



**PhD Position in Quantitative Sociology  
(Project ‘Social Disadvantage and health behaviours in adolescence’)**

**Post specification**

Post Title:	PhD Researcher in Sociology
Post Status:	<b>48 months</b> , Full-time
Starting Date:	September 2023
Department/Faculty:	Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Reports to (supervisor):	<b>Professor Richard Layte</b>
Location:	Trinity College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland)
Salary:	PhD Researcher. Full fees (EU) plus Euro 20,000 stipend per annum (tax-free scholarship stipend) plus research allowance
Closing Date:	<b>31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 (23:00 GMT)</b>

**Post Summary**

*Doctoral Researcher in Sociology (PhD programme)*

The **Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin** is seeking to appoint a doctoral researcher for a period of 48 months.

The doctoral candidate will conduct an innovative PhD project in the field of health behaviour among adolescents as specified by the project brief below.

**‘Social Disadvantage and health behaviours in adolescence: Testing sociological, socio-biological, and psychological explanations’**

Across different societies we frequently observe that members of socio-economically disadvantaged groups and non-dominant minority groups (sometimes ethnic and/or racial minorities) exhibit higher rates of involvement in different high-risk behaviours, compared to the country’s majority or dominant group. Nondominant minority groups tend to engage at higher rates in smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, non-prescription drug use as well as risky sexual behaviours. These patterns become established in adolescence and temporally coincide with an increased risk of academic demotivation or conduct disorder, frequently linked to disadvantageous educational outcomes. Theoretical explanations can be found in the literatures from sociology, public health research, biology, and psychology. Sociology and public health often attribute adverse health behaviours to the development of a “resistance” culture among young people driven by a stance of opposition to the symbols, groups or positions of authority. Biologists propose “social acceleration” theory to explain why socially



disadvantaged groups adopt worse health behaviours in addition to specific physiological changes which have been observed among these groups such as acceleration of menarche among females and biological age acceleration in telomeres and the epigenome. In psychology, attachment theory argues that early childhood experiences may lead to poor attachment among adolescents which raise the likelihood of low perceived control, self-esteem and social competence, resulting in poor social relationships and adverse health behaviours as a coping mechanism. This inter-disciplinary project sets out to test these different theoretical frameworks in terms of their ability to predict patterns of health and social behaviours in adolescence. The project will draw on comparative data from longitudinal child cohort studies from Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. As some of those studies include physical samples, the project aspires to incorporate biological analysis using epigenetic data to examine the model of social acceleration. Additionally, the project may collect a small sample of primary data from adolescents in Ireland.

Applicants with a background in any social or natural science field are welcome but applicants must have advanced training in quantitative-statistical methodology and be able to show that they have experience in the analysis of social survey micro-data, preferably longitudinal data, and be competent in using a statistical package such as Stata or R. The successful candidate will work closely with Prof. Richard Layte and will join the prestigious PhD programme at the Department of Sociology of Trinity College Dublin. The Department will provide all logistic, academic and intellectual support and the PhD candidate will join the vibrant doctoral programme in the Department of Sociology at TCD. The Dept provides a structured PhD training programme which combines obligatory training modules with bespoke training for the specific skills the student will require. PhD students are expected to present their research to colleagues nationally and internationally and additional training expenses such as conference travel are covered by the Dept in addition to academic fees and basic expenses related to the PhD programme itself.

We are looking for an enthusiastic PhD candidate with an enquiring mind, excellent statistical knowledge and first-rate analytic skills to undertake an exciting scientific project which has the potential to impact many fields of scientific study and which may contribute substantially to policy development.

#### *Standard duties of the post*

- Critical, systematic and analytical review of relevant literature for the project.
- Writing academic pieces (working papers, chapters, journal articles) in excellent English.
- Conducting empirical research using statistical methods with longitudinal data.
- Actively writing and submitting research papers for publication and contributing to joint projects or related submissions with the PhD supervisor.
- Attending meetings, workshops, and conferences.
- Disseminating academic work to specialised and general audiences.
- 4 hours of teaching a week during the statutory term (facilitating undergraduate tutorials).



## Person Specification

### *Qualifications*

- MA, MSc or MPhil in any social (e.g. Sociology, Economics, Politics, Population Studies/Demography, Psychology, Social Policy, Epidemiology) or natural science (e.g. Genetics, Neuroscience, Biology, Zoology). Any thesis should be either defended or submitted by the date of interview.

