Intersectional Discrimination *Index (IDI)*

Understanding the Student Experience of Intersectional Discrimination at the University of Galway

University ofGalway.ie

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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Citation
Duvvury, N., Rodrigues, P.L. and Mengistu, R.S. (2025) *Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI): Understanding the Student Experience of Intersectional Discrimination at the University of Galway,* Galway: University of Galway

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Acronyms

AHSSBL Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law

CSO Central Statistics Office

DARE Disability Access Route to Education

EDI Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

EDICC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee

EOD Experiences of Everyday Discrimination

GDPR General Data Protection Regulation

HEA Higher Education Authority

HEAR Higher Education Access Route

HEI Higher Education Institutions

IDI Intersectional Discrimination Index

LGBTQ+ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer

MDI Major Discrimination Index

OVPEDI Office for the Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

STEMM Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine

Executive Summary

Background

Ireland's higher education landscape is increasingly diverse, reflecting a mix of genders, ethnicities, nationalities, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. While this diversity is a strength, it also presents challenges in ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of university life. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has committed to advancing EDI, including tackling racism and intersectional discrimination, across the sector.

About the Study

This study was conducted by the Centre for Global Women's Studies at the University of Galway with funding from the HEA and supported by the Office of the Vice-President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (OVPEDI) as part of the overarching project "Embedding EDI in University of Galway". The project specified three core inter-related strands: Data Collection, Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan, and development of an Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI) which builds on previous work in the EDI Strategy (2020-2025), Gender Equality Action Plan, and the Intercultural Campus work stream of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Campus Committee (EDICC).

Using a student survey, the study sought to understand:

Socio-demographic characteristics
including age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, and program of study.

Systemic, structural, or institutional discrimination
measuring perceptions and experiences of discrimination embedded in university policies, practices, and structures.

Day-to-day discrimination and microaggressions
documenting subtle, frequent forms of bias and exclusion in both academic and social contexts.

Recommendations and expectations
capturing student-led suggestions for actions to prevent discrimination and improve inclusivity.

Based on the survey data, the study also piloted an Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI). The IDI served as a validation tool, confirming that the survey reliably captured the complex ways in which overlapping identities shaped students' experiences of discrimination.

Findings

At a surface level, many students described the university positively. However, closer analysis through an intersectional lens revealed significant disparities. This intersectional approach uncovered patterns of inequality and vulnerability that would not have been visible through single-category analysis:

Systemic Barriers

Racial minority students were more likely than peers self-declared as White to report paying higher tuition fees and lacking equal access to internships. Postgraduate students, who are disproportionately from non-Irish minority backgrounds, also reported greater barriers to internships. Students with disabilities described higher exclusion from sports clubs and other aspects of an inclusive campus. Differences were also evident by sexual orientation and socio-economic background, with LGBTQ+ students and those from lower-income households less likely to view university programs as inclusive.

Day-to-Day Discrimination

Microaggressions were a frequent feature of students' experiences. The most common experiences included mispronounced names (57%), identity-based jokes (56%), being treated as if they were unfriendly, unhelpful, or rude (50.7%), and as if they were less smart or capable than others (50.7%). These behaviours disproportionately affected minority groups, particularly gender-diverse, LGBTQ+, racial minority students, and students with disabilities.

Reporting and Support

While many students believed effective reporting systems existed, those who actually sought help often reported not receiving meaningful support by lecturers or the university.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommends:

- **Addressing structural barriers** by ensuring fair access to tuition, funding, internships, and accommodation.

- **Strengthening reporting and support** so that students who report discrimination receive meaningful help and staff are trained to respond effectively.

- **Tackling everyday discrimination** through awareness campaigns, accountability measures, and targeted supports for the most affected groups.

- **Monitoring progress** using validated intersectional tools such as the IDI and future surveys to track, evaluate, and improve EDI initiatives over time.

Introduction

Today the Irish higher education system reflects the changing face of Ireland – no longer homogenous but a kaleidoscope of genders, ethnicities, abilities, nationalities, income levels, and sexual orientations. This diversity of students is both a strength and a challenge for the educational system. Over the past few decades, higher education institutions (HEI) have been grappling with how to meet the needs of a diverse student body and ensure a learning environment that embraces equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Under the directive of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), HEIs have firmly committed to advancing EDI in their institutions building on the learnings from earlier programs focused on widening access and participation of individuals from vulnerable and marginal groups such as Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), and efforts to reach mature students (Irish Universities Association, 2024; Higher Education Authority, 2021). Gender parity has also been a key concern for HEIs from the 1990s but a significant uptick in enrolment and progression of female students is evident with the introduction of the Athena SWAN awards[1] to HEIs from 2015 (Higher Education Authority, 2025a). As part of advancing the EDI agenda, HEIs have also committed to directly addressing racism with the adoption of the charter of Anti-Racism Principles for Irish higher education institutions (Higher Education Authority, 2022a).

Additionally, the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-2028 (Higher Education Authority, 2022b) puts front and centre the imperative to continue progression of students who are mature, of Traveller and Roma ethnicities, and those from lower socio-economic groups and disadvantaged communities. HEIs have also expanded access to students with disabilities by developing effective reasonable accommodation policies, instituting universal design, and specific programs for students with intellectual disabilities as a part of creating a more inclusive learning environment (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, 2018; Higher Education Authority, 2024). HEIs are also more systematically marketing and drawing in a great number of international students as part of larger efforts to enhance the international reputation of the institutions, particularly their research profile as well as diversifying funding resources in a context of narrowing funding from the state (Hearne and Rodrigues, 2021). This is in line with Ireland's broader internationalisation agenda, articulated in the Global Citizens 2030 strategy (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2024) and the earlier International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016–2020 (Department of Education and Skills, 2016).

> A key challenge facing the HEA and HEIs is ensuring that the diverse student body has not only access to university life but that the institutions provide equal opportunities, a safe learning environment that accords dignity and respect to diverse learning styles, an inclusive campus infrastructure that caters to diverse needs, and a campus life free of various forms of harassment and violence. Central to addressing this challenge is understanding the extent and depth of discrimination that students experience on and around campuses.

[1] The Athena SWAN Charter is an international framework promoting gender equality in higher education and research. Introduced in Ireland in 2015, it initially focused on supporting women's careers in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine). It has since broadened to include AHSSBL (arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law), professional and support staff, and wider equality issues, such as the experiences of trans staff and students, and the underrepresentation of men in certain fields. Institutions and departments are recognised for their progress through Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards (Higher Education Authority, 2025a).

To respond to these challenges, this study carried out a student survey at the University of Galway to capture the prevalence and nature of discrimination as experienced by students. The survey explored both systemic and structural barriers, such as fees, internships, and campus supports, as well as everyday experiences of bias and microaggressions in classrooms, student societies, sports clubs, and the wider Galway community. It also examined the impact of these experiences on academic participation and wellbeing, while providing space for students to suggest actions to improve inclusivity. In addition, the study piloted an Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI) to validate the survey instrument, testing how effectively it captured the complex ways in which multiple identities intersect to shape students' experience with discrimination.

> **Despite growing policy attention to EDI, there also remains a significant lack of systematic data on discrimination in Irish higher education.**

This gap makes it difficult for institutions and policymakers to identify where inequalities persist and to design effective responses. A study of this kind is therefore crucial, as it provides new evidence on the realities of student life at the University of Galway while also contributing to the broader national conversation on racial and intersectional equality in higher education.

The study was funded by the HEA, as part of its commitment to advancing EDI across the higher education sector in Ireland. The HEA is dedicated to fostering a campus culture across all HEIs that is safe, respectful, and supportive. In line with these objectives, the study was conducted by the Centre for Global Women's Studies at the University of Galway. Established in 1988, it is a leading academic centre dedicated to teaching, research, and community engagement on gender equality, human rights, and social justice. The Centre works to promote gender equality and advance inclusive policies and practices, with a particular focus on addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality.

While the study focused on the specific experiences of students at the University of Galway, it has broader relevance. The findings contribute to national conversations on EDI in higher education, and the IDI developed through this research offers a practical framework for validating and strengthening data collection, which other institutions in Ireland can adapt or build upon.

The present report, therefore, sets out the key findings of the study and is organised into six sections. The aims and objectives define the purpose and scope of the research, followed by a review of existing literature on discrimination and intersectionality. The methodology section then outlines the survey design, sample, data collection and analysis process, ethical considerations, and the development and validation of the IDI. The findings are presented in four parts: systemic and structural discrimination; day-to-day discrimination and microaggressions; attribution of discrimination; and analysis of the IDI. This is followed by an overview of students' recommendations and expectations for creating a more inclusive university environment, and the report concludes with key recommendations for policy and practice.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

Using a student survey, the study sought to provide evidence-based insights into the nature and extent of discrimination experienced by students at the University of Galway.

An intersectional lens was applied, recognising that discrimination often results from the interaction of multiple identity characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, and socio-economic background. The survey aimed to understand the prevalence of discrimination experienced by students during their studies at the University of Galway, and to identify its different forms, including systemic, structural, and day-to-day microaggressions, along with the contexts in which they occur. It also sought to assess the perceived impact of these experiences on students' academic performance, social participation, and personal wellbeing. Furthermore, the survey gathered students' recommendations on actions that the University of Galway should take to prevent discrimination, address systemic barriers, and foster a more inclusive and equitable campus environment. Finally, drawing on these data, the IDI was developed as a validation framework, testing how effectively the survey captured the combined effects of multiple identity factors on students' experiences of discrimination. This approach strengthens the reliability of the findings and provides a model that can inform future intersectional research and practice in higher education.

Although the study focused on the University of Galway, an additional aim was to generate insights and tools of value for the wider higher education sector. The findings are intended to inform the HEA's work on addressing discrimination across Irish HEIs, while the IDI provides a framework that other HEIs may adapt or build upon for monitoring and evaluation of equality and inclusion.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the prevalent dimensions and nature of intersectional discrimination experienced by students at the University of Galway who belong to different identity categories.
- Understand the level of structural and day-to-day discrimination experienced by students at the University of Galway.
- Inform efforts to address and mitigate discrimination at the university. More specifically, to inform EDI policy and practice at the university.
- Contribute to broader academic and policy conversations about discrimination in Irish higher education.

To achieve these aims and objectives, the study focused on three key research questions:

- What experiences of intersectional discrimination do students at the University of Galway face based on their various identity categories (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation, social class status, age, disability, Irish Traveller, and migrant status)?
- Can the IDI be developed from the survey data to validate the survey and assess how effectively it captures students' intersectional experiences of discrimination?
- What implications do the findings of the study have for the EDI policy and practice within the University of Galway and, more broadly, across the higher education sector in Ireland?

Discrimination and Intersectionality

Discrimination in higher education can take many forms, ranging from structural barriers embedded in institutional policies and practices to the more subtle, everyday microaggressions that shape students' social and academic lives. To understand discrimination faced by students in HEIs it is important to recognise that diverse students may encounter different forms of discrimination, with varying intensities. Too often, however, disadvantage and discrimination are conceptualised along a single axis of identity, overlooking the ways in which multiple identities interact to shape experiences of inequality. EDI policies and practices in HEIs struggle to employ an intersectional lens when assessing inequalities on campus (Maramba and Museus, 2011; Harris and Leonardo, 2018; Harpur, Szucs, and Willox, 2023).

Intersectionality provides a framework for analysing how different forms of discrimination overlap and interact. First introduced by Crenshaw (1989) to explain how Black women's experiences of discrimination were obscured when race and gender were treated as separate categories, intersectionality highlights that identity dimensions such as gender, race, social class, disability, sexuality, and migration status do not operate in isolation but intersect to shape distinctive and compounded experiences of inequality. Rather than treating identities as separate strands, an intersectional approach recognises them as interconnected and embedded within broader systems of power.

Intersectionality is increasingly being adopted as a lens for examining discrimination in higher education. Studies using this framework have explored both student and faculty experiences of inequalities (Luft and Ward, 2009; Nichols and Stahl, 2019; Harris and Paton, 2019). In a systematic literature review of research that explicitly applied intersectionality to interrogate students' experiences in HEIs, Nichols and Stahl (2019) found that most studies focused on academic, social and personal interactions within the higher education settings. Gender was identified as the primary category of analysis, with the majority of papers conducting an intercategorical analysis (McCall, 2005) between gender, class and race (Nichols and Stahl, 2019). Interpretative and phenomenological approaches that enabled navigating personal experiences were primarily used (Nichols and Stahl, 2019). This stands in contrast to the student engagement assessment tools typically used by HEIs, which rely on pre-defined metrics to quantify student experiences, but lack the nuanced, intersectional analysis of their experiences on campus (Maramba and Museus, 2011; Maisuria and Cole, 2017).

Other research has focused on the intersection of gender and sexual orientation in higher education. A study by O' Neill, et al. (2022) found that LGBTQ+ students in four-year college and graduate studies in the United States experienced significantly higher levels of discrimination based on their sexual orientation compared to non-LGBTQ+ students. The study also found that LGBTQ+ students who identified as non-binary or gender non-conforming experienced higher levels of discrimination compared to those who identified as binary. A study by Kim, Kim and Lee (2021) conducted at a university in South Korea found that students who identified as both a minority race and LGBTQ+ experienced significantly higher levels of discrimination compared to those who only identified as one of these identities. This suggests the importance of considering the intersection of multiple identities in understanding and addressing discrimination in higher education.

Major developments of intersectionality theory and practice have come from researchers applying the framework in quantitative analysis. Much of this work has emerged within sociology, psychology, epidemiology, and population health sciences. In these fields, intersectionality has been widely adopted, particularly in population health and epidemiology. In this context, researchers have used quantitative methods to study intersectional discrimination, identify and measure the social factors that contribute to health inequalities, and pinpoint the most vulnerable groups by analysing large datasets across multiple identity categories (Dubrow, 2008; Evans and Erickson, 2019; Seng et al., 2012; Bowleg and Bauer, 2016; Bauer and Scheim, 2019a; Bauer and Scheim, 2019b; Evans, 2019a; Mena and Bolte, 2019; Scheim et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2022).

In much of this literature, discrimination is conceptually understood to encompass both structural discrimination, arising from institutional policies, processes and practices, and day-to-day discrimination, often manifested through microaggressions in everyday interpersonal interactions. Within the literature, some potential scales for measuring these experiences have been identified. These include intercategorical indices such as that developed by Williams et al. (1997) to measure racial discrimination through the Everyday Discrimination Index (EDI) and the Major Discrimination Index (MDI), Krieger et al.'s (2005) Experiences of Everyday Discrimination (EOD) scale, and the Intersectional Discrimination Index developed by Scheim and Bauer (2019).

Given the educational setting of the present study, structural discrimination was examined across three key domains of the student experience: financial, teaching and learning, and inclusive campus. The financial domain refers to issues such as tuition fees and accommodation, which are central to students' ability to access and remain in education. The focus of the teaching and learning domain is on students' experiences within the classroom and with curriculum, including whether teaching practices and course content are inclusive and equitable. The third dimension, inclusive campus, captures the extent to which the physical and social environment of the university fosters belonging and equal participation for all students.

Considering the exploratory nature of the research, the study applied a theoretically informed descriptive intersectionality analysis to the quantitative data. This approach was used to highlight variations in experiences of discrimination both within and between identity categories. While the intersecting nature of discrimination, shaped by the interaction of multiple identity factors, is fully recognised, the analysis also acknowledges the role of salient identity traits, or the aspects of identity with which respondents most strongly identify, in shaping their day-to-day experiences. This dual focus allows the study to capture both the complexity of intersectional discrimination and the significance of specific identities in influencing students' lived realities.

Methodology

This study used a survey to examine students' experiences of discrimination at the University of Galway. The survey was designed to capture a broad picture of discrimination across academic, social, and community contexts. Questions addressed both systemic and structural barriers, such as tuition fees, curriculum, and campus supports, as well as day-to-day interactions, including microaggressions and exclusion in classroom settings, student societies, and wider campus life. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how discrimination is perceived and experienced across different identity groups, and its impact on students' participation, wellbeing, and sense of belonging. The survey was also structured to support the development of the IDI, which served to validate how effectively the survey captured the combined influence of multiple identity factors on students' experiences of discrimination.

Survey Design

The student survey was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data on students' experiences of discrimination at the University of Galway. The questionnaire was structured in four main parts:

Socio-demographic characteristics
including age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, and program of study.

Systemic, structural, or institutional discrimination
measuring perceptions and experiences of discrimination embedded in university policies, practices, and structures.

Day-to-day discrimination and microaggressions
documenting subtle, frequent forms of bias and exclusion in both academic and social contexts.

Recommendations and expectations
capturing student-led suggestions for actions to prevent discrimination and improve inclusivity.

