

# RACE EQUALITY

**IN THE HIGHER  
EDUCATION  
SECTOR**

**ANALYSIS COMMISSIONED BY THE  
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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**HEA** | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

### **The Higher Education Authority (HEA)**

The Higher Education Authority (HEA), established under the Higher Education Authority Act (1971), is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland, in respect of which it advises the Government and the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The HEA is responsible for the allocation of Exchequer funding to the Universities, Technological Universities, Institutes of Technology and to other institutions designated under legislation.

This role encompasses the development and implementation of policy across all aspects of the mission of higher education, the main dimensions of which are teaching, learning, research, and engagement. Maintaining a watch on developments in higher education nationally and internationally, the HEA provides high-quality, evidence-based policy advice while also performing an advocacy role on behalf of the Irish higher education sector.

### **National Online Survey: Race Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions**

The HEA has a statutory responsibility to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education (HE). The HEA is committed to addressing racial inequalities in higher education and to supporting Irish Higher education institutions (HEIs) to create an inclusive culture and environment where individuals are able to thrive, irrespective of their ethnic background.

As part of the HEA's ongoing work in the area of staff equality, diversity and inclusion, further to the collection of data on HEI staff by gender, from 2020 HEIs are requested to return staff ethnicity data to the HEA. In this context, the Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group was established in 2019 by the National Committee for Athena SWAN in Ireland with an initial goal to develop a cross-sectoral approach to collecting data on staff and student ethnicity in the Irish higher education sector. The group is open to staff members from HEIs with academic or professional expertise in this area as well as representatives from the HEA.

In 2020, the working group produced a statement (see Appendix 2) to provide staff in HEIs with information on the rationale for collecting ethnicity data and the complexities of categorisation. The statement also provides some context for race equality work in higher education, as well as recommended actions for HEIs to consider. The statement has been endorsed by 25 HEIs, as well as by the Irish Universities Association and the Technological Higher Education Association.

In late 2020/early 2021, the HEA conducted a national survey of HEI staff to develop a picture of race equality across the Irish higher education sector. For the purposes of the survey, race equality was defined as ‘equal representation, equal experiences and equal outcomes of staff from minority ethnic groups’. The survey was developed by the HEA Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, in collaboration with the Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group.

The HEA ran the national online survey on race equality in HEIs from December 8th 2020 until January 31st 2021. All staff working in HEIs in the Republic of Ireland, regardless of ethnic background or nationality, were invited to participate. 3,323 staff in Irish HEIs responded to the survey. As the aim of the survey was to capture the lived experience of HEI staff in relation to race equality, a number of open questions were used in the survey, leading to 6,536 individual open text responses to the survey. The survey results are collated here to provide an overall picture of race equality across the Irish higher education sector and to help to identify areas for improvement, as well as ways to make those improvements.

## Survey Data

While some of the questions in this survey have fixed answers, we have included as many open text boxes as possible, to give respondents an opportunity to detail their own experience of race equality in Irish HE. Staff have not been asked for names or contact details, but to understand answers in more context participants were asked to provide some personal demographic information as part of this survey. The amount of information provided is up to participants. Where a participant did not wish to disclose information, they had the option to choose the ‘prefer not to say’ option. No data was collected in relation to institutional affiliation and no information relating to individual responses will be shared with HEIs.

The survey adopted the most recent revision of ethnicity categories for the Census 2022. [[https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census\\_Pilot\\_Survey\\_Report\\_2018\\_V1.pdf](https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census_Pilot_Survey_Report_2018_V1.pdf)] (see page 15). The invitation to identify one’s ethnicity in the census has largely involved a mix of physical characteristics or race (White, Black, Asian etc), subcategorised by nationality e.g., Irish, Chinese, and in the case of Irish Travellers, further subcategorised by a specific ethnic identifier. The 2022 categories also include the grouping Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi as a subcategory of ‘Asian’ for the first time. The Census categories were adopted explicitly to allow for comparison.

All data collected through this survey is held securely and confidentially, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018. The data will not be used for any purpose other than providing an overall picture of race equality across the Irish higher education sector.

We understand the collection of staff and student ethnicity data to be central to the implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, deriving from section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act (2014). Under this Act, all public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must undertake assessment and monitoring, and have policies and plans to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect the human rights of staff, students, and the wider public that are served by the work of HEIs. The HEA has a legal obligation under The Higher Education Act (1971) to promote equality in the higher education sector.

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# 1 Demographics of Respondents

This section will present the demographics of the respondents, focusing on respondents' ethnic backgrounds, nationality, gender, and socio-economic data. We will also justify our methodological choices in relation to analysis of the quantitative data.

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## Ethnicity

The largest group of respondents (72%) described their ethnicity as White Irish. Nearly a fifth (17.5%) described themselves as of White Other background. A further 8.6% described themselves using other ethnic categories. Asian (Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi) were 1.7%, Black African were 1.4% and Mixed background were 1.7%. Asian Chinese, any other Asian background, any other Black background, Arabic, Irish Traveller and Roma were less than 1% each. Those who described themselves as Other made up 1%.

Ethnicity of respondents has been recorded using CSO categories from the 2016 Census.<sup>1</sup> Ethnic data is not available for the total population of HEI staff in Ireland at present. White Irish are underrepresented in this survey compared to the Census figures (82 compared to 72%), while White Other are almost double (17.4 compared to 9.8%). Other ethnicities are broadly similar overall to the national figures (5.6 compared to 7.7%). Less than 2% of respondents in this survey preferred not to state their ethnic origin, similar to census figures.

While the response rates by ethnicity broadly reflect national ethnicity demographic data as reported by the CSO, comparative data for the HE sector is not currently available. To date, the HEA has not collected statistics on staff by ethnicity but, at the recommendation of the Athena SWAN Intersectionality Working Group, has begun to request such data from HEIs where available. The first set of returns, provides an incomplete dataset and is therefore not appropriate for comparative purposes in this context. It is hoped as institutional recording systems become more mature in relation to staff ethnicity that a fuller national dataset will be available.

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<sup>1</sup> In line with Statement by the National Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group on the Use of Ethnicity Categories in Irish Higher Education (May 2020), ethnicity data is collected here with the explicit purpose of recognising and tackling institutionalised racism and advancing equality in higher education, and for comparability purposes with CSO figures, the HEA use CSO categorisations of ethnicity to conduct this work. See appendix 2 or <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2020/07/Intersectionality-WG-Statement-on-Ethnicity-Categories-in-Irish-HE.pdf>

**Table 1.1: Ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White Irish	2389	71.9%
White Other	580	17.5%
Asian or Asian Irish: Chinese, Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Any other Asian background	104	3.1%
Black or Black Irish: African, Any other Black background	57	1.7%
Other including mixed group/background: Mixed Background, Arabic, Other	110	3.3%
Irish Traveller and Roma	15	0.5%
Prefer not to say	68	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3323</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

For the purpose of our quantitative analysis, and to facilitate comparison with Census results, we have created 3 categories of White Irish, White Other and minority ethnic groups (including Irish Traveller). These were matched as closely as possible with protected characteristics under Irish law and policy. White Other includes all those who are another nationality, but who describe themselves as White. Minority ethnic groups have been analysed individually in the preparation of this report, and are presented as a single category in this report due to small overall numbers for comparison with other categories. Race equality measures can and do include people of migrant as well as racialised backgrounds, and therefore the White Other category is of interest alongside minority ethnic groups throughout the report.

11% of respondents considered themselves to be from a minority ethnic background when asked if they self-identified this way. As percentages of each ethnicity category, this included 85% of those we have categorised as being from minority ethnic groups based on the ethnic categories they selected, 14% of respondents of White Other background, and less than 1% of White Irish respondents. This result demonstrates some mixed feeling about self-identification as ethnic minority. This categorisation is not used for any other statistical analysis in this report.

## **Nationality**

The majority of respondents described their nationality as Irish (71%), while 9% described themselves as Irish and another nationality (dual nationality).<sup>2</sup> 12% were nationals from within the EU (other than Ireland) and the UK, and 6% from outside the EU and UK.

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of dual nationals is significantly higher than in the 2016 Census, which showed just 2.2% of the population of Ireland held both Irish and another nationality.



Of those identifying as White Other, 60% were of EU/UK nationalities, 20% of dual Irish and another nationalities, and 15% of non-EU/UK nationalities. Of those identifying with other ethnic categories, excluding Irish Traveller (all of whom are of Irish nationality), 40% were of Irish or dual Irish/other nationalities, 16% of EU/UK nationalities and 42% of non-EU/UK nationalities.

**Table 1.2: Nationality**

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Irish	2373	71.4%
Dual nationality/citizenship (Irish/non Irish)	307	9.2%
From within the EU (other than Ireland) and the UK	403	12.1%
From outside the EU	214	6.4%
Prefer not to say	26	0.8%
Total	3323	100.0%

## Gender

Of the 3,323 respondents to the survey, 61% were female, 37% were male, 1% were non-binary, and less than 1% identified as Other or preferred not to say. 98% of respondents had the same gender as assigned at the time of birth, 1% preferred not to say, and 1% had a different gender than the one assigned at the time of birth.

## Institutional Affiliation

Ethnic diversity varies significantly by institution type in this study. Within the Universities or Technological Universities, 68% of respondents were White Irish, 21% White Other, and 9% from minority ethnic groups. College respondents were 68% White Irish, 17% White Other and 13% from minority ethnic groups. Respondents from Institutes of Technology were much less ethnically diverse, with 87% White Irish, 9% White Other, and 3% from minority ethnic groups.

## Area of Work / Academic Discipline

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the sector they worked in, and if in Academic roles, which discipline. More than half of respondents (52%) worked in Academic (teaching and research) roles, 35% worked in Professional, Managerial and Support Services (PMSS) roles, 6% worked in Research only roles, and 4% worked in Technical Support roles. The majority of

respondents employed within Professional, Managerial and Support Services were White Irish (83%) with 12% White Other, and 4% from minority ethnic groups. Research Fellow roles had the lowest percentage of White Irish (43%), compared to 39% White Other and 19% from minority ethnic groups. This raises a question about the proportion of employees from minority ethnic groups in this study on temporary contracts compared to other groups. We will come back to this in the section that discusses respondents' contract types.

Respondents from minority ethnic groups were 4 times more likely to be employed in Academic roles than in Research Centre or Research Fellow roles, and 3 times more likely than in Professional, Managerial and Support Services. They were slightly more likely to be employed within Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences than other disciplines. White Other respondents were least likely to work in Business and Law amongst the various disciplines. White Irish respondents were well spread across all disciplines, but particularly strongly represented in Business and Law.

**Table 1.3: Disciplinary area**

Disciplinary area	White Irish	White Other	Minority ethnic groups	Total %
Academic: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	63	23	11	100
Academic: Business and Law	80	10	7	100
Academic: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics	68	21	9	100
Academic: Medicine and Health	72	19	8	100
Research Centre/ Institute	52	24	22	100
Research Fellow	42	39	19	100
Professional, Managerial and Support Services	83	12	4	100
Technical Support	75	15	7	100
Prefer not to say	68	13	8	100
Other	68	23	9	100
Total	72	18	8	100

## Role by Pay Grade

Respondents earning less than 30,000 Euro a year were relatively equally likely to come from White Irish, White Other and minority ethnic groups (11%). However an ethnic pay gap in Irish HEIs becomes apparent in most higher pay categories.

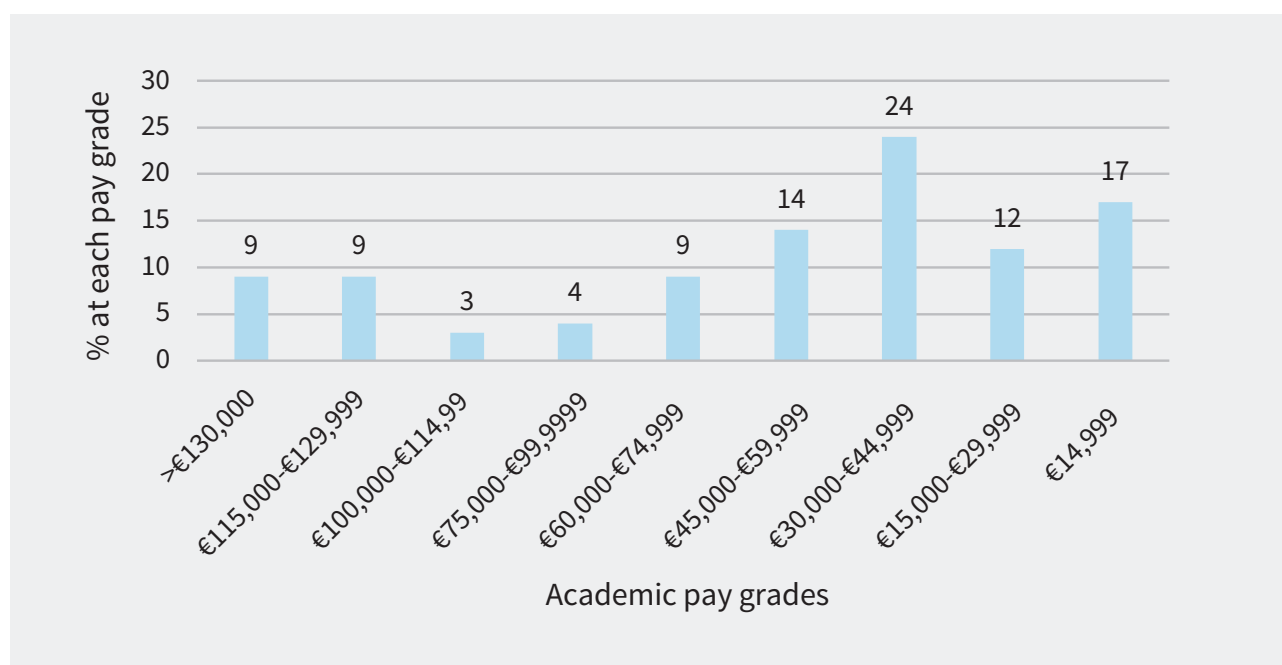
While 38% of White Irish and 49% of White Other across all roles earn below 60,000 Euro, 66% of respondents from minority ethnic groups are in this category. The percentage of people who earn over 75,000 Euro is the lowest among minority ethnic groups (17%) as compared to 38% of White Irish, and 25% of White Other respondents.

At the top end of the scale, those earning over 130,000 Euro were relatively equally likely to be White Other (6%), White Irish (4%) or from minority ethnic groups (4%). However while White Irish and White Other respondents in this pay grade were from a range of roles, respondents from minority ethnic groups only worked in senior academic roles.

Respondents from minority ethnic groups made up 10% of those in academic roles, but nearly a quarter (24%) of those paid between 30,000 and 45,000 Euro, 9% of those paid 60,000 to 75,000 and just 4% of those paid between 75,000 and 115,000 Euro (Figure 1.1).

Just 3% of the sample preferred not to answer this question.

