

# Belfast: a profile of the city 2008-2009



# Contents

Introduction .....	3
A short history.....	4
Belfast in brief .....	6
Who's in charge?.....	7
Demographics .....	10
The economy.....	14
Education and research.....	20
Deprivation .....	23
Health provision.....	24
Tourism.....	26
Quality of life.....	28
Retail .....	34
Leisure and culture .....	35
Transport.....	37



# Introduction

As the capital city of Northern Ireland, Belfast has enjoyed over a decade of sustained investment and it is one of the fastest growing regional economies in the UK.

As well as this sustained economic growth in Belfast, the city is also going through a period of rapid physical regeneration and development. The city skyline is rapidly changing, with large scale developments taking place at an unprecedented rate. The revitalised city centre with bars, restaurants and top class hotels are all evidence of the changes that have already taken place. The retail, commercial, residential and leisure offering of the city centre have been greatly boosted by the opening of the £320 million Victoria Square development, which combines living, working, enjoyment, shopping, dining out and relaxing in one lively mix.

Meanwhile phase one of Europe's largest waterfront development, the £1 billion Titanic Quarter project is now underway. Work has also progressed on improving our transport infrastructure. For example, the three year, £104 million project to upgrade Northern Ireland's busiest road, the Westlink is nearing completion. It links the M1, M2 and M3 motorways and carries 65,000 motorists every day.

A thriving social and cultural life is attracting visitors from across the world. In 2007 there were 6.9 million visitors to the city, which represents an increase of 1 million since 2004.

As the civic leader of Northern Ireland's capital, Belfast City Council continues to work with our partners in government and elsewhere to realise our vision of Belfast as a progressive twenty-first century capital city with a vibrant innovation-led economy where people are proud to live, work and visit.

# A short history

<b>1600</b>	Up until 1600 the area known now as Belfast was called 'Béal Feirste' an Irish term roughly meaning 'mouth of the sandy ford'.
<b>1603</b>	The town of Belfast is founded under the leadership of Sir Arthur Chichester (made Baron of Ulster in 1613).
<b>1611</b>	A stone and timber castle is erected at the ford of Belfast but is burnt down in 1708 only the street name, Castle Street, marks the site today.
<b>1641</b>	A partial wall is built around Belfast.
<b>1737</b>	The first local newspaper is published The Belfast Newsletter.
<b>1769</b>	Lord Chichester commissions The Exchange on Waring Street - Belfast's oldest surviving public building.
<b>1777</b>	Linen production reached its peak with over 17 million yards woven.
<b>1845</b>	Queen's University Belfast is founded.
<b>1849</b>	Queen Victoria visits the city.
<b>1850-1900</b>	Many of the city's public buildings are erected, including the first free public library, the Gasworks and the museum.
<b>1870</b>	Belfast Castle is built within a deer park on Cave Hill.
<b>1888</b>	Belfast is granted city status by Queen Victoria.
<b>1896</b>	St.George's Market was built.
<b>1900</b>	Harland & Wolff becomes the greatest shipbuilding firm in the world. Their proudest moment is the launch of the Oceania II in 1899, the largest ship then afloat.
<b>1906</b>	City Hall is completed; a magnificent Edwardian building started ten years earlier.
<b>1912</b>	Launch of the Titanic.

<b>1921-1972</b>	A Northern Ireland Parliament sits at Stormont (until direct rule was introduced in 1972).
<b>1933</b>	Harry Ferguson invents the three point setup which revolutionised the tractor.
<b>1938</b>	Belfast Harbour Airport opens.
<b>1939</b>	Shorts and Harland & Wolff begin production of military aircraft for use in World War II.
<b>1941</b>	The Blitz in Belfast - nearly 1,000 civilians die, 1,500 are injured and 1,600 homes destroyed.
<b>1969-1998</b>	The 'Troubles' - a period of intense civil strife in Northern Ireland. During this time there are more than 3,600 deaths and 40,000 people injured.
<b>1980</b>	Regeneration of the city's waterfront area began.
<b>1994</b>	Paramilitary ceasefires are declared and the beginning of the 'Peace Process'.
<b>1997</b>	Opening of the Waterfront Hall.
<b>1998</b>	The Good Friday Agreement - a new Assembly returns a devolved government to Northern Ireland.
<b>2000</b>	Odyssey Arena opens.
<b>2003</b>	Belfast hosts Team USA for the 2003 Special Olympics.
<b>2006</b>	Centenary of Belfast City Hall.
<b>2006</b>	Major work begins on Belfast's strategic M1/Westlink infrastructure .
<b>2007</b>	Restoration of Northern Ireland Assembly.
<b>2007</b>	Work begins on the £1 billion Titanic Quarter development.
<b>2008</b>	Opening of the £320m city centre Victoria Square complex.

# Belfast in brief

- Belfast is the capital of **Northern Ireland**.
- The city, and its wider metropolitan area, is the largest settlement in the region and the second largest city on the island of Ireland. The city lies at the head of Belfast Lough in the lower reaches of the Lagan valley.
- The Belfast City Council area sits at the heart of the growing population of the wider Belfast Metropolitan Area, which also comprises the surrounding district council areas of Castlereagh, Lisburn, North Down, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus.
- **267,374** people live in the city while **645,536** live in the wider metropolitan area.
- 44.9% of the population is **under 30 years of age**.
- The city's **working age population** accounts for over 60% of the total population.



# Who's in charge?

Northern Ireland has three **Members of the European Parliament** (MEPs) and 18 **Members of Parliament** (MPs) at Westminster, four of whom represent the city of Belfast.

In March 2007, 24 **Members of the Local Assembly** (MLAs) were elected from six political parties to represent Belfast in the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont. The Northern Ireland Assembly was restored in May 2007, consisting of 108 elected members (MLAs).

Belfast City Council is the largest of 26 district councils in Northern Ireland. It is the local democratic institution for the city with 51 elected **councillors** representing nine electoral areas. The councillors elect a **Lord Mayor** and **Deputy Lord Mayor** who serve a ceremonial function for one year.

The role of a councillor is to represent the interests of their constituents and electoral areas. They aim to ensure that the interests of the people of Belfast are reflected in council decisions and in the way services are delivered.

The council is governed through a committee system. Political representation on each committee is based on the number of seats each party holds on the council.

