

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



Commission Statement on  
Equality in Northern Ireland

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# Participation in Public Life

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Summary Report

3 of 6  
Areas of Life

May 2024

This is the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Statement on Equality in Northern Ireland. This document is a summary of data analysed for the area of life: **Participation in Public Life**. It is one of six documents to highlight the findings from analyses of data, to identify differences in equality outcomes, for a range of population indicators in six areas of life in Northern Ireland.

All six documents, which constitutes parts of the Statement, are drawn from the Commission's Framework for Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland. The Framework was developed through extensive consultation with those interested and representing equality groups in Northern Ireland, and through ongoing engagement for the development of population indicators and sources of evidence. The Framework will enable the Commission to identify differences in equality outcomes and to track those differences over time.

The Statement covers six broad areas of life in Northern Ireland:



**Education**



**Employment**



**Participation  
in Public Life**



**Health and  
Social Care**



**Standards of  
Living and  
Housing**



**Communities that  
are Welcoming  
and Inclusive**

The outcome area identified for **Participation in Public Life** is as follows, with the **associated priority areas**:

*There is equality of opportunity in access and participation in decision making*

- **Representativeness in Political Life:** Greater representativeness in the political life for Northern Ireland
- **Representativeness in Public Life:** Greater representativeness in government public appointments.
- **Access to Participation in Public Life:** People are supported and empowered to influence decision-making processes that affect them through participation in public life.

Where possible, the findings presented in this Statement highlight the observable differences **across equality groups** from the overall values recorded for entire samples of population from surveys and administrated datasets. Furthermore, and where possible, the Statement also highlights the key differences between equality groups **within** their respective **equality grounds**.

## The Indicator and Data Status for the Priority Areas

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### Representativeness in Political Life:

**Data Status:** No data was available for the one population indicator identified for this priority area.

### Representativeness in Public Life:

**Data Status:** 4-8 Grounds were analysed; Public Appointments Report for Northern Ireland; Statistics and Research Branch, The Executive Office (TEO)

In respect to representativeness in public life, three measures were used to identify differences in equality outcomes for the equality groups. This was achieved for between four to eight equality grounds, based upon whether the measures collected data for particular equality grounds and the disclosure controls but in place against those measures. For reporting on representativeness in public life, the summary tables below present the last year of the analyses, 2021/22.

The analyses of the data indicates that generally the equality groups with the lowest percentage shares of those **applying** for public appointments were those from a minority ethnic group (2%), people in the age group of 18-29 (2%), those declaring an Other sexual orientation than heterosexual (4%), and people with disabilities (9%). Those equality groups with the lowest percentage shares of those **appointed** were those in the age group of 18-29 (2%), applicants with a disability declared (9%), and applicants with Neither community background (12%). Those with lower percentage shares of **appointments held** that year were individuals with a disability (5%), individuals from the age group of 18-39 (8%), individuals with Neither community background (14%) and females (42%).

## Access to Participation in Public Life:

**Data Status:** Data was collected, analysed and presented for all nine equality grounds; Public Opinion Survey of Equality in Northern Ireland – 2023; Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The MENI framework utilised three performance indicators for the measurement of access to participation in public life. These indicators used measures obtained from the Equality Commission’s Public Opinion Survey of Equality in Northern Ireland 2023,

Looking across two measures, the equality groups less likely to agree with the statements “I would **consider participating** in voluntary and community work” and “I would **consider applying** to sit on a public board” were men compared with women, those aged 65+ compared to other age groups, respondents with a disability compared to those with no disability, those with no dependents compared to those with dependents, non-carers compared to carers, and widowed respondents compared to married/cohab., single, separated/divorced respondents.

The equality groups less likely to agree with the statement “I am **confident I have the knowledge and understanding of how to apply** for public appointments and other school and community boards” were those aged 65+ compared to other age groups, respondents with a disability compared to those with no disability, heterosexual compared with LGBTQI+ respondents, those with no dependents compared to those with dependents, non-carers compared with carers, and widowed respondents compared to married/cohab., single separated/divorced.