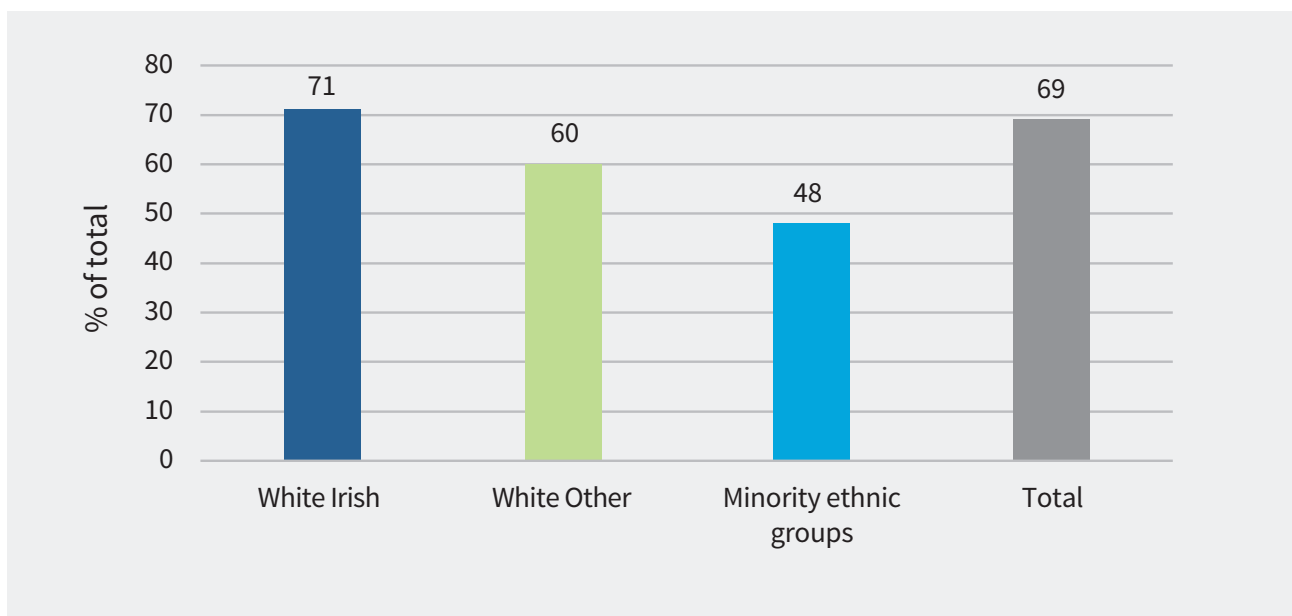
**Figure 1.1: Pay grades of minority ethnic groups**



### Mode of Working/Contract Type

Most survey respondents were in full-time permanent/multiannual contracts or contracts of indefinite duration (67%; Table 1.4). A fifth (22%) were in full-time fixed term contracts. Other types of contracts were part-time permanent (4%), part-time fixed term (3%) and hourly paid (3%). The results indicate that there is a significant difference between the percentage of people from minority ethnic groups who had permanent contracts and other groups (Figure 1.2). Only 48% of respondents from minority ethnic groups had full-time permanent contracts or contracts of indefinite duration, compared to 60% of White Other and 71% of White Irish. At the same time, minority ethnic groups were more likely to have full-time fixed contracts (39%) as compared to White Other (30%) and White Irish (18%). They also were more likely to have hourly contracts (6%) as compared to White Irish (2%) and White Other (3%).

**Figure 1.2: % of staff on permanent / multiannual and indefinite duration contracts by ethnicity**



These figures indicate that White Irish respondents were in a comparatively more privileged position on the labour market than White Other respondents and respondents from minority ethnic groups. It is important to note that our sample cannot represent the full range of lower paid and temporary roles, since academic staff in precarious employment may not be included in institutions’ all-staff mailing lists. However, we believe that the collected data yields important insights into a portion of their experiences of employment in the academic sector.

**Table 1.4: Mode of working/Contract Type**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Full time permanent/multiannual	2206	67.3
Part time permanent/multiannual	131	4.0
Full time fixed term contract	718	21.9
Part time fixed term contract	106	3.2
Hourly Paid	88	2.7
Other	8	0.2
Prefer not to say	23	0.7
No answer	43	1.0
Total	3280	100.0

# 2 Ethnic Diversity in Institutions

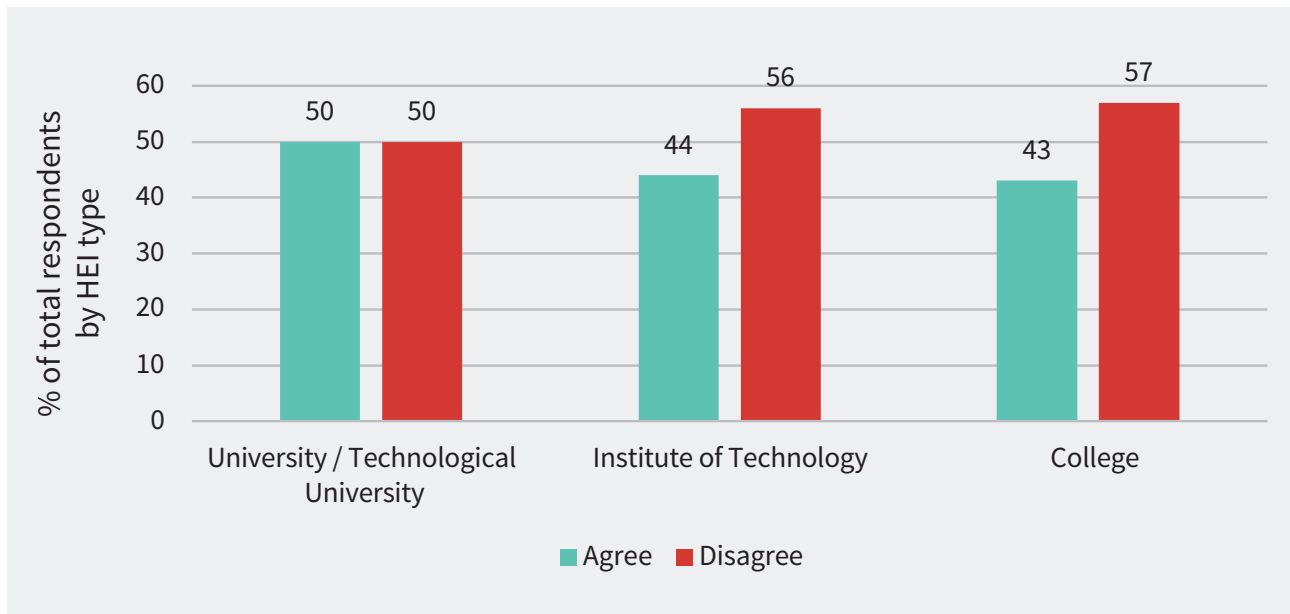
For a long time there has been a lack of a centralised system to collate data on ethnic diversity among staff in ROI. In 2018, a report published by the Royal Irish Academy and the British Council in Ireland emphasised the urgency of publishing figures on the ethnicity breakdown in Irish academia, in an attempt to highlight and tackle a lack of diversity in the sector. The authors of the report note that the higher education staff data collection instruments used by Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) do not collect information on race or ethnicity as standard. The Higher Education Authority, in 2020, announced plans to collect ethnic data from all HEIs. In this context, this section will examine respondents' perceptions and experiences of the ethnic composition of HEIs.

Overall, 45% of respondents agreed that they work in an ethnically diverse institution, while 47% disagreed. Respondents from Universities and Technological Universities were equally likely to agree or disagree (Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1). Respondents from Institutes of Technology and Colleges were slightly less likely to see their institutions as ethnically diverse as not (44% and 43% respectively). Respondents employed by Colleges were the most likely to strongly disagree that their institution was diverse. 30% strongly disagreed with the statement, almost twice as many as in Universities and Institutes of Technology (15% and 16%).

**Table 2.1: Institution Type**

Institution Type	Agree	Disagree
University / Technological University	50	50
Institute of Technology	44	56
College	43	57

**Figure 2.1: I work in an ethnically diverse institution in terms of staff**



White Irish, White Other, and ethnic minority staff were relatively equally likely to report their institution as being ethnically diverse. 45% of all staff believe they work in an ethnically diverse institution, while 38% of Black and ethnic minority staff believe they work in an ethnically diverse institution.

Asked whether they considered the ethnic diversity of an institution’s staff before applying to work, the majority of respondents in all ethnic categories disagreed (59%) or had a neutral stance (22%). Across all the groups, ethnic diversity of staff was not a crucial factor in applying for jobs. This may be influenced by shortages of employment in the academic sector, or constraints such as location on job applications. But whereas ethnic diversity of staff is perhaps not a decisive factor in job applications, staff from minority ethnic groups are slightly more likely to consider this factor than their Irish counterparts. While only 6% of White Irish considered ethnic diversity in applying for jobs, 15% of White Other and 18% of respondents from minority ethnic groups considered it.

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“I never considered ethnic diversity before applying for a job in my organisation, it was a struggle to get a job as an [ethnic minority candidate], so you find yourself settling for anything just to get by.”



Participants mainly described the impact of diversity on their own choice, or the nature of diversity at their institution, although some also mentioned the policies that were in place at their institution. Most respondents felt that their choice of institution wasn't motivated by the ethnic diversity of the institution. Other reasons why individuals chose a particular institution were its reputation, and their fit with the department or institution. Only a few respondents indicated that the diversity of the institution was a pull factor.

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“Although my department and college became much more diverse since I started, the international outlook and openness was certainly a pull factor.”

Most respondents to this survey reported that their current institutions lacked ethnic diversity, particularly at the leadership and management level. This resonates with the findings of UK research showing significant under-representation of ethnic minority groups at senior levels within academia, with many ethnic minority staff concentrated at lower grades (Arday 2018, Bhopal and Brown 2016, Bhopal and Pitkin 2018, ECU 2017, Rollock 2016, Tate and Bagguley 2017, UCU 2013). Many White Irish respondents in this survey also commented that Irish HEIs are disproportionately led by white male colleagues, with both a gendered and ethnic 'glass ceiling' (Davies, 2011). These barriers to entry are exacerbated by institutional racism (Ahmed 2012, Bhopal 2016).

Several White Irish respondents in this survey commented that sometimes potential applicants from minority ethnic groups are not aware of vacancies. Established informal methods of recruitment, for example by word of mouth or sponsorship, reinforce inequalities in recruitment practices through 'routine practices' (Fenton, Carter and Modood, 2000).

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“ Almost everyone I work with is White Irish and I can't understand why. It's not as if only White Irish people are interviewing. There needs to be an active effort to hire diverse staff if we are to reflect the diversity of the student body that we provide service for.”

In terms of disciplines, those in STEM disciplines were more likely to believe staff were diverse than those in Arts and Humanities. Research contract staff were also seen as more diverse than permanent staff and administrative staff. Amongst those who thought that their institution was diverse, they attributed this to the changing demographics of Irish society.

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“Ireland has more rapidly over the past 2-3 decades welcomed diverse peoples, but many of the more prestigious, more well-remunerated, more erudite professions have not seen the same diversity trickle into their -particularly better-paid- ranks. This includes all HEIs.”

Respondents also commonly described diversity as much more prevalent within the student body than within the academic staff.

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“There is an unequal ratio between the number of Black students on the campus to Black academic staff on the campus.”

Participants who commented on university diversity policies highlighted that there should be policies introduced to ensure more ethnic diversity across both academic and professional services. Suggestions included introducing new hiring policies, organising outreach activities to encourage diversity, revising employment criteria, and implementing pro-active EDI policies.

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“I can only speak for my own area, and I think that it is open to diversity. In my immediate team over the last few years we have actively sought to encourage diversity and have done this successfully. We have employed people from the following groups, Chinese, Indian, Nigerian-Irish, Polish, Irish, English.”

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“I think that the lack of diversity in ethnic HE institutions is probably less to do with overt, direct racist attitudes and more to do with what people feel comfortable with and looking after one’s own community first. I think there are both historic and contemporary reasons for this. It does however mean though that the percentage of people from minority ethnic backgrounds who live in the wider community are not reflected in employment patterns or positions of authority in either academic or non-academic posts.”

# 3 Institutional policies and leadership on race and ethnicity

This section will discuss HEIs' policies around race and ethnicity. We examine respondents' views on the clarity of policies and how they get translated into action in different contexts. We focus on how respondents considered relationships between 'doing the document' and 'doing the doing' (Ahmed 2007). This section will indicate that despite some efforts, HEIs have yet to develop inclusive policies that would provide equality of opportunity to staff and students, and eliminate racism and race inequality.

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## **Awareness of policies**

When asked whether they were aware of policies at their institution which seek to tackle racism and race inequality<sup>3</sup>, more than half (65%) of respondents agreed, while 23% of respondents disagreed. The graph below collates all agree and disagree categories, and compares them with other categories for the simplicity of analysis (Figure 3.1).

There is some difference between respondents on the basis of ethnicity. While less than a quarter (24%) from minority ethnic groups agreed, there was stronger agreement from White Irish (36%) and White Other (32%) respondents. Disagreement in general was shared by all ethnic groups (11-14%), but strong disagreement was expressed by more than twice as many respondents from minority ethnic groups (13%) as White Irish and White Other (both 5%).

Participants mainly discussed awareness of policies at their HEIs, effectiveness and meaningfulness of these policies, although some discussed questions of leadership and clarity of the policies in place. More respondents were unaware of policies at their HEIs which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequalities. Respondents often note that policies on race/ethnicity are embedded within broader equality policies, such as Dignity at Work and Mutual Respect policies. Some individuals also remark that there are more policies relating to gender, rather than ethnicity.

Additionally, respondents noticed that diversity policies have recently come to fore with increasing diversity of staff, and they were further advanced with the Athena Swan charter. Comparative research on HEIs in the UK suggests that the charter mark process has enabled some discussion around the issues of gender and race equality at HEIs. However, research suggests that gaining the charter marks should be linked to wider institutional and cultural change and should be visible in practice and outcomes for women and BME. (Bhopal and Henderson 2019a, 2019b). This issue was raised by a small number of respondents in this survey.

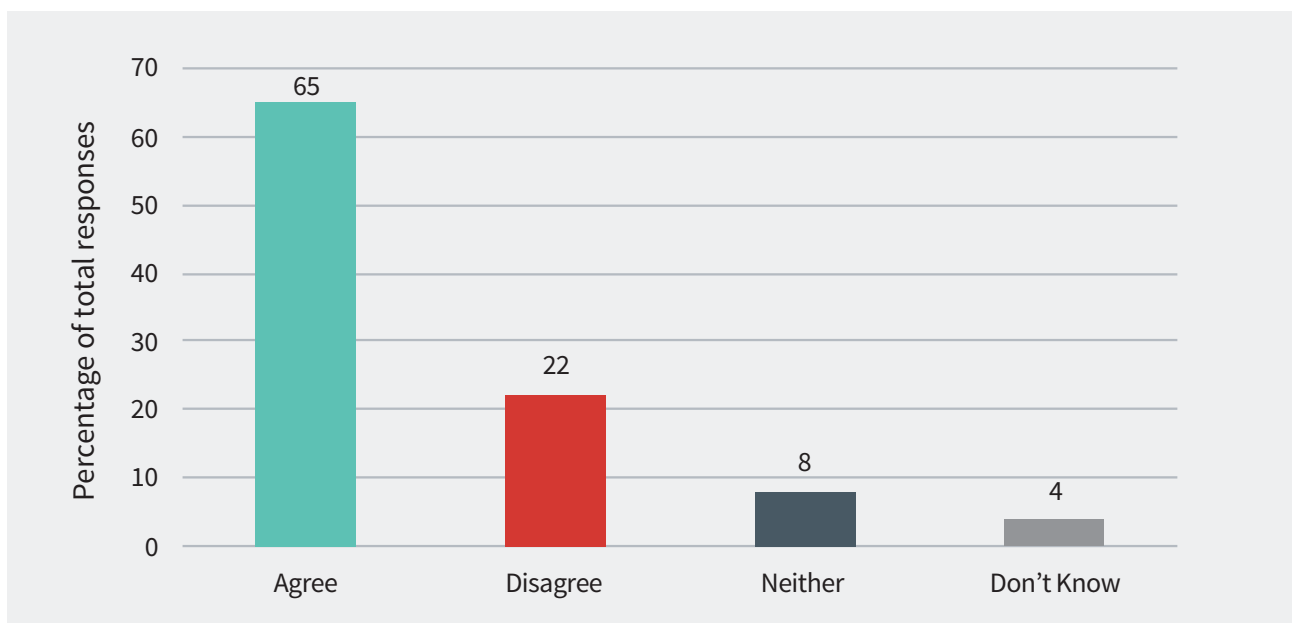
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<sup>3</sup> Q. 13 "I am aware of policies at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequality."

“The fact that HEIs are now actively engaging with Athena Swan application has led to clearer policies being available for staff to consult on race inequality and racism. Sometimes it is left to HR functions to design these policies, but is up to all members of staff to champion diversity on campus.”

**Figure 3.1: I am aware of policies at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequality.**

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### Clear and explicit policies

Respondents were asked whether they felt that policies at their HEI on racism and race inequality are clear and explicit.<sup>4</sup> More respondents from each of White Irish, White Other and staff from minority ethnic groups agreed than disagreed (Figure 3.2). Staff from minority ethnic groups were least likely to agree (19%) and most likely to disagree (16%).

