

Irish Workers' Perceptions of the Impact of Immigrants: A Cause for Concern?



C H R I S T I N E C R O S S *
T O M T U R N E R *

ABSTRACT

Immigrant workers are increasingly essential to the EU economy as Europe's population continues to decline. In Ireland there has been an influx of approximately 250,000 migrants into the country since 1997. Using a recent survey of citizens in the European Union the attitudes of Irish workers towards immigrants regarding their economic, social and cultural impact are assessed. Determinants of attitudinal differences are examined using a number of possible explanatory factors widely recognised in the sociological literature on public opinion formation, such as age, gender and education. The factors with the strongest explanatory effect are education, occupational level, political orientation and political activism. Overall, a sizeable minority of respondents believed that immigrants undermine their country's culture, have a negative impact on wages and the poor and a negative impact on jobs and the economy. Given the consistent upward trend in the number of immigrants into Ireland and the ageing population demographic, such negative attitudes are a

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major cause for concern for both organisations and for government policy-makers.

Key Words: Attitudes; Immigrant; Workers; Ireland; European Union.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade of the twentieth century the number of immigrants from outside European Union (EU) countries working in the labour force had increased (Turner and Cross, 2005; Garson and Loizillon, 2003; OECD, 2001; Coppel et al., 2001). The most striking aspect of the contemporary period of migration is the increase in employment related permanent and temporary migration with a preference for skilled workers (Garson and Loizillon, 2003). Immigration has played a significant part in the population increase in the EU in the last five years; however a European Commission report (2002) shows that even doubling the immigration rates and simultaneously doubling fertility rates will not, on their own, make a significant contribution to securing sustainable labour markets and pension systems. Indeed, United Nation estimates for the EU indicate that the number of migrants necessary annually to keep the potential support ratio constant at its 1995 level by 2050 would be 15 times greater than the net migration level in the 1990s (United Nations Population Division, 2000). Furthermore, the old age dependency ratio in the EU (population above the age of 65 divided by the population aged 15–64) increased from 9.5 per cent in 1950 to 24 per cent in 2001 and is predicted to increase further (United Nations Population Division, 2000; European Commission, 2002).

Although less extreme, a similar demography situation pertains in Ireland. The number of old persons (those 65 years and older) increased by almost one third between 1971 and 2002 (CSO, 2004a). It is estimated that older people will outnumber younger people with the excess being most pronounced in those aged 65 years and over by 2036 (CSO, 2004b). This presents a number of problems, most especially with regard to future labour supply. The attraction and integration of migrants in the workplace is therefore of critical significance to Irish labour market policy. Until recent times, Ireland was essentially a nation of emigrants. The first Irish census ever to

ask a question on the nationality of the respondent was in 2002. Yet, between 1997 and 2002 approximately 250,000 migrants arrived in Ireland (International Organisation for Migration, 2002). Thus, immigrant workers are now an important feature of the Irish labour market. Consequently, the perceptions of immigrant workers by Irish citizens in the workplace are increasingly a cause for concern. There are two possible reasons to be concerned about the nature of workplace attitudes towards immigrant workers. First, there is the moral argument that outsiders should be treated fairly and humanely. The concern here would be to ensure that immigrants in the workplace are not subject to prejudice or discrimination in relation to remuneration, benefits and opportunities available to other workers. If immigrant workers are viewed in a negative or disparaging way by employees in the workplace it is likely that such attitudes will spill over into unfair treatment. A second and possibly more compelling reason is that immigrant workers will be essential to an expanding Irish economy and a changing demographic structure.

This paper examines Irish employee attitudes and perceptions towards immigrants, in an effort to broaden our understanding of this contemporary issue. As Scheve and Slaughter (2001) note, it is only when individual preferences regarding immigration policy are understood that reasonable policy-making efforts can begin. Using a general European survey, Irish workers' views of the economic, social and cultural impact of immigrants are assessed. Determinants of attitudinal differences are examined using a number of possible explanatory factors widely recognised in the sociological literature on public opinion formation, such as age, gender, and education (Chandler et al., 2001). The term 'immigrant' used in this context should not be confused with other references to people from overseas moving to live in a host country, such as 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees'; words which are often used in the same sentence. Our analysis excludes asylum seekers and refugees. An immigrant, for the purpose of this study, is defined as someone born and brought up outside the respondent's host country who moves to live in the host country.

