Migration

Irial Glynn

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the impact of the Great Recession on Irish migration patterns. Emigration increased dramatically, particularly in the depths of the recession, but this was partially offset by an inflow of immigrants that faltered and then resumed with recovery. Within this general trend there was substantial emigration of Irish citizens. Irish emigrants were disproportionately drawn from those with higher education, although the outflow of graduates was offset by an inflow of highly qualified immigrants. Immigrants were hit hard by the recession: they experienced a greater fall in employment than did Irish natives, and they suffered higher rates of unemployment. However, the recession did not increase either the labour market penalties or discrimination experienced by immigrants. The chapter also discusses the individual and societal effects of emigration.

Keywords: discrimination, emigration, immigrants, migration, recession, recovery

Introduction
The Great Recession and austerity had a series of profound impacts on Irish migration patterns. Outward migration increased dramatically, and inward migration declined, particularly in the depths of the recession from 2009 to 2012. Initially, emigration was dominated by the departure of relatively newly arrived immigrants. Between 2011 and 2013 emigration of Irish nationals exceeded that of non-Irish nationals, but that pattern was reversed again in 2014 and 2015.

This chapter begins with a review of the main trends in migration, documenting inflows and outflows and showing their impact on the structure of the population. It then examines the impact of the recession on immigrants in the Irish labour market, examining the extent to which immigrants were adversely affected by the contraction in employment and increase in unemployment. The discussion then turns to emigration, exploring trends in outward migration, the reasons for such patterns, the situation of Irish emigrants abroad, and the impact that this latest wave of emigration had on Irish society.

Principal trends in migration

For most of the last two centuries, migration to and from Ireland has ebbed and flowed with the fortunes of the economy. The last two decades have been no different in this respect. In the mid-1990s, in the context of rapid economic growth and convergence with the Western European core, a long-established pattern of net outmigration, where outflows of
emigrants exceeded inflows of immigrants, shifted to net inward migration, as shown in Figure 16.1.

**Table 16.1. Total inward, outward, and net migration, 2008–15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inward (1,000s)</th>
<th>Outward (1,000s)</th>
<th>Net (1,000s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>120.5</td>
<td>263.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of EU15</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU12 NMS</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>110.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of world</td>
<td>117.9</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>407.3</td>
<td>560.7</td>
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(p.291) The gross migratory inflow increased from around 20,000–25,000 per annum in the late 1980s to over 50,000 per annum after 2000 and to over 150,000 in the twelve months to April 2007. The impact of the Great Recession, with the dramatic decline in labour market conditions, can be clearly seen after 2008, with a sharp fall in the inflow to 42,000 in the twelve months to April 2010. Immigration then recovered somewhat to over 60,000 in 2013/14. Emigration declined during the period of rapid economic growth, to a low of 25,600 in the twelve months to April 2002. Emigration increased with the onset of the Great Recession, to 72,000 in 2008–9 and to 89,000 in 2012–13, but fell again to just over 80,000 in 2013–14 and 2014–15. As a result, net migration, which had peaked at a net inward flow of almost 105,000 in 2006–7, turned negative in 2009–10 and, having bottomed out at −34,400 in 2011–12, was down to −11,600 in 2014–15. Immigration plunged sharply after 2007, and emigration, which was already on the rise from about 2005, reflecting increased circular movement within Europe after European Union (EU) enlargement, increased steadily throughout the crisis period.

Table 16.1 shows cumulated migration between April 2008 and April 2015 by nationality. Over that period, total emigration amounted to 560,000 while immigration was 407,000: a net outward migration of 153,000 over six years. Irish nationals
were the single largest mobile group: 263,000 Irish nationals emigrated during the crisis, and 120,000 returned. The return migrants would have included both those who had emigrated at an earlier time as well as those who emigrated during the crisis and returned after a brief period abroad. Over the entire period there was net outward migration of 143,000 Irish nationals.
### Table 16.2. Total population 2006 to 2015, classified by nationality

