



STRONGER TOGETHER

**Organising For
Active Inclusion and
Anti-Racist Workplaces
and Trade Unions**

TOOLKIT



STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

**BETTER
IN A TRADE
UNION**



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

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Contents

Using this toolkit	1
Trade unions and Anti-Racism	2
Recognizing Racial Discrimination	4
Racial Discrimination and the Labour Market in Ireland	10
Common Issues in Employment	16
Equality Law	22
Supporting Complaints	28
Creating Inclusive Workplaces	30
Creating Inclusive Unions	36
Outreach Strategies	37
Capacity building	41
Countering Hate	43
Audit tool	48
Learning resources	50
Glossary	52

Using this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to familiarise trade union members at all levels of organising with the nature and impact of racial discrimination in the labour market and workplace, and support the development of strategies for anti-discrimination and inclusion actions. It can also be used for capacity building activities such as preparing training materials for union staff and members. The toolkit focuses on the current context on the island of Ireland. It has been developed with the contribution of members of trade unions across the island in a wide variety of sectors through a series of training and outreach activities during 2024.

The toolkit is part of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Stronger Together: Anti-Racism Workplaces and Trade Unions Project, which also included training on anti-racism actions, capacity building for migrant and minority ethnic trade union members and research on experiences of workplace racism and trade union responses to racism. The project aims to help ensure that anti-racism policies and practices are a core collective bargaining tool for unions and was supported by the Ireland Against Racism fund.

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Trade unions and Anti-Racism

There are many reasons why trade unions engage in anti-racism campaigns and advocacy.

In the increasingly diverse Irish labour market, active engagement enables the trade unions to strengthen their solidarity with workers, especially those from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds. In addition, support for anti-racism helps promote equality for workers experiencing discrimination at work or engaged in precarious jobs.

Promotion of anti-racism goes a long way to support the fight against exploitation of workers in the labour market. Workers who may face exploitation at work include those from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds employed through recruitment agencies.

By advocating for anti-racism trade unions strengthen their institutional and bargaining power. When minority ethnic workers join a union, the union becomes more able to actively advocate for their rights from a position of power.

One of the most effective ways of improving the working and living conditions of migrant and minority ethnic workers is promoting anti-racism in workplaces. Trade unions can promote anti-racism by networking, establishing links and extending membership to migrant and minority ethnic workers. Through this, they can build alliances able to transform the labour market and society.

In summary:

- Trade unions endorse anti-racism to bolster solidarity and equality among workers
- Trade unions combat exploitation and advocate for social justice
- Diversity is seen as a strength, enhancing collective bargaining power
- By opposing racism, unions strive for fair treatment and opportunities for all workers
- Building alliances fosters inclusive workplaces and societies

ORGANISING FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACIST WORKPLACES AND TRADE UNIONS

Historically, trade unions play significant roles in anti-racism. This includes:

Support for Civil Rights Movements	Trade unions have supported civil rights movements, advocating for equal rights and opportunities for all. They have actively participated in marches, protests, and other actions promoting civil rights and social justice.
Anti-Discrimination Legislation	Trade unions have advocated for the passing of anti-discrimination policies by the government and help to monitor effective implementation of existing anti-discrimination laws.
Campaigns Against Racism	Trade unions engage in advocacy campaigns against discrimination in the labour market and society through organising events, such as awareness sessions on combating racial discrimination.
Diversity and Inclusion Policies	Trade unions play an instrumental role in advocating for implementation of diversity and inclusion policies in workplaces and society in general. To achieve this, trade unions work with employers through training and resources to develop policies that promote equality and fairness.
Support for Minority Workers	Trade unions offer strong support for workers, especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds, to ensure that their rights, such as fair wages and safe working conditions, are respected and protected. They can also provide legal support and representation for minority workers facing discrimination.
Collaboration with Minority Communities	Trade unions establish links and reach out to workers from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds to champion for their rights and address challenges. This can include partnership with community organisations, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements to support their causes.
International Solidarity	Due to a history of supporting workers' rights internationally, trade unions can form alliances with their counterparts in other countries to advocate for fair labour practices, worker protections, and human rights.

Trade unions have also played significant roles in anti-fascism such as:

- Engaging in direct action and resistance against fascism.
- Defending democracy and workers' rights against fascist threats.
- Unions show solidarity with targeted groups, such as minorities and immigrants.
- Education initiatives to raise awareness about fascism's dangers.
- Unions build coalitions with progressive allies to combat fascism.
- Opposing hate speech and extremism, advocating for legal measures.
- International solidarity supports anti-fascist movements worldwide.

Recognising Racial Discrimination

To be able to recognise racial discrimination, it is vital to understand what it is. Racial discrimination can be defined as:

*“Any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin, which has the **purpose or effect** of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.*

Racial discrimination **does not** need an identified perpetrator.

Recognizing racism is critical in addressing all forms of racial discrimination and promoting justice and equality.

Studies have shown that White individuals are five times less likely to recognise racism. Demanding evidence is one of the main barriers to effectively addressing racial discrimination. This is because evidence can be hard to find and incidents of hidden racism makes evidence even harder to acquire.

By identifying the patterns and trends to prove racism, organisations and institutions can begin to effectively address racism.

Data collection and recording as a way of identifying and recognising trends can assist in evidence-based decision-making and targeted interventions.

Benchmarking with other workers, workplaces, and sectors can also provide important insights into recognizing and addressing racism by comparing best practices and outcomes to drive meaningful change.

Types and levels of discrimination

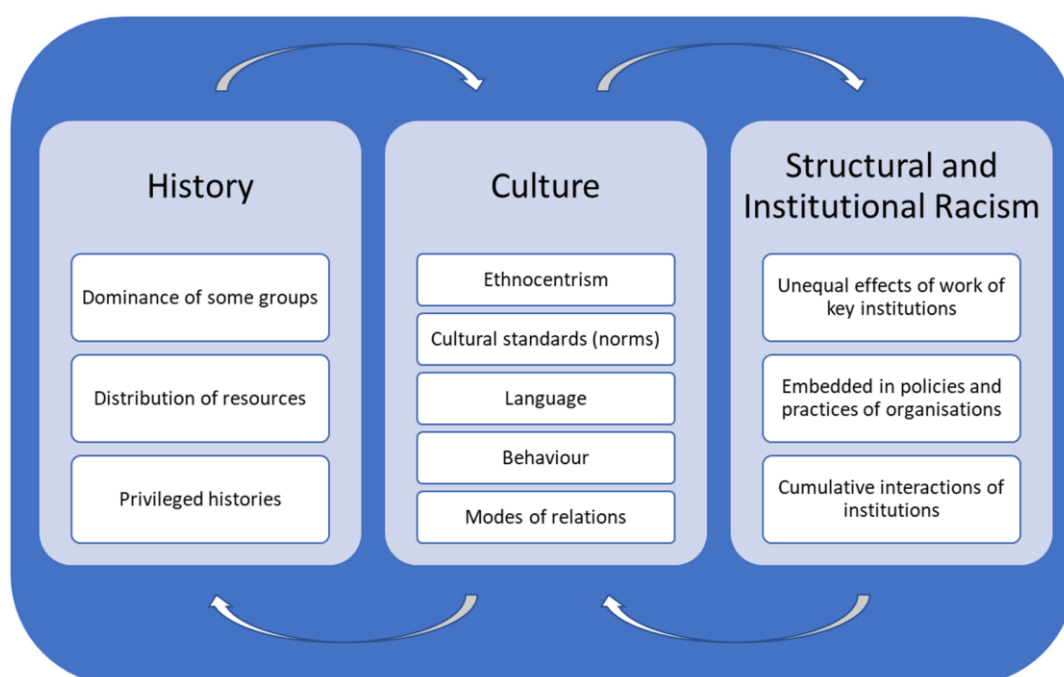
Various types and levels of discrimination exist in the labour market or society in general:

- Systemic discrimination: Perpetuated by inequity within interconnected systems (such as political, economic, and social systems)
- Structural discrimination: Focusses on differential outcomes across institutions.
- Institutional discrimination (unequal opportunities/outcomes): Focuses on the actions, behaviours, decisions of people in positions of power within institutions.
- Group behaviours: Discrimination targeted at a particular group.
- Individual discrimination: Conscious & unconscious biases, attitudes and behaviours

Systemic Racism

This can be defined as, “forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in and throughout systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, entrenched practices, and established beliefs and attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of colour”¹. Systemic and structural racism reflect historical and ongoing injustice. Some examples include, biased policing of people of colour, undervaluing foreign qualifications and experience of migrants leading to barriers to employment. Systemic racism involves whole systems, and often all systems such as, political, legal, economic, healthcare, educational, and criminal justice systems—including the structures that uphold the systems².

Diagram: How the different forms interact to create systemic racism



¹ Braveman *et al.* (2022): Systemic And Structural Racism: Definitions, Examples, Health Damages, And Approaches To Dismantling. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01394>.

² Ducey J. (2018): Racist America. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315143460>

Structural Racism

Structural discrimination is how systemic racism plays out across different sectors of society. Education, labour market access, housing, health, and wealth accumulation are interconnected and create cumulative disadvantages for certain ethnic and racial groups. For example, poor educational outcomes for a minority group can limit their job opportunities, which then restricts their ability to access quality housing, healthcare, and build wealth - perpetuating a cycle of inequality. These structural barriers exist not due to individual prejudice, but because of deeply rooted, systemic factors.

This structural perspective is important for trade unions to grasp, as it reveals how economics, politics, and racism are deeply intertwined. Addressing workplace discrimination thus requires a holistic, systemic approach, not just reactive responses to individual cases.



Structural discrimination

Focus on differential outcomes
across institutions

- structural inequalities
- Based on social hierarchies
- repeated chances and treatment
- segregation in all institutions

Institutional Racism

Focuses on the actions, behaviours, decisions of people in positions of power within institutions.

- Actions and decisions may be unintentional
- Consequences can be far-reaching and self-reproducing.
- Differential outcomes or observed patterns will identify

Organisational values and culture

- Change needs to start with policies and procedures

Forms of Institutional Racism

- Policies that look neutral but have differential effects
- Disciplinary systems that target marginalised staff
- Unwritten practices of expected behaviour / priorities
- Informal mentoring systems
- Absence of / underperforming feedback loops and complaints systems
- Absence of effective responses to harassment / discrimination
- Absence of positive messaging on diversity
- Low / no diverse representation in leadership
- Selection of external partners, suppliers, beneficiaries
- Required modes of informal participation

Reflecting on your own workplace, can you think of examples of any of the above? How could you find data on the problem in your workplace or sector to help you explore this issue?

Examples:

- A company primarily recruits from universities and networks that have a majority white student or alumni base, effectively limiting the pool of diverse candidates.
- During the hiring process, the criteria used by a company for evaluating candidates include subjective measures, such as "cultural fit" or recommendations from existing employees. These criteria favour white candidates because they align more closely with the existing workforce, which is predominantly white.
- An Garda Síochána until recently had a ban on headwear for serving Gardaí. This discriminated against people who wore headwear for religious reasons. This apparently neutral rule disproportionately affected people of a particular ethnic or national group (e.g. Indian Sikhs).
- A company has a zero-tolerance policy for certain behaviours, such as unprofessional communication. Employees of migrant or minority ethnic background are more likely to be accused of violating this policy, particularly in cases where their communication

style is misinterpreted as overly direct or aggressive, while similar behaviours from White employees are dismissed as assertive or passionate.

