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SPEAK OUT AGAINST RACISM

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About ICOS

The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) is an independent advocacy organisation whose mission is to protect and enhance the rights of international students in Ireland while championing their contribution in the places they study and in the communities in which they live. ICOS has 26 institutional members, including all the universities in the Republic of Ireland, many of the Institutes of Technology and independent third level colleges, and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). ICOS is also a member of the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR), the Coalition Against Hate Crime (CAHC), and the Coalition for the Implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism (CINAPAR).

ICOS' values include consultation, collaboration, learning, and accountability, and our goals are to influence policy and standards in international education; build the capacity of our members; empower international students to pursue their rights; and support and showcase the important contribution of international education to international development.

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Foreword

The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) would like to thank the 428 participants who took part in this research. *The Speak Out Against Racism Report* is the first of its kind in Ireland in that it specifically explores the experiences of international students who come to Ireland to study.

Every student who studies in Ireland should feel safe here whether that is on campus, on the street, on public transport, in work or socialising in bars and restaurants. Unfortunately, our research shows that perpetrators of racism are everywhere and not confined to one place which is why we need a whole-of-society approach to tackling the issue. Racism also has many faces including verbal, physical, indirect or online.

Our research shows that racism is a prevalent issue in Ireland and one that affects international students who come here to study. With 63% of students who participated in our research stating that they experienced or witnessed racism in Ireland, ICOS is calling for a number of actions outlined in this report to be taken by policymakers, Government, English language schools and higher education institutions.

It is alarming that only 10% of international students who said they were affected by racism reported it to the authorities. It is clear that we need to raise awareness on how to report racism, access supports and make people aware of their rights under the law.

I would like to acknowledge the authors of the report, my colleagues, Brian Hearne, Policy and Communications Manager at ICOS and Sanghamitra Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, Research Assistant at ICOS.

Laura Harmon

Executive Director
Irish Council for International Students

Acknowledgement

ICOS would like to thank all of the participants who contributed to this research and shared their personal experiences of racism in Ireland.

List of Abbreviations

CAHC: Coalition Against Hate Crime

CERD: International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

CINAPAR: Coalition for the Implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism

CSO: Central Statistics Office

EDI: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

EEA: European Economic Area

ELE: English language Education

EU: European Union

HEA: Higher Education Authority

HEI: Higher Education Institution

ICOS: Irish Council for International Students

INAR: Irish Network Against Racism

NAPAR: National Action Plan Against Racism

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

UN: The United Nations

USI: Union of Students in Ireland

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Executive Summary

Research carried out by ICOS in 2021 as part of a wider investigation into the challenges facing international students during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that 2 in 5 international students experienced or witnessed racism in Ireland with only 5% reporting the incident (Hearne & Rodrigues, 2021). Apart from these findings, there is a notable absence of research on international students' experience of racism in Ireland. This report aims to enhance understanding of the nature and scope of racism suffered by international students, to contribute towards supporting equality and inclusion, and to combat racial discrimination in Irish society.

Findings from the research show that 63% of participants reported that they had personally experienced and / or witnessed racism in Ireland. The most common form of racism documented was verbal abuse. Incidents of racism were reported as having occurred in both private and public spaces, and perpetrators were both male and female, young and old. There were also some reports of institutional discrimination. The notion of 'speaking differently', for example, not speaking fluently, or having an accent, was strongly identified as a factor for being discriminated against and contributing to feelings of exclusion. ICOS' research shows that racism continues to be underreported in Ireland. Reasons for which victims and witnesses of racism said they did not report, include: language barriers, fearing the consequences, not knowing how to report, and a belief that nothing would be done. A lack of trust in the Gardai to address racism was also identified as a key factor for not reporting.

The following is a summary of the key findings:

- 63% of participants reported that they had personally experienced and / or witnessed racism in Ireland, while 37% said they had never witnessed or experienced racism here;
- Verbal abuse was found to be the most common form of racism experienced by participants in this research;
- A quarter of all racist incidents occurred on the street. Racism was also widely reported in social settings (pubs, restaurants, nightclubs), in the workplace, and on public transport;
- Of the 77 participants who said they were studying in higher education, 25 said they had experienced racism on campus;
- The main perpetrators of racism were found to be youths and teenagers. Participants also frequently reported racism in the workplace by customers, colleagues, and supervisors, as well as, in public and private places involving individuals acting alone, and groups of male adults;

- 68% of racist incidents were reported to have taken place in Dublin. However, there were numerous examples of participants who reported witnessing or experiencing racism on more than one occasion, in some cases, in different parts of Ireland;
- Only 10% of people affected by racism reported the incident with the findings showing that many participants did not report because they did not trust the Gardai to address racism. Other reasons for not reporting, include: not knowing how to report, not having enough proof, a fear of the consequences, language barriers, and a belief that nothing would be done. The research also revealed that most participants lacked awareness of their rights under employment and equality rights;
- The research found that many participants reported being discriminated against for speaking in their native language.

Introduction

In the last two decades, Ireland's demographic make-up has rapidly transformed as a result of immigration. Today, Ireland is a multi-cultural and ethnically diverse country; the 2016 Census found that over 11% of the people residing in the State were non-Irish nationals (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Part of this influx of new residents can be attributed to significant growth in the number of international students studying in Ireland. Figures from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) show that there were 27,630 international students studying in higher education in 2021, up from 21,388 in 2015 (Higher Education Authority, 2022). The English language sector has also grown substantially with student numbers reportedly estimated to be in the region of 145,000 prior to the pandemic (Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2023).

Attracting international students to Ireland has formed an important part of government policy. The State's review of its most recent strategy, the International Education Strategy 2016-2020, estimated that the impact of international education on the Irish economy was worth over €2 billion (Indecon, 2020). In addition to their economic importance, international students enrich the Irish higher education system, play a vital role in research and innovation, and contribute to the labour market, and Irish society.

Despite these notable contributions, international students, similar to many non-Irish nationals, are often subject to racial discrimination. Research carried out by ICOS in 2021 as part of a wider investigation into the challenges facing international students during the COVID-19 pandemic found that 2 in 5 international students experienced or witnessed racism in Ireland with only 5% reporting the incident. It is ICOS' understanding that these findings represent the only existing body of evidence on international students' experience of racism while studying in Ireland.

