

DARE

**DISABILITY
ACCESS
ROUTE TO
EDUCATION**

HEAR

**HIGHER
EDUCATION
ACCESS
ROUTE**

**FACTS AND FIGURES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
2018 – 2022**



Key Terminology

Application assessed	Applicant made an online application and submitted documentation, therefore received a full assessment by trained DARE and/ or HEAR assessors.
Eligible	Received a full assessment and was deemed as meeting the DARE/ HEAR criteria.
Ineligible	Received a full assessment and was deemed as not meeting the DARE/ HEAR criteria.
Eligibility Carried Forward (ECF)	Applicant verified as having been eligible the previous year and is availing of the one-year eligibility carry forward facility.
Reduced points offer	Applicant received a DARE reduced points offer or a hear reduced points offer in a participating HEI (applies to Level 8 and Level 6/7 courses).
On/above the points offer	Applicant received an offer on or above the points required in a participating or non-participating HEI (applies to Level 8 and Level 6/7 courses).

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the staff in the participating colleges and other stakeholder groups who have contributed to the development and success of DARE and HEAR and to this research. Thanks to the members of the Access Steering Group for Higher Education Institutions, the DARE HEAR Operations Subgroup and the DARE HEAR Practitioners Group for the expertise and guidance they provided during the development and realisation of the research strategy. Further thanks to the CAO, for providing the data and their expertise, the Access Programme Manager and to the IUA. Finally, thank you to all of the students, their parents and schools who have engaged with the schemes since their creation.

Dr Abdellatif Atiff, Researcher, and Daniel McFarlane, Access Manager.

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7.3%

increase in applications

Total CAO applications increased by 7.3%, from 72,643 in 2018 to 78,012 in 2022.

HEAR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS ROUTE

SCHEME DATA POINTS

APPLICATIONS:



60%
Female

Female applicants consistently represented about 60% of the total.



28%
Dublin

Dublin accounted for approximately 28% of HEAR applications annually.

ELIGIBILITY:

67%

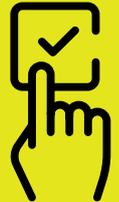
of assessed applications were eligible.



ACCEPTANCES:

84%

Acceptance rates among assessed applicants.



HEAR applications declined by 11.3% from 8518 (12% of total CAO applications) in 2018 to 7548 (10% of total CAO applications) in 2022.

DARE DISABILITY ACCESS ROUTE TO EDUCATION

SCHEME DATA POINTS

APPLICATIONS:



53%
Female

Female applicants consistently outnumbered male applicants (around 53% each year).



26%
Dublin

The greater Dublin region accounted for over 26% of applicants.

ELIGIBILITY:

43%

increase in eligible applications from 3,645 in 2018 to 5,228 in 2022.



ACCEPTANCES:

80%

Acceptance rates in Specific Learning Disabilities (the largest group).



11%
of total applications

DARE applications increased from 9% to 11% of total CAO applications from 2018 to 2022.



Most applicants were Irish nationals, with notable numbers from Poland, Romania, and Nigeria backgrounds.

DUAL ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

SCHEME DATA POINTS

APPLICATIONS:

5%
dual-eligible

The proportion of dual-eligible (for DARE and HEAR) applicants remained stable (5%).



ACCEPTANCES:

80%
received offers.

Most dual-eligible applicants received offers (exceeding 80% each year).



ELIGIBILITY AND DUAL ELIGIBILITY:

APPLICANTS IN THE CARE OF THE STATE



823
HEAR eligible

Total of 823 HEAR eligible students who were in the care of the state from 2018 to 2022.

116
dual eligible

Total of 116 dual eligible (HEAR and DARE) students in the care of the state.



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Introduction

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) are higher education admissions schemes, which aim to achieve equality of access to higher education in Ireland for two under-represented cohorts identified in the National Access Plan 2015 - 2019, 2022 - 2028. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges in post-primary education. HEAR offers reduced point places for students who are traditionally from under-represented backgrounds, that is students from disadvantaged communities who traditionally have low progression to higher education. Applicants must meet a combination of 6 financial, social, and cultural indicators, with household income being the most important, with applicants needing to be eligible for a variation of other indicators. These schemes were developed by a number of universities and colleges to mitigate the negative impact socio-economic disadvantage and/or disability can have on progression to higher education. Twenty Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) currently participate in DARE and HEAR.

The DARE HEAR Facts and Figures Report 2018/22

The Facts and Figures Report 2018/22 is the third report on the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) by the Irish Universities Association (IUA). This report provides an overview of data from both supplementary access routes to the Irish higher education system highlighting key trends during the COVID-19 pandemic era. Under advisement for content from participating Higher Education Institutes, this document will produce and illustrate figures, interpretations, and trends across datasets from 2018-2022.

The data analysis and dissemination of results achieved over the period of 2018-2022 has provided participating HEIs and the IUA with the accurate, current and valuable data required to make evidence-based and strategic decisions regarding the future direction of the schemes. Especially given that participation in DARE and/ or HEAR by HEIs in the Republic of Ireland has increased to include nearly all state-funded HEIs, data analysis must remain a priority in advancing the national access strategy and in making higher education accessible for all.



