

Maynooth University Implementation of the Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty

Assess Step

October 2024

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1 Introduction

Maynooth University (MU) sees it as vital that we respond through positive actions to the objective of greater inclusion, as stated in our [Strategic Plan 2023 -2028](#). We have a reputation for authentic, strengths-based access initiatives, supporting participation, engagement, and progression for all students. We will build on this legacy and on our commitment to social justice to ensure that every member of our University community has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of who they are and where they come from.

2 The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

(1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to:

- ⇒ Eliminate discrimination;
- ⇒ Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and
- ⇒ Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

S42.2 (a) and (b) establish the steps that public bodies should follow, in regard to implementing the Duty

- (2) (a) set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in its strategic plan (howsoever described) an **assessment** of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to **address** those issues, and
- (b) **report** in a manner that is accessible to the public on developments and achievements in that regard in its annual report (howsoever described).

Based on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#) guide¹, we have summarised the three steps required in terms of:

- ⇒ *Assess Step*: Identify equality and human rights issues relevant to the purpose and function of the organisation. *This document constitutes the MU Assess Step.*
- ⇒ *Address Step*: Identify the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address equality and human rights issues. [MU Address Step can be found here.](#)
- ⇒ *Report Step*: Report on developments and achievements in implementing the Duty in a manner that is accessible to the public. [MU Report Step can be found here.](#)

¹ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2019) [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#).

The Irish Human Rights Commission has recommended that, in implementing the Duty, organisations should keep a focus on those groups:

- ⇒ covered by the nine protected grounds under equality legislation:
 - gender (including gender identity and gender expression);
 - civil status;
 - family status (including lone parents and carers);
 - age;
 - disability (defined broadly in the legislation to include medical conditions, mental health and invisible disabilities);
 - sexual orientation;
 - race (encompassing race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins);
 - religion; and
 - membership of the Traveller community; and
- ⇒ at risk of poverty and social exclusion, in effect a socio-economic status ground.

The ten identified groups for the Duty are not homogenous, and significant diversity exists across and within the identified groups, in regard to the situation, experience, and identity of individuals. Issues of intersectionality are relevant in this regard, in terms of multiple and/or compounding negative impact due to discrimination, inequality, social exclusion and/or disadvantage experienced. Intersectionality could usefully be identified as a further strand to the groups identified for the Duty.

Organisations are required to implement the Duty across all their function areas. The core function areas identified by MU encompass:

- ⇒ Teaching, Learning and Student Success (including assessment)
- ⇒ Promoting and conducting research
- ⇒ Innovation
- ⇒ Employment
- ⇒ Support for student and staff wellbeing
- ⇒ Corporate governance (including procurement)
- ⇒ IT & Digital Transformation
- ⇒ Campus Development and Estates
- ⇒ Provision of student accommodation
- ⇒ Community outreach (for example, through access programmes and events)
- ⇒ Recreational and visitor services (e.g. public cultural spaces, sports offer, etc.)

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 accords a number of roles to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in relation to the Duty, to: guide and encourage implementation including issuing guidelines and preparing codes of practice; review and report on implementation of the Duty; and where it considers there is evidence of failure of compliance, invite the public body concerned to review the performance of its functions and prepare an action plan in relation to these, having regard to the Duty.

IHREC Resources

1. [Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2019.

2. Assisting Effective Implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: [Tool for an Evidence Based Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2020.

3. Assisting Effective Implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: [Tool for a Consultative Approach](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2019.

IHREC eLearning Module

1. [Equality and Human Rights in the Public Service: Introductory eLearning module](#): Unit 1, Equality in the Public Service; Unit 2, Human Rights in the Public Service; and Unit 3, Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

3 Maynooth University Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

3.1 Introduction

The following *Maynooth University Equality and Human Rights Values Statement* has been developed in collaboration with the *Irish Universities Association (IUA) Equality and Human Rights Values Initiative* which aims to support higher education institutions to bring a values-led focus to our work to implement the public sector equality and human rights duty (the Duty), and to embed our ambition for the Duty within the culture of our organisation.

Personal values are those deeply held ideals that motivate us and shape our sense of self and our behaviours and actions. At an organisational level, values are central to organisational culture, which in turn, impacts on the priorities, processes, and practice of an organisation. A values-led approach to the Duty, therefore, can assist in embedding a focus on equality and human rights within the culture of an organisation and to mobilise that culture behind implementation of the Duty.

The values identified in this statement are those that motivate a concern for equality and human rights. They are well anchored in the values already espoused by Maynooth University and other universities involved in this initiative, as motivating our operations in our wider organisational strategies.

The equality and human rights values identified as underpinning and motivating implementation of the Duty provide benchmarks against which to check and assess an ongoing alignment by the university with the ambitions set for addressing the equality and human rights issues identified as relevant to its various functions.

Five core values are identified as motivating this ambition for the Duty: social justice; participation; inclusion; agency; and respect. For each of these values a brief shared understanding of this value is set out along with two benchmarks:

- a statement of outcome: the implications of the value for the change sought and priorities pursued by the university across its various functions; and
- a statement of process: the implications of the value for the way the university works in pursuing this change and its various priorities.

3.2 Maynooth University Equality Human Rights Values Statement

Social Justice: *Social Justice is about resources and capabilities to flourish, involving action to enable achievement of outcomes.*

Statement of Outcome:

Maynooth University will: enable greater access to, retention in, and outcomes from higher education for the identified groups; offer employment opportunities and enable their career progression within the sector; and contribute to a wider societal achievement of such goals by challenging injustice, building a knowledge base on the issues, and promoting innovation in addressing equality and human rights issues in society.

Statement of Process:

Maynooth University will: remove barriers and engage in positive action for new outcomes in employment, education and learning provision for the identified groups; and lead a societal and institutional conversation on equality and human rights issues and ambitions.

Participation: *Participation is about diversity of voice, involving empowerment, listening and being heard, and having influence and a meaningful say in decision-making.*

Statement of Outcome:

Maynooth University will: ensure adequate representation at decision-making tables, and within structures that influence and inform policy and plans for the identified groups; and ensure the voice of the diversity of staff and students is heard and has meaningful impact and influence in driving change.

Statement of Process:

Maynooth University will: work in partnership with relevant organisations and groups that bring forward the perspective of the identified groups; take participatory approaches across our work, including in research; empower relevant staff networks and student associations; and consult with the identified groups and act on their feedback.

Inclusion: *Inclusion is about valuing diversity, achieving a sense of belonging, and being person-centred, involving universal design and recognition for and flexibility in addressing specific needs.*

Statement of Outcome:

Maynooth University will innovate to develop and operationalise models of good practice in mainstreaming a focus on diversity, thus ensuring our general provision and systems address the specific needs of people from across the identified groups and accommodate the particular needs that arise from their diversity.

Statement of Process:

Maynooth University will implement systems that are flexible in taking account of diversity, for staff and students, and that ensure a sense of belonging where people can give full expression to their different identities while progressing their aspirations to full effect.

Agency: *Agency is about autonomy, choice, and self-determination, involving availability of, and access to a range of options.*

Statement of Outcome:

Maynooth University will offer options that enable real choice for people across the identified groups, in particular, pathways into and within higher education, and employment pathways and career progression.

Statement of Process:

Maynooth University will enable and empower informed choices by people from the identified groups and will ensure processes of assessment that include real choices in the pathways they open up for them.

Respect: *Respect is about dignity, human worth, and care, involving fair treatment, a safe environment, and valuing people.*

Statement of Outcome:

Maynooth University will: establish an organisational culture of equality and human rights; form a community based on respect and a valuing of diversity; enable relationships based on collaboration and co-design; and offer societal leadership, knowledge and innovation in protecting human rights and preventing and addressing all forms of discrimination.

Statement of Process:

Maynooth University will: create safe environments for work and study and build trust, transparency and accountability in these environments; and institute and operate effective and fair systems to deal with all forms of discrimination, harassment, and human rights violations that might arise.

3.3 Using the Maynooth University Equality and Human Rights Values Statement

The *Maynooth University Equality and Human Rights Values Statement* provides a values lens for implementing the public sector equality and human rights duty, through:

- Deploying these values as a frame for the assessment of equality and human rights issues, and for reporting on progress made in implementing the Duty and addressing these issues.
- Applying the values benchmarks, the statements of outcome or the statements of process as appropriate, as one part of the check, undertaken in implementing the Duty, on plans, strategies, programmes, and policies being developed and reviewed, to assess alignment with these values.

The *Maynooth University Equality and Human Rights Values Statement* can serve to embed the public sector equality and human rights duty within our organisational culture, through:

- Engaging the values creatively as a focus within our staff training.
- Engaging the values creatively as a focus in our internal and external communications.
- Employing the language of these values to engage the breadth of university stakeholders behind the ambition for equality and human rights encapsulated in the Duty.

4 Assess Step - Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

4.1 Introduction

An assessment of equality and human rights issues is a required step of the statutory obligations of public bodies under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014: the public sector equality and human rights duty (the Duty).

This assessment is not an assessment of Maynooth University nor its performance. It is the foundation stone for the Duty in assessing and setting out the equality and human rights issues, facing the identified groups, that have relevance for the functions of a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

This assessment is aligned with the guidance issued by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, including that the assessment is evidence-based and involves consultation with relevant stakeholders.² The evidence-base used for this assessment is provided in the appendix. In order to develop this assessment, a validation exercise was prepared of the draft assessment with representatives from across the identified groups to underpin a participative approach. The assessment remains a living document to be further enhanced as new research or new knowledge and insights come available.