Racism is a very real experience shared by many people across Ireland. Figures published by An Garda Síochána show there was a 29% increase in reported hate crimes and hate related incidents in 2022 (An Garda Síochána, 2023). The Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) also recently reported an increase in the number of racist incidents recorded through its *ireport* system (INAR, 2022).

ICOS' interpretation of racism is based on Article 1 of the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)(1969) which is defined as:

'Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, which has the purpose of modifying or impairing the recognition, the enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life.' (United Nations OHCHR, 1965)

The *Speak Out Against Racism Report* is the first in-depth investigation to explore and document international students' experience of racism in Ireland. The aim of this research is to enhance understanding of the nature and scope of racism suffered by international students, to contribute towards supporting equality and inclusion, and to combat racial discrimination in Irish society.

Methodology

The research was divided into three stages. The first stage consisted of an online survey that was conducted between 17 November 2022 and 17 December 2022, and was available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The survey was followed by a series of semi-structured one on one interviews with survey respondents who agreed to participate in a follow-up online interview. Interviewees were given the option of speaking in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. The final stage of the data collection process was an hour-long focus group that was conducted in English. The data from the survey, interviews, and focus group were cleaned, collated, and analysed by two researchers at ICOS.



1. Online Survey



2. One on One Interview



3. Focus Group

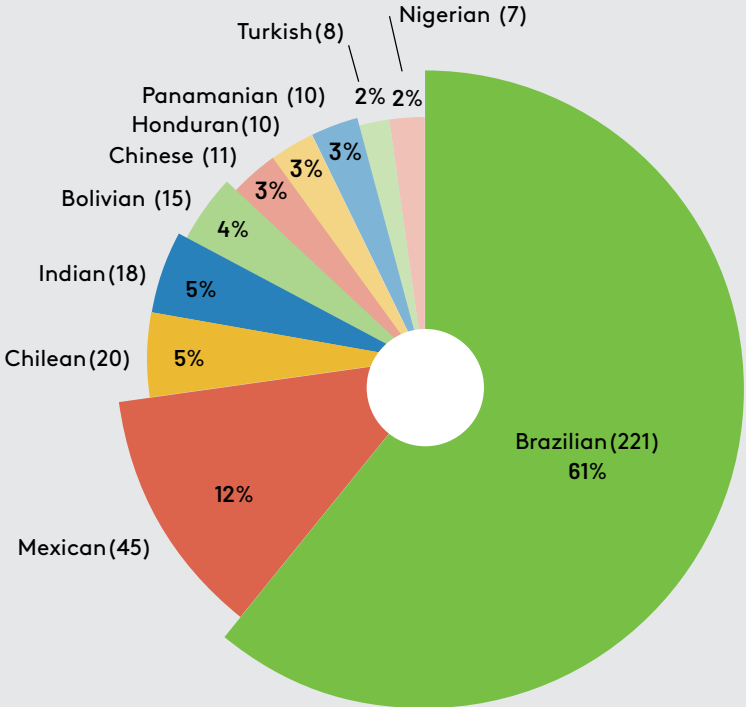
Profile of Participants

In total, 428 participants contributed to this research, of whom 212 reported they were female (50% of all research participants), and 209 said they were male (49% of all research participants). 7 participants (or 1% of all research participants) reported as trans, non-binary, or did not report a gender. There were 426 respondents to the survey, 6 of whom subsequently participated in the online interviews. Of the 4 focus group participants, 2 had previously completed the survey, while the other 2 had not. 97% of research participants were from non-EEA countries, of whom 78% were from Latin America. There was 1 participant who said they identified as 'Asian' and 1 as 'African/Arab', while 1 participant chose not to disclose their nationality. The top 10 nationalities represented 85% of all participants in this research.

428
Participants

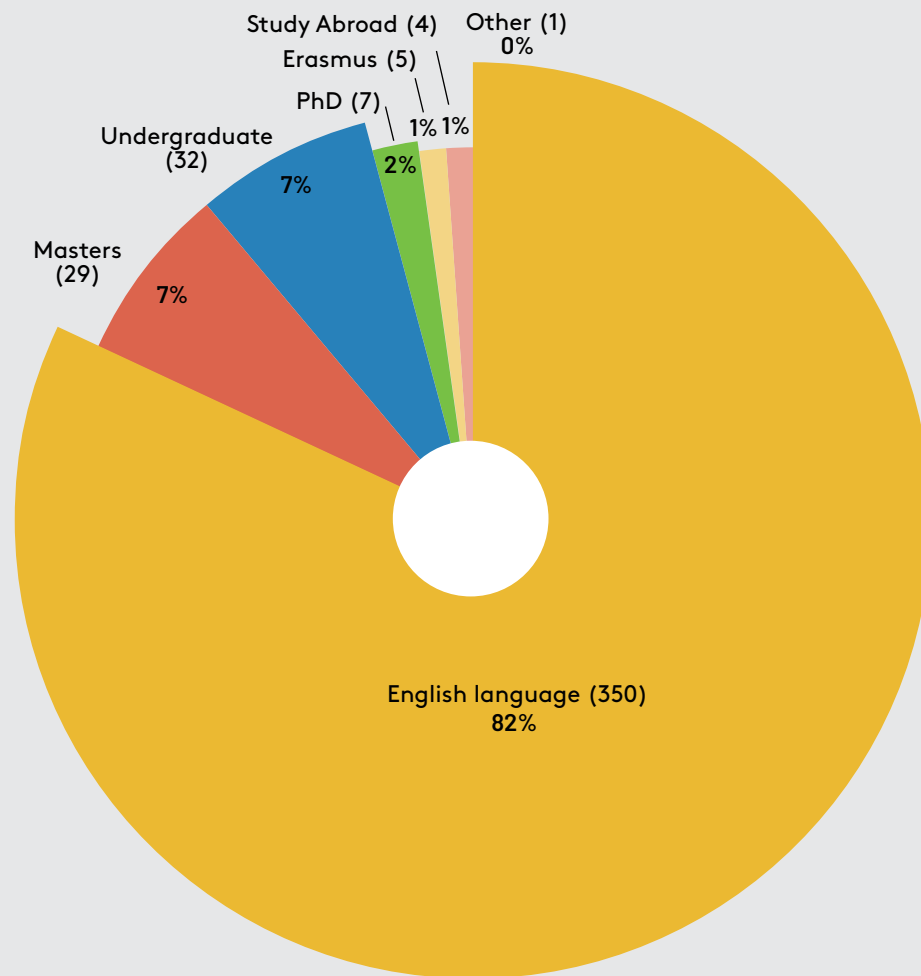
212 Female 50%
209 Male 49%
7 Trans/Non Binary/Did not Report Gender 1%

Top 10 Nationalities



In terms of the types of courses studied, 82% of all research participants were English language students. The proportion of Undergraduate and Masters students were similar at 7% respectively, while the remaining 4% of participants was made up of PhD students, students on Erasmus, and Study Abroad programmes. The breakdown of courses is listed below.