The survey included a wide range of questions designed to capture both perceptions and lived experiences of discrimination. Students were asked about their experiences in the classroom, such as whether they felt stereotyped, ignored, or excluded by lecturers or peers, as well as in campus life more broadly, including participation in student societies, sports clubs, and university events. Questions also explored practical barriers such as access to accommodation, funding, or internships, alongside perceptions of curriculum inclusivity and diversity in university communications. Beyond the campus, students were invited to share whether they experienced discrimination in the wider Galway community, for example in housing or interactions with local services. A full copy of the survey questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1.

To capture everyday bias, the survey included items on common microaggressions such as being asked "where are you really from", having one's name mispronounced, or being subject to identity-based jokes. Many of the specific examples were drawn from existing literature on discrimination in higher education and from a secondary analysis of qualitative data gathered by OVPEDI during an earlier consultation study on racism with staff and students at the University of Galway. That study, undertaken to inform the development of the Race Equality Framework and Action Plan (University of Galway, 2023), included nine focus groups, which provided rich insights into the everyday behaviours and interactions participants identified and experienced as discriminatory. These insights informed the design of the present survey, ensuring it reflected the real-world forms of bias and exclusion described by members of the university community.

The questionnaire used a novel design probing "because of who I am" rather than specifying particular identity categories such as gender, race, or disability, reflecting complexity of lived experience.

This choice was guided by the logic of the IDI, which emphasises capturing the cumulative impact of multiple, overlapping identities rather than isolating discrimination along single axes (Scheim and Bauer, 2019). By using an open and inclusive phrasing, students were invited to reflect on experiences of discrimination that may stem from the interaction of several aspects of their identity simultaneously, or from how they are perceived by others, without being restricted to one category.

This approach offered several advantages for the present study. First, it avoided leading respondents to focus only on a single identity marker, allowing for more authentic responses that reflect the complexity of lived experiences. Second, it aligned with the exploratory and intersectional aims of the study by capturing perceptions of discrimination in ways that traditional, category-specific measures often overlook. Finally, it facilitated the development of the IDI, which recognises that discrimination is often produced at the intersection of multiple identities rather than in isolation.

Sample

The survey was open to University of Galway students enrolled in undergraduate programs (second to fifth year) and taught postgraduate programs, such as Master's Degree, Higher Diploma, or Postgraduate Diploma programs (first or second year). It sought to understand the experiences of students within both on-campus and off-campus settings, encompassing academic, social, and community contexts. It focused on multiple identity characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, and socio-economic background.

Data Collection Method

The survey was available online through the Qualtrics survey software between March and April 2025. It was open to undergraduate students and taught postgraduate students. Recruitment was conducted via the university's mailing lists and social media channels, with the support from various departments and schools, as well as student organisations and societies. Posters were also placed on murals across campus. Participation was anonymous and entirely voluntary. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, and students had the option to pause and return to the survey within 24 hours before submitting. To encourage engagement and, as a token of appreciation for their time, students were also invited to enter a draw for a small number of vouchers upon completing the survey.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics applied to identify overall trends and cross-tabulations conducted to examine variation across identity groups such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. This analysis also provided the basis for the development of the IDI, designed to capture the cumulative effects of multiple identity factors on students' experiences of discrimination. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were imported into NVivo and thematically coded, enabling recurring patterns to be identified and student perspectives to be integrated alongside the quantitative findings.

Ethical Considerations

The survey was conducted in line with the University of Galway's ethical research standards and received ethics approval from University of Galway Research Ethics Committee (Ref No. 2024-08-013). Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all respondents at the outset. Responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality, and no identifying information was stored. Given the sensitive nature of the topics, participants were provided with information about relevant university support services in case of distress. Data were stored securely and handled in compliance with data protection regulations, including GDPR.

Limitations

As with all self-reported survey data, results may be subject to bias, including under-reporting or over-reporting of experiences. Participation was voluntary, which may have introduced self-selection bias, with students who have experienced discrimination being more likely to respond. Non-response from some demographic groups may have also limited the representativeness of the findings. In addition, the survey captures perceptions and self-reported experiences, which may not always align with formally documented incidents, but nevertheless provide essential insight into students' lived realities.

The survey was specifically aimed at second to fifth year undergraduate students, as well as taught postgraduate students, but it did not include first-year undergraduates or doctoral researchers. First-year students were excluded on the basis that they may not yet have had sufficient time or exposure to the university environment to report meaningful experiences of discrimination. Doctoral students, by contrast, were not included because their programmes are structured very differently, being primarily research-based and not centred on classroom teaching, which was the focus of many survey questions. These decisions were made to ensure the relevance and accuracy of responses. However, the exclusion of these groups is a limitation. In particular, the experiences of PhD students represent an important area for future investigation, and further research should be undertaken to explore the forms of discrimination and inequality they may encounter.

Finally, the decision to phrase questions in terms of "because of who I am" within the survey was intended to support an intersectional understanding of discrimination, although it limited the ability to attribute experiences to specific identity categories. This limitation is acknowledged. However, the approach was adopted to more accurately reflect the complexity of how students face discrimination in practice and to enable the development of the IDI.

Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI)

In addition to investigating the student experience at the University of Galway, the study also applied the Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI) framework to the survey data as a means of validating the survey tool. Developed by Scheim and Bauer (2019), the index is designed to capture discrimination across multiple social identities. It was developed to address the limitations of traditional approaches, which often examine discrimination through a single lens. By capturing the interplay of multiple identity characteristics, the IDI offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how discrimination is experienced.

The index was developed based on statistical methods to assess whether components of discrimination experiences captured in the survey hold together as capturing the underlying construct of intersectional discrimination. Index or scale construction often involves three main steps: 1) selection of item/variable from the captured discrimination; 2) examining the empirical relationships between variables and the combining of items into an index; 3) validating the index via principal components analysis, also known as multiple correspondence analysis in the case of categorical variables.

As already highlighted in the literature, the construct of intersectional discrimination, which is not directly observable, could be assessed by understanding discrimination experiences through key domains of university life (denoted as structural discrimination) as well as day-to-day microaggressions (everyday interpersonal discrimination). The items included for the construction of the index thus included responses to specific questions capturing aspects of financial discrimination, learning discrimination, and inclusive campus. The table in Appendix 2 details the specific items that were included in the construction of structural discrimination and everyday interpersonal discrimination.

Given that the questions for both domains of structural discrimination and behaviours of microaggressions were categorical variables, the decision was made to do Multiple Correspondence Analysis (very similar to Principal Components Analysis which is used when the responses are continuous) in SPSS.

The statistical analysis involved both exploratory and confirmatory analysis for the two components of structural and everyday interpersonal discrimination (see Appendix 2 for the reporting of statistical results).

Structural Discrimination

The preliminary exploratory analysis of the individual items capturing structural discrimination indicated that they grouped into five components with some individual items grouping into several components. However, further analysis including promax revealed that the items regrouped into three coherent dimensions: discrimination in learning/teaching, institutional inclusion, and financial discrimination. Factor loadings were high (λ = .47–.91), and most communalities exceeded .30, indicating that each item contributed meaningfully to the construct. These findings support the construct validity of the scale, confirming that structural discrimination manifests across three complementary yet distinct domains. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the statistical fit of the model with three factor correlated model and internal consistency indices were within the acceptable parameters. Taken together, the model supports the presence of three interrelated dimensions of structural discrimination, with the recommendation to compute composite indices for each subscale.

Everyday Interpersonal Discrimination

Everyday interpersonal discrimination (or microaggressions) was explored through a series of 13 questions of experience of different behaviours. Exploratory analysis indicated a strong factorial structure. Two correlated factors were extracted, explaining 43.5% of the total variance. The first factor captured hostile treatment, jokes, insults, and questioning of abilities, while the second factor reflected exclusion experiences linked to accent, name, or group belonging. Factor loadings ranged from .37 to .81, and most communalities exceeded .40. This suggests that interpersonal discrimination comprises both a direct relational component (hostility and ridicule) and an identity-based exclusion component. Confirmatory analysis compared two models, a two-factor model and a unidimensional model. Both models showed excellent fit and internal consistency. Given that both models are plausible, everyday interpersonal discrimination can be represented as a global factor; however, the differentiation into two specific dimensions is also theoretically defensible. For practical and parsimonious purposes, we have used a single general composite index of everyday interpersonal discrimination.

Composite scores of structural discrimination and everyday interpersonal discrimination were calculated. The score for everyday interpersonal index was transformed into a binary (yes/no across the 13 behaviours) to be comparable with structural discrimination index. A combined index was also calculated based on standardising both indices to use in regression analysis.

Regression analysis was undertaken to understand how intersectional discrimination varies with different identities. Since the predictors were all categorical variables, it was important to recode each identity variable to reflect the reference group which is expected to have less discrimination. For example, ethnicity and nationality were combined to reflect the interwoven nature of nationality and ethnicity and coded to reflect that White Irish were the reference group. In the table (see Table 1) the last group in each identity category is the reference group. Age and income level variables were not recoded as the last group was already the reference group. It should be noted that in the case of disability the reference group is expected to experience higher level of discrimination so the direction of effect would be positive.

Table 1: Recorded variables

Gender	Sexual Orientation
1 Female	1 Gay/Lesbian
2 Other	2 Bisexual/Other
3 Male	3 Heterosexual

Race/Ethnicity	Religion
1 Minority Irish	1 Islam
2 Minority Non-Irish	2 Christian
3 White Non-Irish	3 Other
4 White Irish	4 No Religion

Disability	Course of Study
1 No	1 Postgraduate
2 Yes	2 Undergraduate

Usefulness and Replicability of the IDI

The IDI developed through this study served as a validation tool. It was used to test whether the questions designed to capture different aspects of discrimination, ranging from structural barriers to everyday interpersonal experiences, collectively measured the broader concept of intersectional discrimination in a coherent way. In this sense, the IDI is not an independent measure of inequality, but a means of confirming that the survey reliably reflects students' lived experiences across multiple identity factors.

The value of the IDI lies in strengthening the credibility and rigour of the survey itself. By validating the structure and consistency of the questions, it ensures that the data produced can be interpreted with confidence and used to inform institutional policies and actions on EDI.

For other HEIs or policy bodies wishing to replicate this work, the process involves adapting the survey framework to local contexts, ensuring it captures relevant dimensions of the student experience, and applying a similar validation analysis to confirm that the instrument accurately reflects intersectional realities. In doing so, universities can develop a robust and evidence-based approach to understanding and addressing intersectional discrimination within their own settings.

Findings

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents an overview of the socio-demographic profile of survey participants.

The results are outlined across key identity categories, including **nationality**, **race/ethnicity**, **age**, **gender**, **sexual orientation**, **disability**, **religion**, and **social class background**.

Nationality

Race/Ethnicity

Age

Gender

Sexual Orientation

Disability

Religion

Social Class Background
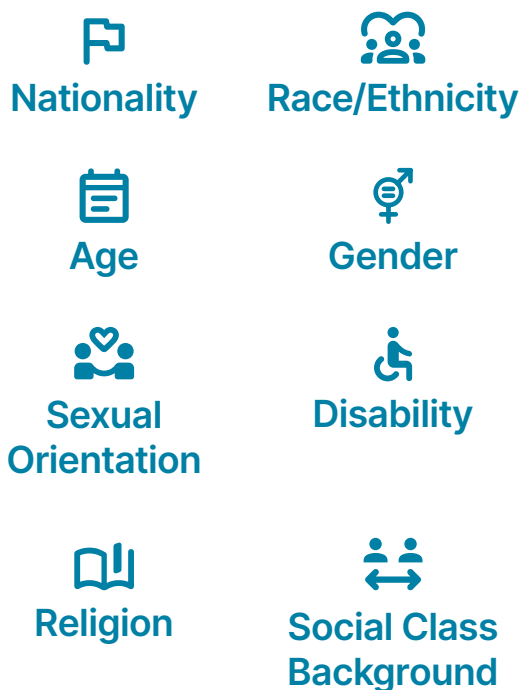
For the questions on race/ethnicity and disability, the survey adopted the classification system used by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland. These categories were chosen to allow for comparability with national datasets. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of these classifications.

Respondents may not always see their identities fully reflected in the categories provided, and in some cases, students may have selected the option they felt was "closest" rather than an exact description of how they identify. As such, while these categories enable consistent reporting, they may not capture the full diversity and nuance of students' lived identities.

In addition to these identity categories, we also highlight the distribution of respondents by course, year of study, and student status. Together, these findings provide important context for interpreting students' reported experiences of discrimination and inclusion at the University of Galway.

1,167 students participated in the survey

Including such incomplete responses could bias the findings and reduce the reliability of the results

257 survey responses were excluded from analysis due to substantial missing data (e.g., participants answered only one or very few questions)

910 The final dataset therefore comprised **910** valid responses, which provided sufficient quality data for analysis

Nationality

A majority of respondents **(60.3%) reported being born in Ireland**, while **39.1% reported being born outside of Ireland**. A very small proportion **(0.5%) preferred not to disclose their nationality of birth**.

Overall, students who took part in the survey were from over **50** different nationalities.

Graph 1: Nationality
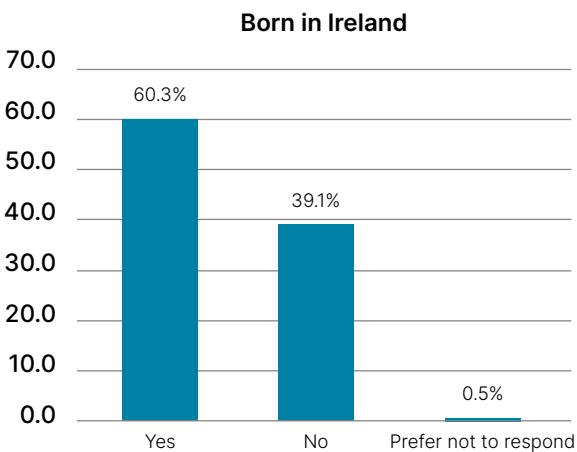
Born in Ireland

In addition to asking students whether they were born in Ireland, the survey also included an open-text question where participants could state their nationality.

Most non-Irish students who took part were from

Poland

India & China

United States

Race/Ethnicity

The largest group of respondents self-identified as **White Irish (56%)**, followed by **Asian–Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi (12.6%)**, and **White Non-Irish (11.8%)**. Smaller proportions identified as **Asian–Chinese (3.8%)**, **Black Irish (3.3%)**, and **African (3.1%)**. A further **1.8% selected Other Asian Background**, **1.8% preferred not to respond**, and **1.7% selected Other Background** (including mixed-race backgrounds).

Additional groups included **Asian–Irish (1.6%)**, **Arab (1.4%)**, and **Latin American (0.8%)**, while White Irish Traveller accounted for 0.3%.

Nearly 1 in 3 students were non-White, from multiple countries across the globe.

Graph 2: Race/ethnicity

Category	Percentage
Prefer not to respond	1.8%
Other Background including mixed race	1.7%
Other Asian Background	1.8%
Asian - Indian/Pakistan/Bangladeshi	12.6%
Asian - Irish	1.6%
Asian - Chinese	3.8%
Latin American	0.8%
White Non-Irish	11.8%
White Irish Traveller	0.3%
White Irish	56%
African	3.1%
Black Irish	3.3%
Arab	1.4%
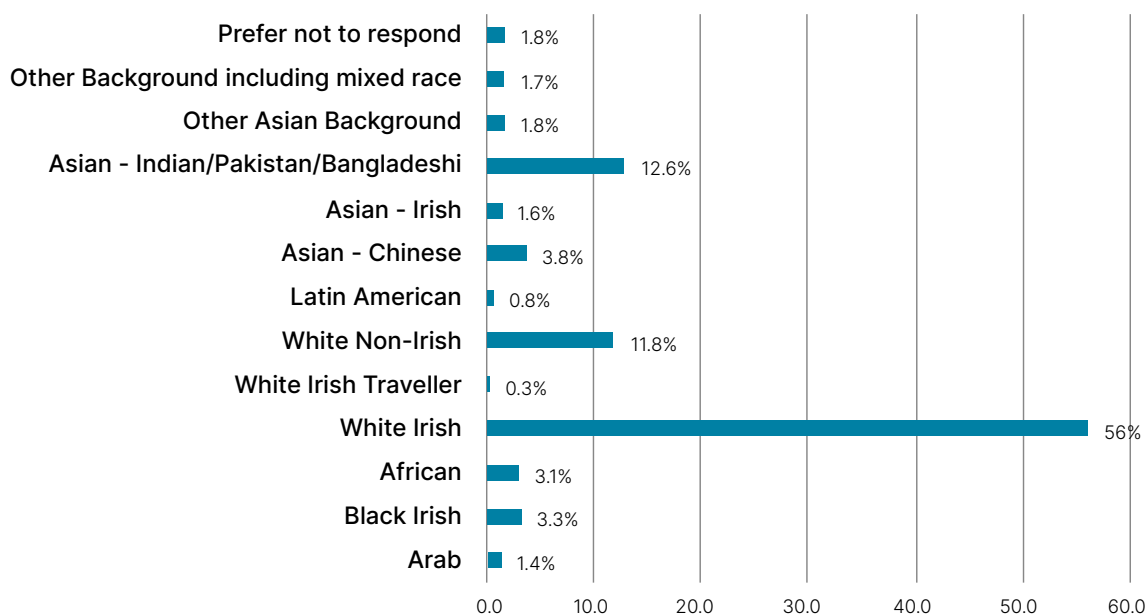
Age

The largest proportion of respondents were **aged 21–25 years (44.1%)**, followed by those **aged 17–20 years (33.5%)**. A smaller proportion were aged **26–30 years (10.1%)**, with **5.2% aged 31–35**, **4.9% over 40**, and **2.3% aged 36–40**.

