

The Experience of Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from Self-Report Data

*Helen Russell, Frances McGinnity, Emma Quinn
and Rebecca King O’Riain¹*

The mid-1990s to the mid-2000s was a period of significant development and increasing awareness of the problem of discrimination within Irish society. This is reflected in the development of equality legislation and the establishment of bodies such as the Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal. Discrimination is commonly understood as differential treatment on the basis of group membership that unfairly disadvantages a group, and is defined in Irish law as covering unfair treatment in employment, training, accessing goods, services, accommodation and education across nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race/ethnicity/nationality, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the Traveller community (see Bond et al., this volume). However, while expectations of a fair society for all have become increasingly well-defined in recent years, relatively little is known of the nature or extent of the

¹ The authors would like to acknowledge the Equality Authority who funded the research as part of the Research Programme on Equality and Discrimination with the ESRI. We would also like to thank the CSO for access to the micro-data from the QNHS and to the European Foundation for access to the European Working Conditions Survey micro-data.

problem of discrimination in Ireland. This is partly because measuring discrimination offers considerable challenges to researchers, as discriminatory behaviour is rarely observed directly. A number of methods for measuring discrimination have been used in previous research, though no single approach allows researchers to address all the important measurement issues and each have their strengths and weaknesses (see Bond et al., this volume; Blank et al., 2004; Darity and Mason, 1998; Pager and Shepherd, 2008).

Surveys of respondents' self-reported experiences of discrimination are an important instrument in the toolkit for measuring inequality and discrimination in society. This chapter draws on data from the first nationally representative survey designed to collect information on self-reports of discrimination in Ireland, which was carried out by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2004.

The method draws on the respondents' own experiences and their interpretation of events. The primary strengths of this methodology are its breadth and the representative nature of the results. Surveys of discrimination or unfair treatment can investigate a wide variety of situations and are not confined to a particular setting such as employment or housing. One survey can ask respondents about their experiences across a wide range of domains.

General population surveys also have the advantage of collecting information across all sectors of society and not just among an identifiable minority group. The results of surveys conducted upon a nationally representative random sample of the population can be generalised to the wider population, which is a key limitation of some other approaches to investigating discrimination such as experimental studies, legal caseload analyses and qualitative studies. A further advantage of this approach is that follow-up questions can be asked about respondents' reactions to discriminatory experiences and the perceived consequences for the individual.

The subjective nature of self-reports is the chief weakness of this methodology – unlike legal cases, there is no independent arbitrator to assess whether discrimination took place according to a set of defined criteria and evidence. Self-reports of discrimination may be subject to incomplete information and bias. Discrimination may be under-reported because it is not observable to the respondent (for example, an employer might discriminate against a job candidate who is female/pregnant/a non-national but the applicant will not know the reason he or she has not been hired). Others may experience discriminatory treatment but not identify this as discrimination due to lack of knowledge about rights or because they wrongly believe the treatment was due to some other factor. Alternatively, discrimination may be over-reported if, in an ambiguous situation, respondents falsely attribute their treatment to discrimination when it is in fact due to some other reason (for example, denial of job promotion could be due to poor performance rather than discrimination). Such under- or over-reporting is especially problematic if it varies systematically across the groups of interest. For example, previous research shows that the highly educated tend to report more discrimination in a range of situations, despite being objectively advantaged (McGinnity et al., 2006). A further disadvantage of this approach is that it is confined to discrimination that operates at an individual level. Discrimination that operates at a structural/institutional level (for example, occupational segregation) which disadvantages a group is unlikely to be reported in this type of survey.

The limitations of self-report and other single methods of investigating discrimination mean that it is important to interpret the results in conjunction with findings generated through other research methodologies, a process known as triangulation. In general, researchers have found direct self-reports of discrimination to be accurate and reliable when cross validated against other data sources (Blank et al., 2004).

Previous research has found widely varying levels of self-reported discrimination depending on country, the social situation investigated and the way in which the questions are asked. These type of surveys are most frequently fielded in the US, although a number of cross-European studies have also been conducted. The studies are often linked to specific types of discrimination, for example on the basis of gender or race/ethnicity (see Pager and Shepherd, 2008; Blank et al., 2004 for reviews; see also Darity, this volume).

For example, in a national population survey of adults in the US (N=3,032), Kessler et al. examine perceived discrimination across a range of eleven domains (e.g. promotion, job hire, denied bank loan, denied/received inferior medical care, other services) across the respondent's whole lifetime. The rate of reported discrimination was highest in respect of job hires (16 per cent), promotion (13 per cent) and other services (9 per cent), and fell to 3 per cent in the case of medical care. A European study on migrants' self-reports of racism and discrimination was conducted across 12 EU Member States including Ireland (EUMC, 2006). Altogether more than 11,000 respondents with migrant backgrounds answered questions about their experience of discrimination in the preceding year across five domains: employment, private life and public arenas, shops and restaurants, commercial transactions and institutions.² While the questions were harmonised, the selected migrant groups and the sampling methods differed across the countries. The Irish sample consisted of four migrant groups, North African, Asian, Central/South African and Eastern European, who had come to Ireland through either the work-permit system or the asylum process (see McGinnity et al., 2006 for further details). Among other results, the Irish report found that 35 per cent of migrants experi-

² Within these five categories respondents were questioned about 16 different experiences.

enced harassment on the street/on public transport/in public places in the past year; 32 per cent of those entitled to work experienced harassment at work, while 21 per cent of this group reported discrimination in access to employment; 15 per cent reported being denied access to housing because of their national/ethnic origin, and a similar percentage reported being denied credit/a loan, or being harassed by neighbours; 14 per cent reported being refused entry to a restaurant, pub, or nightclub during the last year because of their national/ethnic origin. Rates of self-reported discrimination were highest among Black Africans (*ibid*, p. vi).

