

Understanding attitudes to Travellers and Roma in Ireland

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Agenda

- 1.** Introduction and background
- 2.** Census 2022
- 3.** Attitudes in context
- 4.** Factors affecting attitudes
- 5.** Conclusions

1. Introduction and background

Introduction and Background – Motivation

- Understanding attitudes to groups important as it affects their experience of life in Ireland – in social interactions, shops/pubs, other services
 - decisions about the group (housing, jobs, bank loans)
 - Well-being and self-esteem of group members
- Irish Travellers are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Ireland – in terms of education, employment, health and housing (Watson et al., 2017)
- Roma are culturally distinct, and more diverse in terms of religion, language and religion, also high levels of disadvantage (Roma Needs Assessment, 2018)
- Small size of the groups mean often excluded from (quantitative) research

Introduction – Experience of Discrimination

- Discrimination is hard to measure as rarely observed directly; reported experience a valuable instrument when carefully conducted
- Compared to White Irish, Irish Travellers experience very high levels of discrimination in seeking work and accessing private services (McGinnity et al. 2017) – consistent with *All-Ireland Traveller Health Survey (2010)*
- Experience of discrimination among Irish Travellers high in international comparison (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2020)
- Qualitative research suggests high levels of discrimination among Roma in IE, also additional barriers such as language (Pavee Point/Maynooth 2023)
- Policy Context – *NTRIS II (2024-2028); TRES 2024-2030; NTHAP 2022-2027; National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR)*

Introduction: Attitudes to Travellers and Roma

Research on attitudes to Travellers (Mac Gréil) (1988, 2007) found that:

- Attitudes were among the most negative towards any group
- Attitudes improved slightly between 1988 and 2007

Research on attitudes to Roma (2014) (McGinnity et al., 2018) found that:

- Attitudes in Ireland were the most negative of 11 Western European countries

This research seeks to update our understanding of attitudes to Travellers and Roma using data from 2023, building on the survey report (DCEDIY 2023)

- How do attitudes compare to attitudes to other ethnic, religious, social groups?
- What factors are associated with positive or negative attitudes?

2. Travellers and Roma in Census 2022

Census 2022 – Irish Travellers and Roma

11 What is your ethnic group/ background?
Choose ONE section from A to D, then mark the appropriate box

A White

1 Irish
2 Irish Traveller
3 Roma
4 Any other White background

B Black or Black Irish

5 African
6 Any other Black background

C Asian or Asian Irish

7 Chinese
8 Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi
9 Any other Asian background

D Other, including mixed group/background

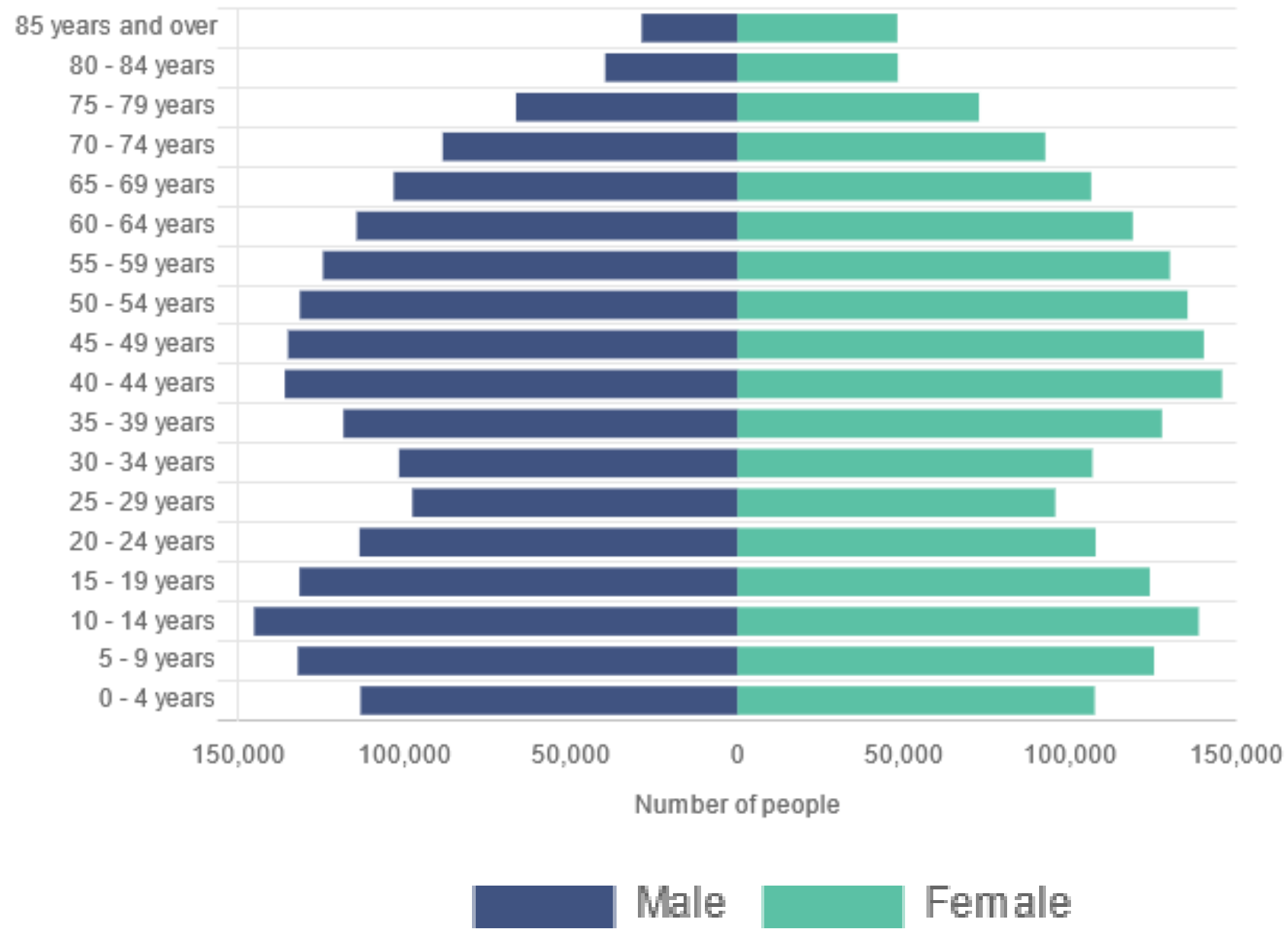
10 Arabic
11 Mixed, write in description
12 Other, write in description

