

**BLACK AFRICAN WOMEN  
in the  
IRISH LABOUR MARKET**

March 2007



**Research by  
Florence M. Hegarty  
for AkiDWA**



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# 1. Executive summary

This study explores the experiences of migrant African women in Ireland accessing and participating in the labour market. This small-scale study conducted on behalf of AkiDwA – the African Women’s Network – shows that while migrant African women tend to be highly educated, they are often over-qualified for the jobs they can access. The study shows that many migrant women experience barriers to accessing the labour market and face discrimination at work, despite being aware of Ireland’s equality legislation.

Respondents, who came from nine African countries, were between 18 and 45 years old; 49% were married and 55% had children. 46% had been in Ireland 4-6 years, and 67% had legal residency status as mothers of Irish citizen children, spouses of Irish, Women with refugee status or with leave to remain.

The study’s main findings are:

## 1.1 Personal profile:

- 91% of the respondents rated their English language skills as good, very good or excellent
- the majority of the respondents had college education and 76% had professional qualifications prior to coming to Ireland
- most of the respondents had good, very good or excellent computer skills
- 37% of the respondents had their qualifications recognised in Ireland; 30% did not have recognition for their qualifications
- 70% of the respondents were unemployed at the time of the study; but only 27% were receiving unemployment benefit

## 1.2 Experience of accessing work:

- the main barriers to accessing employment were lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, lack of work experience in Ireland, lack of childcare, lack of Irish references, multiple discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and religion, and poor interview skills
- 70% of the respondents experienced barriers to accessing employment
- of those employed, 57% indicated their jobs did not match their skills

- 52% of the respondents felt discriminated against while looking for work; 75% felt discriminated against because of race/colour/nationality; 25% felt specifically discriminated against as African women
- 27% sent 10-15 job applications; 31% attended 5-10 interviews
- 30% of the respondents did not receive any job offers; 34% received 1-5 job offers

## 1.3 Workplace experience:

Respondents reported:

- unequal treatment (asked to do work other employees were not asked to do);
- lack of promotion/pay rise; absence of contracts, job description or pay slips;
- threats of sacking;
- exploitation; overwork;
- unfair dismissal;
- not made part of decision making.
- Finally, respondents reported that their grievances regarding racial discrimination by work colleagues or clients were not taken seriously by supervisors, even though they were aware of their rights under the Irish equality legislation.

## 2. Research outline

### 2.1 Background of the Study:

AkiDwA is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. It was established in 2001 with the aim of responding to the existing and changing needs of migrant women in Ireland. While there are no statistics to show how many migrant women live in Ireland, however AkiDwA to date has worked with over 2250 women living in 22 locations in Ireland. Out of 16,693 Parents of Irish citizen children granted leave to remain in Ireland in early 2006, 9,457 were women.

Like all other women, many migrant women experience barriers to accessing and participating in the labour market. As a migrant led organisation representing black and ethnic minority women and one of the key organisations involved in Anti Racist Work Place Week 2006, AkiDwA submitted a proposal to research black and ethnic minority women's experiences of accessing and participating in the labour market to the Equality Authority.

### 2.2 Objective:

The objective of the research is to highlight the experiences of African migrant women in accessing and participating in the labour market in Ireland. Specifically the research aims to qualify, for historical and policy development purposes, the situation of differing categories of migrant African women living in Ireland.

### 2.3. Methodology:

The experiences of African migrant women in accessing and participating in the labour market in Ireland were analysed by using a literature review, documentary analysis, questionnaires, focus group and individual interviews.

### 2.4. Research Findings:

Using the questionnaire and interview data, research findings are presented in order to highlight the specific situation and experiences of Black African women in accessing and participating in the labour market in Ireland

## 3. Introduction

### 3.1 Background of AkiDwA

AkiDwA is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. It was established in 2001 with the aim of responding to the existing and changing needs of migrant women in Ireland.

AkiDwA's work focuses on development and human rights issues based on a gender perspective. Its mission is to promote equality for Africa and minority ethnic women living in Ireland in order to ensure positive change and social justice.

Fundamental to AkiDwA's work is the belief that Women's Rights are Human Rights. The organisation recognises that African women face particular barriers to their empowerment. The following human rights underpin the work of the organisation:

- To be free from racism, discrimination and stereotyping
- To be valued for the full diversity of their situation and conditions
- The right to be respected as equals in Irish society
- The right to live free from abuse personally, socially and politically
- To live free from violence within relationships
- To determine one's own needs and the responses to these needs
- To have an equal voice in all areas of life
- To have the right to education
- To have the right to work
- To have the right to be healthy
- To have the right to be confident and happy

### 3.2 Achievements:

AkiDwA has voiced and represented issues affecting migrant women at regional and national level. In five years of its existence AkiDwA:

- Has made four submission papers, two to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and two to the Oireachtas Committee on Women's Rights and Justice
- Has held six successful cultural events in Dublin
- Has delivered capacity building training to 105 migrant women
- Has given training to 57 Gardaí on cultural diversity and inter-culturalism

- Has organised and held five national conferences in Dublin and three regional seminars in three counties
- Has held five round table discussions with 42 service providers on issues that relate to migrant women.
- Has visited and facilitated 25 groups of migrant women around the country
- Has made regular visits to African women in prison, reception centres and hospitals
- Has made over 65 presentations focusing on the needs of African/migrant women in Ireland to service providers, NGOs and Government bodies.
- Has provided information and support to over 500 women in Ireland
- Has worked and continues to work and collaborate with other organisations such as the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC), Access Ireland, the Irish Refugee Council, Cairde, Amnesty International, Banulacht, An Garda Síochána, The Irish Council of Civil Liberties (ICCL), Integrating Ireland, The Immigrant Council of Ireland, The Equality Authority, Africa Centre and Dublin Inner City Partnership.
- Has published Herstory, a collection of ten migration stories of African women.

### 3.4 Aim and scope of the Research:

The report highlights the outcome of a small-scale study of the specific situations and experiences of 33 African women migrant from nine African countries. It suggests areas for further action by the social partners, the Equality Authority and government departments. It specifically covers only black African women living in Ireland in the following categories, all currently permitted to work in Ireland:

- a) Mothers of Irish citizen children,
- b) Spouses of Irish
- c) Women with refugee status or with leave to remain on humanitarian grounds.

