TUS Public Sector Duty Assess Report

TUS

Contents

Acronyms

EDI – Equality, Diversity, Inclusion

EU – European Union

EUA - European University Association

FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

HEA – Higher Education Authority

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

INAR – Irish Network Against Racism

LGBT+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

SL2 – Senior Lecturer Grade Level 2

SL3 – Senior Lecturer Grade Level 3

STEM- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Introduction

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ("The Duty") places a statutory obligation on public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect human rights in the performance of their functions. Under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, institutions must integrate these principles when developing policies, delivering services, and engaging with stakeholders. In doing so, they must consider the nine equality grounds set out in Irish legislation: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community.

This Duty aligns with broader European commitments, notably *The European Pillar of Social Rights* which was released by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.[1] This sets out 20 key principles for building a fair and inclusive society and reinforces the importance of equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion. It places a particular emphases on areas such as gender equality, equal opportunities, and the rights of people with disabilities, providing a complementary framework to national legislation.

Under the Public Sector Duty, public bodies are required to assess equality and human rights issues relevant to their functions, identify actions to address these issues, and report on progress. This Assessment Report draws on EU and Irish datasets, government and NGO reports, and peer-reviewed research, combining data from European, national, and institutional levels to provide a comprehensive view of current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) challenges. It also includes findings specific to TUS, based on staff surveys, focus groups, and diversity data aligned with the nine equality grounds. These insights will be periodically updated to ensure decisions reflect the most current understanding of equality and human rights concerns, including intersectionality where discrimination occurs across multiple grounds.

[1] European Commission, 'European Pillar of Social Rights' <https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union_en> accessed 29 October 2025.

1 - Gender

EU

A recent study of 31 European countries found that the gender pay gap reduced when there were higher levels of tertiary education.[2] Although more women complete third-level education than men, they are more likely than men to work part-time, one of the primary reasons being caregiving responsibilities.[3,4] Caregiving commitments affect the employment status of one-third of women in the workforce which is an important factor when considering the gender pay gap as part-time and temporary contracts have been observed to increase this gap.[5,6] Part-time employment also comes with fewer advancement opportunities and poorer access to social benefits compared to full-time positions.[7,8] Furthermore, female representation in higher education is unbalanced across disciplines with the majority of women completing degrees in arts and humanities and health and welfare while men predominate in the fields of STEM and life sciences.[9] While the outlook for senior management appears to be more positive with 60% of women from European University Association (EUA) members holding these positions[10], the EUA also notes "as women move up the career ladder, they become progressively outnumbered by men".[11]

A further concern regarding gender equality is the prevalence of sexual violence experienced by women. In the EU, 30% of women reported that they had experienced

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[2] António Afonso and M Carmen Blanco-Arana, 'The Persistence of Gender Pay and Employment Gaps in European Countries' (2025) 67 Comparative Economic Studies 326 accessed 26 August 2025.
[3] Eurostat, 'Educational Attainment Statistics' (2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/> accessed 28 August 2025.
[4] Central Statistics Office, 'Women in the Labour Market 2023-2024' (7 March 2025) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wlm/womeninthelabourmarket2023-2024/keyfindings/> accessed 27 August 2025.
[5] Eurostat, 'Gender Equality in the EU - 10 Years in Review - Statistics Explained - Eurostat' (*Eurostat*, 2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=684789#Gender_balance_in_higher_education_degrees> accessed 26 August 2025.
[6] Afonso and Blanco-Arana (n 2).
[7] Ole Brüggemann, 'Employees' Perceptions of Co-Workers' Internal Promotion Penalties: The Role of Gender, Parenthood and Part-Time' (2024) 26 European Societies 773 <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2023.2270049> accessed 28 August 2025.
[8] Silvia Girardi, Anna Ilsøe and Trine Pernille Larsen, 'Non-Standard Employment and Access to Social Protection across European Countries' (2024).
[9] Eurostat, 'Gender Equality in the EU - 10 Years in Review - Statistics Explained - Eurostat' (n 5).
[10] European University Association, 'Women in University Leadership – Some Progress but More to Do' (2022) <https://www.eua.eu/news/eua-news/women-in-university-leadership-some-progress-but-more-to-do.html> accessed 28 August 2025.
[11] ibid.

physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.[12] Violence can result in both physical injury and psychological consequences, both of which may impact on an individual's work performance. While most gender-based violence happens in the home, it can also occur in the workplace.[13] In 2021, between 11% and 54% of women across the EU reported having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace compared to 5% to 20% of men.[14] In 2022, UniSAFE coordinated a survey on gender-based violence in European academia across 46 higher education and research organisations representing 15 European countries.[15] This study found that, since starting work or study at their institution, 62% of staff and students had experienced at least one type of gender-based violence, with psychological violence and sexual harassment being the most prevalent.

The Irish Context

Although more women than men in Ireland hold a third-level degree, and the number of women employed in Ireland more than doubled between 1998 and 2024, women continue to make up the majority of the part-time labour force.[16] They are also more likely to be low-paid (i.e., earning less than two-thirds of median earnings) than men, even when other factors are held constant.[17] In line with EU findings, one-third of women in Ireland reported that their primary reason for being in part-time employment was due to caregiving responsibilities.[18] Indeed, caregiving disproportionately affects women who make up 61% of unpaid carers in Ireland and can have a direct impact on caregivers' career progression.[19] The caring responsibilities of female staff in higher education can be at odds with being seen as an 'ideal' academic. These additional commitments often result in career interruptions and disadvantages female carers who are working within the 'always on' academic culture.[20] Providing care can affect students as well. Russell and Smyth

[12] Ionel Zamfir, 'Violence against Women in the EU: State of Play in 2025' (2025).
[13] ibid.
[14] Eurostat, 'Violence Experienced by Total Population' (2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=669154#Sexual_harassment_at_work_based_on_the_EU-GBV_survey> accessed 28 August 2025.
[15] 'Gender-Based Violence and Its Consequences in European Academia' <https://unisafe-gbv.eu> accessed 16 October 2025.
[16] Central Statistics Office, 'Women in the Labour Market 2023-2024' (n 4).
[17] Garance Hingre and others, 'Gender and Labour Market Inclusion on the Island of Ireland' (ESRI 2024) <https://www.esri.ie/publications/gender-and-labour-market-inclusion-on-the-island-of-ireland> accessed 26 August 2025.
[18] Central Statistics Office, 'Women in the Labour Market 2023-2024' (n 4).
[19] Central Statistics Office, 'Profile 4 - Disability, Health and Carers' (2023).
[20] Corina Sheerin and Margaret Linehan, '"Everyone Should Have a Wife" – Extreme Work, Eldercare, and the Gendered Academy in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic' (2024) 35 The International Journal of Human Resource Management 1708

(2024) note that the progression to higher education is less likely for young caregivers and those who do progress may be restricted in terms of their selection of institutions as it is important for them to remain at home.[21]

Governance and management structures in Irish HEIs are now mostly gender balanced[22]. In 2020, four governing authorities, six academic councils and six executive management structures had achieved a minimum of 40% representation of each gender. This is compared to 2024 in which 16 governing authorities, 17 academic councils and 11 executive management structures were gender balanced[23] [24]. There has also been an improvement in gender equality at senior positions within universities in recent years. In the Technological University sector in 2021, 27% of senior level Academic posts (SL3) were held by women[25]. This increased to 44.3% in 2024[26]. In the traditional university sector, 30% of Professors were female in 2021[27]. This has increased marginally to 34% in 2024[28]. There has also been an improvement in gender balance in Core funded senior level Professional Management and Support Staff in the same time period: 46% of PMSS staff earning over €106,000 in 2021 were female[29]. This increased to 54.1% in 2024[30]. However, research has also shown several challenges for women in senior positions in higher education, with women in senior management being subject to a higher degree of self-regulation and "stretching of self" compared to their male counterparts [31] and

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09585192.2023.2237865%4010.1080/tfocoll.2024.0.issue-working-extremely-at-the-centre-of-HRM-Research> accessed 4 September 2025.

[21] Helen Russell and Emer Smyth, 'Caregiving Among Young Adults in Ireland' (2024) <https://doi.org/10.26504/rs168> accessed 26 August 2025.

[22] Pádraig Macneela and others, 'Report on the National Survey of Staff Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish HEIs' (2022) <https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/> accessed 27 August 2025.

[23] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender 2021' (2021).

[24] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Sex and Gender 2024' (2024) <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/statistics/higher-education-institutional-staff-profiles-by-sex-and-gender-2024/> accessed 16 October 2025.

[25] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender 2021' (2021).

[26] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Sex and Gender 2024' (2024

[27] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender 2021' (2021).

[28] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Sex and Gender 2024' (2024)

[29] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender 2021' (2021).