In another European-wide study, which is repeated every five years, the European Working Conditions Survey 2005 found that 5 per cent of those in employment felt they had been discriminated against 'at work' in the previous 12 months across a range of grounds (religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, sex).³ In Ireland, 6.8 per cent of employees reported discrimination at work, and rates ranged from 2.1 per cent in Spain to 9.1 per cent in the Czech Republic. The earlier surveys reveal that the rates of self-reported discrimination in Ireland increased over time, from 2.9 per cent in 1995 to 4.4 per cent in 2000 and 6.8 per cent in 2005.

Perceived discrimination has also been found to have negative outcomes. Kessler et al. (1999) report that self-reported discrimination is linked to depression, anxiety and other negative health effects. Perceived discrimination has also been linked to diminished effort in education or in the labour market, which can have a further negative impact on outcomes (Loury, 2002; Steele, 1997).

³ Findings based on authors' own analysis of the European Working Conditions Survey micro-data supplied by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (contact first author for further details). The results refer to the proportion of respondents who report discrimination at work on any of the grounds.

This chapter is primarily concerned with identifying the socio-demographic factors associated with greater risk of self-reported discrimination in Ireland. We are particularly interested in the extent to which groups identified in the equality legislation self-report that they have been discriminated against in the recent past. In discussing these results we examine whether they are consistent with other evidence on discrimination and inequality in Ireland using alternative methodologies. As the survey was the first of its kind in Ireland, the results are important for benchmarking future changes in discrimination experiences.

The Survey

The results are based on analysis of the CSO Quarterly National Household Survey, Equality Module, conducted in the fourth quarter of 2004. The QNHS is a nationally representative random sample of private households in Ireland. The Equality Module of the survey was completed by 24,600 respondents, all aged 18 years and over who were interviewed directly.

The survey follows international best practice to minimise bias in the estimates of discrimination:

- Respondents were provided with an explicit definition of discrimination and a number of concrete examples of what is and is not considered discrimination (see Table 1).
- The experience of discrimination is linked to specific social contexts or domains (Table 2).
- The questions are time-delimited – in this case, confined to the two years preceding the interview (Table 2).

Table 1: Definition of Discrimination on Equality Module (Prompt Card)

Discrimination takes place when one person or a group of persons are treated less favourably than others because of their gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, 'race' – skin colour or ethnic group, sexual orientation, religious belief, and/or membership of the Traveller community.

Discrimination can occur in situations such as where a person or persons is/are refused access to a service, to a job, or is/are treated less favourably at work. In other words, discrimination means treating people differently, negatively or adversely because they are for instance Asian, Muslim, over 50 years of age, a single parent, and/or homosexual.

If the reason you may have been treated less favourably than someone else is due to another reason (such as your qualifications, being over an income limit or because you are further back in a queue for something) this does not constitute discrimination.

Respondents were asked about the experience of discrimination across nine social situations or domains. Two of these were work-related and the remaining seven related to accessing services (see Table 2). For those who reported discrimination in any of these situations, follow up questions were asked concerning the grounds on which they felt they were discriminated, the effect the experience had, and their response. The respondents were not asked who was responsible for the discrimination, therefore it is possible, for example, that discrimination 'at work' was instigated by an employer/manager or by colleagues or customers, etc. Similarly, service discrimination may have been instigated by the service provider or by other users.

In addition to the specific questions on subjective experiences of discrimination, the module also included some classificatory information not routinely collected in the QNHS. This included two questions on disability, detailed information on religious affiliation and a question on ethnicity. The QNHS measure of 'ethnicity' is self-selected from a set of 11 pre-coded

categories using the classification applied in the 2006 Irish Census (see Garner, 2004, for a discussion of the use of the term ethnicity in Ireland and Russell et al., 2008 for further details of the measure in the survey).