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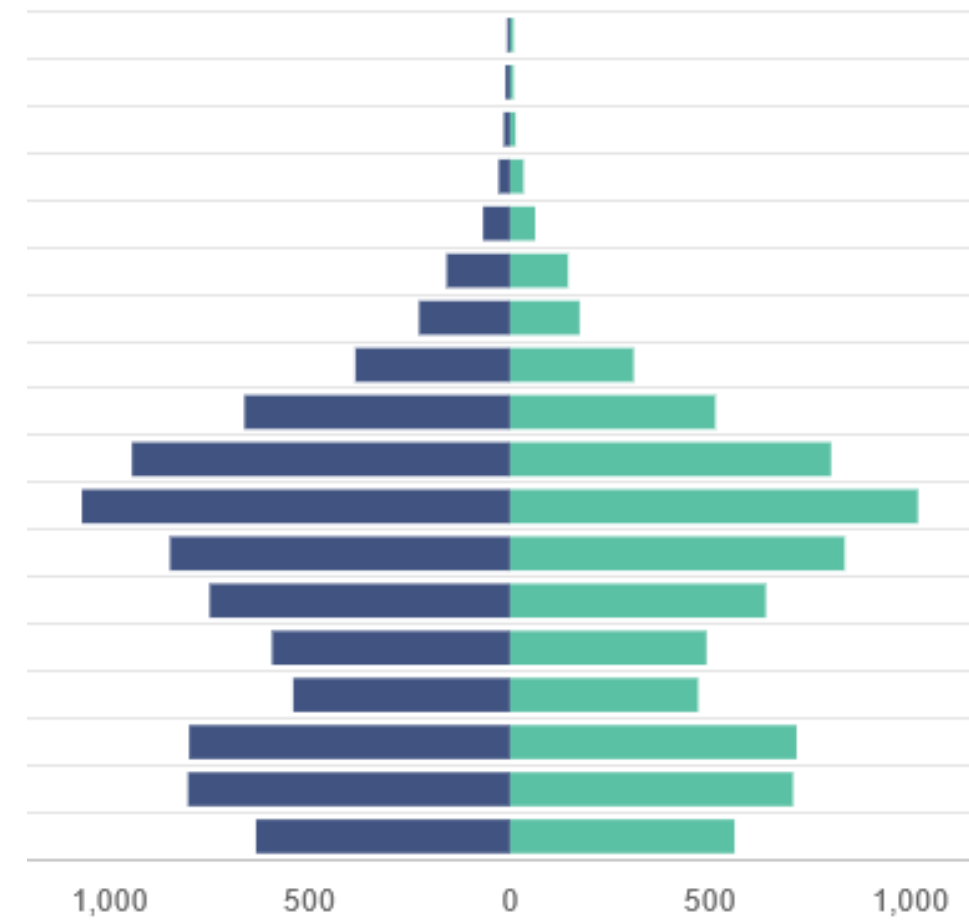
- **Travellers: 32,949 in 2022**
 - Up 6% from 2016 (30,987)
- **Roma: 16,059 in 2022**
 - First time 'Roma' was included as a category of ethnicity in the Census
 - Previous research (2018) suggested between 4,000 and 5,000