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<td>1,000s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
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<td>3909.5</td>
<td>3994.7</td>
<td>4035.0</td>
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<td>4057.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Non-Irish</td>
<td>430.6</td>
<td>575.6</td>
<td>560.0</td>
<td>550.4</td>
<td>564.3</td>
<td>578.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>115.5</td>
<td>117.9</td>
<td>115.9</td>
<td>113.0</td>
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<td>115.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old EU13</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>31.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>233.0</td>
<td>229.4</td>
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<td>237.4</td>
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<td>Rest of World</td>
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<td>159.2</td>
<td>158.7</td>
<td>162.5</td>
<td>180.5</td>
<td>193.4</td>
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<td>4485.1</td>
<td>4554.8</td>
<td>4585.4</td>
<td>4609.1</td>
<td>4635.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>%</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>87.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Non-Irish</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old EU13</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU NMS</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of World</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** CSO 2013, 2015.
There was also substantial mobility among the nationals of the new post-EU enlargement member states (EU NMS). Over 110,000 of them left Ireland (p.292) between 2008 and 2015. This was a significant outward migration, equivalent to almost 45 per cent of the estimated population of EU NMS nationals resident in Ireland in 2008. However, substantial inward migration continued among this group: almost 84,000 EU NMS nationals migrated into Ireland during the crisis, with the result that net emigration among this group amounted to just over 26,000.

Nationals of the older pre-enlargement states, excluding the UK ('old EU13'), were also highly mobile: over 77,000 emigrated and 57,000 immigrated, yielding a net emigration of 20,000 between 2008 and 2015. While these movements are small in numerical terms, they are significant when compared with the population of old EU nationals in Ireland.

Migration from the rest of the world, a very broad category which accounts for almost 30 per cent of all inflows, increased: inward migration was almost 118,000 during the crisis, offset by outflows of 84,000, yielding a net inflow of 34,000. Most of the inflow from outside the EU related to inward migration of highly skilled workers, with employment permits to meet skill shortages, as well as students.

So while there was a substantial migratory outflow during the Great Recession, this was partially offset by an inflow of immigrants, especially from outside the EU. This can be seen in the data on the number of foreign residents in Ireland, which peaked before the recession at over 575,000, or 12.8 per cent of the total population, in 2008. Their numbers declined during the recession, to 550,400 in 2010, but recovered to 578,000 in 2015, slightly exceeding the pre-recession peak. The single largest group of non-nationals is from the EU NMS. There were 133,000 nationals of the EU NMS in 2006 (accounting for 3 per cent of the total population) and this increased to 248,000 in 2008—(5.5 per cent of the population). That number declined in the recession to 228,600 in 2013, but increased again to over 237,000 in 2015.

The number of immigrants from the old EU 13 (excluding the UK) has fallen from over 52,000 in 2010 to less than 32,000 in 2015, a sharp decline of 40 per cent. Nationals from the rest of
the world (outside Europe) have (p.293) increased in number since 2010—to 193,000 (or over 4 per cent of the total population) in 2015. This is consistent with the data on immigration presented in Table 16.2, and may be partly related to the influx of highly skilled immigrants to meet skill demands in particular sectors, particularly information technology (IT) and health.

The Impact of the recession on Immigrants in the Labour Market

Employment is a key element of economic integration and social inclusion. It leads to financial independence, and allows people to contribute to society and avoid the risk of poverty and social exclusion in their host country. Through employment, immigrants can build networks, develop their language skills, and increase participation in society. Job loss can be associated with poverty, psychological distress, and broader social exclusion. In general, immigrants are more exposed to the consequences of economic downturns, and in this section we explore the impact of the recession on immigrants in Ireland.

Most research on immigrants in the labour market focuses on patterns of employment and unemployment among labour market participants. However, the first element of immigrant integration concerns continued presence in the country. We have seen that, during the recession, there was substantial (p. 294) outward migration, particularly among the relatively recently arrived nationals of the EU NMS, offset to some extent by inward migration, and that the population of old EU country nationals declined significantly. A second dimension of integration is participation in the labour market. Throughout the boom, asylum seekers awaiting decisions on their refugee claims were denied the right to work in Ireland. Asylum seekers are accommodated collectively in Direct Provision centres and receive small allowances. This exclusion from participation in the Irish economy and society remained unchanged throughout the recession.

