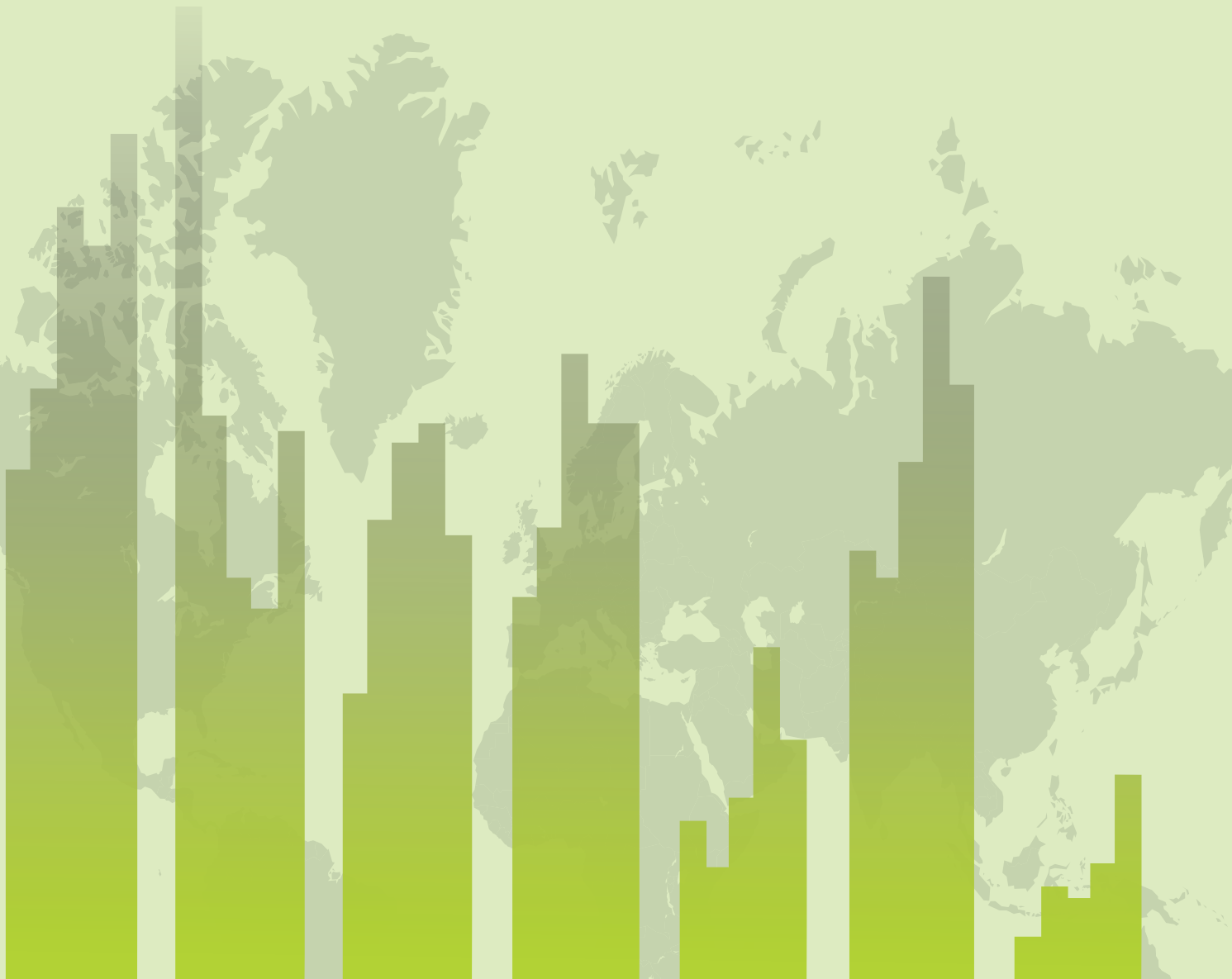


# SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE IRISH DIASPORA

Report of a Research Project Funded by the Emigrant  
Support Programme, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Liam Kennedy, Madeleine Lyes, Martin Russell  
Clinton Institute, University College Dublin  
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An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



# Table of Contents

Key Findings 1

Introduction 3

Irish Emigration and the Emigrant Support Programme 9

The Irish in Britain 24

The Irish in the United States 45

The Irish in Australia 59

The Irish in Canada 73

The Irish in Other Destinations 87

Conclusion 102

Works Cited 108

The Research Team 115

Acknowledgements 116

# Key Findings

- At a time when the Government is reviewing its engagement with the Irish abroad, the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) should be resourced and strategically developed as a key point of engagement with the Irish diaspora. The ESP is not only an effective means of support for vulnerable sectors in the diaspora it also has great potential to facilitate the bridging of differences and disconnects within diaspora communities and between Ireland and its diaspora. The combination of support for the vulnerable with engagement of the successful will define the character of Ireland's engagement with the Irish abroad.
- A focus on frontline services should remain central to the ESP agenda, while taking into consideration the shifting metrics of vulnerabilities. There is evidence of primary needs in all the communities visited and researched, though these fluctuate depending on context. They include the elderly Irish, especially in Britain, Irish Travellers in Britain, the undocumented Irish in the USA, and young families in Australia and Canada.
- The welfare focus must be balanced with that on culture and heritage. There are many points of connection between these elements—indeed, culture may be said to have a therapeutic impact on the Irish diaspora as a whole—though more can be done to align them in designing policy. There is much evidence that Irish cultural products and activities motivate social interaction among different segments of the Irish diaspora and so accommodate difference, including different ideas and forms of Irishness. It is integral to reaching out to second and third generations.
- While welfare and culture should be the core elements supported by the ESP there are emerging opportunities to also engage business and education networks in a broader diaspora engagement. There are already examples in the ESP portfolio and this report identifies further possibilities whereby the ESP can scale out the support paradigm of its work to include advancements in educational and economic development.
- Although the ESP sees its function primarily in supporting migrants once they have left Ireland (and there are obvious sensitivities around any activity seen to be supporting migration), the issues of pre-departure preparation and return were highlighted everywhere the report team visited and so we highlight them here. Many vulnerabilities begin at home, and many return home. There is an opportunity for the ESP to heighten its impact with the next generation of Irish emigrants by engaging them in all stages of the diasporic journey—departure, time abroad, and possible return.
- Irish emigration to “other destinations” (beyond the core destinations of Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada) showcases new frontiers in diaspora support and engagement. Irish community organisations in these countries provide help in navigating acute cultural difference, and provide a backbone of Irish identity for an increasingly mobile population. They have leveraged their constituencies' diaspora capital in innovative ways, and have in some cases created solutions to issues prominent in mainstream destinations. The ESP should more actively engage these “other” Irish communities.
- The research team encountered repeated concerns in multiple regions of Irish settlement about intergenerational gaps at community and leadership levels. This lack of intergenerational stake-holding within the diasporic communities can be deemed as a fresh opportunity for the ESP to provide targeted support for programmes and activities that bridge generations.
- The emergence of a young, female professional element in the Irish emigrant communities affords opportunity for the ESP to support the development of diasporic networks for female professional development.
- In the post-2008 context, the impact of social media on diaspora communities has been significant. The scale and nature of this impact is complex, and worthy of further study. The changing na-

ture of intra-diasporic communication, advice networks, access to home media and debate, and expectations of accessibility more broadly have proven a challenge and a resource to Irish communities worldwide. As of yet, government stakeholders have not fully grappled with the potential inherent in these new modes of diaspora communication.

- Many service providers spoke of their interest in sharing experience and knowledge both nationally and transnationally. Some suggested the creation of specific platforms, such as online fora, educational exchanges, and research collaborations, to harmonise the expertise and experiences of global Irish actors who are supporting Irish communities abroad. As with the social media example above, the DFAT should be open to supporting new initiatives in these areas under the ESP.
- A number of interviewees held strong views about the priorities, allocations and administration of ESP funding. These included questions about the “conditions of funding,” and about “measurement and monitoring.” While some such comments are subjective it would be prudent for the ESP to widen and deepen its diaspora engagement as suggested above, to more fully advertise its work, and to consider the best techniques to measure its outcomes in line with broader, government-led diaspora policy. This is in line with the recommendation of the Global Irish Economic Forum in October 2013 that the Government establish a “defined, measurable strategy for engaging with the Irish diaspora” (Report of the Third Global Irish Economic Forum).
- There remains scepticism on the mandate and expectations of government engagement with the global Irish and the ESP occupies an important role in helping to promote trust and confidence in why the diaspora is being engaged and what is expected of them. It underscores the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between government and diaspora in the Irish context.

- Diaspora engagement should involve an ethics of care on the part of Government, based on recognition, respect and reciprocity. The ESP has particular value in this regard, as an emblematic constituent of Irish diaspora policy.
- It is important that the current value and future potential of the ESP does not create a burden of expectation. The role of the ESP should be to facilitate, not to lead nor direct. This approach is widely acknowledged as international best practice in diaspora engagement, which recommends that diasporic groups themselves must self-organise to support their communities, while governments act principally as facilitators.
- We recognise that resources are not unlimited and that reductions in certain areas of support may be necessary in order that the ESP can undertake fresh initiatives. In line with the current review of the DFAT’s engagement with the Irish abroad, a balance will need to be struck in aligning resources, aims and objectives with the changing nature of the Irish diaspora.

# Introduction

More and more, states are seeking to understand the forms and functions of diasporas and engage them to provide new opportunities for knowledge transfer, tourism, conflict resolution, and many other matters. In the context of these emerging interests, Ireland has some prominence as a small nation with over seventy million diaspora. The Irish government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its engagement with the Irish abroad. Launching the review on 19th March 2014, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Eamon Gilmore said:

Engagement with our diaspora is of enormous importance for Ireland. Together, we have built economic links resulting in trade, investment and tourism. Our engagement has played an important role in efforts to bring a lasting peace to this island. It has also deepened ties of culture and kinship. (“Tánaiste Seeks Views on Future Diaspora Policy”)

At the same time, he noted: “While many Irish have found great success overseas, for others it has been a challenging and difficult experience.” This acknowledgement of the mixed fortunes of the Irish diaspora is uncommon in public political discourses and an indicator of a mature intent by the Government—rare in Western nations—to recognise and offer support to vulnerable sectors of the diaspora as well as engage the successful. This can be a challenging balancing act, not least because the diaspora is an imaginary community that is difficult to define or measure, but will be key to shaping the character of Ireland’s engagement with the Irish abroad. This report, focused in particular on the work of the Emigrant Support Programme, also addresses some of these broader matters of diaspora engagement.

Since 2004 the Irish government has provided financial support through its Emigrant Support

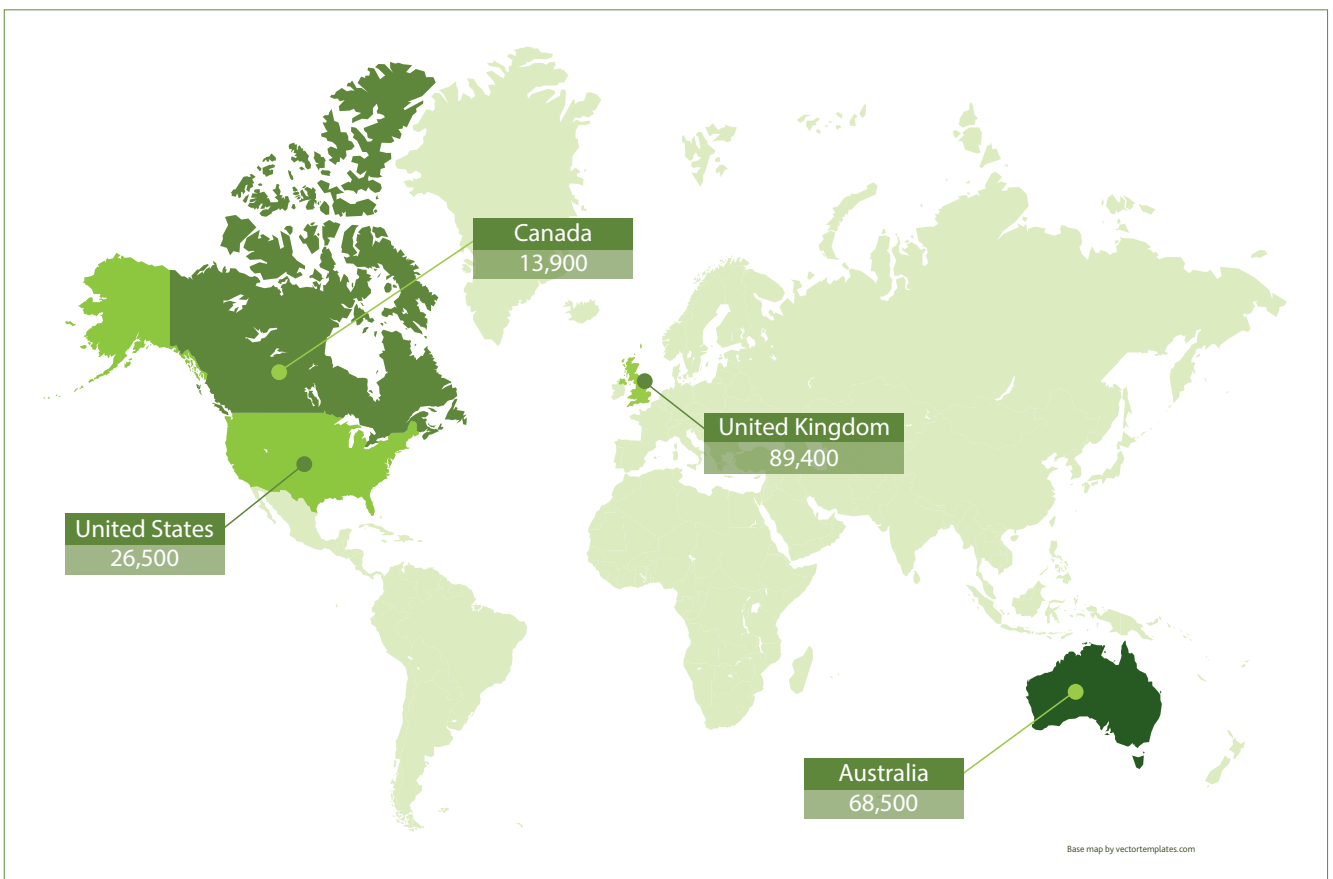


Fig 1: Numbers of Irish Migrants, 2008–13  
Source: Central Statistics Office of Ireland.

Programme (ESP) to organisations that are engaged in the delivery of services to Irish communities and citizens overseas. The majority of funding goes to support services to the most vulnerable and marginalised, while the programme has recently expanded to support heritage and cultural projects that foster a sense of identity within Irish communities and strengthen their links with Ireland. The programme was initiated at a time of economic prosperity and with a sense that the country owed a debt of support to its diaspora, especially to the vulnerable amongst them. In the last ten years and especially with the impact of the economic recession since 2008 patterns of migration have changed significantly—Ireland has once again become a country of net emigration—and there are many signs of new forms of interest in engaging the Irish diaspora. It is timely to consider the profile and needs of the emergent generation of Irish emigrants.

This research report scopes the changing profile and needs of Irish emigrants in relation to the Government’s strategic objectives in engaging the diaspora—particularly through the ESP—and considers how best these objectives may continue to be met. It reviews and analyses current data on the Irish abroad, with particular focus on the Irish in Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada. The report reflects an understanding of the dynamics and contexts that are reshaping the nature of the Irish diaspora and in particular the characteristics and needs of the “next generation” of emigrants. It includes an examination of emergent patterns of migration and the shifting metrics of vulnerability within the Irish diaspora. The report identifies strategies of the ESP and partners that are effective in reaching vulnerable emigrants and draws on international research to help identify good practices in emigrant support. It also considers how established and emerging culture and identity projects may most effectively deliver the aims of the ESP, particularly in second and third generation Irish communities abroad.

The report brings together different sources of information and combines statistical data, critical analysis and interviews to provide focused com-

mentary on general patterns of emigration and on the particulars of key countries of Irish diaspora settlement. While we begin by reviewing the outputs of the ESP in terms of the volume, range and trend of grants awarded since 2008, the emphasis of this study is on current and emerging patterns of emigration and emigrant needs, so as to present a picture of the next generation of the Irish diaspora.

## Definitions and Sources

The shifting nature of the Irish diaspora is a key conceptual and experiential point of focus as we design the report to not only review current profiles and needs of the Irish diaspora but also scope emergent patterns and project future profiles and needs

### Definitions

Our focus on the **next generation** of emigrants should not be taken to mean younger people, rather it refers us to the character of the current and emergent communities of Irish abroad, understood in relation to the broad economic, social and cultural conditions of emigration.

Our emphasis on **vulnerability** is likewise framed and understood in relation to these conditions. It refers in the first instance to the historical grounds of ESP activity, providing support for the most vulnerable and marginal among the Irish overseas, but also to the changing needs of the next generation of the Irish diaspora. There is a therapeutic impetus in much of the support lent both to projects of care as well as those of culture, infusing the diaspora with a sense of connectivity that is crucial to its health. Vulnerability is differently understood and serviced in different countries and we develop a comparative analysis of needs in the selected locales, to better understand the contexts of vulnerability among emigrant communities. (For example, the definition and experience of social exclusion differs significantly between Britain and the United States, in part because of different welfare systems and cultures).

Our use of the term **diaspora** reflects evolving scholarly and policy perspectives on this concept and refers to the culture and connectivity of a group

“There is a therapeutic impetus in much of the support lent both to projects of care as well as those of culture, infusing the diaspora with a sense of connectivity that is crucial to its health”

of migrant origin residing in a host country but maintaining strong imaginative and material linkages with the country of origin (See Aikins and White, 2011; Agunias, 2010; Baubock and Faist, 2010; Cohen, 2008; Lyons and Mandaville, 2010; Safran, 1991; and Sheffer, 2003)!. We aim to illuminate dynamics at work in the maintenance of the Irish diaspora and the changing relationship between the diaspora and the home nation, taking into consideration significant shifts in demographics and communications that are reshaping diasporas in the context of globalisation. A diaspora framework also revises and extends the category of emigrant for it foregrounds the dynamics of host-homeland-emigrant relationships and highlights the significance of cultural identity and the multiple forms of communication and mobility that maintain this.

The ESP has used particular categories to facilitate its funding criteria and decisions. These are:

1. Capital expenditure “Projects involving the construction, refurbishment or purchase of capital assets.”
2. Welfare (elderly services) grants.
3. Welfare (other services) grants.
4. Heritage Grants “Project involving the promotion and maintenance of Irish heritage and identity overseas.”

A close analysis of funding trajectories post-2008 as well as consideration of emigration patterns and the changing culture of the diaspora, leads us to present alternative though closely related categorisations for the purposes of analysis and forecasting. These are:

1. **Culture:** a determinant driver in facilitating a strong diasporic relationship between Irish emigrants and home. It is a therapeutic connection that works up a shared sense of identity and cultural traits that connect emigrants with home. Furthermore, culture is a key bridge between new and established emigrants and their ongoing negotiation between isolation and assimilation at home and abroad.

2. **Support:** the central framework for the provision and providing of front line services to Irish emigrants abroad. The support category includes those who enable emigrants to access critical services in order to ensure their safety and well-being abroad. These individuals and institutions are a critical apparatus in facilitating host country assimilation for new and established Irish emigrants. This category also includes those who provide advice, guidance and direction on a range of support driven topics for Irish emigrants abroad, including alcohol abuse, housing, and counselling.

3. **Business:** refers to the continued efforts by the DFAT and the Irish abroad to promote and secure business into and from Ireland. It is focused on the promotion of Irish business networks and talents abroad, most often through formal and informal networking arrangements which range from social activities to active business promotion. It is a growing component of the Irish diaspora’s relationship with Ireland and a key future trajectory of connection at home.

An example of this selection of definitions is our preference for the category of culture rather than heritage. While heritage as a term encompasses culture and cultural activities, heritage refers to a cultural *history* and heritage funding is thus implicitly about supporting a shared past through the support of cultural tradition, in this case overseas. It has less resonance as a term in the present moment and is potentially reflective of an out-moded model of diasporic relationships, one in which the emigrant is pre-supposed to be in a one-way relationship with the origin country, needing support to cherish origin-based traditions as a way of coping with life in the destination country. The more flexible term culture reflects a more open relationship between emigrant, origin and destination countries. Its usage here acknowledges the formations of on-going diasporic cultures that can be developed and celebrated at home and overseas.

This definitional schema enables a nuanced appreciation of the varied forms of diaspora engagement by the ESP and of the shifting character of the Irish diaspora. It also helps us to recognise and illustrate that the individual and intersected capitals between Culture, Support, and Business have steadily be-



come the central drivers in connecting with and for the Irish Abroad.

### Sources

In plotting the story of Irish migration in recent years, it is necessary to confront both the accepted narratives of Irish historic exile and the dire lack of concrete statistical information required to clarify the lived reality of emigration. This report, in attempting to build a clear picture of recent Irish emigration and to make logical projections about future demographic movements, harnesses reputable international statistical data sources to provide a foundation for the quantitative and analytical research undertaken by the project team. The key primary sources include data and reports commissioned by government and non-government agencies, including the ESP and its institutional partners (for example: national census data, assessment reports, and embassy outreach divisions).

As pointed out by the ESRI in a 2011 report on the impact of recession on migration to and from Ireland, any effort to track trends through migration data over the previous five years will be very challenging, as Ireland changed from a country with net inward migration to one with net outward migration (Quarterly Economic Commentary). This skews efforts at large-picture analysis of overall migration during this period. The Irish Central Statistics Office (2013) reiterates the problem: “Projecting migration involves making assumptions about the magnitude and direction of future migration flows. The volatility of past migration flows and their susceptibility to shifts in reaction to economic conditions makes projections around migration very difficult” (Population and Labour Force Projections, 2016–46).

In the narrower remit of this report, clear analysis of emigrant data is hindered by a number of factors including, for example, the CSO tracking Irish migration only to core countries (though the recent expansion of their statistics to cover Canada and Australia has been helpful to this report), the lack of clear data on migration between Ireland and the UK as well as other destinations under EU free movement law, and large data gaps in those countries where large-scale Irish migration is a relatively new phenomenon. This report therefore focuses not on assessments of likely trends in the *numbers*

of Irish migrants in the coming years, but rather on the *changing character* of such emigrant groups, in order to better project their future needs.

We also conduct interviews with key stakeholders to build knowledge about the processes of emigrant support among those responsible for the delivery of services to the Irish community abroad. These include visits to representative groups of funded projects in Britain, the United States and Australia and Canada—the focus is not on reviewing their work but on identifying emerging issues and patterns that indicate the trajectories of Irish emigrant mobility and experience in the coming years.

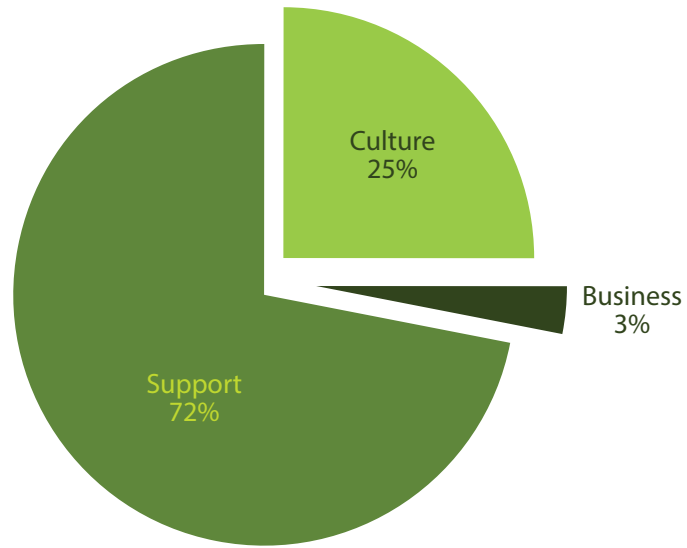
The key secondary sources are academic scholarship on the Irish diaspora, migration, and diaspora engagement strategies. The project also incorporates global expertise from established and emerging policy writers including policy briefs. These sources provide the necessary depth to position the report as a progressive discussion of the ESP as a thought and practice leader in the area of emigrant support.

The project team has reviewed data on recent and emergent patterns of Irish migration and on the motivations and experiences of emigrants, with particular attention to those who are vulnerable. This review utilises conventional categories of emigrant mobility and identity (offering continuity with previous reports and studies associated with the ESP): age/generation, gender, socioeconomic factors, religion, and geography. It also draws on current research that is redefining categories of Irish diaspora identity to better understand the changing landscapes of the Irish diaspora, with particular appreciation of the changing dynamics and contexts in areas such as human and social capital.

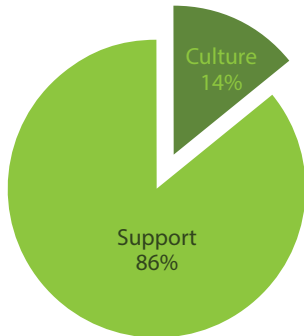
### Emigrant Support Programme Funding

Analysis of funding allocations in the post-2008 setting (simultaneous with the economic downturn and changing perceptions on Irish emigration) provides a basis for a provisional identification of emergent and future funding trends, which will then be mapped onto patterns of emigration and profiles of Irish communities abroad. From the outset, the strategic composition of the projects and funding facilitated by the ESP has developed a clear vision on the scope of needs by Irish emigrants. This is

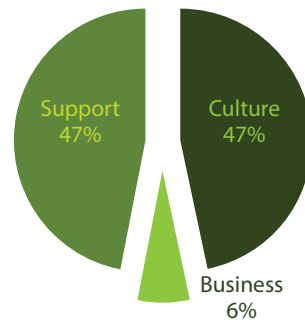
Total ESP Funding 2009–2013 by Type



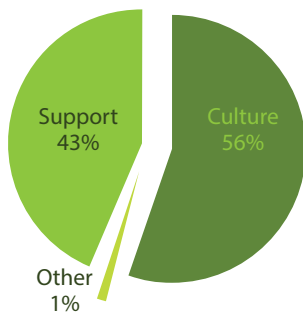
United Kingdom



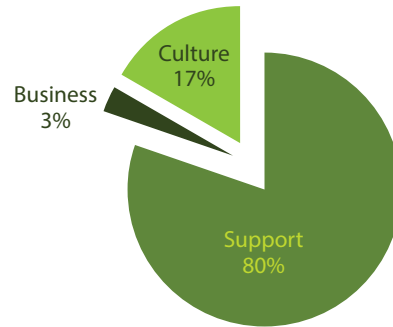
United States



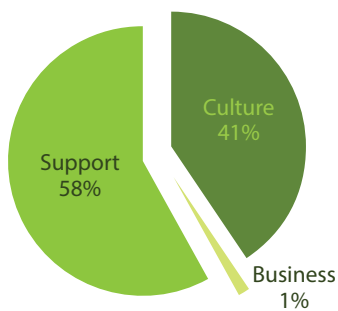
Ireland



Australia



Canada



Other Destinations

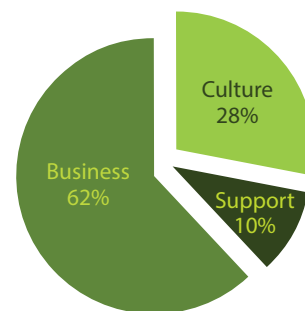


Fig 2: ESP Funding 2009–13, including overall figures and segmented figures for all key destinations.

reflected in the four precise categorisations offered within the ESP to provide a framework for funding. As indicated above however, this report presents alternative though closely related categorisations of engagement that intersect through certain projects. These are Culture, Support, and Business.

### Post-2008 Trends

In the post-2008 period, the ESP has acted as a significant financial resource for safeguarding and supporting the Irish diaspora. Between 2009 and 2013, the programme distributed approximately €60 million to organisations and communities engaging the global Irish. The categorical breakdown of this funding indicates that the ESP, during this period, has been impactful in meeting changing needs during the recessionary era. While emigration from Ireland has proliferated in recent times, the segmented breakdown of financial allocation, depicted in the overall diagram above, indicates that the ESP has invested the majority of its financial resources tackling issues of vulnerability—a key remit of the definitional parameters of the programme.

In total, the ESP has allocated 72.31%, or approximately €43,457,584, of its financial output to service orientated projects and organisations. This clearly ties in with a consistent increase in demand for services to engage the recent wave of new migrants who have left our shores. As new arrivals, these emigrants face uncertainty and dislocation and the provision of support mechanisms and services remain integral to the recent work of the ESP. While this influx of new Irish has shaped many of the discussions to follow in this report, the strong cultural allocation in the post-2008 period also signposts an awareness through the ESP of the importance and influence of maintaining cultural connections with the Irish abroad. As will be developed in later sections of this report, we have also witnessed a reawakening in the therapeutic function that culture can serve both for new and older emigrants. In the post-2008 period, the ESP allocated 24.77% of its financial output to culture-orientated projects and organisations, equating to a financial value of approximately €14,886,509.

Given the nature of recent emigration and the diverse range of connections with Ireland that constitute the layered relationship between Ireland

and her diaspora, the prominence of culture and support work through the ESP is fitting. However, as the reach of the global Irish expands, we are also beginning to see some interesting regional and sectoral signposts that may provide early indications of the value of broadening the defined parameters of work undertaken by the ESP. For example, the emergence of business and professional networks in recent times indicates a differentiation in the emigration dimensions often associated with those leaving Ireland. The emergence of funding in the business sector, 2.81% of overall financial output (€1,688,408), points to a new element in conceptions of support. Individual chapters will explore these variables in greater depth.

Regional diversification of funding post-2008 acts not only as a useful precursor for later analysis on the changing characteristics of the global Irish but also on the needs of the next generation of the Irish diaspora. As will be explored in relevant chapters, these significant variations in financial allocations within the categories of culture, support and business remain an early window into changing terrains of Irishness at work in each region. By examining these variations, we are able to map the noteworthy work conducted by those facilitated by the ESP and begin to look forward to the challenges ahead, at a policy and practical level.

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<sup>i</sup> The definition of diaspora continues to be an evolving scholarly discussion with a deep historical rooting. Contemporary scholarly and policy foci have shifted towards understanding diaspora in an operational framework which has been developed through an interdisciplinary analysis of the impact of diaspora communities in home and host countries. The publications listed above, with additional reading suggestions in the works cited appended to this report, provide an overview to bridging the historical and contemporary understanding of diaspora in a global context.

# Irish Emigration and the Emigrant Support Programme

In later sections of this report that address Irish communities residing abroad, a key part of our methodology will be to map the changing characteristics of respective Irish communities with a view to identifying specific realms of support or vulnerability to be channelled through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP). This chapter is focused on the presence and work of the ESP *in* Ireland since 2008 and is designed to introduce later discussions by outlining key characteristics of contemporary Irish emigration, and also begin to probe how the work of the ESP has specifically functioned in relation to these patterns.

There is growing research as well as widespread public discussion on contemporary migration from Ireland, much of which illuminates the need for informed debate on the topic. In 2013, the UCC EMIGRE project produced invaluable representative data that deepens our understanding of contemporary migration from Ireland. Such analyses acknowledge the need for greater analytical depth and awareness across spectrums to fully engage the

policy realm; as the EMIGRE report notes:

In the wake of the collapse of the Irish banking system in 2008 and the downturn in the economy, the return of high levels of emigration has become one of the most debated and sensitive social topics in Ireland today. There is an urgent need for an informed policy debate which recognises the complexity of the issues that this presents. (EMIGRE Report, 3)

This chapter can indicate the significance of migration patterns to those involved in diaspora policy/engagement in Ireland. There is a clear research gap on diaspora policy that needs to be addressed and we can begin to close the knowledge vacuum on what the International Organization for Migration argues “works and does not work” in diaspora engagement by adopting sector sensitive, interdisciplinary research (Ionescu, 9).

This chapter is designed to help us understand how Irish diaspora engagement policy through the ESP begins at home. It will firstly explore the key ques-

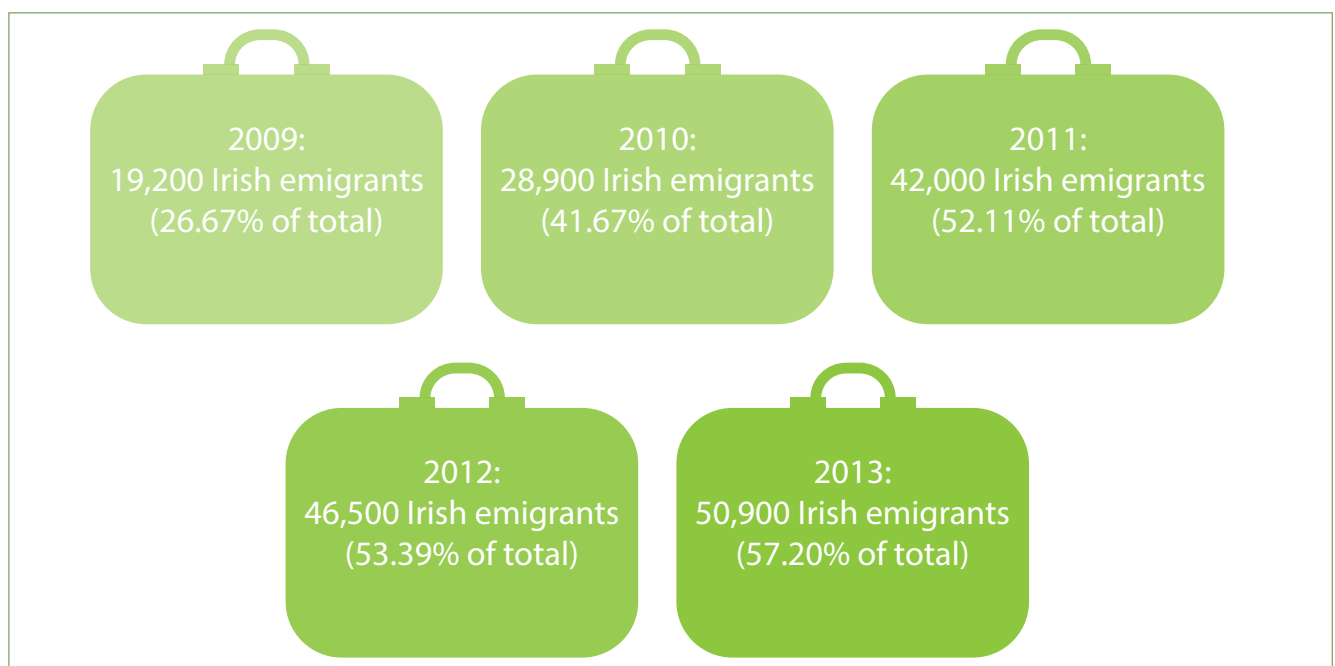


Fig 1: Irish Emigrants 2009–2013  
Source: CSO, Population and Migration Estimates

tions of emigration: who is going, where they are going, and why they are going. Additionally, the chapter will add a further query on what these combined insights tell us about what emigration means in contemporary Ireland. The chapter will then link these insights to the policy dimensions of the ESP and conclude by considering future trajectories for the ESP in Ireland through the prism of return.

## Emigrant Profiles

Although this report will argue that the Irish diaspora today is a diverse body of people with myriad motivations and characteristics, a broad assessment of an Irish emigration profile is necessary. As noted above, there are no clear records maintained by Irish authorities of Irish nationals leaving the country for migration purposes, which can problematize research in this area, but considered estimates of migration flows are produced by the Central Statistics Office on a regular basis. In considering the profile of Irish emigrants over the past number of years and projecting into the future, this report will consider in particular age brackets, gender ratios, socioeconomic indicators, and geographic origin/destination factors.

The profile of contemporary Irish emigration is an important indicator emanating from the domestic context that will have a significant impact on the future cycle of the ESP. As we will see in later sections of this report, there are emerging demographic frames in Irish communities abroad. These frames will have varying impact on the type of support and engagement needed through policy vehicles such as the ESP. Variations in gender, age, and socioeconomic class all have important impacts on the types of vulnerabilities, supports, and opportunities that are afforded Irish communities abroad and on their multiple relationships with Ireland. Such variations are evident across countries of settlement. Britain, for example, has a very large number of elderly Irish, reflecting historical immigration patterns, and this grouping has clearly defined needs for support. Australia, where the mining and construction boom directly followed our own crash, now hosts a significant percentage of Irish workers drawn from engineering, construction, and the building trades. Often moving with partners and young families, these new migrants bring a specific set of needs and challenges for Irish community groups in Australia.

There are new patterns of settlement emerging and they have implications for the economics and the psychology of emigration. The declining cost and increased fluidity of travel, global infrastructural advancements, and collaborative policies at a bilateral and multilateral level have all significantly increased the circularity trends in migration.

In the old days migration was final, brutal and sad and, in many cases today, it still is. However now, for possibly the first time in history, absence no longer automatically equals exile and geography no longer dictates identity. People are leading 'hyphenated' lives and living 'here and there'.  
(Aikins and Russell, 26)

In mapping the methods through which the ESP can support the next generation of Irish abroad, these new migrant circularities are noteworthy. James Wickham has argued that contemporary Irish emigration is driven by:

the more skilled and the better educated who are leaving. Migration today often takes the form of commuting, shorter term stays, circular and even serial migration rather than the traditional move-work-settle pattern of the past. It is not just jobs, but quality of life, gaining experience and even adventure that motivates Ireland's present day migrants and for this new generation emigration, national identity is worn lightly and reflexively.  
(McGreevy)

This reflexive Irish identity appears to be a key feature of the younger migrants we engaged in this study. This noted, the makeup of the next generation of the Irish diaspora is more diverse than these compelling references to mobile, reflexive, educated Irish emigrants suggests. As we shall see, it contains both persistent and fresh vulnerabilities.

Insights from community and business leaders abroad and returned migrants can help shed further light on the other growing trends post-2008. Research interviewees in Australia, Canada, and the United States noted a heightened sense of mobility amongst Irish emigrants which was complimented by focus group participants in Ireland who commented that they now see themselves as "more prepared" to move again.

Growing economically driven mobility was a clear

indicator of current emigration trends, as seen by the EMIGRE Report and in later analysis in this section, with 47% of recent emigrants (2008–2013) leaving full time employment to emigrate. As significantly, there is growing evidence of the readiness to re-migrate. Whilst clearly denoting the cyclic, multi-nodal nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenry, these trends can provide valuable potentials for the ESP in engaging the next generation of the Irish diaspora. For example, these resettling emigrants can act as mentors to recent emigrants, both pre-departure and in destination locales, and also act as key conduits and connectors between generations of emigrants. Encouraging such programmes or platforms will enable the ESP to facilitate bottom up, community-led problem solving on issues of vulnerability and support within the multiple Irish communities abroad—a growing feature of diaspora engagement and a vehicle through which the global Irish can have local impacts.

### Who is Going?

The stark figures, released from the Central Statistics Office earlier today, show almost 90,000 people left the country in the year up to April 2013 as the economic crisis here shows no sign of abating. A total of 89,000 people moved from Ireland to start a new life abroad. That figure equates to 240 people a day, or ten people an hour, or one every six minutes. (“One Person Emigrates from Ireland Every 6 Minutes”)

This dramatic analysis of 2013 emigration figures by the *Irish Independent* is a common example of the promotion of an emigration narrative that is well established in Ireland and which depicts emigration as constant, economically driven, and regressive. Media, domestic and diaspora, is important in shaping perspectives on the Irish abroad and can be a key driver in understanding the diasporic phenomenon, as evidenced by the work of platforms such as IrishCentral.com and Generation Emigration. Here, however, we see how influential mainstream media fuels narrow perceptions of an emigration narrative that has a powerful cultural resonance in Ireland. Such views are also recycled by recent emigrants; one recent arrival in Canada noted:

We do inherently associate it [emigration] with recession like in the 1980s and everybody heading to New York and this will be recession and everybody heading to Canada.

Such frames can delimit understanding of modes of vulnerability (and opportunity) for the Irish emigrant. In revisiting the established discourses on Irish emigration, we are drawn to ask: should we be looking outward, inward, or both? Contemporary discourses are shaping new areas of interest spurred by the onset of digital communications and relatively low cost travel. There are new potentialities for the ESP to align its work with these changing dynamics of emigrant mobility and communications.

“interviewees in Australia, Canada, and the United States noted a heightened sense of mobility amongst Irish emigrants which was complimented by focus group participants in Ireland who commented that they now see themselves as “more prepared” to move again”

Post-2008 migration figures give the clearest portrayal of why emigration has returned to public awareness in Ireland. Data indicates that the number of Irish-born emigrants has incrementally increased in the post-2008 period. In 2009, 26.67% of emigrants from Ireland were Irish nationals (equating to 19,200). By 2013, this had risen to 57.20% (50,900). Overall emigration figures for the period grew from a low of 69,200 to 89,000 in 2013. Since 2009, Irish emigrants have outnumbered the two largest other nationalities recorded by CSO figures, EU12 and the Rest of the World (CSO, “Population and Migration Estimates,” 2013).

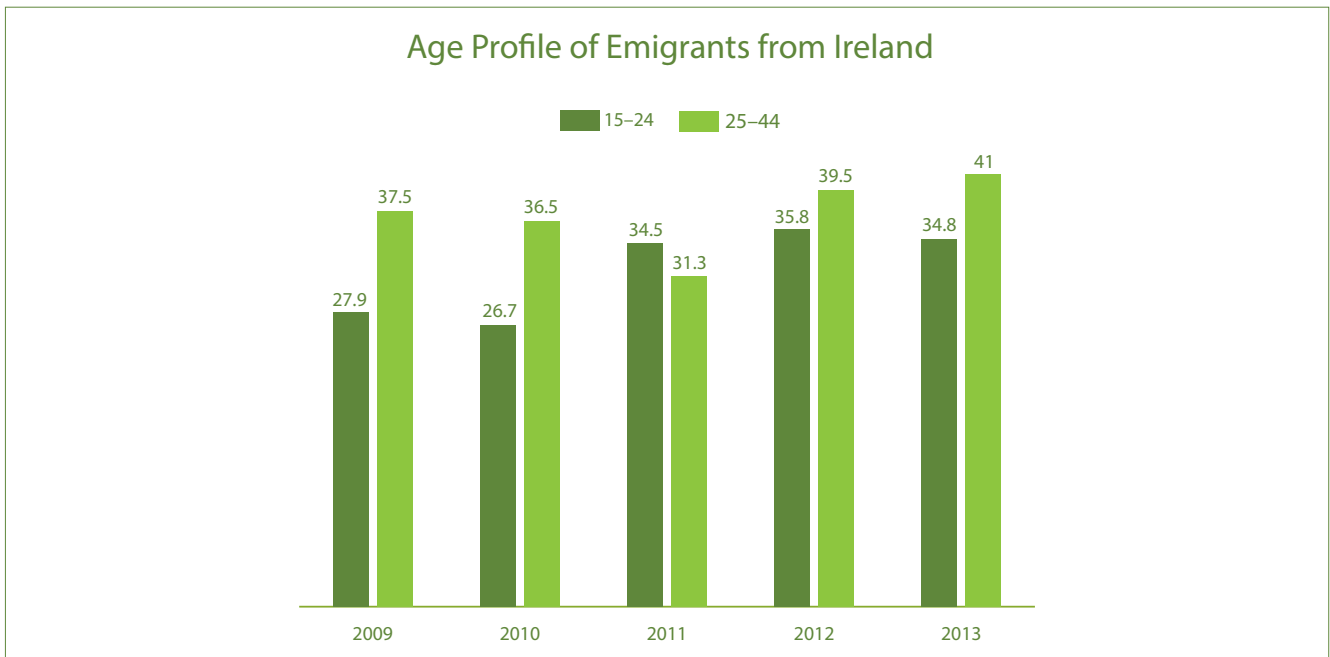


Fig 2: Age Profile of Emigrants from Ireland  
Source: CSO, Population and Migration Estimates

### Age

As the table above illustrates, those leaving Ireland —Irish and non-Irish—in the post 2008 period are predominantly between the 15–44 age profiles with an increase in each category. In 2009–2013, there were 159,700 15–24 year old emigrants and 185,800 emigrants aged 25–44 from Ireland.

As we shall see, repeated concerns in multiple regions of Irish settlement indicate a growing awareness of intergenerational gaps at community and leadership levels which may reflect by the significant amount of young emigration from Ireland. In this snapshot, it would appear that variations of Irishness are not being effectively negotiated within the diaspora and consequently there are significant enclaves of Irish abroad who are not being engaged. This lack of intergenerational stake-holding within the diasporic communities, whilst unpalatable within popular discourse, can be deemed as a fresh opportunity for the ESP to provide support for initiatives that work to bridge generational gaps amongst the global Irish.

While the majority of post-2008 emigrants are young, the growing numbers in their thirties and

early forties indicates an emergent trend. Speaking with the *Irish Times*, the leader of the EMIGRE Project noted: “Of the 527 people [interviewed] at the Working Abroad Expo... 44 per cent were over 30, and 14 per cent were 40 or older. More than one in five had mortgages in Ireland, and 27 per cent had children (“Going North: New Trends in Emigration”). This has a number of implications for designing support for the new emigrants. It should acknowledge the needs of those with families, with direct financial ties to Ireland, and with the more embedded connections to Ireland due to their much longer residence here.

“...variations of Irishness are not being effectively negotiated within the diaspora and consequently there are significant enclaves of Irish abroad who are not being engaged”

The figures show a rise, particularly post-2010, in the 0–14 category, from 2,000 to 6,800.

As noted by the report of the Global Irish Economic Forum in 2013, the need to ensure engagement amongst the next generation of the Irish diaspora in the youngest age bracket is critical for sustainable engagement with the global Irish. The Forum report recommended:

Consideration should be given to engaging the children of the diaspora as the current younger generation of Irish Americans may well be more American than Irish. For example, organise summer



schools across the country to connect them with their heritage. (8)

As noted by the report of the Global Irish Economic Forum in 2013, the need to ensure engagement amongst the next generation of the Irish diaspora in the youngest age bracket is critical for sustainable engagement with the global Irish.

As we shall see, some strong work in this area already exists through organizations such as the GAA, but the ESP can become more influential in engaging new generations of Irish from a young age through culture and education.

The figures show that there has been a smaller but noteworthy rise in the 45–64 age category of Irish emigrants, from 2,900 to 5,700. The rise in this age bracket is often attributed to returning emigrants after a period spent at home, as noted by some in the United States. Capturing knowledge about this mobility and experience could help how younger emigrants prepare and undertake their migratory journey. Beyond this, the ESP can, like examples offered by platforms such as IndiaCorps, begin to shape opportunities of return to Ireland for this age profile. Sonal Shah, founder of IndiaCorps, noted that diaspora members in this age profile are often the most determined and driven to engage (“Diaspora and the Knowledge Economy”). A number of returned emigrants we spoke to expressed similar concerns:

I think there is a lot to be learned from how things are done over there [Germany] and if there were some way of integrating that or bringing those lessons learnt as you said, not to be like oh I have been away and I am going to teach you how things are done over there but it might open things up or make things less conservative and less closed minded.

