

# Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty **Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues**

2024

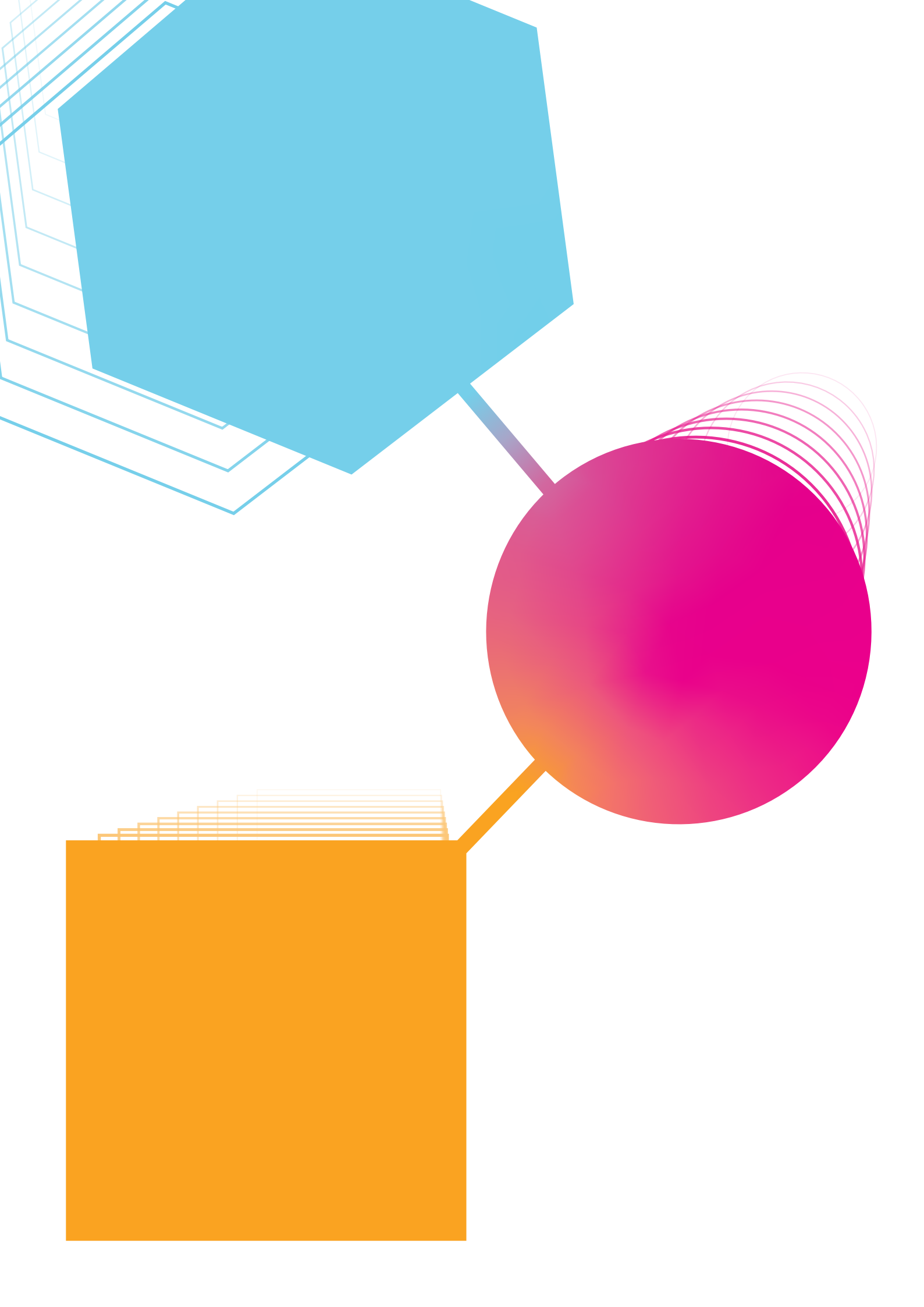




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# 1. Introduction

The assessment set out in this report has been undertaken by SOLAS in fulfillment of its obligations under S42 (2) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014: the public sector equality and human rights duty (the Duty) and in reflection of its ambitions to eliminate discrimination, and advance the achievement of equality and the fulfillment of human rights across all of its function areas.

Section 42(2) requires public bodies, in giving effect to the Duty, to undertake and publish an assessment of the equality and human rights issues, relevant to its functions and purpose, for identified groups under the Duty. The assessment is the foundation for implementing the Duty, both the overarching Duty under Section 42(1) and the strategic Duty under Section 42(2), enabling a planned and systematic approach to equality and human rights.

In conducting this assessment, SOLAS has ensured alignment with guidance issued by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, including that the assessment is evidence-based and involves consultation with key stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2024) [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.- Guidance for Public Bodies - Second Edition](#)

## 2. Assessment Template

The assessment of equality and human rights issues involves an examination of the situation, experience, and identity of the identified groups for the Duty, to establish the equality and human rights issues experienced by these groups, that are relevant to the functions and purpose of SOLAS.

The identified groups are:

- those covered by the nine grounds under equality legislation: gender (including gender identity), civil status, family status (including lone parents, carers), age, sexual orientation, disability, race (including race, colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins), religion, and membership of the Traveller community; and
- those at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including working class people, people experiencing rural disadvantage, and ex-offenders;
- those at the intersections of these groups, being a member of more than one group; and individual rights holders under relevant human rights instruments.

The **situation** of the group refers to disadvantage in the level and quality of resources the group can access, including such as education and training services, as well as employment opportunities. The **experience** of the group refers to the quality of the group's engagement with wider society, including their engagement with public services, both as employees, service participants and policy beneficiaries. The **identity** of the group refers to the manner in which the group gives expression to its identity and to any lack of recognition for diversity leading to unmet needs that are specific to the identity of the group.

SOLAS has identified five equality and human rights benchmarks for our ambitions for the Duty: Dignity; Voice; Agency; Social Justice; and Inclusion. Statements of outcome and process have been identified for each of these benchmarks to serve as a compass for the organisation, giving directions for our ambitions for equality and human rights, providing the frame within which we will implement the Duty, and offering a language for communicating and embedding the Duty across the organisation. These are set out in full detail in our Equality and Human Rights Benchmark Statement.

These five benchmarks are used as a framework to set out our assessment of the equality and human rights issues relevant to our functions.

### 3. Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

This section sets out the core equality and human rights issues that have most relevance to the functions of SOLAS. These issues are drawn from the evidence base of issues, set out in section 4.

When using the assessment as a tool to implement the Duty (when developing or reviewing plans, strategies, policies, processes etc.), the relevant equality and human rights issues of relevance to the plan, strategy, policy, process under development or review, should be identified from this section. The evidence base, section 4. And referenced reports/research, should also be used, if necessary, to obtain more detail in regard to the specific issues identified from section 3.

*The equality and human rights issues identified below relate to all of the identified groups unless otherwise indicated. In regard to a number of the equality and human rights issues, the particular situation or experience for one or more of the identified groups is noted where the data indicate: a unique experience for that group in regard to the issue(s); or that the group experience a significant/persistent inequality/discrimination/human rights violations in regard to the issue(s).*



#### Dignity

*Dignity is about care, trust, and kindness, mutual respect and respect for the diversity of people across the identified groups. It involves fairness and equal treatment.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this benchmark and relevant to the functions of SOLAS, are:

- Employment-related discrimination<sup>2</sup> for all of the identified groups (when seeking work and/or in the workplace). In particular, the data point to:
  - high levels of discrimination, when seeking employment, for: Travellers; Roma and Black (non-Irish national) migrants; disabled people; transgender people; and people with a criminal conviction.
  - high levels of in-work discrimination, for women, disabled people, and transgender people.
- Discrimination in accessing and/or participating in key services,<sup>3</sup> including education and training. In particular, the data point to:
  - high levels of discrimination in accessing and participating in education, experienced by Travellers, and people with disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> As defined under the Employment Equality Acts.

<sup>3</sup> As defined under the Equal Status Acts.

- Identity-based harassment and sexual harassment,<sup>4</sup> which prevents access to and participation in employment and key services, including education. In particular, the data point to:
  - high levels of sexual harassment experienced by women in the workplace,
  - high levels of identity-based harassment and bullying (in education and workplace settings) experienced by LGBTI+ people, Travellers and other minority ethnic groups.
- Hate-motivated abuse and violence, on the basis of a person's identity, which negatively impacts on access to and participation in employment, education, and wider society.
- Stigma, stereotypes and assumptions about difference across the identified groups, affecting people's participation in employment and key services, including education.
- Under-reporting of discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, including in work and in learning environments, and lack of knowledge of rights under legislation and capacity to exercise these rights.
- Limited understanding and/or capacity of employers and service providers, in relation to understanding and responding to equality and human rights issues for identified groups.

### Voice



*Voice is about the diversity of people from the identified groups, being empowered and having a say in decisions. It involves clarity, transparency and openness in decision-making processes, and decision-makers being accountable.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this benchmark and relevant to the functions of SOLAS, are:

- Under-representation of people from the identified groups in decision-making positions and in structures to shape and make decisions.
- Lack of spaces and opportunities for the voice of identified groups to be effectively articulated. In particular, the data point to:
  - failure by service providers and employers to ensure the perspective and lived experience of people experiencing inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion is informing priorities and approaches in employment and service provision.
- Lack of organisation, resources, support, and encouragement for the identified groups to participate effectively in and have influence on decision-making.

<sup>4</sup> As defined under the equality legislation (the Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts). Identity-based harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic under one or more of the protected grounds under equality legislation.





## Agency

*Agency is about the diversity of people from the identified groups having choices and autonomy in making and acting on their choices. It involves people being informed and confident in making choices, and having capacity to exercise their rights.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this benchmark and relevant to the functions of SOLAS, are:

- Limitations for women, in particular for those parenting alone, in accessing education and training, and employment progression opportunities, where caring roles can limit their choice and agency.
- Stereotyping and assumptions about the capacity and agency of identified groups. In particular, the data point to:
  - gender stereotyping affecting subject and course choices available to, pushed towards, and made by females and males.
  - gender stereotypes and norms about women and caring responsibilities, affecting participation in employment and education, and
    - Ageism and ableism due to stereotypes and biases about the capacity and ability of older people and people with disabilities.
- Digital literacy barriers for older people, and people with intellectual disabilities, which affects their agency.
- Limited articulation of individual perspectives and preferences by members of the identified groups, with particular reference to barriers of:
  - low levels of confidence and limited ambition in making choices and accessing options available, and in exercising rights;
  - lack of autonomy afforded and disempowerment, including in particular for people with literacy issues, people with learning difficulties, and people with intellectual disabilities;
  - being unable to articulate needs due to having to hide one's identity, in employment and/or education, due to fear of negative treatment, for Travellers, LGBTI+ people, and people with non-visible disabilities.
  - lack of information and barriers to accessing information on options available and to ensure informed choices.



## Inclusion

*Inclusion is about ensuring access and participation in services and employment for the diversity of people from the identified groups. It involves making adaptations, being flexible, and making reasonable accommodations for the diversity of people.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this benchmark and relevant to the functions of SOLAS, are:

- Invisibility of diversity, with particular regard to:
  - lack of equality data (employment and service provision) to measure diversity and monitor progress in regard to equality outcomes for specific groups (in particular a lack of data on ethnicity, and disability); and
  - lack of visibility for diverse identities in education curricula.
- Failure to make adaptations for diversity and to address the specific needs arising from this diversity. In particular, the data point to:
  - inflexibility in the design and provision of education and training;
  - limited capacity and knowledge (among employers and service providers) to appreciate and respond to the practical implications of difference and diversity;
  - lack of knowledge and awareness (among employers and service providers) in regard to ensuring reasonable accommodation for people with different types of disability/impairment.
  - lack of universal design for accessibility and disabling physical environments; and
  - the absence of a diversity of provision of school type within educational catchment to reflect the diversity of religious and non- religious convictions now represented in the State.
- Inadequate response to caring responsibilities. In particular, the data point to:
  - the unequal sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men;
  - the lack of affordable and accessible childcare; and
  - the absence of adequate work-life balance employment arrangements.
- Isolation. In particular, the data point to:
  - Isolation of people with disabilities where there are barriers to their full participation in workplace and education settings;
  - Isolation of minority ethnic migrants, particularly those whose first language is not English, from local community services and supports; and
  - Isolation of people in rural areas with lack of access to public transport (in particular for older people, and those living in poverty).
- Unwelcoming/non-inclusive working and learning environments, with particular regard to:
  - 'soft' barriers of discouragement where certain groups (Travellers, LGBTI+ people) feel they have to hide their identity; and
  - stereotyping of certain groups resulting in barriers of access and participation (employment and service provision).