A second group with restricted access to the Irish labour market saw that access become further restricted during the recession when, in 2009 under a revised policy, spouses, partners, and dependents of general employment permit holders could not access the Irish labour market without applying for their own employment permit. Such permits allow
access to a restricted range of occupations and require a labour market test. This was part of a wider set of revisions to policy at the onset of the recession, which, in other respects, could be regarded as increasing restrictions on ‘outsiders’, particularly immigrants from outside the EU, while liberalizing certain provisions for those already resident in Ireland, such as extending the time period that holders of employment permits could remain in the country to look for work following redundancy.
Table 16.3. Employment by nationality, 2004–15 (Q4)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>1735.1</td>
<td>1814.5</td>
<td>1579.9</td>
<td>1682.24</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>−12.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Irish</td>
<td>164.4</td>
<td>341.5</td>
<td>269.2</td>
<td>300.9</td>
<td>107.7</td>
<td>−21.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>−18.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU13</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>−10.2</td>
<td>−39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU NMS</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>171.3</td>
<td>125.9</td>
<td>137.9</td>
<td>318.8</td>
<td>−26.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>−16.4</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Persons</td>
<td>1899.05</td>
<td>2156.0</td>
<td>1848.9</td>
<td>1983.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>−14.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | %     |       |       |       |        |         |         |
| Non-Irish | 8.7   | 15.8  | 14.6  | 1542  |        |         |         |

In examining observed patterns of labour market activity, it is essential to be aware that our statistics reflect the results of a selection process in which those who had a particularly negative experience of the labour market may have exited the country and are thus not observed. Table 16.3 tracks the trends in employment by nationality since 2004. The role of immigrants in meeting the demand for labour in the booming Irish economy between 2004 and 2007 is clearly evident. The number of non-Irish nationals in employment increased from 164,400 at the end of 2004 to 341,500 at the end of 2007—the peak of employment and immigration. This represented a very rapid increase of immigrants in the labour market, from less than 9 per cent to almost 16 per cent of total employment, between 2004 and 2007. Over that three-year period, the total number of non-Irish nationals in employment more than doubled. The growth in numbers from the EU NMS was particularly strong: over 300 per cent.

After 2007, however, immigrants began to lose ground in the Irish labour market. Total employment fell by over 14 per cent between the end of 2007 and the end of 2012. While employment among Irish nationals fell by 13 per cent, it fell by 21 per cent among non-Irish nationals. Non-Irish nationals accounted for almost 16 per cent of total employment in 2007 but this share had fallen below 15 per cent by the end of 2012. Employment among NMS nationals contracted by over 26 per cent between 2007 and 2012, and among UK nationals by 18 per cent. The biggest employment losses occurred in construction, in the wholesale and retail trade, and in accommodation and food

Figure 16.2. Unemployment rates, Irish and non-Irish nationality, 2007–15
Source: CSO, Quarterly Household Survey, various years.
Migration services; these sectors had expanded substantially with large increases in migrant labour during the boom years.

In the more recent context of economic recovery, total employment increased by almost 5 per cent between 2012 and 2015. Employment among Irish natives increased by 6.5 per cent and among non-Irish by almost 12 per cent—a significant rebound. The rate of growth was greatest (36 per cent) among those from outside the EU, reflecting demand for skills in short supply among Europeans (10 per cent). Employment of nationals of the older EU countries (other than UK) continued to decline, by a dramatic 40 per cent between 2012 and 2015.

The national unemployment rate increased from 4 per cent of the labour force in 2007 to 15 per cent in 2012 (see Figure 16.2). Unemployment increased by over 220,000 people overall; by 185,000 among Irish nationals and 36,000 among non-Irish nationals. As the recession deepened, the gap in unemployment rates grew wider between Irish and non-Irish nationals. At the end of 2007 the unemployment rate among Irish nationals was 4.4 per cent, compared with 5.8 per cent among non-Irish nationals: a gap of less than 1.5 per cent. Following substantial job losses in late 2008 and early 2009, the unemployment rate among non-Irish nationals was 15 per cent in 2009, 5 per cent higher than among Irish nationals. Unemployment continued to grow until the middle of 2012, although the gap between Irish and non-Irish nationals declined somewhat. Since then unemployment has trended downwards, so that by Q4 2015, the unemployment rates were 8.3 per cent among Irish and 10.3 per cent among non-Irish.