### 3.5 The countries represented by the respondents are:

- Ghana
- Kenya
- Nigeria
- Somalia
- South Africa
- Gambia
- Sudan
- Eritrea
- Uganda

### 3.6 Research Questions:

The study seeks to answer two key questions and outline the current issues facing African migrant women, which require policy interventions in order to improve the situation for various categories of migrant women in accessing, participating in and progressing within the labour market in Ireland. To shape policy in this area the study asked two main questions:

1. What are the experiences to date of various categories of migrant women in accessing the labour market in Ireland?
2. What are the experiences of various categories of migrant women of participating in and attempting to progress within the labour market after accessing work.

## 4. Research methodology

The interviewees were contacted by telephone and meetings were arranged for the interviews. The researcher travelled at different dates to the various locations at the agreed time to carry out the interviews.

A variety of methods were used to highlight the specific experiences of African migrant women: They include:

- Face-to-face interviews, based on structured and semi-structured and questionnaires (lasting between 1.5 and 2 hours) were held with 15 women.
- Structured questionnaires were sent to 11 women and were followed up by telephone and email.
- A focus group with a group of five women was held using semi structured questionnaires.

The focus group was made up of members of Africa Alliance Women Group of Galway. The interviews took place initially at the Galway Methodist/Presbyterian Church where the group hold its meetings. The interview took the form of discussion where general questions related to accessing work were asked. The questions asked aimed to ascertain whether the women were employed, whether they had experienced difficulties in accessing work, and what they were doing at the time. Those not working were asked what they were doing about it. Some of the responses from this group were:

“I’m a qualified teacher but the only work I ever got here in Ireland was cleaning, but currently I am looking for another one because that has ended”

“I had to train as a Care Assistant even if I am a development worker in order to get a job here. I am currently waiting to hear from the prospective employer”

“I have done many courses including Child Care EMERGE in order to start my own business, I have registered Childcare business but it is yet to take off and it needs capital”

“I am a qualified caterer, but I have been looking for a job without success”

The women in the focus group were later individually interviewed using the structured questionnaires and the results were analysed using the appropriate software programme.

## 5. Migration in Ireland: an overview

In 1996 Ireland reached its ‘immigration turning point’ and has been a country of in-migration ever since, net migration going from minus 1,900 in 1995 to 31,600 in 2004. According to CSO figures, by April 2005 the number of people who do not describe themselves as ‘Irish’ living in the Republic of Ireland approached 400,000, or 10 per cent of the population, up from 240,000 in the 2002 census – this represents an increase of 40 per cent. Assuming in-migration continues to grow, the CSO predicts the proportion of foreign-born nationals should increase to 18 per cent, or one million, by 2030. 100,000 people migrated to Ireland between December 2004 and December 2005 from the new EU accession countries – headed by Poland and Lithuania – fuelling the five per cent increase in the number of people employed over the year – a figure unknown in the global economy. According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), only 13 per cent of immigrants to Ireland in 2004 were from ‘the rest of the world’ – most in-migrants were returning Irish people, UK citizens and members of the EU accession states (Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 40, see table below).

**Table 5.1 - immigration into Ireland by nationality/ country of origin 2004**

Nationality/origin	Number	%
Irish	19,000	27
UK	6,900	10
Polish	11,900	17
Lithuanian	6,300	9
Other EU accession countries	8,200	12
Rest of EU	7,100	10
USA	1,600	2
Rest of the world	9,000	13

Source: CSO, cited *The Irish Times*, 15 Sept 2005

Figures for migrant workers can be obtained by analysing data from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) which documents the number of work permits (which do not cover statistics of the women studied for this report, who are entitled to work in Ireland). Table 2 documents the DETE figures of permits issues in 2003, 2004, and 2005 and shows that the number of permits declined after the accession of ten new states to the EU:

**Table 5.2: Permits issued - Ireland: 2003, 2004, 2005**

	New	Renewal	Group	Refused	Issued
2003	21,965	25,039	547	1,838	47,551
2004	10,020	23,346	801	1,486	34,067
2005	7,354	18,970	812	1,215	27,136

Source, DETE

Furthermore, the main countries providing migrant workers to Ireland included only one African country, South Africa (Lentin and McVeigh 2006: 67).

## 6. Women and labour migration to Ireland: an overview

The CSO also provides a gender breakdown, according to which between 2000 and 2005, the numbers of men and women migrants were more or less equal, even though there are differences in specific categories as the table below shows.

**Table 6.3: Estimated migration classified by sex and country of origin, 2000-2005/ in 000**

Year	UK	Rest of EU15	EU10	USA	Rest of world	Total	Net migration
<b>M</b>							
2000	10.4	4.9	–	2.8	8.1	26.2	13.1
2001	10.2	5.0	–	2.7	12.2	30.1	17.5
2002	9.3	4.6	–	2.9	14.4	31.3	18.6
2003	7.6	5.0	–	2.4	10.9	25.9	14.8
2004	6.7	6.3	–	2.6	10.5	26.1	17.0
2005	7.3	4.0	17.6	1.6	8.7	39.1	30.5
<b>F</b>							
2000	10.5	6.8	–	2.7	6.4	26.4	12.9
2001	10.4	5.4	–	4.0	9.3	29.0	15.3
2002	9.8	6.7	–	3.7	15.5	35.6	22.7
2003	6.0	4.7	–	2.3	11.7	24.6	15.0
2004	6.3	6.3	–	2.2	9.2	24.0	14.6
2005	6.4	5.0	8.6	2.8	8.2	30.9	22.9

Source: CSO, Population and migration estimates 2005.

While it is apparent that women make up a large part of the new wave of migration to Ireland, it is also becoming clear that migrant women employ a variety of resistance strategies to their racialisation by state and society. One resistance strategy is the formation of migrant networks such as AkiDwA. According to Salome Mbugua, director of AkiDwA, the main purpose of establishing networks is to make the issue of migrant women more visible in the Irish system: 'because at the moment, it's still very invisible'.

Generally women who actively participate in the labour market tend to be of child bearing age. This means that in order for this category of women to access the labour market and make a useful contribution to the Irish economy, they have to make childcare arrangements. According to National Women's Council of Ireland submission to the Ireland Rural Development National Strategy Plan (NSP) 2007 – 2013, in January 2006, Women's participation in the labour market correlates with the ages of their children. In 2005, the employment rate for women aged 20-44 was 68.6%. This rate varied from 84.3% for women with no children to 55.3% for women whose youngest child was aged 3 years and under<sup>1</sup>.

