



GELS

Gender Equality in Language Studies
Comhionannas Inscne sa Léann Teanga

Let's start the conversation!

Cuirimis tús leis an gcomhrá !



BACKGROUND

- Within Language Studies (Irish and Modern Foreign Languages [MFL]), **women commonly constitute around 80% of the student and staff bodies in Irish HEIs.**
- GELS is highly innovative project constituting the **first national study of gender inequality in Language Studies in Irish HE**
 - i.e. the converse gender dynamic, where **those not identifying as female are underrepresented and require greater visibility and promotion** in future gender-equality initiatives
- Evolved from the Increasing Male Participation & Uptake in Language Studies (IMPULS) project conducted by Prof Jean Conacher at the University of Limerick
- The Times Higher Education/UNESCO report - *Gender Equality: How Global Universities are Performing (Part 2)* [20th May 2022]
 - “**underrepresentation of male students** in certain subjects, ... is **concerning**” (p.4)
 - “important that **universities interrogate the perceptions towards certain programmes and disciplines** so that they can be seen as non-gendered” (p.14)
 - “move beyond focusing on ‘women in STEM ... **underrepresentation of male students** in some subjects is also **an issue that has implications for women**” (p.30)
- HEA *Gender Equality Taskforce Action Plan 2018-2020*
 - A first step is “to actively develop gender awareness” in the education system
 - Challenge the “symbolic links between gender and discipline” (p.36)

PROJECT TEAM



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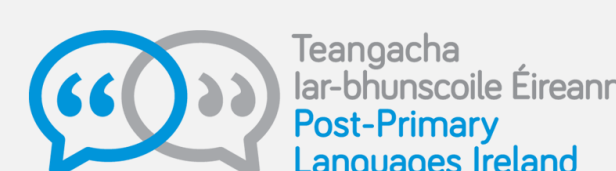
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THE STUDY & ITS AIMS

Aims of the project

- to **enrich and broaden current gender-equality debates**
 - Gender equality framed strongly as advancing the participation and representation of women systemically (particularly STEM)
 - Drawing attention to a **discipline** (Language Studies) **where converse** (under-representation of men) **dynamics exist and require intervention** in the interest of equality and inclusivity
- To **uncover and interrogate the systemic factors at post-primary and HE level** that contribute to such ‘converse’ gender representation in Language Studies
- To **develop strategy recommendations for stakeholders** to achieve **greater gender equality and diverse representation** in Language Studies (potential relevance to other disciplines like Nursing, Teaching, Social Care)

Study sites

- Data collection at post-primary schools and HEIs**
- Diversity of partner HEIs:** One NUI, two non-NUIs, one Technological University across Munster and the greater Dublin area (i.e. a range of urban and rural schools)
- Each of the 4 partner HEIs form a local cluster, comprising two DEIS schools** in their vicinity for participation
- Greatest overall diversity** pursued through Criterion Sampling:

Co-ed vs all-male	Urban vs rural
Irish-medium vs English-medium	Size of school
Range of modern foreign languages on offer alongside Irish	Denominational vs multi-denominational vs non-denominational

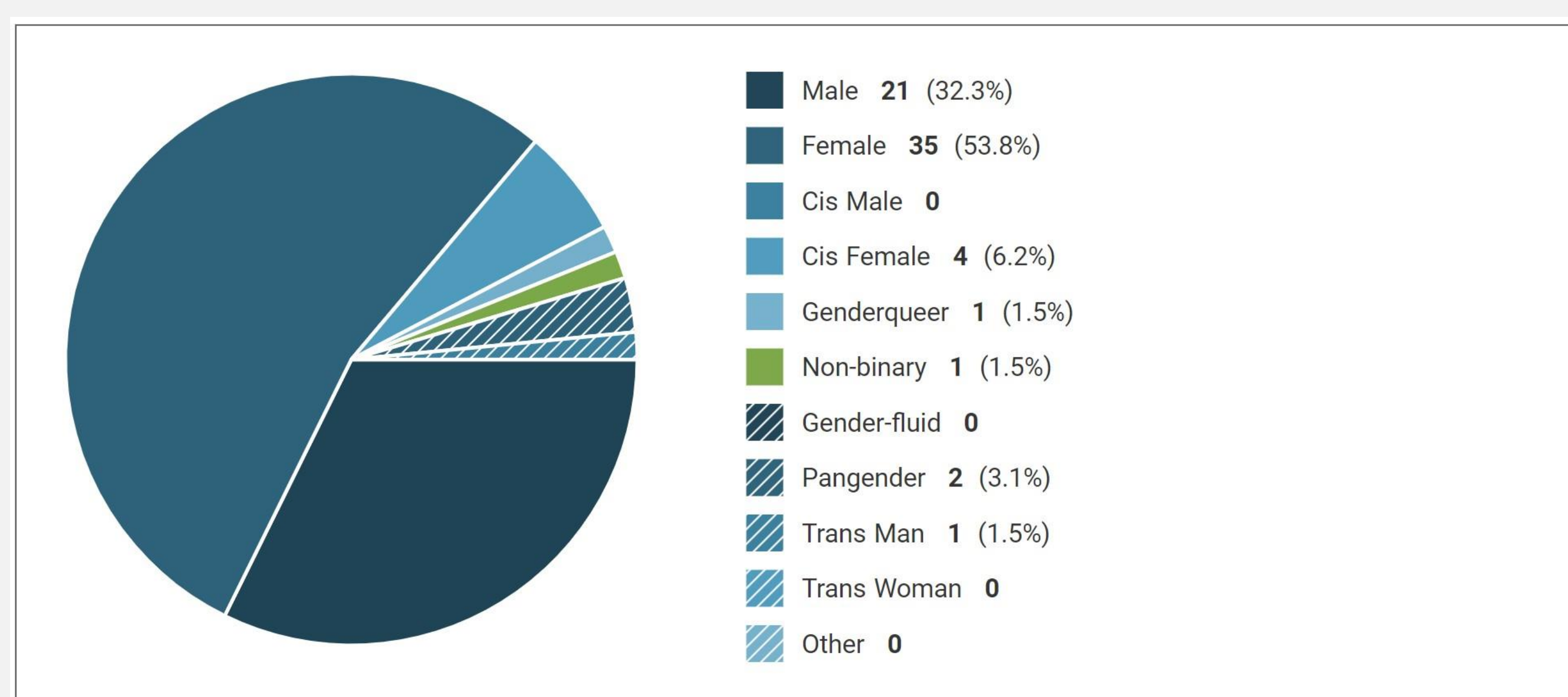
- Additionally, **one HEI will target a Gaeltacht school.**

Phases of the research project

- Review existing **national and international research** on gender equality in Language Studies
- Map the **current gender profile** within Language Studies (Irish and MFL) in Ireland
- All students and staff in schools and the HEIs complete **online surveys**
- Follow-up **interviews/focus groups** with a % of students and staff in schools and HEIs, particularly encouraging **individuals NOT identifying as female** to participate
- Survey and interviews/focus groups explore factors (attitudinal and perceptual) impacting upon decision-making around continuing with Language Studies post-JC
- Based on the analysed data, **outreach activities** developed that enable **more diverse role models** and **potential career paths** to be introduced via
 - Online sessions with current UG students
 - Online sessions with successful graduates working with languages in Ireland and abroad

SOME PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS

Students' reported gender identities (n=60)



Students' word associations with learning MFLs

What's the first word that comes to mind when you think about learning foreign languages?
48 responses



CONTACT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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