



# BELFAST

Has COVID-19 changed our city?



Profiling Health, Wellbeing & Prosperity

**PROSPERITY**

## Acknowledgements

Belfast Healthy Cities would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank Erica Ison, for her commitment and diligence as author of the six chapters in this publication, *BELFAST: Profiling, Health, Well-being and Prosperity: Has Covid -19 changed our city?*

We would also like to wholeheartedly thank Dr Karen Casson, Vice Chair of Belfast Healthy Cities Board of Directors for her meticulous review of the data and her valuable comments on the Chapters.

### **Steering Group Members**

**Joan Devlin**, Chief Executive Officer, Belfast Healthy Cities, Chair

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# Publications

There are six publications, referred to as chapters, in *BELFAST Profiling Health, Wellbeing & Prosperity: Has Covid-19 changed our city?*

They are based on the 6P framework of Belfast being a member of Phase VII (2019 – 2025) of the World Health Organization European Healthy Cities Network:



# Previous Publications

There are six publications, referred to as chapters, in *BELFAST Profiling Health, Wellbeing & Prosperity*, and a summary document.

They are based on the 6P framework of Belfast being a member of Phase VII (2019 – 2025) of the World Health Organization European Healthy Cities Network:



# Foreword

The Belfast Healthy Cities City Health Profile is an important document that will help set out the challenges and opportunities for us all to improve the Health and Wellbeing of the city into the future going forward.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and we continue to see pressures on the cost of living, the city is clearly in a very different place now and we must take the opportunity to reflect both on the impact of the pandemic and refocus our thoughts as we move forward. This profile, and the key learning within, will help us do that.

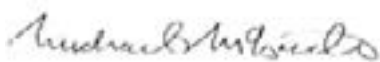
Has COVID-19 changed our city? Undoubtedly the answer is yes. The wider health and social care system had to adapt to meet the challenge of COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, our health and social care system was already facing huge strategic challenges in the form of an ageing population, increasing demand, long and growing waiting lists, workforce pressures and the emergence of new and more expensive treatments. All of these pressures were exacerbated by the pandemic. The Department of Health and the wider service also need to plan for potential further outbreaks of the virus and use the learning from the pandemic to assist this planning.

To support the overall work on recovery, we need to understand what has, and has not, worked in terms in addressing the impact of the pandemic around the world. While no one nation or region will map precisely to our situation, there will be a strong evidence base to draw from.

It is apparent across many areas that there are opportunities to use the new ways of working and opportunities from the current crisis and not simply to return to the way things were done previously. This continues to be a feature of the future thinking on recovery.

I see continued collaboration as key going forward, we can all learn so much from each other, as is evidenced in the Chapters. I whole-heartedly support cross-departmental and cross-agency liaison. This is at the heart of Making Life Better, the Executive's framework for improving health and addressing health inequalities. We all have so much to contribute towards the health of our population and we can do this better together.

I am delighted to be working closely with Belfast Healthy Cities and I commend the organisation on this very important piece of work.



**Prof Sir Michael McBride**  
Chief Medical Officer

# Preface

This chapter analyses how the COVID-19 pandemic affected a range of health and wellbeing indicators for Belfast. Based on the availability of data, key indicators were selected from an initial PROSPERITY chapter, produced in 2022, as part of, 'BELFAST Profiling Health, Wellbeing & Prosperity: The data behind the city and the people', to describe the changes that occurred across the city between March 2020 and May 2022. The data have been collected from various sources and are presented here in an accessible, concise and integrated format.

Communities play a vital role in health promotion and disease prevention activities, and in the social inclusion of people with chronic diseases and/or disabilities. Strong leadership and public investments in communities build resilience, release potential and enable communities to take responsibility for their health and their lives. Asset based approaches within city strategies are key to improving health and reducing health inequities.

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT), the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty increased. Prior to the pandemic, Belfast HSCT had the equal lowest percentage in 2018/19 but the highest percentage in 2021/22 and was the only HSCT in which the percentage of households increased during this period.

The food-aid response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Belfast was largely informed by, and built on, a pre-existing "vibrant community sector"; this localised, community-driven model capitalised on the capacity and reach of Belfast's community sector. Community organisations used their existing knowledge to identify households in need of support and responded quickly with support tailored to the local community. Belfast City Council co-ordinated and distributed £1.6 million to nine strategic partners, existing community and third sector organisations providing local support services, including food provision.

Creating employment, either in the public sector or through incentives for expanding the private sector, is the most cost-effective intervention for improving health and wellbeing at the population level. Expanding debt advice services also play crucial roles in promoting good mental health. Between 2019 and 2021, in Belfast, the employment rate among working-age people (16-64 years) decreased slightly overall, and, although there was a decrease between 2019 and 2020 followed by an increase between 2020 and 2021, the increase did not return the employment rate to pre-pandemic levels.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, in Belfast Local Government District (LGD), the percentage of primary pupils with Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) increased slightly and was higher than that in Northern Ireland and highest among LGDs. Eight out of the 10 District Electoral Areas (DEAs) had an increase in pupils with FSME.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of Non-FSME and FSME pupils who achieved at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C including GCSE English and GCSE Maths increased. The gap in attainment between non-FSME pupils and FSME pupils in Belfast LGD closed slightly over this timeframe, although percentages were lower in both when compared with Northern Ireland.

The Belfast Agenda's strategies and actions on the range of indicators in this chapter will be key to achieving a systemic approach to health and wellbeing for all and to reducing inequalities. Targeting actions to address the indicators in this chapter will improve prosperity within communities. Working in collaboration across public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations will be critical to successful outcomes and to measuring progress.

We are very pleased to present this chapter and encourage the use of the data in targeting future actions across agencies.

**Irene Sherry**  
Chair

**Natasha Brennan**  
Vice Chair

**Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectoral Advisory Panel**  
**Community Planning Partnership Belfast**

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Employment rate for people aged 16-64 years						
Economic inactivity rate for people aged 16-64 years						
Gross disposable income per head						
Working-age recipients of Universal Credit						
Households showing signs of food poverty						NI quintiles of deprivation
Food distribution by FareShare NI						
Emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust						“Children” and “Adults”
Referrals to Trussell Trust						Population groups
<b>Special educational needs (SEN)</b>						
SEN Stage 1-4 primary pupils						
SEN Stage 5 primary pupils						
Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) primary pupils						
Achievement of at least 5 GCSEs Grade A*-C including GCSE English and GCSE Maths: pupils with FSME and non-FSME						
School leavers’ destinations						



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## SECTION 1

# Employment Rate for People Aged 16-64 Years

### DATA SOURCE

LGDs: Information is from NISRA Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021, Labour Market Structure – Employment Activity and Qualifications level by Local Government District 2009-2021.<sup>1</sup>

Assembly areas: NISRA, Labour Force Summary Annual Report 2021, Documents, Labour Market Status – Sub Population 2021, Tables 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d.<sup>2</sup>

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Calendar years 2020 and 2021

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

Typically, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) re-weights the Labour Force Survey (LFS) every two years to take account of updated population estimates and projections. Since the onset of the pandemic, the ONS have been monitoring the impact and as a result, there have been three LFS re-weightings to improve the estimates. In June 2022, the LFS estimates were re-weighted from January-March 2020 to January-March 2022 using updated PAYE Real-Time Information data and with the introduction of the non-response bias adjustment to Northern Ireland data. An overview of the impact of re-weighting on the quarterly Northern Ireland estimates of unemployment, employment, and economic inactivity is available on

1. Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed 28 June 2023)
2. Labour Force Survey Annual Summary Report 2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed 28 June 2023)

the LFS Background Information section on the NISRA website. This paper also contains the detail on two previous LFS reweighting since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in October 2020 and July 2021.<sup>3</sup>

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In Belfast LGD, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- In 2020, covering the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, was 65.6%
- In 2021, covering the first calendar year of the pandemic, was 66.9%

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years decreased by 0.7 percentage points overall, from 67.6% to 66.9%.

Between 2019 and 2020, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first 9 months of the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years decreased by 2.0 percentage points, from 67.6% to 65.6%, whereas between 2020 and 2021, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years increased by 1.3 percentage points, from 65.6% to 66.9%.

### Differences by Belfast's assembly areas

There was variation in the employment rate across Belfast's assembly areas both before and during the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, covering the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Belfast East had the highest employment rate at 76.9%, closely followed by Belfast South at 76.5%
- Belfast West had the lowest employment rate at 55.6% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 1)

3. Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021, Documents, Labour Market Structure – Employment Activity and Qualifications level by Local Government District 2009-2021, information given on the Cover Sheet of Excel spreadsheet under the heading “LFS revisions”: Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed 28 June 2023)

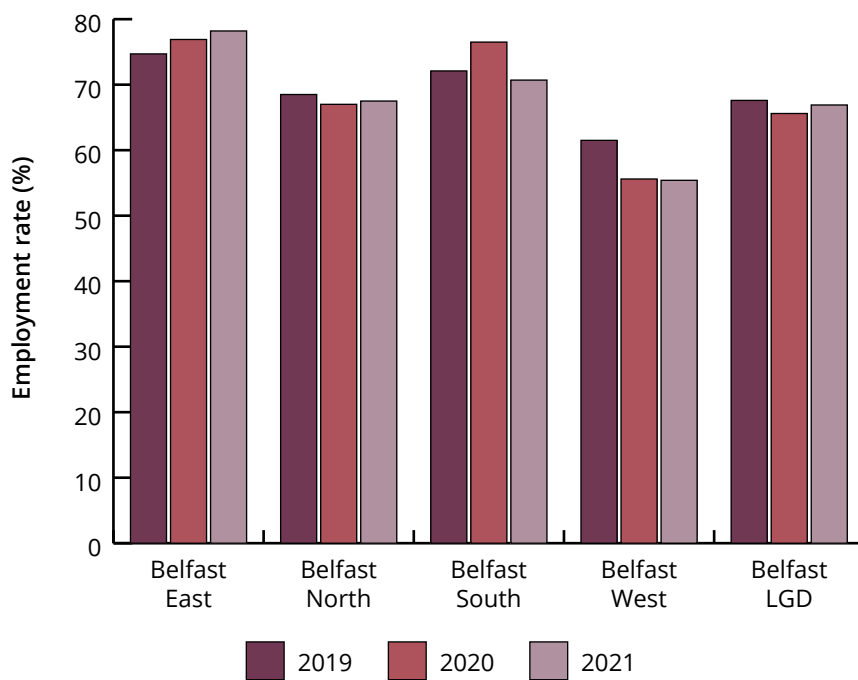
In 2021, covering the first calendar year of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Belfast East had the highest employment rate at 78.2%
- Belfast West had the lowest employment rate at 55.4% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 1)

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the employment rate increased overall in Belfast East, but decreased overall in Belfast South, Belfast North, and Belfast West.

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 1:**

**Employment rate (%) in people aged 16-64 years by Belfast assembly area and Belfast LGD, 2019, 2020, and 2021**



Source: NISRA, Labour Force Summary Annual Report 2021, Labour Market Status – Sub Population 2021, Tables 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d.

See pages 36-52, in the Prosperity Chapter for further detail of the findings before the COVID-19 pandemic.

## KEY COMPARISONS

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, Belfast LGD had a lower employment rate of people aged 16-64 years in:

- 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic
- 2021, covering the first calendar year of the pandemic

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years decreased overall:

- In Belfast LGD, by 0.7 percentage points, from 67.6% to 66.9% (a percentage decrease of 1.04%)
- In Northern Ireland, by 1.7 percentage points, from 71.9% to 70.2% (a percentage decrease of 2.36%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 2)

### Comparison with other LGDs

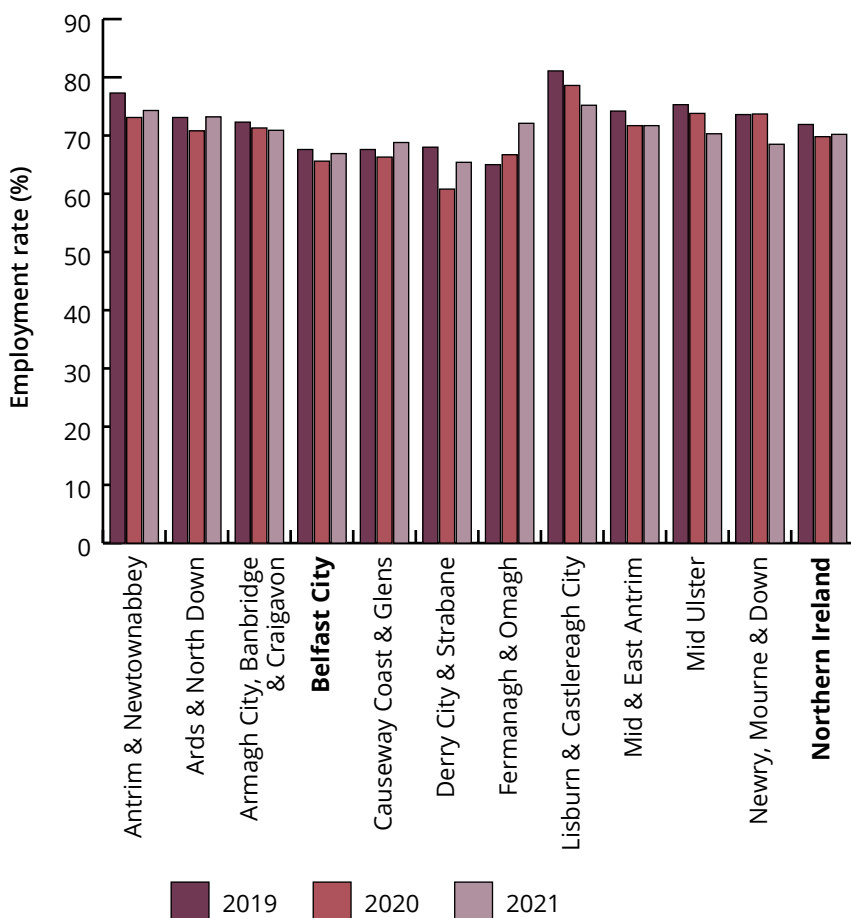
When compared with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had the equal second lowest employment rate of people aged 16-64 years in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the second lowest rate in 2020 and 2021, covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic.

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- Decreased overall in 8 LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Increased in three LGDs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 2)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 2:**

**Employment rate (%) of people aged 16-64 years by LGD and Northern Ireland, 2019, 2020, and 2021**



Source: NISRA: Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021 Tables Labour Market Structure – Employment Activity and Qualifications level by Local Government District 2009-2021, Tables 1.11b, 1.12b, and 1.13b

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years was lower in Belfast LGD, both before and during the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the gap between the two narrowed during the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, with a greater percentage decrease in Northern Ireland than that in Belfast LGD.

## Comparison with other LGDs

Of all the LGDs, Belfast LGD had the equal second lowest employment rate of people aged 16-64 years before the COVID-19 pandemic and the second lowest during the first year and 9 months of the pandemic. Consequently, there was no overall change in the relative position of Belfast LGD among LGDs, although in 2021 Belfast's employment rate was slightly below pre-pandemic levels.

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic:

- The smallest percentage decrease in the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years was in Belfast LGD at 1.04%
- The greatest percentage decrease was in Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD at 7.27%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- Decreased overall in 8 LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Decreased in Northern Ireland
- Increased in three LGDs

For people aged 16-64 years in Belfast LGD, the COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with a slight decrease in the employment rate overall.

## Inequalities, with the potential for inequity

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the employment rate of people aged 16-64 years decreased in Belfast West, Belfast South, and Belfast North, although the greatest percentage decrease was in Belfast West at 9.92%, compared with 1.94% in Belfast South, and 1.46% in Belfast North. For all three of these assembly areas, the employment rate fell below pre-pandemic levels during the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the employment rate in Belfast West was more than 20 percentage points below that of Belfast East, with between 5 and 6 out of every 10 people of working age in employment in Belfast West compared with almost 8 out of every 10 in Belfast East.

## SECTION 2

# Economic Inactivity Rate for People Aged 16-64 Years

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NISRA Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021, Labour Market Structure – Employment Activity and Qualifications level by Local Government District 2009-2021.<sup>4</sup>

Information for LGDs and Belfast’s Assembly area: NISRA, Labour Force Summary Annual Report 2021, Labour Market Status – Sub Population 2021.<sup>5</sup>

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Calendar years 2020 and 2021

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

Typically, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) re-weights the Labour Force Survey (LFS) every two years to take account of updated population estimates and projections. Since the onset of the pandemic, the ONS have been monitoring the impact and as a result, there have been three LFS re-weightings to improve the estimates. In June 2022, the LFS estimates were re-weighted from January-March 2020 to January-March 2022 using updated PAYE Real-Time Information data and with the introduction of the non-response bias adjustment to Northern Ireland data. An overview of the impact of re-weighting on the quarterly Northern Ireland estimates of unemployment, employment, and economic inactivity is available on

4. Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed March 2023)
5. Labour Force Survey Annual Summary Report 2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed 3 March 2023)

the LFS Background Information section on the NISRA website. This paper also contains the detail on two previous LFS reweighting since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in October 2020 and July 2021.<sup>6</sup>

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In Belfast LGD, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- In 2020, covering the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, was 31.3%
- In 2021, covering the first calendar year of the pandemic, was 29.7%

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years decreased by 0.8 percentage points overall, from 30.5% to 29.7%.

Between 2019 and 2020, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first 9 months of the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years increased by 0.8 percentage points, from 30.5% to 31.3%, whereas between 2020 and 2021, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years decreased by 1.6 percentage points, from 31.3% to 29.7%.

### Variation by Belfast's assembly areas

There was variation in the economic inactivity rate across Belfast's assembly areas both before and during the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic:

- Belfast West had the highest economic inactivity rate at 43.1%
- Belfast South had the lowest economic inactivity rate at 20.1% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 3)

6. Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021, Documents, Labour Market Structure – Employment Activity and Qualifications level by Local Government District 2009-2021, information given on the Cover Sheet of Excel spreadsheet under the heading “LFS revisions”: Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed 28 June 2023)

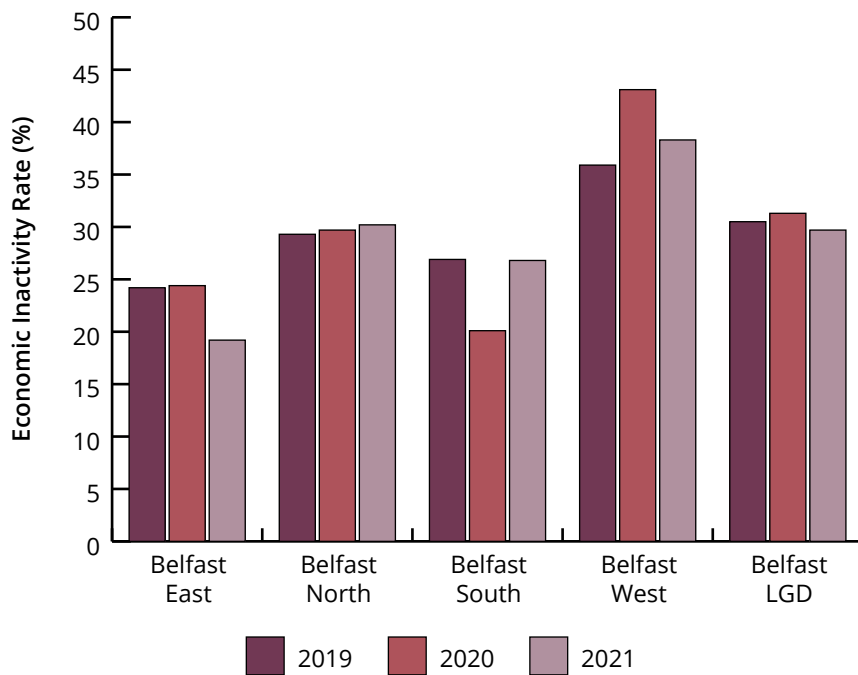


In 2021, covering the first calendar year of the pandemic:

- Belfast West had the highest economic inactivity rate at 38.3%
- Belfast East had the lowest economic inactivity rate at 19.2% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 3)

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the economic inactivity rate increased overall in Belfast West and Belfast North and decreased overall in Belfast East and Belfast South.

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 3:**  
**Economic inactivity rate (%) in people aged 16-64 years by Belfast assembly area and Belfast LGD, 2019, 2020, and 2021**



Source: NISRA, Labour Force Summary Annual Report 2021, Labour Market Status - Sub Population 2021, Tables 2a-d.

See pages 65-71, in the Prosperity Chapter for further detail of the findings before the COVID-19 pandemic.

## KEY COMPARISONS

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, Belfast LGD had a higher economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years in:

- 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic
- 2021, covering the first calendar year of the pandemic

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- In Belfast LGD, decreased overall by 0.8 percentage points, from 30.5% to 29.7% (a percentage decrease of 2.62%)
- In Northern Ireland, increased overall by 0.8 percentage points, from 26.2% to 27.0% (a percentage increase of 3.05%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 4)

### Comparison with other LGDs

When compared with the other LGDs, Belfast LGD had:

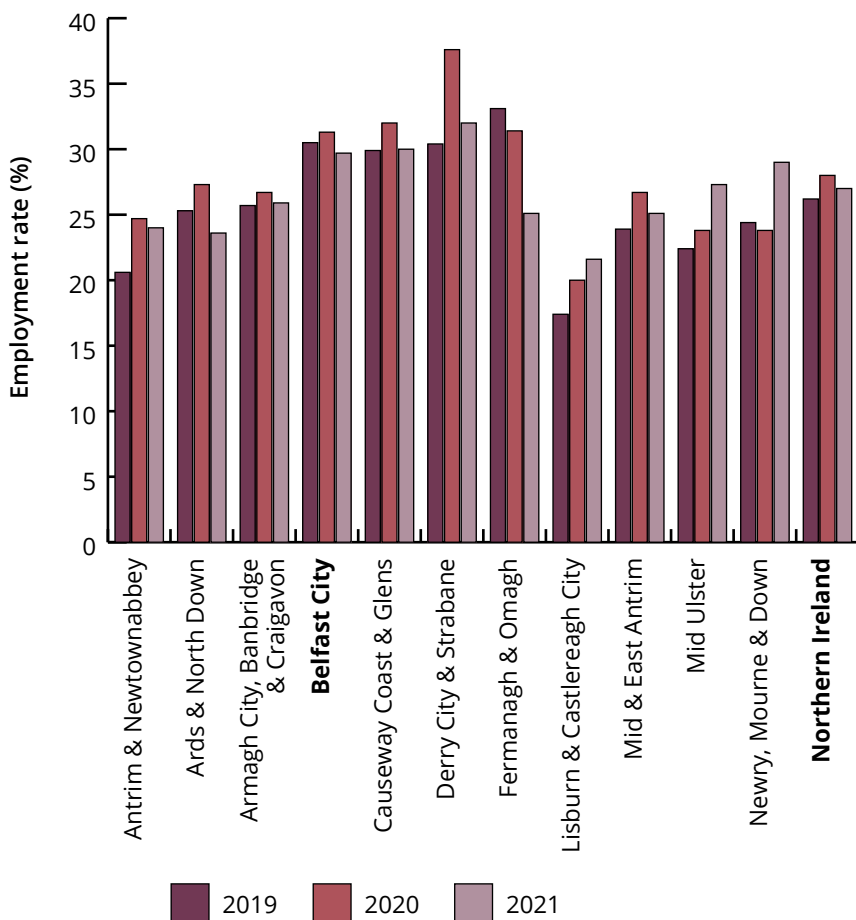
- The second highest economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- The fourth highest rate in 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic
- The third highest rate in 2021, covering the first calendar year of the pandemic

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- Increased overall in 8 LGDs
- Decreased overall in 3 LGDs including Belfast LGD, (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 4)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 4:**

**Economic inactivity rate (%) of people aged 16-64 years by LGD and Northern Ireland, 2019, 2020, and 2021**



Source: Source: NISRA, Labour Force Summary Annual Report 2021, Labour Market Status – Sub Population 2021, Tables 3a-k.

