



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

An tIonad Dlí & Beartais Míchumais
Centre for Disability Law & Policy



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Disability and Belonging to Different Groups in Ireland's Local and European Elections 2024



Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

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Table of Contents

Introduction, page 5.

This part of the report describes what the research project is about and why we did it.

Literature Review, page 6.

This part of the report describes what we learned from books and research about disabled election candidates from Ireland and other countries.

Irish Context, page 11.

This part of the report talks about election and disability in Ireland.

Methodology, page 15.

This part of the report describes how we did the project and who we talked to.

Findings and Analysis, page 19.

This part of the report describes what we found out from talking to different people in Ireland.

Discussion, page 22.

This part of the report describes what we think about what we found out and what it all means.

Conclusions and Recommendations, page 25.

This part of the report sums up what we found out from doing this research. It recommends things that can help more disabled people from different groups to run for election.

Important words in this report

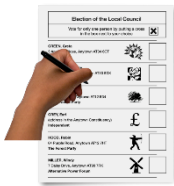
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Information

Voting is a way for a group of people to make a choice.

When a group of people vote it is called an **election**.



A **local election** is when people vote for local councillors. Councillors represent people in local government.



A **European election** is when people vote for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). MEPs represent people in the European Parliament.



Candidates are the people who want to be elected.



A **campaign** is the work that candidates do right before an election to let people know who they are and to get people to vote for them. Campaigns can involve putting up posters, knocking on people's doors and talking with them, or talking on TV, on the radio or in the newspaper.

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Information

Disability is when a person with a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory difference faces barriers that stop them from having full rights. In this report we use the words **disabled people** to talk about people with disabilities.



Identity is all the things about a person that combine to make them who they are. It can include their nationality, gender, age, religion, whether they have a disability or not, and other things. There are disabled people from every identity group.



In Ireland, a set of laws called The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 protect **nine different identity groups**. These are gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.



Intersectionality is when different parts of a person's identity cross over in ways that affect their lives. It means they belong to different groups.

An example of a disabled person with an intersecting identity could be a woman with a learning disability, a young Deaf LGBTQ+ person, or a Traveller who is a wheelchair user.

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Information

LGBTQ+ means a person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. The + means it includes lots of other identities too.



Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of their identity.



Marginalisation means the ways that different communities are discriminated against. When we use this word in this report, we are talking about how a group of people is being treated rather than an individual person.



A **Disabled Peoples Organisation or DPO** is an organisation for disabled people that is run by disabled people, has members who are mostly people with disabilities, and is not part of a government. Disability services and charities that aren't run by disabled people are not DPOs.



The **CRPD** is the short name for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is an agreement between countries to guarantee the human rights of people with disabilities. Most countries have agreed to the CRPD, including Ireland.

Picture



Information

This report is about disabled people from different groups who wanted to be elected in the local and European elections in 2024.



The CRPD says that **disabled people have the right to be elected** and to take part in political life. Countries have to work to make sure that all disabled people can equally take part in elections.

Introduction

Picture



Information

This research was funded by the National Disability Authority (NDA). The NDA is an independent organisation that advises the Government on disability policy in Ireland.

The research was done by Dr Aoife Price and Dr Vivian Rath.

They are disabled researchers and activists who are interested in politics and disability.

They worked with Professor Eilionóir Flynn of the Centre for Disability Law and Policy at the University of Galway.

Emma Burns of the Centre for Disability and Policy made the Easy Read report.

The researchers wanted to know more about the experiences of disabled election candidates from different groups in the Irish local and European elections (2024). There was very little research done on this topic before this.

The research team did not include the general election. It took place too late in 2024 to be included. They would like to study general elections in the future.

Literature Review

Picture



Information

This part of the report tells you what we learned from books and research about disabled election candidates who belong to different groups. We looked at books and reports about things that happen in Ireland and in other countries.



Most of the books and research only talked about disabled people running for election. Most did not talk about disabled people from other groups running for election. We did find some research that talked about disabled women running for election.

We learned three main things from the books we read.



1. We need a bigger mix of disabled people to run for election.
2. We need more research to understand what happens when disabled people from different groups run for election.
3. When we make it easier for disabled people from different groups to run for election then we make things better for everyone.

1. Having a bigger mix of disabled people run for election

Picture



Information

Reports show that there are more people than ever from different groups running for election in Ireland and around the world. For example, we see more women running for election, and people who come from different countries running for election too.



This is good because there is a big mix of people living in every country. Politicians should represent the big mix of people who live in each country.



