
'The Grass Ceiling'

**Audit of Women in Rural
Areas in the North of Ireland**

**Written by Marie Crawley for the
Women's Resource and Development Agency**

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The Women's Resource and Development Agency welcomes wide use of this Audit, but please always cite the source clearly, and acknowledge the author, Marie Crawley.

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Audit of Women in Rural Areas

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Foreword

This invaluable report provides us with a snapshot of the position of women in rural Northern Ireland. Rural women make up nearly one third of our population and, as we can see from the statistics, they are active in a multitude of ways, economically, socially and politically. They provide care for the young, the sick and the elderly. Over half of all women in full-time employment come from rural areas. The majority of members of rural community organisations are women. Society would be immeasurably the poorer without their often unpaid contribution. However, when it comes to involvement in decision making, the absence of women is striking. Reading through this report, the same picture emerges time and again: in education, health, social services, local government, councils, local strategy partnerships, community organisations, cultural and sporting organisations, those making the important decisions are almost entirely male.

Marie Crawley has provided us with a very timely and deeply disturbing report, coming as it does at a time of radical change arising from the Review of Public Administration. At the moment it is unclear where women will figure in the proposed new arrangements. As a women's organisation with a mission to advance women's equality and participation in society, WRDA is extremely concerned by the implications of the RPA. We believe that the current situation should alarm everyone concerned with ensuring that the new political and administrative structures being planned are representative of the whole of the population. The reduction in council seats is likely to result in less female representatives in 2009 and even fewer women among senior staff positions. Rationalisation of public bodies, particularly in education, health and social services will almost inevitably have an adverse impact on women.

The message from this report is that all decisions on the implementation of the RPA must be assessed for their capacity to enhance or restrict women's

participation in areas where they are already under-represented. The transition period between 2006 and 2009 provides a timeframe for all agencies involved in the implementation of the RPA to ensure that gender equality forms one of the overarching principles on which the new arrangements are crafted.

The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement affirmed 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'. We urge political parties to live up to this pledge by ensuring that their women councillors do not become the first casualty of the changes. Finally, we urge government to provide funding and incentives to political parties to increase their numbers of female candidates in order to ensure that the principle of gender parity is accepted by our politicians. Then, hopefully we can look forward to a gradual transformation of our political landscape.

Margaret Ward

Introduction to the report

This audit is intended to provide a statistical overview of women in rural society in the North of Ireland. It does so by presenting information on where women are placed in terms of decision making which affects rural communities and within rural communities. The main focus of the research is on gender representation on decision making bodies. Some information is also provided on key areas of employment.

The audit results represent a moment in time and as such are subject to variation. Board membership and staff positions change regularly and some changes may well have taken place since this research was conducted. However, the trends and overall picture are unlikely to have altered in any significant way. The primary sources used to gather information for this audit were the Northern Ireland Yearbook, NISRA census statistics and the Central Appointments Unit Public Appointments Annual Report. Finally, it should be noted that throughout this report, some percentages are rounded to one decimal place and may not necessarily total 100%.

Defining 'rural'

In Northern Ireland, there is no agreed understanding of what constitutes 'rural'. Different definitions have been applied to policy and strategy documents across Government Departments¹. For the purposes of this research, 'rural' is defined as all local authority areas in Northern Ireland with the exception of Belfast, Castlereagh, Derry, Lisburn, North Down, and Newtownabbey. Any further reference to rural women in this document will be on this basis.

¹ 'A Study on Rural Policy', Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, March 2005

Rural Northern Ireland



Map by Conal Kelly. Source: www.ark.ac.uk/elections

1 Women in Rural Areas - General

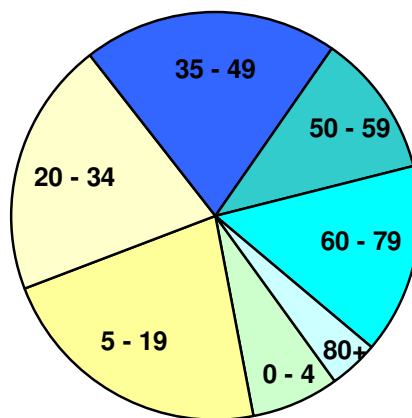
There are 490,822 women in rural Northern Ireland out of a NI population total of 863,872 women². Rural women therefore constitute 56.8% of the women of Northern Ireland, 29% of the population as a whole and 51% of the population of rural areas.

1.1 Age ranges of women in rural NI

They belong to the following age categories:

Total	0-4	5-19	20-34	35-49	50-59	60-79	80+
490,822	33,616	109,586	98,919	100,620	55,088	73,645	19,408

Source: NI Census 2001 Table S305



Age range of women in rural NI

² All statistics in this section are drawn from the 2001 census. Census statistics (2001). Source; Northern Ireland Statistics website: www.nisra.gov.uk. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

1.2 Number and percentage of Care Provider Hours by Gender

	Total Rural Population	Number of Care Providers	Number of hours provided		
			1 to 19	20 to 49	50 or more
Men	480,404	41,122 (9% of Men)	25762 (62%)*	5962 (15%)	9398 (23%)
Women	490,906	60,290 (12% of Women)	34855 (58%)	9402 (16%)	16033 (26%)

Source: NI Census 2001 Table T566C

* Figures in brackets represent the percentage of Care Providers, e.g., 62% of male carers provide 1 to 19 hours of care.

Note that there is a slight discrepancy in the totals for women given by NI Statistics Tables S305 (Section 1) and Table T556C (this section).

According to the above statistics (census based) 9% of men and 12% of women provide care in rural areas, which are similar to the NI population as a whole (9% and 13% respectively). The 'Informal Carers Report'³ published by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in 2001 presents statistics at variance from the census data. Its figures suggest that eighteen percent of respondents indicated that they act as informal carers; that is to say, they look after or give special help to someone who is sick, disabled or elderly. The research noted that women carried significantly more responsibility than men for the provision of care, with 20% of women providing care compared to 14% of men. The report also noted that this figure is slightly higher than the level of informal care reported in the 1995 Continuous Household Survey, which indicated that 14% of adults (10% of men and 17% of women) provided informal care. Neither of these figures is broken down on a rural / urban basis.

³ 'Informal Carers Report', Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety An Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí, 2001 www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

2 Employment

2.1 Employment Status - women in NI aged 16 to 74

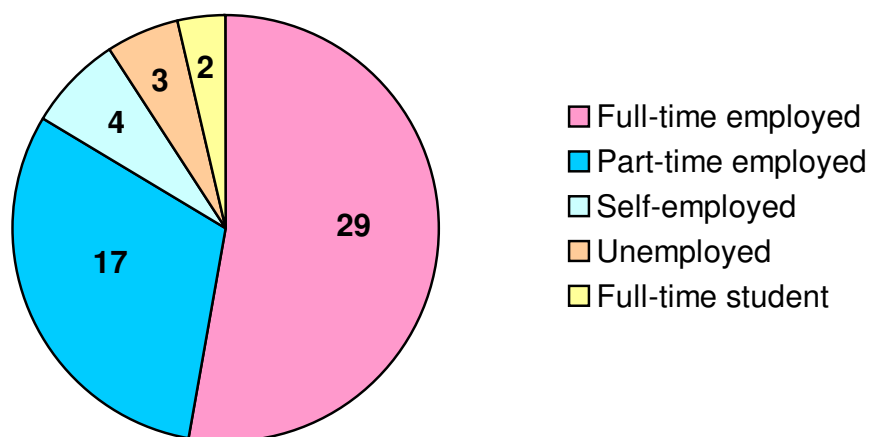
The following table outlines the economic status of women who are described in the census data as 'economically active' and compares rural women with women in NI as a whole. For census purposes; part-time is defined as working 30 hours or less a week. Full-time is defined as working 31 or more hours a week. 'Long-term unemployed' are those who stated that they have not worked since 1999 or earlier.

	All women aged 16-74 years	Economically active				
		Employee - full-time ¹	Employee - part-time ¹	Self-employed	Unemployed	Full-time student
Total for Northern Ireland	605,847	174,676 (29%)*	100,809 (17%)	19,287 (3%)	16,141 (3%)	16,186 (3%)
Rural Northern Ireland	341,808	98,824 (29%)	56,987 (17%)	12,645 (4%)	8,816 (2%)	7,514 (2%)
Rural women as % of the NI Total	56	57**	57	66	55	46

Source: NI Census 2001 Table KS09C

* The figures in brackets show the proportion for each cell as a percentage of all women. For example, in this case, full-time employees represent 29% of the total number of women aged 16-74 in Northern Ireland.

** The figures in bold show the proportion of rural women as a percentage of the total for Northern Ireland. In this case, women in full-time employment living in rural areas account for 57% of all full-time employed women in Northern Ireland.



Employment status of women aged 16 to 74 in rural NI

The following table presents information on women who are in the census described as 'economically inactive' and compares figures with those for women in NI as a whole.

'Economically Inactive'					
	Retired	Student	Looking after home/ family	Permanently sick/ disabled	Other
Total NI	76,905	36,729	79,809	54,366	30,939
Rural NI	41,894 (12%)*	20,236 (6%)	46,752 (14%)	29,712 (9%)	18,428 (5%)
Rural as a % of Total NI	55**	55	59	55	60

Source: NI Census 2001 Table KS09C (continued)

* The figures in brackets show the proportion for each cell as a percentage of all women (see previous Table). In this case, retired women represent 12% of the total number of women in rural Northern Ireland.

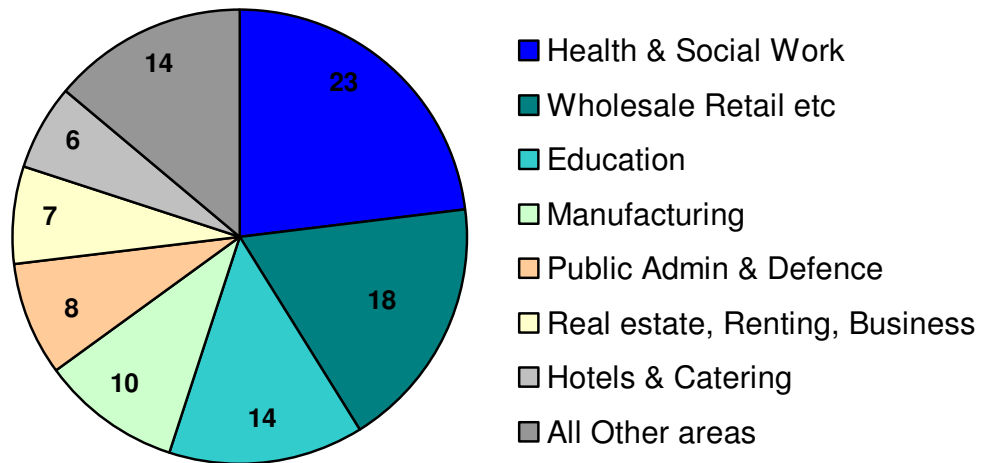
** The figures in bold show the proportion of rural women as a percentage of the total for Northern Ireland. In this case, retired women living in rural areas account for 55% of all retired women in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Areas of employment: women in rural NI

Women in rural NI are employed in the following areas.