[30] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Sex and Gender 2024' (2024)

[31] Dympna Devine, Bernie Grummell and Kathleen Lynch, 'Crafting the Elastic Self? Gender and Identities in Senior Appointments in Irish Education' (2011) 18 Gender, Work and Organization 631 </doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2009.00513.x> accessed 27 August 2025.

organisational resistance to gender equality that has been observed in higher education institutions in Ireland.[32]

In addition to these broader gender equality challenges facing HEIs, the issue of sexual harassment and violence in academia must also be considered. A national survey on staff and student experiences of sexual violence and harassment within higher education institutions in Ireland was carried out in 2021 by the HEA. The results for this survey are presented in two separate reports focusing separately on staff and students.[33,34] The findings revealed that 42% of students agreed that sexual harassment and violence was an issue in their institution, compared to staff of which 14% and 27% believed that it was a problem among staff and students, respectively. Overall, one-third of adults with a third-level education who participated in a survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office in 2022 reported having experienced sexual violence as an adult, though these experiences are not confined to sexual violence experienced within HEIs.[35]

In relation to reporting incidences of sexual violence and harassment, the HEA survey mentioned above highlighted that male students were more likely to agree that their institution would be supportive in response to a report of sexual violence and harassment compared to female and non-binary students or those that preferred not to disclose their gender. The same was true for male and non-binary staff compared to female staff and those who preferred not to disclose their gender.

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[32] Margaret Hodgins, Pat O'Connor and Lucy Ann Buckley, 'Institutional Change and Organisational Resistance to Gender Equality in Higher Education: An Irish Case Study' (2022) 12 Administrative Sciences 2022, Vol. 12, Page 59 59 <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3387/12/2/59/htm> accessed 27 August 2025.

[33] P MacNeela, K Dawson and T O'Rourke, 'Report on the National Survey of Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions' (2022) <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kate-Dawson/publication/358141295_Report_on_the_National_Survey_of_Student_Experiences_of_Sexual_Violence_and_Harassment_in_Irish_Higher_Education_Institutions/links/61f293a25779d35951da55af/Report-on-the-National-Survey-of-Student-Experiences-of-Sexual-Violence-and-Harassment-in-Irish-Higher-Education-Institutions.pdf> accessed 16 October 2025.

[34] P MacNeela, K Dawson and T O'Rourke, 'Report on the National Survey of Staff Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions' (2022) HEA Staff Survey Report [Sexual violence and Harrassment in HE]

[35] 'Sexual Violence Survey 2022 – Adult Experiences - Central Statistics Office' <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-svsad/sexualviolencesurvey2022adultexperiences/> accessed 16 October 2025.

Gender Equality in TUS

The gender issues highlighted above are also challenges that TUS faces, both in terms of staff and student profiles.

Staff profile:

TUS has been tracking the gender profile of staff since its formation in 2021. Over that period, there has been both improvements in gender balance, but also some remaining challenges, as detailed in the points below:

- **Gender Balance**: There is gender balance of staff across TUS: in 2024, 52% of staff were female, 47% male. There is also gender balance across various cohorts of staff: In 2024, 47% of Academic staff were female, 53% male. 55% of non-core funded Professional Management and Support Services (PMSS) and research staff were female, 43% male.

- **Improvements**:
    - Between 2021 and 2024, there has been improvement in gender balance at Head of Department level (Senior Lecturer 2 Level – SL2). In 2021, 27% of Heads of Department were female, this increased to 44% in 2024.
    - There have been improvements in the gender pay gap of staff since reporting in 2022. In 2024, the mean gender pay gap was 7.5% and the median was 6.7%. Gender pay gap reporting is based on the average earnings of all men versus that of all women in an organisation.
- **Challenges**:
    - Within Academic roles, while there is gender balance at Assistant Lecturer (42% female in 2024) and Lecturer level (48% female in 2024), there is an imbalance at Senior Lecturer Teaching level (SL1T) (39% female in 2024) and Dean of Faculty (SL3) level (33% female in 2024). However, numbers of staff at these levels are relatively small (in 2024, there were 9 staff members at SL3 level), so a small change in personnel from year to year can dramatically affect the percentages.
    - Within PMSS grades, there is a high gender imbalance at the €46,000- €75,999 pay bracket. In 2024, 73% of staff in this category were female. The situation then reverses at higher pay brackets, as 35% of staff at pay grade above €106,000 were female in 2024. Again, numbers of staff at this level are small.
    - In relation to part time staff, only 4% of Academic staff in 2024 availed of part time work, with broad gender balance amongst this cohort (62% female in 2024). 17% of core funded PMSS staff availed of part time work options in 2024,

but 87% of those were female. There is a similar picture for staff availing of flexible leave options, including options such as career break, job sharing and unpaid leave/ shorter working year. Of those who availed of these options during Academic year 24/25, 80% were female. Of those who availed of parents leave, parental leave and carers leave in 24/25, 87% were female.

This data indicates that TUS is not immune to many of the gendered issues which are prevalent in broader society and across the Higher Education sector. While significant progress has been made in some areas, concerted and ongoing action is needed to support further gender balance in senior level roles and encouraging more male staff to consider flexible leave and family leave options.

Student Profile

TUS offers a diverse portfolio of programmes in a range of areas including science, engineering, health and welfare, business, hospitality, social sciences, informatics, sport, teacher education, and art and design. In Academic Year 24/25, the TUS student population was 15,024, and 43% were female.

2 - Disability

EU

In 2024, nearly one-quarter of people aged 16 years or older in the EU had a disability, with women being more likely to report a disability than men.[36] Individuals with disabilities are at a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion, are twice as likely to be victims of sexual violence and are less likely to complete third-level education compared to those without a disability.[37] 9.3% of people with a disability reported that they felt discriminated against when engaging with public services which was more than two times higher than those without a disability.[38]

Students are particularly affected by inequalities that arise due to their disabilities. Students with a disability are more likely to drop out of higher education than those without a disability, and those with a mental disability have a higher likelihood of dropping out than students with a physical disability.[39]

Lid *et al.* (2025) argue that students with intellectual disabilities in higher education are "invisible as learners" and that their exclusion, being both political and legal, must be addressed at an institutional level as well as the level of the individual HEI.[40] Furthermore, the accessibility of digital platforms may not meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities, creating barriers to learning.[41]

For students, accessing accommodations can be a difficult process. In some institutions, students are unable to access disability supports without official documentation of their diagnosis. For those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, this can be a significant barrier that prevents engagement with disability services.[42] Making the physical

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[36] Eurostat, 'Population with Disability' (2025) accessed 31 October 2025.
[37] European Council, 'Disability in the EU: Facts and Figures' (2025) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/disability-eu-facts-figures/> accessed 4 November 2025.
[38] Eurostat, 'Living Conditions in Europe - Self-Perceived Discrimination' (2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_self-perceived_discrimination#Source_data_for_tables_and_graphs> accessed 17 October 2025.
[39] Mareike Rußmann, Nicolai Netz and Markus Lörz, 'Dropout Intent of Students with Disabilities' (2023) 88 Higher Education 2023 88:1 183 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-023-01111-y> accessed 4 November 2025.
[40] Inger Marie Lid and others, 'Recognizing Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education' (2025) 11 Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy 71 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/20020317.2024.2382366> accessed 3 November 2025.
[41] Ibid
[42] Marie Sépulchre and Alexis Buettgen, 'Intersectional Praxis and Disability in Higher Education' (2023) 11 Social Inclusion 362 <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/7085> accessed 3 November 2025.

environment (i.e., the architecture of university buildings) more accessible for individuals with physical disabilities is also something that needs to be improved to create a more inclusive environment for both staff and students.[43]

The Irish Context

Public bodies in Ireland have clear obligations under national legislation to promote equality and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Disability Act 2005[44] requires public sector organisations to ensure accessibility of services and information, and to make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. In the workplace, the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015[45] prohibit discrimination on the disability ground and mandate reasonable accommodation to enable employees with disabilities to participate fully in employment. For students, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004[46] and provisions under the Equal Status Acts[47] ensure that educational institutions provide appropriate supports and do not discriminate in access to education.

In 2022, 22% of the population of Ireland reported experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty.[48] Overall, women were more likely to report a disability and 28% of respondents agreed that they had difficulty working at a job or business or attending school or college. Only one-third of individuals over the age of 15 who were living with a disability were employed. Of those who had completed third-level education, 89% were unable to work due to illness and stated they had a disability.[49] This is in line with EU data that reveals that Ireland has the lowest rank for disability employment among all member states.[50] The employment rate for people with disabilities 'to some extent' is 60%,

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[43] Roman Czajka and Józefina Furmańczyk, 'Physically Disabled People in Higher Education Buildings' (2021) R.25, nr 3 Builder 78.
[44] Disability Act 2005
[45] THE EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY ACTS 1998-2015 - A guide to your rights if you are discriminated against in the workplace or in seeking work
[46] Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
[47] Equal Status Act, 2000
[48] Central Statistics Office, 'Disability Census of Population 2022 Profile 4 - Disability, Health and Carers' (2023) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp4/censusofpopulation2022profile4-disabilityhealthandcarers/disability/> accessed 4 November 2025.
[49] Central Statistics Office, 'Census 2022 Profile 8 - The Irish Language and Education' (2023) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp8/census2022profile8-theirishlanguageandeducation/thirdlevel/> accessed 28 August 2025.
[50] Disability Federation of Ireland, 'Disability in Ireland - Factsheet 2024' (2024) <https://www.disability-federation.ie/publications/disability-in-ireland-factsheet-2024/> accessed 5 November 2025.

compared to only 27% for those with disabilities 'to a great extent'.[51] Currently, there is little research on the experiences of staff with disabilities in Ireland, though there is a strong focus on supporting students with disabilities in higher education.

