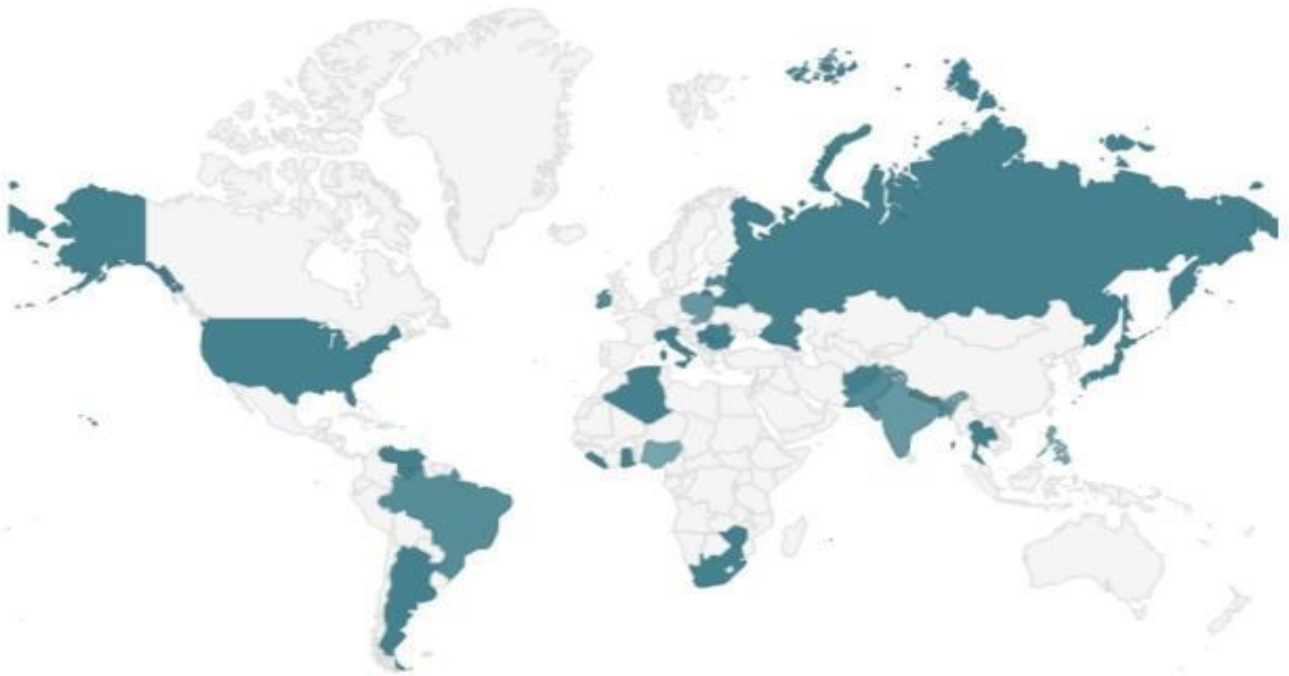


# Migrant Workers & Trade Union Membership

## Survey Findings



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*Promoting and protecting human rights*

## Migrant Workers & Trade Union Membership

### Survey Findings

#### Background

Doras Luimní is a human rights NGO working to support and promote the rights of all migrants living in Limerick and the Mid-West region of Ireland. Our mission is to promote and uphold the human rights and well-being of migrants through personal advocacy, integration development and collaborative advocacy campaigns at the local and national level.

Based on the direct support work at Doras Luimní this research sought to understand if migrants were aware of their employment rights and that they can be supported through membership of the Trade Unions. While organisations like Doras Luimní advocate across a range of issues on behalf of migrants, more commonly migrants have sought legal redress through the use of private solicitors.

#### Methodology

In September 2015 Doras Luimní sought to explore migrants' attitudes and relationships to the Trade Union movement. Through the use of a survey we examined the extent of Trade Union membership. "Are you a member of a Trade Union?" was the key research question, however a number of additional questions were asked, such as: age, sector of employment, duration of employment and if not a member of a Trade Union the reasons for not being a member. Survey distribution avenues included social media, online via Doras Luimní website, on the streets, to people who use our services, peer survey collection, as well as distributing them to places and services frequented by migrants in Limerick. The vast majority of surveys were completed using hard copies by people resident in Limerick.