Application Numbers

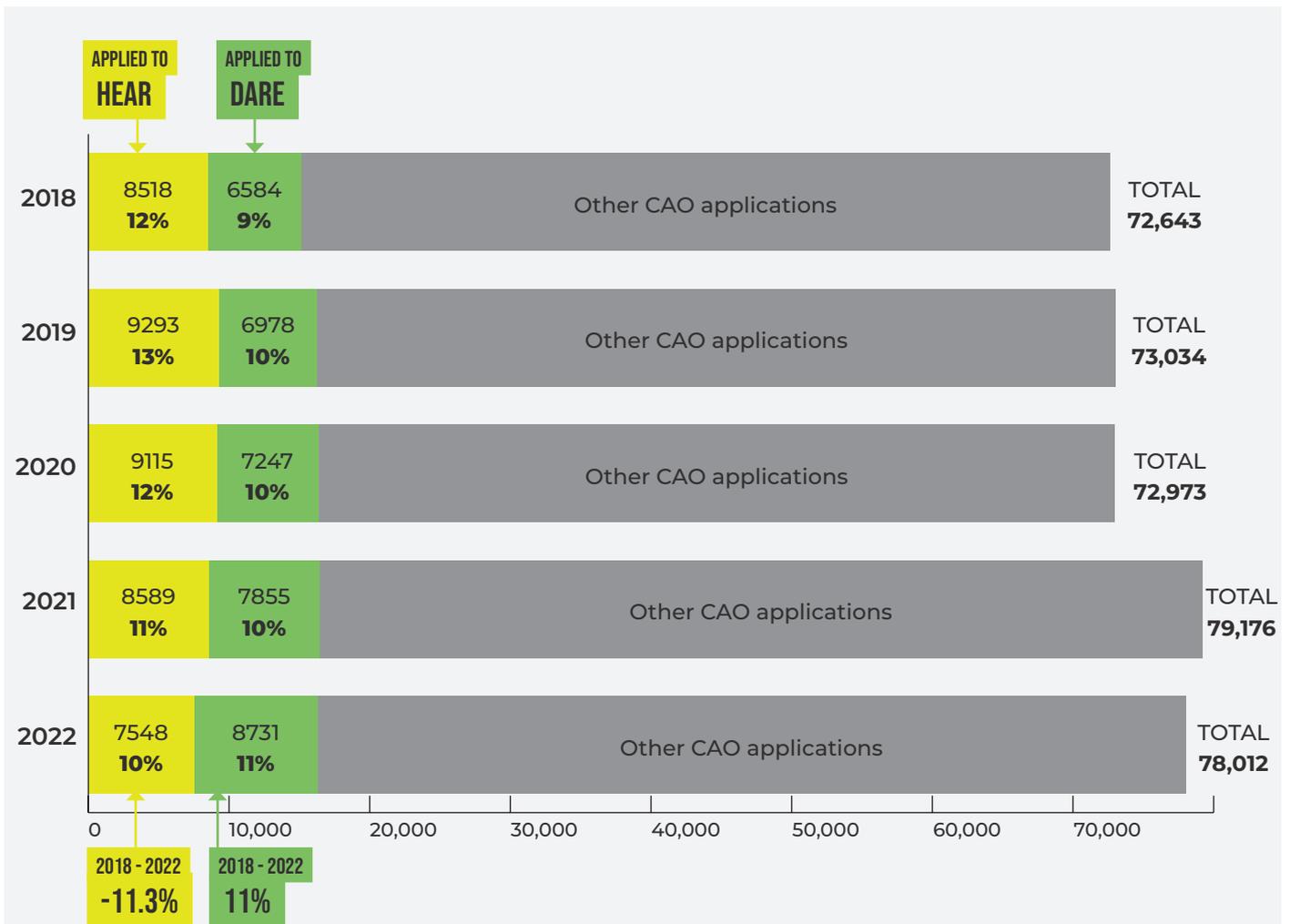


Figure 1: applications to HEAR and DARE in the period of 2018-2022

HEAR

Over the five years from 2018 to 2022, data on the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme reveals significant trends in CAO applications. As Table 1 shows, in 2018, 12% of total CAO applications applied for the HEAR scheme, which decreased to 11% in 2022, indicating a decline of 11.3% in applications to HEAR over the five years. Conversely, the percentage of applicants who did not apply to HEAR increased from 88% in 2018 to 89% in 2022, showing a rise of 9.8%.

Overall, the total number of applications to the CAO increased by 7.3% from 2018 to 2022, rising from 72,643 in 2018 to 78,012 in 2022. There was a consistent gender imbalance in CAO applications, with most applicants being female, an average of 60% each year. Most HEAR applicants were 18-year-olds (3,985 in 2022), making 53% of the overall applications), followed by 17-year-olds (2028 in 2022, making 27% of the overall applications). Dublin consistently had the highest number of HEAR applications, and the distribution by county and Dublin postcode remained relatively stable at 28%.

