

# Diversity and Inclusion in Focus

BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY  
IRELAND

A Business in the  
Community Ireland  
Publication.



# Introduction

Business in the Community Ireland is a movement for sustainable change in business.

In a dynamic and changing environment, sustainable businesses are successful businesses.

Our purpose is to inspire and enable businesses to bring about a sustainable, low carbon economy and a more inclusive society where everyone thrives.

Our Leaders' Group on Sustainability, drawn from companies who have achieved the **Business Working Responsibly Mark**, is a coalition of companies striving to improve the sustainability of the Irish business sector through sharing best practice and creating new ways of doing business.

One of the areas the Leaders' Group is addressing is social inclusion. This is done through the 'Social Inclusion Sub-Group'. The group is made up of representatives from BITCI member companies - CRH, Dawn Meats, Deloitte, eir, Gas Networks Ireland, Janssen, M&S, SSE Ireland and Veolia as well as experts from Business in the Community Ireland. The group is co-chaired by Sinéad Patton, Chief Financial & Commercial Officer, Veolia Ireland and Ken Scully, Director and Head of Trading and Commercial Operations – M&S Ireland.

Recognising that social equality is a fundamental driver for sustainable economic growth and recovery, the 'Social Inclusion Sub-Group' set about identifying a responsible business approach to reducing inequalities and achieving a fairer more inclusive society. As a result in 2019, BITCI published the **Inclusive Employer Blueprint** providing a step-by-step approach for any employer interested in building an inclusive society starting with their own organisation.

Progressing the work started with the Inclusive Employer publication, in 2021, BITCI will launch **Elevate – The Inclusive Workplace Pledge**. The purpose of this Pledge is to practically demonstrate commitment by Irish business to building an inclusive workforce. It will also act as a catalyst for wider, complementary initiatives and actions, to assist companies achieve diversity, equity & inclusion targets whilst tackling inequalities in society.

BITCI commissioned Deloitte to assist with the research for this report, which reveals some of the social inequalities that exist in Ireland today alongside an exploration of the barriers to inclusion as experienced by employers and job seekers.

# Foreword

Today, investors, consumers, employees, and civil society all pay attention to how businesses respond to the diversity, equality and inclusion challenges we face. Companies are expected to act beyond compliance and to take a real stand on inclusion.

The global pandemic has radically disrupted the employment market. It has exposed the deeply rooted inequality in our society and has broadened the social divide.

While some thriving sectors of the economy will continue to engage in a war for talent that will exacerbate as our economy rebuilds, rising unemployment in challenged sectors, mostly low paid, part-time, and informal, will further distance vulnerable job seekers.

We in BITCI believe that **businesses can only be sustainable in a fair and equal society**. For over 20 years, we have driven this agenda through our education and employment programmes where we support people from different backgrounds to enter employment in this country. For example, our award-winning EPIC programme has placed over 4000 people from over 100 nationalities.

This publication shines a light on diversity and inclusion. It presents labour force statistics to highlight stark inequalities that exist within the employment market. It explores barriers to opportunity that face certain groups of job seekers along with a suite of tangible actions that can make a real difference in building inclusive workplaces. This report invites you to hold a mirror to your organisation and ask, how real is inclusion?

I would like to acknowledge and thank Deloitte Ireland for their research support in collating empirical data and for facilitating focus group discussions to uncover key insights into the challenges to inclusion and how these challenges can be overcome.

I hope you find this publication insightful and that it inspires you to take meaningful action in shaping a more equitable and inclusive society.



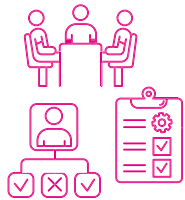
Tomás Sercovich  
CEO, Business in the Community Ireland  
May 2021



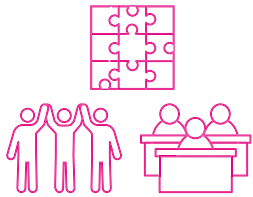
**Tomás Sercovich**

CEO, Business in the  
Community Ireland

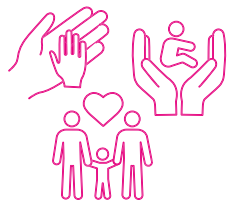
# What do we mean when we talk about Inclusion?



Social inclusion is affording all people the best opportunities to enjoy life and prosper in society. It is about making all groups of people within society feel valued and important. Improving social inclusion can lead to economic strength and higher living standards.



Workplace inclusion is about deeply valuing people from different backgrounds, creating a strong sense of connectedness and belonging. It is the recognition that diversity of experience and thought can benefit business productivity and the ability to connect with customers. It is about doing business better. It is about creating equity of opportunity regardless of background or personal circumstances.



At its heart, inclusion at work is about making all members of an organisation feel valued and giving them equal opportunity to connect, belong, and grow. It is about people being supported to contribute to the organisation, advance their skill sets and careers, and feel comfortable and confident being their authentic selves. However, it is not enough for workplaces to be diverse. This is only the first step. Inclusion is going a step beyond just diversity – it is when the differences of all come together to create an environment where people feel they can truly be themselves. A truly inclusive workplace understands this diversity and how to bring out the best in its people, teams and culture.

