

# Attitudes to Diversity in Ireland

March 2018

Frances McGinnity, Raffaele Grotti,  
Helen Russell and Éamonn Fahey



**Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta  
an Duine agus Comhionannas**  
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission



**ESRI** ECONOMIC & SOCIAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was established under statute on 1 November 2014 to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland, to promote a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding, to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality, and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses and discrimination.

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## FOREWORD

This report, *Attitudes to Diversity in Ireland*, carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), is the second in a series of research publications for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, as part of the Commission's research programme. It is also the first major report devoted to attitudes to immigrants in Ireland.

It is well documented that during the past two decades Ireland has become an increasingly diverse country. The 2016 Census indicates that the 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland originate from 200 different nations. The largest group are Polish nationals at 122,515, followed by 103,113 UK nationals, and 36,552 Lithuanians. Overall, there are 12 nationalities with more than 10,000 residents living here in Ireland from America, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Latvia, Romania, and Spain, in addition to Poland, Lithuania and the UK.

As well as making Ireland's population more diverse, immigrants to Ireland are themselves enormously varied in their age profile, their socio-economic background, their religious beliefs and customs, and their proficiency in the English language. This diversity in our communities can affect, and create, challenges in certain areas, for example in the provision of public services such as education and health, how people access work, and how they experience Irish society.

To support an integrated society, it is important for us to know how people in Ireland feel about the changes we are experiencing in the population. This report examines data from the European Social Survey on attitudes to immigration in Ireland among the Irish-born population. As the data used in this report is collected throughout Europe, the results for Ireland are compared to other West European countries. This means we have an indication of how attitudes in Ireland compare to our European counterparts. The timeframe for the data is 2002-2014, therefore establishing if attitudes have changed or remained the same over time. The report also examines the kind of factors which influence attitudes to diversity.

The relatively high levels of discriminatory attitudes detailed in this study are a matter for concern. However, the evidence in this report also demonstrates that attitudes to diversity are a product of our social, economic and cultural life. They cannot be divorced from how we live – both together and as individuals. This insight offers policy makers some direction when it comes to building a more inclusive, more tolerant society. Those factors which influence attitudes to diversity – economic inclusion, educational attainment and the quality of our communities – are such that progress, when it is made, benefits all.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission works in a variety of ways to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland. This report offers us an understanding of prevailing attitudes to diversity and how those attitudes are formed, and will help us in our mission to build a fair and inclusive society that protects and promotes human rights and equality. Its findings will also inform the Commission's submission to the forthcoming treaty monitoring process for the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Finally, I would like to thank the ESRI for their engagement, and the report's authors, Professor Frances McGinnity, Dr Raffaele Grotti, Professor Helen Russell and Éamonn Fahey.

Emily Logan

Chief Commissioner,

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Traditionally a country of emigration, rapid immigration during the economic boom has meant that Ireland has become considerably more diverse in terms of national and ethnic origin in recent decades. Increasing diversity can challenge existing ideas about national identity and culture and may influence attitudes to immigrants and immigration. Using evidence from the European Social Survey, this study considers whether attitudes to immigration in Ireland have changed among the Irish-born population since 2002. Exploiting a special module of the European Social Survey in 2014, it investigates Irish attitudes to Muslims and Roma immigrants. The report also examines beliefs about racial and cultural superiority among Irish people, and the quality and frequency of their contact with those of a different race/ethnic group in 2014. The results for Ireland are compared with averages from ten other West European countries<sup>1</sup> to set Ireland in comparative context. Drawing on theories of social identity, ethnic group competition and social contact, the report also examines how such attitudes are formed – are they influenced by factors such as social contact, attitudes to race/ethnicity, education and financial difficulties?

### ATTITUDES IN IRELAND OVER TIME AND IN COMPARISON

In the first half of the 2000s attitudes to the impact of immigration on the economy, cultural life and quality of life in Ireland were increasingly positive. Attitudes became more negative in 2008 and continued to decline in 2010, but became more positive again in 2012 and 2014. Views on the impact of immigration on the economy closely followed the economic cycle. Attitudes to immigration were more favourable in Ireland than the average across ten Western European countries in the pre-recession period but between 2008 and 2014 Irish attitudes fell below this European average, though the gap is narrower in 2014 than in 2010.

Attitudes to some migrants are much more negative than others. While 58 per cent of Irish-born people report they would allow many or some immigrants from members of the same ethnic group as most Irish people to come to Ireland, the equivalent figures for Muslim and

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<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. These are the ten other West European countries for which European Social Survey data was available for the whole period.

Roma migrants are 41 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. The international literature suggests there is a greater perception of cultural threat around Muslim immigration than to immigrants of the same ethnic group. Resistance to Roma migration reflects a widespread prejudice against this group across Europe (FRA, 2016). Support for Muslim and Roma immigration is lower in Ireland than the average for the ten Western European countries presented.

In terms of beliefs about race/ethnicity, just under half of adults born in Ireland believe some cultures to be superior to others, and 45 per cent that some races/ethnic groups were born harder working. A much lower proportion, 17 per cent, believes that some races/ethnic groups were born less intelligent. These values are somewhat above the EU10 average.

An over-inflated view of the size of the immigrant population can be an indicator of perceived threat from immigration. The figure for Ireland is relatively low in a cross-national context, suggesting that feelings of threat may not be as prevalent as elsewhere in Western Europe.

Contact with those from a different ethnic or racial group is similar in Ireland to other West European countries. Almost a quarter of the population has daily casual contact, while the majority has contact at least once a week (58 per cent). Most people (62 per cent) reported this contact as positive and 8 per cent reported it as negative.

## **ATTITUDE FORMATION**

Attitudes to immigration and to ethnic diversity differ across social groups. Those with higher levels of education hold much more positive attitudes about the impact of immigration than those with lower levels of education. A number of explanations are discussed in the report, such as the fact that those with higher levels of education tend to be in a financially more secure position, as well as the potential 'liberalising' effect of higher education. Those in financial difficulty have more negative attitudes, which is consistent with the argument that this group is more likely to be in competition with migrants for jobs and social benefits/services.

Some attitudes to race and ethnicity are related to attitudes to immigration, though the effect is variable. Respondents who believe some races/ethnic groups are born more intelligent are less positive about the cultural impact of immigration; respondents who believe some groups are harder working are less positive about the economic impact and whether immigration makes Ireland a better place. In general, believing that some cultures are better than others is not associated with support for immigration. Overestimating the size of the immigrant group is also not associated with attitudes to immigration in Ireland.

Positive social contact with those of a different race/ethnic group was found to be associated with more favourable attitudes to the impact of immigration regardless of the frequency of contact. Negative social contact was linked to more negative attitudes to the effects of immigration and was more negative as contact became more frequent. As both indicators are measured at the same point in time we cannot establish definitively whether contact influences attitudes or attitudes influence contact.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The finding that social contact for the most part promotes less negative attitudes to immigration and immigrants, suggests that enhancing opportunities for meaningful and positive interactions between the Irish-born population and immigrants will reduce anti-migrant sentiment. Such interaction would also have positive implications for the social integration of migrants and their children (Darmody et al., 2016). Accurate information may also have an important role to play in informing the public about immigrant outcomes, such as labour market outcomes, educational qualifications, poverty rates and how these vary, even within the immigrant population in Ireland.

The strong effects of financial difficulty and lower educational attainment on attitudes suggest that tackling poverty and poor educational achievement is therefore an important strategy in promoting greater social cohesion between native and immigrant groups. Attitudes to immigration are becoming more positive again with economic recovery but spreading the gains equally is important in terms of reducing perceived threats and prejudice.

Given recent negative public debate about immigration in parts of Europe and the US, the ongoing monitoring of attitudes to migrants remains important as an indicator of the social context for migrant integration and of social cohesion in Ireland.

## CHAPTER 1

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### Introduction and motivation

Ireland's experience of migration has changed radically over recent decades, with a shift from net emigration to net immigration, and there has been an associated increase in national and ethnic diversity.

Understanding attitudes of the host population to immigrants is important for a number of reasons. The attitudinal climate will affect how welcome immigrants feel in Ireland and their everyday experience. Attitudes may also affect decision-makers including those involved in recruitment, service providers and policymakers. In many European countries, including the UK, immigration has become a highly salient and divisive political issue (Ford and Heath, 2014).

This report uses core indicators from the European Social Survey to first consider how attitudes to immigration have changed in the period 2002-2014 in Ireland, when the country was experiencing both rapid immigration and economic turbulence. Did Irish people become more resistant to immigration as the number of immigrants rose rapidly? How did the economic recession and period of austerity influence attitudes to immigration? How did Irish attitudes compare to those in other West European countries during the same period?

The newness of the immigration experience in Ireland means that there are significant gaps in our knowledge about important factors related to diversity. The report exploits a special module on immigration of the European Social Survey in 2014 to fill some of those gaps. It explores attitudes to specific migrant groups – Muslims and Roma – and whether these differ from attitudes to migrants from the same ethnic/racial group as most Irish people.<sup>2</sup> It examines beliefs about racial and cultural superiority among Irish people, how close people feel to Ireland and the perceived size of the immigrant group. Evidence is also provided about the social contact Irish people regularly have with those of a different race/ethnic group – both how frequent this contact is, and whether it is perceived as positive or

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<sup>2</sup> The survey question does not define what same 'ethnic or racial group as most Irish people' means, it is up to the respondent to decide.



negative. The results for Ireland are compared with those from other West European countries to allow us to investigate how Ireland compares.

The report then explores how attitudes to immigration are related to demographic factors like age, education and gender, as well as employment status, financial stress and rural/urban location. It also explores the role of political orientation, racism and cultural superiority, national attachment, perceived size of the immigrant group and the quality and frequency of social contact with ethnic minorities in understanding attitudes. These factors have been shown by previous research to be associated with attitudes to immigration (see Chapters 2 and 5).

The focus is on Ireland, but as the European Social Survey is comparative, we can compare Irish responses to the same questions in other West European countries. This allows us to make sense of the Irish responses, in light of responses in neighbouring European countries. Of course West European countries have had varied and in many cases rather different experiences of immigration and ethnic diversity than Ireland, and it is important to bear this in mind.

## CHAPTER 2

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### The Irish context, theoretical perspectives and previous literature

As a prelude to exploring changing attitudes to immigrants and immigration, this chapter considers the Irish context – immigration flows and the economic context. It also briefly reviews theoretical perspectives and some previous findings from the international literature on attitudes to immigrants and immigration.

#### 2.1 THE IRISH CONTEXT: IMMIGRATION, BOOM AND RECESSION

Previous authors have argued that both immigration flows and the economic situation influence attitudes to diversity. One argument is that the more immigrants that come to a country, the more resistant the native population becomes (Schneider, 2008). Ireland experienced considerable variation in immigrant inflows in the period 2000–2014. Figure 2.1 presents data on migration inflow (immigration), outflow (emigration) and the proportion of the population foreign-born in Ireland between 2000 and 2014.<sup>3</sup> Between 2004 and 2007 there was a sharp increase in immigrant inflows, due to the accession of the EU New Member States (NMS),<sup>4</sup> and a growing economy. Annual inflows of non-Irish immigrants were around 40,000 in 2002, and peaked at around 120,000 in 2007, falling to just under 42,000 in 2010, before increasing again in 2012 to 52,700 (see Figure 2.1). Prior to the boom Ireland was historically a country of emigration (Hughes et al., 2007).

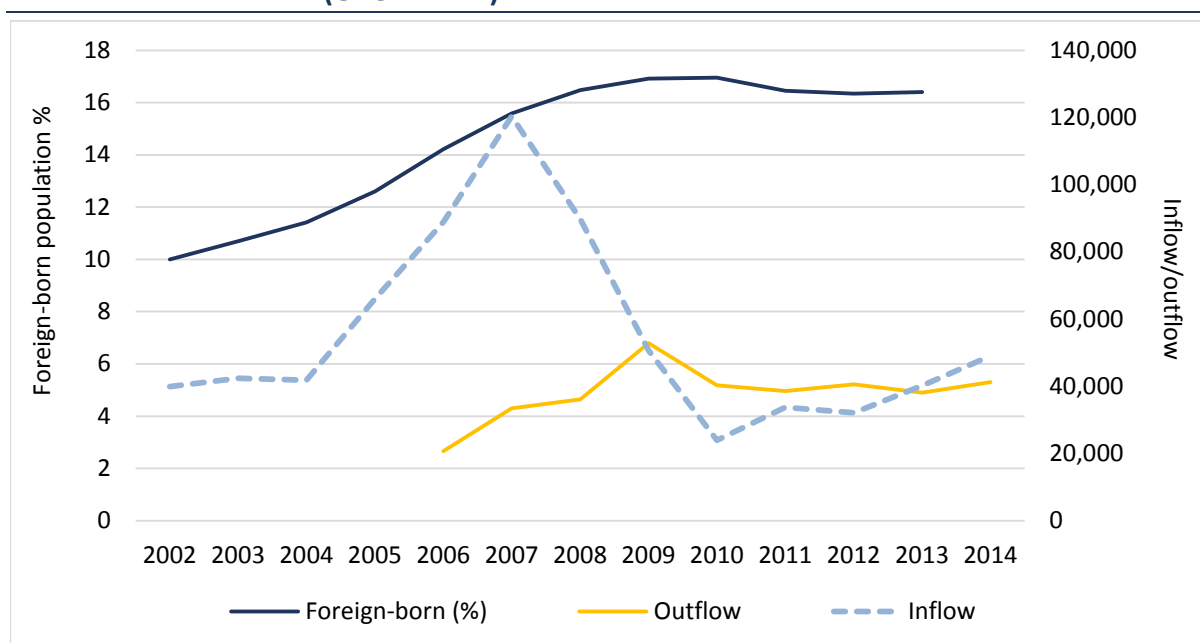
Coupled with rapid immigration, the proportion of the population in Ireland that was foreign-born rose in the period. While inflows declined with the start of the recession in 2008, the proportion of foreign-born did not fall and has stabilised at around 16 per cent of the population since 2009 (See Figure 2.1).<sup>5</sup> In 2014 Ireland had the fourth highest proportion of foreign-born residents in the EU after Luxembourg, Cyprus and Austria (Eurostat, 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> OECD data on foreign born are only available until 2013. Eurostat provides data from 2007 to 2016 but due to differences in estimation techniques, the data are not comparable to the OECD figures.

<sup>4</sup> EU New Member States (NMS) refers to states that acceded in 2004 and 2007: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>5</sup> These diverging trends occur because the outflow did not rise as sharply as the falling inflow and because there was also emigration among the Irish-born population during the recession.

**FIGURE 2.1 SHARE OF FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, AND INFLOW AND OUTFLOW IN IRELAND (OECD DATA)**

Sources: OECD International Migration Database, based on national data sources and revised periodically on the basis of census data. OECD data on foreign born are only available until 2013.

Immigrant flows to Ireland to date have been predominantly European: in 2011, for example, 72 per cent of the usually resident foreign-born population was born in an EU Member State, and much of the population increase was due to immigration from the EU's New Member States (CSO, 2012a; CSO, 2018). Polish immigrants are the largest migrant group in Ireland, comprising over a fifth of the non-Irish population, followed by those from the UK (CSO, 2017a).