**Table 1: Political representation in the council**

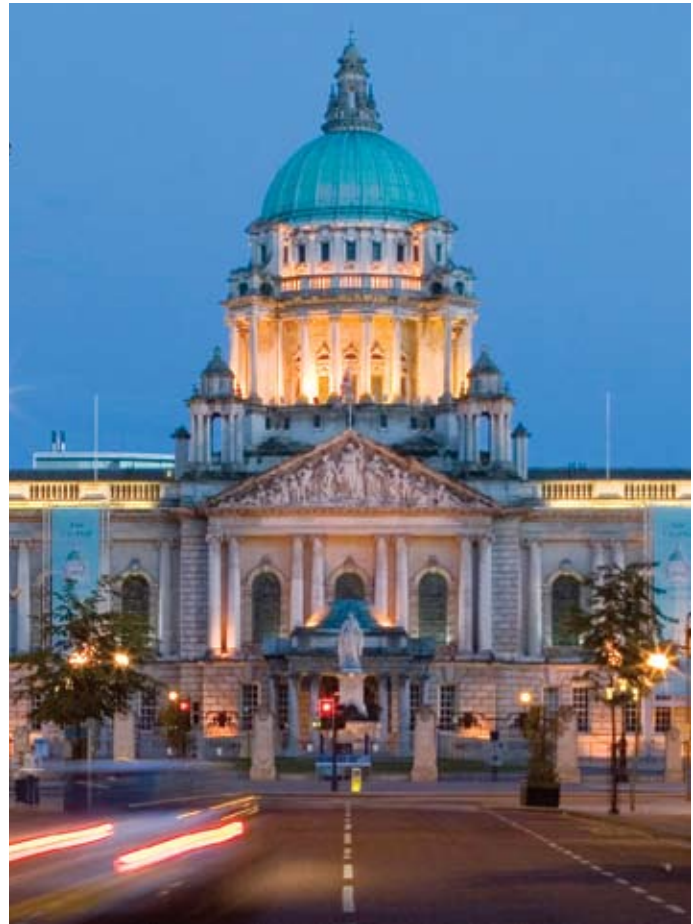
Political party	Number of councillors (June 2006)
Democratic Unionist Party	15
Sinn Féin	14
Social Democratic & Labour Party	8
Ulster Unionist Party	7
Alliance Party	4
Progressive Unionist Party	2
Independent	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>

Source: Belfast City Council Corporate Plan 2007-2008

The council's **six standing committees** are:

- Strategic Policy and Resources
- Development
- Health and Environmental Services
- Licensing
- Parks and Leisure
- Town Planning

The council delivers key services to citizens such as street cleansing, building control, refuse collection, leisure facilities, parks and community development. It also has a remit for some economic and urban regeneration activity in the city.



The **Review of Public Administration (RPA)** represents a real **opportunity to revitalise public services** in Northern Ireland, to replace current structures with a new, more accountable public sector; working together with a common purpose to meet the needs of the 'on-demand' lifestyles that people now lead.

A recent announcement on the future shape of local government proposes that the current 26 local government districts will be rationalised to create 11 new local government districts. This number will allow new council areas to deliver important services to communities in an efficient and effective manner. In order for local government to fulfil its role as leader and shaper of communities, a range of functions will be transferred to the new local councils, including:

- Local **development plan** functions, development control and enforcement;
- Local **public realm** aspects of road functions including streetscaping; town and city centre environmental improvements; street lighting; off-street parking; permitting local events to be held on roads;

- **Urban regeneration** and **community development** delivery functions including those associated with physical development, area based regeneration (such as Neighbourhood Renewal) along with some community development programmes and support for the voluntary and community sectors;
- A range of **housing related functions**;
- A number of functions associated with driving forward **local economic development**, local tourism and local arts, sports and leisure.

More information on Belfast City Council and on the Review of Public Administration can be found at:

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)  
[www.rpani.gov.uk](http://www.rpani.gov.uk)

# Demographics

Belfast's population has been in gradual but persistent decline from a historic high of over **400,000** before World War One. According to mid year estimates for 2006, Belfast has a population of **267,374**, which represents 15.35% of the Northern Ireland total population of 1,741,619. After a period of sustained population loss Belfast's population has begun to stabilise. Between 2004 and 2006 the city lost only 0.6% of its population compared with almost 12% in the previous 20 years. The population density of Belfast is 2,439 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The wider Belfast Metropolitan Area has a population of **645,536**.

## Age profile

Over 60% of Belfast's total population are of **working age**. Belfast is a young city, with 19.9% of the population under 16 years old. This youthful population could be a real asset in the future.

**Table 2: Age profile for Belfast**

Age group	Belfast total	Belfast percentage	Northern Ireland total	Northern Ireland percentage
<b>Under 16</b>	53,213	19.9%	380,141	21.8%
<b>16-59</b>	161,103	60.3%	1,035,167	59.5%
<b>60 Plus</b>	53,058	19.8%	326,311	18.7%

Source: NISRA Mid year estimates population and migration 2006

## Population density

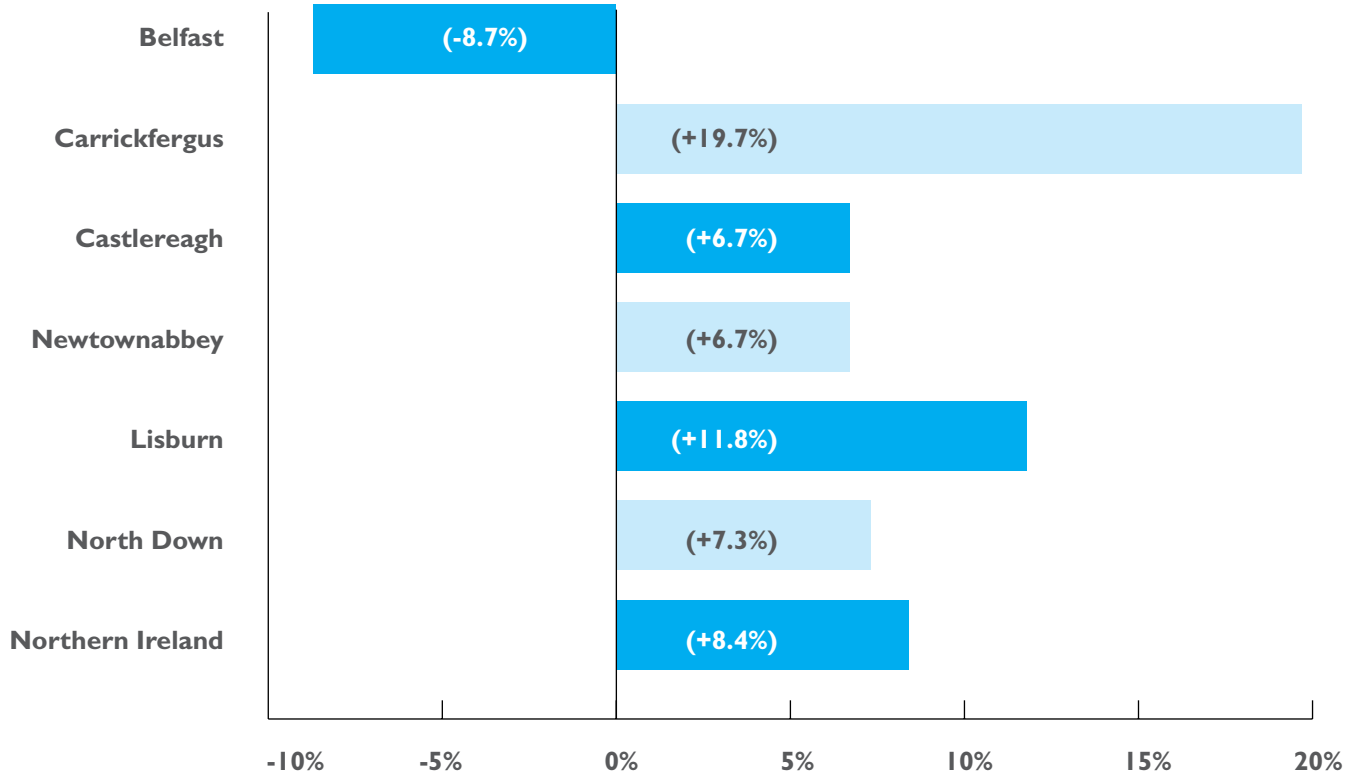
There was a slow decline in population density (people per square kilometre) between 1991 and 2006 with a definite decrease in the number of residents in Belfast (down by 8.7% over the period). By comparison over the same period the outlying area of Carrickfergus had a population density growth of 19.7% while Lisburn had density growth of 11.8%.