## 6.2 African women labour migrants

The African women interviewed for this study were aged between 18 and 45 years old. From discussion it was evident that the pressing issue was the barriers they experienced while trying to access and participate in the labour market. While these barriers are not specific to African women but also to other migrant women workers, black African women experience a double burden of gender and racial discrimination. According to the ESRI (Nov. 2006<sup>2</sup>), "Black Africans suffer the most, with 53% compared to Eastern Europeans and Asians. Another report by the Central Statistics Office<sup>3</sup>, testing discrimination on the basis of race/skin colour/ethnic group/nationality, found that 31% of those from Black Africans ethnic backgrounds experienced discrimination at a higher level than any of the other groups studied.

A significant number of migrant women changed or lost their jobs since they first arrived in Ireland, moving from difficult, exploitative or poor quality employment into less exploitative jobs with better employers. Sometimes the decision to make a move is not made because of economic reasons but because of the need to feel safe and free from all forms of discrimination. It is often not how much the person will make when making the change, but how one will be treated in the next job. Most women rely on their friends to access employment and to find out how the next employer treats workers. A study by Pillinger (2005<sup>4</sup>) supports this by indicating that women migrant workers talked about the use of their own networks to identify good and bad employers.

Employment promotes personal dignity and encourages people to take control of their lives. According to a government document on immigrant integration, employment "is a key factor in terms of facilitating integration. It provides a regular income and economic independence, security, status and opportunities for interaction with people from the host community and for social integration<sup>5</sup>."

Therefore, denying migrant workers the opportunity to work means denying them the opportunity not only to economic independence, security and status, but also the opportunity to integrate. The inability to access employment leaves most of the women interviewed either reliant on their spouses or having to live on social welfare payments, a lesser option.

## 6.3 Irish Equality Law

The Employment Equality Act outlaws discrimination in relation to employment on nine grounds including gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability and race. The scope of the Act is comprehensive and covers discrimination in relation to access to employment, conditions of employment, equal pay for work of equal value, promotion, training and work experience<sup>6</sup>. Such discrimination, whether by an employer, an employment agency, a trade union, a professional body, a vocational training body or by a newspaper advertising jobs in its careers and appointments pages, is outlawed. Investigation and remedies are provided for under the Act, allowing redress to be sought through the Equality Authority and the Director of Equality Investigations - the Equality Tribunal.

Even though most migrant women interviewed for this study said they understand the implications of the equality legislation, interviewees reported that it is often difficult to seek redress. One woman interviewee said that having reported abuse at work to her supervisor, she was laid off the following day. Having been racially abused, some respondents decided to leave the job without seeking redress. In some cases, African women reporting racial abuse were asked to provide evidence or witnesses, but found it difficult to do so – often the abuser feels secure to discriminate in the knowledge that the migrant does not feel secure enough to complain.

1 Central Statistics Office (2005), Women and Men in Ireland, Dublin: Stationery Office.

2 Irish Independent, Metro Edition 07.11.06

3 Central Statistics Office (2005) Quarterly National Household Survey: Equality, Quarter 4 2004 Cork: CSO

4 Jane Pillinger (2005) *Draft report on The situation and Experience of Women Migrant Workers in Ireland*. Dublin: The Equality Authority

5 Interdepartmental Working Group on Integration (2000): A Two Way Process, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform: Dublin p. 29

6 The Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004

## 7. Research findings

This section presents the survey results. The report follows the responses of the interviews. The analysis highlights the specific situation and experiences of Black African women in accessing and participating in the labour market in Ireland

The survey results are divided into the following six thematic sections based on the six topic questions used in the research:

- 7.1 Section one summarises respondents' self-rated English proficiency. This covered; ability to speak, understand, read and write English
- 7.2 Section two highlights the qualifications, education and training levels of the African Women respondents. These qualifications included computer skills, educational level and professional qualifications from country of origin.
- 7.3 Section three focuses on respondents' experiences in accessing work. It highlights the respondents current work position and if employed, whether job matches skills and qualifications. The section also explores whether the respondents have experienced any barriers that hinder them from participating or accessing of work and whether they have personally felt discriminated against while looking for work as well why they think they were discriminated against.
- 7.4 Section four deals with job application the respondents have sent by post, summarizes number of replies, job offers, number of rejections as well as job interviews attended.
- 7.5 Section five explores the respondents' workplace experiences and highlights whether the respondents have personally felt discriminated against by their employers, bosses and supervisors. Where discrimination was experienced, we show frequency and why respondents think they were discriminated against as well as the effects of discrimination in the respondents' life.
- 7.6 Section six summarises the respondents' age, marital status, number of children, nationality, areas of residence, languages spoken, length of stay in Ireland and legal status.

### 7.1 Self-Rated English Language Proficiency

Respondents were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 rated extremely poor while 5 rated excellent), regarding their ability to speak, understand, read and write English.

Table 7.1.1 gives the self rating results of the respondents' ability to speak the English language.

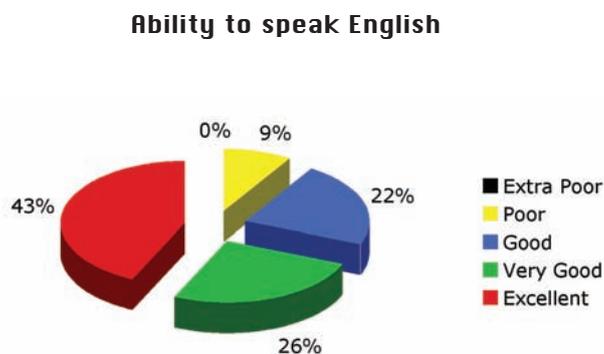


Table 7.1.1 indicates that 91% of the respondents' had good, very good or excellent ability of speaking English, with the majority (43%) being excellent, while only 9% rated themselves as poor in English speaking with no respondent who was extremely poor.

Table 7.1.2 rates the ability to understand English which scored higher than the ability to speak. Out of the 33 respondents 100% had a good understanding of the English language with a majority (19) recording ratings of excellent. Again there was no record of anyone who could not understand English.