Area of Employment	Number of Women	Percent of total no. of rural women in employment
Health and social work	41085	23
Wholesale & retail, repair of motor vehicles	30961	18
Education	24359	14
Manufacturing	16846	10
Public administration and defence	14527	8
Real estate, renting and business activities	11338	7
Hotels and catering	11011	6
All other areas (< 10,000 employees)	25060	14
Total	175187	100

Source: NI Census 2001 Table KS11C



Areas of employment for rural women in NI (% of total)

2.3 Categories of employment (occupations)

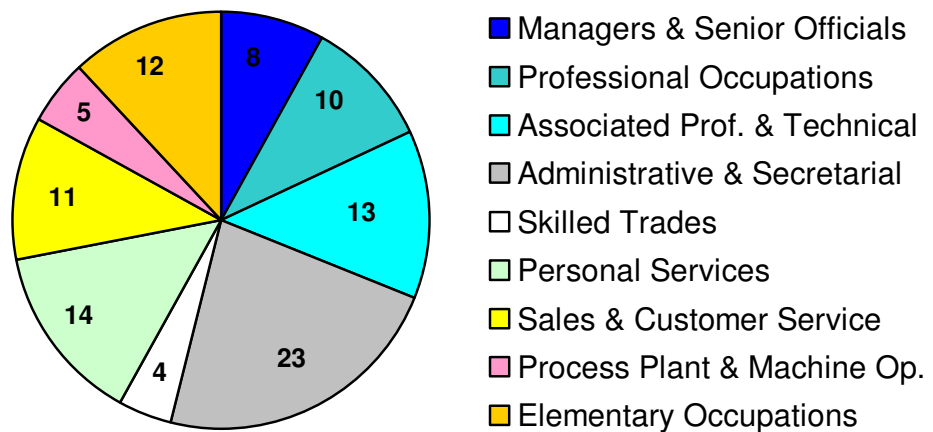
The following table presents statistics on the categories within which women are employed. This table compares women in rural areas with women in NI as a whole.

	Managers and senior officials	Professional occupations	Associate prof and technical occupation	Administrative and secretarial occupations	Skilled trades occupation	Personal service occupation	Sales and customer service occupation	Process, plant and machine operative	Elementary occupation
Total NI Women	25,086	34,359	41,525	73,034	9,986	39,165	36,290	12,792	37,016
Rural Women	13,806 (8%)*	18,198 (10%)	22,782 (13%)	40,057 (23%)	6,809 (4%)	23,516 (14%)	19,253 (11%)	9,249 (5%)	21,517 (12%)
Rural as % of Total NI Women	55**	53	55	55	68	60	53	72	58

Source: NI Census 2001 Table KS12C.

* The figures in brackets show the proportion for each cell as a percentage of all employed rural women. In this case, managers and senior officials represent 8% of the total number of women employed across all categories in rural Northern Ireland.

** The figures in bold show the proportion of rural women as a percentage of the total for Northern Ireland women. In this case managers and senior officials living in rural areas account for 55% of all female managers and senior officials in Northern Ireland.



Categories of employment of rural women (% of total rural women)

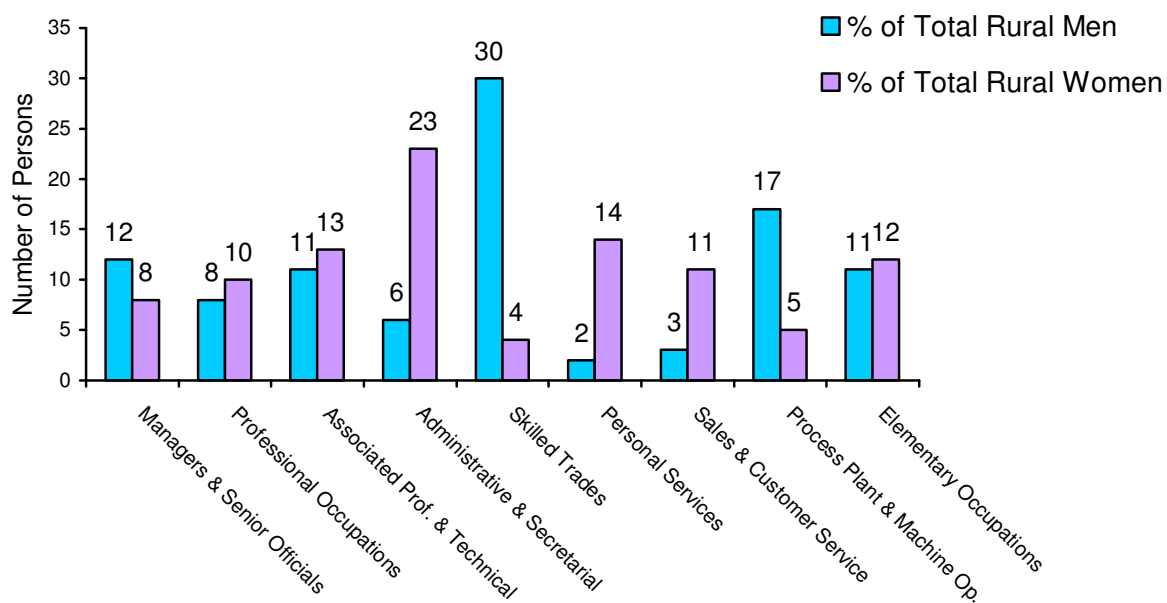
2.4 Categories of employment (occupations): rural men and women in NI

The following table presents statistics on the numbers of women in different categories of employment alongside numbers of men in the same areas of employment.

	Total	Manager and senior officials	Professional occupation	Associate professional and technical occupation	Admin and secretarial occupations	Skilled trades occupation	Personal service occupation	Sales and customer service occupation	Process, plant and machine operative	Elementary occupation
Rural Men	225842	26245 (12%)	18165 (8%)	23774 (11%)	13760 (6%)	68625 (30%)	3671 (2%)	7044 (3%)	38830 (17%)	25728 (11%)
Rural Women	175187	13,806 (8%)*	18,198 (10%)	22,782 (13%)	40,057 (23%)	6,809 (4%)	23,516 (14%)	19,253 (11%)	9,249 (5%)	21,517 (12%)

Source: NI Census 2001 Table KS12C

* The figures in brackets show the proportion for each cell as a percentage of all employed rural men or women. In this case, female managers and senior officials account for 8% of the total number of women employed in the given occupations in rural Northern Ireland.



Rural men and rural women in each category of occupation (% of total)

2.5 Employment in the NI Civil Service (NICS)

The following tables present information on employment in the civil service throughout rural NI. Given the centralised nature of the civil service, figures in some grades, particularly the most senior ones are relatively low.

Information is not available on two departments, Education and Health, Social Services and Public Safety as there are no posts in rural areas.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) aims to promote sustainable economic growth and the development of the countryside in Northern Ireland. The Department assists the competitive development of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, having regard for the need of the consumers, the welfare of animals and the conservation and enhancement of the environment. DARD has responsibility for food, farming, and environmental policy and the development of the rural sector in Northern Ireland. It provides a business development service for farmers and growers, and a veterinary service with administration of animal health and welfare. The Department also oversees the application of European Union agricultural and rural development policy to Northern Ireland.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	1	0
6 / 7	57	96	59
Deputy Principal	25	63	37
Staff Officer	66	158	30
Executive Officer	110	402	22
Administrative Officer	174	50	78
Administrative Assistant	154	51	75
Industrial	36	418	8

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

DCAL is responsible in Northern Ireland for developing policy, service delivery, administration and monitoring of arts and creativity, museums, libraries, sport and

leisure, visitor amenities, inland waterways and inland fisheries, Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, language diversity and the Northern Ireland Events Company.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	0	0	-
Deputy Principal	0	0	-
Staff Officer	0	3	0
Executive Officer	0	22	0
Administrative Officer	2	0	100
Administrative Assistant	1	2	33
Industrial	0	23	0

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

DETI is responsible for economic policy development, energy, tourism, mineral development, health and safety at work, Companies Registry, Insolvency Service, consumer affairs, and labour market and economic statistics services. It also has a role in ensuring the provision of the infrastructure for a modern economy. Economics, financial and personnel management services are provided centrally within the Department. DETI has four agencies, established as non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), to assist in strategy implementation; Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI), the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI), and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (GCCNI).

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	0	0	-
Deputy Principal	0	5	0
Staff Officer	0	2	0
Executive Officer	3	3	50
Administrative Officer	0	0	0
Administrative Assistant	0	2	0
Industrial	0	0	0

Department of Finance and Personnel

The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) has a wide range of functions but primarily administers the financial business of the Government of Northern Ireland and supplies a support service to the rest of the Northern Ireland departments.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	0	6	0
Deputy Principal	1	13	7
Staff Officer	2	11	15
Executive Officer	17	20	46
Administrative Officer	58	19	77
Administrative Assistant	16	7	70
Industrial	0	0	-

Department of Employment and Learning

The aim of the Department of Employment and Learning is to to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy. Its objectives are:

- To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training; and
- To help people into employment and promote good employment practices.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	1	1	50
Deputy Principal	2	1	67
Staff Officer	20	11	65
Executive Officer	262	63	81
Administrative Officer	205	35	85
Administrative Assistant	25	13	66
Industrial	0	0	-

Department of the Environment

The Department's aim is to improve the quality of life in Northern Ireland, now and for the future, by promoting a better and safer environment and supporting effective and efficient local government. Its objectives are:

- To protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and built heritage;
- To improve the quality of life of the people of Northern Ireland by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment;
- To reduce road casualties and
- To support a system of Local Government which meets the needs of residents and ratepayers.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	1	0
6 / 7	9	20	31
Deputy Principal	29	29	50
Staff Officer	50	95	35
Executive Officer	128	137	48
Administrative Officer	308	188	62
Administrative Assistant	143	74	66
Industrial	3	51	6

Department of Regional Development

The main responsibilities of the Department of Regional Development are: strategic planning; transportation strategy; ports and public transport; roads and water policy; providing and maintaining roads and providing and maintaining water and sewerage services.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	2	26	7
Deputy Principal	6	93	6
Staff Officer	18	166	10
Executive Officer	92	396	19

Administrative Officer	149	63	70
Administrative Assistant	99	183	35
Industrial	2	965	0.2

Department of Social Development

The Department of Social Development has strategic responsibility for urban regeneration, community and voluntary sector development, social legislation, housing, social security benefits, pensions and child support. Around 7,600 people are employed by the Department, approximately 91% of whom are located in the Social Security Agency and Child Support Agency.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	1	2	33
Deputy Principal	3	6	33
Staff Officer	20	14	59
Executive Officer	342	65	84
Administrative Officer	544	101	84
Administrative Assistant	132	80	62
Industrial	0	0	-

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (Armagh)

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is a fully functioning department of the Northern Ireland administration with a wide range of responsibilities.

