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Migration to and from Ireland, 2011 to 2024:
Known Facts and Data Gaps

PROFESSOR MARY GILMARTIN
Maynooth University Department of Geography and
Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute

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Professor Mary Gilmartin
Maynooth University Department of Geography and Maynooth University
Social Sciences Institute



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1. Introduction

In May and June 2024, election literature from people campaigning in the local and European elections was posted through letterboxes across Ireland. Some of this literature made reference to migration, with claims that "Ireland is Full" (from the Irish Freedom Party) and calls for "an immediate halt on mass immigration" (from the National Party), mass deportations, and the refusal of any more applications for asylum (from a variety of Independents). Underpinning all of these various assertions and claims was the belief that the level of immigration to Ireland was unacceptable. Yet, the election literature did not quantify the scale of immigration, preferring to focus on emotions rather than facts.

This paper outlines the known facts about migration to and from Ireland in the period from 2011 to 2024 (see Gilmartin 2012, 2013 for overviews of the period from 2000-2012). The period covers the aftermath of the financial crash in Ireland and the subsequent (partial) financial recovery, broader geopolitical instability, and a widespread international cost of living crisis. The first section provides a brief overview of migrant stock – the numbers of people living in Ireland at the date of the last Census. However, the main focus of the paper is migration flows – the movements of people into and from Ireland. The second section details migration *to* Ireland in the period between 2011 and 2024, and highlights the continuation of more established migration patterns as well as the development of new patterns. The third section presents migration *from* Ireland in the same period. In both sections, sources of reliable information as well as the knowledge gaps that exist are discussed. The paper concludes with a reflection on the state of migration to and from Ireland today.

2. Migrants in Ireland: a brief overview

The Census of Population, generally held every five years, is the most comprehensive count of people living in Ireland, and provides insights into their demographic, social, cultural and economic characteristics. The most recent Census was held on 3 April 2022, and results from that Census have been made available from May 2023 onwards. There were 5,149,139 people in the State on the census night, an 8% increase in population since the previous census in 2016 (Census 2022, Table FY001).¹ For the first time, this number included people who were

¹ Throughout this working paper, data from various Censuses comes from the website of the Central Statistics Office (CSO 2024a). Information on the source is provided by year (e.g. Census 2022) and by the PxStat Table where the data can be found (e.g. Table F5002). The tables can be accessed at data.cso.ie (CSO 2024b).

temporarily in Ireland as well as people who are "ordinarily resident" and present. The number of people who were ordinarily resident and present in Ireland on the Census date is 5,084,879 (Census 2022, Table F5002).

The Census form provides a number of ways of identifying people with a migration background. The first is country of citizenship, with the assumption that people who do not have Irish citizenship are migrants. The second is place of birth, with those born outside Ireland considered migrants. The third is in response to a census question that asks "Have you ever lived outside the Republic of Ireland for a continuous period of one year or more?", and further asks the last year of taking up residence in Ireland and the most recent country lived in. If people answer 'yes' to this question, they may also be considered migrants. The fourth asks where you usually lived a year ago. If 'elsewhere', this may also indicate migrant status (both internal and international). Each of these four questions provides a different count, and an overview is shown in Table 1.²

Table 1: Indicators of migrant status for ordinarily resident population, Census 2011, 2016, 2022

| Indicator | 2011 | | 2016 | | 2022 | |
|---|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Country of citizenship other than Ireland | 544,357 | 12.0 | 535,475 | 11.4 | 631,785 | 12.4 |
| Place of birth outside Ireland (Republic) | 766,770 | 16.9 | 810,406 | 17.3 | 1,017,437 | 20.0 |
| Lived outside Ireland for at least a year | 892,370 | 19.7 | 888,899 | 19.0 | 1,077,481 | 21.2 |
| Lived outside Ireland a year ago | 53,267 | 1.2 | 82,346 | 1.8 | 89,512 | 1.8 |
| Total | 4,525,281 | | 4,689,921 | | 5,084,879 | |

Sources: CSO Census 2022: Tables F1052, F5017, F5020, F5002; Census 2016: Tables E7027, E7043 (see CSO 2024a, 2024b)

² A sample of the 2022 Census form is available at https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2021/Sample_Census_2022_Household_Form_English.pdf [accessed 31 October 2024]

As Table 1 shows, the percentage of the ordinarily resident population falling into each category has remained relatively stable over the three Censuses. The proportion of people with a citizenship other than Irish has varied between 11.4% and 12.4%. There has been a small increase in the proportion of people who have lived outside Ireland for at least a year, and a sustained - though also relatively small - increase in the proportion of people born outside Ireland. The proportion who lived outside Ireland a year ago remains between 1% and 2% of the overall population. The differences in numbers are accounted for by the complex historical and contemporary patterns of migration to and from Ireland. For example, the category described as 'place of birth outside Ireland' includes people who are Irish citizens, such as people who are entitled to Irish citizenship on the basis of descent. In 2022, for example, almost 300,000 people with Irish citizenship were born outside the Republic of Ireland (Census 2022, Table F5014). The category described as 'lived outside Ireland for at least a year' - the consistently highest number - includes return Irish migrants who left the country and then came back.

Table 2 provides more detailed information on one of these measures, which is citizenship of a country other than or in addition to Ireland. While Poland and the UK are consistently high, there has been a marked increase in the number of dual Ireland-UK and Ireland-US citizens, with a 107% increase in the number of Ireland-UK citizens between 2016 and 2022. There has also been a marked growth in the number of Indian citizens, from 16,986 in 2011 to 11,465 in 2016 and 45,449 in 2022 - a 168% increase in 11 years.

Table 2: Top ten countries of sole or dual citizenship for ordinarily resident population of Ireland (excluding Ireland), 2011, 2016, 2022

| Rank | 2011 | | 2016 | | 2022 | |
|------|-------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|--------|
| | Country | Number | Country | Number | Country | Number |
| 1 | Poland | 122,585 | Poland | 122,515 | Poland | 93,680 |
| 2 | UK | 112,259 | UK | 103,113 | UK | 83,347 |
| 3 | Lithuania | 36,683 | Lithuania | 36,552 | India | 45,449 |
| 4 | Latvia | 20,593 | Romania | 29,186 | Romania | 43,323 |
| 5 | Nigeria | 17,642 | Latvia | 19,933 | Ireland-UK | 31,907 |
| 6 | Romania | 17,304 | Ireland-US | 17,552 | Lithuania | 31,177 |
| 7 | India | 16,986 | Ireland-UK | 15,428 | Ireland-US | 30,044 |
| 8 | Ireland-US | 14,699 | Brazil | 13,640 | Brazil | 27,338 |
| 9 | Ireland-UK | 13,543 | Spain | 12,112 | Italy | 18,319 |
| 10 | Philippines | 12,791 | Italy | 11,732 | Latvia | 18,300 |

Sources: Census 2016, Table E7002; Census 2022, Table F5014 (see CSO 2024a, 2024b)

Table 3 shows the ten most common places of birth for each of the last three Censuses, for people born outside Ireland. England and Wales is consistently the most significant place of birth. If Scotland and Northern Ireland are included, as part of the United Kingdom, the significance is even stronger, with close to 300,000 born in the UK in each of the three Census years. This is considerably higher than the number of people in each census who claim UK citizenship, which is also the case in relation to the US. This demonstrates the complexities of identifying migrants by either place of birth or citizenship only, because of the complicated history of migration from and to Ireland.

Table 3: Top ten places of birth for ordinarily resident population of Ireland not born in Ireland, 2011, 2016, 2022

| Rank | 2011 | | 2016 | | 2022 | |
|------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | Place of birth | Number | Place of birth | Number | Place of birth | Number |
| 1 | England and Wales | 212,286 | England and Wales | 203,173 | England and Wales | 210,434 |
| 2 | Poland | 115,193 | Poland | 115,161 | Poland | 106,143 |
| 3 | Northern Ireland | 58,470 | Northern Ireland | 57,389 | Northern Ireland | 61,750 |
| 4 | Lithuania | 34,847 | Lithuania | 33,344 | India | 56,642 |
| 5 | United States | 27,726 | Romania | 28,702 | Romania | 42,460 |
| 6 | Latvia | 19,989 | United States | 28,650 | Brazil | 39,556 |
| 7 | Nigeria | 19,780 | India | 20,969 | Lithuania | 34,242 |
| 8 | Romania | 17,995 | Latvia | 18,991 | United States | 34,236 |
| 9 | Scotland | 17,871 | Scotland | 16,644 | Nigeria | 20,559 |
| 10 | India | 17,856 | Nigeria | 16,569 | Latvia | 20,330 |

Sources: *Census 2016, Table E7053; Census 2022, Table F5014 (see CSO 2024a, 2024b)*

Tables 1 to 3 provide snapshots of different counts of the resident migrant population in Ireland on each of the three Census dates. They highlight the difficulties in asserting who, exactly, is or has been a migrant. Many of those who move to Ireland from elsewhere may well have been born in Ireland or hold Irish citizenship. Others who move to Ireland may now be Irish citizens, and their children – born in Ireland – may be Irish citizens whose migrant background is not recognised in these different measures. When people use headline figures to make assertions about the level and scale of migration, it is important to understand precisely what the figures refer to, and whether they are being used accurately and correctly. In many instances, they are not.

