

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

# *Draft* Statement of Key Inequalities in Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland

May 2018



## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	Executive Summary .....	i
<b>2</b>	Introduction .....	1
<b>3</b>	Disabled People .....	9
<b>4</b>	Gender .....	14
<b>5</b>	Religious Belief .....	22
<b>6</b>	Ethnicity .....	25
<b>7</b>	Age .....	30
<b>8</b>	Other Issues.....	39

# 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This draft *Statement on Inequalities in Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland*<sup>1</sup> 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 draft *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 report<sup>1</sup> and associated stakeholder engagement has played a key role in informing this draft *Statement*.
- 1.3 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 Governors<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.4 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 in increasing the voice and influence of underrepresented 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 underrepresented groups to act as positive role models, which in turn can encourage the participation in political, public

---

<sup>1</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

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

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 belonging<sup>3</sup>.

- 1.5 Using the Commission's guidance on what is understood by the term "public life"<sup>4 5</sup>, Ipsos MORI<sup>6</sup> developed a framework to investigate participation in public life. This highlighted nineteen possible areas as examples of public life, which was used as 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.
- 1.6 The starkest finding from our assessment is the absence of data in most of the areas considered to constitute participation in public life.
- 1.7 This research identifies **data limitations and gaps**, and **barriers to participation**, alongside a number of **inequalities and those the Commission considers key**, for the review period 2007-2016. These are presented below along with short explanations.
- 1.8 This draft *Statement* is presented to enable the Commission to test and refine findings with our stakeholders in order to inform a final Statement. We welcome your comments and views. Please forward your comments and views to [research@equalityni.org](mailto:research@equalityni.org) by **12 noon on 15 June 2018**.

---

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

<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> ECNI (2008) [Lets Talk, Lets Listen, Guidance for Public Authorities on consulting and involving children and young people](#). ECNI, Belfast

<sup>6</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast

## 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 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 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

- 1.9 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.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, there is a complete lack of data for the specific Section 75 grounds of marital status, dependent status and sexual orientation.
- 1.10 The paucity in monitoring and reporting participation in public life on equality grounds has impacted upon the extent to which the independent research<sup>8</sup>, and this draft *Statement*, can highlight the inequalities in participation in public life in Northern Ireland.
- 1.11 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 limited, patchy and often not disaggregated<sup>9</sup>. A number of other data sets were available but no trends could be identified.

---

<sup>7</sup> ECNI (2017) Section 72 Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties. Acting on the Evidence of Public Authority Practices: Summary Report for Consultation. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>8</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>9</sup> 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'.

## Inequalities

- 1.12 Where data allowed, inequalities and differences were identified. The Commission has also identified those inequalities it considers to be key,<sup>10</sup> which are presented below. An *inequality* was identified where a difference in expected representation<sup>11</sup> was found, and that this difference could be associated with identified barriers to participation for this equality grouping. However, due to the paucity of data, and the limited disaggregation of data, the true extent of inequalities could not be fully gauged.

### Key Inequality

**There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability in government public appointments**

- 1.16 **There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability in government public appointments.** No improvement has been made in terms of the levels of participation of persons with disabilities within government public appointments (2% 2006/07 and 2% in 2013/14). Further, during the period 2008-2014, there was an observed trend of decreasing numbers of applications to government public appointments from persons who had declared a disability.

### Inequality

**Persons with a disability are less likely to vote.**

- 1.17 **Persons with a disability are less likely to vote or be registered to vote.** 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 from tellers. Further, they

<sup>10</sup> See paragraph 2.25

<sup>11</sup> 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](#)).

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.

### Key Inequality

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

- 1.18 **Women are underrepresented within elected positions** in Northern Ireland, including MPs (22%), MLAs (30%), Local Councillors (25%), and Council Mayor/Chairpersons (23%).
- 1.19 **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 (36%) and as publicly appointed chairpersonships (21%)<sup>12</sup>, having increased slightly since the inequality was highlighted in the Commission's 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities<sup>13</sup>.

### Key Inequality

**There are no elected representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds.**

- 1.20 **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)<sup>14</sup> was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

## Barriers to Participation

- 1.21 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this draft *Statement* are the outcomes of a range

<sup>12</sup> This 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.

<sup>13</sup> ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>14</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2017) [They Work for You](#)



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<sup>15</sup>, may act as barriers to broader participation. Similarly, the use of professional language<sup>16</sup> in the selection processes may act as another barrier as some equality groups may be less familiar with the jargon.<sup>17</sup>
- 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 of the process of mothers entering, remaining in, progressing in or returning to work and hence employment equality<sup>18</sup>, also acts as a barrier to participation in public life.
- 1.25 The **cost** of participation may limit the opportunities to participate fully in public life, for a range of equality groups,

---

<sup>15</sup> Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#)

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF, [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#), UNICEF; New York.

<sup>17</sup> The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

<sup>18</sup> McQuaid, R, Graham, H, and Shapira, M. (2013) [Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women](#), ECNI, Belfast.

either based upon a single or multiple identities, given the financial resources often required to participate, and the limited remuneration available to those who may wish to participate<sup>19</sup>.