Priority Area:

## Representativeness in Political Life

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Greater representativeness in the political life  
for Northern Ireland

**Population Indicator:** Composition of electoral representatives by equality ground

**Data Source:** Unknown

**Data Provider:** Unknown

**Data Status:** No data available for this population indicator.



Priority Area:

## Representativeness in Public Life

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Greater representativeness in government public appointments<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **Definition:** “A public appointment is generally an appointment, made by government Minister, to the Board of a public body. Public Bodies are not part of Government Departments, but carry out their functions, to different extents, at arm’s length from their sponsoring Department” (Public Appointments Report for Northern Ireland, p6)

**Population Indicator: Composition of government public applications/appointments by equality ground - Percentage of applications received.**

**Data Source:** Public Appointments Report for Northern Ireland – March 2023

**Data Provider:** Statistics and Research Branch, The Executive Office (TEO)

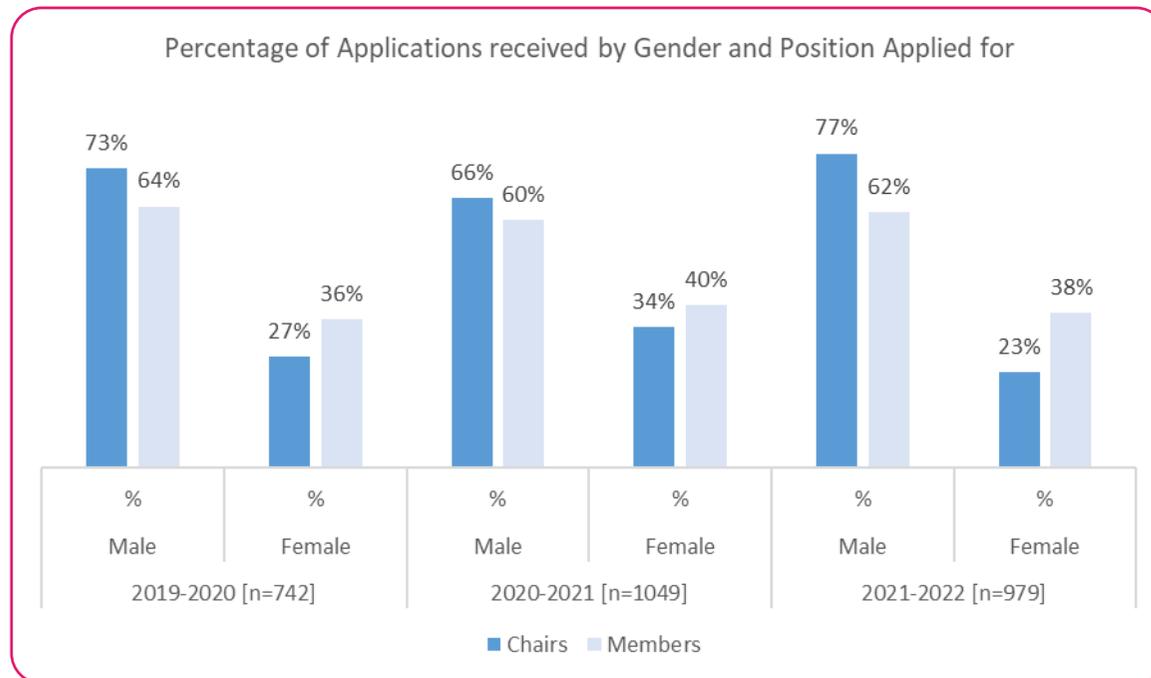
**Data Status:** Data was collected analysed and presented for eight equality grounds, with political opinion excluded.

The equality groups with the highest percentage shares of those applying for public appointments in 2021-2022 were white applicants (98%), followed by heterosexual applicants (96%), applicants with no disability declared (91%), married or in a civil partnership (80%) applicants, male applicants (63%) and applicants with no dependents (62%). The equality groups with the lowest shares of those applying for public appointments were those from a minority ethnic group (2%), people in the age group of 18-29 (2%), those declaring an Other sexual orientation than heterosexual (4%), and people with disabilities (9%).