- Migrant or minority ethnic employees may experience selective scrutiny. For example, they might be disciplined for social media posts that express political views or cultural pride, while White employees who post similar or even more controversial content face no consequences.
- A company's criteria for selecting suppliers include factors like "reputation" and "network connections," which are subjectively assessed. These criteria tend to favour established companies that are already part of predominantly White business networks, thereby disadvantaging minority-owned businesses that may not have the same level of visibility or connections.
- A company advertises a role which requires building a professional network in the sector. A migrant who has built similar professional networks in several countries from scratch is passed over for a person who has a network in the sector they acquired in their last role. The policy favours personal connections over networking skills and experience.

Group behaviours and individual biases

Group behaviours in the workplace can manifest as discrimination targeted at a specific racial or ethnic group, where members of that group are collectively treated unfairly or excluded.

This can include practices like creating a hostile work environment through microaggressions, derogatory comments, or exclusion from opportunities. Such behaviour fosters a toxic culture where the targeted group feels marginalised, impacting their job satisfaction, performance, and overall well-being.

Individual discrimination in the workplace arises from both conscious and unconscious biases held by employees or managers.

Conscious biases involve deliberate actions or attitudes that discriminate against others based on race, ethnicity, or other protected characteristics, such as intentionally overlooking qualified minority ethnic and migrant candidates for promotions. Unconscious biases, on the other hand, are subtle, automatic judgements that affect behaviour without the individual realising it, such as assuming a person of colour is less competent. These biases can influence decision-making, interactions, and evaluations, perpetuating inequality and hindering diversity and inclusion efforts within the organisation.

Check your understanding by answering the following questions (Answers on the next page.)

1. Which of the following is an example of Institutional Racism?
 - A) A school that denies admission to students based on their race.
 - B) A person refusing to sit next to someone because of their race.
 - C) A company implementing a dress code that unintentionally discriminates against certain cultural practices.
 - D) A neighbourhood group excluding someone from social events due to their race.

2. Which of the following best describes Systemic Racism?
 - A) Racism that is experienced in every aspect of life, such as education, employment, and housing.
 - B) A racist joke made by an individual.
 - C) A one-time event of discrimination at work.
 - D) Racism that only occurs within a specific family or group of friends.

3. What is the main difference between Institutional Racism and Structural Racism?
 - A) Institutional Racism is specific to organisations, while Structural Racism involves broader societal systems.
 - B) Institutional Racism is intentional, while Structural Racism is unintentional.
 - C) Structural Racism only affects certain neighbourhoods.
 - D) Institutional Racism is based on laws, while Structural Racism is based on cultural practices.

4. Why is it important to understand different types of racism?
 - A) To support one's own cultural beliefs.
 - B) To only focus on the most obvious forms of racism.
 - C) To identify the best way to avoid racism discussions.
 - D) To better address and combat racial inequality in all its forms.

Racial Discrimination and the Labour Market in Ireland

In Ireland, racial discrimination for minorities is persistent in the Irish education system and labour market, in wealth accumulation, and class mobility. Minority ethnic workers are impacted financially and socially both by their own reduced opportunities in the labour market and those of their families.

While Ireland has one of the most diverse labour markets in Europe in terms of the proportion of foreign born workers, it is well established that discrimination in both recruitment processes and workplace practices are common. Despite well-established anti-discrimination laws, immigrants consistently fare worse in employment. Among factors such as education and language, skin colour appears to be a major barrier to entering the labour market³.

Migrants from outside the EU experience significantly lower rates of employment than EU-born, with Muslim and Black respondents in particular recording very low employment (McGinnity et al, 2021)⁴. In 2016 the unemployment rate of migrants was 15.4% compared to 12.6% of Irish-born, and although unemployment was at a 10 year low in 2019, the positive turn in the economy only affected Ireland's white population (Joseph, 2019)⁵.

In Ireland, Black African men were the least likely to receive a response for an application compared to identical applications with White and Polish sounding names (McGinnity and Lunn, 2011)⁶. The lack of recognition of qualifications and experience from other countries continues to impact on the recruitment and progression of migrant groups (MRCI, 2015)⁷.

Migrant and minority ethnic workers in Ireland are less likely to occupy managerial or professional jobs compared to their White-Irish counterparts. Although, migrants of working age are more likely to hold a third level qualification compared to people born in Ireland (71%

³ Joseph, E. (2018) 'Whiteness and Racism: Examining the Racial Order in Ireland'. *Irish Journal of Sociology* 26, no. 1: 46–70.

⁴ McGinnity, F., H. Russell, I. Privalko, and S. Enright. (2021) 'Monitoring Decent Work in Ireland'. Dublin: Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission,

⁵ Joseph, E. (2019) 'The Centrality of Race and Whiteness in the Irish Labour Market'. INAR, Dublin.

⁶ McGinnity, F., and P. D. Lunn. (2011) 'Measuring Discrimination Facing Ethnic Minority Job Applicants: An Irish Experiment'. *Work, Employment and Society* 25, no. 4: 693–708.

⁷ Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2015) 'All Work and Low Pay: The Experience of Migrants Working in Ireland. <https://www.mrci.ie/app/uploads/2020/02/MRCI-All-Work-and-Low-Pay.pdf>.

compared to 40%), but fewer migrants work in graduate occupations. Furthermore, both Black Non-Irish and Black Irish groups are much less likely than White Irish or White Other groups to hold a managerial or professional job (McGinnity et al., 2018)⁸.

There is significant sectoral concentration of migrants in the Irish labour market. Most work in the following sectors.

- Security
- Care work
- Cleaning services
- Beauty/ personal services
- Food processing/ agrifood

Diverse Experiences of the Labour Market

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Ireland Monitoring Report on Integration (2018)⁹ found that across the different ethnic minority and migrant groups working in Ireland there were variations in experiences of employment. White EU-East Nationals were seen in fewer managerial/professional jobs and experienced workplace discrimination (x1.5). White non-EU workers experienced discrimination in seeking work due to employment permits. Asian-Irish were less likely to have managerial/professional jobs, while other Asian nationalities were more likely to have managerial/professional jobs, likely due to high-skilled visa permits. Black-Irish were in fewer managerial/professional jobs and experienced workplace discrimination (x3.4). Other Black nationalities experienced discrimination in seeking work, had employment rates of 40%, occupied fewer managerial/professional jobs, and experienced workplace discrimination (x2.7).

Migrant workers often find their value is increased or diminished by these factors:

- Qualifications – in Ireland and abroad
- Experience – in Ireland and abroad
- Language (fluency in English is overvalued, while fluency in others undervalued)
- Accent
- Professional or social network
- How they reflect current clients/stakeholders

⁸ McGinnity, F., R. Grotti, S. Groarke, and S. Coughlan. (2018) 'Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market'. Dublin: ESRI.

⁹ McGinnity, F., Fahey, É., Quinn, E., Arnold, S., Maître, B., and O'Connell, P. (2018). Monitoring report on integration 2018, Dublin: ESRI

Example: Being Black in the Irish labour market

Being Black in the Irish labour market is a strong indicator of unemployment and underemployment (Joseph, 2019)¹⁰. Less than 40 per cent of African nationals in Ireland were employed in 2019, a starkly lower proportion compared to any other ethnic group in Ireland (O’Connell, 2019)¹¹. This is a persistent pattern, in the previous decade Black participants were nine times more likely to be unemployed compared to white Irish participants (O’Connell and McGinnity, 2008)¹². People from the Black Irish group are twice as likely to experience discrimination seeking employment compared to White Irish, but Black non-Irish are five times more likely to experience discrimination (McGinnity et al, 2018)¹³. Stereotypes based on a perception of ‘migrant deficit’ are also influential (Joseph, 2019)¹⁴. Even when employed, Black Irish and Black non-Irish are between about three and eight times less likely to occupy a senior role (McGinnity et al, 2018)¹⁵. Various efforts to support their access to employment have dissolved under broader “diversity” agendas (Joseph, 2019)¹⁶.

Racial discrimination and other experiences

Discrimination is often intersectional with race, gender, religion, age, disability, socio-economic class, and geography all impacting on employment. These characteristics of an individual or group interact in certain ways to shape complex patterns of social inequality, rather than operating as mutually exclusive identities. The combination of several specific characteristics can lead to distinct forms of discrimination or disadvantage (McGinnity et al, 2021)¹⁷. Gender is one of the key factors that affect the different patterns of employment between ethnic groups (Zwysen et al, 2021)¹⁸. For example, migrant workers in Ireland earned an average of 22% less per hour than their Irish counterparts between 2011 and 2018, but non-Irish women experience “a double earnings penalty”, earning an average of 11% less than non-Irish men and 30% less than Irish men.¹⁹

¹⁰ Joseph, E. (2019) ‘The Centrality of Race and Whiteness in the Irish Labour Market’. Dublin, INAR.

¹¹ O’Connell, P. J. ‘African Non-Employment and Labour Market Disadvantage’. In *Immigrants as Outsiders in the Two Irelands*, edited by B. Fanning and L. Michael. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.

¹² O’Connell, P. J., and F. McGinnity. ‘Immigrants at Work—Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market’. Dublin: Equality Authority and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), 2008.

¹³ McGinnity, F., R. Grotti, S. Groarke, and S. Coughlan. (2018) ‘Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market’. Dublin: ESRI.

¹⁴ Joseph, ‘The Centrality of Race and Whiteness in the Irish Labour Market’.

¹⁵ McGinnity et al., ‘Ethnicity and Nationality in the Irish Labour Market’.

¹⁶ Joseph, ‘The Centrality of Race and Whiteness in the Irish Labour Market’.

¹⁷ McGinnity, F., E. Quinn, E. McCullough, S. Enright, and S. Curran. (2021) ‘Measures to Combat Racial Discrimination and Promote Diversity in the Labour Market: A Review of Evidence’. Dublin: ESRI.

¹⁸ Zwysen, W., V. Di Stasio, and A. Heath. (2021) ‘Ethnic Penalties and Hiring Discrimination: Comparing Results from Observational Studies with Field Experiments in the UK’. *Sociology* 55, no. 2: 263–82.

¹⁹ Laurence, J., Kelly, E., McGinnity, F., & Curran, S. (2023). Wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals in Ireland. Economic and Social Research Institute.

In order to tackle this discrimination ethnic minority women often have to demonstrate higher educational qualifications²⁰. Lack of qualifications, failure to gain recognition for existing qualifications, and language proficiency are significant barriers to ethnic minority women participating in the labour market and sustaining an independent life²¹. These circumstantial barriers along with the structural barriers affect women's participation, making it harder for ethnic minority women to join the labour market and integrate in the workplace²².

