

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



KEY INEQUALITIES

IN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

STATEMENT
SEPTEMBER 2018

Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	i
2	Introduction	1
3	Disabled People	10
4	Gender	15
5	Religious Belief	24
6	Ethnicity	28
7	Age	35
8	Other Issues.....	45

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This '*Statement on Key Inequalities in Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland*' highlights our assessment of inequalities and differences in participation in public life faced by equality groups across the Section 75 equality categories in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 In compiling this Statement, the Commission has drawn on a wide range of sources including: research reports from government departments and the community and voluntary sectors; academic research; and the Commission's own information sources. The Commission also contracted independent research from Ipsos MORI (2015). The resultant research report¹ and associated stakeholder engagement has played a key role in informing this Statement.
- 1.3 The Commission also sought the views of Government Department representatives and community and voluntary sector representatives on its identified key inequalities and data gaps through a series of meetings and a seminar event. The Statement in its current form, therefore, reflects feedback received from the consultation process with stakeholders.
- 1.4 The Commission's understanding of *participation in public life* is that participation can be at all levels, whether community, regional and national. It can include participation as elected representatives or members of political fora. It can also include participation as board members of public bodies, or at a community level, such as members of community associations, and school Boards of Governors².
- 1.5 Diversity in public life, with participation of people from all types of backgrounds and with a broad range of characteristics, should ensure a more informed policy decision-making process. Diversity is important in increasing the voice and influence of underrepresented groups, such as women,

¹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast.

² ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

disabled people and ethnic minorities, and in shaping the community in which they live. It provides opportunities for individuals to make a valuable and recognised contribution, ensuring that public policy and services reflect the needs of all citizens and residents. It creates the opportunity for people from underrepresented groups to act as positive role models, which in turn can encourage the participation in political, public and civic life of others from those groups. Diversity can also help transform attitudes and behaviour and create an environment for equal respect. Participation in public life is vital to people's sense of status and belonging³.

- 1.6 The Commissions guidance⁴ notes that *'public life is a very broad term'*, including but not limited to:

"government public appointments; the House of Lords; public bodies' focus or working groups; community associations or fora; community police liaison committees⁵; neighbourhood watch committees; citizens panels; Local Strategic Partnerships; school Boards of Governors; school councils; youth councils; user groups for a service provided by a public authority."

- 1.7 The Guidance also goes on to note that it can include how people participate in political life; for example:

"as elected representatives, members of political for a... access to the voting system ... their participation as litigants (in terms of access to the law and Courts), judges and jurors."

- 1.8 Furthermore, Commission guidance⁶ on *'active participation'* also may include involving people at more formal levels for example, recruitment and selection panels.

- 1.9 Using the guidance, Ipsos MORI⁷ developed a framework to investigate participation in public life. This highlighted nineteen possible areas as examples of public life, which were used as

³ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

⁴ ECNI (2007) [A Guide for Public Authorities – Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People and Encouraging the Participation of Disabled People in Public Life](#). ECNI, Belfast, page 55.

⁵ The Commission notes that Community Police Liason Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).

⁶ ECNI (2008) [Lets Talk, Lets Listen, Guidance for Public Authorities on consulting and involving children and young people](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁷ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

the scope for the research study. The Commission acknowledges in its guidance that the list is not exhaustive; but it provides a number of examples of public life.

- 1.10 The starkest finding from our assessment is the absence of data in most of the areas considered to constitute participation in public life. There are significant and specific data gaps across a number of themes in relation to a number of equality groups, specifically: marital status, dependency status, and sexual orientation. In addition, there is a lack of data disaggregation in relation to disability and ethnicity. These shortfalls limit the Commission's ability to draw robust conclusions about inequalities, and there are inevitably gaps in our assessment and those considered key inequalities, and/or progress in addressing the same across the full range of equality categories and groups.
- 1.11 Alongside a number of differences and wider inequalities, three key inequalities have been identified for participation in public life, from data spanning 2007-2016. These are presented below along with short explanations.

Data Limitations and Gaps

- There are **significant and specific data gaps across all areas of public life** in relation to the participation of equality groups within the nine equality grounds.
- In the areas of public life where data is collected, **the availability of data is often limited, patchy and often not disaggregated.**
- **Only three of nineteen areas of public life collect and report quantitative data findings on a regular basis**, namely: government public appointments; elected representatives; and access to the voting system.
- **There is a complete absence of data for the specific Section 75 grounds** of marital status, dependent status and sexual orientation, across all areas of public life.

Key Inequalities

- **There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability in applications and appointments to government public appointments.**
- **Women are underrepresented within elected positions in Northern Ireland and within government public appointments.**
- **There are no elected representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds.**

Data Limitations and Gaps

- 1.12 Public authorities have statutory equality and good relations duties in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality scheme arrangements show how the public authority proposes to fulfil its duties. Despite the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, there are significant and specific data gaps across all areas of public life in relation to the participation of equality groups within the nine grounds. The Commission has found that the Equality Scheme commitments have not driven a data development agenda in the public sector, despite the particular monitoring arrangements and the Commission's longstanding advice.⁸ Specifically, there is a complete lack of data for the specific Section 75 grounds of marital status, dependent status and sexual orientation.
- 1.13 The paucity in monitoring and reporting participation in public life on equality grounds has impacted upon the extent to which the independent research⁹, and this Statement, can highlight the inequalities in participation in public life in Northern Ireland.
- 1.14 Even in the areas of public life where data is collected, namely government public appointments, elected representatives and access to the voting system, the availability of data is often

⁸ ECNI (2017) Section 72 Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties. Acting on the Evidence of Public Authority Practices: Summary Report for Consultation. ECNI, Belfast.

⁹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

limited, patchy and often not disaggregated¹⁰. A number of other data sets were available for other areas of public life, however, as the data were not collected regularly and / or consistently, no trends could be identified.

Key Inequalities

Key Inequality

There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability in applications and appointments to government public appointments.

- 1.15 **There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability in applications and appointments to government public appointments.** Little improvement has been made in terms of the levels of *appointments* of persons with disabilities being made to government public appointments over the period 2006 – 2016 (2% 2006 and 3% in 2016)¹¹.
- 1.16 Further, during the period 2008-2016, there has been a consistent underrepresentation of persons with a disability as *applicants* to government public appointments ranging from 2% to 5% annually¹².

¹⁰ The monitoring of ethnicity and disability within participation in public life does not allow for disaggregation by categories. For example, 'white' category by nationality would enable the experiences of Eastern European migrants and other minority ethnic groups such as Travellers to be determined. Similarly, disaggregated beyond the classification of 'disability'.

¹¹ Note that data pertaining to disability relates to **appointments made** in that year, no data pertaining to appointments held by persons with a disability is available from the TEO Government Public Appointment data (2006-2016) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹² In 2010/11 the percentage of applications received from persons who declared a disability increased slightly to (4%) from 3% the previous year.

Key Inequality

Women are underrepresented within elected positions in Northern Ireland and within government public appointments.

- 1.17 **Women are underrepresented within elected positions** in Northern Ireland, including MPs (22%), MLAs (30%), Local Councillors (25%), and Council Mayor/Chairpersons (23%).
- 1.18 **Women are underrepresented within government public appointments.** There continues to be an underrepresentation of women, when compared to their share of the population, in government public appointments (41%) and as publicly appointed chairpersonships (24%)¹³, having increased slightly since the inequality was highlighted in the Commission's 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities¹⁴.

Key Inequality

There are no elected representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds.

- 1.19 **There are no elected representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds.** Currently, there is no political presence in terms of ethnic minorities within the Northern Ireland Assembly. However, previously (2007-2016) one MLA (Alliance party)¹⁵ was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

¹³ This inequality is derived from an analysis of TEO Government Public Appointment data by Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast and by the Commission (2015 and 2016 data).

¹⁴ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

¹⁵ Northern Ireland Assembly (2017) [They Work for You](#)

Barriers to Participation

- 1.21 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this Statement are the outcomes of a range of institutional, socio-economic and individual barriers encountered by individual equality groups. A review of such barriers provides a useful insight into some of the key drivers for the identified inequalities and differences in participation in public life. The barriers identified are mainly evidenced from the four areas of public life where data is available. However, these barriers may also affect the participation of a range of equality groups across other areas of public life where data is limited.
- 1.22 **Culture, stereotypes and prejudice** impact on participation in public life for a range of equality groups. Negative perceptions / stereotypes exist about the skills, abilities and experience of certain equality groups.
- 1.23 The **appointment processes** associated with participation in public life can place women and other under-represented groups at a disadvantage. Recruitment and selection processes, and application forms often asking for formal qualifications and previous board experience^{16 17}, may act as barriers to broader participation. Similarly, the use of professional language¹⁸ in the selection processes may act as another barrier as some equality groups may be less familiar with the jargon.¹⁹
- 1.24 **The reconciliation of family and working life** represents a significant barrier for women seeking to participate in public life. The inequitable sharing of family responsibilities between women and men perpetuates a double burden of paid and unpaid responsibilities upon women. Furthermore, the availability of affordable childcare, which is a fundamental part

¹⁶ Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#)

¹⁷ In respect to government public appointments, the Commission recognises the [Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland's Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland \(2016\)](#) which states 'When drawing up criteria for a public appointment, those involved must recognise the validity of non-traditional career paths, to encourage applications from as diverse a range as possible'.

¹⁸ UNICEF, [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#), UNICEF; New York.

¹⁹ The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

of the process of mothers entering, remaining in, progressing in or returning to work and hence employment equality²⁰, also acts as a barrier to participation in public life.

- 1.25 Given the financial resources often required to participate, and the limited remuneration available to those who may wish to participate²¹, the **cost** of participation may limit the opportunities to participate fully in public life, for a range of equality groups, either based upon a single or multiple identities.
- 1.26 As stated above, it has been identified that a **lack of promotion, engagement and outreach** by public bodies and political institutions towards some equality groups may also act as barriers to broader public participation.^{22,23,24} Similarly, the **lack of support and / or development in terms of developing skills and providing education / training / capacity building** to underrepresented groups may also be considered a barrier to broader participation in public life.
- 1.27 Certain equality groups may **lack confidence and trust in politicians and the public bodies**, possibly resulting in a disengagement, dissatisfaction, and disempowerment²⁵ to participation in the political environment.
- 1.28 The presence of **physical and communication barriers** may also inhibit the participation of certain equality groups. Poor provision of accessible travel systems and accessible buildings can limit attendance.
- 1.29 Considering the perceptions, and actualities, of the cultures and processes relating to being on and being recruited to public boards; a **lack of confidence by under-represented equality groups** may affect broader participation.

²⁰ McQuaid, R., Graham, H., and Shapira, M. (2013) [Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women](#), ECNI, Belfast.

²¹ The Executive Office (2006/07-2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

²² O'Toole, T.; Dehanas, D.N.; Modood, T.; Meer, N.; and Jones, S. (2013) [Taking part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance](#). University of Bristol.

²³ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁴ Weller, P. (2009) How participation changes things: 'Inter faith', 'multi faith; and a new public imaginary. In (eds) Adam Dinham, Robert Furbey, Vivien Lowndes, Faith in the Public Realm: Controversies, Policies and Practices. Policy Press: University of Bristol.