Other authors highlight the importance of the economic and labour market situation in understanding attitudes to immigration and diversity. The period of 2000 to 2014, which our data covers was also one of dramatic change for the Irish labour market. Between 2000 and 2007, Ireland experienced extremely strong economic growth: construction boomed, standards of living were at an all-time high and the unemployment rate averaged 4.5 per cent per annum. However, the global financial crisis and the collapse of the construction and banking sectors meant that the Irish economy entered a deep recession in 2008. Job losses were combined with dramatic cuts in public expenditure and large tax increases. As the recession began, the level and rate of unemployment increased substantially. By the fourth quarter of 2010, 14 per cent of the labour force in Ireland was unemployed (CSO, 2012b). The Irish economy began to recover in 2011. After three successive years of falling

GDP, Ireland recorded a positive GDP growth rate in 2011 of 1.4 per cent, and unemployment rates began to decrease after 2010 as the economy showed signs of recovery. Unemployment continued to fall, reaching around 11 per cent by 2014 – the final time point in the data used for this study.<sup>6</sup>

What were the implications of rapid immigration coupled with economic fluctuations for attitudes to immigration in Ireland? McGinnity and Kingston (2017) explicitly test the association between rising immigration levels, unemployment and attitudes to immigration in the period 2002-2012. They find that attitudes in Ireland became more negative as unemployment rose. They also find that once they account for the economic context, specifically rising unemployment, using statistical modelling, a higher proportion of immigrants was associated with more positive attitudes.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND PREVIOUS FINDINGS

Social identity theory forms the theoretical backdrop for much of the empirical research on attitudes to immigrants (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). According to social identity theory, individuals compare their 'in-group' to other 'out-groups', and selectively perceive positive characteristics of their in-group (for example trustworthiness, being hardworking) and negative characteristics of the out-groups (such as dishonesty, laziness). In so doing, they achieve and maintain a positive social identity (Hewstone et al., 2002). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of symbolic boundaries to distinguish 'us' and 'them'. How these boundaries are constructed varies considerably across countries and across time (Wimmer, 2008).

An extension of social identity theory, ethnic competition theory is rooted in the notion that groups compete over scarce resources in society (Quillian, 1995; Esses et al., 2001). Two types of threat are distinguished. One is primarily material or tangible, referring to any threat to the economic, political or physical well-being of the 'in-group' for example to their jobs, financial resources, or housing. The second is more symbolic, that is the perception that immigrants have differing belief systems and moral values which pose a threat to the values and symbols of the majority group, regarding for example the role of women in

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<sup>6</sup> Sources: CSO Statbank, Quarterly National Household Surveys.

society or religious values. Either type of threat can be real or imagined but both perceived and real threats have the potential to affect attitudes (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). Some authors argue that the economic threat might be particularly salient for attitudes to economic migrants, while cultural threat may be more prominent for those from different cultures, like Muslim migrants (Heath and Richards, 2016).

For those concerned with the threat to culture, it may be less the scale of immigration but the national/ethnic composition of the immigrants that really matters. Schneider (2008) found that the higher the percentage of non-Western immigrants, the higher the country's average level of perceived ethnic threat of immigration. As noted above, most immigrants to Ireland were White Europeans, but Chapters 4 and 5 explore this issue by investigating attitudes towards immigrants of majority and minority ethnic groups.

Social contact theory has played a very important role in research on intergroup relations since it was first proposed by Allport in 1954. Contact between individuals from different groups may reduce prejudice and ameliorate threat perception, though this depends on the type of contact: not all contact is positive (McLaren, 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Both the quality and quantity of contact with immigrants and ethnic minorities may affect attitudes of majority members, though Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) argue that the impact of quality is usually stronger. However, previous research has also found that negative contact increases prejudice more than positive contact reduces it (Barlow et al., 2012). Contact can either be close, as is the case with inter-ethnic friendships, or may involve weaker ties or casual encounters. Social contact is of course related to the relative sizes of the majority and minority ethnic group, and also how segregated the two groups are in terms of where they live, work and socialise. Chapter 5 explores the extent of social contact between the Irish population and ethnic minorities; Chapter 6 investigates how social contact is related to attitudes to immigration.

What would these theoretical perspectives lead us to expect about the effect of a respondent's personal characteristics on their attitudes to immigrants and immigration? A remarkably consistent finding in previous literature is that attitudes to immigrants, like many social attitudes, vary by education, with more highly educated respondents having more positive attitudes than those with lower levels of educational attainment (Ceobanu

and Escandell, 2010). The mechanism underlying this effect is debated. One explanation attributes it to self-selection (Lancee and Sarrasin, 2015). According to this mechanism, higher education does not have any direct effect on attitudes but individuals who have more positive attitudes tend to be those who progress into higher education.<sup>7</sup>

A further explanation is based on theories of economic competition, alluded to above. The native population may compete with immigrants in several areas, for example housing, social benefits or jobs. Given that immigrants are typically less educated and have fewer resources or have educational credentials that are not recognised, they directly compete with the low- rather than the high-educated native population (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). The latter should therefore feel less threatened by immigrants, the argument goes. Immigrants to Ireland, unlike in many European countries, currently have higher qualifications than the native population (Barrett et al., 2017). However due to other disadvantages e.g. language proficiency, discrimination, non-recognition of qualifications, they are likely to be competing for jobs at lower skill level than their education would indicate. In addition, regardless of whether or not immigrants are actually competing with the lower skilled native population for housing, jobs or social benefits, it is perceived competition that is salient for the notion of economic threat.

Another explanation rejects economic competition in favour of education's liberalising effect. This explanation builds on the idea that when individuals pass through education they develop a set of values such as egalitarianism and open-mindedness, and capacities such as analytical skills to learn about out-groups, that prevents prejudice and fosters positive attitudes toward immigrants (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007). Of course it could be that while university graduates may have learned tolerance, they may have also become familiar with what is 'socially desirable' or 'politically correct', and have become better at hiding their negative attitudes than their less educated peers (Janus, 2010; Byrne, 2014). We discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 3.

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<sup>7</sup> The authors suggest that patterns of transmission of social and political attitudes from parents to their children may be a factor, given that those who enter higher education are much more likely to have parents with third-level education, who may themselves have more liberal attitudes (Lancee and Sarrasin, 2015).

In keeping with labour market competition theories, previous research has also typically found that labour market status, particularly unemployment, matters for attitudes to immigrants and immigration. Those who are currently unemployed tend to hold more negative attitudes than the employed, as do those in vulnerable financial situations (Semyonov et al., 2006; McGinnity and Kingston, 2017 for Ireland).

Most research in Europe has also found that respondents identifying as right wing on a left-right scale show more negative attitudes to immigrants and immigration (e.g. Semyonov et al., 2006; McLaren, 2003). While Quillian (1995) found that older respondents, men and those living in rural areas tend to hold more negative attitudes to immigrants and immigration, the effect of age, gender and urban/rural is much less consistent than education and financial strain (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010).

## CHAPTER 3

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### Measuring and modelling attitudes using the European Social Survey

Measuring attitudes to immigrants and immigration is challenging (Bond et al., 2010). Public opinion surveys may record attitudes of a particular group of people, like young adults living in urban areas, but this may not be broadly representative of the population. This is an important limitation, as attitudes often vary depending on people's age, education, nationality, where they live and other characteristics.

This report uses data that combine many elements of best practice in measuring attitudes: the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS is a biennial survey that was specially designed to measure and interpret aspects of public attitudes, and changes in these attitudes over time. Thirty-six European and non-European countries have taken part to the survey over the last 16 years.<sup>8</sup> The ESS is an academically-driven interview-based survey, which from its inception has set very high methodological standards in terms of questionnaire construction, sampling techniques and data collection. The first round was fielded in 2002/2003, and the latest round for which data is available at the time of writing, Round 7, was fielded in 2014.<sup>9</sup> Thus the survey is ideally suited to comparing attitudes over time and between countries. It is not longitudinal (i.e. it does not ask the same people about their attitudes in each year), but it provides rigorous representative, cross-national data about shifts in people's long-term perceptions and attitudes. The questions are carefully worded to ensure that they are balanced.

The survey instrument of each round contains a core set of questions and a rotating module that changes each round. The core includes a number of questions on attitudes to immigration, thus allowing comparisons of change in these indicators over time (2002-2014).

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<sup>8</sup> The 36 countries include countries that have participated in all waves (such as Ireland) and countries that participated only once (such as Albania).

<sup>9</sup> Round 8 was fielded in 2016. For more information on the survey see <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>.



We also exploit the special module of 2014 entitled ‘Attitudes towards immigration and their antecedents’. The same module, although not as rich in information, was included in the first ESS wave fielded in 2002/2003. The module asks respondents about their attitudes towards particular groups, such as Muslims and Roma from other countries, as well as their beliefs about ethnic groups, their contact with immigrants and the perceptions of how large the immigrant population is. We will discuss the special module questions and their wording in Chapters 5 and 6 where we also present and discuss the results.

The chief interest in this report is the attitudes of the majority (Irish-born) population. We therefore restrict the analysis to those born in Ireland. This is an important point in Ireland, where the proportion of immigrants is changing over time. As shown in Figure 2.1, the proportion of people born outside Ireland varied a lot over this period – from 10 per cent in 2002 to 17 per cent in 2010. As attitudes to immigration of those born abroad differ to those of the population born in Ireland, if those born abroad were included, any observed changes might be due to changes in the proportion or national origin of immigrants in the population.<sup>10</sup> The size of the Irish-born sample, aged 15 and over, is reported in Table A3.1 in the Appendix.<sup>11</sup>

In some instances it is instructive to compare the Irish results with those from other EU countries, to give an impression of how positive or negative attitudes to immigration are in Ireland. With this aim, we compare levels and trends in the attitudes of Irish people with those of other Western Europeans.

Even in representative surveys, responses to attitudinal questions can be subject to ‘social desirability bias’: respondents are reluctant to express attitudes or opinions that are seen as undesirable, for example expressing racist attitudes. Social desirability bias is the tendency a respondent might have to adjust their response so as to provide an answer that they feel fits with a perceived norm (Oberski et al., 2012). Best practice in the area uses carefully worded, balanced questions and combines items to form indices that measure a latent belief or attitude, thus overcoming some of the wording effects and increasing reliability.

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<sup>10</sup> Respondents born outside of Ireland report, on average, much more positive attitudes towards immigrants than the Irish-born population (results available from the authors). See also McGinnity et al. (2013), Chapter 6.

<sup>11</sup> In Table A3.1 we report the sample size for each outcome analysed. The final sample size for the outcomes may vary slightly because of the different number of missing cases for each outcome.

However, even with careful wording, some list experiments in the US have shown that social desirability bias tends to be more prevalent among middle class/higher educated respondents (Janus, 2010). In qualitative research on the response of Irish professionals to immigration, Byrne (2014) argues that Irish professionals adopt a number of strategies to appear tolerant and not racist, while expressing more racist attitudes among trusted friends. This implies we need to be careful in interpreting attitudes, and in particular the education gap in attitudes.

In the following chapters, we investigate attitudes towards immigration focusing on several measures. Chapter 4 presents a descriptive analysis of change over time on a battery of measures on attitudes to diversity from the survey in Ireland. The results show considerable variation in attitudes over the period 2002-2014. Chapter 5 provides a more detailed analysis of attitudes using the 2014 round, and in particular the extra information contained in the ESS special module on immigration. The findings from Chapters 4 and 5 are contextualised with a comparison to results from ten West European nations. We selected only Western European countries for two reasons. Firstly, we wanted to exclude from the comparison countries that are very different in economic and cultural terms and recent political history, such as Eastern European countries. Secondly, given our interest in the trends over time in Chapter 4, we had to select only the countries for which the ESS provides information for the entire time span. The countries that we included in the European measures are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

Chapter 6 presents multivariate models which examine the association between individual characteristics, perceptions, and experiences and individuals' attitudes. For this analysis we employ linear regression models which allow us to evaluate the effect of each characteristic/variable on attitudes while controlling for the other variables. Given that characteristics often overlap, for example younger individuals tend to be more educated than older individuals, statistical models allow us to evaluate the effect of one variable while holding all other variables constant.

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<sup>12</sup> As in the analysis of Ireland, all the figures only include native-born respondents in each country.

In the analyses we will consider two sets of characteristics that previous research has found to play a role in explaining attitudes to immigration. The first set relates to socio-demographic characteristics and includes: sex, age, education, employment status, area of residence (whether urban or rural), whether the individual experiences financial difficulties, and his/her self-placement on the left-right political spectrum. The second set concerns individuals' feelings and perceptions, mainly related to immigration and includes: the perceived share of immigrants in the country; national attachment; three items measuring attitudes to different ethnic groups; and frequency and quality of contacts with immigrants. The variables and their distribution in the sample are presented in Table A6.1.

All the descriptive statistics reported are computed using weights. Weights are important because they permit adjustment of the available sample to the characteristics of the Irish population, and thus make our sample representative of the population born in Ireland.

In computing the European level statistics, we follow the same procedure described above and compute weighted statistics for each single country. Finally, we average the statistics over the ten countries. In this way each country contributes to the overall measure to the same extent, avoiding the problem that countries with very large populations might drive the results.

## CHAPTER 4

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### Attitudes to the impact of immigration and to immigrants in Ireland and in comparison, 2002-2014

This chapter investigates how attitudes to immigration, measured in repeat waves of the European Social Survey, have changed over time in Ireland, in light of the rapid increase in immigration and the economic turbulence of the last 20 years. The extensive changes in migration patterns, labour market and living standards in Ireland resulting from the boom and bust are expected to influence the prevailing attitudes to immigration and immigrants (see Chapter 1). Attitudes are also likely to have been influenced by European and world events and we compare attitudes in Ireland to those across Europe. Were attitudes to immigrants and immigration more or less positive than the average for the other ten West European countries?

#### 4.1 ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRATION

We analyse the following questions, probing attitudes to immigrants' economic contribution, their cultural contribution and an overall assessment of whether they make Ireland a better place:

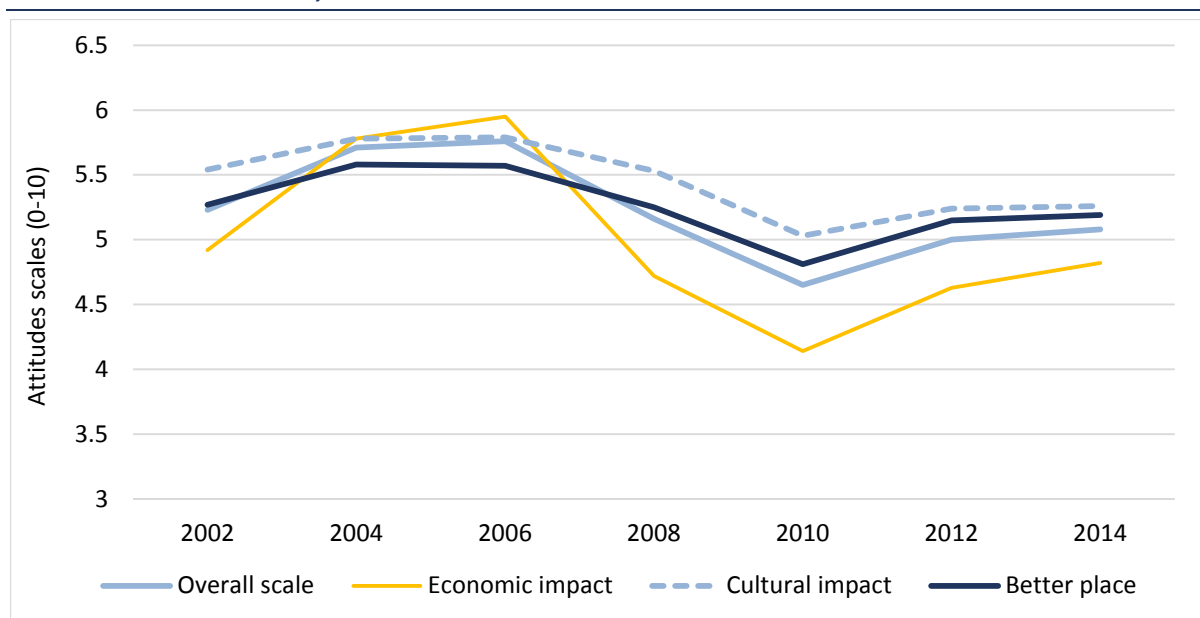
- *'Would you say it is generally bad or good for Ireland's economy that people come to live here from other countries?'*  
*'00 Bad for the economy' on a scale to '10 Good for the economy'*
- *'Would you say that Ireland's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?'*  
*'00 Cultural life undermined' on a scale to '10 Cultural life enriched'*
- *'Is Ireland made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?'*  
*'00 Worse place to live' on a scale to '10 Better place to live'*

Responses to these questions are analysed separately and in a combined scale.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted that these questions do not refer to the scale of immigration, nor is the term ‘immigrants’ used in these questions. Byrne (2014) argues that people in Ireland may have different understandings from researchers as to what the term immigrant means. We use this term in this report as it is a commonly identified term in Ireland for non-Irish nationals who have come from other countries.