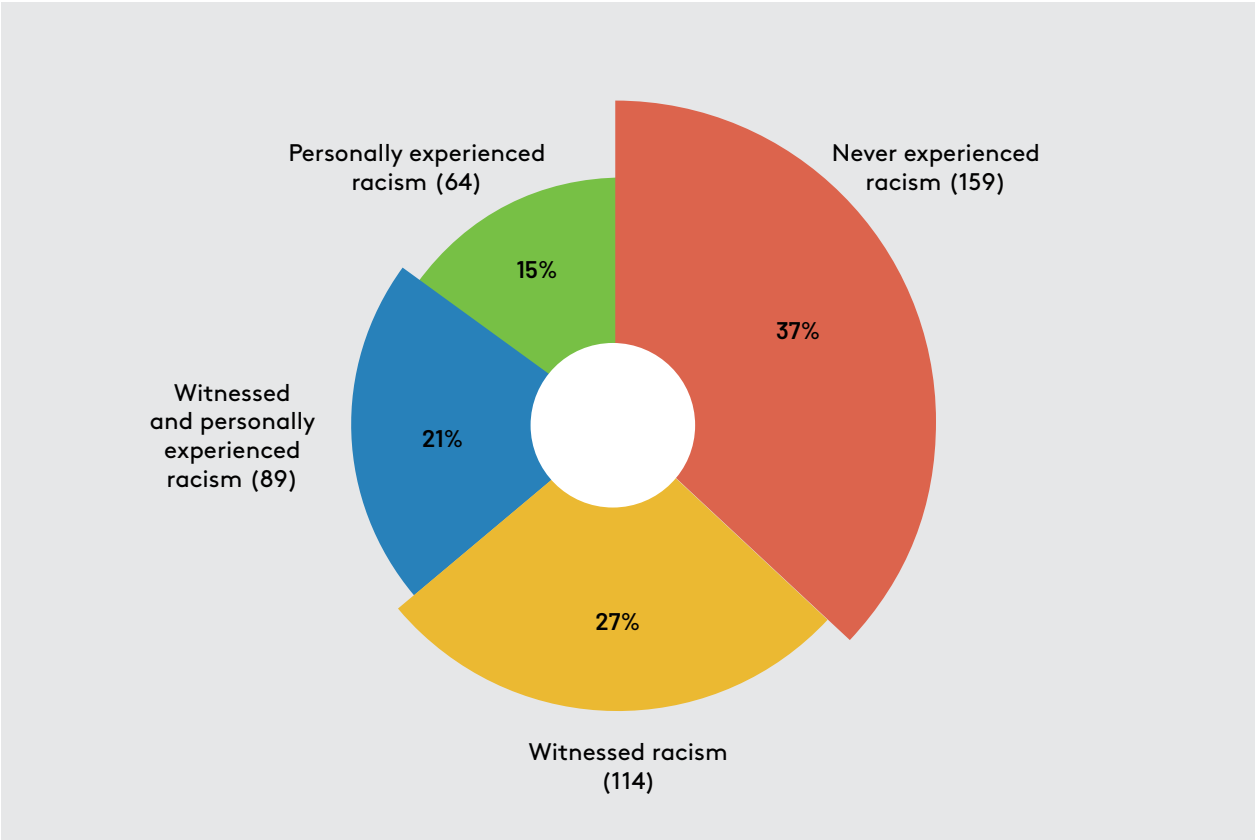
Type of Studies



Survey Findings

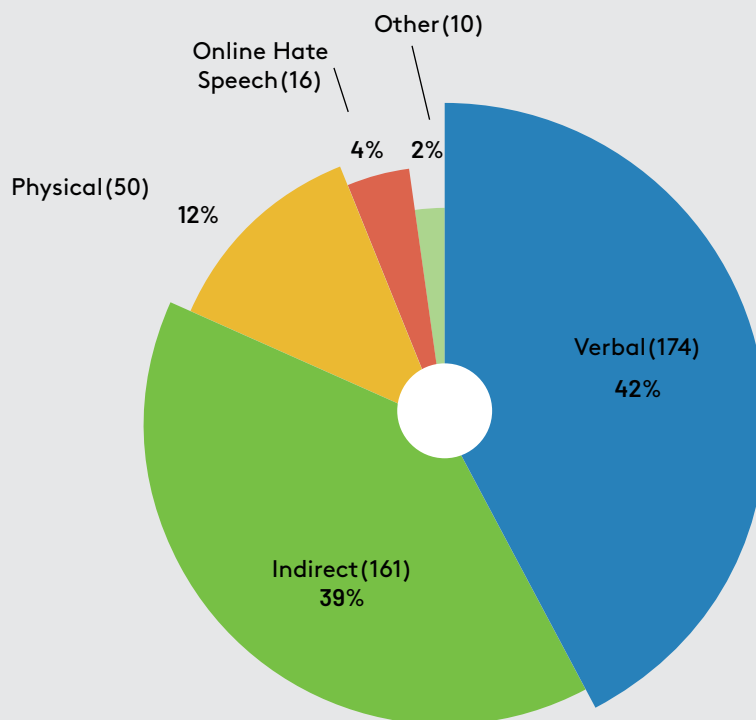
Experiences of Racism

Of the 426 respondents who participated in the survey, 267 (63%) reported that they had personally experienced and / or witnessed racism in Ireland, while 159 (37%) respondents said that they had never experienced racism.



Type of Racism

Respondents who indicated that they had witnessed or experienced racism in Ireland were asked to describe the type of racism by selecting one or more of the following categories: 'Verbal', 'Physical', 'Indirect' (being treated differently because of race), 'Online Hate Speech', 'Other' (any other manifestations of discrimination). Many respondents reported being subject to one or multiple forms of racism. In total, there were 411 incidents of racism documented, with 'Verbal' and 'Indirect' being the most common forms of racism that were witnessed or experienced.



