







TIME TO GO?

A Qualitative Research Study Exploring the Experience & Impact of Emigration on Ireland's Youth



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The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

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A Qualitative Research Study Exploring the Experience & Impact of Emigration on Ireland's Youth

By Marie-Claire McAleer National Youth Council of Ireland

April 2013

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Glossary of Abbreviations

Allied Irish Bank
A&E Accident & Emergency

AIMRO Association of Irish Market Research Organisations

CSO Central Statistics Office
CV Curriculum Vitae
EU European Union

EU-SILC European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions

ESOMAR European Society of Marketing and Research Irish National Training & Employment Authority

FN File Number - An immigration file number is the reference given by the visa office processing

the immigration part of an immigrant's application in Canada

FIS Federation of Irish Societies
GAA Gaelic Athletic Association
GP General Practitioner

I/CAN Irish Canadian Immigration Centre
ICT Information Communication Technology

ID Identification

IDA Irish Development Agency – responsible for the attraction and development of

foreign investment in Ireland

IEC International Experience Canada visa

LRM Labour Market Review

MRCI Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

NEET refers to a young person who is 'not in education, employment or training'

NESC National Economic Social Council

NHS National Health Service

NYCI National Youth Council of Ireland
OHIP Ontario Health Insurance Programme

PayPal is a global e-commerce business allowing payments and money transfers to be made

through the Internet

P. Eng. P.Eng. designation is a Canadian provincial professional licence, allowing one to

practice engineering as a recognized professional engineer in each province in

accordance with engineering professional standards

PEO Professional Engineers Ontario

PPS Personal Public Service number in Ireland

RDD Random Digit Dial
ROI Republic of Ireland

SA Small Area

SMS Short Message Service

Teachta Dála - a member of Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Oireachtas (the Irish

Parliament). The official translation of the term is "Deputy to the Dáil"

Twitter Twitter is an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users

to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets"

UCC University College Cork

Uni Abbreviation for the word university

UK United Kingdom

USA United States of America

US United States

Viber is a communications application

WhatsApp WhatsApp messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging application which

allows you to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS

Foreword

Mary Cunningham Director



Emigration can be defined as going and settling in another country. The reasons for this are vast and there are many contributing push and pull factors causing an individual to leave their home and move to another country.

For some the push factors are so great that they are forced to leave because of economic necessity whilst others leave for adventure and different and new experiences with the intention of returning home some day.

Time to Go? tells the story of a generation of young people who have left their homeland in droves against a backdrop of economic recession. For many young Irish people, emigration is the only viable option open to them at the present time. Emigration is once again a prevailing part of Irish life. Every day a mother or father waves goodbye to their child in the hope that some day they will return.

The figures speak for themselves:

- Over the past 2 years over a quarter of our population has been affected by the emigration of a close family member (NYCI Poll conducted by Red C, October 2012).
- One in two of our 18 24 years olds would consider emigrating themselves (NYCI Poll conducted by Red C, October 2012).

Many of our young exports are highly skilled and highly educated. Many are empowered with the knowledge to progress and achieve great things in their new country. Their experience of leaving, however, may be no less heart wrenching. They are leaving a country which during the economic boom offered them much work and now they are forced to leave to find work abroad.

All emigrants have important insights to share on the experience of emigration. Questions such as: how it felt arriving in a new country, what challenges they encountered, how they settled into their new home, how they overcame some of the teething problems they experienced, what advice they would give to Government and to the next phase of emigrants are key aspects of this study. The research also reveals the social and emotional side of emigration. The study examines the social and economic policy implications of sustained emigration. It identifies both positive and negative stories and highlights important issues for Government to consider, to support Ireland and its emigrating youth.

I welcome the publication of this research, which I believe provides an invaluable insight into the world and experience of young Irish emigrants. The report will greatly inform our advocacy and policy work in this area. Contained within the report are a number of key research findings and recommendations to assist young Irish people facing the prospect of emigration or currently living abroad. We need to ensure that our young Irish emigrants are not forgotten about and are supported to return to Ireland in the future.

Mary Cuning Ram

Researcher's Acknowledgements

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Without their cooperation and informed input this research study would not have been possible.

Marie-Claire McAleer

Executive Summary

By interviewing young people who have emigrated to the UK and to Canada about their experience, the study explores:

- 1. Where are Irish youth emigrating to and why?
- 2. How are they settling into life in their host country?
- 3. What are the challenges they have encountered on this journey?
- 4. What supports would have made their move easier?
- 5. Do they envisage returning home in the next 5 years if the economy improves?

The study explores the social and economic impact of youth emigration and considers the policy implications of youth emigration for the future.

The research reveals the positive and negative aspects of emigration. For many young people interviewed, they spoke of their experience as being a rich and positive one tinged with some sadness which emerges from time to time at various periods in their journey. Some experience great heartache leaving home while others experience difficulty once they arrive in their host country or at various periods throughout their stay.

Emigrants spoke about the many challenges they have encountered since they arrived in their host country. While there were many interesting parallels between emigrant's experiences in the UK and in Canada, there were also distinct differences. Common themes emerging were issues such as personal finance, accommodation, credit history, job searching and some cultural differences.

In both countries, emigrants found the use of Irish networks and support systems invaluable. Organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), the London Irish Centres, the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (I/CAN) or the local chamber of commerce were regarded to be great supports to emigrants abroad. Many young Irish emigrants spoke about their tendency to rely strongly on Irish networks and maintain a good contact with the Irish community when abroad.

Many young people interviewed in Canada and in the UK shared similar experiences and attitudes and offered, almost word for word, the same messages of advice to prospective emigrants considering emigrating in the near future. The message was clear - be positive and make the most of the situation. They also advised those who were considering emigration as an option to 'go for it' and to be prepared before leaving Ireland.

The vast majority of young people who participated in the research exhibited overwhelming determination and had a very positive outlook on life. Some participants spoke about initial feelings of anger and resentfulness that they had to leave Ireland because of the recession and the economic situation. They stated that these negative feelings subsided, however, once they arrived in their new country and settled into life abroad. Others spoke about being open

to the prospect of emigration now because they are young but felt they would be angry if they felt the current economic situation would prevent them from returning to Ireland in the future.

Of particular significance, is the fact that whilst many looked on their journey so far as both a necessity and an adventure, in the long-term many see themselves returning home eventually.

In general, emigrants interviewed felt very much in control of their own destiny and situations. Reflecting on this new wave of emigration from Ireland, many felt this time around it is very different from the emigration of the 1970's and 80's in that the current wave of emigrants are better placed to succeed. It is a smaller world and ICT has greatly improved, making staying in touch with home more of a visual and affordable reality.

When asked about their 5 year plan, many felt they would eventually return to Ireland. Participants wanted to return to an Ireland that was more positive in its outlook and felt that Government needed to put in place a plan to attract its people back home when the economy could provide them with work.

Report Structure and Chapter Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction - provides a background to the research by highlighting the current social and economic context which has contributed to an increase in emigration from Ireland. It reviews the current data available and highlights the absence of reliable statistics on the numbers of Irish people emigrating abroad as a fundamental concern in formulation of policy to respond to the issue of emigration. It explores the profile of those leaving Ireland and the motivating factors contributing to their decision to emigrate.

Chapter 2 – Research Strategy & Methodology - outlines the rationale for undertaking this research and the research aims of the study. The chapter also discusses the research strategy and methodology employed for this study.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review - provides a review of contemporary literature on emigration in the Irish context. The chapter explores the key themes emerging from the current literature and examines the discourse on emigration as it relates to the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. It explores Oberg's concept of 'culture shock' and the five phases of transition and relates this theory to the experience of young emigrants. It references a number of writers who have written extensively about the experience of emigration and their experiences of being an emigrant and the various stages an emigrant goes through and aligns some of the descriptions written about to Oberg's phases of transition.

Chapter 4 - The Story so Far... documents the experiences of 4 young Irish emigrants who left Ireland in the last 2 years. Two of the case studies tell stories of living in the UK as an Irish emigrant and two case studies relate to the Canadian experience. All stories serve to illustrate the different experiences encountered by the young people in relation to emigration and settling into life in a new country.

Chapter 5 – Being a Young Emigrant in the UK... documents the experience of 18 – 25 year old Irish emigrants who have moved to London in the UK.

The participants were from various parts of the Republic of Ireland and all had very interesting insights into being an Irish person living in London. Generally their experience was a positive one but was not without stories of problems they had encountered along the way. These experiences are extremely useful in informing the research on the sorts of supports young emigrants require prior to their departure and on arrival in their host country

Chapter 6 – Being a Young Emigrant in Canada documents the experience of young Irish emigrants in the 18 – 25 and 26 – 30 age cohorts. Both groups comprise of a mix between new arrivals and emigrants who had been in Canada for up to 2 years. The participants were from various parts of the Republic of Ireland and all had very interesting insights into being an Irish person living in Canada. Whilst many told of very positive experiences of emigration, they also highlighted many difficult times they encountered along the way.

Chapter 7 – Emigrant Supports & Employability in Canada addresses key supports for emigrants and the barriers to accessing employment in Canada. Chapter 7 is presented in three sections.

Section 7.1 outlines a range of supports available to Irish people who have emigrated to Canada. It profiles the work of the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (I/CAN) and highlights various initiatives currently in place in Canada to support emigrants to settle and integrate into their new environment.

Section 7.2 focuses on understanding and accessing the Canadian labour market. It highlights challenges to employability encountered by young emigrants and discusses how to overcome these obstacles, making reference to the employment workshop provided by I/CAN.

Section 7.3 highlights the provincial requirements many emigrants must undertake before they can work in their profession in Canada.

Chapter 8 – The Impact of Emigration - addresses the social and economic impact of youth emigration in Ireland. It considers the social and economic implications of the mass emigration of a technically skilled and highly educated youth population from Ireland. It discusses the impact of a brain drain and the policy implications resulting from the prevalence of continued youth emigration from Ireland.

Chapter 8 also explores the ramifications of youth emigration on the family and on Irish society at large. The chapter explores how emigration affects parents, siblings and the wider family circle. It integrates findings from the focus groups with young emigrants into the discussion and explores how young emigrants feel their departure has impacted on the family and how their parents reacted to their decision to emigrate.

Chapter 9 - Research Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations - provides a synopsis of the research and a summary of the key findings and recommendations arising from the research.

"I don't look on the type of emigration we have today as being of the same category as the terrible emigration of the last century. What we have now is a very literate emigrant who thinks nothing of coming to the United States and going back to Ireland and maybe on to Germany and back to Ireland again. The younger people in Ireland today are very much in that mould..."

(Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Brian Lenihan, 1987).

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provides a background to the study and outlines the social and economic context contributing to the increase in emigration from Ireland. The chapter also considers the information deficit that has existed in relation to the profile of emigrants and where they are emigrating to.

Based on figures available, this chapter explores the profile of those leaving Ireland and the motivating factors contributing to their decision to emigrate. It also provides an overview and outline of the structure of the report.

Economic Context

Recession has had devastating social and economic consequences for Ireland. The economic recession resulted in Ireland losing its economic sovereignty and entering into an IMF-ECB-EU ('Troika') programme. This programme means Ireland can avail of a loan. The conditions of this loan require Ireland to meet a number of draconian policy conditions to ensure the country's economy recovers and it can repay the debt. The policy decisions taken over the last 4 years in relation to tax increases, wage reductions, cuts in social welfare and public services have resulted in much economic austerity. The impact of austerity is reflected in the numbers of people unemployed, the levels of personal indebtedness, the numbers of jobless households, the rate of child poverty and the increase in food and fuel poverty prevalent in Ireland (DSP, 2012), (O'Sullivan, C., 2010), (Weston, 2012), (CER, 2012b), (CSO, 2009b), (CSO, 2012c).

The unemployment rate has soared and currently Ireland has a high proportion of jobless households. Since 2007 the proportion of jobless households has increased from 15 per cent to 22 per cent in 2013 (Watson et al., 2012). Research commissioned by the Department of Social Protection revealed that 10% of people in Ireland are living in food poverty. Amongst those most at risk are people living on low incomes, families with young children and lone parents. Families with three or more children aged under 18 were most likely to be affected. Furthermore the latest EU-SILC figures confirm that Ireland has the fifth highest rate of child poverty in Europe with a poverty rate of 19.7 per cent (EU SILC, 2013).

The onset of recession in Ireland has had a particularly devastating impact on Ireland's youth. Youth unemployment, having trebled since 2008, is now one of the greatest challenges facing Ireland. Young people are twice as likely to be unemployed as older workers. Indeed Ireland now has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in Europe. According to figures from the Eurostat, 30.7 per cent of young people in Ireland are unemployed (European Commission, 2013).

Young people in Ireland faced with a very significantly shrunken jobs market and increased competition for the opportunities that are available are struggling to obtain relevant and secure jobs. A very significant 1 in 3 young men under 25 years of age are now out of work. Ireland has one of the highest proportions of those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in the European Union. In fact Ireland exhibits the fourth highest number of young people who are NEETs in the European Union with 18.4% of young people not in education,

employment or training compared with the EU average of 12.9%. The very significant number of young people emigrating also further masks the full extent of the problem.

A study conducted by NYCI in 2010 found that 70% of the 90 young people interviewed agreed that it is more likely - rather than less likely – that they will emigrate within the next 12 months in response to their status of being unemployed in Ireland (NYCI, 2011).

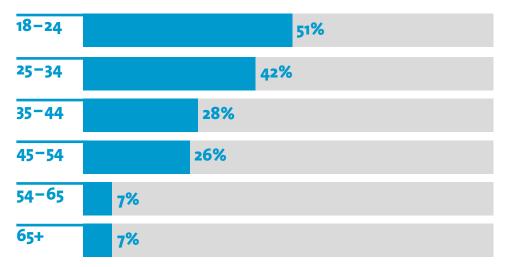
Data Deficit

To date it has been difficult to discuss a policy response to emigration in the absence of reliable and accurate statistics on the exact numbers of people emigrating from Ireland. The Central Statistics Office publishes annual population and migration estimates which include statistics on the estimated number of people who have emigrated and where they have emigrated to. The migration estimates are compiled with reference to movement in other migration indicators such as the number of Personal Public Service (PPS) numbers allocated to non-Irish nationals, the number of work permits issued/renewed and the number of asylum applications (CSO, 2012). There has, however, been no robust system for collection of data on emigration.

The Prevalence of Emigration - Who is Leaving and Why?

NYCI commissioned Red C to conduct an opinion poll on a number of key social policy issues affecting the lives of children and young people which included 3 questions on emigration. 1003 interviews were conducted and 931 of those interviewed were Irish citizens providing a sample error of + or -3%. A random digit dial (RDD) method is used to ensure a random selection process of households is included – this ensures that ex-directory households are included. The poll undertaken in October 2012 revealed that over the last 2 years over a quarter of the Irish population (28% of those interviewed) had been personally affected by the emigration of a close family member. As shown in the graph below, the intention to emigrate was found to be much greater amongst the 18-24 age cohort, with 51% of respondents aged 18-24 stating that they would consider emigration themselves.

Graph showing the age profile and proportion of respondents who had considered emigration as an option



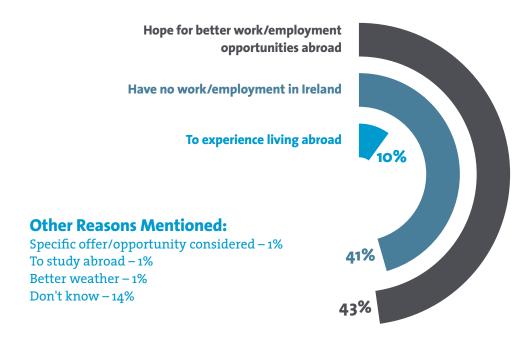
45% of the Irish population have either considered emigration or had a close family member emigrate in the past 2 years. 1 in 10 has experienced both.

Motivating Factors

When asked what the primary factors would be to motivate them to emigrate, the vast majority of respondents stated that they would emigrate primarily because of a lack of employment opportunities at home or in the expectation that they would have better work prospects abroad.

These survey findings are reinforced by the qualitative research which found that for many emigrants the decision to emigrate was prompted by the lack of opportunities in Ireland and in the first instance by the need to leave to find work.

Diagram showing reasons why respondents would consider emigrating



In relation to whether the Government is doing enough to address youth unemployment and youth emigration, 83% of respondents felt the Government was not addressing the issue of youth unemployment adequately. In relation to the issue of youth emigration, 85% disagree with the statement that the Government was doing enough to tackle the problem.

Where are they going?

According to the most recently published figures, Ireland is exhibiting the highest net outward migration since the late 1980s. In the last four years, 308,000 people have left Ireland. 41 per cent (125,000) of those are in the 15 – 24 age cohort. Emigration in the last year up to April 2012 is estimated to have increased to 87,100 from 80,600 in the year to April 2011. Irish nationals account for 53 per cent (46,500) of those leaving the country (CSO, 2012). 35,700 young people emigrated in the year up to April 2012 – the highest number since 2008.

A significant proportion of those leaving Ireland are young people. 88 per cent of all emigrants leaving in 2011 were aged between 15 and 44 years of age, with 43 per cent being in the 15-24 age cohort. The implications of losing such large numbers of our youth population will remain to be seen. Undoubtedly the effects of brain drain and losing a significant proportion of young people means a loss of a highly skilled, educated workforce and the loss of a generation of Irish people.

The brain drain phenomenon and the social, personal and economic implications of youth emigration will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 8 of the report.

According to Conefrey, the UK was the destination of choice for the vast majority of Irish emigrants in the 1980's, with 60 to 70 per cent of those leaving the Irish Republic to move to the UK. Since then, however, there has been a decline in the numbers of Irish emigrating to the UK and many Irish emigrants are moving further afield to the EU or US. The most popular destinations are Canada and Australia. Since 2008, between 20 and 30 per cent of emigrants moved to the UK and over half emigrated to the EU or US (Conefrey, 2013); (CSO, 2012b). In April 2012, one in five relocated to the UK and over half of emigrants moved outside of the UK, EU and US (Conefrey, 2013).

Figures from various official sources reveal how many Irish nationals have been granted visas in the last year. This information gives an indication of where young people from Ireland are moving to.

Australia

According to the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the total number of working holiday visas granted to Irish citizens in 2012 – 2013 to 31st December 2012 was 10,239, compared to 11,928 visas issues in 2011 – 2012 to 31st December 2011 (2012: 20).

Canada

Canadian statistics show that in 2011 about 5,000 young Irish people came to Canada under the International Experience Canada working holiday programme. In 2012, that number has risen to 5,350 places. In 2012, 744 Irish people became permanent Canadian residents, while 3,729 received temporary work permits (I/CAN, 2012). The quota for the Irish participants in the International Experience Canada Initiative was 5,350 in 2012.

In 2013, the yearly quota of 6,350 'working holiday' visas for Irish visa participants was filled in just two and a half days which is indicative of the demand for working visas to Canada (Tristan Hopper, National Post, Canada, 13 Feb 2013).

The United Kingdom

In the UK 15, 900 National Insurance numbers were issued to Irish citizens in the 12 months to March 2012 (Department of Work & Pensions, 2012).

Responding to the deficit in data

Researchers in University College Cork have recently commenced a research project entitled 'Emigre' to profile and track contemporary emigrants using data drawn from the new Small Area (SA) Population Statistics developed for the 2011 Census.