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years was higher in Belfast LGD, both before and during the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the gap between the two narrowed, with a slight decrease overall in Belfast LGD and a slight increase overall in Northern Ireland.

## Comparison with other LGDs

Of all the LGDs, Belfast LGD had a relatively high economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years and, therefore, a relatively high ranking (within the top four), both before and during the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2019 and 2021, Belfast dropped from second to third highest LGD, against increases in the economic inactivity rates of Causeway Coast & Glens LGD and Derry City & Strabane LGD, which were the highest and second highest ranking LGDs in 2021.

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic:

- **Belfast LGD had the smallest percentage decrease in the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years at 2.62%**
- **Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the greatest percentage decrease at 24.17%**

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first year and 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years:

- **Increased overall in 8 LGDs**
- **Increased in Northern Ireland**
- **Decreased in three LGDs, including Belfast LGD**

In 2021, Belfast LGD had an economic inactivity rate slightly below pre-pandemic levels. Thus, for people aged 16-64 years in Belfast LGD, the COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with a slight decrease in the economic inactivity rate overall.

## Inequalities with the potential for inequity

Between 2019 and 2021, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 9 months of the pandemic, the economic inactivity rate of people aged 16-64 years increased in Belfast West, and Belfast North, although the greatest percentage increase was in Belfast West at 6.69%, compared with 3.07% in Belfast North. For both these assembly areas, the economic inactivity rate rose above pre-pandemic levels during the first year and 9 months of the pandemic.

In 2021, the economic inactivity rate in Belfast West was double that of Belfast East, with between almost 4 out of every 10 people of working age being economically inactive in Belfast West compared with almost 2 out of every 10 in Belfast East.

## SECTION 3

# Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) per Head<sup>7</sup>

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from ONS Dataset, Regional gross disposable household income, all ITL level regions, 1997 to 2020 edition of this dataset.<sup>8</sup>

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Calendar year 2020

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

In the ONS statistical bulletin “Regional gross disposable household income, UK: 1997 to 2020”, it states:

*“In this release we are seeing the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on regional gross disposable household income (GDHI) for the first time.*

*The pandemic has affected the components of GDHI differently and this is reflected in some universal movements in the data for 2020, particularly when looking at smaller geographical areas.”*

7. Estimates can be divided by the resident population of a country, region, or area to give a value per head. This can be a useful way of comparing regions of different sizes. Because GDHI is measured according to the residence of the person, not their place of work, GDHI per head is not subject to distortion from commuting. It does, however, include the entire population of an area, including children and retired people Regional gross disposable household income, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) (Last accessed 29 June 2023)
8. Regional gross disposable household income: all ITL level regions - Office for National Statistics (Last accessed 29 June 2023)

+In this ONS statistical bulletin, it also notes:

*“change from the normal pattern of growth [in GDHI] is driven by the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which affected local areas in different ways, depending on the composition of household income in each area.”<sup>9</sup>*

Furthermore, in the ONS publication “Interpreting changes in UK income estimates during the coronavirus pandemic: financial year ending 2021”, it states:

*“The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to a series of operational changes to the Household Financial Survey (HFS), from which the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates of household disposable income and inequality are derived.*

*A wide range of financial support measures were introduced to alleviate the potential financial pressure of the coronavirus pandemic; as such, income estimates are subject to greater uncertainty this financial year, and we recommend users exercise caution when interpreting rates of growth, particularly at the quintile and decile level.”<sup>10</sup>*

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In 2020, covering the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the gross disposable household income per head was £16,744.

Between 2019 and 2020, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first 9 months of the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the gross disposable household income per head decreased by £13, from £16,757 to £16,744.

See pages 89-92, in the Prosperity Chapter for further detail of the findings before the COVID-19 pandemic.

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9. Regional gross disposable household income, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) (Last accessed 29 June 2023)
  10. Interpreting changes in UK income estimates during the coronavirus pandemic - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) (Last accessed 17 July 2023)

## KEY COMPARISONS

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, Belfast LGD had a lower gross disposable household income per head in:

- 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic

Between 2019 and 2020, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first 9 months of the pandemic, the gross disposable household income per head decreased:

- In Belfast LGD, by £13, from £16,757 to £16,744 (a percentage decrease of 0.08%)
- In Northern Ireland, by £94, from £17,395 to £17,301 (a percentage decrease of 0.54%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 5)

### Comparison with other LGDs

When compared with the other LGDs, Belfast LGD had:

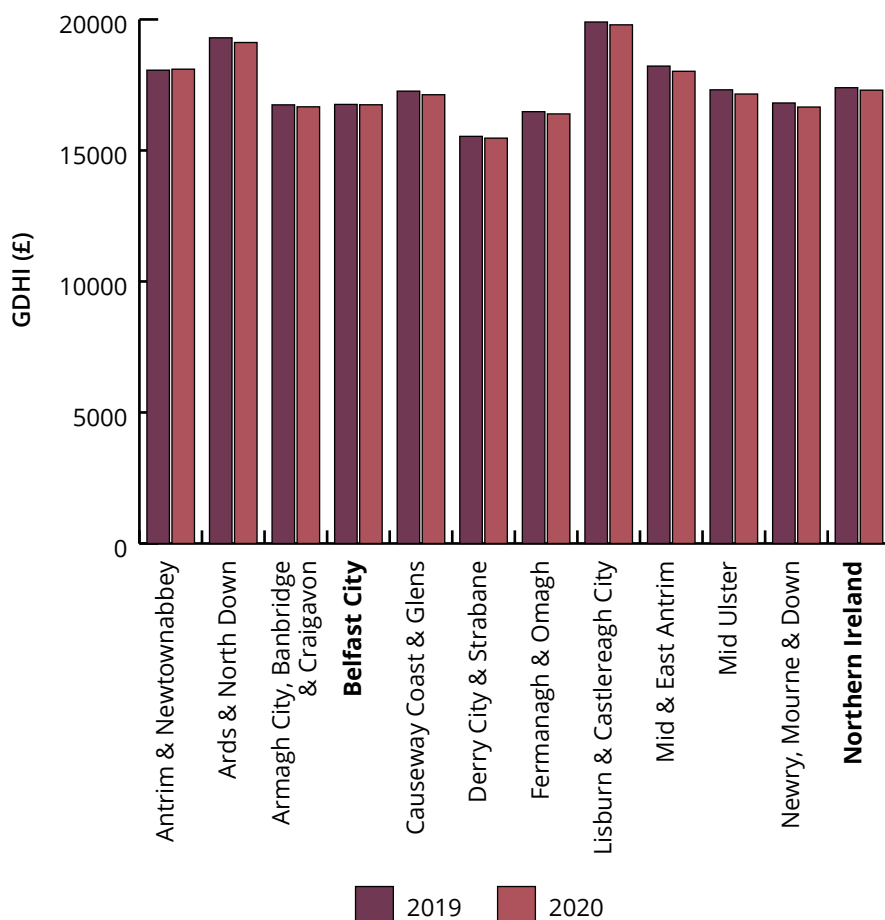
- In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth lowest gross disposable household income per head
- In 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic, the fifth lowest gross disposable household income per head

Between 2019 and 2020, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first 9 months of the pandemic, the gross disposable household income per head:

- Decreased in 10 LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Increased in one LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 5)

### COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 5

Gross disposable household income per head (GDHI: £) by LGD and Northern Ireland, 2019, and 2020



Sources: LGD data: ONS, Regional gross disposable household income, UK: 1997-2020, Section 4 Average gross disposable household income in your local area, Figure 3 Gross disposable household income per head for UK local authorities 1997-2020; NI data: ONS Dataset, Regional gross disposable household income, all ITL level regions, 1997 to 2020 edition of this dataset

### OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA

#### Comparison with Northern Ireland

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the gross disposable household income per head was lower in Belfast LGD, both before and during the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the gap between the two narrowed, with a slightly greater percentage decrease in Northern Ireland than in Belfast LGD.



## Comparison with other LGDs

In comparison with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had:

- The fourth lowest gross disposable household income per head in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- The fifth lowest gross disposable household income per head in 2020, covering the first 9 months of the pandemic

Consequently, among LGDs, Belfast LGD rose one place from fourth lowest to fifth lowest between 2019 and 2020.

In 2020, Belfast LGD had a gross disposable household income per head slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Between 2019 and 2020, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first 9 months of the pandemic:

- Belfast had the smallest percentage decrease in the gross disposable household income per head at 0.08%
- Mid & East Antrim LGD had the greatest percentage decrease at 1.09%
- The median percentage decrease was 0.67%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the gross disposable household income per head:

- Decreased in 10 LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Decreased in Northern Ireland
- Increased in one LGD

For people in Belfast LGD, the first 9 months of the COVID-19 pandemic have been associated with a slight decrease in the gross disposable household income per head.

## SECTION 4

# Working-age Recipients of Universal Credit

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NINIS Pivot Table Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies).<sup>11</sup>

### TIMEPOINTS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

At February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

On the Department for Communities Universal Credit statistics webpage, under the heading "COVID-19 Management Information", it states:

*"as there has been significant interest in Universal Credit applications since the onset of COVID-19, the Department has released Management Information related to Universal Credit Claims, Payments and Advances. Detailed information was first released on 06 May 2020 with a further update on 05 June 2020. A summary dashboard was also released on 05 June 2020 and was last updated on 02 October 2020."*<sup>12</sup>

11. Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies) - Table view - Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies) - Table view - NINIS: Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (nisra.gov.uk) (Last accessed 28 June 2023)
12. Universal Credit statistics | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk) (Last accessed 28 June 2023)

## INTRODUCTION

Universal Credit was introduced in Northern Ireland in September 2017 under the Northern Ireland (Welfare Reform) Act 2015. Universal Credit is a payment for people over 18 years of age (16-17 years of age in certain circumstances) but under State Pension age who are on a low income or out of work. It includes support for the cost of housing, children and childcare, and financial support for people with disabilities, carers, and people too ill to work.<sup>13</sup>

For people aged over 18 years and under State Pension age, Universal Credit replaces:

- **Jobseeker's Allowance (income based)**
- **Employment Support Allowance (income-related)**
- **Income Support**
- **Housing Benefit (rental)**
- **Working Tax Credit**
- **Child Tax Credits**

New claimants will be the first to claim Universal Credit in each rollout area. Existing claimants will transfer to Universal Credit between July 2019 and March 2022. Some claimants will naturally move to Universal Credit earlier, where their circumstances have changed.<sup>14</sup>

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13. Universal Credit | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)  
(Last accessed 21 April 2023)

14. Update on Universal Credit rollout schedule | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)  
(Last accessed 29 June 2023)

## PROFILE FINDINGS

The numbers of working-age people receiving Universal Credit in Belfast LGD at February 2019 through to February 2022 are shown in COVID-19 Prosperity Table 1 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 6.<sup>15</sup>

### COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 1:

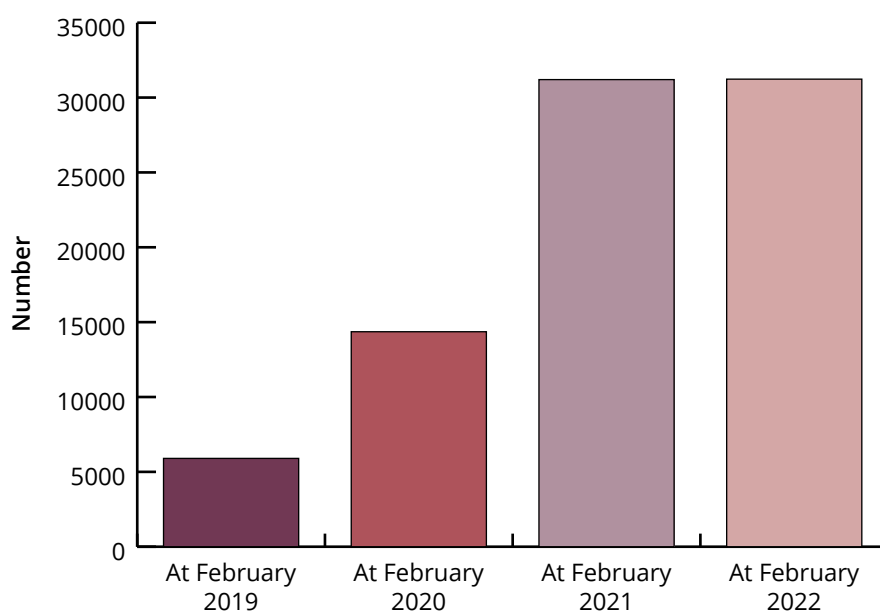
**Number of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit in Belfast LGD and Northern Ireland, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**

	February 2019	February 2020	February 2021	February 2022
Belfast LGD	5,900	14,360	31,200	31,230
Northern Ireland	32,920	65,150	135,760	132,090

Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants Pivot Table

### COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 6:

**Number of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit in Belfast LGD, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**



Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants Pivot Table

15. The data for working-age recipients of Universal Credit have been provided over this timeframe, from February 2019 to February 2022, to coincide as closely as possible with the roll-out of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland; however, the text describes what has happened during the timeframe from February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, to February 2022, covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic

Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the number of working-age people receiving Universal Credit increased by 16,870 people, from 14,360 to 31,230 people.

### Differences by Belfast assembly area

There was variation in the numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit across Belfast’s assembly areas (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 2 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 7).

Among Belfast’s assembly areas, Belfast North had the highest numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit, and Belfast West the second highest, at:

- February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- February 2021, covering the first 11 months of the pandemic
- February 2022, covering from 12 months to one year and 11 months into the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 2 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 7).

Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, the numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit increased in all Belfast’s assembly areas (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 2 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 7).

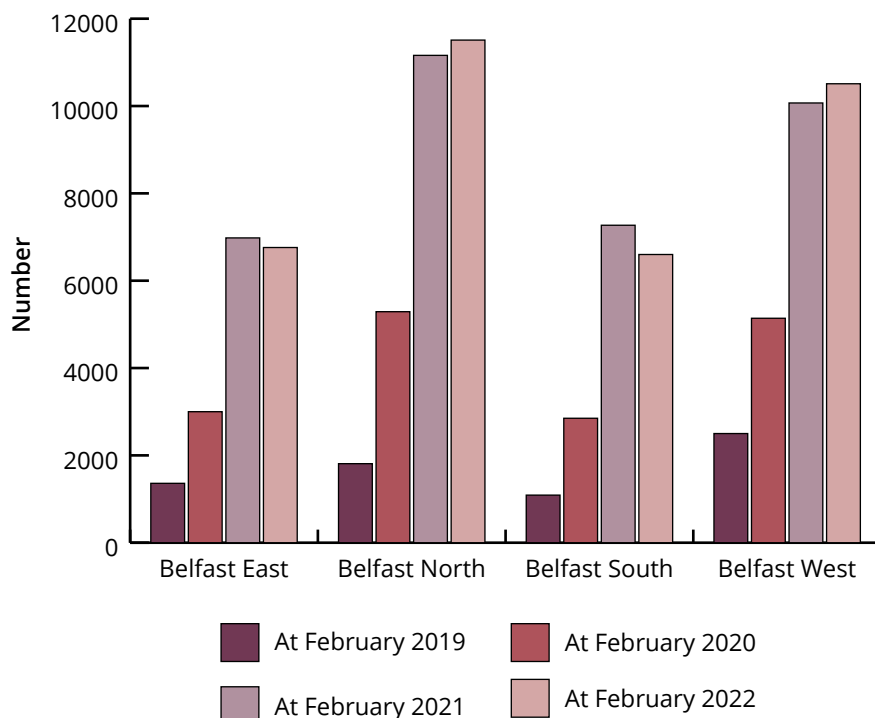
**COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 2:**  
**Numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit by Belfast assembly area, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**

	February 2019	February 2020	February 2021	February 2022
Belfast East	1,360	3,000	6,980	6,760
Belfast North	1,810	5,290	11,160	11,510
Belfast South	1,090	2,850	7,270	6,600
Belfast West	2,500	5,140	10,070	10,510

Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 7:**

**Numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit by Belfast assembly area, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**



Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies)

### Differences by Belfast's DEAs

There was variation in the numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit across Belfast's DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 3 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 8).

Among Belfast's DEAs, Court, Oldpark and Titanic DEAs had the highest numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit at:

- February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, when Court DEA had the highest number, Oldpark the second highest, and Titanic DEA the third highest
- February 2021, covering the first 11 months of the pandemic, when Titanic DEA had the highest number, Oldpark DEA had the second highest, and Court DEA had the third highest
- February 2022, from 12 months to one year and 11 months into the pandemic, when Oldpark DEA had the highest number, Court DEA had the second highest and Titanic had the third highest (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 3 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 8)

Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit increased overall in all Belfast's DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 3 and COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 8).

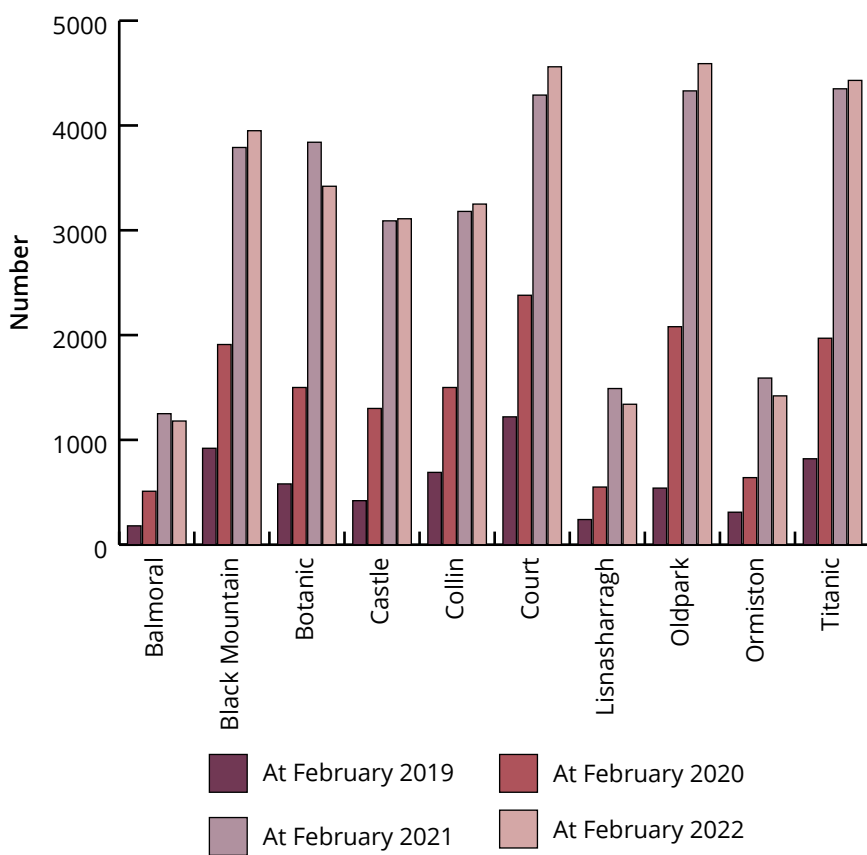
**COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 3:**  
**Numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit by Belfast DEA, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**

	February 2019	February 2020	February 2021	February 2022
Balmoral	180	510	1,250	1,180
Black Mountain	920	1,910	3,790	3,950
Botanic	580	1,500	3,840	3,420
Castle	420	1,300	3,090	3,110
Collin	690	1,500	3,180	3,250
Court	1,220	2,380	4,290	4,560
Lisnasharragh	240	550	1,490	1,340
Oldpark	540	2,080	4,330	4,590
Ormiston	310	640	1,590	1,420
Titanic	820	1,970	4,350	4,430

Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 8:**

**Numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit by Belfast DEA, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**



Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies)

**KEY COMPARISONS**

Comparison with Northern Ireland

Of the total number of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland at:

- February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage share for Belfast LGD was 22.04%
- February 2021, covering the first 11 months of the pandemic, the percentage share for Belfast LGD was 22.98%
- February 2022, from 12 months to one year and 11 months into the pandemic, the percentage share for Belfast LGD was 23.64% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 4)



Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, the number of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit increased in:

- **Belfast LGD, by 16,870, from 14,360 to 31,230 people (a percentage increase of 117.48%)**
- **Northern Ireland, by 66,940 people, from 65,150 to 132,090 people (a percentage increase of 102.75%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 4)**

### Comparison with other LGDs

When compared with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had the highest numbers and highest percentage shares of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit at:

- **February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **February 2021, covering the first 11 months of the pandemic**
- **February 2022, covering from 12 months to one year and 11 months into the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 9 and COVID-19 Prosperity Table 4)**

Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, the numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit increased overall in all LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 9 and COVID-19 Prosperity Table 4).

#### COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 4:

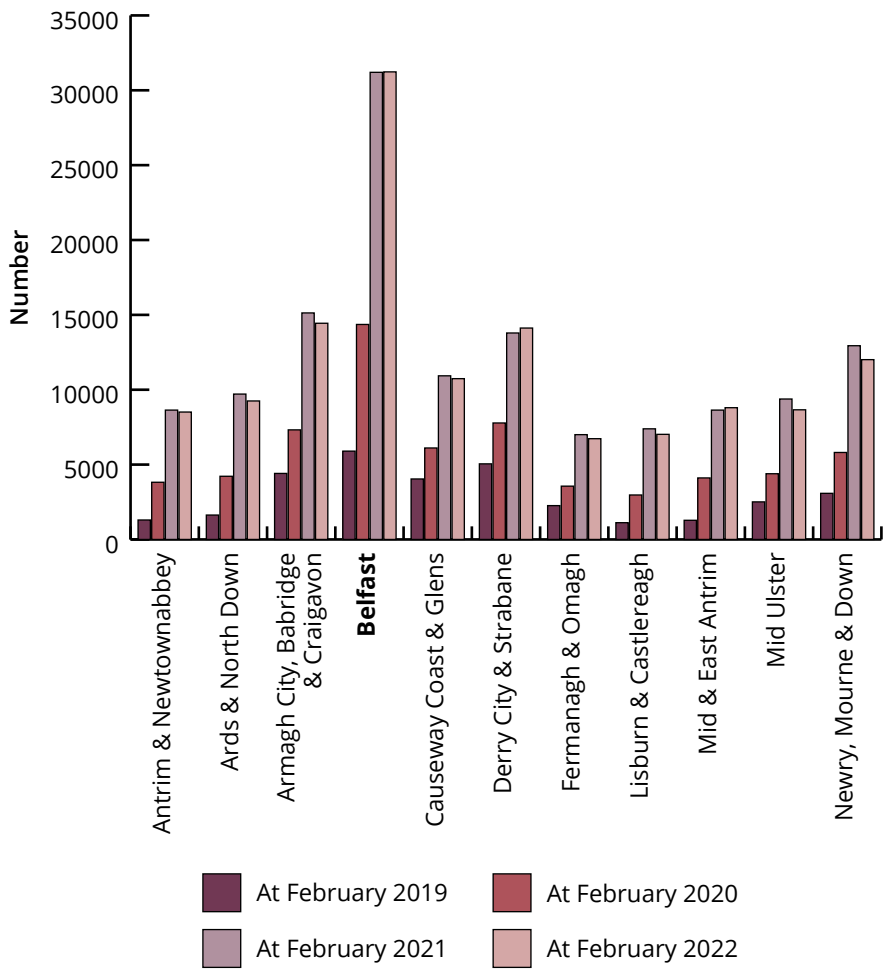
Numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit by LGD and Northern Ireland, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022

LGD	February 2019	February 2020	February 2021	February 2022
Antrim & Newtownabbey	1,300	3,820	8,640	8,510
Ards & North Down	1,630	4,220	9,710	9,250
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	4,410	7,320	15,130	14,440
Belfast	5,900	14,360	31,200	31,230
Causeway Coast & Glens	4,040	6,110	10,930	10,740
Derry City & Strabane	5,050	7,780	13,790	14,120
Fermanagh & Omagh	2,260	3,560	7,000	6,730
Lisburn & Castlereagh	1,120	2,970	7,390	7,020
Mid & East Antrim	1,280	4,110	8,640	8,800
Mid Ulster	2,510	4,390	9,380	8,660
Newry, Mourne & Down	3,080	5,810	12,940	12,010
Northern Ireland	32,920	65,150	135,760	132,090

Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 9:**

**Numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit by LGD, at February 2019, February 2020, February 2021, and February 2022**



Source: NINIS: Universal Credit Claimants (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

From February 2020 to February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, Belfast LGD's percentage share of Northern Ireland's working-age population in receipt of Universal Credit increased by 1.59 percentage points, from 22.04% to 23.63% (a percentage increase of 7.21%). Thus, Belfast LGD's share of Northern Ireland's working-age people on Universal Credit comprised between one-fifth and one-quarter of the total.

Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, there was a greater percentage increase in the number of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit in Belfast LGD when compared with Northern Ireland.

## Comparison with other LGDs

In comparison with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had the highest numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit, and the highest percentage shares of Northern Ireland's totals, at:

- February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic
- February 2021, covering the first 11 months of the pandemic
- February 2022, covering from 12 months to the first year and 11 months into the pandemic

Therefore, there was no change in the relative position of Belfast LGD among LGDs from before and during the first year and 11 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between February 2020 and February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic:

- Belfast LGD had the fourth greatest percentage increase in the number of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit at 117.48%
- Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD had the greatest percentage increase at 136.36%
- Causeway Coast & Glens LGD had the smallest percentage increase at 75.78%
- Newry, Mourne & Down LGD had the median percentage increase at 106.71%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first year and 11 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit increased in:

- All LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Northern Ireland

At February 2022, Belfast LGD had over 2 out of every 10 of Northern Ireland's working-age adults in receipt of Universal Credit.

Among LGDs, both before and during the first year and 11 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Belfast LGD had:

- **The highest numbers of working-age adults in receipt of Universal Credit**
- **The highest percentage shares of Northern Ireland's total**
- **Belfast LGD also had a relatively higher percentage increase in working-age recipients of Universal Credit.**

For working-age people in Belfast LGD, the COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with an increase in the numbers in receipt of Universal Credit (over 100%); however, as the timeframe for the COVID-19 pandemic coincides with the roll-out of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland, it is not possible to identify how much of the increase is due to the planned roll-out and how much might be due people's needs as a result of the health and economic shock of the pandemic.

### **Inequalities, with the potential for inequity**

From February 2020 to February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, Belfast North, followed by Belfast West, had the highest numbers of working-age adults in receipt of Universal Credit, although the greatest percentage increases occurred in Belfast South and Belfast East (from relatively low pre-pandemic baselines).

At February 2022, more than 3 out of every 10 working-age people in Belfast's assembly areas in receipt of Universal Credit were in Belfast North, and 3 out of every 10 were in Belfast West, compared with approaching 2 out of every 10 in Belfast East and in Belfast South.

From February 2020 to February 2022, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first year and 11 months of the pandemic, Court DEA, Oldpark DEA and Titanic DEA had the three highest numbers of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit, although the greatest percentage increases occurred in Lisnasharragh DEA, Castle DEA, and Balmoral DEA (from relatively low pre-pandemic baselines).

At February 2022, the combined total of working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit in Court, Oldpark, and Titanic DEAs accounted for more than 4 out of every 10 of Belfast LGD's working-age people in receipt of Universal Credit, compared with the combined total of Balmoral, Lisnasharragh, and Ormiston DEAs, which accounted for just over 1 out of every 10 of Belfast's working-age population in receipt of Universal Credit.

## SECTION 5

# Households Showing Signs of Food Poverty

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from the Department of Health, Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22, Health Survey NI Trend Tables, Food Security tab.<sup>16</sup>

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Financial year 2021/22<sup>17</sup>

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

Owing to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, data collection for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Health Survey Northern Ireland moved from face-to-face to telephone interviewing. Several factors should be considered when interpreting the 2021/22 results, and care should be taken when comparing these to previously published findings.

The change in data collection method:

- May have altered how people responded to the survey
- Necessitated a reduction in the number of questions and changes to how some questions were asked or presented, as well as the response categories associated with them, which may also have implications for how people responded

16 1 Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22 | Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk) (Last accessed 6 July 2023)

17. The questions in the Health Survey Northern Ireland used to determine signs of food poverty were not asked in financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21

As the response rate to the telephone survey was lower than that by face-to-face interviewing (47% compared with 55%):

- The number of cases at household and individual levels was reduced
- The precision of survey estimates in 2020/21 was reduced in comparison with previous findings, particularly when analysed by population subgroup
- The demographic profile of the survey sample changed when compared with previous years, with a greater under-representation of people aged 16-44 years

Although the 2021/22 results were based on data weighted by age and sex, weighting cannot eliminate all forms of bias in the data. In addition, the 2021/22 data were weighted by Multiple Deprivation Measure as the survey covered fewer households from Quintile 1, the most-deprived areas, and more households from Quintile 5, the least-deprived areas.

In addition, findings for 2021/22 and as such, individual responses to some behavioural, attitudinal and health related questions, may also have been impacted to a degree by which Government restrictions were in place for the pandemic at the time the interviews took place.<sup>18</sup>

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In 2021/22, the second full year of the COVID-19 pandemic, in Belfast HSCT, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty was 6%.

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic to the second full year of the pandemic, in Belfast HSCT, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty increased by 2 percentage points from 4% to 6%.

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18. Impact of COVID-19 tab, Health Survey NI Trend Tables Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22 | Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk) (Last accessed 6 July 2023)

## Differences by deprivation quintile in Northern Ireland

In 2021/22, the second full year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty in:

- Quintile 1, the most-deprived areas, was 8%
- Quintile 2, the second most-deprived areas, was 4%
- Quintile 3, the mid-quintile, was 3%
- Quintile 4, the second least-deprived areas, was 3%
- Quintile 5, the least-deprived areas, was 2%  
(see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 10)

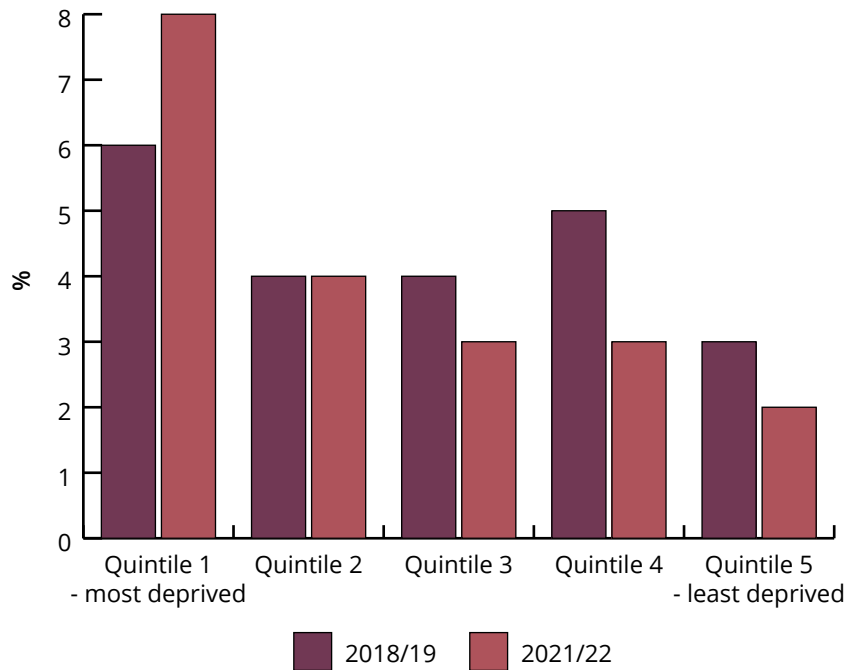
Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic to the second full year of the pandemic, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty in:

- Quintile 1, the most-deprived areas, increased by 2 percentage points, from 6% to 8% (a percentage increase of 33.33%)
- Quintile 2, the second most-deprived areas, remained the same at 4%
- Quintile 3, the mid-quintile, decreased by 1 percentage point from 4% to 3% (a percentage decrease of 25.00%)
- Quintile 4, the second least-deprived areas, decreased by 2 percentage points from 5% to 3% (a percentage decrease of 40.00%)
- Quintile 5, the least-deprived areas, decreased by 1 percentage points from 3% to 2% (a percentage decrease of 33.33%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 10)



**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 10:**

Percentage (%) of households showing signs of food poverty by deprivation quintile in Northern Ireland, 2018/19 and 2021/22



Source: Department of Health: Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22, Health Survey NI Trend Tables, Food Security tab, Food Poverty tables

## KEY COMPARISONS

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, Belfast had:

- In 2018/19, before the COVID-19 pandemic, a lower percentage of households showing signs of food poverty, 4% compared with 5%
- In 2021/22, the second full year of the pandemic, a higher percentage of households in food poverty, 6% compared with 4% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 11)

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic to the second full year of the pandemic, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty:

- In Belfast HSCT, increased by 2 percentage points from 4% to 6% (a percentage increase of 50.00%)
- In Northern Ireland, decreased by 1 percentage point, from 5% to 4% (a percentage decrease of 20.00%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 11)

### Comparison with other HSCTs

When compared with other HSCTs, Belfast HSCT had:

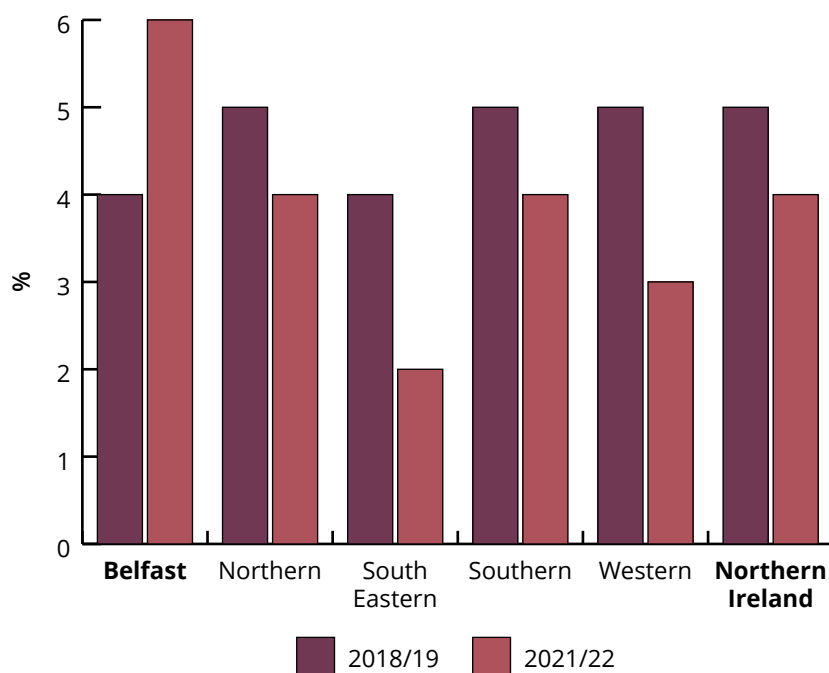
- In 2018/19, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the equal lowest percentage of households showing signs of food poverty at 4% together with South Eastern HSCT
- In 2021/22, the second full year of the pandemic, the highest percentage of households in food poverty at 6% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 11)

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic to the second full year of the pandemic, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty:

- Increased in Belfast HSCT
- Decreased in 4 HSCTs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 11)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 11:**

**Percentage (%) of households showing signs of food poverty by HSCT and Northern Ireland, 2018/19 and 2021/22**



Source: Department of Health: Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2021/22, Health Survey NI Trend Tables, Food Security tab, Food Poverty tables

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

In comparison with Northern Ireland, Belfast HSCT had a lower percentage of households showing signs of food poverty in 2018/19, before the COVID-19 pandemic, but a higher percentage in 2021/22, the second full year of the pandemic. This is because there was an increase in the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty in Belfast HSCT, whereas there was a decrease in the percentage in Northern Ireland over this time-period, and the gap between the two closed and then widened, from Belfast having more favourable outcomes to having less favourable outcomes when compared with Northern Ireland.

## Comparison with other HSCTs

In comparison with other HSCTs, Belfast HSCT had the equal lowest percentage of households showing signs of food poverty in 2018/19, before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the highest percentage in 2021/22, the second full year of the pandemic, consequently there was a reversal of Belfast HSCT's position among other HSCTs, from equal lowest to the highest due to Belfast HSCT being the only health and social trust in which there was an increase in the percentage of households in food poverty; all other HSCTs had a decrease.

### POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic to the second full year of the pandemic, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty:

- Increased in Belfast HSCT
- Decreased in Northern Ireland
- Decreased in the four other HSCTs

In 2021/22, in Belfast HSCT, 3 out of every 50 households were showing signs of food poverty compared with 2 out of every 50 in Northern Ireland, Northern HSCT and Southern HSCT, between 1 and 2 out of every 50 in Western HSCT, and 1 out of every 50 in South Eastern HSCT.

## Inequalities, with the potential for inequity in Northern Ireland

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic to the second full year of the pandemic, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty increased in Quintile 1, the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland, whereas it remained the same in Quintile 2, the second most-deprived areas, and decreased in Quintiles 3, 4, and 5, the mid quintile, second least-deprived areas, and least-deprived areas, respectively.

In 2021/22, in the most-deprived areas in Northern Ireland, 4 out of every 50 households were showing signs of food poverty compared with 1 out of every 50 in Quintile 5, the least-deprived areas.

In 2021/22, the percentage of households showing signs of food poverty in Quintile 1, the most-deprived areas in Northern Ireland, was double that in Quintile 2, the second most-deprived areas, and four times that in Quintile 5, the least-deprived areas.

## Introduction to the distribution of food aid during the COVID-19 pandemic in Belfast and Northern Ireland

It is possible that the indicator “Households showing signs of food poverty” is an underestimate of the number of households experiencing food poverty, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This could be for various reasons, including:

- **Changes in the data collection method for the indicator, which had several consequences such as a smaller sample size for the survey, and the underrepresentation of people aged 16-44 years, and people in Quintile 1, the most-deprived areas, compared with people in Quintile 5, the least-deprived areas**
- **A reluctance by some participants to report experiencing food poverty due to social stigma**

According to a mixed methodology study undertaken by Ipsos and the Trussell Trust investigating the scale and drivers of food insecurity in Northern Ireland, 1 out of every 14 people in Northern Ireland (7%) reported that that they, or another member of their household, had accessed at least one type of food aid<sup>19</sup> in the last 12 months, from mid-2021 to mid-2022; this approximates to 158,000 people in Northern Ireland. This number of people, however, is thought to represent only a minority of people who might have been going hungry, because the Trussell Trust found that between 7 and 8 out of every 10 people experiencing food insecurity<sup>20</sup> in Northern Ireland (75%) had not used any form of food aid in the last 12 months, from mid-2021 to mid-2022.<sup>21</sup>

To highlight the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to food aid in both Belfast and Northern Ireland, the following have been presented to illustrate the situation:

- **Case-study – The food-aid ecosystem in Belfast during the COVID-19 pandemic, March to August 2020**
- **Case-study – North Belfast Advice Partnership COVID-19 Support, March to May 2020**
- **Food redistribution by FareShare NI in Northern Ireland**
- **Emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland**

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19. The definition of food aid used by Ipsos and the Trussell Trust is accessing food parcels from a food bank or other emergency provider, hot or cold meals from an organisation like a soup kitchen, and/or low-cost food from models such as food pantries or social supermarkets

20. The definition of food insecurity used by Ipsos and the Trussell Trust is going without or cutting back on quality or quantity of food due to a lack of money. People who are food insecure have, at some point over the last 12 months, run out of food and been unable to afford more, and/or reduced meal size, eaten less, gone hungry or lost weight due to lack of money.

21. Page 23 2023-Hunger-in-Northern-Ireland-report.pdf (trusselltrust.org) (Last accessed 18 August 2023)

## CASE-STUDY

# The Food-aid Ecosystem in Belfast during the COVID-19 Pandemic, March to August 2020

## INFORMATION SOURCE

Gordon, K., Loopstra, R., and Lambie-Mumford, H. (2021) 'Belfast Case Study, Mapping local responses: March to August 2020', published July 2021. <sup>22</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In a research project undertaken by the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Sheffield, entitled "Food vulnerability during COVID-19", as part of the project's "Work package 3: Local area case studies", a case-study of the food-aid ecosystem in Belfast during the COVID-19 pandemic was undertaken.

## SUMMARY OF CASE-STUDY FINDINGS

### Belfast City Council:

- Coordinated and provided city-wide deliveries of food parcels for people who were shielding or had financial barriers to accessing food
- Distributed £1.6 million to nine strategic partners, existing third sector organisations providing local support services, including food provision (e.g., emergency food parcels, community meals, meals on wheels, and holiday clubs)

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22. Food vulnerability during COVID-19, Work package 3: Local area case studies, Work package 3 publications, Mapping local responses: March to August 2020 reports, Belfast Case Study Food vulnerability during COVID-19 | SPERI | The University of Sheffield (Last accessed 18 August 2023)

Strategic partners also redistributed funds to smaller organisations and community groups providing support with food access, some of which already worked in communities with food, whereas others were newly undertaking food work.

There were 18 food banks in Belfast before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the need for these services increased at the start of the pandemic. Although need abated when lockdown restrictions eased, it increased in 2022 when the economic consequences and impacts on household incomes came to the fore.

Belfast Food Network, a collaborative forum established in March 2014 to develop Belfast as a Sustainable Food City, consciously avoided involvement in direct emergency food provision and supported:

- **Local sustainable food businesses**
- **Households with cooking and growing**

The food-aid response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Belfast was largely informed by, and built on, a pre-existing “vibrant community sector”; this localised, community-driven model capitalised on the capacity and reach of Belfast’s community sector. Community organisations used their existing knowledge to identify households in need of support and responded quickly with support tailored to the local community. Some respondents, however, were concerned that the localised and ad-hoc nature of the response also led to:

- **An “uncoordinated, disjointed response across the city”**
- **The “duplication of services in some circumstances”**

Some felt this resulted in “a complicated and messy landscape of food provision across Belfast”.

## CASE-STUDY

# The North Belfast Advice Partnership COVID-19 Support, March to May 2020

## INFORMATION SOURCE

NICVA website: post by Una McKernan, last updated 14 May 2020. <sup>23</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Established by the North Belfast Advice Partnership (NBAP), many agencies came together including the Vine Centre/NBAP, Ligoniel Improvement Association, Ballysillan Community Forum, Cliftonville Regeneration Forum, Greater Whitewell Community Surgery, Ardoyne Youth Enterprise, and Upper Ardoyne to collaborate on a COVID-19 Community Response providing all aspects of emergency support for people in the North Belfast and Shankill areas, as well as for homeless people rehoused across Belfast.

Teams provided advice on benefits, debt, and tribunal representation, as well as operating a food bank and delivery service, and a nightly homeless outreach service. A team of 44 volunteers operated the food bank, and six volunteers from the Ardoyne Association provided shopping services and prescription collection five days per week.

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23. Collective Action in North Belfast delivers phenomenal results | NICVA (Last accessed 2 August 2023)



## SUMMARY OF CASE-STUDY FINDINGS

Highlights from food aid during the first six weeks of operating the COVID-19 community response in North Belfast and Shankill areas:

- Distribution of 550 food parcels to all folds, hostels, and sheltered accommodation
- 35 homeless packs each night to homeless people, with a total of 900 to date
- 150 pensioner packs out per week to older people shielding, with a total to date of 450
- 200 pensioners receiving Sunday dinner in Upper Ardoyne Ballysillan area
- Supporting Clare Project with emergency aid for older people
- Supporting the North Belfast Soup Kitchen delivering 200 soups per day
- 80 pensioners getting pensioner food and safety pack in Upper Ardoyne
- 131 older people receiving fresh nutritional meals from Ben Madigan's Bar and Restaurant with total meals to date of 3,829
- 50 people getting meals three times per week from Vine Centre - going out to people with poor mental health/vulnerable/older, with total meals to date of 400
- 996 family food hampers out in first six weeks of response

## SECTION 6

# Food Redistribution by FareShare NI in Northern Ireland

### DATA SOURCE

FareShare NI website, and Media at FareShare NI, personal communication.<sup>24</sup>

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Financial years 2020/21, and 2021/22

### INTRODUCTION

FareShare NI is part of the UK's network of charitable food redistributors, and the largest food redistribution organisation in Northern Ireland. Good-quality surplus food from the food industry is redistributed to 164 frontline charities and community groups every week, including:

- School breakfast clubs
- Older people's lunch clubs
- Homeless shelters
- Community cafes

Every week food is provided to create almost 40,000 meals for vulnerable people.<sup>25</sup>

24. 2019/20 data: personal communication, Media at FareShare NI, 9 August 2023; 2020/21 data: FareShare NI - Homeless Connect; 2021/22 data: FareShare Main - Homeless Connect (Last accessed 2 August 2023)

25. FareShare Main - Homeless Connect (Last accessed 6 August 2023)

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In 2020/21, the first full year of the COVID-19 pandemic, in Northern Ireland, FareShare NI redistributed 800 tonnes of food, equivalent to 1,900,000 meals.

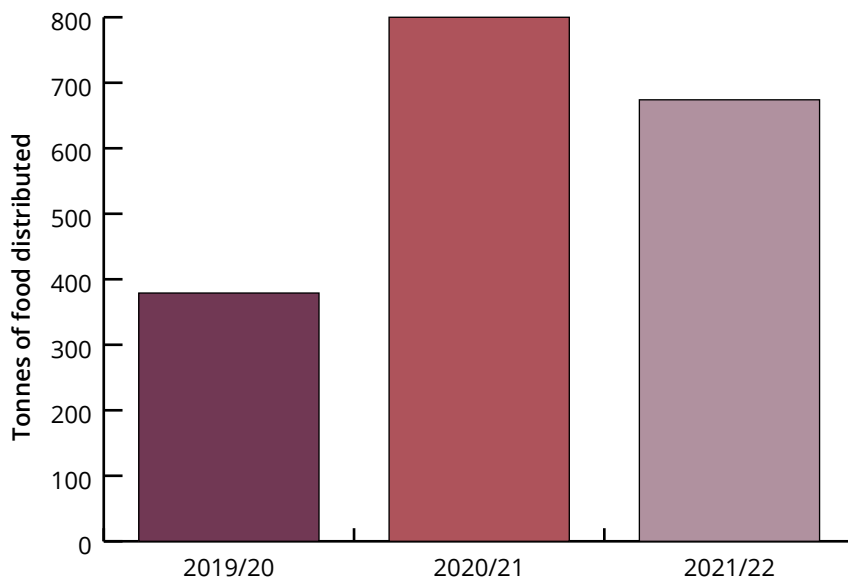
In 2021/22, the second full year of the COVID-19 pandemic, in Northern Ireland, FareShare NI redistributed 674 tonnes of food, equivalent to 1,600,000 meals.

