**List of Issues submission to the examination of UK under the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights**

**January 2023**

**Introduction**

This submission is designed to assist the Committee in assessing the State Party’s 7th periodic report. It highlights key issues from the perspective of the women’s sector in Northern Ireland, and has been coordinated by Women’s Platform (NIWEP), building on an interim shadow report to CEDAW in 2021 developed in consultation with members and civil society partners.

Women’s Platform is a women’s sector membership organisation in special consultative status with ECOSOC. The organisation’s key role is to act as a coordination between the women’s sector in Northern Ireland and international networks including the UN; to advocate for implementation of international human rights standards in Northern Ireland and build capacity on international human rights standards and mechanisms for women’s rights within the sector in Northern Ireland.

The core message is deep concern over long term low priority given to gender equality in Northern Ireland, which is further falling behind as a result of current political instability, with a cost of living crisis and the ongoing aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis worsening the situation.

**Article 1**

**Equality legislation**

Northern Ireland continues to rely significantly on equality provisions set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which enacts provisions in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement[[1]](#footnote-1). This legislation has not been updated and no single equality legislation is in place or proposed. As noted by the CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Observations 2019, protections for women and girls in Northern Ireland have fallen behind those for women and girls elsewhere in the UK[[2]](#footnote-2) as a result. Specifically, sex discrimination legislation remains based on the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and equal pay on the Equal Pay (Northern Ireland) Act 1970[[3]](#footnote-3). Protection against discrimination on the grounds of age in relation to goods, facilities and services has not been enacted in law[[4]](#footnote-4), creating a significant gap to England, Scotland and Wales.

Northern Ireland has lacked functioning political institutions for most of the last six years. This has significantly reduced opportunities for effective policy and decision making and created uncertainty, which is increasing community level tension[[5]](#footnote-5). The lack of long term planning and budgeting, alongside a lack of appropriate and adequately disaggregated data, is also reducing opportunities for innovation and implementation of new and promising practices, which contributes to the widening policy and practice gaps between Northern Ireland, other parts of the UK and Ireland and other countries.

**Withdrawal from the European Union**

The UK left the EU during the period for examination, following a referendum in June 2016. The impact of withdrawal has been significant in Northern Ireland, and has contributed to political instability, as political parties have taken very different perspectives on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol, which sets out mechanisms and processes on cross border trade[[6]](#footnote-6). Article 2 of the Protocol sets out to secure non diminution of rights in Northern Ireland, and includes gender equality within these provisions. A dedicated mechanism, operated by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, has been set up; however, the scope of implementation is complex and as yet developing[[7]](#footnote-7).

Women are affected by the changes, particularly in border regions, where communities prior to Brexit commonly accessed services on both sides of the border. New barriers have emerged in particular for EU citizens living on the Irish side of the border, who are no longer able to freely access services on the UK side; only so called frontier workers with a permit showing they live in Ireland but work in Northern Ireland can do so.[[8]](#footnote-8) There is also concern that women who are EU citizens and have caring responsibilities may find it disproportionately difficult to secure full settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme[[9]](#footnote-9) [[10]](#footnote-10). This has been further exacerbated by the Nationalities and Borders Act 2022, which also is affecting asylum seeker and refugee access to basic services[[11]](#footnote-11).

**Bill of Rights**

From a gender equality perspective, the future development of rights is a potential concern. While women in Northern Ireland have different views of Brexit and the Protocol, a shared priority is implementation of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement[[12]](#footnote-12). Women also broadly support a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland[[13]](#footnote-13), and the women’s sector advocated for an inclusive Bill of Rights that would integrate key international human rights obligations in Northern Ireland law[[14]](#footnote-14) [[15]](#footnote-15). The impasse on a Bill of Rights[[16]](#footnote-16) is disappointing, and the proposed repeal of the UK wide Human Rights Act[[17]](#footnote-17) [[18]](#footnote-18) is a significant concern in this regard.

**International development**

Northern Ireland has not been included in the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which to date has focused exclusively overseas[[19]](#footnote-19). Civil society continues to call for domestication of the women, peace and security agenda, in order to ensure women in Northern Ireland, as well as women arriving in the UK from conflict regions, can have access to the full range of rights and protections under UN Security Council Resolution 1325, including representation at all levels of decision making.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Northern Ireland is included in the Irish National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and a consultative forum with the women’s sector in Northern Ireland was initiated under this mechanism[[21]](#footnote-21). The Irish Government’s Reconciliation Fund also provides funding for work on peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, including women as a specific priority[[22]](#footnote-22).

Women’s Platform provides the secretariat to the Northern Ireland Assembly All Party Group on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security. The role of the All Party Group is to promote women in public life; it also provides a mechanism for capacity building and dialogue across sectors on issues relevant to gender equality and peacebuilding. However, APGs lack formal powers.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**Articles 2 and 3**

**Gender equality**

There has been no meaningful action to secure gender equality or implement the Concluding Observations. Gender is absent from the New Decade, New Approach agreement that underpinned the return of devolved institutions in January 2020[[24]](#footnote-24). Differences with Great Britain in equality law remain[[25]](#footnote-25).

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened gender inequalities. The women’s sector produced a COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan[[26]](#footnote-26) to address this. The response received from the Head of the Civil Service, with contributions from all but one Department, and later by Ministers, demonstrates the very poor policy framework and practice in respect of gender equality*[[27]](#footnote-27)*. This is echoed in a finding by the Equality Commission that the Department of Finance failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme in budget preparation 2019-20.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The Feminist Recovery Plan was updated in July 2021 to evidence impact and the experiences of Northern Irish women one year on[[29]](#footnote-29). To date there has been no action.

Work on an updated Gender Equality Strategy only begun in September 2020[[30]](#footnote-30), as part of a suite of social inclusion strategies including an LGBT Strategy[[31]](#footnote-31). The process, originally due to complete in late 2021[[32]](#footnote-32) but now indefinitely delayed due to the lack of functioning institutions, includes engagement with the women’s sector[[33]](#footnote-33); however, the effectiveness of this process cannot yet be assessed.

Marriage equality was fully achieved in October 2020[[34]](#footnote-34),[[35]](#footnote-35),[[36]](#footnote-36), but assisted conception remains an issue for lesbian and bisexual (LB) women in same sex relationships[[37]](#footnote-37). A commitment to three cycles of IVF within the New Decade, New Approach agreement has not yet been implemented.

Children of same sex couples born outside the island of Ireland have difficulty accessing Irish passports, and citizenship[[38]](#footnote-38), as the Irish system currently only recognises the birth mother for this purpose.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The UK Government abolished the so called ‘tampon tax’ on period products in 2021[[40]](#footnote-40), and funds have been channelled to the women’s sector from previous proceeds[[41]](#footnote-41). However, women continue to face additional living costs compared to men, including for healthcare.

