

Perceived discrimination and young people's health and wellbeing in Ireland

Daniel Capistrano, Helen Russell, Eva Slevin

Dublin, May 2026



An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais
agus Combhionannais
Department of Children,
Disability and Equality



Fás Aníos in Éirinn
Growing Up in Ireland



Outline

1. Context
2. Data and methodology
3. Perceived discrimination
4. Health and wellbeing relationship
5. Discussion

Context

Of persons aged 18 years and over...
Overall **22%** experienced **discrimination**¹

Main grounds for
**discrimination in
social settings**¹



Increase from 2019 (18%) and 2014 (12%)

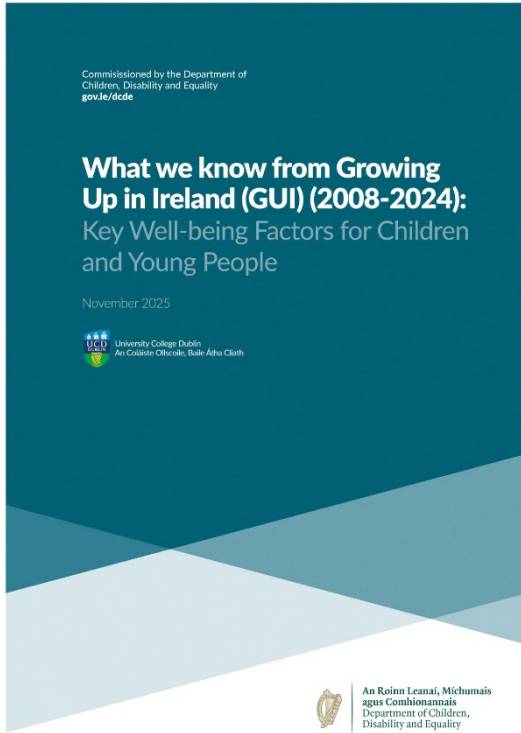


Table 3. Overview of the GUI domains and subdomains covered in the analysed peer-reviewed studies (k=223) and thematic reports (k=23)

Physical health and development K=79 articles K=13 reports	Education and cognitive development K=75 articles K=13 reports	Socioemotional development and well-being K=112 articles K=18 reports	Civic and economic engagement (>17y) K=4 articles K=3 reports
Commuting K=1 article / K=0 reports	Academic self-image K=5 articles / K=1 report	Bullying, perpetation K=7 articles / K=0 reports	Aspirations K=4 articles / K=1 report
Dental health K=2 articles / K=0 reports	Aspirations, school choice, post-school educational attainment K=6 articles / K=1 report	Coping strategies K=2 articles / K=0 reports	Attitudes to work K=0 articles / K=0 reports
Diet, eating behaviour K=5 articles / K=3 reports	Attitudes to school, school engagement, absenteeism K=8 articles / K=6 reports	Gambling, self-harm K=2 articles / K=0 reports	Concerns K=0 articles / K=0 reports
Handedness K=1 article / K=0 reports	Attitudes to school subjects K=2 articles / K=3 reports	Hobbies, interests K=6 articles / K=0 reports	Employment K=0 articles / K=1 report
Health status K=12 articles / K=4 reports	Childcare uptake K=2 articles / K=3 reports	Key relationships (e.g., with parents and peers) K=21 articles / K=10 reports	Experience of discrimination K=0 articles / K=0 reports

Philippe, K., Sloan, S., and Neville, R.D. (2025). *What we know from Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) 2008-2024: Key Well-being Factors for Children and Young People*. Department of Children, Disability and Equality

Literature Background: *Outcomes of perceived discrimination*

‘Review of reviews’ 29 lit reviews/meta-analyses (Williams et al 2019)

- Consistent effect on mental health & wellbeing
- Associated with poor general health, cardiovascular disease, high BMI, cortisol and hypertension, and poor health behaviours.

Meta-analyses of research on young people (Priest et al. 2013 Benner et al., 2018)

- Heightened anxiety, depression, & conduct problems in <18s
- Lower life satisfaction & self-esteem
- More harmful for adolescents given identity formation

Majority of studies US based, predominant focus on racism
Most studies **cross-sectional**, growing **longitudinal** literature

Data and methods

Growing Up in Ireland Cohort '98

- **Longitudinal cohort study** of young people in Ireland.
- Cohort '98 born in **1998** and surveyed for the first time in **2007** (age 9)



Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS)

*Based on the concept of discrimination as a **recurrent** part of everyday life (Essed, 1991) rather than single, decisive event*

In your day-to-day life, how often have any of the following things happened to you:

- You are treated with **less courtesy or respect** than other people
- You receive **poorer service** than other people at restaurants or stores
- People act as if you are **not smart**
- People act as if they are **afraid** of you
- You are **threatened or harassed**

Five-point response scale: “Almost Everyday” → “Never”

Reasons for discrimination

Those answering ‘**at least a few times a year**’ asked what they believe the main reason(s) for their experiences were