### *Essential research skills*

- excellent analytical skills;
- the ability to understand theories about the processes that shape child development and behaviours and to create innovative methods to test them;
- solid statistical training or knowledge in advanced multivariate statistical methods, and preferably high competence in longitudinal research design;
- experience in the management and analysis of micro-level quantitative data (preferably longitudinal data);
- advanced technical skills in *Stata* or comparable statistical packages (like R) or willingness and competence to acquire such skills in a short amount of time

### *Other essential knowledge and skills*

- excellent written and verbal communication skills in English;
- ability to structure and pursue an independent research project;
- strong motivation to publish in academic journals;
- good organisational skills;
- ability to work effectively in a team;
- interpersonal and relational skills

### *Desirable skills*

- an openness to interdisciplinary approaches;
- knowledge of the literatures on child development and social inequality;
- interest in pursuing an academic or teaching career

## Application Procedure

Informal enquiries are very welcome and can be made directly to Prof. Richard Layte ([layter@tcd.ie](mailto:layter@tcd.ie))

To apply, candidates should submit:

1. a **motivation letter** clearly indicating how the applicant's profile and skills fit the requirements of the PhD position (max. 2 pages);
2. a **full curriculum vitae**
3. the names and contact details of **two referees** (with email addresses included);
4. at least **one example of a written piece of work** (in English) that shows the statistical and analytical skills of the candidate.



via email to

- Professor Richard Layte ([layter@tcd.ie](mailto:layter@tcd.ie))

before the **closing date of March 31st 2023 (23:00 GMT)**.

Applications must indicate exactly “*PhD Application – Quantitative Sociology*” in the subject line.

### **Institutional background information**

#### *The Department of Sociology*

Sociology is a member of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, one of 24 Schools within Trinity College. The Department’s principal research clusters are: Migration, Identities and Diversity; Comparative Inequalities, Education and Families; Power, Conflict and Resistance; Digitalisation and Social Networks.

Department staff are highly international and our research combines advanced quantitative methods applied to real-world data with the use of sophisticated and diverse qualitative methodologies. Our research links to several College priority research themes: 'International Integration' centred within Trinity Research in Social Science (TRISS), 'Identities in Transformation' and 'Inclusive Society' within the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH) and 'Ageing' within the Longitudinal Study of Ageing (TILDA). The Department has a long-standing collaboration with Ireland’s premier research institute, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and has strong links with other disciplines such as Medicine, Psychology, Immunology and Neuroscience.

The Department has an active postgraduate programme. It is home to an MSc in Comparative Social Change delivered jointly with University College Dublin, as well as an MPhil in Race, Ethnicity, Conflict. It has a structured PhD programme combining advanced methodological training with transferable skills workshops. There are around 15 PhD students and our doctoral graduates have positions in academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Further information on the Department of Sociology is available at: [www.tcd.ie/sociology](http://www.tcd.ie/sociology)

#### *School of Social Sciences and Philosophy*

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy was formed in 2005 and comprises the Departments of Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology, together with the Policy Institute. With over 45 full-time academic staff, the School has an international reputation in research and is committed to the dissemination of its knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the wider community, with the Policy Institute providing an important channel for policy analysis and evaluation. The School is home to the unique undergraduate



## Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

degree in PPES (Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology). It also contributes to undergraduate degrees in Business, Economic and Social Studies (this includes Political Science and Sociology), Philosophy, History and Political Science, Philosophy and Political Science, Law and Political Science, Geography and Political Science, Sociology and Social Policy, and European Studies. Over 100 graduate students are conducting research across the four disciplines.

Further information on the School is available at: [www.tcd.ie/ssp](http://www.tcd.ie/ssp)

### *Trinity College Dublin*

Founded in 1592, Trinity College is at the nexus of tradition and innovation, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across 24 schools and three faculties: arts, humanities, and social sciences; engineering, maths and science; and health sciences. Spread across 47 acres in Dublin's city centre, Trinity's more than 20,000 strong student body comes from all 32 counties of Ireland, and 16% of students come from outside the country. Of those, 40% are from outside the European Union, making Trinity's campus cosmopolitan and bustling, with a focus on diversity.

As Ireland's leading university, the pursuit of academic excellence through research and scholarship is at the heart of the Trinity education. Trinity is known for intellectual rigour, excellence, interdisciplinary approach, and research-led teaching. Home to Nobel prize-winners such as scientist Ernest Walton and writer Samuel Beckett, Trinity draws visitors from across the world to its historic campus each year, including to the Book of Kells and Science Gallery which capture the university's connection to both old and new. Trinity accounts for one-fifth of all spin-out companies from Irish higher education institutions, helping to turn Ireland into an innovation-intensive, high-productivity economy. That culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is a defining characteristic of our campus as we help shape the next generation of job creators.

### *Equal Opportunities Policy*

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the employment policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.