The equality and human rights issues assessed below relate to all of the identified groups unless otherwise indicated. They are presented in the form of an overarching issue that applies across the ten identified groups, which is then further illustrated with a series of bullet points drawn from the evidence base that is group-focused.

4.2 Maynooth University Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues

Respect: *Respect is about dignity, human worth and care, involving fair treatment, a safe environment, and valuing people.*

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to the functions of HEIs, are:

- ⇒ Discrimination in accessing and participating in employment and services, of staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
 - Discrimination, at the point of recruitment to employment, against Travellers, Black and other minority ethnic people, disabled people, transgender and gender non-binary people, and older people.
 - In-work discrimination (e.g. in promotion and other career opportunities) against women, pregnant people, disabled people, Black and other minority ethnic people, people from religious minorities, and transgender and non-binary people.

² Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2020), [Assisting the Effective Implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty: Tool for an Evidence-Based Assessment of Equality and Human Rights Issues](#).

- Discrimination in accessing and participating in services, including education, experienced by: Travellers, disabled people, lone parents, people from religious minorities, and transgender and gender non-binary people.
 - Discriminatory impact of enrolment policies that give preference to the children of past pupils, that may segregate out Travellers and migrants from specific schools.
- ⇒ Systemic institutionalisation of negative treatment on the basis of identity: ableism; ageism; racism; sexism; sectarianism; homophobia; transphobia.
- ⇒ Identity-based violence, abuse and harassment, of staff and students across the identified groups, which prevents access to and participation in employment and key services, including education, and diminishes engagement in campus spaces and education settings, with particular regard to:
- Identity-based harassment and bullying by peers, experienced in education settings, by LGBTIQ+, Traveller, and disabled students and staff.
 - Micro-aggressions and more direct forms of identity-based harassment experienced in the workplace by LGBTIQ+ people, Travellers, and other minority ethnic groups.
 - Racism experienced in public spaces, by: Black and minority ethnic people; including Travellers, Roma, and Muslim women.
 - Gender-based violence and abuse experienced by women and non-binary people of all ages, including: intimate partner violence and abuse; sexual harassment and assault; and stalking.
 - Abuse and neglect of older people.
- ⇒ Mis-portrayal of discrimination, sexual harassment, and harassment, due to stereotyping and bias, across the identified groups, such that blame is misdirected including onto those that are a target for such.
- ⇒ Hostile working and learning environments and cultures, for staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
- Stigmatisation of people on the basis of: their ethnic background; their religious background; their sexual orientation; their minority gender status; their disability; their social background.
 - Stereotyping of groups, including: gender stereotypes that restrict subject choice and career routes for girls and boys; stereotyping of students with a disability and Traveller students, resulting in low expectations from teaching staff; stereotyping of older people as being non-contributors to society.
 - Bias informing decision-making and serving to make the articulation of discrimination more difficult.
 - Low expectations of the potential of disabled students and Traveller students.

- Limited understanding and/or capacity of employers and service providers, and of employees and service-users, with regard to equality and human rights issues, including addressing identity-based discrimination, harassment and abuse.
 - Negative impact of identity-based bullying, harassment, and abuse (including gender-based violence) including: poor physical and mental health and wellbeing; absence from/being forced to leave education and employment; and self-limiting participation in public and the wider community to avoid victimisation.
- ⇒ Under-reporting of discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and bullying, including in work and in learning environments, and lack of knowledge of rights under legislation and capacity to exercise these rights.
- ⇒ Limited or inadequate response, from service providers and employers, to discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and bullying, including lack of or inadequate complaints/investigation mechanisms, and failure of or inadequate implementation of these where in place.

Agency: *Agency is about autonomy, choice, and self-determination, involving availability of and access to a range of options.*

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to the functions of HEIs, are:

- ⇒ Lack of real and accessible options to allow for an adequate range of choices, for staff and students across the identified groups.
- ⇒ Lack of independence due to inadequate resources, legal status, or inadequate supports, for staff and students across the identified groups.
- ⇒ Lack of access to appropriate and accessible information and support to enable informed choices, for staff and students across the identified groups.

Inclusion: *Inclusion: is about valuing diversity, ensuring flexibility, achieving a sense of belonging, and being person-centred, involving universal design and recognition for and flexibility in addressing specific needs.*

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to the functions of HEIs, are:

- ⇒ Failure to provide reasonable accommodation for diversity, including to address specific needs, preventing access to and participation in education, training and employment, of staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
 - For disabled people: lack of flexible work arrangements; need for modified tasks, wage subsidy, transport/parking, human support, and assistive technology or physical adjustments; lack of statutory provision for ISL interpreting for employment; and ISL interpreters insufficiently prepared to interpret in employment fields with large amounts of specialist concepts and terminology; inaccessible buildings and public spaces; inaccessible communication channels; and limited understanding and application of the social model of disability and universal design.

- For Black and minority ethnic groups: lack of recognition for cultural difference and its practical implications, and, in particular for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers: the uncertainty or short-term nature of their visa or residential status; the lack of recognition of their existing qualifications; lack of information about how to access education; ineligibility to access bursaries and other schemes to assist with fees; language barriers, lack of translation and interpretation, and limited availability of English language classes.
- For Travellers: potential loss of income supports (such as the medical card) upon take-up of employment; a lack of networks and connectors (as exist for settled community) to assist them in getting into employment; removal of targeted education supports at primary and post-primary level (such as the visiting Teacher); limited financial and other resources (broadband, devices, study space etc.) to participate in education (the latter was exacerbated during COVID-related school/college closures).
- For people with caring responsibilities, including lone parents and some carers: inadequate family leave provision and lack of flexible working arrangements; potential loss of income supports; lack of affordable, accessible childcare; and impact of unequal sharing of caring responsibilities on women's ability to take up full-time employment and on their promotion and other career opportunities.
- For older people: lack of gradual retirement options and early retirement.
- For LGBTIQ+ people: lack of provision that acknowledges same-sex relationships and that enables people transitioning their gender in the workplace or education setting.
- For religious minorities: lack of provision and flexibility to enable religious observance and other religious imperatives.
- For people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless: unstable housing situation interrupting or delaying young people's engagement with education and/or employment.
- For former or current prisoners: lack of supports and Garda vetting procedures as a barrier to education and employment.

⇒ Invisibility for diversity, a culture of invisibility for diversity within an organisation, and a mono-cultural group dynamic, for staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to:

- An absence of data on many of the identified groups in regard to their access to, participation in, and outcomes from employment, education and other key services.
- Fear of self-expression or disclosure of authentic self, in particular Travellers, LGBTIQ+ people, and people with 'hidden disabilities' feeling compelled to hide

their identity in employment and education settings, in order to avoid discrimination, harassment, and abuse.

- Learning and working environments that do not adequately or positively reflect the culture and identity of diverse groups, including Black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, and LGBTIQ+ people.
 - Attitudes and behaviours that present barriers, isolate and exclude staff and students, including disabled people, LGBTIQ+ people, and Black and minority ethnic people.
- ⇒ Failure to acknowledge and respond to intersectionality across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
- specific needs for those groups at the intersections between the grounds.
 - experiences of multiple and compounding discrimination and inequality.
 - Intersection of socio-economic disadvantage with identity-based inequality (in particular for: lone parents, Travellers and other minority ethnic groups, disabled people, older people, and transgender and gender non-binary people).
- ⇒ Limited understanding and/or capacity of employers and service providers with regard to equality and human rights issues, including understanding and responding to diversity.
- ⇒ Social isolation and social exclusion, of staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
- Social exclusion experienced by Travellers, Black and minority ethnic people, migrants, and disabled people.
 - Rural isolation in particular where people have limited access to transport.
 - Social isolation of older people living alone; disabled people whose access to the community is limited, including those in congregated settings; lone parents; and people in Direct Provision.

Participation: *Participation is about voice and accountability, involving empowerment, listening, and being heard and having influence and a meaningful say in decision-making.*

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to the functions of HEIs, are:

- ⇒ Lack of access to decision-making structures and systems and lack of influence on decision-making, for staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to young people.
- ⇒ Lack of diversity, of staff and students across the identified groups in governance structures of institutions.
- ⇒ Lack of adequate and appropriate feedback structures to those in leadership or management positions available to staff and students across the identified groups.

- ⇒ Lack of participation in research and research methodologies, across the identified groups.
- ⇒ Lack of potential for meaningful engagement with governance structures, decision-making, feedback systems and research, including tokenism in this, for staff and students across the identified groups.
- ⇒ Disempowerment of staff and students across the identified groups, in the absence of support and information to make an impact on decision-making and discouragement in the sense of being powerless and lacking influence and voice.