Verbal

Verbal abuse accounted for 42% of all racist incidents reported in the survey. Many of these incidents were manifested in the form of explicit statements, while some were more discrete.

A female Spanish Erasmus student reported the following experience of direct racism: *'A man shouted at us in the public transport when he heard us speaking Spanish that Spanish people are here in Ireland to steal their jobs.'*

A Nigerian Masters student who reported being racially targeted at her shared accommodation said: *'A particular housemate would always accuse me of things saying, "it's always one of your kind" and even when another housemate would say he/she did it, he would insist it had to be me.'*

A Costa Rican English language student heard the following remark while on a busy Luas: *'The only thing that foreigners do is take up space.'*

Racial slurs were also common, sometimes involving stereotypes.

A female Indian Masters student said her lecturer made a joke saying: *'You Indians come to our country and take away our jobs.'*

Respondents reported that casual remarks were made by perpetrators, in some cases, without them realising that they were racist. An example of this is being told they should *'feel lucky to be in Ireland'* or that they *'look a different nationality'* than they really are.

Verbal abuse was sometimes accompanied by discriminatory gestures that made the victim feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. A female Undergraduate student from Malaysia said the following: *'A person looked at me weirdly and said something to me because I'm wearing hijab.'*

Physical

There were 50 reports of physical abuse from survey participants which included: physical assaults, the throwing of objects, and people being spat at. The accounts below highlight incidents experienced or witnessed by respondents.

A Brazilian English language student said: *'I was assaulted and thrown out of a nightclub which I believe was race motivated.'*

A student from Honduras said: *'I have seen how kids and teenagers attack people who aren't white with eggs.'*

A Mexican Undergraduate witnessed: *'Teenagers insulting and hitting people in the street especially foreigners, deciding who looks Irish and who doesn't. They said - not him, he's from here.'*

One Indian PhD student said: *'A woman spat at me saying fucking immigrant.'*

Another Indian student reported being hit with an object: *'I got hit by a bottle of a Pepsi which was thrown from a car as they were yelling racial slurs.'*

One respondent from Brazil remarked: *'A banana was thrown at me.'*

A Mexican respondent reports: *'I was waiting for the Luas when the woman next to me, attacked me with verbal intimidation, then she tried to hit me with her bag.'*

A female respondent from El Salvador commented: *'Some teenagers threw water balloons at me while recording on their phones.'*

Another respondent from El Salvador recalled: *'A group of men got on the bus and they were drinking, one of them sat beside me, while the bus was moving he spilled beer on me, I got up to move downstairs on the bus, as I was leaving my seat, the guy stuck out his leg to trip me up, I managed to avoid being tripped, but he still was able to kick me in the leg.'*

A female Undergraduate from Botswana said: *'A bottle was thrown at me in the street, and I was told to go back to my country.'*

A Mexican student said: *'We were in the supermarket and speaking in Spanish, a man heard us and started to shout at us telling us to go back to our country and he spat at us.'*

An English language student from Mexico reported: *'Mexican community were singing our anthem in our Independence Day and Irish people started to be rude with us and our flag. They used violence.'*

Indirect

161 survey respondents reported that they were discriminated against indirectly by being treated unfairly or differently due to their race. Responses from the survey suggest that this was particularly evident in the workplace.

A Brazilian respondent said: 'I used to work in a place where an Irish person used to always ask that I clean, while she gave different jobs to people from other nationalities that didn't involve cleaning. I have witnessed people treat me badly and not have patience because I didn't speak very good English.'

A Panamanian student said: 'In work they treat me differently because I am Latino and speak differently.'

A male Honduran respondent lamented: 'In my job I feel that because we are Latinos, we are treated differently from the Europeans.'

A female student from Honduras commented on her experience on the street: 'People often look at you differently when you are walking down the street, some Irish people prefer to cross the road.'

One Brazilian participant recalled: 'When I arrived in a pub a man said to me, "don't speak Portuguese", and if I kept speaking, I would have to leave.'

Another English language student from Brazil said: 'The look and way that people talk to you says a lot, judgemental looks because of your skin colour is the main reason, later they find out you are Brazilian, it seems like they don't like to deal with Brazilian people.'

A Bolivian English language student commented on the lack of cultural tolerance that she observed: 'The people insult and don't respect where you are from or that you have a different culture.'

Online Hate Speech

Instances of online hate speech were recorded on 16 occasions in the survey. Many of these incidents were reports of what respondents had witnessed online, but some responses also described personal experiences.

A Japanese English language student reported: *'My friend is a barber, and he posted a picture of me and my friend, we both are from Asia. Some Irish men commented that the Irish barber turned into a Chinese takeaway or that sort of random racist comment.'*

A Mexican English language student said: *'There was a hashtag on Twitter: #Irelandisfull to complain about the housing crisis, and some users were posting that the immigrants were the ones to blame for the housing crisis.'*

A female English language student from Brazil reported seeing: *'Hate comments about how the person is ugly or a really bad stereotype because of their race.'*

Another Brazilian English language student said she saw: *'Hate comments about colour and nationality on the internet.'*

A Nigerian Masters student reported being abused online: *'Been told so many times I'd be shipped back to Africa, where I belong.'*

Other Forms of Racism

The 10 respondents who selected the option 'Other' were asked to provide details about their experiences.