**Violence against women and girls**

Policy on domestic abuse is gender neutral[[42]](#footnote-42),[[43]](#footnote-43). The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act 2021[[44]](#footnote-44) updates some protections, but falls short of fully criminalising coercive control, unlike Great Britain[[45]](#footnote-45) or Ireland[[46]](#footnote-46). Paid leave for victims of domestic abuse to seek care and support was legislated for in 2022[[47]](#footnote-47), and upskirting and downblousing were criminalised[[48]](#footnote-48).

Gaps that in part prevented the UK from ratifying the Istanbul Convention.are addressed in this Act and in a Protection from Stalking Act[[49]](#footnote-49); both include measures on extraterritorial jurisdiction. The Istanbul Convention ratification[[50]](#footnote-50) brings no new protections; funding for services for victims and survivors remains limited. Services for disabled women are very limited, although disabled women are at disproportionate risk of violence[[51]](#footnote-51). Domestic abuse is among the most common reasons for homelessness[[52]](#footnote-52); however, access to housing is limited and acts a barrier for women to leave abusive relationships[[53]](#footnote-53).

Calls for a strategy on violence against women and girls were repeatedly declined, although ten women were murdered between March 2020 and January 2022[[54]](#footnote-54). Women’s Aid Federation Northern Ireland launched a public petition calling for a strategy[[55]](#footnote-55). The Executive committed to a strategy in 2021[[56]](#footnote-56),[[57]](#footnote-57) but this remains at preparation stage[[58]](#footnote-58). In the meantime, the Police Service for Northern Ireland has launched its own strategy on violence against women and girls, which includes action to ensure safe policing services and aims to increase victims’ trust in policing[[59]](#footnote-59) following disclosures of criminal and inappropriate behaviour of officers[[60]](#footnote-60).

A hate crime review recommended gender as a new protected characteristic, but rejected a stand alone misogyny offence[[61]](#footnote-61); a subsequent consultation sought further views on this[[62]](#footnote-62). Many people experiencing homophobic or transphobic incidents and crime also feel unsupported by the judicial system and are reluctant to engage with it[[63]](#footnote-63). A review of the handling of serious sexual violence cases, the Gillen Review, was initiated following a high profile trial in 2018[[64]](#footnote-64). The review made 16 main recommendations[[65]](#footnote-65) - none have been implemented as yet[[66]](#footnote-66).

In 2021-22, only 35.5% of all sexual violence cases sent to the Public Prosecution Service led to prosecution. Only 72 cases of rape, out of 600 reported to PPS (12%), proceeded to prosecution and out of these, 21 cases led to conviction for rape (3% of all cases reported).[[67]](#footnote-67)

Trafficking cases reported to the National Referral Mechanism increased 750% by 2020, compared to 2012[[68]](#footnote-68) and increased further in 2021.[[69]](#footnote-69) The majority of cases relate to work related exploitation and the majority of victims were male, but women, including local women as well as victims from other countries, are disproportionately trafficked for sexual exploitation.[[70]](#footnote-70) The Police Service of Northern Ireland has led an operation against trafficking in 2022[[71]](#footnote-71) leading to a number of prosecutions[[72]](#footnote-72); however, victims have difficulties seeking help due to issues including concerns about immigration status, language barriers and lack of information.

**Care**

Northern Ireland lacks a childcare strategy[[73]](#footnote-73); work on a strategy promised in the 2017-22 Assembly mandate was not initiated. Childcare is difficult to access, particularly in rural areas, and the average cost for full time childcare is £170 per week[[74]](#footnote-74). Children in their immediate pre school year (aged 3-4) are entitled to a nursery school place for 2.5-4 hours per day, but no free childcare provision is in place[[75]](#footnote-75).

Adult social care is severely stretched, and involves complex, often significant contributions from service users and their families[[76]](#footnote-76). Caring is the primary reason why many women are unable to participate in the labour force, or work fewer hours than they’d like[[77]](#footnote-77), with financial impacts as a result. The issue is particularly acute for lone parent households, which constitute 21% of all families in Northern Ireland (the highest proportion in the UK)[[78]](#footnote-78), and over 90% of which are headed by women[[79]](#footnote-79). Women with disabilities are also at significant risk of poverty, with only 40% of women who report being disabled also in employment.[[80]](#footnote-80) In addition, women are more likely to report that they cannot accept work offers, as many employers particularly in lower paid sectors demand full flexibility throughout the week, and childcare outside regular office hours is virtually non existent in Northern Ireland.

**Article 4**

**Immigration legislation**

The recently enacted Nationalities and Borders Act limits the rights of refugees and asylum applicants, including creating a two tier system based on a refugee’s mode of entry to the UK, and a new provision for removing asylum seekers to a third country for processing, effectively criminalising asylum. The Act also removes family reunion rights for some refugees, circumscribing women’s and children’s routes to safety. In addition, it introduces a new electronic travel authorisation for all non British citizens seeking entry into the UK, including for non Irish citizens seeking entry to Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland, for any reason[[81]](#footnote-81).

This has particular implications in Northern Ireland, relevant to Article 4 of ICESCR. Firstly, the travel authorisation requirement introduces a de facto hardening of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, contrary to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and also the EU Withdrawal Agreement, although no information has been given on how the law will be enforced or monitored. Secondly, the Act further reduces the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to cross the border, which is significant in border regions, where people commonly cross the border to access key services[[82]](#footnote-82). Vitally, a number of health care specialties, including paediatric cardiac care, has been centralised on the island of Ireland in Dublin, which means access to life saving treatment for a very vulnerable and marginalised group of people is dependent on permission to travel and access to an Irish visa[[83]](#footnote-83).

**Living conditions and access to food for asylum seekers**

Conditions for asylum seeking individuals, including women and children, are poor in Northern Ireland, where women and children are held alongside men in Larne House detention centre[[84]](#footnote-84). Families are frequently housed in hotels for long periods while waiting for their applications to be assessed[[85]](#footnote-85), while many families who are granted asylum also report being allocated housing in poor condition[[86]](#footnote-86), including affected by mould.

**Migrant women, violence and poverty**

Asylum seeking and migrant women are at significant risk of destitution and exploitation, particularly where their immigration status is insecure[[87]](#footnote-87) [[88]](#footnote-88). Migrant and ethnic minority victims of domestic abuse may be subject to coercive control based on immigration status[[89]](#footnote-89), and are more likely to have language barriers and lack of knowledge of the system. No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is a major barrier to accessing support and safety[[90]](#footnote-90).

Migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women in poverty are at the highest risk of social exclusion and poverty, due to factors from legal restrictions on working to language barriers, which limit women’s opportunities to engage in society. While statutory services are required to provide interpreters where required, access is often challenging, and women may rely on male relatives or sometimes children to act as interpreters[[91]](#footnote-91). This creates significant challenges, including loss of privacy and limitations to accessing full healthcare, and can also further isolate women who are victims of domestic violence, as outlined above.

Asylum seekers waiting for their claims to be processed are often housed in hotels, with limited access to food, and there are increasing reports of children going hungry, particularly in the mornings as hotel breakfast is not available before they leave.[[92]](#footnote-92) [[93]](#footnote-93)

**Migrant women and health**

Women who have no recourse to public funds, including migrant and asylum seeking women, lack access to full healthcare services and may be asked to pay upfront for care, including reproductive and maternity services and care. This creates significant risks for women’s health, including their mental health and wellbeing. Due to challenges in accessing translators, women with limited English are often reliant on family members when accessing health care, which has implications for their privacy and may create health risks through miscommunication or inability to share full details due to cultural or other barriers. Risks are particularly significant for women in coercive or abusive relationships.[[94]](#footnote-94)

**Articles 6-10**

**Economic empowerment of women**

Over a third of women of working age are currently not in employment, and the most common reason for this is family or caring responsibilities[[95]](#footnote-95). Gender pay gap reporting regulations[[96]](#footnote-96) have not been introduced, and the gender pay gap remains at around 10 per cent[[97]](#footnote-97) . There is currently no legislative timetable for introducing these[[98]](#footnote-98).

Pay in Northern Ireland is lower than elsewhere in the UK[[99]](#footnote-99); sectors including teaching and care have experienced a real terms pay cut of up to 20% since 2010, which alongside concern about conditions is underlying a wave of strikes across sectors taking place since autumn 2022[[100]](#footnote-100) [[101]](#footnote-101). The living wage has not been implemented across sectors, and the minimum wage is not keeping pace with inflation[[102]](#footnote-102) [[103]](#footnote-103). Zero hours contracts also remain more common in female dominated low paid sectors such as hospitality and retail, which makes it difficult for women to pay for childcare, typically billed a month in advance[[104]](#footnote-104).

Women born in the 1950s in Northern Ireland continue to be disadvantaged by the change in pension age implemented in the early 2000s, alongside women in Great Britain affected by the change, which has been found to have been poorly communicated by the Department for Work and Pensions[[105]](#footnote-105). The change directly impacts on older female poverty in Northern Ireland, as women of this generation in Northern Ireland were less likely to work outside the home, due to larger families, greater rurality and social norms prioritising women’s caring responsibilities within the home.

**Women and austerity**

Women and girls living in poverty in Northern Ireland face multiple, intersecting barriers to everyday life, which limit opportunities and options in all areas of life. The impact of welfare reforms and austerity over the last decade to 12 years has also been particularly significant for women, as shown by research commissioned by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. This analysis found that women on lower incomes have seen their incomes fall by up to £400 per year as a result of welfare reform; this research found that women in income deciles 4, 5 and 6 lost income, while men on average gained. Both women who are lone parents and women with disabilities have seen their incomes fall particularly steeply as a result of welfare reform[[106]](#footnote-106), deepening social exclusion and economic hardship, as women in these groups lack the full flexibility required by most employers. Older women have also been significantly affected, losing up to £450 per year on average for women over 75.

The two child cap under Universal Credit remains[[107]](#footnote-107) [[108]](#footnote-108), deepening child and maternal poverty[[109]](#footnote-109). While split payments are available on request in Northern Ireland[[110]](#footnote-110), women as the typically lower earner can be disadvantaged, as the threshold for Universal Credit is lower, sometimes making working unrealistic. Women may also find it difficult to request this, particularly where the relationship is abusive[[111]](#footnote-111). Universal Credit claims almost doubled between February 2020 and February 2021[[112]](#footnote-112). The only change to the system, a £20 per week increase, was cut from October 2021[[113]](#footnote-113),[[114]](#footnote-114). There is a culture of mistrust regarding migrants; claims and appeals can be delayed and advisors may suggest applicants are lying about UK work history.

The impacts linked to welfare reform are varied and significant. Fuel poverty in Northern Ireland was 45% in 2021, and is projected to rise to 76% by early 2023; for lone parent families this figure is over 90%[[115]](#footnote-115). For Universal Credit claimants in receipt of the housing benefit element, the average shortfall in rent is £119 per month. The Family Resources Survey 2019-20 found that 36% of households have no savings[[116]](#footnote-116), while the National Institute of Economic and Social Research predict that destitution could rise by as much as 67% in Northern Ireland - double the rate of the headline figure of 30% in other parts of the UK. This equates to 25,000 destitute households.[[117]](#footnote-117)

Housing need remains a major issue in Northern Ireland; social housing allocations remain significantly lower than the number of households in housing stress on the waiting list.[[118]](#footnote-118) The private rented sector is now the main provider for many households on low income; however, protections against rent increases and eviction are limited and some landlords do not accept Universal Credit claimants. Temporary housing is often unsuitable and crowded.[[119]](#footnote-119)

Separately, the benefit system penalises disabled people who get married, affecting disabled women in particular.[[120]](#footnote-120)

**Article 11**

**Access to food**

Women are disproportionately represented among the poorest population groups, and a significant proportion of single parent households headed by women are in either absolute or relative poverty. Recent research by Women’s Regional Consortium with women in Northern Ireland shows that over half of participants were in debt, and experienced both physical and mental health impacts[[121]](#footnote-121). Many reported going without food and other essentials to provide for their families on at least an occasional basis, and using foodbanks to make ends meet. In some cases, women with poor or no access to high street lending are targeted by illegal lenders, including those linked to paramilitaries. Women can be at risk of violence if they struggle with such debt repayments, although accessing detailed information on this is very difficult due to the highly sensitive nature of the issues.

Families waiting for the first Universal Credit payment are among those most likely to be forced to use foodbanks[[122]](#footnote-122), although demand for foodbanks has risen significantly during 2022 as a result of inflation, associated with both international and domestic factors, leading to a cost of living crisis. Holiday food payments for families entitled to free school meals, whose income must be below £15,000 per annum, were retained following the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021[[123]](#footnote-123) [[124]](#footnote-124), but inflation is affecting the value of these payments.