**Table 3: Changes in percentage population density (1991 to 2006)**

	1991	2006	Percentage change
<b>Belfast</b>	2,672.3	2,439.1	-8.7
<b>Carrickfergus</b>	410.3	491.3	+19.7
<b>Castlereagh</b>	723.5	772.2	+6.7
<b>Newtownabbey</b>	505	538.9	+6.7
<b>Lisburn</b>	226.1	252.8	+11.8
<b>North Down</b>	906.3	972.8	+7.3
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	118.4	128.3	+8.4

Source: NISRA Local Government District (LGD) Population Densities 1991-2006

**Figure 1: Changes in percentage population density (1991 to 2006)**



Source: NISRA Local Government District (LGD) population densities 1991-2006

## Ethnicity and religion

In Belfast **98% of the residents are of white ethnic origin**. The largest minority ethnic groups within Belfast are the **Chinese community** (with 1,318 residents) and the **mixed community** (with 729 residents).

The religious breakdown in the city is roughly equally split between those people of a 'Protestant and other Christian' community background (48.6%) and those people of a 'Catholic' community background (47.2%). 4.2% of the population has either indicated they are of a non-religious persuasion or is a member of other non-Christian religions.

**Table 4: Ethnicity and religion in Belfast and Northern Ireland (2001)**

<b>Ethnic group (all people)</b>	<b>Belfast percentage</b>	<b>Northern Ireland percentage</b>
<b>White</b>	98.6%	99.2%
<b>Largest Ethnic minority groups</b>	Chinese 0.5%	Chinese 0.2%
	Mixed 0.3%	Mixed 0.2%
	Indian 0.2%	Indian 0.1%
<b>Religion (all people)</b>	<b>Belfast percentage</b>	<b>Northern Ireland percentage</b>
<b>Protestant and other Christian</b>	48.6%	53.1%
<b>Catholic</b>	47.2%	43.8%
<b>None/other</b>	4.2%	3.1%

Source: Northern Ireland Census 2001

More information on population can be found at: [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)

# The economy

Belfast is one of the fastest growing regional economies in the UK. The city has experienced over a decade of sustained investment, economic growth and has reduced unemployment to historically low levels. During this period increased political and social stability, generous European funding support and a favourable global economy have combined to revive Belfast's wealth.

## Productivity

Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita provides a good comparative measure of productivity. GVA per capita for Belfast is **£26,792**. The trend in productivity for Belfast is promising, between 2000 and 2005 GVA per capita in Belfast **increased by 35.3%**. In 2005 **£7,180 million** GVA was generated in the Belfast Local Government District – 28.7% of Northern Ireland's GVA.

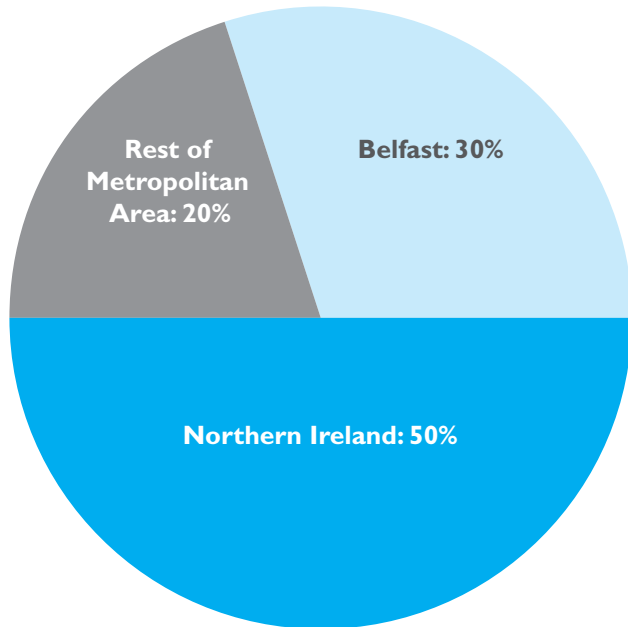
Source: Michael Parkinson report – Where is Belfast going? (2007)

## Employment

Belfast has almost **30% of the total employment** in Northern Ireland (this figure rises to 50% in the Belfast Metropolitan Area). However, as with many other European industrialised regions, traditional manufacturing industries, that were once the lifeblood of the economy, have now decreased in importance.

Reduced employment opportunities in this sector have been offset by a considerable increase in those employed in other areas such as the public sector and business services sector. The public sector plays a huge role in Belfast's economy. Almost two out of every five jobs are in public administration, education and the health sector.

**Figure 2: Distribution of employment**



Source: Northern Ireland Census of Employment 2005

## Northern Ireland Census of Employment

The total number of jobs in Belfast was **192,293 in 2005**. When the economy is broken down, “Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities” is the largest industrial sector in Belfast employing **31,165 employees**. “Health and Social Work” is the second largest sector with 30,378 employees. Table 5 shows that growth has been the greatest in “Financial Services” and second greatest in “Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities” in recent years.

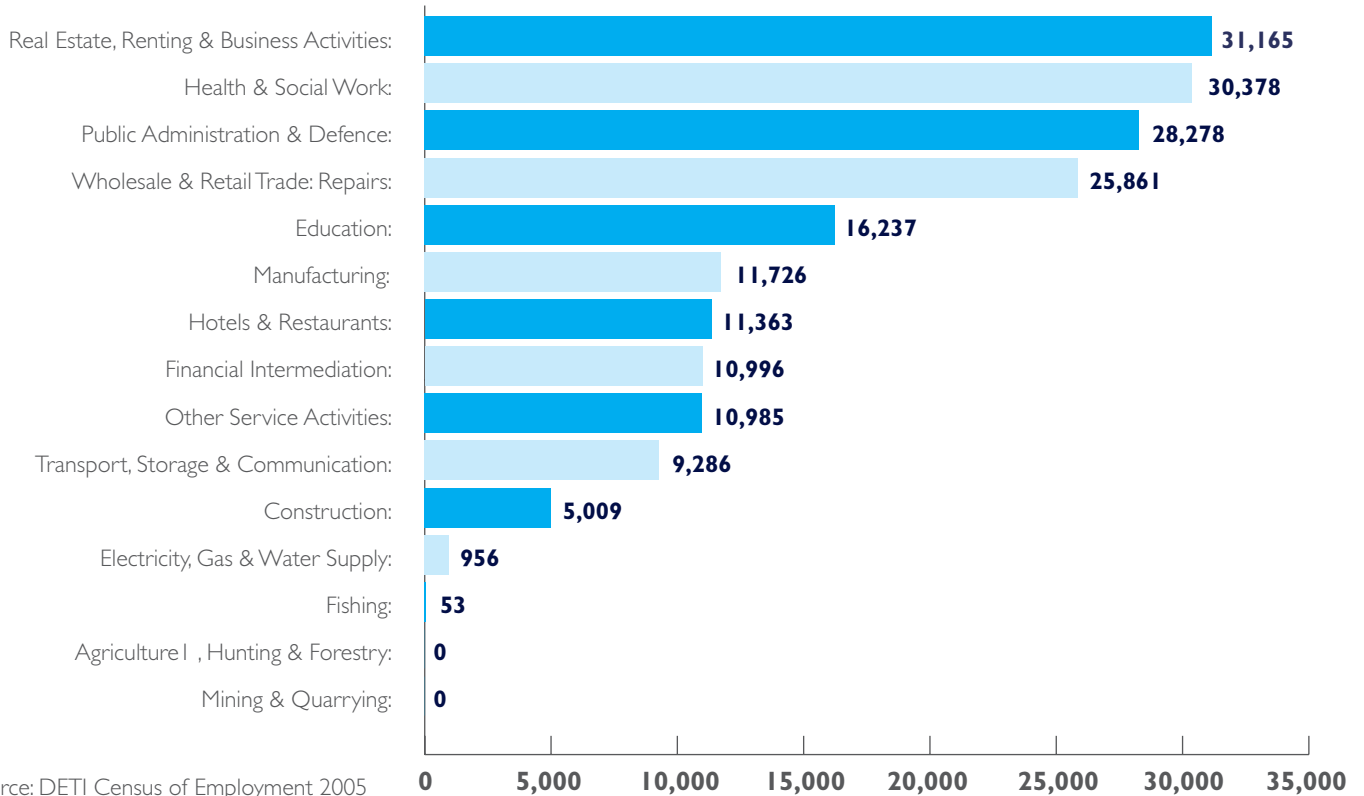
**Table 5: Breakdown and sectoral change of employment in Belfast 2005**