During the period of the Celtic Tiger and in the context of the large influx of new immigrants, a substantial body of research emerged showing that immigrants suffered multiple disadvantages in the Irish labour market. Unemployment was shown to be consistently higher among immigrants than natives (McGinnity et al. 2013). Immigrants tended to be overeducated: employed at occupational levels below their skill level (Barrett and Duffy 2008; O’Connell and McGinnity 2008). There was also evidence of substantial wage penalties, whereby immigrants earned less than Irish nationals, and this varied by national group (Barrett and McCarthy 2007). Higher rates of discrimination in the labour market were also reported among immigrants (O’Connell and McGinnity 2008). Given that these studies sought to control for the composition
of immigrant groups—in terms of age, education, gender, and so on—these results point to an *immigrant penalty* associated with the status of immigrants per se, rather than to any personal or human capital characteristics that might lead to poorer labour market outcomes. We have already seen that the recession led to a dramatic deterioration in the Irish economy after 2008 and that immigrants were more exposed to its consequences, with greater employment losses and higher unemployment. Given this experience, and against the backdrop of disadvantage experienced by immigrant groups during the boom, it is important to assess whether immigrant *penalties* persisted or increased during the recession.

McGinnity and colleagues (2014) compared labour market outcomes in 2007 and 2012 in their assessment of the impact of the Great Recession. They found that, in 2007, at the end of the boom, all migrant groups, apart from old EU13 and EU NMS, had lower employment rates than Irish nationals, with *Africans* showing by far the lowest employment. All nationality groups experienced a fall in employment by 2012. However, controlling for other relevant factors, the employment gap between Irish and all other groups narrowed during the recession. They found a similar pattern in relation to unemployment: most non-national groups experienced higher unemployment risks than Irish nationals in 2007. The unemployment gap was particularly high for Africans. All groups, including Irish nationals, experienced a sharp increase in unemployment. However, the relative gap in unemployment between Irish and other groups did not generally increase—with two exceptions: the rise in unemployment among the EU NMS group was somewhat steeper than that of the Irish, and the size of the African disadvantage increased over time. These results suggest a general pattern of persistence rather than intensification of immigrant penalties over the course of recession. Kelly and colleagues (2015) found that labour market outcomes for newly nationalized immigrants deteriorated in 2012 and 2014, relative to Irish nationals’ unemployment, but this appears to have been due less to the impact of the business cycle and more to the personal characteristics of this particular group: there was a marked increase in naturalizations of immigrants from 2011, and many were refugees who had been excluded from the labour market.
for extended periods of time while awaiting decisions on their asylum claims.

Barrett and colleagues (2014) examined the impact of the recession on the immigrant earnings gap. They found that average hourly earnings increased by 7.5 per cent among Irish nationals between 2006 and 2009 while immigrants’ earnings fell by over 8 per cent. Disaggregating among immigrants, they found that all EU groups experienced increases while non-EU nationals’ earnings fell. They also found that, when relevant characteristics were controlled for, the large increase in the wage gap between immigrants and Irish nationals between 2006 and 2009 was eliminated, suggesting that the gap was driven by changes in the composition of the immigrant workforce. A key element of this was a decline in the employment share of graduates among immigrants. Indeed, the analysis found that, controlling for these differences, the immigrant wage penalty actually declined, suggesting that immigrants had become better integrated into the labour market over time.

Corroboration for these somewhat surprising findings about immigrant experiences during the recession can be found in the analysis of discrimination in the Irish labour market by Kingston, McGinnity, and O’Connell (2015). They examined the extent to which self-reported discrimination varies across different national ethnic groups, and whether discrimination increased between 2004 and 2010. They found that immigrants experienced higher rates of discrimination both in looking for work, and in the workplace, in both boom and recession. There was substantial variation in discrimination across national ethnic groups. In looking for work, ethnicity was particularly important: Black Africans and EU nationals of minority ethnicity were particularly likely to experience this form of discrimination. In the workplace, most national ethnic groups, apart from White UK and White EU13 groups, were more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination in 2004. In 2010, the Black African, White NMS, and White Non-EU groups experienced more discrimination than White Irish nationals. However, contrary to expectations, they did not find that discrimination increased significantly in the twin contexts of recession and the growth in the immigrant population between 2004 and 2010. In looking for work, the gap in reported discrimination between immigrants and White Irish fell between 2004 and 2010: in the
workplace the gap remained relatively stable. In seeking to explain why reports of discrimination did not increase during recession, Kingston and colleagues (2013) suggest many immigrants in 2004 were newcomers and that by 2010 many immigrants might have gained more experience and knowledge of the Irish labour market, and have established networks. Similarly, on the employers’ side, as immigrant groups became more established in the Irish labour market over the 2004–10 period, employers may have become better able to identify the work-related characteristics of immigrant job applicants in a process where familiarity breeds tolerance rather than contempt.