Social Justice: *Social Justice is about resources and capabilities to flourish, involving action to enable achievement of outcomes.*

The equality and human rights issues to be addressed in implementing the Duty, relevant to the functions of HEIs, are:

- ⇒ Poverty and material deprivation, including in a context of increased cost of living, across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
 - Comparatively higher levels of poverty experienced by: lone parents; Travellers, non-Irish nationals, disabled people, and transgender and gender non-binary people.
 - The prohibitive financial cost of participating in HE, in particular, for: lone parents, Travellers, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and disabled people.
 - Lack of flexibility in the payment options for HE fees.
 - Reliance on inadequate public transport to access education/ employment for people living in poverty and those who are living in rural communities.
 - Lack of access to affordable accommodation.
 - Unequal impact of climate change and failure to address issues of environmental justice.
 - Absence of gender-proofing and wider equality-proofing of national anti-poverty measures.
- ⇒ Unequal outcomes for those across the identified groups, in regard to key resources (in particular income, education, and employment), including:
 - Low income, across the grounds, with particular regard to:
 - underemployment among migrants, due to issues of recognition of qualifications.
 - underemployment among deaf graduates compared to their hearing peers.
 - concentration of women in low-paid, part-time work.
 - extra day-to-day spending costs associated with having a disability.

- the gender pay gap and gender pension gap.
 - the ethnic pay gap in Irish HEIs.
 - insecurity of income and uncertain employment for people (predominantly women and minority ethnic migrants) on employment contracts with unspecified hours of work ('zero hour' contracts).
 - dependence on social welfare supports, in particular for: some carers, lone parents, and Travellers.
- Poor education outcomes and/or low skills status, across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
 - lack of access to, and outcomes from education in particular for: young people from lower socio-economic groups and those from less affluent postcodes; Travellers; Roma; disabled people; some migrants; young women parenting alone; and current or former prisoners.
 - lower level of education outcomes associated with particular types of disability, in particular for: people with sensory disabilities; people with speech impediments; and people with an intellectual or learning disabilities.
 - difficulty for disabled children, particularly those with a lower socio-economic status, in accessing mainstream education provision.
 - lack of progression from training and education into employment for Travellers and disabled people.
- Barriers to employment, across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
 - high levels of unemployment for Travellers, Roma, disabled people, and African nationals.
 - lack of recognition for qualifications of migrant people.
 - lack of diversity in regard to employees across many sectors, including HE.
- Lack of in-work progression, across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
 - lack of women in management positions.
 - gender imbalance in HEIs with less women holding senior academic posts.
 - barriers to promotion for Black and minority ethnic employees.
 - lack of diversity at management and Board level.

- ⇒ Digital inequality, including lack of access to equipment, infrastructure and skills, an issue exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, across the identified groups.
- ⇒ 'Soft-barriers' of participation in employment and education for staff and students across the identified groups, with particular regard to:
- The gendered concentration of men and women in certain education fields.
 - Significant gender differences in the selection of science subjects at Leaving Certificate leading to under-representation of women in STEM courses and in the STEM workforce, and under-representation of men in areas such as nursing, midwifery.
- ⇒ Unequal health status across the identified groups, which impacts negatively on people's ability to access and fully participate in employment and education, with particular regard to:
- Impact of economic deprivation and disadvantage on the health, wellbeing, and life chances of children and adults.
 - Mental health issues across the identified groups, and in particular for young people, Travellers, disabled people, and LGBTIQ+ people.
 - Negative impact of being homeless or at risk of homelessness, and/or living in unsuitable accommodation on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.
 - High levels of self-harm and suicide in the Traveller community and among young LGBTIQ+ people.
 - Limited availability of, and access to mental health supports and services for young people.

Appendix: Evidence Base for the Assessment

This evidence base draws on data and information from a range of sources including: the HEA; the Economic Social Research Institute; the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights; academic institutes; state agencies and NGOs; national CSO data sets; national policy strategies for the identified groups; and submissions by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, under the UN human rights monitoring framework.

This evidence base should be periodically updated by HEIs 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.

In generating the evidence-base for the assessment of equality and human rights issues, the IUA employed the framework of: situation, experience, and identity of to establish the equality and human rights issues for the identified groups for the Duty.

Situation: refers to disadvantage in the level and quality of resources which the identified groups can access and participate in, including: employment; education, health, and accommodation; and cultural and recreational goods and services.

Experience: refers to the quality of the identified groups' engagement with, and treatment by wider society, including as part of their engagement or potential engagement with employment and with key services (as service participants and policy beneficiaries).

Identity: refers to the manner in which the identified groups' give expression to their identity and, in particular, any lack of recognition for diversity leading to unmet needs that are specific to the identity of the identified groups.

A. Gender Ground

Situation

- Among all employed women in Ireland, in 2018, 22.6% could be classified as “low-wage earners”. The corresponding proportion of male low-earners was 16.7%³
- The main reason women employees cited for being in part-time rather than full-time employment (in 2020) was care of adults with a disability/ children/ other family members (62%). The corresponding figure for males was 15%.⁴
- In 2018 the gender pay gap in Ireland was 11.3% (the education sector had a lower average of 7.8%).⁵

³ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (December 2021). [Statistical Spotlight #6: Gender Norms in Ireland](#). P12.

⁴ Ibid. P16.

⁵ Ibid. PP 29 and 24.

- A gender imbalance exists in higher education institutes in regard to who holds senior academic posts and regarding those with permanent vs temporary contracts of employment. Until 2021 (with the appointment of the new provost for TCD) a female had never held the post of university president/provost. Regarding the university sector: as of December 2020: 27% of women and 73% of men held the Professorship posts; 37% of women and 63% of men held the Associate Professorship posts; and 41% of women and 59% of men held the Senior Lecturer posts. The picture, as of December 2020, is an overall improvement on the situation that pertained in 2016 (when the HEA undertook research on this issue). In regard to contracts of employment: in 2020 women constituted 43% of those with FT permanent contracts of employment and 55% of these with FT temporary contracts (compared to 57% and 45% of men respectively).⁶ Figures for 2015 indicate that five of the seven universities had less than 40% women on their executive management team.
- In 2017: about 75% of all graduates in both education and in health & welfare were female and around 80% of all graduates in information & communication technologies and in engineering, manufacturing & construction were male.⁷
- In 2019: just over 1 in 4 (26%) of all senior roles in large enterprises was held by a women in 2019; Women occupied only 11.5% of CEO positions and 28.3% of Senior Executive roles; and women held just 1 in 5 positions on Boards of Directors (19.6%).⁸
- A 2019 survey of minority gender third-level students and recent graduates, in Irish universities, found the following:
 - 78% cited mental health and medical issues as obstacles to their academic performance; 41% and 31% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement “my campus mental health services are/were inclusive of my needs”;⁹
 - 23% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement “it is (was) easy for me to present as my preferred gender at my (education) institution”;¹⁰

⁶ Higher Education Authority (2021) Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender. P7.

⁷ CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Understanding the Lived Experience of Gender Minority Students in Irish Third-level Education. Trinity College Dublin, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, National LGBT Federation, and Transgender Equality Network of Ireland. P51.

¹⁰ Ibid. P52.

- 17% were too apprehensive to approach institution staff, or did not know whom to approach (12%), to seek reasonable accommodations. Those who did approach staff, were most likely to approach a member of the teaching staff;¹¹ and
- Respondents demonstrated a very strong preference for gender neutral bathrooms, as well as discomfort using gender segregated restrooms and changing facilities.¹²
- A study by NUI Galway, found that 82% of female students found their learning environment to be less inclusive than pre-Covid, compared with 58% of male students.¹³
- Concerns have been raised, by the IHREC, at the absence of gender impact assessments of national policies and strategies (e.g. anti-poverty measures, and national development plans).¹⁴
- Domestic violence impacts on women’s participation in employment and education: as a result of injury and ill health caused by abusive partners, and also due to abusive partners preventing women from participating in work and/or education or making work difficult for her. UK research found that 20% of women who were victims of domestic violence, had to take a month off work in the previous year, due to the impact of the abuse; 12% of abuse victims said the abuse continued while they were in work (through abusive phone calls or emails, stalking outside work, or turning up to her place of work).¹⁵

Experience

- A 2021 survey of HE students found high levels of sexual harassment, coercion and violence being experienced by students (women and non-binary students experienced higher rates of such abuse). Of the students who answered follow up questions regarding their experiences of sexual harassment, more than half said another student was responsible for the harassment, 22% said the incident had happened on campus, and 17% said it had happened during an activity related to their higher education institution.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid. P26.

¹² Ibid. P23

¹³ Wijeratne, D., Buckley, L., and Quinlivan, S. (2021). Inclusive Learning at NUI Galway: Centering the student voice in higher education. NUI Galway. P5.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ TUC (2014). [Domestic Violence and the Workplace](#): a TUC Survey Report. PP 2 and 4.

¹⁶ Mc Neela, P., Dawson, K., O’Rourke, T., Healy-Cullen, S., Burke, L., Flack., W. (2021). [Report of the National Survey of Students Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutes: Summary of Survey Findings](#). Higher Education Authority.P15.