Overall, over 25% of respondents were mature students above the age of 25

Graph 3: Age
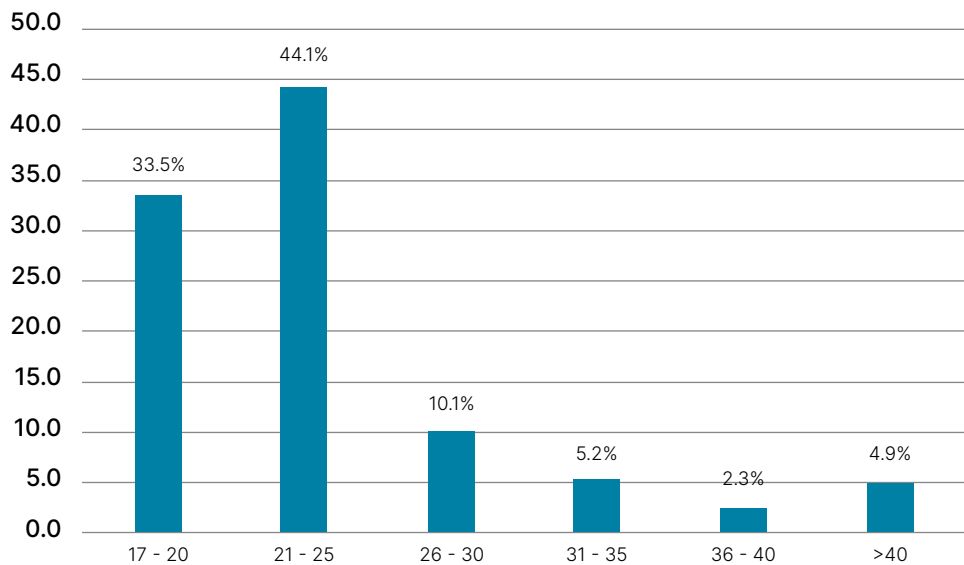
Gender

A majority of respondents identified as **Female (64.2%)**, while **30.3% identified as Male**. Smaller proportions identified as **Non-binary (2.2%)**, **Transgender (1.9%)**, or **another gender identity (0.6%)**. **Less than 1% (0.9%) preferred not to respond**.

Graph 4: Gender
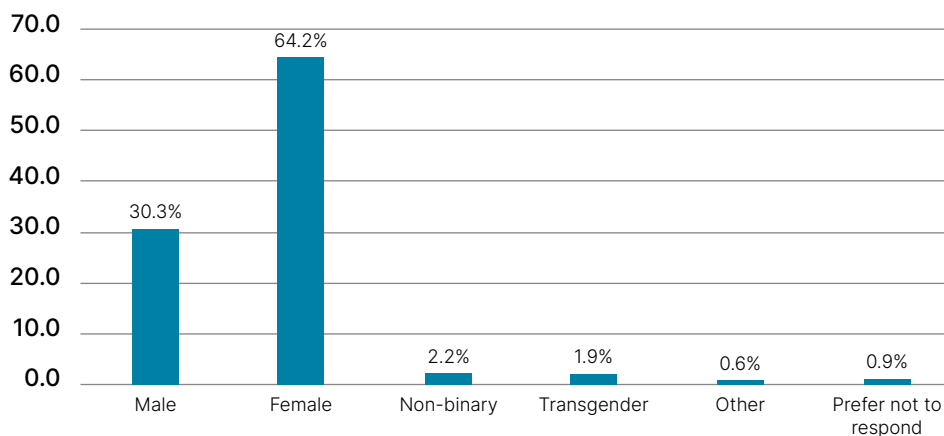
Sexual Orientation

Most of the students who took part in the study identified as **Heterosexual (70.1%)**. Smaller proportions identified as **Bisexual (14.2%)** and **Gay or Lesbian (5.8%)**. A further **3.0% described themselves as Questioning**, while **2.2% identified as Asexual**. In addition, **4.7% preferred not to respond**.

Graph 5: Sexual Orientation
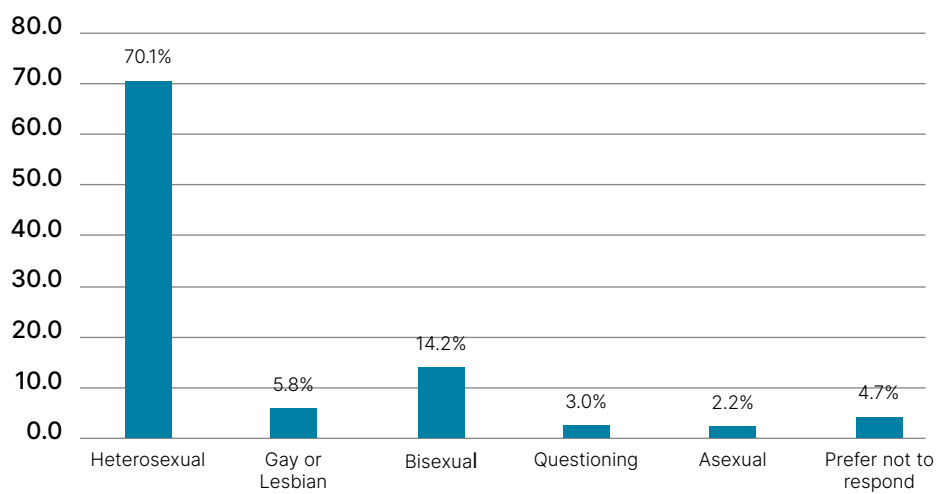
Disability

Most of the students **reported not having a disability (76.6%)**, with **21.3% indicating that they did**. A further **2.1% preferred not to respond**.

Graph 6: Disability

Prefer not to respond
2.1%
76.6%
21.3%
Yes
No
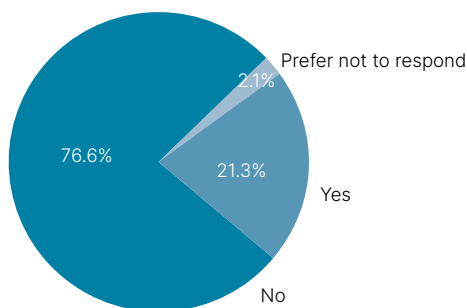
Among those who did report a disability **(see Graph 7)**, they most frequently declared a **psychological or emotional condition or mental health issue (35.8%)**, followed by **difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating (20.8%)**, and **difficulty with pain, breathing or any other chronic illness or condition (15%)**.

Graph 7: Disability type

Disability type	%
Difficulty in participating in other activities	5.4%
Difficulty working at a job or business or attending school or college	3.1%
Difficulty going outside the home	1.9%
Difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home	0.8%
Difficulty waith pain, breathing or any other chronic illness or condition	15%
Psychological or emotional condition or mental health issue	35.8%
Difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating	20.8%
Intellectual disability	5.8%
Difficulty with basic physical activities	3.8%
Deafness or hearing impairment	1.9%
Blindness or vision impairment	5.8%

0.0 5.0 10.0 15.0 20.0 25.0 30.0 35.0 40.0

Religion

Nearly half of respondents reported they were **Christian (49.2%)**, while **30.3% identified as having No Religion**. A further **12.3% declared "Other"**, while **5.0% of students identified with Islam**, and **3.2% preferred not to respond**.

Graph 8: Religion
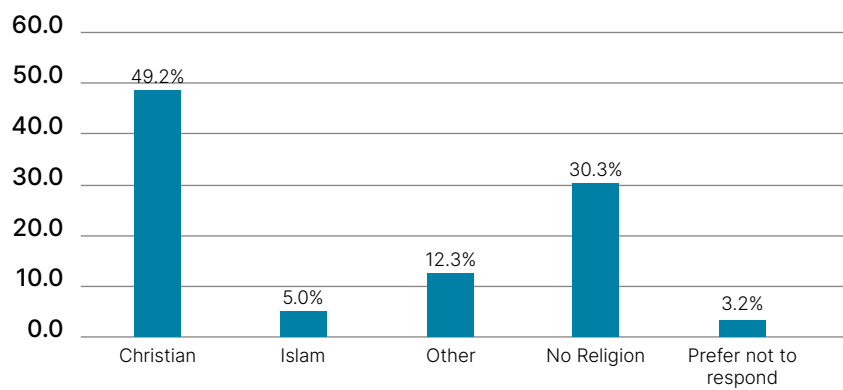
Social Class Status

The survey also asked students regarding the income level of their parents, or their own income, if not dependent on their parents. Many students **(16.3%) preferred not to respond to this question**. However, of those that did, **nearly half (47.7%) indicated an income level below €50,000**.

Graph 9: Income level of parents
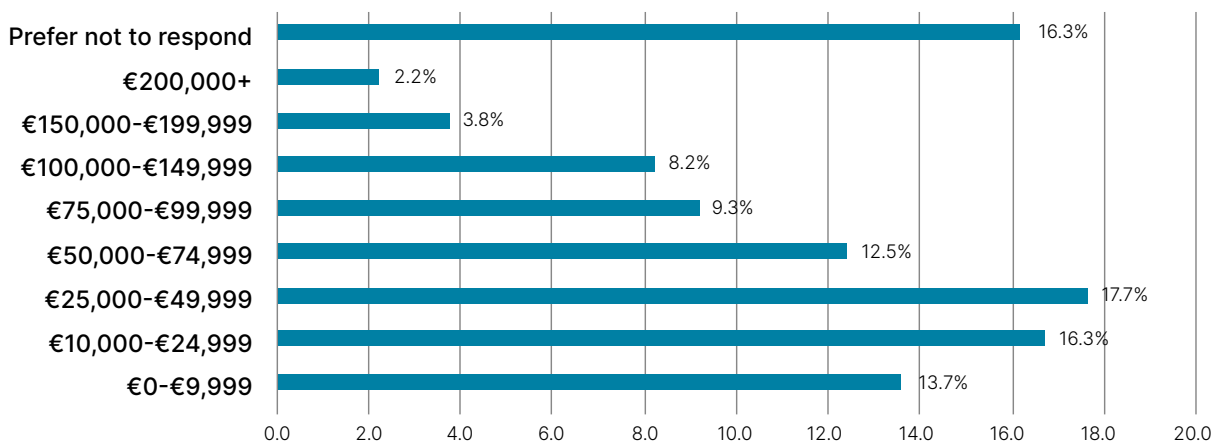
Academic Profile of Respondents

A majority of students reported they were studying at **Undergraduate level (68.7%)**, while **31.3% were studying at Taught Postgraduate level**.

Graph 10: Course of study

68.7% Undergraduate

31.3% Taught Postgraduate (e.g. Master's, Higher Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma)
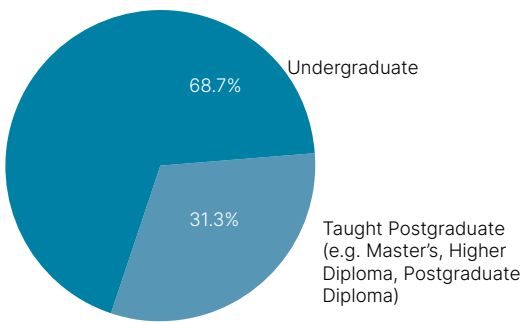
There were also marked differences in race/ethnicity by course of study. **(see Table 2)** While most **Undergraduate respondents identified as White (83.7%)**, the majority of **Postgraduate respondents identified as Asian/Arab (71.1%)**. This indicates that the Postgraduate cohort is more ethnically diverse and international in composition compared with the Undergraduate cohort.

Table 2: Course of study (by race/ethnicity)

Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
White Irish White Non-Irish	83.7% (n=509)	16.3% (n=99)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	28.9% (n=55)	71.1% (n=135)
Black Irish African Caribbean	58.6% (n=34)	41.4% (n=24)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	52% (n=13)	48% (n=12)
Prefer Not to Respond	31.3% (n=5)	68.8% (n=11)

Most of the students who responded the survey were in their **second year of Undergraduate studies (38.7%)**, followed by **first year of Taught Postgraduate studies (23.8%)**.

Graph 11: Year of studies

Year	Percentage
2nd Year Taught Postgraduate	6.5%
1st Year Taught Postgraduate	23.8%
5th Year Undergraduate	1.7%
4th Year Undergraduate	12.8%
3rd Year Undergraduate	16.4%
2nd Year Undergraduate	38.7%
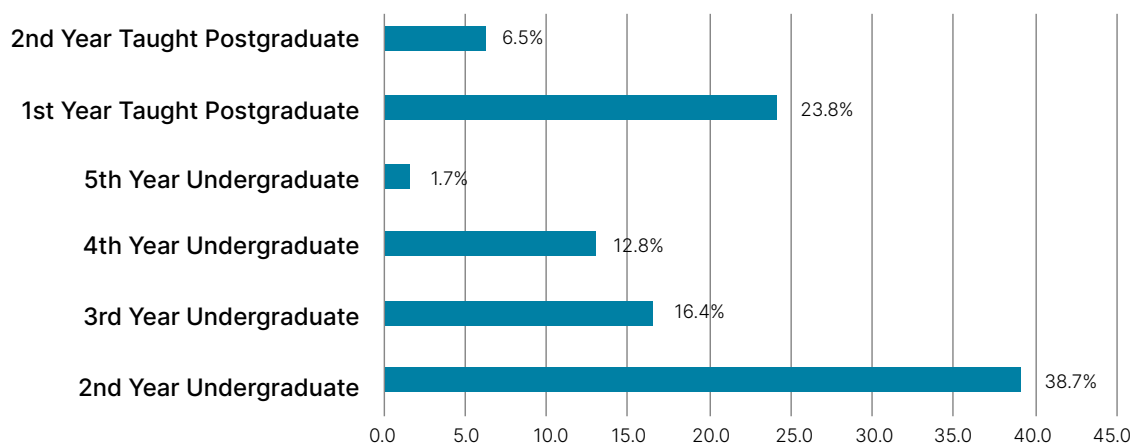
Nearly all respondents reported they were **Full-Time students (95.1%)**, while only a small proportion **(4.9%) were studying Part-Time**.

Graph 12: Student status

I am a part-time student
4.9%

95.1%

I am a full-time student
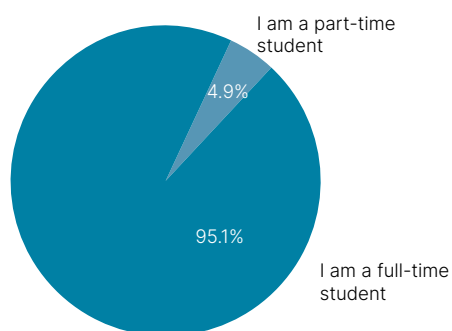
Overall, a majority of students who took part in the survey were **born in Ireland (60.3%)** and identified as **White Irish (56%)**. Most participants were **between 21 and 25 years old (44.1%)**, followed by those **aged 17 to 20 (33.5%)**. **The majority were studying at Undergraduate level (68.7%)**, with the largest group in their **second year of Undergraduate study (38.7%)**. Most respondents identified as **Female (64.2%)** and **Heterosexual (70.1%)**. In terms of religion, **49.2% identified as Christian**, while **30.3% reported having No Religion**.

Most students reported **not having a disability (76.6%)**. However, among those who did, the most common categories were **psychological or emotional conditions or mental health issues (35.8%)** and **difficulty with learning, remembering, or concentrating (20.8%)**.

