

Monitoring Adequate Housing in Ireland

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Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

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Monitoring Adequate Housing: Motivation

- Housing is essential to people's their health, well-being, and their social inclusion.
- Start from commitments in human rights agreements concerning the right to adequate housing
- Aim is to develop a set of indicators that allow us to monitor progress or lack of progress and to identify groups that are vulnerable to inadequate housing



Adequate housing in Human Rights Agreements

Adequate Housing in international standards

- Ireland is a signatory to a number of international conventions and agreements that include the right to adequate housing
- Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

- Detailed dimensions spelt out in International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), article 11.
- States commit to progressive realization of these rights
- HR approach also commits to non-discrimination

What counts as Adequate Housing (ICESCR)?

- Six dimensions:

Access to housing

Affordability

Cultural adequacy

Security

Quality, habitability,
and facilities

Location and access
to services

Monitoring Adequate Housing: What we do

- Consider **ICESCR** and other **frameworks** that monitor QoL or adequate housing
- **Consult a range of stakeholders** – 30 individuals/organisations
- Select **best available indicators** to measure these 6 dimensions
- Use **existing high-quality representative national data to present these indicators for different groups**
- **Identify data gaps** -groups covered and dimensions of housing

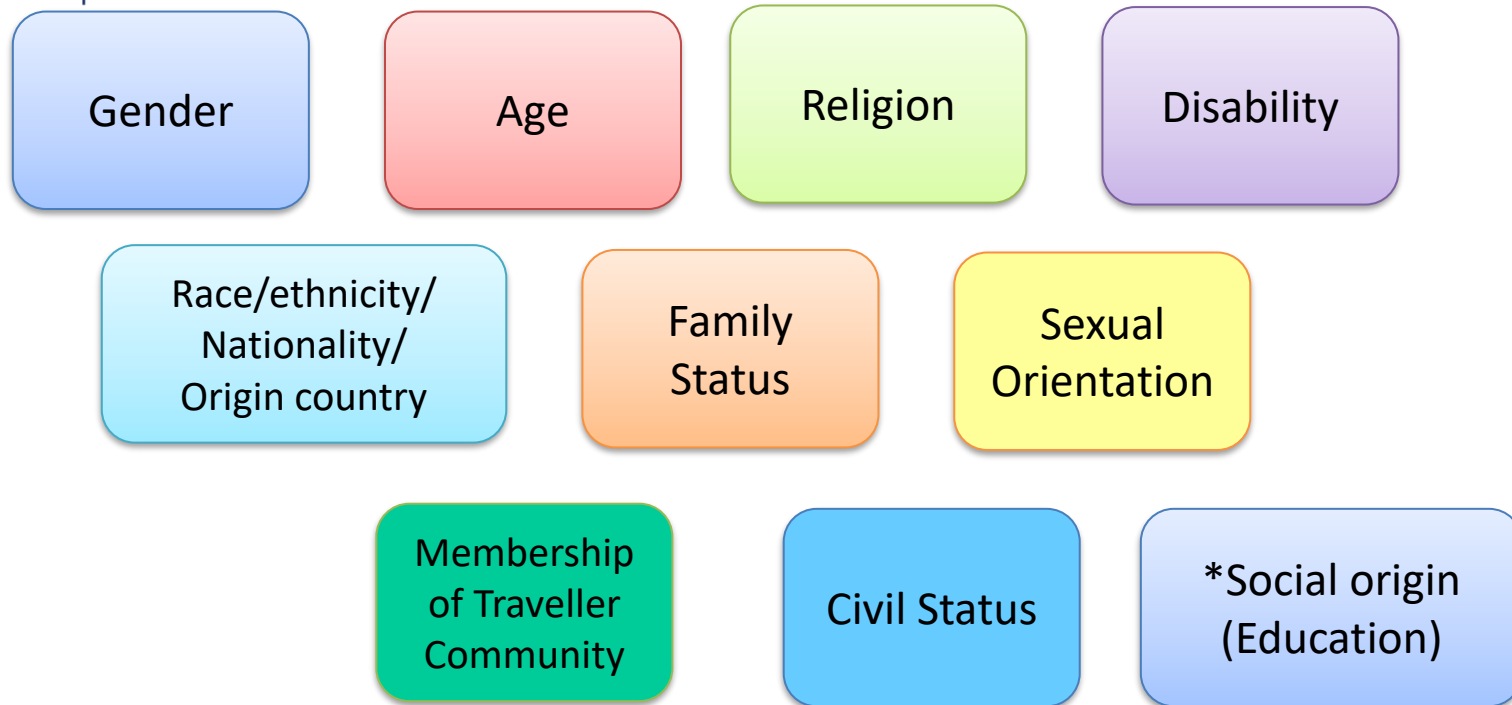
Selecting Indicators –criteria

- Should highlight **important areas of inequality and human rights** but avoid **overlaps** and **gaps**
- **Measurable, high-quality and robust**
- Allow for **disaggregation** across equality groups
- **Timely** and **repeated** to allow monitoring
- **Easily comprehensible** for a general audience and **meaningful** for rights holders
- Consider these separately – not a combined into ‘Adequate Housing index’

Main Indicators of Adequate Housing

Dimension	Individual level indicator	Aggregate indicator
1 Access to housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness (service users) • Tenure type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing completions • Social housing unit output • Spending on social housing/housing benefits
2 Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30/40 measure • Poverty after housing costs • Rent and Mortgage arrears in the last 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent index, ratio of mean monthly rent to mean monthly earnings • Housing supplement recipients
3 Cultural adequacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending on Traveller Accommodation • Numbers/Duration in Direct Provision
4 Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of tenure in years • Subjective sense of housing security due to affordability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of tenancy RTB • RTB disputes • Mortgage arrears/repossessions
5 Quality, Habitability, and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-crowding • Housing quality index • Ability to keep home warm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of housing stock in Ireland
6 Location and access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services • Safety walking home at night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to basic facilities • Internet access

Whose outcomes? Protected Characteristics & Equality 'groups'