Table 2: Questions on Experience of Discrimination

<p>In the past <i>two years</i>, have you personally felt discriminated against:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In the workplace?2. While looking for work?3. In places like, shops, pubs or restaurants?4. Using services of banks, insurance companies or other financial institutions?5. In relation to education?6. In respect of obtaining housing/accommodation?7. In respect of accessing health services (e.g. getting access to a GP, access to hospital, access to specialist treatment)?8. In respect of using transport services?9. In respect of accessing other public services either at a local or national level?
--

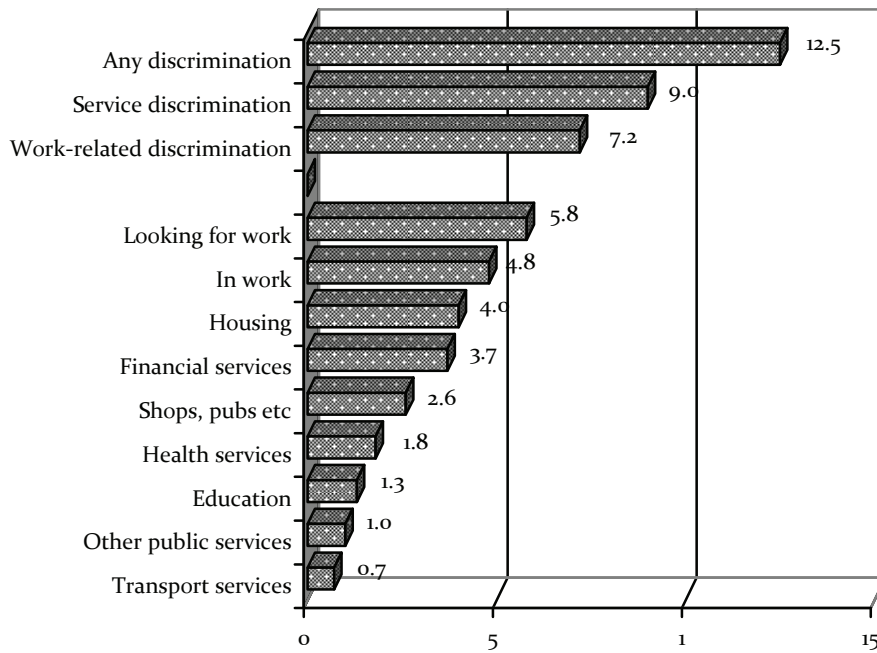
Self-reported Discrimination

This paper is concerned with two inter-related questions: firstly, what are the characteristics of those most at risk of discrimination according to self-reports? And secondly, does the context matter – are the same groups at risk in different social situations? In answering the second question in particular it is important to bear in mind that involvement in different social contexts, for example accessing health services, education services or the job market, varies across different groups and the rates of discrimination reported apply only to those who participated in this situation at some point over the preceding two years. For example, those who were not involved in the labour market in the last two years were

defined as ‘not applicable’ for the work-related questions. The eligible population therefore varies across the social situations from 100 per cent for ‘accessing shop, pubs and restaurants’, transport, financial services and other public services, to only 43 per cent for education and 42 per cent for ‘looking for work’.

Overall, 12.5 per cent of respondents reported experiencing discrimination in at least one of the domains covered by the questionnaire (see Figure 1). Service-related discrimination was reported by 9 per cent of respondents and work-related discrimination by 7 per cent of respondents. Within the more detailed categories, the highest rate of discrimination reported was in relation to looking for work – 5.8 per cent. Discrimination in the workplace was the next most commonly reported: almost 5 per cent of the eligible population felt discriminated against in this domain.

Figure 1: Rates (%) of Self-reported Discrimination by Social Situation



Note: ‘Not applicable’ are excluded, therefore the Base N differs across the domains (see text)

Within the services domains the highest rates of discrimination were reported in accessing accommodation (4 per cent), financial services (3.7 per cent) and shops, pubs and restaurants (2.6 per cent). The lowest rates of discrimination were reported in accessing education (1.3 per cent) other public services (1 per cent) and using transport services (0.7 per cent).

In the following section the social and demographic characteristics associated with subjective experiences of work-related discrimination and service-discrimination are examined through logistic regression models. Many of the characteristics are covered by anti-discrimination legislation in Ireland such as gender, age, family status, marital status, race/ethnicity, nationality, disability and religion. Two characteristics covered by the equality legislation could not be included in the models – sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community. Information on respondent's sexual orientation was not collected in the survey, while the number of respondents identifying as Travellers in the ethnicity question was too small for further analysis.⁴ The models also include employment status and education level. For the models of work-related discrimination, the characteristics of the job are also controlled but these are not discussed in detail in this chapter (see Russell et al., 2008, p. 18). The section below focuses on the model results and in the concluding section we discuss the extent to which these findings replicate those from studies adopting other methods, for example, studies comparing objective conditions and experimental studies of direct discrimination.

Discrimination at Work and Looking for Work

Women were more likely than men to report they had been discriminated against at work, controlling for a wide range of per-

⁴ In the follow-on questions respondents could chose sexual orientation as one of the grounds on which they believed they had been discriminated against.

sonal and occupational characteristics. However, men were more likely to report they had been discriminated against in job search.

Age had relatively little impact on either self-reported workplace discrimination or looking for work, so older age groups (45–54 and 55–64 years) were no more likely to report discrimination. In fact, the small number of over-65s in the labour market were much *less* likely to report either discrimination at work or seeking work.