Table 7.1.2

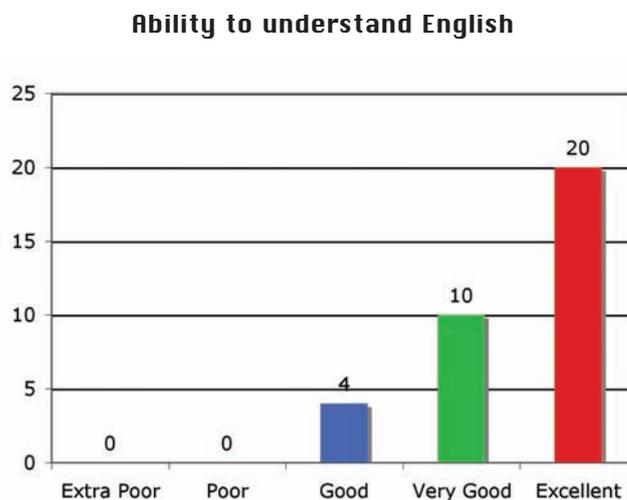


Table 7.1.3, scoring the ability to read English, indicates that only 9% scored a poor ability to read English, the majority (48%) rating 'excellent' in their ability to read English and 26% as very good.

Table 7.1.3

Ability to read English

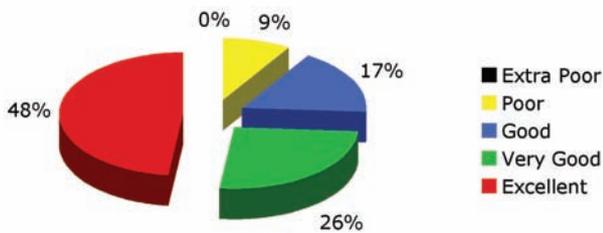
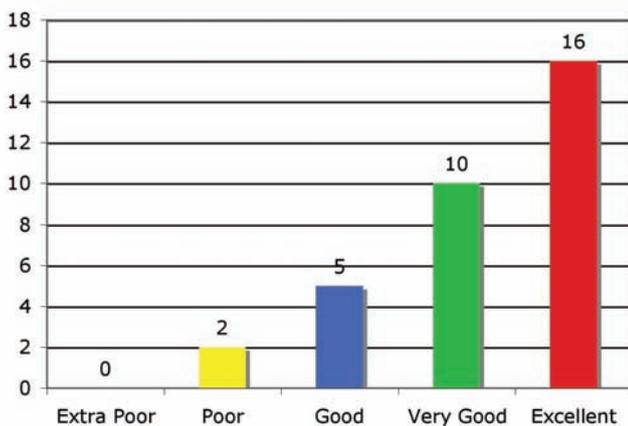


Table 7.1.4 showed English writing ability, indicating that most of the respondents scored good, very good and excellent in their ability to write in English. There was no record of any respondent who had extremely poor ability of writing English.

Table 7.1.4

Ability to write in English

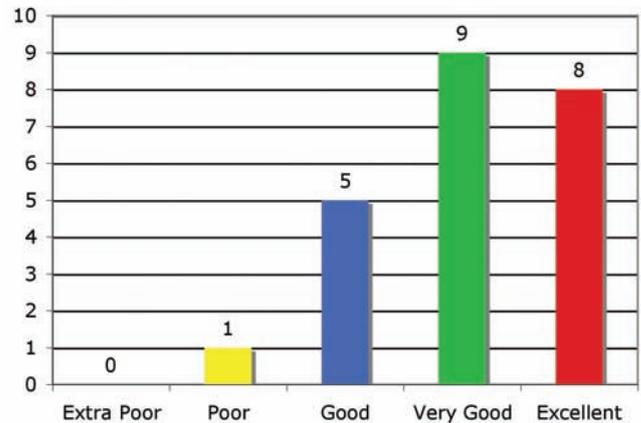


7.2 Qualification/ Education and Training

The section explores the level of the respondents' qualifications and asks whether qualifications have been recognized in Ireland and whether respondents have participated in any education or training since arriving in Ireland. The qualifications included: computer skills, educational levels and other professional qualifications necessary for accessing work. Table 7.2.1 records respondents' computer skills:

Table 7.2.1

Computer skills



Most of the respondents recorded their computer skills as good and very good, and 17 out of 33 respondents recorded their skills as very good or good, 5 indicated that their skills were poor and one as extremely poor. Where computer skills were poor or extremely poor, respondents were working to improve them by attending computer training courses.

Table 7.2.2

Education level from country of origin

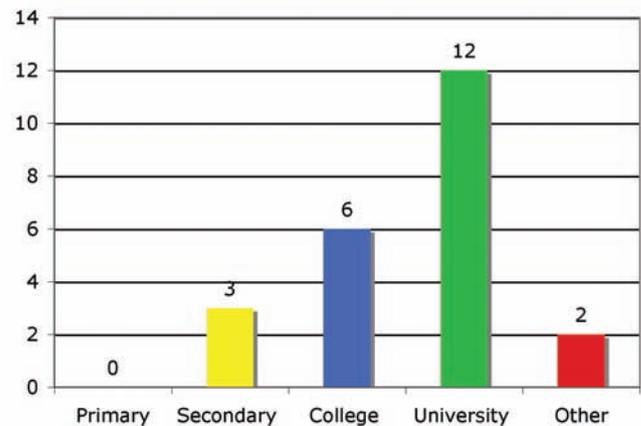
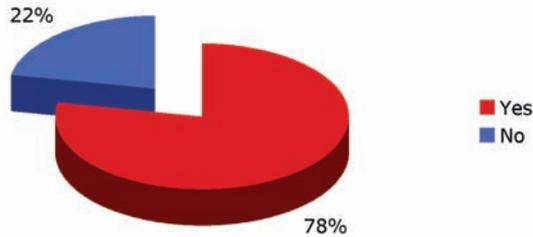


Table 7.2.2 shows educational levels acquired in respondents' country of origin. The majority of the respondents had college education from their country of origin. The majority (76%) also had professional qualifications before coming to Ireland, while the remaining 24% had no professional qualifications from their countries of origin, as indicated in table 7.2.3.