## Social Justice



*Social Justice is about the diversity of people from the identified groups achieving similar outcomes to the general population across a range of fields including education and employment. It involves creating the conditions for such outcomes.*

**The equality and human rights issues to be addressed** in implementing the Duty, related to this benchmark and relevant to the functions of SOLAS, are:

- Low education status. In particular, the data point to:
  - early school leaving as a result of identity-based harassment (particularly for Travellers and LGBTI+ students);
  - poor educational outcomes for Travellers and people with disabilities;
  - low levels of literacy for Travellers and Roma;
  - children with disabilities from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately placed in special education;
  - poorer leaving cert outcomes and consequent lack of transition to third-level education, for young people who are taking on care responsibilities in the family.
- Barriers to lifelong learning participation for: older people, people on low incomes, people who left formal education after primary school, lone parents, some migrants; and people exiting prison.
- Low skills status. In particular, the data point to:
  - lack of access to and outcomes from training provision across the identified groups;
  - gender imbalance in STEM courses and apprenticeships;
  - lack of progression, from training into employment, for Travellers and people with disabilities; and
  - Travellers missing out on educational supports due to hiding their ethnic identity, for fear of negative treatment.
- Unemployment and under-employment. In particular, the data point to:
  - low levels of labour market participation for: young people; people with disabilities; Travellers and other minority ethnic groups; and lone parents;
  - lack of networks and connections for Travellers, regarding employment and course-related placements; and
  - lower overall employment rate for women and higher concentration of women in part-time and precarious work.
- Lack of access to employment opportunities and promotion. In particular, the data point to:
  - lack of women in management positions;
  - impact of caring responsibilities and limits on promotion and other career opportunities, for women; and
  - lack of progression within the workplace and of diversity in management positions for the identified groups.

- Low income. In particular, the data point to:
  - the additional financial costs of having a disability;
  - concentration of women in low-paid, part-time work;
  - the gender pay gap and gender pension gap; and
  - dependence on social protection payments to access/continue in employment and/or education.
- Poverty, with particular regard to:
  - situations of socio-economic disadvantage; and
  - intersection of socio-economic disadvantage with identity-based inequality (in particular for: lone parents, Travellers, minority ethnic groups, disabled people, older people, and transgender people).
- Homelessness/insecure accommodation status, and overcrowding, which adversely impact on people's learning and education. In particular, the data point to:
  - poor living conditions, overcrowding, and high risk of homelessness for Travellers and Roma and other minority ethnic groups;
  - unsuitability of direct provision accommodation for families, and lack of accommodation options for those exiting direct provision; and
  - poor quality of accommodation and increased risk of homelessness for disabled people, and lone parents.
- Unequal health status. In particular, the data point to:
  - mental health issues, in particular for young people, Travellers, and LGBTI+ people;
  - limited availability of, and access to mental health supports and services;
  - high mortality rates and suicide levels in the Traveller community; and
  - suicide rates among young men.
- Digital exclusion/inequality. In particular, the data point to:
  - lower digital skills and digital literacy among: older people, and people with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties; and
  - lack of access to devices or internet services, in particular for: older people; young people who are classified as NEET (not in employment, education, or training); people living in poverty; Travellers; Roma; people in over-crowded accommodation; and people with disabilities.
- Specific barriers for some minority ethnic migrants in accessing education and training due to: lack of information and knowledge; language barriers; eligibility requirements; lack of recognition of qualification from other jurisdictions, and legal status requirements.

## 4. Evidence Base for the Assessment

This SOLAS assessment of equality and human rights is evidence-based in drawing from:

- National policy strategies for identified groups.
- CSO data.
- Research conducted by: national research institutes; the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission; national organisations advocating on behalf of the identified groups; and EU bodies.
- Submissions by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, to the international UN human rights monitoring framework.
- Research conducted by SOLAS.

The evidence base is set out for public information purposes. It further serves as a resource for SOLAS in implementing the further steps of the Duty, to: identify the policies, plans, and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address these equality and human rights issues; and report annually on developments and achievement in addressing the issues.

This evidence base will be periodically updated by SOLAS to ensure that the most up-to-date data and information is informing our ongoing work to address equality and human rights concerns across our function areas.

The evidence base is set out according to the identified groups for the Duty, and using the framework of situation, experience, identity.

# Gender (including gender identity)

## Situation

- CSO data finds the following in regard to the situation of men and women in Ireland:<sup>5</sup>

### Employment and decision-making:

- Men have a higher employment rate (75%) than women (64%) in Ireland.
- There were large variations in employment rates between women with and without children. The presence of children had a much smaller effect on the employment participation rate for men, than for women.
- In 2019, women held just 26% of senior roles in large Irish enterprises. They occupied just 11.5% of CEO positions, 28.3% of Senior Executive roles, 19.6% of Board of Director positions, and 7.4% of Chairperson roles.
- Men significantly outnumbered women in all national decision-making structures in Ireland in 2018. Men also out-numbered women in all regional decision-making structures in Ireland in 2019.

### Income

- Women in Ireland have a higher risk of poverty (16.5%) than men (14.7%) after considering social transfers and pensions.
- Men are slightly more likely to have pension than women. In 2019 60.7% of men and 58.7% of women had a pension.
- On average female employees were paid 14.4% an hour less than male employees in 2017.
- The median earned income across all education levels was higher for men than for women in 2016. In total the median earned income for women in 2016 was 78.3% of that earned by men.
- Women constitute almost two-thirds of the civil service workforce, while the vast majority of senior positions at the top four civil service grades are filled by men, suggesting the continued existence of a glass ceiling in the public sector.<sup>6</sup>
- Women report lower job control<sup>7</sup> than men.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2017 the gender pay gap in Ireland was 14.4%.<sup>9</sup>
- Women are concentrated in part-time employment: Census 2022 indicates that almost a quarter of women in employment were in part-time employment, compared to 7% of men.<sup>10</sup>

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5 CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

6 IHREC (2015) [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

7 How much control workers they feel they have over the tasks, timing, and pace of their job.

8 Mc Ginnity, F. et al (2021) [Monitoring Decent Work in Ireland](#). IHREC and the ESRI.

9 [Gender Equality in Ireland](#): Dept of Justice and equality Website.

10 CSO Census 2022.

- Despite attaining better outcomes from education than their male peers, women experience lower employment participation rates and continue to be employed in less senior positions than men.<sup>11</sup>
- Gendered allocation of unpaid work is a key component to gender inequality in employment, pay, poverty and lifetime income.<sup>12</sup>
- Young women are more likely than young men (13.9% of women (15-29) vs. 11.9% of men in 2017) to be neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET).<sup>13</sup>
- Barriers to FET for women, due to: lack of access to and availability of Part-time courses and other accommodations to accommodate women's needs as carers and where they engage in home duties.<sup>14</sup>
- Subject and course choices (available to, and pushed towards females and males) can reinforce gender stereotypes.<sup>15</sup> More girls than boys sat higher level papers in the Leaving Certificate exams in English, French, Irish, Biology, Chemistry, Art, Home Economics and Music in 2016. More boys than girls took the higher level papers in Mathematics, Physics, Construction studies, Design and communication graphics and Engineering. More than four out of five (82.4%) graduates in Engineering, manufacturing and construction were male in 2016 while 79.3% of graduates in Information and Communication Technologies were male. Women represented more than three out of four (76.4%) graduates in Health and welfare and 71.4% of graduates in Education.<sup>16</sup>
- There is a gender imbalance on STEM courses, and apprenticeship (with low levels of women participating).<sup>17</sup> However, the situation in regard to apprenticeships is showing some improvement: the number of women in apprenticeships has grown from 26 women in 2015 to 1,500 in 2022.<sup>18</sup>
- Women less likely to be in receipt of an occupational pension or a contributory State Pension.<sup>19</sup>
- Long term unemployed women face barriers to FET regarding childcare. There is FET childcare supports in place but the cost of childcare in Ireland is very high and they find it hard to pay the extra cost. Retaining payments, or can prevent people from taking up courses in which they have an interest due to a lack of financial support.<sup>20</sup>
- There are high rates of suicide among young males in Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

11 IHREC (2015) [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

12 Russell et al. (2019). Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland. The ESRI and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. [Caring and unpaid work in Ireland | ESRI](#)

13 The 'National Strategy for Women and Girls: Creating a Better Society for All, 2017-2020'

14 [Women in FET](#). Solas 2021

15 The IHREC (2017) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports](#)

16 CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

17 The 'National Strategy for Women and Girls: Creating a Better Society for All, 2017-2020'

18 <https://apprenticeship.ie/success-stories/women-in-apprenticeship>

19 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (May 2017) [Submission to the Citizens' Assembly in its consideration of 'How we respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population'](#).

20 Solas 2017. [Barriers to FET with particular reference to long-term unemployed](#) and other vulnerable individuals.

21 [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Report, Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#), May 2015.

## Experience

- CSO data from 2019 indicates that while similar numbers of males and females experienced discrimination while *looking for work*, women are twice as likely as men to report that they had experienced *in-work* discrimination in the previous two years (7.3% vs 4.6%). For women who experienced in-work discrimination, the types of discrimination/relevant issues were (in order of prominence) harassment or bullying (34.3%), work conditions (19.4%) and promotion (17.2%). For men who experienced in-work discrimination, the types of discrimination experienced were (in order of prominence) harassment or bullying (30.4%); *promotion* (21.6%).<sup>22</sup>
- An Irish survey<sup>23</sup> on sexual harassment<sup>24</sup> in the workplace found: high incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace and very low levels of reporting of such incidents. The key findings were:

### Level and type of sexual harassment experienced:

- 54% of respondents were subjected to unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature; 41% received unwelcome verbal sexual advances; 37% experienced unwanted touching; 37% experienced unwelcome questions or comments about their sex life; 17% were exposed to displays of pornographic photographs or drawings; 23% received unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature by e-mail, text social media; 15% were subjected to unwelcome questions or comments of a sexual nature about their sexual orientation; 2% were seriously sexually assaulted or raped at work.

### Perpetrator and location:

- For 81% the perpetrator of the *most recent* incident was a male colleague (54%) or their (male) manager (31%); 55% of the incidents reported had taken place on work premises and 20% at a work related social event.

### Impact of sexual harassment in the workplace on victims:

- 41% avoided certain work situations as a result of the harassment; 30% felt less confident at work; 18% felt it had a negative impact on their work performance; 26% reported that the harassment had a negative impact on their mental health; 10% reported that there was a negative impact on their physical health; 16% wanted to leave their job as a result but were unable due to financial or other factors; and 6% said the harassment had caused them to change their role within the company or leave their job with that employer.

### Reporting of sexual harassment incidents to employer:

- 81% did not report the incident(s) to their employer. Reasons for not reporting were as follows: 32% feared that reporting would have a negative impact on their working relationship; 28% did not think they would be believed or taken seriously; 27% feared reporting the incident would have a negative impact on their career; 26% did not

<sup>22</sup> Central Statistics Office: [Equality and Discrimination](#). CSO release July 2019

<sup>23</sup> Irish Congress of Trade Unions (November 2019) Survey with 1,300 union members on their experience of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace. 72% of the survey respondents were women.

<sup>24</sup> The Employment Equality Acts place a legal onus on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and to deal effectively with incidents of sexual harassment.