A comparison with HEA enrolment data for the University of Galway for the 2023/2024 academic year **(19,335 students)** shows that the survey sample broadly reflects the university's overall student population (Higher Education Authority 2025b). **Female students were slightly over-represented in the survey (64.2% compared with 60% in HEA data)**, while **Male students were somewhat under-represented (30.3% compared with 39.5%)**. Students with a **disability were also marginally over-represented (21.3% compared with 18.4%)**. In the survey, **White Irish and White Non-Irish students together accounted for around 68% of respondents**, compared with **90.1% (White Irish and White – any other background)** in the HEA data, indicating an under-representation of White students. The **largest international groups in both datasets were Indian, American, and Chinese students**. Overall, the survey provides a close reflection of the student body, with modest differences in representation.

Systemic, Structural, or Institutional Discrimination

Systemic, structural, or institutional discrimination in higher education can arise when university policies and practices unintentionally disadvantage certain groups of students.

To explore this dimension, the survey asked students about key aspects of their academic and social environments. These questions provide insight into how students perceive the inclusivity of the university's structures and formal systems. Findings are considered from two perspectives: students' perceptions of how inclusive the university's structures are, and their reported experiences of discrimination within these structures.

Perceptions of Structural Discrimination

At the surface level, students' perceptions of the structural dimensions of university life appeared broadly positive.

The majority of respondents expressed agreement, for instance, that:

- Tuition fees at the University of Galway are fair and in line with other Irish universities.

- The library has inclusive collection of academic materials that are representative of diverse knowledge resources.

- The curriculum of their academic program is not biased against minority students.

- Events held on campus represent Irish and other cultures equally.

- Student societies embrace and promote diversity among the student body.

- The university's social media reflects the diversity of students.

- The university has diverse programs and events that facilitate inter-group interaction.

Graph 13: Perceptions of structural discrimination

Tuition fees at the University of Galway are fair and in line with other Irish Universities

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6.5%
Disagree	16.3%
Neither disagree or agree	20.5%
Agree	48.4%
Strongly agree	8.2%

The library has inclusive collection of academic materials that are representative of diverse knowledge sources

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3.1%
Disagree	11.1%
Neither disagree or agree	19.5%
Agree	47.9%
Strongly agree	18.4%

The curriculum of my academic program is biased against minority students

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	24.9%
Disagree	39.8%
Neither disagree or agree	18.7%
Agree	12.6%
Strongly agree	4.0%

Events held on campus represent Irish and other cultures equally

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	5.1%
Disagree	18.4%
Neither disagree or agree	18.5%
Agree	45.1%
Strongly agree	12.9%

Student societies embrace and promote diversity among the student body

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2.2%
Disagree	6.5%
Neither disagree or agree	12.0%
Agree	48.7%
Strongly agree	21.4%
Unsure/Don't Know	9.3%

The university's social media reflects the diversity of students

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3.0%
Disagree	9.1%
Neither disagree or agree	14.7%
Agree	54.1%
Strongly agree	19.1%

The university has diverse programs and events that facilitate inter-group interaction

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3.2%
Disagree	7.1%
Neither disagree or agree	12.4%
Agree	52.0%
Strongly agree	25.2%

Yet, when responses are examined more closely across groups, a different picture emerges. For example, as shown in the table on curriculum bias **(see Table 3)**, Black Irish, African and Caribbean students were significantly more likely than their peers to feel that their academic program is biased against minority students. While most students did not share this view, these results suggest that minority-identifying students are more likely to encounter barriers that are not visible in the overall findings.

Table 3: The curriculum of my academic program is biased against minority students (by race/ethnicity)

Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	Disagree	Agree	Neither Disagree nor Agree
White Irish White Non-Irish	67.3% (n=339)	15.9% (n=80)	16.9% (n=85)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	60% (n=90)	16% (n=24)	24% (n=36)
Black Irish African Caribbean	54.2% (n=26)	23% (n=11)	22.9% (n=11)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	66.6% (n=14)	14.3% (n=3)	19% (n=4)
Prefer Not to Respond	50% (n=4)	37.5% (n=3)	12.5% (n=1)

A similar pattern emerged when considering sexual orientation. Although the majority agreed that the university provides diverse programs and events that facilitate inter-group interaction, the strength of agreement varied.

Heterosexual students were much more likely to agree or strongly agree, whereas students identifying as Gay/Lesbian and Bisexual/Other were less likely to strongly agree and more likely to remain neutral or disagree.

Graph 14: The university has diverse programs and events that facilitate inter-group interaction (by sexual orientation)
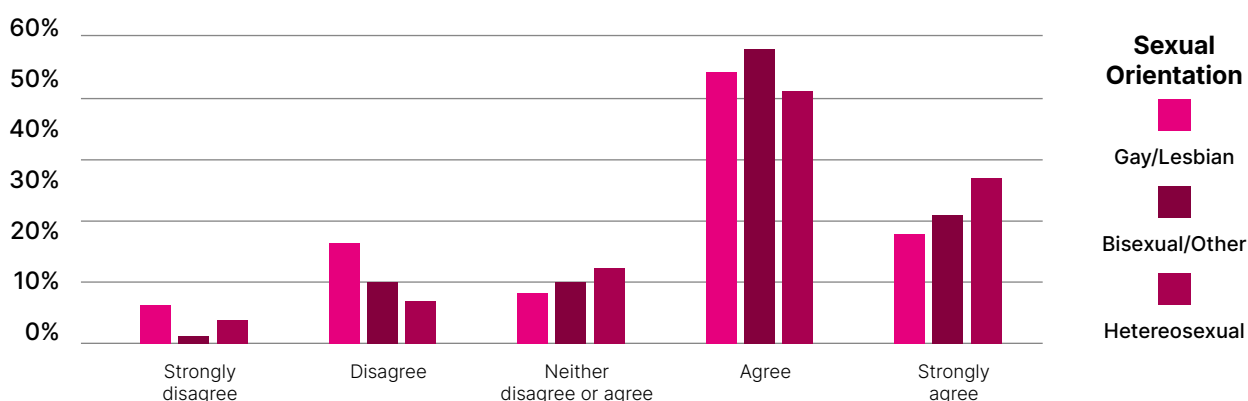
This pattern was also visible when looking at results by socio-economic background. Students from higher-income households were more likely to strongly agree that the university has diverse programs and events, while those from lower-income households were less likely to strongly agree and more likely to remain neutral or disagree.

Graph 15: The university has diverse programs and events that facilitate inter-group interaction (by socio-economic background)
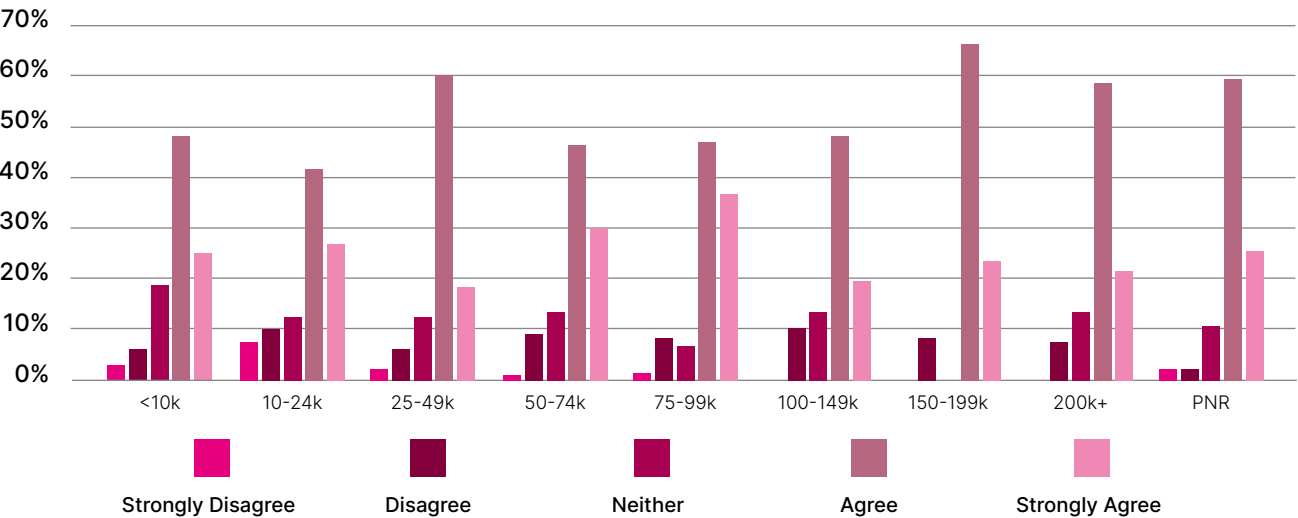
Overall, these findings highlight an important pattern. While many students view the university's structures positively, students from minority or less advantaged groups are less likely to share this perspective. What appears at the surface level as a broadly inclusive environment is therefore more complex when examined across different identities. This finding underscores the importance of an intersectional approach, which reveals disparities that would otherwise be hidden in aggregate findings.

Experiences of Structural Discrimination

Building on these patterns of perception, the survey also asked students about their direct experiences of structural discrimination. Here, too, important differences emerged. Racial minority groups were more likely to report several forms of institutional discrimination in comparison to students who self-identified as White, including:

- Being subject to higher tuition fees than other students.

- Not being able to access equal funding and equal internship opportunities.

- Finding university accommodation inaccessible.

- Being stereotyped or having their knowledge and expertise ignored by their lecturers or tutors.

The extent of these experiences varied across different racial groups.

For instance, when asked whether they felt excluded from student sports clubs because of who they are, responses also varied by disability status **(see Table 4)**. Among students with a disability, **almost one in five (19.3%) reported feeling excluded**, compared with only **2.8% of students without a disability**. A **majority of students with a disability (70.7%) disagreed**, yet their rate of exclusion was substantially higher than that of peers without a disability. While most students did not report exclusion, students with disabilities were more likely to experience or perceive exclusion from sports clubs, pointing to ongoing barriers in participation and inclusion.

Table 4: Because of who I am, I am excluded from student sports clubs (by disability)

Within Group (Disability)	Yes	No	Unsure/Don't Know
Yes	19.3% (n=29)	70.7% (n=106)	10% (n=15)
No	2.8% (n=14)	88.9% (n=450)	8.3% (n=42)
Prefer not to respond	13.3% (n=2)	73.3% (n=11)	13.3% (n=2)

When asked whether they had been subject to higher tuition fee payments than other students, responses varied considerably across racial and ethnic groups (see Table 5). **Nearly half of Asian and Arab students (49.4%) reported experiencing higher fees**, compared with only **14.7% of White Irish and White Non-Irish students**.

Table 5: Because of who I am, I have been subject to higher tuition fee payment at the university than other students (by race/ethnicity)

Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	Yes	No	Unsure/Don't know
White Irish White Non-Irish	14.7% (n=78)	68.7% (n=364)	16.6% (n=88)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	49.4% (n=81)	32.3% (n=53)	18.3% (n=30)
Black Irish African Caribbean	26% (n=13)	58% (n=29)	16% (n=8)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	36% (n=9)	48% (n=12)	16% (n=4)
Prefer Not to Respond	66.7% (n=6)	22.2% (n=2)	11.1% (n=1)

When asked whether they were unable to access equal internship opportunities because of who they are, disparities again appeared across racial and ethnic groups (see Table 6). Like tuition fees, the majority who felt impacted were **Asian and Arab students (41%)**, compared with **18.4% of White Irish and White Non-Irish** students.

Table 6: Because of who I am, I am not able to access equal internship opportunities as other students at the university (by race/ethnicity)

Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	Yes	No	Unsure/Don't know
White Irish White Non-Irish	18.4% (n=98)	61.7% (n=328)	19.9% (n=106)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	41% (n=66)	36.6% (n=59)	22.4% (n=36)
Black Irish African Caribbean	38% (n=19)	38% (n=19)	24% (n=12)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	29.2% (n=7)	50% (n=12)	20.8% (n=5)
Prefer Not to Respond	66.7% (n=8)	16.7% (n=2)	16.7% (n=2)

When the same question was broken down by level of study, clear differences emerged between **undergraduates and postgraduates (see Table 7)**. **Postgraduate** students were more likely than **undergraduates** to report being unable to access equal internship opportunities, indicating that they experienced this barrier more strongly. The specific groups of students reporting difficulties also varied between the two levels, with different racial and ethnic groups highlighting unequal access at undergraduate and postgraduate stages.

Table 7: Because of who I am, I am not able to access equal internship opportunities as other students at the university (by race/ethnicity and course of study)

Undergraduate			
Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure/Don't know**
White Irish White Non-Irish	17.8% (n=80)	61.6% (n=227)	20.7% (n=93)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	18.2% (n=8)	50% (n=22)	31.8% (n=14)
Black Irish African Caribbean	27.6% (n=8)	48.3% (n=14)	24.1% (n=7)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	30.8% (n=4)	46.2% (n=6)	23.1% (n=3)
Prefer Not to Respond	100% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)

Postgraduate			
Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure/Don't know**
White Irish White Non-Irish	23.1% (n=18)	61.5% (n=48)	15.4% (n=12)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	49.6% (n=58)	31.6% (n=37)	18.8% (n=22)
Black Irish African Caribbean	52.4% (n=11)	23.8% (n=5)	23.8% (n=5)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	27.3% (n=3)	54.5% (n=6)	18.2% (n=2)
Prefer Not to Respond	60% (n=6)	20% (n=2)	20% (n=2)

Nearly 50% of postgraduates of asian or black ancestry felt they did not have equal internship opportunities

Everyday Interpersonal Discrimination

Everyday interpersonal discrimination denotes the day-to-day discrimination and microaggressions in higher education that often take the form of subtle, repeated behaviours that undermine students' sense of belonging.

To explore this dimension, the survey asked a series of questions about common interpersonal behaviours, such as jokes about identity, mispronunciation of names, inappropriate questions, or being treated as less capable. Students were also asked about the university's reporting mechanisms, to understand both how such behaviours are experienced and how effectively the institution responds when they occur. Findings are presented from two perspectives: the frequency of reported microaggressions across the student body and variation in how different identity groups experienced these behaviours, and their views on reporting systems.

Reporting of Everyday Interpersonal Discrimination by Frequency and Identity

Across identity groups, a substantial proportion of students reported experiencing microaggressions and discriminatory behaviours. The most frequently cited were:

1. Having their name misspoken, mispronounced, or misspelled **(57.4%)**.

2. Hearing others make jokes about their identity **(56%)**.

3. Being treated as if they were unfriendly, unhelpful, or rude **(50.7%)**.

4. Being treated as if they were less smart or capable than others **(50.7%)**.

5. Being asked where they are originally from **(48.8%)**.

6. Being asked inappropriate, rude, or overly personal questions **(47.5%)**.

While these behaviours were common across the student body, some groups were disproportionately affected **(see Table 8)**.

Table 8: Frequent everyday interpersonal discrimination reported and variation by identity (gender, race, disability, sexual orientation)

Identities		Have been touched on any of your body parts in a manner that made you uncomfortable		Have been told that you do not belong in the country		Have heard others make jokes about your identity		Have had your name misspoken, mispronounced or misspelled by others		Have been treated differently or made fun of because you have an accent when speaking		Have been asked where you are originally from		Have been treated as if you are less smart or capable than others		Have been asked inappropriate, rude, or overly personal questions	
		(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Gender	Female	155	36.60%	80	18.90%	200	47.30%	249	58.70%	156	36.70%	213	50%	220	57.30%	210	49.60%
	Male	50	25.10%	42	21.10%	80	40.30%	105	52.70%	73	36.80%	93	46.70%	58	32.80%	76	38.30%
	Other	16	55.20%	9	30.90%	25	86.20%	19	65.50%	12	41.40%	10	34.40%	20	74%	24	82.70%
Race	Minority Irish	19	39.70%	26	54.20%	28	58.40%	36	75%	17	35.50%	42	87.60%	30	66.70%	29	60.40%
	Minority Non Irish	35	22.70%	54	35%	64	41.60%	106	68.90%	58	37.70%	118	76.60%	68	48.30%	65	42.50%
	White Non Irish	25	29.40%	26	30.70%	38	44.70%	58	68.20%	47	55.30%	66	77.70%	39	50%	38	44.70%
	White Irish	140	38.80%	23	6.30%	173	48%	171	47.30%	118	32.50%	87	24.10%	157	49.10%	173	48%
Disability	With Disability	83	56.10%	25	16.90%	106	71.60%	77	52%	59	39.90%	53	35.80%	95	72.50%	100	67.60%
	With No Disability	132	26.60%	104	21%	195	39.30%	292	58.80%	180	36.10%	258	51.70%	199	44.20%	203	41%
Sexual Orientation	Gay/Lesbian	19	50%	6	15.50%	27	71.10%	17	43.60%	11	28.20%	11	28.30%	15	44.10%	23	60.60%
	Bisexual/Other	72	54.10%	34	25.50%	94	70.70%	89	66.90%	63	47.40%	76	57.10%	82	67.10%	89	66.80%
	Heterosexual	124	26.90%	86	18.70%	173	37.50%	256	55.50%	155	33.70%	220	47.60%	189	45.70%	185	40.20%

Gender-diverse students reported the highest levels of day-to-day discrimination

A total of **86.2% had heard others make jokes about their identity**, **74% had been treated as less capable**, and **82.7% had been asked inappropriate, rude, or overly personal questions**.

