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Submission to the Anti-Racism Committee for the Development of a National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR)

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INTRODUCTION

The marked increase in immigration that accompanied the economic boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s brought considerable ethnic and national diversity to Ireland, though the Irish Traveller minority group has always been present. The development of a National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) is timely and important in order for Ireland to respond to growing concerns about racism and discrimination in Irish society, including in the labour market, education, housing and health. This submission collates relevant research findings on the attitudinal context, incidence and experience of racism and discrimination in Ireland, as well as on changing attitudes within wider society. The focus is on minority ethnic groups, supplemented at times by information on national or immigrant minorities, as the groups overlap. In particular, ESRI research informs themes 3 and 4 of the public consultation: Employment, education, health, and accommodation; and inclusion and participation. Critical data challenges are discussed along with key future priorities for data collection, including the importance of monitoring the future anti-racism strategy.

THEME 3 – EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ACCOMMODATION

Employment

In terms of employment, research suggests disadvantage and discrimination are most pronounced for the Black ethnic group and for Irish Travellers. Data from the 2016 Census reveals that the unemployment rate among Black respondents was high relative to other groups, though unemployment rates among Irish Travellers, at 80%, were highest of all the groups measured (McGinnity et al., 2021).

Considering both ethnicity and nationality, the Black non-Irish group is much less likely to be employed (0.4 times as likely) than White Irish, and they are also much less likely (0.3 times as likely) to hold a managerial/professional job than White Irish (McGinnity et al, 2018a).[1] The Black ethnic group also report higher rates of discrimination in recruitment than White Irish, White EU nationals and the Asian ethnic group, with the 'other/mixed' ethnic group in an intermediate position (McGinnity et al., 2018a). This is particularly true of Black non-Irish, who are five times more likely to report recruitment discrimination than White Irish. Irish Travellers report the highest recruitment discrimination – 10 times that of White Irish (McGinnity et al., 2017).

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[1] This research is based on data from CSO Equality modules in 2004, 2010 and 2014.

ESRI field experiment research conducted in 2009 showed that job applicants with Irish names are over twice as likely to be invited to interview as candidates with identifiably non-Irish names, even when both submit equivalent CVs. African, Asian or German applicants are around half as likely to be invited to interview as Irish candidates (McGinnity et al, 2009).

For some of the Black ethnic group, higher unemployment rates may be related to having come to Ireland seeking international protection: McGinnity et al., (2020a) find that migrants with a high probability of having come through the international protection system are more likely to be unemployed.[2] These findings indicate that migrants who came to Ireland to seek protection may need greater supports in order to integrate to the labour market integration, which is consistent with calls from UNHCR Ireland (2014) for increased supports for this group.

In the workplace, all non-White ethnic minorities (and some White non-Irish groups) report more discrimination in the workplace than White Irish – with Black non-Irish experiencing the highest rate of discrimination (McGinnity et al., 2018a).[3] This, along with evidence of recruitment discrimination, suggests a need for both government and employer-led policies to monitor, prevent and respond to incidences of discrimination in recruitment and in the workplace.

Education

While many foreign-born ethnic minority groups have relatively high levels of education, the importance of qualifications acquired abroad being recognised in Ireland has also been highlighted in research on migrant labour market integration. While Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) helps non-Irish nationals to have their qualifications recognised, it is crucial that awareness of this system is promoted among both immigrants and employers to prevent skills being underutilised and facilitate occupational mobility. Programmes that allow migrants to acquire and develop skills relevant to the Irish labour market, including English, should complement efforts to ensure recognition of qualifications, to address the disadvantage migrants may experience and ensure occupational progression (McGinnity et al, 2020a).

The situation is stark for Irish Travellers: in 2011, only 8% of Travellers aged 25-64 had completed education to Leaving Certificate level (Watson et al., 2017).[4] Education also plays a big role in understanding the low employment rates of this group: if Travellers and non-Travellers had the same characteristics in terms of education, age and other characteristics, the employment rate of Travellers would be just under two times lower (instead of the observed 6 times lower), though clearly additional barriers in the labour market remain.

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[2] Reason for migration is not included in the Census data so researchers use a measure based on a migrant's country of origin and flows of protection applicants from that country to estimate their probability of having come through the protection system.
[3] Travellers are not included in estimates of workplace discrimination as there are not enough of them in the workplace.
[4] Among younger adults, those in the 25–34, the figures are 9 per cent of Travellers had completed the Leaving Cert and 86 per cent of non-Travellers.

Health

The health situation of Travellers is an ongoing concern. The gap in poor health between Travellers and non-Travellers is smaller in childhood and early adulthood it increases very rapidly after the age of 35 (Watson et al, 2017). In the 55–64 age group, the adjusted gap in poor health was 28 percentage points (50 per cent of Travellers reporting poor health versus 22 per cent of non-Travellers).

More recent ESRI research has found that, based on available data until November 24th 2020, Irish Travellers, the Black ethnic group and the Asian ethnic group were more vulnerable to COVID infection than White Irish, making up a higher proportion of COVID cases compared to their proportion in the population (Enright et al., 2020).[5] Up to that point, the available evidence suggested that these ethnic minority groups were less vulnerable to deaths from COVID-19 than the Irish population, possibly linked to their younger age profile.