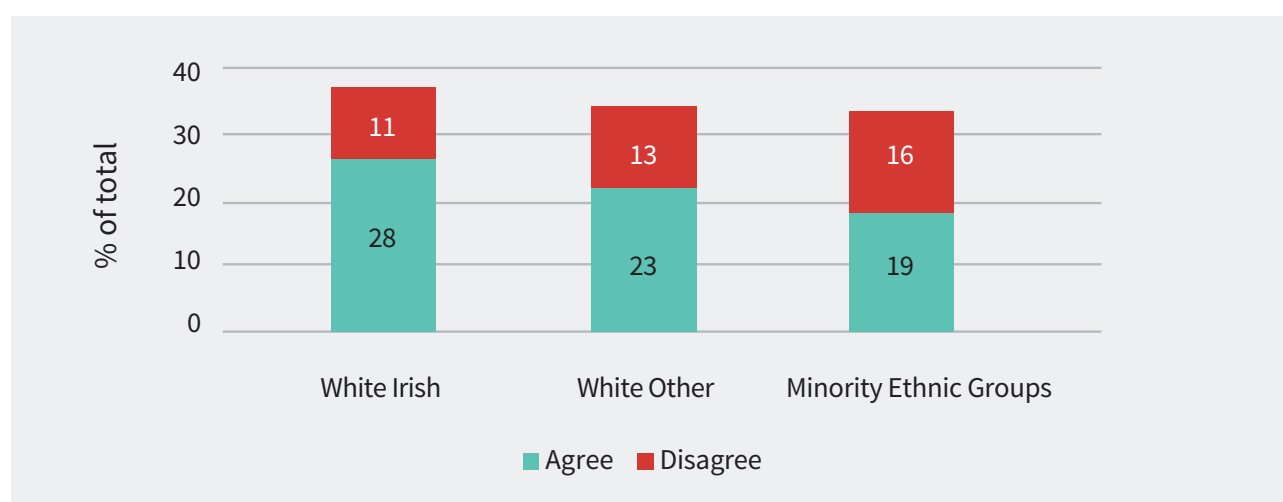
“Policies are good in what they seek to achieve but are not very well disseminated, and procedures for making/receiving complaints about discrimination are not very clear.”

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<sup>4</sup> Q14. Policies at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequality are clear and explicit.

A range of respondents who commented on clarity of the policies complained mostly that the policies were unclear. Even respondents who said that clear policies existed thought that their impact on racial/ethnic diversity was unclear. Respondents additionally note that if policies exist, there is no real implementation of these policies, and no visible outcomes in the staff body. Many respondents referred to the existing policies as a meaningless and ineffective ‘tick box exercise’ or ‘lip service’ (Ahmed 2007). Some pointed out that HEI policies are limited to introduction of diversity training, mainly unconscious bias training, which might not be enough. Evidence from UK HEIs suggests that unconscious bias training can be only effective for reducing implicit bias, but it is unlikely to eliminate it completely. Furthermore, unconscious bias training interventions are not generally designed to reduce explicit bias (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2018), nor to tackle structural racism. Some positive effects on implicit bias towards women in STEM have been demonstrated (Jackson et al., 2014). However, other studies have shown that there may even be unintentional effects which strengthen negative associations (Maio et al., 2018; Brogaard and Gatzia, 2020).

**Figure 3.2: Policies at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequality are clear and explicit**



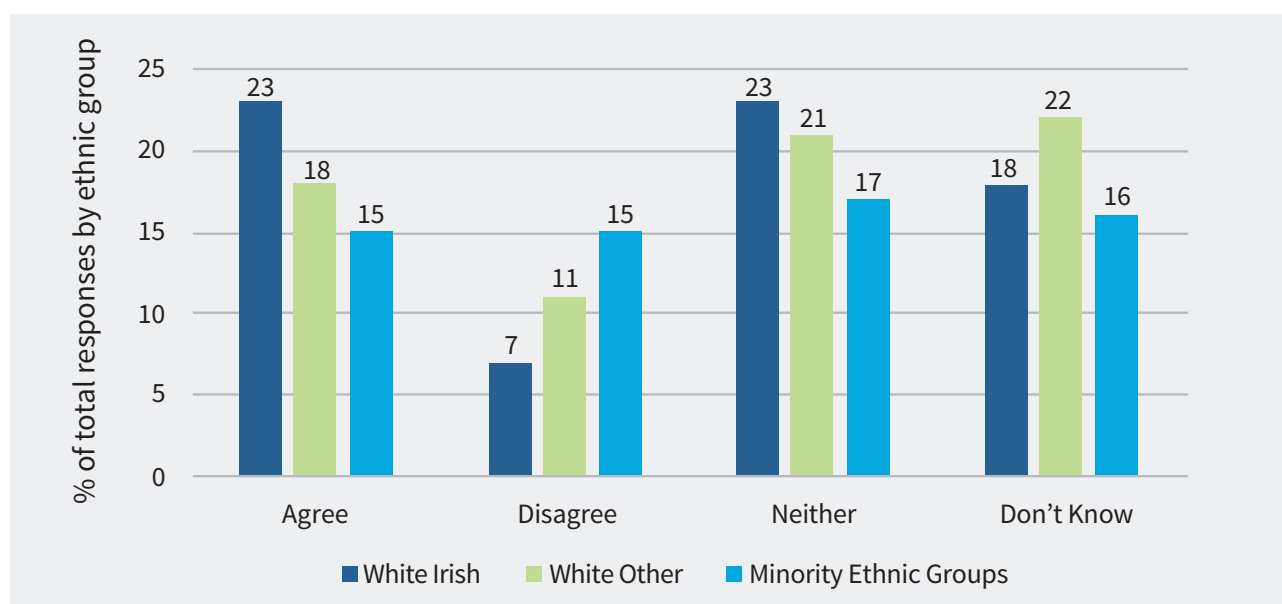
### Meaningful and/or effective policies

Respondents were asked if policies at their HEI around race and/or ethnicity are meaningful in the way that they address race inequality.<sup>5</sup> The largest group of respondents agreed (38%), while just over a fifth disagree (21%). However almost half (47%) of respondents indicated either ‘Don’t Know’ or ‘Neither agree nor disagree’. This suggests some lack of awareness or some confusion about the impact of institutional policies.

<sup>5</sup> Q15. The policies that my HEI has around race and/or ethnicity are meaningful in the way that they address race inequality.

“Where I work, I’m sure there is a well-written generic paragraph somewhere in the documentation, but as for any systematic solution, or explicit policy on the behaviour - nothing.”

**Figure 3.3: The policies that my HEI has around race and/or ethnicity are meaningful in the way that they address race inequality**



White Irish were more likely than White Other or minority ethnic groups to agree (23%, 18% and 15%), and less likely to disagree (7%, 11% and 15% respectively; Figure 3.3). Staff from minority ethnic groups were more than twice as likely to strongly disagree that HEI policies around race and/or ethnicity are meaningful (13% as compared with 5% of White Irish, and 6% of White Other), and also tended to have clearer views on the issues (16% Don’t Know, compared to 18% of White Irish and 22% of White Other).

Respondent’s beliefs about the effectiveness of policies around race and/or ethnicity in generating outcomes that address race inequality did not vary much by ethnic group overall.<sup>6</sup> Almost half of staff said they didn’t know (23%) or neither agreed nor disagreed (23%). However staff from minority ethnic groups were more likely to strongly disagree that the policies of their HEI were effective (18% compared with 6% of White Irish and 9% of White Other).

<sup>6</sup> Q16. The policies that my HEI has around race and/or ethnicity are effective in generating outcomes that address race inequality.



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“I am aware of the Policies around race and/or ethnicity but cannot speak to their effectiveness in generating outcomes that address race inequality other than Awareness.”

## Visible leadership

Visible HEI leadership in addressing racism and race inequality was observed by almost half of respondents (44%), while almost a third (31%) disagreed. White Irish were more likely to agree with this statement (22% as compared to 16% of White Other and 14% of staff from minority ethnic groups), while staff from minority ethnic groups were more likely to strongly disagree (17%, compared with 7% of White Irish and 10% of White Other respondents). White Other respondents were most likely to answer that they did not know if leaders at their HEIs were visible in addressing racism and race inequality.

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“Poor policies, poor communication, and a lack of resourcing ensure the continuing prevalence of problems in this area.”

It is well established that leadership is important in guiding the transformation of organisational culture (Adserias, Charleston & Jackson 2017, Universities UK 2020). In this survey, respondents describe a lack of visible leadership in addressing questions of racial/ethnic diversity. Leaders are commonly described in this survey as more reactive than proactive in encouraging racial/ethnic diversity, with only a few respondents commenting that their leadership is visible in addressing racism and race inequality.

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“The only thing that was apparent to me was the [leadership’s] reaction and then response to BLM. This is welcome, but feels reactive rather than proactive.”

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“Paying lip service in public does not equate with actually having clearly defined policies that are transparent and can be demonstrated in action.”

There is also inconsistency in the approach within institutions, with some leaders described as making an effort to address questions of racial/ethnic diversity, including younger managers, whilst others are described as having no real interest in these issues.

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The leadership does an excellent job here [my institution] - Senior Management, [leadership], HRD, Dean are great role models for all matter to do with this topic and many others.

# 4 Social inclusivity/sense of isolation among staff

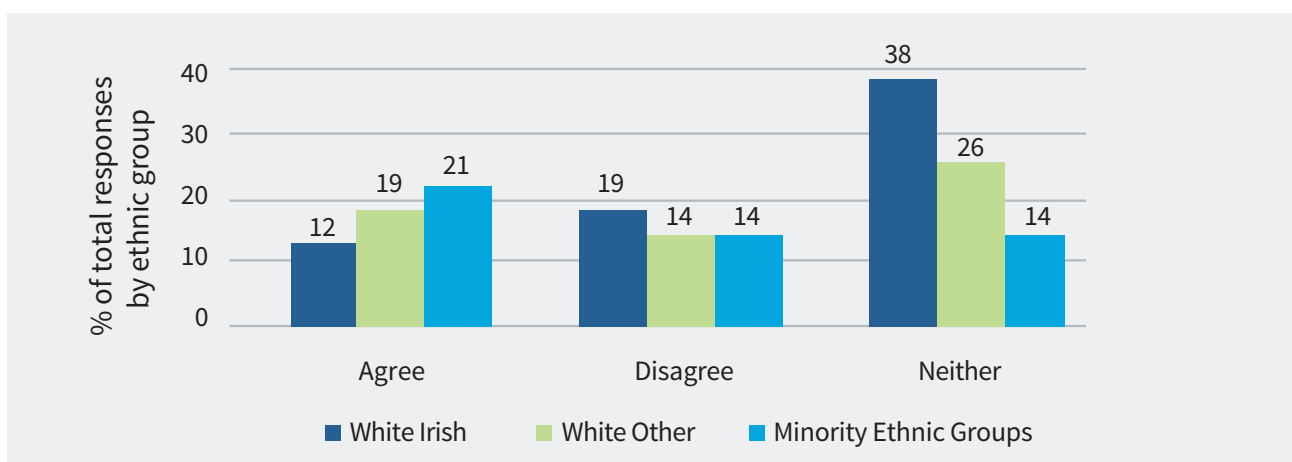
This section will examine issues of social inclusivity and sense of isolation among staff. Social inclusion is defined as ‘a process which ensures the opportunities and resources necessary for individuals to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and enjoy a standard of living and well being that is considered normal in the society in which they live’ (Council of European Union, 2004). It is vital to eliminate social exclusion and to strengthen integration of ethnic minority staff in HEIs. This section will consider respondents’ responses in regards to whether or not they are treated equally by students and other staff, and the effects of social inclusivity and isolation on their senses of belonging and desire to stay within institutions.

### Ethnic diversity and sense of belonging

When asked if ethnic diversity of staff impacts their senses of belonging, 53% agreed, and 33% disagreed categories. 13.7% said that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Overall, respondents believed that ethnic diversity of staff does have an effect on people’s senses of belonging.

Staff from minority ethnic groups and White Other were the groups that were most likely to agree with the statement (21% of staff from minority ethnic groups and 19% of White Other agreed with the statement, as compared to 12% of White Irish; Figure 4.1). These groups were slightly less likely to disagree that ethnic diversity affects their senses of belonging (14% of staff from minority ethnic groups and 14% of White Other as compared to 19% of White Irish). Ethnic minorities were also more likely to strongly agree with the statement (20% of staff from minority ethnic groups, 9% of White Other and 3% of White Irish strongly agreed with the statement).

**Figure 4.1: The ethnic diversity of staff at my institution impacts on my sense of belonging**



## Ethnic diversity and staff retention

Respondents were asked whether the ethnic diversity of staff at my institution impacted on their desire to stay at their current HEI. While 38% overall disagreed, 30% agreed, and 33% neither agreed nor disagreed. Significant difference between ethnic groups is only evident in those who strongly agree, where 17% of staff from minority ethnic groups agree, compared to 9% of White Other and 5% of White Irish respondents. This indicates that ethnic diversity is an important factor in facilitating social inclusion/integration of staff from minority ethnic groups, while it might not be as important for White Irish and White Other. This sheds some light on the importance of ethnic diversity in how people make sense of their experiences in HEIs.

On the whole, participants felt that low ethnic diversity was a factor that had a negative impact on their desire to stay within the institution. However, this view is not representative for the whole sample. This again may be because the Irish academic labour market is very competitive and applicants are motivated by other reasons for their choice.

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“If possible, I would like to work in an institution that was becoming increasingly diverse in terms of race and ethnicity over time. In practice I have found working elsewhere (in a local authority) involved a much more diverse workforce in terms of race and ethnicity than in any HEI I have studied or worked.”

## Equal treatment by colleagues and students

When asked if they feel they are being treated equally by all colleagues irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, over two thirds of respondents agreed with the statement (71%). White Irish were most likely to agree with the statement (41%), followed by 33% of White Other, and 25% of staff from minority ethnic groups. 30% of staff from minority ethnic groups would strongly agree with the statement, followed by 26% of White Irish, and 25% of White Other. Conversely, staff from minority ethnic groups were also the most likely to disagree with the statement (11%), compared with 4% of White Irish and 6% of White Other. On the whole however, it seems that the experiences of collegiality are generally positive across all the groups.

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“I feel included. I came from [abroad] more than 40 years ago. I see myself as Irish. I think how you see yourself, how secure you were at home and how your early and teen social experiences impacted, influence how you interact and respond to your environment. Which is probably a big contributor to the individual's perception of being included or excluded. I think many staff do feel included.”

The majority of respondents also agreed that they are treated equally by students, irrespective of their ethnic background (69%). White Irish respondents agreed most with the statement (42%), as compared to 37% of White Other, and 28% of staff from minority ethnic groups. Again, staff from minority ethnic groups were more likely to strongly disagree with the statement (6%) as opposed to White Irish (1%) and White Other (2%). Comparative research suggests that students sometimes questioned credibility of ethnic minority staff and preferred White staff over ethnic minority staff (Bhopal and Jackson 2013, Jones 2006).

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“I believe that my white Irish-ness puts me in a position of privilege, compared to those who are members of ethnic minorities.”

Many White Irish felt that they were treated more equally by students, colleagues and management than ethnic minority groups. Some respondents across all groups commented that ethnic minority groups may feel excluded or socially isolated. This is reflective of other research that found that Black academics in HEIs were seen as ‘out of place’ (Mirza 2009, Wright, Thompson and Channer 2007). A few respondents mentioned that ethnic minority groups are in precarious positions, which further exacerbates their feeling of social isolation. Similarly, often White Other respondents felt that they were treated better than staff from minority ethnic groups. Cultural, linguistic, and religious barriers were factors that affected people’s sense of belonging within their HEIs.

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“As a foreigner and a non-native English speaker, you always have a different relationship with local students, relative to Irish colleagues, because you do not share the same cultural background and sometimes do not understand their accents. This however, becomes less prominent with years. After 10 years living in Ireland, I still cannot hold a conversation about the GAA, but I have accumulated a number of local references and experiences which help to connect in class, and with Irish colleagues.”