Non-Irish nationals were more than one and a half times as likely as Irish respondents to report discrimination in the workplace and two and half times more likely to report discrimination when looking for work. While the ‘raw’ percentage of respondents of minority ethnic background reporting work-related discrimination was significantly higher than for White respondents,⁵ these differences do not remain significant in the models when other personal and job characteristics are taken into account. There are a number of possible reasons for this non-significance. Firstly, the numbers in the Black, Asian and Other categories are small, and secondly, due to the recent nature of immigration in Ireland there is a strong overlap between non-national and minority ethnic groups. Most respondents from minority ethnic groups experience higher levels of work-related discrimination attached to being a non-Irish national but the models do not indicate an additional penalty for being of Black, Asian or Other ethnicity, once nationality is accounted for. A further test of this was conducted by creating dummy

⁵ Ten per cent of Black respondents and 17 per cent of Asian respondents reported discrimination at work compared to 5 per cent of White respondents, similarly 18 per cent of Black respondents and 15 per cent of Asian respondents reported discrimination in job search compared to 6 per cent of White respondents. The ‘in work’ models suggest that Asians may be more likely to experience discrimination in work but the difference is only marginally statistically significant, and is reported in the table as ‘same’.

Table 3: Model¹ of Work-related Discrimination: Personal Characteristics

	At Work Odds ²	Looking for Work Odds
<i>Male</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Female	1.38	.59
<i>Irish</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Non-Irish	1.54	2.53
<i>White</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Black	Same	Same
Asian	Same	Same
'Other'	Same	Same
<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Non-Catholic	1.62	1.40
<i>No disability</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Disability	2.76	1.86
<i>Single</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Married	.78	0.73
Separated	1.56	Same
<i>No child <15 yrs</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Couple child <15 yrs	1.32	Same
Lone parent	Same	Same
<i>Employed</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Unemployed	3.14	8.71
Inactive	Same	2.96
<i>Under 25 years</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Age 25-44 years	Same	Same
Age 45-54 years	Same	Same
Age 55-64 years	Same	Same
65 + years	0.27	0.13
<i>Primary education</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Lower second ed.	Same	0.62
Upper second ed.	Same	0.56
Post-second/Third level	1.62	Same

Note: 1. Logistic regression model. The model also controls for the work characteristics for those in employment: occupation, sector, trade union membership, employment contract (full-time, part-time, self-employed). 2. Odds of less than 1 mean that the group in question is less likely to have experienced discrimination than the reference group. Odds greater than 1 mean they are more likely. All figures reported are statistically significant at the .05 level. 'Same' means that the risk of discrimination does not differ significantly from the reference group.

variables that identified those of Irish nationality who were members of a minority ethnic group – this group was not significantly more likely to report work-related discrimination than White Irish nationals. However, there were only 50 respondents in this category.

Religion is also associated with self-reported discrimination in the workplace. Grouping all those who are not members of the majority Catholic religion together (including those with no religious affiliation), it was found that the non-Catholics were 1.6 times more likely to experience discrimination at work and 1.4 times more likely to report discrimination while looking for work.

People with a disability were almost three times more likely to report discrimination at work than those without a disability and were 1.9 times more likely to report discrimination in job search.

In both job search and at work married people were significantly *less* likely to report discrimination than single people. The small number of separated respondents reported higher levels of discrimination at work than those who were single. In terms of family status, couples with children had somewhat higher odds of experiencing discrimination in work than couples without children. While there was a difference in the ‘raw’ rates of work discrimination between lone parents and those without children, this difference was not apparent in the model. However the larger group of couples with children were more likely to report discrimination at work than those without children.

Regarding education, those with post-secondary/third level education were more likely to report discrimination in work. In terms of looking for work, those with lower and upper secondary education were less likely to report discrimination than the reference group – those with primary level only. The higher educated did not differ significantly from those with primary education.

Those currently unemployed were significantly more likely to report discrimination ‘at work’ in the last two years – more than

three times as likely as the employed after controlling for their personal characteristics, such as education and age, and job characteristics like sector and occupation. The effect of being unemployed was even more marked with regard to seeking work. Here the unemployed were eight times more likely to report discrimination than the employed who had engaged in job search over the last two years. It is not possible from this data to assess to what extent their unemployment was due to discrimination on the part of employers, but it is clear that a sizeable proportion of this group *felt* they had been discriminated against in seeking work. Discrimination seeking work was also high among those inactive in the labour market.

The models of discrimination at work and discrimination in job hires also control for a range of job characteristics, namely industrial sector, occupational class, trade union membership and employment contract (full-time, part-time, self-employed). These analyses (not shown, see Russell et al. (2008) for details) found that the predictive power of occupational characteristics was considerably weaker than personal characteristics.⁶ Self-reports of discrimination were not widely differentiated by occupation or sector, with the same rate occurring across many sectors and occupations when personal characteristics are controlled.⁷ The self-employed were less likely to experience discrimination in work due to being their own boss, however they were more likely to report discrimination when looking for work. This latter result suggests that some entry to self-

⁶ The pseudo R square for personal characteristics was 0.60, and when occupational characteristics were added this only increased to 0.75.