- believe person responsible would be punished; 26% were too embarrassed to report the incident; 12% feared that they would be blamed; 10% did not report as the perpetrator was part of the reporting process; and 5% were unaware that they could report or knew how to report the harassment. Of the 19% that did report, very few saw a positive outcome; 15% felt was not dealt with satisfactorily and half of that felt they were treated worse as a result i.e. passed over for promotion or other opportunities or targeted for further bullying or harassment.
- A UK trade union employee survey on domestic violence,<sup>25</sup> found the following:
  - Victims of domestic violence may be prevented from getting to work, due to: injury and/or the abuser preventing them going to work.
  - 20% of victims of domestic abuse had to take a month or more off work in the previous year due to the abuse and domestic violence affects workers' attendance and performance.
  - Domestic violence can spill over into the workplace with abusers continuing to harass the victim at work.
  - Women can be forced out of employment due to the impact of the abuse and/or the tactics of the abuser.
  - Victims rarely disclosed the abuse to anyone at work.
- Gender norms, gender stereotypes, sexism, and discrimination present barriers to women and girls.<sup>26</sup> Stereotyping and prejudices about the role of women in society persist, and this can be worse in the case of marginalised groups of women.<sup>27</sup>
- An EU-wide survey on issues facing transgender and non-binary people found that 50% of Irish transgender and non-binary respondents had experienced discrimination when seeking employment and 20% had experienced discrimination in work, in the previous twelve months.<sup>28</sup>
- A national study on the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI people, found the following in regard to transgender respondents:<sup>29</sup>
  - 9.4% of transgender participants reported leaving employment due to negative treatment about their gender identity, from colleagues.
  - Negative experiences and bullying related to their gender identity, was higher for transgender and intersex people (than for lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents): 24% and 36% respectively.
  - Transgender participants reported the highest incidence of self-harm among LGBT respondents (49%).

25 TUC (2014). [Domestic Violence and the Workplace](#): a TUC Survey Report.

26 The 'National Strategy for Women and Girls: Creating a Better Society for All, 2017-2020'

27 The IHREC (2017) Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports. [Overview\\_Ireland-and-the-Convention-of-the-Elimination-of-Discrimination-against-Women.pdf \(ihrec.ie\)](#).

28 FRA (2014). [Being Trans in the European Union Comparative analysis of EU LGBT survey data](#). European Agency for Fundamental Rights.

29 GLEN, - BeLonGTo. (2016). The LBGTireland Report: national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland, GLEN, BeLonGTo, TCD and the HSE, 2016. [lgbt-ireland-pdf.pdf \(belongto.org\)](#).

- 44% of LGBTI+ students indicated they experienced harassment, in school, because of their gender expression and 8% were assaulted due to gender expression.<sup>30</sup>
- 24% and 23% of the Irish public (in 2023) said they would feel uncomfortable with their child being in the same class as a transgender child or a non-binary child (respectively) (transgender and non-binary came out the lowest and second lowest of 46 groups).<sup>31</sup>

## Identity

- Issues of intersectionality which can give rise to experiences of multiple and compounding discrimination and inequality, are evident for women with diverse identities involving more than one protected characteristic, including for: Traveller women; migrant women; Black, Asian and other minority ethnic women; disabled women; lesbian women; transgender women; older women and young women; and women parenting alone.
- Since 2015, people over 18 have a legal right to self-declare their own gender identity.
- Nearly half of transgender people in one Irish study, said they would feel unsafe or very unsafe to express their gender identity in public,<sup>32</sup> and transgender people face many barriers in coming out in the workplace,<sup>33</sup>
- Universal design, including gender-neutral toilets, is needed in buildings.<sup>34</sup>

30 BeLonGTo (2019) The 2019 School Climate Study. (involving 788 LGBT students)

31 Government of Ireland (2023) [Survey of People in Ireland's Attitudes Towards Diversity](#).

32 GLEN and BeLonGTo (2016). LGBTI Ireland report- national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in Ireland.

33 The '[LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#)'

34 The '[LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#)'

# Age

## Situation

### Young people:

- Approximately 25% of children have special educational needs.<sup>35</sup>
- Figures for 2022 indicate a higher unemployment rate (16%) for young people (15-24 years) than for those above this age, and higher for males in this age group, than for females: 17% vs 15%.<sup>36</sup>
- 1 in 8 young men and women, in Ireland, are neither in employment or education and training.<sup>37</sup>
- Low pension coverage among young workers aged 20-24: just 13% of males and 15% of female workers aged 20-24 had pension coverage in 2015.<sup>38</sup>
- A survey on lifelong learning participation,<sup>39</sup> found that 17-24 year olds are the age group most likely to participate in lifelong learning, with participation rate of 88%. As age increases, the participation rate decreases.
- Digital exclusion: Young people who are classified as NEET are far less likely to own digital devices. Young people living in poverty can experience educational exclusion where they cannot afford digital devices/broadband access.<sup>40</sup>

### Older people:

- 2022 CSO data indicates that 19% of people aged 65 and over in Ireland are at risk of poverty (up significantly from 11.9% in 2021).<sup>41</sup>
- Older women (60-64) have a much lower employment participation rate than older men: 47.5% vs 63%. For persons aged 65+, the female participation rate was just 6.7% compared to a male rate of 16.4%.<sup>42</sup>
- Employment among those aged 65+ has increased by 50% in five years (to 2022).<sup>43</sup>
- Women over the age of 65 are more likely to depend on the non-contributory State Pension as their source of income.<sup>44</sup>

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35 The 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020'

36 CSO Census 2022. Profile 7 Employment, Occupations, and Commuting.

37 CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

38 CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

39 Aontas (2023) [Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland](#): a focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups.

40 Paul Partnership 2021 [Exploring the meaning and experience of digital exclusion among at-risk groups in Limerick](#)

41 Central Statistics Office: [Survey on Income and Living Conditions](#) (SILC). 2022.

42 CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

43 Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

44 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (May 2017) [Submission to the Citizens' Assembly: 'How we respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population'](#).

- There are a lack of employment options available, to allow older people opt for gradual retirement.<sup>45</sup>
- Older people are more likely to provide financial assistance to their children (48%) than receive financial help from them (3%); and Half of adults aged 54-74 provide regular childcare for their grandchildren.<sup>46</sup>
- A survey on lifelong learning participation,<sup>47</sup> found the following:
  - as age increases, participation rates in lifelong learning decrease to: 73% of 25-34-year-olds, 63% of adults aged 35-44, 54% of 45-54-year-olds and 48% of respondents aged 55 years+.
  - participants who reported no participation in learning in the last three years were asked about the main barriers preventing them from doing so: 25% cited that they "feel too old".
  - reduced access to digital devices, and lower digital skills and digital literacy places older adults at a significant disadvantage when it comes to course access, retention, and completion. This is particularly relevant in the context of remote and hybrid learning, where much tutor-led and self-directed learning relies on the use of digital devices and skills.
  - ageism in educational settings and prior experiences of negative treatment in formal education are been shown to act as a barrier to older people's lifelong learning participation.
- 2016 data indicate that 61% of people aged 55-65 had low literacy and 63% had low numeracy.<sup>48</sup>
- Access to information (in particular online) is a key barrier to older people's access to services.<sup>49</sup>
- Digital exclusion: 41% of 'older households' do not have internet access. 25% of those aged 60-74 and 56% of those aged 75+ do not use the internet. Of those aged 60-74 who are online, 43% have digital skills below a basic level and only 6% have "above basic". In total, 65% of those aged 65+ are either non using the internet or have below basic level digital skills.<sup>50</sup> The main barriers to older people's digital inclusion are: accessibility for older people with literacy and/or learning difficulties; education and training barriers in learning and maintaining digital skills; income barriers and affordability of devices and broadband; some older people do not wish to use the internet.<sup>51</sup>

45 The '[National Positive Ageing Strategy](#)'

46 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (May 2017) [Submission to the Citizens' Assembly: 'How we respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population'](#).

47 Aontas (2023) [Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland](#); a focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups.

48 Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

49 IHREC (2017). [Submission to the Citizens Assembly on: How we respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population](#).

50 Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

51 Age Action Ireland (2021) [Digital Inclusion and an Ageing Population](#).

## Experience

### Young people

- CSO data indicate the following:<sup>52</sup>
  - 4% of people aged 18-24 reported that they had experienced age-related discrimination in the workplace, in the previous two years, and 4.9% had experienced such discrimination while looking for work,
  - Comparing different age groups, those aged 18 to 24 years experienced the highest levels of discrimination in accessing accommodation (5.6%), when compared with those aged 45 to 64 (1.7%) and those aged 65+ (.5%).
- Young people are often not afforded voice or agency in regard to having a say in decisions affecting them. Despite the Constitutional Convention recommending, in 2013, that the voting age should be lowered to 16, this has not been acted on by governments.

### Older people:

- Older working-age respondents, 45-64 years, report significantly higher levels of discrimination while looking for work (12%), compared to younger job-seekers (5.2% of 18-24 year-olds and 5.9% of 25-44 year-olds).<sup>53</sup>
- The number of older people taking no action in regard to incidents of discrimination increased from 52% in 2004, to 79% in 2019.<sup>54</sup>
- Some older people will be at increased risk of social exclusion/marginalisation and isolation due to: rural isolation; ill-health and/or physical and mental capacity; poverty; and lived experience of discrimination due to their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ability.<sup>55</sup>
- Ageism is a pernicious barrier to older people's full participation in society and in regard to how older people are viewed by other age groups. Ageist representations of older people in the media, as frail, dependent, and lacking agency, perpetuate ageist attitudes.<sup>56</sup>

## Identity

- The diversity of young people and older people needs to be considered in terms of the specific needs that arise from this diversity, including for: those with a minority ethnic identity; those living in poverty; those with a disability; LGBT young people and older people; and older and younger migrants.

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52 Central Statistics Office: [Equality and Discrimination](#). CSO release July 2019

53 McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Kenny, O., and Russell, H. (2017) [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules, ESRI and IHREC](#).

54 Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

55 The 'National Positive Ageing Strategy'

56 Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

## Young people

- Children and young people experience a number of key transitions in their journey from childhood to adulthood – from home to early years setting, from pre-school to primary school, from primary school to post-primary school, leaving school, and from living within the family home to living on their own or with others.<sup>57</sup>
- Children and young people with diverse identities: with disabilities, from minority ethnic groups, migrants whose first language is not English, LGBT children and young people, and those living in or at risk of poverty need additional and/or diverse supports to participate in education and training.<sup>58</sup>

## Older people:

- The population aged over 65 has increased by 19% since 2011.<sup>59</sup>
- Between the ages of 70 and 79 the incidence of disability steeply rises, from 25% to 43%.<sup>60</sup>
- Later life can and should be a time of active citizenship, for continued contribution and participation in local community affairs and a time for involvement with family, neighbours and the wider community.<sup>61</sup> 55% of older adults undertake volunteer work.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020'

<sup>58</sup> 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020'

<sup>59</sup> Census 2016

<sup>60</sup> Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

<sup>61</sup> Department of Health (2013). [Positive Ageing – Starts Now. National Positive Ageing Strategy](#). Department of Health.

<sup>62</sup> Age Action Ireland (2022): [Reframing Ageing: the State of Ageing in Ireland 2022](#).

# Race (encompassing nationality, skin colour, ethnic identity) and Religion<sup>63</sup>

## Situation

- Census 2022 data indicate the following: The highest unemployment rate was recorded for Ukrainian citizens (36%), followed by, citizens of African countries at (15%) and citizens of Other Asian countries (excluding India and China) (13%); and among those who could speak English very well, 8% were unemployed (which was the same as the overall census unemployment rate), however, the unemployment rate for those who could not speak English at all was the highest at 22%.<sup>64</sup>
- Research on the employment situation of the Roma community in Ireland<sup>65</sup> found the following:
  - Because of the significant barriers Roma experience in accessing employment (discrimination and racism, language barriers, regulatory barriers), many working age Roma are unemployed (just 16% are in employment). Those who do find work are more likely to: be underemployed (e.g. working very few hours or precarious hours); vulnerable to exploitation, such as not getting paid properly or working in unsafe conditions; feel compelled to hide their ethnicity due to fear of racism and discrimination.
  - The Habitual Residency Condition and how it is applied in Ireland was noted as a big challenge to seeking employment. Roma support workers identified a lack of transparency in the process and they cited examples where it was used as a tool to exclude Roma from accessing basic supports.
- Many Roma adults have low levels of literacy (in their mother language) (37% of Roma adults have no formal education, and women are twice as likely as men to have had no formal schooling) in addition, 71% of Roma have difficulty reading English. For this community, therefore, literacy and language are compounding barriers in regard to participation in education and training, employment, accessing services, and fully participating in community life.<sup>66</sup>
- 37% of Roma adults have no formal education, and women are twice as likely as men to have had no formal schooling; language issues are also a barrier with 71% of Roma having difficulty reading English; racism (by peers and educators) is also a barrier.<sup>67</sup>
- Difficulties in obtaining recognition of foreign educational qualifications pose a barrier to labour market integration and may lead non-Irish nationals to situations of under-employment and over-qualification.<sup>68</sup>

63 We include Religion in conjunction with data on the Race ground as the data indicate that religious discrimination is mainly targeted at minority ethnic groups who are members of minority religions.