- 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, and possibly a wider range of equality groups, may also act as barriers to broader public participation.<sup>20,21,22</sup> 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. Therefore, certain equality groups may **lack confidence and trust in politicians and the public bodies**, possibly resulting in a disengagement, dissatisfaction, and disempowerment.<sup>23</sup>
- 1.27 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.
- 1.28 Considering the perceptions, and actualities, of the cultures and processes relating to being on and being recruited to public board; a **lack of confidence by under-represented equality groups** may affect broader participation.

---

<sup>19</sup> The Executive Office (2006/07-2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

<sup>20</sup> O'Toole, T.; Dehanas, D.N.; Modood, T.; Meer, N.; and Jones, S. (2013) [Taking part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance](#). University of Bristol.

<sup>21</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This draft *Statement on Inequalities in Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland*<sup>24</sup> 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 dependents<sup>24</sup>.
- 2.2 This draft *Statement* updates the participation component of the Commission's previous *Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland*<sup>25</sup> published in 2007. It is part of a larger 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)<sup>26</sup>.
- 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

---

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>26</sup> 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 belonging<sup>27</sup>.

## **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 2007<sup>28</sup>. 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 population<sup>29</sup>.
- 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,<sup>30</sup> 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'<sup>31</sup>.
- 2.9 The Commission's Shadow Report (2013)<sup>32</sup> to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), recommended, inter alia, that Government be asked to set out

---

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

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

<sup>29</sup> NISRA (2012) Census 2011 Results Ethnicity [Table KS201NI: Ethnic Group](#)

<sup>30</sup> ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). ECNI, Belfast. (p31)

<sup>31</sup> ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). ECNI, Belfast. (pii)

<sup>32</sup> 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 CPANI<sup>33</sup> 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 groupings 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.*’<sup>34</sup>
- 2.11 Office for the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) Government Public Appointment statistics (2007-2014)<sup>35</sup> show that membership of the boards of many public bodies in Northern Ireland does not reflect the composition of the population they serve.
- 2.12 In 2007, statutory [disability] duties<sup>36</sup> 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.’<sup>37</sup>
- 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.*’<sup>38</sup>
- 2.14 The Commission provides advice and guidance on these matters. In particular, when reviewing and reporting progress on the implementation of Disability Action Plans (DAPs) for the

---

<sup>33</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (2014). [Under-representation and lack of diversity in Government Public Appointments in Northern Ireland.](#) CPANI, Belfast.

<sup>34</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (2014) [Annual Report 2014/15.](#) CPANI, Belfast. (p6)

<sup>35</sup> OFMDFM (2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014) [Government Public Appointments Annual Reports](#) CPANI, Belfast.

<sup>36</sup> Under section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

<sup>37</sup> 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)

<sup>38</sup> ECNI (2010) [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities.](#) ECNI, Belfast. (p11)

Disability Duties, public authorities should undertake annual evaluations of progress should report 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*'.<sup>39</sup>

## 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 Governors<sup>40</sup>.
- 2.16 The Commission identifies a number of examples in its guidance<sup>41</sup> in the context of the statutory disability duties on public authorities as set out in Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.<sup>42</sup>
- 2.17 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, 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

---

<sup>39</sup> ECNI (2017) '[Summary of existing Commission guidance: Disability Action Plans \(DAPs\)](#)' ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>40</sup> ECNI (2007) '[Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#)'. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>41</sup> <sup>41</sup> 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

<sup>42</sup> This order amends Section 49 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

environment for equal respect. Participation in public life is vital to people's sense of status and belonging<sup>43</sup>.

## Approach and Methodology

- 2.18 In compiling this draft *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.
- 2.19 The Commission also contracted independent research from Ipsos MORI (2015). The resultant research report '*Participation in Public Life Inequalities in Northern Ireland*'<sup>44</sup> and associated stakeholder engagement has played a key role in informing this draft *Statement*.
- 2.20 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 Commission's guidance<sup>45</sup> 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 committees; 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.”*
- 2.21 Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>46</sup> used the above areas, and others identified from Commission guidance<sup>47</sup>, to develop a framework for analysis within which it was possible to investigate participation in public life across the nine equality grounds.

---

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

<sup>44</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>45</sup> 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.

<sup>46</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* (page 10)

They used the 2011 Census<sup>48</sup> of population data as a broad indicator for determining expected equality group profiles.

- 2.22 Further, Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>49</sup> 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 Partnerships and the Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) was also analysed, albeit limited. The research also incorporated focus groups, interviews and an expert seminar with key stakeholders.
- 2.23 Key inequalities, inequalities and differences were identified from this analysis, using specific criteria. An *inequality* was identified where a difference in expected representation<sup>50</sup> 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 inequalities were considered in relation to the following criteria:
- **Relevance:** The inequality is clearly aligned to the Commission's statutory remit.
  - **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 effects 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.

---

<sup>48</sup> 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](#)).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> The [Census 2011](#) of population data (Tables 2012A; 2013A; 2013B; 2013C) was used as a broad indicator for determining expected equality group profiles.



- 2.26 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.

### Challenges and Data Limitations

- 2.27 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.<sup>51</sup>
- 2.28 Specifically, there is a complete lack of data for the specific Section 75 grounds of marital status, dependent status and sexual orientation. 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).
- 2.29 The paucity in monitoring and reporting participation in public life has impacted upon the extent to which the Ipsos MORI<sup>52</sup> research and this draft *Statement* can highlight the inequalities in participation in public life in Northern Ireland.
- 2.30 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 disaggregated<sup>53</sup>.

