



**Belfast
City Council**

Audit of Inequalities 2021

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Section 1: Background

1.1 The Legislative Background

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that:

- (1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity-
 - (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - (b) between men and women generally;
 - (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - (d) between persons with dependants and persons without
- (2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

While much good work has been achieved in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, there remains persistent inequalities within our society. Within its guide Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) recommends that public authorities should undertake an audit of inequalities by systematically reviewing and analysing its services and how these relate to the promotion of equality and good relations. Having identified any inequalities it is recommended that public authorities should set out specific actions to address these in an action plan attached to the public authority's Equality Scheme.

ECNI defines an audit of inequalities as a "systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies". The purpose of this report is to detail how the Council conducted its audit of inequalities, and to identify some of the key inequalities, which emerged.

1.2 The Strategic Context

The Belfast Agenda

Community planning is a process led by councils working with community planning partners, including other statutory agencies, businesses and local communities, to develop and implement a shared vision and plan for the council area.

Belfast City Council took on responsibility for community planning as part of local government reform in 2015, and Belfast's first community plan, the Belfast Agenda, was launched in 2017. Its long-term aspirations or intended outcomes for the city are:

- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all
- Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential
- Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing
- Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city

The Belfast Agenda is underpinned by values including “A focus on outcomes for people”, “Equality and good relations” and “Inclusiveness, care and compassion”. It recognises the need to “deliver services differently, in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of people and helps them participate fully in the life of the city.”

The Belfast Agenda’s immediate priority (2017 to 2021) is inclusive growth. Inclusive growth aims to improve the wider outcomes for people in Belfast, regardless of where they were born or where they live, by addressing issues of poverty, economic inactivity, unemployment and underemployment. This will be supported by four pillars or areas of work:

- Growing the economy: a competitive city region economy that creates opportunities for all
- Living here: Great place to live, good houses, excellent local facilities and open spaces, healthy and safe neighbourhoods
- City development: Connected, well planned with the right infrastructure to succeed
- Working and learning: Making sure people have the right skills for the future

1.3 The Corporate Context

The Corporate Plan (2020 to 2024) supports the Belfast Agenda through its themes of:

- Growing the economy
- Living here
- Working and learning
- City development
- Resilience and sustainability
- Cross-cutting priorities, including implementing the Good Relations Strategy and developing and implementing the city’s cultural strategy ‘A City Imagining’

It also introduces a number of organisational capabilities required to deliver excellent service and city leadership. Priorities under organisational capabilities include data development, people development, customer focus, continuous improvement and equality, diversity and inclusion.

Section 2: About Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council is led by 60 elected representatives supported by approximately 2,300 full and part-time staff.

The council is made up of 10 District Electoral Areas and has a budget of c.£160 million. Its role can be divided into three main areas:

- direct service provision
- a representative role
- a consultative role

It does this by:

- the direct provision of a number of services and facilities
- the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development
- the regulation and licensing of certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety
- carrying out a representative role on a number of bodies and boards including the Education Authority and Health and Social Care Board
- carrying out a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other government bodies and agencies on issues such as regional planning, water, roads and housing
- carrying out an advocacy role for the people of the district

On 1 April 2015, the council took on new or enhanced powers including local planning, community planning and off-street parking. As part of local government reform, a reorganisation of government aimed at modernising and improving services.

To carry out its role and functions, the council performs the following activities (not an exhaustive list):

- the provision and maintenance of facilities for recreational, social and cultural activities including leisure centres, community centres, parks, open spaces, sports and playgrounds and places of entertainment
- street cleansing
- waste collection and disposal
- the provision of burial grounds
- the provision of grants to support arts, community development, good relations, sports development and so on
- the administration and regulation of certain matters relating to the environment, public health and public safety including building control, food safety, statutory nuisance, dangerous buildings, air pollution, noise pollution, dog control, consumer protection and health and safety
- the licensing and regulation of street trading, places of entertainment, amusement centres, sex shops, society lotteries, cinemas and petrol stations
- the making of bye-laws and regulation of same

- a wide range of powers and duties placed on the council by statute.

The council also has a General Power of Competence under Section 79 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. This power enables the council, in broad terms, to act with similar freedom to an individual unless there is a law to prevent it from doing so. It provides the council with the ability to act in its own interest and to develop innovative approaches to addressing issues in its area.

