



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba



Foundation Apprenticeship Report

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Incorporating SCQF Levels 4,5 and 6

For Cohorts 1-9 (up to academic year 2024/25)

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Introduction

Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) are available for secondary school pupils to undertake at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 6 and SCQF levels 4 and 5. These qualifications share the design principles of, and are intrinsically aligned to, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships providing high levels of interoperability and clear pathways into work. Introduced in 2016, there are twelve FA frameworks available at SCQF level 6, two at SCQF level 5 and three at SCQF level 4. Each FA framework has been developed and mapped to key sectors in the Scottish economy where there are current or projected skills gaps and future job growth.

FAs are designed to enhance and expand existing pathways from school, with multiple progression routes to work on completion, including Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships, college, or university. Pupils have scheduled periods during their school timetables to undertake their FA. Delivery of FA learning takes place in college or learning provider premises with the practical work-based element undertaken with a participating employer.

This is the fourth year that this report has been jointly published by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and follows the Code of Practice for Statistics. Detailed supplementary data tables are available in Microsoft Excel format on the [SDS website](#). This is the third year that data from SDS and SFC systems has been combined for reporting.

Development of Foundation Apprenticeships

The Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers have overall accountability for the apprenticeship system in Scotland and for the public funding invested in it. The development of FA frameworks is led by the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) in response to demand from industry in key occupational areas. SAAB facilitates feedback from employers and learners, ensuring FAs are clearly aligned to economic growth and job opportunities.

Responsibility for the funding of FAs was split between SDS and SFC, for any new enrolments, from academic year 2021/22 onwards¹. SFC is accountable for the funding it allocates to colleges in relation to FAs. SDS is accountable for the FA funding it allocates to Local Authorities and Independent Learning Providers. SFC and SDS are working in collaboration to support the delivery of FAs.

From academic year 2027, in line with the Scottish Government's Tertiary Education and Training Act; funding, development and delivery of all Scottish apprenticeships (including FAs) will be brought together into a redesigned funding body.

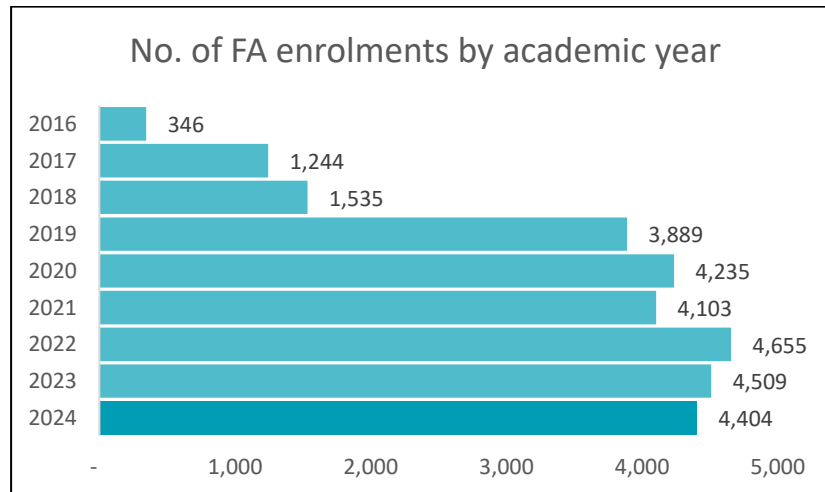
¹ Years presented in this report refer to academic years (e.g. 2022 = academic year 2022/23, 2023 = academic year 2023/24).

Economic context

Despite ongoing economic uncertainty and inflationary pressure affecting both individuals and businesses, demand for labour remained relatively strong during 2024. FAs offer a means for participating businesses to access a pipeline of young talent, who may be their workforce of the future, and for pupils to gain a meaningful work placement offering experiential learning at a key decision-making point in their education.

Key Results 2024

- Since their introduction in 2016 nearly 29,000 school pupils have enrolled on a Foundation Apprenticeship.
- In academic year 2024, there were 4,404 enrolments, of which 40% were college delivery (SFC funded), and 60% local authority and independent learning provider delivery (SDS funded).²



- Social Services Children and Young People framework accounted for over one third of enrolments at SCQF level 6 in 2024.
- Construction frameworks made up more than half of all enrolments at SCQF level 4/5.
- The number of female enrolments at SCQF level 6 remains similar to last year, (1,452, 40 more than 2023).
- Across both SCQF level 6 and level 4/5 the proportion of enrolments self-identifying as minority ethnic increased to their highest recorded levels, reaching 9.1% and 5.1% respectively.
- The proportion of pupils achieving their full SCQF level 4/5 qualification increased to 76.6% in 2024, continuing the improvement seen in recent years.

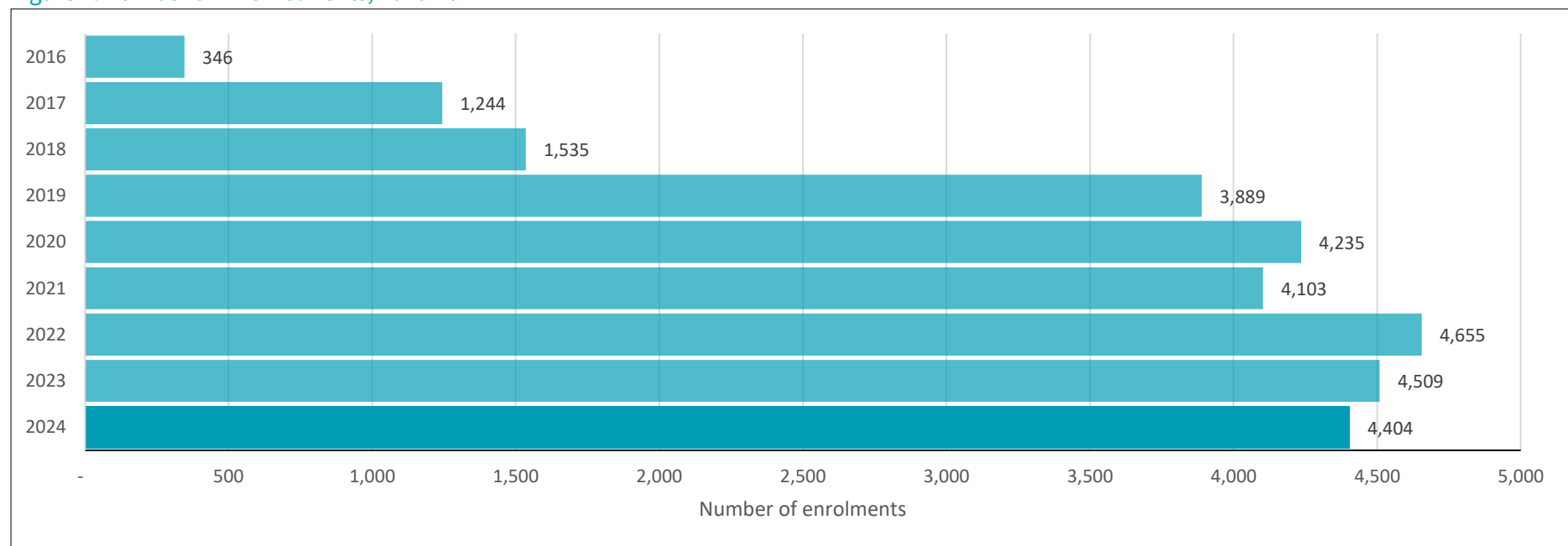
² More information on local authority and independent learning provider funded provision can be found [here](#).

Enrolments

Number of pupils enrolled on a Foundation Apprenticeship

Figure 1 illustrates the total number of FA enrolments by academic year. Figure 2 shows FA enrolments by SCQF level.