While AHEAD found that there had been a 268% increase in disabled students in higher education from 2008/09 to 2020/21[52], there are still a number of challenges that disabled students face in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A recent study on neurodiverse students with traumatic brain injuries in Ireland found that in order to receive the proper accommodations in their classes, some students felt pressured into disclosing their illness even if they were not comfortable doing so.[53] Institutional oppression also arose as a primary challenge faced by students, as outlined by Rath (2022). For example, being expected to respond to 'off the cuff' questions during doctoral examinations and processing material 'in the moment' during classes created barriers to inclusion for students with disabilities. Requirement to disclose disability in order to join certain social clubs or societies is also seen as a barrier to inclusion, along with general lack of disability awareness.[54]

Findings from TUS

TUS Staff

The TUS Annual return submitted for 2024 to the HEA reported that 5% of employees had a disability. However, 8% of the 660 anonymous respondents to the TUS 2025 Staff Barometer Survey disclosed that they have a disability, impairment, chronic health condition (including mental health) or learning difference. Of those who did disclose, 57% of them stated that they have supports and reasonable accommodations available for them to do their job.

[51] National Disability Authority, 'Discussion Paper on National Employment Targets' (2024) <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fnda.ie%2Fuploads%2Fpublications%2FDiscussion-paper-on-national-employment-targets.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK> accessed 6 November 2025.
[52] Ahead, 'Students with Disabilities Engaged with Support Services in Higher Education in Ireland 2021/22'.
[53] Teresa Shiels and others, 'Incivility in Higher Education: Challenges of Inclusion for Neurodiverse Students with Traumatic Brain Injury in Ireland' (2021) 11 Societies 2021, Vol. 11, Page 60 60 <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/11/2/60/htm> accessed 3 November 2025.
[54] Vivian Rath, 'Social Engagement: Hearing the Experiences of Disabled Students in Higher Education in Ireland' (2022) 7 Frontiers in Education 895392.

TUS Students

Students who are registered with the TUS Student Disability Service can self-refer throughout their time at TUS or may be part of DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) Scheme. In 2023/2024 TUS admitted 228 students into first year under the DARE scheme. Notably, in 2024 TUS become the first university in Ireland to be officially designated an ADHD-friendly university by ADHD Ireland. In 2023-2024 there were 1,052 students registered with TUS Disability Services.

3 - Race

EU

The *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* prohibits discrimination based on any ethnic or social origin, yet ethnic and racial discrimination is one of the most common forms of discrimination experienced by those under the age of 35.[55],[56] The European Commission asserts that "racist and discriminatory behaviours can be embedded in social, financial and political institutions, impacting on the levers of power and on policy-making", making the disaggregation of EDI data by ethnic or racial background necessary to assess and respond to race-based discrimination.[57] In the EU, there is an existing legal framework aimed at reducing racism and creating a more inclusive society. This includes the *Racial Equality Directive*[58], the *Framework Decision* on combatting racism and xenophobia[59] and the *Victims' Rights Directive*[60].

A survey carried out by the European Commission found that respondents who are part of an ethnic minority report experiencing physical violence at a higher rate than the average, and that individuals born in another country, non-citizens and those who are part of an ethnic minority experience higher rates of harassment.[61]. Intersectional discrimination is a particular concern with some minority individuals experiencing discrimination based both on their ethnic or racial background as well as religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability. For example, women were more likely to experience discrimination, primarily due to their gender, and experience multiple forms of discrimination (e.g., based on their race or ethnicity)[62].

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[55] European Parliament, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01) 2000.
[56] Suzana Hardy and Tom Schraepen, 'The State and Effects of Discrimination in the European Union: OECD Papers on Well-Being and Inequalities' (2024) <https://doi.org/10.1787/7fd921b9-en> accessed 17 October 2025.
[57] European Commission, 'A Union of Equality: EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025' <https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en> accessed 17 October 2025.
[58] 'Directive - 2000/43 - EN - EUR-Lex' <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2000/43/oj/eng> accessed 29 October 2025.
[59] 'Framework Decision on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law | EUR-Lex' <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/framework-decision-on-combating-certain-forms-and-expressions-of-racism-and-xenophobia-by-means-of-criminal-law.html> accessed 29 October 2025.
[60] 'Directive - 2012/29 - EN - EUR-Lex' <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/29/oj/eng> accessed 29 October 2025.
[61] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021), 'Crime, Safety and Victims' Rights – Fundamental Rights Survey'.
[62] Ibid

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) observed that, while students are less likely than other groups to report violent incidents, those who belong to minority groups are more likely to report them compared to non-minorities.[63] They suggest that this may be due to these incidents being bias-motivated and affecting the broader minority community, resulting in higher rates of reporting. Though not all of these incidents are reported to the police, the FRA also found that victims of hate-motivated harassment and violence, particularly immigrants, Roma and Jews, commonly engage with service providers to access support following violent incidents.

The Irish Context

In Ireland, anti-race is the most prevalent discriminatory motive behind hate crimes and has increased in recent years.[64],[65] The most recent report by the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) showed that there was an increase in the number of race-based incidents reported through its iReport system from 2021 to 2022.[66] The 2022 national Census showed that 77% of the Irish population identified as White Irish, with the remainder making up those from any other white background (9.9%) and minority backgrounds (7.4%, including White Irish Traveller and White Roma).[67]

According to the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the data for ethnic minority staff in Universities and Technological Universities are similar to the national statistics with 68% of respondents being White Irish, 21% White Other and 9% from minority ethnic groups.[68] 79% of respondents stated that they had never or rarely heard or seen the use of racist language, comments, gestures, symbols or physical violence on campus or online. This is a significantly different experience compared to students.

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[63] ibid.
[64] '2024 Hate Crime Data and Related Discriminatory Motives - Garda' <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/office-of-corporate-communications/press-releases/2025/april/2024-hate-crime-data-and-related-discriminatory-motives.html> accessed 30 October 2025.
[65] Brian Hearne and Sanghamitra Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, 'Speak Out Against Racism' (2023) <www.internationalstudents.ie> accessed 17 October 2025.
[66] Lucy Michael, Daniel Reynolds and Niloufar Omidi, 'Reports of Racism in Ireland' (2022) <www.iReport.ie> accessed 30 October 2025.
[67] 'FY023 - Population Usually Resident and Present in the State' <https://data.cso.ie/> accessed 31 October 2025.
[68] Marta Kempny and Lucy Michael, 'Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector' (2021) <https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Census_Pilot_Survey_Report_2018_V1.> accessed 17 October 2025.

Students are the largest group of non-EEA migrants in Ireland, with international students making up 13.7% of the student population in 2023.[69],[70] According to a study by the International Council for International Students, 63% of respondents had experienced and/or witnessed racism in Ireland, with verbal abuse being the most common form of racism reported. One-third of students in higher education stated that they had experienced racism on campus with a low number reporting these incidents to gardaí[71]. This is in line with the EU findings which show low reporting among students for race-based violence.

Findings from TUS

During Academic year 23/24, TUS conducted four Race Equality Forums to promote progress and good practice in support of race equality and inform the development of a TUS Race Equality Action Plan and related policies and processes. The forums gathered insights from staff and students to assess campus culture and institutional practices on race equality. While participants acknowledged a supportive and welcoming culture, they also highlighted challenges such as limited racial diversity in staff and student union roles, and limited uptake on race equality trainings. Recommendations from the report included placing a further emphasis on inclusive recruitment, further provision of anti-racism training, and increased diversification of the curriculum to address racial issues.

TUS staff

As of August 2024, 62% of TUS staff had shared their ethnicity data through a voluntary disclosure portal. 84% of those who have disclosed are White Irish, 5.6% Asian, 5.5% any other White background, 4% Mixed group/ other group. Other minority ethnic groups make up less than 1% of those who have disclosed their ethnicity.

TUS students

Student ethnicity data is collected annually through the Equal Access Survey. In Academic year 2024/25, of the 2013 first year full time new entrant respondents, 73% identified as

[69] Economic and Social Research Institute, 'The Number of International Degree Students Coming to Ireland Reaches a New High' <https://www.esri.ie/news/the-number-of-international-degree-students-coming-to-ireland-reaches-a-new-high> accessed 31 October 2025.
[70] Higher Education Authority, 'Higher Education – Key Facts and Figures 2022/23' <https://hea.ie/2023/10/04/higher-education-key-facts-and-figures-2022-23/> accessed 31 October 2025.
[71] ICOS, 2023, Speak Out Against Racism Report Speak Out Against Racism_Final.pdf

White Irish (Figure 1). However, these figures may not fully reflect the student population due to the survey's optional nature.