Section 3: Methodology

A four-stage approach was taken to developing this Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan as follows:

- 1) Review of the Equality Scheme. The council's Equality Scheme was approved by ECNI in March 2015. A new scheme will be reviewed, revised and submitted to ECNI for approval.
- 2) Review of evidence including:
 - a) statistical baseline data for Section 75 groups in the Belfast City Council district area
 - b) Belfast City Council strategies, plans, programmes, policies, complaints, surveys, consultations and a range of completed Section 75 screening templates and any Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)
- 3) Review of previous audits and action plans produced by Belfast City Council, other local authorities and other statutory bodies
- 4) Audit of service areas and functions through consultation with council departments and units. This included a series of workshops and meetings on preparation and design; auditing; prioritisation; and action planning.

Regular progress reports were provided to the City Solicitor and the Governance and Compliance Manager who have responsibility for equality matters across the council.

Key findings of the research are summarised in the next section 'Key Findings'. Through this research, a range of issues were identified. These are outlined in the Profile of Belfast City Council, Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan in the appendices.

The Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The results of this monitoring will be included in the council's Annual Equality Progress Report, which is forwarded to ECNI. Responsibility for monitoring and review of the Equality Action Plan will rest with the relevant officers within council.

Section 4: Key findings

Findings from the Policy Review

The policy review included:

- a desktop review of various Belfast City Council policies, strategies, and plans
- the Council's Equality Scheme
- consultation with departments and units responsible for the design and delivery of those policies, strategies and plans

The Belfast Agenda has at its core the aim of improving the wellbeing of all Belfast citizens. It has the potential to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, tackle and address issues of exclusion and marginalisation and have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups.

The ability to achieve its ambitions, however, will be dependent on greater understanding of inequalities at both programme and operational level. Respondents to consultation on the Belfast Agenda EQIA highlighted the importance of screening at strategic, programme and project-level. This will ensure that all activity has the desired positive impact and does not negatively impact on others.

Respondents to the Belfast Agenda EQIA also suggested that relevant population indicators should not only be tracked in aggregate (for example economic inactivity), but also by Section 75 group (for example economic activity by age and gender). This feedback has informed the format of this audit.

Data development is also an ongoing priority of the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan. While using data to identify and address key inequalities is essential, it is not straightforward: there are gaps in evidence or, in some cases, a myriad of information of variable quality that can conflict or compete. Rather, data development is an ongoing process and further work will be required to ensure quality data is available at the most appropriate level. The format of the Audit of Inequalities and its accompanying Equality Action Plan allows for this ongoing development and consideration of new evidence, impacts and developments.

Section 5: Profile of Belfast City Council

According to NISRA Population Estimates **mid-year population estimates for 2018, the population of Belfast local government district is 341,877**, accounting for 18.2 per cent of the population of NI. 99 per cent of those people live in the urban environment, with 4,600 (1.3 per cent) living in rural or mixed urban/rural areas.

The population has increased by 8,006 or 2.4 percent since the 2011 Census (when the usually resident population of Belfast was 333,871).

The Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency (NISRA) projects that by 2041, the population of Belfast will be 353,280, an increase of 11,403 people or 3.3 per cent.

The following demographic information is arranged under the nine Section 75 equality categories and provides basic information on the make-up of the Belfast City Council (as extended in 2015 as a result of local government reform).

5.1 Religion

On Census day 2011, 48.8 per cent of the population of Belfast identified as Catholic and 42.5 per cent identified as Protestant. Belfast had **a slightly higher percentage of people identifying as “Other” or “None” religion than the NI average.**

	Religion or religion brought up in: Catholic (%)	Religion or religion brought up in: Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related) (%)	Religion or religion brought up in: Other religions (%)	Religion or religion brought up in: None (%)
Belfast	48.8	42.5	1.6	7.1
<u>NI</u>	<u>45.1</u>	<u>48.4</u>	<u>0.9</u>	<u>5.6</u>

5.2 Political opinion

After the May 2019 Belfast City Council election, the following parties were elected to the council.

Party	No. of councillors
Sinn Féin	18
Democratic Unionist Party	15
Alliance Party	10
Social, Democratic and Labour Party Green Party	6
Green Party	4
People Before Profit	3
Ulster Unionist Party	2
Progressive Unionist Party	2

5.3 Ethnicity

According to the 2011 Census, **96.7 per cent of the population of Belfast are White**. The main minority ethnic groups were Chinese, Indian and Mixed ethnic group.

	% Belfast	% NI
White	96.7	98.2
Irish Traveller	0.1	0.1
Mixed	0.5	0.3
Indian	0.7	0.3
Pakistani	0.1	0.1
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.03
Other Asian	0.6	0.3
Black Caribbean	0.03	0.02
Black African	0.3	0.1
Other Black	0.1	0.1
Chinese	0.7	0.4
Other ethnic group	0.2	0.1

In addition, migrant workers from the A2 and A8 European Union (EU) Accession countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) represented 1.9 per cent of population, with a further 0.7 per cent from other EU countries.