**Applications received by Gender and Position Applied for<sup>2</sup>**

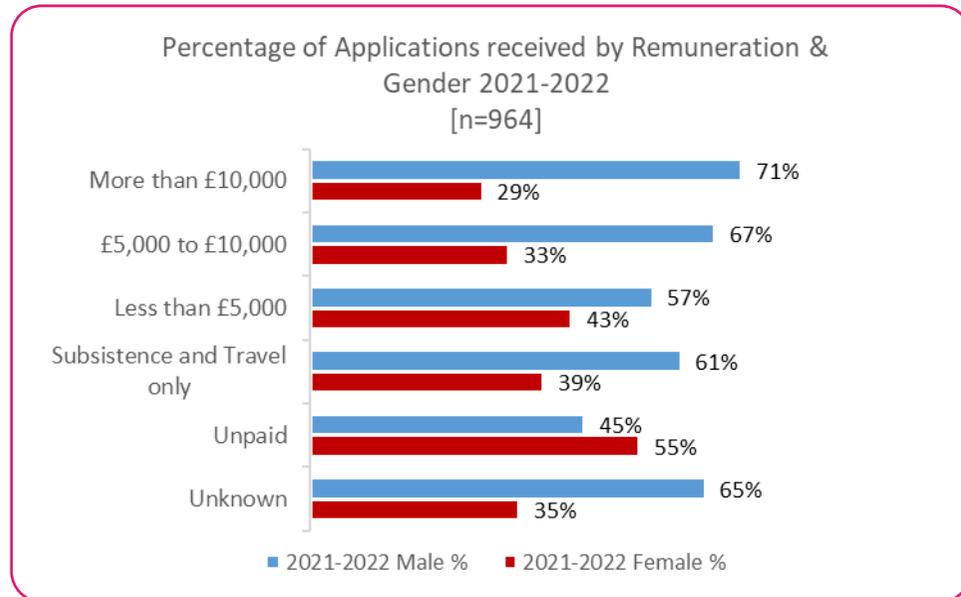
In 2021/22, the percentage share of applications by males to chair positions was 77%, and 23% by females. The percentage share of applications by males to member positions was 62%, and 38% by females.



<sup>2</sup> Those who applied for both members and chair positions are included in both the “members” and “chair” categories in the data charts and those in Director and Vice-Chair positions are included in the “Member” category only as stated by the data provider (TEO).

**Applications received by Remuneration & Gender<sup>3</sup>**

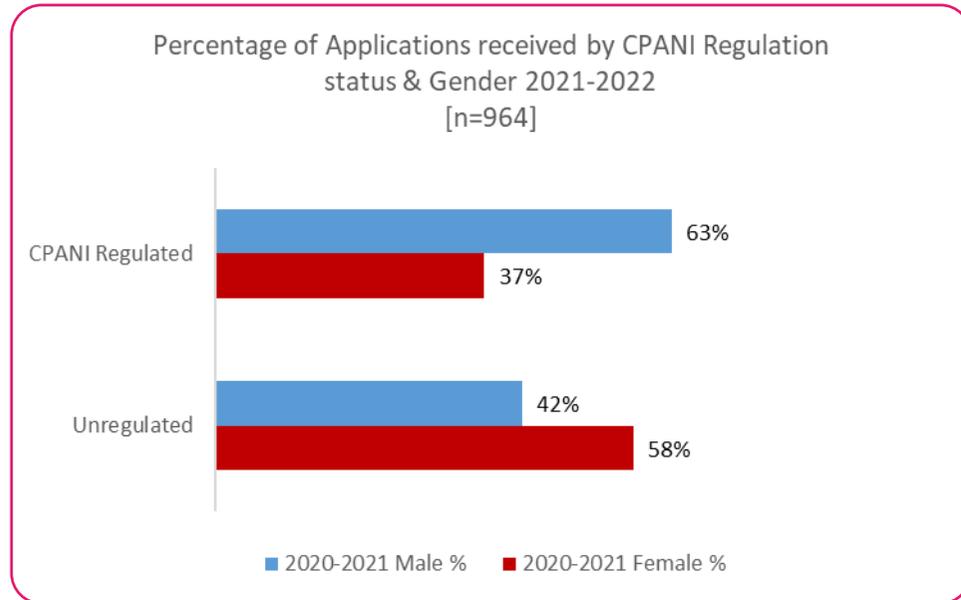
In 2021/22, 71% of applications for the highest remunerations (greater than £10,000) came from male applicants while 29% were from female applicants. This trend was also prevalent for the two previous years under analysis.