	Belfast employment breakdown 2005	Sectoral change 2001-2005
Real Estate, Renting & Business Activities	31,165	16.3%
Health & Social Work	30,378	10.9%
Public Administration & Defence	28,278	4.6%
Wholesale & Retail Trade: Repairs	25,861	1.8%
Education	16,237	10.8%
Manufacturing	11,726	-25.9%
Hotels & Restaurants	11,363	7.0%
Financial Intermediation	10,996	16.8%
Other Service Activities	10,985	7.7%
Transport, Storage & Communication	9,286	-0.5%
Construction	5,009	3.0%
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	956	6.3%
Fishing	53	
Agriculture, Hunting & Forestry	*	*
Mining & Quarrying	*	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>192,293</b>	<b>5.4%</b>

Source: DETI Census of Employment 2005

\* Not shown due to either no employees or confidentiality constraints.

**Figure 3: Breakdown of employment in Belfast (2005)**

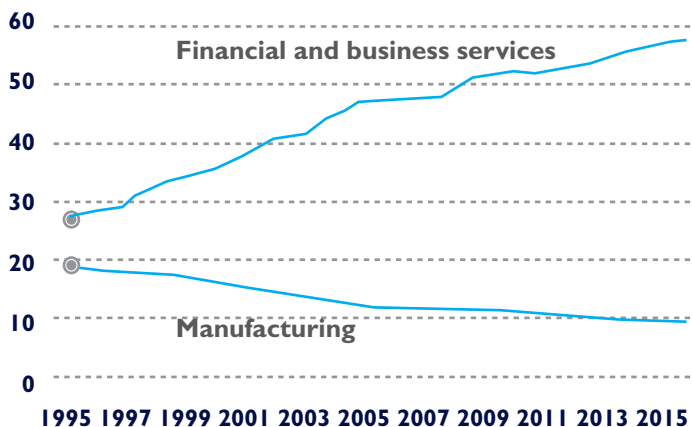


Source: DETI Census of Employment 2005

Financial and business services are projected to drive Belfast's employment growth (2006-2015) accounting for three-quarters of overall net new jobs.

**Figure 4: Growing and declining sectors within Belfast.**

**Total workplace employment (000s)**



Source: Belfast skills demand and supply report, Regional Forecasts.

## Falling unemployment

The increasing number of jobs in the city has had a positive effect on unemployment which has **fallen dramatically** in recent years from 9.3% in 1997 to 3.9 in 2007, lower than the Northern Ireland rate of 4.9%.

Despite recent improvements in unemployment however; a large proportion of those who are registered as unemployed have been out of work for more than a year (22.9%).

Source: Labour Force Survey 2006, Local Area Database.

## The labour force

- Roughly 30,000 additional jobs were created over the last decade in Belfast and close to 21,000 more jobs are forecast between 2006 and 2016.
- Labour turnover is less than 80%.
- Labour cost is 15% lower than the UK average.
- Belfast has a high working age economic activity rate of 70.1% in 2006, slightly lower than the overall Northern Ireland **working age activity rate** of 72.3%.

- Employment rates are fairly low - in 2006 less than two thirds (65.5%) of the city's working age population were employed or self-employed.

Source: [www.investmentbelfast.com](http://www.investmentbelfast.com)  
[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/stateofthecity/developmentbrief](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/stateofthecity/developmentbrief)

## Earnings

The average gross weekly earnings of full time employees in Belfast increased by 6.12% between 2005 and 2007. The average gross weekly earnings of full time employees in Belfast is **£511.20** in comparison to £675.20 for Northern Ireland.

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2007 (ASHE) Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI).

## Claimant count

Claimant count measures those people who are claiming unemployment related benefits known as **Jobseeker's Allowance**. The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in the city has decreased by 0.4% between 2006 and 2007. However, the claimant count rate in Belfast in December 2007 was higher than in all the other councils in the metropolitan area.

**Table 6: Claimant count rates December 2007**

District council area	Claimant count rates
Belfast	3.4%
Carrickfergus	1.6%
North Down	1.5%
Lisburn	1.6%
Newtownabbey	1.8%
Castlereagh	1.0%

Source: DETI, Economic Overview, December 2007

# Education and research

Education standards in the city's grammar and secondary schools are among the **highest in the UK**. Northern Ireland students at GCSE, GCE AS Level and GCE A Level continue to out-perform their UK counterparts.

- The city has the lowest primary, secondary and grammar school pupil-to-teacher ratio in Northern Ireland.
- The city's education authority, Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB), is responsible for 59,418 pupils (18% of the Northern Ireland total).

## In 2007 in Northern Ireland:

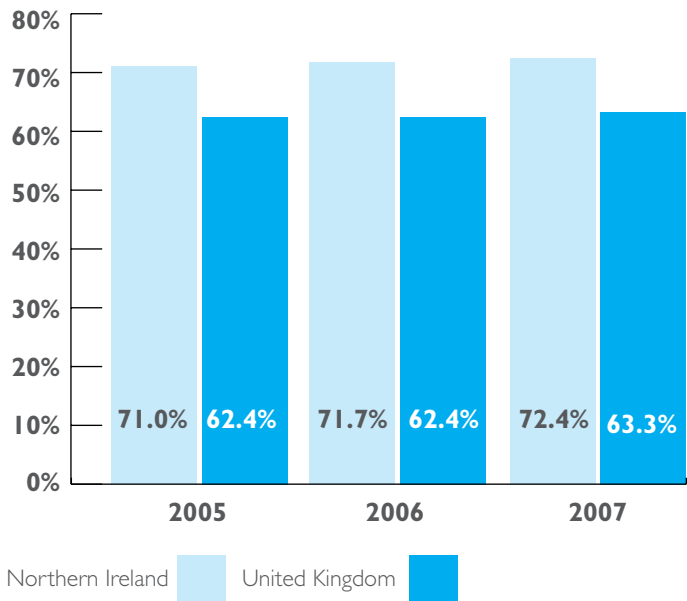
- 72.4% of young people achieved grades A\* to C at GCSE level (compared to 63.3% in the rest of the UK).
- The proportion of entries awarded A\* to G grades at GCSE level has risen slightly by 0.1% to 98% (also the same as the rest of the UK - 98%).
- For the third consecutive year young people in Northern Ireland (72.4%) achieving grades A\* to C at GCSE level, outperforming their UK counterparts (63.3%).