²⁵ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This ‘*Statement on Key Inequalities in Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland*’ highlights the nature and extent of inequalities across the nine equality grounds covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: gender; racial group; disability status; sexual orientation; religious belief; political opinion; age; marital status; and those with and without dependents²⁶.
- 2.2 This Statement updates the participation component of the Commission’s previous ‘*Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland*’²⁷ published in 2007. It is part of a series of Statements on Key Inequalities that highlight key inequalities in other areas including: education, employment, and housing.
- 2.3 Participation can be at all levels, including community, regional and national. For example, it can include participation as elected representatives (such as Assembly Members or local councillors), or members of political fora. It can also include participation as board members of public bodies, or at a community level (such as members of community associations, voluntary organisations, sporting or social bodies, school Boards of Governors, school councils, or citizens’ panels)²⁸.
- 2.4 Diversity in public life with participation of people from all types of backgrounds and with a broad range of characteristics should ensure a more informed policy decision-making process. Diversity is important, too, in increasing the voice and influence of under-represented groups, such as women, disabled people and ethnic minorities, and in shaping the community in which they live. It provides opportunities for individuals to make a valuable and recognised contribution, ensuring that public policy and services reflect the needs of all citizens and residents. It creates the opportunity for people from under- represented groups to act as positive role models, which in turn can encourage the participation in political, public and civic life of others from those groups. Diversity can also

²⁶ Equality grounds are those specified above, equality groups are categories within those grounds e.g. gender is an equality ground, males and females are the groups within that ground.

²⁷ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

²⁸ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

help transform attitudes and behaviour and create an environment for equal respect. Participation in public life is vital to people's sense of status and belonging²⁹.

Overall Context of Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland

- 2.5 The social, economic and political context of Northern Ireland has changed considerably since the Commission produced its Statement on Key Inequalities in 2007³⁰. In particular, Northern Ireland has a changing demographic profile with increasing numbers of young people, and an increasing proportion of those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities among the general population³¹.
- 2.6 Since 2007, there has been a number of reports that examine participation in public life relating to one or more of the nine Section 75 grounds in Northern Ireland, as well as more broadly across the UK. For example, The Executive Office (TEO) Government Public Appointments; NI Assembly research reports; and Electoral Commission reports.
- 2.7 In 2016, the Commission,³² in setting out its gender policy priorities and recommendations, notes that it is *'internationally recognised that societies' needs are better served where there is a diverse political representation.'*
- 2.8 Further, it highlighted as priority policy area that *'action is required to increase the participation of women in political and public life, the judiciary and economic decision making; promote the participation of women in peacebuilding; and increase the visibility of trans people in public life'*³³.
- 2.9 The Commission's Shadow Report (2013)³⁴ to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), recommended, inter alia, that Government be asked to set out

²⁹ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ NISRA (2012) Census 2011 Results Ethnicity [Table KS201NI: Ethnic Group](#)

³² ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). ECNI, Belfast. (p31)

³³ Ibid (pii)

³⁴ ECNI (2013) [CEDAW Shadow Report 2013](#). ECNI, Belfast.

actions, including temporary special measures, to increase the representation of women in political and public life.

- 2.10 In 2014, the CPANI³⁵ noted that boards which are more representative of all the people living in Northern Ireland *‘are shown to better represent and serve the whole community.’* In 2015 the statistics for underrepresented groups including women, people under 30 years of age, people from our ethnic minority communities and people with a disability *‘remain stubbornly unchanged except for minor fluctuations’*.³⁶
- 2.11 The Executive Office (TEO) Government Public Appointment statistics (2007-2016)³⁷ show that membership of the boards of many public bodies in Northern Ireland does not reflect the composition of the population they serve³⁸.
- 2.12 In 2007, statutory [disability] duties³⁹ were placed on public authorities in Northern Ireland. *‘When carrying out their functions they must have due regard to the need to:*
- *Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and*
 - *Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.’*⁴⁰
- 2.13 These duties are in addition to those set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 where public authorities in *‘carrying out their functions are obliged to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories and have regard to desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group’*.⁴¹
- 2.14 The Commission provides advice and guidance on these matters. In particular, when reviewing and reporting progress

³⁵ Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (2014). [Under-representation and lack of diversity in Government Public Appointments in Northern Ireland](#). CPANI, Belfast.

³⁶ Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (2014) [Annual Report 2014/15](#). CPANI, Belfast. (p6)

³⁷ OFMDFM / TEO (2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016) [Government Public Appointments Annual Reports](#) CPANI, Belfast.

³⁸ The TEO (various dates) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#) publish data relating to applications received and appointments made for gender, disability, age, community background and political opinion. However, only for gender is data published for appointments held.

³⁹ Under section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

⁴⁰ ECNI (2007) [A Guide for Public Authorities – Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life](#). ECNI, Belfast. (p5)

⁴¹ ECNI (2010) [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities](#). ECNI, Belfast. (p11)

on the implementation of Disability Action Plans (DAPs) for the Disability Duties, public authorities should undertake annual evaluations of progress by reporting on: *‘What monitoring systems have been established, including statistical and qualitative systems; how has monitoring data been applied over the period of this progress report to promote the two duties; and what monitoring gaps have been identified and when and how will these be addressed’*⁴².

Focus

- 2.15 The Commission’s understanding of *participation in public life* is that participation can be at all levels, including community, regional and national. It can include participation as elected representatives or members of political fora. It can also include participation as board members of public bodies, or at a community level, such as members of community associations, and school Boards of Governors⁴³.
- 2.16 The Commission identifies a number of examples in its guidance⁴⁴ in the context of the statutory disability duties on public authorities as set out in Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.⁴⁵

Approach and Methodology

- 2.17 In compiling this Statement, the Commission has drawn on a wide range of sources including: research reports from government departments and the community and voluntary sectors; academic research; and the Commission’s own information sources.
- 2.18 The Commission also contracted independent research from Ipsos MORI (2015). The resultant research report *‘Participation*

⁴² ECNI (2017) [‘Summary of existing Commission guidance: Disability Action Plans \(DAPs\)’](#) ECNI, Belfast.

⁴³ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

⁴⁴ ⁴⁴ ECNI (2007) [A Guide for Public Authorities – Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People and Encouraging the Participation of Disabled People in Public Life](#). ECNI, Belfast, paragraph 5.21, (page 55)

⁴⁵ This order amends Section 49 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

*in Public Life Inequalities in Northern Ireland*⁴⁶ and associated stakeholder engagement has played a key role in informing this Statement.

- 2.19 When carrying out their functions in relation to the disability duties, public authorities must consider the need to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. The Commissions guidance⁴⁷ notes that *‘public life is a very broad term’*, including but not limited to:

“government public appointments; the House of Lords; public bodies’ focus or working groups; community associations or fora; community police liaison committees⁴⁸; neighbourhood watch committees; citizens panels; Local Strategic Partnerships; school Boards of Governors; school councils; youth councils; user groups for a service provided by a public authority.”

- 2.20 The Guidance also goes on to note that it can include how people participate in political life; for example:

“as elected representatives, members of political for a... access to the voting system ... their participation as litigants (in terms of access to the law and Courts), judges and jurors.”

- 2.21 Furthermore, Commission guidance⁴⁹ on *‘active participation’* also may include involving people at more formal levels for example, recruitment and selection panels.

- 2.22 Ipsos MORI (2015)⁵⁰ used the above areas, and others identified from Commission guidance⁵¹, to develop a framework for analysis within which it was possible to investigate participation in public life across the nine equality grounds.

⁴⁶ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁴⁷ ECNI (2007) [A Guide for Public Authorities – Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People and Encouraging the Participation of Disabled People in Public Life](#). ECNI, Belfast, page 55.

⁴⁸ The Commission notes that the Police Community Safety Partnerships replaced the community police liaison committees.

⁴⁹ ECNI (2008) [Lets Talk, Lets Listen, Guidance for Public Authorities on consulting and involving children and young people](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁵⁰ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁵¹ ECNI (2008) [Lets talk lets listen, Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people](#).

They used the 2011 Census⁵² of population data as a broad indicator for determining expected equality group profiles.

- 2.23 Further, Ipsos MORI (2015)⁵³ analysed reports from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) covering the period 2007-2014. Data from the Northern Ireland Electoral Commission, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships⁵⁴ and the Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) was also analysed, albeit limited. The researchers also hosted focus groups, interviews and an expert seminar with key stakeholders.
- 2.24 For the purpose of this Statement, the Commission analysed datasets released after the finalisation of the Ipsos MORI (2015) research report; these included, for example, the Executive Office's The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports⁵⁵. Furthermore, data pertaining to the Northern Ireland judiciary was not included as it was considered to be more closely aligned to employment and participation in economic life⁵⁶.
- 2.25 Key inequalities, inequities and differences were identified from this analysis, using specific criteria. An *inequality* was identified where a difference in expected representation⁵⁷ was found and this could be associated with identified barriers to participation for this equality grouping. In deciding whether an inequality was '**key**' (such are highlighted in bold in the document), identified inequities were considered in relation to the following criteria:
- **Relevance:** The inequality is clearly aligned to the Commission's statutory remit.

⁵² The NISRA (2012) [Census 2011](#) of population data tables were used to establish broad indicators for determining expected equality group profiles for Disability ([Table KS301NI: Health and provision of unpaid care](#)); Gender ([Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#)); Religious Belief ([Table KS212: Religion \(or Religion brought up in\)](#)); Age ([Table KS102NI: Age Structure](#)); and Ethnicity ([Table KS201NI: Ethnic Group](#)).

⁵³ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁵⁴ The Commission notes that the PCSPs replaced the community police liaison committees.

⁵⁵ TEO (2006/07-2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

⁵⁶ Further information pertaining to the Northern Ireland Judiciary is available via Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁵⁷ The [Census 2011](#) of population data (Tables 2012A; 2013A; 2013B; 2013C) was used as a broad indicator for determining expected equality group profiles.

- **Persistence:** The problem is persistent or getting worse. Neither legislation nor other public policy intervention has influenced it substantially.
- **Scale and/or Severity:** The issue affects many people or impacts severely on a smaller group.
- **Societal Benefit:** It is in the public interest to reduce the inequality.
- **Opportunity for Intervention:** The issue is currently amenable to solution and measurement. There is a strong argument for progressing action now, including alignment to current policy priorities.

- 2.28 In addition, the report outlines areas where there are **key data gaps** that make inequalities and differences difficult or impossible to assess in a robust manner.
- 2.29 In compiling this Statement, the Commission sought the views of Departmental representatives and community and voluntary sector representatives on its identified key inequalities and data gaps.
- 2.30 The Commission undertook a series of meetings to discuss the Statement with representatives from key government departments and agencies in May and June 2018. It also held a seminar on 29 May 2018 to facilitate engagement with representatives of the categories covered by the statutory duties under Section 75 as well as representatives of the community and voluntary sector.
- 2.31 In addition, the Commission held a public consultation between 1 May 2018 and 15 June 2018 on its findings and facilitated meetings with stakeholders on request. Two meetings were held to facilitate stakeholder feedback.
- 2.32 Feedback from stakeholder engagement was considered, and where appropriate, incorporated into the report. The Statement in its current form, therefore, reflects feedback received from the consultation process with stakeholders.