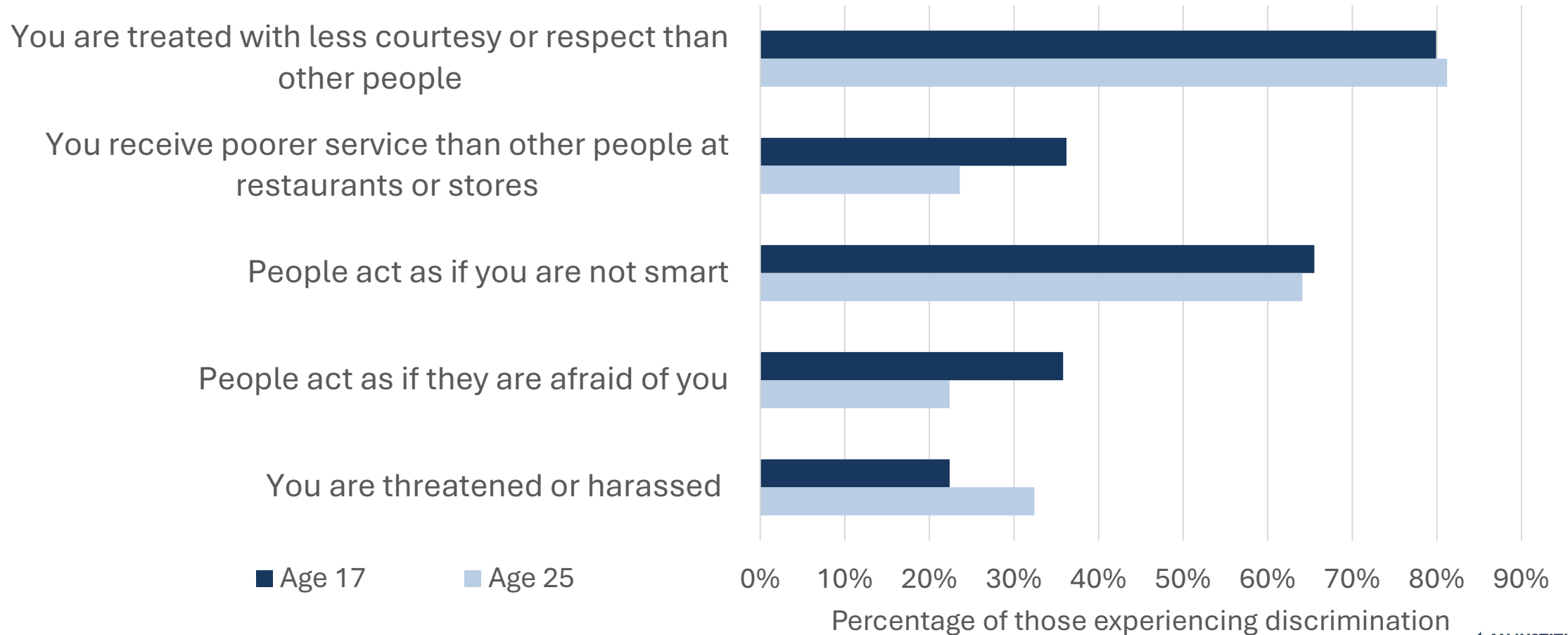
- Gender
- Race, skin colour
- Age
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Height, weight, other aspect of physical appearance
- Accent
- How well you speak English
- Education or income

Note that only some of these are protected grounds under equality legislation

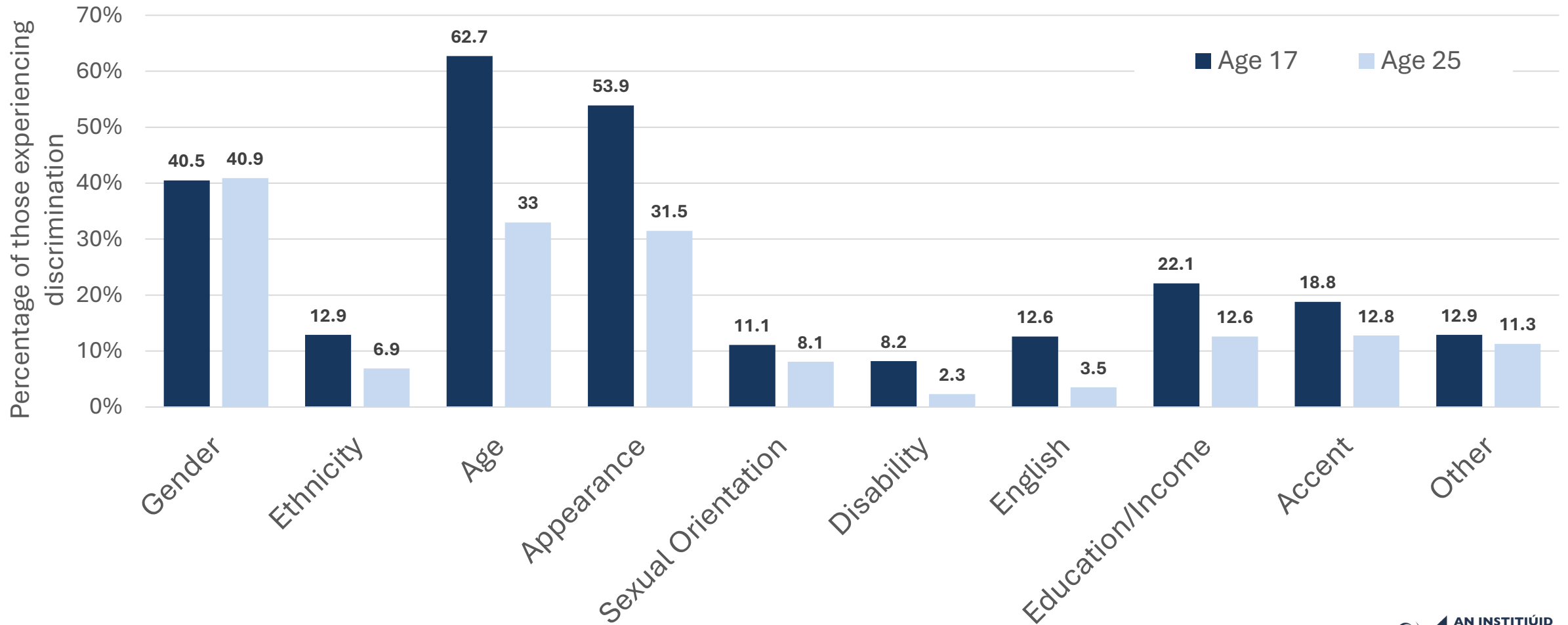
Results

Factors associated with reporting discrimination

Responses to categories on the Everyday Discrimination Scale at 17 and 25



Perceived grounds of discrimination at 17 and 25 years



Predictors of everyday discrimination score at age 17

Significantly higher scores (compared to reference group)

Male

Transgender

LGBA+

Disability

Irish Citizen

High amounts of time online

No time online

Predictors of everyday discrimination score at age 25

- **Significantly higher scores** (compared to reference category)