⁷ Only those in the Transport and Education sectors reported higher discrimination at work and only those in the Financial services sector reported higher discrimination rate in hiring (out of 11 sectors specified). Across the occupational categories only the unskilled manual respondents had higher rates in the at work model, whereas three of the seven occupational categories had significantly higher rates of self-reported discrimination while looking for work.

employment may be prompted by failure to secure employment. Trade union members were more likely to report discrimination at work, which may be connected to greater awareness of employment rights. It is also possible that trade union members feel discriminated against because of their membership, or that the experience of workplace discrimination may motivate people to become union members. These possible explanations cannot be disentangled with the current data.

Self-reported Discrimination in Accessing Services

Respondents were asked whether they had been discriminated against in accessing seven types of services over the last two years. In the main report the influence of personal characteristics on experiences within each of these social situations was examined through a series of separate models for each domain (Russell et al., 2008). Here we present the results for the overall model, which estimates the likelihood of reporting discrimination in any of the seven domains (Table 4); the results of the individual models are summarised in Table 5.

With the exception of gender, all of the characteristics covered by the equality grounds that were available in the data were found to be significantly linked to the likelihood of reporting discrimination accessing services in the combined model. Within the detailed services domains, women were more likely to say they had been discriminated against in accessing health services, while men were more likely to report discrimination in accessing financial services such as banking and insurance (Table 5).

Young people aged 18 to 24 years (the reference group) were much more likely than all other age groups to report discrimination while accessing services. The detailed models showed that this effect was strongest in financial services, housing, and shops, pubs and restaurants.

Table 4: Model of Services Discrimination in Last Two Years

Group	Odds
<i>Male</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Female	Same
<i>18 – 24 years</i>	<i>Reference</i>
25 – 44 years	0.67
45 – 64 years	0.45
65+ years	0.31
<i>White</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Black	2.70
Asian	Same
Other ethnic group	1.71
<i>Irish</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Non-Irish	1.34
<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Not Catholic	1.60
<i>No disability</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Disability	3.26
<i>Single</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Separated	1.34
Married	0.75
<i>No child <15 years</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Couple child <15 years	1.31
Lone Parent child <15 years	1.85
<i>Primary Education</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Secondary level	Same
Post-second Level	1.21
<i>Employed</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Unemployed	1.39
Inactive	1.43

Note: All figures reported are statistically significant at the .05 level. 'Same' means that the risk of discrimination does not differ significantly from the reference group. Odds less than 1 imply a lower risk than reference group. Not Catholic includes those of no religion, who also report a higher rate of discrimination relative to Catholic.

Table 5: High Risk Groups by Service Domain

Domain	Groups
Housing	Non-Irish nationals, Black and 'Other' ethnicity, no religion, lower education, unemployed, economically inactive, people with disabilities, lone parents, parents, non-married
Health	Women, minority religious groups, 25-64 years, people with disabilities, separated, unemployed, inactive, parents
Shops, pubs, restaurants	Young people, minority ethnic groups, non-Irish, people with disabilities, unemployed and economically inactive
Financial Institutions	Young people, men, Black ethnicity, non-Irish nationals, people with disabilities, not married, graduates, no religion, minority religious groups
Transport	People with disabilities, Black or Asian ethnic groups, non-Irish nationals, minority religious groups, economically inactive, respondents with children, including lone parents
Education	People aged 18-44, other Christian, unemployed, economically inactive, parents with children under 15 years
Other public services	Other Christian, no religion, people with disabilities, economically inactive, those with children under 15 years including lone parents

Note: These results are taken from regression models that control for all the characteristics outlined in Table 4. The full model results are available in Russell et al., 2008.

The model results for ethnicity show that Black respondents had a significantly higher risk of services discrimination than White respondents, even when other characteristics were held constant (including nationality). The highest relative rate of self-reported discrimination for those of Black ethnicity was in relation to shops, pubs or restaurants, where this group were almost five times more likely to experience discrimination than White respondents. Those of 'Other' ethnic background were also more

likely to report greater discrimination accessing services in the combined model (Table 4).

Non-Irish nationals were 1.3 times more likely to report discrimination accessing services than Irish nationals, suggesting that nationality has a less pronounced effect in this domain than in the labour market as seen above. Within the service categories, nationality had the greatest impact in relation to using transport services.

Respondents who were members of minority religious groups or had no religious affiliation were more likely to report service discrimination than Catholic respondents. This effect was significant in all seven service domains examined.

Disability was the characteristic most strongly associated with self-reported discrimination in services. People with disabilities were 3.3 times more likely to report such discrimination than those without a disability. The rate of discrimination for this group was highest in transport services and health services, and was also significant in all service domains except education.

Marital status and family status also proved significant. The married group was *less likely* to perceive discrimination in services than single people, as was the case for work-related discrimination. The context was significant here: marriage was irrelevant for education, health, transport or other public services, but was particularly 'advantageous' in terms of access to housing and to a lesser extent accessing financial services, and pubs, shops or restaurants. The separated group were more likely to report discrimination than those who were single. Respondents with children were significantly more likely to report service discrimination in the combined model, with lone parents reporting the highest level of discrimination among the family status groups. Family status was particularly relevant in the financial service and education models and was not significant in the health service domain.