**Taking a holistic view of Inclusion means building a culture based on**

Fairness and respect

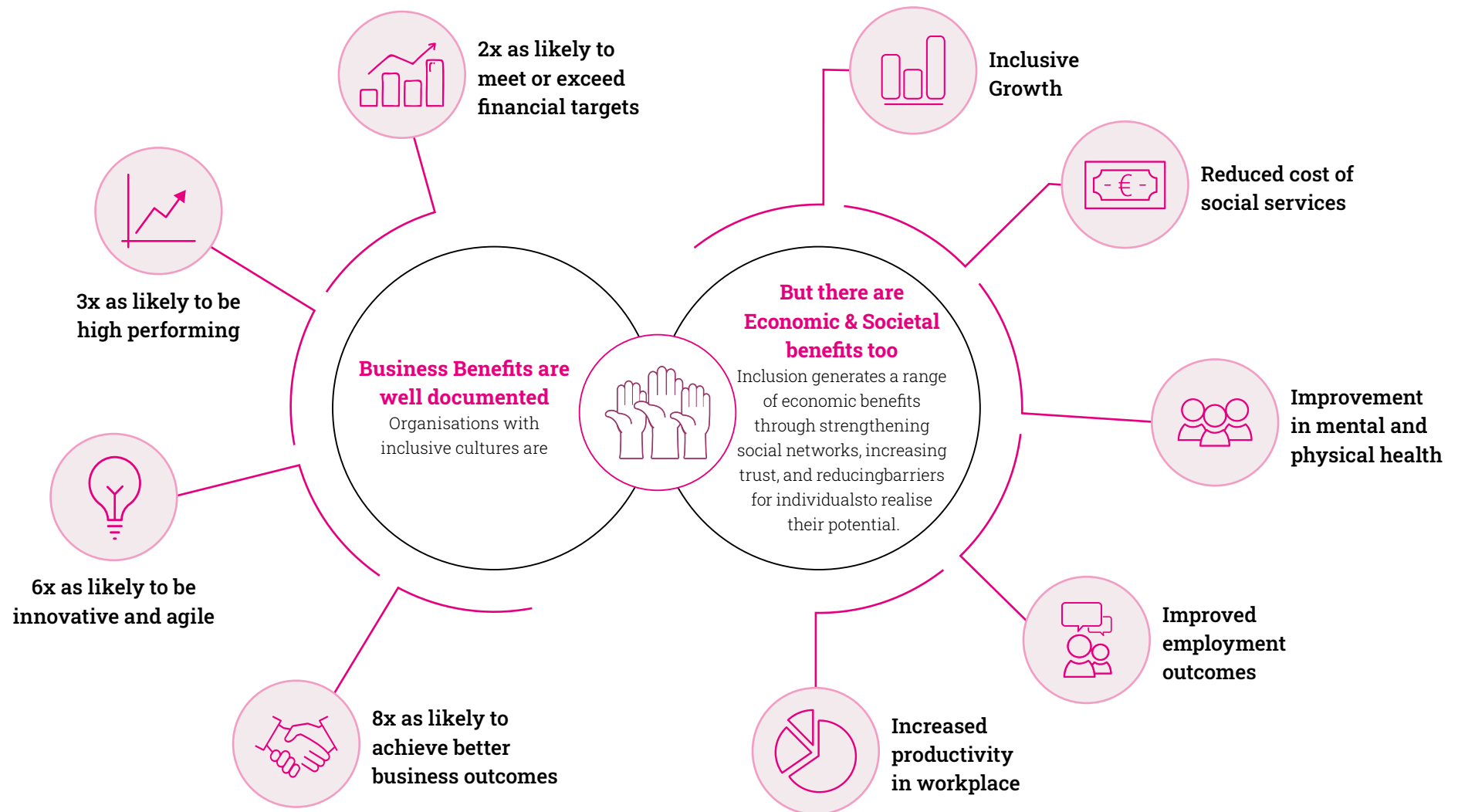
Value and belonging

Safety and openness

Empowerment and growth

Source: Deloitte Diversity & Inclusion Report 2020

# Why does Inclusion make sense?



Source: Deloitte Diversity & Inclusion Report 2020 & Deloitte Economic Benefits of Improving Social Inclusion Report