<sup>3</sup> Unpaid and Subsistence/Travel only have been combined due to statistical disclosure as stated by the data provider (TEO).

**Applications received by CPANI Regulation status & Gender<sup>4</sup>**

In 2021/22, the percentage shares of female applicants (58%) to unregulated appointments exceeded the percentage shares of male applicants (42%). Also, for 2021/22, male applicants (63%) represented the greater share of those applying to regulated appointments, with a female applicant share of 37%. A similar trend is present for the previous years.



<sup>4</sup> Unregulated appointment and Unknown have been combined due to statistical disclosure as stated by data provided (TEO)

**Population Indicator: Composition of government public applications/appointments by equality ground - Percentage of applications received - Appointments made**

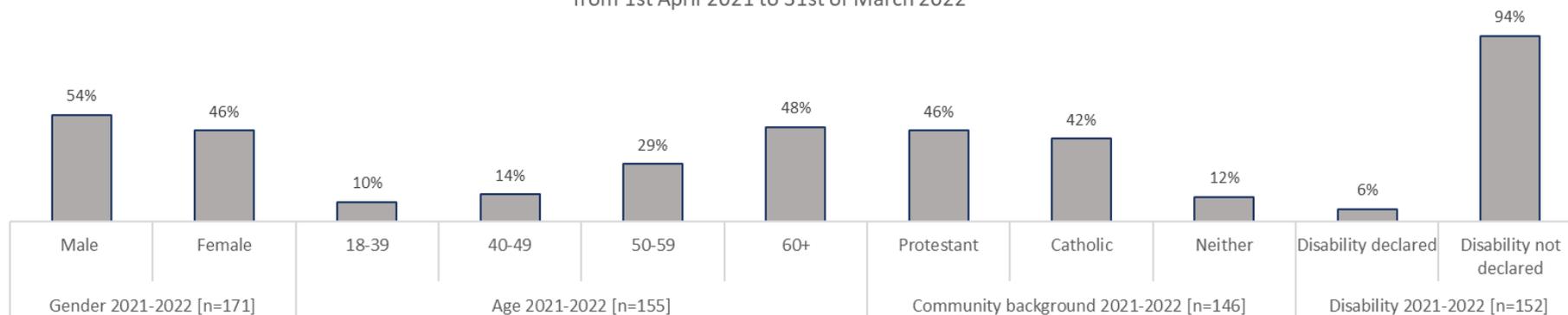
**Data Source:** Public Appointments Report for Northern Ireland – March 2023

**Data Provider:** Statistics and Research Branch, The Executive Office (TEO)

**Data Status:** Due to disclosure control, data on the following equality grounds to assist this performance measure was removed by the data provider from the dataset submitted to the Commission: ethnicity, marital status, sexual orientation, political opinion and for those with and without dependents.

Those with the greatest shares of appointments to public appointment in 2021/2022 were applicants with disability not declared (94%), male (54%), those with a Protestant community background (46%), and applicants in the age group of over 60+ (48%). Those equality groups with the lowest percentage shares of those appointed were those in the age group of 18-29 (2%), applicants with a disability declared (6%), and applicants with Neither community background (12%).

Percentage of public appointments made by equality ground when it is known from 1st April 2021 to 31st of March 2022



