

Voices of Young Migrant Men



Immigrant Council
of Ireland

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Foreword

The Immigrant Council of Ireland is delighted to produce this piece of research. It is ground breaking in that it gives a platform to those who have notably been absent from the debate on immigration and integration in this country.

The stories of these young migrant men mirror the story of the changes in our country over the past two decades, yet their voices are rarely heard in terms of policy and the future course for our nation.

We are extremely grateful and indebted to the 40 men who agreed to share their experiences, fears, hopes and dreams to allow us to produce this research.

Each has been extremely candid and forthcoming. They speak of their backgrounds, the land of their birth, what it was like at a young age to abandon everything and head off either as an individual or as part of a family to start again.

They have been frustrated, in some cases unfairly targeted by authorities and have had to face challenges in order to secure work.

Each case gives opportunities for lessons on how we implement policies across every part of Irish life and together highlight the need for a National Integration Strategy.

Most inspiring is the enthusiasm, excitement and passion the men have for Ireland and its future.

Young migrant men are part of Ireland's future and we owe it to those who have spoken up to ensure they are respected and treated equally in a land which is now their home.

I encourage you to read each of their stories and the recommendations which follow.

Brian Killoran,
Chief Executive,
Immigrant Council of Ireland

Introduction

General information

The research was carried out as part of the Migrant Men's Well-Being in Diversity (MiMen) Project, which has been funded by the European Commission. The project has taken place with partners in seven countries, including Ireland. The partnership constitutes universities, ministerial bodies and NGOs from seven member states:

- Christliches Jugenddorfwerk (CJD) Hamburg + Eutin (Christian Association of Youth Villages Hamburg – Eutin) – Project Leader
- Ministry of Justice in France
- University of Manchester in the UK
- Psychoanalytical Institute for Social Research (IPRS) in Italy
- Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) in Czech Republic
- The Finnish Youth Research Society Finland
- The Immigrant Council of Ireland/The Integration Centre

The project was implemented in Ireland by The Integration Centre between January and December in 2014. In 2015 the Immigrant Council of Ireland took over the project to bring it to its completion.

Aim and methodology

The purpose of this research is to examine the integration experiences of young male migrants and to look at the positive and negative factors affecting their well-being in various contexts such as

- Migration journey
- Belonging and identity
- Family
- Education
- Employment
- Safety and security
- Authorities
- Social networks
- Friendship
- Recreation and football
- Ambitions
- Issues which affect young migrant men and women in different ways

In Ireland the participants consisted of 40 young people from 19 different non-EU countries who had been living in the country for at least one year. The project focuses on young men with non-EU backgrounds. 22 interviewees participated in three focus groups discussions. 26 individual biographical narrative interviews were conducted, out of which eight were with focus group members. One person was interviewed twice.

Research methods	
Individual Interviews	18
Focus Group participants	22
Repeat interviews with Focus Group members	8
Repeat interview with an interviewee	1

Two focus groups were organised with the help of a youth organisation and a community forum, whereas the third group discussion took place as part of nationwide conference organised by a migrant organisation in partnership with other groups working in the area. Interview participants were reached through youth, migrant and sport organisations as well as through universities, ethnic restaurants and social media. The interviews and focus groups were conducted in Dublin, Dundalk, Kilkenny and Waterford. All interview participants received the same set of questions but some discussion topics differed due to the different circumstances of the participant e.g. the interviewee did not have any work experience at the time that the interview was conducted. Focus Group discussions included fewer key questions, giving the participants more freedom to dictate the conversation. All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and summarized.

We wish to put the views and thoughts of young migrant men who shared their experiences and opinions at the centre of this report. Therefore, the style of the report is descriptive, with a focus on quotations from the young men themselves. We also include a number of key findings from surveys, important studies and projects that are beneficial in contextualising our findings. This inclusion is merely intended for improved understanding of the interviews, as a full literature review would be beyond the scope of this publication.