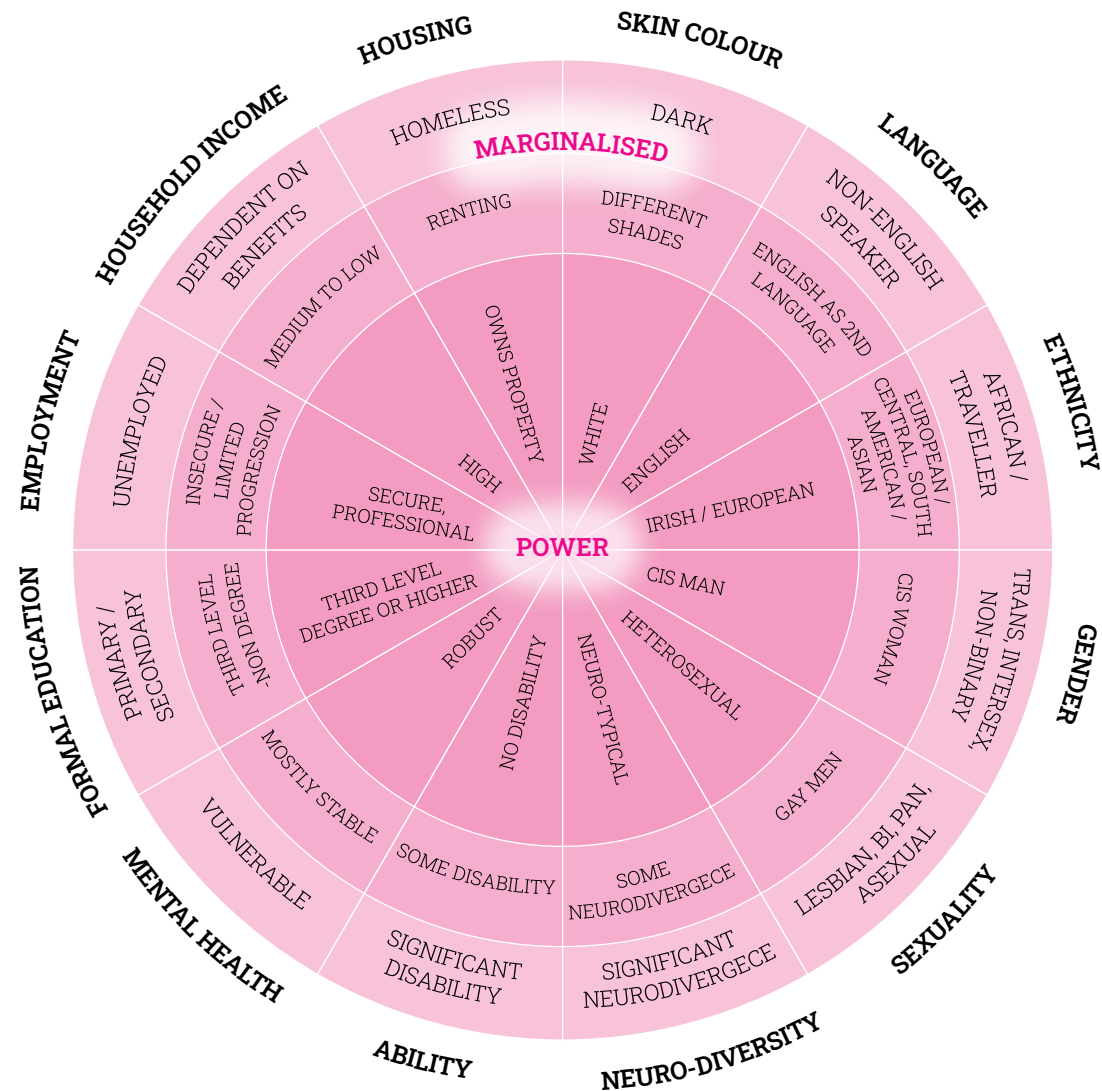


# Power & Marginalisation in our Society

We don't often stop to think about it, but different characteristics of our identity have an impact on how easy and seamless our journey through life is. For some, opportunity is so varied and plentiful that it can be difficult to recognise that opportunity is not distributed evenly.

The tendency is to think of diversity in singular terms. However, by doing so we fall into the trap of **them and us**. Gender is for women, Racism is just about #BlackLivesMatter and so on. Lack of opportunity or inequality is usually not the result of single, distinct factors. Often it is the outcome of intersections of different characteristics, power relations and experiences.

The following diagram represents some of the characteristics that can impact on our employability. It illustrates some of the characteristics of those that hold most power in our society and as such typically benefit from greater opportunity. It also shows the characteristics of those individuals more likely to be marginalised and denied opportunity.



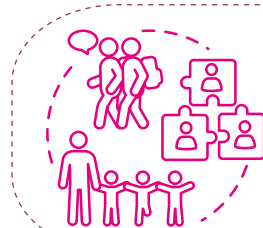
Source: adapted from New Ways Academy training materials on Power & Privilege and the Power Wheel from Canadian Council for Refugees.

# Power & Marginalisation in our Society

## Importance of Allyship

Most of us are privileged in at least one way. That doesn't mean we didn't work hard or that we didn't experience any other hardships in life. Neither does it mean we do not have a voice on inclusion. Sometimes people can think because they don't have the lived experience they shouldn't get involved. That is where allyship comes in. Allyship is about recognising personal privilege or power and using it to advocate for people in under-represented groups. To use privilege for good and to be a good ally you have to be aware, listen and speak up.

### A Good Ally will



#### Recognise their Role

It is easy to think of D&I as someone else's job or HR's responsibility. The reality is that diversity, equity and inclusion is everyone's job. Acknowledging this for yourself is a first step. A second is to encourage colleagues to join you.

#### Be Aware and Speak up

For example, call out inappropriate comments or jokes or flag bias in a job description. If you find yourself at a table that is lacking in diverse voices recommend others that could join or offer up your own place.



#### Understand the Power of Language and Actions

Use terms that embrace all people. If you are not sure, ask what term is most appropriate. Be open to correction if you say or do the wrong thing.

#### Challenge own Bias

Don't make assumptions on how other individuals or groups at your workplace feel. Seek out different views, experiences and perspectives and use them to challenge your own bias. Invite uncomfortable conversations and use them as a learning experience.



# How Inclusive is Irish Society?

Ireland made significant progress in recovering from the economic crash of 2008. At the start of 2020, pre pandemic with unemployment rates at a little over 5% we were technically at full employment. Our economy was vibrant, and we experienced a trend for higher salaries and increased standard of living for many. However, despite positive indicators of economic growth, the country was also experiencing an unprecedented housing crisis. Rates of long term unemployment and the number of jobless households were amongst the highest in Europe and one in [eight of us were at risk of poverty](#). Then the global pandemic hit and workforces across all sectors have been radically disrupted. The true levels of unemployment are currently disguised by the Pandemic Unemployment Payment. However, as unemployment rises vulnerable job seekers will be further distanced from the labour market.