The strategic objectives of the department include:

- supporting Ministers and the institutions of government;
- building a programme for government and modernising government programme;
- promoting better community relations, a culture of equality and rights,
- and targeting social need and promoting social inclusion.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	1	0	100
6 / 7	0	1	0
Deputy Principal	2	1	67
Staff Officer	1	2	33
Executive Officer	4	0	100
Administrative Officer	1	0	100
Administrative Assistant	1	1	50
Industrial	0	0	

Northern Ireland Office

The role of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is to support the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in securing a lasting peace, based on the Agreement in which the rights and identities of all traditions are fully respected and safeguarded and in which a safe, stable, just, open and tolerant society can thrive and prosper.

The NIO has responsibility for Northern Ireland's constitutional and security issues, in particular, law and order, political affairs, policing and criminal justice. It also has responsibility for matters relating to the licensing and legislation concerning firearms and explosives, including fireworks.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	6	12	33
Deputy Principal	10	26	28
Staff Officer	27	34	44
Executive Officer	62	33	65
Administrative Officer	120	24	83
Administrative Assistant	46	25	65
Industrial	2	0	100

Police Service of Northern Ireland (civilian posts)

The Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland was set up as part of the Agreement reached in Belfast on 10 April 1998. The task of the Commission was to

provide 'a new beginning to policing' in Northern Ireland. In its report published in 1999 [commonly referred to as the Patten Report] the Commission made 175 recommendations about policing in Northern Ireland. Amongst the recommendations were proposals regarding the composition, size and structure of the Police Service. It also recommended the creation of new accountability structures, and said that Human Rights and community policing should underline all of the work carried out by the Police Service. As a result of the recommendations, a new name, badge and uniform came into being. In November 2001 the RUC became the Police Service of Northern Ireland [PSNI]. The accountability structures include the Policing Board, the Police Ombudsman's Office and the 26 District Policing Partnerships.

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	0	0	-
6 / 7	0	0	-
Deputy Principal	0	0	-
Staff Officer	3	2	60
Executive Officer	48	9	84
Administrative Officer	95	11	90
Administrative Assistant	207	22	90
Industrial	0	73	0

The following table combines statistics from all the previous tables of NICS employees to provide a breakdown of total employees in the NICS (rural areas)

Total Employees in the NICS (rural areas)

Grade	Women	Men	% Women
5+	1	2	33
6 / 7	76	164	32
Deputy Principal	78	237	25
Staff Officer	207	498	29
Executive Officer	1068	1150	48
Administrative Officer	1656	491	77
Administrative Assistant	824	460	64
Industrial	43	1530	3
Total	3953	4532	47

2.6 Method of travel to work: Women in rural NI

	All	Work mainly at or from home	Train	Bus, minibus or coach	Motorcycle, scooter or moped	Driving a car or van	Passenger in a car or van	Car or van pool	Taxi	Bicycle	On foot	Other method
All	175,202	11,963	1,310	7,905	390	10,1759	17,948	10,525	2,263	574	20,219	346
16 to 19	9428	205	116	1341	36	1569	3187	406	444	22	2067	35
20 to 34	67289	2639	771	3689	165	40156	7260	4414	1022	155	6891	127
35 to 49	64783	4631	323	1794	126	42143	4418	4055	516	162	6511	104
55 to 59	27031	2985	85	872	51	15158	2415	1362	225	152	3676	50
60+	6671	1503	15	209	12	2733	668	288	56	83	1074	30

Source: NI Census 2001 Table S350

'Other method' includes no fixed place of work, working at offshore installation, working outside the UK.

3 Political Representation

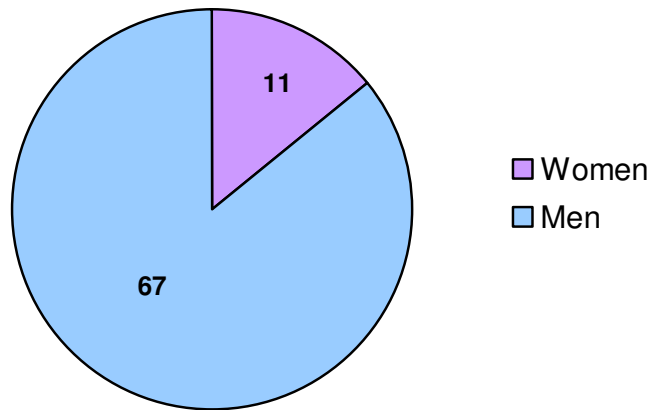
3.1 The Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly

The NI Assembly was established in 1998 as part of the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement (although it had no legislative powers until devolution in December 1999). It is composed of 108 elected members, 6 from each of the 18 Westminster constituencies. The Assembly has full legislative and executive authority to make laws and take decisions on all aspects of government except those non-devolved powers which remain the responsibility of the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.⁴ For the purposes of this audit, the results pertain to 13 of the 18 constituencies, omitting Foyle and the four Belfast constituencies.

Constituency	Men	Women	Total	% Women
East Antrim	6	0	6	0
North Antrim	6	0	6	0
South Antrim	6	0	6	0
North Down	5	1	6	16.7
South Down	4	2	6	33.3
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	4	2	6	33.3
Lagan Valley	4	2	6	33.3
East (London)Derry	6	0	6	0
Mid Ulster	5	1	6	16.7
Newry & Armagh	5	1	6	16.7
Strangford	5	1	6	16.7
West Tyrone	6	0	6	0
Upper Bann	5	1	6	16.7
Total	67	11	78	14.1

2003 Assembly Election Results

⁴ These are categorised into excepted and reserved matters. Reserved matters include policing, security, prisons, criminal justice, income tax, national insurance and regulation of telecommunications and broadcasting. Excepted matters include elections, Europe, Peace and Reconciliation and foreign policy.



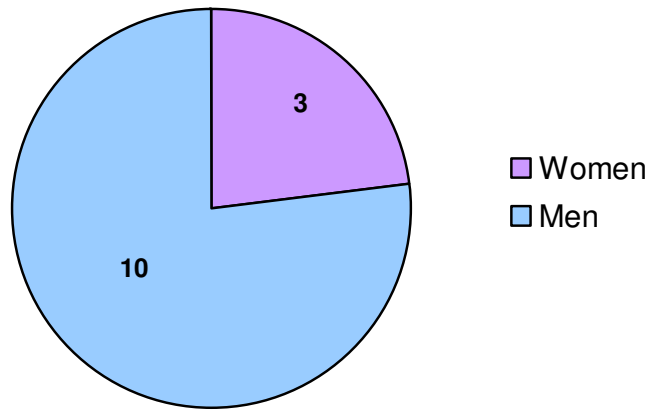
Number of male and female rural MLA's in the NI Assembly

3.2 Westminster

Northern Ireland is subject to the authority of the Westminster parliament and returns 18 M.Ps. As in the Assembly section, for the purposes of this audit, the results pertain to 13 of the 18 constituencies, omitting Foyle and the four Belfast constituencies.

Body	Men	Women	Total	% Women
Westminster	10	3	13	23.1

The three women were elected in the constituencies of Fermanagh/South Tyrone (Michelle Gildernew, SF), North Down (Lady Sylvia Hermon, UUP) and Strangford (Iris Robinson, DUP).



Number of male and female rural NI MPs at Westminster

4 Local Government

4.1 Local Government Staff Commission for NI

The Local Government Staff Commission for NI oversees and makes recommendations in relation to matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers within the 26 councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It also monitors the fair employment practices of Councils and their compliance with statutory requirements in relation to fair employment.

4.2 Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee

The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC), is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body, and was established on 1 April 1950 under the Local Government (Superannuation) Act 1950. Appointment of the Committee, which consists of a Chair and 10 other members, is subject to the approval of the Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The term of appointment is normally for a period of 4 years.

The Committee was set up to administer the NI Local Government Officers' Superannuation Scheme and to manage its pension fund. It represents the interests of officials of 210 employing authorities, with approximately 39,000 contributing members of the scheme; over 20,000 pensioners; and some 10,000 deferred pensioners. The fund has assets and investments worth over £1.7 billion.

Board	M	W	% W	Chair	CEO
Local Government Staff Commission for NI	15	0	0	M	M
NI Local Government Officer's Superannuation Committee*	10	1	9	M	M

* 5 are appointed by employing authorities; 5 by staff associations and trade unions

4.3 Local Government - Elected Representatives

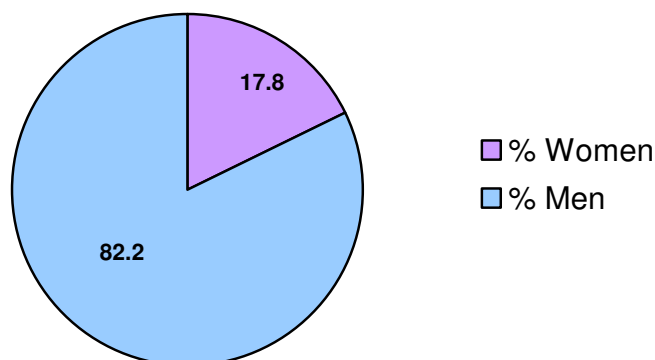
There are 26 District Councils in Northern Ireland. Local councils are responsible for a wide range of functions including the delivery of key services such as those relating to refuse collection and disposal, street cleansing, health and environmental services, community development, indoor and outdoor leisure, parks and recreational facilities, and support for the arts, culture, tourism and economic development.

Local councillors also have a representative role on Education and Library Boards, Health and Social Services Area Councils, Health and Social Services Boards and Local Strategy Partnerships.

Composition of local councils in Northern Ireland (2005 elections)

Council	Men	Women	% Women	Chair	Chief Executive
Antrim	17	2	10.5	M	M
Ards	21	2	8.7	M	M
Armagh	15	7	31.8	M	M
Ballymena	20	4	16.7	M	M
Ballymoney	13	3	18.8	M	M
Banbridge	14	3	17.7	M	M
Carrickfergus	12	5	29.4	M	M
Coleraine	16	6	27.3	M	M
Cookstown	14	2	12.5	M	M
Craigavon	21	5	19.2	M	M
Down	20	3	13.0	W	M
Dungannon	21	1	4.6	M	M
Fermanagh	17	6	26.1	M	M
Larne	13	2	13.3	M	F
Limavady	12	3	20.0	M	M
Magherafelt	13	3	18.8	M	M
Moyle	9	6	40.0	M	M

Newry & Mourne	26	4	13.3	M	M
Omagh	18	3	14.3	M	M
Strabane	15	1	6.3	M	M
Total	327	71	17.8	19M 1W	19M 1W



Gender composition of local councils in Northern Ireland (% of total)

While statistics for Foyle are not included above to retain consistency with the remainder of the report; the rural ward of the Foyle electoral area is represented as follows.

