Fostering Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

Bank of Ireland

Table of contents

Table of contents

Table of contents

Table of contents

Research background, Bank of Ireland

> " We are committed to creating a workplace that is welcoming to all and where all can thrive because this is important for customers, colleagues, and the company as a whole. As an employer, the bank aims to mirror the diversity of wider society. To help achieve this, it has pioneered multiple initiatives such as exploring ethnicity bias using virtual reality, mandatory inclusive hiring training for hiring managers, 'Inclusive Dialogue' listening sessions with ethnically diverse colleagues, and talent acceleration programmes. The Bank monitors hiring and now recruits ethnic minorities on a basis representative of society, while its multicultural colleague network advocates for inclusion through cultural and religious celebrations. Taken together, the impact of these initiatives include higher engagement scores among colleagues from different ethnicities. To help monitor and maintain progress, a Race Action Taskforce has been mobilised. Its commitment extends to societal impact, including commissioning this research to identify and remove barriers to work. "

Matt Elliott, Chief People Officer, Bank of Ireland

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Ireland can now be described as a multicultural country. Currently, 23% of Ireland's population consists of individuals from background other than white Irish backgrounds and 20% of Irish residents were born abroad[1]. This shift has been driven by the significant wave of immigration during the Celtic Tiger years, where the rapid expansion of Ireland's economy attracted talent from all over the world. From 1995 to 2007, immigration to Ireland surged by over 384%, peaking at 151,100 immigrants in 2007, the year before the economic downturn. This remains the highest level of immigration on record and has continued to influence the country's demographic landscape.

23%

of Ireland's population consists of individuals from backgrounds other than white Irish.

20%

of Irish residents were born abroad.

At a societal level, this growth in population and associated diversity in ethnicity are known to be key enablers of Ireland's economic growth. The National Development Plan (NDP)[2] and related government policies emphasise the need for skilled workers in key sectors such as healthcare, IT, and construction. Immigration will continue to play a crucial role in filling these gaps[3]. While upskilling the domestic workforce remains a priority, Ireland's economic migration policy acknowledges that foreign talent is critical in sustaining the country's growth and innovation, particularly in high-value industries.

Today, Ireland's immigrant population is largely made up of working-age individuals. Recent data shows that 52% of immigrants in 2024 were aged 25-44, and an additional 17% were between 15-24 years old[4]. The primary drivers for migration include employment opportunities and the pursuit of higher education, reflecting Ireland's growing appeal to young professionals and students alike. However, despite the economic opportunities, our findings reveal critical gaps in how Ireland's workplaces reflect the ethnic diversity of its society.

Ethnic minorities in Ireland continue to face barriers in accessing employment and career progression. Data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows us that Ireland's migrant population is notably younger than their White Irish counterparts and highly qualified. Despite these advantages, unemployment rates remain significantly higher for ethnic minority groups compared to White Irish individuals. For instance, unemployment rates for individuals from a Black or Black Irish-African background or an Arab background stood at 10% in 2022, considerably higher than the 4.3% unemployment rate for White Irish individuals which also mirrors the national unemployment rate as at September 2024. Similarly, individuals from the Traveller and Roma communities still face extreme employment difficulties, with the highest unemployment rates of all groups, of 26% and 12% respectively[5].

Findings from this research highlight that many ethnic minority individuals feel forced to 'hide' aspects of their identity, whether through omitting personal information from job applications or hiding their ethnicity in the workplace. Many ethnic minority professionals report feeling overlooked or underappreciated, with some expressing that their employers appear more focused on favouring White Irish professionals or meeting diversity quotas than on fostering genuine inclusivity.

This raises important questions about potential systemic bias in hiring practices and workplace inclusion. Does being of a background other than white Irish background disadvantage individuals in the Irish job market? Understanding the barriers they encounter— whether related to ethnicity or not - is essential in identifying challenges to securing employment and career progression. Can these barriers be overcome and what support systems are necessary to address them?

> Unemployment rates are significantly higher for ethnic minority groups, and inidividuals can feel forced to 'hide' aspects of their identity.

[1] Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022. [2] Government of Ireland. (2021). National Development Plan 2021-2030. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
[3] ESRI. (2024). The National Development Plan in 2023: Priorities and capacity (Survey and Statistical Report Series No. 123). [4] Central Statistics Office (2024). Population and Migration Estimates, April 2024. [5] Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

Executive Summary

Data collected through this study shows that 59% of ethnic minority immigrants to Ireland face difficulties finding employment, compared to 48% of those born in Ireland, indicating that locally born individuals have easier access to jobs. This leads us to think that some barriers to employment are linked to the immigration status of some individuals whereas others are related to discrimination based on ethnicity. The issue of employment permits, for instance, often deters employers from hiring non-EU nationals immigrating to Ireland due to concerns over processing delays. Meanwhile, international students—who are eligible to work post-graduation—remain underutilised in the labour market. This untapped potential represents a missed opportunity for both employers and the Irish economy.

Promoting ethnic diversity and inclusion in the workplace isn't just about fairness—it's also good for business. Diverse teams are proven to bring a wealth of perspectives, enhancing problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. Companies with diverse workforces enjoy higher employee engagement and retention rates, a broader customer base, and a stronger reputation in the market. Moreover, employers with inclusive practices are better positioned to meet Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, which are becoming increasingly important to investors and stakeholders.

The goal of this report is to shed light on the challenges ethnic minority individuals face in accessing and advancing within Ireland's labour market and to develop concrete recommendations for stakeholders, particularly employers nationwide, to help overcome these barriers. It draws on the experiences of over 2,700 individuals from diverse

2,700 individuals views and **14** checklist items to support organisations.

View findings on page 98.

ethnic backgrounds, as well as input from advocacy groups, community organisations, and employers.

For Ireland to remain competitive in the global market and continue its economic growth, fostering a workforce that truly reflects its diversity is essential. Employers that prioritise diversity and inclusivity not only enhance their internal culture but also make meaningful contributions to the broader social and economic landscape of the country. This research report delivers recommendations for employers which are actionable and research-driven and should enable them to foster ethnic diversity and inclusion within their own workplaces. It goes further than just identifying the barriers faced by ethnic minorities in the workplace, instead offering concrete strategies that organisations can implement to foster a more inclusive environment.

Main findings

Main findings

17% of Ireland's population identifies as an ethnic minority background[6].

Growth in diversity of Ireland's population

- **17%** of Ireland's population identifies as an ethnic minority background[6].
- Over **1 in 3** individuals from a Black or Black Irish - African and almost **1 in 4** from an Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background were born in Ireland[7].
- Over **1 in 2** individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background, Any other Mixed Background and Black or Black Irish - African background hold Irish citizenship[8].
- The individuals least likely to pursue Irish citizenship are those of an 'Any other White background' and a 'Roma' background, as a large proportion hold other EU nationalities, granting them similar rights to Irish citizens, particularly regarding employment and freedom of movement within the EU.
- The lack of recognition of dual citizenship from certain countries makes acquiring Irish citizenship a more complex choice for individuals from other ethnic backgrounds.
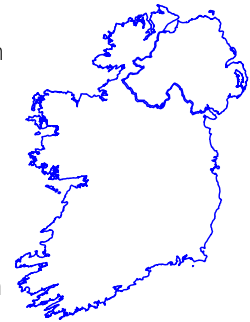
Integration of ethnic minorities into employment

- Except for White Irish Travellers, all other ethnic minority groups have a higher proportion of persons at working age (between 15 and 65 years old) than White Irish[9].
- All ethnic minority groups have higher proportions of unemployed persons than White Irish, with the highest unemployment levels observed for individuals from White Irish Traveller backgrounds, Roma backgrounds and Arab backgrounds.
- Despite these differences, unemployment among ethnic minority groups has decreased between the census of 2016 and that of 2022. For example, the unemployment rate of persons from a Black or Black Irish - African background went from **20%** in 2016 to **10%** in 2022 and this of Travellers went from **46%** in 2016 to **27%** in 2022[10].
- 39% of persons working in Accommodation and food services in Ireland and 36% of persons working in ICT activities are from ethnic minority backgrounds[11].
- Over **1 in 7** individuals from an Arab or an Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background work in ICT[12].
- **1 in 3** individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background work in Healthcare[13].

Drivers of Immigration to Ireland

- **1 in 2** respondents to the survey from an ethnic minority background came to Ireland to work or study.
- More than **1 in 5** respondents to the survey came to Ireland in the pursuit of a better quality of life or in order to leave behind instability or conflict in their home country.
- **42%** of respondents to the survey listed the 'People' in Ireland as one of the top 3 factors that they like about the country.

More than **1 in 5** respondents to the survey came to Ireland in the pursuit of a better quality of life or in order to leave behind instability or conflict in their home country.

---

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.   10 Central Statistics Office (2016). Census 2016.

Main findings

Barriers to employment for ethnic minorities

- Our survey shows that **59%** of ethnic minority immigrants to Ireland face difficulties finding employment, compared to **48%** of those born in Ireland, indicating that locally born individuals have easier access to jobs.
- 1 in 2 individuals from ethnic minority groups have difficulties identifying a job that matches their experience and qualifications according to the research findings.
- White Irish respondents were nearly three times more likely to utilise their networks when seeking employment compared to ethnic minority groups.
- Individuals of Arab background are the most likely to receive no response after submitting a job application, with **88%** reporting this outcome.
- Respondents from a Roma background are the most likely to be unsuccessful beyond the interview stage with **67%** citing they were unable to progress further in the application process.
- Individuals from a Chinese background are almost 4 times more likely to hold a Managerial position than individuals from a Black or Black Irish - African Background[14].

Experiences with discrimination

- Respondents from a Black or Black Irish - African background and a White Irish Traveller background were twice as likely to have experienced discrimination in Ireland than individuals from other ethnic backgrounds.
- According to our survey findings, respondents from an Arab background are the most likely to experience discrimination based on their name, with one in two reporting it as a common reason for discrimination.
- Among all ethnic minority groups, individuals from an Arab background were the most likely to experience religious discrimination, with **60%** of those who reported discrimination attributing it to their religion.
- Although research participants recognised that the Workplace Relations Commission offers resources to address workplace discrimination, there appears to be a reluctance to file complaints about unlawful employer practices. This hesitation is primarily driven by fear of retaliation or knowing others who have experienced such repercussions, such as the potential loss of their current job.
- More than **1 in 2** individuals from the Black or Black Irish - African group and the White Irish Traveller community think that their ethnic background is a barrier to accessing employment, this compares to **1 in 5** for the Any other White background.

> More than **1 in 2** individuals from the Black or Black Irish - African group and the White Irish Traveller community think that their ethnic background is a barrier to accessing employment, this compares to **1 in 5** for the Any other White background

- Findings from this research show that there is a general feeling that employers in the country prefer to hire or promote Irish professionals, despite the fact that they 'might be less qualified' or have less experience than professionals from an ethnic minority background.
- Due in part to ethnic-related barriers in accessing jobs they feel qualified for, many participants from ethnic minority backgrounds reported being compelled to accept lower-skilled and lower-paid positions than their qualifications justify.
- The cohort of respondents who expressed the highest levels of difficulties finding a job in Ireland are the respondents who have a Postgraduate or Master's degree, with **63%** of these individuals reporting experiencing difficulties securing employment in Ireland.

This report sets out to identify main issues for ethnic minority groups as well as providing pathways for employers to identify the main issues.

---

[14] Central Statistics Office. Census 2022

Economic Context

Economic Context

Ireland's economic performance has beaten all expectations over the past five years. Employment is 2.8 million, up 17% since the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic.
The government has enjoyed a budget surplus benefitting from buoyant tax revenues, from the multinational sector, but also reflecting the broad based expansion amongst indigenous firms.

Part of this success has reflected Ireland's openness to immigration, crucial as a small European economy, to help alleviate labour shortages. Remarkably, of the 225,000 jobs created over the past three years, 60% were accounted for by non-Irish nationals.

Accommodation and food services, information and communications technology and manufacturing or three sectors where employment of non-Irish nationals accounts for a higher share than in aggregate employment. Furthermore, 70% of inward migrants have achieved 3rd level education, bringing much needed skills to the economy. Inevitably, rapid economic expansion and population growth has placed greater strain on Ireland's supply capacity. The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) has estimated Ireland's stock of infrastructure, per person, is now 25% below comparable high income countries and requiring investment in the electricity grid, housing, health and transport.
Hence, the Irish government has planned public investment will rise to 5% of gross national income, via the National Development Plan (NDP). This is on top of ambitious climate change targets, that could require investment of 2-3% of gross national income.

Bottlenecks are also now evident in the labour market. The unemployment rate fell to 3.9% in February 2025, its lowest level since the turn of the millennium. Also, pay growth accelerated to 5.6% at end-2024, again the sharpest pace since the mid-2000s.

Ireland still enjoys a strong natural flow of skill workers via its favourable demographics. Hence, the Central Bank of Ireland estimates Ireland's longer-term structural growth of GNI* is still relatively high at 2-3%, vis-à-vis the UK and European peers.

However, competition for workers has clearly intensified. Looking forward, the ability of labour supply to respond to demand will be constrained. Participation at 66% is already back at peak 2007/08 levels and for women rose to a record high of 61% in 2024. Further inward migration will be constrained by the lack of housing.

In the context of a tighter labour market, the most successful Irish companies will be those that can continue to attract talent and encourage labour productivity amongst the existing workforce. This is also true for Ireland. Employers need to adapt to the transformation of the labour force over the past decade, to help drive efficiency and cost discipline. Fostering an ethnically diverse, equitable and inclusive working environment will be crucial, both in terms of a societal impact, but also to help employees thrive and contribute to Bank of Ireland's key role within the Irish economy. This will involve responding to a range of concerns; discrimination and cultural differences, but also prosaic problems relating to employment permits and training, and addressing broader neuro inclusion and social mobility issues .

Methodology

Methodology

This research, conducted by Morgan McKinley from February 2024 to September 2024, was commissioned by Bank of Ireland, which provided support and guidance throughout the project's completion.

The research focused on (1) identifying any barriers that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds may encounter in securing employment and advancing in their careers in Ireland and (2) providing advice to employers on how to foster ethnic diversity and inclusion within their workplaces. In this study, ethnic minorities refer to all 10 ethnic groups that are not the majority White Irish, as classified by the CSO:

Any other White background	**Arab**	**Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background**	**Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese**	**Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi**
Black or Black Irish - African	**Black or Black Irish - any other Black background**	**Other including mixed background**	**Roma**	**White Irish Traveller**
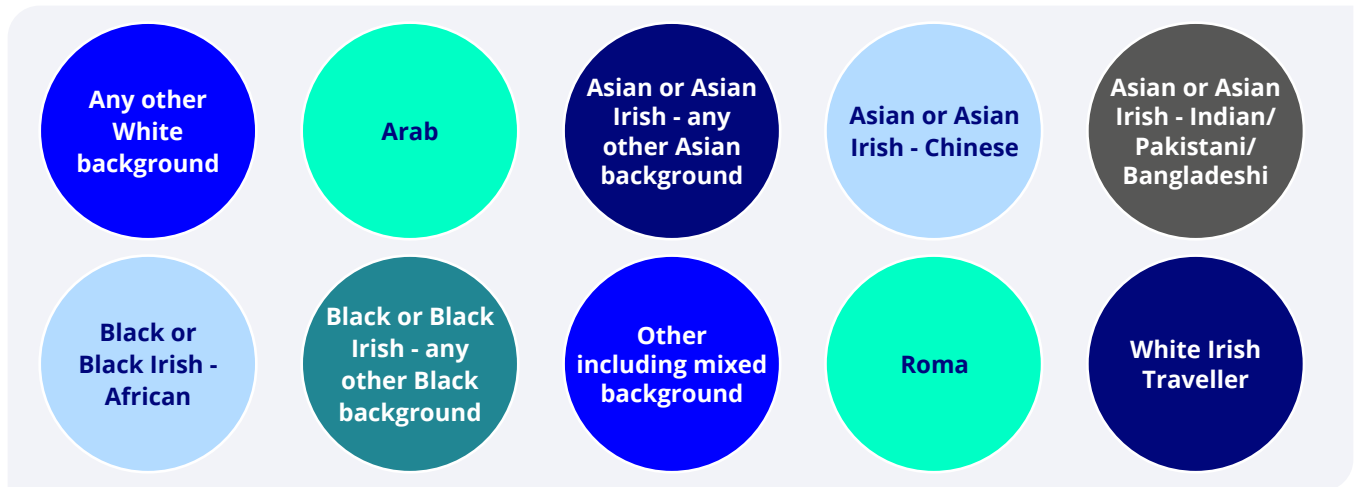
This research has not focused on the group of individuals who chose not to state their ethnicity in the various CSO issued surveys ('Not stated'), including the latest census.

The initial phase involved desk research, including a review of academic literature and an analysis of the ethnic minority landscape in Ireland.

In the quantitative phase of the research, we conducted an online survey titled *'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace'*. The survey collected responses from over **2,700** participants, representing a broad spectrum of ethnic minority groups, providing valuable insights into their experiences

The qualitative phase comprised a series of one-on-one interviews with representatives from ethnic minority groups in Ireland, as well as other key stakeholders. The breakdown of these interviews is as follows:

104 interviews were conducted with representatives from Ireland's 10 ethnic minority groups.

14 interviews were held with experts in talent acquisition, recruitment, and diversity, equity and inclusion (EDI).

12 interviews were conducted with advocacy groups, specialised organisations, and companies, forming the basis for the case studies featured in this report.

[18] CSO (2022). Census 2022. [19] CSO (2023). Educational attainment, Q2 2023.

Methodology

Please note that while the survey ensures satisfactory representation of all ethnic groups in Ireland and maintains gender balance, there is an overrepresentation of employed individuals and those with third-level education. According to the latest census, **64%** of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds aged 15 and over were employed[15], compared to 77% of our survey respondents. Similarly, **62%** of non-Irish individuals aged 25 to 64 hold an undergraduate, postgraduate, or professional qualification[16], whereas **87%** of our respondents fall into this category. This variance is partly due to the distribution channels used to recruit participants. While advocacy groups and organisations working with more marginalised populations provided valuable support, the primary distribution method was through professional networks. Additionally, although qualitative interviews were conducted in English, French, and Spanish, the online survey was available exclusively in English.

A detailed description of survey respondents and participants to the qualitative interviews can be found in Appendices A, B and C of this report.

The research also incorporated the perspectives of a small sample of **23** White Irish participants who completed the online survey. Their experiences and viewpoints were analysed alongside those of ethnic minority participants, allowing for the identification of both similarities and differences. This approach helped to highlight areas of shared understanding, as well as points of divergence in terms of perceptions of workplace inclusivity, discrimination, and opportunities. Given the small size of the White Irish survey respondents, they were not used as a Control Group throughout the report, despite their insights allowing for a more balanced and nuanced understanding of how experiences with diversity and inclusion vary across different ethnic groups.

The aim of this research was to gather a broad and diverse sample from all ethnic minority groups, with a specific focus on employment-ready individuals. This approach allowed for an exploration of the nuanced and complex barriers to workforce access that extend beyond commonly recognised challenges, such as language barriers.

The personas presented here are fictional representations designed to capture the personal experiences shared by research participants. They are composites, created by blending various aspects of life from multiple individuals within the same ethnic minority group. All names used in the personas are entirely fictional, and any resemblance to real individuals is purely coincidental and unintentional. The personas have been used as Chapter dividers in the report.

The figures and tables in this report include data with decimal points to ensure a precise representation of proportions, especially those below **1%**. However, to enhance readability, the narrative sections generally use rounded percentages, except when dealing with values under **1%**, where exact figures are retained for clarity. Additionally, an exception is made for national unemployment rates, as provided by the CSO, which are presented with decimal points to reflect industry standards.

To ensure consistency throughout the report, the term 'Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)' is used to describe this concept, aligning with the terminology adopted by the United Nations.

Lastly, it is important to note that this research was conducted in a context marked by notable social unrest, including anti-immigration riots and demonstrations that unfolded in late 2023 and early 2024. While a few participants mentioned these events, assessing their overall impact on the lived experiences and perceptions highlighted in the study remains difficult.

[15] Central Statistics Office. Census 2022. [16] Central Statistics Office (2023). Educational attainment, Q2 2023.

1. Introduction and context

1. Introduction and context

1. Introduction and context

1.1. Immigration and changes

Although this research focuses primarily on fostering ethnic diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace, it is important to provide some context regarding Ireland's current wider diverse population.

Historically, Ireland has been a country of emigration. Emigration has been a defining feature of Irish history, significantly shaping the nation's demographic and cultural landscape. The emigration in Ireland has experienced many waves, from early waves due to religious and political conflict in the 17th and 18th centuries to more recent waves after the 2008 financial crisis, with a historical peak during the Great Famine in the 19th century.

This pattern began to change in the 1990s when Ireland entered a period of economic expansion known as the Celtic Tiger, spanning from 1995 to 2007. During this time, the number of people immigrating to Ireland increased nearly fivefold, rising from 31,200 in 1995 to a record 151,100 in 2007. This upward trend in immigration was disrupted by the economic crisis that struck Ireland in 2008. Consequently, immigration decreased while emigration increased, shifting Ireland's net migration from 104,800 in 2007 to -27,500 in 2010. As of 2010, immigration began to gradually increase again, reaching 149,200 in the year leading up to April 2024, the highest immigration levels in 17 years.

Figure 1: Migration in Ireland (1987 to 2024)
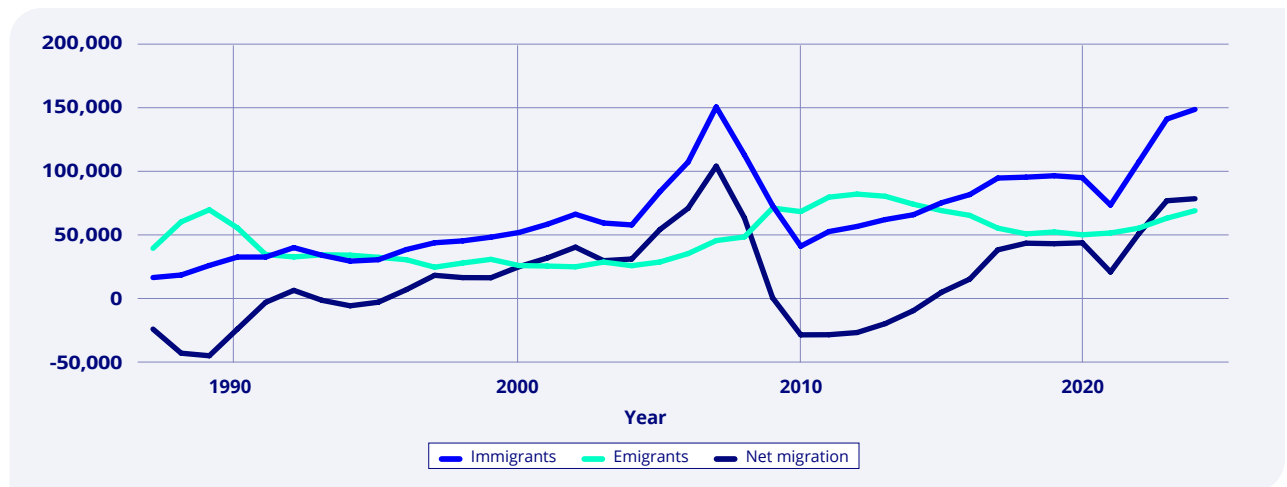
Source: CSO, Population and Migration Estimates, April 2024

Along with fluctuations in the volume of immigration, its composition also changed over time.

Figure 2: Immigration by citizenship (1996 to 2024)
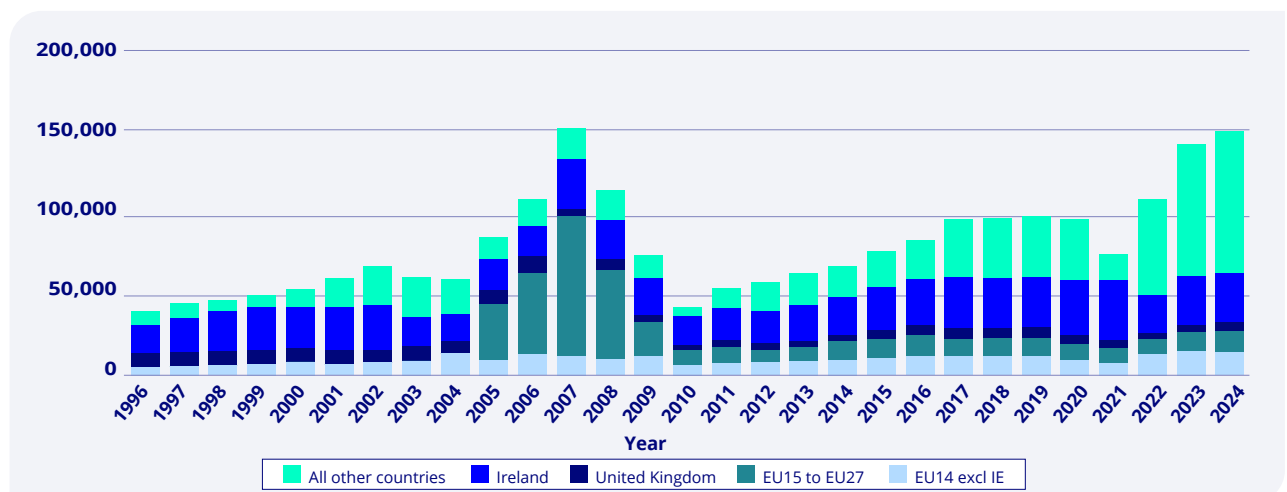
Source: Central Statistics Office (2024). Population and Migration Estimates, April 2024

The figure above illustrates several trends related to the citizenship of immigrants who have arrived in Ireland over the past 30 years.

1. Introduction and context

Firstly, it is important to recognise that the returning Irish diaspora has consistently played a significant role in Ireland's immigration landscape over the past 30 years, maintaining a steady volume throughout this period. In 1996, 17,700 Irish citizens returned to Ireland, which represented 45% of the total immigration inflow. In the year to April 2024, the number of Irish citizens coming to Ireland stood at 30,000 persons which made up 20% of the total immigrants.

Secondly, between 2005 and 2007, there was an increase in immigration from Eastern European nationals[17] whose countries joined the European Union (EU) after 2004. Following the economic crash in 2008 and its subsequent impacts on the country, immigration from these countries declined but remained steady at a lower level since then. In the year to April 2024, citizens from Eastern European countries made up 9% of the total number of immigrants to Ireland.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most significant ongoing trend, is the steady increase in immigration from non-European countries. Figure 3 presents immigration to Ireland by origin (not by citizenship). Even though the data includes the Irish diaspora, a significant increase in the number of people arriving from outside the EU is still evident.

Figure 3: Immigration by origin (1987 to 2024)
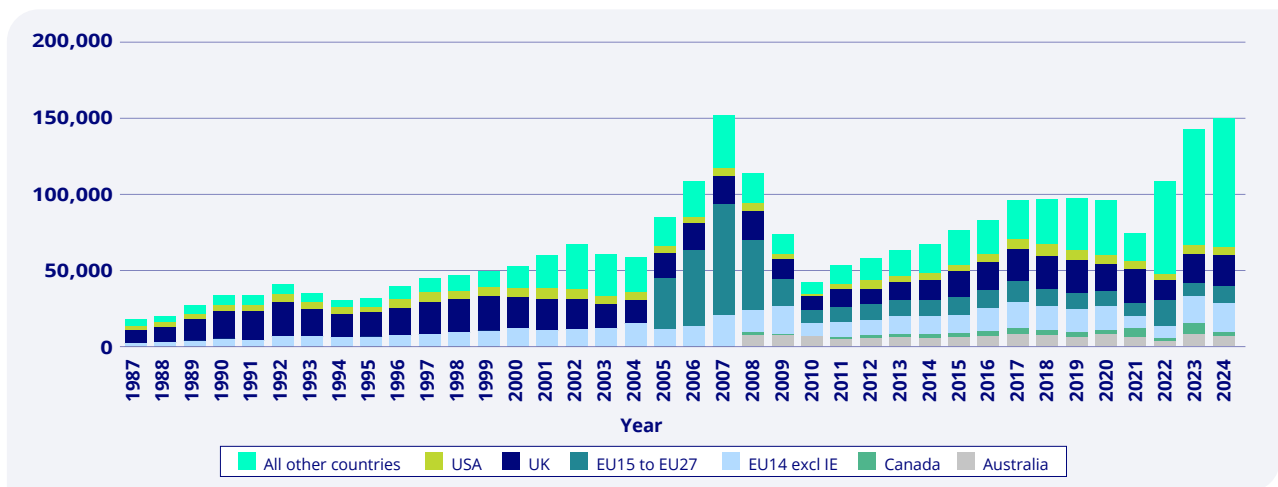
Source: Central Statistics Office (2024). Population and Migration Estimates, April 2024

In the year to April 2024, 20% of immigrants came from the EU, 14% from the UK, 4% from Australia, 2% from Canada, 3% from the United States of America (USA) and the remaining 57% came from other countries.

The change in immigration trends is accompanied by varying immigration volumes and an overall rise in diversity amongst the immigrant population.

1.2. Profile of Ireland's population in Ireland

Due to the increasing diversity and volume of immigration, Ireland's population has become significantly more diverse in recent years.

As of the latest census of 2022, 12% of the population in Ireland (631,785 persons) were non-Irish nationals[18]. This represents a 16% increase from the number of non-Irish nationals present in the state in 2011 (544,357).

EU citizens make up 6% of the total population in 2022. Among EU citizens residing in the country, Polish is the most common nationality. The latest census recorded 93,680 Polish citizens in Ireland which represents 2% of the total population. After Polish nationals, Romanian and Lithuanian nationals are also present in high proportions (accounting respectively for 0.9% and 0.6% of the total population), followed by Spanish, Latvian and Italian nationals, each accounting for 0.4% of the total population.

The number of foreign nationals from Asian countries increased by 53% between the 2011 Census and the 2022 Census. Among these, Indian and Chinese nationals are the most represented in the country and they respectively account for 0.9% and 0.3% of the total population.

Citizens from The Americas doubled between the 2011 and the 2022 Census. Among these nationals, Brazilian nationals are the most represented group accounting for 0.5% of the total population, followed by US citizens who represent 0.3%.

---

[17] Countries that joined the EU from 2004 onwards, also referred to by the CSO as 'EU15 to EU27': Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. [18] This does not include the 3.3% of persons who chose not to state their citizenship or persons who do not have citizenship as per the census 2022.

1. Introduction and context

Table 1: Population by nationality - (2011, 2016 & 2022)

Citizenship	2011 Number	2011 %	2016 Number	2016 %	2022 Number	2022 %	Change 2011-2022 %
Ireland	3,927,143	86.8%	4,082,513	87.0%	4,283,490	84.2%	9.1%
UK	112,260	2.5%	103,113	2.2%	83,347	1.6%	-25.8%
EU excl Ireland	275,351	6.1%	305,806	6.5%	312,909	6.2%	13.6%
Rest of Europe	15,461	0.3%	10,933	0.2%	25,273	0.5%	63.5%
Africa	41,641	0.9%	22,149	0.5%	34,761	0.7%	-16.5%
Asia	65,579	1.4%	50,661	1.1%	100,320	2.0%	53.0%
The Americas	24,884	0.5%	30,991	0.7%	53,738	1.1%	116.0%
Other citizenships	9,181	0.2%	11,822	0.3%	21,437	0.4%	133.5%
Not stated including no citizenship	53,781	1.2%	71,933	1.5%	169,604	3.3%	215.4%
Total population	**4,525,281**	**100.0%**	**4,689,921**	**100.0%**	**5,084,879**	**100.0%**	**12.4%**

Source: Central Statistics Office (2011). Census 2011, Central Statistics Office (2016). Census 2016

Since the census of 2006, the CSO has also collected information on the ethnic or cultural background of Ireland's residents.

We can see from Table 2 that the number of persons identifying as an ethnic background other than White Irish increased progressively over time. In 2011, 85% of the population identified as White Irish, this proportion dropped to 77% in the 2022 Census. With 6% of the population choosing not to disclose their ethnic background, this leaves 17% of the population identifying as being from an ethnic background other than White Irish in 2022.

Table 2: Population by ethnic background (2011, 2016 & 2022)

Ethnic or Cultural Background	2011 Number	2011 Percentage	2016 Number	2016 Percentage	2022 Number	2022 Percentage
Asian or Asian Irish	**84,690**	**1.9%**	**98,720**	**2.1%**	**166,206**	**3.3%**
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	17,832	0.4%	19,447	0.4%	26,828	0.5%
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	66,858	1.5%	79,273	1.7%	139,378	2.7%
Black or Black Irish	**65,078**	**1.4%**	**64,639**	**1.4%**	**76,245**	**1.5%**
Black or Black Irish - African	58,697	1.3%	57,850	1.2%	67,546	1.3%
Black or Black Irish - any other Black background	6,381	0.1%	6,789	0.1%	8,699	0.2%
Other including mixed background	**40,724**	**0.9%**	**70,603**	**1.5%**	**101,166**	**2.0%**
White	**3,851,490**	**85.1%**	**3,885,213**	**82.8%**	**4,428,086**	**87.1%**
Any other White background	412,975	9.1%	446,727	9.5%	502,081	9.9%
White Irish	3,821,995	84.5%	3,854,226	82.2%	3,893,056	76.6%
White Irish Traveller	29,495	0.7%	30,987	0.7%	32,949	0.6%
Not stated	**70,324**	**1.6%**	**124,019**	**2.6%**	**313,176**	**6.2%**
All ethnic or cultural backgrounds	4,525,281	100.0%	**4,689,921**	**100.0%**	**5,084,879**	**100.0%**

Source: Central Statistics Office (2011). Census 2011, Central Statistics Office (2016). Census 2016, Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

Between 2016 and 2022, the number of persons from an Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background increased by 38% and the number of persons from a Black or Black Irish - African background increased by 17%.

The CSO introduced several changes to the classification of ethnic backgrounds in the 2022 Census, adding the following categories: (1) Arab, (2) Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi, and (3) Roma.

Table 3 presents the breakdown of the population by ethnic background as per the latest census.

The most represented ethnic backgrounds in the country, other than White Irish, are Any Other White background (representing 10% of the total population), Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi (2%), Black or Black Irish - African (1%) and Other including mixed background (1%).

1. Introduction and context

Table 3: Population by ethnic background

Ethnic or Cultural background	Number	% of total population
All ethnic or cultural backgrounds	5,084,879	100%
Any other White background	502,081	9.9%
Arab	20,115	0.4%
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	44,944	0.9%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	26,828	0.5%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	94,434	1.9%
Black or Black Irish - African	67,546	1.3%
Black or Black Irish - any other Black background	8,699	0.2%
Not stated	313,176	6.2%
Other including mixed background	64,992	1.3%
Roma	16,059	0.3%
White Irish	3,893,056	76.6%
White Irish Traveller	32,949	0.6%

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

Figure 4: Distribution of ethnic backgrounds among the non-White Irish population[19]

Any other White background 57.1%
Arab 2.3%
Asian or Asian Irish 18.9%
Black or Black Irish 8.7%
Other including mixed background 7.4%
Roma 1.8%
White Irish Traveller 3.7%
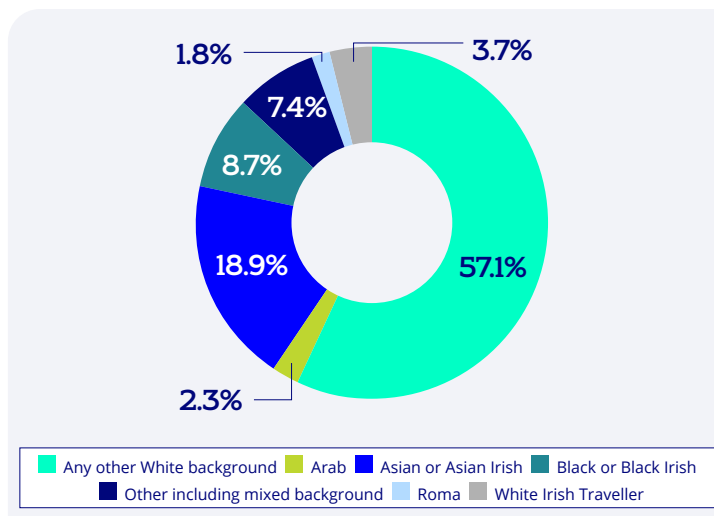
Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

The number of individuals from ethnic backgrounds other than White Irish who hold Irish citizenship has grown over time, both through naturalisation and the birth of second-generation Irish citizens.

In 2011, 8% of persons from Any other White background had Irish citizenship, whereas in 2022 this percentage increased to 24%. Similarly, 39% of persons from a Black or Black Irish -African background had Irish citizenship in 2011 compared to 65% in 2022. The number of individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background holding Irish citizenship increased by 142% between 2011 and 2016.

The table below presents the number of Irish citizens within each ethnic group as of 2022, as well as the number of individuals born in Ireland.

Table 4: Population with Irish citizenship and birthplace by ethnic background

Ethnic or Cultural background	Irish citizens		Born in Ireland	
	Number	%	Number	%
Any other White background	119,428	23.8%	63,094	12.6%
Arab	8,695	43.2%	4,199	20.9%
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	25,624	57.0%	8,584	19.1%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	10,800	40.3%	6,556	24.4%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	36,324	38.5%	17,819	18.9%
Black or Black Irish - African	43,862	64.9%	23,955	35.5%
Black or Black Irish - any other Black background	3,221	37.0%	2,084	24.0%
Not stated	105,711	33.8%	237,476	75.8%
Other including mixed background	33,519	51.6%	23,441	36.1%
Roma	4,430	27.6%	3,355	20.9%
White Irish	3,861,283	99.2%	3,646,137	93.7%
White Irish Traveller	30,593	92.8%	30,742	93.3%

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

[19] This data does not take into account the 313,176 individuals who chose not to disclose their ethnic or cultural background in the Census 2022

1. Introduction and context

As shown in the table from the previous page, and as it might be expected, 99% of the White Irish and 93% of the White Irish Travellers in Ireland have Irish citizenship.

1 in 3 individuals[20] from backgrounds other than White Irish and White Irish Travellers are Irish citizens,18% are born in Ireland, or are second generation.

The distribution of Irish citizenship among non-White Irish ethnic groups exhibits significant variation. Notably, a majority of individuals from several ethnic categories have acquired Irish citizenship. Specifically, 57% of those classified as Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background hold Irish citizenship. This proportion is even higher among the Black or Black Irish - African group, where 65% are Irish citizens. Additionally, 52% of individuals from an Other including mixed background possess Irish citizenship. These statistics underscore the diverse composition of Irish citizenship beyond the traditionally predominant White Irish and White Irish Traveller groups.

The ethnic groups with the lowest number of Irish citizens are the Any other White background and Roma. This is likely due to a significant number of individuals in these groups originating from EU countries, where they benefit from the right to live and work in Ireland under EU free movement laws. As a result, there is less incentive for these individuals to pursue Irish citizenship, as they already enjoy many of the same rights and privileges as Irish citizens. Some countries do not allow dual citizenship, such as India, China and Japan for example, which can make the choice of acquiring Irish citizenship more complex than for individuals whose country of origin allow dual Irish citizenship. During our interviews, Chinese participants expressed a more consistent reluctance to acquire Irish citizenship. This hesitation stems from the fact that the Chinese government prohibits dual citizenship, meaning that obtaining citizenship in their host country would require renouncing their Chinese citizenship. The primary reasons for considering Irish citizenship included concerns about limited travel freedom as Ireland is not part of the Schengen Area, the challenges associated with obtaining visas—an often time-consuming and inconsistent process depending on the foreign embassy to which they were making an application for an entry visa for—and the desire to safeguard their children's future rights, such as safety and voting rights.

Among non-White ethnic groups in Ireland, the highest proportions of native-born individuals are observed in two categories: the Other including mixed background group and the Black or Black Irish - African group. In both of these demographic segments, more than one-third of individuals were born in Ireland. This statistic underscores the growing diversity within the Irish-born population and indicates a significant level of second-generation representation within these ethnic communities.

Circa one in four individuals categorised as either Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese or Black or Black Irish - any other Black background are born in Ireland.

The increasing ethnic diversification of Ireland's population is accompanied by a gradual decoupling of ethnic background from foreign citizenship status. This demographic shift is characterised by two primary factors: a rising number of naturalised Irish citizens from diverse ethnic origins, and a growing cohort of second-generation Irish individuals born to immigrant parents. These trends collectively contribute to a more complex and nuanced relationship between ethnicity and citizenship within the Irish society.

1 in 3 individuals[20]
from backgrounds other than White Irish and White Irish Travellers are Irish citizens, 18% are born in Ireland, or are second generation.

---

20 This data does not take into account the 313,176 individuals who chose not to disclose their ethnic or cultural background in the Census 2022

1. Introduction and context

1.3. Relationship to the labour market

Since this research focuses on ethnic diversity in the workplace, it is particularly important to understand the proportion of the population from different ethnic backgrounds that are part of the labour force and their relationship to employment.

The below table presents the age breakdown of the population from each ethnic background. For the purposes of demographic analysis, the population has been segmented into five distinct age cohorts: 0-14 years, 15-24 years, 25-44 years, 45-64 years, and 65 years and older. This age categorisation facilitates a comprehensive examination of population distribution across various life stages.

Figure 5: Age breakdown of population by ethnic background
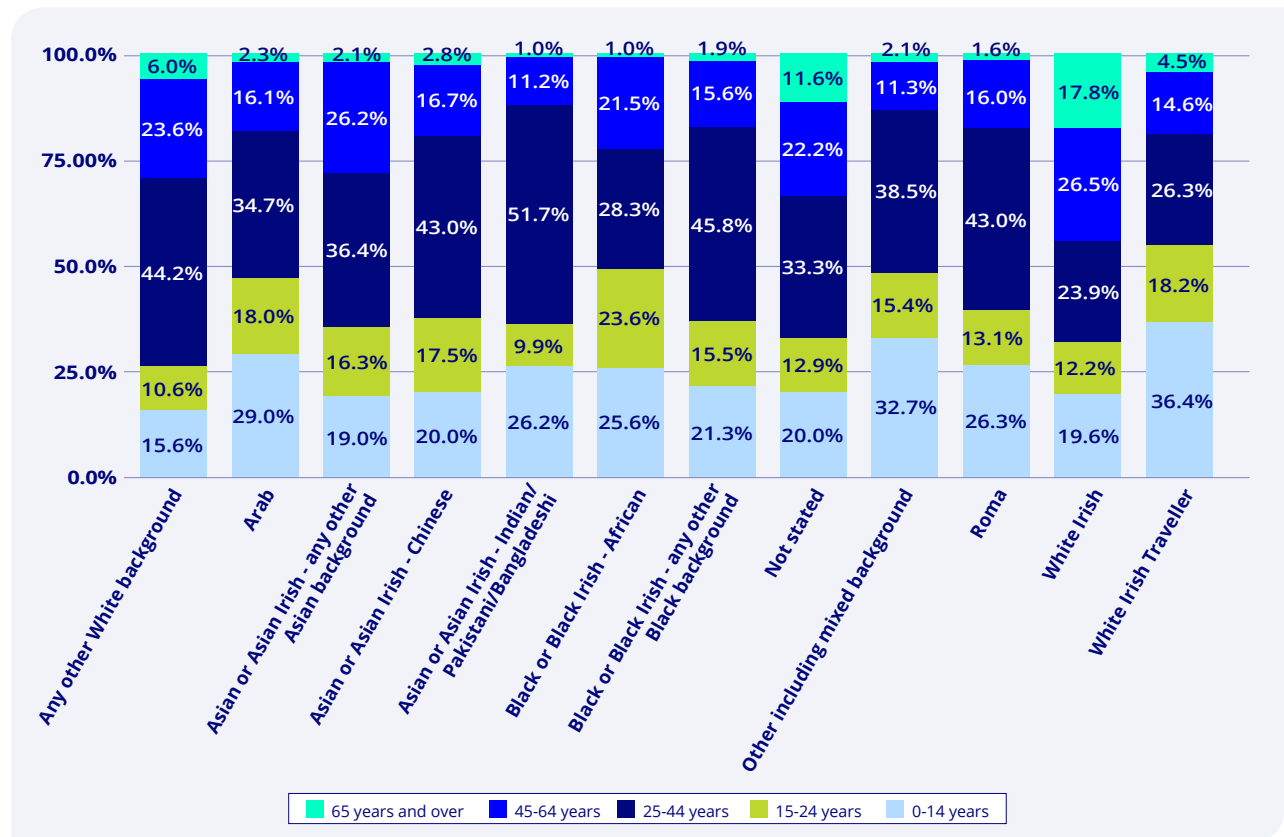
Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

Except for the White Irish Traveller ethnic group, all other ethnic groups have a higher proportion of persons at working age (over 15 and under 65 years of age) than the White Irish, partially explained by the lesser proportion of persons aged 65 years and older. Whereas 18% of the White Irish population is over 65 years old, only 1% of Black and Black Irish - Africans and of Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi are above 65 years of age.

This is partially explained by the fact that immigrants coming to Ireland are young adults. In the year to April 2024, 52% of immigrants were aged between 25 and 44 years old and a further 17% were aged between 15 and 24 years old. Only 3% of immigrants (4,900) were aged 65 years and over[21]. As of the latest census, over half of the individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background and 44% of the individuals from an Any other White background are between the ages of 25 and 44 years old.

The ethnic groups with the highest proportion of children are White Irish Travellers, Other including mixed backgrounds and Black or Black Irish - Africans, with 36%, 33% and 26% respectively of their population being under 14 years of age. Ireland has the highest proportion of young people among EU countries, with over one in four persons being under 20 years of age: 19% of its population is aged 14 or younger and a further 7% is between 15 and 19 years of age.[22] The relatively young age profile of individuals from ethnic minority groups, who make up 17% of the population, contribute to boosting this figure and to Ireland's competitive advantage.

---

[21] Central Statistics Office (2024). Population and migration estimates, April 2024. [22] Eurostat (2024). Population structure indicators at national level

1. Introduction and context

Figure 6: Population aged 15 years and older by ethnic group and economic status
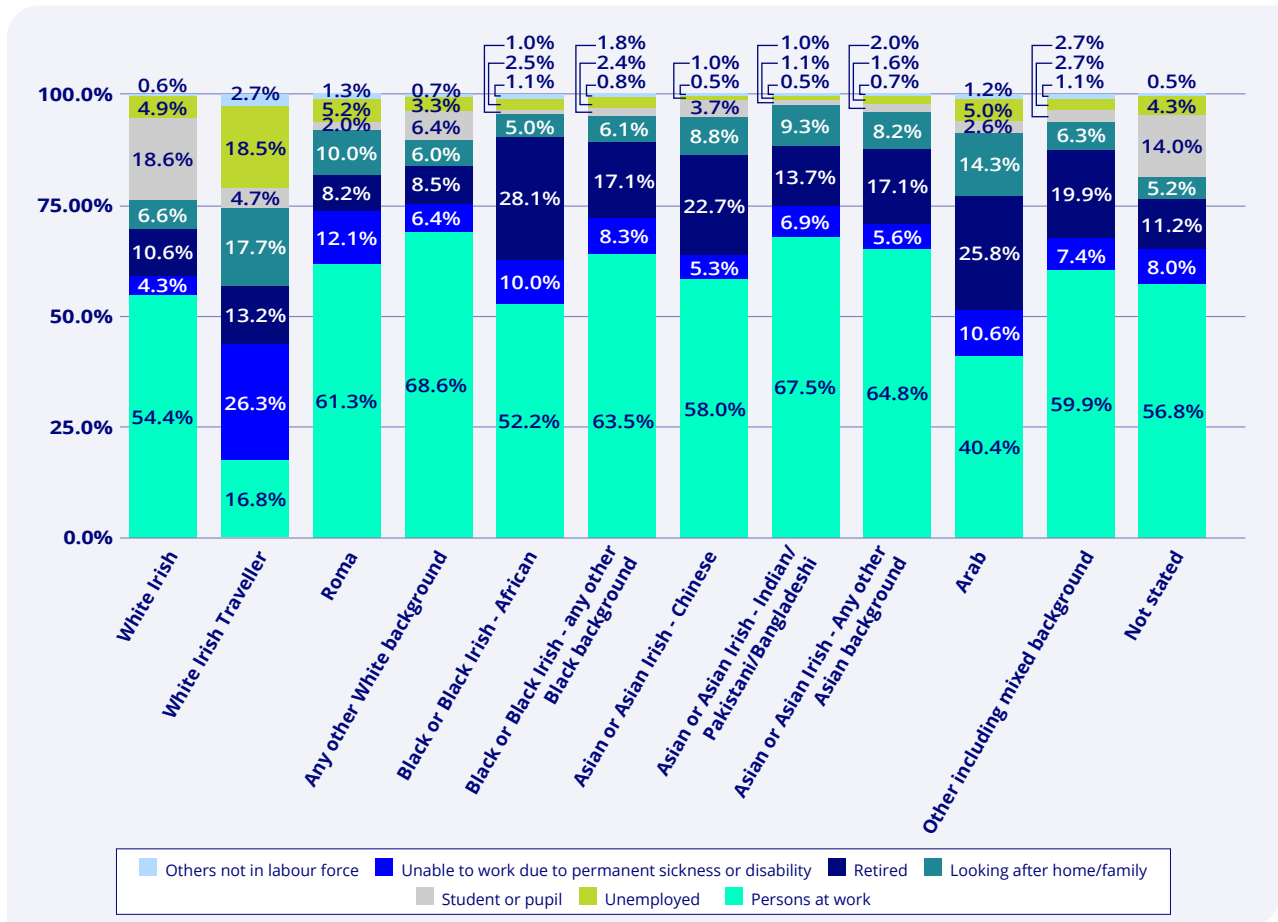
Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

As shown in the graph above, and consistent with the age breakdown within each ethnic group, the highest percentage of retired individuals is found in the White Irish group, with 19% retired. In contrast, the proportion of retired individuals is significantly lower in other ethnic groups: 6% among those from any other White background, 5% among the Irish Traveller group, 4% among the Asian and Asian Irish - Chinese group, and less than 3% in the remaining ethnic groups.