Overall then, the groups identified as needing protection from discrimination under equality legislation were indeed more likely to report that they had experienced discrimination in accessing services and/or in the labour market over the preceding two years. It is noticeable that some groups experienced discrimination in a wide variety of domains. For example, people with disabilities were found to be at higher risk of discrimination in both work-related and all but one of the service domains (except education). Similarly, non-Irish nationals were more likely than Irish nationals to report discrimination in four service domains and both work-related domains. For other groups discrimination was more context-specific, for example young people were particularly likely to report discrimination in the use of financial services and shops, pubs and restaurants. In the concluding section we will discuss how these results correspond to findings from other studies in the Irish context. Before concluding, the impact of perceived discrimination and the actions taken in response to discrimination are discussed briefly.

Impact of Discrimination

Of those experiencing discrimination, 26 per cent said it had a serious or very serious impact on their lives. The impact of discrimination was found to vary across social groups and also depended on the context. Workplace discrimination and discrimination accessing housing were found to have a more serious impact. The former result is likely to arise because the domain of employment is particularly important to individuals' quality of life and mental well-being. Employment also represents a social situation where there is an ongoing set of relationships and interactions, whereas in other domains interactions are more likely to be of a one-off or intermittent nature. A denial of employment due to discrimination can also have serious financial

consequences. A denial of housing could also have significant consequences for individuals' quality of life.

A statistical model of the characteristics associated with a more severe impact found that people with disabilities were most likely to report serious impact, which may be linked to their higher likelihood of experiencing discrimination across multiple domains. The unemployed were also significantly more likely to respond that discrimination had a serious impact on their lives when other personal characteristics were held constant.

Responses to Discrimination

Sixty per cent of those who self-reported discrimination took no action. The most common form of action taken was verbal, with 26 per cent saying they had taken such action. A further 4 per cent made a written response, with only 6 per cent making a formal response by making an official complaint or taking a legal action. This result suggests that the cases that make it to the Equality Tribunal, the Labour Court or other legal arena represent a very small fraction of all cases of discrimination. 'In work' discrimination was most likely to prompt action; discrimination while looking for work was least likely to have been responded to.

Regarding taking action, the analysis shows that in many cases the social groups who report experiencing the highest levels of discrimination are the least likely to take action. Responding to discrimination requires a range of resources such as language skills, confidence and knowledge of one's rights and entitlements. It appears that more marginalised groups who are subject to higher levels of discrimination may also lack some of these resources.

Conclusions: Do Self-reports of Discrimination Confirm Evidence from Other Sources?

The self-reported data from the QNHS Equality Module based on a nationally representative sample of the Irish population suggest that 7 per cent of labour market participants experienced discrimination over a two-year period, while 9 per cent of the population report discrimination accessing services. The results represent an important first benchmark on the distribution of perceived discrimination across social groups and within different social contexts, and provide a basis for tracking changes in perceived discrimination over time. Self-report data alone cannot establish incidence and distribution of discrimination but can be used to corroborate other sources of evidence for Ireland. A key issue, then, is how far the distribution of self-reported discrimination in the labour market and services is in agreement with other research results.

The greater likelihood of women to report discrimination 'at work' is consistent with analyses of working conditions and labour market experiences, which show that women are disadvantaged relative to men, for example in relation to pay when other human capital characteristics are controlled (McGuinness et al., 2009; Russell and Gannon, 2002; Russell et al., 2005; see Gregory, this volume, for international evidence), and occupational positions (Russell et al., 2009; O'Connor, 1998; Fahey et al., 2000). However, the size of the gender difference is perhaps smaller than these studies on objective conditions would suggest. This may be because, in objective labour market inequality, structural inequalities such as gender segregation also play a role and these are not experienced as direct personal discrimination.

High rates of self-reported discrimination among people with disabilities in the labour market and in accessing services is also consistent with previous Irish research, which found that people with disabilities are significantly disadvantaged in the labour

market and in other spheres such as poverty and social participation (see Gannon and Nolan, this volume). Gannon and Nolan (2004) found that people with disabilities were more likely to be unemployed or outside the labour market, holding other characteristics constant, and were disadvantaged in terms of earnings (Gannon and Nolan, 2005). There is also evidence of prejudicial attitudes towards people with disabilities (CSO, 2010),

Research on objective labour market conditions also show that non-Irish nationals are significantly disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of unemployment risks, occupational position and wages, even when factors such as educational level, labour market experience, length of time in country and language ability are controlled (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008; Barrett et al., 2006; Barrett and McCarthy, 2007). McGinnity et al. (this volume, and 2009) also found direct evidence of discrimination against non-Irish nationals in recruitment through a field experiment among Irish employers. The experiment found that job applicants from German, Asian and African backgrounds were only half as likely to be called to interview as Irish candidates.