LGBA+

Disability

Minority Ethnicity

Higher scores at 17

Results

Relationship between discrimination and health and wellbeing



Meta-analysis

Schmitt et al. (2014), 320 effect sizes, 144k participants:

- lower wellbeing
- more depressive symptoms
- greater psychological distress

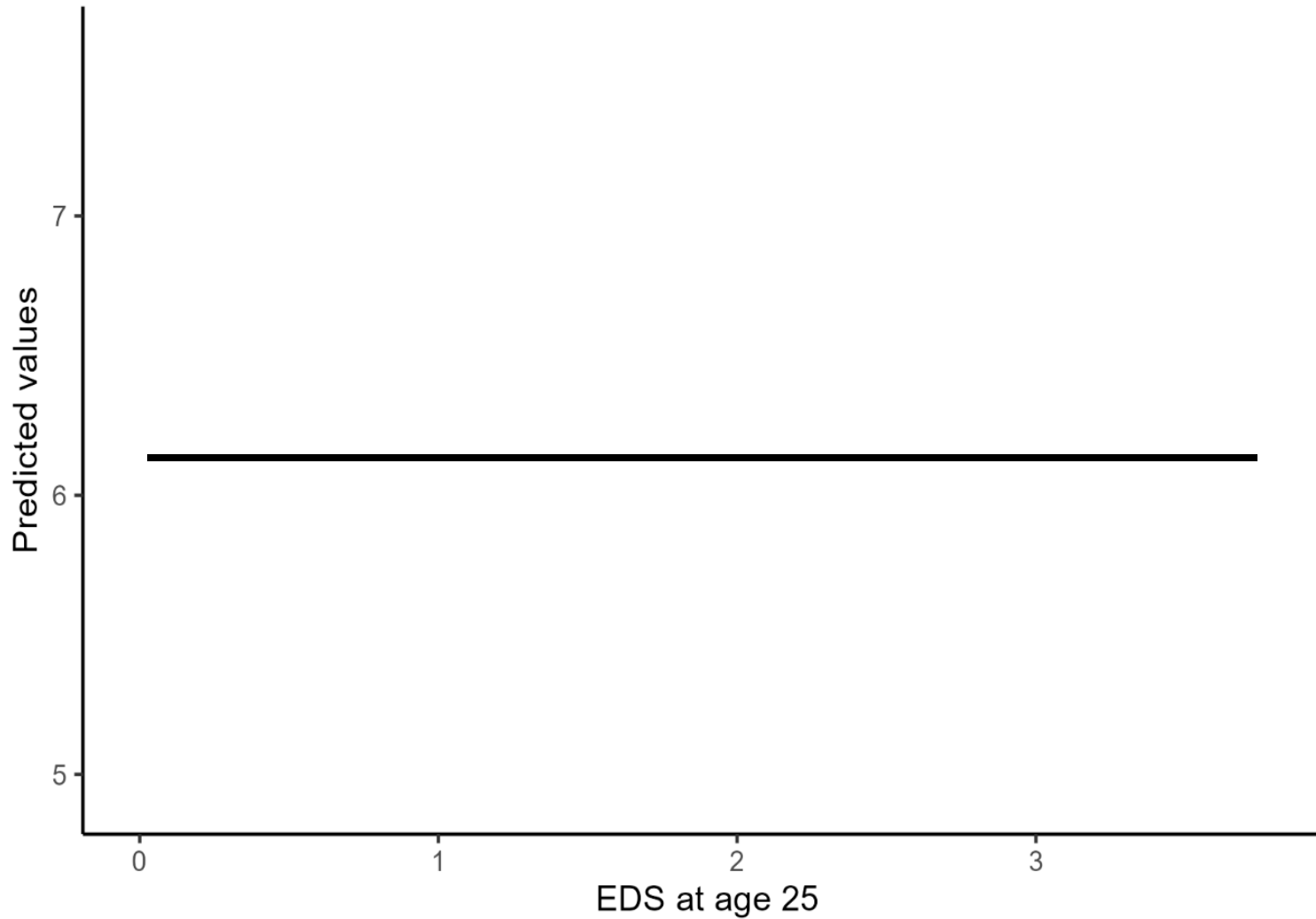
Our analysis

- Statistical models of EDS and health & wellbeing
- Control variables: Sex, Transgender, Sexual orientation, Religion, Citizenship, Time online, Ethnicity, Social-class background, Urban/Rural, Disability status
- Lagged dependent variable (Health and WB at 17)