64 CSO Census 2022. [Profile 7: employment, occupations, and commuting](#).

65 Pavee Point (2023) [Roma in Ireland: Access to Fair and Decent Work](#). Pavee Point and Maynooth University.

66 Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Center (2018). [Roma in Ireland- a national needs assessment](#). Pavee Point and the Department of Justice and Equality.

67 Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Center (2018). [Roma in Ireland- a national needs assessment](#). Pavee Point and the Department of Justice and Equality.

68 IHREC and ESRI (2018) [Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market](#).

- Applicants for International Protection cannot access employment or vocational training until they have waited over 9 months for a first instance decision. Even at that the permit is only for 6 months.<sup>69</sup>
- Minority ethnic migrants face specific barriers in accessing FET:
  - Lack of information and knowledge of FET
  - Language barriers
  - Barriers related to meeting the requirements of the Habitual Residence Condition
  - Courses may have eligibility requirements which include a minimum length of time on live register before they are eligible to apply for a course
  - Lack of recognition of their qualification from other jurisdictions can also be a barrier to participation on certain courses.<sup>70</sup>
- In a study of people's experiences of living in direct provision accommodation: 28% said they had difficulty accessing educational materials/resources for their children. When asked what additional supports they most need for themselves/family, financial support was the most cited (71%) followed by educational supports (41%).<sup>71</sup>
- A survey on lifelong learning participation,<sup>72</sup> with over 1,000 people, found the following in regard to migrants: their participation in learning was found to be hampered by: personal trauma from experiences in country of origin and/or from living in direct provision (DP); lack of access to childcare; lack of transport/ inadequate transport links available locally; lack of recognition of prior learning; disproportionately higher fees for international students who are living in DP; language and communication barriers preventing people from knowing what is available locally.
- Ethnic minorities/non-EU nationals are one of the groups found to be at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage across multiple housing dimensions (discrimination in accessing accommodation, quality of accommodation (including for example over-crowding), and risk of becoming homeless).<sup>73</sup>

## Experience

- Research on ethnicity and nationality in the Irish labour market<sup>74</sup> found the following:
  - Despite having the same education, experience, and labour market skills, some minority ethnic groups have poorer outcomes in the labour market, due to discrimination.
  - 20% of Black non-Irish nationals, compared to 6% of white Irish, report discrimination when seeking work.

69 [Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council: Second Cycle Mid-Term Review](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, April 2019.

70 Solas 2017. [Barriers to FET with particular reference to long-term unemployed](#) and other vulnerable individuals

71 Cid, Sara (2023). [Living in International Protection Accommodation: Exploring the experiences of families and children in direct provision](#). The Irish Refugee Council.

72 Aontas (2023) [Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland](#); a focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups.

73 Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland June 2018 Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey, Bertrand Maître.

74 McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Groarke, S., and Coughlan, S. (2018). [Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market](#). ESRI and IHREC.



- While having higher level education is associated with experiencing less discrimination when looking for work it does not substantially affect which groups are most at risk of discrimination.
- The highest rates of in-work discrimination (across the protected equality grounds) are reported by Black people (14%), followed by those with a minority religion (11%) and people with Asian ethnicity (10%). The highest rates of reported discrimination while looking for employment, are reported by Black people (16.5%). 7.5% of Asian people reported discrimination when seeking work and 10% of people with a minority religion reported discrimination when seeking work.<sup>75</sup>
- Discrimination is high in multiple domains (employment, service provision) for minority ethnic groups (Black, Asian and especially Irish Travellers), and people with minority religions.<sup>76</sup>
- The Roma community in Ireland experience very high levels of discrimination: 79% have experienced discrimination in seeking employment, and 93% have experienced discrimination in accessing accommodation.<sup>77</sup> Where Roma were identifiable, through their traditional clothing for example, they were more vulnerable to discrimination in gaining and retaining employment. This is a particular issue for Roma women and girls. While Roma wanted to proudly express their ethnic and cultural heritage, many felt compelled to hide their ethnicity to avoid such negative treatment.<sup>78</sup>
- An EU-wide 2022 survey<sup>79</sup> found the following in regard to the experience of minority ethnic migrants living in Ireland:
  - 50% said they had experienced discrimination on the basis of their skin colour; 6% had experienced discrimination on the basis of their religion; 38% had experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnic or immigrant background; 8% had experienced discrimination on the basis of their gender; and 10% had experienced discrimination on the basis of their age.
  - 35% had experienced racist harassment in the previous 12 months and 6% had experienced racist violence in the previous 5 years.
  - 29% avoided certain places, including public transport, for fear of experiencing racist abuse/violence.
- Muslim women are three times more likely to suffer from verbal and physical violence in public spaces than Muslim men.<sup>80</sup>
- Direct Provision for asylum seekers is not in the best interests of children and impedes the lives of families.<sup>81</sup>

75 McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Kenny, O., and Russell, H. (2017) [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules, ESRI and IHREC](#).

76 IHREC and ESRI (2017) [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland](#).

77 Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (2018). The National Roma Needs Assessment. Pavee Point and Department of Justice and Equality.

78 Pavee Point (2023) [Roma in Ireland: Access to Fair and Decent Work](#). Pavee Point and Maynooth University.

79 EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023) [Being black in the EU: the experiences of people of African descent- survey of immigrants and descendants of immigrants](#). FRA.

80 Carr (2016). Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and how to respond. The Immigrant Council of Ireland.

81 IHREC (2014) [Submission of the Irish Human Rights Commission to the UN Human Rights Committee on the Examination of Ireland's Fourth Periodic Report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

- Research on attitudes to ethnic diversity in Ireland, found the following:<sup>82</sup>
  - attitudes to some migrants are much more negative than others: 58% of Irish- born people report they would allow many or some immigrants from members of the same ethnic group as most Irish people to come to Ireland, the equivalent figures for Muslim Roma migrants are 41% and 25% respectively.
  - just under half of adults born in Ireland believe that some cultures are superior to others, and 45% believe that some races/ethnic groups were born harder working. 17% believe that some races/ethnic groups were born less intelligent. This negative attitude is more common in Ireland than across a ten-country sample of the EU.
- 20% of the Irish public (in 2023) said they would feel uncomfortable with their child being in the same class as a Roma child (Roma came out 4<sup>th</sup> lowest of 46 groups).<sup>83</sup>
- The recent rise of far-right groups and growing support for anti-immigrant policies highlight that civil rights for minority groups and freedom to live and work without racist abuse and violence cannot be taken for granted.<sup>84</sup>

## Identity

- The diversity of people with a minority ethnic identify needs to be considered in terms of the specific needs that arise from this diversity, including for minority ethnic: women, LGBT+ people, disabled people, younger and older people, migrants, and those living in poverty and direct provision.
- People from minority ethnic groups and those with a minority religion, may require consideration of specific needs arising from their cultural, ethnic and/or religious diversity, to ensure they can fully participate in employment and education. Such needs include: language and interpretation; food considerations; consideration of workplace leave etc. to observe religious days of importance/to attend family and community events relevant to their ethnicity and/or religious faith.
- In 2020, there were over 197 different nationalities enrolled in the FET sector: approximately 22% were non-Irish nationals (Among the non-EU learner enrolments, 36.9% were nationals of Asia, 34.2% were nationals of Africa, 16.5% were nationals of the Americas, 11.6% were nationals of Europe and 0.7% were nationals of Oceania). There was a slightly higher proportion of females among non-Irish national learners, than among Irish national learners.<sup>85</sup>
- A 2021 ETB Learner Survey (1,496 respondents) indicates a diverse learner cohort, in terms of religion: 67% identified as catholic, 15.5% had no religion, 3.1% were Muslim, 5.1% were 'other religion' including Christian, Protestant, Orthodox, Buddhist, Jehovah Witness, Hindu, Lutheran, and Baptist.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Russell, H., and Fahey, E. (March 2018). [Attitudes to Diversity in Ireland](#)

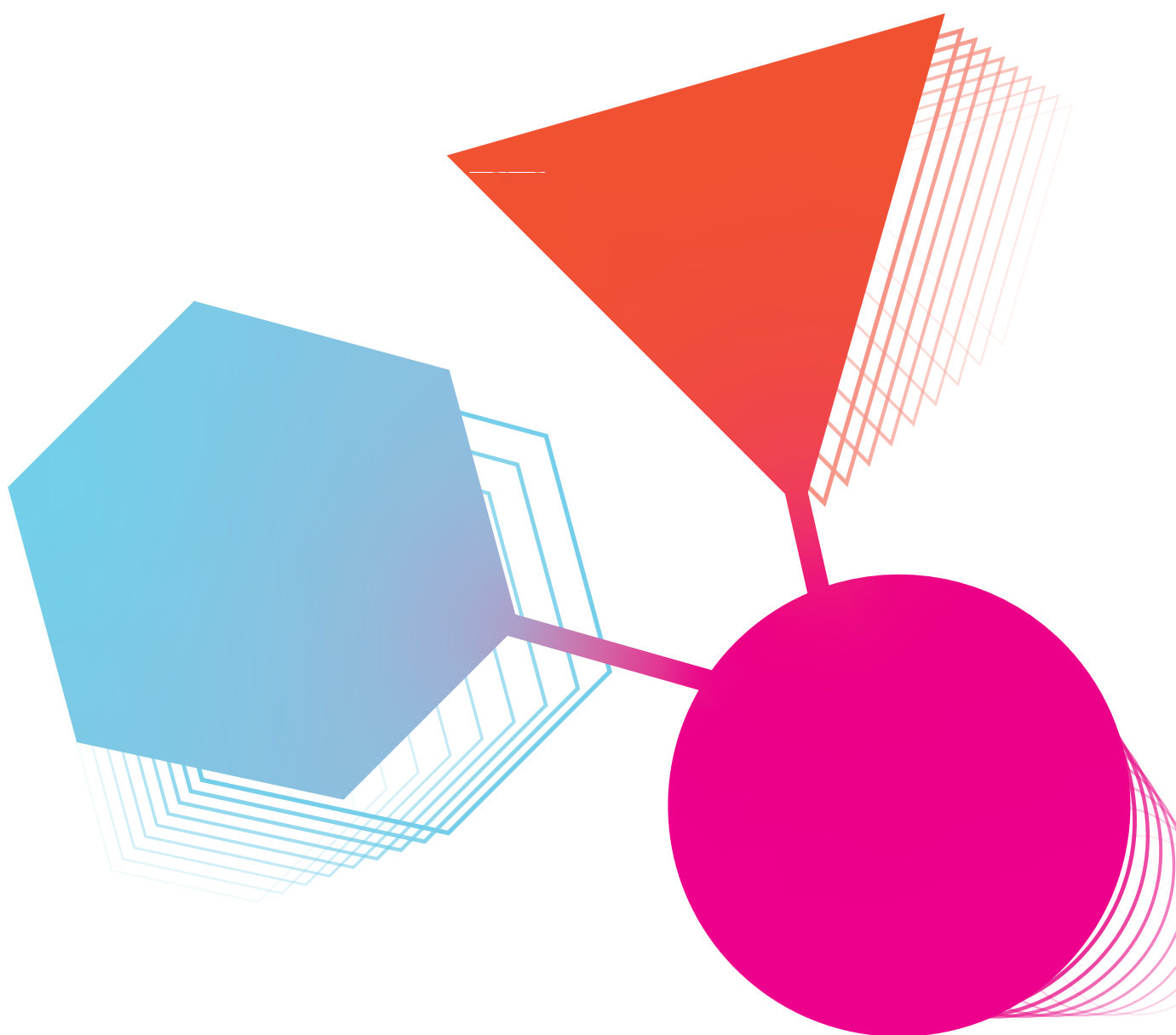
<sup>83</sup> Government of Ireland (2023) [Survey of People in Ireland's Attitudes Towards Diversity](#).

<sup>84</sup> O'Connell, Hugh. February 3, 2024. "[Poll: Over a third of Irish people would consider voting for anti-immigrant party](#)". Irish Independent, online edition, last accessed Feb 23, 2024.

<sup>85</sup> SOLAS (2021) [FET In Focus 2021: Non-Irish Nationals in FET](#).

<sup>86</sup> Roe, S. (November 2021). [A Study of the role, contribution and impact of Education and Training Board \(ETB\) Further Education and Training \(FET\) Services on Active Inclusion in Ireland](#). Education and Training Boards Ireland.