There is a stark difference in the employment levels of White Irish Travellers and all other ethnic groups. They have the lowest employment levels with only 17% (3,518 individuals) of its population employed. The other group with the lowest number of persons at work is the Arab group, with only 40% of individuals 15 years and over from an Arab background being employed. In contrast, all other ethnic groups have over 50% of their population in employment. The highest employment rates for individuals aged 15 and over are found among those from any other White background (69%), the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi group (68%), and the Asian or Asian Irish - any other background (65%).

The White Irish Traveller group also presents the highest proportion of persons 15 years and older looking after the home or the family (18%), followed by the Arab group (14%) and Roma (10%).

The Black and Black Irish - African and the Arab ethnic groups have the highest percentages of students with over 1 in 4 persons 15 years and older studying. This compares to approximately 1 in 10 for the White Irish.

Unemployment is lowest within the White Irish population, as 4.3% of the persons 15 years and over were unemployed at the time of the latest census (2022). The group with the highest percentage of persons unemployed is the White Irish Traveller group, with 26% of individuals 15 years and older unemployed. Other groups presenting levels of unemployed persons above 10% are the Roma group (12% of persons 15 years and older unemployed) and the Arab group (11% of persons 15 years and older unemployed).

---

[21] Central Statistics Office (2024). Population and migration estimates, April 2024. [22] Eurostat (2024). Population structure indicators at national level

1. Introduction and context

It is important to note that despite the unemployment rate of ethnic minorities being higher than that of White Irish, it has been decreasing over the past years. For example, the unemployment rate of persons 15 years and over from a Black or Black Irish -African background, went from 21% in 2016 to 10% in 2022 and that of individuals from a Chinese background went from 8% in 2016 to 5% in 2022.

Figure 7: Individuals aged 15+ in the labour force by ethnic group and industry

Industry	White Irish	Non White Irish
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	3.7%	9.5%
Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U)	0.0%	0.1%
Activities of households as employers; producing activities of households for own use (T)	0.0%	0.1%
Administrative and support service activities (N)	3.0%	5.3%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	4.1%	1.0%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	1.7%	1.2%
Construction (F)	5.9%	4.2%
Education (P)	10.1%	4.2%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D)	0.6%	0.3%
Financial and insurance activities (K)	4.6%	3.5%
Human health and social work activities (Q)	11.1%	11.7%
Industry not stated	2.1%	3.3%
Information and communication (J)	4.2%	8.9%
Manufacturing (C)	9.9%	11.0%
Mining and quarrying (B)	0.2%	0.1%
Other service activities (S)	2.2%	2.1%
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	6.7%	6.0%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security (O)	6.4%	1.5%
Real estate activities (L)	0.5%	0.4%
Transportation and storage (H)	3.7%	3.4%
Unemployed Looking for first regular job	1.0%	2.5%
Unemployed, having lost or given up previous job	6.3%	7.9%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E)	0.5%	0.5%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	11.5%	11.3%

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.
Note that the 'Non White Irish' doesn't include individuals who have not stated their ethnic background on the census

Over one third of individuals from a non-White Irish background work in either Healthcare, Wholesale and Retail or Manufacturing.

There is a notably higher proportion of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds working in the Accommodation and Food Services sector (10%) compared to their White Irish counterparts (4%). Similarly, in the ICT sector, 9% of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are employed, while only 4% of White Irish individuals work in this sector. In Administrative and Support Services, 5% of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are employed, compared to 3% of White Irish individuals. Conversely, individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are significantly underrepresented in sectors such as Education, Public Administration, and Agriculture when compared to White Irish individuals.

1. Introduction and context

An analysis of the industry sectors of choice by ethnic minorities reveals significant differences among them. Figure 8 illustrates the top five industry sectors of employment for each ethnic background.

Figure 8: Top 5 industry sectors by ethnic group
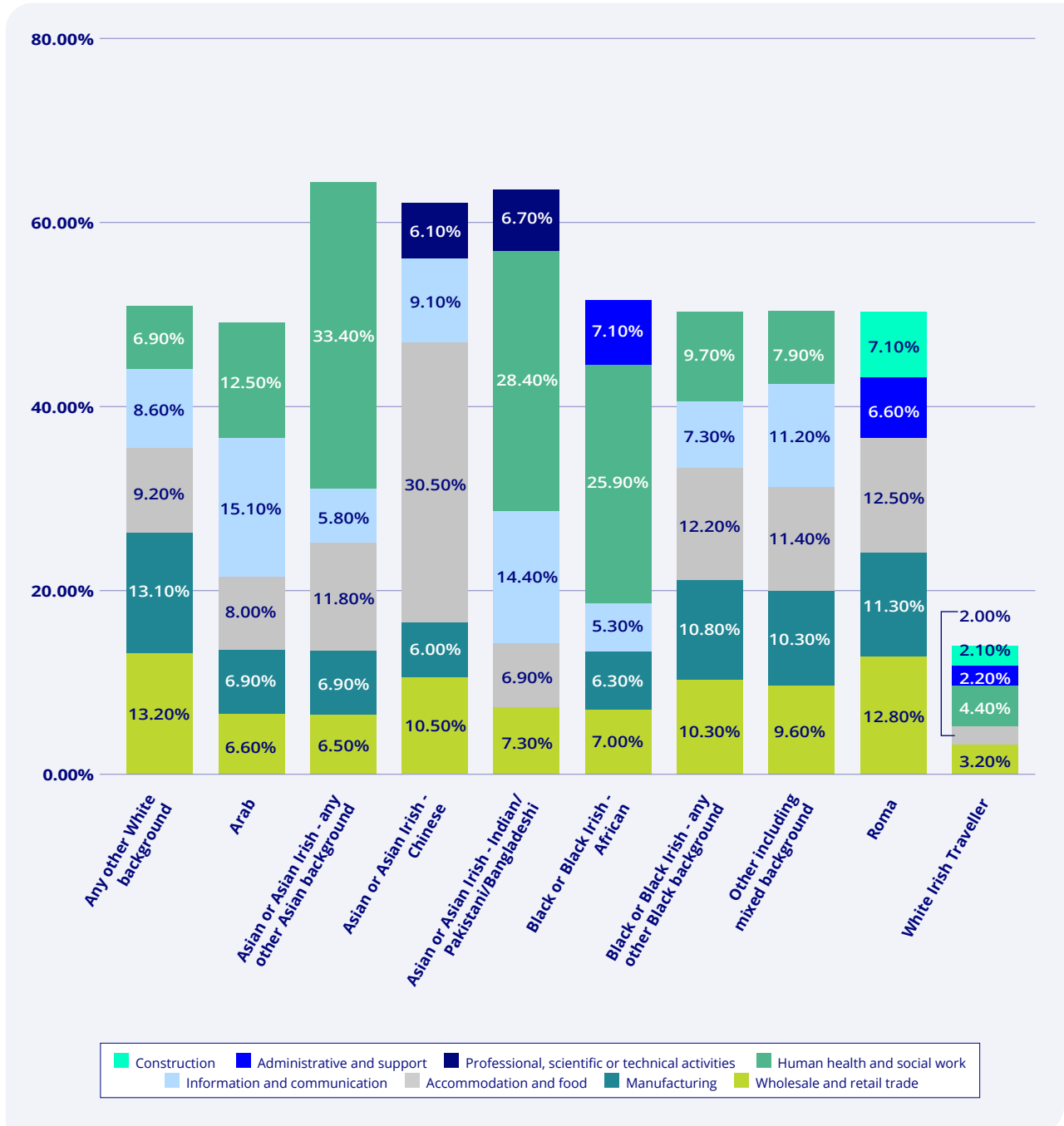
Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

As shown in Figure 8, 15% of individuals in the labour force from an Arab background, 14% from an Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background, and 11% from an Other including mixed background are employed in the ICT sector. In the Healthcare sector, 33% of individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background and 28% of individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background are employed. Additionally, 31% of individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background work in Accommodation and Food Services.

1. Introduction and context

Figure 9: Proportion of White Irish and non-White Irish (15+ years) employed in each industry sector

Industry sector	White Irish	Non-White Irish	Ethnicity not stated
Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U)	51.8%	47.6%	0.6%
Activities of households as employers; producing activities of households for own use (T)	57.3%	40.7%	2.0%
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	56.2%	39.0%	4.9%
Information and communication (J)	62.0%	36.0%	2.0%
Administrative and support service activities (N)	63.7%	30.7%	5.6%
Manufacturing (C)	75.2%	22.7%	2.0%
Human health and social work activities (Q)	76.2%	21.9%	2.0%
Other service activities (S)	76.6%	20.5%	2.9%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E)	77.0%	20.3%	2.7%
Transportation and storage (H)	77.6%	20.2%	2.2%
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	78.0%	19.7%	2.2%
Financial and insurance activities (K)	78.9%	19.3%	1.7%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	81.1%	16.9%	2.0%
Construction (F)	82.1%	16.0%	1.9%
Real estate activities (L)	81.8%	15.8%	2.5%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D)	81.1%	15.2%	3.8%
Education (P)	88.4%	10.7%	0.9%
Mining and quarrying (B)	88.8%	10.1%	1.1%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	89.5%	9.1%	1.5%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security (O)	93.0%	6.0%	1.1%
	91.7%	5.6%	2.7%

Legend: White Irish, Non-White Irish, Ethnicity not stated

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

As can be seen from Figure 9, non-White Irish individuals make up for a significant part of some industry sector's workforce. For example, 39% of persons 15 and over employed in Accommodation and Food services are from ethnic minority backgrounds, 36% of persons 15 and over employed in ICT activities are from ethnic backgrounds as are 31% of the persons working in Administrative and Support services. Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are less represented in activities linked to Public Administration, Agriculture, Mining and Education.

As we have seen in this section, and closely correlated with the young profile of immigrants coming to the country over the past decades, the majority of the ethnic minority population in Ireland consists of persons at working age, more so than within the majority White Irish population. However, the level of unemployment within all of these groups is still higher than the level of unemployment of the ethnic majority group in the country. How can this be explained? Are there barriers to accessing employment that would be specific to individuals from non-White Irish backgrounds? Are these barriers the same for all individuals or are there differences between ethnic groups or between individuals from the same ethnic group? This is what this paper has tried to understand based on the findings from the qualitative and quantitative research.

Persona 1:
Maggie's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from a White Irish Traveller background.

My name is Maggie and I am 44 years old. I was born and raised in Longford, Ireland, and have lived here my whole life.

Maggie

" Like many members of my family, I didn't have a positive experience in school and left when I was 13. We were often isolated, seated at the back, and excluded from learning the same material or completing the same homework as the other students. However, it was still an improvement compared to my parents' experience, as they were never even taught to read or write. When my sons started school, I had to fight, along with other parents, to ensure they were treated equally in the classroom. Despite my own challenges, I realise now how important qualifications are for finding employment and this is why I wanted my children to finish their education.

The idea of leaving Ireland has never crossed my mind—this is my home. I love being surrounded by my family and the sense of community here. Ireland is a beautiful place, and I enjoy making connections with the people.

However, being part of the Traveller community has definitely affected my daily life. There are many places that simply don't welcome Travellers. I remember when we were planning my son's wedding, a hotel refused to host it just because we are Travellers. In my opinion, Travellers are treated worse than any other group in Ireland. Even ethnic minorities coming from abroad seem to be treated better than we are. It feels like the Government has let us down, and wages here aren't enough to live comfortably.

Getting a job as a Traveller is a real challenge. People judge us without knowing us, and employers often don't even offer interviews if they see a Traveller name or address. Even when you do get a job, it's hard to feel accepted in the workplace. I often feel like I have to hide my identity, and some Travellers even change their names or appearances just to fit in.

Our community faces many struggles. Mental health issues are widespread due to various challenges, and the discrimination we face makes it even harder to succeed professionally. I want to feel accepted, but there's so much history behind how people view Travellers that it feels like an uphill battle. It's frustrating because we are not all the same, but it feels like society puts us all in the same box. "

Persona 2:
Alicia's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from an Any other White background.

My name is Alicia. I moved to Ireland just over a year ago to improve my English and pursue better job prospects than those available in my home country, Spain. I am 25 years old and currently studying for a Master's in Business Administration in Dublin.

Alicia

" I really like the people in Ireland, they are friendly, calm and funny. However, I don't always find it easy to really mix with Irish people. I find that you can chit-chat with them but that it is harder to make real connections. The culture and the social life in Ireland are very good, at least in Dublin. There is always something happening. It is also easy to travel to Europe from here and the flights to Spain are quite short. The worst thing about this country, I think, is the accommodation problem. Houses are so expensive that I can't afford to rent something - even small- on my own and I have to share with other people. Weather is also difficult, the winters are really long and cold. I find the medical system much worse than in Spain. It is hard to get a medical appointment and it is quite expensive.

Because I am studying, I am only looking at getting a part-time job, but I struggle to find one. I have applied to many vacancies but haven't heard back from any of them. I have the feeling that my name, which is not Irish, might put employers off. Also, my English is not 100% as this is one of the main reasons I have chosen to come to Ireland. I feel that this limits me even more in the type of jobs I can do.

I haven't really experienced discrimination myself, but I know it does exist here in Ireland as I have friends that have lived unpleasant experiences in the streets because of how they look. For me, I look quite similar to Irish women, so I don't really think I would be targeted by racism. I would really like to stay here in Ireland but I feel that - despite the good job opportunities - there are too many barriers preventing me from finding work. Maybe this will change once I graduate. "

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

2. **Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland**

This chapter aims to present the surveyed population and their connection to Ireland, including their demographic profile, reasons for migration, perceptions of the country, and their job preferences. Gaining insight into their experiences and backgrounds will enhance our understanding of the barriers they may encounter in entering and advancing in the workforce, as well as any emerging trends, which will be further explored in Chapter 3.

2.1. Demographic profile of survey participants

This research gathered lived experiences from a large sample of individuals across all ethnic minority groups through more than 100 1:1 qualitative interviews and an online survey completed by over 2,700 participants.

The survey, referred to here as the 'Survey on Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace,' was designed to collect information on individuals' profiles, their overall relationship with Ireland, and more specifically, their experiences in the labour market, including any barriers they faced in accessing and progressing within employment.

The survey achieved representation from all ethnic minority groups listed in the 2022 Census.

Figure 10: Survey respondents by ethnic minority background
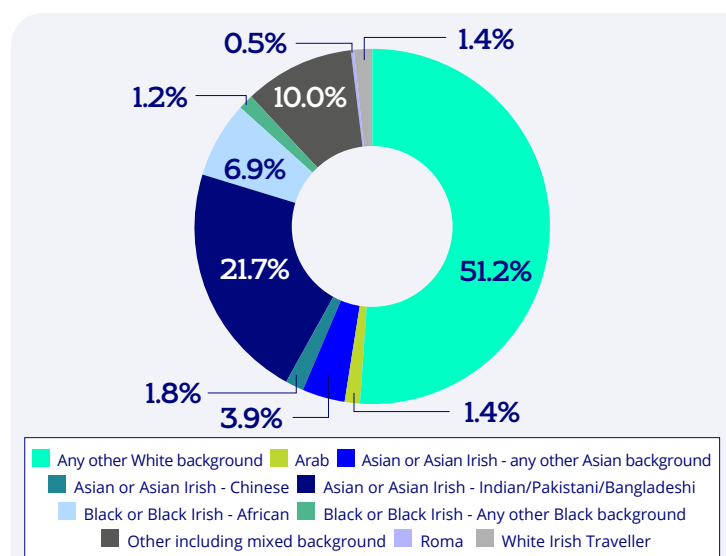
The largest group represented among the survey respondents is the Any Other White Irish **(51%)** followed by the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi **(22%)**, the Other including mixed background **(10%)** and the Black or Black Irish -African **(7%)**.

Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

Figure 11: Survey respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds by gender
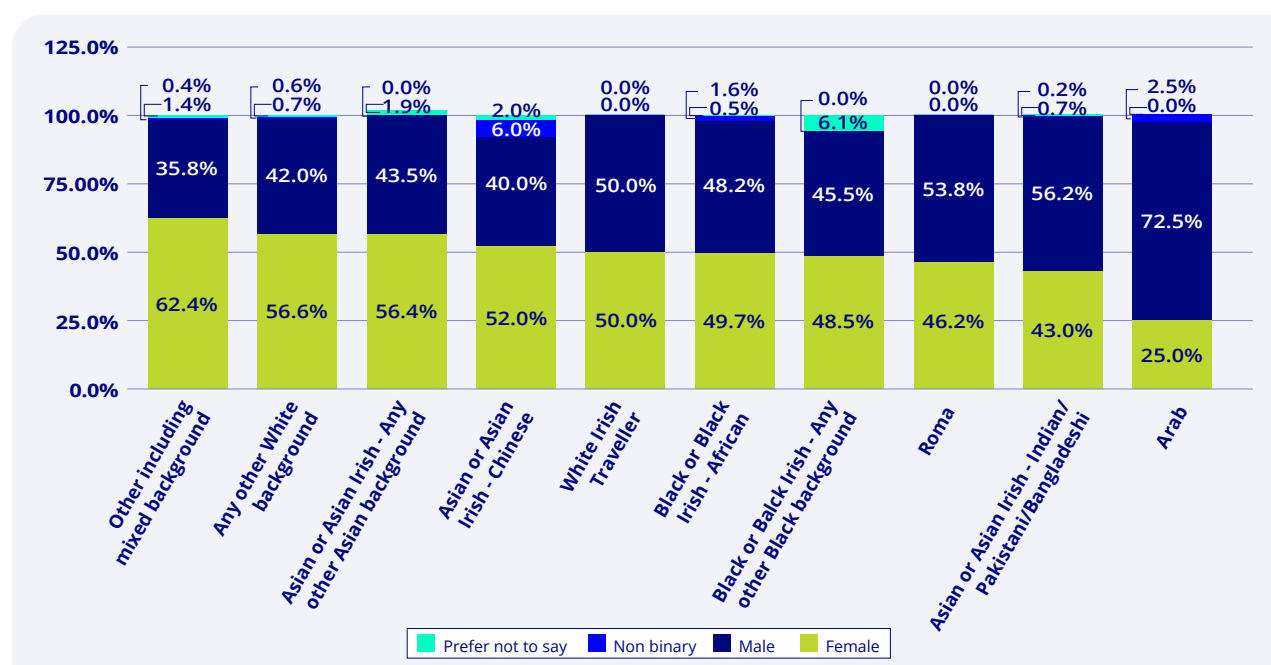
Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

Regarding gender distribution, 53% of the survey respondents were female, 46% were male, 0.6% identified as non-binary, and 0.9% chose not to disclose their gender. The gender distribution varies across ethnic groups, as shown in Figure 11. The Arab ethnic group had the lowest percentage of female respondents (25%), while the Other including mixed background group had the lowest percentage of male respondents (36%). The Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese group had the highest percentage of non-binary respondents (6%).

The respondents' ages ranged from under 20 to over 55 years old, with half of the respondents being under 35.

A total of 87% of respondents were born abroad and immigrated to Ireland, while the remaining 13% were born in Ireland or are second-generation immigrants. Respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds represent 110 distinct nationalities.

In terms of economic status, 77% of respondents were employed or self-employed and 17% were unemployed at the time of the survey. Below Figure 12 details the employment status of the survey respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds:

Figure 12: Survey respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds by economic status

Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

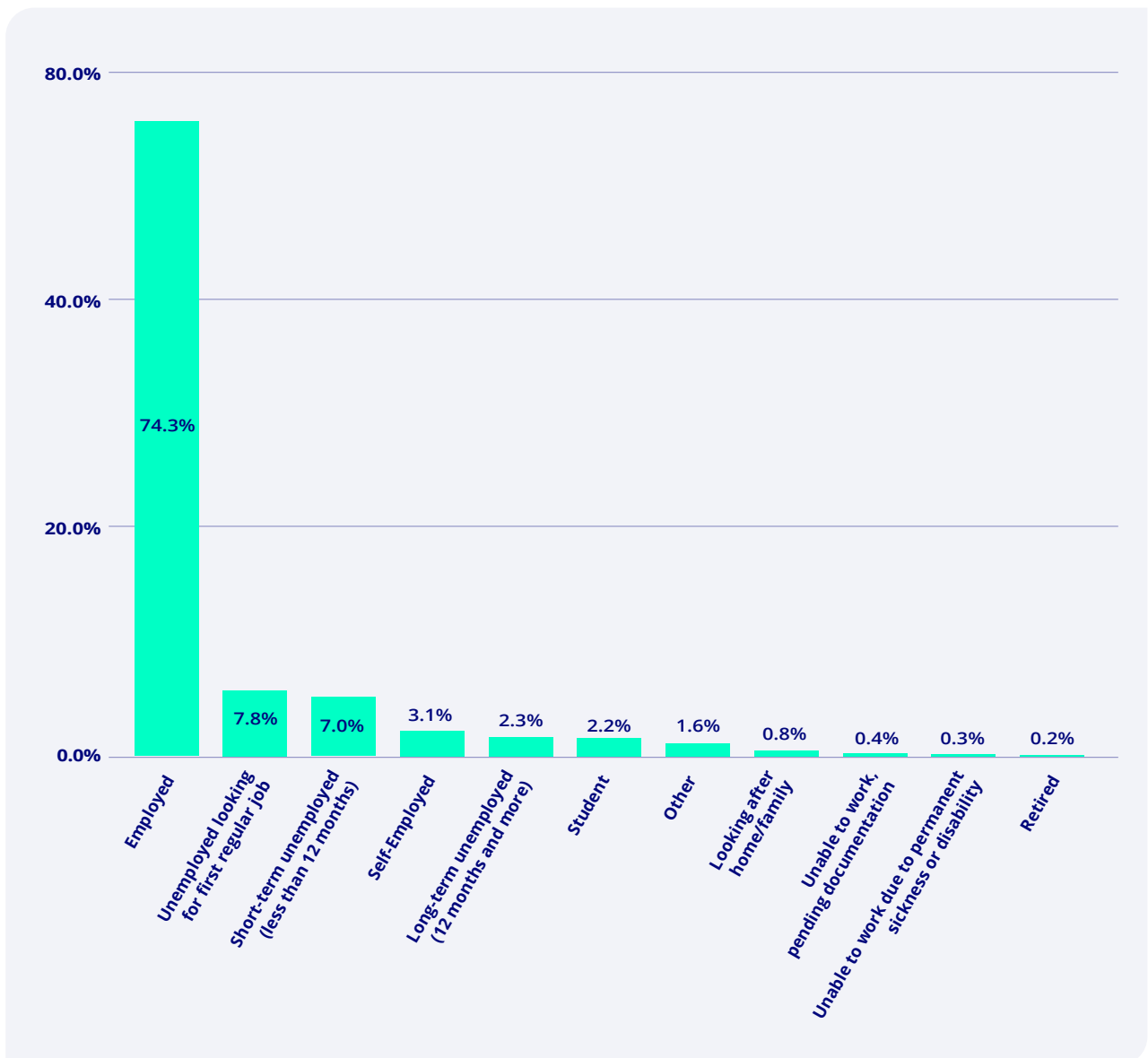## 2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

2.2. Motivations for immigration to Ireland among ethnic minorities

In the survey on Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace, participants were asked to identify their main reasons for immigrating to Ireland. Figure 13 illustrates the factors that influenced the decision of individuals from non-White Irish ethnic backgrounds, who were not born in Ireland, to relocate to the country.

Figure 13: Motivations to relocate to Ireland
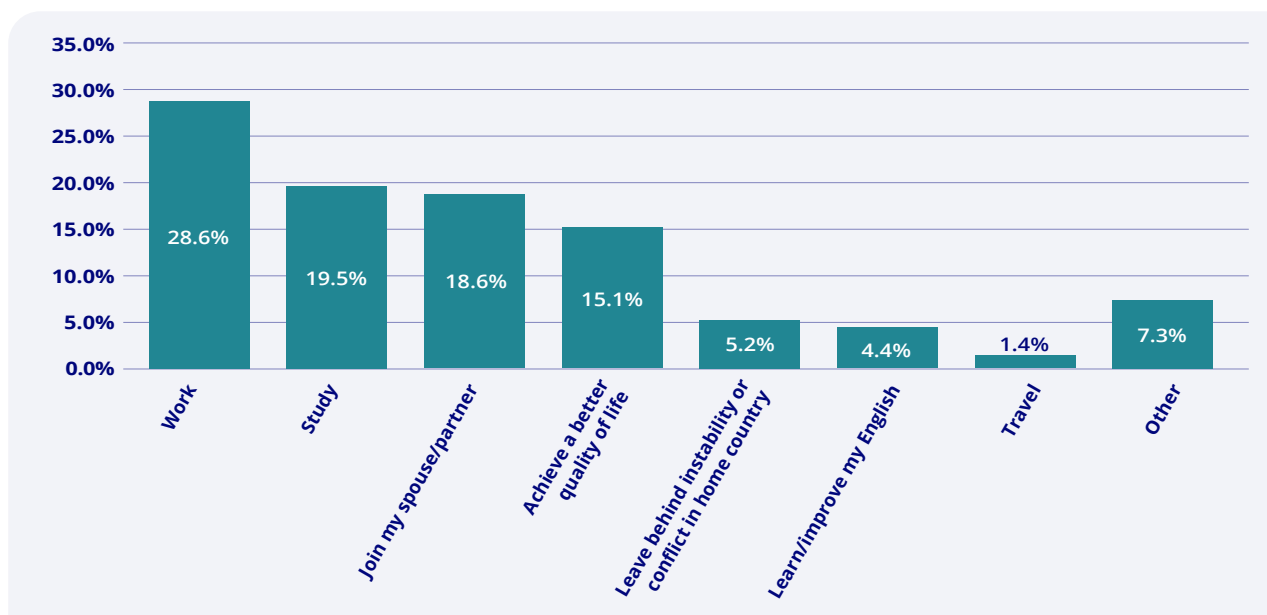
Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

The main reasons cited for moving to Ireland are working and studying. These reasons vary between each ethnic groups. Figure 14 illustrates the reasons for relocating to Ireland for each ethnic group.

Figure 14: Reasons for immigration to Ireland by ethnic minority group
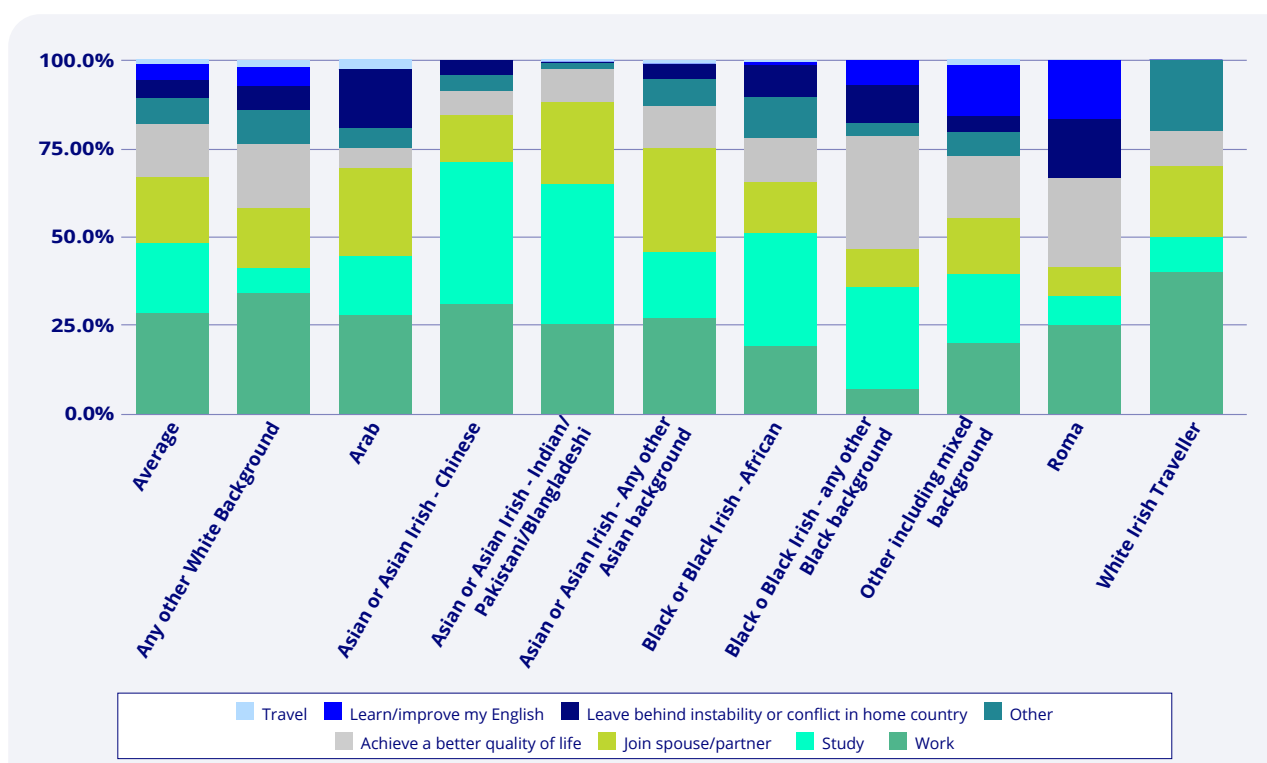
Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey
Note that 69% of White Irish Travellers respondents were born in Ireland and that this figure is only based on the responses of the White Irish Travellers who were born abroad.

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

2.2.1. Employment

Most individuals from non White-Irish ethnic groups immigrating to Ireland do so to secure employment, as indicated by 29% of respondents to the survey.

This varies among each ethnic group, as can be seen from Figure 15 focusing on the proportion of individuals coming to the country to work.

Figure 15: Proportion of ethnic minority respondents immigrating to work in Ireland

Ethnic group	Other reasons	Work
White Irish Traveller	60.0%	40.0%
Any other White Background	65.8%	34.2%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	68.9%	31.1%
All ethnic minority groups	71.4%	28.6%
Arab	72.2%	27.8%
Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background	72.8%	27.2%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/ Pakistani/Bangladeshi	74.6%	25.4%
Roma	75.0%	25.0%
Other including mixed background	79.9%	20.1%
Black or Black Irish - African	80.7%	19.3%
Black o Black Irish - any other Black background	92.9%	7.1%

Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

85% of the persons reporting to have come to Ireland to work, across the 10 ethnic minority groups, are currently employed or self-employed. The main industry sectors in which these individuals are employed are Information Technology (22%), Financial Services (15%), Manufacturing (9%), Healthcare (5%) and Education (5%). Of the persons coming to Ireland to work, 32% required an employment permit to do so. Among the survey participants who came to Ireland for work, 12% are currently unemployed. As discussed in Chapter 1, this unemployment rate is significantly higher than the national average of 4.3%. Of the unemployed respondents, 71% reported that they do not require an employment permit. This suggests that employment permits are just one of many barriers that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds face in accessing employment. These barriers will be explored in detail in Chapter 3.

Working is also the main reason why individuals from an Any other White background (34%), an Arab background (28%) and an Other including mixed background (20%) choose to come to Ireland.

As mentioned earlier in the report, most individuals from an Any other White background (52%[23]) were born in EU countries. EU citizens enjoy the same rights as Irish citizens to access work. It partially explains why working is the main reason why individuals from this ethnic background chose to come to Ireland.

The survey respondents from the Any other White background who migrated to Ireland for work primarily originated from Poland, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Portugal, and Romania. Within this group, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 49% identifying as male and 50% as female. In contrast, individuals of Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background who came to Ireland for work are predominantly male, comprising 71% of this group. Conversely, among those from the same background who chose to relocate to Ireland for study, a significant majority are female, accounting for 61%.

> " I wanted to come to an English speaking country to help improve my language. My brother was already here in Ireland."
> Hungarian participant

[23] Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

2.2.2. Study

The survey findings reveal that the second most common reason individuals from ethnic minority groups chose to come to Ireland is for educational purposes, as reported by 20% of respondents.
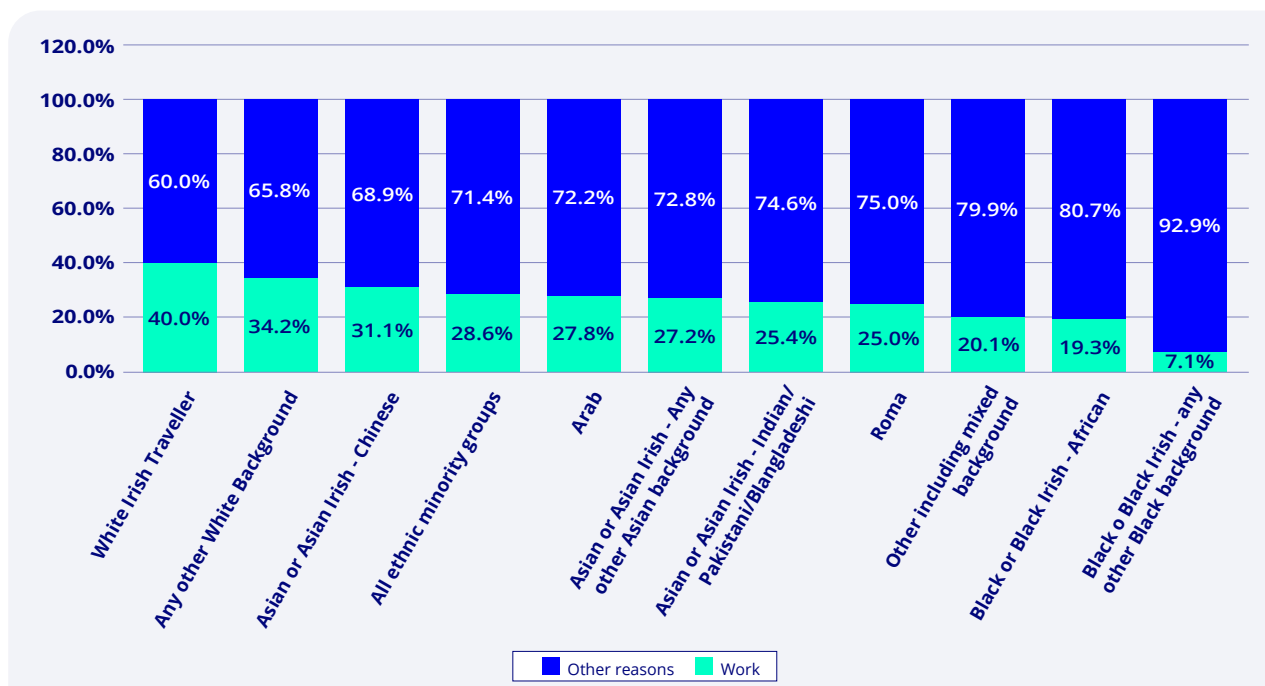
Figure 16: Proportion of ethnic minority respondents immigrating to study in Ireland
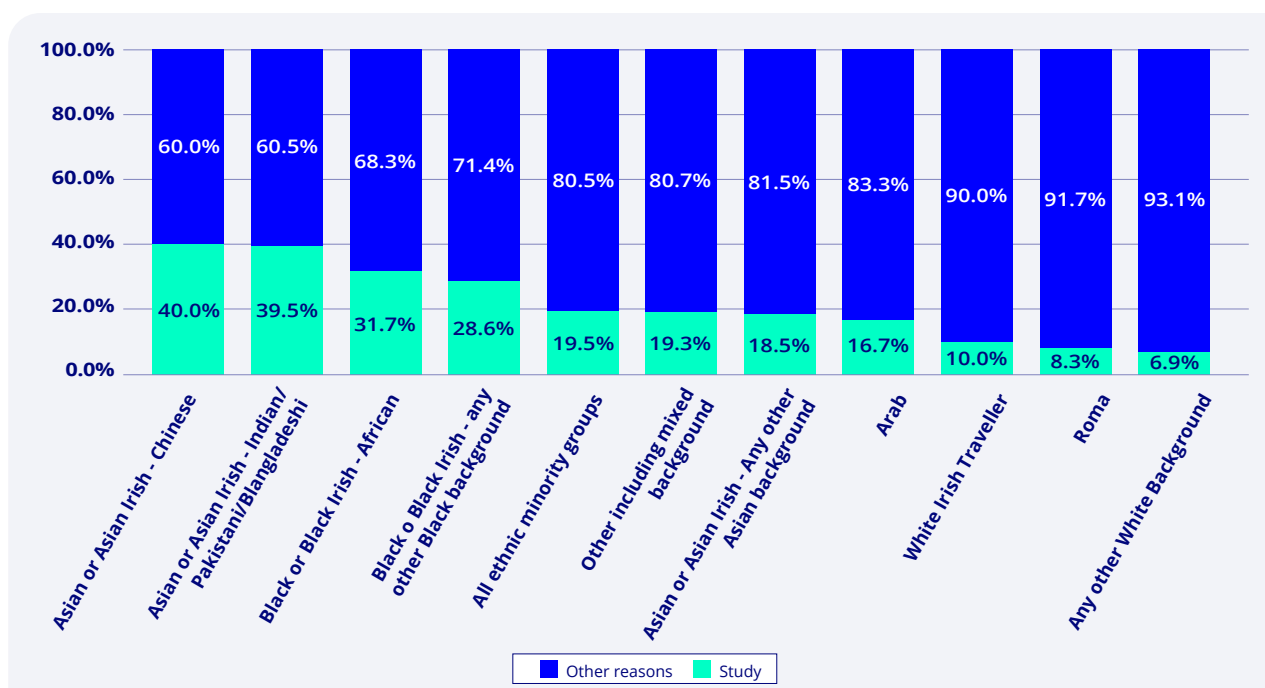
Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

For certain ethnic groups, studying is the most prevalent reason for immigration, surpassing employment. This is particularly true for individuals of Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background (40%), Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background (40%), and Black or Black Irish - African background (32%). In contrast, for individuals of 'Any Other White' background, studying ranks as the fourth reason for coming to Ireland, following employment, the pursuit of a better quality of life, and joining a spouse or partner.

Figure 17 shows the evolution of international enrolments in Irish third-level education institutions between the academic years of 2016/2017 and 2022/2023.

Figure 17: International enrolments in Higher Education in Ireland (2016 - 2023)
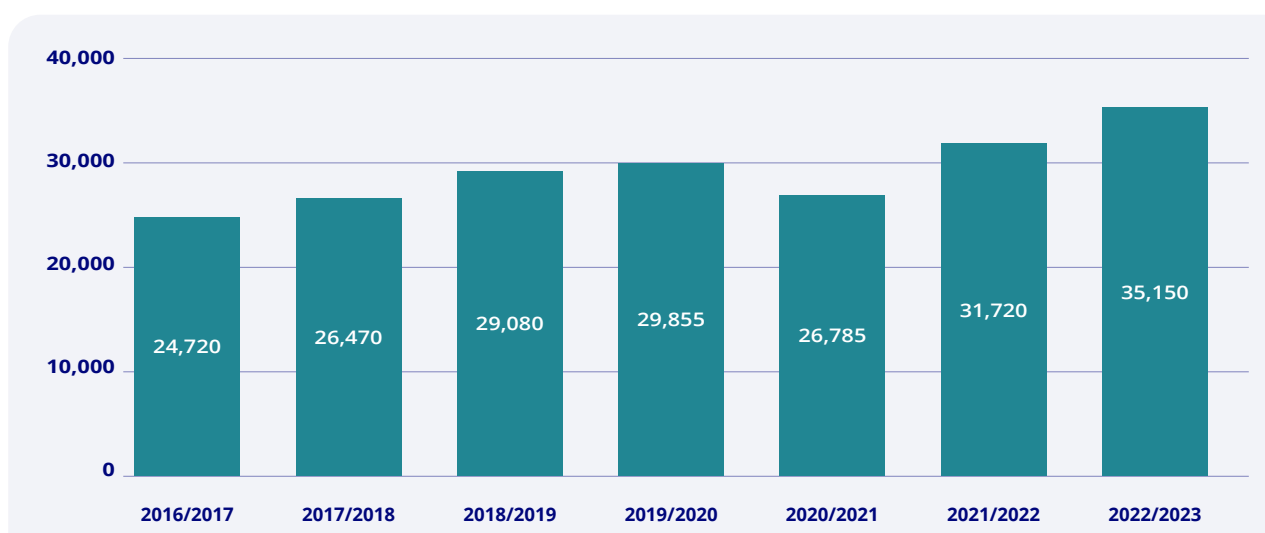
Source: Higher Education Authority (2024).Statistics on International Enrolments in Higher Education

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

Overall, 35,150 international students enrolled in Irish third-level institutions for the Academic year 2022/2023, this represents an increase of 42% from the Academic year 2016/2017. The number of international students studying a postgraduate degree has also risen in recent years. In the academic year beginning in 2016, 35% of international students came to Ireland to pursue a postgraduate degree, a figure that increased to 45% by the 2022/2023 academic year.

Based on the survey findings, the main countries of origin for immigrants who have come to Ireland to study are India, Nigeria, Brazil, China and the United States. These findings match the information provided by the HEA[24] whereas the United States, India and China represented the 3 main countries of origin of international students enrolling in Irish third-level institutions for the year 2022/2023. 15% of international students who enrolled in third-level institutions came from the USA, 14% from India and 11% from China. The other top countries of origin of international students are Canada, France, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Brazil.

Overall, **35,150** international students enrolled in Irish third-level institutions for the Academic year 2022/2023, this represents an increase of **42%** from the Academic year 2016/2017.

In terms of age profile, the persons coming to the country to pursue their education include not only young adults but also mature students. 8% of the respondents coming to Ireland to study are under 25 years of age, 39% are between 25 and 29 years of age, 39% are between 30 and 39 years of age and 15% are older than 40 years of age. This means more than 50% of respondents who came to Ireland to study are aged 30 or over.

Data from the interviews conducted for this research substantiates the view that studying in Ireland is perceived as a pathway to entering the employment market for individuals from outside the EU. Many non-EU students opt to pursue higher education in Ireland, recognising it as a means to access post-study work opportunities. The Third Level Graduate Programme in Ireland permits non-EU graduates to remain in the country for a designated period (typically one to two years) following the completion of their studies, during which time they can seek employment. This timeframe often serves as a crucial stepping stone for obtaining long-term visas or employment permits, thereby positioning education as a strategic entry point for non-EU nationals aspiring to access the Irish job market.

2.2.3. Escape instability or achieve a better quality of life
In Ireland, the Immigration and Protection Office (IPO) is primarily responsible for handling applications for international protection (asylum) in Ireland. Established under the International Protection Act 2015, the IPO is part of the Department of Justice and ensures that Ireland complies with its international obligations, such as the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees.

Between January and July 2024, the IPO received over 12,339 applications for International protection, this represents a 91% increase from the total number of applications received between January and July 2023 (6,469) and a 747% increase from the number of applications received between January and July of 2017 (1,457). The distribution channels for our survey and the methods used to recruit interview participants for the qualitative phase of this research resulted in limited representation from asylum seekers and refugees. However, this research includes the experiences of other individuals who have left their home countries to escape instability or seek a better life. Notably, over one in five respondents to the survey indicated that they came to Ireland in pursuit of a better quality of life or to flee instability or conflict in their home country.

Specifically, 15% of respondents stated that their primary reason for moving to Ireland was to pursue a better quality of life. This was the most common reason among those from a Black or Black Irish - any other Black background, with 32% citing it as their main motivation, surpassing reasons like studying or working. Additionally, 25% of respondents from a Roma background and 18% from Any other White background reported coming to Ireland for the same reason. These individuals predominantly originated from countries such as Brazil, South Africa, Poland, the UK, Croatia, the USA, Italy, Lithuania, and Hungary.

Specifically, **15%** of respondents stated that their primary reason for moving to Ireland was to pursue a better quality of life.

24 Higher Education Authority (2024).Statistics on International Enrolments in Higher Education

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

Another 5% of respondents across all ethnic minority groups reported that they moved to Ireland to escape difficult conditions in their home countries. While this is related to seeking a better quality of life, the emphasis is on the perceived necessity of leaving their home country. Roma, Arab, and Black or Black Irish - African groups had the highest proportions of individuals who came to Ireland to escape instability or conflict. The top countries of origin for those fleeing difficult situations, as highlighted by the survey, are South Africa, Ukraine, Brazil, Nigeria, and Argentina.

> " I moved as it was not safe for my husband to live in Libya anymore. A friend recommended that it would be safer to move to another country. I looked at a number of countries, but it was easier to get into Ireland. "
> Female participant from Libya.

Overall, individuals from minority backgrounds decide to move to Ireland for different reasons, and these seem to have an impact on their insertion into the employment market.

Our research finds that individuals who immigrated to Ireland to join their spouse or partner face the highest levels of unemployment, with one in four respondents in this category reporting unemployment. This finding is particularly significant given that 89% of these individuals hold either an undergraduate degree, a postgraduate degree, or a professional qualification.

This is in spite of the fact that some spouses or de facto partners have the right to work in Ireland. For instance, spouses or de facto partners of professionals holding a Critical Skills Employment Permit (CSEP), researchers on a Hosting Agreement, and doctors with a Stamp 1H are granted a Stamp 1G upon arrival, allowing them to work in Ireland without needing an employment permit. As of May 15, 2024, spouses or de facto partners of General Employment Permit (GEP) holders or Intra-Corporate Transferee (ICT) permit holders can also work without an employment permit if they reside in Ireland under Stamp 3 immigration permission.

Nearly 60% of individuals reporting to have come to Ireland to join their partner are women, which may contribute to their challenges in securing employment due to household responsibilities, particularly when children are involved. These responsibilities can limit their availability and flexibility to seek and maintain employment, especially in the absence of a local support network.

Similarly, over one in four individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds who came to Ireland to escape conflict or to study are unemployed. In contrast, the highest employment rates are observed among individuals who immigrated to Ireland for work, travel, or to improve their English language skills.

2.3. Overall relationship to Ireland

Regardless of the individual profiles, unique experiences, and diverse reasons for coming to Ireland (for first-generation immigrants), our research has revealed a strong desire among respondents to stay in the country. This widespread sentiment appears to outweigh the challenges some may face, particularly in securing employment.

This research examines the key factors valued by individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds who have immigrated to Ireland

Table 5: Top 5 factors liked by ethnic minority respondents about Ireland

	Factor	
1	People	
2	Work-life balance	
3	Job opportunities	
4	Natural landscape	
5	Culture and lifestyle	

Source: Morgan McKinley,'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

42% of respondents ranked 'People' in Ireland among their top 3 likes about the country.

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

During the one to one interviews held for the purpose of this research, Irish 'people' have been described as 'kind', 'calm', 'relaxed', 'laid back', 'friendly', 'open-minded', 'sociable', 'helpful'. The second most valued aspect of the country among survey respondents is the 'Work-life balance', followed by 'Job opportunities' as the third.

