



# NI LOCAL GROWTH DASHBOARD

November 2018







### NI Local Growth Dashboard

#### 1 Introduction

The Northern Ireland Local Growth Dashboard has been developed by Queen's University and the Enterprise Research Centre (ERC) and provides comparative statistics to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Dashboard first launched in June 2014. Its purpose is to present a set of growth metrics for start-ups and existing firms across a range of sub-national geographies in NI with a specific focus on each of the 11 Local Government District (District Council) areas. Alongside these metrics it includes contextual data for each, including comparisons to the wider UK geographies.

The Local Growth Dashboard can be used as a source of evidence to inform discussions on priorities in business support concerning small business growth, and includes easily understood metrics which can be readily updated on an annual basis. This report is designed to simply present the data for others to use and it is not the intention here to investigate the reasons for these variations as that can be found elsewhere in the research outputs of the ERC and the wider research and policy literature.

- 1. The growth metrics which are used in the Dashboard are: 1
  - 3-year survival rates of start-ups (2014-17)
  - Proportion of 2014 start-ups that reach £1m+ turnover (T/O) in 2017
  - Proportion of £1-2m T/O businesses born before 2014 which grow to £3m+ T/O (2014-17)
  - High-Growth Firm (OECD Definition) Incidence Rate (2014-17) using both the traditional 20% threshold and the revised 10% threshold.
  - Small High-Growth Incidence Rate (2014-17) a metric adopting a methodology advocated to avoid the exclusion of firms with less than 10 employees from the OECD definition
  - Productivity Growth metric (2014-17) a metric looking at firms who grow both in terms of jobs and revenues but have a faster rate of growth in revenues.

#### 1.1 Data Sources

The dataset used in the production of the growth and start-up data is the Business Structure Database (BSD). This is a dataset produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and is an annual snapshot of the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) which is a live register of data collected by HM Revenue and Customs via VAT and Pay as You Earn (PAYE) records <sup>2</sup>. The IDBR data are complemented with data from ONS business surveys. If a business is liable for VAT (turnover exceeds the VAT threshold) and/or has at least one member of staff registered for the PAYE tax collection system, then the business will appear on the IDBR (and hence in the BSD). We use the firm-level BSD for firm growth rates, start-ups, and turnover calculations. The District Council areas are based on the Local Government District (LGD 2014) definitions; Figure A1 in Appendix One displays the District boundaries and names. All the data contained in this report can be downloaded from the Data Hub on the ERC website.

 $<sup>^1</sup>$  Metric Definitions: Start-up is defined as a UK-owned employer firm born in 2017; Start-ups growing to £1m turnover refer to UK-owned firms born in 2014 whose turnover reached at least £1m in 2017; Firms growing to £3m+ turnover refer to UK-owned firms born prior to 2014 that survived to 2017, whose turnover grew from £1-2m in 2014 to at least £3m in 2017; High-Growth is defined by the OECD as annualised average growth in employment of 20% or more over a three year period (2014-17) and restricted to a business having at least 10 employees in 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Note: The use of these data does not imply the endorsement of the data owner or the UK Data Service at the UK Data Archive in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

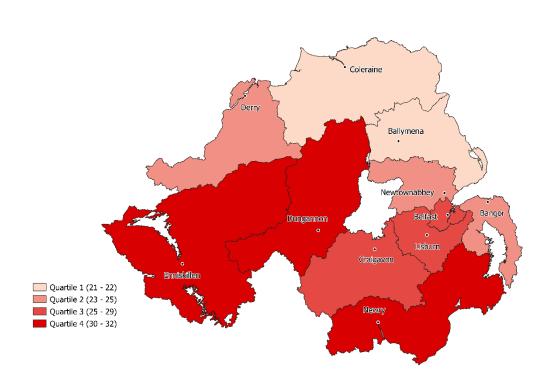




#### 2 Growth Metrics

The number of start-ups in an economy is often seen as the headline metric of 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurial ability'. Start-ups have been rising steadily in recent years but this trend does display some spatial variation across Northern Ireland (Figure 1). Mid Ulster; Fermanagh & Omagh, and Newry, Mourne & Down have the highest rate of start-ups and there are generally smaller numbers of start-ups as we move north and east. However, Belfast is an exception and also exhibits rates of start-up above the Northern Ireland average. Generally, start-up rates in Northern Ireland are much lower than in the UK at 27 per 10,000 population compared to a UK average of 50.