The study is using a number of key variables from the 2011 Census including age profile, employment levels, education levels, degree of rurality, family structure and housing stock, to build a new map of Ireland embodying a level of complexity and detail never previously possible (Dr. Piaras Mac Éinrí, 30 Jan 2013).

The 'Emigre' study is constructing a population sample based on a series of rural and urban SAs and differentiated by socio-economic and educational background. A detailed profile of emigrants, supplemented by interviews, will be developed, focusing on destination, occupation and stated intention to return.

The study to map and track contemporary emigration from Ireland is funded by a major IRCHSS award and is based at the Department of Geography, and the Institute for Social Sciences in the 21st Century (ISS21) at University College Cork. The research team consists of Dr. Irial Glynn, Dr. Piaras Mac Éinrí (Principal Investigator) and Tomás Kelly. Further details of this research including the online emigrant survey are available on the http://www.ucc.ie/en/emigre/ website.

Such an innovative approach to mapping the profile of this current wave of emigrants promises to generate extremely important data to inform the development of an appropriate policy response to emigration.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided a background to the study and outlines the social and economic context contributing to the increase in emigration from Ireland. Based on figures available, Chapter 1 explores the profile of those leaving Ireland and the motivating factors contributing to their decision to emigrate.

The emigration figures presented in Chapter 1 are reminiscent of the 1980's and early 1990's when the country experienced both long term and endemic unemployment which left a lasting legacy on individuals, communities and our society and also high levels of emigration.

"The Government has a responsibility to assist and support Irish emigrants abroad who are in need and to ensure that, as far as possible, those who emigrate are properly prepared for the challenges and opportunities of living and working abroad"

(Taskforce Report on Policy regarding Emigrants, 2002).

Research Strategy & Methodology

Chapter 2 outlines the rationale for undertaking this research and the research aims of the study. The chapter also discusses the research strategy and methodology employed for this study.

Rationale for Study

A primary reason for conducting qualitative research on the issue of contemporary youth emigration from Ireland is to produce an unbiased and analytical study to explore and uncover the experience of young Irish emigrants who have emigrated in the last 2 years.

Research Aim

There are a number of key objectives to this study. The research is intended to provide a greater insight into the experience of emigration from the perspective of the young Irish emigrant and to explore how emigration is affecting young people. The research records and documents how participants are getting on in their host country and identifies any challenges they have encountered in the course of their migration.

By interviewing young people who have emigrated from Ireland in the last 2 years about their experience, the study seeks to ascertain answers to the following research questions:

- 1. Where are Irish youth emigrating to and why?
- 2. How are they settling into life in their host country?
- 3. What are the challenges they have encountered on this journey?
- 4. What supports would have made their move easier?
- 5. Do they envisage returning home in the next 5 years if the economy improves?

The study seeks to identify the push and pull factors influencing Ireland's young to emigrate and explores what the policy implications will be as a result of emigration of young people from Ireland.

By exploring the experiences and motivations of young people who have emigrated, the research considers the impact of youth emigration for Ireland. Based on the research findings, the report identifies policy recommendations, which if implemented, will help to support young emigrants and assist policymakers to plan for the future and to attract Irish emigrants to return home when the economy starts to recover.

Research Strategy

The research approach adopted to explore the study is three-fold – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The study seeks to explore the experience of young Irish emigrants, get an insight into this experience and examine how emigration has impacted on the participant.

Methodology

The study combined the use of documentary and qualitative research to investigate the experience of emigration by young people from Ireland in the last two years.

The first stage in the research process involved a comprehensive review and evaluation of the related literature. The literature review was essential to gain a better understanding of the topic under investigation. It also identified important sources of data related to the research topic and guided "the development of explanations during the data collection and analysis in studies that seek to explain, evaluate and suggest linkages among events" (Marshall et al, 1995: 35). The study reviews census data and relevant statistics and literature to provide a context to the research study and explore the social, personal and economic implications of youth emigration.

Qualitative research methodology is employed in this study to consult with young people who have emigrated. Sherman and Webb describe qualitative research as directly concerned "with experience as it is lived or felt or undergone" (Sherman & Webb, 1988: 7). Qualitative research tends to focus on exploring in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve depth rather than breadth (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001: 64). It can offer the policymaker a theory of social action grounded on the experiences – the world view – of those likely to be affected by a policy decision (Walker, 1995).

Profile of Research Participants

The research interviews young people in the 18-25 and 25-30 age cohorts who have emigrated to the UK and to Canada. These countries were selected as two of the top destinations for young Irish people emigrating at present based on various visa and work permit data issued by host countries.

The participants participating in the London focus group were in the 18-25 age cohort. The participants participating in the focus groups hosted in Toronto, Canada were in the 18-25 and 26-30 age cohort. Both groups comprised of a mix between new arrivals and emigrants who had been in Canada for up to 2 years. All participants were from various parts of the Republic of Ireland.

Recruitment of Research Participants

Focus group participants were recruited using a number of different approaches – 'on street' recruitment, 'snowball', peer and 'word of mouth' recruiting.

Organisations residing in both London and Toronto who provide supports to

Irish immigrants¹ were extremely helpful in publicising the study and recruiting young people to participate in the research. Advertisements were also placed in an Irish read newspaper in the UK and on social media websites to promote the study and recruit prospective participants.

Three focus groups were conducted with young people who had emigrated to London in the UK and Toronto in Canada. Each group consisted of between 7 and 9 participants with an even gender balance in each of the focus groups. The focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes to ensure a breadth of data was collected from each participant. In depth interviews were also conducted with emigrants who were unable to attend the focus group sessions.

The research also incorporated written accounts received by email from young emigrants documenting their experience of emigration in the period 2010 – 2012.

To be included in the study participants were required to meet the following criteria:

- be a young Irish person aged between 18 25 or 26 30 years of age,
- have emigrated from Ireland in the last 2 years,
- be interested and willing to participate in a focus group or interview to talk about their experience of emigration,
- be willing to have their interview recorded.

Ethical Considerations

Research participants were assured that the purpose of the research was to explore their experiences and highlight challenges, if any, encountered by them to advocate for improved supports for young emigrants. Ethical principles of research including anonymity and confidentiality were upheld.

Prior to conducting focus groups and interviews, participants were briefed by the researcher about the project. Participants were also issued with an information sheet about the project in advance of the focus groups and interviews and invited to sign a consent form to participate in the research study. All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. All data was anonymised and the research participants were given a pseudonym in the report.

Research Design

Focus Groups are the main method of data collection in this study. A focus group is a form of qualitative research. Focus groups "offer the opportunity to interview a number of people at the same time, and to use the interaction within a group as a source of insight" (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2011: 172).

¹ The Federation of Irish Societies in the UK and the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre in Canada.

The focus groups were exploratory and facilitated engaging and lively discussion amongst participants. Group members spoke openly about their experiences of emigration and shared very personal feelings, attitudes and reflections about life as a young emigrant.

The focus groups generated substantial information on the sorts of challenges they encountered as emigrants. Invaluable insights into the experience of emigration and the challenges encountered by emigrants were provided in all of the focus groups conducted. In general participants were enthusiastic about telling their stories and energized by having the opportunity to identify problems they had overcome.

Based on their experiences, participants advised and proposed practical recommendations, which if implemented, would help to support others facing the prospect of emigration.

The conduct of each focus group was governed by a discussion guide, a copy of which is included in Appendix A.

The findings from the focus groups and interviews undertaken are presented in two parts. Chapter 5 presents the findings of the interviews with young people residing in the UK and Chapter 6 presents the findings of the interviews with young people residing in Canada. The data was collected and analysed by the researcher.

In depth interviews

Five in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders on the issue of youth emigration to inform the study. All interviews assisted in the framing of the discussion guide for the primary research conducted with young emigrants.

The interviews generated great insights into the sort of supports required by young Irish emigrants presently. The information obtained through the key stakeholder interviews complemented and substantiated many of the key findings arising from the focus groups. The interviews also contributed to and further informed the development of some of the conclusions and report recommendations. All of the interviews and focus groups were conducted between March and July 2012.

Case studies

Chapter 4 uses case studies to tell the stories of emigrants who have left Ireland in the last 2 years. Yin defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and addresses a situation in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (1993:59). Case studies tend to be rich in data and suited to the research questions under examination in the research. For example in this particular study on emigration, the use of case studies provides a greater insight into the experiences and attitudes of the group of people under investigation and the social context in which they live in. This provides the researcher with a greater understanding of the environment an emigrant experiences.

In qualitative research the use of case studies enables participants to define the situation in their own terms. The case studies were collated from written accounts from emigrants and from the in-depth interviews with emigrants.

Summary

Chapter 2 outlines the reasons for undertaking this research and the research aims of the study. The chapter discusses the research strategy and methodology employed. It also outlines the profile and recruitment of research participants, ethical considerations relevant and the research design.

"No family on this island can be untouched by the fact that so many of our young people leave it. The reality is that we have lost, and continue every day to lose, their presence and their brightness. These young people leave Ireland to make new lives in demanding urban environments. As well as having to search for jobs, they may well find themselves lonely, homesick, unable to speak the language of those around them; if things do not work out, unwilling to accept the loss of face of returning home. It hardly matters at that point whether they are graduate or unskilled. What matters is that they should have access to the support and advice they need. It seems to integrate into educational and social and counselling services an array of skills of adaptation and a depth of support which will prepare them for this first gruelling challenge of adulthood"

(Mary Robinson, 1995).

Chapter 3 provides a review of contemporary literature on emigration in the Irish context. The chapter explores the key themes emerging from the current literature and examines the discourse on emigration as it relates to the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. It explores Oberg's concept of 'culture shock' and the five phases of transition and relates this theory to the experience of young emigrants.

The literature on emigration in the Irish context is largely of literary or historical significance. Much is written about the Irish experience of emigration over the decades. Emigration and its impact on Irish society and culture has dominated the agenda of successive Irish Governments and enjoyed much commentary by writers and poets alike. Mac Éinrí contends that aside from many individual works on the subject of the Irish migrant, there is no recognisable body of material that exists. He argues that the migrant experience has been hidden in Ireland by a preference to take "refuge in denial or indifference" (2012: 2).

The problem of high unemployment and high rates of emigration that has dogged Ireland periodically throughout its history is not due to these problems being ignored but a failure to identify policies to address them adequately (NESC, 222). The NESC report made the case for Ireland to evaluate the gains and losses from emigration to identify specific issues that need to be addressed so that the country can reduce the costs and increase the benefits associated with the flows out of the country (1991:223).

Overview of Key Reports on Emigration from 1945 - 2002

There are a number of key reports which have informed thinking on emigration from the mid-1940's to 2002.

Each wave of emigration is preceded by a period of economic recession so often associated with a mass exodus of people in search of work abroad. The second wave of emigration occurred in the 1950's and is discussed at length in the *Reports of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems* (1956). Four years after the publication of the Reports of the Commission, emigration from Ireland reached the highest level recorded for seventy years. In May 1958 the Department of Finance document *Economic Development* highlighted the large scale emigration figures as a reason for widespread anxiety about the country's economic future.

"...The common talk amongst parents in the towns, as in rural Ireland, is of children having to emigrate as soon as their education is completed in order to be sure of a reasonable livelihood..." (1958: 5).

Once again the issue of emigration was reflected in the Programme for Economic Expansion published by the Government in November 1958. The Programme contained detailed proposals designed to increase the rate of economic growth and reverse the decline in population.

In the 1980's despite discussion on emigration and how to respond to it during the 1987 general election, there was a distinct absence of any real and meaningful policy response to addressing the issue of emigration. In fact in October 1987, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan stated:

"It (emigration) is not a defeat because the Irish hone their skills and talents in another environment; the more they develop a work ethic in a country like Germany or the US, the better it can be applied in Ireland when they return. After all, we can't all live on a small island."

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) explored the issue of emigration in a report published in 1991, entitled *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration*. The NESC report explored the third wave of emigration and its economic and social impact. It also explored the circumstances of the Irish community in Britain as the largest population outside Ireland. Some of the observations and commentary contained in the NESC report on emigration will be discussed further in Chapter 8 of this report. In the 1990's the Harvey Report on Emigration and Services for Irish Emigrants: *Towards a new Strategic Plan* was undertaken for and published by the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants and looked at supports for emigrants internationally.

In December 2001, the Minister for Foreign Affairs established a Taskforce on Policy regarding Emigrants to recommend a coherent long-term policy approach to meeting the needs of Irish emigrants, in particular young and vulnerable emigrants. The Report of the Taskforce on Policy regarding Emigrants was published in 2002. The report noted the diversity of communities which existed amongst the Irish abroad and the differing needs of these emigrants. Reflecting on this heterogeneous group, the report states that no single approach would meet the myriad of needs of the Irish abroad and that a variety of responses were required to meet all of these needs.

"Meeting the needs of the Irish Abroad should take account of their rights and respect their views" (Taskforce Report, 2002: 3).

It is worth reflecting on the key policy objectives outlined by the Government at the time, as many of the sentiments expressed and concerns highlighted in 2002 are as relevant today as they were a decade ago. A key recommendation made in the Taskforce Report was the call for "the adoption of a strategic and integrated approach to meeting the needs of the Irish Abroad which includes policy objectives, an action plan and the necessary structures and resources to achieve these ends" (Taskforce Report, 2002: 3).

The following are the policy objectives contained within the Taskforce Report:

- Ensure as far as possible that Irish people who emigrate do so voluntarily and on the basis of informed choice, are properly prepared to live independently in different societies.
- Protect and support the Irish Abroad, particularly those who emigrate involuntarily and those who find themselves marginalised or at risk of social exclusion.

 Facilitate the return to Ireland and reintegration into Irish society of emigrants who wish to do so, especially the vulnerable and the elderly.

• Support the Irish Abroad who wish to express and share the Irish dimension of their identity (Taskforce Report, 2002: 3).

These policy objectives remain as relevant to young emigrants leaving Ireland today as they were a decade ago. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 document and discuss the many stories of young Irish people who have recently emigrated from Ireland – some voluntarily and some involuntarily. Their stories are both positive and negative and highlight difficulties they encountered and challenges they overcame. The recommendations of this study are informed by the experiences of the many emigrants interviewed as part of this research and echo many of the policy objectives outlined in the Taskforce Report published in 2002.

Emigration & Cherishing the Irish Diaspora

Mary Robinson championed the voice of the Irish abroad. Cherishing the Irish Diaspora was a key theme during her presidency. During an address to the Houses of the Oireachtas in 1995 she spoke about emigration as more than a "chronicle of sorrow and regret" and rather a "narrative of dispossession and belonging."

Robinson used her presidency to highlight the importance of forging a greater link with the Diaspora. She stated that one of the best ways to cherish the Diaspora was to start at home by providing supports to our young who are facing the prospect of emigration.

Emigration and Irish Culture

Emigration is not a new phenomenon in Ireland. Ireland has a history of exporting its people. O'Toole explores this culture of emigration amongst the Irish and makes a very powerful case that emigration is deeply embedded in Irish culture:

"emigration and exile, the journeys to and from home, are the very heartbeat of Irish culture. To imagine Ireland is to imagine a journey" (1997: 158).

A journey is a good metaphor for describing the emigration experience and yet as O' Toole points out this journey has changed in recent times. He contends that emigration is "no longer the wake but the wedding."

The qualitative research to a large extent supports this argument in that many young Irish emigrants are moving abroad to experience new horizons and access greater opportunities. Many emphasised that their limited options in Ireland was a determining factor prompting their decision to leave. The research findings reveal many young emigrants expressed the view that they perceived their experience as Irish emigrants to be much easier than that of their forefathers in that they were well educated and highly skilled and had a lot to contribute. Furthermore the advances in ICT made emigration less of a 'voyage beyond the point of no return' as O'Toole puts it (1997: 158).

Does Globalisation make emigration less of a culture shock?

When one considers emigration from Ireland, often what springs to mind is the image of young people leaving in the 1950's and 1970's to a new life abroad. The prospect of the return was deemed to be unlikely. O'Flaherty's story 'Going into Exile" captures this experience aptly. The meal the night before the son and daughter depart is like a last supper. Such a description of emigration lies in stark contrast to the experience of many Irish today.

When interviewed about his parent's reaction to the news that he was going to emigrate one young person stated:

"They've another scatter of kids to look after so they're okay, they're busy you know. But no, it's not like thirty years ago when the uncles and aunts would have went, emigrated to Australia and you get a phone call from them once every six months. Firstly it costs nothing to ring home anymore, you've got Skype, you've all these free apps like Viber and Whatsapp and all those. Sure I talk to someone in Ireland almost every day you know. Not in a let's have a keep in touch kind of way but you just get a message from them and so you have all that at the weekend."

Many young people interviewed stated that their parents, although sad to see them go, were pleased for them and recognised that emigration was the best option for their children in light of the dire economic situation in Ireland. The impact of emigration on the family will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 8 of this report.

For most young people interviewed, although daunting, the prospects and experience of emigration is exciting and new. At the initial stage of the journey most projected a very positive impression of life abroad. Undoubtedly they experience periods of missing home and they miss many aspects of home life, but for the most part they viewed emigration as an adventure.

So why is this the case and has an increase in globalisation contributed to an easier transition for Ireland's young emigrants?

It could be argued, that the world is a much smaller place and what once were considered to be significant cultural, political, social and economic differences are not so seismic. As a result the transition from Ireland to the rest of the world is not as significant. A UCC Symposium addressed a number of these questions during a roundtable discussion hosted by the Institute of The Social Sciences in the 21st Century in June 2011. The Symposium used internet technology to consult with emigrants during the symposium. The key questions for discussion were: Is emigration from Ireland today as bad as the 1980's? Who is leaving? Will they come back? What factors are likely to influence their decision? Dr Piaras Mac Éinrí argues that advances in internet technologies such as Skype, Facebook and Twitter have changed the way people communicate globally and as a result young emigrants are in a more advantageous position compared with those who emigrated 30 years ago. Such a position was reinforced by emigrants in the focus groups who used the internet regularly to keep in touch with parents, family members and friends back home and who confessed that they spoke more frequently to their parents now than when they lived in Ireland.

Regardless of the advances in communication and internet technology, one can not dismiss the huge transition for many young emigrants moving from one country to another and the challenges so often associated with cultural readjustment. Migrants often experience displacement and dislocation as a result of a sense of psychological disorientation. A polish born writer Hoffman described this anxiety about her identity after receiving advice about becoming Canadian in her book *Lost in Translation:*

"This is a society in which you are who you think you are. Nobody gives you your identity here, you have to reinvent yourself every day. He is right I suspect, but I can't figure out how this is done. You say what you are and everyone believes you? But how do I choose from identity options available all around me?" (1991).

The journey of an emigrant is often a complex one and involves many stages of readjustment to a new society, with new cultural and society norms. For some this journey is an easy one to take, whilst for others it has many twists and turns and states of adapting to a new life. Oberg's work in this area aptly describes the five stages of adapting to a new culture.