Table 7.2.3

**Professional qualification from country of origin**



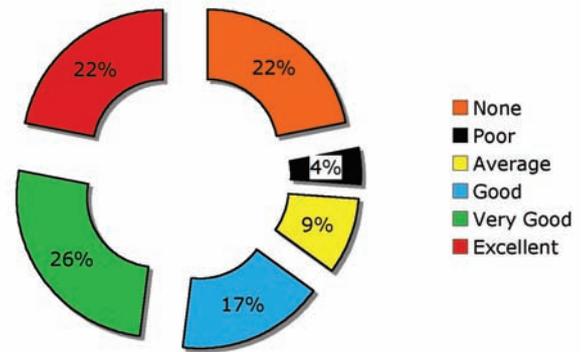
Some of the professional qualifications recorded were:

- School Teacher
- Sales and marketing
- Secretarial
- Information Technology
- Social work
- Development work
- Child care
- Interior Design
- Air Travel/Ticketing
- Book-keeping
- Researcher/Adviser for farmers
- Customer care
- Supervisor in hotel housekeeping department
- Administration
- Radio/TV production
- Business Administration
- Hairdressing
- Accountant
- Waitress
- Designer for ladies clothes
- Beautician

When respondents who had professional qualifications were asked to rate them on a scale of 1 to 5, the results indicated that 26% had very good qualifications, and 22% had excellent qualifications. 22% had no professional qualifications before coming to Ireland, while 9% rated their professional qualifications from their country of origin as average. These ratings are shown in table 7.2.4.

Table 7.2.4

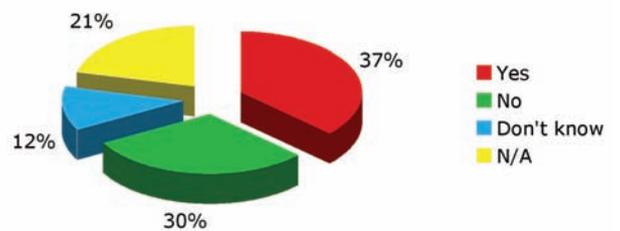
**Rating professional qualifications from country of origin**



When respondents were asked whether their qualifications from their country of origin were recognised in Ireland, a majority (37%) had their qualifications recognised, while 30% did not; 12% were not sure whether their qualifications were recognised while another 21% did not respond or did not have professional qualifications before coming to Ireland, as shown in table 7.2.5.

Table 7.2.5

**Have qualificationf from country of origin recognised in Ireland?**

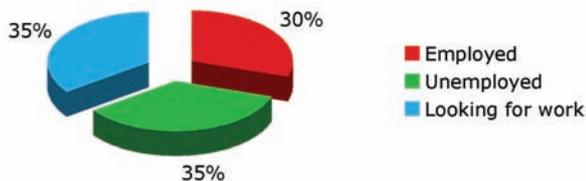


When asked which of the qualifications were recognised here in Ireland, the majority were specific and indicated their educational qualifications were recognised, while others did not indicate anything.

**7.3 Experience in Accessing Work**

In order to gauge respondents' experiences in accessing work and after, the research sought to establish their employment status by asking whether they were: employed, unemployed, or looking for work. Those employed were asked to indicate whether their current job matched their skills and qualifications, whether they have experienced barriers in accessing work and to explain what type of barriers. They were also asked to indicate whether they felt discriminated against while looking for work and if so why they think they were discriminated against. Table 7.3.1 indicates respondents' work status:

Table 7.3.1

**Current work position**

A majority (70%) recorded their status as unemployed with half of them (35%) looking for work, while 30% recorded their status as employed. Various reasons were given as to why the unemployed women were in that situation. Some of the reasons were:

- Lack of recognition of overseas professional qualifications
- Lack of work experience in Ireland which is a requirement in all employment
- Lack of support in childcare, especially for young mothers
- Lack of Irish references while applying for work
- Multiple discrimination, gender, race and religion
- Poor interview skills

Interviewees described their experiences:

"I'm a qualified graduate teacher but have been working as a care assistant and in cleaning since coming to Ireland, but currently I am looking for another job because the cleaning job has ended"

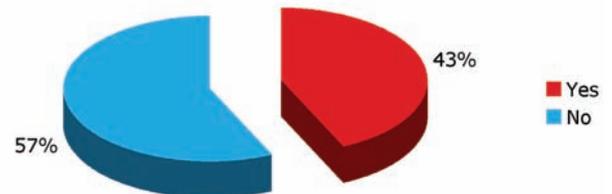
"I have been doing various jobs as I get them at the same time sending job application letters in my area of specialisation but some of the replies I get are disheartening. For example "...a suitably qualified person was recruited for this position..."

"I have gone for several interviews without successfully getting a job. I think there are interview skills that I need to have".

"I would like to contribute to the Irish economy by using my qualifications and experience, but as a young mother, I find childcare very expensive."

Those employed were asked to indicate whether their jobs matched their skills and qualifications.

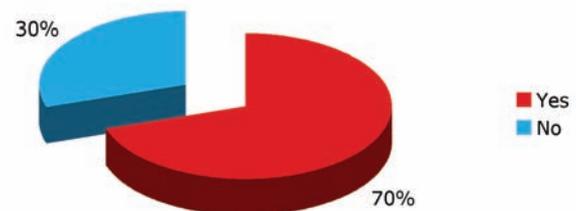
Table 7.3.2

**Does current job match your skills/qualifications?**

According to table 7.3.2, 57% indicated that their current jobs did not match their skills and qualifications while 43% were affirmative and happy in their jobs.

All the respondents were asked to indicate whether they had experienced barriers that hindered them from participating or accessing work. Table 7.3.3 indicates that the majority (70%) had experienced barriers while 30% had not experienced any barriers while accessing work.

Table 7.3.3

**Experienced barriers that hinder you from accessing work?**

In addition to the reasons given above, some women experienced barriers in accessing work because they were pregnant, even when they were successful at the job interview. Other cases recorded were of women called for an interview after applying for a position and being told the position had been filled. The following week they saw the same position still advertised. An example of such cases was reported by three women.

“I saw a job advertisement in the Galway Advertiser newspaper I was qualified for that would have suited me. I telephoned the number to arrange for interview as was required, but the response was that the position had been filled. The following week, the same job was advertised.”