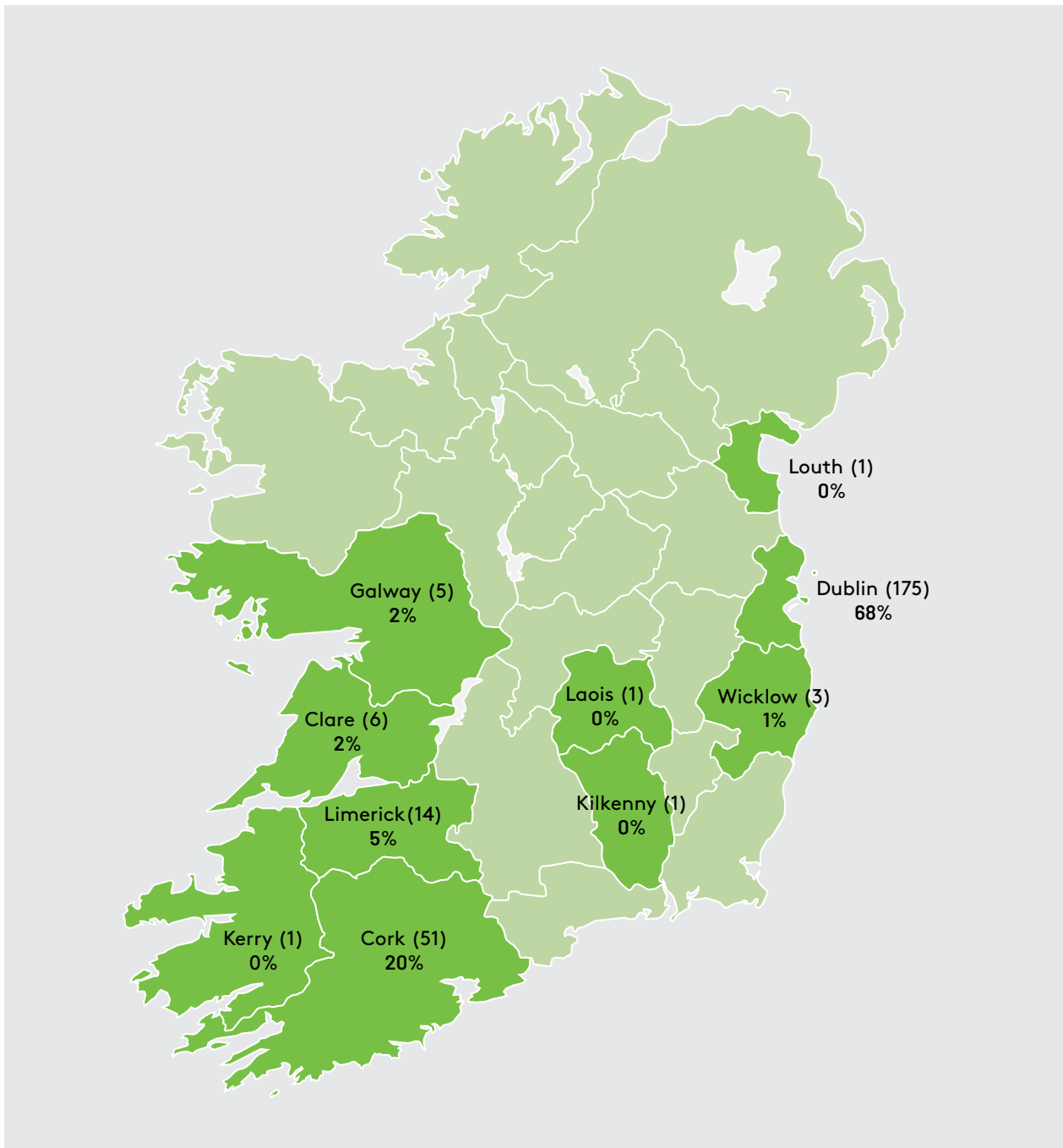
A Brazilian English language student commented on his experience in a shopping centre: *'Me and my friends were in a shop and the security guard started following us around.'*

Discrimination is also prevalent in the provision of accommodation. A female Masters student from Nigeria reported her experience of looking for accommodation in Galway: *'Applied for loads of houses and would be told "oh we don't want foreigners" or "we don't accept Indians" (I'm not even Indian) or "there are enough Nigerians already".'*

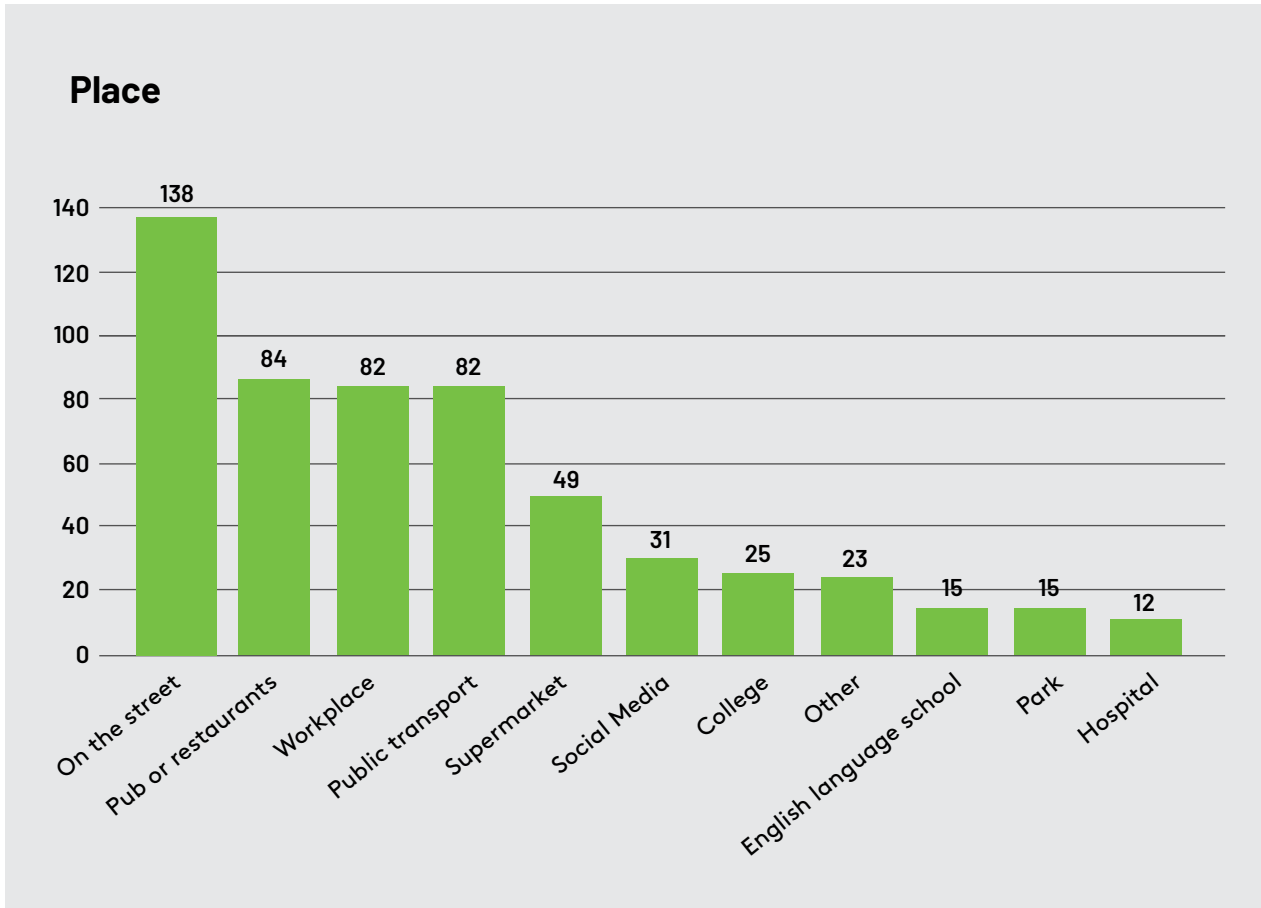
A Brazilian respondent witnessed a woman being refused a seat on a bus because of her religion: *'They said - there's no room for people like you.'*