---

<sup>51</sup> ECNI (2017) Section 72 Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties. Acting on the Evidence of Public Authority Practices: Summary Report for Consultation. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>52</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>53</sup> 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'.

- 2.31 This lack of data significantly impacts not only the degree to which overall inequalities in participation in public life can be assessed and monitored, 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.
- 2.32 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 highlighted examples of best practice, including the establishment of internal and external data resources<sup>54</sup>.

---

<sup>54</sup> 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 draft *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*”.<sup>55</sup>
- 3.4 Where data is available, this *Statement* identifies the following key inequality<sup>56</sup>:
- There is an underrepresentation of persons with disabilities within government public appointments.
- 3.5 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this draft *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

---

<sup>55</sup> ECNI (2009) [Effectiveness of the Disability Duties: A review report](#). ECNI, Belfast.(p5-6)

<sup>56</sup> When compared to the NISRA (2012) [Census 2011 Table KS301NI: Health and provision of unpaid care](#)

transport, adaptations and adjustments and other support; and the processes relating to public appointments.

## **Inequalities and differences**

- 3.7 Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>57</sup> reported that available quantitative data pertaining to those with a disability was limited to only two of the nineteen chosen areas of public life<sup>58</sup> – government public appointments and access to the voting system.

### **Key Inequality**

**There is an underrepresentation of persons with a disability within government public appointments.**

- 3.8 Since being highlighted as an inequality in the Commission's 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities<sup>59</sup> no improvement has been made in terms of the levels of participation of persons with a disability within government public appointments<sup>60</sup>.
- 3.9 The underrepresentation<sup>61</sup> of persons with disabilities in government public appointments has remained reasonably consistent over the period 2006-2014 (2%)<sup>62</sup>. However, during the period 2008 - 2014, there was an observed trend of a decreasing number of *applications* to government public appointments from persons who had declared a disability.

<sup>57</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>58</sup> Areas of public life may include: Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>59</sup> ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>60</sup> This inequality was derived from an analysis of OFMDFM Government Public Appointment data and Census 2011 population via Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>61</sup> 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](#)

<sup>62</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

- 3.10 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 boards<sup>63</sup>.
- 3.11 A study in England and Wales in 2009<sup>64</sup> 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).

## Inequality

### Persons with a disability are less likely to vote

- 3.12 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*'<sup>65</sup>.
- 3.13 The European Foundation Centre (2010)<sup>66</sup> reported that even though most EU Member States have adopted legislative 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

---

<sup>63</sup>Commissioner for Public Appointments (2014) [Underrepresentation and Lack of Diversity in Government Public Appointments in Northern Ireland](#).

<sup>64</sup> Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#) (page 5)

<sup>65</sup> Scope (2010) [Polls Apart 5 Opening Elections to Disabled People](#) (page 13)

<sup>66</sup> The European Foundation Centre (EFC), (2010) [Study on challenges and good practices in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), VC/2008/1214.

- 3.14 Disability Action (2010)<sup>67</sup> 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.

## Barriers / Drivers

- 3.15 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this draft *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.
- 3.16 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)<sup>68</sup> identifies that persons with an intellectual disability disproportionately face barriers to their participation in political life. These barriers include *'legal restrictions on the right to vote of some persons with disabilities and inaccessible administrative processes linked to elections'*<sup>69</sup>.
- 3.17 Harper et al (2012)<sup>70</sup> 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.

---

<sup>67</sup> 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.

<sup>68</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) [The Right to Political Participation of Persons with a Disability](#). Vienna.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid (pp7-8)

<sup>70</sup> 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)

- 3.18 **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 information<sup>71</sup>.
- 3.19 A range of **physical and communication** barriers have been identified by persons with disabilities including accessible information and buildings for example, polling stations and difficulties accessing political party materials<sup>72</sup> and websites<sup>73</sup>.

---

<sup>71</sup> 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)

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) [\*The Right to Political Participation of Persons with a Disability\*](#). Vienna.

# 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 *Draft Statement* highlights the lack of publicly available data concerning gender and participation across those nineteen areas identified of public life<sup>74</sup> 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, namely<sup>75</sup>: elected representatives and government public appointments. This draft *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.

---

<sup>74</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>75</sup> 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)<sup>76</sup> noted the lack of publicly available data concerning gender and participation across nineteen areas of public life<sup>77</sup>. 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 Committee<sup>78</sup> 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 government<sup>79</sup> there has been a persistent underrepresentation of women when compared to their share of the population<sup>80</sup>. This inequality was highlighted in the Commission’s 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities<sup>81</sup>.

---

<sup>76</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>77</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>78</sup> Assembly and Executive Review Committee (2015) [Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly](#). (p1)

<sup>79</sup>This 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.

<sup>80</sup> Women account for 51% of the Northern Ireland Population, source NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#).