Census 2022 – Age Distribution

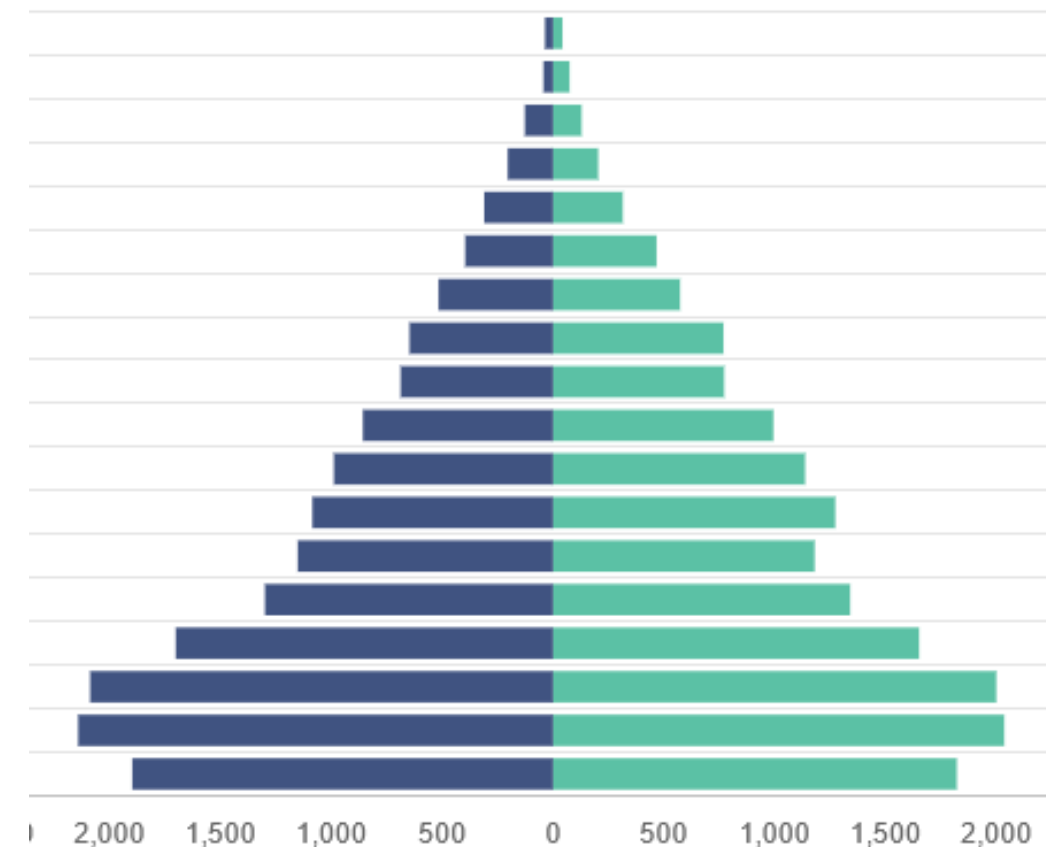
White Irish



Roma



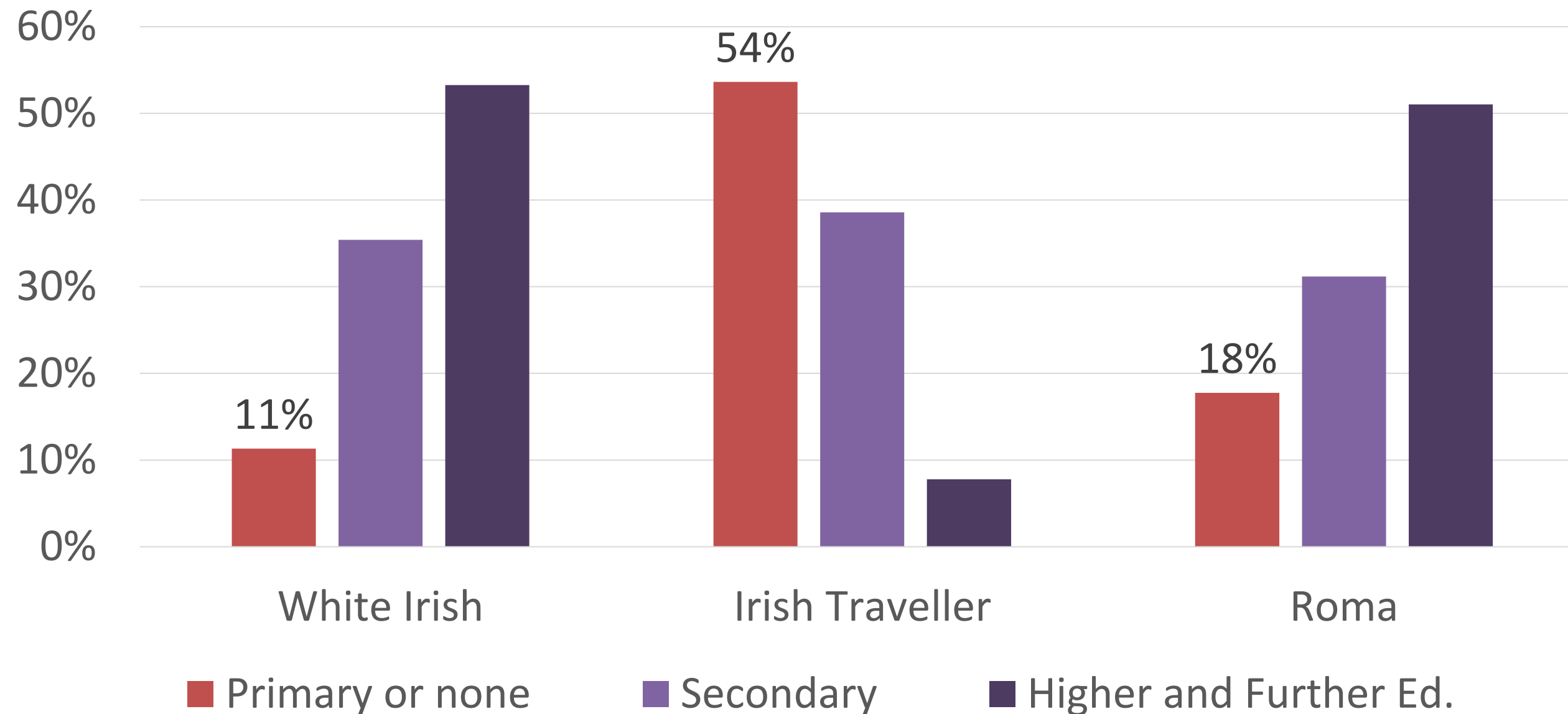
Traveller



Census 2022 – Highest level of Education Completed

Highest Level of Education Completed

(over 15 years of age whose education has ceased)



Census 2022 – Unemployment rates (self reported)