Challenges and Data Limitations

- 2.33 Public authorities have statutory equality and good relations duties in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality scheme arrangements show how the public authority proposes to fulfil its duties. Despite the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, there are significant and specific data gaps across all areas of public life in relation to the participation of equality groups within the nine grounds. The Commission has found that the Equality Scheme commitments have not driven a data development agenda in the public sector, despite the particular monitoring arrangements and the Commission's longstanding advice⁵⁸.
- 2.34 Specifically, there is a complete lack of data for the specific Section 75 grounds of marital status, dependent status and sexual orientation⁵⁹. In addition, there is very limited disaggregated data, across all grounds, which prevents an examination of potential inequalities encountered as a result of multiple identities (e.g. barriers faced by young, single mothers).
- 2.35 The paucity in monitoring and reporting participation in public life has impacted upon the extent to which the Ipsos MORI⁶⁰ research and this Statement can highlight the inequalities in participation in public life in Northern Ireland.
- 2.36 Even in the areas of public life where data is collected, namely government public appointments, elected representatives and the voting system, the availability of data is often limited, patchy and often not disaggregated⁶¹.
- 2.37 This lack of data significantly impacts not only the degree to which overall inequalities in participation in public life can be assessed and monitored, and there are inevitably gaps in our

⁵⁸ ECNI (2017) Section 72 Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties. Acting on the Evidence of Public Authority Practices: Summary Report for Consultation. ECNI, Belfast.

⁵⁹ The Commission recognises that the currently unreported areas of marital status, dependency status and sexual orientation for government public appointments is now being collected using public appointments equal opportunities monitoring forms. TEO official comms. (June 2018).

⁶⁰ Ipsos MORI (2015) [*Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁶¹ The monitoring of ethnicity and disability within participation in public life does not allow for disaggregation by categories. For example, 'white' category by nationality would enable the experiences of Eastern European migrants and other minority ethnic groups such as Travellers to be determined. Similarly, disaggregated beyond the classification of 'disability'.

assessment and those considered key inequalities, but also impacts on the ability to monitor and evaluate individual actions taken by public authorities and others to address these inequalities. It also affects public authorities with respect to the implementation of their statutory duties under the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and also Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- 2.38 In 2016, the Commission published a review of recent practice by public authorities in Northern Ireland in the application of screening and equality impact assessment (EQIA) methodologies highlighting examples of best practice, including the establishment of internal and external data resources⁶².

⁶² Policy Arc Limited and Kremer Consultancy Services Ltd (2016) [*Section 75 Screening and Equality Impact Assessment: A Review of Recent Practice*](#) ECNI, Belfast.

3 Disabled People

Summary

- 3.1 There are fewer persons with disabilities than might be expected, when compared to their share of the overall population, participating in public life. Where data is available, this Statement highlights that there are persistent inequalities, differences and barriers for persons with disabilities in terms of their participation in public life.
- 3.2 Under section 49 of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, referred to as the “disability duties”, public authorities, when exercising their functions, *must have due regard to the need to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.*
- 3.3 The Commission notes that *“promoting positive attitudes and participation in public life could help to address the negative attitudes and underrepresentation which could impact on the continuing inequalities and social exclusion faced by disabled people”*⁶³.
- 3.4 Where data is available, this Statement identifies the following key inequality⁶⁴:
- There is an underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in applications and appointments to government public appointments.
- 3.5 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this Statement are the outcomes of a range of institutional and individual barriers encountered by persons with disabilities. A review of such barriers provides a useful insight into some of the key issues driving the inequalities which prevent the full participation of persons with disabilities.
- 3.6 The main barriers faced by persons with disabilities include the costs associated with facilitating their participation such as transport, adaptations and adjustments and other support.

⁶³ ECNI (2009) [Effectiveness of the Disability Duties: A review report](#). ECNI, Belfast.(p5-6)

⁶⁴ When compared to the NISRA (2012) [Census 2011 Table KS301NI: Health and provision of unpaid care](#)

Inequalities and differences

- 3.7 Ipsos MORI (2015)⁶⁵ reported that available quantitative data pertaining to those with a disability was limited to only two of the nineteen chosen areas of public life⁶⁶ – government public appointments and access to the voting system.

Key Inequality

There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability in applications and appointments to government public appointments.

- 3.8 Since being highlighted as an inequality in the Commission's 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities⁶⁷ no improvement has been made in terms of the levels of participation of persons with a disability within government public appointments⁶⁸.
- 3.9 The underrepresentation⁶⁹ of persons with disabilities *appointed* to government public appointments⁷⁰ has remained reasonably consistent over the period 2006-2014 (2%). The Commission through its analysis of government public appointment data⁷¹ found this was also evident in 2015 (2%) and to a lesser extent in 2016 (3%)⁷².

⁶⁵ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁶⁶ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

⁶⁷ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

⁶⁸ This inequality was derived from the Commission's analysis of TEO Government Public Appointment data and Census 2011 population data via Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁶⁹ When compared to persons with disabilities share of the population which is 21%. NISRA (2012) [Census 2011 Table KS301NI: Health and provision of unpaid care](#)

⁷⁰ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast. Note that data pertaining to disability relates to **appointments made** in that year, no data pertaining to appointments held by persons with a disability is available from the TEO Government Public Appointment data (2006-2015) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

⁷¹ TEO (2014/15 - 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

⁷² TEO (2014/15 - 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#). The Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form was used to determine the proportion of individuals who considered

- 3.10 During the period 2008-2016, there has been a consistent underrepresentation of persons with a disability as *applicants* to government public appointments ranging from 2% to 5% annually⁷³.
- 3.11 In 2014, CPANI reported that previous diversity initiatives during the period 2008 - 2011 had made no impact on the number of persons with disabilities serving on public boards⁷⁴.

Inequality

Persons with a disability are less likely to vote

- 3.12 A study in England and Wales in 2009⁷⁵ highlighted that *‘respondents who considered themselves to have a disability were twice as likely to apply and be unsuccessful in their application for a national public appointment than those respondents who did not consider themselves to have a disability’* (18% and 9% respectively).
- 3.13 Scope (2010) research from across the UK highlights that 6% of disabled voters had their ability to vote questioned by polling staff at the 2010 general election and many reported negative attitudes. Further, they found that 67% had one or more barriers to voting including no accessible booths, inaccessible polling stations and a lack of hearing loops for deaf people. However, with respect to accessing polling stations, when compared to the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland had *‘significantly better processes being implemented’*⁷⁶.
- 3.14 The European Foundation Centre (2010)⁷⁷ reported that even though most EU Member States have adopted legislative

themselves to have a disability. The definition for disability used on the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form was derived from the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. Completion of the form is voluntary.

⁷³ This inequality was derived from the Commissions own analysis of TEO Government Public Appointment data 2015 and 2016 and via Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁷⁴Commissioner for Public Appointments (2014) [Underrepresentation and Lack of Diversity in Government Public Appointments in Northern Ireland](#).

⁷⁵ Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#) (page 5)

⁷⁶ Scope (2010) [Polls Apart 5 Opening Elections to Disabled People](#) (page 13)

⁷⁷ The European Foundation Centre (EFC), (2010) [Study on challenges and good practices](#)

provisions in order to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in voting procedures, these are not enough to ensure full and effective participation of all persons with disabilities.

- 3.15 Disability Action (2010)⁷⁸ identified that that many people with disabilities were not able to access information from the Northern Ireland political parties in a format that suited their needs.
- 3.16 In respect to **voter registration**, the Northern Ireland Electoral Commission (2015) note that “*people with a long standing mental condition are less likely to be registered to vote (72%) than those without a disability (78%)*”⁷⁹. In comparison, they observed that people with a long standing physical condition or disability (91%) were more likely to be registered to vote.

Barriers / Drivers

- 3.17 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this Statement are the outcomes of a range of institutional and individual barriers encountered by persons with disabilities. A review of such barriers provides a useful insight into some of the key drivers of the inequalities highlighted above which prevent the full participation of persons with disabilities.
- 3.18 It is important to highlight that the barriers faced by persons with a disability will vary and be shaped by the nature of the disability, for example the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014)⁸⁰ identifies that persons with an intellectual disability disproportionately face barriers to their participation in political life. These barriers include ‘*legal*

[in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), VC/2008/1214.

⁷⁸ Disability Action (2010) [Review of the Accessibility of Political Party Information for People with Disabilities for the Westminster Elections May 2010](#)

Harper, C, McClenahan, S, Byrne, B & Russell, H. (2012): [‘Disability Programmes and Policies: How Does Northern Ireland Measure Up?’](#) ECNI, Belfast.

⁷⁹ The Electoral Commission (2016) [Report on the Accuracy and Completeness of the December 2015 electoral register](#) (pg 29). Caution should be exercised due to the small sample size.

⁸⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) [The Right to Political Participation of Persons with a Disability](#). Vienna.

*restrictions on the right to vote of some persons with disabilities and inaccessible administrative processes linked to elections*⁸¹.

- 3.19 Harper et al (2012)⁸² set out a range of barriers including, **recruitment and selection** processes that may limit the opportunities for persons with disabilities due to a lack of qualifications and experiences which are needed when applying for positions. Further, a lack of training, capacity building and outreach services acts as barrier for disabled persons as it affects their **confidence** to avail of opportunities to participate in public life.
- 3.20 **Costs** associated with facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities can act as a barrier to public life. Such costs are often substantial and cover a range of issues including transport, communication aids, room adaptations, care assistants and interpreters. Additionally, the restrictions placed on political parties in relation to allowed costs per elector may act as a barrier to producing accessible information⁸³.
- 3.21 A range of **physical and communication** barriers have been identified by persons with disabilities in relation to political participation, including accessing information in alternative formats for example, difficulties accessing political party materials⁸⁴ and websites⁸⁵; electoral registration and voting materials⁸⁶. Further, entry/mobility within buildings may act as a barrier; for example, accessing polling stations⁸⁷ and venue access related to more general participation in wider public life⁸⁸.

⁸¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) [The Right to Political Participation of Persons with a Disability](#). Vienna. (pp7-8)

⁸² Harper, C.; McClenahan, S.; Dr Byrne, B. and Russell, H. (2012) [Disability programmes and policies: how does Northern Ireland measure up? Monitoring implementation \(public policy and programmes\) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\) in Northern Ireland: Full report](#) (pp240 – 245)

⁸³ Ibid (pp240 – 245)

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) [The Right to Political Participation of Persons with a Disability](#). Vienna.

⁸⁶ House of Commons (2014) [Political and Constitutional Reform - Fourth Report - Voter engagement in the UK](#)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

4 Gender

Summary

- 4.1 Where data is available, it shows women are underrepresented in public life when compared to their share of the overall population.
- 4.2 This Statement highlights the lack of publicly available data concerning gender and participation across those nineteen areas identified of public life⁸⁹ generally. Data concerning gender, that is either routinely collected or reported by government or public authorities in Northern Ireland, is only available for two areas of public life and one sector, namely⁹⁰: elected representatives and government public appointments. This Statement only highlights the following key inequalities:
- Women are underrepresented within elected positions in Northern Ireland.
 - Women are underrepresented within government public appointments.
- 4.3 In respect to these areas, a range of barriers and drivers affecting participation have been identified including institutional structures and hierarchies, culture and stereotypes, costs and a lack of available childcare. These may impact upon women's participation across other areas of public life areas where data is either not routinely collected or reported by government or public authorities in Northern Ireland.

