6).

5.2. All students enrolled by regulated status

Table 7: All students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and age band (2017/18 to 2021/22)

Regulated Status	Age Band	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Non-regulated	19 and under	4,609	5,173	4,832	1,342	3,713
	20-24	993	1,152	956	720	868
	25 and over	8,275	8,807	7,672	3,040	5,611
	Unknown	111	481	202	61	21
	Total	**13,988**	**15,613**	**13,662**	**5,163**	**10,213**
Regulated	19 and under	30,922	29,334	28,290	25,303	23,922
	20-24	9,487	9,128	8,940	8,592	8,611
	25 and over	23,510	22,593	19,954	16,900	18,947
	Unknown	7	2	1	13	3
	Total	**63,926**	**61,057**	**57,185**	**50,808**	**51,483**
FE Sector Total	**19 and under**	**35,531**	**34,507**	**33,122**	**26,645**	**27,635**
	20-24	**10,480**	**10,280**	**9,896**	**9,312**	**9,479**
	25 and over	**31,785**	**31,400**	**27,626**	**19,940**	**24,558**
	Unknown	**118**	**483**	**203**	**74**	**24**
	Total	**77,914**	**76,670**	**70,847**	**55,971**	**61,696**

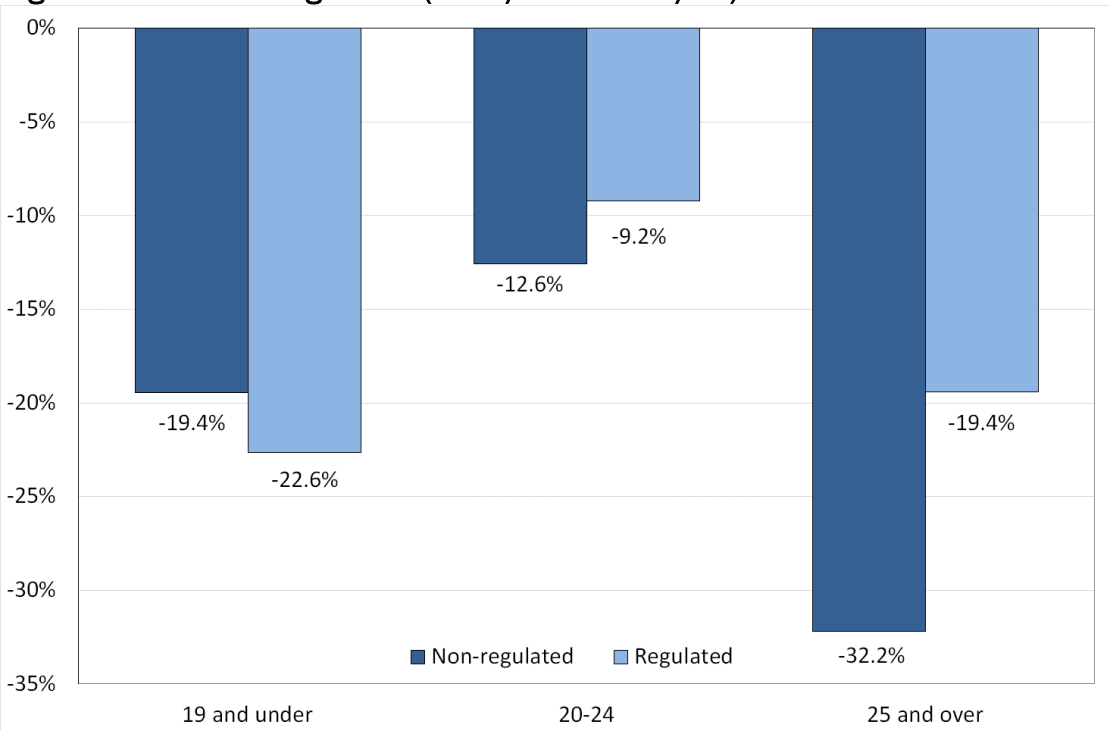
The number of students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses at FE Colleges has decreased by a net 27.0%, from 13,988 in 2017/18 to 10,213 in 2021/22; this includes a 25.2% net fall on 2019/20 (13,662). Over the same period, the number of students enrolled on regulated courses at FE Colleges has decreased by a net 19.5%, from 63,926 to 51,483, including an 10.0% net fall on 2019/20 (57,185) (Table 7).

Age

Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, the number of students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses has decreased in net terms in each of the age bands, ranging from 12.6% in the 20-24 age band to 32.2% among those aged 25 and over (Figure 40, Table 7).

Since 2017/18, the number of students enrolled on regulated courses has decreased in net terms in each of the age bands, ranging from 9.2% in the 20-24 age band to 22.6% among those aged 19 and under (Figure 40, Table 7).

Figure 40: Net percentage change in students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and age band (2017/18 to 2021/22)

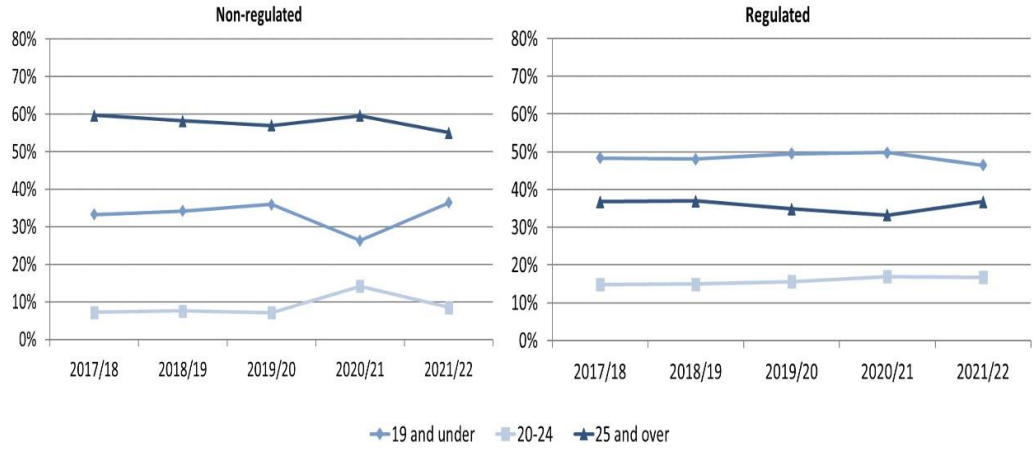


Please note students with unknown ages (<4.0%) are excluded from the chart, but are included in Table 7.

The aged 19 and under share of students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses has increased in net terms, from 33.2% in 2017/18 to 36.4% in 2021/22, while for those aged 20-24 the share has increased in net terms from 7.2% to 8.5% over the same period. Conversely, the proportion of those aged 25 and over has decreased in net terms, from 59.6% in 2017/18 to 55.1% in 2021/22 (Figure 41, Table 7).