> Over **1 in 3** respondents to the survey ranked 'Natural landscape' among the top 3 factors they liked about the country.

Other factors listed as the top 3 likes about Ireland include 'Safety', 'Culture and lifestyle', 'Education opportunities' and its 'location in Europe'.

The concept of 'Culture and lifestyle' varied among participants. Some emphasised Ireland's rich cultural offerings, while others highlighted the abundance of outdoor activities. Many parents appreciated the quality of sports facilities available for children. Participants from countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, and India, among others, also praised Ireland's overall quality of life. Additionally, cultural diversity was noted by several participants, though perceptions of Ireland as a culturally diverse country varied significantly depending on their country of origin. Participants from countries like the UK were less likely to praise Ireland's multiculturalism and inclusivity compared to those from African, Asian, and American countries.

> " Wonderful people. People are friendly and kind, polite and good community people "
> Korean participant

> " I like the people, the smile that people give you makes you feel like a sense of belonging to a country " Indian participant

When asked about their favourite aspects of Ireland, White Irish respondents highlighted similar themes as those from ethnic minority backgrounds, with 'People,' 'Natural landscape,' and 'Culture & lifestyle' ranking highest. However, unlike respondents from ethnic minority groups, White Irish participants did not include 'Job opportunities' or 'Work-life balance' among their top five factors. This difference can partly be attributed to the fact that many individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds have moved to Ireland from countries where access to employment and working conditions are perceived to be less favourable than in Ireland.

Table 6: Top 5 factors disliked by ethnic minority respondents about Ireland

	Factor	
1	Cost of living	
2	Housing market	
3	Weather	
4	Public Health	
5	Culture and lifestyle	

Source: Morgan McKinley, 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

Two thirds of the respondents to the survey ranked the 'Cost of living' as one of their top 3 dislikes about Ireland. The rising cost of living in Ireland presents a challenge for the entire population, but it can be particularly difficult for newly arrived immigrants. Although only a small portion of research participants cited the increasing cost of living as a reason for leaving the country, the vast majority reported being affected by it to varying extents.

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

The rising cost of living in Ireland intensified around October 2021. The Covid-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions in global supply chains, leading to shortages of goods and materials. This contributed to price increases for a wide range of products. In Ireland, these disruptions led to higher costs for imported goods, further exacerbating the cost of living crisis. Consumer prices went up by 9% between October 2021 and October 2022 across all items. This price increase was particularly noticeable in commodities related to food

> Consumer prices went up by **9%** between October 2021 and October 2022 across all items.

and housing. For example, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages went up by 11% between October 2021 and October 2022 and the price of commodities related to housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels increased by 28% in the same time frame[25]. Overall, the cost of goods and services went up by 20% between August 2019 and August 2024[26]. In 2023, Ireland had the second highest prices in the EU27 at 42% above the EU27 average[27].Despite rising average weekly earnings in Ireland, these increases have not been sufficient to offset inflation or the rising cost of accommodation. Between Q2 2023 and Q2 2024, the average gross weekly earnings reached €936.17, reflecting a 6% increase from the previous year[28]. However, this wage growth has had a limited impact on helping the population cope with the rising cost of living, particularly in housing. No major changes to income tax have been implemented in recent years, and a gross weekly salary of €936.17 translates to approximately €3,142 per month after taxes[29]. With average rental prices in Q2 2024 at €2,377 in Dublin City Centre and €2,005 in Cork City[30] renting in these areas would consume between 60% and 80% of the average monthly income, leaving many households financially strained. This high proportion of income spent on rent underscores the severity of Ireland's housing affordability crisis.

Additionally, housing availability continues to worsen. Many individuals, particularly migrants, are forced into house-sharing arrangements or live far from their workplaces due to the scarcity of affordable housing options. This shortage of accommodation not only impacts the local population but also poses a significant barrier to attracting foreign professionals.

Moreover, the types of accommodation being developed and brought to market in Ireland today often do not align with what international ethnic minority talent may have been accustomed to in their home countries. Many of these new housing options lack the privacy and space necessary for individuals to fulfil their personal and religious needs. For instance, communal living situations may not provide the quiet or solitude required for prayer or reflection, which can be essential for some migrants.

As housing costs continue to rise, they become an additional obstacle for industries already facing labour shortages, such as construction, healthcare, and ICT. Without adequate housing that meets the needs of skilled workers, these sectors risk a diminished inflow of talent, further exacerbating their existing challenges.

> " The weather is always cold and raining."
> Zimbabwean participant

Anecdotally, Ireland's weather ranked third among the most disliked factors. Many participants highlighted the rain and cold as unfavourable, though these complaints were often expressed in a light-hearted manner.

'Public Health' came 4th in terms of disliked factors about the country. The views of participants on Public Health varied greatly as the views on these services were evaluated in comparison to the Public Health from the individuals' home country. Chinese participants to the qualitative interviews held in the context of this research expressed dissatisfaction on the ease to access public healthcare and insisted on the long waiting times.

Given that this report focuses primarily on the relationship between individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds and employment, we examined the factors they prioritised most in their job search in Ireland.

> " The cost of living doesn't allow me to rent a house on my own so I have to share"
> Spanish participant

> " The medical system is not good, (you) have to book 2 weeks in advance to see a doctor, healthcare is expensive"
> Chinese participant

---

[25] Central Statistics Office (2024). Consumer Price Index [26]Central Statistics Office (2024). CPI Inflation Calculator [27]Eurostat (2024). Comparative price levels of consumer goods and services [28]Central Statistics Office (2024). Average Weekly Earnings [29]Pwc (2025). Income Tax results calculator. Based on the income tax simulation of a 35 years old single person with no dependants [30]Daft.ie (2024). The Daft.ie Rental Price Report: An analysis of recent trends in the Irish residential market 2024 Q2

2. Survey participant profiles and their connection to Ireland

Table 7: Top 5 job factors valued by ethnic minority respondents

	Factor	
1	Salary & benefits	
2	A position that matches my qualifications and experience	
3	Job security/stability	
4	Flexibility	
5	Company culture	

Source: Morgan McKinley,'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

Across all ethnic minority groups, **69%** of respondents ranked 'Salary and benefits' among the top three factors they consider most important when seeking employment in Ireland.

Specifically, one in five respondents identified it as the single most important factor in their job search. The second most valued consideration is finding a position that aligns with their qualifications and experience, with more than half of participants citing it as one of their top three priorities and over one-third naming it as the most important factor driving their job search. Other highly valued factors included 'Job security and stability, 'Flexibility' and 'Company culture'.

'Remote working' was the **sixth** most important factor with over one in four respondents mentioning it as one of their top three considerations.

Other factors such as 'To be treated with respect' and 'Not to be discriminated against' were mentioned as important considerations when looking for a job, they respectively ranked 7th and 8th. Despite not appearing in the overall top 5, it is noteworthy to mention that 42% of survey respondents identified 'Being treated with respect' or 'Not being discriminated against' as one of their top three priorities when seeking employment in Ireland, though only 8% ranked it as their highest concern.

The importance of workplace respect emerged spontaneously during the qualitative phase of the research, particularly among participants from White Irish Traveller, Roma, Black or Black Irish - African, and Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese backgrounds. In the survey, one in four respondents listed respect as a key factor in their job search, with Arab and Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese respondents being notably well-represented among those who prioritised respect. The desire for respect was more prominent among White Irish Traveller and Roma groups during the qualitative interviews.

> In summary, our research indicates that, despite the diverse experiences and unique challenges faced by individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in Ireland, there is a pronounced inclination among these respondents to remain in the country. This attachment is primarily driven by positive aspects such as the welcoming nature of the Irish people, favourable work-life balance, and job opportunities. However, respondents also identified significant concerns, particularly regarding the rising cost of living and dissatisfaction with other issues.
>
> These factors are not merely anecdotal; they reflect deeper systemic issues that warrant further examination. The subsequent section of this report will delve into the experiences of ethnic minority groups concerning discrimination and barriers to employment, exploring how these elements impact their integration and success in the Irish labour market.

Persona 3:
Mei's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from an Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background

My name is Mei. I am 43 years old and I moved to Cork from China in 2004 to join my partner, who had been offered a job here.

"I feel that Ireland doesn't have as many work opportunities as China. Asian people are not getting the top jobs here, unlike Europeans. When I first arrived, I was a bit concerned about my English skills, thinking it might hinder my job prospects.Thankfully, I didn't face too many difficulties finding work. It probably helped that I applied for a position in a major Chinese Technology company that employs a significant number of Chinese people. I have been working in this company for nearly 15 years.

I really enjoy life in Ireland. It's a calm and relaxed country, much quieter than my own, and the people are friendly, which makes me feel safe. My son received his education here and has become quite successful.

Of course, there are some frustrations. The housing crisis has made it challenging to find decent accommodation, and the healthcare system is difficult, especially with long waiting times to see a doctor.

Although most people in Ireland are welcoming, I've experienced some racism. I don't feel entirely accepted, and I recall some unpleasant incidents, like when someone shouted at me from a car to "go back to my country." That said, over the 20 years I've been here, I've seen things improve. When I first arrived, there were only a few Chinese people in Cork, but now there's a growing diversity with people from many different nationalities."

Persona 4:
Layla's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from an Arab background

My name is Layla, and I recently decided to move from Egypt to Ireland. I was seeking a safer and more stable environment, as the situation back home had become increasingly unsafe, with wages as low as €20 a month. I've now been living in Galway for the past 18 months, where I hope to build a better future.

" One of the things I really appreciate about Ireland is the sense of safety and the warmth of the people. From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed. While there is some discrimination, I've found that there is less racism here compared to other places I have been. The education system is also excellent, which is a huge plus.

However, I am still struggling with some challenges. The cold, wet weather is something I am not sure I will ever fully get used to. Finding affordable housing is difficult, and rent prices are very high. My long commute is another issue—until my driving license is sorted, I have to take two buses just to drop my child at childcare.

Securing a good job has been one of the hardest parts of adjusting to life here. Back home, I worked as an accountant in financial services, but I haven't been able to find work in my field in Ireland. I have a two-year visa, but employers don't seem willing to take me on. Despite applying to over 100 jobs, I've only landed two interviews. Out of necessity, I have taken a part-time job as a waitress while I continue to search for something better.
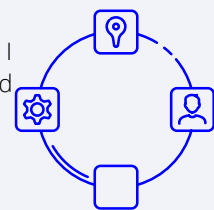
In one of my interviews with an Irish company, I was asked if I was Muslim. When I said yes, the interviewer questioned whether I planned to pray at work and how that would "look." That was quite off-putting, and I ended up withdrawing from the process. Also, not drinking surprises people here, especially in work settings, where a lot of social events revolve around alcohol. It is something I am still adjusting to. "

# 3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

3.   Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

The integration of individuals in the labour market is a key factor in the enhancement of their economic stability, social inclusion, personal growth, and overall well-being. As seen in the first Chapter of this research, there are differences in the labour force participation rates and outcomes between White Irish and individuals from other ethnic minority groups. Factors such as educational background and language proficiency alone cannot fully account for the disadvantages faced by this population[31]. This suggests that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds may encounter unique challenges compared to individuals from a White Irish background. This section aims to identify these challenges and determine whether they are prevalent across all ethnic minority groups.

Figure 18: Employment challenges experienced by ethnic minority groups
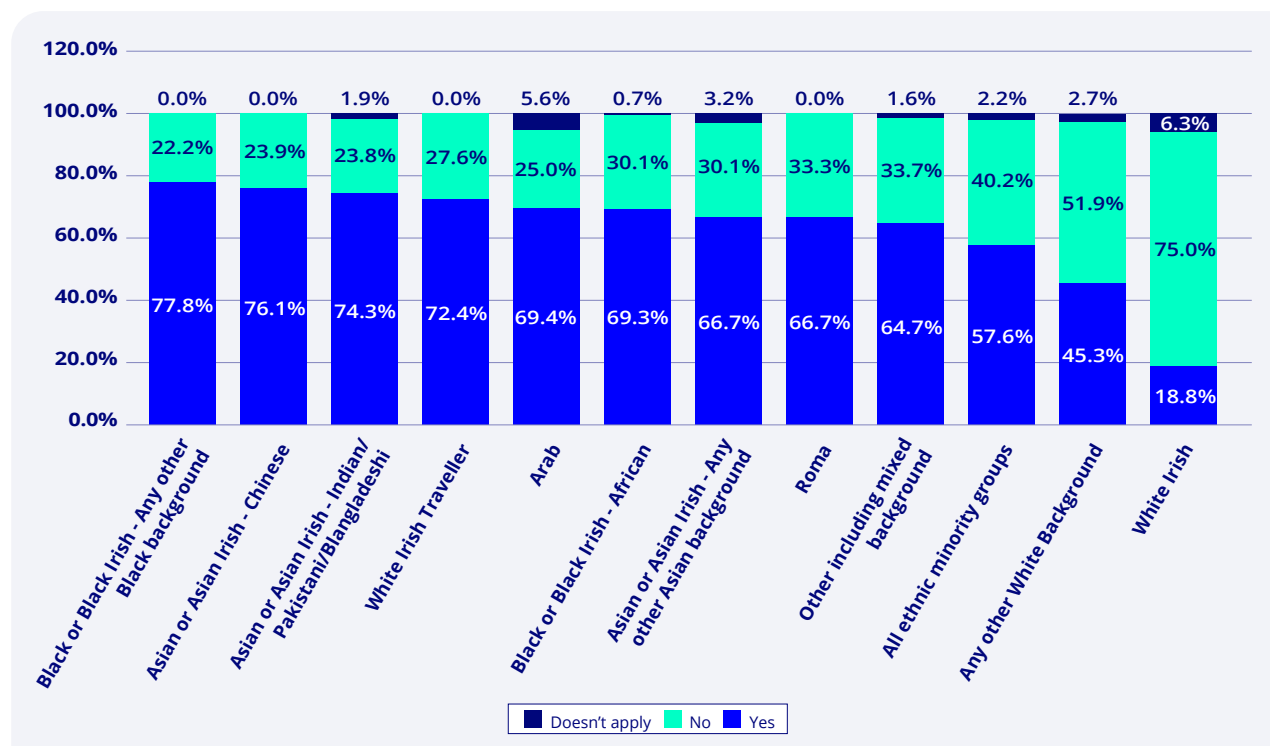
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

The survey findings indicate notable differences among various ethnic groups in Ireland concerning their experiences with challenges in the job search process.

Among the White Irish respondents, only 19% reported facing challenges in finding work, with 75% indicating they do not experience such difficulties. In contrast, ethnic minorities reported much higher levels of difficulty across all groups (with the exception of Any other White background) with over 1 in 2 respondents from non-White Irish backgrounds reporting difficulties in their job searches. Significantly, 78% of respondents from Black or Black Irish - any other Black background reported experiencing challenges in securing employment, while 69% of Black or Black Irish-African respondents indicated similar difficulties. These statistics suggest that individuals from a Black background in Ireland face substantial barriers in the job market.

The data regarding Arab respondents is significant, with 69% indicating they encounter difficulties in securing employment. Additionally, among Asian groups, 76% of Chinese respondents and 74% of individuals from Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi backgrounds reported facing comparable challenges in the job market. Other Asian backgrounds also indicated a high incidence of difficulties, with 67% expressing struggles in the job search.

> " Because I am black, and despite my excellent background and qualifications in the accounting field, I am still unemployed. "
> Male participant from Côte d'Ivoire

Additionally, 65% of respondents from Any other mixed backgrounds reported difficulties, while 67% of Roma individuals and 72% of White Irish Travellers noted challenges in finding work.

31   McGinnity, F., Privalko, I., Fahey, É., Enright, S., & O'Brien, D.Origin and integration: A study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census. Economic and Social Research Institute/Department of Justice and Equality

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

These findings suggest that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds face significant barriers in the job market, particularly among Black or Black Irish, Arab, Asian or Asian Irish respondents, and White Irish Travellers. The challenges highlighted in this chapter underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the specific employment difficulties faced by these communities.

3.1. Barriers common to all ethnic groups

This section examines the experiences of discrimination faced by both first-generation immigrants and second-generation Irish citizens, focusing specifically on factors related to their ethnic backgrounds and ethnicity-based discrimination.

The main pieces of legislation in Ireland protecting individuals from discrimination are the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015. The Employment Equality Act, initially introduced in 1998 and later amended, establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure fair treatment of individuals in employment-related matters. These matters include recruitment, pay, training and work experience, conditions of employment, promotion and progression, classification of posts, collective agreements as well as dismissal. The Act prohibits discrimination based on nine separate grounds, including race and ethnic origin. Other prohibited grounds for discrimination include gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability and membership of the Traveller community.

The other important legislation protecting individuals from discrimination is the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 which promotes equality and prohibits discrimination in areas beyond employment, such as the provision of goods and services, education and accommodation. The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination on the same grounds as the Employment Equality Acts.

Individuals can bring a discrimination claim under both acts to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).

> " They offer illegal working contracts and low wages. When I confront them about an illegal work contract they say: do you want this job or not? They hire immigrants for low salaries because they know they are desperate. At least we have the Workplace Relations Committee in Ireland, but before reporting a company you have to find a new job. Once you report your company they will fire you. " Male participant from Croatia

3.1.1. Discrimination experienced by ethnic groups

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate how inclusive Ireland was as a society. They were asked to rate it using a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 was not inclusive at all and 10 was very inclusive. Below is a table presenting the average rating per ethnic group.

Table 8: Average rating of Ireland as an inclusive society per ethnic group

Rate	Average rating[32]
Arab	7.3
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	7.1
Roma	6.9
Any other White background	6.9
All ethnic minorities	**6.8**
Other including mixed background	6.8
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	6.6
Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background	6.6
Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background	6.1
Black or Black Irish - African	5.9
White Irish Traveller	5.7

Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

[32] Participants were asked to rate it using a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 was not inclusive at all and 10 was very inclusive

# 3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Table 8 indicates that the White Irish Traveller group has the highest proportion of individuals who perceive Ireland as lacking inclusivity. Similarly, Black or Black Irish individuals are more inclined than other groups to rate Ireland as not very inclusive. Nearly half of the Traveller community and approximately 40% of Black or Black Irish respondents assessed Ireland's inclusivity poorly, with scores ranging from 1 to 5.

In contrast, the Arab group, as well as the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi group, reported the most favourable perceptions of Ireland's inclusivity. Specifically, 84% of respondents from an Arab background, 81% of individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background, and 82% of Roma respondents rated Ireland's inclusivity positively, with scores ranging from 6 to 10. The findings from our qualitative interviews suggest that the positive views expressed by Roma participants regarding inclusivity in Ireland may stem from their experiences of discrimination. Many reported that the most significant prejudice they faced came from people in their countries of origin, rather than from individuals in their host country. This contrast could explain their favourable perception of Ireland's inclusivity.

Despite the differences in how various ethnic minority groups perceive Ireland's inclusivity, it is important to highlight that, in each group, the proportion of individuals who view Ireland as either moderately or highly inclusive consistently outweighed those who felt otherwise.

Figure 19 below shows the proportion of individuals from ethnic minority groups who reported experiencing discrimination in Ireland, whether at work or outside of work.

Figure 19: Experience of discrimination by individuals per ethnic background
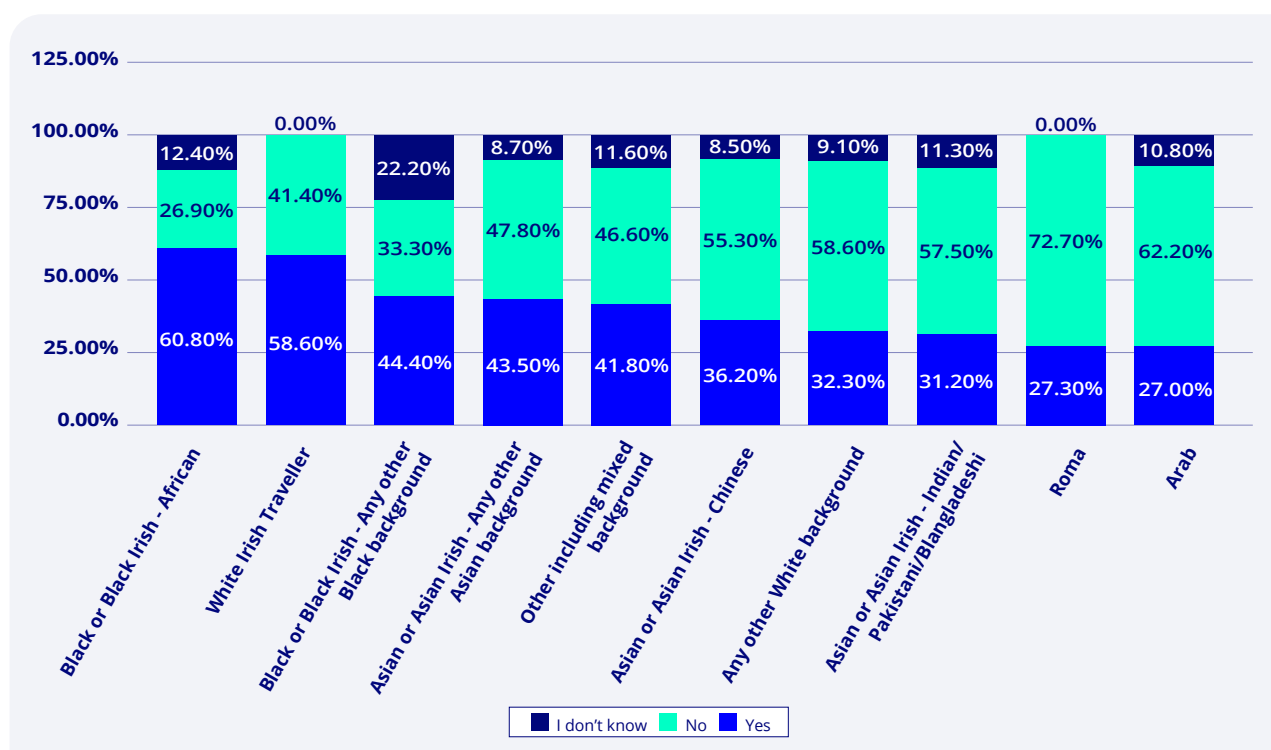
Source: Morgan McKinley Survey 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace'

As shown in Figure 19, the group reporting the highest levels of discrimination is the Black or Black Irish - African group, followed by the White Irish Traveller group. In both cases, over half of the respondents indicated they had experienced discrimination. Reflecting their more positive views on Ireland's inclusivity, the Arab and Roma groups reported the lowest levels of discrimination, with 27% and 27% of respondents, respectively, stating they had faced discrimination. This contrasts with 61% of individuals from the Black or Black Irish - African group and 59% of individuals from the White Irish Traveller group. However, it is also important to note that within the qualitative interviews, there was evidence of widespread non-disclosure of ethnicity particularly within the Roma community, which was cited to be necessary to protect their employment.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

> " I need to hide my Roma identity because of other settled Romanians here. "
> Irish- Romanian participant from a Roma background

Within the Any other White background, some individuals from countries that might not traditionally be associated with being targets of discrimination reported having faced unpleasant incidents while living in Ireland. This is the case of, for example, British or American individuals. The emphasis in these situations was put on the 'stereotypes' associated with their origin. An American participant nuanced their experiences insisting on the fact that discrimination might not have been the proper term to use, but that they were often victims of 'profiling'.

Based on the data collected within the survey, we can note that experiences of discrimination affect all ethnic minority groups, at different levels, and that they can happen at work or outside of work.

> " I am aware of my white privilege, however, there is an instant 'write off' from Irish people against Americans a lot of times, not just Irish people but all Europeans typically have this attitude. Can be frustrating when you can't control where you're from and all the stereotypes that come with it. "
> American survey respondent

> " (I experienced discrimination) only twice as Irish people are usually very nice so both instances came as a shock and have stuck in my memory. On a bus ride, my friend and I were called monkeys and got animal sounds made at us. Whilst most people just stared at us, a very brave young Irish man stood up to the person though so it didn't feel so scary, embarrassing and intimidating. I've been told to go back to my country whilst waiting for a train home. "
> Female participant from Nigeria

While some respondents have noted that this discrimination is widespread throughout the country, others have attempted to provide a more nuanced view regarding the perpetrators of these abusive situations. There is often an emphasis on uneducated or younger individuals, for instance. Participants from various ethnic groups, including Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, Mexico, Turkey, and Vietnam, reported incidents involving teenagers, ranging from name-calling to physical attacks.

> " I was targeted in Dublin for my race but I believe all countries have their fair share of bad apples. "
> Indian participant

While acknowledging that discrimination against ethnic minorities occurs in everyday life, this report will focus specifically on discrimination within the professional sphere, including recruitment, selection, and employment experiences. The survey data and interviews conducted for this research reflect the disparities in labour market outcomes between White Irish individuals and those from ethnic minority groups living in Ireland, as outlined in the report's first section. Although Section 3.2 will highlight the employment barriers primarily faced by first-generation immigrants, this study has revealed that ethnicity-based discrimination in recruitment and the workplace is widespread, impacting both first-generation immigrants and second-generation Irish individuals to varying degrees.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

> " (In terms of career progression) I also don't get called back by recruitment agents for the level of roles I am qualified to do…Asian females are expected to do the grunt work, but are not seen as leadership or senior management material…. "
> Chinese participant

> " Also some recruiters have asked about my marital status and things like 'what does your husband think of you taking this job.' "
> Turkish female participant

3.1.2. Discrimination in employment by ethnic group

Across all ethnic minority groups, 29% of respondents indicated in the survey that they believed their ethnic background posed a barrier to accessing employment in Ireland.

However, this perception varies considerably across different ethnic groups. Figure 20 illustrates the proportion of individuals within each group who perceive their ethnic background as either a barrier or not when it comes to securing employment in the country.

Figure 20: Perceived impact of ethnic background as a barrier to access employment in Ireland
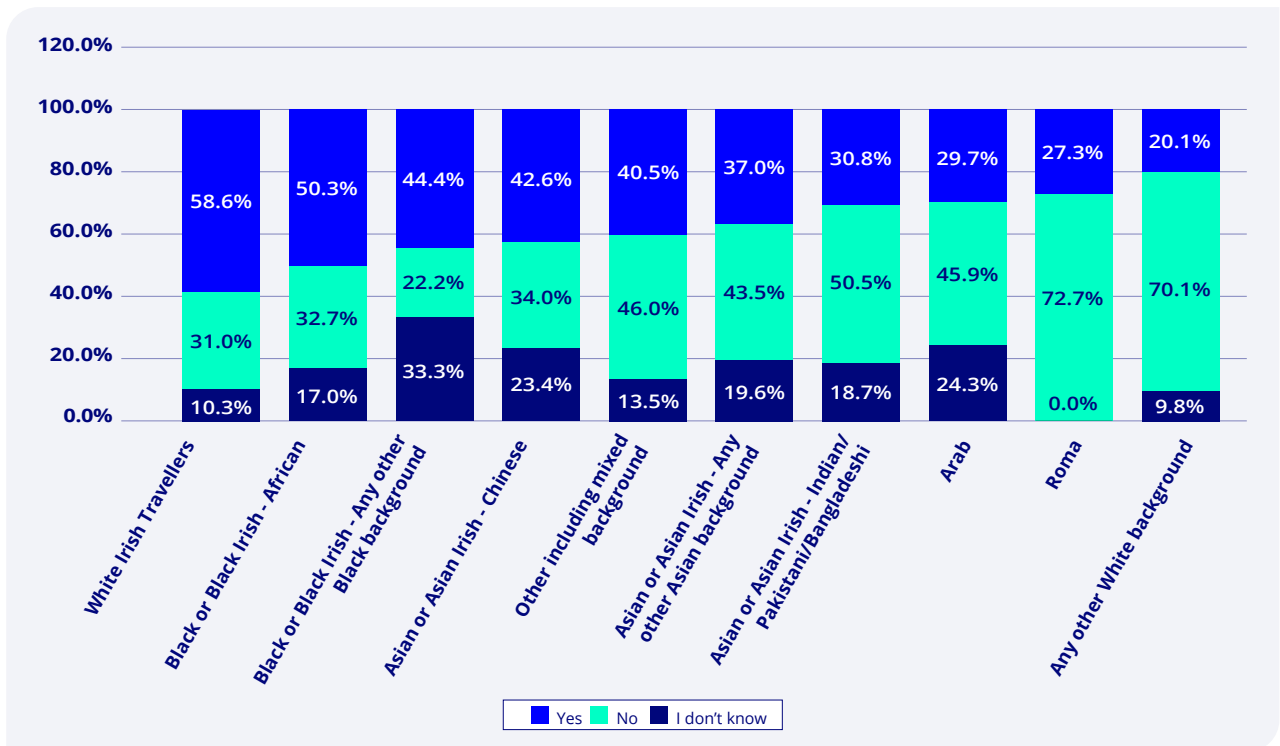
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

More than half of White Irish Traveller respondents (59%) and Black or Black Irish - African respondents (50%) believe their ethnicity is a barrier to employment access in Ireland. Other groups with a notable percentage of individuals feeling that their ethnic background affects their job opportunities include those identifying as Black or Black Irish - any other Black background and Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese. In contrast, respondents from the Any other White background group are the least likely to perceive their ethnicity as a barrier to employment. Among those in this group who view their ethnicity as a barrier, over half are natives of Brazil, Poland, Italy, South Africa, Turkey, the USA, and the UK.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Among respondents to the survey who expressed that their ethnic background was a barrier to finding work, there is a general feeling that employers in the country prefer to hire Irish professionals, despite the fact that they 'might be less qualified' or have less experience. This sentiment has been expressed by respondents from all ethnic minority groups. Several participants noted that they believe this preference for White Irish candidates is particularly prevalent among Irish-owned companies and public institutions.

> " I believe my ethnic background has been a barrier to me being considered for roles which I am suitably qualified for based on my work experience. "
> Male participant from Nigeria

> " In most Irish owned companies, first thing that they look at is country of origin (witnessed it firsthand). "
> Male participant from Croatia

Half of the survey respondents stated that having a job that matched their qualifications and profile was among the top three most important factors when job hunting, ranking just behind salary and benefits. Overall, one in three respondents identified it as the single most important factor in their job search. Due in part to ethnic-related barriers in accessing jobs they feel qualified for, many participants reported being compelled to accept lower-skilled and lower-paid positions than their qualifications justify. This can also create further obstacles in the hiring process, as candidates may be perceived as 'overqualified' and subsequently rejected from consideration.

> " I have been rejected for being overly qualified for low-level positions, and when trying to get a higher position I have been rejected due to lack of experience in the EU. "
> Female participant from Ukraine

This research also examined access to managerial and professional roles among ethnic minorities. Individuals in these roles generally enjoy higher wages, job security, and better career prospects, along with improved working conditions. Therefore, examining inequalities in access to these top-tier positions helps to capture broader social and economic disparities, as it reflects differences in job quality and overall opportunities within the workforce.

Previous studies[33] indicated that certain nationalities and ethnic groups face disadvantages in securing top-level positions. The CSO provides detailed information on the socio-economic classifications of residents in Ireland, segmented into 11 groups[34], ranging from managerial roles and professional workers to manual labour and agricultural workers.

---

[33] McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Groarke, S., & Coughlan, S. (2018). Ethnicity and nationality in the Irish labour market. Economic and Social Research Institute.
[34] Socio Economic Groups: Employers and managers, Higher professional, Lower professional, Non-manual, Manual skilled, Semi-skilled, Unskilled, Own account workers, Farmers, Agricultural workers, All others gainfully occupied and unknown

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Figure 21: Proportion of individuals 15 years+ by ethnic group and socio economic group
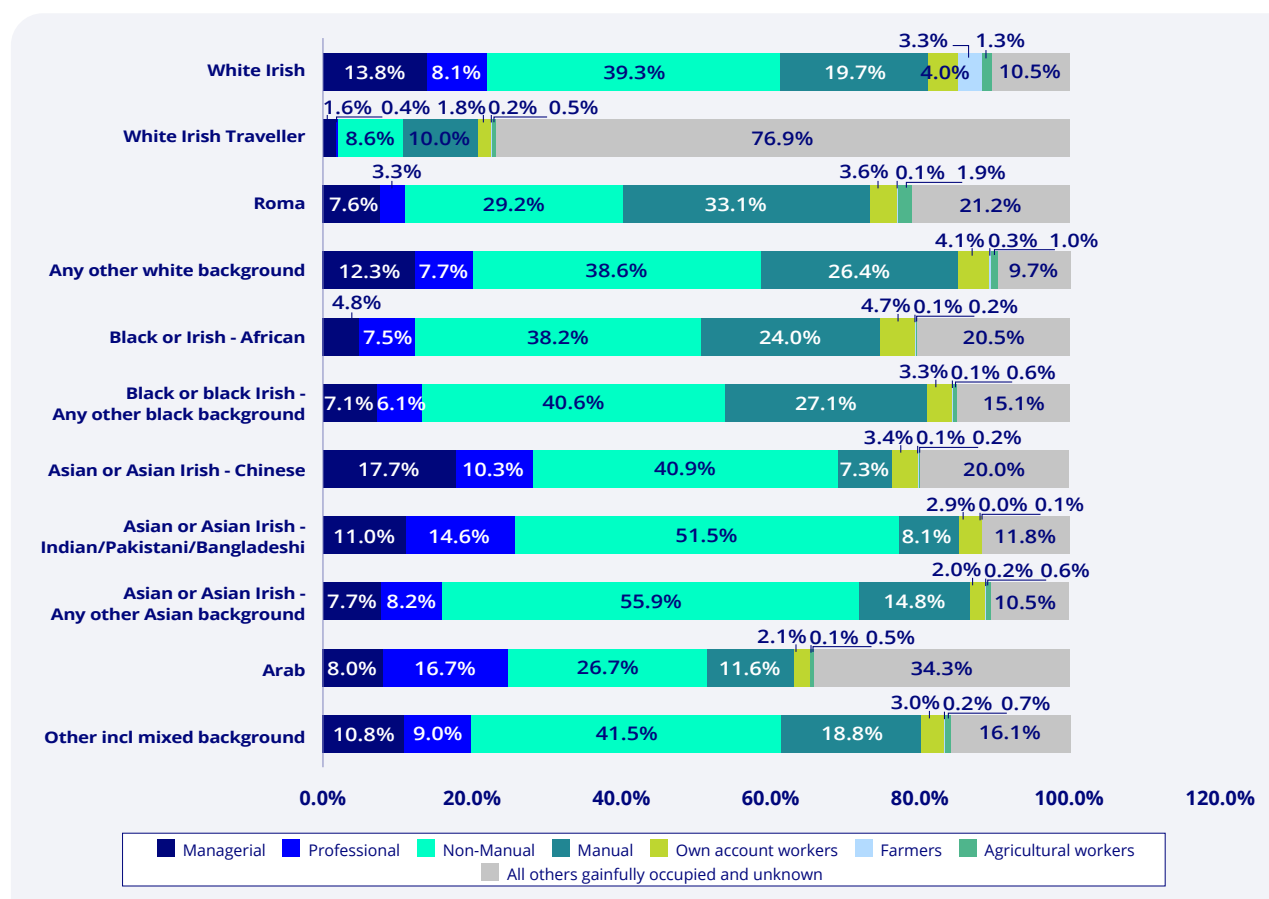
Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022.

As can be seen from the above figure, individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese background were the most likely to occupy Managerial positions, with 18% of them employed in such roles. Individuals from a White Irish background and an Any other White background were the next groups most likely to be in Managerial positions, with 14% and 12%.

Regarding the advantage that Asian or Asian Irish might face in relation to accessing top jobs, previous research[35] mentioned that it is likely influenced by Ireland's employment permit and naturalisation systems. The general policy focuses on attracting high-skilled labour from non-EU countries, which means many Asian Irish professionals may have originally come to Ireland through job-specific permits for high-skilled sectors. This targeted recruitment could explain their higher likelihood of securing managerial or professional positions, as they often enter the workforce with roles that already align with high-skill requirements.

The groups least likely to be in managerial positions were the White Irish Travellers (with only 2% of individuals in this socio economic group), Black or Black Irish - African (5%) and Roma (8%).

Educational attainment is correlated to access to top jobs and previous research has found that people with a third-level honours degree were nine times as likely as people with lower secondary or lower education to be employed in top jobs[36]. The impact of educational level in access to professional and managerial positions can partially explain why individuals from a White Irish Traveller background or a Roma background might be less represented, but fails to justify why individuals from a Black or Black Irish - African background are among the least represented groups in access to top jobs.

While ethnicity-related factors appear to be a barrier to employment access for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in Ireland, they are also seen as obstacles to career progression once in the workplace.

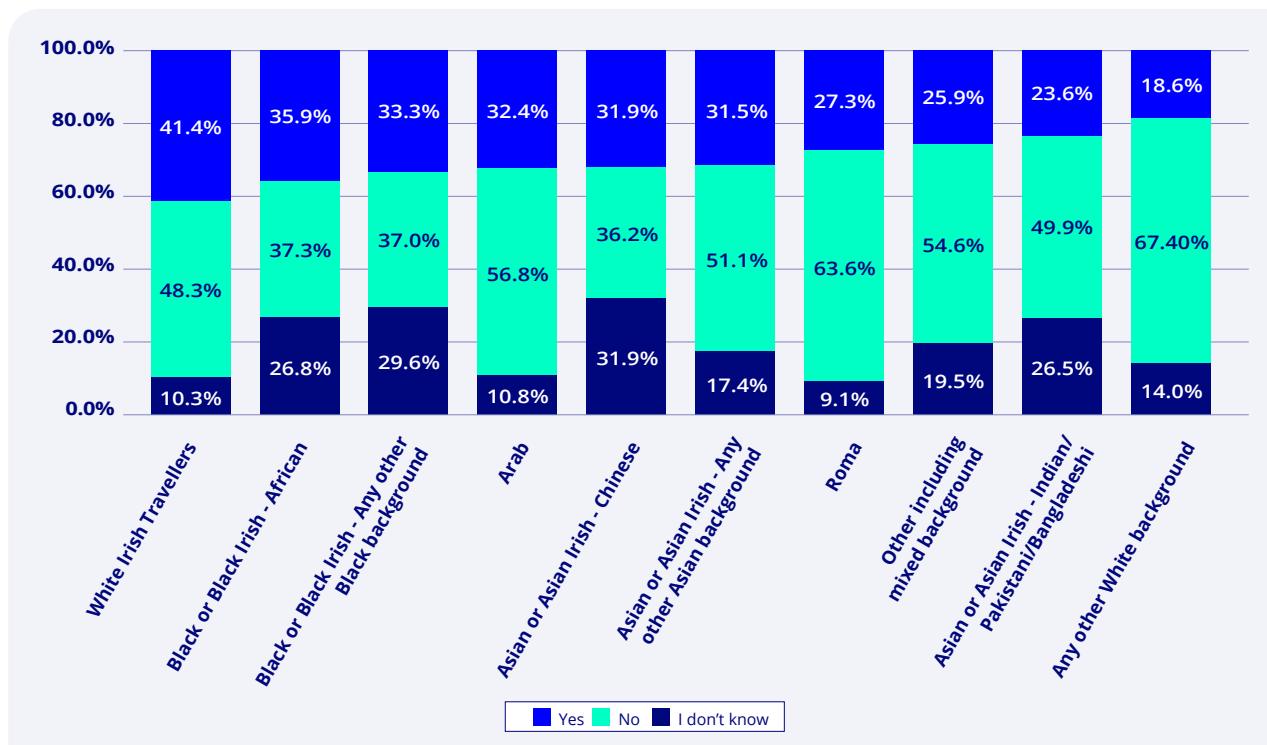35 36   McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Groarke, S., & Coughlan, S. (2018). Ethnicity and nationality in the Irish labour market. Economic and Social Research Institute.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Figure 22: Perceived impact of ethnic background as a barrier to career progression in Ireland

Ethnic group	Yes	No	I don't know
White Irish Travellers	41.4%	48.3%	10.3%
Black or Black Irish - African	35.9%	37.3%	26.8%
Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background	33.3%	37.0%	29.6%
Arab	32.4%	56.8%	10.8%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	31.9%	36.2%	31.9%
Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background	31.5%	51.1%	17.4%
Roma	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%
Other including mixed background	25.9%	54.6%	19.5%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/ Pakistani/Bangladeshi	23.6%	49.9%	26.5%
Any other White background	18.6%	67.40%	14.0%

Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

On average across all ethnic groups, 23% of respondents stated that they believed that their ethnic background posed a barrier to progressing within employment in Ireland. This compares to 29% of respondents indicating that their ethnic background was a barrier to entering employment.

Perception of ethnic background as a barrier to career progression varies significantly among the ethnic groups surveyed. Respondents from the White Irish Traveller community and Black or Black Irish backgrounds were the most likely to associate their ethnicity with added challenges in advancing their careers. This was less evident among respondents from Any other White background.

Similar to the findings on job access, many respondents believe that Irish professionals are often favoured for promotions over employees from non-White Irish ethnic backgrounds.

> "Difficulty being promoted as Irish prefer to promote their peers." Swedish female participant

> "I have been in situations where the graduates I have trained, have gotten senior positions much earlier than me. Sometimes I had to prove myself multiple times for promotions whereas I have seen some colleagues get it without even asking for it." Indian male participant

Reflecting the perception that securing employment is more challenging for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds when applying to Irish-owned companies, some survey participants emphasised that career progression is similarly more difficult when working for indigenous companies.

> "Harder to progress in an Irish owned company into a senior manager role. Had to move to an international firm." Male Portuguese participant

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Some ethnic minority groups feel that they must work 'twice as hard' to reach the same level as their White Irish peers. This sentiment was highlighted during the qualitative interviews by a female participant from a Black or Black Irish - African background, who noted that this belief is widely understood within their community.

> " In my opinion, people have an idea that Black people are intelligent and I feel I need to work harder because of this pressure. I am never the first pick, always second to White Irish. I feel I need to do more to stand out, extra shifts, extra tasks. " Second-generation Irish/Nigerian interviewee

Our research, particularly evident in the qualitative interviews, has found that the lack of diversity at the leadership level poses a significant barrier to career advancement for employees from underrepresented ethnic groups. When individuals do not see people of their own ethnic background in managerial or executive roles, they may feel discouraged from aspiring to such positions, believing their chances of success are minimal or that the opportunity is 'lost from the start.' This lack of representation reinforces the perception of an invisible ceiling, diminishing confidence and lowering aspirations for leadership roles.

> " No managers in previous company who weren't Irish. " Polish female participant

> " There is no Asian senior management team in my organisation. " Chinese female participant

Workplace discrimination based on ethnicity or ethnicity-related factors can sometimes originate from managers or colleagues who themselves are from non-White Irish backgrounds. For instance, a Chinese participant shared that her Chinese manager expected her to work in a 'Chinese' style, being available 24/7, despite working in Ireland. Similarly, a Taiwanese participant, employed by a Chinese firm, reported experiencing discrimination from her Chinese manager, who admitted to disliking and distrusting Taiwanese employees. There was further evidence from participants from the Roma community that they experienced the most discrimination from natives of their home country who very often 'outed' them to local employers here as being Roma when they had chosen not to disclose their ethnicity, with some citing loss of employment as a consequence of this.

3.1.3. Grounds for ethnicity-based discrimination

This section examines the specific grounds on which individuals from ethnic minorities, who reported experiencing discrimination in accessing employment and in the workplace, are discriminated against.

In 2023, the WRC received 6,172 complaint applications, which included 14,158 individual complaints. Of these, 13% (1,817) were related to Discrimination, Equality, and Equal Status cases, with 71% focusing on Employment Equality. While there was a 21% decrease in the number of complaints based on race or ethnicity under the Equal Status Act from 2022 to 2023, complaints based on race or ethnicity under the Employment Equality Acts increased by 64% during the same period, rising from 166 in 2022 to 272 in 2023[37].

---

[37] Workplace Relations Commission (2023). Annual Report 2023

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Figure 23 illustrates ethnic related grounds of discrimination experienced by individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Figure 23: Ethnicity-related grounds for discrimination
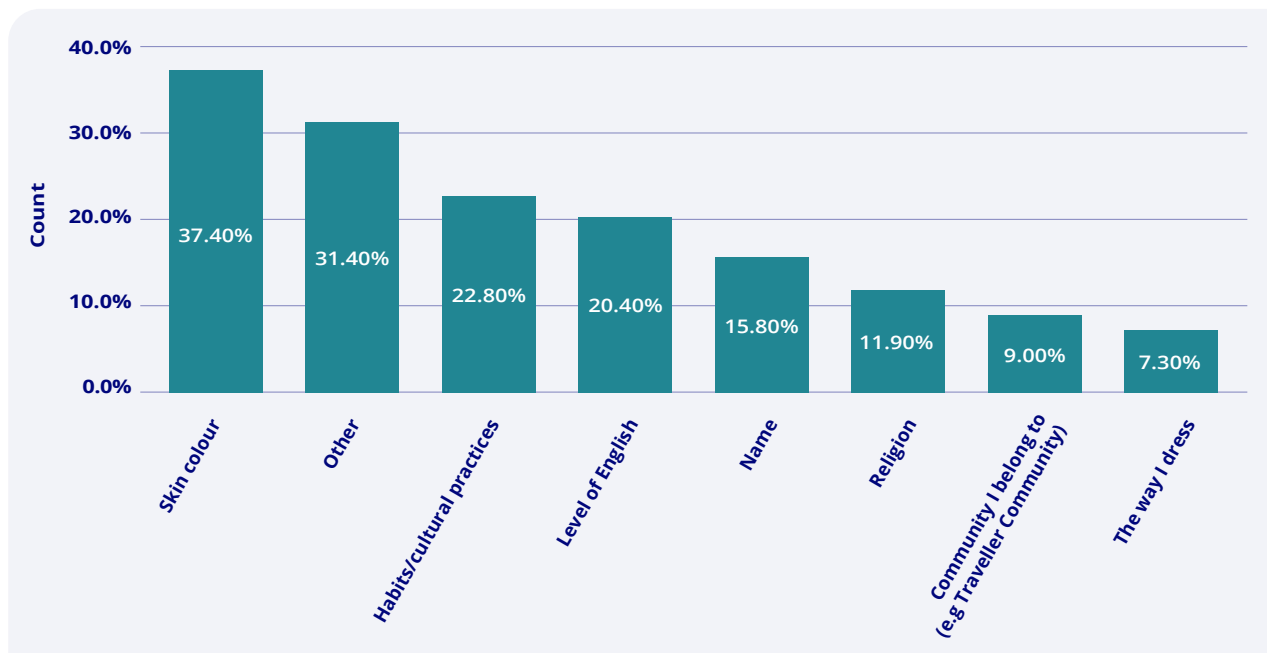
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

As can be seen from Figure 23, the most common ground for employment related discrimination, as perceived by the survey participants, is skin colour.

Skin colour

Among all ethnic minority groups, 37% of respondents who experienced discrimination attributed it to their skin colour. However, the extent to which individuals feel their skin colour is a factor in discrimination varies considerably across different ethnic groups, as might be expected. The figure below shows the percentage of respondents from each ethnic group who reported experiencing discrimination based on skin colour.