Housing and community

ESRI research finds that over half of non-Irish nationals in 2017/2018 lived in private rented accommodation, compared to 11% of Irish people (McGinnity et al, 2020b). This implies a much greater vulnerability of the group to current problems of affordability and security of tenure in the private rented market (see also Grotti et al. 2018). The first housing discrimination field experiment in Ireland by Gusciute et al (2020) found that Polish and Nigerian house-hunters were significantly less likely to be called for a viewing than Irish applicants, with Nigerians experiencing greater discrimination than Polish applicants in the private rented market. Irish Travellers were 11 times more likely to report discrimination accessing housing than the settled community, even after controlling for other factors (Grotti et al., 2018).

Some non-Irish and minority ethnic groups are also overrepresented in the homeless population, in particular the Black ethnic group and Irish Travellers. While Irish Travellers represent less than 1% of the 2016 total population, they make up 9% of the homeless population. The Black ethnic group made up 11 per cent of the homeless population in 2016 but only 1.4 per cent of the total population.

In terms of housing quality, 12 per cent of Travellers live in a caravan or mobile home, while 56 per cent live in overcrowded accommodation (Watson et al., 2017). Forthcoming research will look at housing including overcrowding among minority ethnic groups.

Bearing in mind research findings that the positive interactions between different ethnic groups lead to more positive attitudes, facilitating positive and meaningful social contact between immigrants, ethnic minorities and the general population is likely to foster integration (McGinnity et al., 2018a). By extension, avoiding residential segregation and ghettos may be helpful. Using 2016 Census data, Fahey et al. (2019) find that immigrants in Ireland are fairly evenly distributed

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[5] COVID-19 cases and death numbers in this report are based on data as of 25 November 2020 for events created on CIDR (Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting) up to midnight on Tuesday 24 November 2020. This was matched to data from Census of Population 2016 by CSO.

across neighbourhoods in Ireland and immigrants overall tend to live in more affluent areas, though migrants with poor language proficiency are concentrated in a smaller number of areas.[6]

THEME 4 – INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

Racism may be covert and difficult to detect. ESRI research carried out in 2020 reveals the gap between what people say in public about their attitudes to minorities in Ireland, and what they say when afforded anonymity. Whereas 66 per cent of people openly supported more Black people coming to Ireland, this dropped to 51 per cent when respondents could conceal their attitude. Fewer people openly supported more Muslim immigration, with no evidence that people conceal their attitudes (McGinnity et al, 2020c).

Other ESRI research finds a 'hierarchy of support for different immigrant groups: openly expressed support for Muslim and Roma immigration is lower in Ireland than support for immigrants from the same ethnic group as most Irish people: support for these two groups is also lower than the average for the ten Western European countries presented. A total of 17% of Irish people believes that some races/ethnic groups were born less intelligent, which represents a rate of openly-expressed racial superiority slightly above the West European average (McGinnity et al, 2018).

DATA AND RESEARCH NEEDS

Monitoring is a key component of any anti-racism strategy, to document the extent of disadvantage and discrimination, to motivate measures to combat it and monitor their effectiveness. A key limitation in the evidence base in Ireland on ethnic minority outcomes is that ethnicity is rarely measured, on either survey data or administrative data (Fahey et al., 2019).[7] What does this mean? It means we know nothing about the wages, working conditions, income, poverty rates, deprivation, self-rated health of ethnic minorities. It means we are limited in ability to report on the situation of ethnic minorities to International human rights monitoring bodies such as the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (McGinnity et al., 2021). In the labour market, an ethnic identifier on the labour force survey would considerably enhance our understanding of how ethnic minorities fare in the Irish labour market.

Ethnicity is also rarely measured on administrative data sources. Administrative data record all recipients of a given training course, medical treatment, or examination outcome, for example, and if ethnicity is recorded, this allows monitoring of both participation and outcomes. An ethnic identifier more widely used would considerably enhance the potential to monitor and tackle racism and discrimination. The linking of survey data with administrative data – for example, in numerous frontier publications by the by the Central Statistics Office (CSO)- offer great potential in terms of measuring equality outcomes.[8]

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[6] No analysis of residential segregation among ethnic minority groups has been conducted.
[7] There are important exceptions in survey data (Census, Growing up in Ireland data) yet ethnicity does not feature on regular social surveys in Ireland.
[8] For example see: https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/health/aprofileofcovid-19inireland usingcensus2016householddatatoanalysecovid-19cases/

CONCLUSIONS

Varying attitudes to different ethnic minorities in Ireland highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring of attitudes to migrants as an indicator of the social context for migrant integration and of social cohesion in Ireland. This will be particularly important considering the likely economic aftershock of the pandemic, the effects of which may coincide with increased negative attitudes towards immigrants in Ireland.

The dissemination of accurate information may have an important role to play in informing the public about the immigrant population in Ireland, about their unemployment and poverty rates, educational qualifications, and other outcomes. Information can also be used to document the variability of the immigrant population in Ireland, to counter the perception that immigrants are a homogenous group.

Any successful anti-racism strategy will need the support of many, not few – policymakers, employers, co-workers, service providers, carers, to name but a few. Racism and discrimination can happen at all levels of society, from micro-interactions between a few people to government policy decisions impacting many, in publics settings and in private settings. Anti-racism measures need to operate at multiple levels too, and they need widespread support.

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