Support for breastfeeding remains limited, although campaigning by civil society ensured the public transport provider Translink and some civic venues are now breastfeeding friendly.[[125]](#footnote-125) Northern Ireland has the lowest breastfeeding rate in the UK, with 61% attempted starts and 30% breastfed at six weeks (2017 data).[[126]](#footnote-126)

**Article 12**

**Abortion and reproductive rights**

Abortion was decriminalised in October 2019[[127]](#footnote-127), and the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020[[128]](#footnote-128) came into force in March 2020[[129]](#footnote-129). However, the Regulations have not been implemented, and no action has followed[[130]](#footnote-130),[[131]](#footnote-131) legislation introduced at Westminster to force implementation in July 2021[[132]](#footnote-132),[[133]](#footnote-133) and further in May 2022[[134]](#footnote-134) . In December 2022, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland confirmed commissioning of services will be introduced, but delivery is as yet to begin[[135]](#footnote-135).

Early medical abortions are only provided for up to 9 weeks’ 6 days’ gestation. Telemedicine is not permitted, further widening the gap to England and Wales[[136]](#footnote-136), Scotland[[137]](#footnote-137) as well as Ireland[[138]](#footnote-138) .

Northern Ireland passed the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in February 2022[[139]](#footnote-139). Under this law, period products will become available for free to anyone who needs them. The legislation mandates a regional approach to avoid sub regional inequalities, and is expected to be rolled out gradually, initially in education establishments, but ultimately with free access at community level.

No regional menopause strategy is in place, creating uncertainty for employees as well as employers. HRT medication is free to women in Northern Ireland as part of overall free prescriptions, but shortages in 2022 affected access across the UK[[140]](#footnote-140).

**Trans healthcare**

Trans healthcare is in crisis. The adult Gender Identity Service has not accepted new patients since the first quarter of 2018, while the review of these services and the commissioning of new ones has been severely delayed[[141]](#footnote-141), leading to deteriorating community health.

**Maternal mental health**

Northern Ireland currently has no mother and baby unit for mothers requiring inpatient mental health care in the perinatal period[[142]](#footnote-142). The need for this has been recognised in the Mental Health strategy[[143]](#footnote-143) and £4.7m was invested in a perinatal mental health service[[144]](#footnote-144), but no budget has been made available to create a unit. Women with lived experience of perinatal mental health indicate that access to services is patchy and uneven, and quality of care also varies[[145]](#footnote-145).

**Article 13**

**Gender equality in education**

Gender inequalities in Northern Ireland begin with unequal access to education: the education system in Northern Ireland is two tiered with non selective secondary schools and selection based grammar schools[[146]](#footnote-146), which disproportionately educate children from wealthier families[[147]](#footnote-147); many schools also demonstrate gender stereotyping in subject offer and guidance. There is limited financing of apprenticeships in traditionally female dominated sectors such as childcare and adult social care, and pay in these sectors is low, with limited progression routes.[[148]](#footnote-148)

There are no programmes planned to assist women to access training or alternative employment[[149]](#footnote-149),following economic changes as a result of Covid-19. Investment in apprenticeships have focused on the construction and IT sector[[150]](#footnote-150), with no plan to invest in care[[151]](#footnote-151) and limited focus on addressing gender segregation. A Skills Strategy launched in 2022 introduces a focus on STEM subjects, including increasing women’s participation in these sectors, but lacks an analysis of wider societal needs and an associated plan for providing such skills long term.[[152]](#footnote-152)

There has been no movement on the CEDAW Inquiry recommendation to implement standardised, age-appropriate relationships and sexuality education (RSE), widening the gap with Great Britain[[153]](#footnote-153). Schools take responsibility, with no systematic guidance[[154]](#footnote-154) and require parental consent[[155]](#footnote-155). The curriculum excludes the experiences of LGBTQI+ pupils, and pupils with disabilities may be withdrawn from lessons[[156]](#footnote-156). Young people report that current RSE is ‘useless’ and ‘biased’, but feel school is the best place for RSE[[157]](#footnote-157).

1. Northern Ireland Act 1998 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CEDAW Committee (2019) Concluding Observations of the examination of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Equal Pay (Northern Ireland) Act 1970](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/apni/1970/32/contents) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Equality Commission press release 9 August 2022, ‘[Age Discrimination Law needs strengthened](https://www.equalityni.org/Footer-Links/News/Delivering-Equality/Age-Discrimination-Law-needs-strengthened)**’** [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See eg. Women’s Platform [submissions](https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/108963/html/) to the House of Lords sub committee on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See eg. Hayward, K & Komarova, M (April 2022) [The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland: Past, Present, and Future Precariousness](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1758-5899.13079). In *Global Policy,* vol 13, issue 52, p 128-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See eg. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (December 2022) [The Scope of Article 2(1) of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol](https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/DMU/NIHRC-ECNI-Scope-of-Protocol-Working-Paper-December-2022.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. UK Government [online information](https://www.gov.uk/frontier-worker-permit) on Frontier Worker permit scheme, last accessed 13.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Fernández-Reino, M & Sumption, M (March 2022). [How Secure is Pre-Settled Status for EU Citizens After Brexit?](https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MigObs-Report-How-Secure-is-Pre-Settled-Status-for-EU-Citizens-After-Brexit.pdf) Oxford: University of Oxford Centre on Policy, Migration and Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Committee on the Administration of Justice (June 2022) [Frontline Lessons for the Future Collaborative research on the impact of immigration law and policy in post-Brexit Northern Ireland](http://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Frontline-Lessons-for-the-Future-JUNE-22.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Committee on the Administration of Justice (December 2021) [CAJ briefing note: Nationality and Borders Bill - Electronic Travel Authorisation](http://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Briefing-note-ETA-Nationality-and-Borders-Bill-Dec-2021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network (2018) [Rural Voices](https://www.nirwn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NIRWN-Rural-Voices-Research-Report-March-2018.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Barry, R & Close, L (March 2021) [NI Bill of Rights Survey](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/committees/2017-2022/ad-hoc-bill-of-rights/written-briefings/bill-of-rights-survey-report.pdf). Belfast: Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform (February 2021) [Submission to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/committees/2017-2022/ad-hoc-bill-of-rights/written-briefings/niwep-written-evidence-to-ad-hoc-committee-on-a-bill-of-rights.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Northern Ireland Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights (March 2021) [Minutes of Proceedings Thursday 18 March 2021](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/committees/2017-2022/ad-hoc-bill-of-rights/minutes-of-proceedings/2020-2021/minutes-of-the-ad-hoc-committee-on-a-bill-of-rights-meeting-18th-march-2021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Northern Ireland Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights press release 14 February 2022, ‘[Bill of Rights Committee Publishes Report’](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/session-2021-2022/bill-of-rights-committee-publishes-report/)‘ [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. [Bill of Rights Bill](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227) 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Donald, A (July 2022) [Explainer: The Bill of Rights Bill](https://ukandeu.ac.uk/explainers/the-bill-of-rights-bill/). London: UK in a Changing Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. HM Government (January 2018) [UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018-22](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2018-to-2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Gender Action for Peace and Security (September 2022) [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2021: GAPS Shadow Report](https://gaps-uk.org/assessing-uk-government-action-on-women-peace-and-security-in-2021/) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Irish Department of Foreign Affairs (May 2019) [Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](https://www.dfa.ie/our-role-policies/international-priorities/peace-and-security/women-peace-and-security/irelandsnationalactionplansonwomenpeaceandsecurity/#:~:text=United%20Nations%20Security%20Council%20Resolution,conflict%20and%20post%2Dconflict%20situations.) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, Reconciliation Fund [website](https://www.dfa.ie/reconciliation), last accessed 20.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. NI Assembly [website information](http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/mlas/apgdetails.aspx?&cid=283) on All Party Group on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security, last accessed 20.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. [New Decade, New Approach agreement](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf) 8 January 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. These include the absence of protection against discrimination and harassment by public bodies on grounds of sex when carrying out their public functions. Other legislative gaps potentially impact on women; for example, there is no protection on the ground of age beyond the workplace [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Women’s Policy Group (July 2020) [COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan](https://wrda.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WPG-NI-Feminist-Recovery-Plan-2020.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. [Response](https://wrda.net/political-responses/) to Feminist Recovery Plan by Northern Ireland Departments, September 2021; at the time of writing, only one Minister has met with the sector to discuss the Plan [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (September 2020). Investigation under Paragraph 11 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 Department of Finance - in its preparation of the Budget for Northern Ireland 2019-20. [Investigation Report](http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/S75_P11_investigationreports/DeptFinanceBudget-P11investigation) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Women’s Policy Group (July 2021) [NI COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan: Relaunch - One Year On](https://wrda.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/WPG-COVID-19-Feminist-Recovery-Plan-Relaunch-One-Year-On.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The previous strategy officially expired in 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. #  ‘[Minister announces work is to commence on development of Social Inclusion Strategies’](https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/node/46534), Northern Ireland Executive press release 24 September 2020