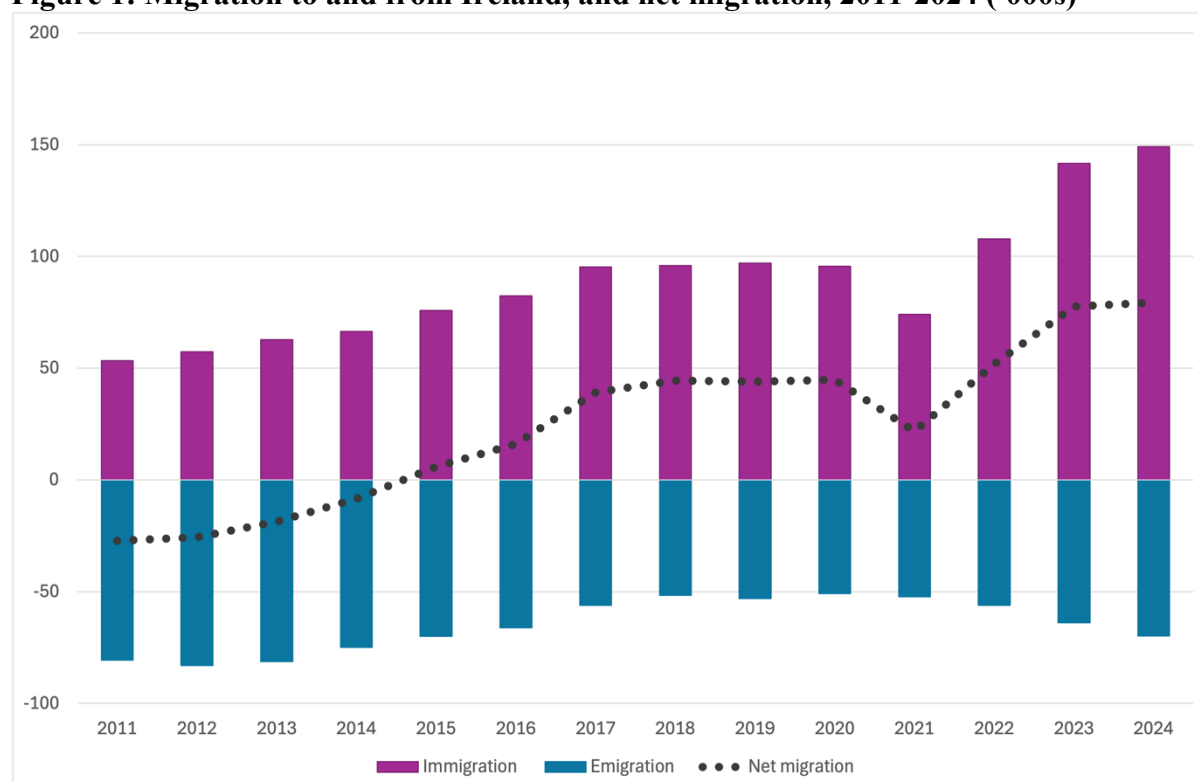
3. Migration to Ireland

The conditions under which people can migrate to Ireland are varied and complex. Table 4 provides an overview, but this is partial, because other dimensions of people's identity, such as relationship status, may have more significance than nationality.

Table 4: Visa and other requirements for migration to Ireland, by nationality

| Nationality | Visa required | Conditions |
|----------------|--------------------|---|
| Irish national | No | None |
| UK national | No | None |
| EU/EEA/Swiss | No | After 90 days, some additional requirements |
| Non-EU | (Generally) Yes | Visa may be required for entry Irish Resident Permit required for stay beyond 3 months |

Figure 1: Migration to and from Ireland, and net migration, 2011-2024 ('000s)



Source: Table PEA 18 (see CSO 2024b)

Because Ireland does not require administrative or legal registration for most recently-arrived immigrants, official statistics on annual immigration are less robust than the count of population provided by the regular censuses. The best estimate of overall immigration to Ireland is provided by the CSO in their annual *Population and Migration Estimates* (usually

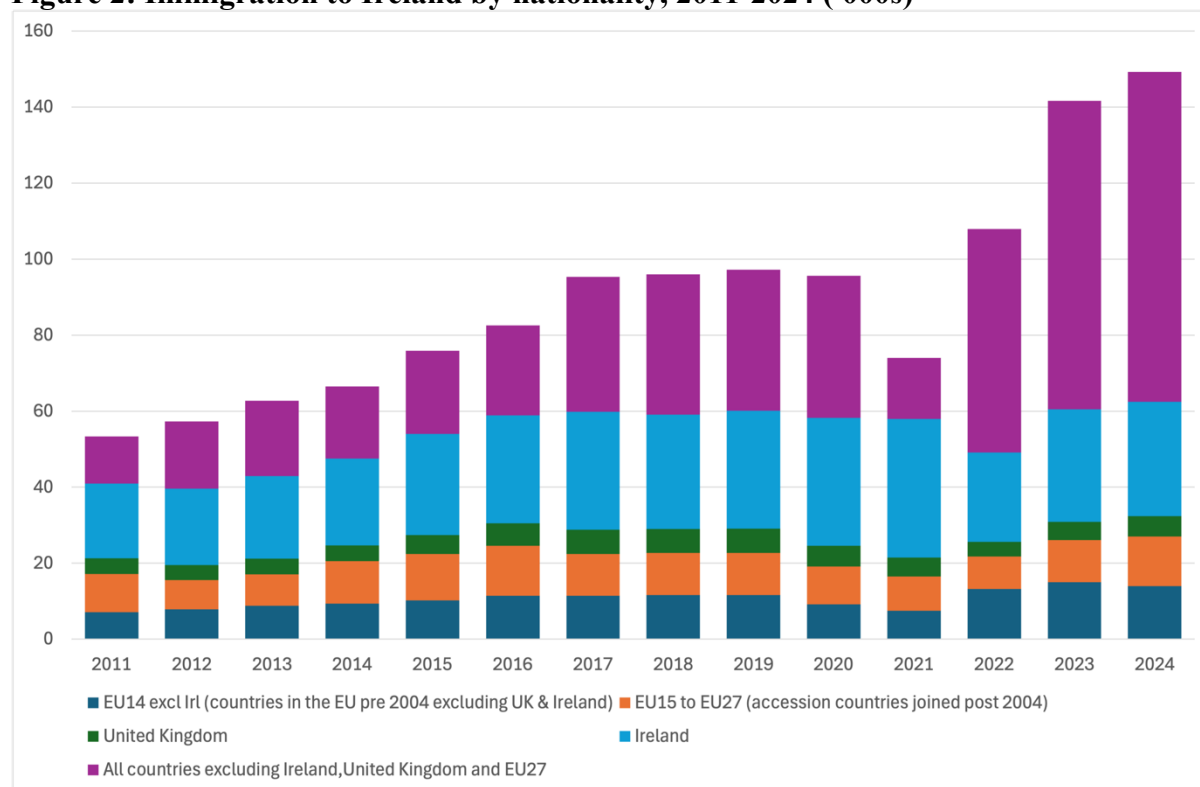
published in August/September each year) (CSO 2024c).³ Using this information, an overview of migration to Ireland in the period from 2011 to 2024 is provided in Figure 1.⁴ Emigration from Ireland exceeded immigration to Ireland from 2011 to 2014, a continuation of the pattern of net outward migration that began in 2010, following the economic crash that started in 2008. Since 2015, even though levels of emigration have remained high, there has been net inward migration each year. Levels of immigration may have been suppressed during the period of COVID-19 travel restrictions, and have grown considerably since. It is estimated that almost 150,000 people immigrated to Ireland in 2024, the second-highest number ever. The highest number was 151,000 in 2007, just before the economic crash began.

More detailed estimates of immigration flows to Ireland are also provided by the CSO, which includes a breakdown of immigration by nationality, gender and age. Figure 2 provides the most recent overview of immigration to Ireland by nationality group for the period from 2011 to 2024. The annual number of Irish nationals immigrating to Ireland in the period has often been between 25,000 and 30,000 people. In contrast, there has been a consistent growth in the annual number of nationals of countries other than Ireland, EU and the UK, from just over 12,000 in 2011, to a high of almost 87,000 in 2024. Much of the increase in this category of immigrant nationals in 2022 and 2023 is because of immigration from Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian war with that country. In 2022, there were over 27,000 PPS numbers issued to Ukrainian nationals, with over 53,000 issued in 2023 (CSO Tables UA07, UA36). If these are excluded, the overall levels of immigration in 2022 and 2023 would have been similar to 2016.

