



# REPORT

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## Housing Challenges and Needs of Migrants in Ireland

**2025**

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The Housing Agency's purpose is to provide expertise and solutions to help deliver sustainable communities throughout Ireland. A strategic objective is to support stakeholders with evidence informed insights and data to develop a sustainable Irish housing system. In this vein, the Research Support Programme funds research projects which respond to key topical issues in housing and have the potential to impact on housing policy and practice. The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of The Housing Agency.

## Executive Summary

Access to adequate housing is a fundamental human right. Yet, several vulnerable groups, including people with a migrant background, often face significant barriers in finding a home. They experience exclusion through discrimination in the access to housing, the consumption of poorer quality housing and the high cost of housing relative to income. This study investigates the relationship between access to housing for migrants, their specific housing needs, and the barriers to access to decent and affordable housing in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in Ireland. Drawing on applied social science research methods, this research applies a qualitative research approach and policy document analysis to explore access to housing among migrant communities in Ireland, at this critical juncture of the post-global pandemic and the widespread housing affordability crisis.

This research highlights that the migrant housing experience is significantly impacted by a complex blend of discrimination, practical challenges, and aspirational goals. The analysis of the data identifies three main elements shaping this experience: housing discrimination, strategies for overcoming challenges, and housing future aspirations. Firstly, housing discrimination poses a major barrier for migrants, making it difficult for them to secure accommodation. Secondly, migrants face multiple challenges in obtaining housing, such as navigating intricate processes, dealing with financial limitations, and securing mortgages, but they utilize various strategies to manage these difficulties. Lastly, despite these obstacles, migrants have clear aspirations for their housing future, including a strong desire for homeownership and specific housing preferences often associated with their sociocultural backgrounds. Ultimately, the research results provide a foundation to inform future research and policy, offering evidence-based recommendations and insights for overcoming disadvantages in migrant housing and supporting more equitable housing outcomes.

## Policy Recommendations


- 01 Provision of Multilingual Documentation and Support Services
- 02 Government-led Rental Search Platform
- 03 Support and Orientation for Newcomers
- 04 Transparent Housing Market Practices
- 05 Enhanced Oversight of Health and Safety Standards
- 06 Engagement With the Migrant Community in the Phases of Project Design and Implementation
- 07 Housing as a Priority Area for Migrant Integration Policy
- 08 Data-Driven Decisions through Robust Ethnic Data Collection
- 09 More Research on Housing Discrimination
- 10 Training and Capacity Building for Public Servants and Real Estate Agents

## Introduction

Affordable and accessible housing is vital for the social inclusion, well-being, and integration of migrants. It serves as a key indicator of successful integration and social cohesion. Equal access to housing not only enhances employment and education prospects but also promotes positive relationships between immigrants and local communities. Conversely, inadequate housing and discrimination can exacerbate social divides, undermining unity and contributing to complex social challenges. Housing discrimination and exclusion are linked to fewer educational and employment opportunities (Flage, 2018), restricted access to welfare (Flatau et al., 2015), and a diminished quality of life, including poor physical and mental health (Motz and Currie, 2019; Mejia-Lancheros et al., 2021). These factors also hinder integration and increase the risk of homelessness (Pleace, 2011; Francis, 2010; Teixeira and Halliday, 2010). In 2022, migrants comprised 12% of Ireland's population, reflecting an increase in the presence of ethnically diverse groups in the country. However, this growth has also brought challenges in securing accommodation, with significant social and economic consequences due to inconsistent housing investments and slow construction rates (Lima et al., 2022).

Research has shown that the effects of the housing crisis disproportionately affect ethnic and racial minorities (Teixeira, 2013; Flatau, 2015), because highly competitive private rental markets generate greater competition at the lower ends of the housing market. Tually et al. (2012) noted that this competition may allow landlords greater opportunity to engage in discriminatory practices towards potential tenants. In Ireland, housing charities, advocates and campaigners have repeatedly pointed out the obstacles that ethnic and racial minorities encounter when trying to access housing and homeless services in Ireland. Ethnic and racial minorities are more likely than the white-Irish majority to be living in unsuitable accommodation, while black people are five times more likely than white people to report housing discrimination (Grotti et al., 2018). Minority groups, such as migrants, are disproportionately represented among homeless populations. When compared to the general population, a relevant percentage of the homeless population comprises non-Irish nationals, accounting for 23% (non-EU) and 23% (EU/EEA) of new single






adult presentations to homeless services (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2023). In addition, there has been a notable increase in the number of non-Irish citizens entering Emergency Accommodation (EA) in recent years. The proportion of EU citizens newly presenting to EA has doubled from 10% in 2016 to 22% in 2019 (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2020). This report also shows that the 44.2% of families who made use of emergency homeless accommodation in 2019 were headed by a non-Irish national (EU and Non-EU citizens combined). In addition, the percentage of non-Irish applicants for social housing in Dublin increased from 26% in 2016 to 34% in 2019, consisting of 19% from the European Union and 15% from non-EU countries.

Against this background, the core objective of this research is to provide a better understanding of housing disadvantages among migrants, their needs, and the barriers and challenges they face in accessing adequate housing in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in Ireland. While there have been some empirical investigations into the prevalence of discrimination in the area of housing, there is still little research on the concrete barriers imposed by discrimination. This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of housing discrimination. Furthermore, Ireland is an interesting case because it holds a strong magnetic attraction for a highly-qualified migrant population outside the EU, due to its thriving IT job market - despite the ongoing housing crisis. In this way, the present research also explores opportunities for overcoming the identified barriers in order to improve affordable housing options for this group. To do so, it examines the relationship between access to housing for migrants, their specific housing needs, the barriers in accessing decent and affordable housing and their housing aspirations. More specifically, it asks: what are the needs and barriers for migrants when it comes to accessing housing and how can the barriers be overcome?

This question is critical for several reasons. Firstly, the evolving housing market challenges - such as rising costs and housing shortage - and recent migration patterns highlight the need to understand how discrimination affects migrant access to housing. Secondly, there are broader societal implications of housing discrimination, including its impact on social cohesion, integration dynamics and



compliance to human rights standards. Thirdly, the ineffectiveness of current Irish housing policies and the difficulties in addressing access challenges in the private rental sector underscore the importance of this issue in creating transparent, fair and equitable housing opportunities for everyone.

This research paper argues that the migrant housing experience is profoundly influenced by a complex interplay of discrimination, practical challenges, and aspirational goals. The analysis of data reveals three core elements shaping this experience: **discrimination**, strategies to overcome **challenges**, and **aspirations**. Firstly, housing discrimination acts as a significant barrier for migrants, challenging their ability to find accommodation. Secondly, migrants face numerous challenges in securing housing, which include navigating complex processes and overcoming financial constraints, but they employ various strategies to mitigate these difficulties. Lastly, despite these obstacles, migrants maintain clear aspirations for their housing futures, such as a strong desire for homeownership and specific preferences regarding housing types.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the background to the research with an overview of migration, discrimination and housing trends in Ireland, including a review of housing policy and legislation that directly and indirectly protect migrant housing rights. The literature review in Section 3 outlines recent academic work and concepts related to housing discrimination and inequality. Section 4 details the research design and methodological approach used to investigate housing access among the migrant community in Dublin. Section 5 focuses on the interpretation of the results, their implications for theory and practice, and the contributions to the fields of housing and migration studies. Finally, Section 6 presents the study's discussion and conclusions. Policy recommendations are made in the final section, based on data analysis and international best practices.

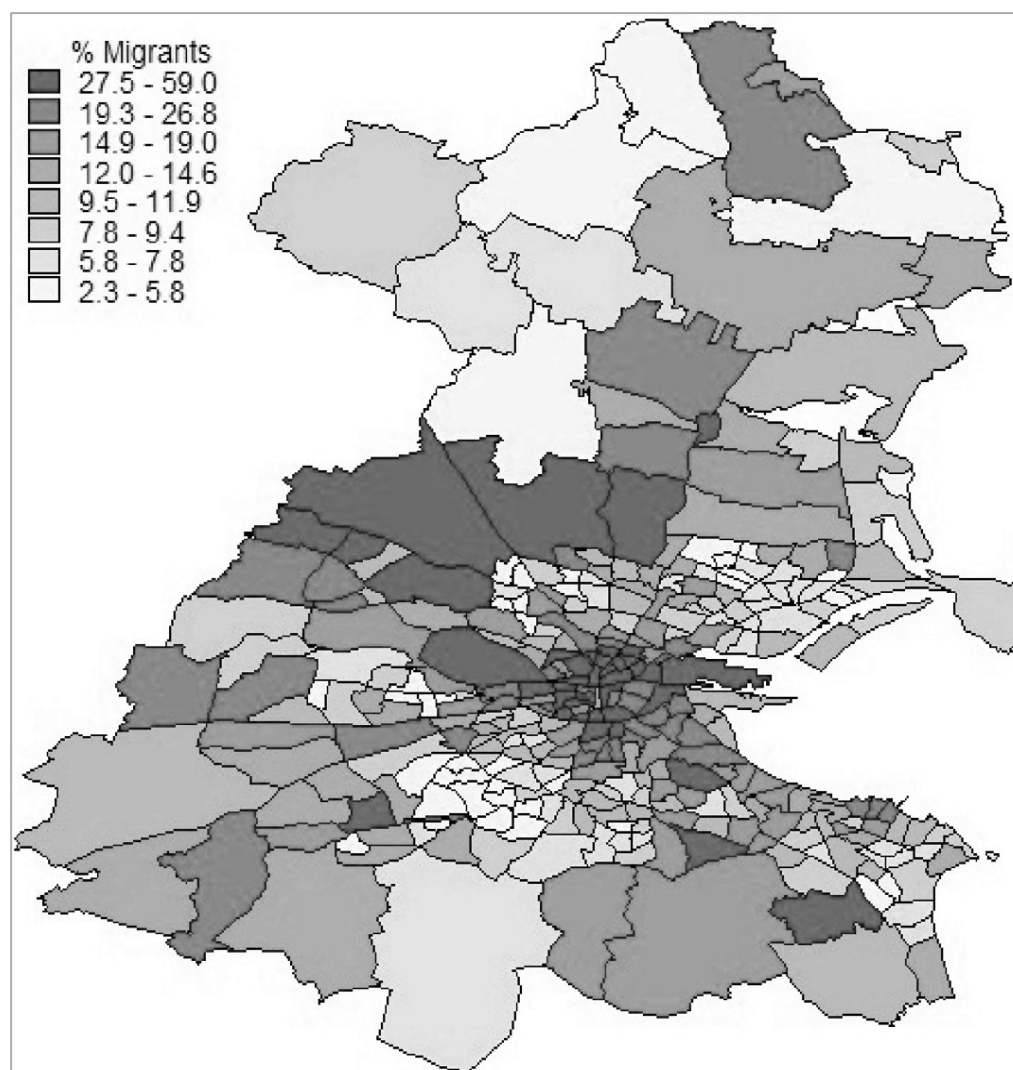
## **2. Background to The Study**

Ireland has experienced significant waves of immigration over recent decades, shifting from a predominantly Irish society to one characterised by diversity, with a



wide range of ethnicities, nationalities, and cultures. The migrant population has seen significant growth, with non-Irish nationals comprising 12% of the total population according to the 2022 Census. A notable aspect of this demographic shift is the increase in dual Irish citizenship, with 170,597 people reporting dual citizenship in 2022, representing a 63% increase since 2016. This growing population of migrant residents, in addition to the expected natural growth of the current population, is expected to increasingly influence Ireland's housing market, a key driver of new housing demand in the future.