Summary of key factors affecting the well-being of young migrant men

For many young migrant men, migration created a big challenge in terms of coping with the changes relating to language, culture, physical environment and social circles. At the beginning, there was a **common sense of disorientation** and it took time before the men *“eventually got used to it”*; one person talked about *“losing two years”* of his life. Therefore, they regarded eventually settling in and **building a life in Ireland as a great achievement**. For many, becoming a citizen was crucial as it granted them a secure status without the burden of applying for stamp renewals, in addition to marking a welcome from Ireland. For those coming from troubled countries, the peace in Ireland was itself a source of happiness: *“when you search for value in life the best thing to value is peace”*. Being successful in their studies was also important as it granted them the possibility of having a future career. Almost all of the men perceived education (typically third level education, however, for a few, work began towards the end of secondary school) as an essential path to the establishment of a career. Those who began to work appreciated its positive impact: *“Even though I am not going to college right now, the job makes me happy.”* In contrast, those whose progress was hindered in education or employment lamented the limitation posed by their circumstances: *“I can’t get a job or even go to college. I have these visions but I can’t accomplish like there are boundaries wherever I go.”*

The men also spoke of the **independence** that they gained as a result of having a job and social networks: *“...it is something that I could never imagine in my wildest dream, living abroad in my own place with my girlfriend...having friendship around the world.”* Other notable factors in the men’s satisfaction with life in Ireland were sports and student societies. For example, one person secured an award through his involvement in coaching a soccer team. Another person was the chairperson of a society. A third man recalled how, after a difficult beginning in school, he felt a sense of achievement when he was awarded special prizes for a project in transition year. His journey seemed to typify many others who, after a challenging initial period, progressed and grew in **confidence** as time went on.

On the other hand, several expressed bitterness at what they believed to be discriminatory treatment in schools, sport clubs, and by some authorities. Being discriminated against was perceived by some as more damaging than actual racist words; one African person shared his experience of being rejected by a manager who claimed that *“we don’t hire Black people here”*: similarly, another person was denied a position in a club and felt completely betrayed: *“Because I have that confidence I said I want to join the club, the manager said no, no, no we are currently full and I can see on the board like more players are welcome, you can register(...). I felt very bad that day. I realize if I was Irish that day I definitely get there but what can I do, I have to move on”*. This denial of equal opportunities and their incapacity of defending themselves is a prime example of treatment that adversely affects the migrant men’s well-being. Even though these negative views of the interviewed migrant men cannot be objectively verified, they still represent the mutual views of many young male migrants.

Not surprisingly, the people surrounding the young men have a significant influence over their happiness. Where present, **family**, including romantic partners, was central to their well-being: *“I have my family here (...), I’m managing the restaurant now, so everything is going well.”* In contrast,

being separated from family caused considerable hardship for young people, particularly those living without one or both parents. The happiness of some men was in part determined by the presence and happiness of their partners and/or children, as that was a key priority for them. Others talked about establishing a family as a major part of their future plans. One man stated that his dream is to have *“a big family of different cultures, so then they can teach people how to be happy.”* Cross-cultural families had their own internal challenges, often requiring additional cultural negotiation, particularly in terms of children’s upbringing. Differences emerged between the young migrant men and their parents around career expectations, and the men’s greater embracing of liberal values. That said, migrant men showed understanding of their parents’ views and valued their support.

Forming friendships was another key contributor to the young men’s happiness in Ireland. They appreciated meeting people in their classes but often youth clubs, sport activities (typically soccer), student societies, music activities and churches offered the best opportunity to make friends. Many believed that Ireland offers plenty of opportunities to find friends and they saw Irish people as approachable. Many had a mixed group of friends but some found it challenging to build deeper friendships with local men. Importantly, several encountered stereotypes and misrepresentation of their cultures, which upset them. Other differences to emerge included at times a more deferential attitude to their parents, elderly and authorities; their attitude to alcohol; the importance of religion and their ambitions. A considerable group of migrants lived, at least for a period, in poorer areas where their middle-class aspirations were often in contrast to that of local families. They experienced stereotyping, threatening behaviour and assaults. Some showed remarkable maturity in reaching out to local youth and finding ways to overcome initial adversity. Nevertheless it was felt that more effort is needed to address social problems affecting those areas which, in their view, contributed to the targeting of migrants. The stakeholder seminar also highlighted that living in such neighbourhoods may increase the possibility of young migrant men becoming at-risk group, especially if additional problems related to single problems and immigration issues exist, too. Support services have an important role to play.