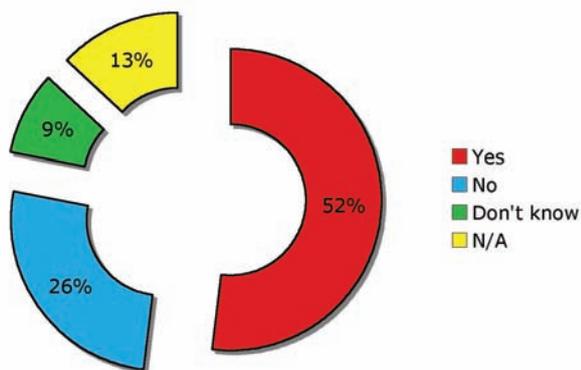
When those who had experienced barriers were asked whether they had overcome them, responses indicated that they were:

- Offering to do voluntary work where accepted
- Persistently looking for work
- Continually doing community offered training
- Taking further educational training
- Taking various courses in order to try and access work

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they had personally felt discriminated against while looking for work in the previous two years. Table 7.3.4 indicates that 52% felt they were discriminated against, while 26% had not experienced discrimination and 22% either did not know if they were discriminated against or said it was not applicable to them.

**Table 7.3.4**

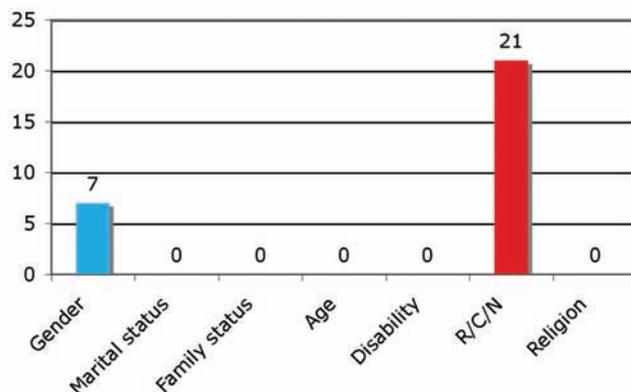
**Felt personally discriminated?**



Those who said they were discriminated against were asked to indicate why they felt discriminated against. Table 7.3.5 shows that 75% indicated they were discriminated against because of race/colour and nationality, and 25% felt discriminated against because they were women as well as Black Africans.

**Table 7.3.5**

**Why do you think you were discriminated against?**

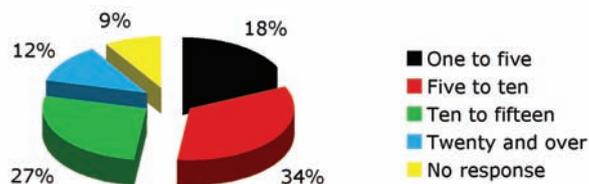


**7.4 Job Applications by Post**

Though respondents had sent several job applications by email and by personal delivery, this research focused only on postal job applications. Table 7.4.1 shows that 34% of the respondents sent between five and ten job applications while 27% sent 10-15 letters and another 12% sent more than 20 and were continuing to send them.

**Table 7.4.1**

**Job application by post**

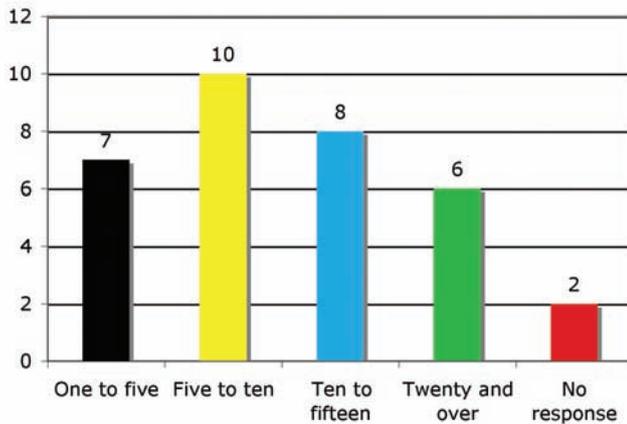


It is clear from the number of job applications sent by post that over 90% of the women were continually looking for jobs despite facing constant rejections.

Table 7.4.2 indicates the number of interviews the respondents had attended.

Table 7.4.2

## Number of job interviews attended



Of the 33 respondents, 10 women (31%) attended five to ten interviews, while eight (24%) attended 10-15 and six women (18%) attended 15-20 job interviews.

In order to gauge how the respondents fared in the job market, they were asked to indicate the number of job offers they had received. The table below indicates their responses.

Table 7.4.3

## Number of job offers

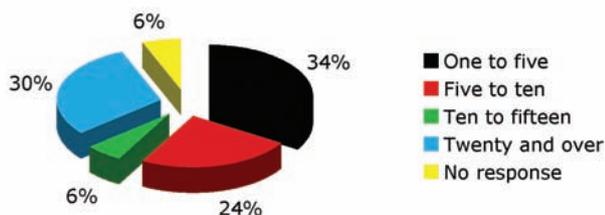
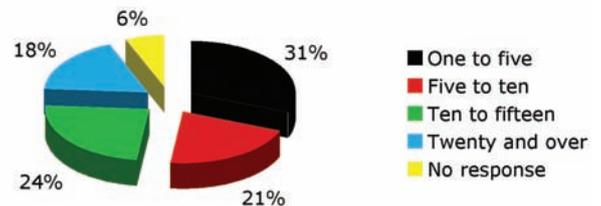


Table 7.4.3 shows that 34% had received one to five job offers while 30% had not received any offers. 24% had received 5-10 job offers while 6% indicated having received 10-15 job offers over their period in Ireland. 6% did not respond to the question.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the number of letters of rejections that they had received. Table 7.4.4 shows that 31% received one to five letters of rejection, 24% received 10-15 letters, 21% received 5-10 letters, and 18% had received over 20 letters of rejection.

Table 7.4.4

## Number of rejections



Some of the letters of rejections stated reasons. The respondents listed some of the reasons why they were not offered the jobs they applied for:

- Not successful on this occasion
- Not suitable for the position
- High calibre candidates were interviewed for only one position
- Impressed by qualifications and experience, but not suitable for the position
- Age and gender
- A more suitable person with experience was offered the job

## 7.5. Experience at work Place

Respondents listed various challenges they faced in the work place. These include:

- Complaints that supervisors ignored their grievances and rarely investigated their claim
- Unequal treatment where African women were asked to do what others did not want to do.
- Lack of promotion /pay rise
- Absence of contracts of employment
- Threatened with sacking
- Absence of proper job descriptions
- Absence of proper job induction
- Exploitation
- Overwork
- Unfair dismissal
- Some women working at a professional level stated that their views were ignored and were not taken into account in decision making
- Absence of pay slip

There were also reported cases of discrimination because of skin colour and race. It was reported that this discrimination was in most cases passive, especially by work colleagues and clients. Most of the women reported that their immediate supervisors and employers treated them well.