³ Figures are to the end of April in the stated year i.e. 2024 refers to migration in the year to the end of April 2024.

⁴ Figures for 2023 and 2024 are estimated. These will be revised following the next Census, scheduled for April 2027.

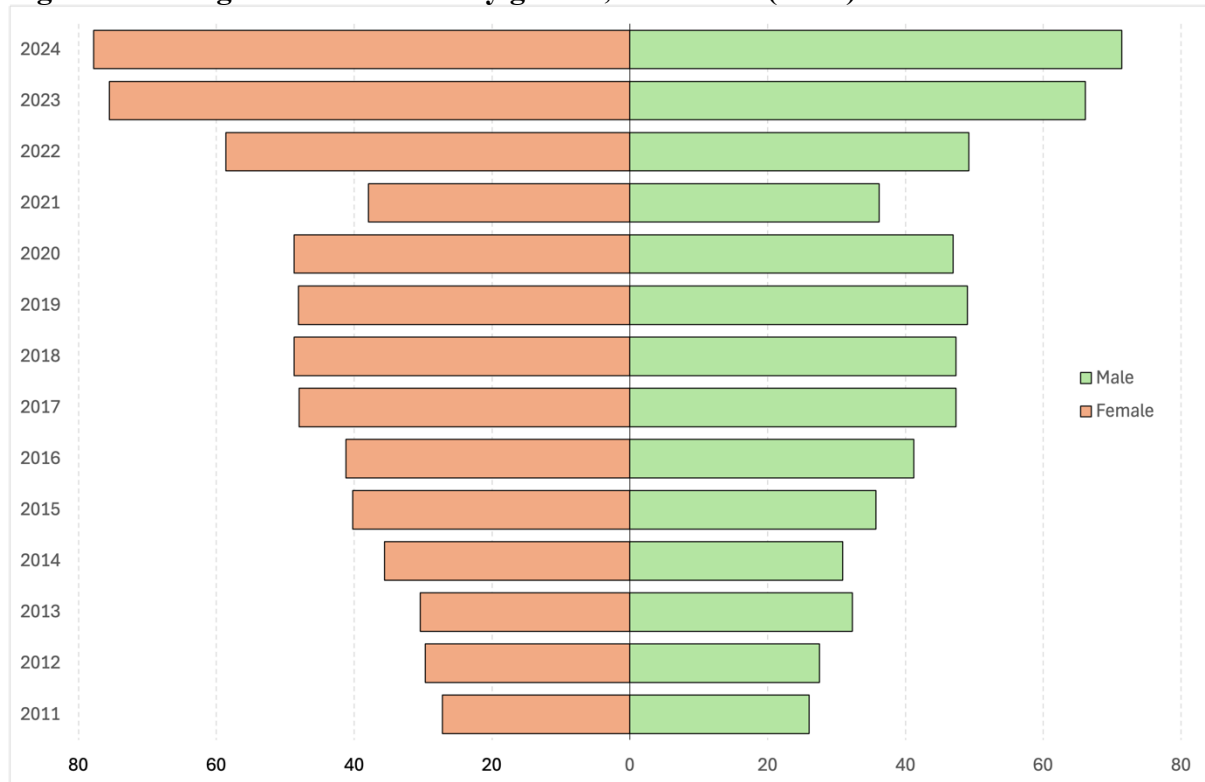
Figure 2: Immigration to Ireland by nationality, 2011-2024 ('000s)



Source: Calculated from Table PEA24 (see CSO 2024b)

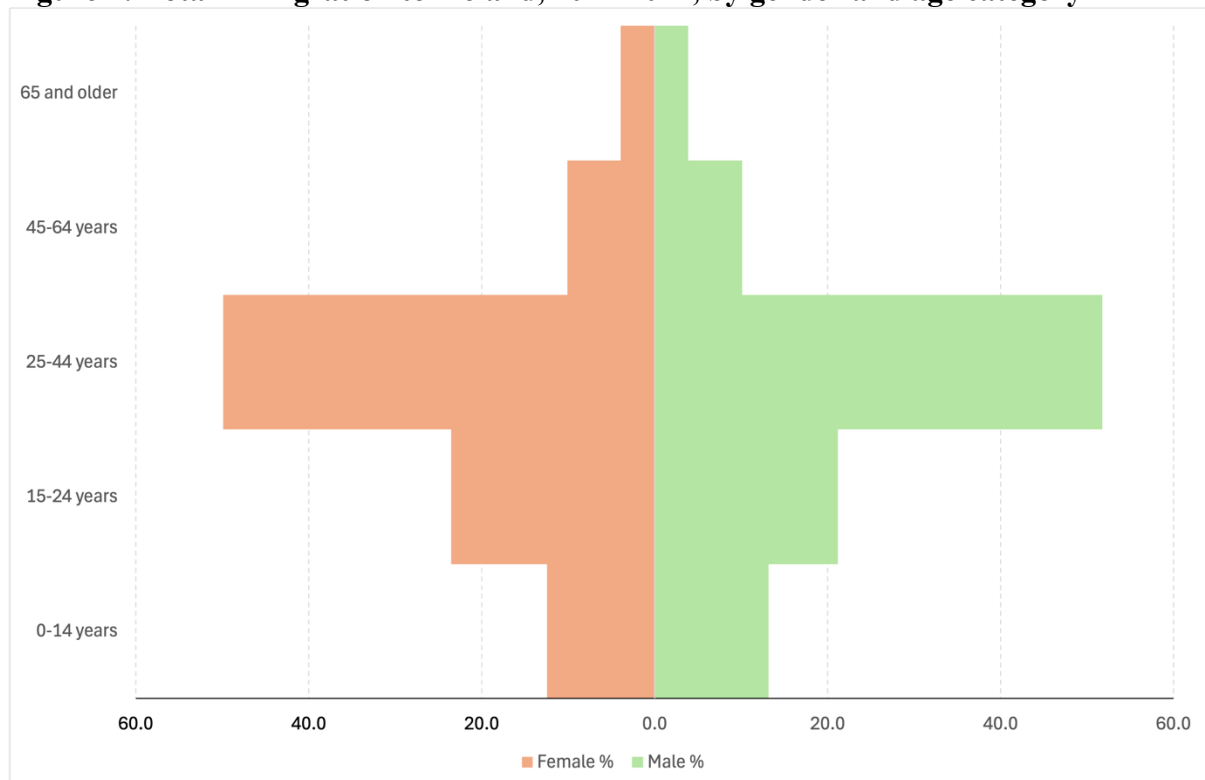
In the period, there have been slight variations in the proportion of men and women immigrating to Ireland each year. This information is provided in Figure 3. In this period, there was a slightly higher proportion of women immigrating to Ireland in 12 of the 14 years (the exceptions were 2013 and 2019). The proportion of women ranged from a low of 48.5% in 2013, to a high of 54.4% in 2022. The 2022 figure is also linked to Ukrainian immigration: in 2022, around 67% of Ukrainian arrivals in Ireland were female (CSO 2024b, Table UA38). Immigration from the EU is also feminised. In contrast, more male UK citizens than women immigrated to Ireland in 10 of the 14 years, with a high of 56.4% male in 2020. Figure 4 takes the total figure for immigration to Ireland between 2011 and 2024, and presents it by gender and age category. The majority of immigrants to Ireland in this period were aged between 15 and 44 years (72.9% of all men and 73.5% of all women), with just over half of the total number of immigrants aged between 25 and 44 years on arrival.