Figure 24: Proportion of respondents reporting discrimination by skin colour and ethnic minority group
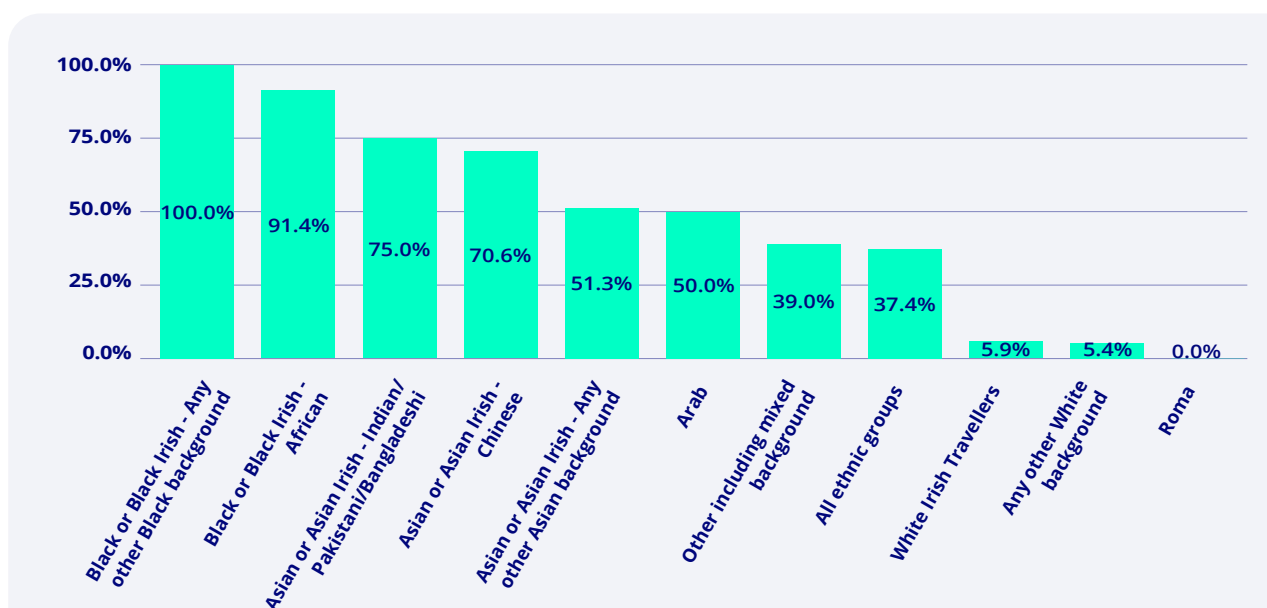
Source: Morgan McKinley' Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Among respondents who experienced discrimination in Ireland, 100% of those from the Black or Black Irish - Any Other Black background and 91% from the Black or Black Irish - African background reported that the discrimination was based on their skin colour. Other groups with high levels of discrimination on this basis include the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi group (75%) and the Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese group (71%).

Half of the respondents from an Arab background and slightly more than half of those from an Asian or Asian Irish - Any Other Asian background who reported experiencing discrimination indicated that it was based on their skin colour.

Approximately half of the respondents from Other including mixed backgrounds, who reported discrimination based on skin colour are nationals of Brazil and Mexico.

> " I am black.
> That says it all. "
> Female respondent from the Bahamas

> " As a black person, I feel it's more difficult for me to find a job because of my skin tone. It often just stems from most employers employing people they can relate to, or feel a sense of unspoken camaraderie with, because of the colour of their skin. " Female respondent from Cameroon

> " I can promise you if my skin colour was white, I would have been in a higher senior management role however I found this issue only to be with an Irish owned employer but with the same Irish owned employer managed by a British or American then the perspective is totally different. "
> Male participant from Mauritius

Respondents perceive discrimination based on skin colour as both a barrier to accessing employment and an obstacle to career progression.

Names
Among all ethnic minority groups, 16% of respondents who experienced discrimination attributed it to their names. However, the impact of this form of discrimination varies among different ethnic minority groups.

Figure 25: Proportion of respondents reporting name-based discrimination by ethnic minority group
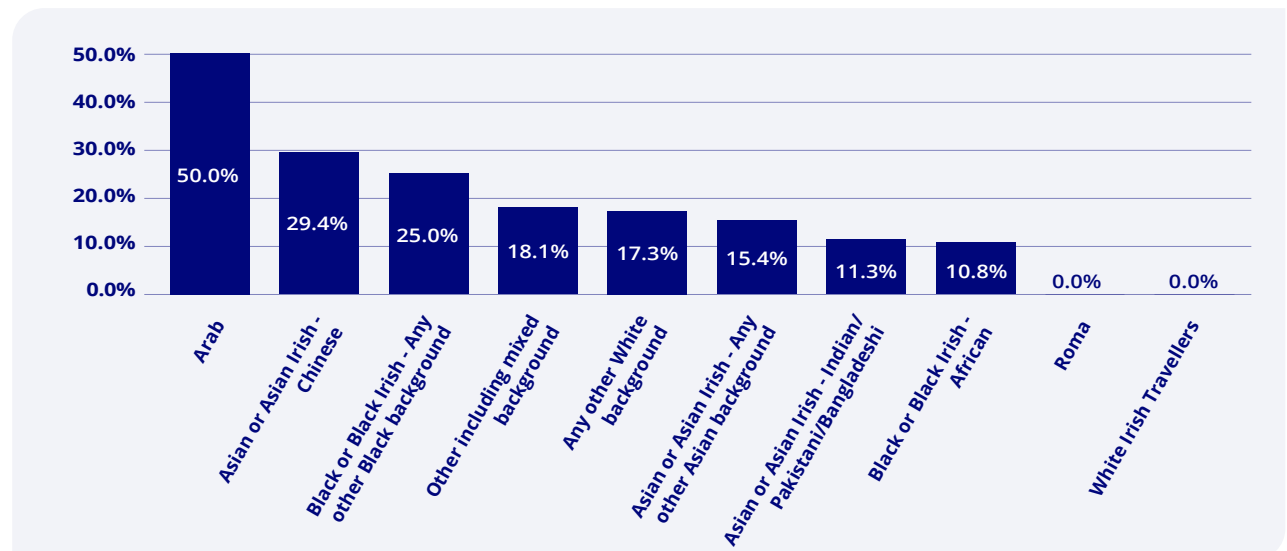
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

According to our survey findings, respondents from an Arab background are the most likely to experience discrimination based on their name, with one in two reporting it as a common reason for discrimination. More than one in four respondents from the Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese group, as well as a similar proportion from the Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background group, reported experiencing discrimination based on their names.

While only 11% of respondents from a Black or Black Irish - African background who experienced discrimination attributed it to their name, this group was the most likely to mention their name as a potential barrier to employment in the open commentary sections of the survey.

Several research participants reported taking steps to modify their names when submitting CVs and job applications. Common strategies include shortening their given name, using their middle name, or opting for a different surname. For Chinese individuals, it is also common to adopt a more 'Western' sounding name as part of their CV and application process to overcome the barrier of a prospective employer disregarding their application as they were not able to pronounce their name.

The shortening of the names was specifically mentioned by Mongolian participants in the qualitative phase of this research.

> " I have applied for several roles using my fathers surname (African) and never called for an interview and used the same CV but with my mother's surname (Western Surname) and got called for an interview. The interviewee appeared shocked, I was not who he expected. I obviously sound 100% Irish but I'm not 100% Irish. " Nigerian female participant

> " Just got more interviews when I applied with my husband's surname. " Female participant from Chile

Although no White Irish Traveller respondents identified 'names' as a reason for discrimination in the survey questions on this topic, several participants from the Traveller community mentioned in other sections of the survey and during the qualitative interviews that their names often 'revealed' their identity, resulting in discrimination when seeking employment.

> " My name alone will stop employers from giving me an interview. They know I'm a Traveller. " Participant from the Traveller community

> " Had a lot of issues due to my name being a Traveller name. Applied for over 100 jobs for Company X in Galway and received an email to say stop sending CV. Ward is a big Traveller name in the town and therefore I feel I am rejected because of this. Many Irish Travellers are changing their name and location just to try and get a job. " Participant from the Traveller community

Several advocacy groups consulted for the purpose of this research admitted to be promoting blind CV screening to ensure that names are not considered by employers during the shortlisting phase for interviews, allowing for a greater focus on the applicant's relevant skills.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Religion

Overall, 12% of respondents who faced discrimination in Ireland reported that it was due to their religion. Among all ethnic minority groups, individuals from an Arab background were the most likely to experience religious discrimination, with 60% of those who reported discrimination attributing it to their religion.

Figure 26: Proportion of respondents reporting religion-based discrimination by ethnic minority group
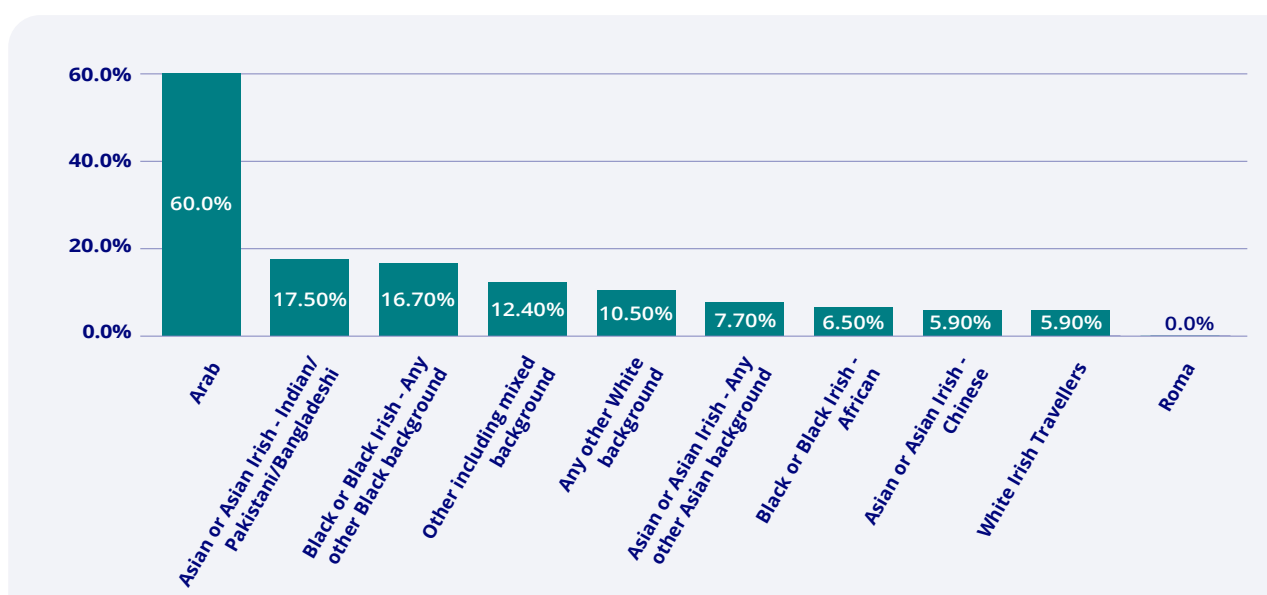
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

During the latest census of 2022, 90% of individuals from an Arab background and 31% of individuals from an Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background self-identified as muslims. Islam is often viewed more negatively than other religions in non-Islamic countries. Muslims are often portrayed in a negative light in the media, particularly in connection to terrorism or extremism. These associations can fuel Islamophobia and lead to misconceptions about the Muslim community as a whole, resulting in discrimination. Also, Muslim practices, such as wearing hijabs, observing Islamic dietary restrictions, or praying several times per day, can set them apart visibly, which may lead to misunderstandings or prejudice.

> " I was asked at an interview by a wholly owned Irish company if I was a Muslim, I said yes and the interviewer asked 'are you expecting to pray here', when I said it would only be for a few minutes, he asked 'how would that look like here'. I withdrew from the interview process but didn't state my reasons. "
> Male participant from Egypt

Other ethnicity-related grounds for discrimination

Among the various ethnicity-related grounds for discrimination, habits and cultural practices were cited by more than one in four respondents, on average, across all ethnic minority groups. This form of discrimination was most commonly reported by individuals from the Roma community, with over two-thirds of Roma respondents identifying it as a key reason for the discrimination they experienced.

The way individuals dressed was cited as a reason for discrimination by 7% of survey respondents. This form of discrimination was more prevalent among individuals from an Arab background (20%), those from an 'Other' category including mixed backgrounds (14%), and those from a White Irish Traveller background (11%).

88% of White Irish Traveller respondents to the survey who have experienced discrimination stated that it was based on the community they belong to.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

3.2. Barriers linked to immigrants

The survey findings indicate that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds born outside of Ireland encounter, on average, greater challenges in accessing employment compared to those born in Ireland. Specifically, 59% of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds who were not born in Ireland reported facing difficulties in accessing work, whereas this was true for 49% of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds who were born in Ireland or are second-generation.

This indicates that some of the challenges faced are not solely related to individuals' ethnic backgrounds but also to their status as immigrants.

Figure 27: Employment challenges: Immigrants versus individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds born in Ireland
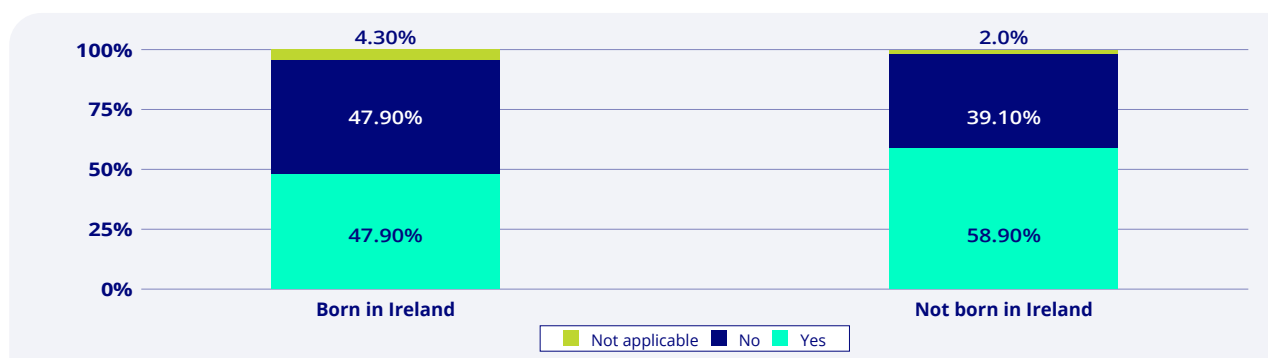
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

This section examines the barriers that specifically impact immigrants. While these challenges are complex and multifaceted, those highlighted here are closely related to immigration status and the difficulties individuals encounter when settling in a new host country. Although these barriers may contribute to discrimination and are often observed among ethnic minority groups, they are not inherently linked to ethnicity. For instance, second-generation Irish individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds typically do not face these particular challenges.

3.2.1. Cultural differences

This subsection explores the unique challenges and cultural differences that ethnic minority groups in Ireland face when searching for employment. It highlights how cultural norms, language barriers, unfamiliarity with local job market practices, and varying expectations around networking and professional behaviour can impact the job search experience for these groups. These cultural differences impact individuals immigrating to Ireland at different stages of the job search, from understanding the local employment market to succeeding at interview stages.

According to our survey findings, more than half of the respondents reported having difficulties finding a job that aligns with their qualifications and experiences. Figure 28 below illustrates the proportion of respondents from each ethnic group who faced challenges in identifying suitable job opportunities.

Figure 28: Proportion of ethnic minority respondents facing job matching difficulties
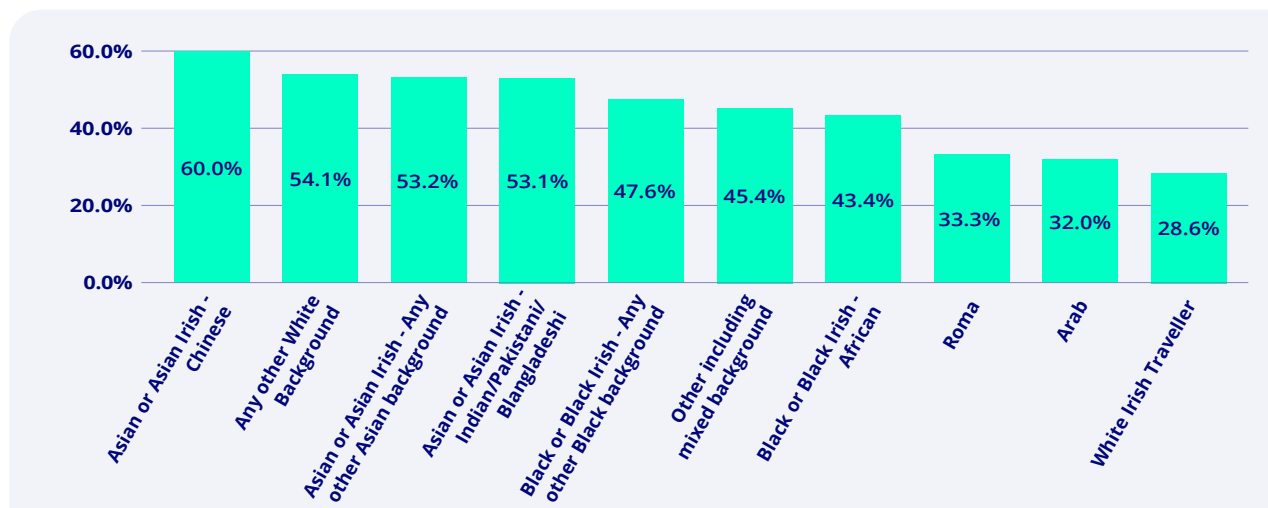
Source: Morgan McKinley Survey 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace'

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Challenges in finding suitable employment are influenced by a variety of factors. These include the structure of the job market, a mismatch between an individual's qualifications and the available positions, and the difficulties individuals may encounter in their job search strategies and the resources they utilise. Additionally, external factors such as economic conditions, industry demand, and potential biases in recruitment processes can further complicate the job search experience for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective interventions to support individuals in navigating the employment landscape.

Figure 29 below shows the different search methods used by individuals from different ethnic backgrounds when it comes to looking for the right job in Ireland.

Figure 29: Analysis of job search methods among ethnic groups in Ireland

Source: Morgan McKinley Survey 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace'
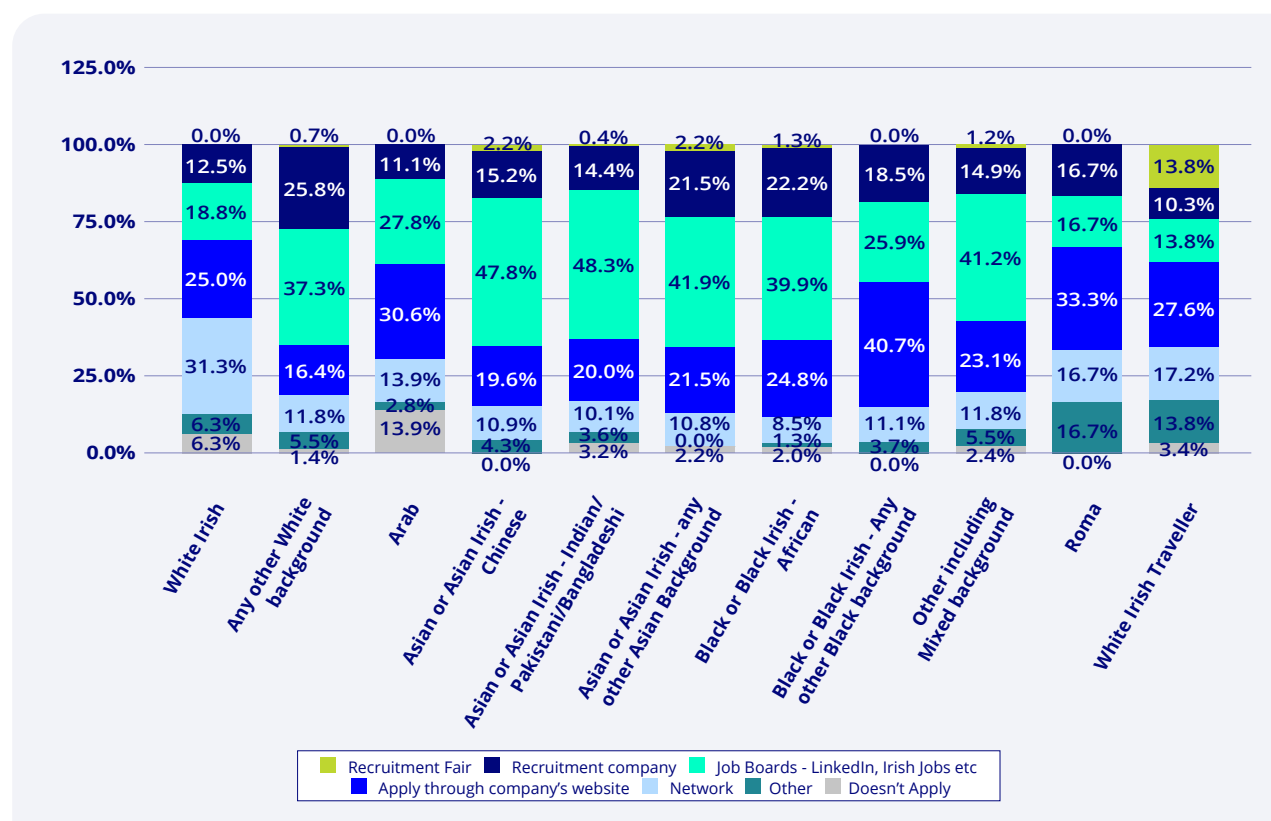
The survey data highlights significant differences in job search methods among various ethnic groups in Ireland. White Irish respondents were nearly three times more likely to utilise their networks when seeking employment compared to other groups, with only 9% of Black or Black Irish-African individuals engaging their networks in their job search. Similarly, White Irish Travellers and individuals from a Roma background identified their networks as the second most preferred option in their job search, following direct applications through company websites. This direct application method was also favoured by the Arab ethnic group.

The survey findings reveal that job boards are the most preferred job search method among all Asian groups and most Black Irish groups, with the exception of the Black or Black Irish - African group, which favoured direct applications through company websites. Among White ethnic groups, those from any other White background were the most likely to use recruitment companies, with 27% utilising their services, whereas White Irish Travellers were the least likely to do so, at only 10%. Furthermore, both Roma and White Irish Travellers exhibited a greater inclination to employ non-traditional methods for securing employment, reporting 'other' approaches at rates of 17% and 14%, respectively.

These findings underscore the varied strategies and preferences among ethnic groups when seeking employment in Ireland. From conversations held with various advocacy groups working with ethnic minorities in Ireland, it was evident that some of the main requests that were addressed to these groups from newcomers to the country were 'Help me find a job'. Some organisations such as the African Professional Network of Ireland (APNI) or the Open Doors Initiative have created specific job boards accessible to their members to look for relevant positions. They also provide members with advice on the drafting of their CVs and their application process.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Cultural differences significantly influence the job application process, in addition to the challenges associated with identifying suitable job opportunities. The format and content of job applications, including resumes and cover letters, vary considerably between countries. Consequently, individuals arriving from abroad often lack familiarity with the expectations and standards for job applications in Ireland.

Table 9 highlights the main types of difficulties experienced by individuals from ethnic minority groups during the application processes:

Table 9: Difficulties faced by ethnic minority groups in the application process

Ethnic group	Not getting a response after applying	Not getting to the interview stage	Not getting past interview stage	Getting contacted after reaching out to recruitment agencies	Others
Any other White Background	72.6%	51.4%	23.8%	23.7%	15.6%
Arab	88.0%	76.0%	28.0%	20.0%	8.0%
Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background	64.5%	53.2%	29.0%	17.7%	9.7%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	77.1%	51.4%	28.6%	17.1%	8.6%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Blangladeshi	80.9%	55.2%	16.2%	24.0%	7.5%
Black or Black Irish - African	65.1%	47.2%	24.5%	20.8%	17.0%
Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background	61.9%	61.9%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%
Other including mixed background	69.3%	52.8%	19.6%	20.9%	0.0%
Roma	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%
White Irish Traveller	57.1%	42.9%	28.6%	19.0%	38.1%

Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

The table presents data on the challenges faced by various ethnic groups during the job application process. While some difficulties listed are common to all individuals in Ireland, including White Irish, the level of difficulty experienced by ethnic minority groups may be influenced by cultural differences related to job applications, including building a CV, communication styles, and knowledge of interview expectations and standards.

The highest rate of not receiving a response after applying is observed among the Arab group (88%), followed by individuals from the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background (81%). This suggests that certain ethnic groups may face barriers in the initial stages of the application process, which could stem from biases in recruitment practices or systemic issues within the job market. Conversely, the Roma group reports the lowest rate of not receiving a response (33%), which may indicate fewer applications being submitted or a different context in their job search experiences.

> The highest rate of not receiving a response after applying is observed among the Arab group **(88%)**, followed by individuals from the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background **(81%)**.

The Arab group also leads in the percentage of individuals not reaching the interview stage (76%), highlighting further discrimination or bias at this critical juncture. The relatively high percentages for the Asian or Asian Irish - Any Other Asian background (53%) and Black or Black Irish - Any Other Black background (62%) indicate a consistent pattern of exclusion. In contrast, the White Irish Traveller group demonstrates a notable 43% not reaching the interview stage, revealing challenges they face in this regard as well.

The Roma group presents a unique case, as 67% reported not progressing beyond the interview stage, the highest of all groups. This might suggest systemic barriers that impact their ability to perform well in interviews, potentially linked to biases against their ethnicity or cultural differences in communication styles. In contrast, the Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi group reports the lowest rate of not getting past the interview stage (16%), indicating a better alignment with employer expectations during interviews.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

The table indicates variability in outcomes when reaching out to recruitment agencies. The Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi group (24%) reports the highest rate of successful contact after engaging with recruitment agencies, suggesting that they may have access to networks or resources that facilitate employment opportunities. Conversely, the Roma and Black or Black Irish - Any Other Black background groups report no contact success from recruitment agencies, highlighting a potential gap in support and resources for these groups.

CVs are often the first documents employers review, representing individuals' initial opportunity to create a positive impression and influence hiring decisions. However, the expectations regarding the content and format of CVs can vary significantly between countries and industries. For instance, some countries allow for longer and more detailed CVs, while Irish employers typically prefer a length of one to two pages. Additionally, the emphasis on education versus professional experience can differ; Irish employers prioritise relevant skills and achievements over educational background.

In Ireland, it is advisable to share minimal personal information, contrasting with other countries where including details such as date of birth, nationality, gender, marital status, address, and a photo is standard practice. Moreover, while some countries focus on job responsibilities in CVs, Irish practices emphasise achievements. These nuances, if not properly understood, can hinder an applicant's ability to effectively communicate their qualifications and suitability for a role, making it more challenging to secure job interviews.

The data in Table 9 illustrates a complex landscape of experiences among different ethnic groups during the job application process. Systemic biases, cultural differences, and varying levels of access to resources play significant roles in determining outcomes. Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions aimed at reducing biases in recruitment practices, enhancing support for ethnic minority applicants, and fostering a more inclusive job market that recognises the value of diversity. Understanding the nuances of the job application process is essential for creating effective strategies to assist individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in navigating the employment landscape.

> " It can be difficult to find jobs in Ireland because the rules and principles are different. There is little information. For example, I was asked to provide a birth certificate at some point for a job application, but I don't have one. All this means a lot of extra effort when applying for jobs or doing admin related procedures."
> Chinese participant

> "I've sent my CV over 250 times. No job offers. The impression of closed Irish society is obvious. There is only unqualified work, which does not imply any development and prospects. And even that is not always full time."
> Quote from job-seeker in Any Other White Background Ethnic Group

Cultural differences are also a factor that can hinder work progression. In cultures where deference to authority is emphasised, professionals from ethnic minorities may struggle with advocating for themselves in a workplace environment that values initiative and challenge to the status quo. A research participant, who had previously explored this topic during her third-level studies, pointed out that in some countries, specifically in some Asian countries, the accepted workplace norm is to *work hard, don't talk too much, deliver and you will be recognised'*. However, she noted that this approach does not necessarily apply in Ireland. These differences can hinder their ability to stand out for promotions or leadership roles.

As seen in this section, cultural differences can heavily impact an individual's capacity to effectively search and successfully secure a job in their host country but also to progress and access leadership jobs.

Understanding cultural differences is crucial for employers, policymakers, and support organisations to develop more inclusive recruitment strategies and support systems that help bridge these gaps, ensuring equitable access to employment opportunities for all.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

3.2.2. Lack of local network

The lack of a local network can be a significant barrier for immigrants trying to find work in Ireland. A local network not only provides help with the process of job searching but it also represents a valuable resource in learning more about the professional culture of the host country and what is expected from an individual applying for a job.

As indicated in the previous section, one in three White Irish survey respondents relies on their network to search for employment. For individuals who have recently arrived in Ireland, not utilising a network can restrict access to job opportunities.

> " I normally ask friends. This worked in Canada as there is a large Asian network. "
> Japanese student participant

There are a proportion of job opportunities in Ireland, as in can happen in other countries, that are never advertised publicly, they are filled through word-of-mouth, referrals, or internal networks. Without a local network, immigrants may not hear about these 'hidden' jobs, limiting their access to potential employment opportunities.

Referrals have become an increasingly important source of candidates for employers, with many companies in Ireland implementing referral schemes that incentivise employees for successfully recommending candidates for open positions. However, this reliance on referrals can pose a significant barrier to a diverse and inclusive recruitment strategy, particularly for individuals who lack local networks. Those new to the country often miss out on recommendations for positions, which can be a critical factor in securing employment. Consequently, this practice hinders ethnic diversity, as individuals without established connections are at a disadvantage in the hiring process.

Local networks can also help individuals better understand the job market in the host country and guide them in overcoming cultural differences that - as seen in the above section - can hinder their successful application process. Local networks can provide career guidance, information on industry trends, inside knowledge on interview processes, etc...which are valuable resources when looking for employment.

Without a network to facilitate their job search, individuals new to Ireland may need to rely solely on online applications, which can be a less effective and slower route to employment. This can extend the duration of their job search, leading to financial and emotional strain.

> **In summary, the lack of a local network poses significant challenges for immigrants seeking employment in Ireland. It limits their access to job opportunities, diminishes their chances of receiving referrals, and hinders their ability to navigate the cultural and professional landscape of the Irish job market. Ireland now benefits from the work of various organisations and professional networks designed to enhance employment opportunities for immigrants who need this support"**

3.2.3. Employment permits

Another barrier affecting individuals from ethnic minorities who are neither born in Ireland nor are Irish citizens is the requirement for employment permits.

Between January and July 2024, 23,820 employment permits were issued in Ireland, among which over half were delivered to Indian, Brazilian and Filipino nationals[38]. Between 2009 and 2023, the number of employment permits issued nearly quadrupled, going from 7,962 permits issued in 2009 to 30,981 issued in 2023.

Between January and July 2024, **23,820** employment permits were issued in Ireland

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

In Ireland, employment permits are required for non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who wish to work in the country. The permit system is designed to regulate the employment of foreign nationals, ensuring that job opportunities are first made available to Irish and EEA citizens. There are several types of employment permits, including the General Employment Permit and the Critical Skills Employment Permit, each with specific eligibility criteria. At the time of commencing this research, the process typically involved an application by the employer, who needed to demonstrate that the role could not be filled by an Irish or EEA candidate. This requirement added a layer of complexity for non-EEA job seekers, often extending the time and effort needed to secure employment in Ireland. More recently a new Employment Permits Act came into force in Ireland on 2 September 2024 which introduces several important changes that should benefit employers and permit holders alike. The new Act represents the biggest reform of Ireland's employment permits legislation since 2006 and introduces a number of positive changes to the existing system, including:

- **Seasonal work authorisation:** Implementation of a new permit category for seasonal employment, emphasising robust worker protections to address specific sector needs.
- **Enhanced job mobility:** Provision for employment permit holders to switch employers after a nine-month period, fostering improved working conditions and career advancement opportunities.
- **Flexible regulatory framework:** Transition of operational specifics, including Labour Market Needs Test criteria, to secondary legislation to enable swift adaptations to labour market fluctuations.
- **Augmented support for permit holders:** Introduction of additional employer obligations, such as provision of training and housing assistance, to enhance Ireland's appeal as an employment destination.
- **Multi-site work authorisation for medical professionals:** Creation of a specialised permit allowing non-consultant hospital doctors to practise across multiple locations, streamlining healthcare staffing processes.
- **Internal career progression:** Elimination of the requirement for a new permit when an existing permit holder receives a promotion within their current role.
- Allow for non-consultant hospital doctors to have a permit which will allow them to work at multiple sites, which will help to further streamline the system.
- Allowing permit holders to be promoted within their roles without the need for a new permit.

In Ireland, international students from non-EEA countries studying in Ireland typically progress through several stages of work authorisation. Firstly, they obtain a Student Visa / Stamp 2 Permission, which allows full-time study and part-time work (up to 20 hours per week during term time and 40 hours per week during holidays).This is not technically an employment permit, but a visa status that includes work rights.

Upon completing their studies, graduates can transition to the Third Level Graduate Scheme, or Stamp 1G, which enables them to remain in Ireland for up to 12 months (or 24 months for postgraduate students) to seek employment and work full-time without a specific employment permit. Following this, graduates who secure employment may be eligible for a Critical Skills Employment Permit if their job is in a high-demand sector, or a General Employment Permit (covers a broader range of occupations) for other roles. These permits are typically valid for two years initially. In some cases, family members of Critical Skills Employment Permit (aimed at roles in high-demand sectors) holders may qualify for a Dependent/Partner/Spouse Employment Permit, allowing them to work full-time. Over time, some individuals may become eligible for Stamp 4 Permission, a residency status that permits unrestricted work.

This pathway provides international graduates with a transition period to gain employment and potentially secure longer-term residency in Ireland.

This research reveals a notable disparity in employment permit requirements among various ethnic groups in Ireland. Of the total survey participants, 60% indicated a need for an employment permit to work in the country, while 40% did not require such authorisation.

Of the total survey participants, **60%** indicated a need for an employment permit to work in the country, while **40%** did not require such authorisation.

[38] Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2024). Employment Permit Statistics 2024

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Analysis of the data demonstrates a clear correlation between ethnic background and the likelihood of needing an employment permit. White ethnic groups exhibited the lowest requirement rates with only 17% of those from other white backgrounds and 20% of White Irish Travellers required authorisation.

The Black or Black Irish-African group had the highest proportion, with 74% of respondents needing a permit. This was followed closely by the Asian or Asian Irish-Chinese group at 69%, and the Arab group at 60%.

These findings underscore substantial variations in employment permit requirements across ethnic categories in Ireland. Such disparities have potential implications for access to employment opportunities and labour market integration for different ethnic groups within the country.

Figure 30: Employment permit requirements by ethnic group
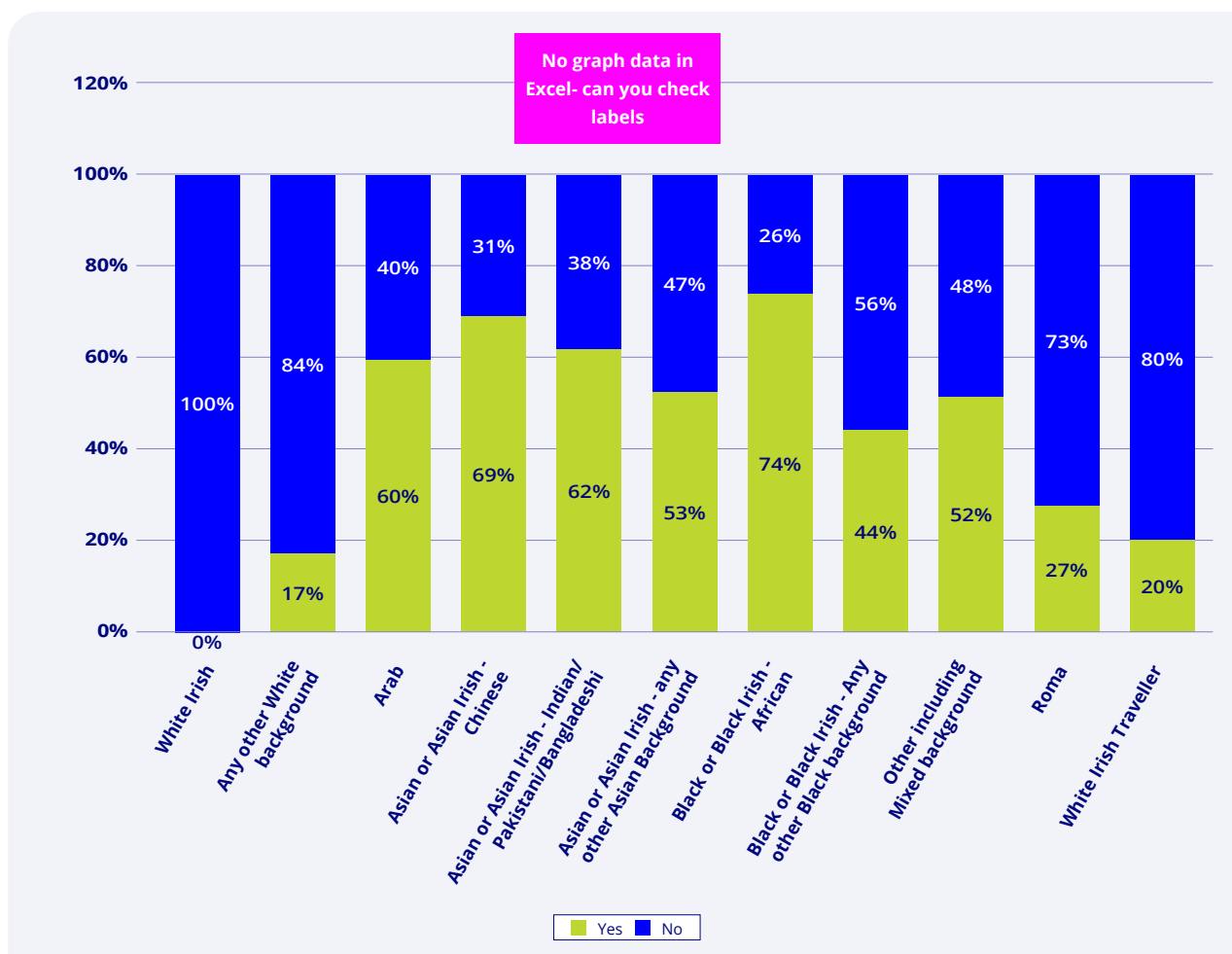
No graph data in Excel- can you check labels

| | Yes | No |

Source: Morgan McKinley' Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

In some instances some non-nationals in Ireland who do not need an employment permit to work in Ireland, may require a residency permit to live in the country e.g. Swiss nationals.

Persons from outside the EU will require a residency permit or visa to live in Ireland but do not need an employment permit to work in Ireland generally include UK citizens, family members of EEA/EU nationals, Stamp 4 holders and in some instances certain non-EU nationals who are Academics and Researchers come to Ireland under specific research programmes and may be exempt from needing an employment permit but would still require a residency permit.

In this research, 29% of all survey respondents (excluding White Irish) held a Stamp 4 residency permission that includes the right to work, distinguishing it from a visa, which primarily allows entry into the country for a specific purpose and duration. 27% held Stamp 1G residency permission which is granted to non-EU/EEA/Swiss nationals.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

The findings of this report highlight significant confusion among employers regarding Stamp 1G, as revealed through the interviews conducted. Originally introduced for students, Stamp 1G was later extended to spouses and de facto partners of Critical Skills Employment Permit holders, yet retained the same designation. This overlap has contributed to uncertainty among employers, leading to hesitancy or reluctance in hiring individuals on Stamp 1G, despite their clear eligibility to work without restrictions. The report emphasises that an education of hiring managers and Talent Acquisition professionals to better understand and effectively manage the employment of Stamp 1G holders is required to dispel the many myths and misunderstandings that are currently in the market. These individuals represent a significant portion of the skilled talent pool, yet they are often underutilised due to employers' misunderstandings of their legal obligations. A common misconception is that Stamp 1G holders require an additional employment permit to work legally in Ireland, whereas, in reality, they are authorised to work full-time without any additional permit during the validity of their Stamp 1G. Given that Stamp 1G is granted for a limited time (12 to 24 months, depending on the graduate's qualification level), employers may also be concerned about what happens when this period ends. However, graduates can transition to another permission, such as Stamp 1 or Stamp 4, if they secure a suitable job, thus enabling continued employment.

24% of survey respondents held a Stamp 1 residency permission which also requires they must maintain a valid employment permit. 10% of survey respondents held a Stamp 2 which is issued to full time students, one year at a time, which allows them to work up to 20 hours during term time and 40 hours per week during their holidays. 2% were availing of a Stamp 1A which is specifically for individuals who are engaged in a full-time training programme to become a qualified accountant under a recognised training contract in Ireland.

The research findings indicate that employment permits act as a barrier to securing jobs in Ireland. Employers often hesitate to hire professionals with these permits, which, as previously mentioned, is sometimes due to a lack of understanding about the rights of permit holders and the sponsorship process. This issue is less prevalent among large employers, who typically have dedicated resources and more experience managing employment permits.

> **24%** of survey respondents held a Stamp 1 residency permission
>
> **10%** of survey respondents held a Stamp 2
>
> **2%** were availing of a Stamp 1A

In some cases, however, exclusion from job application processes has become 'automatic.' One HR professional shared that their company includes a screening question in the application process asking whether the applicant needs an employment permit to work in Ireland. This simple 'yes' or 'no' question does not account for the specific type of permit held by the applicant. The HR professional acknowledged that if the answer is 'yes,' the application is automatically excluded from further consideration.

Similarly, interviews with recruiters from agencies revealed that, in their efforts to present clients with employment-ready candidates, recruiters often filter out professionals requiring permit sponsorship, anticipating that clients will be reluctant to hire them due to a potential negative impact on their time to hire if included in the process.

3.2.4 Recognition of international qualifications and experience

This section will explore the ways in which the recognition of international qualifications and experience may impact the job search experiences of ethnic minorities who have immigrated to Ireland.

Figure 31: Employment challenges in Ireland for ethnic minorities by educational achievement

Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

As can be seen from the above figure, the cohort of respondents who expressed the highest levels of difficulties finding a job in Ireland are the respondents who have a Postgraduate or Master's degree, 63% of these individuals reported experiencing difficulties securing employment in Ireland. After them, the other groups experiencing the highest difficulties are respondents with an undergraduate or Bachelor degree, followed by the respondents with a Doctorate or a PhD.

It is evident from the responses to the survey and feedback through extensive interviews conducted that the recognition of international qualifications and experience is a significant challenge for ethnic minorities in Ireland.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) plays a key role in assessing and validating foreign qualifications. QQI is the state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education system. More specifically, QQI has a service called National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Foreign Qualifications that focuses on the recognition of foreign qualifications. Its primary purpose is to help individuals and institutions understand how foreign qualifications compare to Irish qualifications, facilitating the integration of international students, workers, and professionals into the Irish education system and labour market. This service provides a list of qualifications from different countries with their equivalent in the Irish education system. It currently provides a comparability statement for 1,798 foreign qualifications from more than 160 countries[39].

---

[39] NARIC Ireland

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

In spite of this recognition service, many employers in Ireland still show a preference for individuals with local qualifications. This could be explained by other factors of a psychological nature. Employers may have a stronger sense of trust in qualifications from institutions that they know. These local qualifications are perceived as more reliable as, sometimes, employers might hold biases or stereotypes about the quality of education in other countries and assume that education systems in specific countries are less rigorous.

The issue or recognition of qualifications can be particularly challenging for those seeking to enter regulated professions, as the process can be lengthy and costly, often deterring individuals from pursuing careers in their trained fields. For example, healthcare professionals like doctors and nurses or dentists and orthodontists, or engineers and architects, must undergo rigorous assessment processes to have their qualifications recognised, which can take several months to years. These prolonged timelines, coupled with the associated costs, frequently push qualified professionals to abandon their original career paths and take up alternative employment that may not fully utilise their skills and expertise. This not only impacts the individuals' career satisfaction and economic potential but also represents a loss of valuable skills in sectors where Ireland often faces shortages. Addressing these barriers through streamlined processes and support mechanisms is crucial to ensuring that Ireland fully benefits from the diverse talents of its immigrant population.

Interviews with qualified nurses from an Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background revealed significant challenges in having their qualifications recognised in Ireland. Despite having completed their nursing qualifications and specialisations abroad, these professionals were informed that their credentials were not recognised in Ireland and that additional study would be required. One interviewee decided to pursue the necessary additional training, but their spouse, who was equally qualified, opted to leave the nursing profession due to financial pressures. Instead, they transitioned into a customer service role with a multinational company, where they quickly advanced to a managerial position within a few years. This case illustrates how the barriers to recognition can lead to the loss of skilled professionals in critical sectors like healthcare, as individuals are forced to seek alternative career paths.

Another such example included a highly qualified and specialist orthodontist from India who faced significant challenges in attempting to practise in Ireland due to the non-recognition of their qualifications. Despite their extensive training and expertise, they found themselves unable to work in their profession for two years after arriving in Ireland. The recognition process required them to join a lengthy queue as part of an annual application cycle, where only a limited number of places were available for the necessary exams. These exams, which were designed for general dentists, covered a broader range of topics than their specialised orthodontic experience. The process for an orthodontist trained in India involves first having their qualifications assessed by the Dental Council of Ireland. If the qualifications are not deemed equivalent, the individual must pass the Irish Dental Council's Overseas Registration Examination, which focuses on general dentistry.

This process is not only time-consuming and costly but also forces specialists to revisit general dental knowledge, creating additional barriers for those who have already established themselves in their field. As a result, many qualified orthodontists are left unable to practise their specialty, delaying their careers and contributing to a loss of valuable expertise in Ireland's healthcare system.

> " Foreign qualifications are a barrier to getting employment in your field of study."
> Participant from a Caribbean country

Based on conversations with individuals from ethnic minorities it has also been made evident throughout the research that employers in Ireland often value candidates with local work experience for several reasons. Firstly, because it indicates that the candidate is familiar with the country's work culture, norms, and expectations. This includes understanding how businesses operate, communication styles, and workplace etiquette. There is evidence from research interviews conducted that employers perceive hiring individuals with experience in the local job market as less risky.

> " My supervisor who got to know I was an aircraft mechanic in my hometown told me in the face he will never fly in an airplane that I work on because he doesn't trust the trainings in Africa." Male participant from Ghana

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Our research has found evidence that even if an individual who has immigrated to Ireland possesses substantial experience from abroad, employers may undervalue or doubt the relevance of that experience. They may question whether the skills and knowledge acquired in a different country will effectively translate to the Irish context. Several participants in this research have faced this issue. Recruiters in specialised fields like payroll and tax have also reported this issue, as differing regulations across countries can pose obstacles. Similarly, in fields such as marketing, clients often assume that professionals from abroad may lack an understanding of Irish culture and consumer behaviour, potentially resulting in less effective communication strategies. Illustrating the above, one participant interviewed, who had worked in International Audit in her home country immigrated to Ireland but struggled to find a position in her field despite her qualifications and experience. She eventually took a job in a shoe shop. It was only after securing employment in the Financial Services industry in Ireland that her job searches became easier and more successful. She noted that her experience working for an Irish-based employer increased her CV's appeal to potential employers.
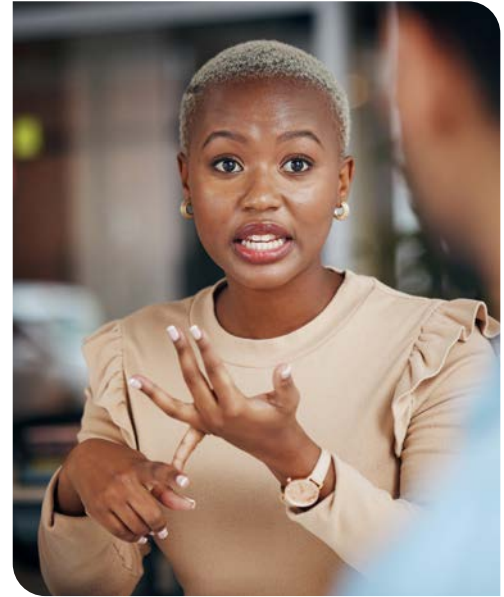
> " Before having references in Ireland it was very difficult to get a job. I had to work for free in order to build my experience in Ireland and be able to receive a reference from someone based here. " Female participant from Brazil

A respondent from Cameroon stated that while he did not view his ethnic background as a barrier to finding employment in Ireland, his absence of work experience in the country led him to feel unqualified for available positions and not 'a fit for roles'.

In addition to the psychological preference that employers may have for local experience and qualifications, a lack of work history in the country can also suggest unfamiliarity with key aspects of professional practices. While certain skills and knowledge, such as programming, are transferable across borders, other occupations are more closely aligned with the specific context of the country in which they are practised. For example, professionals in payroll management encounter regulations and practices that can vary significantly between countries. As a result, a payroll professional without experience in Ireland may be deemed unsuitable for comparable roles, despite their qualifications and experience gained abroad.

In conclusion, the recognition of international qualifications and experience presents significant challenges for ethnic minorities seeking employment in Ireland. The survey results indicate that individuals with higher educational achievements, such as postgraduate degrees, face considerable difficulties in securing jobs. Despite existing recognition services like QQI and NARIC, many employers maintain a preference for local qualifications, often viewing them as more reliable. This preference, compounded by the lengthy and complex recognition processes for regulated professions, discourages qualified individuals from pursuing careers in their fields, leading them to accept roles that do not fully utilise their skills and expertise.