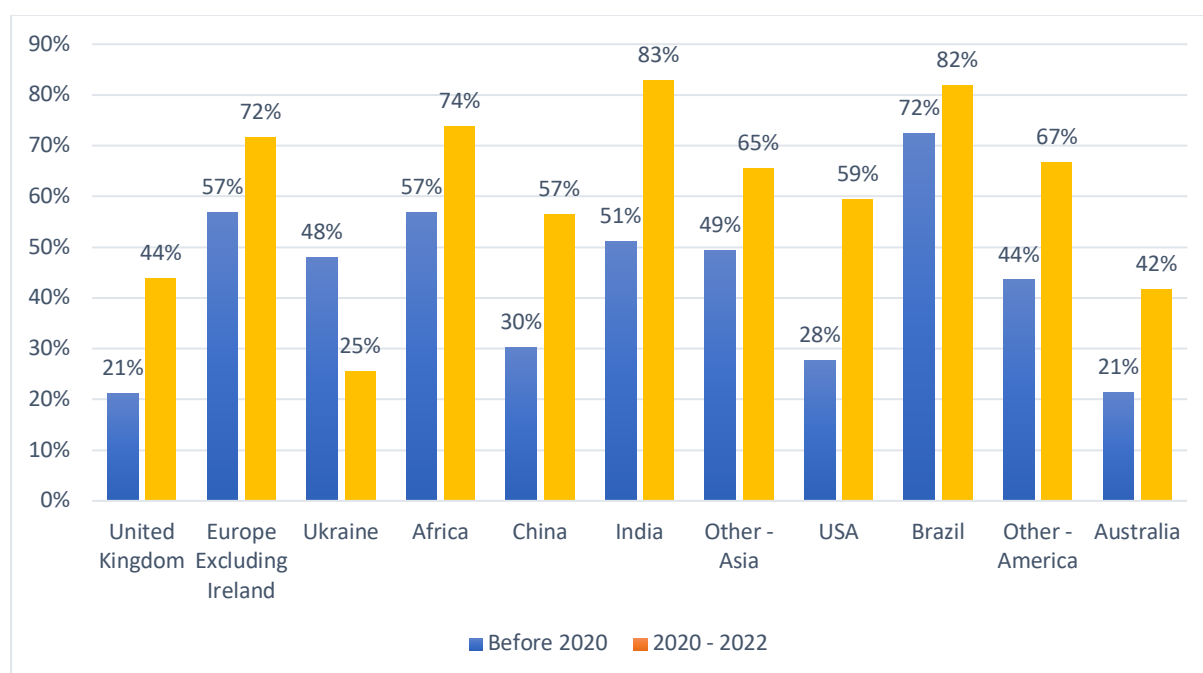
**Figure 1 - Share Of Electoral Division Foreign-Born (Non-Irish/UK), Dublin 2016.**



Source: Fahey et al., 2019. CSO Small Area Population Statistics, Census 2016.

However, the housing challenges faced by migrants highlight stark inequalities and systemic barriers that require urgent attention. In contrast to countries, such as The U.S., where racial segregation persists and is frequently normalised within the housing system (Korven-Glenn, 2021), spatial segregation in Ireland is relatively low (Fahey et al., 2019) – but some patterns are starting to unfold. Figure 1 above shows the share of Non-Irish/UK born people in the Census 2016. A higher concentration of migrants reside in the Western and Northern suburbs and in particular in the North inner city. Associated to that, ten of the top 12 Electoral District (EDs) with a high non-UK foreign-born population in Dublin are located in the North Inner City (Fahey et al., 2019). In contrast, few foreign-born residents were living in the affluent South-East of Dublin.

**Figure 2 – % of migrants living in rental properties per country of origin**



Source: Census of Population 2022, Profile 5, Social Inclusion (CSO, 2023b)

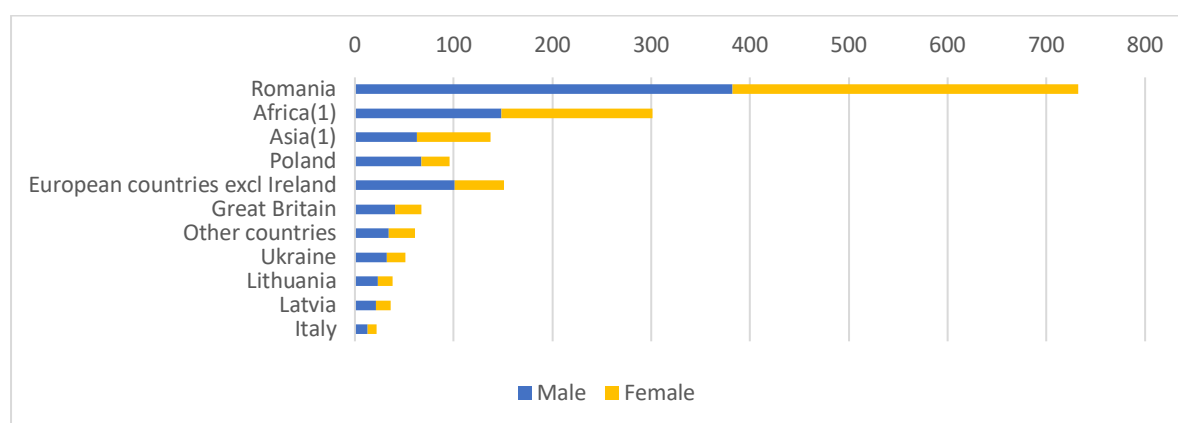
48% of all migrants in Ireland were living in private rented accommodation in 2016 (CSO, 2021), while migrants make up 34% of people experiencing homelessness in Dublin (Dublin Region Homelessness Executive, 2023; Kilraine, 2023). According to Focus Ireland, of all people that became homeless in the 2022-2023 period, around 55% had been living in accommodation in the private rental sector (PRS)

before entering homelessness (Focus Ireland, 2024), a number that has been consistent with research from previous years. The significant proportion of homelessness that stems from the PRS highlights systemic issues, including escalating rental costs, inadequate tenant protections, and a shortage of affordable housing alternatives, all of which aggravate housing instability and push individuals and families into homelessness.

Nationally, Romanian and African migrants over-represented among the homeless, 15% and 6% respectively (see Figure 3). Private rented accommodation is strongly associated with the size of the migrant population (McGinnity et al., 2022), mostly likely due to the low levels of homeownership among this population, their young age profile and the high costs of housing in the country.

Those numbers reflect the economic inequality and housing market dynamics that are exacerbating homelessness, particularly among low-income and marginalised populations. Systemic and structural deficiencies within housing and social welfare systems, such as inadequate social housing, insufficient support services, and bureaucratic barriers, are key factors contributing to the persistence of homelessness which disproportionate impact vulnerable groups, including immigrants, minorities, and individuals with mental health issues or addiction problems (Lima, 2023; Lima et al., 2022).

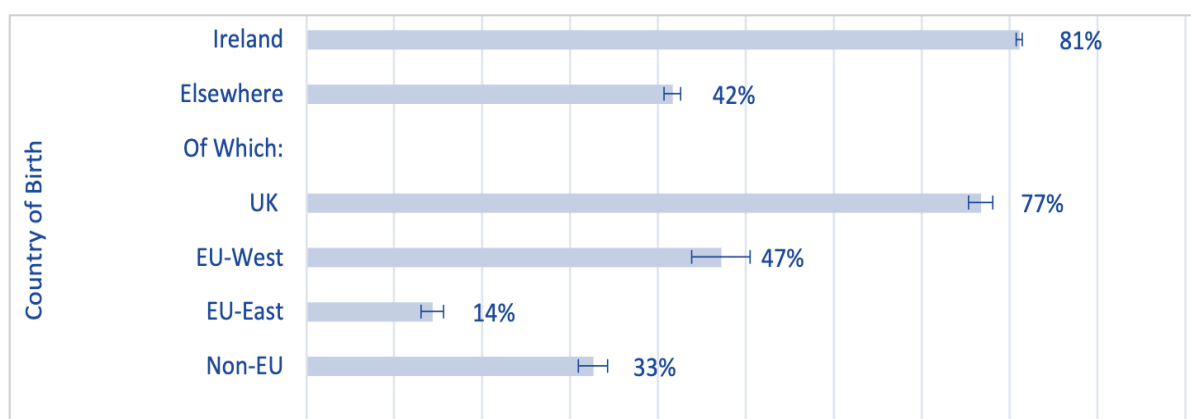
**Figure 3 – Non-Irish homeless people by country of citizenship and sex in 2022**



Source: CSO, 2023b (table F6009)

A study by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights highlighted that migrants, including undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, frequently face multiple forms of discrimination in securing formal housing – and this discrimination significantly increases their risk of homelessness and poverty (Human Rights Council, 2024). Housing insecurity - the risk of losing stable or safe housing, due to factors like financial difficulty, frequent moves, overcrowding, substandard conditions, or fear of eviction - is also a relevant element to explain the rise in homelessness numbers in the country. For migrants, and asylum seekers in particular, racism can be a barrier to accessing housing, leading to homelessness (Michael, 2016; Finn and Mayock, 2021).

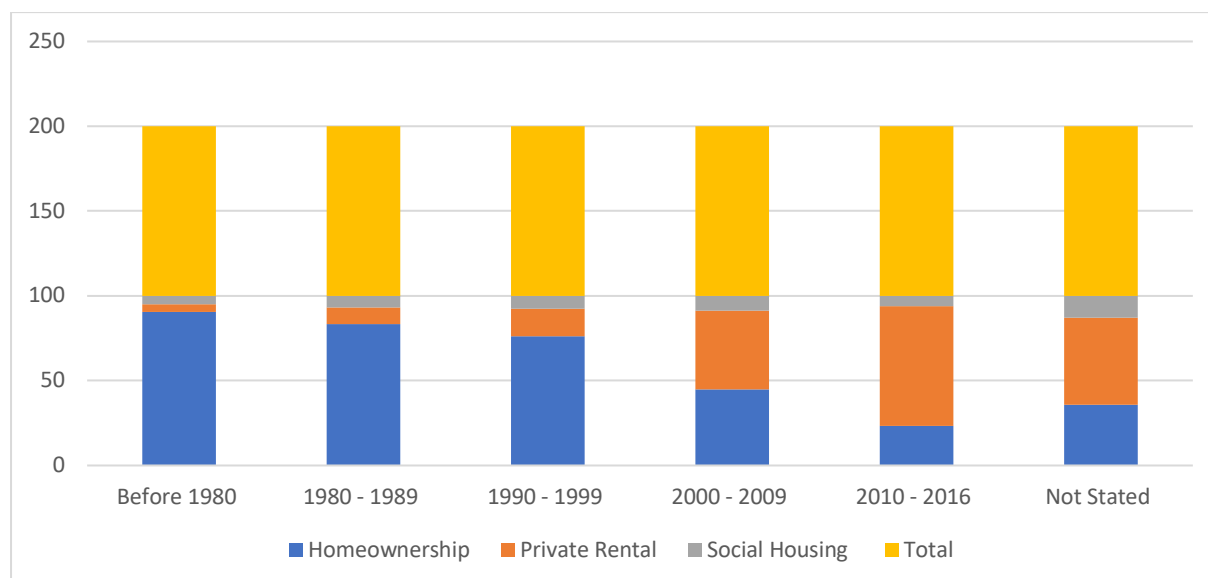
**Figure 4 - Differences in owner occupation rate**



Source: Russel et al., 2021.

Data from social housing waiting lists indicates that a substantial proportion of social housing tenants in Dublin were migrants in 2019, with 34% of applicants originating from other countries. This includes 19% from the European Union and 15% from non-EU countries. Among EU countries, Poland has the highest number of applications with 877, followed by Romania (825), Lithuania (386), the UK (328), and Latvia (287), together accounting for 81% of applications from EU countries. Outside the EU, Nigeria leads with 293 applications, followed by Somalia (237), Pakistan (128), and Congo (119). Conversely, applications from countries in Asia and South America are lower, with Brazil submitting 52, India 24, and China 51 applications (Kilraine, 2019).

