

Changing Ireland, 2000–2012: immigration, emigration and inequality

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At the start of the twenty-first century, there have been significant changes in patterns of migration to and from Ireland. This paper provides a comprehensive account of available statistics on these migration patterns, and assesses the quality of this information, highlighting issues with the measurement of migrant flow in particular. The paper also provides information on migrant stock in Ireland, drawing on detailed information from the 2002, 2006 and 2011 Censuses, and shows how available data sources might illuminate the relationship between migration and inequality.

Keywords: Ireland; migration; immigration; emigration; inequality

Introduction: the changing landscape of Irish migration

In Ireland today, migration ‘is one of *the* topics under discussion’ (Gilmartin and White 2008, p. 143). Though written in 2008, the statement remains true four years later. However, the way in which migration is being discussed has changed, fundamentally, in a very short period. In 2008, the emphasis was on immigration to Ireland. The potent combination of economic growth, a property bubble, and a more relaxed immigration regime had led to a rapid increase in the numbers of immigrants moving to Ireland. Since then, patterns of international migration have changed again, and Ireland is once more a country of net emigration. As a consequence, the topic of emigration from Ireland receives significantly more attention in public discussions and discourses about people and mobility in the context of the on-going recession.

Migration to and from Ireland, in the period from 2000 to 2012, is detailed in [Table 1](#). Emigration from Ireland has certainly increased significantly in recent years: the figure for 2012 represents close to a 240% increase from the low of 2002, when less than 26,000 emigrated. In contrast, the levels of immigration to Ireland have decreased significantly: in 2010, this figure was at its lowest level since 1994, when around 30,100 people moved to the country. However, the focus on changes between years hides broader patterns of mobility. In the 13-year period shown in [Table 1](#), just over 970,000 people immigrated to Ireland, while around 604,000 people emigrated from Ireland. The net figure for in-migration is thus just over 371,000: averaged out over the 13 year period, this equates to around 28,500 more people moving to than leaving Ireland on an annual basis. [Table 1](#) does not provide any detail on who these

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Table 1. Migration to and from Ireland, 2000–2012.

Year	Immigration to Ireland	Emigration from Ireland	Net migration
	‘000s	‘000s	‘000s
2000	52.6	26.6	26.0
2001	59.0	26.2	32.8
2002	66.9	25.6	41.3
2003	60.0	29.3	30.7
2004	58.5	26.5	32.0
2005	84.6	29.4	55.2
2006	107.8	36.0	71.8
2007	151.1	46.3	104.8
2008	113.5	49.2	64.3
2009	73.7	72.0	1.7
2010	41.8	69.2	-27.4
2011	53.3	80.6	-27.3
2012	52.7	87.1	-34.4
Total	975.5	604.0	371.5

Source: CSO 2012a, p. 2 (Table 1).

people are – this is an issue that will be discussed later in the paper—so its importance lies in showing the concurrent movement of people both in and out of Ireland over an extended period.

This paper examines the relationship between Ireland and migration over the last decade. It charts levels of migration to and from Ireland, and assesses the reliability of available data sources. The first section focuses on immigration to Ireland in the period from 2002 to 2012. The second section focuses on emigration from Ireland over the same period. The third section addresses the limitations to, and insights offered by, data sources on migration to and from Ireland. The paper concludes with a reflection on the connection between migration, the state and statistics, and the implications of this for policy and for social cohesion.

‘Migration Nation’

1996 marked the first year of a sustained period of net in-migration to Ireland, which lasted until 2009. ‘Migration Nation’ was the phrase used to describe the consequences of this movement of people, in a policy statement on integration published in 2008 (Office of the Minister for Integration 2008). Yet, despite the wide-scale belief that Ireland had become a nation of immigrants, it is a challenge to show this clearly. Charting the exact scale and form of net in-migration is difficult, because the Irish state maintains different records of migration depending on the nationality of migrants. As a result, information about migration to Ireland relies on a range of sources, some of which are more comprehensive and more reliable than others.

The benchmark for understanding migration to Ireland is the Census of Population, which is generally held every five years. Three census questions are of particular importance. The first is place of birth; the second is nationality; and the third is information about periods of time spent living outside Ireland. Nationality

provides the best insight into individual identity, in that it marks both the ways in which people identify attachment and identity, as well as the terms under which people living in Ireland can participate in Irish society. However, the other questions highlight different forms of migration, such as recent or longer-term, new or return.

The last three Censuses (2002, 2006 and 2011) provide important snapshots of the migration experience of residents of Ireland. [Table 2](#) provides information on place of birth, broadly categorised. Until 2004, the EU referred to the 15 member states: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, UK. From 1 May 2004, the EU also included the next 10 states to join: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. From 1 January 2007, the EU also included Bulgaria and Romania. From 1 May 2004, EU-15 is used to identify the original 15 member states, and EU-10 or EU-12 to identify the new member states. Percentage figures show a consistent fall in the proportion of people born in and living in Ireland, as well as increases in the proportion of people born in the rest of the EU (excluding the UK), Asia and Africa. Despite the apparent decrease in the Irish-born population, the actual number of people born in and living in Ireland has increased over the nine years. By 2011, over 770,000 people living in Ireland were born outside the country. The Census also asks people to self-record nationality, and aggregated responses to this question are shown in [Table 3](#).

In general, discussions of migration to Ireland tend to focus on nationality or place of birth as key markers. However, perhaps the best indication of migration comes from responses to a question about time spent outside Ireland (see [Table 4](#)). The question asks whether a person has lived outside the Republic of Ireland for a continuous period of one year or more, and asks for information about year of migration and most recent place of residence. Working with an understanding of migration that is time-limited – in other words, living outside Ireland for less than a year does not mark someone as a migrant – this provides a better sense of migration

Table 2. Population of Ireland, by place of birth.