> " Allegation that a foreigner will not know 'Irish Way' (culture and management). "
> Brazilian female participant

The qualitative data gathered from interviews further emphasises the psychological barriers and biases that contribute to the undervaluation of foreign experience. Many respondents reported feeling unqualified for positions due to their lack of local work experience, despite possessing substantial qualifications from abroad. These insights highlight the need for more streamlined processes and greater employer awareness to ensure that the diverse talents of immigrant professionals are effectively integrated into the Irish labour market. Addressing these issues is crucial not only for enhancing individual career satisfaction and economic potential but also for leveraging the skills of ethnic minorities to fill critical shortages in various sectors within Ireland.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

3.2.5 Language and accents

For immigrants to Ireland, proficiency in English is a crucial factor in their successful integration into all aspects of Irish life, including the professional sphere. This suggests that immigrants who master English, particularly those from English-speaking countries, have a greater chance of success in the Irish labour market.

Figure 32: English proficiency among non-English speaking households

Legend: Very Well, Well, Not Well, Not at all, Not stated

2.0% · 4.1% · 10.7% · 25.9% · 57.2%

Source: CSO (2022). Census 2022
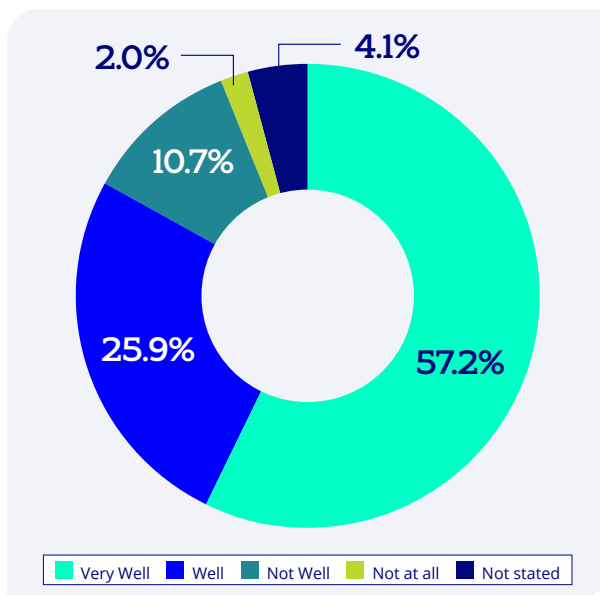
According to the latest data from the 2022 Census, 83% of individuals who spoke a language other than English at home reported speaking English 'well' or 'very well.' Additionally, 11% of these individuals indicated that they spoke English 'not well,' while 2% stated that they did not speak English at all. The remaining 4% chose not to disclose their level of English proficiency.

Our research findings signal proficiency in English can serve as a critical screening factor when applying for jobs, as strong language skills are often a prerequisite for many positions. Additionally, good knowledge of English enables individuals to communicate effectively in the workplace, engage professionally with customers, interact with colleagues and management, and integrate more seamlessly into the work environment. Consequently, fluency or a high level of proficiency in English is essential not only for accessing employment opportunities but also for advancing in one's career.

The lack of English language proficiency is particularly pronounced among asylum seekers and refugees. While many refugees and asylum seekers may come from lower economic and educational backgrounds, some also have high levels of education and have been forced to leave their countries abruptly. This was evident in the case of Ukrainian interviewees involved in our research, who were in a stable situation in their home country but had to abandon everything to escape the war that began in February 2022.

In Ireland, several programmes and initiatives are available today to provide English language courses to migrants and asylum seekers. The Education and Training Boards (ETBs) provide free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to migrants including refugees and asylum seekers. Under the Refugee Resettlement Programme, the Irish government provides English language training as part of broader integration support services for refugees. These programmes are tailored to the specific needs of refugees, helping them adapt to life in Ireland. The Community Sponsorship Ireland programme allows community groups to sponsor and support refugee families, including providing English language support as part of their integration efforts. English classes are also provided in the Direct Provision Centers where asylum seekers are housed. In addition, specific organisations such as the Migrant Rights Center Ireland (MRCI), The Irish Refugee Council, Doras, The Open Doors Initiative and Nasc provide English language support as part of their services for migrants and refugees

Due to the channels of distribution used to reach participants to this research and the fact that the survey was issued in English, 99% of survey respondents reported to speak English very well or well. Thus the absence of English was not a major element when it came to explain difficulties accessing employment in the country. However, the lack of proficiency in the language was quoted by some interviewees as a factor of discrimination or a source of added difficulty in the process of job searching.

In addition to a lack of proficiency in English, 'accents' were identified as a source of discrimination and a barrier for ethnic minorities in accessing relevant employment opportunities.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

> " Applied for 100 jobs to date, had 30 interviews, and only 5 of those gave feedback. It does feel when talking to people that there is an issue with language and understanding me. Language is an issue in interviews. "
> Nigerian participant

> " Ireland is very far behind in the way of diversity. Had people in the past laughing at my accent because it was not Irish. "
> South African participant

> " I was the PA to a large international brand in Brazil, but I was told as my English was not good I would not get this in Ireland. So I had to start at the bottom and work up. I do feel uncomfortable when speaking in public as sometimes I don't feel safe as I speak with a foreign accent and not from Ireland. "
> Brazilian participant

Proficiency in English is vital for the successful integration of immigrants into Irish society, particularly in the professional realm. The data from the 2022 Census demonstrates that a significant majority of individuals from non-English speaking households possess a commendable level of English proficiency, which positively influences their job prospects. While various initiatives exist to support language acquisition among migrants and asylum seekers, the research highlights that even among those who speak English well, barriers such as accents and discrimination still persist.

3.3 Challenges common to all

In addition to the barriers specifically related to being part of an ethnic minority, individuals from these groups also face challenges common to the general population in Ireland when seeking employment and advancing their careers. These challenges include discrimination based on non-ethnic factors and broader issues related to the overall job market.

3.3.1 Other grounds of discrimination not exclusive to ethnic minorities

In addition to ethnicity-related discrimination, survey participants also reported experiencing employment discrimination based on factors such as gender, age, and sexual orientation.

Across all ethnic groups, 20% of those who experienced discrimination attributed it to gender. The survey findings indicate that gender-based discrimination was most prevalent among respondents from an Any other White background (26%), an Other including mixed background (26%), an Arab background (20%), and an Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian' background (18%).

> " At university in Ireland was pushed to do more than the other students that were Irish. Felt like I didn't get recognised - here I am with a PHD but as I am a muslim and a woman I felt like a ghost not seen by many companies. Sometimes I don't wear the scarf to feel more accepted. Did interviews online and was ok as no scarf, interview face to face was different as had the scarf and rejected for jobs. Muslim men are not treated like this, Just women. " Female participant from Libya

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Age-based discrimination was reported by 13% of survey respondents who had experienced discrimination in Ireland, while 5% reported discrimination based on sexual orientation. The ethnic group most likely to report discrimination related to sexual orientation was the Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese group.

Although this research primarily focuses on barriers to employment related to ethnicity, it is crucial to recognise that individuals from ethnic minority groups may face multiple grounds of discrimination. In addition to factors tied to their ethnic background, they may also be targeted based on age, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics common to both minority and majority groups.

3.3.2 Employment market related difficulties

As noted earlier in the report, 58% of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds reported challenges in accessing jobs in Ireland. As discussed in previous sections, many of these difficulties are linked to ethnic-based discrimination, with some also stemming from non-ethnic factors.

Among ethnic minority respondents who acknowledged having trouble finding work, 7% believed these challenges were only faced by specific groups, while 30% felt they were more severe for certain groups. Survey commentary suggests these respondents believe the difficulties disproportionately affect individuals from certain ethnicities or nationalities, those requiring work permits, or those with lower English proficiency.

However, 58% of those who reported employment challenges believe these difficulties are shared by the general population, not limited to specific groups.

Difficulties are experienced across all industry sectors and occupations, even though it can impact more individuals from certain industries. Figure 33 illustrates the proportion of respondents who have reported experiencing difficulties securing employment in Ireland based on their Industry sector.

Figure 33: Employment challenges by industry sector for ethnic minority groups
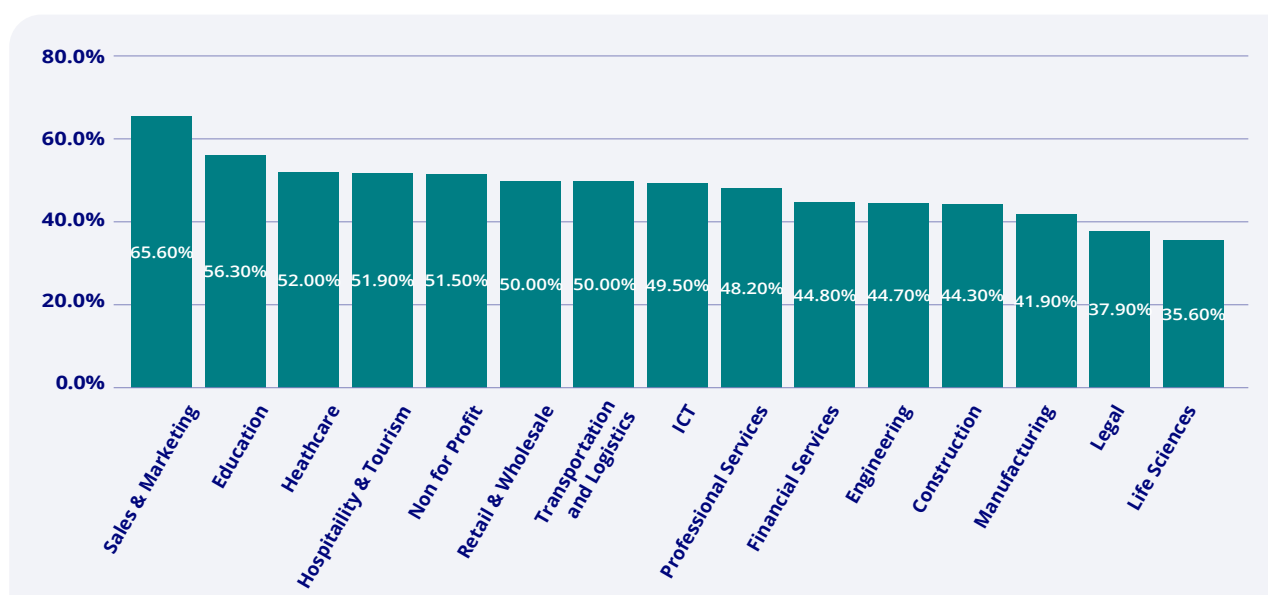
Source: Morgan McKinley 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace' Survey

Respondents experiencing challenges to access work in Ireland in lesser proportions are respondents working in the Life Sciences and the legal sector. Conversely, respondents encountering the highest rate of difficulties when it comes to securing a job in Ireland are respondents working in Sales and Marketing, Education, Healthcare and Hospitality and Tourism.

Circa half of unemployed respondents to the survey are respondents from the ICT sector, the Financial Services sector and the Sales & Marketing sector. Other sectors highly represented in terms of unemployment are the Healthcare and the Manufacturing sector.

3. Employment discrimination and barriers for ethnic minorities

Despite a generally favourable job market, finding employment can still be challenging for all job seekers, whether they are from ethnic minority backgrounds or not. According to Morgan McKinley's Q2 2024 Employment Monitor, employers are becoming increasingly selective in their hiring processes, making it harder for professionals to meet the exact qualifications demanded. This trend is particularly evident in the ICT, Life Sciences and Financial Services sectors, where highly specialised skills are required in what is sometimes a very regulated environment.

Moreover, companies are exercising caution in the permanent job market, aiming to ensure that new hires are not only well-suited but also capable of contributing immediately to reduce turnover and inefficiency. In Q2 2024, there was a notable increase in the availability of technology talent, particularly software developers. However, professionals who previously found it easy to secure roles are now facing more challenges. This decline in job placement is partly due to a cautious approach by US tech employers in Ireland ahead of the 2024 US elections. Many companies are delaying hiring decisions for development talent, reflecting broader uncertainty tied to potential changes in US economic policies and regulations. As a result, there has been a temporary slowdown in recruitment within the tech development sector.

The findings from this research, along with other studies on the same topic, suggest that while overall job market difficulties may partially explain some of the challenges ethnic minorities encounter when seeking employment in Ireland, they do not fully account for the additional barriers associated with ethnicity. As of September 2024, the unemployment rate stood at 4.3%, significantly lower than the unemployment levels reported in Section 1.4 of this study for various ethnic minority groups. Notably, unemployment rates were highest among individuals from a White Irish Traveller background at 26%, followed by 12% for those from a Roma background, 10% for individuals from an Arab background, and 10% for individuals from a Black or Black Irish - African background

The broader employment issues, such as increased employer selectivity, competition for skilled positions, and economic uncertainties, impact all job seekers to some extent. However, ethnic minorities face compounded difficulties due to factors like discrimination based on ethnic background, name, religion, or skin colour, as well as cultural differences and biases in hiring practices.

Thus, while the overall labour market's challenges may exacerbate job access difficulties for ethnic minorities, the presence of ethnic-specific discrimination and biases creates additional hurdles that are unique to these groups.

Chinedu's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from a Black or Black Irish - African background

> My name is Chinedu. I am 38 years old and come from Nigeria. I decided to move to Ireland in search of a better life and also because I had family living here, in Roscommon.

Chinedu

"One of the things I really like about Ireland is that it feels much safer than my home country. The people are friendly, laid-back, and have a great sense of humour. The education opportunities are excellent, though I find them quite expensive, especially for people that are not from the EU. I also appreciate the stunning natural landscapes that Ireland has to offer.

However, there are some frustrations I've encountered. The housing situation is quite challenging; finding decent accommodation can be really difficult. I often feel overwhelmed by the number of documents required when trying to secure a place to live. Additionally, the weather can be quite a downer. It's almost always cold and rainy, making it hard to plan anything since it changes constantly. While I find the Irish people friendly, I sometimes feel that they aren't always inclusive.
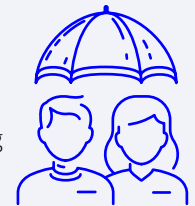
In terms of work, I've faced several challenges, particularly regarding employment rights. Issues related to my visa and work paperwork have been quite frustrating. I often had the feeling that my work experience from Nigeria did not count. To catch the attention of larger companies, I need to show that I have relevant experience in Ireland, which can be a hurdle.

I've also noticed some discrimination in the job market. Many Africans struggle to secure positions they are qualified for. Although people are generally nice, I sense barriers when it comes to professional advancement. I often find myself being turned down for internal applications, which makes me feel somewhat discriminated against at work. It's tough to feel accepted when you're not from Ireland. While everyone is kind, I can't shake the feeling that progressing in the workplace isn't as accessible for me as it is for Irish citizens."

Persona 6:
Miroslav's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from a Roma background

My name is Miroslav, I am 45 and have been living in Westmeath for the past 18 years. I moved to Ireland from the Czech Republic in search of a better quality of life for my family.

" Having friends already here made the transition much smoother. Currently, I work for a Non-for-Profit organisation, which gives me a real sense of purpose and the opportunity to advocate for my community in ways I couldn't before. Ireland has provided a safe and stable environment for my family, and I truly appreciate the welcoming and kind Irish culture. Life here feels much freer compared to back home.

While I find Irish people generally less discriminatory towards the Roma community compared to those in our home country, there's still a significant lack of understanding about who we are – our beliefs, cultural practices, and traditions like the way women dress or marriage customs. Unfortunately, all Roma tend to be stereotyped, which can be frustrating.

One of the biggest challenges we have faced in Ireland is finding affordable housing. The cost of accommodation is incredibly high, and there are numerous barriers to securing a decent place to live.

In terms of work, I feel fortunate that I don't have to hide my ethnicity at my current job, unlike many Roma who do so after graduating. Coming from a small village with few job opportunities and no real work history, it was tough to secure employment. Language was another hurdle for me when I first arrived, as I didn't speak much English, and had to teach myself.

Discrimination does exist here, and it is never easy being blamed when things go wrong. I have noticed that this is more prevalent in larger cities like Dublin. However, compared to my home country, where discrimination is much harsher, I feel somewhat less targeted in Ireland. **"**

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this report, Ireland has undergone profound demographic changes in recent decades, with ethnic diversity becoming a significant and growing feature of its population and workforce. According to the CSO, almost one in five people living in Ireland were born outside the country. This demographic shift introduces both opportunities and challenges for employers operating in this evolving landscape. The integration of ethnic diversity and inclusion within workplaces is not only merely a moral imperative; it also represents a strategic advantage that can enhance business performance.

In conducting this research, as detailed in the methodology section, we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders. These included employers who are at various stages of incorporating ethnic diversity into their workforce, human resources and talent acquisition professionals supporting this journey, NGO and advocacy groups focused on diversity, and a diverse array of candidates representing multiple ethnic backgrounds. The objective was to gain a comprehensive understanding of why ethnic diversity and inclusion is vital for Irish workplaces and what tangible benefits these efforts can bring to businesses across Ireland.

Our findings underline the fact that fostering ethnic diversity brings a host of advantages to organisations that are proactive in embedding it as part of their overall strategy. The reasons for doing so are numerous, ranging from enhanced innovation to improved decision-making and global market relevance. The benefits extend beyond ethics and compliance to include concrete business outcomes, making diversity a crucial factor for competitive success in the Irish context. In the following section, we outline these benefits, drawing upon both stakeholder insights and relevant research, to illustrate the substantial value of focusing on fostering ethnic diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

> " The business case for I&D as a source of competitive advantage is growing stronger. Increasingly, we find that the most diverse companies recognise I&D as more than a social-justice imperative; they also see it as a core enabler of growth and value creation. These diversity winners are pulling ahead of the rest. " McKinsey & Company[40]

4.1. Enhanced innovation, creativity & profitability

One of the most significant advantages of a diverse workforce is the boost it provides to innovation and creativity. Different cultural backgrounds bring unique perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches, leading to more innovative solutions and ideas.

When considering the importance of fostering ethnic diversity in the workplace, early research on diversity in general explored a broad spectrum of factors before honing in on the unique benefits that arise specifically from ethnic diversity. The connection between a diverse workforce and enhanced creativity is well-established. As early as 1993 research[41] highlighted how bringing together individuals from varied backgrounds—be it culture, ethnicity, age, or lifestyle – enables companies to respond more innovatively to business challenges. This diversity-driven approach is particularly advantageous in a globalised market, where different perspectives can lead to faster, more creative solutions and a competitive edge. Additional research[42] has continued to highlight this strong connection between workforce diversity, enhanced creativity and innovation within organisations. Okoro and Washington (2012) argue that to maintain a continuous flow of innovation and successfully meet objectives, companies should focus on hiring and retaining employees from varied backgrounds, ethnicities, and nationalities.

According to Gomez-Mejia et al. (2006), employee diversity does not only stimulate creativity but also fosters problem-solving and adaptability, which ultimately leads to more innovative approaches.

40 McKinsey & Company (2020). Diversity wins. How inclusion matters. McKinsey & Company.
41 Cox, T. H. (1993). Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research, and Practice. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler
42 Skarzynski, P., & Gibson, R. (2008). Innovation to the core: A blueprint for transforming the way your company innovates. Harvard Business School Press.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

These benefits in innovation and decision-making stem from two key factors. First, diverse teams bring together a wider range of perspectives, reducing groupthink, and second, the presence of diversity encourages both majority and minority members to engage more thoroughly with information[43]. In this sense, diversity fosters constructive friction, which promotes more thorough deliberation and disrupts conformity, as shown in a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology[44]. This study found that diverse groups outperformed more homogeneous groups on decision-making tasks, more specifically related to pricing. Findings from the experiment carried out showed that ethnically diverse markets were 58% more likely to price assets correctly.

If the link between diversity, better decision-making and innovation has been well established, it has been more challenging to establish a correlation between workforce diversity including ethnic diversity and an organisation's financial performance. Nonetheless, some research has been carried out and successfully linked both.

A McKinsey Report in 2020[45] provides compelling evidence in the case for the benefits of ethnic and cultural diversity to employers stating businesses in the top quartile for ethnic diversity are 36% more likely to outperform in terms of innovation and profitability. Furthermore, their research shows that the likelihood of outperformance continues to be higher for diversity in ethnicity than for gender.

> Businesses in the top quartile for ethnic diversity are **36%** more likely to outperform in terms not only innovation but also on profitability

Specific research[46] carried out in the Venture Capital industry has also proven a correlation between workforce diversity and financial performance. This research has gathered evidence that diversity has a positive impact on financial outcomes, and more specifically on metrics such as profitable investments and overall fund returns. The research shows that increased similarity among investment partners in VC firms correlates with lower investment performance across various metrics. Specifically, investment groups consisting of partners with shared ethnicity experienced a success rate for acquisitions and IPOs that was between 26% and 32% lower compared to those with diverse ethnicity.

In line with previous research findings referenced above, Deloitte's 2020 Global Human Capital Trends report[47] found that organisations with inclusive cultures are 6 times more likely to be innovative and agile and 8 times more likely to achieve better business outcomes.

> Ireland is home to operations of some of the largest and most innovative tech companies in the world including Google, Workday, Microsoft and LinkedIn and all who emphasise the importance of ethnic diversity as a driver of innovation.

Workday is a good example with a workforce of 2,000 employees in Ireland itself, the company has 70 different nationalities working in the country. It is estimated that circa 80% of the staff in Ireland work in product innovation in the organisation's Research & Development (R&D) function, corroborating the link between an ethnically diverse workforce and innovation

> " By valuing diversity, maintaining transparent communication, and fostering an inclusive culture, employers in Ireland can significantly improve both their hiring experience and overall workplace environment. These efforts will not only enhance the company's reputation but also drive innovation and success through a more diverse and motivated workforce." Female Participant, Nigeria

43 Apfelbaum E. P., Phillips K. W., Richeson J. A. (2014). Rethinking the baseline in diversity research: Should we be explaining the effects of homogeneity? Perspectives on Psychological Science, 9, 235–244.
44 Levine, S. S., Apfelbaum, E. P., Bernard, M., Bartelt, V. L., Zajac, E. J., & Stark, D. (2014). Ethnic diversity deflates price bubbles. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111(52), 18524-18529.
45 McKinsey & Company (2020). Diversity wins. How inclusion matters. McKinsey & Company.
46 Gompers, P., & Kovvali, S. (2018). Organizational restructuring: The other diversity dividend. Harvard Business Review, 96(4), 28–29.
47 Deloitte. (2020). 2020 Global human capital trends: The social enterprise at work: Paradox as a path forward. Deloitte Development LLC.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

4.2. Psychological safety facilitates high performing teams

Google has been proactive globally in fostering psychological safety and promoting ethnic diversity within teams, including in Ireland, where it has a significant presence.

Google's research on high-performing teams, specifically through Project Aristotle (launched in 2012), found that the most crucial factor for team success is psychological safety. This concept emphasises that individuals feel safe to take risks, express ideas, ask questions, and admit mistakes without fear of judgement or retribution. For diverse teams, this kind of environment is essential to ensure that minority voices are heard and valued.

In Ireland, Google has worked to integrate psychological safety across its teams by encouraging inclusive leadership practices, where managers are trained to foster open communication, support diverse perspectives, and mitigate bias.

Project Aristotle has significant relevance to ethnic diversity and inclusion, even though it wasn't explicitly designed to focus on those areas. The core finding of Project Aristotle is that psychological safety is the most important factor in a successful team. Psychological safety has strong implications for fostering ethnic diversity, equality and inclusion, as it creates an environment where all voices, including those from underrepresented ethnic groups, can be heard and valued.

> " Workplace culture could be improved by creating a safe environment, where employees feel valued. If needs be, employers could look at getting a training course on anti-racism or avoiding biases. There could be committees in companies centred around diversity & inclusion, employees could bring forward any issues they may have to those, the leads of those committees would then carry the information to more senior members of staff. "
> Female Respondent from Zimbabwe

4.3. Expanded market reach and customer base

An ethnically diverse workforce can help businesses better understand and connect with a wider range of customers, both domestically and internationally.

Previous research[48] has demonstrated that workforce diversity significantly influences the quality of a company's services. Employees with varied backgrounds bring unique experiences that enable them to connect with specific customer segments, understanding their needs, cultural perspectives, and thought processes. This insight allows companies to adopt a personalised approach, tailoring their services to meet the demands of diverse customer groups. By leveraging the diverse perspectives of their workforce, companies can enhance their service offerings and effectively engage with a broader range of clients, ultimately driving customer satisfaction and loyalty .

In an interview with Prashant Shukla, Chairman of the Ireland India Council (IIC), he emphasised the importance for businesses to *'understand how things are done in other countries and be able to explain the differences.'* The importance of international talent in the services industry cannot be overstated, especially when the customer base is international.

Recent immigrants to Ireland often struggle to understand the nuances of the local services market and this was evident in many of the qualitative interviews we conducted. For example, car insurance works differently in Ireland and in India: in India, the car is insured, while in Ireland, it's the driver who is insured. For companies, banks, or organisations, having an understanding of these differences is a valuable asset in providing better information to customers from diverse backgrounds as you understand the place where the customer is coming from and where comparisons for educational effect may be useful. A diverse workforce partially helps bridge these gaps, offering insights, guidance, and ultimately improving the ability to serve and sell to non-Irish customers. Intercultural familiarisation programmes can help businesses adapt to their diverse customer base.

---

48 Mor Barak, M. E. (2015). Inclusion is the Key to Diversity Management, but What is Inclusion? Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, 39(2), 83–88.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

For a customer, engaging with an employee who shares their nationality and ethnicity can be incredibly beneficial. This employee can draw comparisons between purchasing services in their home country and in Ireland, highlighting the differences they can expect. This is particularly evident in the insurance sector.

International talent brings diverse perspectives and a deeper understanding of different cultural expectations, which enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, in the insurance industry, having staff who can relate to the experiences of international clients helps in explaining complex policies and procedures more effectively. This not only improves the customer experience but also builds trust and confidence in the service provided.

> In an article entitled How Diversity Can Drive Innovation, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall, and Laura Sherbin[49] stated "We've found that when at least one member of a team has traits in common with the end user, the entire team better understands that user. A team with a member who shares a client's ethnicity is **152%** likelier than another team to understand that client."

4.4. Employee attraction, engagement and retention

Workforce diversity within organisations can improve employee attraction. Companies known for their inclusive cultures have an enhanced employer brand and based on insights gleaned from our qualitative phase of this research, are considered more attractive to top talent from diverse backgrounds.

Over **1 in 4** respondents to the survey on Fostering Ethnic Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the workplace reported **Company Culture** to be among the **top 3** most important factors when considering a job.

> " What is important to me in a job is a good working environment and the company culture." Female participant from India

A Glassdoor survey[50] revealed that **67%** of job seekers consider workplace diversity an important factor when considering employment opportunities.
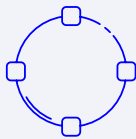
Workforce diversity and inclusion has also proven to have a positive impact on employee engagement. The concept of employee engagement varies across definitions, ranging from an emphasis on an employee's dedication and commitment to their work to being seen as the opposite of burnout. It is also described as a blend of key attributes such as 'commitment, loyalty, productivity, and ownership' acting as a *'force that motivates employees to higher (or lower) levels of performance'[51]*. Nevertheless, there is agreement on the positive impacts that employee engagement brings to the well-being of an organisation and its employees. While engagement is driven at the individual level, it has been consistently shown to positively impact business outcomes through improvements in individual performance[52].

Research on diversity and engagement has demonstrated that implementing diversity and inclusion practices within organisations fosters a greater sense of trust and well-being among employees, both of which are closely linked to higher levels of engagement[53].

49 Hewlett, S. A., Marshall, M., & Sherbin, L. (2013). How diversity can drive innovation. Harvard Business Review, 91(12), 30-31.
50 Glassdoor. (2021, July 12). What job seekers really think about your diversity and inclusion stats. Glassdoor.
51 Wellins, R., & Concelman, J. (2005). Employee engagement: A pathway to organizational success. In Journal of Management Studies.
52 Agrawal, S. (2016). *Factors influencing employee engagement: A study of diverse workforce.* Article No. 19. International Management Institute, New Delhi, India.
53 Downey, S. N., van der Werff, L., Thomas, K. M., & Plaut, V. C. (2015). The role of diversity practices and inclusion in promoting trust and employee engagement. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 45(1), 35-44.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

Trust is key for employees to feel engaged. Research has suggested that the connection between diversity practices and the trust climate within an organisation will be enhanced when employees have a strong sense of inclusion. Mor Barak (2008)[54] emphasises the critical connection between trust and inclusion in organisational settings arguing that 'inclusion is defined as the degree to which employees feel part of essential organisational processes,' which includes having influence over decision-making, participating in important work groups, and having access to necessary information and resources. This perception of inclusion is vital as it significantly predicts employee commitment and job performance. When employees, especially those from underrepresented groups, feel excluded, their job commitment tends to decrease.

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employee engagement can be seen as a way for individuals to reciprocate the career and social support and opportunities provided by their employer[55/56]. Therefore, when companies invest in promoting a diverse and inclusive work environment, they enhance employee well-being, which in turn leads to stronger engagement and loyalty. This reciprocal relationship underscores the strategic value of diversity and inclusion efforts in boosting overall workforce engagement.

When employees are engaged, they are less likely to leave. High engagement levels, driven by a diverse and inclusive culture, often result in lower turnover rates[57].

Specific research[58] has also focused on the role that leaders have in the reduction of turnovers in diverse teams. Indeed, the objective of an organisation is not only to attract a diverse workforce but also retain these employees. Inclusive leaders who develop equitable relationships with all team members create a more stable work environment, which can lead to lower turnover rates. Conversely, if leaders only engage effectively with a subset of their team, this can lead to dissatisfaction and higher turnover among those who feel excluded. To achieve this, and as recommended in this research, organisations can benefit from training managers in diversity and inclusive leadership practices to ensure that all employees feel valued and connected, ultimately enhancing employee retention.

4.5. Enhanced language capabilities

> The 2022 census data reveals that **20%** of the population in the Republic of Ireland was born outside of the country, reflecting the increasing diversity of its population.

Additionally, 751,507 persons indicated in the census 2022 that they speak a language other than English or Irish at home, marking a 23% increase from the 2016 census. Notably, around 28% of those who speak a foreign language at home were born in the Republic of Ireland. The most commonly spoken foreign languages include Polish, Romanian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Lithuanian, German, Chinese, Malayalam, Arabic, Russian, and Italian (see Table 10 for details).

54 Mor Barak, M. E. (2008). Inclusion: A key to workplace diversity. In *Diversity in the workplace: A review of the literature* (pp. 33-50). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
55 Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. Annual Review of Psychology, 52(1), 397-422.
56 Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management,* 31(6), 874-900.
57 Buttner, E. H., Lowe, K. B., & Billings-Harris, L. (2010). The impact of diversity promise fulfillment on professionals of color outcomes in the USA. Journal of Business Ethics, 91(4), 501-518.
58 Nishii, L. H., & Mayer, D. M. (2009). Do inclusive leaders help to reduce turnover? *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 30(8), 793-815.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

Table 10: Population Usually Resident and present in Ireland who spoke a language other than Irish or English at home by language spoken

Language Spoken	Number of speakers
All languages	**751,507**
Polish	123,968
Romanian	57,383
French	51,568
Spanish	48,113
Portuguese	43,985
Lithuanian	34,885
German	27,926
Chinese	24,709
Malayalam	24,674
Arabic	23,234
Russian	20,434
Italian	18,725
Urdu	16,307
Latvian	15,349
Hindi	13,902
Croatian	12,247
Filipino	10,892
Yoruba	10,343
Hungarian	9,586
Slovak	9,336
Other Asian	8,940
Ukrainian	8,077
Tagalog	6,551
Bengali	6,245
Other African	5,874
Tamil	5,502
Dutch	5,341
Czech	4,999
Afrikaans	4,961
Bulgarian	4,175
Turkish	4,036
Igbo	3,872
Irish sign language	3,578

Language Spoken	Number of speakers
Telugu	3,125
Albanian	2,991
Punjabi	2,537
Pashto	2,534
Thai	2,478
Greek	2,353
Swahili	2,219
Somali	2,150
Persian	2,094
Japanese	2,063
Swedish	2,041
Other Eastern European	1,975
Shona	1,898
Vietnamese	1,623
Serbian	1,582
Lingala	1,495
Kurdish	1,484
Malay	1,412
Other Northern European	1,311
Georgian	1,309
Bosnian	1,305
Edo	1,228
Other Southern European	1,139
Korean	1,083
Estonian	1,044
Nepali	1,001
Finnish	922
Danish	858
Sign Language (Not Specified)	733
Hebrew	711
Irish cant	699
Nyanja (Chichewa)	649
Other stated languages (incl. not stated)	29,744

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022

This rise in multilingualism highlights the growing cultural and linguistic diversity within Ireland, with this diverse workforce bringing multilingual skills, which can be particularly beneficial for Irish companies engaging with the EU and global markets post-Brexit.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

4.6. Broader economic benefits

Beyond corporate advantages, promoting ethnic diversity also brings broader economic benefits at a national level.

Ethnic diversity and immigration play a crucial role in supporting Ireland's economic growth, primarily due to their ability to address critical skills shortages and support sectors that are essential for the country's development. About 1 in 5 workers in Ireland are non-Irish citizens and, similarly, about 1 in 5 workers are from an ethnic minority background[59].

With an unemployment rate of 4.3% as of September 2024, Ireland is close to full employment, which means that many services or sectors are having challenges filling their jobs and finding staff[60]. Based on a study carried out by Skillnet Ireland[61] 41% of businesses surveyed reported having difficulties recruiting employees with the necessary skills. While upskilling and reskilling programmes are essential to addressing skills mismatches in Ireland, the inflow of foreign workers and the effective utilisation of the foreign workforce already based in Ireland are crucial to tackling skills shortages. We must actively work to remove the barriers identified in this research that are currently hindering the full optimisation of this talent pool in the job market.

> With an unemployment rate of **4.3%** as of September 2024, Ireland is close to full employment.

As the economy grows and diversifies, certain industries face significant challenges in finding qualified workers locally. This is one of the reasons why Ireland has implemented the Critical Skills Employment Permit, targeting occupations with high demand and a shortage of local talent, such as in healthcare, ICT, engineering, and other specialised fields. Between January 2024 and September 2024, 30,172 employment permits were delivered to support the needs of 6,466 employers[62].

As of 2022, several industry sectors in Ireland relied heavily on a diverse workforce of ethnic minority professionals. For example, 39% of the persons employed in Accommodation & Food activities were from an ethnic minority background. Professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds also made up for 36% of those employed in ICT, 23% of those employed in manufacturing, 22% of those employed in healthcare and 16% of those employed in Construction[63]. Between January and September 2024, 33% of the total employment permits delivered were for the Healthcare sector, 17% for the ICT sector and 8% for the Hospitality sector (Accommodation & Food activities)[64].

> Between January 2024 and September 2024, **30,172** employment permits were delivered to support the needs of **6,466** employers[62].

Since the financial crisis, there has been a significant decline in the number of individuals entering the construction sector. The ongoing inflow of migrant workers has been crucial in alleviating the skills shortages in this industry. In 2023, approximately 27,500 migrant workers were employed in Ireland's construction sector, marking an 84% increase (or 12,600 workers) since 2021[65]. Despite this continuous influx, the sector continues to grapple with significant skills gaps. These challenges are further intensified by Ireland's climate and housing goals. A key objective of the government's Housing for All policy is to increase housing output from 20,000 units in 2020 to 33,000 annually by 2030. To meet this target, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2021) has projected a requirement for an additional 26,000 full-time equivalent employees, presenting a considerable demand for a construction sector that is already facing numerous skills shortages[66].

> A key objective of the government's Housing for All policy is to increase housing output from **20,000** units in 2020 to **33,000** annually by 2030.

59 Central Statistics Office (2022). Census 2022
60 Department of the Taoiseach. (2024, October 7). *Migration - The facts.* gov.ie. https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/migration-the-facts/
61 Skillnet Ireland. (2024). *Ireland's Talent Landscape 2024 - Future Skills Challenges of Irish Business.* Skillnet Ireland.
62 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2024). *Employment Permit Statistics 2024*
63 Central Statistics Office (2022). *Census 2022*
64 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2024). *Employment Permit Statistics 2024*
65 Department of the Taoiseach. (2024, October 7). *Migration - The facts.* gov.ie. https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/migration-the-facts/
66 Barrett, A. (2024). Capacity constraints, chapter 2 in The National Development Plan in 2023: priorities and capacity, Book/Report Chapter, Dublin: ESRI

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

Despite the clear significance of international skills to the Irish economy, ethnic minorities in Ireland continue to experience higher unemployment rates than the national average. This disparity persists even though educational attainment data from the CSO indicates that non-nationals possess higher qualifications compared to Irish nationals[67]. Below a figure illustrating the highest educational attainment of persons aged 25-64 years per nationality:

Figure 34: Population aged 25-64 years old per nationality and educational attainment
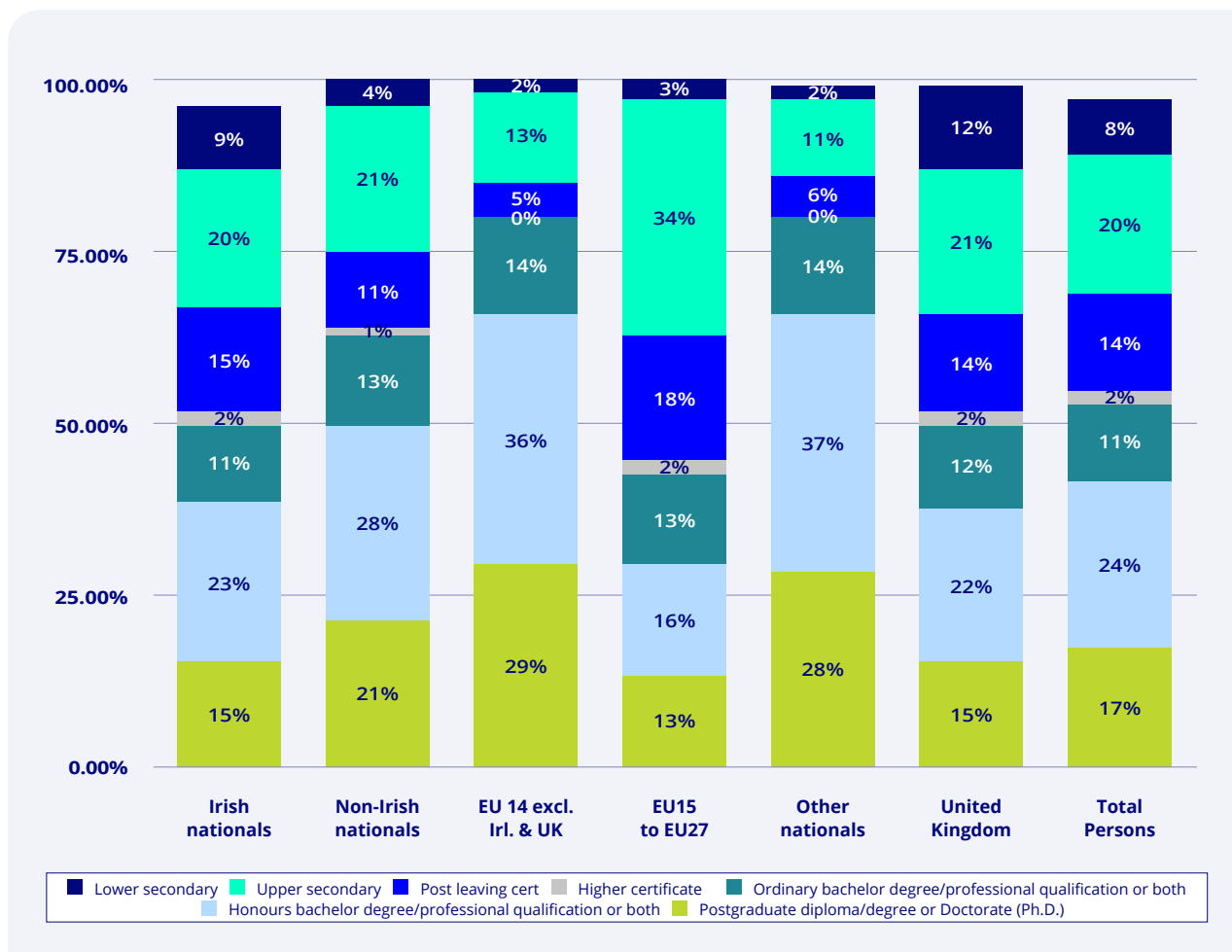
Source: Central Statistics Office (2023). Educational Attainment, Q2 2023

As can be seen in the above figure, 49% of Irish nationals have a bachelor degree, a postgraduate degree or a diploma. This compared to 63% for non-Irish nationals. Specifically, 28% of non-nationals hold an Honours bachelor's degree or higher qualification compared to 23% of Irish nationals; 13% hold an Ordinary bachelor's degree or professional qualification compared to 11% of Irish nationals; 21% have a Postgraduate diploma, degree, or Doctorate, in contrast to 15% of Irish nationals; and 21% have attained an upper secondary education compared to 20% of Irish Nationals.

---

67 It is important to note that education levels can be a prerequisite for immigrating to Ireland, particularly for individuals from non-EEA countries. Additionally, the educational attainment of migrants in Ireland may often exceed the average educational levels in their countries of origin.

4. Why is it important to foster ethnic diversity in the workplace?

The government has brought in several measures that ease the integration of the international workforce into the country. Some of these measures include updates to the employment permit systems such as the allowing of spouses or de-facto partners of GEP or ICT permit holders residing in Ireland to work without an employment permit as well as the addition of new skills to the critical skills list for e.g. bricklayers and site managers[68].

As of July 2018, employers in Ireland can hire asylum seekers who have obtained work permissions. To support businesses considering this option, Ibec and the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission have developed the 'Employing International Protection Applicants' Toolkit', which serves as a practical guide providing employers clear information on how to employ asylum seekers.

To fully realise the individual and collective benefits of immigration in Ireland, employers can play a crucial role in leveraging existing mechanisms, such as employment permits. Additionally, they have an opportunity to play a key part in ensuring that the diverse talent already residing in the country is able to transition effectively into the labour force, occupying positions that match their skills and qualifications.

Besides its impact easing labour shortages and increasing economic growth, the integration of immigrants and individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Ireland also has the potential to contribute positively to reducing societal inequality by providing opportunities for underrepresented groups and promoting economic integration.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has emphasised that promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace is a key strategy for reducing income inequality and fostering social mobility. Additionally, a report by the European Commission highlights that inclusive employment practices contribute significantly to reducing socio-economic disparities among different ethnic groups.

As seen in this Chapter, the benefits of fostering ethnic diversity, equality and inclusion in Irish workplaces are numerous and far-reaching. From enhanced innovation, higher quality decision-making, increased employee engagement, lower turnover and financial performance to nationwide economic outcomes.

While diversity in teams brings numerous advantages, it can also present certain challenges. One of these is the potential for conflict, as individuals often feel more comfortable and trusting around those who share similar backgrounds. To fully leverage the benefits of a diverse workforce – both for individuals and the organisation – employers need to invest in fostering a culture of trust and inclusion. This means dedicating resources and time to actively promote diversity and manage it effectively. By doing so, companies can 'maximise the gains and minimise the pains of diversity'[69].

---

[68] Courtney, L. (2022, June 5). The benefits of encouraging an international workforce to come here. Business Post
[69] Galinsky, A. D., Todd, A. R., Homan, A. C., Phillips, K. W., Apfelbaum, E. P., Sasaki, S. J., Richeson, J. A., Olayon, J. B., & Maddux, W. W. (2015). Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Pains of Diversity: A Policy Perspective. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10(6), 742-748.

Persona 7:
Larissa's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from an Other including mixed background

I am Larissa. I came from Brazil on a holiday 5 years ago for my 30th birthday and ended up staying longer than planned. I met my husband here, in Dublin, and now we're planning to stay for at least the next five years.

Larissa

" What I love about Ireland is the opportunity it has given me to pursue further studies and really improve my English. There are so many job opportunities, especially with the number of multinational companies here. The work-life balance is also much better than what I had in Brazil, and the wages are higher. Plus, Irish people are friendly and have a laid-back approach to life that I really appreciate.

Of course, there are things I don't enjoy as much. The cost of living, especially when it comes to finding accommodation, is quite high. The weather is another challenge – it's much colder than what I'm used to. I also feel like getting good job opportunities often depends on who you know. Based on my travel experience, I feel that Ireland is slower to fully embrace other nationalities compared to places like the UK for example.

In terms of work, my journey wasn't easy at first. When I arrived, I was advised to take any job available, so I started out as a cleaner and worked in a coffee shop. Back in Brazil, I was a personal assistant to a major international brand, but I was told that my English wasn't good enough to get a similar role here. I had to start from the bottom and work my way up. Even now, I sometimes feel insecure about speaking in public, as I worry that my foreign accent might not be well-received.

As for discrimination, I haven't experienced much of it on the streets, but at work, I feel like I've been fortunate because of my lighter skin tone. However, I have witnessed colleagues from India facing harsher treatment from customers. Sometimes, I feel like Ireland sends mixed signals – one moment it feels welcoming, and the next, it seems like it's pushing you away. "

Persona 8:
Arjun's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from an Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi background

I am Arjun. I am a 42 years old father of two from India, currently living in Dublin since 2015.

Arjun

" After having kids, I really started to think about leaving India. I wanted to give my children better opportunities. Luckily, I managed to get a job transfer to Ireland through my company back home. Eventually, I landed a role as an ICT Solutions Architect at a telecommunications company, but my contract ended a couple of months ago, so now I'm on the lookout for new opportunities.

I have to say, I find Ireland to be such a clean country. It's not as big as India, and the countryside is just beautiful. The people here are welcoming, friendly, and incredibly generous. There's also a wonderful mix of nationalities and cultures, which I really appreciate.

Adjusting to life here took some time, especially getting used to the weather, which seems to change all the time and is often wet. I was also surprised at how early shops close; it's quite different from what I was used to. Even though salaries are generally better than in India, accommodation prices are very high, making it tough to buy a house. I also faced challenges getting some documents, like my passport and driving license.

As for work, I see plenty of opportunities, but visa issues have been a significant hurdle for me. I've applied for over 200 jobs and only landed four interviews, which is discouraging. I often felt like my applications were dismissed simply because I'm not an EU citizen.

When it comes to discrimination, there's definitely some negativity in Ireland, but it seems to be directed at everyone, not just people from my background. Unfortunately, my daughter faced bullying at her first school, with eggs thrown at her, which led us to change schools. Thankfully, things are much better now, and overall, we're enjoying our life in Ireland. "

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.1 Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

While addressing the challenges of unequal access and success in the workforce for ethnic minorities requires societal changes at all levels – from individual behaviours to national policies – the following recommendations are specifically focused on the crucial role employers can play. By implementing targeted actions, employers can help improve the situation and create more equitable opportunities within their own workplaces.

5.1.1 Self-assessment: Plan your own DEI journey

The first step in any diversity and inclusion journey is a clear commitment to invest time, resources, and energy into creating a more inclusive workplace. This decision should be rooted in an understanding of the long-term benefits of DEI, including enhanced creativity, innovation, employee satisfaction, and access to a wider talent pool (see section 4 of this research). By making this decision, employers will signal to their teams that diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords but core values that drive the organisation forward. It's essential to communicate this commitment throughout the organisation and ensure that DEI initiatives are aligned with the organisation's overall mission and values. In order to proceed with the DEI journey, it is important to:

Know where you start from:

Before implementing any DEI initiatives, it's crucial to assess the employer's current situation. Conduct an internal audit to understand the existing demographic makeup of the workforce, identify areas of underrepresentation, and explore any potential barriers to inclusion. As part of this research, several employers have adapted their HR information systems to prompt both new and existing employees to provide details about their profiles, such as ethnicity and nationality. This serves as a starting point for tracking the proportion of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds. Beyond demographic data, the information collected also extends to employee perceptions of diversity, gathered through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, in order to better understand the organisation's culture.This initial assessment provides a baseline from which progress can be measured and highlights key areas of focus for your DEI strategy.