 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. [Timetable for development of Social Inclusion Strategies](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/social-inclusion-strategies) , [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibidem [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. [Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/22/enacted) secured marriage for previously unmarried people of the same sex [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Amnesty International press release 22 October 2020 ‘[Northern Ireland: marriage equality fully achieved as civil partnership conversion legalised’](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/northern-ireland-marriage-equality-fully-achieved-civil-partnership-conversion); a provision to convert existing civil partnerships into marriages was secured in October 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Only civil partnerships formed in Northern Ireland can be converted to marriage in Northern Ireland; in other cases, conversion must take place in the relevant jurisdiction, in person. Conversions must take place within three years; capacity for the process is limited ,with fees introduced after the first year. See NI Direct website - Convert civil partnership to marriage and marriage to civil partnershipGuidance on civil partnerships in Northern Ireland [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. [Fertility Network | NHS Funding in Northern Ireland | Fertility Network (fertilitynetworkuk.org)](https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/trying-to-conceive/nhs-funding/northern-ireland/),. Regulations for Donor Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) have been introduced, but without adequate resources. LB women must also have completed a number of self funded/ self sourced IUI which have huge cost and legal risks respectively. The Regional Fertility Clinic is not enforcing this requirement, but this is on the basis of good will rather than policy [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. People born in Northern Ireland have the right to be either British or Irish, or both, but this requires proving eligibility for citizenship through parental lines; citizenship is not available eg. to children of two EU/EEA nationals even if they are born in Northern Ireland (children of heterosexual couples with one parent from Northern Ireland are eligible for citizenship)s [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. [Citizenship - Department of Foreign Affairs (dfa.ie)](https://www.dfa.ie/citizenship/) - the Irish system currently only recognises a birth mother as capable of transferring citizenship, and therefore an Irish non birth mother cannot pass on citizenship, even where she is a legal parent. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. UK Government press release 1 January 2021 ‘[Tampon tax abolished from today’](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tampon-tax-abolished-from-today) [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See eg. Community Foundation for Northern Ireland [website information](https://communityfoundationni.org/funds/tampon-tax/) on Tampon Tax Fund, last accessed 15.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Department of Health (2016) [Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence in Northern Ireland](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/stopping-domestic-sexual-violence-ni.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Department of Health (2020) [Progress under the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence strategy’s Year Four action plan](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/year-four-progress-report.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. [Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2021/2/section/37) (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. [Women’s Aid Federation Northern Ireland evidence to Justice Committee on Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/health/responses-to-calls-for-evidence/domestic-abuse-and-family-proceedings-bill/submission-from-womens-aid-federation-ni/), presented 28 May 2020 to the Justice Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In Scotland new legislation that criminalises psychological abuse and controlling behaviour came into force in 2019 and in England and Wales, a new Domestic Abuse Act was passed in spring 2021 strengthening protections, although falling short of protecting migrant and minority ethnic women. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. [Domestic Violence Act 2018](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/6/enacted/en/html) (Ireland); this Act criminalises coercive control as well as forced marriage. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. [Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/27/contents/enacted) [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. [Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/19/contents/enacted) [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. [Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/17/enacted) 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. [Statement](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-05-17/hcws34) by Home Secretary to the UK Parliament on Ratification of the Istanbul Convention, 17 May 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Disability Action (April 2022) [Evidence for Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](https://www.disabilityaction.org/news/evidence-for-domestic-and-sexual-abuse-strategy-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Northern Ireland Housing Executive (December 2022) [Northern Ireland Housing Statistics 2020-21](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-21-22-full-copy.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Agenda NI* (February 2022) [‘Appalling’ murder rate of women in Northern Ireland](https://www.agendani.com/appalling-murder-rate-of-women-in-northern-ireland/)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Women’s Aid Federation Northern Ireland [press release](https://www.womensaidni.org/press-release-womens-aid-launch-a-petition-for-a-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-in-ni/) 9 March 2021; the Executive was also called to act by the Assembly, which passed a motion on a strategy addressing violence against women and girls on 23 March, following public outcry over highly publicised murders of women in both England and Northern Ireland ([Item 5: Order Paper 86/17-22 – Tuesday 23 March 2021](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/order-papers/session-2020-2021/23-march-2021/)). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. BBC News 18 March 2021 ‘[Naomi Long: Executive 'must act on violence against women'](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56440234) [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Northern Ireland Assembly [motion](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/marshalled-list-of-amendments/23-march-2021/) Tuesday 23 March 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Ending Violence against Women and Girls information on The Executive Office [website](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls#:~:text=The%20Strategy%20to%20End%20Violence,they%20are%20women%20and%20girls.)