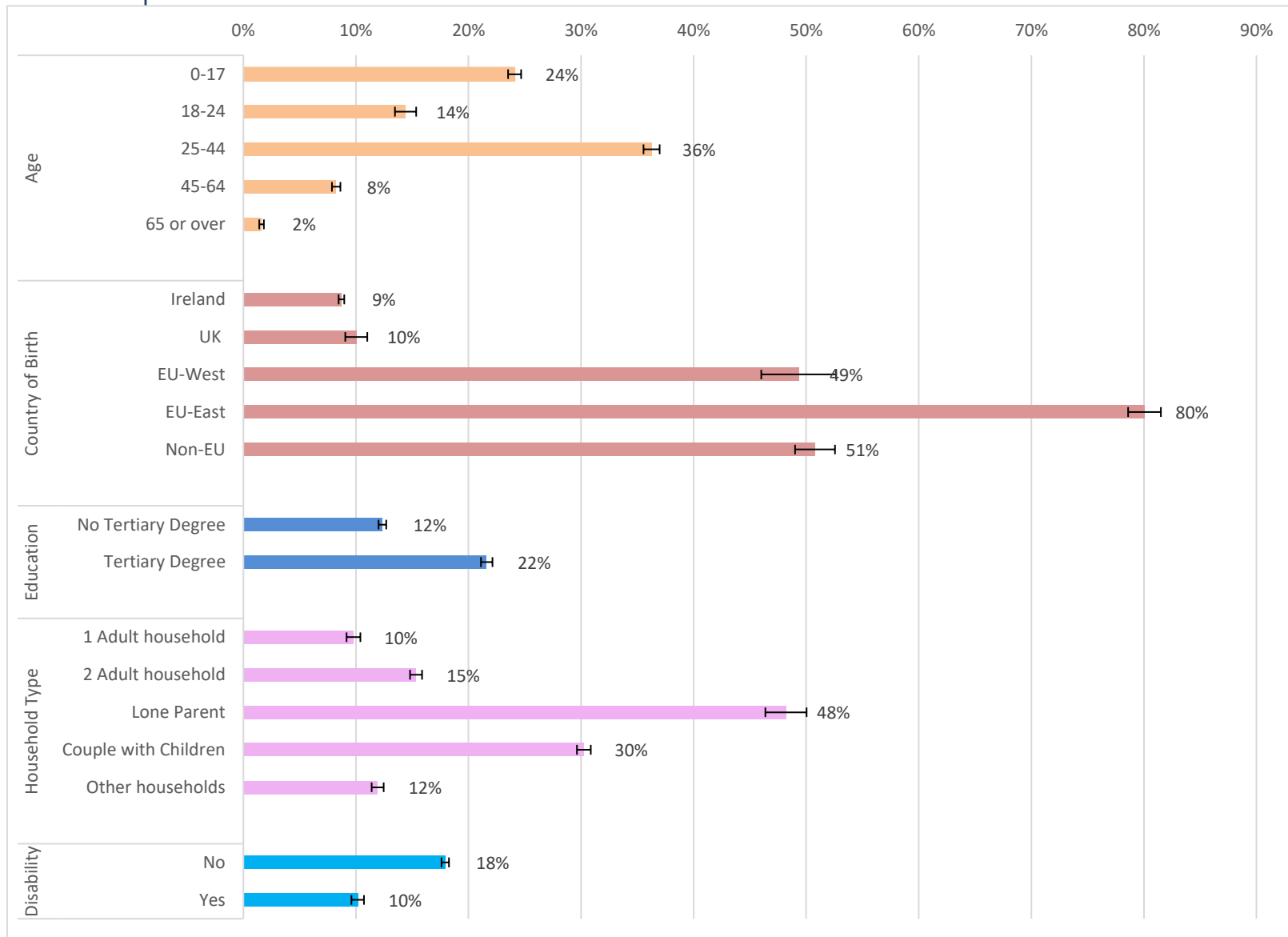


Source: Equal Status Acts (2000-2018). *Socio-economic status under consideration.