Migrant men and their families arrived in Ireland **searching for a better life**. In some cases this meant leaving war-torn countries with serious instability, escaping poverty or just feeling a lack of future prospects in a country. Their parents were keen on their children getting good education, thus the young men were driven in pursuing their career goals. Many believed that they would have better opportunities in Ireland than in their countries of origin. This was said to be because Ireland offers a **well-resourced education system** and more varied employment opportunities. However, some of the men have been discouraged by the joblessness, as one person expressed to us: *“everything is peaceful but there are no jobs”*. Accordingly, the young migrant men showed signs of frustration not dissimilar to other young people but often felt an extra hurdle existed for migrants. The vast majority of young migrant men still believed that they could achieve their aspirations in Ireland. Perhaps it is this attitude that sets Ireland apart from other countries where young migrants may be associated with socio-economic problems and lack of ambitions. This view of an Ireland that fosters migrants’ futures needs to be retained and cherished if the Irish people want to see a successful integration among the coming generation of migrants.

• • •

“I’ve become a man
of my own here,
so I would say
this is my home.”

• • •

Profile of the target population

General statistical overview of the young non-EU population in Ireland

According to Census 2011, in April of that year there were 544,357 non-Irish nationals from 199 different nations living in Ireland. The non-Irish share of the population had doubled in under a decade, growing from 6 per cent in 2002 to 12 per cent in 2011; the share of non-EU nationals was 3.5 per cent. Looking at the 15-24 age group, there were 22,910 non-EU nationals who made up 4 per cent of the total population within this group. In terms of geographical distribution, non-Irish nationals are more likely to live in urban areas and non-EU nationals in particular were concentrated in bigger urban areas (CSO, 2011). Unlike other nationality groupings, the flow of non-EU nationals remained relatively stable during the downturn, between 9,000 and 11,100 non-EU nationals emigrated per year in the period 2008–2012 (McGinnity et al 2013). The provisional 2014 year-end estimates of non-EEA nationals with permission to remain in the State was approximately 95,000, compared to 107,000 at the end of 2013 (Department of Justice, 2015).

As for birthplace, the number of foreign born Irish residents reached 766,770 in 2011 an increase of 25 per cent on 2006; this is 17 per cent of the population. The non-EU born population made up 4.7 per cent of the total population, whereas among 15-24 olds non-EU born young people accounted for 5.7 per cent. Accordingly, there were 32,474 young people born outside the EU. This is a larger group than that of young people with non-EU nationality: it seems that some of those born outside the EU reported being of Irish nationality. It is estimated that between the introduction of citizenship ceremonies in 2011 and early 2015 over 85,000 people acquired citizenship through naturalisation (O’Riordan, 2015). In 2012, the last time that such data is available, almost 4,000 non-EU nationals younger than 16 years old received citizenship through naturalisation (Mc Ginnity et al, 2014).

Based on Census 2011 figures, the table below shows the share of 0-14 year old children and 15-24 year old young people within broad birthplace groups. We can see from the data that foreign born children and young people make up an important part of the migrant population. Given the target of this research, what is particularly relevant is that the share of 15-24 olds¹ is somewhat higher within the non-EU born population than within Irish-born: 15.4% compared with 12.3%. This is line with the calculation above showing that non-EU born residents accounted for 5.7 per cent in the 15-24 age cohort and 4.7 per cent within the total population.