Know where you want to go:

An employer's diversity and inclusion strategy should be data-driven, with clear, measurable objectives based on the metrics collected. They must define success for their organisation, whether that means increasing the representation of specific demographic groups, fostering a more inclusive culture, reducing turnover among underrepresented employees, or addressing all these goals. Using the data, employers should set realistic, time-bound goals and develop a roadmap to achieve them. For instance, if employees from ethnic minority backgrounds make up just 1% of the workforce, and 17% of Ireland's population identifies as an ethnic background other than White Irish, the employer could aim to gradually increase representation to align with this percentage over a 10-year period. The key is to ensure steady, year-on-year progress, with achievable and realistic targets guiding the improvement of ethnic minority representation.

Measure the progress:
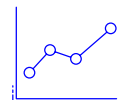
Once realistic baselines and objectives have been put in place, it is important to continuously track progress to ensure the organisation's efforts are effective. The data collected has to be reviewed periodically and workplace culture should be monitored in parallel with metrics such as employee engagement and satisfaction. It is important to establish key performance indicators that align with the broader organisational goals and create a reporting system to regularly review and communicate progress to all employees and stakeholders. This will help ensure accountability and allow for adjustments to the strategy where needed. Being transparent in the sharing of the progress made as regards to DEI is also key to keep all employees and stakeholders informed and engaged.

Look at external resources and best practices:

Employers don't need to reinvent the wheel when starting their DEI journey—there are numerous external resources and best practices available to guide them. Researching successful DEI programmes from other organisations, attending industry conferences, and consulting with experts in the field are highly recommended. Additionally, seeking advice from professional networks or specialised consulting firms can be valuable. Leveraging external resources can offer new perspectives, innovative solutions, and proven strategies to help you achieve your DEI goals more efficiently and effectively.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.1.2 Leadership commitment

Leadership buy-in is critical for a company to start their DEI journey. Executives and managers set the tone for the company's culture. When top leadership actively supports DEI initiatives, it signals to the entire organisation that these efforts are a priority. Their involvement drives accountability and ensures that DEI is integrated into the business strategy rather than being treated as a side project. Making the necessary changes to ensure the implementation of DEI policies requires resources—whether in the form of time, training, or financial investment. Leadership commitment ensures that the necessary resources are allocated to effectively drive initiatives such as inclusive hiring practices, employee resource groups, or unconscious bias training.

Without senior leaders advocating for and championing these efforts, there is a risk that DEI initiatives may lose momentum, especially when faced with short-term business pressures. Leaders help to keep the focus on the strategic importance of these initiatives, even when challenges arise.

Employees, especially from underrepresented groups, need to trust that DEI efforts are genuine and not merely a PR exercise. When leadership is actively involved, it signals authenticity and increases employee engagement and participation in the initiatives. A lack of visible commitment from leadership can result in scepticism and a lack of buy-in from staff.

Leaders have the power to influence policies, processes, and practices. Their involvement ensures that DEI is embedded into recruitment, performance reviews, promotions, and decision-making processes. When leaders drive DEI efforts, it also influences middle management and team leaders, who are critical in day-to-day operations and employee experiences. Top executives and managers also serve as role models for inclusive behaviour. Their buy-in and visible support help cultivate an inclusive environment where employees feel valued, respected, and encouraged to bring their whole selves to work. It also encourages other employees to adopt inclusive practices.

> **In summary, leadership buy-in is essential for creating a company culture that values diversity, for securing the necessary resources to implement DEI initiatives, and for ensuring that these efforts are sustainable and impactful throughout the organisation.**

5.1.3 Attraction: Be an appealing employer for ethnic minority groups

Before an individual begins the application process for a job, they must first decide to apply to a specific employer. Attracting professionals from diverse ethnic backgrounds is just as important as ensuring equitable recruitment procedures and fostering an inclusive company culture.

Employers can broaden their appeal to a wide range of candidates by cultivating a brand that reflects a strong commitment to DEI. This can be done by prominently featuring DEI statements and imagery across multiple platforms. For example, the employer's website should highlight a dedicated section on diversity, accompanied by visuals of a diverse workforce. Additionally, printed materials within the company's premises and other media communications should consistently reinforce the message of inclusivity.

Engagement with potential candidates at university campuses, career fairs, and professional events is also essential. Targeted DEI messaging at these events helps create brand awareness, especially for graduates looking for their first internships or entry-level positions. Early impressions matter and being visible in educational and professional spaces fosters a sense of belonging among individuals from various backgrounds.

Employers should also pay special attention to the drafting of job descriptions, which serve as a first impression of the company. These descriptions not only outline job responsibilities but can also communicate the company's values and culture. Ensuring that job postings convey diversity and inclusivity is key. Feedback from advocacy groups reveals that some individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds may feel that certain roles are 'not for them.' It's crucial to dispel this perception by clearly stating that roles are open to all qualified candidates, regardless of background, provided they meet the job requirements.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

For example, some individuals from non-White Irish backgrounds may mistakenly believe that public service jobs in Ireland are reserved exclusively for Irish citizens or White Irish individuals. While some restrictions based on nationality and residency do exist, it is incorrect to assume that these roles are closed to individuals from ethnic minorities. Employers must communicate clearly that public service jobs are accessible to people from diverse backgrounds, as long as they meet the qualifications and eligibility criteria.

In the effort to foster a more inclusive workplace, employers may want to publicly signal their commitment to welcoming individuals from underrepresented groups. For example, organisations that are truly committed to creating equitable opportunities for Ireland's Traveller community can consider openly 'badging' themselves as Traveller-friendly employers. This approach can send a strong message that the company values and supports individuals from the Traveller community, a group that has historically faced significant barriers to employment in Ireland. Following discussions with Traveller organisations, it has been made clear that this type of targeted communication would be welcomed by the members of this community.

However, it's essential to recognise that while such a badge could help attract members of the Traveller community, this approach may not be as effective or appropriate for other ethnic minority groups, such as Black or Black Irish individuals and Arabs. The challenges these groups face can be different, and their sense of exclusion or discrimination may not be alleviated by a similar badge.

By embedding diversity in branding, recruitment, and outreach efforts, companies can create a welcoming environment where individuals from all ethnicities feel encouraged to apply and thrive.

5.1.4 Attraction: Engage with specific partners to broaden your candidate base

To enhance workforce diversity, it's essential to expand the pool of potential candidates and ensure it's as inclusive as possible. Research has shown that various demographic groups often rely on different methods for job searching.

Partnering with advocacy organisations can play a pivotal role in increasing a company's reach when seeking new talent. For example, certain advocacy groups offer specialised job boards and can connect employers with individuals who might not otherwise encounter certain job postings. These candidates may feel that certain roles aren't 'meant for them' or that they don't stand a chance, but such partnerships help bridge that gap and make opportunities more accessible to a broader, diverse audience.

Many advocacy groups host career fairs for their members and the communities they support. Participating in these events offers a valuable opportunity for employers to engage directly with a diverse pool of potential candidates. By attending, companies can build connections and showcase their commitment to diversity and inclusion in a more personal, impactful way.

Collaborating with an advocacy group to enhance diversity and inclusion can involve both financial and time investments, but the specifics will vary depending on the depth of engagement and the scale of the organisation's goals. Advocacy groups often provide consultations, workshops, or training sessions, which could involve a fee. These can range from one-off payments for specific events to ongoing retainers for long-term collaboration. Developing tailored DEI strategies or programmes, such as mentorship initiatives, inclusive recruitment practices, or diversity audits, may involve additional costs.

Collaborating with an advocacy group is a highly effective way to advance DEI efforts. This partnership provides employers with access to specialised expertise and established DEI frameworks, helping to minimise trial-and-error in developing a successful strategy. It also improves the company's reputation and ensures better compliance with DEI-related regulations. The best approach is to initiate a dialogue with selected advocacy groups and build from there. Even starting with small steps and committing to them can have a significant impact, benefiting both the employer and the ethnic minority groups targeted by these initiatives.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.1.5 Fair recruitment: Review recruitment policies and tools

Once an employer has deployed efforts on reaching out and appealing to a diverse candidate base, it is important to work on fostering fair recruitment practices that will ensure the fair treatment of all candidates independently of their ethnic background. Example of initiatives to consider when designing diverse and inclusive recruitment policies or practices include:

Consider hiring a diverse talent acquisition/recruitment team:

A diverse recruitment or talent acquisition team brings a variety of perspectives, experiences, and cultural understandings to the hiring process, which can help identify and address biases that might otherwise go unnoticed. This team can better understand and relate to the needs and concerns of candidates from different backgrounds, ensuring that recruitment practices are fair and inclusive. Moreover, diverse recruiters can leverage their networks and connections within various communities to attract a broader range of talent. Their varied experiences can also contribute to more effective strategies for reaching underrepresented groups. Ultimately, a diverse recruitment team not only promotes a more inclusive hiring process but also sets a positive example for the organisation, reinforcing the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Consider implementing anonymised CVs:

Anonymised CVs can play a crucial role in promoting fair recruitment practices, particularly for ethnic minorities. By removing personal identifiers such as names, addresses, and other demographic details, anonymised CVs help to mitigate unconscious biases that may influence hiring decisions. This approach ensures that candidates are evaluated solely based on their skills, experience, and qualifications, rather than being inadvertently judged on their ethnic background or socio-economic status. As a result, anonymised CVs contribute to a more level playing field, enabling a diverse range of candidates to be considered fairly and increasing the likelihood of attracting talent from various ethnic backgrounds. This practice not only supports equity in recruitment but also enriches the workplace with diverse perspectives and experiences.

Examine the tools used for application analysis to prevent the systematic rejection of certain applications:

During the research, a couple of participants with HR experience noted that specific responses to pre-screening questions could lead to automatic discarding of applications. For instance, if a candidate indicated they required a work permit to work in Ireland, their application might be dismissed without further consideration. This system failed to account for additional details, such as whether the candidate held a Stamp 4, which would grant them the same work rights as an Irish citizen.

5.1.6 Fair recruitment: Recognition of foreign qualifications and experience

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the recognition of foreign qualifications poses an additional barrier to access employment for many ethnic minority groups and there is a responsibility on the Irish based employer/hiring manager to address this to the mutual benefit of both parties.

To promote fair recruitment practices regarding the recognition of foreign qualifications and experience, Irish employers should actively utilise the services provided by QQI and the NARIC. Employers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with QQI and NARIC resources to understand the equivalency of foreign qualifications and the skills associated with diverse professional backgrounds. Incorporating a structured approach to evaluate foreign qualifications during the hiring process is essential; this can include requiring candidates to provide recognition statements from QQI or NARIC, ensuring that their qualifications are accurately assessed against Irish standards.

Furthermore, organisations should provide training for hiring managers and HR personnel on the importance of recognising foreign qualifications and experiences, emphasising the benefits of diverse talent and the potential for enhancing workplace innovation and productivity. Job postings should be crafted to encourage applications from candidates with foreign qualifications, explicitly stating that the organisation values diverse educational backgrounds and experiences.

Collaboration with recognition bodies is also crucial; employers are encouraged to work closely with QQI and NARIC to stay updated on the latest developments in qualification recognition and to participate in initiatives that promote the integration of skilled immigrants into the Irish labour market. By taking these steps, Irish employers can foster a more equitable recruitment process, enhance workforce diversity, and leverage the skills and talents of immigrants, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and effective workplace

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.1.7 Fair recruitment: How to approach employment permits

To foster fair and inclusive recruitment practices for candidates with employment permits, Irish employers should implement comprehensive policies that promote transparency and equity throughout the hiring process. First, organisations must ensure that job descriptions are clear and accessible, explicitly stating that candidates with employment permits are welcome to apply. This approach not only expands the talent pool but also demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity.

Employers should provide training for hiring managers and HR teams on the specific challenges faced by candidates with employment permits, including the nuances of their legal rights and the importance of recognising their skills and experiences. This training can help mitigate unconscious biases and create a more supportive environment for all candidates. Resources such as the Citizens Information website and the Department of Justice offer valuable information on employment permits, allowing employers to understand their obligations and the processes involved in supporting candidates in this area.

Furthermore, organisations should actively engage with local and national organisations that support immigrants and individuals on employment permits, creating partnerships that facilitate outreach and provide resources for potential candidates. Offering mentorship programmes or networking opportunities can help these individuals integrate into the workplace and feel valued from the outset.

Additionally, employers should establish clear processes for evaluating candidates with employment permits, ensuring that their qualifications and experiences are assessed on par with those of other applicants. Recognising the unique skills and perspectives that these candidates bring can significantly enhance workplace diversity and innovation.

For employers looking to understand their obligations regarding the employment permit process, resources such as the Work Permits section of the DETE website and the Employment Permits FAQ are invaluable. These platforms offer guidance on the application and renewal processes, as well as information on upgrading permits, ensuring employers are well-informed and compliant.

By adopting these recommendations, Irish employers can create a fair and inclusive recruitment process that not only benefits candidates with employment permits but also enriches the overall workplace culture and performance.

5.1.8 Company culture: Create an inclusive workplace culture

After an organisation has focused on attracting a more diverse workforce and implementing fair recruitment practices, it is essential to assess and enhance the culture that will support and integrate these new employees.

A diverse and inclusive culture focuses on many aspects. Below some example of areas to focus on:

- Develop policies that support a diverse workforce, including flexible work arrangements and anti-discrimination measures
- Foster open communication and provide channels for employees to share their feedback and expectations on DEI as well as to report any DEI-related issues
- Create employee resources groups and support networks for employees of different ethnic backgrounds
- Celebrate diversity by organising initiatives such as international food days, recognising significant cultural observances, and hosting diversity-focused events
- Have clear and transparent policies and procedures to address discrimination complaints within the organisation

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

Embarking on a DEI journey involves embracing a range of perspectives and experiences within an organisation. This process may introduce new challenges or unfamiliar situations as the workplace becomes more diverse. It's important for employers to remain open-minded and adaptable, recognising that not all scenarios may be pre-documented. The primary goal is to ensure that all employees feel safe and respected at work while also meeting the expectations and requirements of their roles. With this in mind, for example, it Is worth considering whether accommodating a person's need for multiple smoke breaks differs significantly from allowing regular prayer breaks, and how each can be managed fairly and respectfully in the workplace. The intention of this comparison is not to spark debate or suggest that employers must accept all requests, but to encourage employers to engage in discussions when hiring a diverse workforce. It is crucial to evaluate new requirements in relation to the existing work environment and determine if they can be accommodated with similar flexibility as other familiar needs, such as flexible working hours.

The size of a company or the resources available can impact the scope of the overall DEI initiatives to be developed. However, the focus on the wellbeing and the fair treatment of all employees should remain a key priority.

During the research interview, a participant recounted an experience from November 2023, when she was out with work colleagues at a pub and witnessed instances of antisocial behaviour around her. Her colleagues offered to accompany her home to prevent any potential incidents on public transport or in the streets. The participant expressed feeling safe in the presence of her colleagues and noted that, amid the period of social unrest, she regarded her workplace as a safe environment. This highlights an important goal for companies: to ensure their premises provide a safe space for employees, regardless of the broader social climate within the country.

5.1.9 Company culture: Facilitate the growth and success of Employee Resource Groups

An Employee Resource Group (ERG) is a voluntary, employee-led group within an organisation, typically organised around shared characteristics or experiences such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or other aspects of identity. ERGs are designed to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace by providing support, enhancing career development, and contributing to personal and professional growth. They also act as a resource for the company, helping to inform strategies related to DEI.

Across the interviews with employers, representatives from ethnic minority groups, and other stakeholders, there was a consistent message emphasising the value of ERGs in the Irish workplace. Descriptors such as 'bridge to the organisation,' 'gateway to being understood and heard,' 'means of being seen within the organisation,' 'having a voice,' and 'being able to celebrate my culture when I am so far away from home means a lot' highlighted their significance. One participant noted, 'I have a forum to represent the issues of a few of us within an action-oriented group that has a straight line to leadership.' These statements reflect the positive impact an effective ERG can have, not only on employees but also on employers who are seen as listening, learning, and acting on feedback from their workforce.

ERGs originated in the United States in the 1970s as a means for minority employees to address workplace discrimination and cultivate a sense of community. As Ireland has become increasingly multicultural, employers have recognised the growing diversity within their workforce. While Irish people have historically valued a sense of family and community, ERGs have proven to be a particularly effective way to integrate ethnic minority groups into the workplace and foster a sense of belonging. ERGs have provided a safe space for many employees to express their concerns, embrace their authentic selves, and actively work to dismantle any barriers that hinder their career advancement.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

Our research has highlighted the significant impact of ERGs in fostering cross-cultural mentoring groups and promoting cultural awareness and education through engaging activities such as cultural festivals, food fairs, and guest speakers. ERGs have played a pivotal role in companies implementing cultural training programmes to enhance employees' understanding of diverse cultures and perspectives. We have witnessed the powerful momentum generated by ERGs that are wholeheartedly supported by their employers. These ERGs have successfully established internal networks and provided members with networking opportunities that would have otherwise been inaccessible. Participation in ERGs has empowered ethnic minority employees to have a voice within their organisations and collaborate with management to shape and promote policies that support diversity and inclusion, paving the way for future generations. Organisations with effective ERGs have also prioritised training employees on how to be effective allies and support colleagues from ethnic minority groups. Employers we interviewed have acknowledged the valuable contributions of their ERGs, highlighting the importance of social events for employees to connect and build relationships, as well as recognising and celebrating their achievements.

In research conducted in the US by Seramount[70] it cited the importance of ERGs in four different ways:

1 ERGs create a vital space during turbulent time

2 ERGs create a sense of community and belonging: there were findings from research[71] that linked higher levels of employee belonging to a **56%** increase in job performance, a **50%** decrease in turnover, and a **75%** reduction in sick days.

3 ERGs advance business needs that benefit specific markets

4 ERGs help meet the different needs of different groups: *'There are varying needs of the affinity groups and merging them all into one silences the concerns and unique experiences of each group.'*

" Your tribe is waiting for you. You are not alone. " Shonda Rhimes' quote has been used to reflect the importance of ERG groups citing " everyone should be able to connect with someone who looks like them, whom they can relate to or whom they can go to. "

5.1.10 Career progression: Monitor and support career progression

As highlighted in Chapter 3 of this research, an average of 23% of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds reported feeling that their ethnicity was a barrier to career progression. This perception is particularly prevalent among individuals from White Irish Traveller, Black and Black Irish, and Arab backgrounds.

" There are not many workshops or initiatives to help ethnic minorities in career development. We don't know precisely how and where we have opportunities that we can progress further in our career development. " Hong Kong Female Participant

When designing and implementing an organisation's DEI programme, it is essential to address career progression inequalities, not just recruitment disparities.

---

[70] Seramount. (2022, November). *The future of ERGs: Are affinity-based groups still necessary?*

[71] BetterUp. *The value of belonging at work: The business case for investing in workplace inclusion.* Retrieved from https://grow.betterup.com/resources/the-value-of-belonging-at-work-the-business-case-for-investing-in-workplace-inclusion-event

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

To ensure the equitable advancement of ethnic minority employees, organisations should create clear career pathways and establish transparent promotion criteria. In interviews conducted for this research, some participants mentioned applying for multiple internal promotions without success, leading them to 'assume' they were being discriminated against based on their ethnicity or that White Irish colleagues were given preference. To prevent such perceptions, it is important to provide objective promotion criteria, offer constructive feedback, and clearly explain the reasons behind promotion decisions. This transparency can help eliminate uncertainty and reduce speculation about why promotions were not granted.

Additionally, providing all employees with access to upskilling and training opportunities is also important to foster their career development.

Regularly tracking diversity metrics such as the representation of ethnic minorities at various organisational levels, enables employers to monitor progress and identify where additional support may be needed.

Building on these insights and broader efforts to ensure equal opportunities, organisations can create targeted initiatives for underrepresented ethnic groups. For instance, implementing leadership development programmes tailored to these groups can provide crucial skills and knowledge while also fostering the confidence required to access and thrive in managerial or leadership positions.

5.1.11 General: Training on discrimination & unconscious bias

> " There is a need for training on racism. Create a culture within workplaces that has safe spaces for conversations around racism and discrimination. Irish people are racist in obvious and subtle ways that show they are not educated on what is discrimination, and due to lack of knowledge on the subject, they do nothing about it. Managers turn a blind eye to complaints from minority groups because they have not been equipped with the skills to handle such conflicts within the team. If we can start there, then we can ask as black and minority groups for equal opportunity access in workplaces and better representation in positions that we are more than qualified for but are turned down because we are black or immigrants. " Female participant from Kenya

Anti-discrimination, anti-racism, and unconscious bias training are powerful tools that help foster a more diverse and inclusive culture within the workplace. These programmes can be implemented for various motives, including legal obligations, moral considerations or economic reasons. While these programmes may sometimes be perceived as mere 'box-ticking' exercises, their impact is always valuable.

These training sessions create a dedicated space and time for employees and leaders to pause, reflect, and engage with the topics of diversity and inclusion. Unconscious bias, as the term suggests, involves biases we may not be consciously aware of. Therefore, it's essential for employees across all levels of an organisation to recognise these biases, which they might unknowingly possess.

Training sessions offer a platform to discuss topics that are often considered sensitive or uncomfortable to address. They provide an opportunity to openly explore language, examining which terms or phrases might be hurtful, which are acceptable, and gathering feedback from the impacted audience on their experiences.

Training not only raises awareness but also encourages individuals to reflect on their thought processes and behaviours. This process allows employees to put themselves in the shoes of their diverse colleagues, reconsider habitual ways of thinking, and address patterns that may unintentionally contribute to a less inclusive environment. Over time, these sessions can lead to a more empathetic and conscious approach, helping to reduce discrimination and create a more equitable workplace.

---

[70] Seramount. (2022, November). *The future of ERGs: Are affinity-based groups still necessary?*

[71] BetterUp. *The value of belonging at work: The business case for investing in workplace inclusion.* Retrieved from https://grow.betterup.com/resources/the-value-of-belonging-at-work-the-business-case-for-investing-in-workplace-inclusion-event

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

Anti-discrimination training benefits all employees but can serve particular purposes for specific roles within a company. For instance, recruiters who may unintentionally favour CVs with names or educational backgrounds that feel familiar can adjust their approach after such training. When reviewing a CV from a candidate with a different nationality or diverse background, they are more likely to pause and reflect on whether there are any valid reasons not to treat that application equally. This shift in mindset can help reduce unconscious bias, promoting fairer and more inclusive hiring practices across the organisation.

These training sessions can also significantly improve how companies handle discrimination claims by shaping more effective procedures. The Immigrant Council of Ireland, interviewed for the purpose of this research, leverages these training courses to simulate the steps involved when an employee files a complaint. Running through these mock scenarios helps to 'normalise' the process, reducing uncertainty and fear for both the complainant and the staff responsible for addressing such issues. This practical approach ensures that employees are better equipped to manage discrimination cases with confidence and transparency, fostering a more supportive and responsive workplace environment.

5.1.12 General: Support building of networks

To address the disparities faced by ethnic minority employees in their career advancement, Irish employers should prioritise the establishment of robust mentorship and networking programmes that empower these individuals to build their professional networks. Our research shows that individuals from the majority White Irish ethnic group are three times more likely to leverage their professional networks to secure job opportunities. This underscores the necessity for ethnic minority employees to have access to similar support systems to offset the disadvantages they may encounter.

One effective strategy is to create formal mentorship initiatives that connect ethnic minority employees with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and support tailored to their unique challenges. Organisations such as Open Doors, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), Doras, African Professional Network of Ireland (APNI) and the Irish Refugee Council can play a pivotal role in facilitating these mentorship relationships. They offer resources and training to mentors, ensuring they are equipped to address the specific needs of ethnic minority employees, helping them navigate workplace dynamics and career paths.

Moreover, employers can enhance networking opportunities by partnering with these organisations to host events that foster connections between ethnic minority employees and industry leaders. Such events can enable ethnic minority employees to engage with a broader network, reducing the barriers to accessing professional contacts and opportunities.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

By emphasising the importance of building professional networks and providing the necessary support through mentorship and community initiatives, Irish employers can help ethnic minority employees overcome the challenges they face and create a more equitable and inclusive workplace environment.

While the recommendations outlined above are designed to assist employers in promoting ethnic diversity and inclusion within their organisations, it is essential to prioritise the creation of a fair and positive working environment for all employees. Achieving a balance is crucial when implementing policies and initiatives aimed at diversifying the workforce and fostering inclusivity. Recognising differences should not be viewed as an end goal but as a means to cultivate a safe workplace that encourages employee engagement and satisfaction. This, in turn, can enhance the favourable business outcomes associated with a diverse workforce.

> "Regarding work, it can be awkward at times feeling like the 'diversity hire'.(...) I am grateful that companies are taking initiatives towards ethnic diversity in the workplace and I understand their intentions, but I think there should always be an understanding that 'ethnic' employees are first and foremost just employees - not more or less special than Irish employees. When too much emphasis is placed on ethnic diversity in the workplace, it ends up feeling like this. Differences can be celebrated, but not too much or else people will only see those differences - subconsciously. If a company truly cares about diversity in the workplace and such efforts aren't only for optics. Actions speak louder than words. It's very nuanced but when diversity in the workplace is done correctly, it's amazing!" Female participant from Nigeria

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.2   Checklist for employers to foster ethnic DEI

5.2.1   Getting Started: Planning your organisations ethnic DEI journey

5.2.1.1   Identify benefits of ethnic DEI & confirm commitment

- Assess the advantages of investing in ethnicity focused DEI for your organisation (e.g., employee satisfaction, employee attraction and retention, representing your customers, creativity, innovation etc.)
- Evaluate how ethnicity focused DEI aligns with your organisation's mission and values.
- Determine whether your organisation is ready to invest time and resources into fostering ethnic DEI.
- Confirm Leadership buy-in.
- Review your DEI policy to ensure it includes a dedicated section for ethnic DEI.
- Establish roles or appoint individual(s) responsible for overseeing DEI initiatives.

5.2.1.2   Data collection & analysis

- Assess whether you have a method for gathering employee demographic data.
- Determine if data on employees' ethnic backgrounds has been/is being gathered.
- Adapt or update systems to collect ethnic diversity data, or explore alternative tracking methods if adaptation isn't feasible.
- Analyse your workforce's current ethnic demographics to identify potential gaps and areas of underrepresentation.

5.2.1.3   Leverage external resources

- Research external resources to support the design and implementation of your ethnic diversity policy within your overall DEI policy.
- Consult with peer organisations succeeding in ethnic DEI or professional organisations/ consultancies for advice and guidance.

5.2.1.4   Setting goals and measuring progress

- Define specific and measurable goals for ethnic representation over a 5 or 10-year timeframe.
- Determine the methods and metrics for tracking progress towards your ethnic diversity objectives.
- Create a reporting schedule to regularly update on progress (e.g., quarterly, annually).

5.2.1.5   Communication and engagement

- Formulate a strategy to inform employees about the organisation's commitment to enhancing ethnic diversity.
- Implement a system (e.g., surveys, focus groups) to monitor employee perception and gather feedback on ethnic DEI initiatives.
- Develop a plan to use feedback to refine and improve your ethnic DEI policy and initiatives.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.2.2 Become an attractive employer to ethnically diverse professionals

5.2.2.1 Showcase your ethnic DEI commitment

- Highlight your ethnic DEI commitment through statements and visuals on websites, social media, and internal communications.
- Use printed materials within the workplace to reflect and reinforce your ethnic DEI values and initiatives.
- Consider publicly identifying as "Traveller-friendly" to support inclusivity for the Traveller community in alignment with research findings.

5.2.2.2 Reach out to a diverse candidate base

- Engage with diverse candidates at university events, career fairs, and professional gatherings, emphasising your inclusive values.
- Include ethnic DEI policies in job postings to attract a diverse applicant pool.

5.2.3 Implement fair recruitment policies

5.2.3.1 Assess and improve your current recruitment policies

- Review and map hiring processes to identify improvement areas.
- Form a diverse hiring team to address unconscious biases.
- Consider anonymised CVs to focus on qualifications and experience.
- Optimise application analysis tools to avoid excluding or disadvantaging candidates.

5.2.3.2 Reclarify your organisation's approach to recognising foreign qualifications and experience

- Assess your organisation's approach to handling applications from candidates with foreign qualifications.
- Gain a thorough understanding of QQI and NARIC to enhance knowledge of foreign qualification equivalency and diverse professional skills.
- Include a structured process for evaluating foreign qualifications in recruitment, such as requiring recognition statements from QQI or NARIC.
- Provide training to TA and hiring managers on recognising the value of foreign qualifications and the impact of diverse talent on innovation and productivity.
- Job postings should highlight the organisation's recognition of candidates with foreign qualifications and diverse backgrounds.

5.2.3.3 Address your organisation's approach to hiring individuals with employment permit requirements

- Specify in job postings that candidates requiring employment permits may apply where applicable.
- Offer training to staff on the challenges faced by employment permit holders and the related hiring processes.
- Assign a dedicated resource to manage employment permit applications.
- Establish clear procedures for evaluating candidates with employment permits.
- Partner with local and national organisations supporting immigrants and employment permit holders for outreach and resources.

5. Recommendations: How to improve ethnic diversity in the workplace

5.2.4 Work on fostering an inclusive company culture

5.2.4.1 Develop policies, procedures and initiatives to support an ethnically diverse workforce in your organisation

- Implement policies promoting workforce diversity, including flexible work and anti-discrimination measures.
- Encourage open communication with channels for feedback and reporting ethnic DEI issues.
- Celebrate diversity through cultural events, international food days, and acknowledgement of cultural practices.

### 5.2.4.2 Create Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and support networks

- Create ERGs and support networks for employees of different ethnic backgrounds.
- Actively promote support networks (including mentorship and sponsorship programs) and ERGs, ensuring all employees, including new hires, are invited to participate.

5.2.4.3 Invest in training and education on ethnic DEI

- Create tailored, recurring training on discrimination and unconscious bias.
- Collaborate with specialised organisations or advocacy groups for training design and/or delivery.
- Consider making the training mandatory for both current and new employees.
- Integrate ethnic DEI training into a continuous learning program with regular refreshers and updates.
- Have clear and transparent policies and procedures to address discrimination complaints within the organisation.

5.2.5 Ensure fair and effective career progression for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds

- Collect data on career advancement for ethnic minority employees.
- Establish clear career progression and promotion criteria ensuring visibility on career development programs, internal job openings, and leadership pathways.
- Ensure Managers have enough time to review internal applications and provide adequate feedback to applicants.
- Insist that Managers hold regular performance reviews with their team-members.
- Provide all employees with equal opportunities for upskilling.
- Regularly track ethnic minority representation at various levels to assess progress and identify gaps.
- Introduce programmes, like leadership development, for underrepresented ethnic groups if necessary
- Regularly collect feedback from ethnic minority employees on career progression barriers and act on insights.
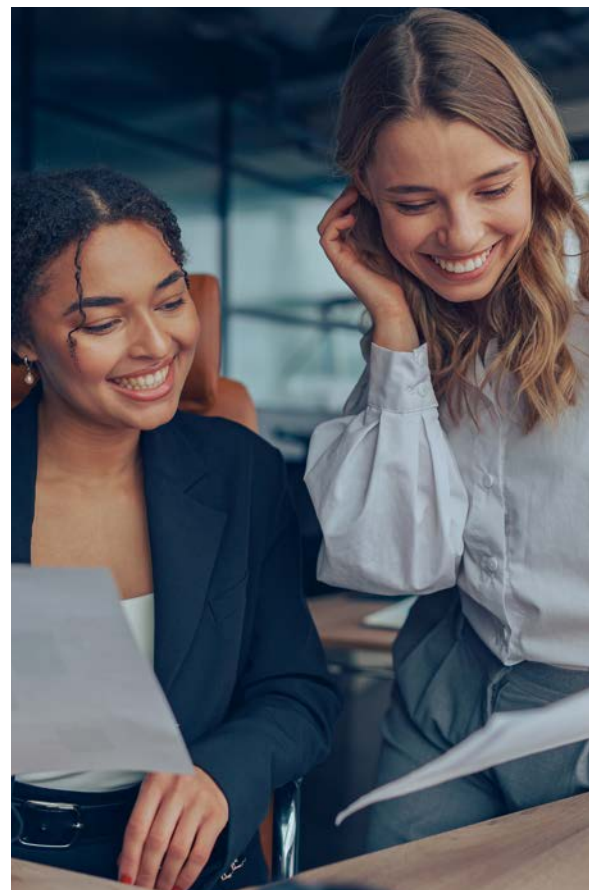
Persona 9:
Rafael's story
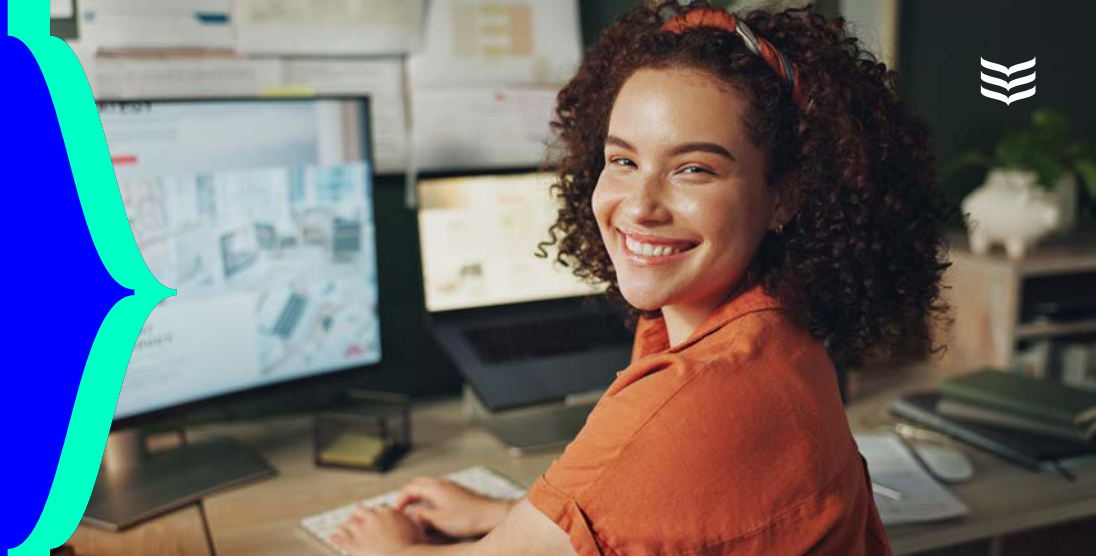
The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from a Black or Black Irish - any other Black background

My name is Rafael. I came to Ireland from Cuba 4 years ago because I wanted to travel and, most importantly, to find a better quality of life for myself and my family.

"What I really like about Ireland is that it's a secure, stable, and generally peaceful country to live in. The education system is excellent, and I'm very happy that my children will benefit from it. The people here are very sociable, and even though the weather can be challenging, there's always something to do or an activity to enjoy.

That being said, it hasn't always been easy. Adapting to the cold, rainy weather and the short days in winter can take a toll on your mental health. Another issue for me is public healthcare—it's not the best, and I sometimes feel like doctors treat me differently because I'm Black. I've also found that the transport infrastructure isn't great, and the long commutes can be frustrating.

When it comes to work, I initially struggled because companies here didn't seem to value my qualifications since they were obtained abroad. But once I managed to get my first job - in my field of study - with an Irish company, things became easier, and I was even headhunted for my next role. I now have a full-time job in a Professional Services firm. However, I do feel that when it comes to career development, companies are more focused on ticking the diversity box rather than truly supporting people in advancing their careers.

Unfortunately, I've faced discrimination as well, both in the streets and at work. Sometimes, people look at me strangely in shops or speak to me in a way they wouldn't to others. At work, I feel like my application wasn't always given the same consideration as those of White candidates, even though I had the same qualifications.

Employers here should make more of an effort to be welcoming and supportive when dealing with people from diverse backgrounds. Moving to a new country with all its cultural differences is hard enough – everyone should be treated equally, no matter their nationality, religion, or skin colour."

Persona 10:
Anurak's story

The below story is a construct based on the experiences of the interview participants from an Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background

My name is Anurak, I am a 30 year-old from Thailand. I moved to Ireland three years ago on the recommendation of friends who spoke highly of its safety and quality of life.

Anurak

" I decided to continue my studies here and settled in Dublin. Although I arrived alone, I've made many friends and found the people to be as kind and helpful as those back home. I love the beauty of the country, its manageable size, and the ease of travelling to other parts of Europe from here.

One of the things that I think could be improved about the country is public transport. It used to take me 1.5 hours to go to college. This is 3 hours spent commuting per day. The cost of living is also very expensive.

Regarding the employment market, even though I had a degree and relevant qualifications, it took me 6-7 months to get situated with a job as companies were not interested where I didn't have local work experience. Also, if you don't have fluency in the language, it can be difficult to understand the accents and if you can't understand at an interview, it is hard to show your abilities to do the job

Even if most people are nice, there is still racism going on in the country. In the streets and sometimes at work. Me and my family have been called names in the streets in Dublin several times. I also was attacked once. At work, when I was promoted to Team Leader position some of the team did not wish to be directed by a 'Thai person'. They would not engage and asked me to go back to where I came from. I raised it with my manager who put the person under disciplinary action, and it did not happen again.

Despite this, I enjoy my time in Ireland and working here, I have been promoted a few times now with the same company. I feel Ireland is becoming home to me now. "

6. Case studies

Case study 6.1: Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)

> "Ethnicity should not be a barrier to living your life in Ireland"

The ICI, established in 2001 as an independent law centre, is dedicated to supporting individuals from migrant backgrounds. It provides legal advice and assistance to a broad range of migrants, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable. In addition to offering direct support, the Immigrant Council plays an active role in advocating for immigration reform and driving public discussion on issues related to immigration and inclusion. The ICI also provides intercultural and anti-racism training across employers in Ireland.

Why do organisations request intercultural and anti-racism training?

Employers can reach out to the ICI to request intercultural and anti-racism training. Such training can be requested for a variety of reasons, including legal requirements, economic considerations such as adapting to a diverse customer base, or ethical motivations. The need for training may arise during periods of internal change, as a response to incidents, client feedback, or internal concerns. In some cases, it may also be part of a risk management or 'Cover Your Ass' approach, which is perfectly valid. Regardless of the motivation, these training programmes serve as a valuable tool for creating fairer workplaces and positively impact all employees and functions in unique ways.

What does the training involve?

Anti-racism training typically lasts between half a day to a full day, depending on the organisation's needs. It offers a safe, judgement-free environment where participants can engage openly, reflect, and confront unconscious biases they may not realise they have. For example, one exercise asks participants to choose between two potential neighbours: a family from a Black background or a Traveller family. Participants often select the Black family, highlighting that the decision is based on ingrained perceptions and prejudice rather than race, class, or education. Acknowledging these biases is the first step toward addressing them. *'It is not enough to be not racist, you need to be anti-racist'.*

The training also covers language and terminology, helping participants feel comfortable with appropriate terms – such as whether it is acceptable to say 'Black' – and encourages open discussion. Additionally, mock exercises are provided to practise handling discrimination complaints, much like fire drills. These 'discrimination drills' ensure that all parties are well-prepared when action is needed.

Another key aspect is showcasing best practices from other organisations, providing tailored solutions to specific challenges, and supporting the development of DEI policies. The demand for this type of training has surged, with the ICI delivering 47 sessions to organisations in 2023 alone, a number matched within the first half of 2024.

'Organisations are starting to be more proactive than reactive when it comes to DEI training'

Case study 6.1: Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)

Advice to organisations: Start by projecting your inclusivity and reaching out to diversity

First and foremost, employers should focus on attracting diverse talent. Many individuals from migrant backgrounds may feel that certain jobs or employers are not accessible to them. This is often the case for public sector roles or industries like financial services. To counter this, organisations need to actively 'project their ethos' and commitment to being equal opportunity employers. This can be achieved through targeted communication, such as using inclusive imagery in posters, as well as engaging with diverse groups by offering internships and transition year placements to people from migrant backgrounds.

The ICI has created internships that pair individuals from migrant backgrounds with professionals, such as a placement with the mayor of Longford, and similar initiatives with TDs, aiming to break down the perception that some jobs are out of reach for these individuals. After attracting diverse candidates, organisations should also ensure that their recruitment processes give these individuals a fair chance to join. Lastly, fostering an inclusive workplace culture is key, which can be supported by hosting events that celebrate diversity, such as cultural days or food festivals.

Kensika Monshengwo, Intercultural Training Coordinator at the ICI said:

" Diversity is like the Euro coin one side is uniform across all countries, while the other is uniquely tailored to represent national identity. In the same way, embracing diversity starts with recognising and normalising it, after which we can engage in meaningful dialogue and find ways to accommodate individual differences. "

Immigrant Council of Ireland

Phone:
01 674-0202

Immigration Helpline:
01 674-0200

Email:
admin@immigrantcouncil.ie

Case study 6.2: Premier Lotteries Ireland

Interview with HR Team

> "We support each other. Open Doors supported us with DEI policy and training, and then we supported them with mentorship."

Since its establishment in 1987, Premier Lotteries Ireland has been dedicated to supporting communities across Ireland, raising over €6 billion for thousands of Good Causes nationwide. This commitment to benefiting the broader population is also reflected internally, with a strong focus on fostering a diverse workforce and creating an inclusive culture where everyone feels welcome, safe, and valued.

3P (Paint, Prosecco and Pizza) event at Premier Lotteries.

Why is DEI important to Premier Lotteries Ireland?

Premier Lotteries Ireland aims to attract the best talent available. By excluding certain groups, we risk missing out on a significant pool of potential employees and face greater challenges in retaining talent. At the National Lottery, we thrive to serve and represent the entire diverse population of the country. Diversity and inclusion are central to our core values and directly aligned with one of our main goals to support communities.

The importance of measuring and monitoring

About a year and a half ago, we began collecting diversity data as part of the launch of our new HR Information System. We included optional questions for employees to voluntarily provide information about their profiles. This data has been invaluable for monitoring organisational diversity and refining our policies. For instance, we discovered that 40% of our employees were parents, which led us to reassess our support for parents. As a result, we expanded our services and collaborated with specialised suppliers, a move that was met with positive feedback.

We also conduct an annual survey to gauge employee sentiment and gather their feedback and expectations.

Overall, employees have been relatively open about sharing their data. While most disclosed their gender, age, and nationality, only **35%** shared their ethnicity, and even fewer disclosed disabilities due to stigma.

Case study 6.2: Premier Lotteries Ireland

Premier Lotteries Ireland's main strengths in DEI

The strongest aspects of our DEI policies - which are publicly available - are undoubtedly our recruitment strategies and workplace inclusion initiatives.

Premier Lotteries Ireland has made a concerted effort to enhance staff diversity and foster inclusivity. To achieve this, we engaged Open Doors Initiative for specialised inclusive recruitment training, which was tailored for HR, Senior Managers, and Hiring Managers. The training covered critical aspects such as appropriate and inappropriate questions to ask applicants.

We have implemented several practices to promote ethnic diversity, such as utilising a 'cultural calendar' to celebrate various cultural dates and organising an annual cultural food day Additionally, the company has produced videos highlighting the experiences of employees to be shared internally. This has focused on lived experiences of women, ethnic minorities, and those from the LGBTQ+ Community within the workplace to highlight their perspectives and barriers of working and living in Ireland.

Partnering with Open Doors Initiative (ODI):

Premier Lotteries Ireland discovered the Open Doors Initiative at a conference, where the advocacy group's enthusiasm piqued the company's interest. ODI provides valuable support through expert advice, training, and the implementation of targeted programmes, such as their Mentorship Programme. To date, approximately ten Premier Lotteries Ireland employees have volunteered their time to become a mentor. This involved being a mentor for 3-6 months for an individual who came through ODI who is looking for a job from a marginalised group. This involves meeting with them in person or virtually guiding them to meet their full potential and achieve their professional goals. Mentees who've received the mentorship have since succeeded in gaining employment which is a wonderful thing to see.

Does investing in DEI work?

Yes. Since placing a strong focus on DEI, Premier Lotteries Ireland has seen substantial progress.

As of August 2024, **16%** of our workforce is non-Irish with **6-7%** of the total employees being from a non-White background.

The impact of this change is not only quantified but also reflected in employee feedback, which indicates a greater sense of safety and support.

Case study 6.3: Irish Centre for Diversity (ICD)

> " If as an organisation you can refocus on the fairness of things, then you can get back to why you're doing it and move forward. "

The ICD, established in 2017, plays a pivotal role in advancing diversity and inclusion across workplaces in Ireland. The Centre was inspired by the original National Centre for Diversity founded in the UK by Solat Chaudry. Caroline Cummins, who launched the Irish Centre, recognised the growing diversity in Ireland on her return to Ireland from the UK and the urgent need for inclusion strategies in workplaces.

Promoting ethnic diversity and inclusion

ICD has trained more than 35,000 people in DEI and today works closely with over 400 organisations in Ireland, offering comprehensive training and strategic support to foster diverse and inclusive environments. 'An ethnicity strategy that is going to work involves engaging proactively with advocacy, community, and immigration groups,' Laura emphasises. Their work includes inclusive language training, allyship training, guidance on Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Race & Cultural awareness training.

A cornerstone of their approach is the **Investors in Diversity** accreditation, the only such framework in Ireland today. Organisations can achieve Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels, each requiring progressively deeper engagement with diversity and inclusion principles.

1 **Bronze Accreditation:** Focuses on policy review and leadership training. Organisations must implement key policies on Diversity and Inclusion, Recruitment, and Anti-Bullying.

2 **Silver Accreditation:** Involves a detailed employee survey to assess inclusivity across various dimensions within the organisation. "We take the answers...and put it into data modelling...where we benchmark against other organisations and assess against Investors in Diversity Pillars."

3 **Gold Accreditation:** Requires an in-depth analysis across five key pillars, including leadership diversity and recruitment practices.

The importance of measuring and monitoring

Laura believes one of the significant barriers to embracing ethnic diversity is fear – fear of lacking the necessary tools and awareness to embrace ethnic diversity in a meaningful way. ICD advises organisations to 'put the ask out' to employees, engaging them in the creation of ethnicity networks and asking what they need to feel more included.

Case study 6.3: Irish Centre for Diversity (ICD)

Sector engagement and success

Certain sectors in Ireland are leading the way in fostering ethnic diversity. The construction sector, with its already diverse workforce, is implementing various initiatives such as cultural days and training sessions.
The insurance sector has made significant strides, recognising the broad customer base it serves and the importance of reflecting that diversity internally.

The hospitality industry, particularly hotels, is also embracing diversity, with some employing a workforce of approximately **150** employees from up to **50** different ethnic backgrounds.

ICD's broader impact

Beyond direct organisational support, ICD connects businesses with advocacy and community groups to advance best practices in diverse hiring and inclusivity. They also host the National Inclusion and Diversity Awards, which include recognition for advancing race and ethnicity in the workplace. These awards provide a platform for companies at the beginning of their diversity journey to learn from industry leaders and take place in February every year.

Key takeaways

For organisations looking to advance their ethnic diversity and inclusion strategies, ICD emphasises the importance of proactive engagement, clear communication, and leadership commitment. 'Organisations need to say we are embracing this, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it is the best thing to do for our business and it's best for the people that we serve,' stresses the Centre. By focusing on fairness and creating opportunities for diverse talent, businesses not only do the right thing but also benefit from a more committed and motivated workforce.

Case study 6.4: Ireland India Council

Interview with Prashant Shukla
Chairman

"Ireland in the last 20 years changed much and beyond my expectations. Barriers that were here 25 years ago are not here. Now we need to do some tweaking. Equal opportunities to all, without any form of discrimination."

The Ireland India Council (IIC) was established in 2022 by its current chairman, Prashant Shukla, along with the late Professor Louis Smith, a renowned Irish economist. The council was founded with the goal of strengthening ties between Ireland and India and supporting economic, business, and cultural exchanges. At the time of its founding, there were just over 2,000 Indians living in Ireland. According to the latest census, two decades later, that number has grown to over 45,000. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of employment permits delivered to Indian nationals has more than tripled.

In 2024, Indian nationals constituted the largest group of employment permit recipients, receiving a total of **9,271** permits, which accounted for **34%** of all permits issued during that period.

Challenges faced by Indian nationals in Ireland

1 **Financial integration:** Accessing financial support can be difficult for both employees and entrepreneurs, as they lack a business history in Ireland.

2 **Cultural differences:** Misunderstandings arise due to differences in how services are provided, such as the distinction between insuring drivers only in Ireland versus insuring cars only in India. Navigating licences and insurance for businesses, like restaurants or food stalls, can also be complex. Familiarity from service providers in Ireland with both Indian and Irish systems would help Irish businesses better serve Indian customers.