Disabled people are also part of all these different groups. This means that when we see disabled people running for election they should also belong to different groups.



The disabled people from countries like the UK, Canada and Indonesia who have run for election are usually people who did a lot of disability advocacy before getting involved in politics.

Picture



Information

Sometimes family members of disabled people run for election too. While this can be good, we still need to work on making sure more disabled people from different groups can get elected.



When disabled people start to get involved in politics it is often more likely to be men with physical disabilities who run for election. We need to do more to support disabled women and disabled people from different groups running for election.

2. More research to find out what happens in elections

Picture



Information

Some research on disabled women running for elections in the UK shows that voters think they aren't good enough for the job. People often treat them as if they are not the same as other candidates.



Disabled women running for election also feel like they stand out from the crowd. Sometimes this helps them to get elected. Other times they feel treated unfairly because people think they are too different.



Disabled women running for election in the UK told researchers they had to work twice as hard as other candidates to get elected. One woman worked so hard in her campaign that she ended up in hospital.



Sometimes disabled people from different groups don't like to talk about their disability when they are running for election. They might even hide their disability or not tell people about it.



We need more research to understand what it is like for disabled people from different groups to run for election. This will help us to see what needs to be changed to make it easier for them to run for election.

3. Making it easier for disabled people from different groups to run for election

Picture



Information

Some of the things that would help disabled people running for election would help people in other groups as well. If election events are in accessible buildings that is easy for parents with buggies to be there too.



Sometimes election meetings are held in pubs. A lot of pubs are not accessible for disabled people. People who don't drink alcohol because of their religion might prefer not to go to a meeting in a pub.



When organisations are training people from different groups on how to get elected, they need to include disabled people in their work. For example, groups that help women to get elected should make sure they are helping LGBTQ+ women, disabled women and Traveller women to get elected too.



It is important to include disabled people in all research about people from different groups getting elected. When we do research on disabled people getting elected, we should also check how many people from different groups are running for election. We need to ask more questions to understand what this is like for them.

Irish Context

Picture



Information

This part of the research describes disability, other identities and population in Ireland. Population is how many people live in a country.

There are 1,109,557 disabled people in Ireland. This is 22% of the total population.

There are slightly more disabled women (52%) than disabled men in Ireland (48%). This is about the same as for non-disabled people.

87% of people are White Irish or other White background. Irish Travellers make up 0.6% of the population. Black or Black Irish people make up 1% of the population. Asian or Asian Irish people are 3.2% of the population.

We don't have information on sexual orientation or gender identity.

This information shows that Ireland has a large number of disabled people, but we don't know how many disabled people belong to other identity groups.

Rules about Elections

Picture



Information

Ireland used to have laws that could stop some disabled people from standing for election or voting, but some new laws have changed that.

There are no rules that could stop people from other groups from standing for election.

For local and European elections, candidates must be **over 18 and live in Ireland.**



Some countries have a **quota system** for the election of people from marginalised groups. A quota means there must be a set number of candidates for that group. Ireland doesn't have a quota system for any groups for the local or European elections.



Some **rules about money** can make it harder for disabled candidates to take part in elections. Candidates have to pay a deposit (€100 for local candidates and €1800 for European candidates). Candidates in local elections can't claim back expenses like accommodation or additional childcare costs.



In Ireland, the State does not give any funds to support disabled people to stand for election. Disabled people are more likely to live in poverty and often have extra costs that other candidates don't have, like transport.

Election timeframe

Picture



Information

The local and European elections in Ireland took place on 7 June 2024. Candidates had only 2 weeks to do the paperwork that allows them to become a candidate. They had 6 weeks to campaign. Disabled candidates often need more time to prepare their campaigns.

Abuse in elections

Picture



Information

The 2024 local elections had more candidates from **racial and ethnic minorities** than ever before in Ireland. A racial or ethnic minority is a community like Travellers or Black or Asian Irish people.



There were reports of abuse against women and racial or ethnic minority candidates and their teams. The research team didn't find any reports of abuse against disabled candidates in this election.



Lots of different research shows that abuse in political life is a problem that happens all the time. Women, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority candidates are most at risk, including disabled people from other groups.



Fear of abuse causes other problems, like candidates quitting or being afraid to talk about some topics.

Action plans for different groups

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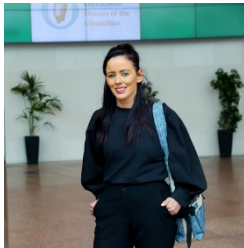


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Most of the government action plans are out of date. The newer ones have some good ideas about supporting people from different groups to stand for election.