Council	Men	Women	% W	Chair	Chief Executive
Rural Derry	6	0	0	N/A	M

4.4 Employment in Local Authorities

This section presents information on the nature of women and men's employment within local authorities in rural NI. As the nature of posts varies, to provide an indication of types of posts referred to in the table below, the salary scales associated with the grades listed in the table below are as follows⁵:

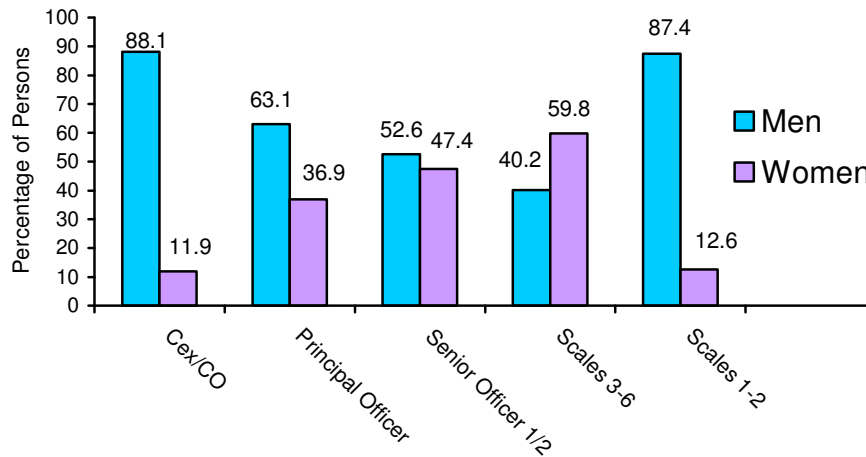
⁵ Equal Opportunities in the NI District Councils, The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland, 2003

Chief Executive/Chief Officer	above £35,934
Principal Officer	£24,048 - £35,934
Senior Officer 1/2	£21,282 - £24,726
Scales 3-6 (primarily administration and clerical)	£13,581 - £20,469
Manual, Craft and Scales 1-2 (primarily manual)	£10,278 - £13,335

Grade	Full time			Part time*		
	M	W	% W	M	W	% W
Cex/CO**	96	13	11.9	0	0	0
PO grades	330	193	36.9	1	14	93.3
SO1/2	202	182	47.4	1	33	97
Scales 3-6	473	705	59.8	28	235	89.4
Scales 1-2	1737	250	12.6	239	462	65.9

*Part time means anyone working less than 30 hours per week including job shares.

** There is one female CEO in Larne Borough Council



5 Rural Development

This section presents information on women's representation on some of the key decision making bodies across all sectors within rural development. It begins by looking at the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as the key government with responsibility for rural areas. It then examines LEADER boards, the Rural Development Council, Rural Community Network and sub-regional (rural development) networks.

5.1 The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

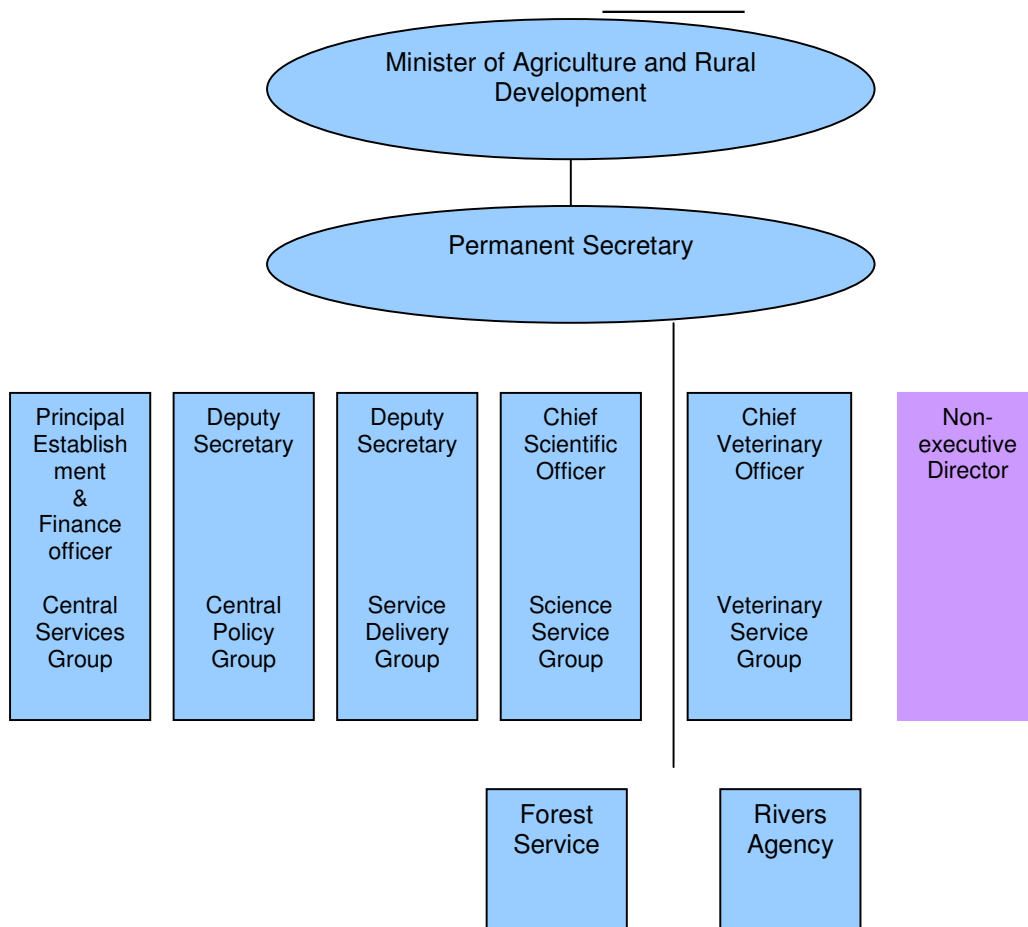
Since the passing of the NI Act in 1988, a devolved government was restored in NI featuring a power sharing Executive and ten government departments. An eleventh, joint department, the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister was established to oversee the work of the other departments⁶. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is one of the 10 government departments.

The responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development include:

- the development of the agricultural, forestry and fishing industries in Northern Ireland;
- rural development in Northern Ireland;
- providing an advisory service for farmers;
- agricultural research and education;
- providing a veterinary service and administration of animal health and welfare policies;
- responsibility to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the administration in Northern Ireland of schemes affecting the whole of the United Kingdom;
- the application of EU agricultural policy to Northern Ireland.

The organisational structure of DARD is as follows. A blue box denotes the position is currently held by a male member of staff; lilac by a female.

⁶ Northern Ireland Yearbook 2004



Responsibilities within each of these groups are as follows:

Central Services Group	Personnel Division, Finance Division, Corporate Policy Division, Change Division
Central Policy Group	Policy and Economics Division, Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division
Service Delivery Group	Development & Education Services Division, Rural Development Division, Rural Payments & Inspection Division, Environmental, Food & Central Services Division

Science Service Group	Veterinary Sciences Division, Agriculture, Food & Environmental Science Divisions, Applied Plant Science Division, & Corporate Services Unit
Veterinary Service Group	Enzootics Unit, Epizootics Unit, Veterinary Public Health Policy Unit

In addition, there are Non-departmental Public Bodies (NDPB's) which are neither government departments nor parts of a department but have a role in the process of government; which are categorised into Executive, Advisory and Others. The Rural Development Council is one of these 'other bodies' and is outlined in 3.4 below.

5.2 Rural Stakeholder Forum

The Rural Stakeholder Forum (RSF) within DARD falls within the responsibility of the Deputy Secretary for Policy. The Rural Stakeholder Forum and its specific sub-groups facilitate focused consultation and interaction with customers through regular face to face meetings, written contact, user surveys, use of internet, e-mail and telephone calls.

The Rural Stakeholders Forum is not a decision-making, but an advisory body. It was created, in a consultative role, to advise the Minister on strategic issues. The Forum advises on rather than initiates policy. Focused discussions on key issues take place primarily in Sub-Groups drawn from the Wider Forum membership.

The Department does not appoint named individuals to the Forum. Instead, membership of the Forum is defined in terms of organisations and the RSF database records the contact details for each organisation, which in turn appoint members to attend meetings and conferences. It is often the case that the main contact is not the person who attends. The make-up of the database does not reflect the male/female split of attendance at specific meetings and conferences. The Forum has not met since December 2004.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is no exact membership, the DARD Study on Rural Policy (March 2005) provides a table detailing members of the Forum⁷. Of this group which provides an indication of membership; the breakdown is as follows:

Board	M	W	Chair
Rural Stakeholder Forum – indicative only	18	3	N/a

There are three main Rural Stakeholder Forum (RSF) sub groups. These are:-

- Animal Health and Welfare Sub Group;
- Rural Development Sub Group; and
- Equine Sub Group.

Board	M	W	Chair
RSF – rural development sub group	13	4	M

5.3 LEADER +

LEADER + is a European Community Initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. LEADER + is the third LEADER Programme having been preceded by LEADER I and II.

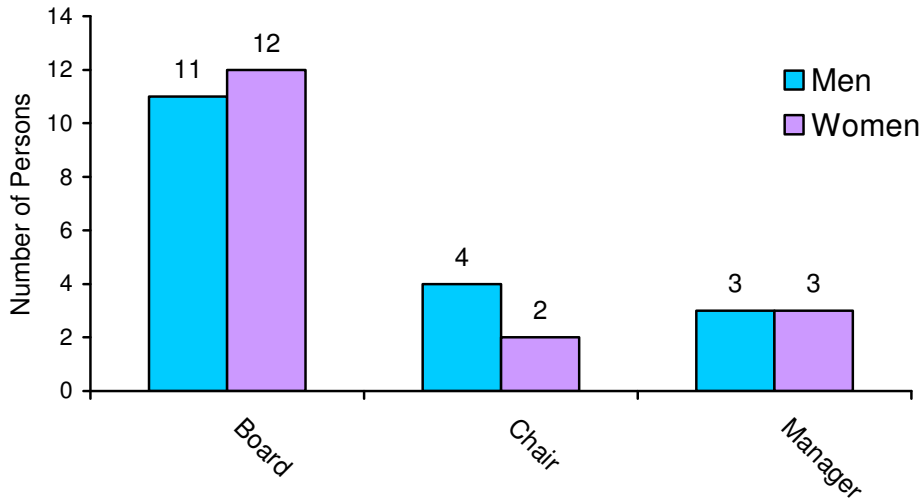
LEADER + runs from 2000-2006 and its aim is to encourage and support rural actors to consider the long term potential of their area. It seeks to encourage the implementation of integrated, high quality, original strategies for sustainable development designed to encourage experimenting with new ways of:

- Enhancing the natural and cultural heritage;
- Reinforcing the economic environment, in order to contribute to job creation and
- Improving the organisational abilities of their community.

⁷ 'A Study on Rural Policy', Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, March 2005, p.4

The following is a breakdown of women and men on the boards of LEADER companies; drawn up on the basis of information provided by the companies themselves.

LEADER Board	Men	Women	Chair	Manager
Coleraine Local Action Group Enterprise Ltd.	Not provided			
Craigavon and Armagh Rural Development	Not provided			
East Tyrone Rural (ETR)	Not provided			
Limavady	12	7	M	W
Fermanagh Local Action Group (FLAG)	Not provided			
Magherafelt Area Partnership (MAP)	11	6	M	M
North Antrim Leader (NAL)	9	6	W	M
Newry Mourne Leader (NML)	9	4	M	M
Rural Area Partnership in Derry (RAPID)	Not provided			
Rural Down Partnership (RDP)	7	10	M	W
Rural Enterprise Awareness Programme (South Antrim)	6	3	W	W
Roe Valley Rural Development (RVRD)	Not provided			
West Tyrone Rural (WTR)	Not provided			
Total (for information provided)	54	36	4M 2W	3M 3W



Gender representation on LEADER Boards

NI Leader Network

The NI LEADER Network comprises managers of LEADER companies.