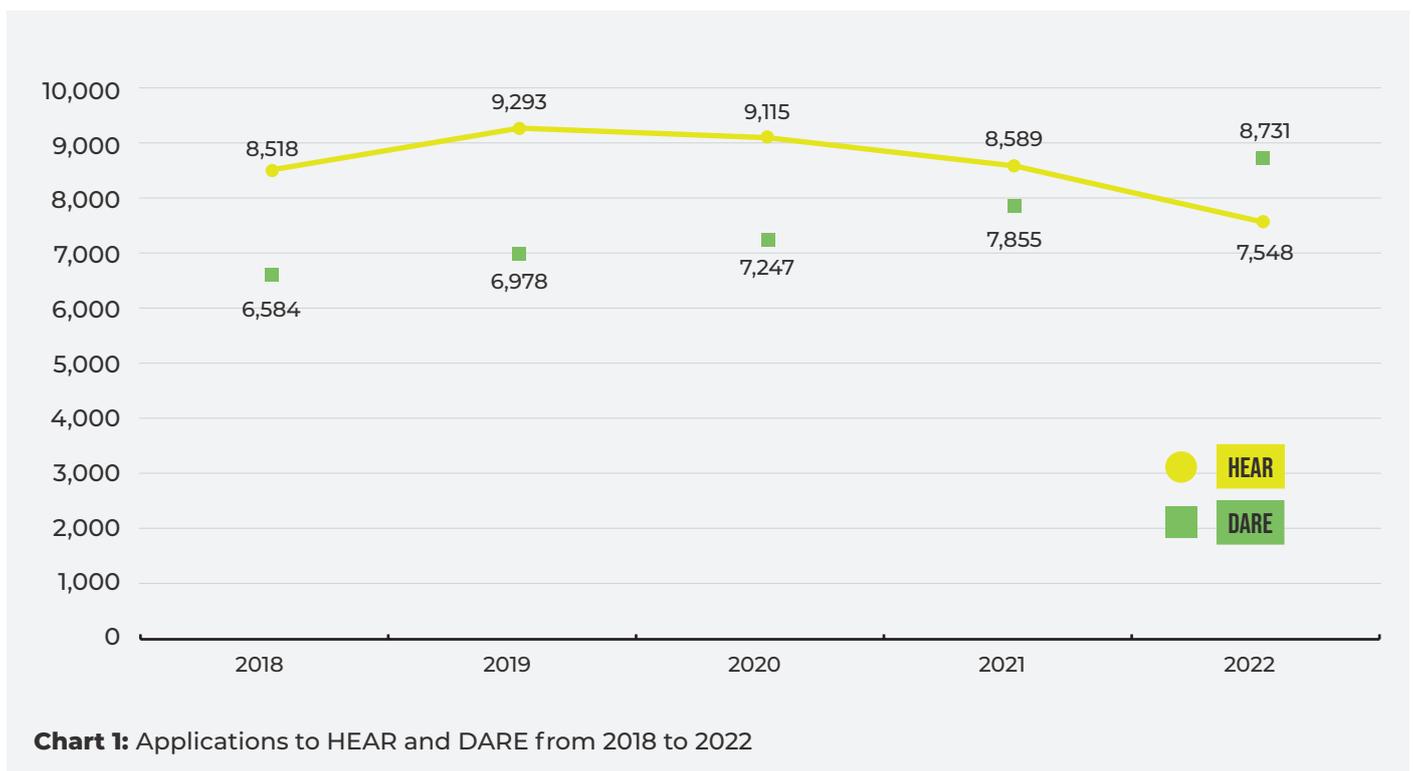
There is also diversity in nationalities among applicants, with Irish applicants dominating with an average of 80% but substantial numbers from other countries like Poland, Romania, and Nigeria. The number of applications from non-DEIS schools consistently outnumbered those from DEIS schools (an average of 44%).

DARE

The number of DARE applications significantly increased in the percentage of applicants from 9% to 11% of total CAO applications (6584 out of 72,643 in 2018 and 8731 out of 78,012 in 2022). Female applicants consistently outnumbered male applicants (around 53% each year). Most DARE applicants were 18 years old, around 60% each year. While most applications came from outside Dublin, the greater Dublin region accounted for over 26% of the overall applicants. There was also lack of diversity in nationalities among applicants, with Irish applicants dominating (around 95% every year) but substantial numbers from other countries like Poland, Romania, and Nigeria. Secondary schools remained the primary source of applicants for DARE with a percentage of 53%.

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There was also lack of diversity in nationalities among applicants, with Irish applicants dominating (around 95% every year) but substantial numbers from other countries like Poland, Romania, and Nigeria.