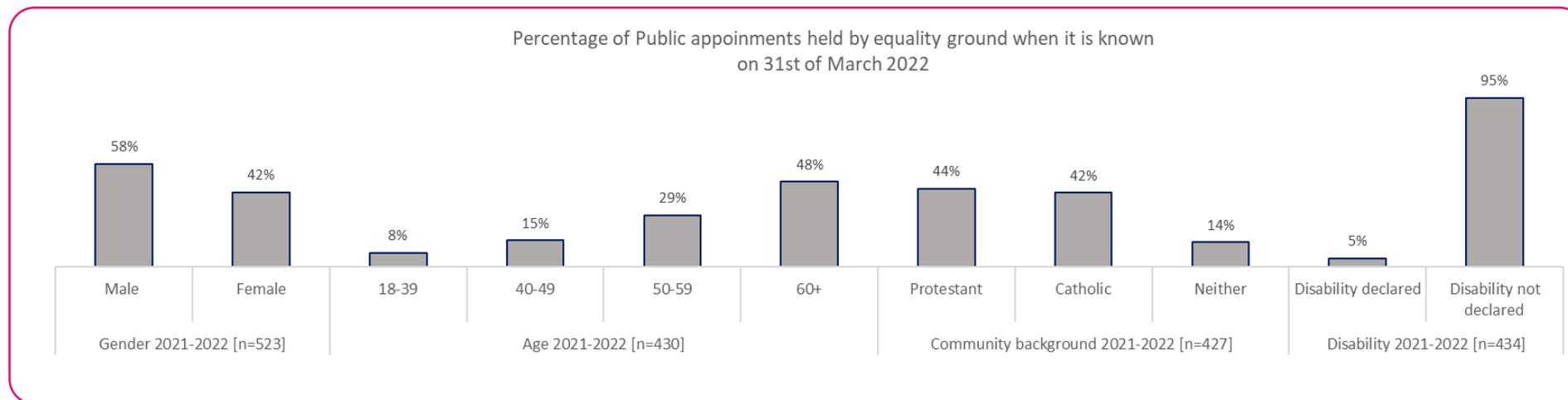
**Population Indicator: Composition of government public applications/appointments by equality ground - Percentage of applications received - Appointments held**

**Data Source:** Public Appointments Report for Northern Ireland – March 2023

**Data Provider:** Statistics and Research Branch, The Executive Office (TEO)

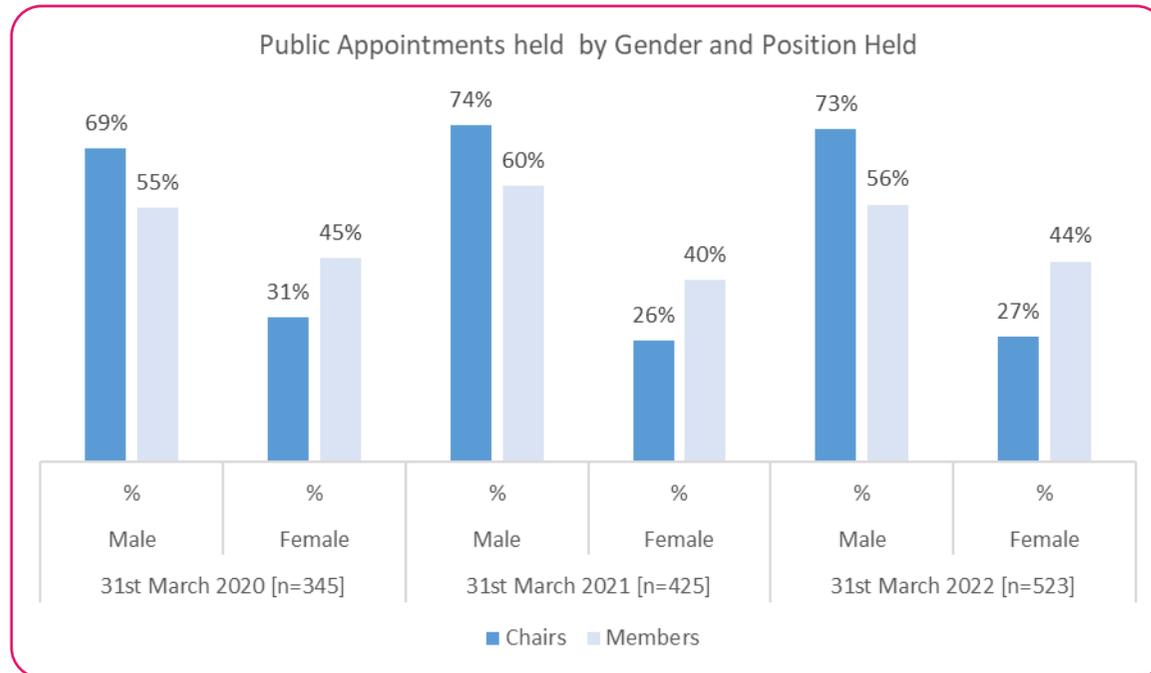
**Data Status:** Due to disclosure control, data on the following equality grounds to assist this performance measure was removed by the data provider from the dataset submitted to the Commission: ethnicity, marital status, sexual orientation, political opinion and for those with and without dependents.