Notwithstanding differences in interpretation, these studies share a common pattern of findings that suggest that while immigrants suffer multiple disadvantages and penalties in the Irish labour market, these disadvantages do not appear to have intensified during the Great Recession. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that wage penalties and discrimination in looking for work may have declined over the period, perhaps in spite of the recession.

**Emigration**

**The Scale of Emigration Pre- and Post-Recession**

Ireland has a long history of emigration. Millions departed throughout the nineteenth century, especially from the Famine (1845–52) onward. Indeed, the Irish moved across the Atlantic at a rate more than twice that of any other European country (per capita) from the 1840s to the turn of the twentieth century (Hatton and Williamson 1998: 75). This was reflected most starkly by the demise of Ireland’s population from over 6.5 million in 1851 to less than 4.5 million just fifty years later. Indeed, over 2.5 million Irish-born people resided abroad in 1901 (Delaney 2011). After partition in 1922, emigration (p. 299) continued from the newly independent southern state, especially in the 1950s and 1980s, two decades marked by serious economic difficulties. In contrast with earlier trends, most emigrants went to England rather than America. During the 1950s, Ireland shared the ignominy of being the only country in Europe to see its population decline with East Germany, such was the effect of emigration (Daly 2006: 183). The return of significant economic problems in the 1980s resulted in sizeable out-migration taking place again.
Many of the 1980s generation of emigrants later returned during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ era. People continued to leave Ireland during this period although the scale and character of emigration changed considerably. From 2002 to 2007, between 11,000 and approximately 13,500 young Irish citizens travelled to Australia each year as part of that country’s working holiday scheme (Gilmartin 2013: 11). New Zealand ran a comparable programme that attracted around 2,000 Irish per annum. Approximately 10,000 Irish citizens also registered for national insurance numbers in the UK annually during the same period (Walter 2008). Considering the low levels of unemployment in Ireland at the time, much of this movement was not the result of domestic economic pressure but a desire to leave, sometimes temporarily, for lifestyle-related and professional reasons.

During the Great Recession, emigration from Ireland rose considerably. Whereas 245,900 people left the country in the eight years between 2000 and 2007, nearly 610,000 departed.
between 2008 and 2015. First, immigrants began to leave in increasing numbers. Thereafter, Irish citizens started to catch up and subsequently overtake their foreign counterparts between 2011 and 2013, before numbers decreased somewhat, as demonstrated in Figure 16.3. It is the departure of Irish citizens, rather than foreign citizens, which has dominated national debates about emigration because of the notable ties these people have with communities and families in Ireland and because of how much the Irish state has invested in their education. Moreover, the net migration of foreign citizens between 2009 and 2015 was approximately –10,000, compared with a net migration rate of over –140,000 for Irish citizens in the same time period.

Recent Irish emigration patterns contrast starkly with those of other Eurozone countries that also introduced a range of austerity measures in the wake of the economic crisis, and experienced economic contraction and high unemployment, most notably Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain (see, for example, Matsaganis and Leventi 2014). As shown in Figure 16.4, the rate of departure among Irish citizens reached much higher levels per capita than in these other crisis countries.