Sexual minority students also experienced heightened levels

Over 70% of Gay/Lesbian and Bisexual/Other students heard others make jokes about their identity, compared with **37.5% of Heterosexual students**. More than two-thirds of Bisexual/Other students (**67.1%**) said they had been treated as less capable, and 66.8% had been asked intrusive or overly personal questions.

Students with disabilities also reported high levels of microaggressions

Especially **being treated as less capable (72.5%)** and **hearing others make jokes about their identity (71.6%)**.

Racial minority students faced specific forms of microaggressions

More than half of **Minority Irish (54.2%)** and over a third of **Minority Non-Irish (35%)** students said they **had been told they do not belong in the country**, while 87.6% of Minority Irish students reported being asked where they are originally from. When broken down further by race **(see Table 9)**, the contrast becomes even more evident. Only **18.3% of White Irish and White Non-Irish students reported being asked this question** many times in the past year, compared with **72.1% of Black Irish, African, Caribbean students**.

Over 72% of Black Irish students reported being repeatedly asked in the last year where they were originally from, at a rate higher than that experienced by non-Irish minorities.

Table 9: Because of who I am, I have been asked where I am originally from (by race/ethnicity)

Within Group (Race/Ethnicity)	Never	Yes, but not in the past year	Yes, once or twice in the past year	Yes, many times in the past year	Not applicable
White Irish White Non-Irish	44.5% (n=199)	6.3% (n=28)	9.6% (n=43)	18.3% (n=82)	21.3% (n=95)
Asian-Chinese Asian-Irish Asian-Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi Other Asian Background Arab	19% (n=26)	2.9% (n=4)	20.4% (n=28)	52.6% (n=72)	5.1% (n=7)
Black Irish African Caribbean	4.7% (n=2)	7% (n=3)	11.6% (n=5)	72.1% (n=31)	4.7% (n=2)
Latin American White Irish Traveller Roma Other Background, Including Mixed Race	18.2% (n=4)	4.5% (n=1)	18.2% (n=4)	54.5% (n=12)	4.5% (n=1)
Prefer Not to Respond	18.2% (n=2)	9.1% (n=1)	18.2% (n=2)	54.5% (n=6)	0% (n=0)

These findings show that microaggressions are a regular feature of everyday life for many students. Importantly, they are not evenly distributed. Gender-diverse students, LGBTQ+ students, racial minority students, and students with disabilities consistently reported the highest levels. This highlights how everyday interactions are shaped by broader systems of inequality.

Complaints Mechanisms and Reporting of Microaggressions

As with results on institutional discrimination, findings on complaints mechanisms and reporting suggest that, at the surface level, students generally expressed confidence in the university's procedures. Most respondents agreed that:

- Anonymous and confidential reporting systems exist.

- Allegations are treated in a timely manner.

- Students can seek support from lecturers if they experience discrimination or bullying.

- The university provides support to students during complaint procedures.

- The university has clear whistle-blower procedures to publicise discriminatory conduct.

On first impression, these responses suggest that the university has strong systems in place to support students experiencing discrimination. However, it is important to distinguish between perceptions of structures and lived experiences of using them.

Among the survey questions on complaints mechanisms, one asked whether students had received support from their lecturer(s) or the university after seeking help. Unlike other questions, this captured lived experience rather than perception. While a majority of respondents to this question selected "Not Applicable", indicating that they had not experienced discrimination or had not needed to seek support, many of those who did engage with the system reported not receiving support **(see Graph 16)**.

This highlights a gap between confidence in formal procedures and the reality for students who engaged with them. It also points to the importance of carefully wording survey questions. Perceptions of systems may appear positive overall, but lived experiences reveal challenges on delivery, particularly for those most affected by discrimination.

Of the students who sought help regarding discrimination based on identity, the majority (21%) indicated not receiving support from their lecturer(s) or from the university

Graph 16: Complaints mechanism and reporting of microaggressions

The university has anonymous and confidential complaint procedures for students who experience discriminatory treatment

Category	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6.0%
Disagree	8.7%
Neither disagree or agree	16.1%
Agree	55.7%
Strongly agree	13.4%
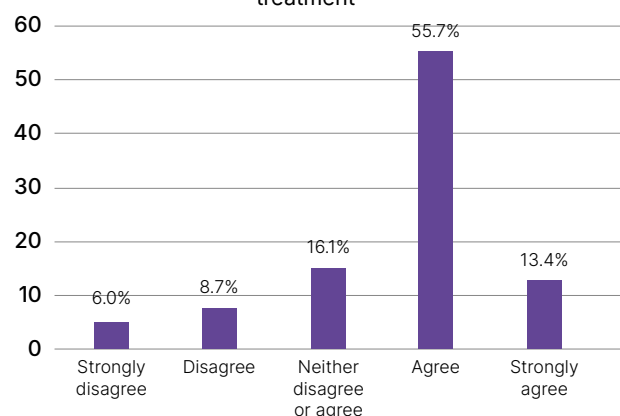
Allegations of dicrimination based on identity made by students are treated in a timely manner

Category	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6.4%
Disagree	20.7%
Neither disagree or agree	24.4%
Agree	37.1%
Strongly agree	11.4%
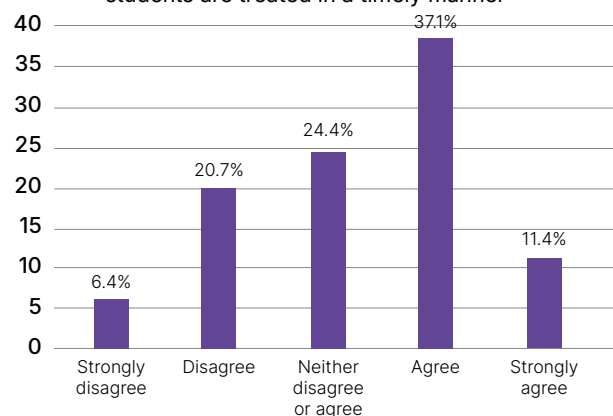
I can seek support from my lecturer(s) if I experience dicrimination or bullying based on identity on campus
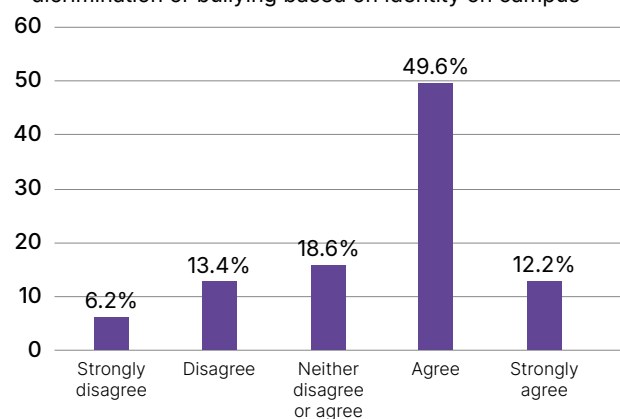
Category	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6.2%
Disagree	13.4%
Neither disagree or agree	18.6%
Agree	49.6%
Strongly agree	12.2%

The university provides support to students during complaint procedures

Category	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6.9%
Disagree	11.2%
Neither disagree or agree	26.3%
Agree	44.4%
Strongly agree	11.2%
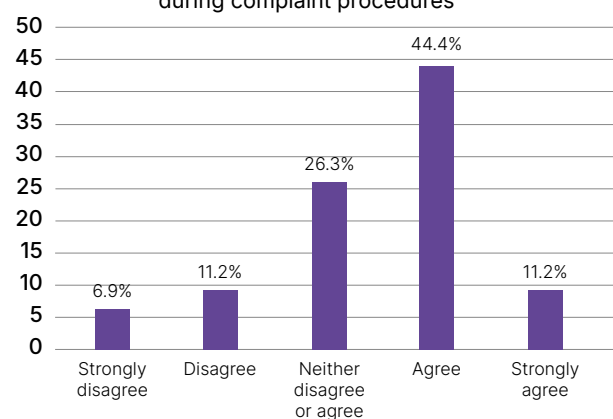
The university has clear whistle blowing procedures to publicise discriminatory conducts based on identity
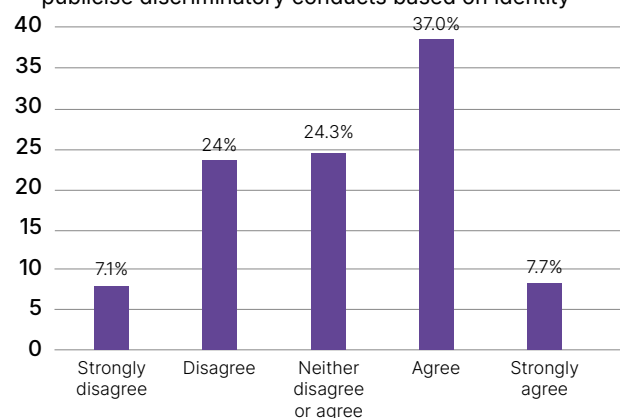
Category	Percentage
Strongly disagree	7.1%
Disagree	24%
Neither disagree or agree	24.3%
Agree	37.0%
Strongly agree	7.7%

I have received support from my lecturer(s) or from the university after seeking help regarding discrimination based on identity

Category	Percentage
Yes	10.9%
No	21.0%
Unsure/Don't Know	9.9%
Not Applicable	58.2%
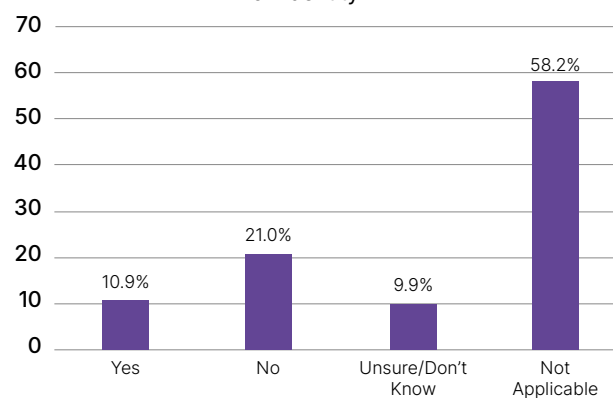
When this question was further broken down by identity, disparities also become clearer (see Table 10). White Non-Irish students were the least likely to report receiving support, with only 4.7% answering "Yes". Gender-diverse students ("Other") were the most likely to state they had not received support (34.5%), followed by students with disabilities (26.6%).

Table 10: I have received support from my lecturer(s) or from the university after seeking help regarding discrimination based on identity (gender, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation)

Identities		Yes (n)	Yes (%)	No (n)	No (%)	Unsure/Don't Know (n)	Unsure/Don't Know (%)	Not Applicable (n)	Not Applicable (%)
Gender	Female	42	9.70%	83	19.10%	40	9.20%	270	62.10%
	Male	27	13.20%	48	23.40%	22	10.70%	108	52.70%
	Other	4	13.80%	10	34.50%	4	13.80%	11	37.90%
Race	Minority Irish	4	8.20%	9	18.40%	8	16.30%	28	57%
	Minority Non Irish	28	18.10%	27	17%	24	15.50%	76	49%
	White Non Irish	4	4.70%	12	14%	8	9.30%	62	72.10%
	White Irish	35	9.30%	93	24.70%	25	7%	223	59.30%
Disability	With Disability	24	15.60%	41	26.60%	13	8.40%	76	49%
	With No Disability	50	9.80%	98	19%	52	10.20%	308	60.60%
Sexual Orientation	Gay/Lesbian	5	13%	8	21.10%	5	13.20%	20	52.60%
	Bisexual/Other	18	13.30%	33	24.40%	8	5.90%	76	56.30%
	Heterosexual	45	9.50%	95	20%	50	10.50%	285	60%

Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI)

To establish the contribution of the different identities to the structural discrimination and everyday interpersonal discrimination experiences reported by respondents we undertook a regression exercise.

The regression method essentially allows us to assess the impact of different independent variables on a dependent variable and assess the significance of this impact (statistically significant or not). In this study the dependent variables we explored are the structural discrimination index, the everyday interpersonal discrimination index and the composite index (combining the together). The independent variables were gender, ethnicity_order (combing ethnicity and nationality), disability, sexual_orientation, religion, course of study, age, and income. Below we give the results for three models **(see Table 11, Table 12, and Table 13)**.

Table 11: Structural discrimination

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.783	0.820	–	4.614	<0.001
	Gender	-0.168	0.092	-0.063	-1.834	0.067
	Ethnicity_order	-0.397	0.091	-0.168	-4.369	<0.001
	Disability_1	1.210	0.218	0.206	5.544	<0.001
	Course_Study	-0.155	0.239	-0.029	-0.651	0.516
	Religion_1	-0.177	0.091	-0.071	-1.945	0.052
	Sexual_Orientation_Final	-0.292	0.164	-0.067	-1.780	0.076
	Age	0.230	0.083	0.117	2.781	0.006
	Income Level	-0.141	0.033	-0.153	-4.263	<0.001

a. Dependent Variable: STRUCT_DISCRIM_INDX

Table 12: Everyday interpersonal discrimination

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	30.612	3.422	–	8.946	<0.001
	Gender	-0.159	0.386	-0.016	-0.411	0.681
	Ethnicity_order	-2.913	0.389	-0.320	-7.489	<0.001
	Disability_1	4.147	0.931	0.186	4.456	<0.001
	Course_Study	2.624	0.996	0.131	2.635	0.009
	Religion_1	0.094	0.386	0.010	0.243	0.808
	Sexual_Orientation_Final	-2.282	0.683	-0.140	-3.340	<0.001
	Age	-0.139	0.336	-0.019	-0.416	0.678
	Income Level	-0.573	0.141	-0.161	-4.067	<0.001
a. Dependent Variable: EVERYDAY_DISCRIM_INDX						

Table 13: Combined discrimination index

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.512	0.275	–	1.863	0.063
	Gender	-0.036	0.031	-0.039	-1.149	0.251
	Ethnicity_order	-0.152	0.030	-0.188	-5.023	<0.001
	Disability_1	0.399	0.074	0.195	5.406	<0.001
	Course_Study	0.018	0.080	0.010	0.227	0.821
	Religion_1	-0.041	0.031	-0.048	-1.347	0.178
	Sexual_Orientation_Final	-0.142	0.055	-0.095	-2.588	0.010
	Age	0.064	0.028	0.093	2.279	0.023
	Income Level	-0.041	0.011	-0.128	-3.653	<0.001
a. Dependent Variable: BIG_DISCRIM						

The regression models demonstrate that predictors of discrimination vary across structural and everyday domains, highlighting the multidimensional nature of the construct. Structural discrimination is strongly associated with institutional markers such as age and religion, in addition to ethnicity, income, and disability. Gender and sexual orientation are significant but less robust than religion.

These **findings suggest that older students or those from minority religious backgrounds may encounter barriers embedded in formal university systems (e.g., access to services, academic resources, or institutional inclusion). By contrast, everyday discrimination was most strongly predicted by ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, income level and to a lesser extent by course of study, indicating that interpersonal exclusion and hostile treatment are more closely linked to visible minority status and non-heterosexual identity**. Interestingly, gender disappears as a predictor, suggesting it is likely subsumed within other visible forms of minority status. When both dimensions were combined into the overall discrimination index, only the most robust predictors - ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and income -remained significant, while the effects of age and religion diminished. This attenuation reflects the aggregation of structural and interpersonal experiences and underscores the importance of examining both levels separately. Overall, the **results reinforce that discrimination is not uniform: structural and interpersonal discrimination mechanisms operate differently across identity categories, and collapsing them into a single global index, although useful for communication, may obscure meaningful subgroup differences**. But the global index can be useful for monitoring purposes to assess progress across the two domains.

The regression results obtained are not only empirically coherent but align closely with findings reported in prior research on discrimination in higher education both nationally and internationally. The findings provide specific insights into today's Irish higher education. Ireland has historically been characterised by relative homogeneity in terms of ethnicity and religion. However, recent decades have witnessed a rapid increase in migration and diversification of the student population. Within this context, **the data from this study show that ethnicity continues to be the strongest predictor of discrimination. The analyses highlight that not only international Non-White students, but also Non-White Irish students report elevated levels of discrimination.**

> This finding underscores the salience of racialisation processes in Ireland, where Non-White Irish students may be perceived as "immigrants" who do not fully belong.