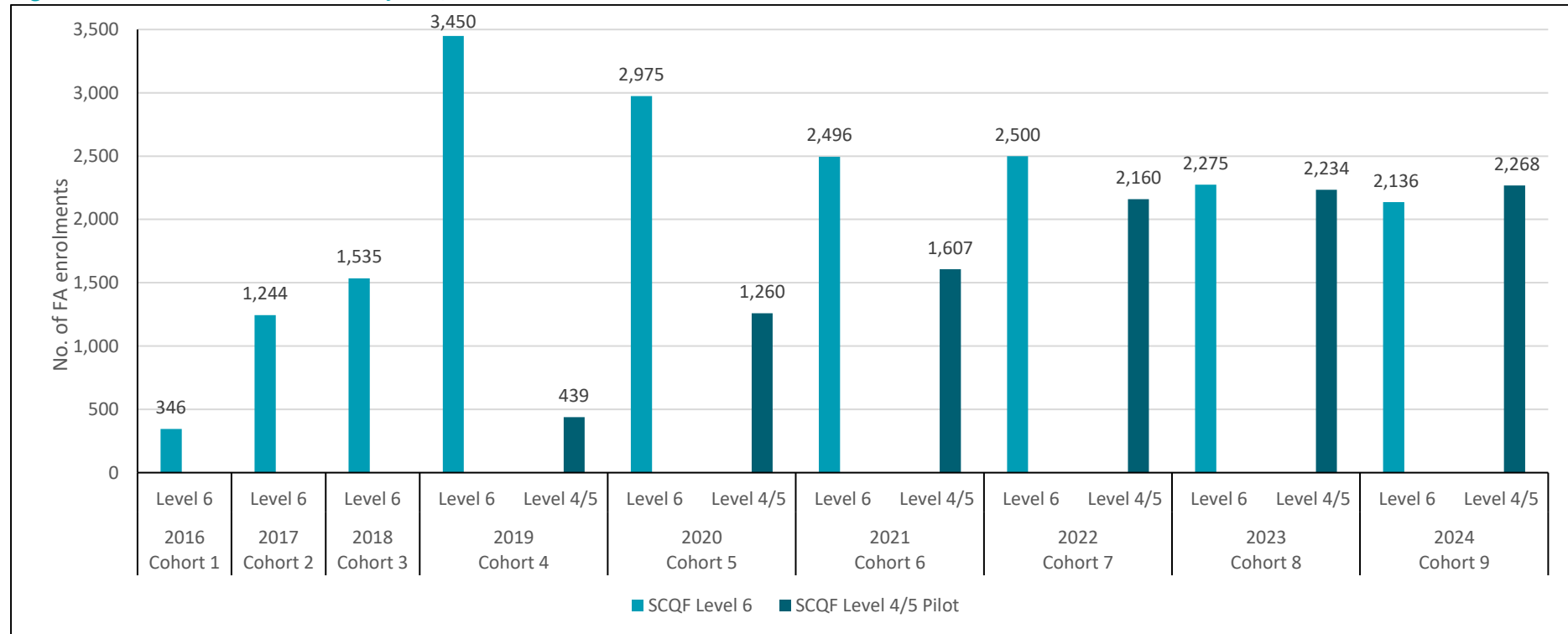
Figure 1: Number of FA enrolments, 2016-2024³



Every year, FAs are offered through colleges, local authorities, and independent learning providers based on their expected levels of demand from schools. Figure 1 shows the total number of FA enrolments each year, with the total for 2024 reaching 4,404 (105 fewer than 2023, or -2%).

³ For academic year 2024 there were 4,266 enrolments funded via either SDS or SFC. A further 138 enrolments were self-funded by local authorities to meet demand in their area.

Figure 2: Number of FA enrolments by SCQF level, 2016-2024



FAs form part of subject choices for school pupils, largely undertaken in S4, S5 or S6. In 2019, to respond to skills gaps in additional sectors and widen access to more experiential learning for school pupils, three new frameworks were offered at SCQF levels 4 and 5. The SFC and SDS currently, collectively, provide funding for up to 5,000 FA enrolments each year and, over time, the take up across FAs at levels 4, 5 and 6 has shifted, with enrolments falling at level 6 to accommodate the increase in uptake at levels 4 and 5.

Table 1 and Figures 3A and 3B show the number and proportions of FA enrolments by gender.

At SCQF level 6, the proportion of males starting a FA in 2024 has decreased to 31.5%, from 37.3% in 2023, with the biggest reductions in enrolments to Engineering and IT: Software Development frameworks. Females continue to make up most enrolments. This is largely due to the two Social Services frameworks which, in line with industry trends, tend to be female dominated and accounted for around 52% of enrolments in 2024. FA enrolments by framework are provided in Table 2.

Table 1: Gender balance across all FA cohorts⁴

Year/ Cohort	SCQF level	Male enrolments	Female enrolments	Total enrolments where gender known
2016 Cohort 1	L6	174	172	346
2017 Cohort 2	L6	576	668	1,244
2018 Cohort 3	L6	666	869	1,535
2019 Cohort 4	L6	1,484	1,966	3,450
	L4/5	389	50	439
2020 Cohort 5	L6	1,251	1,724	2,975
	L4/5	1,037	222	1,259
2021 Cohort 6	L6	953	1,500	2,453
	L4/5	1,336	256	1,592
2022 Cohort 7	L6	915	1,540	2,455
	L4/5	1,770	360	2,130
2023 Cohort 8	L6	839	1,412	2,251
	L4/5	1,822	387	2,209
2024 Cohort 9	L6	667	1,452	2,119
	L4/5	1,849	392	2,241

⁴ In 2021, 58 pupils selected the option prefer not to say/in another way. In 2022, 70 pupils selected the option of prefer not to say/in another way. In 2023, 49 pupils selected the option of prefer not to say/in another way. In 2024 44 pupils selected the option of prefer not to say/in another way. These have been removed from the total when calculating percentages in this section.

Figure 3A: Change in balance over time at SCQF level 6

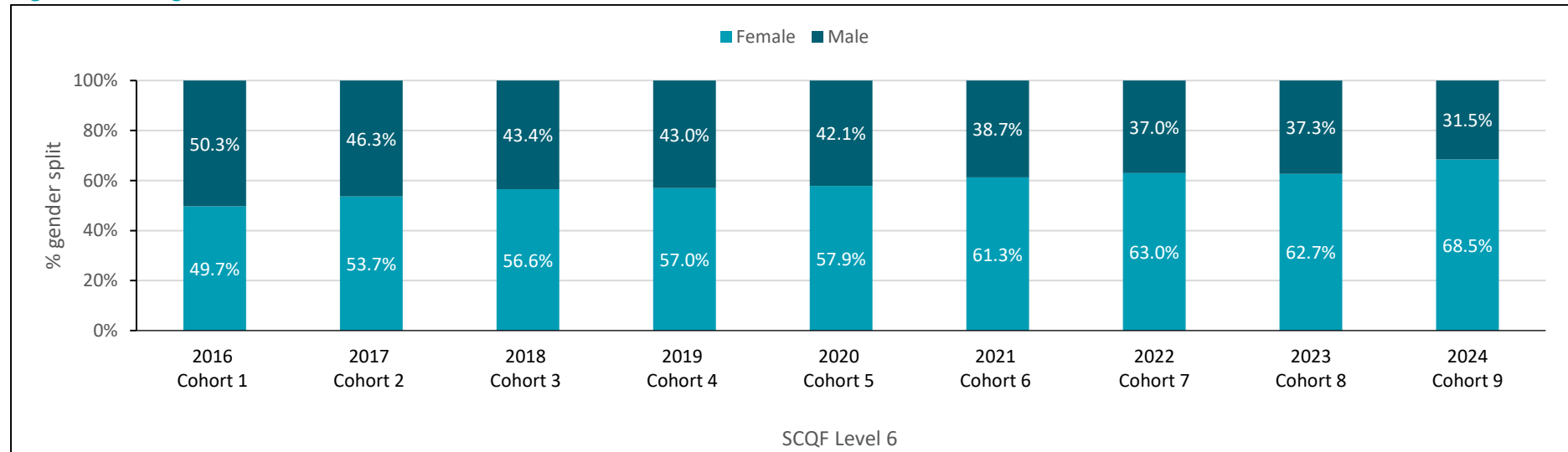
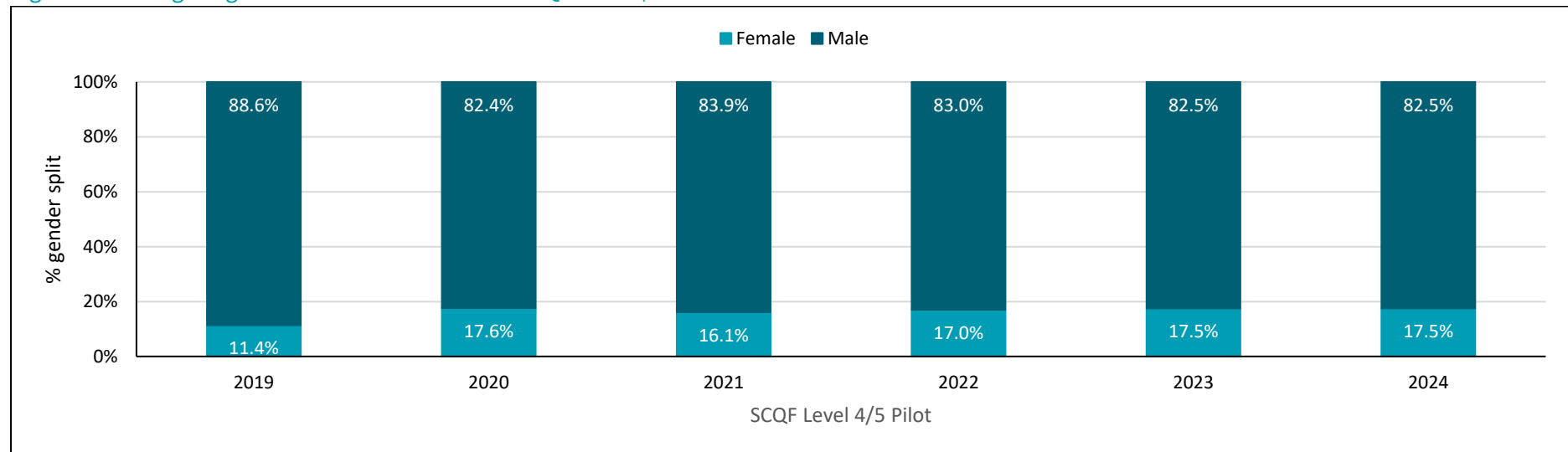