<sup>81</sup> ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

- 4.7 While two of the three<sup>82</sup> of Northern Ireland's MEPs are women, in the most recent elections only 22% of MPs<sup>83</sup>, 30%<sup>84</sup> of MLAs and 25% of Northern Ireland councillors<sup>85</sup> are women. The Commission's most recently published Equality Awareness Survey, found that people are more or less equally comfortable with a man or a woman being in the highest elected position, with nearly two-thirds agreeing that there should be more female MLAs<sup>86</sup>.
- 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 Scotland, and when compared internationally it would rank 80<sup>th</sup> in the world if it were a national parliament<sup>87</sup>. International studies indicate that women typically hold around a fifth of parliamentary seats<sup>88</sup>.
- 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 Board<sup>89</sup>, will also have an under-representation of women'<sup>90</sup>.
- 4.10 The underrepresentation of women as candidates for election to the Northern Ireland Assembly has been an enduring trend

---

<sup>82</sup> Women typically represent two of the three MEPs elected in Northern Ireland to the European Parliament, thus the percentage share figure 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.

<sup>83</sup> The small number (n=18) of MPs elected from Northern Ireland means the percentage share figure should be treated with caution.

<sup>84</sup> 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](#)

<sup>85</sup> M.Potter and M. Kelly (2014), Northern Ireland Assembly, Research and Information Service, Briefing Note: [Local Elections 2014: Results by Party and Gender](#)

<sup>86</sup> ECNI (2011) [Equality Awareness Survey, 2011](#). ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>87</sup> Inter-parliamentary Union (2015) [Women in National Parliaments](#). Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016

<sup>88</sup> Women account for 22% of parliamentary seats see Inter-parliamentary Union (2015) [Women in National Parliaments](#). Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016

<sup>89</sup> 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](#)

<sup>90</sup> ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). ECNI, Belfast. (p32)

since 2007<sup>91</sup>. The proportion of female candidates has been increasing, but remains below that expected when compared to the population share<sup>92</sup>. 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 38<sup>93</sup>. In 2017 the proportion of female candidates continued to increase (31%)<sup>94</sup>, which is slightly less than the proportion of all women in the General Elections in Westminster in 2017 (32%)<sup>95</sup>.

4.11 Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>96</sup> suggest 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%)<sup>97</sup>.

4.12 In local government, there remain persistently fewer women as councillors in local government (25%) in Northern Ireland<sup>98</sup> than might be expected when compared to their share of the population<sup>99</sup> and when compared to women in local councils in the EU member states (32%)<sup>100</sup>. Furthermore, despite incremental increases in terms of female participation in mayoral and chairpersonship positions in local government in recent years, it has not exceeded thirty per cent<sup>101</sup>.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast

<sup>92</sup> Women account for 51% of the Northern Ireland Population, source NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#).

<sup>93</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2016) RAISE Research Report: [Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 5 May 2016](#)

<sup>94</sup> 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](#)

<sup>95</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2016) RAISE Research Report: [Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 5 May 2016](#)

<sup>96</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>97</sup> Note in the 2017 elections the male success rate was slightly higher than the female rate at 40%.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Table KS101NI: Usual Resident Population](#).

<sup>100</sup> European Commission (2013) [Database: Women and Men in Decision-making](#) (accessed June 2016)

<sup>101</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

## Key inequality

**Women are underrepresented within government public appointments.**

- 4.13 In 2015, the Ipsos MORI research reported the continuing underrepresentation of women when compared to their share of the population in government public appointments (36%) and as publicly appointed chairpersonships (21%)<sup>102</sup>, having increased slightly since the inequality was highlighted in the Commission's 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities<sup>103</sup>. The Commission through its analysis of government public appointment data found this was also evident between 2014 and 2016, although to a lesser extent<sup>104</sup>.
- 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 women<sup>105</sup>. When considering remunerated Chair positions, this increases to more than three times as likely<sup>106</sup>. CPANI (2015) notes the slow progress towards appointing more women, particularly as Chairs of public boards<sup>107</sup>.

## Barriers / Drivers

- 4.17 The Commission is mindful that many of the inequalities presented in this draft *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

---

<sup>102</sup> This 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.

<sup>103</sup> ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>104</sup> The Commission found the percentage of public appointments held by women to be 38% in 2014/15 and 41% in 2015/16. However, due the introduction of new disclosure conditions the data pertaining to the percentage of chairpersonships held by women in 2015/16 is not publicly available. See TEO (2014/15 - 2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

<sup>105</sup> TEO (2006/07-2015/16) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

<sup>106</sup> Overall during the period 2006/07-2014/15 women account for less than a quarter (23%) of remunerated chair positions.

<sup>107</sup> CPANI (2015) 'Guardian of the Public Appointment Process' [Under-representation and lack of diversity in public appointments in Northern Ireland](#).

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)<sup>108</sup> 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)<sup>109</sup> highlighted a number of barriers women face in relation to entering into politics and remaining in politics<sup>110</sup>. Although, the range of barriers / drivers presented may have been evidenced from specific areas of public life namely as elected representatives<sup>111</sup>, Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>112</sup> 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 areas<sup>113</sup>.
- 4.21 ‘**Political**’ – political parties as male domains<sup>114</sup> and the masculine model of politics<sup>115</sup> do not adequately promote the participation of women, nor does the way electoral systems work which can often disadvantage women<sup>116</sup>. Further, incumbency has been identified as an important predictor of getting elected and female candidates are less likely to be incumbents<sup>117</sup> than male candidates.