The Census also identified that 4.3 per cent of the Belfast population aged 3 and over did not have English as their main language, which was higher than the NI average of 3.1 per cent. In 2018, the Department for Education identified 3,510 “newcomer” pupils (a newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment, and does not have a language in common with the teacher, whether that is English or Irish) across NI.

While the Census data is the most accurate dataset available on ethnic minorities in NI, in 2021 it is likely to be an under estimation of the ethnic minority population.

5.4 Age

According to NISRA 2018 mid-year population estimates, **Belfast has a relatively young population with 55.7 per cent of the population aged under 40** compared to 51.6 per cent of the NI population.

	% of population			
	0-15 years	16-39 years	40-64 years	65+ years
Belfast	19.9	35.8	29.6	14.6
NI	20.9	30.7	31.9	16.3

NISRA projects that by 2041, people under 40 will make up 51.3 per cent of the population, but that the 65+ age bracket will be the fastest growing, comprising 72,245 people or 20.4 per cent of the Belfast population.

5.5 Marital status

On Census day 2011, **a higher proportion of Belfast residents aged 16 and over were single, separated, divorced or widowed than the NI resident population.** 22.2 per cent of people also lived alone, which was the highest rate across NI where the average was 16.8 per cent.

0.1 per cent or 353 residents were in civil partnerships, almost a third of all such partnerships in NI at that time. This is likely to be higher in 2021

Marital status	% of population	
	Belfast	NI
Single	45.3	36.1
Married	35.6	47.6
Civil partnership	0.13	0.09
Separated	5.4	4.0
Divorced/civil partnership dissolved	6.2	5.5
Widowed/Surviving civil partner	7.5	6.8

5.6 Sexual orientation

There are currently no or limited statistics that monitor the sexual orientation of the population in NI. The 2018 NI Life and Times found that 94 per cent of respondents identified as “heterosexual or ‘straight’”; 1 per cent as “‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ (homosexual)”; 1 per cent as “bisexual” and 1 per cent as “Other” (3 per cent declined to answer). **A commonly used estimate of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is 5 to 7 per cent of the population.**

5.7 Gender

According to NISRA 2018 mid-year population estimates, **the population of Belfast by gender is broadly even**, although there is a higher proportion of older females (59.3 per cent of the over 65 population are female).

	% of population				
	All ages	0-15 years	16-39 years	40-64 years	65+ years
Male	48.5	10.2	17.7	14.3	6.3
Female	51.5	9.7	18.1	15.3	8.4

5.8 Disability

The 2011 Census asked people to what extent a long-term health problem or disability (that is, which has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months) limits their day-to-day activities. At 25.9 per cent, **Belfast has a higher proportion of people with a limiting health condition or disability than the general NI population** (20.7 per cent).

	% Belfast population	% NI population
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	14.4	11.9
Day-to-day activities limited a little	11.5	8.8
Day-to-day activities not limited	76.5	79.3

5.9 Dependants

The 2011 Census defines a “dependent child” is defined as a person aged under 16 or young person aged 16 to 18 who is a full-time student and living in a family with a parent or grandparent.

The 2011 Census showed that **28.6 per cent of households in Belfast included a dependent child compared to 33.9 per cent of households across NI**. Historical Census data shows that the proportion of households with dependent children in both NI and Belfast has been in decline since 1981.

The Belfast City Council 2014 Residents Survey reported that **32.3 per cent of the population have dependents or caring responsibilities**.

In Belfast in 2018, 15,550 people or 4.5 per cent of the population claimed Carer’s Allowance. (Carer’s Allowance is a non-contributory benefit for people who look after a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours a week.) This was higher than the NI average of 3.9 per cent. Most claimants were female: 62.9 per cent compared to 37.9 per cent male.