⁸⁹ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

⁹⁰ Note that there is limited data available relating to gender representation on School Boards of Governors and District Policing & Community Safety Partnerships.

Inequalities and differences

- 4.4 Ipsos Mori (2015)⁹¹ noted the lack of publicly available data concerning gender and participation across nineteen areas of public life⁹². Available data was limited to two of the nineteen areas: elected representatives and government public appointments.

Key inequality

Women are underrepresented within elected positions in Northern Ireland.

- 4.5 In 2015, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee⁹³ concluded that the ‘under-representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland is a serious issue which must be addressed urgently.’
- 4.6 In elected positions, at Westminster, in the Northern Ireland Assembly and in local government⁹⁴ there has been a persistent underrepresentation of women when compared to their share of the population⁹⁵. This inequality was highlighted in the Commission’s 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities⁹⁶.

⁹¹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁹² Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies’ focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

⁹³ Assembly and Executive Review Committee (2015) [Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly](#). (p1)

⁹⁴This inequality is derived from analysis of OFMDFM Government Public Appointment data by Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁹⁵ Women account for 51% of the Northern Ireland Population, source NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#).

⁹⁶ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

- 4.7 While two of the three⁹⁷ of Northern Ireland's MEPs are women, in the most recent elections only 22% of MPs⁹⁸, 30%⁹⁹ of MLAs and 25% of Northern Ireland councillors¹⁰⁰ are women. In 2011, nearly two-thirds of respondents agreed that there should be more female MLAs¹⁰¹. The Commission's most recently published Equality Awareness Survey (2016)¹⁰², found that people are more or less equally comfortable with a man or a woman being in the highest elected position.
- 4.8 When comparing Northern Ireland to other jurisdictions, the 22% of Northern Ireland MPs who are women is lower than the 29% of all MPs elected to Westminster from across the United Kingdom who are women. The Northern Ireland Assembly has the lowest female representation within the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland¹⁰³, and when compared internationally it would rank 80th in the world if it were a national parliament¹⁰⁴. International studies indicate that women typically hold around a fifth of parliamentary seats¹⁰⁵.
- 4.9 The Commission has noted the knock-on effect of representation levels: *'in addition to there being fewer women in the chambers [of the Northern Ireland Assembly], the bodies that are made up from elected members, such as the Assembly scrutiny committees, or bodies that have elected member representation, such as the Northern Ireland Policing Board¹⁰⁶, will also have an under-representation of women¹⁰⁷.*

⁹⁷ Women typically represent two of the three MEPs elected in Northern Ireland to the European Parliament, thus the percentage share figure 68% should be treated with caution- see Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

⁹⁸ The small number (n=18) of MPs elected from Northern Ireland means the percentage share figure should be treated with caution.

⁹⁹ In 2017, the number of Assembly seats was reduced from 108 to 90, so although women hold fewer seats than in 2016 (27 out of 90 in 2017 compared to 30 out of 108 in 2016), their proportion has increased. R. Russell (2017), Northern Ireland Assembly, Research and Information Service, [Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 2 March 2017](#)

¹⁰⁰ M.Potter and M. Kelly (2014), Northern Ireland Assembly, Research and Information Service, Briefing Note: [Local Elections 2014: Results by Party and Gender](#)

¹⁰¹ ECNI (2011) [Equality Awareness Survey, 2011](#). ECNI, Belfast.

¹⁰² ECNI (2016) [Equality Awareness Survey, 2016](#). ECNI, Belfast.

¹⁰³ In 2015, the percentage of female membership elected to the National Assembly of Wales was 42% and 35% to the Scottish Parliament.

¹⁰⁴ Inter-parliamentary Union (2015) [Women in National Parliaments](#). Accessed on 20th February 2016

¹⁰⁵ Women account for 22% of parliamentary seats see Inter-parliamentary Union (2015) [Women in National Parliaments](#). Accessed on 15th January 2016

¹⁰⁶ Five of 19 Policing Board Members are women (26%) – 3 of 9 independent members (33%) and 2 of 10 political members (20%) Available from: [Review of Gender Issues in NI](#)

¹⁰⁷ ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). ECNI, Belfast. (p32)

- 4.10 The underrepresentation of women as candidates for election to the Northern Ireland Assembly has been an enduring trend since 2007¹⁰⁸. The proportion of female candidates has been increasing, but remains below that expected when compared to the population share¹⁰⁹. In 2016, an all-time high level of female candidates was recorded (27%) with double the number of women running in 2016 as 2011, 76 compared to 38¹¹⁰. In 2017 the proportion of female candidates continued to increase (31%)¹¹¹, which is comparable to the proportion of all women in the General Elections in Westminster in 2017 (32%)¹¹².
- 4.11 Ipsos MORI (2015)¹¹³ suggests that the participation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly in more recent years may be due to the underrepresentation of women as candidates rather than their success when standing for election. Indeed, when considering the success rate of candidates, in the last two Northern Ireland Assembly elections (2016 and 2017) women were as likely to win seats as their male counterparts (39%)¹¹⁴.
- 4.12 In local government, there remain persistently fewer women as councillors in local government (25%) in Northern Ireland¹¹⁵ than might be expected when compared to their share of the population¹¹⁶ and when compared to women in local councils in the EU member states (32%)¹¹⁷. Furthermore, despite incremental increases in terms of female participation in

¹⁰⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁰⁹ Women account for 51% of the Northern Ireland Population, source NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#).

¹¹⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly (2016) RAISE Research Report: [Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 5 May 2016](#)

¹¹¹ The number of female candidates fell from 76 in 2016 to 70 in 2017, reflecting the overall fall in candidate numbers. However, the proportion of female candidates actually rose, from 27% in 2016 to 31% in 2017. The increase in the proportion of female candidates continues the upward trend which has been evident since 2007, when only 47 women (18%) stood for election see Northern Ireland Assembly (2017) [RAISE Research Report: Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 2 March 2017](#)

¹¹² Northern Ireland Assembly (2016) RAISE Research Report: [Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 5 May 2016](#)

¹¹³ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹¹⁴ Note in the 2017 elections the male success rate was slightly higher than the female rate at 40%.

¹¹⁵ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹¹⁶ NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#).

¹¹⁷ European Commission (2013) [Database: Women and Men in Decision-making](#) (accessed June 2016)

mayoral and chairpersonship positions in local government in recent years, it has not exceeded thirty per cent¹¹⁸.

Key inequality

Women are underrepresented within government public appointments.

- 4.13 In 2015, Ipsos MORI research reported the continuing underrepresentation of women holding government public appointments when compared to their share of the population¹¹⁹, having increased slightly since the inequality was highlighted in the Commission's 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities¹²⁰. The Commission, through its analysis of government public appointment data, also found that women were underrepresented, but to a lesser extent, between 2014 and 2016, with women holding 41% of all government public appointments and 24% of chairpersonships¹²¹.
- 4.14 In terms of remuneration for their role/contribution, during the period 2006/07-2015/16 men have consistently been nearly twice as likely to be in paid positions when compared to women¹²². When considering Chair positions, for the period 2006/07 to 2014/15, men were to more than three times as likely to hold remunerated positions¹²³. CPANI (2015) notes the slow progress towards appointing more women, particularly as Chairs of public boards¹²⁴.

¹¹⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹¹⁹ This inequality is derived from analysis of TEO Government Public Appointment data by Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast. In 2013/14 the females held 36% of government public appointments and 21% of publicly appointed chairpersonships.

¹²⁰ ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

¹²¹ TEO (2014/15 - 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹²² TEO (2006/07-2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹²³ Overall, during the period 2006/07-2014/15 women account for less than a quarter (23%) of remunerated chair positions when the aggregate figure is considered. The reader should note that due to the introduction of new disclosure conditions, data pertaining to the percentage of females in remunerated chair positions is not available for 2015/16. See TEO (2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹²⁴ CPANI (2015) 'Guardian of the Public Appointment Process' [Under-representation and lack of diversity in public appointments in Northern Ireland](#).

Barriers / Drivers

- 4.17 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this Statement are the outcomes of a range of institutional and individual barriers encountered by women. A review of such barriers provides a useful insight into some of the key issues driving the inequalities highlighted above which prevent the full participation of women in public life.
- 4.18 The Women and Peacebuilding project (2014)¹²⁵ note that the general view amongst women is that they have ‘*become increasingly invisible in decision-making over the past 15 years*’.
- 4.19 An examination of the literature and qualitative data by Ipsos MORI (2015)¹²⁶ highlighted a number of barriers women face in relation to entering into politics and remaining in politics¹²⁷. Although, the range of barriers / drivers presented may have been evidenced from specific areas of public life namely as elected representatives¹²⁸, Ipsos MORI (2015)¹²⁹ also found them to be evident in other areas including, government public appointments and women’s participation more generally.
- 4.20 The barriers to women’s participation in public life can be summarised into three key areas¹³⁰.
- 4.21 **‘Political’** – There is a perceived ‘masculine’ culture in both politics and parliament. There is a masculine model of politics¹³¹, with political parties as male domains¹³². The interest in the promotion of women in the political arena¹³³ does

¹²⁵ Women and Peacebuilding Project (2014) [Issues of Participation and Representation](#) (p5)

¹²⁶ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹²⁷ See for example the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance work on [Improving Parliament](#)

¹²⁸ Nadezhda Shvedova (2005), ‘Obstacles to Women’s Participation in Parliament’, in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (Eds). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, pp33-48

¹²⁹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast (p1)

¹³⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly (2013) Research and Information Paper [Women in Northern Ireland](#). (p14-15)

¹³¹ Nadezhda Shvedova (2005), ‘Obstacles to Women’s Participation in Parliament’, in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (Eds). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, pp33-48

¹³² The APPG Inquiry noted the ‘perceived masculine culture of Parliament’. Respondents to the APPG Inquiry noted that the behaviour, which may extend beyond the chamber, would not be tolerated in any workplace or school. *Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House*, APPG *Women in Parliament*, July 2014 – [APPG ImprovingParliament 072014](#)

¹³³ Galligan, Y. (2014) Gender and Politics in Northern Ireland, *Parliamentary Affairs* 67, No.3 617-46

not adequately support the participation of women. Furthermore, the way electoral systems work can often disadvantage women¹³⁴. Incumbency has been identified as an important predictor of getting elected and female candidates are less likely to be incumbents¹³⁵ than male candidates.

- 4.22 Additionally, women's disengagement, lack of support for the new political arrangements, power sharing systems and low party attachment¹³⁶ may act as barriers to women's political participation and voter turnout¹³⁷.
- 4.23 **'Socio-economic'** – the financial resources required, limited remuneration, the long hour's culture and the lack of flexibility in meeting times and locations alongside women bearing primary responsibility for caring and child raising means less time for political participation¹³⁸. Additionally, the financial resources required to participate in politics often restricts women due to the feminisation of poverty and unemployment¹³⁹.
- 4.24 Further, Northern Ireland is seen as the most expensive region in the UK for accessing childcare and this lack of affordable childcare¹⁴⁰ impedes women's participation in public life.
- 4.25 Research¹⁴¹ has identified that 'the economic barrier can act as barrier to accessing future positions of leadership... as they are less likely to achieve senior positions from which board members are appointed' – often referred to as the 'leadership pipeline.'