The results thus resonate with wider societal debates about migration and the rise of anti-immigration sentiment in Ireland. They also suggest the importance of understanding the very specific challenges faced by minority students as they come through the Irish school education system.

The analyses also revealed that disability is a powerful and consistent predictor of both structural and interpersonal discrimination. Despite the existence of national frameworks and institutional policies promoting accessibility and inclusion, students with disabilities continue to encounter both systemic barriers (e.g., infrastructure, services) and interpersonal stigma. This suggests that formal commitments to inclusion need to be translated into lived realities at the campus level.

Finally, the results demonstrate that predictors differ between structural and everyday discrimination. Age and religion emerged as significant factors in structural discrimination but not in interpersonal discrimination. This finding reflects specific features of the Irish context, such as the historical influence of religion in education and the challenges faced by mature students in a context of predominantly younger cohorts. By contrast, everyday discrimination is more strongly linked to visible identity markers, such as ethnicity and sexual orientation. The evidence points to the need to develop targeted communication strategies to address structural discrimination versus everyday discrimination.

Overall, the University of Galway data reveal that while Ireland's higher education institutions are increasingly diverse, significant disparities remain. These findings emphasise the need for targeted strategies that address discrimination not only in the aggregate but also across specific domains and identity groups, and particularly at the intersections of different identities. The importance of this point becomes clear when examining a specific example of discrimination by race and gender. The data **(see Graph 17)** show that minority Irish women and students of other genders are more likely to report being told that they do not belong in the country multiple times in the past year. In other words, discrimination is intensified for students who are at the intersection of gender and race.

Graph 17: Because of who I am, I have been told that I do not belong in the country (by gender and race/ethnicity)
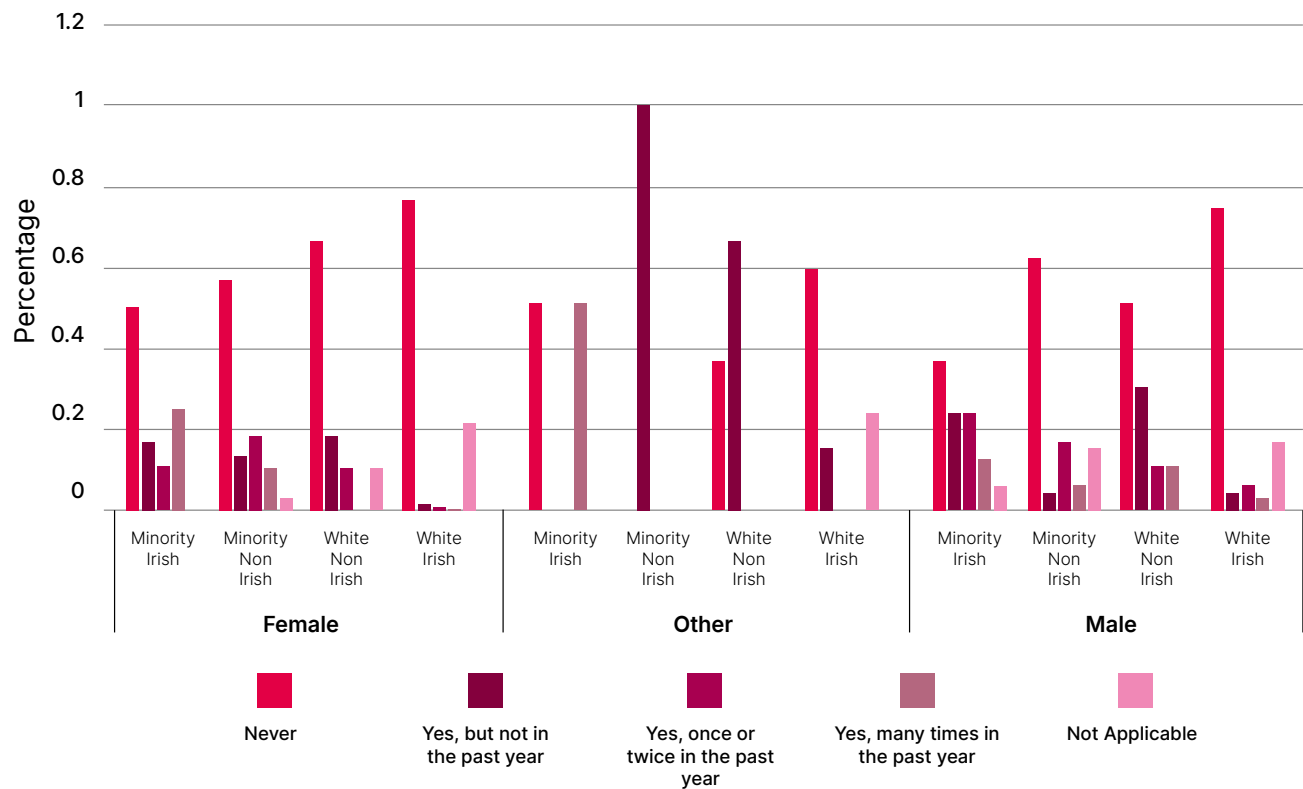
Attribution of Discrimination to Identity Characteristics

The survey also asked students to reflect on the discrimination they had experienced and indicate how often they believed each identity characteristic was the reason for that discrimination.

The question aimed to measure perceived attribution, that is, the extent to which students associated their experiences of discrimination with specific identity characteristics, such as **gender, socio-economic class, nationality, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, Traveller status, age, religion, migration status, or a combination of these**.

Table 14: Attribution of discrimination to identity characteristics

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Unsure/Don't Know
Gender	13.9% (n=81)	36.7% (n=214)	36.2% (n=211)	13.2% (n=77)
Social Class	6.8% (n=39)	36.4% (n=210)	43% (n=248)	13.9% (n=80)
Nationality	12.7% (n=74)	28.9% (n=168)	46.2% (n=269)	12.2% (n=71)
Ethnicity	13.9% (n=81)	22.4% (n=130)	52.8% (n=307)	10.8% (n=63)
Disability	4.5% (n=26)	18.7% (n=108)	60.7% (n=350)	16.1% (n=93)
Sexual Orientation	4% (n=23)	23.1% (n=133)	58.9% (n=340)	14% (n=81)
Irish Traveller Status	3% (n=17)	8.4% (n=48)	70.9% (n=406)	17.8% (n=102)
Age	3% (n=17)	28.1% (n=162)	57.3% (n=330)	11.6% (n=67)
Religion	4.2% (n=24)	16.6% (n=96)	67.1% (n=387)	12.1% (n=70)
Migration Status	5.5% (n=32)	17.5% (n=101)	64.3% (n=371)	12.7% (n=73)
Combination of These	12.9% (n=74)	37.4% (n=215)	31.8% (n=183)	17.9% (n=103)

Overall, when asked about the extent to which their experiences of discrimination were associated with identity characteristics, students most frequently selected **"always"** for **gender (13.9%)**, **ethnicity (13.9%)**, **nationality (12.7%)**, and **intersecting identity factors (12.9%)**.

Approximately half of respondents (50.6%) indicated that discrimination they experienced was "always" or "sometimes" based on gender, followed by social class (43.2%), nationality (41.6%), and ethnicity (36.3%).

Discrimination based on **age (31.1%), sexual orientation (27.1%), disability (23.2%), migration status (23%)** and **religion (20.8%)** were less common but still notable. **Irish Traveller status (11.4%)** had the lowest attribution rates.

A significant proportion of students attributed discrimination to a combination of identity characteristics, with 50.3% of respondents indicating this occurred "always" or "sometimes".

This finding highlights the importance of intersectionality, recognising that overlapping identities can interact to shape and intensify experiences of discrimination.

A more detailed analysis of attribution by different identity characteristics provides a deeper insight of students' own understanding as to which aspect of their identity is the basis of the discrimination they have experienced. For example, **12.7% of students** in the aggregate reported that nationality was always the reason for the discrimination they experienced. If we explore this by ethnicity **(see Table 15)**, we see that in fact **30% of Minority Non-Irish** felt nationality was always the basis for discrimination compared to **19.2% for White Non-Irish**, 13.3% for Minority Irish, and 3.2% for White Irish.

Table 15: Attribution of discrimination to identity characteristics - nationality (by race/ethnicity)

	Race/Ethnicity				
	Minority Irish	**Minority Non Irish**	**White Non Irish**	**White Irish**	**Total**
Always	13.30% (n=6)	30% (n=42)	19.20% (n=14)	3.20% (n=10)	12.60% (n=72)
Sometimes	40% (n=18)	45.70% (n=64)	42.50% (n=31)	16.30% (n=51)	28.70% (n=164)
Never	28.90% (n=13)	13.60% (n=19)	26% (n=19)	68.70% (n=215)	46.60% (n=266)
Unsure/Don't Know	17.80% (n=8)	10.70% (n=15)	12.30% (n=9)	11.80% (n=37)	12.10% (n=69)

When examining gender as the reported reason for discrimination by ethnicity (see Table 16), it emerges that White Irish students attribute discrimination to gender at a higher rate than Minority Irish or Minority Non-Irish students.

Table 16: Attribution of discrimination to identity characteristics - gender (by race/ethnicity)

Race/Ethnicity		Minority Irish	Minority Non Irish	White Non Irish	White Irish	Total
Always	Count	3	9	10	57	79
	% within Gender	3.80%	11.40%	12.70%	72.20%	100%
	% within Race/ethnicity	6.70%	6.50%	13.70%	18%	13.80%
	% of Total	0.50%	1.60%	1.70%	10%	13.80%
Sometimes	Count	20	37	33	119	209
	% within Gender	9.60%	17.70%	15.80%	56.90%	100%
	% within Race/ethnicity	44.40%	26.80%	45.20%	37.70%	36.50%
	% of Total	3.50%	6.50%	5.80%	20.80%	36.50%
Never	Count	17	75	19	97	208
	% within Gender	8.20%	36.10%	9.10%	46.60%	100%
	% within Race/ethnicity	37.80%	54.30%	26%	30.70%	36.40%
	% of Total	3%	13.10%	3.30%	17%	36.40%
Unsure/Don't Know	Count	5	17	11	43	76
	% within Gender	6.60%	22.40%	14.50%	56.60%	100%
	% within Race/ethnicity	11.10%	12.30%	15.10%	13.60%	13.30%
	% of Total	0.90%	3%	1.90%	7.50%	13.30%

This analysis clearly demonstrates that viewing discrimination through a single identity lens may obscure the more complex realities faced by students who experience multiple and intersecting forms of marginalisation. For example, among Minority Irish and Minority Non-Irish students, nationality is more frequently perceived as the basis for discrimination than gender. As such, an initiative focused solely on gender-based discrimination would be unlikely to address the experiences of many minority students directly. Recognising and responding to these nuanced, intersectional dimensions of discrimination is essential for developing interventions that are both relevant and effective in tackling structural and everyday discrimination.

Recommendations and Expectations

The survey also included two qualitative open-ended questions to better understand students' views on supports and actions the university should focus on.

Of the **910 students, 299 (32.9%) provided a response to the first question** and **267 (29.3%) to the second**. This level of engagement suggests a significant interest among students in contributing thoughtful feedback to inform supports for those experiencing discrimination and to shape ongoing prevention efforts. We highlight here the key findings and recurring themes from the students' responses to these questions.

Supports

The first open-ended question asked students what supports they thought the university should prioritise to students experiencing discrimination. Among the responses, the most frequently mentioned topics were:

- Support services
- Inclusivity in the university or their course
- Barriers to reporting discrimination
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Education and training
- Raising awareness

The subject "support services" was the most frequently mentioned topic by students. More specifically, participants emphasised the need for accessible, confidential, and culturally competent support services to address discrimination. Many called for clear and well-publicised reporting mechanisms, with prompt and empathetic responses. Suggestions included expanding counselling and mental health provision, ensuring anonymity where desired, creating safe spaces and peer support groups, and providing specialist services for marginalised groups such as international students, students with disabilities, and transgender students. Respondents also stressed the importance of making existing supports more visible. While a few participants praised current services, most felt improvements were needed in awareness, accessibility, and responsiveness.

Have a place where students can go without feeling any judgement.

Universities should prioritise a holistic and intersectional support system for students facing discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, or age.

Dedicated support services such as culturally competent counselling, equity offices, and peer support networks are vital in providing both emotional and practical assistance.

Making awareness on how and where students can find those services to submit complaints and get counselling is also important, because many students do not know how to get access to those counselling and complaint services.

Health unit. Like more supports for suspected sexual assault cases. Having more people who students can talk to and discuss what happened and help them move through it.

The university should prioritise accessible, culturally competent support. Like dedicated reporting services, trained counselling, and safe peer spaces. So students feel heard, supported, and protected.

Help from people, e.g councillors, who have lived experience or are able to actually understand the struggle. Sympathy is good, but empathy is also important, and it is hard to empathise with a situation you haven't and won't experience.

There is no crisis support. I once tried to reach out during a crisis and the best I could hope for was filling an online form and wait to be contacted, which happened 3 days later.

The second most frequent theme related to inclusivity in the university or in their course. Students' views on inclusivity within the university were mixed, with both praise and criticism. Positive experiences included feeling welcomed by diverse student groups and recognising existing supports for marginalised communities. However, many respondents highlighted barriers to true inclusivity, such as Eurocentric curricula, lecturers' bias or insensitivity towards certain nationalities, religions, or dialects, and insufficient cultural competence in teaching. Several participants noted that inclusivity should extend beyond initiatives to ensure equal participation for mature students, students with disabilities, and those from varied cultural backgrounds. Suggestions included more diverse curriculum content, accessibility improvements, such as recorded lectures for students with disabilities, stronger accountability for discriminatory behaviour by staff, and better integration between domestic and international students.

Overall, the responses indicate that while some progress has been made, achieving genuine inclusivity requires systemic change in curriculum design, staff training, and campus culture.

> **"**
>
> *The university environment feels calm and friendly in all aspects.*
>
> *I believe the university are doing their best at the moment to handle discrimination efficiently.*
>
> *The university should remind professors that it is a global university, and that there will be many international students, and that they should be patient with our English.*
>
> *I have never faced direct discrimination, but the professor in my class stereotyped me.*
>
> *Stop making students who challenge the university's Eurocentric course work "rude". It's not about creating "inclusive" modules it's about understanding the world exists beyond Europe and all areas of humanity have their own unique interesting history that we should study.*
>
> *Better accessibility for disabled students with live or recorded lectures. Same thing as well with lecturers having only a "short lecture" where they only do 10 minutes of content where you've travelled e.g. 50 minutes each way to make it to the class when you have conditions like chronic fatigue etc. It's not fair and can be debilitating to some.*
>
> *Do not issue registration numbers based on the date when a student first entered the university, which in my case was 1988. I found one lecturer was dismissive of me due to my age, when I raised an academic concern.*
>
> *Stop paying lip service to mature students and provide age-related supports.*
>
> *Recognise that not all students fall into the same age / location bracket. Realise that not all mature students are parents but still face life challenges.*
>
> **"**

The third most cited topic referred to barriers to reporting discrimination. Students identified multiple obstacles to reporting discriminatory incidents, ranging from fear of retaliation to a lack of trust in how cases are handled. Several participants felt reporting systems were unclear, inaccessible, or complicated. Calls were made for fully anonymous, confidential, and culturally sensitive mechanisms, backed by clear follow-up processes and regular updates to complainants. Concerns were raised that reports are sometimes dismissed, mishandled, or lead to the reporter being blamed. Others felt staff lacked the cultural competence to address certain issues, particularly racism. While a few recognised existing reporting platforms, many stressed the need for stronger institutional commitment, transparent investigation processes, and visible action on verified cases to build trust and encourage more students to come forward.

"

Stop treating those who report discrimination as if they are the ones who started it.

Have a simple reporting system with clear defined guidelines of what actually constitutes these things instead of vague terminology that could be applied to any situation/encounter.

Make anonymous reporting systems easier to access or make it clearer where to access them.

Updates on the progress of complaints proceedings.

Easier, completely anonymous ways to report discrimination.

A strong and easily accessible support framework for people who are reporting discrimination.

The establishment of robust and accessible reporting mechanisms that allow students to safely disclose incidents of discrimination, with clear protocols for action and protection from retaliation.

I find that because all staff are white it's hard to discuss about racial issues or for them to understand. I always feel othered or like I don't belong here. Make it more accessible for students to report racism and not face consequences.

Teaching international students about the procedure of complaints and tell them their rights at the university, because some of them are afraid and terrified that if they speak they will be harmed.