Figure 1: Start-ups per 10,000 Population in NI (2017): Quartiles



Source: ONS Business Structure Database (BSD)

Since 2013 the ERC research programme has emphasised the importance of small business growth to the objective of driving economic growth and re-balancing the UK economy. So we now turn to a range of business growth metrics which can provide a more fine-grained analysis of the local business dynamic which can inform the development of local, regional and national business support initiatives.





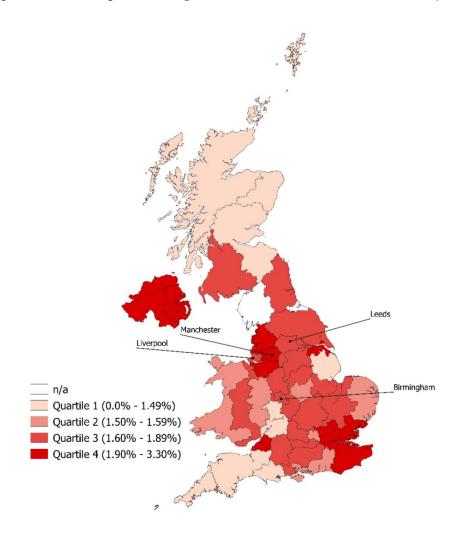
#### 2.1 Growth of Start-ups - Initial Scaling

It is a matter of record that the UK now has a larger number of start-ups than ever before, yet what is less well known is the proportion, if they survive, that go on and generate at least  $\mathcal{L}1m$  in revenues after 3 years. This threshold, while arbitrary, reflects the ambitions of many entrepreneurs as they strive to sustain and grow their businesses – getting to the 'first million' is an often heard metric.

The overall survival rate for this 2014 cohort of start-ups is 50.1% in NI and 54.7% in the UK so half of all startups do not make it to their third year – a fact that holds for all the cohorts of start-ups we have analysed since 1998.

Figure 2 shows that the proportion of UK-owned start-ups that achieve this early indication of 'scale' is very small (1.9% nationally) but there is a great deal of variation between the Home Nations and across local economic areas or LEPs in England. Northern Ireland stands out as having above average proportions of start-ups (2.7%) achieving the  $\mathcal{L}1m+$  threshold after 3 years trading with Outer Belfast and the East of NI (combined) having the highest proportion in the UK (3.3%). This result for Northern Ireland is consistent with the analysis in previous years. Wales (1.5%) and Scotland (1.3%) are below the UK average which is again consistent with a previous cohort of start-ups in 2013.

Figure 2: Proportion of Start-ups Generating £1m+ Revenues after 3 Years in the UK (2017): Quartiles







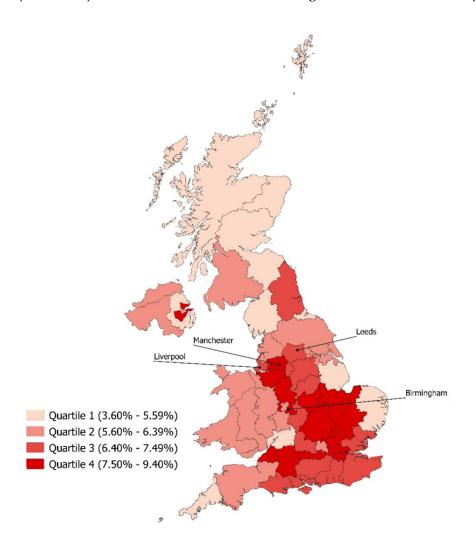
Across the LEPs in England there are a number of above average 'hotspots' including London and the South East, Hertfordshire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Warrington, Lancashire and the West of England.

