

BREAKING BARRIERS

A PARTICIPATORY
APPROACH TO
DEFINING SOCIO-
ECONOMIC
DISCRIMINATION

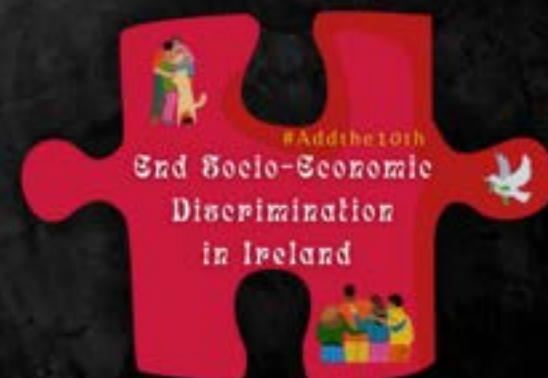
IN REAL TERMS



Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and
Equality Commission



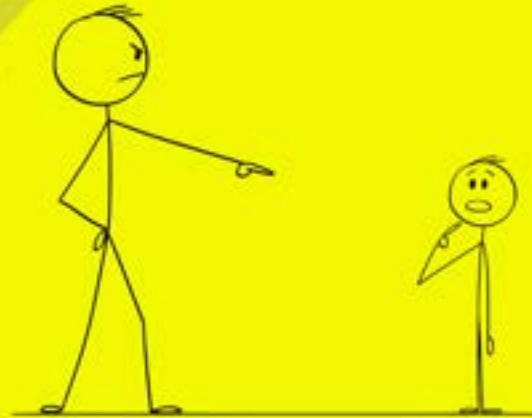
ATD
Ireland



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A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEFINING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION

IN REAL TERMS



ATD Ireland (All Together in Dignity) is part of the International Movement ATD Fourth World – All Together in Dignity to overcome poverty (atd-fourthworld.org). This is a movement of solidarity in collaboration with the most disadvantaged and excluded families around the world. ATD has more than sixty years' experience of **tackling inequality and promoting social justice**.

For the past 25 years, ATD Ireland has been close to families facing persistent poverty and struggling daily to live in **dignity**.

OUR VISION is of a world without persistent poverty, where everyone is valued, and can participate fully in society and fulfil their potential.

OUR MISSION is to contribute to building a network of people, groups and organisations committed to overcoming persistent poverty with people with a lived experience of poverty, through a human rights approach, and with a focus on leaving no one behind.

ATD welcomes everyone. It unites people whatever their origin, social status, culture or beliefs to fight against poverty. In building trust, solidarity and friendship, all have a place to realise their full and best potential.

By working together, everyone can express themselves without being judged. **Our efforts focus on supporting families and together influencing policy.**

Foreword by Andrew - Activist ATD Ireland

Can you imagine a world where the dignity of everyone is respected? Can you imagine living in poverty for 35 years or longer? Can you imagine a father from a disadvantaged area going for multiple job interviews, he has all the qualifications and he doesn't get the job because he is from a certain area? Can you imagine the mental torture that he is going through? Can you imagine a world where people don't have to worry about poverty or worry about not getting a job solely because of where you live? That is the reason I am a community activist; to try and show you that even though I have gone through this, that I still have a voice and I intend to use it so my kids don't have to go through what I have gone through.

I live by this quote. I have made it my mantra, ***“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”*** - Joseph Wresinski Founder ATD Fourth World

Wherever we are in the world, if we are to improve access to rights, we need to take account of the hidden dimensions of poverty. The institutional maltreatment, the poverty-based discrimination, the shame and stigma of being poor are all obstacles for accessing rights. In Ireland we are currently engaged in a campaign to include poverty - based discrimination as the tenth ground of discrimination in Irish equality legislation. This is so that people experiencing socio-economic discrimination have a right to legal redress and protection in the law. The absence of this ground means that many people continue to experience discrimination in accessing employment, goods and services and have no protection under the law. Apart from the material loss this has on people, it also has a deep impact on the dignity and self-belief of the victims, as well as impacting on their families and communities. Even though we have nine other grounds in the equality legislation, we are not protected and we constantly fall through the cracks. Things can't move forward until we bring in this tenth ground. To discriminate against someone because of their socio-economic status is to disrespect the inherent dignity that we all hold within us.

I feel when Ireland does add socio-economic discrimination as a 10th ground we could be a lighthouse for all of Europe. For anyone that doesn't know, a lighthouse is a beacon of hope for sailors to make sure they get safe to shore. So, ***“as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others”*** - On our deepest fear by Marianne Williamson

If anyone sees me speaking and feels as though they don't have a voice let me tell you this, everyone has a voice especially those who have gone through poverty. The only way out of poverty is to consult the experts and these are the people who are living in poverty. The only way we can eradicate poverty is by including them at the tables of power. This project brings us to the table. We are meeting minsters, academics and speaking to students at Trinity College Dublin. I had the privilege to speak at the United Nations and at Leinster House. The #addth10th campaign is building momentum.

I have this saying, 'team work makes the dream work'. I love it because one voice can make a difference but a collective of voices- it's so important. It doesn't mean one person is standing alone. More voices I think we will have more chance of making a difference and I feel we have made a difference.

Andrew- My Journey to the United Nations: Short Film on [ATD Ireland Youtube](#)



What is the project about?

Defining Socio-Economic Discrimination.... but for whom?

This project aims to define the term socio - economic discrimination, and break it down into understandable parts; what is it, how and why does it happen, how does it impact people and what can we do to change it. As well as this, the report documents three years of campaign work in Ireland and internationally with the #addthe10th campaign to have socio-economic status recognised as the tenth ground of discrimination in Irish equality legislation.

We have merged together three years of interviews, public presentations and conversations with those with lived experience of socio-economic discrimination and interviews with 20 academics, professionals working in the community and voluntary sector and members of the #Addthe10th alliance. Many of our participants may be drawing from knowledge through their work but also their own personal experiences of discrimination. Similarly, we have participants who may have had lived experience of socio- economic discrimination but also discrimination from one or more of the current 9 grounds. From there, we did a thematic analysis to form an understanding of all aspects of socio-economic discrimination. We then had some collective conversations with diverse participants where people could write down in their words, 'what does socio-economic discrimination mean?' This report breaks down socio- economic into six chapters based on the thematic analysis. Each chapter also includes its own colour and visual image.

This project aims to bring these different voices together on an equal footing, breaking barriers between people and ultimately breaking down the barriers caused by socio-economic discrimination. In light of this, the quotes used in this report are all anonymous.

“Socio-economic discrimination the actual phrase is a form of discrimination as far as I’m concerned. Hundreds of thousands of people are excluded from a conversation about their position in life and what possible solutions they might put forth if the language and terms were in layman’s terms and not legal excluded language”

From our work it is clear that a lot of people, regardless of their background, do not fully understand the term socio-economic discrimination.

It’s long and can be difficult to pronounce, it’s weighted and it’s multi-faceted. This is compounded by the fact that socio-economic status, social status and social class are not always topics that we like to discuss in Irish society. Moreover, from a legal standpoint, it is necessary to have a definition which is as technically proficient and as encompassing as it needs to be.

ATD Ireland in a series of collective workshops asked the question “**What does socio-economic discrimination mean?**” These collective discussions included those impacted by socio-economic discrimination and those who encounter socio-economic discrimination through their work in the community, in policy advocacy or in academia.

Arising from these discussions were interesting insights into why language used in policy needs to become more accessible in order to reach the people it aims to support.

“The term itself (socio-economic discrimination) is excluding people...it’s an academic term”. It is clear that socio-economic discrimination as a concept can be confusing to understand. This is an interesting point about how the term itself can isolate the people who are actually affected by it. Another quote points to the fact that politicians often use exclusionary language that sounds intellectual and well-intentioned but in fact these words aren’t making any progress towards solving the problem. ***“Politicians use these beautiful words...beautiful words but we can’t eat them and we can’t live in them”.***



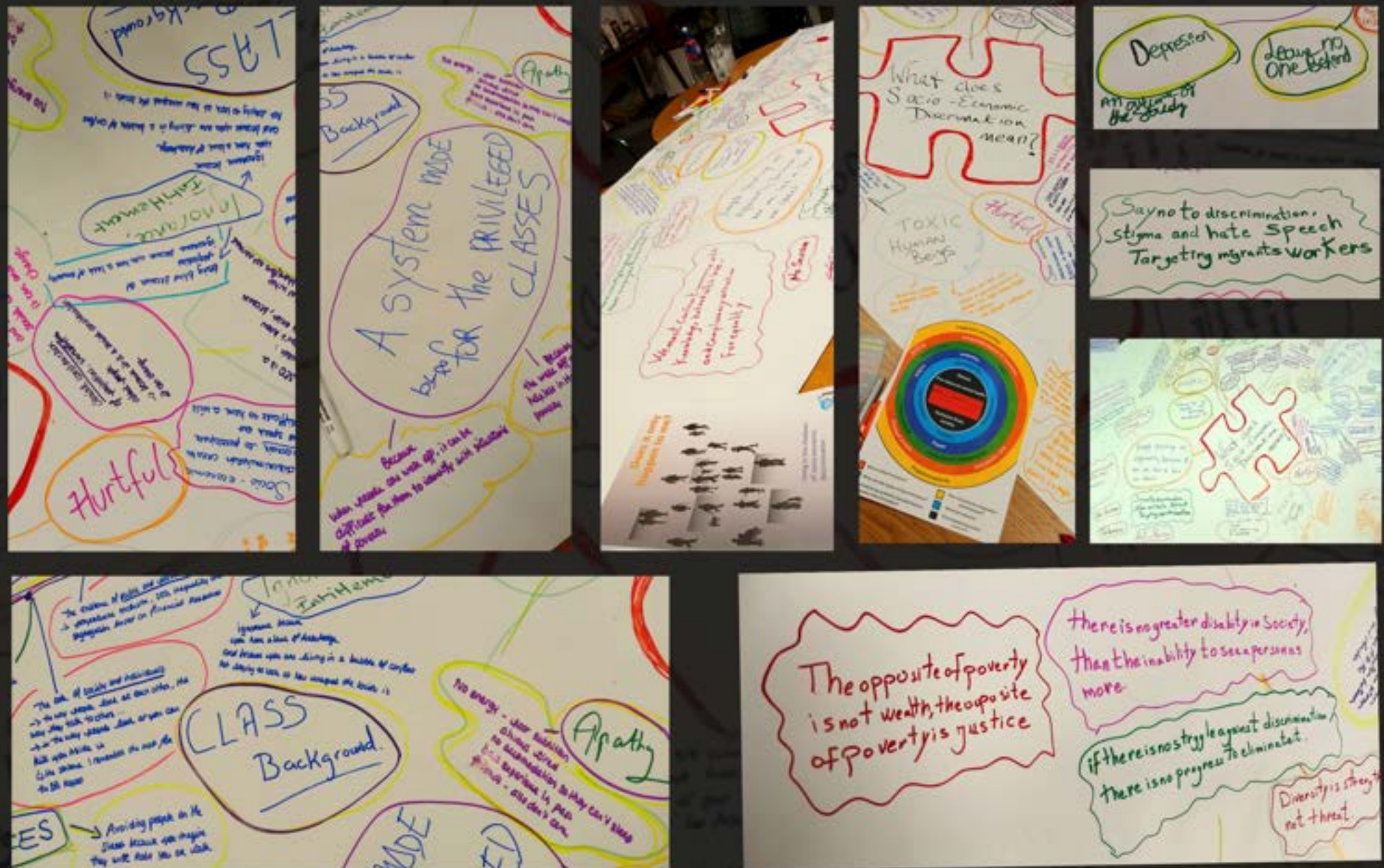
Another member reinforced the idea that socio-economic discrimination as a concept can be difficult to pin down and so it is more productive to understand it through discriminatory experiences and stories. In this way it becomes easier to comprehend socio-economic discrimination in real-terms.

“Sometimes the language we use can be a barrier to understanding, so we need to break that down and think about it in terms of the experiences that people have, for example what does it mean to be treated differently because of your accent, your dress or your postcode, what’s that like, how does it feel, what are those experiences like in reality?”.