---

<sup>108</sup> Women and Peacebuilding Project (2014) [Issues of Participation and Representation](#) (p5)

<sup>109</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>110</sup> See for example the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance work on [Improving Parliament](#)

<sup>111</sup> 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

<sup>112</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast. (p1)

<sup>113</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2013) Research and Information Paper [Women in Northern Ireland](#). (p14-15)

<sup>114</sup> 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](#)

<sup>115</sup> 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

<sup>116</sup> 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).

<sup>117</sup> Fawcett Society (2017) [Does Local Government Work for Women, Interim Report of the Local Government Commission](#)

- 4.22 **‘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 participation<sup>118</sup>. Additionally, the financial resources required to participate in politics often restricts women due to the feminisation of poverty and unemployment<sup>119</sup>
- 4.23 Further, Northern Ireland is seen as the most expensive region in the UK for accessing childcare and this lack of affordable childcare<sup>120</sup> impedes women’s participation in public life.
- 4.24 Research<sup>121</sup> 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.’*
- 4.25 **‘Ideological and Psychological’**<sup>122</sup> barriers – where women are still seen as filling traditional roles and may lack confidence<sup>123</sup>, for example, unlike men, women lack the confidence to put themselves forward and may have to be asked to stand<sup>124</sup>. Assumptions are made about women, that they do not aspire to board directorships, and that they lack the necessary skills to sit on boards<sup>125</sup>. The role of mass media in its portrayal of public life being male orientated<sup>126</sup> 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 participation<sup>127</sup>.

---

<sup>118</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast. Chapter 5 refers to Gender.

<sup>119</sup> North South Inter-Parliamentary Association (2015) [Briefing Paper for the seventh meeting of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association: Women in Public Life](#)

<sup>120</sup> McQuaid R, Graham H, Shapira, M. (2013) [Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women](#)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. (p37-38)

<sup>122</sup> 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)

<sup>123</sup> Fawcett Society (2017) [Does Local Government Work for Women, Interim Report of the Local Government Commission](#)

<sup>124</sup> Assembly and Executive Review Committee (2015), [Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast: Northern Ireland Assembly](#), (pp 13-18).

<sup>125</sup> Women’s National Commission (2009) [Women in public life](#).

<sup>126</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2013) Research and Information Paper [Women in Northern Ireland](#). (p14)

<sup>127</sup> Women’s National Commission (2009) [Women in public life](#).

- 4.26 Furthermore, education and training opportunities are often different for men and women with female education tending to stream them into particular occupations<sup>128</sup>. In 2014, a study by Girlguiding, noted that girls and young women aged 11 to 21 feel they do not receive adequate political education<sup>129</sup>.
- 4.27 **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 participate<sup>130</sup>. Women in rural areas<sup>131</sup>, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women, women caring for disabled children, women living in disadvantaged communities<sup>132</sup>, among others, face additional difficulties in accessing suitable childcare<sup>133</sup>, many of whom are also amongst the most under-represented in political and public life<sup>134</sup>.
- 4.28 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 abuse<sup>135</sup>; and the general public being 'uncomfortable' with having a Transgender person in the highest elected position<sup>136</sup>.

---

<sup>128</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2013) Research and Information Paper [Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly](#).

<sup>129</sup> Girl Guiding (2014). [Girl's Attitudes Survey 2014](#).

<sup>130</sup> 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](#).

<sup>131</sup> Fermanagh Women's Network (2008) [Gender Equality Strategy for Fermanagh](#).

<sup>132</sup> McLaughlin, H. (2009) *Women living in disadvantaged communities: barriers to participation*.

<sup>133</sup> McQuaid R, Graham H, Shapira, M. (2013) [Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women](#), ECNI

<sup>134</sup> ECNI (2014) Response to '[Assembly and Executive Review Committee - Inquiry Into Women In Politics](#)', ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>135</sup> 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](#).

<sup>136</sup> ECNI (2012) [Equality Awareness Survey 2011](#). 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 life<sup>137</sup>; 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)<sup>138</sup> 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.

### Difference

**Due to an overrepresentation of 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.**

<sup>137</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>138</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.



- 5.5 Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>139</sup> 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 2015<sup>140</sup>. Overall, the percentage of 'not known' accounts for 17% of all government public appointments, higher than the corresponding share of the population<sup>141</sup>.
- 5.6 Similarly, those classified as 'neither' were consistently overrepresented (overall 7%) in government public appointments, throughout the period 2006-2015 when compared to their share of the population<sup>142</sup>.
- 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 period<sup>143</sup>. However, this underrepresentation was more marked for those of a Catholic community background<sup>144</sup> (overall 35% compared to a population share of 45%).

## Barriers / Drivers

- 5.8 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

---

<sup>139</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>140</sup> TEO (2006 - 2014) [The Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Reports](#)

<sup>141</sup> The percentage of government public appointments classified as 'not known' has fluctuated between 36% and to 10% during the period 2006/07 - 2015/16. The overall aggregate figure for the period is 17%, compared to 6% of the population stating 'no religion' to the NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Religion or Religion brought up \(other religions\) in KS212 \(2012\)](#)

<sup>142</sup> During the period 2006/07-2015/16, overall those classified as 'neither' Protestant or Roman Catholic accounted for 7% of government public appointments, and 11% (Source: NISRA (2012) [2011 Census Religion or Religion brought up \(other religions\) in KS212 \(2012\)](#))

<sup>143</sup> With the exception of 2008/2009 for Protestants.