28 How would you describe your present principal status?
 Mark one box only

1 Working for payment or profit

2 Looking for first regular job

3 Short-term unemployed (less than 12 months)

4 Long-term unemployed (12 months or more)

5 Student or pupil

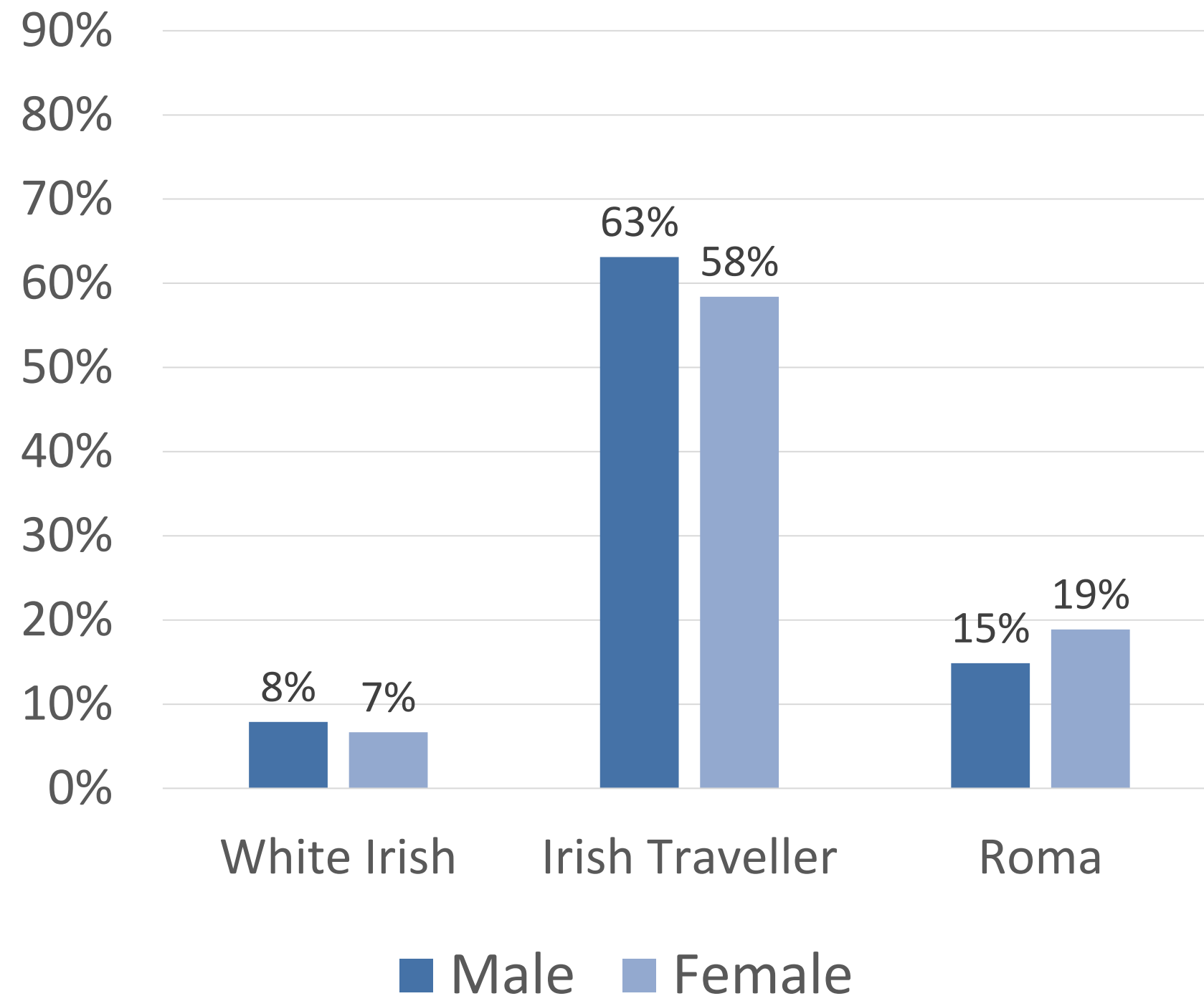
6 Looking after home/family

7 Retired from employment

8 Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability

9 Other, write in

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Source: Census 2022, F5087. Proportion of those in the labour market (employed+unemployed) who are unemployed

3. Attitudes in Context

Attitudes: Evidence base

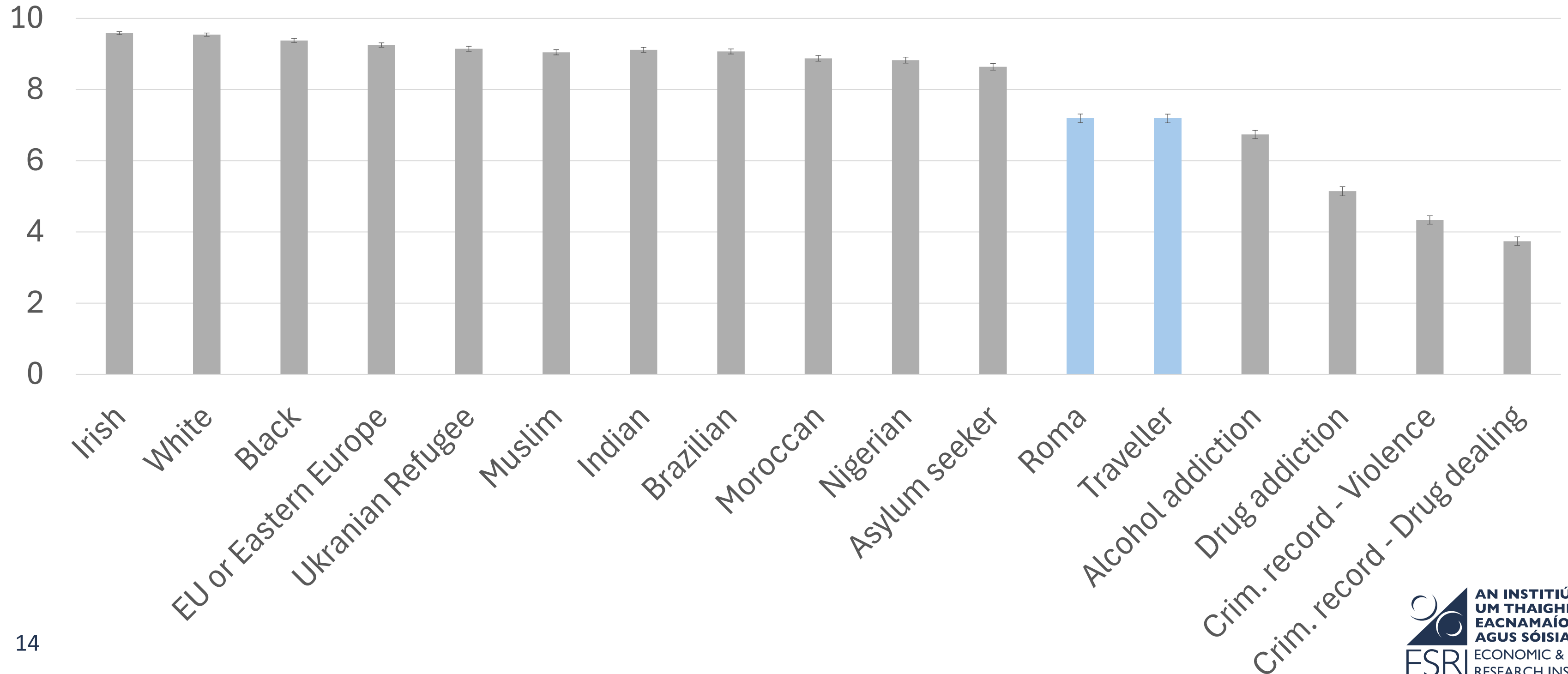
- Survey of 3,008 adults in Spring 2023 – commissioned by DCEDIY (report June 2023)

Three questions:

- How comfortable are you, on a scale from 1 to 10, with [a member of this group]:
 - As a neighbour
 - In a relationship with your child
 - In a class with your child at school
- Groups included Travellers and Roma
 - Also many other national, ethnic, religious, and social groups (between 30 and 40 depending on question)
- Also collected data on personal/family situation, and location (for some people)

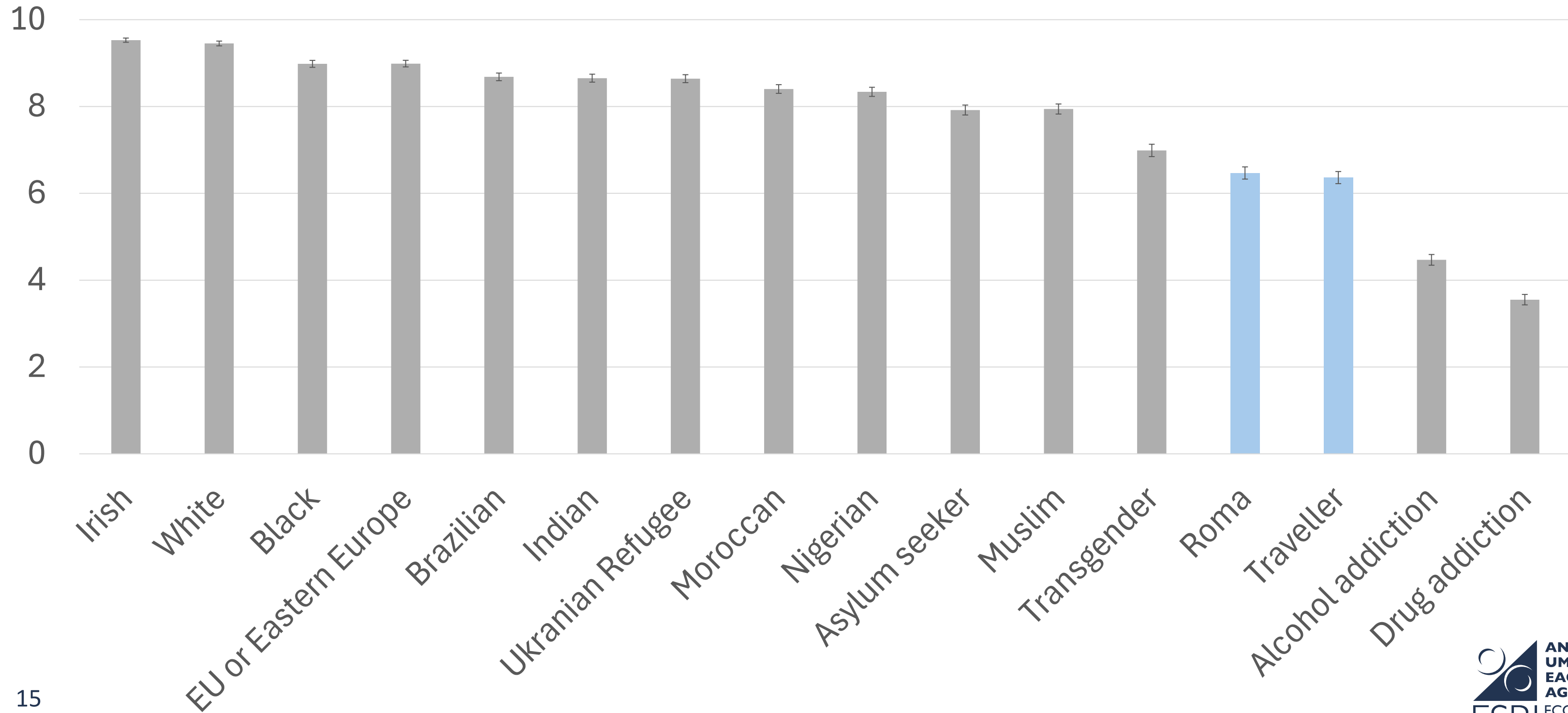
Attitudes in context - Neighbour

Mean comfort - As a neighbour



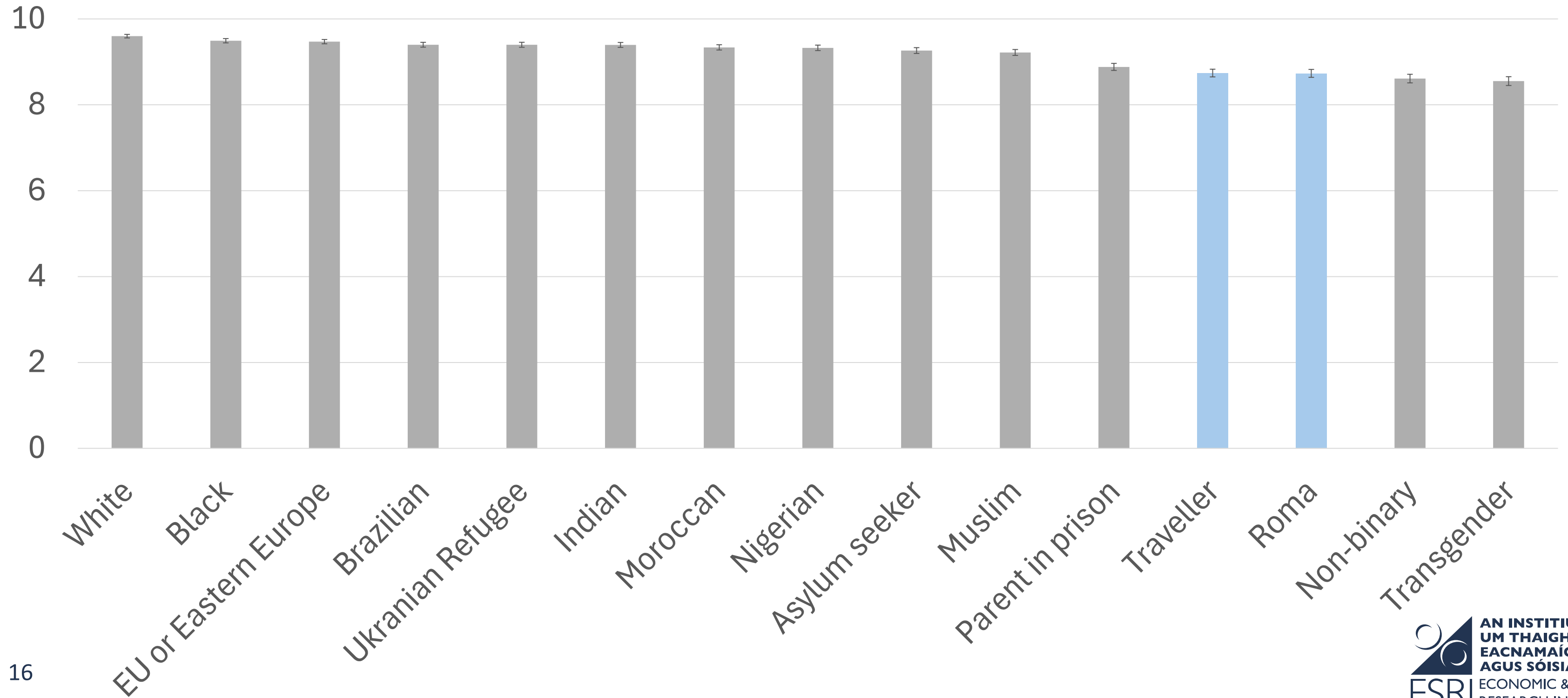
Attitudes in context - Relationship

Mean comfort – In a relationship with your child