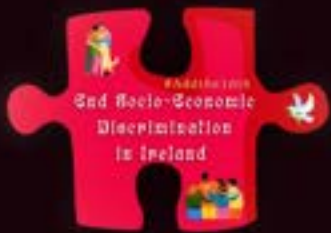
Definition

IN REAL TERMS

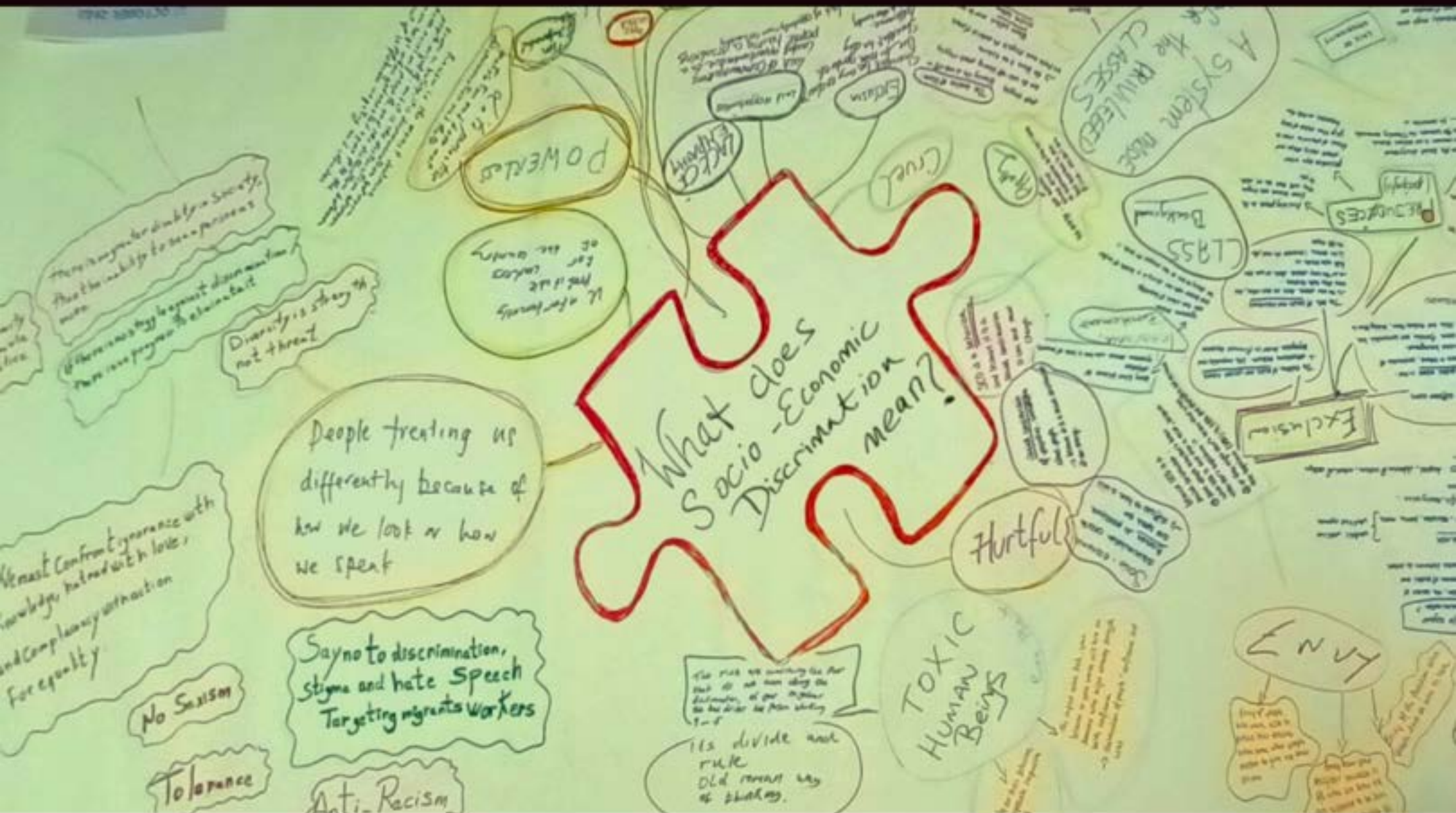
“People treating us differently because of how we look, how we speak, where we live and our wealth...it is hurtful, toxic and it impacts our quality of life”.



This definition arose from elements of the collective conversations and choosing words which were representative of the project overall.

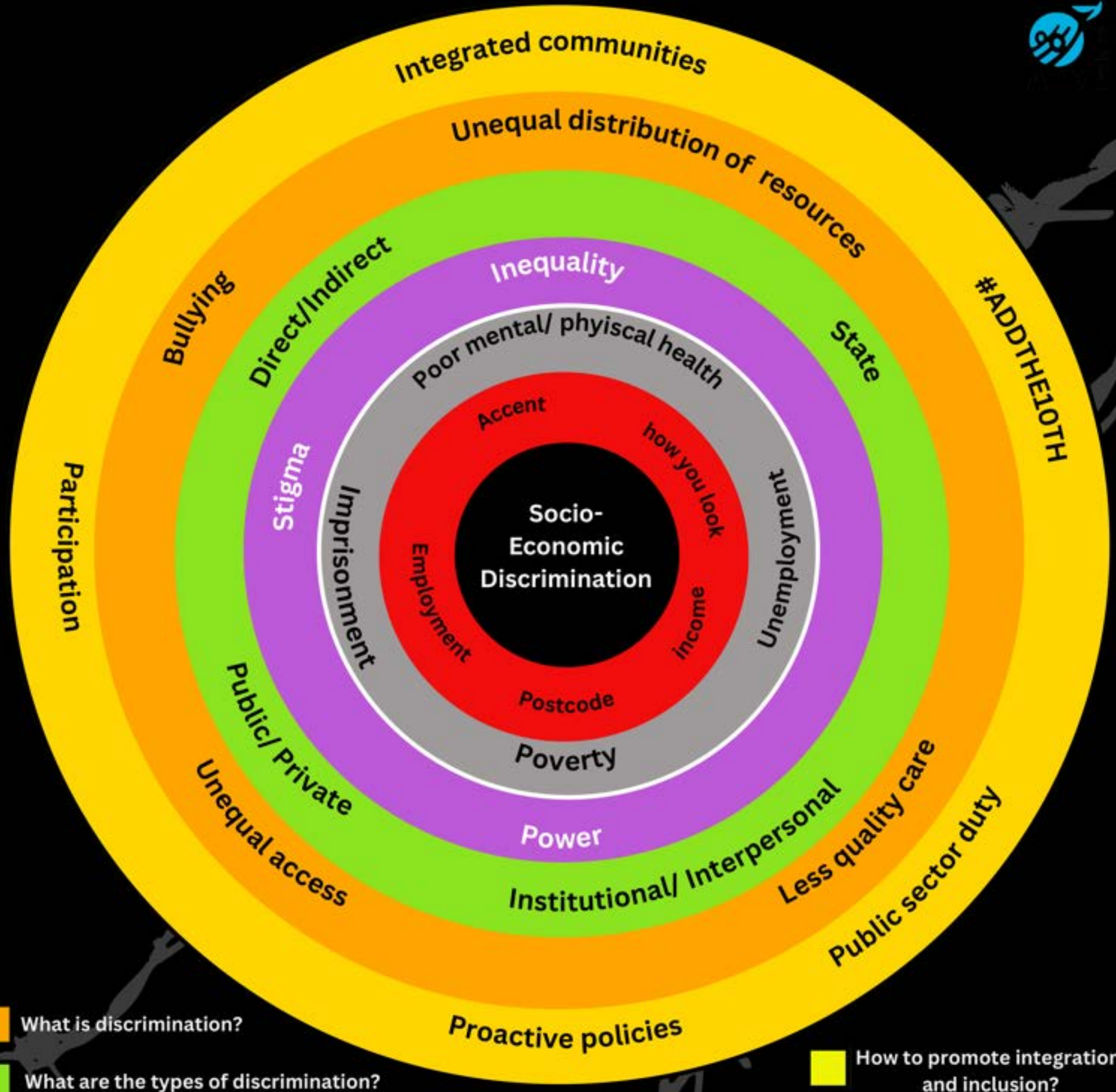


IN REAL TERMS





“SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION IS THE FEELING TO HIDE WHERE YOU COME FROM OR WHO YOU ARE BECAUSE YOU ARE AFRAID WHAT PEOPLE WILL SAY, WHAT THEY WILL THINK.”







 What is discrimination?

 What are the types of discrimination?

 Underlying systemic/societal factors causing discrimination?

 What is socio-economic status

 How to promote integration and inclusion?

 Encompassing human & material impacts?

The Design & Logic of the Report

1) What is Socio-Economic Status?



This design aims to portray a broader understanding of what socio-economic discrimination is and how it manifests.

Each of the layers of the circle attempts to break this down into understandable parts. The circular design shows how each section is intertwined and inter-related, for example, something can be both a cause and impact of socio-economic discrimination. The words are not necessarily meant to be fully representative of each chapter but to give an insight into the main ideas.

The order and logic of the report

Chapter 1: **What is socio-economic status;** This will include narrowing down the personal characteristics that can contribute to a person's socio-economic status.

Chapter 2: **What is socio-economic discrimination** and what are the specific types of actions that can be considered discriminatory?

Chapter 3: **What are the types of socio-economic discrimination,** how and where is it perpetuated?

Chapter 4: **What are the impacts of socio-economic discrimination,** including the human and material impacts

Chapter 5: **What are the underlying systemic structures and societal factors** that allow socio-economic discrimination to arise?

Chapter 6: **How to promote integration and inclusion.** How can we combat socio-economic discrimination in the long term and how can we create further integration between different sections of society?

These chapters will be followed a discussion on the **history of the campaign** to add socio-economic status as a tenth ground, some **recent political and policy developments,** and a **legal view** on defining socio-economic discrimination. Finally, the report ends with a **conclusion by Dr Joe Whelan** from Trinity College Dublin and some final thoughts from our **ATD Ireland Community Activists.**

2) What is discrimination?



3) What are the types of discrimination?



4) Encompassing human and material impacts



5) Underlying systemic/societal factors causing discrimination?



6) How to promote integration and inclusion?



#ADD THE 10TH CAMPAIGN



ATD Ireland are a founding member of the #Addthe10th Alliance. The purpose of this group is to have socio-economic status recognised as the tenth ground of discrimination in Irish equality legislation, namely the Equal Status Act and the Employment Equality Act.

The add the tenth alliance is made up of;

All Together in Dignity Ireland (ATD Ireland),
Association for Higher Education, Access and Disability (AHEAD),
Community Action Network (CAN),
Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC),
European Anti- Poverty Network Ireland (EAPN Ireland),
Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI),
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) and
Community Law and Mediation (CLM)

*“No matter where we come from-
we all deserve to be treated
equally and with the same love,
respect, dignity and empathy on
every level”*

There are currently nine grounds of discrimination set out in equality legislation including gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, membership of the Traveller community and race. The exclusion of socio-economic status represents a significant gap, and those with an experience of poverty “constantly fall through the cracks” of equality legislation – community activist Andrew.

Those experiencing this form of discrimination currently have no way of seeking any form of legal redress and have no protection in the law. Socio-economic discrimination can occur in many forms and can be experienced both individually and collectively. It is often felt within public services, such as in healthcare, housing and accommodation, when seeking employment, education, social welfare or with the police.

For the past two years the #Addthe10th alliance, led by ATD Ireland have been carrying out a social media campaign where we are asking people to pose with the ‘missing piece’ of the equality legislation, with a quote on why the campaign is important to them. The #Addthe10th alliance submitted a collective response to the government consultation for the review of the review of the equality acts in 2021.





#ADD THE 10TH CAMPAIGN



#Addthe10th
End Socio-Economic
Discrimination
in Ireland



SIGN THE PETITION!

ADD THE 10TH CAMPAIGN



THE MISSING
PIECE IN EQUALITY LEGISLATION



What is Socio-Economic Status?

This will include narrowing down the personal characteristics that can contribute to a person's socio-economic status. This chapter will discuss what the terms 'socio' and 'economic' mean. It will also discuss why communities and people are viewed differently based on how they look, their life experiences and the resources they have access to. In particular, it will mainly discuss socio-economic status as it relates to those who experience disadvantage, i.e. those who are at the receiving end of socio-economic discrimination.

“Socio-economic status can be looked at as a sort of hierarchy. There are people at the very top of the triangle who have a mass wealth...and there are people at the bottom that are almost disenfranchised with society, who don't own anything and by birth of not owning anything, have no stake necessarily in society.”



**Socio-Economic status is based on people's education/ employment/
family name/ source of income/ how you look/ criminal record/
experience of addiction/ postcode /living or housing situation/
accent/ access to power/ family name**

- **Socio-economic status (SES) is the hierarchy of wealth and where you stand within that hierarchy. Socio-economic status is the position in society people are seen in based on different levels e.g. low, medium or high**
- **SES is often referred to as 'class' or social class**
- **People can be discriminated against due to their socio-economic status. This report primarily discusses people being discriminated against for having a perceived disadvantaged SES**
- **People can be discriminated against for living in poverty**
- **It is very difficult to escape the cycle of socio-economic discrimination (SED)**
- **SES must include cultural, social and economic factors**
- **Your SES can be related to other identities such as being a member of the Traveller community, being a migrant, etc.**
- **Socio-economic status relates to choice and opportunity**

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT DETERMINE A PERSON'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS?

Economic factors, wealth and income

One aspect of socio-economic status is very clearly to do with economic factors, how much money someone has generally to spend on goods, services and essential needs. Some of our participants described those who experience socio-economic discrimination as those who are living in poverty.

