

**Irish Emigration: A study on why people still emigrate from contemporary Ireland.**

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## **Abstract**

As the world appears to be growing into an increasing globalised one, so too does contemporary Ireland. Ireland has always seen periods of emigration throughout its modern history and modern-day Ireland is no exception. This study attempts to research what causes people to leave their country even at a time when Ireland is economically strong. The findings will show that people are in search of a better life with more opportunities than exist in Ireland. People want to experience what the world has to offer and become more financially secure. The participants of this study show that once they have lived several years abroad, they were also ready to return to Ireland and start back with a better, more fulfilled life. Emigration is also a difficult choice that an individual may have to make, thus the research also attempts to understand what some of the key causes may be.

# 1. Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

The total number of people emigrating from Ireland as of April 2019, was 56,300 (CSO). Of these, 29,000 (52.8%) were Irish nationals leaving the country. Although there was a net inward migration of +100 Irish nationals for the first time since 2009 in the previous year, it once again returned to a net outward migration of -2,100. There still remains this social phenomena of Irish people wanting or needing to leave their country in search of a better life, whether that be true economical means, health reasons or another explanation that draws so many people away from their home country. Yet as Ireland's population grows to 4.92 million, and emigration numbers in total are declining, it appears that throughout the history of the State, this Irish sediment routed from the Irish Diaspora has stayed connected to communities across the nation. Many of the unwanted from pre-modern societies such as, criminals and the poor, were forced to leave or voluntarily left for the 'New World'. Millions were being driven by starvation from a famine-stricken island in a time of desperation. A circumstance which the Irish people have always been familiar with.

Yet, after almost 200 years of near constant emigration, what is causing people to continue considering the option of emigration in such high regard. Ireland is now one of the wealthiest nations in the world and ranks 5<sup>th</sup> of 187 countries in the global GDP per capita list (IMF). Including this, the Irish economy has started to once again thrive, resembling the prosperous 'Celtic Tiger' era of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Unemployment has dropped drastically since the recession of 2009, falling to a significant 4.8% in December 2019 (CSO). With these seemingly positive improvements to Irish life, there does not appear to be as many countries that can rival or boast a higher standard of living. Sociological research may be able

to explain and uncover what is driving people to leave Ireland and by what means it is causing them to search for a better life in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, Ryan (2015). The following literature review aims to support and demonstrate this issue.

## **1.2 Migration a Social Existence**

“Migration has been a defining feature of Irish society throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries” (Ryan 2015). It is a process that has echoed throughout human nature and is a part of people and their social interactions in the world. Ireland has long been known for its people migrating from the small farm villages of the Border, Midlands and West regions, but in post-modern Ireland the issue of emigration in the country is a nationwide concern. Through its history, Irish people have become different types of migrants at various periods in the last 200 years. This process has come to define almost every aspect of a social existence both in Ireland and across the world. By this, the Irish people have transformed and shaped the places in which they have settled with the culture and variety they have brought.

Typically there are four types of migrants, economic, political, environmental and family migrants. Different socio-economic reasons result in a defined pattern that people could be categorized, such as those forced to leave due to high rates of unemployment. Yet these methods of organizing are not as relevant than in the post-recession era of Irish society.

Today people are emigrating for various reasons and fall under several migrating terms, such as people in search of simple change and wanting to experience different cultures and values. As understood by (Castles 2009), these perspectives are still very important in tendencies like that of ‘push-pull’ theory These lay the fundamental comprehension of this social phenomena but can become somewhat hindered in a post-modern context of an increasingly globalised world.

### 1.3 Migrants

Economic migrants are people who move from one country to another as a response to beneficial and greater economic prosperity/ opportunity in a receiving country. “Typically, it is thought that economic migrants generally come from the global south into areas such as North America or Europe” (Koser, 2007). However this is not the case of the modern Irish emigrant context. An example of this mechanism taking place is that of the well-known chat show host Graham Norton. Born in Dublin to a Protestant family, he dropped out of university to travel. During this time he moved to the UK where he carved out a successful career in tv and radio. It may be considered that had he not left Ireland during this time, he may not have had the opportunities or resources to gain such fame and traction. It does appear that this element of traveling while at a young age could be a factor in the decision of this subject.