Between 2019/20 and 2021/22, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first two full years of the pandemic:

- The tonnage of food redistributed by FareShare NI increased by 295 tonnes, from 379 to 674 tonnes (a percentage increase of 77.84%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 12)
- The equivalent number of meals increased by 700,000, from 900,000 to 1,600,000 (a percentage increase of 77.78%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 13)

### COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 12:

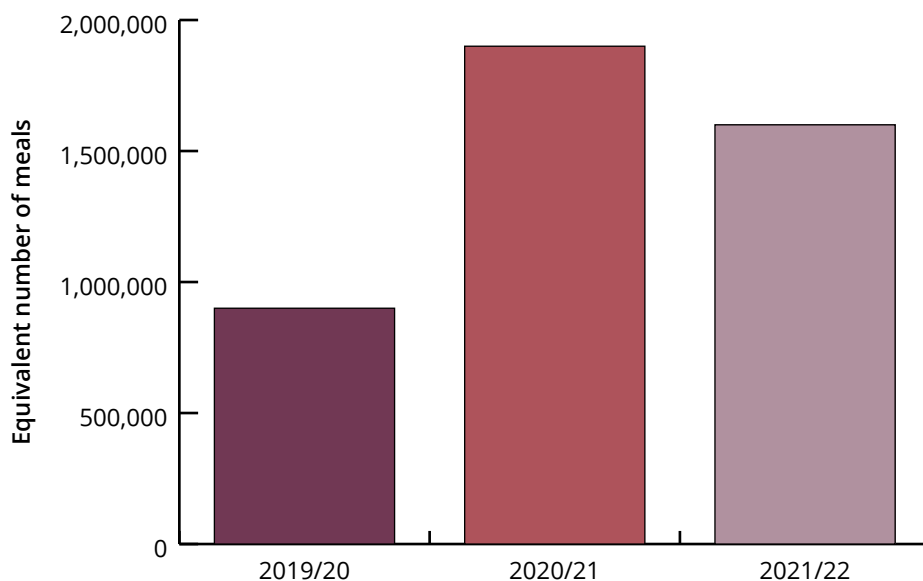
Food redistributed (tonnes) by FoodShare NI in Northern Ireland, 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22



Source: FareShare NI website, and personal communication, Media at FareShare NI

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 13:**

**Number of meals equivalent to the tonnage of food redistributed by FoodShare NI in Northern Ireland, 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: FareShare NI website, and personal communication, Media at FareShare NI

### OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA

Between 2019/20 and 2020/21, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first full year of the pandemic, the tonnage of food redistributed by FareShare NI in Northern Ireland more than doubled at 111.08%, as did the equivalent number of meals at 111.11%.

Between 2020/21 and 2021/22, covering the second full year of the pandemic, the tonnage of food redistributed by FareShare NI in Northern Ireland decreased by 126 tonnes from 800 to 674 tonnes, a percentage decrease of 15.75%, with a similar percentage decrease in the equivalent number of meals at 15.79%; however, this decrease was relatively small compared with the previous year's increases, and did not reach the lower pre-pandemic levels of food redistribution, or meal equivalents.

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first two full years of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- The tonnage of food redistributed by FareShare NI in Northern Ireland increased overall by almost 80%
- The equivalent number of meals for people in Northern Ireland also increased overall by almost 80%

The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with an overall increase in the tonnage of food redistributed by FareShare NI in Northern Ireland; this translated into an overall increase in the equivalent number of meals provided to people in Northern Ireland during the pandemic.

## SECTION 7

# Emergency Food Parcels Provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland

### DATA SOURCE

Ipsos and the Trussell Trust: "Hunger in Northern Ireland", June 2023.<sup>26</sup>

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Financial years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23

### INTRODUCTION

The Trussell Trust supports a UK-wide network of food banks. In Northern Ireland, there are 22 food banks supported by the Trussell Trust, distributing parcels at over 45 venues in the six counties.<sup>27</sup>

There are four Trussell Trust-supported food banks in Belfast:

- South Belfast
- North Belfast
- South-West Belfast
- Dundonald (run in cooperation with local churches)

People are referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network by referral agencies, such as health visitors, schools, social workers, and organisations such as Advice NI. These agencies assess people for financial hardship before referring them to a food bank.<sup>28</sup>

26. 2023-Hunger-in-Northern-Ireland-report.pdf (trusselltrust.org) (Last accessed 2 August 2023)

27. Our work in Northern Ireland - The Trussell Trust (Last accessed 6 August 2023)

28. 2023-Hunger-in-Northern-Ireland-report.pdf (trusselltrust.org) (Last accessed 7 August 2023)

## PROFILE FINDINGS

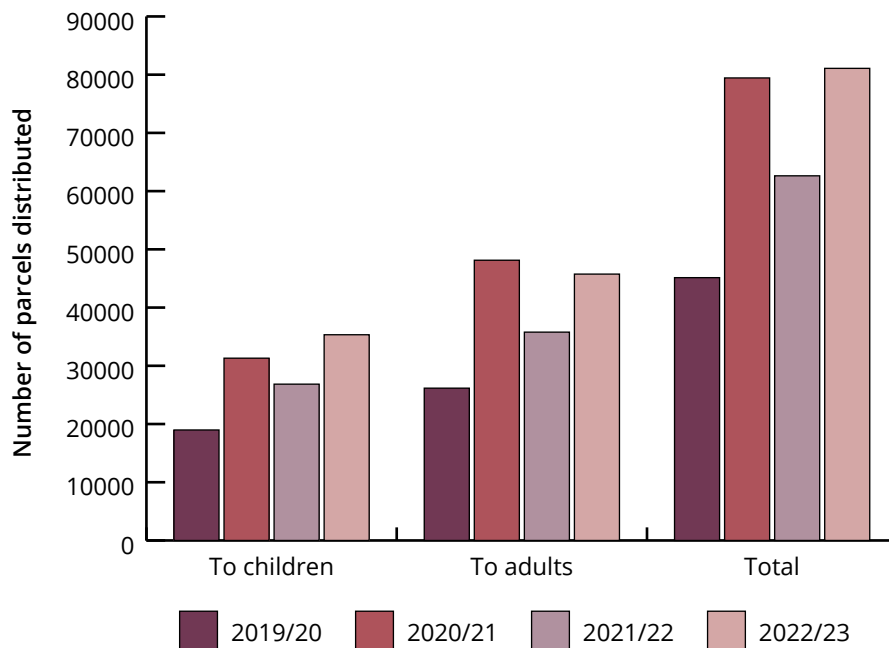
In Northern Ireland, the total number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust was:

- 79,440 in 2020/21, the first full year of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 62,630 in 2021/22, the second full year of the pandemic
- 81,084 in 2022/23, the third full year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 14 and COVID-19 Prosperity Table 5)

Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first three full years of the pandemic, the number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland increased by 35,945, from 45,139 to 81,084 (a percentage increase of 79.63%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 14 and COVID-19 Prosperity Table 5).

### COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 14:

**Number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23**



Source: Ipsos and the Trussell Trust: "Hunger in Northern Ireland", June 2023, Figure 2, page 23

### COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 5:

#### Number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23

Recipient	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Children	18,979	31,308	26,848	35,334
Adults	26,160	48,132	35,782	45,750
Total	45,139	79,440	62,630	81,084

Source: Ipsos and the Trussell Trust: "Hunger in Northern Ireland", June 2023, Figure 2, page 23

In Northern Ireland, the percentage of emergency food parcels provided to children out of the total provided by the Trussell Trust was:

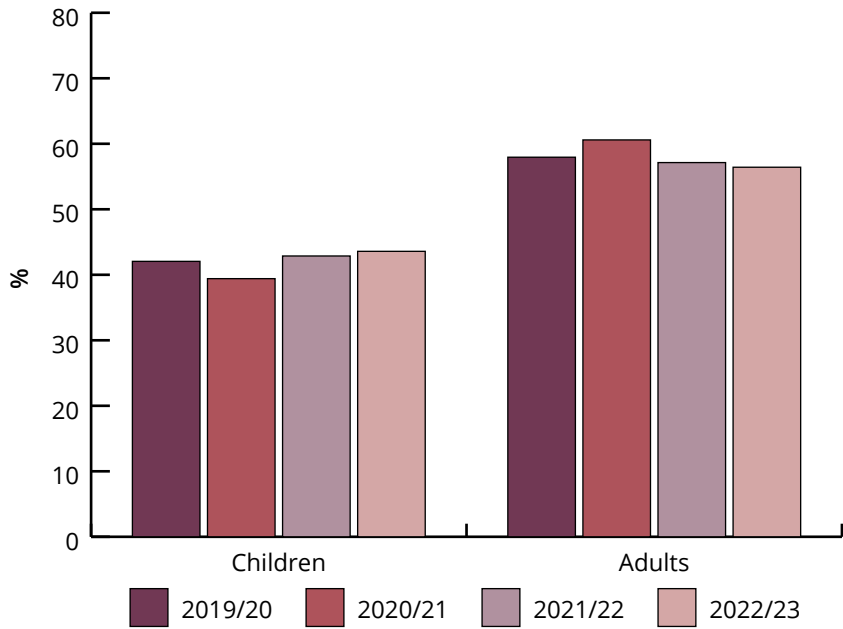
- 39.41% in 2020/21, the first full year of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 42.87% in 2021/22, the second full year of the pandemic
- 43.58% in 2022/23, the third full year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 15)

Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first three full years of the pandemic, the percentage of emergency food parcels provided to children out of the total provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland increased by 1.53 percentage points, from 42.05% to 43.58% (a percentage increase of 3.64%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 15).



**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 15:**

**Percentage share (%) of total emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust to children and adults in Northern Ireland, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23**



Source: Data extracted from Ipsos and the Trussell Trust: “Hunger in Northern Ireland”, June 2023, Figure 2, page 23

***Representation of different population groups in referrals to the Trussell Trust network in Northern Ireland***

The Trussell Trust analysed the percentages of various population groups referred to their network for food aid in Northern Ireland, and compared those percentages with the average for the general population in Northern Ireland.<sup>29</sup> The Trussell Trust found that several population groups were over-represented in referrals for food aid (see COVID-19 Prosperity Table 6 and COVID-19 Prosperity Table 7).

29. In mid-2022 (from May to August 2022), the Trussell Trust conducted a UK-wide survey of 99 food banks in the Trussell Trust network, which covered 12 food banks in Northern Ireland with 264 respondents; Ipsos conducted a UK-wide survey via a random probability online panel over the same timeframe, with 539 respondents from Northern Ireland. The parallel datasets were used to identify the drivers of food bank use by comparison of users with the average in the general population.

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 6:**

**Representation of various population groups referred to the Trussell Trust network compared with the average in the general population, May to August 2022**

Population group	Average in general population in Northern Ireland (%)	Referrals to Trussell Trust network in Northern Ireland (%)	Difference, indicating the degree of over-representation
People with a disability <sup>30</sup>	30%	61%	31 percentage points
Women	52%	66%	14 percentage points
Households with one or more children under the age of 16 years	34%	48%	14 percentage points
Single adults with children	4%	25%	21 percentage points
Working age (18-64 years) adults living alone	12%	33%	21 percentage points
People in social rented accommodation	2%	42%	40 percentage points
People in private rented accommodation	10%	22%	12 percentage points
Homeless people or people who were homeless in the last 18 months <sup>31</sup>	1%	26%	25 percentage points
People with at least 1 adverse experience <sup>32</sup> in the last 12 months	26%	58%	32 percentage points
People in receipt of means-tested benefits	24%	78%	54 percentage points
People in receipt of Universal Credit	6%	50%	44 percentage points
People in some form of debt	58%	89%	31 percentage points
People subject to benefit caps or deductions	23%	49%	26 percentage points
People from ethnic minority groups	2%	10%	8 percentage points

Source: Ipsos and the Trussell Trust: "Hunger in NI" report, pages 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 52, and 53

30. People with a physical disability, a long-term physical condition or illness, a mental health condition (including stress, depression or anxiety) or a learning disability or learning difficulty
31. People in temporary accommodation, statutory accommodation, living insecurely with friends or family (sometimes referred to as 'sofa-surfing'), living in a B&B or hostel, or sleeping rough
32. Adverse events include bereavement, a long-term physical condition or sickness, and relationship breakdown

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY TABLE 7:**

**Representation of various population groups referred to the Trussell Trust network compared with the average in the general population for people with a disability, May to August 2022**

Population group	Average in general population in Northern Ireland (%)	Referrals to Trussell Trust network in Northern Ireland	Difference, showing the degree of over-representation
People with a disability	30%	61%	31 percentage points
People with a physical disability	8%	16%	8 percentage points
People with a long-term physical condition or illness	19%	27%	8 percentage points
People with a mental health condition (including stress, depression, or anxiety)	17%	46%	29 percentage points
People with a learning disability or learning difficulty	2%	7%	5 percentage points

Source: Ipsos and the Trussell Trust: "Hunger in NI" report, page 28

**KEY COMPARISON**

Between 2017/18 and 2022/23, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first three full years of the pandemic, when compared with the UK, the percentage increase in the provision of emergency food parcels by the Trussell Trust was 21 percentage points higher in Northern Ireland, 141% compared with 120%.

**POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

In Northern Ireland, between 2019/20 and 2022/23, from before the COVID-19 pandemic and covering the first three full years of the pandemic, the total number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust increased by almost 80%.

Using the Trussell Trust data from 2017/18 to 2022/23, it indicates that the increase in the need for emergency food aid has been greater in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK.

In 2022/23<sup>33</sup>:

- Over 4 out of every 10 recipients of the total emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland were children
- Approaching 6 out of every 10 recipients of the total emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust in Northern Ireland were adults

For people in Northern Ireland, the COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with an overall increase in the provision of emergency food parcels through the Trussell Trust network. This overall increase comprised:

- An increase between 2019/20 and 2020/21
- A relative decrease between 2020/21 and 2021/22 although not to pre-pandemic levels
- A further increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23, which may reflect a combination of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost of Living crisis

### Inequalities, with the potential for inequity in Northern Ireland

In mid-2022, after more than two full years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the population groups that comprised the greater proportions or volumes of referrals to the Trussell Trust network were:

- People in some form of debt
- People in receipt of a means-tested benefit
- Women
- People with a disability, although the largest population group within this category was people with a mental health condition (including stress, depression, or anxiety), followed by people with a long-term physical condition or illness
- People with at least one adverse experience in the last 12 months
- People in receipt of Universal Credit
- People subject to benefit caps or deductions

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33. The data for financial year 2022/23 also reflect the Cost of Living crisis

- Households with one or more children under the age of 16 years
- People in social rented accommodation

When analysed by the magnitude of difference between the percentage referrals of various population groups to the Trussell Trust network in Northern Ireland and the percentage of those groups in the general population in Northern Ireland, the population groups with the greatest degree of over-representation (that is, the greatest percentage-point differences) were:

- People in receipt of a means-tested benefit
- People in receipt of Universal Credit
- People in social rented accommodation
- People with at least one adverse experience in the last 12 months
- (i) People with a disability, although the greatest degree of over-representation within this category was people with a mental health condition (including stress, depression, or anxiety); (ii) people in some form of debt (these two groups of people had the same percentage-point difference)
- People subject to benefit caps or deductions
- Homeless people or people who were homeless in the last 18 months
- (i) Single adults with children; (ii) Working age (18-64 years) adults living alone (these two groups of people had the same percentage-point difference)

## SECTION 8

# Special Educational Needs (SEN) Stage 1-4 – Primary Pupils

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NINIS, Pivot Table Primary Pupils (administrative geographies)

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Academic years 2020/21, and 2021/22

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

None reported in the metadata for the NINIS “Primary Pupils (administrative geographies)” Pivot Table.

### PROFILE FINDINGS

In Belfast LGD, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 1-4:

- In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, was 17.82%
- In academic year 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic, was 17.13%

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 decreased overall by 1.67 percentage points, from 18.80% to 17.13%.

### Differences by Belfast's assembly areas

There was variation in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 across Belfast's assembly areas.

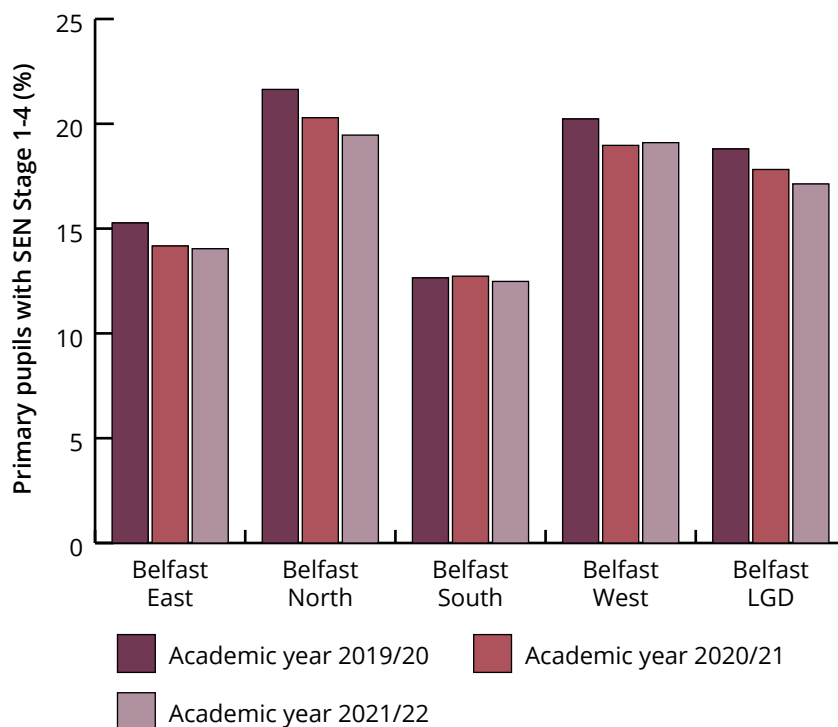
In academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, covering the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Belfast North had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 at 20.29% and 19.46%, respectively
- Belfast South had the lowest percentage at 12.73% and 12.48%, respectively (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 16)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 decreased in all Belfast's assembly areas (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 16).

#### COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 16:

Percentage (%) of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 1-4 by Belfast assembly area, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

Differences by Belfast's DEAs

There was variation in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 across Belfast's DEAs.

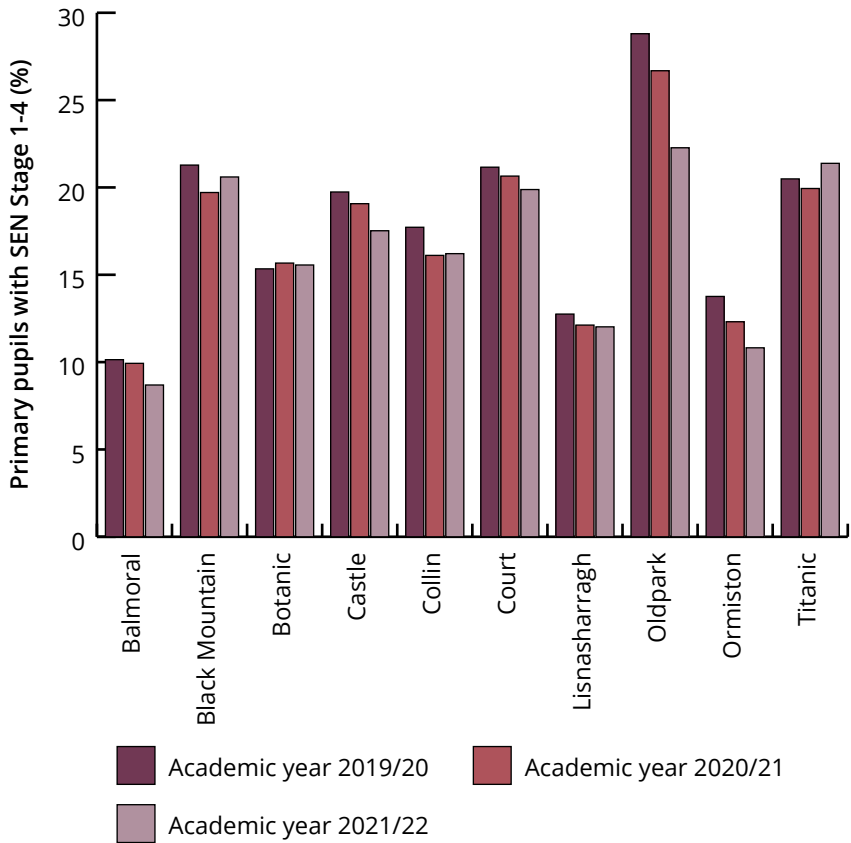
In academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Oldpark DEA had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 at 26.68% and 22.27%, respectively
- Balmoral DEA had the lowest percentage at 9.93% and 8.69%, respectively (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 17)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4:

- Decreased in 8 of Belfast's DEAs
- Increased in 2 of Belfast's DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 17)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 17:**  
**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 1-4 by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table



## KEY COMPARISONS

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, the percentages of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 in Belfast LGD were higher in academic years:

- 2019/20, an academic year that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic but covers the first 3 months of the pandemic
- 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic
- 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 18)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 decreased:

- In Belfast LGD, by 1.67 percentage points, from 18.80% to 17.13% (a percentage decrease of 8.88%)
- In Northern Ireland by 1.44 percentage points, from 15.11% to 13.67% (a percentage decrease of 9.53%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 18)

### Comparison with other LGDs

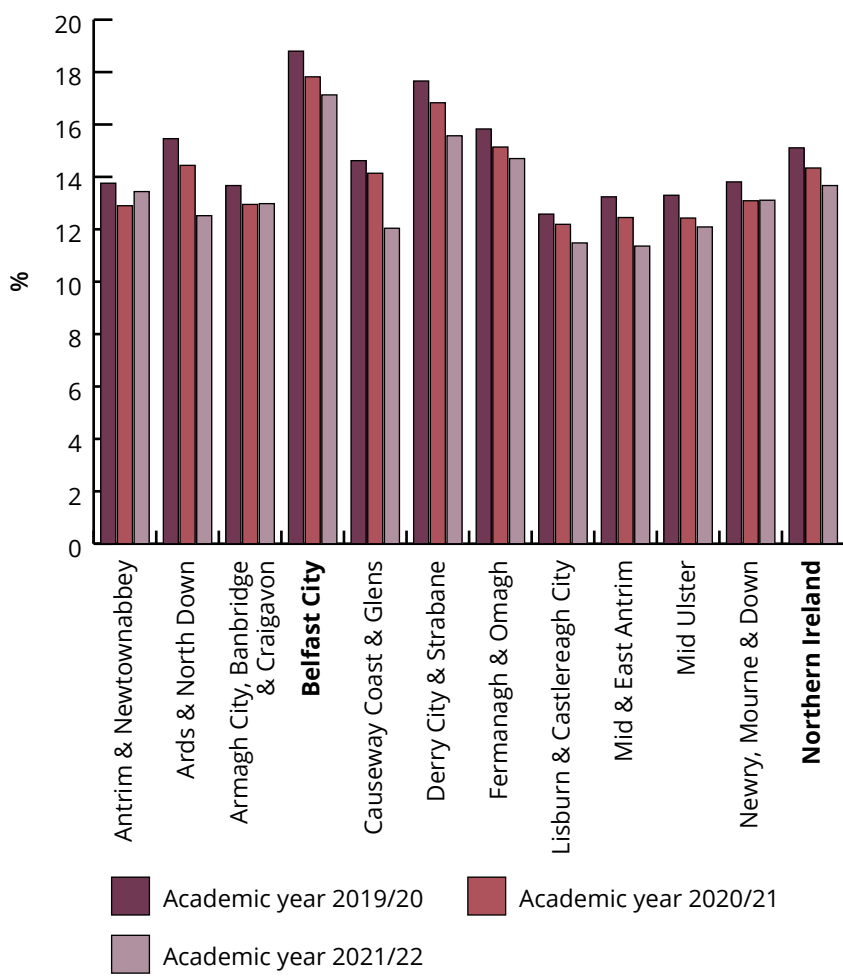
When compared with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 in academic years:

- 2019/20, an academic year that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic but covers the first three months of the pandemic
- 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic
- 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 18)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 decreased in all LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 18).