Figure 3B: Change in gender balance over time at SCQF level 4/5



At SCQF level 6, females accounted for 68.7% of enrolments in 2024, up from 62.7% in 2023. This increase in the female proportion was driven primarily by a reduction in male enrolments (-172 or 20.5%), while female enrolments increased only slightly (+40 or 3.5%).

In 2019, new pilot frameworks were introduced at SCQF levels 4 and 5. These are one-year FAs and are available in Hospitality and Construction at SCQF level 4 and 5, and Automotive at SCQF level 4. These qualifications have proven popular, with enrolments increasing five-fold between 2019 and 2024. They have attracted more male pupils, largely due to Automotive and Construction frameworks, which accounted for 78% of SCQF level 4/5 enrolments in 2024.

FA frameworks

There are twelve FA frameworks currently available for pupils to study at SCQF level 6, three frameworks at SCQF level 4, and two at SCQF level 5.

FA frameworks – highest number of enrolments (SCQF level 6) in 2024

Social Services – Children and Young People (759 enrolments)

Social Services and Healthcare (403 enrolments)

Business Skills (340 enrolments)

Tables 2A and 2B show the number of FA enrolments by framework over the last 8 years as FAs have become more widely available as part of school subject choices.

Table 2A: FA enrolments by framework (SCQF level 6), 2016-2024

FAs at SCQF level 6	2016 Cohort 1	2017 Cohort 2	2018 Cohort 3	2019 Cohort 4	2020 Cohort 5	2021 Cohort 6	2022 Cohort 7	2023 Cohort 8	2024 Cohort 9
Accountancy	-	-	28	131	119	67	70	59	79
Business Skills	5	67	84	316	338	265	280	353	340
Civil Engineering	47	87	95	185	215	151	135	47	43
Creative and Digital Media	-	43	135	355	305	292	290	275	200
Engineering	71	232	304	470	327	257	215	194	126
Financial Services	38	54	13	41	26	16	15	30	16
Food and Drink Technologies	-	-	10	61	43	29	30	32	14
IT: Hardware/System Support	13	40	35	69	40	6	15	7	-
IT: Software Development	30	130	104	190	146	145	125	90	51
Scientific Technologies	-	20	39	108	97	90	105	89	88
Social Services and Healthcare	85	105	186	493	508	460	415	335	403
Social Services Children and Young People	57	466	502	1,031	811	675	795	740	759
Undisclosed frameworks ⁵	-	-	-	-	-	43	-	24	17
Total – SCQF level 6	346	1,244	1,535	3,450	2,975	2,496	2,500	2,275	2,136

Table 2B: FA enrolments by framework (SCQF level 4/5 Pilot), 2019-2024

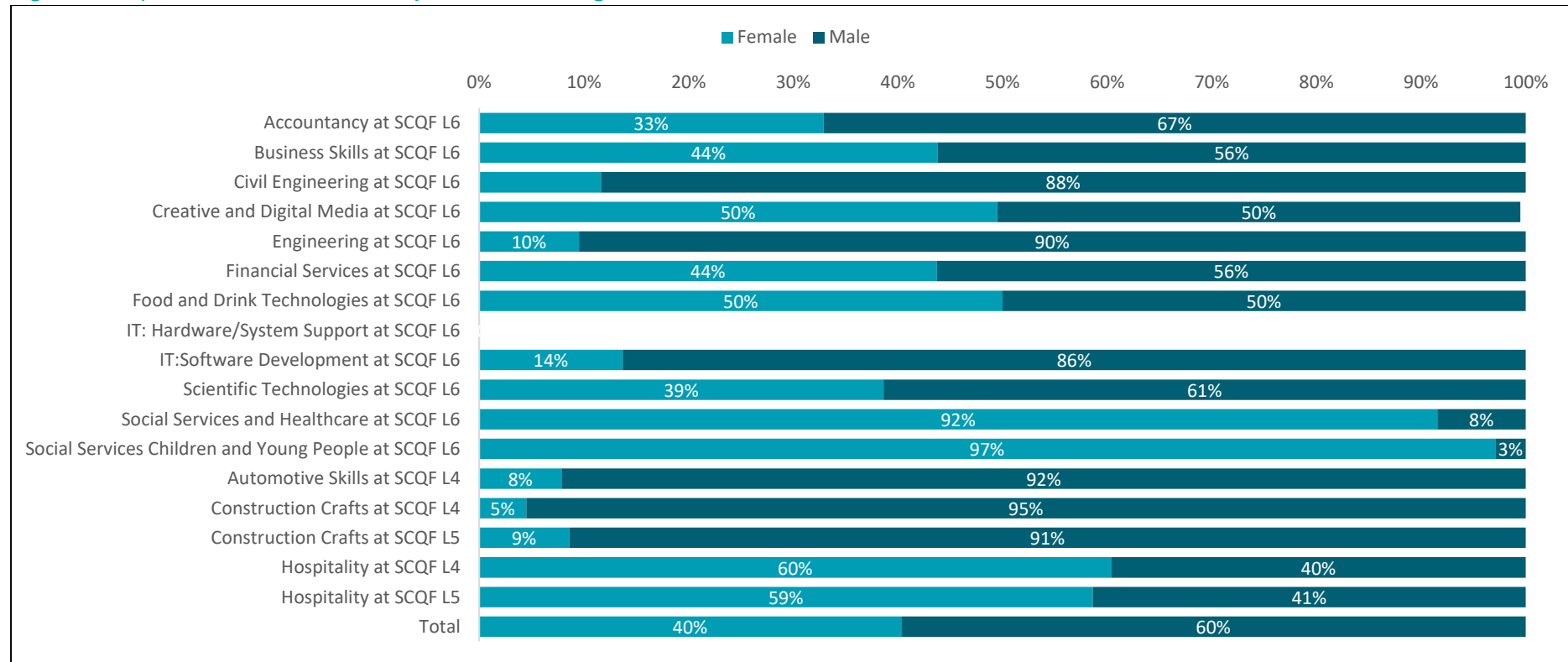
FAs at SCQF level 4/5 Pilot	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Automotive L4	30	273	323	485	489	480
Automotive L5 ⁶	88	-	-	-	-	-
Construction L4	141	326	286	480	578	1,041
Construction L5	132	340	647	750	600	232
Hospitality L4	32	200	193	130	172	48
Hospitality L5	16	121	143	310	370	440
Undisclosed frameworks	-	-	15	-	25	27
Total – SCQF level 4/5	439	1,260	1,607	2,160	2,234	2,268

⁵ In 2021, 58 pupils (43 at SCQF level 6 and 15 on SCQF level 4/5 Pilot) recorded their gender as either ‘prefer not to say’ or ‘in another way’. In 2023 49 pupils (24 at SCQF level 6 and 25 on SCQF level 4/5 Pilot) did the same. In 2024 44 pupils (17 at SCQF level 6 and 27 on SCQF level 4/5 Pilot) did the same. Given the small numbers, to ensure individuals cannot be identified, the frameworks on which they enrolled are not disclosed, and are instead grouped under ‘Undisclosed frameworks’.