“Children are being told directly that the contribution was supposed to have been paid three months ago. Children are being poverty-shamed in front of their classmates, making the rest of the class aware that they have not paid”.

However, poverty is often described in economic terms within the public realm and there may be people who may feel as though they have experienced socio-economic discrimination but may not fit within the exact same economic bracket. Many discussed how the definition for poverty and for socio-economic discrimination needs to include cultural, social, as well as economic factors.

“I think that conversation rather than just saying yeah you’ve had enough money with social welfare to put food on the table and you’ve got rent allowance and you should be delighted about that. It then ignores all the other things that people are denied”.

In a definition first adopted in 1997, the Irish government states that people live in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate that it precludes them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society (NAPS, Government of Ireland, 1997)

In addition, we need to understand how these two concepts (social and economic) are related. Social status is to do with how someone is perceived socially. People experience discrimination or have judgements made about their socio-economic status based on how they dress, the type of haircut they have or their accent. A person's social status can dictate your economic status and vice versa.

“The Roma community, the Traveller community, people who are chronically unemployed so you’ll have a group of people who are often- It’s a bit of a catch 22 right so they can be discriminated against based on their social status, but as a result, their ability to inflate their own economic ability is therefore hampered by that. But then you’ll also have people who have very little control over either elements, i.e., asylum seekers or international protection applicants whose socio and economic status is so inherently linked” .

“There’ll be signifiers of class through your accent, by what you know as cultural norms, if you’re in a particular area now, you’ve grown up and people are talking about holidays abroad, going to rugby matches, or whatever it might be, there are cultural signifiers that you may have to adapt to or be completely absent from but you will often be denied those social networks”.

Another aspect to economic status is **source** of income. People can experience discrimination more frequently as result of being unemployed, because they receive social welfare, or for being employed in certain kinds of work.

“I think it’s probably to do with your financial wealth, your geographic location, where you live, your status and your employment and not just whether you’re employed or not, but also then, there are certain professions considered to have a higher socio-economic status carrying more social capital than other professions”.

Education

Similar to employment, socio- economic status can be judged based on your level of education. Your access to education and employment, along with social and cultural capital can be linked to your access to power and this was identified by a few participants as a characteristic of socio- economic status.

“I suppose it will not be of interest to getting the legal definition but there’s a lack of access to power. I think it’s a really important one because decisions are made about people’s lives without their involvement and without their ability to shape or influence and it does become intergenerational because if you think about people who have access to power, not just political power but economic power, social capital” .

Area

Many people associate socio-economic status with the area you live in. Your life experiences and your status in society can be linked to where you are from. People continually address how there are clear distinctions between areas categorised as more disadvantaged and areas seen as affluent or upper class.

Many people have stated this as something that impacts how they are viewed by others;

“I inherited the reputation of the area and that stuck with me”.

“I suppose from coming from a social work background we tend to think of it (socio-economic status) in terms of community resources or available sources of capital to people and not just financial capital but that sort of community capital”.

Different communities, geographical areas, postcodes, types of housing and living situations can be associated with different lifestyles and different access to resources and opportunity. This may not necessarily reflect how the people living there view it themselves.

“I’m from Dorset street flats and I’ve lived there since I was born and they’re just great, but people see them as a bad place but because we’re so used to them we kind of normalise it and then we kind of like being there but some people walk past it and just think “Oh, this is a horrible place to live”

“Proud to be in Ballymun and proud to be from Ballymun”.

Discrimination based on where you are from is often described within an urban context but many interviewees described how this can also manifest in rural settings.

“We tend to think of working class as an urban phenomenon but you also have working class people in rural areas in Ireland, so you’ve got a geographic dimension there, I think, to who experiences discrimination, who is perceived as experiencing discrimination”.

Discrimination based on area shows how discrimination can sometimes be experienced collectively as well as individually.

People also experience discrimination as a result of being homeless, in particular for not having a fixed address, or for being a young person in care.

“The homeless are discriminated against because they use food banks, for the way the look, where they are from, if you’re overweight, etc”.

“It’s not only about where you come from it can also be about what paths you’ve taken in life, if you were in care, or if you were sick you might be discriminated against for being in a wheelchair, you could be discriminated against for not having a fixed address, like a lot of homeless people around Dublin would be discriminated against daily for not having a house but that’s completely out of their control“

Many feel that accent, for example, is a signifier of socio-economic status and a personal characteristic that gets discriminated against.

Dress/ How you look

People get discriminated against because of how they look, their haircut, the clothes they like to wear

It doesn’t matter where you come from, you could also wear different clothes that might not fit into the everyday life and you’ll again be discriminated against because of that.

People are not looking at me. They are looking at my appearance.

Socio-economic status can be about life experiences, and many people report being discriminated against because of their past. Furthermore, people experience discrimination because they are dealing with addiction or they are in recovery, or because they have a criminal record.

“I was discriminated against in the hospital after giving birth. While other women were given support I was excluded because I was on methadone. My past still gets brought up even though I have changed. I have spoken to others with the same experience and help them to use their voice”.

Family

The intergenerational nature of one's socio-economic status is a prevalent factor. Although not always the case, many people fall victim to the cycle of poverty and deprivation. Many people hold the same socio-economic status as their parents and grandparents.

“Poverty across socio-economic status impacts across many generations and it can take many generations to break that cycle” .

“It could be based on poverty, it could be based on exclusion, on access to particular services, it can be based on, in a lot of rural areas surname“.

As a result, several people point to family name as an indicator of socio-economic status. One participant points to differences of intergenerational poverty as opposed to someone whose socio-economic status changes over their lifetime.

“My understanding is that while SED can happen to anyone at any stage of life, it is the most difficult when you are born into or you enter into this country in a place of socio-economic lower levels and so it's much harder to build yourself up as opposed to someone who maybe falls into it through losing their home or losing their job”

Intersectionality

It is necessary to recognise how socio-economic status intersects with other identities to compound discrimination. There are certain groups who may be more at risk of social exclusion and thus socio-economic discrimination.

“I think there's intersecting reasons for discrimination in society so I think when poverty intersects with maybe age or ethnic background or gender or any other markers of minority status in society, I think that then you know it builds in terms of the level of discrimination somebody might experience on the barriers to full participation” .

“People that wear some visualisations, for example, if you're Muslim and you wear headdress, people make assumptions about your social status based on that. Typically if you don't speak strong English, you get racism intersecting with socio-economic disadvantage there with both Travellers and immigrant populations”.

While fundamentally the legislation should work to recognise and thereby combat the disadvantages people face as a result of their socio-economic status, we also need to flip that around and begin to not simply see people of a lower socio-economic status as people to be pitied but those with an abundance of knowledge, skills and goodness to contribute to society.

SHOULD PEOPLE BE DEFINED BY THEIR CLASS?



What is Socio-Economic Discrimination?

This chapter will discuss what is meant by socio-economic discrimination and what specific actions that people consider discriminatory, based on the examples we have come across from our participants.

The way people are judgemental, i.e. the way people speak about your culture or background



Socio-Economic Discrimination is being treated unfairly in a way which disadvantages you from others in society based on your Socio-Economic Status

- **Socio- economic discrimination is being excluded**
- **SED is experiencing poorer access to/ treatment within care and public services, like healthcare, education, the justice system, emergency services**
- **SED is not being given enough support to allow you to participate, based on your needs**
- **SED is not being involved in decision making**
- **SED is rude comments, bullying and harassment**
- **SED is people/ institutions having less expectations regarding your ability/ potential**
- **SED is certain communities getting less resources/ investment**
- **SED is being denied services or opportunity, e.g. employment**
- **SED is certain spaces being framed on middle class values and cultural norms in a way which excludes people**
- **SED is making assumptions and judgements about people**
- **SED is having to fight hard to achieve rights, e.g., welfare**
- **SED is seen in the digital divide and increased automation**
- **SED is seen in media portrayals, social messaging and political campaigns**
- **SED is being questioned/ stopped by security/police without reason**
- **SED is attempting to erase certain accents/ cultural norms from the public sphere**

WHAT IS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

Exclusion

At its core, socio-economic discrimination is when you are excluded from certain aspects of life due to your wealth or lack thereof.

In the most basic form, people who experience socio-economic discrimination are made to feel unwanted or unwelcome in social and physical spaces. Rude comments, poor treatment, and unfounded assumptions (due to socio-economic status) creates spaces that are harmful to people. Additionally, spaces that “traditionally” belong to higher status people draw unwanted attention and scrutiny to people lower in the hierarchy.

Many of our participants with lived experience of socio-economic discrimination describe it as ***“the way people are judgemental”***. ***“People treating us differently because of how we look or how we speak”***.

People feel as though there have been many circumstances in which they have been immediately dismissed or labelled because of how they look, how their accent sounds, etc.,

“It's like having a book in front of you and you judge that book by the cover it, but you never got the chance to read it - or speak to the person to see who they are, what they're really like.”

“I remember when I was doing my PHD, there wasn't anyone in the department with a Dublin accent. I very much felt that (judgement) in there. I still sometimes feel it when I'm speaking to people and I say, 'I'm Dr _____' and I see them think, oh that's weird – you don't sound like a doctor.”

One participant details how these stigmatising attitudes extend beyond silent judgement and can manifest into bullying and harassment.

“That's your kind of micro stuff that is really corrosive harmful treatment in sociology, they are called “microaggressions”. So, you're there, you're talking about sort of some very overt kind of harassment and demeaning treatment. There were this really explicit, you know, usage of derogatory terms perhaps. Then you have much more subtle stuff, which I would say my students experience quite a lot”.

Negative attitudes and stereotypes can be perpetuated throughout the media, government and other influential actors. Socio-economic discrimination includes how people are represented in the media and social messaging. It is discrimination when it involves framing certain people and certain communities in a particular way, which will impact them negatively.



WHAT IS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

“Even stuff in the media you see, like adverts, right. So, this is also true for gender discrimination. When you begin to unpack the social messaging, we see stuff like adverts for like cleaning products. You see germs right, and they have working class accents.”

This can extend to the messages that which are perpetuated by government and those in power.

“There’s stigma in how things get discussed in the public arena, which are often not constructive and can be very destructive. We had that campaign a few years back about: welfare cheats, cheats us all and ... there was certain particular personal and family circumstances that people automatically thought of.”

One participant discussed discrimination as trying to erase certain accents or ways of speaking.

There are three steps of establishing linguistic ideology; That’s sort of the first level of establishing a linguistic ideology, the ability to differentiate between different voices. Second stage: When we start to add value to those voices which is inevitably what people do.

“The final stage in establishing linguistic ideology is erasure. Which is exactly as scary as it sounds. It’s trying to eliminate certain voices from either our immediate jurisdictions or teachers you know it might be ‘don’t talk that way in class’ or the examples from students that I talk to tend to be much, much worse and constitute ad hominem attacks on their character on their value system so at that third stage we were trying to avoid certain voices entering into public debate“.

SED can be seen within the digital divide and the push for increased automation.

“We now all use our smartphone to pay for things so there’s a big sort of pressure on society- a lot of big business I think would like to abolish cash. However, there’s a segment in society who don’t have smartphones or who are not comfortable with smartphones, or who can’t afford smartphones. They will be discriminated against”.

This can particularly impact older people and those who simply don’t have access to the latest technology.

Exclusion from employment

People discuss discrimination as not gaining employment because of your socio- economic status, not getting an interview or being passed over for promotion. This may be especially present in certain industries.

“I worked for a while as a training and employment officer where people post release reintegrate, and it was so difficult to get people meaningful employment if they had a conviction. So, there’s another trap for socio economic reproduction.”

Exclusion from education

SED involves people facing barriers to education.

“Even with a Dublin 17 address, I’ve been refused from school applications and things like that”.

Socio-economic discrimination can arise when systems are not set up to adequately support people, and as a result people miss out on important opportunities. This was brought up several times within the context of the education system.

“Universities are predominantly for the middle classes. Working class people navigating university can be challenging just based on cultural differences and values.”

“That college automatically expects you to to be able to do this, do that. People in colleges don’t take into consideration the lifestyle someone may have lived when they were younger, they genuinely haven’t got that knowledge of school or education.”

It could be suggested based on these responses that certain pathways and institutions were simply not set up with certain people in mind. Some cultural norms, backgrounds, experiences and forms of knowledge are seen as more worthy and valued.

Some students will need more support to simply level the playing field with the other students. This has less to do with innate intelligence and ability and more to do with everyday barriers that other students may be less likely to experience.

“We have a whole bleedin generation now of children growing up in hotels/hostels, so I don’t even know where they’re supposed to do their homework, never mind anything else”.

“When you get access students into third level, the problem is they drop out a lot because they don’t fit in and they have these professors saying these really big words and it gets a lot. Plus, people don’t understand the other struggles people have at home”.

Not only does socio-economic discrimination result in not getting extra support they may need, they may get comparatively less support to begin with as a result of assumptions made about their ability.