Eligibility Numbers

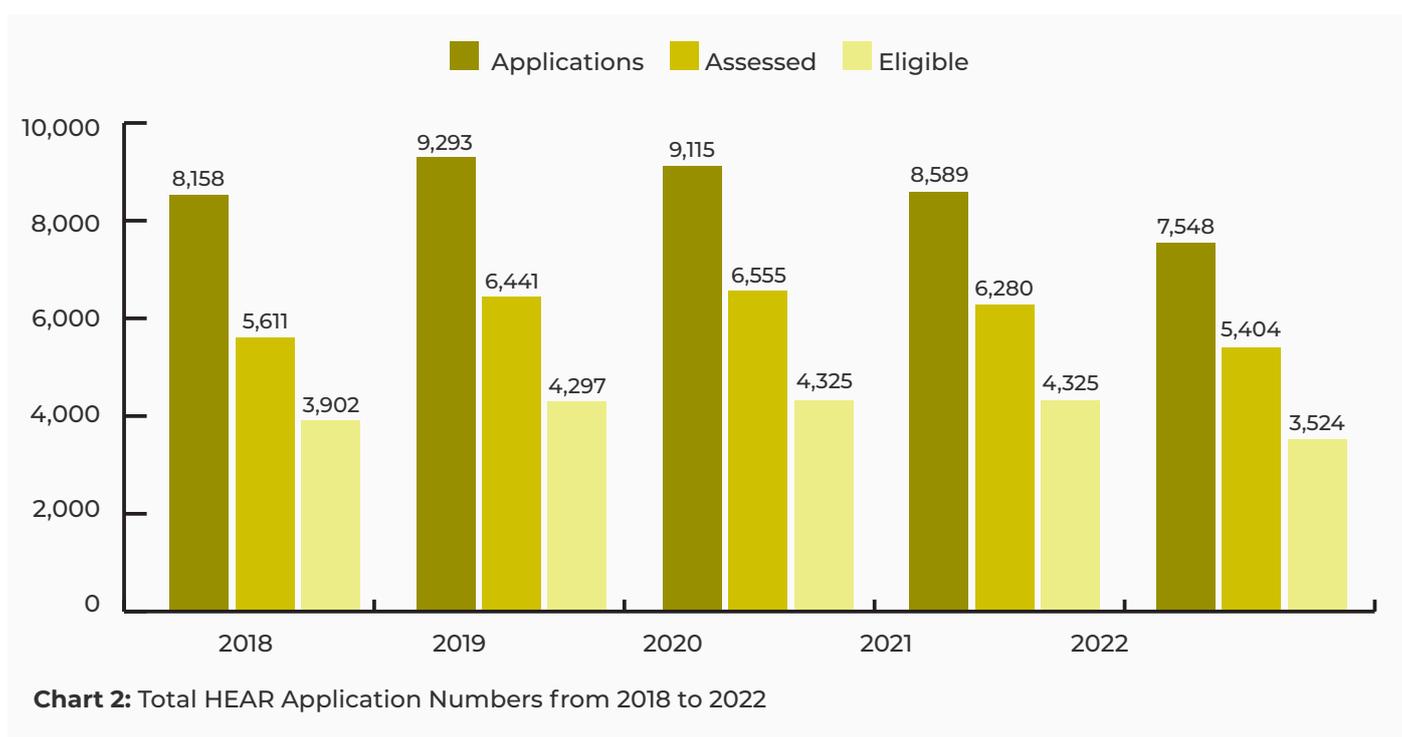
HEAR

Notable observations on eligibility for both the HEAR schemes indicate several trends over the years. A noteworthy proportion of applications (ranging from 28% to 34%) were not assessed each year, indicating potential challenges in the application process. Applicants face several challenges, including providing financial documentation for the correct year, supplying complete pages of the required documentation, and submitting financial documents when requested to support their application. Most applications to HEAR via CAO were assessed, with assessment rates ranging from 66% to 73% during the study period. The final number of eligible applicants, however, fluctuates, with percentages ranging from 64% to 70% of assessed applications. Conversely, the final number of ineligible applicants also fluctuates, ranging from 30% to 36% of assessed applications. Each year, a small percentage of applications (ranging from 4% to 5%) carried their eligibility from the previous year.

In terms of gender, a higher percentage of females apply to the HEAR scheme. However, the eligibility rates are comparable for both genders, with an average of 60% for both females and males. Across age groups, a significant proportion of applicants aged 16 to 20 are eligible, with relatively stable eligibility across other age groups. Eligibility rates

vary across counties and over time, with some counties consistently showing higher rates, such as Carlow with 82% eligibility in 2022, while others fluctuate, like Longford, which dropped to 54% in the same year. Dublin consistently maintains eligibility rates of around 80%, with over 1,000 applicants qualifying annually, while Northern Ireland's rates average around 60%.

Furthermore, the data reveals a stark contrast in application and eligibility rates between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. Applications from non-DEIS schools consistently ranged from 44% to 48% of the total applications. Meanwhile, applications from DEIS schools remain at 22% to 25% of the total applications annually. This disparity is even more noticeable when considering the applicants' socio-economic backgrounds. There is a notable pattern where applicants from disadvantaged and very disadvantaged areas consistently demonstrate higher eligibility rates compared to those from more affluent backgrounds. For instance, in 2022, 78% of applicants from disadvantaged areas and 78% from very disadvantaged areas were eligible, compared to 62% from very affluent areas and 57% from affluent. This trend has persisted over the years, thus showing the need for localised and targeted outreach.