⁶ Automotive at level 5 was not offered after 2019.

There continues to be significant gender imbalance across frameworks with males more likely to study Automotive, Construction, Engineering and IT and females more likely to study Social Services, as illustrated in Figure 4. This is representative of the ongoing gender imbalance challenges within these sectors.

Figure 4: Proportion of FA enrolments by framework and gender, 2024

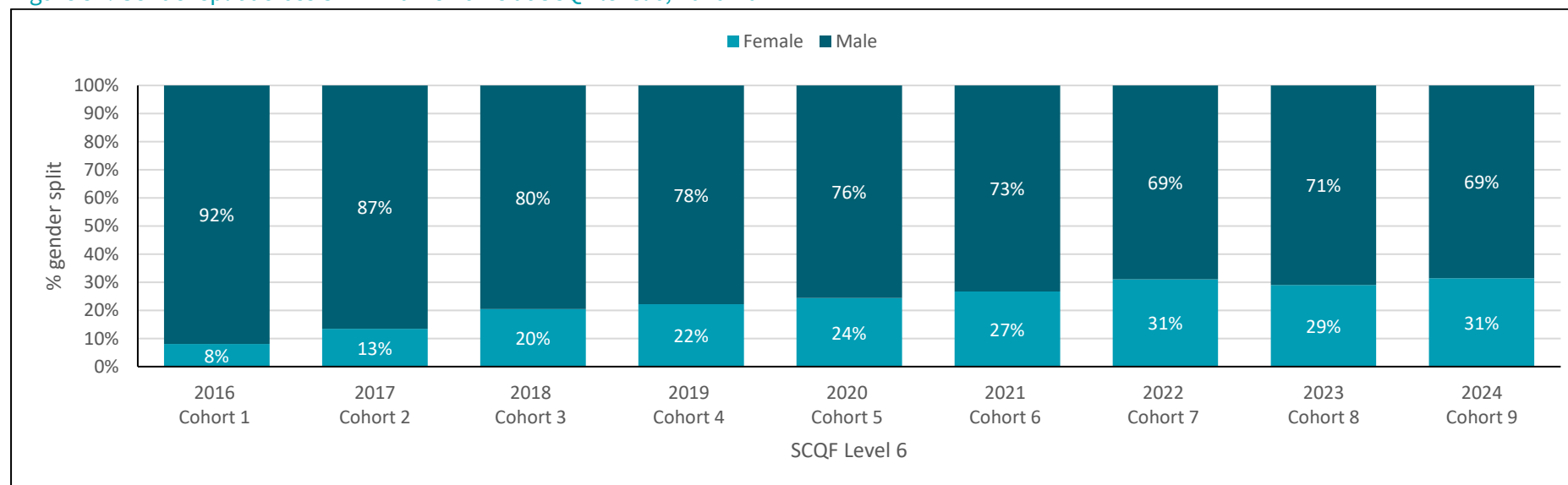


STEM opportunities

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) related study continues to be a Scottish Government policy priority with particular focus on the gender balance across STEM subjects. Based on the Scottish Government definition, most FA frameworks are STEM related other than Accountancy, Business Skills, Financial Services, Hospitality, and the two Social Services frameworks.⁷

Figure 5A demonstrates that most STEM enrolments at SCQF level 6 were male. However, there is a long-term trend showing increasing female participation in STEM frameworks.

Figure 5A: Gender split across STEM frameworks at SCQF level 6, 2016-2024⁸

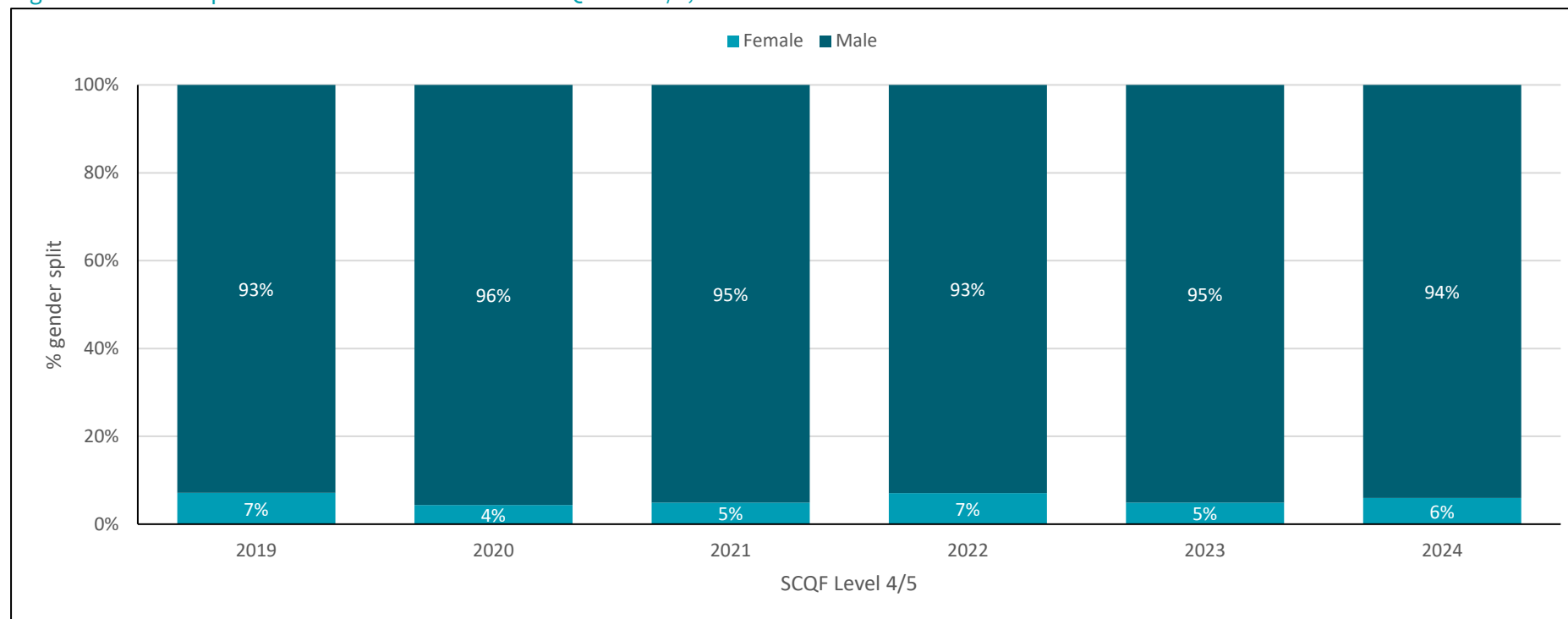


⁷ Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF level 6 and Social Services Children and Young People at SCQF level 6.

⁸ To protect confidentiality, individuals who chose to record their gender as 'prefer not to say' or 'in another way' have been removed from the totals.

With three of the five frameworks at SCQF levels 4/5 defined as STEM (Automotive and both Construction frameworks), the total proportion of enrolments in STEM frameworks in 2024 was 78%, an increase in the proportion recorded in 2023 (77%). As in previous years, most enrolments at SCQF levels 4/5 were male, as shown in Figure 5B. Female participation in STEM frameworks increased in 2024 to 6%, from 5% in 2023.