#### Trade Unions in Limerick

More recently Doras Luimní has collaborated with local Trade Union chapters to highlight the needs of migrants in precarious, low paid employment. This collaboration has proven useful given the overrepresentation of migrants in low paid work, and the added layers of discrimination encountered by migrants relative to the wider Irish population. The following range of issues have affected Doras Luimní service users: exploitation of work permit holders, unfair dismissal, non-receipt of minimum wage, insufficient notice periods, excessive working hours, insufficient breaks and rest periods and lack of a formal Contract of Employment. Given the breadth of employment legislation in Ireland and the avenues for redress for those employed in Ireland, the Trade Union membership survey was a useful addition to our growing catalogue of knowledge on the rights of migrants in low paid work in Limerick.

#### Goals of the survey:

- To establish Trade Union membership uptake for migrant workers in low paid jobs.
- To understand if and how Trade Unions support migrant workers.
- To engage unions, discuss findings and propose possible action in response to findings.

## Summary

- A total of 83 respondents from 34 countries.
- The Survey was accompanied by a short description of a Trade Union (extract from Mandate website)
- The survey took 2 minutes 30 seconds to complete online and was available to participants for a duration of three months.
- Survey distribution avenues included social media, on the streets, to people who use our services, peer survey collection, as well as distributing them to places and services frequented by migrants in Limerick.
- 90% of migrant workers surveyed said they were not members of any trade union.
- Half of the people who responded to the survey said the reasons they weren't a member of a trade union was that they did not know about unions or were not informed of Union membership in their workplace.

## People from 34 countries worldwide completed the survey:



## Countries of Origin

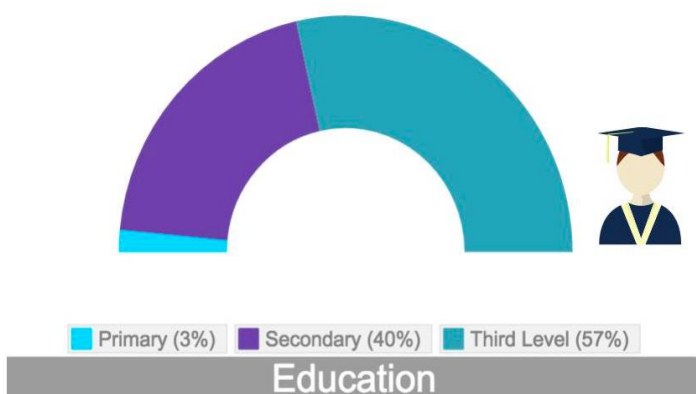
South Africa Congo Brazzaville, Latvia, Nepal, Argentina, Ghana, India, Mauritius, United States, Thailand, Poland, Nigeria, Bulgaria, Italy, USA, Pakistan, Liberia, Venezuela, Brazil, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Japan, Belarus, Sierra Leone, Russia, Pakistan, Ireland(naturalised), Slovakia, Iran/Pakistan, Serbia, Romania, Philippines, Bangladesh.

## Biographical Data of Survey Participants

- Of the participants, 61% were male and 39% were female.
- The age of the participants varied from 18 years to 59 years, with the majority in the 18-30 bracket. This indicates that a considerable cohort of those working in the service industry are young migrants, with the majority from EU member states.



## Level of Education

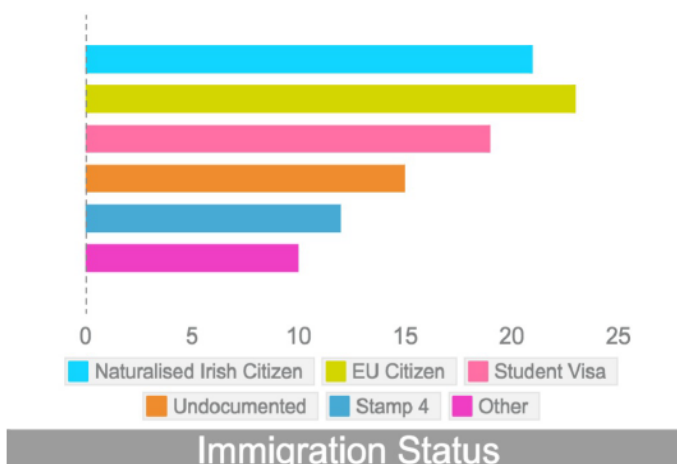


- 46 people (56.8%) of survey respondents had a third level qualification.
- Of the participants who did have a third level qualification, the majority worked in the hospitality sector. This shows that the majority work in sectors that are below their skill level.