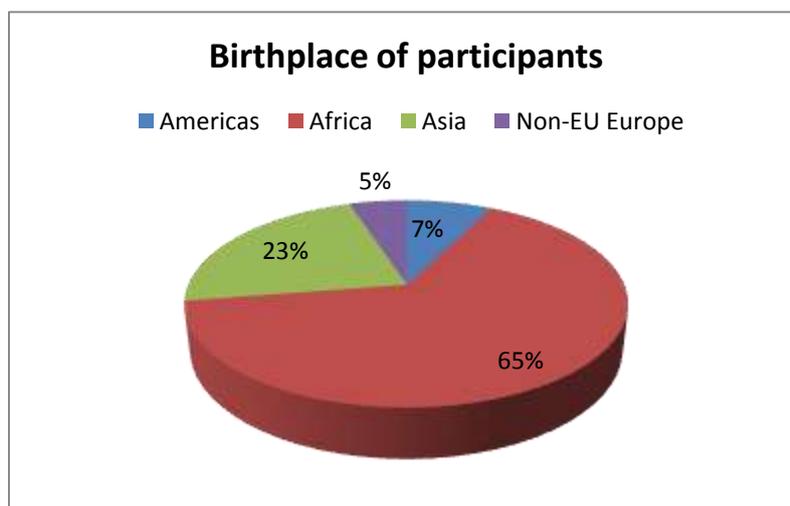
¹ Data was not available for the 16-27 age range, which is the exact target group of the research.

Birthplace	0-14 years	Share of children	15-24 years	Share of young people	All children and young people	Share of children and young people
ALL IRISH BORN	880,170	23.4%	461,096	12.3%	1,341,266	35.7%
ALL EU BORN	61,775	11.1%	71,901	12.9%	133,676	24.1%
Non-EU Europe	3,295	14.7%	2,680	11.9%	5,975	26.6%
Asia	11,172	14.1%	10,843	13.7%	22,015	27.9%
Africa	7,202	13.2%	8,250	15.2%	15,452	28.4%
Americas	8,848	18.8%	9,235	19.6%	18,083	38.4%
All Australia and others	1,530	18.7%	1,466	17.9%	2,996	36.6%
ALL NON-EU BORN	32,047	15.2%	32,474	15.4%	64,521	30.6%

Table, Source: Census 2011

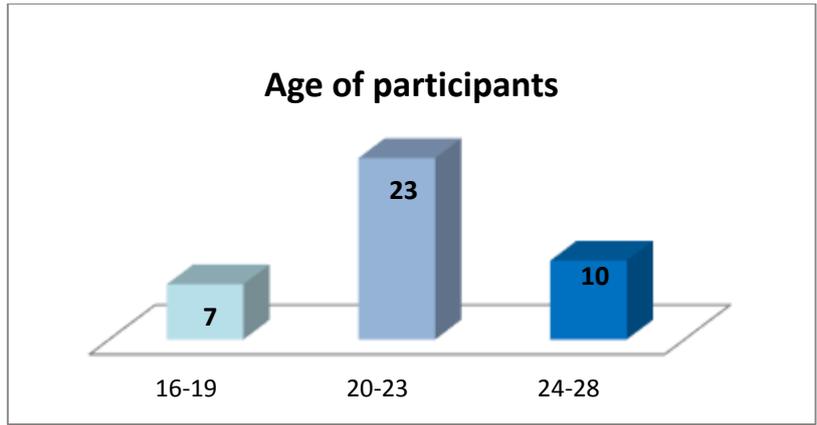
Participants

65 per cent of the participants of the forty participants in the study were born in Africa, 23 per cent in Asia, 7 per cent in the Americas and 5 per cent in the non-EU part of Europe. This is not exactly representative of the total non-EU population according to Census 2011, since African people only made up an estimated 25 per cent of the non-EU population aged 15-24 while Asian people accounted for 36 per cent. The research goal was to focus on those who came to live in Ireland and therefore the considerable number of people from Asia and North America coming here to study was largely excluded. Furthermore, the intention was not to be fully representative of the total population since this was not a quantitative study; we rather aimed to capture a diverse range of experiences through our interviews. In total, project interviewees were representatives of 19 countries², representing different channels of migration as explained below.