**Table 7: Total number of pupils and schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area**

Type of school	No. of pupils	No. of schools
Voluntary and private pre-school education centres	520	35
Nursery	1,564	32
Primary	25,271	97
Secondary	14,488	23
Grammar	16,241	16
Special	1,245	11
Hospital	89	1
Total of schools and pre-school education centres	59,418	215

Source: Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) 2006/07

**Figure 5: Percentage of students achieving grades A\* to C at GCSE Level**



Source: [www.belb.org.uk](http://www.belb.org.uk)

In 2006/07 in Northern Ireland:

- 97% of students achieved grades A to E at GCE
- 28.1% of students achieved 'A' grades at GCE.

Source: [www.belb.org.uk](http://www.belb.org.uk)  
[www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)  
[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

Education standards in the city's grammar schools are amongst the highest in the UK. There are two top universities in Northern Ireland: Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. In 2006/07 in Northern Ireland, there was:

- **A total of 47,970 undergraduate and 7,080 postgraduate students.**
- Students achieving first class or upper second class honours degrees have increased by **29% over the last decade from 4,012 to 5,165.**

## Research excellence

### **Queen's University Belfast**

One of the top universities in the UK in terms of the quality of teaching and the excellence of research. It has a five star rating in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) for Mechanical, Aeronautical and Manufacturing Engineering. Its five faculties offer a wide range of courses across the pure and applied sciences, arts and social sciences. Queen's is part of the UK's Russell Group, an acknowledgment of its status as a world class centre of excellence in research and education.

### **University of Ulster**

The university offers the largest number of courses in Ireland covering Arts, Business and Management, Engineering, Information Technology, Life and Health Sciences and Social Sciences. It is a major contributor to the region's research and development (R&D) capacity in support of local business and industry. It has a five star rating in the RAE in Biomedical Sciences and Celtic Studies.

### **Belfast Metropolitan College**

The college is the largest provider of further education in Northern Ireland with over 53,000 students with a huge range of vocational and academic courses offered at all levels up to degree and degree equivalent.

More information on education can be found at the Belfast Education and Library Board: [www.belb.org.uk](http://www.belb.org.uk) and the university and college websites:

[www.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qub.ac.uk),

[www.ulster.ac.uk](http://www.ulster.ac.uk)

[www.belfastinstitute.ac.uk](http://www.belfastinstitute.ac.uk).

# Deprivation

According to the Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation (2005):

- Belfast is the most deprived out of the 26 Local Government Districts (LGDs);
- Belfast has eight of the 10 most deprived wards in Northern Ireland;
- Belfast has nine of the 10 worst wards in the region in relation to health deprivation;
- There are 82,986 people in Belfast experiencing income deprivation and 30,119 people experiencing employment deprivation;
- Belfast has 150 Super Output Areas (SOAs) in total and 34% of these SOAs fall within the most deprived 10% of all SOAs in Northern Ireland (See Figure 6);
- 6.5% of the city's population live in 10% of the most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland.

Source: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 (NISRA).

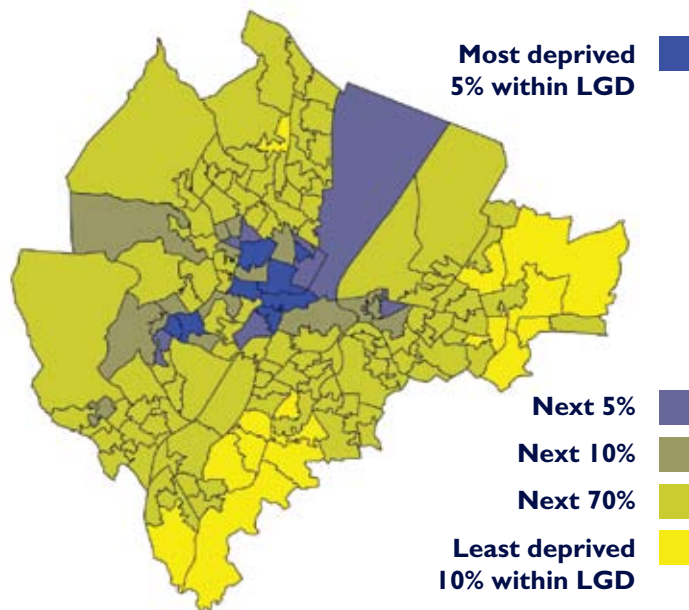
Belfast has a high level of benefit dependency. In 2006:

- 13.2% of the population were claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA);
- 4.4% of the population were claiming incapacity benefit;

- 12.7% of the population were claiming housing benefit;
- 9.7% of the population were claiming income support.

Source: Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service, [www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk)

**Figure 6: Multiple deprivation in Belfast (2005)**



Source: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005, NISRA.

# Health provision

Belfast has the largest provision of health care facilities in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust was formed in April 2007 with the merging of the six existing healthcare trusts in Belfast:

- The Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust (made up of Royal Victoria Hospital, Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital and Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children).
- Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust (made up of the Belfast City Hospital, Cancer Centre and Windsor House).
- Green Park Healthcare HSS Trust (made up of Musgrave

Park Hospital and Forster Green Park Healthcare.)

- Mater Hospital Trust.
- North & West Belfast Trust.
- South & East Belfast Trust.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provide services for more than 340,000 people in Belfast and regional services to the whole of Northern Ireland.

The three main hospitals treated a total of 719,974 patients in 2006/07, 26.2% of Northern Ireland patient activity.

**Table 8: Patient activity for the three main Belfast hospitals (2006/07)**

	The Royal Hospitals	Belfast City Hospital Trust	Mater Hospital Trust	Total	Northern Ireland total
<b>Accident and Emergency (A&amp;E) attendances</b>	101,772	48,662	44,501	194,935	709,326
<b>Day cases</b>	25,893	25,540	7,676	59,109	160,222
<b>In-patients</b>	50,015	69,547	12,765	132,327	358,550
<b>Outpatients</b>	67,525	198,553	67,525	333,603	1,523,672
				719,974	2,751,770

Source: Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (2006/07)

## General health

According to Northern Ireland Census 2001:

- 65.8% of people had a 'good' level of general health.
- 19.9 % of people had a 'fairly good' level of general health.
- 14.4% of people had a 'not good' level of general health.
- 24.2% of people have a limiting long-term illness.
- 11.8% of people provide unpaid care.

The average life expectancy at birth in Belfast based on the mortality rates in 2002 to 2004 was 79.4 years for females in comparison to 73.5 years for males, slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average of 80.6 for females and 75.8 for males.