I was just going to say one thing that could be valuable would be not to look at people coming back as a problem to be solved but to ask people what they’ve learned and what they would like to share or what constructive things they bring home with them.

The perceptions of new emigrants from Ireland can differ greatly from the historical appreciation of Irishness amongst earlier emigrants. These varia-

tions on associative understandings of Ireland can result in the emergence of specific vulnerabilities at a community level in host countries. For example, as we will see in Canada, the influx of newer arrivals has caused several forms of inter-generational cultural ruptures and also had a partial influence in organisational uncertainty as newer migrants are becoming less likely to take up leadership roles in the community. Valuable insights and lessons in tackling this issue can be drawn from Australia where a relatively clear infrastructural framework has allowed for recent arrivals, notably in the post-2008 period, to act efficiently and effectively in community mobilisation and leadership.

### Gender

Of the 149,700 Irish nationals who are estimated by the CSO to have left Ireland between 2008 and 2012, approximately 86,600 (58%) were men and 63,200 (42%) were women, although the gap between these figures has narrowed dramatically in recent years as more women emigrate. In 2013 the percentage of female Irish migrants has risen to 54.09%.

Before 2008 and the economic downturn, numbers of men and women leaving Ireland were much closer, 8,000 men and 7,300 women leaving in 2006, and more women than men (6,800 women to 6,100 men) in 2007. The difference between boom-time migration and recessionary migration is thus played out across the genders within an Irish context. In the immediate rush of migration following the first flush of the economic crisis, a much larger number of men were leaving the country, reflecting the predominance of men in those professions—primarily those connected to the building trade—most directly and immediately affected by the crisis. An analysis of Irish emigrants to Australia, for example, shows large numbers of carpenters, electricians and plumbers arriving there in 2008 and 2009, but then dropping by 2011/12 as the supply of such professions stabilised in Ireland. Instead, larger numbers of administrative and legal workers—representing more women—began to appear in more recent years.

Whilst there is evidence of gender-specific platforms of communication and support among the Irish diaspora, for example the Irish Women’s Network



in British Columbia, more can be done to engage such groups. There are global precedents in creating gender specific engagement platforms in multiple areas, with organisations such as DAWN (Diaspora African Women’s Network) quickly establishing global prominence in effective diaspora engagement designed to develop and support the next generation of African diaspora women leaders focused on African affairs. Similar platforms can be instrumental in the Irish case in addressing some of the core issues outlined in later sections of this report such as the lack of inter-generational collaboration.<sup>i</sup>

### Socioeconomic Factors

The preparation and funds involved in uprooting and re-settling can make the process of emigration precarious for many. Of those leaving Ireland due to economic depression, there is great variety between what we might call “light” and “heavy” emigrants, “light” being those who leave with little, often alone, often early in their lives, with the intention of setting themselves up cheaply and attempting to build a more secure base overseas. We might understand a “heavy” emigrant in this case as one with both more funding and more responsibilities—perhaps a migrant family who have sold a home in Ireland to create some liquidity, who will need

considerable sums available to set up a home and schooling for their children once overseas. Of the five main destinations for Irish emigrants abroad, all but the United Kingdom have barriers to entry dependent on employability and skills sets. This means that the United Kingdom receives a higher proportion of unskilled or low-skilled emigrants, as highlighted by the 2005 Crosscare report, “Still Leaving,” which studied vulnerable Irish emigrants in the UK. This report, though limited in scope, found that more vulnerable Irish migrants were often unprepared for the experience of migration and were driven to leave Ireland not simply in search of better employment prospects but because of serious problems relating to violence, drugs, and domestic problems at home. Such migrants are much less likely to avail of opportunities in countries with more stringent access criteria, which supports the ESP’s policy of directing a larger share of welfare funding to the UK.

In Australia, skilled workers in particular areas are in demand. There has been a 238% increase in employer-sponsored working visas between 2008/09 and 2011/12, and an 82% rise in requests for a visa extension between 2011/12 and the previous year. This indicates that Australia has become

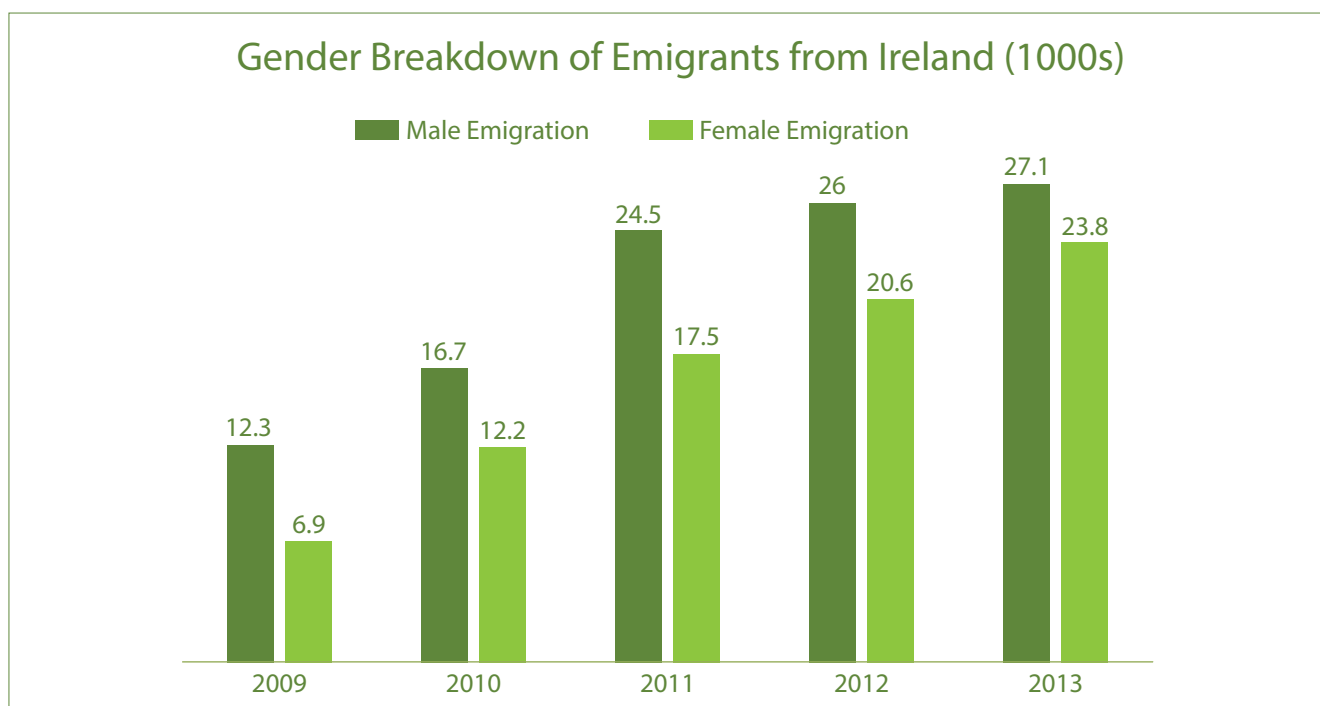


Fig 3: Male and Female Emigration from Ireland 2009-13 (1000s)  
Source: CSO, Population and Migration Estimates

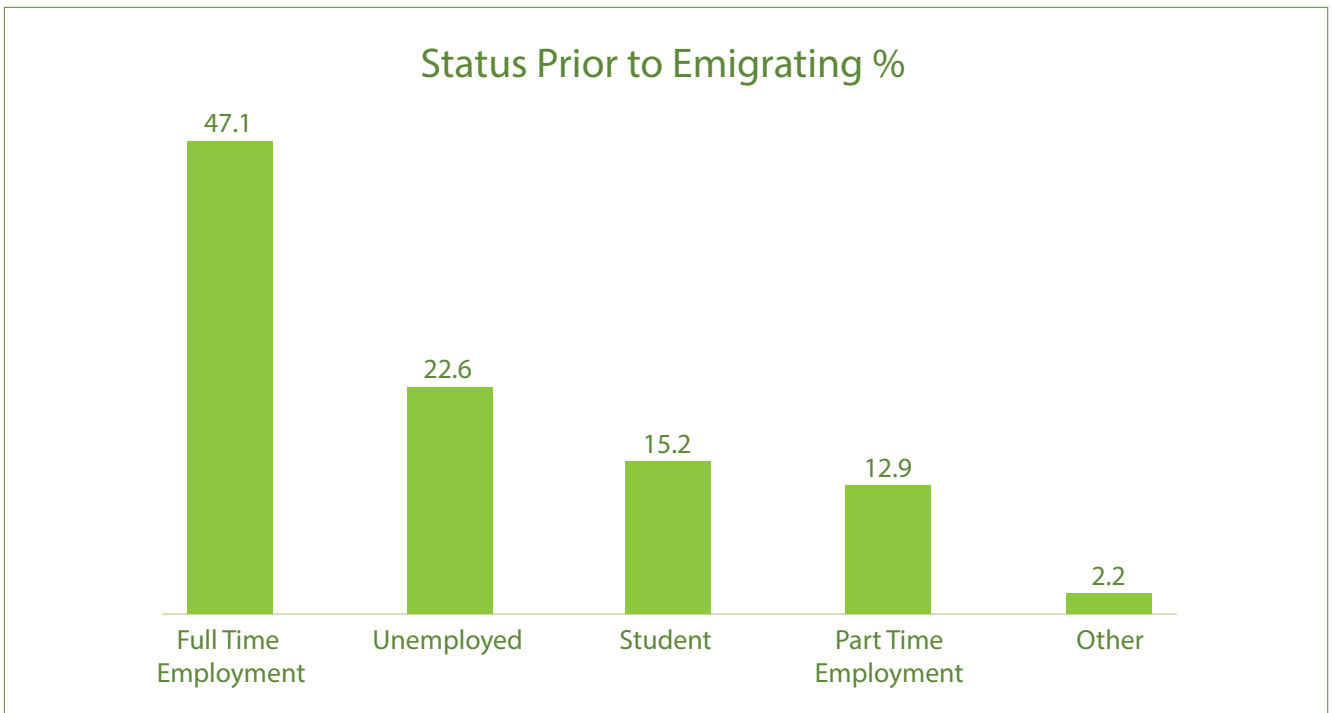


Fig 4: Status of Emigrants Prior to Emigrating, 2009–13  
Source: UCC EMIGRE Report

a destination for a number of different types of migrant, from the long-term “traditional” migrant who will stay permanently in Australia, to the more mobile migrant who may work casually for a year and backpack around the country before returning to Ireland. In Canada, even more clearly, “skilled workers” and “business migrants” are selected for their ability to contribute to Canada’s economy (Citizenship and Emigration Canada). Although vulnerable migrants—refugees—are also welcomed through a particular scheme (a scheme which will not be accessible to Irish people as a rule), for Irish people entry to Canada and other countries which use similar models will depend on them having the right kind of training and education to be attractive. It is clear that emigration prospects for the most vulnerable of Irish people—unskilled, unsupported, underfunded—are narrowing.

### Where are they Going?

Current migration destination trends provide valuable information regarding the geographical foci of the ESP in years ahead. For example, beyond Irish emigration to the four major destinations, emigration to the EU, particularly through contexts of affinity, could point to a new direction and focus for the ESP. The relatively low level of funding attribut-

ed to these regions in the ESP undervalues the recent flows of emigrants to the region from Ireland. Furthermore, extending this to a diasporic framework, we can assert that there are more enclaves of Irishness, born and affinity, in these regions that can be effectively harnessed. The ESP can work to ensure that distinct and plural senses of Irish identity can be maintained and expressed as part of a co-operative European identity. Such European-Irish communities can be conduits of support by promoting Irishness abroad as done by many other countries, notably India. At present there appears to be an information or awareness void around the ESP in the region. Furthermore, by reflecting on the significant number of emigrants from Ireland to these regions in the 2009–2013 period, which equates to 133,100 individuals, it indicates that trajectories of funding through the ESP have been focused upon the historical diasporas associated with previous migration discourses in Ireland. By elevating emerging locales or pockets of destination in contemporary Irish migration patterns, the ESP can begin to work through a global engagement profile for the global Irish.

Other regions, in line with overall growth trends on migration, provide some useful indicators for the fu-

ture of the ESP. Those regions that are conditioned by strict legislative entry procedures, particularly the U.S., Canada, and Australia, noted increases to varying scales. Canada remains the strongest growth region in the post- 2008 period with an overall 5.96% portion of emigrants going to Canada in 2013. This is a notable increase from 2009 when only 1.53% emigrated to the region. Although popular discussion of Australia as a growing destination of Irish emigrants remains strong, there has been less than 2% increase in the overall percentage going to the location, rising from 15.42% to 17.30% by 2013 which equates to an increase of 4,300 emigrants overall to 15,400 in 2013. Similarly, growth trends within the US were lower than 2% with an increase from 4,100 emigrants to 6,200 in the 09–13 period marking a 1.28% increase overall. We shall argue that the dynamic composition of emerging Irish communities in Canada, due to increase significantly in 2014 with approximately 10,000 visas for Irish nationals, presents particular challenges and opportunities for the ESP to meet the needs of the next generation. For

“The ESP can work to ensure that distinct and plural senses of Irish identity can be maintained and expressed as part of a co-operative European identity”

example, more organisations should be promoted to act as auxiliaries to existing organisations, notably led by the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre in Toronto and the GAA.

### Why are they Going?

Previous analysis offers some introductory pointers in deciphering causality for contemporary emigration from Ireland. The globalised, interconnected 21st century has seen a proliferation of circular migration driven by issues of necessity, desire, experience, and opportunity. Global indices of migratory causality include social, economic, and political factors. For example, the recent UCC EMIGRE report utilised a 5 point “motivation” scale to construct an image of contemporary emigration including – to find a job, to travel, to gain job experience, to experience a new culture, and other (EMIGRE Report, 41). Crisis response has been at the root cause of multiple migration transformations in recent times with natural disasters, conflict, and economic regression often cited as the core

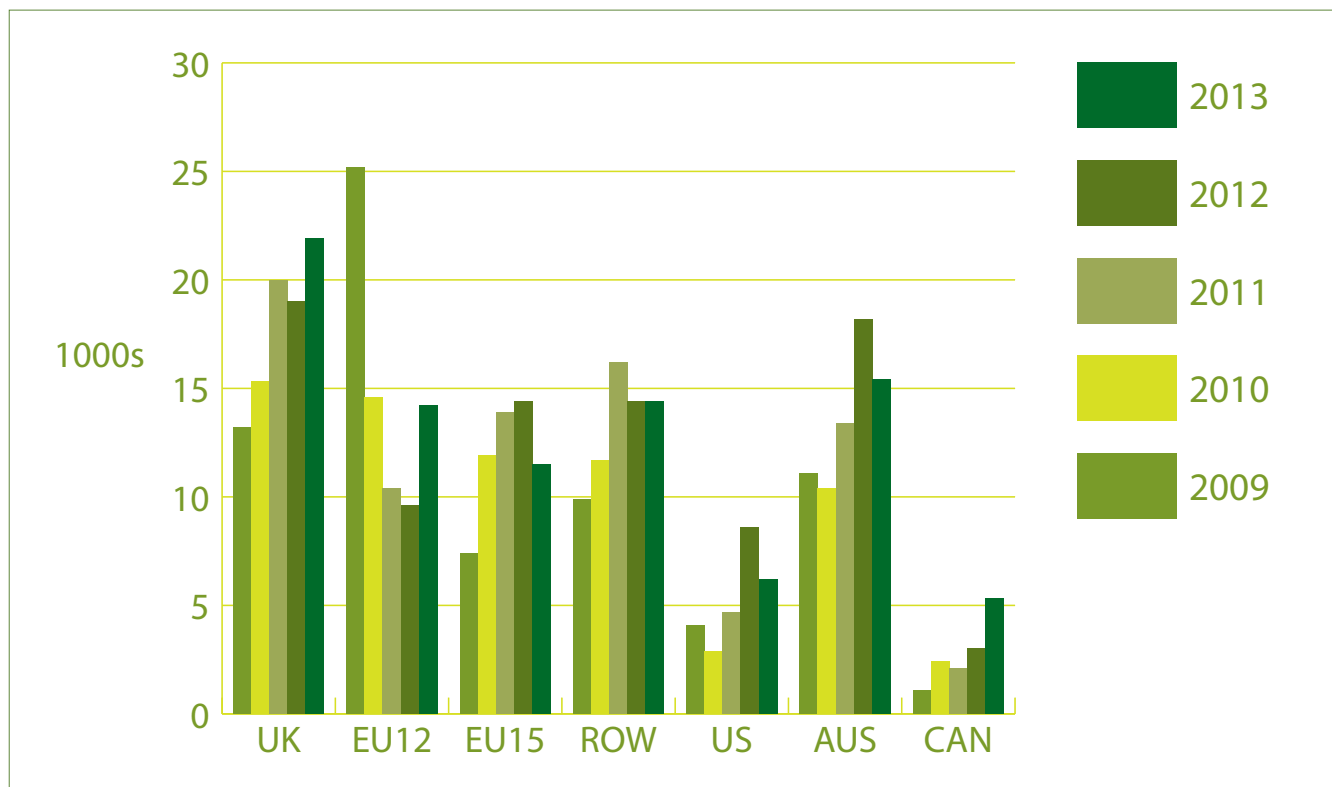


Fig 5: Countries of Destination of Emigration from Ireland, 2009–13  
Source: CSO, Population and Migration Estimates

constituents in shaping growing migration trends with the number of international migrants up to 232 million from 215 million in the last few years. Irish migration trends operate within these frames and we can deduce probable correlations.

Not surprisingly, among the relevant push-pull factors of causality that have shaped post-2008 emigration (and return migration) economic factors weigh most heavily. All economically-driven emigration must be responsive to changes in employment markets and economies worldwide. From an Irish perspective, this means that emigrants must be particularly aware of employment opportunities in both traditional and new destinations. Of the five major destinations for the Irish abroad, it is central Canada and Western Australia which have been the most recent focus of Irish migrants, as they respond to the skills shortages in those areas best suited to the skillsets of Irish-trained workers. In Canada, for example, while the urban destinations of Toronto and Vancouver remain popular, an interviewee points out that “the competitive employment markets and high cost of living in both places are driving workers, especially those with families, to smaller, lesser-known cities in the western provinces.”

Large numbers of under-employed Irish skilled tradesmen have been drawn to the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. In Calgary, “the economic heartland of Canada,” 19 of the 25 skillsets most in demand are readily available in Ireland” (“Going North: New Trends in Emigration”). Similar responsiveness to demand can be seen in Australia, where a new generation of Irish emigrants are moving from the traditional stronghold of New South Wales to territories in Western Australia with currently booming construction and mining industries. Currently 10% of the Australian general population lives in Western Australia, but a much larger proportion of 21% of Irish-born people in Australia are there. As Irish migrants respond to market-driven forces which are more frequently located beyond traditional urban areas, new kinds of supports will be required. Hitherto, the vast majority of ESP funding

“Canada remains the strongest growth region in the post-2008 period ...”

“As Irish migrants respond to market-driven forces which are more frequently located beyond traditional urban areas, new kinds of supports will be required”

has focused on urban locations—Sydney, London, Toronto, Boston, etc.—but there is a need to look beyond these agglomerations in order to find new models of dispersed support over much larger territories. We believe that social media integrated supports will be vital in this new model.

The push/pull factors of causality for recent Irish emigration require a multi-level segmented approach in order to be fully understood. Whilst 47% of recent emigrants left full time employment to emigrate, the professional/non-professional distinction must be contextualised in terms of the educational composition of recent emigrants. It has been found that over 40% had a degree and between 10—15 % had a postgraduate qualification with 62% of recent emigrants having a tertiary degree (EMIGRE Report, 11 and 35). At the same time we note that construction (which witnessed the largest scale of unemployment in the period) makes up the most significant industry of emigrants (over 16%—nearly double the nearest sector, health and social work). While it can be reductive to prescribe overt socio-economic frames to migration, the Irish case post-2008 would suggest that of those emigrating to find jobs significantly large numbers worked in construction and service provision and that it is in these segments that vulnerabilities may reside and where the traditional focus of the ESP may be best delivered in years ahead. Simultaneously, there are collectives and clusters of educated, professional Irish abroad who can be engaged through the ESP. The challenge for the programme remains creating sufficient connection points between these constituents to understand their perceptions and expectations of their engagement with Ireland. At the centre of this process is the ability to tackle the relevant vulnerabilities of each segment whilst also nurturing and communicating other supports where emigrants who have emigrated in recent times, due to multiple causes, remain open to “re-investing” with home.



Fig 6: ESP Funding to Ireland 2009–13

### The ESP in Ireland Post-2008

Funding allocation to Ireland has continuously been in the top three funding regions within the Emigrant Support Programme post-2008. As displayed in the figure at the beginning of this chapter, funding has steadily increased since 2010, with funding to organisations in Ireland increasing from 0.98 million in that year to a projected 1.98 million euros in 2013.

Between 2009 and 2013, there have been 13 organisations (including the authors of this report) funded through the ESP in Ireland. Despite the limited scope of organisations active in Ireland through the ESP, the combined scale of services they provide are impressive and remain instructive in shaping new discussions on emigration in Ireland. SafeHome Programme Ireland, set up Dr. Jerry Crowley in 2001, offers housing assistance and information for elderly emigrants and other individuals looking to return and relocate to Ireland respectively. Organisations such as Glór na nGael, the Gaelic Athletic Association, and the Football Association of Ireland serve as important cultural connectors for the Irish at home and abroad in areas such as language and sport.

Crosscare Migrant Project also conducts extensive research and outreach on three core areas, emigration, return to Ireland and Irish immigration information. More recently, the Irish International Diaspora Centre Trust in Dún Laoghaire have been funded in their endeavour to locate a global tourist/research hub on Carlisle Pier in Dún Laoghaire which could become a hub of collaboration through which the ESP can interact. Other organisations also provide a heightened focus on networked connectivity and return, for example Ireland Reaching Out is connecting over 500 parishes in Ireland to the diaspora through reverse genealogy which enables preliminary mapping exercises. These snapshots of diaspora work in Ireland display a

“These snapshots of diaspora work in Ireland display a vibrant and inclusive approach to diaspora engagement, for both Irish-born and others,”

vibrant and inclusive approach to diaspora engagement, for both Irish-born and others.

By bridging such inclusiveness, these organisations also arch into fresh terrain in terms of understanding the diasporic phenomenon at home. For example, whilst more often than not concerned with the Irish abroad, these organisations also cater, in some cases, for the growing internal diasporas in Ireland.<sup>ii</sup> Converging

the migratory/diasporic frames, internal diasporas can be a powerful connector in and for Ireland in years ahead and more work should be done to provide greater integrative coherence for such communities in Ireland in line with global approaches being developed through platforms such as the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development. Like diaspora engagement, inclusive parameters of identity within Ireland can help address issues that are now being felt not only by immigrants in Ireland but also by returned migrants.

A brief overview of the financial trends of the ESP work in Ireland indicates strengths and weaknesses for the programme in light of previous analyses in this chapter. As displayed in the diagram below, clear trends up to 2013 have emerged in terms of the financial allocations of ESP funding to organizations in Ireland. Despite the stable contingent of organizations, not exceeding 13 in the post 2008 period, there has been a sizeable increase in financial allocation to those organizations working in the cultural sector. These organizations, such as the GAA, Glór na nGael and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann are key connectors in building associations of culture and heritage for the Irish abroad. Also, as will be

discussed in the chapter on the Irish in Britain, the increase of funding in this sector is a coherent policy decision from the ESP. Concurrent development of further support funding in Ireland is needed as the decline in financial allocation works against various emigrant needs. Between 2009 and 2013 financial allocation to organizations providing support provisions in Ireland fell from 55.24 to 27.62%, which has correlated to a perception of a lack of pre-departure support amongst the global Irish. Early engagement can have notable impacts on reducing possible vulnerabilities for recent emigrants and promote greater connectivity to home which may later enhance capacity in areas such as return and local economic development.

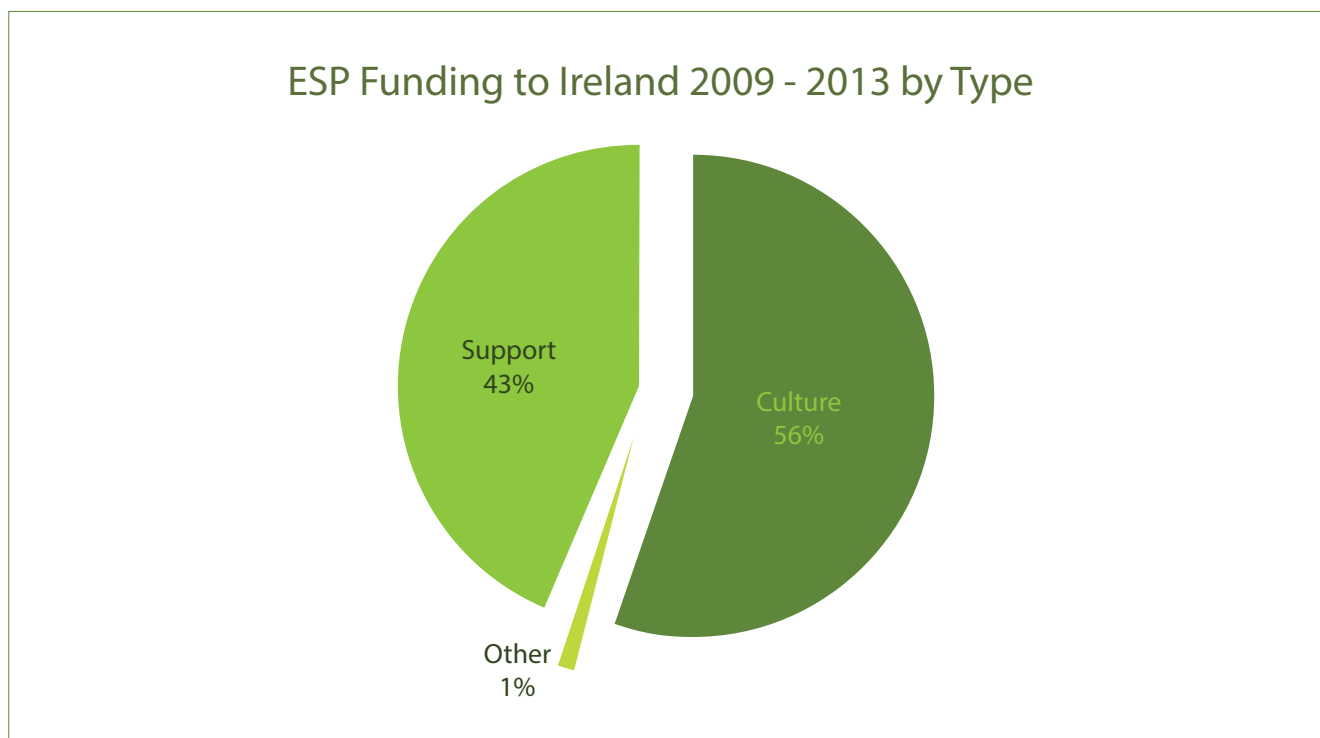


Fig 7: Segment breakdown of ESP funding in Ireland 2009–13

## Conclusions

The organisations funded through the ESP predominantly focus on a fluid, mobility driven appreciation of Irish identity—for example, the return dimension advocated by the Crosscare Migrant Project and SafeHome Programme. Diaspora engagement is driven by global contextual forces that have resulted in a proliferation of influences and stake-holdings by diaspora members in determining their journeys. The increased capacity afforded by digital connectivity, low cost travel, and integrative border control through geopolitical realignment, for example in the European context, has resulted in an Irish diasporic identity that is multiple and mobile.

This presents the ESP with opportunities to further efforts on tackling issues of vulnerability for the Irish abroad by adopting integrative, joined-up, evidence-based collaboration between organisations in Ireland and abroad. The ESP is in a unique position to heighten its impact with the next generation of Irish emigrants by engaging them in all stages of the diasporic journey—departure, time abroad, and possible return. The future trajectories of the ESP should focus on addressing all stages of the journey. In conclusion, the chapter offers two viable case studies of fresh application of ESP focus in Ireland that can help reduce the likelihood of vulnerabilities among emigrants and broaden the support horizon channelled through their financial allocations to diaspora communities.

## Enhanced Pre-departure Support

I was like that when I first came over I thought you would be making a fortune and that, it was naïve like and it took about 12 months to have that knocked out of me like and it was. It had to be because a lot of the Celtic cubs, they probably never had their hands on the cash but their parents did, they were reared in a more affluent way than other generations and their expectations are a little bit higher and I have to put myself in that bracket. (Irish Emigrant in Canada)

I think the issue of dislocation, the issue of involuntary emigration is number one. Everything else stems from that. I think a lot of these kids in an Irish situation would not have developed the problems they do because they would have a caring family structure around them whereas here they do not have that and loneliness, depression, alcoholism, drug abuse, those are the key problems that I see happening to people. You know there

is nothing terribly new to that but what is new to me is the kind of spurious, extremely spurious argument that makes me furious is that emigration is always good. That is not the case and certainly if it is voluntary emigration, I do not have a problem with it but involuntary emigration when you are exporting thousands of young Irish who are ill equipped to deal with the issues is not a good idea. (Service Provider in Canada)

If you can come through it, it is quite character building and some people don't. (Irish Emigrant in Canada)

A determining influence on effective diaspora support remains the ability to provide mutually beneficial platforms and provisions as defined by the OECD coherency framework.<sup>iii</sup> Continuous feedback from research interviews and focus groups have seen a strong desire amongst the Irish communities abroad for more detailed pre-departure support. These debates were strongest in those areas most geographically distant from the home country, in particular Australia, Canada, and the United States. This would provisionally indicate that spatial distance is a driver in the “dislocation” dimension of the emigrant experience and associated vulnerabilities such as isolation, homesickness and mental health issues. For example, during a focus group in Canada several participants commented on the need for greater help pre-departure and on the linkage between a lack of pre-departure preparation and the development of vulnerabilities:

I am actually amazed at like you know the amount of people, Irish people, coming to Canada because it always have the old it was the land of milk and honey, it was New York one stage now it is Toronto, it was Australia, whatever. And here in Toronto, how hard it is to get a job. I am blown away by it, well it took me 3 months to get a job and I was doing really well at that.

This transformation to tangible vulnerabilities from an awareness/information gap is furthered by the sensitivities caused by a regressive sense of emigration at home. A key lesson emerging is that the scope of vulnerability is not solely located in the host country and issues of vulnerability often source back to home contexts. Several of our interviewees drew attention to this in relation to the emigration of families. A recently arrived married couple in Canada explain:



A: We were under a lot of stress [in Ireland], we were definitely not the only couple going through that, we—a lot of our friends are in similar boats, we—I remember at one stage I was working, this was probably back in 2009, I was working for an international company and I realised that on the team, it was like 10 people, and they were all female and they were now all the breadwinners in their family and we ended up having a discussion about it....

B: We had no contacts [in Toronto], nothing and we had a going away party and standing outside the pub like me friends going well who are you meeting, I was like, I says nobody. And right, on the day I was leaving A was going to a business meeting in Munich the same time as I was flying out to here to emigrate. So the both of us were in the airport, she was going to a meeting while I was emigrating. And just to arrive in a city like Toronto all on your own, you go “Jesus, what am I doing here.”

A: It’s surreal.

B: And it was you talking about suicide and depression. I suffered a lot of depression at home in Ireland when I was doing nothing, how easy it can get to just say is it worth it and I remember nights sitting here in Toronto in a hotel room, in a B&B on me own, and going, “What the fuck have I done.”

These comments are only a few of many that evidence the linkage between poor preparation for emigration and the development of vulnerabilities in the sites of settlement. Although the ESP sees its function primarily in supporting migrants once they have left Ireland (and there are obvious sensitivities around any activity seen to be supporting migration), this issue has been highlighted everywhere the report team visited and so we highlight it here.

### Return—The Trust Dimension

I have had that experience as well and it has been really recent, really recent. Coming back and nothing is as it should be. You know, so, I am trying to figure my way out in my new job in Ireland and I feel like an alien here. (Focus Group member)

There remains scepticism on the mandate and expectations of government engagement with the global Irish and the ESP occupies an important role in helping to promote trust and confidence in why the diaspora is being engaged and what is expected of them. It has the potential to build sustainable

bridges and image recognition for the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between government and diaspora in the Irish context. These challenges for the ESP were highlighted by recently returned emigrants who noted that there is a general lack of trust of government engagement with the diaspora. One interpreted government-led diaspora engagement as “hitting them [the diaspora] up for whatever we can get.” Another remarked, “when you have left and, but for whatever reason you left – voluntarily or you went for a job or whatever – and you set up a life at home and suddenly you get the call from the homeland—why, why do you need me now?” (Returned Emigrant Focus Group, UCD) Bridging this trust gap can be channelled through the ESP on two fronts. Firstly, the promotion of the work already conducted by the programme is critically important and more needs to be done to make Irish emigrants and organisations supporting them aware of the work of the ESP. Secondly, greater work in the promotion of return in the social, cultural, educational, and economical contexts will provide a further strand to the support government can provide if connected with pre-departure support. We need to understand that, often, vulnerabilities not only begin at home they also return home. As one recent returnee to Ireland observed during a focus group discussion:

I don’t think I did a lot of preparing because in the end it was kind of rushed. It was kind of a rush decision, I was studying for the licensing exam in New York state as I thought if I came back I would have the license. Also, I was rushing to get home as I had a family member who was ill and the kids were still in school. I kind of packed, left my husband there, took the kids with me and kind of came back. I am still living with family a year later, who are very kindly putting me up for a year, I am looking for a job. I thought it would be easier than what it has been. Emotionally, mentally, you know every kind of way.

This account is one which is echoed in other regions where motivations for return were predominantly focused by a desire to bring children home to be brought up in Ireland or to deal with familial illness. Greater integration support would be a critical apparatus to build up trust within the diaspora for the ESP as formal and informal networking would communicate the effectiveness of the engagement. More broadly, by connecting into a wider return



facilitation mode the ESP can begin to scale out the support paradigm of its work to include advancements in educational and economic development—we will comment on examples in individual chapters.

Through the prisms of support and vulnerability, the ESP is in a unique position to strategically engage the Irish diaspora. The various changes and challenges outlined in this chapter, which are being shaped by contemporary migration patterns in Ireland, have brought the ESP to an important crossroads. It is clear that there are opportunities for the

ESP to enhance its vulnerability/support portfolio. By closing awareness and information gaps at a policy and practice level, it can progress the already valuable work of the organisations currently funded by promoting fresh developments in the diaspora landscape in Ireland for the global Irish. Part of this endeavour will be philosophical by actively engaging the evolving discussions on emigration as noted above. Other parts will be working beyond these dialogue driven platforms to action orientated engagements in areas such as pre-departure support and return migration.

## Summary

- Since 2010, there has been continuous growth in the funding allocated to organisations in Ireland reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of migration and diaspora at home.
- Increases in emigration of Irish people also contain some important signposts for possible facilitation and progressions through the ESP. The emergence of strong demographic trends, in areas such as gender, should be integrated into the work of both the ESP and organisations active with the global Irish.
- The organisations funded by the ESP in Ireland display an appreciative understanding of the internal and external dimensions of migration by servicing the Irish abroad and new migrant communities in Ireland. This inclusive approach is a useful template to advance further work in Ireland on diaspora topics.
- Greater collaboration between organisations at home and abroad can be facilitated as many contributors noted an increased awareness of vulnerabilities beginning at home.
- There remain greater potentials in providing detailed pre-departure support at an organisational and community level in Ireland, facilitated through the ESP, to narrow the possibility of emigrant vulnerabilities emerging in countries of destination.
- More work can be done to help returned migrants to share their knowledge and expertise to help close awareness and knowledge gaps on the migrant experience particularly on issues of vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the work of the ESP in Ireland should be celebrated and utilised to nurture trust between the next generation of emigrants and diaspora communities already residing abroad.

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- i There is a relevant initiative in Ireland. In 2013, the DCU Ryan Academy, Ireland Funds, and other partners launched a female entrepreneurship hub which provides support, financial and otherwise, to aspiring female entrepreneurs (“DCU Ryan Academy Launches Female Only Accelerator Programme”). The emergence of a diaspora entrepreneurship strand, focused on women in the Irish diaspora, may be a unique vehicle in channelling the potential of the recent emigrant population.
- ii Internal diasporas, in the domestic Irish context, are migrant communities residing in Ireland that have strong affinities with countries of origin.
- iii ‘Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development’, OECD and the Post 2015 Agenda, OECD, Element 8, Paper 1. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/pcd/POST-2015%20PCD.pdf>

# The Irish in Britain

The Irish in Britain are a large and diverse population, spanning several generations and shaped by distinct waves of emigration and settlement patterns. Due to its proximity and the relaxed immigration controls of the Common Travel Area, Britain has long been a favoured destination for Irish migrants. It has been the largest area of Irish emigrant settlement since the 1940s, though the numbers peaked in the early 1970s and have been in a steady, slow decline since then, with increases in the late 1980s following the economic crisis in Ireland and with a recent upturn since the global economic crisis of 2008. Of course, the numbers only tell headline stories. The realities of emigration and settlement, like the markers of progress and vulnerability within the Irish population in Britain, have complex patterns, not easily discerned through a single statistical lens. Whatever its historical and symbolic pre-eminence as a site of emigration and key centre of the Irish diaspora, there are signs that the patterns are changing and that what it means to be Irish in Britain today is not only a compelling question of identity but key to understanding the changing profile and needs of the Irish diaspora and the prospects of strategic diaspora engagement.

There is no single Irish community in Britain but rather a patchwork of communities shaped by the socioeconomic and cultural factors of emigration and settlement. The question of community identity has long been troubled by an uncertain status within the host nation. While the Irish may be said to have achieved relative progress in terms of general growth in socioeconomic status and improvements in health (not to mention the many contributions they have made to British society), they are not a fully assimilated people as their otherness still colours their identities. The ambivalent status of the Irish in Britain has often been remarked upon and has been the subject of scholarly analysis that points out the paradoxes and ironies of their status betwixt and between categories of social identity, both part of and apart from the mainstream “white” society, immigrants or descendants of

immigrants in a country that does not view itself as an immigrant nation (Hickman and Walter, 1997; Hickman, 1998). While long an “ethnic minority” in reality the Irish have not officially been registered as such and so have existed as a “non-visible minority,” which means that “the needs of the Irish community are often overlooked by policymakers and service providers” (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia).

The relationship between social position and a sense of belonging is not a stable register of Irish identity in Britain due to this ambivalence and to the internal markers of difference within Irish communities. Despite socioeconomic progress disadvantages remain, most acutely for the elderly Irish—the generation who arrived in the 1950s—and for Travellers, who continue to be subject to extreme forms of deprivation and disadvantage. There also growing signs of vulnerability among those who arrived in the 1980s, with many in the 50-64 age group reporting poor health. Even among the new generation of immigrants, many of whom are well-educated and self-confident, there are disadvantaged Irish and growing reports of psychological problems caused by dislocation. For all groups, the socioeconomic and health disadvantages have been exacerbated by the economic downturn since 2008. Most recently, the extensive review of the welfare system in Britain means the likelihood of heightened vulnerability for many Irish in areas of accommodation, benefit claims and health.

The Irish are an ageing population in Britain—the oldest of all ethnic groups, as the 2011 Census figures clearly show—and this has significant implications not only for matters of health but also for more general aspects of well-being and cultural identity. Across Britain, certain markers of identity have been eroded, most especially the sense of belonging associated with residing in an ethnic enclave. Several interviewees commented on this sense of loss, felt keenly by older generations. For example, in London, the elderly Irish were described as “a fractured and isolated community;” with

“The Irish are not a fully assimilated people as their otherness still colours their identities”

“people going back into their homes” as “meeting places are stripped away” and a “sense of pride” disappears.

Is this the twilight of Irish ethnicity in Britain? To be sure, the relationship between place and community is a strong marker of ethnic identity and as it fractures so communities are altered. However, it is too soon to speak of decline or disappearance, rather there is emerging a greater diversity of Irish identity in Britain and as this occurs the markers of progress and vulnerability also shift. While there is a sense of a community passing there are also Irish communities thriving and evolving. Several commentators interviewed for this study remarked on the growing heterogeneity of Irish identities—no longer bound to narratives of exile or to residential or social proximity. Some made strong pleas for policymakers and funders to acknowledge and engage more diverse Irish communities and to recognise that people demonstrate their Irish identity in different ways.

There is no doubt the new generation emigrants have their own distinctive features. The recent cohort of Irish migrants are often described as “transitory” and “detached” from Irish social sites and networks, and often categorised as well educated and upwardly mobile. There is truth in these general observations but they are caricatures and require detail and analysis. The younger generation are not all well-educated, mobile professionals residing in Britain out of choice—a number are poorly educated and acutely disadvantaged—while among the well educated majority there are issues of isolation and dislocation. Nor does the younger generation eschew an Irish identity, rather they have a relatively more confident sense of their Irish identity, due in large part to the very different Ireland they left, and they are forming fresh sites and networks in which to express this. Most notable are the burgeoning professional and business networks, especially in London but also beyond.

Many interviewees spoke of the need to provide bridges for the different generations of Irish people in Britain. Nationally, the GAA is forming an increasingly important site for continuities and crossovers

between the generations, a locus of social interaction and a strong reminder that a shared cultural heritage remains important to the Irish in Britain. There are many signs that the promotion of Irish culture and heritage can productively address some of the generational schisms in the diaspora.

The heterogeneity of the Irish population, the issues of intergenerational connectivity, and of transitions in the culture, identity and community of the Irish in Britain, were among the main themes that emerged from research and especially conversations with organisations providing services to Irish communities. Across Britain, Irish-focused organisations have formed to provide various services—welfare, advice, culture—that play important roles in meeting social care and cultural needs of Irish communities. Many have a growing consciousness of the need to evolve to match changing demographics and needs. As one interviewee put it, the Irish-centred “organisations need to be more agile.” There are signs that this is happening. A striking number of organisations have changed their names in recent years to register the transformations in the Irish population, and many are transforming their boards and governance to help create new opportunities to broaden forms of engagement with the Irish population, to diversify the search for funding, and to be more proactive in identifying and articulating the needs of the Irish in Britain. The challenge for these organisations, as for the Emigrant Support Programme, is to develop imaginative and pragmatic means to support changing Irish communities.

### A Note on Sources

We have utilised several data sources in researching the Irish in Britain, with a particular focus on post-2008 emigration.

The Census of England and Wales, undertaken once every ten years, is the most comprehensive data source, providing information on population, housing, health and employment. This source is widely used in policy and research, and a significant determinant of how the state allocates services and other resources. In 2001, for the first time, the UK Census provided an opportunity for residents to

“Across Britain, certain markers of identity have been eroded, most especially the sense of belonging associated with residing in an ethnic enclave.”

officially identify as “White Irish” and this category was available again in 2011. This has made available a great deal of data that is helpful in formulating a richer picture of Irish people living in Britain, though it should be noted that this data has significant limitations. The Census uses both country of birth and ethnicity (“white Irish”) variables in its data sets. In this report, we have used both variables to provide the most relevant information about selected issues.

Among British data sources, we have also drawn on UK National Insurance figures and on data from The Labour Force Survey and the Department of Work and Pensions. In Ireland, our key statistical resource is the Central Statistics Office Ireland.

Drawing on this data we can more clearly see both the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the Irish in Britain. The data can only produce a statistical snapshot though and we have also drawn on further primary sources, including interviews with service providers and others engaging the Irish in Britain, and with focus groups of Irish emigrants.

### Population and Settlement

As noted above, while Britain remains the first choice destination for Irish migrants, these num-

bers have been declining for some time. Whereas over 70% of all migrants leaving Ireland between the 1950s and 1970s went to Britain, that number was 24.6% in the year to April 2013, when 21,900 people moved to Britain. That noted, this is almost three times the figure of 2008 when 7,600 people migrated, signifying the impact of the economic crisis.

The number of these migrants who are Irish-born is difficult to determine as these are numbers of migrants of all nationalities leaving Ireland. A useful indicator of Irish nationality in these figures is the National Insurance Numbers issued to Irish nationals. In 2013, 15,540 Irish nationals registered for a National Insurance Number. The total number of registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK in 2012/13 was 562,000. Irish nationals were the 11th highest group registration; the highest was Poland, with 91,360 registrations.

In the 2011 census, 531,087 registered as “white Irish.” This is 0.9% of the population of England and Wales. In the same census, 407,357 denoted Ireland as their country of birth. This is the first time that Ireland has not been the largest non-UK born group. In the 1951 Census there were 492,000 Irish-born residents, accounting for more than a quarter (26%)

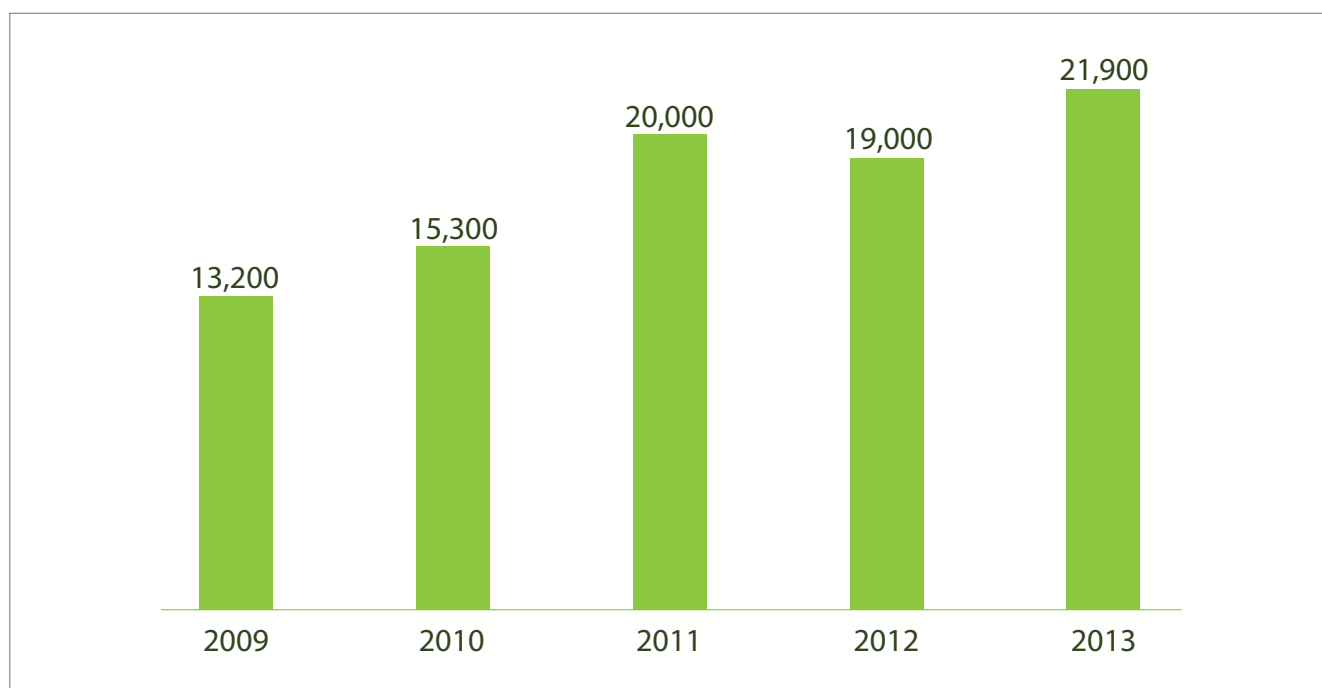


Fig 1: Estimated Migration from Ireland to England and Wales, 2009–2013  
Source: Office for National Statistics (UK)

of all foreign-born residents in that year. In 2001 there were 473,000 Irish-born and Ireland was still the most reported country of birth of non-UK citizens, making up 10.2% of this population. In 2011, it was fourth, after India, Poland and Pakistan, making up 5.4% of non-UK born people.