Following this, the other type of migration, however does not provide much significance to the Irish case of emigration in a modern sense, is that of political migration. Political migrants are people who leave their home country due to aspects such as war, or government policies that discriminate or threaten a certain group of people. The fear of persecution or death results in these people fleeing from these regions in search of a safer place to live. BBC News (2001) shed light on the background to someone who falls under the category of a political migrant. Fleeing from a war torn Afghanistan, Farid Ahmad the interviewee, explained the treacherous journey and life that comes with being a political migrant.

Although this is not lightly used to label a certain type of migrant, there can be different levels to this, however in an Irish context there is little resemblance of this in effect today. Environmental migrants are those who are forced to leave their home due to sudden and long-term changes to the local environment which as a result causes living circumstances to be unsafe. Processes such as desertification, droughts and more recently, rising sea levels have

caused people to flee from their regions. Again, this does not reflect the Irish stature of migration but could be a possible factor as climate change occurs over time.

Finally, the last migrant type that will be discussed is that of people leaving a country for family reasons. This refers to the method of family members joining another who is a lawful resident in that country. Again through the works of (Koser, 2007), often times spouses and children may be allowed and stay in a country to be with those family members. In relation to Irish migrants, it does not appear to be a fundamental aspect of Irish emigration, however it should not be ruled out entirely.

#### **1.4 Reasons for Emigration**

As mentioned previous there are four main types of migrants which are seen around the world today. Often times they are combined as people who have many different individual aspects which can cause them to fall into one or more of those categories. However, this may not reflect the full extent as to why these people may choose or have to migrate from their home. Therefore, it is important to also understand the logic behind the choices people make and why. During 2013, which saw the height of emigration mid recession, there was a large change in direction for the destination of Irish migrants than that of the UK which was the destination of many Irish migrants before then. Countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States (US) appeared more lucrative and opportunistic and a much different lifestyle to that of the United Kingdom (UK) which would be similar to Ireland.

Yet through the work of Mota & Ribeiro (2019), it can be analysed that a large factor for migration, particularly to countries such as the US, is that of both financial means but also to gain experience, both in relation to work and lifestyle. Mota and Ribeiro's work led to the understanding that some people who were highly skilled, such as doctors, went to the US with the aid of modern global mobility in order to train, work and learn new techniques. In

the beginning many of these people aspired to return to their home country to share their knowledge and increase the standards in their field of work. Therefore it could be aligned to Irish emigrants that some may wish to gather more life and work experience abroad, which they could then bring back if they decided to return home.

However the issues which Mota and Ribeiro found was that many of these emigrants adjusted to life away from their home country and stayed, starting an almost new life. This then led to 'brain drains' within local communities that had high levels of emigration.

In accordance with (Cohen, 1997) "A shared memory about the original homeland, a commitment to its preservation and belief in the possibility of eventual return". This is also a key feature of migrants when they begin a new life abroad.

## **1.5 Recession**

During the economic crash of 2009 many young people began leaving Ireland in search of a better life. Unemployment was drastically increasing to 17.1% which had not been seen in Ireland since 1986 (CSO 1986). With this, the Irish Financial Services (IFS) uncovered large amounts of salary freezing along with wage cuts across the job market. Most alarmingly was the drop in living standards for a country that had been at the forefront and led by example in this category.

With a staggering 2% of the population emigrating in the 2011-2012 financial year alone, O'Sullivan (2013) admits that after 90 years of Irish freedom, the connection between past and present is still ever relevant in tough economic periods. With such a prosperous age of the 'Celtic Tiger' and the vast wealth and expenditure that came with that, it is thought the Irish people had a blip in their history and returned to the Irish reality of life.

During this prosperous time emigration had become an unfamiliar part of Irish society, with the country boasting one of the highest standards of living anywhere in the world and record

low unemployment. However this came to an abrupt end and many people started to leave on masse. Yet it appeared that those who were leaving the country were primarily a part of the most mobile cohort population. As noted by Confrey, Lawless & Linehan (2014), population figures showed that there was a 31% increase to the number of adults aged 25-44 who emigrated in the most recent recession compared to that of the 1980s, where the majority of emigration occurred among those aged 15-24. This is an interesting factor in how or why there was such a shift in the age groups of those emigrating in a 30 year gap. This may raise the issue of why there was such a significant drop in the age group of the migrants during this time. It could be as Confrey (2011) describes it as, “the substantial rise in broader measures of unemployment during the recession due to increases in the number of discouraged and marginally attached workers”. This could be construed that the labour market itself completely shifted in skill and made that the 25-44 age group were possibly less adaptable or unable to retrain due to financial restraints than their younger counterparts.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, as delving into such a niche topic of Irish emigration, particularly in recent years after the global recession, there does appear to be a gap in the current knowledge in this specific section. Therefore the research question for this project is “why people still emigrate from Ireland”. It is an area for which many people in Ireland know of a close friend or relative that has made the journey abroad in search of a better life or experience. Perhaps many people, as they reach a certain age consider doing the same. Certainly in post-recession Ireland it became more of a matter when a person would rather than if they would emigrate. For these reasons this research study will attempt to understand why people chose to leave Ireland.