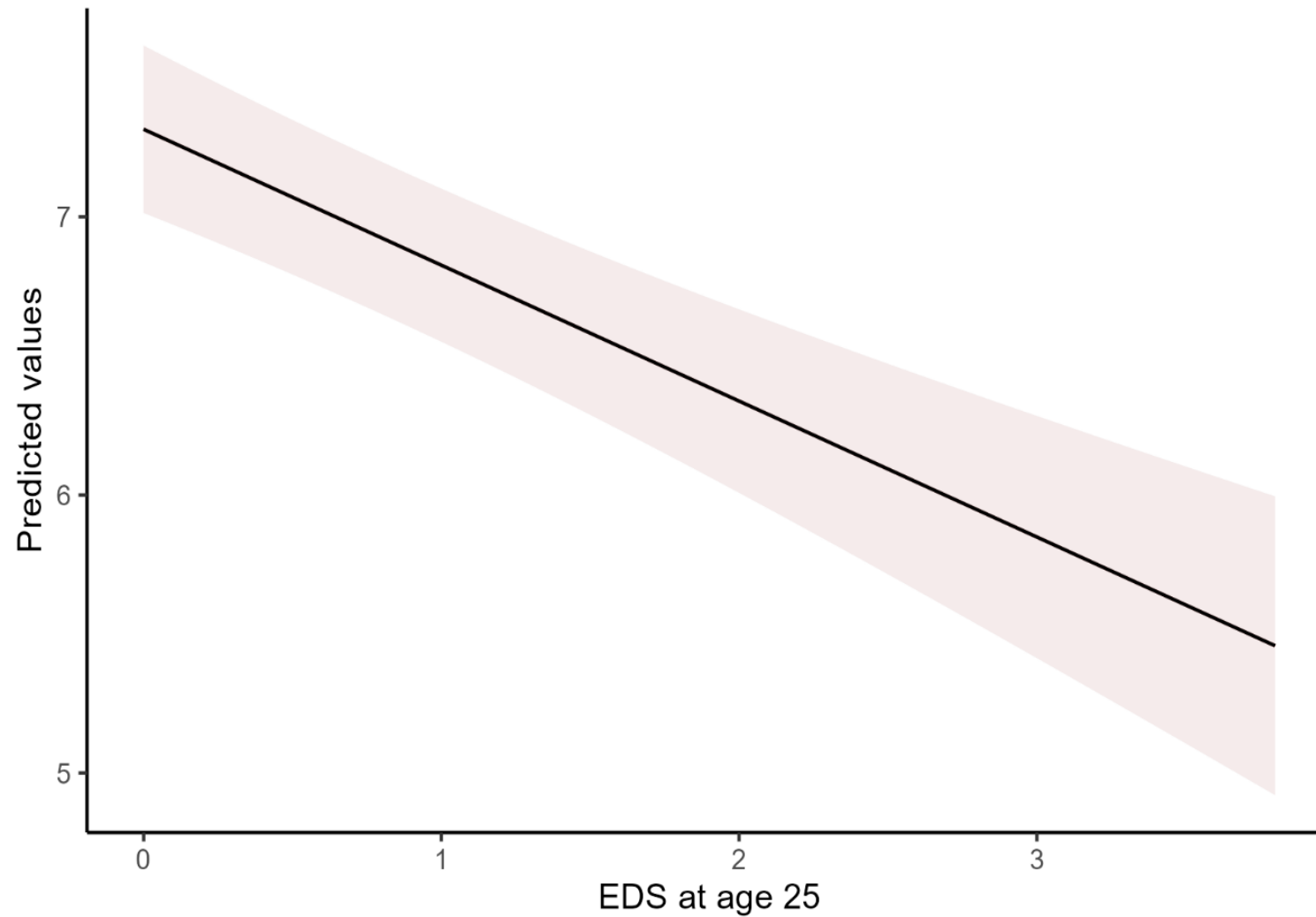
Life satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with life on an 11-point scale, where 0 is extremely unsatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied.

No-relationship hypothesis



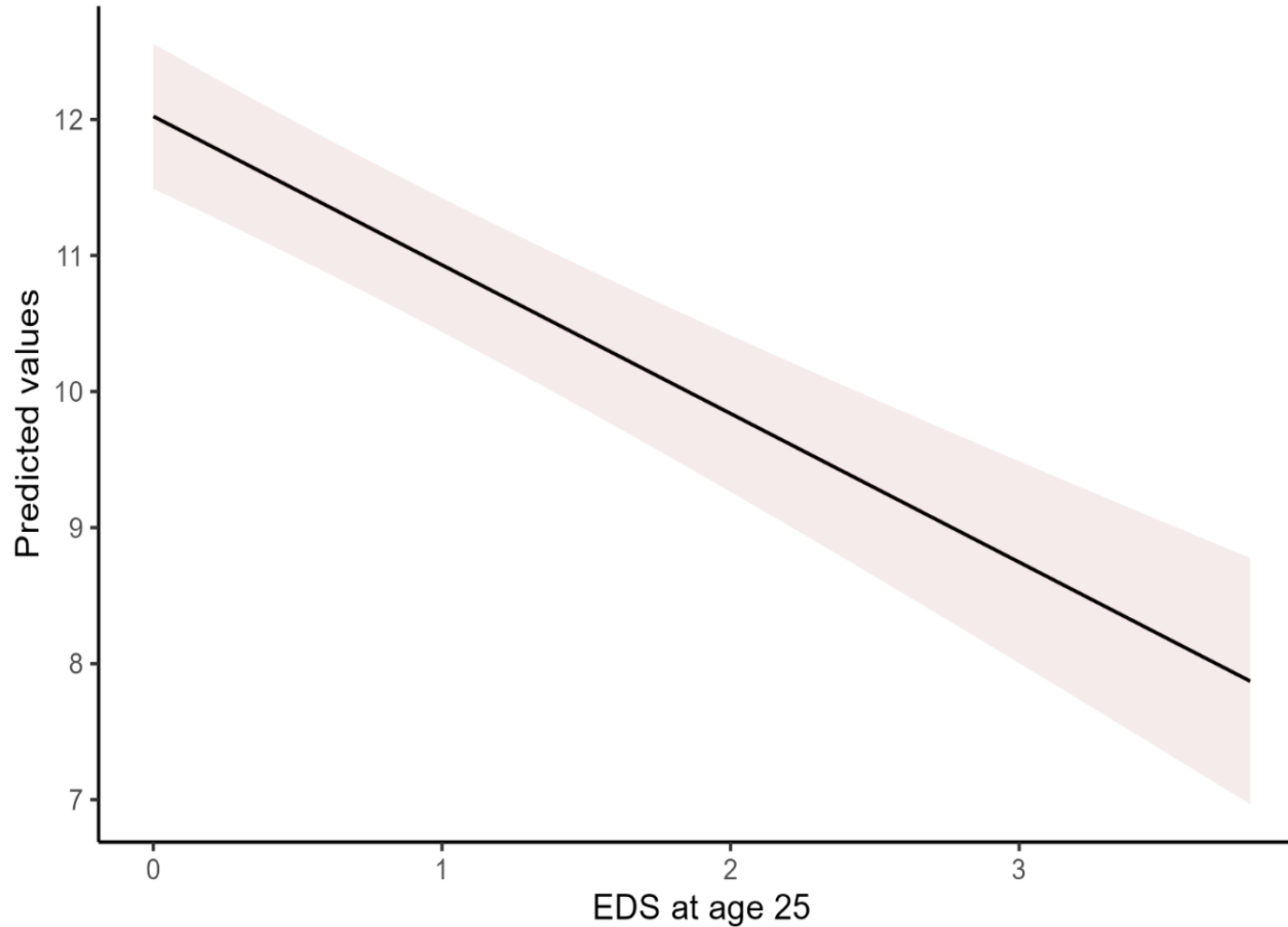
Life satisfaction



Self-esteem

This scale is composed of six items rated on four-point scales (strongly disagree – strongly agree). Examples of items include *‘I feel that I have a number of good qualities’*, and *‘I certainly feel useless sometimes’*. The final scale at age 25 varies from 0 to 18.

