European Semester 2021-2022 country fiche on disability equality

Ireland

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With comparative data Annex provided by EDE

Ireland

Jenny Dagg

European Disability Expertise (EDE) provides independent scientific support to the Commission's policy Unit responsible for disability issues. It aims to mainstream disability equality in EU policy processes, including implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester in 2022.[1]

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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1   Executive summary and recommendations

1.1   Key points and main challenges for Ireland in 2022

Disability and the labour market

Several important measures have yet to be operationalised that target early engagement and transition. Important commitments identified in the final Make Work Pay report of 2017 have not yet been progressed and a full review is timely. Awareness initiatives need to continue for employers on the potential of persons with disabilities within their work force. Disaggregated data on persons with disabilities across all sectors is required, this includes public bodies categorising disability consistently.

Disability, social policies and healthcare

The main challenges include the need for more ambitious actions to address additional services in the community and the introduction of a cost of disability payment in the social welfare system. Ireland's efforts to tackle poverty and social exclusion primarily through employment, activation and education measures needs to be supported by regional and local community activation projects along with the transfer of knowledge between local stakeholders. While eHealth initiatives can support persons with disabilities to access health services, consultation is required from persons with disabilities or DPO's to ensure that online services such as ePharmacy are compliant with WCAG 2.1 guidelines and accessible.

Disability, education and skills

In Ireland, there is concern about the level of early school leavers with disabilities and the NEET rate of persons with disabilities. While some new programmes such as the Access Inclusion Model for early years, and the Social Inclusion Model pilot are making strides in particular areas, challenges remain for the provision of career guidance across educational settings and the transition from education to employment. Persons with disabilities are underrepresented in FET (despite an increase in numbers) and apprenticeship positions. The apprenticeship space is important considering Ireland's focus within the RRP on apprenticeships and reform of TU routes and provision of courses.

Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility

Ireland's Recovery and Resilience Plan investment priorities are focused towards addressing the digital divide and digital skills, improving transition routes and the flexibility of courses and course content within the TU environment, introduction of new eHealth initiatives, increasing the digital infrastructure within enterprise, supporting work placement programmes and providing investment to reskill and retrain potential workers. Universal design and accessibility will be key within these new initiatives. Funding could also support case officers within Intreo to link with wider initiatives in their locality to support persons with disabilities transition from unemployment to FET, education or community initiatives. As such, it could increase the funding within SICAP for projects across all regions in Ireland that target persons with disabilities.

1.2   Recommendations for Ireland

These recommendations are based on the evidence and analysis presented in the following chapters of our report.

Recommendation: Address the gaps within transitions for persons with disabilities, either from education settings to FET or employment, from unemployment to FET or employment, or for those with acquired disabilities seeking to reskill, re-train or re-enter the work force.

Rationale: Commencement of the early engagement process as recommended in the 2017 Make Work Pay Report can support transitions, as well as implementation of the national support employed programme. Included also is the public service employment and Intreo staff who can refer persons with disabilities towards employment opportunities, individual interventions, supported employment options or FET options. Crucial is the referral mechanism between DSP and relevant departments and agencies within the locality and region, working together to ensure long-term sustainability of programmes and options.

Recommendation: Harmonisation of disability data across public service sectors is required to better assess the impact of policy.

Rationale: A harmonised approach would ensure consistency across national policy initiatives with a future focus including social inclusion, skills attainment, poverty reduction, education provision, and enterprise development. For instance, the new SOLAS Green Skills Action Programme and Work Placement Experience Programme should capture data on the persons with disabilities that engage with these programmes as part of their target group. Similarly, we should be able to assess how many persons with disabilities engage with the new apprenticeship placements envisaged with TU's and the referral mechanism in which the opportunity came about to know more about the pathways persons with disabilities engage with and whether these are successful, or not. Additionally, data on changes in allowances and the movement of people to and from allowances and employment would enable better knowledge on the impact of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy.

Recommendation: Address regional disparities visible within Regional Enterprise Strategies and SICAP Projects.

Rationale: Globally governments recognise the increased numbers of people with mental health difficulties because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ireland, Dublin's Regional Enterprise Strategy 2020[2] recognises the need to support a selected cohort for a pathway back to economic activity after time away from the workplace either by choice, illness or other reasons and people with physical and mental disabilities. Such a focus could be replicated within all regional strategies in Ireland, which is currently not the case, ensuring those seeking support within their locality or region receive the supports they require. Similarly, the SICAP annual report highlights projects for social inclusion for persons with disabilities in communities around Ireland, however, these are not prevalent within all localities and regions.

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[2] The Regional Enterprise Strategy 2020 https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Dublin-Regional-Enterprise-Plan-to2020.pdf.

2   Mainstreaming disability equality in the Semester documents

Country Reports and Country Specific Recommendation of direct relevance to disability policy were not published in this exceptional policy cycle. For a commentary on the last published documents please see our country fiche for the previous Semester 2020-21.

2.1   [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Ireland (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of persons with disabilities or disability policies was considered in these plans. We address the most relevant of these and other issues arising from the RRP/NRP in the next chapters. Ireland's Recovery and Resilience Plan focuses on three key priorities: the Green Transition; Accelerating and Expanding Digital Reforms and Transformation; and Social and Economic Recovery and Job Creation. Within these priorities we have highlighted goals in which disability equality is mainstreamed, specified, or omitted.

- Public Sector Retrofit Pathfinder Project (social policy)
- Drive Digital Transformation of Enterprise in Ireland (labour market)
- Digital Infrastructure and Funding to Schools (education and skills)
- Online response option for Census (accessibility)
- eHealth initiatives (health)
- Digital Divide and Enhance Digital Skills – 10yr Adult digital literacy, numeracy and Digital Literacy strategy (social policy / education and skills / labour market).
- TU Transformation Fund (education and skills)

The RRP refers explicitly to disability only twice, in identifying that persons with disabilities are included in Government equality strategies (p. 14), and with reference to eligibility for the Work Placement Experience Programme (p.15). It does not refer directly to the National Disability Inclusion Strategy or Ireland's obligations under the CRPD. There is passing acknowledgement of vulnerability to poverty and low participation in the workforce for vulnerable groups (including persons with disabilities). There is reference to vulnerable and marginalised groups in the actions on education, without specific reference to learners with disabilities. In all other areas the relevance of disability equality must be inferred by implication and would benefit from more explicit mainstreaming.

2.2   Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans

Relevant recommendations and issues arising from participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are highlighted in each chapter.

It is also important that Semester plans align with national disability strategy too. In Ireland, this refers to the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021.[3] A five-year national strategy was developed for the period 2017-2021, in preparation for ratification of the UN CRPD, with initial progress evaluated in 2019 and a mid-term

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[3]   https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8072c0-national-disability-inclusion-strategy-2017-2021/.

review published by the government in January 2020 and an annual independent assessment by the NDA in April 2021.[4]

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4   National Disability Authority (2021). Independent Assessment of Implementation of NDIS 2020. [Available at: https://nda.ie/publications/justice-and-safeguarding/national-disability-inclusion-strategy/nda-assessment-of-progress-under-the-national-disability-inclusion-strategy-2020].

3 Disability and the labour market - analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

In 2018, Ireland ratified the UNCRPD. The first State Party report was submitted in April 2020 and the UN CRPD Committee has not yet responded.

Article 27 UN CRPD addresses Work and Employment.

Employment was one of the pillars of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (Theme 4), which included commitment to develop a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, with relative employment rates envisaged among its outcome measures.[5] It also recommended examining the recommendations of the Make Work Pay Report 2017, to introduce meaningful reforms that would make it financially worthwhile for a person with a disability to take up employment.[6] The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2015-2024 (CES) was developed and is in the second phase of its Action Plan 2019-2021

3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Ireland of 32.6 % in 2019, compared to 76.5 % for other persons against a national employment target of 69 % and approximately -18.7 points below the EU27 average, compared with -13.5 points in 2018. This results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 44 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.4. In 2018, the estimated disability employment gap was approximately 40 percentage points. This remains very wide across all adult age groups and appeared to widen in 2019 among younger adults (aged 25-34) although the sample in this age group is small.

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 20.1 % and 7.7 %, respectively in 2019 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Ireland was 40.8 %, compared to 82.8 % for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in annex. The disability unemployment gap widens among older workers and youth unemployment seems high. The activity gap is wider in Ireland than the EU average due to a low disability activity rate.

Nationally, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) maintains data through the census, however, data from the 2020 census is not yet available (see our country fiche for the previous Semester 2020-21). The 2016 Census data showed that there were 176 445

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[5] http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-stratgey-booklet.pdf/Files/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-stratgey-booklet.pdf.

[6] Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2019), *Make Work Pay for People with Disabilities.* Report to government 2017. [Available at: https://assets.gov.ie/10940/c4c20348897148eb9a50ac2755fd680f.pdf].

persons with a disability in the labour force, giving a labour force participation rate of 30.2 % compared with 61.4 % for the population overall.[7]

3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 Recovery and Resilience Plan for Ireland and the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021.

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021) adheres to the employment strategy laid out in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (CES). The CES has now entered into its second three-year action phase 2019-2021 focusing on six key strategic policy goals (SP 1-6) with an end of year review completed by the NDA for 2020. This 2020 annual review notes the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment levels and work patterns, highlighting persons with disabilities 'at risk of losing their job due to the higher proportion of persons with disabilities in lower paid jobs such as retail, catering and hospitality compared to the general population'.[8] 2021 is also a significant year in terms of the evaluation of progress as the current action plan comes to an end. A new and final phase of action should be finalised and published by year end.