TRENDS IN IMMIGRATION IN IRELAND

In a comparative European context migration in Ireland presents an interesting picture. For a prolonged period of time, from the 1840s

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to the 1950s, Ireland experienced a constant decline in population due essentially to emigration outflows. Although the population decline peaked in the 1950s, emigration remained for many the only prospect for getting employment well into the 1990s. Indeed, with the onset of the recession in the 1980s emigration reached similar numbers to the exodus experienced in Ireland in the 1950s when almost half a million Irish people emigrated from Ireland (CSO, 2004b). Irish emigrants favoured two host countries in particular: the UK and the USA. Between 1981 and 1990 65 per cent of all emigrants went to the UK and 14 per cent to the USA (NESC, 1991).

However, the dramatic economic growth and expansion of employment in the late 1990s changed Ireland from a country of emigration to one of net immigration, caused both by both non-Irish and Irish nationals coming to live here. The 2002 census returned 47,500 registered immigrants, of which 18,000 were returning Irish. A recent report by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN, 2005) collates available statistical information on non-nationals in Ireland. It indicates that in 2004, the non-Irish population accounted for 215,000 people, which is approximately 5 per cent of the population. 105,000 of these are non-EU nationals, with 10 per cent coming from the US. In comparison with the US and other European countries the number of immigrants at first glance may appear low. Yet, on a per capita basis this represents more than four times the immigration rate of the USA (Capell, 2004). Whilst the population of Ireland has grown by 8 per cent in the last five years, the number of non-nationals has grown by 82 per cent. The OECD has suggested that the percentage of non-national workers in the Irish labour force is higher than in the UK and most other EU countries (OECD, 2004).

The EGFSN report (2005) also provides a breakdown of the employment patterns and demographics of the non-Irish immigrants. Most are located in Dublin (one third) and the east of Ireland and one third of them are in the 25–34 age group. Most are employed in the manufacturing, hotel, health and retail sectors, with the majority located in services (e.g. waiters, chefs and childcare workers), professional (e.g. university lecturers, medical practitioners and software engineers) and associated professional occupations (e.g. computer analysts/programmers).

As a group, the study results indicate that they are highly skilled, with 44 per cent having a third level qualification. The report contends therefore that as a significant number of these non-nationals are employed in low-skilled occupations, or are economically inactive, their skills are being underutilised.

In recent years statistics indicate that immigration peaked in 2002, reaching a high of 41,000, then declined to about 32,000 in 2004 (CSO, 2004b). The report by the EGFSN (2005) clearly indicates an expectation that the non-national population will increase significantly in the coming years, particularly as a result of the recent expansion of the EU, Ireland's policy of free labour market access for the new member states who joined in 2004 and the Employment Permits Act (2006).

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF IMMIGRANTS

With emigration outflows a central feature of life in the twentieth century, Ireland's population remained culturally and ethnically homogeneous (Mac Éinrí, 2001). However, multiculturalism is becoming a feature of Irish life. In cities and major towns the visual impact of increased immigration is evident in the range of retail stores, the array of goods on sale and the ethnicity of employees, particularly in the service sector. Yet, integration into the host country is one the most difficult challenges for immigrants. Finding a workable balance between host community respect for difference and immigrant participation remains an extremely difficult issue for most countries (ILO, 2004). In 1999 the leaders of the EU called for a common immigration policy, which would include strategies to ensure the integration of third country nationals legally resident in the Union. In June 2003, the Council set out a strategy for the development of a comprehensive and multidimensional policy on integration for the Union based on the principle of granting legal immigrants rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens. The Commission has also indicated that failure to promote tolerance in a society is often a precursor to discrimination, social exclusion and the rise of racism and xenophobia (European Commission, 2001). In Ireland a variety of legislative and policy measures to assist with the integration of immigrants into Irish society has been introduced, such

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as the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Employment Equality Act 2004. The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) was established in 2005, which includes a new Immigrant Integration Unit to promote the integration of lawful immigrants into Irish economic and cultural life. In addition, a national action plan on racism has been developed to create the foundations for a more inclusive and intercultural society (Department of Equality, Justice and Law Reform, 2005).