Migrant Women are affected both by gender and racial discrimination, as well as facing particular additional barriers connected to migration.²³ Those experiences include:

- Being stereotyped as dependents of migrant men
- Having foreign qualifications, experience and references discounted by employers: (40% have Irish qualification*)
- Being habitually underemployed, with lower pay, security, opportunities
- Being concentrated in sectors that predominantly employ women (e.g. Healthcare and Education, with small numbers in technology) despite aspiring to much wider range of sectors

²⁰ Miaari, S., N. Khattab, and R. Johnston. (2019) 'Religion and Ethnicity at Work: A Study of British Muslim Women's Labour Market Performance'. *Quality & Quantity* 53, no. 1: 19–47.

²¹ Turkman, H. (2019) 'Tripled Glazed Ceiling- Barriers to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Participating in the Economy'. Cardiff: Chwarae Teg.

²² Finney, N., D. Kapadia, and S. Peters. (2015) 'How Are Poverty, Ethnicity and Social Networks Related?' York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

²³ New Communities Partnership (2020) 'Employability of Migrant Women in Ireland'. Available at: <https://www.newcommunities.ie/assets/files/pdf/162202995215370681.pdf>.

The Impact of Racism

Racism has direct effects on workers, including the stress, isolation, and reduced opportunities that result from discriminatory practices and behaviours. These challenges also extend to workers' families.

Effects on workers	Effects on workers families	Microaggressions
● decreased job satisfaction ● limited opportunities for advancement and mobility in labour market ● lower wages ● higher levels of stress and anxiety ● decreased productivity ● impact on mental and physical health ● Workplace injury	● increased financial strain due to lower wages or limited job opportunities ● heightened stress and anxiety within the family unit ● negative impacts on children's well-being and educational outcomes ● perpetuation of intergenerational cycles of disadvantage ● sense of social isolation and exclusion.	● feelings of invalidation, marginalisation, and alienation ● decreased self-esteem, increased stress and anxiety ● diminished job satisfaction, and impaired mental health. ● repeated exposure can contribute to a hostile work environment ● exacerbate feelings of powerlessness and frustration

Microaggressions have a significant impact on people because they are so likely to happen every day or week in a variety of contexts. 'Micro' refers to the everyday nature of these types of incidents rather than the impact they have. These are why the term 'racial battle fatigue'²⁴ was coined by psychologists to reflect the way individuals and communities affected by racism are ever watchful for potential abuse or threat.

The Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) highlights both the ripple effect of racism in a particular context and the societal effects of racism in general.

For example: increased migrant experiences of PTSD²⁵, Traveller experiences of suicide²⁶ and rates of depression amongst asylum seekers²⁷.

INAR highlights a variety of these impacts in their work, which you can download at inar.ie and this is really useful for highlighting the Irish context. Communicating to other people in your union or to the public is much more effective when the data you use is local.

²⁴ Smith, W.A., Allen, W.R., and Danley, L.L. (2007). "Assume the Position . . . You Fit the Description". *American Behavioral Scientist*. 51 (4): 551–578.

²⁵ College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, (2017). The Mental Health Service Requirements in Ireland for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants from Conflict Zones. Available at: <https://irishpsychiatry.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Mental-Health-Service-requirements-for-asylum-seekers-refugees-and-immigrants-150517-1.pdf>.

²⁶ Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care, (2018). Available at: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_future_of_mental_health_care/reports/2018/2018-10-17_final-report-joint-committee-on-the-future-of-mental-health-care_en.pdf.

²⁷ Doras, (2020). Mental Health and Direct Provision. Available at: <https://doras.org/publications/mental-health-and-direct-provision-2020>.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What are some of the barriers that ethnic minorities face when accessing the Irish labour market?
- Why is being Black in the Irish labour market a strong indicator of unemployment or underemployment?
- How does intersectionality affect discrimination in the workplace?
- How can microaggressions contribute to a hostile work environment for ethnic minorities?
- What aspects of employment are covered under the Employment Equality Acts and Equal Status Acts in Ireland?
- How is harassment defined under the Equal Status Act, and why is it considered a form of discrimination?
- Why might temporary and casual workers be particularly vulnerable to discrimination, and how do performance assessments factor into this?

Common Issues in Employment

In Ireland, racialised workers frequently encounter wage disparities, underemployment, and job insecurity, which are compounded by their lived experiences of microaggressions and discrimination. The cumulative experiences of racialised employees in Ireland's labour market reflect deep-seated structural inequalities and persistent barriers to fair employment. In this section, we explore common issues affecting minority ethnic and migrant people in the workforce and potential actions for unions.

Discrimination

There are a number of areas where racial discrimination apply which are familiar to trade unions. Harassment is only one of these. However it often occurs in advance of, following, or in parallel with these other issues. It should not be ignored or sidelined when it arises with other issues, even if you feel more competent on those. Instead, acknowledging discrimination (with or without explicit harassment) is helpful to reassure the affected worker, and any indications of discrimination should be recorded and investigated, even if you need help to do that part. Discrimination can exist in:

- Pay
 - Recruitment
 - Contract types and conditions
 - Promotion and acting up
 - Temporary and casual workers
 - Performance assessments
 - Harassment
-

Collective Bargaining

One important way that trade unions can be proactive on racial discrimination and inequality in the labour market is through collective bargaining. Workplaces which have explicit commitments to equality and non-discrimination find it harder to tolerate incidents that arise. Collective Bargaining helps to drive a norm across the sector and even the wider labour market. Equality law is essential, but going beyond that and tying it to worker agreements is what really hardens a workplace against discrimination. Collective Bargaining can be applied to:

- Negotiating Anti-Discrimination Clauses
- Implementing Diversity and Inclusion Programs
- Addressing Racial Pay Gaps

- Supporting Strategic Affirmative Action
 - Training and Education
 - Supporting Minority Workers' Rights
 - Collaborating with Community Groups
 - Monitoring and Enforcement
 - Promoting Inclusive Leadership
 - Supporting Social Justice Initiatives
-

Disciplinary Actions

It is helpful to reflect in advance, as a union, on the common approaches that might be taken. Disciplinary actions can be tainted by racial discrimination, or follow some forms of harassment by managers or colleagues. If there is no evident discrimination, it is nonetheless important to ensure that the worker understands the process and that discrimination does not enter the process at any later stage. Clear communication is important, and listening carefully if concerns of discrimination are raised.

Issue: Racism may influence disciplinary actions, leading to disproportionate penalties for minority ethnic workers.

Actions:

- Ensure fair disciplinary procedures that consider all aspects of a case.
- Address any racial bias in investigations and advocate for cultural sensitivity in the handling of disciplinary matters.
- Negotiate for policies that prevent discriminatory practices in disciplinary actions.

There are several things that reps can do to try and ensure that performance assessments act in a way that is helpful and empowering.

1. Investigate whether both managers and workers have received adequate training on how performance assessments should work.
 2. Explore whether performance assessments are based on measurable and unbiased criteria.
 3. Find out whether outcomes are monitored by ethnicity and whether opportunities for training and advancement are part of the process.
-

Temporary and Casual Workers:

The labour market in Ireland, as elsewhere, is deeply unequal, and many migrant and minority ethnic workers are in precarious employment situations.

Issue: Minority ethnic workers may be disproportionately employed in temporary or casual positions.

Actions:

- Advocate for equal opportunities for permanent employment.
 - Negotiate for fair treatment of temporary workers, including equal pay and benefits.
 - Work towards implementing policies that prevent the exploitation of temporary and casual workers, addressing any racial disparities in their employment status.
-

Promotion and Acting Up:

Promotion and preferential opportunities to act up (which can lead to promotion) are often unequally stacked away from migrant or minority ethnic workers. These are areas where it is difficult for workers to raise concerns about discrimination. Proactive work on transparency and advocacy for fair access to opportunities for mentoring, experience and feedback are helpful approaches to take.

Issue: Systemic racism may create barriers to promotions and acting-up opportunities for minority ethnic employees.

Actions:

- Negotiate for transparent promotion criteria that consider merit rather than biases.
 - Advocate for mentorship programs that support career development and are inclusive of minority ethnic workers.
 - Work to establish mechanisms that address biases in decision-making processes related to promotions and acting-up assignments.
-

Recruitment and Contracts:

It can be very difficult for a worker to know for certain if recruitment has involved direct or indirect racial discrimination. Proactive approaches are most effective in this area, ensuring that there are good processes in place for fairness and transparency, and developing good practice on providing information to non-traditional candidates.

Issue: Discriminatory hiring practices may limit opportunities for minority ethnic workers during recruitment and contract negotiations.

Actions:

- Shop stewards should demand fair and unbiased recruitment processes. Work towards inclusive language in job descriptions to attract diverse candidates.
- Ensure equal access to contract terms and benefits for all employees, irrespective of their ethnic background.
- Check the data: Does the composition of the workforce reflect the local population? (Information on the local population is available from the local authority and the Census.) If not, is any monitoring being carried out to determine if migrant and minority ethnic workers are applying for job vacancies and what happens to their applications during the recruitment process
- Ask: Are any steps taken to ensure job advertisements are targeted at under-represented groups? What training is provided to staff involved in the recruitment and selection process? Does this include training on your workplaces equalities policy and its application to recruitment?

Pay Disparities:

Pay is another area where discrimination in the workplace and structural inequalities in the labour market really come together strongly. Again, most of the solutions to addressing this problem work pretty well for other groups in the workplace too.

Issue: Racism may contribute to pay disparities, with minority ethnic workers often facing wage gaps compared to non-minority counterparts.

Actions:

- Advocate for transparent and equitable pay structures.
- Work with management to conduct regular pay equity reviews to identify and rectify any disparities.
- Challenge discriminatory practices in compensation through negotiations and collective bargaining.

Digital Discrimination

One of the newest areas of concern in relation to discrimination affecting minority ethnic and migrant workers is in relation to the use of AI in human resources and people management. Pictured here is a report published 3 years ago on how 'off the shelf' recruitment and human resources software products used directly by employers and small recruiters, as well as those developed and used by big recruitment/HR firms, amplify the effects of racial inequalities in the labour market. The report includes a toolkit on how the risks can be minimised, and what to look for. The impact of AI shows up in all of the areas we have just discussed, from recruitment and promotion to pay and disciplinary action, and educating ourselves about how AI amplifies bias is important as these are hitting the labour market harder each year.

AI used in screening applicants, shaping selection processes, and providing predictive analysis. Some of the issues linked to AI at work include:

- Reproduces and amplifies human biases
- Reinforces discrimination on qualities or markers associated with dominant groups
- Further reduce diversity across the European labour market
- Reduce skills and experience in workforce
- Targeted recruitment advertising, bulk screening of CVs and applications, shortlisting and assessment



Actions:

- Benchmarking for bias
- Informed consent and opt-out
- Addressing the imbalance of information and capacity
- Increasing transparency and accountability

See also: [Artificial intelligence in HR: how to address racial biases and algorithmic discrimination in HR](#)

Questions for reflection:

- In what ways can collective bargaining be used to proactively address racial discrimination and inequality in the labour market?
- What steps can be taken to ensure that disciplinary actions are free from racial bias, and how can unions advocate for fairness in these processes?
- How can trade unions advocate for fair and unbiased recruitment and contract negotiation processes for minority ethnic workers?
- What role can unions play in addressing pay disparities that disproportionately affect minority ethnic workers, and what actions can be taken to close these wage gaps?
- How might the use of AI in recruitment and HR processes amplify racial biases, and what steps can unions take to mitigate these risks?
- What measures can be taken to increase transparency and accountability in the use of AI for recruitment and HR decisions?