The National Remote Work Strategy: Making Remote Work (2021)[9] sets out the way in which remote working can become a regular scenario post-COVID-19 pandemic working on the progress made during the pandemic. It identifies how mobility, transport and physical issues may make attending a workplace difficult, while working from home for persons with disabilities in some cases is the only viable alternative. The move towards remote working as an acceptable and viable long-term option by employers is of benefit for people with disabilities. Concern remains around visibility, career progression as well as continued access to the physical workspace.[10]

Ireland's RRP is clearly focused on generating longer term jobs, digitisation and digital solutions, improving productivity, labour force participation and fostering skills and talent while transitioning to a low carbon economy. In the plan, persons with disabilities are placed within the category of 'vulnerable' persons. The Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP) and the Solas Green Skills Action programme aim to target workers of vulnerable groups and provide them the opportunity to gain experience, reskill or upskill to new areas that are experiencing growth and skill shortages. Those receiving the Disability Allowance (DA) and Blind Person Pension (BPP) are considered eligible payments. It will be important to measure the rate of participation in these programmes by persons with disabilities. Additionally, it is important to ensure that these targeted programmes are delivered using a universal design for learning approach as developed by SOLAS and that funding is available for assistive technology devices or digital devices for accessibility for persons with disabilities participating on such programmes.

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[7] Census Data 2016, http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2016resultsprofile9-healthdisabilityandcarers/.

[8] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html p. 6.

[9] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/51f84-making-remote-work-national-remote-work-strategy/

[10] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/51f84-making-remote-work-national-remote-work-strategy/ p. 18.

Educational projects in the plan focus on addressing the digital divide by providing increased funding for ICT digital infrastructure. It is not clarified whether this grant includes special education schools and the digital infrastructure requirements of young learners with disabilities. The Technological Universities Transformation Fund will see greater adaptation and accessibility of learner pathways, upskilling course provision and the apprenticeship space, flexible course delivery and content creation, and digital connectivity for vulnerable persons and marginalised groups (also see section 5.2).

The NDA annual review of the CES indicates specific areas in which the national recovery plan interacts with the CES. It highlights, for instance, the Regional Enterprise Strategy 2020 for the Dublin area that includes an objective to 'develop and communicate a pathway to economic activity for a selected cohort(s), including: people with physical and mental disabilities, and people returning to the workplace who may have exited through choice or illness or other reasons'.[11] While this is a welcome focus it is confined to the Dublin region and not prevalent within the other regional strategies, which is significant if these strategies are considered 'key to addressing longer term strategic planning'.[12] Instead, a consistent focus across all regions of Ireland is in line with CES Strategic Priority four which focuses on return to work for those who have acquired a disability or long-term health condition during their working life, particularly relevant post-pandemic. Regional disparities in Ireland also noticed in SICAP annual reporting. The National Skills Strategy 2025[13] is similarly focused on providing reskilling and training programmes that will provide opportunities for people to seek employment in other sectors, if necessary.

A review of Reasonable Accommodations by the NDA revealed that the process was bureaucratically burdensome and inconsistent for employers and a low level of awareness among employers.[14] 2020 saw several awareness raising initiatives and online training programmes to support employers in the area of disability.[15] These include:

- Open Doors Initiative commissioned by the DCEDIY.
- Employers for Change Information service launched in March 2021.
- 'Recruiting for Ability' webinar by Enterprise Ireland/IDA Ireland.
- Public Appointments Service has published a Guide to Promoting Inclusive Employment.
- Creating a pathway for OWL graduates to compete for permanent roles in the Irish Civil Service at Clerical Officer Level through confined competitions.

Almost a quarter of 15-24 year-olds with disabilities are NEET (23 % compared to young persons without a disability at 10 %). While programmes such as the Ability Programme, the Willing Able and Mentoring programme, the Oireachtas Work

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[11] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html p.7.

[12] https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/South-East-Regional-Enterprise-Plan-to-2020.pdf p.6.

[13] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69fd2-irelands-national-skills-strategy-2025-irelands-future/.

[14] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/indicators-for-monitoring-progress-under-the-comprehensive-employment-strategy-for-persons-with-disabilities-2015-2024.html p. 10.

[15] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html p. 26-7.

Learning (OWL) programme, the Youth Employment Support Scheme and the EmployAbility programme have all had positive impacts, the latter two in particular could improve their outcomes.[16] Additionally, the actions that are highlighted for 2021 within the NDA end of year review[17] should be prioritised. These include:

- finalisation of third action plan and publication by year end in line with national recovery plan;
- address lack of progress on Career guidance across educational settings which would address Article 27 on work and employment which contains provision on vocational guidance;
- implementation to develop a national programme of coordinated employment supports for persons with disabilities who wish to work, including those with high support needs;
- commencement of the early engagement process as recommended in the 2017 Make Work Pay Report;
- conducting a full review of the Make Work Pay actions.

Crucially, the NDA review once more stresses how the public employment service can provide employment support options through the key role of a case officer.[18] In 2016 training of case officers commenced however little is known about how Intreo staff can refer persons with disabilities directly to employment opportunities and/or to a range of individual interventions or suitable programmes i.e. EmployAbility, the Individual Placement and Support Model or other further education and training options. It is envisaged that this role would work with the individual and support them in connecting and transitioning to their next phase, be it employment or FET. The current CES action plan requests a closer referral mechanism between Intreo and their locality, and even a review of existing protocols between DSP and relevant departments and agencies to ensure the transfer of knowledge and suitability of placement to work towards long-term sustainability, including programmes that have demonstrated their efficacy such as the IPS programme or the Ability projects. They can also now take into consideration the WPEP and the SOLAS Green Skills Action Programme.

The national supported employment programme supports those with a high level of support needs to obtain and retain employment. The agreed policy approach and implementation plan is awaiting implementation. A vocational rehabilitation policy paper is being advanced with a focused consultation process underway with a view to creating a case management process for those with acquired disabilities or long-term health conditions who may need support to re-enter the work force. The NDA further suggest, based on the Scottish example, that the case management approach could be extended to those persons with disabilities transitioning back to employment post-pandemic, including those with newly diagnosed mental health conditions.[19]

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[16] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/indicators-for-monitoring-progress-under-the-comprehensive-employment-strategy-for-persons-with-disabilities-2015-2024.html p. 7.
[17] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html p. 13.
[18] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html p. 19.
[19] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html pp. 22-24.

Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 sets a 3 % target for the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector, increasing to 6 % by 2024.[20] At the end of 2017, this number stood at 3.5 %, decreasing slightly in 2018 to 3.3 %. (7 585 employees). Within the civil service there were 990 employees (4.7 %) who reported a disability. The NDA has a forthcoming paper that outlines recommendations for improving implementation of the Part 5 over a three-year timeframe with guidance to public bodies to support them reaching the increased target of 6 %. The expenditure by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) on the Reasonable Accommodation Fund increased by 55 % between 2016 (EUR 77 822) and 2018 (EUR 120 622).

To conclude, it is clear from employment statistics that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on employment levels and opportunities in Ireland including the reallocation of resources within public support systems to address public health measures and loss of employment for citizens. Despite this, a focus on progress for 2022 with clear actions and targeted investment is needed to ensure greater disability equality.

In employment and activation, the employment rate of persons with disabilities has decreased and has fallen further below the EU average. Several important measures have yet to be operationalised that target early engagement and transition, either from education to employment, from acquiring a disability and re-entering the labour market, or supporting employment for persons with multiple support needs. The role of career guidance across educational settings, of case officers within activation settings, and of case management for those requiring additional support to obtain, retain or re-enter the work force are vital resources that have been identified as lacking. Access to career guidance for learners with disabilities in special and mainstream schools is essential to ensure smooth progress and transition from education to FET or employment.

Important commitments identified in the final Make Work Pay report of 2017 have not yet been progressed and a full review is timely. Awareness initiatives need to continue for employers on the potential of persons with disabilities within their work force including information on the reasonable accommodation fund, transport and mobility options, and assistive devices and digital technology supports. Similarly, we should be able to assess how many persons with disabilities engage with the new apprenticeship placements envisaged with TU's and the referral mechanism in which the opportunity came about to know more about the pathways persons with disabilities engage with and whether these are successful, or not. Additionally, data on changes in allowances and the movement of people to and from allowances and employment would enable better knowledge on the impact of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy.

Lastly, disaggregated data on persons with disabilities across all sectors is required, this includes public bodies categorising disability consistently to audit successfully for equality, as well as addressing regional disparities in resource allocation and outcomes to address anti-poverty measures and tackle social exclusion.

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[20] Government of Ireland, *National Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024*. 22 (2015).

4   Disability, social policies and healthcare – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

Ireland ratified the UN CRPD on the 20 March 2018. Ireland ratified the UN CRPD on the 20 March 2018. The first State Party report was submitted in April 2020 and the UN Committee has not yet responded.

Article 28 UN CRPD addresses Adequate standard of living and social protection.

Article 19 UN CRPD addresses Living independently in the community.

Article 25 UN CRPD addresses Health.

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 included commitments to a range of relevant social policies, such as implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, Health and well-being, Person-centred disability services, Housing, Transport and accessible places, Equality and choice, and Joined-up services.[21]

4.1   Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC 2019 indicate the poverty risk rate for working age persons with disabilities in Ireland was 23.2 % in 2019, compared to 9.9 % for other persons of similar age - an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 13 percentage points (see Table 14). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 8.8 points (24.1 % for older persons with disabilities and 15.3 % for other persons of similar age). While the poverty gap for persons with disabilities of working age has decreased in comparison to 2018, it has increased for persons with disabilities over 65. The tables in annex also indicate the respective rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion and break these down by gender as well age.