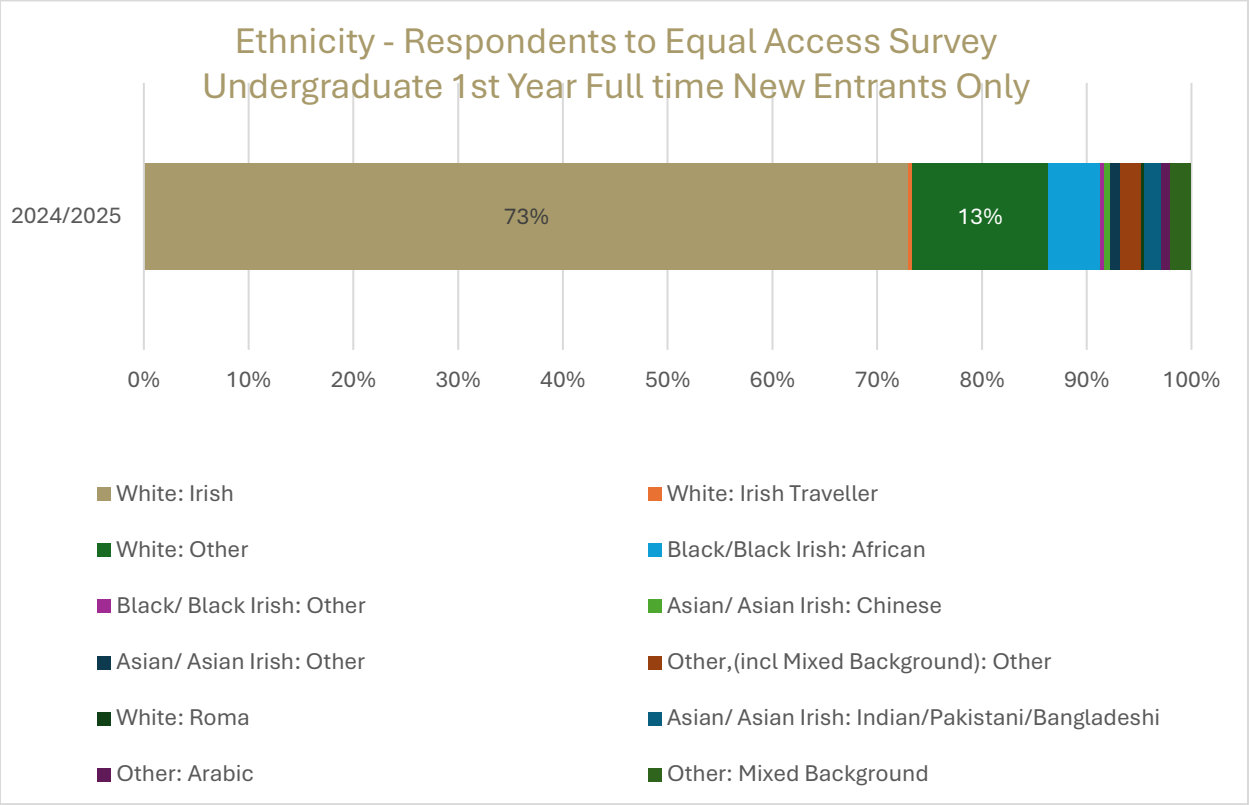

Figure 1 Ethnicity of Respondents to TUS Equal Access Survey. Undergraduate 1st year full time new entrants

4 - Membership of the Traveller Community

EU

In addition to discrimination based on ethnic or social origin, the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* also prohibits discrimination based on membership of a national minority, including those belonging to the "Roma" group. The FRA uses "Roma" as an umbrella term for a number of ethnic minorities including Roma, Romani Gypsies and Travellers (i.e., Irish Pavee and Scottish Nawken).[72] Reflecting the sustainable development goals of the United Nations and the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Roma framework is founded on the principle of leaving no one behind.[73],[74] It is supported by a number of legislative documents including the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Directive 2000/43/EC on racial equality.[75]

Although there is legislation protecting members of the Roma community in both the EU and the UK, a study on Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities (GTRSB) in the UK argues that "community members neither benefit from the same privilege enjoyed by the White British majority, nor visibility within initiatives to promote racial equality in higher education".[76] For this reason, it is important to address the unique issues that members of the Roma communities face, particularly in relation to access to and discrimination within higher education.

On average, access to certain rights for the Roma has improved since 2016, including the right to education and the right to work.[77] While there was a steady increase in the number of Roma students from 2012 to 2020 in the UK[78], obtaining accurate statistics about those entering higher education remains difficult due to the stigma around belonging to a Roma community resulting in many students being unwilling to disclose their membership to these groups.[79],[80]

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[72] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries – Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024'.
[73] United Nations, '70/1. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Preamble'.
[74] EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020.
[75] 'Directive - 2000/43 - EN - EUR-Lex' .
[76] Natalie Forster, Martin Gallagher and Christina Cooper, 'Representations of Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities in Higher Education Widening Participation Discourse' (2022).
[77] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries – Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024'
[78] Laura Brassington, 'Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: The Ethnic Minorities Most Excluded from UK Education' (2022) <www.hepi.ac.uk> accessed 17 October 2025.
[79] ibid.
[80] Cassie Barton and Yago Zayed, 'Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: Statistics' (2024).

The Irish Context

In 2022, Ireland saw a 6% increase in the number of Irish Travellers from 2016, though this group only made up 1% of the total population.[81] Members of the Traveller community face serious challenges in higher education including poverty, cultural exclusion and systemic challenges.[82] While strides have been made to improve the rights of Roma and Travellers across the EU, the FRA reported that Ireland was unlikely to meet any of the EU-level goals by 2030, with there being an increase in discrimination rates and material deprivation.[83] However, members of the Traveller community are also at risk of experiencing multiple discrimination.

26% of the Irish Traveller population reported a disability in 2022, and this group had nearly twice the rate of disability that affected them "to a great extent" than the total population.[84] Despite experiencing poorer mental health and higher rates of suicide and substance abuse compared to the general population, engagement with support services in the Traveller community remains poor.[85] The scarce literature on these issues that does exist suggests that this is driven by a "lack of culturally appropriate engagement" and supports that are inadequate to meet the particular needs of those in the Traveller community.[86]

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre found that Traveller women were more likely to have enrolled in FET and higher education than Traveller men, though the total number of Traveller students in Ireland remains low. [87] These low reported numbers are too small to guide interpretations or predictions regarding members of this group which creates further difficulties for understanding and responding to the needs of Traveller students.

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[81] Central Statistics Office, 'Irish Travellers Census of Population 2022 Profile 5 - Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers & Religion' (2023) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp5/censusofpopulation2022profile5-diversitymigrationethnicityirishtravellersreligion/irishtravellers/> accessed 10 November 2025.

[82] Eilís Ní Chorcora and others, 'A Community Needs Analysis with Traveller and Roma Students on Their Experiences of Higher Education: A Call to Action for Accountable and Transformative Policy and Practice Throughout the Higher Education System' <https://doi.org/10.48460/vd15-nn04> accessed 26 August 2025.

[83] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (n 76).

[84] Central Statistics Office, 'Irish Travellers Census of Population 2022 Profile 5 - Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers & Religion' (n 85).

[85] Ella Arensman and Rebecca Dennehy, 'Evidence Brief: Mental and Health and Suicide in the Traveller Community' (2021) <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1465-> accessed 12 November 2025.

[86] ibid.

[87] Máirín Kenny, 'Travellers and Roma in Education and Training Overview of Provision and Engagement' (2024).

Findings from TUS

TUS has a strong record of enrolment of Traveller students in its student body. It publicly reports such enrolments through the HEA Performance Agreement 2022-28. In 2024/25, TUS had 16 students formally noted on its records as new entrants from the Traveller and Roma community. Reporting of being a member of either community is through self-selection by the completion of the Equal Access Survey by members of these communities. Accordingly, the reported results and actual enrolments in TUS differ.

For example, 30 Traveller Students and 4 Roma Students were enrolled in TUS in 23/24. This represents a significant contribution to the HEA target under NAP 2022-2028 of 119 Traveller Students across all HEI's nationally.

TUS is using two key reports to inform its pre-entry and post-entry work with Travellers and Roma students, including its profile of work under Path 4 Inclusive Environment and Path 5, two discreet funding initiatives supplied by the HEA to HEIs.

In 2024, TUS partnered with DCU, DKiT, Maynooth University, the HEA and Pavee Point to conduct a *Community Needs Analysis with Traveller and Roma Students*[88] on their Experiences of Higher Education. The findings revealed that Traveller students face persistent and systemic racism and discrimination throughout their educational journeys, from primary school to higher education. These experiences often lead to identity concealment, mental health challenges, and a lack of belonging. Despite these barriers, many students found strength through family support, culturally affirming initiatives, and the presence of supportive individuals such as mentors or access officers. Financial hardship, inflexible academic structures, and limited post-graduation opportunities further hinder participation and success. Participants called for systemic change, including mandatory Traveller-led cultural awareness training, flexible access routes, dedicated financial scholarships, and increased representation of Travellers in higher education staff and leadership. The report emphasises the need for a whole-institution, anti-racist approach that embeds Traveller culture and identity into curricula and campus life.