The aged 19 and under share of students enrolled on regulated courses has decreased in net terms, from 48.4% in 2017/18 to 46.5% in 2021/22. Conversely, the proportion of those aged 20-24 has increased in net terms over this period, from 14.8% to 16.7% (Figure 41, Table 7).

Figure 41: Proportion of students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and age band (2017/18 to 2021/22)



Please note students with unknown ages (<4.0%) are excluded from the chart, but are included in Table 7.

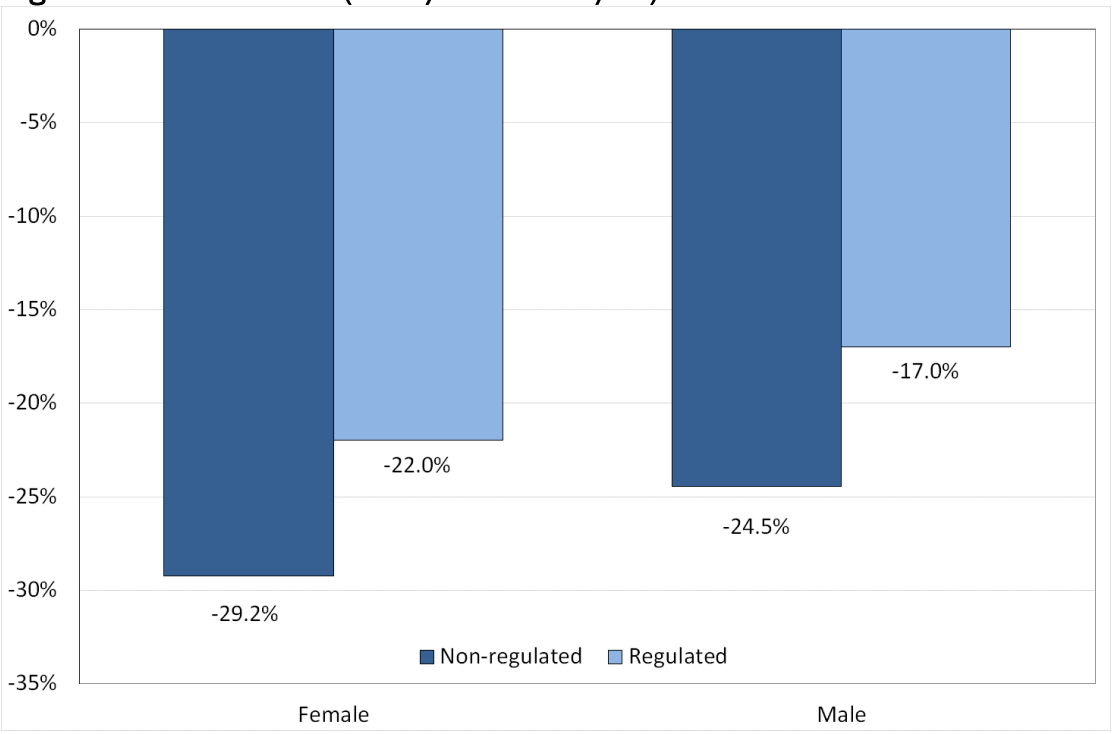
Sex

Table 8: All students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and sex (2017/18 to 2021/22)

Regulated Status	Sex	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Non-regulated	Female	7,430	8,601	7,527	2,526	5,259
	Male	6,558	7,012	6,135	2,637	4,954
	Total	**13,988**	**15,613**	**13,662**	**5,163**	**10,213**
Regulated	Female	31,747	29,330	27,444	24,362	24,767
	Male	32,179	31,727	29,741	26,446	26,716
	Total	**63,926**	**61,057**	**57,185**	**50,808**	**51,483**
FE Sector Total	**Female**	**39,177**	**37,931**	**34,971**	**26,888**	**30,026**
	Male	**38,737**	**38,739**	**35,876**	**29,083**	**31,670**
	Total	**77,914**	**76,670**	**70,847**	**55,971**	**61,696**

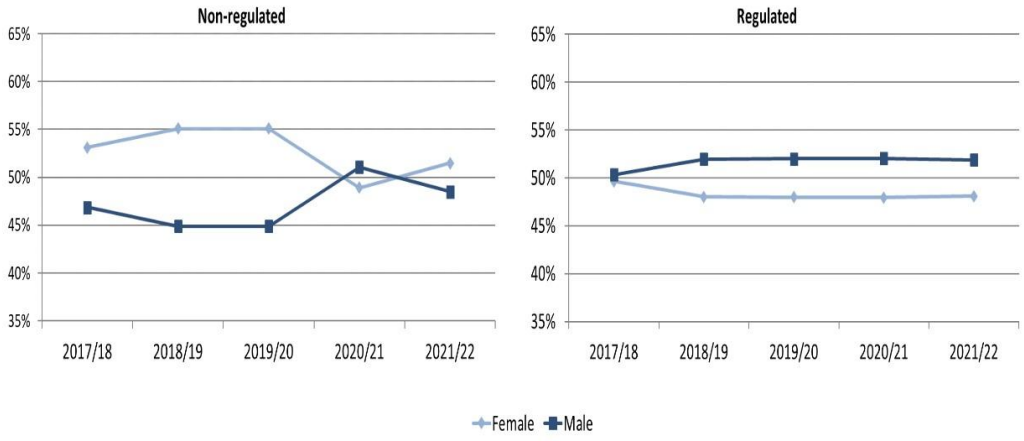
The number of female students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses has decreased by a net 29.2%, from 7,430 in 2017/18 to 5,259 in 2021/22. Similarly, the number of male students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses has decreased by a net 24.5% over this period, from 6,558 to 4,954 (Figure 42, Table 8).

Figure 42: Net percentage change in students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and sex (2017/18 to 2021/22)



The number of female students enrolled on regulated courses has decreased by a net 22.0%, from 31,747 in 2017/18 to 24,767 in 2021/22. Over the same period, the number of male students enrolled on regulated courses has decreased by a net 17.0%, from 32,179 to 26,716 (Figure 42, Table 8).

Figure 43: Proportion of students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and sex (2017/18 to 2021/22)



Between 2017/18 and 2021/22, the female share of students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses reduced from 53.1% to 51.5%; while the male share of those enrolled on regulated courses increased from 50.3% to 51.9% (

Figure 43, Table 8).