5.10 Belfast City Council Staff

As at February 2021 the council’s workforce comprised (as far as staff disclosed their identities):

- 50.2 per cent were from a Protestant community background and 45.4 per cent from a Catholic community background
- 99.1 per cent were from a White ethnic group and 0.9 percent from another ethnic group
- 0.5 per cent were aged 16 to 24; 11.2 aged 25 to 34; 26.8 aged 35 to 44; 29.6 aged 45 to 54; 29.6 aged 55 to 65; and 2.3 per cent aged over 65
- 52.2 per cent were married; 34.3 per cent single; and 6.6 per cent co-habiting. The remainder were civil partner, divorced, partner, separated and widowed
- 96.9 per cent identified as heterosexual and 3.1 per cent as gay/lesbian/bisexual/other
- 62.2 per cent were male and 37.8 per cent female
- 5.3 per cent were disabled and 94.7 per cent non-disabled
- 40.5 per cent had dependants or caring responsibilities

Section 6 Auditing Inequalities Data

6.1 Access to council services

Evidence from recent Belfast City Council surveys suggests that **younger people tend to be less involved in council consultation** and engagement. For example, 2 per cent of respondents to a 2019 council survey were under 24 compared to 61 per cent who were aged 25 to 59.

There have also been difficulties securing sufficient **responses from people from ethnic minority communities** to ensure the data is statistically reliable.

According to the council's Consultative Forum, **people with caring responsibilities may find it difficult to take part in engagement opportunities**, and the council's draft Putting You First strategy notes that people with dependants may prefer to carry out business digitally due to demands on their time.

However, digital solutions do not work for everyone: Age-friendly Belfast found that **51 per cent of people aged 65 and over in Belfast have never accessed the internet**.

Putting You First also notes increasing challenges due to **language barriers and cultural differences** as the council's customer base becomes more diverse.

6.2 Education

Our population is highly qualified. According to the Labour Force Survey, in 2018, 38.9 per cent of Belfast's working age population (that is, people aged 16 to 64 inclusive) had a higher-level qualification (degree-level and above) compared to 34.9 per cent of the NI population.

However, **there are also more people of working-age with no qualifications** – 16.9 per cent in Belfast compared to the NI average of 14.7 per cent.

There are a number of inequalities within these statistics. In 2017, ECNI's Education Inequalities report found that:

- **Some equality groups experience bullying** (including minority ethnic students, trans pupils, students with same sex attraction; disabled pupils with a disability; and students with a Statement of Educational Need (SEN))
- **Males have lower levels of attainment than females**
- There is **persistent underachievement of school leavers entitled to free school meals, particularly Protestants males**
- **Underachievement of working class Protestants, particularly males**
- **Students with a disability or SEN have lower attainment levels**
- **Roma and Traveller pupils have the lowest levels of attainment**

According to the Labour Force Survey Religion Report, in 2017, 37 per cent of working-age economically active Protestants and 39 per cent of working-age economically active Catholics had a higher-level qualification. This is an increase from 2015 for both groups when the respective figures were 32 per cent and 37 per cent.

The proportion of economically active Protestants with no formal qualifications was 12 per cent and 11 per cent for Catholics in 2017.

The Department of Education’s Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2017/18 identified that while 71.4 per cent of Catholics and 69.7 per cent of Protestants leave school with at least five GCSEs A* to C including English and Maths, at 56.3 per cent, Catholic school-leavers are considerably more likely to attain three A levels (grades A* to E) than Protestant (50.3). However, female pupils consistently out-perform male, with Protestant males least likely to attain A levels (41.8) or GCSEs (64.2) to the same standard.

75.2 per cent of Catholic school leavers and 77.9 per cent of Protestant went on to further or higher education, although again there is a marked difference according to gender (83.3 per cent of female school leavers compared to 70.3 per cent of males).

Attainment of A levels by ethnicity is relatively consistent at 52.4 per cent for ethnic minority¹ school leavers and 53.4 for White school leavers. However, there is a more pronounced difference at GCSE at 65.4 and 70.8 per cent respectively.

The main exception is Traveller children: ECNI’s 2018 briefing on Travellers states that between just over half and 8 out of 10 Traveller children leave school with no GCSEs.

83.7 per cent of school leavers from ethnic minority communities went on to further or higher education compared to 76.4 per cent of White school leavers.

The Labour Force Survey for October to December 2019 found that disabled people are less likely to be qualified above GCSE and more likely to have no qualifications than the general population.

Highest level of qualification	Without a disability (%)	With a disability (%)
Degree or equivalent	30.3	14.6
Other higher	10.5	9.0
A Level or equivalent	24.7	18.4
GCSE or equivalent	20.9	22.2
Other	4.3	6.9
No qualification	9.3	28.8

¹ Including Travellers

6.3 The Economy

Enterprise

According to the Inter-department Business Register, there were 10,705 businesses in Belfast in 2018, accounting for 14.0 per cent of businesses in NI.