Attitudes in context - School

Mean comfort – In a class with your child at school



Attitudes in Context – Relationships between Attitudes

- Exploratory Factor Analysis:
 - Generally, people who have tolerant attitudes towards one ethnic group have tolerant attitudes to other ethnic groups
 - However, this effect was less strong for Roma, and particularly for Travellers
 - We find that positive attitudes to Travellers and Roma were more consistently associated with comfort to very stigmatized groups, rather than other ethnic groups

4. Factors affecting attitudes

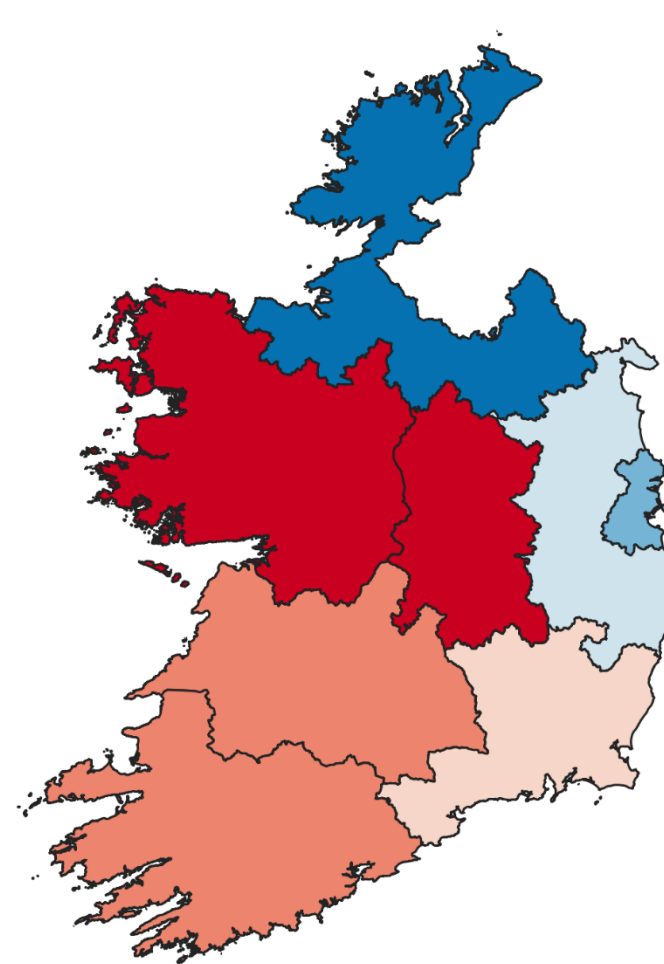
Factors affecting attitudes – Personal Characteristics