Stages of Adapting

Emigration is often associated with a journey or life path that one takes. This journey often entails going through a number of stages. There is extensive literature documenting this experience which often starts with a honeymoon phase when the emigrant is experiencing a positive perception of their new country and continues on this road going through a further 4 stages of what Oberg called 'culture shock.' Culture shock is a term Oberg coined to describe 5 distinct stages people experience travelling to or living in another country. This transition through the 5 stages has a cause, symptoms and resolution.

According to Oberg, cultural shock is "precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs and cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life" (1960:1).

For many emigrants there tends to be five stages they experience as emigrants as they adapt to life in a new culture.

Phase 1: Honeymoon

The honeymoon period is typically a period of excitement, happiness and fascination with your new home. The emigrant tends to experience this phase before or shortly after arriving in their new country. Everything is new and interesting and emigrants tend to focus on similarities between the country they have emigrated to and home.

Phase 2: Rejection

During the first months emigrants may begin to feel a sense of disappointment, frustration, confusion and irritability with their situation. The differences between the new country and home tend to be ever present in one's mind and emigrants may miss family and feel a lack of connection to their new home. Finding employment may be difficult. It is not uncommon for emigrants to feel

lonely and homesick for home and friends. Some may have feelings of guilt about leaving family members behind.

Phase 3: Regression

After a period of time, an emigrant may experience more acceptance or openness to their new surroundings. Such feelings will usually manifest in feeling more familiar with and understanding the new cultural cues of the new country. Emigrants tend to be more receptive to meeting new people, experiencing new things and enjoying life in your new country. Phase 3 is a period of acceptance when an individual finally learns the local language, customs and way of living and adjusts slowly without losing your own cultural identity.

Phase 4: Recovery Phase or At-Ease-At-Last

The recovery phase or at-ease-at last phase is a period when things start to become normal. You are comfortable in your new surroundings. You have integrated into life in your new country, made friends and are now leading a relatively new lifestyle to your old way of life.

Phase 5: Reverse Culture Shock or Return Culture Shock

The final stage of Oberg's culture shock - phase 5, the period when an emigrant experiences what Oberg calls 'Reverse Culture Shock or Return Culture Shock'. This is when the emigrant returns home but finds that home is no longer the home they identified with before they emigrated. They feel lost between two worlds and have now become so adjusted to their new culture that the old culture they left at home has become somewhat alien to them. They experience a reverse or return culture shock. They view Ireland differently now than before. They view Ireland as an emigrant and not as a native. Joseph O'Connor captures this experience so well in his introduction to Ireland in Exile: Irish Writers Abroad, when he describes a visit home to Dublin after living for a period of time abroad. The experience starts with a strong desire to be home and to experience the comfort of home amongst friends. The next experience is the feeling of being an outsider amongst friends and not being able to relate completely to their lives or the conversations taking place. O'Connor describes the feeling of uneasiness and lastly the dawning realisation that they are in fact an emigrant. The following excerpt reflects so eloquently the experience of reverse culture shock:

"...You might be coming home for Christmas, or a family celebration, or a funeral, or to see a friend. Or you might just be coming back to Ireland because you're so lonely and freaked-out where you are that you can't stick it anymore, and you need a break, and you'd sell your Granny to be back in the pub at home by nine o'clock on a Friday night, having fun and telling stories.

And there it is, this IDA poster, illuminated at the end of the corridor that leads from the airbridge gates to the arrivals terminal; the ghostly faces of those beautiful Young Europeans. It always seemed so poignant as any ancient Ulster saga to me, this pantheon of departed heroes, so hopeful and innocent, frozen in their brief moment of optimism.

And you meet your friends the night you get home, the people who stayed behind. You talk to them of what's happening and there's loads of news. Some of them are getting married to people you haven't met, because you don't live in Ireland anymore. Some of them have broken up with long-time lovers, others are still trying to get decent work. Some of them have kids you've never seen. You don't really know what these scandals and gobbets of gossip are, about which people are laughing so knowledgably as they sip their pints, but you laugh too, because you don't want to be left out. You pretend you know what your friends are talking about, because you still want to belong, And sometimes there are rows, as the night wears on, because you don't keep in touch as much as you should, and they resent you a bit for going anyway, and you resent them a bit for staying, although you can't put your finger on why. But the conversation flows, as much as it can, with a couple of awkward moments. When you use the words "home," for instance, your friends don't really know what you mean. Sometimes you don't know yourself.

...then, about half an hour before closing time, you find yourself looking around the pub and becoming frantically uptight. You're feeling completely out of place, you don't know why. It's weird. You don't get it. But somehow, despite the ceol and the caint and the craic, something is wrong. You're home in Ireland, but you're not home really. London is still in your head, or New York, or Paris. But you're in Ireland. How did this happen? It's not that you're unhappy exactly. But it's just not right. You take a swig of your drink, and the music seems louder. You close your eyes and try to fight back the almost overwhelming urge to be somewhere – anywhere – else. And you realise in that moment that you really are an emigrant now. And that being an emigrant isn't just an address. You realise that it's actually a way of thinking about Ireland."

This excerpt will resonate with many emigrants of the 1950's, 80's and 90's. It is a story so familiar to many young Irish men and women who left Ireland — many never to return. After a period of time in their new country, many start to regard it as home. To what extent this story reflects the experience of today's emigrants is questionable. Undoubtedly they will experience unsettling periods throughout their time abroad or on returns home. Many interviewed stated that technology afforded them the opportunity to keep informed about what was going on in Ireland — whether through online media reports or sporting broadcast of GAA events and with the onset of skype, whatsapp, or viber they could speak to friends and family regularly. The only obstacle was the time difference and finding a suitable time to communicate with those at home.

"... I was listening to a local GAA game on live stream today, on a local radio station, you know so I'm not missing much..." (young emigrant).

Oberg's typology is identifiable in some of the research findings emerging from the interviews and focus groups with the young emigrants in Canada and in the UK. The research reveals that some emigrants experienced great heartache leaving home while others experienced difficulty once they arrived in their host country or at various periods throughout their stay.

Cultural norms whether it is language, humour or behaviour and how we socially interact with others is learned behaviour. When one enters a new environment often they are required to adjust to new customs, habits, pastimes even foods. As articulated by many of those interviewed in this study one of the quickest ways to overcome 'culture shock' is to emerge oneself with the culture and get acquainted with the natives.

As one emigrant in the focus group stated, "...get involved and make an effort to make friends."

Summary

This chapter explores and discusses the literature on emigration. It focuses on key concepts and perspectives dominant in the discourse and provides a historical overview of how emigration was perceived and addressed by successive Irish Government since 1945.

The concept of the Diaspora is pertinent to any discussion about emigration and the literature addresses the importance of responding to the needs of the Diaspora. The relationship between Ireland and its Diaspora is extremely important and needs to be cherished. As Robinson contends this relationship needs to start at home by providing supports to our young who are facing the prospect of emigration. Furthermore the Taskforce Report on Policy concerning Emigrants reinforces this argument stating that people who emigrate should be empowered with the information to make an informed choice and be properly prepared (2002: 3).

The literature on emigration explores how the perception of emigration has changed over the years. A salient point emerging in the literature is that contemporary emigration is less of a journey of no return. Many commentators speak about emigration as a journey. This journey is explored in the research to capture the experience of those young people currently emigrating from Ireland.

Another key concept pertinent to the research is that of 'culture shock' – a term coined by the anthropologist Oberg. The literature review used Oberg's theory of culture shock and stages of adaptation as a framework for the research - from 'The Honeymoon' (phase 1) right through to phase 5 which Oberg describes as 'Reverse Culture Shock or Return Culture Shock.' The stages of transition and adaptation resonate strongly with the experience of emigrants interviewed as part of this research.

"Misinformation needs to be confronted with objective information. Governments and other societal institutions who are slow to give objective information about emigration are implying national failure. Like the emigrant, nobody is comfortable admitting failure. Emigration is not an act of God"

(Fr. Bobby Gilmore, President of the MRCI, 2012).

Chapter 4 documents the experiences of 4 young Irish emigrants who left Ireland in the last 2 years. Two of the case studies tell stories of living in the UK as an Irish emigrant and two case studies relate to the Canadian experience. All stories serve to illustrate the different experiences encountered by the young people in relation to emigration and settling into life in a new country.

1. MARY

Profile

Gender: Female

Age: 23

From: County Kerry

Destination: Emigrated to Edinburgh, Scotland

Occupation: Occupational Therapy

Narrative

Mary left Ireland in 2010 to study Occupational Therapy in Edinburgh. She financed her studying through parental support. She had to leave Ireland to pursue the course of her dreams but stated that she was looking forward to the move as it offered a course with a good reputation and she wanted to live in Edinburgh for a while.

She returns home every few months and has found the experience a positive one.

Settling into life

She never encountered any difficulties settling into life in Edinburgh and attributes this to the fact that there are a lot of Irish in Edinburgh and it was easy to get to know people as everyone was starting a new course.

Living status

Accommodation wasn't difficult to arrange and she used gumtree (a website) to source it. Mary lives with 3 girls from her class and the majority of her friends in Edinburgh are Irish. The aspect of life that appeals most to her about her host city is the vibrancy and prettiness of the city.

Things missed most about home

The things she misses most about home are her family, friends, boyfriend and the local areas.

Staying in touch

Mary uses facebook, phone texting and ringing to stay in touch with friends and family at home.

The Story So Far... 34

Supports that would have made her move easier

Mary stated that it would have helped if there were grants available for studying masters degrees abroad for Irish students from the Republic of Ireland. She also stated that flights to the Republic of Ireland are quite expensive which means it is difficult for people to afford to visit her.

Intentions to return home in the next 5 years if the economy improves

Mary would return home if she could get an Occupational Therapy job, however, she plans to travel further once she completes her studies - first to Australia.

2. JAKE

Profile

Gender: Male Age: 22

From: County Kerry

Destination: Emigrated to Oxford, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom

Occupation: Student of Osteopathic medicine

Narrative

Jake left Ireland in 2010 to study Osteopathic medicine in Oxford. His primary reason for leaving Ireland was to continue his studies and there were no equivalent courses in Ireland.

He returns to Ireland about 3 times a year – at Christmas, for an annual festival and for family events (weddings, christenings, 21st etc.,).

Settling into life

He was enthusiastic about moving and relished the opportunity to meet new people and to live and study in a new environment. He says he is content to stay in Oxford for the foreseeable future, but if opportunities to study/work elsewhere appealed to him he would have no problem leaving.

Lifestyle choice or necessity

Jake says it was a bit of both.

Living status

In his first year he stayed in university accommodation but this year he lives in a rented house near the college with four other students. Most of his closest friends in Oxford are Irish.

Aspects of life in the host country that appeal to you

He loves the nightlife in Oxford.

Things missed most about home

Jake says he misses family and friends at home and playing for his local GAA club. He also misses out on events at home.

The Story So Far...

Staying in touch

Jake uses skype, email, viber, facebook, the odd text or phone call and has started to write letters to people at home.

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Supports that would have made his move easier

Jake found his transition from Ireland to England was relatively easy.

Intentions to return home in the next 5 years if the economy improves

Jake says

"I would never say never, but I can't see myself returning and it is highly unlikely in the next 5 years and if I do it would most likely be to raise a family once I had settled down."

Advice to intending emigrants

"Get involved, whether it be a Saturday soccer team, cooking classes, yoga, GAA or Irish Societies. Get out there and get involved."

3. ANNA

Profile

Gender: Female

Age: 29

From: County Laois

Destination: Emigrated to Toronto, Canada

Occupation: Solicitor

Narrative

Anna arrived in Toronto in July 2011. She has lived in Canada for a year. She had trained and worked as a solicitor at home. She qualified in December 2009 and after qualifying she had always intended to travel before settling down.

Anna decided to wait until after she completed her apprenticeship and was fully qualified and then head away. When she qualified she got work and continued to work until she was made redundant.

Post redundancy she got a further three months work in a personal injury firm but after that she struggled to find work.

"It just got to a stage where I wasn't getting any work. I was applying for jobs left, right and centre and I was just getting rejection letters."

She decided to apply for a visa for Canada.

Anna travelled to Toronto by herself and spoke of the experience as daunting. Initially it was quite overwhelming but the experience has been thoroughly empowering and personally enriching.

"I was never a very independent person ever but it has been the making of me do you know..."

The Story So Far... 36

Anna was fortunate to have friends who lived in Toronto who she was able to stay with when she first arrived. She stayed with them for the first 2 weeks and then found a place for herself. She sourced her accommodation on Craig's list (a website) and lives with a guy from Wexford, a girl from Tipperary and an Australian guy. Craig's list is a website, where people post their accommodation and items for sale.

Anna said that even though her parents found her leaving Ireland hard, they knew it was for the best given the limited prospects and opportunities for her at home.

"Just for me personally and you know, the mind frame I was in I needed to get out and I needed to work as well and you know, so yeah of course, they were sad to see me leave, but they were happy to see me go into a better place you know."

She stays in touch with home through skype and by using call cards, by email and texts.

Anna stayed in Canada for Christmas and found it very hard. She missed home so much and it was one of the times whilst being abroad that she found the whole experience very difficult.

"I cooked dinner for like a few other Irish people that were around and at the end of the day it's all about your friends and family like...Christmas eve wasn't great, it wasn't, but like I got over it do you know what I mean. Like it's weird as well because everything was open on Christmas day like. I live right down town and sort of McDonalds is across from me. That was open and the pizza restaurant was open, you know the chemist was open, it was just really weird. Really, really weird."

4. GRÁINNE

Profile

Gender: Female

Age: 27

From: County Tipperary

Destination: Emigrated to Toronto, Canada **Occupation**: Occupational Therapist

Narrative

Gráinne is from County Tipperary. She did an undergraduate degree in social studies for four years and then returned to college to do a masters degree in Occupational Therapy.

Gráinne graduated in August 2011 and moved to Toronto to get work as an Occupational Therapist. Prior to emigrating she was told that she would have no problem getting work in Canada but when she arrived she discovered she was required to do a national exam.

Before emigrating Gráinne was advised that all she required was ratified copies of her university transcripts, however, this was not the case. She was required to do further exams in Canada which cost \$550. She also had to register with the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy which is the main body over all the different provinces in Canada and another organisation which

covers the State of Ontario. Furthermore she discovered on arrival the process of accreditation in Canada is a time consuming process.

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"I was told coming over here that I could become employed as an Occupational Therapist, pending the exam. Like all my lecturers were telling me oh no you'll be grand, you know. You'll walk into a job over in Toronto without the exam, just let them know you're registered, once you have your letter of registration."

Whilst studying for the exam she took a job in an Irish bar to get an income and to meet people.

"I took a job in an Irish bar which do you know, I was reluctant to do at the start, I was like oh really I wanted to you know, I wanted to get, even doing something in health care but still once I started you know, working in it, I was happy you know. I'm happy to have it because you know I'm making friends down there. I meet Irish people down there the whole time you know and it's quite good really do you know for networking and just to help me settle in as well because it's just frustrating being at home every day behind a lap top applying for jobs and sometimes you don't get feedback or you ask for feedback and they say you know it's, you know it can become disheartening so you know I'm happier just being out and doing a few hours each week while I'm trying to get into a hospital or health care work as an occupational therapist."

Gráinne has just completed the national exam and awaits the result and is looking for work as an Occupational Therapist.

"The men and women of our Diaspora represent not simply a series of departures and losses. They remain, even while absent, a precious reflection of our own growth and change, a precious reminder of the many strands of identity which compose our story. They have come, either now or in the past, from Derry and Dublin and Cork and Belfast. They know the names of our townlands and villages. They remember our landscape or they have heard of it. They look to us anxiously to include them in our sense of ourselves and not to forget their contribution while we make our own"

(Mary Robinson, 1995).

Chapter 5 Being a Young Emigrant in the UK

5.1	Life in the UK for a young Irish emigrant
5.2	Reasons for emigrating
5-3	Emigration – An Adventure
5-4	Challenges encountered on arrival
5.5	Views on the current economic situation in Ireland
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5.1 – LIFE IN THE UK FOR A YOUNG IRISH EMIGRANT

Following a brief introduction, the discussion started with participants introducing themselves, telling a little bit about themselves, what brought them to London, their current status and what they enjoyed most about life in London and what they liked least. This question served to highlight some of the positives and negatives about their experience.

Likes and Dislikes

A common 'like' emerging from the discussion was the fact that London offered participants a greater range of things to do and new experiences and the social life is good.

"The social life is pretty good, and you've lots to do."

"What I like the best is the diversity in London, I like the way there's so many different kinds of people here."

"What I like most is I just love the one big adventure. I just love exploring all different areas of London every weekend, there's always something new to do, it doesn't get boring."

Participants also cited the diversity in culture and different types of people to mix with as appealing.

"...what I like best about London is probably a mix of the social aspect and the cultural part, the diversity and all that has to do with London."

Participants felt that people's outlook on life was much more positive than in Ireland. One participant stated

"...it's not depressing because every time you go home to Ireland or anywhere in Dublin everyone is like moaning about recession, but here people just get on with it..."

On 'dislikes' participants referred to a dislike for travelling on the tube, the long commutes so common for people living in London, paying exorbitant rent and people being less receptive to 'Irish' craic and banter.

Ways of staying in touch...

Most common forms of communicating with family and friends back home is through skype, viber or whatsapp or by the old conventional method of the telephone.

What do I miss?

Things participants missed about home varied from activities, to foods they would eat at home. Some missed playing golf or driving a car. Others cited missing the silence of country life, tayto crisps, brown scones, a particular type of chicken roll, 'Sunday dinners' and Barry's tea. Despite enjoying their experience of living in London there were still things that they missed from home.

The following quotations convey these very well:

"... I miss the silence. Like you don't get that here at all. You could go to your back garden there and it would be just dead, nothing."

Pining for space and solitude and some countryside one participant stated "I'm going away this weekend, I feel I need air, I need sea, I need space, I need like water..."

Participants also spoke about missing the culture and the craic of the Irish. A sense of humour was also regarded as an important virtue of the Irish and one that was missed by many of the participants.

"I suppose laughing at yourself as well, they don't do that over here. Like actually taking the piss out of yourself like, they find it very strange like. But that's probably a national pastime at home."

What do I not miss?

There were some things participants mentioned that they didn't miss about Irish culture namely 'Irish begrudgery' and 'negativity.'

"Because you know in Ireland people are a lot more cynical and that's good in one way but in another way they can be like oh you want to start a business! Really! What would you know about that?"

5.2 – REASONS FOR EMIGRATING

There were many reasons cited for emigrating. With one exception all participants left Ireland to pursue better job opportunities.

In response to the question of whether leaving Ireland was a lifestyle choice or a necessity everyone stated that it was more of a lifestyle choice. There was no doubt, however, that the impetus to leave was as a result of a lack of job opportunities at home. Some stated that because of the career path that they had chosen leaving was an inevitability as Ireland just did not offer the opportunities to progress in their chosen career.

For some leaving was a fait accompli as life in Ireland offered them so little and finding job satisfaction was considered to be a priority.

One participant described how Dublin had become suffocating and inhibited the chance of job progression.

"Dublin was just getting too much, like it was soul destroying working so hard all week and literally having to stay in at the weekend."

"...Yeah I wanted a career that wasn't going to be provided back home."

"I'm in property related real estate kind of stuff...the market in Dublin even the commercial market is tiny in comparison to what it is over here. So your experience to get chartered is massive compared to what it would be at home. So you know its kind of like bite the bullet for two years and get chartered, maybe you know something might rise back at home but I doubt it but no I'm here and I'll stay here probably for the foreseeable future."