The National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027 says it will give training for people from minority ethnic communities who want to run for election.



The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028 says it will support Travellers and Roma to run as election candidates and that it will support Traveller and Roma women to become leaders in politics.

Methodology

Picture



Information

The research team wanted to find out about the experiences of disabled people with intersecting identities who ran as election candidates in the local and EU elections in Ireland.

Research Plan

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Information

The team chose to do the research following a **human rights-based disability research** plan.

This means that:

1. The research was led by voices of disabled people
2. The research is about a human rights problem that disabled people have.
3. The results of the research are given back to disabled people.



The Research Ethics Committee at the University of Galway checked that the research was safe to do.



The research team checked that all of the information they got would be stored safely. Their plan was double checked by the Data Protection Officer at the University of Galway.

Literature Review

Picture



Information

First the team did a literature review. A literature review is when the research team reads the books and reports that were written before about the problem they are researching.

They searched for reports in online libraries using the words “intersectionality”, “disability”, “candidature”, and “marginalisation”.



The literature review for this report showed that there has not been a lot of research with disabled election candidates with intersecting identities.

The research team decided to do two types of online interview. People who took part chose a fake name to protect their privacy.



The first type of interview was with disabled people with intersecting identities. They were asked about their experiences of being election candidates.



The second type of interview was with different organisations. They gave their views on what was hard for disabled people from different groups running for election, and what helped.

Interviews with election candidates

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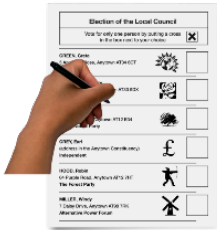
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To take part in the research, people had to:

- Be a disabled person
- Be over 18 years of age
- Be a candidate in the local or EU elections in Ireland in 2024
- Have at least one other intersecting identity.



Eleven people were invited to take part. Seven agreed to be interviewed. Five of these were disabled women and two were disabled LGBTQ+ men.



All of the people interviewed were local election candidates. The research team couldn't find an EU election candidate who was a disabled person with an intersecting identity.



It was hard to find people to interview. Very few disabled people run for election. Many disabled people do not talk in public about their disability. It was even harder to find disabled people who belonged to different groups.



The team found people to talk to by searching online to find disabled candidates. People we spoke to recommended other disabled people we could talk to.

Interviews with organisations

Picture



Information

The research team talked to organisations working with different groups like women and Travellers and to organisations that train people to run for election.

Nine people took part in the interviews from eight different organisations.

In total, 16 people took part in the research.

Data analysis

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Information

All the information from the interviews was gathered together. The research team worked together to find out what views were shared and what views were different between the different people they spoke to.

Findings and Analysis

Picture



Information

There were seven candidates. Two ran for Party A, two ran for Party B, one ran for Party C, one ran for Party D, and one was an independent candidate.

Two of the seven candidates were elected, including the independent candidate.



The research team spoke to women's organisations, organisations working with LGBTQ+ people, organisations working with people who have come to Ireland from different countries and Traveller women.



Two political education and training organisations took part in interviews. Both of these groups worked to get women candidates elected.

Two DPOs were interviewed. One works with disabled women. One works with disabled people in general.

Deciding to stand for election

Picture



Information

Most of the candidates were involved in politics from a young age. Some had been in political parties. Others were part of disability advocacy or other action groups.



Some people felt they had to run for election because they had supports that other disabled people didn't have. An example was having support from family or a political party.



Some people said that it can be hard for disabled people to get involved in politics. The way politics works is not very disability-friendly. It can be hard for people from other groups like women, Travellers, Black people and others to get elected too.

Election Campaigns

Picture



Information

Everyone agreed it was good to have more disabled people from different groups running for election.



Many of the candidates said that election campaigns are not accessible. They had problems with election posters and taking part in debates. It was hard for some candidates to get their message out to everyone.



Some people had bad attitudes to disabled candidates from different groups. Politicians can get a lot of abuse and sometimes this is worse for disabled people, women, LGBTQ+ people and other groups.



It costs a lot of money to run for election. Disabled people and people from different groups might need to spend more money on things like transport and childcare.



Some people did not have a lot of support to help them to campaign. One candidate talked about how most of her friends were disabled and had the same problems she did with access, so it was hard for them to help her.



