

5.0 FINDINGS

5.1 Findings 1: information and data on maternity care and services in Northern Ireland

5.1.1 Population and services

The health and social care system in NI serves a population of 1.9 million, [85] a recent increase of 0.3%. People live in urban, semi-rural and rural communities. Belfast is the capital city, with almost 18% of the population. [86]

The proportion of women of childbearing age (15-45 years) reduced by almost 1% from 2019 to 2020, from 370,925 to 367,925. [87] The age distribution is changing; the number of women aged between 15 and 24 is projected to increase by 2035, compared with a reduction in the number of women aged between 30 and 39.

Ethnicity of the population of NI was predominantly reported as White (96.5%) in the 2021 census, with the largest ethnic minority groups represented by Mixed, Indian, and Chinese communities. [88] The proportion of NI residents born outside of UK and the Republic of Ireland increased from 4.5% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2021. [89] Migration, both immigration and emigration, will continue to impact the demography of women of childbearing age, changing the profile of maternity service users in NI. [87] Known inequalities in relation to migrant and immigrant pregnant women are reported on their experiences of care, access to services and risk of poorer morbidity and mortality outcomes. [90, 91]

Socioeconomic deprivation in NI is a significant factor in the health and wellbeing of the population. Household incomes and productivity levels are lower than the UK average (-17.9% and -14.1% respectively) and NI's gross disposable household income in 2021 was £17,340; lower than Wales (£18,038), Scotland (£19,630) and England (£22,213). Comparison (adjusted for the different deprivation indices used across the UK) [92] demonstrates that NI has the highest proportion of the population living in the most deprived quintile of the UK (37%), followed by Wales (22%).

The map below (Figure 6) highlights the extent and location of deprivation using the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure [93] showing Decile 1 (dark blue, most deprived) through to Decile 10 (white, least deprived).

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