The problems facing governments attempting to develop integration policies are highlighted in the results of recent surveys conducted with European Union citizens. Immigration was believed to be the second most important issue to voters (after employment) in the European Parliament elections of 2004 (European Commission, 2004). An earlier version of the survey revealed that 45 per cent of the EU population believed there were too many foreigners in their country at that time (European Commission, 1997). The key issues in this debate on migration focus on the potentially adverse economic, cultural and social effects on the host country. While a worker's labour market position is at the core of his wider integration into society, this is only part of the complete integration process (Doomerik, 1998; Borjas, 1994). Various strategies are employed by governmental agencies to assist with the socio-economic integration of immigrants. These include language training, information referral, migrant resource centres, access to health care, employment possibilities for spouses and the right of family members to accompany the migrant. In relation to host country language, a number of studies across the world have highlighted the critical importance of being skillful in the host country language in gaining employment (International Organisation for Migration, 2002).

Policy developments in recent years at EU level reflect the need for clear and effective policies for the social integration of migrants. These often differ from one member state to another due to prevailing cultural diversities. In this paper we examine employee perceptions of immigrants in two areas: the socio-cultural requirements considered important for immigrants and the cultural impact of immigrants on the host country.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IMMIGRANTS

Most of the world's developed economies have had to import large numbers of foreign workers at some stage to fill vacancies caused by a growth in manufacturing and a decreasing supply of unskilled national workers¹ (Doomerik, 1998). As noted earlier, much debate has taken place on the role immigration may play in easing the economic impacts of Europe's ageing and declining population. The economic effect of immigration on a country is a complex issue. Increases in numbers of immigrants into a country are often opposed on the basis of fears that significant inflows of foreign workers will increase unemployment, depress wages and lead to a decline in the employment of national workers who are available for low-skilled work (OECD, 2001). Recent research conducted on this issue however highlights a different picture. Foreigners tend to occupy blue-collar rather than white-collar jobs and tend to be concentrated in particular industries such as construction, catering, health care and services to households (OECD, 2001). Moreover, research highlights that immigrants usually command lower wages than native-born workers when they initially arrive in the host country (Friedberg, 2000). A recurring theme in the immigration literature is whether immigrants ever achieve earnings parity with nationals (Borjas, 1992; 1995). Schoeni et al. (1996) contend that immigrants probably experience a wage disadvantage for most of their working lives, given the size of the wage gap between the foreign and native population at their time of entry. Most studies in Western Europe have indicated that wages tend to resist downward pressures. The negative effect of immigration on native wage levels is small and the impact on employment is indefinite (see Coppel et al., 2001; ILO, 2004).

Although much discussion focuses on the potential negative impacts of immigration on the labour market, migration can in fact be beneficial in generating economic benefits for the host country. Immigrants who have high levels of productivity and contribute to the host nation's economy can make a significant contribution to economic growth (Borjas, 1994). Also, they address specific labour shortages and the problems associated with ageing populations in the EU (OECD, 2000). Temporary employment of foreigners brings flexibility into a labour market, relieving labour shortages, particularly

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during economic upswings. Immigration in itself creates a demand for goods and services, thereby increasing the demand for labour while at the same time providing a flexible labour reserve (Coppel et al., 2001; Ben-Gad, 2004).

Given the different evaluations of the impact of immigrants on a country's economy it would not be surprising to find considerable variations in employee attitudes to the economic impact of immigrants. Here we assess the views of employees regarding whether immigrants are a net gain to the economy and whether they have an adverse effect on the conditions of the existing domestic work force.

In summary, the attitudes of employees are examined in four distinct areas: firstly, the extent to which employees believe that immigrants from poor countries should be permitted to come and live in Europe; secondly, perceptions of the importance of labour market requirements for immigrants; thirdly, socio-cultural requirements considered important for immigrants and the cultural impact of immigrants; fourthly, perceptions of the impact of immigrants on the economy. For a detailed description of the measures in each of these areas see Table 12.1 below.

ATTITUDINAL DETERMINANTS AND HYPOTHESES

Seven factors were identified as likely to affect individual employee attitudes towards immigrants. These are the individual's age, education, occupation, political orientation, union membership, political activism and civic concern. As the European Union has become a diverse multicultural entity, we might expect that the attitudes of Europeans towards outsiders are likely to be more liberal and inclusive than in previous generations. In particular, this is likely to be more pronounced amongst younger people. Alternatively, increasing age tends to be associated with more conservative attitudes (Hypothesis 1).

H1: Increasing age will tend to be associated with more negative attitudes towards immigrants.