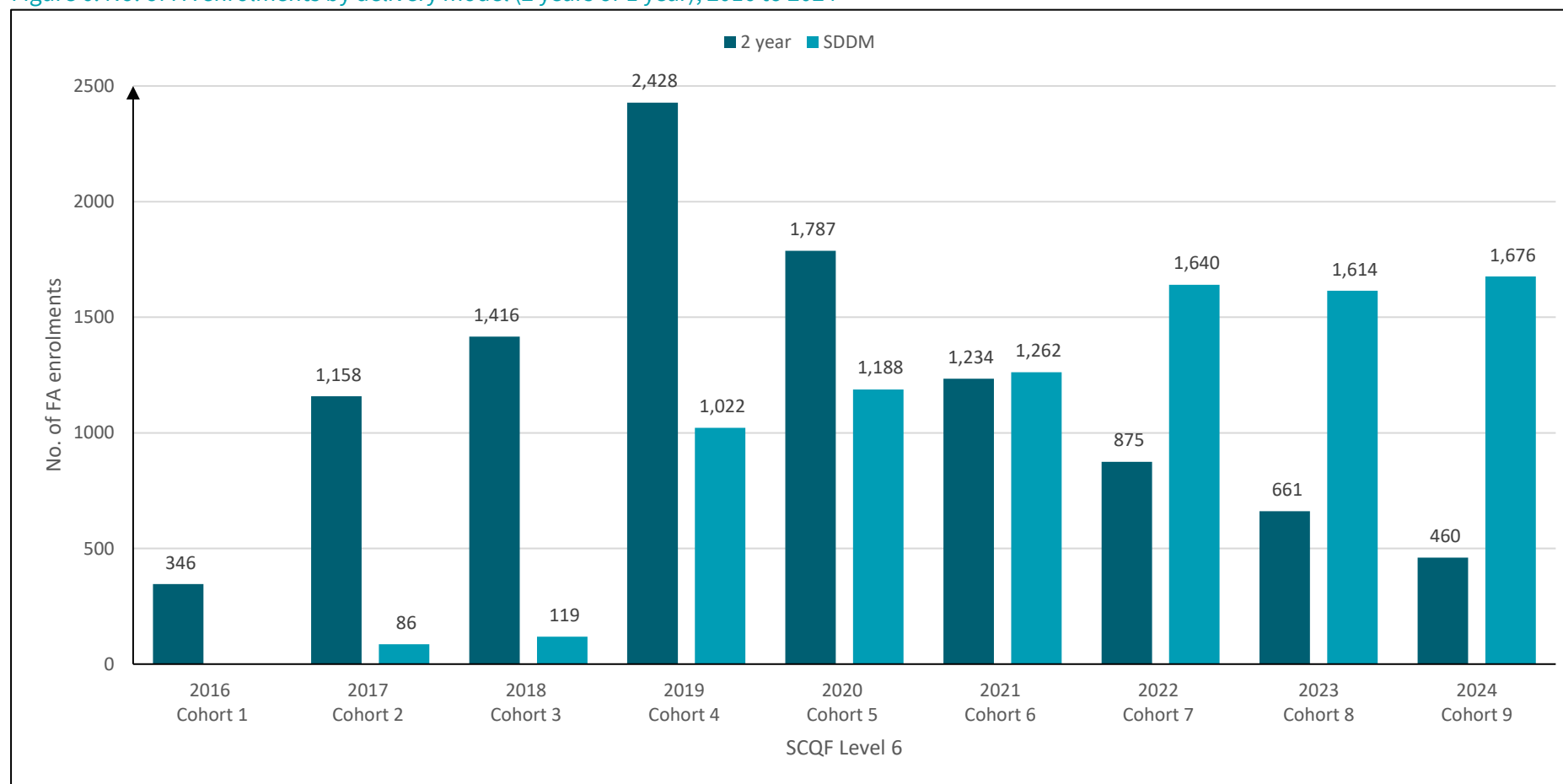
Figure 5B: Gender split across STEM frameworks at SCQF level 4/5, 2019-2024



Delivery model

When FAs at SCQF level 6 were first introduced, they were all two-year courses. From 2017 the introduction of the shorter duration delivery model (SDDM), enabled pupils to complete their FA in one rather than two years. This model has been increasingly popular, with the number of pupils choosing this option increasing year on year. Figure 6 shows the number of enrolments at SCQF level 6 and whether pupils have opted to complete their study over one or two years.

Figure 6: No. of FA enrolments by delivery model (2 years or 1 year), 2016 to 2024



In 2024, almost 79% of pupils opted to complete their SCQF level 6 FA in one year, an increase of around 8 percentage points relative to the previous year.

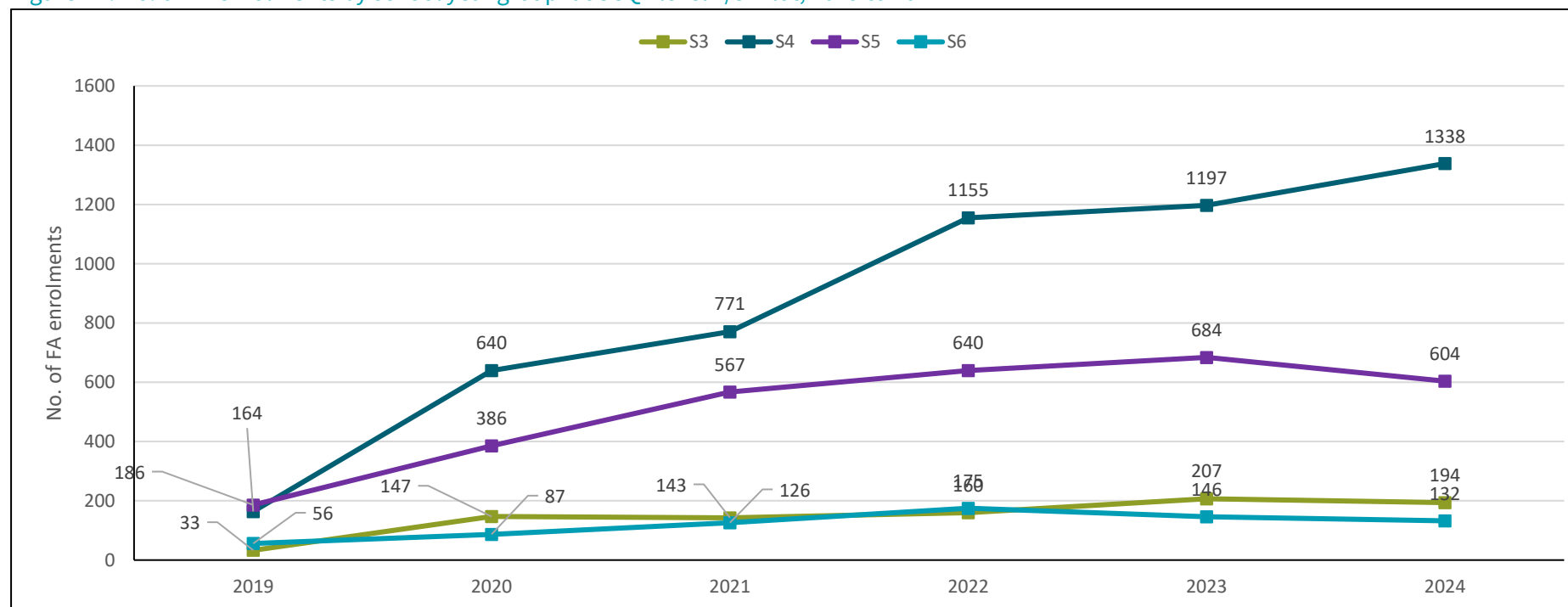
Figures 7A and 7B show the number of enrolments by school year group. At SCQF level 6, the proportion of enrolments for S5 pupils continued to decline, falling from 54.9% in 2023 to 47.9% in 2024.

The number of enrolments at SCQF level 4/5 Pilot increased steadily year on year across the S4 year group, with enrolments in all other year groups dropping slightly.