3 **Career progression:** Many Indians work in the healthcare sector, but non-Irish-trained doctors and nurses encounter challenges when trying to gain employment in Ireland. For instance, Indian nurses must register with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland and have their qualifications recognized, a process that can be both costly and lengthy. Some of these professionals report facing obstacles to career advancement. While there are no formal regulations preventing Indian professionals from progressing, they feel the route for them to access consultant roles is harder than for their Irish counterparts.

4 **Employment barriers for students:** Indian students who graduate in Ireland should be able to secure employment without facing additional administrative hurdles, which often force them to return home to renew their permits. The government should streamline the process to make it easier for these graduates to enter the workforce.

Access to employment should be 'on a merit approach only, for all institutions'.

Case study 6.4: Ireland India Council

Work and supports provided by the IIC

1 **Policy and lobbying:** The IIC has been actively lobbying for the rights of Indian migrants in Ireland. It played a key role in advocating for the establishment of a Minister for Integration, which led to the appointment of the first minister in 2007.

2 **Cultural familiarisation training:** The IIC offers a wide range of services, networks, and events catering to various stakeholders, including employers, students, the Indian community, and the public sector. Among their offerings are half-day intercultural familiarisation programmes designed to provide insights into Indian culture, history, and related topics. These programmes offer significant benefits, such as helping businesses better understand and serve their diverse customer base, while also supporting employers in fostering career development for their Indian employees. 'Indian employees feel that their career is stagnant, that they are not progressing in their career. They should be able to grow in the organisation instead of having to move to another one.'

Ireland India Council

Phone:
+35314131241, +35315253578

Email:
info@irelandindiacouncil.ie

Case study 6.5: Grant Thornton

Interview with Shauna Rahman
Associate Director EDI

> "If somebody is really good, we will go above and beyond to get him/her"

Grant Thornton's dedication to promoting Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) has cultivated a workforce representing **73** nationalities, with **68%** of employees identifying as diverse and **26%** coming from ethnic minority backgrounds.

This achievement reflects the company's strong focus on fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, recognising that people are central to the success of any organisation and that diversity enriches both the employee experience and the business as a whole. Creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels comfortable collaborating can be a significant challenge, but it can be effectively managed through a strong DEI focus and strategy.

DEI at Grant Thornton: 'Educate, Integrate, and Celebrate'

1 **Data collection:** Grant Thornton collects diversity data through its Workday platform, which includes a specialised DEI dashboard. Targeted campaigns have been launched to emphasise the importance of this data for understanding and addressing employee needs, resulting in higher disclosure rates.

2 **Training:** The Learning & Development team has developed a tailored training programme on Unconscious Bias, which is mandatory for all employees to undertake.

3 **Events:** Grant Thornton hosts events like Culture Week, where employees from various backgrounds can share aspects of their culture, including traditional practices, food, and music. Additionally, the 'Our People, Our Stories' initiative features testimonials from employees with diverse profiles throughout the year.

4 **Recruitment:** A comprehensive review was recently conducted to revise all job descriptions, making them more inclusive with the help of a tool from LinkedIn. To assist new employees, an International New Hires Guide was created in 2023, which was compiled with inputs from existing international hires who had moved to Ireland and included support on how to navigate the accommodation landscape and how to become employment ready for the Irish Market.

5 **Progression:** The organisation is currently focusing on identifying the ethnicity pay gap, in a manner similar to the gender pay gap. Grant Thornton is committed to enhancing the career progression of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds, recognising that cultural differences and lack of confidence can impede their internal mobility.

Case study 6.5: Grant Thornton

Partnerships: We are not experts, but we work with experts

Grant Thornton's commitment to DEI extends beyond ethnicity and culture to encompass various pillars, including ability, family, gender equality, and LGBTQIA+. To enhance its efforts across all DEI dimensions, Grant Thornton collaborates with specialist partners for expert guidance. Specific to their ethnic diversity strategy pillar, the company works alongside organisations such as the African Professional Network of Ireland (APNI), Business in the Community and the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR). Grant Thornton's exemplary dedication to DEI has earned it Gold accreditation for Diversity from the Irish Centre for Diversity. Additionally, it received the Outstanding Employee Resource Group Award for its Embrace Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Employee Resource Group (ERG). While these awards and recognitions are not the ultimate goal, they serve as additional motivation to uphold high standards.

Grant Thornton was awarded the Investors in Diversity Gold at the end of 2023 which is the only Gold ED&I standard mark for businesses in Ireland and they are the largest professional services firm to be awarded Gold.

Advice to employers

In order to design and implement successful diversity policies, it is crucial for employers to have dedicated resources where possible and leadership support. Whether a company's employee numbers allow for a dedicated resource or not, it is important to recognise there is a large network of organisations in the wider ecosystem that can support you in this journey. Partnerships with specialised organisations such as advocacy groups can be tailored to your business profile and needs. Try to expand your network and feed from best practices.

Finally, approach DEI as a whole and then target your initiatives and policies to different pillars.

> " You need somebody who's looking at the overall organisation and then you look at the ethnicity piece because whatever you're going to do for this, you can do for gender, you can do for sexual orientation. It will obviously be different, but there will be a template there. "

Case study 6.6: Open Doors Initiative

Interview with Lidiia Oborina
Programme Manager

"The number one ask that we get is: 'Help me find a job'"

In Ireland today, some groups encounter significantly greater barriers to employment than others, with many remaining excluded from the workforce, even during times of near full employment. Open Doors Initiative strives to address this by creating opportunities for some of the most marginalised individuals, offering pathways to work through training, education, and entrepreneurship. Their efforts extend to a wide range of groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and individuals from Traveller or Roma backgrounds.

Main challenges experienced by ethnic minorities

1 **Discrimination:** Many individuals face direct or indirect discrimination when seeking employment in Ireland due to their background or profile, making it more difficult for them to access work opportunities.

2 **Cultural barriers:** Navigating the Irish job market can be challenging, particularly in understanding how to apply, what to include on a CV, the working culture, and industry-specific jargon in English.

3 **Recognition of qualifications:** Obtaining recognition for foreign qualifications can be a lengthy process, particularly in professions like medicine, engineering, and nursing. This often takes 1 to 2 years, during which time professionals may be unable to work in their field. As a result, some professionals leave their industry, while others opt to return to college to obtain Irish qualifications.

4 **Lack of local networks and experience:** Many individuals struggle to find employment due to limited professional networks and a lack of local work experience.

Case study 6.6: Open Doors Initiative

Support to job seekers

The most common request they receive from individuals is: 'Help me find a job.' To address this, the Open Doors Initiative provides a range of services aimed at improving employment prospects in Ireland, including:

1 **Employment expert sessions:** Led by volunteers, these sessions help individuals navigate the job market, craft tailored CVs, update LinkedIn profiles, and practice mock interviews to boost their confidence and readiness for job applications.

2 **Development workshops:** These workshops focus on skill-building and professional development to enhance employability.

Support to employers

The Open Doors Initiative offers diversity training for employers, along with workshops and seminars that highlight the advantages of diversity and inclusion. They also provide Diversity Audits – which are evaluations that assess an organisation's policies, practices, and culture to ensure they are inclusive and effectively promote diversity - as well as guidance on developing tailored DEI policies. Additionally, the organisation has developed a comprehensive Inclusivity Employment Toolkit, designed to inform and support employers in hiring and working with individuals from marginalised backgrounds, while fostering an inclusive workplace environment.

Bridging the gap: Connecting job seekers and employers

1 **Pathways to Progress:** This programme is designed to equip individuals from migrant backgrounds with the resources and support needed to secure employment or establish clear career pathways.

2 **Career Path Days:** These in-person or virtual events allow companies to present insights into their operations, discuss available job openings, and guide participants on how to apply, including what they expect from CVs and the interview process.

3 **Job Matching Assistance:** They help individuals identify suitable job opportunities by connecting them with vacancies at partner companies that align with their skills, qualifications, and experience.

Open Doors Initiative

Email: info@opendoorsinitiative.ie

Case study 6.7: Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

Interview with Jacinta Brack
National Policy & Advocacy Coordinator

& Andrew Chapple
National Policy Coordinator,
Employment & Enterprise

> "There is little value in providing training and upskilling opportunities for Travellers if employers are unwilling to hire them."

Founded in 1990, the Irish Traveller Movement is the national advocacy and membership platform which brings together Travellers and representative organisations to develop collective solutions on issues faced by the community to achieve greater equality for Travellers. ITM represents Traveller interests in national governmental, international and human rights settings. We challenge racism – individual, cultural and structural which Travellers face and promote integration and equality. We are led by our grassroots community membership, deliver expertise in shaping organisations locally and promote community leadership ensuring Traveller's voices are to the forefront of all discussions.

In relation to accessing employment, Irish Travellers report very high rates of discrimination in seeking work, where they are ten times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination. Although they have been at the centre of research and specific policies since the 1960s, they still encounter significant challenges in critical areas such as education, housing, health, mental health, and employment. Representing less than 1% of Ireland's population, there is a clear opportunity for meaningful improvement of their situation, provided both public and private organisations are willing to offer support.

Despite being one of the oldest ethnic groups in Ireland, the Traveller community continues to face severe discrimination and are **22** times more likely than White Irish persons to experience discrimination particularly in shops, pubs and restaurants.

Main challenges experienced by ethnic minorities

- The latest census reported **32,949** Irish Travellers in Ireland, but this number is considered **an underestimation**. The most legitimate estimation of the population is based on the Annual Count, as not all Travellers self-identify in the Census collections. In 2022, there are **12,183** Traveller families nationally equating to approx. **48,000** people, equating less than **1%** of the population of Ireland. Historically, Travellers were a rural, nomadic community, but their way of life shifted in the 1960s due to factors like the introduction of plastic which displaced the need for their skills in Tinsmithing, repairing and trading. This forced many who were without access to burgeoning mainstream employment, to rely on social welfare.

Case study 6.7: Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

Main challenges experienced by ethnic minorities

- **Inclusion within education** remains a significant hurdle for Travellers. Historical discrimination within the education system has left lasting effects on older generations, and disparities persist today. In some schools, Travellers still face segregation through reduced timetables, while low expectations from educators, parental educational disadvantage, and limited investment for supporting Traveller retention from primary to post primary in particular, undermines students' chances of success. Although some members of the Traveller Community thrive in the education system despite considerable challenges, many still find it difficult to reveal their identity as they move into the professional world.

- Linked to these educational challenges, Travellers experience the **lowest employment rates** among all ethnic minority groups in Ireland, with just **16.8%** of the community in employment.

- **Negative stereotypes** about Travellers continue to endure, with many individuals feeling compelled to hide their identity in the workplace due to widespread prejudice. 'Some people have never interacted with a Traveller, but still hold very negative views'.

ITM's focus on education and access routes to employment

The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) places a strong emphasis on education and skills training for members of the Traveller community and since 2023 has rolled out the Traveller Apprenticeship Incentivisation Programme. This programme provides bursaries to Travellers to access and maintain apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeship training. In 2024 alone, ITM received 141 expressions of interest from individuals looking to access apprenticeships. Additionally, the ITM provides incentives for employers to hire Traveller as an apprentice by offering a one-off €2000 grant. However, less than half of eligible employers have taken advantage of this initiative mainly partly due to non-disclosure of their Traveller identity by participants who fear any discriminatory repercussions in the workplace.

How can employers help

Breaking down barriers which have affected some Travellers requires action at every level of society (housing, education, health), with employment playing a crucial role. Employers across Ireland can be instrumental in driving change. There is little value in providing training and upskilling opportunities for Travellers if employers are unwilling to hire them.

In addition to hiring Travellers and creating fairer recruitment processes, the ITM encourages employers to label their workplaces as 'Traveller-friendly.' Travellers and their representative organisations want to be specifically named and included in targeted employment initiatives which already forms part of the requirement of public services in Ireland for groups covered by the Equal Status Act, under the Public Sector Duty.

> " Discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers is the last acceptable form of racism."
> Sir Trevor Phillips, Chair of the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission "

Irish Traveller Movement

Phone:
+353 (1) 679 65 77

Email:
info@itmtrav.ie

Case study 6.8: Bank of Ireland

Interview with Kate Butler
Group Inclusion and Diversity Lead

> " Our statement of intent is to reflect the diversity we see in society. We are currently at around 6% ethnic diversity and our ambition to maintain or slightly increase that. "

Bank of Ireland is one of the largest financial services employers in Ireland with over 10,000 employees and is dedicated to creating a workplace that mirrors the diversity of society by ensuring opportunities for progression across all ethnic groups. Bank of Ireland recognises that diversity drives innovation, improves business outcomes and benefits the wider economy. To achieve this, they have implemented many initiatives, including those focused on data tracking, employee engagement, and structural inclusivity measures.

Key Initiatives for promoting ethnic diversity

1 **Data-driven diversity**
Bank of Ireland has ethnicity targets and tracks ethnic minority employee representation and progression, using data to guide decisions and measure effectiveness. When disparities were identified, the company introduced inclusive hiring training, leading to improved outcomes. Continuous data monitoring helps mitigate unconcious bias in hiring.

2 **Employee Resource Groups/Networks and cultural inclusion**
The Multicultural Employee Network at Bank of Ireland celebrates diversity by organising events around cultural celebrations such as Diwali, Chinese New Year etc. The company also introduced a faith room to ensure inclusivity for employees of all religious backgrounds, embedding diversity into everyday employee experiences.

3 **Talent development and partnerships**
Bank of Ireland supports ethnic minority career advancement through programmes like an ethnic minority internship and partnerships with professional networks. Collaborations with membership and advocacy groups such as African Professional Networks Ireland and Involve have helped boost representation and build a diverse talent pipeline.

4 **Race Action TaskForce**
To help accelerate progress, Bank of Ireland signed up to be externally accredited with 'Investing in Ethnicity' and mobilised a Race Action TaskForce to support them in their ambitions to be a more ethnically diverse and inclusive place to work. In August 2024, Bank of Ireland was recognised as one of the Top 10 Outstanding Employers at the Ethnicity Awards.

Challenges and future outlook

Looking ahead, Bank of Ireland remains committed to refining its strategy, maintaining external accreditation through the 'Investor in Ethnicity' framework, and engaging with employees to ensure ongoing improvement.

Case study 6.9: Workday

Interview with Andrea Clarkson
Principal Diversity and Belonging Business Partner, EMEA

"VIBE™: Value Inclusion, Belonging, and Equity is about creating a workplace where all employees are valued for their unique perspectives, respected as integral to the Workday community, and given equal access to opportunity. Workday shares best practices and methodologies with its customers and partners as it advances on its own diversity and inclusion journey."

Background

Workday is a leading enterprise platform that helps organisations manage their most important assets – their people and money. Ireland is home to Workday's European headquarters with over 2,000 employees and 70+ nationalities. Workday believes that the diversity of its workforce and its culture of belonging & equity has made Ireland a hugely successful R&D hub for its 70 million users globally. The company's thoughtful and unique approach helps to remove systemic barriers so that each person can reach their full potential in the organisation.

Data & technology driven approach to measuring DEIB Impact

Workday expanded global self-identification options for more than 90% of its employees including 'Race & Ethnicity' options for those based in Ireland. The objective here is to holistically measure diversity, equity, belonging and inclusion metrics to help identify areas of focus. This occurred across the following areas:

- **Breadth and depth:** Measure across the employee lifecycle, from sourcing and hiring diverse talent to retaining, developing, and promoting that talent, all the way to understanding belonging sentiment and positively impacting attrition.

- **Intersectionality:** Compare and assess performance based on multiple dimensions of a person's identity, including gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

- **Equity and parity:** Identify disparity across intersectionalities and prioritise the biggest areas for improvement.

Case study 6.9: Workday

Fostering a culture of belonging

Workday's Employee Belonging Councils (EBCs) are a celebration of the company's diverse and inclusive workplace. EBCs create a safe space that foster the opportunity to network, connect, innovate and celebrate. There are multiple EBCs in Ireland representing various ethnicities, ranging from Black@Workday to East Asians@Workday.

Each EBC benefits from an executive sponsor internally and members get access to unique learning experiences including mentorship, special events and personal development programmes.

To measure impact and constantly improve, Workday also uses its own employee voice tool - Workday Peakon Employee Voice - to undertake weekly 'pulse checks' on sentiment and ask questions to better understand how employees are experiencing diversity and belonging. This helps greatly to iterate and improve by addressing any differences in employee's experience and engagement.

Workday's VIBE™ (Value Inclusion, Belonging, and Ethnicity) initiative – a unique approach to belonging and diversity

Challenges addressed

- **Talent & Skills**
  The world of work is changing with demographic shifts and skills shortages. Workday knows brilliance comes from viewing differences as an asset. That's why it's using technology to drive equity in talent practices with AI embedded analytics. Managers are trained to focus on skills rather than credentials to not only enable internal mobility for employees, but also empower people from non-traditional backgrounds to participate in the workforce, add value and contribute to business success and economic growth.

- **Removing Barriers**
  There are many systemic barriers for ethnic minorities including access to networks, lack of role models and even imposter syndrome. Workday actively promotes multiple learning and access opportunities to underrepresented groups including special programmes it has developed in partnership with TU Dublin in the fields of Cyber Security, Machine Learning, Entrepreneurial Leadership and Emerging Leadership.

Case study 6.10: African Professional Network of Ireland

Interview with Edima Inyang
President - African Professional Network of Ireland (APNI)

"We believe that mentorship and sponsorship plays a big role in diversity and inclusion. If you don't see it, you can't be it. But when you see, it motivates you and shows that representation matters."

Background

With over **3,500** members, APNI strives to create a thriving community where individuals of African descent are well-represented across various sectors

APNI, a nonprofit organisation established in 2016, has a mission to empower Black and African professionals in Ireland. It does so by providing members of its community with the resources and platforms necessary for personal and professional development.

The organisation operates through a volunteer-run model, where professionals from different industries dedicate their time outside of regular jobs to further the cause.

Key initiatives for workplace diversity

1 **Career Accelerator Mentorship Programme:** One of the flagship initiatives by APNI is the **Career Accelerator Mentorship Programme**, which partners with corporations to provide Black and African professionals access to internships, training, and mentorship. A notable collaboration is with Bank of Ireland, which has facilitated paid internships, training, and skill development opportunities for participants. The programme aims to close the skills gap and support individuals in navigating their career paths. As a core belief, APNI stresses that 'representation matters,' and mentorship plays a crucial role in empowering underrepresented communities in the workplace.

2 **Career Day in partnership with LinkedIn:** To address the barriers Black professionals face in accessing employment, APNI organises an annual **Career Day** in collaboration with LinkedIn. This event is an opportunity for professionals to connect with companies looking to diversify their workforce. Over 750 attendees participate, and companies such as Google, Bank of Ireland, and Irish Life exhibit and share recruitment insights. This event is not just a job fair but also offers workshops, CV clinics, and LinkedIn profile optimisations to help candidates present themselves effectively to potential employers.

3 **Promoting anonymised recruitment processes:** In a survey conducted by APNI, 50% to 67% of respondents expressed the desire for **anonymised recruitment processes**. They identified that ethnic background and names might negatively impact their chances during the initial stages of job applications. This highlights the critical role of anonymising the first stage of recruitment, focusing purely on skills rather than names or personal background.

Case study 6.10: African Professional Network of Ireland

Challenges in the workplace

Through continuous feedback from its members, APNI has identified several challenges that Black professionals face in the Irish workforce:

- **Lack of representation in leadership:** One significant issue is the underrepresentation of Black professionals in leadership positions. While many members are highly educated, with a large proportion holding master's or PhD degrees, their progression into senior roles is limited. APNI stresses the importance of organisations developing mentorship programmes specifically aimed at helping Black professionals transition into leadership roles.

- **Cultural adjustments in the workplace:** There is also an undercurrent of Black professionals feeling the need to work harder than their peers to prove themselves, often taking on extra projects or working longer hours to be recognised on par with colleagues from other ethnic backgrounds.
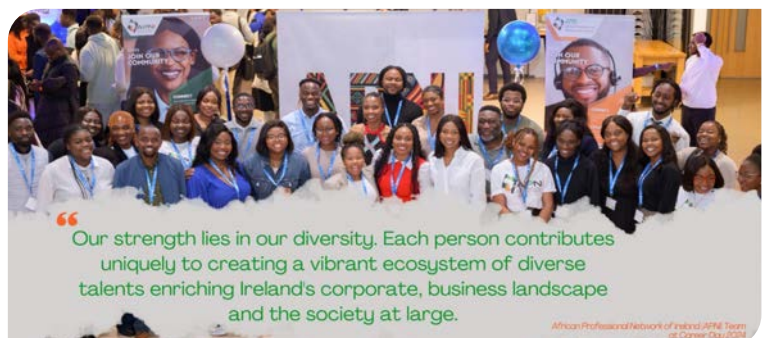
Partnerships and community engagement

In addition to the programmes mentioned, APNI runs several initiatives that foster engagement between companies and Black professionals. These include:

- **International Women's Day events:** These events highlight inspirational women from the Black community.

- **The Lion's Den pitch competition:** Focused on entrepreneurship, this competition provides Black founders a platform to pitch their business ideas and secure funding, mentorship, and visibility.

- **ERG forum:** APNI facilitates knowledge-sharing sessions between organisations at various stages of their diversity and inclusion journey. Through workshops, they promote best practices for fostering belonging and inclusion in the workplace.

Conclusion

APNI demonstrates the power of grassroots initiatives in fostering ethnic diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace. By providing training, mentorship, and opportunities for Black professionals, they empower individuals to thrive and encourage organisations to recognise the value of diversity. Their collaborations with companies like Bank of Ireland and LinkedIn offer a model for organisations looking to address diversity challenges in a meaningful and impactful way.

> Our strength lies in our diversity. Each person contributes uniquely to creating a vibrant ecosystem of diverse talents enriching Ireland's corporate, business landscape and the society at large.
>
> African Professional Network of Ireland APNI Team at Career Day 2024

APNI Team at Career Day 2024

Case study 6.11: Ibec

Interview with Dr. Kara McGann
Head of Skills and Social Policy

> "Progress is seen as fragile, and ongoing work is needed as societal issues like discrimination can resurface. Constant vigilance and adjustments are required."

Irish Business and Employers Confederation (Ibec) is Ireland's largest business representative organisation and supports over **70%** of the private sector workforce.

It is dedicated to fostering diversity and inclusion within the workplace, focusing on cultural diversity, particularly ethnic inclusion. Through tailored guidance and advocacy, Ibec helps organisations overcome challenges such as language barriers, unconscious biases, and difficulties in integrating employees from diverse backgrounds.

Key Initiatives:

- **Toolkits and training:** Offering resources like a DEI Hub to provide a one-stop-shop of useful guidance, examples of good practice, case studies and templates, employment toolkits on mental health and wellbeing, combating violence and harassment to address biases and promote diversity.

- **Policy guidance:** Assisting companies in developing sustainable DEI strategies.

- **Partnerships:** Collaborating with advocacy groups, policymakers, and government agencies to provide wider support.

- **Lobbying and influencing:** Ensuring that the voice of business is represented in all discussions around national and European strategy in this space. That includes being part of the development and implementation groups of strategies such as the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the National Plan for Business and Human Rights and part of the Anti-Racism Committee that developed the National Action Plan Against Racism.

Addressing workplace challenges:

- **Language proficiency:** Helping companies with employees facing language barriers by providing training.

- **Employment permits**

- **Informal networks:** Encouraging mentorship and networking opportunities for minority employees to enhance career advancement. E.g. Ibec REAP programme

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Ibec expanded its support to ensure workforce cohesion, especially in diverse teams, through remote work challenges. They continue to work with advocacy groups to measure the impact of DEI initiatives and advocate for regulatory reforms that support diverse hiring practices.

Ibec believes commitment to DEI requires constant vigilance as societal challenges resurface, but Ibec's efforts ensure member companies are equipped to navigate and adapt to these complexities effectively.

Case study 6.12: Black & Irish

Interview with Leon Diop
Founder and CEO

> "Sustained efforts and a willingness to experience discomfort are necessary to address structural issues and foster a truly inclusive workplace culture."

Background

Black and Irish is an advocacy organisation founded by Leon Diop, dedicated to highlighting the identities and experiences of Black and mixed-race individuals living in Ireland. Through storytelling, it aims to foster understanding and inclusion within the broader Irish society. The organisation works to address challenges faced by Black employees in the workplace, particularly focusing on issues such as microaggressions, lack of recognition, and barriers to career progression. Their advocacy is central to promoting ethnic diversity and inclusion in Irish workplaces, with an emphasis on creating systemic change to improve career opportunities for Black employees.

Key Challenges Identified by Black and Irish

1 **Negative experiences in the workplace:** Black employees in Ireland face microaggressions, harsher treatment for mistakes, and a lack of recognition for their achievements. These experiences contribute to feelings of inadequacy and reduced career progression opportunities. For instance, Black employees may find their contributions less celebrated compared to their white colleagues, which undermines their confidence and sense of belonging.

2 **Barriers to career advancement:** One of the core challenges is the perception of limited career progression for Black employees. Despite qualifications, many Black professionals encounter barriers when seeking roles that match their skills. Stories shared by Black and Irish include examples of highly qualified individuals, including those with PhDs, being forced to accept roles below their expertise due to systemic biases and limited employment opportunities.

3 **Exclusion from employment opportunities:** Black individuals in Ireland face significantly higher unemployment rates than their white counterparts. The organisation notes that despite possessing relevant qualifications, Black professionals are often overlooked for roles, highlighting a need for inclusive hiring practices.

Case study 6.12: Black & Irish

Recommendations for fostering diversity and inclusion

In their advocacy, Black and Irish stresses that promoting ethnic diversity in the workplace requires sustained efforts and a willingness to confront structural issues. Their key recommendations for employers hoping to foster ethnic diversity and inclusion in their organisations include:

- **Building diverse hiring pipelines:** Recruiters should actively seek candidates from underrepresented communities to ensure a more diverse pool of applicants. This involves working with community organisations to identify talent.

- **Diversity in hiring panels:** To foster inclusivity, hiring teams should reflect the diversity of the workforce. Having diverse panels helps ensure that candidates from various backgrounds feel welcome and fairly evaluated.

- **Providing feedback to candidates:** Offering detailed feedback to candidates who are not selected for a role helps them understand how their skills and qualifications compare to the successful candidate, which supports their professional development.

Impact and benefits of diversity

Black and Irish stresses the importance of diversity not only from a social justice standpoint but also for business performance. Diverse teams bring a range of perspectives that can enhance problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. The organisation notes that sustained diversity efforts result in a more productive and engaged workforce, leading to improved business outcomes.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
APNI	African Professional Network of Ireland
CSEP	Critical Skills Employment Permit
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
EEA	European Economic Area
ERG	Employee Resource Group
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETB	Education and Training Boards
EU	European Union
GEP	General Employment Permit
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICD	Irish Centre for Diversity
ICT	Information & Communication Technologies
ICT	Intra-Corporate Transferee
IIC	India Ireland Council
INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
IPO	International Protection Office
ITM	The Irish Traveller Movement
MRCI	Migrant Rights Center Ireland
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NDP	National Development Plan
NFP	Non For Profit
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission

List of figures

Figure	Title
Figure 1	Migration in Ireland (1987 to 2024)
Figure 2	Immigration by citizenship (1996 to 2024)
Figure 3	Immigration by origin (1987 to 2024)
Figure 4	Distribution of ethnic backgrounds among the non-White Irish population
Figure 5	Age breakdown of population by ethnic background
Figure 6	Population aged 15 years and older by ethnic group and economic status
Figure 7	Individuals aged 15+ in the labour force by ethnic group and industry
Figure 8	Top 5 industry sectors per ethnic group
Figure 9	Proportion of White Irish and non-White Irish (15+ years) employed in each industry sector
Figure 10	Survey respondents by ethnic minority background
Figure 11	Survey respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds by gender
Figure 12	Survey respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds by economic status
Figure 13	Motivations to relocate to Ireland
Figure 14	Reasons for Immigration to Ireland by ethnic minority group
Figure 15	Proportion of ethnic minority respondents immigrating to work in Ireland
Figure 16	Proportion of ethnic minority respondents Immigrating to study in Ireland
Figure 17	International enrolments in Higher Education in Ireland (2016 - 2023)
Figure 18	Employment challenges experienced by ethnic minority groups
Figure 19	Experience of discrimination by individuals per ethnic background
Figure 20	Perceived impact of ethnic background as a barrier to access employment in Ireland
Figure 21	Proportion of individuals 15 years+ by ethnic group and socio-economic group
Figure 22	Perceived impact of ethnic background as a barrier to career progression in Ireland
Figure 23	Ethnicity-related grounds for discrimination
Figure 24	Proportion of respondents reporting discrimination by skin colour and ethnic minority group
Figure 25	Proportion of respondents reporting name-based discrimination by ethnic minority group
Figure 26	Proportion of respondents reporting religion-based discrimination by ethnic minority group
Figure 27	Employment challenges: Immigrants versus individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds born in Ireland
Figure 28	Proportion of ethnic minority respondents facing job matching difficulties
Figure 29	Analysis of job search methods among ethnic groups in Ireland

List of figures

Figure	Title
Figure 30	Employment permit requirements by ethnic groups
Figure 31	Employment challenges in Ireland for ethnic minorities by educational achievement
Figure 32	English proficiency among non-English speaking households
Figure 33	Employment challenges by industry sector for ethnic minority groups
Figure 34	Population aged 25-64 years old per nationality and educational attainment
Figure A1	Survey participants per ethnic minority background
Figure A2	Gender of survey participants
Figure A3	Age distribution of survey participants
Figure A4	Survey participants' country of birth
Figure A5	Proportion of survey participants born in Ireland
Figure A6	Proportion of survey participants with Irish citizenship
Figure A7	Economic status of survey participants
Figure A8	Field of work of survey participants
Figure A9	Industry sector of employed survey participants
Figure A10	Educational level of survey participants
Figure A11	Level of English of survey participants
Figure B1	Gender of ethnic interview participants
Figure B2	Age distribution of interview participants
Figure B3	Citizenship of interview participants
Figure B4	Time living in Ireland
Figure B5	County of residence of interview participants
Figure B6	Economic status of interview participants
Figure B7	Industry sector of interview participants
Figure C1	Profile of stakeholders qualitative interview participants
Figure C2	Industry sectors of stakeholders qualitative interview participants

List of tables

Table	Description
Table 1	Population by nationality (2011, 2016 & 2022)
Table 2	Population by ethnic background (2011, 2016 & 2022)
Table 3	Population by ethnic background
Table 4	Population with Irish citizenship and birthplace by ethnic background
Table 5	Top 5 factors liked by ethnic minority respondents about Ireland
Table 6	Top 5 disliked factors about Ireland by ethnic minority respondents
Table 7	Top 5 job factors valued by ethnic minority respondents
Table 8	Average rating of Ireland as an inclusive society per ethnic group
Table 9	Difficulties faced by ethnic minority groups in the application process
Table 10	Population usually resident and present in Ireland who spoke a language other than Irish or English at home by language spoken
Table A1	Breakdown of responses and their inclusion/exclusion in the analysis
Table A2	Representation of each ethnic minority group in the survey compared to their representation nationally (as a proportion of all ethnic minority groups)
Table B1	Interview participants per ethnic minority group

Authors & Contributors

Authors:

· **Morgane Alcaraz**, Research Manager at Morgan McKinley.

· **Trayc Keevans**, Foreign Direct Investment and Research Director at Morgan McKinley.

Contributors:

· **Michelle Boyle,** freelance Market Research Consultant.

· **Laura Botey Gaude,** Project Researcher at Morgan McKinley.

· **Matt Elliott,** Chief People Officer.

· **Deirdre Gavin,** Head of Inclusion and Diversity.

· **Kate Butler,** Inclusion and Diversity Lead.

· **Kelsey Davis,** Inclusion & Diversity.

· **Aoife McGabhann,** Head of Group Culture Reporting.

· **Sean O'Connell,** Head of Recruitment.

References

Agrawal, S. (2016). Factors influencing employee engagement: A study of diverse workforce. *International Management Institute, New Delhi, India,* Article No. 19.

Apfelbaum E. P., Phillips K. W., Richeson J. A. (2014). Rethinking the baseline in diversity research: Should we be explaining the effects of homogeneity? *Perspectives on Psychological Science,* 9, 235–244.

Barrett, A. (2024). Capacity constraints. *In The National Development Plan in 2023: priorities and capacity* (Chapter 2). ESRI

Buttner, E. H., Lowe, K. B., & Billings-Harris, L. (2010). The impact of diversity promise fulfillment on professionals of color outcomes in the USA. *Journal of Business Ethics, 91(4),* 501-518.

Central Statistics Office. (2022). *Census 2022.* Central Statistics Office.

Central Statistics Office. (2023). *Educational attainment, Q2 2023.* Central Statistics Office.

Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Average Weekly Earnings.* Central Statistics Office.

Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Consumer Price Index.* Central Statistics Office.

Central Statistics Office. (2024). *CPI Inflation Calculator.* Central Statistics Office.

Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Population and Migration Estimates, April 2024*

Courtney, L. (2022, June 5). The benefits of encouraging an international workforce to come here. *Business Post.*

Cox, T. H. (1993). *Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research, and Practice.* Berrett-Koehler

Daft.ie. (2024). *The Daft.ie Rental Price Report: An analysis of recent trends in the Irish residential market 2024 Q2.* Daft.ie

Dublin City University. (2021). *Race equality guide for hiring.* Dublin City University.

Deloitte. (2020). *2020 Global human capital trends: The social enterprise at work: Paradox as a path forward.* Deloitte Development LLC.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. (2024). *Employment Permit Statistics 2024.* Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Downey, S. N., van der Werff, L., Thomas, K. M., & Plaut, V. C. (2015). The role of diversity practices and inclusion in promoting trust and employee engagement. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 45(1),* 35-44.

ESRI. (2024). *The National Development Plan in 2023: Priorities and capacity* (Survey and Statistical Report Series No. 123). ESRI.

Eurostat. (2024). *Comparative price levels of consumer goods and services.*

Eurostat. (2024). *Population structure indicators at national level.*

Galinsky, A. D., Todd, A. R., Homan, A. C., Phillips, K. W., Apfelbaum, E. P., Sasaki, S. J., Richeson, J. A., Olayon, J. B., & Maddux, W. W. (2015). Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Pains of Diversity: A Policy Perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10(6),* 742-748.

Glassdoor. (2021, July 12). *What job seekers really think about your diversity and inclusion stats.* Glassdoor.

Gompers, P., & Kovvali, S. (2018). Organizational restructuring: The other diversity dividend. *Harvard Business Review, 96(4),* 28–29.

Government of Ireland. (2021). *National development plan 2021-2030.* Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Hewlett, S. A., Marshall, M., & Sherbin, L. (2013). How diversity can drive innovation. *Harvard Business Review, 91(12),* 30-31.

Higher Education Authority. (2023). *Statistics on International Enrolments in Higher Education.* Higher Education Authority.

Kelly, T., & Mac Éinrí, P. (2015). The re-emergence of emigration from Ireland: New trends in an old story. In I. Glynn (Ed.), *Transatlantic Council on Migration.* Migration Policy Institute.

References

Kingston, G., McGinnity, F. and O'Connell,P.J. (2015). Discrimination in the Labour Market: Nationality, Ethnicity and the Recession. *Work, Employment and Society.29(4),* 725–744.

McGinnity, F., Watson,D. and Kingston,G. (2012). *Analysing the Experience of Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010.* The Equality Authority and Economic and Social Research Institute.

McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Groarke, S., & Coughlan, S. (2018). *Ethnicity and nationality in the Irish labour market.* Economic and Social Research Institute.

McGinnity, F., Privalko, I., Fahey, É., Enright, S., & O'Brien, D. (2017). *Origin and integration: A study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census.* Economic and Social Research Institute/Department of Justice and Equality

McKinsey & Company. (2020). *Diversity wins. How inclusion matters.* McKinsey & Company.

Mor Barak, M. E. (2008). Inclusion: A key to workplace diversity. In *Diversity in the workplace: A review of the literature* (pp. 33-50). American Psychological Association.

Mor Barak, M. E. (2015). Inclusion is the Key to Diversity Management, but what is Inclusion? *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, 39(2),* 83–88.

Nishii, L. H., & Mayer, D. M. (2009). Do inclusive leaders help to reduce turnover? *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 30(8),* 793-815.

O'Connell, P.J. and McGinnity, F. (2008). *Immigrants at Work: Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market.* Equality Research Series. Economic and Social Research Institute and The Equality Authority.

OECD. (2008). The Price of Prejudice: Labour Market Discrimination on the Grounds of Gender and Ethnicity in *OECD Employment Outlook 2008* (pp. 95-136).

Okoro, E. A., & Washington, M. C. (2012). Workforce diversity and organizational communication: Analysis of human capital performance and productivity. *Journal of Diversity Management, 7(1),* 57–62.

Privalko, I., McGinnity, F., Curristan, S., & Enright, S. (2023). How do migrants fare in the Irish labour market? Country of origin, gender, asylum, and ethnicity effects. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies.*

Seliverstova, Y., & Pierog, A. (2021). A theoretical study on global workforce diversity management, its benefits, and challenges. *Cross-Cultural Management Journal, Fundația Română pentru Inteligența Afacerii.*

Seramount. (2022, November). *The future of ERGs: Are affinity-based groups still necessary?* Seramount.

Skarzynski, P., & Gibson, R. (2008). *Innovation to the core: A blueprint for transforming the way your company innovates.* Harvard Business School Press.

Skillnet Ireland. (2024). *Ireland's talent landscape 2024: Future skills challenges of Irish businesses.* Skillnet Ireland.

SOLAS, ETBI, & European Social Fund. (n.d.). *English language provision and language assessment for low-skilled and unemployed migrants: Recommendations for good practice at NFQ levels 1-3 in ETBs.*

Wellins, R., & Concelman, J. (2005). Employee engagement: A pathway to organizational success. *Journal of Management Studies.*

Workplace Relations Commission. (2023). *Annual report 2023. Workplace Relations Commission.*

Appendix A :
Profile of participants in the survey on 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace'

Appendix A : Profile of participants in the survey on 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace'

Appendix A : Profile of participants in the survey on 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace'
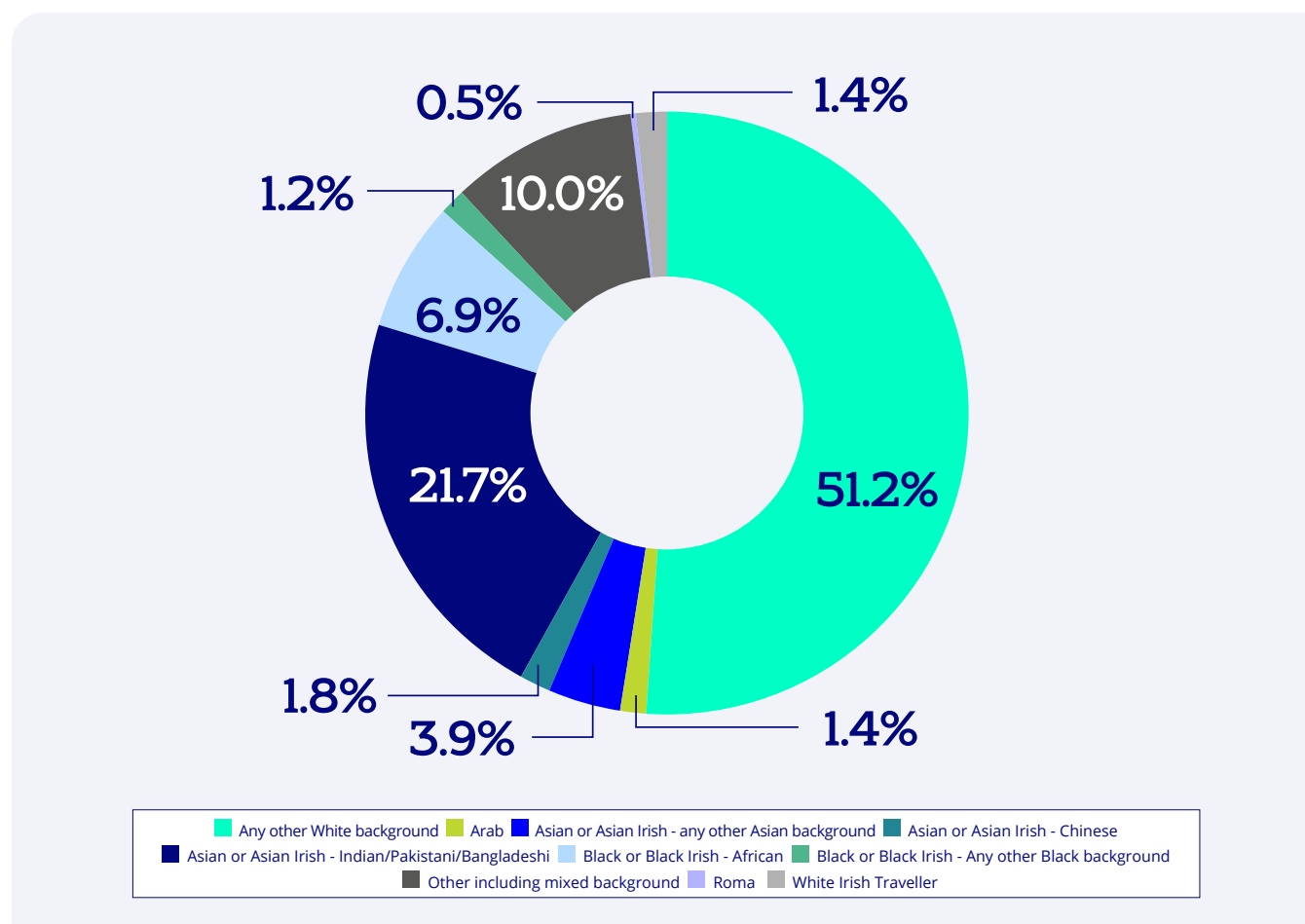
The online survey titled 'Fostering Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace' gathered responses from **3,773** participants. Of these, **2,798** were included in the data analysis, consisting of **2,775** respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds and **23** from White Irish participants.

Table A1: Breakdown of responses and their inclusion/exclusion in the analysis

Type of responses to the survey	Included in the analysis	Nb of responses
Responses from participants not residing in Ireland	No	393
Invalid responses[73]	No	582
Valid responses from participants identifying as belonging to ethnic minority backgrounds	Yes	2,775
Valid responses from participants identifying as belonging to a White Irish background	Yes	23
Total	**NA**	**3,773**

Please note that the primary aim of this survey was to collect insights into the profiles and experiences of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in Ireland. Responses from White Irish participants were included only as a comparison group where relevant. The following profile analysis is focused on the ethnic minority respondents.

Figure A1: Survey participants per ethnic minority background

Legend: Any other White background · Arab · Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background · Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese · Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi · Black or Black Irish - African · Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background · Other including mixed background · Roma · White Irish Traveller

---

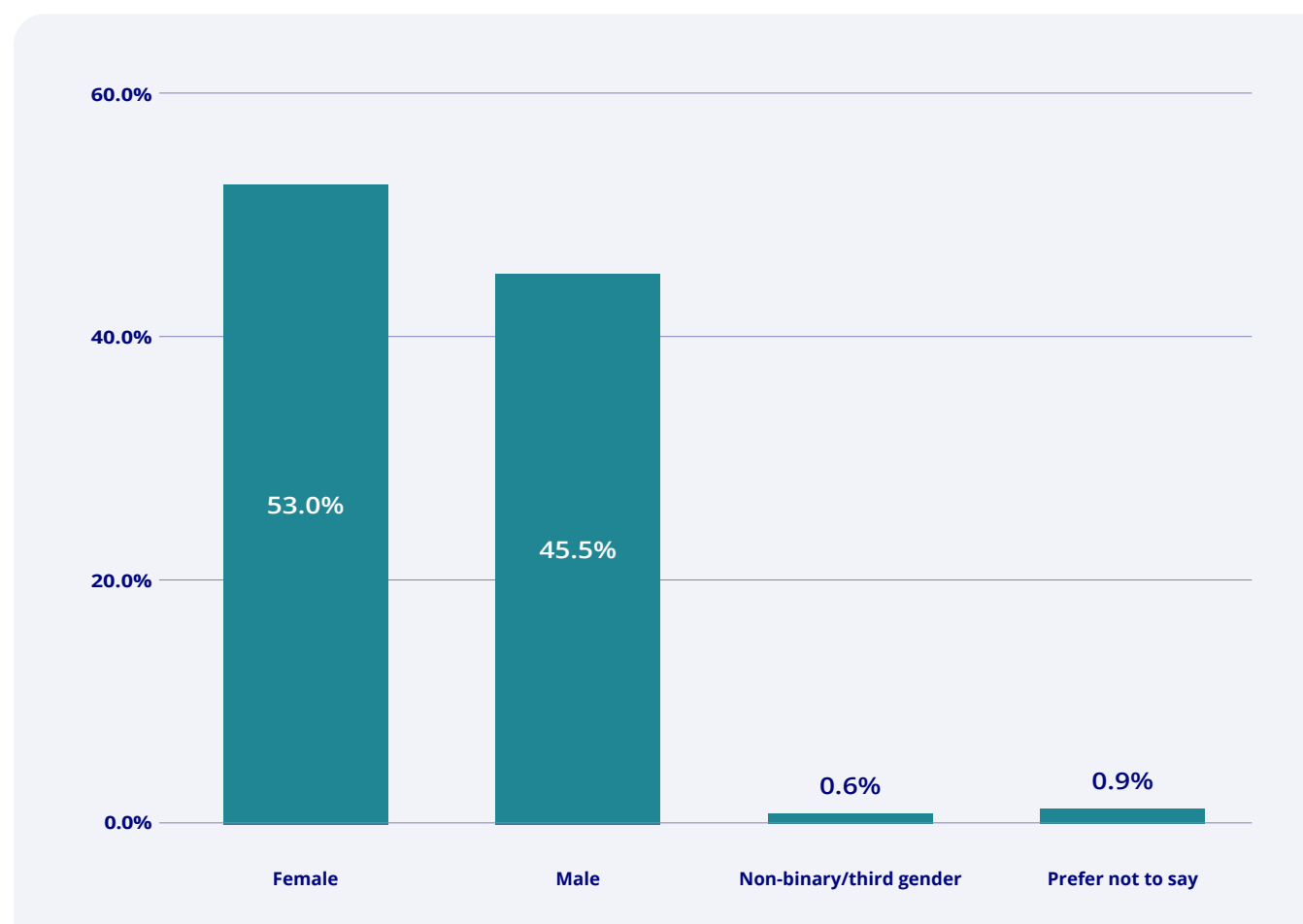[73] Invalid responses due to low completion rate

Appendix A : Profile of participants in the survey on 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace'

Table A2: Representation of each ethnic minority group in the survey compared to their representation nationally (as a proportion of all ethnic minority groups)

Ethnic background	Share of each ethnic minority group in the survey	Share of each ethnic minority group nationally[74] as a proportion of all ethnic minorities[75]
Any other White background	51.2%	57.1%
Arab	1.4%	2.3%
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	3.9%	5.1%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	1.8%	3.1%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	21.7%	10.7%
Black or Black Irish - African	6.9%	7.7%
Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background	1.2%	1.0%
Other including mixed background	10.0%	7.4%
Roma	0.5%	1.8%
White Irish Traveller	1.4%	3.7%

Figure A2: Gender of survey participants

74 This calculation only includes the 10 ethnic minority groups listed in this table and excludes the population identifying as White Irish and those who did not wish to state their ethnicity in the last census.
75 CSO (2022). Census 2022.
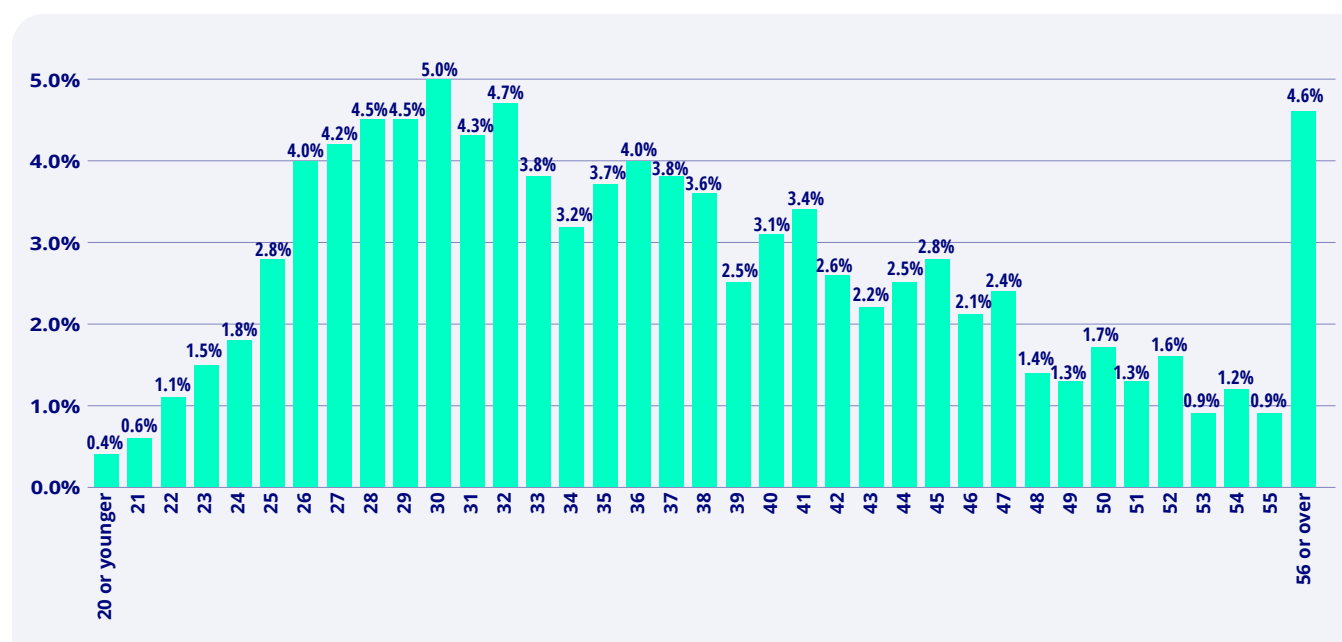
Figure A3: Age distribution of survey participants

Figure A4: Survey participants' country of birth

Participants to the survey were born in 132 countries which are displayed in the below map.