Similarly, higher levels of education are associated with an increased capacity to accept social and cultural differences. Thus, increasing levels of education will tend to be associated with more

positive attitudes towards immigrants. Additionally, education and occupational level are essentially a measure of social class level with those at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy most vulnerable to adverse economic events. Research indicates that those who have more pessimistic assessments of the current and future state of the economy are less receptive to immigration than those who are optimistic (Lahav, 2004). As such, people's assessment of immigration tends to depend on the extent to which they perceive threats to the economy and their jobs. If immigrants are perceived to be competing for jobs, then it is reasoned that the employed and the prosperous will be less 'anti-immigration' (Chandler et al., 2001), leading us to Hypotheses 2 and 3.

H2: Increasing levels of education will tend to be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants.

H3: Employees in higher occupational levels will tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigrants than lower level occupations.

Political science research has found that judgments about general and specific policy are associated with political beliefs (McGowan, 1999). For example, Sears et al. (1980) have found that political affiliation was significantly related to attitudes toward a variety of public policy issues, such as unemployment, national health insurance, and questions about law and order. Immigration can clearly be viewed as a contemporary addition to these issues. The historical relationship between trade unions and social democratic or Labour parties is one essentially based on shared values of social justice, equal opportunities, solidarity and respect. The relationship has been seen to be a mutually beneficial one over time (see McCartney, 2003). Collective solidarity is commonly associated with the trade union movement and conjures up positive images of the strength of togetherness and community. Thus, positive attitudes towards immigration would be viewed as an expected extension of both trade union membership and leftist political orientation. This leads us to the following two hypotheses:

H4: A political left orientation will be associated with more benign attitudes towards immigrants than a right orientation.

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H5: Membership of a trade union is likely to be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants.

Previous studies have found political participation to be more common amongst people with higher education levels, income and active citizenship (see for example Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1995). Additionally, Schur (2003) asserts that employment directly affects interest in politics and workers' civic skills through the impact of changing work practices, such as the introduction of employee participation programmes. Participation in this type of work practice may foster skills development that facilitates political participation outside the workplace. Survey research has consistently found men to be somewhat, but not substantially, more politically active than women. Various factors have been proposed to explain the disparity in political activity between the sexes. Schlozman et al. (1999: 29) have found gender differences in workplace experiences linked to the issue that women are less likely than men to accumulate participatory factors at work because 'they are less likely to be in the workforce at all, to be in the workforce full-time, or to be in high-level jobs'. These are captured in the final two propositions:

H6: Increased political activism will be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants.

H7: Higher scores on the citizenship measure are likely to be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants.

DATA AND MEASURES

The data used here comes from the 2003 European Social Survey (ESS).² The European Social Survey (the ESS) is a biennial multi-country survey covering over twenty nations. The first round was fielded in 2002/2003. The survey is designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It is funded jointly by the European Commission and the European Science Foundation and directed by a Central Coordinating Team.³ Data collection was by means of face-to-face interviews of around an hour in duration. The objective of the ESS sampling strategy is

the design and implementation of workable and equivalent sampling strategies in all participating countries. The requirement is for random (probability) samples with comparable estimates based on full coverage of the eligible residential populations aged 15+. An essential element of the strategy is the achievement of high response rates in all participating countries, in order to ensure that the people interviewed in each country closely represent the country's total population. A target response rate of 70 per cent was set for each country. The fifteen countries used for comparative purposes are the European Union members before the recent accessions. They are Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, UK, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, France, Portugal, Sweden. We have excluded the recent new entrants such as Poland and Hungary as their experience of democratic politics is relatively recent.

A total of 29,110 surveys were returned from these fifteen countries with 44 per cent or 12,779 of the respondents reporting being currently in employment. Since our focus is on employee attitudes to immigrants only the latter 12,779 respondents are included in our analysis. The sample size returned for Ireland was 2,046 of which 888, or 43 per cent of respondents, reported being in employment. The appropriate design and population size sample weights are used in the data analysis below.

Table 12.1 provides a description of the dependent and independent variables used in our analysis. Apart from the first question, all the questions defined immigrants as someone born, brought up and living outside (the respondent's country). Thus, the questions on immigrants do not distinguish between those coming from inside and outside of Europe as a single group. Since attitudes to western and non-western immigrants could plausibly be significantly different, the responses in the ESS survey may be biased in either direction. Although we can only speculate on whom respondents had in mind when answering the questions it is probable that many of the questions were answered based on their beliefs about non-western immigrants. For example, questions on the importance of cultural requirements of immigrants include 'coming from a Christian background', 'being white' and being 'committed to the way of life in the host country'.