<sup>144</sup> 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](#)

the differential experiences of white and ethnic minority people when seeking to participate in public life.

- 5.9 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 either not routinely collected or reported by government or public authorities in Northern Ireland.
- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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.
- 5.12 Research by O’Toole et al (2013)<sup>145</sup> 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 communities<sup>146</sup>.
- 5.13 **Selection procedures** - Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>147</sup> identified 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.

---

<sup>145</sup> O’Toole, T.; Dehanas, D.N.; Modood, T.; Meer, N.; and Jones, S. (2013) [Taking part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance](#). University of Bristol.

<sup>146</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>147</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

# 6 Ethnicity

## Summary

- 6.1 In undertaking research to assist this draft *Statement*, Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>148</sup> 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 life<sup>149</sup> – 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 draft *Statement* highlighted associated barriers. As stated elsewhere in this draft *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.

---

<sup>148</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>149</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

## Inequalities and Differences

- 6.4 Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>150</sup> 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)<sup>151</sup> was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 6.6 More than two-fifths of respondents to the Northern Ireland Life and Times (2015)<sup>152</sup> 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.

### Difference

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

- 6.7 Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>153</sup> identified a historic and on-going underrepresentation<sup>154</sup> of persons from a minority ethnic

---

<sup>150</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>151</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly (2017) [They Work for You](#)

<sup>152</sup> 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](#)

<sup>153</sup> This inequality was derived from an analysis of OFMDFM Government Public Appointments data by Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>154</sup> 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](#)

background in terms of applicants and appointees to government public appointments, with little improvement observed since 2006<sup>155</sup>.

- 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<sup>156</sup>.
- 6.9 However, the CPANI (2014)<sup>157</sup> reports that the participation statistics for people from ethnic minorities '*remain stubbornly unchanged except for minor fluctuations*'.

## 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 group<sup>158</sup>. 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 The Northern Ireland Electoral Commission (2012)<sup>159</sup> observed that, in relation to voter registration, EU citizens in Northern Ireland were more likely to be under-registered than their counterparts in Great Britain (jurisdictional registration rates were 20% compared to 56% respectively).

---

<sup>155</sup> 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.

<sup>156</sup> The Commissions own analysis of OFMDFM 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.

<sup>157</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (2014) [Annual Report 2014/15](#).

<sup>158</sup> 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."](#)

<sup>159</sup> Electoral Commission (2012) [Continuous electoral registration in Northern Ireland](#).

- 6.12 In 2015, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)<sup>160</sup> 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.’*

## Barriers / Drivers

- 6.13 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.
- 6.14 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.
- 6.15 Research by NICEM (2013)<sup>161</sup> identified that political **participation is not a priority issue** for most female BME respondents, with nearly all<sup>162</sup> respondents having never considered standing for election.
- 6.16 Further, a NICEM study in 2014<sup>163</sup> 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.
- 6.17 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 times<sup>164</sup>.
- 6.18 **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

---

<sup>160</sup> NICEM (2015) [Traveller Voices for Change: Mapping the views of Irish Travellers on integration and their sense of belonging in Northern Ireland.](#)

<sup>161</sup> NICEM (2013) [The experiences of ethnic minority women in Northern Ireland.](#)

<sup>162</sup> 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.

<sup>163</sup> NICEM (2014) [Voices for Change.](#)

<sup>164</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) [Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds.](#) ECNI, Belfast.

likely to be active in their local communities<sup>165</sup>. Furthermore, the Commission's Equality Awareness Survey (2011)<sup>166</sup> found that the general public were most 'uncomfortable' towards having a Traveller in the highest elected political position.

- 6.19 **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 life<sup>167</sup>.
- 6.20 Lack of **confidence** and low self-esteem / anticipated fear or anxiety amongst ethnic minorities often deters them from the participating in public life<sup>168</sup>. 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 life<sup>169</sup>.
- 6.21 In respect to Irish Travellers, **physical barriers**<sup>170</sup> to voting have been related to a lack of secure sites, enforced mobility, lack of a postal address, and restricted postal deliveries even if resident on some public sites<sup>171</sup>.

---

<sup>165</sup> 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.](#)

<sup>166</sup> ECNI (2011) [Equality Awareness Survey, 2011](#). ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>167</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>168</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>169</sup> 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.](#)

<sup>170</sup> Cemlyn, S.; Greenfields, M.; Burnett, S.; Matthews, Z., and Whitwell, C. (2009) [Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review.](#)

<sup>171</sup> 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 draft *Statement*, Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>172</sup> reported the lack of quantitative data concerning age and participation in public life. Data was limited to three of the nineteen areas of public life<sup>173</sup> – 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<sup>174 175 176</sup> 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.

---

<sup>172</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>173</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>174</sup> UNICEF (n.d.) *Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process*, UNICEF; New York.

<sup>175</sup> Davey C. (2010) [Children's participation in decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010](#). Participation Works.

<sup>176</sup> 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 identified<sup>177</sup> 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)<sup>178</sup> when conducting research to assist the development of this draft *Statement* noted the lack of quantitative data concerning age and participation across the nineteen areas of public life<sup>179</sup>.

### 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%)<sup>180</sup>. Those 60 years of age and above account for over a third of MLAs<sup>181</sup>.