**Figure 5 - Housing Tenure of migrants in Ireland (Before 1980 – 2016)**



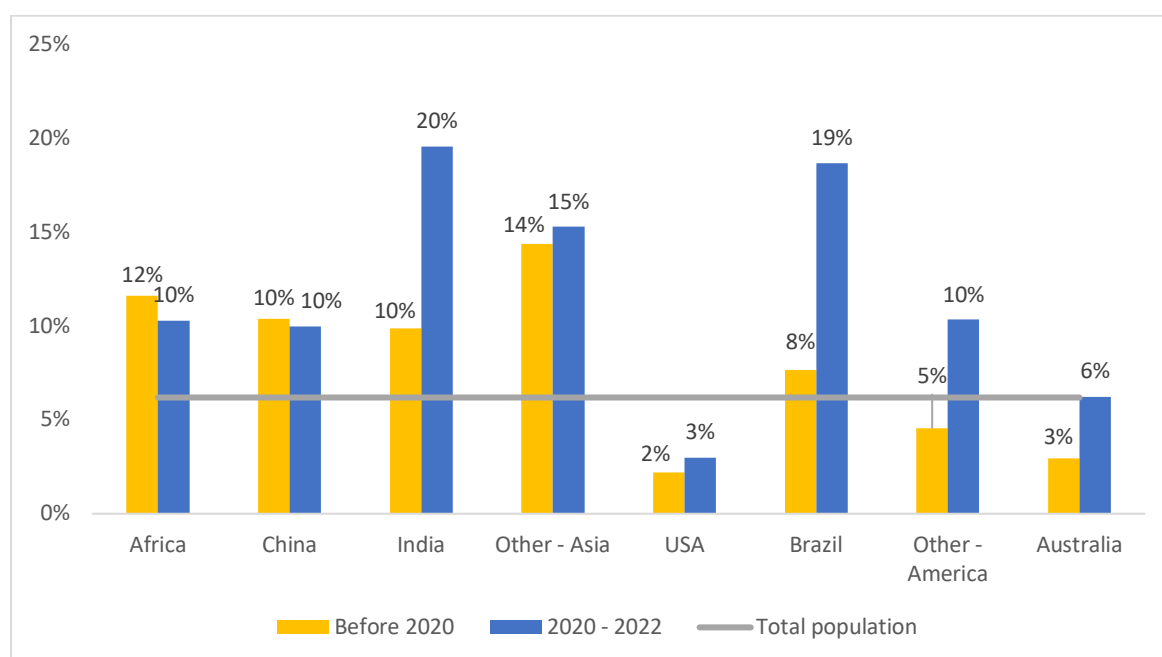
Duration of Residence in Ireland	Homeownership	Private Rental	Social Housing	Total
Before 1980	90.7	4.43	4.87	100
1980 - 1989	83.33	9.98	6.69	100
1990 - 1999	76.06	16.21	7.73	100
2000 - 2009	44.73	46.53	8.74	100
2010 - 2016	23.38	70.54	6.08	100
Not Stated	35.97	51.34	12.69	100

Source: McGinnity et al., 2022.

Homeownership rates can vary significantly among different migrant groups, influenced by factors such as duration of stay, economic status, and legal residency status. Only 9% of households led by non-Irish immigrants owned their homes and a large majority of these households rent from private landlords (CSO, 2023a). The data on housing tenure of migrants in Ireland from 1980 to 2016, as illustrated in the figures that follow. Figure 4 shows that Irish-born individuals have the highest homeownership rate at 81%, followed by UK-born at 77%. Homeownership is lower among migrants from Western EU (47%), non-EU (33%), and Eastern EU (14%) countries. In turn, Figure 5 suggests a significant shift in housing patterns over time. The rate of homeownership among migrants has markedly declined, dropping from 90.7% before 1980 to just 23.38% between 2010 and 2016. Conversely, the

proportion of migrants in private rental accommodation has increased dramatically to 2016. Social housing, although relatively stable, shows a slight increase, particularly in earlier periods. This trend suggests that economic pressures, changing housing markets, or evolving migrant demographics may be contributing to a decreased ability to purchase homes and a growing reliance on rental options. Overall, the data shows significant changes in housing stability and tenure among migrants in Ireland over recent decades, with socioeconomic and demographic shifts leading to increased reliance on private rentals replacing more traditional pathways to homeownership.


**Figure 6 – % of migrants living in overcrowded accommodation by year of arrival in Ireland**



Source: Census of Population 2022, Profile 5, Social Inclusion (CSO, 2023b)

Migrants in Ireland are more likely to experience overcrowding in their housing situations compared to Irish nationals. This overcrowding is particularly pronounced among non-EU migrants, who face greater barriers to accessing adequate housing due to factors such as lower incomes, less secure employment, and limited access to social housing, as they face challenges in securing larger or more suitable accommodations (Grotti et al., 2018). Overcrowding is a significant indicator of





housing inequality and is associated with negative outcomes such as poorer health and reduced quality of life (Swope and Hernández, 2019). These overcrowding rates serve as both a cause and consequence of deeper systemic inequalities in the housing market, particularly for newly arrived migrants.

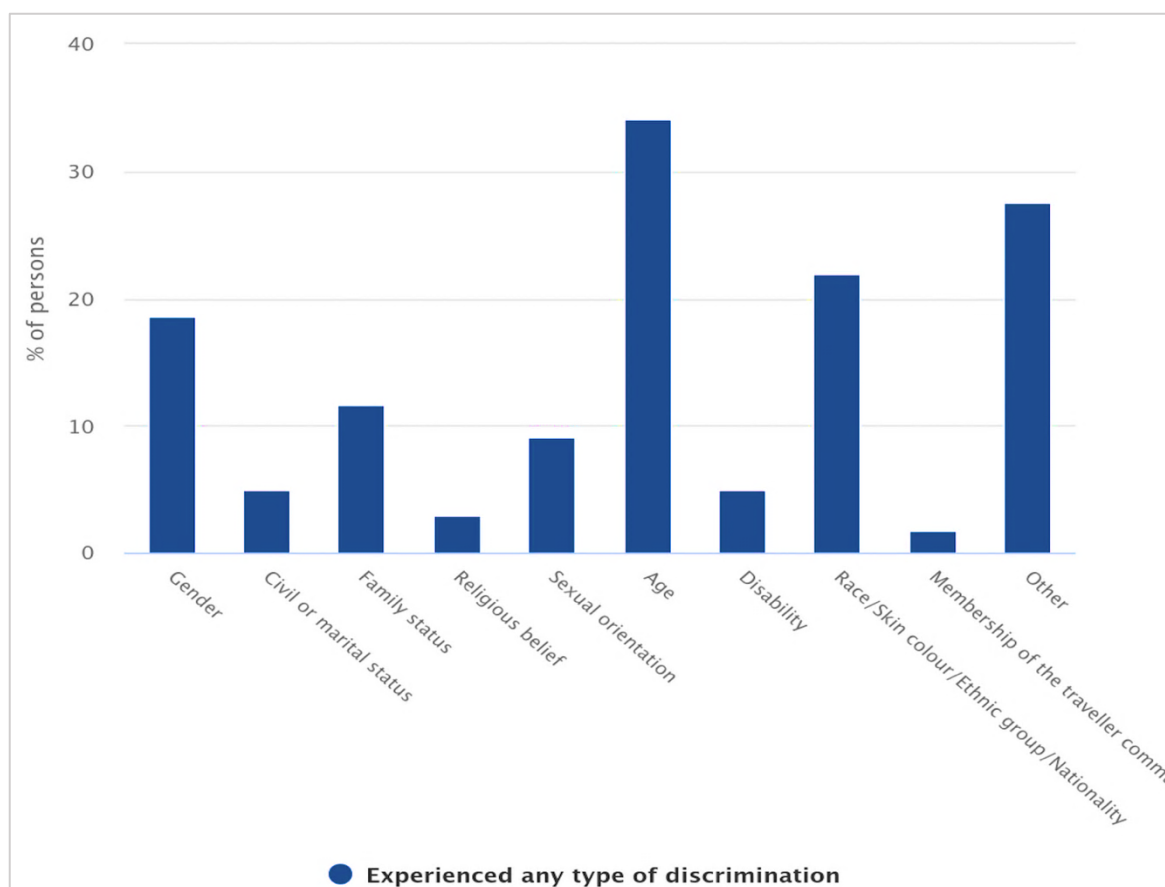
Overcrowding refers to households that do not have enough rooms to accommodate their residents according to Eurostat's guidelines. These guidelines define that, for example, lacks the minimum required number of rooms, which includes one for the household, one per couple, one for each single adult (18+), one per pair of same-gender individuals aged 12–17, one for each remaining single individual aged 12–17, and one per pair of children under 12. Taking a different approach, the definition of overcrowding in housing under Section 63 of the Housing Act 1966, emphasizes the sharing of sleeping spaces by opposite-sex individuals over ten years old and the available air space per person, focusing on sleeping arrangements and air space rather than overall living space. The law has not been significantly updated since 1966, meaning it may not accurately reflect current housing challenges, urban density, and affordability issues.

In 2023, 12.9% of Ireland's population renting in the private sector were living in overcrowded conditions (Eurostat, 2024). Figure 6 shows the percentage of migrants in overcrowded accommodation in Ireland who arrived between 2020 and 2022. Overcrowding is pronounced among newly arrived Indians and Brazilians, persistent among “Other Asia” group and lower among migrants from Africa, China, and “Other America,” with minimal changes across the two time periods, according to CSO data. Migrants' higher rates of overcrowding are attributed to a combination of economic disadvantage and potential discrimination in the private rental market (Grotti et al., 2018).


Preliminary research on housing access for migrants has underscored key challenges in fulfilling social rights and integration. A major finding is that, beyond high housing costs and affordability issues, migrants frequently encounter significant barriers to securing adequate housing, with discrimination being a prominent obstacle (Russell et al., 2022). According to the Central Statistics Office's Statistical

Yearbook of Ireland, 33.1% of persons from non-white ethnic backgrounds and 26.7% non-Irish nationals reported experiencing discrimination in accessing services in the two years prior to the survey, including in the area of housing (CSO, 2019). In relation to perceptions of discrimination, race, skin colour, ethnic background and nationality are identified by around 22% of respondents as being the cause or origin of discrimination (see Figure 7). When it comes to looking for housing or accommodation, one in every twelve people (8.1%) from a non-white ethnic background experienced such discrimination. Similarly, 6.6% of non-Irish persons experienced discrimination when seeking housing or accommodation (CSO, 2019). This data has been more or less consistent over time and adds to existing Irish research indicating that discrimination towards ethnic minorities is ubiquitous in Ireland (McGinnity at al., 2018, 2020; Gusciute et al, 2022).

**Figure 7 – Discrimination by Perceived Grounds, Q1 2019**




Source: CSO, Statistical Yearbook of Ireland, Equality and Discrimination (2019)



In the Irish PRS, which is, to an extent, meeting the needs of many migrants, it has been found that migrants suffer more often with rental deposit retention (Lalor and Doyle, 2012). Furthermore, migrants are also often victims of racism and discrimination (Michael, 2016; Grotti et al., 2018; Vang, 2010). A 2024 survey by Ipsos B&A for the Department of Integration found that a significant number of migrants in Ireland experienced racial or ethnic discrimination, with two-thirds facing such discrimination and nearly 60% encountering hate crimes and harassment, which manifest in microaggressions, physical attacks, threats, and other forms of violence. In housing, discrimination is often concealed discriminatory practices by private landlords which are hard to identify but they include non-appearances when showing a house to a migrant or claiming that a house was already rented when it was actually vacant, in addition to discrimination by neighbours (Threshold, 2010). The convergence of systemic barriers and discriminatory practices further entrenches inequality within Ireland's housing market, leaving migrants with few viable options for stable housing.

While migrants have differentiated access and eligibility to social housing and homeless services based on their nationality (EU/non-EU), many do not qualify for housing supports. In Ireland, two central elements act as barriers for migrants in accessing adequate housing. In the social housing sector, there is the Habitual Residency Condition (HRC) and the 'right to reside' test. This is defined in Circular 41/2012. Even without a firm legislative basis, and grounded in the interpretation of local authorities, the circular is commonly used to justify the denial of social housing support to non-Irish citizens based on a) outdated immigration status criteria and b) the need to prove established local connections (Mercy Law Resource Centre, 2021). Those decisions are potentially discriminatory and can lead to migrants experiencing homelessness or staying longer in emergency accommodation services. Currently, there is a lack of publicly available data on the population count of EEA/UK and non-EEA citizens who are not eligible to receive social housing supports and are residing in emergency accommodation. However, based on anecdotal evidence, the number of such households is believed to be substantial. If this is accurate, these households may become stuck in emergency accommodation without the necessary supports (Baptista et al., 2022, p. 40).