"No I suppose my own bad luck that I picked a course like that. But no, listen that's the cards you are dealt."

5.3 – EMIGRATION – AN ADVENTURE

Others stated that if circumstances and opportunities had been better in Ireland that they would like to have stayed. For those people and the group as a whole, the sense of overwhelming enthusiasm and positivity was striking. No one expressed any disappointment at not being able to secure employment in Ireland in their chosen career.

As the following quotations reflect, all the participants looked on their emigration experience to date as an adventure.

"I think if things hadn't changed and like if things had stayed the same I probably would have been content to stay at home and to work at home."

"If I had got a job I probably would have stayed, but my sister moved, lots of my family have moved away so there's nothing, like lots of my friends are gone so in that sense it was a lifestyle choice that I was looking forward to moving to London and I wanted to."

"Well when I finished college I had, because I did journalism I was interning so I was working like full-time but I wasn't getting paid for it. So I'd done that for eight or nine months and I just couldn't take it anymore. That's why I decided to move so it was like a relief almost for me to leave because I was just so frustrated trying to apply for jobs. I was constantly applying for jobs. Just getting nowhere with it. But at the same time I think if it was six years ago and I was in the same position I probably wouldn't have thought about moving elsewhere."

The Job searching Experience

When asked about the job searching experience, there were various different experiences. Some tried to secure work prior to leaving Ireland, others moved first and then applied for jobs once they arrived. Participants emphasised that there were difficulties in all types of job searching whether you engaged in the process before you emigrated or if you waited until you arrived. One participant described the experience as 'really challenging' and 'overwhelming.'

"I did find it (job searching) really challenging when I moved over because it wasn't like Dublin, I couldn't just ring someone up who knew somebody...I was overwhelmed by how much there was. I didn't really know how to, where to go. So it kind of was a stressful time. It took me about 6 to 8 weeks to really get somewhere, getting a job but you know I did find it challenging."

Advertising Jobs or Internships on-line

One participant who found out about an internship opportunity after arriving in London felt there would be value in creating a website which advertised internships to prospective Irish emigrants and included general advice on opportunities from current interns.

5.4 – CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED ON ARRIVAL

The participants highlighted that the problems they encountered on arrival in their new country were interrelated. The biggest difficulty encountered by participants arriving in London was lack of adequate resources and not having a UK credit history. The latter led to problems opening a UK bank account and obtaining a lease on a property. Another challenge was job searching and getting a job to suit personal skill sets and qualifications.

Funding was cited by all as the most difficult obstacle to overcome. All told the same story in this regard. Participants stated that in relation to money an emigrant arriving in London had to either have enough of a financial reserve to support themselves for a month or two or rely on parental support.

"...I hadn't built up enough finances so I moved over and very much depended on my parents to keep me going with the deposit and the rent for the house I was in."

"Probably then the first month where you don't get paid, that was tight and luckily enough my parents aren't in any financial difficulties so they could provide me with that but still at 24 you don't want to be asking your parents for money you know."

Accommodation

Finding accommodation was another hurdle to overcome. Participants described the difficulties encountered on arrival in London seeking to secure accommodation. The search for accommodation was compounded by the fact that you require a month deposit and then a month rent in advance before the first month salary is due.

"I just didn't know where to live, didn't really have anywhere. So that was my biggest kind of thing finding somewhere to live. I kind of did it backwards. I probably should have got a job first but yeah I sold my car so that paid for me to kind of be able to survive."

One of the participants stated that securing accommodation was a more difficult process than at home because of the fact that landlords require tenants to demonstrate a good credit rating. Unless you could do this then you were often required a guarantor who resides in the United Kingdom or potentially 6 months of rent in advance.

Irish people do not have a banking history in the UK and as a result will not be able to pass the credit checks which presents huge problems in respect of accommodation, taking out contracts etc.

"Unless you've a banking history that's the real thing over here, your credit history is tied to you big time over here whereas in Ireland you can kind of skip around it a bit more and probably because you might know someone who has a house or someone who knows someone. But here no, you are just another face in the crowd."

Obtaining a credit rating in the UK can take up to 2 years. To get a credit rating requires an individual to have entered a contract or have a utility bill in their name. As participants explained this is a vicious circle and has implications for obtaining the most basic utilities such as a contract mobile phone.

"I'm still trying to get a bill phone after a year and a half, I'm paying rent, I'm paying taxes, I'm paying gym membership, I'm paying like most things that you can pay if you are working and they do a credit check and I'm sorry you didn't pass. I can't get a contract bill phone. I think once you've registered to vote apparently that opens up a lot more things for you."

Difficulty getting a bank account

According to the participants the process of opening a bank account was a very long protracted and difficult process and affected many other important processes related to settling into life in London.

The following quotations reflected the bureaucratic nature of opening a bank account:

"Nightmare (laughing) that was probably the biggest hurdle I've had since I got here. I needed a bank account to get my police clearance. I need my police clearance to start work but I couldn't, I needed a statement from a bank but the bank wouldn't give me a statement because I couldn't open an account, it went on for weeks, I mean six weeks at least. But I mean I opened it and I went home for a couple of weeks because I didn't have the job and eventually I had to drive back over, just to sort out this bank account which I'd already been to the bank and opened."

"...But I had to have like, to open one I had to have a bill or something with my address on it and I was like well I've just moved here how do you expect me to get that. Then I had to actually physically go and get the contract, the tenancy agreement to our house but it needs to be the original one that was signed. It couldn't just be faxed over or something they actually wanted the original one and then they needed like, it was just like I remember it being an absolute nightmare and like then the cost of getting around to try, just no one helping you...I found it quite stressful."

To address some of these teething problems in relation to accommodation, credit history, opening a bank account, accessing essential social services it was suggested by participants that there would be merit in the establishment of an agency that operates in the Republic of Ireland to provide assistance to prospective emigrants before they arrive in the UK. Such support, it was thought would greatly alleviate the stress associated with resolving some of these issues and make the process of moving to a new country much easier.

5.5 – VIEWS ON THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN IRELAND

Most of the participants were relatively optimistic about life at the moment. Youth was on their side. Travelling and living abroad was an experience. It was good to experience new horizons and try new things. London provided plenty of scope for them career wise and also in terms of social life and activities.

This idea of emigration being chosen as opposed to 'forced' is an interesting perspective and a departure from some of the recent media portrayal of youth emigration. Frequently we are bombarded with the perspective that emigration is as a result of necessity where young people are forced to leave as opposed to opting to emigrate.

Undoubtedly these young people felt that emigrating offered them a challenge and excitement and many opportunities to experience and enjoy.

"I'm 24 and it's a great experience and I want to see the world, but maybe in ten years time when I've ten years more experience and maybe I want to start a family maybe I'll be angry then that there's not work for me back home and that I don't have that option."

"I'm not saying that it's every young person's reason for wanting to leave, but it's definitely quite a few. Obviously you are going to have the sad cases where you are forced to move but like I had jobs not being big-headed about it but I had job offers at home if I wanted them. But just didn't fit into what I wanted in my life."

Attitudes to life in Ireland in recessionary times...

Participants felt that the recession brought a new attitude to money and wealth for Irish society. It was felt Irish people were afraid to expose wealth or to be seen as "flash with money." It wasn't 'cool' to be seen with money at home anymore. According to the young people interviewed, this mentality contrasted starkly with London life where people were still very 'flash' with cash.

"...the way the global downturn is ...they are not buying land rovers anymore or not putting the 2012 registration plate on the car. But over here it's still...they all see themselves as high rollers. They've no problem you know going for a big dinner, 15 of them they all throw their credit cards into a bowl and whoever gets last straw has to pay for all the dinners."

5.6 – IRISH NETWORKS & CONNECTIONS

Irish networks and connections were considered to be important by many of those interviewed. Some of the participants spoke about setting up a Gaelic football team for a 'kick about' on a Sunday. It generated a lot of interest from Irish people and helped to make contacts and friends.

The London Irish Centres and the GAA were acknowledged as having an important role to play in connecting people with their roots and providing a touch stone for support if required.

One participant said if in need of assistance when living in London, he would contact the GAA before he would contact the Irish Embassy. The GAA was also commended for being open to all, men and women.

"I've no great attachment to GAA, I was just purely going out to meet people and have a bit of craic. But you have then an instant circle of friends, that's the thing, like obviously you have friends outside of that but to get an instant circle of fifteen friends, fifteen lads you know and it goes across the borders, you go to Australia, New York. Like a lot of my friends during the summer they play hurling and football over in New York and they'd have lots of people to go out with, loads of people to socialise with. And you know it's in the back of your head so that's why you do it."

The Power of the Irish

There was a view that being Irish abroad or in the UK was very 'powerful' in terms of the networking opportunities it affords you. Furthermore, participants stated that they felt in the main, people in England were more receptive to the Irish living in the UK than the Irish would be to British people living in Ireland.

"I think people just respond more positively to you, like I haven't met one person who didn't rave about you being Irish, and likes you."

5.7 – FINANCING POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

During the discussion participants highlighted the fact that if you were from the Republic of Ireland and wanted to travel to the UK to do postgraduate studies it was very difficult to secure funding and often one needed to self finance their studies. There is very little financial support for postgraduate studies in the UK for those who are not UK residents.

"It (funding) was just non-existent so I don't know if anybody is even aware of this, for Irish people going to do Masters degrees in London but we are not in the Commonwealth obviously right so you don't qualify for dominance vouchers. We don't qualify for a scholarship for basically anybody outside of the Commonwealth. You obviously can't apply for a British scholarship."

Student Loan

The option of obtaining a student loan is also prohibitive in that you must have a credit history or be resident in the UK for a period of time. Many of the participants in the focus group highlighted obtaining a loan or funding for a postgraduate course extremely challenging:

"I was asking for £6,500 or something for education to go and do this masters and they kept on putting like more hoops to jump through. They were like, do you have a letter from the school, I do. Do you have this, do you have that, right and eventually it came down to we are not giving it to you because you are going to the UK, it's not an Irish institution that you are going to. I was refused the credit."

"My dad is putting me through it and he's under financial stress. I mean his salary has gone down by 30% since 2007 or whatever and he's paid off his mortgage quite a long time ago so he remortgaged part of the house or something and that's kind of what he's using."

"I think that's a huge thing because I'm hopefully going back in September to study, now I'm doing my obstetrics which is funded by the NHS, otherwise I would have had to pay maybe £9,000 a year, but other than that like that I can't apply for a bursary in the UK because I'm not from the UK but I'm not considered a European student either."

5.8 – ACCESSING HEALTH CARE

The health care system in the UK was acknowledged by participants as being of a very high standard, however, participants stated that accessing public health services as a new immigrant to the country can take a long time. One needs to be registered before they can see a doctor otherwise they must go to A&E or a pharmacy to get a diagnosis and/or treatment. Unlike the Republic of Ireland, one cannot pay to access the system. As the participants describe, this is a lengthy process and means that it is difficult to access primary health care. Often one has to resort to using emergency services for non-emergency treatment which is not a good use of resources.

On arrival to the UK, participants recommended that an individual immediately register with a G.P. To register with a G.P., the individual is required to prove that they will reside in the country for more than 3 months.

5.9 – THE SOCIAL LIFE

Participants felt that the social scene in London is better than at home in that it offers more options and more diversity. Comparisons were made with how the social life in London was different from home, with some believing it was more exciting and every night there was something on, somewhere new to go and more opportunity to mingle with different, new and interesting people.

"I don't know I think at home everyone is really in their niche, I know with me like I've my group of friends and they all go out together and you know everybody else. But like you don't really hang out with them, but here I think you could, I think it's easier to get to know people here in a sense."

"I think the social life over here seems to be a lot more work orientated and I find that after I spend most of my time wearing work clothes, I can't remember the last time I went out like drinking on a Saturday or something but I tend to go out with work during the week."

"I find over here its buzzing Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. So you go for a drink after work and English people go and have a drink and go home. Irish people kind of go out and just go out..."

Drinking in the UK

Interestingly participants commented on the heavy drinking culture in the UK. They stated that although Ireland had a reputation as having a heavy drinking culture that this was much more pronounced in London in terms of the amount and frequency people would drink even on a weekday night after work. When asked why they thought this was the case many felt it was a response to the high pressured, fast pace of life in London and a way for many Londoners to unwind after a long and busy day at work.

"I think life is so fast paced over here, you move so fast and stuff I feel like people midweek need a drink, just you need a release. You need something, that's why I think its more work because people after work are going oh my God, mental day like they go do you need a drink? And that's why you end up, at weekends I tend to take it easy because I'm usually mental during the week."

"With the work thing as well I noticed drinking at lunch time. It's completely insane. Back home. I never did it...If you went for a drink at lunch time back home they'd think you have a problem."

"In our staff room people will have, not necessarily during work obviously because we do have patients (laughing) but like if people are going to stay an hour or two late they'll open a bottle of wine and have a few drinks and that, we'd never ever think of doing that at home."

The Rat Race

Life in London was regarded as fast and stressful at times with very demanding work schedules and very long working hours. How participants coped with this pressure varied. Some felt it was part of the experience but would not be sustainable in the long-term. Others felt it was often necessary to take a break from the rat race and get away from the city at weekends.

"It's not too bad at the moment I quite like what I'm doing, so I'm more than happy to work those 12 or 13 hour days. But at the same time you need to step away from it as well, it's not sustainable, not very health beneficial..."

"I suppose it's to do with age as well, you are of the age now where you have to get that experience so if you are going to clock more hours getting experience it's not going to speed up to where you want to get career wise. But you know it's going to help you along the way a lot more than just doing your regular 9.30 to 5.30."

"When I first started my job now I was given a contract for hours of work 9.30 to 5.30 but you could tear it up like. There was one guy he was doing 9.30 to 5.30 and he was pulled aside and told you know you might want to stay a bit longer here you are creating a bad impression."

5.10 – SUPPORTS

Participants gave very good advice and recommendations based on their personal experiences of supports which should be established for those emigrating from Ireland presently. These supports were very practical and would, if implemented, provide up to date information informed by young people for young people to assist and support them. Participants suggested the use of social media and websites to provide young Irish emigrants with up to date, useful information on a broad range of countries throughout the world. Social media would be a good way of disseminating information and providing a user friendly guide to living in these countries. The information could also include contact organisations or individuals who could provide additional support if required.

5.11 – THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING NETWORKS & MAKING CONTACTS

Some participants spoke about the importance of building contacts to advance your career and open doors to you when you do arrive in London. It was recommended that to do this you should attend talks or seminars that are organised in your chosen profession.

"It's good from a career perspective like because you don't have those instant networks that say the people that I work with. They all went to uni together and across different firms across London. So they have that instant access. Whereas I found out there's two or three Irish guys in other firms and just one of them is running that network, that business network. And so that could be an instant network for me like and could lead onto later down the line business and you know, whereas we are at a distinct disadvantage not having gone to uni here."

"There's a London Irish business group or something. I went to one of those talks and it was a packed house about 300 Irish people and they brought over Peter Sutherland, you know an unbelievably interesting man. And just brilliant, it was good to be in the company of people you know a lot of people were there and were learning. We do all plan to go back home and it's good to get their support and to be able to know that you are all thinking in the same way."

"They are a good network to tap into, if there's any Irish people coming over, business related."

5.12 – INTENTIONS TO RETURN HOME

There were mixed views on whether or not participants would return to Ireland if the economy improved. It depended a lot on the sort of career they worked in and whether or not they thought it was realistic to imagine an economic recovery in 5 years time. Some expressed a desire to save money and use this to develop a business at home in the future.

"I'd often view a downturn or a recession as an opportunity for a business, that's something I want to do maybe not in the next few years but long term I'll start my own business and often when you start businesses in a downturn its often quite a good place to begin because you get to tap into suppliers that will provide you with something at a cheaper cost."

"I kind of left Ireland without paying my phone bill (laughing). So I won't be going home any time soon."

"I'm not sure if I was in a relationship, I think if I wanted to move back they are going to go like yeah fine, we'll all move to Ireland, I don't mean it's like going backwards but there's obviously a lot more opportunities here..."

"I think it would depend a lot on your social circumstances at the time even if I wanted to move back if you have met someone you are obviously going to have to be more like open to staying..."

"Most of the people I've chatted to who are in London who are Irish - they are like no I'm probably not going back. They have started to build a life here, I've met a guy here, met a girl here, and you know that way. But personally yeah I'll definitely move back, probably not in five years though. I want more time."

5.13 – EXPECTATIONS FOR IRELAND IN THE FUTURE

Participants stated that they would like to return home to an Ireland that was more sustainable in terms of health and the environment and the public policies in place. Sustainable policies are integral to the way people live their lives and invest in their futures. Examples were given in relation to the health system in Ireland. Participants referred to how money was squandered in Ireland leaving a legacy of a third world health care system. Participants would like to return to an Ireland that has vision and better public services and better sustainable investment for the medium to long-term.

Participants also joked about the weather and wanting to return to an Ireland that was 'sunnier'.

5.14 – ADVICE TO PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS

In terms of advice to a young person considering emigrating from Ireland the message was unanimous and encouraging.

Those who had emigrated stated that the most important advice to impart to others was to 'embrace the experience' and 'don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.'

"If you are one of the people that is being forced to move, just deal with it and embrace it and make it work for you - don't complain about it."

Another tip was to make a real effort with people in your new country, instead of trying to hang around people or gravitate towards people that you know.

"I've got English friends over here and I think it's because I made an effort to just really, if you are invited somewhere go, don't just stick to what you know. Just try something new."

5.15 – ADVICE TO THE IRISH GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT EMIGRANTS

Be More Positive

Emigrants felt the Irish Government needed to be much more positive in its outlook and to engender more optimism and promote more positivity in general.

"I read something recently in The Economist that was saying that governments should be embracing emigrants in the hope that they'll come back so much better and able to drive your country forward. But at the moment we are still quite, you know in that mode where we are giving out about it and feeling sorry for ourselves."

One participant felt that the Government needs to plan for the future and provide incentives to attract young people back to Ireland once the economy had recovered.

"...If there was some way that you could provide maybe a financial incentive to go home in five years time to say we know you've been abroad but we've set up all these areas since you've been gone to come back."

5.16 – PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

When asked about the future, most of the participants said they intended to travel more and that it was unlikely that they would return to Ireland after 5 years. Some stated that they would try to earn money so that if and when they returned to Ireland they would have capital to start a business.

"I'd probably see myself with the intention of moving back to Ireland in about five or six years time, probably going to somewhere like Australia or Brazil to earn a bit of money to be able to afford to go back and start something at home."

"I think I'd like to be in the position to go elsewhere, I don't think I'd be ready to move home in five years time. But I don't think I see myself in London still."

"I treat this as a stop-gap to moving on to somewhere else abroad. But like you're grand after living in London you know one of the biggest cities in the world you go into another place they think you are very capable and you know whereas you mightn't be but that gives you that bit of extra gravitas as well in that situation."

5.17 - PROFILING EMIGRANTS

There is an absence of data on the people emigrating from Ireland. Who are they and where are they going? One participant felt that there should be more of an emphasis on collecting data on emigrants and an effort made in Ireland to engage with the Irish Diaspora.