---

<sup>177</sup> The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

<sup>178</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>179</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>180</sup> NISRA (2012) [2011 Census KS102 NI Age Structure](#)

<sup>181</sup> 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, within government public appointments.**

- 7.8 There is an underrepresentation of younger people, particularly those under the age of 40 (8%) and, more so, those under the age of 30 years (1%) within government public appointments<sup>182</sup> when compared to their respective shares of the Northern Ireland population (13% and 17% respectively)<sup>183</sup>. Government public appointments mainly comprise persons over the age of 40 years, most notably those aged 50 years and over (72%)<sup>184</sup>. The Commission through its own analysis of government public appointment data found this was also evident between 2014 and 2015<sup>185</sup>.
- 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 underrepresented<sup>186</sup>. This was also evident in 2014 and 2015<sup>187</sup>.
- 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 30<sup>188</sup>.

---

<sup>182</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>183</sup> NISRA (2012) [2011 Census KS102 NI Age Structure](#)

<sup>184</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>185</sup> 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 during the period 2007/6/2007 – 2014/15, and those aged 40 years and under accounted for 8%. Those aged over 40 years overall accounted for 75%.

<sup>186</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>187</sup> 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 during the period 2006/07 – 2014/15, and those aged 40 years and under accounted for 8%.

<sup>188</sup> 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’*”<sup>189</sup>.

## 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)<sup>190</sup> 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 (2012)<sup>191</sup> note that generally older age groups are more likely to be **registered to vote**, particularly those aged 65 years and over<sup>192</sup>. However, during the period 2007-2012, they observed reductions in the proportions of people registered to vote for all age groups<sup>193</sup>, with greater decreases observed for those in the age groups 18-44 years than those aged over 45, most notably those aged 25-34 years which declined by almost a third<sup>194</sup>.
- 7.14 The Institute of Public Policy Research (2013)<sup>195</sup> 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)<sup>196</sup> shows that in the

---

<sup>189</sup> The Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (2014) [Under-representation and lack of diversity in public appointments in Northern Ireland](#) (p5)

<sup>190</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>191</sup> Electoral Commission (2012) [Continuous electoral registration in Northern Ireland](#).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. The completion rate for those aged 65 years and over was 90% in 2012. (p78)

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 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.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 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.

<sup>195</sup> IPPR (2013) [Divided Democracy: Political inequality in the UK and why it matters](#). (p78)

<sup>196</sup> Berry C. (2012) [How the growing grey vote could undermine British democracy](#). Open Democracy

next few decades an ageing UK population will concentrate voting power among those aged over 50.

- 7.15 According to the Eurobarometer (2013)<sup>197</sup>, just 38% of UK respondents aged under 25 years have voted in any election in the past three years. That's 18% less than the EU average (56%) – and half as many as in Malta.

## Difference

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

- 7.16 DENI (2010)<sup>198</sup> reported that School Governors are predominately aged over 35 years<sup>199</sup> and that those aged 16-35 were underrepresented in 2010 when considered against the 2011 Census population comparator<sup>200</sup>. The underrepresentation of those aged 16-35 was also observed across the different types of governors<sup>201</sup> and across the different school management types<sup>202</sup>.
- 7.17 In both 2012<sup>203</sup> and 2015<sup>204</sup> those aged 41 - 60 years accounted for the majority of independent members to Policing & Community Safety Partnerships/District Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP/DCPSP)<sup>205</sup> boards (60% and 46% respectively).

<sup>197</sup> Eurobarometer (2013) [European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life Report. Flash Eurobarometer 375.](#)

<sup>198</sup> DENI (2010) [School Governors: The Guardians of our Schools.](#) DENI, Belfast.

<sup>199</sup> Those aged 35 years and over account for 94% of school governors although they only comprise 54% of the population according to Census 2011.

<sup>200</sup> The age group 16-35 composed 26% of the total population while only accounting for 6% of school governors.

<sup>201</sup> 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](#)

<sup>202</sup> School management types include Nursery Schools, Primary Schools, Secondary, Post-Primary - grammar, Special Schools.

<sup>203</sup> 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.*

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> 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.

- 7.18 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.
- 7.19 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 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.**

- 7.20 The Commission notes that Article 12(1) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)<sup>206</sup> requires that children and young people be given meaningful opportunities to participate in formal and informal decision-making processes. However, research<sup>207 208</sup> studies in Ireland and GB show that significant numbers of children still do not feel involved in school and community decision-making<sup>209</sup>.
- 7.21 Research undertaken by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people (NICCY) (2014)<sup>210</sup> 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'*.

---

<sup>206</sup> The UNCRC was signed by the UK in 1990, ratified in 1991 and came into force 15 January 1992.

<sup>207</sup> 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.](#)

<sup>208</sup> 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.

<sup>209</sup> 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

<sup>210</sup> NICCY (2014) [Walking or Talking?](#) NICCY, Belfast.

The report further found ‘no systematic process in relation to these activities, consistently applied in any department.’

## Barriers / Drivers

- 7.22 Various research studies<sup>211 212 213</sup> 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.
- 7.23 A report by The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009)<sup>214</sup> 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.
- 7.24 **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.”<sup>215</sup>
- 7.25 **Stereotypes and prejudice** impact both younger and older people’s participation in public life. Young people have identified that the ‘*limiting mindsets*<sup>216</sup> and the ‘*negative, preconceived ideas about the abilities of children and young people to bring about social change and outdated notions, or*

---

<sup>211</sup> UNICEF (n.d.) *Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process*, UNICEF; New York.