Those with the highest proportions of appointments held on 31st of March 2022 were individuals with a no disability declared (95%), males (58%), individuals over 60+, and those with a Protestant community background (44%). Those with lower percentage shares of appointments held that year were individuals with a disability (5%), individuals from the age group of 18-39 (8%), individuals with Neither community background (14%) and females (42%).



**Appointments held by gender and position held.**

There were noticeable differences between in the percentage shares of appointments held by males and females for the positions of chairs and members over the three years of analysis. In 2021/22, the percentage shares for male appointments held for the positions of chairs was 73%, and for member positions was 56%.





Priority Area:

## Access to Participation in Public Life

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People are supported and empowered to influence decision-making processes that affect them through participation in public life.

**Population Indicator: Percentage of people who would consider participating in voluntary or community work.**

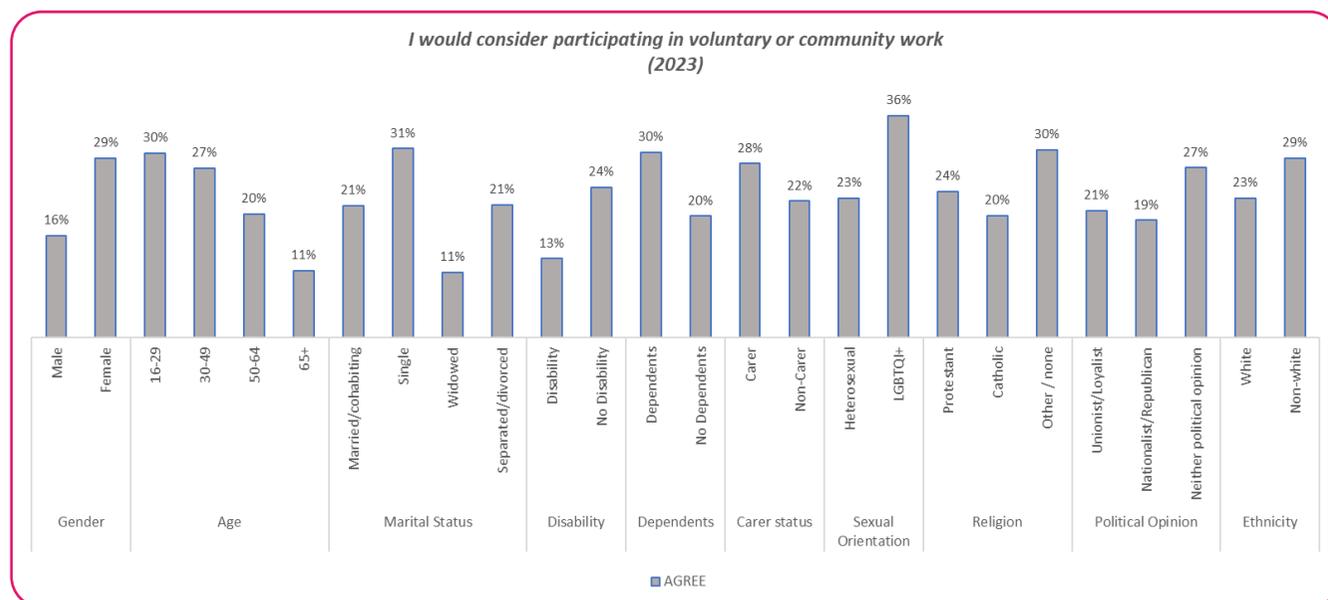
**Data Source:** Public Opinion Survey of Equality in Northern Ireland - 2023

**Data Provider:** Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

**Data Status:** Data was collected, analysed and presented for all nine equality grounds.

Across all equality groups, respondents more likely to agree with the statement “I would consider participating in voluntary and community work” were LGBTQI+ respondents (36%), single respondents (31%), respondents with dependents (30%), respondents with Other or No religion (30%), those in age group 16-29 (30%), female (29%), non-white (29%) and carer respondents (28%), compared to an overall agreement level of 23%.