Secondly, the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024-2030 (TRES)[89] has identified a number of key action points to improve the engagement by Travellers & Roma in higher education.

[88] A Community Needs Analysis with Traveller and Roma Students on their Experiences of Higher Education
[89] Traveller-and-roma-education-strategy-2024-2030.pdf

These include the strategic pillars and actions:

- Pillar 1: Participation and Experience
- Pillar 2: Access and Outcomes
- Pillar 3: Partnership
- Pillar 4: Delivering Change.

TUS is working with key stakeholder in addressing the above pillars through an implementation plan to assure its enrolment and success of students from these discreet communities.

5 - Family status

EU

Family status refers to adults who are parents to individuals under the age of 18 or who are providing care to someone with a disability. To support people in these roles who are also active in the workforce, EU Directive 2019/1158 outlines minimum requirements relating to paternity leave parental leave and carers' leave, as well as the provision of flexible working arrangements for those who are parents or carers.[90] As they are usually the primary caregivers, female staff and students in higher education face additional challenges such as not being able to attend work-related events and preventing enrolment in higher education[91].

A recent study of Italian employees with caregiving responsibilities found that female participants spent more time on family responsibilities, while male participants spent more time on work-related activities.[92] Female respondents also reported perceptions that providing care to an ageing relative would negatively affect their career progression. One example of this is the ability to attend academic conferences. Female parents in academia may face difficulties in attending conferences throughout pregnancy, breastfeeding and caretaking, resulting in disadvantages and potential negative impacts on career progression compared to their male counterparts.[93,94] Caregiving responsibilities have also been shown to affect enrolment rates in higher education and pose a particular concern for female students, highlighting the importance of conducting research with a focus on intersectionality.[95]

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[90] 'Directive - 2019/1158 - EN - EUR-Lex' <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158> accessed 21 November 2025.
[91] Irene Lantano and others, 'The Caregiving Penalty: Gender and Caregiving Effects on Career Opportunities Perceived by Italian Employees' (2025) 14 Social Sciences 2025, Vol. 14, Page 547 547 <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/14/9/547/htm> accessed 20 November 2025.
[92] Ibid
[93] Rebecca M Calisi, 'How to Tackle the Childcare-Conference Conundrum' (2018) 115 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 2845 </doi/pdf/10.1073/pnas.1803153115?download=true> accessed 20 November 2025.
[94] Emily F Henderson and Marie Pierre Moreau, 'Carefree Conferences? Academics with Caring Responsibilities Performing Mobile Academic Subjectivities' (2020) 32 Gender and Education 70 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09540253.2019.1685654> accessed 20 November 2025.
[95] Ravi Meda, Masarah Mohamad Yusof and Azlinda Azman, 'Organisational Frameworks and Intersectional Obstacles: Investigating Gender Inequality in Higher Education' <https://www.researchsquare.com> accessed 20 November 2025.

Women with children may also be less likely to participate in the labour force, with the employment rate of women with children being significantly lower than that of men with children.[96] Where they are employed, women with children are also more likely to be engaged in part-time work compared to women without children and men with children. This includes individuals who have reduced their working hours or have taken career breaks to focus on caregiving responsibilities which disproportionately affects women.[97] Returning to full-time employment can be a difficult transition and the loss of opportunities during career breaks, along with stigma around mothers returning to work can negatively affect the ability of female academics to progress in their careers.[98,99]

The concept of the 'ideal academic' relates to those employed in higher education and excludes those who have caregiving responsibilities. A 2024 study on female academics caring for older people argues that the culture of academia results in women trying to adhere to the expectations of an 'ideal academic' while also managing their caring responsibilities.[100] This study found that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges that already existed within the gendered culture of higher education, widening the gap of gendered division of labour.

The Irish Context

In 2022, nearly 300,000 people in Ireland identified as unpaid carers (i.e., individuals providing personal help or support to a family member, neighbour or friend with a long-term illness, health issue or an issue related to old age or disability), with 61% being female.[101] However, this study also highlighted that this number is likely to be an underestimate as it is based on self-identification as a carer. Nearly one-third of children

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[96] Eurostat, 'Gender Employment Gap Larger for Parents in 2021' (2023) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/edn-20230302-2> accessed 21 November 2025.

[97] Eurostat, 'Career Breaks Due to Childcare' (2019) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20191010-1> accessed 21 November 2025.

[98] Karen Jones, 'Precarity of Post Doctorate Career Breaks: Does Gender Matter?' (2023) 48 Studies in Higher Education 1576 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03075079.2023.2245849> accessed 21 November 2025.

[99] Linda Sangalli, Luciana M Shaddox and Grace M De Souza, 'Gender Differences in Barriers in Career Development Among a Cohort of Dental Researchers. A Cross-Sectional Study' (2025) 89 Journal of Dental Education 1267 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388361570_Gender_Differences_in_Barriers_in_Career_Development_Among_a_Cohort_of_Dental_Researchers_A_Cross-Sectional_Study> accessed 21 November 2025.

[100] Corina Sheerin and Margaret Linehan, '"Everyone Should Have a Wife" – Extreme Work, Eldercare, and the Gendered Academy in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic' (2024) 35 The International Journal of Human Resource Management 1708

[101] Central Statistics Office, 'Profile 4 - Disability, Health and Carers' (2023).

below the age of 15 were in childcare (e.g., unpaid care by a family member, childminder, creche), indicating that there is a significant portion of individuals with parental responsibilities not engaging with childcare services.

A recent study carried out on students with caregiving responsibilities at Trinity College Dublin revealed that student carers reported worse wellbeing than other students.[102] Sleep deprivation leading to chronic fatigue, difficulty attending lectures and poor availability of formal childcare resulting in increased caregiving hours and higher financial investment in childcare were all noted as negatively impacting on student carers' academic experiences and performance. Coupled with the university culture which assumes that third-level students do not have other obligations, student carers are faced with distinct challenges as they pursue higher education. However, staff and faculty awareness of university policies to support student carers was poor[103]. Both staff and student carers have been observed to be reluctant to engage with supports provided by their institutions, suggesting that there may be stigma surrounding requests for accommodations due to caring responsibilities.[104,]

Findings from TUS

Family leave options in TUS include paid maternity leave, unpaid maternity leave, paternity leave, parents leave, parental leave and carers leave. Parents leave entitlement is 7 weeks of paid leave during the first two years of the child's life, or within two years of the placement of an adopted child. Parental leave is up to 26 weeks unpaid leave for each child under the age of 12.

70 staff availed of parents leave, parental leave and carers leave in AY 24/25. 60% of these staff were in PMSS roles, 32% in Academic roles and 8% in Research roles. 87% of staff who availed of parents, parental and carers leave were female, 13% were male. In the same period, 35 staff availed of paid maternity leave, 10 availed of unpaid maternity leave and 13 availed of paternity leave.

[102] Anchal Sharma, Psu33018-Junior Sophister and Group Project, 'Navigating Caregiving Obligations: Understanding the Experiences of Student-Carers at Trinity College Dublin'.
[103] Ibid
[104] Marie Pierre Moreau and Murray Robertson, '"You Scratch My Back and I'll Scratch Yours"? Support to Academics Who Are Carers in Higher Education' (2019) 8 Social Sciences 2019, Vol. 8, Page 164 164 accessed 4 September 2025.

In 2022, TUS conducted a survey and focus group with staff members who had taken maternity or adoptive leave since 2019. The survey revealed that while the application process for leave was generally straightforward, gaps exist in communication, support, and facilities. Many staff reported inadequate handovers, lack of formal return-to-work procedures, insufficient breastfeeding facilities, and limited awareness of entitlements. The focus group further highlighted the emotional and logistical challenges faced by returning staff, emphasising the need for improved communication, flexible working arrangements, and consistent support from line managers. The report recommended the development of detailed employee and manager handbooks, standardisation of breastfeeding facilities, enhanced health and safety protocols, and the establishment of a Parents and Carers Network to foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

6 - Age

EU

In recent years, there has been an increase in students in tertiary education for both traditional students (i.e., below the age of 23) and mature students (i.e., aged 23 or older).[105] In 2022, 47% of adults aged 25 to 64 participated in formal or informal education and training in the previous 12 months.[106] Overall, there has been a steady increase of adults aged 25 to 64 who have attained a tertiary degree in the EU from 2002 to 2024.Yet, mature students continue to face distinct challenges compared to traditional students.

In their paper discussing the concept of the 'ideal' student, Gregersen and Nielsen (2023) highlight how higher education structures challenge mature students to conform to established norms of how a university student should perform and participate.[107] This results in many mature students experiencing difficulties in their learning journeys due to factors such as having a non-linear learning path, dealing with feelings of being an outsider, balancing parental responsibilities, and transitioning between multiple identities (e.g., parent, employee, student)[108].