Individuals who experience barriers to reaching their potential can get caught up in welfare systems and poverty traps. Individuals, their families and whole communities can get stuck in a vicious cycle of disadvantage which can be difficult to break. Very often the path out of poverty is not clear and individuals don't see options for themselves.

## Under-employment

Unemployment rates (as presented on page 10) give one indication of disproportionate disadvantage. Under-employment is another indicator. However, it is difficult to accurately assess under-employment.

A 2018 Labour Force Survey revealed over 5% of the workforce were visibly under-employed. That is, 5% of the workforce were actively looking for additional hours. For the purpose of compiling labour statistics, a person needs only to work one hour per week to be considered as employed.

Another area of under-employment is invisible. This relates to individuals who are working in jobs where their skills are not adequately utilised. Women and people with disabilities or caring responsibilities account for a disproportionate amount of part time positions to enable them balance work and home responsibilities. As a result, they often have to choose between a job they are qualified for or a lower skilled/lower paid job that affords them the flexibility they require.

Invisible under-employment also relates to non-Irish nationals.

Often foreign qualifications or work experience will not be considered for roles here, meaning that highly qualified individuals are working in low skilled roles. In a 2021 BITCI survey of 800 migrant jobseekers that engaged with our EPIC programme, 69% were unemployed and 31% were under-employed.

## Progression to Third Level

The [HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey Report](#) indicates that graduates are less likely to experience unemployment, suggesting that a third level qualification is a key requirement in getting your foot on the career ladder. This has significant implications in terms of ensuring workplaces are diverse.

From the [Annual Irish Times Feeder School Tables](#) we can see that third level progression from disadvantaged (DEIS) schools has increased over the last number of years. However, at an average rate of 63.5% compared to over 80% from non DEIS schools and as high as 98% from fee paying schools there is still a considerable differential in the opportunities available to students based on the affluence of the area they grow up in.



# How Inclusive is Irish Society?

## Impact of the Pandemic

### Gender

A global [Deloitte report](#) on the impact on women suggests the pandemic could threaten the progress made on gender equality over the last number of years. Nearly 82 percent of women surveyed said their lives have been negatively disrupted by the pandemic. Nearly 70 percent of women who have experienced these disruptions are concerned their career growth may be limited as a result, believing these shifts have prevented—or will prevent—them from progressing. Extra demands across work and home (caregiving and schooling responsibilities) come at a heavy price – with forty percent of working women who experienced negative shifts in their daily routine saying they are unable to balance their work and life commitments, and nearly 40 percent cite significant consequences to their physical and mental well-being.

### Non-Irish Nationals

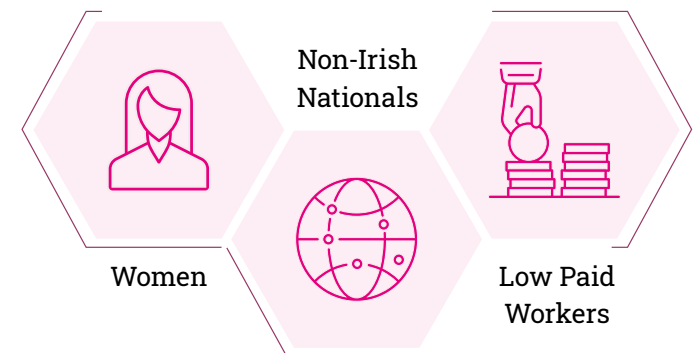
In March 2021, the standard measure of Monthly Unemployment was 5.8%. The COVID-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment could indicate a rate as high as 24.2% if all claimants of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) were classified as

unemployed. A [2020 ESRI report](#) found that Non-Irish nationals have suffered more job losses due to Covid-19 closures than Irish nationals mainly due to the fact that many of them work in the hospitality sector. If job losses were distributed evenly across society, we would expect to see Irish nationals account for 83% of the PUP. This figure is 72% with non-Irish nationals accounting for 28% of the payments.

### Low Paid Workers

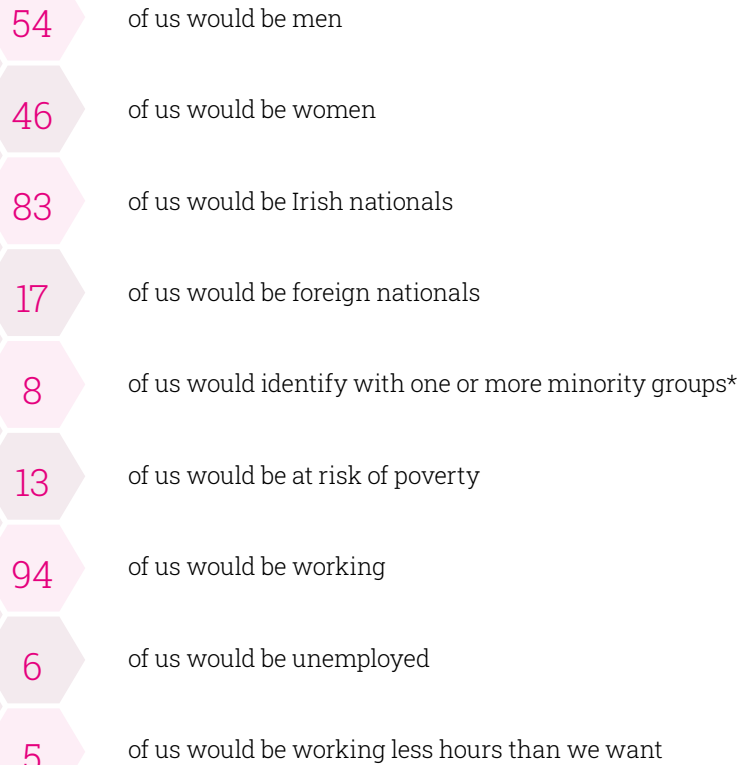
Low-paid, often low-skilled, workers were particularly affected during the initial phase of the crisis. Many “frontline workers”, who put their health at risk, exposing themselves to the virus to ensure the continuation of essential services during lockdowns, work in sectors characterised by relatively low wages. This includes health and care workers (apart from doctors), but also cashiers, production and food processing workers, maintenance workers, agricultural workers, delivery workers and truck drivers. According to a [2020 OECD report](#), outside the essential services, low earners are more likely to be working in sectors affected by shutdowns and are more likely to have suffered job or earnings loss.