Equality Law

Employment Equality Acts & Equal Status Acts

The Irish legislation related to discrimination and employment are the [Employment Equality Acts](#) and the [Equal Status Acts](#). Aspects of employment covered include:

- Job advertising
- Equal pay
- Access to employment
- Vocational training and work experience
- Contract types and conditions
- Temporary and casual workers
- Harassment as a form of discrimination, involving the exercise of power and dominance on one of the statutorily prohibited grounds of discrimination. Sexual harassment is particularly prohibited²⁸.
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Promotion or re-grading
- Performance assessments
- Classification of posts
- Dismissal
- Collective agreements

In Northern Ireland, unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race is contrary to the [Race Relations \(NI\) Order 1997](#) and [Race Relations Order 1997 \(Amendment\) Order \(NI\) 2012](#), as amended, and the relevant European law.

Irish, UK, and EU law cover similar key topics when it comes to equality protections in the workplace, including: Pay, Harassment, Recruitment, Contract types and conditions, Promotions and regrading, Dismissal, and Collective agreements.

These aspects of employment are explicitly named and covered under equality law, stemming from EU directives like the Gender Directive and Race Directive, which are directly applicable in the Republic of Ireland. However, a major challenge is a lack of awareness among workers, trade unions, and even support organisations about the specific racial discrimination protections provided under the law. This lack of knowledge makes it very difficult for workers to understand and assert their rights when facing racial discrimination. Not only workers, but also the organisations meant to guide and support them, often lack familiarity with the legal framework around racial discrimination. This creates significant obstacles for victims trying to report and pursue complaints. Also see: [IHREC Your Rights](#) & [Equality Commission NI Workplace Discrimination](#)

Employees in Ireland also have a responsibility under the Equal Status Acts to provide services in an equal way as well as benefiting from protections under employment

²⁸ Irish Legal Guide: <https://legalguide.ie/harassment-2/>.

legislation, but their employers are vicariously liable for their acts so long as they are done in the course of their job. This does mean however that a worker can be disciplined for discriminating illegally if advised not to do so.

Going to the WRC / Industrial Tribunal

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is the body responsible in the Republic of Ireland for deciding on discrimination claims in Ireland in the first instance. The WRC deals with both employment and service/goods related claims. [How to submit a complaint](#)

You can read past decisions of the WRC and Tribunals on their websites:
www.workplacerelations.ie
www.employmenttribunalsni.co.uk

In Northern Ireland, racial discrimination complaints go to the Industrial Tribunal in the first instance. [How to submit a complaint](#)

The legal framework provides a clear benchmark for the minimum standards of fairness and inclusion that employers must uphold. But there is a need to improve awareness, access, and the effectiveness of these legal protections for workers facing racism.

Employment equality complaints must be raised first with the employer and addressed through internal mechanisms. At the same time, a complaint should be lodged with the WRC or Tribunal, because internal attempts at resolving disputes will not extend the statutory time limit, even though they are expected by the WRC / Tribunal.

Factors Affecting Success

Submitting and making a valid case on the grounds of racial discrimination is affected by:

- Time limit on complaints (3 months in both ROI and NI)
- Comparator for claim
- Inequality of arms and access to legal aid
- Evidence of discrimination
- Use and timing of internal complaint mechanisms

A low success rate for racial discrimination cases can also be attributed to factors like:

- Difficulty navigating the reporting mechanisms and complaints process
- Lack of support and fear of backlash for victims
- Poor evidence gathering and investigation by employers
- Adjudicators not fully understanding what constitutes racial discrimination

How do the WRC and Tribunals deal with racial discrimination cases?

The WRC and Industrial Tribunals have taken a number of similar approaches to racial discrimination cases. In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, there are codes of practice published on what racial discrimination looks like in the workplace, and employers are vicariously liable for the actions of their workforce.

An employer's response to the very first incident of racial discrimination in the workplace is crucial. How they handle that initial complaint or issue sets the tone and legal framework for how future incidents will be viewed, as in the following case example.

- In *Night Porter v a Hotel*, a night porter experienced racial abuse from a manager on their very first night of employment. The employer was held liable because they did not do anything afterwards to ensure the person did not experience that abuse again.

There is a clear obligation on employers to properly investigate any incidents of racial discrimination that occur. Failure to do so adequately can undermine an employer's defence, as evidenced by:

- *Warehouse Operative vs Distribution Company*: Two separate incidents of racial abuse occurred in the workplace, two years apart. After the first incident, the employer held a staff meeting and investigation, but for the second incident they only gave an informal warning. The WRC found the employer did not take sufficient steps to prevent further recurrence, so they were found liable.
- *An employee v Accountancy Solutions*: A female ethnic minority employee experienced both sexual and racial harassment in the workplace. The WRC not only awarded 1,000 euro in compensation, but also ordered the employer to develop a code of practice on harassment covering all equality grounds. The WRC also ordered the employer to ensure there was training provided on this new code of practice.

It is not a valid legal defence to downplay racial harassment or abuse in the workplace as 'banter'. The tribunals do not accept this excuse.

A retailer knew about but failed to address issues of racist verbal abuse and language. The WRC ruled that even casual comments about customers which are racist in nature can create a hostile environment for workers.

Employers are held vicariously liable for the actions of their workforce. If an employee engages in racial discrimination or harassment, the employer can be found liable for failing to prevent it.

- In *Anysz v Sizzlers Case* (Northern Ireland), the company's management team did not respond appropriately to the complaints of racial discrimination. Therefore they were found vicariously liable for their employees' actions.

Indirect Discrimination

The Employment Equality Acts defines indirect discrimination as occurring where an apparently neutral provision would put a person belonging to a protected group at a “particular disadvantage” compared with other employees of their employer²⁹. Examples: Requesting references, scheduling holiday leave without regard for religious holidays or migrants’ connection with family, uniform requirements or requesting certificates in English which are costly for migrant employees.

Grounds of Race: The difference in the disadvantage experienced must be specifically on the grounds of race or ethnicity. The policy does not have to target the protected group directly, but the disproportionate impact must be linked to their racial/ethnic identity. As long as the complainant can demonstrate the disproportionate burden on their protected group, that is sufficient to establish indirect discrimination. The comparative test and the nexus to race/ethnicity are the key legal elements. This framework provides an important tool for challenging seemingly neutral policies that perpetuate racial inequities, even without explicit discriminatory intent.

To prove indirect discrimination, the burden of discrimination only has to be predictable. It does not have to have caused disadvantage yet. The complainant must show only that they would be put (rather than are or have been put) at a disadvantage by a policy or practice compared to another person, and that the difference is on the grounds of race.

- ***Romera v Waterford Institute of Technology [2020]***

The claimant argued indirect discrimination but failed to identify specific policy provisions leading to disadvantage. The case was unsuccessful, emphasising the importance of clearly identifying discriminatory policies or practices.

- ***A Prison Officer V Minister for Justice & Equality [2017]***

A Black prison officer faced harassment from prisoners. Despite the harassment, the court did not consider it as indirect discrimination, highlighting the complex legal considerations involved in such cases.

²⁹ Sections 31 and 22 EEA

Comparator Test

Two comparator groups should be constructed for assessment of the 'provision, criterion or practice' (PCP), then establish if the disadvantaged group includes significantly more people who are unable to comply with the PCP than the advantaged group. Employers have a defence if they can show that the provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified on other grounds, such as health and safety.

The below examples relate to unequal treatment of foreign qualifications and giving preference in recruitment to persons with prior knowledge or experience of the Respondent's products.

- **Dr Zsolt Fábíán V Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.**

Qualifications and experience obtained by a doctor abroad were given less weight in an application for a training programme than those gained in Ireland.

Applying a marking scheme that allows for a higher award of marks to graduates of Irish medical schools than overseas medical schools was indirectly discriminatory.

- **Microsoft Ireland and Amjad Shaaban.**

A candidate from a country where Microsoft wasn't prevalent was rejected due to lack of familiarity with the products. The court found this requirement legitimate, as it was directly related to the job role and not considered as indirect discrimination.

Language competence and usage in the workplace

- **A Lithuanian National v A waste management company [2016]**

"The requirement to be proficient in English ... is likely to place employees whose native language is not English at a disadvantage relative to other employees." Deficiencies in the selection process, because candidates' English was not tested.

- **Boxmore Plastics - and - Zanetta Zimareva [2017]**

An employer's prohibition on the attendance of an interpreter in a grievance investigation was disproportionate and awarded 8,000 euro. The complainant sought the right to have an interpreter present as well as a trade union representative.

- **Kelly v Covance [2016, England, Employment Appeal Tribunal]**

A Russian national was told not to speak Russian at work. The Manager's requirement that workers speak English in the workplace related to 'concerns about conduct and performance' and was not 'related' to the worker's national origin.

- **Pathrose v A Care Home [Northern Ireland, Industrial Tribunal]**

Failure to provide an interpreter for disciplinary meetings resulted in a successful racial discrimination claim. Employers must accommodate non-native English speakers during formal processes to prevent discrimination.

Statutory guidance for employers and trade unions

In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, there are codes of practice published on what racial discrimination looks like in the workplace, and employers are vicariously liable for the actions of their workforce.

Republic of Ireland - 2022 IHREC Code of Practice: Employers' Duty

<https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/case-studies/>

Ireland does not have a specific Code of Practice that deals solely with racial discrimination in the workplace. IHREC does have a more general Code of Practice on the Employer's Duty. This Code of Practice covers all of the equality grounds, including racial discrimination, and provides guidance on the legal obligations and responsibilities of employers. The IHREC Code of Practice has statutory recognition. Employers must have comprehensive, accessible, and effective policies that focus on prevention, best practice, and remedial action. They must also have accessible complaints procedures. An employer may become aware of harassment or sexual harassment without a complaint being made (for example by way of exit interviews) and will therefore have a duty to act in the absence of a complaint. The Code of Practice covers all equality grounds

The IHREC Code of Practice on the Employer's Duty serves as an important reference point and source of guidance for understanding the legal framework around racial discrimination and other forms of workplace discrimination in Ireland. It is a helpful tool for trade unions and workers to understand the legal obligations and benchmarks around addressing racial discrimination, even though it is not specific to that ground alone.

Northern Ireland - 2007 Code of Practice for the elimination of Racial Discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment.

<https://www.equalityni.org/Individuals/I-have-a-work-related-problem/Race> and
<https://www.equalityni.org/cases>

Northern Ireland has a specific Code of Practice that deals directly with racial discrimination and equality of opportunity in employment. Unlike the more general Code in the Republic of Ireland, this Northern Ireland Code explicitly includes obligations for trade unions, not just employers. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has a dedicated section on its website providing case studies and guidance on racial discrimination issues, which helps complement the legislative framework. The existence of this specialised Northern Ireland Code is positive, as it offers more tailored standards for employers and unions to follow on addressing racial discrimination in the workplace although there is arguably a need for an updated version to ensure the guidance remains current.