- Lack of availability of key information in languages other than English and, of interpreting to enable migrants to access public services, including education.<sup>87</sup>
- Issues concerning the adequacy of training in intercultural awareness for frontline staff delivering public services.<sup>88</sup>
- There are issues in relation to the rights of children and parents to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in the state-funded education system in the absence of a diversity of provision of school type within educational catchment to reflect the diversity of religious and non- religious convictions now represented in the State. The rights of minority faith or non-faith children need to be recognised in the curriculum.<sup>89</sup>



<sup>87</sup> [The Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future](#). Department of Justice and Equality. 2017

<sup>88</sup> [The Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future](#). Department of Justice and Equality. 2017

<sup>89</sup> IHREC 2014 [Submission of the Irish Human Rights Commission to the UN Human Rights Committee on the Examination of Ireland's Fourth Periodic Report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

# Travellers

## Situation

- There is a very large difference between Travellers and non-Travellers in the level of education completed:
  - for the 25-64 age group, 78% of Travellers had completed no more than primary education compared to 10% of non-Travellers.
  - 1% of Travellers have a degree or higher compared with 30% of non-Travellers.
  - 95% of Traveller men and 92% of Traveller women leave school without completing second level compared to 30% of non-Traveller men and 24% of non-Traveller women.
  - Traveller children tend to start school a year later than other children and have a greater likelihood of being assessed as having a special educational need.<sup>90</sup>
- A 2019 EU survey<sup>91</sup> found that 31% of Travellers and 28% of Traveller children (0-17) were living in households experiencing severe material deprivation (based on inability to afford four of nine specified items). The figures for Irish Travellers were higher than for Travellers in the 5 other countries surveyed.
- There is a large gap in employment levels between Travellers and non-Travellers.
  - for the 25-64 age group, the employment rate among non-Travellers was 66% compared to only 11% for Travellers.
  - about half of Traveller adults identified their main status as 'unemployed', compared to around 14% of non-Travellers.
  - for the 15-64 age group, Travellers were 19 times more likely than non-Travellers to be 'not at work'.<sup>92</sup>
- A 2021 report on the experiences of Traveller (and Roma) in education, found the following:<sup>93</sup>
  - generational feelings of isolation and being overlooked,
  - Traveller and Roma children feeling unsafe in school and experiencing racist bullying.
  - Roma parents experience language barriers impacting on their ability to: support their children with homework; engage with the school; and attend parent teacher meetings.
- In 2019, Travellers represented .85% of total learners who enrolled in FET (1,527 of 179,058 total learners: 57% female and 43% male).<sup>94</sup>

90 Watson, D., Kenny, O., and F McGinnity (2017). [A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland](#). ESRI Research Series No 56.

91 EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020). [Roma and Travellers in Six Countries](#)

92 Watson, D., Kenny, O., and F McGinnity (2017). [A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland](#). ESRI Research Series No 56.

93 Quinlan, M., (2021) [Out of the Shadows: Traveller and Roma Education](#), Voices from the Community. Department of Education.

94 Roe, S. (November 2021). [A Study of the role, contribution and impact of Education and Training Board \(ETB\) Further Education and Training \(FET\) Services on Active Inclusion in Ireland](#). Education and Training Boards Ireland.

- Identified barriers to Travellers progressing in further and higher education include:<sup>95</sup>
  - post-primary school educators having low aspirations for Traveller students, even where students have attained good Junior Cert results (e.g. directing them into Leaving Cert Applied and PLC courses (however PLC courses can be an important gateway into higher education for Travellers).
  - being drawn away from education towards employment, to bring an income into a financially struggling household.
  - The emotional and psychological impact of negative experiences while attending secondary education.
  - Lack of family role models.
  - Lack of knowledge about/difficulty negotiating SUSI.
- The ERSI have noted that taking educational attainment into account, Travellers are still much more likely (9 times more likely) than the general population to experience unemployment. They conclude that discrimination and prejudice is the reason for this significant difference.<sup>96</sup>
- Research by UCC found that primary inhibitors for Traveller women accessing education were: institutional discrimination, fear of exclusion and/ or segregation in higher education spaces; poverty (and lack of SUSI funding for part-time courses); early school rejection<sup>97</sup>; challenges in digital and literacy skills; and, caregiving responsibilities asked of Traveller women often make returning to education quite challenging. Primary facilitators of access were: family support, support from classmates and support from educators.<sup>97</sup>
- 33% of Traveller women recorded their principal economic status as looking after the home and family (the corresponding figure for non-Travellers was 17.5%).<sup>98</sup>
- Educational disadvantage delays and thwarts Travellers' career aspirations. Many interviewees had left school early, most had experienced racist bullying in school, particular from their peers at second level, and many had experienced low expectations from teachers at primary and second level.<sup>99</sup>
- Traveller students in, and applicants to third level, who did not feel empowered to openly identify as Travellers were consequently missing out by not being able to avail of the supports offered through the Access Programme.<sup>100</sup>
- Travellers have limited access to potential employment connections and networks than their settled peers, to support them to gain employment, particularly their first job.<sup>101</sup>

95 SOAR (2021) The Traveller Graduate Network: a formative evaluation of a new initiative to support Travellers in education. SOAR. HEA.

96 Watson, D., Kenny, O., and F McGinnity (2017). [A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland](#). ESRI Research Series No 56.

97 SOAR (May 2023) A Report: The Gathering: Travellers in Education Celebrating Success, Framing the Future. Programme for Access to Higher Education. SOAR. HEA.

98 Census 2011 data.

99 Mullen, R. Kelly, B. and Crowley, N. (2021) [Travellers in the Mainstream Labour Market: Situation, Experience, and Identity](#). St. Stephen's Green Trust.

100 Mullen, R. Kelly, B. and Crowley, N. (2021) [Travellers in the Mainstream Labour Market: Situation, Experience, and Identity](#). St. Stephen's Green Trust.

101 Mullen, R. Kelly, B. and Crowley, N. (2021) [Travellers in the Mainstream Labour Market: Situation, Experience, and Identity](#). St. Stephen's Green Trust.

- Traveller students find it very difficult to secure work placements which are a requirement of access to some third-level courses.<sup>102</sup>
- Travellers are one of the groups found to be at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage across multiple housing dimensions (discrimination in accessing accommodation, quality of accommodation (including for example over-crowding), and risk of becoming homeless).<sup>103</sup>
- Approximately 40% of Travellers live in overcrowded accommodation compared with less than 6% of the total population.<sup>104</sup> At 39% the Mid-West had the joint-highest rate of Travellers living in overcrowded conditions.<sup>105</sup>
- 24% of Traveller accommodation had internet access (compared to 82% of non-Traveller households) the rate is lower for those living in caravan. At 20%, the Mid-West region had the highest adjusted rate of Travellers living in caravans in the state.<sup>106</sup>
- The suicide rate is almost seven times higher among Traveller males than in the general population.<sup>107</sup>

## Experience

- Travellers have very low levels of trust in regard to engaging with mainstream services: their experiences of high levels of racism and discrimination, when interacting with wider society, are key factors.<sup>108</sup>
- A 2021 report on the experiences of Traveller and Roma in education, found the following:<sup>109</sup>
  - generational feelings of isolation and being overlooked.
  - Traveller and Roma children feeling unsafe in school and experiencing racist bullying.
  - post-primary school transition is particularly difficult for Traveller children and post primary spaces were found to be unwelcoming.
  - the Youthreach financial incentive acting as a disincentive for young Travellers to complete second-level education.
  - children unable to cope with increased workload in post primary and subsequently falling behind.
  - Traveller parents felt 'looked down on' by teachers and reported that teachers often had a low expectation of Traveller children's capacity.

<sup>102</sup> Mullen, R. Kelly, B. and Crowley, N. (2021) [Travellers in the Mainstream Labour Market: Situation, Experience, and Identity](#). St. Stephen's Green Trust.

<sup>103</sup> Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland June 2018 Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey, Bertrand Maître.

<sup>104</sup> Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland June 2018 Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey, Bertrand Maître.

<sup>105</sup> Watson, D., Kenny, O., and F McGinnity (2017). A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. ESRI Research Series No 56.

<sup>106</sup> Watson, D., Kenny, O., and F McGinnity (2017). A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. ESRI Research Series No 56.

<sup>107</sup> The '[National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#)

<sup>108</sup> Kelleher et al (2010) All Ireland Traveller Health Study

<sup>109</sup> Quinlan, M., (2021) [Out of the Shadows: Traveller and Roma Education](#), Voices from the Community. Department of Education.

- lack of representation of Traveller culture, values and experiences e.g. in CSPE.
- Members of the school community identify: absenteeism, lack of parental support and value of education; curriculum not meeting needs and school unable to innovate, as the major barrier to Traveller participation in education.
- Travellers are ten times more likely to experience discrimination in seeking work than 'white Irish' (e.g., unemployment: 80% compared to 12.9% in general population).<sup>110</sup> Negative stereotypes of Travellers in public discourse reinforces barriers to public services and exacerbates disadvantages.<sup>111</sup>
- A 2019 EU survey<sup>112</sup> found the following in regard to Travellers in Ireland:
  - 68% of Traveller men and 62% of Traveller women said they had experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months (looking for or in work; in education; accessing a public service; accessing goods and services).
  - 52% had experienced hate-motivated harassment, and 7% had experienced hate-motivated violence in the previous 12 months.
  - 27% said their child/children had experienced racist bullying in school, in the previous 12 months.
  - 27% said they had felt discriminated against by education providers in the previous 5 years, and 13% in the previous 12 months.
- 21% of the Irish public (in 2023) said they would feel uncomfortable with their child being in the same class as a Traveller child (Travellers came out 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest of 46 groups).<sup>113</sup>
- Over 40% of Travellers say they are not always treated with dignity and respect.<sup>114</sup>

## Identity

- Travellers are a relatively young population: the average age of the Traveller population is 27 years, compared to 39 years for non-Travellers. Children under the age of 15 made up 36% of Irish Travellers compared with 20% of the total population.<sup>115</sup>
- Family holds particular importance and centrality in Traveller culture.<sup>116</sup>
- Travellers marry younger, with 33% between 18-29 married compared to 8% of people the same age.<sup>117</sup>
- Travellers have an average of 5 children compared to national average of 3.<sup>118</sup>

110 [Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council: Second Cycle Mid-Term Review](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, April 2019

111 [Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council: Second Cycle Mid-Term Review](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, April 2019

112 EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020). [Roma and Travellers in Six Countries](#)

113 Government of Ireland (2023) [Survey of People in Ireland's Attitudes Towards Diversity](#).

114 [The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#). Department of Justice and Equality.