Those who had experienced discrimination said that the incidents occurred on a few occasions while a few said that it was frequent and with serious effects, leading them to leave the job. A few had reported the serious incidents to gardai. Two interviewees said they. "Still suffered serious effects of work related discrimination after leaving employment and had gone for counselling". Another interviewee said "I did not mind doing whatever the Irish girls did not want to do, but when I reported that I was expecting, I was dismissed. I am currently unemployed".

When asked whether they knew their rights under the Irish Equality law, respondents said they did, though their understanding had various levels.

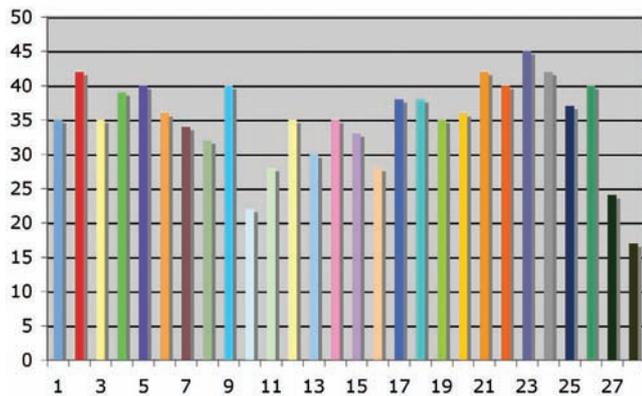
The tables below record the respondents' profile including age, nationality, area of residence, mother tongue, other languages spoken fluently, marital status and number of children if any as well as the length of stay in Ireland.

**Age:**

The respondent' age ranged from 18 to 45 with the majority being 35-40 years old. Some of the respondents did not indicate their age for personal reasons. Table 7.6.1 indicates the ages of 28 respondents.

**Table 7.6.1**

**Age in years**



**Nationality:**

**Table 7.6.2**

Nationality		Nationality	
Ghanaian	2	Kenyan	11
Ugandan	1	Nigerian	10
South African	4	Gambian	2
Sudanese	1	Somalian	1
Eritrean	1		

**Area of Residence:**

**Table 7.6.3**

Area of residency		Area of reidency	
Co. Dublin	10	Co. Galway	9
Co. Meath	5	Co. Kildare	1
Co. Mayo	1	Co. Offaly	5
Co. Louth	2		

**Languages:**

Table 7.6.4 shows that most of the respondents speak fluently more than one other language besides their mother tongue. Some spoke internationally desired languages such as French. It was also worth mentioning that all the respondents fluently spoke English language.

**Table 7.6.4**

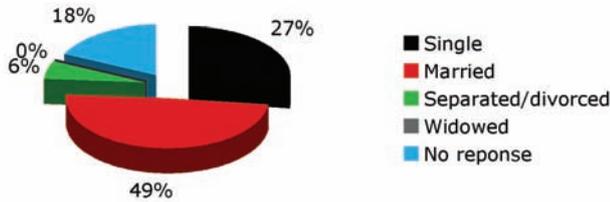
Mother tongue	Other languages spoken fluently
Luo	English, Kiswahili, Kikuyu
Kikuyu	English, Kiswahili, French
Wollof	English
Yoruba	English
Luganda	English
Kikamba	English, Kiswahili
Ghania	English
Xhosa	English
Benincity	English, French
Tigrinja	English, Arabic
Somali	English, Arabic, Swahili
Zulu	English, Shona
Kikuyu	English, Kiswahili
Akan	English, Ewe

**Marital Status:**

According to table 7.6.5, 49% of the respondents were married, while 27% recorded single status. There was a small number (6%) who were separated and another 18% who did not indicate their marital status.

Table 7.6.5

**Marital status**

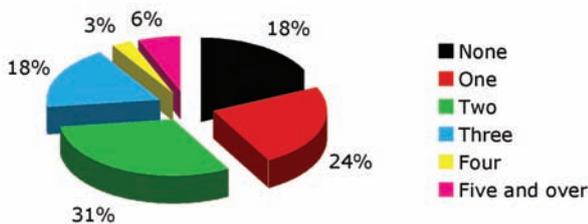


**Number of Children:**

Table 7.6.5 shows that 31% indicated they had two children, 24% indicated they had one child while another 18% had no children. Those that had the most (6%) indicated having six children.

Table 7.6.6

**Number of children**

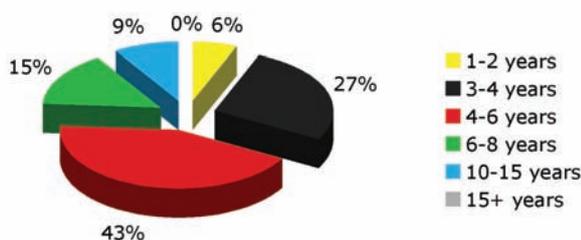


**Length of Stay in Ireland:**

Table 7.6.6 shows that 43% of the respondents had been in the country between four and six years.

Table 7.6.7

**Length of stay in Ireland**



The longest period was 10-15 years while the shortest period (6%) indicated was one to two years.

**Legal Status:**

Table 7.6.8

**Legal status**

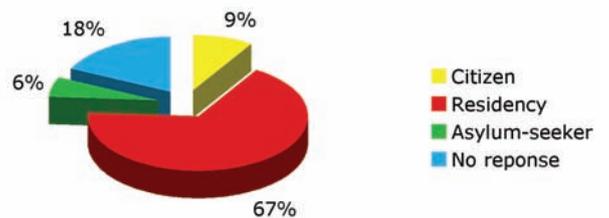


Table 7.6.8 shows that 67% of the respondents indicated that they had residency status, and had leave to remain in Ireland in the following categories:

- a) Mothers of Irish citizen children,
- b) Spouses of Irish
- c) Women with refugee status or with leave to remain on humanitarian grounds

18% did not indicate their status, while 9% of the respondents had been given Irish citizenship. A few (6%) indicated they were asylum seekers.

**Social Welfare benefit:**

Out of the 33 respondents 9 (27%) were not receiving any benefit because they were either working or hoping to get a job. Another 9 (27%) indicated they were receiving unemployment benefit, 6 (18%) were on lone parent allowance, while 5 (15%) were receiving the basic allowance and other 4 (12%) did not respond.