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 18:**

**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 1-4 by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 was higher in Belfast LGD both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic; the gap between the two widened, with a smaller percentage decrease in Belfast LGD than that in Northern Ireland.

## Comparison with other LGDs

Of all the LGDs, Belfast LGD had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic; consequently, there was no change in the relative position of Belfast LGD among LGDs.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic:

- Belfast LGD had the median percentage decrease in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 at 8.88%
- The largest percentage decrease was in Ards & North Down LGD at 19.02%
- The smallest percentage decrease was in Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD at 2.33%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 decreased in all LGDs, including Belfast LGD, and in Northern Ireland.

For primary pupils in Belfast LGD, the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been associated with a decrease in the percentage designated with special educational needs Stage 1-4.

In a report by the National Children's Bureau entitled "Insights into the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Northern Ireland"<sup>34</sup>, published in June 2021, one of the recommendations was:

*"Meeting the educational and developmental needs of children and young people with SEND in Northern Ireland needs a thorough rethink. It is not just about education or health, but about these and all the other areas of life. There should be a comprehensive, coordinated approach from across government and statutory organisations in partnership with parents and voluntary and community sectors organisations to reshape and maximise the 'offer' to children and young people with SEND."*

34. Impact of COVID-19 on children and YP with SEND in NI - FIINAL.pdf (ncb.org.uk) (Last accessed 2 August 2023)

Several participants in this research pointed out that the pandemic did not cause a lack of support for children with SEND, but rather exacerbated an already bad situation in relation to the lack of services and support to adequately meet their needs and the ongoing struggle faced by parents as a result.

### Inequalities with the potential for inequity

The percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 was highest in Belfast North, followed by Belfast West, both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, all Belfast's assembly areas had a decrease in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4, although Belfast North had the greatest percentage decrease at 10.07%, followed by Belfast East at 8.06%. The smallest percentage decrease was in Belfast South at 1.34%.

Thus, in academic year 2021/22, almost 2 out of every 10 primary pupils were designated with special educational needs Stage 1-4 in Belfast North and Belfast West compared with over 1 out of every 10 in Belfast South and between 1 and 2 out of every 10 in Belfast East.

The percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4 was highest in Oldpark DEA, both before and during the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other DEAs with relatively high percentages before and during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic were Black Mountain, Court, and Titanic DEAs, which were variously second, third and fourth highest depending on the academic year.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, of the 8 DEAs that had a decrease in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 1-4:

- **Oldpark DEA had the greatest percentage decrease at 22.67%, followed by Ormiston DEA at 21.37%**
- **Black Mountain DEA had the smallest percentage decrease at 3.20%**

Thus, in academic year 2021/22, over 2 out of every 10 primary pupils in Oldpark and Titanic DEAs and 2 out of every 10 in Black Mountain and Court DEAs were designated with special educational needs Stage 1-4 compared with fewer than 1 out of 10 in Balmoral DEA, 1 out of every 10 in Ormiston DEA and over 1 out of every 10 in Lisnasharragh DEA.

## SECTION 9

# Special Educational Needs (SEN) Stage 5 – Primary Pupils

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NINIS, Pivot Table Primary Pupils (administrative geographies)

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Academic years 2020/21, and 2021/22

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

None reported in the metadata for the NINIS “Primary Pupils (administrative geographies)” Pivot Table.

### PROFILE FINDINGS

In Belfast LGD, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 5:

- In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, was 3.92%
- In academic year 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic, was 4.25%

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 increased overall by 0.60 percentage points, from 3.65% to 4.25%.

Differences by Belfast's assembly areas

There was variation in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 across Belfast's assembly areas.

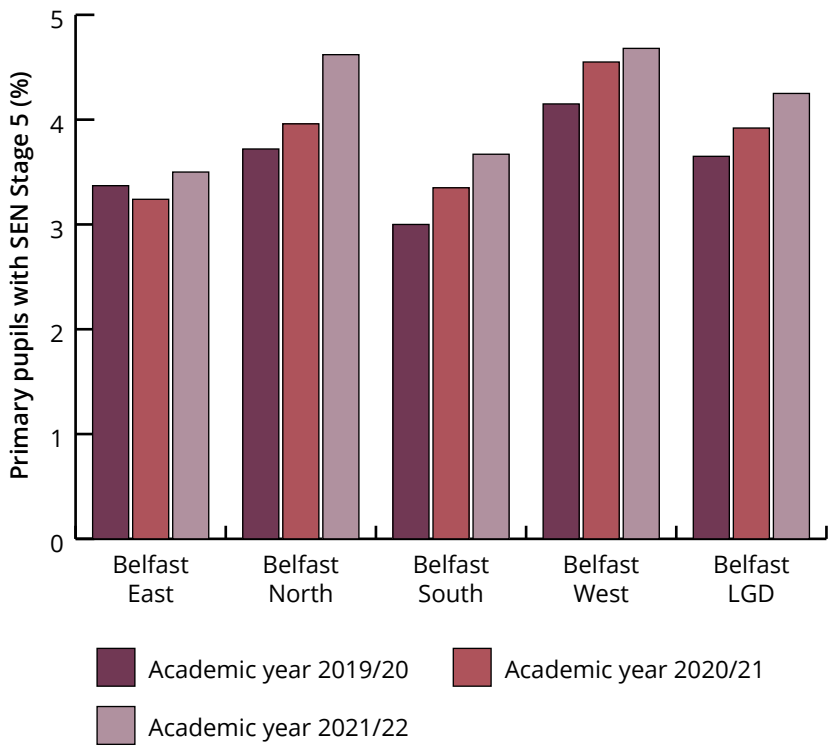
In academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Belfast West had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 at 4.55% and 4.68%, respectively
- Belfast East had the lowest percentage at 3.24% and 3.50%, respectively (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 19)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 increased in all Belfast's assembly areas (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 19).

COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 19

Percentage (%) of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 5 by Belfast assembly area, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

## Differences by Belfast's DEAs

There was variation in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 across Belfast's DEAs.

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic: Court DEA had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 at 4.78%, followed by Black Mountain DEA at 4.60% and Oldpark DEA at 4.56%

Titanic DEA had the lowest percentage at 2.98%, followed by Ormiston DEA at 3.20% and Balmoral DEA at 3.23% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 20)

In academic year 2021/22, the second full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic:

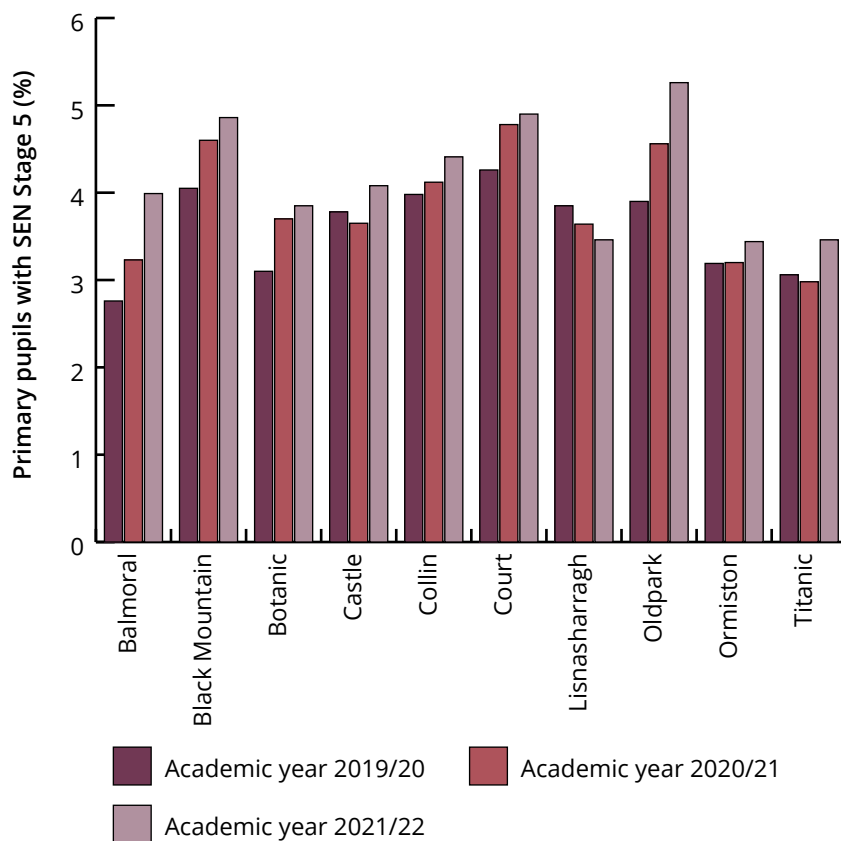
- Oldpark DEA had the highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 at 5.26%, followed by Court DEA at 4.90%
- Ormiston DEA had the lowest percentage at 3.44%, closely followed by Titanic DEA at 3.46% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 20)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5:

- Increased in 9 DEAs
- Decreased in 1 DEA (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 20)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 20:**

**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 5 by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**KEY COMPARISONS**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

When compared with Northern Ireland, the percentages of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 in Belfast LGD were higher in academic years:

- 2019/20, an academic year that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic but covers the first 3 months of the pandemic
- 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic
- 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 21)



Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 increased:

- In Belfast LGD, by 0.60 percentage points, from 3.65% to 4.25% (a percentage increase of 16.44%)
- In Northern Ireland by 0.70 percentage points, from 3.43% to 4.13% (a percentage increase of 20.41%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 21)

### Comparison with other LGDs

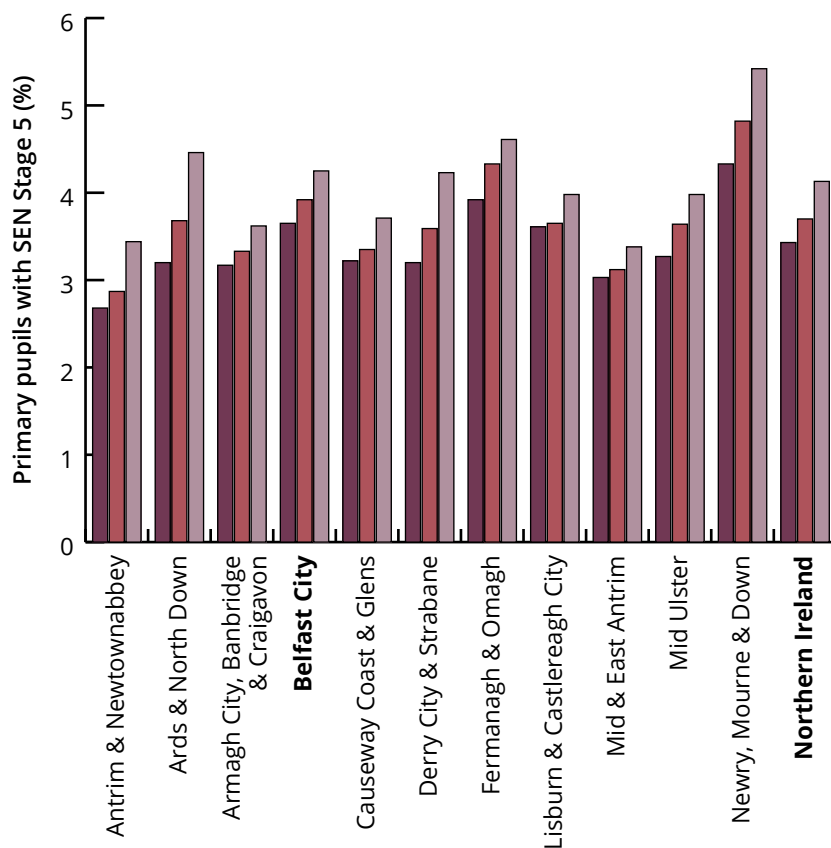
When compared with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had:

- The third highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21
- The fourth highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 in academic year 2021/22 (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 21)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 increased in all LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 21).

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 21:**

**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with special educational needs (SEN) Stage 5 by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 was higher in Belfast LGD, both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic; the gap between the two narrowed, with a greater percentage increase in Northern Ireland when compared with Belfast LGD.

## Comparison with other LGDs

Of all the LGDs, Belfast LGD had:

- The third highest percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in academic year 2019/20 and during the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21
- The fourth highest percentage during the second full academic year of the pandemic

Thus, between academic year 2019/20 and academic year 2021/22, Belfast LGD dropped one place in its relative position among LGDs.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic:

- Belfast LGD had the fifth lowest percentage increase in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 at 16.44%
- The largest percentage increase was in Ards & North Down LGD at 39.38%
- The smallest percentage increase was in Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD at 10.25%
- The median percentage increase was in Fermanagh & Omagh LGD at 17.60%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 increased in:

- All LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Northern Ireland

For primary pupils in Belfast LGD, the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been associated with an increase in the percentage designated with special educational needs Stage 5.

In a report by the National Children's Bureau entitled "Insights into the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Northern Ireland"<sup>35</sup>, published in June 2021, one of the recommendations was:

*"Meeting the educational and developmental needs of children and young people with SEND in Northern Ireland needs a thorough rethink. It is not just about education or health, but about these and all the other areas of life. There should be a comprehensive, coordinated approach from across government and statutory organisations in partnership with parents and voluntary and community sectors organisations to reshape and maximise the 'offer' to children and young people with SEND."*

Several participants in this research pointed out that the pandemic did not cause a lack of support for children with SEND, but rather exacerbated an already bad situation in relation to the lack of services and support to adequately meet their needs and the ongoing struggle faced by parents as a result.

### Inequalities with the potential for inequity

The percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 was highest in Belfast West, followed by Belfast North, both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, all Belfast's assembly areas had an increase in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5, although Belfast North had the greatest percentage increase at 24.19%, followed by Belfast South at 22.33%. The smallest percentage increase was in Belfast East at 3.86%.

The percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5 was highest in Court DEA, before and during the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas during the second full academic year Oldpark was highest and Court second highest. Other DEAs with relatively high percentages before and during the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic were Black Mountain, and Collin.

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35. Impact of COVID-19 on children and YP with SEND in NI - FIINAL.pdf (ncb.org.uk)  
(Last accessed 2 August 2023)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, of the 9 DEAs that had an increase in the percentage of primary pupils with special educational needs Stage 5:

- Balmoral DEA had the greatest percentage increase at 44.57%, followed by Oldpark DEA at 34.87%
- Ormiston DEA had the smallest percentage increase at 7.84%, followed by Castle DEA at 7.94%
- Court DEA had the median percentage at 15.02%

## SECTION 10

# Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME): Primary Pupils

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NINIS, Pivot Table Primary Pupils (administrative geographies)

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Academic years 2020/21, and 2021/22

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

None reported in the metadata for the NINIS “Primary Pupils (administrative geographies)” Pivot Table.

### PROFILE FINDINGS

In Belfast LGD, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement (FSME):

- In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, was 45.65%
- In academic year 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic, was 46.58%

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement increased overall by 0.79 percentage points, from 45.79% to 46.58%.

### Differences by Belfast's assembly areas

There was variation in the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement across Belfast's assembly areas.

In academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, covering the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic:

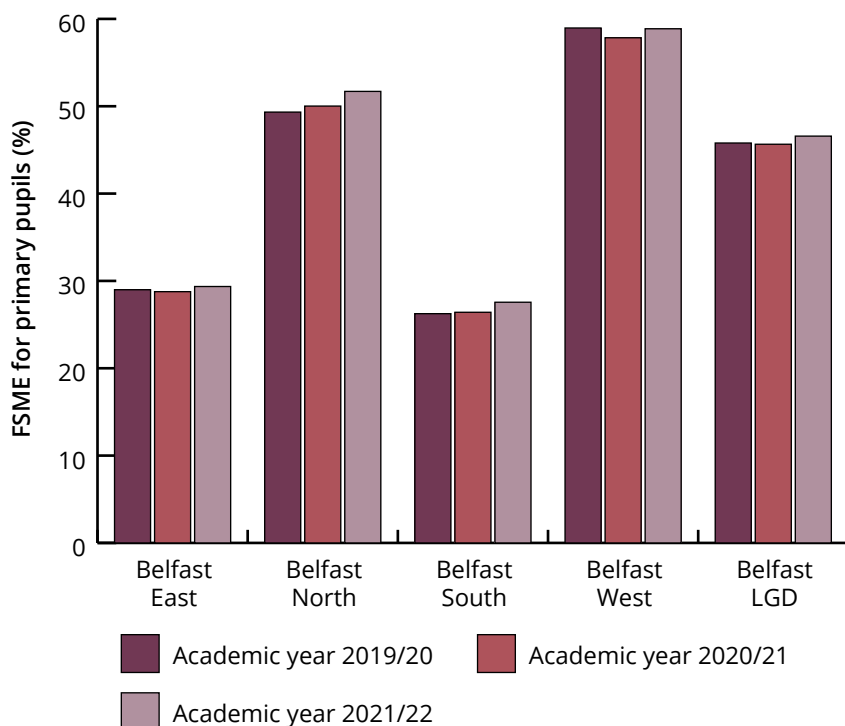
- **Belfast West had the highest percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement at 57.84% and 58.87%, respectively**
- **Belfast South had the lowest percentage at 26.41% and 27.56%, respectively (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 22)**

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement:

- **Increased in Belfast East, Belfast North, and Belfast South**
- **Decreased very slightly in Belfast West (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 22)**

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 22:**

**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement (FSME) by Belfast assembly area, academic year 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

### Differences by Belfast's DEAs

There was variation in the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement across Belfast's DEAs.

In academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, covering the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Court DEA had the highest percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement at 66.29% and 67.44%, respectively
- Ormiston DEA had the lowest percentage at 17.20% and 16.84%, respectively (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 23)

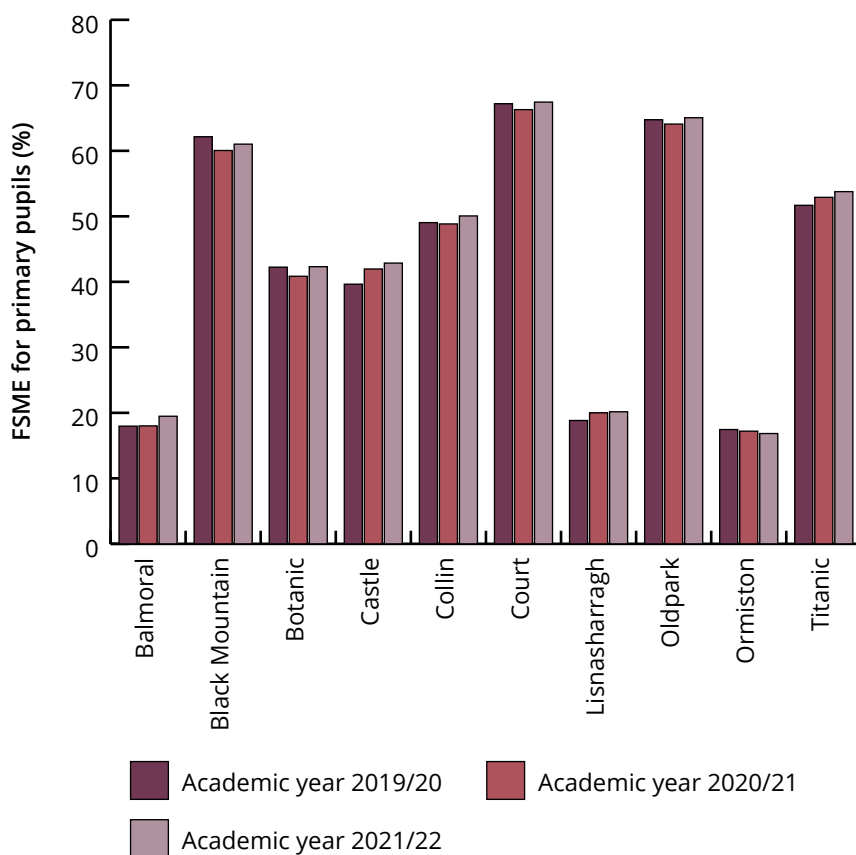
Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement:

- Increased in 8 of Belfast's DEAs
- Decreased in 2 of Belfast's DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 23)



**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 23:**

**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement (FSME) by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

## KEY COMPARISONS

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, the percentages of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement in Belfast LGD were higher in academic years:

- 2019/20, an academic year that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic but covers the first 3 months of the pandemic
- 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic
- 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 24)

Between 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement increased:

- In Belfast LGD, by 0.79 percentage points, from 45.79% to 46.58% (a percentage increase of 1.73%)
- In Northern Ireland by 0.77 percentage points, from 28.31% to 29.08% (a percentage increase of 2.72%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 24)

### Comparison with other LGDs

When compared with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had the highest percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement in academic years:

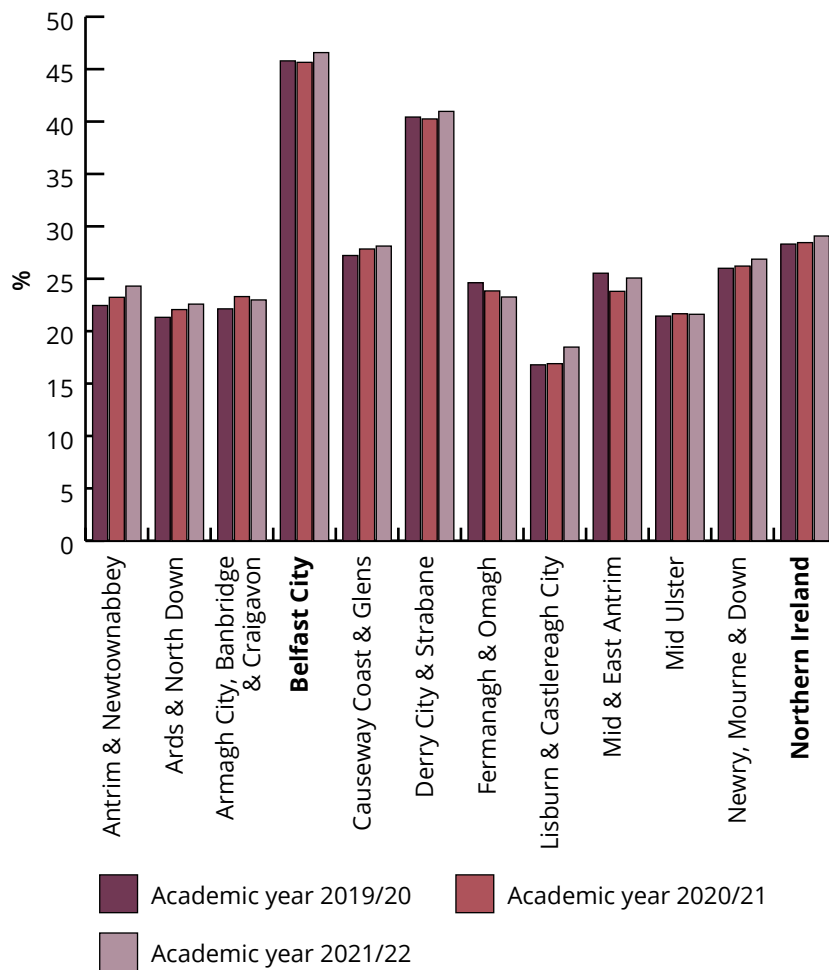
- 2019/20, an academic year that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic but covers the first 3 months of the pandemic
- 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic
- 2021/22, the second full academic year of the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 24)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement:

- Increased in 9 LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Decreased in 2 LGDs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 24)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 24:**

**Percentage (%) of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement (FSME) by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22**



Source: NINIS: Primary Pupils (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement was higher in Belfast LGD, both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first two full academic years of the pandemic; the gap between the two narrowed slightly, with a slightly greater percentage increase in Northern Ireland than that in Belfast LGD.