Figure 4.1 presents trends in both the overall attitudes scale and in responses on the economic impact, the cultural impact and whether Ireland is made a worse or a better place by people coming to live here from other countries in the period 2002-2014. In the first half of the 2000s, attitudes towards immigrants were stable or were becoming increasingly positive, around a value of 5.5 on a scale that ranges between 0 and 10, with higher values indicating more favourable attitudes towards immigration. From 2006 to 2010, by contrast, the attitudes scale declined sharply, before increasing again from 2010 to 2014.

**FIGURE 4.1 CHANGE OVER TIME IN ATTITUDES TO THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION IN IRELAND, 2002-2014**



*Sources:* Own calculation based on ESS data Rounds 1 to 7, respondents born in Ireland. Weighted results. Scales range from 0 to 10.

*Notes:* Higher values mean more positive attitudes. Trends estimated from models that control for changes in the demographic composition of the population are equivalent to the descriptive trends presented. The ESS is run every two years.

<sup>13</sup> The combined ‘overall’ scale ranges from 0 to 10. It has a high degree of reliability as measured through the Cronbach’s Alpha (over time the measure ranges between 0.85 and 0.90).

The sub-component 'Economic impact' is the one that shows the largest variation over time. During the 2002-2014 period economic threat had a range of about two points, while the sub-components pertaining to cultural and general threat varied by less than one point. In detail, the positive perception of the contribution of immigrants to the economy increased by one point between 2002 and 2006 but began to decrease in 2008 when the economic recession started. The most negative attitudes towards immigration were registered in 2010 (two points lower than in 2006) when the recession in Ireland was at its deepest. Attitudes became more positive afterwards, but after 2012 the increase in positivity slowed and the level in 2014 is still well below the pre-recession level observed in 2006. This is true especially for the measure of the economic impact of immigration but also for the other measures.

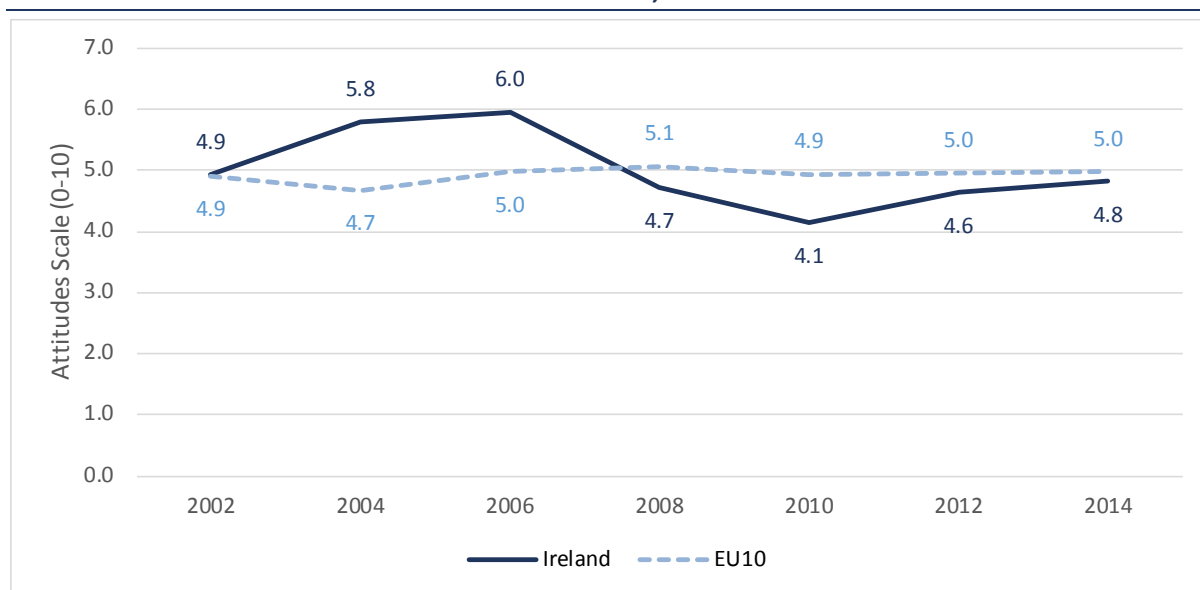
In order to test whether attitudes have really changed over time or rather if changes in attitudes have been the result of the changing composition of the Irish population – for example ageing, increasing education – we estimated attitudes over time based on a model that controls for changes in the population (see Figure A4.1 in the Appendix).<sup>14</sup> Predicted trends based on these models almost perfectly fit the observed trends presented in Figure 4.1. The descriptive changes over time in Ireland are thus robust: changes are not due to increases/decreases in the size of groups with particularly high/low levels of attitudes towards immigration.

In order to interpret responses to these questions it is useful to situate Irish responses in comparative perspective. The next three charts present trends for both Ireland and ten West European countries in attitudes to immigration – the economic impact, the cultural impact and whether immigration has made Ireland/the host country a better place.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In this respect we estimate a model for each outcome. In each model we pool data from 2002 to 2014 and control for sex, age, education, area of residence, as well as for year dummies. We do not control for employment status as it is associated with trends in economic situation. Based on these models we then predict attitudes keeping the size of groups constant over time, namely we fix groups size at their average over time.

<sup>15</sup> This set of countries, labelled 'EU10' in Figure 4.2, includes all the EU15/Western European countries for which the ESS provides data for the entire time span (2002-2014).

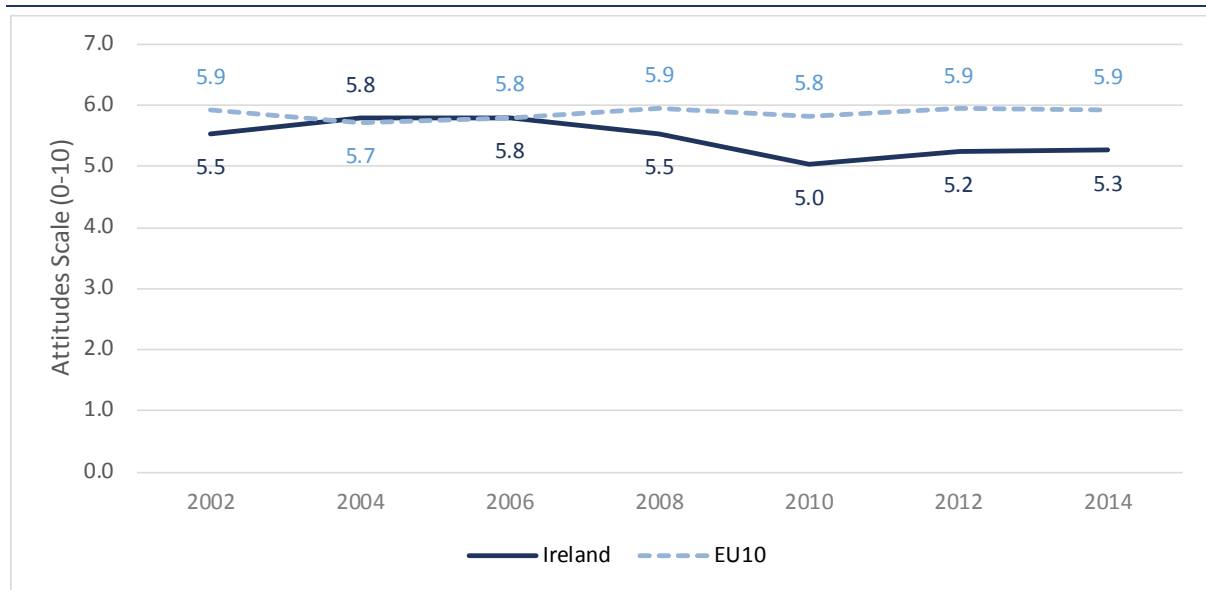
**FIGURE 4.2 ATTITUDES TO THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION IN IRELAND AND TEN WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, 2002-2014**

**Sources:** Own calculation based on ESS data Rounds 1 to 7, respondents born in the country. Weighted results. Scale ranges from 0 to 10.

**Notes:** Higher values mean more positive attitudes. Western EU countries include: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EU statistics are averages of the weighted values at the country level.

Comparing Ireland with the EU10 average on the economic impact of immigration, we see significant differences in both attitude levels and changes. While Irish respondents reported increasingly positive assessments of the economic impact of immigration from 2002, there was a marked drop around the beginning of the recession (2008) and a subsequent increase again by early recovery (2014), the EU10 average is much more stable over time, at around 5 on the 0-10 scale.

**FIGURE 4.3 ATTITUDES TO THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION IN IRELAND AND TEN WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, 2002-2014**



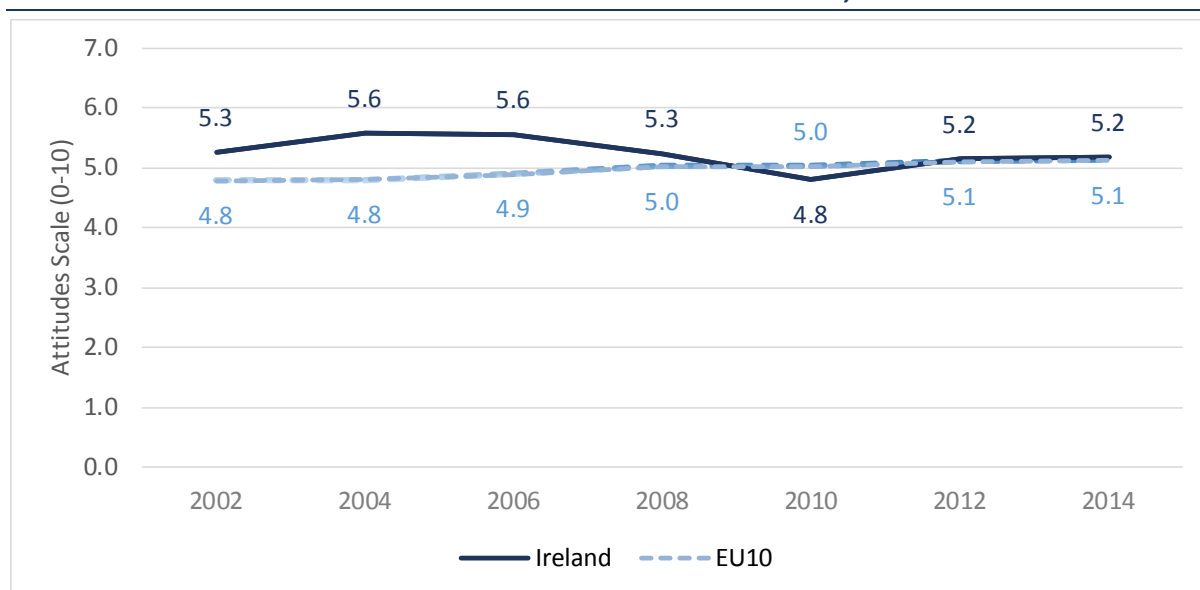
*Sources:* Own calculation of ESS data Rounds 1 to 7, respondents born in the country.

*Notes:* Higher values mean more positive attitudes. Western EU countries include: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EU statistics are averages of the weighted values at the country level.

As noted above, Irish attitudes towards the cultural impact of immigration did not vary as much as attitudes to the economic impact. While slightly lower in 2002, the Irish mean converged with the EU10 average in 2004 (around 5.7) and 2006, (5.8) but then dropped in 2008 and particularly in 2010 (see Figure 4.3). By 2014 Irish respondents' assessment of the cultural impact of immigration, at 5.3, was somewhat lower than the EU10 average of 5.9.

The comparative picture of whether immigration makes the host country a better place is somewhat different (Figure 4.4). Here, Irish attitudes were more positive during the economic boom, especially in 2004 and 2006, years of very high immigration and also economic prosperity in Ireland. Irish attitudes then became more negative, and were slightly lower in 2010, but by 2012 had converged with the EU10 average. In 2014 both the Irish and EU10 average was just over 5.



**FIGURE 4.4 DOES IMMIGRATION MAKE THE HOST COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, IRELAND AND TEN WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, 2002-2014**

*Sources:* Own calculation based on ESS data Rounds 1-7, respondents born in the country. Weighted results. Scale ranges from 0 to 10.

*Notes:* Higher values mean more positive attitudes. Western EU countries include: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. EU statistics are averages of the weighted values at the country level.

This pattern of results is broadly consistent with the findings of Hatton (2016), in his analysis of attitudes to immigration in 20 countries, including Ireland, in the period 2002-2012. He finds small shifts in attitudes overall in Europe, but in countries with more severe experience of recession shifts in opinion are more marked.

Summarising these trends, we find that before the recession Ireland was characterised by more positive attitudes towards immigrants compared with these EU10 countries but more negative attitudes during and after the recession, though Ireland is now converging with the average EU10 levels.