115 CSO Census 2022. [Profile 5 - Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers & Religion](#)

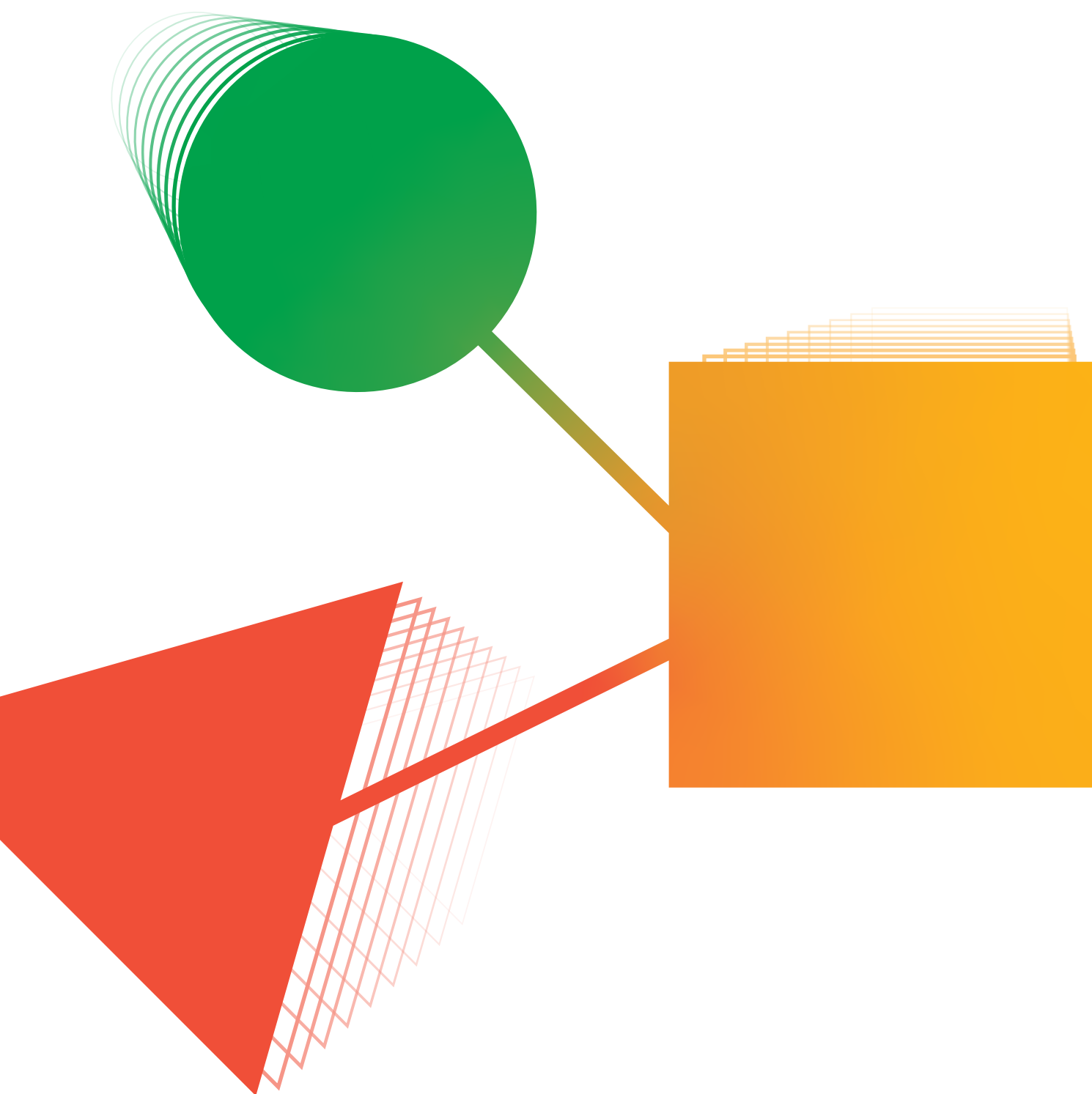
116 [The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#). Department of Justice and Equality.

117 [The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#). Department of Justice and Equality.

118 [The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#). Department of Justice and Equality.



- Travellers distinct ethnic identity has been recognised by the state, however, there is a lack of support for Traveller Culture and Identity in Irish society.<sup>119</sup>
- Many Travellers are hiding their ethnic identity in the workplace and in schools and colleges, due to fears of racism, discrimination and social exclusion.



<sup>119</sup> [The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#). Department of Justice and Equality.



# Disability

## Situation

- In 2020, 11,376 of those enrolled in FET disclosed that they had at least one type of disability (this figure represents 7.5% of all FET enrolments that year)<sup>120</sup> ; A 2021 ETB Learner Survey (1,496 respondents) found that 12.2% of respondents indicated they had a disability.<sup>121</sup>
- Research<sup>122</sup> on the education and employment of disabled people in Ireland, found the following:

### Education:

- Adults with a disability were significantly less likely to have completed education (at all levels) than non-disabled people.
- 30% of working age people with a disability developed their disability during their school years and of those, 50% had school absences (most lasting over 12 months). those affected during school years had only about 3/4s the odds of completing second level education compared to people who developed their disability later in life.
- 15% of working age people with a disability left school sooner than desired because of the disability.
- People with an intellectual disability, learning disability or speech impairment were more likely to experience education barriers, than those with other impairments.

### Employment:

- Only 29% of working age disabled people who had early onset disability, were in employment. Younger disabled adults more likely to be in employment, than older: 43% of those aged 18-34 vs 21% aged 45+. Of those not in work, 47% would be Interested In a job if circumstances were right.
- 85% had left employment because of disability.
- People with hearing disability and those with learning disability most likely to be employed and employment was lowest for people with mobility, dexterity, pain disability and emotional, psychological and mental health disabilities.
- Over 50% of disabled people with higher education were in employment vs 37% of those with post-primary and 22% with primary.
- Those who were affected by their disability while in school or college are more likely to be in employment (37%) than those whose disability has a later onset (26%).
- Barriers to participation in employment for disabled people included: lack of reasonable accommodation to address specific needs (e.g. aids/technology; flexible work arrangements etc.); fear of losing needed social protection benefits;

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120 Solas (2020) [FET in Numbers: Learners with Disabilities](#)

121 Roe, S. (November 2021). [A Study of the role, contribution and impact of Education and Training Board \(ETB\) Further Education and Training \(FET\) Services on Active Inclusion in Ireland](#). Education and Training Boards Ireland.

122 Watson, D., Banks, J., and Lyons, S. (2015) [Educational and Employment Experiences of People with a Disability in Ireland](#); an analysis of the National Disability Survey. ESRI.

for some disabled people, the main barrier was getting first job; some had to leave employment because of impact of disability. Unmet needs in this regard were found to be a particular barrier for people with a mobility and dexterity disability and those with pain disability.

- Census 2016 data indicate the following regarding the education and employment situation of disabled people:

### Education:

- There is a significant difference in the age at which people with a disability ceased their full-time education compared to the total population: 21% of persons aged 15+ with a disability had primary education as their highest level of education compared to 7% of those aged 15+ without a disability; 30% had finished their education at secondary level (vs 27% of those without a disability); 14% had FET as their highest level of education vs 17% of those without a disability; and 13% had finished their education at tertiary level (vs 25% of those without a disability).

### Employment:

- There is a significant difference in employment levels between people with a disability and non-disabled people: for the 15-64 age group, only 51.1% of men and 42.2% of women with a disability participated in the labour market compared to 78% and 59.9% respectively among the general population.
- The unemployment rate amongst people with a disability is 26.3% compared to just 12.9% of the general population.<sup>123</sup>
- The labour market participation rate for people with an intellectual disability is 21%, compared to 73% of the general population. The unemployment rate for this group is 43%.<sup>124</sup>
- Young persons with disabilities face greater barriers to employment than their non-disabled peers. The EU Commission estimates that 47% of persons with disabilities aged 20 to 29 were employed in 2019, compared to 58% of those without disabilities in the same age group.<sup>125</sup>
- Research has found strong occupational segregation for people with disabilities in employment, in that they are more frequently working in low-skilled positions (32%) and as administrative staff (15.8%). Persons with disabilities are underrepresented in high and medium-high professional categories, with the exception of administration.<sup>126</sup>
- Remote working can expand access to jobs that would otherwise be inaccessible to persons with disabilities (lack of infrastructure or transportation). However, remote working should never be seen as a substitute for the provision of reasonable accommodation in employment. It also entails the risk of isolation, loneliness and social exclusion.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9: Health, Disability and Carers

<sup>124</sup> SOLAS (2021) [Implementation of Guidelines](#) on the Inclusion of Learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Adult Literacy Services.

<sup>125</sup> [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

<sup>126</sup> [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

<sup>127</sup> [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

- People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and to be outside the workforce, than non-disabled people.<sup>128</sup> Male unemployment exceeded female unemployment for all disability types.<sup>129</sup>
- The COVID-19 pandemic hit persons with disabilities hard for many reasons, and loss of livelihood was certainly a major problem. 47% of persons with disabilities surveyed in the EU during the pandemic reported difficulties in making ends meet, compared to 34% of those without disabilities.<sup>130</sup>
- The cost of living is approximately one-third higher for people with disabilities,<sup>131</sup> as having a disability means additional costs for disabled people, and these costs vary with the type of impairment. The additional cost of having a disability can range from an additional €8,500 to €16,000 per annum.<sup>132</sup>
- Economic independence, social inclusion and personal fulfilment are at issue where a person with disability does not have a job.<sup>133</sup>
- Students with disabilities are more likely (than non-disabled students) to face barriers in education and report disliking school, and are at risk of poorer academic outcomes.<sup>134</sup>
- People with intellectual disabilities (92%) or learning disabilities (80%) were more likely to have been affected by their disability, while in school or college, than people with other forms of disability.<sup>135</sup>
- Key educational challenges faced by students with a vision impairment include: use of assistive technology, movement between classes and access to and viewing the white board or other printed materials.<sup>136</sup>
- Poor health has been highlighted as a factor impeding participation in learning for adults. 25% of people who left education after primary school (and 16% of people who left school after the Junior or Inter Certificate) cited health and age as a reason they could not participate in lifelong learning. Whereas only 4% of those with third-level qualifications cited health and age as a barrier to participation in lifelong learning.<sup>137</sup>
- Research in the UK found that 25% of persons with disabilities had never used the internet and were significantly less likely to have internet access than those without disabilities. This has a significant impact on employment, with UK employers reporting that 92% of the positions they recruit for require at least basic level IT skills.<sup>138</sup>

128 Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

129 Census 2016

130 [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

131 IHREC (2015). [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

132 Indecon (2021). The [Cost of Disability in Ireland](#). Commissioned by the Department of Social Protection.

133 The [‘Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024’](#)

134 Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

135 Watson, D., Banks, J., and Lyons, S. (May 2015). Educational and Employment Experiences of People with a Disability in Ireland: an analysis of the National Disability Survey.

136 [Equitable-education-report-final-and-fully-accessible.pdf \(vi.ie\)](#)

137 Aontas (May 2020) [Mitigating Educational Disadvantage \(including Community Education issues\)](#) Working Group Educational Equity and Learner Cohorts :A Discussion Paper.

138 [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

- There is a significant digital literacy gap between adults with an intellectual disability and those without an intellectual disability: in one study three-quarters of adults with an intellectual disability reported they had difficulty using technology; three-quarters of adults with an intellectual disability did not write, text, email, or use social media to contact their family or friends; one third of adults with an intellectual disability owned a mobile phone, with some of these reporting that they never used it; just over one third reported had access to a computer, tablet or smartphone, but a significant proportion (38%) reported that they used their device infrequently or never.<sup>139</sup>
- Digital literacy (in the absence of accessible design, information, and technology) can be particularly challenging for people with a range of disabilities, with literacy and numeracy presenting significant difficulties for people with dyslexia.<sup>140</sup>
- People with a disability are one of the groups found to be at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage across multiple housing dimensions (discrimination in accessing accommodation, quality of accommodation (including for example over-crowding), and risk of becoming homeless).<sup>141</sup>

## Experience

- People with disabilities are three times more likely to experience discrimination compared (than non-disabled people) in accessing public services (such as education, health, and transport).<sup>142</sup>
- People with disabilities are twice as likely, as non-disabled people, to experience discrimination when seeking work or in the workplace.<sup>143</sup>
- Research on discrimination against people with disabilities (in employment, and accessing public and private services and goods) found that two forms of disability result in higher levels of reported discrimination (in any domain): blindness/serious vision impairment, followed by emotional or psychological conditions.<sup>144</sup>
- Irish research on ableist attitudes towards disabilities,<sup>145</sup> provided evidence for ableist beliefs being expressed as justifications for potential discrimination, including in access to education and employment. The research also found that the disabilities that tend to be judged more harshly, were autism and mental health issues. The findings include the following:

<sup>139</sup> SOLAS (2021) [Implementation of Guidelines](#) on the Inclusion of Learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Adult Literacy Services.

<sup>140</sup> SOLAS (May 2021) Adult Literacy for Life: detailed consultation report to develop the adult literacy, numeracy and digital strategy.

<sup>141</sup> Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland June 2018 Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey, Bertrand Maître.

<sup>142</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

<sup>143</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

<sup>144</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

<sup>145</sup> Timmons, S. McGinnity, F. and Carrol, F. (May 2023). [Ableism differs by disability, gender and social context: Evidence from vignette experiments](#). ESRI Working Paper 752.