Some people had lots of support from their political party, family and friends. Other people wanted more support from political parties and organisations that represent different groups like women and disabled people.



Some candidates did not talk about their disability at all in the election. Other people felt they had to explain a lot about their disability even if they didn't really want to.



Family members of disabled people running for election can also be good, but it is not the same as disabled people doing it themselves.

Discussion

Picture



Information

The people we talked to agreed on a lot of things that disabled people and people from other groups need to run as election candidates.

There were a few things people we talked to disagreed on or were not sure about.



We also talk about how Ireland is different from the other countries we know about where disabled people from different groups run for election.

What people agree on

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Information

Disabled candidates from different groups need support with money, help with organising their campaign, training to become a candidate, and help with talking to the media.



Support for disabled candidates needs to include people who belong to different groups, like disabled women, disabled Travellers and others.

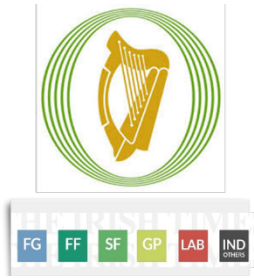
What people were not sure about

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Information

Some people were not sure where exactly the support for disabled people from different groups should come from.



People had different ideas about this. Some said the government should do most of the work. Others said political parties should do most of the work.



Some said they wanted to see organisations working with different groups like women, disabled people and Travellers do a lot more work.



Some people and organisations are worried that people think bad things about disability. They think this might stop disabled people from different groups running for elections. Others did not talk about this.

How Ireland is different from other countries

Picture



Information

In other countries, many disabled people get involved in politics because they have experience of disability advocacy. Only one of the seven candidates we spoke to got involved in politics because of disability.



Most of the people we spoke to got involved in politics in school or college politics, through their families, through workers unions, family, or other campaign groups.



We think this difference in Ireland might be because we have very few disabled people's organisations (DPOs). Most of Ireland's DPOs do not have a big mix of disabled people from different groups like disabled Travellers or disabled Black people in them.

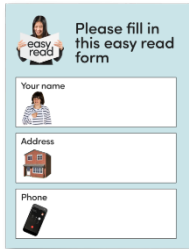


DPOs in Ireland can work on getting a bigger mix of disabled members from different groups. They can also help their members to run for election in future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

What we learned from doing this research

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Information

Information on the types of people running for election from different groups is not collected when a person becomes an election candidate.



Some candidates said being part of different groups helped them to get on well with lots of different people.



Many organisations we talked to did not think about disability when doing their work. This was not on purpose. They said they will try to do better in future.

Limits of the research

Picture



Information

It was hard to find disabled election candidates from different groups. Some people don't talk about their disability or don't talk about the other groups they belong to.



The only two different groups this research found were disabled women and disabled LGBTQ+ people. This tells us that there is not a big mix of people in Irish politics.

Future research

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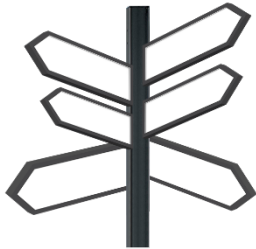
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We would like to know more about how people get involved in politics.

We would like organisations to include more disabled people and other groups in their work with election candidates.

Recommendations

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Information

We came up with recommendations for government, for political parties, and for advocacy organisations that are not part of government.

Recommendations for Government

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Information

The government should collect information from election candidates about disability and whether they are part of other groups.

This information will help Ireland to see if we are getting a bigger mix of people running for election.



Disabled candidates from different groups should be given extra money to support their campaign.

Government should fund advocacy organisations to support disabled people from different groups to run for election.



Government should talk to disabled people and other groups who are running for election to see what they can do to help them.

Recommendations for Political Parties

Picture



Information

Political parties should make sure that disabled people from different groups can fully take part in their work.

They should only choose accessible meeting places and make sure that communication with party members includes everyone.

They should also make sure that the people who work for the party understand disability and people from other groups. Parties can learn how to do this from DPOs and organisations that support different groups.

When a local councillor is elected to the Dáil, their political party can pick someone to replace them as a councillor. This is called **co-option**. Political parties should think about disability and people from other groups when they pick a person for co-option.

Recommendations for Advocacy Organisations

Picture



Information

Advocacy organisations should be funded to run training and mentoring sessions for disabled people, including people from other groups, who are interested in running for election.



DPOs should support their members to run for election. They support a big mix of people from different groups when doing this work.



Organisations who work with different groups should support their members, including disabled people, to get involved in politics, and to run for election.