Figure 3: Immigration to Ireland by gender, 2011-2024 ('000s)



Source: Calculated from Table PEA24 (see CSO 2024b)

Figure 4: Total immigration to Ireland, 2011-2024, by gender and age category

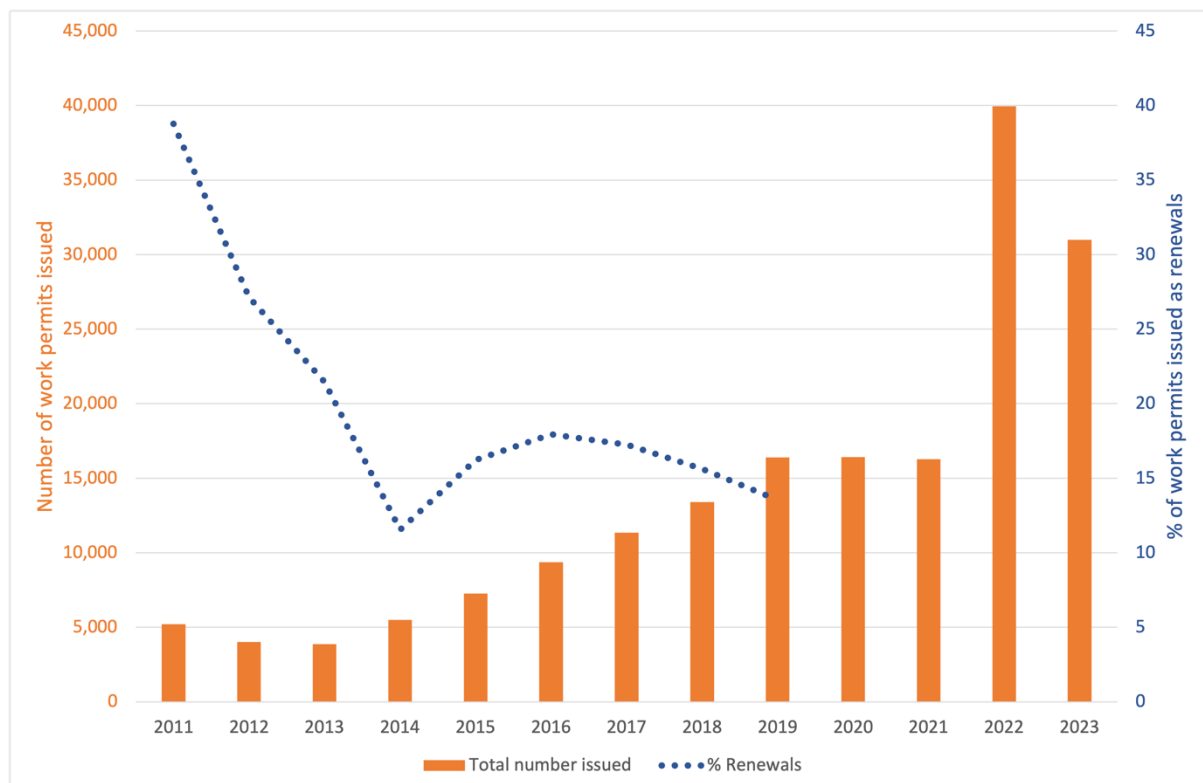


Source: Calculated from Table PEA03 (see CSO 2024b)

Public debates about migration to Ireland often focus on migrants who are not UK, EU, EEA or Swiss nationals, and who are not from countries with long-established migration links to Ireland, such as the US or Australia. This group - previously categorised as 'Rest of World' in official statistics - represents a minority of migrants and faces the most obstacles in moving to Ireland. Despite this, their migration to Ireland faces most scrutiny, possibly because it is most regulated. The main way regulation happens is by imposing additional conditions on people who wish to immigrate, such as the requirement for a visa.

Information about one particular type of visa issued in Ireland - employment permits - is clearly and consistently recorded and made easily accessible by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Figure 5 shows the total number of employment permits issued each calendar year from 2011 to 2023. It also includes information on the number of permits issued as renewals (rather than as new permits) up until 2019, after which point the information was not made publicly available.

Figure 5: Total number of annual employment permits issued, and percentage renewals, 2011-2023



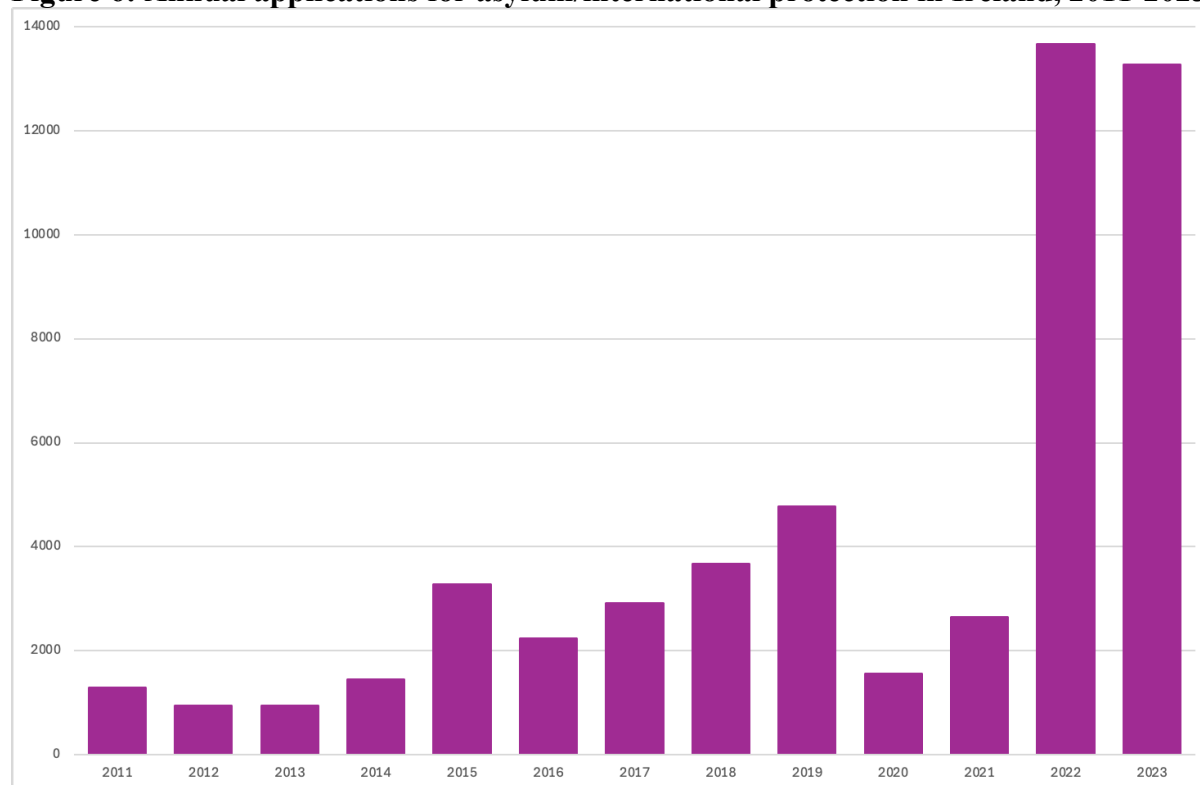
Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2024)

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment provides further information about employment permits issued, which includes the employer, the sector of employment, the county of employment, and the nationality of the permit holder. In 2023, for example, employment permits were issued to 6,754 different employers. Of these, 5,866 employers had received 5 or fewer permits (with 3,834 employers receiving just 1 permit). In contrast, 89 employers had received 50 or more permits. The highest number (365) was issued to Ernst & Young. Other employers that received over 300 permits included University Hospitals in Limerick and Cork, Redwood Extended Care Facility, and Google Ireland Limited. The previous year, Google Ireland Ltd (734), Ernst & Young (714) and Dawn Meats Ireland (669) received the highest number of permits, while 3,513 employers received just 1 permit. The economic sectors where employment permits are particularly important include health and social work; information and communication activities; agriculture, forestry and fishing; and financial and insurance activities.

The other category of immigrants about whom detailed records are kept and made publicly available is applicants for international protection. Figure 6 shows the annual number of applications for asylum in Ireland in the period from 2011 to 2023. The lowest number of applications was in 2013, with just 946. The high of 13,671, in 2022, surpassed the previous highest annual number of applications, which was 11,634 in 2002.

Information on country of origin is generally just provided for the top five each year. Table 5 details the top countries of origin of asylum/international protection applicants for each year from 2011 to 2023. Nigeria and Zimbabwe have appeared most often, followed by Pakistan and Albania. Of the countries appearing in Table 5, six have been designated safe countries of origin by the Department of Justice (Albania, Georgia and South Africa in 2018; Algeria, India and Malawi in 2024).