## 4.2 ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRANTS

The questions which are the focus of this section gauge respondents' feelings about the number of immigrants that should be allowed to come to Ireland, as opposed to the impact of immigration more generally. The questions thus capture attitudes about the desirable quantity of immigration which is not directly tapped by the questions on whether immigration has positive or negative effects on the economy and society. These questions also specifically ask about different groups of migrants: typically respondents are more open

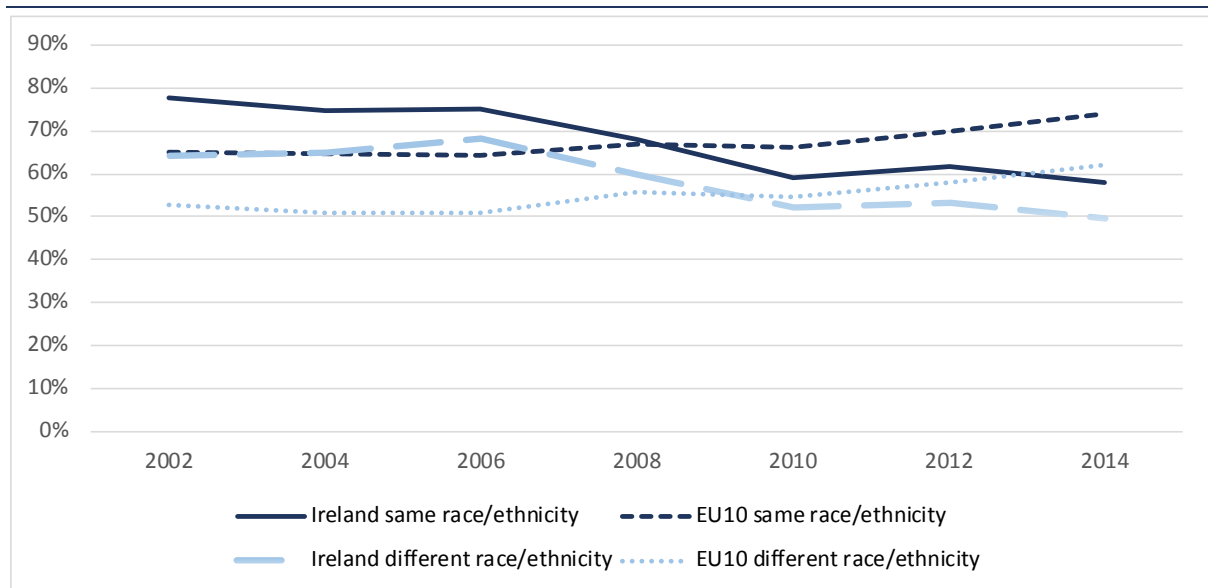
to immigrants from the same ethnic group than from a different ethnic group (Strabac and Listhaug, 2008).

*'Now, to what extent do you think Ireland should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most Irish people to come and live here?'*

*Responses: 'Allow many to come and live here, Allow some, Allow a few, Allow none.'*<sup>16</sup>

Figure 4.5 presents the proportion of respondents in Ireland and the average of the EU10 countries who would allow many or some immigrants of the majority and minority races/ethnic groups in Ireland and across the ten-country sample.

**FIGURE 4.5 PROPORTION ALLOWING MANY OR SOME IMMIGRANTS OF THE SAME AND DIFFERENT RACES/ETHNIC GROUPS, IRELAND AND TEN WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, 2002-2014**



**Sources:** Own calculation based on ESS data Rounds 1-7, respondents born in the country. Weighted results.

**Notes:** EU10 countries include: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. EU statistics are averages of the weighted values at the country level.

During the boom years a high proportion of Irish respondents were open to some or many people of the same racial/ethnic group coming to Ireland – almost 80 per cent in 2002, 75 per cent in 2004 and 2006. However in 2008 and 2010 this proportion fell quite sharply, to

<sup>16</sup> Respondents indicate preferences on a card with response categories provided. For each European country, 'Ireland' is replaced with the host country name.

under 60 per cent in 2010, and remained around this level in 2012 and 2014. It would appear that by 2014, support for immigrants coming to Ireland did not 'recover' and was much lower than in the boom years (2002-2006). In comparative perspective, the proportion of Irish respondents supporting immigrants of the same ethnic group coming to Ireland was higher than the EU10 average in the 2002-2006 period, around the same in 2008 and lower in the 2010-2014 period. It remains to be seen how the trend develops as economic recovery in Ireland continues.

Figure 4.5 also indicates the extent to which Irish people are open to diversity. It plots the proportion of people born in Ireland that favour allowing many or some immigrants of a different race/ethnic group from most Irish people to come to Ireland. The pattern here is similar to the previous item on immigrants from the same race or ethnic group as the majority, but values are consistently lower by between 7 and 14 percentage points, indicating that the preference for immigrants of the same race or ethnicity over those of a different race or ethnicity persists over time. A similar, or in some years even stronger preference exists on average across Western Europe. The gap between attitudes towards immigrants of the same and different race/ethnic group in the ten-country sample varies between 12 and 14 percentage points over time.

### **4.3 SUMMARY**

Summarising the period 2002-2014, overall perceptions of immigration in Ireland became more positive in tandem with the economic boom and rising immigration in the period 2002-2006, peaking in 2006. Perceptions became considerably more negative between 2006 and 2010, during the recession, and recovered again in 2012 and 2014, though did not approach 2006 levels. Fluctuations were particularly marked in views of the economic impact of immigration.

Attitudes to immigration in the selected EU10 countries did not vary as much as in Ireland, though of course the EU10 averages presented could mask variation between countries. So while in 2004 and 2006 overall perceptions of immigration in Ireland were more positive than the average of these West European countries, by 2010 perceptions of immigration in Ireland were more negative. As perceptions in Ireland became more positive in the 2010-

2014 period, attitudes to immigration converged with the EU10 average, but were still somewhat lower in 2014.

A slightly different trend in attitudes towards immigrants is observed in Section 4.2. The proportion of Irish-born respondents willing to allow many or some immigrants from the same ethnic group was higher than the EU10 average in the boom years (2002-2006), similar in 2008 but lower than the EU10 average in the 2010-2014 period. The same is true of attitudes to immigrants from a different race or ethnic group, albeit at lower levels of support overall.

It is important to note, however, what countries we are comparing Ireland with. The set of EU countries that we are considering does not include Greece and Italy (which were not included in all rounds of the ESS in survey), or the Eastern European countries, which are typically characterised by less positive attitudes towards immigration (Coenders et al., 2004).

Given that attitudes to immigration in Ireland were so sensitive to the economic and labour market situation, and because this varied so dramatically over time, the attitudes expressed in 2014, which are analysed in Chapters 5 and 6, should be seen as a snapshot within a period of rapid change.



## CHAPTER 5

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### Evidence from the European Social Survey Special Module on Immigration, 2014

In this chapter we examine attitudes towards immigrants in more detail, focusing on extra information on the topic included in a special module of the 2014 round of the European Social Survey. First, we will focus on attitudes towards Muslims and the Roma community, two groups found to experience high levels of discrimination in Europe (Strabac and Listhaug, 2008; FRA, 2016). Second, we use the data to examine other dimensions of public attitudes to diversity, highlighting biological racism, feelings of cultural superiority, perceptions of group size, and feelings of national attachment. Finally, we provide descriptive statistics on social contact between the native population and people of different races/ethnic groups. These statistics inform the multivariate models which follow in Chapter 6.

#### 5.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS SPECIFIC GROUPS: MUSLIMS AND ROMA

While general attitudes about the impact of immigration are informative, there could be considerable variation in attitudes towards specific groups of immigrants. Research that considers variation in attitudes to groups usually finds that majority members show different levels of prejudice against different ethnic groups, a phenomenon known as ‘ethnic hierarchies’ (Strabac and Listhaug, 2008).

The specific module on immigration in the 2014 round of the European Social Survey allows us to test whether Irish people have different levels of opposition towards different groups. In particular, the module includes a question regarding opposition towards Muslims and Roma, two groups that may be stigmatised in Irish society.

Respondents are asked the following question in the European Social Survey:

*‘I am going to ask you about different groups of people who might come to live in Ireland from other countries. Using this card, please tell me to what*

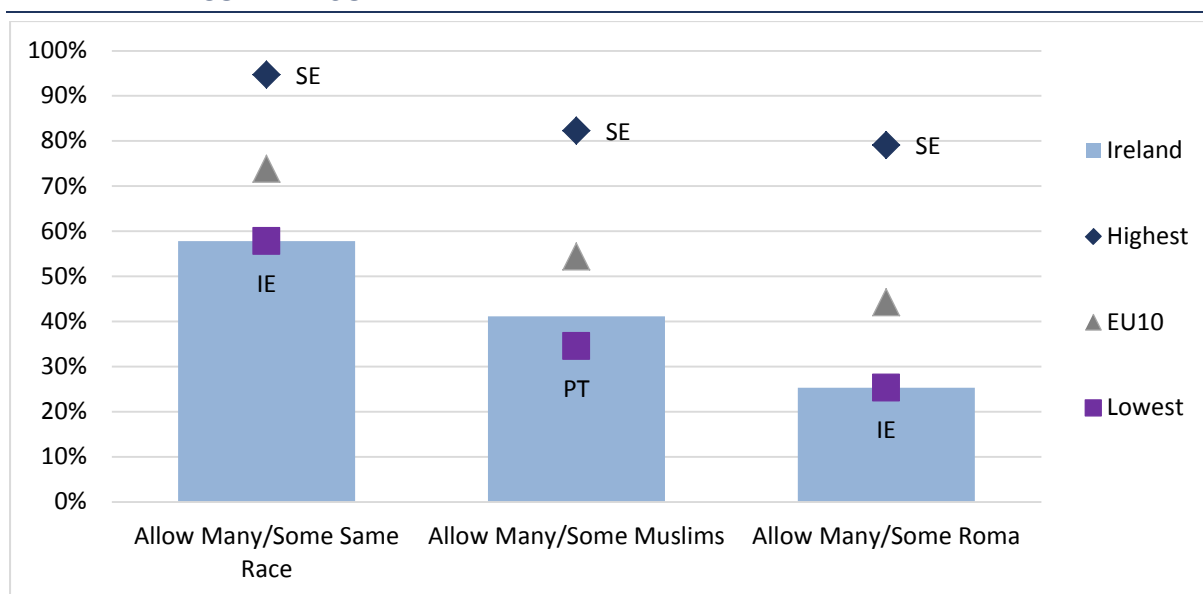
*extent you think Ireland should allow Gypsies from other countries to come and live in Ireland?'*

*Response categories: Responses: 'Allow many to come and live here, Allow some, Allow a few, Allow none.'*

The term 'Gypsies' is potentially problematic in Ireland as it has largely fallen out of use. It is possible that some respondents will think of Irish Travellers rather than Roma, but given that it is clearly stated 'Gypsies from other countries', we assume most respondents will think of Roma, and this is the term used throughout the chapter.

Another, otherwise identical question, replaces the word 'Gypsies' with 'Muslims'. The same response categories are available for this item.

**FIGURE 5.1 PERCENTAGE ALLOW MANY/SOME: SPECIFIC GROUPS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON**



Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in country. Weighted results.

Figure 5.1 presents a comparison of attitudes towards these groups between Ireland, the selection of ten EU countries presented in earlier chapters, the country in this set with the lowest value on each item, and the country with the highest value. Information on attitudes towards immigrants of the same race or ethnic group as the majority is also included as a reference. The graph demonstrates that Muslim and Roma immigrants are considerably less welcome than immigrants of the majority race or ethnic group. Compared to 58 per cent of Irish respondents who would allow many or some immigrants of the same ethnic group as

most Irish people, 41 per cent would allow ‘many’ or ‘some’ Muslims immigrants to come to their country. This compares with an average of 54 per cent who would allow many or some Muslims across the ten European countries. This average figure, however, masks considerable variation within countries. Values range from a maximum of 82 per cent in Sweden to 35 per cent in Portugal. Irish attitudes towards Roma are considerably more negative in a cross national perspective. Of the 11 countries, Ireland has the lowest proportion that would allow ‘many’ or ‘some’ Roma immigrants, at 25 per cent. This compares to the ten-country average of 44 per cent and the maximum value (which is again Sweden) at 79 per cent.<sup>17</sup> A recent report finds Roma are a small but extremely disadvantaged group in Ireland, with very high rates of poverty, housing deprivation and reports of children going hungry (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Department of Justice and Equality, 2018). The results presented here show that attitudes of the host population to Roma are also very negative.

## 5.2 ATTITUDES TO RACE, NATIONAL ATTACHMENT AND PERCEIVED GROUP SIZE

### *Attitudes to race and ethnicity*

Racism is a contested concept, but usually implies the following set of beliefs: societies are organised into racial or ethnic groups and people in these groups are fundamentally different; some groups perceived as different are better than others (hierarchy); and these differences are fixed and do not change over time. Recent work has distinguished biological racism, for example the idea that some groups are inferior in terms of intelligence, from cultural superiority, the feeling that some cultures are better than others. Both may be related to attitudes to immigrants and opposition to immigration, though cultural superiority is more readily expressed than biological racism (Vala et al., 2009).

The ESS measures biological racism through two sub-components which address intelligence and work ethic:

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<sup>17</sup> However, Irish attitudes towards these groups are relatively positive when compared to some countries in Eastern Europe. For example, in the Czech Republic, only 14 per cent would allow many or some Muslim immigrants, and 11 per cent would allow many or some Roma immigrants. Hungarians express even more negative views, where the equivalent figures are 11 per cent and 8 per cent.



1. *'Do you think some races or ethnic groups are born less intelligent than others?'*

*'Yes or No'*

2. *'Do you think some races or ethnic groups are born harder working than others?'*

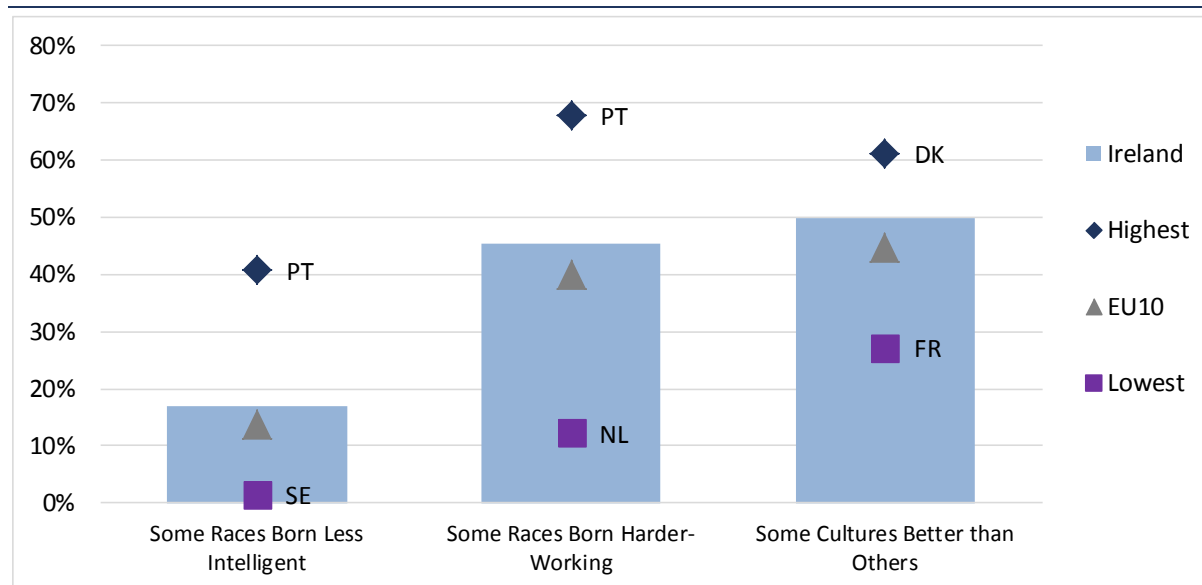
*'Yes or No'*

The concept of cultural superiority is measured by asking:

3. *'Thinking about the world today, would you say that some cultures are much better than others or that all cultures are equal?'*

*'Some cultures are much better than others' or 'All cultures are equal.'*

Figure 5.2 displays descriptive statistics for these three items in a format similar to the attitudes to Muslims and Roma in the previous section, with comparisons between Ireland and the highest, lowest and average values from the ten-country European sample. There is considerable variation across the three measures. Biological racism, measured as the proportion of people who believe that some races are born less intelligent than others, registers the lowest values across the board. Negative attitudes on this item in Ireland are slightly more common than across the ten-country sample (17 per cent compared to 14 per cent). However, different countries register substantially different values, ranging from less than 2 per cent in Sweden to 41 per cent in Portugal.