Table 12.1a: Description of Dependent Variables

	Dependent Variables Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Allow poor in from non-EU	Question: To what extent do you think the country should allow people from the poorer countries to come and live here? Scored: 1=Allow many to live here; 2=Allow some; 3=Allow a few; 4=Allow none.	2.2	0.7	/
Labour market skill requirements	Question asked: How important do you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside [country] should be able to come and live here? Three items are added together: 1. Have good educational qualifications. 2. Be able to speak [country]'s official language(s). 3. Have work skills that [country] needs. Scored on an eleven-point scale from 0=Extremely unimportant to 10=Extremely important. The three items are added together and divided by three to give a range from 0 to 10.	6.6	2.3	0.78

(Continued)

Table 12.1a: (Continued)

	Dependent Variables Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Socio-cultural Requirements	Same question as above. Four items are added together and divided by four to give a range from 0 to 10. 1. Have close family living here. 2. Come from a Christian background. 3. Be white. 4. Be committed to the way of life in [country]. Scored as above.	4.0	2.0	0.69
Cultural impact	Composed of three items: 1. Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? 2. Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries. 3. Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries. All are scored on an eleven-point scale from 0=Culture undermined, worse to live, crime worse to 10=Culture enriched, better place, crime better. Three items are added together and divided by three to give a range from 0 to 10.	5.2	1.9	0.74

(Continued)

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Table 12.1a: (Continued)

	Dependent Variables Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Economic impact	<p>Question: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Four items added together:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Average wages and salaries are generally brought down by people coming to live and work here.2. People who come to live and work here generally harm the economic prospects of the poor more than the rich.3. People who come to live and work here help to fill jobs where there are shortages of workers (reverse scoring).4. If people who have come to live and work here are unemployed for a long period, they should be made to leave. <p>Scored on a five-point scale from 1 = Agree strongly to 5 = Disagree strongly. Four items are added together and divided by four to give a range from 1 to 5.</p>	3.1	0.7	0.65

(Continued)

Table 12.1a: (Continued)

	Dependent Variables Description	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Economic input	Composed of three items: 1. Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs? 2. Most people who come to live here work and pay taxes. They also use health and welfare services. On balance, do you think people who come here take out more than they put in or put in more than they take out? 3. Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries. All are scored on an eleven-point scale from 0= Take away jobs, take out more, bad for the economy to 10= create jobs, put in more and good for economy.	4.4	1.8	0.68

n=882 (weighted)

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Table 12.1b: Description of Independent Variables

	Independent Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Political orientation	In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'; where would you place yourself on this scale? Scored from 0 = Left to 10 = Right	5.2	1.9	/
Age	Age of respondents	38	12.2	/
Education	Years of education	13.9	3.2	/
Gender	1 = Male; 0 = Female	0.47	/	/
Occupation	Occupation is classified into eight groups as follows: 1 = Senior/Managers; 2 = Professional; 3 = Technicians/lower professional; 4 = Admin white collar; 5 = Lower services white collar; 6 = Skilled manual; 7 = Semi-skilled manual; 8 = Unskilled manual	4.1	2.1	/
Union membership	Scored 1 = Member of a trade union; 0 = Non-member	0.4	/	/

(Continued)

Table 12.1b: (Continued)

	Independent Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Political activism	Question: During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? 1. Contacted a politician, government or local government official. 2. Worked in a political party or action group. 3. Worked in another organisation or association. 4. Worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker. 5. Signed a petition. 6. Taken part in a lawful public demonstration. 7. Boycotted certain products. 8. Deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons. 9. Donated money to a political organisation or group. Scored 0 = None of these and 1 for each item done. Possible range 0 to 9.	1.8	0.2	0.71

(Continued)

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Table 12.1b: (Continued)

	Independent Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Citizenship measure	<p>Question: To be a good citizen, how important are the following? Composed of six items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support people who are worse off than themselves.2. Vote in elections.3. Always obey laws and regulations.4. Form their own opinion, independently of others.5. Be active in voluntary organisations.6. Be active in politics. <p>Scored 0 = Extremely unimportant to 10 = Extremely important. The six items are summed and then divided by 6 to give a 0 to 10 range.</p>	6.9	1.4	0.72