Figure 6: Annual applications for asylum/international protection in Ireland, 2011-2023



Sources: International Protection Office (2024), ESRI Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum 2013-2016 (Joyce and Gusciute 2015; Joyce and Whelan 2015; Sheridan and Whelan 2016; Sheridan 2017)

Table 5: Leading countries of origin of asylum/international protection applicants, 2011-2023

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Afghanistan | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Albania | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Algeria | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bangladesh | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| China | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DR Congo | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Georgia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| India | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Malawi | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nigeria | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pakistan | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Somalia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| South Africa | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Syria | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zimbabwe | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

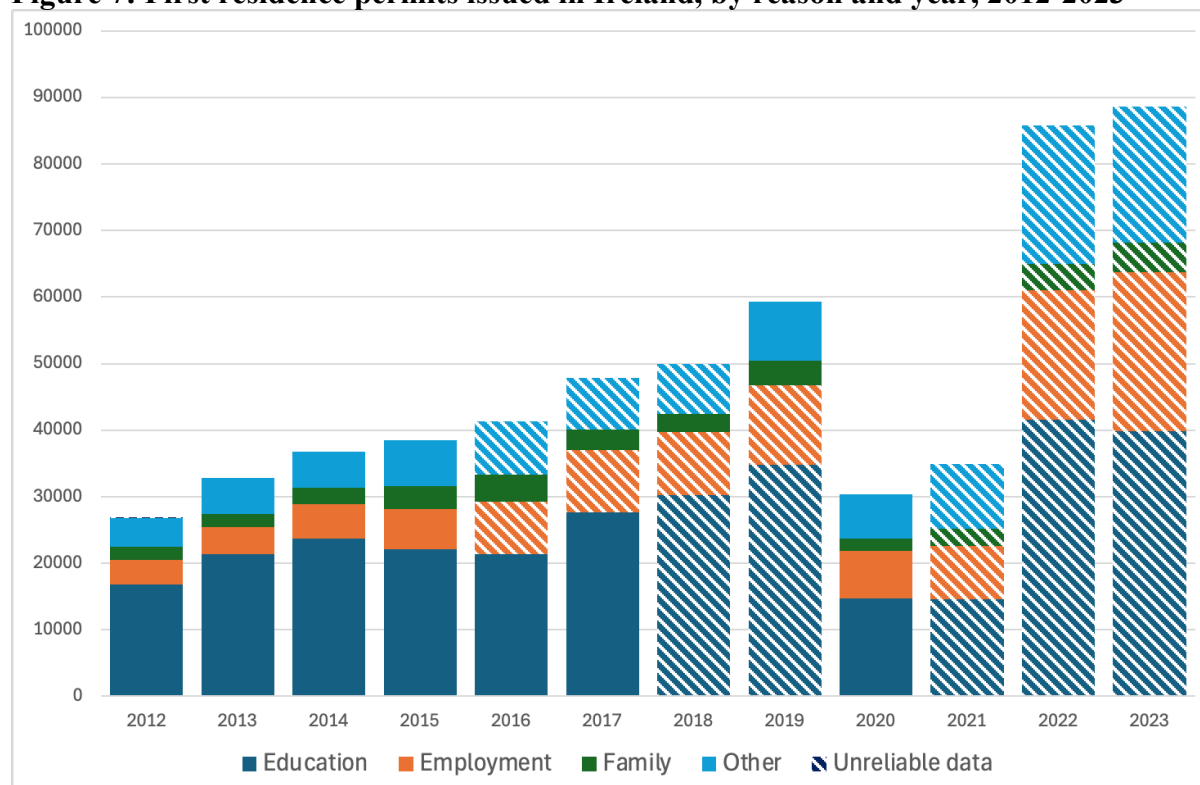
Sources: International Protection Office (2024), ESRI Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum 2013-2016 (Joyce and Gusciute 2015; Joyce and Whelan 2015; Sheridan and Whelan 2016; Sheridan 2017)

However, the level of detail provided in publicly available statistics about employment permits and international protection applicants also points up the limited information that is

available about other types of migration to Ireland where visas and/or special permissions are required. This is apparent in Figure 7, which shows information about the categorisation of first residence permits issued to people during each year from 2012 to 2023. The information comes from Eurostat, and it shows the reasons for the first permits, defined as education, employment, family or other. While Eurostat reports that much of the data is unreliable (indicated by a shaded pattern on Figure 7), an important point to note is the significance of residence permits issued for the purposes of education: close to 40,000 each in both 2022 and 2023. Despite this, statistics about international student visa holders in Ireland are sparse and difficult to access. The HEA provides information about the domicile of people attending third level institutions during each academic year, but domicile does not always indicate whether or not people require special permission to study in Ireland (HEA 2024). However, the HEA does not provide data on international students attending language schools or colleges of further education. A recent contribution to an Oireachtas Joint Committee discussion on the English language sector, from Lorcan O'Connor Lloyd representing Marketing English in Ireland (MEI), suggested that 128,397 students attended English language programmes in 2023, with around half of these aged 18 and over, and around 30% coming from outside the EU/EEA (Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science 2024). However, MEI is just one association of English Language Education providers in Ireland, so its figures are partial.

Figure 7 demonstrates the relative unimportance of family and the importance of education as reasons for first permits in Ireland. This contrasts with patterns across the EU. In the period from 2013 to 2022, 28.3% of first residence permits across the EU were for family reasons. The corresponding figure for Ireland for the same period was 6.6%, which illustrates what MIPEX described as Ireland's "discretionary and insecure" family reunification policies (MIPEX 2020). In the same period, 13.6% of first residence permits in the EU as a whole were issued for education purposes. In Ireland, this figure was 55.1%. Given this, the relative invisibility of international student migration in official statistics is a cause for concern (see also Gilmartin et al 2021).

Figure 7: First residence permits issued in Ireland, by reason and year, 2012-2023



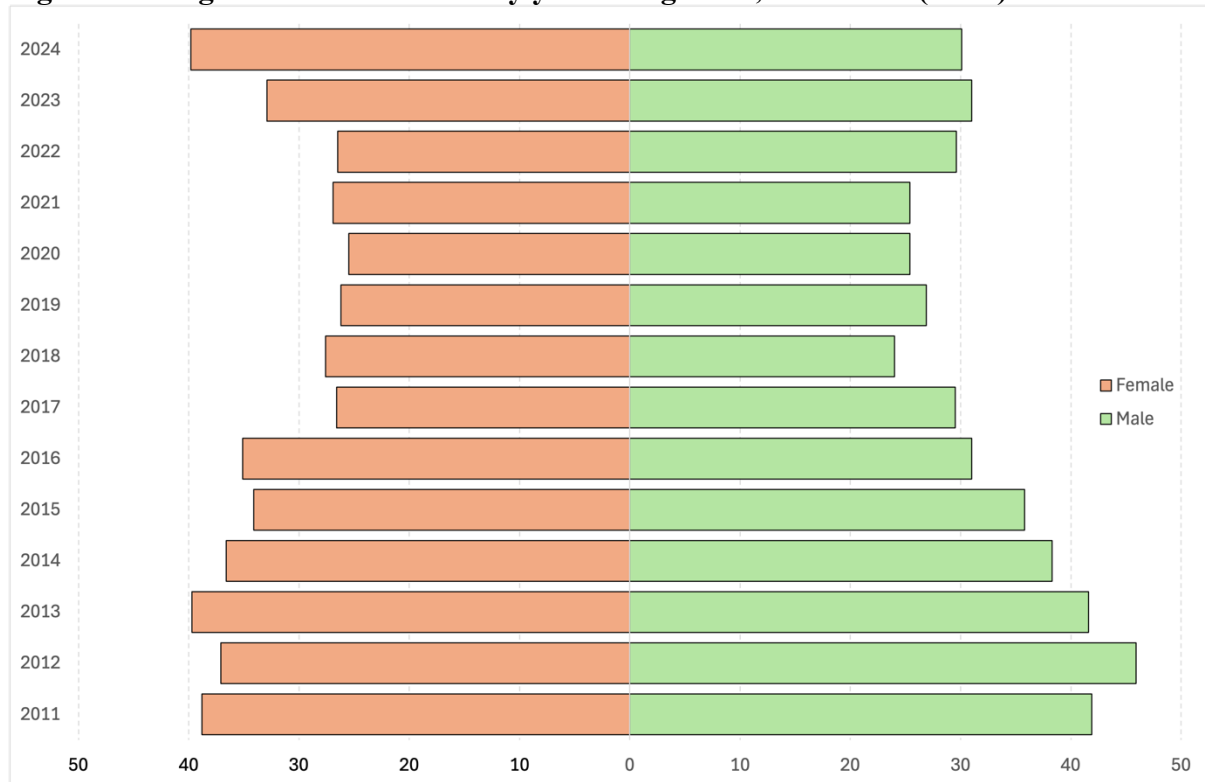
Source: Eurostat (2024)

4. Migration from Ireland

Figure 1 provides an overview of migration from Ireland from 2011 to 2024. The number of people leaving Ireland each year has ranged from a high of 83,000 in 2012, to a low of 50,900 in 2020. While the number of emigrants in 2020 and 2021 has been affected by restrictions on international mobility and migration introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the scale of emigration has once again increased, with an estimated 70,000 people leaving Ireland in 2024.