Adequate housing outcomes across equality groups: Baseline findings

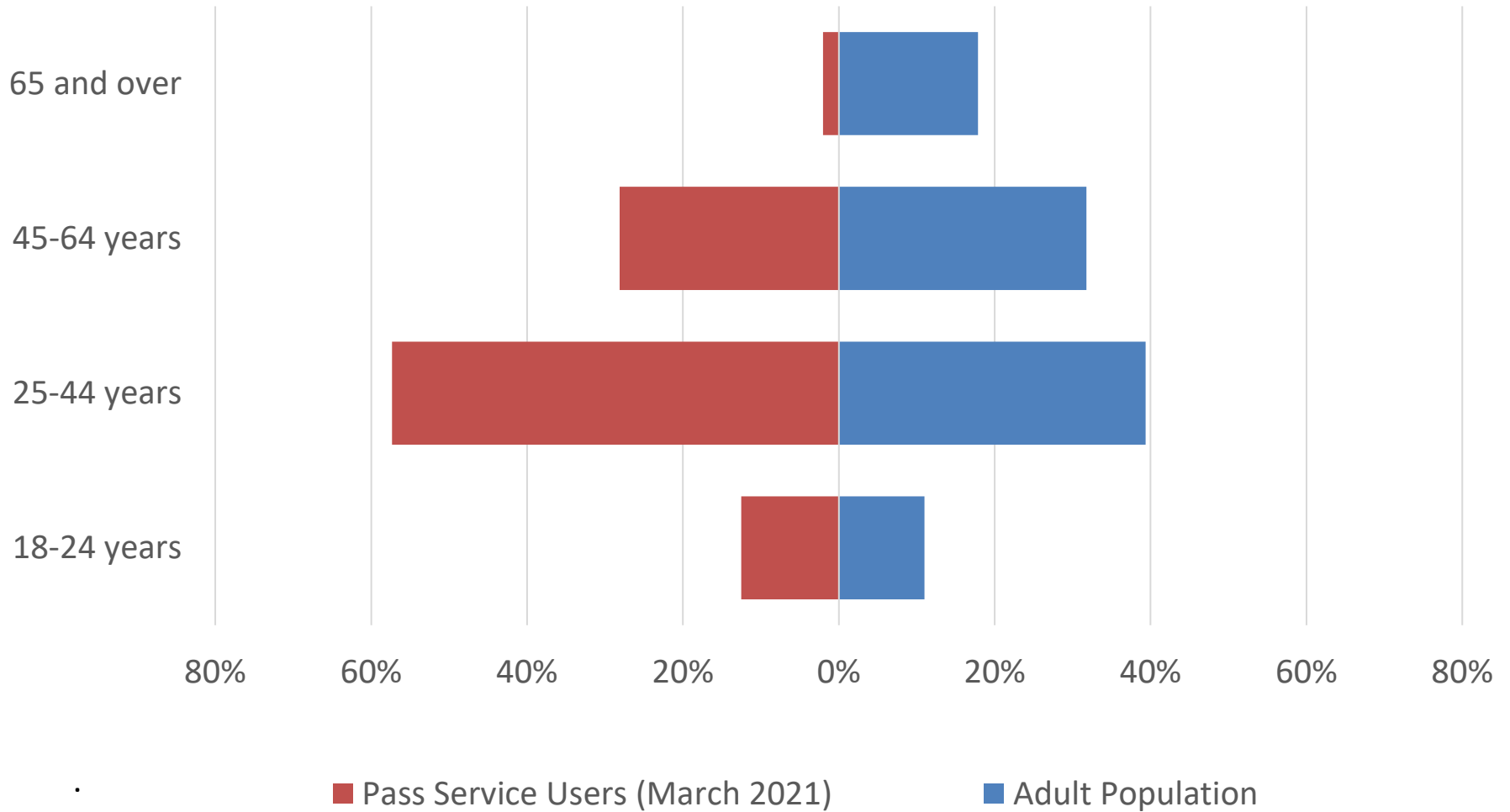
ACCESS: Private rented accommodation (SILC 2018 and 2019)