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Census Data, Health and Care, Mortality rates in 2002 to 2004.

More information can be found at the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency website: [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk); the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland website: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk) and individual hospital websites. Royal Group Hospital Belfast: [www.royalhospitals.org](http://www.royalhospitals.org) and Belfast City Hospital: [www.bch.n-i.nhs.uk](http://www.bch.n-i.nhs.uk)



# Tourism

Belfast is now a popular short-break destination and has established itself as one of **Europe's top visitor destinations**. Major efforts have been made over the past decade to revitalise, regenerate and renew the city's tourist offering.

As a city, Belfast is compact and intimate, much of its rich legacy of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture remains intact and many fine buildings have been revitalised with cutting edge contemporary design in a vibrant city centre.

In recent years, Belfast has established a reputation as one of the premier business and conference locations within Europe.

Venues such as the **Belfast Waterfront**, which has gained recognition as a world-leading conference and exhibition venue, plus the availability of premium hotel accommodation, has established Belfast's position as the preferred choice for many national and international events. The city is also becoming a popular destination for cruise ships with 31 vessels visiting the city in 2007, carrying over 38,000 passengers and crew.

## Tourism performance

In 2007 more than 6.9 million visitors came to Belfast. To put this achievement in perspective, it is a massive 1 million more visitors that came to the city three years before, in 2004. Tourists injected £313.3 million into the local economy and helped to support over **17,230 full time jobs**.

Of the many reasons to visit Belfast, 40% of all visitors revealed that they had come to Belfast on business or to attend a conference, a clear indicator of the growing importance of the conference market and improved conference facilities in the city. Another principal motivator helping to attract 30% of all visitors is pure holiday factors. While 13% came to visit friends and relatives.

Source: Belfast 2007 Tourism Facts & Figures, Belfast City Council

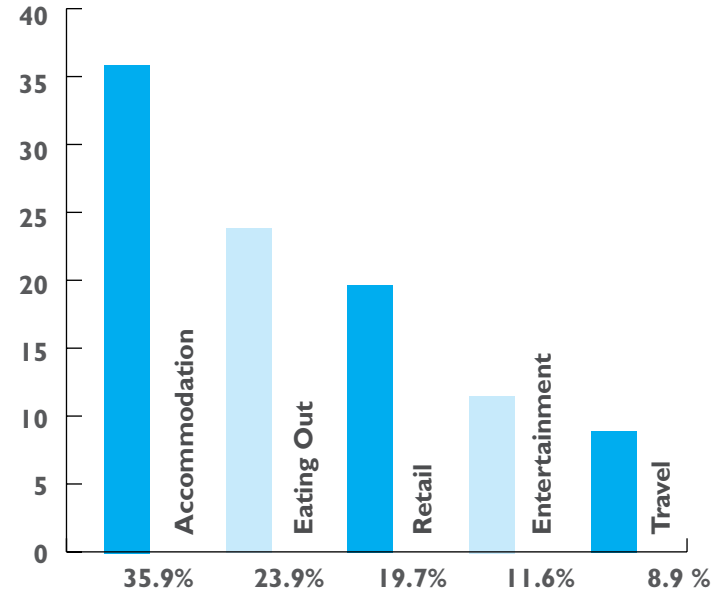
There were **1.2 million out of state overnight visitors** to Belfast in 2007, contributing an estimated £166.9 million to the local economy. The key expenditure was on **accommodation** and **eating out** (See Table 9).

**Table 9: Out of state allocation of expenditure from overnight visitors (2007)**

	Expenditure	Percentage
<b>Accommodation</b>	£59.8m	35.9%
<b>Eating out</b>	£40.0m	23.9%
<b>Retail</b>	£32.8m	19.7%
<b>Entertainment</b>	£19.3m	11.6%
<b>Travel</b>	£15.0m	8.9%

Source: Belfast Tourism Facts and Figures, Belfast City Council (2007)

**Figure 7: Out of state allocation of expenditure from overnight visitors (2007)**



Source: Belfast Tourism Facts and Figures, Belfast City Council (2007)

For more information on tourism in Belfast contact the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau or view the official tourism website: [www.gotobelfast.com](http://www.gotobelfast.com)

# Quality of life

Creating a successful and vibrant city where people want to live is about more than improving the economy, job prospects and regeneration of an area. It is about the things that are **important to the people living in the city**, so called 'liveability, soft, quality of life factors', such as, clean streets, availability of green spaces, safer and healthier environment, levels of pollution and waste and people's perception of crime. In the 2003 Quality of Life survey, Belfast was voted the **best city in the UK** in which to live.

## Table 10: Housing in Belfast (2006)

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Condition Survey 2006

Type	Percentage
Owner occupied	55%
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	18%
Housing Associations	6%
Private Rented & Other	13%
Vacant	8%

## Housing

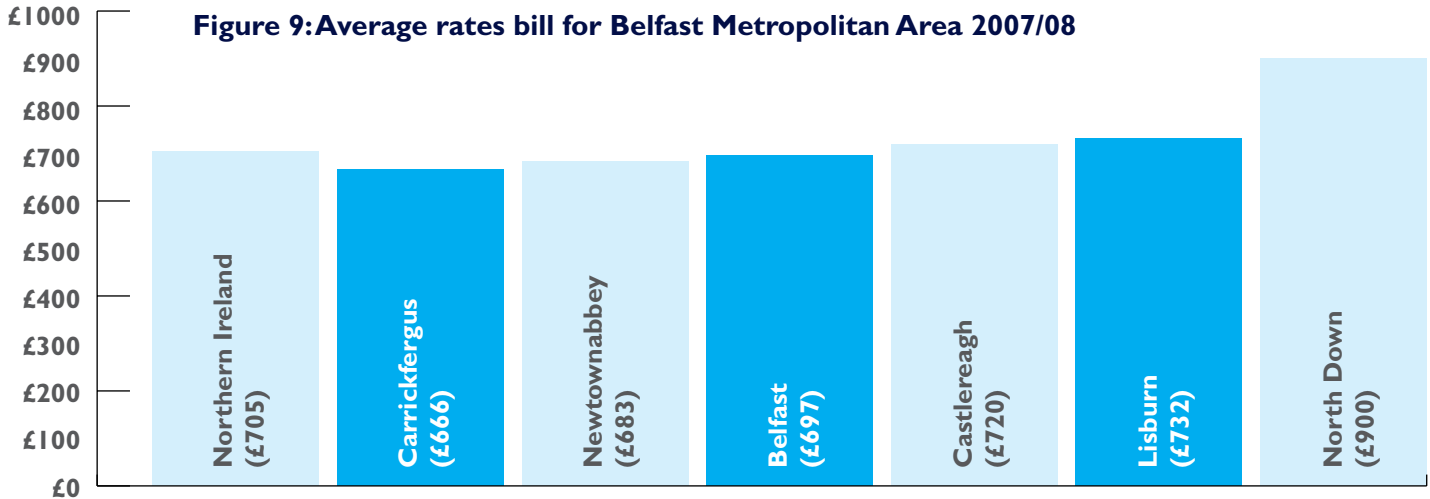
Housing conditions in Belfast have improved significantly over the past decade, with much of the housing stock (both social and private) in the inner city area on par with some of the best in the UK. The housing stock has risen steadily to over 124,000 in 2006.