	Men	Women	Chair	Manager
NI Leader Network	5	7	N/A	N/A

5.4 Rural Development Council (RDC)

The Rural Development Council (RDC) exists to address the needs of deprived rural areas in Northern Ireland. It was set up in 1991 as an independent organisation under the Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Programme working in partnership with a spectrum of rural interest groups.

The RDC is managed by a 10 member council which is made up of rural community representatives drawn from the private sector, local government, environmental interests, LEADER Groups and the agriculture industry. It attempts to reflect a broad geographical, gender and religious mix in the Council make up.

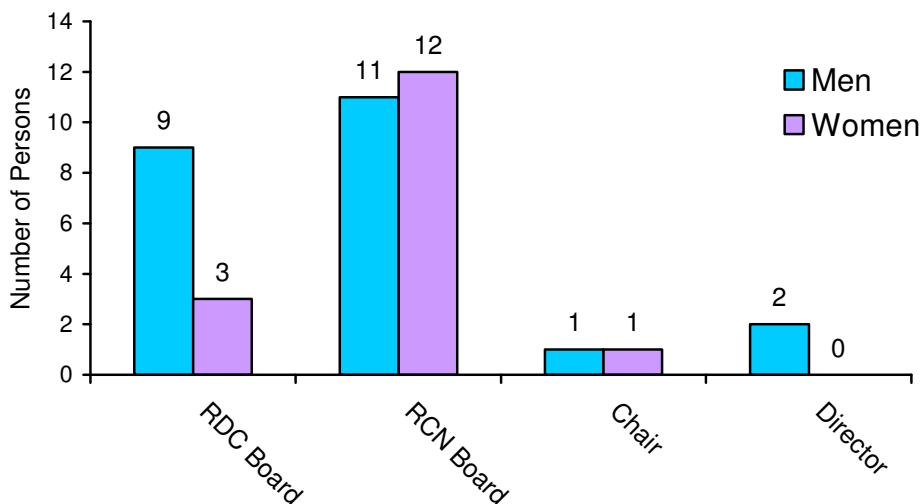
Board	M	W	Chair	Director
Rural Development Council	9	3	W	M

5.5 Rural Community Network NI

The Rural Community Network (RCN) is a voluntary organisation established by local community organisations to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and community development. Formed in 1991, it is a membership organisation with over 500 members. RCN is managed by a voluntary committee, elected every 2 years, made up of 2 community representatives from each of the 6 counties, along with voluntary organisations, statutory and other interested representatives. It attempts to reflect a broad geographical, gender and religious mix in its membership and Board.

RCN comprises a policy / research unit, Community Development Support Unit, Service Centre, Rural Community Estates Programme, grant giving through the Women's Sectoral Programme and Peace II programmes including Community Relations.

Board	M	W	Chair	Director
Rural Community Network	11	12	M	M



Gender representation on RDC and RCN Boards

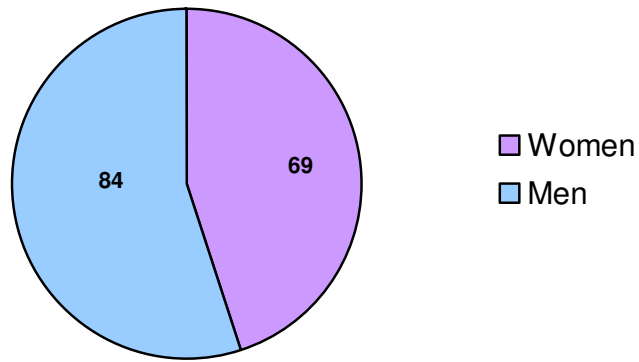
5.6 Rural Support Networks (RSNs)

RSNs are networks of rural community groups; independent of government and funders with charitable aims and objectives. They are membership led cross community networks widely representative of the rural community and accountable to their membership.

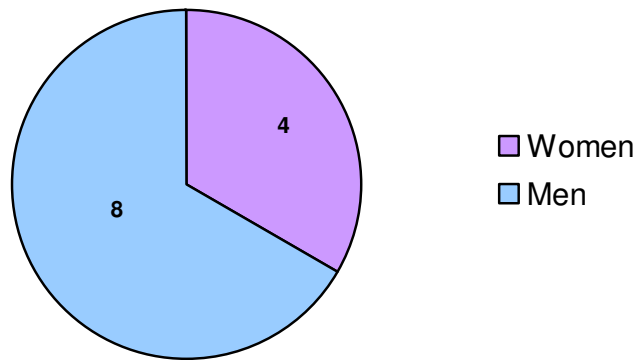
RSNs are non profit taking voluntary groups with broad and varied constitutions. Each network is committed to rural development informed by a community development approach. This entails a commitment to broad based participation and consultation, self help, equitable treatment and local ownership.

The main part of the work includes promoting peace and reconciliation, combating poverty and promoting social inclusion. Networks provide a key 'gateway' role as a point of contact with rural communities, channeling information to and from groups.

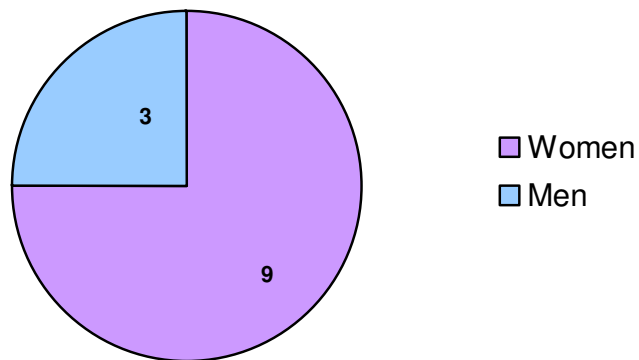
Rural Support Network – Board members	M	W	Chair	Sec	Treasurer	Childcare expenses
Cookstown & Western Shores	12	6	M	W	W	On request
COSTA	3	5	W	W	M	On request / not active
Fermanagh Rural Community Network	9	7	M	W	W	If requested
North Antrim Community Network	6	2	M	M	W	yes
Omagh Forum for Rural Associations	7	3	W	W	M	Not provided
ROMAL	12	7	M	W	W	If requested
Regeneration of South Armagh	7	8	W	M	M	YES
Strabane & District Community network	6	7	M	W	W	Not provided
Oakleaf	3	3	M	W	M	No
South Antrim Rural Network	3	5	M	W	W	YES
TADA	9	8	M	W	M	If requested
Total	84	69	8M 4F	3M 9W	5M 7W	



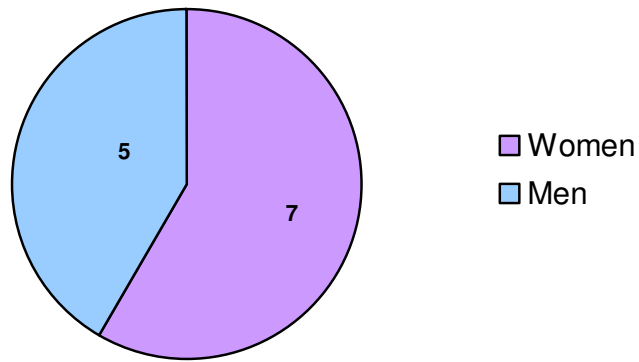
Proportion and Number of Male and Female Board Members of Rural Support Networks



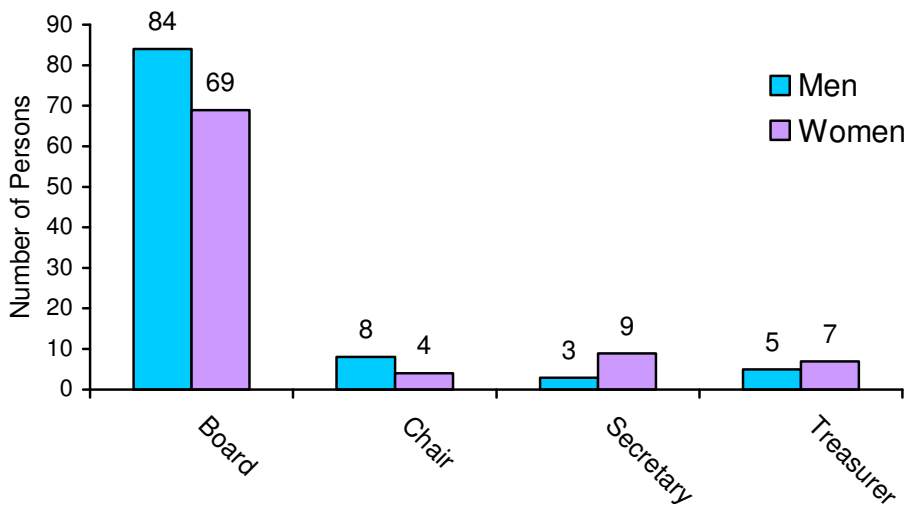
Proportion and Number of Male and Female Chairs of Rural Support Networks



Proportion and Number of Male and Female Secretaries of Rural Support Networks



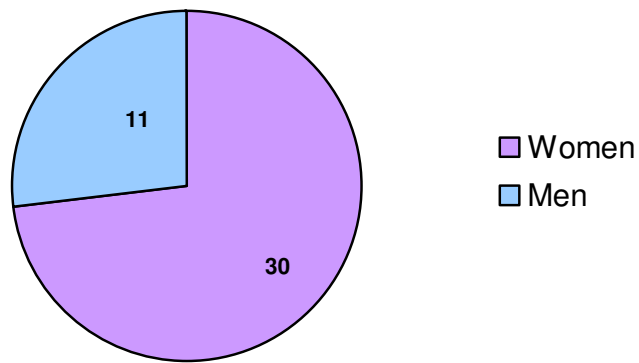
Proportion and Number of Male and Female Treasurers of Rural Support Networks



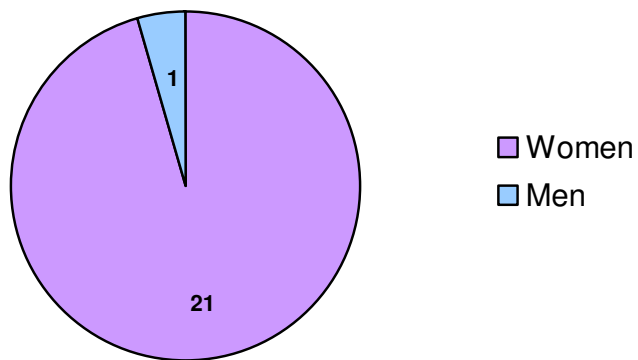
Gender representation on Rural Support Network Boards

Rural Support Network – STAFF	Coordinator/ Dev Staff		Admin Staff	
	M	W	M	W
Cookstown & Western Shores	2	4	0	2
COSTA	0	1	0	1
East Down RCN	1	6	0	2
North Antrim Community Network	1	3	0	2