	2002	2006	2011
Place of birth	%	%	%
Republic of Ireland (RoI)	89.6	85.3	83.1
Northern Ireland	1.3	1.2	1.3
Britain	5.1	5.3	5.1
Rest of EU	0.9	4.0	5.9
Other European countries	0.7	0.7	0.5
USA	0.6	0.6	0.6
Africa	0.7	1.0	1.2
Asia	0.7	1.3	1.7
Elsewhere	0.4	0.6	0.6
Total population (millions)	3.86	4.17	4.53
Total born outside RoI (millions)	0.40	0.61	0.77

Sources: CSO 2003, pp. 104–105 (Table 29); CSO 2007a, pp. 104–105 (Table 28A); CSO 2012b (Theme 2, [Table 1](#)).

Table 3. Population of Ireland, by nationality.

Nationality	2002	2006	2011
	%	%	%
Irish	92.9	88.8	86.8
UK	2.7	2.7	2.5
Rest of EU	0.8	3.9	6.1
Other European	0.6	0.6	0.4
USA	0.3	0.3	0.2
African	0.5	0.9	0.9
Asian	0.6	1.1	1.4
Other	1.6	1.7	1.7
Total population (millions)	3.86	4.17	4.53

Sources: CSO 2003, pp. 136–137 (Table 36A); CSO 2007a, pp. 136–137 (Table 35A); CSO 2012b (Theme 2, Table 2), 2012e (Table 1).

patterns over a longer period. The percentage of people who have lived outside Ireland has increased over the period, from 16.9% in 2002 to 19.4% in 2011.

Taken together, these three measures provide a good snapshot of migrants living in Ireland at the times when the Census was taken. This is often referred to as ‘migrant stock’: people who have changed their country of residence at any point during their lives. Table 5 shows, for each of the last three Censuses in Ireland, the percentage of the population with a nationality other than Irish, born outside Ireland, and who have lived outside Ireland for at least a year. In each case, the percentage that has lived outside Ireland is higher than the other two measures. These differences are shown in Table 6, which suggests that close to 140,000 were not born in Ireland and have lived outside Ireland for at least a year, but consider themselves Irish. This primarily relates to those born outside Ireland but who have Irish nationality, such as the children of Irish emigrants. People who have assumed Irish nationality following their migration to Ireland also influence this discrepancy, but these numbers have, until recently, been relatively small. From 2007 to 2009 inclusive, just 10,486 certificates of naturalisation were issued in Ireland (Cosgrave 2011, p. 27).

The best indicator of migrant stock is the measure of people who have spent at least a year outside Ireland – close to 20% of the resident population of Ireland in

Table 4. People who have lived outside Ireland for at least one year, by most recent place of residence.

Place of residence	2002	2006	2011
UK	375,178	377,685	393,079
Other EU countries	51,752	139,151	205,506
USA	58,682	65,406	70,559
Elsewhere	158,832	196,335	223,226
Total	644,444	778,577	892,370
% of total population	16.9	18.9	19.4

Sources: CSO 2003, p. 92 (Table 24A); CSO 2007a, p. 91 (Table 23A); CSO 2012c, p. 87 (Table 21).

Table 5. Indicators of migrant stock.

Indicator	2002	2006	2011
	%	%	%
Lived outside Ireland	16.9	18.9	19.4
Born outside Ireland	10.4	14.7	16.9
Nationality other than Irish	7.1	11.2	13.2

April 2011. However, many of the people included in this percentage are not necessarily considered ‘immigrants’ in the Irish context, because their identity as Irish trumps their identity as immigrants. This understanding is based on a problematic assumption that returning Irish emigrants and their descendants will easily re-integrate or integrate into Irish society (Ní Laoire 2008, Ralph 2009, 2012). Nonetheless, it helps to explain why discussions of immigration in Ireland primarily highlight nationality or place of birth.

The second important set of sources in relation to migration refers to migrant flow. Migrant flow is understood as the movement of people into and out of a country: this general information for Ireland, based on the CSO Population and Migration Estimates, is shown in Table 1. People move to Ireland under a variety of schemes. A significant majority of migrants are EU/EEA nationals, and are free to move to, live in and work in Ireland. These migrants need no special permission, and are not required to complete landing cards or register with Irish authorities, unlike the situation in 19 of the 27 EU countries (Poulain 2006). For people who do not have EU or EEA nationality, options for moving to Ireland are much more restricted. The main entry routes are through work and study. Other routes include the asylum system, or through marriage, civil partnership or a close family relationship. Since no records of entry and exit of EU nationals are retained by the Irish state, the estimation of migrant flows uses a range of indicators. The most recent Census provides the base population profile, and this is supplemented by results from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), as well as information on work permits, Personal Public Service (PPS) numbers and applications for asylum. Of the additional sources of information, just one – PPS numbers – covers EU nationals, even though EU nationals make up a significant majority of migrants to Ireland. The PPS number is used by state agencies for identification purposes, so it is needed, for example, to pay tax, avail of social welfare payments, or to use public health facilities. Information on migrant flow, by nationality, is

Table 6. People who have lived outside Ireland for at least one year, by birthplace and nationality, 2011.

	Birthplace	Nationality
Ireland/Irish	398,215	536,384
Not Ireland/Irish	494,155	351,905
Total	892,370	888,289

Source: CSO 2012e, interactive tables CD611, CD639.

provided in [Table 7](#). This shows that over 75% of migrants to Ireland, each year, have EU nationality, with figures ranging from 76.7% in 2011 to 87.4 % in 2007.