"Like I mean I feel like it's you are gone now good luck. Like if they, I think it just doesn't make any sense when there's been so many people who have left Ireland since the foundation of the State that there's nobody even in the political system that represents people from abroad. And all of us would engage with it, if we had the chance to vote for a Senator for example that was just purely for people who are from the Diaspora. I think people would really welcome that."

Such profiling on an ongoing basis could be done by an agency or by Irish embassy staff working either in Ireland or abroad and would provide very rich data for developing further public policies to take account of returning emigrants.

Summary

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the focus group discussions with young emigrants who have emigrated to London in the UK. The focus group explores a number of key issues related to the research questions and the experience of being an emigrant in the UK. The findings of the focus group uncover some extremely insightful information about the experience of emigration from the perspective of the emigrant. The following themes are addressed in the discussion:

- Life in the UK for a young Irish emigrant
- Reasons for emigrating
- Emigration An Adventure

- Challenges encountered on arrival
- Views on the current economic situation in Ireland
- Irish networks and connections
- Financing postgraduate studies
- Access to health care
- The social life
- Supports
- The importance of building networks and making connections
- Intentions to return home
- Expectations for Ireland in the future
- Emigrant's advice to prospective emigrants
- Emigrant's advice to the Irish Government to support emigrants
- Plans for the future
- Profiling emigrants

The experiences of participants are extremely useful in informing the research on the sorts of supports young emigrants require prior to their departure and on arrival in their host country. They highlight particular issues which presented problems for them on arrival in the UK and made a number of interesting suggestions on how to ease or alleviate some of the challenges they encountered. They provide useful advice to prospective emigrants and to Government and make a number of suggestions which have informed the findings and recommendations of this report and are outlined in greater detail in Chapter 9.

"For those who do leave Ireland, I think the decision to come to Canada is a very good one. This is a wonderful country in which to live with great prospects for hardworking people, and the existing Irish community in Canada...are extremely welcoming and supportive to our new arrivals so I know that there is a great network of support out there for anyone seeking to make a new home here"

(Irish Ambassador to Canada, Dr. Ray Bassett, 2012).

Being a Young Emigrant in Canada

6.1	Likes and Dislikes What do you miss about home?
6.2	The Canadian Labour Market The importance of Canadian work experience Preparation is the key to success
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6.14	Emigrant's advice to the Irish Government to support emigrants A Grant to support emigrants The promotion of foreign languages
6.15	Intentions to Return Home Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
6.16	Expectations for Ireland in the future

6.1 – LIKES AND DISLIKES

Many participants liked the way Canada offered them so many opportunities. One emigrant stated that coming from a country that currently offers its young so little that it is refreshing to arrive in a country where the world is your oyster.

Many participants liked the outdoors, and activity based social life and the fact that there are many things to do every other night of the week.

The weather was regarded to be a bonus to living in Canada. Another participant spoke about loving the anonymity that living as an immigrant in a new country can afford one. It allows one to be whoever they want to be and do whatever they want without the scrutiny so prevalent in Ireland.

"You can actually do whatever you want when you're here and no one cares and whether it's a good thing or a bad thing about Ireland – there is a lot of small talk like you know - everybody knows what is going on in your life."

"It's a really good quality of life like, I mean there is so much sort of, different sorts of food and places you can go out to eat and like just in the summer it's amazingly hot. I like it. In the winter, it's really cold and you can go skiing and just, I don't know, yeah it's just a really good quality of life."

"I think the people are super positive and I really like that. At work people are amazingly happy about everything all the time."

"It is a very positive place and it kinda rubs of on you a bit."

"Everything is easy, transport is easy - you can't get lost. Everyone is super nice, like you'd actually kind of go, why aren't I this nice (laughing) you know. Like actually, you just feel like you're going like if you ever do go back home to Ireland like you would actually change into a nicer person than when you left."

One participant stated that she loved the fact that Toronto offered her so many opportunities to meet so many Irish people of her own age. Given the mass exodus of Irish people emigrating to Toronto, the city had a lot of young Irish people to socialise with.

"There's a great community here... you know you don't meet this many people your own age all at once. Except in college you know. We're all in the same boat and we're all in a similar age bracket so that's a really nice..."

In relation to aspects of Canadian life that participants disliked, these ranged from the inconvenience of easily accessible mobile phone contracts to the high cost of living and the tipping culture.

"Even dinner at restaurants, it's all very expensive. Yeah and when to tip, when not to tip, how much to tip, how much is enough, have I enough to. We realised we'd been tipping too much recently there we were like, what are we doing?"

What do you miss about home?

Although many participants were enjoying their time in Canada, when asked about home and what they missed about home the list was very long. At the top came people – friends and family. Others missed certain drinks and food. Cadbury's chocolate was greatly missed. Others said they missed a pint of Guinness.

Others missed the freedom of travel that living in Ireland afforded them – both within Ireland and throughout the European Union. Compared with Canada travelling in Ireland and Europe was regarded to be much more affordable.

"If you want to go to Montreal it's like a seven hour journey like and it's so expensive to travel..."

"I miss not being able to jump on a Ryanair flight for next to nothing and just go away for a weekend."

"I think its, you really appreciate Ireland more once you actually come abroad."

"I didn't really appreciate it as much when I was at home but I suppose now that I've come abroad. I probably would like to go back working there some day but I won't say I'm angry either because I was always going to travel at some stage."

6.2 – THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET

Chapter 7 focuses in greater detail on the Canadian labour market. The key message emerging from the consultation with the young emigrants was how very different the Canadian labour market is to the Irish labour market. Some of the main differences relate to the structure of the resume, the need to embrace networking as a mechanism to finding a job, the style of recruitment and the recruitment process.

For some participants, the job searching process was relatively straight forward. They were prepared and had planned well in advance. Before leaving Ireland they had researched the job market and how to engage with the Canadian labour market. For others it was a completely different experience and often left them feeling 'bewildered,' 'frustrated' and 'disheartened.'

"I was slightly under the perception that I kind of would get something easier. I was a bit dreamy about it. I don't think I was being realistic with myself, which didn't help me either because like I think after, I'd say six or seven weeks, I kind of had a bit of a panic attack about it..."

"I think that things are so bad at home that you come over here and you've just got this idea that oh I'll be working in two weeks. And it's not like that, it's not like that anywhere really."

"I found like even like you're applying for some jobs on-line and you're trying to tailor your own application specifically for that job. You could spend three hours doing it and never hear anything back and it is kinda disheartening after a while..."

"And it's just when you're taking days off work like for full time work and you've dry cleaned your suit, you're doing everything to try and get there and then they tell you oh well done, well done, well done, and then you don't even get it, you just about get a phone call to tell you, you're not getting the job you know. That is one of the most disheartening things."

The process of job searching in Canada is unique to the Irish in that one must be extremely proactive and job hungry to secure an interview. The following quotations from Irish emigrants reveal that job preparation, networking and making the right contacts is integral to getting a job:

"I was coming here to work. I wasn't coming to arse around for a month and then look for work. I was coming to work. So no there's no problem like. It's common sense and it's research..."

"It's all about networking and it's all about who you know."

"It's very much a process of okay he can vouch for you, he can say you're a good guy, why don't you come along to an interview, and then you stand up in the interview, you have the job because not only did you do well in your interview, but also you're this guy's friend and you know he said you're a lovely guy and so on..."

"Everything is about who you know, oh I'll ask this guy if he can get you a job you know. There is not too much emphasis played on let's apply coldly for a job."

"So everything stands in terms of references and I suppose coming out here I really noticed just in terms of the local chamber of commerce or the local GAA or even things like there's the Mayo association of Ontario and very small things and you know – these contacts can open doors..."

"I just did a variety of jobs. I worked as a receptionist at one of those clubs, you know, like your equestrian clubs, random jobs really and just to kind of get me in there. Like the money was desperate..."

For others the process whilst initially frustrating was worthwhile in the end and the message they communicated to prospective emigrants is - be prepared before you leave Ireland.

"I came over here to work so I had already done up my Canadian resume before I came over. So like I just googled it, looked up you know, different things that people said and put down, just what it was like to get a job over here. So I had all of that done so I didn't have to, I didn't you know, encounter any difficulties per se with my CV because I did have it done."

Overall many people acknowledged that while the job opportunities are available, most job seekers have to work at job searching. For some they secure employment immediately but for a lot it can take much longer and the longer it takes the more likely the emigrant is to feel insecure about having emigrated and experience doubts about their decision to leave home. Eventually, if you are tenacious enough and try hard you will get a job.

"There are very few people that you meet say oh it didn't work out, complete disaster. I was unemployed for twelve months and I ended up going home broke. Like you don't hear that. It works out eventually."

The importance of Canadian work experience

Work experience was regarded by many as really important and many of the emigrants coming to Canada straight from college did not have work experience and therefore were at a disadvantage. Irish work experience was not regarded to have much value to Canadian employers.

"I think a big difficulty for people first coming over is not having the Canadian experience. The minute you have Canadian experience or a reference, even if it's two weeks that makes all the difference in the world you know. So they just want to see that you have done something in this country."

"Someone I met recently and she's from Ireland and she's got ten years experience, they did kind of look down on her because it was all in Ireland and she took off the Irish part and just left it out of her resume...She just put it down and dropped it out of the interview, at that point they saw her and she got in the door."

"Well I left college and I pretty much had trouble getting work experience straight off the bat. I had to start off my first job for free for six months it was just to actually get in the door and lucky enough I got it turned into a contract after that..."

Preparation is the key to success

Those who arrived in Canada without an idea of the labour market situation and what they needed to do to access the labour market ended up finding it harder. If one is unprepared then the transition is much harder and it takes much longer to get a job. The message from participants is that you must be aggressive in pursuit of a job and really chase your employer. Such an approach is expected by employers particularly in the corporate world. For those who are shy, it is a real challenge.

"They (job searchers) really are expected to drop employers an email twenty five minutes after you get out of the interview, and a phone call a few days later. You know, and really, be really hungry and pushy in a way that you'd never do in Ireland."

"And it wouldn't be like appropriate at home like, if you did that at home they'd be like whoa, who's this nutter..."

"Out here it's kind of seen as like a form of flattery like oh they really want to work here."

6.3 – REASONS FOR EMIGRATING

Those who emigrated to Canada from Ireland did so because they wanted to work in their chosen profession and Ireland could not offer them such job opportunities. Most regarded the reason for leaving as a mixture of necessity and choice.

"I'd just finished college and like there was nothing at home so we needed to go but we talked about the UK and here just in terms of being able to work professionally...But I don't think I'd have come straight after college if I could have worked at home."

"Like I had to leave home, being on the dole for me was the worst thing that I have ever experienced. I was in a bad place, I really was and I needed to get out because I spent too long in college and qualifying to get stuck in a rut. And I was in a rut. And I needed to get out and so for me to come here and so many opportunities, anybody who wants to work will get a job here."

Feelings about leaving...

Those in the 18-25 year old age group were very positively disposed to leaving Ireland and very optimistic about emigrating but many expressed the desire to return home eventually.

Whilst they missed their friends and family dearly and many aspects of life at home, from the food to the culture, they had embraced life in their new home. Many stated that with skype and other forms of communications they could keep in touch with relative ease. The only problem with communication was the time difference. The 5 hours difference between Ireland and Toronto, Canada in many ways made it much harder to arrange a time to suit to talk to friends and family during the week than a 12 hour time difference between Ireland and Australia.

After spending considerable time looking for work in Ireland and claiming social welfare, many jumped at the opportunity to go to pastures new and find work.

One participant stated:

"I got my visa on a Wednesday and left the following Friday. It was so last minute like and I was at home for nine days. I got my visa and I didn't even think about it. I was just like gone, let's go."

The point was reinforced again that many young people are excited about leaving and that often they found it was those who stayed at home who painted a negative image of emigration.

"Well when we were leaving, I remember I met this taxi driver and when he heard we were leaving he said to me 'Jesus that's terrible I'm so sorry to hear that. Yeah you know like a wake or something and I was like no, no we've left the jobs now. And he was like it's awful - isn't it, like he didn't even hear what I was telling him..."

"We became very positive about it, like we weren't angry about it, and I remember the week we were going we were like yippee."

Others felt angry by the fact that their country left them with no choice but to leave Ireland in search of work. One participant stated they did not choose to leave – they had to leave. It was a necessity.

"For me it's necessity. I was more than happy to travel for a year but I don't like the feeling of not having clear options of going home. I'm angry because like we're the kind of the generation that didn't quite get the money because we were probably in college or just starting to work so We're kind of going I cannot wait to start working and then we got two years of it and then we were like screwed..."

"I was very bitter leaving Ireland like you know, I was disgusted do you know like. I can't say that I wasn't looking forward to going. I was a bit excited too but when I got here that went, that bitterness just you know, left, when I actually realised where I was now you know and the city that I was in was kind of, it totally kind of quenched that for me anyway."

6.4 - FUNDING

Financing the trip to Canada and the money required to get a visa required participants to save in advance of their trip. Many stated that they worked and saved and tried to budget and cut back on non-essentials to ensure they could afford to emigrate. For those who were unemployed it was harder.

"We were just saving, saving, saving and even when my contract finished with AIB I got a, just a small office job in my local town. I hadn't even lived there since I was like eighteen do you know, but I just went home. I got a job there like you know and just saved. Because actually I saved more money doing that when I was in the AIB you know, because you've no rent and all that."

6.5 – CHALLENGES SETTLING INTO LIFE IN TORONTO

Participants described a number of what they regarded to be challenges encountered in their new country. These ranged from getting used to the geographical spread of the city, long commutes, difficulty obtaining a contract mobile phone and frustration in general with the mobile phone system in Canada. Another issue which was found to be a significant impediment to new arrivals is the importance of a credit history in Canada to access almost every commodity from securing a tenancy to getting a contract mobile phone.

Geographical spread and no hub

Canada is a very large country and Toronto was described by one participant as 'very spread out.' The geographical spread means that there is no heart to the city – no city centre. The city has many different neighbourhoods and no real central point where people congregate.

"...there is no kind of everybody congregating in one place. So I found it, in that sense, a little bit tough settling in but once you get to know where the places are to go, you're fine."

Commuting

Like any big city commuting is an issue depending on where one is living and working and it takes a considerable period of time to get from A to B. Participants found commuting a less favourable aspect of life in Toronto.

Mobile phone contracts

Participants found the mobile phone contracts in Canada to be both frustrating and restrictive. There would appear to be a monopoly in place and many participants unwittingly signed contracts where they are locked into the provider and the contract for 3 years. Such a situation is problematic particularly if you are only in Canada on a one year visa. There are shorter contracts, but they tend to be more expensive.

"I'm locked into a three year contract, which is really unheard of. I think it's illegal in Europe to have anything over two years..."

"My bill started off as like thirty five dollars a month then you have to pay for Caller ID. Then there is tax on top of that and like it's costing me seventy dollars a month now..."

"There seems to be a severe lack of competition with companies...There's only five telephone companies and Rogers seems to dominate everything. So that affects the cost and the service."

"I mean you know in Ireland you walk in and you just buy a phone and you start ringing people. But here it's like you know, oh you get your big contract and its like do you pay for incoming calls, do you pay for like text messages..."

Credit history

Like participants in the UK, Irish emigrants in Canada cited the issue of credit history as a significant challenge. When an individual emigrates to Canada it is like starting afresh. They need to build a credit history in Canada to get approval from many financial institutions and to enter into contracts.

Most emigrants are unaware of the importance of a credit rating in Canada.

"To get anywhere in Canada you have to have a credit rating..."

"Despite the fact that it's the same mastercard company all over the world, they can't ring up the head office and say has this guy paid his bill in Ireland."

"They should take a credit card when they are opening a bank account in Canada, buy some basic things that they are going to need, pay for them on line and now they have a credit rating. Cause when you go looking for an apartment, they will not give you an apartment unless they check your credit rating. Mandatory."

6.6 – ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Toronto was regarded by participants to be very good quality and affordable. It can take some time to find a suitable place to live but the advice was to take your time and do not rush into a long-term contract. Many emigrants used Craig's list (a web-site) to find accommodation. Many new arrivals stayed in hostels at first to meet people and to suss out the areas.

Staying in temporary accommodation is advisable until you know where you will be working as you may have to move closer to work. A key piece of advice in relation to accommodation is ensure that the accommodation is close to the subway, temporary and has air conditioning.

"Being aware of air conditioning and being aware of things like the need to have temporary accommodation until you find your first job. As Toronto is a very big city. And then you move your accommodation closer to your job. If you don't do that in winter it can be minus 30 degrees so you can't take the subway and then take 2 buses and then have a ten min walk – you won't survive!"

Many emigrants had positive stories to tell in relation to their experience of finding accommodation:

"I just got onto a plane and I didn't book anything and I just kind of thought I'll just figure it out when I get there. And just at the airport I met three Irish girls and they were just going to a hostel. I had it down on my list of names so I went with them."

"I found an apartment on Craig's list and because I was moving in with people, it was just like a room share. I wasn't looking for a whole apartment. I didn't have to worry about leaks or insurance or any of that. I didn't sign anything."

Overall the stories about accommodation were good. There were some participants, however, who had bad experiences.

"We hadn't really seen the accommodation and living arrangements, it was, you walk in the kitchen and then there's, the bathroom is off that, and there was my room which doubled as the living room and then my friend's room so he has to walk through my room in the kitchen at night time to go to the bathroom or whatever, so in that sense it's a nightmare. I'm definitely looking at a place before I take it in future."

Participants cautioned that using a website to source accommodation can be dangerous and one needs to be careful.

"Craig's list is both amazing and it's actually more dangerous...you get these emails back from these guys who want you to tell them a little bit about yourself which is perfectly fine and then they send you back this form which is clearly a personal data form which he wants you to fill it out and send back and you're kind of like well clearly you're trying to rob my information."

6.7 – HANGING OUT WITH OTHER IRISH

Many of the participants interviewed relied strongly on the Irish networks in place in Toronto. All had Irish friends and liked to maintain a good connection with the Irish community.

Some participants had tried extremely hard to forge friendships with others outside the Irish community and felt that branching out further and befriending more Canadians helped them to integrate better into life in Canada.

"I live with four Irish guys, and I started playing GAA as well just to you know, make a few contacts, and that's good for jobs as well, because they do actually really look after their own but I do have, I know a few Canadians friends as well."

"I think at the start I was more like looking for that Irish connection but then like the longer I'm here I'm you know, branching out and I mostly work with Canadians. So I'm kind of at that stage now where it's probably half and half."

6.8 – CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The Irish spoke of some of the notable differences between their host country and Ireland. Canadians were regarded as very polite and had very good manners.

"They're very polite, very courteous like. And they don't swear".

The sense of humour was described by the participants to be completely different to the Irish sense of humour.

"They don't get our sense of humour (laughs). I think the Irish have such a sarcastic sense of humour. I have some very, very good Canadian friends and you know I kind of do my Irish thing and it's you know, sarcastic and it's funny and serious but they're not sure whether I'm being serious or not you know. And they look at me either in amazement and then I'm like they're not sure whether or not I'm being serious."

Another aspect of Canadian life is the adherence to rules and structure.