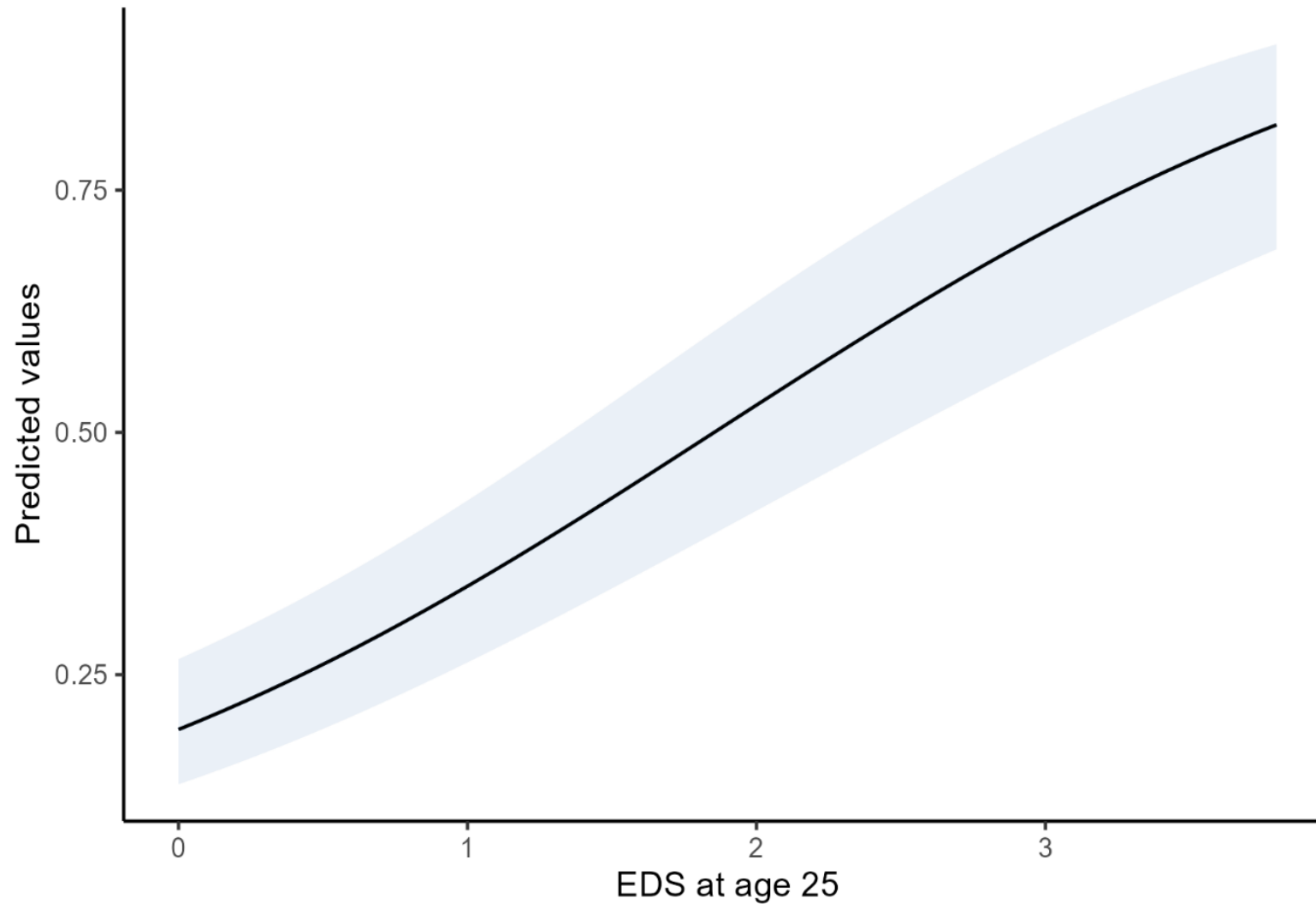
Self-esteem



Depression status

Measured using the Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) scale. The young person is asked to rate how frequently in the prior week they experienced different depression symptoms. A composite value of 7 or higher in the depression score is considered a 'clinically significant' level of psychological distress