WHAT IS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

On an individual basis but also structurally and systemically people are treated differently in terms of education systems, it will attribute different expectations based on their background. They are treated differently based on whether they will enter 3rd level education.”

Discrimination can be when access to certain opportunities or experiences is hindered because of a paywall. This is automatically excluding a significant group of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Exclusion from spaces

People discuss discrimination as being unfairly stopped or questioned by security or police simply because of how they look. This can arise from even everyday activities such as going to the grocery store.

“Even a simple place like a grocery chain where you are sometimes asked question when you enter a store, when you are leaving a store, that don’t always match the ones that are asked of people who are identified as not being local so ‘what are you doing here’, ‘can I look in your pockets’, that sort of thing”.

In relation to this, several participants discuss discrimination resulting in a heavy police presence in more disadvantaged communities. Similarly, many young people feel unfairly targeted by police. This will be discussed more in the impacts chapter.

Some participants even pointed to less obvious signs of discrimination, but becoming aware through body language and other subtle indicators that you are being responded to or noticed differently to others.

Another frequently used example is not being able to book hotels, restaurants, etc for events because of someone’s name, accent, where they are from. However, often the proprietor will cite other reasons such as the place being booked up.

“You can’t book certain hotels for events if you’re from certain areas. They don’t want the premises used by certain groups and that’s just a form of class-based discrimination.”

Denial of rights and needs

Many people feel as though they are routinely denied or have to fight for their basic rights and entitlements. This can include access to basic accommodation, access to and treatment within healthcare services and the high level of scrutiny which exists within the social welfare system. For many, it is not a simple process in applying for social welfare entitlements or even in collecting them once they have been approved. Many people discuss how the social welfare is often seen as invasive, time consuming, confusing and in many cases strict and unempathetic.

“People were talking about going over and collecting an entitlement and coming out feeling they had had a victory. It felt like a victory that they had been given what was entitled to them. They also spoke about having to play a role to get what they want and these are state entitlements.”

“I think also the justice system, so the gardai, if there’s someone who’s from one of those areas that perhaps is reporting something or has been in a negative incident. There’s not always the uptake with it”.

Many of those with lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage discuss the discrimination which occurs when emergency services do not respond as quickly if at all to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This, of course, can lead to very detrimental consequences.

“My friend was in an abusive relationship. He beat her really bad and she called the police who did not come for four hours. She could have died”.

Similar examples can be seen within the social housing sector. Residents cite numerous times when it is very difficult to get someone out to do housing maintenance and it is deemed that this is a specific issue to do with living in social housing.

“...The caretakers can’t do anything for you. They sweep up the stairs and make sure there’s nothing you can slip on, around the car park and the leaves off the trees. But when it comes to real problems, it’s frustrating! I am constantly ringing someone to come fix things and they don’t. Unbelievable! Swear to God! I reckon that’s what they do... delete the message. I don’t even deal with them anymore. I just go get someone to do it, or do it myself. That’s a contract job. They have men to fix it, but they don’t want to know.”

People also discuss discrimination as not being given the same level of treatment or care, for example within healthcare services, being pushed aside and not being taken seriously.

“Say I had a big abscess and I went to the hospital, what they do because I’m a drug addict is put an X scar on me, so anytime I’m at the hospital and the doctors see that X, they know I’m a drug addict who has been injecting drugs. So, if I’m lying there and I’m, like, I’m in pain, she says, ‘You self-inflicted it’ – ‘It’s your own fault’- ‘You did that to yourself’ – ‘So why should you get painkillers’- that’s more or less what they say to us. You’re there crying with an abscess and they just say that. That’s discrimination!”

Exclusion from Decision- Making and Choice

People suffering from socio-economic discrimination are further excluded from decision making and have little to no stake in society leading to further marginalisation.

From the perspective of several of our participants, discrimination is having decisions that deeply affect you being made on your behalf without your active participation or consultation. This can range from large scale social policies to decisions surrounding someone's individual housing or healthcare needs.

“In the last few weeks my husband has been asked to leave his mental health clinic all because he doesn't live in Ballymun after being with them for 16 years. He felt hard done by after building relationships with the nurses for the last 10 or 15 years and the clinic made the decision to transfer him to another place without consulting him” .

“On the 20th of December 2018, my husband and myself got married, so we had to leave the hostel we were living”.

This is a scenario, that married couples who are not at risk of homelessness would not have to consider when starting their married lives. Discrimination is about your options being limited.

It is possible to say this involves policies and support services not being person centred or as one participant suggests ***“It's a disregard for people, then people can be overlooked because there's a stereotype that's being reinforced”.***

Unfair community resourcing

On a government level, discrimination can manifest through the unequal distribution of resources towards affluent versus more disadvantaged communities...***“the public facilities may not be as good, the public transport may not be as good. The bus companies may put the new buses on the routes to the rich communities, and the battered buses to the poor communities” .***

“There's a good amount of work done but it really does come down to the people in the community rather than the council”.

[What else is there to do in Ballymun] “Fight...go out on the stroke- robbing”.

“I think you get better quality urban planning in rich communities than you do in poor communities, the rich people know how to lobby and get good advice, can hire consultants to write reports to argue against the planners. Poor communities don't have an organised voice in the same way.”

WHAT IS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

Equally some participants have pointed out that policy does often attempt to redistribute investment and resources to those more disadvantaged communities such as through the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Scheme.

This has been acknowledged as an important government response. However, there is room for improvement.

“Sometimes there’s more investment in poorer communities but equally there may be more subtle investment so there are better parks in richer communities than in poorer communities, or they’re better maintained you know that sort of thing” .

The way the distribution of resources are publicly discussed and framed within policy can contribute to segregation and labelling, even with the best of intentions.

“DEIS schools are for disadvantaged areas and they have certain resources that other schools would have to pay for and they would have a certain status and they would take students from what would be so called socially deprived areas. But even that is a label you know the fact that you’re identifying one school as a DEIS school as opposed to another, yeah it’s from the context of offering more support and extra capacity for a community that might need it but if there’s a DEIS school that’s 500 metres up the road and I’m here on my side of the fence and I’m going to a primary school getting the same curriculum because there’s a national curriculum and mine is not a DEIS, then you’re automatically creating a narrative there”.



**SHOULD A YOUNG
PERSON BE
DISCRIMINATED
AGAINST BECAUSE
OF THEIR ACCENT?**



What are the types of Socio-Economic Discrimination?

This chapter will discuss what the types of socio-economic discrimination are, how and where is SED carried out? Not all the examples of discrimination we have looked at are similar in how it is experienced, or as easy to identify or capture in legislation. This chapter will look at the scope of how socio-economic discrimination is experienced.

“I think one thing that’s important to distinguish is between interpersonal discrimination, in other words you know somebody goes to sit on the bus, you get on the bus and you sit beside someone and they make a rude comment about you and it’s based on your SES. So, that’s an interpersonal interaction if you like, but I think, in the way the law means it’s about institutional discrimination in other words, that the bus company won’t let you on the bus in the first place or that the school system won’t allow certain kinds of children to attend certain schools”.



Socio-Economic can be come from institutions, individuals, the public and private sector and can be direct or indirect

- **Socio-economic discrimination can be both interpersonal and institutional**
- **Institutional/ structural discrimination is when laws and policies are discriminatory**
- **Institutional socio- economic discrimination can come from the state**
- **Interpersonal discrimination is discrimination through individual interactions**
- **SED can occur in the public and private sectors**
- **SED can be experienced within the charity/ service provider landscape**
- **Discrimination can be direct and indirect**
- **SED is a societal problem**
- **SED can be overt or more subtle**

This chapter will discuss the different types of discrimination and the different ways socio-economic discrimination will be experienced as through the views of the project participants.

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)
Review of the Equality Acts - July 2023

Structural Discrimination

“Structural discrimination refers to inequalities of outcome in terms of privileges, rights, participation, inclusion, access, and opportunities for particular social groups that are usually the result of apparently neutral legislation, policies, procedures, and institutionalised practices, and of embedded and interrelated norms, attitudes, behaviours, routines, and values found in organisations or in broader society”

In simple terms - it is embedded discrimination due to institutionalised and outdated policies and practices

Direct Discrimination

Where someone treats you less favourably than another person in a similar situation because of a different personal characteristic or circumstance that falls under the protected grounds

Indirect Discrimination

Where a seemingly neutral system or policy disadvantages you because of a personal characteristic or circumstance that falls under the protected grounds

Discrimination by imputation

Where someone treats you less favourably than another person in a similar situation because someone has incorrectly assumed (‘imputed’) that you fall under the protected grounds.

Discrimination by association

Where someone treats you less favourably than another person in a similar situation because of your connection, relationship or association with someone who falls under the protected grounds.

www.ihrec.ie

We will discuss examples of direct and indirect discrimination.

“I think most discrimination is indirect and also at times meant without malice or harm but people just make assumptions and people speak to people differently and provide different levels of support or assume that because someone is experiencing one element of their life that people have categorically destroyed all elements or that they’ve made mistakes and I think everyone, because you’re raised in a society where discrimination is built in, everyone’s a little discriminatory”.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

This shows how the way people experience and understand socio-economic discrimination often does not boil down to single situations but an accumulation of life experiences of disadvantage.

“So, there's quite a lot of micro stuff ... it's often not a single incident, it's a drip feed, a continual drip feed of comments, you know, the dispositions of people towards you ... That's hard to capture in law, because law tends to fixate on single incidents, whereas I think a lot of the harm is like just corrosive, as I said, stream of stuff that might happen over the course of years“.

Often, we only recognise or think about these more direct, once-off examples of discrimination, and this could be said to be reflected in the way discrimination is addressed through the equality legislation.

However, we need to have a much broader lens on discrimination to really address it sufficiently and ensure that socio-economic rights and equal opportunities are protected.

Discrimination from private organisations and businesses

We previously discussed how socio-economic discrimination is experienced within stores, when being a consumer, in social spaces like in restaurants, or hotels.

“We'd be often walking up and down Grafton Street, and there's a shop up there - it's one of the dearer shops - and I'd often say to her, ‘Come on and we'd have a ramble around there ‘ - and no, no she wouldn't dare. My wife, she wouldn't go near it. I said to her, ‘Why wouldn't you go near it?’ She says, ‘Everything is too dear in there and you'd be followed around if you look like you haven't got enough money’ - because they think you're not there to buy anything“.

“An example is that I booked a table in a touristy pub. We went up and he said sorry the table was double booked and to get out of the pub. I walked away and saw two people walk past me and go up to the guy. They said they had no booking and they were let in. They walked into our table. I went back to question this and he said “get out of my place I don't need to give you an answer, I'll call the guards on you”. It was so humiliating. The fella who went in after me even said “look if they booked it, they can have it”. That's a thing my partner noticed all the time with me being refused into pubs”.

We also see discrimination within the housing sector particularly coming from private landlords, whereby you may not be accepted for receiving social welfare which has since been outlawed in the equality legislation.

“There is discrimination when landlords put on daft.ie or other platforms for renting flats. We may remember all that 2 years ago, it was still a very wildlife practice on daft advert to say: ‘no rent allowance”.

Discrimination may be embedded into the policies of the business or organisation, or may arise from the attitudes of a particular employee. This is the difference between discrimination being **institutional** or **interpersonal**

Discrimination within the public service

Similar patterns can be seen within public services. This can include things like healthcare and education, social welfare and the criminal justice system.

“In the criminal justice system, people from deprived backgrounds tend to do less well than people from more affluent backgrounds. They can’t mobilise the material resources, the capital, the money to represent themselves as well as others but also because of the way they look and they appear in the courtroom.”

This encapsulates different types of discrimination. People are indirectly discriminated against because they do not have access to the resources which may technically be the same requirements for all who are entering the criminal justice system- but put certain people at more of a disadvantage. More direct discrimination forms of discrimination would come into play with being judged based on **“how they look and appear in the courtroom”**.

Many people discuss discrimination within the education system. Several participants discuss opportunities being cut off because they experience additional barriers to participation which others do not face.

“I still see that when students coming through, they don’t have the same opportunities to participate because their life is different, you know, they have childcare responsibilities or they have mainly, it’s because they have work and not work the way some students do, because they want more money to drive a nicer car and wear makeup but work because they need to pay their rent and to get food and to live their life.”

People are also treated differently by individual teachers because of their socio- economic status.

“Teachers are biased towards some people. Some people would get held for something while others would get away with it”.

People can also experience discrimination within support services and within the charity landscape.

“There needs to be humanity when you’re dealing with people. To be told, ‘There’s no beds’. Why isn’t there in every hostel or every emergency accommodation, someone that can sit down with you for 5 or 10 minutes as a person and say we have no beds but this is what you can do, and we can give you advice and refer you somewhere. To be shoved like that is just disgraceful. The last person we talked to wasn’t even a staff member of the place, she was the cleaner. And I said, ‘Can we have the number of the manager please?’ And she was like, ‘No, no - we have no beds - move away from the door! The manager is busy, she’s busy’, and she closed the door in my face”.