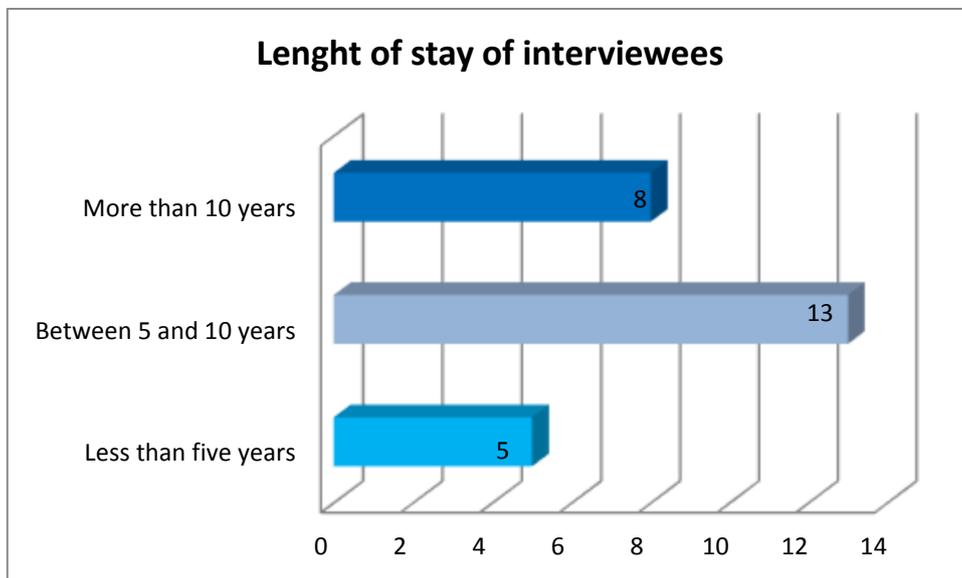
The majority of the research participants were in their twenties; 23 belonged to the 20-23 age group, 9 were aged 24-27 and one participant was 28 years old. It was our intention to place a bigger focus on this group since much less known about this age range in Ireland than about migrant teenagers.

² Nigeria, Ghana, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Venezuela, Russia, Bahrein, Vietnam, United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Malawi, Kenya, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, India and Nepal.



It is noteworthy that in many cases the young men interviewed arrived in Ireland at the decision of their parents. Some needed to go through the family reunification process in order to join them. Some parents of the migrants sent the young men to Ireland to join relatives who were already settled in Ireland. A few participants of the study came to Ireland on their own to study, work and/or to seek protection here.

As mentioned above, participants resided in Dublin, Dundalk, Waterford and Kilkenny. Their length of stay in Ireland varied but many of the participants had been living in Ireland for several years: 21 out of the 26 interviewees had been here for at least five years and 8 of those had lived in Ireland over 10 years.³ 5 were in the country less than five years. The research aimed to primarily focus on those who had been in Ireland for some time although some comparative data was desirable. By interviewing many who arrived in their early or mid-teens and are now entering young adulthood we could get a sense of how they settled in Ireland while also coming of age.



³ Exact information is only available for interview participants as this question was not discussed in the focus groups.

Findings

Migration journey

Migration has a profound impact on young migrant men and their well-being. They often know little of Ireland before coming here and do not feel they are prepared for the change. On a practical level, the men involved in the research spoke about the climate, the **language differences** and **housing** as the first challenges for them. Several did not speak English well upon arrival: “it makes your heart broke if you cannot communicate”. For many others, they needed time to adjust to the accent and, to some degree, the vocabulary used.

Finding accommodation was not easy and many lived or initially lived in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where accommodation was cheap. They accepted that access to housing has been a problem for established communities in recent years, but they still felt that landlords and agencies take advantage of newcomers. Most recent migrants particularly struggled with finding accommodation. The small but marked group who grow up in the Direct Provision Centre for asylum centres lead an institutionalised life: “Children born here and going to school... and you can see they don’t have a space to study. They need to get proper education and have facilities.”

Former Ombudsman Emily Logan called for the revision of the system arguing that direct provision is not suitable for children to grow up within, since on average they spend four years there, but often more (O’Brien, 30 Jan 2015). Her words echoed the findings of the report by the Irish Refugee Council calling for improved standards in Direct Provision such as hygiene, nutrition, safety and living space and financial assistance but also replacement of the regime with a more equitable one over the medium-term (Arnold, 2012). In late 2014 a Working Group was set up to review the Direct Provision system and its report is due at time of publication of this report.

Research with migrant parents indicated that the general experience of the immigrants regarding acceptance was that although they feel supported by Irish society, it does not always allow them to become part of it. However they also commented that sometimes they do not allow the society into their own lives either. They felt that in general they children integrated into society more easily than them.