**In Ireland, the global pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on:**



# How Inclusive is Irish Society?

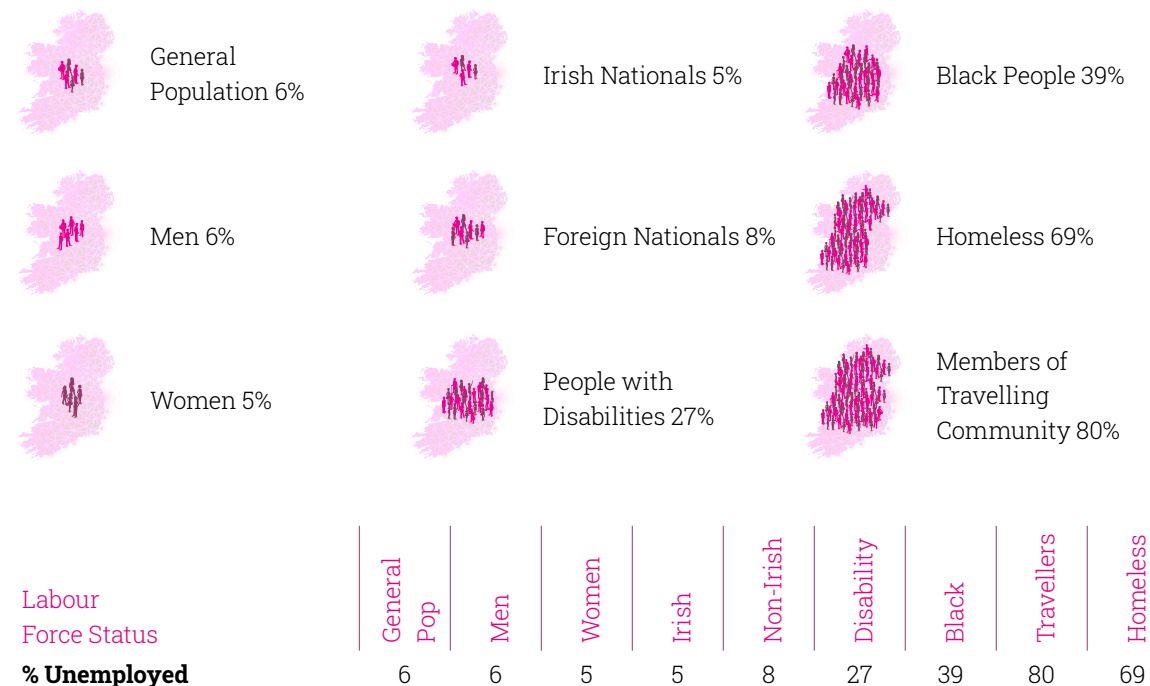
## If Ireland was a workforce of 100 people, reflective of the diversity within society:



## Spotlight on unemployment

If Ireland was a fair and equitable society we would expect to see comparable rates of unemployment across different demographics. This is not the case.

### Unemployment Rates in Ireland



#### Note on Data

Data collated for BITCI by Deloitte based on CSO Census and Labour Force information as well as employment and social publications – all links included in the reference section.

**Labour force** = All people aged 15-64 currently in work (employed for a minimum of 1 hour per week) and those looking for work.

\* Minority groups refer to Black People, People with a Disability, Members of Travelling Community, Homeless

# Barriers to Inclusion

Diversity & Inclusion has come into sharp focus for business. There are a variety of reasons for this. The global pandemic and high-profile campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter have shone a spotlight on social inequalities. Investors, consumers, employees, and civil society have increased their attention on how businesses respond to the diversity, equity and inclusion challenges we face.

From a moral sense we know it is the right thing to do. We also know there is a strong business case for inclusion. Businesses talk about their commitment to diversity & inclusion. Common assertions made include “everyone is welcome to apply for a job

and develop a career regardless of background or personal circumstances” or “we’re open to anyone who has the right qualifications.” However genuine these statements are, the reality is, as we have seen earlier in this report certain groups within our society face significant barriers to employment.

To gain an understanding of these barriers and how they can be overcome, BITCI commissioned a series of focus groups in early 2021. Two sessions involved participants from employment support NGOs and two sessions involved participants from business. The following pages present key insights from this focus group research.