Supporting Complaints

Motivations to Complain

There are several key factors that influence workers' motivations and ability to make complaints about racial discrimination:

Awareness of the Law and Rights: Not only workers, but also many trade unions and support organisations, have very low awareness of the legal protections against racial discrimination. This lack of knowledge makes it difficult for workers to understand and assert their rights.

Reporting Mechanisms and Processes: The processes for reporting and navigating racial discrimination complaints are often unclear, time-consuming, and difficult to access, both within workplaces and through external bodies like the Workplace Relations Commission.

Lack of Support and Fear of Backlash: Victims of racial discrimination frequently feel isolated and unsupported when reporting incidents. There is also a fear of facing negative consequences or backlash from employers for making a complaint.

Perceived Ineffectiveness of Complaints: Many workers who reported racial discrimination in the past have experienced poor responses or lack of action from employers. This leads them to lose faith in the efficacy of the complaint systems, discouraging future reporting.

Psychological and Emotional Toll: Repeatedly experiencing and reporting racial discrimination can have significant psychological and emotional impacts on workers. This "cycle patch" makes it even harder to muster the energy and resources to go through the complaint process.

By the time a racial discrimination case makes it to a formal tribunal or commission, the worker has often had to overcome numerous obstacles and deterrents. This results in many cases being poorly evidenced, as workers struggle to navigate the system.

Some of the factors that may motivate someone to report a complaint include:

- Knowledge of the law and rights
- Access to and trust in reporting mechanisms
- Recognition of discrimination
- Psychological support for victims
- Belief in the efficacy of reporting
- Time required
- Psychological impact of reiteration

To make a complaint about or related to racial discrimination or inequality in the workplace, there is often a convincing case from the worker's point of view about why they believe racism is involved. It's important to capture that at the start of any complaint process, and ensure that the case worker or rep is informed about how race plays out in the workplace.

These points to help us think about what a worker needs when they take such a complaint have some overlaps with other worker complaints, but important differences too, most notably the element of active listening and validation in the early stage, so that any viable case of racial discrimination is not dismissed or silenced early.

Most people experiencing racism never report most of their experiences, and research shows that where a complaint of discrimination is made, it is usually because the victim has a similar experience previously where there were visible signs of racism, or has observed something similar in the current context.

How can a trade union representative support someone who has experienced racism in the workplace?

- Listen Actively
- Empathise
- Provide Emotional Support
- Validate Their Experience
- Offer Information and Resources
- Advocate on Their Behalf
- Provide Practical Assistance
- Promote Education and Awareness
- Advocate for Structural Change
- Follow Up

Employer Responses to Complaints

Formal complaint and investigation processes can end up further isolating and marginalising the employee who has experienced discrimination. Rather than supporting them, the systems can feel punitive. These formal processes tend to become overly focused on individual cases and disciplining specific employees. This diverts the organisation's time, energy and resources away from the broader work of creating an inclusive culture. Employers often fail to use these moments as opportunities to reaffirm the organisation's values, policies and commitment to equality. The response becomes narrowly about the specific incident rather than the bigger picture. The adversarial nature of formal complaints and mediation can actually fragment the process of restoring justice and repairing the workplace relationships that have been damaged by discrimination. Employers are often too quick to try and resolve these issues privately, behind closed doors, rather than addressing them transparently and collectively with the workforce. Overall, the typical employer responses to racial discrimination complaints are reactive, punitive and siloing, rather than proactive, restorative and geared towards building a truly inclusive workplace culture. This is a major shortcoming, and an ideal area for unions to intervene to mitigate workplace fragmentation and conflict.

Creating Inclusive Workplaces

In this section, we will discuss what it means to proactively create inclusion in the workplace. This is a really effective way of reducing the likelihood of tensions or conflict.

Inclusion in Work Actions

- Promote Awareness and Education
- Advocate for Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives
- Address Microaggressions
- Support Networking Opportunities
- Advocate for & support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
- Promote Inclusive Language and Practices
- Provide Feedback and Suggestions
- Lead by Example

Unconscious/Implicit Bias

Many organisations have focused on unconscious bias training as a core part of their EDI work. Is it useful? To some extent. It tells us that there is a potential problem if we don't understand that many of our decisions are not made consciously. We can acknowledge some forms of bias are at play no matter what we are doing or who we are with. Some are context-triggered. None of us can eliminate unconscious bias. That's just one problem with relying on Unconscious Bias approaches as our only response. The other is that many of the most damaging forms of racism are at least partly conscious. Worse, unconscious bias training has recently been proven to be effective for only around 1/3 of people who take it, and only for those who actively seek a 'next step' to proactively address bias in the workplace. Equality training is more effective because it is more likely to put an understanding of bias with those next steps.

Unconscious biases drive 90% to 99% of our decision making. Awareness is not enough.

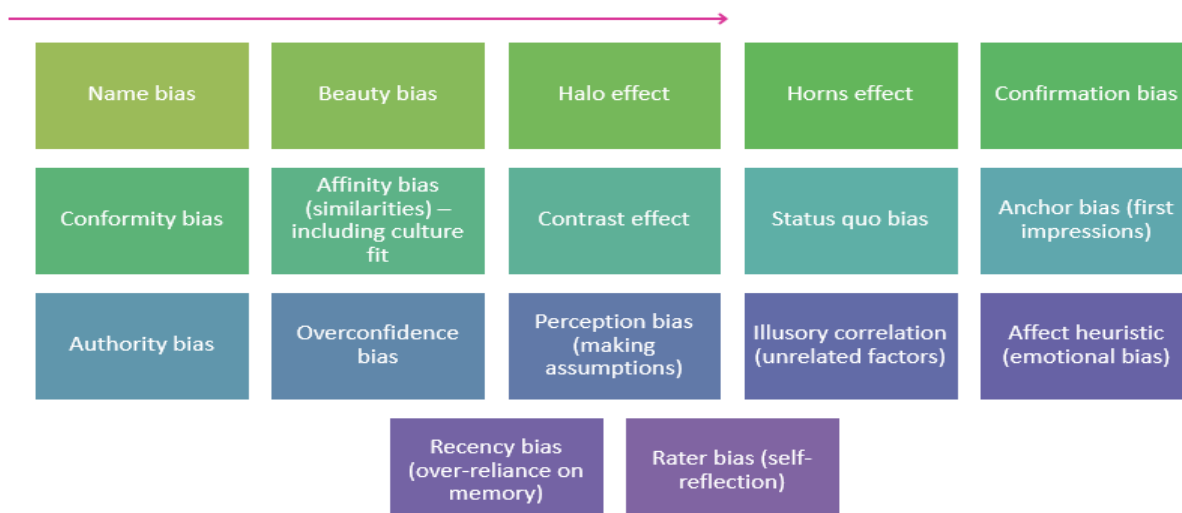


Diagram: Types of unconscious bias we use every day

‘Culture fit’

Some of the ways in which bias strongly plays out in recruitment is how companies or organisations emphasise ‘culture fit’. There are 3 important ways that the elements that usually make up corporate / team “culture” align with and reproduce bias. Values, behaviour, and language. Most of these are not connected at all to the nature of work being done or the best ways to do the work individually or as a team.

- Values e.g. competition / collaboration, empathy, machismo (‘the best’), etc.
- Behaviour e.g. group membership / mixing, sociability, levels of trust & personal interaction
- Language e.g. multilingualism or accent

Intercultural Competence

An important element of an inclusive workplace culture is the extent to which workers and management are able to, and confident to, understand the role of intercultural competence. It does not mean understanding every cultural difference! Intercultural competence is essentially the ability to interact effectively and respectfully with people from different cultural backgrounds. It’s about understanding, communicating, and empathising with diverse perspectives. Find more on this at GormMedia.com

This plays out at workplaces in the following ways:

1. Assumption of similarities - negative view of differences
2. Language Differences (meaning and words)
3. Nonverbal Misinterpretation (dress, gestures)
4. Preconceptions and Stereotypes
5. Tendency to evaluate
6. High anxiety

The role of difference is often exaggerated, when the problem really is poor communication

about differences. We have a high tendency to evaluate others (usually unfavourably) when we perceive them as more different than similar to us. So we might assume ethnic or cultural differences are more important than shared gender, age, or language, or profession. The emphasis on difference also gives us high anxiety, so encounters with colleagues we perceive as different become highly stressful to us, and we avoid them or view them as sites of potential threat. These are the things that make intercultural competence important.

There are a number of elements of intercultural competence which support inclusion within the workplace.

Cultural Awareness	Empathy	Cultural Sensitivity
Recognising biases in our social behaviours and attitudes, and building awareness around diversity	Promotes mutual understanding, reduces misunderstandings, and enhances solidarity.	Fosters respect and creates an inclusive environment.
Communication Skills	Flexibility and Adaptability	Effective conflict resolution
Vital for building trust and fostering collaboration among union members	Ensure union members can navigate diverse situations and find solutions that resonate with various cultural perspectives.	Promotes unity and ensures that cultural differences do not undermine the overall goals of the union.
Cultural Intelligence	Inclusive Leadership	Cross-Cultural Teamwork
Understanding cultural nuances and adapting accordingly enhances the ability of union members to work collaboratively and negotiate effectively for a diverse membership	Fosters a sense of belonging, encourages diverse perspectives, and strengthens overall cohesion.	Enhances creativity, problem-solving, and productivity

Job accommodation measures that reflect intercultural competence can include:

Migrant workers

- Flexible holidays and unpaid leave to allow for longer visits to countries of origin
- Use of languages of migrant employees in management and union communications
- Staff training in cultural awareness or in managing multi-ethnic teams

Specific religious or cultural needs

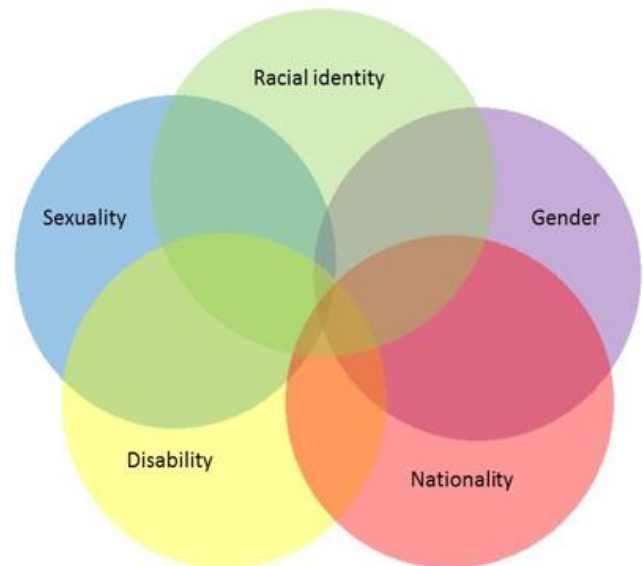
- Dietary requirements
- Flexible hours to allow for the observance of religious tradition

- Dress codes accommodating cultural and religious imperatives of minority ethnic groups

Recognising Intersectional Experiences

It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking about any group as monolithic – not internally diverse – and that reinforces the idea of us and them. Instead it's helpful to think of our various characteristics as overlapping and influencing one another.