- A 2021 survey of staff of HEIs found high levels of sexual harassment experienced by staff. 27% of the staff respondents who had completed the sexual harassment section of the survey, gave further information on their experience: 86% said that the person responsible was a staff member at a HEI. 12% of staff said they had experienced unwanted sexual contact (being touched in a way that made them feel uncomfortable) (12%). Females, non-binary staff, and staff who preferred not to indicate their gender, were more likely to experience this behaviour.¹⁷
- A 2014 EU-wide survey on gender-based violence found the following in regard to Irish respondents:
 - 15% of Irish women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence, and 31% have been subjected to psychological violence, by a current or former partner;¹⁸
 - 41% of Irish women know of a family member or friend experiencing domestic violence, and 22% know of a work colleague experiencing domestic violence;¹⁹
 - 12% of Irish women have experienced stalking;²⁰
 - Based on six behaviours considered the most serious forms of sexual harassment: 12% of Irish women had experienced sexual harassment in the twelve months preceding the survey and 39% since the age of fifteen;²¹
 - Irish women consider violence against women in Ireland to be ‘very common’ (33%) or ‘fairly common’ (50%);²²
 - Fear of physical or sexual violence restricts women’s freedom of movement: Irish women indicated that, in the previous twelve months, they had ‘often/all the time’ (30%) or ‘sometimes’ (39%) avoided places and situations for fear of being physically

¹⁷ Mc Neela, P., Dawson, K., O’Rourke, T., Healy-Cullen, S., Burke, L., Flack., W. (2021). [Report of the National Survey of Staff Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutes: Summary of Survey Findings](#). Higher Education Authority.PP20-23.

¹⁸ Fundamental Rights Agency (2014). [Violence Against Women: an EU-wide survey](#). European Agency for Fundamental Rights. PP28, 74.

¹⁹ Ibid.P156.

²⁰ Ibid.P83.

²¹ Ibid.P99.

²² Ibid.P153.

or sexually assaulted. On this question, Irish women ranked the second highest (of the Member States) in this risk avoidance behaviour.²³

- Women are more likely than men to experience discrimination in the workplace, but in other domains (access to goods and services) men and women are equally likely to experience discrimination.²⁴
- Sexual harassment in the workplace is significantly under-reported: only 1 in 5 people who experience such harassment in the workplace report it to their employer. The main reasons for not reporting are: fear that reporting would impact negatively on working relationships/career; fear of not being believed/taken seriously; feeling that nothing would be done (no action would be taken); embarrassment; and fearing that they would be blamed for what happened.²⁵
- Muslim women are three times more likely to suffer from verbal and physical violence in public spaces than Muslim men.²⁶
- School policy regarding subject provision, subject packaging and timetabling can serve to reinforce existing gendered patterns of subject take-up. Issues include: a lack of subject choice in single- sex girls schools, particularly the traditionally 'male' technological subjects, and the lack of adequate support for girls to participate in certain subjects.²⁷
- Women are greatly under-represented in the STEM workforce in Ireland. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimates that fewer than 25% of approximately 120,000 people working in jobs that use STEM skills are women. A major contributory factor is the selection of subjects and Third Level programmes by young women at post-primary level. There are significant gender differences in the selection of Science subjects at Leaving Certificate, with the ratio of male students to female students greater than 3:1 for Physics and approximately 2:3 for Biology.²⁸

²³ Ibid. P145.

²⁴ McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Kenny, O., and Russell, H. (2017) [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules](#). ESRI and IHREC.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Carr, J. (2016). Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and how to respond, Dublin. Immigrant Council of Ireland.

²⁷ [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.

²⁸ STEM Education Review Group (2016). [STEM Education in the Irish School System](#), A report on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, Analysis and Recommendations the STEM Education Review group, November 2016. P8.

- Boys are much more likely to do physics, design graphics, engineering, building construction, and applied mathematics, subjects that are strongly predictive of later doing STEM in college. Even two years before college entry, there are systematic gender differences in decision-making that lead to boys being more likely to choose STEM subjects. Even when we adjust for the subjects taken and grades obtained in each subject in the Leaving Certificate, there is a nine percentage point unexplained gender gap in whether a STEM degree programme is listed as first preference. Clearly there are systematic differences in tendency to list STEM courses (technology courses in particular) across gender even amongst academically observationally equivalent boys and girls.²⁹
- An EU-wide survey on issues facing transgender and non-binary people found the following in regard to Irish respondents:
 - 50% indicated they had experienced discrimination when seeking employment and 20% had experienced in-work discrimination, in the previous twelve months;
 - 35% indicated they had felt discriminated against, due to their gender identity, by school/university personnel, in the previous twelve months; and
 - 13% indicated they had experienced hate-motivated violence in the previous twelve months.³⁰

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: 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.
- Almost half of the transgender respondents in one Irish study, said they would feel unsafe or very unsafe to express their gender identity publicly.³¹
- Transgender people face many difficulties coming out in the workplace and transgender people who are transitioning, in particular, need greater support from employers.³²

²⁹ Delaney, J.M., and Devereux P.J. (2019). [It's not just for boys! Understanding Gender Differences in STEM](#). UCD Centre for Economic Research, Working Paper Series, WP19/05. PP37-39.

³⁰ FRA (2014). [Being Trans in the European Union Comparative analysis of EU LGBT survey data](#). European Agency for Fundamental Rights.PP29, 37 and 56.

³¹ 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.

³² The [LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#). Department of Children and Youth Affairs. PP8 and 21.

- Universal design, including gender-neutral toilets, is needed in public buildings.³³

B. Family Status Ground (including parenting, lone parenting and other caring roles)

Situation

- Women continue to shoulder childcare and general caring responsibilities in families, and the lack of affordable, accessible childcare in Ireland, remains an obstacle to women's participation in employment.³⁴
- A survey of Irish women, by the National Women's Council of Ireland, found that 85% of respondents said their caring responsibilities had increased during the COVID-19 lockdowns.³⁵
- Employer policies are crucial in allowing individuals to combine work and care: the majority of (daily) carers are combining employment and care.³⁶
- Research indicates the strong influence of gender role expectations on the (increased) time Irish women spend on unpaid work (caring and housework) compared to men. The research found that this gender difference could not be accounted for by differences in paid work hours between men and women (i.e. women having more availability to spend on unpaid work than men).³⁷
- 2014 research found that 30% to 32% of lone parents (86% of whom are women³⁸) were in income poverty and 44% to 49% were materially deprived.³⁹

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 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.

³⁵ National Women's Council of Ireland (November 2020). [Women's Experiences of Caring During COVID-19](#). P10.

³⁶ Russell, H., Grotti, R., McGinnity, F., and Privalko, I. (2019). [Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland](#). The Economic and Social Research Institute and the Irish Human rights and Equality Commission.

³⁷ Ibid. P63.

³⁸ CSO. Women and men in Ireland in 2019. Op Cit.

³⁹ McGinnity, F., Russell, H., Watson, D., Kingston, G., and Kelly, E., (2014) *Winners and Losers? The Equality Impact of the Great Recession in Ireland*, Dublin: Equality Authority & Economic and Social Research Institute, p. 7, available: <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/download/pdf/20141109163348.pdf>

- Access to transport was identified as a barrier to participation in further education and training for lone parents living in rural areas.⁴⁰
- Mature students (current, former, and prospective) who are lone parents, cite financial costs (69%) and family responsibilities (68%) as the two biggest barriers to their participation in higher education.⁴¹

Experience

- Pregnant employees report discrimination, following disclosure of pregnancy, in a range of areas including: job offers being rescinded; being placed on reduced hours; unfair selection for redundancy; negative impact on work performance rating; and lack of promotion.⁴²
- Lone parents experience higher levels of discrimination in accessing public and private services, than single childless adults.⁴³

Identity

- Gendered allocation of unpaid work (caring, housework and other work in the home) is a key component to gender inequality for women, in employment, pay, poverty and lifetime income.⁴⁴
- There is a need for increased availability of family leave and work-life balance to support parents in their caring role.⁴⁵

C. Disability Ground

Situation

- Disabled people are more than twice as likely to experience poverty and social exclusion as those without disabilities. Ireland is among the EU countries with the largest differences in

⁴⁰ Society of St Vincent de Paul (2015), 'Supporting Pathways to Parental Employment'.

⁴¹ Indecon (June 2021). [Study of Mature Student Participation in Higher education: what are the challenges? Recommendations for the future.](#) Prepared for the HEA. P32.

⁴² Banks, J. (2011) Pregnancy at Work: A National Survey; Banks, J., and Russell, H. (2011) Pregnancy Discrimination in the Workplace: Legal Framework and Review of Legal Decisions 1998–2008;

⁴³ McGinnity, F. et al. (2017). Op Cit. Piv. [ESRI and IHREC.P44.](#)

⁴⁴Russell, H. et al. (2019). Op Cit.

⁴⁵ [National Strategy for Women and Girls: Creating a Better Society for All, 2017-2020](#), Department of Justice and Equality, 2017.P32.

the at-risk of poverty rate between working people with and without disabilities, at 6 percentage points in 2018.⁴⁶

- 346,000 disabled people were employed in Ireland according to Census 2022 out of a total of 400,639 people with disabilities active in the workforce (employed, looking for their first regular job or unemployed). Unemployment rates for people with disabilities with any degree of long-lasting condition was higher than that of the overall unemployment rate.⁴⁷
- Disabled people have extra spending costs in living their day- to-day lives that non-disabled people do not face. These extra costs are a direct result of their disability.⁴⁸
- For those people with a disability who are out of work and would wish to work, the main perceived barriers are, in order of importance:
 - Flexible work arrangements (45%)
 - Modified tasks (29%)
 - Wage subsidy (24%)
 - Transport/parking (17%)
 - Accessible building (13%)
 - Human support (7%)
 - Assistive technology or physical adjustments (4%)⁴⁹
- The employment rate of people with a disability in Ireland is low by European standards. Among working-age people with a disability: only 29% were in employment; and an unmet demand for employment (i.e. interest in employment among those not in a job) was particularly high among younger adults (73% among those aged 18 to 34).⁵⁰
- Disabled people have fewer education qualifications than non-disabled people when they leave school. This leads to a double disadvantage, where economic prospects are reduced both by disability status and by lower levels of education.⁵¹

⁴⁶ ESRI (2021). [Identification of Skills Gaps Among Persons with a Disability](#), and their Employment Prospects.