Research indicates that restrictive migration policies can worsen housing challenges by forcing migrants into informal and frequently unsafe housing situations (Şahin-Mencütek et al., 2021). As legal pathways for securing accommodation become limited, migrants may resort to unregulated and precarious housing options, which lack basic safety and living standards. These conditions not only increase their vulnerability but also amplify the overall housing insecurity faced by migrant communities.

## 2.1. Housing Policy and Legislation with directly and indirect implications on protections to migrant housing rights in Ireland

In Ireland, various policies and legislative pieces have been implemented to protect migrants from discrimination in housing. The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 play a relevant role in prohibiting discrimination in the provision of goods and services, including housing, including on grounds such as race, nationality, and ethnicity. This legislation ensures that migrant groups are not unfairly treated when seeking housing.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 further reinforces these protections by establishing the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), which actively works to safeguard human rights and promote equality, including in housing. This commission addresses discrimination and promotes fair treatment through advocacy, legal assistance, and public awareness campaigns. In turn, the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides measures to improve housing standards and support vulnerable populations, including migrants. This Act requires that housing policies take into consideration the needs of migrants, promoting access to adequate and appropriate housing as a critical aspect of their integration.

The National Action Plan Against Racism published in 2023 provides a framework for addressing racism at both systemic and institutional levels and is to be implemented over a five-year period, from 2023 to 2027. It outlines comprehensive measures to combat racism, including improving legal protections, enhancing public



awareness, and promoting equality in various sectors. Specifically, regarding housing, the plan includes actions to address the discrimination faced by minority ethnic groups in accessing housing and accommodation. It aims to introduce special measures for those most at risk of homelessness, ensure equal access to the private rental sector, and address differentials in the acceptance of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) to improve housing outcomes for racialised communities. While this action was welcomed by charities and policy advocates, groups highlighted the need of resourcing the Plan with not only adequate funding but also additional staff in key government departments, state agencies, and An Garda Síochána, as well as providing training and support for front-line staff to identify and address acts of racism and discrimination (Social Justice Ireland, 2023).

Securing Ireland's Future. *Programme for Government 2025*.

Other legislative measures indirectly impact migrants' access to housing, underpinned by international and EU agreements. The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015, while primarily focused on workplace discrimination, also extend protections that can influence housing situations by ensuring that migrants are not disadvantaged in employment, thereby supporting their financial stability and housing affordability. The European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 incorporates broader human rights protections into Irish law, aiming to prevent unfair housing practices, such as arbitrary eviction and discrimination. Additionally, the International Protection Act 2015 outlines the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees, including access to housing. Collectively, these legislative and policy measures form a potentially strong protection net to uphold the rights of migrants, so to guarantee their access to affordable and adequate housing, which is vital for their social inclusion, well-being and integration. Table 1 below showcase a non-exhaustive list of legislative and policy framework protecting migrants from housing discrimination that applies to Ireland.

**Table 1 - Legislative and Policy Framework Protecting Migrants from Housing Discrimination in Ireland**


Policy/Legislation	Description	Implications for Housing	Specific Implications for housing
<b>National Action Plan Against racism</b>	Sets out actions and objectives to create a fair, equal and inclusive society, free of racial discrimination.	Direct	Action 2.7 introduces special housing measures for racialised groups at risk of homelessness Action 2.8 combats rental discrimination, especially against HAP recipients.
Equal Status Acts 2000-2018	Prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods and services, including housing, on various grounds such as race, nationality, and ethnic origin.	Direct	Ensures that individuals are not discriminated against in access to housing based on race, nationality, or ethnic origin.
Residential Tenancies Act 2004-2021	Governs the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants in the private rented sector, aiming to ensure fair treatment and prevent discrimination.	Direct	Provides protections for tenants and landlords, ensuring fair treatment and preventing discrimination in the private rented sector.
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014	Establishes the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), which works to protect human rights and equality, including in housing.	Direct	Supports human rights and equality in housing, addressing discrimination and promoting fair treatment.
Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009	Provides measures to improve the standard of housing and support vulnerable populations, including migrants.	Direct	Improves housing standards and supports vulnerable populations, including migrants, ensuring access to adequate housing.
Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015	While primarily focused on employment, these acts also provide protections against discrimination that	Indirect	Extends protections against discrimination to housing-related issues, ensuring fair treatment in housing matters.



	can extend to housing-related issues.		
European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003	Incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into Irish law, providing protections against discrimination in various areas, including housing.	Indirect	Provides a basis for protecting housing rights through broader human rights protections, addressing issues like arbitrary eviction and discrimination.
Directive 2004/113/EC	Aims to implement the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.	Indirect	Extends the principle of equal treatment between men and women to the access to and supply of goods and services, including housing.
Directive 2000/43/ECC	Provides a framework for combating discrimination based on race or ethnicity in various areas, including employment, education, and social protections.	Direct	Ensures equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin in access to housing, prohibiting discrimination.
International Protection Act 2015	Outlines the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland, including access to housing.	Direct	Ensures that asylum seekers and refugees have access to housing and outlines their housing rights.

Source: Author's elaboration.

However, ensuring that those policies and legislations in fact protect migrants from discrimination in housing faces significant challenges, especially within the context of Ireland's housing crisis. One of the foremost challenges is the severe shortage of affordable housing, which exacerbates competition for limited resources and can lead to discriminatory practices. Landlords may prioritise tenants perceived as less risky or more financially stable, often to the detriment of migrants who might face implicit stereotypes. This scarcity makes it difficult to enforce anti-discrimination laws effectively, as landlords can choose tenants based on subjective criteria (Reosti, 2020), a practice that is often hard to identify, regulate and monitor.




Another critical challenge is the inadequacy of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. While the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 and the Residential Tenancies Act 2004-2021 provide robust legal frameworks, the actual enforcement of these laws is elusive. Regulatory bodies like the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) are often under-resourced and may struggle to address all reported cases of discrimination on a timely manner (see Kapila, 2024). Additionally, migrants may be unaware of their rights or hesitant to report discrimination due to fear of retaliation (e.g. forced eviction), which is heightened the power imbalance in the landlord–tenant relationship. The gap between legislation and practical enforcement severely undermines the effectiveness of these protective measures.

### **3. Barriers to Housing: A Literature Review of Discrimination, Inequality and Disadvantage**

Housing has a profound impact on various aspects of life, making fair and equal access to housing essential. The shortage of affordable housing amid a deep housing crisis disproportionately affect migrants, as they are more likely to have difficulty accessing social housing supports (Mercy Law Resource Centre, 2021; Focus Ireland, 2022). It is even more challenging when migrants are stigmatised by their skin colour, religion, nationality and/or ethnicity. This literature review provides an overview of the current state of knowledge in relation to housing discrimination, disadvantage, and inequality in the field of housing in Ireland and internationally.


#### **3.1 Housing Discrimination**

Housing discrimination is the practice of treating or behaving differently towards an individual or group in the housing market on the basis of their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sex, familial status, disability, income or other protected characteristics. In this research, housing discrimination refers to patterns of discrimination that affect a person’s ability to access the housing market. This is the case because housing discrimination is often not overt or easily observable, making it challenging to define what constitutes discrimination and to measure its



prevalence accurately (Pager and Shepherd, 2008). Housing discrimination is illegal in many countries, as it violates various equality laws, such as the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 that prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation and education in Ireland. Other examples at national levels are the Equality Act 2010 (Part 4) in the UK; the General Equal Treatment Act in Germany that protects tenants specifically from racial discrimination; and the Basic Housing Law in Portugal. At the EU level, the legal basis for protection against discrimination in housing includes: Directive 2000/43/EC (equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, applying to ‘access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing’ (art. 3(1)(h) and Directive 2004/113/EC: ‘equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services’. At the international level, several UN human rights conventions protect against discrimination in housing (e.g. the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, art. 11 and art. 2) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990, art. 43(1)). See Table 1 above for more information on this kind of legislation.


The existing literature on discrimination at both the Irish and international levels tends to concentrate predominantly on the discrimination faced by individuals belonging to different ethnicities and nationalities. In the particularly context of housing search, as mentioned, housing discrimination is often subtle and hard to document, but it can occur in the form of direct abuse by perpetrators, such as racist comments and insults, racist graffiti and/or other damage (Ní Chonail and Buczkowska, 2016; Reosti, 2020; Lukes et al. 2018). Empirical research on the topic is often challenge to conduct due to: a) difficulties in accessing data, since housing discrimination can be sly and difficult to detect, making it empirically hard to quantify and study; b) low reporting, as many victims of housing discrimination might not report their experiences for a myriad of reasons (e.g. fear of retaliation) and c) legal barriers, as people facing housing discrimination are often reluctant to pursue legal action due to the high costs, lengthy legal process, the burden of proof required to establish discrimination, and overall distrust in the legal system.



The literature on discrimination presents numerous techniques that attempt to isolate and document its effects on a variety of areas, from the labour market to education, to housing and gender bias. Quantitatively, these studies often use perceptions of discrimination, surveys, experimental approaches (such as field experiments or paired testing), outcomes between groups, and reports by potential discriminators (Pager and Shepherd, 2008, p.2-6). Field experiments and surveys have become popular in recent years as relevant tools to measure and document housing discrimination. In contrast, analysis of legal records and attitudes towards the marginalised are rarely used by researchers in the field, given the difficulty in accessing accurate data and the need to combine it with more qualitative studies, which makes it an even more complex task.

As the most pervasive method to identify and measure discrimination in various domains, including employment and housing, field experiments involve sending applications to potential employers, landlords, or lenders. They are divided into audit tests and correspondence tests. In audit tests, a pair of testers are matched according to all relevant characteristics (height or academic background, for example). They do not match in relation to the characteristic of interest (e.g., race or gender), when applying for the same job, accommodation, or loan. Audit tests often involve direct contact with the discriminator (e.g., a face-to-face job interview), which can provide rich data on the specific forms of discrimination that occur and the reasons why they occur.

Correspondence tests, sometimes named 'email studies', involve sending pairs of testers who are similar on all relevant characteristics, except for the characteristic of interest, to apply for the same job position or housing by submitting identical CVs or application letters, often using applicants names with a high likelihood of association with either white European or people with an African or Middle Eastern background, for example. Correspondence tests often involve less direct contact with the discriminator but can still provide valuable information on the prevalence and extent of discrimination in a given setting. The goal in both methods (audit and correspondence) is to compare the responses of the potential employer or landlord




to the two applications to see if there is evidence of discrimination based on the characteristic of interest (gender, race, nationality, etc).

Research using field experiments has provided strong causal evidence of racial and ethnic discrimination in housing. Auspurg et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of field experiments examining ethnic discrimination in rental housing markets. The authors collected data from 76 studies conducted across 24 countries and found that, on average, minority groups are less likely to receive positive responses to their inquiries about rental housing compared to the majority group. They also found that differences in treatment between minority and majority groups is significant and persistent over time, even after controlling for various factors, such as the location and type of housing being studied. The authors also found that discrimination is more likely to occur in countries with high levels of segregation, income inequality, and xenophobia. Rich's (2014) meta-analysis included 19 field experiments carried out in the US, Scandinavia, and southern Europe and found high levels of discrimination against Middle Eastern men in Sweden, against disabled residents of Chicago and against Albanians in Greece.

Studies of housing discrimination are dominated by American literature. This is due to historic levels of prejudice and racial segregation against black and Hispanic communities in the U.S., which has both generate housing justice movements and attracted the attention of academics in the field. Several of those American studies focus on housing disadvantage and discrimination against poor and black communities (e.g. Korver-Glenn, 2021; Flage, 2018) as well as against Hispanic communities (Gaddis, 2017) and people with disabilities. Overall, these studies, experimental or not, have found that segregation frequently overlaps with a range of other inequalities, including poverty, unemployment, housing quality and overcrowding, as well as crime. This type of study shows that the intersectionality of overlapping identities (e.g., race, gender, or disability, etc.) impact experiences of housing discrimination.

European studies have revealed discrimination against Arabs, Muslims, Africans, Eastern Europeans, Roma, and refugees and migrants in general. Bosch et al.