More than 50% of the houses in Belfast are owner-occupied and only 8% are vacant.

## Local rates

The average rates bill in Northern Ireland has risen by 9.5% from £644 in 2006/07 to £705 in 2007/08. The average rates bill for Belfast has increased by roughly 43%

from 2002/03 to 2007/08. Across the Belfast Metropolitan Area in 2007/08, North Down had the highest average rate bills of £900 and Belfast had one of the lowest with an average of £697.



Source: Northern Ireland Housing Statistics (2006/2007)

## House prices

Since 2000 average house prices in Belfast have risen from £95,800 to £156,250 in 2006, an increase of over 60%.

From the second quarter of 2007 (April to June) the average house price in Belfast was £232,800, an increase of 34% from the previous quarter. This is above the Northern Ireland average house price of £215,300.

Source: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)

## The environment

The environment affects many aspects of quality of life and helps determine the attractiveness of the city to both visitors and residents. Belfast is home to over 2,000 acres of parkland and nature reserves including:

- Two city parks
- 77 playgrounds
- Five country parks
- Nine district parks
- 36 local parks
- Belfast Zoo

The parks are home to buildings of cultural heritage such as Belfast Castle, Malone House and the Palm House in Botanic Gardens.



## Litter

Street cleanliness has an impact on the city's image and attractiveness. **Over £10 million** was spent by the council last year to help clean the **1,000km of roads** in Belfast (twice what the average UK city spend) and efforts to increase its effectiveness and change public attitudes and behaviour towards litter are being intensified.

Over 180 vehicles and 1,800 litter bins are on hand so that rubbish can be properly disposed. Overall the net cost of street cleansing per head of population has increased by 4.5% from £32.78 in 2005/2006 to £34.27 in 2006/2007. The Level of Cleanliness Index achieved by Belfast has increased from **56 in 2000/2001** to **70 in 2006/2007**.

## Recycling

The council introduced a new waste collection system to all households in Belfast, with households having at least one method to recycle their household waste. The waste collection budget for Belfast is roughly £8.5 million. The current rate (2006/07) of household waste goods recycled and composted is 19% (an increase of 10% from 2004/05). The aim is for 35% of waste to be recycled by 2010. In 2006/07, 118,541 tonnes of household waste was collected; of this around 27,792 tonnes was recycled by the council.

**Table 11: Belfast City Council Cleansing Performance Indicators 2000/2001 to 2006/2007**

Indicator	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/7
Net cost of street cleansing per head of population	£26.03	£25.52	£28.01	£29.34	£31.12	£32.78	£34.27
Level of Cleanliness Index achieved	56	58	65	68	68	70	70

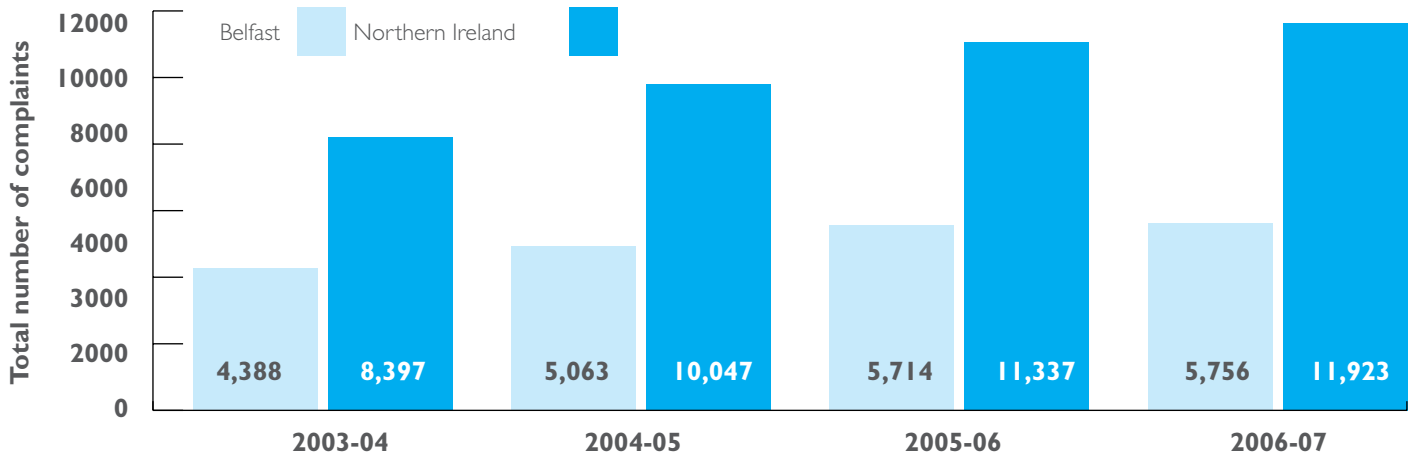
Source: Cleansing Services, Belfast City Council

## Noise

In Northern Ireland, district councils are responsible for taking complaints about noise and where necessary, dealing with the problem through enforcement. Figure 10 illustrates the number of noise complaints recorded in Belfast and Northern

Ireland since 2003/04. It shows an upward trend in complaints each year. The number of complaints was 30% higher in Belfast in 2006/07 compared to 2003/04. Across Northern Ireland complaints increased by 42% over the four years.

**Figure 10: Total number of complaints in Belfast and Northern Ireland.**



Source: [www.doe.gov.uk](http://www.doe.gov.uk), Noise Complaint Statistics for Northern Ireland

## Community safety

Crime in Northern Ireland remains low in comparison to other UK cities. A total of 121,144 offences were recorded in Northern Ireland during 2006/07.

As a percentage of Northern Ireland total offences, Belfast accounts for 25%. Between 2003/04 and 2006/07 the crime rate in Belfast fell by 8%. Violence accounted for 30.8% of all crime in Belfast in 2006/07.

**Table 12: Offences recorded in Belfast 2003-2007**

	<b>Criminal damage</b>	<b>Violence</b>	<b>Theft</b>	<b>Burglary</b>	<b>Total offences</b>
<b>2003/04</b>	8,866	8,808	12,051	3,864	33,589
<b>2004/05</b>	7,951	8,295	10,761	3,966	30,973
<b>2005/06</b>	9,184	9,177	9,015	3,007	30,383
<b>2006/07</b>	9,285	9,497	9,049	3,011	30,842

Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland, [www.psnl.police.uk](http://www.psnl.police.uk)

# Retail

A city's retail market is vital as it attracts not only tourists but regular trade from residents and day trippers. Belfast is the main retail market in Northern Ireland with a primary **catchment population of 1.8 million**. This includes all of Northern Ireland as well as extending into parts of the Republic of Ireland. There are a total of 6.9 million high-spending visitors to the city each year, demonstrating the Lonely Planet's description of Belfast being a **'city on the rise'**. Victoria Square, the new £320 million development which opened in March 2008, will increase Belfast's presence on the UK retail map and will give it a further boost in attracting shoppers, tourists, conferences and investors.

## Key statistics

- Belfast is rated within the top five fastest growing regional economies in the UK.
- It is ranked fifth in the UK for retail trading conditions, and fourth for retailer confidence (Gerald Eve: 'Prime Retail Report').
- Belfast has the largest and most diverse retail centre in Northern Ireland.
- There are 834 retail outlets in Belfast's prime retail area, an increase of 58% since 2006.
- It has a combined retail spend of more than £2.5 billion per year.
- 45% of total visitor expenditure is based on shopping.
- Shoppers' perception of safety has improved by 40% (from 49% in 2006 to 89% in 2007).