The research reviewed, highlights key areas which will help gain an understanding for the hard life decisions that people make. Particular importance on values, meaning and seeking a better life should provide important context for this area of a gap in the literature.

## **2. Methods**

The method of qualitative data used was semi structured in-depth interviews. Due to the nature of the research, in that the opinions and feelings of the participant towards emigration must be examined, qualitative analysis was deemed the best approach for the collection of this data. The questions that will be addressed to the participants will be exploring areas of migration as a social phenomenon and social issue. As stated by Malinowski (Richie & Lewis, 2003) “qualitative interviews provide the ability to achieve this depth”.

### **2.1 Apparatus**

The apparatus used to record the participants was a recording feature on an iPhone X. It was an inbuilt app that supplied the ability to conduct the interview with ease and flexibility, in case a participant wanted or needed to halt the interview at any time. Furthermore, the interviews were then transcribed onto Microsoft Word. From here the interviews were downloaded to a USB key as a backup. They were inputted into the software package of NVivo 10 where the findings could be drawn using thematic analysis.

### **2.2 Participants**

The participants used in this study came from a group of four people. They gave their informed consent and consisted of two males and two females who had previously emigrated from Ireland. It was also important that the participants were Irish natives. From these four interviews there was a significant amount of information for analysis available.

The use of non-probability sampling was used and helped to highlight certain aspects of the participants within the population. Participants required were aged between 18-40 as to grasp those returning home having previously emigrated and those who also wish to do so again.

Upon interviewing three of the respondents, snowball sampling was used in respect to the

final participant. The participants sample was stratified purpose sampling and the respondents were homogenous. The main difference between the group was age with two being in their twenties and two in their thirties. Two of the participants were also from county Kildare while the other two were from Tipperary and Limerick.

### **2.3 Design**

The design method was that of qualitative research analysis using in-depth semi structured interviews. Each important theme was noted and thus various questions were formulated with that in mind. The interviews were conducted from the first week in February 2020 to the last week of that month. It was important for the interviews to explore the idea of emigration and how people from the population thought about the process and if it was important to them. The questions tended to be open-ended to allow for maximum exploration of one's ideas and opinions.

### **Procedure 2.4**

The procedure included all four participants taking part and being interviewed individually. They were given the same base questions with probes differing depending on the area of discussion or feelings that a person had. The interviews took place in the participants home, typically in a quiet room away from the other members of the house hold. The interviews were between 20-40 minutes which allowed for a wide range of discussion on the subject. The participants were also informed of the conversation being recorded and analysed with the consent form being completed beforehand (Appendix 2). Only with the second interviewee was there an interruption which was handled swiftly due to the ease of pausing the recording which then continued shortly after. The semi-structured layout of the questions meant that questions were straightforward and easy to answer but allowed for a wide scope of answers to be collected. Follow up questions were also asked to each individual which were different

from each interview. This helped further explore areas that the questionnaire did not directly inquire. Upon gaining the results from the interviews, they were then transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document and later moved onto NVivo 10 for analysis.

## **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

The research proposal had to be reviewed through Dublin Business School ethics committee before any work could be conducted. Before the research was conducted the participants were handed a consent form and also verbally informed about the format of the interview. This also helped to reassure the interviewee as several stated that they were nervous of the interview to follow. Due to the nature of the topic it was noted when questioning that some participants may have had to emigrate due to unemployment or redundancy. If this was introduced by the participant it would be left to them whether they deemed it appropriate to discuss further during the session as it can be a sensitive topic for some. The researcher also informed the participants that the data they collected would be analysed but that identifying markers would remain confidential to protect their identity, with only pseudonyms being used in place of actual names. Following this, the participants were also informed that their consent forms and interviews would be appropriately stored and filed with access only being available to the researcher and examination board if required. The researcher made the nature of discussion very clear and planned so that the participants would not be surprised or caught unaware of the proceeding questions, therefore communication between both researcher and participant was very important to allow for a safe, beneficial project.