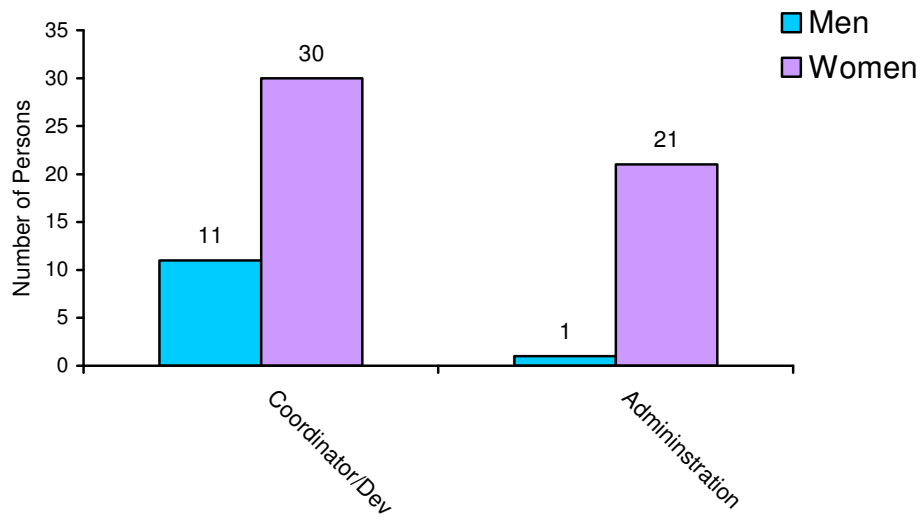
Omagh Forum	0	2	0	1
ROMAL	2	1	0	2
Strabane & District	1	1	0	2
Fermanagh RCN	2	0	0	1
Oakleaf	1	3	0	3
ROSA	1	5	0	2
SARN	0	1	0	1
TADA	0	3	1	2
Total	11	30	1	21



Proportion and number of male and female Coordinators/Development staff of Rural Support Networks



Proportion and number of male and female Administration staff of Rural Support Networks



Gender proportion and number of Rural Support Network staff

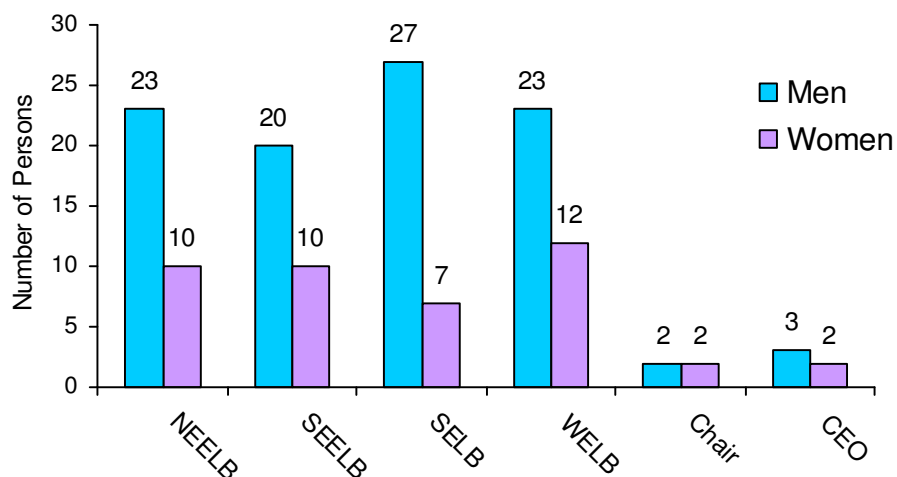
6 Education

6.1 Education and Library Boards

The Education and Library (NI) Order 1972 took control of the provision of education and library services from local authorities and placed it under the direction of five Education and Library Boards. Four of these cover rural NI. Each Board is responsible for primary, secondary and pre-school education within their respective areas along with the provision of a youth service and library services to schools and the public.

Board	M	W	% W	Chair	CEO
North Eastern Education & Library Board	23	10	30.3	W	M
South Eastern Education & Library Board	20	10	33.3	M	M
Southern Education & Library Board	27	7	20.6	W	W
Western Education & Library Board	23	12	34.3	M	M

65% of the membership consists of district councillors, representatives of the main Protestant churches and trustees of the Roman Catholic Church.



Gender breakdown of Education and Library Boards

6.2 Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

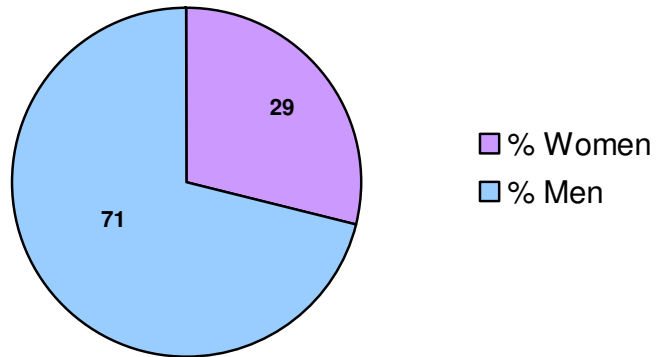
The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is the employing authority for teaching staff within maintained schools (commonly known as ‘Catholic schools’). In all non-Catholic maintained schools, the Board of Governors is the employing authority for all staff members.

Board	M	W	Chair	CEO
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	6	2	N/A	N/A

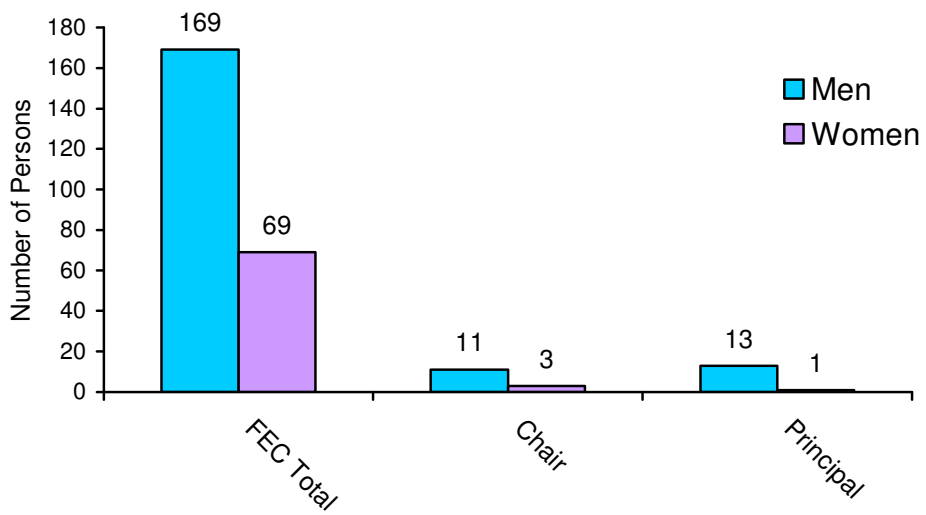
6.3 Governing Bodies of Further Education Colleges

NI has a network of 16 institutions of Further Education (with approximately 400 out centres) providing a range of courses of a technical or commercial nature as well as a wide range of general educational and recreational classes. The following table presents information on FE colleges in rural areas of NI.

Board	M	W	% W	Chair	Principal
Armagh College of Further Education	14	4	22.2	M	M
Causeway Institute of Further & Higher Education	13	5	27.8	M	M
East Antrim Institute of Further & Higher Education	12	6	33.3	M	M
East Down Institute of Further & Higher Education	9	7	43.8	M	M
East Tyrone College of Further Education	12	6	33.3	M	M
Fermanagh College of Further Education	12	3	20.0	M	M
Limavady College	13	4	23.5	W	W
Lisburn College	14	4	22.2	M	M
Newry & Kilkeel College	12	6	33.3	M	M
North East Institute of Further & Higher Education	9	3	25.0	M	M
North West Institute of Further & Higher Education	14	4	22.2	M	M
North Down & Ards Institute	10	6	37.5	W	M
Omagh College of further Education	11	7	38.9	M	M
Upper Bann Institute	14	4	22.2	W	M
Total	169	69	29%	11M 3W	13M 1W



Male and female representation on governing boards of FE Colleges (% of total)



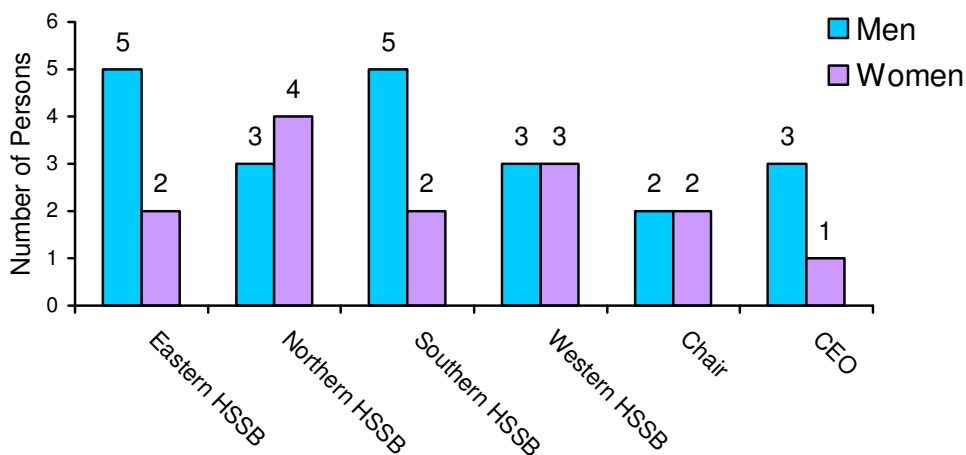
Male and female breakdown of FE Colleges

7 Health and Social Services

7.1 Health and Social Services Boards

Health and Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland are provided as an integrated service. The 4 Health and Social Services Boards (Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western) are agents of the Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in planning, commissioning and purchasing services for the residents in their areas. Their role is to promote the health and well being of the people who live in their respective areas. This involves an assessment of the health and social services needed by local people and arrangements for the provision of those services.

Board	M	W	Chair	CEO
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	5	2	M	W
Northern Health and Social Services Board	3	4	M	M
Southern Health and Social Services Board	5	2	W	M
Western Health and Social Services Board	3	3	W	M



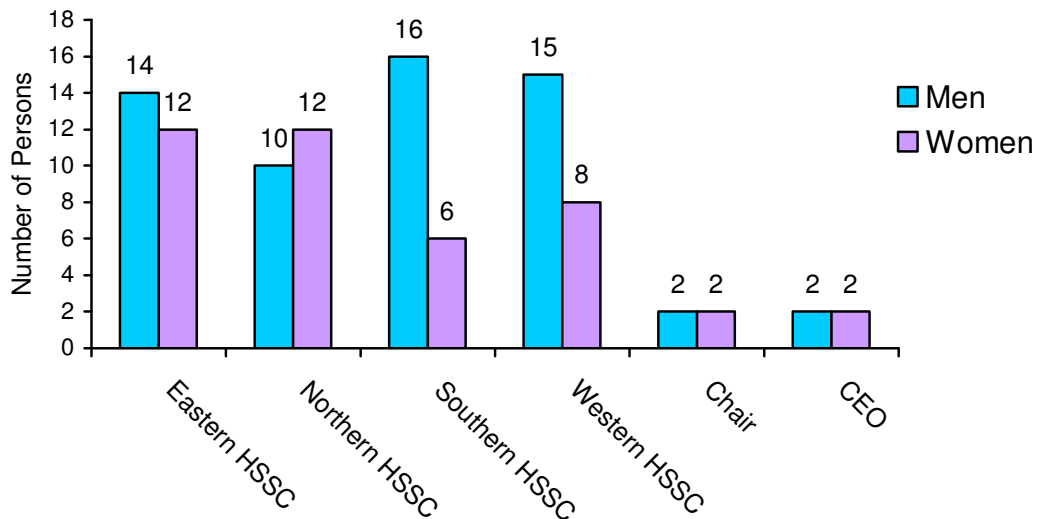
Number of male and female representatives on Health and Social Services Boards

7.2 Health and Social Services Councils

The Health and Social Service Councils monitor the health and personal social services in each of the four board areas. Health and Social Services Councils regularly consult with the general public to monitor healthcare from the perspective of the consumer and make recommendations on how services might be improved. They have a role in representing their local area population and influencing the policies of the Health Boards.