Discrimination from the state

“One of the biggest problems, I’d say internationally, but not sure it’s probably similar in other countries, sometimes the bigger of the biggest offender of socio- economic discrimination is the state, the agencies of the state.”

“It’s [socio- economic discrimination] actually built into the fabric of particular laws, policies, practices, so you’re talking about the interpersonal and then what is sometimes called systemic or structural or institutionalised discrimination”.

An example of discriminatory practices could be how some social workers routinely go about interacting with their clients, in a way which does not necessarily show empathy or respect.

“When my wife was in hospital giving birth to our first child, the first person to visit her was a social worker. This was only because we had a history of addiction. The social worker came down on us pretty hard and this really made my wife afraid that our baby would be taken away by the social worker. In the end, the social worker visited our home, and everything was fine. But should this be a way you bring your first child into this world with fear and discrimination?”

Discrimination could be said to exist in how state policy provides access to care, and access to public services.

In Ireland discrimination could be said to exist as a result of the two-tiered healthcare system. This two-tiered system is based on a mixture of private and public hospitals. Furthermore, free access to public healthcare is means tested.

“I think it happens in public services and I suppose the examples of that are around a two-tier healthcare system, that if somebody has more money they have more choices, back to choice again, in terms of healthcare”

One person describes how the system of direct provision which is the state response to housing asylum seekers is a form of discrimination.

I arrived in Ireland in 2019. Direct provision is like an open prison. You are not free. Anything you want to do; you have to inform someone before you do it. At the beginning, I felt like the whole world was falling on top of me.

Many social welfare recipients have experiences of discrimination, while claiming their weekly payments. However, if this is something which is so consistently experienced by social welfare recipients it’s worth questioning if it is a form of discrimination that is ingrained into the training of the staff which will turn it into something more structural and institutional.

Furthermore, if the rates of social welfare are not deemed enough to cope with the cost of living or to provide an adequate standard of living which allows you the same opportunities as others in society, it is worth questioning if this could be considered discrimination.

“On the social welfare, you start when you’re eighteen and get €107 a week I think, which is fuck all, to be honest. It’s a joke how much they give you because you are young. How do they expect us to survive? They tell you go and look for work, and they’ll help you look for work, and they’ll send you on a scheme or something for a few weeks to print out CVs, and then no one ever gets back to you”.

SHOULD CHILDREN BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY IN SCHOOLS BASED ON WHERE THEY ARE FROM?



What are the impacts of Socio-Economic Discrimination?

This chapter will discuss the human and material impacts of socio-economic discrimination. It will discuss how socio-economic discrimination makes people feel. How it impacts people in their day-to-day life, and how it effects their future.



“I just wanted to highlight the massive link between being discriminated against, shouldering shame and stigma and the effect on mental health. It really hurts to the point where it can give you a mental health disorder”.

Socio- Economic Discrimination impact's mental and physical health and leaves those impacted more at risk of falling into or falling further into poverty

- **SED means people often have to play a role or hide part of themselves.**
- **SED creates fear and distrust.**
- **SED impacts one's physical and mental health.**
- **SED impacts one's agency, thoughts and ambitions**
- **SED creates a fear of rejection**
- **SED has intergenerational impacts**
- **SED can lead to groups of people getting organised in activism**
- **SED creates social problems such as crime and drug use**
- **SED impacts one's progression in life such as in education and employment or in their social life**
- **SED creates exclusion from society**
- **SED has long and short term impacts**
- **SED stops people from venturing outside their community**



WHAT ARE THE HUMAN & MATERIAL IMPACTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION (SED)

“Moralistic judgement by others, unfair treatment, marginalisation, stigmatisation, social exclusion, denial of human rights, powerlessness, poor social mobility, and a low level of self-determination - impacts which can be summarised as an enforced ‘living in the shadows’ of mainstream society where people feel unprotected under the law and with no legal redress.”

One participant sums up the impact of discrimination as ***“When your need isn’t being met”***.

We have discussed how not having access to rights is a form of discrimination. Discrimination in its worst impacts can lead to people not having enough food to eat, not having a safe home, poor health and wellbeing. Discrimination can ultimately lead to those impacted falling into or falling further into poverty.

“Obviously, there’s the main impact, without wrap around support you fall further into poverty because there’s nothing to help you engage out.”

The lifelong impacts of discrimination begin to take shape from even early life experiences. What experiences you have access to and the support system you have around you can all effect the kind of future you will have. Some participants discuss impacts of exclusion in early education.

“Even from teachers, I’ve been ostracized out of the class, I’ve been removed from the general population because at the time I didnt know how to manage. I didn’t know how to cope like with the pressure of you’re from Darndale and getting the slaggings and things like that”.

These are the words of a mother who commented on the generational effect of discrimination on whole families and communities:
“Discrimination shadowed me throughout my earliest memories of childhood and now my children are living the shadowed life that I once led.”

“What you put into a child when they’re young is what you’re going to get out of a child when they’re older.”

“SED is a kind of cul-de-sac you can find yourself in very easily – you and your community and your family. There is a difficulty in getting out of it if you wish to change your life, to go off and do something different or is not normally associated with you and yours.”

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

Socio- Economic Discrimination can impact long term opportunities and the choice to progress towards different kinds of employment, higher education and access positions of power.

This can result from direct discrimination such as not being given a job interview because a CV mentioned Ballymun, it can be life circumstances prohibiting you from engaging in work or education, or it can be the cumulative experiences of rejection and exclusion that can prevent you from having the confidence or self-belief to go for these opportunities.

“It’s just really corrosive and it leads to students from working class backgrounds; for example, dropping out of higher education at much greater rates, and it leads to social isolation, to people being reticent about talking up in class you know. Or not participating in all of the great things as universities in theory offer”.

“There is a lot of experience through focus groups with young people in Ballymun that show how they are treated by police and their scarce opportunity for education and how this impacts their own beliefs about themselves and the major barriers they have to overcome. And how they are treated in the end and what they will face in employment etc. The system needs to be supported.”

A recurring idea is that many impacted by SED will often simply have lower expectations for their own future. For example, because they may not have that visibility of people from their family or their community.

“They are hard to quantify but people are deeply affected by it. Even in terms of managing their aspirations. They are afraid to step outside of that or to think, I could go on to be a lawyer or a doctor or a professional. They always feel like they can’t, and that’s because of this internal policing. There’s this saying in working class communities of “oh you can’t be doing that” or “you’re getting above your station” so that’s parents telling their kids not to go and do that because they’re going to be put in uncomfortable situations and it’s not ours to do that... That comes from a generational low self-esteem that says we need to stay within this very narrow confine and we can’t break out beyond that.”

Similarly, participants discuss the impact of physically staying within your own community. It can prevent you from trying out for different employment and educational opportunities, but also impacting your social and cultural life.

“Going to a restaurant, or club or anywhere and you’re asked where you’re from and you get rejected. That rejection builds up over time and it stops you doing things in life. It makes people stay in their community and not venture out because they’re afraid of that rejection. I think that impacts a lot on your progression in life.”

Criminality

Those who face socio-economic discrimination are often the most affected by criminalisation and drug use. People suffering under socio-economic discrimination sometimes cultivate anti-social, anti-conformist, and anti-establishment behaviours which deters them from engaging with their larger society and isolates them within their own community. Crime can result from poor community resourcing.

“The devil makes work for idle hands and the council made sure that there was nothing there to keep us occupied, you’re looking up to older gangs and things like that because it’s a tough area, you need protection and before you know it you’re in the midst of it all”.

As a result, socio-economic discrimination can impact the person discriminated against but also the wider society as an instigator of social problems. Ultimately it will create more mistrust and misunderstanding between different sections of society.

Not only are those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to end up in prison or in repeated contact with the criminal justice system, they are also more likely to face unequal treatment within those settings aswell.

“Communities I work in have a heavy police presence compared to other areas. Many people suffer from recidivism- generational imprisonment. There is a lack of resources and an under investment in youth. This leads to limited job prospects and opportunities. Children grow up to disrespect law and order due the threatening and aggressive nature of police. It is a containment operation- communities are in a poverty trap. It is political neglect, and certain communities are then given a bad name“.

“It’s strain theory, which is a sociological theory – so if you’re living in Dublin 1 and you’re right beside the IFSC – there’s a huge gap in your head from how am I going to get from Sheriff St to the IFSC and a lot of the time the only way you’re going to do that is from what you think is by illegal means. Because you want what the social contract is promising but it’s not open to you.”

There are lifelong impacts to having a criminal record.

“Your convictions- they follow you for the rest of your life”. Ultimately when discussing how to tackle crime within society, we need to pay greater attention to the root causes and understand why people are drawn into crime.

Socio- economic discrimination also impacts the wider society through **not allowing people to contribute both economically, socially and intellectually.**

“From an economic perspective as well if you’re looking at that, you’re losing masses amounts of people’s ability to create and engage with the economic status of Ireland and the environment of Ireland”.

Socio-economic discrimination leads to the wider society missing out on people’s ability to contribute and utilise their talents, skills and potential.

“All too often, people’s skills are not recognised and even ignored, this is prejudice and discrimination“.

Physical and mental health

Another serious impact of socio-economic discrimination is poorer health outcomes. Our participants reference the plentiful amount of research outlining the strong link between life expectancy and socio-economic status. Maybe people are at risk of developing long or short-term health conditions, or they find it more difficult to access either preventative health care or treatments.

“If you look at the health statistics, generally the higher someone’s SES, the better their health is because they have access to better health care, they live in environments where often the building quality is better, there’s maybe less pollution in the air and all of that.”

“SED will affect things like your health, or seeking supports because you’re fearful of what way people will react towards you, so if you’re sick and your contacting a consultant or a hospital or whatever – sometimes when you speak a certain way or you look a certain way or whatever, straight away people talk down to you or act differently towards you.”

“We know that in the Traveller community in Ireland the life expectancy is lower than the national average which is really shocking”.

Similarly, along with impacts of physical health, there are huge psychological and emotional impacts of experiencing socio-economic discrimination. The quotes above reflect the impact of discrimination on someone’s confidence and self-belief.

“Poverty is not being able to smell the flowers because the stress of life gets in the way”.

When there are hurdles to cross over everyday experiences, it can make it much more difficult to feel any sort of contentment.

“I think that sense of exclusion and failure can really erode somebody’s mental health and it can cause really serious problems like depression, hopelessness, suicidal ideation and it can result in suicide. And then it can also impact on people’s physical health I think. There’s a lot of research that shows the correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and a higher incidence of illness and disease”.

“The way people look at you can kill you inside”.

“I think you do internalise these things, you know? And it’s not a good thing... and I think men, especially men, don’t express how they feel. Because when you get rejected from somewhere, it’s quite hurtful, and you can bottle that up easily enough and say, ‘Ah, don’t fuckin mind them idiots’, but really, you’re hurt, especially if you walk into a shop and the security guy, and you haven’t even gone in yet, and they’re refusing you at the door or they’re following you around“.

The impacts of SED appear to be compounded further by the lack of legal recourse, and the lack of public discourse awareness surrounding SED. This can lead to people internalising these experiences and even blaming themselves. It can make those effected less likely to speak up, for fear of further punishment.

“I feel that they are above me; feel like they have more rights than I have, even though they haven’t”.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION?

“They talk about that it’s hidden, that are living in the shadows, it’s intergenerational, it’s been in reinforces a sense of insecurity or lack of self-belief, self-esteem in people. Because it’s not acknowledged as there is not a public discourse about it. There are no legal protections in place which code or tools a place which can give leverage for people to make proper complaints.”

“It’s not that people are helpless but when you’re struggling to survive, you’re struggling to put a roof over your head, cost of living crisis, rent, everything, there’s fewer times to stop and think about structural inequalities” .

“What socio - economic discrimination ultimately does is lead to a form of disenfranchising where you’re not quite a member of society so you feel less then. You can feel stigmatized and a deep sense of shame because the way our society is set up it suggests that if you’re experiencing poverty, it’s your own fault and the state wipes its hands of it. So, you might feel shame that you’re not able to provide the things you would like to provide or live the kind of life you would like to live.”

On the other hand, socio- economic discrimination can have the opposite response for some people. All these hardships also can be shifted towards the better. It may lead to groups of people getting organized, and getting involved in activism or reaching out to others who are struggling.

“People have different ways of responding, don’t they? So, it will galvanise some people. So, some people have the energy to get involved in a group like ATD and they really want to fight it and they really want to show the world that this is a load of baloney and that really we just need to spread our wealth a little bit nicer and help each other out a little bit. And other people won’t be able to respond that way, they just feel not able to, they just want to lay down on the sofa, and you know, watch TV all day. And both of them are equally valid responses to it. I suppose it’s an individual response. I imagine that it makes people feel quite worthless and frustrated and upset about a total lack of justice around the world.” .