Mode of attendance

Table 9: All students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and mode of attendance (2017/18 to 2021/22)

Regulated Status	Mode of Attendance	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Non-regulated	Full-time	10	14	13	6	0
	Part-time	13,978	15,599	13,649	5,157	10,213
	Total	**13,988**	**15,613**	**13,662**	**5,163**	**10,213**
Regulated	Full-time	24,533	23,931	23,524	22,304	21,283
	Part-time	39,393	37,126	33,661	28,504	30,200
	Total	**63,926**	**61,057**	**57,185**	**50,808**	**51,483**
FE Sector Total	**Full-time**	**24,543**	**23,945**	**23,537**	**22,310**	**21,283**
	Part-time	**53,371**	**52,725**	**47,310**	**33,661**	**40,413**
	Total	**77,914**	**76,670**	**70,847**	**55,971**	**61,696**

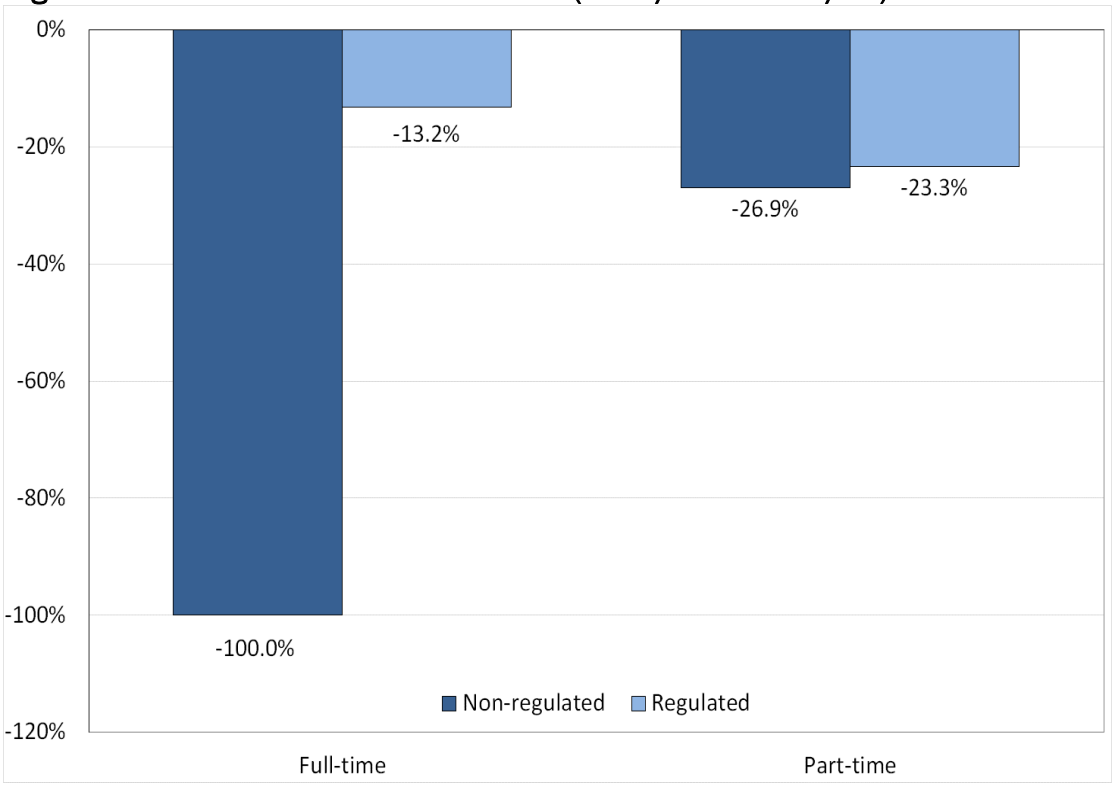
The number of part-time students solely enrolled on non-regulated courses has decreased by a net 26.9%, from 13,978 in 2017/18 to 10,213 in 2021/22 (

Figure 44, Table 9).

The number of full-time students enrolled on regulated courses has decreased by 13.2%, from 24,533 in 2017/18 to 21,283 in 2021/22. Over the same period, the number of part-time students enrolled on regulated courses has decreased by a net 23.3%, from 39,393 to 30,200 (

Figure 44, Table 9).

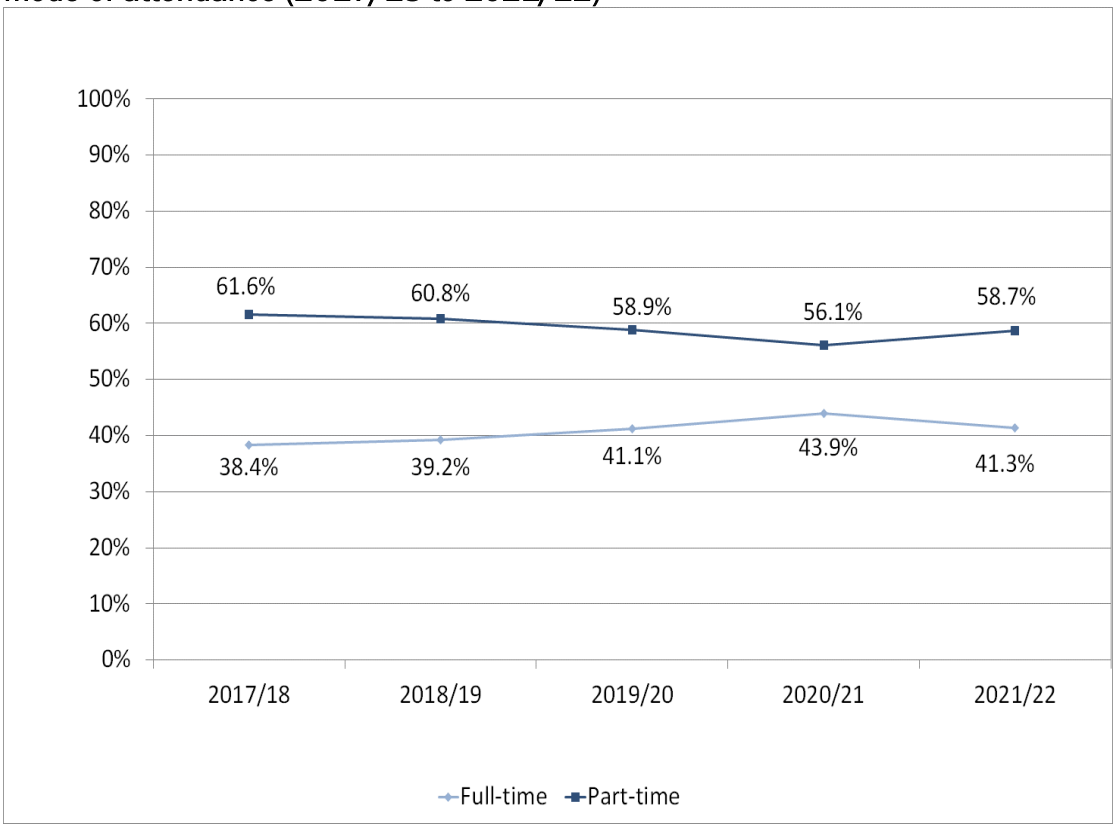
Figure 44: Net percentage change in students enrolled at FE Colleges by regulated status and mode of attendance (2017/18 to 2021/22)



Please note the 100.0% decrease in full-time students on non-regulated courses relates to a decrease of 10 students.