- Research participants were significantly less accepting of a school using reduced timetables for children with a speech impairment and children with no disability, than they were of children with autism being placed on reduced timetables.
- Research participants judged it to be more acceptable not to offer a person with an anxiety disorder a job than a person with a physical disability or a non-disabled person.
- 18% of the Irish public (in 2023) said they would feel uncomfortable with their child being in the same class as a child with a mental health issue (coming out 6th lowest of 46 groups).<sup>146</sup>
- Parents and teachers of children with disabilities can have lower educational expectations compared to children without disabilities.<sup>147</sup>
- A survey of ETB staff asked respondents to rank which groups of learners they considered to be most challenging to engage in learning; people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills challenges were ranked second (by 25.3% of respondents). people with mental health issues were ranked as most challenging to engage in FET, by (15.7% of respondents).<sup>148</sup>
- Research on attitudes towards people with disabilities show a hierarchy of acceptance in regard to different types of impairment: 75% said they would support children with physical disabilities attending the same school as non-disabled children; 61% said they would support children with vision or hearing disabilities attending the same school as non-disabled children; 56% would support children with intellectual disabilities attending the same school as non-disabled children; 54% would support children with autism attending the same school as non-disabled children; and 49% would support children with mental health difficulties attending the same school as non-disabled children.<sup>149</sup>
- The majority of children with disabilities attend mainstream education, classes or schools, although the percentage attending special education settings increases as they move to secondary education. Children with disabilities from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be placed in special education.<sup>150</sup>
- The lived experience and knowledge gained by people with a disability is not always recognised. People are not always valued in their own right as 'Experts by Experience'.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Government of Ireland (2023) [Survey of People in Ireland's Attitudes Towards Diversity](#).

<sup>147</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

<sup>148</sup> Roe, S. (November 2021). [A Study of the role, contribution and impact of Education and Training Board \(ETB\) Further Education and Training \(FET\) Services on Active Inclusion in Ireland](#). Education and Training Boards Ireland.

<sup>149</sup> NDA (2017) [National Survey of Public Attitudes to Disability in Ireland](#).

<sup>150</sup> IHREC (2015) [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

<sup>151</sup> HSE (2018) Transforming Lives: Effective Participation in Decision-Making: Planning for Ordinary Lives in Ordinary Places.

## Identity

- Approximately 13.5% of the population identify as having a disability.<sup>152</sup>
- Many disabled people want their needs addressed through the social model of disability, rather than the medical model. The social model (developed by disabled people) recognises society's disabling of people as the problem and focuses on removing the barriers that prevent disabled people's full participation. The medical model focuses on the person's impairment as the 'problem'.<sup>153</sup>
- Most disabilities develop during people's working lives.<sup>154</sup>
- Ensuring access and participation for disabled people (to information and services, including education/learning) requires attention to:
  - a universal design approach (including, but not limited to: improving access to devices and technology- laptops, tablets, smartphones and Wi-Fi; . standardising the use of plain language and multiple communication mediums (e.g. audio and video and text); accessible websites, particularly when required to access rights, entitlements and services; scheduling of ALND services and training to ensure they are accessible to people with work and family commitments);<sup>155</sup> and
  - ensuring specific accommodations for the diversity of impairments (including, but not limited to: provision for Irish Sign Language; assistive technology; provision of information in braille) plain English and different formats.<sup>156</sup>
- Accommodations and flexible approaches to education are required for students with disabilities and special educational needs, such as: a flexible, blended approach (rather than full-time course); support services (in particular for those with emotional and mental health issues); adaptations or assistive technologies; wheelchair accessible environments; information in accessible formats (including on websites of providers).
- Disabled working age people reported that they require the following accommodations in order to fully participate in employment: flexible work arrangements such as reduced hours (46%); modified job tasks (29%); accessibility modifications (32%); and a wage subsidy (24%).<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Census 2016

<sup>153</sup> See for example-HSE (2018) Transforming Lives: Effective Participation in Decision-Making: Planning for Ordinary Lives in Ordinary Places.

<sup>154</sup> Banks, J., Raffaele G., Fahey, E., and Watson, D. (2018). Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004, 2010, 2014. ESRI.

<sup>155</sup> SOLAS (May 2021) Adult Literacy for Life: detailed consultation report to develop the adult literacy, numeracy and digital strategy.

<sup>156</sup> Watson, D., Banks, J., and Lyons, S. (2015) [Educational and Employment Experiences of People with a Disability in Ireland](#); an analysis of the National Disability Survey. ESRI.

<sup>157</sup> Watson, D., Banks, J., and Lyons, S. (2015) [Educational and Employment Experiences of People with a Disability in Ireland](#); an analysis of the National Disability Survey. ESRI.

# Family Status (including lone parents and others with caring responsibilities, pregnancy)

## Situation

- 61% of those doing unpaid caring in Ireland are women; the presence of children (in the family) has a much smaller effect on the employment rate for men compared to women; and nearly all (94%) of those who were looking after home or family were women.<sup>158</sup>
- The employment rate for women who were lone parents or were part of a couple and who were aged 20-44 years was 67.6%, well below the male rate of 88.3%. Lone parents had lower employment rates than parents in couples.<sup>159</sup>
- In Q2 2019 the employment rate of lone parents whose youngest child was aged 0-5 years was 60%, this rose to 70.9% for lone parents whose youngest child was 12-17. Policies designed to increase lone parent participation in employment and education must take the varying caring requirements over the course of a child's life into account.<sup>160</sup>
- 93% of parents of children with disabilities who did not work said they would like to, but were restricted from doing so by a lack of childcare and flexibility.<sup>161</sup>
- One-parent families are approximately 2.5 times as likely to be living in enforced deprivation as two-parent families.<sup>162</sup>
- The median net wealth of households with two parents and children (€136,800) is twenty-six times more than the net wealth of households with one parent and children (€5,200).<sup>163</sup>
- There are barriers for pregnant students continuing their education and a lack of support for teenage mothers exists.<sup>164</sup>
- Social protection payments for lone parents often disincentivise their entry into the labour market.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

<sup>159</sup> CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2016

<sup>160</sup> [Submission on the National Access Plan 2022-2026 | June 2021 \(onefamily.ie\)](#) One Family

<sup>161</sup> [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

<sup>162</sup> Meyler, A. Lovejoy, Dr. L., Swan, L (2023, March). [Lifelong learning in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups](#). AONTAS.

<sup>163</sup> [Submission on the National Access Plan 2022-2026 | June 2021 \(onefamily.ie\)](#) One Family

<sup>164</sup> [Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports](#). Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, January 2017.

<sup>165</sup> OECD Face of Joblessness in Ireland - A People-centred perspective on employment barriers and policies (2018)



- Once a woman is classified as a 'qualified adult' under the One Parent Family Payment, she is excluded from a range of social supports, such as funding for higher education, which particularly affects Traveller, Roma and migrant women.<sup>166</sup>
- In the most recent Census just 15% of lone parents reported having a third level qualification and 70% were educated to level 6 or less on NFQ.<sup>167</sup>
- Pregnant students can be prevented from continuing their education during pregnancy.<sup>168</sup>
- Lone parents are likely to experience several barriers to lifelong learning participation, including: judgemental attitudes, exclusion, financial pressure, an absence of adequate childcare facilities, unsuitable course scheduling, digital poverty and confidence issues.<sup>169</sup> Other barriers to education include the scheduling of courses in the evenings which often clash with primary childcare activities and responsibilities.<sup>170</sup>
- The AONTAS Annual Synthesis Report 2021-2022 highlights that a majority of lone parents (51%) were unaware of the availability of childcare support within their respective Education and Training Boards.<sup>171</sup>
- Hybrid-learning provides flexibility to lone parents, however, there is a need to consider the financial resources required to engage in online learning, including access to digital tools and learning materials.<sup>172</sup>
- Research on young adults who take on caring responsibilities in the family,<sup>173</sup> found the following:
  - There was no gender difference in terms of young people who were taking on care responsibilities, and there were similar rates of caregiving among young adults from lone-parent and two-parent households. However, greater resources in the family, did reduce the prevalence of caregiving.
  - Providing any care at age 17 was found to be "significantly related" to lower Leaving Certificate grades for those who had higher levels of prior achievement, especially if they are involved in caring for multiple types of care recipient. As a result, these young people were less likely than others to go on to higher education, and when they go on to further/higher education, they potentially constrain their choices, placing more emphasis, in their education decisions, on being able to live at home.
  - Migrant families are less likely to have local family members to draw on for care support and there may be language or cultural barriers to accessing services. This

166 IHREC (2017) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports](#)

167 Meyler, A. Lovejoy, Dr. L., Swan, L (2023, March). [Lifelong learning in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups](#). AONTAS

168 IHREC (2017) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports](#)

169 [AONTAS LLL Research Report Final Digital Launch.pdf](#)

170 Meyler, A. Lovejoy, Dr. L., Swan, L (2023, March). [Lifelong learning in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups](#). AONTAS.

171 Meyler, A. Lovejoy, Dr. L., Swan, L (2023, March). [Lifelong learning in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups](#). AONTAS.

172 [AONTAS LLL Research Report Final Digital Launch.pdf](#)

173 Russell, H. and Smyth, E. (January 2024). [Caregiving among Young Adults in Ireland. Evidence for Policy](#). Economic and Social Research Institute.



is reflected in “migrant-origin” young people being more likely to care for their parents and/or younger siblings at age 20 and to spend more of their time on care responsibilities.

- Lone parents are one of the groups found to be at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage across multiple housing dimensions (discrimination in accessing accommodation, quality of accommodation (including for example over-crowding), and risk of becoming homeless).<sup>174</sup>

## Experience

- Women experience pregnancy-related workplace discrimination with job offers rescinded, reduced hours, negative impact on performance rating, and lack of promotion.<sup>175</sup>
- Women caring for a child with a disability, often face discrimination by association, in employment. Workers caring for a relative with disabilities may struggle to find employment, face difficult working conditions, or be laid off by their employers.<sup>176</sup>
- Gender stereotypes in regard to women's caring role, have contributed to gender inequality in regard to caring responsibilities for children and other family members.<sup>177</sup>

## Identity

- 86.4% of Lone Parents in Ireland are headed by a woman.<sup>178</sup>
- Women are more likely than men to shoulder more responsibility for caring (45% of women, 29% of men provide care on a daily basis).<sup>179</sup>

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174 Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland June 2018 Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey, Bertrand Maître.

175 IHREC (2017) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports](#)

176 [European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023 \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

177 IHREC (2017) [Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports](#).

178 Meyler, A. Lovejoy, Dr. L., Swan, L (2023, March). [Lifelong learning in Ireland: A focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups](#). AONTAS.

179 Russell et al. (2019). [Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland](#). The ESRI and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

# Sexual Orientation

## Situation

- Many LGBTI young people are at risk of leaving school early due to identity-based bullying and harassment.<sup>180</sup>
- 3 in 10 LGBTI+ students missed at least one day school in the previous month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.<sup>181</sup>
- 60% of LGBTI people in one study, said they had seriously thought of ending their own life, with approximately 45% having thought of doing so within the past year. 60% reported that their suicidal thoughts were at least somewhat related to their LGBTI identity and their struggle to be accepted.<sup>182</sup>

## Experience

- In one study it was found that 67% of LGBTI students had witnessed LGBTI bullying in their school and 48% had personally experienced LGBTI bullying by fellow students.<sup>183</sup>
- LGBTI+ students experience homophobic and transphobic remarks from students, staff, and teachers. 59.9% of LGBTI+ students harassed because of sexual orientation. Frequency of physical harassment experienced by LGBTI+ students in the past school year based on sexual orientation (16% frequently, 7.6% Often, 28.4% sometimes, 48% rarely). 10% of LGTBI+ students reported assaulted at school due to sexual orientation.<sup>184</sup>
- LGBTI+ students experience verbal, physical, and sexual harassment, as well as cyber bullying because of sexual orientation, causing: isolation, absenteeism and impacts academic aspiration (8% less likely to pursue 3<sup>rd</sup> level education, 27% more likely to missed school in the past month); self-esteem, sense of belonging, isolation, and avoidance of certain spaces (PE, bathrooms, locker rooms, etc.).<sup>185</sup>

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180 Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (2016) 'Being LGBT in School: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, and Support LGBT Students'

181 BeLonGTo (2019) The 2019 School Climate Study. (involving 788 LGBT students)

182 GLEN and BeLonGTo (2016). LGBTI Ireland report- national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in Ireland.