SHOULD PEOPLE SUFFER SHAME AND STIGMA BECAUSE OF THEIR SOCIAL STATUS?



What are the underlying systemic structures and societal factors?

This chapter will look at the systemic structures and societal attitudes that allow socio-economic discrimination to arise. What causes discrimination?

This chapter will have a deeper look at the link between poverty, inequality and socio-economic discrimination.

“I think fundamentally the problem is that inequality is the base line or the ground rule of society and there are different groups of different social and economic interests.”



SED is caused by lack of understanding around the experiences of those facing poverty and exclusion, deep inequality and government policy

- **SED is caused by judgement, stigma and shame**
- **SED is caused by a lack of awareness and understanding about the experience of people living in poverty**
- **SED is influenced by the role/agenda setting of the media**
- **SED is a symptom of government ideology**
- **SED is caused by a lack of political representation for minority groups**
- **SED results from a lack of government resourcing of support services.**
- **Human rights are stumped by a charity model of the deserving and undeserving poor**
- **SED is caused by a lack of integration in society and fear between different communities**



An important message which we need to take from our work on socio-economic discrimination is the understanding that it does not exist in isolation. Socio-economic discrimination is deeply related to the experience of poverty, with several analysts and academics beginning to use the term 'povertyism'. Socio-economic discrimination can be seen as a symptom of the wider structures of inequality which exist in Irish society.

“A system made for the privileged classes”

Lack of awareness and understanding about the experience of people living in poverty

We spoke in chapter two about how discrimination is evident when stereotypes are used to speak rudely towards people and when speaking about others. In this chapter we will discuss how the perpetuation of stereotypes can contribute to the stigma which functions as an underlying factor causing discrimination or which people use to justify discrimination.

Stigma can be caused by a lack of awareness and understanding of different people's experiences and realities. If all we know about people living in poverty or people who are struggling is through second hand information and not through real human interactions it is much easier for an unfair image to be created.

“Poverty is a lack of understanding and it's an ignorance on the part of those who choose to ignore it”.

“Because of the stigma of poverty, nobody wants to talk about it, because it's a touchy subject“.

Some of our participants spoke about the ways in which the general public can go through phases of being more sympathetic to certain causes, often based on public awareness and media attention. Even if all of these issues are equally prevalent and important it can create a ranking system where some groups are seen as more deserving or worthy of public support and attention than others.

“The middle classes, will be very supportive of things like the Ukrainian refugees and LGBTQ rights but at the same time are very biased against poor working-class communities and what way they react to certain political situations.”

Similarly, many interviewees discussed how discrimination is embedded into the society and although it is often practised in a way which is not necessarily intentional, it can still be harmful.

“It's in all areas – it's everywhere. There's no one place that you can say (socio-economic discrimination) is worse than another but I think that's a cultural and societal thing that we've all built up over decades and decades – we all just have that stigma of judging people because of certain reasons.”

“I think most of us are at least aware if not complicit in linguistic discrimination or language based/ accent based discrimination. Those who hold power are naturally the ones who tend to be on the discriminator side of the equation and those without power on the discriminatee side of the equation”.

The underlying stigma and stereotypes associated with poverty also impact the nature of support services in Ireland and how we help people. Many of our participants talked about the idea of the deserving v. undeserving poor. Historically this has been the idea that some people are to be blamed for their poverty. Periods of economic downturn can create more division within society and contribute to narratives around the deserving and undeserving poor.

“When people are struggling, it can turn people against each other”.

“The government perpetuates SED but society can be classist in how they perceive people, undeserving and deserving poor. Irish people are broadly decent in terms of treating people. But there is a sense of deserving and undeserving which can have perpetuated in the political environment and policies. They operate on the same value. It is broadly societal but the political system plays a role that reinforces inequality in society.”

“There’s a massive stigma around the concept of poverty because we still operate in a very charitable way when we talk about poverty, the deserving and the undeserving poor. If you think about it we’re in a capitalist society so your value or worth, and even using those terms – value and worth, they’re economic terms, so a person’s status or how they’re often related to because of what they earn or what they can produce economically”.

“There’s a new cohort of people coming to Ireland now seeking refugee status who are potentially going to introduce those individuals to SED in that who can work and who can’t work and we have a narrative around the person who was a doctor back home and now doesn’t have a job here and how we need to have respect because of that but we should have respect because they’re humans and there’s human rights and dignity”.

Segregation between communities

Further, discrimination is not always fundamentally about putting others down but about actively protecting one’s own interests and comfort over supporting others and society as a whole. Many participants pointed to the idea of people protecting their own vested interests and this often contributes to segregation and a lack of integration between different socio- economic groups. Segregation prevents different communities from developing a mutual understanding and from working towards a shared visions of what society should look like.

“I’m over simplifying but broadly speaking say rich people are in favour of housing for poor people but not in their area”.

“We’ve provided housing but haven’t thought about what sorts of societies we’re creating”.

Related to this segregation, socio-economic discrimination can be caused by a generational fear and distrust.

“Fear of social workers- “social worker failed in all aspects’- it is important to build a relationship with those you are working with.”

Previous chapters discussed how emergency services often do not respond to calls from more disadvantaged communities. However, there is also sometimes a fear of reporting incidents to emergency services.

“There is a fear of reporting incidents to the police due to stigma from communities- do not want to be seen as working with the police or having police seen around their homes. – police have a bad reputation in certain communities.”

Political Prejudice

The institutional factors that play into discrimination have plenty of origins and most are imbued into the fabric of the state. The very foundation of the state, the base assumptions in the core of the state (like neoliberalism), produce and feed into socio-economic discrimination. Beyond the foundation, many politicians in power avoid progressing equality legislation which further worsens the state of socio-economic discrimination.

Lack of political representation

“There’s nobody from the minority groups that are being discriminated against in power. Like, I seen the other day, the first Traveller woman that graduated with a PhD. Like, it’s 2019, like what? And it’s all over the news...like obviously it’s a great achievement for her, like, I can’t ever imagine getting to a PhD, and it’s a great achievement, but why, like that shouldn’t be front page news, that should be the norm for Traveller women. But in the media where are the Travellers that are writing the columns? Where’s the people from the north inner city that’s writing the columns? Where’s the black man that’s playing in golf and sport, or whatever, you know? We’re not represented enough in power. That’s why we’re still being discriminated against, because there’s nobody to represent voices of the minority groups in power, and that’s how it’s going to keep on continuing until either we raise our voices and bring it to parliament, or until we’re more represented in powerful positions. That’s how we’ll change the mind-set“.

A lack of political power and representation has been deemed a key reason as to why discrimination persists, particularly on an institutional level. These systems are seen as extremely exclusive, very difficult to break into or to influence in any way.

And beyond the foundation, many politicians in power avoid progressing equality legislation, further worsening the state of socio-economic discrimination.



“It’s partly political. The main objectionsto me it seems disingenuous, it’s always around some technical issue like the definition. You always get the impression that that’s not the real objection.

They just don’t want it on a political level. It’s in government policies. Housing policy, etc. Police would have to be looked at. How we’re policing? What kind of frameworks we’re using when we are looking at crime. It’s just dispersed in individuals throughout the country – like middle class people, older people, people that run certain companies. There needs to be a balance and some push back on that.”

This project has discussed how discrimination can be experienced through the lack of support services. This can in some circumstances be traced back to a lack of commitment and ultimately resourcing from government.

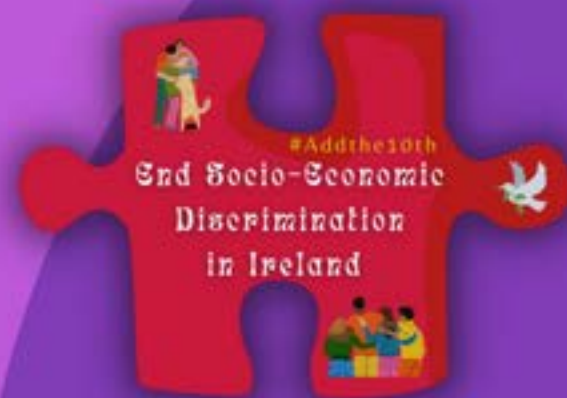
“There were good structures there that were absolutely eviscerated in 2008, you know combat poverty agency, which was a really strong group, gone, the equality authority 42% cut, the human rights commission, 38% cut, you know none of that was accidental, if you’re going to implement the harshest austerity measures that you’ve brought in in 30 years, no harm to eviscerate the critical voices that might actually track what that will look like on marginalised communities“.

When discussing the characteristics, norms and stereotypes related to different socio-economic groups, the conversations need to be had with greater nuance and understanding of the historical and present day context. For example, this participant discusses two communities which are deemed as having a bad reputation but there is a larger conversation to be had around this and why some communities have higher levels of deprivation and all which can result from that.

“When you think of pure economic status, which is linked to the socio-economic status as well, you look at sort of policies in the early 70’s in Ireland to build large housing complexes to feed sort of the industrial sites like in Ballybeg in Waterford, like in South Hill in Moyross in Limerick, some reliant on individual factories, some of them reliant on one or two industries. When they failed, those societies were left with no resources, with no employment, and it’s easy as a society to think that’s the fault of that section of society and they are creating now their own social problems such as criminality, drug use and such behaviour but we are distracted from the historical context”



**SHOULD SOMEONE
BE DENIED
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES
BECAUSE OF THEIR
POSTCODE?**



How to promote integration and inclusion

This chapter will discuss how we can combat socio-economic discrimination in the long term and we can create further integration between different sections of society. This chapter will address why adding the 10th ground of discrimination - socio- economic status is important and necessary, and in particular we will discuss the role the public sector duty could have in the long term.

We have campaigned for many years building up an Alliance of NGOs called the #Addthe10th Alliance, creating a social media campaign with over 2000 supporters and we have met Ministers, spoke at the United Nations, European Union and at many Universities across Ireland.

We are asking the current Government and future Governments to take the necessary action in regard to the cost-of-living and housing crisis and immediate recognition of a tenth ground in Irish Equality Legislation to protect people from socio- economic discrimination. We want all your support.



We can prevent SED through #Addthe10th, greater awareness of the experiences of those facing socio- economic disadvantage, genuine support for those at risk of poverty and participative structures

- SED creates division between people from affluent and disadvantaged communities
- Integration is key to bridging the gap between people from different SES backgrounds
- Adding SED as the 10th ground in equality legislation can create change
- We need to celebrate people's differences and not just focus on the barriers
- There needs to be more awareness surrounding poverty and SED
- There needs to be greater participation in policy and decision making
- Public sector staff need more guidance and training about working with those who are struggling and facing social exclusion
- There is a need for more scientific data around inequality
- Universal services can help stop stigmatisation
- There needs to be more more representation in positions of power of those who are working class and living in poverty
- The Public Sector Duty is a legal obligation on public bodies, contained in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of public sector staff and service users.
- The public sector duty can be a tool to help prevent socio- economic discrimination from the outset and encourage public sector organisations to be more inclusive.

This project has been in support of the #addthe10th campaign to have socio-economic status recognised as the 10th ground of discrimination in the equality legislation. Many of our participants recognised the value of making this change to policy in combatting and preventing socio-economic discrimination. #Addthe10th

“When you live in poverty and you experience SED, you don’t have any real protection ... We constantly fall through the cracks. One of our main campaigns in Ireland is to ask for SED to be brought into equality legislation. Things can’t move forward until we bring socio-economic status as a tenth ground”.

“Changing the law on discrimination is important because people should be treated the same with no higher class or lower class. What I mean in general is we should be treated with respect”.

The lack of a socio-economic ground means that people are not recognised at all. We are asking for the equality legislation to be expanded so that those who have experienced socio-economic discrimination have access to legal recourse. Many participants pointed to the awareness raising role a change in the legislation would bring. Not having this recognition can impact one’s ability to advocate for themselves and cause them to feel invisible. The implementation of a socio-economic ground could have the possibility of creating more public discourse and awareness around socio-economic discrimination.

“Sometimes inclusion is not just about fixing the barriers in a material way - it’s also always about the mindset.”

“A lot of it is about education and awareness. There would generally be good practice of the other grounds in most organisations because of awareness, so there needs to be the same for SES”.

People need to be challenged on these things. The whole thing with equality legislation and campaigns is that it challenges people’s perceptions of what they think and their pre-conceived ideas of what people might be like based on their background. So, it needs to be implemented into state bodies and interview processes and their employment contracts and stuff like that. So, they are aware and so people have a fair chance and they’re not being held back because of their background.”

In addition to having these important conversations, more research needs to be done surrounding socio-economic discrimination to build up an evidence base, particularly to combat more institutionalised forms of discrimination.

“Very often people who are affected by institutional discrimination don’t have the data or the evidence to know how they’re being treated badly” .