In contrast to the lack of corroborating sources of information on intra-EU migrants, migrants from outside the EU are carefully monitored. The most comprehensive statistics relate to asylum seekers, despite the fact that they make up a very small proportion of migrant flows, followed by data on work permits. [Table 8](#) shows the number of asylum applications and the number of work permits issued on an annual basis between 2002 and 2012. In 2012, for example, the number of asylum seekers represented less than 2% of the total flow of migrants to Ireland that year.

Yet these raw figures provide a misleading picture of migration flows. While asylum applicants live in Ireland as their application is being processed, a very small percentage – just under 6% – are granted asylum on first application in Ireland ([ORAC 2013](#)). In relation to work permits issued, many are renewals rather than new permits, so they relate to people already living in the country. In 2012, renewals accounted for just over 37% of all work permits issued ([Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation 2013](#)). These figures are perhaps more interesting for the insights they provide into the broader context for migration – specifically a drop in asylum applications across Europe, the impacts of EU enlargement in 2004 on intra-EU migration patterns, and the contraction of the Irish labour market as a consequence of the recession in Ireland – rather than as an accurate measure of migration flows in their own right. In some instances, such as the case of student migration, information is limited. An audit undertaken in March 2009 suggested that over 34,000 non-EEA students were attending Irish higher and further education institutes and language schools, but this audit has not yet been repeated ([Department of Justice and Equality 2009](#)). One source of information that covers both EU and non-EU migrants is statistics on the issuing of PPS numbers, which are allocated to Irish, EU and other nationals. [Table 9](#) provides details of PPS numbers issued between 2002 and 2012.

PPS numbers issued certainly illustrate changing patterns over time, and show the relative importance of migration to Ireland by particular nationalities, information which is corroborated by lists of migrant groups by nationalities (see [Table 10](#)).

Table 7. Immigration to Ireland by nationality, 2006–2012 ('000s).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Irish	18.9	30.7	23.8	23.0	17.9	19.6	20.6
(% of total immigration)	17.5	20.3	21.0	31.3	42.7	36.8	39.0
UK	9.9	4.3	6.8	3.9	2.5	4.1	2.2
(% of total immigration)	9.2	2.8	6.0	5.3	6.0	7.7	4.2
Rest of EU-15	12.7	11.8	9.6	11.5	6.2	7.1	7.2
(% of total immigration)	11.8	7.8	8.5	15.6	14.8	13.3	13.6
EU-12	49.9	85.3	54.7	21.1	9.3	10.1	10.4
(% of total immigration)	46.3	56.5	48.2	28.7	22.2	18.9	19.7
Rest of World	16.4	19.0	18.6	14.1	6.0	12.4	12.4
(% of total immigration)	15.2	12.6	16.4	19.2	14.3	23.3	23.5
Total	107.8	151.1	113.5	73.6 ^a	41.9 ^a	53.3	52.8 ^a

Source: CSO 2012a, p. 3 ([Table 2](#)).

^aBecause of rounding, these total figures vary slightly from the figures in CSO 2012a.

Table 8. Asylum applications and work permits issued, 2002–2012.

	Asylum applications	Work permits issued
2002	11,634	40,321
2003	7900	47,551
2004	4766	34,067
2005	4323	27,136
2006	4314	24,854
2007	3985	23,604
2008	3866	13,567
2009	2689	7962
2010	1939	7271
2011	1290	5200
2012	956	4007

Sources: ORAC 2012, p. 65 (Table 15); ORAC 2013; Gilmartin 2008, p. 241; Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation 2013.

However, they do not indicate temporary or circular migration, or return migration, and they do not show whether people remain resident in Ireland. More detailed information about PPS numbers suggests that many are used for just a short period, if at all. Around 30% of the just-over 700,000 PPS numbers issued to foreign nationals aged over 15 in the period from 2006 to 2011 recorded no employment or social welfare activity in the same period (CSO 2013).

Measures of migrant stock in Ireland are generally robust. The Census provides useful and detailed information about people who have lived outside Ireland, people who were born outside Ireland, and the self-identification of nationality. However, as outlined above, measures of migrant flows are patchy. Figures for annual immigration to Ireland in the intercensal periods are estimated, and are

Table 9. PPS numbers issued by nationality, 2002–2012.

Year	Irish	UK	Other EU	RoW
	'000s	'000s	'000s	'000s
2002	49.87	18.92	18.51	66.93
2003	86.95	18.47	19.21	66.93
2004	86.69	18.55	78.56	36.16
2005	80.29	20.66	133.94	36.32
2006	80.79	22.28	164.52	44.26
2007	87.56	22.04	156.36	39.65
2008	91.28	19.71	99.15	37.29
2009	85.91	13.40	42.81	23.18
2010	85.13	13.44	36.00	19.60
2011	85.21	13.14	34.25	20.45
2012	81.33	12.73	37.32	23.28

Source: Department of Social Protection 2012, 2013.

Note: Data on PPS numbers is provided by nationality. From 2004 onwards, I have included nationals of EU-10 countries in the 'Other EU' category; from 2007 onwards, I have included nationals of Bulgaria and Romania in the 'Other EU' category.

Table 10. Top 10 national groups in Ireland, 2002, 2006, 2011.