Figure 7A: No. of FA enrolments by school year group at SCQF level 6, 2016 to 2024



Figure 7B: No. of FA enrolments by school year group⁹ at SCQF level 4/5 Pilot, 2019 to 2024¹⁰



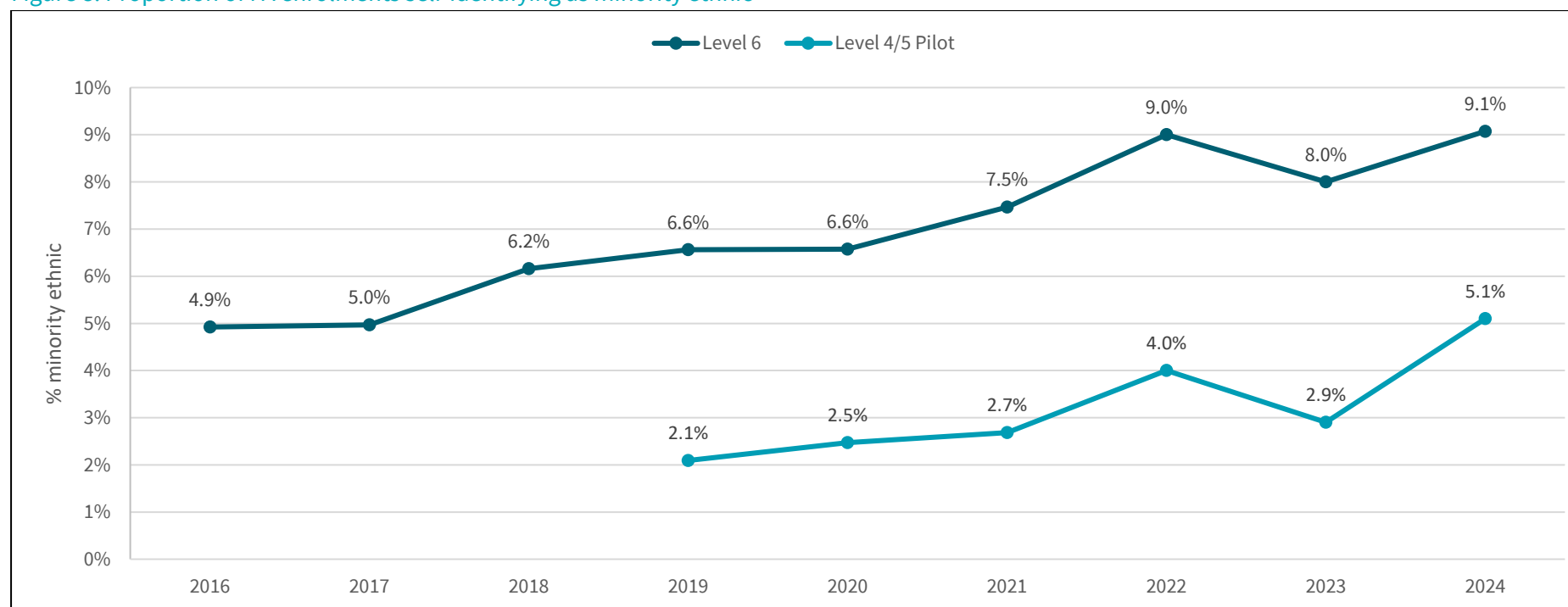
⁹ At SCQF levels 4/5, pupils can opt to undertake the qualification from S3, as part of their school senior phase subject choices.

¹⁰ In 2022, there were 15 pupils whose year group was unknown. In 2024 there were 13 pupils whose year group was unknown.

Ethnicity¹¹

At SCQF level 6, the proportion of FA enrolments self-identifying as being from a minority ethnic background reached 9.1% in 2024, continuing the overall upward trend observed since 2016 despite a temporary dip in 2023. The corresponding figure for SCQF level 4/5 Pilot increased to 5.1% in 2024, the highest level recorded since the pilot began in 2019. While both programmes saw a decrease in 2023, these were reversed in 2024 with proportions increasing above their 2022 levels. In Scottish secondary schools, 25% of pupils were recorded as from a minority ethnic background in 2024.¹²

Figure 8: Proportion of FA enrolments self-identifying as minority ethnic¹³¹⁴



¹¹ Percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total known which excludes any unknown and those recorded their ethnicity as 'prefer not to say'.

¹² [School education: statistics 2024, supplementary tables \(3.9\)](#) accessed via [summary statistics for schools in Scotland](#)

¹³ Minority ethnic: Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; Arab; and Other ethnic group.

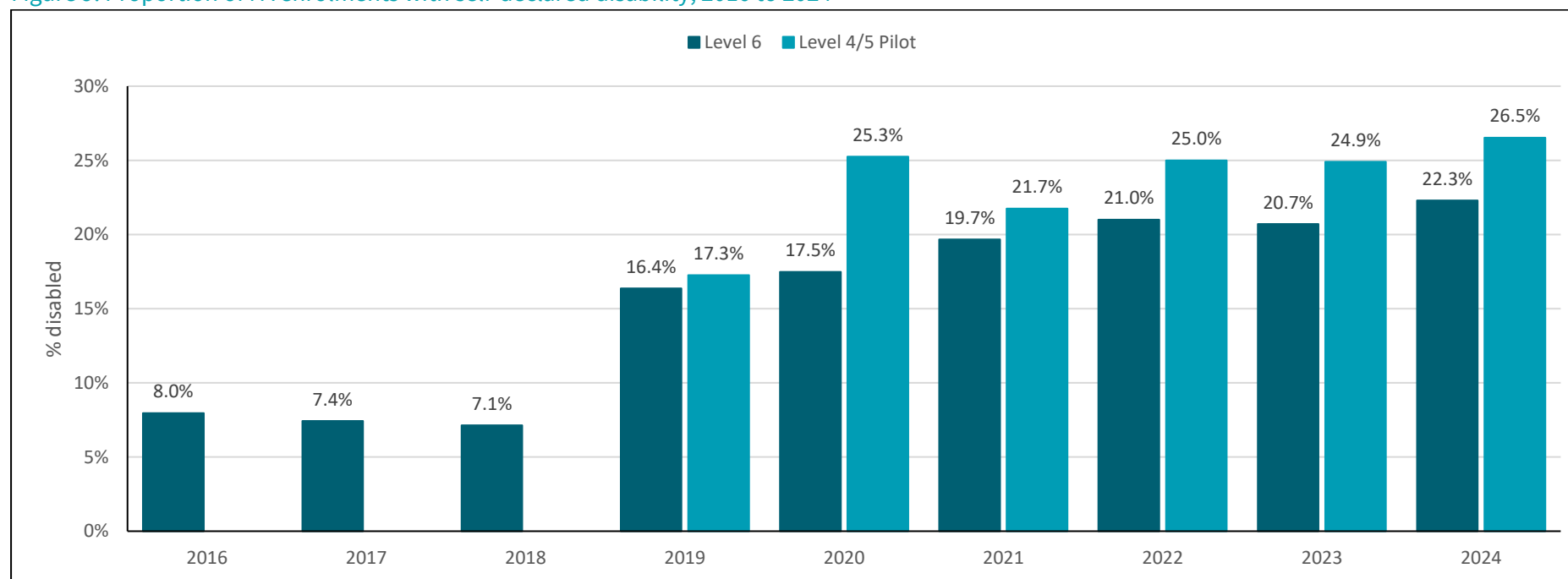
¹⁴ Please note level 4/5 Pilot did not start until 2019.

Disability

The proportion of FAs at SCQF level 6 self-identifying a disability has increased over time. At SCQF level 6, the proportion rose from 8.0% in 2016 to 22.3% in 2024. For SCQF levels 4/5, the proportion increased from 17.3% in 2019 to 26.5% in 2024, reaching its highest recorded level. While both programmes showed slight decreases in 2023, both programmes returned to an upward trend in 2024.

Definitions of disability vary, and within this report Additional Support Needs and Learning Difficulties are included.¹⁵ Learning providers have also improved how this data is collected from pupils. These figures are in line with the proportion of students at university (25.5%) and college (25.4%)¹⁶ who self-identified a disability in 2024.

Figure 9: Proportion of FA enrolments with self-declared disability, 2016 to 2024



¹⁵ Categories include hearing impairment, learning disability, long standing illness, mental health, physical impairment, social communication impairment, specific learning difficulty and visual impairment.

