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[Blog article](#) by Chris Jenkins, Senior Policy Officer, Equality Commission NI

Improving representation in public life

Our work around participation in public life looks to analyse and identify opportunities to make NI public appointments more reflective of the community they serve.

The roles need to be accessible to people regardless of age, gender, disability, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

Efforts needed to improve representation in public life

Having a mix of people in public life from different backgrounds, including those protected by equality laws, will improve decision-making and outcomes.

We want the NI Executive renew efforts to

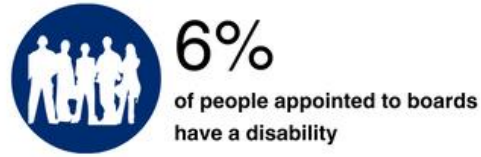
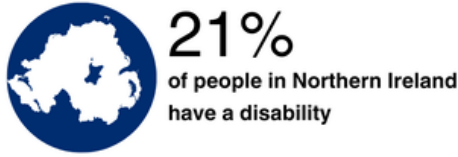
- increase the representation for people with disabilities.
- achieve the Executive's targets for gender equality in board and chair appointments.
- improve data collection across equality grounds, especially for ethnic minorities.

Underrepresentation in Northern Ireland

We examined the make-up of government public appointments in 2021/22 to identify underrepresentation in public life.

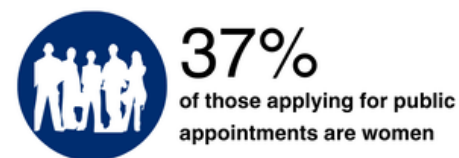
Disabled people not represented in public life

The information shows an underrepresentation of people with a disability in public life in Northern Ireland. 21% of the Northern Ireland population is disabled, but in 2021-2022 only 6% of public appointments are people with a declared disability. We want to see efforts to increase participation from individuals with disabilities.



Women not represented in paid or chair roles

The number of women in government public appointments is improving, but they are still underrepresented in both appointments and applications. Women account for 52% of the population yet only 37% of applications to public bodies are from women.



Men hold 73% of 'Chair' positions within government public bodies.



Women make up just 29% of applications for the highest-paid positions over £10,000.



We want to see action plan to achieve gender equality in board and chair appointments.

People from ethnic minorities not represented in public life

White people make up 98% of all applicants to government public appointments.

Unfortunately, there is no data of the number of people from ethnic minorities in these roles. We want to see this addressed quickly, as it is vital we understand how to increase participation of ethnic minorities.



98%
of people who applied for
government public appointments
are white



No data on the number of ethnic
minorities in government public
appointments

Our work to improve participation in public life

We will continue to monitor participation in public life across a range of equality groups as part of our ongoing [Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland research](#).

We also [continue to inform and challenge the government to take steps](#) to address short comings in data collection and take steps to increase diversity in public appointments.