Rank	2002	2006	2011
1	UK (101,257)	UK (112,548)	Poland (122,585)
2	USA (11,135)	Poland (63,276)	UK (112,259)
3	Nigeria (8650)	Lithuania (24,628)	Lithuania (36,683)
4	Germany (7033)	Nigeria (16,300)	Latvia (20,593)
5	France (6231)	Latvia (13,319)	Nigeria (17,642)
6	China (5766)	USA (12,475)	Romania (17,304)
7	Romania (4910)	China (11,161)	India (16,986)
8	Spain (4347)	Germany (10,289)	Philippines (12,791)
9	South Africa (4113)	Philippines (9548)	Germany (11,305)
10	Philippines (3742)	France (9064)	USA (11,015)

Sources: CSO 2003, p. 146 (Table 39A); CSO 2012c, p. 89 (Table 23).

only corroborated when the next Census is taken. From 2012 to 2016, measures of migrant flows, generally issued in September for the year to the previous April, will not be verified until 2017 at the earliest.

‘Generation Emigration’

In 2012, the *Irish Times* initiated a new section on its website. ‘Generation Emigration’ focuses on the experiences of Irish people as migrants: mostly from Ireland but, in some instances, to Ireland as well. This can be seen as a response to a growing emphasis on, and concern with, the emigration of Irish nationals from the country. A search of the *Irish Times* online archive returned 810 articles on emigration in the two years from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012. This is in contrast to 307 articles in the same newspaper in the two years from 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2007, many of which focused on emigration as an historical event. Table 1 shows the significant increase in general levels of migration from Ireland: from just over 45,000 in 2008, prior to the bank bailout and the start of the economic crisis, to over 76,000 in 2011. In January 2011, the ESRI forecast that 100,000 people would leave Ireland in the two years prior to April 2012. Their predictions were translated into dramatic headlines such as ‘1000 a week forced to emigrate’ (Molloy and Sheehan 2011). However, such evocative headlines mask two key points about migration from Ireland. The first is the make-up of migration flows out of the country. While headlines imply that all emigrants are Irish nationals, this is not the case. Additionally, there are differences in the gender and age profiles of emigrants from Ireland. The second is the extent to which emigration from Ireland during the recession represents a new pattern of mobility. These two points are discussed below.

Details of emigration from Ireland are shown in Table 11. While these are estimated figures, they illustrate some important general trends. While both the number and proportion of migrants with Irish nationality have increased each year since 2007, it is also worth noting the changing migration patterns of other national groups. In particular, there was a sharp increase in the number of emigrants with EU-12 nationality in 2009, but this fell in 2010 and again in 2011. There have been small increases in the numbers of emigrants with other nationalities, but over the six-year

Table 11. Emigration from Ireland by nationality, 2006–2012 ('000s).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Irish	15.3	12.9	13.1	19.2	28.9	42.0	46.5
(% of total annual emigration)	42.5	27.4	26.7	26.7	41.8	52.1	53.4
UK	2.2	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.0	4.6	3.5
(% of total annual emigration)	6.1	8.0	7.6	5.4	4.3	5.7	4.0
Rest of EU-15	5.1	8.9	6.0	7.4	9.0	10.2	11.2
(% of total annual emigration)	14.2	19.2	12.2	10.3	13.0	12.7	12.9
EU-12	7.2	12.6	17.2	30.5	19.0	13.9	14.8
(% of total annual emigration)	20.0	27.2	35.1	42.4	27.5	17.2	17.0
Rest of World	6.2	8.2	9.0	11.0	9.3	9.9	11.1
(% of total annual emigration)	17.2	17.7	18.4	15.3	13.4	12.3	12.7
Total	36.0	46.3	49.0 ^a	72.0	69.2	80.6	87.1

Source: CSO 2012a, p. 4 (Table 3).

^aBecause of rounding, this total figures varies slightly from the figure in CSO 2012a.

period shown here, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all emigrants from Ireland each year held either Irish or an EU-12 nationality.

Changes in the gender and age profiles of emigrants from Ireland tell another story about recent migration. Table 12 provides an overview, showing the predominance of migrants aged between 15 and 44 in the period 2006–2012.

Table 12. Emigration from Ireland by gender and age, 2006–2012 ('000s).

		0–14	15–24	25–44	45–64	65 +	Total
2006	Male	1.1	8	7.6	1.2	0.8	18.7
	Female	1.1	7.9	6.5	0.9	0.9	17.3
	% of total annual emigration	6.1	44.2	39.2	5.8	4.7	100
2007	Male	0.6	8.9	12.8	2.0	1.5	25.8
	Female	0.8	9.3	8.4	1.1	1.0	20.6
	% of total annual emigration	3.0	39.2	45.7	6.7	5.4	100
2008	Male	0.8	9.7	14.9	2.2	2.0	29.6
	Female	0.8	8.1	9.1	0.6	1.0	19.6
	% of total annual emigration	3.3	36.2	48.8	5.7	6.1	100
2009	Male	1.1	17.1	22.0	1.2	0.4	41.8
	Female	1.3	10.8	15.5	1.8	0.8	30.2
	% of total annual emigration	3.3	38.7	52.1	4.2	1.7	100
2010	Males	1.0	13.7	23.0	2.4	0.5	40.6
	Females	1.1	13.0	13.5	0.5	0.6	28.7
	% of total annual emigration	3.0	38.5	52.7	4.2	1.6	100
2011	Males	2.5	15.9	17.9	3.1	2.4	41.8
	Females	2.7	18.6	13.3	3.1	1.0	38.7
	% of total annual emigration	6.5	42.9	38.8	7.7	4.2	100
2012	Males	2.3	17.4	24.7	3.8	0.6	48.8
	Females	2.6	18.4	14.8	1.8	0.6	38.2
	% of total annual emigration	5.6	41.1	45.4	6.4	1.4	100

Source: CSO 2012a, p. 6 (Table 5).