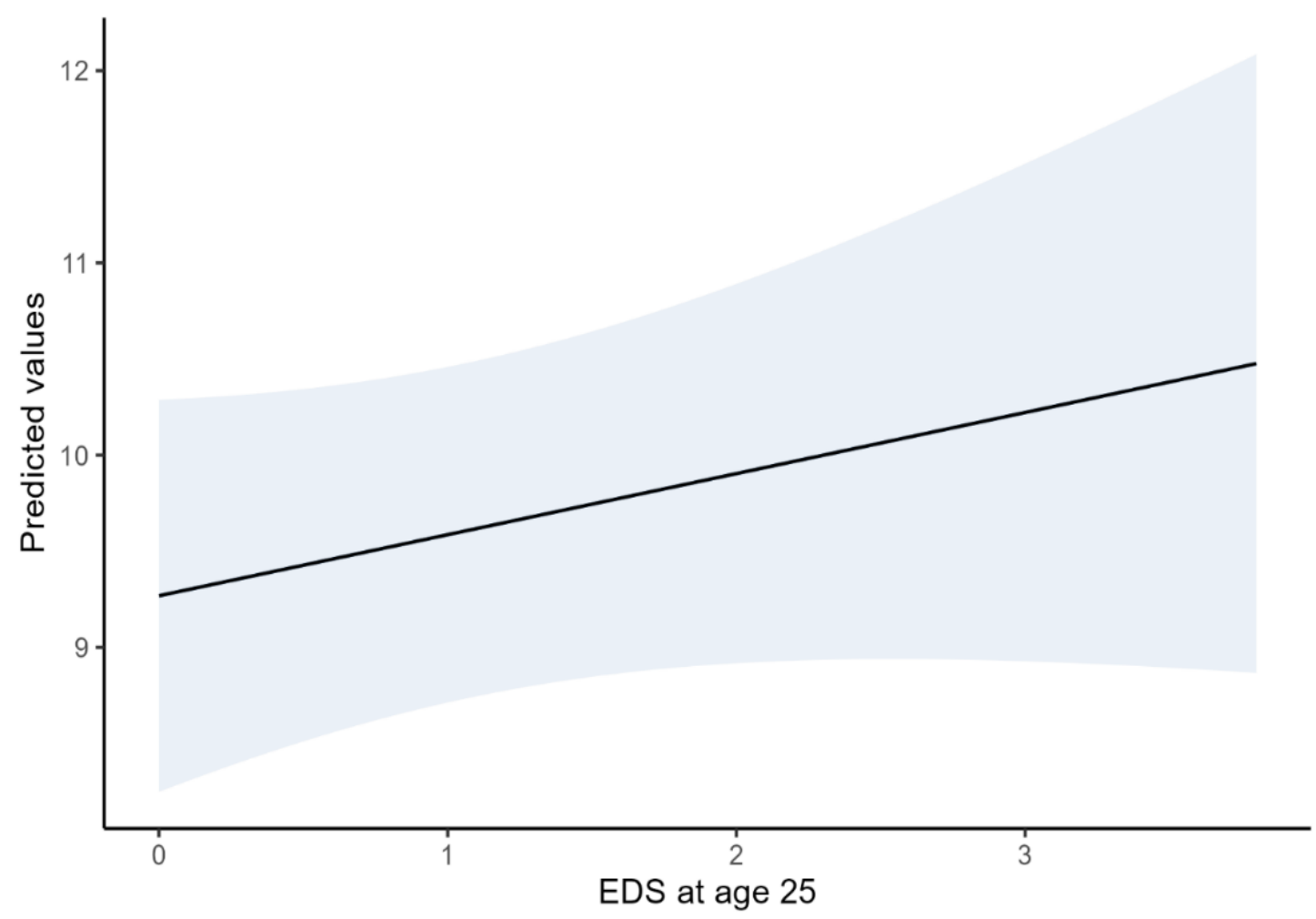
Depression status



AUDIT score

This is a 10-item screening tool for alcohol consumption. A total score of 20 or more may indicate alcohol dependence and scores of 8 or more are suggestive of strong likelihood of harmful alcohol consumption

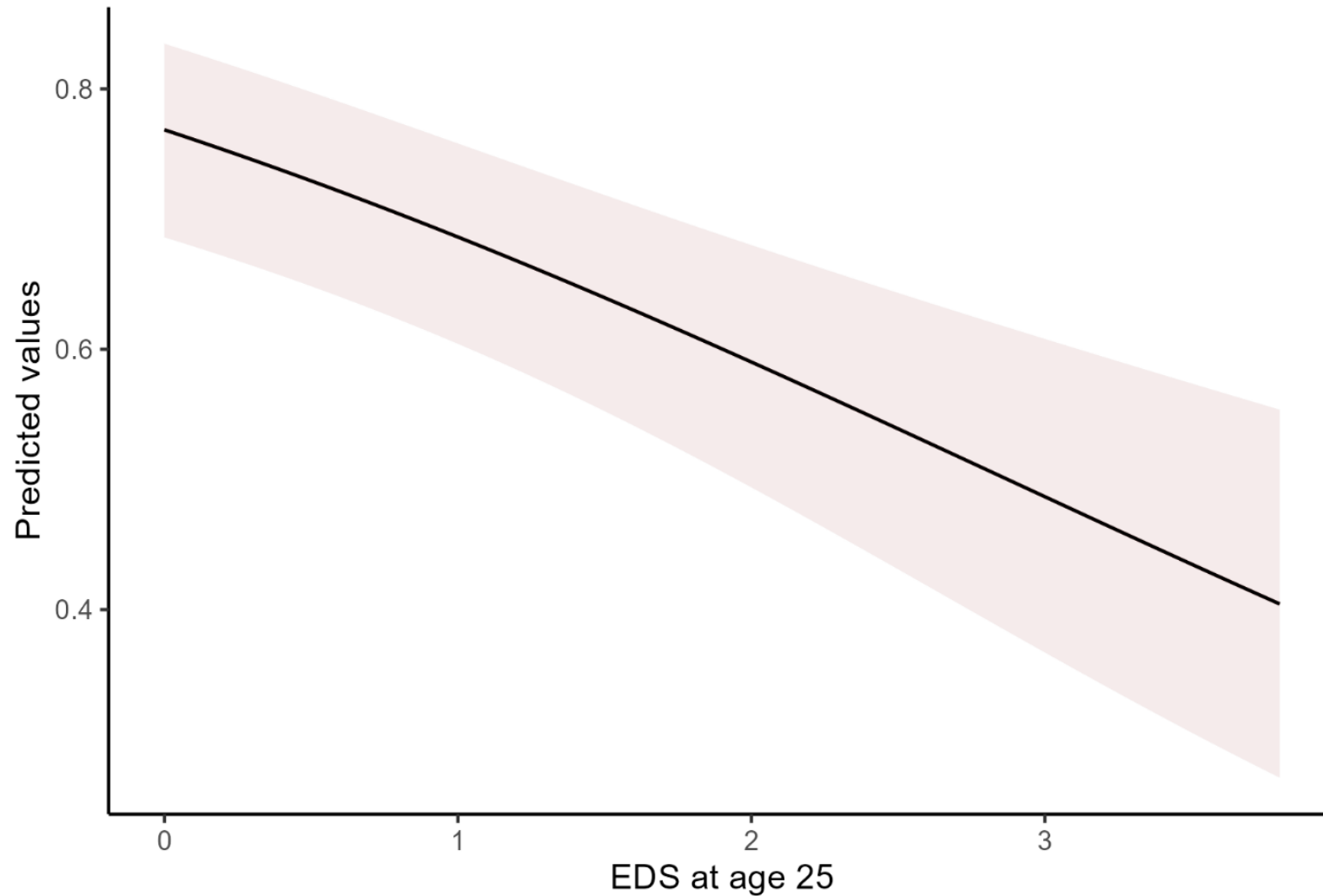
AUDIT score



General health

A scale of self-rated general health questions. Reference group is a combination of **'very good'** and **'excellent'**, which is compared against responses **'poor'**, **'fair'** and **'good'** combined.