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“Students fact-check everything I say in lectures and they don’t behave like that with my colleagues. They also challenge my understanding of how ‘Ireland works’.”

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“This is my first time to work at an HEI and I love it, I love the cultural and tribal diversity of the students, and I am so impressed by their talent, kindness, and openness.”

Overall, results for this section suggest that while respondents may have more ambiguous opinions about the general statements, such as importance of diversity for their desire to stay within the institution, or for their senses of belonging, they make more clear-cut judgments about how diversity works in everyday life, when they interact with their colleagues and students.

# 5 Observation and experience of unfair treatment or discrimination



This section will examine responses of participants in regards to observation and experience of unfair treatment and discrimination, either on campus or online. In most of the literature on discrimination, the term ‘bias’ or ‘implicit bias’ is now used to indicate patterns of exclusion faced by underprivileged groups that are more subtle and covert than direct discrimination (Buitendijk, Curry and Maes 2019). This transpires from both quantitative and qualitative data.

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More than a third (35%) of staff from minority ethnic groups have been subject to racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of their work, compared to 16% of White Other respondents and 3% of White Irish respondents (Figure 5.1).

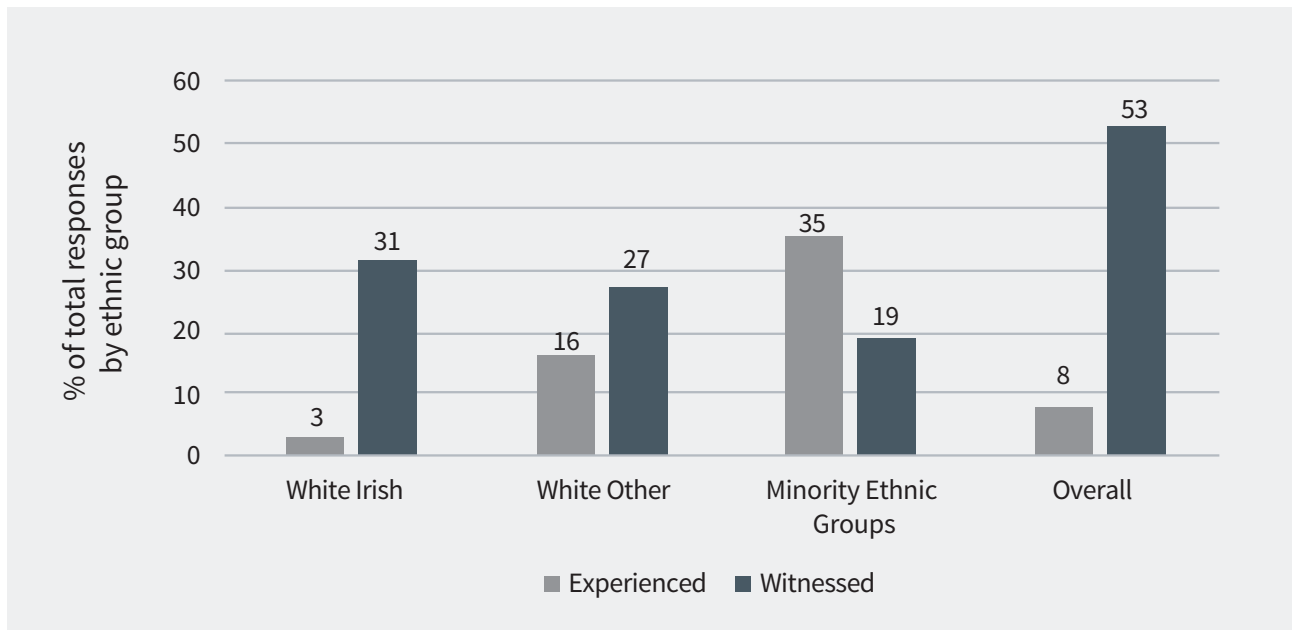
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“I have been told more than once to “go back to your own country” by students if I told them something about their behaviour (smoking on campus by my office window, be careless with college property, etc).”

The majority of respondents (61%) had not witnessed racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of their work. White Other (14%) and staff from minority ethnic groups (14%) were more likely to have witnessed discrimination in the course of their work than their Irish counterparts (10%).

Over half of respondents (53%) agreed when asked if they reported racial and/or ethnic discrimination, harassment or abuse to their institution, the relevant and appropriate investigative and/or disciplinary action would be taken. Staff from minority ethnic groups were least likely to agree (19%, compared to 27% of White Other and 31% of White Irish), and twice as likely to disagree (15%).

**Figure 5.1: Experience of discrimination on campus or online<sup>7</sup>**



Most White Irish respondents stated that they have never witnessed racial or ethnic discrimination. However, equally, many White Irish noted different instances of discrimination targeted at staff or students. Staff from minority ethnic groups in general were more likely to discuss instances of witnessing discrimination, rather than discussing their own experiences of discrimination.

Respondents across all groups observed that members of ethnic minority staff experienced discrimination in regards to promotion and career opportunities. On the other hand, respondents often noticed that students were discriminated against in marking and assessment, obtaining placements, or opportunities for development such as tutoring. A few White Irish respondents felt that discrimination against staff was less visible than against students, and believed the latter was a larger problem.

“I received unfair treatment in career progression. One white male colleague was retained and promoted and I was not – even though I have stronger research output, equal level of teaching and service. I did not report it as I feel no one will hear it or change the decision.”

<sup>7</sup> Q24. I have been subject to racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of my work.  
 Q25. I have witnessed racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of my work.

Respondents both discussed their experience of discrimination, and the impact it had on them. In many instances respondents when asked about experiences of discrimination recounted incidents of microaggressions. This might suggest that ethnic minorities are more likely to experience subtle/covert forms of unfair treatment rather than downright discrimination. Some scholars comment that subtle racism has become more prominent in past decades, as blatant forms are legislated against (Gill and Worley 2010).

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“I have never experienced outright discrimination. The little things are hard to go up against, so you just shrug your shoulders.”

Many respondents highlighted that they were unaware of any policies or guidelines to support reporting discrimination. Some participants complained that the mechanisms to tackle this were ineffective and HR was very inefficient in finding the solution to the problem. Over a quarter of respondents (27%) believed that if they report discrimination, no appropriate action would be taken.

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“While I hope that action would be taken if I reported discrimination, I am not aware of any policies or guidelines to support such action.”

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“Policies for dealing with harassment, bullying, racism, etc. are entirely ineffective. Usually swept under the carpet or both parties are brought to a mediator, forcing the victim to take responsibility for the offender’s behaviour. In fairness, there is very little HR can do with repeat offenders. This is a public sector employment issue and it is impossible to sack someone.”

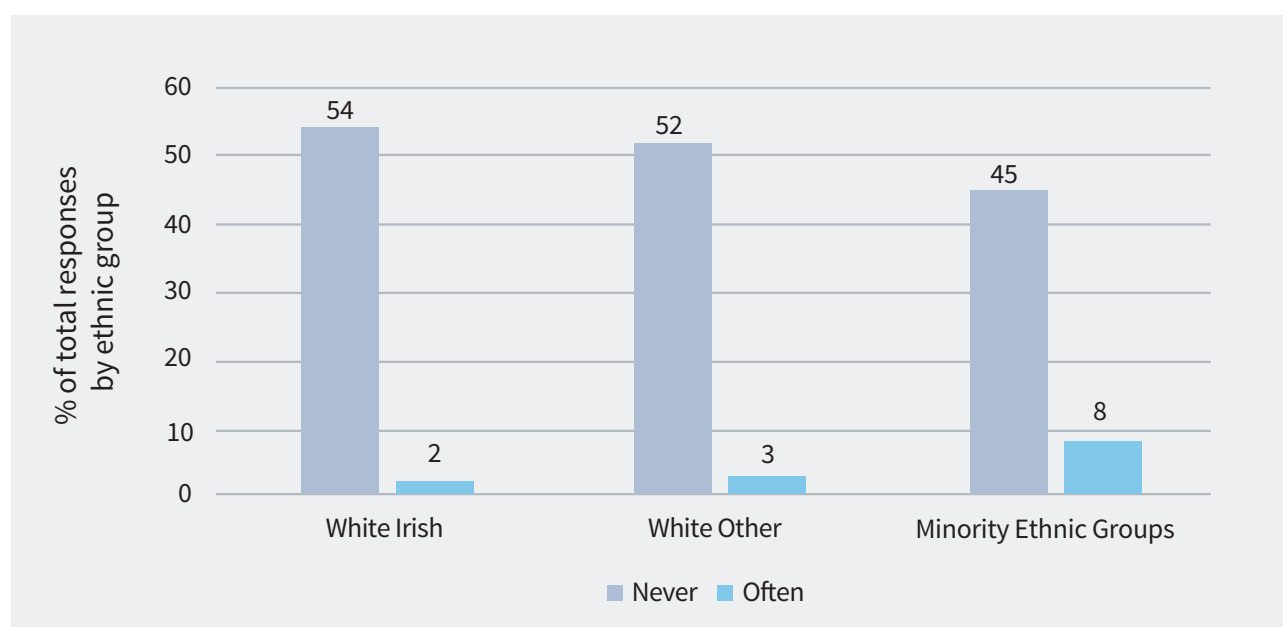
As a result, matters were often ‘swept under the carpet’. Provided that discrimination often comes from the top, ethnic minority staff and students are reluctant to report such incidents, which may lead to underreporting (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2019a, 2019b). An important barrier to reporting were concerns about repercussions and victimisation (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2019c). Several respondents mentioned that they were referred to counselling services as a result, while the matter wasn’t deal with appropriately. One respondent complained that the process of reporting left them more isolated than before.

# 6 Racist Harassment or Abuse

This section will focus on participants' responses on witnessing, experiencing, and guidance on responding to racial harassment and abuse. By racial harassment and abuse we mean 'any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person' (The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015). The 'unwanted conduct' includes spoken words, gestures, production and display of written words, pictures and other material.

More than half of respondents (52%) reported that they had never heard or seen (directly or indirectly) the use of racist language, comments, gestures, symbols or physical violence on campus or online. A further quarter (27%) said that they have rarely seen such instances. White Irish respondents were most likely to say that they have never seen racist incidents (54%), followed by White Other (52%) and staff from minority ethnic groups (45%; Figure 6.1). Staff from minority ethnic groups were much more likely to say that they often saw or heard incidents of racism (8%, as compared with 2% of White Irish and 3% of White Other).

**Figure 6.1: I have heard or seen (directly or indirectly) the use of racist language, comments, gestures, symbols or physical violence on campus or online**



Comments in this section resonate with the comments made earlier that racist harassment/abuse can be subtle and overt, and therefore not always easy to pinpoint. White Irish were more likely to comment than other groups that they have never seen/witnessed racial harassment or abuse.

Examples of abuse included abuse towards staff by the students, students by staff, staff by other staff, and students by students. Respondents mentioned incidents of verbal harassment, dismissive comments, and a use of racial slurs. A couple of respondents mentioned incidences of racist graffiti/symbols on campus and of physical abuse. The vast majority of respondents commented that they have not seen any instances of online abuse within the university, however they have encountered such instances off campus.

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“I have seen a black female student being attacked, thrown an egg at, and called the N word.”

More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents said that they intervene or report the incident if they see (directly or indirectly) the use of racist language, comments, gestures, symbols or physical violence on campus or online. Less than a third (30%) disagreed.

Staff from minority ethnic groups were slightly less likely than other groups to agree with the statement (25% as compared to 32% of White Irish and 32% of White Other). However, they were more likely to strongly agree with the statement (28%) as compared to 22% of White Irish and 19% of White Other. This might suggest that staff from minority ethnic groups were slightly more likely to hold stronger opinions than other ethnic groups about reporting the incidents.

Participants mainly discussed guidance on abuse and intervening/reporting abuse. Some participants mentioned abuse against students and fewer participants mentioned abuse against staff, which may suggest that abuse against staff is less visible or happens less frequently.

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“Overt reportable racism on campus is rare as its unacceptable amongst academics and students, so it would be more likely to happen covertly, off campus events, etc.”

Fewer than half of respondents agreed that there was a clear guidance to follow if they experience or witness racist discrimination, harassment, or abuse (39%). 24% of White Irish, 22% of White Other and 18% of staff from minority ethnic groups agreed with the statement. A slightly lower percentage of White Irish (14%) and White Other respondents (15%) disagreed than agreed with the statement. While this difference is not significant, it is also important to note that 16% of staff from minority ethnic groups would strongly disagree, compared to 6% White Irish and 7% of Irish Other. Also, slightly more staff from minority ethnic groups (19%) disagreed rather than agree with the statement (18%). On the whole, respondents do not feel very clear on the guidance that they have to follow if they experience or witness racist discrimination, harassment, or abuse in their institution. This trend has been particularly visible in the case of staff from minority ethnic groups.

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“I haven’t witnessed racism, if I did I would like to think I would intervene and report. I am unclear as to the procedure for reporting racism.”

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“Students putting Swastikas on their clothing and goose stepping through campus, and roaring abuse at Muslim students was ignored by management where I work.”

Respondents employed by Colleges were more likely to strongly agree that there is a clear guidance that they have to follow (15%), compared with employees of universities (8%) or Institutes of Technology (6%). They were also slightly less likely to agree to the question (7%), compared to 12% of university employees and 10% of Institute of Technology employees. This may suggest that College employees hold stronger opinions regarding clarity of guidance around racist harassment or abuse than other groups.

Many respondents found guidance on reporting abuse unclear and weren’t sure where to report such a behaviour. The comments in this section resonated with comments on discrimination, and with findings of other research, which indicates that students and staff are often unclear about what will happen when they make a complaint and are afraid of the personal consequences in doing so (EHRC 2019d). Some respondents mentioned that they deal with the abuse personally, without escalating problem, due to fear of being victimised, or scepticism in the efficiency of HR in dealing with such matters, with issues being ignored or dismissed (cf. Batty 2019).

Several respondents highlighted that they would be concerned with their own safety when intervening, reporting physical abuse to the guards or ireport.ie. Several respondents mentioned that they would report abuse to EDI officers. Positive comments on efficacy of reporting the abuse were sparse.

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“There was an incident of racial harassment within our cohort of postgraduate students which was reported and subsequently taken very seriously by management, and resulted in a formal warning to the student in question. As an outcome of this incident, all PG students on our programme take a module on ED&I awareness and sensitivity.”



# 7 Racial Microaggressions

This section will examine different kinds of microaggressions that ethnic minority groups experience in HEIs. We use the term “microaggressions” to refer to ‘brief, sometimes subtle, everyday exchanges that either consciously or unconsciously disparage others based on their personal characteristics or perceived group membership’ (Pierce et al, 1978; Sue, 2010) Research examining racial microaggressions in the workplace argues that managers and employees consciously support equal treatment for all, while unconsciously harbouring negative feelings toward people of colour (Sue, 2010).

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Staff from minority ethnic groups (15%) and White Other respondents (13%) were much more likely than White Irish (5%) to report in this survey that they had been subjected to stereotyping at their workplace in relation to race and/or ethnic background (Figure 7.1). Staff from minority ethnic groups and White Other were also more likely to strongly agree with the statement (14% and 8% respectively) as compared to 1% of their Irish counterparts. Respondents report that stereotyping has been important to their sense of belonging at their HEIs. Most respondents who raised this issue experienced negative stereotyping, while only one German respondent felt that positive stereotyping about their work ethic may actually work to their advantage.

A third of staff from minority ethnic groups (34%) reported in this survey that they had their contributions minimized at work based on race and/or ethnic background, compared to 14% of White Other, and 4% of White Irish (Figure 7.1). Some respondents felt undervalued by their colleagues, and commented that their contributions were minimised. Respondents from ethnic minority groups also felt that their ideas/ comments could be dismissed by White Irish colleagues. One respondent suggested that someone else took credit for their work. This links to a question of deprofessionalisation and invisibility of ethnic minorities in academia (Young and Anderson 2021).