For persons with disabilities of working age in Ireland (age 16-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 60.1 % and 23.2 % after transfers. This has decreased since 2018. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities aged under 60 was 5.5 %, compared with 11.3 % in 2018.[22] The main risk is lack of work (low work intensity) band the disability poverty gap is very wide among working age people.

Of interest to health policy are the data on self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list). Disability equality gaps are evident here too and, on this basis, the rate for persons with disabilities in Ireland was 5.0 %, compared to 1.4 % for other persons, and well above the EU27 average of 1.7 % in 2019 (Table 15 shows the three-year average).

With regard to healthcare, the National Ability Support System is operational and presents the demographic and service data for almost 22,500 service users, including 3 515 new registrations in 2020. The merging of existing databases has resulted in

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[21]   http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-stratgey-booklet.pdf/Files/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-stratgey-booklet.pdf.

[22]   https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database (hlth_dpe050).

more comprehensive information about individual service users in relation to ethnicity, diagnosis, living arrangements and whether they have a primary carer. This data can assist the service planning process.

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Ireland and the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021.

The main actions to address social exclusion and poverty for persons with disabilities specified in Ireland's RRP is through its focus on employment, education, training and lifelong learning (see section 3). Additionally, the RRP contains the Public Sector Retrofit Pathfinder Project. It is worth considering a tandem review of public sector buildings for universal design implementation or assistive technologies to increase accessibility. The government's commitment in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 contains important targets to address social exclusion of persons with disabilities e.g. increase the employment level of people with a disability from 22.3 % in 2018 to 33 % by 2025.[23]

The CSR 2020-21 expressed disappointment that although The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 committed to restructure disability-related welfare payments to better recognise a range of work capabilities to date the government has committed to further research the cost of disability rather than introducing a cost of disability payment. Although Indecon International have been contracted to conduct research on the cost of disability, updating the previous 2011 report,[24] no report is yet publicly available at the time of writing. Due to implementation of some of the recommendations from the Make Work Pay Report 2017, DSP figures for 2019 indicate that 3 570 people have taken up employment whilst on disability allowance, with a budget 2021 measure modestly increasing the Disability Allowance and Blind Pension earnings disregard by EUR 20 each per week from EUR 120 to EUR 140.[25]

Ireland's Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018–2022 provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.[26] One of SICAPs target groups are people with disabilities who are disengaged from the labour market. The activation programmes aim to support activities around lifelong learning and preparation for employment, all of which can help to reduce exclusion and poverty. The SICAP annual progress report 2020[27] highlights projects in certain regions that promoted the support, connection and inclusion of persons with disabilities to their wider networks during the pandemic, however, these were not consistent across all regions.

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[23] *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025*, Ambition, Goals, Commitments, p. 18.
[24] http://nda.ie/File-upload/Indecon-Report-on-the-Cost-of-Disability.pdf.
[25] http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/comprehensive-employment-strategy-2020-nda-year-end-review.html p. 9.
[26] Pobal, see: https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/social-inclusion-and-community-activation-programme-sicap-2018-2022/.
[27] https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2019/10/SICAP-Annual-Progress-Report_2020_July2021-1.pdf.

A revised version of the NDIS was adopted by Cabinet in early 2020 following the publication of a mid-term review with the strategy extended to 2022 in light of COVID-19. The annual report by the NDA for 2020 highlights delays and areas requiring further focus in 2021. In the context of social inclusion these include:

- Reconvening the working groups for Assistive Technology and Transport.
- Clear collaborative cross-departmental reporting method on actions.
- Awareness that the current NDIS strategy is extended to end 2022 and need to clarify its successor.
- Third and final action plan of the CES needs to be finalised.
- Commence evaluation of the effectiveness of the Progressing Disability Services Programme and review of regulations for residential disability services.
- Continued focus on the Time to Move On from Congregated Settings policy.

CPD Training on web accessibility is being provided by the Irish Computer Society however there is a lack of awareness within the public sector. Inclusion of accessibility in public procurement as part of the Monitoring of Public Services under the Code of Practice and a pilot of key indicators was commenced. All public bodies could examine how they will incorporate the statutory duty under the 2017 Act into their model of service provision. Likewise, the online response option for the Census should be compliant with WCAG 2.1 guidelines to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Ireland's efforts to improve social policies and healthcare remain similar to those presented in CSR 2020-21, however, additional actions are required to address regional disparities in the provision of activation and inclusion services along with a focus on the commitments within the Time to Move On from Congregated Settings policy.[28]

A key finding of the Equality Data Audit[29] was that a harmonised approach to collecting and classifying disability service data is currently lacking and should be considered. Such an approach would ensure consistency across national policy initiatives with a future focus including social inclusion, skills attainment, poverty reduction, education provision, and enterprise development. For instance, the new SOLAS Green Skills Action Programme and Work Placement Experience Programme should capture data on the persons with disabilities that engage with these programmes as part of their target group.

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[28] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/congregatedsettings/timetomoveon.html.
[29] Hogan E, Howard N (2020) Equality Budgeting – Equality Data Audit Report (Government of Ireland, http://budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2021/Documents/Budget/Equality%20Budgeting%20%E2%80%93%20Equality%20Data%20Audit%20Report.docx.pdf).

5   Disability, education and skills – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

Ireland ratified the UN CRPD on the 20 March 2018. Ireland ratified the UN CRPD on the 20 March 2018. The first State Party report was submitted in April 2020 and the UN Committee has not yet responded.

Article 24 UN CRPD addresses Education.

Education was one of the pillars of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (Theme 3), which included commitment to develop a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, with relative employment rates envisaged among its outcome measures.[30]

5.1   Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

The EU-SILC 2019 estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with additional caution due to relatively wide confidence intervals, but they consistently indicate disability equality gaps (an average of 2-3 years provides a more stable indication). Table 16 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Ireland. Youth with disabilities (aged 18-24) tend to leave school significantly more than peers of the same age groups without disabilities(and this is reinforced by widening the sample size to age 18-29). Table 17 shows completion rate of tertiary education disaggregated by disability and age group. Persons with disabilities (age 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (and this is reinforced in the wider age range 30-39). Although the data sample is small the indicators show wide gaps for young persons with disabilities, reflecting the high NEET levels identified earlier (see chapter 3).

In 2019, there were 13 098 learners enrolled in further education and training (FET) programmes who reported having at least one type of disability, an increase of just over 4 000 on 2018 figure.[31] However, while there was better representation of persons with disabilities in higher education than in FET and in FET than the apprenticeship population, they remain underrepresented overall across education sectors, most notably within apprenticeship populations.[32]

5.2   Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 Recovery and Resilience Plan for Ireland and the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021.

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[30]   http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-stratgey-booklet.pdf/Files/dept-justice-ndi-inclusion-stratgey-booklet.pdf.

[31]   SOLAS (2020) FET in Numbers 2019. Learners with Disabilities, https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/a4dcab3b27/disabilities-fet-report-2019.pdf.

[32]   http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/indicators-for-monitoring-progress-under-the-comprehensive-employment-strategy-for-persons-with-disabilities-2015-2024.html p. 6.

Early years

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Programme continues to generate success, winning an award at the UN Zero Project Awards. The budget for the AIM programme was increased in Budget 2021, from EUR 33 million to EUR 43 million per year. In 2019/2020, the number of children who benefited was 5 698. A comprehensive review began in 2019/2020 and has not yet been published. It is hoped that this review will include unmet need, waiting lists, any impact of overage exemptions and general satisfaction with the programme by parents and carers.

'First 5', the Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028) was published by the DYCA together with a First 5 Implementation Plan covering the period 2019-2021. Objective 9 of First 5 focuses on supporting the transition from early learning settings to primary education, offering an opportunity to improve transitions for children with disabilities by strengthening information exchange between ELC settings, children and parents, and primary schools; continuity of curriculum and pedagogy between ELC and primary; good practice as a foundation to ensure a seamless transition to further learning stages.[33]

While 800 participants have completed Lámh Sign Language training and 1074 Hanen Teacher Talk training, a new Sensory Processing and Early Learning (SPEL) was introduced in 2019-20. Over 2 100 participants have completed this to date. The NDA advises that continued training to be rolled out noting the capital funding provided under Project Ireland 2040 for Early Learning and Care settings from 2021.[34]

Primary and secondary education

The Social Inclusion Model pilot was extended for 2020/21. An evaluation of the pilot is being undertaken by the ESRI and is not yet published at the time of writing. The NCSE was given autonomy to recruit 31 speech and language, and occupational therapists to support the project, rather than the HSE. The first course of the National Training Programme for SNA's was due to commence in January 2021 with a frontloaded model for SNA's implemented for 2021/2022. The In-School and Early Years Therapy Support Demonstration Project supports the work under AIM by delivering therapeutic supports such as speech and language and occupational therapy for mainstream schools, special schools and early years' settings. This was also extended for 2020/21. The approach is now integrated into the new Social Inclusion Model aforementioned. The approach received positive feedback, particularly from parents who side stepped community waiting lists for therapy.

Challenges included the length of time to put therapists in post and become familiar with the requirements of an education environment. There was often confusion over reporting lines and role clarity. The NCCA now maintains a register of ISL requests received and a process is in place to ensure services are provided for ISL users at

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[33] National Disability Authority (2020), C*omprehensive Employment Strategy 2019: NDA Year-end Review*, p. 9. [Available at: http://nda.ie/Publications/Employment/Employment-Publications/Comprehensive-Employment-Strategy-2019-NDA-Year-End-Review1.pdf].