RESULTS

The basic percentage responses for Ireland on the six dependent variables are reported in Table 12.2. One third of the respondents believed that few or no immigrants from non-EU states should be allowed into the country, indicating a relatively negative attitude to

Table 12.2: Irish Employee Attitudes towards Immigrants

	Allow Many/Some		Allow Few/None	N
Allow poor in from non-EU	67%		33%	865
	Not Important	Neither	Important	N
Labour market skills ⁱ	21%	13%	65%	849
	Not Important	Neither	Important	N
Socio-cultural requirements ⁱ	66%	12%	23%	845
	Culture Enriched	Neither	Culture Undermined	N
Cultural impact ⁱ	42%	26%	32%	812
	Disagree	Neither	Agree	N
Economic impact is negative ⁱⁱ	37%	37%	26%	819
	Positive Impact	Neither	Negative Impact	N
Economic input ⁱ	26%	23%	50%	818

ⁱ The measures of labour market skills, socio-cultural requirements, culture impact and economic input all have a continuous range 0 to 11. They are divided into three categories at the upper, middle and lower range to facilitate a frequency distribution in the following manner: 5.5–10=upper level; 4.51–5.49=central level; 0–4.5=lower level.

ⁱⁱ Economic impact measure has a continuous range from 1 to 5. It is divided into three categories: 0–2.5=agree; 2.51–3.49=neither; 3.5–5=disagree.

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non-EU immigrants. While 65 per cent indicated that labour market skills such as language, education and work skills were important attributes for immigrants, only 23 per cent believed that socio-cultural requirements such as having a Christian background, being white and committed to the way of life in the country were important attributes. However, a significant proportion of respondents (32 per cent) believed that immigrants generally undermined the country's cultural life. Conversely, 42 per cent believed that immigrants enriched the country's culture. A total of 26 per cent of respondents agreed that immigrants have a negative impact by bringing down average wages, harming the economic prospects of the poor more than the rich and not helping to fill jobs where there is a shortage of workers. 37 per cent of respondents disagreed with this position while 37 per cent were neutral. However, half of the respondents believed that immigrants had a negative effect on the economy by taking away jobs from indigenous workers and taking out more in health and welfare services and that they are generally bad for the economy. Overall, in the six dependent variables there is a sizeable minority of respondents who hold negative views regarding the effect of immigrants on the country's culture and economy.

IRELAND IN A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

In Table 12.3 the means of the dependent variables are compared across the 15 EU countries. Ireland is ranked second, behind Sweden, in permitting poor people from outside the EU to live here. It is below the EU mean regarding the importance of labour market criteria and socio-cultural requirements. Irish respondents are also above the EU average in believing that immigrants enrich their culture. On the economic impact of immigrants, Irish respondents are less sanguine having a similar mean score as the EU average concerning the negative impact of immigrants on native workers' wages. In addition, Irish respondents were significantly more likely than most other countries to believe that immigrants are bad for the economy in general. In comparative terms these results appear to indicate that Irish respondents are above the EU average regarding the positive socio-cultural impact of immigrants but below the EU average on the positive economic impact

Table 12.3: Employee Attitudes – 15 EU Countries

	Allow Poor in from non-EUⁱ	Labour Market Criteriaⁱⁱ	Socio- Cultural Requirementsⁱⁱⁱ	Cultural Impact^{iv}	Economic Impact^v	Economic Input^{vi}
Austria	2.6	6.8	4.0	4.7	3.1	5.0
Belgium	2.4	6.2	4.3	4.5	3.1	4.4
Denmark	2.5	6.1	4.2	4.9	3.5	4.9
Finland	2.5	6.1	4.8	5.5	3.1	4.9
France	2.5	6.4	4.3	4.6	3.2	4.9
Germany	2.3	7.0	4.0	4.9	3.0	4.5
Greece	2.9	7.8	5.6	3.3	2.5	3.7
Holland	2.4	6.1	4.1	4.7	3.2	4.8
Ireland	2.2	6.2	4.0	5.2	3.1	4.4
Italy	2.3	5.8	4.4	4.6	3.2	5.0
Luxembourg	2.4	6.7	3.5	5.5	3.3	6.0
Portugal	2.8	6.6	4.9	4.1	2.7	4.7

(Continued)

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Table 12.3: (Continued)