Female staff and students may also experience age-related discrimination in higher education as they go through perimenopause and menopause. Almost half of participants in a recent UK study on working with menopause in higher education felt that efforts made by their universities "paid only lip-service".[109] One of the approaches to successfully balancing work while experiencing symptoms of menopause was the ability to work from home. Most reported that this arrangement eased work stress as they were able to engage in more compensatory actions during the workday (e.g., meditation, going for a walk). However, as most of the existing literature focuses on staff experiencing menopause, there

[105] Eurostat, 'Students in Tertiary Education by Age Groups - as % of Corresponding Age Population' (2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uoe_enrt07__custom_18891375/default/table> accessed 14 November 2025.
[106] Eurostat, 'Adult Learning Statistics' (2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics> accessed 13 November 2025.
[107] Andrea Fransiska Møller Gregersen and Katia Bill Nielsen, 'Not Quite the Ideal Student: Mature Students' Experiences of Higher Education' (2023) 32 International Studies in Sociology of Education 76 </doi/pdf/10.1080/09620214.2022.2120525?download=true> accessed 13 November 2025.
[108] Ibid
[109] Sarah Pryor, 'Working through Menopause: The Role of Hybrid Working in Symptom Management for UK Higher Education Professional Services Employees' (2025) 29 Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education 14 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13603108.2023.2291152> accessed 17 November 2025.

is a need for further consideration to be given to the specific challenges faced by students.[110]

The Irish Context

Between 2021 and 2024, one-third of adult students in Ireland were aged 25 or older, while 10% of those aged 25 to 69 participated in formal education.[111,112] 69% of adult learners in Ireland were pursuing third-level courses with 40% of students stating that their reason for engaging in higher education was to improve their performance in their present job. This indicates that a significant portion of the student body is pursuing third-level education while employed[113]. The transition into higher education can be difficult for adult learners as new students must develop a new adult learner identity.[114] There are also concerns for students who may face multiple discrimination, such as members of the Traveller community as this group has a higher rate of mature students compared to the general population.[115]

Similar to the EU findings, female staff and students may face challenges in higher education as they navigate through perimenopause or menopause. In their 2021 survey, The Menopause Hub found that 39% of women reported missing work due to menopause symptoms and 40% had considered giving up their work due to their symptoms.[116] Psychological symptoms (e.g., poor concentration, poor memory) have the strongest association with lower self-efficacy and diminished work ability, especially for those going

[110] Sara N Galletly, 'Are Menopausal Symptoms a Barrier to Learning for Healthcare Students Studying at Higher Education?: A Contemporary Issue' (2024) 143 Nurse Education Today 106403 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0260691724003137> accessed 17 November 2025.
[111] EuroStudent, 'Eurostudent VIII (2021-2024)' (2025) <https://database.eurostudent.eu/drm/?fg=all_students&e=age_s&Curr=&eust_nr=8&country_list=AT,HR,CZ,DK,EE,FI,FR,GE,HU,IS,IE,LT,MT,NL,NO,PL,PT,RO,SE,CH> accessed 13 November 2025.
[112] Central Statistics Office, 'Adult Education Survey 2022' (2024) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-aes/adulteducationsurvey2022/keyfindings/> accessed 20 November 2025.
[113] Ibid
[114] James Brunton and Finian Buckley, '"You're Thrown in the Deep End": Adult Learner Identity Formation in Higher Education' (2021) 46 Studies in Higher Education 2696 accessed 13 November 2025.
[115] Máirín Kenny, 'Travellers and Roma in Education and Training Overview of Provision and Engagement' (2024).
[116] The Menopause Hub, 'Menopause in the Workplace' (2023) <https://www.themenopausehub.ie/menopause-blog/2022/1/1/menopause-in-the-workplace> accessed 17 November 2025.

through perimenopause.[117,118] The same study also found that organisational support for staff experiencing menopause was related to lower severity of menopause symptoms, suggesting that in environments where menopause is stigmatised and not recognised as a workplace issue may result in increased emotional burden and exacerbation of symptoms.

Research[119] on the experiences of the menopause transition in Irish women by the TUS SHE Research centre highlights a significant decline in physical activity among women during the menopause transition, influenced by a mix of motivators, facilitators, and barriers. The study involved interviews with 12 Irish women found that motivations include symptom management, future health, social connections, and relatable role models, while supportive communities, adaptable activities, and medical assistance help sustain activity. Barriers such as reduced capability, menopause symptoms, time constraints, and unsupportive environments hinder engagement. The report recommends practical strategies like making activity social and enjoyable, creating targeted and flexible opportunities, providing women-only spaces, and tailoring approaches to individual menopause experiences to ensure continued or renewed participation in physical activity during this life stage.

[117] Wendyrose Smith, Sarah M Cooney and Akansha M Naraindas, 'The Influence of Menopause Symptoms on Workplace Mental Health among Irish Women: A Preliminary Study' (2025) 24 Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology 100324 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666497625000438> accessed 17 November 2025.
[118] MT O'Neill, V Jones and A Reid, 'Impact of Menopausal Symptoms on Work and Careers: A Cross-Sectional Study' (2023) 73 Occupational Medicine 332 <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqad078> accessed 17 November 2025.
[119] McNulty, K.L., Lane, A., Kealy, R. et al. Experience of the menopause transition in Irish women and how it impacts motivators, facilitators, and barriers to physical activity engagement. BMC Women's Health 24, 666 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-024-03524-y

Findings from TUS

The majority of TUS staff (60%) are between the age of 45-64, with 4% in the 65+ age bracket (Figure 2). The age profile shows the need to concentrate on gender and age-specific health issues for staff (e.g., menopause, men's health), which will be included in the TUS Health and Well-being policy, a priority area in the 2024-2028 Athena Swan Action plan (action 2.1b).

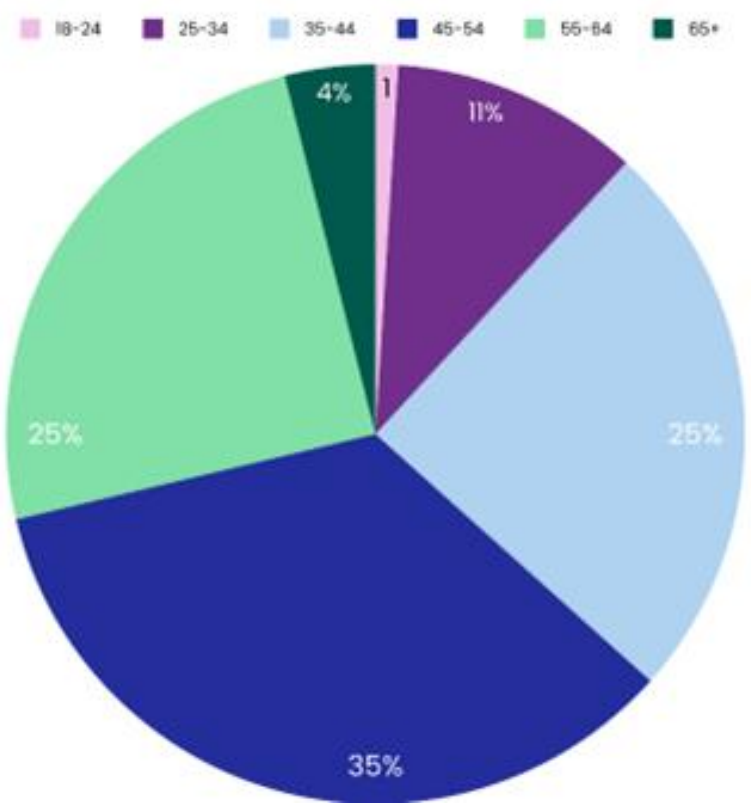

Figure 2 Age profile of staff May 2024

Figure 3 displays student enrolment by age, predominantly in the 17-20 and 21-24 age brackets, with representation also in older age groups. Mature students in TUS receive comprehensive support through the Access Service, including workshops, individual assistance, financial aid. TUS also has a Mature Student Support Network.