## Comparison with other LGDs

Of all the LGDs, Belfast LGD had the highest percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first two full academic years of the pandemic; consequently, there was no change in the relative position of Belfast LGD among LGDs.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic:

- Belfast LGD had the third smallest percentage increase in the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement at 1.73%
- The largest percentage increase was in Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD at 10.07%
- The smallest percentage increase was in Mid Ulster LGD at 0.79%
- The median percentage increase was in Newry, Mourne & Down at 3.35%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement:

- Increased in 9 LGDs, including Belfast LGD
- Increased in Northern Ireland
- Decreased in 2 LGDs

For primary pupils in Belfast LGD, the first two full academic years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been associated with a slight increase in entitlement to free school meals.

## Inequalities with the potential for inequity

The percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement was highest in Belfast West, followed by Belfast North, both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, of the three assembly areas that had an increase in the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement, Belfast South had the greatest percentage increase at 4.99%, closely followed by Belfast North at 4.80%. Although Belfast West had a decrease in the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement during this period it was only of 0.15%.

Thus, in academic year 2021/22, approaching 6 out of every 10 primary pupils were entitled to free school meals in Belfast West and 5 out of every 10 in Belfast North compared with approaching 3 out of every 10 in Belfast South and 3 out of every 10 in Belfast East.

The percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement was highest in Court DEA, followed by Oldpark DEA and Black Mountain DEA, both from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the first two full academic years of the pandemic.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes two full academic years during the pandemic, of the 8 DEAs that had an increase in the percentage of primary pupils with free school meal entitlement:

- **Balmoral DEA had the greatest percentage increase at 8.40%, followed by Castle DEA at 8.12%, and Lisnasharragh DEA at 7.06% - for Balmoral and Lisnasharragh DEAs, these relatively large percentage increases were from a relatively low baseline in academic year 2019/20**
- **Botanic DEA had the smallest percentage increase at 0.17%, followed by Court DEA at 0.37%, and Oldpark DEA at 0.48% - for Court and Oldpark DEAs, these relatively small percentage increases were from a relatively high baseline in academic year 2019/20**

Thus, in academic year 2021/22, approaching 7 out of every 10 pupils in Court DEA and between 6 and 7 out of every 10 in Oldpark DEA were entitled to free school meals compared with between 1 and 2 out of every 10 in Ormiston DEA and 2 out of every 10 in Balmoral DEA and Lisnasharragh DEA.

## SECTION 11

# Achievement of at least 5 GCSEs Grades A\*-C (or equivalent), including GCSE English and GCSE Maths: Non-Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) Pupils compared with Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) Pupils

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NINIS Pivot Tables:

- By LGD, and by assembly area: School Leavers Free School Meal Entitlement (administrative geographies)
- By DEA: School Leavers DEA Free School Meal Entitlement (administrative geographies)

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Academic year 2020/21

## REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

In the metadata for the NINIS “School Leavers DEA Free School Meal Entitlement (administrative geographies)” Pivot Table, it states:

*“Given the new methods of awarding grades in 2019/20 and 2020/21, caution should be taken when drawing any conclusions relating to changes in student performance. Year-on-year changes might have been impacted by the different processes for awarding qualifications in these years rather than reflecting a change in underlying performance.”*

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with:

- Non-free school meal entitlement (FSME) was 82.9%
- FSME was 54.9%

The difference between the two was 28 percentage points.

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with:

- Non-FSME increased by 1.3 percentage points, from 81.6% to 82.9%
- FSME increased by 2.5 percentage points, from 52.4% to 54.9%

The difference between the two decreased by 1.2 percentage points, from 29.2% to 28.0%, due to a greater increase in the percentage of pupils with FSME achieving 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C including English and Maths.

### Differences by Belfast's assembly areas

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was variation in the percentage of pupils with non-FSME and with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths across Belfast's assembly areas.

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Belfast South had the highest percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths at 90.6% and Belfast North had the lowest percentage at 77.6%**
- **Belfast East had the highest percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths at 59.0% and Belfast South had the lowest percentage at 52.7% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 25)**

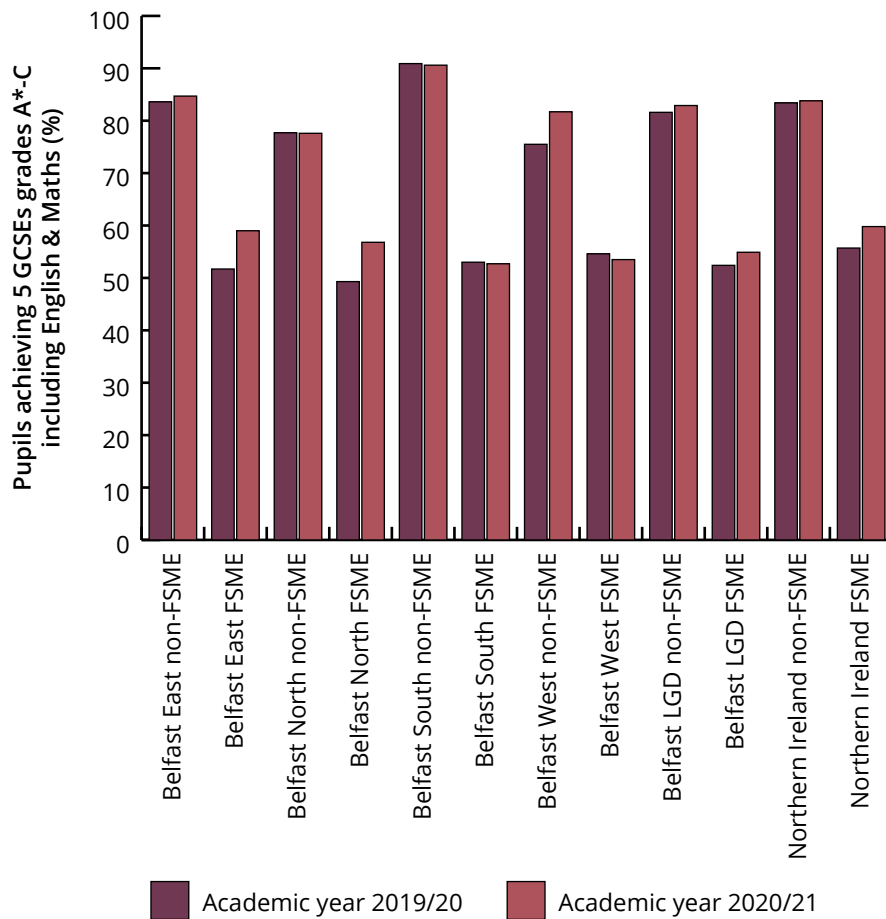
Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with:

- **Non-FSME increased in Belfast East and Belfast West, and decreased slightly in Belfast North and Belfast South**
- **FSME increased in Belfast East and Belfast North, and decreased in Belfast South and Belfast West (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 25)**



**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 25:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils with non-FSME and with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths by Belfast assembly area, academic years 2019/20, and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers Free School Meal Entitlement (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**Differences by Belfast's DEAs**

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was variation in the percentage of pupils with non-FSME and with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths across Belfast's DEAs.

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Balmoral DEA had the highest percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths at 93.8% and Oldpark DEA had the lowest percentage at 62.2%; the median percentage was 84.0%

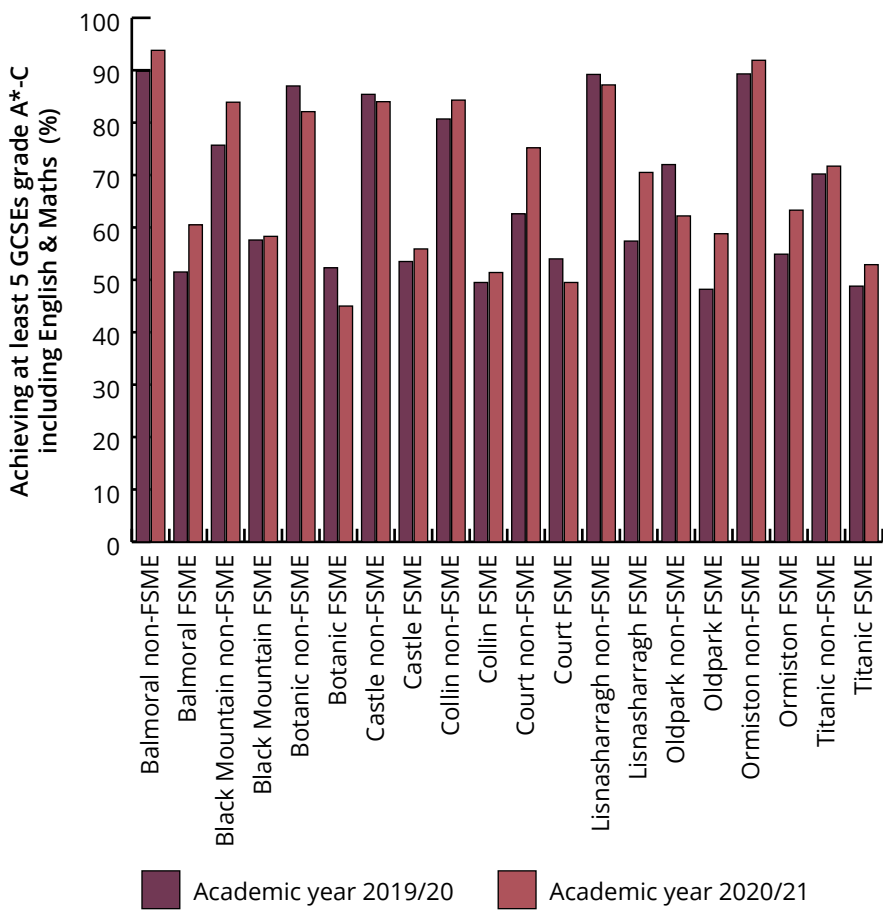
- Lisnasharragh DEA had the highest percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths at 70.5% and Botanic DEA had the lowest percentage at 45.0% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 26)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with:

- Non-FSME increased in 6 DEAs, and decreased in 4 DEAs
- FSME increased in 8 DEAs, and decreased in 2 DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 26)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 26:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils with non-FSME and with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20, and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers DEA Free School Meal Entitlement (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

When compared with Northern Ireland, the percentages of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with non-FSME and with FSME were lower in Belfast LGD in academic years:

- **2019/20**, an academic year that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic but covers the first 3 months of the pandemic
- **2020/21**, the first full academic year during the pandemic (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 27)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of non-FSME pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths increased:

- **In Belfast LGD**, by 1.3 percentage points, from 81.6% to 82.9% (a percentage increase of 1.59%)
- **In Northern Ireland** by 0.4 percentage points, from 83.4% to 83.8% (a percentage increase of 0.48%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 28)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic years during the pandemic, the percentage of FSME pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths increased:

- **In Belfast LGD**, by 2.5 percentage points, from 52.4% to 54.9% (a percentage increase of 4.77%)
- **In Northern Ireland** by 4.1 percentage points, from 55.7% to 59.8% (a percentage increase of 7.36%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 29)

## Comparison with other LGDs

When compared with other LGDs, the percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths in Belfast LGD was:

- The third lowest in academic year 2019/20, the academic that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic, at 81.6%
- The equal third lowest in academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic, at 82.9% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 28)

For the percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths:

- In academic year 2019/20, the academic that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic, Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the highest percentage at 89.3%, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD had the lowest percentage at 80.7%, and Mid Ulster LGD had the median percentage at 83.8%
- In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic, Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the highest percentage at 87.7%, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD had the lowest percentage at 79.8%, and Causeway Coast & Glens LGD had the median percentage at 83.9% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 28)

When compared with other LGDs, the percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths in Belfast LGD was:

- The fifth lowest in academic year 2019/20, the academic that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic, at 52.4%
- The third lowest in academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic, at 54.9% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 29)

For the percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths:

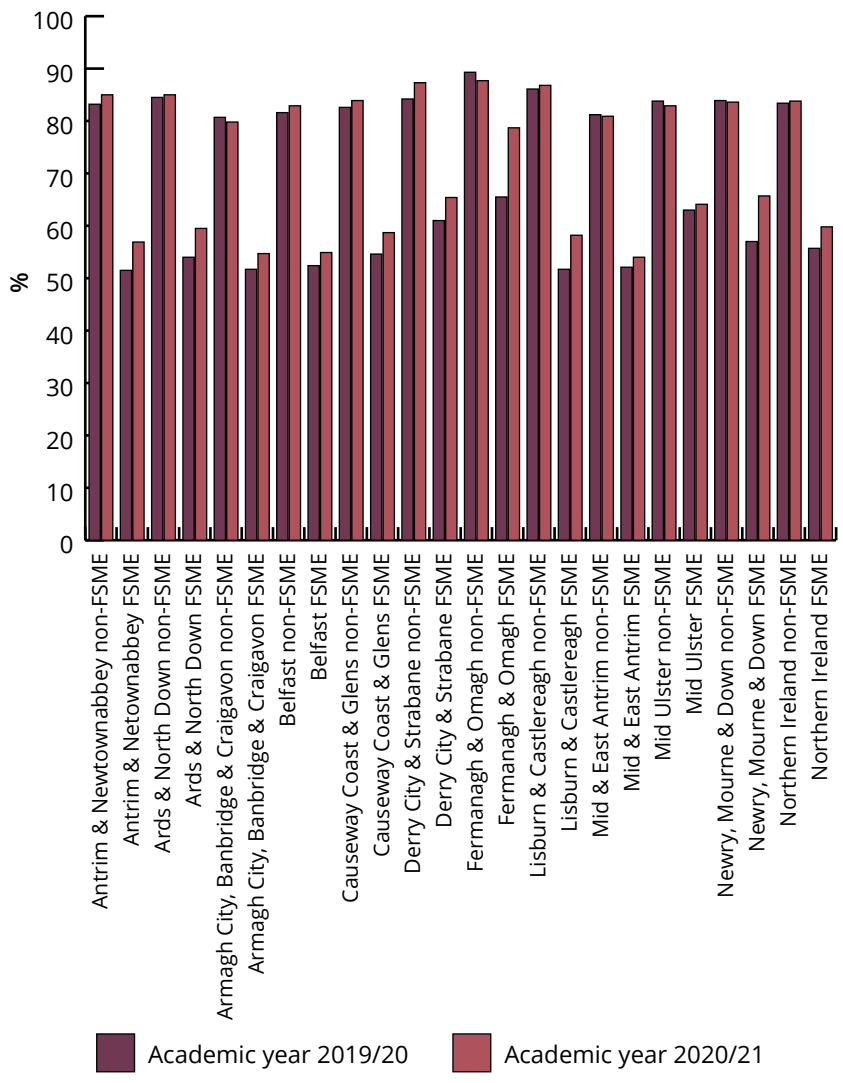
- In academic year 2019/20, the academic that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic, Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the highest percentage at 65.5%, Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD had the lowest percentage at 51.5%, and Ards & North Down LGD had the median percentage at 54.0%
- In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the pandemic, Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the highest percentage at 78.7%, Mid & East Antrim LGD had the lowest percentage at 54.0%, and Causeway Coast & Glens LGD had the median percentage at 58.7% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 29)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with:

- Non-FSME increased in 6 LGDs, including Belfast LGD, and decreased in 5 LGDs
- FSME increased in all LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 27)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 27:**

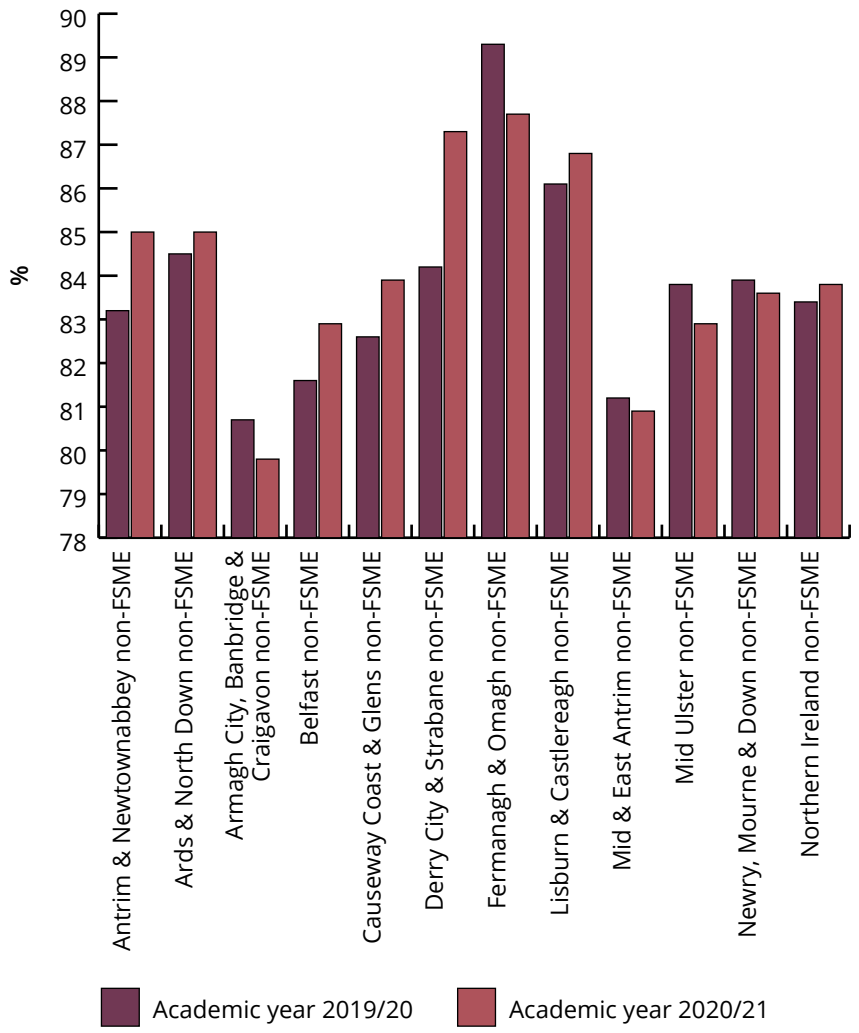
**Percentage (%) of pupils with non-FSME and with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths by LGD, academic years 2019/20, and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 28:**

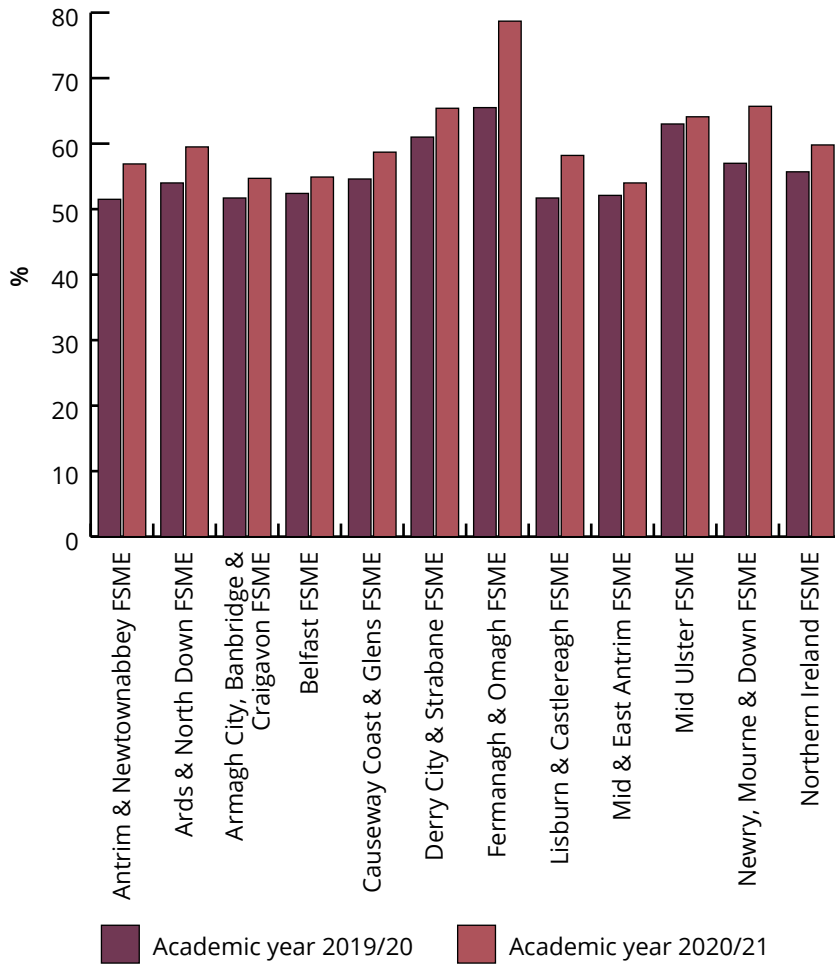
**Percentage (%) of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths by LGD, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 29:**

Percentage (%) of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths by LGD, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table



## OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA

### Comparison with Northern Ireland

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the percentages of pupils with non-FSME and with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths was lower in Belfast LGD from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and including the first full academic year of the pandemic:

- For pupils with non-FSME, the gap between the two narrowed slightly due to a greater percentage increase in Belfast LGD when compared with Northern Ireland
- For pupils with FSME, the gap between the two widened due to a greater percentage increase in Northern Ireland when compared with Belfast LGD

### Comparison with other LGDs

Of all LGDs, Belfast LGD had relatively lower percentages of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths:

- For non-FSME pupils, Belfast LGD had the third lowest percentage in academic year 2019/20 and the equal third lowest percentage in academic year 2020/21, with no change in the relative position of Belfast LGD among LGDs
- For FSME pupils, Belfast had fifth lowest percentage in academic year 2019/20 and the third lowest percentage in 2020/21, with Belfast LGD dropping two places relative to other LGDs

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year of the pandemic:

- Belfast LGD had the third greatest percentage increase in the percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths at 1.59%, Derry City & Strabane LGD had the greatest percentage increase at 3.68%, and Ards & North Down LGD had the lowest at 0.59%
- Belfast LGD had the third smallest percentage increase in the percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths at 4.77%, Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the greatest percentage increase 20.15%, and Mid Ulster LGD had the smallest percentage increase at 1.75%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

From before the COVID-19 pandemic and including the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths with:

- **Non-FSME increased in Belfast LGD, 5 other LGDs, and Northern Ireland**
- **FSME increased in Belfast LGD, all other LGDs, and Northern Ireland**

For pupils with non-FSME, the gap between Belfast LGD and Northern Ireland narrowed with a greater percentage increase in Belfast LGD compared with Northern Ireland, whereas for pupils with FSME the gap widened with a greater percentage increase in Northern Ireland compared with Belfast LGD.

In academic year 2020/21, there were over 8 out of every 10 non-FSME pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths in Belfast LGD and in Northern Ireland, whereas for FSME pupils there were between 5 and 6 out of every 10 pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths in Belfast LGD compared with 6 out of every 10 FSME pupils in Northern Ireland.

For pupils with non-FSME and pupils with FSME in Belfast LGD, the first 18 months of the academic years during the COVID-19 pandemic have been associated with an increase in the percentage achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths.