⁴⁷ CSO 2022 (2023) [Disability and Everyday Living - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#).

⁴⁸ Indecon (2021). [The Cost of Disability in Ireland](#). Department of Social Protection.

⁴⁹ NDA (September 2019). [NDA Factsheet 3: NEET](#). National Disability Authority, Dublin.P5.

⁵⁰ 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.P4

⁵¹ Ibid. PP4, 39 and 40.

- 2010 data indicate that the percentage of people with a disability completing third-level education remained less than half the rate of third-level completion among people without a disability.⁵²
- In terms of educational attainment of working-age people with a disability, the biggest difference is based on main type of disability. Compared to people with mobility and dexterity disability, people with intellectual disability have only about 0.35 times the odds of completing second level and 0.21 times the odds of completing third level. The odds ratio is even lower for people whose main disability is speech, with ratios of 0.18 and 0.03, respectively. The odds of completing higher second level are also low for people whose main disability is a learning disability, at 0.56.⁵³
- One study of the experiences of deaf graduates found the following:
 - Deaf graduates are significantly more likely to be underemployed or unemployed than their hearing counterparts, despite similar levels of qualification;
 - deaf job candidates are concerned about disclosing their hearing status for fear of experiencing discrimination;
 - interpreters are inadequately prepared for working in employment-related settings, particularly in fields with large amounts of specialist concepts and terminology; and
 - the lack of statutory provision of interpreting in employment settings in some countries (e.g. Ireland) inhibits deaf people’s career progression.⁵⁴
- A report of a seminar on ableism in academia in Ireland identifies the following:
 - A much smaller percentage of disabled persons have a third-level qualification compared to those without disabilities: 29.6% in 2016 compared to 47.0% among those without disabilities,
 - Disabled undergraduates represent 7.1% of the student population, this compares to only 2.4% at postgraduate level, and the number progressing on to academia is expected to be lower,
 - Fewer people in academia have disclosed a disability than might be expected when compared with national statistics; many disabled people drop out at different

⁵² Ibid. P15.

⁵³ Ibid. P22.

⁵⁴ Sheikh H., Napier J., Cameron A., Leeson L., Rathmann C., Peters C., Conama JB, & Moisselle R.(2021). [Access to employment for deaf graduates, employees and job seeking signers](#): findings from the DESIGNS project, in UNCRPD Implementation In Europe – A Deaf Perspective.

stages, and those who do continue in academia are less likely to disclose their disability.⁵⁵

- Students with sensory disabilities continue to be less likely to enter higher education than students with other types of disability.⁵⁶
- Research on student inclusion in NUI Galway found that 15% of respondents did not feel their learning experience was inclusive. For student respondents with a disability in the latter group (13%), other students were identified as being exclusionary, rather than teaching staff.⁵⁷
- Mature students (current, former, and prospective) with a disability, cite 'disability/health' as the second biggest barrier to their participation in higher education (59%). Financial cost is identified as the biggest barrier (by 68%).⁵⁸

Experience

- Disabled people experience higher rates of discrimination than non-disabled in all areas: in the workplace, while seeking work, and in accessing private and public services.⁵⁹
- The odds of experiencing work related discrimination were about twice as high for people with disabilities compared to those without disabilities and the odds of discrimination in public services being about three times higher among those with disabilities.⁶⁰
- In addition to being more likely to experience discrimination, people with disabilities were more likely to report that the discrimination they experienced had 'serious' or 'very serious' effects on them compared to those with no disability. They were also more likely to report that the discrimination occurred more frequently than those with no disability.⁶¹

⁵⁵ TCD (2021). [Ableism in Academia in Ireland](#): Experiences of disabled academics and recommendations for the future. Report of a Seminar. PP6, 9, and 11.

⁵⁶ HEA [National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019](#). P14.

⁵⁷ Wijeratne, D. et al. (2021). Op Cit. P20.

⁵⁸ Indecon (June 2021). [Study of Mature Student Participation in Higher education: what are the challenges? Recommendations for the future](#). Prepared for the HEA. P31.

⁵⁹ McGinnity, F. et al. (2017). Op Cit. Piv. [ESRI and IHREC](#).

⁶⁰ Banks J., Grotti R., Fahey E., & Watson D. (2018). [Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules 2004,2010, 2014](#), ESRI and IHREC.PP42-43

⁶¹Ibid.P30

- Across the range of disabilities, people with blindness or serious visual impairment, and people with psychological/emotional disabilities are the most likely disabled people to experience discrimination.⁶²
- External ableism indicates an environment or attitude affecting a disabled individual or group from the outside. This can take many forms, including but not limited to: lack of physical accessibility, networking situations planned in terms of able-bodied people, diminished career prospects because of ableist assumptions regarding conferences and grant applications, making decisions regarding disabled people without the active involvement of disabled people themselves.⁶³
- Internal ableism refers to internalised ideas of our own bodies and minds. We may expect that our bodies and minds will not stop working properly until old age, in which case a disability may cause issues with our confidence and self-perception. Internal ableism may also cause the disabled person to believe that they themselves are the problem, and this can leave them less willing to seek out support and accommodations.⁶⁴
- A National Survey of Public Attitudes to Disability in Ireland found that 75% of respondents would be supportive of children with a physical disability attending the same school as non-disabled children, however, this falls to 49% in regard to children with a mental health difficulty attending the same school as non-disabled children. “Mental illness continues to invite more negative attitudes than other disabilities and this is in keeping with international surveys”.⁶⁵
- Children with disabilities are more likely to have experienced bullying⁶⁶.
- Disabled people are more likely to report experiencing sexual violence as an adult (30%) than non-disabled people (25%)⁶⁷.

Identity

⁶² Ibid.PP30 and 54

⁶³ TCD (2021). Op cit. P8

⁶⁴Ibid.P8

⁶⁵ National Disability Authority (NDA) (2017) [National Survey of Public Attitudes to Disability in Ireland](#). NDA.PP11 and 16.

⁶⁶ National Disability Authority (NDA) (2014) ([Preventing-school-bullying-of-children-with-Special-Educational-Needs-or-Disability-Report.pdf](#))

⁶⁷ Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2022) ([Overall Adult Experiences Sexual Violence Survey 2022 – Adult Experiences - Central Statistics Office](#)).

- According to census 2016, approximately 16% of Irish people in the 20-85+ age category have a disability.⁶⁸
- Most disability is acquired during the life course, rather than being present from birth or childhood.⁶⁹
- Approximately 1 in 4 children in Ireland have special educational needs.⁷⁰
- Many disabled people involved in addressing equality outcomes for their community, prefer that disability is viewed from a social model lens rather than a medical model lens. A social model of disability focuses on societal barriers that disable people and hinder disabled people's ability to lead independent, self-determined lives. The medical model on the other hand, views disability predominantly as a health issue thereby focusing more on the individual's impairment as the issue/problem, rather than the disabling society in which disabled people live. The UN Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability is underpinned by the social model of disability.
- Universal design of workplaces would facilitate employees with disabilities to avail of employment opportunities without need for further adaptation.⁷¹
- While much has changed in terms of recognition of sign languages across the COE and EU territories, the position of sign languages as languages of instruction and as languages of the curriculum has a significant way to go in most parts of the world. Not all HEIs accommodate the use of sign language alongside the spoken/ written language of the majority.⁷²

D. Age Ground

Situation

- Irish research has found that early retirement is common but often unplanned, due to illness and disability and due to a redundancy package or a pension that made early retirement affordable. This research also found a strong preference for gradual retirement. More flexible retirement options were also considered important.⁷³

⁶⁸ CSO 2016.

⁶⁹ Watson, D., et al. (2015). Op Cit.P18.

⁷⁰ Ibid.P4.

⁷¹ Government of Ireland. [Comprehensive Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities: 2015-2024](#).

⁷² Leeson L. & Van den Bogaerde B. (2020). (What we don't know about) Sign Languages in Higher Education in Europe: Mapping Policy and Practice to an Analytical Framework.P.44

⁷³ Department of Health (2013). [Positive Ageing – Starts Now, National Positive Ageing Strategy](#), Department of Health.PP24-25

- Lack of access to transport and underdeveloped IT skills constitute a significant barrier to accessing information for some people as they age.⁷⁴
- Mature students (current, former, and prospective) report a wide range of barriers to participation in higher education: financial cost is identified as the biggest barrier (for all age groups of mature students – 23-64yrs), followed by family/work responsibilities.⁷⁵
- In regard to the consistent poverty rate, in Ireland, children from Traveller, Roma, and refugee backgrounds are disproportionately affected.⁷⁶

Experience

- Workers aged 45–64 years perceive more discrimination, in seeking employment, than younger workers.⁷⁷
- Ageism involves an interlinked combination of institutional practices, individual attitudes and relationships. Institutional practices include the use of upper age limits to govern access to services and contribute to the marginalisation of older people.⁷⁸
- There is a need to combat ageism and age-related discrimination in society.⁷⁹
- Stereotyping of older people includes: portraying them as frail and dependent; as an unsustainable burden on finances in health and pensions; as sick and disabled non-contributors to society and dependent on the welfare system; or as healthy, financially secure and taking advantage of state benefits that they can afford to pay for themselves.⁸⁰
- Research on prevalence of elder abuse found that 2.2% of the study population experienced abuse or neglect in the last 12 months.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Ibid.P46

⁷⁵ Indecon (June 2021). [Study of Mature Student Participation in Higher education: what are the challenges? Recommendations for the future.](#) Prepared for the HEA. P28.