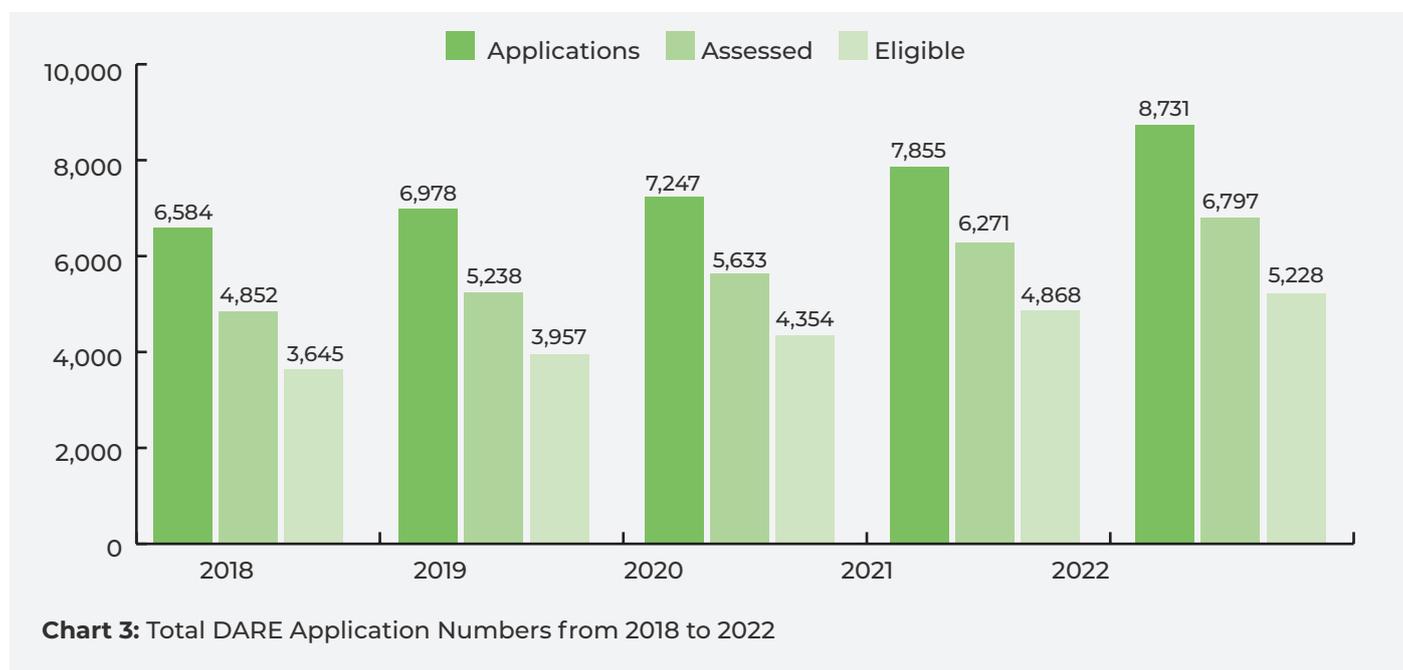
DARE

The number of applications increased steadily, with 4,852 in 2018 and 6,797 in 2022. Despite variations, the percentage of applications not assessed remained consistent, ranging from 20% to 25% throughout the years. Notably, the final number of eligible applications rose from 3,645 in 2018 to 5,228 in 2022, representing a significant 43% increase over the five-year period. Meanwhile, the final number of ineligible applications grew from 1,203 in 2018 to 1,569 in 2022

The data reveals gender differences in DARE eligibility across the years. While the number of assessed applications varied, females consistently had a slightly higher percentage of eligibility compared to males. In 2018, for example, 74% of assessed females were eligible compared to 69% of males. This trend persisted throughout the years, with females consistently maintaining a slightly higher eligibility rate. The age group 18 consistently has the highest number of assessed individuals. It maintains a high eligibility rate (76%-78%).

There were variations in eligibility rates across different Dublin postcodes and regions, with

Dublin having the highest assessments, peaking at 1,776 in 2022. Eligibility rates varied, with Carlow at 82% in 2022 and Longford dropping to 54%. Dublin maintained around 80% eligibility, with over 1,000 qualifying annually. Irish applicants consistently maintain a higher eligibility rate (in the range of 75%-78%) compared to applicants from other EU and non-EU countries. Additionally, varying rates of eligibility were observed across different disability categories, with applicants with neurodevelopmental conditions showing higher rates, ranging from 81% to 89% over the years, compared to those with physical disabilities or ongoing illnesses which tend to have lower eligibility rates, ranging from 56% to 82%. Concerning the number of DARE educational impact indicators met by all assessed, some indicators were consistently met by a high percentage of applicants, namely, indicator 3 School Experience and Well-being and indicator 4 Intervention and Support. Moreover, a much higher concentration of applicants met three indicators (36% in 2018 and 28% in 2022) or four indicators were met with a rate in the range of 40% and 43%.



DUAL ELIGIBLE

This section focuses on dual eligible applicants for both DARE eligible applicants and HEAR eligible applicants, including eligibility to carry forward (ECF), in Irish higher education. Key trends include a stable proportion of dual-eligible applicants (5%). Socio-economic factors show that most dual-eligible applicants are from the marginally below-average group.