Within equality grounds, those less likely to agree with the statement “I would consider participating in voluntary and community work” were men (16%) compared with women (29%), those aged 65+ (11%) compared to other age groups (16-29, 30%: 30-49, 27%: 50-64, 20%), respondents with a disability (13%) compared to those with no disability (24%), Unionist/Loyalist (21%) or Nationalist/Republican (19%) respondents compared to those with Neither political opinion (27%), those with no dependent children (20%) compared to those with dependent children (30%), non-carers (22%) compared to carers (28%), and widowed (11%) respondents compared to married/cohab. (21%), single (31%), separated/divorced (21%).



**Population Indicator: Percentage of people who would consider applying to sit on a public board (such as a school’s board of governors or a board for a publicly funded body)**

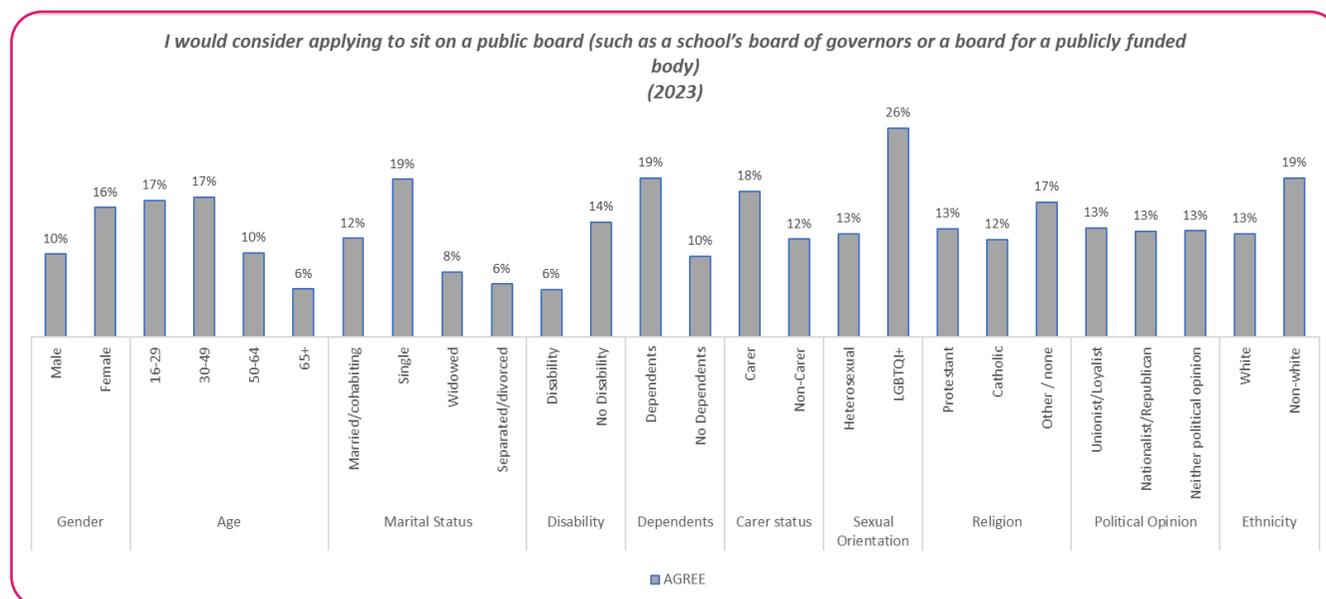
**Data Source:** Public Opinion Survey of Equality in Northern Ireland - 2023

**Date Provider:** Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

**Data Status:** Data was collected, analysed and presented for all nine equality grounds.

Across equality groups, respondents more likely to agree with the statement “I would consider applying to sit on a public board (such as a school’s board of governors or a board of a public funded body)” were: LGBTQI+ respondents (26%), single (19%), those with dependents (19%), non-white respondents (19%), those who were carers (18%), respondents in the age groups 16-29 and 30-49 (17%), respondents with Other or No religion (17%), and female respondents (16%) compared to an overall level of agreement of 13%.