⁷⁶ IHREC (2019) [Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#): Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Ireland’s Combined 5th to 9th Report. P.78

⁷⁷ McGinnity, F. et al. (2017). Op Cit. Piv. [ESRI and IHREC.](#)

⁷⁸ IHREC (2017). [Submission to the Citizens Assembly on: How we respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population.](#) P5

⁷⁹ Department of Health (2013). Op Cit. P22.

⁸⁰ Ibid. P12.

⁸¹ Ibid.P38

- Children and young people need to have a voice in decisions made in their local communities, in their schools and in the wider formal and non-formal education system.⁸²

Identity

- Children and young people experience a number of key developmental transitions in their journey from childhood to adulthood which give rise to diverse needs and requirements.
- Children and young people with diverse identities: those with a disability, those with a minority ethnic identity, migrants whose first language is not English, LGBT people, and those living in or at risk of poverty, need age appropriate information and supports to fully participate in society.⁸³
- The population aged 65 years and over increased by 19% between 2011 and 2016.⁸⁴
- As we age, we may acquire a disability or develop a physical or mental health issue that results in requiring specific supports to fully participate in society, and older people who are also socially excluded, marginalised and/ vulnerable, may have additional needs in this regard.⁸⁵
- The needs of more marginalised, vulnerable, hard- to-reach and minority groups of older people need attention, such as: the frail and the oldest old (aged 80 years and over); people living in rural areas; persons with impaired mental capacity or dementia and those who care for them; older migrants and people from different ethnic backgrounds; older people with specific physical and intellectual disabilities; Travellers; and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older people.⁸⁶

E. Race Ground (including- skin colour, ethnicity, and nationality) and Religion Ground

Situation

- 2021 research on race inequality in HEIs (respondents were staff of HEIs) found the following:
 - When asked if race inequality exists in HE, respondents were more inclined to agree than disagree. 48% of all survey respondents agreed with the statement, however, 32% disagreed.

⁸² Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014, p.31

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ CSO. 2016.

⁸⁵ Department of Health (2013).Op Cit.P13.

⁸⁶ Ibid. P13.

- Respondents noted: low ethnic diversity in HEIs; inequality in student access; issues such as prejudice, unconscious bias and microaggressions observed; invisibility of ethnic minorities within staff body and higher grade posts; and curriculum design centred on works of White scholar.
 - 45% of survey respondents agreed that they work in an ethnically diverse institution, while 47% disagreed. Most respondents reported that their current institutions lacked ethnic diversity, particularly at the leadership and management level.
 - Ethnic minority and White other respondents described feeling that they don't have as many opportunities for career progression as their White Irish counterparts.
 - Intersectionality was another issue raised by people coming from both ethnic minority and White Irish backgrounds, with gender being seen as a further obstacle to promotion/career progression.⁸⁷
- The 'Black non-Irish' group is much less likely to be employed than 'White Irish' (0.4 times as likely) and when individuals from this group do have a job, they are also much less likely (0.3 times as likely) to hold a managerial/professional job than White Irish. The 'Asian non-Irish' group does not differ from White Irish in terms of their overall employment rates but they are less likely to be in the top jobs (0.5 times as likely)⁸⁸.
 - The employment rate of 'African nationals' is 45%, compared to an average of 70% for other minority national groups. The employment rate of African women is 38%, 17% below the average female employment rate in Ireland. The recognition of qualifications acquired abroad (for 'African nationals' is also an issue: difficulties in obtaining recognition, in Ireland, of qualifications acquired abroad can give rise to situations of under-employment and over-qualification.⁸⁹
 - Research with refugees and people seeking asylum in Ireland found the following:
 - only about one-third of respondents with a university qualification from their country of origin were successful in getting their qualification recognised in Ireland.
 - refugees and international protection applicants usually do not have financial means for full participation in society - finances were cited by 66% of survey applicants as a major barrier to accessing education,
 - respondents unanimously described the extreme difficulties that they encountered in their bid to progress their education and rebuild their lives: being quoted

⁸⁷ Kempny M. & Michael L., (2021). Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector. Higher Education Authority.PP.15,17,48,49, 50,60.

⁸⁸ McGinnity F., Grotti R., Groarke S., & Coughlan S. (2018). [Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market](#), ESRI and IHREC. PP.x-xi

⁸⁹ IHREC (2019). Op cit. PP.72 and 73.

international college fees despite receiving a meagre weekly allowance and living in a Direct Provision hostel; not being able to access food or transport while attending college; not being able to get prior education and qualifications recognised; and not being able to access student grants or support schemes due to not having the required residency permissions were frequently cited, and people became visibly upset while speaking of the toll this effort took on their physical and mental health,

- Participants highlighted a dearth of information as one of the major barriers that they faced in accessing education.⁹⁰
- Research on inclusion in NUI Galway found that 15% of students did not feel their learning experience was inclusive. For student respondents with a minority ethnic status, in the latter group, were more likely to identify other students (13%) rather than teaching staff (3%) as being exclusionary.⁹¹
- Minority ethnic groups are often confronted with issues in the workplace such as precarious contracts, a lack of progression, unequal treatment, and exploitation.⁹²
- A national needs assessment of Roma in Ireland found the following:
 - only 16.7% of Roma adult respondents were in employment,
 - many Roma are living in extreme poverty in Ireland: about 10% of respondents did not have basic necessities in their accommodation, including a fridge, cooker, or kitchen; over half of all respondents reported that someone in the household has gone to bed hungry; and 66.3% were unable to afford to keep their home warm all of the time.
 - 71.2% of respondents reported that they have difficulty reading English forms and 66% said they had difficulty filling in English forms. In 84% of households respondents received help reading and writing in English.
 - 37.8% of Roma adults in households had never been to school. This was particularly marked for women with 41.1% of women having never been to school, while 22% of men had never been to school.

⁹⁰ Meaney Sartori S. & Nwanze L. (2021). A Community Needs Analysis with Refugees and People Seeking Asylum: Exploring access and barriers to higher education in Ireland, College Connect and Refugee Council. PP13, 61, 69 and 89.

⁹¹ Wijeratne, D. et al. (2021). Op cit. P20.

⁹² IHREC (2019). Op cit. P.77

- In 9.5% of Roma households there was someone attending a training course. The figures for education completed by respondents and adults across households show that almost 40% have never been to school.⁹³
- An ethnic pay gap in Irish HEIs is apparent in most higher pay categories. While 38% of White Irish and 49% of White Other (across all roles) earn below €60,000, 66% of respondents from minority ethnic groups are in this category. The percentage of people who earn over €75,000 is the lowest among minority ethnic groups (17%) as compared to 38% of White Irish, and 25% of White Other respondents.⁹⁴
- Consistent poverty rate in Ireland disproportionately affects children from Traveller, Roma, and refugee backgrounds. Consistent poverty rate for people who do not identify as being an Irish citizen or national is significantly higher than the general population (12.7% compared to 8.2% respectively). In 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 22.6% for people whose nationality is other than Irish and 42% for those from outside the EU, compared to 15.7% for 'Irish nationals'.⁹⁵
- Undocumented migrants' lack of legal status acts as a barrier to pursuing third-level education, as they are often ineligible for the HEA Free Fees initiative.⁹⁶
- The Direct Provision system inhibits participation in society through: the denial of the right to work; the provision of an insufficient weekly allowance; barriers to the pursuit of meaningful further education opportunities; and rural isolation (many of the 39 direct provision centres are based in rural areas).⁹⁷

Experience

- More than a third (35%) of HEI staff from minority ethnic groups who responded to a national HEA survey have been subject to racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of their work, compared to 16% of White Other respondents and 3% of White Irish respondents.⁹⁸

⁹³ Pavee Point & Department of Justice and Equality (2018). [Roma in Ireland: A national needs assessment](#). PP.62, 69, 70 and 75

⁹⁴ Kempny M. & Michael L. (2021). Op Cit. P.11

⁹⁵ IHREC (2019). Op cit. P.78

⁹⁶ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (January 2017). [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](#).

⁹⁷ IHREC (2019). Op cit.