The full-time proportion of students enrolled on regulated courses has increased from 38.4% in 2017/18 to 41.3% in 2021/22 (Figure 45, Table 9).

Figure 45: Proportion of students enrolled on regulated courses at FE Colleges by mode of attendance (2017/18 to 2021/22)



5.3 Students enrolled on regulated courses

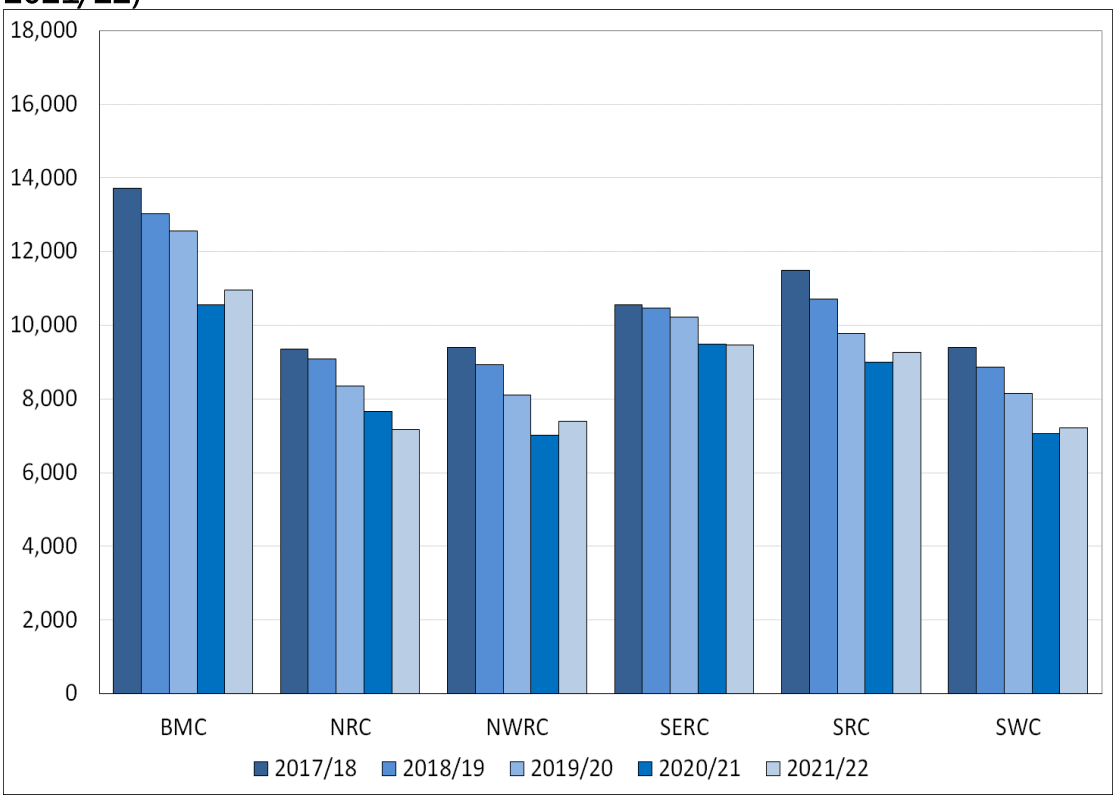
Table 10: Students enrolled on regulated courses by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Academic Year				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	13,710	13,027	12,567	10,564	10,963
NRC	9,365	9,085	8,349	7,666	7,172
NWRC	9,391	8,921	8,108	7,009	7,399
SERC	10,554	10,457	10,230	9,493	9,462
SRC	11,497	10,710	9,774	9,009	9,266
SWC	9,409	8,857	8,157	7,067	7,221
FE Sector Total	63,926	61,057	57,185	50,808	51,483

The number of students enrolled on regulated courses at FE Colleges has decreased by a net 19.5%, from 63,926 in 2017/18 to 51,483 in 2021/22. Since 2017/18, all six colleges have experienced net decreases, with the largest overall decrease being at BMC (2,747) (Figure 46, Table 10).

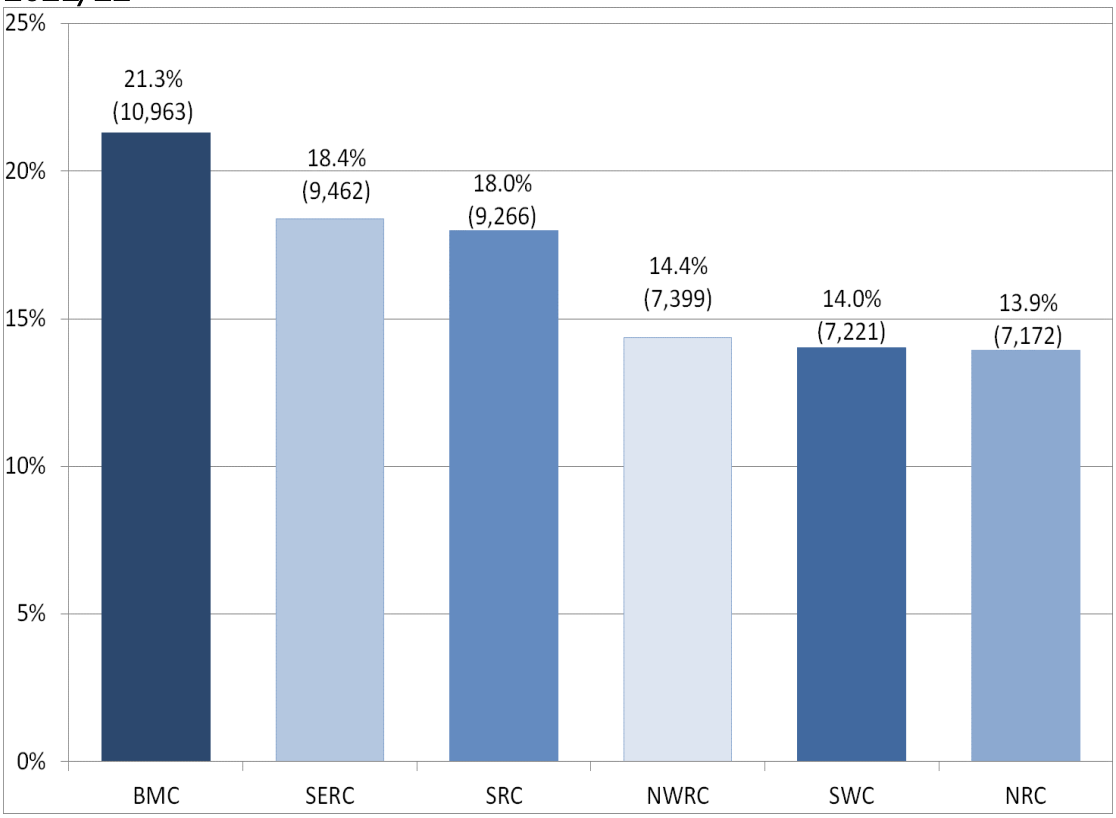
The largest net percentage decrease has been at NRC (23.4%), from 9,365 in 2017/18 to 7,172 in 2021/22, while the smallest net percentage decrease has been at SERC (10.3%), from 10,554 to 9,462 (Figure 46, Table 10).