According to the Global Enterprise Monitor, **female entrepreneurship in NI is considerably lower than male entrepreneurship** and the UK average (7 per cent). In 2017, 7.9 per cent of NI males reported that they were intending to start a business in the next three years compared to 2.3 per cent of females.

The latest Labour Force Survey reports that for the period October to December 2019, 15.3 per cent or 134,000 of those aged over 16 in employment were self-employed. More males (22.4 per cent) than females (7.6) were self-employed. **People aged 45 to 59 were more likely to be self-employed** (41.2), while those aged 16 to 29 (9.5 per cent) and 60 and over (15 per cent) were least likely. 32.8 per cent of self-employed people had a higher-level qualification, while 11.9 per cent had no qualification.

It may be that men with a higher-level qualification aged 45 to 54 are more likely to benefit from enterprise programmes. However, more data is required to determine whether and how different Section 75 groups are being affected in relation to enterprise.

Employment

The latest Labour Force Survey estimates that between October and December 2019, the **NI unemployment rate was 2.4 per cent – one of the lowest on record**, below the UK average of 3.8 per cent and ROI average of 4.8 per cent. The employment rate was 72.4 per cent and the economic inactivity rate,² 25.8 per cent (above the UK average of 20.5, but significantly reduced from 27.2 per cent in 2018).

Labour Force Survey figures are available for Belfast between January and December 2018. Accordingly, **Belfast has lower employment at 64.7 per cent and higher economic inactivity at 32.7 per cent** (second only to Derry and Strabane at 34.1).

In its 2018 report on Key Inequalities in Employment, ECNI identified persistent inequalities in employment spanning 2007 and 2016:

- There is a **persistent employment gap between people with and without disabilities**
- **Women experience a lower employment rate and a higher economic inactivity rate when they have dependants**
- **Lone parents with dependants and carers experience barriers to employment**
- **Irish Travellers are less likely to be in employment** than all other ethnic groups
- **Those aged 18 to 24 years have higher unemployment rates** than those aged 25 years and older

² Including students ,who, according to the Labour Force Survey, made up 22.7 per cent of this group between October and December 2019.

- **Those aged 50 to 64 years are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be economically inactive** than those aged 25 to 49
- **Women, lone parents with dependants and carers** providing less than 49 hours of care are **more likely to be in part-time work**
- **Women experience industrial segregation** (under-represented in industries associated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
- **Women and lone parents experience occupational segregation** (underrepresented in higher-status occupations and overrepresented in lower status occupations)
- **Migrant workers, particularly those from Eastern European countries, are subject to industrial and occupational segregation**
- **Migrant workers and refugees face multiple barriers to employment** such as lack of recognition for qualifications, language proficiency and uncertainty among employers about migrant workers’ “right to work”
- **Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation**
- **Prejudicial attitudes** are experienced by disabled people, women, Trans people, LGBTQ+ people, people from minority ethnic groups, migrant workers and those of different religious belief

Religion

The Labour Force Survey Religion Report 2017 considers data relating to the Belfast socio-economic territory (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics or NUTS 3).³ It shows that 42 per cent of the working-age population of Belfast NUTS 3 was Protestant and 58 per cent, Catholic. **69 per cent of working-age Protestants and 66 per cent of Catholics were economically active.** While there were relatively small decreases in working-age Protestant economic activity since 1995, working-age Catholic economic activity increased from 53 per cent.

Among Protestants of working age in Belfast NUTS 3, the employment rate in 2017 was 67 per cent, and among Catholics, 62 per cent. This is a slight increase for Protestants since 1995, and a considerable increase from 44 per cent in 1995 for Catholics.⁴

Race

The 2011 Census showed that **59 per cent of people aged 16 to 74 from an ethnic minority background were employed, which was slightly higher than the whole population** (57.6 per cent) at that time. 69 per cent of people from the Traveller community were economically inactive.

In 2015, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities identified a number of **barriers to employment for people from ethnic minority groups**, including:

- Recognition of qualifications

³ In 2018, the Executive Office published analysis of 2016 statistics at local government district level. This report is available at www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-religion-report-2016-local-government-district-bulletin.

⁴ There has also been a change in the percentage of the community who report as being Protestant (-14 per cent) and Catholic (+3 per cent) over the same period.

- Work experience and voluntary work overseas being discounted
- The importance placed on references from NI employers
- Language proficiency
- The reliance on job application forms (something that many people are unused to)
- Employment agencies have no capacity to translate documentation needed to support applications

Gender

According to the Labour Force Survey statistics for January to December 2018, **63.7 per cent of females and 65.8 per cent of men were in employment**. Over the same period, 34.7 per cent of females were economically inactive compared to 30.7 per cent of males.