High levels of self-reported discrimination in services among minority ethnic groups in Ireland were also reported by McGinnity et al. (2006) and in smaller non-statistically representative surveys of ethnic minority groups (e.g. Amnesty International Ireland, 2001). O'Connell and McGinnity (2008) also found that Black respondents were significantly more likely to experience unemployment and to occupy lower level occupational positions when education, work experience and nationality are controlled. The insignificance of ethnicity in the work-related discrimination models, despite the high raw rates of self-reported discrimination, may therefore be attributable to the methodological issues discussed (primarily small number of cases), rather than accurately reflecting the underlying reality.

While there is a strong level of correspondence in the results of the self-report survey and studies using other methods to investigate inequality and discrimination, there are nevertheless a number of important inconsistencies (in addition to the differences in strength of effects outlined above).

Firstly, studies of income, labour market and social inclusion show that graduates are objectively advantaged (for example, O'Connell et al., 2004; Russell et al., 2010) but they report higher discrimination at work and accessing services. It is likely that higher self-reports of discrimination among this group arise from a greater awareness of rights, higher expectations about equal treatment, and a greater propensity to report discrimination to a third party. Results from other research also show that the highly educated are more likely to self-report discrimination (e.g. McGinnity et al., 2006; EUMC, 2006).

Secondly, the QNHS module finds that older people have low levels of self-reported discrimination in both the labour market and services despite evidence of ageism in attitude surveys (O'Connor and Dowds, 2003) and poorer outcomes in some service areas, e.g. financial exclusion (Russell and Maitre, forthcoming) and health care (McGlone, 2005). Evidence on objective conditions of older people in the labour market varies depending on the outcome examined. Among those in employment, older workers tend to occupy higher occupational positions (Russell and Fahey, 2004). Wages also increase with age, due to increased seniority and experience (e.g. Barrett et al., 2000). Similarly, the rates of unemployment tend to be lower among older workers. However, a number of studies have shown that, once unemployed, older people have more difficulty re-entering employment (e.g. O'Connell et al., 2009). Experimental studies in other countries have also found direct evidence of discrimination in recruitment on the basis of age (Rich, this volume).

These research results suggest that, other things being equal, older people are less likely to identify their treatment as

being discriminatory. This may partly be due to a lack of awareness of rights: in the QNHS Equality Module, 28 per cent of those aged over 65 years said they had no knowledge of their rights under Irish equality law, compared to 20 per cent of the whole population.

Where the self-reported results are not corroborated by other sources of evidence, as in these cases, it is important to consider possible biases in responses caused by cultural factors, differential resources or other issues which make some groups more or less likely to identify discriminatory treatment.

Policy Implications

The results of this study suggest that accessing financial services and housing, along with recruitment and the workplace, are areas that may require particular monitoring for discriminatory practices. In the case of work-related discrimination, the response of the unemployed and the economically inactive, non-Irish nationals (including minority ethnic migrants) and people with disabilities suggest that these groups are particularly at risk. In relation to services, disabled people, non-Irish nationals and minority ethnic groups reported greater likelihood of consistently experiencing discrimination. The finding that some of the groups who most commonly report discrimination are the least likely to take action indicates the potential benefit of proactive third party interventions, such as information campaigns, advocacy and legal supports, along with initiatives by employers and service providers to implement good practice. These strategies are also important to raise awareness of rights among groups who appear to under-report discrimination, for example, older people and those with lower levels of education.

The Equality Module is due to be repeated by the CSO in the fourth quarter of 2010. This will provide a valuable opportunity to track changes in perceived discrimination over time. It will

also provide evidence to address questions of whether the economic downturn since 2008 has led to increased discrimination in general, and against certain groups in particular (e.g. migrants, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities). This changed context makes the continued collection of equality relevant data all the more important.

References

Amnesty International Ireland (2001) *Racism in Ireland: The Views of Black and Ethnic Minorities*. Dublin: Amnesty International (Irish Section).

Barrett, A. Bergin, A. and Duffy, D. (2006) 'The Labour Market Characteristics and Labour Market Impacts of Immigrants in Ireland', *The Economic and Social Review*, Spring, pp. 1-26.

Barrett, A., Callan, T, Doris, A., O'Neill, D, Russell, H, Sweetman, O. and McBride, J. (2000), *How Unequal? Men and Women in the Irish Labour Market*, Dublin: Oak Tree Press.

Barrett, A. and McCarthy, Y. (2007); 'Immigrants in a Booming Economy: Analysing their Earnings and Welfare Dependence', *Labour*, Vol. 21, No. 4.

Blank, R.M., Dabady, M. and Citro, C.F. (eds.) (2004). *Measuring Racial Discrimination*. Washington DC: The National Academies Press.