### Inequalities with the potential for inequity

In academic year 2019/20, the percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths was lowest in Belfast West, closely followed by Belfast North, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was lowest in Belfast North. Between academic years 2019/20 and 2021/22, Belfast North and Belfast South had very slight percentage decreases at 0.13% and 0.33%, respectively.

In academic year 2019/20, the percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths was lowest in Belfast North, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was lowest in Belfast South, closely followed by Belfast West. Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, Belfast South and Belfast West had slight percentage decreases at 0.57% and 2.01%, respectively.

In academic year 2020/21:

- **Approaching 8 out of every 10 non-FSME pupils in Belfast North achieved at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths compared with 9 out of every 10 in Belfast South**
- **Over 5 out of every 10 FSME pupils in Belfast South achieved at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths compared with approaching 6 out of every 10 in Belfast East**

In academic year 2019/20, the percentage of pupils with non-FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths was lowest in Court DEA, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was lowest in Oldpark DEA. Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 of the four DEAs with a percentage decrease, it was greatest in Oldpark DEA at 13.61%, which is why Oldpark DEA dropped below Court DEA and Titanic DEA, both of which had percentage increases.

In academic year 2019/20, the percentage of pupils with FSME achieving at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths was lowest in Oldpark DEA, closely followed by Titanic DEA, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was lowest in Botanic DEA. Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, Botanic DEA and Court DEA had percentage decreases at 13.96% and 8.33%, respectively, which explains why Botanic DEA dropped to be the lowest and Court DEA the second lowest in academic year 2020/21.

In academic year 2020/21:

- **Over 6 out of every 10 non-FSME pupils in Oldpark DEA achieved at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths compared with between 9 and 10 out of every 10 in Balmoral DEA and over 9 out of every 10 in Ormiston DEA**
- **Between 4 and 5 out of every 10 FSME pupils in Botanic DEA achieved at least 5 GCSEs grades A\*-C (or equivalent) including GCSE English and GCSE Maths compared with 7 out of every 10 in Lisnasharragh DEA.**

## SECTION 12

# School Leavers' Destinations

### DATA SOURCE

Information is from NINIS Pivot Tables:

- By LGD, and by assembly area: School Leavers (administrative geographies)
- By DEA: School Leavers DEA (administrative geographies)

### YEARS FOR WHICH DATA ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN COVID-19 TIMEFRAME

Academic year 2020/21

### REPORTED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DATA COLLECTION

In the metadata for this NINIS Pivot Table, it states:

*"Given the new methods of awarding grades in 2019/20 and 2020/21, caution should be taken when drawing any conclusions relating to changes in student performance. Year-on-year changes might have been impacted by the different processes for awarding qualifications in these years rather than reflecting a change in underlying performance."*

## PROFILE FINDINGS

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of pupils entering:

- Higher education was 46.0%
- Further education was 18.9%
- Employment was 16.4%
- Training was 13.3%
- Unemployment/unknown was 5.4%

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, in Belfast LGD, the percentage of pupils entering:

- Higher education decreased by 1.0 percentage point from 47.0% to 46.0%
- Further education decreased by 1.9 percentage points from 20.8% to 18.9%
- Employment increased by 3.0 percentage points from 13.4% to 16.4%
- Training increased by 1.6 percentage points from 11.7% to 13.3%
- Unemployment/unknown decreased by 1.7 percentage points from 7.1% to 5.4%

### Differences by Belfast's assembly areas

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was variation in the percentage of pupils entering higher education, further education, employment, training, and unemployment/unknown across Belfast's assembly areas.

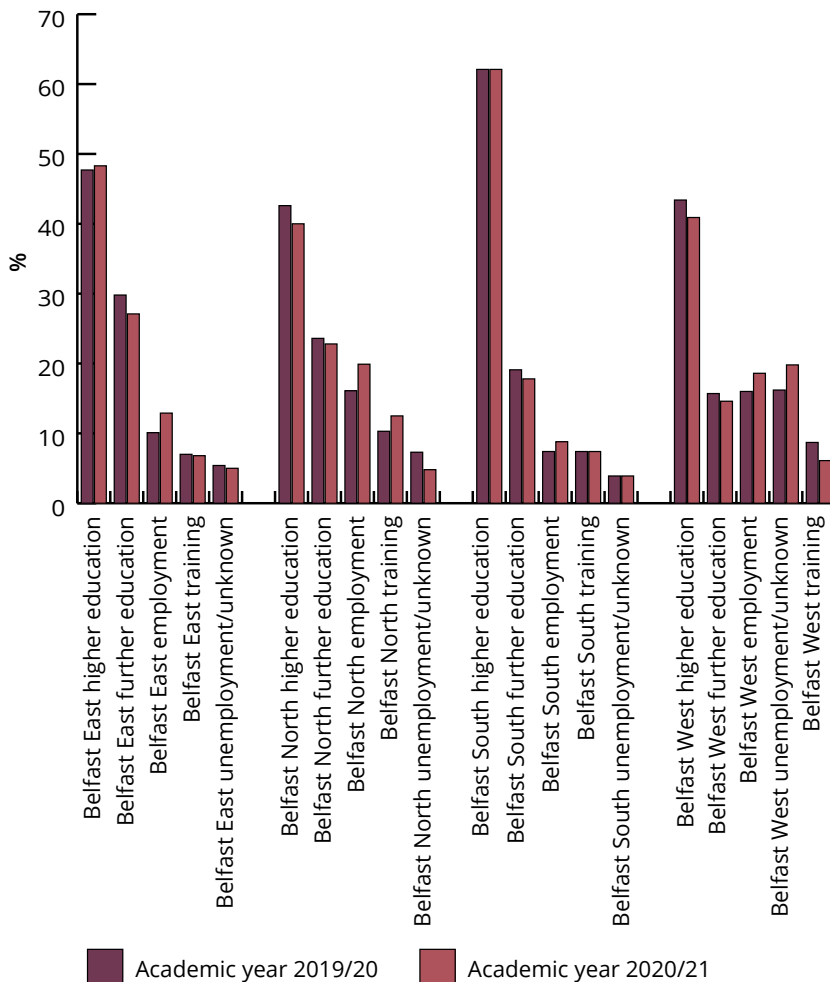
In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Belfast South had the highest percentage of pupils entering higher education at 62.1% whereas Belfast North had the lowest percentage at 40.0%, closely followed by Belfast West at 40.9%
- Belfast East had the highest percentage of pupils entering further education at 27.1% whereas Belfast West had the lowest percentage at 14.6%

- Belfast North had the highest percentage of pupils entering employment at 19.9%, whereas Belfast South had the lowest percentage at 8.8%
- Belfast West had the highest percentage of pupils entering training at 19.8% whereas Belfast East had the lowest percentage at 6.8%, closely followed by Belfast South at 7.4%
- Belfast West had the highest percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown at 6.1% whereas Belfast South had the lowest percentage at 3.9% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 30)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 30:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering higher education, further education, employment, training, or unemployment/unknown by Belfast assembly area, academic years 2019/20, and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

## Differences by Belfast's DEAs

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was variation in the percentage of pupils entering higher education, further education, employment, training, or unemployment/unknown across Belfast's DEAs.

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic:

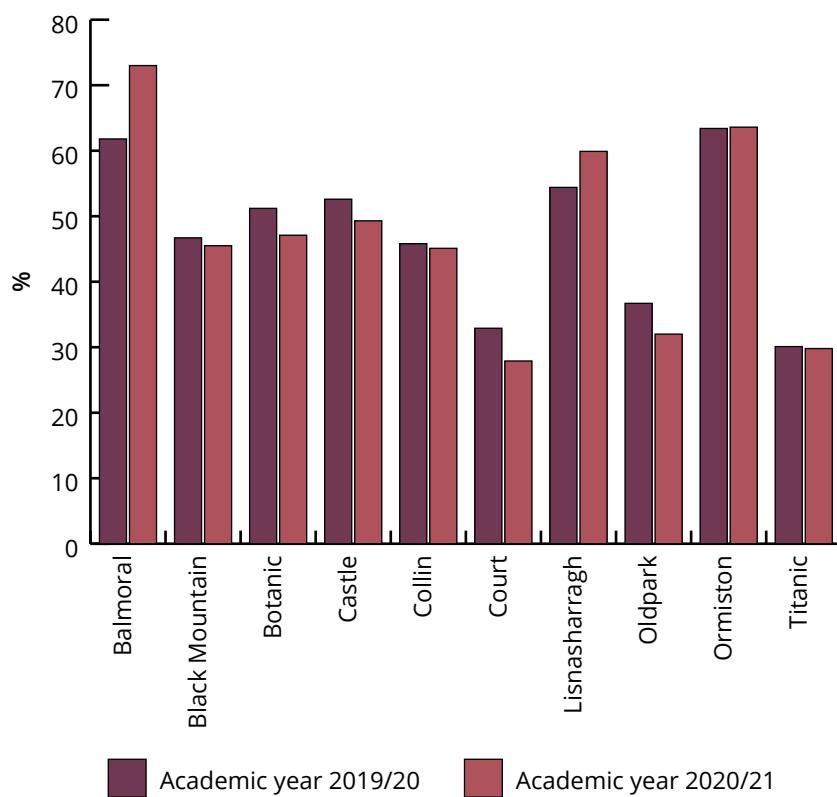
- Balmoral DEA had the highest percentage of entering higher education at 73.0% and Court DEA had the lowest percentage at 27.9% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 31)
- Titanic DEA had the highest percentage of pupils entering further education at 33.4% whereas Balmoral DEA had the lowest percentage at 8.5% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 32)
- Oldpark DEA had the highest percentage of pupils entering employment at 24.3%, whereas Ormiston DEA had the lowest percentage at 9.7% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 33)
- Collin DEA had the highest percentage of pupils entering training at 22.9%, whereas Lisnasharragh DEA had the lowest percentage at 3.2% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 34)
- Titanic DEA had the highest percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown at 9.6%, whereas Ormiston DEA had the lowest percentage at 1.9% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 35)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils entering:

- Higher education increased in 3 DEAs and decreased in 7 DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 31)
- Further education increased in 3 DEAs and decreased in 7 DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 32)
- Employment increased in all Belfast's DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 33)
- Training increased in 6 DEAs and decreased in 4 DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 34)
- Unemployment/unknown increased in 1 DEA and decreased in 9 DEAs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 35)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 31:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering higher education by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



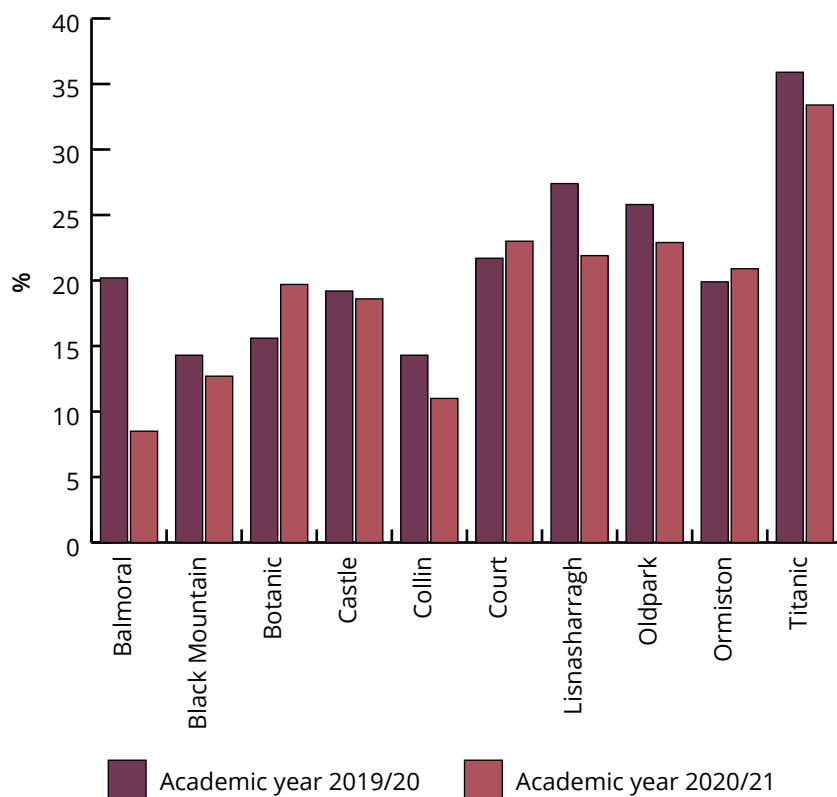
Source: NINIS: School Leavers DEA (administrative geographies) Pivot Table





**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 32:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering further education by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**

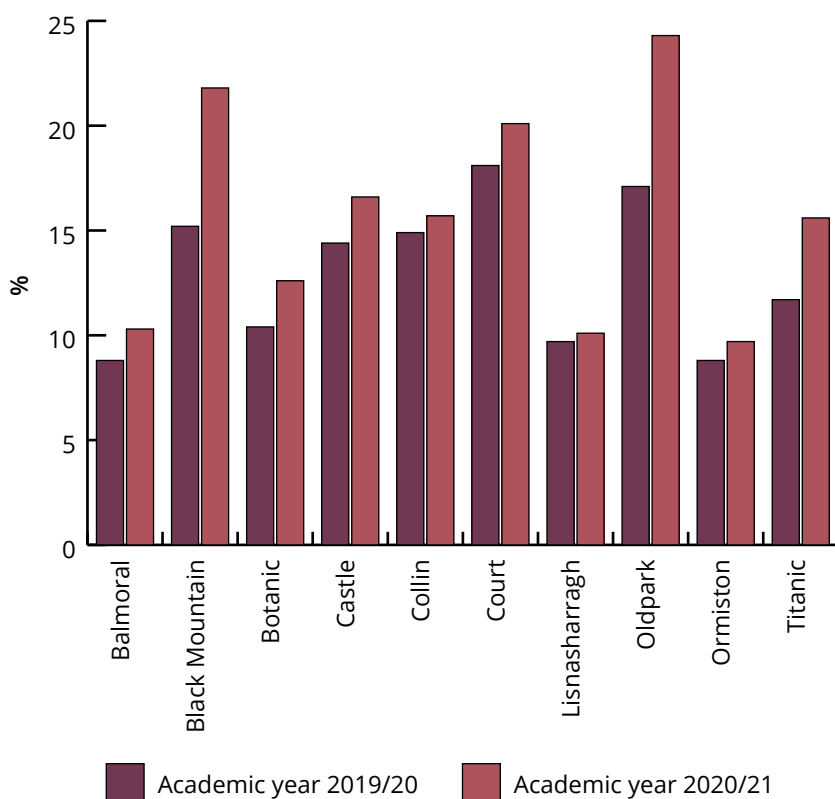


Source: NINIS: School Leavers DEA (administrative geographies) Pivot Table



**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 33:**

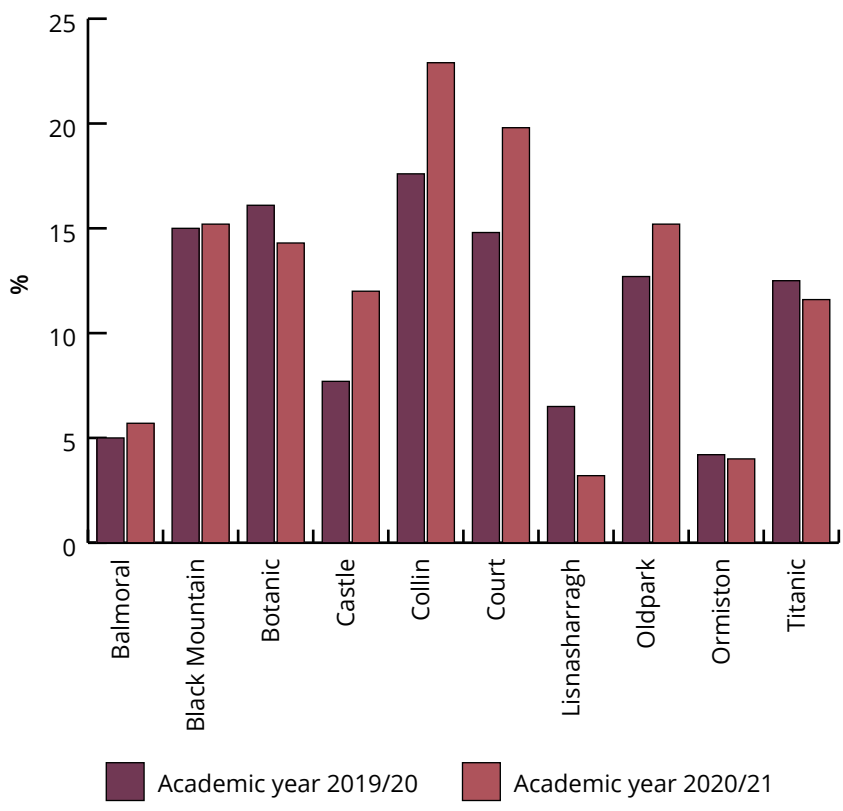
**Percentage (%) of pupils entering employment by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers DEA (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 34:**

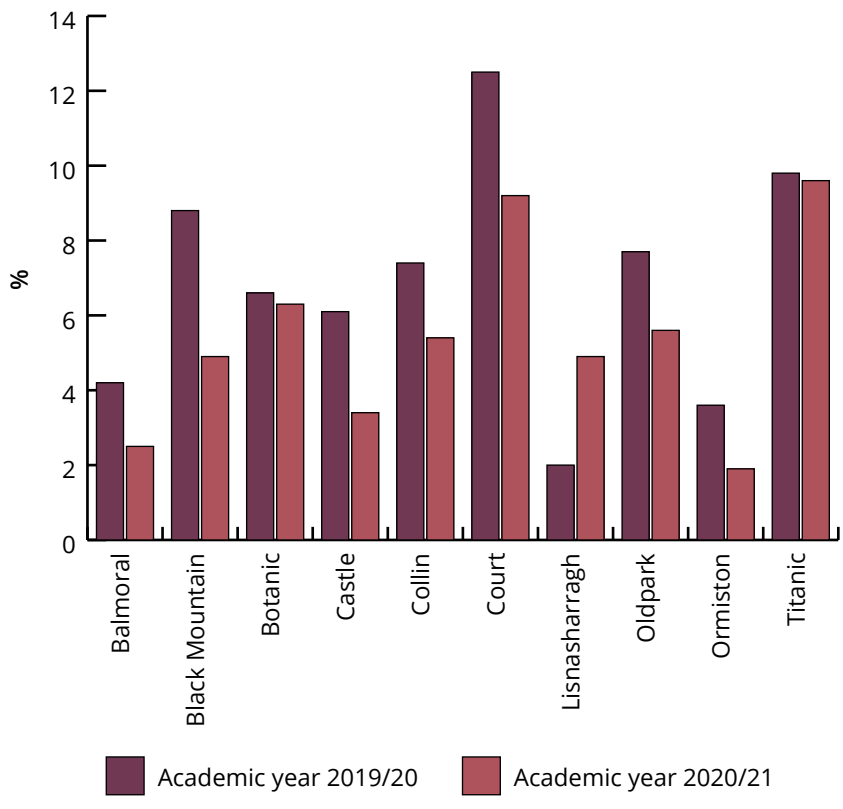
**Percentage (%) of pupils entering training by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers DEA (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 35:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering unemployment/unknown by Belfast DEA, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers DEA (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**KEY COMPARISONS**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

When compared with Northern Ireland, in academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year during the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentages of pupils in Belfast LGD entering:

- Higher education was lower by 1.9 percentage points, 46.0% compared with 47.9%
- Further education was lower by 8.1 percentage points, 18.9% compared with 27.0%
- Employment was higher by 5.8 percentage points, 16.4% compared with 10.6%

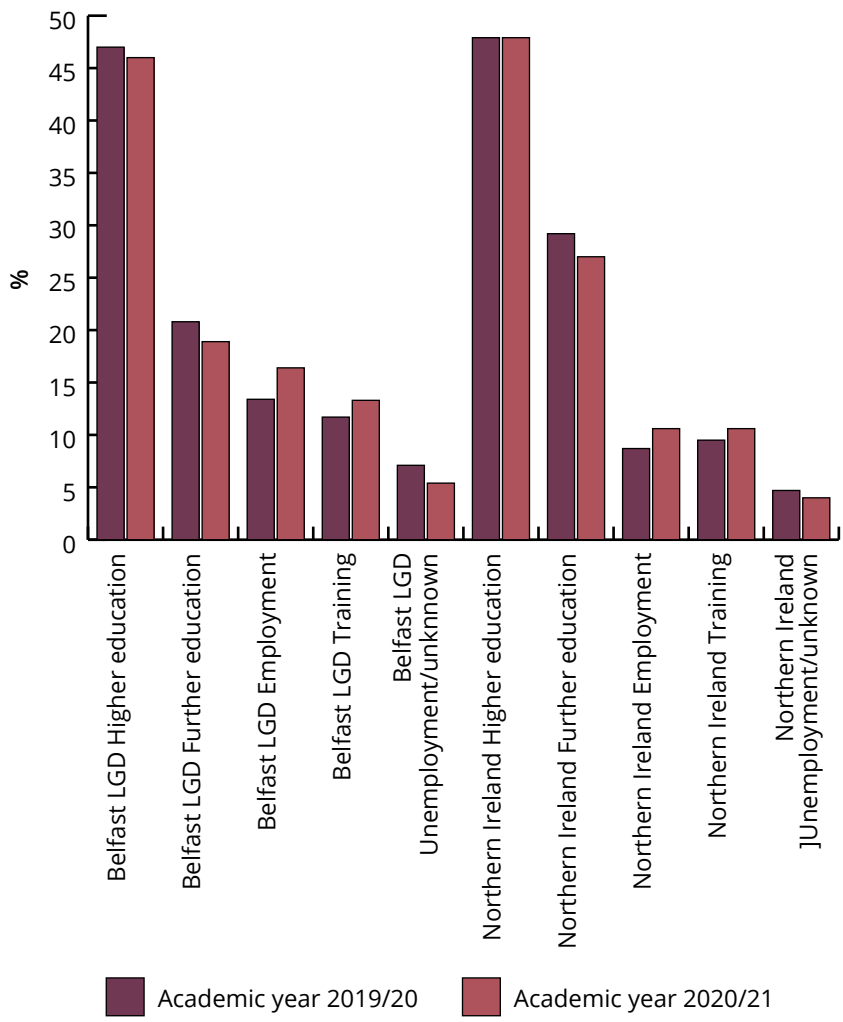
- Training was 2.7 percentage points higher, 13.3% compared with 10.6%
- Unemployment was higher by 1.4 percentage points, 5.4% compared with 4.0% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 36)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils entering:

- Higher education decreased in Belfast LGD, by 1.0 percentage point, from 47.0% to 46.0% (a percentage decrease of 2.13%), whereas it remained the same in Northern Ireland at 47.9%
- Further education decreased in Belfast LGD by 1.9 percentage points, from 20.8% to 18.9% (a percentage decrease of 9.13%), and in Northern Ireland by 2.2 percentage points, from 29.2% to 27.0% (a percentage decrease of 7.53%)
- Employment increased in Belfast LGD by 3.0 percentage points from 13.4% to 16.4% (a percentage increase of 22.39%), and in Northern Ireland by 1.9 percentage points, from 8.7% to 10.6% (a percentage increase of 21.84%)
- Training increased in Belfast LGD by 1.6 percentage points, from 11.7% to 13.3% (a percentage increase of 13.68%), and in Northern Ireland by 1.1 percentage points, from 9.5% to 10.6% (a percentage increase of 11.58%)
- Unemployment/unknown decreased in Belfast LGD by 1.7 percentage points, from 7.1% to 5.4% (a percentage decrease of 23.94%), and in Northern Ireland by 0.7 percentage points, from 4.7% to 4.0% (a percentage decrease of 14.89%; see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 36)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 36:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering higher education, further education, employment, training, and unemployment/unknown by Belfast LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

