

## Equality & Diversity Profile – Sex

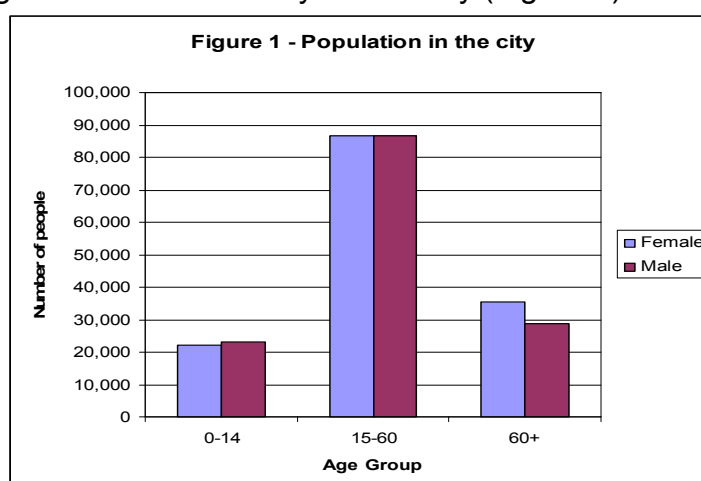
**This profile presents the current information available. We would like your feedback. Does it reflect your understanding of key issues for sex? If not, what would you change or add?**

### Risks of Disadvantage & People's Experiences

The purpose of this profile is to explore the extent to which men and women experience equitable access and outcomes to opportunities and services that are available to everyone as citizens of the city, an aim framed in national and European legislation. In these terms, there are specific areas of potential disadvantage for both sexes, but these issues need to be framed in the wider context of societal stereotypes, expectations and prejudice about gender roles that can help promote, or alternatively bound, opportunity, outcomes and access for both sexes.

Women are those who more often experience disadvantage in a number of areas of their lives. In 2010, there were 144,637 women and girls in the city, with the age distribution shown in Figure 1. This represents 51% of the population largely because women's life expectancy is longer than men, so there were a greater number of older women than men in the city. This trend of a greater number of (older) women in the city is expected to continue as part of the ageing population over the 15 years. At the same time, there was a smaller number of girls aged under 15 than boys in the city (Figure 1).

It should be noted disadvantage amongst some specific groups of women (and indeed men) can be compounded because of inequalities associated with more than one strand of diversity. For example, older women may be at particular risk of disadvantage because of age *and* gender discrimination.



Women can also be at risk of disadvantage periodically for example in pregnancy and maternity, local data, highlights a slight decrease in the number of births in 2010/11 when compared with the previous year; 3442 and 3515 respectively (data provided by the PCT).

From national and local research, specific areas of disadvantage for women include:

- Potential for prejudice, stigma and harassment in individuals' not conforming to (sometimes cultural) stereotypes associated with women's and men's gender, marital or relationship status – these issues can also affect men, although the stereotypes are clearly different. For women, expected stereotypes involve expectations of both domestic and caring roles – whether caring for children, the disabled or the elderly. In the 2010 Residents' Survey, 19% of women stated they had caring responsibilities of adults, compared to 12% of men. Some communities, e.g. those from black and ethnic minority groups, are reported to have particular expectations of women, e.g. the Shakti project found many women from ethnic groups in the North East have little economic independence, with a significant minority of those from South East Asian communities looking after families full-time;
- These issues of stereotypes also exist in terms of expectations of employment for both sexes. For example, there is a strong gender bias in learning and employment in areas such as health, public services and care sectors towards women; and in areas such as construction, engineering and planning environment towards men. Women are also much more likely to be employed part-time, data from 2010-11, show this to be 39.4% of women in comparison to 11.7% of men (Source NOMIS – APS);
- Women are also less likely to be self-employed than men. Figures from 2010/11, estimate the number of women self employed in Sunderland to be 4.6%, (of those in employment) for males however, this is estimated to be more than double at 10%;
- Women are more likely to experience or perceive barriers to employment, education, vocational and life-long learning and, even if this is not an issue, this may affect their own and others' perspectives on their work-life balance between their own, family and work commitments;
- Women can be at risk of pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination both outside of the workplace, or in employment if a woman is treated unfavourably because: of her pregnancy, pregnancy-related illness, is on compulsory maternity leave, is exercising her right to take ordinary or additional maternity leave;
- More recent national studies suggests that the cumulative impact of the welfare reforms are likely to be disproportionately affect women, particularly those in the bottom 10% of income households, than men, because of the range of benefits to which they have access – evidence suggests that a greater proportion of women's income is derived from benefits associated with families rather than private salaries than men;
- Women continue to suffer a gender pay gap between men doing comparative jobs. The median gross weekly full time salary for a women residing in Sunderland in 2011 was £394.50, in comparison this was £442.90 for males (Source NOMIS);
- Women also continue to have less representation in public life and senior decision-making roles. This is despite a stronger performance at Key Stage 4 for girls as opposed to boys: 60% of girls achieved 5 or more A\* - C GCSEs (including English & Maths) compared to 50% for boys in Sunderland; this difference is greater than the national average position;
- Women experience barriers not just to income levels (see below) but also access to economic or personal independence for some women, including

in terms of their partnership rights. This can lead to, or is associated with, financial poverty or reduced life opportunities particularly for some groups in lower socio-economic categories, including in terms of wellness and sporting opportunities;

- Mental health problems are more common amongst women than men (19.7% and 12.5% of the respective populations suffer from mental illness), and there is even higher prevalence amongst certain groups (e.g. SE Asian women: 34%). These higher rates of mental disorders can be associated with issues of self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Women are more likely to be victims of specific crimes or incidents, such as rape and domestic violence, and are more likely to have concerns over their safety in the community. In the 2010 Residents' Survey, 19% of women stated they felt unsafe in their communities and in the city centre, respectively, compared to 17% of men. National findings suggests an additional concern is the level of under-reporting of such crimes to the police;
- A particular issue in Sunderland is the higher level of gender-related violence and abuse than England average – there were 1,555 incidents of domestic violence in the city, the highest in the North East region. However, domestic violence is believed to under-reported and national research suggests at least 1 in 4 women in the UK will experience this in their lifetime. There is significantly more repeat victimisation than for any other type of crime, with, on average, a woman assaulted at least 35 times before she reports an assault to the police;

Specific areas of disadvantage for men include:

- Men, particularly those in lower socio-economic groups in deprived areas, are more likely to suffer from a range of life-limiting conditions at a younger age than women, with reduced life expectancies. There is mixed evidence in the city as to whether the “gap” between Sunderland and England in terms of inequalities associated with mortality rates and/or life expectancy is improving. At least part of the reason for these issues is associated with men's lifestyles and changing behaviours, e.g. reducing alcohol consumption;
- As discussed above, boys are more likely to achieve lower results at Key Stage 4 than girls;
- Nationally, research suggests men are more likely to suffer from a greater degree of social isolation and severe mental illness (including psychotic disorders) than women and are less likely to come forward for advice, information or help about their personal circumstances. Men aged below 25 years are the single largest group of individuals that are at risk of suicide, with the same group at risk of homelessness;