Bond, L., McGinnity, F. and Russell, H. (2010) 'Introduction: Making Equality Count' in L. Bond, F. McGinnity and H. Russell (eds.) *Making Equality Count: Irish and International Research Measuring Equality and Discrimination* Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Central Statistics Office (2010) *National Disability Survey 2006, Volume 2*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Darity, W. (2010) 'Racism and Colorism in Post-Racial Societies' in L. Bond, F. McGinnity and H. Russell (eds.) *Making Equality Count: Irish and International Research Measuring Equality and Discrimination* Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Darity, W. and Mason, P. (1998). 'Evidence on Discrimination in Employment: Codes of Color, Codes of Gender', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 63-90.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (2006) *Migrants' Experiences of Racism and Xenophobia in 12 EU Member States: Pilot Study*, Vienna: EUMC

Fahey, T., Smyth, E. and Russell, H. (2000) 'Gender Equality, Fertility Decline and Labour Market Patterns among Women in Ireland', in B. Nolan, P.J. O'Connell and C.T. Whelan (eds.) *From Bust to Boom?: The Irish Experience of Growth and Inequality*. Dublin: IPA.

Gannon, B. and Nolan, B. (2004). *Disability and Labour Market Participation*, Dublin: The Equality Authority.

Gannon, B. and Nolan, B. (2005). *Disability and Social Inclusion in Ireland*, Dublin: National Disability Authority and The Equality Authority.

Gannon, B. and Nolan, B. (2010) 'Disability and Social Inclusion in Ireland' in L. Bond, F. McGinnity and H. Russell (eds.) *Making Equality Count: Irish and International Research Measuring Equality and Discrimination* Dublin: The Liffey Press.

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

Gregory, M. (2010) 'Assessing Unequal Treatment: Gender and Pay' in L. Bond, F. McGinnity and H. Russell (eds.) *Making Equality Count: Irish and International Research Measuring Equality and Discrimination* Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Kessler, R.C., Mickelson, K.D. and Williams, D.R. (1999) 'The Prevalence, Distribution, and Mental Health Correlates of Perceived Discrimination in the United States', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 40, No. 3. pp. 208-230.

Loury, G.C. (2002) *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

McGinnity, F., O'Connell, P.J., Quinn, E. and Williams, J. (2006). *Migrants' Experience of Racism and Discrimination in Ireland: Survey Report*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

McGinnity, F., Nelson, J., Lunn, P. and Quinn, E. (2009) *Discrimination in Recruitment: Evidence from a field experiment*. Dublin: The Equality Authority and The Economic and Social Research Institute.

McGinnity, F., Nelson, J., Lunn, P.D. and Quinn, E. (2010) 'Are Eamon and Eithne More Employable than Hardeep and Heike? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Ireland' in L. Bond, F. McGinnity and H. Russell (eds.) *Mak-*

ing Equality Count: Irish and International Research Measuring Equality and Discrimination Dublin: The Liffey Press.

McGlone, E (2005) 'Ageism in the Health and Social Services Sector in Ireland', in Y. McGivern (ed.) *From Ageism to Age Equality: Addressing the Challenges, Conference Proceedings*, Dublin: National Council for Ageing and Older People.

O'Connell, P.J. and McGinnity, F. (2008). *Immigrants at Work: Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market*, Dublin: The Equality Authority and The Economic and Social Research Institute.

O'Connell, P.J., McGuinness, S., Kelly, E. and Walsh, J.R. (2009) *National Profiling of the Unemployed in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI Research Series No. 10.

O'Connell, P.J., Russell, H., Williams, J. and Blackwell, S. (2004) *The Changing Workplace: A Survey of Employees' Views and Experiences*, Dublin: NCPP.

O'Connor, P. (1998) *Emerging Voices: Women in Contemporary Irish Society*, Dublin: IPA.

O'Connor, P. and Dowds, L. (2003) *Ageism and Attitudes to Older People in the Republic of Ireland: Report of ARK Survey*.

Pager, D. and Shepherd, H. (2008) 'The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit and Consumer Markets', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, pp. 181-209.

Rich, J. (2010) 'Measuring Discrimination: What do Field Experiments of Markets Tell Us' in L. Bond, F. McGinnity and H. Russell (eds.) *Making Equality Count: Irish and International Research Measuring Equality and Discrimination* Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Russell, H. and Fahey, T. (2004). *Ageing and Labour Market Participation*. Dublin: The Equality Authority.

Russell, H. and Gannon, B. (2002). 'The Gender Wage Gap in Ireland', *Impact Evaluation of the European Employment Strategy in Ireland*, Dublin: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Russell, H., Smyth, E. and O'Connell, P.J. (2005). *Degrees of Equality: Gender Differentials among Recent Graduates*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Russell, H., Quinn, E., O'Riain, R. and McGinnity, F. (2008) *The Experience of Discrimination in Ireland: Analysis of the QNHS Equality Module*, Dublin: The Equality Authority and The Economic and Social Research Institute.

The Experience of Discrimination in Ireland

Russell, H. McGinnity, F., Callan, T. and Keane, C. (2009) *A Woman's Place: Female Participation in the Irish Labour Market*, Dublin: The Equality Authority and The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Russell, H. Maitre, B. and Nolan, B. (2010) *Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland 2004-2007: Key Issues for Children, People of Working Age and Older People*. Dublin: ESRI Research Series, Number 17.

Russell, H. and Maitre, B. (forthcoming) 'Over-indebtedness and Financial Exclusion in Ireland: Evidence from EU SILC 2008', Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Steele, C. (1997) 'A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance' *American Psychologist*, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 613-29.