A female Study Abroad student from the Seychelles recounts being looked at differently because of her race: *'I glanced at a lady, smiled at her, and she looked at me with a disgusted face like I didn't belong there.'*

Location of Incident



Incidents occurred throughout Ireland, both in urban and rural locations. 258 respondents provided details of where they suffered or witnessed racism. In total, there were 10 counties where reported racist incidents took place, the majority of which (68%) occurred in Dublin. There were numerous examples of respondents who reported witnessing or experiencing racism on more than one occasion, in some cases, in different parts of Ireland.



According to the findings, 138 racist incidents occurred on the street, representing a quarter of all incidents. 84 respondents said they witnessed or experienced racism in social settings, such as, pubs or restaurants. There were 82 incidents of racial discrimination in both the workplace and on public transport. Several participants who selected 'Other' reported witnessing or experiencing discrimination from staff at nightclubs. Of the 77 participants who said they were studying in higher education, 25 reported experiencing racism on campus. 17 English language students reported witnessing and / or experiencing racism at their school.

A female Undergraduate from the Philippines said: *'I was waiting with my friend for our bus at a bus stop in Dublin and a cyclist with no helmet decided to shout 'chinks' to us while waiting for the traffic to move. He shouted loud that people even looked at us.'*

A female student from Brazil reported: *'We were in a pub when an Irish guy approached us and started to mock us saying we don't speak English and we shouldn't be here.'*

Racism was commonly observed in the workplace, with many reports of customers, work colleagues, and employers discriminating against non-EEA student workers. Some felt they were treated differently in the workplace because of their nationality or the way that they speak.

A Brazilian English language student said: *'I work as a carer and have witnessed various acts of racism by clients. The worst thing is that we are there to take care and help them.'*

A Zambian Undergraduate participant reported: *'At work I am treated differently from my Irish colleagues. I am constantly monitored and asked about my breaks which I don't normally take.'*

The responses from the survey show that public transport was also a place where racism frequently occurred.

One female Undergraduate from Brazil who was harassed on a bus describes her experience: *'My friends and I were going back from a beach in Galway, so we took a bus to the hotel where we were staying, a group of guys between 17-19 started to sing on the bus and shout horrible things. One of them came over and started to shout at us. It was horrible, I thought they were going to hit us. They also shouted homophobic insults at a woman who was driving her car. It was one of the worst incidents that has happened to me in my life. Almost 2 hours of having to deal with this, we felt so scared and helpless, nobody on the bus tried to defend us and we felt that we would be discriminated against for being foreign if we retaliated. It was a really bad situation.'*

A male English language student from Brazil also recalls feeling isolated and alone: *'The sad thing is that there were other people on the bus who didn't say anything, so it felt like I was invisible to the whole world and only visible to that teenager and his two friends who were laughing.'*

A Brazilian PhD student reports: *'One day in Limerick, inside a bus an Irish lady spat on me, I was speaking with a friend from France, I am brown and probably she realised I am not Irish, or not from Ireland.'*

One Mexican respondent said: *'On the bus, I once heard: Fucking immigrants go back to ye land.'*

There were reports of racism occurring in the respondents' place of study.

A Brazilian PhD student said: *'I suffered a kind of indirect racism from my supervisors at the University; they were belittling the education system in my country.'*

A female PhD student from Nigeria recalled: *'I felt I was not acceptable for a scholarship because of my race. I believe I was qualified and more eligible than others selected.'*

Other places where respondents experienced racism included shops, supermarkets, a library, in the park, accommodation, and using public services.

A female respondent from South Korea commented: *'I was in a queue in Lidl and a guy asked me if I have coronavirus.'*

A Brazilian English language student remarked: *'A black friend suffered racism while participating in an interview for rent of a room, and later suffered racism from*

her landlord who declared that she did not want to talk to her, but to another resident of the house and that the subject was not specific to the other person.'

A Mexican English language student reported: 'A few youths approached a couple of guys that were sitting on a park bench, and they started saying to them to go back to their country.'

A Bolivian respondent recalled: 'The second time was in the emergency department where they had translators of every language except Spanish, a very stressful experience for someone who is studying English.'

Perpetrators



Perpetrators

Of the participants that provided information on the perpetrators of racism, 35 said the offenders were youths or teenagers. There were 34 accounts of racial discrimination in the workplace at the hands of work colleagues, supervisors, and customers, 25 cases involving strangers, and 23 cases involving individuals or groups of men. Abuses by these perpetrators were found to frequently occur in public places, such as, on the street, or on public transport, as well as in private locations, including, pubs, restaurants, and supermarkets. Other perpetrators referenced in responses, include: staff in English language schools and HEIs (lecturers, teachers, classmates, staff members), landlords and host families, and security at pubs and nightclubs. In addition, 17 respondents from the survey reported institutional racism, for example, at their higher education institution (HEI), when dealing with the Gardai, and at a hospital. Several responses also suggested that government policy discriminated against people from non-EEA countries.