Access: Homelessness

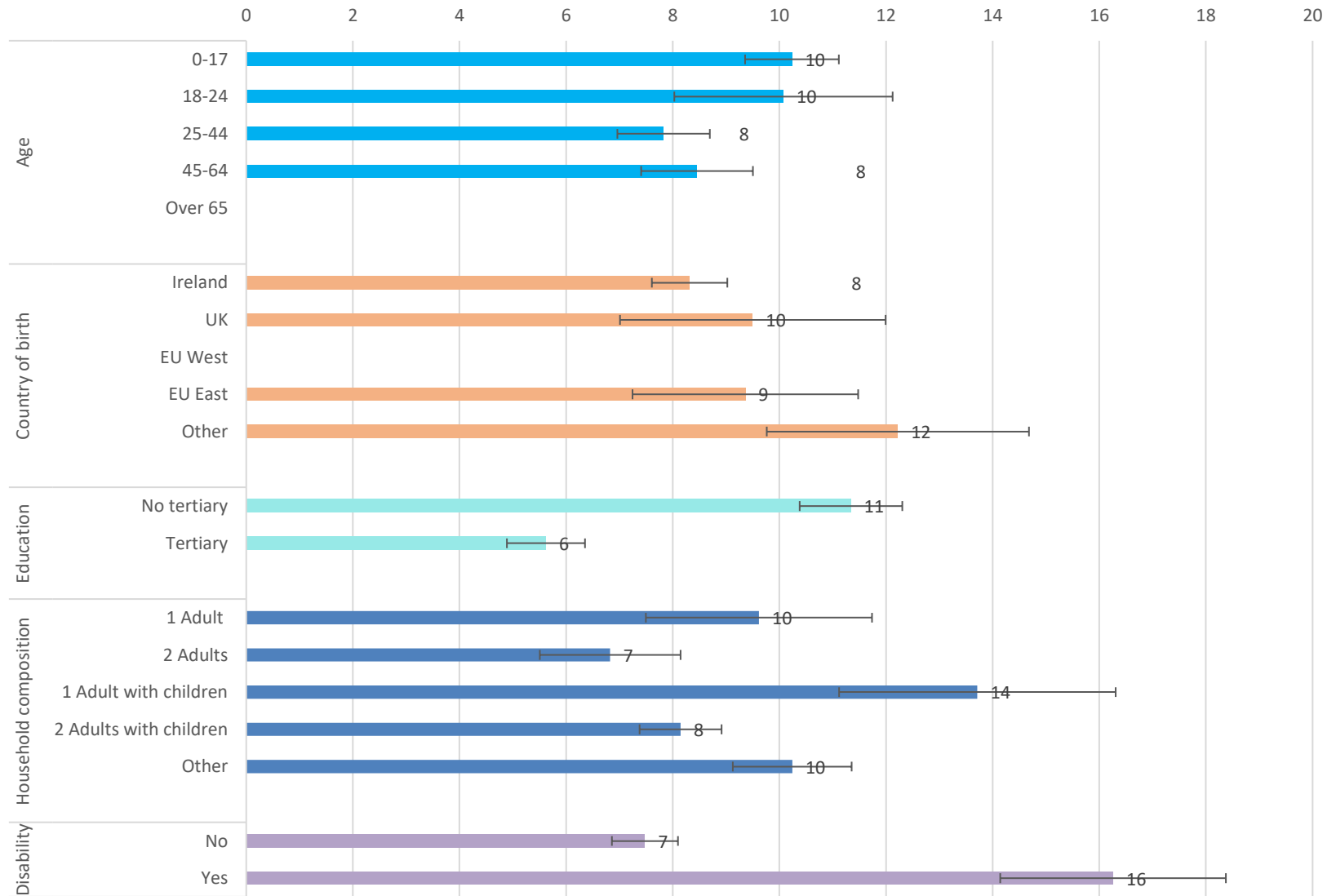
- Fundamental indicator of inadequate housing access
- Data on homelessness limited – use figures on those accessing homeless services (PASS)
- N homeless increased from 3969 in March 2016 to 6552 in March 2020. Declined to 5894 in March 2021
- Decline in homelessness during pandemic reflecting exceptional measures.
- Predominantly single individuals, but among homeless families 53% are lone parents and their children
- Young people over-represented