[34] National Disability Authority (2021). Independent Assessment of Implementation of NDIS 2020. p. 32. [Available at: https://nda.ie/publications/justice-and-safeguarding/national-disability-inclusion-strategy/nda-assessment-of-progress-under-the-national-disability-inclusion-strategy-2020].

NCCA events or meetings. A short course in Irish Sign Language has been developed and schools can choose to provide this as part of the Junior Cycle. There is also an option in Transition Year, or a four-module course in the Leaving Certificate Applied. An Implementation Group has been convened to address the recommendations of the NCSE Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The Department of Education is developing Good Practice Guidelines on the education of children with Autism.

Although a Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum for all schools, no data to measure the effectiveness or impact on this is being collated, neither whether this initiative has been modified for persons with a disability.

Research from the NCSE on post-school education and learning for adults with special education needs hopes to shed light on further education and training options undertaken by school leavers and is due in Q3 2022. The NDA annual review of the CES again highlights the lack of action for career guidance provision for students in special and mainstream schools as well as a lack of progress on transition planning overall.

Tertiary education

A key objective of Ireland's RRP is for digital infrastructure and funding for schools. This has also been a key priority strategically within the education sector for the past number of years with various initiatives contained within the Higher Education Digital Transformation Framework,[35] the HEA Strategic Plan 2018-2022[36] and a new Digital Strategy for Schools that is forthcoming.

The number of persons with disabilities involved in FET and higher education continues to increase annually. SOLAS has published a conceptual framework on Universal Design for Learning in FET, guidance for implementing the framework as well as running supportive webinars for practitioners and a new website that 'describes requirements for apprenticeships, traineeships, post leaving cert courses, community and adult education as well as core literacy and numeracy services. Projects outlined under the RRP intend to address the digital divide by increasing the numbers of learners graduating with high-level ICT skills by over 65 % by end of 2022. Under the 10 Year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy it aims to increase basic digital skills among disadvantaged populations including persons with disabilities as well as distributing laptops to disadvantaged students (approx. 20 0000) in further and higher education settings.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science under the RRP will invest EUR 40 million developing Technological Universities (TU) partnerships between higher education institutions and industry, student pathways and graduate outcomes, upskill course provision and innovative approaches to regional skills shortages including apprenticeship spaces to ensure greater diversity

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[35] https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/190212_FutureFocus_Digital-Transformation_Discussion-Paper.pdf.

[36] https://hea.ie/2018/11/30/hea-strategic-plan-2018-2022/.

and flexibility of access to courses. Persons with disabilities represent 2.8 % of the Irish apprentice population and 5% of the FET population.[37]

It will be important in both the reforms proposed within TU's and adult digital literacy that universal design for learning approaches are foreground to ensure adequate engagement and access for persons with disabilities. The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme is an alternative third level admission scheme that considers the adverse way in which a persons disability may have a negative impact on their second level education. It enables a person to apply for reduced points to access college places.

Across educational sectors is the need to address the recommendations on the provision of assistive technology in Ireland.[38]

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[37] http://nda.ie/Publications/Justice-and-Safeguarding/National-Disability-Inclusion-Strategy/Mid-term-Review-of-Progress-under-the-National-Disability-Inclusion-Strategy-Indicators1.pdf p. 35.
[38] http://nda.ie/research-on-the-provision-of-assistive-technology-executive-summary1.pdf.

6   Investment priorities in relation to disability

6.1   Updates on use of existing EU funds (up to 2021)

According to the ESF Ireland List of Operations from October 2021,[39] projects funded under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 are listed. Projects and agencies within this update relevant to persons with disabilities include ETB Training for the Unemployed; the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP); Adult Literacy; JobsPlus Incentive Scheme; and Community Training Centres. However, data on the inclusion of persons with disabilities within these initiatives is difficult to assess e.g. the SICAP annual report indicated four short-term projects funded for persons with disabilities in 2020 in just one geographic region in Ireland. The CSR 2020-21 highlighted how the 2014-2020 ESIF had the potential to support the transition from institutional to community-based care (de-congregation), and that no funds were allocated to projects which aimed to achieve this goal. ESF in Ireland is not being used to support de-congregation, despite this being vital to the social inclusion of children and adults with disabilities.

6.2   Priorities for future investment (after 2021)

The new ESF+ fund for 2021-2027[40] remains under negotiation with a consultation process complete in Ireland with submissions highlighting potential areas for structural and community investment including youth and mental health services, better community services for persons with disabilities, ongoing funding of SICAP, expanding prevention of homelessness given the rising costs of housing in Ireland, addressing the digital divide within education and employment, access to education and training for young people and those within disadvantaged groups, the ongoing issue of high childcare costs, and skills and employability issues across educational sectors. It is worth noting the way in which the ESF can be used to support de-congregation, the move from institutional to community-based care, in line with providing better community services for persons with disabilities.

Ireland's Recovery and Resilience Plan has been allocated EUR 989 million in EU funding.[41] The TU Transformation Fund is allocated EUR 40 million (see section 5.2 p.17) while funding to address the digital divide and digital skills is not specified. eHealth projects will receive EUR 75 million however accessibility is not explicitly addressed although it is envisaged that all ICT communications within the HSE follow Ireland's Open Data Health Policy and the WCAG principles. The Programme to provide Digital Infrastructure and Funding to Schools is allocated EUR 64 million while the Digital Transformation in Enterprise is allocated EUR 85 million. The later project outlines the digital transformation of the workspace in which it will be important to highlight the potential of digital technology and assistive devices for employees according to the National Remote Working Strategy. The Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP) is allocated EUR 27 million while the SOLAS Green Skills Action

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[39] European Social Fund in Ireland, 2014-2020, List of Operations, June 2020, available at: https://eufunds.ie/european-social-fund/list-of-operations/.

[40] https://eufunds.ie/european-social-fund/operational-programmes/esf-2021-2027/.

[41] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en#national-recovery-and-resilience-plans pp. 18-22.

Programme is allocated EUR 114 million both of which are of important links for case officers and case management workers to highlight as areas of possible transition for persons with disabilities seeking employment. Universal design and accessibility should be key within these new initiatives.

7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database[42] and statistical reports.[43]

Unless specified, the summary statistics are drawn from the most recent EU-SILC data available to researchers from Eurostat. The EU-SILC sample includes people living in private households and does not include people living in institutions (congregative households). The sampling methods vary somewhat in each country.

The proxy used to identify people with disabilities (impairments) is whether 'for at least the past 6 months' the respondent reports that they have been 'limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do'.[44]

Table 1: Self-reported 'activity limitations' as a proxy for impairment/disability (2019)

	Age 65+	Age 16-64	Women	Men	Limited to some extent	Strongly limited	All limited	Not limited
EU27 average	47,6	16,8	26,2	21,9	17,2	6,9	24,1	75,9
National average	32,0	12,8	16,7	16,0	11,2	5,1	16,4	83,6
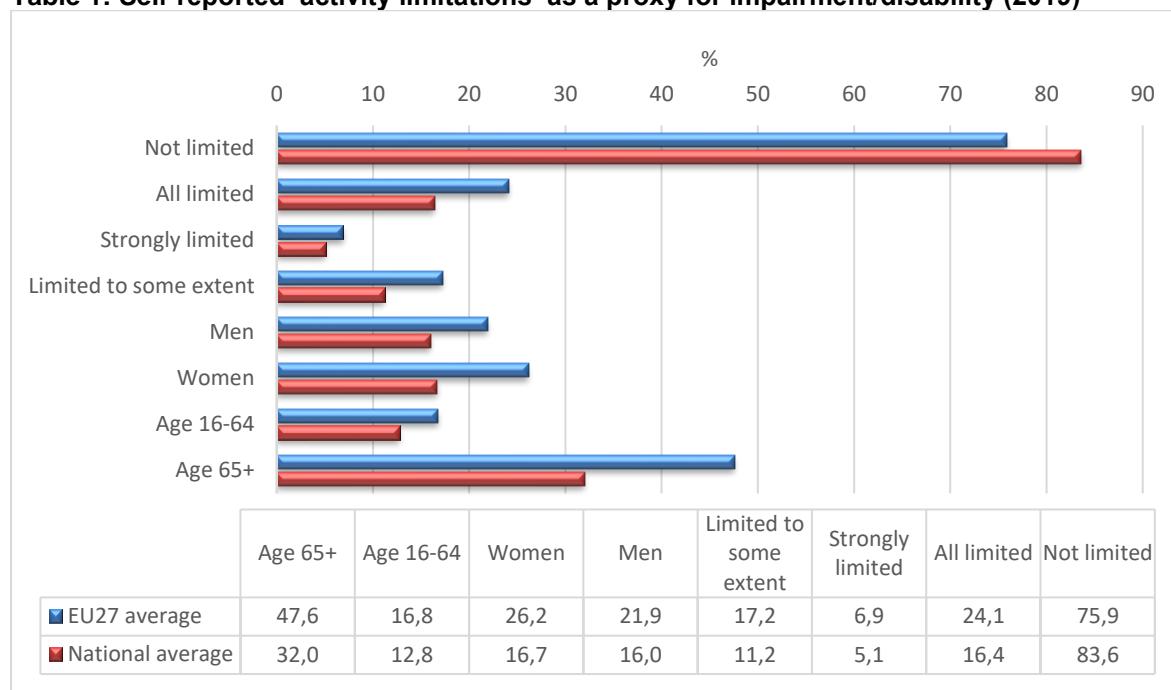
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1.