Describing her experience in the workplace, a female English language student from Brazil said: *'My ex-boss refused to talk to a co-worker stating that because she was black, she wouldn't understand what he was talking about.'*

Another female English language student from Mexico said: *'In my job, they don't pay you the same as those who are from here.'*

A respondent from Brazil mentioned the persistence of racial jokes at her workplace: *'My boss in work makes jokes and mocks me for being Brazilian; even though I ask him not to do this, he continues anyway.'*

There was a strong sentiment that institutions in Ireland were unsupportive of victims of racism. A female PhD student from India said: *'Racism in Ireland is very, very intense and painful as there is no proper support system for immigrants.'*

Some respondents felt that the government was discriminatory through its policies, for example, work restrictions that make it more difficult for international students to afford living in Ireland.

Reporting

Reporting incidents of racism was found to be very low, particularly among respondents that said they had witnessed racism. A total of 26 incidents were reported out of the 267 incidents recorded in the survey. This constitutes just under 10% of all racist experiences shared through the survey and highlights the under-reporting of racism in Ireland. 25 (9%) participants who said that they witnessed or experienced racism gave details on where they reported the incident. Most respondents (68%) reported the incident at a Garda Station or in their workplace. Other examples of where people reported, include: online, to Luas security, and the premises where the incident occurred.

One female English language student from El Salvador said she reported her case to multiple authorities: *'I reported everywhere, but no one did anything.'*

67% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with the response that they received to their complaint about racism. Several reasons were provided for being dissatisfied with the outcome of reporting, including: not receiving a response to their complaint, nothing being done about the incident, significant delays, and being discriminated against for reporting.

The research points to a low level of trust in the Gardai to act against racism with many participants from the survey expressing frustration.

A male English language student from Brazil said: *'I experienced racism mostly by the teenagers and the Gardai let them do whatever they want.'*

Another student from Brazil commented: *'Because we are immigrants, the police don't listen to us, and preference is always given to natives.'*

One Mexican student said: *'Because the Garda was intolerant to listen to me, and in his words, nothing happened.'*

An English language student from Brazil commented: *'The police here think it's normal to be assaulted if you're a foreigner.'*

Another English language student from Brazil reported: *'Because I never feel that I'm going to be protected by the local authorities, or that something is going to change if I report the incident.'*

The lack of confidence in the authorities is a key reason why racism goes under-reported in Ireland. Another important finding from the research is that many respondents did not know where to report the incident they witnessed or experienced. Other reasons given by respondents for not reporting, include: not having enough proof and a fear of the consequences. Several respondents also said they were reluctant to report due to their level of English.

A female Masters student from Uganda said the following: *'Because I don't know where to report, and I don't think anything will be done about the issue.'*

An Undergraduate student from Japan commented on the lack of proof: *'I don't have any evidence about it and Garda station won't deal with it.'*

A student from Brazil said: *'The place where I work is not healthy and there is different treatment for the Irish and non-Irish.'*

A female Study abroad student from Seychelles commented: *'The reason is because when it is indirect it's difficult to actually have the proof and in situations like that, the victim is often looked at as the bad guy. You are most likely labelled as paranoid or looking for excuses for no reason. But I have seen the difference between people that are actually genuine and those that pretends and treat you differently in secret, so they don't get judged.'*

Interviews and Focus Group Findings

Personal Experiences

All participants acknowledged the presence of racism in Ireland. While experiences were mixed, ranging from *'it happens all the time'*, to *'it has never happened to me'*, or *'I have only ever witnessed it'*, there was consensus around the fact that racism is on the rise, and that non-Irish nationals, including international students, are increasingly discriminated against in many different settings, particularly, when seeking employment or accommodation.

For example, many participants commented that in their workplace they were often given tasks that were more unpleasant or arduous than their EU co-workers. Several participants also mentioned how they often felt that they were treated differently and made to feel like they do not belong in Ireland. Both participants in the interviews and focus group said they often feel targeted when they speak in their native language in public. Most respondents reported hearing negative comments about there being too many immigrants in Ireland.

A Zambian student who was interviewed spoke of feeling uncomfortable and objectified over comments about her physical appearance. One participant from Mexico gave an account of how he witnessed colleagues in work being racially abused by customers. Another participant from Mexico spoke about witnessing physical racism against a female friend who was followed by a man on the street and later assaulted. The experience was so traumatising that the victim decided to return to her home country. A participant from Japan reported being the target of racial slurs and hate speech on the street several times. There was one student from Brazil who spoke about being asked to leave a café while other customers were permitted to remain.

Perpetrators

When asked about the perpetrators of racism, participants gave many examples of people in both public and private spaces, including: supervisors at work, academic staff, restaurant and bar staff, security guards, teenagers, and the Gardai. There were reports of teenagers throwing objects at people or racially abusing anyone who they perceived to be non-Irish. The participant from El Salvador and 1 of the participants from Brazil reported that robberies committed against migrants are also becoming more frequent. There was an account by a participant from Chile of a supervisor at work who made a racist joke implying that Irish students were smarter than their international peers. 2 participants in the focus group and 1 interviewee reported that certain pubs only allow white people entry. The participant from Chile also said she repeatedly experienced racial discrimination while searching for work. There was a feeling among several participants that

migrants are often turned away by potential employers from opportunities because of their nationality. A common observation in the focus group and interviews that was also evident in the survey was the lack of trust in the Gardai to take incidents of racism seriously.

Reporting

Participants believed that it was important to report racist incidents, and that racism should be talked about more often in society, especially in the media. However, it was felt that reporting is mostly ineffective as the authorities seem unable or unwilling to do anything about racism, or even provide support to victims. In that sense, racial discrimination has become normalised for many victims of racism. Most participants that contributed to this part of the research reported that they were unsure about where to report racism. Some said that they feared the consequences of reporting, for example, losing their job, and that it was easier to ignore the incident. A frequent reason for not reporting racism was not having sufficient proof. Another key theme that surfaced in the interviews and focus group was the issue of facing a language barrier when reporting. Consequently, some participants opted not to report, even when there was a clear case of racism. It was also highlighted that it can be difficult to report incidents of racism that are subtle or indirect.

Legislation

Knowledge of Irish equality law was very low, and participants believed that this was because legislative documents often use technical language and are difficult to understand. Participants believed that a better way to reach people and inform them of their rights would be through public campaigns, videos, and advertisements that are accessible and easy to follow. Using social media as a means of creating awareness was highlighted in the focus group.