**FIGURE 5.2 BELIEFS ABOUT RACIAL AND CULTURAL SUPERIORITY**

Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in country. Weighted results.

The proportion of people expressing negative attitudes is considerably higher on the racial work ethic measure. As in the racial intelligence question, Ireland still registers a higher proportion (45 per cent) than the European average (40 per cent). Here the lowest proportion, at 12 per cent, is in the Netherlands and the highest is in Portugal at 68 per cent.

Finally, the Irish and average European values are higher again on the measure of cultural superiority, at 50 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. The European average is bracketed by extremes in Denmark (61 per cent) and France (27 per cent).

### ***National attachment***

There is a debate about the extent to which positive perceptions of one's national group, or national attachment, are associated with threat perception and attitudes to immigrants (Raijman et al., 2008; Wagner et al., 2012). Typically studies find that a sense of national superiority or exclusive nationalism is associated with more negative attitudes to immigrants (Raijman et al., 2008). Findings are less clear in studies which use a more civic measure of national attachment which emphasises democratic values, sometimes called 'constructive patriotism' (Wagner et al., 2012).

An item in the ESS special module which attempts to capture this is a measure of subjective attachment to one's own country:

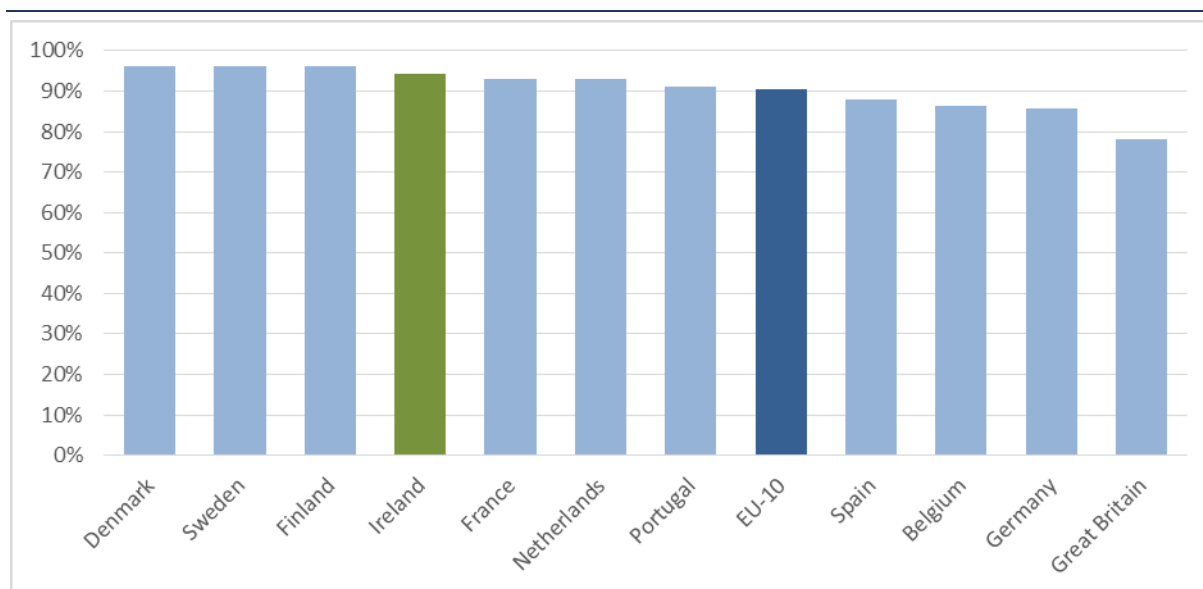
*'How close do you feel to [country]?'*

*'Very close, Close, Not very close, Not close at all.'*

This question is designed to capture 'a sense of national superiority with respect to other countries' (European Social Survey, 2015: p. 28) and is expected to be associated with negative attitudes towards immigration. However, this relationship may vary as a function of individuals' conceptions of nationhood. Conceptions of nationhood and expressions of nationalism are likely to differ across countries, not least because of country differences in the historical processes of nation- and nationhood-building.

Figure 5.3 presents a comparison of the proportion of people responding 'very close' or 'close' on this survey item across the 11 countries.

**FIGURE 5.3 PERCENTAGE THAT FEEL CLOSE OR VERY CLOSE TO THEIR COUNTRY**



Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in country. Weighted results.

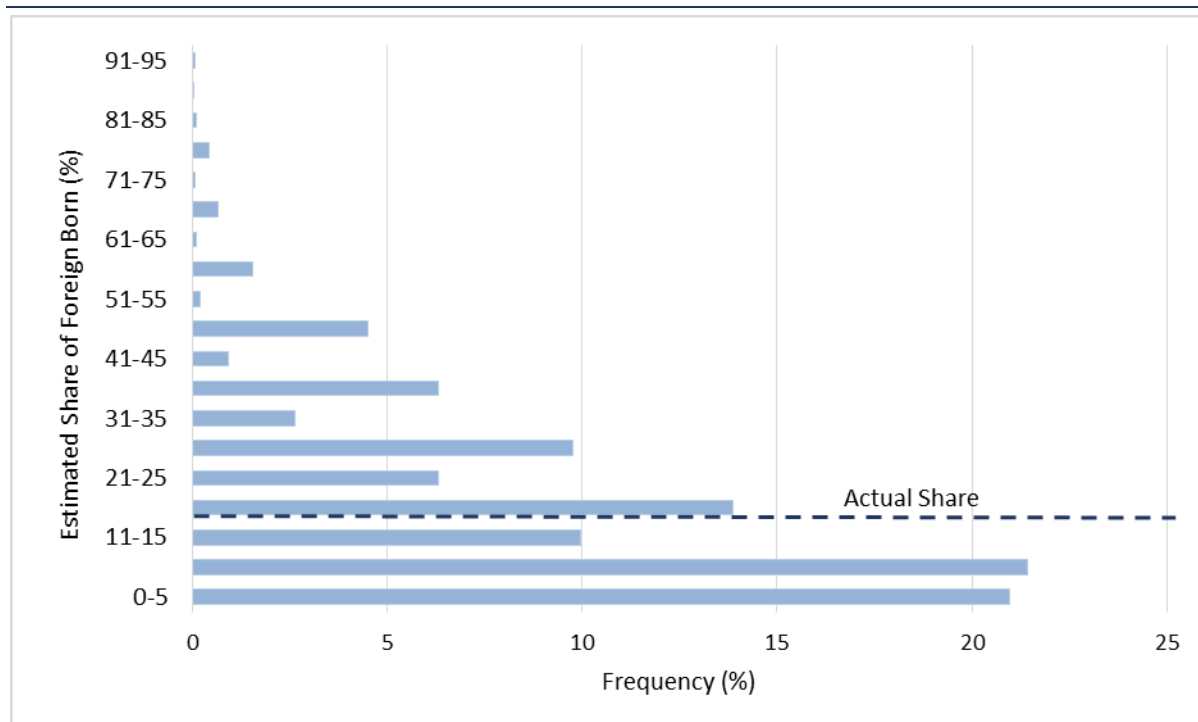
The proportion is four points higher in Ireland than across the ten-country average. The Irish value is not atypical, as there is little variation across the 11 countries. Six of the 11 countries register proportions between 93 per cent and 96 per cent. The role that national attachment can play on attitudes towards immigration is still debated in the literature (Wagner et al., 2012): the models in Chapter 6 will investigate whether national attachment is associated with attitudes to immigration in Ireland.

### ***Perceived group size***

Another factor that might affect attitudes is the knowledge or the perception of the size of the immigrant population. A highly inflated sense of the immigrant population might indicate that the respondent is feeling under threat from the immigrant group, while more realistic perceptions might indicate a lower sense of threat. In fact some researchers argue that it is the perceived size rather than the actual size of the immigrant population that influences attitudes to immigration (Lahav, 2004). The European Social Survey measures perceived immigrant share of the population using the following question:

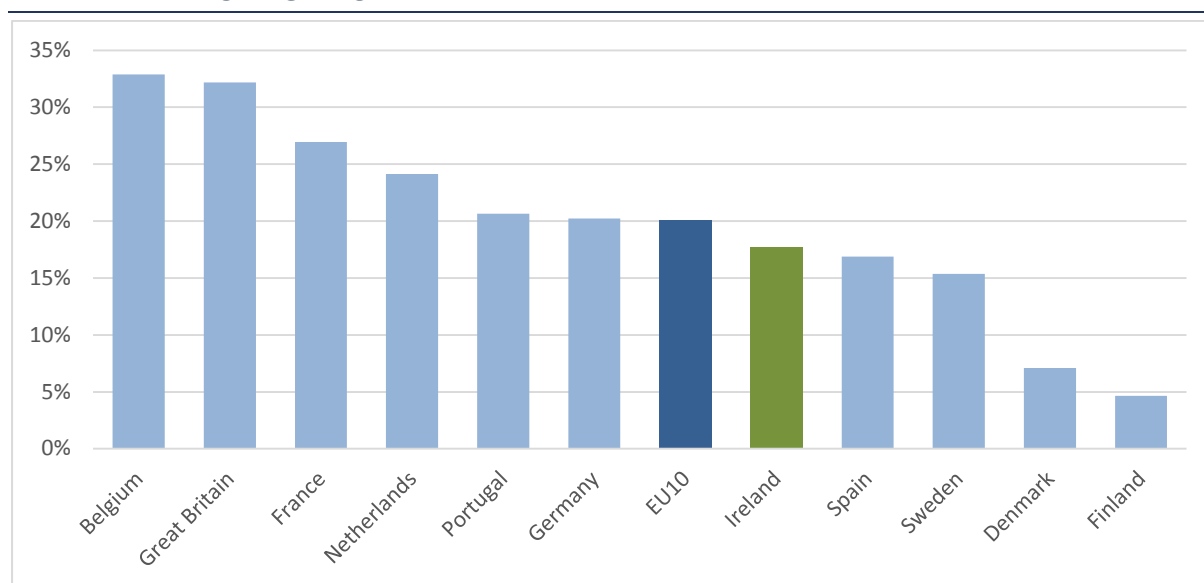
*'Out of every 100 people living in Ireland, how many do you think were born outside Ireland?'*

Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of the perceived size of the foreign-born population in Ireland. The dashed dark blue superimposed line gives an indication of the true share in 2014 of the population born abroad (approx. 16 per cent). Over 50 per cent of respondents report an underestimate, and small numbers give extreme overestimates. The prevalence of underestimation may be due to Irish people conflating foreign birth with foreign nationality. According to the 2016 Census, approximately 38 per cent of those born outside of Ireland are Irish nationals, a cohort which is largely made up of returning UK born children of Irish parents (CSO, 2017b).

**FIGURE 5.4 PERCEIVED SHARE OF POPULATION FOREIGN-BORN: IRELAND 2014**

Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in Ireland. Weighted results.

Providing a cross-national comparison of responses on this item is a methodological challenge, because the true size of the foreign-born population varies across countries, ranging from 8.2 per cent in Portugal to 16.4 per cent in Ireland in 2013 (OECD, 2017). Therefore, in presenting the results we decided to use an arbitrary threshold of 30 per cent as it is a significant overestimate in all countries examined here. Figure 5.5 presents the share of respondents that believes that more than 30 per cent of the population is foreign-born. It shows that gross overestimation of the size of the foreign-born population is slightly less prevalent in Ireland than across the ten-country sample.

**FIGURE 5.5 PERCENTAGE BELIEVING THAT MORE THAN 30 PER CENT OF POPULATION IS FOREIGN-BORN**

Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in country. Weighted results.

### 5.3 SOCIAL CONTACT

Another concept that has been associated with attitudes is social contact with ‘out-groups’. As discussed in Chapter 2, social contact theory posits that contact between individuals from different groups may reduce prejudice between groups. Some studies of social contact focus on friendships (e.g. McLaren, 2003); others on more casual (but typically frequent) interactions. Casual contact can be disaggregated into (at least) two sub-components: the quantity and the quality of contact, both of which may play a role in determining whether attitudes to immigrants are positive or negative. These two sub-components are surveyed in the European Social Survey as follows:

*‘How often do you have any contact with people who are of a different race or ethnic group from most Irish people when you are out and about?’<sup>18</sup> This could be on public transport, in the street, in shops or in the neighbourhood?’<sup>19</sup> (Any contact should be included, whether verbal or non-verbal).’*

*Possible responses are: ‘Never, Less than once a month, Once a month, Several times a month, ‘Once a week, Several times a week, Every day.*

<sup>18</sup> As specified in the ESS interviewer guide, ‘out and about’ means ‘when in public and not at home’.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Neighbourhood’ in the sense of ‘local area’.

Those that report contact are then asked:

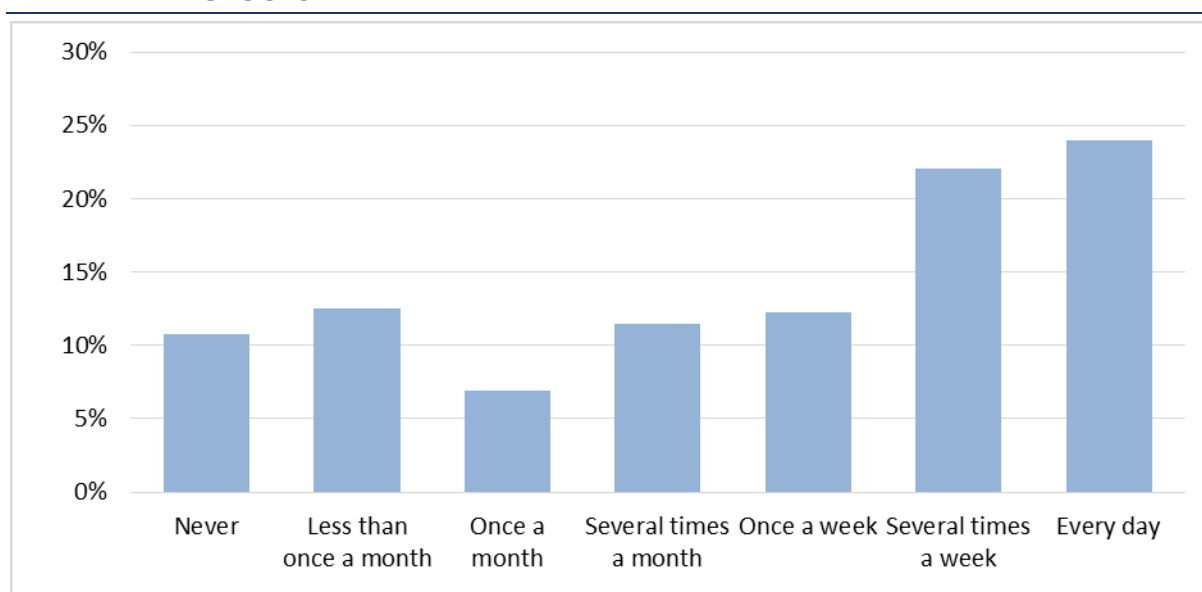
*'Thinking about this contact, in general how bad or good is it?*

*00 Extremely Bad on a scale to 10 Extremely Good.'*

*Possible Responses range from '0 (extremely bad)' to '10 (extremely good).'*

Figures 5.6 and 5.7 show the distribution of responses to these questions among people born in Ireland. They demonstrate that a large proportion of the population has contact every day (around one in four) while the majority has contact at least weekly (58 per cent). In contrast, only one in ten Irish people never has contact with people from another race or ethnicity as most Irish people.