Figure 46: Students enrolled on regulated courses by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)



In the most recent academic year (2021/22), BMC had the highest share of the 51,483 students enrolled on regulated courses, accounting for 21.3% (10,963), and NRC the lowest, with 13.9% (7,172) (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, Table 10).

Figure 47: Students enrolled on regulated courses by FE College share in 2021/22



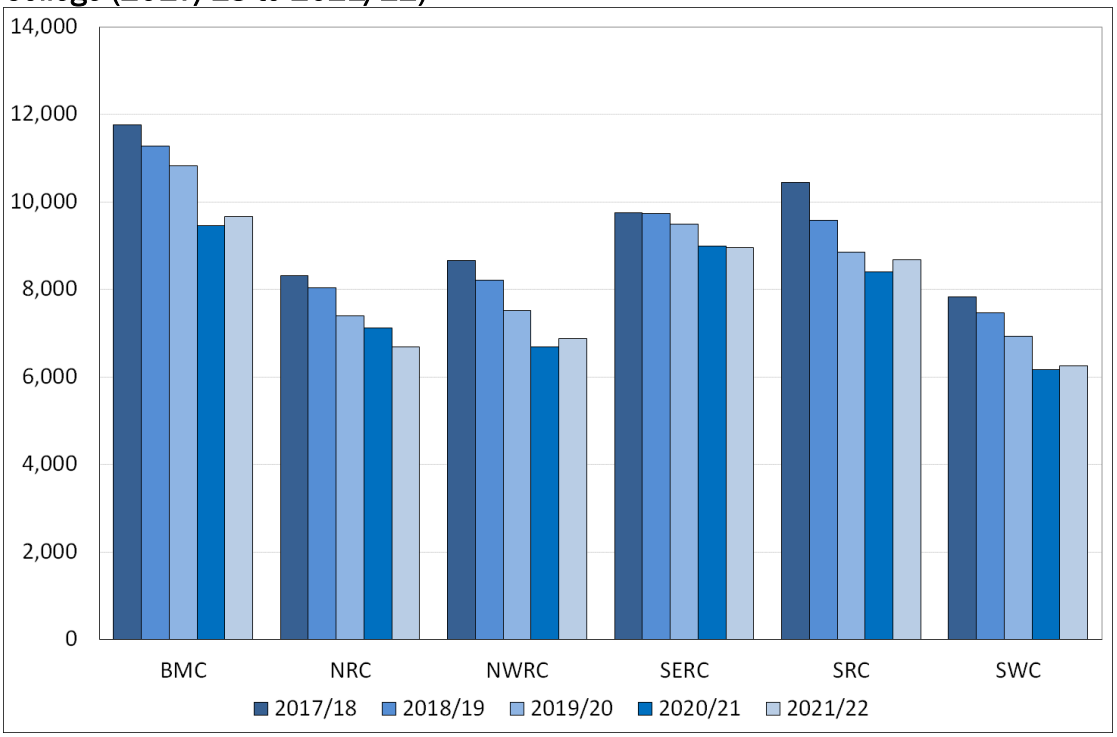
Level 2 or above

Table 11: Students enrolled on regulated courses at Level 2 or above by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

	Academic Year				
FE College	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	11,767	11,268	10,832	9,450	9,662
NRC	8,314	8,044	7,390	7,122	6,684
NWRC	8,665	8,210	7,524	6,689	6,875
SERC	9,760	9,742	9,485	8,991	8,956
SRC	10,438	9,582	8,847	8,405	8,680
SWC	7,837	7,472	6,922	6,163	6,248
FE Sector Total	**56,781**	**54,318**	**51,000**	**46,820**	**47,105**

The number of students enrolled on regulated courses at Level 2 or above at FE Colleges has decreased by a net 17.0%, from 56,781 in 2017/18 to 47,105 in 2021/22. Throughout this period, all six colleges have experienced net decreases, with the largest overall decrease being at BMC (2,105) (Figure 48, Table 11).

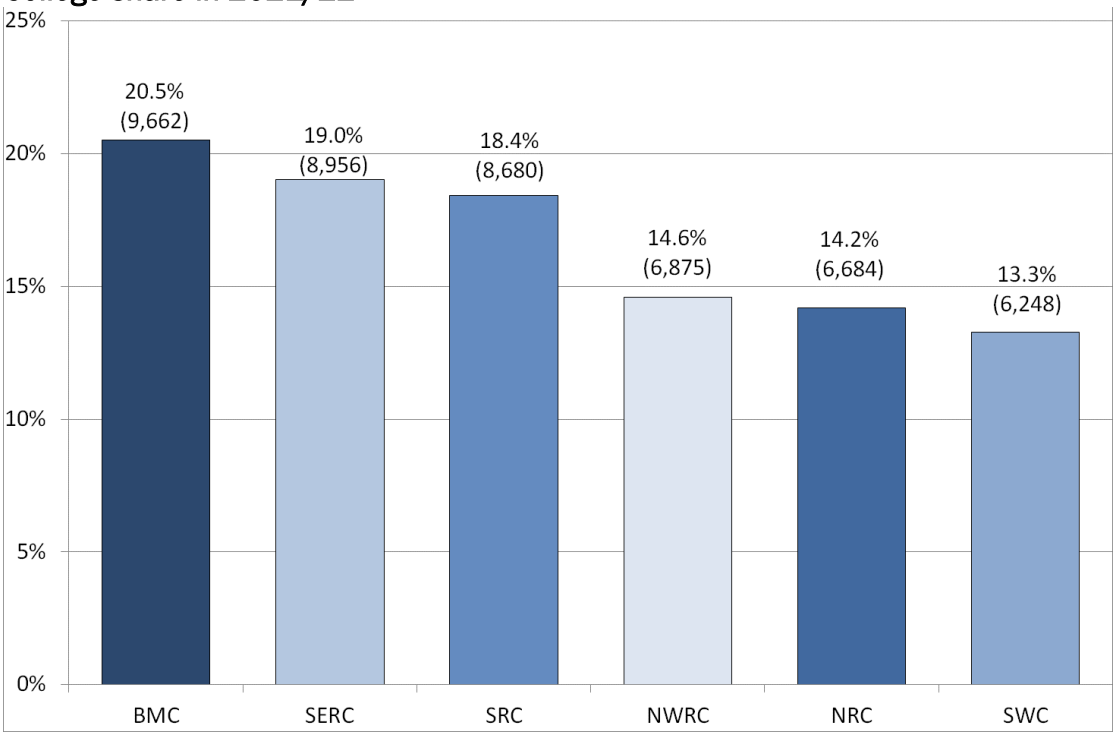
Figure 48: Students enrolled on regulated courses at Level 2 or above by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)



NWRC has experienced the largest net percentage decrease in students enrolled on regulated courses at Level 2 or above (20.7%), from 8,665 in 2017/18 to 6,875 in 2021/22. Over the same period, the smallest decrease has been at SERC (8.2%), from 9,760 to 8,956 (Figure 48, Table 11).