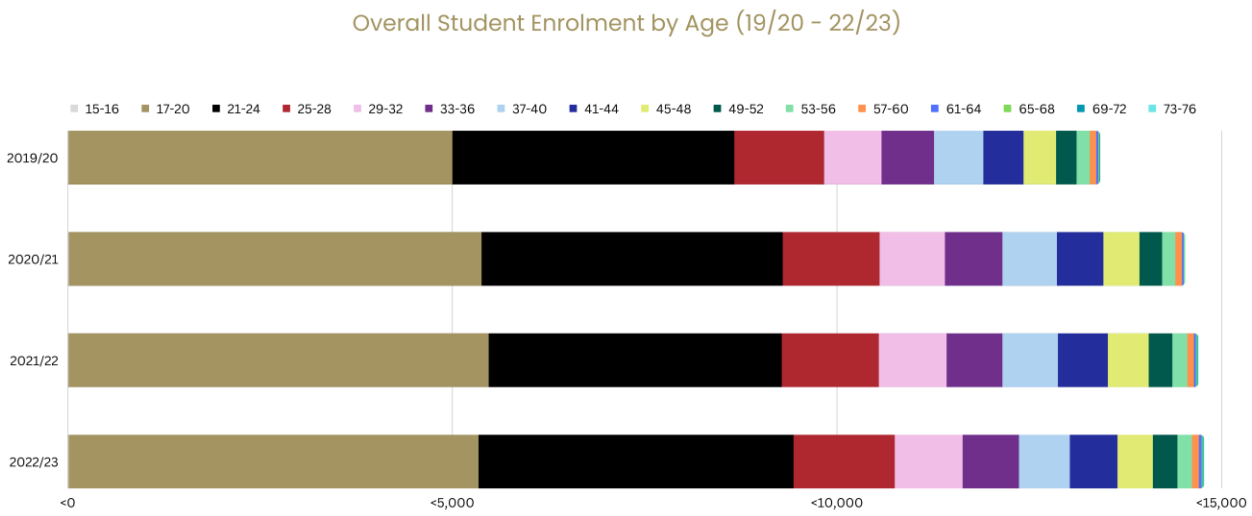

Figure 3 Student enrolment by age 2019 – 2023

7 -Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation (i.e., whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes) is a prominent cause for discrimination. According to a 2021 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 91% of individuals in the EU-27 countries identified as heterosexual, 5% as gay/lesbian, bisexual or other, and 4% responded with 'prefer not to say' or 'don't know'.[120] The survey revealed that 57% of people who identified as LGBT+ had experienced harassment in the five years before the survey. This was compared to 40% of heterosexual respondents. Over twice as many non-heterosexual than heterosexual respondents stated that their experience(s) of harassment were of a sexual nature[121].

A separate survey conducted in 2023 by the same organisation focused on the experiences of LGBT+ individuals in the EU and highlighted some of the particular challenges faced.[122] While there was a decrease in the number of respondents who said they felt discriminated against in the 12 months before the study compared to the 2019 results, the rate of perceived discrimination only decreased by 1%. While there was a noticeable increase in both physical and sexual attacks and hate-motivated violence among all respondents compared to 2019, reporting of these incidents remained low at only 8%. Trans and intersex individuals reported the highest rates of discrimination, as well as higher rates of physical or sexual attacks compared to other respondents. 7% of respondents who had experienced hate-motivated violence stated that the perpetrator was someone from school, college or university. While there is little recent research focusing specifically on discrimination based on sexual orientation in higher education in the EU, this data provides a basis to understand the difficulties that LGBT+ staff and students in higher education institutions may experience.

The relative absence of research on this topic remains a primary concern, which may partly be influenced by the hesitancy of LGBT+ individuals to come out as they navigate these structures. A 2023 UK study on LGBT+ academics in STEM found that there was poor visibility of out academics in higher education, resulting in a feeling of isolation among participants.[123] This was not as pronounced among PhD students compared to more senior

[120] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Crime, Safety and Victims' Rights – Fundamental Rights Survey' (n 52).
[121] Ibid
[122] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'LGBTIQ Equality at a Crossroads: Progress and Challenges EU LGBTIQ Survey III' (2024).
[123] Marco Reggiani, Jessica Dawn Gagnon and Rebecca Jane Lunn, 'LGBT + Academics' and PhD Students' Experiences of Visibility in STEM: More than Raising the Rainbow Flag' (2023) 87 Higher Education 2023 87:1 69 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-023-00993-2> accessed 24 November 2025.

roles in which there was less diversity with one participant explaining, “the more senior you go, its gets whiter, straighter, more male”. The same study also highlighted that inclusivity based on sexual orientation was also absent in many work environments and the lack of representation of LGBT+ individuals in senior roles was thought to prevent disclosure of sexual orientation as it may negatively impact on career opportunities. Non-heterosexual staff and students may also be at higher risk for harassment than their heterosexual counterparts, as evidenced by the reports discussed above.

The Irish Context

Data on gender identity and sexual orientation has not been collected as part of the Census to date, though it has been confirmed that these questions will be included in Census 2027.[124] As few national level studies collect information on sexual orientation, it is difficult to estimate the percentage of the total population that identifies as LGBT+, which has implications for informing policy.

While anti-sexual orientation as a motive for hate incidents in Ireland has decreased year on year, it remained the third highest reason for these incidents in 2024.[125] The 2023 FRA survey revealed that Ireland had one of the lowest levels of trust by respondents regarding the efforts made by government to combat discrimination against LGBT+ individuals.[126] This survey also showed that Ireland had one of the highest rates of discrimination against trans women.

A recent study on sexual harassment in higher education institutions in Ireland found that students identifying as gay/lesbian, bisexual or queer were more likely to be victimised than heterosexual individuals.[127] The same study showed that students who had experienced sexual harassment reported lower perceptions of institutional support than those who had not.

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[124] ‘Major Updates to the next Census Confirmed by Minister Mary Butler’ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-taoiseach/press-releases/major-updates-to-the-next-census-confirmed-by-minister-mary-butler/> accessed 11 December 2025.

[125] ‘2024 Hate Crime Data and Related Discriminatory Motives - Garda’ <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/office-of-corporate-communications/press-releases/2025/april/2024-hate-crime-data-and-related-discriminatory-motives.html> accessed 30 October 2025.

[126] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, ‘LGBTIQ Equality at a Crossroads: Progress and Challenges EU LGBTIQ Survey III’ .

[127] Kate Dawson and others, ‘Patterns of Sexual Harassment: An Intersectional Approach to Reported Victimization in a Campus Climate Survey of Students at Irish Higher Education Institutions’ (2024) 30 Violence Against Women 323 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10778012231203619> accessed 26 November 2025.

In terms of mental health, a study assessing the levels of anxiety and depression among LGBT+ individuals found that students belonging to this group had higher rates of anxiety and depression than non-LGBT+ individuals.[128] The importance of mental health services tailored for LGBT+ students was highlighted in this study, with lesbian and bisexual women having higher engagement with mental health services than heterosexual women.

Findings from TUS

A 2022 study at TUS[129] explored how outness—the ability to be open about one's sexual or gender identity—and community connectedness influence mental health among LGBT+ students. Surveying 245 self-identified LGBT+ students, the research found that both factors had a significant, positive effect on mental health. Barriers to outness included limited understanding of gender issues and bullying, while barriers to connectedness included a lack of LGBT+ activities, safe spaces, and visibility on campus. Students highlighted the need for gender-neutral facilities and improved sexual health supports.

[128] Keith Walker, 'Anxiety and Depression Levels Compared between LGBTQ+ and Non-LGBTQ+ Individuals in Higher Education'(2023).
[129] John Hoey (2022), Outness, Community Connectedness and Mental Health in the LGBT+ Student Community at an Irish University

8 - Religion

EU

The 2021 *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe* estimates that there are 76.1% Christians, 0.2% Jews, 7.2% Muslims, 1% Eastern and other religions and 15.6% non-religious in Europe.[130] Nearly one-third of people who identify as part of a minority group based on religious beliefs reported that they experience discrimination most or all of the time.[131] Yet, recent findings show that there is a disparity between actual and perceived discrimination.

A special Eurobarometer survey from 2023 found that 70% of respondents had friends or acquaintances with different religious beliefs to themselves, and discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs was thought to be less widespread compared to the 2019 findings.[132] However, the same study showed that while individuals reported higher rates of being comfortable working with someone from different religious backgrounds (i.e., Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, atheist), the percentage of respondents who stated that they were comfortable having children who were in a relationship with someone from these backgrounds was lower.

The FRA's most recent survey on perceptions of anti-Semitism in the EU found that respondents reported experiencing discrimination due to their Jewish identity or religious beliefs most often in educational settings, while looking for work or while at work.[133] Consultations with Jewish organisations in the EU after the Hamas attacks on Israel in October 2023 noted a rise in anti-Semitism since. They highlighted a substantial increase of harassment, intimidation and violence across all survey countries[134].

Muslims may also face discrimination in work and education. A 2023 study on perceived discrimination of Muslim immigrants in Europe revealed that Muslim immigrants experienced higher rates of perceived discrimination compared to non-Muslim immigrants.[135] Islamophobia may present itself in a variety of ways, including

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[130] Grace Davie and Lucian N Leustean, 'The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe' <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198834267.001.0001> accessed 27 November 2025.
[131] OECD, 'Combatting Discrimination in the European Union' <https://doi.org/10.1787/29c2c36a-en.> accessed 27 November 2025.
[132] European Union, 'Special Eurobarometer 535 – Discrimination in the European Union' (2023) <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972> accessed 27 November 2025.
[133] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism – EU Survey of Jewish People' (2024).
[134] Ibid
[135] Luigi M Solivetti, 'Muslim Immigrants and Perceived Discrimination in Europe: A Comparative Analysis' (2024) 58 1859 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01702-y> accessed 27 November 2025.

microaggressions and negative treatment based on physical appearance (i.e., Islamic dress). For example, a UK study from 2021 on Muslim students in higher education found that these types of discrimination created tensions in relationships between Muslim and other students and ultimately contributed to damaging the mental health of Muslim students.[136]

The Irish Context

According to the 2022 Census, the Roman Catholic religion remained the most predominant in Ireland with 69% of the population reporting that they were Roman Catholic.[137] The census also showed that 14% of the population declared that they had no religion and that the remainder of the population belonged primarily to the Church of Ireland or England, Anglican and Episcopalian, Islam, Orthodox (Greek, Coptic, Russian) and Hindu religions, though these made up a significantly smaller portion of the population[138].