, last accessed 19.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Police Service of Northern Ireland (September 2022) [Tackling violence against women and girls](https://www.psni.police.uk/VAWG) [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Belfast Telegraph* 7 February 2022 ‘[Nineteen PSNI officers suspended amid sexual misconduct investigations](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/nineteen-psni-officers-suspended-amid-sexual-misconduct-investigations-41320986.html)**’** [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Department of Justice (December 2020) [Final Report into Hate Crime legislation in Northern Ireland Independent Review](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/hate-crime-legislation-independent-review). As an example of gender blind policy making, in their consultation responses, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Human Rights Commission advocated for hate crimes against men and women equally [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Department for Justice press release 27 January 2022 ‘[Long: Have your say on how we tackle hate crime’](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/long-have-your-say-how-we-tackle-hate-crime) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. See eg Victim Support NI (April 2020) [Hate crime review consultation response](https://www.victimsupportni.com/about-us/policy-and-research/) [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The case involved well known rugby players who were ultimately acquitted; an overview is available in the *Irish Times,* 5 April 2018 ‘[Inside Court 12: the complete story of the Belfast rape trial’](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/inside-court-12-the-complete-story-of-the-belfast-rape-trial-1.3443620) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. #  The Gillen Review (2019) [Report into the law and procedures in serious sexual offences in NI](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/gillen-review-report-law-and-procedures-serious-sexual-offences-ni); recommendations focused on ensuring sensitive treatment of victims, appropriate court proceedings and addressing rape myths

 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. The Justice Bill (Sexual Offences and Trafficking) Bill 2021 is introducing some limited implementation, in particular regarding anonymity of complainants in sexual offence cases and exclusion of the public from court.a [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (November 2022) [Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland: Statistical Bulletin: Cases Involving Sexual Offences 2019/20](https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/publications/statistical-publication-cases-involving-sexual-offences-2021-22); the statistics also show the time required for a prosecution decision for sexual violence cases has increased from 447 to 666 days between 2018/19 and 2021-22 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *Belfast Telegraph* 4 June 2021 ‘[Northern Ireland human trafficking cases soar by 750%](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-ireland-human-trafficking-cases-soar-by-750-40716766.html)**’** [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Department for Justice (October 2022) [Consultation on a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/justice/new%20draft%20modern%20slavery%20and%20human%20trafficking%20strategy%2014%20october%202022.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibidem, p.7 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Police Service of Northern Ireland news article 21 November 2022 ‘[Major operation by Police Service Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit takes place across NI’](https://www.psni.police.uk/latest-news/major-operation-police-service-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-unit-takes-place) [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. BBC News 23 November 2022 ‘[Pair charged over largest NI human trafficking raid](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63727480)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. See overview of current position at <https://www.employersforchildcare.org/campaign/childcare-for-all/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Employers for Childcare (2021) [Northern Ireland Childcare Survey 2021](https://www.employersforchildcare.org/report/northern-ireland-childcare-survey-2021/) [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibidem [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Department of Health Northern Ireland (2022) [Consultation on the reform of adult social care in Northern Ireland](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-reform-adult-social-care) [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. NISRA (March 2022) [Women in Northern Ireland 2020-21](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/women-in-Northern-Ireland-2020-2021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Office for National Statistics (2021) [Families and households in the UK: 2020](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2020#:~:text=There%20were%202.9%20million%20lone,over%20the%20last%2010%20years.) [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Portes and Reed (2019) Cumulative impact assessment of tax and social security reforms in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. NISRA (2021) [Disability Employment Gap in Northern Ireland 2020](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/Disability-employment-gap-NI-2020.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. [Nationalities and Borders Act 2022](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/36/contents/enacted) [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Committee on the Administration of Justice (December 2021) [Briefing note: Nationality and Borders Bill – Electronic Travel Authorisation](https://caj.org.uk/publications/submissions-and-briefings/briefing-note-nationality-and-borders-bill-eta/) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. See eg. Law Centre NI (May 2022) [Submission to the Advisory Committee to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](https://www.lawcentreni.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/LCNI-submission-to-FCNM-May-2022-Final.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. See eg. Law Centre NI (May 2022) [Submission to the Advisory Committee to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](https://www.lawcentreni.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/LCNI-submission-to-FCNM-May-2022-Final.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Participation and the Practice of Rights (May 2022) [Accommodating Harm? The Use of Hotels as 'Contingency Accommodation' (Part One)](https://www.nlb.ie/blog/2022-05-it-is-hard-to-be-in-this-system-the-use-of-hotels-as-contingency-accommodation-part-one) [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Participation and the Practice of Rights (2019) "[We came here for sanctuary" Syrian refugee families"](https://issuu.com/ppr-org/docs/we_came_here_for_sanctuary_report_-) [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Committee on the Administration of Justice (June 2022) [Frontline Lessons for the Future](http://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Frontline-Lessons-for-the-Future-JUNE-22.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Women for Refugee Women (2020) [Will I ever be safe?](https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WRW-Will-I-ever-be-safe-web.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Specific issues for migrant and ethnic minority women include threats related to immigration status and deportation, and spiritual abuse; see eg. Step Up Migrant Women [website](https://stepupmigrantwomen.org/), last accessed 19.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. O’Hara, L & Orr, K (November 2021) [A Hostile Environment: Children and families affected by immigration status and No Recourse to Public Funds](https://www.niccy.org/wp-content/uploads/media/3953/niccy-nrpf-paper-final-7-october-2021.pdf). Belfast: Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. O’Hara, L & Orr, K (November 2021) [A Hostile Environment: Children and families affected by immigration status and No Recourse to Public Funds](https://www.niccy.org/wp-content/uploads/media/3953/niccy-nrpf-paper-final-7-october-2021.pdf). Belfast: Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See eg. BBC News 23 November 2022 ‘[Some asylum seekers in NI in 'prison-like' hotel conditions’](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63722681) [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. *Belfast Telegraph* 24 July 2022 ‘[Doctors fear for refugees’ health because of ‘dire’ accommodation programme in Northern Ireland’](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/doctors-fear-for-refugees-health-because-of-dire-accommodation-programme-in-northern-ireland-41863518.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Committee on the Administration of Justice (June 2022) [Frontline Lessons for the Future Collaborative research on the impact of immigration law and policy in post-Brexit Northern Ireland](http://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Frontline-Lessons-for-the-Future-JUNE-22.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. NISRA (March 2022) [Women in Northern Ireland 2020-21](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/women-in-Northern-Ireland-2020-2021.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. [Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/15/contents/enacted) includes a provision for this, as well as a gender pay gap strategy, but Regulations were not passed before the institutions collapsed in in 2017so new legislative process is required