In the most recent academic year (2021/22), BMC had the highest share of the 47,105 students enrolled on regulated courses at Level 2 or above, accounting for 20.5% (9,662), and SWC the lowest, with 13.3% (6,248) (Figure 49, Table 11).

Figure 49: Students enrolled on regulated courses at Level 2 or above by FE College share in 2021/22



5.4 Students enrolled on Higher Education courses

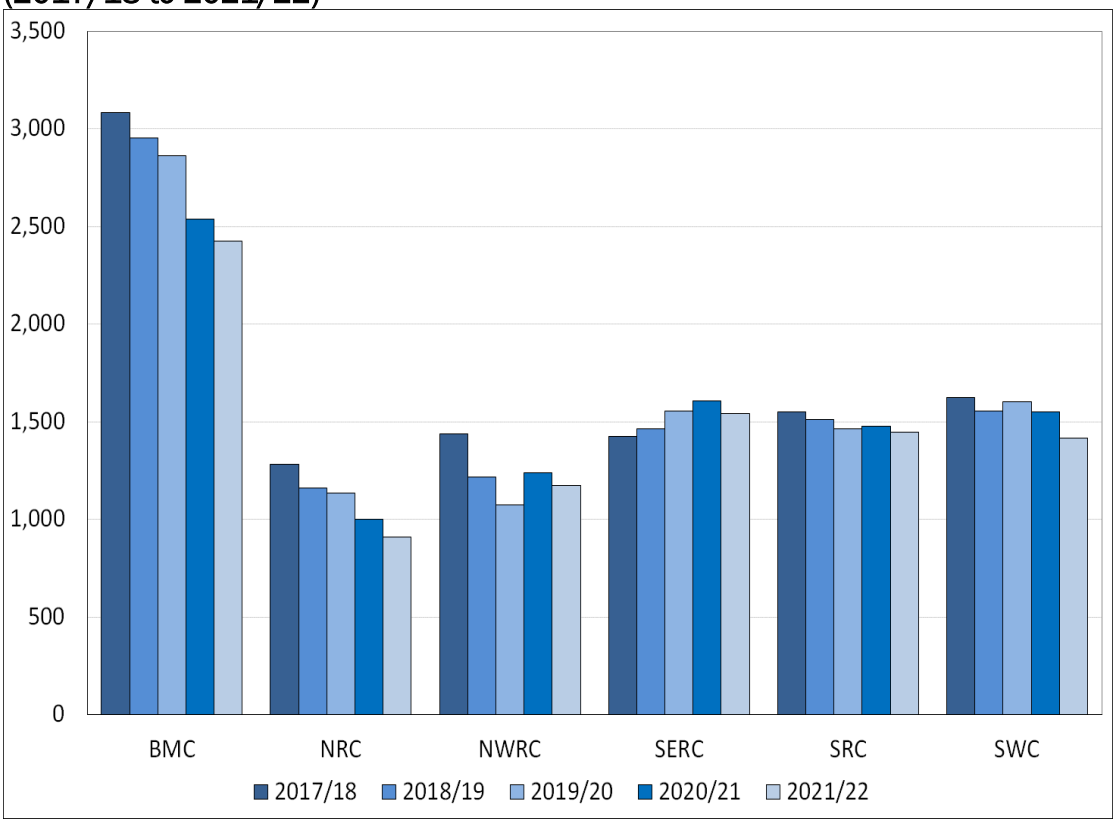
Table 12: Students enrolled on Higher Education courses by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Academic Year				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	3,084	2,953	2,864	2,539	2,424
NRC	1,284	1,161	1,136	999	910
NWRC	1,439	1,217	1,074	1,238	1,175
SERC	1,427	1,465	1,557	1,605	1,541
SRC	1,552	1,513	1,463	1,477	1,448
SWC	1,623	1,556	1,602	1,549	1,417
FE Sector Total	10,409	9,865	9,696	9,407	8,915

The number of students enrolled on Higher Education courses at FE Colleges has decreased by 14.4%, from 10,409 in 2017/18 to 8,915 in 2021/22. Over this period, five colleges experienced net decreases, with the largest overall decrease being at BMC (660) (Figure 50, Table 12).

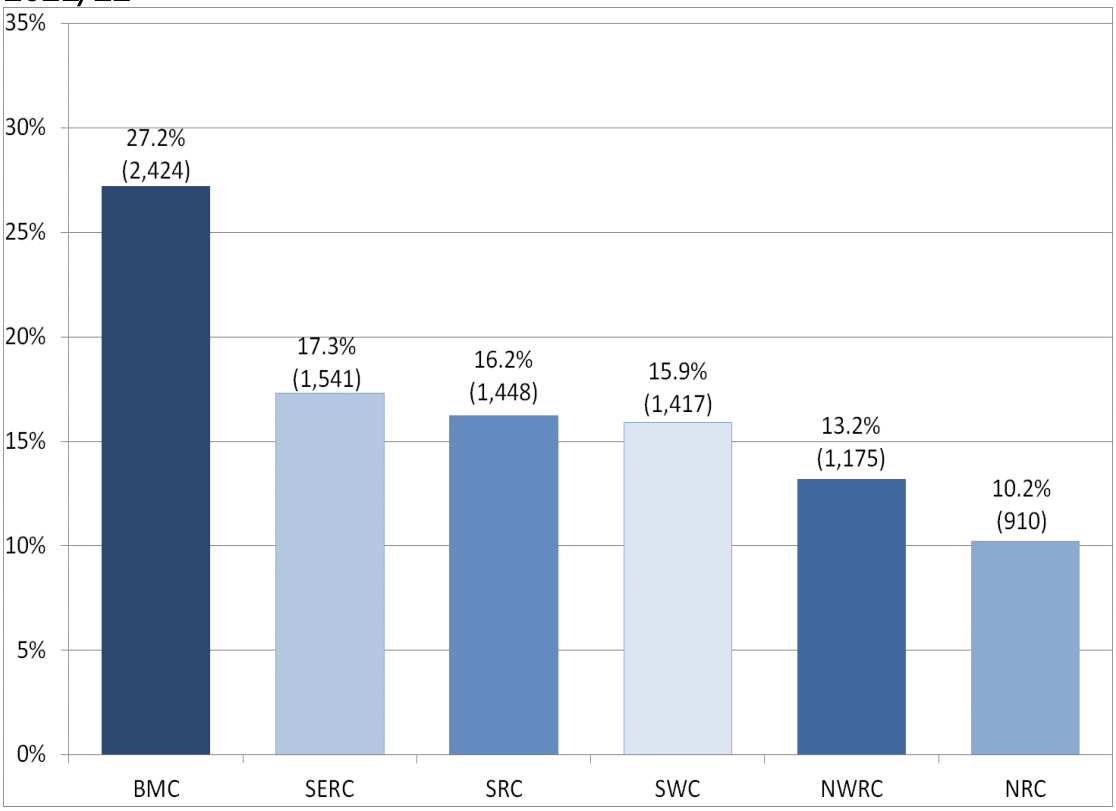
The largest net percentage decrease has been at NRC (29.1%), from 1,284 in 2017/18 to 910 in 2021/22. The sole net percentage increase over this period has been at SERC (8.0%), from 1,427 to 1,541 (Figure 50, Table 12).