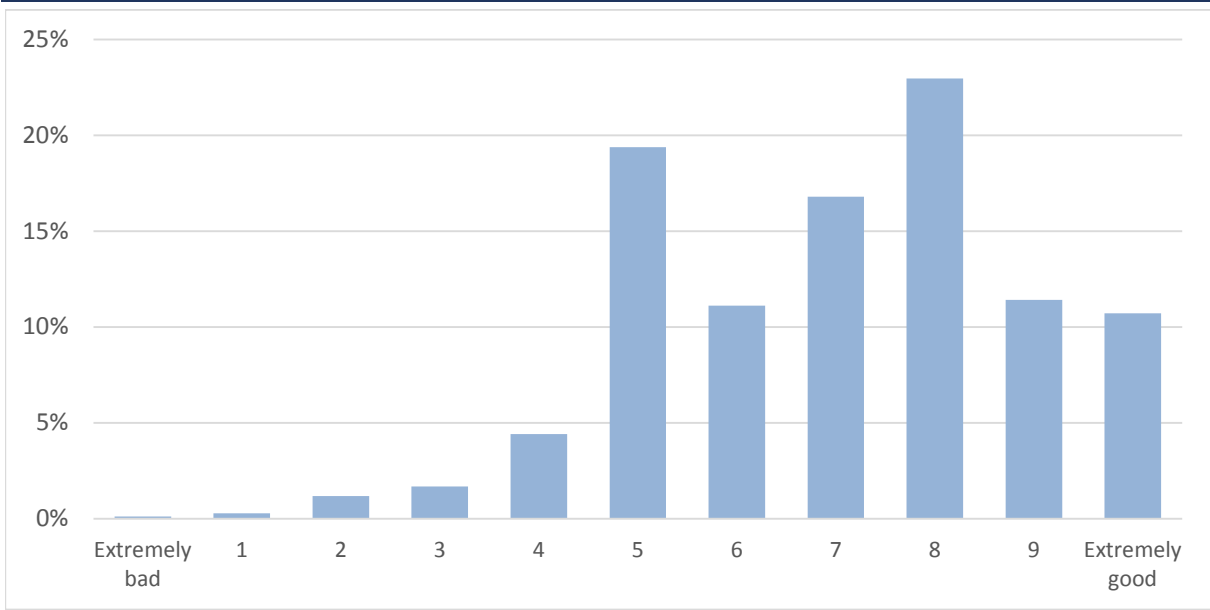
**FIGURE 5.6 IRELAND 2014: FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH DIFFERENT RACES/ETHNIC GROUPS**



Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in Ireland. Weighted results.

The distribution of the quality of social contact is bimodal, with peaks at 5 and 8, showing that most people rate their inter-ethnic contact as either neutral or good. Only 3 per cent of respondents rate the contact between zero and 3 on the eleven-point scale. Because of the shape of this distribution, the models in Chapter 6 use a re-coded quality of contact variable, with values for low quality contact (0-4), neutral contact (5-6) and good quality contact (7+). This ensures that each category is adequately populated with observations.

**FIGURE 5.7 IRELAND 2014: RATING OF SOCIAL CONTACT WITH DIFFERENT RACES/ ETHNIC GROUPS**



Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in Ireland. Weighted results.

Figure 5.8 provides a cross national comparison of the responses to these questions. In the interest of clarity, the variables have been collapsed into dichotomies. The first column displays high and low frequency contact and the second column shows high and low quality contact. High frequency contact is defined as at least ‘several times per week’. High quality contact is defined as 7 or higher on the eleven-point scale.

The first column shows that the proportion of respondents reporting high frequency contact in Ireland (46 per cent) is very similar to the European ten-country average of 49 per cent, which is comprised of values ranging from 30 per cent (Portugal) to 73 per cent (Sweden). The question does not refer to immigrants or foreign-born groups and therefore does not capture the same group as the immigration questions, though it is up to the respondent to decide what ‘ethnic or racial group’ means. While the definition of ethnicity in the Irish Census distinguishes ‘White Non-Irish’, implying that they are a different ethnic group from ‘White Irish’, it could be that some people in Ireland do not consider European migrants to be a different ethnic group.

The second column presents a comparison of the proportion of people that report high quality contact with members of other races or ethnic groups. 62 per cent of Irish people report good quality contact, which is just above the EU10 average of 61 per cent. The



highest proportion is in the Netherlands (74 per cent) and the lowest is in Portugal (42 per cent).

**FIGURE 5.8 INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON: PROPORTION REPORTING HIGH FREQUENCY AND HIGH QUALITY CONTACT WITH DIFFERENT RACES/ETHNIC GROUPS**



Sources: Own analysis based on ESS Round 7, respondents born in country. Weighted results.

#### 5.4 SUMMARY

The data from the 2014 ESS special module on immigration show that attitudes to diversity in Ireland and across Europe vary considerably depending on the survey item used. Relative to other countries, Irish people express particularly negative attitudes towards specific groups of immigrants, especially towards immigrants from the Roma community. Irish people are also more negative than the EU10 average about Muslim immigrants, but their attitudes are not quite as hostile as in Finland, Portugal or a range of East European countries (not shown). Irish people are similar to other Europeans in how they construct ‘ethnic hierarchies’ – immigrants of the same race are seen more favourably than Muslims, and particularly than Roma. Irish people are also slightly more likely than other West Europeans to believe that some racial groups are superior to others. As in other countries, Irish people are more likely to believe that some racial or ethnic groups are culturally superior or have a higher work ethic than to believe that there are racial/ethnic differences in intelligence.

Turning to some other related issues, the chapter reveals that average Irish values for national attachment are slightly above the ten-country European average, though there is little variation across the sample. The chapter also presents the proportion of the population that considerably overestimates the size of the foreign-born population. The figure for Ireland is relatively low in a cross-national context, suggesting that feelings of out-group threat may not be as prevalent as elsewhere in Europe. Finally, the Irish values for the frequency and quality of contact with people from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds are shown to be close to the European averages. The interaction between these two measures of contact form a key part of the multivariate analyses in Chapter 6.



## CHAPTER 6

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### Modelling attitudes to immigration, 2014

In this chapter we use statistical models to investigate to what extent attitudes to race, social contact with different ethnic groups, respondents' attachment to Ireland and their perceptions of the size of the immigration phenomenon are associated with attitudes toward immigration. These factors have been found to be associated with attitudes to immigrants and immigration in other countries (see Chapter 2). Is this also true in Ireland? The models also investigate how attitudes vary across groups in the population – by age, gender, education level, urban/rural location, employment status and left-right orientation. As in the previous chapter, we focus on 2014 because only the special module in 2014 asks respondents about social contact and attitudes to race.

The models used allow us to consider whether attitudes to race are associated with attitudes to immigration, even after accounting for age and education. This permits us to identify the role played by, for example, attitudes to race, among people with similar characteristics – like their age, gender and education.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that each effect reported in the models presented is 'net of other factors', i.e. models control for important individual characteristics.

#### 6.1 ATTITUDES: THE ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Table 6.1 reports Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) models<sup>21</sup> for the impact of individual characteristics on the three outcomes discussed in the previous chapters: respondent opinions about the economic impact of immigration; the cultural impact of immigration; and

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<sup>20</sup> In order to test whether model estimates are affected by the association between variables like education and attitudes to race, we introduced these factors in a stepwise fashion to the model of immigration attitudes – namely social contact; attitudes to race; perceived immigrant group size/national attachment; socio-demographics and financial strain. Our analyses indicate that while the magnitude of some effects varies when adding variables to the model, the overall story is not affected (models available on request).

<sup>21</sup> An OLS model is type a of linear regression model, which estimates the effect of explanatory (independent) variables on an outcome (dependent) variable holding other variables constant.

whether immigration makes the country a better place to live.<sup>22</sup> Each of the outcomes is measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating more positive attitudes (see Chapter 4).

The model results or coefficients presented in Table 6.1 represent the size and direction of the effect of the characteristics of interest on the three outcome scales. For example, the negative coefficient for gender (-0.236) shows that after accounting for the other factors in the model, women report a value 0.236 points lower than men (the reference or comparison group) on the economic impact scale. The positive coefficient (1.126) for 'Bachelor degree or higher' indicates that, compared to those with Junior Certificate or lower qualifications, the reference category, those with a Bachelor degree or higher report, on average, 1.126 points higher (that is more positive) on the economic impact scale. The models also allow us to determine whether the results are robust or 'statistically significant', i.e. whether we can be confident that the differences would not have been generated by chance, given the sample size in each case (indicated by \*\*\* in the table).

Before focusing on social contact and attitudes to race, we discuss the role that sociodemographic characteristics play on attitudes. Overall, we can say that our results confirm to a large extent those from the existing literature. Firstly, women report slightly more negative attitudes to immigration than men on all but the cultural scale, although differences are statistically significant for the economic impact only. Existing research has found conflicting results regarding the effect of gender and attitudes to immigration. While some studies found women to be more positive towards immigrants (cf. Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010), other studies found the opposite (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007), or no significant difference between men and women (Brenner and Fertig, 2006). Examining Ireland, McGinnity and Kingston (2017) also found that women had more negative attitudes to immigration than men, controlling for other factors.

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<sup>22</sup> The three measures are correlated with one another (correlation coefficients range between 0.67 and 0.71).

**TABLE 6.1 IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION, OLS MODELS 2014**

	Economic impact	Cultural impact	Better place
Sex (ref. Male)			
Female	-0.236*	0.074	-0.126
Age classes (ref. 15-24)			
25-44	-0.079	0.103	-0.084
45-64	-0.106	0.051	-0.167
65 +	0.149	0.212	-0.152
Education (ref. Junior Certificate or lower)			
Leaving Certificate	0.289	0.386**	0.354**
Post-Leaving Certificate	0.385*	0.553**	0.578**
Bachelor degree or higher	1.126***	1.096***	1.160***
Employment status (ref. Employed)			
Unemployed	-0.183	0.013	-0.208
Inactive/Other	0.062	0.103	0.249*
Financial difficulties	-0.666***	-0.748***	-0.665***
Rural area	0.166	0.140	0.196
Left-right position (ref. 0-2)			
3-4	0.390	0.394	0.271
5	-0.048	-0.098	-0.128
6-7	0.147	0.112	-0.003
8-10	0.523	0.355	0.405
Share of immigrants, 31+	0.359*	0.225	0.072
Feel close to country	-0.003	0.099	0.536*
Some races/ethnic groups less intelligent	-0.326	-0.437**	-0.145
Some cultures are much better	-0.011	-0.116	-0.208
Some races/ethnic groups harder working	-0.367**	-0.148	-0.346**
Constant	3.958***	4.109***	4.265***
Observations	1,893	1,879	1,907
Adjusted R-squared	0.161	0.196	0.204

*Sources:* Own calculation based on ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

*Notes:* \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . Scales ranges from 0 (Extremely negative) to 10 (Extremely positive). Models also include quantity and quality of social contact and their interaction (see Table A6.2 in the Appendix). Missing values for attitudes to race and social contact are also included as separate categories but not presented.

Concerning age, we do not observe clear differences between age groups for any of the scales – economic impact, cultural impact and whether immigrants make Ireland a better or worse place to live. It might be expected that older respondents would report more negative attitudes to immigration, though Ceobanu and Escandell (2010) note this is not

always the case.<sup>23</sup> In terms of other social attitudes, which may be related to attitudes to immigration, earlier research by Fahey et al. (2005), using the European Values Survey, shows that older people in Ireland express more conservative opinions on divorce, abortion and homosexuality.

Educational attainment is clearly and strongly related to attitudes. The higher the level of education, the more positive attitudes towards immigration are. For example, individuals with a Bachelor's degree or a higher level of education are about 1.1 points more positive than those with a Junior Certificate or less: this is true for each measure of attitudes.

This finding is a rather robust one in the literature and several explanations have been proposed, as discussed in Chapter 2. It could be that highly educated respondents have been exposed to greater diversity and norms of tolerance as they pass through education (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007). Or that they are in more secure positions, both in the labour market and housing market, and do not feel directly in competition with immigrants (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001).

A similar argument applies to individuals' economic status. Unemployment and financial difficulty can be seen as an indicator of low socio-economic status and can identify vulnerable groups. These groups are likely to experience the strongest competition with immigrants for jobs, social benefits/services and previous research has argued they are likely to feel more threatened by immigrants.

Just under a quarter of the sample (23 per cent) reported experiencing financial difficulties (see Appendix Table A6.1). We observe a strong and statistically significant negative effect for financial difficulties on attitudes to the impact of immigration (see Table 6.1). For each indicator those who report financial difficulties are around 0.7 points less positive than those who are not in financial difficulty.

The unemployed report less support for immigration compared to the employed population for two out of three outcomes, but these effects are not statistically significant once

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<sup>23</sup> Given that education is strongly associated with age in Ireland, that is older cohorts tend to have lower education than younger cohorts, this might affect the relationship between age and attitudes to immigration. To check this, we estimate the model without education, but still do not find marked differences between age groups in terms of how positive or negative they are towards immigration.

financial difficulty is controlled for. Unemployment and financial strain are strongly associated among respondents: 17 per cent of the employed report financial difficulties, compared to 57 per cent of the unemployed and 25 per cent of those not in the labour force. In-depth analyses, available from the authors upon request, show that unemployed people tend to report significantly less positive attitudes compared to employed people. This difference, however, becomes much smaller and is not statistically significant once financial difficulties are taken into account, as in the models in Table 6.1.<sup>24</sup> This suggests that a key reason that unemployed people exhibit more negative attitudes is that they are more likely to be struggling financially than the employed.

Those who are inactive in the labour market report more positive attitudes compared to the employed population, but the difference is only substantial and statistically significant for the 'Better place' measure. This is a heterogeneous group, consisting of students, full-time carers, the retired and those unable to work due to illness or disability. Note this positive effect is only found after controlling for financial difficulties.<sup>25</sup>

Previous research has found that opposition to immigration is more pronounced in rural areas than urban areas (Garcia and Davidson, 2013). In Ireland, however, there were no statistically significant differences between the attitudes of respondents living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.

The model also controls for respondents' political positioning on the left-right scale. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) argued that the division of labour and capital is one of the basic historical cleavages in modern European value systems. This cleavage is expressed in the left-right divide and is reflected in the role of social class in structuring politics. In survey data this divide is measured by asking respondents to place themselves on a scale where 1 represents the left and 10 represents the right. Typically research in other European countries has

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<sup>24</sup> In detail, comparing the full models without and with the control for financial difficulties, the coefficient for unemployment more than halves and becomes statistically insignificant for the 'Economic impact' and 'Better place' scales. Concerning the cultural impact scale, if financial difficulties are not taken into account, the coefficient for unemployment is about -0.3, but not statistically different from zero.

<sup>25</sup> Controlling for financial difficulties also has an impact on the effect of being inactive on attitudes, though less dramatically than is the case for the effect of being unemployed. Before controlling for financial difficulties the inactive group did not differ from the employed in their attitudes. After controlling for financial difficulties the positive effect of inactivity increased in magnitude and was statistically significant in the case of 'Better place'.



found that those who are more left-wing (with lower scores on this scale) report more positive attitudes to immigrants and immigration (Coenders et al., 2004).

In Ireland we do not find a clear pattern. People who position themselves in different parts of the left-right scale do not seem to report different levels of support for immigration. This is consistent with previous research by Fahey et al., 2005 in their analysis of social and political attitudes in Ireland. They argue that because the historical political cleavage in Ireland was predominantly along religious rather than class lines, positioning on this scale does not correspond to the classic left-right ideology in other countries (Fahey et al., 2005).