“I think in looking at the experience of disabled people, and I have experience working with Travellers as well to say this is not going to be the silver bullet. I’m always wary of saying, ‘oh when we get this in’, this is just one tool, it does raise awareness about the concept of discrimination, it can be a galvanising effect within a community to start speaking about and unlocking what a lot of people individually experience to start putting it into the collective” .

In addition to this, this project hopes that the possible **implementation of this 10th ground** would involve greater implementation of section 42 of the equality legislation known as the public sector duty

All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, and it originated in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. (IHREC)

“I think the public sector duty fundamentally is about organisations being more human rights aware in their decision making and in their planning and in the training of their staff and in the culture they create, so it has to eventually be the culture of the organisation in a sense that they just wouldn’t know how to do it without taking human rights into account.”

“You have to proactively now think through how your organisation might be discriminating against people on these grounds, and then as you know, address, report on and address what you have found.”

While the participants recognised the necessity of providing an avenue for legal recourse for those who experience socio-economic discrimination, there was an overarching theme of needing to be proactive in preventing it from occurring in the first place.

“It’s more difficult if someone experiences poverty it becomes too difficult to escape and I think that’s why it’s extremely important that the system learns to prevent“.

For organisations to put human rights at the forefront of how they function they, particularly support services for those who are struggling, need to design their services in collaboration with those who they aim to support



“Having a tailored approach that’s informed by those people who are experiencing it and having that built up because I think you can do as much damage by saying like okay to avoid discrimination by treating each individual person exactly the same but that does negatively impact people who need different levels of support. So, I think inclusion can’t be a one line rote, I think you need overarching principles and guidance for inclusion and then you need tailored support informed by the people who use it, and I think honest conversations with the people” .

An example of building a dialogue between those working in support services and those with experience of poverty is ATD Ireland’s ‘poverty aware practice’.

“The reason I like speaking to social work students about poverty and discrimination is because we need to educate them on how to help young people through the care system. It is also important to know what young people are entitled to, for example; Housing, social welfare, etc.”

“I just think that it’s very important for them to hear what I went through because when they’re bringing that into their future career and I mentioned that in Trinity college about the trust issues and all and a lot of the students after the class came up to me and said they’re definitely going to bring that a lot further in their career”.

Particularly as we later discuss more on the need for more integration in housing, in our schools, etc., staff need to be trained on how to work with a diverse population who may have additional support needs.

“When I talk to secondary students I also talk to principles and transition year co- ordinators and teachers and what they say to me is that they don’t have a lot of real guidance about how to include different voices from a socio- economic class point of view”.

Similarly, we need to learn greater how to celebrate difference, and not just view people through the disadvantage they have experienced, while not minimising those experiences.

“While people may take benefits from being socio- economically disadvantaged and they can build forms of resilience they’re doing that in spite of these issues, they shouldn’t have to develop a certain skillset to get themselves out of this situation that shouldn’t have been there in the first place”.

“You have to acknowledge the barriers but you also have to show all the things that people from disadvantaged communities have to offer. That they have agency, thoughts and ambitions. That they have things to offer. That they’re artists, that they’re poets, that they’re writers.

“I never got handed a manual about life to say: 'This is the way you should go; this is the clothes you should wear; this is the way you should act; these are all fashions you should behave in. I never got any manual explaining how to live life. I was only a product of my community. My fellow friends around me, how we all engage, we actually felt quite comfortable in what we wore and the way we go around and the sense of humour, the different personalities we have would... and from time to time, even offend people. But it's tough, you know? At the end of the day, every person has a mother and a father. Every youth has a grandmother and a grandfather. And they all have brothers and sisters. We're all equal. We all should be treated the same”.

There is a need to work in a more integrated and intersectional way when working to address poverty, socio-economic discrimination and exclusion. It is possible to work to ensure people suffering from disadvantage at different levels from socio-economic discrimination, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ableism, etc., are all supported in a way which negates division and builds solidarity. Further, actions that support people can also work to combat growing risks such as climate change.

“I think we really need to work at that inter-phase between the economy, society and these days to the environment and other sources of inequality in society, obviously the experience of migrants and so on. Gender inequality and inequality around disability“.

We need to open up the structures of decision making to include those struggling with poverty and social exclusion.

“We also speak on October 17th. On this day we speak up and help families and young people with their voices and so the government can hear us and we can put a plan together”.

“People with direct experience of poverty should be recognised as experts on poverty and should be included in any societal debate. We need to change the tables to be more accessible. This participation is essential, but it takes time and effort to build up the confidence to speak out“.

In relation to the provision of public services, and combatting the discrimination which persists in these spaces, universal access has been stated as an important way of promoting inclusion and reducing inequality.

“In general, when we provide things on a universal basis, we destigmatise them. When everyone has access to a good or a service then it destigmatises the service and it equalizes the service and it brings people together.”

Similarly resourcing communities which experience disadvantage, is an important step, as well as providing tangible support to those who are struggling.

“If you want to come into these communities, clear them up, rehabilitate them, mental health services and all- well and good. The crime rate is going to drop down“.

Many participants pointed to the need for greater integration. Socio-economic discrimination creates a divide between the people on either side of the economy, and this separation is what maintains discrimination. To integrate people from different socio-economic classes would bridge the gap and break barriers between people, would allow us to celebrate our differences, and would bring awareness to the struggles of poverty and socio-economic discrimination. This would also mean that media and spaces like universities would change for the better and help reduce stigmatization.

“Bring them together. It might be a generational thing as well.....There’s been a lot of working class people in media coverage recently that are from them backgrounds and are doing positive steps. It’s just about how we are represented and bringing people together to get an understanding of what that is. That it’s not all just crime. I know that’s there but there’s a problem with media portrayals.”

“An example of bridging the gap between communities - might be mixed housing. People who might be better able to afford their own home and their neighbour who might be in a house that is social housing but rather than separating and segregating people you’re bringing them together.”

“Building your communities and combining your communities is something that would help bridge gaps. For instance, there’s youth clubs everywhere but they’re all separated – they are all completely segregated. Nobody knows how each other interact – so people from disadvantaged areas, don’t get to see how people from affluent areas act and go on – there’s no interaction between them so there’s no way of understanding each other.”

Segregation in how our communities are set up in where we live, to where we socialise, where we work and our schools prevents us from developing a mutual understanding and appreciation.

“Just because someone has money, it doesn’t mean they don’t go through some of the same struggles you go through and just because someone doesn’t have money it doesn’t mean they’re not as intelligent as you are - because that’s another perception people have. They think oh you’re poor – you don’t know anything. I think integration of some sort in culture and societies is what will help break down those barriers.”



WHY ARE PEOPLE NOT PROTECTED AGAINST SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION IN IRISH EQUALITY LEGISLATION ?



As an academic and a researcher, the work I do with ATD Ireland is without doubt one of the most rewarding and fulfilling aspects of my role. It is work that feels impactful and that's because the work that ATD Ireland do is impactful. In the first instance, therefore, I want to note that I am honoured to have been asked to add my own few words to the Breaking Barriers report. Moreover, having the opportunity to write the conclusion to this report allows me to offer some thoughts and reflections that I hope will be a useful addition to a compelling and thought-provoking report. In this respect, anyone reading the report will quickly realise that the research undertaken by ATD Ireland as part of the Breaking Barriers project has been and is important on a number of levels. Indeed, important is the key word that I want to thread through this conclusion so that rather than just writing the word and leaving it to one side, the words that follow demonstrate just how important this research is.

In the first instance, as readers will have seen, this report has included a diverse set of voices. Academics make up some of the contributors who gave testimony as part of the Breaking Barriers project. Representatives from various community groups also gave careful consideration to the topics covered within these pages. However, most importantly of all, and a real example of barriers being broken, people with first-hand lived experience of poverty and socioeconomic discrimination have been included.

This gives the report a substance that differentiates it from other offerings of this type. By including groups of people who are often separately yet always strongly committed to shining a light on things like poverty and socioeconomic discrimination this report has brought voices together that usually occupy very different spaces. By including the voices of those with lived experience as a core and integral component of what is offered, the report, and the Breaking Barriers project in general, avoids committing what the philosopher Miranda Fricker would call an 'epistemic injustice' through 'testimonial smothering'. These voices are important, the observations that people with lived experience have to offer are important. The Breaking Barriers project includes the voices of people with lived experience not in a tokenistic way, but in way that puts the observations they make on an equal footing with other contributors and this, alone, is important.

At its core the Breaking Barriers project has sought to grapple with and break down the concept of socioeconomic discrimination, to render it useful, tangible and understandable. That this process has not been left to academics or to those with professional backgrounds alone is undoubtedly a unique strength of what is presented. Moreover, when the layers are peeled back, as they are in this report, and when people are asked to talk in real, concrete terms about what something like socioeconomic discrimination means, we quickly see that people are ultimately talking about the same thing, even if the lens is slightly different.

Those with lived experiences of socioeconomic discrimination, academics and researchers and those who in various community settings are not dissimilar in the views they espouse or in the observations they make. Bringing them together in the context of one cohesive project as is the case here, shows this clearly. This in-turn suggests that this method has much to offer and a very real potential to grow and develop further.

CONCLUSION

The most striking and important feature of the report is what it tells us about the very real effects of socioeconomic discrimination. **The phrase socioeconomic discrimination itself is not necessarily easily or instantly understandable and therefore when we speak about something like socioeconomic discrimination we might rightly ask, well, what does it really mean? What does it mean to be discriminated against because of your social class, because of your accent, your postcode or the way you dress? What does it feel like?**

There are some answers to these questions in this report. On personal level it clearly hurts to be discriminated against in this way, it can also induce fear, frustration and anxiety for those experiencing it, it can make people feel ostracised, isolated, alone. Being discriminated against in this way then is a form of what the social theorist Axel Honneth would call misrecognition. However, misrecognition of this type goes beyond the hurtful effects it can clearly have on a personal level to impact on much more tangible and concrete things. Being discriminated against and therefore misrecognised because of your socioeconomic status can have a real impact on your access to resources and social goods, to things like jobs, education and even the freedom to enjoy public spaces. **There is much more at stake then when people are subjected to socioeconomic discrimination than just the psychological impact which is sizable; this is a form of discrimination that can have a real bearing on people's lives on what they can achieve and on where they can go and get to. The Breaking Barriers project captures this and renders it in stark terms and from multiple, valuable, perspectives.**

Finally, in further considering the importance of this report the question of who could benefit from reading it seems like a good place to finish. Undoubtedly, students studying towards qualification in the social and health professions along with those studying across the broad social sciences could benefit from engaging with this report. As an educator when I ask students to think about concepts such as poverty and socioeconomic discrimination, I look for materials to help them connect with these ideas in real and tangible ways so that they do not remain abstractly represented in statistics.

Moreover, it is important that students from all walks of life are exposed to the experiences of others in ways that can illicit the best aspects of a common humanity in the form of empathy and solidarity. I will certainly use the report in my teaching and I would encourage other educators to do so. For much the same reasons, politicians and policy makers could also gain much from engaging with the work undertaken in the Breaking Barriers project. Politicians and policymakers require evidence in which to ground policy and they are often reliant on statistical evidence to develop understanding and capacity when doing so. The research presented in the Breaking Barriers report can further help to ground the statistics that politicians and policy makers rely on in the perspectives and testimony of experts from diverse backgrounds including those with lived experience and this, I feel, is important.

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The Irish Journey So Far: Socio-economic Status as a Ground for Discrimination under the Equality Legislation

2001 - The Employment Equality Act Review

2004 – The “Comparative Perspectives on the Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination” report

2009 – The weakening of equality and rights bodies

2011 – The Equality and Rights Alliance Roadmap

2015 – Ireland under the scrutiny of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

2016 – The ERA Report (Equality and Rights Alliance)

2017 – The Private Bill

2018 – The money message and the mobilisation of civil society

2019 - Does it only happen to me? Report by ATD Ireland

2020 - Forming of the Add the 10th Alliance & the beginning of the #Addthe10th campaign

2021- #Addthe10th Alliance meeting with Minister O’Gorman, #Addthe10th alliance submit a collective response to the government consultation for the review of the equality acts.

2022- #Addthe10th alliance present the #Addthe10th campaign at the Leinster House AV room.

2023- Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 enters the second stage. #Addthe10th campaign is debated in the Dail.

2023 -Minister O’Gorman publishes report on the submissions to the public consultation on the Review of the Equality Acts

2023- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission publishes a second set of recommendations to Government as part of their submission to the government consultation for the review of the equality acts.

Minister O’Gorman publishes report on the submissions to the public consultation on the Review of the Equality Acts July 2023

“Many submissions recommended the following definition proposed in the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 as a workable, enforceable definition of this new ground: ‘socio- economic disadvantage’ means having disadvantaged social status or disadvantaged economic status, or both, that may be indicated by a person’s inclusion, other than on a temporary basis, in a socially or geographically identifiable group that suffers from such disadvantage resulting from one or more of the following circumstances:

- (a) poverty,**
- (b) source of income,**
- (c) illiteracy,**
- (d) level of education,**
- (e) address, type of housing or homelessness,**
- (f) employment status,**
- (g) social or regional accent, or from any other similar circumstance**

Other suggestions for the definition for socio -economic disadvantage status included:

housing, housing assistance, property, homelessness, house address, poverty, accent, social origin, addiction, healthcare provision, lone parent status, a criminal conviction, being an ex-prisoner, a person’s actual or perceived socio-economic status, employment status, local identity, accent, clothing or appearance, income, financial security, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class.