The higher rate of migration from Ireland may have been due to Irish citizens’ access to labour markets, particularly the UK, Australia, and Canada, which recovered from the Great Recession more rapidly than other European economies. Such access was facilitated by the existence of working holiday visa agreements between Ireland and Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, which allowed young Irish citizens to stay in these states for up to two years. Furthermore, Irish emigrants possessed valuable transnational human capital desired by liberal labour markets that emerged quite rapidly from the crisis. They also spoke the same language and shared similar cultural traits as their hosts and were able to call upon extensive Irish networks to further facilitate such moves abroad (Glynn 2015).
Economic crisis and austerity provided a significant impetus for many to leave, as can be seen in Figure 16.5, which shows reasons for emigration over time. A major survey of Irish emigrants conducted by Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí (2013) found that, in 2008, the most popular reason for emigrating was ‘to travel’. But soon after the crisis hit, the vast majority of emigrants were leaving ‘to find a job’. While unemployment was a major driving factor, underemployment and lack of job satisfaction also spurred many to emigrate. Although the economic recession was not a major motivating factor for some when leaving, it may have played a significant role in their ability to return.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2014, 2015) estimates that, between 2009 and 2015, almost half of those aged over 15 who moved abroad were employed before they left Ireland. A quarter comprised students and nearly 20 per cent were unemployed (see Figure 16.6). The CSO data equate roughly with that produced by Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí (2013) for Irish emigrants. Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí found that a sizeable proportion of those who had been employed in full-time jobs before they emigrated left because they wanted to
travel and to experience another culture, as had occurred throughout the early 2000s. These were often people with transferable qualifications in demand in other countries, such as IT professionals. Others, such as medical professionals, left because they were dissatisfied with their career prospects and employment conditions (see Gouda et al. 2015; Humphries et al. 2015). Although austerity measures contributed to a rise in the emigration of health professionals, young Irish doctors and nurses had always departed in substantial numbers, so this did not represent an entirely new phenomenon.

Among those Irish emigrants who were either unemployed or underemployed before departing, the rationale for emigration was more straightforward: most emigrated in order to find work. Students who graduated in the years hardest hit by the recession struggled to break into the job market in Ireland. Fewer graduate positions presented themselves and various students who emigrated after completion of their course cited the competition that they often faced from more experienced candidates who had lost their job and who consequently applied for junior positions. Many left for further study, but the majority of new Irish graduates who emigrated did so to find work.

Effects of Emigration
Impact on Migrants

The emigrant experience generally appears to have been a positive one for those Irish citizens who left in recent years (NYCI 2013: 9; Ryan and Kurdi 2014: 42–3). While less than half had full-time jobs prior to departing, almost 85 per cent found full-time jobs abroad (Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí 2013: 65). This enabled many to experience a higher standard of living abroad. Whereas Irish emigrants rated their quality of life at home before departure at an average of 5.5 out of 10, the equivalent average rating for their quality of life abroad measured 7.9. Emigrants were also much happier with their jobs, salaries, and employment prospects (Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí 2013: 66–8). Unfortunately, no equivalent information is available for foreign citizens who left Ireland.

While many Irish emigrants, particularly those living in Australia and New Zealand, emphasized the positive aspects of living abroad, they sometimes experienced homesickness and many spoke about the difficulties that can arise when living in
a different country from one’s family. Although emigrants benefited financially from their move, they frequently paid an emotional price for leaving. Understandably, emigrants missed their families most of all (Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí 2013: 69-71).
Impact on Irish Society

While almost half of adult emigrants from 2009 to 2015 were in full-time employment prior to leaving, over half were not, and most would presumably have been in search of employment had they remained. Therefore, emigration helped to substantially reduce national unemployment figures and the burden on the state to provide social protection. This was particularly true for those previously employed in the construction industry, who made up 17 per cent of Irish emigrants who moved between 2008 and 2013 (Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí 2013: 39). Between 2000 and 2008, construction companies built an average of almost 68,000 residential units every year, whereas between 2008 and 2013, the average number built per annum was less than 14,000. Similarly, the public health sector reduced the number of its employees by 11 per cent between 2007 and 2013 (HSE 2014). The moratorium on recruitment to the public sector resulted in many newly qualified health and education professionals leaving Ireland—almost 10 per cent of emigrants came from the health and social work sectors, and over 5 per cent from the education sector. If Irish citizens had been unable to access labour markets in the UK and outside the EU in the numbers that they have been, it is very likely that Ireland would have experienced even higher rates of unemployment than it did in recent years.