Age composition of Homeless Service Users (PASS)



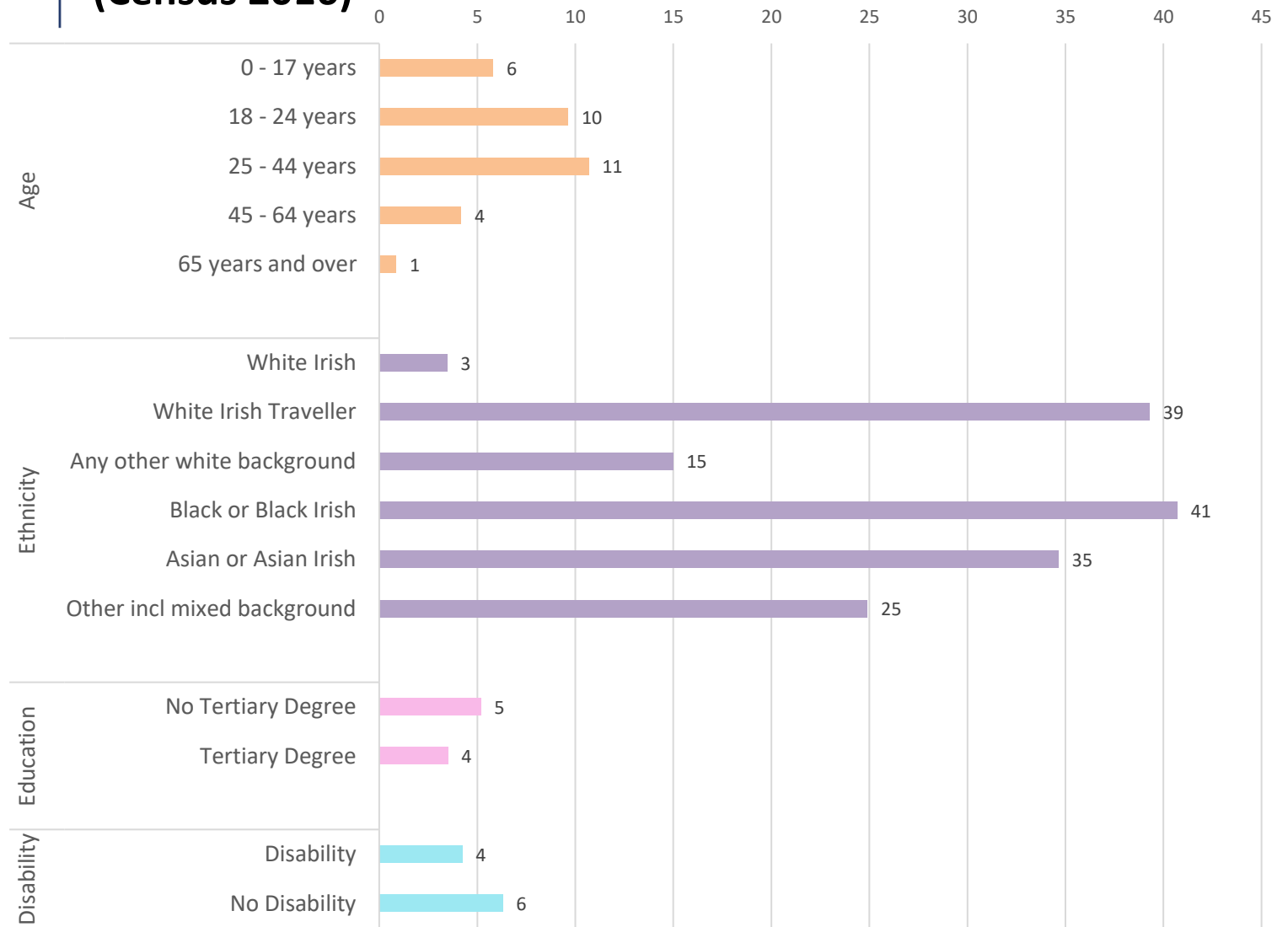
Notes: PASS data for March 2021, contrasted with Adult population from Census 2016

Affordability: % Rent and Mortgage in Arrears 2018/19



Notes: Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

Housing Quality: Proportion in overcrowded accommodation (Census 2016)



Notes: Census, 2016. **Over-crowding - Ratio of N in the household to N rooms >1.**

Cultural adequacy

- Irish Travellers have particular needs for culturally appropriate housing
- In 2019 8% of Travellers lived in LA group housing and 8% in LA halting sites
- However these were the preferred accommodation types for 26% of Travellers (CFI 2017).
- One third of funding allocated to Traveller accommodation by dept of housing was not drawn down by local authorities in 2019
- 92% Travellers in Ireland believe there is insufficient Traveller-specific accommodation (FRA, 2020)
- Lack of culturally appropriate Traveller housing in Ireland also noted by CERD and other international bodies
- Travellers also experience problems of access and quality e.g. high risk of homelessness and over-crowding

Data Gaps

- What gets counted, counts.
- Lack of data on housing security. Need for both subjective and objective measures.
- Religion, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, social origin are typically not measured on survey data (few exceptions)
- There is a lack of data on cultural adequacy, local services, and experience with housing discrimination.

Key messages

- Younger respondents, East European migrants, those with a disability and lone parents disadvantaged in the housing system across numerous dimensions
- Although choice likely to play a role group differences (e.g. preference for renting/buying), other differences more clearly point to disadvantage (overcrowding, affordability issues, housing quality issues etc.)
- Report establishes a baseline for future monitoring, highlighting groups for whom the right to adequate housing is problematic
- Housing adequacy intrinsically linked to broader standard of living e.g. poverty/low income and structural inequalities
- The COVID pandemic has seriously affected life in Ireland – full effect remains to be seen, 2020 data SILC and EQLS data are not yet available.



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Thanks for listening! Comments welcome

Want to read more:

<https://www.esri.ie/publications/monitoring-adequate-housing-in-ireland>

Research programme funded by IHREC here:

<https://www.esri.ie/current-research/human-rights-and-equality-research-programme>