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate 'disability' equality gaps and trends relevant to the analytical chapters – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do not report 'activity limitations'.[45] National estimates for Ireland are compared with EU27

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[42] Eurostat health Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database.

[43] Eurostat (2019) *Disability Statistics,* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

[44] The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM).

[45] This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at: http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators.

mean averages for the most recent year.[46] Fewer people reported limitations in Ireland than the EU average. There are missing years of historical data in 2010 and 2011.

7.1   Data relevant to disability and the labour market

**Table 2: EU and Ireland employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**

	No disability	Some disability	Severe disability	Disabled women	Disabled men	Non-disabled women	Non-disabled men	Disabled total
EU27 average	75,6	58,8	29,8	49,0	53,9	69,3	82,0	51,3
National average	76,5	38,9	17,7	26,5	38,8	71,5	81,7	32,6
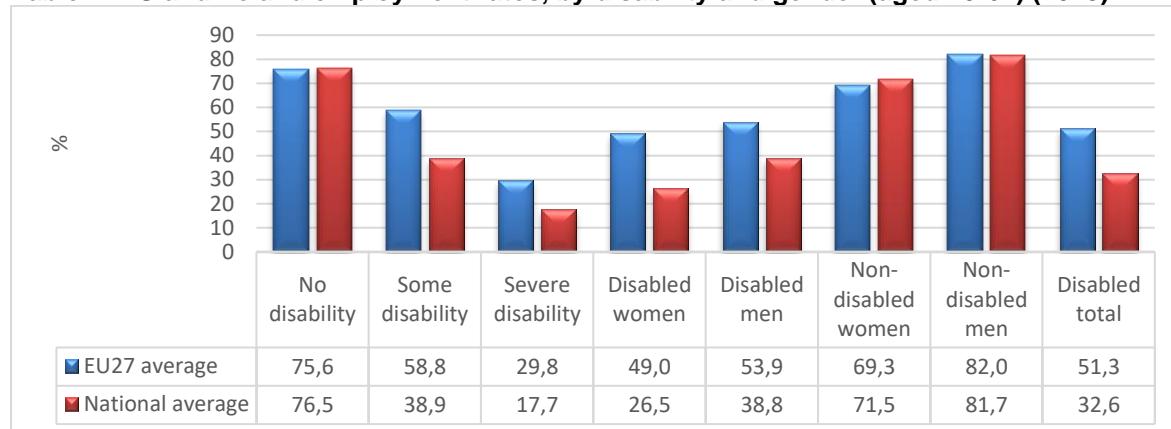
Table 3: Employment rates in Ireland, by disability and age group (2019)

	age 16-24*	age 25-34	age 35-44	age 45-54	age 55-64
Disabled	19,6	35,1	42,7	38,9	22,1
Non-disabled	34,9	81,2	82,5	82,0	67,0
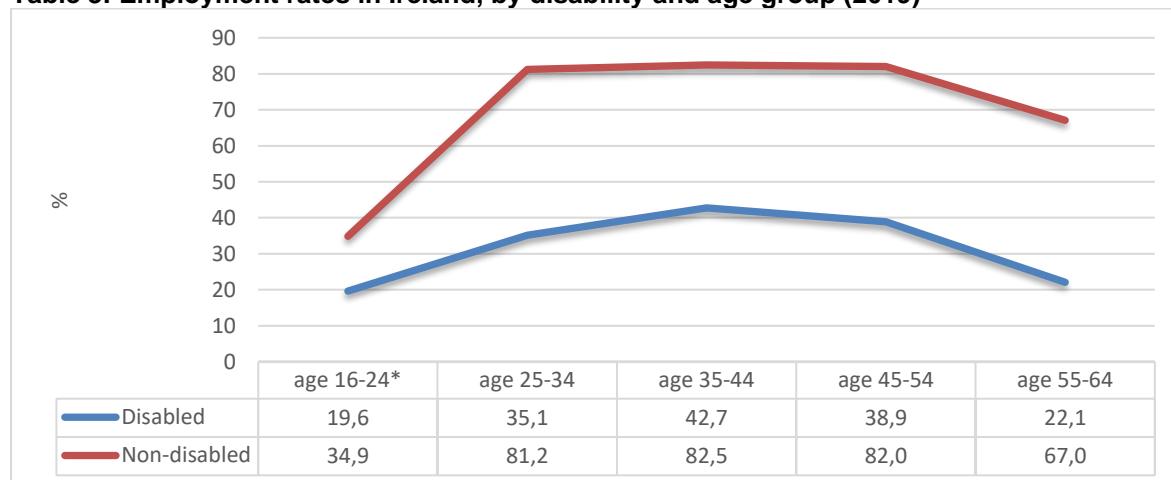
Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
National (disabled)	33,1	29,0	27,6	27,1	27,9	26,5	28,3	29,1	26,2	32,2	37,3	32,6
National (non-disabled)	70,9	65,1	62,3	61,9	63,0	64,1	67,2	70,4	71,3	74,3	77,6	76,5
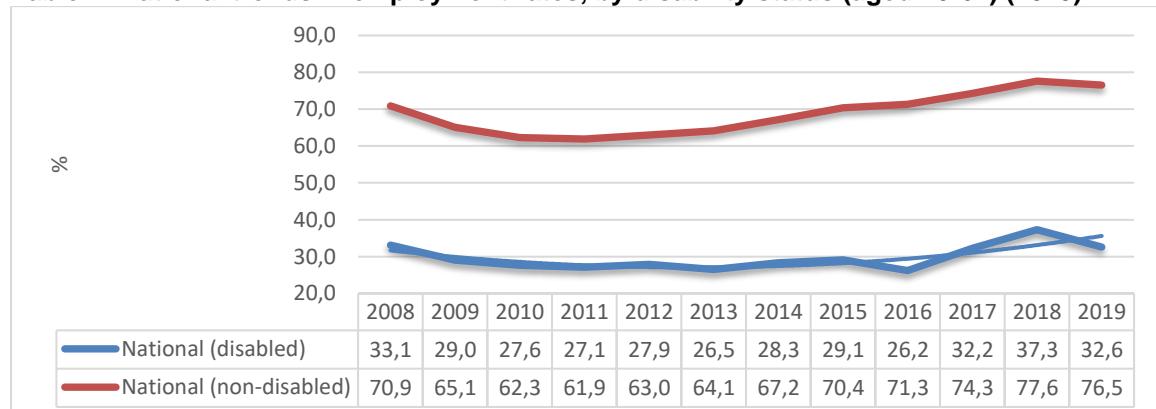
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

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[46]   The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU changes the EU average. Averages were also affected in 2015 by a discontinuity in the German disability data due to a definitional change.

7.1.1 Unemployment

**Table 5: Unemployment rates by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)**

%	Disabled women	Disabled men	Non-disabled women	Non-disabled men	Disabled total	Non-disabled total
■ EU27 average	17,0	17,6	9,1	7,6	17,3	8,3
■ National average	19,8	20,3	6,3	8,8	20,1	7,7
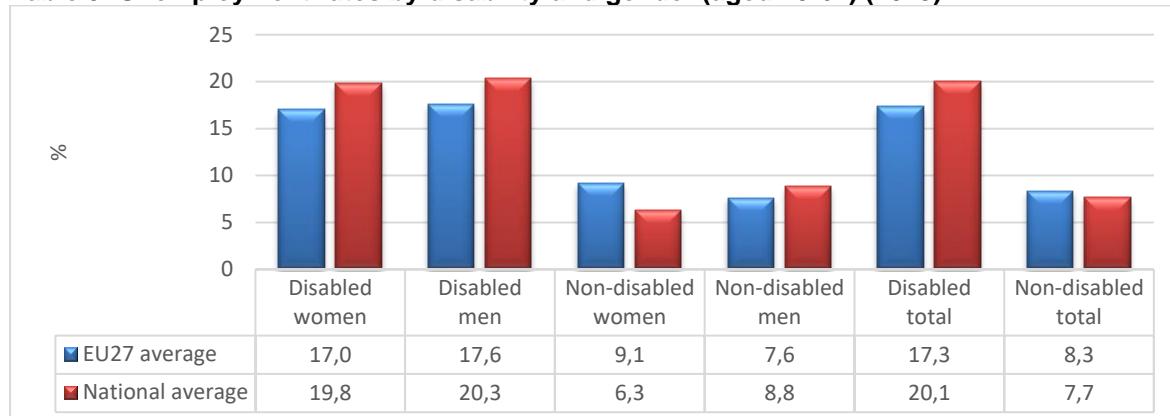
Table 6: Unemployment rates in Ireland, by disability and age group (2019)

%	age 16-24	age 25-34	age 35-44	age 45-54	age 55-64
— Disabled	36,7	15,7	16,1	20,4	23,5
— Non-disabled	18,0	8,0	6,1	5,3	8,0
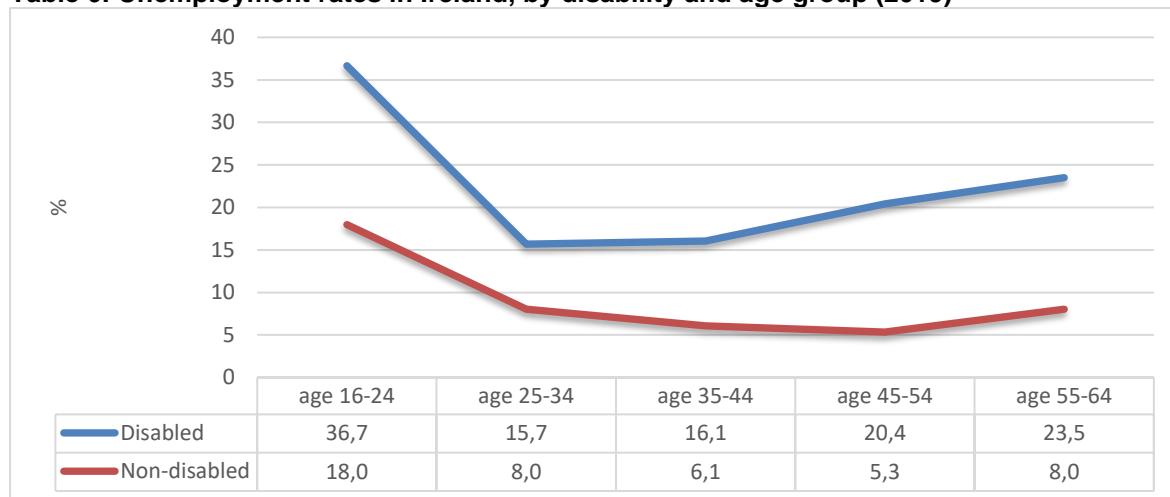
Table 7: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)

%	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
— National (disabled)	20,2	26,4			32,0	35,1	31,7	28,1	32,0	26,1	22,1	20,1
— National (non-disabled)	9,9	15,3			19,4	18,2	15,2	11,4	10,5	9,8	7,0	7,7
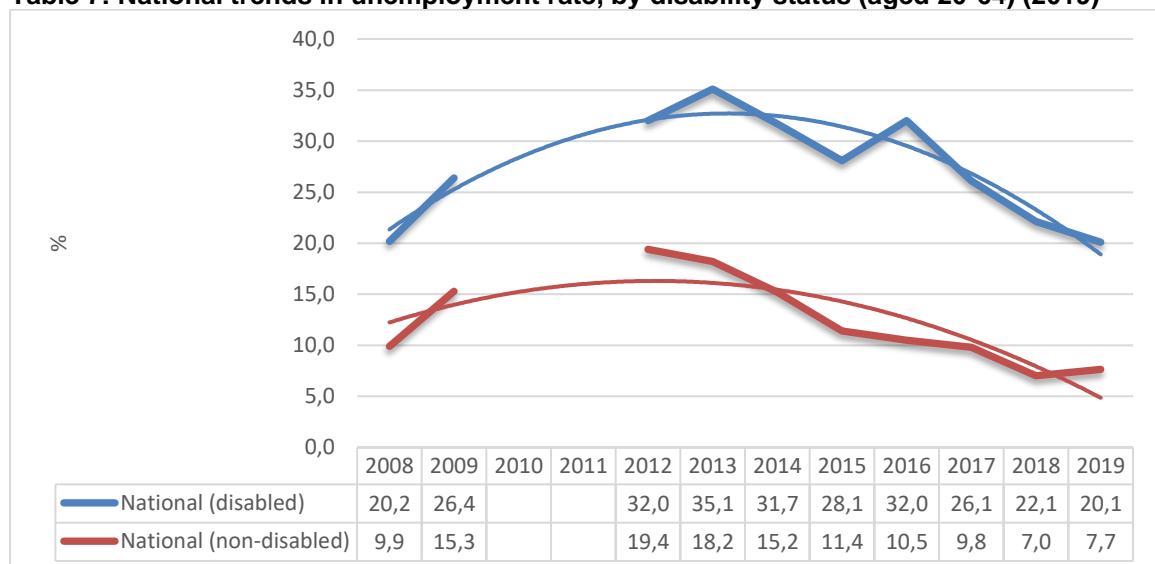
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

7.1.2 Economic activity

Table 8: Activity rates in Ireland, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)

	Disabled women	Disabled men	Non-disabled women	Non-disabled men	Disabled total	Non-disabled total
■ EU27 average	59,1	65,4	76,2	88,8	62,0	82,5
■ National average	33,0	48,7	76,3	89,6	40,8	82,8
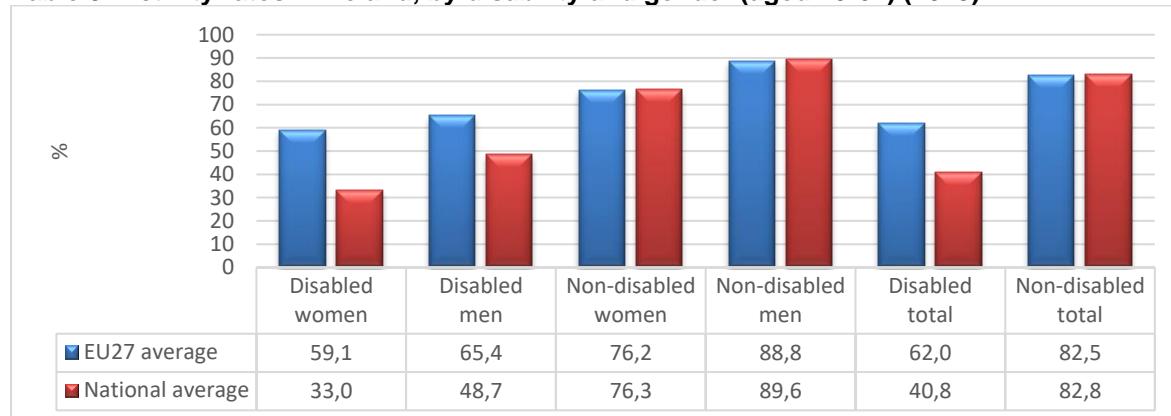
Table 9: Activity rates in Ireland, by age group (2019)

	age 16-24	age 25-34	age 35-44	age 45-54	age 55-64
—— Disabled	31,0	41,7	50,9	48,9	28,8
—— Non-disabled	42,5	88,3	87,8	86,7	72,9
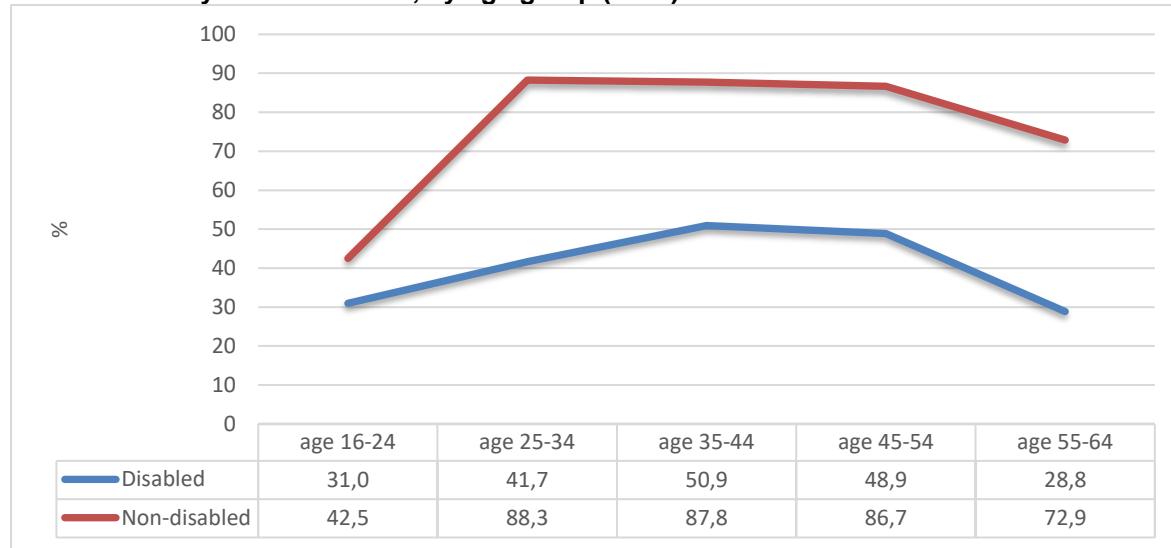
Table 10: Trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
—— National (disabled)	41,5	39,5			41,1	40,7	41,5	40,5	38,5	43,5	47,9	40,8
—— National (non-disabled)	78,7	76,8			78,2	78,3	79,3	79,4	79,7	82,4	83,5	82,8
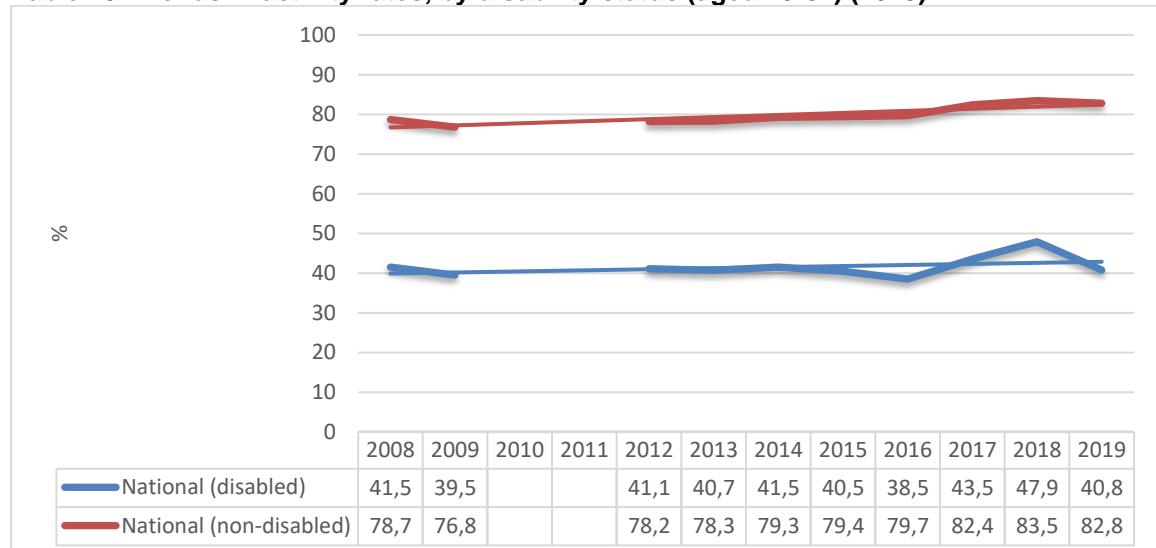
*Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).*