## Immigration status

According to the available data, there were a range of immigration statuses among the research participants.

Of the countries that were represented, 18 were EU citizens (23%), while the second highest cohort were naturalised Irish citizens (21%) and the third highest cohort were student visa holders, or stamp 2 (19%).



## Employment Status and Sectors of work



73% of survey participants were in some form of employment. The survey did not ask if full time or part time.

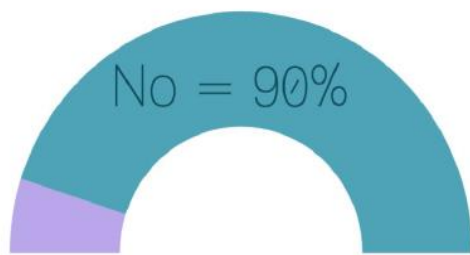
- Cleaning (3.6%)
- Hospitality (40%)
- Security (16.4%)
- Domestic Work (9.1%)
- Retail (10.9%)
- Agricultural work (1.8%)
- Other (20%)

## Length of Time in Employment

This varied considerably among participants. Minimum was one week and the maximum was 10 years but the majority of participants had been in their current employment between 2 and 7 years.



## Key Research Question: "Are you a member of a Trade Union?"



Yes (10%) No (90%)

- 90% of participants were not members of a Trade Union.
- Of the 10% that were Trade Union members, they learned about Trade Unions from the following sources: SIPTU; TV advertisements; NGOs; Internet search; Co-workers; News; Word of Mouth.

## Reasons given by research participants for not joining a Trade Union:

The reasons cited from participants were varied: from a general lack of knowledge about Trade Unions, to not knowing why being a member would be relevant to them.

The majority of answers relate to either a total lack of knowledge to not knowing the relevance of union membership, which illustrates that there is a strong need to inform migrants in low paid work on the benefits of union membership.

### If you are not a Trade Union member, why not?

"I don't know how to join"

"I don't know any Trade Unions"

"I don't need it"

"Migrant"

No knowledge of Trade Unions"

"I don't know about it"

"I'm a student"

"Not sure of the need"

"Not interested"

"I don't know what that is"

"I've never heard about it"

No Trade Union ever approached me"

## Conclusion

Migrant communities are by no means homogenous; they are diverse with a multitude of ethnic and nationality backgrounds, as evidenced in this survey sample. While this sample does not purport to be representative of the entire migrant community it does indicate that, among those surveyed, there is a significant under-representation of migrants in Trade Unions.

Migrant communities are representative of the changing and diverse country in which we now live. Those in low paid work are often in need of protections from poor working conditions and exploitation. As there is an over-representation of migrants in low paid work, this impacts on their long term integration and progression. Further, there is a sectoral concentration, particularly of EU citizens, in for example the hospitality industry. The length of time some migrants have been in employment – some in excess of 10 years - is indicative of the fact that migrants are living here long term. Their lack of visibility or membership within Trade Unions is at odds with the number of migrants working in low-paid sectors. There is a need to tackle labour exploitation and workplace rights violations more generally but in particular for this vulnerable and under-represented group.

## Recommendations

- Targeted outreach by Trade Unions to all work sectors in an effort to ensure membership of migrants.
- Trust building and partnership building to make clear that Trade Unions are there to represent all workers/all workers are entitled to representation.
- Greater visibility of migrant representation will ensure migrant issues are kept on the political agenda.
- Neglected work sectors, particularly domestic or au pair work, need to be addressed by Trade Unions more generally. This could be done in partnership with NGOs, local employment services.
- Given the lack of information on this issue at a local level, there is scope for further research.

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