- Basic demographic factors:
 - Women are generally more tolerant than men
 - The youngest age group (16-19) were consistently the most tolerant age group
 - People with more education, particularly tertiary education, were more tolerant
- People with children are less tolerant on the Relationship question, but no less tolerant on the School question
 - Having children makes these questions ‘more real’ – controlling for all else, it may indicate how deeply an attitude is held
- This may indicate a gap between **social** and **interpersonal** tolerance

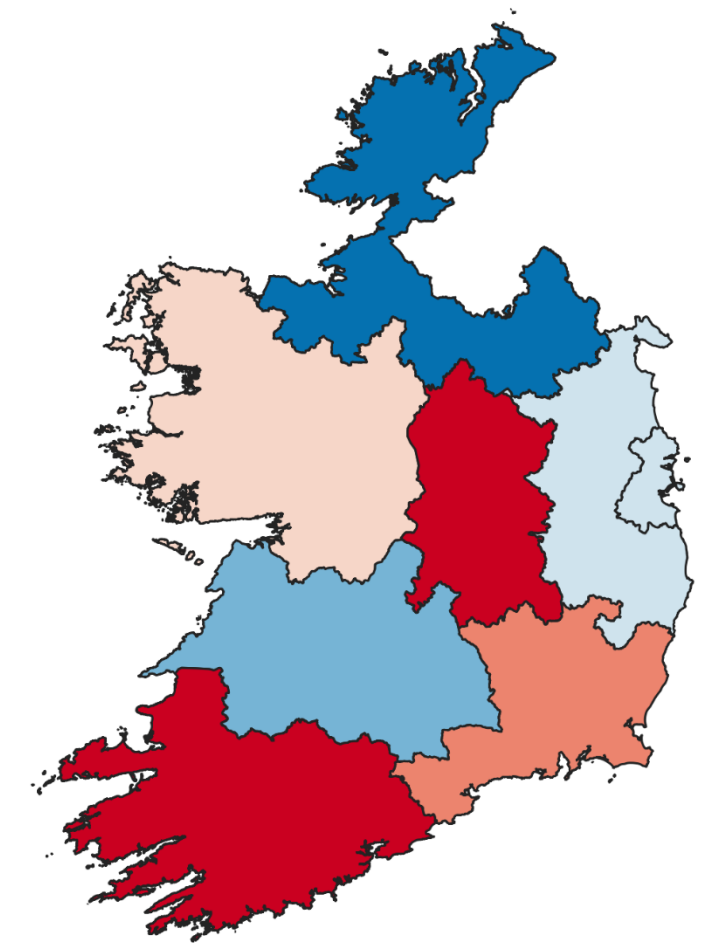
Factors affecting attitudes – Region

Region of residence had a strong association with attitudes

- Red indicates the region was below the national average; blue above
- Attitudes to both groups were negative in the **Midlands** and the **South-West**
- Attitudes to Travellers were also negative in the **West**
- The **Border Region** and **Dublin** were the most tolerant



Travellers



Roma

Predicted Mean Social Distance, standardised



Factors affecting attitudes – Socio-economic Status

- Socio-economic status indicators
 - Identifying as ‘middle-class’ rather than ‘working class’ – less tolerant across nearly all questions
 - Homeowners less tolerant than those living in social housing
 - Finding it easier to ‘make ends meet’ – less tolerant
 - Neighbourhood characteristics: people living in more affluent areas – less tolerant to having Travellers as neighbours

Conclusions

Key Take-aways

- Census 2022 statistics showed that both groups are disadvantaged, particularly Irish Travellers
- Attitudes to Travellers and Roma in 2023 were the **most negative of any ethnic group**, quite distinct
- Tolerance of the **youngest age group** shows potential for change over time
- **Region of residence** is important in influencing attitudes
- More **disadvantaged respondents** are in some cases more tolerant to these groups (generally not the case for attitudes to immigrants)
- NB: some groups may overstate support for minority groups

Policy Implications

- The extent of negative attitudes we find suggests policy needs to be **proactive**
- Facilitating **sustained positive contact** between groups may promote understanding in community projects, sport, at work
- Important to **acknowledge the extent of anti-Traveller/anti-Roma racism** in Ireland
- **Leadership** is also important for facilitating social inclusion – from national to local authority level to local communities

Thank you

Read the full report here:

<https://www.esri.ie/publications/understanding-attitudes-to-travellers-and-roma-in-ireland>

More info on the research programme:

<https://www.esri.ie/current-research/integration-and-equality-research-programme>



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