## 8. Conclusions

Although this is a small scale study, it is a strong indicator of the experiences of black African migrant women in accessing and participating in the Irish labour market. The study has recorded the experiences of women from nine different African nationalities, with different educational backgrounds, with the common feature of all being Black African women living in Ireland. Therefore, this is a good indicator that qualifies for historical and policy development purposes, the situation of differing categories of migrant African women in Ireland.

Respondents reported a number of factors indicating that Black African women face a number of challenges in their endeavour to access the labour market and make a useful contribution to the Irish economy through using their skills and qualifications. Some of these factors are:

- Lack of recognition of overseas professional qualifications
- Lack of work experience in Ireland which is a requirement in all employment
- Multiple discrimination, gender, race and religion
- Lack of Irish references while applying for work.

The study indicates the need for a broader study of the experiences of migrant women in accessing and participating in the Irish labour market.

## 9. Appendix

### Questionnaire

#### Experiences of Black African Women in accessing work and at the work place

AkiDwA (the African Women's network Ireland) is a voluntary non governmental organisation that was established in 2001 with the aim of responding to the existing and changing needs of African women in Ireland. AkiDwA's work focuses on development and human right issues based on a gender perspective. To date AkiDwA have worked with over 25 groups of migrant women and has facilitated awareness raising and development education to colleges, women groups, policy makers and other service providers.

One of the major issues identified by the women that AkiDwA works with is difficulties in accessing work. This research aims to highlight and document the experiences of migrant African women in accessing any form of work. The findings will be used by AkiDwA for lobbying, and informing policy makers, employers, different government departments and other service providers.

AkiDwA will maintain the right to Confidentiality for those who will participate in this research and would like to assure all participating that their names and identities will remain anonymous

#### Q1. Self-Rated English Language Proficiency:

(a) How would you rate your ability to speak English?

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Extremely Poor | 2. Poor      |
| 3. Good           | 4. Very good |
| 5. Excellent      |              |

(b) How would you rate your ability to understand spoken English?

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Extremely Poor | 2. Poor      |
| 3. Good           | 4. Very good |
| 5. Excellent      |              |

(c) How would you rate your ability to read English?

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Extremely Poor | 2. Poor      |
| 3. Good           | 4. Very good |
| 5. Excellent      |              |

(d) How would you rate your ability to write in English?

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Extremely Poor | 2. Poor      |
| 3. Good           | 4. Very good |
| 5. Excellent      |              |

**Q. 2. Qualification/ Education and Training**

- (a) How would you rate your computer skills if any?
- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. None      | 2. Poor      |
| 3. Average   | 4. Good      |
| 5. Very good | 6. Excellent |
- (b) What is your education level from your country of Origin?
- |            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| 1. Primary | 2. Secondary  |
| 3. College | 4. University |
| 5. Others  |               |
- (c) Do you have any professional qualification from your country of origin?  
If yes, in what area? \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) How would you rate these professional qualifications from your country of origin if any?
- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. None      | 2. Poor      |
| 3 Average    | 4. Good      |
| 5. Very good | 6. Excellent |
- (e) Have your qualification from your native country been recognised here in Ireland
- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Yes        | 2. Not Recognised |
| 3. Don't Know | 4. N/A.           |
- If yes please list what Qualification has been recognised  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (f) Have you participated in any Education or training since arriving Ireland,  
If yes please list \_\_\_\_\_  
If not please explain why \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.3. Experience in Accessing work.**

- (a) What is your current work position?
- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. Employed         | 2. Unemployed |
| 3. Looking for work |               |
- (b) If you are employed does your current job match your skills/ qualifications?  
Please explain \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) Have you experienced any barriers that hinder you from participation or accessing work?  
If yes please list barriers \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) Have you overcome listed barriers?  
If yes Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

- (e) In the past two years, have you personally felt discriminated against while looking for work
- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Yes            | 2. No         |
| 3. Not applicable | 4. Don't Know |
- (f) If yes why do you think you were discriminated against was it because of your
- |  |
|--|
| 1. Gender                                    |
| 2. Marital Status                            |
| 3. Family status (pregnant or with children) |
| 4. Age                                       |
| 5. Disability                                |
| 6. Race/skin colour/nationality              |
| 7. Religious belief 8. Others                |

**Q. 4 Job applications by Post**

Number of job applications sent by post.

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. One to five    | 2. Five to ten       |
| 3. Ten to fifteen | 4. Fifteen to twenty |

Number of replies

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. One to five    | 2. Five to ten       |
| 3. Ten to fifteen | 4. Fifteen to twenty |

Number of job offers

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. One to five    | 2. Five to ten       |
| 3. Ten to fifteen | 4. Fifteen to twenty |

Number of rejections

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. One to five    | 2. Five to ten       |
| 3. Ten to fifteen | 4. Fifteen to twenty |

Stated reasons for rejection: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Interviews

Number of job interviews attended.

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. One to five    | 2. Five to ten       |
| 3. Ten to fifteen | 4. Fifteen to twenty |

**Q.5. Experience at work Place**

- (a) If employed, have you personally felt discriminated against by employers, bosses and supervisors?
- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Yes            | 2. No         |
| 3. Not applicable | 4. Don't Know |
- (b) If yes how frequently have you experienced discrimination?
- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Just once      | 2. On a few occasions |
| 3. More regularly |                       |

(c) If yes why do you think you were discriminated against was it because of your

1. Gender
2. Marital Status
3. Family status (pregnant or with children)
4. Age
5. Disability
6. Race/skin colour/nationality
7. Religious belief
8. Others

(d) How serious was the effect of discrimination on your life?

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Little or no effect(s) | 2. Some effect(s)         |
| 3. Serious effect(s)      | 4. Very serious effect(s) |

(e) May I ask what action, if any at all, have you taken in reaction to discrimination you have experienced. In particular have you complained verbally, or in writing or taken legal action?

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

(f) Do you know your rights under Irish equality Law?

1. No understanding
2. Understand a little
3. Understand a lot

1(a) How many applications have you made?

1(c) List down the responses given to you.

## Q. 6 Demographic

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ [In years].

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother Tongue(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Other Languages Spoken Fluently:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_; No [1].

Marital Status:

Single [1]	Married [2]
Separated/Divorced [3]	Widowed [4].

Total No. of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Stay in Ireland: \_\_\_\_\_ [Code in months].

Legal Status \_\_\_\_\_

Social Welfare Benefit

Unemployment Allowance [1]

Lone Parent's Allowance [2]

Disability Allowance

Other \_\_\_\_\_

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