¹³⁴ Knight, K.; Galligan, Y.; & Nic Giolla Choille, U. (2005). ["Equalizing Opportunities for Women in Electoral Politics in Ireland: The Views of Women Members of Parliament"](#), in Women and Politics (Vol. 26(1) 2004; pp1-20).

¹³⁵ Fawcett Society (2017) [Does Local Government Work for Women, Interim Report of the Local Government Commission](#)

¹³⁶ Hayes, B.C., and McEvoy, J. (2018) *Female Party Attachment in a Power-Sharing Polity: The Erosion of Protestant Support in Northern Ireland*. Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 24:1 (pp 66-81)

¹³⁷ Hayes, B.C. (2017) *Religious Differences in Electoral Turnout among Women in Northern Ireland*. Parliamentary Affairs, 70 (pp 322-343).

¹³⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast. Chapter 5 refers to Gender.

¹³⁹ North South Inter-Parliamentary Association (2015) [Briefing Paper for the seventh meeting of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association: Women in Public Life](#)

¹⁴⁰ McQuaid, R., Graham, H., and Shapira, M. (2013) [Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women](#)

¹⁴¹ Ibid. (pp 37-38)

- 4.26 **‘Ideological and Psychological’**¹⁴² barriers – where women are still seen as filling traditional roles and may lack confidence¹⁴³, for example, unlike men, women lack the confidence to put themselves forward and may have to be asked to stand¹⁴⁴. Assumptions are made about women, that they do not aspire to board directorships, and that they lack the necessary skills to sit on boards¹⁴⁵. The role of mass media in its portrayal of public life being male orientated¹⁴⁶ reduces the visibility of potential female role models. A lack of visible female role models within politics at a local and national level can act as a deterrent to women’s participation¹⁴⁷.
- 4.27 Furthermore, education and training opportunities are often different for men and women. Women tend to be steered away from areas that are more aligned to politics, such as management and leadership, economics, business or law, and towards caring, clerical and cashiering jobs¹⁴⁸. In 2014, a study by Girlguiding, noted that girls and young women aged 11 to 21 feel they do not receive adequate political education¹⁴⁹.
- 4.28 **Involvement of marginalised women** - the breadth of knowledge, experiences, and potential viewpoints which may contribute to a board of a public body may be limited as women from a broad range of equality groups and socio-economic levels may not be able to participate¹⁵⁰. Women in rural areas¹⁵¹, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women, women caring for disabled children, women living in disadvantaged communities¹⁵², among others, face additional difficulties in

¹⁴² Nadezhda Shvedova (2005), ‘Obstacles to Women’s Participation in Parliament’, in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (Eds). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, (pp33-48)

¹⁴³ Fawcett Society (2017) [Does Local Government Work for Women, Interim Report of the Local Government Commission](#)

¹⁴⁴ Assembly and Executive Review Committee (2015), [Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast: Northern Ireland Assembly](#), (pp 13-18).

¹⁴⁵ Women’s National Commission (2009) [Women in public life](#).

¹⁴⁶ Northern Ireland Assembly (2013) Research and Information Paper [Women in Northern Ireland](#). (p14)

¹⁴⁷ Women’s National Commission (2009) [Women in public life](#).

¹⁴⁸ Northern Ireland Assembly (2013) Research and Information Paper [Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly](#).

¹⁴⁹ Girl Guiding (2014). [Girl’s Attitudes Survey 2014](#).

¹⁵⁰ See McLaughlin, H. (2009) *Women living in disadvantaged communities: barriers to participation. and NICEM (2013) Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women in response to the UK’s seventh Periodic Report*.

¹⁵¹ Fermanagh Women’s Network (2008) [Gender Equality Strategy for Fermanagh](#).

¹⁵² McLaughlin, H. (2009) [Women living in disadvantaged communities: barriers to participation](#).

accessing suitable childcare¹⁵³, many of whom are also amongst the most under-represented in political and public life¹⁵⁴.

- 4.29 In addition to the gender inequalities and barriers above, specific barriers for **Transgender** persons participating in public life, include: the fear of being ‘*outed*’; negative media stereotyping; the fear of vandalism, violence or abuse¹⁵⁵; and the general public being ‘*uncomfortable*’ with having a Transgender person in the highest elected position¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵³ McQuaid R, Graham H, Shapira, M. (2013) [Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women](#), ECNI

¹⁵⁴ ECNI (2014) Response to ‘[Assembly and Executive Review Committee - Inquiry Into Women In Politics](#)’, ECNI, Belfast.

¹⁵⁵ Ryri, I.; McDonnell, S.; Allman, K. And Pralat, R. (2010) [Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people](#).

¹⁵⁶ ECNI (2016) [Equality Awareness Survey, 2016](#). ECNI, Belfast.

5 Religious Belief

Summary

- 5.1 There is a lack of quantitative data concerning religious belief and participation across the nineteen chosen areas of public life. When undertaking the research, Ipsos MORI (2015) found that available data was limited to only one area of public life¹⁵⁷; government public appointments. Unfortunately, robust analyses of the data was limited due to high levels of non-disclosure.
- 5.2 The barriers experienced by those of a given religious belief in one area of public life, may also be impacting upon the same people in other areas of public life; areas where data is either not routinely collected or reported by government or public authorities in Northern Ireland.

Differences

- 5.3 Ipsos MORI (2015)¹⁵⁸ note the lack of quantitative data concerning religious belief and participation in public life across the nineteen chosen areas of public life. When undertaking the research Ipsos MORI (2015) found that available data was limited to government public appointments.

¹⁵⁷ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

¹⁵⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

Difference

Due to an overrepresentation of appointments made to those who are 'neither' and those who do not disclose their community background, both those from a Catholic and Protestant community background are underrepresented within government public appointments.

- 5.5 Ipsos MORI (2015)¹⁵⁹ note that since 2006, the recording of community background of government public appointments has improved. A twenty-one percentage point decrease is noted in the 'not known' classification from 36% in 2006 to 15% in 2016¹⁶⁰. Overall, the aggregated percentage of 'not known' for the period 2006/07 to 2015/16 accounts for 17% of all government public appointments, higher than the corresponding share of the population¹⁶¹.
- 5.6 Similarly, those classified as 'neither' were consistently overrepresented (overall 7%) in government public appointments, throughout the period 2006-2016¹⁶² when compared to their share of the population¹⁶³.
- 5.7 When appointments from those who declared a community background are considered, a persistent underrepresentation for both of the two main communities was observed when compared to their respective shares of the population during the same period¹⁶⁴. However, this underrepresentation was

¹⁵⁹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁶⁰ Obtained via the Commissions own analysis of the TEO (2006 - 2016) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#) Note that data pertaining to community background relates to **appointments made** in that year, no data pertaining to appointments held by community background is available from the TEO Government Public Appointment data (2006-2016).

¹⁶¹ The percentage of government public **appointments made** and classified as 'not known' has fluctuated between 36% and to 15% during the period 2006/07 - 2015/16. The overall aggregate figure for the period is 17%, this compares to 6% of the population stating 'no religion' to the NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Religion or Religion brought up \(other religions\) in KS212 \(2012\)](#)

¹⁶² During the period 2006/07-2015/16, those classified as 'neither' has fluctuated between 9% and 3%. The overall aggregate figure for the period for those classified as 'neither' Protestant or Roman Catholic is 7% of government public appointments made. Source TEO (2006/07 – 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹⁶³ 0.9% of the population stating 'other religions' to the NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Religion or Religion brought up \(other religions\) in KS212 \(2012\)](#)

¹⁶⁴ With the exception of 2008/2009 for Protestants.

more marked for those of a Catholic community background¹⁶⁵ (overall 35% compared to a population share of 45%).

Difference

Those from a Protestant community background are less likely to vote, and this is more marked for Protestant women

- 5.8 Since 1998, **electoral turnout** amongst the Protestant community has decreased. In the most recent Northern Ireland Westminster election (2015), 72% of Catholics claimed to have voted compared to 62% of Protestants¹⁶⁶. However, this is a predominately female trend.
- 5.9 When considered by the intersectionality of religion and gender, this differential in voter turnout is more marked for Protestant women (55%) than either those within the male or female Catholic population (70% and 72% respectively) or compared to Protestant men (70%)¹⁶⁷.

Barriers / Drivers

- 5.10 The barriers experienced by those of different religious beliefs may be similar to, or intersect with, those barriers experienced by those within other equality grounds. For example, the differential experiences of women, men and those of Transgender with respect to the equality ground of gender, or the differential experiences of white and ethnic minority people when seeking to participate in public life.
- 5.11 Similarly, the barriers experienced by those of a given religious belief in one area of public life, may also be impacting upon the same people in other areas of public life; areas where data is

¹⁶⁵ The percentage of government public appointments from members of the Catholic community has ranged between 26% and 39% during the period 2006/07-2015/16, showing a year-on-year underrepresentation to their share of the population according to [2011 Census Religion or Religion brought up \(other religions\) in KS212 \(2012\)](#) which is 45%. Source: TEO (2006 -2014) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹⁶⁶ Hayes, B.C. (2017) *Religious Differences in Electoral Turnout among Women in Northern Ireland*. Parliamentary Affairs, 70 (pp 322-343).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

either not routinely collected or reported by government or public authorities in Northern Ireland.

- 5.12 As the limited availability of data and research inhibits reporting across all the areas of public life, it is therefore difficult to conjecture if the barriers given below limit participation in all, or some, areas of public life. Furthermore, the consideration of barriers for this equality category relies on research that focuses on groups of other faith backgrounds and not specifically the two main communities in Northern Ireland.
- 5.13 Due to the intersectionality of personal identities, those of a given religious belief may also experience barriers to participation in public life not solely, for example, because they are a Protestant but because they are young and a woman. However, the limited evidence available is summarised below.
- 5.14 Hayes (2017)¹⁶⁸ identified that due to *'greater political disengagement, both in terms of their party attachment and their trust in political leaders'* women from the Protestant community are less likely to participate in the electoral system.
- 5.15 Research by O'Toole et al (2013)¹⁶⁹ with the Muslim community in Britain, identified that lack of engagement by public bodies and political institutions creates mistrust and lack of **confidence** amongst minority communities¹⁷⁰.
- 5.16 **Selection procedures** - Ipsos MORI (2015)¹⁷¹ observed the lack of support / development in terms of developing skills and providing education/training/capacity building to underrepresented groups as barrier to participation in public life.

¹⁶⁸ Hayes, B.C. (2017) *Religious Differences in Electoral Turnout among Women in Northern Ireland*. Parliamentary Affairs, 70 (pp 337).

¹⁶⁹ O'Toole, T.; Dehanas, D.N.; Modood, T.; Meer, N.; and Jones, S. (2013) [Taking part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance](#). University of Bristol.

¹⁷⁰ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

6 Ethnicity

Summary

- 6.1 In undertaking research to assist this Statement, Ipsos MORI (2015)¹⁷² reported the lack of quantitative data concerning ethnic background and participation in public life. Data was only available for three of the nineteen areas of public life¹⁷³ – government public appointments, elected representatives and access to the voting system. For these areas of public life, one key inequality was identified:
- There are no elected representatives from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 6.2 The research undertaken by Ipsos Mori (2015) to assist the development of the Statement highlighted associated barriers. As stated elsewhere in this Statement, the availability of data inhibits reporting across all the areas of public life, therefore, it is difficult to conject if the barriers associated with the inequalities and differences cited below also limit participation by ethnic minorities in all, or some, areas of public life.
- 6.3 The barriers people from ethnic minorities may face include cost, culture and stereotypes, institutional and structural processes and lack of confidence.