"

Furthermore, students' responses related to matters of education and training, as well as raising awareness. Regarding education and training, students called for EDI training for staff and students. Education was viewed as crucial to preventing discrimination and fostering a more inclusive campus culture. In relation to raising awareness, participants recommended more campaigns, events, and training to challenge discrimination. Students felt that visible, ongoing awareness efforts could foster empathy, understanding, and a more respectful campus culture.

> *Diversity training for students in first year, and again in third year. It is good preparation for the workplace too.*
>
> *Support staff should have more training with people who have experienced these difficulties.*
>
> *Training lecturers on the fact that you can't always tell if someone is disabled and the fact that we are disabled doesn't make us incompetent.*
>
> *Workshops or training for all students on building inclusive and welcoming social environments. This could raise awareness about the importance of friendliness and connection.*
>
> *Promotional campaigns and educational sites/leaflets to address stigma, staff and student behaviour.*
>
> *Organise events and campaigns that celebrate diversity and educate the campus community about the experiences of marginalised groups. This can foster empathy and understanding among students.*

The fourth topic most cited was mental health and wellbeing. Students emphasised the need for stronger mental health support, especially for those affected by discrimination. Suggestions included more frequent counselling, culturally competent staff, and peer support groups. Some highlighted the importance of making services more visible to reduce stigma and encourage use. Overall, accessible and empathetic mental health provision was seen as essential for student wellbeing.

> *Prioritise the mental health of the students experiencing discrimination.*
>
> *Better counselling and services that provide more in depth counselling sessions that run for a longer time period.*
>
> *Counselling with counsellors who are qualified and experienced enough to help them with the particular discrimination issue.*
>
> *Culturally competent counselling and therapy services that understand the intersections of identity and discrimination.*
>
> *The university has done the best by providing counselling service but sometimes I feel reluctant to visit because I am afraid. Maybe there should be more encouragement that visiting the counselling service is not that scary.*

Key Actions

The second open-ended question asked students to identify key actions the university could take to prevent discrimination. The most frequently mentioned topics were:

- Raising awareness
- Education and training
- Inclusivity in the university or their course
- Support services
- Opportunities for social interaction and exchange
- Consequences for those that discriminate
- Policies and codes of conduct

While students again emphasised the importance of education and training, awareness, and support, responses to this question placed greater focus on the institutional and preventive dimensions of discrimination. Participants described not only what the university should do to respond when discrimination occurs, but how it could embed equity and inclusion into its everyday structures, policies, and culture.

The most frequently mentioned topic related to raising awareness. Students felt that continuous and visible efforts were required to increase understanding of discrimination and promote respect across the university community. Awareness campaigns, workshops, and regular communication through posters, social media, and lectures were identified as essential ways to build empathy and challenge stereotypes. Participants emphasised that awareness-raising should be ongoing rather than limited to one-off events.

> *There are rarely people with disabilities featured in campaigns and we are often left out of things like EDI initiatives.*
>
> *Not sure how because a lot of it starts from homes. Maybe create awareness that the same blood flows through our veins and we are global citizens, you just happen to be born luckier than some.*
>
> *More awareness about the experience of combinations of different gender identities and/or sexual orientations as these can differ greatly from other specific combinations or single identities/sexualities.*
>
> *Include class and age in discussions around all the other minority characteristics above. Because they are a part of life for all people, migrants, LGBTQ, and people who experience sexual discrimination. In this way, age and class would not be an extra barrier for inclusion and belonging in communities.*
>
> *Make all lecturers take some sort of awareness training for disability/gender/ social class, etc. and how those things might impact their students and thus be mindful of that and take it into consideration when interacting and grading them.*
>
> *Ensure those in higher positions and teaching are aware of biases they may hold and even if they hold it let it not affect their teaching.*

Education and training were also seen as vital. Respondents called for mandatory, interactive, and reflective EDI training for both staff and students. They stressed that education should not be symbolic or superficial but embedded into teaching and curriculum design, ensuring that inclusion and anti-discrimination principles are applied across all disciplines.

"

Bias and inclusion training doesn't really work when it's like one training day a year but can work if it's an actual long program that's interactive and reflective.

Mandatory Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Training. Implement regular, compulsory workshops for all students, staff, and faculty that go beyond surface-level awareness. These sessions should address unconscious bias, systemic discrimination, allyship, and inclusive practices specific to the campus environment. They should be interactive, scenario-based, and led by trained facilitators with lived experience or expertise in EDI.

I acknowledge that it's hard to maintain and expect everyone to behave well. But maybe the university can encourage students and staff members not to stereotype other students and staff members. Maybe a workshop or seminar about stereotypes (Like Seas Suas).

They should implement comprehensive education and training programs that promote awareness, empathy, and allyship among students, staff, and faculty. This includes mandatory workshops on unconscious bias, cultural competence, and anti-discrimination practices to build a more informed and respectful campus culture.

Increased education programs. But please make it accessible and created by students. It drives me nuts to see the workshops and training that happen on campus that are so boring because they aren't relevant, engaging or delivered in a way that would affect change. Nothing done for us without us, that includes having students help create education programs that will actually reach other students. Same with staff, because if they do have training, it's really not working.

"

The next most frequent theme pertained to inclusivity in the university or in their courses. Students called for genuine inclusivity within teaching, leadership, and campus life, alongside greater representation of underrepresented groups. Some pointed to the lack of visibility of students with disabilities or minority backgrounds in campaigns or events. Others recommended more culturally diverse activities and stronger integration between domestic and international students.

"

I feel discrimination against people with disabilities is deeply ingrained. Discrimination against disabled people is less direct, more in the environment. The campus itself is inaccessible and I'm often at a disadvantage purely as a result of architecture. This is something I strongly believe the university should work on.

Provide age inclusive events, provide age inclusive elements to student union policies, have student union officials take age related training so that they don't actively discriminate against mature students. Three university presidents have treated me in this manner. Serious assumptions were made about who I was and my position in the university when in a group of college peers of the usual age range.

Fostering an inclusive campus environment through representation and engagement is essential. This involves actively involving marginalised voices in decision making processes, diversifying leadership and curriculum, and creating safe spaces and support networks for underrepresented groups.

Make all grant-based funding available for grades also applicable for part-time study. Ask the library to record webinars, I cannot attend them because of work and feel I miss out on a valuable component of the education offered to students. Acknowledge how difficult it is for adults in employment to access education and make more programmes available through a blended learning style.

"

Support services were again identified as important, although students framed them in this question as preventive rather than reactive. They highlighted the need for safe spaces, accessible and culturally competent supports, and clear guidance on where to seek advice.

> *Establish support systems and safe spaces. Universities should create dedicated support services for marginalised groups, such as counselling, mentorship, and peer support networks.*
>
> *More support for students to meet basic needs. Support in getting non-exploitative housing, better shower facilities for those who have to commute from far away, help in finding jobs, especially if employers don't want to hire you because you aren't Irish, etc. Because those most vulnerable are most affected and you can't do well in school if you don't even have enough money to turn the heat on in winter. Not much else matters if people's basic needs aren't met.*

Opportunities for social interaction and exchange were also viewed as key to prevention. Students felt that encouraging collaboration and dialogue between diverse groups could build understanding and reduce discrimination.

> *Host events that bring people from all backgrounds together and separate friends out so they meet new people. Encourage on campus socialising, literally having benches along major walkways made people stop and chat but they have been removed. Getting people interacting with each other is key. You cannot force someone to learn but you can create the environment that develops them into better people.*
>
> *Promote conversing with all types of people, rather than sticking to your own stereotype.*
>
> *More integration amongst diverse groups.*
>
> *Encourage societies of minority groups to engage with each other to prevent isolation between groups.*

Finally, students highlighted the role of policies and codes of conduct in setting clear expectations and standards. They called for comprehensive, well-communicated policies that define unacceptable behaviour, outline consequences, and apply equally to staff and students. Such responses reflect a desire for structural and policy-level change as the foundation of prevention.

> *The university should establish clear, comprehensive anti-discrimination policies that cover all forms of discrimination (gender, sexuality, race, etc.). These policies should be communicated to all students, faculty, and staff.*
>
> *The university should establish and enforce clear anti-discrimination policies, supported by accessible reporting systems and swift, transparent responses to incidents. These policies must be widely communicated and consistently applied to ensure accountability.*
>
> *The university should develop and enforce clear anti-discrimination policies that outline unacceptable behaviours and the consequences for violating them.*

Participants further emphasised the importance of clear consequences for those that discriminate. Respondents called for the university to take a firm and consistent stance on discriminatory behaviour, with transparent disciplinary action and visible accountability to demonstrate that such actions are not tolerated.

> *Actually enforce their no discrimination policy, especially regarding people speaking publicly within the university. Transgender and non-binary students shouldn't have to experience their identities being used as a political talking point in a campaign. Promoting free speech doesn't mean that hate speech should be tolerated.*
>
> *Taking appropriate disciplinary action against any reports of abuse of power or mistreatment of students and/or staff, especially by lecturers. Periodic reviews of lecturers and other staff members and their behaviour and teaching methods. Severe disciplinary action against students who are accused of mistreating people based on the above criteria, e.g., permanent mark on their record/ expulsion.*
>
> *Heavily penalise those who commit it. Take issues/crimes seriously, suspend/expel students who do.*

The findings from both open-ended questions show that students understand discrimination as not only an interpersonal issue but also a structural one. Across both questions, students frequently described experiences involving lecturers, emphasising the need for greater awareness, accountability, and training within teaching practices. These accounts point to a culture of discrimination, where bias has become normalised within the university environment through everyday behaviours and systems. Preventive strategies, therefore, must extend beyond student-focused supports to include comprehensive staff education, training, awareness, and curriculum review.

The stronger emphasis on policy, accountability, and representation in the second question highlights a recognition that preventing discrimination requires change at a structural level. Students also raised other issues that had not emerged in the first question, including the need to feel safe on campus and the importance of security and prevention measures to protect vulnerable groups. In addition, several responses pointed to the value of research and funding dedicated to understanding discrimination to inform future interventions.

While the majority of open-ended responses called for greater inclusivity, it is important to note that a small number of open-ended responses expressed discriminatory views toward other marginalised groups. This finding reflects what is sometimes termed intraminority discrimination (MacCarthy et al. 2021; Chan et al. 2025), where members of one marginalised group may enact bias against another. Such dynamics are documented in intersectionality scholarship and highlight the importance of recognising that oppressed groups are not homogeneous. Internal differences and power relations often shape how discrimination is experienced and reproduced (Crenshaw, 1991). In practice, this means that some minority groups may marginalise others, underscoring the need for EDI strategies that are nuanced and attentive to diversity and hierarchy within, as well as between, groups. Other responses also came from students who felt that equality efforts left them marginalised or underrepresented. This highlights the importance of applying an intersectional lens. Recognising these complexities is essential to developing EDI strategies that are not only inclusive, but also equitable in practice.

Conclusion

This study set out to provide evidence-based insights into the nature and extent of intersectional discrimination experienced by students at the University of Galway, based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, socio-economic background, and other identity factors.

Using a student survey, it explored both systemic barriers and everyday experiences of discrimination and microaggressions, alongside students' own recommendations. It also sought to develop a pilot Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI), a validation framework used to test how effectively the survey captured the ways in which multiple identity factors combine to shape students' experiences of discrimination, with potential application across Irish HEIs.

At the surface level, students expressed largely positive views of university structures and supports. However, when examined across identities, clear disparities emerged. Racial minority students were far more likely than their peers self-defined as White to report higher tuition fees and unequal access to internships. Postgraduate students also reported greater barriers to internships, a finding that reflects the higher proportion of racial minority students in postgraduate cohorts. Students with disabilities described higher rates of exclusion from sports clubs. Differences were also evident by sexual orientation and socio-economic background, with minority and less advantaged students less likely to view university structures as inclusive.

Findings further highlighted a gap between perceptions and lived experience related to complaints mechanisms. While many students believed formal systems exist and function effectively, those who had sought help frequently reported not receiving meaningful support. Discrimination was also evident in everyday student life. The most frequent experiences reported included having names mispronounced, hearing jokes about identity, being treated as less capable, and being asked where they are originally from. Gender-diverse, LGBTQ+, and racial minority students, as well as students with disabilities consistently reported the highest levels.

Overall, the findings show that while the university environment may appear broadly inclusive at the aggregate level, the lived experiences of minority and less advantaged groups tell a more complex story. Discrimination is not evenly distributed, and its effects become visible only when examined through an intersectional lens. These insights are crucial not only for shaping University of Galway's EDI policy and practice, but also for informing national conversations across HEIs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following actions are recommended to strengthen EDI at the University of Galway and to inform wider efforts across Irish HEIs:

Address structural barriers

Review tuition, funding, internships, and accommodation supports to ensure equity of access across all student groups, recognising how these barriers may compound for students with intersecting identities. The findings for example highlighted that structural discrimination is felt by not only those of different ethnic minority status but also persists for older students. There must be careful and nuanced review to ensure that the differential needs of all students are met to reduce experience of structural discrimination.

Tackle day-to-day discrimination

Promote a culture of respect and inclusion through awareness campaigns, staff and student training, and clear accountability structures, with targeted initiatives for those most affected by overlapping forms of discrimination. Students in particular highlighted the need for student and staff training to be regular and ongoing rather than a once-off tick box exercise. It was suggested that there should be training particularly for students in the first year and repeated in the third year. In terms of staff there was particular emphasis on ensuring all professional and academic staff who engage with students participate in trainings via establishing a monitoring system of staff participation.

Strengthen reporting and support

Improve the effectiveness of reporting systems so that students who seek help actually receive meaningful, timely, and consistent support. Provide ongoing training for staff to ensure appropriate responses to incidents of discrimination. A critical aspect of reporting and support systems highlighted by students was the need for transparency and timely updates of the status of complaint. As HEIs consider focus on increased disclosure by students, there needs to be critical attention paid to ensure a transparent, agile and responsive reporting and support system.

Monitor and evaluate progress

Use validated tools such as the IDI to monitor and assess EDI initiatives. This should include intersectional analysis to capture the combined effects of multiple identity factors, enabling institutions to identify hidden vulnerabilities and track progress over time.

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Appendix 1

Copy of Survey Questionnaire

Student Experience of Discrimination Survey

This research is funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and is being undertaken by the Centre for Global Women's Studies, University of Galway, on their behalf.

This anonymous survey aims to measure intersecting forms of discrimination that students may experience at the University of Galway during their studies. Intersectional discrimination refers to discrimination that you might experience based on your multiple identities such as your gender, race, sexuality, social class status, disability, religion, nationality or migrant background, ethnicity (including being a member of the Traveller community), or age. For example, a person may experience discrimination based on a combination of gender, race, and social class backgrounds.

We have One4all vouchers on offer for students who respond to the survey. Please enter your email address at the end of the survey to enter the draw (your email address will only be used for this purpose, and will not be linked to your responses throughout the rest of the survey).

You will get the opportunity to express your opinion on how the university should respond to intersecting forms of discrimination students at the university face. The findings of the research will help policy makers in the field of higher education to formulate improved policies which eliminate discrimination in universities and enhance inclusiveness, diversity and equality on campuses across Ireland.

All University of Galway undergraduate students (from 2nd to 5th year) and taught postgraduate students (e.g. master's, higher diploma, post graduate diploma) are invited to complete the survey.

The survey consists of four parts:

- **Part I** consists of demographic characteristics.
- **Part II** aims to assess the level of systemic, structural, or institutional discrimination you might face on campus because of who you are. Systemic, structural, or institutional discrimination refers to discrimination that is embedded in systems, laws, policies, or practices.
- **Part III** aims to assess the level of the day-to-day discrimination and marginalisation you might face on campus because of who you are. Marginalisation occurs when people are relegated to unimportant or powerless positions within a society or group.
- **Part IV** focuses on your recommendations and expectations.

Please complete all parts of the survey indicating the level of agreement or disagreement you may have with the statements. We are interested in knowing experiences that are related to who you are. These include both how you describe yourself and how others may describe you. It includes your race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic/class background, age, disability, nationality, migration status, and ethnicity, including being a member of the Traveller Community.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?
No. Survey completion is entirely voluntary. You can stop at any stage without giving reason. You are giving information on an anonymous, confidential basis. We will not contact you following the survey.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN TAKING PART?

In deciding whether to take part, please be aware that the survey includes questions on experiences of discrimination you have experienced on campus or off campus. It also offers the opportunity to identify your top priorities for the University to reduce discrimination.

The results of the survey will be written up in a report to the HEA and the University. The results may also be written up as part of a published report, academic paper, or student information campaign (e.g., posters). No identifying information from any individual student will be included in these reports or information campaigns.

HOW LONG DOES THE SURVEY TAKE?

The survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. You do not need to complete the survey at once. There is an option for you to pause your participation and return to the survey within 24 hours. Your answers will be saved for 24 hours before submitting them.