The 2023 Special Eurobarometer showed that 35% of respondents in Ireland thought that discrimination based on religious beliefs was widespread in the country.[139] However, the same study showed that the percentage of people who stated they would be comfortable working with someone from certain religious backgrounds (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, atheist), and that they would be comfortable with their children being in a relationship with someone from these backgrounds, had all increased since 2019.

A study published in 2022 on religious beliefs in higher education in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland found that students not only had a high level of religious self-identification, but that they also exhibited a positive attitude towards religious diversity.[140] However, they also expressed that there was poor awareness of and sensitivity to different

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[136] Izram Chaudry, '"I Felt like I Was Being Watched": The Hypervisibility of Muslim Students in Higher Education' (2021) 53 Educational Philosophy and Theory 257 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00131857.2020.1769603> accessed 28 November 2025.
[137] Central Statistics Office, 'Religion Census of Population 2022 Profile 5' (2023) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp5/censusofpopulation2022profile5-diversitymigrationethnicityirishtravellersreligion/religion/> accessed 28 November 2025.
[138] Ibid
[139] European Union, 'Special Eurobarometer 535 – Discrimination in the European Union' (2023) <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972> accessed 27 November 2025.
[140] Patricia Kieran, Marie Parker-Jenkins and Anne Ryan, 'Religions and Beliefs in Changing Times: Perspectives of Student Stakeholders in Third-Level Educational Contexts in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland' (2022) 44 British Journal of Religious Education 38 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01416200.2020.1775552> accessed 27 November 2025.

religious beliefs within their institutions, pointing to the necessity of educating staff and student populations about different religious beliefs.

Findings from TUS

In a TUS staff survey in 2023, respondents were invited to disclose demographic data, including their religion. Options included: Church of Ireland, Islam, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, Presbyterian, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Another option not listed, no religion and prefer not to say. 63% of respondents chose Roman Catholic while 24% chose “no religion” (Figure 4).

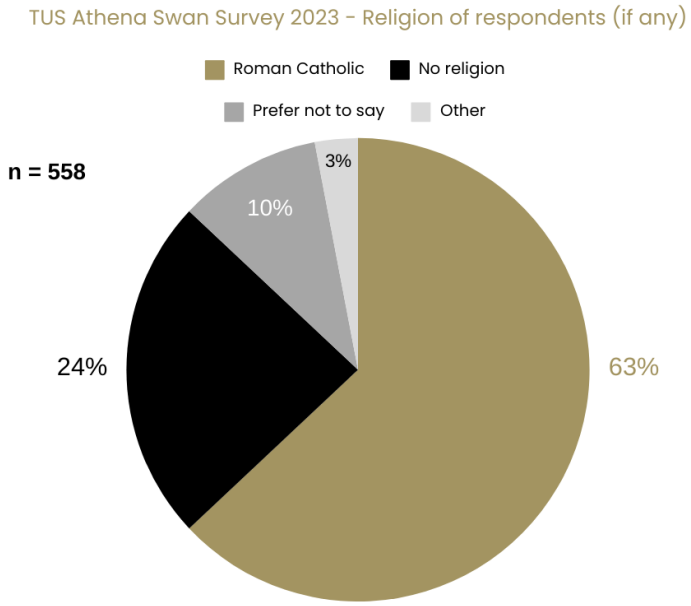

Figure 4 TUS Athena Swan Survey 2023 Religion of Respondents (if any)

9 - Civil Status

EU

Civil status (i.e., single, married, separated, divorced, widowed people, civil partners and former civil partners) can affect staff and students in higher education in a number of ways. This may include the type of retirement pathways that are available to the individual, their pension income and balancing work or study obligations with divorce, or parenting responsibilities.

A 2024 study of West Germany revealed that men tend to have more stable, higher income pathways to retirement compared to women.[141] Civil status was a significant factor in retirement experiences with divorced men and women being more likely to receive early retirement pensions or long-term unemployment benefits compared to married men and women, making them more susceptible to old age inequalities. While divorced women were more likely to increase employment and work full-time prior to retirement than married women, a significant number faced difficulties in doing this due to challenges such as balancing parental responsibilities and full-time employment, dealing with poor health and coming from a lower socio-economic background, precluding them from pursuing better employment opportunities[142].

A recent study comparing pensions in West Germany and Sweden and how they are influenced by civil status reported that in both countries economic inequality by civil status was present. In Germany, the divorce-splitting mechanism, which aims to equalise pension incomes for men and women, resulted in comparable pensions for divorced men and women. In Sweden, women overall had lower pensions than men, though divorced and married women had similar pensions. However, pension incomes for divorced men and women were still less than that of married men.[143]

In a 2025 research review examining the relationships between divorce and work, the importance of organisational policies in supporting staff to both help reduce the probability of divorce and to support staff going through the divorce process was

[141] Sarah Schmauk, 'Pathways to Retirement in West Germany: Does Divorce Matter?' (2024) 60 Advances in Life Course Research 100595 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1569490924000066> accessed 1 December 2025.
[142] Ibid
[143] Sarah Schmauk and Linda Kridahl, 'Who Receives Most? Gendered Consequences of Divorce on Public Pension Income in West Germany and Sweden' (2025) 45 Ageing & Society 831 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ageing-and-society/article/who-receives-most-gendered-consequences-of-divorce-on-public-pension-income-in-west-germany-and-sweden/D2508D6C7B705C69D5DD7F9E2480FEB9> accessed 1 December 2025.

highlighted.[144] The report highlights that supports intended to allow staff more family time and reduce the likelihood of relationship breakdown included providing paid parental leave, avoiding long working hours, reducing commute times and allowing for remote or hybrid working. In the case of those who were going through a divorce, it was suggested that institutions ensured that relevant supports available to help employees were offered, such as remote or hybrid working, as well as social support from peers and managers.

The Irish Context

Survey results from 2025 revealed that lone parents in higher education in Ireland felt the greatest obstacle they faced as students was the time poverty created by having to balance the demands of being a student and their parental responsibilities.[145] The study outlined that the lack of availability of childcare, along with the timing of their studies (i.e., how courses are organised and delivered) were considered significant challenges for many higher education students.

[144] Thomas K Kelemen and others, 'Understanding the Relationships Between Divorce and Work: A Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda' (2025) 51 Journal of Management 427 <https://scholar.google.com/scholar_url?url=https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/01492063241281467%3Fcasa_token%3D-JjDACAUwwMAAAAA:ihNNYJ5Fe-GRnZzpMGRDoyQEEBg8-2y1SNG5jah61iEJj9pZe8FKAoVJNUuAy47Bv7A-T3y91Qexlzw&hl=en&sa=T&oi=ucasa&ct=ucasa&ei=MfkuacGkA6G7ieoPhoLWaQ&scisig=ABGrvjIoX5p5LyekAruTq6d27VUg> accessed 2 December 2025.

[145] Fiona Dukelow et al (2025), 'Education First? Lone Parents' Lived Experience of the Challenges and Benefits of Participating in Higher Education'.

Findings from TUS

In a TUS staff survey in 2023, respondents were invited to disclose demographic data, including their marital status. The majority of respondents (62% n=350) stated they are married (Figure 5).

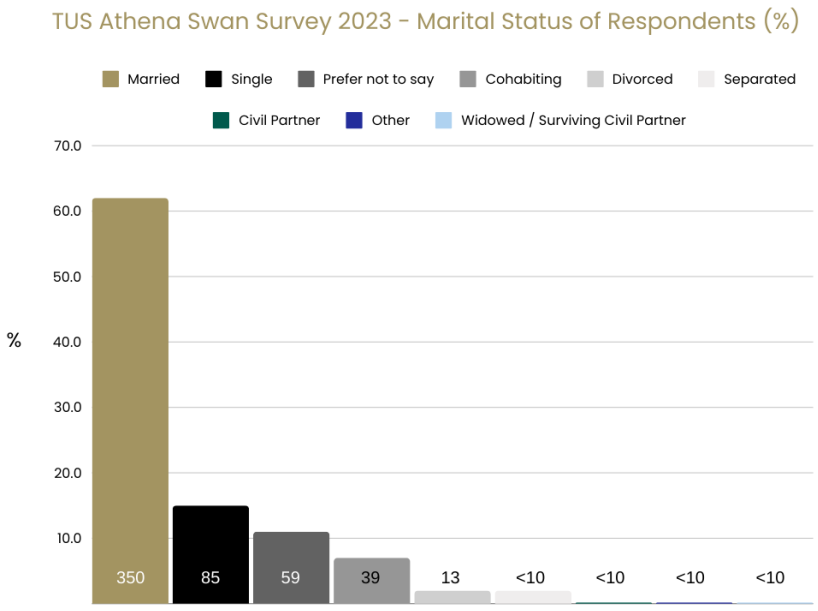

Figure 5 TUS Athena Swan Survey 2023 - Marital Status of Respondents