Of note are those local economies with relatively high levels of start-up activity that have the lowest proportions of their start-ups achieving at least  $\mathcal{L}1m$  in revenues after three years. Worcestershire stands out as an example of this group with start-ups well above the UK average and recorded the highest number outside London. Again, this is consistent with the pattern observed in previous years.

#### 2.2 Growth of Existing Businesses - Stepping Up

Across the UK we observe that 7.2% of existing firms with turnover of £1-2m per annum in 2014 grow to at least £3m turnover in 2017 which is slightly higher than that observed in 2014 and 2015 (i.e., 6%) and marginally higher than in 2016 (7%). This metric of businesses scaling varies greatly across the UK with the three Home Nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (except the Outer Belfast region) having lower proportions of these businesses than most areas in England (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Firms (born<2014) turnover £1-2m in 2014 and reaching £3m+ in 2017 in the UK: Quartiles



Source: ONS Business Structure Database (BSD)

Within England there is a much more complex pattern across the LEPs. Outside London, which records the highest proportion (9.4%), the broad pattern is that of LEPs along the M4 corridor and a spine from London through the Midlands to Manchester having above average proportions of these scaling firms.

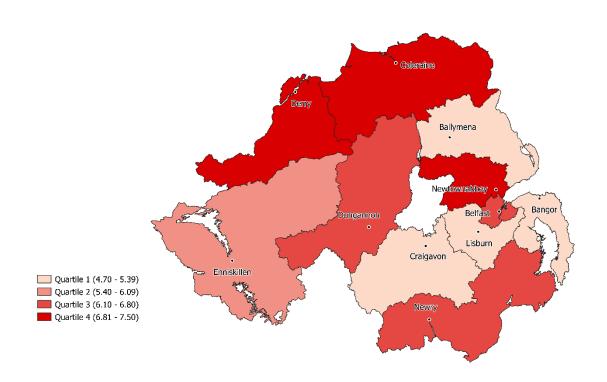




#### 2.3 High-Growth Firms

The number of high-growth firms (HGFs), as defined by the OECD <sup>3</sup>, in the UK declined very slightly in the 2014-17 period – the absolute number fell from 11,855 (2012/15) to 10,718 (2014/17) which means that the overall incidence rate is now 6.3% for the UK compared to 7.5% in the previous period. The incidence rate of high-growth firms in Northern Ireland varies from 4.7% in Ards & North Down to 7.5% in Causeway Coast & Glens (Figure 4). The spatial pattern within this range shows that Derry City & Strabane and Antrim & Newtownabbey also record above average incidence rates.

Figure 4: High-Growth Firm Incidence Rate (20% threshold) in NI (2014-17): Quartiles



Source: ONS Business Structure Database (BSD)

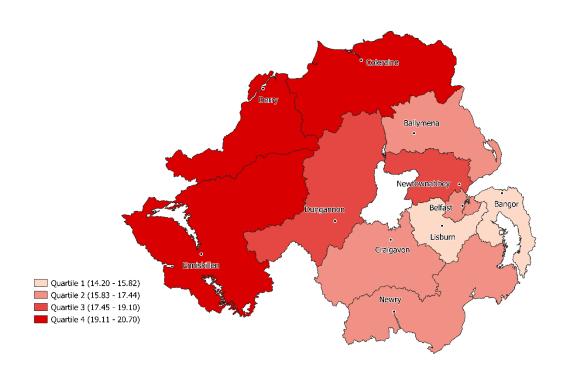
In recent years the OECD have decided to relax their 20% threshold for the definition of a HGF to 10% for both measures (i.e., using employment or revenue). Within the UK, Northern Ireland stands apart from Wales and Scotland with all district councils, except Ards & North Down, having a proportion above the UK average of 15%. Figure 5 shows this definition with those councils in the west having the highest rates in the UK.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> High-Growth is defined as annualised average growth in employment of 20% or more over a three year period (2014–17) and restricted to a business having at least 10 employees in 2014.