Going against the trend in England, Scotland and Wales, hourly earnings (excluding overtime) from the (provisional) 2019 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) show the **gender pay gap for full-time employees in NI at 2.9 per cent in favour of females** – that is 37p more per hour for full-time females than full-time males (£13.13 compared to £12.76). 2019 was the tenth year where full-time females in NI earned at least as much as full-time males on average.

However, considering all employees, **regardless of working pattern, female hourly pay is below male pay on average** – £12.30 for males and £11.06 for females. **This is due to the higher proportion of females working part-time** – 30.1 per cent of females compared to 22.8 per cent of men according to Labour Force Survey statistics for January to March 2019.

ASHE data also show that **earnings are also differently impacted by age and gender**. Female earnings increase with age up to the 40 to 49 age group, while earnings for males increase with age until the 50 to 59 age group.

There are a number of frequently cited explanations for the gender differential in employment including:

- disproportionate responsibility for childcare and unpaid caring
- sectors predominated by female employees, such as retail and care, tend to be low paid
- part-time jobs are more likely to be low paid and on a casual or atypical contract
- choice. According to NISRA's Women in Northern Ireland 2018, almost three quarters (74 per cent) of female employees working part-time stated that the reason was because they "Didn't want full-time work". However, the reasons for not wanting a full-time job may be due to particular barriers to participation in the labour market that women face.
- perception that when female-generated income is being spent on childcare, paid work may not be seen as worthwhile

There is currently limited data in relation to employment among the transgender community. However, research points to prejudice and hostility in the workplace and trans people are less likely to be open about their gender identity, which may affect how people participate in and sustain employment.

Age

ECNI's analysis of historical Labour Force Survey in its Key Inequalities in Employment publication found that at nearly all time points, **young people aged 18 to 24 had the highest rates of unemployment**. Young men in particular experience higher unemployment. Youth unemployment can be associated with lifelong problems such as worklessness, poverty, lower average life satisfaction and ill health.

Older people aged 50 to 64 also experience age-related inequalities in relation to participation in employment. This age group is less likely to be in employment and more likely to be economically inactive than those aged 25 to 49. Economic inactivity may be linked to the rising retirement age, long-term sickness or the provision of unpaid care.

According to the latest Labour Force survey, between October and December 2018, 55.7 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 and 64.2 per cent of people aged 50 to 64 were in employment compared to 72.4 per cent across the whole NI population.

Disability

Disabled people are much less likely to be employed. According to the Labour Force Survey, between October and December 2019, 37.7 per cent of disabled people in NI were in employment and 60.9 per cent were economically inactive compared to 81.7 and 16.4 per cent of the non-disabled population.

Belfast's disability-related benefit claimant level has historically been above the NI average, and while changes to welfare reform make trend analysis more difficult, this is likely to continue. According to Department for Communities (DfC) experimental statistics, at November 2019, there were 32,000 Personal Independence Payment claims, accounting for 23 per cent of claims across NI.

Employment among disabled people is strikingly lower in Belfast and NI than in other parts of the UK. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) in 2018, 42 per cent of disabled people in Scotland, 47 per cent in Wales and 50 per cent in England were in employment. Furthermore, JRF reported that **27 per cent of disabled people in NI are in poverty compared to 19 per cent of non-disabled people**.

In 2016 Disability Action identified key challenges facing disabled people participating in and sustaining work including access to reasonable adjustments; fears over sickness absence; pressure to work beyond their capacity; poor communication with employers; and stress in the workplace.

Dependants

According to the Labour Force Survey for July to September 2018, **economic activity for women with and without dependent children varies with age**.

Age of female	Economic activity %	
	Dependent children	No dependent children
16-24	-	79.6
25-34	73.1	93.1
35-49	80.1	76.2
50-64	71.8	59.1
Total	76.1	67.5

According to the 2011 Census, in just over half (50.7 per cent) of lone parent households, the parent is not in employment; in 32.9 per cent, the parent works part-time; and in 16.3 per cent, full-time. **Lone parent households are considered at greater risk of economic disadvantage**, and affordable childcare is an important consideration to support women and lone parents' participation in employment.

Inclusive growth

The Inclusive Growth Strategy identifies four cohorts that will be targeted to benefit from inclusive growth activity. These are:

- Workless residents
- Residents with low skills levels
- In work, low earning individuals
- Young people not in education, employment and training

Many Section 75 groups are likely to be reflected in these cohorts. For example, women are more likely to be in part-time and lower-paid jobs than men, and disabled people are more likely to be economically inactive than the general population.

