



**women's**  
**RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
Supporting Women's Groups and Networks Across Northern Ireland

6 Mount Charles  
Belfast  
BT7 1NZ

Tel: +44 028 9023 0212

Fax: +44 028 9024 4363

E-mail: [info@wrda.net](mailto:info@wrda.net)

Web: [www.wrda.net](http://www.wrda.net)

**WRDA response to the Executive Office Consultation on proposals for the withdrawal of two compendia official statistics publications - 'A profile of older people in Northern Ireland' and 'Gender Equality Statistics' annual publications.**

**Submitted 22/11/16**

**WRDA objects to the removal of these two publications by The Executive Office as they form a vital part of the process of monitoring equality outcomes for older people and women. As an organisation working for women's equality we will focus particularly on the Gender Equality Statistics Update.**

There is a legal duty on the Executive to monitor the impact of all law and policy on women, looking for any direct or indirect discrimination. This duty exists in domestic equality and human rights law as well as through obligations under international human rights treaties. For example, in order to meet the core obligations of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the UN Committee requires that the Executive adopt the following implementation measure: *'Developing and establishing valid indicators of the status of and progress in the realization of human rights of women, and establishing and maintaining databases disaggregated by sex and related to the specific provisions of the Convention.'* (UNCEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 28) The Convention on Economic and Social Rights also requires the Executive to *'develop monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the implementation of laws and policies aimed at promoting the equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by men and women do not have unintended adverse effects on disadvantaged or marginalized individuals or groups, particularly women and girls'*. (CESCR Committee, General Comment 20)

While we appreciate that gender disaggregated data is quite widely available in Northern Ireland we believe that the removal of the Gender Equality Statistics Update would mean that the raw data would not be translated into a meaningful monitoring mechanism for measuring the impact of law and policy on women and girls and the progress made towards gender equality.

As the Executive works towards the implementation of its Open Data Strategy (2015-18) we note the following commitment: *'We will ensure the open data formats we publish are relevant to the users. We will build the skills and capability within government to proactively release relevant datasets.'* This reflects the principles contained in the G8 Charter on Open Data to ensure that data is of a high quality and that it is *'useable by all'*.

As users of government data, WRDA is urging the Executive Office to retain the Gender Equality Statistics Update as it is currently the only statistical publication that provides a cross-cutting review of indicators of



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Supporting Women's Groups & Networks across Northern Ireland

Inland Revenue Charity No. XR94553  
Company Reg. No. NI22541

gender equality. In line with the Executive's own commitment we call on the Executive Office to 'proactively release' this very 'relevant' and comprehensive dataset. While the Women in NI report produced by NISRA from the NI Labour Force Survey provides a valuable evidence base on a range of work and education related indicators, it is narrow in its scope.

The provision of links to the various data sets that would normally be used in the report is not sufficient to make this data useable and accessible. On reviewing the 2015 Gender Equality Statistics Update we found that there were 34 separate data sources cited, not all of which are publically available and licensed appropriately. We do not believe that a user interested in monitoring gender equality could access the evidence base that this publication provides by their own efforts. It certainly does not appear reasonable for the Executive to expect users to do this given their duty to use data to monitor the impact of law and policy on women.

We are conscious that the Executive Office no longer holds responsibility for the gender equality strategy and accept that a renewed strategy brought forward by the Department for Communities should be accompanied by a monitoring mechanism that measures progress across the strategy's indicators. However, there is no information forthcoming from the Department for Communities about their intentions to renew the gender equality strategy once it expires in 2017. It is not acceptable that moving a strategy between departments should lead to a complete loss of essential monitoring of equality indicators. As the Department with overall responsibility for equality and human rights it would be neglectful for the Executive Office to stop monitoring gender equality data and making it accessible to users, knowing that there is currently nothing to replace it from any other departments.

Likewise we note the reference to the monitoring mechanisms around the new Programme for Government and the suggestion that this work will replace some currently produced statistical reports. However, it is not evident from the PfG consultation and the associated EQIA documentation that the PfG measures will cover anywhere near the breadth of gender equality indicators that are currently contained in the Gender Equality Statistics Update. As women's organisations are currently engaging with the Executive Office on the PfG consultation we are seeking to raise the profile of gender inequality within the PfG framework. However, to make the decision at this stage to remove the only comprehensive review of gender equality indicators seems extremely premature and leaves a vacuum in the Executive's evidence base in this area. Not only does this make equality data less accessible to users and the general public, it will also affect the Executive's ability to provide accurate reports to UN treaty body examination processes.

**In conclusion WRDA urges the Executive Office to retain the Gender Equality Statistics Update publication at this time. We would be happy for the Executive Office to review the decision at a later stage if a new gender equality strategy is released by the Department for Communities with accompanying monitoring mechanisms. We do not feel it is appropriate for the department with lead responsibility for equality and human rights to stop producing a comprehensive monitoring document on gender equality while there is nothing to replace it.**

*wrda*

Supporting Women's Groups & Networks across Northern Ireland



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Inland Revenue Charity No. XR94553  
Company Reg. No. NI22541