Board area	M	W	Chair	CEO
Eastern Health and Social Service Councils	14	12	W	M
Northern Health and Social Service Councils	10	12	M	M
Southern Health and Social Service Councils	16	6	W	W
Western Health and Social Service Councils	15	8	M	W

70% of the membership consists of district councillors and nominees from voluntary and community organisations.

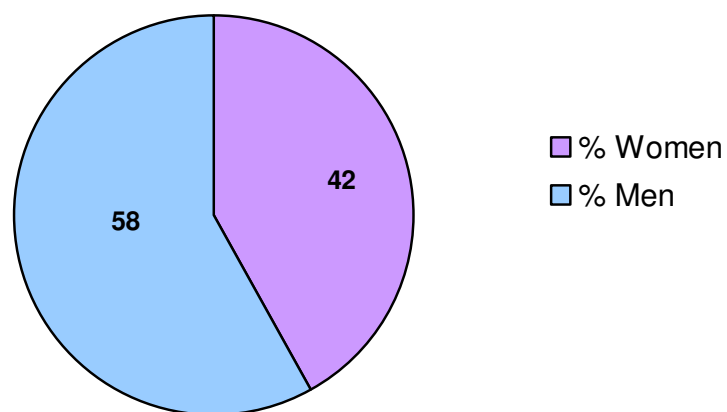


Number of male and female representatives on Health and Social Services Councils

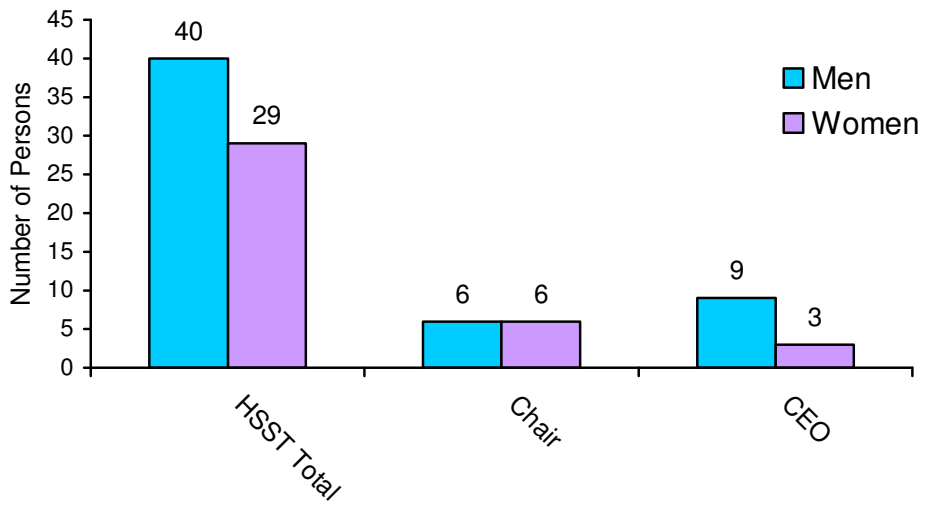
7.3 Health and Social Services Trusts

The 19 Health and Social Services Trusts are the providers of health and social services. They manage staff and the delivery of services on the ground and control their own budgets.

Trust	M	W	Chair	CEO
Altnagelvin Hospitals	3	1	M	W
Armagh & Dungannon	3	3	W	W
Causeway	3	3	W	M
Craigavon and Banbridge	5	1	M	M
Craigavon Area Hospital Group	3	3	W	M
Down Lisburn	3	3	W	M
Foyle	2	3	M	M
Homefirst	3	3	M	W
Newry & Mourne	4	2	M	M
Sperrin Lakeland	4	2	W	M
Ulster Community & Hospitals	3	3	W	M
United Hospitals	4	2	M	M
Total	40/(58%)	29/(42%)	6M 6W	9M 3W



Proportion of men and women on Health and Social Services Trust Boards



Number of male and female representatives on Health and Social Services Trusts

8 Local Development

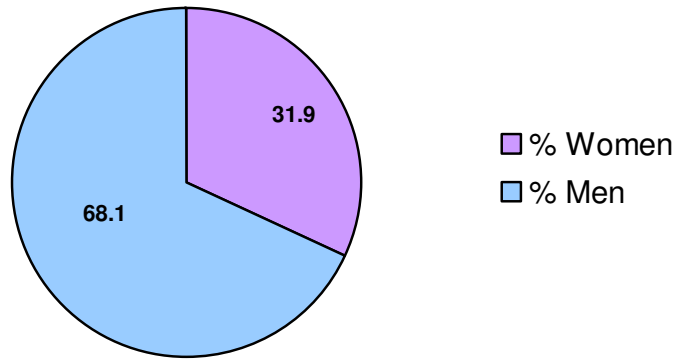
8.1 Local Strategy Partnerships

The Local Strategy Partnerships (hereafter referred to as LSPs) are the structures established throughout Northern Ireland to manage the administration of funds through Priority 3 of the Peace II Programme. Based largely on the experience of the District Partnerships under PEACE I, their structure facilitates local participation in decision making from the organisations, sectors, and communities concerned.

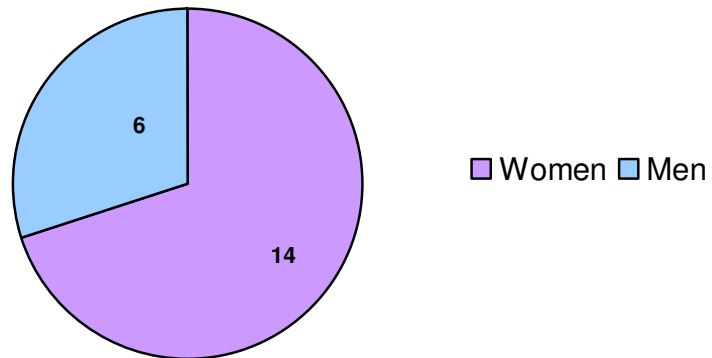
The aims of the LSPs are to enhance the capacity of District Councils, the voluntary and community sector, trade unions, business and statutory agencies delivering services at a local level; to work more closely together to produce integrated local area strategies which will become a framework for sustainable regeneration and to develop local areas beyond the lifetime of the Peace II Programme. 26 LSP structures have been established, one in each district council area across Northern Ireland. Information on rural LSPs is provided below.

LSP	Men	Women	% Women	Vacancy	Chair	Manager
Antrim	14	8	36.4	2	M	M
Ards	14	10	41.6	0	M	W
Armagh	15	8	34.8	5	W	W
Ballymena	19	5	20.8	0	M	W
Ballymoney	12	4	25.0	8	M	W
Banbridge	17	9	34.6	1	M	W
Carrickfergus	11	11	50.0	1	M	W
Coleraine	12	4	25.0	1	M	W
Cookstown	12	5	29.4	3	M	W
Craigavon	13	2	13.3	1	M	W
Down	15	8	24.8	4	M	M
Fermanagh	10	5	33.3	6	M	W
Larne	15	10	40.0	0	M	M

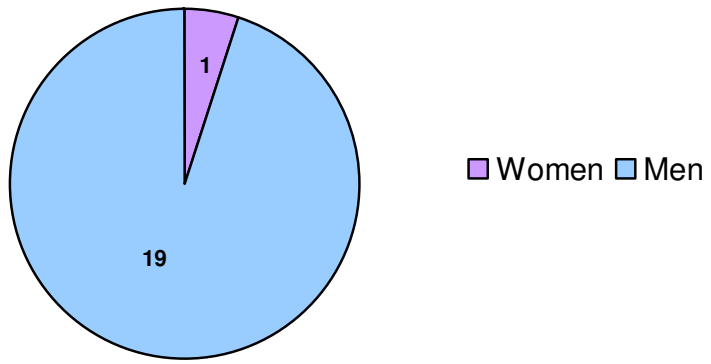
Limavady	15	6	28.6	2	M	W
Magherafelt	11	5	31.3	4	M	M
Moyle	9	9	50.0	6	M	W
Newry & Mourne	18	6	25.0	4	M	W
Omagh	16	8	33.3	2	M	M
South Tyrone	13	4	23.5	6	M	W
Strabane	21	5	19.2	2	M	M
Total	282	132	31.9	58	19M 1W	6M 14W



Proportion of men and women on Local Strategy Partnership Boards



Number of male and female LSP Programme Managers



Number of male and female LSP Chairs

9 Local Sport, Cultural & Special Interest Organisations

9.1 Gaelic Athletic Association

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is an amateur sporting organisation founded to preserve and cultivate the national games of gaelic football, hurling and handball. The GAA is the largest sporting organisation in Ireland, having over 2,500 clubs. Membership of the GAA exceeds 800,000 at home and abroad. Gaelic football is played by approximately 250,000 men and women, making it the most popular sport in Ireland.

The GAA has over 2,500 clubs in Ireland. Each of the thirty-two counties in Ireland organises its own GAA affairs through a County Board. Counties have a number of Divisional or Juvenile Boards to organise competitions at district and youth levels. The County Board (and / or subsidiary boards) organises competitions for the clubs within its jurisdiction. They are also responsible for the organisation of teams to play at inter-county level, at all age groups from Under-10 to Senior.

The following table presents information on male / female representation on county boards. Some of the respondents who provided the information noted that women's GAA activities are organised separately.

County Board	Men	Women	Chair	% Women
Antrim	18	0	0	0
Armagh	N/a			
Derry	24	0	M	0
Down	N/a			
Fermanagh	54	6	M	0
Tyrone	N/a			

9.2 The Orange Order

The Loyal Orange Institution (more commonly known as The Orange Order) is a Protestant fraternity with members throughout the world. Membership of the Orange Order is not divulged. There are 1200 Orange Lodges in Ireland. The Loyal Association of Orangewomen is a separate organisation and there are no mixed lodges.