6.3 Health and wellbeing

According to NISRA's Life Expectancy at birth 2015–17 statistics, **Belfast has the lowest life expectancy in NI** for both males (75.6 years) and females (81.0 years). (The NI life expectancy for the same period is 78.5 for males and 82.3 for females.) The gap between male and female life expectancy is also largest in Belfast – 5.2 years in favour of females compared to 3.9 in favour of females across NI.

While, in general, **the population is living longer, this is often with long-term health conditions**. Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together estimates that by 2026, for the first time in NI there will be more over 65s than under 16s. NISRA projects that by 2041 in Belfast, 20.4 per cent of the population will be aged 65+, including 3.3 per cent "very elderly" aged 85+, an increase of 4,229 people or 58.2 per cent.

Not surprisingly, **older people are more likely to experience long-term health problems**. In Belfast on Census day 2011, 13.3 per cent of people aged 85 and over reported that no limiting health problems or disabilities compared to 92.7 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24.

	0-14 years	15-24	25-44	45-64	65-84	85+
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	2.1%	3.3%	7.5%	22.5%	37.0%	62.5%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	3.7%	4.0%	6.3%	12.0%	23.9%	24.1%
Day-to-day activities not limited	93.1%	92.7%	86.2%	65.5%	39.0%	13.3%

Women are also more likely to experience long-term health problems. On Census day 2011, almost a quarter of women in Belfast, compared to 1 in 5 men, reported a disability or a long-term health problem that affects their day-to-day activities.

Across NI, **ethnic minority groups** including Asian (90 per cent), Black (90.4 per cent) or Mixed (92.6 per cent) **reported considerably higher rates of good or very good health** than the White population (79.3 per cent). The only exception was the Traveller ethnic group: only 66.3 per cent reported that they were in good or very good health.

It is generally expected that factors causing certain diseases and ill health are more prevalent among certain ethnic groups. The Census also identified, for example, that diabetes is more prevalent in Asian and Black ethnic groups compared to the general NI population.

According to the Rainbow Project, **young LGBTQ+ people are 5 times more likely to be medicated for depression, 2.5 times more likely to self-harm and 3 times more likely to attempt suicide** than their heterosexual counterparts.

Loneliness

Belfast also has the second highest rate (after Ards and North Down) of older people aged 65+ living in alone: 12.0 per cent compared to 11.1 across NI. **Lone person households, in particular lone pensioner and lone parent households, are more likely to experience poverty.**

According to the Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018–21, one in five older people in Belfast do not have any close friends. This is higher for men (22 per cent compared to 16 per cent for women) and for those in the oldest age group. **Loneliness is a high risk factor for poor physical and mental health.**

Arts engagement

According to DfC, **87 per cent of adults and 96 per cent of children (aged 4 to 15) engaged with arts** in 2018/19. Overall, **engagement declines with age**, reducing to 72 per cent of those aged 65 and over engaging.

Women were slightly more likely to engage than men (90 per cent compared to 84 per cent).

People from no religious background (93 per cent) were more likely to engage than people from a Catholic (86 per cent) or Protestant (87 per cent) background.

Widowed people (68 per cent), disabled people (76 per cent) and people without dependants were all less likely to engage than the general population.

However, engagement varies substantially according to the type of activity. For example, literature and visual arts tend to attract an older audience while film and outdoor events attract younger audiences.

4.8 per cent of activity funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland targeted people from the LGBTQ+ community, although there is little data to demonstrate actual engagement.

Sports participation

According to DfC, **56 per cent of adults participated in sport in 2018/19. 87 per cent of children also participated in sport outside of school.**

Females aged 16 and over were less likely to have taken part in sport at least once within the last year (49 per cent) than males (62 per cent).

Disabled people are also less likely to participate in sport with 65 per cent of those aged 16 and over taking part at least once in the last year (35 per cent) compared to 64 per cent of non-disabled adults.

During the development of the Leisure Transformation Programme, Belfast City Council consulted with disabled people, who identified challenges including transport, cost, class structure, fear of taking part, lack of physical adaptations, staffing and staff awareness and lack of information.

Sport participation also declines with age among adults. Those aged 45 and over were less likely to have participated in any sport within the last year (41 per cent) than younger adults aged 16 to 44 years (71 per cent). Consultation with older people during the Leisure Transformation Programme identified challenges including lack of age-appropriate activity; staff training; facilities include private changing areas; cost; and marketing.