For some people, who carry several minoritised or marginalised identities, the effects of those can be strongly cumulative – they don't just pile one on top of the other – they make being a woman, or disabled, or Muslim, more difficult than if those identities were not mixed. All of us have variable levels of power to control our own lives and experiences. Class and socioeconomic disadvantage is a strong element of exclusion.



What's the impact of intersecting with race, gender, disability, etc? When we think about antiracism within the trade union (1)

it's important not to pit one form of inequality against another, because every group is internally diverse and has a lot in common with other groups based on other characteristics and (2) when we plan actions, we do it with an eye to that internal diversity, so that we are not just responding to one kind of experience or sub-group.

- Cumulative effect of multiple exclusions / oppressions
- Negatively affects access to health, education, permanent residence status, work permits and employment

Situating EDI compliance

Many EDI (equality, diversity, inclusion) actions are aimed at individuals and imply moral value – this is what often creates resistance from workers who feel that EDI is a “burden” or “moralising”. When you are reviewing EDI plans from an employer, it's helpful to examine who actions are aimed at, and how management takes responsibility for outcomes and processes that underpin EDI. When you are developing anti-racist actions as a union, you should be equally mindful about that. Automating processes for collecting data, for example, helps to gather information about casework and who's developing expertise on such cases, without putting the onus on individual staff to do that. Developing SOPs and guidance that can be used across the Union reduce individual workload and enable discussion about their use and value. As much as possible, avoid putting the emphasis on individual voluntary action

because while it is better in the early stages, it tends to drop off quickly and sustainable resources are not put in place.

Who are actions aimed at?

1. Individual bias:

- How much emphasis is there on this?
- Training and in accountability

2. Collectives:

- Departments, programme teams, professional services
- Including all internal committees and decision -making processes

3. Management:

- How will teams understand and embed the principles of race equality in their decision making and work

Addressing Employer Risk Aversion

Most employers are highly risk averse when it comes to thinking about innovating for inclusive workplace cultures. These are the 10 things that recent research suggests are strong determinants of success for any EDI programme or actions. More importantly for unions, these approaches give space to building solidarity, collecting feedback on what works, and avoids tick box and tokenistic action plans.

- Define Clear Criteria - 'must-haves' versus 'nice-to-haves'
- Structured Interview Process
- Assessment Tools
- Trial Periods or Projects
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Embrace diversity
- Learning from Failure
- Continuous Development
- Collaborative Decision-Making
- Focus on Potential
- Data-Driven Approach
- Clarify reasonable risks

Reflect on the following questions:

- How does unconscious bias influence decision-making in the workplace?
- What are the risks of over-relying on unconscious bias training as a solution to workplace discrimination?
- What are some common biases that might influence hiring decisions, can you give examples of these biases?
- How does the concept of 'culture fit' potentially reinforce bias within organisations, and what alternatives could promote a more inclusive environment?
- How can defining clear criteria and structured interview processes help reduce bias in recruitment and promotion decisions?
- What strategies can organisations implement to ensure that their diversity and inclusion efforts are more than just 'tick-box' exercises?

Creating Inclusive Unions

It's not only our members' workplaces that should be proactively inclusive. Our unions should be too. Again, it's easy to fall into the trap of believing that good people will act appropriately and proactively in this area. But it's better to acknowledge that unions, like all organisations, have a lot of demands on their people and resources, and a proactive approach and sustainability measures will ensure we live up to our values. Good people are often also busy stressed people with laser focus on other areas, and racial discrimination can easily fall out of view until it pops up in casework.

An inclusive union works towards the following:

1. In collective bargaining agreements:
 - Strong diversity and inclusion policies that explicitly address and prevent racism within the workplace.
 - Language that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity
 - Clauses that promote equal opportunities for all workers, regardless of their ethnic background.
2. Implementing systems for collecting and analysing data on pay, promotions, and other employment factors.
3. Advocate for employers to address systemic issues creating and amplifying racial disparities.

Key commitments to creating an inclusive trade union include; collective bargaining, organising and recruitment of ethnic minority members, demanding better public policy, leading by example by being good employers as unions.

Outreach Strategies

Effective strategies taken by trade unions have included:

1. **Improving Working Conditions**- Through collecting evidence and promoting greater media coverage of the workers' conditions. This enables the unions to protect their members and challenge systemic exploitation of workers³⁰.
2. **Organisation**- Through targeted recruitment and providing migrant-specific services. These can strengthen the bargaining positions of unions, and may include provision of migrant specific services such as language support services.
3. **Equalisation**- Through advocating for minimum wages and collective bargaining, trade unions can prevent disruptions in the standards of wages³¹. In Sweden, for example, unions with a large membership base have successfully pursued an equalisation strategy, promoting openness while ensuring wage parity through strong collective bargaining³².

In Finland and Estonia, a key trade union strategy is to try to guarantee that migrants' working conditions do not differ from those of other workers. The trade unions inform migrants about Finnish collective agreements and trade union membership in the most common migrant languages. This is important for the unions because it is not in their interest that migrants' working conditions are undercut (Alho, 2015, p. 7)³³.

In the United Kingdom, trade unions have had some success engaging with migrants in the workplace, through organising and learning strategies, and have also engaged in campaigns to improve the rights and position of Black and minority ethnic workers within trade unions and in the workplace. These benefit from strong regional union branches, dedicated union officers or external funding. However, broader coordinated action and long-term strategies for greater collective regulation and support from the state is necessary to build on these³⁴.

During the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, trade unions such as the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) campaigned against exploitative working conditions of drivers, in a sector where a significant number are migrant and minority ethnic workers³⁵. This advocacy

³⁰ Blackshaw, L. (2022) 'Transport and logistics workers face new challenges and adapt new trade union strategies', *International Union Rights*, 27, pp. 22–23.

³¹ Afonso, A., Negash, S.M. and Wolff, E.A. (2020) 'Closure, equality or organisation: Trade union responses to EU labour migration', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 30, pp. 528–542.

³² Bengtsson, E. (2013) 'Swedish trade unions and European Union migrant workers', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 55, pp. 174–189.

³³ Alho, R. (2015) *Inclusion or exclusion?: trade union strategies and labour migration*. Turku: Siirtolaisuusinstituutti.

³⁴ Connolly, H. and Sellers, B. (2017) 'Trade unions and migrant workers in the UK: Organising in a cold climate', in. Available at: <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:158769991>.

³⁵ Blackshaw, L. (2022) 'Transport and logistics workers face new challenges and adapt new trade union strategies', *International Union Rights*, 27, pp. 22–23.

included collecting evidence directly from affected migrant and minority ethnic workers, documenting this in a report and arranging media coverage of unacceptable conditions. This enabled the union to not only protect their members but also challenge the systemic issues that allow such exploitation to persist. Coordinated, long-term strategies and robust collective action reinforce the union's role as a vital defender of workers' rights.

See more here: [Pandemic of Exploitation in European Trucking](#)

The SIPTU Fair Deal for Cleaners Campaign (2009) was created to address issues identified in the cleaning sector where there was a low density of union membership. Migrants make a significant proportion of the workers in this sector, but are not reflected in union representation. The key issues were non-compliance in employment law, statutory rates of pay, holiday pay, breaks and working time. SIPTU compiled evidence from CSO data on migrants in the labour market by sector and NERA reviews on low pay, irregular and unsocial hours, lack of respect, and worker exploitation. SIPTU targeted the contract cleaning industry for a strategic organising campaign. Two key elements are important to note:

1. Outreach: Direct consultation with 500 cleaners in their own homes, from 22 different countries across 46 different work sites in Dublin.
2. Capacity building: Through the campaign, SIPTU identified and developed new workplace leaders and built workplace and industry activist infrastructures in Dublin.

More recently, trade unions in Northern Ireland have reported a wide range of outreach activities. Omagh Trades Council has been actively involved in supporting migrant workers suffering exploitation in their area, Craigavon Trades Council have been supporting ethnic minority workers, and the Trade Union Education Program (TUEP) developed an accredited course with Belfast City of Sanctuary on workplace discrimination and the role of trade unions delivered to representatives of ethnic minority communities. NIC ICTU delivered unaccredited seminars on various employment related issues with Belfast City of Sanctuary and the Migrant Centre NI. During 2021-2023, ULF projects included 220 migrant workers completing OET, IELTS training or ESOL qualifications.³⁶

Reaching out

Campaigns or actions towards supporting and including migrants do not have to recreate the wheel – many of the issues are remarkably stable. They might affect different groups or sectors, but they will probably be familiar to you.

Many issues remain unchanged despite shifts in labour market. These include:

- Misperceptions about trade unions
- Fragmentation of workers and workplaces
- Cost of Union membership

³⁶ ICTU (2023) Report of the Executive Council.
https://www.ictu.ie/sites/default/files/publications/2023/8219%20ICTU%20BDC%20Report%202023.pdf_

- Centralised/shop steward based decision-making
- Need to strengthen organising ways of working to complement good servicing capabilities
- Recognition of Qualifications
- Lack of Data

Self-assessment: Where are you starting from?

Using the graphic below, reflect on your union or branch and where you are right now.³⁷

Protectionism • Reluctance to support migrants in industrial conflicts linked to racism • Rejection of union membership by migrants or minority ethnic workers • Reluctance to recruit migrant and minority ethnic workers	Openness • Advocacy of integration of minority ethnic workers within the union • Services established for migrant and minority ethnic workers • Individual recruitment of minority ethnic workers to union • 'Colour-blind' approach to union strategic planning • Recognition of linguistic differences and need for union to adapt • Support for migrant and minority ethnic workers in industrial disputes
Exclusionary • Rigid 'colour-blind' approach to integrating minority ethnic workers • Denial that migrant and minority ethnic workers have different issues and demands • Failure to prioritise minority ethnic workers grievances • Reluctance to represent minority ethnic workers in race discrimination complaints • Paternalistic control over minority ethnic workers in the union or in struggle	Inclusion • Recognition of difference and monitoring of migrant and minority ethnic workers involvement • Encouragement to migrant and minority ethnic workers to become union activists/workplace representatives • Development of union strategy for greater involvement of migrant and minority ethnic workers • Election or appointment of migrant-origin union officials and organisers • Encouragement of self-organisation within the union for migrant and minority ethnic workers • Rules introduced outlawing convicted racists from union membership

³⁷ Jefferys, S. (2007). Why do unions find fighting workplace racism difficult?. Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 13(3), 377–395. doi:10.1177/102425890701300305

Creating positive attitudes towards anti-racism in your union, branch or workplace

Some workplace practices can perpetuate indirect racism, even though they are well established. Workplace cultural norms can allow indirect discrimination to continue without being recognised as such.

- Organisational procedures and rules often inadvertently permit differential treatment between 'majority' and 'minority' workers in favour of the former.
- Traditions of family recruitment in certain industries and workplaces, have the effect of excluding recruits from ethnic minorities
- 'First in, last out' response redundancies mean ethnic minority workers – the most recently hired are first to be fired.

Attitudes are hard to change permanently. But behaviour and attitude are distinct from each other. Focus on behaviours rather than attitudes in the promotion of race equality and migrant inclusion.