(Mc Grath and Weidhaase, 2009)

Apart from problems with the asylum system, many of those who came to Ireland as a family member of a non-EU national or as a student, highlighted bureaucratic hurdles associated with their status. They stressed that status gives them security, as young people planning their futures. The unpleasant experience of queuing for hours at the Immigration Service resulted critical remarks from young migrants. Additionally, they also highlighted the impact of being split from family and old friends, which was difficult to deal with. They tend to use social media, Skype and phone to stay in touch with family members. One of the most challenging issues for them was the difficulty and rarity of traveling back to their countries of origin.

Those arriving at primary school age found the transition easier than those who came in their teenage years. Those who re-joined a family benefited from the assistance of their family members. A particular challenge was faced by men who were too old for secondary school, who had to rely on voluntary organisations when working to bring their linguistic and general educational level to what is required for further studies in Ireland. In general, schools were a crucial space for

orientation in a linguistic, cultural and social sense. Many valued the support they received and the opportunities to become familiar with Irish culture and meet friends who helped them to **settle in and feel accepted** here. However, there was also negative experience cited relating to negative **stereotypes**, racism and clustering between local and migrant children: “...they were asking stupid questions, messing around with your hair, annoying really.” Some noted progress as “they are getting used to different cultures, different people now”. All of this created **stress and sometimes even anxiety** among the young migrant men but they showed an impressive **maturity** in becoming accustomed to their new environment and developing strategies for their inclusion. There was an emerging conclusion that **strong determination** was needed to go through that difficult initial period but there was progress if people kept strong. “The thing that stands out is the sensation that things get better as years go on...the sensation of progress.”

Cultural differences

Many discussed the cultural differences they experienced, arguing that **adjusting to a different culture and environment can affect a person’s mental health**. “If you left the country, you have to think in a new country (way). You can miss your country but you have to keep going.” Those differences included such visible forms of culture as food or clothes but also cultural knowledge and subsequent understanding of references; for instance, humour. In terms of behavioural differences they identified several points of contrast such as a more deferential attitude to authorities and more responsibilities for household chores and caring for younger siblings. “I knew it was going to be my turn. Do I stand up...? Do I stand up?...I stood up. He [the teacher] said you do not need to stand up.” This also affected how they approached older people. “...when you go to a Nigerian school...they make you have the sense of respect for the elders...Young Irish kids, males and females, they don’t really respect elders as much as Nigerians.” Migrant families are also likely to attach more importance to religion, as expressed by several of the interviewed men. Sometimes this affected the young migrant’s ability to fit into society in regards to underage drinking “Sometimes it is hard to fit in when you don’t drink; but all my friends, (they) know that I don’t drink.” Other notable cultural differences include more conservative views on sexuality and traditional gender roles in society.

Research also noted that a lot of the migrant teenagers came from cultures that attached value to deferring to authority at home, in school or elsewhere and the less deferential attitude was shocking and a challenge to them. (Gilligan et al, 2010) The study with migrant parents revealed that migrant parents attached high importance to religion and their children’s observation of it.

The men found it particularly upsetting when they encountered stereotypes, prejudices and a lack of openness. Such behaviour was offensive or upsetting. One young Muslim man experienced racist jokes: “Do you have a bomb in your bag?” There was also an instance where a teacher called a Muslim student ‘Allah’ while other students laughed. The mocking ceased after his father complained.

According to the 2009 study with migrant parents, there was concern among some in relation to their children losing their own culture and being too influenced by Irish culture. Others thought there could be a balance between the two, while the rest felt that they can keep both separate but choose the best aspects from each culture.