### Regions

Geographically, the great densities of the Irish ethnic population in Britain remain in urban centres or conurbations, particularly in the North West, the East Midlands, the West Midlands, the East, and London.

## Non-UK born census populations 1951–2011

13% (7.5 MILLION) OF RESIDENTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES WERE BORN OUTSIDE OF THE UK, 2011

TOP FIVE NON-UK COUNTRIES OF BIRTH  
NUMBERS ARE IN THOUSANDS

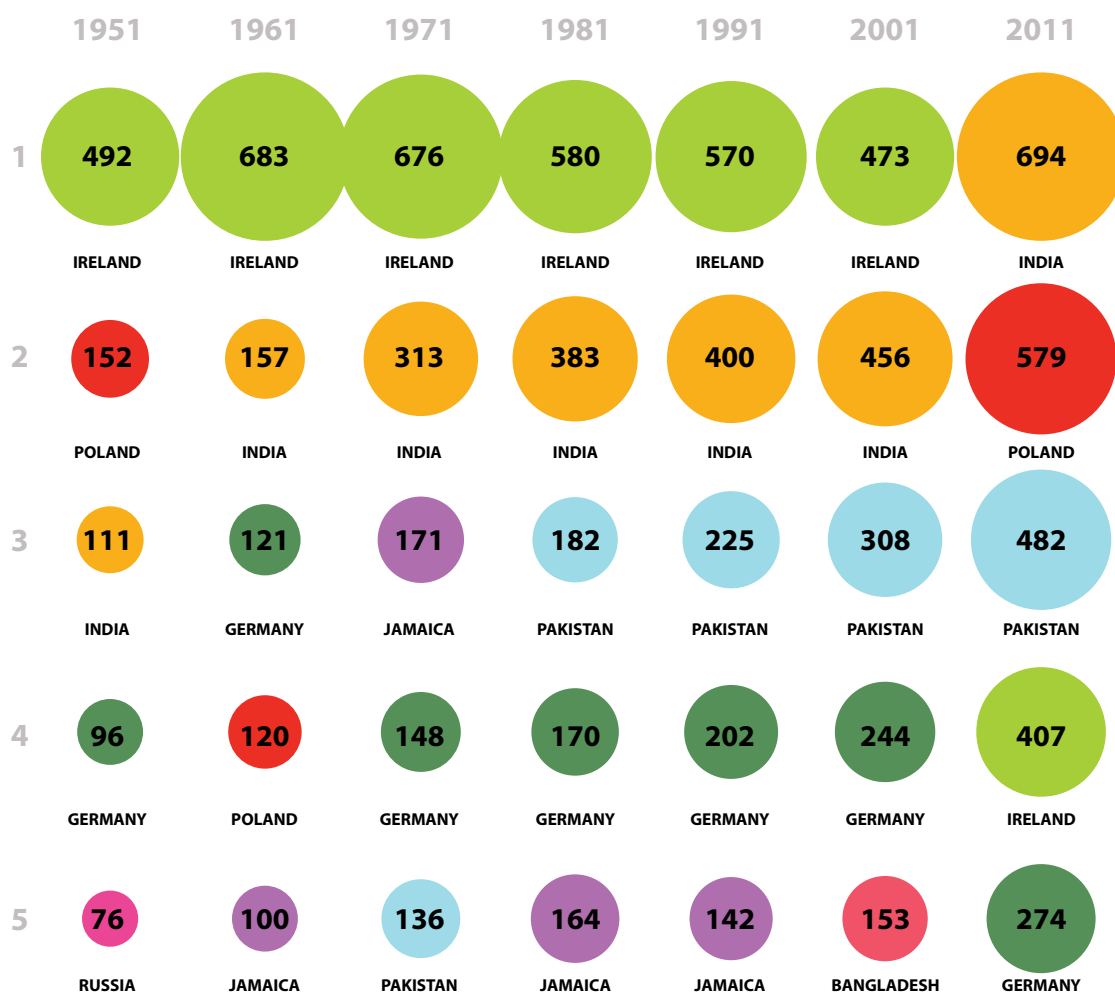


Fig 2: Non-UK Born Census Populations 1951–2011  
Source: Office for National Statistics (UK)

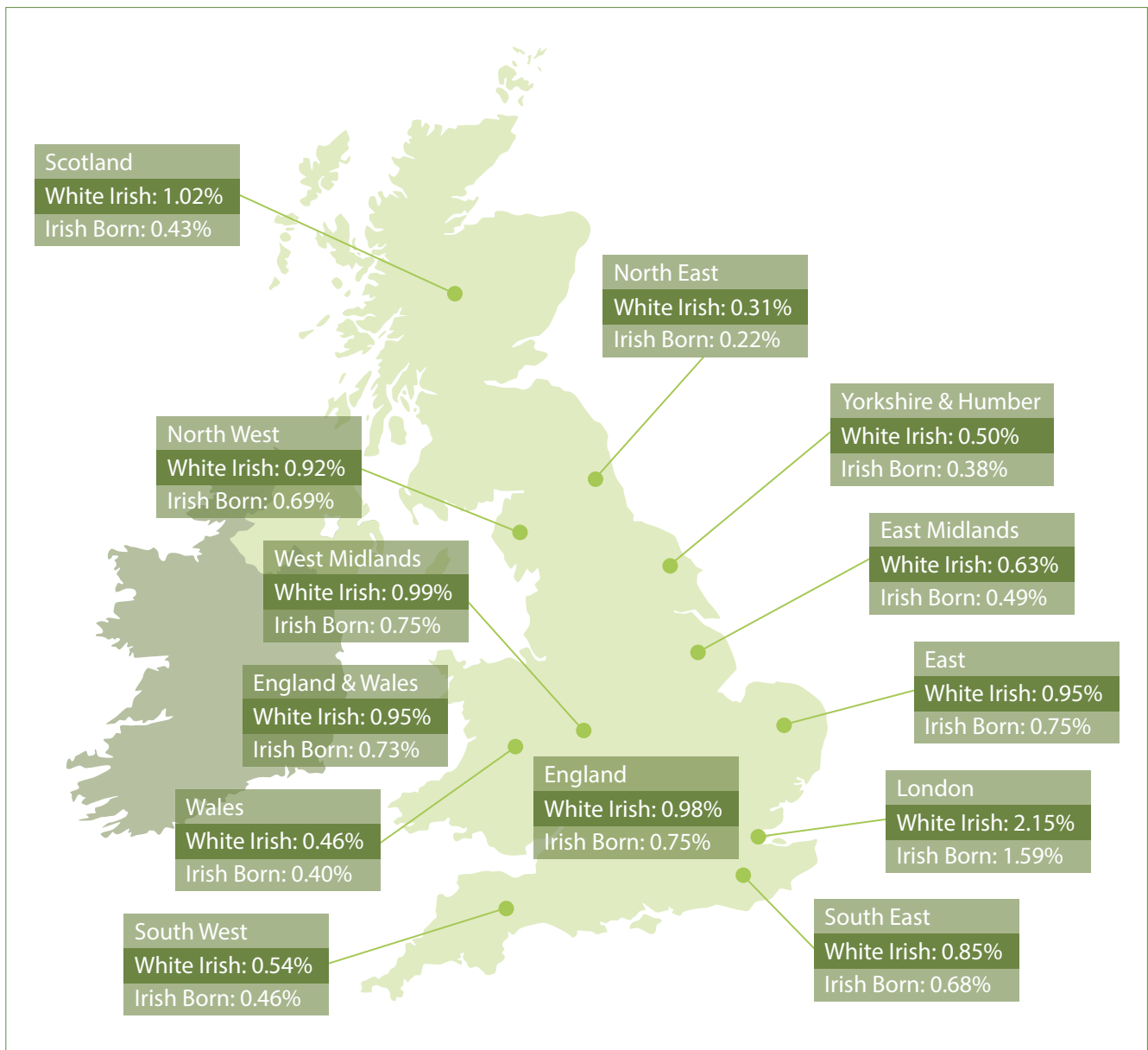


Fig 3: Population of Britain by Country of Birth, Ethnicity and Region  
 Source: Office for National Statistics

With almost half of the Irish population in London and the South East it would seem that the North/South divide, always an element in Irish settlement in Britain, is becoming starker. Looking across the last four census we can see there has been a notable decline in the Irish population in the North since 1981.<sup>i</sup>

An obvious result of this is that northern centres of Irish migration are no longer being replenished. In 2013 the *Irish Post* reported on this:

Members of Irish centres in Coventry, Huddersfield and Leeds who spoke to the *Irish Post* suggest a gulf

between older emigrants and the young is due to the decline of an Irish workforce.

Kerry man Joe Moran regularly visits the Huddersfield Irish Centre. He says: “There used to be a big Irish community here but they haven’t been replaced. There is no work now, that’s the trouble. There are young Irish that use the centre here but they are in the universities. (Mulhern)

This pattern of decline—and what appears to be a concomitant “gulf between the older emigrants and the young”—is far from terminal though for there are indicators of vibrant Irish populations in parts of the North. In Newcastle, a service provider notes:

New migrants have increased quite markedly. There is evidence that many students have stayed in the region mainly working as young professionals in health services, teaching, business and the law... There is minimal contact between this group and the older populations though all come together quite happily for sporting and cultural events. The “new” population is also very fluid. Many move away after a year or so for better jobs in Leeds, Manchester or London. Most travel home several times a year and are quite rightly termed ‘commuters’ rather than migrants in some cases.

“It is these more fluid formations of Irish identity and identification that characterise Irish settlement in Britain today”

Speaking of Liverpool, an interviewee with an Irish community organisation observed:

We find that we have a lot more young Irish moving into the region for work and also young people who come to the region for university are staying on when they graduate. There has been a huge increase in the number of young Irish people in the last 5 years. We have seen this increase mainly in the sports side with the number of men, women and children’s Gaelic football and hurling teams, the majority of whom are all Irish-born, compared to 10 years ago when we didn’t have any. These young people are all actively involved in our organisation and mix with all generations.

These commentaries speak to the relativities of migrant settlement and displacement and to differing sensibilities about the relations between the generations and what constitutes an Irish community. This is not to gainsay the raw statistics that evidence depopulation of once stronger Irish enclaves in the North of Britain, but to underline the shifting nature of ethnic connectivity. Rionach Casey has examined the complex ways in which the Irish in Sheffield negotiate community and argues that their “trajectories are too diverse to fit traditional models of community engagement. There is a conscious shift away from a ‘traditional’ model of an Irish community based on the exclusive ownership of a physical space towards a more inclusive network of connected individuals” (228-29). It is these more fluid formations of Irish identity and identification that characterise Irish settlement in Britain today.

In London, the Irish community is also declining in

numbers but is also being more fully replenished than other regions and retains a larger infrastructure of community organisations. The Irish in London constitute the fourth largest single ethnic group within a city that is increasingly multicultural. While major ethnic enclaves are diminishing in number there remain significant concentrations of Irish-born in many boroughs. The highest concentration of Irish-born is in the boroughs of Brent and Ealing. Younger Irish migrants are not moving into the established areas of Irish settlement in London but there are signs of new enclaves emerging. One interviewee observed:

A lot of the younger people are moving into areas that are affordable, Clapham for example and that area of South London... and they want to be on certain tube lines for getting into Canary Wharf, for getting into the city, and so the old reasons for settling in London, reasons of community, Irish pubs, that sort of thing is just not there now.

This comment indicates not only new patterns of settlement but also how the socioeconomic and cultural markers of Irish identity in London are shifting.

The numbers of Irish in Scotland are more stable than most parts of England and Wales. In 2001, 21,774 people were Irish-born, while the 2011 census registered 22,952 people born in Ireland, an increase of 5%. In 2011, the Irish were the third highest non-UK born group after Poland and India (Krausova and Vargos-Silva, 8). In 2001, 49,428 were registered as ethnic Irish and in 2011 the number was 54,090.

There are well-established migration routes between Ireland, especially the Northern counties, and Scotland, and Irish peoples (Northern and Republic) are widely if not evenly dispersed across the region. While predominantly urban, with a rich cultural history in Glasgow in particular, there are also small but proportionately significant concentrations in areas such as East Ayrshire, West Dumbartonshire and the Shetland Islands.

A history of sectarianism in Scotland has long marked the experience of many Irish emigrants there. There is some evidence of continued dis-



crimination and a legacy of vulnerabilities in health and employment (Walls and Williams, 2003). Irish people remain wary of promoting Irish culture and heritage in parts of Scotland.

The Irish in Britain remain overwhelmingly an urban-dwelling people: 90% of white Irish live in cities or urban conurbations compared with 81.5% of all usual residents. That noted, several interviewees pointed out that there are pockets of Irish populations outside the urban centres, that they contain ageing and vulnerable people who are isolated from networks of Irish welfare or cultural support, and have received little or no direct support from the ESP.

### Age Profile

As noted, the Irish population in Britain is the oldest of all the ethnic groups. This reflects the historical patterns of migration. Generally, the non-UK born population is younger than the UK-born, reflecting the fact that it is normally younger people who emigrate, but the Irish population differs due to the timing of migration patterns. The 2011 census shows that the non-UK born population has 36% aged 25–39, compared to 20% in the usually resident population as a whole. The median age for the usually resident population was 39.4. However, the median age for Irish-born was 61.7 years.

The median age of the Irish-born population is dramatically higher than any other group. As noted, this profile reflects the historical pattern of Irish migration. Census figures show that almost 65% of Irish-born residents arrived before 1981. Of the 175,000+ in London, over 60,000 are over 60 years of age. The ageing profile means a disproportion-

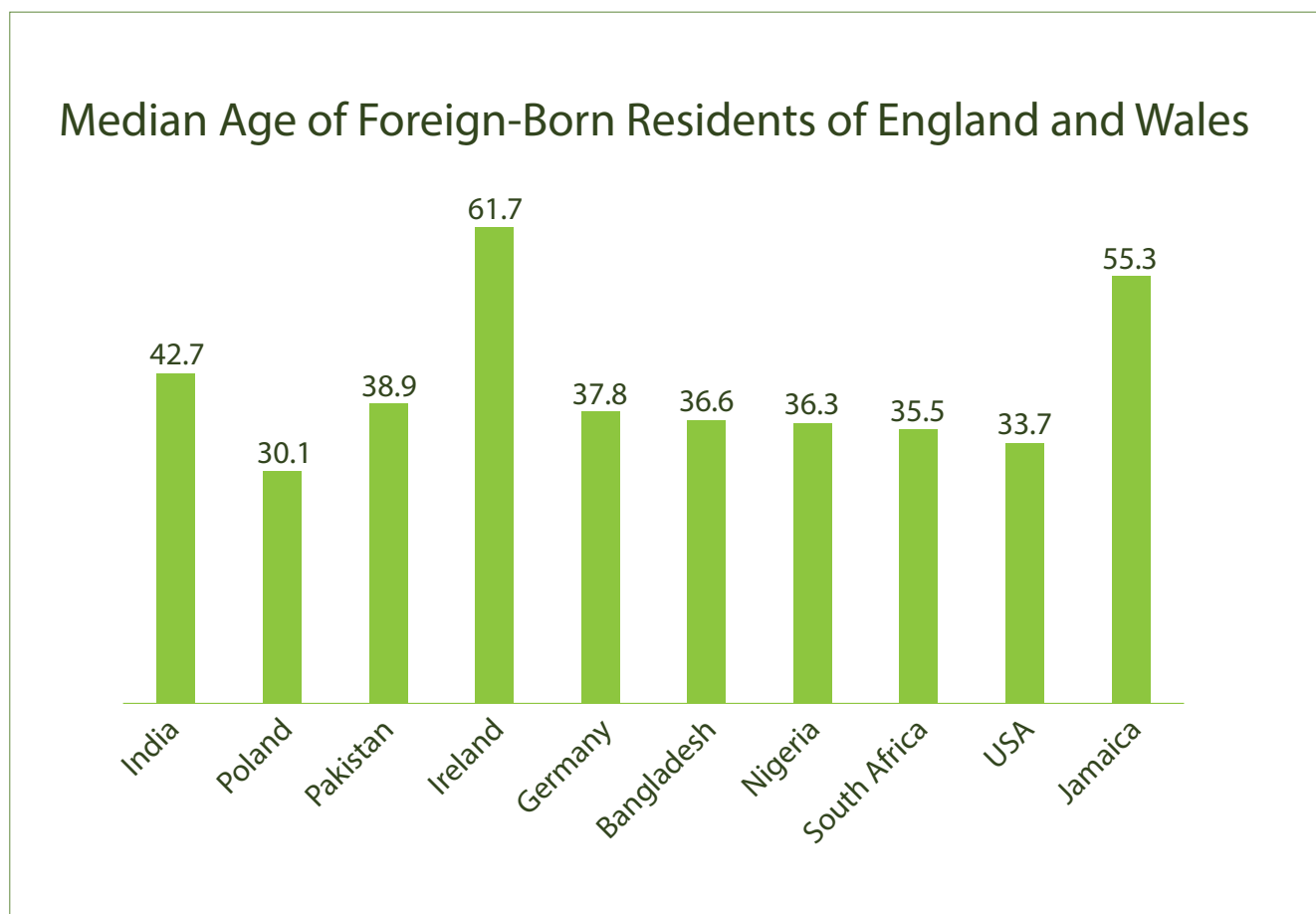


Fig 4: Median age for ten non-UK countries of birth for usual residents of England and Wales, 2011  
Source: Office for National Statistics (UK)

ately large part of the present Irish population in Britain is vulnerable to poor health and “end of life” issues.

### Housing and Homelessness

Home ownership and rental among the Irish in Britain is generally in line with the national resident population, though there are some notable differences. There are very distinctive differences for Irish Travellers.

According to the 2011 census, 64% of the total household population owned their own home, 31% owned their home outright, 18% rented or lived rent free, and 17.6% rented social accommodation. Among the white Irish population, 61.4% owned their property, 33% owned it outright, 16.7% rented or lived rent free, and 21.7% rented social accommodation.

If we add age to the variables, we find that 37.6% of the white Irish household population are aged 50 and over compared with 27.2% of the total household population. 2011 census figures show a high percentage of ethnic Irish live in households comprising a single pensioner. These figures are higher than for any other ethnic group and point once again to the ageing profile of the Irish population and to attendant problems of social isolation as many are housebound, often unaware of support available or wary of mainstream services, and have lost touch with relatives in Ireland.

The numbers of Irish in communal establishments are in line with the general population though with higher numbers in care homes and hostels. Communal establishments include hospitals, nursing and residential homes, hostels, prisons and other forms of criminal justice spaces. There are a total of 11,741 Irish in communal establishments according to the 2011 census. Of these, 45% are in medical and care establishments, compared with 42% of the resident population; 39% are in care homes, either with or without nursing, compared with 36% of the resident population, and 2.4% of Irish are in hostels or temporary accommodation for the homeless, compared with 2.1% of the resident population. Irish men in particular are overrepresented in hospitals and hostels for the homeless.

The number of Irish people who are homeless is difficult to determine as there is no robust national data, the criteria can be unclear, and the numbers are anyhow in flux across time and place. We know from both census figures and reports by Irish organisations that there are problems of homelessness and poor housing for Irish people across Britain. In recent years eligibility has become more and more constrained due to welfare reforms and pressures on social housing provision. In 2012 the Combined Homeless Information Network reported data that showed an increase in the number of new Irish rough sleepers in London, with the number of newly homeless Irish people increasing from 43 in 2010 to 79 in 2011 (Crosscare Migrant Project, 12).

### Employment and Economic Activity

The Irish are one of the largest ethnic groups in Britain’s workforce. Like other groups, they have taken up particular labour niches in the early generations and diversified in more recent times. The 1950s migrants are sometimes referred to as a “labour diaspora”, referring to their propensity for work in manual and low-skilled areas of employment, with men in manufacturing and construction, and women in domestic and care work (see: Delaney, 2007; Gray, 2004). While the occupational distribution and status of the Irish in Britain has diversified over time and more closely mimics the norms of British-born residents, there are some significant patterns of concentration in certain sectors of employment.

Figures from the 2011 census show 63% of all usual residents over 16 are “economically active”, 58.6% are in formal employment, 8.8% are self-employed, 2.3% full-time students, and 4.7% are unemployed. Figures for the ethnic Irish show 56% to be economically active, 53% are in formal employment, 9% are self-employed, 1.3% are full-time students, and 3.2% are unemployed.

The figures also show that the Irish are a disproportionately older work force. Of the Irish who are designated economically active 58.3% are aged 50 and over, compared with 42.6% of usual residents. The gender balance is in line with the resident population. Of the Irish in formal employment, 52.2% are male and 47.8% are female, compared with 53% and 47% respectively among the resident population.

The Irish who are economically inactive is a higher number than the British average. Economically “inactive” is defined as people of working age who are not in the labour force although eligible to work. There are many reasons for economic activity, including gender, age, economic status and health. Data from the Department of Work and Pensions shows the numbers of Irish nationals claiming working age benefits. In the year to March 2013, the total number was 14,820, of which 8,620 are claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefits and 2,950 claiming Jobseekers Allowance. The ESA and Incapacity Benefits figure is comparatively high compared to national averages, placing Ireland as the second highest client group in this category (after Pakistan).

### Occupations

The 264,082 white Irish aged 16 and over in employment are spread over a much wider range of

industries than earlier generations of Irish migrants.

There are significant concentrations in construction (11.2%), wholesale and retail trade (9.7%), professional, scientific and technical activities (8.5%), education (12.3%), and health and social work (15.4%). This represents a distinctive movement beyond the occupations of labour and care among the earlier generations of Irish emigrants, while these industries remain areas of very active employment for the Irish in Britain—men continue to have high representation in construction, while women are overrepresented in the public sector.

Both the census and the LFS measure occupational status, and both data sets show that not only have the occupations taken up by white Irish in Britain diversified to include all sections of employment, there are large and growing proportions in the highest professional and managerial occupations.

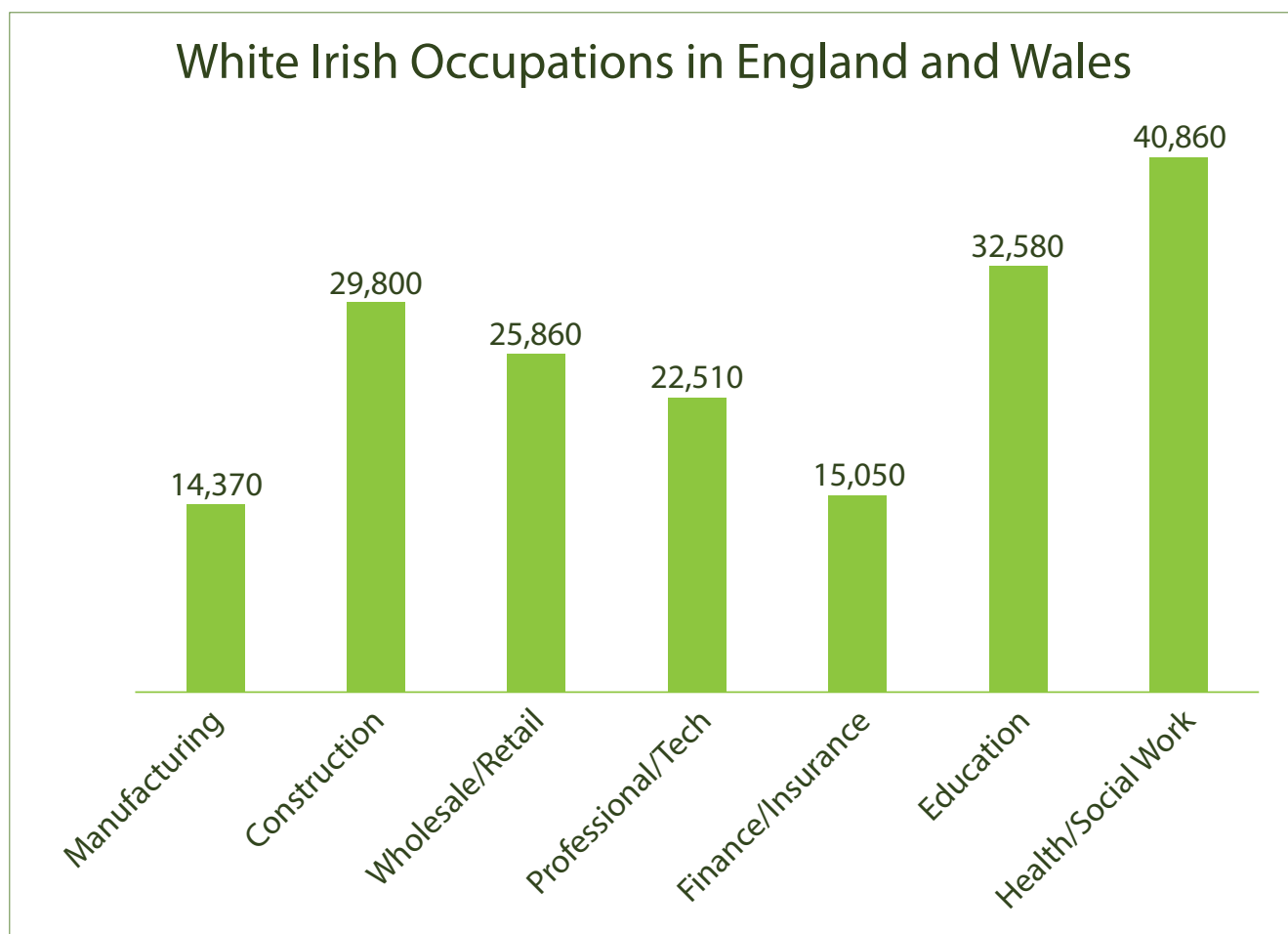


Fig 5: White Irish Occupations in England and Wales  
Source: Office for National Statistics (UK)

## Those in "Not Good Health", by Ethnic Group, in England and Wales

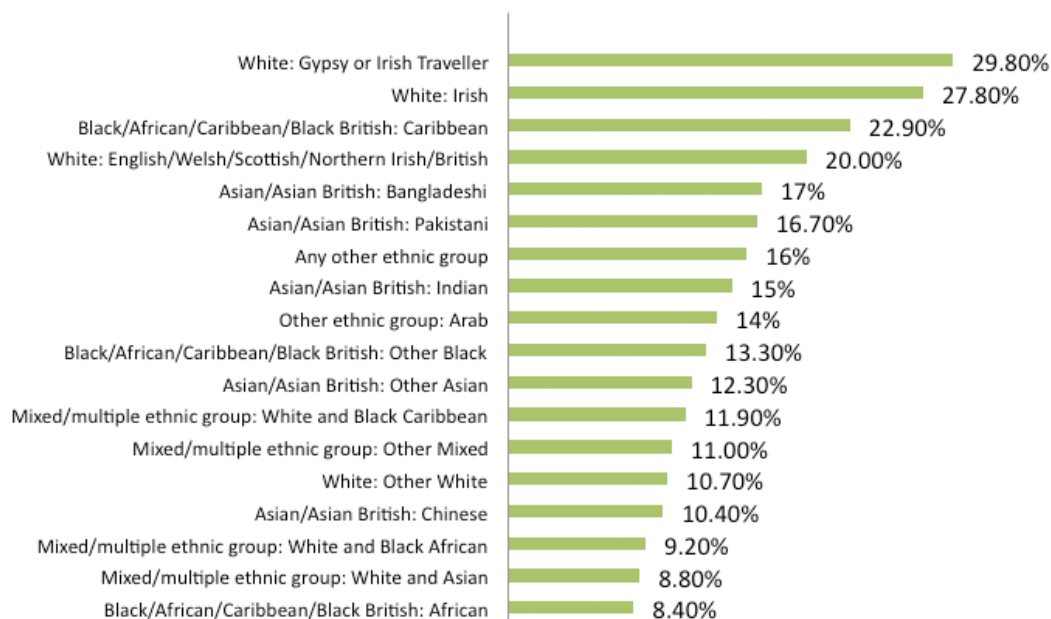


Fig 6: The relationship between increasing age and percentage of people with 'Not Good' general health: by ethnic group, England and Wales, 2011. Source: Office for National Statistics (UK)

According to the 2011 census figures, of the white Irish over 16 who are in employment, 12.8% are managers, directors and senior officials, 27.5% are in professional occupations, and 13.4% are in associate professional and technical occupations. That adds up to 53.7% in the top three bands of occupation.

Irish-born people under 60 now occupy top levels of occupation in Britain. However, the lower status occupations among those over 60 correlates with other indicators about the vulnerabilities of this group and points up their relatively lower wages and pension entitlements.

It should be noted that the white Irish have a high level of educational qualification compared with other groups and the general population. 33.6% of white Irish over 16 have Level 4 qualifications and above, compared with 27.2% of all usual residents. A closer look at these figures shows that age is once again a significant element, with the younger generations of Irish ethnics scoring comparatively highly in educational qualifications.

### Health

Irish populations in Britain have been subject to distinctive health inequalities. Rates of major illnesses are higher than the national average and rates of life expectancy are lower. Among the Irish-born over 50 there are higher reported levels of poor health, limiting long term illness and disability. There are clear, cross-cutting relations between economic inactivity, poor physical and mental health and social isolation. For example, evidence of poor health reflects and impacts on the large numbers of one-person households and those economically inactive.

In the 2011 census residents were asked to assess their health on a five point scale: very good, good, fair, bad or very bad. There was notable variability in general health among different ethnic groups; in some significant part, the differences are due to age factors.

27.8% of the Irish population reported not good health and this correlates with the ageing population, for 30.7% of the Irish population are aged 65 or over, compared with 16.4% of the population as

a whole in England and Wales. The percentage of Gypsy or Irish Travellers reporting not good health is even higher at 30%.

The Irish population in Britain have high rates for a range of mental health problems—*anxiety and depression* are especially prevalent among Irish men. The rates are also high for GP consultations and hospital admissions. This has remained a largely invisible issue though a number of organisations are pushing hard for statutory services and national agencies to recognise it and create suitable policy and practice responses.

### The Elderly Irish

An interviewee who has been involved with Irish communities in London for over twenty years comments:

I feel that where we are at now is the best we have ever been in relation to older Irish people. Irish agencies, large and small, are able to offer a service to older Irish people because we are funded... the older Irish community 20 years ago was much smaller than it is now, as an organised community... the census would tell you it's much larger...

This points to the effectiveness of funded, formalised care and engagement of the elderly Irish, in part due to the support of the ESP. Yet, as substantive research shows, there remain significant challenges to the maintenance of supportive engagement with the elderly Irish in Britain.

Several providers spoke of the need for culturally sensitive approaches to engagement and care of elderly Irish. Some Irish people, more men than women in the older generation, are unwilling to engage services or seek support, either due to a lack of knowledge about what is available or personal apprehension or even shame about asking for help. Several organisations are promoting initiatives to have Irish befrienders go into homes of elderly Irish. There are numerous stories of the benefits of sensitive outreach to vulnerable Irish people and the reliance on advocates and volunteers from the wider Irish communities. As one interviewee put it, “people in care need Irish accents, someone to have the craic with them.” It

was noted by several interviewees that the new generation of Irish migrants frequently volunteer to be befrienders or otherwise approach organisations with a view to engaging older people. One interviewee observed that the younger volunteers “love meeting with the older ones who have paved the way... they get a buzz.”

Social isolation among elderly Irish is an issue that has seen concerted and effective action over the last ten years but it remains an outstanding concern. An interviewee commented that for the elderly Irish they engage, “isolation is more an issue than economic concerns...the challenge is to keep them in the system... to keep them mentally alert and physically well...”

The rate of dementia is a significant problem among elderly Irish, with relatively few accessing mainstream services (see: Mulligan, 2007). The Irish in Britain (IIB) has taken a lead in lobbying to draw attention to this, arguing that people are disappearing from mainstream services and making the case that the Irish cultural experience is crucial to understanding and treating dementia. The Cuimhne campaign, run by IIB, has worked to highlight the high incidence of Alzheimer’s and dementia among the elderly Irish population. They are also training organisations to have the capacity and confidence to deal with dementia, and developing strategic partnerships to grow awareness about the problem and how it can help organisations meet their targets. They are approaching the issue in a holistic fashion, understanding it in multi-sector and multi-generational terms, while seeing it as “an engagement tool” that brings in the wider Irish community.

The ageing profile of the Irish in Britain, combined with the health deficits for this population, is reflected in the numbers of carers registered in recent surveys. The 2011 Census shows that 5.8 million (10%) of residents in England and Wales provided unpaid care for someone with an illness or disability, ranging from 1 to 50+ hours per week. The amount of care provided among ethnic groups ranged widely and the Irish (11%) and Gypsy or Irish Traveller (10.7%) populations were among the highest providers of unpaid care.

“This points to the effectiveness of funded, formalised care and engagement of the elderly Irish, in part due to the support of the ESP,”

## The “Forgotten Irish”

Somewhat less evident or subject to the same levels of concern as the elderly Irish is the section of the population aged 50–64 years, but there is growing evidence of vulnerability in this group, especially mental health problems.

In the 2011 census, those aged 50–64 rating their health not good is higher than those over 65. This may seem surprising as these are people still of working age. Claire Barry and Marc Scully have remarked on the significance of this in London:

Among this pre-retirement group of the London Irish community 5,800 men [30%] report that their life is limited by a long term disability. The figure for women who report limits to their daily life is slightly lower i.e. 5,300 or 26.5%. In total over 11,000 people, or 28%, of the pre-retirement or middle-aged Irish population in London have some life limiting condition. These raw figures from the census bear out our experience of the last 16 months. We have supported people aged 19–85 with some health related issue...the average age of our members is 61, what in most contexts is still considered middle age. This is worrying. At a point when people should be getting ready to reap the benefits of a life’s effort many Irish people in London are likely to have a reduced quality of life because of poorer health. (Barry & Scully)

These figures are striking and indicate ongoing vulnerabilities among pre-pension Irish in Britain. Studies evidence high levels of depression among this age group, especially men, reflecting a range of social problems that includes low levels of social support and alcohol misuse (see: Tilki et al, 2009). The welfare reforms also impact on this group. A service provider comments:

that middle group is less likely to have bought than the 50s generation, many are in rented accommodation and having problems getting benefits.....in some ways that’s a more pressurised group...many have been in unskilled jobs and not paying tax and so may not be eligible for contributory benefits...and so poverty is quite a big issue for this group...they don’t have higher eligibility older people have or other add ons...and welfare reform is impacting on that group quite significantly, they are not protected in the way pensioners are...so that’s the most challenging age group for us at the moment.

This age cohort are sometimes referred to as “the forgotten Irish,” signifying their relative invisibility to service providers and those seeking to support the Irish abroad.

## Travellers

Irish Travellers have long been and continue to be one of the most socially excluded groups in Britain. Disadvantages and deprivations have accrued to this group due to racism, social stigma and ignorance. The community experiences multiple, reinforcing inequalities, which contribute to a range of problems, including poor health and education provision, low life expectancy and high infant mortality rates, high levels of unemployment, poor accommodation provision, high imprisonment rates (about 5% of the prison population in England and Wales), and widespread discrimination, ranging from prejudice among service providers to violent hate crimes.

The Travellers have not integrated in British society and there remains considerable ignorance and prejudice in mainstream views (supported by media stereotyping) of a culture characterised by nomadism, self-employment and self-sufficiency. The relationship of this group to the settled Irish communities is a problematic one, rife with distrust. One of our interviewees described relationships between settled Irish communities and Traveller communities as “non-existent.” Many argued that the health needs of Travellers are not being competently met by health services in Britain. Several considered the treatment of Travellers by service providers to be “racist” and a form of “apartheid.” One noted: “... because of stigma some are not declaring they are Travellers when they come for advice...”

In the 2011 Census a new tick box for “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” was introduced. A total of 57,680 identified themselves with this category—this is 0.1% of the general population, Britain’s smallest ethnic group. This is probably a significant undercount, due in part to many in the community not being willing or able to self-ascribe. The Irish Traveller Movement has raised “serious questions about the 2011 census enumeration process” and produced alternative figures based on estimates by the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA) and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) caravan counts. The census

data shows Gypsy and Irish Traveller populations concentrated regionally in the South East and East of England, with the largest congregations in Basildon, Maidstone, Swale, Fenland and Ashford. The GTAA and DCLG figures confirm this but also show high concentrations in the North West and Yorkshire and Humber.

Notwithstanding the problems in producing an accurate count of Irish Travellers in Britain, their inclusion in the 2011 census has the benefit that statutory services are now including a “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” category in their monitoring procedures and this should have an impact both on resourcing and knowledge-gathering.

In the 2011 census, Gypsy or Irish Traveller had the highest proportion of people with “Not Good” general health (29.8%)—see Fig 7 below. Studies show reduced life expectancy and high infant mortality rates, mental health issues, addiction issues, and

low child immunisation levels are common in the Gypsy and Traveller communities. There are many reasons for this, including a transitory lifestyle that limits registration for public services, including GPs, which would facilitate access to health care, and a distrust of formal agencies of care. There are national and regional difficulties with provision and commissioning of services and ensuring continuity of care for Travellers; there are also questions about the “cultural competence” of health staff (Francis).

Almost 25% of Gypsy and Traveller children are not enrolled in formal education and educational attainment is lower than for any other ethnic group. “At the end of secondary education, just 12% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, compared with 58.2% of all pupils” (“Progress Report by the Ministerial Working Group on Tackling Inequalities Experienced by Gypsies and Travellers,” 7). There are signs though that rising numbers of

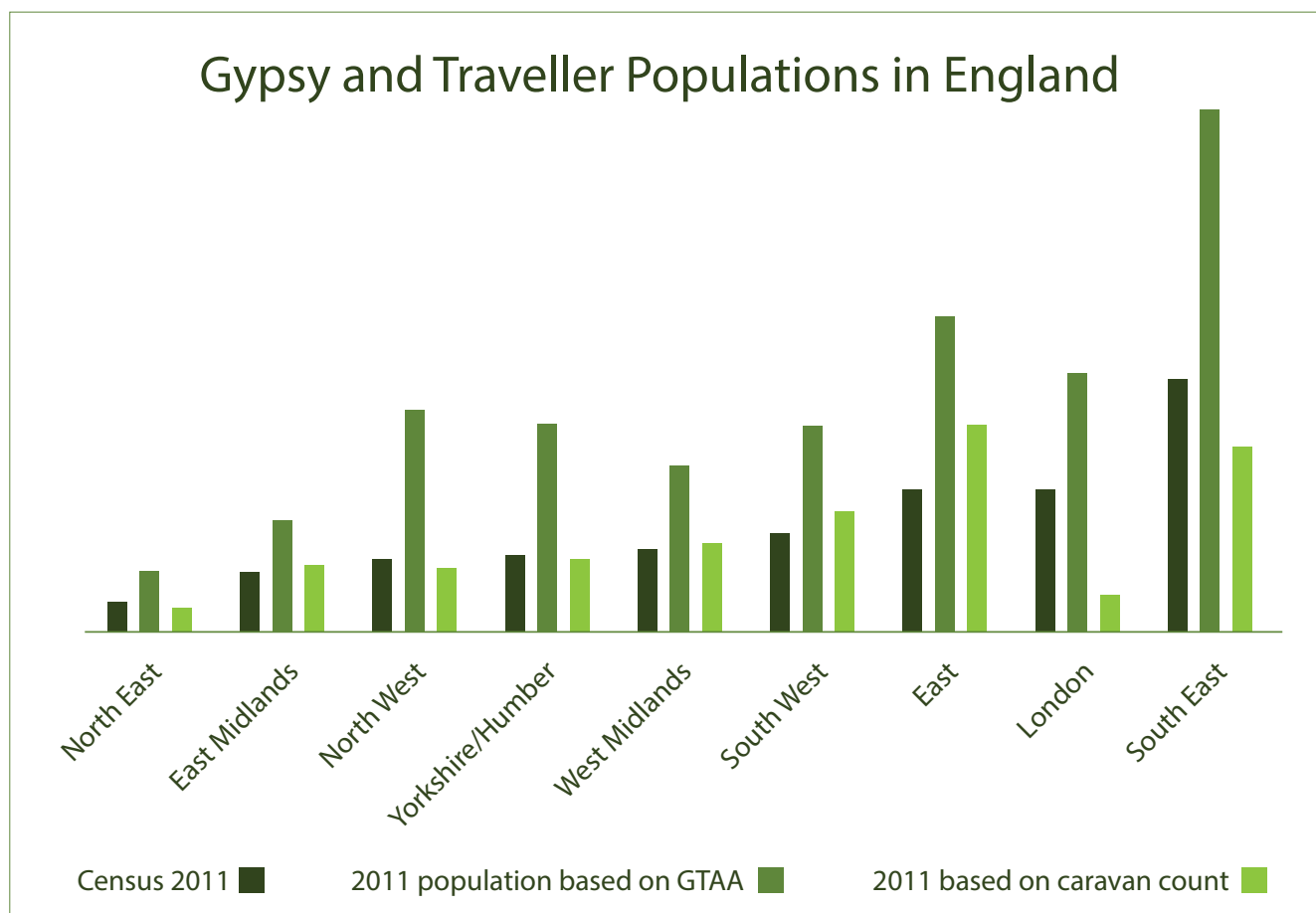


Fig 7: Gypsy and Traveller Population in England  
Source: Irish Traveller Movement in Britain



adult Gypsies and Travellers are taking up educational programmes and providing fuller support for their children's education.

Due in large part to the national lack of legal Traveller sites, 25% of the community are officially categorised as homeless. There appears to be limited Government will to address this problem in favour of Traveller communities and it has been devolved to local authorities to make provision with the result that there is increased opposition to planning proposals to develop sites. Those living in unauthorised encampments or developments are subject to eviction while those on local authority sites have limited tenancy rights.

In 2010 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government set up a ministerial working group on "tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers." In April 2012 the group published a report with 28 recommendations to "help mainstream services work better with Gypsies and Travellers" ("Progress Report," 3). Of particular import is the tasking of national and local health providers "to identify what more must be done to include the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the commissioning of health services" ("Progress Report," 15). In the field of education, "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are specifically highlighted as a vulnerable group in the revised Ofsted framework, ensuring that school inspections will pay particular attention to their progress, attainment and attendance" ("Progress Report," 8). In the Department for Work and Pensions Gypsies and Travellers will be included "as a monitoring category in our IT, processing and management information systems with changes being made for the introduction of Universal Credit in 2013" ("Progress Report," 30). With reference to employment opportunities, Gypsies and Travellers will now have representation on the Ethnic Minority Advisory Group that "provides advice to Government on issues related to the disadvantage individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds face in relation to the labour market" ("Progress Report," 31).

Such government actions are to be welcomed, for

they begin a long overdue process of formal recognition and engagement with Traveller communities and acknowledgement of their particular needs. At the same time, though, the Government's welfare reforms are adversely impacting on Travellers in Britain. Of particular concern is the stipulation that one person is designated to receive benefits for a family. Many are at risk of falling further into the poverty trap and traditional forms of Traveller work have been squeezed by a range of regulations, particularly on the handling of scrap metal and on "cold calling."

ESP funding for Traveller-related projects totalled €513,900 in 2013. The ESP has provided the most direct and consistent support for the Traveller community through its funding of the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (€128,325 in 2013). This organisation campaigns for recognition and rights for Travellers and is active in capacity building, creating opportunities for education, training and community empowerment.

There remains a host of vulnerabilities within the Traveller communities and a long journey to economic and social inclusion in Britain. There also exists something of a paradox in the provision of funding to the Irish Travellers abroad under the ESP programme, as there is little evidence that this community sees itself as a part of the Irish diaspora in any conventional sense, or that it is perceived as such by settled Irish communities in Britain.

### The New Migrants

The profile and settlement patterns of the most recent wave of Irish migrants, since 2008, are different from those of earlier generations. Firstly, they are predominantly, though not exclusively, a well-educated, mobile group driven by the search for economic opportunities abroad. Secondly, they do not seek out Irish ethnic enclaves in which to settle in Britain and their connectivity is not focused on older sites of community congregation such as pubs and clubs. There is a new dynamic of Irish community among many in this cohort, often based on business and professional networks. Unlike the Irish societies that attracted earlier generations of

“these new networks are, to cite one interviewee, “more around what you do rather than where you came from” ”



Irish emigrants, these new networks are, to cite one interviewee, “more around what you do rather than where you came from.” This noted, it is also clear that many feel dislocated and in search of anchors. A London interviewee involved in a centre providing welfare support and cultural programmes for the Irish in London described the new Irish migrants as “economic migrants, forced migrants who don’t want to be here...we are seeing people at events here who do not want to be in London...you see them trying to recreate Ireland...they are looking for a sense of belonging.” As noted above, many organisations report that young Irish migrants are turning up to volunteer their services; one interviewee suggested they used her organisation as a “transition space....to bolster self-esteem.”