⁹⁸ Kempny M. & Michael L. (2021). Op Cit. P.33

- HEI members of staff with a minority ethnic identity experienced discrimination in regard to promotion and career opportunities and over a quarter of respondents (27%) believed that if they report discrimination, no appropriate action would be taken.⁹⁹
- ‘Black non-Irish’ people are five times as likely as ‘White Irish’ to experience discrimination seeking work and 2.7 times as likely to experience discrimination in the workplace. The ‘Black Irish’ group are twice as likely to experience discrimination seeking work and 3.4 times as likely to experience discrimination in the workplace as ‘White Irish’. ‘Asian Irish’ do not differ from ‘White Irish’ in their experience of discrimination seeking work but are 1.9 times as likely to experience discrimination in the workplace than White Irish.¹⁰⁰
- Compared to those whose religion is Catholics, members of minority religions report higher discrimination rates in the workplace (11% vs 4.8%).¹⁰¹
- HEI staff from minority ethnic groups were much more likely to say that they often saw or heard incidents of racist abuse or harassment (8%, as compared with 2% of White Irish and 3% of White Other).¹⁰²
- HEI staff from minority ethnic groups (15%) and White Other respondents (13%) were much more likely than White Irish (5%) to report in this survey that they had been subjected to stereotyping at their workplace in relation to race and/or ethnic background. A third of staff from minority ethnic groups (34%) reported that they had their contributions minimised at work based on race and/or ethnic background, compared to 14% of White Other, and 4% of White Irish. Staff from minority ethnic groups and White Other were more likely to slightly agree or agree that they had been made to feel the way they speak was inferior based on race and/or ethnic background (20% from minority ethnic groups, 16% of White Other, versus 3% of White Irish). 11% of staff from minority ethnic groups have experienced not being taken seriously at work based on race and/or ethnic background, compared to 1% of White Irish and 6% of White Other.¹⁰³
- Racially loaded discourse online in Ireland, ranges from ‘crude’ to ‘coded’ forms of speech, as well as a broader and more generalised acceptance of ‘banal’ or ‘casual’ racialised discourse.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ibid. PP.34 and 35.

¹⁰⁰ McGinnity F., Grotti R., Groarke S., & Coughlan S. (2018). Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market, ESRI and IHREC. PP.x-xi

¹⁰¹ McGinnity, F. et al. (2017). Op Cit. P.25.

¹⁰² Kempny M. & Michael L. (2021) Op Cit. P37.

¹⁰³ Ibid. PP.42-43

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. P47

- 78.9% of Roma adults living in Ireland reported feeling discriminated against in getting hired or getting a job. 81.1% reported having experienced discrimination in a street or public setting - through verbal abuse and racist taunts. 74% reported feeling discriminated against in shops, restaurants, pubs and other social venues, and many spoke about having had to hide their Roma identity to protect themselves against racism and discrimination.¹⁰⁵
- Research with refugees and those seeking asylum in Ireland found that respondents felt stigmatised because of their religion, race, background, or refugee status. Many also reported feeling shame and discomfort when out and about in public and consequently tried as much as possible to conceal their identity. A key finding from the research was in relation to the stigmatisation of refugees and protection applicants, which can manifest as internalised oppression, or as a feeling of having one's identity 'deconstructed' and replaced with that of a 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker'. Conversations with the Syrian community, who partook in this research, indicated a fear of becoming involved in Irish society as a result of Islamophobia, and a lack of awareness at all levels of Irish society about Arabic culture. Microaggressions can range from seemingly innocent, yet highly loaded questions, to aggressive comments and demands, that over time can chip away at the person on the receiving end of what can feel like a continuous onslaught of commentary, othering, and vocalised prejudices.¹⁰⁶
- Just under half of adults born in Ireland believe some cultures to be superior to others, and 17% believes that some races/ethnic groups were born less intelligent. In regard to ideas about racial superiority, Ireland ranked higher when compared to 10 other western EU countries surveyed.¹⁰⁷
- Research indicates that negative attitudes towards immigrants is found to increase based on the cultural and ethnic identity of migrants, rather than the scale of immigration per se.¹⁰⁸
- Discrimination-related differences between religious groups, in terms of accessing public and private services, are more pronounced regarding public services than private services. Compared to Catholics, those whose religion is 'Other' are 1.8 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination in public services like health, education and other public services. "This may be related to the prominent role the Catholic Church has played in many public services."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Pavee Point & Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op Cit. PP51 and 55.

¹⁰⁶ Meaney Sartori S. & Nwanze L. (2021). Op Cit. PP14, 76 and 79.

¹⁰⁷ McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Russell, H., and Fahey, E. (March 2018). [Attitudes to Diversity in Ireland](#), The ESRI and IHREC. Pviii.

¹⁰⁸ Heath, A. and Richards, L. (2016). Attitudes towards immigration and their Antecedents. Topline Results from Round 7 of the European Social Survey. London: ESS.

¹⁰⁹ McGinnity, F. et al (2017). Op cit.

Identity

- HEI staff data collection instruments do not collect information on ethnicity as standard.¹¹⁰
- 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 services, including education, which should be considered by employers and service providers. Such needs may include, for example: language and interpretation needs; 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; availability of prayer room/space.
- There is a need for cultural norms to be recognised and understood by all service providers, including: language barriers with need for information on services and on rights to be provided in language appropriate forms; mechanisms to provide adequate interpreting facilities to enable access to services; and need for ESOL classes and follow-on programmes for language acquisition.¹¹¹
- Irish residents with non-EU nationality had varied religions - 14.4% of males and 9.6% of females described themselves as Muslim while around an eighth stated they had no religion, (12.4% of males and 13.7% of females).¹¹²

F. Traveller Community Ground

Situation

- In 2016, the unemployment rate for Travellers was 80.2%, compared to 12.9% for the general population. Census 2016 also highlighted that only 10.1% of Traveller women and 12.6% of Traveller men list their principal economic status as 'at work'.¹¹³
- Levels of unemployment, poor health, disability, low educational attainment, inadequate housing, and premature mortality among the Traveller population, suggest that they are also exposed to distinctively high levels of poverty and deprivation.¹¹⁴
- Travellers are much less likely, than non-Travellers, to have completed education to Leaving Certificate level: only 8% have done so, compared to 73% of non-Travellers. Only 1% of

¹¹⁰ Kempny M. & Michael L. (2021) Op Cit. P15

¹¹¹ [Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future](#), Department of Justice and Equality, 2017. PP41, 23-26.

¹¹² [CSO Women and Men in Ireland 2016](#), Table 3.14

¹¹³ CSO, Census of Population 2016 – Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion.

¹¹⁴ Watson D., Kenny O., & McGinnity F. (2017). A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland, ESRI. P.3

Travellers aged 25–64 years have a college degree compared to 30% of non-Travellers. Travellers are more likely to have left school at an early age, with 28% of Travellers over 25 years having left before the age of 13, compared to only 1% of non-Travellers.¹¹⁵

- The number of Irish Traveller women who recorded their principal economic status as looking after the home and family in Census 2011 was nearly twice the rate of the general population, at 33% compared to 17.5%.¹¹⁶
- The participation of the Traveller community in further and third-level education remains comparatively low; 167 Travellers held a third-level qualification in 2016, up from 89 in 2011.¹¹⁷

Experience

- Travellers are almost ten times more likely than ‘White Irish respondents, to experience discrimination in seeking work.¹¹⁸
- Research on the employment pathways of Travellers in employment found the following:
 - Travellers in employment report experiencing microaggressions from other employees and some report that they have hidden their Traveller identity in work, in order to avoid harassment and racism.
 - Travellers seeking employment (including seeking a placement necessary to access certain third-level courses) lack the family/ work/college/community networks that settled people have access to, to secure potential employment opportunities.
 - Traveller students who feel it necessary to hide their ethnic identity in accessing/participating in third level education, can consequently miss out on potential supports that could be offered, for example, through the Access programme.¹¹⁹
- In research carried out with the general population in 2017, 35% of respondents stated that they would avoid a member of the Traveller community.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Ibid. PP. vii-viii.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. P.7

¹¹⁷ IHREC. (2019). Op Cit. P.68

¹¹⁸ Ibid. P.71

¹¹⁹ Mullen, R., Kelly, B., and Crowley, N., (2021). [Mincéir Misl’er a Tom Tober – Travellers in the Mainstream Labour Market: Situation, Experience and Identity](#). St Stephens Green Trust, Dublin.

¹²⁰ IHREC. (2019). Op Cit. P.38

- Over 40% of Travellers stated that they were not always treated with dignity and respect. Traveller children are significantly more likely to be bullied at school.¹²¹
- Irish Travellers are ten times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination when seeking work, and 22 times more likely to report discrimination in accessing services, particularly in shops, pubs and restaurants.¹²²

Identity

- Higher education staff data collection instruments used by Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) do not collect information on ethnicity as standard.¹²³
- Research indicates that Travellers do not always feel free to be truly themselves, in school/college and the workplace, as they may feel compelled to hide their Traveller ethnicity to avoid harassment, racism and discrimination.¹²⁴
- The importance of family and kinship in Traveller culture, mean that Travellers in employment appreciate employers that have good family-friendly workplace policies.¹²⁵
- Recognition of the distinct heritage, culture and identity of Traveller and Roma communities is important to overcoming marginalization and discrimination.¹²⁶

G. Sexual Orientation Ground

Situation

- 40% LGBTI+ students who experience frequent verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation missed school in the previous month. 73% of LGBTI+ students felt unsafe at school: 47% because of their sexual orientation and 27% because of their gender expression; and LGBTI+ students avoid certain spaces and activities due to safety concerns.¹²⁷
- “a lifetime history of self-harm was reported by a third (34%) of LGBT participants, in a national study, which represents an increase on the 27% previously reported in the LGBT

¹²¹ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021, Department of Justice and Equality, 2017, pp.11-12

¹²² McGinnity, F. et al. (2017). Op Cit. P.iv_

¹²³ Kempny M. & Michael L., Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector, Higher Education Authority, 2021, p.15

¹²⁴ Mullen, R., et al. (2021). Op cit.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#), Department of Justice and Equality, 2017.P6.