Emigration can have significant disadvantages for those left behind. Mosca and Barrett’s (2014: 1) study of Irish people over the age of 50 found that ‘depressive symptoms and feelings of loneliness increase among the parents of migrant children’—especially for mothers. The consequences of emigration for local communities are difficult to measure. Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí (2013) found that a clear majority—65 per cent—of respondents to their representative national household survey viewed emigration as having either a ‘negative’ or ‘very negative’ impact on their area. A series of common themes emerged from responses to an open-ended question asking household respondents to elaborate on this issue. The most frequent topics to emerge concerned a perceived loss of general ‘vibrancy’ and ‘energy’ associated with younger residents of the locality and the emergence of a ‘generation gap’. Respondents also mentioned that there were less people involved in community activities and clubs, as well
as an overall reduction in ‘community spirit’. Less-accessible rural areas appeared to feel these ramifications most due to their smaller size.

A notable reduction in the number of people aged in their twenties in Ireland has also taken place in recent years due to high emigration rates and low birth rates in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The number of 20 to 24-year-olds and 25 to 29-year-olds in Ireland dropped by over a third and over a quarter respectively between 2008 and 2015 (Kenny 2015). This has caused some researchers to raise the issue of whether this may lead to an increasingly unfavourable age dependency ratio in the future (NYCI 2013: 82).

Figure 16.7. Education levels (in per cent) of Irish population’s 25–34 year olds in 2012 compared with Irish emigrants, 2008–13
Sources: OECD 2014 and Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí 2013.
Table 16.4. Inward, outward, and net migration by educational attainment, May 2008–April 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Immigration 000s</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Emigration 000s</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Net 000s</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary and Below</td>
<td>111.6</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>211.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>−99.7</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC*</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>−18.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Level**</td>
<td>189.1</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>237.2</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>−48.2</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>−4.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>356.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>528.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>−170.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: * Technical or Vocational, Advanced Certificate or Diploma

(**) Third level degree or above

Graduates are clearly over-represented among Irish citizens leaving. Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí (2013: 35) found that the number of Irish emigrants with a tertiary education qualification is over 64 per cent. Another 6.5 per cent had completed skilled apprenticeships, which usually involved four years of vocational training. By contrast, those who did not complete their secondary school education or attain an equivalent qualification were significantly under-represented among emigrants when compared with the Irish population more generally, as shown in Figure 16.7. This is because countries such as Australia and Canada operate immigration policies that seek to attract people with higher-level skills in demand in their labour market. No such barriers exist to deter unskilled Irish citizens from moving to Britain or other EU states, yet emigration rates among those with lower education or skills appear to be relatively low. Perhaps the prospect of encountering stiff competition for low-skilled jobs in other EU countries, the convergence of wages between Ireland and the rest of the EU, and the maintenance of the relatively generous Irish welfare system (Cannon and Murphy 2015: 8) means that the costs and risks of migrating are too high for unskilled Irish citizens.

The CSO (2014, 2015) has recently begun to provide education profiles for migrants over 15 years of age. These show a more mixed picture than that set out in Figure 16.7. Unfortunately, the data do not distinguish between nationalities. These aggregate data suggest that less than half of all emigrants from Ireland over the 2009–15 period had third-level education. This is substantially less than Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí’s (2013) estimate that 64 per cent of Irish emigrants who left between 2008 and 2013 had a third-level education, and suggests that Irish nationals were over-represented among the gross outflow of graduates during the recession.

Whether these patterns represent a ‘brain drain’ is unclear, and it is necessary to consider immigration flows as well as emigration. Indeed, many Irish citizens returning from short-term working holiday visas have been counted among the immigrant inflow in subsequent years. Table 16.4 shows accumulated migration flows over the previous twelve months from April 2009 to April 2015 by level of educational attainment. Almost 240,000 third-level graduates emigrated from Ireland since May 2008, virtually 45 per cent of the outflow. However, the immigrant inflow is dominated by the
highly qualified: between 2008 and 2015 almost 190,000 graduates migrated into Ireland, 53 per cent of the total inflow. This resulted in a net outflow of (p.306) −48,000. Among those with secondary education, there was a substantial exodus (211,000) but the influx was just over half this (112,000). As a result of these divergent patterns, net migration of those with secondary education (58 per cent of the total) far exceeds net emigration of graduates (28 per cent).