Figure 50: Students enrolled on Higher Education courses by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)



In the most recent academic year (2021/22), BMC had the highest share of the 8,915 students enrolled on Higher Education courses, accounting for 27.2% (2,424), and NRC the lowest, with 10.2% (910) (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, Table 12).

Figure 51: Students enrolled on Higher Education courses by FE College share in 2021/22



5.5. Students achieving regulated qualifications

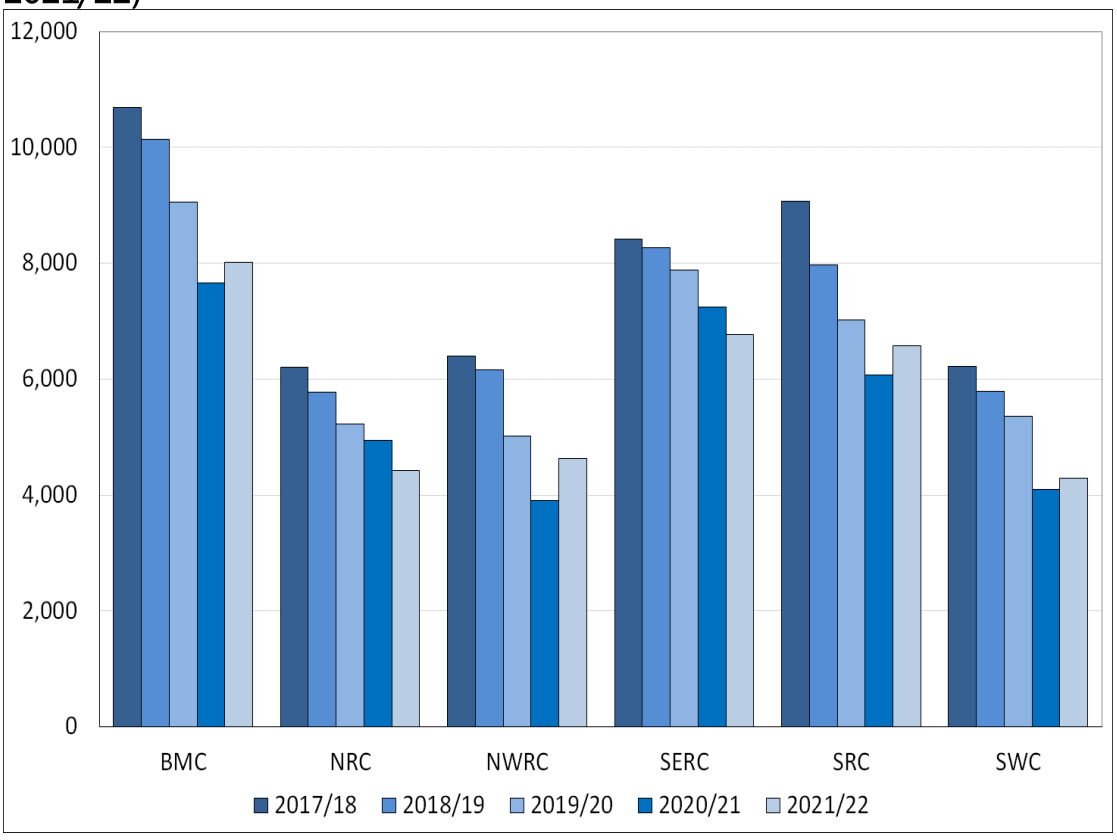
Table 13: Students achieving regulated qualifications by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Academic Year				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
BMC	10,688	10,134	9,062	7,668	8,023
NRC	6,210	5,774	5,227	4,942	4,430
NWRC	6,406	6,164	5,021	3,902	4,628
SERC	8,423	8,276	7,880	7,248	6,764
SRC	9,078	7,971	7,028	6,071	6,572
SWC	6,223	5,784	5,359	4,093	4,292
FE Sector Total	**47,028**	**44,103**	**39,577**	**33,924**	**34,709**

The number of students achieving regulated qualifications at FE Colleges has decreased by a net 26.2%, from 47,028 in 2017/18 to 34,709 in 2021/22. All six colleges have experienced net decreases over this period, with the largest being at BMC (2,665) and SRC (2,506) (Figure 52, Table 13).

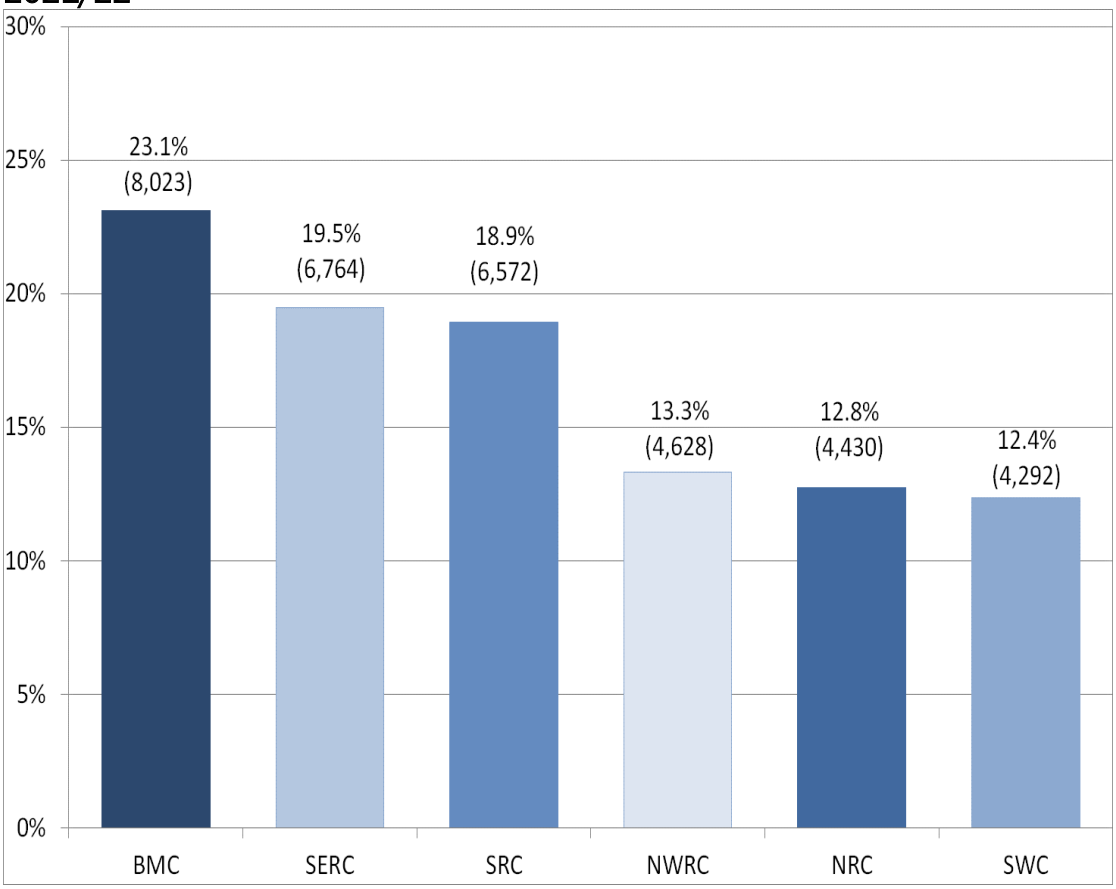
The largest net percentage decrease has been at SWC (31.0%), from 6,223 in 2017/18 to 4,292 in 2021/22, while the smallest decrease over this period has been at SERC (19.7%), from 8,423 to 6,764 (Figure 52, Table 13).