<sup>212</sup> Davey C. (2010) [Children’s participation in decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010](#). Participation Works.

<sup>213</sup> 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)

<sup>214</sup> The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

<sup>215</sup> Davey C. (2010) [Children’s participation in decision-making: A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010](#). Participation Works.

<sup>216</sup> 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)

*media misinformation, that portrays young people as transient, chaotic and unreliable*<sup>217</sup> between younger and older people acts as a key barrier to younger peoples participation as it *'destroys young people's confidence and trust'*<sup>218</sup>. Older people have identified that ageism<sup>219</sup> and lack of belief and perceptions of abilities<sup>220</sup> amongst professionals are key barriers to participation.

- 7.26 The domination of **recruitment and selection** panels by white middle aged males<sup>221</sup>, application forms often asking for formal qualifications and previous board experience<sup>222</sup> and the use of unfamiliar professional language<sup>223</sup> may act as barriers for younger people but also older people who are not familiar with such jargon<sup>224</sup>. Thus, low **confidence** / anticipated fear or anxiety amongst many younger and older people often deters them from the participating in public life<sup>225</sup>.
- 7.27 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<sup>226 227</sup>.
- 7.28 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*

---

<sup>217</sup> UNICEF (n.d.) [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#), UNICEF; New York.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Volunteer Development Agency (2009) [Report on Northern Ireland Public Policy for Older People and Volunteering](#). Belfast: Volunteer Development Agency

<sup>220</sup> The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

<sup>221</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>222</sup> Common Purpose (2009) [Diversity of representation in public appointments: A study by Common Purpose](#)

<sup>223</sup> UNICEF (n.d.) [Children and young people: Participating in the decision-making process](#), UNICEF; New York.

<sup>224</sup> The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

<sup>225</sup> Ibid

<sup>226</sup> 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

<sup>227</sup> The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation (2009) [Engagement and Empowerment among older people: A case study](#). National Empowerment Partnership: London

*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.*<sup>228</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> 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)<sup>229</sup> 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<sup>230</sup>. 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)<sup>231</sup> 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'*<sup>232</sup>.
- 8.3 Hunt and Dick (2008)<sup>233</sup> 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 emphasises that where people are confident that they will be treated fairly, they are more likely to engage in public activity<sup>234</sup>.

---

<sup>229</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>230</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>231</sup> 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](#).

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.(p61)

<sup>233</sup> Hunt. R. And Dick.S (2008). [Serves you right: Lesbian and Gay peoples expectations of discrimination](#).

<sup>234</sup> Guasp, A. (2009). [Homophobic Bullying in Britain's Schools](#).

## Barriers / Drivers

- 8.4 Non-institutional barriers identified by participants within Ryrie et al (2010)<sup>235</sup> 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)<sup>236</sup> 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 draft *Statement* observes that there is a lack of quantitative data by marital status and dependency status across the nineteen areas of participation in public life<sup>237</sup> investigated in the research by Ipsos MORI (2015)<sup>238</sup>. Therefore, it was not possible to identify any inequalities for these groups.

---

<sup>235</sup> 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](#).

<sup>236</sup> Nolan. P (2013) [Peace Monitoring Report](#). (p142)

<sup>237</sup> Government Public Appointments; Members of a voluntary group; Elected representatives; the judiciary; Community Police Liaison Committees; Neighbourhood Watch Committees; Community Associations or for a; 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 For a; Access to Voting System; Litigants – Access to Law and Courts; Jurors; Recruitment and Selection Panels.

<sup>238</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

- 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)<sup>239</sup> 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)<sup>240</sup> 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 women<sup>241</sup>.
- 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 institutions<sup>242</sup>; a lack of confidence, knowledge, skills or experience to undertake a role or to apply for a role in public life<sup>243</sup>; other financial burdens such as financial resources

---

<sup>239</sup> Hill-Carr, R. and Dixon, P. (2007) [Indicators of equality and diversity in Northern Ireland – Patterns of social difference](#); Commissioned by OFMDFM

<sup>240</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>241</sup> Hinds, B. (2011). [Women on the Edge? A Comprehensive Analysis of the Impacts of the Financial Crisis: Lone Parents](#).

<sup>242</sup> 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).

<sup>243</sup> 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](#).

required, limited remuneration, the long hour's culture, and the lack of flexibility in meeting times and locations<sup>244</sup>.

## 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)<sup>245</sup> 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)<sup>246</sup> 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 opinion<sup>247</sup>. Where data is available, this draft *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 life<sup>248</sup>.

## Equality Commission May 2018

---

<sup>244</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Northern Ireland Life and Times (2014) [Political Attitudes Module](#) accessed 13/05/2016

<sup>247</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) *Inequalities in Participation in Public Life: An Investigation of the Nine Section 75 grounds*. ECNI, Belfast.

<sup>248</sup> Clark, A. and Wilford, R. (2012) [Political Institutions, Engagement and Outreach: The case of the Northern Ireland Assembly](#). Parliamentary Affairs 65, 380-403.