## **2.6 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was the method of data analysis used with the help of NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis software package. After the interviews were transcribed onto a Microsoft word document and transferred to NVivo 10, they were then coded. These codes allowed for themes to be identified and thus allowed for analysis to proceed. As described by Braun and Clarke (2006) “a key benefit of thematic analysis is that it is flexible which is exactly what is needed with semi structured interviews”. After this process was complete, the researcher has significant data collected from the interviews allowing for the key themes to be identified and creating sub-themes in the process. These were then all collected and provided the researcher with the appropriate data needed.

### **3.0 Findings**

The aim of this research is to explore the reasoning behind people migrating from Ireland currently and what it is that makes those people leave. Upon completion of the interviews, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and the subsequent evidence, producing some of the fundamental themes that emerged.

#### **3.1 Why Emigrate?**

The research was based on the process of emigration from a modern Irish context. The reasoning behind taking such an adventure was one of the most intriguing aspects of the interviews. Each participant was asked why they decided to do so and the term that appeared the most was opportunity in relation to financial gain.

“My dad, my dad’s job, he got a promotion or an opportunity to work abroad and he took it and took the family with him.” (Colm)

It could be observed from the interviews that each participant emigrated due to either a family member or themselves seeking better opportunities and thereby financial motivation was a key area of significance. The fact that the participants had emigrated previously demonstrated that their desire to achieve better opportunities and financial gain were justified in their decision to leave Ireland, alone or with family.

“I emigrated so that I could make some money, come home and buy a house. But I had it in my head that it was just going to be for one year because my fiancé was here at the time.” (Fay)

For each participant they concluded that although they were seeking better money, it was for something greater than themselves. To sacrifice a year without a loved one, in order to better

their own lives back in Ireland, clearly, it would appear that emigration is something which still has, in this case, an almost romantic element to it that they had hoped would be justified in the search of starting their lives together.

“I emigrated because there was a recession in Ireland at the time. It was difficult to find employment so I emigrated for job reasons and a better climate.” (Paul)

Furthermore, there is also evidence of the global recession of 2008 and its effects on Ireland. In this instance the notion of having to emigrate rather than wanting to is prevalent. Many people left Ireland as many have in the past in search of work and a better life. Interestingly to note also is the response of climate being another factor as to why that person emigrated. Although it was not the primary condition, it is nonetheless an element that could determine where one may emigrate to. Paul chose to emigrate to Australia instead of the UK, Canada or the US as the weather impacted his decision.

“My dad was asked would he like to go abroad for work and he thought it would be an adventure so we went.” (Sarah)

Again, the work reasoning behind moving away from Ireland is popular in concluding on the decisions of Sarah’s experience. However, there is also the ‘adventure’ aspect which they saw as another reason to go. Sarah and her family loved Shanghai, and she eventually did not wish to leave the city. Thus it appears that although work may be a factor to emigrate, the adventure is one that helps in making that decision easier than it seemed.

### 3.2 Leaving Ireland

Leaving one's home place is something that each of these participants experienced. They have had to deal with the issues but also the positives of starting essentially a new life abroad and all the circumstances that are involved with that. Yet through this, the participants shed light on how they felt about leaving Ireland behind, in some cases not knowing if they would ever move back home.

“I didn't find it difficult to leave, I was just kind of worried what I would be going into.” (Sarah)

Naturally, worry is an issue in a big life decision such as this. However, Sarah did not discover the move to be difficult. She did not particularly like her school and being young and not overthinking her families decision she embraced the adventure and opportunity she was about to embark upon.

“I did at the time because I was leaving my fiancé behind at the time. however I knew it was just for a year's contract and going to the middle east, the likes of Saudi Arabia you wouldn't necessarily as a single women be going there for a long period of time of your own. It can happen but in my case it was a very defined period of time.” (Fay)

As Fay reminisces on her feelings leaving behind what was her life for a definite period of time, it helped with her knowing that she would have a set return date back to her fiancé. This allowed her to work towards a goal even though she would have ideally preferred not go or that her future husband could come with her. Particularly due to the nature of the country she was set to work in. She put aside any negative thoughts of the challenge ahead of her and instead focussed on the positives that would make it worthwhile for her and her fiancé in the long term.