The percentage of emigrants from Ireland aged between 15 and 44 has varied between 80 and 90% over the six year period, while the percentage of emigrants aged under 15 was at its highest level in 2006 and 2011. While the level of emigration of men from Ireland rose very rapidly between 2008 and 2009, this increase has now flattened out. In 2011, the most significant increase was in the level of out-migration of women.

Again, there is no one obvious source of information about emigration from Ireland, such as departure records gathered at ports and airports. This is not uncommon in the European context: as de Beer *et al.* comment, ‘many European countries do not have reliable statistics on emigration’ (2010, p. 461). Instead, figures for emigration from Ireland now come from the Quarterly National Household Survey. Table 13 provides information on emigration from Ireland by destination, and shows important increases in the numbers of people moving to the UK, the EU-15 and the Rest of the World though, following a large rise in 2009, the numbers moving to the EU-12 have dropped sharply again. It is possible to triangulate the information shown in Table 13 with other sources, such as records from immigration authorities in other countries. However, since immigration authorities tend to gather details based on nationality rather than on place of previous residence, this is most useful for understanding the migration from Ireland of Irish nationals.

In the Rest of World category, Australia is the main destination for Irish nationals. The key route of access to Australia for Irish nationals is through the Working Holiday Visa programme, which facilitates temporary migration. The annual number of Australian working holiday visas issued to Irish nationals has remained consistently over 10,000 for a decade (see Table 14). Apart from a decline in the year to June 2010, the number of visas issued has increased each year since the year to June 2006. At the end of 2011, there were 15,874 Irish working holiday visa holders in Australia (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2012). There has also been an increase in migration of Irish nationals to Canada – again, many on temporary working holiday visas – and to other places, most notably the Middle East. Permanent migration to Australia and Canada, among other places, has also increased, but remains at relatively low levels. In 2011, 662 people from Ireland became permanent residents of Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2013), and during 2011–2012, 2239 people from Ireland were admitted to Australia as settlers (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2013).

Table 13. Emigration from Ireland by destination, 2006–2012 (‘000s).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
UK	8.8	11.1	7.6	13.2	15.3	20.0	19.0
Rest of EU-15	5.7	3.5	7.8	7.4	11.9	13.9	14.4
EU-12	2.3	7.7	10.1	25.2	14.6	10.4	9.6
US	3.3	3.1	2.4	4.1	2.9	4.7	8.6
Rest of world	15.8	20.8	21.3	22.2	24.6	31.7	35.6
Total	36.0	46.2	49.2	72.1	69.3	80.7	87.2

Source: CSO 2012a, p. 5 (Table 4).

Table 14. Australian working holiday visas issued to Irish nationals, 2002–2011.

Year (to end of June)	Number of visas issued
2002	11,000 (est.)
2003	11,500 (est.)
2004	12,260
2005	12,585
2006	12,554
2007	13,554
2008	17,133
2009	22,759
2010	14,790
2011	21,753

Sources: Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, p. 12 (Table 1.05).

The UK has also retained its importance as a destination for migration from Ireland. The Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK means that Irish nationals are not subject to the same immigration controls in the UK as many other nationalities. Therefore, records of Irish nationals migrating to the UK are limited, and do not include people who maintain a residence in Ireland and commute for the purposes of work. The UK Office for National Statistics reported that over 360,000 people living in Britain in 2011 had been born in Ireland, and around 320,000 had Irish nationality (Office for National Statistics 2012). However, information on migrant flows is more limited, and publicly available data on Irish nationals is often aggregated into the broader EU category. An immediate insight into movement to the UK is provided by information on National Insurance Numbers issued to Irish nationals, shown in Table 15.

As with the use of PPS numbers to measure migration flows to Ireland, there are obvious difficulties with using National Insurance Numbers to show flow of Irish to the UK. This does not capture circular migration: people from Ireland who have

Table 15. UK National Insurance Numbers issued to Irish nationals, 2002–2011.

Year	Male	Female	Total
2002	3960	4140	8100
2003	4520	4650	9,170
2004	4570	4700	9270
2005	5070	5130	10,200
2006	4750	4770	9520
2007	5590	4990	10,580
2008	6010	4540	10,550
2009	5840	5210	11,050
2010	7340	6570	13,910
2011	9440	7600	17,040

Source: Department for Work and Pensions 2012.

previously lived in the UK and already have a National Insurance number. It also does not show where people have moved from, rather using the implicit assumption that people have moved directly from their country of nationality. Similarly, this measure does not indicate temporary migration, such as seasonal migration, and so may over-estimate the number of migrants from Ireland actually resident in the UK. However, the figures shown in [Table 15](#) offer further support for the patterns suggested in [Table 13](#), specifically a marked increase in emigration from Ireland to the UK in 2011.

Emigration from Ireland has clearly increased since the start of the prolonged recession in 2008. Yet, changes in patterns of emigration are less marked than is suggested by banner headlines. It is clear, particularly from [Table 14](#), that some movement represents a continuation of patterns of migration that were established during the Celtic Tiger era, particularly the Irish version of the ‘Gap Year’ in Australia. However, a focus on nationality in statistics from destination countries masks the extent to which migrant flows from Ireland include both Irish nationals and others. While [Tables 11](#) and [13](#) suggest that there is some return migration by recent immigrants to Ireland, equally these tables suggest some onward migration, highlighting that our knowledge of migrant flows from Ireland is partial. Similarly, the extent to which official statistics can pick up newer and less clearly defined forms of emigration, such as ‘extreme commuting’ or circular migration, is limited. The data presented here represent the best available information on migration to and from Ireland, but the limits must be acknowledged. The 2011 Census of Population highlighted this clearly. There were close to 100,000 more people living in Ireland in April 2011 than had been predicted. While there are many possible explanations for this, inaccuracies in estimating both migrant stock and migrant flow are likely to be key factors.