6.9 – THE SOCIAL LIFE

In relation to the social scene, participants described Canada as a very activity based lifestyle. Compared to Ireland there is much more emphasis placed on activities and there is less focus on drinking alcohol.

"They don't drink as much as us, like not just the massive bender, but like on a Saturday night I don't want to play board games and like they're content with doing Snakes and Ladders. They play a lot of board games, a lot of card games and we played backgammon for like hours the other day and like as much as it can be fun, not on a Saturday night."

"Like there's so many bars here. But it's not like back at home. There's no devilment like there's no banter."

6.10 – STAYING IN TOUCH

Although forms of communication are much easier and affordable now, the time difference was cited as problematic by many emigrants. Some emigrants stated that in many respects living in Australia with a twelve hour time difference would be an easier time difference to live with than the 5 hour time difference between Ireland and Canada.

"I find that on the six hour, five hour time difference, I find that a killer because I'm gone for work maybe or I leave at six in the morning and I don't get back till eight at night and then like it's one o'clock in the morning like."

"It's very hard when you're doing a six day week. In Australia where it's twelve hours. Twelve hours is more accessible like"

"And even when you get up in the morning even if you get up at like, I get up at six, it's still eleven o'clock which means people are either in work or in school or you know, they're doing something. It's eleven o'clock it's not nearly enough if they're free. So I think the best plan is just to go to bed but then you ring in an hour or two and just it's after five or after six."

6.11 – SUPPORTS TO MAKE THE MOVE EASIER

Participants felt that the services provided by the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (I/CAN) (see Chapter 7) would have been invaluable if they had been in place in Ireland before they emigrated. They highlighted in particular information and advice about visas and the workshop on employment in Canada delivered by I/CAN as of particular value. These were highly regarded by those who had received the advice and participated in the workshop.

I/CAN provides advice on so many aspects of life that the immigrant is facing, from where to live to advice on visas.

In Ireland there is limited support of this nature for prospective emigrants. This deficit in information and supports was highlighted in focus groups by participants.

"It would be great, I would say just to have the stuff in place beforehand so that people are geared with this knowledge before they arrive and they don't waste so much time trying to figure things out and be in touch with the right people and have this one major port of call..."

"Because it is, like there is some pretty good websites at home, now www.revenue.ie is like a very good website, it just gives you information on it without trying to sell you something. Whereas everything back home to do with Canada is like, I'll give you the information but it's about the services that we provide to get you to Canada."

Another suggestion from one of the participants was for the media to play a role in informing audiences of the opportunities for prospective emigrants abroad rather than being fixated on the negative stories so often featured on the television, radio programmes and print media. The media should be more responsible and balanced in its portrayal of emigration and cover positive stories as well as the negative ones. Programmes featuring countries seeking to attract people with skills to fill gaps in their labour market, providing information

on visas and stories of what it is like to live in countries such as Canada and Australia, was regarded by one of the participants as a way of providing useful information to Irish audiences and those considering emigrating from Ireland.

6.12 – HEALTH INSURANCE

Health Insurance is a requirement for emigrants to get a visa to work in Canada, however, once an emigrant has been employed for 3 months in the province of Ontario they are eligible for health insurance under the Ontario Health Insurance Programme (OHIP).

Ontario Health Insurance Programme

Ontario Health Insurance Programme (OHIP) entitles recipients to free doctors and a complete range of medical services including x-rays, blood tests etc. To apply for OHIP, applicants are required to produce their passport with visa attached and a letter from their employer confirming that they have worked for them for three months.

One emigrant stated that she cancelled her Irish insurance once she arrived in Canada and discovered she was covered under OHIP.

"I got health insurance before I left home two weeks ago. Just to cover myself in the event that an immigration officer would ask me do I have the requisite insurance. But I cancelled it as soon as I got here because I'm covered under the OHIP."

6.13 – ADVICE TO PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS

The message from the participant to young people in Ireland considering emigration is

"Don't be afraid."

Like the young people who had emigrated to the UK, the message was the same – embrace the experience and "throw yourself into it."

Participants stated:

"The more you put into it the more you get out of it..."

"I've a friend like and he just, had his visa, like you would get a job in construction or something, he'd have a job in the morning like but he's just afraid to come out. And I don't know what it is, just he has his visa and a place to stay for as long as he wants, he'll get a job, but he is just afraid."

"Another friend too is leaving New York in two years time, has been offered a full time visa in New York for a tier one marketing company and turned it down because she wants to go home and see her dog. She's been there a year and has met three friends, hasn't really networked though..."

Many of those interviewed during the course of the research stated that to be successful in your new country, an immigrant must make every effort to integrate into your new country and make as many contacts and networks as possible.

"At the start like it's going to be difficult like but in the case of any job, get a job when you come first to keep you going financially, then, apply for something good like. Set yourself a target for six months or five months, if you don't reach it then reassess yourself."

Another tip was to be as prepared as you can be and do your research before you come.

"Know what climate you're coming to. Because people come here and they're like oh my God I wasn't expecting it to be so cold. Like I mean the reality is say for example the winters, they are cold."

"If you're coming here to work, have your homework done. Have your CV done. Know you know, what ever you need from the bank, know what you need to get your PPS or your FN number."

6.14 – ADVICE TO THE IRISH GOVERNMENT

Participants were asked to consider what advice they would offer the Irish Government in terms of supporting Irish emigrants at the present time. After lengthy discussion, a number of specific proposals were put forward by participants.

A Grant to support emigrants

The current system of paying people unemployment assistance to sit at home and rot was regarded as destructive to the individual. It was felt the revenue expended on social welfare payments could be used in a more positive way to provide a grant to those opting to emigrate. One participant felt that a scheme to support young unemployed people to emigrate for work should be considered.

The promotion of foreign languages

Another recommendation was to promote learning languages in schools. This proposal was more medium to long-term and was related to the fact the many Irish people can not compete internationally for jobs because of a deficit in language skills. Therefore it was proposed that the Government should launch a campaign to drive forward the need to learn a foreign language to enhance one's employability.

"I'd say push languages in school. It's not push languages in terms of emigrating it's push languages for Ireland because there are jobs today that are, you know Twitter, paypal Ireland, these jobs don't go to Irish people because they don't have the language skills to provide the services."

"I have friends working in HR google who fly thirty people a week into Dublin to take over jobs because the Irish people can't fill them. I know loads of graduates who finished their masters with me couldn't get into tier one online service businesses because they don't have the language skills to provide services in Europe."

Another proposal was to introduce a system to attract more second level students into courses where there are job prospects.

"They shouldn't be filling courses where there's going to be like zero job options."

"And like the government are funding universities so it makes no sense for them to fund courses to have unemployed graduates."

"I don't think they should supply all these courses, and all these college places where there's nothing at the end of it."

6.15 – PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Intentions to Return Home

The vast majority of participants in the 18-25 age cohort who participated in the focus group expressed the intention and desire to return home after a period of time provided they could get a job.

"Returning home in the future is the plan but I don't see things changing. I think the longer you're here the more you're going to settle. At the moment I would like to go home in a certain number of years time, it's kind of wide open."

"I don't see myself staying here forever, but I would like to put down a few years here but you know, career wise, would there be an option to go home to? I don't know."

Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

When asked about their 5 year plan, again many felt they would eventually return to Ireland and aspired to return to a better Ireland – an Ireland that had turned a corner and could offer them better opportunities and work in their chosen career.

"Cutting turf in Ireland (laughs) no seriously I see myself going home."

"I don't think I'd see myself returning that quickly now, whether I stayed here for five years and then went somewhere else."

"Yeah yeah well say for construction for what I'm in, it's, it's kind of pointless there's nothing going on for five, six or seven years."

"I'll stick it out here for a year and my friend Julia is going for a second year but I don't know, I'll play it by ear but I would like to return home eventually. Home is where the heart is, it's Ireland."

6.16 – EXPECTATIONS FOR IRELAND IN THE FUTURE

In terms of the type of Ireland emigrants would hope to return home to, many said they would love to come back to 'a working Ireland' – one where if you did have to come home that you could actually walk into a job rather than having to start from the bottom up. Another participant said they would like to return to an Ireland that 'wasn't full of greed.' All agreed that they hoped Ireland would recover economically and be able to provide opportunities for its people.

Again participants like those in London said they hoped to return to a more positive and optimistic Ireland.

"I think if it's a bit more upbeat, like it's just that even like, fair enough like loads of people can't get jobs or whatever else. But even like when I talk to my mother she's so miserable about it...And she's always just like oh you know there's no point in you ever coming back and all this kind of stuff...because there's just nothing here."

Summary

Chapter 6 presents the findings of the focus group discussions with young emigrants who have emigrated to Toronto in Canada. The focus group explores a number of key issues related to the research questions and the experience of being an emigrant in Canada. The findings of the focus group uncover some extremely insightful information about the experience of emigration from the perspective of the emigrant. The following themes are addressed in the discussion:

- Likes and Dislikes
 What do you miss about home?
- The Canadian Labour Market

 The importance of Canadian work experience

 Preparation is the key to success
- Reasons for Emigrating Feelings about leaving
- Funding
- Challenges settling into life in Toronto Geographical spread and no hub Commuting Mobile phone contracts Credit history
- Accommodation
- Hanging out with other Irish
- Cultural differences
- The Social Life
- Staying in Touch
- Supports to make the move easier
- Health Insurance
 The Ontario Health Insurance Programme

- Emigrant's advice to prospective emigrants
- Emigrant's advice to the Irish Government to support emigrants
 A grant to support emigrants
 The promotion of foreign languages
- Intentions to Return Home Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
- Expectations for Ireland in the future

The experiences of participants are extremely useful in informing the research on the sorts of supports young emigrants require prior to their departure and on arrival in their host country. They highlight particular issues which presented problems for them on arrival in Canada and made a number of interesting suggestions on how to ease or alleviate some of the challenges they encountered. They provide useful advice to prospective emigrants and to Government and make a number of suggestions which have informed the findings and recommendations of this report and are outlined in greater detail in Chapter 9.

"The loss of so many intelligent, well-educated, enthusiastic young people creates a void in Irish families and communities. It is our hope that as the economy recovers, those who were forced to emigrate will have the opportunity to return home if they so wish"

(Bishop John Kirby, Chair of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, 2013).

Chapter 7

Emigrant Supports & Employability In Canada

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Chapter 7 addresses key supports for emigrants and the barriers to accessing employment in Canada.

Section 7.1 outlines a range of supports available to Irish people who have emigrated to Canada. It profiles the work of the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (I/CAN) and highlights various initiatives currently in place in Canada to support emigrants to settle and integrate into their new environment.

Section 7.2 focuses on understanding and accessing the Canadian labour market. It highlights challenges to employability encountered by young emigrants and discusses how to overcome these obstacles, making reference to the employment workshop provided by I/CAN.

Section 7.3 highlights the provincial requirements many emigrants must undertake before they can work in their profession in Canada.

7.1 – SUPPORTS FOR IRISH EMIGRANTS IN CANADA

Why choose Canada as a destination?

Unlike many countries at the present time, Canada is a strong and growing economy. Furthermore a lot of the workforce in Canada is aging and heading into retirement. Therefore there is a great need to attract young people to fill the gaps in the Canadian labour market.

The Construction Sector Council forecasts that Canada will need an estimated 319,000 new construction workers between 2012 and 2020 as resource projects peak and retirements continue to rise across the country. The forecast estimates a need for 100,000 jobs due to expansion demands in the mining, oil and gas, electricity and transportation sectors.

Canada has made a concerted effort to attract Irish emigrants to its country. During a recent visit to Ireland in October 2012, Canada's Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Mr. Jason Kenney announced significant changes to its International Experience Canada visa for Irish Citizens. From Jan 2013 the IEC has been extended from one year to two years for Irish applicants.

Previously, Irish citizens were permitted to participate twice, each time for up to 12 months. Starting in 2013, Irish citizens who had participated in the International Experience Canada initiative (including through USIT) for a period of up to 12 months will be eligible for another participation of up to 24 months. Those who had participated in the International Experience Canada initiative (including through USIT) more than once (i.e., beyond 12 months) will not be eligible.

Other changes made to the International Experience Canada initiative include the following provisions:

- Irish citizens will be able to come to Canada under International Experience Canada for a period of up to 24 months, on a maximum of one occasion.
- Irish citizens will no longer be required to demonstrate habitual residency.

There is a tremendous support for young Irish emigrants in the form of a number of Irish Canadian organisations namely the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce, the Irish Benevolent Society of Toronto, the Ireland Fund of Canada, the Canadian board of the Gaelic Athletic Association, and the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre.

One example of the support available to Irish immigrants is the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (I/CAN). The Centre was officially opened in March 2012 by Tánaiste Eamonn Gilmore. It provides an outreach and one stop shop for young emigrants living in Canada. It is based in down town Toronto and provides support to emigrants. It employs an Executive Director to provide support in Toronto and to deliver a broad range of outreach services to Irish immigrants throughout Canada. The work of the centre is strongly supported by the generosity of many volunteers.

I/CAN is an initiative that emerged because of a number of Irish-Canadian groups who wanted to help the newcomers from Ireland. I/CAN (a not-for-profit organization) comprises of a board with representatives from the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce, the Irish Benevolent Society of Toronto, the Ireland Fund of Canada and the Canadian board of the Gaelic Athletic Association. The centre's seed funding came from the Embassy of Ireland in Ottawa, through the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Emigrant Support Programme, which provided a grant of \$50,000.

In addition to the grant, additional funds have been committed to I/CAN by the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce and the Irish Benevolent Society of Toronto. Scotiabank is also a corporate sponsor. The Toronto GAA provided I/CAN with a grant in 2012 and the Ireland Fund contributes significant investment in the form of an in-kind donation of office space.

Aside from a central office in downtown Toronto, I/CAN connects with many emigrants through a Facebook site and Twitter feed. The website www.irishjobs.ca, a project of I/CAN, provides a facility for arrivals to upload their resumes and it also provides a list of available jobs that have been brought to the centre's attention through the community.

Canada has a very large Irish community stretching right across the country. In Vancouver, a website *moving2vancouver.com* was created by an Irish immigrant who moved to Vancouver about four years ago. There is also an Irish Women's Network which provides a very useful networking resource (Celtic Connections, Spring 2013).

I/CAN provides young Irish emigrants with a point of contact where they can go for advice on issues such as finding work, accommodation, accessing services, or dealing with the immigration system. It also provides a safe place where they can meet other Irish people and share and exchange experiences, advice and make connections both personal and professional.

"The opening of the new Irish Canadian Immigration Centre complements and enhances this existing informal network" (Bassett, Irish Ambassador to Canada).

The centre has an excellent reputation with many young Irish emigrants who have recently emigrated to Canada. The centre was mentioned by a number of emigrants interviewed during the research study who acknowledged the support they received from the centre. One emigrant stated:

"The Irish Canadian Immigration Centre is fantastic. It's a really good start point. It is a really good way of connecting with the Irish in Canada and, if everybody just used it they'd be sorted..."

7.2 – UNDERSTANDING & ACCESSING THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET

Canadian Employment Workshop

The Irish Canadian Immigration Centre offers a workshop for the new arrivals in Toronto on recruitment and understanding the Canadian Employment system. The workshop is designed for the graduate population, including engineers, architects, accountants, speech therapists, occupational therapists, marketing and sales people and a population of business administration and customer service generalists. It offers young emigrants essential advice on understanding the Canadian employment perspective. It provides advice on how to prepare and tailor your resume to suit the Canadian job market. Using role play and examples, the 2 hour workshop empowers participants with essential interview skills and approaches such as what to bring to the job – 'your value proposition,' how to conduct your job search and key interviewing tips for recruiters. The employment workshop offers a board room setting with an academic focus. It provides a good forum to share and exchange information.

A primary concern for many Irish emigrants arriving in Canada is how to adapt the Irish CV into a Canadian resume and how to make contacts in the business community. The structure of the Irish CV is totally different to the structure of resumes in Canada. In Canada your resume should be a sales and marketing document. The resume should define what your objective is – what are you looking for?

Canadian employers put as much emphasis on the soft skills of the job as they do on the technical qualifications. Canadian employers are very conscious of group dynamics and what value a prospective employee will bring to the workplace and to their team.

Another major issue in job hunting is communication skills. Unfortunately for many Irish particularly those from rural areas, communications skills can be a problem. Diction, clarity of message, and speed of delivery are regarded to be the biggest problems when it comes to Irish applicants being understood at interview stage.

A key message delivered in the workshop by the workshop facilitator is that to secure employment the candidate must be prepared and deliver a consistent message.

"...Employers here are seriously interested in a long-term relationship they want to build. They are not interested in spending a lot of money training people unless the candidate gives a very strong message — I am here for one year, my visa will be extended for a second year at which point I will be applying for landed emigrant status. That has to be a consistent message (Workshop Facilitator, July 2012)."

Another key point highlighted during the workshop is that the process for finding jobs in Canada is completely different to the process adopted to find a job in Ireland.

"A lot of them apply for jobs online and then they will come in and say look I have been here 4 weeks and I am not even getting a response and we tell them well you are not going to get a response because the success rate with online applications is less than 3 per cent. Networking is the number 1 area here (Workshop Facilitator, July 2012)."

7.3 – PROVINCIAL REQUIREMENTS...

Emigrants with a trade have no trouble getting jobs in Canada and securing employment with relative ease on arrival. Many graduates do not encounter the same ease of transition into the Canadian labour market. Graduate emigrants tend to experience a more challenging environment when job searching in Canada compared to those in construction.

Irish emigrants working with a trade or in construction are attractive to Canadian employers for a number of reasons namely:

- fluency in English,
- they are very well educated and skilled in their trades,
- there is a history in Canada of the Irish building Canada,
- Irish people have a good reputation as being friendly, sociable people with good leadership skills,
- Irish people are considered to be good workers with good management skills/ supervisory skills,
- they have the ability to relate to people very well particularly foreigners.

All of these attributes make a strong argument towards using construction workers from Ireland.

For many graduates emigrating to Canada the transition from arrival to working in their chosen profession is often not as smooth for a number of reasons. The most significant impediments to instant recruitment into one's profession relates to the need for Canadian accreditation of Irish qualifications in Canada, the requirement to do further study to attain this accreditation and cost implications of undertaking exams post arrival.

The following are examples of the route some emigrants are required to take to access employment in their profession.

In the instances of Engineers, first they have to go to the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario which is a regulatory body to get their Irish graduate qualification recognised and certified. The next step is to sit an ethics exam before they will be allowed to join as a PEO. Once they have become a member of PEO they have to work as a professional engineer for 2 years at which time they attain a PENG Designation.

Their Irish academic qualification is recognised in Canada but when you get into areas such as regulatory structures and governance issues, there is a general recognition that the Irish system does not equip Irish engineers to work in Canada as a fully chartered engineer.

In terms of training professional engineers in Ireland intending to work in Canada, they need to be aware of the process to be undertaken before their qualifications are fully recognised.

Such accreditation is applied across the board in professions such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Law, etc., The qualifications in Ireland are not recognised in Canada and graduates are required to do further exams.

Those working with children must be fully vetted. The process takes a long time and is very thorough to ensure suitability and to effectively check their criminal record and past history of working with children.

"This delay is a bit of a shock for people. The Irish educational system is highly regarded here. People like Speech Therapists can work as a waitress for 8 to 10 months while they are sitting their Canadian examinations (Workshop Facilitator, July 2012)."