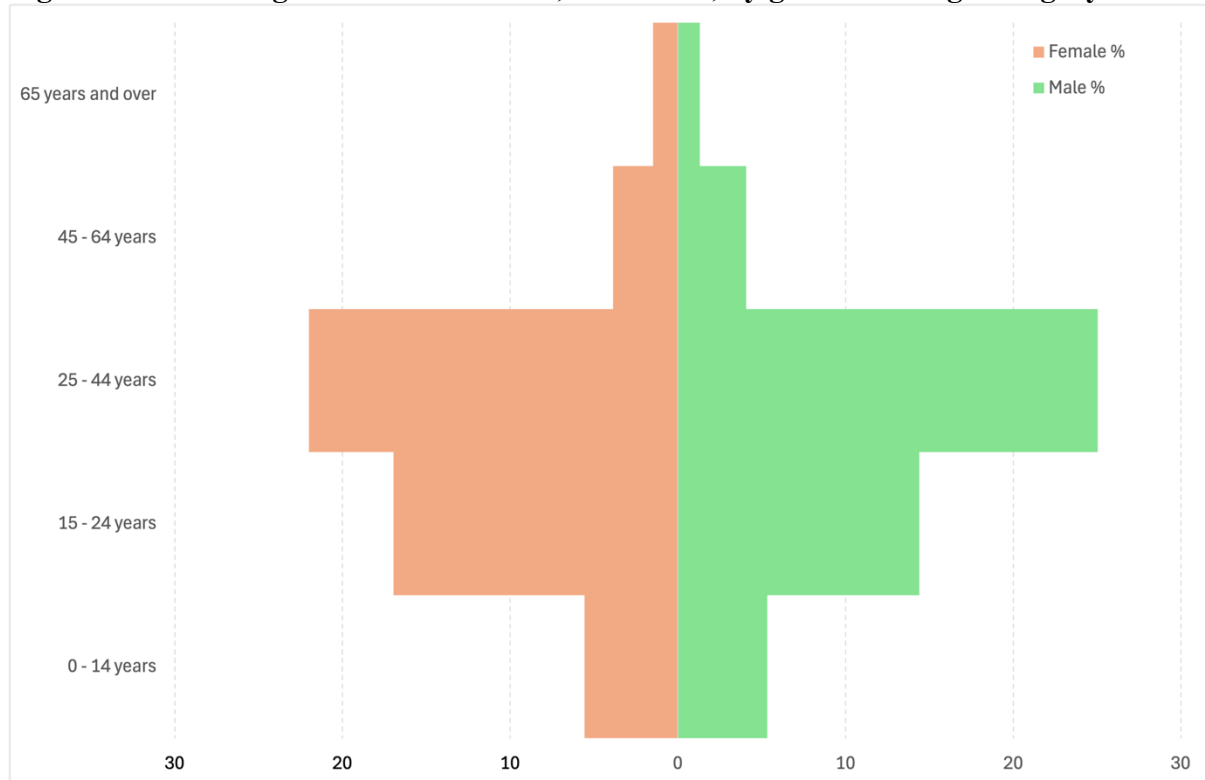
Figure 8 provides an overview of emigration from Ireland by year and gender, from 2011 to 2024. Slightly more males (50.1%) than females emigrated in the period, though there were marked differences in some years. For example, between 2011 and 2013 around 14,000 more males than females left Ireland. Figure 9 considers total emigration from Ireland in the period between 2011 and 2024, and breaks it down by age category and gender. The females who left during this period were, on average, slightly younger than the males who left. Around 22% of those who left were females aged under 25, while around 31% of those who left were males aged 25 and over.

Figure 8: Emigration from Ireland by year and gender, 2011-2024 ('000s)



Source: Calculated from Table PEA03 (see CSO 2024b)

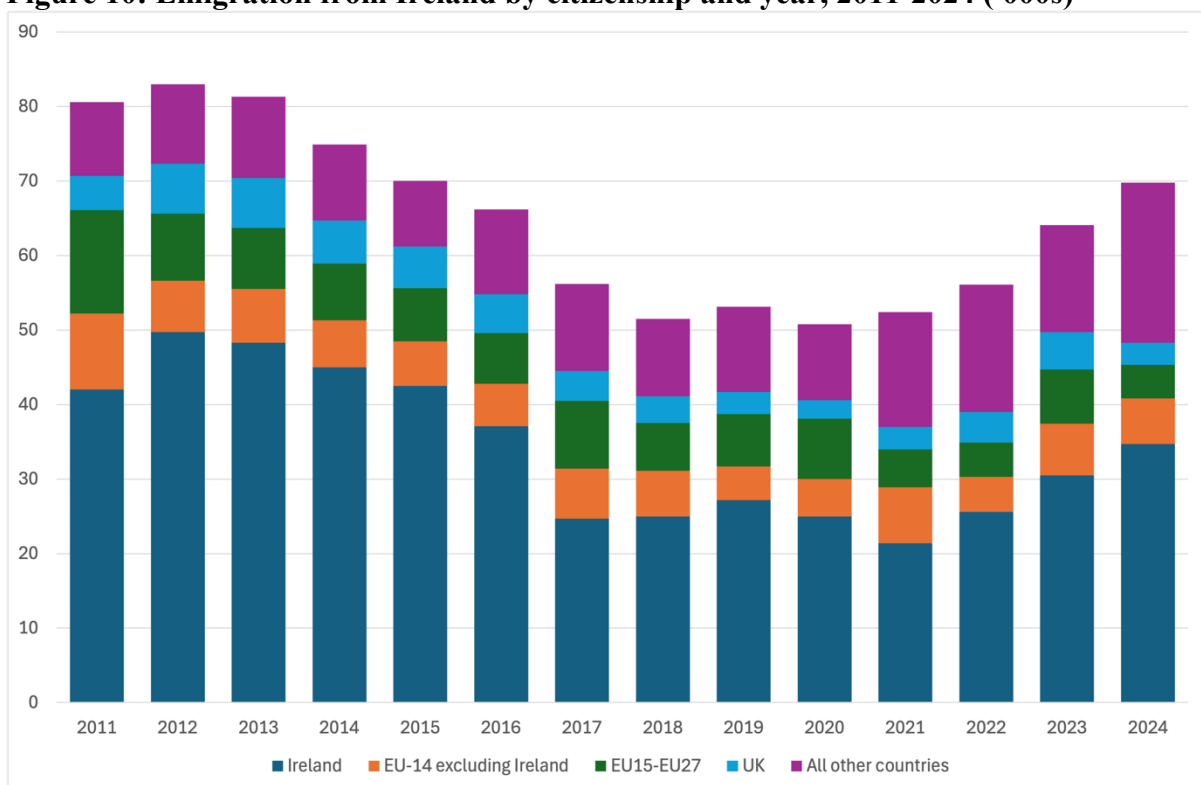
Figure 9: Total emigration from Ireland, 2011-2024, by gender and age category



Source: Calculated from Table PEA03 (see CSO 2024b)

Figure 10 provides more detailed information on emigration from Ireland by citizenship, from 2011 to 2024. The proportion of Irish citizens among emigrants is generally significant, ranging from a low of 40.8% in 2021 to a high of 60.7% in 2015. In 7 of the 14 years, more than half of emigrants from Ireland were Irish citizens. The proportion of emigrants who are not Irish, UK or EU citizens has been steadily increasing over the same period, from 12.3% in 2011 to a high of 30.8% in 2024. With the exception of EU14 citizens, there is a majority of male emigrants in all other citizenship groups across the entire period, but in the last four years, more female than male Irish citizens have emigrated.

Figure 10: Emigration from Ireland by citizenship and year, 2011-2024 ('000s)



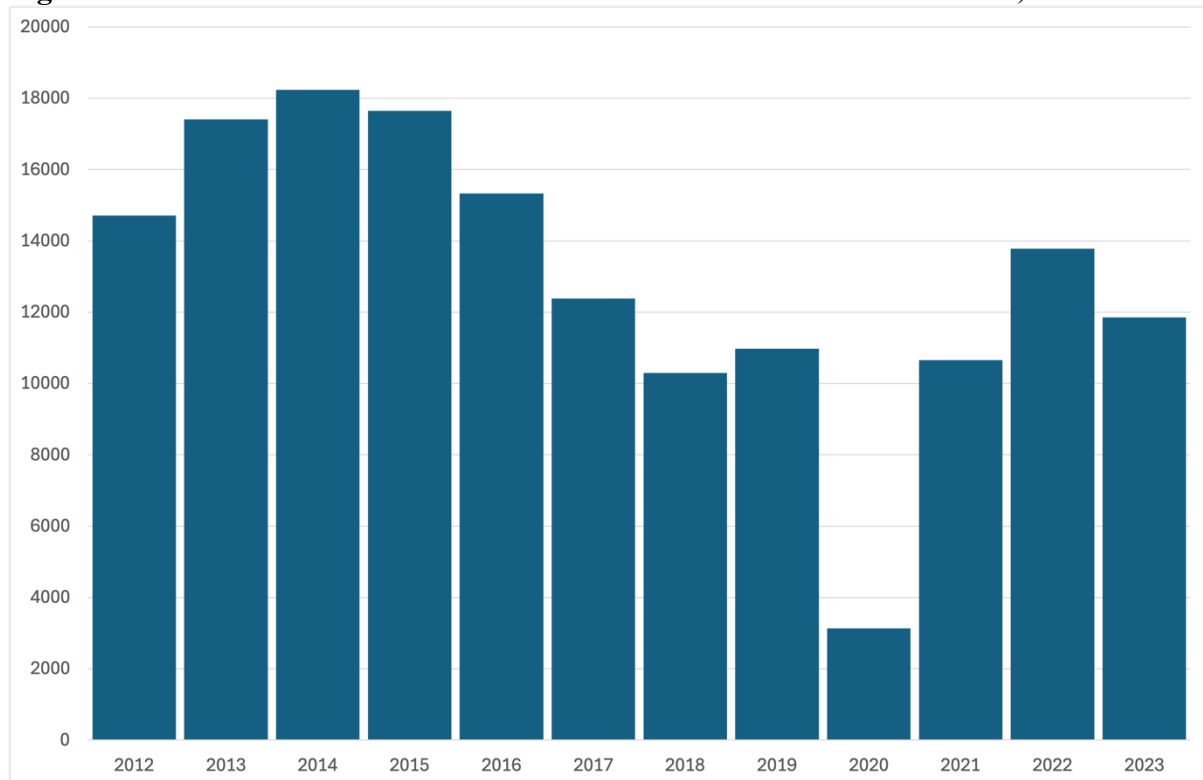
Source: Table PEA23 (see CSO 2024b)