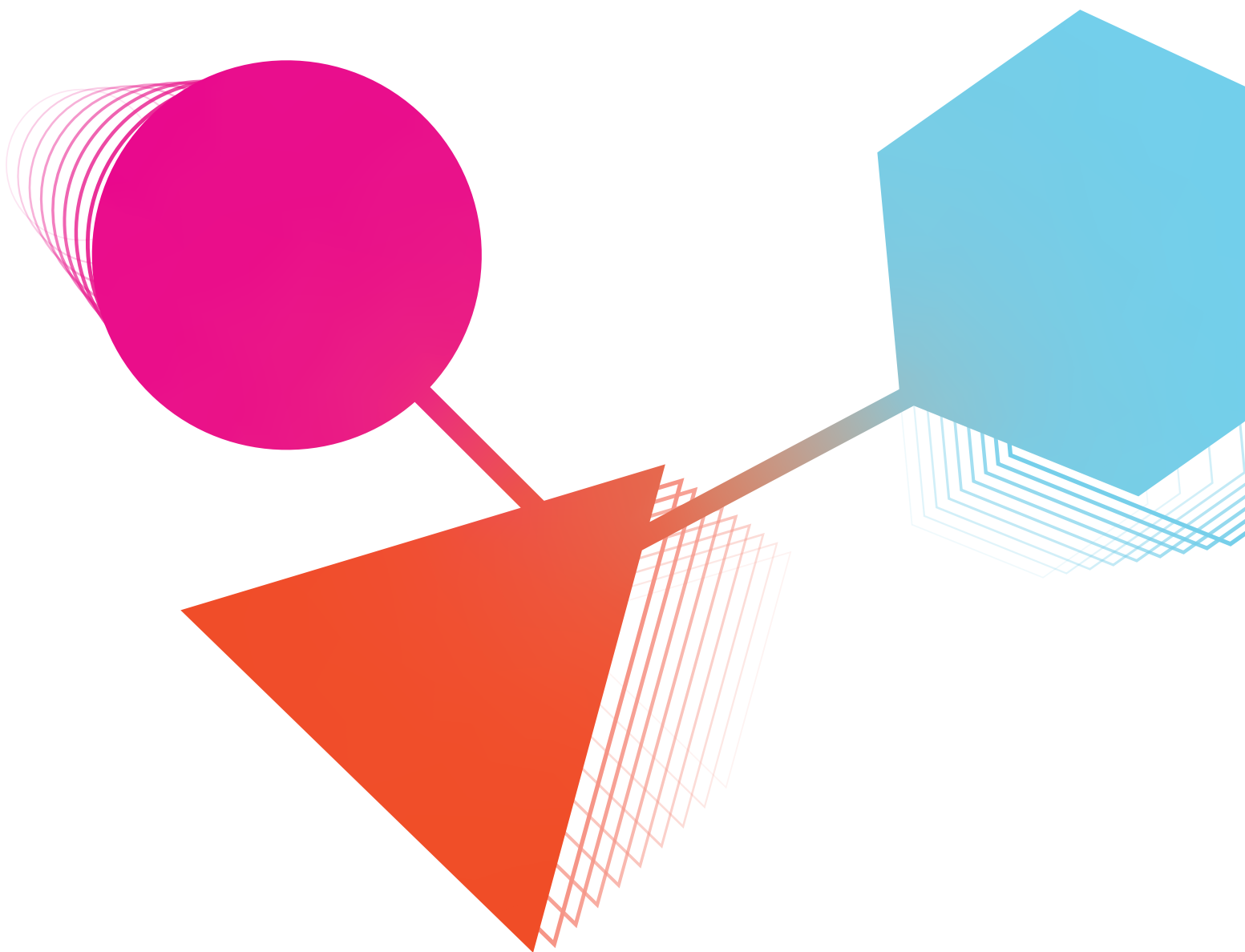
183 Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (2016) 'Being LGBT in School: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, and Support LGBT Students'

184 BeLonGTo (2019) The 2019 School Climate Study. (involving 788 LGBT students)

185 BeLonGTo (2019) The 2019 School Climate Study. (involving 788 LGBT students)

## Identity

- There is a gap of years between 'knowing and telling' one's LGBT. For many, this period spans their time at second level education and intersects with critical milestones such as state examinations and preparation for working life or continued studies. This has implications for schools to ensure the learning environment is safe, supportive and affirming for LGBT young people.<sup>186</sup>
- The most common age to know one's LGBT identity, is 12 years. The most common age to 'come out' is 16 years.<sup>187</sup>
- 68% of LGBTI+ students were not taught anything positive about LGBTI+ identities in school.<sup>188</sup>



186 Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (2016) 'Being LGBT in School: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, and Support LGBT Students'.

187 Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (2016) 'Being LGBT in School: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, and Support LGBT Students'.

188 BeLonGTo (2019). Op Cit.

# Poverty and social exclusion (socio-economic status)

## Situation

- Groups protected under the nine grounds in equality legislation, because of their vulnerability to discrimination and inequality, are more likely to live in or be at risk of poverty (see above for specific details in regard to different grounds). This is particularly the case for: older women, lone parents, disabled people, Travellers and other minority ethnic groups; and transgender people. The negative treatment they experience relating to their identity often results in, or is compounded by, their experiences of poverty, socio-economic disadvantage, and social exclusion.
- 2022 CSO data indicates the following: 13% of the population are at risk of poverty (an increase of 2% from 2021) and 5.3% of people were living in consistent poverty (up from 4% in 2021); 1 in 3 unemployed persons are at risk of poverty; 17.7% of the population were defined as living in enforced deprivation, i.e. experienced two or more of the eleven types of deprivation (compared with 13.8% in 2021).<sup>189</sup>
- A lack of affordable childcare provision is a key employment barrier for all groups.<sup>190</sup>
- A survey on lifelong learning participation<sup>191</sup>, with over 1,000 people, found the following:
  - Employed respondents were more likely to have taken part in learning than unemployed respondents (68% vs 45%, respectively).
  - 25% of respondents who reported no participation in learning in the last three years cited financial/cost issues as a barrier.
- Growing up in socio-economic disadvantaged areas is associated with poorer educational outcomes and lower likelihood of engaging in FET.<sup>192</sup>
- There are particular digital literacy challenges faced by unemployed/inactive, economically disadvantaged individuals, as this group simultaneously lacks access to digital literacy learning opportunities at home (due to the high cost of technology) and the workplace (due to extended absence from the labour market).<sup>193</sup>
- People from poorer socio-economic backgrounds may be more at risk of experiencing mental health difficulties in general and this risk is more widespread during times of recession.<sup>194</sup>
- The Habitual Residence Condition can act as a barrier for migrants trying to access social protection payments, leaving this group very vulnerable to poverty.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Central Statistics Office: [Survey on Income and Living Conditions](#) (SILC). 2022.

<sup>190</sup> OECD Face of Joblessness in Ireland - A People-centred perspective on employment barriers and policies (2018)

<sup>191</sup> Aontas (2023) [Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland](#); a focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups.

<sup>192</sup> Solas 2017. [Barriers to FET with particular reference to long-term unemployed](#) and other vulnerable individuals

<sup>193</sup> SOLAS (May 2021) Adult Literacy for Life: detailed consultation report to develop the adult literacy, numeracy and digital strategy.

<sup>194</sup> IHREC (2015). [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

<sup>195</sup> IHREC (2015). [Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)

- In 2020, the unemployment rate among non-Irish national learners in FET was significantly higher than among Irish national learners: upon enrolment to a FET course 37.8% of non-Irish nationals reporting they were unemployed vs 27.4% of Irish nationals.<sup>196</sup>

## Experience

- CSO data indicate that the highest rates of discrimination related to the education setting were reported by people aged 18-24 and those who are unemployed (3.4%).<sup>197</sup>
- One in five (20.1%) of unemployed persons experienced discrimination while *looking for work in the previous two years*.<sup>198</sup>
- Many of those in the prison system have a history of social exclusion, including high levels of family, educational and health disadvantage, and poor prospects in the labour market. Discrimination against individuals with a criminal conviction is a key barrier to their ability to access employment: 81% of respondents in one study said their conviction had negatively impacted on their ability to access employment; 53% were concerned about the impact of their conviction on volunteering; and 29% were concerned about the impact of their conviction on accessing education.<sup>199</sup>
- The absence of a socio-economic ground, as a basis for discrimination, in equality legislation impacts on people's ability to challenge socio-economic discrimination in accessing key services, such as employment and education.<sup>200</sup>

## Identity

- Issues of intersectionality which can give rise to experiences of multiple and compounding discrimination and inequality, are evident for people living in/at risk of poverty with diverse identities involving more than one protected characteristic, including: Travellers and other minority ethnic groups; young people; refugees and those seeking asylum; disabled people; women; transgender people; lone parents; and older people.

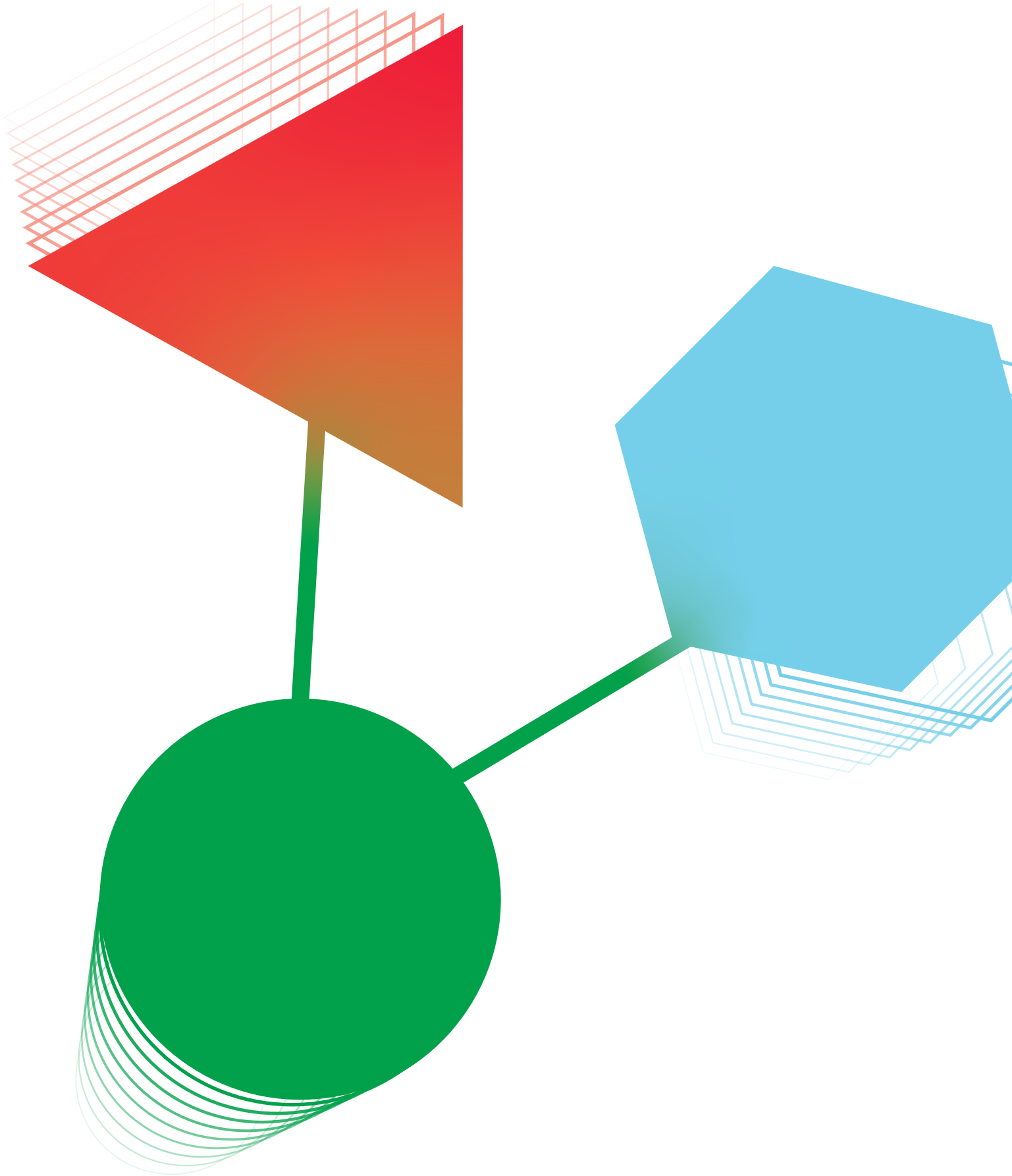
<sup>196</sup> SOLAS (2021) FET In Focus 2021: Non-Irish Nationals in FET.

<sup>197</sup> Central Statistics Office: [Equality and Discrimination](#). CSO release July 2019

<sup>198</sup> Central Statistics Office: [Equality and Discrimination](#). CSO release July 2019

<sup>199</sup> IPRT [Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the Review of the Equality Acts](#), December 8, 2021.

<sup>200</sup> [Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports](#). Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, January 2017.





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