(2015) found that discrimination against immigrants in the housing market is persistent and aligned with the level of migration in different areas. Similarly, Wencel and Prawnej (2012) found strong levels of housing discrimination against Roma people in Poland. Malheiros and Fonseca (2011) found that a considerable portion of Brazilians and Portuguese-speaking Africans in Portugal suffer housing discrimination, especially females from those regions. The study notes that landlords are reluctant to rent to these groups due to fear of association with anti-social behaviour. A more recent Portuguese study has found that xenophobia is the most prevalent form of discrimination, followed by social discrimination, racism, and linguistic prejudice, leading to percentage 90.4% of immigrants experiencing housing discrimination, in the Portuguese rental market (CBL, 2023). Similarly, Zaroni and Días (2024) study showed that Venezuelan migrants in Colombia face substantial discrimination in the housing rental market, with real estate agents showing a significant preference for Colombian over Venezuelan applicants, highlighting that discriminatory practices are widely accepted among the interviewed real estate agents. These findings underscore the persistent and multifaceted nature of housing discrimination across Europe and beyond, stressing the urgent need for comprehensive policies and interventions to address systemic issues.

To date, the only field experiment on housing discrimination carried out in Ireland is Gusciute et al. (2022), which investigates ethnic and nationality discrimination in the Irish rental housing market. The study uses a field experiment approach where pairs of testers with different ethnic or nationality backgrounds but similar profiles try to rent properties advertised online or in newspapers. The results show that discrimination is stronger in the private rental sector and among landlords who own fewer properties, with testers with Irish names receiving more responses and viewing opportunities than testers with non-Irish names. Additionally, they found discrimination among minority groups: Polish applicants are more likely to be invited to view an apartment than Nigerian applicants, and females receive more invitations to view apartments than male applicants. This study is in line with other existing studies indicating that black non-Irish and black Irish are at a greater social disadvantage in the country (McGinnity et al. 2018).




### 3.2 Perceptions of Discrimination

Other studies have focused on perceptions of discrimination, offering important insights into the experiences of marginalised groups who face discrimination in accessing housing. For example, there is compelling evidence indicating that perceived discrimination can have negative effects on mental health. A study by Kachen et al. (2022) showed that housing discrimination can lead to psychological distress and suicide attempts among transgender and gender non-binary adults. Another study by Cross et al. (2023) found that four marginalised populations (homeless individuals, refugees, indigenous peoples, and LGBTQ+ individuals) are more exposed to racial health disparities, with housing discrimination a critical driver of social and residential segregation. These studies present strong evidence of self-reported discrimination and its association with health outcomes (and other policy areas) and are of particular interest in the context of discrimination in housing.

Despite their relevance, there has been limited but growing research on perceived discrimination in housing, especially in areas that investigate discrimination against migrants and refugees. A relevant part of those studies is based on self-reporting data, which refers to information provided by individuals about themselves. This type of data stems from the personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, behaviours or attributes of the individual or group under analysis; and more nuanced understandings using qualitative research are needed to uncover subtle and less overt forms of housing discrimination that may not be captured through traditional quantitative methods.


Self-reporting data provides valuable insights into people's perceptions but it is also subject to certain biases, such as under or over-reporting (although rare) and personal predispositions, which can affect the accuracy and reliability of the data. In spite of its limitations, perceived discrimination is a relevant element of research for policy makers and academics, since discrimination is a complex phenomenon and may occur in a multitude of forms that are more less perceptible or more subtle (Lopes, 2021). It also reflects the direct experiences of immigrants and is also an indicator of the wider societal context and its level of social cohesion (McGinnity and



Gijsberts, 2015). Perceived discrimination is also relevant for the understanding of structural bias that can permeate the design of public services and exclude certain groups as service users.

Previous studies have help us understand perceived housing discrimination. Dion (2001) examined the perceptions of housing discrimination among immigrants in Toronto, finding that a significant proportion of them perceived discrimination in various aspects of the housing market and that 'visible minorities' (specifically, Chinese and West Indian Blacks) perceived considerably more discrimination towards them. Ghekiere et al. (2022) found that the perceived financial situation and the communication skills of immigrants among real estate agents contributes to discrimination, but only when other selection mechanisms are not present (e.g. knowing and/or trusting the applicant beforehand).

Discrimination, particularly racial discrimination in Ireland's private rental market, has attracted international academic interest. However, limited research exists on the discrimination experienced by migrants in the private rental market, an area to which this research intends to contribute. Findings from studies based on Ireland generally focus on how discrimination negatively affecting minorities and vulnerable' groups ability to find and retain housing (Bieri, 2024; Finn and Mayock, 2022; Grotti et al., 2018; Gusciute et al., 2022). Furthermore, the research focused on Ireland has produced some interesting results on perceived discrimination using self-reporting data. In their study, McGinnity et al. (2017) provided an analysis of the distribution of self-reported discrimination cases across different areas of public life: the labour market, public services, and private services. This study found that discrimination in access to housing services was the most pervasive, with a prevalence rate of 4.1%. This rate of discrimination in housing services has remained relatively stable over the same period. A previous similar study, conducted in 2012, found that among minority groups, people from black backgrounds were five times more likely to report discrimination than white respondents. Black people were followed by Asians, reporting housing discrimination at a rate 3.7 times greater than white respondents (McGinnity et al., 2012). A study by Machowska-Kosiack and Barry (2022), examining the experiences of second generation young ethnic




minority people in Ireland, noted that young people perceived several barriers to access housing, such as segregation between advantaged/disadvantaged areas, stereotyping and fear of verbal abuse and violence amongst many ethnic minority families.

According to the research results by Grotti et al. (2018), housing discrimination is a significant challenge for individuals and families searching for accommodation in the private rental market in Ireland. They found that close to one-third of the surveyed participants reported experiencing discrimination during their housing search, with most incidents taking place during the viewing stage of the rental process. The rate of discrimination was considerably higher for black respondents (17.1%). The second most discriminated group were Asians (5.8%). These results align with international literature which finds that black people experience particularly high levels of discrimination (e.g. Gusciute et al. 2022; Korver-Glenn, 2021; Flage, 2018; McGinnity et al. 2018; Dion, 2001; Pager and Shepherd, 2008; Michael, 2016; Cross, 2023).

For asylum seekers living in Direct Provision (or DP, Ireland's system of asylum seeker accommodation) low rental affordability and discrimination in the housing market, combined with labour market challenges, result in a disadvantaged position in the private rental market. Asylum seekers often face discrimination from landlords based on their status as refugees and ethnicity, as well as a lack of information on how to access welfare payments and search for housing and the fact they were coming from institutional accommodation (Bieri, 2024; Murphy and Stapleton, 2024; Finn and Mayock, 2022).

### 3.3 Constrained Housing Markets and Discriminatory Practices

As a scarce resource, housing can be seen as limited, enabling landlords or letting agencies to select their preferred tenants. This situation can create opportunities for discrimination against ethnic minorities and a preference for Irish nationals (Gusciute et al., 2022). The dysfunctional housing market has also made it more difficult to enforce and realise certain rights for migrants. The competitiveness of the housing market might make it more difficult to prove cases of possible discrimination




by a landlord against a prospective tenant based on protected characteristics, such as ethnicity and housing benefits (Murphy and Stapleton, 2024).

Persistent housing discrimination and inequality between vulnerable groups is the product of complex and multifaceted influences. It is a person's social characteristics - intersected with wider structural cultures and institutions - that shape their experiences in the rental market (Wolifson et al., 2023). The weight of existing evidence suggests that discrimination against immigrants and non-white groups is particularly challenging. This issue is connected to both the structural challenges of the housing market and policies that do not protect vulnerable groups. Combined with discrimination against non-white migrants, especially those from black and Asian backgrounds, the problem of access to housing remains an important factor in shaping contemporary patterns of inequality and disadvantage among migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Existing research indicate that several issues interact in complex ways and create barriers to accessing housing for migrants. These studies highlight the need for understanding the needs and experiences of the migrant community and necessity to address housing discrimination against migrants which will require more research and analysis focusing on housing discrimination – and on how to stop it. While these studies have explored the profile and some of the experiences migrant had in the housing sector, research has yet to examine the multiple factors interact to create barriers to housing access for migrants. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive research and policy efforts to mitigate discrimination and promote inclusive housing practices.

#### **4. Research Design And Methods**

This study employs social science research techniques to investigate housing access within migrant communities in Ireland. To this end, the research utilizes qualitative interviews with tenants from migrant backgrounds. The study's timeframe is January 2023 to March 2024, during which the fieldwork was conducted. In total, 41 migrant tenants were interviewed. A semi-structured interview style was chosen




to explore participants' thoughts, experiences, and beliefs regarding migrant experiences in accessing housing and housing exclusion in the private rented sector.

#### 4.1 Data Collection - Recruitment and Sampling Methods

The growing diversity of the population in Ireland, coupled with ethnic disparities housing constitute compelling reasons for the inclusion of ethnically diverse migrants in this research. Recruiting ethnically diverse migrants is crucial to ensure adequate representation of non-dominant ethnic groups for better understanding housing disparities and improving services through research-informed practices. In doing research with migrant groups, a persistent challenge is to avoid the risk that the voices of individuals from non-dominant groups are often not included (Renert et al., 2013). Therefore, I employed multiple strategies to reach potential participants, including using cultural insiders and unaffiliated intermediaries as recruiters, and advertising the research across various platforms accessible to ethnically diverse populations (as suggested by Knobf et al., 2007). Participants were selected according to three criteria: 1. Having low-to-middle income; 2. Having attempted or managed to secure accommodation in the PRS over the past 3 years; and 3. Being over 18-years old.

A call for research participants was disseminated via social media platforms, specifically Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and published on ActiveLink, an online platform that belongs network for Irish non-profit organizations, with extensive reach among charities in Ireland. Additionally, organisations such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Threshold, and the Dublin City Public Participation Network, which focus on migrant welfare, housing issues, and citizen participation, respectively, helped promote the call by sharing it with their subscribers, members, and followers. The recruitment notice utilised culturally sensitive materials, aligning with best research practices to ensure clarity and transparency about the project's details and risks, thus facilitating informed decisions about participation.



The interviews took place virtually with the majority of them being conducted in English, and some in Portuguese and Spanish. In one of the interviews with migrants from Turkey, I used the help of a Turkish-speaker colleague to help with the translation.

## 4.2 Data Analysis

The dataset was coded in NVivo to unravel the themes used by interviews in defining their experience in the PRS, including their own experiences with discrimination, strategies to circumvent challenges and expectations for their housing futures. In addition, all participants interviewed for this research were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. I categorised themes related to discrimination, particularly during the early stages of their migration pathways, and the challenges faced in the private rental market. Using deductive coding, I analysed the data for themes related to the causes of the perceived discrimination, proposed solutions, power (landlord-tenant relation), as well as identity and ethnic discrimination. I outlined the prevalent concepts from the codes and then analysed how these concepts interacted in different and meaningful ways in each of the themes.

## 4.3 Coding and analysis procedures

In coding the interviews, I developed a deep engagement with the data via reading, note taking, re-reading and re-writing. To code for themes, I first utilised an Initial Coding to generate a comprehensive list of codes from the data (Saldaña, 2009). During the Second Cycle coding, I reorganised these codes into broader categories by identifying thematic or conceptual similarities, which reduced the initial 48 codes to a more manageable set of 22, 15, and 10 codes across different categories. Axial Coding was then applied to describe the properties and dimensions of these categories and to explore the relationships between them. Finally, Focused Coding further refined and consolidated the data, resulting in a final set of eight categories, which were synthesized into three meta-categories, facilitating a more systematic understand of the data collected.



#### 4.4 Ethical rigour

Research ethics were taken seriously throughout the research process and closely followed The Housing Agency Ethical Framework 2022. This included obtaining: ethical clearance from the DCU Humanities & Social Sciences Faculty Research Ethics Committee; informed consent from all research participants; maintaining confidentiality and anonymity at all times and ensuring that the research does not harm research participants in any way.