There is much anecdotal comment on the culture and perspectives of the new migrants but little hard research to provide a robust profile. Among those we interviewed there were mixed views on the drives and perspectives of these migrants. While the commentator above emphasises their status as economic migrants, reluctant to be in London, a coordinator of one of the new Irish business networks in London observed:

There is a big influx of young, educated and extremely talented “hungry” people from Ireland arriving in London...every week. They are probably people who would have travelled abroad to work in any event despite economic conditions at home and would be keen to return in the long term to Ireland.

Of course, such views reflect the relative positions of engagement with Irish communities these people have. Further research is required to delineate the cultures and trajectories of these new, young migrants.

While emphasis is often on the more youthful of the new migrants, commentators also referred to a slightly older cohort of Irish migrants who are regularly commuting between London and Ireland:

Also, there is an influx of more established and mature individuals with a different profile. Some looking for work opportunities in London more than New York as commutable to Ireland. Many with families and commitments at home. Looking for mid-level to senior positions in London as struggling to find well enough paid or good enough opportunities at home. Lots of Monday-Friday people.

It is difficult to measure the numbers of this grouping as they are so mobile but they clearly indicate the increase in the numbers of Irish who commute between Ireland and Britain (and some other parts of Europe) as a staple of their working lives.

Those in the new Irish business networks may seem somewhat divorced from traditional Irish communities and sense of identity. This is a view iterated by some elderly Irish who question their “Irishness” while a small number of service providers bemoan the difficulties of engaging the business/professional Irish in support of vulnerable people among the Irish population. This noted, those we spoke to in business/professional networks were quick to underscore their sense of Irishness and of responsibility to a larger community. One spokesperson for a business group remarked:

Most [of our] members, whether Irish born or of Irish descent, have a very strong sense of their Irishness. They are extremely proud to be Irish, always have an eye to home. They are mixed on issues such as rights to voting etc., slow often to look at investing in certain sectors in Ireland (construction for example) due to high risk but keen to do the right thing. People are strongly conscious of the struggles many of their families are experiencing on a daily basis—financially and in accepting what has happened in Ireland in the last six years. Asking members a ‘favour’ in introducing, meeting someone for a coffee, opening a door, etc., are rarely if ever turned down. [There is a] huge connection via sport to GAA and rugby.

These mixed views speak to no singular generational or group identity but to the apprehensions and misapprehensions that are not uncommon between generations of ethnic emigration and settlement. They are suggestive though of the ways in which the diaspora is inflected by the cultures of both host and homeland. As noted above, many interviewees commented on an apparent generational gap, at its most extended between the new young migrants and the elderly Irish generation, but even between these poles of emigrant identity there are differences of outlook and expectation, based as much on the Ireland emigrants left behind as on the Britain they encountered. One interviewee refers to “a degree of disconnect between the generations,” and explains:

We left different Irelands. I left booming-buzzing-

we're-all-Europeans-Ireland to come to London. It shapes your point of view and I had no engagement with the Irish community for a long time....18–30s in Ireland at the moment have come of age in an age of austerity, which is a completely different arrival into the working world. We can't necessarily bridge that gap between the generation, though we have tried....a lot of the older people we work with do not believe the younger people have had the struggle they had and the younger people think that the older people are so disenfranchised from the Ireland of today that there is nothing in common... there is no Irish community, there is a plurality of subcultures and communities.

“there is no Irish community, there is a plurality of subcultures and communities”

Many of the providers of care and culture are aware of this plurality and this inflects how they strategise their engagements with Irish populations in Britain.

At the same time though there are reports of Irish people arriving in Britain with low levels of education and weak or no employment records and welfare services are seeing new migrants with a range of needs. There is evidence of a correlation between poor planning for migration and anxiety or depression on settlement in Britain. Many interviewees remarked on this unpreparedness, even among the well-educated, which could result in culture shock and more extreme forms of disorientation. In particular, there was a lack of knowledge about the need for a National Insurance Number, about how to apply for benefits, and about the difficulties in accessing suitable, affordable accommodation, especially in central London. Some commentators also mentioned “unrealistic expectations about social support” among younger Irish migrants. The increase in numbers of younger people needing welfare services presents particular challenges for the providers, as one notes:

The key problem is getting them into the system. About 10% of our client group are under 30 and that might increase as migration increases. Those are vulnerable people, people coming without the wherewithal to set up in accommodation or work or claim benefits and might have additional issues like drug addiction, alcohol addiction, fleeing violence in Ireland...vulnerable mental health issues.

There is concern that reform of the housing benefit

system will make it more difficult for some of the new migrants to afford accommodation. For those who are homeless, there is a shortage of temporary “emergency accommodation” and the criteria for eligibility has become more stringent.

There are similar difficulties in accessing social housing.

A report by Crosscare in 2012, based on research on what they termed “crisis emigration”—focused on “Irish emigrants recently arrived in the UK in vulnerable situations such as homelessness, addiction, domestic violence or unemployment”—provides evidence that growing numbers of this young (18–30) cohort are presenting to Irish organisations (Crosscare Migrant Project, 1). They point in particular to single males with a history of addiction or/and homelessness; most of those presenting sought help due to street homelessness, access to benefits and to health services, and many had high support needs due to multiple issues. The Crosscare report concludes that:

the number of emigrants falling into the ‘vulnerable’ category is only a very small proportion of the tens of thousands who have emigrated over the last few years. Nonetheless, based on the research findings, it appears that these vulnerable emigrants are people who have very high support needs (Crosscare Migrant Project, 12).

There are some recent signs that indices of vulnerability may be growing among young Irish migrants. In January 2014, Console, a suicide charity, reported that 2,200 calls were received on its helpline through December 2013 (O’Sullivan).

A number of interviewees spoke of the need to find ways to provide information to pre-emigrants that would better prepare them for arrival and settlement in Britain. A number of organisations are becoming more proactive on this matter. Both the London Irish Centre and Mind Yourself, for example, have added pages to their websites to help new and intending migrants. In 2013 the Irish Youth Foundation launched a new funding initiative (valued at £30,000) to support charities that help vulnerable new migrants from Ireland. The project aim is to “provide an emergency safety net over the difficult winter months for destitute young individuals up to the age of 30” (Irish Youth Foundation).



Fig 8: ESP funding in Britain 2004-2013  
 Source: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

### The Emigrant Support Programme in Britain

The Irish government has provided significant support for Irish people in Britain, mostly via the funding of Irish welfare and cultural organisations. While there has been reduction in funding since 2008 there remains a core focus on supporting frontline services and the Government has reiterated its commitment to maintain this focus.

In 2013 there were a total of 111 organisations funded in Britain. While organisations across Britain receive funding the major portion has supported groups and projects in London. In 2013, just under 65% of funding went to organisations in London.

A number of large capital grants have been awarded in recent years; for example, to the Irish World Heritage Centre in Manchester (€559,663 in 2012), and to the GAA for redevelopment of the Emerald GAA Grounds at Ruislip, London (€600,000 in 2013).

The primary funding emphasis has been on supporting frontline welfare and information services, which range from highly skilled outreach to vulner-

able individuals to informal community networking groups for seniors and the provision of advice on benefits. In 2013 welfare and support services received 86% of the overall funding.

While there has been a reduction in funding over the ten years of the ESP the Irish Government has reiterated that it will continue to support the Irish community in Britain and that the elderly and most vulnerable will remain a priority. Speaking to a gathering of Irish community organisations in London in September 2012, the Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore, said:

“There is evidence of a correlation between poor planning for migration and anxiety or depression on settlement in Britain”

These grants demonstrate the Government’s ongoing commitment to supporting the work of Irish organisations abroad, particularly those providing frontline services to the elderly, vulnerable and marginalised. I know you are all aware that this year the Emigrant Support Programme has faced a reduction in its overall budget. However, I am glad that despite this significant budgetary pressure, the Government has been able to ensure that funding for

## ESP Funding to UK 2009–2013 by Type

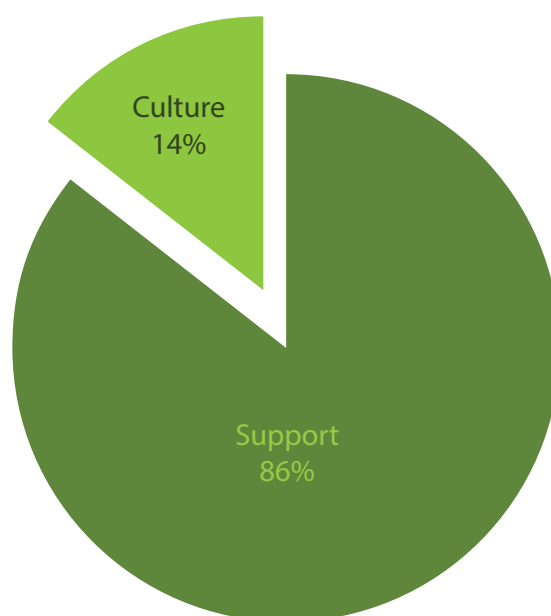


Fig 9: ESP funding allocations in Britain 2008-2013  
Source: The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

vital frontline organisations in Britain is being maintained. This underlines the value the Government, and indeed the Irish people, place on our communities here and around the world and our continuing commitment to assisting those emigrants who most need our help. (“Tánaiste Announces Funding for Irish Organisations in Britain”)

these new arrivals to these shores. It is in this respect that I am particularly pleased to be able to include two business networks in this round of funding. (“Tánaiste Announces Funding for Irish Organisations in Britain”)

This decision to fund business networks reflects again the evolution of the ESP in relation to emergent diaspora needs.

While underlining this commitment, the Government has broadened the terrain of ESP funding in Britain to include culture and heritage projects. The increase in funding for culture and heritage since 2007 in part reflects a strategic decision to encourage closer links with second and third generations of the Irish community in Britain. The provision of major grants to the British Provincial Council of the GAA and to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is indicative of this.

The balance between culture, welfare needs and provisions, and business networks for new migrants goes to the crux of ESP funding within a framework of support devised over ten years ago, in a different Ireland for a different diaspora. Some service providers are very conscious of this segmentation in funding. A few of those interviewed questioned the funding of culture and heritage projects as a distraction from primary care needs and argued there was no strong rationale for funding beyond frontline services. However, more saw a need for a diversification in funding that reflected the changing demographics and cultures of Irish migrants in Britain. There were some doubts about funding business organisations or networks through the ESP programme. One interviewee asked: “if business networks are getting funding what is the CSR

In 2012, for the first time in Britain, the ESP funded two business networks. The Tánaiste commented on this:

The current wave of immigration from Ireland has added a new dynamic to the Irish community in Britain and, as is the case with earlier emigrants, the Government is committed to engaging with

in that?" Another thought it "right" to diversify the funding to engage Irish business networks but added "I think the thing is...baby and bathwater..." Overall, there was a sense that diversification of funding to include business initiatives could be a good thing but there had to be a clear rationale to justify it.

Others point to the long association between culture and care in Irish communities in Britain and argue these have and must complement each other. Several spoke of a "therapeutic" element in this association. A London provider remarked, "there are issues that straddle arts and welfare...it is important to people's wellbeing...there has always been the thinking that culture and welfare linked...a kind of holistic service and it is happening here again."

It should be noted that several interviewees held strong views about the priorities and allocations of ESP funding. One remarked that "conditions of funding is an issue," and explained: "ESP does not have a very formalised system, so there are questions of measurement and monitoring...to be fair, ESP is not set up to do this."

There remains an open question about the policy drives and constraints surrounding Irish Government engagement with the Irish in Britain via the ESP. A number of interviewees commented on this when discussing their perceptions of Irish government policies and the ESP programme more particularly. A few took up the idea of diaspora engagement to ask if this constituted a formalised or coherent policy vision within the Irish government. One interviewee succinctly asked: "Is engaging with the Irish in Britain part of a diaspora engagement policy or an aspect of 'British-Irish relations?'" Pointing out that "British-Irish relations is built on a peace process, a no-longer suspect community, but most importantly trade relations," the interviewee suggested that apropos of ESP "if there was no political agenda I think they [the Government] would move everything as much as possible onto trade." With regard to ideas of diaspora engagement, as promoted by successive Global Irish Economic Forums (GIEF), the same speaker asked: "Is ESP there to

“There remains an open question about the policy drives and constraints surrounding Irish Government engagement with the Irish in Britain via the ESP”

meet objectives of the GIEF, or is the GIEF there to benefit from emigrants, or are they two concurrent programmes that can bridge and link?" This is not a confusion on the part of the speaker but an astute series of questions that go to the heart of tensions within contemporary thinking about diaspora engagement, especially as these pertain to differences within the diaspora and how these are differently recognised (or not) via policy or support. We will pick these questions up again at the end of this report.

## Conclusions

The data and statistical profiles above underscore significant issues and trends that are important to understanding the lives and possible futures of the Irish in Britain. Overall, it is an ageing and declining population, yet is also infused with new energies by younger migrants. There is considerable progress, but also established and emerging vulnerabilities.

Our conclusion, in line with our conclusions for this report as a whole, is that the ESP needs to continue to fund particular frontline services while taking cognisance of the shifting indices of vulnerability and also support broader Irish communities by supporting bridging initiatives that facilitate the interactivity of diverse Irish communities and generations in Britain. Frontline services should remain the core of this work—rightly so as the needs of the elderly remain paramount, with high levels of illness and disability, and as we have seen the pre-pension Irish have distinct and growing needs. At the same time there needs to be a recognition that the Irish population in Britain has changed in the last ten years and will change again in the next ten. This refocusing should not mean a bifurcation of funding criteria or diminishment of the indices and significance of vulnerability, but offer a fresh engagement with the realities of Irish emigrant experiences.

Many of those providing support to Irish communities in Britain are highly conscious of the shifting terms of engagement. More than one interviewee spoke of the need to "empower and strengthen communities....We should not just be about advice." Examples range from literacy classes for Travellers

to computer classes for elderly Irish emigrants. A London service provider argued the need to “encourage people to give back....there should be exchanges, to create a sense of community rather than dependence...get people to take responsibility for their own lives.....we can fall back on the postcolonial mindset, told what to do.”

“the challenge to recognise and manage the transforming cultures and identities of Irishness in their midst, and to manage change in supporting these communities,”

There was also much interest in engaging the wider Irish community, beyond those engaged directly by frontline services. This often tied into reflections on generational schisms. One of our interviewees, a service provider, comments:

...there is a growing divergence between new migrants and 2nd generation/older migrants. Newer and generally younger migrants have grown up in a different country i.e. more outwardly looking [regardless of their education levels] than older migrants. Older and 2nd generation migrants as manifested in Irish culture and welfare organisations have the appearance of a more traditional view of what it means to be Irish and hold to some of the past. This is fully understandable in the context of close knits communities in the past and more difficult times for the Irish community in the UK....being Irish, London Irish, Irish American, Birmingham Irish, etc., are quite distinct identities with their own unique interpretation of Irishness. It is just that many Irish born migrants don't readily identify with being London/UK Irish and vice versa....This represents a long-term challenge to how to engage and support both.

This articulates a number of the issues that bubbled through many conversations with Irish people in Britain. There is recognition of divergent cultural worldviews among the older and younger generations of migrants. Yet, while many of the older generation may hew to a more “traditional” sense of Irish identity there are also plural Irish identities in Britain (as elsewhere), identities significantly inflected by region or gender or profession, yet also richly and inclusively Irish.

This goes to the heart of the challenge facing those engaging and tending to the needs of Irish communities in Britain—the challenge to recognise and manage the transforming cultures and identities

of Irishness in their midst, and to manage change in supporting these communities. This is already happening in certain forms and sites. For example, the London Irish Centre provides both welfare and cultural support to Irish communities and is very conscious of the need to innovate through outreach. As one of their number observed: “we do not want to be a ghetto of Irishness in Camden, we want to be here for the widest possible section of the community, across all the sectors.”

Certainly there is a cognisance that the pressure to manage change is becoming increasingly urgent and will affect the future of organisations engaging the Irish in Britain. One service provider stated:

We are one of the agencies that have grasped the bull by the horns...if we don't change we will become completely irrelevant to a larger and larger group of people and in ten years' time we will be selling the place and locking up because there would be no point in us being here.

This consciousness of the need to manage change has led a number of organisations to more proactively engage Irish business communities and diversify searches for funding. One interviewee commented:

We host business events and network, trying to get much more support from the business sector. Up until recent years we did not have to look so much to business, the financial base was quite sound. We are now facing challenges, money drying up. We need to start looking for funds or other support from the Irish business world.

Another interviewee argued that there is some complacency among ESP-funded organisations and that ESP should be more stringent in assessing applications for funding: “ESP should compel Irish agencies to demonstrate what kind of conversations they are having with local government about their provision of services...to at least demonstrate they have tried.”

i In 2011, 82% of national insurance numbers registered to Irish people in Britain were registered in the south, with 55% in Greater London (Department of Work and Pensions).

ii There is also an overall 0.13% of funding to Business.

## Summary

- The Irish in Britain are disproportionately older than the general population and the older generation has disproportionate health and other needs. A large number of Irish people above pension age require culturally sensitive support for a range of needs including social isolation, dementia, LLTI and disability.
- A growing proportion of the 50–65 years-old Irish population are experiencing problems but are not as yet on the radar of statutory service providers. These problems include high levels of depression among this age group, especially men, and there is a growing need for advice on benefits due to welfare reform.
- The severe, ongoing social exclusions of Travellers render them a chronically marginalised group in Britain. The ESP must continue to support organisations well-placed to tackle the many vulnerabilities besetting this group.
- The role of culture has become increasingly important as a means to bridge generations and combat social isolation. Such uses of cultural forms and platforms merit further research and support.
- Irish community support structures and organisations exist across Britain but are concentrated in major metropolitan areas. Outside of these there are smaller Irish populations which have little or no access to Irish community support.
- Emigrants should be better prepared and informed about settlement in Britain. Potentially vulnerable migrants, particularly unemployed young males, should be provided with accessible information before they depart Ireland. This should be supported by robust referral systems between relevant organisations in Ireland and Britain.
- There is evidence the ongoing welfare reform in the UK is having a significant impact on sectors of the Irish population. Among the reforms, new regulations make it more difficult for newcomers to access benefits, the new Single Allowance makes it more difficult for families to cover a range of basic needs, and the emergency safety net payment has been removed. ESP needs to be vigilant about the effects of these reforms and the vulnerabilities they will exacerbate or create.



# The Irish in the United States

The Irish diaspora in the United States of America has, according to new Irish Ambassador Anne Anderson, left an Irish imprint in every corner of the country and in every aspect of its life (“Message from Ambassador Anne Anderson on Arrival”). The story of the Irish in the United States is one of remarkable progress, from early challenges to acceptance and assimilation (see Miller, 1985, 2008; Kenny, 2003). At the same time, we know that the Irish in America (Ireland-born and multi-generational) retain strong connections to Ireland through their histories, cultures and identities. We should note that the histories of the Irish in the United States have been shaped by shifting relations between host and home country—most recently the pursuit of peace in Northern Ireland—and that such ties should not be taken for granted. Some recent commentators have suggested that the ties are weakening, in part due to a domestic and diasporic erosion of Irish-American identity (Cochrane, 2013; Duffy, 2013). The Emigrant Support Programme (along with a range of other organisations) has an important role to play in helping to maintain connectivity between Ireland and the Irish in the United States in a mutually beneficial manner.

The histories of the Irish in America oscillate between perspectives shaped by the heightened relevance of home and host contexts. Throughout the twentieth century Irish-America strengthened its ethnic civil society structures—such as the Catholic Church, the GAA and Ancient Order of Hibernians—while also assimilating into the American mainstream (see Casey & Lee, 2005; Dolan 2008; Doorley 2005; Greeley 1998; Hayden 2003; Kenny 2000, 2003; McLoughlin 2011; Miller 2008; and Shannon; 1974). Developing out of this complex triangulation between home, host and diaspora, culture emerged as a key connector and this period saw a prolific rise in the production of Irish-American culture as a means to preserve diasporic identities and communities. As such, it developed a diasporic consciousness and community, though one with only

intermittent collective or political interest in Irish affairs. From the early 1970s, the Northern Ireland conflict galvanised considerable interest and activity in the Irish-American diaspora, both as supporters of conflict and more lastingly as peace builders (see Cochrane 2007, 2009, 2010; Guelke, 1996; O’Clery 1996; O’Dowd 2011; and Wilson, 1995). In more recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in the relationship between Ireland and Irish-America, reflecting the effects of globalisation on the causes and nature of migration, and the waning of older ethnic Irish organisations and networks in America. Add to this the new type of emigrant, more transient and pragmatic than earlier generations, and less likely to engage with traditional ethnic support networks, and we find a diasporic community at a point of significant change.

“The Irish diaspora in the United States of America has, according to new Irish Ambassador Anne Anderson, left an Irish imprint in every corner of the country and in every aspect of its life”

## Changing Profile of the Irish in America

The St Patrick’s Day parade in south Boston is one of the most famous roastings in the USA, it is real knuckle duster stuff. It is preceded by a breakfast hosted by the local state senator and because it was vacant for a while a local Irish-American took it and then the vacancy was filled by this Haitian American married to an Irish-American. It is a nice interesting change...That might be part of what [happens] in the next 5 years or so, that you have more of this... that the Irish community here will look almost more like the community in Ireland. (Interviewee, Boston, 2013)

In Boston this year, Senator Linda Dorcea Forry became the first non-white, non-male host of the St. Patrick’s Day Breakfast. During the proceedings, Senator Forry quipped that there was no need to “adjust your TV sets, there is nothing wrong with the picture on your TV...I am a woman” (Seeyle). At the same event, Gov. Deval Patrick, the state’s first African American governor noted, “Have a good look people, this is what a Forry and Patrick looks like these days” (Levenson & Miller). In this brief exchange at one of the most symbolic annual Irish gatherings in the United States, we are given a window into the progressive evolution of the Irish in

America into a developed diaspora.

Irish-America, as a disaggregate fusion of migrants and ancestrally/affinity bound individuals, is a mature, developed diaspora. The temporal longevity and makeup of the community along with the strong infrastructural progression within it can be a determining influence on where the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) goes next in the region. As seen in other chapters, locations without this infrastructural security face other issues focused on advancing stable organisational and communal bases for the work of the ESP. The United States, in a similar manner to the United Kingdom, is different. The composition of the organisational and community base, although witnessing some changes, is well established. This provides unique opportunities for the ESP to further its facilitation model and enhance the role of diasporic communities and organisations in shaping the next cycle of funding.

A number of factors are shaping the contours of Irish-American identity in the twenty-first century. These include: the erosion of urban ethnic enclaves and the advance of assimilation into the American mainstream; the reduced numbers of new migrants and their dispersed settlement and employment patterns; the heightened sensitivities and restrictions around immigration in the post-9/11 United States; and the impact of social media and advanced forms of communication and exchange between Ireland and the USA. These factors are pushing and pulling in different directions, making it difficult to sketch a composite picture of Irish-America today. We should note that the “undocumented” Irish in America have a reduced visibility and it is difficult to trace their role in the Irish diaspora. Clearly, the Irish government is alert to the shifting composition of

Irish-America, as evidenced by the recent opening of diplomatic missions in new USA locales.<sup>1</sup> It is also, of course, alert to the opportunities for business and knowledge transfer through engagement with diasporic professional elites in the USA, such as the Irish Technology Leadership Group in Silicon Valley. As we reconsider the complexity of what constitutes Irish-American identity today, we see a redrawing of established identifiers such as socioeconomic class, age and occupation.

Notwithstanding popular narratives of Irish-American progress, it is misguided to conceptualise the Irish in the United States as a homogenous social formation or identity group within the context of a diasporic conceptualisation (See Agunias, 2009; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Lyons & Mandeville 2010). As one community practitioner in Boston noted:

There are actually different groups or categories of Irishness, there is a wave of younger men and women in their 20s who are coming through and those who came 20 or 25 years ago who came and settled either with documentation or without documentation. You start clinging on to your identity and my point is different people have different needs.

The following analysis will map distinct segments of Irish communities. Active segmentation in the context of diaspora engagement can provide “a more focused and strategic approach in engaging the right people of the diaspora for the right purpose” (Aikins & White, 13). Given the scale and scope of vulnerabilities and supports needed for such a large diaspora population, segmentation is an instructive methodological tool for the ESP in supporting the next generation of the Irish in the United States.

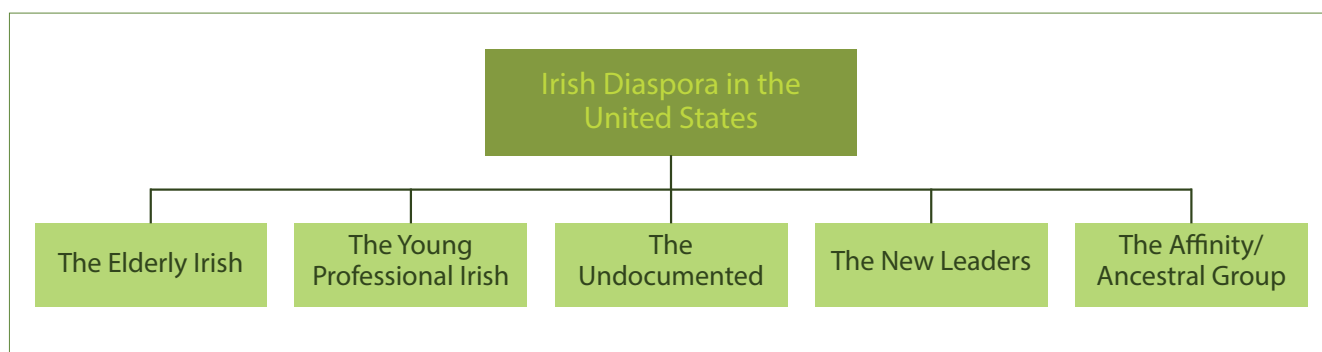


Fig 1: Formations of Irish Identity in the United States

## The Elderly Irish

Life for an older [person] is very difficult. You can be very alone even though there are loads of people around you. It is a great country but it is a very strange place in that regard. I mean there are neighbours on my street that I live that I have no conversations with. So for older people, especially those who are homebound, it can be a very, very lonely place. (Interviewee, Boston, 2013)

It is clear from both statistical and anecdotal evidence that the Irish in America have an aging profile, which one commentator attributed to the “the lack of immigration from Ireland. You are not getting the same thrust of young people coming across like 1980.” There is a significant increase in the demand for services for the elderly Irish. For example, the New York Irish Centre hosts a computer class for elderly members of the community where they can learn skills which can be used to familiarise them with emerging communication technology and so stay informed and connected with Ireland. A service provider in New York remarked:

You know, drifting into isolation is the single greatest threat. The other needs are quality of life which we try to provide here, our programmes allow seniors to come out of their apartments where many are widowed, their families have flown the nest and live in other parts of the States.

The Irish Pastoral Centre has created a unique approach which incorporates single and group sessions which are driven by a desire to engage a sense of “Irishness.” The dual strategy has allowed the centre to provide some basic health care as well as cultural support, and the indices of vulnerability associated with this group of the community are multiple.

This segment of the Irish in America will continue to be at the forefront of issues traditionally associated with the ESP. Vulnerabilities associated with this cohort of individuals will require close attention in the near future. Given the large-scale emigration to the United States in previous cycles of emigration from Ireland dating back to the mid-1900s, we can safely assess that although a natural decline in elderly figures will occur (similar to the United Kingdom), there remains a strong pool of Irish moving into the

elderly bracket. While more affluent and upwardly mobile younger emigrants are showing signs of moving out of traditional Irish enclaves, much of the focus in looking after the elderly Irish will focus on established hubs of Irish communities in areas such as South Boston, Queens and Yonkers. Therefore, the strong community organisations in each region remain key partners for the ESP in servicing this growing and critical segment of the community.

## The Young, Professional Irish

Although limited opportunity remains for large scale Irish immigration into the United States, there is still a vibrant young, professional sector of the Irish community. Through legal frameworks such as the year-long J1 internship programme and specific sector development, there remain opportunities for young Irish to gain experience and expertise in the USA. This cohort of the Irish community in the USA is relatively well educated and is in the 20–30s age bracket. The continued presence and potentials of this segment is denoted by the recent creation of networked conduits such as the Irish Networks.

“You are not getting the same thrust of young people coming across like 1980”

In spite of relative job security and financial stability, this cohort of new Irish are slowly displaying some familiar vulnerability identifiers heightened by short term visa stays, isolation, and other key assimilation determinants. Multiple interviewees noted that young professionals are willing to overstay once their short-term visa expires. The ESP can map how newer Irish arrivals are becoming vulnerable in the United States. Luckily, as noted by one economist, Jed Kulko, “people from Ireland tend to search more for homes in places where more Irish-Americans live,” and the settlement patterns of the young Irish into established diaspora landscapes is important (qtd in Kliff). The clear infrastructural coherence within Irish-America will help to identify any vulnerabilities within this cohort at an early stage. Many community activists noted that newer migrants tend to move out of traditional Irish locales once established, which may complicate any place-based engagement strategies over a longer period. Any future projects by the ESP will need to take into account this greater mobility and move beyond traditional locales. A side-note to such progression is the increase in inter-community marriage, particularly

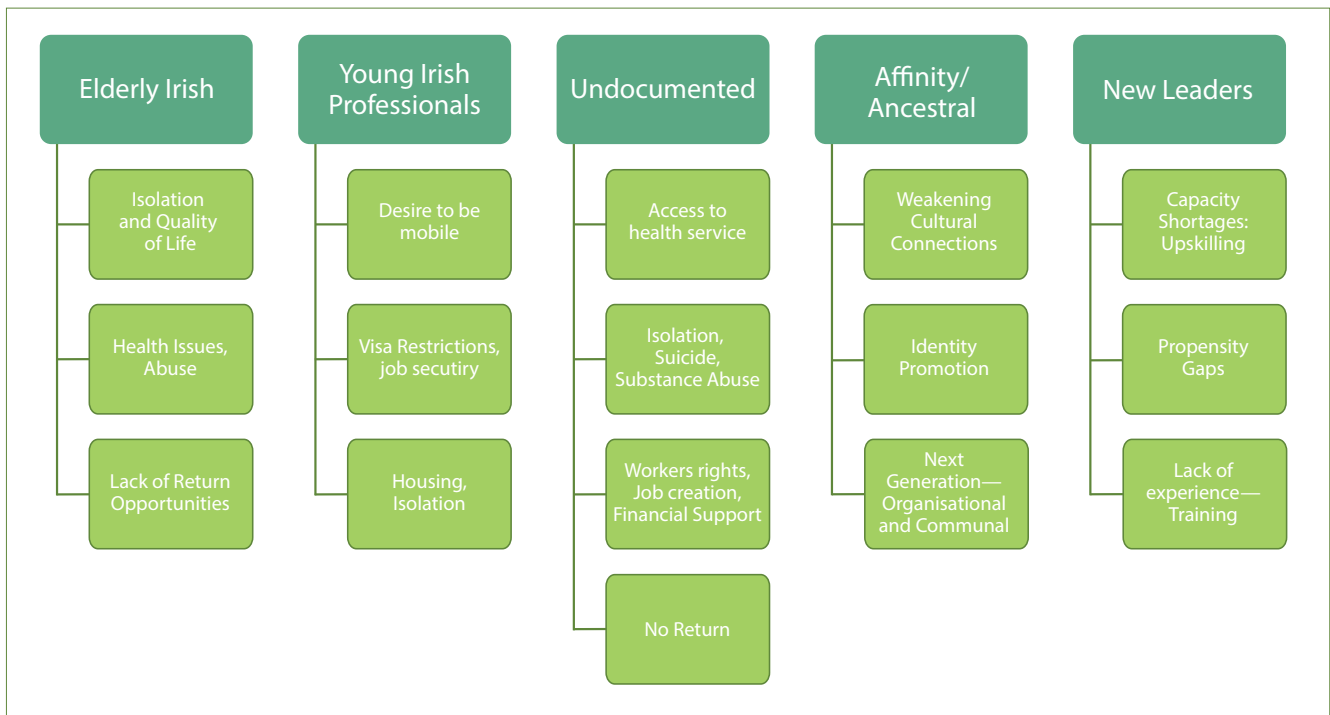


Fig 2: Irish in America: Vulnerability Map

among young Irish women, which needs consideration in future engagement of the next generation of engagement in the USA.

### The Undocumented

In general, enforcement numbers have gone up which creates more fear in the community and, you know, of family or friends who are in immigration custody or have been deported so there are, as times goes on and immigration laws stay the same but enforcement increases there is like a need for legal services for people who are facing deportation. (Irish Service Provider in Boston)

Anybody in a shirt and tie is official and they are also afraid that even if you are not going to rat them out that you are in contact with people that might for example somebody might meet them or surveil them so there is a suspicion. To go back to my experiences, they are like the suspect community of the Irish in London in the early 90s where the threat was terrorism, here it is illegal status and they are scared. (Irish Service Provider in Boston)

I mean one of the questions we get asked all the time is to quantify, we can't quantify it. I mean we estimate there could be up to 10,000 undocumented people living in the Boston area. I think that is a very reasonable number, can I tell you

for sure? No, I can't but I think that is reasonable. It is a significant portion of the community. I go to the local Irish store and I see people I know have been living here for 10, 20 years from my work that they don't have documentation. (Irish Service Provider in Boston)

There is a significant section of the Irish community in the USA which is undocumented (living in the United States with illegal status). This segment of the community cuts across all age profiles and tends to be focused on the lower to middle class socio-economic category. Explaining how this status has "everyday" impacts, community practitioners in established Irish hubs such as Boston and New York note how the centres themselves have had to "evolve" into safety nets from their inception, although there are "plenty of gaps in the net."

Further, they argue that living with undocumented status is "doing a number on people in terms of depression and suicide" including the recent tragic loss of 2 attendees at their monthly legal clinics. This segment of the community face elevated sensitivities around their individual and collective sense of vulnerability as issues such as gaining medical care and other day-to-day service provisions are often conditioned by their status. A recent BBC report

“Multiple interviewees noted that young professionals are willing to overstay once their short-term visa expires”

on “America’s New Irish Immigrants” commented that:

undocumented immigrants feel stuck, unable to go home for family weddings or funerals for fear they won’t be let back in. Obtaining a driving licence or health care is also a problem. And many are anxious, worried about the risk of deportation if they are stopped by the police.

This group of emigrants are centred within the traditional focus of emigrant vulnerabilities and will need to remain a central thread for future work for the ESP. This segment of the community is also at the foreground of emerging vulnerabilities such as suicide and depression. One service provider in New York spoke to the importance of overcoming barriers that the undocumented often face in accessing help and that reinforces isolation, depression and associated illnesses:

I think health insurance and coverage is a big problem and it is to do with immigration and undocumented. You know, even the famous Obamacare, people who are here legally it is very hard for people, for them to get insurance even though we have several providers that help. Undocumented, that is still a big thing even though we try, we have good relationships with the hospitals. People only go if it is an accident or illness, they will sooner ignore something that is a very serious issue as the thought of “what will this cost me?” It is awful that people have neglected something until it is too late.

There may be a need to advance further systematic outreach through trusted organisations in the community to dispel some existing myths amongst the Irish undocumented which have restrained them from accessing invaluable services on a continuous basis. The Irish International Immigration Centre in Boston has developed an outreach strategy which has their staff visiting locales and establishments frequented by undocumented Irish. One of the staff comments:

The undocumented are here in numbers—we don’t know how many—they are here and they are in the very traditional Irish areas. So they are in very solid, for want of a better word, safe Irish

neighbourhoods, they get jobs in Irish bars, with Irish builders, but that is getting much tougher all the time.

Central to engaging the undocumented remains the advancement of trust between those most marginalised and service providers. Through heightened visibility and access, as noted by several active community organisations, there can be practical and realistic tools put in place in which safe spaces are created for engagement. As the issue of the undocumented will remain for the foreseeable future, their needs are critical to understanding indices of vulnerability within the United States.

Similarly, the building of trust will take time and effort and the ESP could be a key influencer in shaping such discourse through facilitating further engagement of the undocumented community as part of their diaspora engagement strategy in the United States.

### The New Leaders

Irish emigrants of the 1980s, with many achieving legal status due to the remarkable success of the Morrison/Donnelly Visa programmes, are emerging into the vacuums of leadership in Irish-America. It is within this constituency that community leadership can be nurtured and channelled towards a smoother transition to the next generation. Through bridging platforms at an organisational and community level, including mentorship, this segment of the community are central gatekeepers in shaping the continued success of the strong infrastructure for the Irish in the United States.

This noted, several interviewees, at a diplomatic and community level, commented on difficulties in bringing new leadership into the community organisations funded by the ESP. There are viable platforms through which the ESP can help this process by promoting greater training and offsetting the cost of up-skilling for potential new leaders. Furthermore, platforms such as community engagement through townhall meetings (as planned by the US Department of State for Diaspora Week in October 2014) provide useful mechanisms through which to elevate the issue of new leadership in Irish-America and develop the critical apparatus provided by host countries in diaspora engagement.

“living with undocumented status is “doing a number on people in terms of depression and suicide” including the recent tragic loss of 2 attendees at their monthly legal clinics”



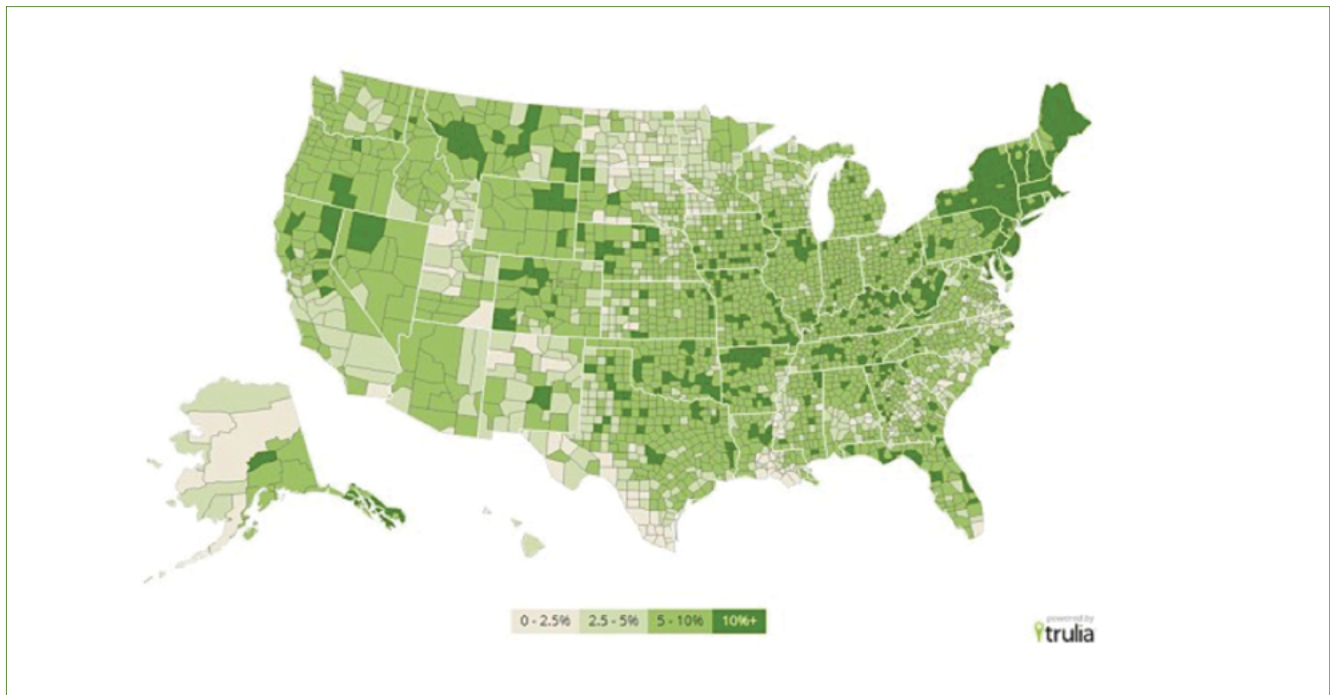


Fig 3: Where Irish-Americans Live  
 Source: Trulia Trends, March 12, 2013

### The Affinity/Ancstral Group

This is the largest segment of the Irish community in the United States. It consists of those who claim an ancestral or affinity link to Ireland. The needs of this sector may be incompatible with a conventional vulnerability index and other avenues of support may be explored. For example, the emerging influences of educational exchange and business networking have historically been focused on the ancestral/affinity connection. In 2013, the Gathering Ireland was shaped towards this sector and resulted in an approximate 7% increase in overall visitors to Ireland in a year, which illustrates the effectiveness of such engagement. As holistic approaches to diaspora engagement emerge, the ESP is uniquely placed to channel efforts into supporting this large portion of the Irish community in the USA address their desire to engage with Ireland.

### Population and Settlement

The settlement dimension of the Irish in the USA is complex due to the vast geographical scale of the host country. However, early indicators from service providers and community activists convey a growing awareness of how the varying sectors of the community are shaping where they decide to settle. While the safety of traditional Irish enclaves are of utmost important to many of the most marginalised of society, particularly the undocumented, other traditional hubs of Irish settlement are beginning to erode due to two central factors. As rental accommodation becomes harder to secure due to rising cost in some familiar Irish centres, most noticeably New York, some of the newer migrants are beginning to pop up in new locales. Furthermore, newer migrants are arriving from a modern Ireland and are illustrating a desire and willingness to be more mobile and ultimately less reliant on traditional Irish boroughs. This is countered by the appeal such enclaves provide in the early stages of arrival where informal networks and friendships remain critical agents in negotiating the migratory experience. However, many active in the community noted that in the years ahead a more fulsome erosion of traditional Irish hubs may occur due to the falling off of older generations, rising rental prices, and the desire of new Irish to create their own fresh narra-

tive in their adopted homeland. In particular, these forces combined in New York, where service providers noted:

There is a lot of competition for finding accommodation, we have no way of meeting the demands, we get emails from Ireland saying I am going on Tuesday, I am landing on Tuesday, is there a hostel, the culture of hostels is not strong in New York. And the shock of having to furnish your own apartment, more so than back in the 80, 90s, of finding a place to stay. New York has changed since the downturn, it really has become a difficult place to make a go of it.

Frankly, I don't know how people survive sometimes, particularly when they are getting work sporadically and at low pay.

These new settlement phenomena will most likely develop slowly in the next few years given the difficulty for new migrants to emigrate to the United States. However, it is an evolving feature which the ESP can gain understanding of by engaging active community leaders.

Recent figures for those who claim Irish ancestry in the United States vary. The US Census Bureau noted that from data collected in 2011, 34.5 million Americans claim Irish ancestry which they note is

over seven times the population of Ireland (4.68 million). Meanwhile, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) provides an increased figure of 39.2 million Americans who claim Irish ancestry (Groves). The noteworthy extension within the MPI database is that they advise that approximately 133,000 out of this figure are foreign born (first-generation migrants). The disproportionate configuration between those defined through migratory frames and those who claim diasporic affiliation with Ireland underscores the powerful affinity component in the Irish diaspora in the USA.

The median age of USA residents who claim Irish ancestry is 39.3 years old in comparison to the overall USA median of 37.3 years old. The largest singular age breakdown of the Irish-American population is the 5–17 age bracket which stands at 16.7% (US Census Bureau). This age profile is a key signpost for the future work of the ESP as it not only re-emphasises the diasporic frame for the ESP in the region but conveys the need to fully understand the changing images and interpretations of Ireland showcased to this age group. Outside this, the figures portray a dominant collective age profile of 25–65 which accounts for 53.8% of the populace, and of that number, 15.3% are between 45–55 years of age (US Census Bureau).

“The largest singular age breakdown of the Irish-American population is the 5–17 age bracket which stands at 16.7%”

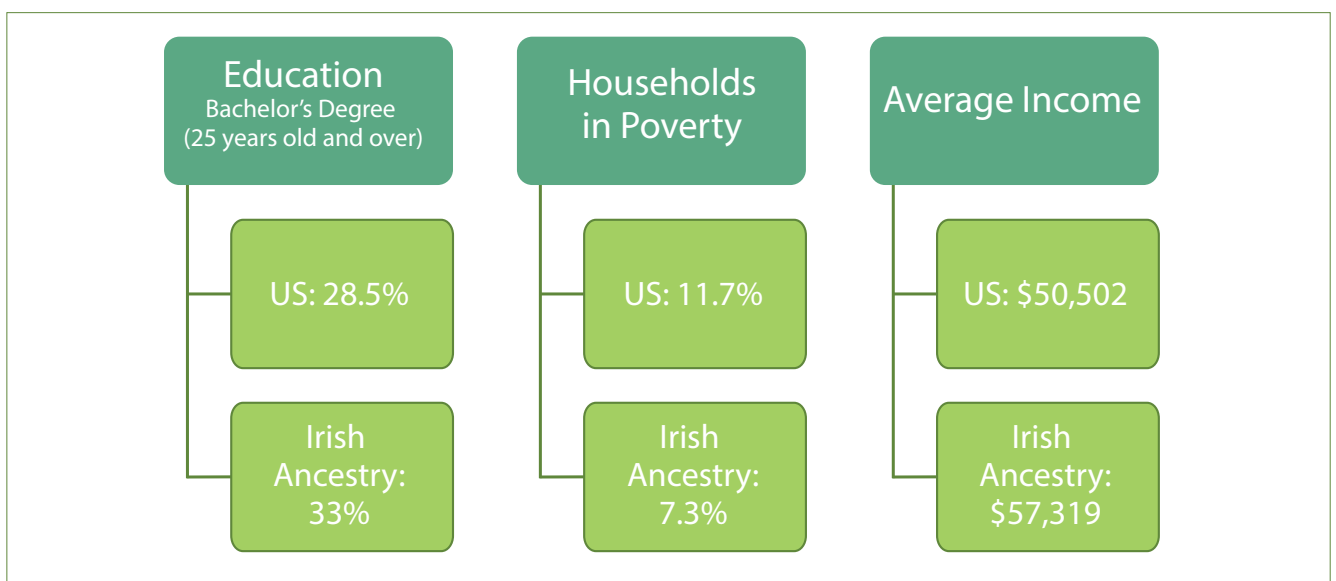


Fig 4: Education/Economic Insights—Those in USA who Claim Irish Ancestry  
Source: US Census Bureau



### Employment and Economic Activity

The Irish diaspora is relatively mature, defined as a diaspora that has achieved a stable, assimilated position in the host country and one that has produced a robust infrastructure to advance connection with home in the host country. We can identify elements of infrastructural security and assimilation through trends of income, employment profiles, and age. While population trends such as median age and gender breakdown provide instructive overviews, the earlier data deducted from Irish CSO estimates on young migration and choices of destination also point to a strengthening of the diasporic frame in the United States. Other indicators in this frame, on issues such as economic status and education standards, can provide useful portraits of the developed Irish-American diaspora.