Figure 5: High-Growth Firm Incidence Rate (10% threshold) in NI (2014-17): Quartiles



Source: ONS Business Structure Database (BSD)

#### 2.4 Small High-Growth Firms

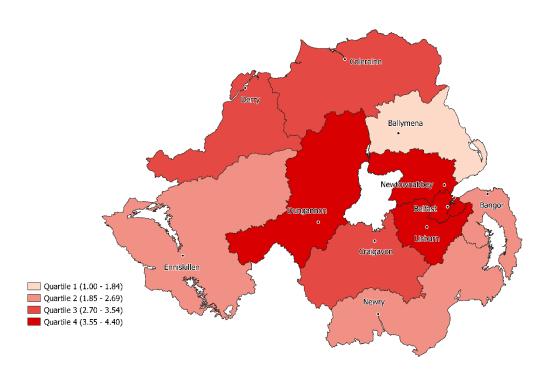
There has been growing criticism of the OECD HGF measure in recent years and in the US, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) argued that the OECD measure was too narrow and excluded firms with less than ten employees in the first year of the three year growth period. The BLS developed an alternative measure which extended the definition of a high-growth firm to include firms with less than ten employees if the firm added eight or more employees during the three year growth period. Here we adopt this measure and refer to these as Small High Growth Firms (SHGFs).

Overall, the UK SHGF incidence rate is 1.5% for the 2014-17; the Northern Ireland rate is more than double this at 3.2%. As with the HGF measure the SHGF measure exhibits a complex geography and in general, stands in contrast to that for the HGF measure (Figure 6). The highest rates in the UK are in Northern Ireland sub-regions with the highest being in Belfast (4.4%) followed by its surrounding council areas. Mid Ulster also stands out as having a higher than average incidence rate.





Figure 6: Small High-growth Firm Incidence Rate in NI (2014-17): Quartiles



Source: ONS Business Structure Database (BSD)

The introduction of this new variation on the official OECD HGF measure is an important innovation and provides a more comprehensive overview of growth in local businesses. The fact that it provides a rather different geography underlines the importance of resisting the acceptance of a single metric for 'high-growth' firms and this metric serves to capture the growth in the micro-business sector where, as we have seen from the ERC's new 'Micro-Business Britain' survey, there is not only growth but significant levels of ambition and innovative business practices.

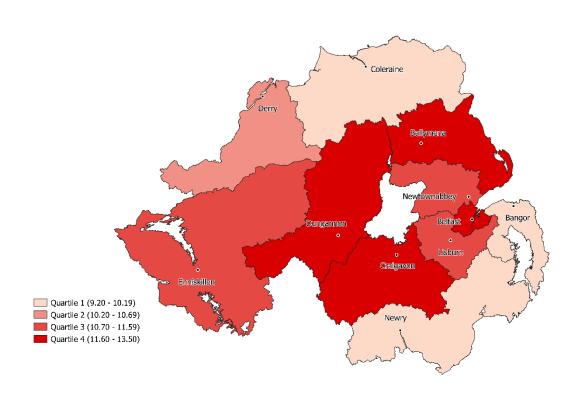
#### 2.5 Productivity Growth

We devised this growth metric for two reasons. First, as a result of our previous research which showed that there was a very poor correlation between jobs growth, increases in revenues and productivity gains. Indeed, we found that only 5% of the OECD's high-growth firms (employment definition) recorded productivity growth in the period 2008-2015 \*. Second, the current 'Long Tail Productivity Review' prompted us to probe and extend the evidence base using the datasets we have access to on the population of employer enterprises rather than the sole reliance on ONS survey data which normally excludes the smaller businesses.





Figure 7: Proportion of Firms with Positive Productivity Growth in NI 2014-17 (where turnover and employment both increased but turnover grew at a faster rate)



Source: ONS Business Structure Database (BSD)

The new productivity metric reveals that only 8.4% of all job-creating employer enterprises in the UK achieved positive productivity gains (revenue per employee) while still increasing jobs over the period 2014-17. Perhaps surprisingly, Northern Ireland had the highest proportion in the UK at 11.0% while the proportion in Wales and Scotland was 7.4% for both respectively, which was below the average of 8.5% for England.