The UK is consistently the most important destination for emigrants from Ireland, with around 23% of all emigrants moving to the UK over the 14 year period. Australia follows, as the destination for around 11.9% of all emigrants, with the US as destination for around 8.3% of emigrants, and Canada for around 6.1%. Information about other individual countries is not made publicly available, but is rather aggregated into broad regions. In the period from 2011 to 2024, 19.3% of total emigrants from Ireland went to EU14 countries (excluding Ireland). 11.7% of total emigrants went to newer EU countries (i.e. EU15-EU27), while around 20% of emigrants went elsewhere (CSO 2024b, Table PEA18). Women were more likely than men to emigrate to EU14 countries, while men were more likely than women to

emigrate to the UK, US and Canada; the proportions emigrating to Australia, EU15-EU27 and all other countries were roughly similar. However, the lack of specificity is connected to the relatively sparse records that are kept on emigration from Ireland. For example, people leaving the country are not required to register their departure. Instead, the CSO uses data from other countries, such as the UK, Australia, US, Canada and New Zealand, as a source for its estimates of emigration.

The Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK means that Irish and British citizens can freely move between the two territories. The main insight into recent emigration from Ireland to Britain comes from statistics on National Insurance numbers issued to Irish nationals, made available by the Department of Work and Pensions. Figure 11 shows this information for the period from 2012 to 2023. With the exception of 2020, at least 10,000 new national insurance numbers have been issued to adult Irish nationals each year. However, these figures capture only new numbers issued. They do not provide any insights into the emigration of either Irish nationals who have previously lived in the UK and already have a UK national insurance number, or of people who have emigrated from Ireland but are not identified as Irish nationals.

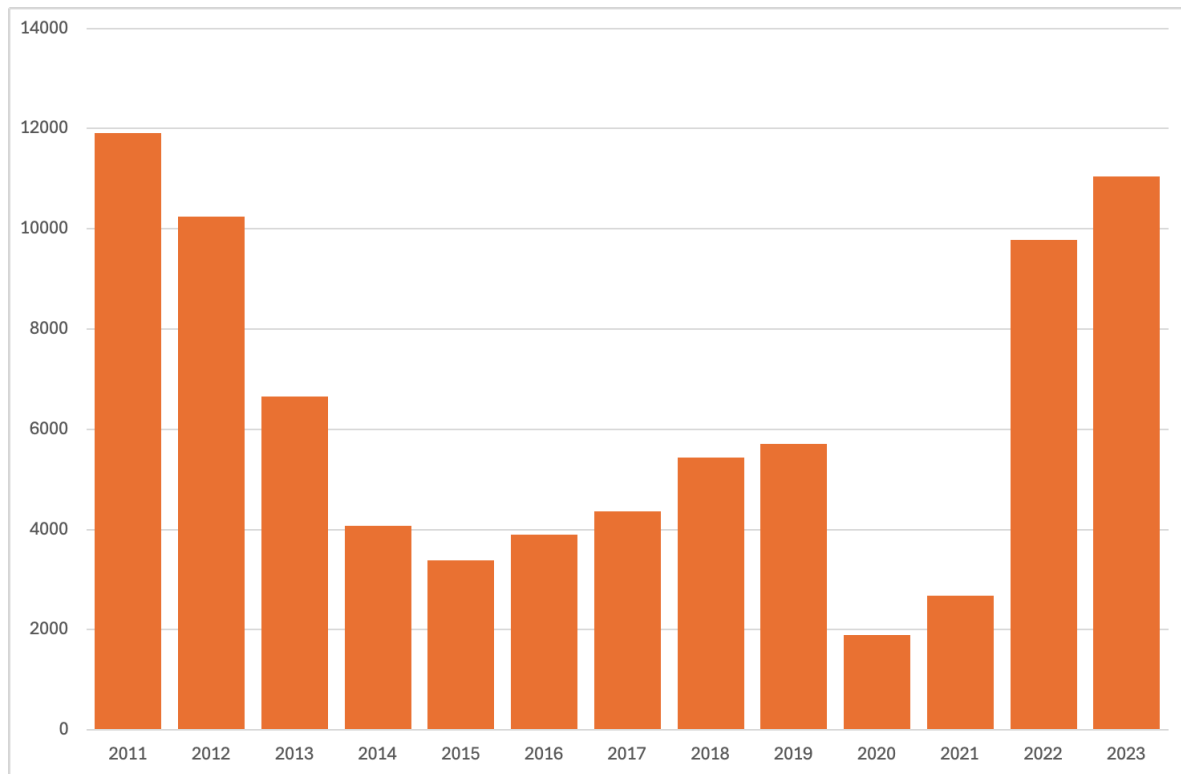
Figure 11: UK National Insurance numbers issued to adult Irish nationals, 2012 to 2023



Source: UK Department for Work and Pensions (2024)

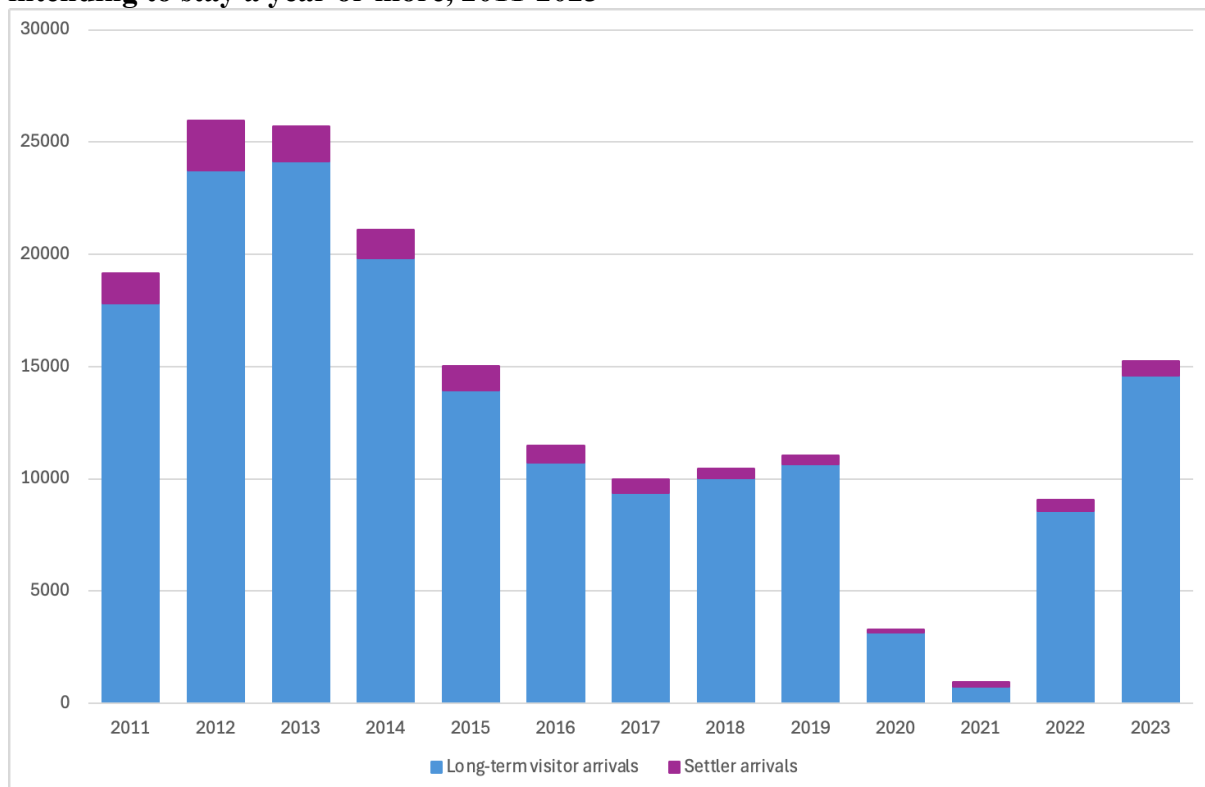
Over this period, Australia was the second most important destination for emigration from Ireland. Immigration to Australia is tightly controlled, and it is difficult for people to move there on a permanent basis at first instance. For this reason, many emigrants to Australia migrate initially using a temporary scheme, such as the Working Holiday Maker Visa Programme or through a temporary work visa, and then apply for longer-term residence at a later stage. Figure 12a provides information on the Working Holiday Maker Visas (both new and renewals) granted to Irish citizens each year from 2011 to 2023. These visas are granted to people aged between 18 and 35, initially for one year only, but the visa can be extended for a second and third time if the applicant meets certain conditions. Figure 12a shows the year visas were granted: the year that people first move to Australia may differ. While the Working Holiday Maker Visa program is open to Irish citizens as well as citizens of 48 other countries, there is no indication of where Irish visa holders may have emigrated from (e.g. it could be from a country other than Ireland). Figure 12b provides information on Irish citizens arriving in Australia, either as long-term visitors (e.g. Working Holiday Maker Visa programme or Temporary Skilled Workers) or as settlers (i.e. people planning to stay longer term), all of whom have indicated their intention to stay in Australia for at least a year. While Figure 12b is an imperfect guide to migration flows - e.g. it focuses on citizenship rather than place of last residence, it counts all arrivals by one person separately, and many visitor arrivals may not stay - it does provide some insights into the dynamic nature of emigration flows of Irish citizens to Australia.

