



Migration Profile

IRELAND

A. Executive Summary

Ireland is Europe's second largest island after Great Britain. Compared to the other European countries, it is not heavily populated (approximately five million people, with less than 65 inhabitants per km²), also due to its mountainous land. In 2020, only 63% of Ireland's total population lived in urban areas and cities, especially in Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland, and in the Greater Dublin Area with almost 2 million inhabitants.

Ireland is led by a president as head of the State and is governed by an elected parliament. Ireland's economy has always been based on farming and agriculture, but since the late 1950s it turned from one of Europe's poorest countries to its second wealthiest, thanks to several policies enacted to attract foreign investments. In terms of GDP per capita (85,267 USD in 2020), Ireland is ranked as one of the wealthiest countries in the EU and in the world.

Ireland is mainly a Catholic country (78%),ⁱ 3% is Protestant, 2% Orthodox, and another 2% belongs to other denominations; less than 1% is Jewish and 1% Muslim.ⁱⁱ

The majority of immigrants come from the European Union, especially Poland, while the second largest group is from the United Kingdom, followed by Eastern Europe, in particular from Lithuania, Latvia, and the Czech Republic. According to the 2021 Central Statistics Office data, migrants arriving in Ireland and not members of the European Union mostly come from Australia, Canada and the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ

Regarding emigration, over the last two centuries Ireland has been the European country affected the most by this phenomenon, especially in the 1980s, with England and USA as their two main destinations.

Human trafficking in Ireland remains a hidden but widespread crime, disproportionately affecting migrant people;^{iv} and for human trafficking, Ireland serves as both a destination and a transit country. Trafficked persons are mostly women and almost all are migrants, who are commonly used for sexual exploitation. They are also victims of labour exploitation and forced criminal activities.^v

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Even though Ireland - in terms of GDP per capita - is ranked as one of the wealthiest countries in

the world, in 2019 more than 12% of the population was at risk of poverty,^{vi} and this is the result of historical issues. Ireland's independence was reached through different steps: in 1921 the country was split into two (Northern and Southern Ireland), and in 1937 it obtained a Constitution breaking the political dependence with London and its monarch.^{vii} In 1948, most of Ireland became an independent country, except for some Protestant counties in the Northeast area that remained part of the British territory. After WWII, the major issue to be solved was the Northern Ireland matter, which ended only in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement, establishing a positive relation between London and Dublin. Brexit, however, is likely to challenge this relationship, for the UK's exit from the EU coalition might have greater implications for Ireland than for any other European country, because of the substantial trade and investment volume between the two islands.^{viii}

Ireland is a founding member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 1949, the country decided not to become part of NATO, while in 1973 it became a member of the European Union. These are Ireland's two fundamental pillars: military neutrality and a strong affiliation to the EU.^{ix} Despite its military neutrality, Ireland is also an observer on 9 more Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the first lockdown was among the longest ones in Europe, that produced a severe recession and a historically high rate of unemployment. A Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) and a Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS) were set up by the government.^x

II. International and Internal Migrants

According to the Central Statistics Office, as of April 2021 there were 645,500 non-Irish nationals resident in Ireland, "about one in eight (12.9%) of the total population."^{xi} The 2016 census states that the first three non-Irish nationalities resident in Ireland were Polish, UK and Lithuanian, followed by Romanian (29,186), Latvian (19,933), Brazilian (13,640), Spanish (12,112), Italian (11,732), French (11,661), and German (11,531).^{xii} In addition, there were 20,969 people from India and 12,891 from Pakistan.^{xiii} However, the top countries of origin for non-EU migrants are Australia, Canada and the United States.^{xiv}

In 2017, 42,700 men immigrated to Ireland compared to 41,900 women, and their age was mainly between 25 and 44 years old (47,100 persons). The second largest group of immigrants was between 15 and 24 years old (18,600 in total), and a smaller percentage was aged 65 or more (2,300 in total).^{xv}