The barriers to inclusion were explored from both the employer and the jobseeker’s perspective. Not surprisingly similar themes came out from both groups. It is interesting though to consider the themes from two different sides, as this offers up insights into how such barriers can be addressed and overcome. The barriers presented on the following pages relate to four key themes.

## Focus Group Participants

### Business

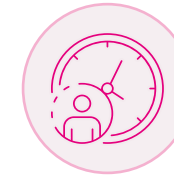
- ✓ A&L Goodbody
- ✓ Aldi Stores Ireland Ltd.
- ✓ BT Ireland
- ✓ CRH
- ✓ eir
- ✓ Enterprise Rent A Car
- ✓ Gas Networks Ireland
- ✓ Janssen
- ✓ Mercury Engineering
- ✓ PermanentTSB
- ✓ Scope Eye Care
- ✓ Veolia

### Employment Support

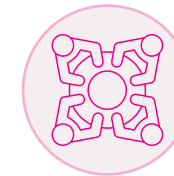
- ✓ Ballymun Job Centre
- ✓ MTU Traveller Programme
- ✓ Cultúr
- ✓ Disability Federation of Ireland
- ✓ EPIC
- ✓ EmployAbility
- ✓ Empower
- ✓ IASIO
- ✓ Schools’ Business Partnership
- ✓ Specialisterne
- ✓ WALK
- ✓ Women@Work



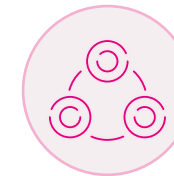
**Fear**



**Low Expectation**



**Culture**



**Systems**

# Barriers to Inclusion

## Employer

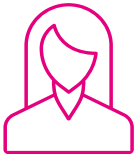
- Fear of working with someone different to me, someone with a disability, someone with a different ethnicity or background to me.
- Fear of change.
- Fear of the unknown, of saying the wrong thing.
- Fear of being uncomfortable.
- Fear that it won't work out.

## Fear

Step out of the comfort zone

## Jobseeker

- Fear of disclosing identity – my address, my disability, my background.
- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of the unknown, a new environment, new people, new ways of doing things.
- Fear of stepping away from my community and doing something different.



### Tara's story

"I came to Ireland 20 years ago as an immigrant. There were a lot of opportunities, I fell into a job easily at the start as I was a recent graduate. Which is a real 360 from my situation now. I took time out of my career to raise my family, so I now have a gap in my CV. I want to get back to work but I have a mental block about putting myself forward for rejection because job searching is very daunting. As a stay-at-home Mum I don't value my contribution. It is as if you are not ambitious. These things stacked on top make me feel overwhelmed. I feel isolated from people who are working, because I am not contributing to the economy, I don't feel I have as much value."

# Barriers to Inclusion

## Employer

Believing stereotypes and making assumptions and judgements.

- They wouldn't have the qualifications...
- They wouldn't be able...
- They'd be unreliable...
- They would take up too much of my time...
- They wouldn't fit in...

Allowing prejudice – conscious or unconscious impact on decisions.

Low Expectation

See the individual  
not the stereotype

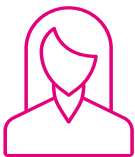
## Jobseeker

There is often self stigma, a lack of confidence

- I don't see others like me working there or doing that role.
- I speak with an accent, will I belong? Should I disclose – if I do will it go against me?

Stigma can prevent a job seeker from taking up opportunities for employment.

Repeated knock backs can wear away at resilience to the point that it becomes too difficult to put yourself forward again.



### Lisa's story

"When I turned 16, I looked for a part time job without success for 2 years. I watched all my classmates get jobs. When a settled person vouched for my sister, she got a job in our local shop. That paved the way for me. That same employer ended up hiring all four girls from my family because we were great employees."



# Barriers to Inclusion

## Employer

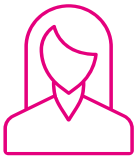
- Pressure to fill roles.
- Reliance on traditional channels of recruitment.
- Resistance from hiring managers.
- Referral schemes.

## Systems

Screen In not Out

## Jobseeker

- Long and complex job descriptions.
- Unnecessary criteria.
- Online application process.
- Screening process scoring on criteria not relevant for the role.
- Standardised tests.
- Interviews.



### Olive's story

"Last year I got a summer internship. I loved the experience and did very well. I was encouraged to apply for a permanent role. For the selection process I had to go through the standard online assessment. I didn't pass the test. Maybe I should have disclosed I had dyspraxia. I didn't think I'd need to as it had never been an issue during my internship. I could do the job, but I couldn't pass the test."

# Barriers to Inclusion

## Employer

- Passive approach to Diversity & Inclusion.
- Changing culture takes time.
- Policies aren't integrated.
- No measurements or accountability.
- Focus on minorities – can be hard to relate to.
- It can be hard work embracing difference.
- Easier to do what you have always done.
- Perceptions and biases go unchecked.

## Culture

Make Inclusion about  
everyone

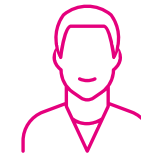
## Jobseeker

- Everyday racism & jokeism.
- Lack of networks.
- Feeling invisible.
- Lack of confidence.
- Feel can't disclose identity.
- Fear of asking for help.



### Dave's story

"I recently gave a contract to a someone who had come out of prison. We gave him loads of support and he was doing very well. Then he just stopped turning up. I was so frustrated that it didn't work out. It felt like a kick in the teeth."