Very good or excellent health



Discussion

Limitations

- **Self-reported measurement:** the results may in part reflect different propensities of individuals to assess the same situation in a different manner;
- findings should be considered alongside other evidence of discrimination using different designs and methodologies

Summary

- High prevalence of everyday discrimination and potential health and well-being consequences;
- Findings underline the importance of acknowledging and addressing discrimination in Irish society;

Discussion

- Direct measures to address discrimination include legal measures such as equality and hate crime legislation, but...
- Other research shows that **few cases of discrimination are reported through formal channels** and fewer still will be the subject of legal cases (EUFRA, 2024d)

Discussion

- There have been recent calls to add new grounds for discrimination to Irish legislation, including **socio-economic background**. The results presented in this report lend support to the call to include socio-economic status as a discrimination ground.

Discussion

- Policies at the organisational level are also important to prevent and address discrimination.
- Effective policies for work organisations include formalised recruitment, outreach activities to reach more marginalised groups, and mentoring and sponsorship within organisations

Discussion

- While **preventing discrimination should be the primary objective**, policy can also tackle the consequences. For example, extended wellbeing and mental health supports for young people is important

Discussion



National Action Plan Against Racism 2023–2027

National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024–2028

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025–2030

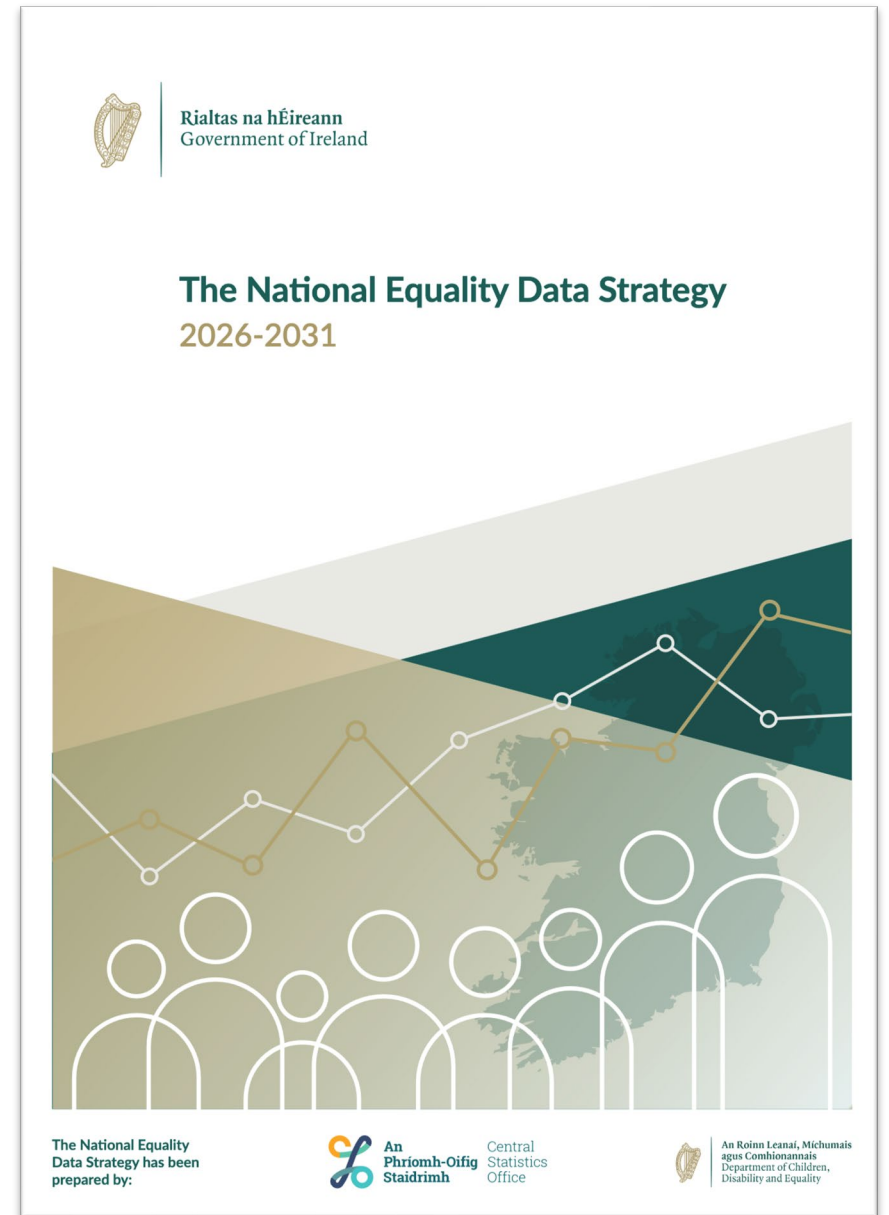
National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028.

Discussion

Evaluating the impact of the strategy measures is also crucial.

The availability of **quality data disaggregated by protected characteristics** (such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) and of discrimination is essential for monitoring outcomes



Thank you!