Figure 52: Students achieving regulated qualifications by FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)



In the most recent academic year (2021/22), BMC had the highest share of the 34,709 students achieving regulated qualifications, accounting for 23.1% (8,023), and SWC the lowest, with 12.4% (4,292) (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, Table 13).

Figure 53: Students achieving regulated qualifications by FE College share in 2021/22



Annex A: Definitions

Academic Year
Each academic year period is defined by each FE College and potentially could 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 percentage of final year regulated enrolments completed by students who achieve a qualification.

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).

The analysis of deprivation quintiles in this publication excludes all unknown or invalid postcodes, including those relating to Republic of Ireland domiciles; thus the charts and Annex tables refer to enrolments of Northern Ireland domiciles and their relative deprivation quintiles.

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 strategy and action plan in October 2002. The Essential Skills 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 of that course. 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 of a course who do not withdraw from their course are regarded as final year completers.

Final year achievements
Enrolments of students in their final year of a course 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. For any further enrolments, the funding stream was classed as 'Other'. These 'Other' enrolments include programmes such as Assured Skills, European Social Fund and Skills Focus.

From 2017/18, government training programmes also include Into Work Training Support, Youth Training (Level 2) and Apprenticeships (Level 3) and Higher Level Apprenticeships. The new Level 2 NI Traineeship Programme was introduced in September 2021 and is included in government training programmes.

Further Education College
Please refer to the link below for further detail about FE Colleges in Northern Ireland.

Contextual-Information regarding the FE Sector

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 2013/14:
(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 percentage of final year regulated enrolments completed by students. 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'.

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.

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).

Student
The number of students 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 students calculated over the entire time period, therefore, does not equal the summation of all individual students' academic years. This is due to the fact an individual student may be enrolled in a number of academic years.

Students on 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 of that course. Students enrolled on a one year course or in the second year of a two year course are regarded as students in final year enrolments.

Success rate
Success rate is recognised as the overall measure of performance, which is the percentage of final year regulated enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification.

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 individual students 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 14th October 2022.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, where the Outcome code is 'S' (COVID affected - outcome deferred to next year), these enrolments are filtered out of all performance analysis, that is final year regulated enrolments, completers, achievements and thus all performance rates.

14. 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.

15. From 2015/16, the dependant status yes refers to any enrolment where an individual student has declared a responsibility for either an adult, child or person with a disability (Table S1).

16. Although typically students will attend their local college, a student 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.

17. 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 to that LGD.

18. Analysis has been produced for students enrolled in the categories: - regulated status, age, sex, mode of attendance, provision area, level of study, 'Broad STEM', 'Narrow STEM' and deprivation quintile. Analysis has not been produced with regard to subject area, as one subject area cannot be categorised above another.

19. Where a student has a regulated enrolment and a non-regulated enrolment, the regulated one will be chosen in analysis of students.

20. In a small number of cases, a student has more than one age in the academic year. This can occur where, for example, a student enrols on a course in July 2021, that is, the last month of the 2021/22 academic year. In such a case, the age of the student would be as at 1st July 2022. This student may also have other enrolments from earlier in the 2021/22 academic year. In such cases, the age of the student would be as at 1st July 2021. When considering the student's age, priority is given to the younger age, that is, as at 1st July 2021. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, this identification of a student's age has not been applied and age is simply identified as the students age at 1st July prior to the full academic year. It is anticipated that from 2022/23 the identification of a student's age will revert back to the situation as at 2019/20 and previous years.

21. Where a student has a full-time enrolment and a part-time enrolment, the full-time one will be chosen in this analysis. Similarly, where a student has achieved a full-time qualification and a part-time qualification, the full-time one will be chosen in this analysis.

22. Where a student has not achieved a qualification at full-time study, but has achieved a qualification at part-time study, this could produce higher numbers of students who have achieved qualifications than the number of students who have enrolled at part-time study.

23. When considering provision area and a student has more than one enrolment, priority is given in the order Higher Education, Further Education and then Essential Skills. Similarly, where a student has achieved more than one qualification, priority is also given in the order Higher Education, Further Education and then Essential Skills.

24. Where a student has more than one enrolment, and thus potentially enrolments at more than one level of study, the higher level of study is chosen in this analysis. Similarly, where a student has achieved more than one qualification, and thus potentially qualifications at more than one level of study, the higher level of study is chosen in this analysis.

25. Where a student has not achieved a qualification in a higher education course, but has achieved a qualification at a lower level of study, this could produce higher numbers of students who have achieved qualifications than the number of students who have enrolled at the lower level of study.

26. A student is categorised as being enrolled in a 'Broad' STEM subject if at least one of their enrolments is in a 'Broad' STEM course.

27. A student is categorised as being enrolled in a 'Narrow' STEM subject if at least one of their enrolments is in a 'Narrow' STEM course.

28. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, some students have different addresses relating to their enrolments, potentially resulting in different deprivation quintiles for different enrolments. For consistency, when identifying primary cases in different categories, a unique deprivation quintile must be assigned to each student. Primarily, total hours and mode of attendance have been considered in determining the deprivation quintile for these students. Other factors are then considered, such as start and end dates of course.

29. The 2020 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.

30. 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:

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