As mentioned above, the majority of migrants in Ireland come from the European Union, particularly from Poland - the Poles in fact represent 2.6% of the population according to the 2016 Central Statistics Office data - and from the UK. People migrate to Ireland because of its strong economy and an immigration system that helps highly skilled foreigners to work in Ireland. For UK citizens it is much easier to move to Ireland, because the two islands share the same language

and culture. This is also the main reason why immigration from Australia, Canada and the United States is massive. In addition, Ireland and the UK are under the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangement, which does not require for UK nationals to get a visa or a residence permit to work, live or study in Ireland.^{xvi} This means that UK and Irish citizens are free to work and travel in both countries. Furthermore, people move to Ireland because of its benefits and stable ties with the EU and the UK. The country is equipped with great immigration friendly policies: there are less residency requirements compared to other countries and it is possible to obtain an Irish passport after some years of "reckonable residence" in the country.^{xvii}

The migrant population is mostly concentrated in urban areas, precisely in the city centres of Dublin, Limerick and Cork, and in the suburbs of West and North Dublin, for both EU and non-EU migrants.^{xviii} "People with poor English-language proficiency, who account for 1.8% of the population, are less centralised in these three cities",^{xix} but they may be found in large numbers in towns like Ballyhaunis, Monaghan, New Ross and Roscommon.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

Irish emigration increased significantly in the 1980s due to a severe recession. England, especially the South-Eastern part of the country, was the most popular destination for these emigrants, and the US, which had a lower unemployment rate than Ireland in the late 1980s, thus becoming a very common place to relocate. Also Australia, Canada, and Spain over the years have been a preferred destination for work. Many emigrants back then had a higher level of education than their predecessors. As of today, between April 2019 and 2020, 56,500 people emigrated from Ireland; among these approximately 50.1% are Irish nationals,^{xx} and most of them are between 25 and 44 years old (29,800).^{xxi} Climate and weather are considered some of the main reasons to leave Ireland.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees, climate displaced people)

According to the World Bank, in 2020 in Ireland the number of granted asylums for refugees was 9,070.^{xxii} According to the UNHCR, between 2000 and 2019 "over 3,000 refugees from almost 30 nationalities were resettled to Ireland."^{xxiii} Also, in 2020 there were 1,566 asylum applications, "a 67.3% reduction from 2019 due to the pandemic."^{xxiv} With the recent Afghan crisis, since July 2021 the Irish government has assigned refugee status to 400 people coming from Afghanistan.^{xxv}

In 2020, the top 3 countries of origin for refugees living in Ireland were Syria (2,899), Zimbabwe (504), and Iraq (404), while for asylum-seekers were Nigeria (756), Zimbabwe (761) and Georgia (695).^{xxvi} In 2020, 6,997 asylum-seekers lived in accommodation and emergency centres:^{xxvii} some of them are state-owned, like the Knockalisheen Accommodation Centre (Clare) or the Kinsale Road (Cork, in the Southern part of Ireland). Another centre is located in Westmeath, called Athlone Accommodation Centre, and 3 are based in Kerry.

Not all the forced migrants speak the local language, and that can be one of the main barriers for them, especially women forced to work in low-paid jobs and not able to afford the cost of English classes. Moreover, many forced migrants face delays in asylum centres and often remain in these facilities for several years.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

An Garda Síochána is the Irish national police corp. In 2020 it identified 38 victims of human trafficking:^{xxxviii} “twenty-six of these were victims of sexual exploitation, ten were victims of labour exploitation, and two were victims of forced criminality.”^{xxix} In total, 294 victims have been detected over the last 5 years.

The 38 victims were all adults. “There was a shift in the gender breakdown of victims of human trafficking in Ireland from 2018 to 2020. In 2018, males accounted for 49% of victims and females accounted for 51% of victims. This drastically changed in 2019 where males accounted for only 6% of victims and females accounted for 94% of victims and in 2020 where males accounted for only 13% of victims and females accounted for 87% of victims.”^{xxx}

Out of 38 victims, 23 (more than 60%) came from Africa, especially Nigeria (11) and Zimbabwe (5). 9 victims were originally from the European Economic Area (EEA), particularly Romania (6).^{xxxi} In terms of regions of origin, men from Asia and Africa are targeted for forced labour in the fishing sector,^{xxxii} while in the construction, waste-recycling and car-washing industries they are predominantly EEA nationals. Also, within the fishing industry male victims are usually employed, while exploitation in the domestic sphere mainly affects women.