A third of people who claim Irish ancestry aged 25 years or older have a bachelor’s degree or higher adding to over 92.9% having at least a high school diploma. By comparing these figures with national averages in the United States, 28.5% having a bachelor’s degree or higher and 85.9% attaining a high school diploma respectively, the basic indices of the progress of the Irish in the USA clearly emerge. Similarly, 41% of employed civilian Irish-Americans, aged 16 or older, work in management,

professional and related occupations. Additionally, 25.9% work in sales and office occupations; 16.0% in service occupations; 9.3% in production, transportation and material moving occupations; and 7.8% in construction, extraction, maintenance and repair occupations. The Irish in the United States also surpass national trends in median household incomes with Irish ancestry headed households averaging \$57,319 against a national average of \$50,502. Approximately 69% also owned the home in which they lived with the remainder renting. Significantly in terms of the work of the ESP, Irish ancestry households in poverty stood at 7.3%, lower than the 11.7% national average (US Census Bureau).

This breakdown conveys a predominantly skilled community and signposts an emerging reality that the issues of vulnerability historically associated with the Irish in the USA, apart from their clear correlation to the current undocumented issue, are diminishing. This indicates that ESP strategies aimed at this constituency may need revisiting. The relative maturity of the Irish-American diaspora should not hinder imaginative policy engagement, and there is an opportunity for the ESP to provide support and tackle vulnerability through processes focused on mutual benefits and stake-holding.

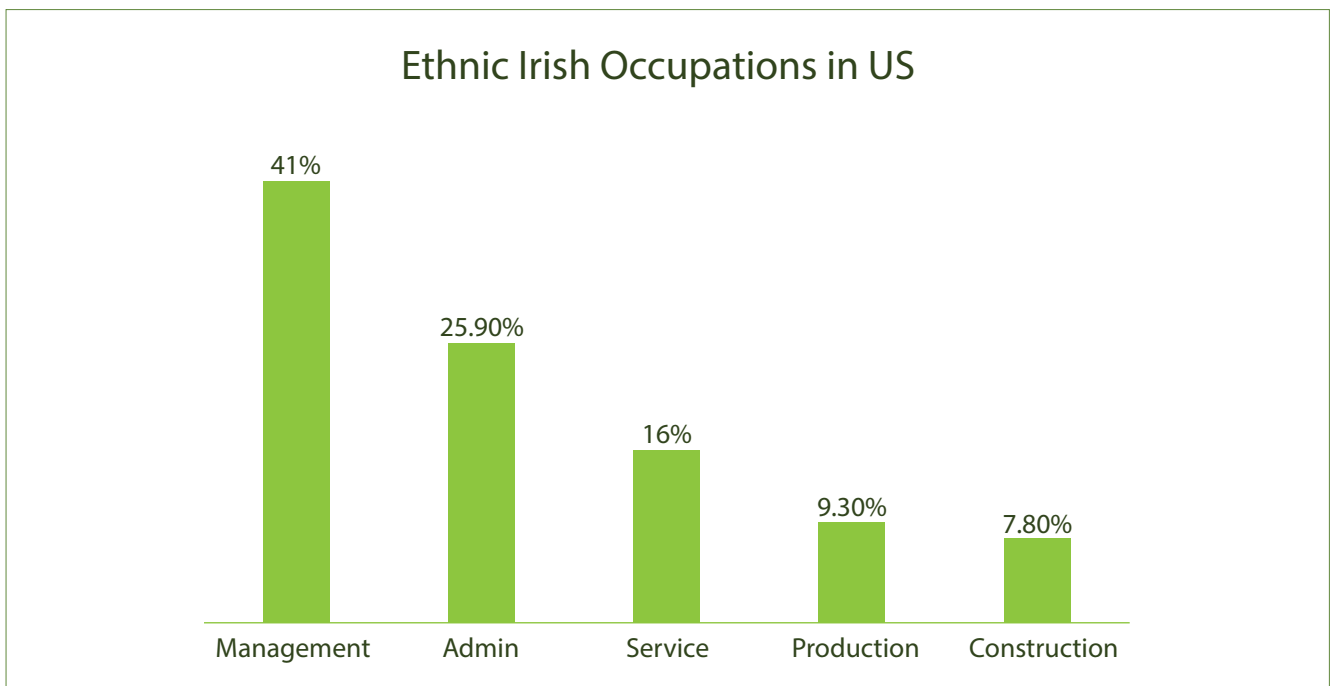


Fig 5: Ethnic Irish Occupations in the USA  
Source: USA Census Bureau

## Health

As the image on the right displays, certain core vulnerabilities remain within the Irish community in the United States. Furthermore, these vulnerabilities have a history and recent reports of growth of such issues must be contextualised. A scan of some of the programmes and insights developed by the key organisations active in the communities indicate specific emerging trends. For example, representatives of a leading engagement centre in Boston identified a growing issue with substance abuse, now defined by a “massive heroin and prescriptive drugs” issue which has replaced the cocaine usage “which has always been there.” Other organisations interfacing with many of the vulnerable Irish noted that issues around alcoholism remain and are, in a sense, “multigenerational.” One service provider noted:

The problems out there that people are not seeking help for are far bigger and in terms of counselling would be at crisis point by the time people come in here but there is a bigger problem out there with people not asking for help. There is a type of road block with undocumented—alcohol, drugs, even domestic violence, depression, unemployment.

Echoing these sentiments, Fr. John McCarthy of the Irish Pastoral Centre in Boston is quoted in the *Irish Voice* as noting that the community in general does “not speak enough about mental health issues” (qtd. in Ní Fheallaigh). Similarly, other interviewees indicated that the top five vulnerabilities were driven through the prism of “involuntary” emigration from Ireland with issues such as mental health, access to health services, and other associated restrictions key in influencing further growth of vulnerabilities. Multiple service providers indicated the convoluted health care system in the United States is a significant obstacle, with one noting that access to health services can be “a maze”. A worrying trend extending from this is the rise in misdiagnosis of certain conditions as witnessed by some community groups. The provision of health services to diaspora communities through government facilitation has interesting precedent in the work of Mexico’s government providing limited medical assistance at consulates to their citizens in the United States.

Commenting on the range of health vulnerabilities affecting young Irish emigrants in Boston, a service

**Irish Central** **Why Can't We Ask for Help?**  
**Suicide and Depression: The Facts**

**Single immigrants are 2.6 times more likely to kill themselves.**

**HELP IS AVAILABLE**

- ALL-IRELAND YOUNG MEN & SUICIDE PROJECT REPORT [www.mhih.org/youngmenreport.pdf](http://www.mhih.org/youngmenreport.pdf)
- SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE CENTER <http://www.sprc.org/>
- NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE [www.national-suicidepreventionhelpline.org/](http://www.national-suicidepreventionhelpline.org/)
- AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- NATIONAL OFFICE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION [www.nosp.org](http://www.nosp.org)
- SUICIDE PREVENTION [www.suicideprevention.ie](http://www.suicideprevention.ie)
- CONSULE - THE NATIONAL SUICIDE CHARITY [www.consule.ie](http://www.consule.ie)

**One in three of us will be affected by depression at some point in our lives.**

**Loss, depression and alcohol: main factors which, when combined, can lead to suicide.**

**WARNING SIGNS**

- Divorce
- Separation
- Bereavement
- Loss of job
- Loss of money

**UNITED STATES**

In 2010, **38,364** people took their own lives. Suicide was the **tenth leading** cause of death.

**25,238** of those who committed suicide were **white males**.

You are **more likely** to experience suicidal thoughts when you are **under 30**.

**8.3 million adults** (3.7% of the adult U.S. population) reported having **serious thoughts of suicide** in the past year.

**Every 15 minutes** someone in the United States commits suicide.

**IRELAND**

In Ireland, **80% of deaths from suicide occur in males**, and 80% of all suicide attempts occur in females.

Since the early 1980s, the Irish suicide rate has **doubled**.

**Men under 35 years old** account for **40%** of all suicide deaths in Ireland.

**10,000 people** hospitalized each year with depression.

Provisional data for 2010 shows a total of **486 deaths by suicide**, of which 388 were male and 100 female.

**Irish Central** **Why Can't We Ask for Help?**  
**Suicide Awareness Week**  
 November 4 - 8, 2013  
[www.IrishCentral.com](http://www.IrishCentral.com)

Infographic Design: Eileen Murphy / [emurphy1@gmail.com](mailto:emurphy1@gmail.com)  
 Graphics sourced through Shutterstock Photography: [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

Fig 6: Leaflet distributed by Irish Central for Suicide Awareness Week  
 Source: IrishCentral.com

provider noted:

It is similar issues that you would have in Ireland, drugs and alcohol, and you would have the mental health component. So what we are trying to do in the last couple of weeks and IrishCentral have got on the back of it as well is awareness, get people involved. It is a very similar problem that what is being seen in Ireland, the statistics are very similar, males, 18–30 year olds, the dynamic we are not seeing at home is the undocumented so you have the added pressure of that to your normal mental health issues.

These added pressures have resulted in, according to one service provider, a “clear increase in suicides,” amongst the Irish in the United States. The clear presence of interconnected vulnerabilities around immigration status, substance abuse and mental health should be at the forefront of the short-term work of the ESP as these issues are heightening the vulnerability of numerous Irish in the region. This requires detailed consultation with the organisational and community leaderships addressing these issues—embassies/consulates have an integral part to play in such dialogues.

### The Emigrant Support Programme in the United States Post-2008

In the post-2008 period, the work of the ESP in the United States has centred on a stable platform, with the two main segments being culture and support. They both equated to 47% of the financial allocation in the period, although support services remained consistent throughout the years and the cultural allocation was influenced by a significant allocation in 2009. Notwithstanding this, there was only a €9,594 difference in the financial allocation between the two segments in the post-2008 period. This would indicate that the cultural landscape has developed strongly in the region at the same time as core support services have been maintained. Given the next generation dimension noted earlier in this chapter, culture may again become more relevant as it may provide a unique entry point to subsequent generations of Irish-Americans. The funding allocation to the United States also provides a useful index in terms of the value of extending issues of vulnerability to a paradigm of support as business focused funding could also be a useful influencer in times ahead. To date, although only equating to 6% of the overall financial allocation – which equates to €765,184 – the work of groups such as the Irish Technology Leadership Group in showcasing Irish



Fig 7: ESP Funding for the United States 2009–13

## ESP Funding to United States 2009 - 2013 by Type

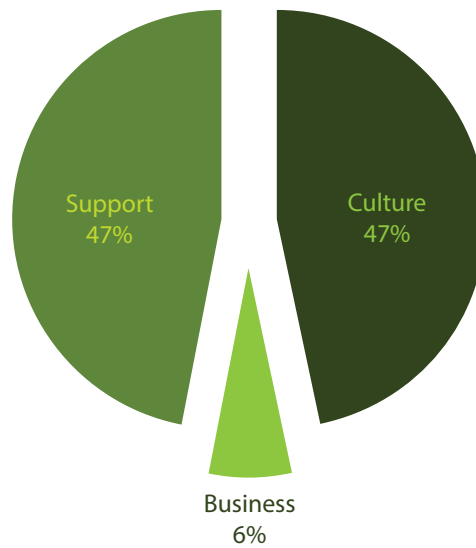


Fig 8: Financial Allocation of ESP to United States

talent and innovation are important departures within the ESP scope. Further work in such areas, as noted by the emergence of the Irish Networks, remain instrumental in positioning the ESP as a possible vehicle in supporting a range of Irish communities abroad and incorporating all as a participant and constituent in forms of economic and social development at home. The correlation of diaspora and development is a framework that the ESP can shape towards effective results for Ireland.

The scope of vulnerabilities and issues that the ESP has addressed in the United States to date represents an understanding of the historical issues which beset the Irish in the USA. The dual influence of culture and support has been a strong platform to tackle the issues within the community. However, there is need for revision of this approach in line with the shifting energies and profiles of the Irish-American diaspora. The ESP may also begin to map other avenues of support in the USA, such as business and education sectors. In 2013, the Irish Networks and the Irish Technology Leadership Group represent the only business-orientated organisations, as defined in this report, funded by the ESP. In recent years, a professional, well educated, and relatively young Irish community has grown in the United States—the ESP can nurture these emigrants as key constituents in closing vulnerability

gaps. There needs to be a harmonisation of diaspora capital, from political and social landscapes, in shaping the future trajectories of the ESP in the United States. We offer two pertinent examples of how this can be shaped. Firstly, an internal diaspora-led process of capital harmonisation develops intra-diaspora capacity building through which developed diasporas, such as the Irish in America, work together to deliver efficient engagement of issues. This provides a strong emphasis and stake for the diaspora within the engagement strategies and portfolios which are a key cornerstone for sustainable diaspora engagement. Secondly, a sector-sensitive paradigm pertinent to the community offers another viable trend looking forward, in this case the power of education.

### ESP Looking Forward: Trends to Action

#### Intra-Diasporic Capacity Building

While there are sporadic examples of cross-community and inter-generational engagement amongst the Irish in the United States, the segmented nature of the community remains the largest obstacle in effectively identifying growing needs. At the institutional level, Irish culture and welfare organisations remain highly competitive, particularly on funding, and this has diminished joined-up and bottom-up problem solving. In this respect, the early efforts of

the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers should be commended as a fresh approach to collaboration within the diaspora. However, limited efforts seem to be emerging organically, and it is likely that the institutional frameworks of some organisations will hinder such progress. As noted by an interviewee in New York, there is a significant issue in “bringing in new blood” at the management level of many organisations. The lack of intra-diasporic connectivity at an institutional level needs to be addressed to effectively meet the future needs of the Irish community and to open up other viable supports as new pockets of Irish focus emerge in other parts of the country. Embassies and consulates operating in concert with the ESP can facilitate this through more systematic awareness building about the Programme.

Varying forms of cultural attachment to and expressions of Irishness can exacerbate intergenerational disconnects within the many layers of Irish society in the USA. Jennifer Nugent Duffy has traced out how older generations of Irish in Yonkers resent younger, newer immigrants moving into the area as it threatens staples of their identity (2013). Examples cited by Duffy include increased binge drinking, lack of attendance at mass, and the lack of desire to be American. The many testimonies Duffy cites illustrate how attitudinal perspectives and cultural practices reflect different comprehensions and experiences of Irish identity among generations in the same diaspora spaces.

A key challenge for the ESP and the organisations funded by the programme should be to bridge the segmentation of Irish communities in the USA. A number of Irish consulate interviewees expressed eagerness to develop synergies between groups and individuals across the communities and saw inherent value in mobilising through such synergies. For example, one noted that there could be a place for the emergence of new groups:

New groups emerge because there is a gap to filled. I think plenty of people know that there are plenty of organisations dealing with issue X. But, I think where something new arises is when somebody

has already looked for something that services their needs and they say, I have not found it so let's get some like-minded people together and create something new.

The value of such connectivity is delivered through the aims of non-competitive diaspora engagement. A good example of this is the Irish Day of Action post-Hurricane Sandy.

### Education

The Emigrant Support Programme, while Irish-centric, does not operate in isolation from global trends and initiatives emerging in this area. In fact, the ESP is a global leader in delivering support and other countries are creating similar platforms. Ghana have recently established a diaspora support unit at governmental level and Mexico also provides direct frontline services through their consulate

networks in the United States. However, the ESP can further its international reputation by scaling up the viability of other forms of support. For example, the recent Global Irish Economic Forum Report indicated a growing appreciation of engaging through educational platforms driven by an appreciation that the next generation of the affinity/ancestral community may feel more American than Irish and there is a need for the next generation to experience a “homecoming or youth gathering” (ix).

As the largest singular age breakdown within those who claim Irish ancestry is children aged 5–17, educational engagement is a natural focus for the ESP to develop. In relation to this, a semi-state agency representative noted:

Because the Irish education system is public, we don't tend to have a lot of programmes that are short in duration. But the majority, the growth in students going overseas from the USA, they are all on short duration programmes and I think there is a huge opportunity in terms of the diaspora if we had some kind of two-week, three-week summer programme, almost like the Gaeltacht except it would be for students who aren't necessarily learning Irish in schools. If we had something like that, it would be immensely attractive to diaspora families here as well as other families too. That is a hugely untapped opportunity.

This expands the remit of the ESP towards another key ingredient of effective diaspora engagement, that of mutually beneficial engagement. Strategies to engage diasporas in a global context are worked through an association of networked benefits for both home, host, and diaspora. By expanding educational access and stake-holding in the diaspora in this setting, the ESP can facilitate home country development and long term affinity/relationship building with the next generation of the Irish diaspora. Multiple examples exist of how educational exchanges, both in terms of academic and cultural education platforms, have enhanced and secured access for home countries to future generations of talent, enterprise, and industry. Israel's *Taglit Birthright* programme has grown systematically in this sphere. Nigeria has developed a diaspora innovation institute. Non-governmental organisations such as the Carnegie Foundation have developed diaspora specific exchange programmes, for example the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Programme. Again, certain programmes can also be effectively shaped to encompass the traditional vulnerability scope of the ESP, as one interviewee notes on education:

Only 1% of American students study abroad—it is tiny and generally it is wealthy families so if you wanted to do something that is really positive for Ireland and the next generation of the diaspora also that has some kind of means tested assistance associated with it, I think you could actually do both so you could open up opportunities for students who otherwise would not have them from the Irish diaspora to go and study in Ireland. And the opportunity to go overseas, to a family who is particularly not that well off, is not something you are going to get every day—it is an amazing experience.

Such insights also position intra-diaspora networking, formal and informal, as central to the innovation process in supporting the next generation of the diaspora.

## Conclusions

Historical narratives of Irish-American progress have occluded vulnerabilities and disconnects among the Irish communities in the USA. The ESP, working with broader government-led diaspora engagement policies, can identify and productively address these. The fundamentals in tackling the traditional scope of vulnerability among Irish emigrants in the USA are well established in the current ESP structure and should be maintained. At the same time, greater consultation with key stakeholders can unearth some new trends. The rise of physical and mental health issues, ongoing undocumented vulnerabilities, and latent diasporic identities present a complex picture for the ESP in the United States. A clear next step is to help bridge barriers which segment the Irish communities, vulnerable and successful, and work to target support for those falling through the gaps. By enhancing the capacity of embassies, consulates, and organisations, the ESP can become a facilitator through which the Irish in the United States can more fully negotiate their loyalties and affiliations to home from abroad.



## Summary

- The Irish in the United States consist of a developed diaspora witnessing a reduced number of newer migrants.
- The organisational and community infrastructure within the Irish population in the USA allows for the ESP to adopt a clearly defined and measurable strategy for tackling issues of support and vulnerability.
- The core component of the ESP in the region must be to continue assisting those at the margins of society, in particular the undocumented Irish who face increased vulnerabilities and display higher likelihoods of further difficulties in areas such as health and job security.
- There is an intergenerational gap at community and organisation leadership level that may be narrowed through facilitation by the ESP.
- Greater collaboration between organisations can be facilitated by the ESP to help identify future indices of vulnerabilities and possible ways to tackle such issues. The emphasis for such collaboration remains within organisations active in Irish communities in the United States.
- Given the diverse constituency of the Irish in America, there are different expectations of engagement with Ireland and varieties of Irishness at work in the region which need to be carefully mapped and nurtured to deliver sustainable engagement. Next-generation engagement is important in reinvigorating the ties between Ireland and the Irish in the United States. Further attention may be attributed to areas such as diaspora education and talent acquisition as part of a joined-up diaspora engagement strategy in the United States.



# The Irish in Australia

From convict transport ships to backpacker holidays, Irish people have been travelling to Australia for hundreds of years. The history of the Irish in Australia confounds the dominant migration narrative informed primarily by Irish experiences in Britain and the United States.<sup>i</sup> The longevity of the Irish legacy in Australia belies the multiplicity of Irish experiences of emigration and integration, and it is this variety of experience which continues to pose both challenges and opportunities to those seeking to engage the Irish diaspora in Australia today. Since 2008, Australia has come to prominence as a destination of choice for Irish emigrants, a new version of the American dream played out in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Interestingly, the combination of the different needs of different segments of Irish migrants heading to Australia today with the stratification of Australian immigration access pathways has resulted in the development of distinct groupings of Irish people in Australia which official figures may not at first reflect. It is only through closer investigations and in-depth interaction with those providing services for Irish people in Australia that a clearer picture emerges, one crucial to the development of appropriate support for these groups into the future.

In contemporary migration between these two countries, perhaps the most important factor in the transition from earlier periods was the creation of the Working Holiday visa scheme in 1975, which allowed people under the age of 30 to live and work in Australia for a period up to one year (this has recently been amended to allow for the possibility of a two-year stay). These visas have become the most popular way for Irish people to migrate to Australia, and there is still much to be learned about the process by which Irish people experience short-term migration and in some cases extend this to a longer-term stay. The other primary mechanism for entry into Australia is via the Employer-sponsored 457 visa scheme,

which allows Irish people to enter the Australian workforce in particular industries—the list of which changes regularly—and to stay up to four years. 457 visa holders are entitled to bring their families with them, and their spouses are also allowed to work. This visa is also often seen as a route to Permanent Residency, which allows the migrant the same rights as citizenship, bar voting rights. The discussion in this chapter will return often to these key structures in examinations of employment, health, and other indicators.

## A Note on Sources

The Australian government's Department of Immigration and Border Protection (formerly Immigration and Citizenship) maintains in-depth records on the people arriving into the country for purposes of leisure, business, asylum and permanent residency. This report is informed by their statistics, as well as a number of scholarly and journalistic sources dealing with both historical and contemporary Irish Australia. A research trip to Australia carried out as part of the project has furnished insights from key stakeholders in the Irish community at governmental, community and local levels.

## Population and Settlement

There is a long-established Irish diasporic population in Australia, dating first from the convict transportation era of the late 18th century, quickly followed by large numbers of settlers in search of, in Patrick O'Farrell's words, "gold, land, fortune and adventure" (63). Unlike long-accepted narratives of emigration from Ireland positing a model of flight from destitution in desperation, this understanding of Irish interest in Australia foregrounds economic self-interest in a form which we rarely apply to migration before the twentieth century. These early migrants became integral actors in the formation of the Australian nation state, with O'Farrell arguing for their centrality: "the Irish have been the dynamic factor in Australian history, that is, the galvanizing

“Since 2008, Australia has come to prominence as a destination of choice for Irish emigrants, a new version of the American dream”

“there is still much to be learned about the process by which Irish people experience short-term migration”

force at the centre of the evolution of our national character” (63). The earliness of large-scale Irish settlement in Australia, followed by a much slower flow of Irish migrants through most of the twentieth century, means that Australia today has a long-established and integrated Irish ancestral group living alongside the diverse new arrivals of recent years.

The Irish came to Australia when the society was still “plastic” and they were able to enter into higher strata of the still-budding society from an early stage. Irish emigrants accounted for almost 25% of Australian arrivals from 1788 to 1900 (MacDonagh, 124). The descendants of those early arrivals maintain connections with Ireland as a long-distant homeland, but are on the whole fully integrated into the social and political fabric of Australian society. This group exists in contrast to the recent new wave of Irish migrants who have in the past decade turned to Australia in large numbers for the first time in 150 years.

Irish-Australians did not settle overwhelmingly in urban areas, but dispersed more broadly into rural and suburban communities. Though they came in large numbers before the twentieth century,

these figures dwindled almost entirely—in 1901, the Ireland-born were the second largest overseas-born birthplace group in Australia at 22% of all immigrants. By 1996, the Irish made up only 1% of overseas-born people in Australia (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2001, 16). At mid-century, 91.4% of Irish emigrants were moving to the United Kingdom (47.1%) and the United States (44.3%), while Australia received only a 2.9% share of the Irish emigrant body (Grimes, 69). Although numbers had been boosted by the “White Australia” policy in Australian immigration law in the first part of the century, flows of migrants from Ireland dropped precipitously after World War Two.

According to the Central Statistics Office of Ireland, 78,900 people have emigrated to Australia since 2008 up to April 2013 (“CSO statistical release, 29 August 2013”). Between 2008 and 2013, over one hundred thousand Working Holiday (subclass 417) first and second-year visas have been granted to Irish citizens, a figure which dwarfs migration figures to other countries in the same period. In the period since 2008, it is clear that Australia has been the destination of choice for Irish emigrants.

“The Irish came to Australia when the society was still “plastic” and they were able to enter into higher strata of the still-budding society from an early stage”

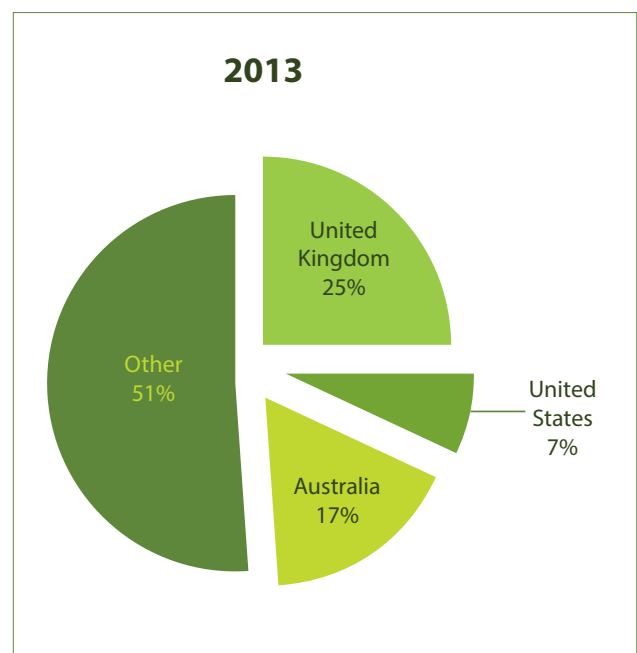
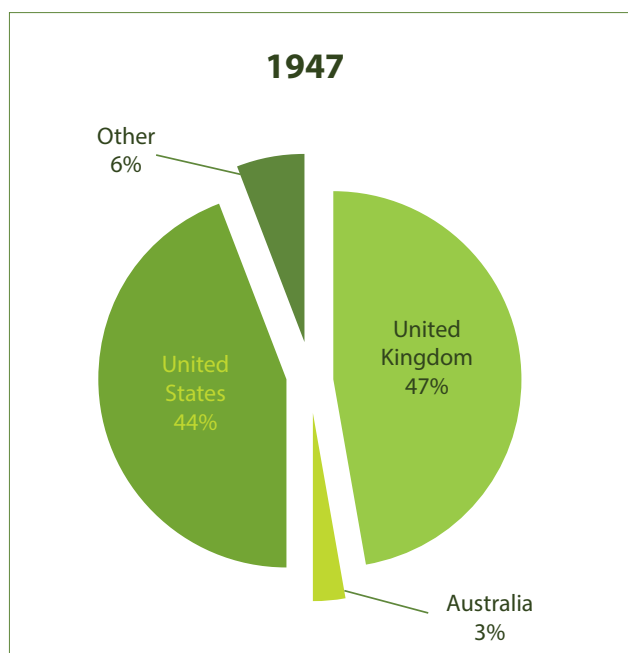


Fig 1: Irish worldwide migration in 1947 and 2013. Sources: “The Sydney Irish: A Hidden Ethnic Group” (Grimes) & the Central Statistics Office of Ireland.



Fig 2: Working Holiday 417 visas (first-year) granted to Irish nationals 2008–2013  
 Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection

It is also clear that they have been successful there: the Irish are the best-paid European migrants in Australia, and from the rest of the world are second only to South African migrants (O’Neill).

The figures for Irish people using 417 visas in such high numbers are sensitive to both push and pull factors in Ireland, Australia and increasingly, in other countries. One reason for the drop in 417 visa applicants in 2012/13, for example, is thought to be the growth in the construction industry in Canada, which is drawing the pool of employment-seeking Irish migrants away from Australia. There are reports of “visa-hopping” among younger migrants, who will do two years in Australia, then move for the next two years to Canada, building a career, having an adventure, or waiting out the Irish recession. Other reasons for this drop in Irish 417 applications—a drop of almost 40%—are more directly connected to the two core countries (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013a, 22). These include a reduction in the number of young Irish people with the financial means to travel to Australia, where a

significant number of Irish 417 visa holders would historically go backpacking for a number of months before finding temporary work, and the possibility that a saturation point in numbers of interested Irish travellers has been reached. It is clear from the significant take-up of the new second year option for the Working Holiday Visa that there is a desire to stay in Australia beyond the original one-year period, no doubt reflecting the paucity of options for the 18–35 year olds who predominantly comprise the program’s applicants. Irish people make up a significantly higher percentage of second-year visa holders (18.8% of all such visas issued) than first year holders (5.6%), showing that while other Working Holiday makers are happy to return home after the 12-month period, Irish people in Australia are seeking new paths to long-term migration there (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013a, 22).

“There are reports of “visa-hopping” among younger migrants, who will do two years in Australia, then move for the next two years to Canada, building a career, having an adventure, or waiting out the Irish recession”

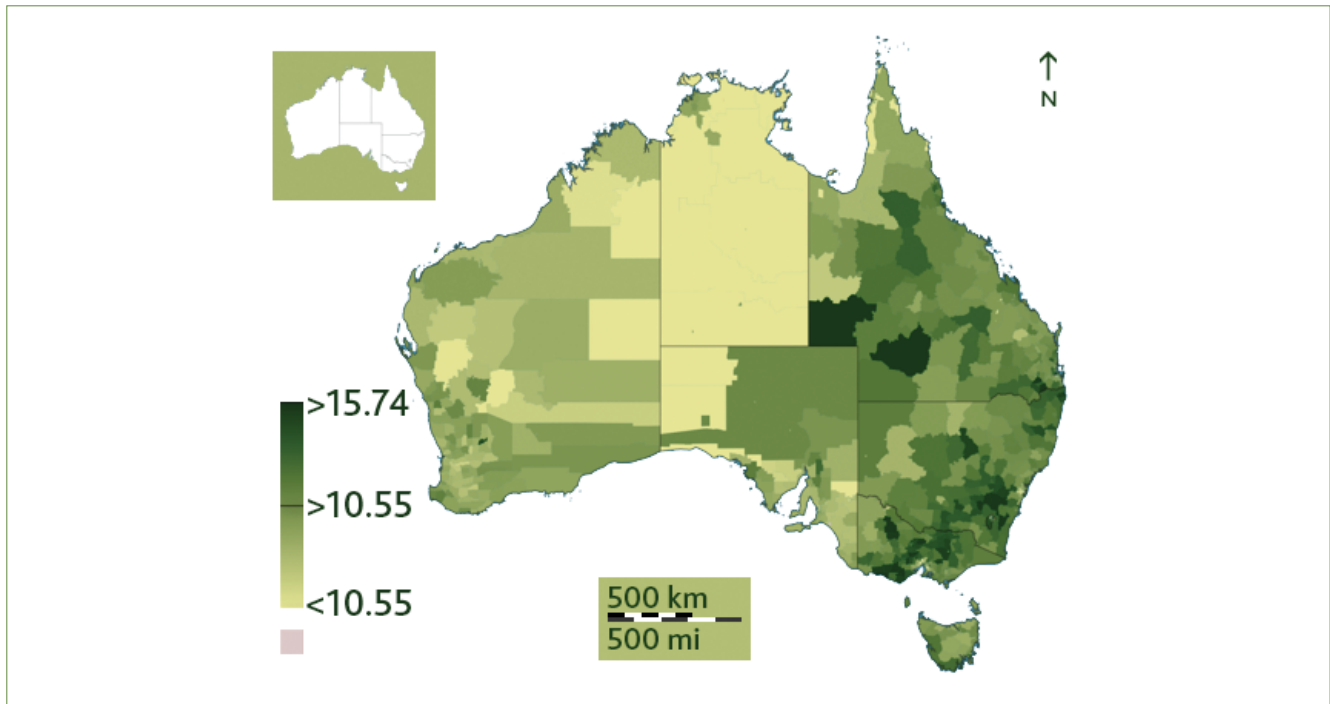


Fig 3: People with Irish ancestry as a percentage of the population in Australia divided geographically by statistical local area, as of the 2011 census. Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection

### Regions

Western Australia, the destination for a growing number of Irish people since 2008, has only recently begun to flourish in population and economy. The East, home of most of the big cities of Australia, holds attraction for Irish people seeking career paths in white-collar professions, young people seeking cosmopolitan lifestyles, and backpacker groups looking for the short-term service industry work which grows around the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane. In contrast, Perth has become a boom hub in the past decade as a direct result of the mining industry and its attendant construction, banking and service industries. The Irish communities in the East are well established, flourishing in some areas and languishing in others as Irish migrants find assimilation increasingly easy. Among the projects funded by the Emigrant Support Programme in the East are three large welfare centres, heritage groups, a St. Patrick's Day parade committee, a chamber of commerce, and numerous meet-up groups. In the West, the supply of Irish community support organisations has yet to keep up with the exponential demand. In what can often be more challenging conditions—mining and construction

“In the West, the supply of Irish community support organisations has yet to keep up with the exponential demand”

work hundreds (or even thousands) of miles from the city, families spending much of their time apart, fewer opportunities for integrations—the Irish community is only beginning to develop the structures needed to fully support its members.

### Age

The fundamental difference between earlier migrants and those who arrive today and in the future is the expectation and ease of return. Before exponential development in both communication technologies and air travel, Irish emigrants to Australia felt themselves to be making an irrevocable decision, and were seen to be cutting themselves off from life in Ireland in a much more significant way (for a discussion of new forms of migrant identity under transnationalism, see O'Connor, 2010 and Fitzpatrick, 1994). Some members of a focus group in Canberra reflected:

My [Irish] parents, they came out here in the sixties. And they would only have got home maybe for a funeral. And they would have heard about it through a telegram, not a text message! So you're really seeing the evolution of communication. In some ways to leave Ireland is easier, with Skype and email. In the sixties, you had the letter. And at

Christmastime, you'd have to queue to make the phone call home.

The advent of Skype and the proliferation of social media have changed relationships with home. At the welfare bureau in Sydney, computer classes for seniors are particularly popular, allowing people to make contact with relatives in Ireland they had previously lost touch with—enhancing the ability of welfare workers to engage efficiently. The casualisation of connectivity fostered by social media becomes a boon for the group most in danger of isolation. Australia does not have the high population of elderly Irish observable in the UK or the US, but care for this group continues to represent a significant percentage of the workload of welfare groups, particularly in the eastern part of the country.

The Irish Australian community is a diverse one, with members from all age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. In the context of the post-2008 migration period, the pathways offered by the Australian immigration authorities for legal migration to the country have a significant impact on the lived experience of recent migration. In focusing on the changing profile of Irish people migrating to Australia, it is thus helpful to consider the two main categories of visas of particular interest to the Irish, the 417 Visa Holder (Working Holiday Maker Programme), and the 457 Visa Holder (Temporary Work—Skilled).

The 417 Visa is often referred to as “the backpacker visa,” giving some indication of the age range represented. Under the terms of this visa, an unaccompanied Irish person under the age of 30 may travel to Australia for one year, and may work for a particular employer for a maximum of six months. They have the option to apply for a second year visa upon completion of 88 days working in a particular industry, which at the moment is primarily agriculture (often fruit-picking and other harvesting and planting).

More than any other visa type, the Working Holiday Maker scheme has proven attractive to Irish migrants. Many have availed of the programme and

have since returned to Ireland, as shown by high return figures, often attributed to this visa and others like it. The popularity of the 417 visa before 2008 and in the early years after the downturn was connected to its status as “the backpacker visa,” allowing young people to travel and see Australia, working casually to keep themselves afloat and travelling for half their stay. Although this profile has diversified somewhat in the post-boom era, the age range for the 417 visa remains low, and in concert with the strictures of the visa's conditions (discussed below), the relative youth of the average participant can contribute to their vulnerability.

There is a rising age profile associated with the second significant visa category, the 457 “Temporary Work—Skilled” visa. Within the 457 Employer Sponsored visa programme, an Irish person of any age secures work with an Australian employer either before travelling to Australia or while in Australia on another visa. This temporary four-year visa, seen by many as a stepping stone

“a more educational and cultural programme would be of significant benefit to the growing communities of Irish families in the major metropolitan centres of Australia”

to permanent residency, offers no access to free medical care or legal aid, and gives visa holders only ninety days to find new employment if made redundant. The visa holder is entitled to bring his or her family, and his/her spouse also has employment rights. Australian immigration authorities record only the principal visa holder in their statistics, however, obscuring the fact that many 457 holders will arrive with a partner and children. Only a few Irish community services are directly aimed at children, beyond ad-hoc events and more family-oriented programming during St. Patrick's Day festivals. The GAA has done much to fill this gap, with an increasing number of clubs creating teams for children and youths, but a more educational and cultural programme would be of significant benefit to the growing communities of Irish families in the major metropolitan centres of Australia.

### Employment & Economic Activity

While the 417 visa was designed as a way for Australia to capitalise on the gap-year phenomenon by getting foreign backpackers to take on seasonal work in rural areas desperate for workers, in more recent years the visas have been used as

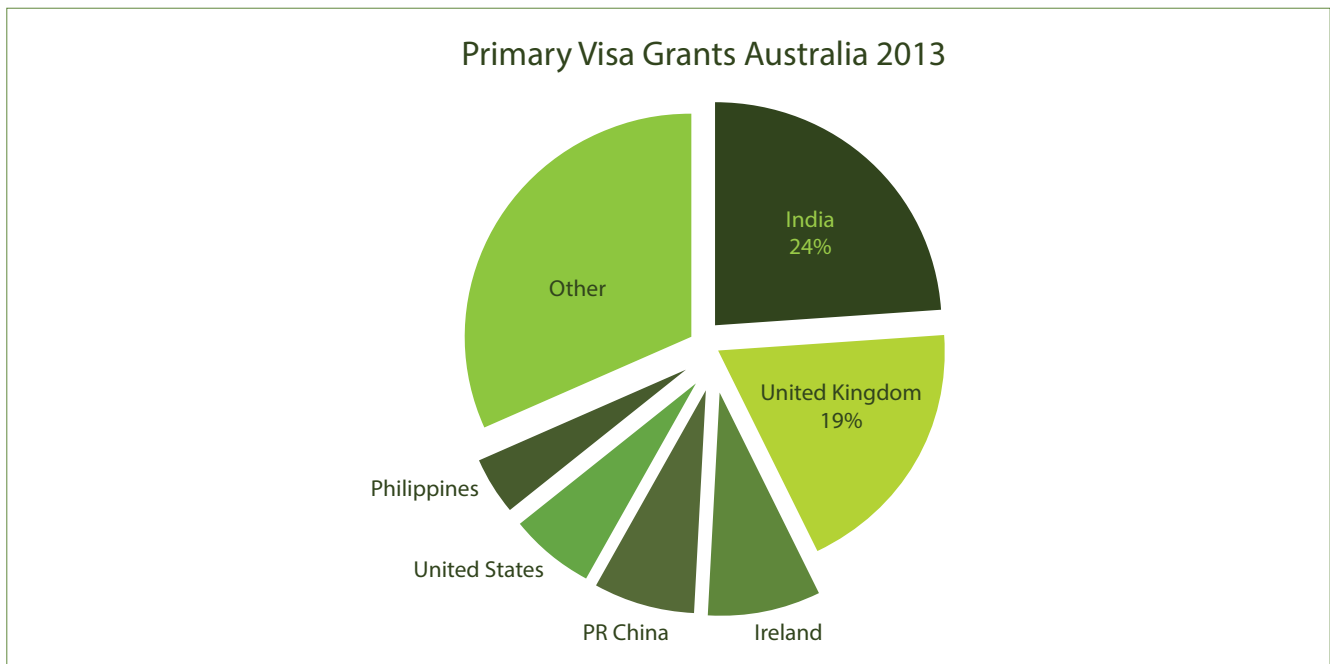


Fig 4: Primary 457 Visa Grants, Australia 2013 (to September 2013)  
 Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection

the most direct and simple way into the Australian job-market for people far more serious about the move. The recent drop in applications for the 417 visa (a 26% drop from 2011/12 to the most recent figures available from end of June 2013) is seen as a reflection of the decreased spending power of young Irish people and their families who used this visa in the past as part of a broadening life experience and who may not have the inclination or ability to fund such an endeavour under current circumstances (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013a, 18). At the same time, Irish applications for a second year of the 417 visa programme are highly over-represented in the statistics; although Irish emigrants made up only 5.6% of the cohort of 417 visa holders in 2012/13, they made up 18.8% of all second year visa holders (19).

Life in Australia with a 417 visa can be both worthwhile and enjoyable, and in the majority of cases it seems to be so. Nevertheless, embassies and consulates report that it is predominantly people availing of this visa—young, single, un-networked—who make up the bulk of their pastoral and emergency

cases. This is due to a number of factors. This visa path requires a high level of mobility, and it can be a challenge to locate a successive number of suitable employers who will happily cater for the 6-month limit dictated by the visa conditions. Welfare services in a number of areas have spoken of young Irish workers falling through the cracks in negotiating the demands of the labour market.

“embassies and consulates report that it is predominantly people availing of this visa—young, single, un-networked—who make up the bulk of their pastoral and emergency cases”

The 88-day industry-specific work requirement can also present difficulties, as the industries, primarily agriculture, are located far from metropolitan areas. People desperate to qualify for a second year visa are often working their 88 days for bed & board only. This leaves them desperate to find proper work afterwards, and some will present themselves to welfare groups having run completely out of funds.

Different opportunities and challenges are faced by the 457 (Temporary Work- Skilled) visa holder. Such a person is limited to certain types of employment, a broad list which is slightly altered by successive government administrations. These visas thus become more or less accessible for migrants, and there are moves by the new administration



signalling a future hike in the cost of the visa. The top three citizenship countries for primary visa grants in the 2013–14 programme year to 30 September 2013 were India (24.1%), the United Kingdom (18.9%) and the Republic of Ireland (8%) (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013b, 6). A 457 visa holder may be an accountant working for a global firm, transferred to Sydney to spend a number of years working overseas. They could be a nurse, suffering under the public sector recruitment freeze in Ireland and coming out to Melbourne to find employment. They could be an engineer, drawn to Perth to work as a fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) contractor with one of the massive mining companies operating in Western Australia. The position of the FIFO worker is discussed below, and has its particular challenges, but the overall sense is that Irish workers on these temporary skilled visas, which present a relatively smooth path to permanent residency if desired, are prospering in Australia.

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“30% of the Australian population has Irish heritage, and this continues to be successfully leveraged by Irish business networks”

ping stone in a career which will ultimately bring them back to Ireland. With advancements both in cheap travel and global employment markets, a stint in Australia can be seen as a valuable addition to a young professional’s resume. There is also a significant Irish presence in business in Australia—as pointed out by Enterprise Ireland’s Paul Burfield, 30% of the Australian population has Irish heritage, and this continues to be successfully leveraged by Irish business networks. Goodwill is key. Such people, whether Irish-born or diasporic, may not attend Irish cultural or welfare groups, but will attend business receptions and events. In Sydney, the Lansdowne club, for example, a group funded at one time by the Emigrant Support Programme and more recently funding itself, once provided a more pastoral level of support for the Irish business community, but is now highly professional and very well internally funded and positioned. The Club helps Irish SMEs to advance within global chains using highly placed Irish-Australians. There is an influx of highly motivated and professional Irish people taking over business clubs in Sydney and the

Increasingly, Irish graduates see Australia as a step-



Fig 5: Changes in popularity of regional destinations for Irish 457 visa holders from 2009 to 2013. Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Subclass 457 Temporary Work (Skilled) Reports June 2009 & June 2013.



east coast. There is little worry around the question of succession in such groups; where, a few years ago, the age profile of a club like the Lansdowne was rising steadily, it now has a very young committee. Membership is seen as a personally rewarding activity in one's career. Such groups must be supported as part of the suite of Irish community representation alive in Australia. They provide a crucial connection to Irish community and identity, and their long-term engagement is important to the maintenance of a diverse and powerful Irish diaspora in Australia.

### Health

Perhaps more than physical health concerns, mental health issues are becoming more pressing within the Irish community in Australia. Often there is a crossover between physical and mental needs, where neither are being met, most commonly due to financial concerns and a lack of awareness and preparation. As the burden of migration—loneliness, isolation, lack of networked support—can be a significant factor in the development of mental health issues among migrants, it is crucial that these issues be recognised by those supporting the Irish overseas, and that such issues are understood as part of the nexus of the migrant relationship with host country and with home.

In some cases, the intersection between financial trouble, lack of preparedness, and health issues is evident. Under the terms of both 417 and 457 visas, a Reciprocal Health Care Agreement between Ireland and Australia entitles visa holders to emergency medical care within the public system, but increasingly, Irish migrants without comprehensive travel or health insurance are finding themselves in difficulty. Many interviewees spoke about the lack of foresight and understanding among young people around this issue. A suite of issues can develop, such as when the migrant does not purchase insurance for the second year of their visa, or when they encounter the higher price of medication in Australia. Joan Ross, of the Claddagh Association in Perth, which has recorded a 35% increase in requests for assistance or advice

since last year, says that “We are getting calls from the embassy referring young lads to us who are practically homeless. They might have enough left for a few nights in a hostel, but no other money for food or anything. That’s the kind of desperation we are faced with at the moment, which is very different to what we have ever seen before” (qtd. in Kenny). A key stakeholder in Irish governance in Australia echoed to us the concern of the most recent generation of Irish migrants:

The profile of the 417s has changed. It had been in the early 2000s, people who had finished college and were on a gap year, or who had done maybe a year or two of work, and then were coming out for a break before settling down and getting married or whatever. So they were generally well-educated, they had resources back home, that kind of profile. And now you’re getting much more—“I’m on the dole in Ireland, and I’ll scrape together enough money to get across here.” They don’t have the education, they don’t have the skills, and they are in a challenging environment here, just because it’s not home. And we’ve seen that since about 2008, 2009.

An organiser at an Irish welfare group connected a number of these concerns in her assessment, arguing that the increase in economic migration—often undertaken in desperation—in the wake of the economic crash has brought a corresponding increase in people unsuited to the challenges of migrant life.

She spoke of helping a woman who had a mental breakdown in Australia, whose family

“We are getting calls from the embassy referring young lads to us who are practically homeless. They might have enough left for a few nights in a hostel, but no other money for food or anything. That’s the kind of desperation we are faced with at the moment, which is very different to what we have ever seen before”

were very shocked to hear about the situation, as she had no pre-existing mental health problems. A psychiatrist clarified that there were clear signs of pre-existing issues, but that had the patient remained within the comforting networks of home, these issues would likely never have reached crisis. The increasing precarity of both pre-departure circumstances and experience on the ground in Australia signals that a significant amount of innovative and responsive supports will be required in the immediate and medium-term future.