Across Northern Ireland the pattern is complex with an arc of councils around mid Ulster as well as Belfast having the highest proportions of firms with productivity growth measured in this way. On the contrary some of the peripheral council areas such as Ards & North Down; Newry, Mourne & Down, and Causeway Coast & Glens all had rates well below the Northern Ireland average.





### 3 Conclusion

This overview of a range of business growth metrics has underlined the fact that, irrespective of the measure adopted, there are very few firms in Northern Ireland or the UK which can be categorised as 'high-growth' or 'scaling' and indeed contributing to productivity growth. We also know that this small group of firms, whether start-ups scaling or more established businesses growing rapidly for the first or second time, have had a disproportionate impact on job creation. They are crucial to the growth and re-balancing of the economy. The maps show a complex geography of 'growth' which challenges some of the preconceptions about the 'hotspots' of business growth across Northern Ireland.

A single-minded preoccupation with HGFs and indeed SHGFs, whatever definition the OECD decide to use, may not be a sensible focus for policy-makers as they seek to address the growth and productivity problems confronting the Northern Ireland economy. Not only are these measures somewhat artificially defined, they also have the disadvantage of rendering invisible the reality of growth for the majority of businesses which is usually episodic and not constrained by an arbitrary 3-year period.

As we have argued on many previous occasions it would be more informative to concentrate on the importance of creating a growth pipeline at local level and monitoring its development over time. Tracking cohorts of start-ups over time, and other groups of established firms as they begin to engage in a range of activity which prepares them for future growth, would be a more meaningful focus for business support policy and demands richer data.





# Annex of Local Government District (District Council) Statistics





Population: 141,697

Private Sector Firms: 2,140

Private Sector Jobs: 25,903

**Sectoral Composition:** 

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

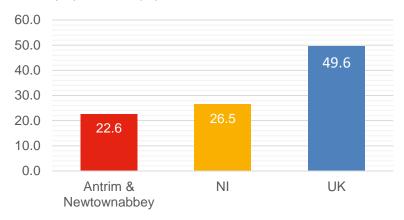
- 318 new registered businesses in 2017
- 23 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 48% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 5.3% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

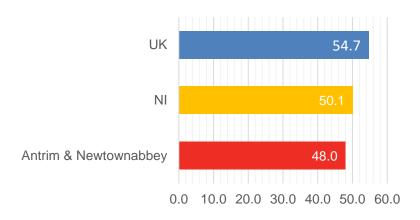
- 7.1% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 18.9% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 4.1% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI, 1.5% for UK
- 11.2% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

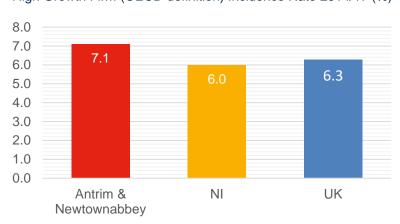
# Antrim and Newtownabbey

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 160,098

Private Sector Firms: 2,538

Private Sector Jobs: 18,038

Sectoral Composition:

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

- 365 new registered businesses in 2017
- 23 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 49% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 5.4% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

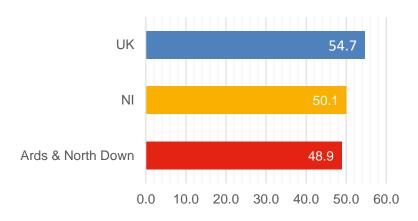
- 4.7% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 14.2% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 2.0% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 9.2% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

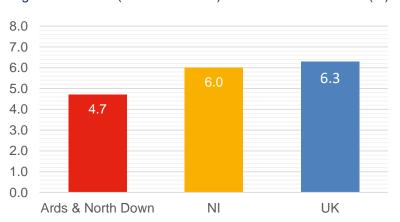
### Ards and North Down

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 211,898

**Private Sector Firms:** 

3,818

**Private Sector Jobs:** 43,037

Sectoral Composition:

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

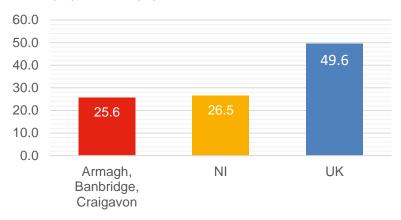
- 543 new registered businesses in 2017
- 26 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 47% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 5.8% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

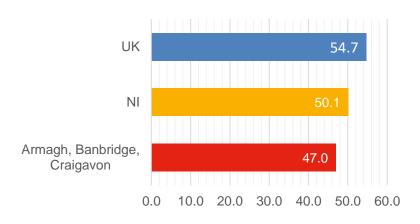
- 5.1% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 16.0% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 3.1% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 11.6% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

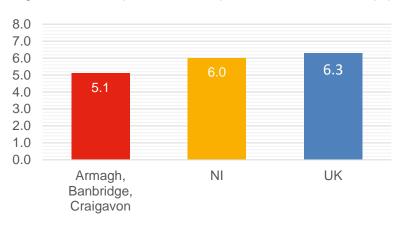
# Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon

Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



Start-up Survival rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 340,220

Private Sector Firms: 6,509

Private Sector Jobs: 129,748

**Sectoral Composition:** 

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

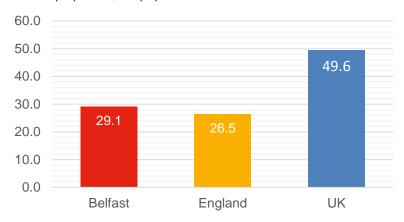
- 990 new registered businesses in 2017
- 29 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 53% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 5.7% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

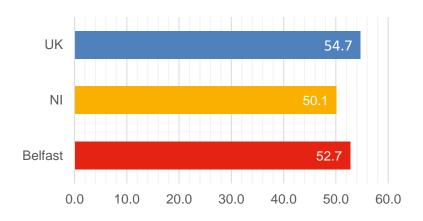
- 6.1% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 17.0% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 4.4% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 11.6% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

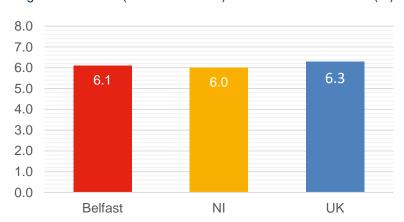
### **Belfast**

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 143,920

Private Sector Firms: 2,486

Private Sector Jobs: 19,272

**Sectoral Composition:** 

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

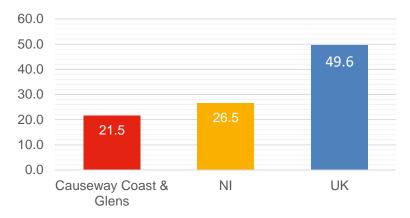
- 310 new registered businesses in 2017
- 22 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 45% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 5.8% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

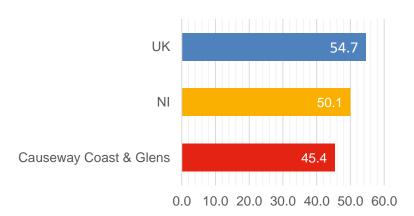
- 7.5% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 20.2% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 2.7% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 9.8% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

## Causeway Coast and Glens

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 150,497

Private Sector Firms: 2,393

Private Sector Jobs: 21,407

Sectoral Composition:

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

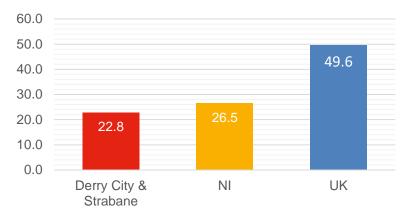
- 343 new registered businesses in 2017
- 23 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 50% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 3.3% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