What to do to shift behaviours within the trade union:

- Promotion of TU ethos
- Address isolation and distancing
- Induction into TU workings
- Representation and leadership strong on unity
- Continuous learning
- Capacity building opportunities
- Solidarity work

How does your union or local branch:

- Work to shape and implement EDI policies in a sector and workplace?
- Hold employers accountable for EDI compliance?
- Contribute to anti-racist messaging/awareness in the sector?
- Gather and use evidence about inequality in the sector?
- Respond to messages from the political sphere about migrants and minorities?
- Work with anti-racist & migrant support organisations to identify and address equality issues?

Capacity building

Efforts to increase the representation and inclusion of minority ethnic members in leadership positions and decision-making bodies are crucial for fostering a diverse and equitable trade union. To achieve this, the union must prioritise initiatives that not only open doors for minority ethnic members but also support their development and growth within the organisation.

1. Increase Representation and Inclusion in Leadership and Decision-Making Positions

This can be achieved by implementing policies that promote diversity in elections and appointments, ensuring that minority voices are heard and have a seat at the table. Co-opting members or creating bridging or liaison roles are good short-term fixes alongside sustained efforts to diversify holders of traditional positions.

2. Promote Existing Leadership Programmes to Minority Members

This involves not only making them aware of these opportunities but also encouraging and supporting their participation. Your union can use targeted communication strategies, such as outreach through minority networks and affinity groups, to ensure that these members are fully informed and motivated to take part in leadership development initiatives.

3. Develop and Promote Targeted Leadership Development Programmes

These programmes can focus on addressing the unique challenges and barriers faced by minority leaders, providing them with the skills, confidence, and networks needed to thrive in leadership roles. Tailored content, such as workshops on navigating bias and understanding organisational dynamics, can be particularly valuable.

4. Provide Training, Mentorship, and Networking Opportunities

Offering training, mentorship, and networking opportunities with senior union leadership is a key strategy for developing minority ethnic leaders. Mentorship programmes can pair emerging leaders with experienced mentors who can provide guidance, support, and insights into leadership pathways. Networking opportunities, such as events and forums, can help minority ethnic members build relationships with senior leaders and peers, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose within your union.

5. Offer Training and Workshops on Cultural Competence and Awareness

These sessions can educate members about the importance of diversity, the challenges faced by minority ethnic members, and strategies for supporting inclusive practices.

6. Create a Culture that Values Contributions of Minority Activists and Leaders

Your union must cultivate a culture that genuinely values and celebrates the contributions of minority ethnic activists and leaders. This can be achieved by publicly recognising and rewarding the achievements of minority leaders, integrating diverse perspectives into the union's strategic goals, and ensuring that minority voices are actively involved in decision-making processes.

7. Address Discrimination and Bias Promptly and Effectively

This includes implementing clear anti-discrimination policies, providing channels for reporting and addressing grievances, and ensuring that any incidents of bias are handled swiftly and fairly.

8. Provide Support and Advocacy for Minority Ethnic Members

This could involve providing legal support, counselling services, and advocacy on behalf of affected members.

9. Ensure Inclusivity Across Gender, Sexuality, Disability, and Socioeconomic Status

Your union's activities and support mechanisms must be inclusive and address the intersectional differences across gender, sexuality, disability, and socioeconomic status. Minority ethnic members may face multiple layers of discrimination. Tailoring support and resources to meet the diverse needs of all members will help create a truly inclusive union that champions equality at every level.

Next Steps for your union might include:

Policies

- Anti-racist statutes or policy
- Rules against racists
- Anti-racist Publicity

Actions

- Ethnic monitoring or special provisions for minority members
- Anti-racist education or training
- Anti-racist discrimination raised in negotiations

Countering Hate

In this section we particularly address the questions raised by our current political landscape where we see hate emerging in a much more vocal and organised way than in the previous decade. Here we suggest a number of steps which, used together, provide a very effective defence against hate organising within the union or unionised workplaces, and which build resilience and confidence amongst trade union members to counter hate in their own communities.

Hate Proofing Actions

- Develop strong narratives for sector and workplace
- Draw on TU movement history
- Educate members on scapegoating
- Prepare for “Difficult conversations”
- Use factual information resources sparingly but make them easy to find (avoid myth bust approach)
- Strengthen Union Democracy
- Provide Support for Targeted Groups
- Develop clear position on economic pressures

Myth busting does not work... but evidence-based narratives do. Why?

- It reinforces doubt in ‘facts’
- It focuses on anti-immigrant narrative
- It places racist myths at centre of debate

Research has shown repeatedly that myth busting campaigns are not effective as a lead strategy because they effectively reproduce the framing of issues set by hate groups. Myths can be ‘busted’ by setting a strong alternative framing, with factual information as well as individual stories. These in particular can help people who are ‘undecided’ about their views. Myth busting approaches also tend to be highly distrusted by those who already hold anti-immigrant and/or racist views.

Creating and strengthening independent union narratives

Creating strong narratives from the trade union is key to connecting with our members and the general public.

What are the key issues that are driving discontentment? Often these are about rapid social change as well as economic issues. Change is not the problem, but the support we have to help people adapt to it. Ill health, loneliness, and alienation from family or friends can be key triggers for sympathy with far-right narratives.

Trade unions have a strong history of building narratives around economic justice, but the solidarity message is an essential element. This helps us to create a future vision of Ireland, a fair labour market, a fair society, which the public want to be part of.

Hearing personal stories is a strong disruptor of generalised 'othering' messages (but remember people telling their stories need ongoing support to prevent targeting). There is value in hearing from disaffected groups, and this is best done through quiet listening exercises rather than 'town hall' meetings, to avoid establishing a norm for hateful language in public.

Because Trade Unions have such a significant history in countering hate across many countries, there is a lot of good practice to draw on elsewhere. The research conducted for this project identified a number of helpful narratives which can bolster solidarity with migrant and minority ethnic workers. A mix of these is more helpful than using one, because migrant experiences and contributions are very diverse, even within specific national or regional origin groups. These are additional to the core messages of anti-racism and equality discussed earlier.

- What migrants add to the economy
- How our cultural landscape is made more enriching for all of us
- Younger workers are filling jobs left by ageing population
- Different labour market experiences and ways of working make our organisations better able to withstand rapid change
- Thriving healthy societies with functioning services rely on workers to fill the gaps – often filled by migrants
- Ireland, like most of Europe, has a history steeped in emigration and immigration (see Bryan Fanning, *The Making of Ireland*) long before British rule and since. There is no Ireland without migration. This is an important context that should not be lost.

In short, create strong narratives for the union members which:

- Identify key issues
- Draw from past experience
- Connect with lived knowledge
- Paint a strong future picture

Video: The Far Right doesn't represent working people. Trade Unions do.

It is helpful to draw on European neighbours for good anti-racism practice, particularly where these have honed in on government policies against marginalised groups. In many of the recent media sources we have seen, asylum seekers are cast as benefit frauds or cheats, but many asylum seekers now work in Ireland, and prop-up our social care services and other sectors. Framing them as workers can help, and as this case study from the UK shows, more

importantly as humans worthy of dignity, like us, is a really powerful appeal to trade union members and the public.

- Formal trade union protests in Belgium, France and the UK against asylum seeker policies
- Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) coalition with Oxfam and the Refugee Council pressurised government into abandoning asylum-seekers vouchers
- 3 principal Belgian trade union confederations agreed to refuse to recruit any worker expelled for membership of Belgian extreme right parties

'[The voucher system] brings you into sharp contrast with others. You stand in a supermarket queue and while others have money, you have a voucher. It's grotesque. Worse, the government will subsidise Tesco and Sainsbury's. That's not the redistribution I voted for'.

Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union on the asylum seeker voucher scheme

Reflect on the following questions:

- What are the primary challenges in creating inclusive trade unions today?
- How can unions effectively measure and communicate progress in promoting inclusivity to their members and the broader community?
- How can unions and local branches take an active role in shaping and implementing effective Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies within their sectors and workplaces?
- In what ways can unions contribute to anti-racist messaging and awareness within their sectors?
- How should unions respond to political messages that impact migrants and minorities?
- What are effective strategies for unions to work with anti-racist and migrant support organisations to address equality issues?
- What steps can unions take to build the capacity of their members to effectively counter hate and promote inclusivity?
- What are the most effective strategies for unions to defend against hate organising within their own ranks and in unionised workplaces?
- What anti-racism practices from European neighbours could be adapted to resist extreme right politics in Ireland? Which challenges should be avoided if possible?



Hope & Courage Collective Guidance on messaging for civil society in context of local protests against people seeking asylum and refugees

Don't repeat or amplify fear based narratives and dog whistles. They are designed to stoke fear and dehumanise people and every time we repeat them in an effort to refute terrible things been said, we are actually helping the other side ie *#IrelandIsNotFull*, *it's not true that refugees are flooding this area*, *'refugees are not taking our homes'* *'they are not dangerous'* *'there is nothing to fear from them'* etc.

This also extends to sharing screenshots, and content online drawing attention to what is happening and to express your opposition. You might think it's helpful to share information, but in reality you are giving more oxygen to the other side. The silent majority in our communities, who are afraid to speak or who are drowned out need to be held up - focusing everything on the negative minority voices makes it very hard for them to be visible.

Avoid mythbusting; it will only enforce our opponents' frames. A classic trick of opposing voices is to draw us into arguments about **numbers** All this does is force you to discuss the issue on their terms, is dehumanising, negating and shifts the discussion away from talking about what the community is for and amplifying the positive values.

Avoid saying 'the far-right', or calling community protests racist. Our opposition uses racism to exploit fear, division, and reaction at every level of society. A very effective strategy used by the far right and right wing politicians is to exploit anxieties in order to turn people against each other. It goes against our instincts but when we talk about racism without naming specifically the effect or the behaviours ie the spread of hate, fear, division, the listener/reader/community has to fill in the gaps ie what you mean.

Most people do not have a definition of racism, i.e. prejudice plus power. Hearing spokespeople talk about racism without saying what it actually results in the audience feeling like you are talking about them, i.e. that they themselves are racist, or leave them confused or apply popular understandings i.e. that it's about bias or difference. This does not mean that we shy away from naming what is happening, calling out racism/racial coding and dog whistles - just don't fall into the trap of thinking everyone is like you!

Be clear who you are talking to/about and be careful that in the process of trying to prove a point, that you are not either 'othering' people who are experiencing the harm but alienating people who are looking for help in understanding what's going on.

Do acknowledge that there are people spreading lies and fear [*racism*] in our communities, and are using the fact that we need better services, safe homes, and decent work - to turn us against each other and to fuel hate. Communities often feel left in the dark, and are hurting for many reasons - often as a result of systemic under-resourcing. So when there's a significant moment in a community it can serve as a lightning rod for channelling unrest. From there it can quickly become weaponized by the far right and some politicians. Equally we need to be very careful of the danger of framing

ORGANISING FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACIST WORKPLACES AND TRADE UNIONS

communities as deficient in some way in trying to 'explain' what is happening. Getting into arguments re the 'far right' naturally evokes the so called 'far left' framing, something to avoid at all costs.