“I did, I did because I was unemployed. It was difficult because I was leaving my parents and family in general. I was very much involved in a football club so I had to leave that as well. And leave the sporting side of me I had in general.” (Paul)

Paul did remark that due to the recession he had no choice but to leave and was naturally upset about the process. Emigration has changed in the short space of 10 years to people having to leave out of necessity. Yet, interestingly he also brought up the topic of sport and how that was another factor difficult to leave behind. With someone being reared around GAA, a sport primarily played in Ireland, he was aware that there was little chance that he would play the sport leaving for Australia. That sense of community which being involved in a club and its ethos must resembles another family bond to him.

### **3.3 Negatives of Emigration**

Positives and negatives will naturally arise during the process of emigration to different individuals. The participants were happy to acknowledge that their attitudes were impacted both ways during their time away.

“Well there are negatives to it, especially from my personal experience, I found a loss of culture, and when I came back to Ireland I felt less at home than I did when I left.”  
(Colm)

Being ingrained with Irish pride is something a lot if not most people growing up in Ireland has experienced or at least observed. Therefore in Colm’s experience he felt that a loss of this pride began setting in while he was away from Ireland. Being in a different culture with practically no Irish people around naturally made it difficult to keep in touch with day to day life back home. Even in a modern, online world, being absent from Irish news, events and

society in general will naturally erode away, or certainly make it more difficult, this sense of constantly being Irish and keeping up to date about current Irish affairs and Irish culture.

“Negative, maybe for some people it may be that they won’t or can’t come back but I think that’s not as relevant because of social media and people can communicate so much better with Skype and FaceTime etc.” (Paul)

With the widely accessible communication tools such as FaceTime and Skype it significantly makes long distance contact more available, quicker and cheaper. Paul, not wanting to emigrate and only so out of necessity sees making this big life decision as an overall negative one. However, he does understand that such a situation he was in, is a much better scenario than previous generations that emigrated.

“Family is the only one I can think of.” (Sarah)

Yet in respect to Sarah, as she left with her close family, the issue was her extended family that she would see as a negative aspect to emigration. Sarah in particular embraced the idea of moving and so she found most of the experience largely positive. This information is important in attempting to understand the downsides to emigration as this negative side may prevent many people from emigrating also.

### 3.4 Positives of Emigration

Positives to emigration include a wide range of ideas and feelings. It appears that modern emigration is a much more positive life choice than what previous generations encountered. It is no longer the case that once people leave Ireland there is the possibility that they may never return home again. Even in the case where individuals do emigrate and set up a new life for themselves, the accessibility and affordability of returning home is much more of a prospect now than it ever was.

“Years ago people found it hard as they didn’t come back, whereas now they are in a position to come and go. I think it improves their outlook on life and gives them new experiences and I think it’s positive that they learn new things, they can bring things back.” (Fay)

As Fay describes the difference between years ago and now in relation to coming back to Ireland, with flights being much cheaper and shorter the reality is that people living away have that opportunity to come home whenever they can. It is also about gaining new life experiences and the ability to use that background in a positive way back in Ireland. Learning from new cultures and the particular ways in which others work may be able to be adopted for a good outcome in Irish society.

“It’s positive for the likes of Ireland for example. The island of Ireland currently has a population of 5.5 million and in 25 years’ time they maintain that it will be 10 million. So that will give the country the opportunity to perform better. The country needs about 50,000 houses to be built here for newlyweds and homeless people, but at the moment we don’t have enough construction workers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, builders in general.” (Paul)

In this sense Paul sees the positives of emigration in respect to Ireland itself and the solutions it may lead to. The lack of tradespeople in the workforce currently is a problem which will need to be addressed in the near future. Homes are needed in Ireland and with, as Paul sees it, the use of foreign nationals this might become a viable solution to the problem.

### **3.5 Emigrating Again**

The area of emigrating again was visited during the interview with each participant. It is a true indication if the person really thought positively or negatively about the experience or that they simply were happy with the time they spent abroad and decided it was time to settle down. As in Colm's experience with emigration he thought it would be a good idea to try it again as he enjoyed his time initially in Singapore.

“Yeah, if it was just for a few years I would definitely go abroad yeah.” (Colm)

He does not commit for an indefinite amount of time but does suggest a few years would be something he might look into.