Financial Cost

There is a cost implication associated with re-sitting exams. This is a heavy cost for a new emigrant and a young person with limited means. Many young emigrants rely on their parents for support until they complete their studies and get a job in their chosen professions.

Many emigrants take whatever employment they can get to cover their costs while they complete the studies required to have their qualifications recognised in Canada.

"In the interim they are working in waitressing or in something they are not trained to do while they are waiting with no choice. You either live the life of a lady or gentleman when you are studying or you get work and most of them are quite happy to get work (Workshop Facilitator, July 2012)."

One emigrant described the process of undertaking further exams as challenging and the process as frustrating.

"It was challenging for a number of reasons. I had qualified as a solicitor in Ireland about six years ago and had been practising and had gone through the whole process so having to go back and do exams when I had been out of practice doing them and studying was just disconcerting. But you know you do them and that's that. From a time point of view it didn't really matter because I was here and I wasn't doing anything else. I found the process slow and that was a little frustrating and from a cost point of view I knew I had to do them..."

Furthermore from discussions with new arrivals it became apparent that many emigrants are not aware of the need to take further examinations before they are qualified to work in their professions. It is important that emigrants considering emigration to Canada are aware of what to expect before leaving Ireland and are informed and prepared.

IEC Visa

To date the process for an emigrant has required them to enter the country on a one year visa and then go on to a 2 year visa. The next stage is that their employer has to do a Labour Market Survey and the issue of sponsorship is raised. If an employee is considered to be hard working and diligent then the employers will sponsor them and pay the associated costs.

There are certain vulnerabilities for the employee with some visas. For example a carpenter from Ireland had a visa to work with a company. The company went into liquidation and his visa did not enable him to work for a second company.

Summary

Chapter 7 explores in detail the key supports for emigrants and the barriers to accessing employment in Canada. It focuses on the range of supports available to Irish people who have emigrated to Canada. It examines the issues of employability in Canada - highlighting challenges encountered by young job seeking emigrants and discusses how to overcome these obstacles to employability. Chapter 7 also addresses the provincial requirements many emigrants must undertake before they can work in their profession in Canada.

There are many opportunities for young Irish people in Canada. Initially there are hurdles to jump in relation to financing, recognition and accreditation of qualification, gaining relevant Canadian work experience and the required preparation to secure employment. Once you have survived these initial teething problems, however, an emigrant can achieve great things and go on to succeed and progress up the career ladder.

The key to success according to the young emigrants interviewed is to be prepared and to work hard.

"If you are prepared to work hard and you want to work then you can go far..."

"Emigration is not just an accident. It is not just an individual problem. Emigration has arisen and increased as a direct result of the failure of the social and economic policies of successive governments on this island. Their failure in recent decades has been compounded by their lack of honesty and energy in tackling the issue ...the political parties have failed to address seriously the notion that we have any choice in how to respond to emigration. The notion is put forward, and generally uncritically by the media, that emigration is unavoidable, inevitable and long-term. The notion is unacceptable to those of us in Emigrant Advice and is an insult to those who feel compelled to emigrate"

(Tríona Nic Giolla Choille, 1989).

The Impact of Emigration

Chapter 8 addresses the social and economic impact of youth emigration in Ireland. It considers the social and economic implications of the mass emigration of a technically skilled and highly educated youth population from Ireland. It discusses the impact of a brain drain and the policy implications resulting from the prevalence of continued youth emigration from Ireland.

Chapter 8 also explores the ramifications of youth emigration on the family and on Irish society at large. The chapter explores how emigration affects parents, siblings and the wider family circle. It integrates findings from the focus groups with young emigrants into the discussion and explores how young emigrants feel their departure has impacted on the family and how their parents reacted to their decision to emigrate.

Why do people emigrate?

The question of why people emigrate is a central component of this research and a key question explored in the focus groups with young emigrants. The international research on migration patterns suggests that countries with high emigration rates tend to exhibit the following characteristics:

- it is relatively underdeveloped,
- its labour force experiences a rapid growth and/or is undergoing structural change,
- its population has ready access to economies where conditions are relatively favourable,
- if there is a tradition of emigration (NESC, 1991: 13).

The cost of emigration

As alluded to already in this report, emigration has many costs associated with it. The policy implications of large scale emigration are vast and have both a social and economic dimension. This report seeks to examine both, in terms of the cost to the state and the cost to the individual.

Economic Cost

Emigration costs the Irish State money in the long-term. It may temporarily help alleviate the problem of unemployment but in the long-term, emigration equals public costs. It is worth considering the implications of a well educated Irish person emigrating from Ireland to realise the full costs to the state. The Irish state loses the return from the public funds invested in the individual's education and if emigration, as it currently is, is on a large scale, then mass emigration represents a significant loss in the capacity of the economy to maintain or increase the living standards of those living in Ireland. Furthermore, when one considers the age demographics in Ireland, the State loses a contribution vis-à-vis lost revenue and contribution to social welfare, state pensions etc., For example

in the case of pensions, the ratio of people of working age to people of pension age is expected to fall from 5.6 in 2006, to 1.8 in 2061. When one considers the increase in life expectancy coupled with an increase in the number of people of retirement age in the future (given the changing demographics arising from an increase in emigration and an already aging population), the sustainability of funding State pensions to an adequate level is questionable (National Pensions Framework, Government of Ireland, 2010). The public costs of large scale emigration are significant and are yet to be fully realised.

Emigration may also contribute to greater inequality in the distribution of income. By reducing the numbers of highly qualified in the population, those highly qualified personnel remaining in the country will have higher salaries relative to those unskilled in the population.

Emigration is intrinsically intertwined with the economy and how it performs. It is commonly accepted that economic growth would lead to a reduction in emigration rates. The question of how to reduce the loss and increase the gain to the economy as a result of emigration is a key policy question that requires further consideration.

Social Cost

The social costs and impact of emigration tends to be reflected in how the loss of a generation of young people impacts on society. The family is often the first structure to be affected in this regard.

Emigration alters the age structure of the population by greatly reducing those in the 18-25 and 25-39 age groups and often leaves a high level of young and old dependency. There are other noticeable signs such as how it affects sport in the country, the arts, and the community in general.

It is very evident from the focus groups that many young people residing in Ireland are considering leaving to be with friends who have already left. One young emigrant stated:

"I was having a Skype conversation two days ago with four guys, three of us were in London and the fourth guy was at home, and a lot of the conversation was about what was happening in London and I kind of felt the guy that was home he got the feeling I'm missing out. And I got the feeling that if there was anything that was going to push him was that fear of missing out. So its other people's impact, you know friend's impact that could easily prompt you to leave as well."

The social impact of emigration can be seen in every community in Ireland. Football teams in local towns can not be filled. Pubs on a Friday night are missing those in their 20's. As more and more young people leave Ireland, those who remain are attracted to join their friends abroad by stories of how good life is in Toronto, Sydney, New York, or London.

The Consequences of a Youth Generation Gap

The whole fabric of Irish society could be altered quite dramatically if the rate of youth emigration continues at the same pace as it is currently. In 1991 in its report on emigration NESC asserted that a consequence of losing a dominant youth

population could lead to the emergence of dominant perspectives aligned to older people. If this happened there would be an increased likelihood that young people in Ireland would feel alienated by the prevailing status quo, perceive national attitudes to be out dated and opt to emigrate as well (NESC, 1991).

As one emigrant stated in an interview:

"I think there's going to be a generation gap, obviously I mean my friends are going to Australia now so people of a certain age, our age and two years above and below they are all going to move out of the country and there's going to be a population gap."

Many young people are leaving to join friends and to find work. Such migration will have a huge impact on Irish communities throughout the country and Irish society at large.

Engaging with the Irish Diaspora

Engaging with the Diaspora was thought by research participants to be extremely important and one emigrant proposed the need for the Irish Government to ensure that connections are made and sustained with young Irish people who are leaving the country at the present time.

This issue of valuing and cherishing the Irish abroad was a very strong theme of the Irish Presidency in the 1990's. In an address to the Houses of the Oireachtas by former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, entitled 'Cherishing the Irish Diaspora; On a Matter of Public Importance', she stated:

"...If cherishing the Diaspora is to be more than a sentimental regard for those who leave our shores, we should not only listen to their voice and their viewpoint. We have a responsibility to respond warmly to their expressed desire for appropriate fora for dialogue and interaction with us by examining in an open and generous way the possible linkages. We should accept that such a challenge in an education in diversity which can only benefit our society" (February, 1995: 4).

Participants felt that there should be more of an effort made in Ireland to engage with the Irish Diaspora. Some expressed the view that it felt in some way that once you had left Ireland you were gone for good – invisible in the Irish discourse. This point was reinforced in an interview given by the actor Gabriel Byrne to Matt Cooper on the radio programme 'The Last Word' when he emphasised the gap between emigrants and their homeland. He asserted that there was a lack of interest in the Diaspora in Ireland unless the emigrants are your children.

Byrne stated that "the bridge between the Diaspora and the people of Ireland is broken... once your people have emigrated you don't really care where they've gone to, unless they are your kids, and then emigration takes on a very, very emotional sense for you" (5 November, 2012).

The onus is on Ireland and its elected Government to stay connected to this cohort of Irish people in the hope they will return.

The Impact on the Family

Emigration still invokes personal distress and anguish whether it is for the individual emigrant or their family. Many emigrants stated that leaving mum and dad and breaking the news of their imminent departure to their parents was one of the hardest aspects of leaving Ireland. Many felt that parents associated emigration as 'permanent' and a 'one way ticket.' Such a perception, young emigrants attributed to the experience of emigration 30 years ago when an aunt or uncle would leave Ireland never to return home again. It is this story of emigration that has left a legacy in the Irish psyche which continues to frame and influence how we think of emigration today.

In a key stakeholder interview, the founder of a social network for parents of emigrants spoke from the parent's perspective about the emotional side of emigration. With an increase in emigration of young people in Ireland, he became acutely aware of the need for a support network for parents of children who had emigrated. He brought together a group of parents who shared their stories. Many had mixed emotions about their children's departure. Whilst they were excited for them and the opportunities open to them, he stated that this excitement does not dilute the sense of grief and loss.

The stakeholder stated that many parents tend to use a 'filtering of emotions' when talking to their children about how they are feeling about their child's emigration. Parents often encourage the young emigrant to leave and to support them to have the courage to emigrate because they know that it is better to see them get a job than sit at home unemployed. He stated that there is a growing emergence of grandparents who are also considering leaving Ireland to follow their children and grandchildren who have emigrated to another country.

Young people often adopt the same 'filtering of emotions' when communicating with parents by telling mum and dad that everything is going well when perhaps they are desperately homesick or when things are not going quite as well as they could be. Young people often convey a more positive story to protect parents from worrying.

Family Reaction to Emigration

Leaving home is never easy but when the destination is the other side of the world it is much harder. The focus group participants touched on the impact their departure had on parents and young siblings. For many young emigrants they believed that their parents were sad to see them go but given the lack of opportunities in Ireland many parents recognized that emigration was the best option available to their children.

In exploring the emotional side of emigration, it was important to hone in on how participants felt their family felt about them emigrating. Most of the young emigrants expressed the view that their parents and family were supportive of their decision.

As the discussion on emotional ties developed, it became apparent, however, that in many cases it was hard for participants to leave home and leave behind particular members of their families that they were close to. Two participants

talked about feelings of 'sadness' and 'guilt' about leaving a Dad, and leaving a younger sibling behind and missing important family occasions.

"Well in my situation it's just my dad, me and my sister and brother and both me and my sister have had to leave. Which my dad is really like, it doesn't bother him but at the same time I think it's really hard when you leave someone behind like that...it changes his lifestyle quite a lot as well as its going to change ours."

"Yeah and you do always have the guilt and it's something extra to think about. But it's the way, yeah it does affect families as well as other people."

"Well I have a sister she's 9 years younger so I know it's kind of hard for her from being used to me being around the whole time. And then like I kind of went home, when I moved here first I went back a couple of times and obviously leaving is emotional, floods of tears and everything. So I did ball the first few times but like I'm fine with that now, but I kind of do find it sad because when I go back its like she's not, because there's a 9 year gap things have changed and you do feel like you miss out sometimes in things that she does."

"My parents were delighted. As long as I was doing something like rather than just sitting at home."

It was stated, however, that the young emigrants often felt the need to convince a parent, usually the mother, that they really weren't going very far and that they could be home within a day.

Participants also felt that many parents associated emigration with the emigration of the 1950's and 1970's when communications were not as sophisticated or advanced as today and the likelihood of an emigrant returning home was limited.

"I think it's more the fear of like oh are you going to settle down for like, forever you know. As in then you know they're okay with a few years you know and they'll come over and that but it's like you're coming home alright."

"Obviously there's planning and you've got to do the flights in advance but if anything ever really happened I'd be home in a few hours."

Although this generation of emigrants appear to be much more technologically savvy and confident, many emigrants still encounter significant adjustment problems and often struggle with periods of immense homesickness, stress over financial concerns, accommodation, and job searching. It has been argued that advances in ICT has served to ease the transition and experience of adjustment to a new country for emigrants and to a degree this may be the case although one can not underestimate the psychological trauma and distress that many young emigrants still experience. The gravity of personal problems outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are not to be dismissed.

"I'm the first to have left so I was really surprised, I think that they felt it was so much more of a big deal. I think they felt it was an emigration story and it was so sad and it was terrible, whereas I never felt that. I always felt that it was just a good opportunity and that to go where the opportunities are."

"I was surprised with how kind of sad like my parents were. They seemed to think oh emigration, she'll never be back or she'll never come back to Ireland and I suppose we, one of the reasons why we came to Toronto was because it's so close to Ireland so we will be able to fly home when we need to and the bottom line is if you really needed to go home, you could you know."

"I think I suppose for my parents generation, I think they found, they just find it sad and like even my older sister like, I was surprised with her reaction like that they were just, do you know, they were sad to see us go."

"My family were like off you go and that's it...I'm sure they miss me and I definitely miss them like but, it's just a very kind of straight forward kind of from their point of view as in like, I'd say they'd actually if I didn't go, they'd have been disappointed in me you know..."

Most participants stated that their emigration was much harder for their families especially their parents, than it was for them. Many attributed this sense of loss on the part of their parents to a fear that they would be losing their children to another country for good.

"Our parents are under the impression that we would be gone for a year. So they probably would be more upset that we weren't home and we're staying, and probably not going to come back."

"I found when I was leaving, even though I did want to go, I got very upset for two or three weeks you know and kept breaking down, so I was telling people no I'll be definitely back in a year, if not before that and now even though we're here five weeks, I'll probably stay the two years if not longer but I haven't actually told the parents (laughs). I'm sure they'll probably get more upset now when I tell them that."

The Brain Drain effect

Brain drain is the effect of mass emigration of a technically skilled people from one country to another country. We are witnessing this happening in Ireland with a dramatic loss of our young highly educated, highly skilled workforce leaving Ireland in search of work or better opportunities. The impact of this brain drain has yet to been seen but is very regrettable not only for our economy but for the social and cultural fabric of Irish society. Such sentiments were expressed by participants in the focus group reflecting on the brain drain in Ireland.

"It's very sad in a way that you get educated back home you know you go on and do a Masters and you have all your networks set up there, all your family is there and then you know you have to leave and that's just gone out of the country" (young emigrant).

When the NESC explored the social and economic cost of emigration in 1991 its report made the point that emigration needed to be recognized as having a significant impact on the Irish economy and on Irish society. The report stated that often emigration is considered as a panacea to addressing the problem of unemployment, however, this perspective is often overemphasised. It was argued that while emigration may serve to provide a short-term solution to an

immediate problem in the long-term the impact of emigration causes much greater problems in terms of skill and labour shortages and salary costs.

Although Ireland has changed substantially in the last 20 years, ironically some of the issues discussed and considered in the 1991 NESC report remain as relevant today as they were 2 decades ago. The Council at the time cited emigration as a symptom of relative economic underdevelopment. It stated that any future policy development to address emigration should be predicated on the need to develop the economy in the long-term. The second policy consideration NESC highlighted was the clear relationship between migration and the labour market, in particular labour market growth, emigration and employment. The third point made was the need to formulate policies with regard to emigrants and the need to ensure that the prevalence of continuing emigration informed public policy.

Summary

This chapter focuses on the social and economic implications of youth emigration from Ireland. It examines the factors contributing to emigration, and the personal, social and economic costs associated with emigration. It also discusses the consequences of losing a significant population cohort from Ireland.

The statistics are alarming and indicate that if emigration continues at the same pace there will be a significant change in the age structure of the population by depleting the numbers of working age in the population. This alteration in the age structure combined with an aging population has profound and long-term consequences on many aspects of social policy, for example, in the areas of pensions and health care. This is particularly significant in an aging population where there is a reliance on young people to contribute to revenue through income tax to resource State pensions and other exchequer finances.

There is also the social dimension to losing a generation of Ireland's young who may never return. The loss of young people may result in a significant decline in the birth rate and change in our demographics which has implications for social policies and social services.

A key point made by emigrants in relation to emigration is the need to engage and build greater links with the Irish Diaspora. Government needs to reflect on the current wave of emigration and the impact of emigration and develop a plan to maintain connections with its emigrating youth. This plan should include a strategy to attract emigrants back to Ireland in the future.

The chapter also raises a number of key social policy questions that require greater discussion amongst policymakers and at a political level. The state needs to develop a long-term plan which is responsive to changes in migration and demography and responsive to the needs of those who have emigrated from Ireland.

"Migrants will be vital for the future EU economy but the issue has attracted misinformation and rhetoric. Ignoring it any longer would be disastrous"

(Peter Sutherland, 2012).

Chapter 9

Conclusion, Research 89 Findings & Recommendations

Chapter 9 provides a synopsis of the research and a summary of the key findings and recommendations arising from the research.

RESEARCH AIM

This research explores and documents the experience of young Irish emigrants. It investigates and documents their personal stories of emigration and examines:

- their transition from Ireland to their host country,
- challenges encountered on this journey,
- supports identified as important to easing their transition,
- their intentions for the future,
- their hopes and aspirations for Ireland.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study examined the lives of young people who had emigrated from Ireland in the last 2 years. From the consultations with these young emigrants the study found that:

Reasons for emigrating

- Many young Irish emigrants are moving abroad to experience new horizons and access greater opportunities.
- Limited employment options and lack of opportunities at home were cited as a determining factor prompting their decision to leave.

Perception of the current wave of emigration

 Many young emigrants interviewed, perceived their experience as Irish emigrants to be much easier than that of their forefathers in that they were well educated and highly skilled.

Parents' reaction

• Many young people interviewed stated that their parents, although sad to see them go, recognised that emigration was the best option for their children in light of the dire economic situation in Ireland.

Use of ICT

• Emigrants used the internet regularly to keep in touch with parents, family members and friends back home and many stated that they spoke more frequently to their parents now than when they lived in Ireland.

- ICT was regarded by research participants to be essential for keeping in touch with home in a cost effective way.
- Young Irish emigrants are very social media and technologically savvy.
- Many used ICT as a means of finding accommodation and accessing networks abroad.