Within equality grounds, those less likely to agree with the statement were men (10%) compared with women (16%), those aged 65+ (6%) compared to other age groups (16-29, 17%: 30-49, 17%: 50-64, 10%), respondents with a disability (6%) compared to those with no disability (14%), those with no dependents (10%) compared to those with dependents (20%) non carers (12%) compared with carers (18%), heterosexual respondents (13%) compared with LGBTQI+ (26%) respondents, separated/divorced (7%) or widowed (8%) respondents compared to respondents who are married/cohabiting (12%) or single (19%).



**Population Indicator:** Percentage of people who feel they are confident, have the knowledge and understanding of how to apply for public appointments and other boards.

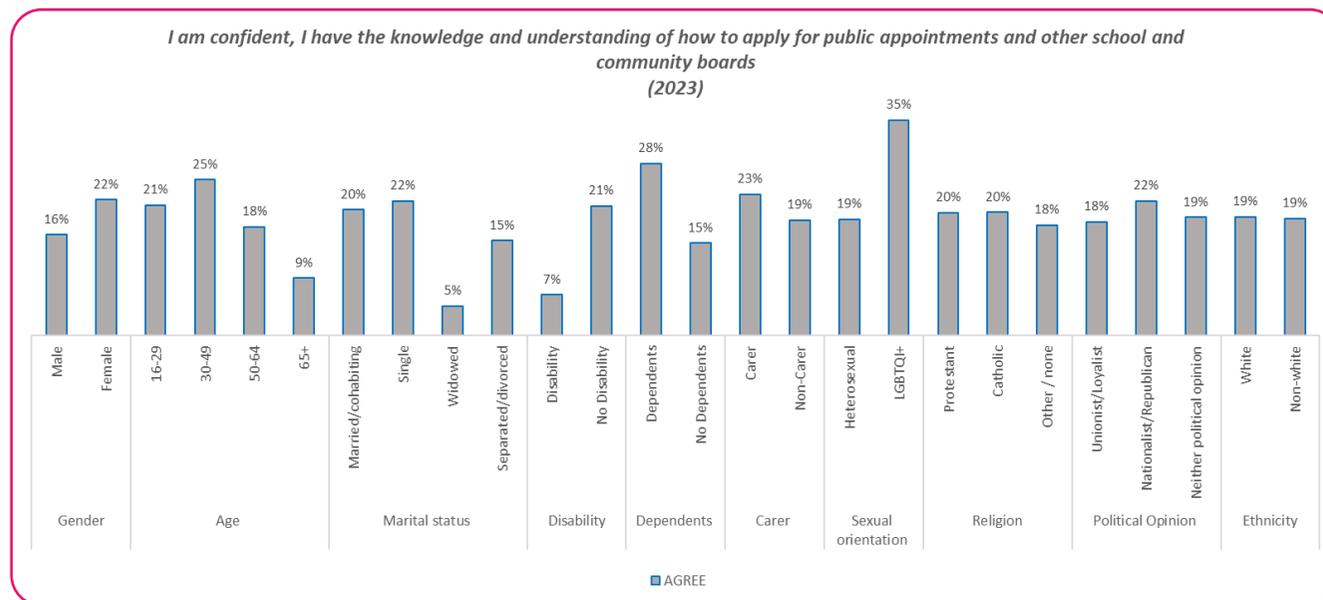
**Data Source:** Public Opinion Survey of Equality in Northern Ireland - 2023

**Date Provider:** Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

**Data Status:** Data was collected, analysed and presented for all nine equality grounds.

Across all equality groups, respondents more likely to agree with the statement “I am confident I have the knowledge and understanding of how to apply for public appointments and other school and community boards” were LGBTQI+ respondents (35%), respondents with dependents (28%), respondents in the age group of 30-49 (25%), and carers (23%) compared to an overall level of agreement of 19%.

Within equality grounds, respondents less likely to agree with the statement were those aged 65+ (9%) compared to other age groups (16-29, 21%: 30-49, 25%: 50-64, 18%), respondents with a disability (7%) compared to those with no disability (21%), heterosexual (19%) compared with LGBTQI+ (35%) respondents, those with no dependents (15%) compared to those with dependents (28%), non-carers (19%) compared with carers (23%), and widowed respondents compared to married/cohab. (20%:), single (22%) separated/divorced (15%).





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