Afghanistan	Chile	Haiti	Morocco	Somalia
Albania	China	Hong Kong (S.A.R.)	Namibia	South Africa
Algeria	Colombia	Hungary	Nepal	South Korea
Angola	Congo, Republic of the...	Iceland	Netherlands	Spain
Argentina	Costa Rica	India	New Zealand	Sri Lanka
Armenia	Croatia	Indonesia	Nicaragua	Swaziland
Australia	Cuba	Iran	Nigeria	Sweden
Austria	Cyprus	Iraq	Norway	Switzerland
Azerbaijan	Czech Republic	Ireland	Other	Syrian Arab Republic
Bahamas	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Israel	Pakistan	Thailand
Bahrain	Denmark	Italy	Palau	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Bangladesh	Ecuador	Japan	Palestine (State of)	Tunisia
Barbados	Egypt	Kazakhstan	Peru	Turkey
Belarus	El Salvador	Kenya	Philippines	Uganda
Belgium	Equatorial Guinea	Kuwait	Poland	Ukraine
Belize	Estonia	Latvia	Portugal	United Arab Emirates
Benin	Ethiopia	Lebanon	Republic of Moldova	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Bhutan	Finland	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Romania	United Republic of Tanzania
Bolivia	France	Lithuania	Russian Federation	United States of America
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Georgia	Malawi	Rwanda	Uruguay
Botswana	Germany	Malaysia	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of...
Brazil	Ghana	Maldives	Saudi Arabia	Viet Nam
Bulgaria	Greece	Malta	Senegal	Zambia
Côte d'Ivoire	Grenada	Mauritius	Serbia	Zimbabwe
Cambodia	Guatemala	Mexico	Singapore	
Cameroon	Guinea	Monaco	Slovakia	
Canada	Guinea-Bissau	Mongolia	Slovenia	

Appendix A : Profile of participants in the survey on 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace'

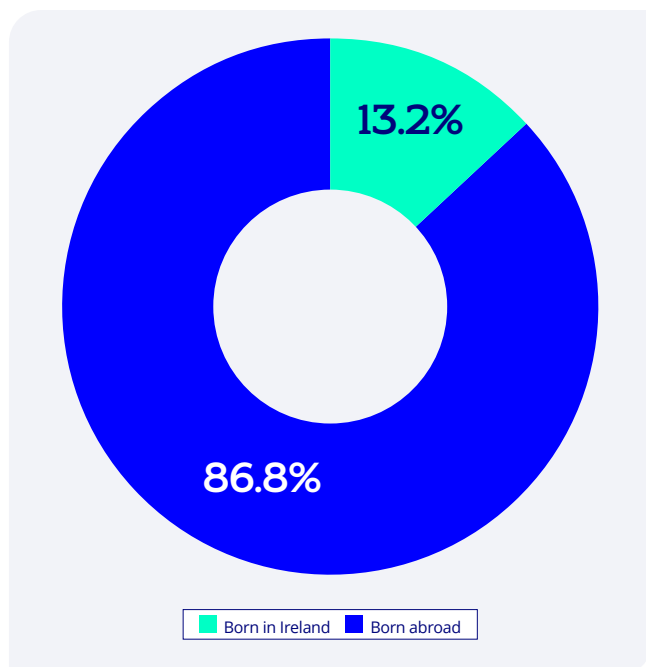## Figure A5: Proportion of survey participants born in Ireland

13.2%

86.8%

Born in Ireland   Born abroad

Figure A6: Proportion of survey participants with Irish citizenship
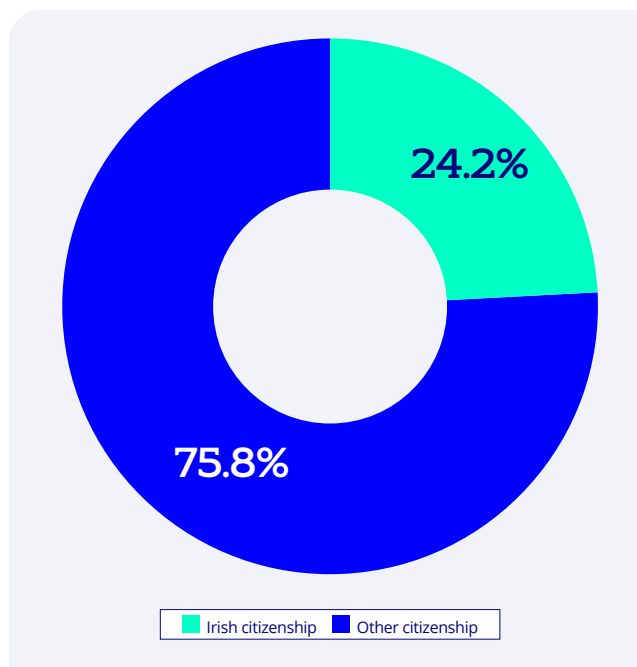

24.2%

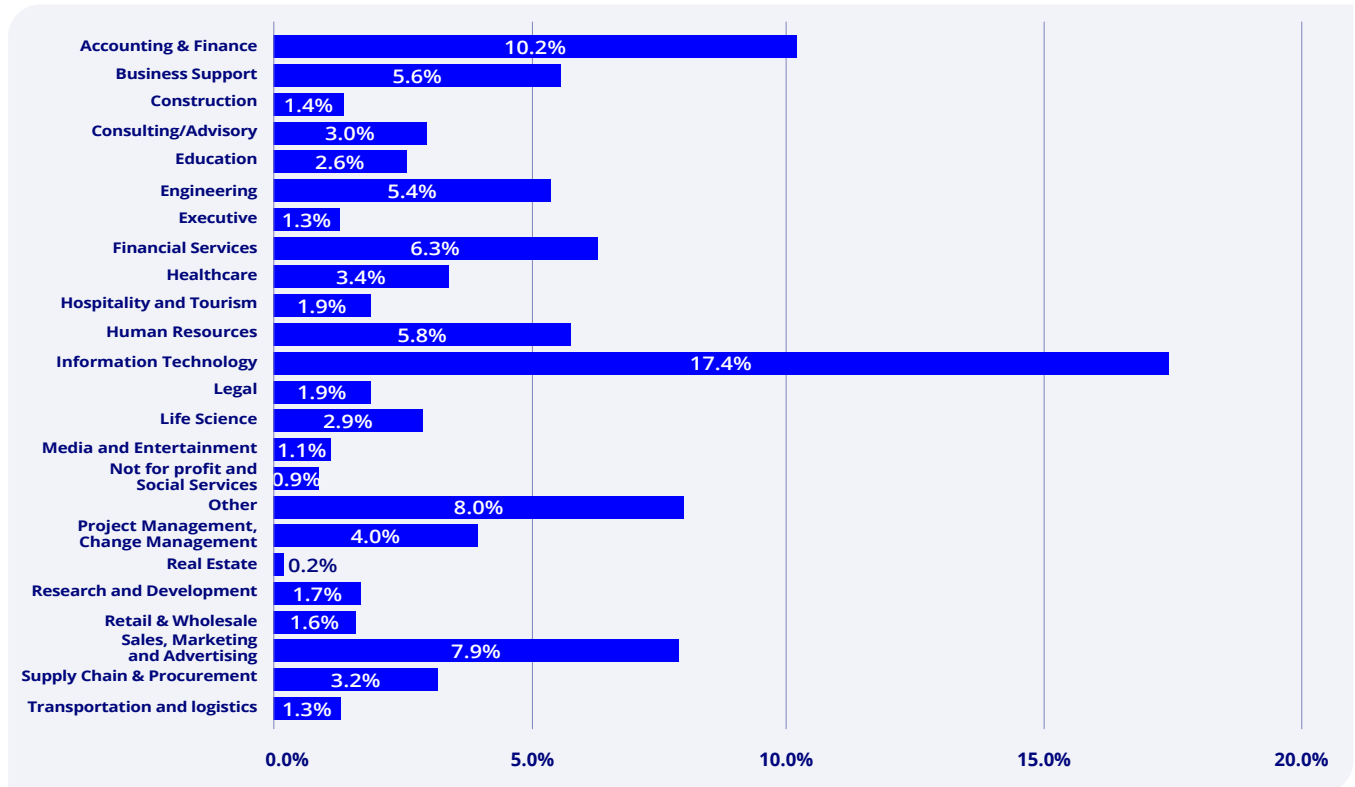75.8%

Irish citizenship   Other citizenship

Figure A7: Economic status of survey participants

Category	Percentage
Employed	74.3%
Long-term unemployed (12 months and more)	2.3%
Looking after home/family	0.8%
Other	1.6%
Retired	0.2%
Self-employed	3.1%
Short-term unemployed (less than 12 months)	7.0%
Student	2.2%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	0.3%
Unable to work, pending documentation	0.4%
Unemployed looking for first regular job	7.8%

Count
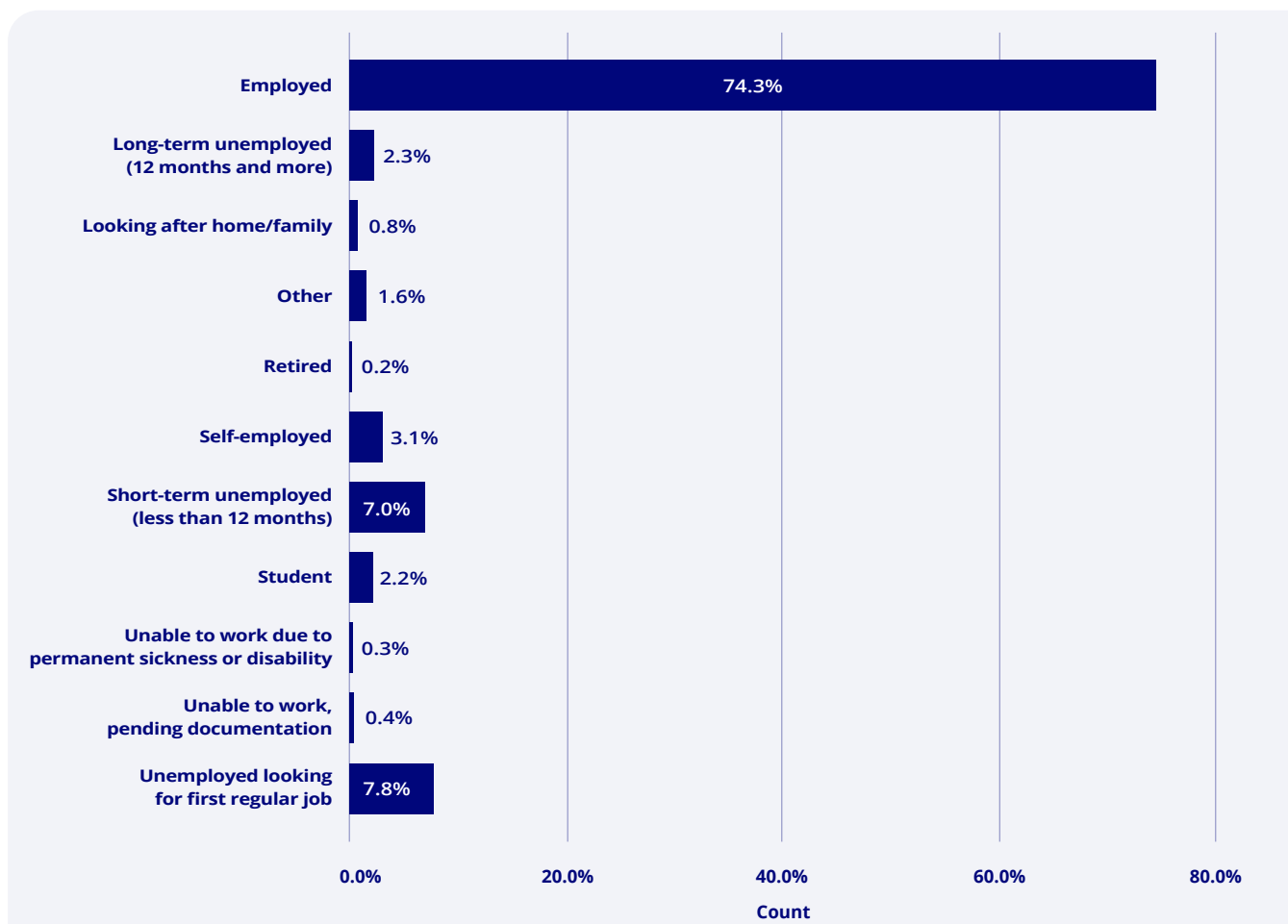
Figure A8: Field of work of survey participants

The above figure presents the respondents' fields of work or specialisations, independently of their economic status. For example, if the respondent is a Data Engineer working for a Bank, their field of work would be 'Information Technology'.

Figure A9: Industry sector of employed survey participants

Industry sector of respondent's employer or themselves if self-employed. For example, if the participant is a Data Engineer working for a Bank, their industry sector would be 'Financial Services'.

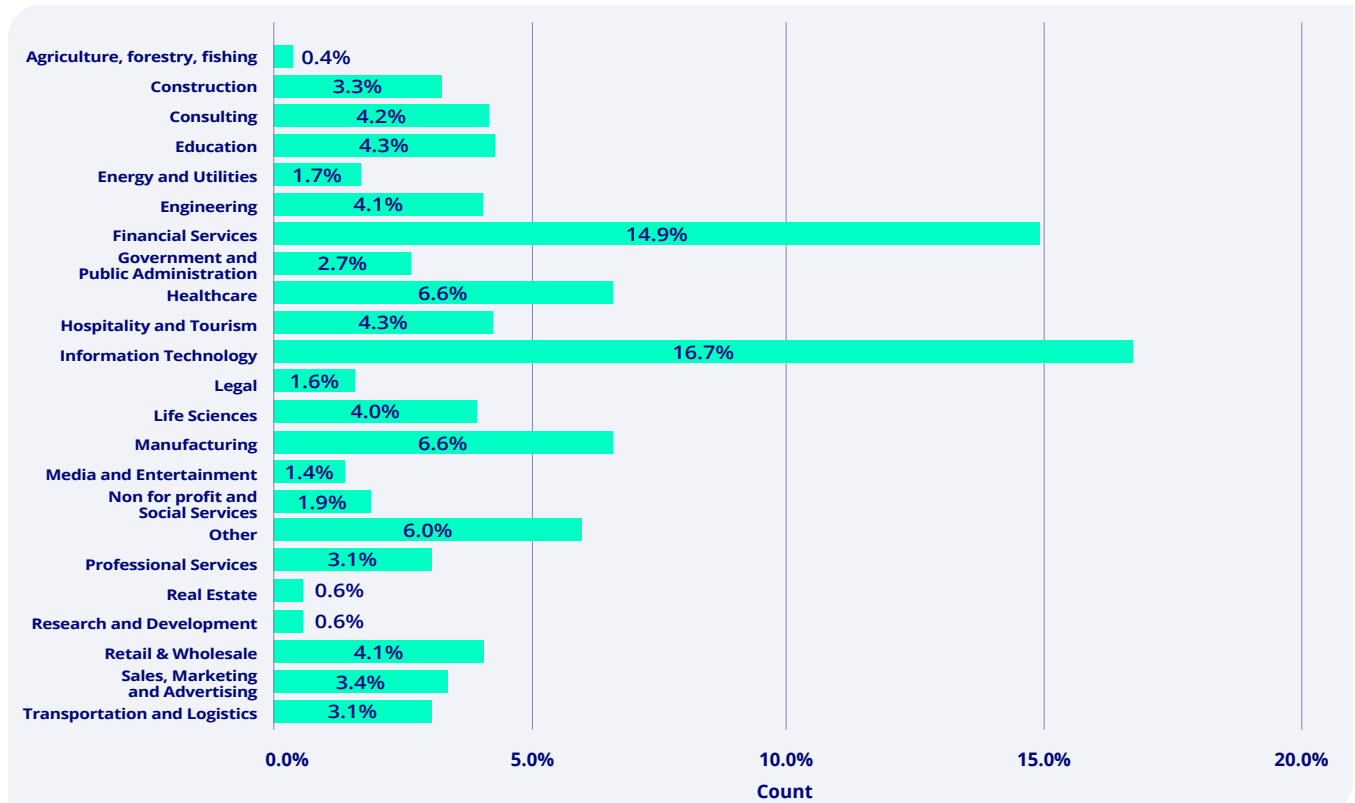# Appendix A : Profile of participants in the survey on 'Fostering Ethnic Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace'
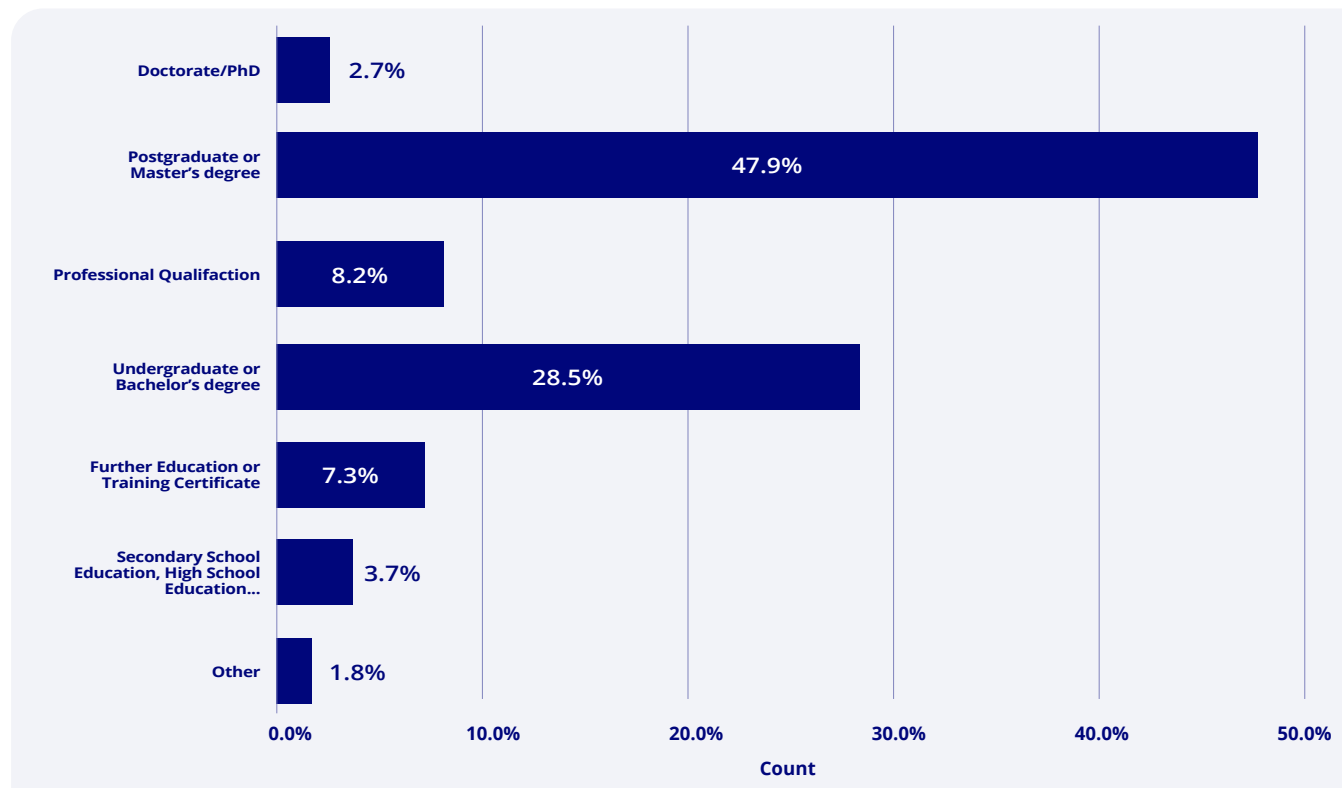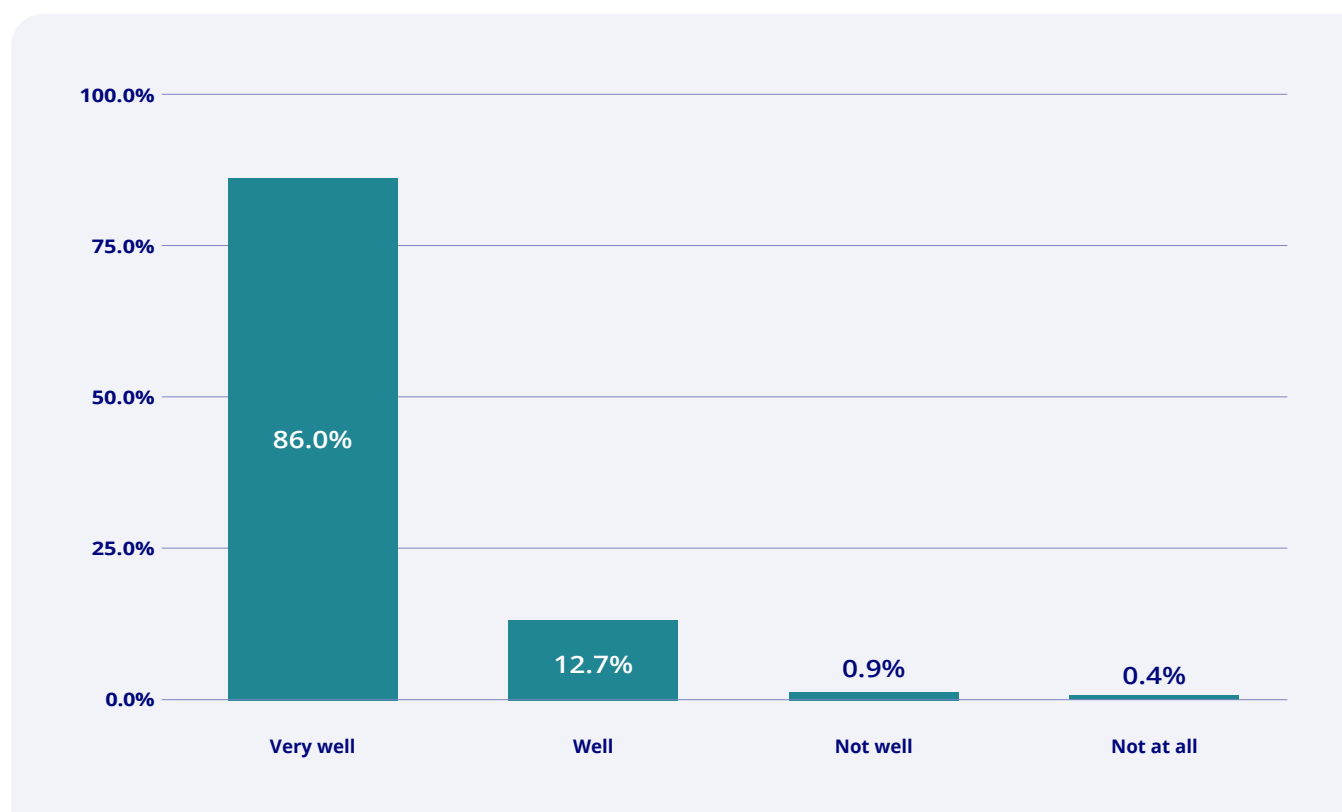
Figure A10: Educational level of survey participants

Figure A11: Level of English of survey participants

Appendix B:
Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with ethnic minorities

Appendix B: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with ethnic minorities

Appendix B: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with ethnic minorities

For the purpose of this research, 104 one-hour long interviews were conducted within a four month period (March to July 2024) with representatives from 10 ethnic minority groups.

Table B1: Interview participants per ethnic minority group

Ethnic Group	Completed interviews
Any other White background	14
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	14
Black or Black Irish - African	19
Other including mixed background	14
Asian or Asian Irish - any other Asian background	10
White Irish Traveller	9
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	9
Arab	9
Roma	5
Black or Black Irish - any other Black background	1
Total	104

Figure B1: Gender of interview participants
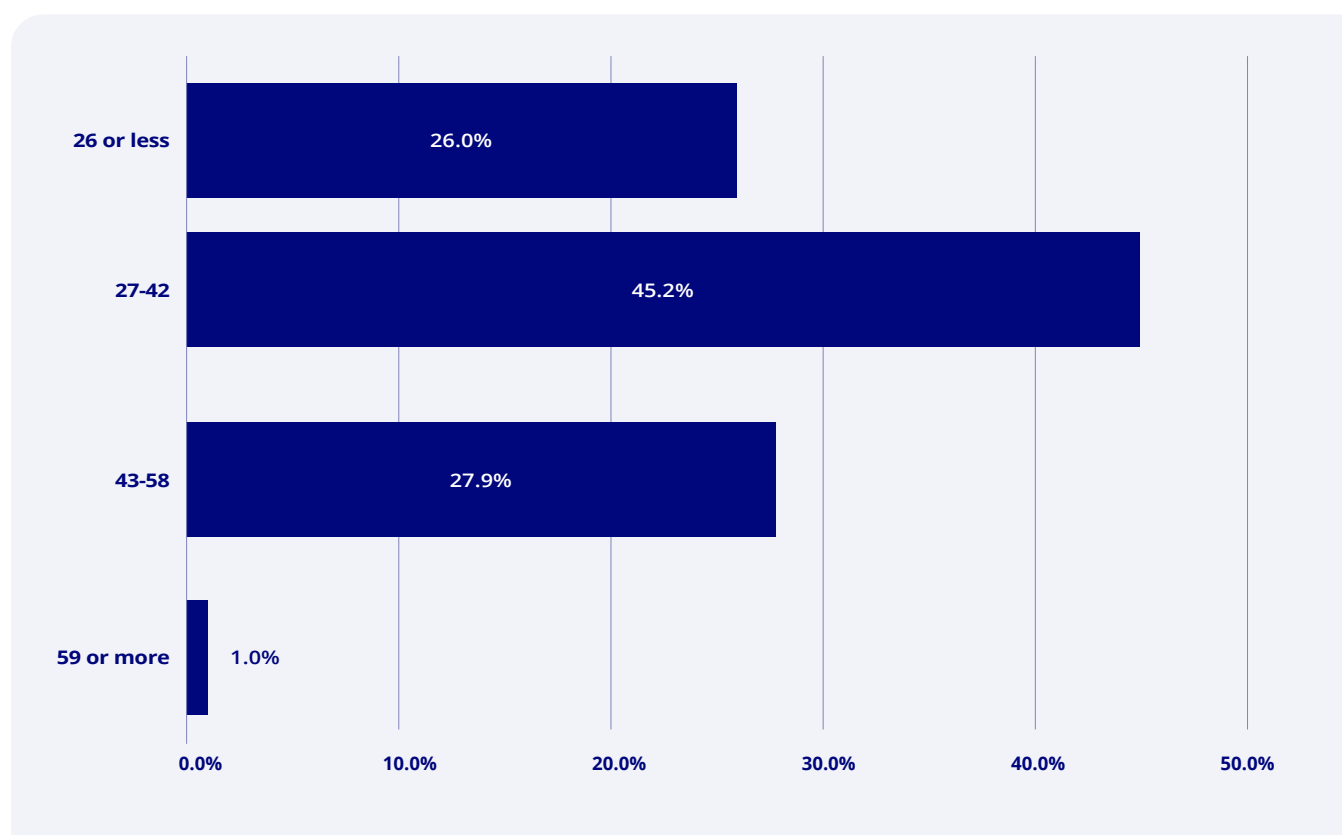
35.6%
64.4%

Male   Female

Figure B2: Age distribution of interview participants

- 26 or less: 26.0%
- 27-42: 45.2%
- 43-58: 27.9%
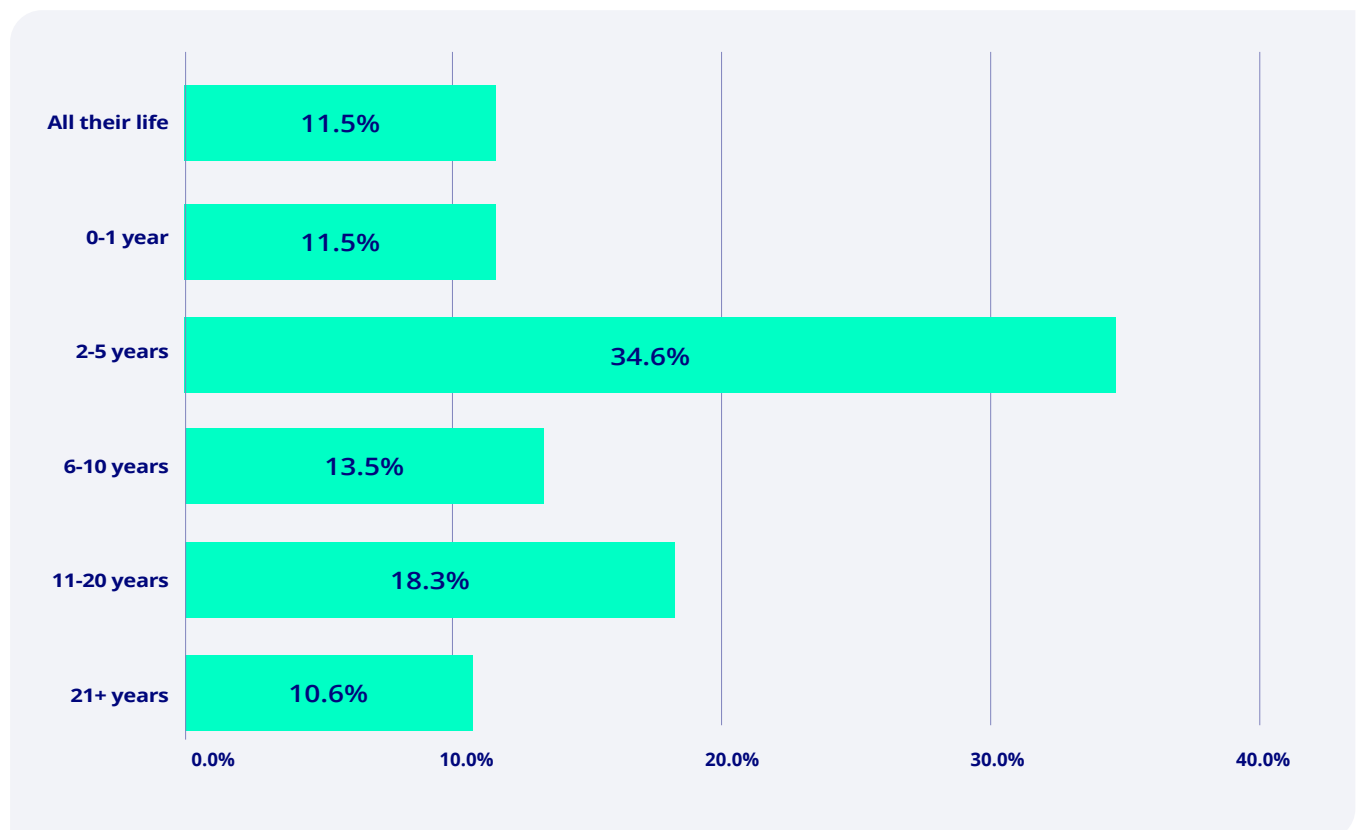- 59 or more: 1.0%

0.0%   10.0%   20.0%   30.0%   40.0%   50.0%

Appendix B: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with ethnic minorities

Figure B3: Citizenship of interview participants

Argentina	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Romania
Brazil	Malawi	Singapore
China	Mali	South Africa
Costa Rica	Mauritius	Spain
Cuba	Mexico	Taiwan
Czech Republic	Republic of Moldova	Thailand
Egypt	Mongolia	Turkey
Hungary	Morocco	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
India	Nigeria	United States of America
Ireland	Pakistan	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of...
Italy	Poland	Viet Nam
Japan	Portugal	Zimbabwe
Lebanon		

Figure B4: Time living in Ireland

All their life	11.5%
0-1 year	11.5%
2-5 years	34.6%
6-10 years	13.5%
11-20 years	18.3%
21+ years	10.6%

Appendix B: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with ethnic minorities

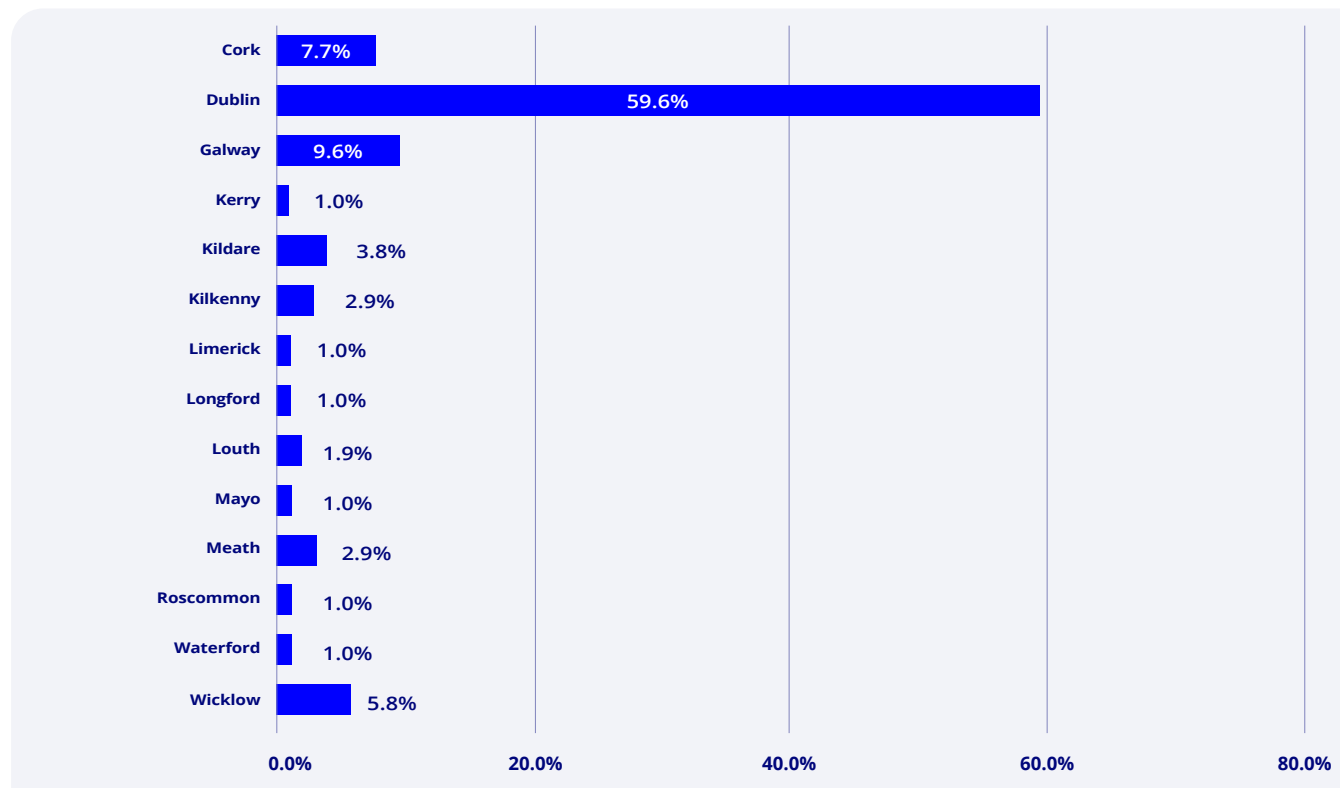## Figure B5: County of residence of interview participants

County	Percentage
Cork	7.7%
Dublin	59.6%
Galway	9.6%
Kerry	1.0%
Kildare	3.8%
Kilkenny	2.9%
Limerick	1.0%
Longford	1.0%
Louth	1.9%
Mayo	1.0%
Meath	2.9%
Roscommon	1.0%
Waterford	1.0%
Wicklow	5.8%

Figure B6: Economic status of interview participants

Economic status	Percentage
Employed	72.1%
Long-term unemployed (12 months and more)	1.9%
Looking after home/family	1.0%
Self-employed	1.9%
Short-term unemployed (less than 12 months)	5.8%
Student	12.5%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	1.0%
Unemployed looking for first regular job	3.8%

Appendix B: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with ethnic minorities
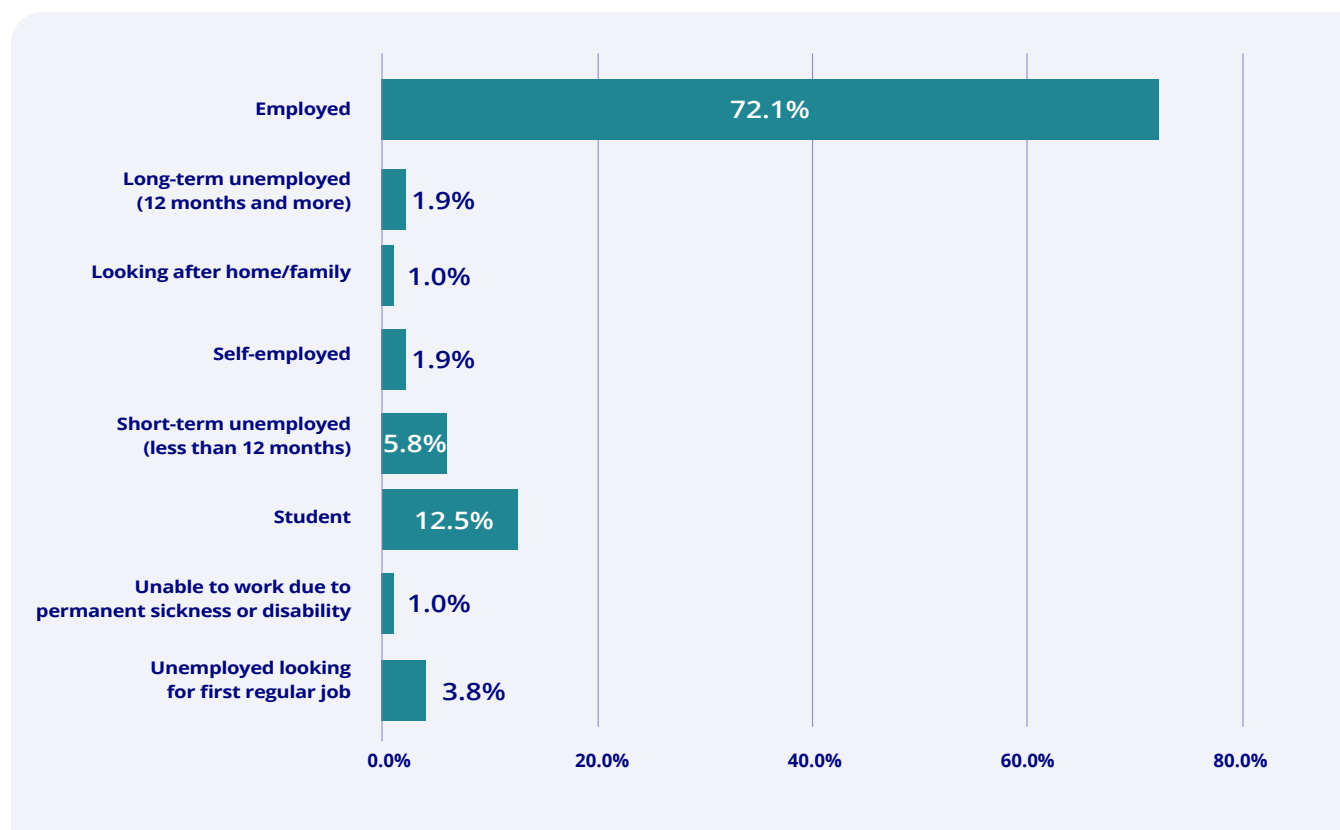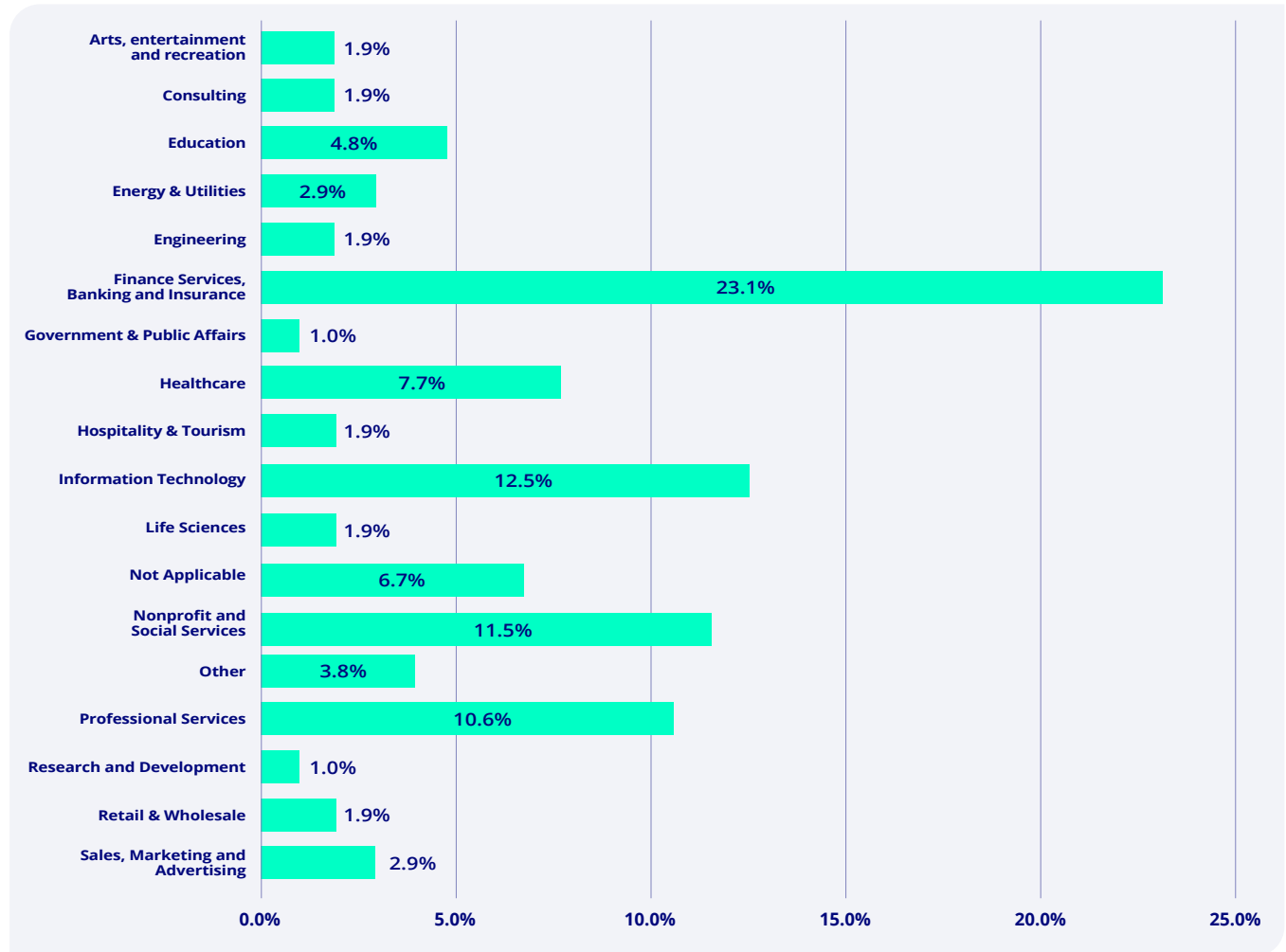
Figure B7: Industry sector of interview participants

Industry sector	Percentage
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.9%
Consulting	1.9%
Education	4.8%
Energy & Utilities	2.9%
Engineering	1.9%
Finance Services, Banking and Insurance	23.1%
Government & Public Affairs	1.0%
Healthcare	7.7%
Hospitality & Tourism	1.9%
Information Technology	12.5%
Life Sciences	1.9%
Not Applicable	6.7%
Nonprofit and Social Services	11.5%
Other	3.8%
Professional Services	10.6%
Research and Development	1.0%
Retail & Wholesale	1.9%
Sales, Marketing and Advertising	2.9%

Appendix C:
Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with stakeholders

Appendix C: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with stakeholders

Appendix C: Profile of participants from the qualitative interviews with stakeholders

For this research, we conducted 14 in-depth interviews, each lasting around one hour, with various stakeholders, including Talent Acquisition professionals, Recruitment specialists, DEI experts, and subject matter experts on ethnic diversity.

The objective was to gather diverse perspectives on fostering ethnic diversity in the workplace. These interviews provided insights into how different organisations approach ethnic diversity, the challenges recruiters and talent acquisition professionals may encounter when hiring non-White Irish candidates, and specific issues such as employment permits and anti-discrimination training.

In total, the discussions included 7 Talent Acquisition and Recruitment professionals from both recruitment agencies and corporate settings, 4 DEI specialists, and 3 subject matter experts. This variety of participants allowed us to gain a comprehensive understanding of current practices, challenges, and opportunities related to enhancing ethnic diversity in the workplace.

Figure C1: Profile of stakeholders qualitative interview participants

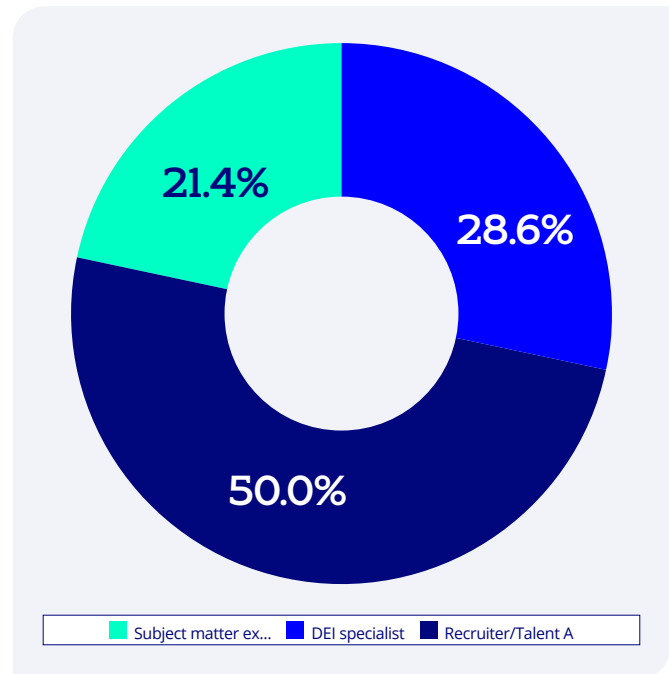|		
■ Subject matter ex…	■ DEI specialist	■ Recruiter/Talent A

Figure C2: Industry sectors of stakeholders qualitative interview participants