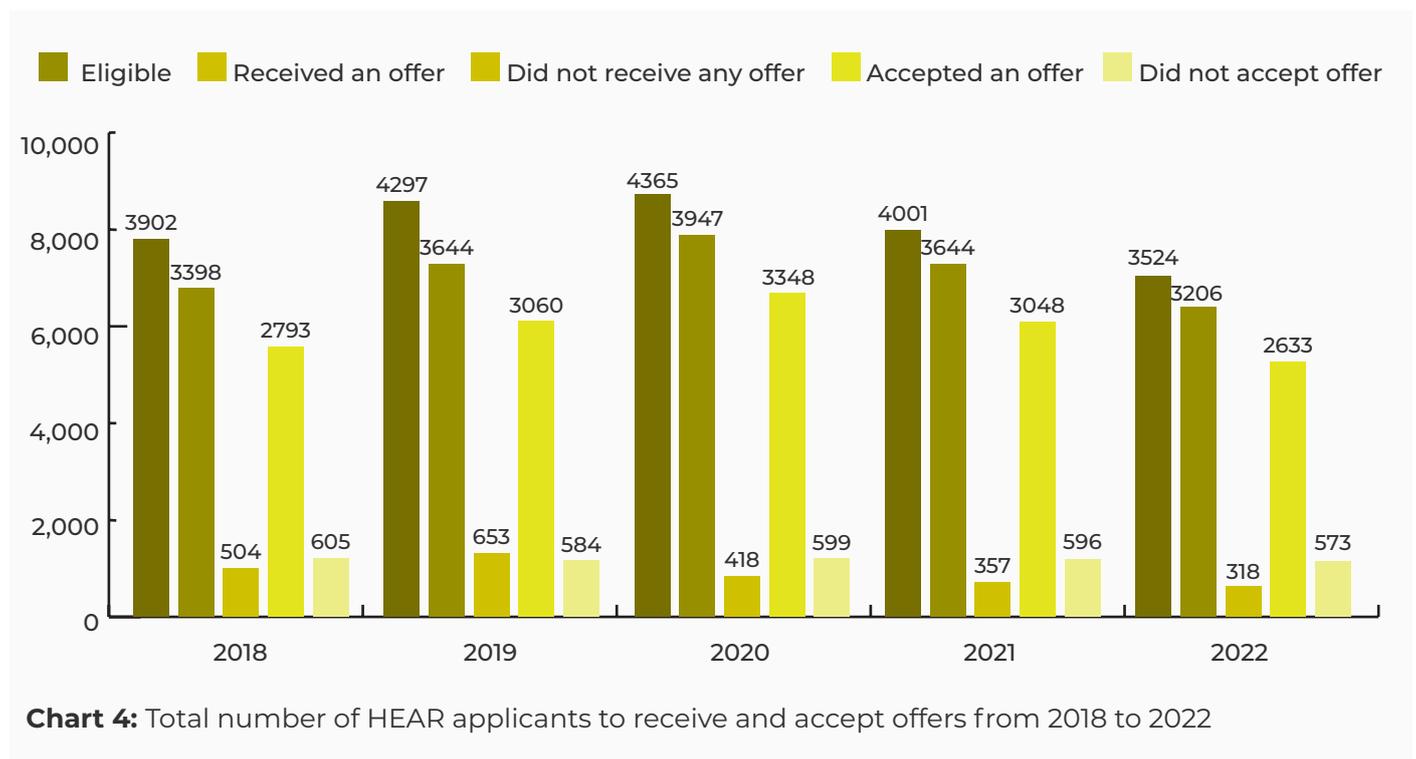
Disability types like Autism Spectrum Disorder and Specific Learning Difficulties are prevalent among dual-eligible applicants. The data also highlights the fulfilment of the educational impact indicators, suggesting areas for further investigation or targeted support for applicants meeting different indicator thresholds.

Acceptances

HEAR

From 2018 to 2022, the number of HEAR applicants varied, peaking at 8,518 in 2018 and dipping to 7,548 in 2022, while the percentage of applicants receiving offers remained stable between 81% and 89%. Acceptance rates among assessed applicants ranged from 84% over this period, indicating effective assessment processes. Applicants meeting more indicators of socio-economic disadvantage had higher acceptance rates, highlighting the scheme's effectiveness. Despite lower numbers (1,876 to 2,284), DEIS school applicants had strong acceptance rates (1,314 to 1,690), highlighting the scheme's support for disadvantaged students. Socio-economic group (SEG) analysis revealed that applicants from

affluent backgrounds had higher acceptance rates, often above 70% than their disadvantaged counterparts, often below 30%. SEG D - Non-Manual Workers consistently had the highest applicants (1,601 to 1,924) and acceptance numbers (1,051 to 1,372), while SEG J - Agricultural Workers had the lowest (9 to 20 applicants and 8 to 12 acceptances). Education was the most popular course subject, with acceptance rates ranging from 21% to 25%, followed by Law at 17% to 20%. Institutions like Dublin City University (DCU) consistently attracted a significant percentage of HEAR applicants, with similar trends observed at University College Dublin (UCD).



DARE

From 2018 to 2022, the percentage of applicants accepting offers below the required points dropped from 27% to 21%, and those accepting offers on or above the required points slightly declined from 25% to 24%. Approximately 10-15% of applicants consistently accepted offers in non-participating HEIs each year. Eligibility rates remained high at about 85%, with fluctuations in Eligibility Carry Forward (ECF) usage. Applicants with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) were the largest group, peaking at 1,878 in 2022, with acceptance rates between 66% and 70%. Mental Health condition applicants ranged from 665 to 908, with 61% to 69% acceptance rates, while physical disability applicants had moderate numbers and 72% to 82% acceptance rates. Deaf/Hard of Hearing applicants showed stable application numbers and 74% to 81% acceptance

rates. The number of applicants accepting reduced points offers increased from 1,006 in 2018 to 1,283 in 2022, with notable trends in acceptance rates across disability types. Secondary and vocational schools saw significant growth in applicants and acceptance rates, while comprehensive and community schools showed steady growth. Science/applied science was the most popular course subject, representing 21% to 22% of acceptances. Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and University College Dublin (UCD) consistently had the highest acceptance rates, around 15% to 19%, while Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) and University College Cork (UCC) maintained rates of 9% to 15%. Emerging trends included increases in acceptance rates for National College of Ireland (NCI) and Munster Technological University (MTU).