Daniel Capistrano – daniel.capistrano@esri.ie

Eva Slevin – eva.slevin@esri.ie

Helen Russell – helen.russell@esri.ie



ESRI.i



[Economic and Social Research Institute \(ESRI\)](#)



[Economic and Social Research Institute](#)



[@ESRI.ie](#)

[Sign up to our Newsletter](#)

Table 3.1 Predictors of everyday discrimination score at age 17

	All
	Coefficient
Sex (ref: male)	
Female	-0.151***
Transgender (ref: cisgender)	
Transgender	0.836*
Prefer not to say	0.382*
Sexual orientation (ref: heterosexual)	
LGBA+	0.242***
Don't know/prefer not to say	0.012
Disability status (ref: not disabled)	
LLC not hampered	0.043
Disability	0.197***
Religion (ref: Catholic)	
No religion	0.165***
Other religion	0.052
Citizenship (ref: Irish citizen)	
Not Irish citizen	-0.260*
Parent(s)' ethnicity (ref: white Irish)	
Either parent from ethnic minority	-0.171
One or both parents born in IE (ref)	
No parents born in IE	-0.115
Family class background (ref: professional/managerial)	
Non-manual	-0.063
Skilled manual	-0.037
Semi/unskilled	-0.015
No social class	-0.082
Time spent online weekdays (ref: >3 hrs online during weekdays)	
No time	0.357*
<1 hr	-0.215***
1-2 hrs	-0.155***
2-3 hrs	-0.113*
Don't know but >0	0.022
Constant	1.351***
Observations	6064
Adjusted R-squared	0.055

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohort '98 Data Wave 3. Authors' analysis. Weight used is cross-sectional weight at 17.

Notes: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

Table 3.2 Predictors of Everyday Discrimination Scale scores at age 25

	Coefficient
Sex at 17 (ref: male)	
Female	0.075
Transgender status at 17 (ref: cisgender)	
Transgender	-0.047
Prefer not to say	-0.033
Sexuality (ref: heterosexual)	
LGBA+	0.134*
Don't know/prefer not to say	-0.182
Disability status (ref: no disability)	
LLC not hampered	-0.024
Disability hampered	0.273***
Religion (ref: Catholic)	
No religion	-0.066
Other religion	0.029
Citizenship (ref: Irish citizen)	
Not Irish citizen	0.117
Ethnicity (ref: white Irish)	
White other	-0.125
Ethnic minority	0.385*
Missing	0.208
Social class (ref: professional/managerial)	
Non-manual	-0.028
Skilled manual	-0.094
Semi/unskilled	-0.14
No social class	0.109
Urban rural status (ref: urban)	
Rural	-0.051
Urban status missing	0.129
Time spent online for leisure (ref: over 3 hrs)	
<1 hr	0.125
1–2 hrs	0.068
2–3 hrs	0.029
EDS score at 17	0.340***
Constant	0.565***
Observations	1794
Adjusted R-squared	0.173

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohort '98 Data Wave 5. Authors' analysis. Weighted using longitudinal weights at 25. Transgender status and sex is measured at 17.

Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Table 4.1 Coefficients/odds ratios of the models for all health and wellbeing outcomes at 25

	General health	Life sat	Self-esteem	Depress score	Depress status	AUDIT score
Characteristic	OR	Beta	Beta	Beta	OR	Beta
(Intercept)	0.17***	5.5***	7.8***	1.6***	0.09***	8.3***
EDS score 25	0.66***	-0.49***	-1.1***	1.7***	2.16***	0.32*
Health 17	2.11***					
Life sat 17		0.23***				
Self-esteem 17			0.38***			
Depression 17				0.21***	1.11***	
AUDIT score 17						0.35***
Sex at 17 (ref: male)						
Female	0.92	0.16*	-0.23	0.78***	1.46***	-1.4***
Transgender status at 17 (ref: cisgender)						
Transgender	0.64	0.28	1.2	-2.6*	0.34	0.83
Prefer not to say	0.77	0.45	0.23	-0.74	0.4	-2.2
Sexual orientation (ref: heterosexual)						
LGBA+	0.50***	-0.47***	-0.58**	0.87***	1.58**	0.98**
DK/prefer not to say	0.49*	0.51	0.24	-0.58	0.81	-2.8*
Religion (ref: Catholic)						
No religion	0.94	0.1	0.35*	0.12	1.02	-0.04
Other	0.49**	0.05	0.68	0.1	0.81	-2.5***
Religion missing	1.16	0.17	0	0	0.92	-0.11
Citizenship at 17 (ref: Irish citizen)						
Not Irish citizen	1.53	0.1	2.6***	-2.4*	0.23	-1.9
Time online outside of work (ref >3 hrs)						
<1 hr	1.18	0.32	0.51	-1.6***	0.25***	-1.1
1-2 hrs	2.22***	0.34***	0.75***	-1.2***	0.54***	-1.1***
2-3 hrs	1.49***	0.28**	0.64***	-0.92***	0.60***	-0.53*
Ethnicity (ref: white Irish)						
White other	1.27	-0.12	-1.3*	0.66	1.47	-1.6
Ethnic minority	2.89**	-0.03	0.13	1	1.18	1.7
Ethnicity missing	2.67	-1.8***	-3.5***	1.2	2.04	-0.23
Social class background (ref: professional/managerial)						
Non-manual	1.06	-0.08	-0.16	-0.01	0.77	0.01
Skilled manual	0.60**	0	0.43*	-0.4	0.54***	-2.1***
Semi/unskilled	0.48***	-0.2	-0.33	0.65*	1.25	-0.38
No social class	0.71*	-0.11	-0.19	0.02	1	-2.5***
Urban/rural status (ref: urban)						
Rural	1.19	0.07	0.13	-0.05	1	-0.52*
Urban missing	0.89	-0.14	0	0.12	0.93	-1.3***
Disability status (ref: no disability)						
LLC not hampered		-0.04	-0.15	0.36	1.34	0.35
Disability hampered		-1.0***	-1.7***	3.5***	4.57***	-0.79**

Source: GUI Cohort '98, Waves 3 and 5.

Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Variables measured at age 25 unless otherwise stated. Abbreviations: CI = confidence interval, OR = odds ratio, LLC = long-lasting condition.