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PRESS RELEASE

## Do You Mean Me?

One in three people feel they have been unfairly treated or harassed, according to a new survey into experiences of and attitudes towards discrimination, from the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland.

The report 'Do You Mean Me?' launched today (Wednesday 13 June 2012) at Titanic House, Belfast reveals that the figure of those affected has doubled, from 16% to 33%, since 2008.

It also finds that there has been a hardening in negative attitudes, linked to levels of social contact towards people from different backgrounds including race, disability and sexual orientation over the last six years.

Speaking at the discussion-based event, Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner said: "This study provides a valuable insight into our society, how we connect with others and who we are as people.

"The key question is "Do you Mean Me?" and this is double-edged. It is not just have I experienced discrimination because of who I am, but do I have negative attitudes towards others just because of who they are? Where the answer to the second question is yes, then we each need to address what makes us think like this and challenge our own beliefs and stereotypes.



“The survey also highlighted that 30% of the respondents feel that some forms of prejudice are acceptable and equivalent surveys in other parts of UK show similar results. This is a worrying insight into the population’s psyche and proves that much work remains to be done to break down barriers in our mindsets to create a fairer and more equal society for everyone in Northern Ireland.”

More than half of respondents (55%) would mind having a Traveller as an in-law, an increase of 17 percentage points from 2005, with similar responses to them as neighbours.

Negative attitudes towards people with a disability have also increased, most notably towards those experiencing mental ill-health. Between 2008 and 2011 these have risen by nine, eight and 12 percentage points towards individuals as a work colleague (from 17%) a neighbour (16%), and marrying a close relative (from 25%). Negative attitudes towards a person with a physical disability as a work colleague rose by seven percentage points to 15%.

Over a quarter of people (27%) would mind a gay, lesbian or bisexual person living next door, compared to 14% in 2005, with 42% unhappy about them becoming an in-law, a rise of 13 percentage points over the last six years.

Around a third of people (35%) would mind a transgender person as a work colleague, rising to 40% as a neighbour and 53% as an in-law. This is the first time a major survey in Northern Ireland has considered attitudes towards this group.

Mr Wardlow continued that: “This is our third survey into attitudes to and experiences of discrimination so we have now a unique insight into both the challenges and opportunities for positive change that they present to all of us in Northern Ireland.

“We want to build on the clear expressions of confidence and trust in the Commission from all sections of the community and on the overwhelming support (91%) for equality law here.

“This survey will certainly inform and drive our work going forward and part of this will be to continue to work collaboratively with leaders from across business, politics and the community.”

*ENDS*

*Caption: Christine Dodson from the Northern Ireland Assembly with the Equality Commission’s Darren McKinstry, Director of Policy and Research, Colin Flinn from Cara-Friend and Ailyn Olila-Majury from the PSNI*

**Notes to Editor:**

- In February 2011, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland commenced work to conduct a survey of equality related issues and attitudes amongst the general public in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork was conducted in September 2011 by Social Market Research (SMR) and covered five main areas, namely:
  - o social attitudes and perceptions;
  - o personal experiences of discrimination or harassment;
  - o awareness of anti-discrimination laws;
  - o perceptions of equality issues;
  - o awareness of and public confidence in the Equality Commission; and personal experiences of the economic downturn
- The current survey builds on previous Equality Awareness surveys in 2005 and 2008. These surveys established baseline data on awareness of, and attitudes towards key equality issues, with the intention that this would be used in subsequent years to monitor change over time. Furthermore, the 2011 survey included similar questions to the Eurobarometer surveys to gain comparability on particular equality issues within the UK and other European regions.
- The fieldwork for the survey was conducted on a face-to-face basis with an achieved sample of 1,101 adults aged 16 and over. A stratified random sample was used to ensure the sample was fully representative of the Northern Ireland adult population (aged 16 years and over).

□□ The sample was stratified by Local Government District (LGD) on a proportionate basis using Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS). This facilitated analysis by the three main areas of Northern Ireland, namely: East of Northern Ireland, West of Northern Ireland and Belfast. Within each LGD a number of electoral wards were randomly selected to represent the LGD. Individuals were then selected from within each electoral ward on the basis of quotas for age, sex, social class, religion and area of residence.