9.3 Ulster Farmers Union

The Ulster Farmers' Union, with over 12,500 members, represents farmers and growers in Northern Ireland. Its central objective is to promote their interests both at home and abroad through professional lobbying. The Ulster Farmers' Union takes a close interest in rural affairs and services. It works with politicians (both in the U.K. and internationally) and other groups and organisations to advance rural interests. It has particularly close links with consumer groups, countryside and wildlife bodies, animal welfare organisations and academics. It also focuses on developing access to new markets and encouraging buyers and purchasers to choose home produced supplies. UFU grass roots members discuss policy issues at their local Group and County meetings. These are then examined in detail at the Union's Central Committees, before policies are ratified at the UFU's monthly Executive Committee meeting.

9.4 Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association

NIAPA is the voice of family farm members. It offers help and support in change management. NIAPA regards all aspects of social life which affect farm family members as important.

Information was not provided on membership for either of the above unions.

10 Conclusions

General and Employment

- There are just under twice as many women in the 5-19 age category as women in the 50-59 category (50,088 as against 109,586) which is an important consideration for development efforts in rural areas; many of which appear to attract women in the older age bracket. These statistics point to the need to increase investment in younger women.
- Considerably more women are self employed in rural areas (66% of the NI total). It would be useful to ascertain the reasons for this which may be related to the lack of childcare as women choose self employment where they can adopt flexible working arrangements.
- Marginally more women in rural areas than in urban areas 'look after home / family' (59% of all women in NI), although this figure is less than stereotype and perception would suggest.
- Almost a quarter of women in employment are employed in health and social services (23%).
- Across the categories of employment, women in rural NI are broadly similar to women in NI as a whole with two notable exceptions. 68% of all women in NI working in skilled trades occupations work in rural NI and 72% of all women who work as 'process, plant and machine operatives' work in rural NI.
- Within the civil service, women as 47% of its workforce in rural areas are predominantly located within administration posts (77% of Administrative Officers and 64% of administration assistants). Within senior posts the two most significant ones are grades 6 /7 and Deputy Principal (there are only 3 people employed in grade 5+ positions). Of these women comprise 32% and 25% of the posts

respectively. There are some notable exceptions. In DEL 50% of grade 6/7 posts are held by women as are 67% of Deputy Principal posts. Within the DoE, 50% of Deputy Principal posts are held by women; as are 67% of similar posts in OFM/DFM.

- Census statistics suggest that there are no significant discrepancies between women and men in relation to care hours. However, information from other sources are at variance with census statistics and suggest that women play a significantly greater role in caring than men. (None of the figures for caring include childcare).

Political Representation and Local Government

- The greatest area of inequality is that of political representation. Five out of thirteen constituencies have elected no women representatives to the NI Assembly. The highest number of women representatives in any constituency is 33%. The total number of rural MLAs is 11%; far short of the 40% which is widely considered necessary as the critical mass necessary to affect change.
- Two of the key agencies relating to employment in local government are overwhelmingly male dominated. The Local Government Staff Commission for NI has no women representation and the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee has one woman out of 11 members. These bodies combined are responsible for the recruitment, training, terms and conditions, of all council officials and the administration of a pension fund which has assets and investments worth over £1.7 billion.
- Women are also significantly under-represented on local authorities. In rural NI, just under 18% of local councilors are women. There is only one woman chair out of 21 rural councils. There is one woman Chief Executive (Larne Borough Council).

Rural Development

- There is a lack of women in senior positions within DARD and on the Rural Stakeholder Forum. The Head of Rural Development in DARD is however female. At a regional level, the figures are more encouraging with 59% of grade 6/7 employees in DARD in rural areas held by women.
- Of the organisations involved in rural development, the most equitable body in terms of gender representation is the Rural Community Network, with marginally more women than men on the Board (12 women and 11 men).
- There are slightly more women than men on the boards of RSNs (84 as against 69). There are twice as many male chairs of RSNs whereas there are three times as many women secretaries than men. There is no notable difference in the position of Treasurer. By contrast in employment, the rural support network staffing complement is predominantly female; employing 35 women development staff and 11 men with 21 administrators being women and one man.

Education

- Women are significantly under-represented on education and library boards; the maximum representation on any board being 34.3%. The figures on women's representation on education and library boards are particularly significant considering the predominance of women in education professions. An important factor here is that 65% of the places on these boards are retained for local councillors, representatives of Protestant churches and trustees of RC churches.
- Another significant area of women's under-representation is on the boards of FE colleges. The average representation of women on boards of FE colleges is 29%, the highest being 43.8% in East Down and the lowest being 20, that being the level of representation in Fermanagh. 11 men chair the boards of FE colleges and just one woman. Of the fourteen principals, thirteen are men and one is a woman.

- Representation on the HSS Boards is one of the areas in which there is evidence of more equitable gender representation. Out of the 4 Boards, one has equal composition of women and men, one has more women than men (4:3) and the other two areas are each represented by 5 men and 2 women. There is an equal number of men and women chairs. 3 of the 4 CEOs are men. Health and Social Services Council show similar trends in representation.

Health and Social Services

- The Health and Social Services Trusts across rural NI also have more equitable representation of women and men; in total 58% male and 42% female. There is an equal number of women and men as chairs. The under-representation here is in the most senior staff position with 9 men as CEOs as opposed to 3 women.
- There is also a significant under-representation of women within LSPs; women totalling just 31.9% of all LSP Boards in rural NI. Of the 20 chairs, just one is a woman. One of the contributory factors here could again be the retention of places for local councillors; a sector in which there are much fewer women than men. There are however considerably more women employed as managers within LSPs; 14 women and 6 men.

Local Development and Special Interest Organisations

- Special interest organisations play an important role in the social and cultural life of rural communities. For example, GAA clubs are not only the main sporting outlet in many Catholic communities; they are closely associated with community identity and pride. In some areas they are also a focal point for social activities. The Orange Order performs a similar function in Protestant communities, assuming responsibility for the organisation of social events, music and other cultural activities for younger and older people alike. In terms of decision making, both of these organisations are male dominated. While some respondents who provided statistics on GAA county boards noted that women's GAA competitions are separately organised, the fact remains that county boards are the primary decision making bodies. Similarly the Orange Order noted that there is a separate

association of Orangewomen but again the Orange Lodges which are exclusively male are those with the highest profile in rural areas.

- Neither of the farmers unions provided information for this research; both of whom are considered important lobbying bodies for the farming community within rural areas.

Concluding Comments

This research shows that rural women play a very active role in Northern Irish society, both economically and in terms of their involvement in community and voluntary sector activities. Rural women are more economically active than their urban counterparts in all categories of employment. They also play an active role in mainstream rural development activity as is demonstrated by their high levels of involvement in rural support networks and their regional representative body, the Rural Community Network. It is worth noting that this is in addition to involvement in a broad range of women's development activities which takes place in rural areas as well as childcare groups which are predominantly run by women.

However, where women are glaringly absent is in the main arenas in which decisions are made which affect rural communities. One of the most notable areas is that of local government where women comprise just 17.8% of elected councillors in rural areas. This figure falls far short of the 30% recommended as being needed to create the critical mass necessary to affect significant change. In terms of the key decision making positions, of the 20 rural councils, there is just one female Chair and one female Chief Executive. Given that women comprise 51% of the population in rural areas, these figures are startling. This is coupled with equally striking under-representation of women on two key bodies associated with local government; the Local Government Staff Commission for NI and the NI Local Government Officer's Superannuation Committee.

Women employed in local government are similarly under-represented in the most senior grades in employment within local government; but there is perhaps evidence of a shift as 36.9% of women are now employed at Principal Officer grade.

Public bodies which have reserved places for elected councilors such as Education and Library Boards and Local Strategy Partnerships show significant under-representation of women. This is unsurprising given that places are retained for locally elected councillors, a sector which is predominantly male. This draws attention to the need to ensure that formulae developed for membership of public bodies do not perpetuate inequalities by virtue of their criteria for appointment.

Information on women in decision making bodies is important in the context of the Review of Public Administration (RPA). Women's under-representation in local authority and other sub-regional decision making bodies is not a new phenomenon nor is it one in which any noteworthy degree of progress has been made in recent years. Experience from elsewhere (e.g. Scandinavian countries, Welsh Assembly, France) has shown that unless positive action for women measures are put in place, this democratic deficit is unlikely to shift naturally. In terms of public representation, there are a complex set of reasons why women do not opt for public office including; perceptions of the levels of expertise required, the culture or the perceived culture within bodies, the lack of supports (the primary one being childcare), the culture of long working hours (plus early morning and late evening meetings) which is incompatible with women's child rearing responsibilities (particularly in rural areas where there is a dearth of childcare provision) and the traditional roles and expectations of the society we live in. There is therefore an onus on those responsible for developing mechanisms and procedures within the RPA to put positive action measures in place. Corrective measures to ensure equity or parity are not without precedent in NI. Much thinking went into the development of similar mechanisms to ensure equity along religious lines in the construct of the Assembly structure; ensuring democratic representation along gender lines within local government deserves similar innovative thinking.

In terms of political representation, whatever actions those responsible for the implementation of the RPA may put in place, this will not remove the necessity of political parties taking action. The situation of women's under-representation in local government is also reflected in Assembly and Westminster representation. Mechanisms introduced within the context of the RPA should operate hand in hand with constructive measures within political parties to support women to play a full role in public and political life.

One of the limitations in the conduct of an audit is that it does not provide the information behind the statistics. In other words, it does not provide us with qualitative information on what prevents women from putting their name forward for public appointments or public office nor on their experiences when they do serve on public bodies. This is well documented elsewhere with a strong focus on the 'culture' of organisations with reference to adversarial and confrontational style of operating⁸.

The culture of organisations is one of those areas difficult to pin down but frequently referred to informally and anecdotally. An indicator of the type of culture described is the unchallenged use of the word 'chairman'; for example '*appointment of the Committee, which consists of a Chairman and 10 other members, is subject to the approval of...*'. This was a feature of a number of websites visited as part of this research.

Anecdotally, within rural development circles, women also refer to feeling incompetent to deal with the breadth and depth of policy issues required and the difficulty of finding the time to both attend meetings and do the requisite reading while at the same time meet their family responsibilities. The absence of childcare allowances or the fact that they are only available on request within rural support networks (participation on these Boards is in a voluntary capacity) is perhaps a useful indicator that the caring roles of women are not an important consideration in the development of supports for board membership and is certainly not in common practice.

Another striking area of under-representation of women is that of FE colleges where women make up just 28% of the governing bodies with just 3 Boards out of the 14 in rural areas being chaired by a woman. Just one of the 14 colleges has a woman principal. With the universities in NI being located in Belfast, Jordanstown and Coleraine, the role of FE colleges in rural areas is extremely important in terms of choice of courses provided, initiatives to encourage take-up of non-traditional areas of education and the nature of community based education provided.

There is however evidence of change within some structures most notably within the areas of decision making in health and social services.

⁸ 'Women and the Review of Public Administration', Bronagh Hinds and Ann Marie Gray, November 2005

Equitable gender representation however remains the exception rather than the rule in relation to women and decision making in rural NI. Women play a key and active role in rural communities and in particular within day to day rural development activities. However, they remain absent from the most important decision making bodies and senior posts in all major agencies. Responsibility for change must lie within the bodies themselves. Change and in particular cultural change within organisations comes about slowly. One of the most important factors is the willingness and determination (supported by actions) necessary to make it happen.

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