Figure 12a: Australian Working Holiday Maker Visas granted to Irish citizens by year, 2011-2023



Source: Australian Government Department of Home Affairs (2024a)

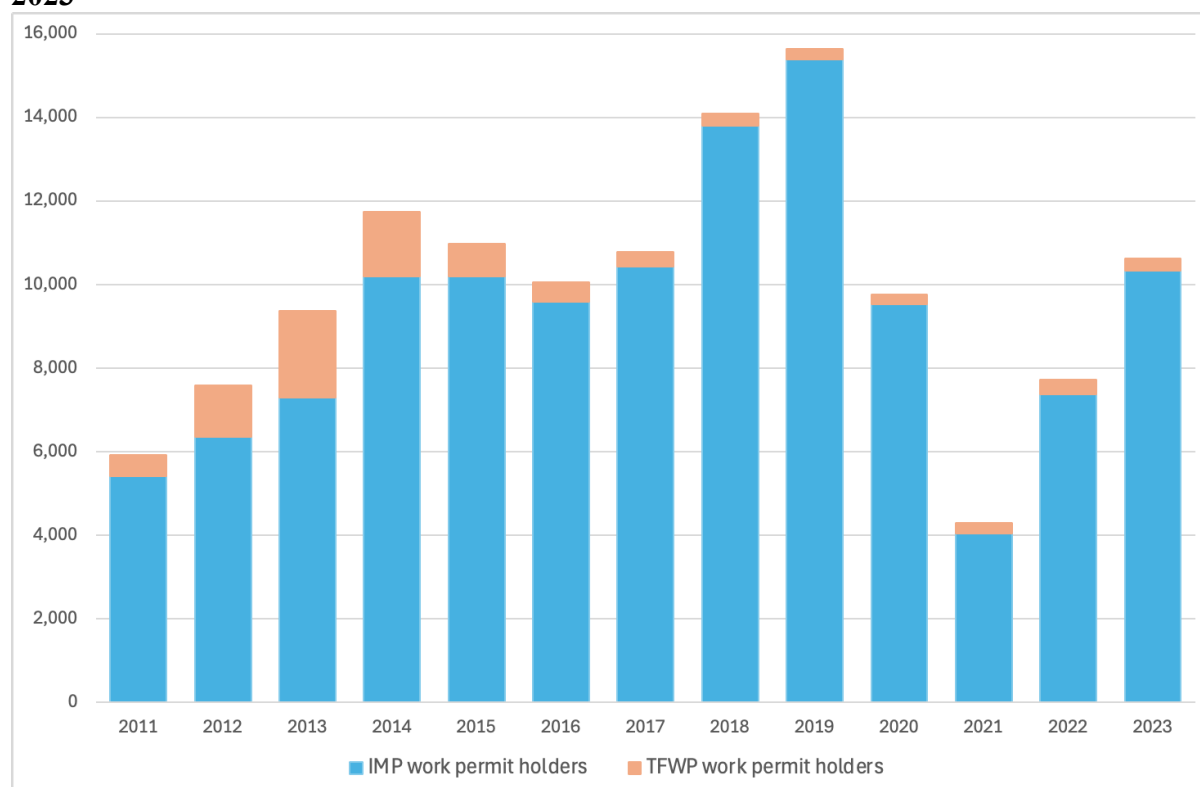
Figure 12b: Overseas long-term visitor and settler arrivals to Australia by Irish citizens intending to stay a year or more, 2011-2023



Source: Australian Government Department of Home Affairs (2024b)

Canada is also an important destination for emigrants from Ireland. Irish citizens can emigrate to Canada through a variety of schemes, such as Working Holiday (with an annual quota of 10,500 visas for Irish citizens, see Government of Canada 2024a), the International Mobility Program (IMP) and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). All of these programme permit temporary migration to Canada, within a migration system that is increasingly two-step, similar to Australia. While statistics on the Working Holiday programme are not readily available, Canada provides an update on the numbers of Irish citizens resident in the country on 31 December each year, holding either an IMP or TFWP work permit. This information is shown in Figure 13. It shows a significant increase just before COVID-19, followed by a dramatic drop, with numbers again increasing to the levels seen in the mid-2010s.

Figure 13: Irish citizens in Canada on 31 December holding International Mobility Program (IMP) or Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) work permits, 2011-2023



Source: Government of Canada (2024b)

While countries with detailed immigration records and statistics offer good insights into the numbers of Irish citizens moving to and living there, our overall picture of emigration from Ireland is patchy. There is little specific information about many of the destinations that people move to from Ireland, such as countries in the Middle East or other EU countries.

There is limited information about the movement from Ireland of people who have lived in the country for a long time but are not Irish citizens, or about the movement of people who are dual Irish citizens and may be emigrating. Because of this, what we know about emigration from Ireland is partial, though it is clear that emigration remains an important component of the Irish migration experience.

5. Conclusion: the state of migration

Patterns of migration to and from Ireland have been volatile in recent years. In the period covered by this working paper, 2011 to 2024, we have seen the long impacts of the financial crisis in Ireland; the later impacts of the fledgling economic recovery; the significant interruptions to migration and mobility as a consequence of COVID-19; and the considerable migration that resulted from the Russian war with Ukraine. The latter two events - COVID-19 and the Russian war - continue to impact levels of migration in unpredictable ways, as do broader geopolitical conflicts.

Despite this, there are some clear trends that are important to note. The first is the continued significance of the UK, the EU and the US as sources of immigration to Ireland, together with the emergence of new sources of immigration such as India and Brazil. The second is the growing importance of temporary migration schemes, evident in the increase in international student migration to Ireland and in the increase of Irish emigration under temporary schemes to countries such as Australia and Canada. The third is the growth in the numbers of people applying for international protection, which is evident across a wide range of countries and not just Ireland, though this remains a small proportion of all immigrants to Ireland each year. The fourth is the persistent levels of emigration from Ireland, particularly to the UK which remains an important destination for emigrants from Ireland, despite Brexit.

However, the quality of data about immigration to and emigration from Ireland - particularly in relation to migration flows - remains patchy. Many immigrants to and emigrants from Ireland remain relatively invisible in official data. Indeed, it is difficult to find information about certain categories of immigrants, such as international students, despite their centrality to Irish society and economy. This may be because of the restricted rights of international students, who are not permitted to accrue residency rights for the purposes of naturalization as student visa holders. Similarly, the lack of adequate records about emigration from Ireland

and the reliance on the data collection activities of other states means that our knowledge of the emigration of people who are not solely Irish citizens but may be long-term Irish residents is sparse. These limitations are important, because they mean that our broader understanding of migration is restricted. Better data, and a better awareness of the limitations of existing data, could allow us to make better informed policy and engage in more meaningful and accurate public discourse. On the evidence presented in this working paper, it is clear that Ireland is not full, but instead is continuing to experience both immigration and emigration as diverse and unpredictable, similar to many other countries in Europe and beyond.

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