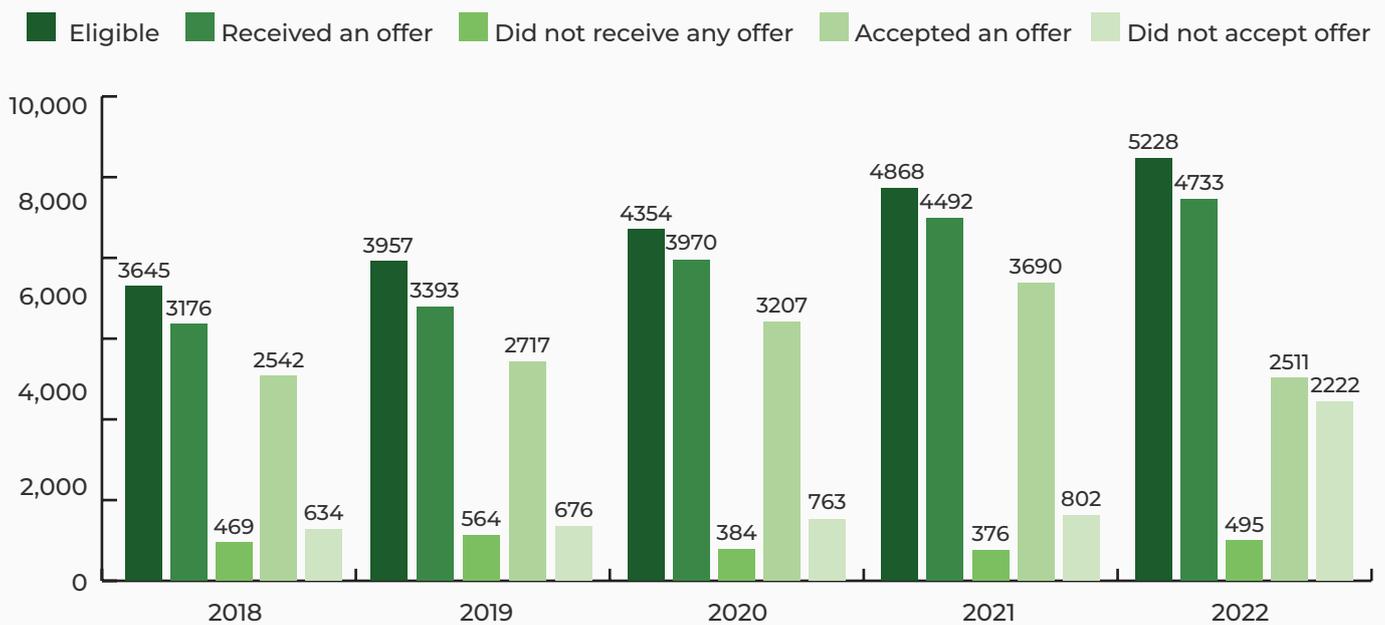


Chart 5: Total number of DARE applicants to receive and accept offers from 2018 to 2022

DUAL ELIGIBLE

Over the years, the total number of dual eligible applicants varied slightly, ranging from 422 to 450. The majority of dual eligible applicants for both schemes received offers, with the percentage receiving offers generally exceeding 80% each year. However, there was a consistent proportion of applicants who did not receive any offer, ranging

from 10% to 15% annually. Among those who received offers, a significant percentage accepted an offer, with acceptance rates ranging from 66% to 73%. This data should be valued as a key guide for better-targetted approaches for outreach and information for applicants who are dual-eligible.



		Total	Did not receive any offer	Received any offer	Accepted an offer	Below Points L8 offer	Below Points L6/7 offer	On/above points L8 offer	On/above points L6/7 offer	Other on/above points L8 offer	Other on/above points L6/7 offer	
2018	All dual eligible*	344	293	51	229	64	55	5	45	7	87	30
	All DARE eligible*	3645	3176	469	2542	634	892	905	88	145	328	184
	All HEAR eligible*	3902	3398	504	2793	605	940	47	850	64	559	333
2019	All dual eligible*	433	346	87	268	78	65	9	89	19	60	26
	All DARE eligible*	3957	3393	564	2717	676	1007	98	1062	189	265	96
	All HEAR eligible*	4297	3644	653	3060	584	1070	106	1152	106	327	176
2020	All dual eligible*	432	382	50	312	70	69	33	113	12	63	22
	All DARE eligible*	4354	3970	384	3207	763	1046	102	1442	255	284	78
	All HEAR eligible*	4365	3947	418	3348	599	1076	92	1456	298	319	107
2021	All dual eligible*	450	397	53	324	73	77	32	117	11	68	19
	All DARE eligible*	4868	4492	376	3690	802	1171	61	1583	283	309	283
	All HEAR eligible*	4001	3644	357	3048	596	1076	75	1205	249	350	93
2022	All dual eligible*	422	379	43	295	84	75	7	104	26	71	12
	All DARE eligible*	5228	4733	495	2511	2222	1180	76	1741	274	301	73
	All HEAR eligible*	3524	3206	318	2633	573	934	58	1133	218	225	65

*(including ECF)