Policy and Supports

There were 3 types of strategies that came out of the interviews and focus group discussions: (1) information and resources, (2) public education and outreach, and (3) government policy to deal with structural racism. The main support that is currently missing for international students is information about racism. There needs to be more advocacy, and better information given to students on legal recourse, available supports, and procedures for dealing with racism. Several participants highlighted the need for psychological support and access to translation services. Most feedback from participants that focused on education related to the need to promote diversity and inclusion across society. There was a strong sentiment among participants that the State

must take more responsibility for tackling cases of racism in places, such as, the workplaces, educational institutions, and public services.

Discussion of Findings

This research found that racial discrimination is a common experience shared by many international students in Ireland. Participants across the survey, interviews, and focus group reported witnessing and / or experiencing racism in both public and private places. While verbal abuse and indirect racism were found to be the most common forms of racism, there were also numerous accounts of physical, online hate speech, and other forms of racism. These incidents include explicit racism, such as, racial slurs, abusive or threatening language, object throwing, and spitting. There were also accounts of more subtle, or less explicit forms of racism, including, microaggressions, denial of access to premises, and being treated differently or less favourably. In terms of perpetrators, youths and teenagers were identified as being the primary offenders. There were also many reports of discrimination in the workplace by customers, colleagues, and supervisors, as well as in public and private spaces by individuals acting alone, and groups of male adults. In addition, some participants said they experienced institutional discrimination.

Although most of the participants in ICOS' research were English language students, there were 77 (18%) respondents who reported studying in higher education. Concerningly, 1 in 3 of these people reported experiencing or witnessing some form of racism on campus. Given the absence of data on international students' experiences of racism in Ireland, including the higher education sector, there are limits to the conclusions that can be drawn from this relatively small sample. However, the findings are indicative of the prevalence of racism in Irish higher education, and further substantiated by a recent survey of HEI staff in public universities in which more than a third (35%) of respondents from minority ethnic groups said they were subject to racial and/or ethnic discrimination on campus or online in the course of their work (Kempny & Michael, 2021).

One of the main findings that emerged from this research was that non-Irish nationals, including international students, are often targeted for speaking in their own language. The notion of 'speaking differently', for example, not speaking fluently, or having an accent, was strongly identified as a factor for being discriminated against and contributing to feelings of exclusion. Similarly, language barriers were one of the main reasons for which people did not report racism. Other reasons given by respondents for not reporting racism, include: not having enough proof, a fear of the consequences, and the belief they would not be taken

seriously. The research supports the findings from ICOS' research in 2021, as well as recent data from the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR), which show that racism is hugely under-reported in Ireland and that there is a lack of trust in the Gardai, and other reporting mechanisms, to address racism (INAR, 2022).

Throughout this research, participants highlighted the need for more advocacy and education about racism, as well as tighter laws to combat racial discrimination in Irish society, and information and supports to assist victims of racism. It is also clear that international students lack awareness of their rights under Irish equality legislation, such as, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 and the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Racism can be deeply traumatic and have a devastating impact on people's lives. Sadly, many racist incidents, including those reported in this research, do not meet the current threshold to be considered criminal offences, or may be deemed to be too difficult to secure convictions. However, recently, there have been several significant developments in response to racism in Ireland, including: the enactment of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022, the launch of the long-awaited National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR), and the Higher Education Authority's Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions. ICOS has campaigned for the introduction of legislation to tackle racism for several years, and we recognise that these measures represent important steps towards combating racial discrimination and promoting equality. As a member of INAR, the Coalition Against Hate Crime (CAHC), and the Coalition for the Implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism (CINAPAR), ICOS is calling on government to also prioritise the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022.

While legislation and strategies to tackle racial discrimination are essential, there must also be a genuine commitment at the highest level across government to prioritise addressing racism, including the allocation of sufficient resources. Awareness raising of human and equality rights, education and diversity initiatives, and better reporting mechanisms and supports for victims of racism, are among the key areas that will need more investment. Furthermore, the absence of data on international students' experiences of racism is symptomatic of a wider lack of data on racism in Ireland. Enhanced data gathering to record and monitor racial discrimination in Irish society, including data collected by HEIs, is critical to facilitating better understanding of racism and to inform policymakers.

As the State prepares to launch a new International Education Strategy in 2023, which will no doubt set ambitious targets to increase the number of international students, graduates, and researchers studying and working in Ireland, it is imperative that hate crime and hate speech legislation is in place and adequately resourced to protect international students and minorities at risk of discrimination.

The following is a Summary of ICOS' recommendations:

- Prioritise the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 and establish a comprehensive set of measures to implement the new law;
- Implement the NAPAR in partnership with ethnic minority communities and civil society organisations including grassroots organisations;
- Improve awareness of reporting mechanisms and access to supports for victims of racism;
- Enhanced data collection in the reporting and recording of hate crime and hate incidents;
- Promote intercultural and education initiatives that foster equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- Increase awareness of equality legislation: Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 and the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011;
- Embed race equality in higher education and the English language education (ELE) sectors through the development of a Race Equality Action Plan by all HEIs and English language schools;
- Ensure intercultural awareness training for public servants and compliance with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

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Survey Questions

What is your nationality?

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non- binary
- Trans
- Rather not say

What course are you enrolled in?

- English language
- Undergraduate
- Masters
- PhD
- Erasmus
- Study Abroad
- Other

Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced racism in Ireland?

- Never
- I have witnessed racism
- I have personally experienced racism
- I have witnessed and personally experienced racism

What type of racism? (You may select more than one answer)

- Verbal
- Physical
- Indirect (e.g., you were treated different because of your race)
- Online hate speech
- Other: please provide details

Where did the incident/s occur? (You may select more than one answer)

- On the street
- Park
- Workplace
- English language school
- College
- Pub or restaurants
- Supermarket

In which city / town / county did the incident/s occur?

Please provide details below about your experience/s of racism in Ireland

Did you report the incident/s?

- Yes
- No

Where did you report the incident/s?

- Garda station
- Workplace
- English language school
- College
- Other – please provide details

Were you satisfied with the outcome?

- Yes
- No

Why not?

Why did you not report the incident/s?

What should ICOS do to help tackle racism?

What should the government do to help tackle racism?

Do you have any additional comments or information you would like to share?

Are you willing to participate in a confidential follow-up interview to discuss your experience of racism in Ireland?

- Yes
- No

Please write your email address in the box below if you would like to be contacted by ICOS

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