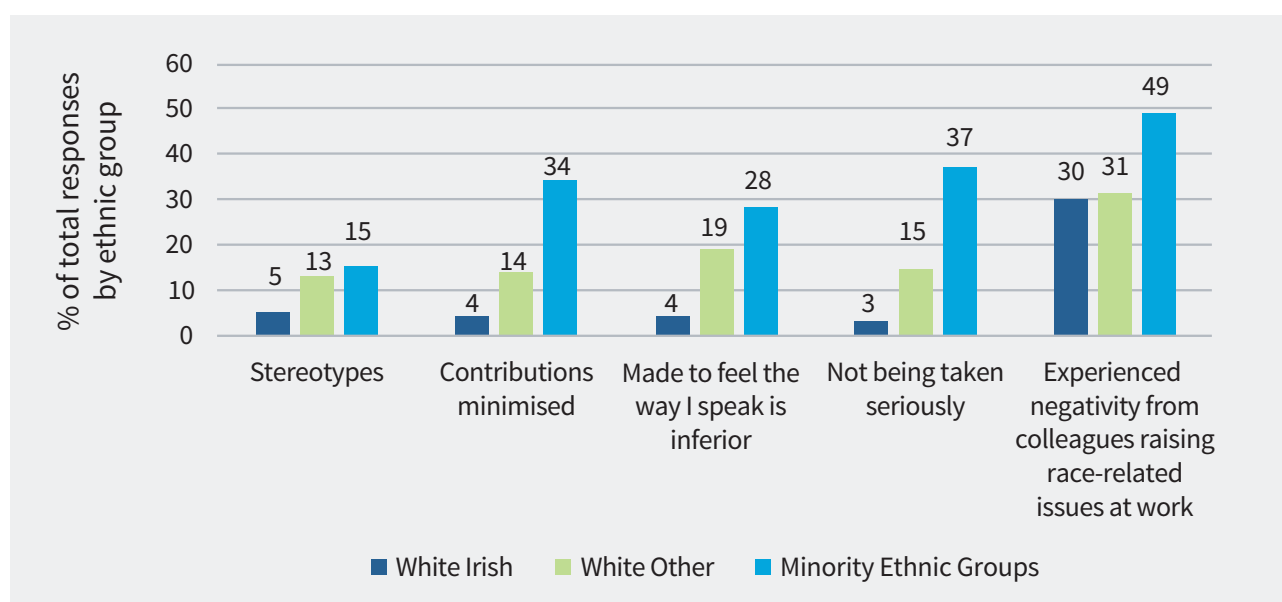
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“Sometimes, they think I have no brains, that I lived on trees all my life before coming to Ireland.”

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“Sometimes my contributions, which I know will be innovative, won’t be considered because I am from black race.”

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**Figure 7.1: Experience of racial microaggressions**

Staff from minority ethnic groups and White Other were more likely to slightly agree or agree that they had been made to feel the way they speak was inferior based on race and/or ethnic background (20% from minority ethnic groups, 16% of White Other, versus 3% of White Irish). Also, 7% of staff from minority ethnic groups strongly agreed with the statement, as compared to 1% of Irish White and 3% of White Other. Non-native speakers recalled incidents of being mocked for their accent and having their grammar and spelling corrected in an unconstructive way. A couple of non-native speakers felt that students didn't treat them seriously enough because of their accents. Native-English speakers, including Americans, were more likely to comment that their accents didn't affect their treatment at HEIs. Furthermore, several respondents mentioned that their names were mispronounced/mis spelled, which left them feel undervalued.

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“Language is a huge issue. While I am a fluent English speaker, I have an accent and have seen many rolling their eyes. I also had my grammar corrected INCORRECTLY by native English speakers.”

11% of staff from minority ethnic groups have experienced not being taken seriously at work based on race and/or ethnic background, compared to 1% of White Irish and 6% of White Other.

Finally, in this section of the survey, staff were asked if they had experienced negativity from other colleague because they raised race-related issues at work. Respondents of all ethnic groups are more likely to share experiences of negativity for raising a race-related issue than about other kinds of microaggressions. Staff from minority ethnic groups are only slightly more likely to think that they have experienced negativity for this reason than White Irish and White Other.

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“I always avoid all discussion about race as it is too easy to offend so silence is the best way to deal with it.”

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“People remain silent or roll their eyes when I point out how white our faculty is.”

Participants mainly described perpetrators and discomfort that questions of race/ethnicity may cause in relation with their colleagues. Such discomfort may be rooted in colour blind racism, which protects the perpetrators from feeling discomfort, shame, or personal responsibility for the realities of racism (Jayakumar and Adamian 2017). Sue in this context points out that staff may act in ways to ignore, dilute, diminish, or cut off dialogues about race (Sue and Constantine 2007).

Some respondents also talked about questions of stereotyping, language barriers, and undervalue. A smaller number of respondents discussed policies. Perpetrators involved colleagues, management, and less frequently students. As with previous questions, a couple of respondents have noted that microaggressions can take form of subtle attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, a couple of respondents highlighted that people may experience unconscious bias.

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“I think that question relates to direct overt forms of discrimination. I think negative perceptions experienced by ethnic minorities are the result of more subtle attitudes and behaviour and often related more to attitudes about ‘who is part of my community’ rather than who isn’t.”

When commenting on impacts such as microaggressions had on them, some participants said they felt undermined, insulted, isolated, angry and frustrated. Several respondents considered moving institution, and a couple of them noted that their quality of work got worse as a result. This corresponds with the findings of the recent Universities UK study (2020), which found that the impacts of microaggressions on both students and staff were severe, affecting mental health, educational outcomes and career progression. Similarly, research found that microaggressions ‘may erode people’s mental health, job performance, and the quality of social experience’ (DeAngelis 2009: 42). In this context, microaggressions often leave victims confused, distressed and frustrated, and the perpetrator oblivious of the offense they have caused (Rollock 2012).

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“I think greater efforts should be made to pronounce names correctly instead of mispronouncing them or making jokes. Also perhaps highlighting that asking ‘Where are you from’ based on one’s name is highly inappropriate.”

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“The emotional impact was devastating.”

Furthermore, there is a sense among respondents that discussing race/ethnicity causes discomfort among colleagues/senior management, with some of them being hesitant to raise these issues. Several respondents noted that their attempts to influence existing policies regarding ethnicity and race at workplace have been futile. A couple of them highlighted a need for inclusion training to address these issues.

# 8 Relationship Between Workload and Recognition

This section links strongly with the section on staff diversity in HEIs. As it transpires from our research, ethnic minorities are underrepresented at higher ranks within the academic institutions in Ireland. Here, we will take a close look at the responses of participants in relation to career progression, development, promotion and recognition. This section will consider open ended responses of ethnic minority staff which point at the reasons why their career progression is constrained.

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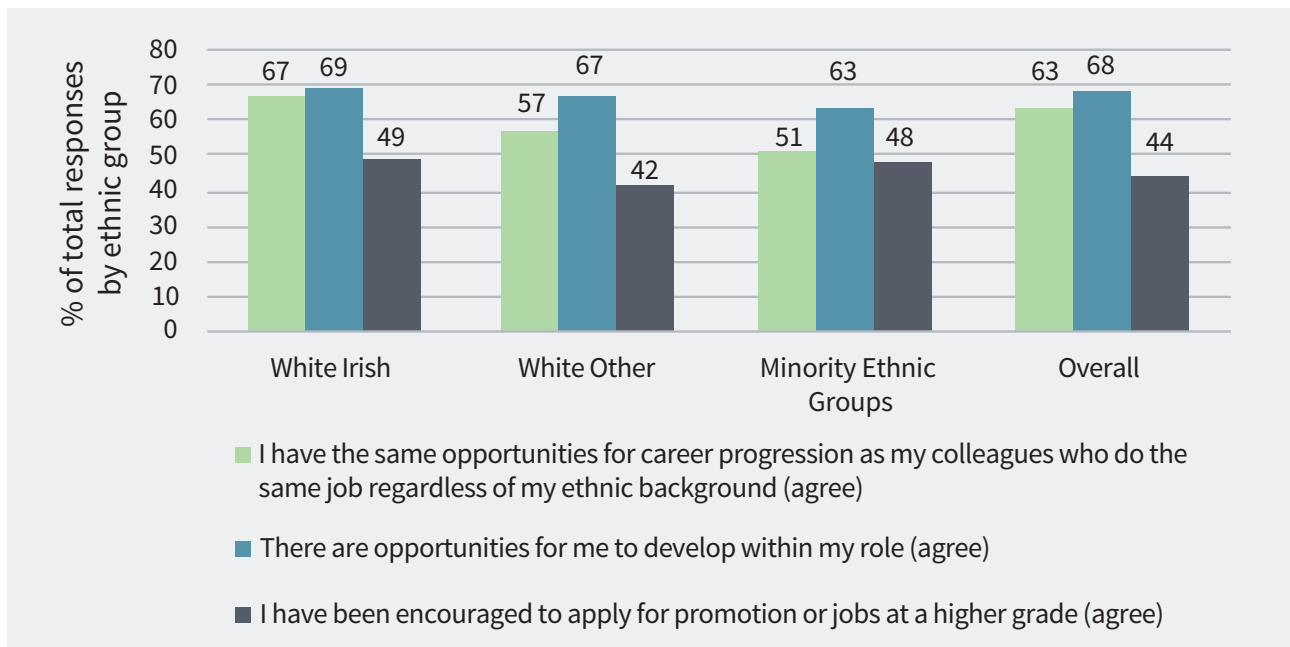
When asked if they have the same opportunities for career progression as their colleagues who do the same job, regardless of their ethnic background, over half of respondents (64%) agreed with the statement. White Irish respondents were most likely to agree (67% as compared to 57% of White Other, and 51% of staff from minority ethnic groups), and minority ethnic staff were mostly likely to strongly disagree (19%, compared to 3% of White Irish and 6% of White Other respondents; Figure 8.1).

More than half of all staff reported in the survey that there are opportunities for them to develop within their role. There is relatively little difference between people based on ethnicity. White Irish were most likely to agree (69%), followed closely by White Other (67%) and staff from minority ethnic groups (63%). However, 12% of staff from minority ethnic groups strongly disagreed with the statement, as compared to White Irish (5%) and White Other (7%).

Staff from minority ethnic groups are more likely to present strong negative views on issues related to career development at workplace than other groups. However, they hold more positive views about their development within their role than about their career progression.

When asked if they had been encouraged to apply for a promotion or jobs at a higher grade, nearly half (45%) of all respondents agreed and 31% disagreed. There was no significant difference by ethnic group. Overall, more respondents held positive views on applying for promotion across all ethnic groups. However, 17% of staff from minority ethnic groups were more likely to strongly disagree compared to White Irish (11%) and White Other (11%) staff.

**Figure 8.1: Workload and recognition**



Ethnic minority and White Other respondents described feeling that they don’t have as many opportunities for career progression as their White Irish counterparts. Some pointed to a problem of nepotism in relation to career progression/promotion. The issue of being a non-native speaker further constrained their options for progression.

“I don’t believe there is clear discrimination to progression. But, definitely, it takes more effort and work for a non-native speaker to access promotion due to linguistic challenges.”

Bhopal’s and Jackson’s study (2013) in comparison raised an issue that White academics were encouraged to apply for promotion if they showed ‘promise or potential’, whereas respondents felt they had to show a track record of achievements, with evidence, rather than merely potential. This limited possibility of career progression and promotion amongst ethnic minorities and native speakers of other languages has also been recognised by many White Irish respondents, who noted that they were in a more privileged situation than their ethnic minority colleagues. This racial privilege is seen as ‘unearned’.

“I benefit from more recognition that my colleagues from non-majority races [sic].”



According to McIntosh (1989), this depersonalization of white privileges, using such words as ‘invisible’ and ‘unearned’, obscures recognition of the painful impact of racism, diminishes personal responsibility and the belief that one should or can change their perceptions of racial privilege. Some comments from a small number of White Irish participants reflected a perception that there was positive discrimination towards White Other and ethnic minority staff in their institutions. This view does not at all reflect the general consensus, and was not widely held.

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“The degree of nepotism and preference given to someone known from school/via family friends/long established social networks can make it difficult to move up the ladder.”

Intersectionality was another issue raised by people coming from both ethnic minority and White Irish backgrounds, with gender being seen as a further obstacle to promotion/career progression. This suggests that in order to better understand experiences of ethnic minority groups in HEIs we need to address the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, nationality and class dimensions (cf. Anthias 1998, Anthias 2013, Brah and Phoenix 2004, Mirza 2015). This will be noted in our recommendations for further research.

Recognition was also described variously in terms of teaching, research and administrative or support activities, and created different patterns of dis/advantage for different roles, not just within HEIs but across the sector more widely.

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“My ethnic background plus the ‘ethnicity’ of my research area means that I do not fit into ‘Irish’ stereotypes. This has not really been an issue in my institution, but it has severely impacted my ability to raise research funds and develop overseas projects. There is a systemic bias against research that is not Irish, and I have seen excellent graduate researchers and potential phd students been subject to this - and eventually go to do their amazing research in Australia, US, France.”

### *Support of students and recognition of workload*

Staff were asked about the extent to which work to support students of marginalised or minority ethnic background is fully recognised in their HEI. Just a quarter of all staff (25%) agreed that the work is fully recognised. Staff from minority ethnic groups were more likely to strongly disagree with the statement (10%, as opposed to 4% of White Irish and 5% of White Other).

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“I do make efforts to support students from ethnically diverse groups and I am committed to reducing inequalities but my work in this area largely goes under the radar. I am not sure how it could be recognised - I am not looking for accolades, recognition or rewards for trying to level the playing pitch.”

Over half of respondents either did not know or neither agreed nor disagreed. This may be either because work to support these students is not well recognised or commonly undertaken, or because it is not much discussed amongst staff. This lack of clarity is consistent across all the groups, 55% for White Irish, 60% of White Other, and 50% of staff from minority ethnic groups either did not know or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

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“Work with students is not really appreciated. They see me as trying to align with my ethnic origin.”

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“All students should be treated equally. No lecturer should favour any group of students.”

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“The question is well timed. While I can be very critical of others lack of support for staff and students from marginalised / ethnic minority groups I am reminded that I myself should be doing more.”

Staff described support of students in general as undervalued, or not appreciated at all, in promotion processes; or seen as an attempt to support students of the same ethnicity. Such non-recognition may restrict ethnic minority staff on influence on their schools and on their school culture (Young and Anderson 2021). Furthermore, many respondents across all the ethnic groups recognised that it is essential to support all the students, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds.

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“Efforts to provide supports for students from migrant backgrounds to assist them with academic English have been turned down [...] I am told that equality is about treating them the same as the English speaking students, that they are responsible for achieving the learning outcomes once they have come in. This in my view, shows that white privilege is considered a given and that there is no desire to empower these students to be the best that they can be.”

Across all groups, there was a shared feeling that workload and recognition were areas of particular challenge in higher education.

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“I feel generally unrecognised by my employer for all that I do in my role. This is nothing to do with my gender or race but a general lack of appreciation for individual staff and recognising each of us as a unique person.”

# 9 Availability of Mentorship

It is established that assigning mentors to ethnic minority academic staff can help them to increase their visibility and provide them with opportunities to advance their careers (Bhopal, 2020). Whilst many studies on this topic suggested that mentors should come from similar backgrounds to fulfil the role modelling aspect of mentoring (cf. Dreher and Cox, 1996), this can be challenging to arrange with a lack of representation by ethnic minorities at higher levels.

This section examines participants' opinions on the availability and importance of mentorship from staff of similar ethnic backgrounds to their own. The findings here demonstrate that it is the absence of mentoring overall, rather than ethnically specific mentoring, which most deeply affects workers from minority ethnic groups.

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When asked if they wanted access to mentors from similar ethnic backgrounds, White Irish were the most likely to have ambivalent views on this question. 51% compared to 38% of White Other, and 29% of staff from minority ethnic groups said they neither agreed nor disagreed. Staff from minority ethnic groups were most likely to agree (35%), although agreement was low also for White Other (17%) and White Irish (10%).