Foreign victims are usually uninformed of their rights, because of limited language skills, or are deliberately misled. Moreover, victims of human trafficking often lack adequate support. One of the main problems they encounter is accommodation which appears to be rather inexistent or extremely insufficient. For this reason, in 2021 the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) underscored the “urgent need for accommodation, and the importance of a gender-specific approach to its provision.”^{xxxiii}

For victims of human trafficking, Ireland provides a victim-centred system of State supports.^{xxxiv} These services are provided by the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a structure by which the government works with civil society to fulfil its responsibility to protect and promote the human rights of trafficking victims. This program, among other things, offers “accommodation, medical services, legal aid and advice.”^{xxxv} If victims of trafficking do not wish to engage with An Garda Síochána, they are excluded from the NRM and are unable to access all state-provided services. Nevertheless, because some victims may be hesitant to come forward, the Department of Justice funds multiple NGOs to provide assistance to potential victims outside the NRM.^{xxxvi}

VI. National Legal Framework

In Ireland there are several laws governing migration, asylum and human trafficking. A major

legal instrument is the 2008 Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act, describing crime offences and penalties, with the exception of child sex trafficking. The Act criminalises for instance the trafficking of adults, child trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation, and prostitution of a trafficked person. A second relevant document is the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act (1998), handling child trafficking, child sex abuse and pornography, and criminalising child trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking Amendment) Act (2013) modified the definition of Labour Exploitation to conform it to the ILO's expression of forced labour. This Act gave effect to the EU Directive 2011/36/EU.

Ireland's national legislation is based on the global and European commitment to fight human trafficking. The international key instruments are the UN Palermo Protocol (2000), to "Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children."^{xxxvii} Ireland has ratified in 2010 the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and successively the EU Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and counteracting human trafficking.

Progress has been made to improve the access of human trafficking victims to the state support system, meaning the National Referral Mechanism. On May 5, 2021, the government approved the establishment of a revamped National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to better identify human trafficking victims and provide help.^{xxxviii}

In 2020, the Irish government reformed the agencies handling of migration. The new Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth is responsible for issues relating to the integration of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), which is part of the Department of Justice, is now in charge of enforcing immigration laws.^{xxxix}

VII. Main Actors

The State

The Irish State and the Department of Justice determine which applications for asylum in the country under the terms of the 1951 UN Convention^{xl} are accepted and granted, not UNHCR's as some people might think.^{xli} The applicants are granted refugee status if their fear of persecution is proven by the Irish asylum authorities.^{xlii} A specific agency, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), takes care of the asylum seekers' accommodation while their applications are being processed.

In 2015 the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established in response to the humanitarian crisis that erupted in Southern Europe, as a result of forced displacement from areas of conflict in the Middle East and Africa. Under this programme, operated by the Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI), the Irish government pledged to accept a total of 4,000 persons into the country.^{xliii} According to UNHCR, 1,913 refugees arrived with this resettlement

programme between 2015 and 2019^{xliv}. In December 2019, the Irish government stated that a New Refugee protection program will be in effect, extending its Community Sponsorship program, and boosting its yearly resettlement quota by 50 people per year for the following four years: 650 in 2020, 700 in 2021, 750 in 2022, and 800 in 2023.^{xliv} Furthermore, since July 2021 the Irish government has provided refugee status to 400 people from Afghanistan^{xlvi} as part of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. The Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) program is an alternative to the usual state-centred resettlement approach, and it is based on a Canadian model that has successfully relocated more than 300,000 migrants since 1978.