#### 4.5 Theoretical underpinning

As a means in scholarly inquiry, this study is underpinned by Hermeneutic phenomenology, which is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world (Neubauer, 2019). By embracing hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers can interpret the narratives of migrant individuals within the context of their lifeworld, acknowledging the inseparable connection between an individual and their surroundings, including social, cultural, and political contexts. In this way, the research demonstrates the complexities migrants face in accessing housing in the private rented sector to uncover the deeper layers of migrant experiences related to housing, shedding light on how individuals perceive and navigate their housing situations within the context of their house experiences in Ireland.

### **5. Results - Migrant's experiences in the Irish Housing Sector**

#### 5.1 Participants' profile

Of the sample of 41, 18 participants were male and 23 were female. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 49 years, with a majority in their 30s or 40s. They arrived in Ireland from a variety of countries, including Albania (1), Algeria (1), Bangladesh (2), Brazil (4), Chile (1), Germany (1), Greece (2), India (4), Indonesia (1), Italy (1), Kuwait (1), Latvia (1), Mauritius (1), Morocco (1), Nigeria (2), Pakistan (3), Philippines (1), Poland (3), Romania (1), Russia (1), South Africa (2), Sudan (1), Tunisia (1), Turkey (3), and Venezuela (1). Ten participants were of EU citizenship and 31 participants were from countries outside the European Union (EU), while at

the time of the interview, two participants were in the process of securing Irish citizenship via naturalisation and another two were Irish citizens. The sample also include two individuals with double-nationality other than Irish, such as Brazilian-born with a Portuguese or Italian passport by descent (see summary in Table 2 below). This sample profile is ‘super-diverse’ and reflects the increasingly complex and diverse nature of contemporary migration patterns, encompassing a broad range of migration factors, such as varied legal statuses, reasons for migration (such as asylum seeking, students or migration for job purposes), and cultural backgrounds (Vertovec, 2017).


Table 3 outlines the housing situations of the participants, categorised by their current living arrangements and the corresponding number of individuals in each category. A total of 32 participants were renting entire houses or apartments on the private rental market. Six participants were renting only a room, either as a licensee or in a shared housing arrangement (e.g. renting a bedroom in a home shared with others). A smaller group of three participants own their homes having acquired a mortgage in recent years before the interview took place. The study’s participants had varied lengths of residence in Ireland, ranging from recent arrivals to those who had been living in the country for up to 19 years. A majority (n = 24) arrived between 2008 and 2022. All migrants initially resided in the private rented sector at some point in the years the proceeded the study.

Table 2 - Participants profile by immigration status and gender

Status	EU	Countries outside EU	Total
<b>Male</b>	5	13	18
<b>Female</b>	5	18	23
<b>Total</b>	10	31	41

Table 3 - Participants' housing situations at the time of the interview

Housing situation	Number of participants
Renting privately (whole housing or apartment)	32
Renting room only (licensee/room or housing sharing)	6
Homeowners	3



The employment situations of the study's participants were of stable employment, precarious or fixed-term contracts, and academic scholarship; none of the participants reported to be unemployed. At the time of interview, the majority were working full-time (often in the IT sector), but also in the charity and services sector; three reported part-time employment and another three were full-time PhD students, some with short-term, precarious contracts (e.g. tutoring or temporary lecturer). Only one participant informed to be in receipt of a housing support, such as HAP (Housing Assistance Payment).


Overall, the sample illustrates the diverse and complex nature of the migrant population in Ireland, encompassing diverse ethnic backgrounds, housing situations, and employment statuses with continued residence in the private rented sector, often on precarious arrangements, as it will be discussed next.

## 5.2 Experiences of migrants in the private rental sector

A detailed examination of the participants' experiences in Ireland's private rental sector revealed three unique experiences. These were linked to the participants' being immigrants, skin colour or nationality, and the expectations of landlords and estate agents based on their status, and occasionally, their gender as well. Three distinct elements emerged during the interviews, identified as: **(1) discrimination** - housing discrimination as a barrier in the home-finding process; **(2) challenges** - the challenges of securing a home and strategies to overcome these barriers; **(3) aspirations** - housing futures, including desire for home ownership and housing type preferences.

### 5.2.1 Patterns of Housing Discrimination Experienced by Migrant Tenants

The themes from the analysis suggest a complex picture of housing discrimination faced by migrant tenants. They highlight various dimensions of discrimination and the challenges migrants encounter in the housing market. A recurring pattern in the interviews is the role of ethnic and cultural background in shaping housing



experiences, highlighting its significance in relation to housing discrimination landscape. Nearly all research participants (n=39) reported instances of discrimination when searching for a home for themselves. Two participants said they did not identify discrimination against them but that this happened with people they know.


Participants reported that unspoken preferences and rejections without explanation are frequent during their housing search. This often manifests as rejection without clear reasons or a lack of follow-up after initial screenings by landlords, particularly targeting migrant newcomers who disclose their status. This practice was studied in detail by researchers at the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR, 2021), who focused on capturing the discriminatory behaviour that occurs when migrants and racialised newcomers make initial contact with a housing provider and found that house viewing candidates were ignored more often by potential candidates. For instance, in this research, Neha, who moved to Ireland from India in 2019, overheard comments about preferences for specific nationalities while viewing a home for herself:

*I have seen like, some people preferring the Irish or European. You have a good job, a good salary, you will think it will be OK, and then nothing. But I just overheard from people and you know conversation that you know, they're preferring someone from Ireland, and you are from India... Nobody will say on upfront, but this is something that happens.*

Perceptions of discrimination turn the experience of finding a place to live even more competitive. As the selection of the new tenants is at the discretion of the landlords or real estate agent, the selection criteria might appear opaque to applicants. As noted by Neha, as above,

*See, it's like become like a competitive exam. You know, something where you're applying and you're just trying to be your best and prove your yourself to be a good tenant. (...) It can be a personal bias or, you know, individual bias, because of the judgement made against your whole community.*

In many instances, research participants experienced interactions with landlords and estate agents that involved discriminatory conduct that was very subtle. In some



cases (n=8) once the immigrant status was disclosed – sometimes together with other information, such as family arrangements (e.g. female lone parent), the participant no longer received a response to their email queries and communication stopped altogether. For new arrivals in the country in particular, a non-response to a housing view application can foment housing exclusion, as the silence makes it hard for the applicants to understand why they were rejected. Bieri (2024) has found similar results with refugees in Ireland and finds that those experiences impacted refugees in acquiring a better understanding of the private rental market. This indicates a form of discrimination where the mention of one's origin can lead to reduced chances of receiving a response or being considered for housing. For example, Ahmad, who arrived in Ireland in 2016 from Kuwait, tells what happened when he was asked the question about this country of origin in an exchange with a landlord.

*I found in some places I would be asked here 'where are you from? And if I say, from the Middle East, they would not respond or they would say, oh no, this is just for women or this or that, you know, for girls, they would make an excuse.*

The impact of a name or accent in housing applications is another critical factor, as participants spoke about a differential treatment based on name (n=11). For example, one interviewee observed that their Eastern Europe husband's accent led to a dismissive response from an estate agent: "The estate agent said: are you going to buy the house or just make me waste time" (Anna from Brazil, arrived in Ireland in 2016). Similarly, other participants noted that an Irish name on an email would receive faster responses compared to an ethnic-sounding name. These reflections refer to a bias where the applicant's ethnic or national identity influences the landlord's perception and treatment, which is often hidden but at the same time painfully real to migrant tenants making an application. For instance, Aylin, a woman from Turkey who arrived in Ireland in 2003, explained how subtle forms of discrimination, including differences in response to emails based on name ethnicity, can still undermine individuals.

*They don't necessarily have to make an overtly racist statement, but they can still undermine you in the conversation. Obviously, you can't read people's hearts and minds, but sometimes it's clear that discrimination is at play. In some cases, it was*

*100% evident to me, and I couldn't think of any other explanation. But you can politely decline people without making them feel undervalued.*


Housing discrimination against migrants operates through nuanced and systemic mechanisms that can be difficult to pinpoint but are pervasive in affecting housing opportunities. These mechanisms include a preference for local applicants, biased communication practices, and differential treatment based on identity markers.

### ***Power Imbalances and Infantilisation***

Landlords often hold substantial control over tenants' living conditions and tenure security and this power dynamic is a major factor in shaping tenants' experiences of insecurity (see Byrne and McArdle, 2020). Discriminatory practices based on race, ethnicity, or cultural practices affects access to housing and interactions with landlords, reinforcing barriers for migrant tenants. This power dynamic in the landlord-tenant relationship has been relatively well-studied, and research has found that this relationship in Ireland is marked by a significant power asymmetry. Multiple interviewees made reference to the power dynamics and infantilising behaviour as a recurring issue in landlord-tenant relationships. Migrant tenants encountered condescending behaviour from landlords, who treated them as less capable or in need of guidance, reflecting a broader pattern of infantilising and undermining migrant individuals. For example, Emre, who arrived from Turkey in 2018, feels restricted on his right to privacy and speaks of a loss of control in relation to his lifestyle.

*Sometimes he [the landlord] comes to our house to check things. He comes here like, asking, why did you close the windows or why didn't you clean here? My wife was told on the phone when we complained about the mould that this might have to do with your lifestyle... you know, your 'Turkish style'...If I wasn't a migrant I think he won't say things like that.*

The issue of control manifests unevenly among tenants, particularly those in the PRS, involving both migrants and non-migrants. Renters frequently face issue of control of their rented space, with significant limitations regarding modifications to their living spaces: they may not be allowed to adorn walls or rearranging furniture.



Restrictions often extend to many landlords prohibiting pet ownership – even with evidence that pet damage is infrequent, not severe, and in the vast majority of cases, there is no financial loss to the landlord (Simcock et al., 2024).

To a considerable extent, this type of control is not exclusive to migrants – they can encompass aspects of tenants' lives beyond their homes, potentially leading to feelings of infantilisation, a phenomenon documented in the literature on homeownership, a sector where housing satisfaction and well-being is much higher (Zavisca and Gerber, 2016). But considering the layers of complexity in the housing system regarding the exclusion of migrant communities, this infantilisation adds another layer of exclusion and stress to research participants' housing search and tenancy. The emotional and psychological effects of feeling infantilised or disempowered are significant, impacting tenants' overall well-being and their interactions with the housing system. An example is Alejandro, who arrived from Venezuela in 2015; he compares his experience as a tenant as of a teenager being told what to do.

*I've been living by myself for seven years now. I went out for university abroad. I would go on trips and tell my parents the last minute. The landlady thinks like as if my mother and tell me to clean my room. I don't know, I'm saying that I'm beyond the age where a parent or a higher figure assume that they can show me what I should be doing in my life.*


Migrant tenants frequently experience housing inequality, worsened by infantilisation and discrimination and these issues have cumulative negative impacts on health and well-being. The paternalistic behaviour of some landlords towards migrants undermines tenants' autonomy, reinforcing a sense of powerlessness in a housing market where landlords have a great deal of discretion and little oversight (Rosen and Garboden, 2022).

### 5.2.2 The challenges of securing a home and understanding the Irish private rental market and how to mitigate those

#### ***Trust-Based Networks***

While the majority of tenants in Ireland have a history of renting in the private rented sector – with 59% of tenants surveyed by RTB in the 2022/23 period stating that





they were ‘living in another rental property before moving into their current property’ (RTB, 2023), migrants initial entry to the private rented sector can be as described as a ‘shock to the system’, as put by a participant. This quote was from Anna, and it suggests how the process of finding housing in a new country can be culturally overwhelming and confusing and that learning about the local housing system and norms can be a steep learning curve for new arrivals.

It is a common experience among migrants to be confronted by the reality of the Irish housing sector. Obtaining knowledge on how to navigate the Irish private rental market and understanding its nuances is an important step in finding a place to live (see CCHR, 2022). Introduction to the Irish housing system was challenging for nearly all participants, due not only to limited financial resources but also to experiences of discrimination and poor knowledge about the housing system in Ireland. Their experience varied in relation to their status, such as students, workers or part of a family.