## 6.2 ATTITUDES TO RACE, NATIONAL ATTACHMENT AND PERCEIVED GROUP SIZE

We now investigate how the perceived size of the out-group, national attachment, dimensions of racism, and contact with different ethnic groups are associated with attitudes towards immigrants (see Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1).

Respondents who believe more than 30 per cent of the population in Ireland were born abroad have more positive views about the economic impact of immigration. This is contrary to expectations, as often having an inflated sense of the size of the immigrant group is associated with greater feelings of threat and more negative attitudes.<sup>26</sup> There is no significant association between having an inflated sense of the immigrant population and either the cultural impact of immigration or the belief that Ireland is made a better or worse place as a result of immigration.

Concerning national attachment, respondents who 'feel close to Ireland' do not differ from those who do not in terms of their assessment of the economic impact and cultural impact. However, those who feel close to Ireland hold more positive views about immigration making Ireland a better place. This result is to some extent contrary to previous findings for other countries. This concept is designed to capture 'a sense of national superiority with respect to other countries' (European Social Survey, 2015: p. 28) and is expected to be associated with negative attitudes towards immigration. However, this relationship may vary as a function of individuals' conceptions of nationhood. Irish people might have a

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<sup>26</sup> Though the finding is only significant once we control for social contact, suggesting estimates of group size may be related to contact with other ethnic groups.

different conception of nationhood with respect to people from other countries, not least because of country differences in the historical processes of nation- and nationhood-building.

Turning towards attitudes to race, those who believe some races/ethnic groups are born less intelligent than others hold more negative beliefs about the impact of immigration on Irish culture than those who disagree with this statement. Respondents who believe some races were born harder working have more negative attitudes in general. This sub-component related to work ethic is strongly associated with the economic impact of immigration and with the question of whether Ireland has been made a better place, while the association is weaker and not statistically significant for cultural impact. Moreover, although we observe a negative impact of the belief that some cultures are better than others on all three measures of attitudes towards immigration, we do not find any statistically significant association. This indicates that biological racism is a considerably stronger predictor of negative attitudes towards immigration compared to feelings of cultural superiority.

### **6.3 ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRATION: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONTACT**

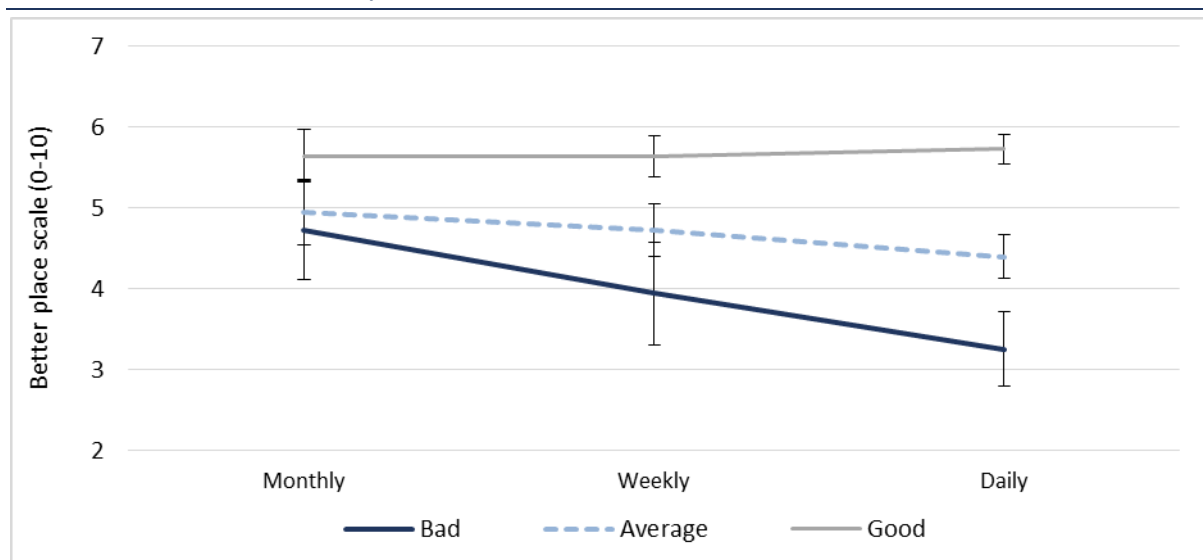
The last factor that we examine is social contact. We consider both the frequency and quality of social contact and allow for an interaction between them. We expect the effect of contact frequency on attitudes towards immigration to vary with contact quality (see Figure 6.1 and Table A6.2 in the Appendix).<sup>27</sup> According to the literature, contact with immigrants may reduce prejudice and ameliorate threat perception (McLaren, 2003). However, this depends also on the quality of the contact. In fact, while frequent contacts might engender more positive attitudes towards immigration if of good quality, the opposite might be true if the contacts are of bad quality.

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<sup>27</sup> The information about the quality of contact is of course only available for the individuals who reported contact with those of a different race/ethnic group (89 per cent of the sample, see Figure 5.6). The results of the relationship between the quantity and quality of contact are presented only for those who report some contact.

Interpreting results based on interactions is not always straightforward. For this reason, we represent the interaction (or relationship) between frequency and quality of social contact graphically in Figure 6.1.<sup>28</sup>

**FIGURE 6.1 PREDICTED PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL CONTACT, BETTER PLACE SCALE, 2014**



*Sources:* Own calculation based on ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

*Notes:* The scale ranges between 0 and 10. Predicted values based on model for 'Better place' presented in Tables 6.1 and A6.2. Predicted values estimated at the mean of the other covariates and following the standard procedure with the margins command in Stata 14.

Figure 6.1 shows the predicted scores for the belief that people coming to live in Ireland make Ireland a better place to live. From the Figure, two key results emerge. Firstly, and not surprisingly, people who report having had good quality contacts with immigrants (represented in the Figure by the grey line) also report more positive attitudes towards immigration than those who have had average or bad quality contacts.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, the extent to which the quality of contacts affects attitudes varies with the frequency of contacts (moving from left to right in Figure 6.1).

<sup>28</sup> In order to isolate the net effect of social contact, the values presented in Figure 6.1 have been estimated by fixing the values of the other variables at their mean across the sample.

<sup>29</sup> As already mentioned through the report, the quality of contact has been collected as a scale ranging from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating more positive contact (see Figure 5.7). Given the very small numbers of individuals reporting the lowest values, we have collapsed the values of the scale into three categories: bad quality (from 0 to 4), average quality (5 and 6), and good quality (from 7 to 10). This categorisation has also been driven by practical reasons and is somehow arbitrary. In order to check that our results are not driven by the specific way in which we have collapsed the categories, we have performed the analyses with a different codification: bad quality (from 0 to 4), average quality (5), and good quality (from 6 to 10). Results based on this measure, although not perfectly overlapping, follow the same pattern that we present in Figure 6.1 (results available upon request).

If contacts are good then attitudes are positive, regardless of the frequency (this is represented by the flat grey line). On the contrary, for those who have experienced average quality contacts, the more frequent the contacts, the more negative the attitudes. This is represented by the dashed light-blue line which decreases moving from the left to the right, i.e. moving from monthly contacts to daily contacts. This effect of frequency is even more marked for individuals who have had contacts of bad quality (the steeper decreasing solid dark-blue line).

In terms of levels, individuals who have never had contact or have had contact up to once per month report a score of 5.6 if they had good quality contact while a score of 4.5 if they had bad quality contact. The difference between good and bad quality contact increases as the contact frequency increases. Indeed the model predictions show respondents who report contact several times a week or daily score 5.7 on the 'Better place' scale. Those who have frequent contact but rate it as bad score 3.3 on the 'Better place' scale. This is a remarkable difference considering that attitude scale ranges between zero and 10.

As an overall picture emerges, it seems that negative contacts affect attitudes more than positive contacts when we also consider the frequency of contact. The pattern that we observe is in line with results by Barlow et al. (2012) who have found that negative contacts deteriorate attitudes towards immigration more than positive contacts ameliorate them. The results presented apply to the question of whether immigrants 'make Ireland a better or worse place'. A similar pattern is found also for responses to the economic and cultural impact of immigration (see Figure A6.1 and Figure A6.2 in the Appendix).<sup>30</sup>

These findings are broadly consistent with those of Hayes and Dowds (2006) for Northern Ireland. Their study finds that social exposure, in particular via a diverse friendship network, has a strong and significant effect on attitudes.

One potential issue in any analysis of social contact and attitudes to immigration is the direction of causality. Certainly in the case of inter-ethnic friendships, it could be that people who have more positive attitudes towards immigrants and other ethnic groups

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<sup>30</sup> Given that results for the economic and cultural impact of immigration follow roughly the same pattern of results for the 'Better place' measure, we focus on one of the three outcomes.

choose to have friends from another ethnic group. It is thus not contact that changes individual attitudes, but positive attitudes that led them to form inter-ethnic friendships. In addition to a friendship measure, Hayes and Dowds (2006) use other measures of contact – colleagues and neighbourhood – which are arguably less susceptible to the issue of reverse causality and support these findings on friendships. The measure of contact used in this report refers to more casual encounters ('when out and about'). These encounters may have less potential to reduce prejudice, but may also be more random and less prone to the problem of reverse causality. However we need to bear in mind that while these results suggest that people who report good quality contacts develop more positive attitudes towards immigration, it could also be that people who already have positive attitudes towards immigrants are also more inclined to report good quality contact, and are more likely to frequent environments where contacts with immigrants are more likely.

#### **6.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter examined how respondents' characteristics – factors like gender, age, employment status, education – relate to their attitudes to immigration. Somewhat surprisingly, respondents' age is not clearly related to perceptions of immigration in Ireland. By contrast we see marked differences in educational attainment: those with higher education are much more positive in their assessment of the impact of immigration in Ireland. Respondents in financial difficulty record more negative attitudes for all the indicators. Once we account for financial difficulties, we find no difference between the employed and unemployed in their perceptions of immigration.

Attitudes to race also emerge as important in accounting for attitudes toward immigration, though this depends on the specific dimension of racism used and varies across outcomes. Racist attitudes related to work ethic are negatively associated with 'Economic impact' and 'Better place' measures. The measure that captures views about racial differences in intelligence is strongly and negatively related with attitudes to the 'cultural impact' of immigration.

One of the most striking findings concerns contact between the Irish-born population and people of a different race/ethnic group. The frequency of social contact is associated with attitudes to immigrants, but also the quality of the contact. For those who report good

contact with other ethnic groups, the frequency of contact (less than once a month to daily) does not matter so much, though more frequent contact is associated with more positive attitudes. By contrast, for those who report bad contact, daily contact is associated with much more negative attitudes than very infrequent contact.



## CHAPTER 7

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### Conclusions

#### 7.1 KEY FINDINGS

Against a backdrop of considerable debate in Europe about immigrants and immigration, this report provides a detailed overview of attitudes to diversity in Ireland. The report tracks Irish attitudes to diversity over time, situating them in a cross national context where appropriate. It also exploits the 2014 ESS special module on immigration to present the various elements of these attitudes, focusing on attitudes to specific groups, beliefs about race, perceptions of immigrant group size and the quality and quantity of social contact with immigrants. Finally, linear regression models are employed to present information on the demographic and sociological determinants of some of these attitudes.

##### *Comparison over time and across countries*

During the economic boom (2002-2006), overall perceptions of immigration in Ireland became more positive amid rising immigration; then more negative during the recession (between 2006 and 2010), and more positive again between 2010 and 2014, though they did not approach 2006 levels. Fluctuations were particularly marked regarding the economic impact of immigration.

The scale of attitudinal change in Ireland over the period was much greater than the average in the ten other Western European countries examined. So while in 2004 and 2006 overall perceptions of immigration in Ireland were more positive than the average of these West European countries, by 2010 perceptions of immigration in Ireland were more negative. Between 2010 and 2014 perceptions of immigration converged towards the EU10 average, but were still somewhat lower in Ireland by 2014.

##### *Ethnic hierarchy*

The results suggest that there is an 'ethnic hierarchy' in relation to immigration. Respondents are most supportive of allowing many or some immigrants of the same ethnic group (58 per cent), followed by Muslim immigrants (41 per cent) and are very resistant to



allowing more Roma into Ireland (only 25 per cent would allow many or some). There may be an association between attitudes to Roma and attitudes to Irish Travellers, which are very negative in Ireland (MacGreil, 2011). These attitudes to specific groups of immigrants are among the most negative in the ten-country sample studied here, but are above the values for East European countries like the Czech Republic and Hungary.

### ***Attitudes to race, perceived immigration and national attachment***

Just under half of adults born in Ireland believe some cultures to be superior to others, and 45 per cent that some races/ethnic groups were born harder working. A much lower proportion, 17 per cent, believes that some races were born less intelligent. These values represent rates of biological and cultural racism slightly above the West European average.

Exaggerated perception of the scale of immigration may also indicate a sense of ethnic threat. The proportion foreign-born in 2014 was around 16 per cent: 17 per cent of Irish adults believe this proportion to be over 30 per cent. However, Irish people are no more prone to substantially overestimating the share of the immigrant population in their country than their West European counterparts, and over half of all Irish respondents give an underestimate.

Finally, studies have shown that feelings of exclusive nationalism or national superiority can be associated with negative attitudes to immigrants. The ESS attempts to tap respondent views on this issue by asking how close they feel to their country. An extremely high proportion of Irish people (94 per cent) give a positive response to this item. This is a typical rate for the ten-country sample studied here, in which six countries exhibit values between 93 per cent and 96 per cent.

### ***Predictors of attitudes to diversity***

Attitudes to immigration and to ethnic diversity differ across social groups. We see marked differences by educational attainment: those with higher education are much more positive in their assessment of the impact of immigration in Ireland – on the economy, the cultural impact and whether immigration has made Ireland a better place. It is difficult to disentangle the mechanisms underlying this – it may be a combination of being in a financially more secure position, as well as the liberalising effect of higher education.

Somewhat surprisingly, we do not find that older people have more negative attitudes to immigration. Perhaps the Irish experience of emigration throughout the age cohorts plays a role here, though this suggestion would require further investigation.

Respondents in financial difficulty record more negative attitudes for all the indicators and groups considered, suggesting that they may feel in more direct competition with immigrants than those who are financially secure. The unemployed record somewhat more negative attitudes than the employed for some of the indicators, but do not differ from them when financial difficulty is accounted for.

Respondents who believe some groups are born more intelligent are more likely to believe that immigration is bad for Ireland's cultural life; and believing in racial disparities in work ethic is associated with negative views about the economic and societal impact of immigration. In general, beliefs that some cultures are better than others tend not to be associated with support for immigration.

One of the most striking findings in the report is about contact between the Irish-born population and people of a different race/ethnic group. Both the quality and frequency of social contact are associated with perceptions of immigration and support for different immigrant groups. For infrequent contact the quality of contact is not so salient, but for frequent contact – daily or several times a week – there are considerable differences in the attitudes to those who report bad contact with members of another race or ethnic group and those with good contacts. We cannot rule that in some instances social contact will be sought by those with more favourable attitudes, and that those with favourable attitudes are more likely to evaluate contact as positive, but we argue that on balance our findings suggest positive social contact is likely to facilitate more favourable attitudes.