(Mc Grath and Weidhaase, 2009)

The experience helped them to grow as men but also led them to question their own identity, belonging and values. With time, their attitudes and behaviour developed and changed, occasionally leading to conflicts with their parents. Several of them expressed views of embracing gender equality or the importance of young people taking responsibility for their own choices. However, some differences with their native peers remained, often placing those young people between **two cultures that lead them in different directions**. *“They can slag each other. But then older people just slag back. In my country you could never do that. They would slap you. So I got used to that here. But I would never do that to Black people.”* As the men settled in Ireland several expressed **confidence in negotiating that space** and, as one said, *‘I’ll cherry-pick from the Irish culture I like and the Russian culture I like (...) and reject those bits I don’t like.’*

Home and belonging

Many felt **home in Ireland** and some even stressed that *“I count myself as Irish”*. This was particularly true of migrants coming at an early age. For many who came later there was also a sense of bond to Ireland as migration coincided with their formative years *“I’ve become a man of my own here, so I would say this is my home.”* Nevertheless, they felt they had a **hybrid identity** or shifted between countries. Several were comfortable in this: *“I’m equally Nepalese and Irish”*; and expressed pride in their roots: *“I am proud where I am from, my colour and my race.”* Others had more mixed feelings, with one young man saying that *“he belongs to Ireland but he doesn’t feel at home.”* Some emphasised the challenge of being accepted as a visibly different migrant were highlighted, however. *“They see me as a Black man and don’t know why we are here.”* One person developed an assimilation strategy to be accepted by the Irish community: *“...my friends call me coconut...because I’m Black outside and White inside”*. One African respondent who was married to a Polish woman had to revisit the question of identity when his small children began to ask him questions. *“And my child ask me one day: Dad, are you Black?”* There were a few that did not feel accepted here and sensed little progress throughout the years: *“...when I left school I was just another foreigner that was hated.”* There was also a view put forward that country of origin or ethnicity is only one aspect of identity and as people grow up other aspects become just as, or even more, important: *“Irish people see me as Russian and Russian people see me as Irish: I see myself as European...but not really. When I was younger I thought everything was so tragic and horrible, I don’t fit in anywhere. But when you get older you realise that a much bigger part of your identity come from what you do in your work...”* It appears that their sense of identity was developing over time; what migrant men pointed out is that **more visible role models** would help their confidence in fitting in and accepting the Irish aspects or their identities.

In general, most young people felt **connected to the city or town they lived in but not necessarily the neighbourhood** they resided in. This is perhaps not unique to migrants as young people in their early twenties can tend to have less of a connection to their locality. A sense of local belonging for

migrants was often hindered as they frequently moved homes, especially at the beginning. Those who stayed close to their secondary school remained in touch with their friends from there. The characteristics of neighbourhoods vary, in some, people just “live in their bubbles” whereas others were seen as more friendly “We say hello to each other, they are very conversational so we chit chat. We had a gathering when a new person moved in”. Quite a number of interviewees held the view that Irish neighbours are friendly but we “don’t interfere with each other’s life”. Some saw this as the impact of the Westernised culture: “...everyone tends to stay to themselves in their house; that is what I noticed in Europe.” It was pointed out that social activities, in the neighbourhood or otherwise, help them to connect to each other. Examples arose such as youth clubs, sport activities or community activities that are particularly beneficial for young parents. Those living outside Dublin, in particular, spoke about the lack of recreational spaces. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods often created a negative environment that limited opportunities for social interaction or even witnessed abusive, threatening behaviour or drug usage that posed risks for young people living there. Nevertheless, there were several good initiatives implemented including youth and art activities although the agreement was that more support is needed for those neighbourhoods.

Importance of family

Family is, not surprisingly, of **paramount importance** to young people and is a key factor in their happiness. Presence of family members eased their integration in Ireland and was a source of support and guidance. “She [his Mother] just told me where to walk, how to walk and speak to people...” It was often them whom they shared their problems with. When it comes to **role models**, several mentioned their parents and highlighted how their parents gave them strength and advice: “They have really a big influence on my life and they make really, really good decision I think: especially my Dad; he is very mature and responsible I think.” Sometimes their parents struggled as a result of not having an immigration status, being unemployed or not being able to speak English well, and they tended to adapt more slowly to Ireland than their children. However, the young migrant men did not lose respect for them and showed appreciation towards the challenges they faced. They also reported that their more deferential attitude and explicit show of respect towards their parents was, at times, mocked by their Irish peers.