Staff from minority ethnic groups were least likely to think they have access to mentors from a similar ethnic background (4% as compared with 23% of White Irish and 18% of White Other). They were much more likely to strongly disagree with the statement (31%), than the other groups, 5% of White Irish and 12% of White Other. White Irish were more likely to strongly agree (11%) with the statement than 5% of White Other and 5% of staff from minority ethnic groups.

Most respondents commented on whether or not it is beneficial to have a mentor from similar ethnic/racial background and considered the negative and positive aspects of such arrangements. Most ethnic minority respondents observed that when it comes to mentorship, ethnic matching should not be a major factor, with competencies, experience, and skills of the mentor more important. Other important aspects of mentoring were support, mentoring style and relationship with the mentor. This is in line with the findings of other research (Bhopal and Jackson 2013, Bhopal 2020) that suggest that an important aspect of mentoring was that a mentor was knowledgeable in their field, and could guide their career at different stages.

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“The availability of mentoring should be highlighted across the board for staff. There has been a lack of this promotion to all staff and coaching unless individuals are active in their research and queries.”

Although ethnic and racial differences have been considered relative barriers to an effective relationship, they have not been seen as real barriers in mentoring process.

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“I worry about conflating everything to a single or couple of attributes of my identity. I will be very disappointed if a mentor was assigned to me based on my gender or ethnic identity. Also, I don’t believe that someone has to share your identity in order to empathize with your challenges or ambitions. People from minorities are not all the same even if they share certain identities. Also, they all have varied interests and cliques and vested interests like any other community. Using identity as a criteria to assign mentorship may end up harming or creating more barriers than doing good.”

Several White Irish and ethnic minority respondents noted that with few minority people at senior levels, likelihood of getting a mentor from the same ethnic background – or even another minority ethnic background - is very low unless you are White Irish. At the same time, many respondents from ethnic minority groups thought that having a mentor from other backgrounds could be an enriching experience, allowing individuals to acquire intercultural skills and becoming more integrated with their local colleagues.

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“The ethnic background of a mentor would not be a huge consideration - their personality, capability and success would be my focus.”

On the other hand, negative aspects of such mentorship included reinforcing the cultural barriers between ethnic minorities and White Irish, leading to marginalisation and isolation of ethnic minorities.

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“There is no formal mentorship system in place where I work. While it sounds a good idea, it might not be practical to match based on ethnicity, due to small numbers of some ethnicities, due to the very crude categorisations of “ethnicity” which could see e.g. an Ethiopian person being mentored by a Namibian person...”

Several participants commented that mentorship programmes where mentors come from the same ethnic backgrounds as their mentees require additional workload and emotional labour for staff.

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“Mentorship programmes only result in more emotional and invisible labour for staff of diverse ethnic minorities. This sort of work and the time commitment that demands is not shared with white and Irish/European members of staff. Thus, this type of programmes put in jeopardy their career advancement and progression of ethnically diverse members by placing in them extra demands that others don’t have to do.”

Positive aspects of having a mentor from similar ethnic background were raised less often. Comments on this mostly came from the White Irish and were based on a presumption of a better understanding and communication between a mentor and a mentee of similar ethnicity. Overall, White Irish were more likely to believe that ethnic minority colleagues would benefit from mentors from the same backgrounds than ethnic minority respondents themselves.

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“With fewer people from ‘minority’ backgrounds at senior level, the issue of mentorship is very challenging to pursue.”

A shared issue of concern across all ethnic groups was the lack of mentoring available to all groups, both formal and informal, and feeling that senior leadership at both departmental and institutional level were unresponsive to requests for mentors.

# 10 Involvement in Outreach and Activities

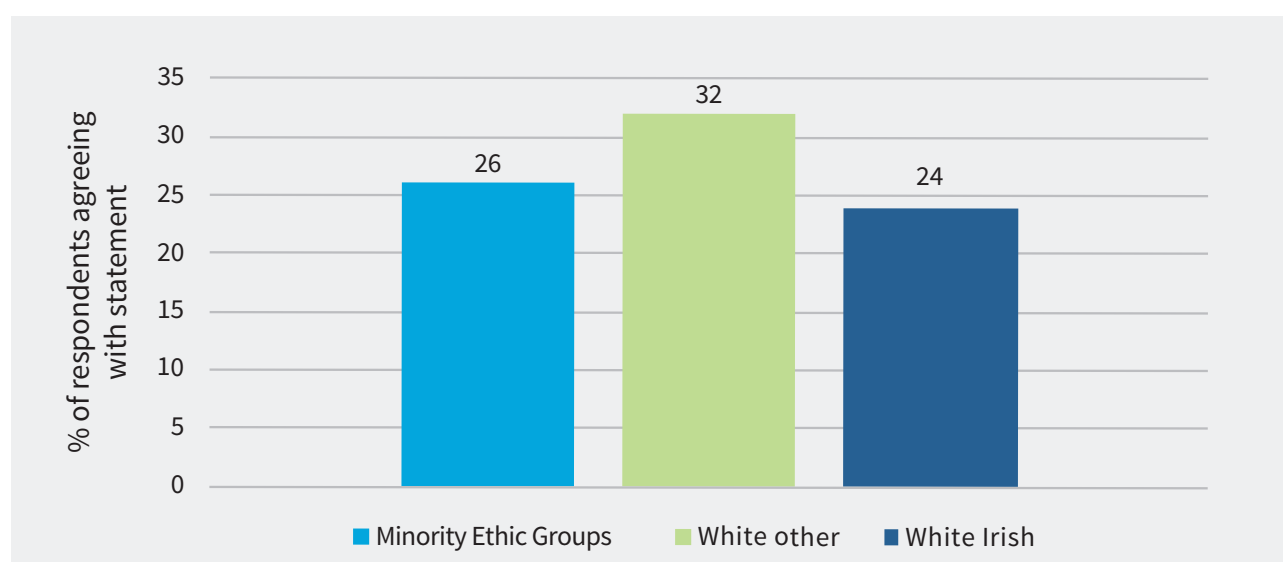


This section will examine participants' views on participation in outreach and other external activities at their HEIs. Outreach by diverse staff is an important means of widening participation in higher education. At the same time, engagement of ethnic minority staff in outreach activities may be tokenistic, and further reinforce othering practices within HEIs of staff engaged in such activities.

When asked if they participate in outreach activities and other external activities at their HEI's, a third of respondents (34%) responded that they occasionally participated. 36% reported that they participated rarely or never. A quarter (26%) reported that they participated often. This suggests that, overall, staff are not significantly engaged in outreach activities. These responses were comparable across all three groups (Figure 10.1) with White Other being slightly more often engaged in outreach activities than other groups (32% compared to 24% White Irish and 26% of staff from minority ethnic groups). Consistently, a smaller percentage of White Other (16%) and of staff from minority ethnic groups (17%) reported that they never participated in outreach activities than White Irish (21%).

Participants mostly commented on frequency of outreach activities and types of outreach that they were engaged in. They also raised the issue of undervaluing outreach activities. Respondents across all ethnic backgrounds felt that their institutions don't engage enough in outreach activities. Respondents remarks also varied by role – some had specific outreach targets in their role (particularly in administrative roles), whilst others did not.

**Figure 10.1: I am asked to participate in outreach and other external activities at my institution**



Staff from minority ethnic groups and White Irish both described participating in recruitment events, open days and conferences. Some ethnic minority respondents felt that they were not given a chance to participate in outreach activities, with some organising them on their own initiative. Those who did participate in outreach activities felt that these were low visibility and not prestigious events, or that they are only asked to participate if their local colleagues are not available.

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“I am invisible on my campus around the issues of outreach (can’t say more as it’s too identifying) but I am definitely sidelined. I get the sense that my institution thinks only white people should represent our campus, especially abroad. I have raised this issue numerous times and have been ignored.”

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“I developed my network and external outreach myself as no one is ready to relate or work with me.”

White Other staff were more likely to make positive comments about their involvement in events than staff from minority ethnic groups, with some commenting that they have been often asked to participate. Ethnic minority respondents also found that their outreach work was undervalued and often wasn’t recognised as a part of workload.

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“I interact with a lot of external professional bodies based on my discipline and corporations. I was asked to do so - however, my School’s workload does not recognise this. I feel very demotivated.”

Staff from minority ethnic groups were most likely to comment on ‘tokenistic’ invitation to be involved in external and outreach activities is tokenistic, with an aim to show off ethnic diversity or promote their institution among international audiences. Ahmed (2007) notes that diversity allows the university to sell itself, and it becomes a source of organisational pride. This is increasingly the case in a globalised higher education market.

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“They love to take our photos for their PR material....”

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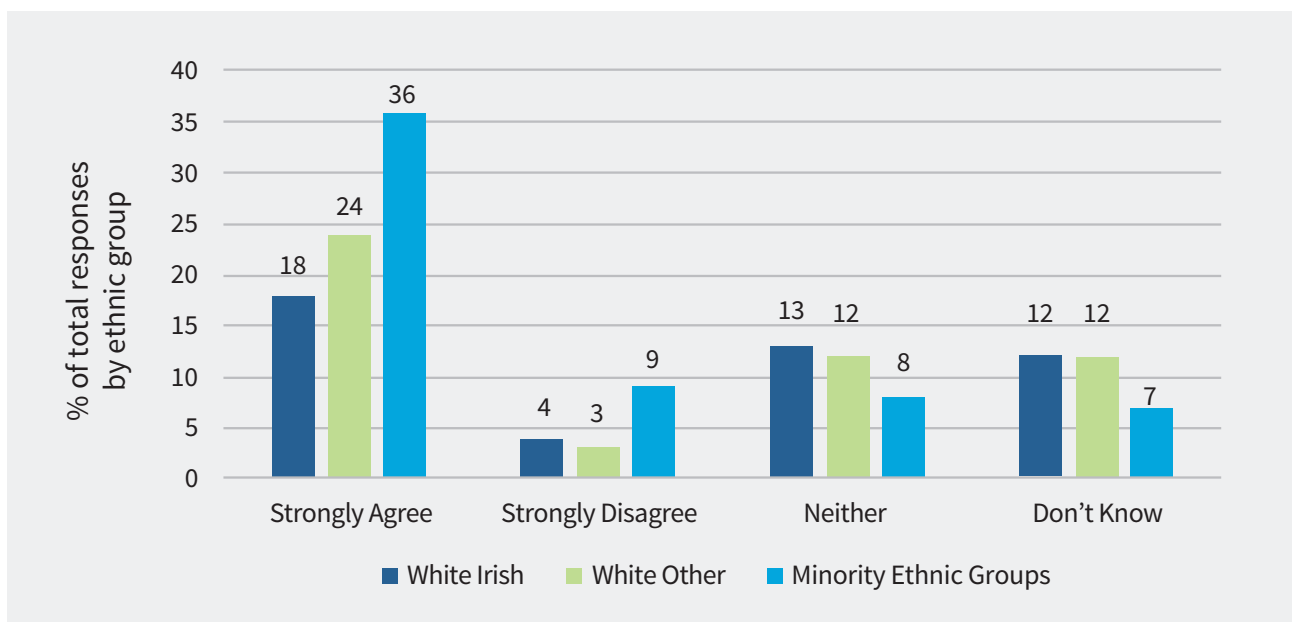
# 1 1 Race Inequality in Irish Higher Education

Race inequality may be defined as ‘unequal representation, unequal experiences and unequal outcomes of staff from minority ethnic groups’. This section will examine to what extent our respondents believe that race inequality exists in Irish higher education.

When asked if race inequality exists in HE, respondents were more inclined to agree than disagree. 48% of all staff agreed with the statement. In comparison, 32% disagreed.

Stronger agreement was higher amongst staff from minority ethnic groups (36%) compared to White Irish and White Other (18% and 24% respectively; Figure 11.1). But staff from minority ethnic groups were also more likely to disagree strongly (9%) than White Irish and White Other (4% and 3% respectively).

**Figure 11.1: Race inequality exists in Irish higher education**



Most respondents across all three groups discussed the ways in which race inequality is visible in HEIs. These responses resonate with the previous questions and vast majority of participants across all backgrounds reiterated points made earlier in regards to low diversity in HEIs, inequality in student access, invisibility of ethnic minorities within staff body and higher grade posts, and curriculum design centred on works of White scholars. Some ethnic minority participants and White Irish pointed to subtle forms of inequality, prejudice, unconscious bias

and microaggressions that affect their day to day existence. Several White Irish respondents pointed to language issues among students as a factor that contributes to their unequal opportunities.

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“I see virtually no senior managers, heads of faculties, committee members who are not white, despite there being many staff who are from minority ethnic groups.”

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“The cohort is predominantly white, and not to recognise this fact would be remiss.”

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“I think that it is changing but I have seen microaggressions by established members of staff toward students on the basis of their background.”

Some White Irish respondents pointed to systematic racism and structural inequalities in which race inequality at HEIs is embedded. They also commented that inequality within HEIs reflected wider inequalities within the Irish society. Furthermore, a number of White Irish staff commented that a lack of ethnic diversity is reflective of societal demographics in general and is not strictly related to inequalities.

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“It is a reflection of race inequality in ROI more broadly.”

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“I know of v few women of colour (or men) who are permanent academic staff. I think the % of non-white minorities in Ireland is much lower than the US or UK but I still think Ireland is coming from a v low base and could do better”

There may be an element of colour-blindness in the observation of racial inequality, which fails to acknowledge institutional racism and white privilege (Bonilla-Silva 2006, Burke 2017). Some respondents across all three groups pointed out – hopefully - that with changing demographics in Ireland this situation will improve. Several respondents also highlighted that race inequality intersects with other forms of disadvantages, such as economic, gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

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“The student population is increasingly diverse; staff diversity is less prominent. It may just take some time for ethnic minority students to be represented better in the staff cohort.”

It is commonly acknowledged across all groups that race equality work will require strategic and consistent action.

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“Even if nobody intentionally supported race inequality, it would persist for various underlying reasons relating to visibility and availability of mentors, ethnically dependent socialising, culturally dependent factors, etc. To move towards race equality - which is of paramount importance - requires hard work and persistent effort.”

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“There should be more funding opportunities for Black and Ethnic Minority Students, as well as overt and sustained anti-racist campaigns on campus and on online platforms. HEIs should have sustained and specific affirmative action policies; providing placements or quotas, training, and scholarships for Black and Ethnic Minority Students. HEIs should also have a department for international staff that should provide support to non-EU families, in order to minimize the effects of institutional racism and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and citizenship.”

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“Future recruitment will need to result in a more diverse representation.”

It is also important to say that many White Irish respondents acknowledged that race inequality does exist in HEI although they don't have any direct experience to prove this. This suggests that they are generally careful in voicing their opinions about racial/ethnic inequalities in an unequivocal way.

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“I have never seen evidence of race inequality in higher education in Ireland and can think of numerous people of varied ethnicity who have succeeded in academia in Ireland. However, I am aware that university hierarchies tend to be less diverse which is why I feel there may be some race inequality in Irish HE.”

Some respondents across all groups had mixed opinions as to whether or not racial/ethnic inequality exists within the HEI. For example, some people commented that whereas ethnic equality seems to exist within student body, it's not so apparent in terms of staff. Several respondents also mentioned that though they can see race inequality between specific individuals, they don't see it at an institutional level. Respondents also commented that whereas they can make judgments about their own institution they don't know how this would extrapolate onto the wider HE sector. They also point at differences between institutions – they may have found racial/ethnic inequality at their former HEI but not at their current one.

In terms of suggestions that the respondents had, some highlighted that having more staff from minority ethnic groups in academic positions would be encouraging for ethnic minority students. Other areas included awareness raising training and affirmative actions.

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“The profile of academic staff in Ireland is overwhelmingly white and settled. We need positive action to ensure greater representation of minority ethnic groups.”

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“Given how little ethnic diversity there is among staff it is hard to know the answer to this. Even among job applicants the pools of candidates are not especially diverse.”

Some White Irish respondents suggested that focusing too much on inequalities/difference between individuals, may lead to further divisions based on ethnicity/race within HEIs. Both gender and class are frequently raised across the survey as areas of discrimination and exclusion, and while some respondents argued for these to be considered more important than race equality, more respondents felt that these were points where solidarity and intersectional work could usefully be located.