 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Wilson, L. (2020) [How Unequal? The unadjusted gender pay gap in earnings in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland](https://www.nerinstitute.net/research/how-unequal-unadjusted-gender-pay-gap-earnings-northern-ireland-and-republic-ireland); NISRA (November 2020) [Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings publication](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NI-ASHE-Bulletin-2020.PDF). A frequently highlighted figure indicates a gender pay gap in full time pay in favour of females. This is largely explained by a very small number of high earning women in senior positions, particularly in the public sector. The response to the Feminist Recovery Plan further illustrates the limitations and poor use of equality data, by referencing this figure, alongside slower increase in the employment rate for women and women's enduring high 'economic inactivity rate' without any further analysis. The pay gap is explained by women ‘choosing’ to work part time, highlighting the impact of gender stereotypes on policy. The gap is larger for women who work part time, women with children, and older women. Women, particularly young women, are overrepresented in the lowest paid occupation sectors () [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. [Written Assembly Question 12666/17-22](http://./3%2C3459%2C3496%2C29%2C%2CWritten%20Assembly%20Question%2012666/) [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Jones, M & Kaya, E (January 2022) [The gender pay gap: what can we learn from Northern Ireland?](https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpab017) In *Oxford Economic Papers*, Volume 74, Issue 1, January 2022, Pages 94–114. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. TES Magazine 6 October 2022 ‘[Northern Ireland school leaders vote for industrial action on pay’](https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-pay-northern-ireland-school-leaders-vote-industrial-action-pay) [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Royal College of Nursing press release 28 October 2022 ‘[Nursing staff are effectively working one day a week for free after a decade of real-terms pay cuts’](https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/Press-Releases/nursing-staff-are-effectively-working-one-day-a-week-for-free-after-a-decade-of-real-terms-pay-cuts). RCN is one of the largest nursing unions and operates across the four nations of the UK. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Belfast Telegraph* 17 November 2022‘[Executive now accredited as a Real Living Wage employer’](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/executive-now-accredited-as-a-real-living-wage-employer-41059658.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. *The Irish News* 17 August 2022 ‘[Average NI wage increase falling well below rate of inflation - official data confirms](https://www.irishnews.com/business/2022/08/17/news/average_ni_wage_increase_falling_well_below_rate_of_inflation_-_official_data_confirms-2800798/)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Irish Congress of Trade Unions Briefing (Winter 2017)