There were also several suggestions for education markers of socio-economic disadvantage: where one attended school or college, education, level of education, literacy difficulties. Several submissions felt education should be a separate ground in its own right.

A number of submissions noted the importance of including the term ‘disadvantaged’ in relation to a socio -economic status ground so as to avoid the danger of challenges being made by people who are not disadvantaged”.

(Government of Ireland, 2023).

ATD Ireland welcome the work done on this and remain hopeful that further steps will be made soon to enshrine a tenth ground into the equality legislation

#Addthe10th Alliance on the legal complications of defining SED [from CLM and #Addthe10th alliance submissions to review of the Equality legislation]

Community Law and Mediation- “The introduction of this discriminatory ground was previously proposed in the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 which came before the Dáil but due to the perceived definitional imprecision, was deemed to require further research to ensure clarity. This is despite IHREC’s observations that definitional ambiguities can be addressed through interpretation by the WRC and the courts. Other grounds, such as race and disability, also have objective and subjective elements which have not precluded their advancement in equality law. IHREC has also highlighted the fact that any challenges in implementing this legislation are counterbalanced by the potential benefits to be gained in increasing the effectiveness of Irish equality law. The 2020 Programme for Government also committed to examining the introduction of this new ground for the Equality Acts. A further Bill was proposed in 2021 (Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions, Bill 2021), to prohibit discrimination on the basis of a person’s social and economic disadvantaged background. We recommend that the wording in this 2021 Bill be adopted in full”. **#Addthe10th alliance-** “The legislation should include a socio-economic status ground, defined in asymmetric terms aligned with the report of the Equality Rights Alliance”.

July 2023 - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Submission on the Review of the Equality Acts

For more than two decades, there have been calls in Ireland for the inclusion of socio-economic status as a ground of discrimination in the Equality Acts. Such a ground would recognise that those with a disadvantaged socio-economic status face discrimination on this basis and are, therefore, often excluded from both services and employment which, in turn, exacerbates income and wealth inequalities.

Not only is there a myriad of international treaty obligations that require Ireland to provide protection against discrimination on grounds relating to socio-economic status, it is a matter of justice that this ground be incorporated into Irish legislation.

The introduction of this ground would not only strengthen the effectiveness of the Equality Acts, but would constitute a crucial shift in the equality landscape in Ireland.

There is an increasing number of studies showing that discrimination on the grounds of socio-economic status is widespread and needs to be tackled, with research finding socio-economic discrimination is a common occurrence in Ireland. Rights helpline has received complaints of socio-economic discrimination in the areas of education, employment, and advertising, and in service provision areas such as insurance, banking and recreation – although none of these complaints were actionable as socio-economic status is not a protected ground.

A socio-economic ground would not only provide a practical means to challenge discrimination on this ground, it would provide “symbolic” recognition that such discrimination cannot be tolerated, which may have a “knock-on effect” on the stigma and stereotyping faced by structurally vulnerable individuals

Socio-economic discrimination is egregious and a form of structural discrimination and explicitly recognising this ground would address cycles of poverty and disadvantage

<https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/submission-on-the-review-of-the-equality-acts/>



Socio-Economic discrimination in international policy

It is difficult to make direct comparisons between anti-discrimination legislation from different countries as slightly different terms are used *“and their English translation can hide further differences”*. Kadar (2016) groups discrimination legislation related to socio-economic status into four clusters;

- **Social origin, following the wording of international instruments (used in 10 jurisdictions)**
- **Social status, social position, social condition or social class, taking a wider and more holistic approach that can encompass a number of more narrowly construed categories (used in 13 jurisdictions)**
- **Wealth, income, property, economic situation, financial status, placing the emphasis on financial aspects (used in 16 jurisdictions)**
- **Education, focusing on a specific field of disadvantage (used in 5 jurisdictions)”(Kadar 2016).**

It is important for legislation to recognise the variety of ways in which poverty-based discrimination can manifest. According to Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on discrimination, *“it can have its source in legislation, regulation or policies that treat people differently on the basis of income or wealth, or on the basis of proxies such as level of education or source of income, in order to exclude people in poverty. It can result from the behaviours of both public agents or private individuals. It can originate in the hiring practices of a firm, or in the policies of real estate agencies or school boards. It can be conscious or unconscious: lawmakers or policymakers, just like employers or landlords can be guided what one scholar called ‘povertyism’, negative stereotyping of people in poverty, whether they are aware or not of such prejudice”*.

United Nations and the EU

Grounds related to socio-economic status are widely protected in international, Council of Europe, EU, and national laws.

At the United Nations level, Articles 2(1) and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights explicitly protect people against any discrimination (distinction) on grounds of “social origin [...] or other status”. It also enshrines the grounds of property and birth. Article 2(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights contains a similar clause regarding the rights contained in it. 193 countries have committed to the UN Agenda 2030’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the ‘Leave No One Behind’ Promise, which among others includes the goals to end poverty. “The fight against poverty and the fight for equality must go hand in hand” – Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair of the Equinet Executive Board (Equinet 2018). According to the 2012 Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, persons experiencing extreme poverty in particular *“live in a vicious cycle of powerlessness, stigmatisation, discrimination, exclusion and material deprivation, which all mutually reinforce one another”* (De Schutter).

In the second cycle of the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, in May 2016, Ireland received three recommendations from the Working Group on the UPR to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that would cover all grounds of discrimination including "social origin, property, birth or other status", (2019)- Addthe10th alliance.

At a European level, social origin is specified as a protected ground in Article 14 ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) and Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 to the ECHR, besides the ground of property. Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 stands alone and does not have to be invoked in conjunction with another right guaranteed by the Convention, as opposed to Article 14. Article E of the revised European Social Charter also prohibits discrimination on grounds of social origin, birth, or other status. Article 21 CFREU (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union) forbids discrimination based on social origin and property, as opposed to Article 19 TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) and the EU anti-discrimination directives, which do not. However, the Charter has a limited scope of application.

A minority of European countries explicitly enshrine grounds related to socio-economic status, including social origin, social status, property, wealth, economic vulnerability, financial status, housing assistance, education, social standing, etc. There are case examples of individuals going to the European Courts when experiencing discrimination when they are not protected by national legislation. The case of Central Union for Child Welfare v. Finland concerned an amendment to the Finnish Act on Early Childhood Education and Care which restricted the individual entitlement to early childhood education and care to 20 hours per week where one of the parents was unemployed or on maternity, paternity, or parental leave for a sibling. The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) found an instance of discrimination based on parents' socio-economic status with regard to children's right of access to education and care.

In 2008, the European Commission presented a proposal for a directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment outside the labour market, irrespective of age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief, which aimed at extending protection against discrimination through a horizontal approach. However, as unanimity of all member states is required in the European Council, the draft has remained blocked at that stage since then. Yet, work and debates have been ongoing for the past 10 years and the proposal is still very much active– ATD Ireland.

Even though equality and human rights campaigners, including ATD Europe, have raised their voices in the past years to advocate for the recognition of the socio-economic status (SES) in the directive, the current draft of the anti-discrimination directive does not include the socio-economic ground. If the directive is adopted as it stands, mobilisation will continue in the coming years to make sure that the common experience of many of the most vulnerable EU citizens is recognised and that protection for all is improved. – ATD Ireland

The Lisbon Treaty came into force in December 2009. *"It offers a valuable foundation for an enhanced response to the link between poverty and discrimination"*. – Addthe10th alliance

[Full article](http://www.ATDIreland.ie) and references available on www.ATDIreland.ie

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ATD Ireland community activists and volunteers

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'Through our lens at Last: The stories of socio- economic discrimination untold'

ATD Ireland film: *What does poverty mean?*

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Coimisiún na hÉireann
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Reading Materials and Films available @ www.atdireland.ie & ATD Ireland Youtube

Final thoughts

Families are struggling to put food on the table. Parents have to make difficult choices. They are having to decide between eating and heating the home, and also have to worry about eviction or homelessness if they are unable to cover the cost of rent or cover their mortgage.

Parents are going without a proper meal so that their kids can eat. Basic hygiene products cannot be afforded as seen by the stark rise in hygiene poverty.

This is a denial of basic human rights and highlights the issue of socio- economic discrimination as a non-existent ground in Irish equality legislation. Families are already struggling with poverty and hardship, yet we are still on top of that discriminated against... how is this right?

We have campaigned for many years building up an Alliance of NGOs called the #Addthe10th Alliance, creating a social media campaign with over 2000 supporters and we have met Ministers, spoke at the United Nations, European Union and at many Universities across Ireland.

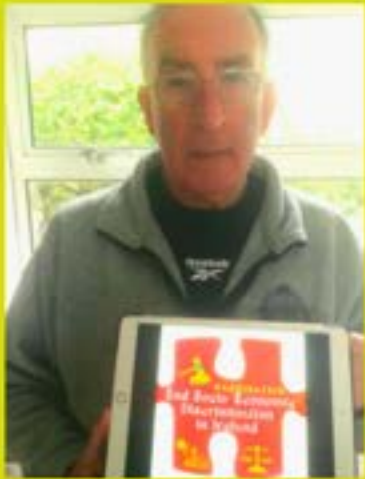
We are asking the current Government and future Governments to take the necessary action in regard to the cost-of-living and housing crisis and immediate recognition of a tenth ground in Irish Equality Legislation to protect people from socio- economic discrimination. We want all your support.

Paul Community Activist & Team Member ATD Ireland



Discrimination is the way people are judgemental.

“In my life I have been discriminated against because I am a young woman who is overweight and because I live in the homeless service. My husband also gets discriminated against because of his background and for being a Traveller”.



"The reality that people in poverty need to campaign to have the legal right not to be discriminated against is a sad reflection on our society".

"Discrimination against people due to them living in poverty is wrong!!"



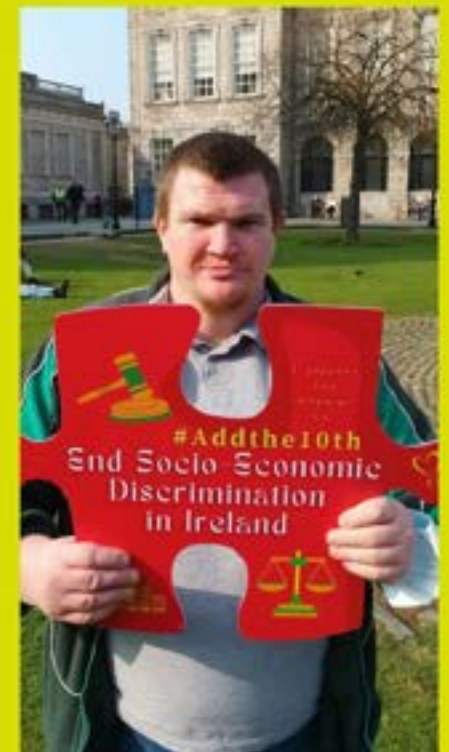
"People from disadvantaged communities are seen as bad people. But that's not true. I question is it just a co-incidence that these communities end up in the states that they are in or is it purposely designed by government bodies and councils to be this way".

ATD Ireland Youtube

***Breaking Barriers (x3)
We need to face poverty
We fight with social economy
If you think
you can knock us down
We are ATD we rock this town***

***Breaking Barriers (x3)
Never going to hold us down
We are going to fight this town
No no we fight this injustice
The government have to trust us***

***Breaking Barriers (x3),
We are the carriers
Must hold our ground
We will be around
We are strong together
Never say never***



WHY ARE PEOPLE NOT PROTECTED AGAINST SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION IN IRISH EQUALITY LEGISLATION ?



BREAKING BARRIERS A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEFINING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION

This project aims to define the term socio-economic discrimination, and break it down into understandable parts; what is it, how and why does it happen, how does it impact people and what can we do change it. As well as this, the report documents three years of campaign work in Ireland and internationally with the #addthe10th campaign to have socio-economic status recognised as the tenth ground of discrimination in Irish equality legislation. #Addthe10th

"The reality that people in poverty need to campaign to have the legal right not to be discriminated against is a sad reflection on our society".

"I feel when Ireland does add socio-economic discrimination as a 10th ground in our equality legislation...we could be a lighthouse for all of Europe...a beacon of hope. So, I hope as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

At its core the Breaking Barriers project has sought to grapple with and break down the concept of socioeconomic discrimination, to render it useful, tangible and understandable. That this process has not been left to academics or to those with professional backgrounds alone is undoubtedly a unique strength of what is presented.

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