In other cases, mental health issues develop where there is no financial deprivation. In a situation

which has become much more predominant in the past five years, as the ex-workers of Ireland’s construction boom look for work elsewhere, the Australian mining industry has become a significant employer. In the year up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013, 34% of Irish 457 visa holders were based in Western Australia, a higher number than in any other territory (Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013b, 14). But the mining sector in Australia produces myriad challenges. The “fly-in-fly-out” (FIFO) model is one in which a man (almost always a man) works in three- or four-week shifts at a mining site many hundreds of miles into the outback, returning usually for 1 week back. Every organisation spoken to for this study highlighted the toll this model has taken on Irish people and their families and communities. The divorce rate among FIFO workers is higher than the national average, and their children are more likely to have behavioural issues in school. As one focus group member testified:

I’ll stop and talk to them [Irish people] when I hear the accent. In the beginning, I’d invite people for coffee, because I was so lonely. And with the kids as well—I want them to mix with Irish people.

“Young single people on FIFO are relatively wealthy...but often do not put down roots for healthy living”

They have the same experiences... I’ve helped an awful lot of people. Some of them are so lonely, so homesick. Especially the FIFO—fly in, fly out—their husbands are gone. It’s desperate... And the wives stay at home... And they don’t realise, they’re a single parent then. [The homesickness—] It’s like when someone dies—when you wake up, and it just hits you.

Young single people on FIFO are relatively wealthy (earning on average 130,000 AUS dollars, twice the average wage) but often do not put down roots for healthy living (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). In Perth, often such workers will not rent an apartment but will secure temporary accommodation only, and will have trouble forming relationships, as well as alcohol and substance abuse issues. As the mining industry in the region contracts, as the mines move from a construction phase (where 10,000 people may be needed) to an operations phase (where 600 may be needed), positions will become insecure, and workers will be expected to move on to the next boom area. Although these positions are well paid, the life experienced around them is one which disrupts the normal rhythms of an integrated and healthy social and psychological lifestyle.



Fig 6: ESP Funding to Australian Organisations 2009–13

## ESP Funding to Australia 2009–13 by Type

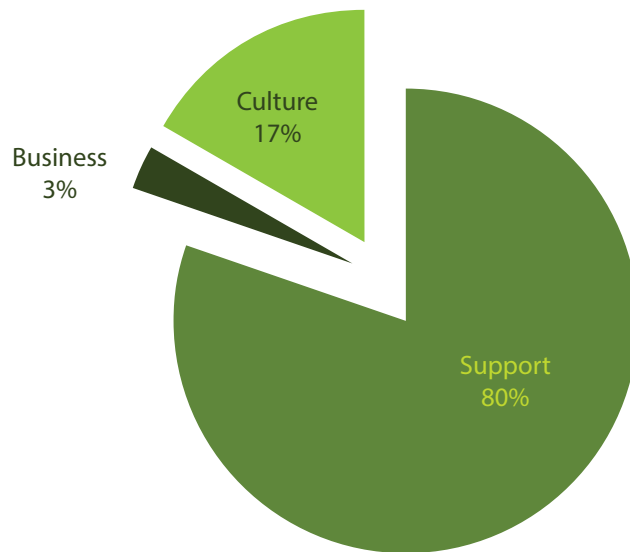


Fig 7: Segment breakdown of ESP funding in Australia 2009–13

### Virtual Networks

Of all the changes that have taken place since 2008 in the migrant experience, it is the development of social media networks which has had the greatest effect. Social media is now a key part of day-to-day life for the Irish migrant in Australia, harnessed in myriad ways in attempts to offset the challenges of adaptation and alienation. This development no doubt poses a challenge to the traditional ESP model, as a virtual network, such as the many Irish-focused Facebook groups dotted across the Australian cybersphere, needs little in the way of funding, may have no named contact person, and has no organising committee. In a broader sense, legitimate concern also exists around the capacity of a virtual network to provide the much-needed support formerly offered by interpersonal face-to-face communication. The latter concern seems mostly unfounded in the contemporary Irish community in Australia, and it will be crucial for the ESP model to adapt to embrace such networks if it wishes to continue to be closely aligned with this community.

Online groups such as “Irish Families in Perth” or “Irish Down Under” give much-needed pre-depar-

ture advice (another key need identified by this study), offer everyday support, and provide a sense of Irish community active—thriving and struggling—in Australia. Crucially, they reach people who would not necessarily engage with traditional “welfare” services, and allow diasporic communities to support themselves. Clearly, such online groups not only provide basic support for those negotiating migration between Ireland and Australia on a very practical level, they also help to maintain a sense of Irishness for those attempting to make new lives overseas. There is also evidence that such online groups are tied in to broader offline communities, and that they can function as an enhancement to face-to-face communities rather than replacing them. The call for location-based services is still strong, and must be a central pillar of any ESP model, but the virtual can and should be embraced.

“Social media is now a key part of day-to-day life for the Irish migrant in Australia, harnessed in myriad ways in attempts to offset the challenges of adaptation and alienation,”

### The Emigrant Support Programme in Australia

The Emigrant Support Programme’s funding priorities have worked to keep up with the changing profile of Irish diasporic groups in Australia, reflect-

ing not only emerging needs and desires within the community but also broader policy-based interventions mandated by a growing coherence within government priorities. Funding for Australian organisations has grown steadily since 2008 (with a brief dip in 2009, see below), with funding rising 150% between 2008 and 2013.

The Irish government's commitment to the protection of the most vulnerable abroad is reflected, overall, in the funding priorities of the programme. The overwhelming majority of the funding directed to Australia has gone to welfare and support organisations which seek to cover the primary territories, including for example the Australia Irish Welfare Bureau in Melbourne, the Irish Australian Welfare Bureau and Resource Centre of New South Wales in Bondi, and the Claddagh Association in Perth. Funding for such centres has risen consistently, with some cuts in funding evident during the crisis years in the Irish economy. Within Australia, diversification of funding has grown since the programme's first allocation in 2006. The total given to Australia in that year, €141,824, has grown almost threefold up to 2013, when the total amount was €413,520. In the early years of the programme, funding was concentrated purely in supporting welfare services. This was a reflection of the programme's priorities and experience in other more established countries, where base funding was almost always rooted in large-scale support organisations. In the years since, the programme has expanded its remit to cover a much larger number of organisations from four in 2006 (three welfare bureaus and a cultural group) to fifteen in 2013. As well as the core welfare organisations, a number of cultural, heritage, and social groups have been funded, representing the major-

“just some examples of the diversity and innovation developing within diaspora groups themselves, focusing on priorities of cross-community and cross-platform engagement and sustainability”

ity of the new recipients since the inception of the programme. It should be noted, however, that the majority of funding is still directed at key welfare organisations: in 2010, support and advice groups received a combined 86.16% of all funding, in 2011 this figure was 75.11%, in 2012 it was 82.05%, and in 2013, 69.56%.

Newly funded non-welfare groups include organisations such as the Sydney St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, the Irish Brekkie Club, the Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce, and the Dictionary of Sydney project.

Support for these groups highlights the welcome expansion of government understanding of diaspora support strategies, encompassing new tactics for engaging and fostering the Irish community in Australia. These projects aim to connect to the different types of people who make up the Irish diaspora and, as they are often highly responsive to the changes, must represent an important pillar of ESP support in anticipating demand in the years to come. John Roper, the President of the Sydney St Patrick's Day Parade committee, believes that the parade and its attendant festival are the only events which bring members of all parts of the Irish Australian diaspora together in one place, and he is passionate about the parade festival's role in providing support through recognition and celebration to the disparate community. Sinead McDevitt, founder of the Irish Brekkie Club, a platform for meet-ups among Irish people in Sydney, put in intense work at the beginning of the project to build awareness and launch the platform. When the project took off and the workload became too great on top of a full-time job, McDevitt re-designed the project to facilitate a self-organising network using online software which is tapped in to the Irish community and speaks to it



Fig 8: Some Culture and Business Groups Funded by ESP in Australia

in its own language. The Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce, at first not an obvious choice for funding, received support from the ESP this year specifically to develop a mentorship programme for newly-arrived Irish entrepreneurs and professionals in Melbourne. These three projects are just some examples of the diversity and innovation developing within diaspora groups themselves, focusing on priorities of cross-community and cross-platform engagement and sustainability.

Fundamentally, the ESP works responsively, only funding those groups which hear about the programme and apply to it. The challenges of this model are clear in the lower number of funded groups in such obviously needy areas as Western Australia. On the other hand, this model respects international best practice on diaspora engagement, which recommends that diasporic groups themselves must self-organise to support their communities, while governments act only as facilitators. The strain of this model, while laudable, is evident in myriad ways in the contemporary Australian diasporic scene. When the most recent round of funding figures were announced by the programme, for example, the Irish Embassy in Canberra published a press-release giving full details of which groups were funded and by how much, hoping to encourage further participation in the programme.

Within the Irish community, a number of funded groups spoke about the difficulties involved in legitimising their organisations—taxation, charity status, accounts, measurability—to the level required to receive government funding. Large gaps still exist where a need has been identified but no grassroots effort has yet coalesced. In the meantime, communities are unsupported.

A distinct sense of frustration was evident among a number of ESP-funded groups and other nascent groups yet to apply for funding, around the challenges of the application and funding process. In relation to support groups in particular, there is a large gap between the skillsets presented among those who volunteer their time to welfare work and

the skillsets required by the ESP application process. The bureaucracy of the ESP process has at times clearly hindered the ability of support groups to get funding which matches their needs. One welfare group, for example, spoke of the difficulty of assessing the impact of their work under the metrics provided—they are asked, for example, to give a number for how many members of the Irish community they have helped in a given space of time. While at

“Large gaps still exist where a need has been identified but no grassroots effort has yet coalesced. In the meantime, communities are unsupported,”

“further supports beyond the monetary – professional advice, strategic planning – would be immensely beneficial to these community groups,”

first straightforward, this metric does not reflect the reality of welfare work, where one client may require long-term assistance. One welfare group gave the example of a young Irish man who was accompanied and supported during his criminal trial over six weeks, or another man who travels bi-weekly from his home outside the city to secure medication and is given transport around the city to doctors, pharmacies, and other appointments on a regular basis. These significant uses of staff time and logistics are difficult to measure and assess, and there is frustration that such supports are not recognised by the Programme’s structures. Another community organiser spoke about the seemingly insurmountable challenges of tax law and incorporation required to take their group to the next level—in some ways the victims of their own success, they are struggling to negotiate the structures of company law and bureaucracy required to

allow their organisation to grow. In Perth, another key support group, which has experienced a significant increase in calls for their services in the last two years, has yet to find a funding and organisational model which will allow them to plan ahead into the future and support their members—including the members of their hard-working committee. At present, they work on an almost ad-hoc basis for fundraising, running numerous one-off funding events for a particular issue or problem, such as repatriating a body after an accident or hosting a bereaved Irish family. The skills of strategic planning are difficult to implement among the part-time and over-stretched volunteers.

It is clear that further supports beyond the mon-

etary—professional advice, strategic planning – would be immensely beneficial to these community groups. Such supports have been initiated in some areas. Of note is the Link conference, a once yearly meeting for welfare organisations in Australia which provided a space to share expertise and discuss challenges across the Australian Irish scene. This was seen as very valuable by all groups approached for this study, reflecting a strong desire for more international cooperation between groups supporting the global Irish diaspora. Although the impetus for this cooperation must come from the diaspora themselves, there should be a role for the ESP in facilitating advancements in this crucial area.

### Conclusions

Twenty years ago, the most prominent Irish organisations in Australia were the county groups based along the east coast of Australia, representing the county-affiliated Irish diaspora who would regularly gather to support each other across a number of platforms.

There were a number of groups dedicated to migrants from particular counties which were very popular and powerful—the Kilkenny group in Sydney, for example, once had a significant membership and large premises. Today, only the Kerry group remains in any real form, and this primarily due to its asso-

ciation with the Rose of Tralee competition. At the same time, county affiliation retains currency in the current landscape of Irish community in Australia. It is a connection now fostered through the GAA, which is county- and province-based, and in the county floats created for the St Patrick’s Day Parade. At a recent Family Fun Day in Perth, attendees were asked to wear a badge with their name and province, and at Sydney Brekkie Club meetings, county information is used as an introductory message. There is a lesson here about the perennial power of certain labels of identity among the Irish diaspora, and their adaptability over time.

It will fall to the ESP to be innovative in how it engages with future generations of Irish people and communities in Australia, and rather than investing heavily in large unresponsive groups, one potential method may be to concentrate on the detail of lived experience. In our research, we identified, for example, a number of “pinch points” at which people who are not classically vulnerable feel added pressure and may get into trouble or need extra support. These supports may be traditional welfare services, or they may be cultural or business groups. Services have developed to support some of these moments, but not all. They include:

“one potential method may be to concentrate on the detail of lived experience”

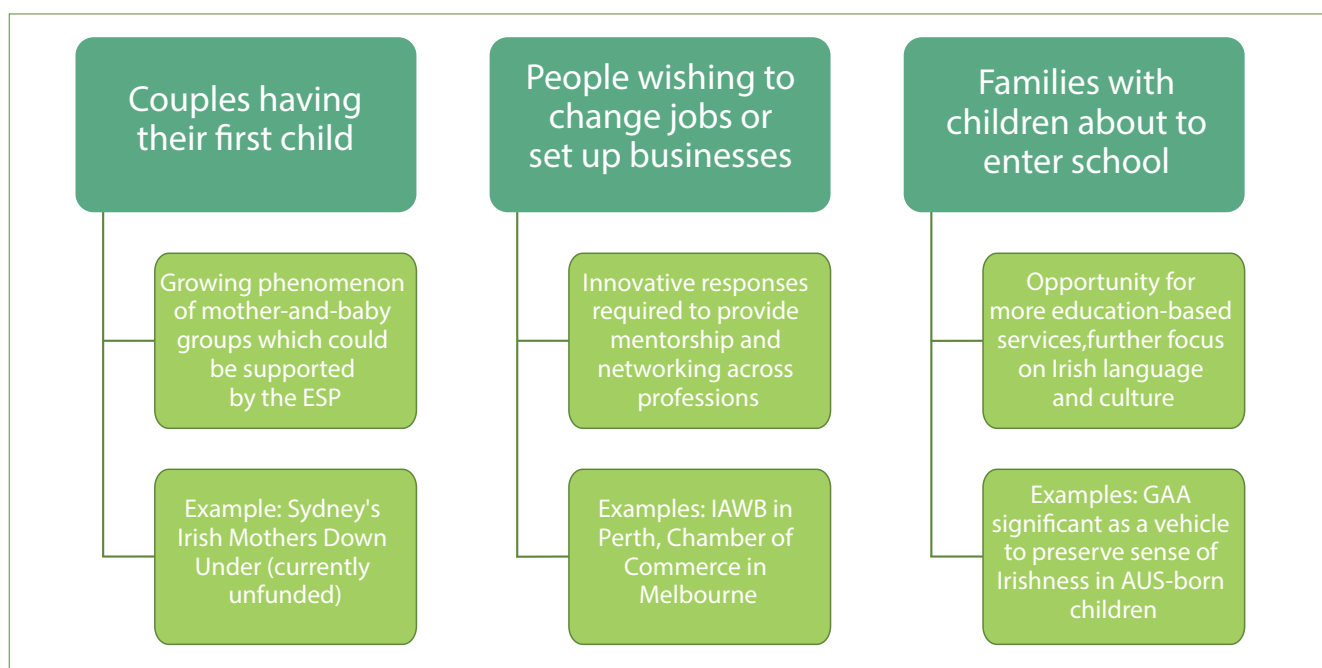


Fig 9: Areas of Opportunity for Support Services



There are also signs of innovation among the groups themselves, which should be identified and fostered. These include groups which leverage the sense of Irishness more broadly found in the Irish and Australian communities to support themselves, for example the Canberra Irish Club which cannot afford to target only the tiny Irish population, but which uses the reputation of Irish clubs as fun and sociable to rent the venue to other paying groups, then using the proceeds to support small Irish community groups (language classes, senior meet-ups). Also, groups which are based around key Irish

events – most notably St Patrick’s Day festivals - are thriving in Sydney and Perth especially. These festivals are tremendous opportunities to draw in Irish people who would not otherwise engage. It is this diaspora-based innovation which must be fostered and harnessed by the ESP in its future work with the Irish community in Australia.

<sup>i</sup> For an introduction to the history of the Irish in Australia, see Castles et al, 1998; Kiernan (ed.), 1986; O’Farrell, 2000; and Reid, 2011.

## Summary

- The history of the Irish in Australia, which affects contemporary relations in many ways, is very different to the stories of Irish America which form the dominant narrative of Irish emigration.
- Australia has been the most prominent destination for the Irish in the recessionary era post-2008. The influx of Irish people into Australia has sparked the development of new communities, the revival of older ones, and has created a host of new challenges and opportunities for those seeking to support and engage.
- Since 2008, Western Australia has received the bulk of Irish migrants, due to the mining and construction boom in the region. Service providers and community groups have yet to develop sufficiently to cope with this demand.
- Australia’s stratification of access pathways has had a powerful impact on the experiences of Irish people migrating, whether it’s on a temporary 1-year visa or as part of a defined path to Australian citizenship. Service providers indicate that it is overwhelmingly young people on temporary 457 visas (which have strict rules around work and travel) who make up the bulk of emergency and welfare cases.
- The growth in families emigrating together is changing the landscape of Irish communities in Australia, and an innovative approach to new forms of engagement are needed to connect with the needs of these groups.



# The Irish in Canada

There is a significant diasporic Irish community in Canada which has been supplemented by current cycles of emigration to the region. In the 2011 census, those who claimed Irish ancestry in Canada (a combined figure of those who claim it as singular and multiple ethnicity), was approximately 4.54 million.

The diasporic narrative of the Irish in Canada is often overshadowed by more dominant histories of the Irish in the United States and United Kingdom. This reduced recognition is unfortunate as the histories of the Irish in the region are deep, meaningful and are a strong starting point in understanding how new and old cycles of Irish migrants can be engaged in the times ahead. However, a rise in awareness around the needs of the new Irish in the region has begun, as Canada becomes the current destination of choice for many Irish emigrants. Not enough is known about what is happening on the ground for many of the new Irish in Canada. While the knowledge gap is beginning to close, the Irish in

“Not enough is known about what is happening on the ground for many of the new Irish in Canada. While the knowledge gap is beginning to close, the Irish in Canada remain a developmental diaspora.”

Canada remain a developmental diaspora. In 2014, Crosscare’s survey of 116 emigrants on a working holiday visa noted an important step in learning more. Advocating strong networking, financial and occupational stability pre-departure, and integrative measures upon arrival, the survey offers a snapshot of some of the more detailed issues at play in the region. Fundamentally, as a disaggregated and dispersed diaspora community, the Irish in Canada are at a crossroads.

Whilst Figure 1 below shows emigration numbers from Ireland to Canada post-2008, Embassy staff view these as significantly underestimated due to a strong Northern Irish element to the Irish community in Canada. In order to qualify for the Irish quota, all that is needed is an Irish passport and many of the new Northern arrivals, from both communities, have an Irish passport. This cross-border element is an interesting footnote to diasporic engagement in the region as it reconfigures more orthodox understandings of Irish identity and displays the complexity of over-prescription in

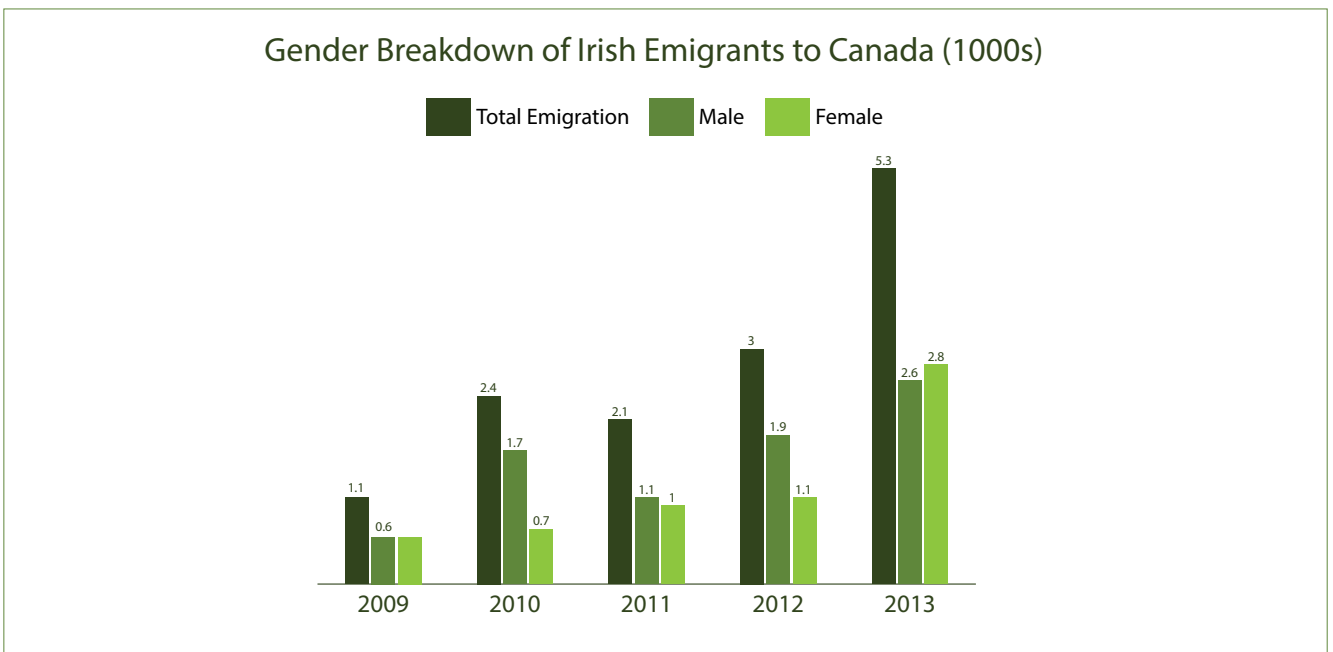


Fig 1: Irish Emigration to Canada, 2009–13  
Source: CSO Population and Migration Estimates

diaspora engagement frames. Given the next generational scope of this research, facilitating inclusivity within the diaspora context through the ESP can be a fresh impetus in helping to close existing divides that remain ahead for the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. Additionally, there has been an increase in circular migration where arrivals are coming from previous destinations of Irish emigration, most often Australia.

From detailed research and interviewees, it has become clear that the work of the ESP in the region needs elevation. There will be a need for systematic advancement of the programme in supporting established and new organisations and the role of ESP as a facilitator of support to vulnerabilities may heighten in the short term. For example, as will be explored below, there are clear cultural and identity gaps between generations in Canada as the influx of new meets old. The regional and geographical scale of the host country also contributes to some important disconnects.

### Note on Sources

The methodological approach of this chapter is consistent with the relevant source data available through which we can effectively begin to map the changing characteristics of the Irish in Canada. In association with detailed research interviews, including an extensive focus group held in Toronto in 2013, this chapter draws on primary and secondary data sources to provide an in-depth look at the new Irish in the region. Along with CSO figures and

“The social and geographic scales can be daunting for new migrants and may contribute to vulnerabilities”

estimates, post-2008, the chapter infuses Canadian immigration data, most notably the Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity data of the National Household Survey from 2011 (NHS 2011), along with contemporary migration analyses from leading academic and policy sources, such as MOWAT Centre at the University of Toronto. The National Household Survey consists of contributions from approximately 4.5 million households in Canada, which represents about a third of all households.

### Population and Settlement

Canada is a nation with an ethnocultural mosaic as indicated by its immigrant population, the ethnocultural backgrounds of its people, the visible minority population, linguistic characteristics and religious diversity. (NHS 2011, 6)

Canada is a nation of immigrants and this has continued to shape the compositional make-up of the region. By 2011, Canada had a foreign born population of approximately 6.77 million which equates to 20.6% of the total population. Between 2006 and 2011, around 1.16 million foreign born people immigrated into Canada (NHS 2011, 6). The Irish proportion of this number is very small but there has been a notable increase since 2011 and it is estimated that Irish emigration to the region will be up to approximately 10,700 in 2014 (Canada International). The arrival of thousands of Irish has come at a time when Canada is in the process of shaping its own discussion on immigration as the constituent make-up of the Canadian populace rep-

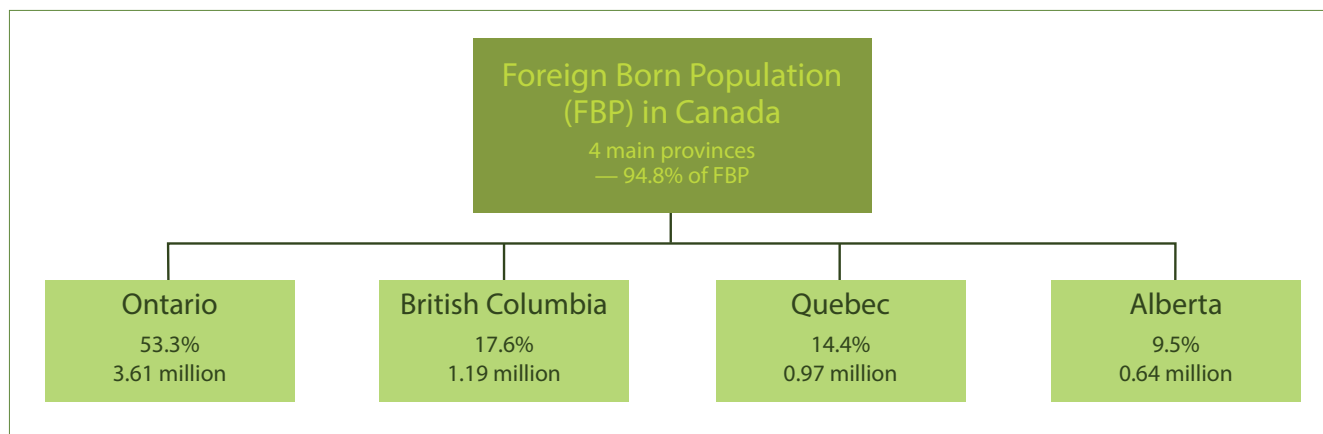


Fig 2: Where Foreign Born Population Live in Canada  
Source: NHS 2011

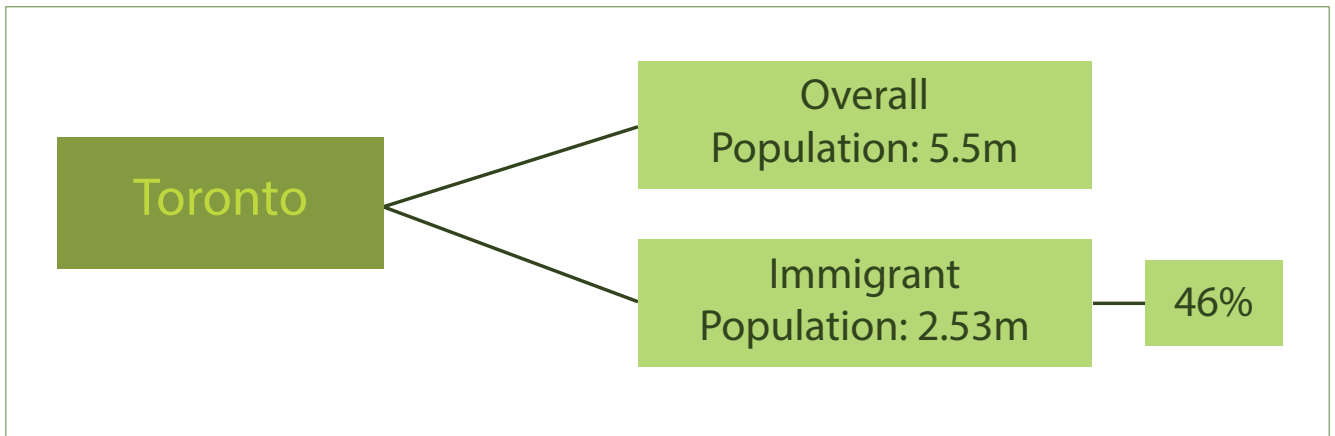


Fig 3: Toronto Immigrant Population (incl Irish)  
Source: NHS 2011

resented in the 2011 census data indicates a nation of complex immigration patterns and affiliations.

In the 2011 National Household Survey in Canada, more than 200 ethnic origins were recorded, with 13 different ethnic origins surpassing the 1 million mark. Within this, there are 18 immigrant communities with a population over 100,000 (NHS 2011, 4; Bitran & Tan, 7). This ethnic diversity is mapped onto an immense nation-state. The social and geographic scales can be daunting for new migrants and may contribute to vulnerabilities. Canada, as an interviewee notes, is:

geographically a huge country with relatively low population and then there are dense centres of population and large areas of nothing and I think, in fairness, people are getting off the plane and getting into Toronto and saying well I will chance this for 6 months and see what the craic is and then I will head out to Alberta and then they actually realise how far away Alberta is, how isolated you could potentially be, how quickly they ran through their money, and suddenly they don't have the plane money to fly across Canada, can't get to Alberta anymore and then they are stuck in Toronto.

Data indicates that the geographical scope of immigrant activity and settlement in Canada is limited and restrained to dense "urban centres" of population (NHS 2011, 4–10). In 2011, 94.8% of Canada's foreign born population lived in 4 (of 10) provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and

“I have done my research on this and there is no solid information to be got, you look at the Canadian Immigration, it is just a jungle to figure it out. (Irish Emigrant in Ottawa, 2013)”

Alberta, which also accounted for 83.7% of individuals who were born in Canada. Approximately 53.3% of immigrants lived in Ontario, including Irish hubs of Toronto and Ottawa, which equated to approximately 3.61 million immigrants in 2011. British Columbia accounted for 1.19 million or 17.6% which is a larger percentage of foreign born constituents than Canadian born. Quebec held approximately 14.4% and Alberta 9.5% respectively. This geographical clustering also impacted heavily on recent immigration with 9 out of every 10 settling in one of these four provinces between 2006 and 2011 (NHS 2011, 10).

An interviewee in Toronto remarked on the influx of Irish to the city:

Well there has been a massive change here... most of the Toronto community started to see this massive influx of young Irish. Previous to this, it had been mostly the leftover of the emigration in the 1980s so the Irish here and across Canada, in terms of first and second generation, were reaching well into their 50s so then all of a sudden about 4 years ago, we started to see or hear an Irish accent on every corner in Toronto and it was young people. It has been a complete turnaround.

Immigrants in the Canadian landscape tend, more often than not, to locate in urban settings. Out of 6.8 million immigrants in 2011, 91% lived in a specifically designated CMA (census metropolitan area) compared with 63.3% of Canadian born individuals. The Irish influx to Toronto is part of a wider trend

which positions Toronto as home to 37.4% of all foreign born individuals in Canada which equated to, in 2011, approximately 2.53 million immigrants and 46% of Toronto's overall population. Even within the Ontario provincially, 7 out of all 10 immigrants lived in Toronto (NHS 2011, 10). By threading this through the Irish narrative, emerging trends of settlement appear.

Whilst broad geographical strokes can illustrate a good sense of where the Irish are going provincially, the larger systematic urban settlement patterns are an early indicator of where vulnerabilities may arise amongst the Irish in Canada, most notably on issues of labour migration and job acquisition. A growing concern amongst many in the Irish community is that an adherence to urban living has resulted in increasing vulnerabilities in terms of job security. Focus group members commented on the gap between how Canada is being promoted to the Irish and the realities on the ground:

A: The housing market in Toronto is incredible, it is so expensive to get somewhere. Rentals are very difficult; to buy a house is almost impossible. I used to go to Ireland and go to a grocery store thinking how expensive Ireland was but now Ireland is far less expensive to live in than it is here.

B: ...you can't come to Toronto just because it is well branded, or just because you have family here or it counts for a lot. If people desperately need a Labour Market Opinion [LMO] and they are not getting it here they have to consider Saskatchewan and northern Alberta and yeah, it may not be pretty but that's where the jobs are.

Some work is being done—at Working Abroad Expos, for example—to raise awareness about these matters among potential Irish emigrants but more could usefully be done. One interviewee drily noted: "Like a lot of people, the Irish coming to Canada, they should look at the map." The challenge is more constructively recognised by a service provider in Canada who comments:

...what we are trying to do is make sure that when people come in, we have PR seminars all year long all across Canada, if you are coming on a 2 year

work permit, you may not be able to do your permit in Toronto, you need to be thinking two years ahead to move next and maybe get the residency and yes, it stinks if you fall in love with Toronto or Montreal or wherever and you want to settle there but I do think the question of immigration particularly around the labour market is so much more complex. But the opportunities are there.

A lack of labour mobility, in a geographical sense, has begun to unearth sensitivities and possible marginalisation for the new Irish emigrants in Canada.

Through the ESP, there can be greater awareness promoted on such issues and recent initiatives prove a useful starting point.

“The promotion of mutually beneficial exchange platforms in the professional sector can enhance the profile of the Irish in Canada and dilute disaggregation at a community and organisational level,”

For example, in 2014, Crosscare surveyed a portion of Irish immigrants in Canada to map some of their experiences and such work needs enhancing as a vehicle of support ("What is Canada Like?" 2014). They also published a pre-departure leaflet for those planning to emigrate to Canada. However, these efforts need to be formalised into a more strategic, sector-sensitive strategy given the changing demographics of Irish emigration to Canada, most notably in the 2014 cycle of visa allocations which witnessed a slow uptake from young professionals.

I have done my research on this and there is no solid information to be got, you look at the Canadian Immigration, it is just a jungle to figure it out. (Irish Emigrant in Ottawa, 2013)

The majority of Irish people emigrating to Canada go via the International Experience Canada (IEC) visa format. The IEC visa is a regulatory visa access agreement that exists between Canada and numerous European countries including Ireland. It is categorised as a "youth" driven exchange process as one must be between 18 and 35 to comply with the regulations for the visa. Other conditions on successful application include being in possession of either a departure ticket leaving Canada at the end of your authorised period of stay or sufficient financial resources to purchase such a ticket, having the equivalent of CAD \$2,500 to cover the expenses at the beginning of your stay, and possessing insurance for medical and health care, including hospitalisation and repatriation, for the entire authorised period of stay. Proof of this insurance cover must

be presented to Immigration officials upon arrival in Canada. IEC have indicated that quotas for certain countries can fill up as quick as 30 minutes.

In fact, this year Ireland has been allocated a quota of over 10,000 and the first round of visas were filled in approximately seven minutes. The approved allocation of 10,700 IEC visas in 2014 from 6,350 in 2013 signposts the significance of growing emigra-

and organisational level.

Other visa access routes, such as the Temporary Foreign Worker Programme, allow for Canadian employers to employ highly skilled migrants, amongst other types of employees, to fill labour shortages in Canada. Higher skill levels are designated into two categories as follows:

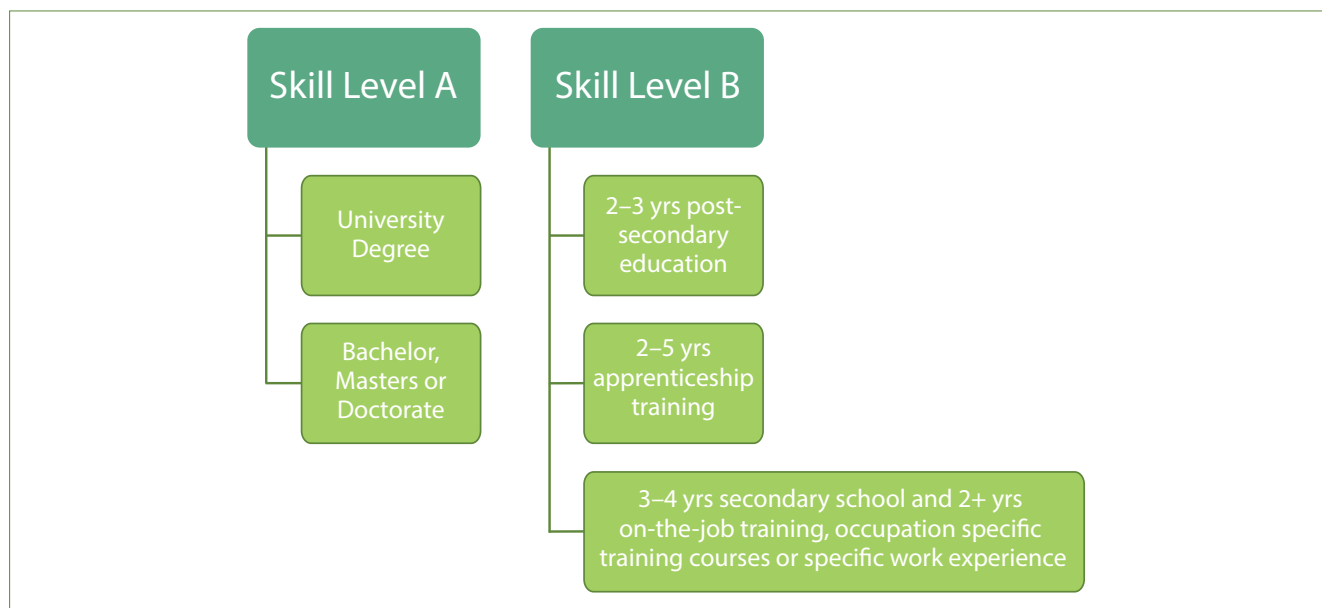


Fig 4: Temporary Foreign Worker Programme Requirements for Higher Skilled Workers (incl management, professional, scientific, technical or trade occupation)

Source: Employment and Social Development Canada

tion to Canada (Canada International). In addition to this, there will be approximately 3,500 on the Temporary Foreign Worker Programme and another cohort on the Provincial programmes. Overall, Embassy staff estimate that, with some expected withdrawals, there will be approximately 14,000 Irish people who will either temporarily or permanently migrate to Canada this year. At the time of writing, all 7,700 IEC working holidays visas for 2014 were taken in record time yet only 79 of the 2,500 young professional visas were taken up which acts as an useful guide to the makeup of recent and future arrivals in the region. A specific criteria for the young professional visa is having pre-secured employment for a maximum of 24 months may have slowed the take up, which is an avenue through which the ESP can become useful. The promotion of mutually beneficial exchange platforms in the professional sector can enhance the profile of the Irish in Canada and dilute disaggregation at a community

These visas must proceed via a Labour Market Opinion (LMO) process. A LMO is a procedure that employers must adhere to in order to hire temporary foreign workers and is designed to ensure that Canadian workers remain first in line for jobs when applicable. This is a useful mechanism as many anti-immigrant narratives, in Canada and elsewhere, often stem from an occupation market basis. A positive LMO indicates that an employer is able to hire temporary foreign workers.

Irish community leaders express an increasing worry that the lack of detailed information on the specific procedural components has had some detrimental effects within the community, particularly around the IEC working holiday visa:

A bigger issue with Irish people in particular is that they are not educated enough on the visa situation and all of a sudden time runs out and they have

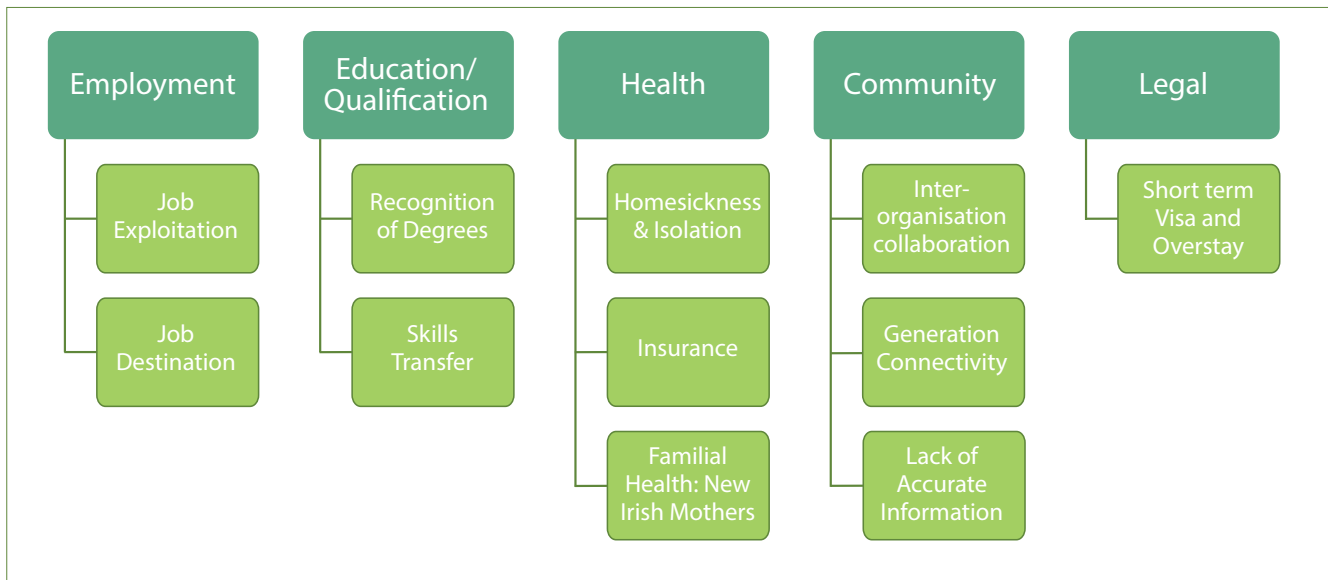


Fig 5: Established and Emerging Vulnerabilities in Canada

Source: CSO Population and Migration Estimates

to get out of here, good people that are here that have had to leave because of visas running out or they have not gone and applied for their residency straight away or haven't gone and done their homework on that.

Once again, there is a lack of knowledge as well as preparedness. These gaps are contributing to emergent vulnerabilities in employment, health and housing among new Irish emigrants.

### Vulnerabilities

Contemporary global migration demands levels of mobility on a new scale, a system which is being normalised at the same time as it creates fresh vulnerabilities among its participants. In Canada, the preponderant dependence on a cycle of two-year IEC visas has resulted in a complex emergence of issues that Irish emigrants are now facing. At an individual and institutional level in Canada, there is growing awareness of vulnerabilities emerging in relation to the visa frameworks. An individual who has spent a few years in the region observes:

If you are on a LMO or a two-year visa, it is a bridge to get you to the next stage, to be very objective about it. And when you come in, I do question some people's expectations when they arrive..... some people I get the impression—and I have seen a good few résumés from people—no wonder the person didn't want to talk to you, look at the state of this. And some people are just underprepared ..... but I think you have to be here and if you have a 2

year visa, you are working towards that permanent residency. In the meantime, it is the means to an end.

For those wishing to work towards permanent residency, the application procedure must be initiated at an early stage in their time in Canada. There are growing indicators of vulnerabilities among those who do not start this process in time and end up desperate for alternatives.

Interviewees reported examples of Irish emigrants beginning to operate at the margins of the legal framework in Canada where issues of overstay and subsequent job exploitation resulted. An interviewee in Ottawa:

I have one lad with me now from Longford and he is saying there is no point in going back to Longford... he actually overstayed his visa and I am paying him under the table just to keep him ticking over and I had to get a bag together for him, a few shirts, my young fella gave him pants, a pair of boots and he is just sharing with another fella.

And another Ottawa interviewee remarked:

So I would be worried when I see those coming in now, I would be worried if it continues this way that we would have an issue in 30 years time with people who either stayed in the community illegally or people who came and lonesome and drank like what we saw years ago. Those lost boys, that could be an issue.



The tackling of such issues remains central to the work of the ESP in Canada and can begin to be channelled through greater collaboration between relevant stakeholders in the community. A limited scope and scale of organisations active in the region also strengthens debate around greater collaboration. Whilst systematic awareness building of the ESP needs to occur in Canada in the short term, greater collaboration enhances the likelihood of closing issues around vulnerabilities, providing integrative support to new arrivals and strengthening the overall bonds between old/new emigrants and home. The ability to close awareness gaps on job location, visa regulations, and other basic information points for emigrants needs to be enhanced. It is an issue which many organisations, community members, and employers are facing more regularly and greater consultative opportunities should be created to reduce the likelihood of such issues reaching a crisis.

### Employment and Economic Activity

The rich legacies and histories of the Irish in Canada signpost that recent Irish emigration to the region has been to a relatively welcoming host country. However, there are some worrying national trends that serve as important information for recent and prospective Irish emigrants particularly in light of continuous requests from interviewees and recent migrants for more realistic information on Canada than what is currently available. For example, the unemployment rate of recent immigrants is almost double the unemployment rate of the Canadian born population (Bitran & Tan, 7). This disparity is quite significant as it indicates sentiments impacting beyond any perceived “settling in” period in relation to employment. Numerous examples have emerged within the Irish communities where immigrants noted the first 6 months were “particularly tough,” and, “character building.” The distinctions between the professional and non-professional categories have also dramatically altered in recent times in Canada. The number of professionals immigrating has fallen by a third which is in sync with the Irish portfolio of a predominantly construction and skills-based populace emerging as recent arrivals. Additionally, those professionals who do arrive are faced by other worrying trends. University educated immigrants have employment rates up to 25% lower than their Canadian counterparts whilst they earn up to 33% less than their Canadian colleagues (Bitran & Tan, 7).

The vulnerabilities associated with variations between native and immigrant marketplaces have begun to emerge within the experiences of the recently arrived in Canada. For example, exploitation within certain sectors has been recorded. One recently arrived Irish emigrant stated that it was easy to “get trapped into a situation where we are being taken on by, not gangsters, but being used by guys and they are saying it’s only 12 dollars an hour.” There are particular vulnerabilities among professional and skilled segments of Irish emigrants. Representatives of the Ottawa Chapter of the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce reported that recognition of university degrees does not automatically transfer within certain sectors in the Canadian market. They noted that “one of the biggest issues you face when you come over [is] whether your qualification transfers so my own qualification doesn’t transfer. I think that is the same for most doctors, lawyers, I am aware there are issues with qualifications.”

Additionally, practical matters such as greater awareness of variations of curriculum vitae style were noted as being significant hindrances to effective arrival. The longevity of these issues are clear with one interviewee noting that when she arrived in 2002, there was “nobody here to tell me my résumé was in the wrong format.” In order to tackle this issue, the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre runs weekly courses on the topic. The potentials of such programmes are unique in that they are often focused on the mechanics and practical elements that spring up from the emigration phenomenon. They also indicate that whilst large scale vulnerability issues such as mental health and aging deserve significant attention, vulnerabilities come in all shapes and sizes.