With regard to the demand side of the labour market, the moratorium on recruitment to the public sector resulted in many newly qualified health and education professionals leaving Ireland. Since there were so few new jobs available in these areas, it seems difficult to term the outflow of graduate emigrants as a brain drain since these emigrants’ skills would most likely not have been fully utilized in Ireland if they had remained—at least in the short term. Nevertheless, if Ireland requires a large number of medical workers and teachers in the future that cannot be met by annual graduate figures, will emigrants return?

Obviously, some degree of return takes place every year. Between 2010 and 2015, for example, almost 100,000 Irish citizens returned to the country, although this paled in comparison to the outflow of over 240,000 Irish citizens (CSO 2015). Whether emigrants return or not, however, depends partly on the immigration regimes of destination states, as well as on conditions in Ireland. The UK has remained the single most popular destination for Irish emigrants, who can remain there indefinitely. Yet the majority of Irish emigrants since 2008 have moved to non-EU destinations, namely Australia, Canada, the USA, New Zealand, and the Gulf States. Most Irish migrants initially move to one of these destinations on temporary permits, such as a one- or two-year working holiday visa or a skilled work permit of a limited duration. It is difficult to foresee how many Irish emigrants will be able to transfer from temporary visas to permanent residency in non-EU destinations, as this often depends on a wide variety of economic and social factors in the host countries. Ireland’s economic situation and the availability of jobs were the two most common factors that Irish emigrants indicated would influence their chances of returning (Glynn, Kelly, and Mac Éinrí 2013: 102). Nevertheless, a 2014 survey of medical professionals who emigrated from Ireland concluded that
doctors, nurses, and midwives are emigrating from Ireland in search of better working conditions, clear career progression pathways, and a better practice environment (Humphries et al. 2015).

Return migration of Irish citizens remained low in 2014 and 2015 despite the Irish economy’s recovery. In addition to labour market demand and working conditions, other factors likely to influence return flows of Irish emigrants include the state of the public finances, the availability of housing, the quality of public services, and the distribution of the tax burden in financing those services. (p.307)

Conclusion
The Great Recession and austerity had a series of profound impacts on Irish migration patterns. First and foremost, outward migration increased dramatically, particularly from 2009 to 2012 in the depths of the recession. Initial emigration was dominated by the departure of relatively newly arrived immigrants.

Immigration fell sharply after 2008 but has been increasing again since 2013 with economic recovery. These trends would suggest the sharp fall in inward migration was a temporary response to the recession and we are likely to see renewed inflows in response to anticipated economic growth.

The substantial migratory outflow during the Great Recession was partially offset by an inflow of immigrants. Within this general trend, it appears that, over the course of the recession, there was high net migration of Irish, as well as other Europeans, with the exception of UK nationals. Part of this appears to be related to skills: this chapter has shown that Irish emigrants were disproportionately drawn from those with higher education, and additional evidence suggested that the share of graduates among the immigrant population declined over the crisis. While this bears the appearance of a brain drain, it should be noted that the outflow of graduates during the recession was at least partially offset by an inflow of highly qualified immigrants, which also included returning highly qualified Irish emigrants. The highly skilled inflow also included a growing number from non-European origins: this is attributable to the employment permits regime, which is designed to address skills shortages from outside the EU.
Immigrants were hit hard by the recession: they experienced a greater fall in employment than did Irish natives, and they suffered higher rates of unemployment. Prior to the recession, immigrants suffered multiple disadvantages in the Irish labour market: they had lower employment and higher unemployment, they tended to be overeducated and underpaid, and experienced higher rates of discrimination than Irish nationals. However, taking into account changes in the composition of the immigrant population, the employment, unemployment, and wage gaps that existed prior to the recession did not widen. Contrary to expectations, the recession did not make things worse. Discrimination is high among visibly different ethnic minorities, but this did not increase, and there is some evidence of a fall in discrimination against ethnic and national minorities. This would be consistent with Fanning’s (2015) argument that there was no evidence of a political backlash against immigration during the economic downturn, although he does note evidence of an increase in racist incidents.

The surge in emigration of native Irish in recent years, even continuing after the worst of the recession was over, can be characterized as having some positive effects at an individual level for migrants achieving employment and career progress, as well as helping to ease the pressure on the labour market and on the public finances. However, this has come at a significant social cost and it will be some time before it will be possible to measure the full extent of the losses incurred by families and communities as well as how this will affect the supply of highly skilled workers to the economy.

References

Bibliography references:


