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New report reveals minority community perceptions of racial discrimination by An Garda Síochána

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) have today launched a report which details the perceptions and experiences of racial discrimination in Ireland of people from ethnic minority communities when interacting with members of An Garda Síochána.

'Policing and Racial Discrimination in Ireland: A Community and Rights Perspective' outlines findings from a series of workshops¹ held with members of ethnic minority communities. While each participant had their own unique experiences, and experiences were uneven, participants were critical overall where their perception was of unfair treatment of members of racialised groups by Gardaí.

Participants detailed some positive experiences with Gardaí, but also shared stressful and traumatic interactions and experiences. Overall, their experiences have led them to feel unsupported, unprotected and unrepresented by Gardaí.

Out of 36 participants, 30 (83%) expressed a fear of being racially profiled or discriminated against by Gardaí. 11 participants (31%) specifically mentioned issues around being Black and their belief that Gardaí assume that Black people cannot be Irish. Participants also noted that there is a lack of trust between minority communities and An Garda Síochána. Asked if they believed Gardaí treated members of racialised groups the same as the wider white, settled Irish population, the vast majority (more than 80% in all workshops) felt they received differential treatment.

Speaking today, Shane O'Curry, Director of INAR, said:

"Relations between police services and the communities they serve are paramount for good policing in any society. The findings of this study indicate an unevenness in the application of good practice, as well as gaps in policy and practice. This leaves a poor impression on communities who often also find themselves marginalised in other ways. We must work to create the conditions where minorities have full confidence in An Garda Síochána. It is in all of our interests."

¹ 36 people took part in workshops organised by independent consultancy Diversity Matters in 2022. In-person workshops were held in Dublin, Cork and Galway with an online workshop also organised. Participants were also facilitated to take part by responding to a written questionnaire (on the phone or by videoconferencing) if they felt uncomfortable attending a workshop

Liam Herrick, Executive Director of ICCL, said:

“This report raises significant questions for An Garda Síochána in terms of how the organisation and its members are perceived by minority communities in Ireland. It is imperative that An Garda Síochána now work to improve relations with and experiences and perceptions of minoritised communities. As recommended by the report, An Garda Síochána should improve diversity within the force and also develop its expertise, policies and training on racial profiling to tackle unconscious bias and improve cross-cultural communication and intercultural understanding.

An Garda Síochána serves all the people of Ireland. Its members should reflect the diversity of the Irish population and be trained, equipped and supported to develop strong relationships across all Irish communities.”

The report’s findings align with the limited existing research in the area of racial profiling in Ireland by human rights bodies such as the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency and the UN Human Rights Committee. This underscores the need for more in-depth and detailed research from State and non-State bodies into the experiences of minoritised communities with the criminal justice system generally, and for racial profiling specifically.

The report makes 18 recommendations, including six to Government, one to the Policing Authority and 11 to An Garda Síochána. Key recommendations include:

- That Government immediately mandate the collection of disaggregated data pertaining to race, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability across the entire Irish criminal justice system, including in all policing operations, the courts and crime statistics, to properly understand how racial and ethnic minorities are treated within the justice system;
- That Government meaningfully implement Action 1.5 of the National Action Plan Against Racism to eliminate any type of policing practice that targets specific racial and ethnic minority groups by 2025;
- That An Garda Síochána develop and publish a new Garda policy on addressing racial profiling and how to prevent, prohibit and monitor it, and also develop and deliver specific training on racial profiling that addresses, amongst other things, unconscious bias, cross-cultural communication and intercultural understanding;
- That An Garda Síochána prioritise diversity in recruitment and take steps to incorporate equality, diversity and inclusion best practice in recruitment practices, to ensure that the Garda reflects the diversity of Irish society, including intersectional identities;
- That the Policing Authority monitor An Garda Síochána’s compliance with their human rights obligations on non-discrimination, as well as Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 to promote equality and prevent racial discrimination when carrying out their functions.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The full report is available to download on INAR's website:

<https://inar.ie/policing-and-racial-discrimination-in-ireland-a-community-and-rights-perspective/>

This research was conducted by independent consultancy Diversity Matters, on behalf of ICCL and INAR.

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About ICCL

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) is Ireland's oldest independent human rights campaigning organisation. We monitor, educate and campaign to secure human rights for everyone in Ireland.

About INAR

The Irish Network Against Racism ([INAR](#)) who coordinate a network of over 180 civil society organisations in Ireland, have pioneered the [iReport.ie](#) racist incident reporting system since 2013, logging thousands of hate crimes and racist incidents, and producing from their data cutting edge reports and policy submissions to national and international reporting bodies, government and media. Its complete periodic reports on racism can be found [here](#).