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Dissertation draft:

1. Historical
2. Education
3. Social and Cultural barriers
4. In Industry in N.I.
5. Government and institutions
6. Future trends
7. Research – Surveys, Interviews, compare N.I. to other countries, Statistics

Historical women:

* **Anne Crawford-Acheson**
* **Lilian Bland (1878-1971):** Anglo-Irish journalist and pioneer aviator who, in 1910–11, became one of the first women in the British Isles, and maybe even in the world, to design, build, and fly an aircraft – the Bland Mayfly. (Magnificent Women, 2019).
* 1958 **Irene Ferguson**, a chief experimental officer at the Air Ministry and former ATA pilot, transitions to become Jonathan Ferguson. Jonathan’s civil service employers move him onto the male pay grade (Magnificent Women, 2019). In 1958 Ferguson announced publicly that he would be living as Jonathan, rather than Joy, following what in those days was referred to as “sex change” but which we now call “gender reassignment” surgery. Interestingly, one of Ferguson’s ATA friends said that she had been told as early as 1939 that such surgery would have been possible then but decided to postpone it until after the war on the reasonable premise that she could serve her country just as well as a woman as a man. The change to living as a man resulted in worldwide press reports of this, stating that Ferguson’s civil service employers were unconcerned about the change and that he would continue with his work as before, but with an increase in pay to the male grade (Baker, 2019).
* Professor Máire O'Neill: At 36, Maire’s youngest engineering professor in Queen’s history, youngest Irish Academy fellow, a former inventor of the year and on cusp of science hall of fame (Ferguson, 2015).
* Professor Eileen Harkin-Jones: Holding the Bombardier-Royal Academy of Engineering Chair in Composites Engineering at Ulster University, Professor Harkin-Jones focuses on polymer processing and sustainable manufacturing. She was the first woman in Ireland appointed as an engineering professor. Wiki

Laws:

**Early laws**

**1918  
The Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act is passed on 21 November allowing women to stand for Parliament**

**1918  
Women vote in a general election for the first time on 14 December with 8.5 million women eligible** (UK Parliament , 2025)

 **1919 – Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act**

* Allowed women to enter professions such as law, civil service, and academia.

**1920 – Matrimonial Causes Act**

* Gave women more control over their personal lives, allowing them greater independence to pursue careers

 **1928 – Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act**

* Gave women over 21 the right to vote, equalizing voting rights with men.

**Mid-20th Century Laws**

**1944 – Education Act**

* + Required free secondary education for all children, including girls, promoting gender equality in education.

**1956 – Equal Pay Act (First Attempt)**

* + The Teachers (Superannuation) Act and other sector-specific laws began equalizing pay in government roles but didn’t apply broadly.

**1970 – Equal Pay Act**

* + Made it illegal to pay women less than men for the same work.

**1975 – Sex Discrimination Act**

* + Prohibited discrimination based on sex in employment, education, and other areas.

**1975 – Employment Protection Act**

* + Introduced maternity leave rights.

**1983 – Equal Pay (Amendment) Act**

* Strengthened the **Equal Pay Act (1970)** by ensuring women were paid equally for work of "equal value," not just identical jobs.
* Helped women in engineering negotiate better salaries.

**1986 – Sex Discrimination Act (Amendment)**

* + Allowed women to work in the armed forces in combat roles.

**Modern Equal Rights Laws**

**1995 – Disability Discrimination Act**

* + Protected people with disabilities from workplace discrimination.

**1998 – Human Rights Act**

* + Incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law, strengthening anti-discrimination protections.

**2010 – Equality Act**

* + Combined several anti-discrimination laws (Equal Pay Act 1970, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, etc.) into one law.
  + Protected individuals from discrimination based on sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, and gender reassignment.

**2017 – Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations**

* + Required companies with 250+ employees to report gender pay gap

**Policies and Industry Initiatives (Supporting Women in Engineering)**

* **WISE Campaign (1984-Present)**
  + Encourages women to pursue STEM careers.
  + Provides mentoring and support networks for female engineers.
* **STEM Returners Programme (2017-Present)**
  + Helps women who took career breaks re-enter engineering.
* **Athena SWAN Charter (2005-Present)**
  + Recognizes universities making efforts to promote women in STEM fields, including engineering

Differences in NI

*  **1970 – Equal Pay Act** (NI version in **1975**) → Ensured equal pay for **men and women**.
*  **1975 – Sex Discrimination Act** (NI version in **1976**) → Banned discrimination in employment and education.

**The Equality Act 2010 Does NOT Apply to Northern Ireland**

In **England, Scotland, and Wales**, the **Equality Act 2010** combines multiple anti-discrimination laws into one. It protects against **gender, age, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and pregnancy discrimination**.

🔹 **In Northern Ireland, separate laws still apply instead of the Equality Act**, such as:

* **Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976**
* **Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998**
* **Disability Discrimination Act (NI) 1995**

**Gender Pay Gap Reporting**

* **UK (England, Scotland, Wales) – Gender Pay Gap Reporting (2017)**
  + **Large employers (250+ staff)** must **publish gender pay gap data**.
* **Northern Ireland – Gender Pay Gap Reporting** (Planned but Delayed)
  + The **NI Assembly planned to introduce similar laws**, but they have **not yet been fully implemented**.

By 1911 Belfast was the 9th largest town in the British Isles, having risen from 22nd in 1800 due to the extreme growth in industries such as linen, engineering, tobacco and shipbuilding across the city. With this came simultaneous growth in employment opportunities, and while the shipping and engineering industry attracted the more typical male labour force to the city, the modernisation of the linen industry saw a boom in the number of young women leaving their homes to move to Belfast in search of work – so much so that the term ‘millie’ was coined as a nickname for the workforce! (Titanic Belfast, 2025).

The 1901 census shows just under 30 per cent of women aged 20 or over were employed in industry – a much higher proportion than average at the time in Ireland, while others found roles in domestic service or for those a little more literate there were a few opportunities in administration. One such lady was 20 year old Charlotte Brennan from Cavan, who was employed as a secretary in Harland and Wolff’s drafting offices. (Titanic Belfast, 2025)

As time moved on it become more commonplace to see women working within the offices, curtain making and upholstery departments in Harland and Wolff, however the sense that the industrial setting was too harsh for ‘delicate’ women did prevail. Often it is said women working in the offices were sent home early ahead of the crush of men leaving the shipyard so as not to be trampled amongst the crowds (Titanic Belfast, 2025)

Following Lord Pirrie’s death in 1924, Lady Pirrie was appointed president of Harland and Wolff, a position created especially for her. (Titanic Belfast, 2025)

A close up of a text

Description automatically generated

(The Vote, 1923)

A newspaper with text and a blue box

Description automatically generated (The Vote, 1923)

A newspaper with text and words

Description automatically generated (Belfast Telegraph, 1926)

A newspaper with text and images of a person

AI-generated content may be incorrect. (Horner, 1928)