6.4 Positive relations

Between July and June 2019, the PSNI recorded **1,292 hate crimes and incidents** in NI comprising:

- 281 sectarian incidents and 190 sectarian crimes, an increase of 14 and 32 respectively on the previous 12 months
- 128 homophobic incidents and 83 homophobic crimes, an increase of 9 and 11 respectively on the previous 12 months
- 468 racist incidents, an increase of 2 on the previous 12 months
- 261 racist crimes, which was 13 fewer than the previous 12 months

The 2014 Belfast City Council residents' survey showed that **people aged over 60 felt more unsafe after dark in their local area** (15.7 per cent) than the general population (10.6 per cent). 22.7 per cent of residents over 60 also felt unsafe in the city centre after dark compared to 18.1 per cent of all residents.⁵

⁵ Cited in the Belfast Agenda EQIA

According to the 2018 NI Life and Times:

- 83 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women never felt threatened or harassed
- 85 per cent of Catholics, 88 per cent of Protestants and 75 per cent of people with no religion never felt threatened or harassed.
- Young people aged 18 to 24 were the least likely never to feel threatened or harassed (69 per cent), and older people aged 65 and over, the most likely (94 per cent).

During the Belfast Conversation – engagement with citizens to design the Belfast Agenda – **good relations, including removal of interfaces, concerns around symbols and expressing cultural identity and more shared space, emerged as a top priority.**

According to the Belfast Interface Project, there are **97 interfaces in Belfast**, the highest in any NI local government district. Consultation with Belfast residents on the Good Relations Strategy and Belfast PEACE IV Plan indicated that residents living near interfaces should be a key target group for good relations and peace-building activities.

As Belfast has become more diverse, there are opportunities and challenges to ensuring that new communities are included and participate in economic, civic, social and cultural life.

According to the 2018 NI Life and Times, 82 per cent of adults aged 18 and over “always” **“respect others no matter what their sexual orientation”**; 13 per cent respect others “most of the time”; 3 per cent “sometimes”; and 1 per cent “none of the time”.

According to Age-friendly Belfast, **a quarter of older people in Belfast feel that they are not treated with respect and dignity.**

6.6 Key emerging issues for Belfast City Council

This Audit of Inequalities has identified a range of emerging inequalities and issues. The Equality Action Plan identifies how we as a council will address these issues through our various departments, services and programmes. Some of these issues are addressed as a collaborative approach with other key city stakeholders. In utilising the data available we also acknowledge the data gaps in some areas of Council functions and we will also take action to address these gaps.

The Equality Action Plan is an approach to addressing the key inequalities identified. Covid 19 has impacted on our work considerably, due regard to the promotion of equality has been embedded in the initial response phase and this will continue through rebuild in to recovery. We have highlighted a number of inequalities we wish to address in this four year Equality Action plan. Please refer to the separate document *Equality Action Plan 2021-24* for our complete actions to address inequalities identified.

- Women with dependents, people with disabilities, people who may face multiple barriers (lack of childcare, qualifications, access to training, employment support) and are more likely to be unemployed and/or need new skills to remain or enter the workforce than the general working age population.
- Disabled people are much less likely to be employed
- Disabled people face barriers to communication and engagement processes

- Disabled people continue to face barriers to cultural activities
- Not all people value diversity
- Older people live in a safer environment that encourages walkability and active ageing, supports services and transport and provides for housing needs
- Older people are more socially, culturally and technologically isolated
- Older people face barriers to access a range of recreational services required to sustain their physical and mental health
- Older people are more financially insecure
- Older long term unemployed, NEETs and people with disabilities, lack qualifications and are more likely to be unemployed and need additional support to enter the workforce than the general working age population.
- To increase our understanding of the end user and outcome based on a geospatial data and ensure the council targets programme support at those most in need.
- Formulation of policy recommendations in programme delivery, which will have a positive impact on equality.
- To support young people most at risk of dropping out of school or not in education, employment and/or training.
- Address educational underachievement and reduce the attainment gap for young people in our schools.
- Individuals and groups such as females and the economically inactive have the lowest levels of engagement in business start-up activities.
- To tackle economic inactivity in the city's deprived geographical areas and for disadvantaged groups, by providing access to opportunities via enterprise routes.
- More effective partnership working between public, private and voluntary sectors to plan to develop an age-friendly city
- Older people live in a safer environment that encourages walkability and active ageing, supports services and transport and provides for housing needs
- Older people have barriers to access to a range of recreational services required to sustain their physical and mental health
- Older people are more financially insecure
- Many across our community provision do not have the technology or the skills to access our services online.

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