

Read for more information on LGBTQ+ rights in Ireland, race and ethnicity, religious diversity, and women's rights

Race and Ethnicity in Ireland

It is well documented that during the past two decades Ireland has become an increasingly diverse country. The 2016 Census indicates that the 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland originate from 200 different nations. The largest group are Polish nationals at 122,515, followed by 103,113 UK nationals, and 36,552 Lithuanians. Overall, there are 12 nationalities with more than 10,000 residents living here in Ireland from America, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Latvia, Romania, and Spain, in addition to Poland, Lithuania and the UK.

The key factors in increased immigration have been the more-open labour market provided by the European Union and the globalized nature of the contemporary Irish economy, both of which have attracted a wave of new residents. Foreign Direct Investment from large technology multinational companies has created many good paying jobs, which has further pulled in workers from outside Ireland's borders. Today Poles constitute the largest minority population in Ireland. Although they are small in number, the nomadic Travellers are an indigenous ethnic minority group—defined by their shared customs, traditions, and language—who have lived in Ireland for centuries.

Sadly, studies have shown inequalities in certain parts of Irish life. Employment is a strong example of this. The research, published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Economic and Social Research Institute, examines the experience of immigrants and minority ethnic groups in the Irish labour market across four measures: employment rates; occupation; discrimination when seeking work and discrimination in the workplace

Some of the key findings include:

- People from the Black non-Irish group are less than half (0.4 times) as likely to be employed than the White Irish group and five times as likely to experience discrimination when seeking work
- People from the Black Irish group are twice as likely to experience discrimination seeking work and just under three and a half times (3.4 times) as likely to experience discrimination in the workplace as White Irish
- Both the Black Non-Irish and Black Irish groups are much less likely to hold a managerial or professional job
- The White EU-East nationals group are much less likely to hold a managerial or professional job but show no difference in their rates of employment

LGBTQ+ in Ireland

Attitudes in Ireland towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people are regarded as among the most liberal in the world. Ireland is notable for its transformation from a country holding overwhelmingly conservative attitudes toward LGBT issues to one holding overwhelmingly liberal views in the space of a generation. In May 2015, Ireland became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage on a national level by popular vote.

Ireland is filled with gifted LGBTQ influencers who continue to inspire people across the country: **Oscar Wilde**, The well known Irish author and artist is one of the first known LGBT influencers in Ireland. His work periodically covered homosexual references and his personal life indicates his attraction for men. Former Taoiseach (prime minister) **Leo Varadkar** publicly came out as gay in 2015. Varadkar was an avid advocate for [the same-sex referendum](#) and continues to inspire the Irish public. **Rory O’Neill** is famously recognized as the drag queen Panti Bliss and is also a gay rights activist. O’Neill’s documentary film 'Queen of Ireland' has premiered across the globe.

Religious Diversity in Ireland

The twenty-five years between 1991 and 2016 have seen significant increases in the non-Catholic population, driven by not only growing numbers with no religion but by increases also in other religions. Roman Catholicism is still the predominant religion in Ireland, with the Church of Ireland in second place. The rise in both Orthodox and Muslim numbers reflects the increase in migration to Ireland in recent years.

Among the Catholic population, Church attendance is dropping. A number of surveys suggest that only between 30% and 35% of Irish Catholics now attend mass weekly, a huge reduction on the 90% plus who attended in the 1970s. For an increasing number of Irish people church is a place they go to on special occasions – to baptise their children, get married or bury their dead – but rarely ever visit outside of those events.

Women’s Rights in Ireland

Women played a crucial role in the fight for Irish freedom both during the 1916 Easter Rising and later in the war for independence. The suffragette movement across both Ireland and the United Kingdom was successful and some women were granted the right to vote in 1918, all women aged 21 and over were granted suffrage four years later. However, in the 1918 Act, working class women and women of color for the most part could still not vote due to caveats in the Act. Moreover, after Ireland was granted independence, cultural expectations led to women stepping back from public life and predominantly staying at home as homemakers. The strong presence and power of the Roman Catholic Church was incredibly influential in maintaining this.

The role of women in Irish society has changed more dramatically in the twentieth century, in particular over the last three decades, than in any other period of Irish history, with the majority of these changes attributed to changes in the economic and labour structures of the country. In fact, one of the most dramatic changes in Irish society has been the substantial increase in the number of women participating in the paid workforce and the change in gender roles (O’Sullivan, 2012). Women in Ireland have been furthered empowered with the legalisation of divorce in 1995 and abortion in a limited capacity in 2018.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Ireland



As a crusader for women and those without a voice in Ireland, Mary Robinson was the first woman elected President of Ireland (December 1990 to September 1997). She was followed by Mary McAleese who served as the eighth President of Ireland from November 1997 to November 2011.