The reliance on personal connections and networks to find housing was a recurring theme. Having connections or acquaintances who are familiar with the local housing market or who can make referrals significantly eases the process of finding accommodation. Interviewees suggested that knowing someone in Ireland (either personally or professionally) can greatly enhance one's chances of securing a rental. This highlights the importance of network-based support in navigating the rental market. As noted by João, who arrived from Brazil in 2018, it was via a working contact that he and his family found a place to live when they first arrived, despite having little contact with locals at the time.

*So my manager found out that I wanted to move here. He had conversations with friends, with a relative; and found a house for me to live in.*

Having local contacts helps migrants navigate the housing search in the private rental market, as they often lack the skills and familiarity with the housing market and online rental platforms, such as Daft.ie. Additionally, they may face challenges in communicating with landlords due to low English proficiency or lack of confidence, and they fear falling prey to rental scams, which are common in Ireland. Laila, who




arrived in Dublin from Bangladesh in 2021, explained how having Irish friends supported her housing search.

*I found it easier to find housing because I already knew someone here, a friend of a friend who is from West Dublin. If you ask a friend, especially if they're Irish they'll know more about this [rental market], and they can help you search on these sites, like Daft, like with which locations to search and how to approach the estate agent with the right kind of documents.*

However, for many participants (n=22), there was not a network of local Irish friends to facilitate access to what was perceived as reliable information about housing. For several of the interviewed, searching for accommodation was a highly stressful experience, often accompanied by discrimination, shortness of time due to eviction notices and fear of rental scams. This group has to recourse to strategies, such as using a mix of online platforms, social media, and personal networks, depending on their familiarity, longevity of residency and resources.

Immigrant communities often assist one another by sharing information about available housing or by acting as intermediaries; a support network is vital for many newcomers. This community support works generally in two ways: (1) information sharing and (2) acting as intermediaries (e.g. translator, guarantor, providing reference letters). In relation to information sharing, immigrant communities frequently use informal networks to disseminate information about available housing. Online platforms like Facebook groups play a significant role in finding housing, especially for specific communities (e.g., Indians in Dublin or Brazilians in Dublin), but some are student/professional-based, such as the Trinity Accommodation group.

Although not explicitly political, these groups often serve as spaces of solidarity, providing community-generated information to address questions raised by their members (see Santamarina Guerrero, 2023). Highly active, they feature numerous daily posts and intense competition for available accommodations. Budi, who moved from Indonesia in 2019, shares his experience of relying solely on social media platforms to search for housing.




*I didn't even know about Daft[.ie] or the other places, I just went straight to Facebook groups because I knew I would have options there, especially for a shared room, which was really what I could afford.*

Many of the ads in those spaces are for shared accommodation. A brief search by the author made clear that: the accommodation listed on those online community platforms is not necessarily cheaper than those announced on larger rental platform such as Daft.ie and that several ads were for room sharing and bed sharing. Coupled with several reports of overcrowding in the rental sector that affects an important part of the migrant community (Grotti et al., 2018; Russel et al., 2021), accommodation on these spaces often seemed of low standard and involved sub-letting. A number of participants (n=7) disclosed that at some point in the past they either viewed or lived in rental accommodation that was substandard and not adequate for living. Anna highlights how the lack of options makes people accept low quality accommodation, and how the landlord-tenant dynamic comes up again in this process:

*I knew I wasn't supposed to live in a mouldy house, but what was I going to say to the landlady? If I said something, she would raise the rent. What do you do then? So you put up the situation and not just me. People, they, in a way, have this awareness that it's not ideal, but they don't have other options.*

Intermediaries have an ability to provide support in situations where migrants lack the tools to navigate the housing market independently. Their role might be informal but essential in contexts where institutional support is limited or where the migrants' social capital is low. For many interviewees (n=23), intermediaries were friends and/or fellow migrants living in Ireland for longer than themselves. These intermediaries were helpful to reduce the information asymmetry that migrants often face, and so help to diminish the risks of exploitation and enhancing the chances of finding suitable accommodation. Intermediaries also can provide crucial translation support and explain the nuances of the rental market in the migrant's native language. While essential, their support is informal and might not be up to date, as they are in fact filling a gap due to lack of institutional support for migrants arriving in the country. But this assistance helps newcomers understand their rights and the specifics of rental agreements, in relation rental deposits and right to privacy for



example. Sofia, who arrived in Ireland from Italy in 2008, spoke of her difficulties not knowing where to find reliable information and how to navigate the rental system.

*It can be nearly impossible to find a good home without good English skills, local support, all this. I did receive help. I talked to acquaintances that have rented houses, they gave me info that I wasn't necessarily aware of. So I'd say like through different channels information were accessible.*

International students studying in Dublin often face significant challenges in accessing the housing market. Unlike domestic students, international students typically arrive without an established social network in Ireland. This gap in social capital means they often depend on university-provided resources or informal networks formed with other international students. However, these networks may not have the same depth of local knowledge or influence as those available to domestic students. Ananya, a postgraduate student from India at the time of the interview, recall the several housing moves due to issues such as high rent and very poor housing quality.

*There's still several very basic issues in our house that I'm just like I mean, no longer surprised, but like when I first moved in, I was just like, I can't believe these things [mould] were like issues here, considering how much we're paying for it.*

While informal networks play a strong role in helping others find a home, registered organisations and information providers are crucial in assisting migrants to navigate these complexities by offering advice and advocacy services. These services are essential for addressing issues such as poor-quality housing, lack of knowledge about tenants' rights and discrimination, to which migrants are particularly vulnerable. Migrants often lack knowledge of their housing rights and are hesitant to assert these rights due to fear of repercussions, such as conflict with landlords. This fear, combined with language barriers and difficulties in accessing reliable information, makes it hard for migrants to advocate for themselves. Organisation such as Threshold (housing charity) and the Citizen Information Board (the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of public services information) offer specialist housing advice services and have seen an increase in the demand of migrants looking for housing information, especially from migrants in vulnerable situations (Norris et al., 2022).

### ***Mitigation strategies to avoid discrimination***

A number of participants employed cultural and strategic adaptations to secure housing and mitigate discrimination: use of their 'most friendly' identity marker and leverage of professional qualifications. Some individuals (n=10) used strategic approaches based on their background, as opting for using their anglicised names on applications to increase their chances of success (e.g., names like William, David, Alice, Victoria). For participants with dual citizenship, especially those originally from outside the EU but holding a European passport, this background proved advantageous. For instance, Carla, originally from Brazil but raised in an EU country, utilised her European documents to facilitate the housing search upon arriving from Germany in 2020. She described how leveraging her European background and passport significantly improved her chances of finding accommodation, illustrating the practical benefits of such strategic identity use in navigating potential biases within the housing market.

*When I was talking to the management of this building, I didn't tell the manager that I was Brazilian. I used my European passport because I already had this feeling that it would give me a better opportunity. But in the previous apartment, I used my Brazilian document because the people managing the process were Brazilian. So I see a bit that it makes a difference, but it's quite subtle, isn't it?*

For those without a European passport or an anglophone-sounding name, the discrimination challenges remain the same.

A second strategy is to focus on professional qualifications in the hope to influence landlords' perceptions and potentially mitigate discrimination. Professional qualifications and social status, like having a PhD or a high paying job are commonly seen as positive trait in tenant selection and underscores how professional status can affect housing opportunities. For example, two postgraduate students shared how being associated with an Irish university assisted them in being viewed as good tenants, even if they had little social capital.

*They would be welcoming, and the fact that I have done my PhD here, and I'm teaching at the university put me up like the social hierarchy. That matters a lot. (Ahmad)*

*Well, you know, maybe like, they'll overlook my appearance if they see that I have a PhD and that I must be like, you know, suitable or whatever. (Ananya)*

The necessity for some migrants to highlight their professional qualifications to counteract potential housing discrimination corroborates existing research on landlords' discriminatory practices and opaque tenant selection processes (Gaddis, 2017; Flages, 2018; Wolifson et al., 2023).

### 5.2.3 Housing futures and aspirations


Many participants expressed distinct preferences regarding their ideal future housing, encompassing a range of features, types, and locations. These preferences include a desire for homes with ample space, accessibility, and a connection to nature. Notably, these priorities align closely with those of the native population (Molloy et al., 2018). Interviewees frequently emphasised the importance of having a home that offers a high quality of living (n=37). A critical factor in their housing choices is the location, with a strong preference for proximity to urban centres, public transportation, and essential amenities. Aylin from Turkey and Nusrat from India expressed their housing preferences for the future with attention to accessibility and connectivity in their ideal housing.

*In the future, a house that is accessible, with links, transport links, not somewhere in the middle of the country, and have good social activities like shops around... definitely bigger than I previously imagined. (Aylin)*

*Ideally, it would be a one-bedroom apartment in a safe neighbourhood with good public transport links... a place where I can feel settled. (Nusrat)*

A difference in housing aspirations between the native Irish population and migrants from countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is the desired home size. While Irish-born showed preference for 3-bedroom home (see Molloy et al., 2018), participants from the above mentioned countries spoke about their preference for large kitchen areas, as their cooking habits involve preparing meals that take time and require the participation of several family members. They explained that the kitchen is the hub of home activities and affairs, making a small apartment kitchen disappointing for their community. Nisha, who arrived in Ireland from India in 2017, explained her need and preference for a large kitchen space.





*So now when I look for house, the most important thing is the kitchen, and because we do a lot cooking which take hours, we always prefer like big kitchens. (...) I can't say about the whole community in this case, but as a migrant who is an Indian, we prefer like big kitchens and we can manage small bedrooms. We don't mind having small bedrooms, but we want like big kitchens.*

A reason for this preference might be that in many Southeast Asian cultures, homes are often multi-generational, with extended family members living together. This can influence a preference for larger homes to accommodate a large family. However, multigenerational living is not an immigrant culture, but normal human culture, among many others (Shayesteh, 2021). In addition, the kitchen space often holds a significant cultural and social role, serving as a central gathering space. The size and design preferences can vary in rural and urban areas (Sal Moslehian, 2023).


### ***Paths to Homeownership***

Considering the low levels of homeownership among the migrant community, some migrants may opt for renting rather than purchasing a home due to the perception of their stay as temporary, thereby avoiding the long-term financial commitment associated with home ownership. In the interviews, many migrants conveyed their challenging path towards homeownership. While some people in the younger cohort signalled they might leave Ireland for a job in the next few years (n=4), the majority of the participants plan to remain in Ireland. They expressed their difficulties in meeting the financial prerequisites for home ownership, such as sufficient savings, suitable salary level and income stability. Nikos, who arrived from Greece in 2020 with his partner, discussed the financial constraints, such as how a lack of savings hinders his efforts to leave the private rented sector, even if he is confident *he will be able to obtain a mortgage in the near future.*

*We don't have any money, which is the biggest problem. I think in terms of income and credit ratings will be fine. But we just don't have any cash at all if that will be necessary. We'll probably do it [get a mortgage] and it'll probably be much cheaper than paying rent. Even if you never end up owning the house, it is still cheaper.*

The need for substantial deposits can be particularly burdensome for migrants, who often face high living costs and economic uncertainty in a new country. These






factors compound the financial demands of maintaining a household abroad, making homeownership less accessible for many immigrants.

### ***Knowledge and Awareness of Mortgage Systems***

There is a noticeable variation in migrants' awareness and understanding of mortgage systems and available government schemes. While some have extensively researched and are knowledgeable about the process, others are less informed or not ready to look for homeownership. Specific factors contribute to the differing levels of knowledge among migrants about mortgage processes. These factors can significantly impact how well migrants understand and navigate the homeownership landscape. Anila, who arrived from Albania in 2015, explain how her little knowledge of the mortgage market and its complexities prevent her from applying to mortgage, even if her income is satisfactory.