Talk about communities needing to be resourced rather getting into 'communities should be consulted' framing. Keep speaking to material needs and what's needed to enable communities to thrive - rather than

getting into supporting the claim that communities should be given the power to veto particular demographics of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Do affirm positive and solidarity based values. All the research shows that by spotlighting and reinforcing solidarity based values directly impacts on how people understand and respond.

There's been tons of [research](#) showing that the best framing is to open with shared values [*what we stand for/unity*] then name the problem [*some trying to divide us and how they are doing it*] and move quickly to solutions [*what we want this gov/leaders to do*]

"In this community, we pride ourselves on being welcoming and how quickly we make friends with newcomers, but some people want to divide us using fear about where we come from or the colour of our skin. Why? Because they've got nothing else to offer.

Whether we were born in Ireland, or came here seeking safety, we all just want to be safe and to live a decent life. That's why we need to fight together for homes we can all afford and decent jobs so we can care for our families. We need to fight for sports clubs, better bus services, health care, more youth clubs and all the things we need to build strong, diverse communities of equals. This community pulls together."

Use 'people first' language i.e. people seeking asylum, people from Ukraine rather than Ukrainians or asylum seekers. The more we use people-first language, the less dehumanised people are.

Repeat, repeat, repeat. Our job as community leaders is to make popular what needs to be said, not say what's popular. This means we have to repeat (until we are blue in the face) the narratives and messaging that we want to shape how our communities respond.

The messenger is important. When people who are trusted and held in high esteem in our communities speak, people listen. Their word carries further and gets outside the echo chambers we often get caught in ie talking to ourselves! Find out who the sports people, church leaders, politicians, cultural leaders are and talk to them about spreading the narratives that unite and show that together we are stronger than fear.

Recommended reading <https://www.wemakethefuture.us/history-of-the-race-class-narrative>

The Hope and Courage Collective is a national civil society organisation that works with community groups, advocacy groups, trade unions, activists and academics to stop hate organising in our communities and workplaces. We support communities and civil society to stay grounded, caring and resilient in the face of far right hate, bigotry and extremism. For further resources guidance and analysis go to <https://hopeandcourage.ie/>

Audit tool

Using the following questions reflect and self-assess the areas in which your union requires urgent action, where additional resources or learning might be required, and where you may have good practice to share with others in your union or sector.

Leadership: Evaluate the diversity of the unions' leadership.

- ☐ Does the union or branch have a diverse group of people in positions of leadership and decision-making roles?
- ☐ Are there people of ethnic minority or migrant background in leadership positions, or is leadership mostly dominated by one ethnic or national group?

Membership: Assess the diversity of the unions' membership.

- ☐ Are people of ethnic minority or migrant background welcomed, represented and actively involved in the union or branch?
- ☐ Are there any groups or cliques that may exclude minorities?
- ☐ In what ways can the union or branch include others to feel more inclusive of cultural differences?

Language: Explore how language shapes belonging in the union.

- ☐ Is the language used in the union or branch welcoming and inclusive to all cultures?
- ☐ Are union or branch leaders confident in using inclusive and appropriate identifications for culturally diverse groups?
- ☐ Are union resources available in languages other than English to support welcome and inclusion?

Outreach: Analyse the unions' outreach efforts.

- ☐ Does the union or branch reach out to diverse communities and neighbourhoods?
- ☐ Can outreach work be made more inclusive and sensitive to different backgrounds and needs?

Events: Review typical events offered by your union branch.

- ☐ What kinds of union or branch events include diverse members of the union?
- ☐ How open is your union or branch to suggestions for new or adapted events to be more inclusive to people of all cultures and backgrounds?

Education: Assess your unions' educational resources.

- ☐ How can union resources better reflect the diversity of our society? Consider visual, audio and reading resources you use.
- ☐ Does the union offer courses / programmes that acknowledge and respect cultural diversity?

Relationships: Consider the relationships between union members.

- ☐ Are people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds forming genuine relationships with each other?

ORGANISING FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACIST WORKPLACES AND TRADE UNIONS

- ☐ What relationships are built between your branch and other branches in more / less ethnically diverse areas?

Policies: Evaluate the unions' policies.

- ☐ Are there policies that might unintentionally discriminate against people of ethnic minority or migrant background?
- ☐ Are there policies that actively promote diversity and inclusion?

Evaluation: Measure the success of your unions' efforts.

- ☐ What benchmarks will you set in place to monitor progress towards your inclusion goals?
- ☐ Who will monitor progress on these goals?
- ☐ How will you share good practice with your union?

Which are the areas where you would most like to see change in your union?

Choose 3 priority areas for your union or branch to work on.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Building on good practice: Reading back over your answers to the above questions, identify an area where you think your union has already undertaken some good practice, and an area where urgent action is needed.

Can you find a way to connect existing good practice with the urgent work that needs to be done?

Learning resources

Racism in Ireland

INAR, [Learn about racism in Ireland](#) and [Responding to Racism Guide](#)

Fanning, B., & Michael, L. (Eds.) (2019) [Immigrants as outsiders in the two Irelands](#). Manchester University Press.

Race in the workplace and the labour market

Joseph, E. (2020) [Critical race theory and inequality in the labour market](#).

Kandola, B. (2018). [Racism at Work](#).

European Commission (2023) [Integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market: EMN Study](#).

Ouali, N., & Jefferys, S. (2015). [Hard times for trade union anti-racism workplace strategies](#).

Race and migration in the labour market in Ireland and Northern Ireland

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2015) [The Experience of Migrants Working in Ireland](#).

Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 21(1), 99-113.

Laurence, J., Kelly, E., McGinnity, F., & Curristan, S. (2023). [Wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals in Ireland](#). Economic and Social Research Institute.

Doras (2021) [Getting Right to Work: Access to employment and decent work for international protection applicants in Ireland](#).

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2020) [Working to the bone: the experiences of migrant workers in the meat sector in Ireland](#)

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (2020) [Migrant Workers in the Mushroom Industry](#)

Arqueros-Fernandez, F. [Exploitation and Resistance among Mushroom Agricultural Workers in Ireland](#).

Kelly, E., McGuinness, S., O'Connell, P., Pandiella, A. G., & Haugh, D. (2016). [How did immigrants fare in the Irish labour market over the Great Recession?](#)

EMN Ireland study (2019) [Policy and practice targeting the labour market integration of non-EU nationals in Ireland](#)

Migrant worker rights

International Labour Organisation (2017) [Trade unions and migrant workers: New contexts and challenges in Europe](#)

International Labour Organisation (2023) [Migrant workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining](#)

IOM - UN Migration (2023) [Policy Brief: Promoting The Human And Labour Rights Of Migrant Workers In Europe](#)

Statistics

Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) (2023) [Migrant Worker Estimate in Ireland](#).

McGinnity, F., Laurence, J., & Cunniffe, E. (2023) [Comparing migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland](#). Economic and Social Research INstitute, Dublin.

Central Statistics Office (2022) [Census of Population](#)

European Migration Network (Ireland) [Reports on the Labour Market](#)

Trade Union Resources

European Trade Union Committee for Education (2023-2025) [“In and Through Education: Education Trade Unions support the inclusion of refugees and migrants”](#).

International Labour Organisation (2019) [Organizing Informal Workers into Trade Unions-A trade union guide](#)

International Labour Organisation (2020) [Trade union action to promote fair recruitment for migrant workers](#)

TUC [Anti-Racism Manifesto](#)

TUC [Discrimination and Trade Unions Negotiator’s Guide](#)

Community TU [BAME Workers Advice and Resources](#)

ICTU Migrant Workers Support Unit (MWSU) Northern Ireland [Black & Ethnic Migrant Workers’ Rights leaflet](#)

Unite the Union- [Discrimination Hurts Everyone Leaflet](#)

[UnionMigrantNet brochure](#) (Organisation focused on union support in different languages)

Glossary

Anti-racism: the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism includes individually opposing overtly racist behaviours and collectively opposing institutional racism.

Direct racial discrimination: Any differential treatment based on a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, which has no objective and reasonable justification. Differential treatment has no objective and reasonable justification if it does not pursue a legitimate aim or if there is not a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised.

Ethnicity: describes how people are categorised by characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioural patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. People can share the same nationality but be of different ethnic groups and people who share an ethnic identity can be of different nationalities.

Indirect racial discrimination: Cases where an apparently neutral factor such as a provision, criterion or practice cannot be as easily complied with by, or disadvantages, persons belonging to a group designated by a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, unless this factor has an objective and reasonable justification. This latter would be the case if it pursues a legitimate aim and if there is a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised.

Integration: a multi-directional and dynamic process including migrants, receiving communities and institutions that involves mutual adaptation of migrants and of the host society, based on principles of protection of fundamental rights, respect, tolerance and non-discrimination, towards migrants' inclusion in economic, psychological, social, linguistic, navigational, and civic spheres.

International Protection applicants: A person who seeks protection in another country (also called an asylum seeker). Seeking asylum is a human right. In Ireland, IP applicants can apply to work 6 months after application for asylum.

Migrant: A person who was born in one country and has settled in another, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

Migrant worker: This is an official term to describe people who migrate specifically for work and the category is given protection by the [UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families](#) and [European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers](#), but excludes frontier and seasonal workers as well as others. The term is often also used to refer to migrants in the labour market who have migrated for other reasons. In this toolkit, we use the term to refer to all migrants in the labour market.

Minority ethnic: Since Ireland has a majority of people who identify their ethnicity as White Irish, this refers to all other ethnic groups regardless of nationality or birth, including Irish Travellers.

“Minoritised”: Similar to “racialised”, this term refers to groups of people who experience societal subordination, discriminatory disadvantages and exclusions based on a wider set of commonly discriminated against characteristics in addition to those encapsulated by “race”; including gender, gender identity, sexuality and disability.

Racialised: The term “racialised” refers to groups of people whose experiences and position in society are shaped by processes referred to as “racialisation”. The process of “racialisation” includes experiences of racism, discrimination, and institutional and structural exclusion and disadvantage, usually based on “race”, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origin, or descent. Where the term “race” can misleadingly suggest natural fixed biological categories, the terms “racialisation” and “racialised [group]” are preferred in scholarship because they reflect more accurately the reality that racialised categories are constructed in the particular contexts of the societies in which they occur. In Ireland today “racialised group” is a term that can be applied to groups of people who may face racism based on real or perceived “racial origin”, skin colour, ethnic or national origin or migration status, including for example Irish Travellers, people of African descent, Brazilians, Roma, migrants, asylum seekers, muslims and jews. Example: “in Ireland, Travellers are considered a racialised group because of their exclusion as a nomadic group in a society whose norms and institutions are configured for settled people”. In the [National Action Plan Against Racism](#) “individuals and groups who experience racism are referred to interchangeably as “minority ethnic”, “racialised” or simply “experiencing racism”, unless more specific terminology is required.”

Racism: the description, in belief, speech or action, of groups as being essentially inferior or superior based on the idea of ‘race’.

Refugees: someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion and has been granted protection in another country.



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
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STRONGER TOGETHER



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