### Liam's story

"I was thrilled to get a job offer after I got out of prison. I loved going into work. Then I had to sort out some family stuff and I missed a few days. I was so caught up in it I didn't let anyone know. Then I felt like I had let everyone down. I couldn't go back."

# Barriers to Inclusion

## Key Insights

### Job Descriptions

Job descriptions often include un-necessary requirements and jargon or overly complex language. Pressure to fill open roles, doesn't allow opportunity to challenge or push back on long lists of requirements. The tendency is to default to full time roles and standard hours.



What profile of candidate might be encouraged to apply if the job was described simply in terms of core skills or expertise and if part time hours or flexible conditions were built into the job design?

### Traditional Recruitment Process

Traditional recruitment screens out. It selects the top candidates based on a standardised set of pre-requisites.



What would happen if the process was designed to screen in?

All candidates that meet minimum requirements necessary for the role are reviewed and any applicants from underrepresented groups are included in first round of the selection process. Think about the selection process and how

best to assess ability to do the job. Not everyone demonstrates their potential through an interview. Are there options to assess candidates on the job?

### Development and Progression

Often employers place emphasis on recruitment to address diversity and inclusion and they make significant investment in pre-employment initiatives. However, post entry support is also needed.



What initiatives are in place to ensure you retain diverse employees?

Every new employee needs support and some will need more than others. It is necessary to consider onboarding and continuous development for all employees. Establishing a support network across the business for all employees helps with onboarding and paves the way for ongoing development. Facilitate buddying and mentoring initiatives along with employee resource groups to build skills as well as confidence and resilience. Build inclusion into manager's KPIs supporting them to proactively conduct appraisals for inclusion to assess employee experiences, understand challenges and discuss progression ambitions, then create development plans accordingly.

### Education and Training

Education and Training is key to over-coming fear that can exist around inclusion, and to tackle bias and challenge stereotypes. A manager who hasn't worked with a colleague with a disability or whose first language isn't English may fear saying the wrong thing that could offend.



What training do you offer to promote inclusion?

Train managers to manage diverse teams, to have challenging conversations and to get comfortable discussing the uncomfortable. If a new employee is starting and requires certain accommodations, brief immediate colleagues on what to expect and encourage open conversations to allay fears and create support.

# Barriers to Inclusion

## Role Models

Role models are important in paving the way for others to follow. Role modelling & ambassadors that are relatable can be very influential. They have the power to inspire people that opportunities exist. However, it can take huge bravery and resilience to step away from your community and do something different and not everyone is comfortable being a role model or the face of diversity for their employer. Share stories from both employee and employer perspective but avoid having a 'poster' person when it comes to showcasing success.



How do you demonstrate that you have an inclusive culture? Can you see your city, town, customers in your workplace?

## Equal Opportunities

It is easy to hide behind generic equal opportunity statements. Demonstrate authentic commitment by defining how you are an inclusive employer. Articulate practical examples of how your culture supports Inclusion. For example, in an invitation to interview, include a menu of accommodations available. Aim to create a situation where candidates feel safe to disclose information and avail of appropriate supports.



What does your equal opportunities statement say about your workplace?

## Sometimes it won't work out

As with any hire, sometimes it just won't work out. A new employee might start well and seem to be settling in but they may experience one set-back either at work or in their personal life and everything falls apart. Depending on their circumstance the job is often first to go either because they don't have the necessary supports to continue or they feel they can't reveal the problem. Other times even if the employer does everything right it might just not be the right fit. It is understandable to be disappointed if this happens but important to recognise that there is always a chance that a new employee won't make probation regardless of their pathway into the business. The general experience is that if an employee gets the right supports they thrive and retention follows.

## Partnerships

Working with partner organisations to support inclusive recruitment and retention can significantly contribute to the success of your efforts. Employment support organisations on the ground have the experience and first-hand knowledge of the barriers faced by individuals they work with. This experience will guide the direction of support or interventions you can provide. The right partner can advise on your approach to widening your recruitment channels. They can refer candidates they know would be suitable. Very often they can provide ongoing support to successful candidates supporting the onboarding process. Many organisations can facilitate pre-employment training and/or work placements. Both of which allow potential employers get to know candidate before hiring, providing a buffer of reassurance regarding their ability to do the job. They are also hugely beneficial to job seekers as they get to experience a world of work they may not be familiar with.

At their core, employment support organisations are about linking people with people, providing the opportunity to see every individual's potential.



# Actions that Make a Difference

## Top tips to building an Inclusive Workplace Starting Now

### STOP

- ☐ Including unnecessary criteria in job descriptions
- ☐ Insisting on Irish experience in a similar role
- ☐ Asking for school exam Results (Leaving Certificate/Junior Certificate results)
- ☐ Asking for disclosure of criminal convictions (Ban the Box)
- ☐ Asking for Stamp 4 or EU only
- ☐ Using aptitude tests
- ☐ Using complex online application forms designed for “standard” applicants
- ☐ Using referrals to screen candidates
- ☐ Viewing diversity & inclusion as a HR issue – it’s a whole organisation issue
- ☐ Looking for years of experience in entry level roles
- ☐ Hiding behind generic equal opportunities statements
- ☐ Accepting everyday racism/sexism/jokeism in the workplace

### START (or continue)

- ☐ Creating partnerships for inclusion
- ☐ Expanding recruitment channels
- ☐ Screening in candidates from under represented groups
- ☐ Offering pre-employment supports with schools or NGOs to develop future talent
- ☐ Setting Inclusion targets for large recruitment drives
- ☐ Making management for diversity & inclusion training mandatory
- ☐ Exploring government supports and incentives to resource inclusion
- ☐ Encouraging challenging conversations
- ☐ Looking beyond the stereotype
- ☐ Challenging bias and perception at every opportunity
- ☐ Agreeing tangible actions and achievable targets, don’t be afraid to start small
- ☐ Thinking of inclusion in every policy and every aspect of your business



# Build an Inclusive Workplace

Building inclusive workplaces is an ever-evolving task. It requires leadership right across an organisation and everyone has a role to play. BITCI has over 20 years of experience working with business to design, develop and deliver strategic initiatives for social impact. We are expertly placed to help business to fully embrace inclusion and build inclusive workplaces.