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“Race inequality is a very significant problem in Irish higher education. The intersections of race with other protected characteristics also needs to be looked at, particularly the intersections of race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. We need to change ‘how things work’. We need to raise awareness of and then transform the dominant norms and assumptions which underpin processes, practices and expectations in Irish higher education.”

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“While it is great to see that the Higher Education Authority is looking into race equality, a serious examination of gender inequality and the intersection between race and gender are largely lacking.”



# 1 2 Overall comments on race equality in Irish HEIs

Respondents were given an opportunity in the survey to respond in general comment, and these provided an interesting reflection space on the survey as a race equality intervention, as a data collection exercise, and as a point of coalescence for some shared concerns. In reviewing these, we are highlighting areas that will be of particular interest to creators of policies and processes in Irish HEIs to address equality issues.

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Interventions to address race equality should address some key recommendations from respondents.

- > Efforts should be made to explore how to encourage a wide range of people to participate in creating and implementing solutions – top-down interventions can create resistance to those solutions and miss opportunities to identify where equality work can address shared and intersectional experiences with other groups. There is a strong desire expressed amongst a large number of White Irish respondents to be able to actively and creatively contribute to antiracist efforts in their HEIs.
- > There is a strong commitment to meritocracy amongst some academic staff which is matched by a belief that race equality work involves positive discriminations which will negatively affect academia employing the ‘brightest and best’. Race equality work can centre the issues of equity and opportunity to counter misunderstandings on these lines.
- > There is very considerable support for a strongly intersectional approach to race equality work in HEIs. The intersections of disability, sexuality, gender, age, religion, socio-economic position, marital and family status with ethnicity and racialisation have been widely commented upon in the survey. Some concern was expressed by white Irish female respondents that gender discrimination was more likely to have an impact in HEIs than racism. An intersectional approach to equality work may also prevent tensions arising between equality efforts in Irish HEIs going forward. Class and disability were the next most mentioned issues after gender.
- > Attention was drawn to discrimination on the basis of nationality, particularly by White Other staff. This has been addressed in this survey by the use of the White Other category for analysis, which was checked against nationality categories for robustness.
- > There was some concern that the category of ‘White’ used overly in race equality work might make invisible those points of commonality which can be used to drive solidarity and collective action between staff to address race inequality.
- > There was similarly a concern that concepts which have moved from academic to mainstream debates without adequate context, like ‘white privilege’, might centre focus too much on individual racist attitudes and distract from the need to seriously address the institutional policies, processes and practices which embed and reproduce inequalities between staff of different backgrounds.

- > Institutions should be reminded that raising concerns about racial discrimination can feel and be unsafe for staff from minority ethnic groups and can reinforce the structural disadvantage experienced by staff. Race equality work places a higher risk on staff from minority ethnic groups and should be cognisant of this inequality.
- > Respondents expressed deep concern that no further action would result from this survey. The invisibility of the problem was noted as undermining evidence for need for action. A small number were hopeful for diversity in their institutions and race equality work arising from this survey in future. Consistent actions build trust more robustly than grand announcements.

Policy recommendations were numerous in this section of the survey, much more so than in other questions.

- > Performance compacts should be supported by adequate oversight to address concerns that Action Plans are not adequately implemented by many institutions.
- > All managers should undertake training in inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, the EDI agenda and how to take ownership on how to change institutional cultures to embrace the 9 grounds of discrimination, not just ethnicity/racism.
- > Mandatory anti-racism training for all staff, as part of standard induction process, and rolled out to all staff.
- > Curriculum change in institutions needs to be addressed with future students in mind, not awaiting a demographic change in each institution. Racial and ethnic segregation of the undergraduate sector between universities, higher education and colleges was noted.
- > Strong efforts towards equality in recruitment must be matched by efforts elsewhere in HEIs.
- > A large number of respondents raised the critical role of HEIs in relation to racial inequalities in wider society. There is an opportunity for real evidence-informed leadership in this area by HEIs.
- > A small number wanted to see a Charter for Race Equality, similar to Athena Swan. The key reasons for this, however, were echoed in a very large number of wider comments: clarity, conciseness, and inclusion.

# 13

Policy  
recommendations

## Theme 1: Leadership

In order to foster race equality in HEIs it is vital that people in positions of leadership lead by example. Our research suggested that there needs to be a stronger leadership in HEIs. Furthermore, we found that often discrimination, abuse, and harassment comes from staff in leadership roles. In order to counteract this, leaders should actively seek to embed a culture of race equality within their institutions. We suggest:

- Communicating from the highest levels of leadership the need for change and the potential benefits to the entire university of increased equality, diversity and inclusion. Build a narrative that fits the institutional goals in terms of organisational culture and academic outcomes.
- Promoting equality on the personal level, encouraging an open dialogue and debate on these issues
- Highlighting the structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism which have informed past and current practice in HEIs and the societies in which they are situated
- Taking responsibility, accountability and ownership of race equality issues at HEIs
- Actively acknowledging that race inequality exists in HEIs
- Encouraging staff and students to report abuse, harassment and discrimination
- Embedding questions of race equality within the strategic priorities of the organisation with a view to the impact of the HEI on wider society as well as internally
- Refuting the assertion of future progressive realisation of equality – Irish HEIs are not keeping pace with wider demographics and assertive action is required to catch up
- Acknowledging the power of HEIs to influence Irish society in general

## Theme 2: Supporting diversity in staffing

It is vital that HEIs ensure that steps are taken to ensure that candidates from minority ethnic groups are supported to apply for and be successful in the recruitment processes to jobs in Irish HEIs. HEIs should be aware of differences between institutions, with some much more diverse than others. This is particularly visible in institutions where full-time staff or staff on continuous contracts are still overwhelmingly White Irish and student bodies are much more diverse. There is also a high level of segregation reported between full-time staff or staff on continuous contracts and staff on precarious contracts, the latter being much more likely to be from minority ethnic groups.

Measures should be in place to enable a fair and transparent recruitment process. Some foreign qualifications are not recognised by HEIs, and more often, they are devalued during the recruitment process by recruiting personnel. This deters ethnic minorities from applying for posts.

Additionally, often ethnic minorities do not have access to the networks via which the posts are advertised. In relation to this, we recommend:

- Institutional identification and targeted support for underrepresented groups
- Reviewing how job specifications are compiled to follow good equality practice, ensuring recruitment criteria are inclusive, and reducing the number of 'desirables' in job adverts
- Providing mandatory race equality training for all members of recruitment panels
- Providing clear reporting mechanisms for candidates to address bias in recruitment
- Targeting advertising towards ethnic minority groups
- Providing immigration advice for non-EEA staff to reduce employment difficulties

Across all groups of staff, informal or no mentoring programmes increased reliance upon informal social networks and information, and excluded people from a range of different backgrounds and experiences. Mentoring programmes and clear transparent information about promotion are key to supporting a sense of fairness and ensuring diversity in promotions.

### **Theme 3: Making race/equality policies transparent**

Our research highlights a lack of clarity and understanding of specific policies addressing race equality at HEIs. There is also a general reluctance to engage with large amount of policies in order to access information, which is often embedded within wider regulations, including Dignity at Work policy, Equality policy, and Mutual respect policy. In view of this, the guidance places an emphasis on:

- Clear signposting to existing policies relating to race equality. Institutions might consider a standalone race equality document for easy access which signposts towards the other relevant policies.
- Clear definitions of race equality within existing policies. This should make reference to the structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism, as well as the more commonly recognised individual racism seen in acts of discrimination and abuse.

### **Theme 4: Reporting mechanisms**

There is also evidence in this survey that racist incidents on campus are under-reported by both students and staff. This is particularly pertinent in cases where the perpetrators hold senior positions within institutions, as there is a general fear of speaking out against those in position of power. Furthermore, lengthy, inefficient bureaucratic processes further deter people from reporting such incidents. We therefore recommend:

- Clear signposting of disciplinary and reporting procedures in relation to race equality on campus
- Possibility to report issues related to racial harassment, abuse, discrimination, and microaggressions online. For example through racism and bias hotline
- An option to make reports anonymously to increase the rate of reporting
- Efficient mechanisms for dealing with complaints be established

### **Theme 5: Awareness and training**

Our research points at a general lack of understanding what constitutes racism, racial harassment, abuse, discrimination and microaggressions within HEIs. We recommend increasing both staff and students' understanding of these issues through appropriate training opportunities that would go beyond unconscious bias training. This could include:

- Mandatory antiracism training for staff at all levels with an emphasis on intersectionality. This should include elements such as bystander intervention, unconscious bias, cultural intelligence, equitable practice and racial justice. These should also counter myths about positive discrimination.
- Tailored race equality training for students
- Sustained anti-racist campaigns on campus and on online platforms

### **Theme 6: Fostering diversity in HEIs**

Having an inclusive civic culture on campus where diversity and intercultural dialogue are encouraged is crucial to promoting race equality in HEIs. We suggest creating supportive and engaging spaces for conversations around race and ethnicity, where ethnic minority students and staff feel respected and valued. This can be promoted by:

- Organising intercultural activities for both staff and students so people can become more understanding and respectful of other cultures
- Supporting staff and student-led initiatives to incorporate discussions about diversity and inclusion into campus life, such as university committee on diversity and inclusion.
- Developing university strategies to engage diverse views, such as decolonising/diversifying curriculum to Euro-centric viewpoints
- Engaging members of ethnic minorities in outreach activities not just to showcase diversity but to promote inclusivity

### **Theme 7: Supporting diversity in student recruitment**

While the student body in Irish HEIs has been becoming more diverse in recent years, reflecting wider demographic changes in Ireland, it is still relatively homogenous when compared to the UK and other Western countries. With these concerns in mind, we recommend that steps are undertaken to increase prospects of ethnic minorities to undertake study programmes in HEIs. It is also vital to have certain measures in place that would support these students in their studies as well as their future careers. Enrolment of underrepresented groups, who can potentially take up lecturing positions is a first step towards the broader inclusion within the HEIs. This can be achieved by:

- Targeted support programmes to improve up take of, and experience of ethnic minority students in regards to applying for scholarship and funding.
- Targeted support programmes to facilitate ethnic minority students' access to placement and training opportunities
- Targeted career advice for marginalised groups, and first generation third level students

### **Theme 8: Data Collection**

There is a need for institutions to be aware of the patterns of diversity in staff and student bodies, and how these compare to diversity in the wider population of Ireland and the communities in which HEIs are based. It is clear that much diversity in permanent academic posts is due to international recruitment. It is less clear how much difference there is between permanent, temporary and precarious employment in Irish HEIs by ethnicity. Qualitative data from this survey suggests that staff are increasingly aware of a divide in this regard.

We recommend the systematic collection of data which will provide the necessary evidence base regarding staff and student representation, access and outcome by ethnicity, and benchmarking of this data against Census data. There are a wide range of considerations in the collection of such data, including voluntary disclosure, work with representative bodies, awareness raising about the role of such data collection, and appropriate resourcing of data collection, retention and security.

The data in this survey supports the implementation of the recommendations of the National Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group on the Use of Ethnicity Categories in Irish Higher Education, which reviews these in some detail.



# 14

## Suggestions for further research

This research yielded important insights into race equality within HEIs, pointing at difficulties, challenges, and structural factors that may have a negative impact on ethnic minority staff's ability to feel welcome, achieve success, and progress within their workplaces. As we mentioned in the first chapter, the main limitation of our project was a small number of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds. There is a scope for a more targeted approach, focusing on experiences of these groups specifically. While the case for change can be built on the existing literature, it is crucial to understand the particularity of the issues at each institution, using both quantitative data and qualitative information from surveys and individual testimonials.

From the review presented here it can be argued that future research should:

1. Use focus groups and interviews to understand how experiences of ethnic minority groups vary across different institutions, different ranks/contract types and areas of work.
2. Reach out to ethnic minority staff who are in precarious employment and whose voices were missing in this research
3. Take a more intersectional approach into understanding of race equality at HEIs, and investigate the importance of other variables, such as social class and gender in shaping people's experiences at HEIs
4. Rethink how the recent Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated some of the issues that ethnic minority groups face at HEIs

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# Appendix 1

## Copy of Survey

## **National Online Survey: Race Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions**

### **Why are we running this survey?**

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has a statutory responsibility to promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education (HE). The HEA is committed to addressing racial inequalities in higher education and to supporting Irish Higher education institutions (HEIs) to create an inclusive culture and environment where individuals are able to thrive, irrespective of their ethnic background.

For the purposes of this survey, race equality may be defined as equal representation, equal experiences and equal outcomes of staff from minority ethnic groups.

In order to support equality planning processes, the HEA is conducting a national survey of HEI staff to develop a picture of race equality across the Irish higher education sector. We would welcome your participation in this survey to gain insight into your view of race equality for all staff in Irish higher education. The survey normally takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

### **Who should take part?**

All staff working in HEIs in the Republic of Ireland, regardless of ethnic background or nationality. We aim to survey all staff for their views on/experiences of race equality in Irish HE.

### **Why should you take part?**

By taking part in this survey you are helping us to identify areas for improvement, and ways to make those improvements. The survey results will be collated to provide an overall picture of race equality across the Irish higher education sector.

### **Your experience**

While some of the questions in this survey have fixed answers, we have included as many open text boxes as possible, to give respondents an opportunity to detail their own experience of race equality in Irish HE. With this in mind, please expand on your answers wherever possible. We want to understand your views on/experiences of race equality in Irish HE. The more information you provide us with, the more we will understand about the current situation in relation to race equality in Irish HE.

## **Personal demographic details**

We do not ask you for your name or contact details in this survey. To understand your answers in more context we would be grateful if you could provide us with some personal demographic information as part of this survey. The amount of information you provide us with is entirely up to you; please only disclose information with which you are comfortable, but the more you provide, the more useful it will be for us when analysing your survey response.

Where you do not wish to disclose information, please choose the 'prefer not to say' option.

All of the information you provide will be held confidentially in full compliance with data protection legislation and will only be seen by a small group within the HEA Executive as outlined below.

## **Data protection and confidentiality**

Survey responses are anonymous. Please only answer questions with which you are comfortable. All data collected through this survey will be held securely and confidentially in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018. The data will not be used for any purpose other than providing an overall picture of race equality across the Irish higher education sector. Access to the data set will be confined to a small group within the HEA Executive, who will be responsible for its subsequent analysis. We will only process data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018. If we appoint a data processor, this will be subject to a data processing agreement and they will only process data under our instructions. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified. Any published material will be anonymised.

The HEA regrets that it is not in a position to personally meet with any individuals who provide a submission or to address personal grievances. Respondents are requested not to submit any details of grievances which are the subject of legal proceedings.

If you have any questions about this survey that have not been answered by this information page, please contact [rwoods@hea.ie](mailto:rwoods@hea.ie)

## Privacy notice- HEA Race Equality Survey

1. Purpose- the data collected in this survey is used to identify if or quantify inequalities exist in the sector, and to inform system-wide and institutional actions to combat inequality.
2. Legal basis- We understand the collection of staff and student ethnicity data to be central to the implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, deriving from section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. Under this Act, all public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must undertake assessment and monitoring, and have policies and plans to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of staff, students and the wider public that are served by the work of HEIs. The HEA has a legal obligation under The Higher Education Act, 1971 to promote equality in the higher education sector.
3. Article 9 of the GDPR 2018 Legal Basis- as we are processing special category data as part of this survey, we are relying on Article 9 (2)(a), **explicit consent**, in order to process this kind of data.
4. Purpose- this data is used to identify if/ what /whether or 'to quantify' inequalities exist in the sector, and to informing system-wide and institutional actions to combat gender inequality. The HEA will not use the data in this survey for any other purpose.
5. Controller- the HEA is the data controller for the data collected in this survey. You can contact the Data Protection Officer of the HEA via [dataprotection@hea.ie](mailto:dataprotection@hea.ie)
6. Categories of personal data- ethnicity, gender.
7. Categories of data subject- The most recent revision of ethnicity categories for Census 2022 are noted here:  
[https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census\\_Pilot\\_Survey\\_Report\\_2018\\_V1.pdf](https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census_Pilot_Survey_Report_2018_V1.pdf) (see page 15). The invitation to identify one's ethnicity in the census has largely involved a mix of physical characteristics (or race; White, Black, Asian etc), subcategorised by nationality (e.g. Irish, Chinese) and in the case of Irish Travellers, further subcategorised by a specific ethnic identifier. The 2022 categories also include the grouping Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi as a subcategory of 'Asian' for the first time.
8. Confidentiality- Access to the data set will be confined to a small group within the HEA Executive, who will be responsible for its subsequent analysis. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified. Any published material will be anonymised. All data collected through this survey will be held securely and confidentially in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## Personal demographic details

### *Institutional affiliation*

Please select the type of higher education institution you currently work in.