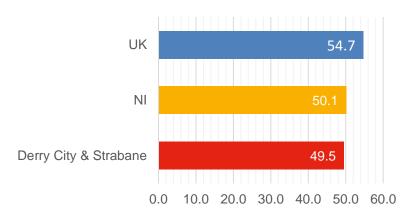
- 7.0% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 20.7% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 3.2% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 10.6% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

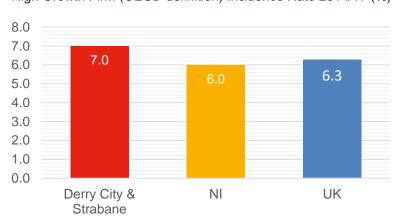
# Derry City and Strabane

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 116,289

Private Sector Firms: 2,613

Private Sector Jobs: 18,503

Sectoral Composition:

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

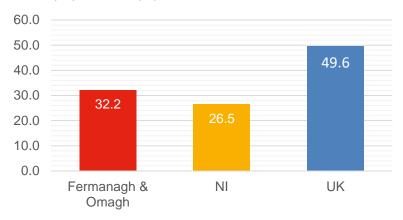
- 374 new registered businesses in 2017
- 32 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 46% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 6.4% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### GROWTH

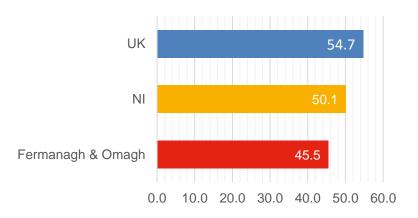
- 5.4% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 19.9% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 1.9% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 10.7% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

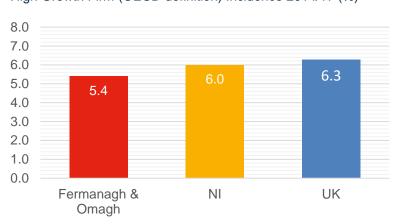
# Fermanagh and Omagh

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 142,640

Private Sector Firms: 2,602

Private Sector Jobs: 28,851

**Sectoral Composition:** 

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

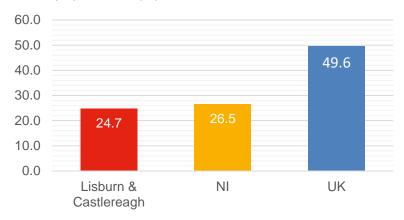
- 353 new registered businesses in 2017
- 25 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 57% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 6.0% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### GROWTH

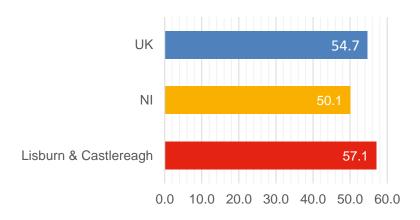
- 4.9% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 15.4% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 3.9% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 10.7% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

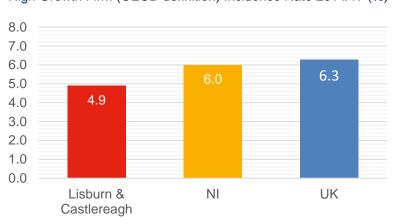
# Lisburn and Castlereagh

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 138,152

Private Sector Firms: 2,212

Private Sector Jobs: 17,866

Sectoral Composition:

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

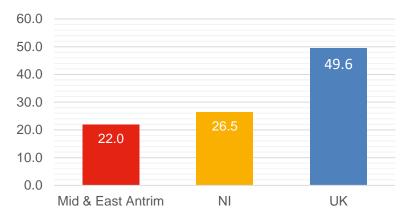
- 304 new registered businesses in 2017
- 22 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 52% of 2013 start-ups survived to 2017
- 10.5% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### GROWTH

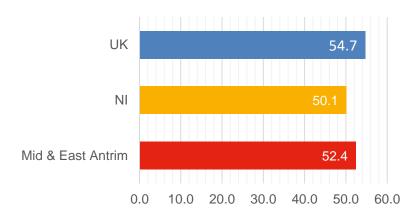
- 4.8% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 17.1% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 1.0% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 13.5% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