Adjustment problems and challenges

- Although this generation of emigrants appear to be much more technologically savvy and confident, many emigrants still encounter significant adjustment problems and often struggle with periods of immense homesickness, stress over financial concerns, accommodation and job searching.
- Many parents tend to use a 'filtering of emotions' when talking to their children about how they are feeling about their child's emigration.
- Young people often adopt the same 'filtering of emotions' when communicating with parents by telling mum and dad that everything is going well.
- Many young people stated that their emigration was much harder for their families especially their parents, than it was for them.

Plans for the Future

- The vast majority of participants interviewed expressed the intention and desire to return home after a period of time provided they could get a job.
- When asked about their 5 year plan, many felt that they would eventually return to Ireland and aspired to return to a better Ireland – an Ireland that could offer them better opportunities and work in their chosen career.

Findings specific to the UK Experience

Challenges encountered by emigrants on arrival to UK relate to:

- job searching,
- lack of adequate resources,
- difficulty obtaining a UK credit history which has implications for securing a tenancy agreement and accommodation and obtaining a contract,
- opening a bank account,
- obtaining financial support to do postgraduate studies in the UK,
- accessing primary health care.

Emigrant's Advice to Prospective Emigrants

- Register with a G.P as soon as you arrive in the UK,
- Embrace the experience, don't be afraid to ask for help if required and make a real effort to integrate into your new country by accepting invitations and mixing with those in your host country.

Emigrant's Advice to the Irish Government

- Provide supports for prospective emigrants considering emigration as an option.
- Plan for the future and provide incentives to attract emigrants to return to Ireland when the labour market has recovered.
- Track and profile those leaving the country collect data on who they are and where they are going?
- Connect and engage with the Irish Diaspora particularly those leaving the country at the present time.

Findings specific to the Canadian Experience

Challenges encountered by emigrants on arrival to Canada relate to:

- accreditation of qualifications and the requirement to undertake further study to have qualifications fully recognised,
- the cost implication associated with re-sitting exams,
- job searching and adapting to the Canadian labour market and recruitment procedures,
- difficulty obtaining a Canadian credit history which has implications for securing a tenancy agreement and accommodation and obtaining a contract,
- finding suitable accommodation.

Emigrant's Advice to Prospective Emigrants

- Don't be afraid to emigrate.
- If you do emigrate, "embrace the experience" and "throw yourself into it."
- Be prepared and have your research done before you come.
- Know the climate you are coming to.

Emigrant's Advice to the Irish Government

The following are specific proposals participants felt Government should consider to address the problems encountered by emigrants in Canada:

- Introduce a system where credit history would be transferable if you use a credit card that has international recognition such as visa, mastercard, etc.
- Establish an agency in Ireland to provide prospective emigrants with support, information and advice.
- Introduce a fund to support those currently in receipt of unemployment assistance to emigrate if they wish to do so.
- Launch a campaign to promote foreign languages at second level and third level education to enhance the skill set of Irish people and equip them with the linguistic skills to compete nationally and internationally and make them more attractive to Employers from non-English countries.
- Establish a system to encourage third level students into particular courses that have greater employability prospects.

Social & Economic Implications

- The policy implications of large scale emigration are vast and have both a social and economic dimension.
- Emigration costs the Irish State money in the long-term. It may temporarily help alleviate the problem of unemployment but in the long-term, emigration equals public costs.
- Emigration alters the age structure of the population by greatly reducing those in the 18 25 and 25 39 age groups and often leaves a high level of young and old dependency. If emigration continues at the same pace there will be a significant change in the age structure of the population by depleting the numbers of working age in the population.
- Alteration in the age structure combined with an aging population has profound and long-term consequences on many aspects of social policy for example in the areas of pensions and health care.
- Emigration needs to be recognized as having a significant impact on the Irish economy and on Irish society.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

In order to adequately address and meet the needs of young Irish emigrants, the Irish Government needs to first acknowledge that the problem of youth emigration exists and make a concerted effort to respond to the issues highlighted in this report.

Without a stable economic environment and an active labour market, high rates of youth unemployment and youth emigration will continue to prevail. The Irish state must, therefore, continue to work towards economic recovery to provide a stable economic environment that can attract migrants back to Ireland when the economy recovers.

The vast majority of young people interviewed expressed a strong desire to return home one day if job opportunities were available to them. The capital and improved skills and expertise they possess has the potential to provide a significant return to the Irish State and this needs to be recognised and harnessed.

Emigrants felt the Irish Government needs to be much more positive in its outlook and to engender more optimism and promote more positivity in general. They also stated that the Government needs to plan for the future and provide incentives to attract young people back to Ireland once the economy has recovered.

A number of policy measures need to be developed and implemented now to make the emigration experience an easier journey for the current wave of emigrants and to alleviate some of the financial and structural barriers encountered by many young Irish people emigrating at the present time.

Government needs to adopt a strategic approach to meet the needs of young Irish emigrants. The strategy requires an action plan, and the necessary supports to take account of the diversity of needs and provide structural supports at home to provide information and assistance to young people who are emigrating.

As the report highlights, there has been an absence of reliable and robust data on contemporary emigration from Ireland. This information deficit needs to be addressed to ensure accurate and responsive policy planning. The 'Emigre' research project currently underway in University College Cork promises to provide essential data which will profile emigrants and help to greatly inform a policy response to emigration.

There is a need for a more long-term policy perspective to be incorporated into policy planning to take account of changes in demography and migration. To date Ireland has not been very good at formulating policy which incorporates long-term planning. Often policy in Ireland is developed in response to an emerging crisis and tends to be reactive rather than preventive. Policymakers should be cognisant of potential problems which may or are likely to emerge in the future. Policy should encompass the medium to long-term perspective and plan for likely scenarios. In the case of emigration and consequences of losing a significant proportion of the population, the State should be considering ways of attracting these people back to Ireland in 5 or even 10 years time.

Another essential aspect of economic recovery is to ensure that Ireland attracts its emigrating youth capital – this young highly educated and highly skilled population - back to Ireland in the future. It will not happen organically and that is why it is imperative that Government invests in a strategy to develop policy to take account of our emigrants and to plan for their return.

A point raised by young emigrants during the focus groups is that the Irish Government needs to maximise the rate of return of emigrants when the economy starts to improve. Such return is essential in the recovery of Ireland's economy. Such investment makes economic sense and is vital for the country's economic growth in the future and for the social fabric of Irish society.

Consideration needs to be given to how the State can support and assist its young people who are considering emigration as a prospect, to make the transition as easy as possible. There are a number of examples of agency supports abroad that provide tremendous support (see chapter 7) and advice to young people who have emigrated. These sorts of supports should be provided before an individual leaves Ireland to ensure they are armed with the essential information, contacts, and are sufficiently informed and prepared to emigrate.

The recommendations contained in this report are informed by the qualitative research on the experience of young Irish people who have emigrated in the last 2 years. It is important that we listen to them, learn from their experience and take on board their advice in relation to meeting the needs of Irish emigrants.

To support young people facing the prospects of emigration currently and to plan for their return to Ireland in the future, it is essential that Government considers the research findings and recommendations contained in this report and acts to implement them.

RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH

Based on and informed by the research and consultations with young emigrants, NYCI proposes **7 recommendations** it considers important to implement in order to adequately and appropriately meet the needs of young Irish emigrants.

The recommendations are categorised under the headings:

- Policy recommendations for Government.
- Practical support measures to respond to the needs of prospective emigrants and/or new emigrants.

These recommendations, if fully implemented, would help to support many young Irish emigrants who are considering emigrating or who have already emigrated to be as prepared as they can be for the challenges they may encounter as emigrants.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Recommendations

1. Appoint a Minister with responsibility for emigration policy and for responding to and connecting with the Irish abroad.

The research highlights the need for Government to ensure that greater connections are made and sustained with young Irish people who are leaving the country at the present time. There are a number of tangible ways of doing this which Government need to consider. Emigrants suggested one way of responding to the needs of the Irish abroad was by appointing a Ministry or Government Department to respond to and connect with the Irish abroad.

This Ministry would have responsibility for the development of a long-term strategy to attract emigrants back to Ireland when the economy recovers and for policy planning to respond to the needs of returning emigrants in the future. The department would have specific responsibility for ensuring long-term planning in the development of public policies, responding to the needs of Irish emigrants, and liaising with key public employment services to facilitate return migration to fill gaps in the Irish labour market as they arise in the future.

2. Develop and adopt a strategic approach to meet the needs of young Irish emigrants.

Government needs to develop and implement a strategy for emigrants. The strategy requires an action plan, and the necessary supports to take account of the diversity of needs and provide structural supports at home to provide information and assistance to young people who are emigrating. The strategy and action plan needs to include ways of incentivising Irish emigrants to return to Ireland when the economy recovers.

It is vital that Government invests in a strategy to attract emigrants back to Ireland in the medium to long-term to fill gaps in the Irish labour market. Government must also plan for returning emigrants in terms of the future provision of social services and facilities.

3. Fund an existing agency that operates in the Republic of Ireland to provide assistance to prospective emigrants intending to emigrate.

As profiled in the report the existence of a centralised one stop shop to support emigrants (in the form of I/CAN) was found by emigrants in Canada to be of tremendous value. Many felt that such a resource would have benefited them greatly had it been available in Ireland prior to their departure.

NYCI calls on Government to fund an existing agency in Ireland to provide assistance to prospective emigrants. The agency would offer advice and support services for Irish people intending to emigrate. It would function to assist emigrants by providing them with information on everything from accommodation to health care, insurance and visa advice. It is envisaged it would help potential emigrants to link into agencies and networks in the country they are emigrating to. The agency would also provide help and support to emigrants to prepare for and resolve any potential problems they may encounter in their host country in advance of their departure from Ireland.

4. Centralised Data Collection on Emigrants.

To date there has been an absence of reliable data on who is emigrating and where they are emigrating to. Such data collection and profiling is integral to future policy planning and the maintenance of good links with our citizens abroad.

The UCC study 'Emigre' promises to generate data on the profile of contemporary emigrants including their age, educational qualifications, profession, emigration destination, and intention to return to Ireland. As NYCI's research reveals such data is essential to inform the development of policy to respond to the issue of emigration.

NYCI recommends Government uses the 'Emigre' data to inform the development of a policy response to emigration and supports the continuous collection of data to profile and track emigrants from Ireland.

5. Launch a campaign to promote foreign languages at second level and third level education.

Launch a campaign to promote foreign languages at second level and third level education to enhance the skill set of Irish people and equip them with the linguistic skills to compete nationally and internationally. Such skills would make Irish employees more attractive to employers from non-English countries.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT MEASURES TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS AND/OR NEW EMIGRANTS

6. Department of Social Protection, and Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade to collaborate in the creation and maintenance of a portal site which would function to map and direct the user to existing websites providing information at a local level.

The research identified the need to provide more information via the World Wide Web to support and facilitate young people to access essential information on internships or work opportunities abroad.

Given there are already many websites and social media pages which provide very good information on employment opportunities, advice and tips on interview technique, and contact details for support organisations abroad, NYCI believes there is a need to assist young emigrants to access these sites via a website portal. The portal would ensure the user could easily navigate through the website portal to access the information on their intended destination.

In the event that there is inadequate information available for a country, the Department of Social Protection, and Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade should address the information deficit by supporting the creation and maintenance of a website for that country.

7. Promotion of Internships, Work Placements or Employment Opportunities Abroad.

The research highlighted that many young emigrants were not aware of existing opportunities in relation to internships, work placements or employment opportunities abroad. Many felt that there was limited promotion of such initiatives in Ireland and suggested that prospective emigrants would benefit from such knowledge prior to their departure from Ireland.

The Department of Social Protection currently advertises opportunities of this nature available in Ireland. NYCI recommends that they extend such advertisements to include the promotion of internships, work placements and employment opportunities abroad through the use of national newspapers, universities or institutes of technology or through other forms of social media targeted at young people. An example of a good way of disseminating such information to young people is through the development of an application containing relevant information on opportunities abroad that could be downloaded for free.



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Limitations of the Study & Opportunities for Further Research

This research provides an initial exploration of the experience of emigration from the perspective of the young Irish emigrant. It focuses on the experience of those who emigrated to the UK and to Canada and in doing so generates very rich and insightful data to inform our policy and advocacy work on the issue of youth emigration.

The budget for this research study determined the nature and scope of the methodology and field work conducted. Unfortunately it was not possible to capture the experience of those emigrating to other countries such as Australia or New Zealand. There is scope to further research this issue through longitudinal analysis of migration patterns between countries in the EU and internationally.

Furthermore the aim of the study was to investigate the emigrant's experience of emigration, however, during the course of the research the impact of emigration on the family and the community emerged as an area of significant interest. Although the research touched on the latter, it goes beyond the scope of this study and therefore is an area which requires further research.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet – Research on Youth Emigration

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) functions to represent the interests of young people and youth organisations. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act) and as a social partner. The NYCI aims through its member organisations and its representative role to empower young people to participate in society as fulfilled confident individuals. The work of the NYCI is based on principles of equality, social justice and equal participation for all. In achieving these aims the NYCI seeks the emergence of a society in which young people are valued citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to their community.

A key issue arising from the research conducted by NYCI on youth unemployment is the emergence of emigration amongst young Irish people. The NYCI research 'The Forgotten Generation' found that a striking 70% of 90 young people interviewed agreed that it is more likely - rather than less likely – that they will emigrate within the next 12 months in response to their status of being unemployed (2010).

We are keen to explore the experience of young emigrants and to document their experiences in their host country.

This research is intended to provide a greater insight into how emigration is affecting young Irish people. The study seeks to ascertain the following research questions:

- 1. Where are Irish youth emigrating to and why?
- 2. Has their experience been a positive one?
- 3. How are they settling into life in their host country?
- 4. What are the challenges they have encountered on this journey?
- 5. What supports would have made their move easier?
- **6.** Do they envisage returning home in the next 5 years if the economy improves?

The research seeks to examine the push and pull factors influencing Ireland's young to emigrate and explore what the policy implications will be as a result of emigration of young people from our shores.

This information will greatly assist us to provide better policy and practical advice to young people facing the prospect of emigration. It will also help shape our policy and advocacy work on this very important issue.

You can help by taking part in this research; You can give a real understanding of your experience as a young Irish emigrant and the support that is needed by young people in similar circumstances.

Taking part in the research would involve participating in a focus group discussion for about 90 minutes. The focus group experience would be just like a conversation – telling the researcher of your experience as a young emigrant.

Your conversation with NYCI will be kept strictly confidential. There is no obligation to participate. If there is a question(s) that focus group participants do not want to answer they will not have to. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. We simply want to hear of your own personal experiences.

The focus group is taking place at Federation of Irish Societies in Angel, on Thursday 1st March at 7pm and will run for 90 minutes until approximately 8.30pm. Approximately 9 people will participate in each focus group.

If you have any questions about this research study at any time please feel free to contact:

Marie-Claire McAleer

National Youth Council of Ireland, 3 Montague Street, Dublin 2 Tel: 01 478 4122

Your Consent

I have received an explanation of the research and I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Name		
Date		

Many thanks for your assistance with this important research and we look forward to meeting with you again at the focus group meeting.

- 1. Welcome and brief introductions of who is in the room.
- 2. Brief outline 'reminder' of NYCI research process.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) functions to represent the interests of young people and youth organisations. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act) and as a social partner. The NYCI aims through its member organisations and its representative role to empower young people to participate in society as fulfilled confident individuals. The work of the NYCI is based on principles of equality, social justice and equal participation for all. In achieving these aims the NYCI seeks the emergence of a society in which young people are valued citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to their community.

The research is intended to provide a greater insight into how emigration is affecting young Irish people and to examine the push and pull factors influencing Ireland's young to emigrate and explore what the policy implications will be as a result of emigration of young people from Ireland.

This information will greatly assist us to provide better policy and practical advice to young people facing the prospect of emigration. It will also help shape our policy and advocacy work on this very important issue.

A key aim of the research is to capture the experience of young people who have emigrated from Ireland and to document their experience of living abroad.

- 3. Assurances of confidentiality/anonymity, how data will be recorded, process for focus group discussion leads into section 4 (sections 3 and 4).
- 4. Before we start the discussion, do the post it exercise on a flip chart to establish expectations for the session and the group discussion.
- What do you expect?
- What do we expect from you throughout the discussion? Respect, session is being recorded so no talking over each other, what is said in the room stays in the room (confidentiality), etc., To participate as much as possible...
- 5. Roundtable; (going round in a circle initially) can you tell me a little bit about yourselves (very brief background to kick start discussion)?
- Age, background (work/career experience, academic achievement, length of time living in London), what county in Ireland are you from, what is your main qualification/trade? Are you currently employed and what do you do?
- What do you like most about living in London and what do you like least?

6. Destination.

If you are working, did it take you long to get a job? What was the job searching experience like?

What was your primary reason for emigrating?

How did you fund your move abroad?

7. Reasons/feelings about emigration.

Was your decision to move a lifestyle choice or a necessity? If you had to move, how did you feel about this? Anger? Happiness? Success? Can you elaborate further?

In your opinion, who is the move harder for—you or your family in Ireland?

Are any of you in relationships and did this affect your decision to emigrate?

Why did you choose London to move to?

How long have you lived there?

How often do you return home?

On the whole has your experience been a positive one?

Did you encounter any difficulties settling into life in the host country? Can you tell me about these?

8. Accommodation.

Was accommodation difficult to arrange?

Who do you live with?

Do you associate with many Irish people living abroad?

What is your current social life like? As good as home or not?

Are there any aspects of life in your host country that appeal to you? (may already have been covered in section 5).

Are there things that you miss about home? What do you miss most about home?

How do you stay in touch with friends and family at home?

9. Supports.

What supports, if any, would have made your move easier?

Do you envisage returning home in the next 5 years if the economy improves?

Where do you see yourselves in 5 years time?

What sort of Ireland would you hope to/like to return to?

If you could give one piece of advice to intending emigrants what would it be?

If you had any advice to give to the Irish Government to support young Irish people at the present time what would it be?

Thank you for your participation today. Your contribution has been invaluable and will contribute significantly to the study. If you would like to be involved in advocacy/communications when the research is completed we would appreciate if you would give your consent for us to contact you again.

Appendix C: Poll Methodology & Weighting

Use of Quantitative Data

The use of quantitative data is also incorporated into the study. An opinion poll of Irish citizens was commissioned by NYCI and undertaken by Red C in October 2012 to gauge the attitudes of the Irish citizens on a number of key policy issues relevant to child and young people. The opinion poll included 3 specific questions related to emigration:

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- Would you consider emigration?
- Has anyone in your close family emigrated from Ireland in the last 2 years?
- If you were to emigrate, what would be your primary motivation?

Poll Methodology & Weighting

In 1003 interviews were conducted in October 2012 among all adults, with 931 Irish Citizens – providing a sample error of + or – 3%. A random digit dial (RDD) method was used to ensure a random selection process of households to be included - ensuring that ex-directory households were covered. Half of the sample are interviewed using an RDD landline sample, with the other half conducted using an RDD mobile phone sample, this ensures 98% coverage of the population reaching landline only households, mobile only households and those with both a landline and a mobile. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults. In all aspects the poll was conducted to the standards set out by AIMRO (the Association of Irish Market Research Organisations) and ESOMAR (the European Society of Marketing and Research).



The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

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