	Allow Poor in from non-EUⁱ	Labour Market Criteriaⁱⁱ	Socio- Cultural Requirementsⁱⁱⁱ	Cultural Impact^{iv}	Economic Impact^v	Economic Input^{vi}
Spain	2.3	5.8	4.4	4.7	3.3	5.2
Sweden	1.8	4.1	3.7	5.7	3.5	5.5
UK	2.5	6.6	4.3	4.6	2.9	4.2
Mean	2.4	6.4	4.2	4.7	3.1	4.7
Irish ranking in the EU	Ranked 2 nd on allowing poor in	Ranked 6 th on criteria unimportant	Ranked 3 rd to 5 th on requirements unimportant	Ranked 4 th highest on culture enriched	Ranked 5 th to 8 th that native workers harmed economy	Ranked 2 nd to 3 rd that immigrants bad for economy
N	13,237	13,439	13,309	12,983	12,733	12,804

ⁱ Scored on a four-point scale from 1 = Allow many to live here to 4 = Allow none.

ⁱⁱ Scored on an eleven-point scale from 0 = Extremely unimportant to 10 = Extremely important.

ⁱⁱⁱ Scored on an eleven-point scale from 0 = Extremely unimportant to 10 = Extremely important.

^{iv} Scored on a eleven-point scale from 0 = Culture undermined to 10 = Culture enriched.

^v Scored on a five-point scale from 1 = Agree strongly that native workers are harmed to 5 = Disagree strongly.

^{vi} Scored on an eleven-point scale from 0 = Take away jobs/bad for the economy to 10 = Create jobs/ good for economy.

of immigrants. A possible explanation for the Irish position is the historical experience of emigration of Irish people up to the 1990s. However, since the early 1990s migration trends have reversed and substantial numbers who emigrated have recently returned to work in Ireland. The 2002 census returned 47,500 registered immigrants, of which 18,000 were returning Irish. Consequently, the experience of emigration may be a factor affecting the Irish response.

DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS

In Table 12.4 multivariate techniques are used to examine the determinants of Irish workers' attitudes towards immigrants. Multivariate analysis allows the separate independent effects of each measure to be estimated while controlling for possible coterminous or overlapping influences from other variables. Full descriptions of the independent variables entered into the equations are outlined in Table 12.1. Although years of education and occupation are relatively highly correlated, both measures are included in the analysis as it allows an estimation of the more dominant of the two measures. Where the independent measures are statistically significant it is in the direction predicted (Table 12.4). It appears that age and gender have no significant effect on attitudes towards immigrants. Thus, there is no support for Hypothesis 1, that increasing age will tend to be associated with more negative attitudes towards immigrants. However, years of education are associated with positive attitudes towards allowing poor people in from non-EU countries (Equation 1). Although education has no effect in the areas of labour market skills and socio-cultural criteria, respondents with additional years of education are more likely to believe that immigrants enrich the country's culture, and have a positive economic impact (Equations 4, 5 and 6). This provides considerable support for Hypothesis 2, that higher levels of education will tend to be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants. Similarly, there is substantial support for Hypothesis 3, that employees in higher-level occupations will tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigrants than those in lower-level occupations. The former are more likely to

238 *Irish Workers' Perceptions of the Impact of Immigrants*Table 12.4: Determinants of Workers' Attitudes to Immigrants
(Ordinary least squares regression, method: enter)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Allow poor in from non-EU	Labour Market Skills	Socio- Cultural Criteria	Cultural Impact	Economic Impact	Economic Input
Age	-0.01	0.04	-0.08	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05
Gender	0.01	0.03	0.00	-0.01	-0.03	0.07
Years of education	-0.11*	-0.00	0.00	0.2***	0.1*	0.18***
Occupational level	0.1*	0.09	0.15***	-0.11**	-0.19***	-0.11**
Political orientation	0.03	0.13**	0.13***	-0.03	-0.05	-0.06
Union membership	-0.04	-0.07	0.02	-0.00	-0.03	0.00
Political activism	-0.06	-0.18***	-0.16***	0.14***	0.07	0.11**
Citizenship measure	-0.12**	0.06	0.08	0.17***	0.1**	0.08*
F score	6***	7***	9***	16***	9***	11***
adjusted R²	0.05	0.06	0.08	0.14	0.08	0.1
N	658	648	645	626	628	631
DW	2.0	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0

* < 0.05; ** < 0.01; *** < 0.001

agree with allowing poor people into the country, to believe that socio-cultural criteria are unimportant and that culture and the economy is enriched by immigrants.