¹⁶ [Report on Widening Access 2024-25](#)

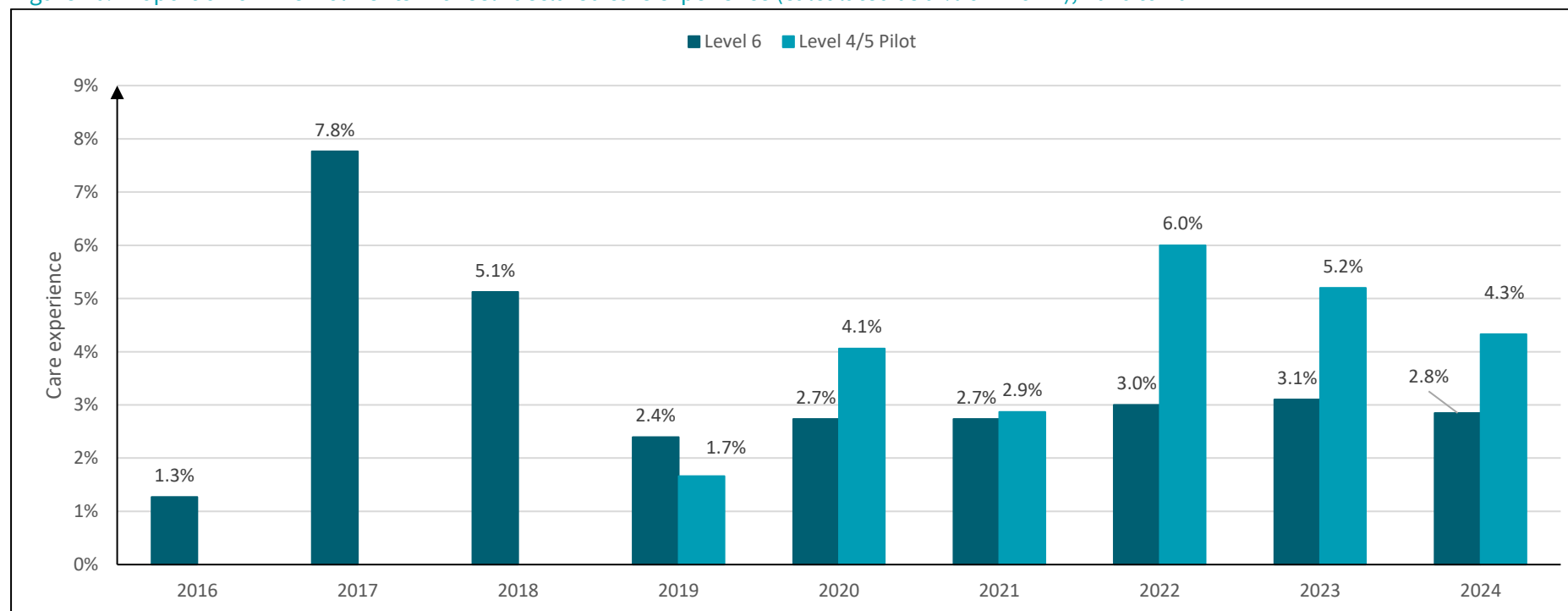
Care experience

In Scotland, 1.2%¹⁷ of the under 18 population is defined as 'Looked After Children'.

In 2022, due to changes in the method of data capture, there was a high volume of pupils marked as 'unknown'. This number has reduced year on year.

The percentage of care experienced FAs is calculated as a proportion of the total of pupils responding 'yes' or 'no' to the set question. Those who do not answer or choose 'prefer not to say' (the unknowns) are excluded from that total. Therefore, caution is advised when comparing figures with previous years (prior to 2022), where the number of unknowns was considerably lower.

Figure 10: Proportion of FA enrolments with self-declared care experience (calculated as a % of known), 2016 to 2024



¹⁷ [Children's Social Work Statistics 2024-25 – Looked After Children - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2024-25/pages/looked-after-children.aspx)

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a relative measure of deprivation across all areas of Scotland, using a combination of financial and socio-economic indicators. It was updated in 2020, replacing the previous SIMD that was based on 2016 area data.¹⁸

It is important to note that the SIMD focuses on geographic areas and does not directly relate to individuals. Not all individuals who live in a deprived area will be deprived, while not all individuals who live in affluent areas will be affluent. Analysis of FA uptake by SIMD involved matching home address postcodes to SIMD data.

The primary driver of change has been the gradual increase in the number of schools and local authorities engaged in FA delivery, which increased from 113 schools in 2016 to 237 in 2024 (-17 compared to 2023) for SCQF level 6 provision (see supplementary tables for full breakdown of school participation for levels 4, 5 and 6). As schools have designated catchment areas, enrolments by SIMD area are contingent on those schools offering FAs as part of subject choices.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of enrolments by SIMD area, ranked from most deprived (SIMD 1) to least deprived (SIMD 10). Historically, pupils studying at SCQF levels 4 and 5 were more likely to be from the most deprived areas. In 2023, however, this pattern shifted. This change continues in 2024, with the greatest proportion of FAs (36%) coming from SIMD areas 5,6 and 7. At SCQF level 6, pupils undertaking SCQF level 6 FAs continued to be more likely to come from the least deprived areas.

¹⁸ SDS only started to report SIMD data for Foundation Apprentices in 2020.

Table 3: Number and proportion of FA enrolments by SIMD area

	2022				2023				2024			
	Cohort 6 level 6		Level 4/5 Pilot		Cohort 7 level 6		Level 4/5 Pilot		Cohort 8 level 6		Level 4/5 Pilot	
SIMD area	No. of FAs	% of total known	No. of FAs	% of total known	No. of FAs	% of total known	No. of FAs	% of total known	No. of FAs	% of total known	No. of FAs	% of total known
1 – most deprived	205	8%	260	12%	154	6.8%	208	9.3%	118	5.5%	252	11.1%
2	205	8%	250	12%	149	6.6%	231	10.4%	150	7.0%	227	10.0%
3	225	9%	235	11%	181	8.0%	234	10.5%	182	8.5%	211	9.3%
4	225	9%	235	11%	201	8.8%	260	11.7%	201	9.4%	263	11.6%
5	235	9%	235	11%	192	8.4%	250	11.2%	237	11.1%	267	11.8%
6	270	11%	220	10%	233	10.3%	269	12.1%	202	9.5%	275	12.2%
7	260	10%	245	11%	283	12.5%	264	11.8%	221	10.4%	273	12.1%
8	350	14%	215	10%	319	14.0%	257	11.5%	296	13.9%	260	11.5%
9	280	11%	180	8%	343	15.1%	165	7.4%	262	12.3%	145	6.4%
10 – least deprived	230	9%	75	3%	218	9.6%	92	4.1%	264	12.4%	88	3.9%
Unknown	5	-	10		2	-	4	-	3		7	
Total	2,500		2,160		2,275		2,234		2,136		2,268	

Completion and achievement

This section provides details on the number of pupils who have completed their FA, relative to the number who began their FA in each cohort or year. Figures 11A and 11B show the proportion of pupils who either:

- Achieved full FA qualification (meaning they did not leave their study early)
- Achieved Partial qualification
- Left without any achievement.

Table 4 shows the breakdown of achievement data for cohorts 7, 8 and 9. Achievement data for cohort 9 does not include pupils undertaking their SCQF Level 6 FA over two years as they had not completed their studies at the point of data capture.¹⁹ Data for these pupils is categorised as ‘Unknown – outcome not yet known’.

As with any programme of learning in school, we would expect to see pupils dropping out within the first few months as they change their minds about what they are interested in studying or where to focus their time and this has consistently accounted for around 20% of pupils each year, higher in 2020 due to COVID. This proportion is currently 16.0% for 2024, with potential to fall further as more outcome data becomes available.