*I don't think I have a really in-depth understanding of the mortgage system here in Ireland and have to go through it, but honestly speaking, my salary is okay but I'd rather just not get involved with it [mortgage application].*

Several participants (n=16) spoke about the challenges with mortgage documents and information as barriers to homeownership. Cornelissen and Pack (2023) point out that migrants often struggle with documentation requirements and legal status, which can limit their eligibility for traditional loans. In Ireland, the Consumer Protection Code (CPC) published by the Central Bank of Ireland provides guidelines for regulated financial services providers, including mortgage lenders, to ensure fair treatment of consumers. While the CPC does not explicitly mention visa status or residency requirements for mortgage applicants, it emphasises the need for lenders to assess the suitability of products and services for consumers, which may indirectly include considerations of legal residency. Specialised mortgage advisory companies often mention that non-EU/EEA citizens applying for a mortgage must have a Stamp 1, Stamp 1G, or Stamp 4 to be eligible for a mortgage. This suggests that lenders want to ensure applicants are legal residents in the country as part of their screening for potential qualified borrower. For example, the AIB bank, in their "mortgage checklist," asks applicants who hold a working permit to submit their original Irish Residence Permit (IRP), a card that shows a person's information and



how long they can legally reside in Ireland. Those practices, that lender might have their own criteria and that the lack of legal residency status can prevent access to certain mortgage products and financial services. Cornelissen and Pack (2023) suggest these barriers result in limited access to homeownership for many immigrant groups, exacerbating disparities in the housing market.


On the other hand, some migrants were well-informed and managed to get a mortgage or are in the process of doing so. Emre, for example, explained that she had carefully planned for homeownership, which likely contributed to her success in securing a mortgage and get the best tax relief available, as she explained:

*(...) I researched and found information on the [bank] website. So you can get your tax back from the government, you know (...).*

Overall, these results indicate that barriers restrict homeownership access for many immigrant groups, exacerbating housing market disparities. Key challenges include language barriers, residency status, and the complexity of mortgage processes.

## **6. Discussion and conclusion**


The primary aim of this research is to enhance the understanding of housing disadvantages experienced by migrants, identify their needs, and examine the barriers and challenges they encounter in securing housing within the private rental sector in Ireland. The study reveals significant housing disadvantages among migrants in Ireland, such as overcrowding, increased risk of homelessness and overrepresentation in the private rental market. Previous research has already indicated that migrants are more likely to have worse housing outcomes than the native population, highlighting a critical issues of housing inequality and exclusion issue in the current housing system. Generally, the results of this investigation show that migrants often face housing discrimination, particularly during the housing search phase. Migrants develop strategies to overcome these barriers, and their housing futures frequently involve obtaining a mortgage, which presents its own set of challenges. The issues identified are significant, and there are strong social justice, human rights, and legislative reasons to push for greater equality within the housing system.



The results are categorised into three main areas: (1) Patterns of Housing Discrimination Experienced by Migrant Tenants, (2) Challenges of Securing a Home in the Irish Private Rental Market, including mitigation strategies and (3) Housing Futures and Aspirations. Regarding the first key finding, migrants often encounter pervasive housing discrimination shaped by ethnic and cultural backgrounds, frequently manifested as implicit biases. Discriminatory practices, such as non-responses after disclosing immigrant status, exacerbate housing exclusion, and the uneven landlord-tenant link might further undermine migrants. Housing discrimination defies conventional integration and housing policies, necessitating a more nuanced approach to address and meet the varied needs and identities of migrants.

The second finding addresses the challenges migrants face in securing accommodation within the private rental market and explores strategies to overcome these difficulties. It reveals that migrants, lacking the social capital to seek housing assistance, often rely on newly established trust-based networks composed of colleagues and acquaintances familiar with the housing system. Additionally, to counteract potential disadvantages of being a migrant, they may use more Western-sounding names and emphasise their professional qualifications. These groups not only face economic and social barriers but also face housing exclusion, which can make the housing search process even more competitive and stressful.

The third key finding is related to barriers migrants encounter related to financial constraints, such as insufficient savings and income stability, and other barriers such as access to information and language barrier, which sometimes impede their ability to understand the mortgage system well and purchase homes. Additionally, there is a variation in knowledge about mortgage systems; some migrants are well-informed, while others lack understanding, impacting their ability to navigate the homeownership process, due to language difficulties and financial insecurity. These findings underscore the need for specific interventions that not only address the systemic barriers migrants encounter but also support their aspirations for secure and affordable homes.



These findings align with existing literature highlighting the challenges migrants face in securing adequate housing, including the subtle and pervasive discrimination they encounter (e.g. Pager and Shepherd, 2008; Grotti et al., 2018; Ní Chonail and Buczkowska, 2016; Reosti, 2020; Lukes et al., 2018). The results also correspond with the high levels of perceived discrimination reported by migrants, which are considered significant compared to other types of discrimination (McGinnity et al., 2017; McGinnity et al., 2012). Perhaps the most disturbing finding is that housing discrimination is hard to prove but often present, and the discrimination reported in this research indicates that these issues may be more serious than documented. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive research and policy efforts to mitigate discrimination and promote inclusive housing practices. However, the results regarding migrant solidarity and support community networks are refreshing and compelling. Migrant solidarity spaces - formal, informal, and online - can become grounds to rethink care practices that empower the migrant community (see Santamarina Guerrero, 2023).

In analysing the barriers to migrant housing, the research examined the overlapping factors that create hurdles to housing access for migrants. In the context of a severe housing crisis, housing support systems are strained, and social services struggle to meet the accommodation needs of the most vulnerable. This housing system is complex, nuanced, and competitive, making it challenging for migrants to navigate, especially those with language limitations, facing homelessness, or having limited knowledge of their rights. These issues are critical because migrants face significant barriers to inclusion and integration, which require well-designed policy responses. More recently, extremist groups have scapegoated migrants as the primary cause of the severe housing crisis, placing migrants' well-being and protections at risk. This argument relies on misunderstandings of the relationship between migration and housing, unfairly blaming migrants for government failures in housing provision. Concerningly, political and public discourse around immigration and housing have the potential to impact public attitudes and the willingness of policymakers to support inclusive housing practices. While housing and migration intersect, no evidence supports a causal link between housing shortages and migration levels (Serpa, 2024; Robinson, 2010).

As in any research, the present study face limitations. In line with many qualitative studies, this research employed self-selection sampling, where participants voluntarily chose to engage. Although this approach resulted in a medium sample size, it provided rich and detailed narrative data. Despite this limitation, the study offered a nuanced understanding of the migrant housing experience that might not have been achievable with a larger, less targeted sample.

There is room for further progress in housing and integration policies aimed at mitigating housing discrimination against migrants, as well as exploring potential new policies or improvements to existing ones. This includes examining how different cities' policies affect migrants' social, economic, and cultural integration, as well as their potential exclusion, using a comparative lens. Additionally, future research could investigate the effects of current policy interventions on mitigating housing discrimination against migrants to identify areas for improvement.

## 7. Policy Recommendations

Continued efforts are needed to make housing more accessible to everyone, including vulnerable communities and migrants. Research participants were asked to share the policies they would like to see implemented to improve migrants' access to housing. Policy recommendations 1 to 5 were derived from thematic code analysis and are based on participants' direct experiences and suggestions, with my own input. The remaining recommendations were developed by me based on best policy and research practices.

### 01 Provision of Multilingual Documentation and Support Services

To address the heightened vulnerability of migrants with limited English skills, who face a higher risk of substandard accommodation or homelessness, a comprehensive multilingual translation service should be implemented. This service would ensure that key paperwork, including housing contracts and legal documents, is available in multiple languages, with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) being responsible for providing these resources. Internationally, for example, jurisdictions

such as British Columbia's Residential Tenancy Branch and the government administration of South Australia are providing translated documents and real-time interpretation services for tenants and landlords in various languages other than English. Additionally, professional translation and interpretation services should be made available to ensure non-English speakers can fully understand and engage with essential services. Dedicated helplines and support centres should also be established to provide assistance in individuals' native languages. The Citizens Information Board, which currently offers reliable information, could provide this service. At present, the Board suggests that non-English speakers use Google Translate to read website information, acknowledging that the resulting translation might be inaccurate (Citizensinformation.ie, 2024). Furthermore, standard information on common queries should be published online and in other relevant locations in multiple languages, prioritizing the most spoken languages in the country other than English and Irish. Financial institutions, such as banks offering mortgages, should also provide the option to access their documents in languages other than English and Irish.

02

### **Government-led Rental Search Platform**

Recent arrival and students frequently fall prey of rental scams. Their low social capital and unfamiliarity with the housing market make them vulnerable to this type of crime. To protect everyone housing seeking a government-led rental search platform that supports foreign students and residents in finding suitable housing should be developed. It should also feature clear information on tenant rights and obligations and provide access to resources for navigating the rental process.

03

### **Support and Orientation for Newcomers**

Create specialized support services for newcomers, including asylum seekers and people leaving Direct Provision. This support can involve orientation programs and workshops that inform them about their rights, available resources, and the housing market. These programs should be tailored to address the specific needs of foreign

students and migrants, including practical advice on housing, legal protections, and house safety standards. Some housing charities offer similar services and the government could increase its partnership with those to provide more accessible and standardised services.

#### **04 Transparent Housing Market Practices**

The process by which landlords select applicants to rent their properties is often opaque and subjective. While landlords can use their best knowledge and apply their own preference to select tenants, it is relevant to establish regulations requiring transparency in the rental market, including clear disclosure of selection criteria and waiting lists to avoid discrimination. The creation of an open-access platform where potential tenants can access information on application statuses, rental conditions, and decision-making criteria to ensure fairness and prevent discrimination.

#### **05 Enhanced Oversight of Health and Safety Standards**

Due to a housing shortage, little resources and poor information, migrants are often forced to live in substandard housing conditions. It is necessary to strengthen the government's oversight and enforcement of health and safety standards in rental properties. This should include more targeted, regular inspections and mandatory compliance with comprehensive safety regulations to ensure that housing conditions are safe and adequate. It is also important to introduce mechanisms for tenants to report violations and access support services for addressing unsafe living conditions.

#### **06 Engage With the Migrant Community in the Phases of Project Design and Implementation**

Given the growing diversity within Ireland, it is essential to ensure that the voices of migrant communities are heard and integrated into the development of policies and programs that impact them. Therefore, it is indispensable that government



policymakers actively engage with the migrant community during all phases of project design and implementation that focus on the migrant community. This inclusive approach will ensure that the unique needs and perspectives of migrants are considered, leading to more effective and culturally sensitive initiatives that better serve this population.

## **07 Housing as a Priority Area for Migrant Integration Policy**

The socio-economic integration of migrants is critical for their overall well-being and successful participation in society. The Government of Ireland should prioritize strengthening this integration through participatory initiatives, particularly those related to housing. Evidence from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) underscores the urgent need to focus on housing as a key area for migrant integration policy. Given that housing was notably absent from the Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020, it is imperative that housing be incorporated into the next iteration of this strategy. By involving migrants in the design and implementation of housing initiatives, the government can ensure that housing policies contribute effectively to their broader socio-economic integration.

## **08 Data-driven Decisions**

Collecting ethnic data is crucial for crafting policies that accurately reflect and address the needs of Ireland's diverse population. The Government of Ireland should collaborate with key data sources, such as the Central Statistics Office (CSO), POBAL, and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), to cite a few, with the view to establishing a comprehensive system for collecting and analysing ethnic data for policymakers to gain a deeper understanding of disparities and challenges faced by different communities. This data-driven approach will not only address current disparities but also inform long-term strategies to prevent discrimination in Ireland's housing sector.

## **09 More Research on Housing Discrimination**

To better understand and address discriminatory housing practices and their impact on the migrant community, the Government of Ireland should allocate funding for comprehensive research initiatives focused on housing needs. These studies should investigate the extension and impacts of housing discrimination. This specifically allocated funding could come from the Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland and should support research undertaken by academic institutions, charities, and policy think- tanks.

## **Training and Capacity Building for Public Servants and Real Estate Agents**

To enhance the effectiveness of housing rights protections and enforcement of Ireland national and international legislative obligations, the Government of Ireland should invest in comprehensive training and capacity-building programs for frontline staff and legal professionals. Those are often the first point of contact for newly arrivals or for migrants trying to access public services. This staff should receive training that focus on equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to identify, address, and prevent violations of housing rights and other issues affecting vulnerable groups. For real estate agents, training could focus on housing rights, anti-discrimination laws, and the ethical responsibilities of real estate professionals. This training should be required as part of the licensing process and include periodic refresher courses to stay updated on new laws and best practices.

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