- = University / Technological University
- = Institute of Technology
- = College
- = Prefer not to say
- = Other (please specify)

### *Area of work/disciplinary area*

Please indicate your area of work/disciplinary area.

- = Academic: Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences
- = Academic: Business and Law
- = Academic: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
- = Academic: Medicine and Health
- = Research Centre/Institute
- = Research Fellow
- = Professional, Managerial and Support Services
- = Technical Support
- = Prefer not to say
- = Other (please specify)

### *Role/Grade*

Please indicate your current role by pay grade. \*

- = >€130,000
- = €115,000-€129,999
- = €100,000-€114,999
- = €75,000-€99,999
- = €60,000-€74,999
- = €45,000-€59,999
- = €30,000-€44,999
- = €15,000-€29,999
- = <14,999

### *Mode of working / contract type*

On what contractual basis are you currently employed? Select all that apply.

- = Full-time permanent / multi-annual
- = Part-time permanent / multi-annual
- = Full-time fixed-term contract
- = Part-time fixed-term contract
- = Hourly paid
- = Prefer not to say
- = Other (please specify)

### *Ethnicity*

For us to analyse how ethnic background impacts experiences of working in higher education, we would like you to indicate your ethnic background.

Do you consider yourself to be from a minority ethnic background?\*

- = Yes
- = No
- = Prefer not to say

With which ethnic group do you most identify? (options are listed alphabetically)<sup>8</sup>

- = Asian or Asian Irish: Chinese
- = Asian or Asian Irish: Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi
- = Asian or Asian Irish: Any other Asian background
- = Black or Black Irish: African
- = Black or Black Irish: Any other Black background
- = Other including mixed group/background: Arabic
- = Other including mixed group/background: Mixed Background
- = Other including mixed group/background: Other
- = White: Irish
- = White: Irish Traveller
- = White: Roma
- = White: Any other White background
- = Prefer not to say

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<sup>8</sup> These categories are those to be used by the Central Statistics Office for Census 2021. While the HEA acknowledges their limitations, we use them here per the recommendation of the National Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group in their May 2020 statement on the use of ethnicity categories in Irish higher education.

### *Nationality*

What is your nationality?

- = Irish
- = Dual nationality/citizenship (Irish/Non-Irish)
- = From within the European Union (other than Ireland) and the United Kingdom
- = From outside the European Union
- = Prefer not to say

### *Sex/Gender*

What gender (if any) do you most identify with?

- = Female
- = Male
- = Non-Binary
- = Other
- = Prefer not to say

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

- = Yes
- = No
- = Prefer not to say

### **Survey Questions:**

#### *Staff diversity in the institution*

I work in an ethnically diverse institution in terms of staff.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I considered the ethnic diversity of staff in my institution before applying to work here.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers above. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*



## HEI policies around race and ethnicity

I am aware of policies at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequality.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

Policies at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate racism and race inequality are clear and explicit.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

The policies that my HEI has around race and/or ethnicity are meaningful in the way that they address race inequality.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

The policies that my HEI has around race and/or ethnicity are effective in generating outcomes that address race inequality.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

Leaders at my HEI are visible in addressing racism and race inequality.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers above relating to HEI policies around race and ethnicity. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

*Social inclusivity/sense of isolation among staff*

The ethnic diversity of staff at my institution impacts on my sense of belonging.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

The ethnic diversity of staff at my institution impacts on my desire to stay.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I believe I am treated equally by all colleagues, irrespective of my ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I believe I am treated equally by all students, irrespective of my ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers above relating to social inclusivity/sense of isolation among staff. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

*Observation and experience of unfair treatment or discrimination*

I have been subject to racial or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of my work.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have witnessed racial or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of my work.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

If I reported racial or ethnic discrimination, harassment or abuse to my institution, the relevant and appropriate investigative and/or disciplinary action would be taken.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers above relating to observation and experience of unfair treatment or discrimination. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)

*Racist harassment or abuse*

I have heard or seen (directly or indirectly) the use of racist language, comments, gestures, symbols or physical violence on campus or online.

- = Never
- = Rarely
- = Occasionally
- = Often
- = Don't know

If I hear or see (directly or indirectly) the use of racist language, comments, gestures, symbols or physical violence on campus or online I intervene or report the incident.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

There is a clear guidance to follow if I experience or witness racist discrimination, harassment or abuse in my institution.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers above relating to racist harassment or abuse. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

### *Racial microaggressions*

I have had stereotypes made about me at work because of my race or ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have had my contributions minimized at work because of my race or ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have been made to feel the way I speak at work is inferior because of my race or ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have experienced not being taken seriously at work because of my race or ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have experienced negativity from other colleagues because I have raised race-related issues at work.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know



*Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers or to describe the impact of such microaggressions (e.g. emotional impact, wellbeing, leaving institution, etc.). (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

*Relationship between workload and recognition*

I have the same opportunities for career progression as my colleagues who do the same job regardless of my ethnic background.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

There are opportunities for me to develop within my role.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have been encouraged to apply for promotion or jobs at a higher grade

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

The work I do to support students from marginalised or minority ethnic backgrounds is fully recognised.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on any of your answers above relating to relationship between workload and recognition. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

*Availability of mentorship*

I would like to have access to mentorship from staff members of a similar ethnic background to me.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

I have access to mentorship from staff members of a similar ethnic background to me.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on your answer relating to the availability of mentorship.  
(Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

*Involvement in outreach and activities*

I am asked to participate in outreach and other external activities at my institution.

- = Never
- = Rarely
- = Occasionally
- = Often
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on your answer relating to involvement in outreach and activities. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

*Race inequality in Irish higher education*

Race inequality may be defined as unequal representation, unequal experiences and unequal outcomes of staff from minority ethnic groups.

Race inequality exists in Irish higher education.

- = Strongly disagree
- = Disagree
- = Slightly disagree
- = Neither agree nor disagree
- = Slightly agree
- = Agree
- = Strongly agree
- = Don't know

*Please use the space below to expand on your answer to the previous. (Please avoid including identifying information in this text box.)*

**Further comments**

*Please use the space below to raise any other issues in relation to race equality within your institution or Irish HE in general. You may also use this space to indicate any actions that you would like to see to address race inequality in Irish HE. You should also feel free to make a comment on the survey itself.*

*(Please avoid including identifying information in this text box. The HEA regrets that it is not in a position to personally meet with any individuals who provide a submission or to address personal grievances. Respondents are requested not to submit any details of grievances which are the subject of legal proceedings.)*

**End of survey**

Thank you for completing the survey

## **Appendix 2** Athena SWAN Intersectionality Working Group Statement

## Statement by the National Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group on the Use of Ethnicity Categories in Irish Higher Education

May 2020

### Background

The Intersectionality Working Group was established in 2019 by the National Athena SWAN Ireland Committee in conjunction with the HEA. Membership of the group is outlined in Appendix 1. While the work of the group will evolve over time, the primary goal of the group has been to develop a cross-sectoral approach to collecting data on staff and student ethnicity in the Irish higher education sector.

We understand the collection of staff and student ethnicity data to be central to the implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, deriving from section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. Under this Act, all public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must undertake assessment and monitoring, and have policies and plans to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of staff, students and the wider public that are served by the work of HEIs.

HEIs in Ireland have become accustomed, in recent years, to collecting and monitoring data on the gender of staff and students for equality purposes. This data has become useful to pinpointing where inequalities exist in the sector, and to informing system-wide and institutional actions to combat gender inequality.

Given international evidence of the ways gender and ethnicity inequalities interact in higher education, we regard it as particularly important that higher education institutions and the HEA develop greater understanding of our staff and students' experiences in relation to ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> But there are limitations and ethical dilemmas involved in asking people to identify with a particular category for the purposes of equality monitoring. This is particularly true in the case of ethnicity categories.

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<sup>9</sup> Bhopal, K. and Henderson, H. (2019) Competing inequalities: Gender versus race in higher education institutions in the UK. *Educational Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1642305>  
Zambrana, R.E. and MacDonald, V-M (2019) Staggered inequalities in access to higher education by gender, race and ethnicity. In Thornton Dill, B. and Zambrana, R.E (eds) *Emerging Intersections*, Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 73-100.

### The limitations and ethics of using ethnicity categories

It is important first of all to acknowledge that taking action against racism and for equality does not require us to wait for establishment of a data collection system. Perhaps more profoundly, we need to acknowledge that the institutionalising of modern racism has involved the state-sanctioned use of pseudoscientific categories in data collection, which falsely divide populations into superior and inferior groups. The concept of ethnicity has been foregrounded in contemporary public and policy discourse as a means of refuting connotations of biological hierarchy in populations, and to foreground the importance of descent, place and heritage to one's experience. Nonetheless, social movements and individuals often identify with categories of race and ethnicity interchangeably and in multiple ways, to reflect specific forms of shared historic and ongoing experience of society not least including the experience of institutionalised racism and related inequalities in work, study, health, housing, education and geographic location.

Ireland's Central Statistics Office (CSO) has developed ethnicity census categories over the past twenty years in consultation with community groups and individuals, and with some considerable reliance on the British approach to census classifications. The most recent revision of ethnicity categories for Census 2021 is noted in Appendix 2. The invitation to identify one's ethnicity in the census has largely involved a mix of physical characteristics (or race; White, Black, Asian etc), subcategorised by nationality (e.g. Irish, Chinese) and in the case of Irish Travellers, further subcategorised by a specific ethnic identifier. The 2021 categories also include the grouping Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi as a subcategory of 'Asian' for the first time.

These categorisations are inevitably contested, not least when one's only option is to identify as 'other'. The question of how to recognise those who are part of diverse but small population groups while retaining their anonymity also raises further question. Terms such as 'Traveller, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' (TBAME), or 'racialised minority' are heavily contested, not least when used to refer to individuals, as opposed to very broad groups. Terms such as 'global majority' are also increasingly being used to avoid overemphasising national minority status in a globalised world.

International evidence, and the working group's own experience also indicates there can be reluctance, not least amongst advantaged and majority groups, to identify with categories that denote one's skin colour.<sup>10</sup> However, since skin colour is one of the ways in which groups experience advantage and disadvantage, it is important to take into account. Thus, while there is

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<sup>10</sup> Doane, A.W. and Bonilla-Silva, E. (eds) (2003) *White out: The continuing significance of racism*. New York: Routledge.

Pauker, K., Apfelbaum, E.P. and Spitzer, B. (2015) When societal norms and social identity collide: The race talk dilemma for social minority children. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 6(8): pp. 887-895.



an ethical purpose to collecting data on people's experiences by race/ethnicity, this purpose needs to be guarded carefully through a process of consultation with diverse constituencies, education at national and institutional level, responsible reporting and media engagement, and conviction to take action against institutional racism at all times.

## **Statement of the Working Group's position**

It is our view that the following actions should be progressed:

1. The Irish higher education sector moves to create an evidence base regarding staff and student representation, access and outcome by ethnicity with the explicit purpose of recognising and tackling institutionalised racism and advancing equality in higher education;
2. For comparability purposes with CSO figures, the HEA use CSO categorisations of ethnicity to conduct this work, and provide feedback to the CSO on the use of these categories in the national census as appropriate;
3. The HEA work with HEIs and representative bodies to advise on the establishment of ethnicity categories in staff and student data systems, policies and forms, and to raise awareness of the legitimate purpose of using ethnicity categories under GDPR legislation;
4. The HEA work with higher education institutions and representative bodies to conduct a 'voluntary disclosure' campaign, which supports staff and students to voluntarily disclose their ethnicity at multiple opportunities (e.g. reminders at registration, recruitment, personal staff/student profile, requests for leave of absence, conferring);
5. The HEA reports on staff demographics and outcomes should include guidance on the limitations, and ethical use of, ethnicity data;
6. Individual institutions monitor staff and student demographics and outcomes by ethnicity, with the purpose of tackling institutionalised racism and advancing equality through targeted actions;
7. Individual institutions may include further ethnicity categories than those provided by the CSO (including broad identifiers such as 'TBAME' or 'MEGs' (Minority Ethnic Groups)) in consultation with staff and students and local community groups, and drawing on the advice of the national intersectionality working group;
8. Individual institutions to advance the recruitment, retention and progression of staff and students from minority ethnic groups through dedicated actions, and equality action plans, as appropriate.
9. The Irish higher education sector, over time, develops a strong capacity to monitor staff and student outcomes across a range of equality grounds and protected characteristics.

## Suggested Reading

Bhopal, K. and Henderson, H. (2019) Advancing equality in higher education: An exploratory study of the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charters.

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/education/reports/advancing-equality-and-higher-education.pdf>

Crenshaw, K (1989) 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', University of Chicago Legal Forum: vol.1989: Iss.1, Article 8.

<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf>

Garner, S. (2004) Racism in the Irish experience. London: Pluto Press.

King-O'Riain, R.C. (2007) Counting on the 'Celtic Tiger': Adding ethnic census categories in the Republic of Ireland. *Ethnicities* 7(4): pp. 516-542.

<https://doi-org.ucc.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1468796807084015>

Nobles, M. (2000) *Shades of citizenship: Race and the census in modern politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

## Other resources

K. Crenshaw, 'The urgency of intersectionality', Ted Talk:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle\\_crenshaw\\_the\\_urgency\\_of\\_intersectionality?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en)

**This statement has been endorsed by the following institutions and organisations:**

Athlone Institute of Technology  
Cork Institute of Technology  
Carlow College  
Dublin City University  
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology  
Dundalk Institute of Technology  
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology  
Institute of Technology, Carlow  
Institute of Technology, Sligo  
Institute of Technology, Tralee  
Irish Universities Association  
Letterkenny Institute of Technology  
Limerick Institute of Technology  
Mary Immaculate College  
Maynooth University  
National College of Art and Design  
National College of Ireland  
National University of Ireland, Galway  
Royal College of Surgeons Ireland  
St Angela's College, Sligo  
Trinity College Dublin  
Technological Higher Education Association  
Technological University Dublin  
University College Cork  
University College Dublin  
University of Limerick  
Waterford Institute of Technology

## **Appendix 1: National Intersectionality Working Group Membership**

Sam Blanckensee (MU)

Victoria Brownlee (Advance HE, Chair).

Jennifer Byrne (TU Dublin)

Kim Connick (DCU)

Sarah Fink (RCSI)

Ebun Joseph (RCSI/UCD)

Su-ming Khoo (NUIG)

Karl Kitching (UCC)

Sarah Hawes (NCI)

Chandana Mathur (MU)

Modesta Mwarire (HEA)

Claire McGing (IADT)

Philip Owende (TU Dublin)

Kalpana Shankar (UCD)

Ross Woods (HEA)

## Appendix 2: Census 2021, Question 12

Q. 12 “What is your ethnic group/background?” will have new tick boxes for Roma, Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Arabic, and Mixed ethnic group/background.

The Census Pilot survey report details the new categories as follows:

**Table 6: Census Pilot survey report**

	<b>Ethnicity</b>
White	Irish Irish Traveller Roma Any other White background
Black or Black Irish	African Any other Black background
Asian or Asian Irish	Chinese Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi (Pilot A only) Any other Asian background
Other, including mixed group/background	Arabic (Pilot A only) Mixed background Other

Source:

[https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census\\_Pilot\\_Survey\\_Report\\_2018\\_V1.pdf](https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census_Pilot_Survey_Report_2018_V1.pdf)