¹⁷² Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁷³ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels..

Inequalities and Differences

- 6.4 Ipsos MORI (2015)¹⁷⁴ identified that ethnicity data for participation in public life was only available on a limited basis, and limited categorisation. The data collected and published by public authorities on participation in public life on the grounds of race or ethnicity were on the basis of only two categorisations; namely, those who are 'White' and those who are of a 'Minority Ethnic Background'.

Key inequality

There are no elected representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds.

- 6.5 Currently, there is no political representation in terms of ethnic minorities within the Northern Ireland Assembly. However, previously (2007-2016) one MLA (Alliance party)¹⁷⁵ was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly¹⁷⁶.
- 6.6 More than two-fifths of respondents to the Northern Ireland Life and Times (2015)¹⁷⁷ survey when asked to consider the participation of people from minority ethnic communities in public life, said that they played 'hardly any' role as politicians or as school governors.

¹⁷⁴ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁷⁵ Northern Ireland Assembly (2017) [They Work for You](#)

¹⁷⁶ The Commission note that anecdotal information gathered from the stakeholder engagement event in May 2018, observes that there is limited representation from ethnic minority backgrounds and Local Council level in 2018.

¹⁷⁷ In 2015, 42% of respondents replied that 'hardly any' members of minority ethnic communities participate in politics in Northern Ireland and 43% of respondents noted that 'hardly any' members of minority ethnic communities act as school governors, see NILT (2015) [Attitudes to minority ethnic people](#)

Difference

Those from minority ethnic backgrounds are underrepresented within government public appointments.

- 6.7 Ipsos MORI (2015)¹⁷⁸ identified a historic and on-going underrepresentation¹⁷⁹ of persons from a minority ethnic background in terms of *applicants* and *appointees* to government public appointments, with little improvement observed since 2006¹⁸⁰.
- 6.8 In more recent years, *applicants* from a minority ethnic background were more representative of their share of the population (1.8%). Also the *appointment* of members from a minority ethnic background is more in line with their share of the population^{181 182}.
- 6.9 However, the CPANI (2014)¹⁸³ reports that the participation statistics for people from ethnic minorities '*remain stubbornly unchanged except for minor fluctuations*'.

¹⁷⁸ This inequality was derived from an analysis of TEO Government Public Appointments data by Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁷⁹ When compared to the figure for the minority ethnic community in Northern Ireland which is 1.8% Source: NISRA (2012) Census 2011 [Table KS201NI: Ethnic Group](#)

¹⁸⁰ In 2006/07, ethnic minorities accounted for 0.4% of appointees to Government Public Appointment positions and 0.8% of applicants to Government Public Appointment positions. In 2013/14, ethnic minorities accounted for 0.7% of appointees to Government Public Appointment positions and 2% of applicants to Government Public Appointment positions. Note that data pertaining to ethnicity relates to **appointments made** in that year, no data pertaining to appointments held by ethnicity is available from the TEO Government Public Appointment data (2006-2016) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

¹⁸¹ The Commissions own analysis of TEO Government Public Appointment data shows that in 2014/15 ethnic minorities accounted for 2% of appointees to Government Public Appointment positions and 2% of applicants to Government Public Appointment positions. In 2015/16, ethnic minorities accounted for 1% of appointments to Government Public Appointment positions and 3% of applicants to Government Public Appointment positions.

¹⁸² TEO Government Public Appointment data (2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#). The Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form was used to determine the proportion of individuals from a minority ethnic background. Individuals were classified as being from an ethnic minority if they selected any ethnic group other than 'white' on the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Completion of the form is voluntary.

¹⁸³ Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (2014) [Annual Report 2014/15](#).

Difference

Ethnic minority groups are less likely to vote or be registered to vote.

- 6.10 Ethnic minorities are less likely to vote than those persons who are not from an ethnic minority group¹⁸⁴. Nearly half (48%) of those from an ethnic minority group who were registered to vote, had voted, compared with a total turnout of 64% among the general population of registered voters.
- 6.11 According to the Electoral Commission (2014), some Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups are significantly less likely to be registered to vote compared to those identifying as White British. Completeness of the electoral register for White British people is 85.9%, for Asian people it is 83.7%, but for Black people it is 76%, for people of Mixed ethnicity it is 73.4% and for people whose ethnicity falls into the "Other" category it is 62.9%. A survey by Ipsos Mori of the 2010 general election also found that the turnout rate for white voters was 67%, while for non-white voters it was 51%¹⁸⁵.
- 6.12 The Northern Ireland Electoral Commission (2015)¹⁸⁶ observed that, in relation to voter registration, EU and Commonwealth citizens (41%) in Northern Ireland were less likely to be registered than UK and Irish citizens (81%). Further, registration among EU and Commonwealth citizens in Northern Ireland has declined from 2012¹⁸⁷.
- 6.13 In 2015, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)¹⁸⁸ found very low levels of participation in voting at all electoral levels by Travellers. Further, it noted that a *‘third of Travellers were not registered to vote or don’t know if they are registered to vote.’*

¹⁸⁴ The Electoral Commission (2005) [“Exploring and measuring the attitudes and behaviour of members of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland to participating in the democratic process generally and with specific regard to registering for and voting at elections.”](#)

¹⁸⁵ House of Commons (2014) [Political and Constitutional Reform - Fourth Report - Voter engagement in the UK](#) (page 35).

¹⁸⁶ The Electoral Commission (2016) [Report on the Accuracy and Completeness of the December 2015 electoral register](#)

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Registration of EU and Commonwealth citizens was 58% in 2012.

¹⁸⁸ NICEM (2015) [Traveller Voices for Change: Mapping the views of Irish Travellers on integration and their sense of belonging in Northern Ireland.](#)

Barriers / Drivers

- 6.14 The barriers experienced by those of different ethnic minorities may be similar to, or intersect with, those barriers experienced by those within other equality grounds.
- 6.15 Similarly, the barriers experienced by those of a given ethnic minority background in one area of public life may also be impacting upon the same people in other areas of public life; areas where data is either not routinely collected or reported by government or public authorities in Northern Ireland.
- 6.16 Research by NICEM (2013)¹⁸⁹ identified that political **participation is not a priority issue** for most female BME respondents, with nearly all¹⁹⁰ respondents having never considered standing for election.
- 6.17 Further, a NICEM study in 2014¹⁹¹ found that ‘in relation to leadership, political parties, representatives and candidates, need to make greater efforts to represent all communities in Northern Ireland’; this included the views of BME communities who felt that their views were being ignored at this level.
- 6.18 A House of Commons (2014)¹⁹² report identified several factors that are likely to affect people's tendency to vote and also their likelihood to be registered to vote including; political disengagement and dissatisfaction; the value of voting or that their vote did not make a difference; and the structure of government.
- 6.19 However, it is important to be mindful that given the diversity between BME groups there is likely to be diversity between the reasons for lower registration and turnout levels¹⁹³.

¹⁸⁹ NICEM (2013) [The experiences of ethnic minority women in Northern Ireland](#).

¹⁹⁰ In 2013, 90% of respondents to the NICEM (2013) [The experiences of ethnic minority women in Northern Ireland. study](#) would not consider standing for election.

¹⁹¹ NICEM (2014) [Voices for Change](#).

¹⁹² House of Commons (2014) [Political and Constitutional Reform - Fourth Report - Voter engagement in the UK](#) (Chapter 3).

¹⁹³ House of Commons (2014) [Political and Constitutional Reform - Fourth Report - Voter engagement in the UK](#). Written evidence submitted by Professor Heath. (Chapter 5).

- 6.20 Further, knowledge of eligibility may act as a barrier to registration rates for BME groups and those EU and Commonwealth citizens¹⁹⁴.
- 6.21 The **cost and time** commitments required may inhibit ethnic minorities' ability to participate in public life given the limited remuneration and the lack of flexibility in meeting times¹⁹⁵.
- 6.22 **Culture, stereotypes and prejudice** impact on ethnic minorities participation in public life. NICEM noted these in reporting that Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women are less likely to be active in their local communities¹⁹⁶. Furthermore, the Commission's Equality Awareness Survey (2011)¹⁹⁷ found that the general public were most '*uncomfortable*' towards having a Traveller in the highest elected political position.
- 6.23 **Recruitment and selection** - Lack of experience, knowledge and/or access to information prevents ethnic minorities from participating in public life as they are unaware of the process or cannot gain the experience to meet the requirements to participate in public life¹⁹⁸.
- 6.24 Lack of **confidence** / anticipated fear or anxiety amongst ethnic minorities often deters them from the participating in public life¹⁹⁹. Further, concerns about the under-developed and under- resourced nature of the Black Minority Ethnic women's sector in Northern Ireland act as a barrier to BME women's representation in public life²⁰⁰.
- 6.25 In respect to Irish Travellers, **physical barriers**²⁰¹ to voting have been related to a lack of secure sites, enforced mobility,

¹⁹⁴ House of Commons (2014) [Political and Constitutional Reform - Fourth Report - Voter engagement in the UK](#). Written evidence submitted by Dr Maria Sobolewska. (Chapter 5).

¹⁹⁵ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁹⁶ NICEM (2013) [The experiences of ethnic minority women in Northern Ireland. Submission to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in response to the UK's seventh Periodic Report](#).

¹⁹⁷ ECNI (2011) [Equality Awareness Survey, 2011](#). ECNI, Belfast.

¹⁹⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ NICEM (2013) [Submission to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in response to the UK's seventh Periodic Report](#).

²⁰¹ Cemlyn, S.; Greenfields, M.; Burnett, S.; Matthews, Z., and Whitwell, C. (2009) [Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review](#).

lack of a postal address, and restricted postal deliveries even if resident on some public sites²⁰².

²⁰² A fixed postal address is a requirement for being able to vote. A restricted postal address may include hostel accommodation or Traveller sites.

7 Age

Summary

- 7.1 There are fewer people under the age of 40 than might be expected, when compared to their share of the overall population, participating in public life namely within elected positions, government public appointments and the registration for and participation in voting.
- 7.2 In undertaking research to assist this Statement, Ipsos MORI (2015)²⁰³ reported the lack of quantitative data concerning age and participation in public life. Data was limited to three of the nineteen areas of public life²⁰⁴ – elected positions, government public appointments and access to the voting system.
- 7.3 The Commission also found information available from research studies and via ad-hoc data collection to identify differences in younger age groups in relation to access to the voting system and their involvement in school and community decision-making processes.
- 7.4 Specific barriers to the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes has been identified by various research studies^{205 206 207} including; institutional structures and systems; poor information sharing and promotion; a lack of mutual respect and trust; poor education and training; age; lack of space and time; and costs of travel.

²⁰³ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁰⁴ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

²⁰⁵ UNICEF (n.d.) *Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process*, UNICEF; New York.

²⁰⁶ Davey C. (2010) [Children's participation in decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010](#). Participation Works.

²⁰⁷ Hogan, D., Forde, C., Parks, A., Martin, S., Mages, L. and O'Connell, A. (2015) [Children and Young Peoples Experiences of Participation in Decision-making at Home, in Schools and in their Communities](#) Dublin: Department of Children and Youth Affairs (p79)

- 7.5 A number of persistent barriers encountered by older people have been identified²⁰⁸ including ageism; lack of confidence; professional language and jargon; prejudices and lack of belief in older peoples' abilities; costs and time.