7.1.3   Alternative sources of labour market data in Ireland

Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Ireland were disaggregated from ad modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.[47]

Nationally, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) maintains data through the census, however, data from the 2020 census is not yet available (see our country fiche for the previous Semester 2020-21). The most recent data on disability and labour force participation in Ireland is from the National Census in 2016.[48]

Figure A: Labour force participation by gender and disability (age 15+), in 2016

Figure 2.5 Labour force participation rate for persons aged 15 and over classified by sex, 2016

- Female participation rate (Persons with disability)
- Female participation rate (Total population)
- Male participation rate (Persons with disability)
- Male participation rate (Total population)
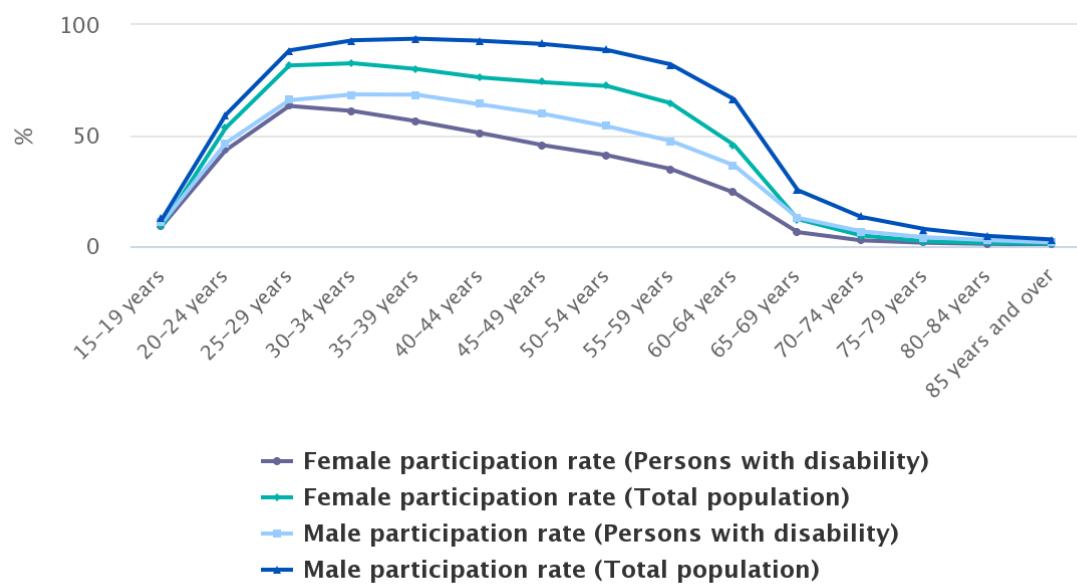
Source: CSO Ireland

Source: Central Statistics Office.[49]

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[47]   Eurostat Health Database: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database.
[48]   Census Data 2016, http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2016resultsprofile9-healthdisabilityandcarers/.
[49]   CSO statistical summary release, *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers*, https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9chs/.

7.2 EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2019)

Table 11: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-59)

	Disabled - low work intensity	Non-disabled - low work intensity	Disabled - low income	Non-disabled - low income	Disabled - materially deprived	Non-disabled - materially deprived
EU27 average	22,6	7,1	23,7	15,3	11,0	5,1
National average	38,8	9,9	23,2	9,9	14,9	4,2
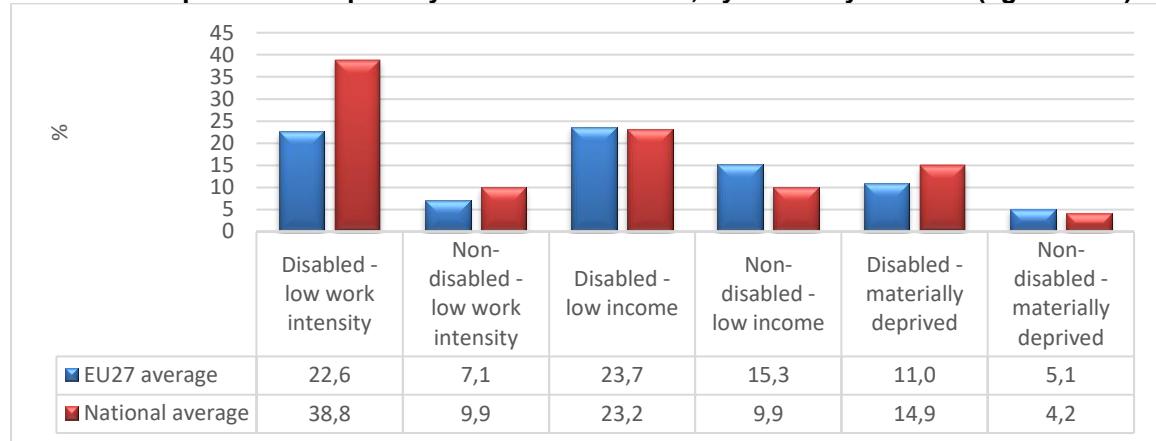
Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)

	No disability	Some disability	Severe disability	Disabled women	Disabled men	Non-disabled women	Non-disabled men
EU27 average	19,1	26,1	34,7	29,4	27,5	20,1	18,1
National average	16,4	35,9	42,2	39,2	36,4	18,3	14,3
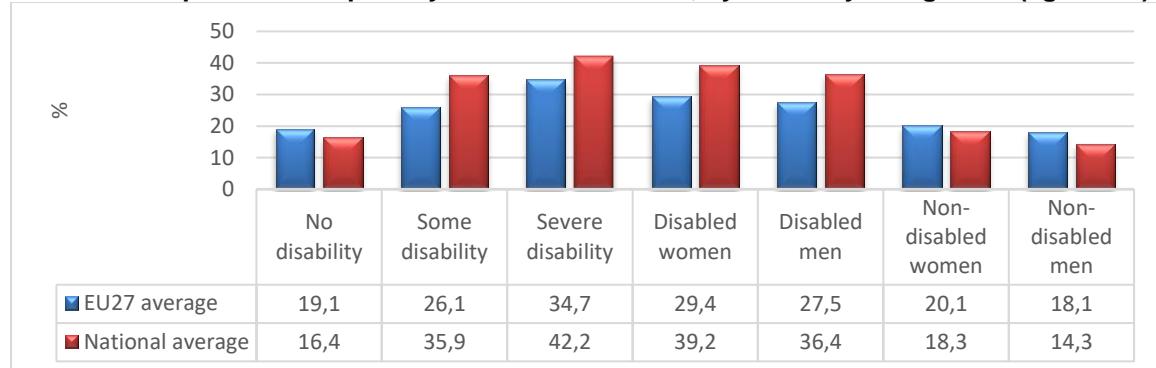
Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)

|	Disabled (16-64)	Non-disabled (16-64)	Disabled (65+)	Non-disabled (65+)
EU27 average	34,6	19,9	21,7	15,0
National average	44,1	16,4	26,8	15,9
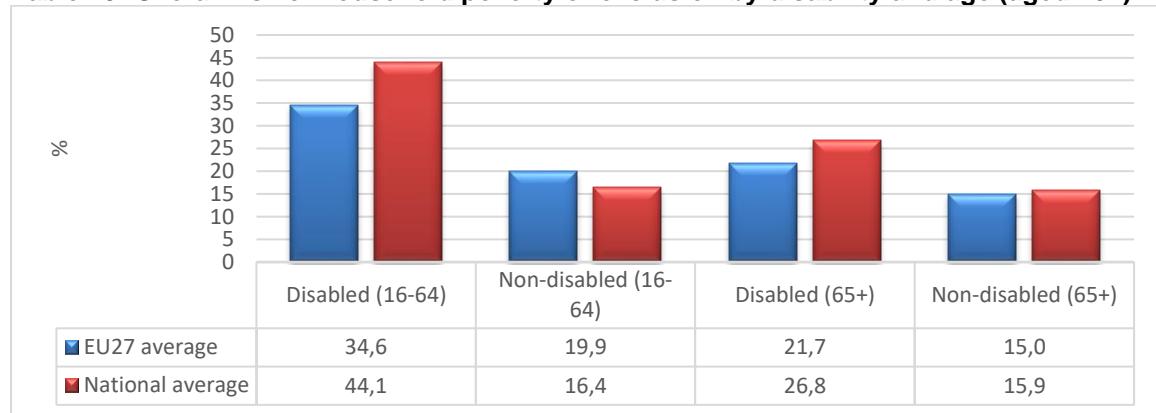
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and previous UDB).