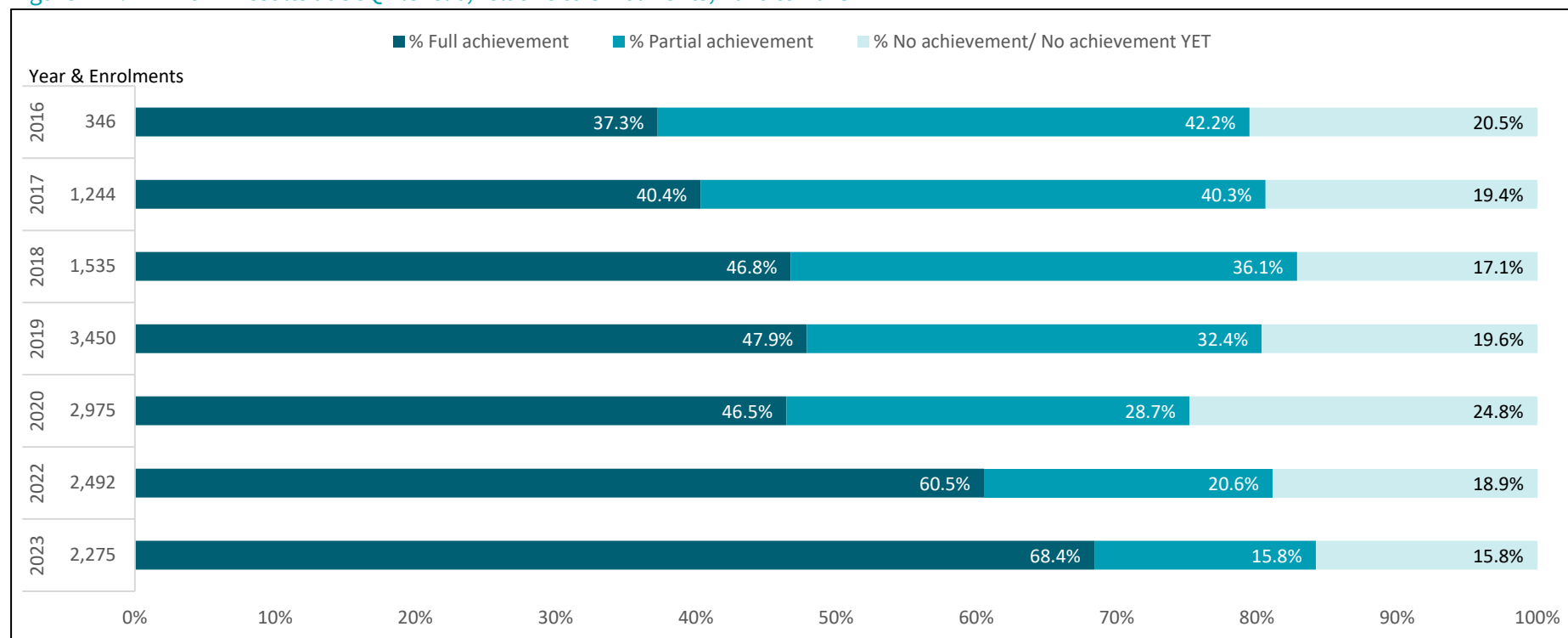
As achievement rates are expressed as a percentage of all enrolments, they include pupils who leave their FA early. We know that school pupils change their minds about the subjects they choose to study and, in some cases, leave before they have completed any component units or have completed only part of the qualification. In previous years, where data was collected about leaver destinations, it was found that most pupils remained in school or moved into further education.

Any enrolments that were funded by local authorities have been excluded from this section. As these enrolments are self-funded, local authorities are not required to provide data beyond enrolment information to SDS. Consequently, outcome data for these pupils is not available and therefore the total enrolment figure / denominator in the achievement data charts excludes them.

It has not been possible to fully reconcile achievement data for those pupils enrolled in 2021. This reflects the transition of college-delivered FAs from SDS to the SFC systems, leading to changes in data collection methodologies. As a result, 2021 achievement data is not included in this report.

¹⁹ The data for 2024 will be updated in future reports.

Figure 11A: FA known results at SCQF level 6, relative to enrolments, 2016 to 2023²⁰²¹



When pupils either do not complete the course, or complete but do not achieve their full FA qualification, they are certificated through Qualifications Scotland for the components they have achieved. All achievement data is captured by learning providers and submitted to Qualifications Scotland.

²⁰ Due to only a small number of pupils from 2020 having unknown results, they have been included in the denominator for disclosure control.

²¹ Full achievement includes Letters of Recognition, issued in lieu of some pupils being unable to complete 100% of the work-based elements of their FA due to COVID restrictions.

Figure 11B: Pilot FA known results at SCQF levels 4/5, relative to enrolments, 2019 to 2023²²

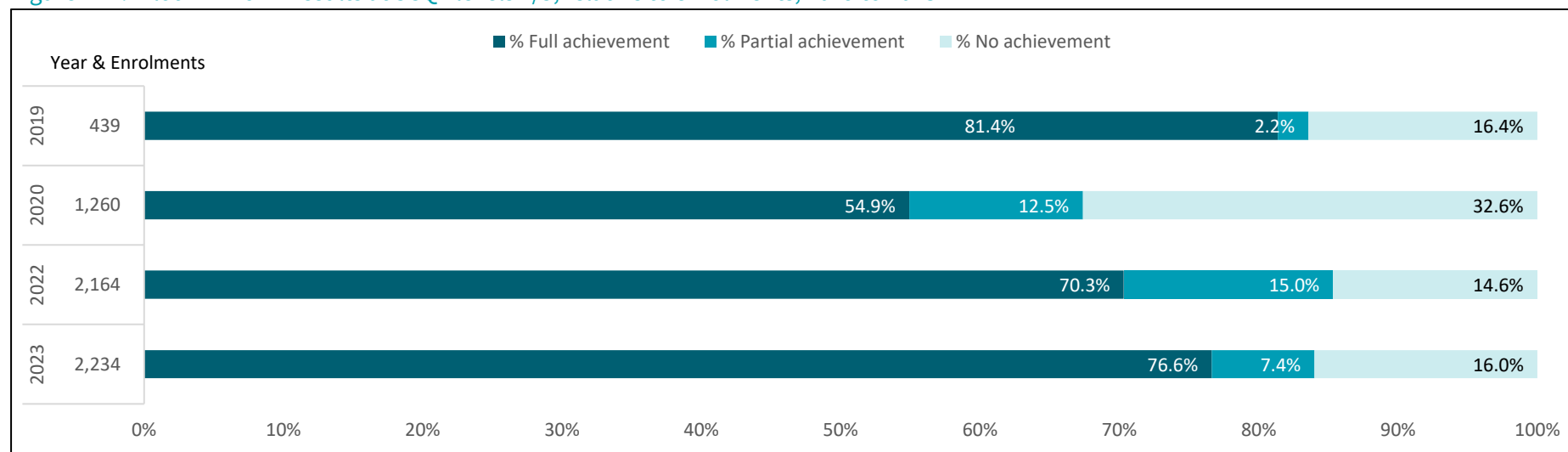


Table 4: FA Qualifications Cohort 7 and 8 (2022-2024)

	2022		2023		2024	
Achievement	Cohort 7 level 6	Level 4/5 Pilot	Cohort 8 level 6	Level 4/5 Pilot	Cohort 9 level 6	Level 4/5 Pilot
Full Qualification Achieved	1,504	1,455	1,421	1,653	1,248	1,640
Partial Achievement	511	311	328	159	122	129
No Achievement	469	303	322	343	479	371
Outcome Not Known Yet	-	-	-	-	271	-
Unknown – No Student Outcome	8	-	6	2	5	1
Total	2,492	2,069	2,077	2,157	2,126	2,141

²² Due to only a small number of pupils from 2019 and 2020 having unknown results, they have been included in the denominator for disclosure control.

Notes for readers

FA statistics in this report are provided in summary. More detailed information can be found within the supplementary tables, in line with our official statistics publications. Previously published reports can also be accessed via SDS's website.

It is important to note that pilot FAs at SCQF levels 4/5 and FAs at level 6, are part of the school curriculum and should not be directly compared to Modern Apprenticeships. School pupils choose to study a FA in the same way as they choose any other school subject.

Comparisons with other senior phase school qualifications are not possible as statistics for other school qualifications are calculated based on those presented for an exam, rather than those who enrol in a subject.

For the period covered in this report, due to the changes in delivery and accountability from 2021, SFC provided the data for college funded FAs and SDS provided the data for non-college funded FAs. Both organisations have conducted quality assurance exercises.

Please note that as our annual FA publication is based on a snapshot of data at a particular point in time, data is subject to minor change.

In 2022 all pupil numbers were rounded (either up or down) to the nearest multiple of 5. Therefore, the sum of a table column may not equal the total number of reported enrolments. Care should also be taken in comparing 2022 to previous years (and to 2023), as changes may be disguised by the rounded figures.

Percentages in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Throughout the report, disclosure control is applied to figures less than 5 or where such figures can be identified through differencing. Where

disclosure control has been applied an asterisk (*) is used in place of the actual figure.

Where individuals have ticked 'prefer not to say' or data is unknown, this is removed from percentage calculations. All percentage calculations therefore are based on known totals.

Any comments or suggestions regarding the content of this report are welcome and can be emailed to: user_feedback@sds.co.uk

Definitions for terminology used in this report:

- **Enrolments:** The number of new pupils registered on a FA or pilot FA framework at the beginning of each academic year.
- **Partial achievers:** Any apprentice who does not achieve the full qualification they were registered for but is recognised and certificated for achieving quantifiable component parts of their qualification.
- **Achievers:** Those who successfully complete all components of their FA or pilot FA group award.