¹²⁷ BelongTo (2019). [The 2019 School Climate Survey](#): the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people in Ireland’s schools. BelongTo Youth Services & Teachers College, Columbia University. P.7.

population in Ireland (Mayock et al. 2009). Nearly half of these (45.6%) reported that they had self-harmed within the past year, with nearly 60% relating their self-harm to their LGBTI identity and their struggle to be accepted by others and society.”¹²⁸

- Research on inclusion in NUI Galway found that 15% of students did not feel their learning experience was inclusive. LGBT respondents, in the latter group, were as likely to identify other students (7%) and teaching staff (7%) as being exclusionary.¹²⁹

Experience

- 68% of LGBTI+ students hear homophobic remarks from other students, with these comments bothering and distressing over 50% of LGBTI+ students. Nearly 50% of LGBTI+ students hear negative remarks about trans people. 48% of LGBTI+ students reported hearing a homophobic remark from a teacher or staff member. 55% of LGBTI+ students reported hearing a transphobic remark from a teacher or staff member.¹³⁰
- 86% of LGBTI+ students feel deliberately excluded by peers with 74% experiencing being the focus of rumours or lies. 77% of LGBTI+ students are verbally harassed based on their sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or ethnic origin. 38% of LGBTI+ students are physically harassed, 25% because of their sexual orientation and 18% based on gender expression. 11% of LGBTI+ students are physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation, 8% because of their gender expression. 43% of LGBTI+ students are sexually harassed. 39% of LGBTI+ students experience cyberbullying.¹³¹
- While 84.8% of LGBTI+ respondents in a national survey said they had not experienced identity-based bullying in college or university, the remaining 15.2% had, and 25% had witnessed bullying of other LGBTI people within their college or university. A further 6.7% indicated that they had missed or skipped college classes or events to avoid negative treatment due to being LGBTI. Transgender (23.6%) and intersex (23.8%) participants were significantly more likely to have experienced LGBTI bullying compared to lesbian females (15%), gay males (14.7%) and bisexual participants (10.4%).¹³²
- 17% of the LGBTI+ respondents in a national survey had experienced LGBTI bullying and 21% had witnessed LGBTI bullying in their workplace. Just over 6% of reported that they missed or skipped work to avoid receiving negative treatment due to being LGBTI. Intersex (35.7%) and transgender (24%) participants were significantly more likely to have experienced LGBTI bullying in work, compared to gay male (18.6%), lesbian female (16%)

¹²⁸ [The LBGTIreland Report: national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland](#), GLEN, BeLonGTo, TCD, HSE, 2016, p.23

¹²⁹ Wijeratne, D. et al. (2021). Op cit. P20.

¹³⁰ BeLonGTo (2019). Op Cit. P6.

¹³¹ Ibid. P6.

¹³² GLEN, BeLonGTo, TCD, HSE. (2016). Op Cit. PP154-155

and bisexual (9%) participants. Intersex participants (44%) reported the highest level of having witnessed LGBTI bullying followed by gay male (23%), bisexual (22.5%), trans- gender (19%) and lesbian female (18%) participants.¹³³

Identity

- 68% of LGBTI+ students say they were not taught anything positive about LGBTI+ identities in school.¹³⁴
- Irish LGBTI+ young people are often forgotten in wider societal efforts to promote equality for LGBTI+ adults and as such, they feel they are left to ‘bide their time’ until they can leave school and be their most authentic selves.¹³⁵
- LGBT people, in particular transgender people, experience difficulties in coming out in the workplace.¹³⁶

H. Socio-Economic Status Ground

Situation

- About one in eight young men and women were neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET rate) in Ireland in 2018. The NEET rate for men aged 18-24 was 12.5% while the rate for women was 12.7%.¹³⁷
- Employment contracts with unspecified hours of work (commonly referred to as ‘zero hour’ contracts) have become a feature of work for many individuals without a permanent or fixed-term work contract, leading to insecurity of income and uncertain employment situations for many employees working under these conditions.¹³⁸
- 2011 data indicates that participation of 18-20 year olds in higher education from the ‘semi-skilled and unskilled’ socio-economic groups was 26%, while there was practically full participation by those from the higher professional socio-economic group. Also, data from Co. Dublin indicated HE participation rates of 84% and 99% respectively for two of the most

¹³³ Ibid. PP168-169.

¹³⁴ BelongTo (2019). Op Cit. P9.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018-2020. Op Cit. P8.

¹³⁷ CSO [Women and Men in Ireland](#) 2019.

¹³⁸ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (May 2015). [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Report, Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#). Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.P14.

affluent post code areas (D4 and D6) to a low of 16% and 15% respectively, for two of the most socio-economically disadvantaged post code areas (D10 and D17).¹³⁹

- Research on the impact of living in emergency homeless accommodation, on children’s education, found that the challenges children experienced in fully accessing education extended beyond attainment, punctuality, homework completion and regular school attendance, to encompass a range of needs that impacted on children’s ability to fully engage in learning, including: getting sufficient rest; access to an adequate diet; and children’s sense of security, belonging, achievement and self-esteem within the educational context.¹⁴⁰
- A review of the research evidence on how COVID-19 is affecting the education and well-being of children and young people from different social groups, found the following: affluent parents and parents with higher levels of educational attainment are more advantaged (in terms of access to resources, confidence to home school etc.) to address educational gaps for their children arising from school closures during the pandemic; children of parents with lower levels of educational attainment were “significantly less likely” to report that they had received educational resources from their teacher or using educational apps and TV hubs; teachers reported difficulties with remote teaching and supports for children with additional educational needs; teachers in the most disadvantaged schools were twice as likely, as teachers from advantaged schools, to report that their students were submitting work of a “much lower quality” than before; and children from disadvantaged backgrounds missed out on key resources, such as free meals, and access to extra-curricular and recreational facilities, due to school closures.¹⁴¹
- Economic deprivation and disadvantage impacts on the physical, mental and emotional health of children and adults, and negatively impacts on their life chances across many domains, including education and employment.¹⁴²
- Research on the experiences of young families who are homeless found that their unstable housing situation interrupted or delayed their engagement with education and/or

¹³⁹ HEA [National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019](#). PP14 and 44.

¹⁴⁰ Scanlon, G., and McKenna, G., (2018). [Home Works: A study of the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation](#). Children’s Rights Alliance, Dublin.P25.

¹⁴¹ Darmody, M., Smyth, E., and Russell, H. (2021). [Impacts of COVID-19 Measures on Widening Educational Inequalities](#). Sage Publications.

¹⁴² Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (May 2015). [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Report, Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#). Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

employment, which creates a vicious circle in reducing their opportunities to exit homelessness.¹⁴³

- A study of the barriers to HE for current and former prisoners, identifies the following:
 - The majority of all people in custody, in Ireland, have never sat a state exam and over half left school by the age of 15. 4 in 10 children (under 16 years) in custody have a learning disability.
 - Participants in the study had “overwhelmingly negative” experiences of formal education, mainly due to negative treatment (by teachers) on the basis of their social background.
 - Garda vetting procedures acted as a “serious discourager” to participants applying for/ taking up certain courses, and in seeking employment.
 - Lack of addiction supports including addiction counsellors, support meetings, were identified by the majority of participants as barriers to progression in higher education.¹⁴⁴
- A study by NUI Galway found that lack of affordable accommodation was a very significant problem for international students, many of whom, with a minority ethnic identity, also experienced racial discrimination in the private rental sector.¹⁴⁵

Experience

- A 2018 Internet based survey of 1,100 Irish girls aged 12-19 years, undertaken by Plan International, found that approximately 50% of girls surveyed reported occasionally experiencing period poverty, with 10% using unsuitable products as a result of cost barriers.¹⁴⁶
- 1 in 5 unemployed people said they had experienced discrimination while looking for work, and 17% said they had experienced discrimination in accessing services, in the previous two years.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Lambert, S., O’Callaghan, D., and Jump, O. (2021). [Young Families in the Homeless Crisis: Challenges and Solutions](#). Focus Ireland.

¹⁴⁴ Meaney, S., (2019). Community Needs Analysis with the Pathways Centre for Prisoners and Former Prisoners: a pilot study as part of College Connect. College Connect, Maynooth University. PP 8, 37.

¹⁴⁵ Wijeratne, D. et al. (2021). Op cit. P6.

¹⁴⁶ Government of Ireland (2021). Period poverty in Ireland: a discussion paper- period poverty sub-committee, National Strategy for Women and Girls.

¹⁴⁷ Central Statistics Office. (July 2019). [Equality and Discrimination 2019](#).

- A study of current and former prisoners found that “discrimination and stigma” by schools and authorities, on the basis of the social background of participants, negatively impacted their self-perception and identity. However, for those who returned to education, the experience was often transformative, resulting in feelings of empowerment and positive changes to their self-perception.¹⁴⁸
- Research on the experiences of young families who are homeless found that their unstable housing situation interrupted or delayed their engagement with education and/or employment, which creates a vicious circle in reducing their opportunities to exit homelessness.¹⁴⁹

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 for: Travellers; minority ethnic migrants; refugees and those seeking asylum; Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups; disabled people; women; transgender people; and lone parents.

¹⁴⁸ Meaney, S. (2019). Op Cit.P8.

¹⁴⁹ Lambert, S., O’Callaghan, D., and Jump, O. (2021). [Young Families in the Homeless Crisis: Challenges and Solutions](#). Focus Ireland.P9.