## **7.2 FURTHER RESEARCH**

The ESS module on 'attitudes towards immigration and their antecedents' includes a range of measures not typically recorded in Irish surveys, such as information about national attachment, perceptions of group size and quality and frequency of social contact. We have examined these and their link with attitudes to immigrants and immigration and found interesting results. Additional work could consider other factors not included, perhaps

around qualification for entry/exclusion from Ireland, support for integration policies, or attitudes to refugees. Further work could also estimate multivariate models for attitudes towards different groups, such as Roma and Muslims, which due to space constraints, were only covered descriptively in this paper. Another avenue of research with this European Social Survey module could investigate some international comparisons in more depth – they were only briefly touched on in this report. Are Irish findings replicated for other European countries, and if not, why not?

Of course any of the attitudes reported here may seem more positive than they actually are, if respondents are concealing socially undesirable attitudes. Some conceal their prejudice in a ‘don’t know’ response, which is not a major issue here as very few respondents recorded ‘don’t know’ to the questions on attitudes to immigrants and immigration (see Appendix Table A3.1). And if social desirability bias remains constant over time, it should not influence overall trends. However, if social desirability bias varies by group – for example between high and low educated – this may be an issue. One way of testing this is to use a list experiment, a device that allows respondents to conceal their prejudice in a list of other items (Janus, 2010; Creighton and Jamal, 2015). As yet no such list experiment has been published in Ireland, but it would be a very promising avenue for future research on attitudes to diversity.

### **7.3 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

While the findings are certainly relevant for the lived experience of immigrants in Ireland, whether attitudes are amenable to policy change is less straightforward. One possible implication is the potential for social contact to promote positive attitudes to immigrants – but it needs to be positive contact, as negative contact increases negative sentiment. Thus facilitating positive and meaningful social contact between immigrants and the Irish-born population has the potential to change attitudes in a positive way, though the nature and social contexts may vary depending on the groups (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000).

Perhaps the most feasible policy response to this finding is to avoid segregation and ghettoisation of immigrant communities through inclusive urban planning. Semyonov and Glikman (2009), using data from the previous ESS special module on immigration in 2002, found strong evidence that residence in homogenous, ‘all European’ neighbourhoods

reduces self-reported high quality contact with ethnic minorities, and that this lack of contact is associated with more negative attitudes. The existing research on the residential segregation of immigrants in Ireland, based on Census data, has found that the concentration of the immigrant population is strongly influenced by the availability of private rented accommodation, resulting in higher concentrations in Dublin's inner city and north-western suburbs (Vang, 2010; Fahey and Fanning, 2010). The release of even more detailed data in the 2011 and 2016 censuses offers an opportunity for future research in this area.

Hewstone et al. (2002) argue that when intergroup conflict is severe, other avenues besides contact may be important in mitigating the worst effects of the conflict. They suggest, among other things, developing each group's knowledge of the other, and encouraging individuals to understand the conflict from the out-group's perspective. Following this line of thought, accurate information may have an important role to play in informing the public about the immigrant population in Ireland, about their unemployment and poverty rates, educational qualifications and other outcomes. Information can also be used to document the variability of the immigrant population in Ireland, to counter the perception that immigrants are a homogenous group. Two recent studies using experimental techniques have found some evidence that providing more information about immigrants is associated with more favourable attitudes to immigrants and immigration in Japan and the United States (Facchini et al., 2016; Grigorieff et al., 2016), though it is unclear how long these effects persist.

Given the effect of the economic cycle on attitudes to immigration we find in Ireland, we would expect sentiment to continue improving with the economic recovery. However, disadvantaged groups, such as those with lower educational attainment and those in financial difficulty show consistently more negative attitudes on all of the indicators. If these groups become more disadvantaged relative to others as recovery progresses, this has the potential to generate more negative attitudes. However, the finding that the negative effect of unemployment on attitudes operates through the mechanism of financial difficulties, i.e. that it disappears when financial difficulties are controlled for, suggests that providing adequate social insurance against the financial risks of unemployment may prevent future labour market shocks from impacting on attitudes to diversity.

Monitoring attitudes in reports such as this certainly has an important role to play in understanding the context for immigrant and minority group integration.

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## APPENDIX

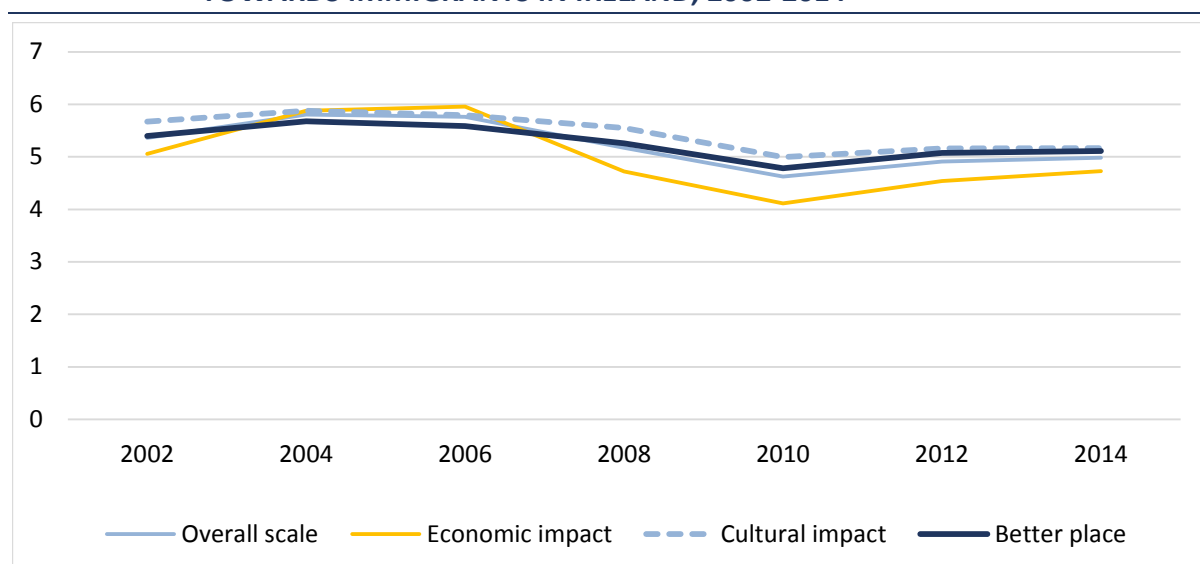
**TABLE A3.1 DEPENDENT VARIABLE NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS, 2014**

	Sample size	Valid	Final sample size
Overall scale	2,075	2,062	1,932
Economic impact	2,075	2,019	1,893
Cultural impact	2,075	1,999	1,879
Better place	2,075	2,034	1,907

*Sources:* ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

*Notes:* Column 'Sample size' refers to the total sample of Irish-born individuals; 'Valid' excludes individuals for which we do not have information for the dependent variable (attitudes); 'Final sample size' excludes individuals for which we do not have information for the main independent variables. The total sample size before excluding foreign-born individuals is 2,390.

**FIGURE A4.1 PREDICTED CHANGES OVER TIME IN OVERALL AND SPECIFIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS IN IRELAND, 2002-2014**



*Sources:* ESS data, respondents born in Ireland. Scales ranges from 0 to 10. Our calculation based on models that control for changes in the demographic composition of the population.

*Note:* Higher values mean more positive attitudes.

**TABLE A6.1 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS IN 2014, BASED ON THE VALID CASES FOR OVERALL ATTITUDES SCALE (N. 1,932)**

	Frequencies	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Sex			
Male	895	45.69	45.69
Female	1037	54.31	100.00
Age			
Under 25	157	12.32	12.32
Age 25-44	585	29.48	41.80
Age 45-64	687	38.52	80.32
Age 65 plus	503	19.68	100.00
Education			
Lower secondary or lower	723	34.54	34.54
Upper secondary	510	28.40	62.94
Lower Tertiary	233	12.47	75.41
Upper Tertiary	466	24.59	100.00
Employment status			
Employed	833	46.08	46.08
Unemployed	167	8.19	54.27
Out of LM/other	932	45.73	100.00
Urban/Rural area			
Urban	1139	58.23	58.23
Rural	793	41.77	100.00
Financial difficulties			
No	1425	76.48	76.48
Yes	507	23.52	100.00
Left-right			
0-2	130	7.61	7.61
3-4	279	17.62	25.23
5	677	41.57	66.8
6-7	389	24.36	91.16
8-10	147	8.84	100.00
Missing	310		
Perceived immigrants share			
0/30 %	1599	82.52	82.52
31+ %	333	17.48	100.00
Feel close to country			
No	116	5.96	5.96
Yes	1816	94.04	100.00
Some races/ethnic groups less intelligent			
No	1440	82.99	82.99
Yes	327	17.01	100.00
Missing	165		

*Contd.*

**TABLE A6.1 CONTINUED**

	Frequencies	Per cent	Cumulative per cent
Some culture are much better			
No	899	50.65	50.65
Yes	920	49.35	100.00
Missing	113		
Some races/ethnic groups harder working			
No	959	54.39	54.39
Yes	866	45.61	100.00
Missing	107		
Frequency contacts with other races/ethnic groups			
Up to 1 per month	616	30.36	30.36
Up to 1 per week	477	24.22	54.58
Up to every day	839	45.42	100.00
Quality of contacts with other races/ethnic groups			
Bad	133	7.69	7.69
Middle	335	30.1	37.79
Good	1,202	62.21	100.00
Missing	262		

Sources: Own calculation based on ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

Note: See Table A3.1 for how the sample is defined.

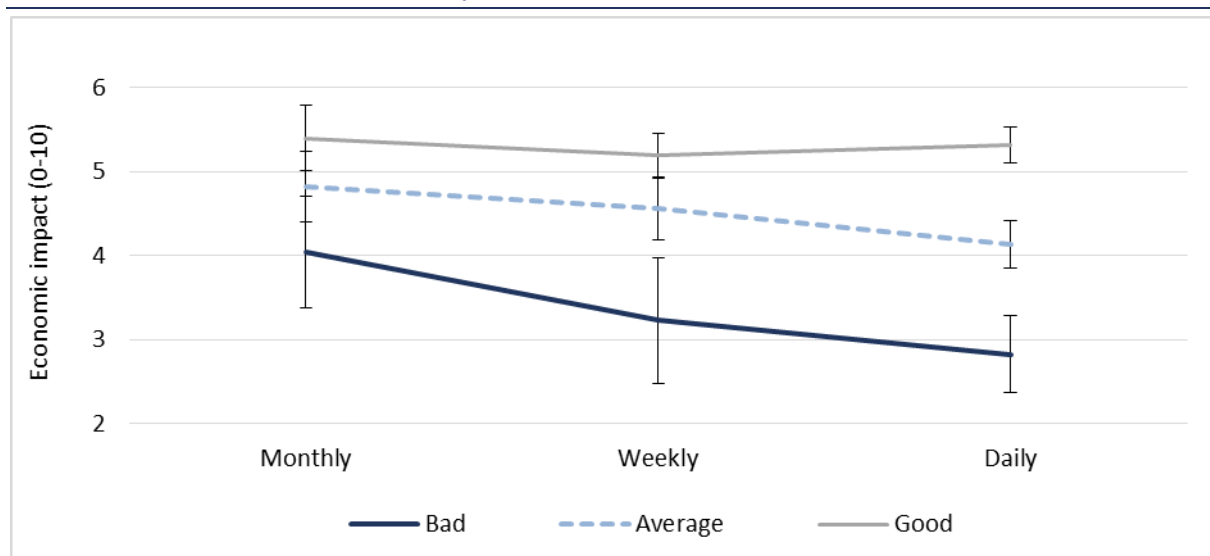
**TABLE A6.2 IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION, OLS MODELS 2014. SELECTED COEFFICIENTS FOR SOCIAL CONTACT**

	Economic impact	Cultural impact	Better place
Contact with other race or ethnic group (ref. Monthly or less)			
Weekly (Bad quality)	-0.810	-1.273**	-0.780
Daily frequency (Bad quality)	-1.212**	-1.197**	-1.471***
Quality of contact (ref. Bad quality)			
Average quality (Monthly)	0.780*	0.648	0.221
Good quality (Monthly)	1.355***	1.228***	0.922**
Frequency*Quality (ref. Monthly*Bad)			
Weekly and Average quality	0.551	0.848	0.558
Weekly and Good quality	0.603	1.138*	0.769
Daily and Average quality	0.523	0.588	0.926*
Daily and Good quality	1.135*	1.311**	1.555***

Sources: Own calculation based on ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

Notes: \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001. These selected coefficients refer to the models presented in Table 6.1. Cf. Note at Table 6.1.

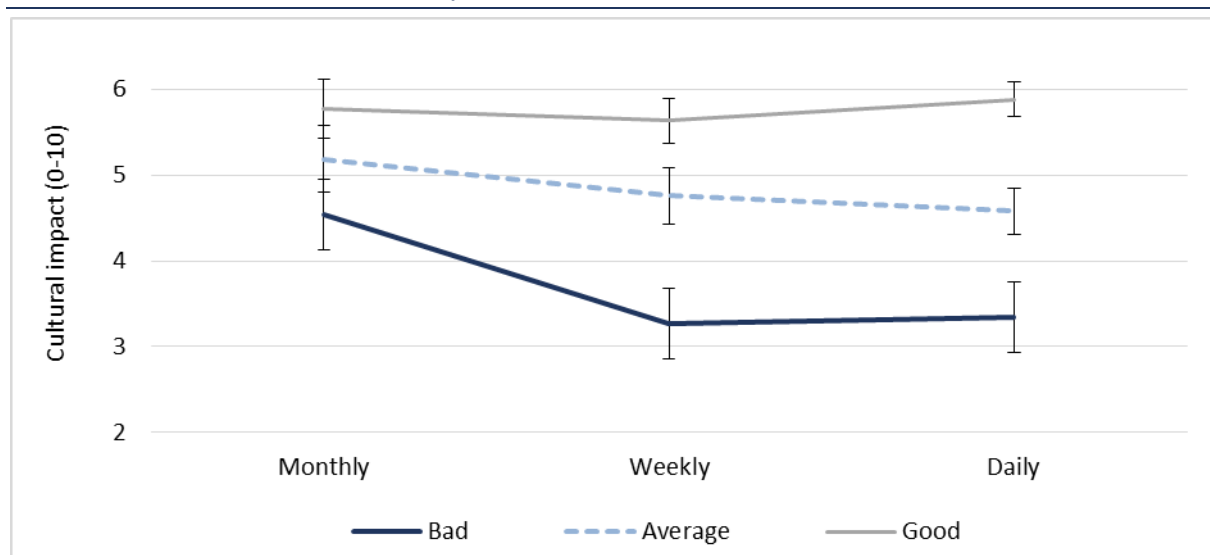
**FIGURE A6.1 PREDICTED PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL CONTACT, ECONOMIC IMPACT, 2014**



*Sources:* Own calculation based on ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

*Notes:* The scale ranges between 0 and 10. Predicted values based on model for 'Economic impact' presented in Tables 6.1 and A6.2. Predicted values estimated at the mean of the other covariates and following the standard procedure with the margins command in Stata 14.

**FIGURE A6.2 PREDICTED PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL CONTACT, CULTURAL IMPACT, 2014**



*Sources:* Own calculation based on ESS data (2014), respondents born in Ireland.

*Notes:* The scale ranges between 0 and 10. Predicted values based on model for 'Cultural impact' presented in Tables 6.1 and A6.2. Predicted values estimated at the mean of the other covariates and following the standard procedure with the margins command in Stata 14.



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