## Comparison with other LGDs

In academic year 2020/21, the first full academic year of the COVID-19 pandemic, when compared with other LGDs, Belfast LGD had:

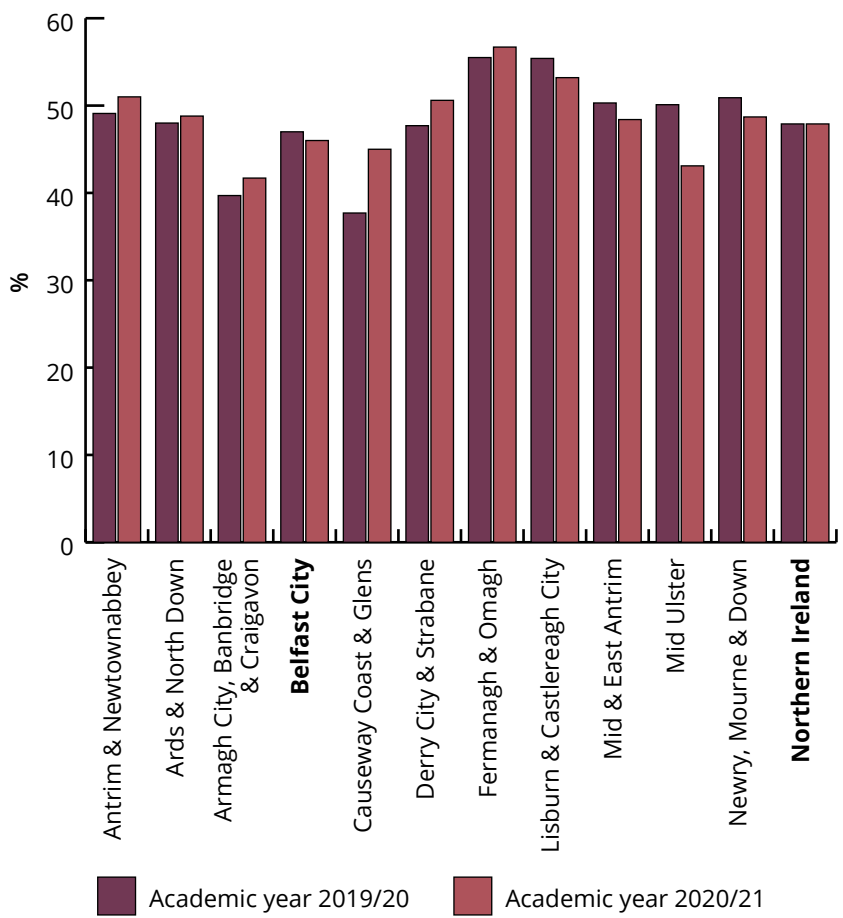
- The fourth lowest percentage of pupils entering higher education at 46.0%, whereas Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the highest percentage at 56.7%, and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD had the lowest at 41.7% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 37)
- The lowest percentage of pupils entering further education at 18.9%, whereas Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD had the highest at 37.3% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 38)
- The highest percentage of pupils entering employment at 16.4%, whereas Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD and Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the equal lowest at 7.2% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 39)
- The equal second highest percentage of pupils entering training at 13.3%, together with Mid Ulster LGD, whereas Derry City & Strabane LGD had the highest percentage at 13.6%, and Ards & North Down LGD had the lowest at 4.4% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 40)
- The second highest percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown at 5.4%, whereas Mid & East Antrim LGD had the highest percentage at 7.3%, and Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the lowest at 2.0% (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 41)

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentage of pupils entering:

- Higher education increased in 6 LGDs, and decreased in 5 LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 37)
- Further education increased in 2 LGDs, and decreased in 9 LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 38)
- Employment increased in 9 LGDs, including Belfast LGD, and decreased in 2 LGDs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 39)
- Training increased in 9 LGDs, including Belfast LGD, and decreased in 2 LGDs (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 40)
- Unemployment/unknown increased in one LGD, and decreased in 10 LGDs, including Belfast LGD (see COVID-19 Prosperity Figure 41)

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 37:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering higher education by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**

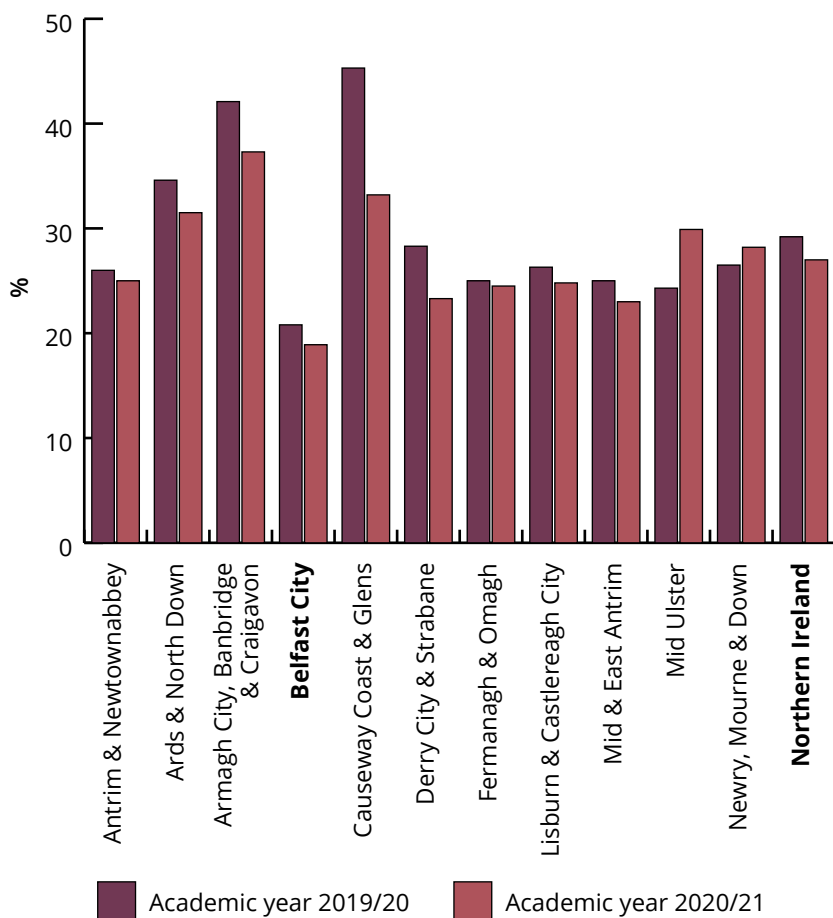


Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table



**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 38:**

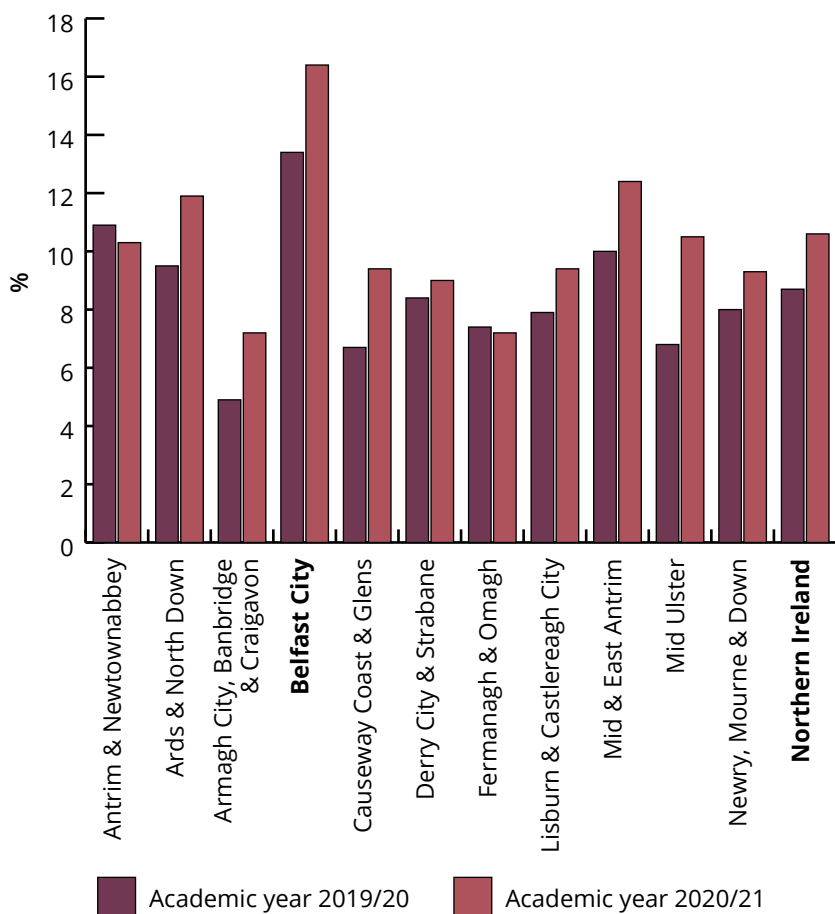
**Percentage (%) of pupils entering further education by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 39:**

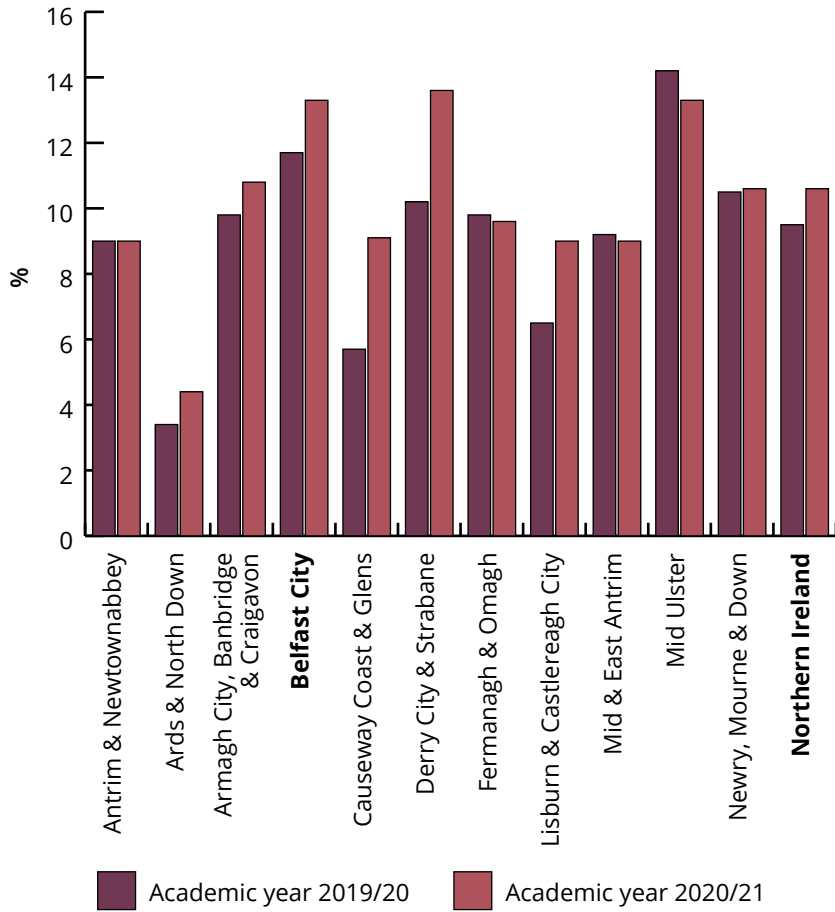
**Percentage (%) of pupils entering employment by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 40:**

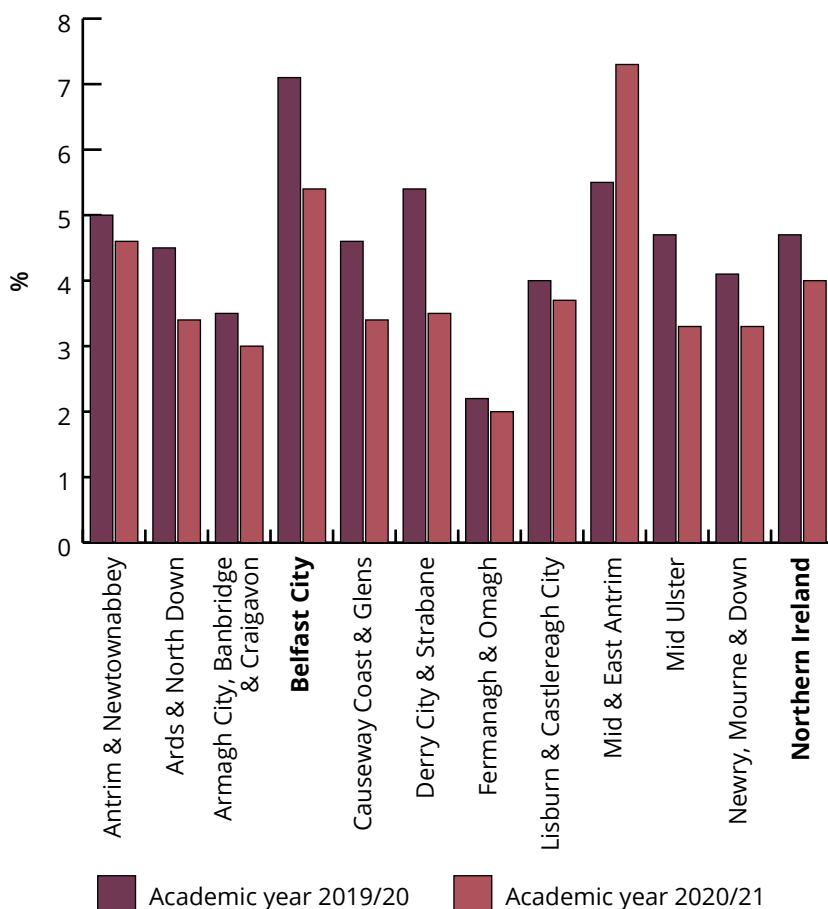
**Percentage (%) of pupils entering training by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**COVID-19 PROSPERITY FIGURE 41:**

**Percentage (%) of pupils entering unemployment/unknown by LGD and Northern Ireland, academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21**



Source: NINIS: School Leavers (administrative geographies) Pivot Table

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE DATA**

**Comparison with Northern Ireland**

In comparison with Northern Ireland, the percentages of pupils in Belfast LGD entering:

- Higher education and further education were lower in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21
- Employment, training, and unemployment/unknown were higher in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the gap between Belfast LGD and Northern Ireland in the percentages of pupils entering:

- Higher education widened, with a decrease in Belfast LGD, whereas Northern Ireland remained the same
- Further education widened, with a greater percentage decrease in Belfast LGD compared with Northern Ireland
- Employment widened with a greater percentage increase in Belfast LGD compared with Northern Ireland
- Training widened with a greater percentage increase in Belfast LGD compared with Northern Ireland
- Unemployment/unknown narrowed with a greater percentage decrease in Belfast LGD compared with Northern Ireland

### Comparison with other LGDs

Of all the LGDs, in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, from before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and including the first full academic year of the pandemic, Belfast LGD had:

- Relatively lower percentages of pupils entering higher education, with an increase in relative position from third lowest to fourth lowest between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21
- The lowest percentages of pupils entering further education, with no change in relative position between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21
- The highest percentages of pupils entering employment, with no change in relative position between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21
- The second highest percentages of pupils entering training, with no change in relative position apart from being equal second highest with Mid Ulster LGD in academic year 2020/21
- Relatively higher percentages of pupils entering unemployment/unknown, with a decrease in relative position from highest to second highest between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic:

- Of the 5 LGDs that had a decrease in the percentage of pupils entering higher education Belfast LGD had the smallest percentage decrease at 2.13%, whereas Mid Ulster LGD had the highest percentage decrease at 13.97%
- Of the 9 LGDs that had a decrease in the percentage of pupils entering further education Belfast LGD had the fourth greatest percentage decrease at 9.13%, whereas Causeway Coast & Glens LGD had the greatest percentage decrease at 26.71% and Fermanagh & Omagh LGD had the smallest percentage decrease at 2.00%
- Of the 9 LGDs that had an increase in the percentage of pupils entering employment Belfast LGD had the fourth smallest percentage increase at 22.39%, whereas Mid Ulster LGD had the greatest percentage increase at 54.41%, and Derry City & Strabane LGD had the smallest percentage increase at 7.14%
- Of the 7 LGDs that had an increase in the percentage of pupils entering training Belfast LGD had the third smallest percentage increase at 13.68%, whereas Causeway Coast & Glens had the greatest percentage increase at 59.65% and Mid Ulster LGD had the smallest percentage increase at 0.95%
- Of the 10 LGDs that had a decrease in the percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown Belfast LGD had fifth greatest percentage decrease at 23.94%, whereas Derry City & Strabane LGD had the greatest percentage decrease at 35.19% and Lisburn & Castlereagh LGD had the smallest percentage decrease at 7.50%

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentages of pupils in Belfast LGD entering:

- Higher education, further education, and unemployment/unknown decreased
- Employment, and training increased

Between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, when compared with Northern Ireland, Belfast LGD had relatively:

- Similar percentages of pupils entering higher education, with between 4 and 5 out of every 10 pupils in Belfast LGD compared with approaching 5 out of every 10 pupils in Northern Ireland, although the gap between the two widened
- Relatively lower percentages of pupils entering further education, with approaching 2 out of every 10 pupils in Belfast LGD compared with approaching 3 out of every 10 pupils in Northern Ireland, and the gap between the two widened
- Relatively higher percentages of pupils entering employment, with between 1 and 2 out of every 10 pupils in Belfast LGD compared with approaching 1 out of every 10 pupils in Northern Ireland, and the gap between the two widened, with Belfast LGD having higher percentages than those in Northern Ireland
- Relatively higher percentages of pupils entering training, with more than 1 out of every 10 pupils in Belfast LGD compared with 1 out of every 10 pupils in Northern Ireland and the gap between the two widened, with Belfast LGD having higher percentages than those in Northern Ireland
- Relatively higher percentages of pupils entering unemployment/unknown, although both Belfast LGD and Northern Ireland have fewer than 1 out of every 10 pupils in this category, however, the gap between the two narrowed with Belfast LGD having a greater percentage decrease

Across academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, in relation to other LGDs, Belfast LGD was:

- In the lower half of LGDs for pupils entering higher education, with an increase of one in its relative position that was positive
- The lowest LGD for pupils entering further education, with no change in relative position
- The highest LGD for pupils entering employment, with no change in relative position
- The second highest LGD for pupils entering training, with no change in relative position
- In the top two LGDs for pupils entering unemployment/unknown, with a decrease of one in its relative position that was positive

For school leavers in Belfast LGD, the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, have been associated with a decrease in the percentage of pupils entering higher and further education, with the corollary of an increase in the percentage of pupils entering employment and training. There has also been a decrease in the percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown.

### Inequalities with the potential for inequity

Overall, between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, across Belfast's assembly areas, there was:

- A decrease in the percentage of pupils entering higher education in 2 assembly areas, an increase in only one assembly area, and the percentage remained the same in one assembly area
- A decrease in the percentage of pupils entering further education in all four assembly areas
- An increase in the percentage of pupils entering employment in all four assembly areas
- An increase in the percentage of pupils entering training in two assembly areas, a decrease in only one assembly area, and the percentage remained the same in one assembly area
- A decrease in the percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown in three assembly areas, and the percentage remained the same in one assembly area

In academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentages of pupils entering:

- Higher education was lowest in Belfast North and Belfast West
- Further education was lowest in Belfast West and Belfast South, although the relatively low percentage of pupils entering further education in Belfast South is likely to be a reflection of the relatively high percentage of pupils entering higher education in this assembly area
- Employment was relatively high in Belfast North and Belfast West, and relatively low in Belfast South and Belfast East
- Training was relatively high in Belfast West, and relatively low in Belfast East and Belfast South



The percentages of pupils entering unemployment/unknown changed between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic:

- In 2019/20, the highest percentages were in Belfast West and Belfast North
- In 2020/21, the highest percentage was in Belfast West, followed by Belfast East and Belfast North, mainly due to a relatively large percentage decrease of 34.25% in Belfast North compared with a percentage decrease of 7.41% in Belfast East, and a smaller but substantial percentage decrease in Belfast West of 29.89%

In academic year 2020/21, the number of pupils entering:

- Higher education was 4 out of every 10 in Belfast North and Belfast West compared with more than 6 out of every 10 in Belfast South
- Further education was between 1 and 2 out of every 10 in Belfast West compared with approaching 3 out of every 10 in Belfast East
- Employment was approaching 1 out of every 10 in Belfast South compared with 2 out of every 10 in Belfast North
- Training was approaching 1 out of every 10 in Belfast East and Belfast South compared with 2 out of every 10 in Belfast West

Overall, between academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, across Belfast's DEAs, there was:

- A decrease in the percentage of pupils entering higher education in 7 DEAs, with an increase in only 3 DEAs
- A decrease in the percentage of pupils entering further education in 7 DEAs, with an increase in only 3 DEAs
- An increase in the percentage of pupils entering employment in all 10 DEAs
- An increase in the percentage of pupils entering training in 6 DEAs, and a decrease in 4 DEAs
- A decrease in the percentage of pupils entering unemployment/unknown in 9 DEAs, and an increase in one DEA

In academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, a time-period that starts before the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the first full academic year during the pandemic, the percentages of pupils entering:

- Higher education was lowest in Court, Oldpark, and Titanic DEAs
- Further education was lowest in Black Mountain and Collin DEAs; in academic year 2019/20, Botanic DEA was another of the DEAs with a relatively low percentage, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was Balmoral DEA
- Employment was highest in Black Mountain, Court, and Oldpark DEAs, and lowest in Balmoral, Lisnasharragh, and Ormiston DEAs
- Training was highest in Black Mountain and Collin DEAs, and lowest in Balmoral, Lisnasharragh, and Ormiston DEAs; however, in academic year 2019/20, another of the relatively high percentages was in Botanic DEA, whereas in academic year 2020/21 relatively high percentages were in Court and Oldpark DEAs
- Unemployment/unknown was highest in Court and Titanic DEAs, and lowest in Balmoral and Ormiston DEAs; however, in academic year 2019/20, another of the relatively high percentages was in Black Mountain DEA, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was Botanic DEA, and in academic year 2019/20 another of the relatively low percentages was in Lisnasharragh DEA, whereas in academic year 2020/21 it was Castle DEA, mainly due to a relatively large percentage increase in Lisnasharragh DEA of 145.00% (from an initially low baseline) and a relatively large percentage decrease in Castle DEA of 44.26%

In academic year 2020/21, the number of pupils entering:

- Higher education was 3 out of every 10 in Titanic DEA and over 3 out of every 10 in Court DEA compared with more than 7 out of every 10 in Balmoral DEA
- Further education was approaching 1 out of every 10 in Balmoral DEA compared with more than 3 out of every 10 in Titanic DEA
- Employment was 1 out of every 10 in Balmoral, Lisnasharragh, and Ormiston DEAs compared with between 2 and 3 out of every 10 in Oldpark DEA
- Training was fewer than 1 out of every 10 in Balmoral, Lisnasharragh, and Ormiston DEAs, compared with more than 2 out of every 10 in Court DEA
- Unemployment/unknown was approaching 1 out of every 10 in Court and Titanic DEAs, compared with much fewer than 1 out of every 10 in Balmoral, Castle, and Ormiston DEAs



# Belfast

A World Health Organization

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