An additional programme is the Humanitarian Admissions Programme (IHAP), announced in 2018 to provide humanitarian admission to Ireland for 530 eligible family members of Irish citizens.^{xlvii}

The Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme (SHAP) was implemented in response to the deteriorating crisis in Syria. SHAP allowed “Irish citizens of Syrian birth and Syrian nationals lawfully resident in Ireland to apply to bring family members from Syria, or displaced from Syria in surrounding countries, to Ireland.”^{xlvi} The Family Reunification Unit in the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) was responsible for accepting and processing SHAP applications. Out of 308 applications, Ireland granted permission to 119 people to live in Ireland under the SHAP system.^{xliv}

The Catholic Church

The Irish Catholic Bishops are committed to helping migrants and refugees, and in 2008 it established the Irish Episcopal Council for Immigrants (IECI). IECI provides English classes for immigrant communities and encourages them to become active participants within parish life.ⁱ In 2017, the Bishop of Achonry received over 80 Syrian refugees. In 2019, a joint statement of the bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois and the bishop of Elphin called on the members of their churches to welcome refugees.^{li} Lastly, in April 2021 the then chair of the IECI called on government to act for the resettlement of children from the Moria refugee camp in Greece which was being delayed.

The Catholic Church has also played a key role in the Sponsorship Program developed in the country, providing guidance, training and support throughout the process.

The faith-based group, Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT), works against trafficking in persons. It has a dual purpose: increasing awareness on the issue of human trafficking and working in cooperation with other organisations to prevent women and children’s trafficking for sexual exploitation.^{lii} The members of APT belong to missionary orders which are part of the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI).^{liii}

The Don Bosco Ireland Volunteers (DBIV) is the volunteering branch of the Salesians in Ireland,^{liv} actively involved in the Salesian missions, both in Ireland and abroad, to help refugees.^{lv}

Caritas Ireland is called *Trócaire*, the Irish word for mercy.^{lvi} Trócaire has responded to several crises, especially in Syria, and provided humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees living in Lebanon.^{lvii} Trócaire raises local awareness about the causes of poverty and injustice. It organises fundraising events such as music festivals, marathons, poetry gatherings,^{lviii} and offers protection services with specific programs for girls and at-risk people in order to prevent sexual violence. The organisation also works in conflict-affected areas, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan. It also gets involved in responding to people's basic needs by providing nutritional supplies and equipment for families to grow their own food, as well as assisting people in their recovery process from calamities such as floods and droughts.^{lix}

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS Ireland) supports "individuals, families and children seeking asylum in Ireland at all stages of the protection process".^{lx} They created the Asylum Seeker Support, whose volunteers offer language classes, or educational and psychosocial support. They also promote the integration of asylum seekers, "supporting education, training, employment and access to housing," and raise awareness for "fairer immigration and asylum systems."^{lxi}

The Order of Malta Ireland is also present and provides services for refugees.^{lxii}

International and other organisations

There are several non-governmental organisations in Ireland giving support to refugees and asylum seekers. The Irish Red Cross has been assisting refugees in Ireland for many years.^{lxiii} Since 2016, the Irish Red Cross has cooperated with the Department of Justice and Equality to assist in the Irish Refugee Protection Programme's EU Commitment.

The Irish Refugee Council is another organisation that works with and for refugees in Ireland, focusing especially on those still involved in the asylum process, after submitting their request to be recognized as refugees. The Irish Refugee Council conducts a drop-in support service, as well as a legal centre, and advocates on asylum concerns.^{lxiv}

Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) is an independent association providing the general public with free and private legal information and advice. FLAC has a toll-free information and referral line, as well as legal advising centres and online legal resources.^{lxv}

Spirasi assists torture survivors who are asylum seekers, refugees, or members of other marginalized migratory groups. It offers medical diagnostics and therapeutic rehabilitation programs, as well as legal assistance and educational sessions targeted at assisting individuals' assimilation into Irish society.^{lxvi}

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was founded in 1951. It is the world's most important intergovernmental organisation as far as the migration phenomenon is concerned, offering services and advice to governments and migrants, in order to encourage humane and orderly migration flows for the common good. IOM assists with voluntary return, family reunion, counter-trafficking, and resettlement in Ireland.^{lxvii}

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