Understanding migration: limitations and insights

Public discussion of migration in contemporary Ireland is most concerned with migrant flow, particularly emigration from Ireland. Yet, the difficulties in measuring migrant flow using the Quarterly National Household Survey were made apparent when the CSO published its Population and Migration Estimates for 2012 (CSO 2012a). Those estimates included significant revisions of figures for immigration to Ireland in the period from 2007 to 2011. Details of these differences are shown in [Table 16](#) (see also Timoney 2012). This suggests that immigration to Ireland was consistently undercounted in the intercensal period, with significant undercounts of both migrants from the EU-12 and returning Irish nationals.

Immigration of EU-12 nationals was underestimated by over 65,000 for the period from 2007 to 2011, while immigration of Irish nationals was underestimated by 30,000 for the same period. In total, the revised Population and Migration Estimates suggested that close to 110,000 more people had immigrated to Ireland between 2007 and 2011 than originally thought. This new figure was 33% higher than the original estimate. Emigration figures were also revised, but not to the same extent: the new estimate was around 8% higher than the original. Over the five-year period, the revised estimates suggested that just over 20,000 more people had emigrated than what was initially calculated. The under-estimation of net immigration was just under 87,000. These revised figures clearly show the difficulties

Table 16. Revisions to migration flow estimates, 2007–2011.

	Migration to Ireland (‘000s)		Migration from Ireland (‘000s)		Net migration (‘000s)	
	Original	Revised	Original	Revised	Original	Revised
2007	109.5	151.1	42.2	46.3	67.3	104.8
2008	83.8	113.5	45.3	49.2	38.5	64.3
2009	57.3	73.7	65.1	72.0	–7.8	1.7
2010	30.8	41.8	65.3	69.2	–34.5	–27.4
2011	42.3	53.3	76.4	80.6	–34.1	–27.3
Total	323.7	433.4	294.3	317.3	29.4	116.1

Sources: CSO 2011, p. 2 (Table 1); CSO 2012a, p. 2 (Table 1).

with the way in which migrant flow is calculated in Ireland. The CSO has changed its methodology in response, now triangulating QNHS data with other sources of information, including PPS numbers, work permits and asylum applications in Ireland (CSO 2012a). However, in the absence of more systematic collection of data on immigration to and emigration from Ireland in particular, statistics on migrant flow will remain as estimates, open to multiple interpretations.

The emphasis on migrant flow also detracts from the important information on migrant stock provided by the Census. In other national contexts, researchers have used the national census and its findings to highlight the ways in which particular minority groups experience economic, social and cultural disadvantage. When a long-standing campaign to have a separate Irish ethnic categorisation in the UK Census was finally realised in 2001 (Walter 1998, Howard 2006), the results highlighted the social polarisation of the self-identified Irish community in Britain. Analysis of the 2001 Census findings across England showed polarisation in terms of education, health, work and housing (FIS 2007). This included sectoral employment concentrations, specifically Irish men in construction-related employment, with Irish women employed in health and social care (20 and 27%, respectively). The distinction was particularly clear in terms of housing. In 2001, over 26% of Irish people owned their own home outright while 21% lived in social housing (FIS 2007).

The 2011 Census in Ireland offers similar possibilities for analysis of the experiences of migrants in contemporary Ireland. As discussed earlier, close to 20% of the population of Ireland in 2011 was migrant stock – people who had moved countries for a period of at least one year. For the purposes of this discussion, however, the focus will be on migrant stock as identified by nationality rather than on time spent outside Ireland or on place of birth. There are difficulties with this approach, particularly the assumption of unproblematic belonging for returning Irish emigrants and/or their families (Ní Laoire 2008, Ralph 2009, 2012). However, a focus on nationality recognises the extent to which people with Irish nationality have enhanced rights in relation to political participation, and are less likely to experience barriers to integration than those with other nationalities (see MCRI 2008 for a discussion of some of these barriers, including linguistic difficulties and recognition of education, training and skills). The relationship between nationality and employment has been identified in a range of studies, which suggest sectoral concentration, deskilling and earnings disadvantage (Barrett and Duffy 2008, Barrett

and Kelly 2012, Barrett et al. 2012; Goodwin-White *forthcoming*). The 2011 Census shows the continued intensification of sectoral concentration (see Table 17). While areas of employment for Irish and UK nationals remain roughly comparable, there are areas of concentration that are worth noting. EU-10 nationals are over-represented in the wholesale and retail trade, in accommodation and food services, and in manufacturing industries. Rest of World (RoW) nationalities are over-represented in health and social work, and in accommodation and food services. Meanwhile, there is under-representation of all nationalities other than Irish in public administration and defence, and of nationals from EU-10 and RoW in education.

Employment has received significant attention, but it is just one aspect of the lives of people who have migrated to Ireland. Where and how people live is also important, and the Census provides important insights into this aspect of migrant experience. The Census is primarily based on place of residence. Census forms are distributed to, and collected from, where people live, and the completed forms are allocated to geographical areas such as Electoral Divisions (EDs) or Small Areas (SAs) in order to develop social, economic and demographic profiles of those areas. The consistency of the 3409 EDs allows for comparison over time, while the recent development of 18,488 SAs (following the 2011 Census) will allow for more nuanced spatial analysis. However, there are limitations to the uses of this spatial information, specifically because the placement of boundaries – between EDs or SAs – affects the character of the ED or SA. Different boundaries would give different results (see Gilmartin and Mills 2008 for a more detailed discussion).