### Housing

Issues of housing—the financial cost and isolated locales—are becoming important in shaping the likelihood of vulnerabilities among Irish emigrants in Canada. Many recent arrivals noted the lack of a designated Irish area, particularly in urban areas such as Toronto:

It is multicultural in Toronto and yet [that can be] therapeutic in that a lot of ethnicities find an area and stay within that area. There is always a Chinatown in each city, a little Korea, a little Italy,



the only place nation that doesn't seem to do that are the Irish people. I would have a lot of people in the office say to me like, where do the Irish go? And I kind of go, nowhere.

This lack of an ethnic or diasporic centre reduces the potential for Irish cultural connectivity we have witnessed in other regions. It is perhaps inevitable that the fragmented and dispersed nature of Irish community in Canada has contributed to a sense of isolation among emigrants. Such clustering is difficult to achieve in the socially sparse employment locales attracting Irish to work on natural resources projects and other construction work out West.

The cost of accommodation has proved an obstacle for some, especially if it has not been sufficiently considered in relation to visa regulations. The IEC visa requirement that emigrants must be in possession of CA \$2,500 has led to some recent arrivals assuming that this is enough to get established. Recent and established emigrants in a focus group discussion in Toronto noted the high cost of rentals in the region and its impact on those who arrive with the minimum funds:

A: Too many people arrive with not enough money. With like maybe 2,000 dollars which may seem like a lot....

B: But not here.

A: It is not and people post on Facebook they are desperate, they need money right now.

C: Yeah, the IEC visas you have to have 2500 but we all know it is not enough. You need first and last months rent which you have to give out, there goes 2 and then it will take time to get a job.

B: And it has taken at least 3—4 weeks just to pick up something whether it be a day job labouring, anything.

D: It does take a few weeks, you don't know where you are going like.

Irish emigrants also noted financial challenges in other areas such as insurance. One noted the high cost of car insurance, that he was "driving for 20 years and got a quote of \$5,000 fully comprehensive," and that Irish driving licences do not automatically transfer, like those from Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. Such issues can defer employment in certain sectors, particularly construction.



Fig 6: ESP Funding in Canada, 2009–13

## Health

In more established landscapes of Irish communities such as Britain and the USA, commentary focuses on traditional spectrums of vulnerabilities like access to health services, onset of elderly health issues, and mental health issues. In Canada, the dispersed nature of the Irish community and the relative lack of infrastructural support makes it more difficult to ascertain the scale and loci of such vulnerabilities. However, organisations active in specific sectors and regions noted growth in health concerns among Irish emigrants. A focus group of recent and established emigrants in Canada provided poignant examples, with several commenting on feelings and effects of isolation. One participant noted that when she arrived over a decade ago, she was “determined to stay” but the first “6 months were rough.” Others remarked on deeper, ongoing problems:

And it was you talking about suicide and depression. I suffered a lot of depression at home in Ireland when I was doing nothing, how easy it can get to just say is it worth it and I remember nights sitting here in Toronto in a hotel room, in a B&B on my own, and going, “What the fuck have I done.”

Other examples proffered regarding health also stem directly from vulnerabilities such as a lack of direct support provisions. The ESP, through its support paradigm, can help to facilitate greater

mapping and engagement of health vulnerabilities, as more Irish arrive across Canada, through the existing and emerging organisations engaging the community. For example, as the influx of new Irish includes familial emigration, the need for greater support to new mothers becomes more apparent. One interviewee explained how, during her pregnancy in Canada, the lack of an Irish support network heightened her sense of vulnerability. Health orientated support mechanisms will remain central to the future of the ESP in Canada. Direct health impacts such as mental health issues and isolation coupled with indirect health impacts such as high insurance costs and financial burdens (in areas such as accommodation) are an interdependent vulnerability which the ESP can help to address in the years ahead as more new Irish arrive in Canada. Similar trends around issues of family and motherhood in the context of health is evident across a number of destinations since 2008.

By supporting the creation of physical and virtual spaces through which people can connect and share experiences, the ESP can facilitate an effective strategy to offer incisive support for those with mental and physical vulnerabilities. Organisations such as the Emerald Isle Seniors Group have already articulated the need for greater mentorship within the Irish community.

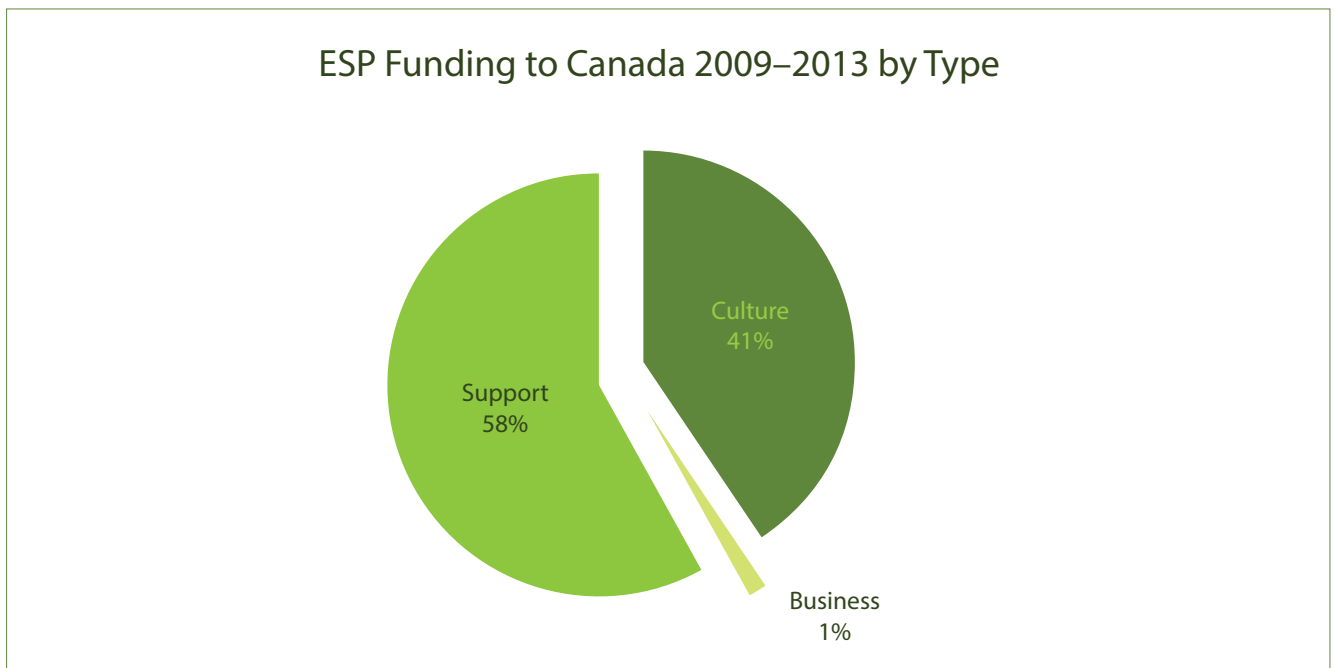


Fig 7: ESP Funding to Canada post-2008 by Type

## The Emigrant Support Programme in Canada

From 2009 to 2013, ESP funding to Canada was €597,686 with a peak in 2012. This peak coincided with the founding of the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre in December 2011. The Centre has a fresh, integrative approach to diaspora engagement as it is positioned as a collaborative effort by leading organisations at home and abroad. For example, whilst the ESP provides financial support, other organisations such as the Ireland Funds and GAA provide invaluable support to the organisation. The Ireland Funds provide infrastructural support with office space and the GAA also have a close working relationship where issues of welfare of migrants and networks for access to support and jobs are developed. They also have strategic sponsorship associations, including with Aer Lingus, Scotia Bank and Hays Recruitment. This integrative approach is partly representative of the intra-diaspora capacity building mentioned elsewhere in this report and also a primitive example of including corporate networks as a vehicle to promote awareness of organisations servicing the Irish abroad. As the leading engagement platform in the region, the centre can remain a valuable asset as an incubator of new ideas on how to map and engage changing Irish emigrant movement and settlement.

Financially, in the post-2008 period, support orientated groups received €345,690 or 58% of overall funding with a peak in 2012 of €122,591. Similarly, culture orientated groups received €243,601 or 41% of overall funding with a peak on 2009 of €82,541. These snapshots display where contemporary focus has been in servicing the Irish in Canada as newer arrivals have increased demand for supply of support provisions.

The compositional makeup of funding in Canada post-2008 displays a stronger focus on support which would generally map consistently into the heightened flow of newer migrants in recent narratives. However, given that this increase is most notably in 2013 and 2014 when Irish arrivals jumped to 10,700 in 2014 from 3,000 in 2012, we must also be conscious that the cultural connec-

tions built prior to 2013 are significant. In fact, coupled with the strong GAA presence developing in Canada, the cultural access points for old and new generations are quite strong. Given that the ESP has funded a limited yet stable composition of organisations, these few organisations can play a role in starting to build a deeper infrastructure within the region as more Irish arrive. For example, groups such as the Emerald Isle Seniors Society, Irish Cultural Society of Calgary and the Irish Sport and Social Club of Edmonton, can be regarded as a basis through which the ESP can meet emerging vulnerabilities in the region. Furthermore, as the increased numbers of newer Irish arrive, greater variances of engagement will occur through which more systematic awareness of the ESP can be built. Interestingly, in 2009, a diaspora media publication, Irish Connections Canada, was funded and such diaspora media work may be a strong gatekeeper for new Irish arriving in Canada. Given that

“There is a rift between the people who emigrated in the 1950s and those in the 2000s,”

we remain unaware on many of the wider issues facing new arrivals in Canada, culture is often the glue through which new migrants will connect with others in early stages of vulnerability. Whilst the cultural scope and interest of new migrants differs from many of the platforms currently accessible in Canada, the existence and emergence of a greater diversification of cultural platforms can be an instrument to protect the vulnerable Irish arriving in Canada and act as a catalyst for longer term investment and connections with Ireland.

The leading difficulty facing the Irish in Canada at the community and organisational level is the lack of coherent intergenerational connectivity. In some part these ruptures are due to cultural perspectives of different generations. For example, an amateur theatre group in Canada recently came under pressure due to a decision to showcase contemporary Irish culture centred on issues around sexuality. It drew strong criticism from regular theatre goers as a representative explains, “we had a modern play and it finished and we had a couple of complaints about it from the older generations as it did not represent the Irish they had left. There is rift between the people who emigrated in the 1950s and those in the 2000s.” There are also difficulties around succession in the leadership and support of

organisations, as explained by a focus group member in Toronto:

That is interesting as the Irish cultural club who put on the picnic and other stuff like that, they would love to connect with people like you and they would love to know how to connect with people like you. we are getting older and older and older and there aren't the same younger people coming up to take over. There are definite problems here and collaboration needs to happen.

Any organisation engaging the Irish in Canada needs to be sensitive to their varied cultural identifications and assumptions. This is acknowledged by the Ireland Funds, who are becoming increasingly successful in engaging the Irish in Canada through their Young Leaders programme. One of their personnel noted:

...the board members of the Ireland Funds of Canada would not be into the people's idea of what Irishness is either. I mean they would all enjoy the music but you know I would never, ever run into any of them in the pub. If you keep, you know, the stereotypical version of Ireland then you are able to engage people who are not Irish because they have an idea of what that night out is going to be like and you have to meet that at some level.

The cultural diversification that is beginning to represent the Irish in Canada is an important pretext for shaping future cycles of the ESP. The recent arrivals have portrayed different understandings of Irishness when positioned with older migrants and diaspora community members in Canada. The ESP, through a pluralised cultural strategy in the region, can help to bridge such cultural difference. This also opens up potential alignments for the ESP in shaping its work in other regions as it suggests that the variations of Irishness now exported through emigration are dense and complex. Similar to earlier notions of the "glue" of the Irish diaspora in regions such as the United States, locales of developmental Irish diaspora communities register a varied index of cultural attachment and identifiers.

“the “significance of networking” is needed more within the professional sector than the trade/service provision sector where older Irish networks, particularly through the pubs and GAA, remain strong in delivering employment and information”

Therefore, the ESP in Canada can begin to accommodate for such difference by adopting a culture- and sector-sensitive portfolio of support.

In trying to gauge why newer migrants are not engaging at a leadership level, one established emigrant noted it is down to them being “scared of their own ability to do it but they will have to, once the seniors move out.” Others commented that there may be a skills gap, which arguably needs to be filled at home within the educational sector, in the ability to network. One interviewee noted that “the new Irish have yet to understand the significance of networking and I do think it got touched on very significantly with the focus group. I mean there is a sense of shame of not wanting to ask for help.”

Interestingly, anecdotal evidence from Canada seems to indicate that the “significance of networking” is needed more within the professional sector than the trade/service provision sector where older Irish networks, particularly through the pubs and GAA, remain strong in delivering employment and information. These networks, specifically the GAA, need continued support through the ESP, and the ESP is also uniquely placed to enhance the networking capacities of emigrants at home and abroad through the support of workshops, seminars, and supporting education at a university level.

Whilst the preponderant focus on youth migration is rational, there are clear cohorts of individuals who are being missed by the ESP cycle of funding. One leading community activist noted that “we are not getting to the over 35” cohort who are arriving. A worrying extension of this is the impact this may have in the next generation of the Irish diaspora as many in this cohort either migrate with families or create families abroad. Explaining how this familial dimension impacts on creating isolation, a recent emigrant explained:

I find a lack of follow up with a lot of things here, I give you one example of it and one that springs to

“There may be opportunities to create platforms of gender based engagement in networking the Irish abroad, particularly focused on the promotion of women's health and professional development”

mind is, I was late into the pregnancy at this stage and the nurse I was dealing with, she was Canadian but her husband was Irish and we just clicked and she was like I get really nervous about women in your situation, newly immigrant, very isolated and it is very hard and I spoke to the social worker in the hospital and we are going to try rally a few Irish mums that are coming through the doors and put ye in touch with each other and that and I went I could think of nothing nicer at this stage, a shitty time, I would love to just talk to another Irish woman, brand new in Toronto and just cry on each other's shoulders, nothing ever came of it, no matter how many times I asked about it.

There may be opportunities to create platforms of gender based engagement in networking the Irish abroad, particularly focused on the promotion of women's health and professional development. As explained in previous chapters, there are global precedents emerging in this context and examples already exist in Canada, such as the Irish Women's Network of British Columbia. There is potential to explore and advance such segmented engagement through the ESP. To date, such approaches remain an undeveloped area within the Irish diaspora engagement process.

A sought after platform from interviewees and community leaders in Canada is an "umbrella" organisation to coherently link up Irish organisations in the region. One interviewee stated:

All these [Irish-focused] organisations are pretty much voluntary...it feels that there are certain steps you can take in Ireland that you could take to make it a little bit better...I am not sure how they do that but I am sure there are ways they could ask the relevant parties that you need to prepare people for this, you need a résumé...but here it feels like an organisation like the immigration centre, you need something there that would act as an umbrella that would act as a link between the GAA, the Irish players, the chambers of commerce. I don't know, I come from a professional background, trades—they tend not to come to the chambers of commerce, some guys do but you know how to link all those things together...

This form of networking could facilitate earlier in-

tervention and be a fresh approach from the ESP in the region; it would enhance the agency and access between the diaspora and the Irish government in a dynamic manner. However, the establishment of such a platform should be conducted through a transparent consultative process as previous efforts at such work have a poor historical record among the Irish in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the community in Canada should begin to take leadership on such issues. The pursuit of greater collaboration within diasporic communities in a specific geographical locale cannot and should not be led by a home government. Therefore, a process of dialogue at a community and organisational level amongst the Irish communities in Canada is an important first step in shaping future avenues of support.

### Staying Engaged—Nurturing Diaspora Talent

The Irish community in Canada can be key mobilisers in closing the inter-generational gap as insights indicate a more active, engaged influx of next generation diaspora. For example, the GAA, which is the leading organisational and community connector in the country, have witnessed this inter-generational gap at a leadership level but are confident that the newer cycles of emigrants are engaging with them. For example, the former president of the GAA in the

region noted that a key indicator for the organisation of a growing maturity amongst the next generation is a reduction in disciplinary issues within the organisation. These indicators, although anecdotal, are further illustrated by groups such as the Ireland Funds which have witnessed an increase in footfall for their young leaders programme and also heightened desires to stay engaged with and give back to Ireland. As one representative remarked:

Interestingly, the people, all interestingly enough, reached out to me when I got here and generally said, I heard about the Ireland Funds, I am new in Canada and I am really interested in giving back to community and that was their launching point so they weren't coming to me saying, "I was on your website and I saw that the President of so and so is on your board," and that wasn't it at all, they were asking how can I help. So the networking has kind of followed from that but their initial interest was helping in their community and their main

“The Irish community in Canada can be key mobilisers in closing the inter-generational gap as insights indicate a more active, engaged influx of next generation diaspora”

interest has been to generate funds to help charities in Ireland, helping their peers – the people who they went through high school with, went through college with and are there and struggling.

Although there has been a general lack of next generational engagement at leadership level, the fact remains that there are significant pools of talented Irish beginning to show up in Canada. There are distinctive opportunities for the ESP to begin to nurture this talent and ensure that their insights, expertise, and experiences are channelled effectively to tackle vulnerabilities and pursue other forms of support.

Diaspora mentorship has the potential to become a significant enabler through the ESP to tackle issues of vulnerability within the region. Valuable insight can be shared on topics such as visa processes, cost of housing and jobs. Greater engagement through mentorship can have a “spin off” effect in building awareness of Irish organisations among newer migrants.

## Conclusions

The development of Irish migration to and settlement in Canada is at an important junction, not least because it has become a destination of choice among new Irish emigrants in recent years. There is consistent commentary from many engaging the Irish community that projects a positive future for the Irish in Canada. However, there are also many concerns about disconnects and vulnerabilities that will need addressing in the next 5 – 10 year cycle of the ESP. We have reported on how a lack of preparation prior to departure coupled with heightened expectations and poor knowledge of Canada’s immigration system have contributed to vulnerabilities among Irish emigrants in areas of employment, housing, and health. There is a basic need to formulate and disseminate information useful to new emigrants and beyond this to build the capacity of organisations to coordinate their knowledge and work in supporting the Irish in Canada. The geographical scale of the region positions a “high tech and high touch” method as central to this process. Media, diasporic and social, are critical apparatus in this regard. For example, Irish Connections Canada, formerly led by recently deceased community leader Eamon O’Loughlin, showcased a useful

nationwide agenda that could be enhanced in some formats. The heightened dependency of new emigrants on social media represents a new line of engagement for the ESP.

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted that little is known about what is happening on the ground for many new Irish arriving in Canada. The recent rise in public discourse around the numbers of Irish emigrating to the region is a reminder that we need to reassess how best to shape the footprint of the ESP in the region. Although there is no certainty these numbers will be maintained, Canada should remain central to the work of the ESP in supporting the next generation of the global Irish. Greater awareness and infrastructural work remains to be done by the Irish in the region. Listening to old and new arrivals can start a coherent and practical approach to supporting the Irish in the region across all spectrums of society with a view to ensuring their connections with home are both achievable and tangible.

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<sup>i</sup> This was remarked upon by some senior members of the community. A member of the Emerald Isle Seniors Society related his experience: “Well that was my idea, the leaders need to get together and talk about it. The leaders of the successful Irish groups, The GAA, we are successful too. We would be looking at the Toronto example first of all and hopefully that would set an example. Well, I noticed like “no, our organisation is going to lose control of everything.” I have got an idea to try and get together under an umbrella group and each organisation maintain their own identity and do their own thing. Like the seniors can carry on doing their own thing as they know best at it, same as the GAA do it, and so on but we would still be part of the group. I tried it back in the 70s and we bought a church and I stepped down as president and within a year they had lost it all.”



## Summary

- In the recessionary period, and particularly since 2012, there has been an exponential growth in the number of Irish migrants travelling to Canada.
- Although the organisations active in the region are doing significant work in closing vulnerability gaps, the influx of new Irish creates fresh challenges for a support infrastructure that is not yet proportionate to the scale and geography of immigration into a vast nation-state.
- There are clear information and awareness gaps which the ESP can facilitate closing. For example, greater pre-departure support, access to reliable and realistic information on employment locations, and awareness of the ESP may help newer migrants tackle key issues of job security, attaining qualifications.
- Given the rise of new arrivals in the region, more work can be done in helping to bring the Irish community together thus building strong formal and informal networks through which greater cultural support can be developed for both old and new migrants.
- There are strong demographic and sector trends, in areas such as employment and visa acquisition, in Canada that can provide a strong basis for the short and long term portfolio of the ESP in the region. By promoting inter-organisational dialogue and integrative, joined up approaches as advocated by new migrants, the ESP can become a key stakeholder in securing the immediate and long term connection between the Irish in Canada and home across multiple sectors.
- There remains uncertainty on the long term influx of Irish to the region but this should not act as a deterrent to providing greater support in the next cycle of ESP work. Also, given the relative short period of significant growth, the ESP can provide listening tools through which to learn what is happening on the ground in Canada as a key instrument in understanding the changing dynamics as more Irish arrive.



# The Irish in Other Destinations

Although the vast majority of Irish emigrants have chosen to travel in numbers to English-speaking destinations — the four destination countries given most attention in this study — there are and always have been those who follow a different path. This chapter casts light on these alternative journeys. In all locations discussed here, however, a network or community of Irish people exists (and is supported in various ways by the ESP), demonstrating that the urge to connect to a sense of Irishness abroad remains powerful in the unlikeliest of places.

As the numbers of Irish people in these areas is often quite small — and each destination has a unique relationship to Ireland and Irish people through history — the organisations which have sprung up to support them are diverse and responsive. It must be noted that there is almost no welfare focus for the Irish communities in these destinations, as in most cases the numbers of Irish people are too low to justify a dedicated support centre. Instead, cultural, social and business groups are the norm, with a greater

emphasis on business in these destinations than in any of the core countries. In many cases, emigration to these countries post-2008 is motivated by job prospects or employment mobility such as in globalised businesses and business sectors, and there are few indicators of overt vulnerability among the emigrant profiles. Instead, it is the challenges of new languages, pronounced cultural differences and often long distances from home which are most pressing for Irish people beyond the core countries. It is precisely such conditions which are likely to become more and more common for the Irish emigrant experience in the coming years, as migration becomes more prevalent and mobility both normalised and rewarded. It is possible, therefore, to reveal a glimpse of the future,

“it is the challenges of new languages, pronounced cultural differences and often long distances from home which are most pressing for Irish people beyond the core countries”

and the organisations funded by the ESP can be seen to be at the forefront of both ESP priorities and Irish migration patterns.

Due to the diversity of destinations, histories, and emigrant profiles suggested by this chapter, the shape of the following pages will follow a different pattern to earlier regional sections of this

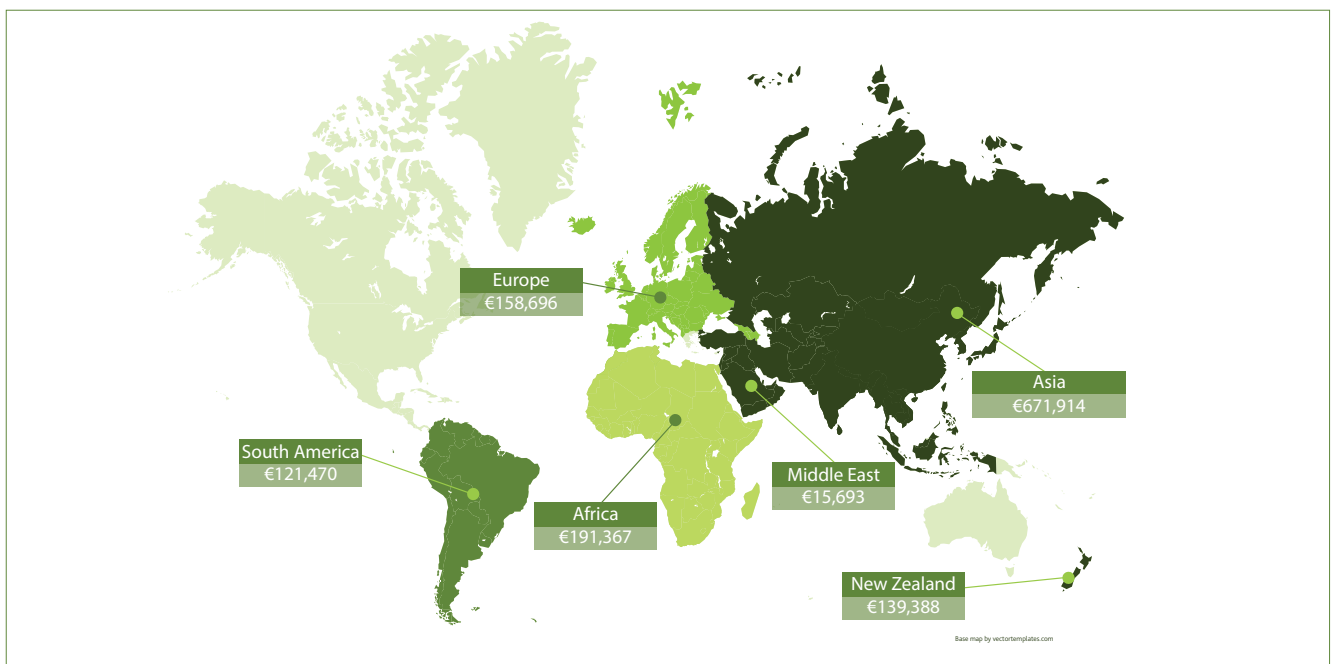


Fig 1: ESP Funding to Other Destinations by Region, 2009–13.

## ESP Funding 09–13 Other Destinations

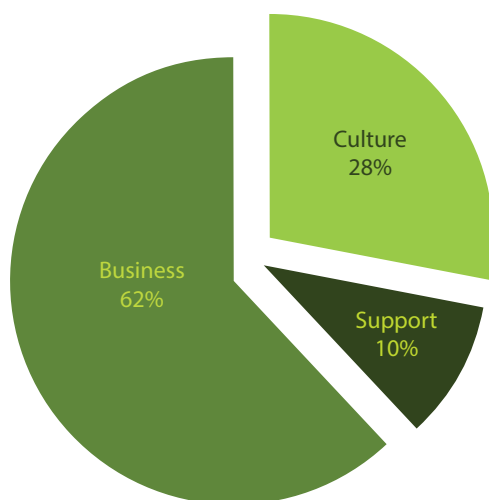


Fig 2: ESP Funding to all Other Destinations countries, by type of funding.

report. Since 2009, the ESP has funded organisations based in eighteen different countries, some over a long period of time and with a significant financial investment, others sporadically or with financial contributions as low as 500 euros. Financial allocation for these alternative destinations has grown significantly over the past five years, from €86,225 in 2008 to a peak of €361,170 in 2012, slightly dropping in 2013 to €269,561. The number of organisations has also grown in the same period, from three groups in 2008 to eleven this year. There is little to be gained from analysing across such diversity, and instead we have broken the 18 destination countries into six different regions for analysis: Europe, the Middle East, Asia, the Antipodes, South America, and Africa. This chapter will proceed differently to others in light of this, in keeping with the multiple regions under discussion.

### Europe: France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland (and Russia)

Connections and affinities held by those who are Irish-born and those with Irish ancestry in these countries are multi-layered, influenced in the contemporary context by an emergent sense of European identity, particularly among those living

in the EU-15 countries. (This section also covers Russia, a country not in the EU but part of the European continent). In the contemporary context, free travel and the right to work across Europe is a significant factor in the movement of Irish people across the European Union, and it is clear that we are only in the early stages of European life under such a system. It is likely that in the coming decades, travel and migration between EU countries will become even further normalised, with Irish people's reluctance to live in a non-English speaking country dispersing in the face of an increasingly cosmopolitan European society.

Funding by the ESP to European destinations is generally very low, particularly in light of the numbers of Irish people and communities resident there now and in the past, though it is growing, both in funding amounts and in the diversity of countries receiving such funding. Overwhelmingly, support for Irish communities in Europe eschews direct funding for the vulnerable, and instead concentrates on cultural and business networks across the eight countries under discussion.

The obvious outlier in the European funding context is France, which has received €91,900 in funding to

“Financial allocation for these alternative destinations has grown significantly over the past five years, from €86,225 in 2008 to a peak of €361,170 in 2012,”

2013, almost four times the next closest in funding (Germany, with €23,021). This is not an obvious reflection of population representation; after the four core destinations of the UK, USA, Canada and Australia, it is Spain rather than France which has the highest number of Irish registered residents at 14,751 as of July 2013 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). The recipient of the overwhelming majority of French funding is the Network Irlande, which grew from an idea generated at the Global Irish Economic Forum, and replaces earlier Irish networking groups in France, the Franco-Irish Chamber of Commerce and The Green Room (a young professionals network). Network Irlande is a sophisticated organisation which recognises the importance of business networking for Irish people in France, and its close connections to the Irish embassy and to other Irish and French state agencies have been carefully maintained and propagated. The network is thriving, with support not only from the ESP but from a number of multinational corporations including the Smurfit Group, Pernod Ricard, and Morgan McKinley. Along with the other business-oriented groups funded by the ESP in Europe — the Irish Business Network in Germany, the Irish Club of Russia, and the Spanish-

“St. Patrick’s Day and the celebrations and festivals which surround it play a particular role in emigrant and diasporic communities, however, taking on much more significant meaning than often attributed to them by Irish people in Ireland”

Irish Business Network — Network Irlande leads the way in developing programming and services which cater to the increasingly professional Irish migrant now dominant within the European context.

Groups which foster cultural exchange and support, though they make up only 25% of the funding attributed to Europe, are still more numerous than business organisations, and are supported in every ESP-funded country except Spain. Although these groups engage with their communities in different ways, commonalities of approach are apparent and worth considering, for these are the tactics which have emerged across numerous territories separately and to best effect. One case study is the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day across Europe, an event which has long been the lynchpin of diplomatic and tourism initiatives from Ireland across the globe. St. Patrick’s Day and the celebrations and festivals which surround it play a particular role in emigrant and diasporic communities, however, taking on much more significant meaning than often attributed to them by Irish people in Ireland. All cultural and social groups funded by ESP explicitly refer to St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in their calendars, many clearly highlighting the festival as the most important part of their

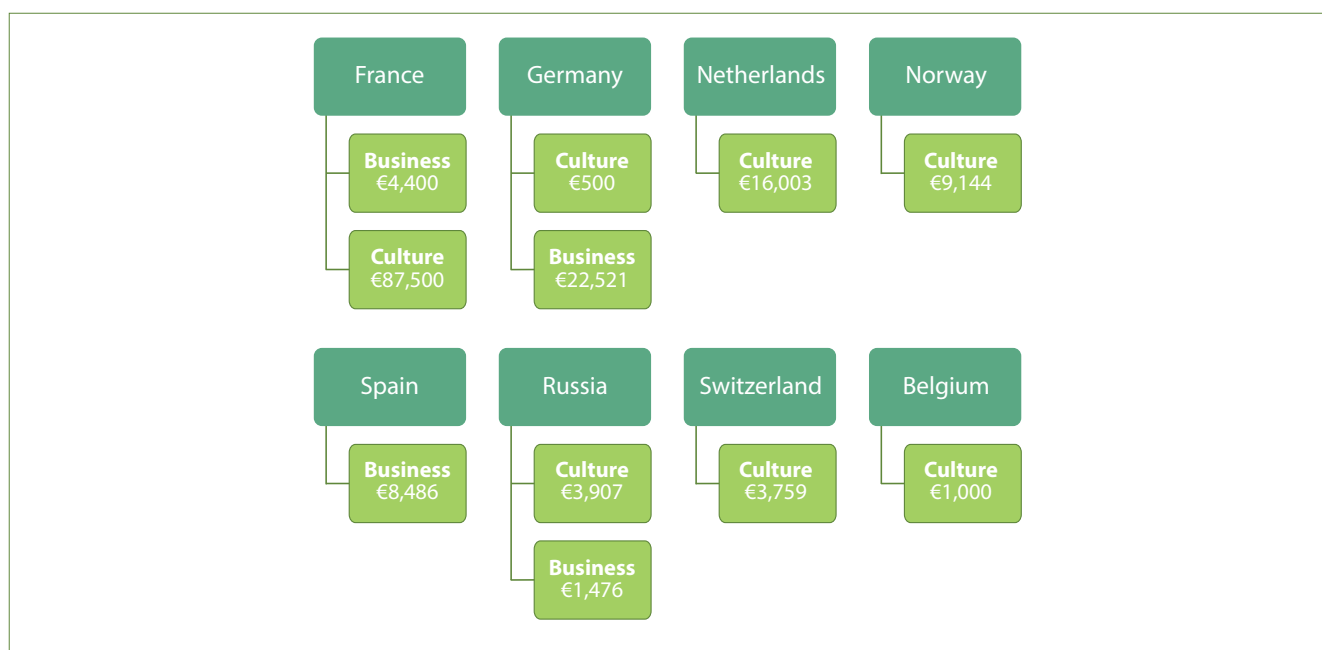


Fig 3: ESP funding to European countries (incl. Russia) 2009–2013, by type of activity funded.

work. Different groups design different events and occasions around the festival, with the more professionally-oriented groups hosting balls and gala dinners (which often have some fundraising element), where others may be aimed primarily at children. Slowly it appears as though a more nuanced approach to the representation of Irishness overseas is being developed through the festival.

As the German-Irish Friends state:

We believe that Ireland has more to offer than green fields and black beer. Through cultural encounters with music, dance, poetry readings, storytelling and much more we want to bring a piece of Irish culture and way of life to Munich daily.

Irish clubs in Europe have never been as demarcated in audience as their counterparts in the UK and the USA, and this openness is growing. The President of the Irish Club of the Netherlands describes this process: “Over the years more and more of the international community have shown an interest in our activities. The club has responded to this with enthusiasm. We now welcome all nationalities with an interest in Ireland and its culture as members.” The Club, in embracing both Irish people and people who are, in their words, “spiritually Irish,” is already engaging strategically with ques-

tions of national affinity. In Norway, St. Patrick’s Day is an event which celebrates not just Irishness but Irishness in hybrid, in context. As the President of the Norwegian Irish Society explains, “In a particular twist on parade traditions, the

Norwegian parade features Irish wolfhounds, often paraded by their Norwegian owners, after a connection was made between the history of the dogs and their Irishness.” Here, the intersection

between Irish myths and iconography, Norwegian interest in Irishness, and Norwegian interest in large dogs gestures towards a nuanced understanding of the Irish national holiday. In struggles to define a twenty-first century Irish identity, Norwegian wolfhounds parading for St. Patrick may show us a way forward. It is evident that Irish migrants in Europe have developed strategies for adaptation and identity formation which could hold the key to future models of diaspora engagement worldwide.

“In struggles to define a twenty-first century Irish identity, Norwegian wolfhounds parading for St. Patrick may show us a way forward,”

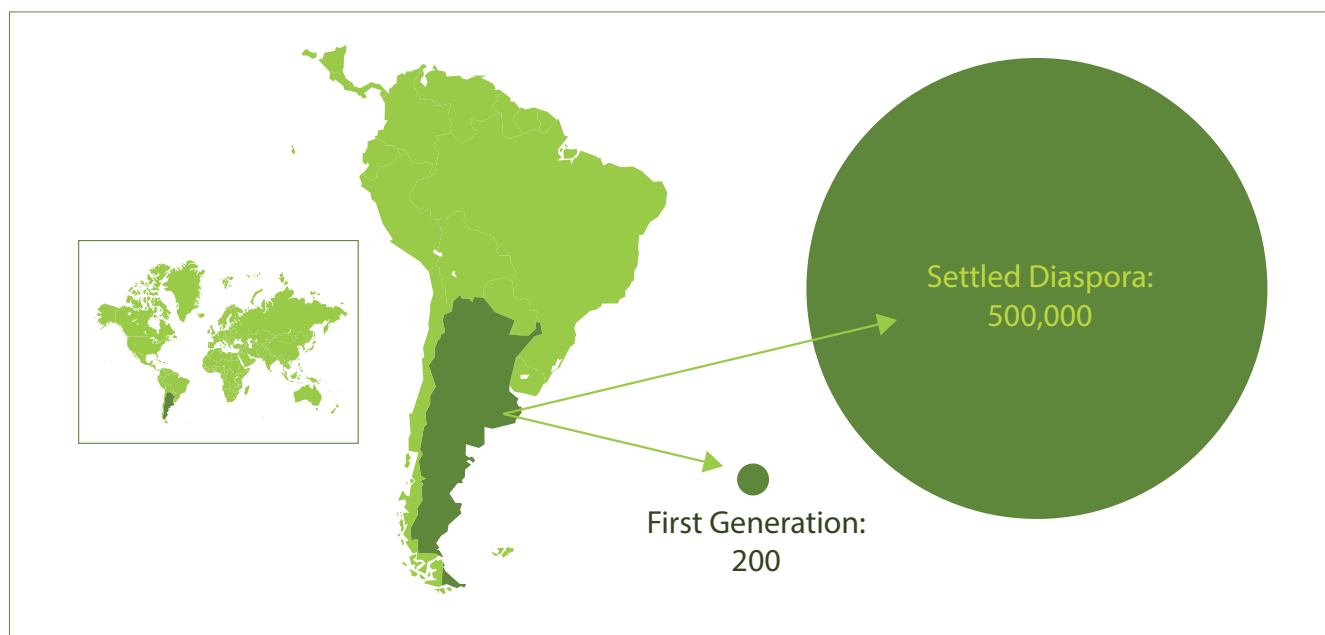


Fig 4: The Irish in Argentina today (estimated figures).

Source: Irish Embassy in Argentina.

### South America: Argentina

Argentina is home to the fifth-largest Irish diasporic community in the world, and the largest non-English speaking Irish diaspora. There are estimated to be approximately half a million people of Irish descent in Argentina today, predominantly the descendants of Irish settlers from the mid-nineteenth century (see McKenna, 2000; Murray, 2006; King and Darby, 2007). Drawn by successful early pioneers, Irish emigrants settled predominantly around Buenos Aires and in many cases became wealthy landowners. The promise of open land ready for claiming meant that the Irish in Argentina did not settle in urban ghettos, as in the United States, but developed new settlement communities around farming and early industry. Today, the Irish community in Argentina is densely embedded and connected to its history. As Argentina is, like the United States, a nation of immigrants, the Irish diaspora is but one of many ethnic groups mixed in to the highly diverse population.

Since 2008, the Emigrant Support Programme has provided €148,270 in funding to Irish organisations in Argentina. These groups are overwhelmingly cultural and community-based, with activities in the arts and sport proving particularly popular. Although there are no core welfare groups funded by the ESP in Argentina, a number of the community groups provide informal support structures, particularly for the elderly. The single largest funding awards have gone to the GAA Hurling Club of Buenos Aires (€40,365 in 2011, and €27,441 in 2012), and to the Fahy Club of Buenos Aires (€25,586 in 2009), as capital expenditure for the refurbishment of the club premises.

Irish community groups are still active among the diaspora, with the Asociación Argentino Irlandesa de Capital Federal and the Asociación Argentino Irlandesa de Bahía Blanca working to foster Irish culture, heritage and society in Argentina. As in all Irish communities worldwide, sporting associations have blossomed, with a very successful Hurling Club of Buenos Aires travelling to Ireland in 2013 to take part in the International Hurling Festival in Galway. The history of another Irish institution, the Fahy Club of Buenos Aires, recently visited by President

“Today, the Irish community in Argentina is densely embedded and connected to its history,”

Michael D. Higgins, is illustrative of the particularity of Irish-Argentinian experience. Founded originally in 1891 as a welfare organisation to take care of destitute immigrant children, it became a school, the Fahy Institute. In 1941, past pupils of the school formed a football club which expanded in popularity and power within the community, eventually morphing into a community association. When the presence of Irish diasporic groups began to decline in the 1960s, the association changed its name to the Fahy Club and opened itself up to every member of the Irish-Argentine community. As an organisation which within its lifetime has embodied a multitude of forms of Irish community overseas, it is a fascinating example of responsive development and sustainability, and its legacy should be carefully considered in any examination of questions of innovation and succession in Irish diaspora engagement worldwide.

### Asia: Singapore, China, Japan, and Korea.

The numbers of Irish people in the four countries supported by the Emigrant Support Programme in Asia are small. There are approximately 3,000 Irish people in China, with a significant number based in Shanghai, around 2,000 Irish people living in Japan, with half this number based in the capital city of Tokyo, and 2,000 or so Irish people in Singapore. There is a small but growing number based in Korea — approximately 1,000 people, more dispersed than in other countries due to the large numbers of English language teachers among their number, a job which often requires living in or near a school in the outer provinces of Korea. The Irish in these countries are often young — between 25 and 35 — and plan to work in Asia for a short number of years to further their careers or to work short-term and save money for return. They are overwhelmingly middle-class and university educated, with traditional markers for vulnerability not readily in evidence. This is shown in testimony from an Irish community partner in Korea:

Honestly, I can't think of any part of the community that we would consider vulnerable. For the most part, Irish who come here do well. I've chatted with a Columban priest about this and he couldn't really pin point a particular part of the community either.

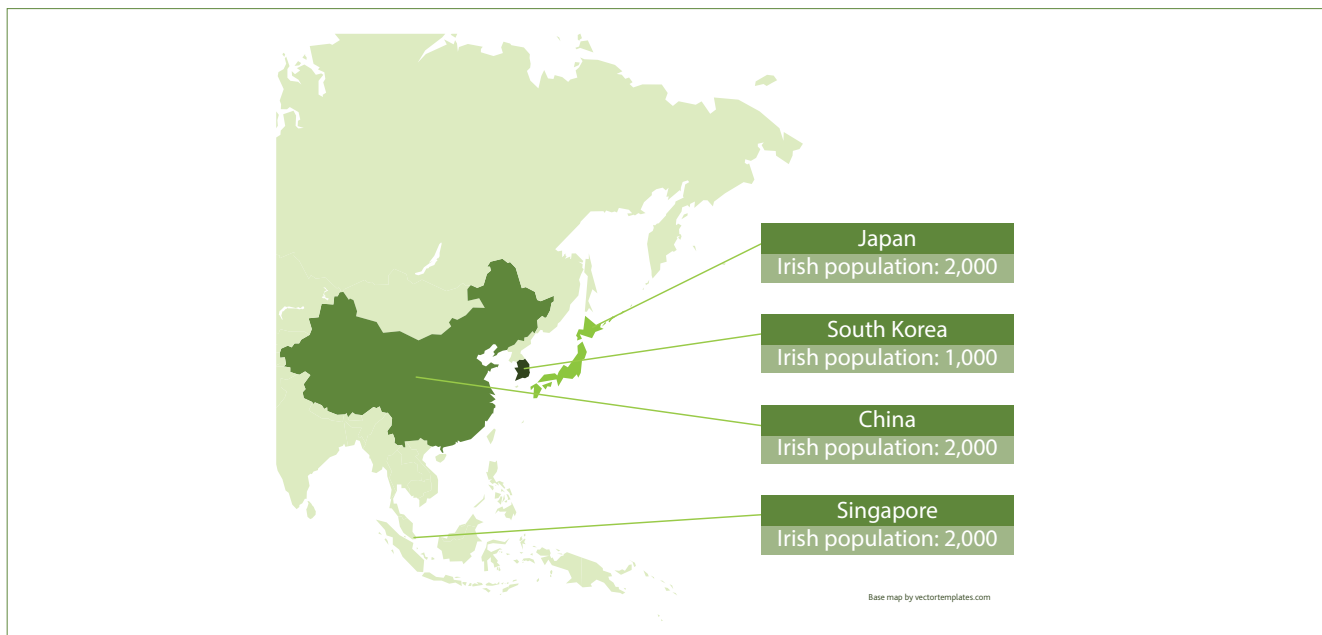


Fig 5: Estimated population of Irish-born people in selected countries in Asia.  
Source: Irish Embassy estimates.

Entry to all countries in this category is controlled by visa, with structures in place for permanent migration, working holiday visas, visas for language teaching, for entrepreneurial endeavours, and for cultural exchange. In Korea, about 80% of all Irish people present in the country are language teachers, based in *hagwons* (private academies) or universities, working under the specific E2 visa. In Singapore, a hub for financial markets and banking across the globe, a sophisticated system of visas or passes is in place, with different visas requiring different working conditions, minimum salary, and adequate qualifications before entering the country. In Japan, a working holiday agreement is in place. Signed in 2007, it allows young people up to 25 years old to travel and work, with strict control over the amount of work allowed, and a ban on “working at places affecting public morals” (Embassy of Japan in Ireland).

China, because of its size and multiple urban centres and industries, attracts a larger diversity of employment, though the immigration regime remains heavily regulated.

In Singapore, where the unemployment rate is a miniscule 2%, the Irish are just one emigrant group among many, and trade between the two countries (at US\$3bn in 2008) heavily influences migration patterns (Irish Chamber of Commerce, Singapore).

It is a feature of the Irish communities in all four funded countries that business networking has primacy, and even within groups ostensibly focused on multi-faceted community activities, business networking has a significant place. Although the ESP is clearly not funding within its traditional model in Asia — welfare support for the vulnerable — funding priorities in Asia are a strategic reflection of the needs of the particular Irish communities present.

The post-2008 exodus from Ireland has been felt in Asia, though with more moderate rises than in more popular destinations. As these destinations cater almost uniquely for well-qualified professionals in white-collar sectors, there is little on offer for the many Irish people in the

property and construction sectors who make up such a large percentage of the growth in migration to major destinations like Australia and Canada. Instead, there has been a moderate rise in teachers travelling to Asia — where there is often no strict requirement for language training certification, though pay and conditions may be better for those with some appropriate qualifications. In Japan, for example, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme has become increasingly popular among Irish people. In 2013, 99 Irish people travelled to Japan with the JET, and approximately 1,000 Irish people have trav-

“It is a feature of the Irish communities in all four funded countries that business networking has primacy,”



elled since the first Irish teacher took part in 1988 (JET Programme Online). The growing phenomenon of the Irish teacher abroad — a trend likely to continue as interest in teacher training in Ireland is growing in spite of on-going cuts in education budgets in Ireland — is one worthy of consideration by those interested in fostering Irish engagement in Asia, and indeed the Middle East. It is clear from a number of accounts that cultural transmission is a significant part of the teaching experience abroad, and there are new generations of Chinese, Korean and indeed Kuwaiti children learning about Irish culture as they learn their English grammar.