Source: DTZ report, Belfast City Centre Healthcheck 2007

# Leisure and culture

Belfast is recognised as having a vibrant and revitalised cultural life. There is growing energy within the culture and arts sector in the city, with eight major annual festivals, key concert and performance venues and award winning theatres. In the past decade, Belfast's **cultural renaissance** has witnessed the arrival of a new generation of visitor attractions, hotels, restaurants and bars. Belfast is embracing the notion of a 'café culture' with a number of cafes and restaurants having tables and chairs outside their premises for people to enjoy food and drink 'al fresco', adding to the vibrancy of the city centre. The city boasts a wide variety of cultural activities including classical and contemporary music, drama, literature, visual arts, many world renowned international festivals and historical events to the city.

## Cultural heritage

The proud heritage and history of Belfast is important and is celebrated through the eight museums and heritage centres located across the city. There are 1,040 listed buildings, 13 designated areas of conservation and 20 designated areas of townscape character. The newly defined Cathedral Quarter, Gaeltacht Quarter and Titanic Quarter have derived their strong identity from their rich traditional heritage.

## Museums, heritage and discovery centres:

- Royal Ulster Rifles Museum
- Belfast Castle Exhibition
- RUC Museum
- Fernhill House
- Ulster Museum
- Lagan Lookout Centre
- W5
- War Memorial Building

## Festivals

There are many opportunities for celebration in Belfast with its rich and diverse cultural heritage. Over 500,000 people participated in the 55 festivals all over the city including Queen's University's annual Belfast Festival, the Belfast Film Festival, the Titanic Festival and Opera in the Gardens in Botanic Gardens.

The St Patrick's Day festival in March offers a carnival atmosphere for all the family with a wonderful and colourful carnival parade making its way through the city centre streets. Belfast also plays host to the biggest 'Orange parade' on 12 July each year, which attracts tens of thousands of participants and spectators.

More information on can be found at

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events) and  
[www.gotobelfast.com](http://www.gotobelfast.com)

## Leisure and community facilities

There are 11 leisure centres owned by Belfast City Council in the city dedicated to providing a complete service for the community. Activities on offer include swimming, five-a-side football, squash, aerobics, spinning and trampolining. The total number of leisure centre members was 26,291 in February 2008. Between 2006 (10,490) and 2008 the number of members increased by 60%.

The council is also responsible for 22 community centres which are used for a wide range of community based activities. These include homework clubs, after schools groups, keep-fit sessions and parent and toddler clubs.

There is also a range of meeting facilities and state-of-the-art computer equipment. A total of 456,489 people used our community centres in 2006/07.

## Performance venues

Belfast continues to host a series of international entertainment, performances and events in its many iconic buildings (Belfast Waterfront, Odyssey Arena) and traditional venues such as the Grand Opera House and Ulster Hall.

**Table 13: Venue capacity (2008)**

Venue	Capacity
Odyssey Arena	10,000
Kings Hall	8,000
Custom House Square (outdoor venue)	5,000
Lanyon Place (outdoor venue)	3,000
Belfast Waterfront Auditorium	2,223
Ulster Hall	1,800
Barrow Square (outdoor venue)	1,500
Writers' Square	1,000
Grand Opera House	1,001
Elmwood Hall	443
Belfast Waterfront Studio	380
Lyric Theatre	304
Black Box	300
Stranmillis University College Theatre	300
Crescent Arts Centre	150
Culturlann	110

Source: [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)

# Transport

Transport is an integral part of modern city life. Effective transport systems are vital for the growth and competitiveness of successful cities. Belfast lies at the heart of the regional transportation network in Northern Ireland. The predominant form of public transport within Belfast is bus-based.

## Public transport

The main mode of public transport in Belfast is the 'Metro' bus service, offering a regular well connected service to the city centre, the suburbs and the outskirts.

Translink is the brand name of the integrated public transport operation of Metro, NI Railways and Ulsterbus. Over **75 million passenger journeys** were made on Translink services in 2006/07.

There are four main rail stations with five stops within Belfast and 37 stops throughout Northern Ireland.

Source: [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk) and [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

## Air transport

Belfast has two modern airports within 20 minutes of the city centre; Belfast International Airport (20 miles, 32km from the city centre) and the George Best Belfast City Airport (2 miles, 3.2km from the city centre). Collectively they account for 95% of air transport movement in Northern Ireland. In 2006/2007 Belfast International was the **11th busiest** airport while George Best Belfast City was the **17th busiest** airport in the UK. Belfast International saw a 39% increase in the number of passengers and George Best Belfast City Airport saw an increase of 77%. Over 7.1 million passengers had used both airports in 2006, an increase of over 1 million since 2003. In 2006 there was a total of 85,074 commercial and cargo flights leaving both airports, an increase of almost 19% since 2003. A total of 48,212 flights left from the International Airport and 36,862 from the George Best Belfast City Airport.

Belfast International Airport serves **47 scheduled destinations** with 16 domestic services, 24 European and transatlantic services and 7 to the rest of the world. Palma de Mallorca was the most popular international destination from Belfast International with 110,970 passengers flying there in 2006. New York was the second most popular destination with 102,365 passengers.

The George Best Belfast City Airport offers short haul destinations serving **26 scheduled destinations** with 24 domestic services and 2 European services. Within the past five years the airport has invested more than £30 million in redevelopment and currently supports around 900 jobs on the airport site and an estimated 300 indirect and induced jobs in the greater Belfast area.

Source: Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2006-2007.

## Port of Belfast

The Port is currently the second largest on the island of Ireland, handling almost 60% of Northern Ireland's seaborne trade and **20% of the entire island's sea traffic**. It is a vital gateway for raw materials, exports and consumer goods for the entire island. In 2006, the Port of Belfast:

- handled 17.5 million tonnes of goods
- handled 95% of Northern Ireland's fuel products and 90% of bulk tonnages;
- facilitated 133,000 containers and 350,000 freight vehicles;
- carried over 1.2 million passengers;
- accommodated over 6,000 sailings to Great Britain, Europe and beyond.

A key infrastructural improvement is taking place at the Port of Belfast. It is carrying out a **£630 million 18 year expansion plan**, with a projected doubling of the level of traffic handled by 2025.

More information can be found at the Department for Regional Development website: [www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk)

## Having trouble reading this document?

'Belfast: A profile of the city 2008/2009' is available in alternative formats. Just call Freephone 0800 0855412 or text phone +44 (0)28 9027 0405. You can also download it from our website [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/business](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/business)

## Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this document was correct at the time of publication, Belfast City Council cannot take responsibility for its currency. To guarantee complete accuracy please refer directly to the organisations responsible for primary data collection.

# Belfast: a profile of the city 2008-2009

---

Published May 2008  
Policy and Research Unit  
Development Department  
Belfast City Council  
4-10 Linenhall Street  
Belfast BT2 8BP  
Northern Ireland

T: +44 (0)28 9032 0202  
F: +44 (0)28 9050 0513  
[development@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:development@belfastcity.gov.uk)  
[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/business](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/business)