Differences

- 7.6 Ipsos MORI (2015)²⁰⁹ when conducting research to assist the development of this Statement noted the lack of quantitative data concerning age and participation across the nineteen areas of public life²¹⁰.

Difference

As elected representatives, younger people, particularly those under the age of 40 year, are underrepresented.

- 7.7 Ipsos MORI (2015) reported that during the period 2007 and 2014, the majority (85%) of those elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLAs) were aged over 40 years. This is almost twice the share that over 40 year olds represent in the general population (47%)²¹¹. Those 60 years of age and above account for over a third of MLAs²¹².

²⁰⁸ The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

²⁰⁹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²¹⁰ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

²¹¹ NISRA (2012) [2011 Census KS102 NI Age Structure](#)

²¹² In 2014, those aged 60 years and over comprised 35% of all MLA's see Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

Difference

There is an underrepresentation of younger people, particularly those under the age of 40, being appointed to government public appointments.

- 7.8 Over the period 2006/07 to 2013/14, there was an underrepresentation of younger people, particularly those under the age of 40 (8%) and, more so, those under the age of 30 years (1%) being appointed to government public appointments²¹³ when compared to their respective shares of the Northern Ireland population (13% and 17% respectively)²¹⁴. Similarly, the Commission through its own analysis of government public appointment data found this was also evident between 2014 and 2016²¹⁵. Government public appointments mainly comprise persons over the age of 40 years, most notably those aged 50 years and over (71%)²¹⁶.
- 7.9 Similarly, with respect to *applicants* to government public appointments, those under the age of 40 years (8%), and more so, those under the age of 30 years (1%) are underrepresented²¹⁷. This was also evident in 2014 and 2015²¹⁸.
- 7.10 In a 2009 study, 52% of young people in England and Wales, under the age of 30 reported that it had never occurred to them to apply for a public appointment, this compares to 26% of people over the age of 30²¹⁹.

²¹³ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast. Note that data pertaining to age relates to **appointments made** in that year, no data pertaining to appointments held by age is available from the TEO (2006-2016) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

²¹⁴ NISRA (2012) [2011 Census KS102 NI Age Structure](#)

²¹⁵ The Commission analysed TEO (2014/15 - 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#) and found that those under the age of 30 accounted for 1% of appointments made during the period 2006/2007 – 2015/16, and those aged 40 years and under accounted for 8%. Those aged over 40 years overall accounted for 71%.

²¹⁶ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ The Commission through its analysis of the TEO (2014/15 - 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#) found that those under the age of 30 accounted for 1% of applicants and those aged 40 years and under accounted for 8%.

²¹⁹ Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#)

- 7.11 In 2014, the Commissioner for Public Appointments (NI) reported that when younger people (under the age of 30) were asked why they had not applied for a public appointment opportunity they indicated that they were “*reluctant to submit themselves to a recruitment process that they see as ‘not for them’*”²²⁰.

Difference

Those in younger age groups are less likely to vote or be registered to vote.

- 7.12 When looking at access to the voting system, Ipsos MORI (2015)²²¹ found that there was limited collection, monitoring and reporting of data relating to Section 75 grounds and groups.
- 7.13 The Northern Ireland Electoral Commission (2015)²²² note that generally older age groups are more likely to be **registered to vote**, particularly those aged 65 years and over, with those aged 25-34 years least likely to be registered²²³. During the period 2007-2012, reductions in the proportions of people registered to vote was observed for all age groups²²⁴, most notably those aged 25-34 years, which declined by almost a third²²⁵. However, in 2015 voter registration has improved for all age groups²²⁶ most notably those aged 35-44 years.

²²⁰ The Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (2014) [Under-representation and lack of diversity in public appointments in Northern Ireland](#) (p5)

²²¹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²²² The Electoral Commission (2016) [Report on the Accuracy and Completeness of the December 2015 electoral register](#)

²²³ Ibid. In 2015, the highest level of completeness rate is for those aged 65 years and over at 92%, compared to 64% for those aged 25-34 years (pg 25).

²²⁴ Electoral Commission (2012) [Continuous electoral registration in Northern Ireland](#). With the exception of those aged under 18 years, which increased from 6% in 2007 to 66% in 2012. However, base sizes for 16-17 age groups is very small and as a result is subject to large confidence intervals. Therefore, these figures should be treated with caution.

²²⁵ The Electoral Commission (2016) [Report on the Accuracy and Completeness of the December 2015 electoral register](#) During the period 2008 and 2012, those registered to vote aged 25-34 years decreased by 29 percentage points from 77% in 2008 to 48% in 2012.

²²⁶ Ibid. With the exception of those aged under 18 years which decreased from 66% in 2012 to 8% in 2015. However, base sizes for 16-17 age groups is very small and as a result is subject to large confidence intervals. Therefore, these figures should be treated with caution.

- 7.14 The Institute of Public Policy Research (2013)²²⁷ has observed lower **electoral turnout** of younger age co-horts in the UK and suggests that '*age-based turnout inequality will become more acute in the future*'. Further, Berry (2012)²²⁸ shows that in the next few decades an ageing UK population will concentrate voting power among those aged over 50.
- 7.15 Indeed, Ipsos MORI (2015) notes a decline in **voter turnout** among all age groups in the last six UK elections, which is more marked for those aged under 35 years²²⁹. An observation accepted by the Electoral Commission in Northern Ireland (2015)²³⁰ who agree that the overall UK trend of a decline in voter turnout among all ages is visible in Northern Ireland, and that it is more marked for those aged 25-34²³¹.
- 7.16 According to the Eurobarometer (2013)²³², just 38% of UK respondents aged under 25 years have voted in any election in the past three years. That is eighteen percentage lower than the European Union average (56%) – and half as many as in Malta.

²²⁷ IPPR (2013) [Divided Democracy: Political inequality in the UK and why it matters](#). (p78)

²²⁸ Berry C. (2012) [How the growing grey vote could undermine British democracy](#). Open Democracy

²²⁹ Ipsos MORI (2015) [How Britain Voted](#)

²³⁰ The Electoral Commission (2016) [Report on the Accuracy and Completeness of the December 2015 electoral register](#)

²³¹ Ibid. As part of the house to house survey, respondents were asked if they had voted in the 2015 UK Parliamentary general election, the results showed significant variation between age groups with 43% of 25-34 answering they had voted, compared to 78% of those aged 65 and over. (pg 27).

²³² Eurobarometer (2013) [European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life Report. Flash Eurobarometer 375](#).

Difference

Representational differences were observed on grounds of age for participation on School Boards and in Policing & Community Safety Partnerships.

- 7.17 DENI (2010)²³³ reported that School Governors are predominately aged over 35 years²³⁴ and that those aged 16-35 were underrepresented in 2010 when considered against the 2011 Census population comparator²³⁵. The underrepresentation of those aged 16-35 was also observed across the different types of governors²³⁶ and across the different school management types²³⁷.
- 7.18 In both 2012²³⁸ and 2015²³⁹ those aged 41 - 60 years accounted for the majority of independent members to Policing & Community Safety Partnerships/District Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP/DCPSP)²⁴⁰ boards (60% and 46% respectively).
- 7.19 In contrast, although the representation of those aged less than 40 years and those aged 61 years and over has improved since 2012, there remains an underrepresentation of those aged less than 40 years (34%) and those aged 61 years and over (20%), when compared to their respective shares of the population (44% and 24% respectively) on PCSP/DCPSP boards in 2015.
- 7.20 However, it was not possible to determine if these were underlying trends as data was only available on Board profiles for two individual years. Furthermore, there was also limited

²³³ DENI (2010) [School Governors: The Guardians of our Schools](#). DENI, Belfast.

²³⁴ Those aged 35 years and over account for 94% of school governors although they only comprise 54% of the population according to Census 2011.

²³⁵ The age group 16-35 composed 26% of the total population while only accounting for 6% of school governors.

²³⁶ There are various types of governors including, Department of Education Governors, School Boards of Governor, Transferors, Trustees, Foundation Governors, Parent Governors, Teacher Governors, Co-opted members. [Click here for more detailed information](#)

²³⁷ School management types include Nursery Schools, Primary Schools, Secondary, Post-Primary - grammar, Special Schools.

²³⁸ Savage. G. (2015) *Northern Ireland Police and Community Safety Partnerships, Appointment of Independent Members: Report of the Impartial Assessor to the Northern Ireland Policing Board*.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ In 2012, Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) were established for each of the 26 Council districts in Northern Ireland. This was revised to 11 council districts in 2014.

comparability of data as the number of district councils decreased from 26 to 11 in 2014.

Difference

Children and young people do not feel involved in school and community decision-making.

- 7.21 The Commission notes that Article 12(1) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)²⁴¹ requires that children and young people be given meaningful opportunities to participate in formal and informal decision-making processes. However, research^{242 243} studies in Ireland and GB show that significant numbers of children still do not feel involved in school and community decision-making²⁴⁴.
- 7.22 Research undertaken by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people (NICCY) (2014)²⁴⁵ found *'disappointing results'* in relation to *'the impact of direct participation of children and young people in the development of departmental policies, strategies, legislation and services'*. The report further found *'no systematic process in relation to these activities, consistently applied in any department.'*

²⁴¹ The UNCRC was signed by the UK in 1990, ratified in 1991 and came into force 15 January 1992.

²⁴² Burke, T. (2010) ['Anyone Listening? Evidence of children and young people's participation in England. London: Children's Rights Alliance for England, Office of the Children's Commissioners.](#)

²⁴³ Ashton, H.J. and Lambert, N. (2010) *Young peoples views about their involvement in decision making*. Educational Psychology in Practice, Vol.26 No.1 p41-51.

²⁴⁴ Hogan, D., Forde, C., Parks, A., Martin, S., Mages, L. and O'Connell, A. (2015) [Children and Young Peoples Experiences of Participation in Decision-making at Home, in Schools and in their Communities](#)

Dublin: Department of Children and Youth Affairs

²⁴⁵ NICCY (2014) [Walking or Talking?](#) NICCY, Belfast.

Barriers / Drivers

- 7.23 Various research studies^{246 247 248} have identified specific barriers to the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes including: institutional structures and systems; poor information sharing and promotion; a lack of mutual respect and trust; poor education and training; age; lack of space and time; and costs of travel.
- 7.24 A report by The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009)²⁴⁹ identifies a number of persistent barriers encountered by older people including ageism; lack of confidence; professional language and jargon; prejudices and lack of belief in older peoples abilities; costs and time.
- 7.25 **Institutional barriers** affect how children and young people are involved in decision-making. Davey (2010) identifies these as *“a low number of organisations proactively measuring the impact of children’s participation on their organisation... key organisational barriers concerned the need for better promotion of the benefits of engaging children in decision making, and related to this, the need for better senior management commitment to children’s participation.”*²⁵⁰
- 7.26 **Stereotypes and prejudice** impact both younger and older people’s participation in public life. Young people have identified that the *‘limiting mindsets’*²⁵¹ and the *‘negative, preconceived ideas about the abilities of children and young people to bring about social change and outdated notions, or media misinformation, that portrays young people as transient, chaotic and unreliable’*²⁵² between younger and older people

²⁴⁶ UNICEF (n.d.) *Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process*, UNICEF; New York.