Singapore is the single largest recipient of Irish ESP funding across any of the minority destinations, by some degree. This is not due to any significance of Irish presence in Singapore or particular needs among its Irish population, but because of the ESP’s commitment to the Farmleigh Fellowships and the work they do in creating links between Irish and wider Asian business networks, using Singapore as a primary Asian hub. Singapore’s status as a central node in Asian networks is reflected in other Irish strategic presences there; Enterprise Ireland,

for example, covers Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, The Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar from its base of operations in Singapore, and the Irish Embassy there covers Indonesia, the

Philippines, Brunei and Timor Leste. The

Farmleigh Fellowships, developed by its chairman Fred Combe as a result of his experience with similar ventures by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs

in Europe in the 1980s (European markets in the 1980s then being what

Singapore is now), are both an extension of older policies in foreign affairs and a new kind of strategy for the ESP. They are foremost an educational opportunity for young Irish business people; they are intensive and require heavy engagement from ESP and DFAT representatives, and they are business led. The Fellowships receive the entirety of ESP funding for Singapore, but it should be noted that there are a number of Irish community groups active on the island. There are a surprisingly large number of Irish pubs in Singapore, including Muddy Murphys, the Dubliner, Molly Roffy’s, Dirty Nelly’s and Scruffy Murphy’s, all evincing an odd fixation with Irish grime. The Irish Chamber of Commerce in Singapore is one of the most active of its kind, with regular events, strong attendance, and a highly

“The growing phenomenon of the Irish teacher abroad ... is one worthy of consideration by those interested in fostering Irish engagement in Asia”

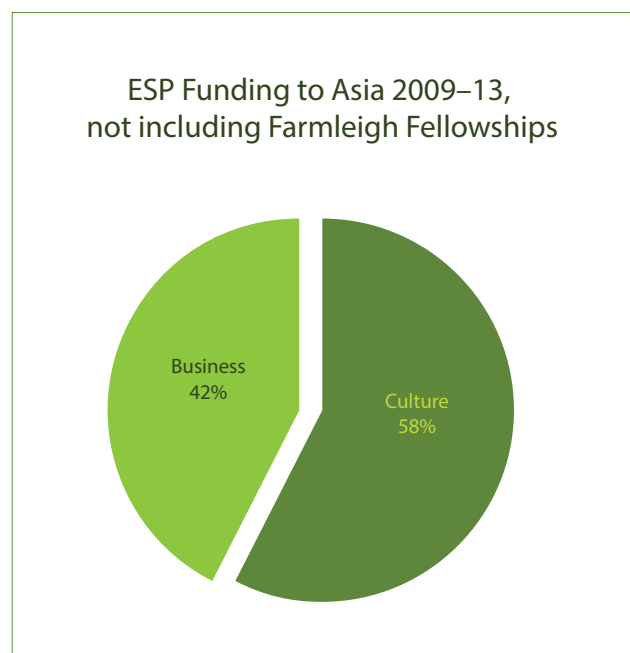
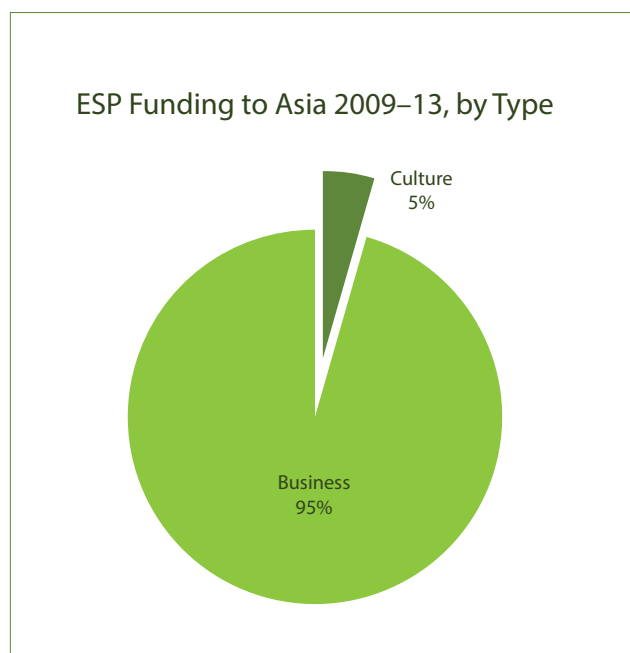


Fig 6: ESP funding to Singapore, China, Japan and Korea, 2009-13. Note the overwhelming effect of Farmleigh Fellowship funding in analysing patterns of funding to this region.



organised structure. The Singapore Gaelic Lions, the local GAA club, has been active since 1998, and the Gaelic Dragons Boat Team runs regular rowing events and competitions with Irish and international members pulling together.

In China the yearly St. Patrick's Day parade forms a fulcrum around which the yearly calendar of the Irish community rotates. The Irish community is the only national group to be given a parade and festival, and a parade takes place every year in both Beijing and Shanghai. The Irish community in China, though still small, has grown exponentially over the past ten years, going from 100 registered migrants to over 3,000 (Red Gate Online). There are typically two types of Irish people in China — those who went to work there initially on a short-term basis, who married a local and stayed and had children; and those who have ex-pat contracts and are working in large multinational firms or in Irish companies in China such as the Kerry Group, Glanbia, or Cement Road Holdings. The ESP has directly funded two organisations, the Le Chéile group in Shanghai, and Irish Network China based in Beijing. The Irish Network China group focuses firmly on business networking, and is affiliated with other networking groups throughout Asia under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Irish Business Forum. Le Chéile was founded in 2008 by a group of expatriates interested in providing a connection to Irish culture through informal community. Its activities are extremely diverse and reflect a contemporary approach to catering for the needs of today's Irish communities. Rather than focusing purely on activities of Irish origin — although they are heavily involved in the Shanghai St. Patrick's Day Parade — the group also organises Halloween events, and Eurovision nights, as well as hosting contemporary Irish plays and writers. They work to cater for the needs of both types of Irish groups in China, giving what Eoin Murphy, the President of Le Chéile calls "an outlet for their Irishness" to the business people, and providing a more long-term education-based experience for the long-term residents and their Irish-Chinese children. Murphy stresses the importance of providing a tangible sense of

“The Irish community is the only national group to be given a parade and festival, and a parade takes place every year in both Beijing and Shanghai,”

“Murphy stresses the importance of providing a tangible sense of nationhood to the children of Irish globetrotters,”

nationhood to the children of Irish globetrotters: “They're very rootless, and if we don't give them a sense of identity and belonging, all the research shows they'll have difficulty settling down.” Such challenges of identity formation may be more evident today in the less usual destinations for Irish migrants, but they are a sign of what is to come, as migration levels escalate among all populations. The pioneering experience of Irish diasporic community groups offers valuable strategic lessons for future engagement policies, and a significant learning opportunity for the ESP.

There have been two Japanese groups funded by the ESP — the Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce (€13,479 in 2010) and Irish Network Japan (€6,164 in 2011). The Chamber of Commerce replaced the earlier Japan Ireland Economic Association, and members represent a cross-section of companies, business people and entrepreneurs from Ireland, Japan and other countries. With a focus on speaker events, seminars and networking, the Chamber also acts as lobbyist for Irish business interests in Japan. Irish Network Japan is a non-profit volunteer organisation which works to promote Ireland's culture, traditions, and people in Japan. Active since 1987, and originally founded by IDA representatives living and working in Tokyo, it now has branches across Japan. It is notable that as well as funding from the ESP, the Irish Network is also supported by a number of Irish business and educational institutions, signalling both that the Network group has cannily diversified its support base, and that there is significant interest from Irish groups in connecting with the Irish diaspora currently living and working in Japan. This demonstrates a model of leveraging diasporic community capital which may be workably transferred to other destination countries.

The Irish community in Korea, although the smallest in size in the Asian region, punches well above its weight in activity and visibility. In sport, for example, Korea sent ten teams to the Asian Gaelic Games competition last year, with the Seoul Gaels

being the largest of four clubs in the country. As in many countries, GAA training becomes a social event, a crucial entry point for the newly arrived migrant and an informal support system which is replicated across the globe (for further discussion of the GAA and Irish migration see Gormley 2014, O'Brien 2012, and O'Connor 2012). As explained by Shauna Browne of the Irish Association of Korea: "During the season, many Irish will get together for training and then socialise together afterward.

It's a great way to make friends and the members are all quite close to each other." The Irish Association (Society) of Korea is so far the only recipient of ESP funding in the country, receiving €10,666 in 2012. They

are far from alone in representing the Irish community there, however. As well as the GAA teams (Seoul Gaels, Daegu Fianna, Busan GAA), there is the Asia Ireland Chamber of Commerce in Korea, as well as branches of the Columban Fathers and Sisters, and the Brothers of St. John of God in Gwangju. Irish music plays a prominent role in the representation of Irishness in Korea, both through core events like the St. Patrick's Day festival and the Seoul Céilí, and through active groups of traditional Irish musicians and dancers. Shauna Browne points out that

"[t]here is a core group, who are well connected to other musicians of Irish music. Most of these musicians are native Korean but the

demand is so high that they hold practice sessions every two weeks with major sessions at least once a month. The numbers coming to these events are growing." As well as highlighting the rising popularity of Irish

music in Korea, this insight demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of Irish culture as promulgated there. Rather than a small pocket of isolated Irish expatriates using traditional Irish music to shore up memories of home, the music is shared and practiced among the local population and thus subject to the development and influence of other cultures, bringing new life to an old artform. This is a very promising framework which echoes broader recommendations around a need for a reconception of Irish approaches to diaspora engagement worldwide.

“This demonstrates a model of leveraging diasporic community capital which may be workably transferred to other destination countries,”

“the music is shared and practiced among the local population and thus subject to the development and influence of other cultures, bringing new life to an old artform,”

## Africa: Zimbabwe and South Africa

The ESP currently funds Irish communities in Zimbabwe and the Republic of South Africa. The Irish communities in these two very different countries reflect long histories of engagement, and both contain first-generation and legacy diaspora groups.

In Zimbabwe, there remains a trace of Irish presence as part of the British colonial project, and Irish representatives of various Catholic orders

remain in the area. According to the Irish embassy, Irish community numbers peaked during the 1960s and 1970s and again from the mid-1980s through to the early 2000s. Today, a significant segment of the Irish community in Zimbabwe works for multi-lateral and bi-lateral funding agencies and NGOs. Explains Irish consul Garrett Killilea, "[u]nfortunately the Zimbabwe economy went through a period of change from which it has not yet recovered. This resulted in a migration of Irish people to greener pastures and a reduction in numbers to the present approximately 1,200 Irish persons currently resident in Zimbabwe." Of that estimate, about half are Irish-born, and the other half are Zimbabwe-born Irish citizens. In recent years, Irish people in Zimbabwe have been affected by the tumult suffered by the indigenous population, and those Irish who are long settled there have in many cases been stripped of land and possessions during

the political upheavals. In 2009, the Zimbabwean dollar collapsed and the country went in to hyperinflation, later to be indexed against the American dollar. At the time, many people lost their life savings and pensions disappeared, as explained by Emma McCluskey, President of the Irish Association of Mashonaland:

People entirely lost faith in the banking system, and many actually fled. Prices were soaring on an hourly basis during hyperinflation — think of Germany in the mid 1920's after the Treaty of Versailles — people were literally paying for things by weighing bricks of cash, because it took too long to count it. A cup of tea at breakfast in a cafe quadrupled in price by lunchtime.

There are a significant number of Irish in Zimbabwe

— particularly the elderly — who are now almost entirely destitute. These people represent the most severe evidence of vulnerability among the Irish community in Africa. According to Killilea, “[w]e do view our elderly Irish and those affected by recent economic events locally as being particularly vulnerable. We estimate this number to be in the region of 200 or so throughout the country.” The different community groups currently work to support these individuals, though funding has been cut from a number of sources. Given the unpredictable nature of the Zimbabwean economy in recent years, we cannot rule out the possibility of this current vulnerable generation being the last.

Today, South Africa is categorised as a middle-income country, although there is a vast differentiation between the many poor and relatively few wealthy people, as there is between the developed economies of the financial hubs and the outlying towns and villages. The Irish Embassy in South Africa estimates that there are approximately 30,000 Irish people in South Africa, though, as Deputy Head of Mission Tony McCullagh explains, “many of these would be dual Irish/South African citizens.” In 2012, the most recent year for which figures are available, there were 1,319 temporary

“Irish communities in these two very different countries reflect long histories of engagement, and both contain first-generation and legacy diaspora groups”

residence permits granted to Irish people. Of these, 540 were visitors permits, most likely for tourism. 326 permits were for work, and a further 247 were issued to relatives of other Irish people living in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 48). The overall figure is an increase from the year before, when there were a total of 729 permits issued, showing a 45% rise. These numbers are small but growing, and are likely to continue to rise as the South African economy becomes more open. South Africa is the economic hub and gateway for access to Sub-Saharan Africa – a market of over 900 million people. According to Enterprise Ireland, their client companies exported more than €400m worth of goods and services in 2012, representing a 20% increase since 2010, while 30 Irish companies now have a presence on the ground in South Africa (“Minister Costello Leads Enterprise Ireland Trade Mission”). It is the Irish South Africa Association which has been most consistently funded by the ESP over the past five years, receiving a total of €59,101 between 2009 and 2013.

In Zimbabwe, €132,266 (2009-13) has been allocated to two primary Irish groups – the Irish Association of Mashonaland and the Matabeleland Irish Association, with a larger percentage of the

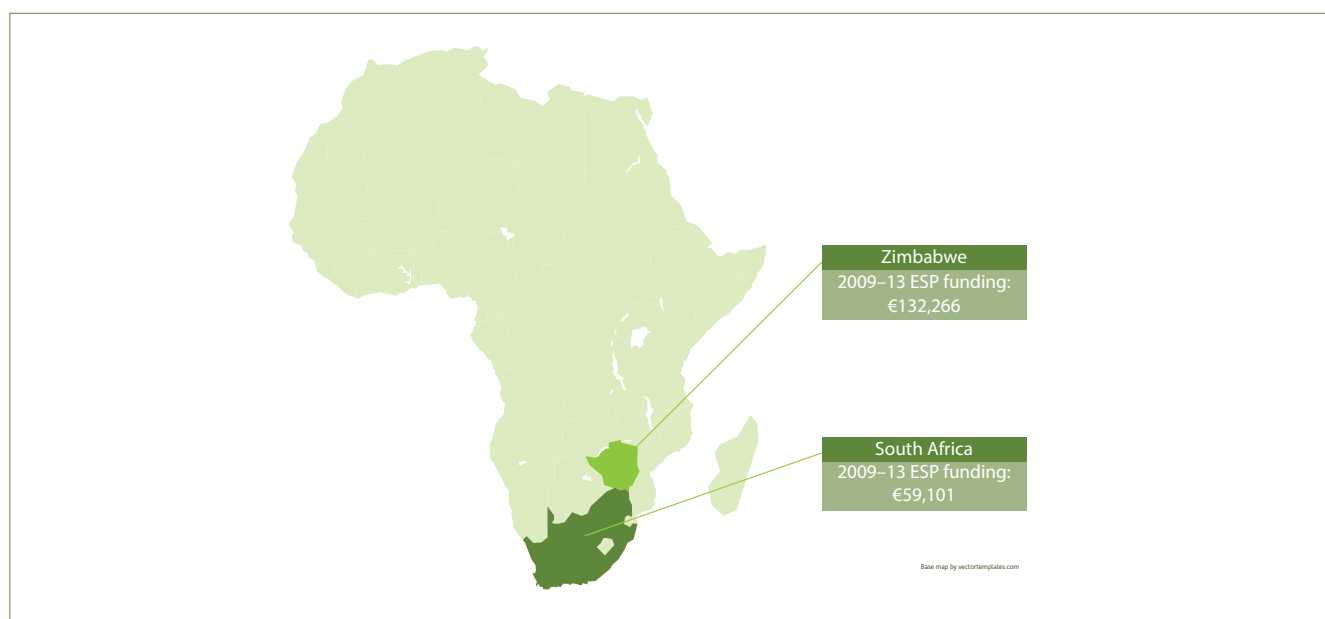


Fig 7: ESP funding to African countries from 2009–2013.

funding going to the former, more established community. The Irish Association of Mashonaland, founded over a century ago in 1891, has in its records a full account of Irish life in Zimbabwe, from the earliest settlers to its most recent history. Today, the association is impressively active, with an up-to-date and well used website, and a number of activities planned. They have 550 people on their database, and their most recent event in December 2013 had 300 people in attendance. One of the biggest expenditures for the group is the dispersal of food hampers to the elderly Irish in Harare. As Emma McCluskey explains:

It really opened my eyes to the poverty that has hit the elderly who were so affected by hyperinflation. Bringing the food hampers is I believe one of the best things we do as an association—although we will have to cut back as our funding does not provide for it any longer—but visiting some of these people in retirement homes and nursing homes with all their worldly possessions crammed into a small room is heart breaking.

In many cases, the children of these elderly Irish have left for South Africa or Australia to pursue work, or in the case of farming families, to other farming countries such as Botswana and Zambia, after the farm seizures implemented by the Mugabe regime. Some indication of the depth of the Irish diaspora in Zimbabwe can be seen in the numbers of people claiming their right to an Irish passport under the grandparent rule, as a gesture of protection. Two things are evident here: that the ESP is doing vital work in supporting the Irish community in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and that there are significant opportunities for reciprocal, cross-border and cross-generational engagement with these communities yet to be fully explored.

“those Irish who are long settled there have in many cases been stripped of land and possessions during the political upheavals,”

“These numbers are small but growing, and are likely to continue to rise as the South African economy becomes more open,”

## New Zealand

New Zealand and Australia exhibit similar trends in Irish communities and migration patterns. Both experienced a rise in Irish migration in the wake of 2008, with New Zealand, as the much smaller and less populated location, acting as a kind of microcosm of Australian trends. As with Australia, generations of well-established Irish communities demonstrate different attitudes to the emigrant experience and to the homeland, with older generations more concentrated on long-term residence and assimilation, while contemporary groups take a more flexible approach.<sup>ii</sup>

The number of Irish people living in New Zealand tends to fluctuate, as a high percentage are staying only short term, often on a Working Holiday Visa, a scheme similar to that of Australia, and may reside only 12–24 months. Between 2008 and 2013, almost 20,000 work permits were issued to Irish nationals (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 109). New Zealand did not entirely escape the global economic recession, but was not nearly as affected as Ireland. In more recent times, significant construction projects, both as a result of mining and oil industry growth and the tragic earthquakes in Christchurch, have created a strong demand for workers with the right skills and experience. In many cases, these skills match with those held by the many workers of the Irish construction boom which imploded in 2008, and New Zealand has offered fresh hope to those eager to continue in those fields. The New Zealand government has been proactive in connecting with Irish employment markets and fairs, and qualifications and experience from Ireland are becoming increasingly recognised there. The long-term skills shortage list created by the New Zealand Immigration bureau outlines the different types of occupational groups most in demand to meet their future needs. Of the eleven groups listed, emphasis is placed on areas in Construction, Engineering, and Health and Social Services (Immigration New Zealand). Significantly, New Zealand’s future growth is seen to be reliant on continued inward migration. A new study from the New Zealand Institute of



Fig 8: Numbers of Work Visas approved for Irish citizens, by financial year of decision.  
 Source: Information Reporting and Analysis, New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Immigration), 2013, 109.

Economic Research (NZIER) shows that increasing net migration would lift incomes not just for immigrants but for the native population. An additional 40,000 people a year for 10 years would increase GDP per capita by NZ\$410 a year, they say, and argue that a more ambitious population policy is needed in New Zealand (NZIER Insight Press Release No. 44). This can only bode well for the well-trained and educated Irish interested in gaining experience abroad.

New Zealand has received consistent levels of funding support from the Emigrant Support Programme since 2007, with the exception of 2008. Funding since 2009 has totalled €139,388.

In large part, the regularity and significance of this funding is due to the creation and innovation of the Irish Community of New Zealand Trust, the brain-child of current Honorary Consul of Ireland in New Zealand, Rodney Walshe. This Trust was put in place by Walshe and a number of other Irish people to help foster the activities of the Irish community in New Zealand, specifically by helping these communities and their representatives to navigate funding

processes (including and beyond the ESP) in order to ensure their progress. As Walshe explains:

“In many cases, these skills match with those held by the many workers of the Irish construction boom which imploded in 2008, and New Zealand has offered fresh hope to those eager to continue in those fields”

It is unique. We set it up ourselves. Our Irish societies are all volunteers, none of them employ anyone. So when they were applying to get grants for the festival or the parade, or the Feis, they just couldn't do it... They all said, we can't do these forms! We said we'd set something up — we'd initiate it and look after it. And we brought in someone who's an accountant, a partner in PWC, and another Irish guy who is good in business. ICONZ, we call it. And ICONZ has initiated, has coordinated, over the last three years to provide funds for the festival in Auckland, for the Feis, and we got some for the music festival in Nelson. But otherwise they wouldn't have done it.... We wouldn't have had any grants in the last five years if we hadn't had ICONZ to do it.

What has been put in place in New Zealand is well worth further exploration. In light of serious concerns in other regions around funding procedures, access to expertise, and worries around succession, the solution offered by the ICONZ model reflects what many in Irish communities in other countries have called for during the preparation of this report.

Although there may be particularities to the New Zealand case, which may prove difficult to replicate directly, its work is promising. The ICONZ model conforms to contemporary best practice in diasporic theory in that it fosters innovation from within the diaspora, while at the same time providing support — funding, expertise, legitimisation — from official representatives of the home nation.

“the solution offered by the ICONZ model reflects what many in Irish communities in other countries have called for during the preparation of this report,”

billion exported in goods and services from Ireland to the Gulf States of UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, they are now the sixth largest export market for Enterprise Ireland clients (“A Guide to Doing Business in the Gulf States,” 1). There are approximately 6,500 Irish people in the Emirates today, and smaller numbers in Kuwait, though both have seen large proportional increases in Irish migration. With an expatriate population of 82% in UAE, English is common in business and diversity of lifestyle widely apparent.

### The Middle East: United Arab Emirates and Kuwait

Although the ESP sponsors groups in only two countries in the Middle East, Irish migration to the Arab regions also includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar. As trade and travel between the two regions grows, the ESP will face a challenge—and opportunity—in working to support new forms of Irish community abroad. The Irish in the Middle East are there primarily for employment and trade, either as teachers in the changing schools system of the UAE, as representatives of multinational corporations, or as envoys from Irish firms seeking a foothold in the booming economies in the region. Access to the region for work is tightly controlled, with employment agencies acting as intermediaries in many cases, and hands-on support from groups like Enterprise Ireland for Irish businesses considering expansion or trade. With an aggregated €2.8

As access, language, and cultural barriers are so much more prominent in the Middle East, a different profile of Irish emigrant will locate there. In accounts of migration to UAE and Kuwait, migrants speak of their determination, their thirst for adventure, and their appreciation for encounters with difference when discussing their motivations and prospects. For the typical Irish person in the Middle East, vulnerability associated with isolation and culture clash will be anticipated, making Irish informal community links more important and, arguably, direct welfare support less so.

Irish teachers in the Middle East are in demand. The education system in the UAE, for example, is in the process of revolutionary reform, modernising along models drawn from New South Wales in Australia,

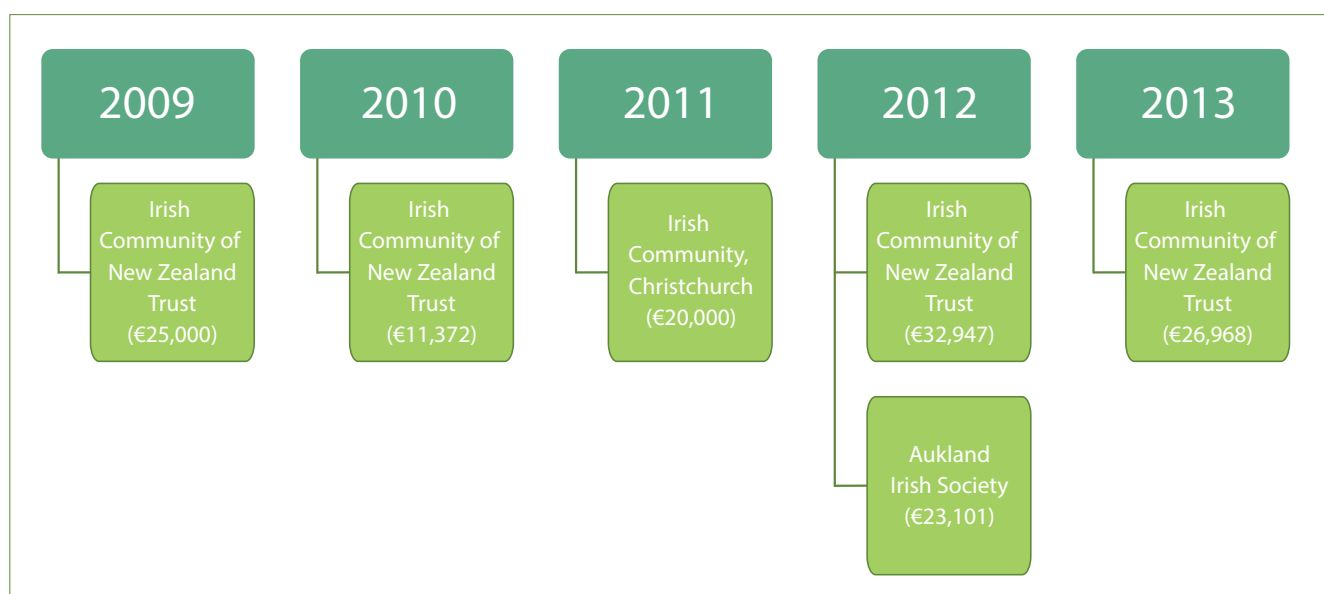


Fig 9: ESP Funding in New Zealand, 2009–13.



and there are many teaching positions available as part of this reform. Irish teachers, predominantly in their mid-twenties with an undergraduate degree and some kind of teaching qualification, sign on initially for two-year contracts, with an option to extend, and with visas tied to their contracts.

The ESP sponsors business and cultural groups in UAE and Kuwait, though the group originally sponsored in Kuwait in 2011 appears to have dispersed. It is, in any case, entirely dwarfed in significance by the Kuwaiti branch of the GAA, the very enthusiastic and successful Kuwaiti Harps, with 60 players from 15 countries represented in their roster. In UAE, the Irish Business Network is the primary mechanism of Irish community funded by the ESP; located in Dubai, it holds regular breakfast meetings, industry sector meetings, and provides networking opportunities.

Of all the regions discussed in this section, it is perhaps Irish communities in the Middle East which will pose the greatest challenge to groups seeking to engage the diaspora. Within such an intrinsically cosmopolitan region, and with the typical profile of the emigrant drawn there, older models of engagement will find little purchase. Instead, any new efforts must treat the Irish migrant in these regions as a national stakeholder, must provide them with a backbone of national identity through cultural, sporting and business projects, and must be highly responsive to the changing needs and opportunities offered by the relationship between migrant community and home nation.

### Conclusions

Although ESP funding has grown significantly to these regions since 2009, an analysis of the figures shows that much of this rise is due to the large-scale investment in the Farmleigh Fellowships in Singapore, which accounted for 48% of the entire funding budget for the “Other Destinations” regions in 2013. If the Farmleigh funding is set aside, then the entire funding budget for those eighteen countries has actually decreased in the post-2008 context: from €110,686 in 2009 to €94,564 in 2013. The responsive model of ESP funding is partly responsi-

ble for this lack of growth, as the smaller numbers of Irish people in many of these locations do not always provide a critical mass for self-organisation and sustainable succession. At the same time, this drop in funding to destinations which have almost all seen a rise in Irish presence in the post-2008 period is somewhat troubling. It is possible that an opportunity is being lost to engage with some of the most innovative and imaginative projects in the Irish community overseas. Such projects are not only vital to foster for the sake of their own constituents, but also because of the discoveries they have made and strategies they have used in carving out a space for themselves in difficult circumstances — discoveries which could be directly applicable in other regions. As these organisations and communities grapple with the experiences of globalised citizenship and routinised migration, they are at the forefront of developments in diaspora engagement in unprecedented conditions, and the insights they offer are invaluable.

“migrants speak of their determination, their thirst for adventure, and their appreciation for encounters with difference when discussing their motivations and prospects”

<sup>i</sup> There is extensive literature on the history of the Irish in Europe. For an introduction, see Clark, 2010, and O’Connor, 2006.

<sup>ii</sup> For more information on the history of the Irish in New Zealand, see McCarthy, 2005, and Patterson, 2002.

## Summary

- The Irish communities in the countries explored in this chapter reflect the significant diversity of Irish migrant heritage, which deserves further exploration and celebration.
- There is a very different funding profile evident in these less common destinations. There is, with the exception of Zimbabwe, very little welfare support funding to these countries.
- Funding for business-related activities and organisations is far more prominent in these countries (59% of overall funding), reflecting the predominantly professional profile of Irish migrants in these areas.
- These countries showcase new frontiers in diaspora support and engagement. Irish organisations facilitate the navigation of acute cultural differences, and provide a backbone of Irish identity for an increasingly mobile population.
- With the growing normalisation of travel and migration, particularly within the EU, new strategies for fostering Irish identity within an increasingly cosmopolitan society must be considered.
- Irish community organisations in these less common destinations have leveraged their constituencies' diaspora capital in innovative ways, and have in some cases created solutions to issues prominent in mainstream destinations.

# Conclusion

We have found the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) to be a robust and effective programme, providing a remarkable range of supports across the Irish diaspora with relatively modest (and reduced) funding means. This study was not undertaken to review the funding mechanisms of the ESP nor the procedures of funded organisations.<sup>1</sup> Rather, this study set out to scope the changing profile and needs of Irish emigrants in relation to the Government's strategic objectives in engaging the diaspora—particularly through the ESP—and consider how best these objectives may continue to be met. It has reviewed and analysed current data on the Irish abroad, with particular focus on the Irish in Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada. Although not included in the original remit, this report has also provided commentary on ESP engagement with organisations and communities in Ireland and in “other destinations” around the globe where Irish networks and populations have significant presence. We broadened the scope and scale of our analysis with a conviction based on research that diaspora engagement needs to be understood through multiple lenses and in a framework that foregrounds the mobility and circuitry of diaspora networks.

While based on hard data and primary materials, including many interviews and several focus groups, this study is necessarily prospective, seeking to delineate and illuminate trends in post-2008 emigration and diaspora connectivity that would help us look ahead to consider the characteristics and needs of the “next generation” of emigrants. As such, we have not offered a list of prescriptive recommendations but rather summaries and indicators, distilled in the “Key Findings” at the beginning of this report. In this concluding section, we will not repeat that summary. Rather, we raise a few points that have come to the fore due to the comparative nature of this research and also consider the future of the ESP in relation to the broader framework of diaspora engagement by the Government.

While an estimable programme, the ESP has its limits and limitations. The key limits are of course delineated by policy and resource factors. It is important to also note that such a programme can potentially suffer from a burden of expectation. We saw some evidence of this among organisations abroad where there are diverse views on what should be funded and some criticism of the mechanisms and protocols of the ESP's management of its funding process. Beyond this there is also the expectation that the programme can or should more proactively engage the diaspora. But it is important to state clearly that the role of the ESP should be to facilitate, not to lead nor direct. This approach is widely acknowledged as international

“this study is necessarily prospective, seeking to delineate and illuminate trends in post-2008 emigration and diaspora connectivity that would help us look ahead to consider the characteristics and needs of the “next generation” of emigrants”

best practice in diaspora engagement, which recommends that diasporic groups themselves must self-organise to support their communities, while governments act principally as facilitators (see: Boyle and Kitchin, 2008; Aikins and White, 2011). As the Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore stated in his introduction to the current review by the Irish government of its engagement with the Irish abroad, “Engagement with the Diaspora...is not the domain of Government alone” (“Tánaiste Seeks Views on Future Diaspora Policy”). It is a domain that includes a diverse array of diaspora stakeholders, including civil society actors, in both host and home countries. Within Ireland, for example, the impact of local communities becoming active in engaging emigrants from their locales was evident in the success of The Gathering in 2013.

The current review by the Irish government of its engagement with the Irish abroad reflects the now common belief that the Irish diaspora has become an increasingly integral component of Ireland's economic, political and cultural engagements with the rest of the world. This review is a significant development and may rescript some key elements of the relationship between the Irish state and the Irish diaspora. As such, it needs to be pursued with considerable tact, aware of the ethical responsibilities of diaspora stewardship and attentive to the

ironies and tensions in attempting to formalise the Government’s relationship with an imagined community that can be difficult to define or measure. In such a context the example and potential future of the ESP has particular value.

The ESP was established in part as a result of an earlier review. In 2002, in the peak years of the economic boom, the Government created a task force on policy regarding emigrants—the initial emphasis was to consider how the government might work to “protect and support” the Irish abroad (Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants). Following the report of the task force, funding for services to emigrants was increased significantly and in 2004 the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was established, to meet the objectives set out in the task force report. Since this time, the work of the unit has evolved in line with the growing range of engagements with the diaspora and has, since the economic downturn of recent years, supported Ireland’s economic engagements through the Global Irish Network and the Global Irish Economic Forums. It is apposite that the role of the ESP, both as a discrete programme and in relation to these broader initiatives, should now be reconsidered. It was devised by a different Ireland for a different diaspora and the current review affords an opportunity to rethink its capacities and role in a diaspora policy framework.

There is an opportunity to create much greater awareness of the work and value of the ESP as a discrete programme (across the globe we were struck by how little is known about its work outside of the immediate sectors it engages) and also to underscore its value as a core, constituent element of Ireland’s nascent diaspora policy. This would strengthen the message that support for the vulnerable as well as engagement with the successful is core to the character of Ireland’s diaspora engagement. This naturally follows from the Tánaiste’s recent statement—“While many Irish have found great success overseas, for others it has been a challenging and difficult experience” (“Tánaiste Seeks Views on Future Diaspora Policy”)—to foreground recognition of those who require support.

“support for the vulnerable as well as engagement with the successful is core to the character of Ireland’s diaspora engagement”

“support for the vulnerable as well as engagement with the successful is core to the character of Ireland’s diaspora engagement”

The logic of this approach is the creation of an inclusive diaspora policy in which the ESP is an integral programme. At present there is some scepticism about the mandate and expectations of government engagement with the global Irish and the ESP occupies an important role in helping to promote trust and confidence in why the diaspora is being engaged and what is expected of them. Recognition of those in need of support is crucial to this for segments of the Irish abroad can feel isolated from the rhetorics and activities of government initiatives. In our research, we found a number of service providers sceptical about or resistant to ideas of diaspora engagement and even the very term “diaspora.” For example, a community leader in Boston stated:

I get quite annoyed actually. I think when I hear the word diaspora I don’t feel like it includes a lot of people we deal with. I think you are dealing with, you know, professional, educated, successful, that’s what diaspora says to me when I hear it being used—even by you!....Because when you talk about diaspora, people think you do not mean the vulnerable, that they are separate....That there are two different groups, and that is where the concern is coming from and that the diaspora does not mean the people we serve and it should because they are the diaspora and I mean, some of them have problems, but they are also a resource. Just because you have a problem now does not mean you will have one next year or the year after. I mean you have people come out here, they are very young, they make stupid mistakes, they do terrible things and then they pick themselves up and dust themselves off. People make mistakes.

“Because when you talk about diaspora, people think you do not mean the vulnerable, that they are separate”

An inclusive diaspora policy must be responsive to such views. Maintaining and developing a programme of care and support at the heart of diaspora policy underscores the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between government and diaspora in the Irish context.

Throughout this report we have remarked on the need to recognise that collective Irish identity formation in the diaspora is very fluid, no longer tied to “traditional” networks and spaces. New global geographies and cultures of Irishness are emerging, based on new patterns of movement and settlement. At present, there are a number of clearly prioritised destinations for the Irish abroad, focused primarily on English-speaking countries and those with historic links to Ireland: Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia. While these countries are destinations for the vast majority of Irish emigrants, there are indications that growing numbers of emigrants are venturing beyond the traditional destinations to other areas of opportunity in Europe, New Zealand, Dubai, China and South Africa, to name a few. There is much to be learned from the experiences of emigrant life in these “other destinations” and the ESP should broaden its global horizons in recognition of this diversification of diaspora movement and settlement.

At the same time, the movement away from “traditional” networks and spaces of Irish connectivity across the globe (for example, the decline of Irish pubs and clubs as sites of emigrant congregation) means the ESP needs to be actively assessing and engaging emergent networks of Irish connectivity. Diasporas have become emblematic communities in the age of globalisation and a focus on networks and networking is crucial to diaspora engagement as this is the connective, communicative tissue of the diaspora. In this study, we found striking resources and potentials among diverse networks, both old and new.

Among the older, established networks in the Irish diaspora the one that has most significantly flourished is the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). In addressing the importance of the GAA at the Global Irish Economic Forum, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D. spoke to the essence of what the organisation means for the global Irish:

The GAA is almost the perfect organisation because it has got the local, county, national and international connection. And why is that? Because the jersey covers everybody—big, tall, short, small or whatever—it covers everybody.

You see a Mayo jersey in California even though they were beaten last week, or you see a county jersey and it is an international connection. And, as an island of people, we always need and wish to understand the feeling of interconnectedness and of interdependence.

During several research trips to the global destinations most engaged by the ESP, it soon became clear that the GAA is highly distinctive if not unique in its engagement with all segments of the global Irish. Apart from providing instant and therapeutic connections with a sense of home, it has also taken on a networking role that is invaluable both to older and newer segments of the Irish diaspora. The organisation has an important diasporic function as a site through which not only heritage or cultural bonds can be maintained but, also, where emerging issues amongst vulnerable Irish can be engaged.

Examples emerging during this research of the capacity of the GAA to bring the Irish community together, across socioeconomic or demographic divides, points to the organisation as a driver in breaking down barriers to participation within Irish communities abroad. Whether in Australia, Asia or Argentina, the GAA has replaced the Irish pub as the central cultural hub through which all generations of Irish meet, network and share their lives. In terms of the ESP, this connective capital can manifest itself into strategic engagement of vulnerabilities and support. As more formal and informal networking emerges within the GAA, particularly in relation to access to health services and job acquisition, some indices of vulnerability can be mapped and narrowed. In advocating culturally sensitive support, the GAA will remain at the forefront of the negotiations of Irishness which are currently ongoing at home and abroad. Their importance to the ESP, and the ESP’s importance as a facilitator for the GAA, should not go unnoticed.

The GAA is a striking instance of an organisation that is adapting successfully to shifting vectors of diaspora networking and need. At the same time, the virtualisation of diaspora networks presents new challenges and opportunities for diaspora engage-

“Diasporas have become emblematic communities in the age of globalisation and a focus on networks and networking is crucial to diaspora engagement.”

ment. Many commentators have acknowledged the crucial role of new communications technologies in diasporic networks and the relationship between diaspora and homeland. This project has observed such technologies being adapted by migrant communities worldwide in many different ways, with great diversity of use facilitated by myriad applications and the tools they offer. In Australia and Canada, where the great influx of Irish migrants in the post-2008 period has created new needs and vulnerabilities, Facebook groups like “Irish Families in Perth” (5,384 members) and “Irish and New in Toronto” (5,712 members) act as invaluable community resources, offering crowd-sourced advice and support on everything from visa restrictions to babysitting. In Asia and the Middle East, where social networking has developed more unevenly, Facebook plays a much smaller role, and instead free text messaging and calling applications are an intrinsic part of the migrant experience. Skype, the internet calling company, is ubiquitous. For professional communities, LinkedIn is being harnessed to help Irish business people leverage national connections to create useful networks around the globe. Access to traditional media is also part of these changes: Irish communities all over the world now use online applications to watch Irish media. Amongst these changes, opportunities for new forms of community engagement by the ESP and other Irish governmental agencies are clear. Examples of developments are already apparent. A recent Crosscare proposal put forward as part of the Department of Foreign Affairs’ review of Ireland’s foreign policy and external relations advocated the creation of an Irish Emigrant Register to maintain closer connection with the Irish overseas.

Many governments are now seeking to make optimal use of social media in engaging their diasporas. This remains a terrain of limited research and knowledge however. To date, Israel has been the most creative in developing forms of governmental engagement by hosting digital conversations between diverse publics and politicians and policymakers. Social media technology was recently harnessed in a three-day online forum

“the virtualisation of diaspora networks presents new challenges and opportunities for diaspora engagement,”

“Whether through the GAA or social media platforms, connectivity and reciprocity are the essence of coherent diaspora engagement,”

between Israel’s leaders and its worldwide diaspora, designed to source new ideas for fostering diasporic connections from the diaspora themselves. The strategy both promotes access, transparency and reciprocity in the practice of engagement while also producing and archiving ideas from the diaspora. There may be lessons for the ESP here, either through the development of a digital strategy to facilitate direct engagement with the diaspora or/ and to ask organisations supported by ESP to provide robust models of social media use in support of their work with the diaspora.

The ESP will need to carefully consider the kind of social media engagement that will best serve the interests of the Irish community abroad and which will be feasible to develop within their resources and remit. Engagement through non-traditional communications media may pose challenges to pre-existing relationships between government and diaspora, but the growing remit of social media in diasporic communities offers significant opportunities. Repeated calls for pre-departure support, heard worldwide during this project, could potentially be addressed by effective use of online and social media by groups supported by the ESP. Further knowledge-sharing between service providers could also be facilitated using such communications technologies, but any venture will require buy-in from key members of the community. Crucial to the success of any social media strategy by the ESP or other Irish governmental organisations interested in connecting with the Irish abroad

would be the trust dimension: Irish migrants would need to know that they can trust the information being shared, and that they can rely on the application or website and its representatives to be the most reliable source of such information.

In the constantly shifting sands of the online world, the authoritative and timely information accessible to the ESP and the organisations is a precious resource. If properly implemented, a coherent social media strategy could provide new avenues of communication to many different sectors of the Irish community, now and into the future. Such potential is worth further exploration.



Whether through the GAA or social media platforms, connectivity and reciprocity are the essence of coherent diaspora engagement. This was echoed by many of our interviewees, several of whom used the metaphor of bridge-building when referring to the work of the ESP. One London service-provider remarked:

I look at the original aims of the ESP and one of them is about bridge-building, building relationships...strong mutual relations between here and Ireland, two-way relationships would be really helpful across all areas of work. This means investing a lot of time into online work, welfare, moving to London, repatriation, acting as a bridge.....still providing community, networking space, both physically and virtually.

This bridging motif also speaks to the sharing of experience and knowledge by those providing services for Irish communities, both nationally and transnationally. In carrying out this research we were struck by the interest in and appetite for information in one country about what people in their sector were doing in other countries to support Irish communities. A British interviewee commented on a growing need for “sharing best practice of Irish community networks in other countries, sharing of best practice around community engagement....there is no network in which to share best practice.” The global desire of community and organisational leaders to collaborate on issues of vulnerability and support is increasing. Through support of specific platforms, such as fora, educational exchange, and research collaborations, the ESP can begin to harmonise the expertise and experiences of global Irish communities.

A key to the future support of knowledge transfer within the diaspora is to provide bridging mechanisms and forums. There is a question, though, a strategic and resource question for the future of the ESP, as to whether such bridge-building should be facilitated at a distance, through support for organisations that undertake it, or/and closer to home, through the creation of a hub platform within ESP. The risk of over-reliance on new and social media networks is that the proliferation of access brings

concerns over the integrity of the information shared. As one new emigrant in Canada noted in interview, “it [online media information] is a jungle to figure out.” While online networking is the inevitable wave of the diasporic future, the Government needs to give careful thought as to how best to ride that wave via its engagement programmes. Virtual networks can be progressive, democratic spaces of mutual engagement and connectivity, but also anarchic sites of dissent and dispute in which communication becomes entropic. In some key respects, this is a resource question. The support of virtual diaspora groups at a distance requires little in the way of funding, while the creation and maintenance of a virtual hub would be a major resource commitment. But it is also a question of strategy within emerging diaspora policy parameters and objectives. If such a hub is to be created, careful attention should be given to its remit, organisation and modes of engagement, so that it reflects and enhances the ethos of the ESP’s support work within a strategic diaspora framework.

While virtual networks will be crucial in diaspora practices of the future, they must not be developed at the expense of interpersonal engagement.

Legitimate concern exists around the capacity of virtual networks to provide the kind or degree of support offered by face-to-face communications. We encountered such concerns while conducting research, but this must be set against the countervailing and much more strongly held view that culture is and will almost certainly continue to be the most crucial aspect of connectivity within the Irish diaspora. While it is difficult to separate the form and content of culture from its delivery platforms, Irish culture in the diaspora has a remarkable health across media, old and new, formal and informal, and continues to be a powerfully affective, integrating force. Interviewees in different parts of the world referred to its “therapeutic” qualities. In London, a service provider commented:

I think ESP has supported a lot of frontline services in tandem with culture...culture is seen as an engagement tool for the community as well as an ambassadorship....other European countries see culture as an ambassadorship role, whereas Ireland sees it both as an ambassadorship and engagement.

“While virtual networks will be crucial in diaspora practices of the future, they must not be developed at the expense of interpersonal engagement.”

In most major European countries, culture has long been understood instrumentally and strategically as a form of diplomacy or national public relations, framed to promote the interests of the nation-state among foreign publics, usually among foreign elites and opinion-makers – in short, as a form of “soft power” (Nye, 2004). It is rarer, as with the Irish example, to find countries promoting their culture internationally as a therapeutic for the global diaspora. To be sure, it can and does play this role in ad hoc ways in many diasporas but there are peculiarities to the Irish case that the ESP has already begun to identify and can do more to facilitate and promote.

This is yet another way in which the value of the ESP programme can be more fully integrated into a developed diaspora policy. The challenge for the programme is to develop imaginative and pragmatic means to support changing diaspora communities. This support must combine a focus on vulnerabilities with the more varied forms of engagement discussed in this report, so balancing the responsibilities of a government in relation to its diaspora. The ESP, valued and resourced as an emblematic constituent of Irish diaspora policy, has the potential to build sustainable bridges and recognition for the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between government and diaspora in the Irish context.

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<sup>i</sup> A detailed review of the work of four ESP-funded organisations in Britain was carried out in 2013 (See: McEvoy, 2013).

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# Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank An Tanaiste Eamon Gilmore, T.D., and acknowledge the support of the current and previous staff of the Irish Abroad Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The authors of this report would like to thank the following for their input during the research project:

Kingsley Aikins  
Diaspora Matters, Dublin

Rita Andrews  
Southwark Irish Pensioners, London

Ian Ashe  
Ottawa Chapter Irish-Canadian Chamber  
of Commerce

David Barlow  
London Irish Centre

Claire Barry  
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Ambassador Ray Bassett  
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Marek Bilski  
Canberra Irish Club

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