Table 14: Trends in the risk of poverty after social transfers, by disability and age group

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Disabled (16-64)	22,0	19,5	22,6	23,4	24,0	26,2	32,1	28,1	31,7	23,2
Non-disabled (16-64)	13,6	14,8	15,6	14,9	16,2	15,0	14,2	13,9	11,4	9,9
Disabled (65+)	9,8	12,1	16,0	11,6	12,6	15,5	16,5	17,7	23,3	24,1
Non-disabled (65+)	9,9	10,3	10,9	10,0	10,8	12,2	16,7	13,5	18,6	15,3
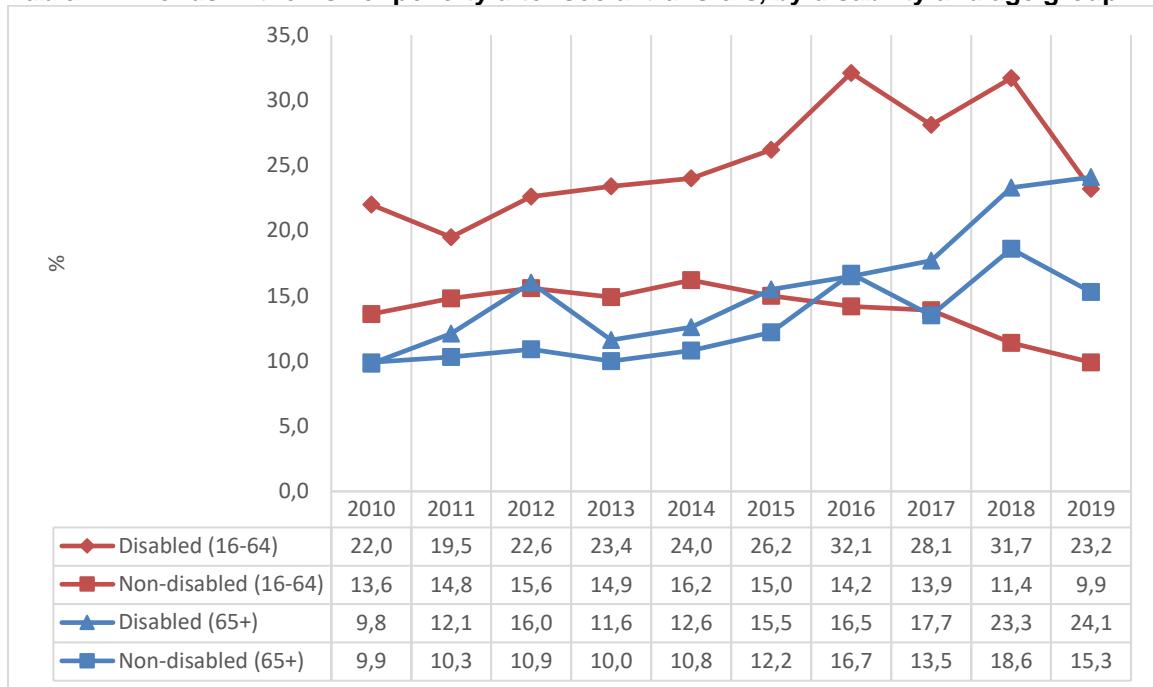
Source: Eurostat Health Database [hlth_dpe020] - People at risk of poverty.
Note: this table shows national trends in financial poverty risk, rather than the general AROPE indicator (which is not as comparable between age groups due to the effect of paid employment); the survey does not distinguish 'activity limitation' for children under 16.

Table 15: Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination, 3-year average (%, aged 16+)

	No disability	Some disability	Severe disability	Disabled total
EU27 average	0,9	3,4	5,4	4,0
National average	1,6	5,0	7,6	5,8
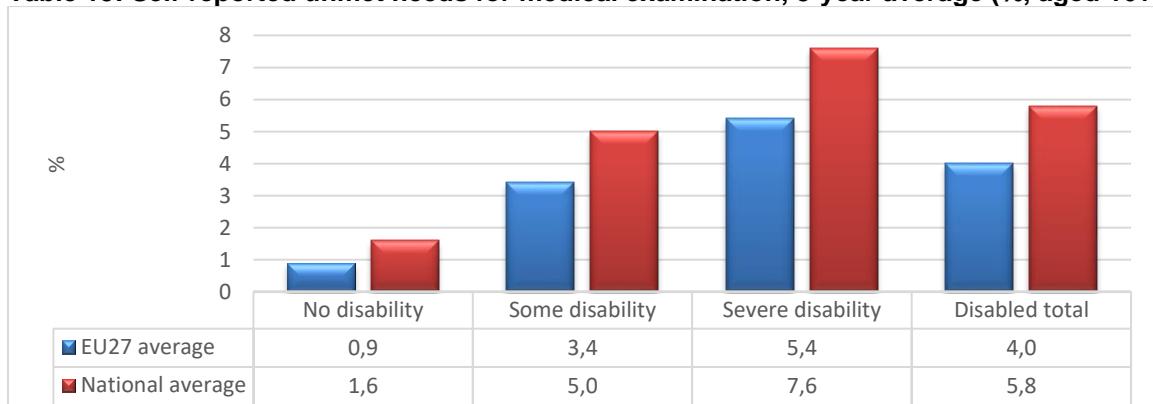
Source: Eurostat Health Database [hlth_dh030] – 'Too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list'.
Note: due to large variations an average of three years is indicated. EU mean averages are also skewed by high values in a minority of countries within disability groups but median averages for the total disability and no disability groups in 2019 are consistent with the 3-year mean values.

## 7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or health care data in Ireland

The EU-SILC data provides a comprehensive and reliable source concerning poverty or social exclusion rates. In addition to the summary tables presented so far, the Eurostat disability database also contains breakdowns concerning disability and poverty before and after social transfers, as well as in-work-poverty.[50]

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[50] Eurostat Health Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database.

Healthy Ireland Survey offers additional information in relation to disability and activity, everyday limitations and caring responsibilities.[51]

7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

Table 24: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)[52]

%	Disabled young people (18-24)*	Non-disabled (18-24)	Disabled young people (18-29)	Non-disabled (18-29)
■ EU27 average	20,3	9,8	21,3	10,9
■ National average	28,3	3,2	21,3	3,8
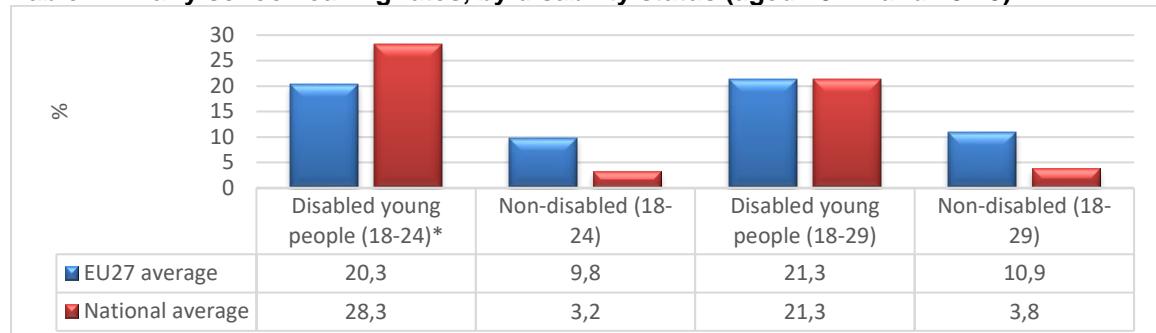
Note: there were fewer than 50 observations in the narrow age band for the disability group.

Table 25: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)

%	Disabled young people (30-34)*	Non-disabled (30-34)	Disabled young people (30-39)	Non-disabled (30-39)
■ EU27 average	29,4	43,8	30,4	41,7
■ National average	30,4	69,8	44,9	68,4
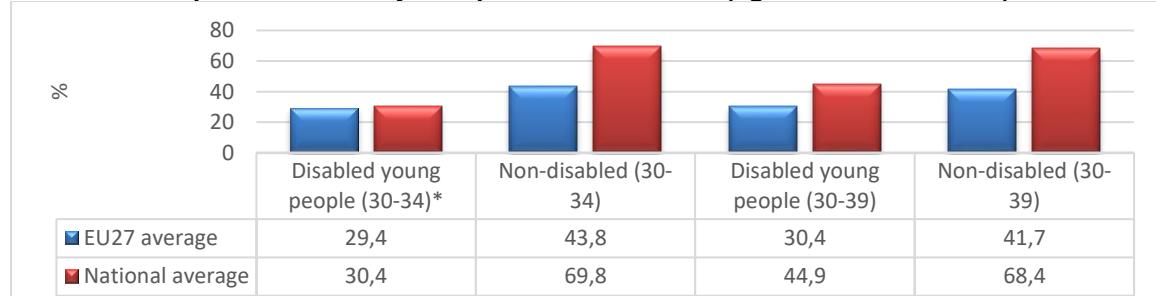
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).
Note: Confidence intervals for the disability group are large and reliability low (due to the small sample size in the target age group). An average of several years may be needed to establish trends or to compare breakdowns by gender.
Note: there were fewer than 50 observations in the narrow age band for the disability group.

7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Ireland

Some administrative data is also provided in the European Agency's Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE), concerning the population of enrolled students identified with special educational needs in Ireland.[53]

The Solas Skills and Labour Market Research Unit[54] provide data on the number of persons with disabilities participating in further education and training in Ireland.

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[51] Department of Health (2019) Healthy Ireland Summary Report, available at: https://assets.gov.ie/41141/e5d6fea3a59a4720b081893e11fe299e.pdf.

[52] There was a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014 although some Member States continued to use the older definition after this time.

[53] European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, *Statistics on Inclusive Education*, https://www.european-agency.org/data/data-tables-background-information.

[54] SOLAS (2020) FET in Numbers 2019. Learners with Disabilities, https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/a4dcab3b27/disabilities-fet-report-2019.pdf.