²⁴⁷ Davey C. (2010) [Children’s participation in decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010](#). Participation Works.

²⁴⁸ Hogan, D., Forde, C., Parks, A., Martin, S., Mages, L. and O’Connell, A. (2015) [Children and Young Peoples Experiences of Participation in Decision-making at Home, in Schools and in their Communities](#) Dublin: Department of Children and Youth Affairs (p79)

²⁴⁹ The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

²⁵⁰ Davey C. (2010) [Children’s participation in decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010](#). Participation Works.

²⁵¹ Percy-Smith, B. and Burns, D. (2013) *Exploring the role of children and young people as agents of change in sustainable community development*. Local Environment: *The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, Vol.18 No.3 (p323-39)

²⁵² UNICEF (n.d.) [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#), UNICEF; New York.

acts as a key barrier to younger peoples participation as it *'destroys young people's confidence and trust'*²⁵³. Older people have identified that ageism²⁵⁴ and lack of belief and perceptions of abilities²⁵⁵ amongst professionals are key barriers to participation.

- 7.27 The domination of **recruitment and selection** panels by white middle aged males²⁵⁶, application forms often asking for formal qualifications and previous board experience²⁵⁷ and the use of unfamiliar professional language²⁵⁸ may act as barriers for younger people but also older people who are not familiar with such jargon^{259 260}. Thus, low **confidence** / anticipated fear or anxiety amongst many younger and older people often deters them from the participating in public life²⁶¹.
- 7.28 The **cost and time** commitments required may limit both older and younger people's ability to participate in public life given the additional financial resources that may be required to travel to venues to participate and the lack of flexibility in meeting times which may clash with educational or employment commitments^{262 263}.
- 7.29 A House of Commons (2014)²⁶⁴ report identified several factors that are likely to affect people's tendency to vote and also their

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Volunteer Development Agency (2009) [Report on Northern Ireland Public Policy for Older People and Volunteering](#). Belfast: Volunteer Development Agency

²⁵⁵ The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

²⁵⁶ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁵⁷ Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#)

²⁵⁸ UNICEF (n.d.) [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#). UNICEF; New York.

²⁵⁹ The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

²⁶⁰ In respect to government public appointments, the Commission recognises the [Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland's Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland \(2016\)](#) which states *'When drawing up criteria for a public appointment, those involved must recognise the validity of non-traditional career paths, to encourage applications from as diverse a range as possible'*.

²⁶¹ Ibid

²⁶² Hogan, D., Forde, C., Parks, A., Martin, S., Mages, L. and O'Connell, A. (2015) [Children and Young Peoples Experiences of Participation in Decision-making at Home, in Schools and in their Communities](#) Dublin: Department of Children and Youth Affairs

²⁶³ The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

²⁶⁴ House of Commons (2014) [Political and Constitutional Reform - Fourth Report - Voter engagement in the UK](#) (Chapter 3).

likelihood to be registered to vote including; **political disengagement and dissatisfaction**; the **value of voting** or that their vote did not make a difference; and the **structure of government** in relation to relationships associated with other countries. Further, the Electoral Commission for Northern Ireland (2016) identified that the main reasons respondents did not register to vote was a lack of interest in politics and that *'politics makes no difference'*²⁶⁵.

7.30 **Physical barriers** may prevent voter registration among younger age groups particularly those aged 25-34 who are more likely to be frequently mobile or renting from a private landlord which presents difficulties when registering to vote²⁶⁶.

7.31 The **intersection between age and gender** may also limit the participation of young females in decision-making processes. UNICEF (nd) note that, *'Girls and young women are not given the same opportunities as boys and young men, and all the challenges listed apply even more to them. They are discriminated against by adults because they are young, and by boys and young men because of their gender. There are also many cultural barriers, attitudes and expectations, which affect the full participation of girls and young women in decision-making.'*²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ The Electoral Commission (2016) [The May 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly Election – Report on the administration of the 5 May 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly Election](#).

²⁶⁶ Electoral Commission (2012) [Continuous electoral registration in Northern Ireland](#).

²⁶⁷ UNICEF (n.d.) [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#), UNICEF; New York.

8 Other Issues

Summary

- 8.1 Ipsos MORI (2015)²⁶⁸ identified a lack of quantitative data covering sexual orientation, marital status and for those with and without dependents and political opinion across the nineteen areas of participation in public life^{269 270}. Thus, we cannot robustly be certain of the levels of participation in public life in Northern Ireland for these equality groups.

Data Gap

LGB persons experience discrimination and harassment, which acts as a barrier to participation in public life.

- 8.2 Ryrie et al (2010)²⁷¹ note a general consensus of exclusion and under-representation of LGB and Transgender people in public and political life in Great Britain. Further, they highlight *'fear of abuse, discrimination, prejudice or reprisal because of sexual orientation or gender identity as the most prevalent barrier to participation in public and political life'*²⁷².
- 8.3 Hunt and Dick (2008)²⁷³ report that between 50% and 90% of LG people in Great Britain anticipate being discriminated against if they were to run for election of a mainstream political party. Indeed, the Stonewall report (2007) in Great Britain

²⁶⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁶⁹ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

²⁷⁰ The Commission recognises that the currently unreported areas of marital status, dependency status and sexual orientation for government public appointments is now being collected using public appointments equal opportunities monitoring forms. TEO official comms. (June 2018).

²⁷¹ Iain Ryrie, Sarah McDonnell, Kate Allman, Robert Pralat (2010) [Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people](#).

²⁷² Ibid.(p61)

²⁷³ Hunt. R. And Dick.S (2008). [Serves you right: Lesbian and Gay peoples expectations of discrimination](#).

emphasises that where people are confident that they will be treated fairly, they are more likely to engage in public activity²⁷⁴.

Barriers / Drivers

- 8.4 Non-institutional barriers identified by participants within Ryrie et al (2010)²⁷⁵ primarily focus upon the role of the media and its portrayal of people from LGB communities. Participants often voiced a concern about the negative portrayal the media provides their community regarding lifestyle, relationships and even targeting individuals.
- 8.5 Nolan (2013)²⁷⁶ reflects that public role models accelerate social change and in Great Britain and Ireland many famous people have been open about their sexuality, which has aided acceptance. In contrast, Northern Ireland has been slower to develop, where there are *'very few household names that have come out as a gay'*.
- 8.6 Further data and research is needed to explore the experiences of participation in public life from persons of different sexual orientation to better understand any associated issues and inequalities.

Data Gaps

There is a lack of research and literature in relation to participation in public life of different marital status groups and those with dependency status.

- 8.7 This Statement observes that there is a lack of quantitative data by marital status and dependency status across the nineteen areas of participation in public life²⁷⁷ investigated in the

²⁷⁴ Guasp, A. (2009). [Homophobic Bullying in Britain's Schools.](#)

²⁷⁵ Iain Ryrie, Sarah McDonnell, Kate Allman, Robert Pralat (2010) [Experiences of and barriers to participation in public and political life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.](#)

²⁷⁶ Nolan. P (2013) [Peace Monitoring Report.](#) (p142)

²⁷⁷ Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; The Judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees (The Commission notes that Community Police Liaison Committees were replaced by the Northern Ireland Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)); Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or fora; School Boards of Governors; Local Strategic Partnerships; Citizens Panels; Public Bodies' focus and or working groups; School Councils; Youth Councils; User groups for a service provided by a Public Authority; Members of Political Fora; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

research by Ipsos MORI (2015)²⁷⁸. Therefore, it was not possible to identify any inequalities for these groups.

- 8.8 Further, the Commission notes that the identification of inequalities for marital status and/or the presence of dependants, their interaction with each other and with other characteristics such as age and gender, are complex and are closely linked to individuals life trajectories; with different phases of life bringing different opportunities or expectations with regards to participation in public life.
- 8.9 OFMDFM (2007)²⁷⁹ noted ‘a perception that people were more likely to suffer disadvantage because they had dependants rather than because of their marital status’ and that ‘many of the differences that are attributed to marital status are more directly due to living arrangements’ – making it difficult to consider these factors in isolation.
- 8.10 Therefore, the clear identification of inequalities in participation in public life in respect to differences in marital status, and for those with and without dependants cannot be achieved without further and extensive research.
- 8.11 The barriers identified by Ipsos MORI (2015)²⁸⁰ follow a general theme across gender, dependency and marital status particularly in relation to barriers identified for women, for example barriers to participation in public life for those who have caring responsibilities frequently overlaps with literature on the barriers to participation faced by women²⁸¹.
- 8.12 These barriers may include: caring and parenting responsibilities; a lack of available and affordable childcare or flexible respite care; the masculine culture of politics and political institutions²⁸²; a lack of confidence, knowledge, skills or experience to undertake a role or to apply for a role in public

²⁷⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁷⁹ Hill-Carr, R. and Dixon, P. (2007) [Indicators of equality and diversity in Northern Ireland – Patterns of social difference](#); Commissioned by OFMDFM

²⁸⁰ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁸¹ Hinds, B. (2011). [Women on the Edge? A Comprehensive Analysis of the Impacts of the Financial Crisis: Lone Parents](#).

²⁸² Knight, K.; Galligan, Y.; & Nic Giolla Choille, U. (2005). [“Equalizing Opportunities for Women in Electoral Politics in Ireland: The Views of Women Members of Parliament”](#), in Women and Politics (Vol. 26(1) 2004; pp1-20).

life²⁸³; other financial burdens such as financial resources required, limited remuneration, the long hour's culture, and the lack of flexibility in meeting times and locations²⁸⁴.

Data Gaps

There is a lack of research and literature in relation to participation in public life in respect to political opinion.

- 8.13 Ipsos MORI (2015)²⁸⁵ identified a lack of available quantitative data on participation in public life in respect to political opinion. When considering the data that is available, namely for government public appointments, it is not possible to identify any emerging or persistent inequalities in participation in public life for persons with different political opinions.
- 8.15 In general terms, any differences or inequalities relating to participation in public life which may be perceived for the ground of political opinion could be closely related to the inequalities found by community/religious background. These general correlations can be supported by findings from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2014)²⁸⁶ which illustrates that unionists/loyalists are predominately Protestant, and nationalists/republicans are predominately Catholic.
- 8.16 There has been very little recent examination of barriers and enablers of participation in public life on the basis of political opinion²⁸⁷. Where data is available, this Statement highlights general barriers to participation in public life and not directly attributable to political opinion. One study from 2012 identifies a number of barriers, such as: people feeling a lack of ability to influence politicians which may deter participation in public life²⁸⁸.

²⁸³ See McLaughlin, H. (2009) *Women living in disadvantaged communities: barriers to participation*, and NICEM (2013) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women in response to the UK's seventh Periodic Report](#).

²⁸⁴ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Northern Ireland Life and Times (2014) [Political Attitudes Module](#) accessed 13/05/2016

²⁸⁷ Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds](#). ECNI, Belfast

²⁸⁸ Clark, A. and Wilford, R. (2012) [Political Institutions, Engagement and Outreach: The case of the Northern Ireland Assembly](#). Parliamentary Affairs 65, 380-403.

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

Telephone: 028 90 500 600

Textphone: 028 90 500 589

Fax: 028 90 331 993

Email: research@equalityni.org

September 2018