“I would go back to somewhere else in the middle east for example, the likes of Dubai where it is not as strict but the money, as good as it is and money has improved in nursing in Ireland.” (Fay)

Fay also evaluates her possibilities and decides on a different location as she did not particularly like Saudi Arabia due to its restrictions on women. She also contemplates as money for nursing, as she describes it, has improved and would be another factor she might have to consider before emigrating again. Yet again it does seem that financial means is determining area in her line of work.

“I probably would depending on the opportunity and depending on the current state of affairs in Ireland. Depending on how the economy was performing. If it wasn’t performing well and my job was at risk then yes, I would definitely consider leaving.”  
(Paul)

The recession still appears to be on Paul’s mind and the possibility of losing his job. He feels very certain that if the economy did start to decline again he would head back to Australia. Although it does not seem that he would go out of spontaneity or as a want, more it would be because he might have to, depending on the current financial climate.

“Yes one hundred percent. Back to Shanghai.” (Sarah)

Sarah, being in her early twenties, is very determined on a return to Shanghai, the place where she had previously spent three years. She is excited at the possibility of returning there as she just loved everything about the city.

## **4.0 Discussion**

This part of the dissertation will look at and discuss the results established in the third section focussing on the relevant literature and research questions. The aim of this research was to discover why people still emigrated from contemporary Ireland. The research required four participants from Ireland who had previously emigrated and involved people from relatively diverse age backgrounds. The main themes identified in establishing and understanding why people still emigrate from Ireland were, why emigrate, on leaving Ireland, negatives of emigration, positives of emigration and on emigrating again. These themes provided for the focus of analysis and granted access into some of the feelings and opinions people had on the topic.

### **4.1 Why Emigrate?**

From each of the four participants it was noted that a big factor that influenced their, or their family's decision to leave was due to financial opportunities. Many people that chose to leave Ireland are doing so in search of a better life which involves financial wealth. According to (Ritzer & Dean, 2019) "there are more jobs and better future job opportunities in the United States than in Mexico." Although the case is not in direct reference to Irish migration, it does reflect on the fact that people are migrating due to financial reasons and better opportunities. This study reflects this opinion that it is an important aspect when considering emigration. Although there are other reasons to account for, this element is fundamentally a factor in this research. However it is also in respect, a difficult life choice as people are choosing to leave their life behind in search of one better abroad. Thus through the reflection of the four participants, financial betterment through better job opportunities and enhanced pay, can be identified as a key areas in this instance to influencing a reason why people may emigrate from Ireland.

## **4.2 Leaving Ireland**

Naturally as all four participants had previously emigrated from Ireland it was important to understand and highlight their feelings towards leaving their home country for the first time. Many of the respondents had both a negative and positive emotion to the question depending on which aspect of leaving they discussed. It was noted that three of the four participants did include their longing to return home almost before they had left. They had wanted to emigrate, however it would never be an unemotional choice to leave family, friends etc. behind. In accordance with (Cohen, 1997) “A shared memory about the original home land, a commitment to its preservation and belief in the possibility of eventual return.” This reflects that people are bound by their connection to their home country despite perhaps starting a new life and even enjoying that condition. Therefore it was through the discussion of knowing they will and did miss Ireland, that it is a driving factor which may draw people back to Ireland and/or help those leaving by knowing they will return home in the future.

## **4.3 Negatives of Emigration**

Naturally, emigration is bound to co-exist with negatives that each individual may feel during their interaction with the process. The participants in the study were quick to note that there was a negative side to a predominantly positive experience in that the human element, such as leaving behind family and friends, was a major concern for the respondents.

All excluding one participant expressed their sadness towards parting from their close friends, families and even sports clubs. As stated by (Ryan, 2015) “For example, Daragh who was active in a sports club, described how different groups met through sport: ‘lads with plaster all over their trousers and paint on their shoes’ and ‘lads in shirt and tie’.” Thus there was a present difference in class that he recognised which was away from the normal of

home. It was the simplicity and knowing everyone that could change one's experience completely.

#### **4.4 Positives of Emigration**

A fundamental aspect that each individual shared during the interview was the positive element of emigration. Although there were downsides to the process, overall the experience was decisively good. Each participant enjoyed their time abroad and all expressed their desire to emigrate again. Although some had come back to Ireland to start a family they too still wished to leave Ireland again in the future. It is also true that there is a growing trend of females now traveling more and more on their own which was the case for Fay. As stated by (Castles & Miller, 2009) "There is a growing tendency towards the feminization of migration. A growing number of migrants are women, making contemporary migration much less male-dominated than in previous times." This is an interesting point as it may be something that not many people discuss around the subject of emigration. As more women do emigrate, it highlights some of the areas in society that may be overlooked in respect to women being able to do so more openly and freely. It is not often one might hear of this and came as a surprise that one of the participants had emigrated to Saudi Arabia, a very conservative country for women. It may show the growing equality in society of women emigrating alone in cohesion with their male counterparts.