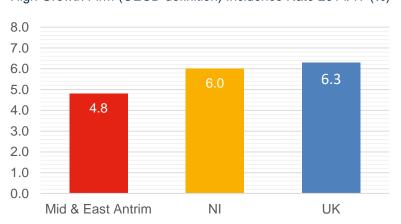
### Mid and East Antrim

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 146,427

Private Sector Firms: 3,436

Private Sector Jobs: 33,884

**Sectoral Composition:** 

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

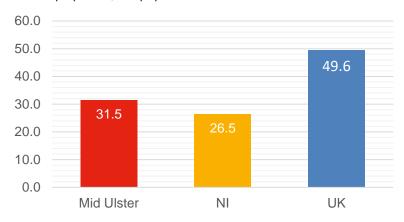
- 461 new registered businesses in 2017
- 32 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 49% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 9.3% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### GROWTH

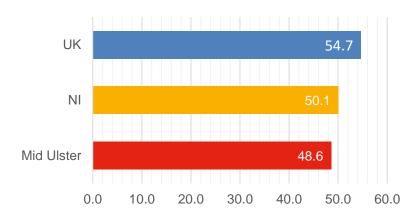
- 6.8% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 18.0% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 3.7% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 12.1% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

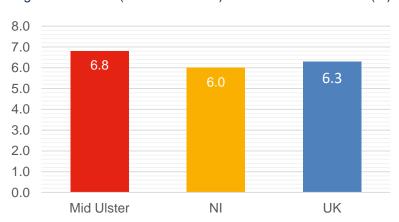
### Mid Ulster

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)









Population: 178,996

Private Sector Firms: 3,762

Private Sector Jobs: 27,886

Sectoral Composition:

See accompanying spreadsheet

#### START-UPS

- 574 new registered businesses in 2017
- 32 start-ups per 10,000 population in 2017
- 53% of 2014 start-ups survived to 2017
- 6.7% of population aged 18-64 engaged in earlystage entrepreneurship (2015-17); NI 6.1%

#### **GROWTH**

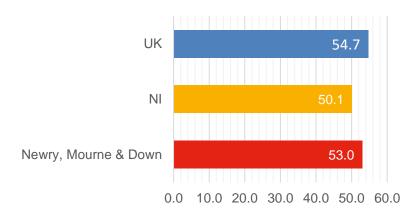
- 6.7% high-growth firms (OECD 20% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 16.2% high-growth firms (OECD 10% employment definition) incidence rate (2014-2017)
- 2.4% small high-growth firm (Clayton variation to OECD definition) incidence rate (2014-2017); 3.2% for NI; 1.5% for UK
- 9.6% of job-creating firms with positive productivity growth (2014-17)

## Newry, Mourne and Down

#### Start-ups per 10,000 population 2017



#### Start-up Survival Rate 2014-17 (%)



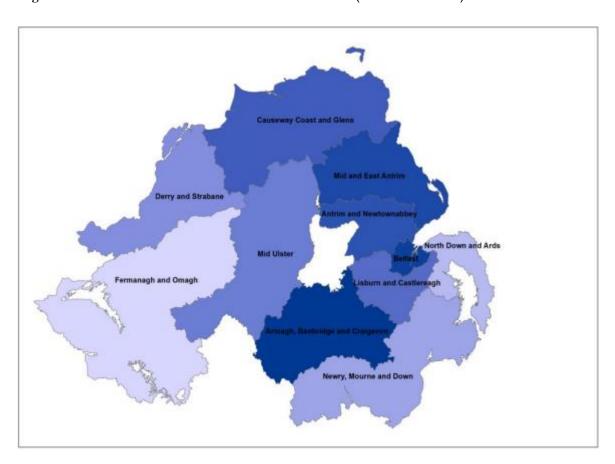






### Appendix One

Figure A1: Northern Ireland Local Government Districts (District Councils)



Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)







#### FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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