That said, the 2006 Census provided interesting insights into the place of residence of the largest migrant groups, by nationality, in Ireland. UK nationals – at that stage, the largest group of non-Irish nationals – had a residence distribution that was similar to Irish nationals. In contrast, Polish nationals were more concentrated in urban areas than Irish or UK nationals, and over 50% of Polish nationals resided

Table 17. Employment by nationality and sector, 2011.

	Total	Overall	Other				
			Irish	UK	EU-15	EU-10	RoW
		%	%	%	%	%	%
Wholesale and retail trade	260,257	14.6	14.3	15.6	9.3	22.7	10.5
Health and social work	194,916	11.0	11.2	12.3	5.5	4.1	19.3
Manufacturing industries	181,486	10.2	9.9	10.0	12.7	16.0	6.4
Education	163,675	9.2	10.1	8.9	7.7	1.7	4.7
Public administration and defence	111,533	6.3	7.2	3.4	1.2	0.4	1.6
Accommodation and food service	102,533	5.8	4.2	6.0	10.9	18.1	12.9
Financial and insurance activities	91,389	5.1	5.5	5.3	8.5	1.8	2.3
Professional, scientific and technical	90,858	5.1	5.5	6.0	5.8	2.0	2.9
Construction	85,982	4.8	5.1	4.6	1.3	4.5	1.9
Total ('000s)		1778.4	1494.5	46.9	30.3	126.2	80.5

Source: CSO 2012d, p. 78 (Table 14A).

Note: Sectoral classifications were changed between 2006 and 2011. The 2006 Census uses NACE Rev. 1 classifications and the 2011 Census uses NACE Rev. 2 classifications. Details of the differences are outlined in CSO 2012d, pp. 141–142.

in just 133 EDs (Gilmartin and Mills 2008). By 2011, these patterns of residential concentration had intensified further. At that stage, over 50% of Polish nationals lived in just 121 EDs: a greater concentration than in 2006 despite a 93.7% increase in numbers. This compares to the more dispersed spread of UK nationals, 50% of whom live in 496 EDs. Lithuanian nationals are even more concentrated, with 50% living in just 87 EDs. This pattern of residential concentration is also clear when we look at EDs without UK, Polish or Lithuanian residents. Just 19 of the 3409 EDs have no resident UK national. The corresponding figure for Poles is 1294, and for Lithuanians 1968 (Gilmartin 2013). So, though the numbers of UK and Polish nationals living in Ireland is roughly similar, around 38% of EDs have no Polish resident presence.

These emerging patterns of residential concentration have led to claims of ghetto formation in various parts of Ireland, most recently in the aftermath of the murder of Toyosi Shitta-Bey in 2010. Bey lived in Tyrrellstown in West Dublin: newspaper reports following his death described the area as one of the most 'racially diverse in Ireland', and then drew parallels with other parts of Ireland. 'All around the country', journalist Ali Bracken wrote, 'large groups of immigrants are forging communities. There are large groupings of Burmese in Castlebar, Kurds in Mullingar, Brazilians in Gort and Kenyans in Dundalk. They are living together both by choice and necessity' (Bracken 2010). While the article suggests that there may be some element of necessity in this residential clustering, its main focus is on choice, suggesting that people choose to self-segregate in this manner. However, the decision on where to live is rarely free of broader structures. In Ireland, this relates to the specific nature of the housing market. Table 18 shows the types of housing tenure, by household, in 2006 and 2011.

The total number of households increased by just over 187,000 between 2006 and 2011. A significant proportion of this increase was in rented accommodation, particularly properties rented from private landlords. This latter category increased from just over 145,000 in 2006 to over 305,000 in 2011. A breakdown of housing tenure by nationality is shown in Table 19.

Table 19 shows striking differences in tenure by nationality. Of particular significance is the extent to which Irish and UK nationals predominantly own their own houses compared to other national groups, and the extent to which EU-10, EU-15 and RoW nationals live in the private rental sector. This supports earlier research

Table 18. Housing tenure by household, 2006 and 2011.

Type of tenure	2006	2011
Owner occupier with mortgage	38.98%	35.35%
Owner occupier, no mortgage	34.09%	34.36%
Being purchased from local authority	1.61%	not available
Rented from private landlord	9.94%	18.51%
Rented from local authority	7.22%	7.82%
Rented from voluntary body	3.45%	0.91%
Rented free of rent	1.48%	1.54%
Total number of households	1,462,296	1,649,408

Sources: CSO 2007b, p. 83 (Table 32A); CSO 2012c, p. 108 (Table 40A).

Table 19. Housing tenure by nationality, 2011.

	Total	Irish	UK	Other EU-15	EU-12	RoW
Type of tenure	%	%	%	%	%	%
Owner occupier with mortgage	35.35	38.34	34.11	18.36	5.67	15.61
Owner occupier, no mortgage	34.36	38.08	28.35	10.07	0.43	3.15
Rented from private landlord	18.51	12.02	25.46	64.22	84.37	66.58
Rented from local authority	7.82	7.93	8.55	3.25	5.95	8.53
Rented from voluntary body	0.91	0.85	1.03	0.95	1.22	1.66
Occupied free of rent	1.54	1.57	1.70	1.44	0.60	1.84

Source: CSO 2012f, CD443.

suggesting that immigrants have a lower owner-occupancy rate than natives (Duffy 2007) and are over-represented in the private rental sector (Vang 2010); it also suggests that type of tenure is strongly related to nationality grouping. There are a number of possible explanations, including the age profile of migrant groups, but it is likely that the cost of property during the Celtic Tiger era acted as a significant barrier to entry to the property market for many migrants in Ireland.