WHAT IF I HAVE A QUERY OR COMPLAINT REGARDING THE STUDY?

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Professor Nata Duvvury (nata.duvvury@universityofgalway.ie) or Dr Helen Maher, Vice-President, EDI (OVPEDI@ universityofgalway.ie)

Information on student supports is provided at the end of the survey. Student Services are available to support you with your accommodation, careers, counselling, disability, societies, and student health.

Clicking to continue indicates your consent to take part in the survey.

Part I: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Q1   Were you born in Ireland?

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Prefer not to respond (3)

Q2.   What is your Nationality?

_____

Q3.   What is your age? Please select the relevant age range.

○ 17 to 20 (1)
○ 21 to 25 (2)
○ 26 to 30 (3)
○ 31 to 35 (4)
○ 36 to 40 (5)
○ >40 (6)

Q4.   What is your present course of study?

○ Undergraduate (1)
○ Taught postgraduate (e.g. Master's, Higher Diploma, Post Graduate Diploma) (2)

Q5.   What year of studies are you in?

○ 2nd Year Undergraduate (1)
○ 3rd Year Undergraduate (2)
○ 4th Year Undergraduate (3)
○ 5th Year Undergraduate (4)
○ 1st Year Taught Postgraduate (5)
○ 2nd Year Taught Postgraduate (6)

Q6.   Please indicate your current student status.

○ I am a full-time student (1)
○ I am a part-time student (2)

Q7.   Please indicate your Race/Ethnicity. The Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) classifies ethnic and racial groups in the following manner. These ethno-racial categories may not be the best characteristics to describe your identity. But please choose what you consider to be the closest ethno-racial characteristic that applies.

○ Arab (1)
○ Black Irish (2)
○ African (3)
○ Caribbean (4)
○ White Irish (5)
○ White Irish Traveller (6)
○ White Non-Irish (7)
○ Latin American (8)
○ Roma (9)
○ Asian -Chinese (10)
○ Asian- Irish (11)
○ Asian - Indian/Pakistan/Bangladeshi (12)
○ Other Asian Background (13)
○ Other Background including mixed race (14)
○ Prefer not to respond (15)

Q8.   Lived Gender.
The following categories of lived gender might not be the best characteristics to describe your identity. But please choose what you consider to be the closest description of your lived gender.

○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)
○ Non-binary (3)
○ Transgender (4)
○ Other (5)
○ Prefer not to respond (6)

Q9. Sexual Orientation.
The following categories of sexual orientation might not be the best characteristics to describe your identity. But please choose what you consider to be the closest description of your sexual orientation.

○ Heterosexual (1)

○ Gay or Lesbian (2)

○ Bisexual (3)

○ Questioning (4)

○ Asexual (5)

○ Prefer not to respond (6)

Q10. What is your religion?

○ Christian (1)

○ Islam (2)

○ Other (3)

○ No Religion (4)

○ Prefer not to respond (5)

Q11. Do you have a Disability?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Prefer not to respond (3)

Q12. Disability Type.
The Central Statistics Office (CSO) classifies disabilities as follows. The following categories of disability types might not be the best characteristics to describe the type of disability you have. But please choose all that apply to be the closest description of the disability/disabilities you have.

○ Blindness or vision impairment (1)

○ Deafness or hearing impairment (2)

○ Difficulty with basic physical activities (3)

○ Intellectual disability (4)

○ Difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating (5)

○ Psychological or emotional condition or mental health issue (6)

○ Difficulty with pain, breathing or any other chronic illness or condition (7)

○ Difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home. (8)

○ Difficulty going outside the home (9)

○ Difficulty working at a job or business or attending school or college (10)

○ Difficulty in participating in other activities (11)

Q13. What is the annual Income level of your parents? Please indicate your income level, if not dependent on your parents.

○ €0-€9,999 (1)

○ €10,000-€24,999 (2)

○ €25,000-€49,999 (3)

○ €50,000-€74,999 (4)

○ €75,000-€99,999 (5)

○ €100,000-€149,999 (6)

○ €150,000- €199,999 (7)

○ €200,000 + (8)

○ Prefer not to respond (9)

Part II: Systemic, Structural or Institutional Discrimination

Students may have different perceptions and experiences of institutional policies and supports across various areas of university life such as fees, learning and teaching, clubs and societies, and so on. The following questions probe your views and experiences across these various areas.

Please only select Not Applicable for statements/questions that do not apply to who you are.

Financial Discrimination

Q14. Tuition fees at the University of Galway are fair and in line with other Irish Universities.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q14a. Tuition fees at the University of Galway vary by the course of study rather than by individual student characteristics.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q15. Because of who I am, I have been subject to higher tuition fee payment than other students.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Q16. Because of who I am, I am not able to access equal funding as other students at the university.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Q17. Because of who I am, I am not able to access equal internship opportunities as other students at the university.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Q18. Because of who I am, I find university accommodation to be inaccessible.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Learning Discrimination

Q19. The curriculum of my academic program is biased against minority students. Minority refers to those that receive unequal treatment or are discriminated against on the basis of physical or cultural characteristics (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, age) regardless of their numbers.

○ Strongly Disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q20. The library has inclusive collection of academic materials that are representative of diverse (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) knowledge sources.

○ Strongly Disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q21. Because of who I am, I have been stereotyped by my lecturers and/or tutors.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Q22. Because of who I am, my knowledge and expertise are ignored by my lecturers and/or tutors.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Q23. Because of who I am, my knowledge and expertise are ignored by my peers.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Q24. Because of who I am, my contributions in class are ignored by my lecturers and/or tutors.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Q25. Because of who I am, my lecturers and/or tutors' lack of social and cultural awareness can negatively impact my academic success.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly Agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Inclusive Campus: Societies, Clubs and Events

Q26. The university has diverse (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) programs and events that facilitate inter-group interaction. (E.g. Campus arts, literature, social, entertainment, sports or music events that promote diverse identities: Gender diversity seminars, Racial diversity awareness workshops, Disability awareness discussion events).

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q27. Events held on campus represent Irish and other cultures equally.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q28. The university's social media reflects the diversity (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) of students.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q29. Student societies embrace and promote diversity (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) among the student body.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q30. There are inclusive sporting events and clubs at the university that represent student diversity (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age).

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q31. I believe that student societies promote division among students at the university.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q32. I believe that there is stereotyping of minority groups in student societies. Minority refers to those that receive unequal treatment or are discriminated against on the basis of physical or cultural characteristics (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity (including being member of Traveller community), nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, age) regardless of their numbers.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q33. Because of who I am, I am excluded from student societies.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Q34. Because of who I am, I am excluded from student sports clubs.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Q35. Because of who I am, I have not been invited to social events held on campus.

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)
○ Not Applicable (4)

Q36. Canteen food at the university is culturally diverse.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Neither disagree or agree (3)
○ Agree (4)
○ Strongly agree (5)
○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q37. Lack of inclusive (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) social space in the university affects my mental health.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q38. Lack of inclusive (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) social space in the university affects my physical health.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Discrimination in Representation

Q39. Student ambassadors are selected from diverse (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) backgrounds.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q40. Student union leaders at the university are elected among candidates from diverse (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, age) backgrounds.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q41. Because of who I am, I am excluded from becoming a classroom representative.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Gender Discrimination

Q42. Because of my gender, I might not get the opportunity to be enrolled in the academic program that I want.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

○ Not Applicable (7)

Q43. Because of my gender, I might not get the opportunity to graduate from my academic program within the official schedule.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

○ Not applicable (7)

Q44. Because of who I am, I might face sexual or gender-based harassment at the university.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

○ Not Applicable (7)

Discrimination in Galway

Q45. There is discriminatory treatment of minority students in Galway. Minority refers to those that receive unequal treatment or are discriminated against on the basis of physical or cultural characteristics (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, age) regardless of their numbers.

◯ Strongly disagree (1)

◯ Disagree (2)

◯ Neither disagree or agree (3)

◯ Agree (4)

◯ Strongly agree (5)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q46. Because of who I am, I have been subject to discriminatory treatment from private landlords in Galway.

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

◯ Not Applicable (4)

Q47. Because of who I am, I have been disproportionately affected by the cost of living in Galway.

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

◯ Not Applicable (4)

Gender Discrimination

Q42. Because of my gender, I might not get the opportunity to be enrolled in the academic program that I want.

◯ Strongly disagree (1)

◯ Disagree (2)

◯ Neither disagree or agree (3)

◯ Agree (4)

◯ Strongly agree (5)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

◯ Not Applicable (7)

Q43. Because of my gender, I might not get the opportunity to graduate from my academic program within the official schedule.

◯ Strongly disagree (1)

◯ Disagree (2)

◯ Neither disagree or agree (3)

◯ Agree (4)

◯ Strongly agree (5)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

◯ Not applicable (7)

Q44. Because of who I am, I might face sexual or gender-based harassment at the university.

◯ Strongly disagree (1)

◯ Disagree (2)

◯ Neither disagree or agree (3)

◯ Agree (4)

◯ Strongly agree (5)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

◯ Not Applicable (7)

Discrimination in Galway

Q45. There is discriminatory treatment of minority students in Galway. Minority refers to those that receive unequal treatment or are discriminated against on the basis of physical or cultural characteristics (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, age) regardless of their numbers.

◯ Strongly disagree (1)

◯ Disagree (2)

◯ Neither disagree or agree (3)

◯ Agree (4)

◯ Strongly agree (5)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q46. Because of who I am, I have been subject to discriminatory treatment from private landlords in Galway.

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

◯ Not Applicable (4)

Q47. Because of who I am, I have been disproportionately affected by the cost of living in Galway.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Q54. I can seek support from my lecturer(s) if I experience discrimination or bullying based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, or age on campus.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Q55. I have received support from my lecturer(s) or from the university after seeking help regarding discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, or age.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (3)

○ Not Applicable (4)

Q56. The university has clear whistle blowing procedures to publicise discriminatory conducts based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, or age at the university.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither disagree or agree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

○ Unsure/Don't Know (6)

Part III: Day-to-day Discrimination or Microaggressions

Microaggressions are everyday subtle, intentional or often unintentional expressions of bias or acts of discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, social class, or age. Some people who commit microaggressions might not be aware of them. For example, a person might comment that a Black Irish person speaks English well or asks where they are from. Another person might interrupt a woman when she is speaking or assume that the woman has less qualifications than her male counterparts.

We now turn to probing if you have experienced day-to-day discrimination or microaggressions. As a reminder, we are interested in knowing the experiences that are related to who you are. These include how you describe yourself and how others may describe you. It includes your race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class background, age, disability, nationality, migration status and ethnicity (including being a member of the Travelling community).

Because of who you are, you...

Q56a. Have heard or saw people laugh or joke about you.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56b. Have been treated as if you are unfriendly, unhelpful or rude.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56c. Have had your name misspoken, mispronounced, or misspelled by others.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56d. Have been treated differently or made fun of because you have an accent when speaking.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56e. Have been called names or heard your name/identity being used as an insult.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56f. Have been asked where you are originally from.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56g. Have been treated as if you are less smart or capable than others.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56h. Have been told to look or act like others.

◯ Never (1)

◯ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

◯ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

◯ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

◯ Not Applicable (5)

Q56i. Have been asked inappropriate, rude, or overly personal questions.

○ Never (1)

○ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

○ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

○ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

○ Not Applicable (5)

Q56j. Have been treated as if others are afraid of you.

○ Never (1)

○ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

○ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

○ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

○ Not Applicable (5)

Q56k. Have been touched on any of your body parts in a manner that made you uncomfortable.

○ Never (1)

○ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

○ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

○ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

○ Not Applicable (5)

Q56l. Have heard others make jokes about your gender/sexuality/race/ethnicity/ nationality/religion/social class/ disability/age.

○ Never (1)

○ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

○ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

○ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

○ Not Applicable (5)

Q56m. Have been told that you do not belong in the country.

○ Never (1)

○ Yes, but not in the past year (2)

○ Yes, once or twice in the past year (3)

○ Yes, many times in the past year (4)

○ Not Applicable (5)

Part IV: Concluding Section

We now turn to the concluding section of the survey. Please answer the next question if you have reported any form of discrimination. Otherwise, please skip to the following question.

Q57. You have recounted different experiences of systemic, structural, or institutional discrimination and/or microaggressions. Thinking of these experiences, how often do you think the following identity characteristics were the reasons? Please choose all that apply.

Q57a. Gender

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57b. Class or Socio-economic Status

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57c. Nationality

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57d. Ethnicity

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57e. Disability

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57f. Sexual Orientation

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57g. Irish Traveller Status

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57h. Age

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57i. Religion

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57j. Migration Status

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q57k. Combination of these

◯ Always (1)

◯ Sometimes (2)

◯ Never (3)

◯ Unsure/Don't Know (4)

Q58. What supports should the University prioritise to students experiencing discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, or age?

_____

Q59. What are 3 key actions that the University can take to prevent discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality or migrant background, religion, disability, social class, or age on the campus?

_____

Appendix 2

Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI)

The development of the Intersectional Discrimination Index (IDI) essentially involves three steps: (1) selection of the items/variable; (2) examining the empirical relationships of variables and combining of these items into an index; and (3) validating the index.

The conceptual understanding underlining the construction of the intersectional discrimination index to capture student experiences in the University of Galway was that discrimination comprised both a structural dimension as well as direct interpersonal dimension. These dimensions were captured in the following items from the questionnaire.

Structural Discrimination (Qn No)			Interpersonal Discrimination (Qn No)	
Financial	Teaching & Learning	Inclusive campus		
Q. 15	Q. 21	Q. 33	Q. 56a	Q. 56h
Q. 16	Q. 22	Q. 34	Q. 56b	Q. 56i
Q. 17	Q. 23	Q. 35	Q. 56c	Q. 56h
Q. 18	Q. 24	Q. 41	Q. 56d	Q. 56k
Q. 46	Q. 25	Q. 44	Q. 56e	Q. 56l
Q. 47	Q. 42		Q. 56f	Q. 56m
	Q. 43		Q. 56g	

(1) Exploratory Factor Analysis (Structural Discrimination)

The principal components analysis (KMO = .72; Bartlett's $\chi^2(153)$ = 5034.77, p < .001) indicated that the data were suitable for extraction. The scree plot and eigenvalues greater than one initially suggested a five-component solution; however, after promax rotation, the items regrouped into three coherent dimensions: discrimination in learning/teaching, institutional inclusion, and financial discrimination. Factor loadings were high (λ = .47–.91), and most communalities exceeded .30, indicating that each item contributed meaningfully to the construct. These findings support the construct validity of the scale, confirming that structural discrimination manifests across three complementary yet distinct domains.

(2) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Structural Discrimination)

The three-factor correlated model demonstrated excellent fit: $\chi^2(132)$ = 141.74, p = .266; CFI = .987; TLI = .985; RMSEA = .013 (90% CI \[.000, .028]); SRMR = .069. All standardised factor loadings were significant (λ = .38–.55), with adequate explained variances (R^2 = .14–.34). Internal consistency indices ranged from acceptable to good (α = .63–.65; ω = .63–.64). Although the average variance extracted (AVE) was below .50, the overall consistency of indicators provided minimal convergent validity. Taken together, the model supports the presence of three interrelated dimensions of structural discrimination, with the recommendation to compute composite indices for each subscale.

(3) Exploratory Factor Analysis (Interpersonal Discrimination)

Preliminary analysis indicated a strong factorial structure (KMO = .90; Bartlett's $\chi^2(78)$ = 4419.56, p < .001). Two correlated factors were extracted, explaining 43.5% of the total variance. The first factor captured hostile treatment, jokes, insults, and questioning of abilities, while the second factor reflected exclusion experiences linked to accent, name, or group belonging. Factor loadings ranged from .37 to .81, and most communalities exceeded .40. This suggests that interpersonal discrimination comprises both a direct relational component (hostility and ridicule) and an identity-based exclusion component.

(4) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Interpersonal Discrimination)

Two models were compared: a two-factor model and a unidimensional model.

- The two-factor model showed excellent fit: $\chi^2(63)$ = 95.91, p = .005; CFI = .991; TLI = .988; RMSEA = .036; SRMR = .059. Standardised loadings were strong (λ = .28–.80), and internal consistency was adequate (α = .67–.87; ω = .64–.87).

- The one-factor model also demonstrated good fit: $\chi^2(65)$ = 142.63, p < .001; CFI = .978; TLI = .974; RMSEA = .055; SRMR = .066, with significant loadings (λ = .46–.88) and excellent reliability (α = .87; ω = .87).

Given that both models are plausible, we decided to use a single general composite index of interpersonal discrimination for ease of analysis.