There is little support for Hypothesis 4, that a political left orientation will be associated with more benign attitudes towards immigrants than a right orientation. Although respondents with a left political orientation are more likely to report that labour market skills and socio-cultural criteria are unimportant than respondents on the right (Equations 2 and 3), there is no significant difference regarding the impact of immigrants on culture and the economy. Hypothesis 5, that membership of a trade union is likely to be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants, receives no support on any of the dependent variables. There is considerable support for Hypothesis 6, that higher levels of political activism are significantly associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants. Political activism is significantly associated with four of the dependent measures: labour market skills, socio-cultural criteria, cultural impact and one of the economic measures. Hypothesis 7, that higher scores on the citizenship measure are likely to be associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants, is also supported but the coefficients are relatively weaker than in the case of political activism.

Although the results in Table 12.4 are generally as predicted (apart from Hypotheses 1 and 5), two qualifications need to be acknowledged. Firstly, many of the standardised beta coefficients, though statistically significant, are relatively weak. A second qualification relates to the actual variance (the adjusted R^2) explained in the dependent measures. The variance in the dependent measures accounted for in the equations ranges from 5 per cent to 14 per cent. Obviously, there are potential factors outside the scope of the survey research used here that may explain more of the variance. This raises interesting questions concerning the determinants of attitudes towards immigrants that require further, perhaps more nuanced, qualitative rather than quantitative research. In any case, there remains much to be explained about the sources and reasons for the variance in the attitudes of working people towards immigrants.

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CONCLUSION

One of the key elements of EU immigration policy is labour market integration. European employment guidelines for 2003 have been revised to require Member States to implement measures and set targets to ensure the integration into the labour market of migrant workers and reduce the unemployment gap with nationals (ILO, 2004). Yet, it appears that negative attitudes among people at work in Ireland towards immigrants are particularly pronounced in the areas of culture and the economy. A sizeable minority of respondents believed that immigrants undermine their country's culture, have a negative impact on wages and the poor and a negative impact on jobs and the economy. Given the consistent upward trend in the number of immigrants in Ireland and Europe generally such negative attitudes are a major cause for concern. Failure to address the causes or sources of these attitudes has the potential to revive nascent extreme nationalist ideologies. Yet, there is little evidence to indicate that negative attitudes toward immigrants are declining. Indeed, Eurobarometer surveys showed that in 1988 30 per cent of respondents believed there were too many foreigners in their country; by 1997 this had increased to 41 per cent (Lahav, 2004: 86). More generally, it appears that throughout the EU policy towards immigrants from outside Europe is becoming more restrictive and protectionist (Lahav, 2004).

The success of the various EU initiatives outlined in the Lisbon strategy on integrating third-country nationals (immigrants from outside the EU) into the labour market will depend to a significant extent on attitudinal change in a significant proportion of native Irish workers. Regarding the determinants of employee attitudes toward immigrants, previous studies have also found that background characteristics such as age and sex have a weak impact on attitudes towards immigration (Chandler, 2001). The variables with the strongest explanatory effect in this study are occupational level, years of education and being politically active. Though weaker, political orientation and the citizenship measure were also significant. Previous studies have indicated that employment plays an important role in creating active citizens (Schur, 2003). Thus, the determinants of social attitudes are an important consideration for governments in the development of successful policies aimed at the social and economic integration of immigrants. In addition, given

the positive attitudes registered by these particular respondent groups, the participation of sectors such as education and business in policy development could assist in developing a coherent policy on immigration at national and European level.

The integration of immigrants remains a key challenge for Irish and EU policymakers. From an economic perspective it is clear that EU member states cannot meet future skills and labour needs with the indigenous population alone. Yet, it appears that a substantial number of Irish employees in the workplace continue to express reservations regarding the adverse cultural and economic impact of immigrants.

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- 1 There has in recent years been an increasing emphasis on easing restrictions to allow inflows of skilled workers in areas such as Information Technology. For example, in August 2001 Germany introduced the 'Green Card' initiative to permit a quota of up to 10,000 specialists from non-EU countries to be employed in Information Technology for five years (International Organisation for Migration, 2002). This has however raised fears of a possible 'brain drain' in less developed countries, with the source countries losing their most qualified workers.
 - 2 Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) as the data archive and distributor of the ESS data.
 - 3 Jowell, R. and the Central Coordinating Team (2003) *European Social Survey 2002/2003: Technical Report*, London: Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University.

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