#### **4.5 Emigrating Again**

As mentioned previous, all the participants expressed their desire to emigrate again in the future. Particularly for the two participants in their twenties, they really enjoyed their time in Asia and exclaimed that they will definitely move back there after they have completed their college degree. In reference to both Paul and Sarah, (Cohen, 1997) "The potential for

valuable and creative contributions to pluralistic host societies.” This is something that is good for society and appears that in this study research, the participants have used their third level education and taken it abroad to better themselves which in return betters their host country. Although contemporary society could not have all its graduates emigrating, it does appear that if they leave and comeback it can be of benefit to both societies in this globalised world.

## **5.0 Limitations of the Study & Implications for Future Research**

The study conducted was a small scale research group with four participants and was subjected to time constraints. The fact that the research was based on Irish people that have previously emigrated made for a small number of individuals who qualified for the study.

Thus, if resources were available to access participants who were still abroad, it may have yielded a different scope on the findings or aided that current study in some manner.

Each participant found the experience relatively positive and so it may be a matter that this may not reflect a wide scale view. Therefore, more participant interviews may be needed in this area of the study to fully grasp a general understanding on this subject.

During the study two key areas of further research were noted that may be required to gain further understanding emigration. The findings from Fay, in which she was a lone female emigrating in a largely male dominated sphere, is an area which may be interesting to discover if there is an abundance of women emigrating alone or if her experience is sporadic as suggested. Interviewing more women could allow for further information to be gathered in this instance and could dramatically change the landscape of individual emigration.

The second and final area of further research that may be carried out to ascertain how many of those that emigrate find success in their new host country. As this study dealt with those who returned home, individuals that forged a new life for themselves could provide a different outlook on the process of emigration. As noted, participants emigrated in search of improved standards of living e.g. wages, career opportunities, thus determining how those that have emigrated and continue to live abroad may be interesting.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This research study set out to discover the reasoning behind why people continue to emigrate from contemporary Ireland. The research found that there were a variety of reasons for emigrating but that financial betterment and career opportunities were key factors in individuals decisions to leave Ireland. The participants also found the process of emigration as a largely positive experience and encouraged people who were in a similar situation to themselves to emigrate also.

However, these respondents had also returned home and had always planned to come back to Ireland after several years abroad. This helped them in gaining key life experience which they have since brought home and applied to their day to day lives.

Contemporary Irish society now allows for many people to experience emigration as an aspect of learning and maturity. As travel to an increasing globalised world becomes faster and cheaper, the prospect of emigration is no longer a lifelong decision. People can spend a few years abroad and return home again which was reflected in this study.

The research also demonstrated that people find it difficult to leave loved ones as they set out on starting, however brief, a new life. Family was one such area that both made it difficult to leave but also provided as motivation for some participants to work hard, save money, and return home to supplement a better life in Ireland.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview Questionnaire**

Can you tell me your age and where you are from?

Have you had close friends who have emigrated?

What do you think are some of the key reasons for people emigrating from Ireland?

Why did you emigrate and did you want to?

How hard did you find it leaving?

Did you consider that you would come back at the time?

Do you think there are much barriers in the way that would keep people from leaving Ireland currently?

Do people in your age group (friends/peers) ever discuss emigration?

Would you think that emigration and migration as a whole is a positive or negative aspect of living in a globalised world?

If you had the option to emigrate again would you?

## Appendix 2

### **A study on why people still emigrate from contemporary Ireland**

My name is Gavin Maher and I am conducting research that explores why Irish people still emigrate from contemporary Ireland.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves an interview that will take roughly 40 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. If you do take part and any of the questions do raise difficult feelings, you do not have to answer that question, and/or continue with the interview.

Participation is confidential. If, after the interview has been completed, you wish to have your interview removed from the study this can be accommodated up until the research study is published.

The interview, and all associated documentation, will be securely stored and stored on a password protected computer.

**It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview that you are consenting to participate in the study.**

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact

Gavin Maher ([10343175@mydbs.ie](mailto:10343175@mydbs.ie))

Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_