**For more information contact**

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## How Employers can get involved

- Join our network and sign up to our collective business led campaign [Elevate – The Inclusive Workplace Pledge](#)
- Engage with our [Employment Programmes](#) to explore recruitment from non-traditional channels
- Partner with our [Education Programmes](#) to inspire and positively impact on student's in DEIS areas
- Work with our [Advisory Team](#) to create bespoke inclusion solutions

# Appendix - BITCI Social Inclusion Programmes

## Employment

One of the most pressing societal issues in Ireland is the continued high levels of unemployment experienced by marginalised people. This is a key focus for Business in the Community Ireland. We have been designing and delivering acclaimed education and employment programmes for over 20 years. Our current employment programmes are:

- **EPIC** supports migrant, refugees and asylum seekers to find employment through group pre-employment and integration training, one to one career guidance and access to multiple business supports including IT skills training, mentoring, business workshops, mock interviews. EPIC is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. EPIC has been running continuously since 2008.
- **Ready for Work** supports people with disabilities and health challenges to find employment through one to one career guidance, business workshops, group training, opportunities for work experience and in-work supports. Ready for Work is funded by the Department of Social Protection and Mark & Spencer and has been operating since 2002.

- The **Women@Work** programme supports women who are distanced from the workplace to return to the work force or enter it for the first time. It provides individual career coaching, group training, access to business supports and in-work supports. W@W is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the European Social Fund (ESF) and began in 2020.

We support over 300 people per year, with up to 70% progressing into employment. Since 2002, we have supported more than 4000 disadvantaged job seekers from more than 100 nationalities.

## Education

- Our Schools' Business Partnership is a nationwide initiative that aims to develop mutually beneficial partnerships between schools and **businesses in Ireland** which support the Government's overall strategy on [educational inclusion](#).
- We operate by matching individual schools that are targeted through the School Completion Programme with a local company. We are the only business-education programme in Ireland that receives matching Government funds under the National Development Plan. Our suite of six programmes supports students, principals, teachers, the STEM agenda and children's literacy & numeracy in primary schools.

To date over 400 partnerships have been established nationally, impacting over 43,000 students nationwide.

## Business Engagement

**Business engagement is central to all BITCI's Social Inclusion Programmes.** BITCI maximises the return on government funding by leveraging our unique position as a business network focussed on sustainability and inclusion. By accessing the skills, talents and resources of our member companies and their employees, we offer enhanced supports and opportunities to the students and job seekers we work with. Exposure to businesses and their staff increases the confidence and aspirations of our participants and improves outcomes. Businesses benefit by having access to a pool of diverse talent, and by offering their staff enjoyable and rewarding volunteering opportunities which develop their own skills and confidence.

# References

[CSO Labour Force Survey](#)

[CSO Labour Force Survey Q4 2020](#) (Table 1, Table A1)

[CSO Census of Population 2016 – Profile 10 Education, Skills and the Irish Language](#)

[CSO Census of Population 2016 – Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity & Religion](#)

[CSO Census of Population 2016 – Profile 5 of Homeless Persons in Ireland](#)

[CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions](#)

[NDA-Factsheet-1-Disability-Statistics](#)

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[NDA-Employment Briefing](#)

[Power Wheel – Canadian Council for Refugees](#)

[Hive Learning – 5 Types of Privilege](#)

[ESRI Report on impact of COVID 19 on Non-Irish Nationals](#)

[Understanding the Pandemic's Impact on Working Women | Deloitte Global](#)

[The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on jobs and incomes in G20 Economies](#)

[The Centrality of Race and Whiteness in the Irish Labour Market](#)

[Irish Government Report on Active Labour Market Policies](#)

[HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey Report](#)

[Annual Irish Times Feeder School Tables](#)

For more information on Business in the Community in Ireland: [www.bitc.ie](http://www.bitc.ie)

For more information on Business in the Community Ireland's Leaders' Group on Sustainability: <https://www.bitc.ie/the-leaders-group-on-sustainability/>

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Business in the Community Ireland is a movement for sustainable change in business. In a dynamic and changing environment, sustainable businesses are successful businesses. Our purpose is to inspire and enable businesses to bring about a sustainable, low carbon economy and a more inclusive society where everyone thrives. We act as trusted advisers in sustainability and corporate social responsibility. We provide access to best practice and support businesses with practical management and monitoring systems. By facilitating forums for reflection and action, we ensure that businesses anticipate and are ready to meet the current, pressing challenges of climate change, the pipeline of talent as well as the issues of social inclusion, diversity and accountability.

Thank you to the team at Deloitte Ireland for their support on research, design and layout of this publication.