These differences in housing tenure have important implications. The private rented sector in Ireland remains largely unregulated and there is limited inspection or enforcement to ensure minimum standards of accommodation (Norris 2011). There are few controls on levels of rent and rent increases, and long-term leases are infrequently available. As a result, it is not unusual for tenants to move frequently, which has implications for wider access to public services. For example, schools and hospitals often have catchment areas, so a change of address can affect continuity of access or service. Voting in elections is linked to place of residence, so a change of address requires a visit to the police station for re-certification of a person's right to vote. More broadly, the increased demand for private rented accommodation shown in Table 18 has been satisfied primarily by new housing developments, for example on the outskirts of Dublin. This also has consequences for access to services, with growing evidence of segregation of immigrant children in schools in Ireland, particularly through over-representation of immigrant children in urban schools and in schools with a high socio-economically disadvantaged student body (Byrne *et al.* 2010). In addition, Byrne *et al.* suggest that 'enrolment criteria used by schools tend to favour settled communities' (2010, p. 285), with implications for access to more popular schools for recent arrivals in Ireland. The implications of these residence-based inequalities are likely to be significant in the medium to longer term. As Simpson suggests in the context of England and Wales, the lack of strong evidence to support the belief that there are growing levels of segregation does not take away from the fact that 'poor educational, housing and employment conditions [are] disproportionately associated with ethnic minority populations' (2007, p. 423). A similar caution is required in the Irish context.

Conclusion: the state of migration

In her recent book on population change in Ireland, historian Mary Daly suggested that a key focus for research should be the misinterpretation of demographic data

(Daly 2006). Daly was writing about Ireland in the twentieth century, but her comments have contemporary resonance. It is clear from the information presented above that there are difficulties in providing accurate figures for migrant flow in particular. Available figures show that more recent stories of an exodus of young people from Ireland are exaggerated. Yet, the misuse of incomplete statistics has been a key feature of recent debates about migration in Ireland, most strikingly in the 2004 Citizenship Referendum (Coulter 2004, White and Gilmartin 2008).

More troublingly, there is often silence on issues that emerge from official statistics. These are issues that point to specific areas of concern for migrants living in Ireland. The emerging patterns of residential concentration in Ireland could lead to future problems around access to resources and services, and around the quality of life in such areas (see Phillips 2010 for a discussion of the relationship between segregation and deprivation across Europe). Levels of sectoral concentration – particularly in areas of employment described as precarious and as 3D (dirty, dangerous, demeaning) in other contexts – mean that possibilities for social mobility among migrants may be restricted (see Soysal 2012 for a broader discussion). Available information on migrant stock in Ireland – from the CSO and from other supporting qualitative research – suggest that many migrants have experienced de-skilling as a consequence of their move to Ireland. This has been exacerbated by the effects of the recession, with migrants more likely to lose jobs, and with more general restrictions on employment mobility (Gilmartin and Migge 2011). Though not discussed in this paper, a growing body of research on education also suggests the development of a two-tier system of access (Ledwith and Reilly 2012). Taken together, these official statistics and corroborating research provide a clear indication of potential difficulties in relation to future social cohesion within Irish society. Evidence from the experiences of Irish migrants in Britain shows the difficulties that emerge from sectoral employment concentration, as well as the consequences of longer-term social and economic marginalisation. However, it took years for the social and economic polarisation of the Irish community in Britain to be formally recognised through Census classification (Hickman 2011). In Ireland, Census classification allows for the identification of both current and potential processes of marginalisation, yet there is an apparent unwillingness to tackle these issues, with the political and policy focus now on the perceived problem mobility of Irish citizens. While the extent of migration of Irish citizens has certainly increased, there are a variety of reasons for this change. The recent focus on raw numbers of migrants, without an acknowledgement of the diversity of migration from Ireland – in terms of motivation, background and intention – detracts from a broader understanding of migration and its impacts, in Ireland and elsewhere.

State-sponsored data collection in Ireland offers us the opportunity to identify broad patterns, trends, similarities and divergences among and between groups of residents. Despite this, policy formulation in Ireland appears to pay limited attention to current and potential patterns of exclusion among immigrants in Ireland. This tendency was clear in the treatment of returning Irish migrants in the early days of the Celtic Tiger (Ní Laoire 2008, Ralph 2012), and it continues in the lack of state attention to questions of integration or social cohesion in relation to newcomers to Ireland. The status of the short-lived junior Ministerial post with responsibility for integration makes this abundantly clear: between June 2007 and January 2011, three different people held the post of Minister for Integration, but this was disbanded in

2011. Even while it existed, the Office of the Minister for Integration did not accept responsibility for EU nationals living in Ireland. ‘Integration’ was directed towards non-EU nationals only. The Office of the Minister has now been replaced by an Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, and the issue of integration is no longer a key issue for the Irish government, despite the presence of a significant number of people in Ireland with a nationality other than Irish.

The changing patterns of migration to and from Ireland are imperfectly identified by the Irish state in terms of data collection. While the experiences of immigrants living in Ireland are charted more methodically, the selective use of the information gathered has broader implications in a time of recession. In particular, we see the emergence of a ‘hierarchy of acceptability’ (McDowell 2009, p. 29) in relation to the presence of migrants in Ireland, and the role of particular, selective statistics in suggesting and supporting that hierarchy. The on-going release of results from the 2011 Census, at an expanded range of spatial scales, offers one way of challenging the incomplete picture of migration and migrant experiences that currently dominates. However, geographers also need to be aware of the politics of data collection and data interpretation, and to look beyond the superficial spatial patterns to uncover broader geographies and structures of inequality both within and beyond the borders of the nation-state (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). This paper provides a starting point for such an analysis.

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