‘[Insecure and Uncertain’: Precarious Work in the Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland,](https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/precarious_work_final_dec_2017.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (July 2021) [Women’s State Pension age: our findings on the Department for Work and Pensions’ communication of changes](https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/publications/womens-state-pension-age-our-findings-department-work-and-pensions-communication/our-findings) [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Portes and Reed (2019) Cumulative impact assessment of tax and social security reforms in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. See NI Direct [website](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/universal-credit-two-child-limit) overview of Universal Credit two child limit, last accessed 19.12.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Supreme Court judgement 9 July 2021 [R(on the application of SC, CB and 8 children v. Secretary of State for Work and Pensions [2021] UKSC 26](https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2019-0135-judgment.pdf) found that limit is not in breach of the European Convention of Human Rights, as it is justified although the Court recognised a disproportionate impact on women. The appellants have taken the case to the European Court of Human Rights. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. See eg. Child Poverty Action Group (November 2022) [Cost of a Child 2022](https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/report/cost-child-2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. An overview of the Universal Credit system in Northern Ireland is available on the [NI Direct website](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/universal-credit) [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. All Party Parliamentary Group on Universal Credit (July 2021): [Evidence session on Domestic abuse and Universal Credit: Report from informal meeting 29 April 2021](https://appguniversalcredit.org.uk/meetings/29-april-2021-domestic-abuse/) [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Department for Communities (February 2021) [Northern Ireland Benefits Statistics Summary](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/benefit-statistics-summary-nov-2020.pdf); Universal Credit is paid by household and no gender breakdown is available. The majority of claimants are in low paid work. 30 per cent are lone parents and ten per cent two parent families; in addition, over 8,000 lone parent families continue to claim the legacy Income Support benefit. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. *The Guardian* 7 July 2021 ‘[Universal credit £20 top-up will end this autumn, MPs are told’](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jul/07/universal-credit-20-top-up-will-end-this-autumn-mps-are-told) [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. The two child cap and benefit cap have not been removed and a [Supreme Court ruling](https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2019-0135.html) in July 2021 states that the two child cap is not discriminatory (R (on the application of SC, CB and 8 children) (Appellants) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and others (Respondents), and split payments remain the exception. For impacts see: [Women’s Regional Consortium Response to Work & Pensions Committee Inquiry into Universal Credit Five Week Wait for First Payment](http://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/sites/default/files/Women%27s%20Regional%20Consortium%20Response%20to%20Work%20%26%20Pensions%20Inquiry%20into%20UC%20Five%20Week%20Wait.pdf)); [Impact of ongoing austerity: Women’s perspectives](http://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/sites/default/files/Impact%20of%20Ongoing%20Austerity%20Women%27s%20Perspectives.pdf); [Making ends meet: Women’s perspectives on access to lending](http://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/sites/default/files/Making%20Ends%20Meet%20-%20Women%27s%20Perspectives%20on%20Access%20to%20Lending.pdf)). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Child Poverty Action Group (2021) [Fuel poverty: Estimates for the UK](https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/fuel-poverty-estimates-uk) [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. NISRA (2021) [Family Resources Survey report 2019 - 2020](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/family-resources-survey-report-2019-2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. BBC News 8 February 2022 ‘[Northern Ireland could 'face extreme poverty surge](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-60306360)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Northern Ireland Housing Executive (December 2022) [Northern Ireland Housing Statistics 2020-21](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-21-22-full-copy.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Participation and the Practice of Rights (December 2022) [The kind economy and human rights: A report on the right to housing and contingency accommodation](https://www.nlb.ie/blog/2022-12-the-kind-economy-human-rights-a-report-on-the-right-to-housing-and-contingency-accommodation) [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. BBC News 5 July 2021 ‘[Benefits and disability: 'I'll never cohabit again, to protect myself](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/disability-57482418)'’ [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Women’s Regional Consortium (September 2022) [Women living with debt](https://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Women-Living-with-Debt.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Women’s Regional Consortium (April 2020)[Response to Work & Pensions Committee Inquiry into Universal Credit Five Week Wait for First Payment](https://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/April-2020-Womens-Regional-Consortium-Response-to-Work-Pensions-Committee-Inquiry-into-Universal-Credit-Five-Week-Wait-for-First-Payment.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Department of Education press release 19 November 2020 ‘[School holiday food grants to be extended until Easter 2022’](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/school-holiday-food-grants-be-extended-until-easter-2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Department of Education press release 20 October 2022 ‘[McIlveen announces £5.5m school holiday food grant’](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/mcilveen-announces-ps55m-school-holiday-food-grant) [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Translink press release 11 March 2022 ‘[Breastfeeding Welcome Here’](https://www.translink.co.uk/corporate/media/pressreleases/breastfeedingwelcomehere) [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Public Health Agency (2020) [Breastfeeding in Northern Ireland](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-05/Hi%20Brief%20Breastfeeding%20February%202020%20FINAL_0.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. The Inquiry into abortion legislation in Northern Ireland under Article 8 of the Optional Protocol to CEDAWdirectly contributed to the decriminalisation of abortion through an amendment to the [Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/22/enacted) passed by the Westminster Parliament in July 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. [Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/345/contents/made) [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. The Regulations provide for abortions up to 12 weeks’ gestation without a specific reason, and beyond this time period in specific circumstances including fatal foetal abnormality [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. No services have been commissioned by the Department of Health, and there has been no training, funding or staff resources, resulting in a postcode lottery for abortion access. Surgical abortions are not being performed, and the Health and Social Care Trusts authorised to perform these are interpreting available guidance in a manner where each case is adjudicated on individually by the Trust Board. The Department of Health has confirmed no communication campaign is planned, and no central information source is available. There is anecdotal evidence from Doctors and from Alliance for Choice of women being delayed past ten weeks, following contact with healthcare providers opposed to abortion, funded by American fundamentalist organisations, which feature prominently in online searches for emergency pregnancy services.  [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. For further information see eg. Alliance for Choice (21 October 2020) [Open Letter to Robin Swann, Health Minister for Northern Ireland](https://www.alliance4choice.com/news/2020/10/open-letter-to-robin-swann-health-minister-for-northern-ireland); abortion has been added to the existing sexual and reproductive health service with no additional funding resulting in abortions not being performed. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. [The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/365/contents/made); [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. House of Commons (22 July 2021) [Statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made on 22 July 2021: The Abortion Services Directions 2021](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-22/hcws238) [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. [The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/554/made) [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Northern Ireland Office press release 2 December 2022 ‘[Secretary of State for Northern Ireland instructs the Department of Health to commission abortion services’](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-for-northern-ireland-instructs-the-department-of-health-to-commission-abortion-services#:~:text=This%20instruction%20follows%20the%20UK,post%2Dabortion%20care%20are%20available.) [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Department of Health (30 March 2020) [Temporary approval of home use for both stages of early medical abortion](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-approval-of-home-use-for-both-stages-of-early-medical-abortion--2)  [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Scottish Government (31 Mar 2020) [Abortion – Covid-19 – approval for mifepristone to be taken at home and other contingency measures.](https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO%282020%2909.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. *Irish Medical Times,*27 March 2020 ‘[Telemedicine abortion consultations permitted — Health Minister](https://www.imt.ie/uncategorised/telemedicine-abortion-consultations-permitted-health-minister-27-03-2020/)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. [Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/25/enacted) [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. BBC Northern Ireland News 23 May 2022 ‘[HRT shortage: 'Safe alternatives' may be offered in Northern Ireland’](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-61545683) [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Health and Social Care Board -[Review of the Gender Service Identity pathway](http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/gender-identity-service/), The review has failed to adequately consult with the groups primarily affected. There have been no interim measures to support trans communities. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Mongan, D et al (November 2021) [Perinatal mental healthcare in Northern Ireland: challenges and opportunities](0.1017/ipm.2021.71)**.** In *Ir J Psychol Med* 2021 Nov 29;1-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Department of Health (June 2021). [Mental health strategy 2021-31](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-mhs-strategy-2021-2031.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Department of Health press release 25 October 2022 ‘[Swann visits new perinatal mental health team](https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/swann-visits-new-perinatal-mental-health-team)’ [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. BBC News 28 November 2022 ‘[Mothers go to Stormont to call for better maternity care’](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63778981) [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Perry, C (2016) Education system in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. An indication of this is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, which in 2020-21 was 37% in non selective secondary schools and 14% in selective schools (latest available figures). Statistics from McClure, H & McNally, M (2022) [School Meals in Northern Ireland 2020-21](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/37857/1/School%20Meals%20in%20Northern%20Ireland%202020-21%20statistical%20bulletin%20%28redacted%29.pdf). Belfast: Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency and Department of Education. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Ballantine, J, Rouse, M & Gray, AM (2021) [Gender Budgeting: Working Paper 2 Case Study: Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland](https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2021-02/Gender_Budgeting-2.pdf). Belfast: Access Research Knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Department for Communities (January 2021) [Equality Impact Assessment - Draft DfC Budget 2021-2022](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/equality-impact-assessment-draft-dfc-budget-2021-2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. #  Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (March 2021) ‘[Statistical Bulletin: Higher Level Apprenticeships (Level4/5) in Northern Ireland: Academic years: 2017/18 - 2019/2](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/higher-level-apprenticeship-statistical-bulletin-2019-20.pdf)0’

 [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Department for the Economy (February 2021) [Economic Recovery Action Plan](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/economic-recovery-action-plan) [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Department for the Economy (July 2021[) A Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10x economy](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/skills-strategy-northern-ireland-skills-10x-economy) [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. CEDAW Committee (2018) [Inquiry into abortion legislation in Northern Ireland under Article 8 of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=3&DocTypeCategoryID=7) [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (2019) [Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: Post-Primary](https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-post-primary); Teachers report feeling ill-equipped to deliver RSE. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Lessons are often based on religious concepts, the charity [Love for Life](https://www.loveforlife.org.uk/) reports that as many as 70 per cent of post primary schools engage its services [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. In particular LGBTQI+ pupils report poor experiences with bullying and harassment in school, including lack of expertise handling issues. New legislation in autumn 2021 provided a legal definition of bullying and strengthened duties of schools (Department of 4 March 2021 ‘[Weir announces new legislation to address bullying in schools](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/weir-announces-new-legislation-address-bullying-schools)). Legislation on issues such as upskirting is not yet in place - Department of Justice 5 July 2021 ‘[Long introduces legislation to strengthen law on sexual offences and trafficking](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/long-introduces-legislation-strengthen-law-sexual-offences-and-trafficking)’. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Belfast Youth Forum, Common Youth and Queen’s University Belfast (2019) [Any Use?](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/youth-forum/Any-use-report#ourfindings) [↑](#footnote-ref-157)