Table 1 Total number of applicants to receive and accept offers

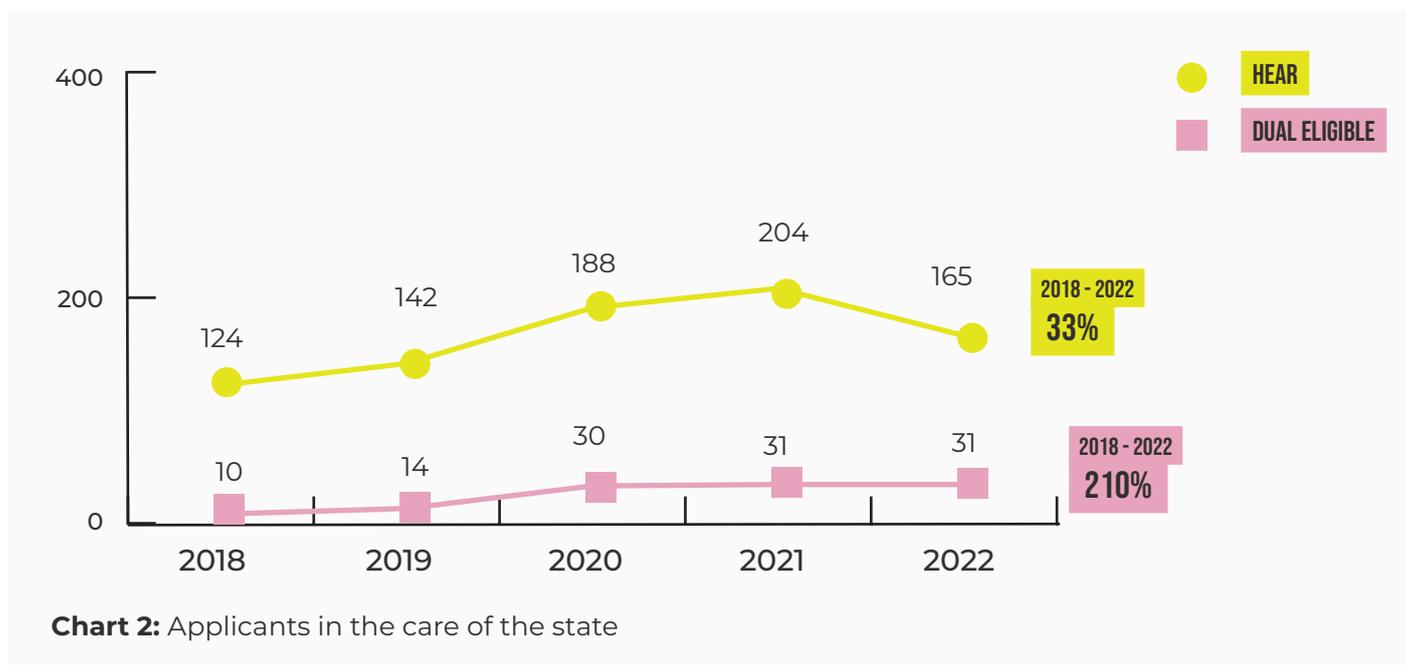


Applicants in the Care of the State

As per the National Access Plan (NAP) 2022 - 2028, applicants who have been in the care of the state or who are care-experienced are prioritised within the HEAR scheme. The HEAR scheme hosts an option via the CAO online application whereby an applicant can tick "in the care of the state" and thereby applies to the scheme with the help of a relevant care social worker or relevant professional to provide a document confirming their status as a student in the care of the state. Applicants in the care of the state are prioritised within the application process. By examining the data below, we can see how effective the HEAR and DARE schemes are when ensuring those who are at risk of not progressing to higher education due to the educational disadvantage associated with being from a care experienced background. Over the period of analysis, 823 students were

eligible for access supports, with 116 dual eligible students applying to HEAR and DARE. This proves how the scheme can capture a greater level of intersectional disadvantage between students experiencing socio-economic hardship and experience of educational disadvantage due to their disability.

The overall increase in application numbers from 2018 – 2022 could be attributed to greater awareness of educational stakeholders, care and social care stakeholders and the greater impact of DARE HEAR communications strategies. Nonetheless, the small minority numbers captured above should be championed as a sign of the schemes success in helping those at the very fringes of society such as those in the care of the state.



	Total	Received any offer	Did not receive any offer	Accepted an offer	Received + did not accept offer	Below Points L8	Below Points L6/7	On/above points L8	On/above points L6/7	Other On/above points L6/7	Other On/above points L8*	
2018	All dual eligible*	344	293	51	229	64	55	5	45	7	87	30
	All HEAR eligible*	124	93	31	56	37	13	1	18	0	11	13
2019	All dual eligible*	433	346	87	268	78	65	9	89	19	60	26
	All HEAR eligible*	142	90	52	73	17	25	2	24	8	8	6
2020	All dual eligible*	432	382	50	312	70	69	33	113	12	63	22
	All HEAR eligible*	188	159	29	102	57	0	5	44	20	20	13
2021	All dual eligible*	450	397	53	324	73	77	32	117	11	68	19
	All HEAR eligible*	204	172	32	141	31	38	2	53	17	20	11
2022	All dual eligible*	422	379	43	295	84	75	7	104	26	71	12
	All HEAR eligible*	165	126	39	88	38	22	4	32	14	10	6

*(including ECF)

Table 2 Total number of applicants in the care of the state to receive and accept offers

Conclusion

The Facts and Figures Report 2018/22 offers a comprehensive examination of the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) programmes in Ireland over a five-year period. Through detailed analysis of application trends, eligibility criteria, and acceptance outcomes, this report provides valuable insights into the accessibility, effectiveness, and equity of alternative access routes to higher education.

Key findings reveal shifts in application preferences, with a slight decline in HEAR applicants and a notable increase in DARE applicants. Despite fluctuations, gender imbalances persist, highlighting potential gender-related factors influencing higher education aspirations. The age distribution of applicants reflects a consistent demographic seeking support, with geographical disparities suggesting ongoing challenges in access to higher education across regions.

Analysis of eligibility criteria underscores the importance of targeted support mechanisms and equity-focused policies to ensure fair access for all students, irrespective of socio-economic status or geographical location. Furthermore, insights into acceptance outcomes reveal both positive trends and ongoing challenges, emphasising the need for continued efforts to address barriers and promote inclusivity.

Overall, this report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, education stakeholders, and advocacy groups, providing a foundation for informed decision-making and targeted interventions to enhance access, opportunity, and success in higher education for all students in Ireland. By addressing the findings and recommendations outlined in this report, stakeholders can work collaboratively to build a more accessible, equitable, and inclusive higher education system for future generations.

Dr Abdellatif Atif, Researcher and Daniel McFarlane, Access Manager, IUA.

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