



**07/12/2010**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Equality Commission Publishes 20th Monitoring Report**

The Equality Commission today (Tuesday December 7, 2010) publishes the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Monitoring Report on the composition of the workforce in Northern Ireland. The report, dealing with returns from employers for 2009, shows a fall in the number of monitored employees for the first time in a decade.

The monitored workforce in 2009 stood at 517,272, representing a decrease since 2008 of 12,585 employees, or 2.4% of the total. The Protestant share of the monitored workforce stood at [54.6%] compared with [45.4%] for Roman Catholics.



Commenting on the figures Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said: "This report highlights a changing employment environment in Northern Ireland. It provides a snapshot in time, but also, when taken alongside monitoring information from the last two decades can help us to draw some conclusions on trends and patterns.

"It is vital, however, that this information is taken in the round. This period (2009) reflects the initial impact of the recession and also some significant demographic shifts. We must balance and judge all of the available evidence to ensure that we can properly measure any questions of unfairness in employment."

The 2009 report shows a noticeable decline in the number of people employed in the monitored workforce, particularly in the private sector, compared with the previous year.

The private sector reduced by 3.5% of the total – 11,755 employees while public sector employment fell by 0.4% or 830.

The report tracks employment in four key groupings, namely, Protestants, Roman Catholics, women and men, and records a drop in each of these. The falls were steeper for Protestants (-6,806 or 2.5%) than for Catholics (-3,899 or 1.8%) and also steeper for men (-8,655 or 3.4%) than for women (-3,930 or 1.4%).

The report also shows a continuation of what could be a significant shift in the community composition of applicants for jobs. The Roman Catholic proportion of all monitored applicants has been rising steadily since 2001 when it stood at [44.8%]. The number of Roman Catholic applicants exceeded those from Protestants for the first time in 2007, albeit by a small number. The 2009 data confirms the continuation of this trend, which has now become more marked. In 2009 the Catholic share [51%] exceeded that of their Protestant counterparts [49%] by 10,465.

“We know from the 2001 Census that in every five-year age group of those then under 25, Roman Catholics represented over 50%,” Bob Collins said. “That pattern will have worked its way up the age scale in the years since and it is a reasonable estimate that, of those currently in the 16-34 age group, Roman Catholics now represent some 52%.”

“Although this is very likely an important factor in the shift in applicant composition, we cannot assume that it is the complete explanation. More study and research is required into all the factors at play throughout the workforce to help us reach conclusions on trends such as these.”

“The three yearly Reviews which employers undertake under Article 55 of the Fair Employment legislation are an important source of information. They shed light not only on the composition of workforces (and those joining or leaving them), but also on the extent to which employment in those workforces actually represents fair participation. The Commission is actively considering how this material can be made more widely available to help obtain a greater understanding of these changing patterns.”

The monitoring data also show the changing nature of our economy, and these changes will also have impacts on the community composition of the workforce. In 1990 almost half, 47.6%, of the monitored workforce in the private sector was employed in manufacturing; and industries based on heavy engineering and textiles were among the largest employers in Northern Ireland. Now manufacturing accounts for just 22.7% of the private sector.

In 1990, the percentage of Roman Catholics in the then monitored workforce (firms of more than 25 employees) was [34.9%], 5.1 percentage points less than the estimated 40% of those available for work who were Catholics. Today's report shows Roman Catholics constitute [45.4%] of the monitored workforce (firms of more than 10 employees), which matches the estimated percentage of Catholics available for work.

“This steady and consistent convergence of the workforce with the composition of those available for work can be tracked through the annual Monitoring Reports,” Bob Collins said, “Monitoring and the three yearly Article 55 reviews have provided a focus for business and the public sector which has helped drive change in the Northern Ireland workforce over the past two decades. It has helped us understand what is happening and why, and contributed to what is now a well established awareness of the importance of equality of opportunity and fair participation. Even though the context of the Northern Ireland workplace has changed dramatically since these measures were introduced, their original purpose – of securing and maintaining fair employment – still has validity and relevance.”

“While economic developments and demographic changes clearly affect the realities of our economy and our society, they also affect our perceptions. It is important that they should also inform our expectations. The Equality Commission believes that workforce monitoring should be extended to the grounds of nationality and ethnic origin, so as to capture more accurately the facts about the changing workforce in Northern Ireland and enable us all to see the extent to which the new shape of our society is represented in the world of work.”

## **Notes to Editor:**

The 20th Annual Monitoring Report (2009) presents an aggregate summary of the 4,013 valid monitoring returns received by the Commission between 1 Jan and 31 Dec 2009.

**Monitoring covers an estimated 70 - 72% of those in employment.**

In this report, **Percentages shown in square brackets [ ]** are based on Protestants and Roman Catholics only, with the Non-Determined excluded. Percentages in round brackets ( ) are based on all employees, including the Non-Determined.

Monitored employment had been on an upward trajectory since 2001. In that year, **total employment** stood at 479,517. Employment peaked in 2008 at 529,857 and, at 517,272 in 2009, has fallen back to its 2005 level.

**The full-time workforce** was monitored at 437,604 employees, a fall of 2.2% and the **part-time workforce** comprised 79,668 employees, a decline of 3.3%.

**In the private sector** there were 328,149 employees, a fall of 3.5% (11,755 employees) since 2008. The private sector composition was [54.8%] Protestant and [45.2%] Roman Catholic. This represented a drop of 3.5% (5,910) for Protestants and of 3.2% (4,570) for Catholics. Men accounted for almost 70% of net job losses in this sector.

**The public sector** contracted for the fourth year in a row and totalled 189,123 employees. This was a reduction from 2008 of 830 employees or 0.4%. The Protestant count dropped by 0.9%, while the Catholic count rose by 0.8%. This resulted in the Roman Catholic share increasing by [0.4] percentage points to [45.8%] Roman Catholic. The Protestant share in 2009 was [54.2%].

In 2009, the overall proportion of Roman Catholic **applicants** 276,011 [51.0%], exceeded that of their Protestant counterparts 256,546 [49.0%]. This development was first observed in 2007, when the Catholic count was marginally higher (186). In 2009 the gap had increased to 10,465. The Roman Catholic proportion of applicants has risen

steadily since 2001, increasing in seven of the past nine years. By 2009, the Catholic share had grown by [6.2] percentage points, from [44.8%] in 2001 to [51.0%] in 2009.

In 2009, for the fourth year in a row, the Catholic share of all monitored **appointees** [50.9%] exceeded that of their Protestant counterparts [49.1%].

In 2009, the total number of monitored **promotees** was 10,460. The composition of those whose community could be determined was 5,319 [54.1%] Protestant and 4,510 [45.9%] Roman Catholic.

A copy of the full Monitoring Report and a brief Research Update on the report, can be found on the Equality Commission's website.