Single parenting is more common among some African groups. For instance, according to the last Census, 33% of Nigerian households were headed by a single parent (CSO, 2011)

A number of them were **split from their family members**, and experienced being part of a transnational family. Typically this meant they grew up without a father or sometimes their sibling(s). There were also examples of people living with their sister, uncle, or even without any close family member. In those situations the men had to mature very quickly: “It’s not easy because you live alone, away from your Mum and Dad. You don’t have your parents to discuss things with.” Participants expressed frustration and disappointment at

being apart from their families, while those who lost their family members carried a deep sadness. Many developed a coping strategy but missed their family members. They tend to stay in touch with families through social media, phone and Skype calls, but this does not replace the need to have their close family members with them. Even when their father can visit, a young man felt the lack of care and guidance: “He misses out on the most important moments in our lives; and is kinda, he is not there most of the time which is hard for us as well because we are guys growing up and we don’t really have that guidance in a sense.” In some cases being apart had become a case of separation;

there were also examples given where parents purposefully separated. Such separation affected younger children more negatively, with one child developing stammering for a period. One person had a row with his uncle who treated him badly and he had to live with others for months. It was a combination of not having a home and not having family nearby that caused him much distress and sadness.

Migrant men also noticed that coming to Ireland brought the family together. It was not unusual for migrant men to look after their siblings. They spoke of remaining close to their siblings and felt responsible for their younger siblings. They also noticed that after a few years they become more independent from their parents and sometimes drifted away from their older siblings.

Expectation and support from parents

A number of interviewees reported having arguments with their parents. These arguments often centred upon **expectations placed upon them by their parents**. Migrant men, in general, showed a strong understanding of why their parents wanted them to succeed. They pointed out that their parents often did not have the same opportunities and were intent on their children making use of their options in Ireland. Even though the men valued their parent's support, they still held their own ambitions. Nevertheless it still made it difficult to deal with those expectations: *"...obviously he wants the best for me but there are some rules that they are a bit hard for me to follow...but... I can understand that"*. Some went further saying that their parents wanted to *"fulfil the dreams of their parents instead of their own."* Those dreams in practice were often expressed as careers as doctors or engineers, particularly by African parents: *"They are pushing me to do harder...They hoped that I could do engineering"*. Particular difficulty was faced by young migrants who want to pursue a career in sport or other non-professional areas: *"I would like to prove a point to my Dad, tell him I did not choose the wrong course. I would get with sport somewhere."* When migrant children decided to pursue their own ambitions they felt a need to provide strong evidence to their parents in support of their choices. Some also admitted that later they came to understand the importance of higher education; it was helpful for them to come to their own conclusions. In contrast to those parents, there were a few who wanted their children to begin careers as soon as possible: *"He doesn't understand the ambition of my brothers and my ambitions. I understand that he didn't study but achieved a lot of stuff, he has his own company. I'm proud of that but if you are not a student or you didn't study sometimes you cannot understand the people who is studying."*

One survey suggested that non-English or non-Irish speaking parents of 3-18 year old children are just likely as native parents to expect their children to complete third level education (QHNS, 2011) whereas another study showed that migrant mothers of primary school children are in fact more likely to display such aspirations (GUI study as analysed in Annual Integration Monitor 2011)

The seminar discussed the challenges faced by **migrant parents** in terms of their **ability to guide their children**. It was also pointed out that cultural context may explain why professions as doctors are held in high esteem while others such as teachers are not valued to the same extent by groups from outside Europe. Parents often did not have the knowledge and wherewithal to support their children's educational progressions. In addressing this deficit, it is clear that building networks with local parents is important. However, this may require facilitation by schools, including provision of

targeted information. It was found that organising family conferences, as practiced in disadvantaged schools known as DEIS schools, in partnership with other local agencies, has a positive impact on parents' understanding of the school system and local services. Providing language classes, café mornings and evening classes were also seen as conducive to parents' deeper integration within the local community and building their local knowledge.

Cultural integration and its impact on relationships

Another source of debate is related to children's deeper **embracing of liberal values**, which migrant parents, who tended to hold more conservative attitudes, perceived as their children' giving up values cherished by their home culture. This can be linked back to a less deferential attitude to authorities and elders and more freedom claimed by children. This was particularly noted with respect to respondents' sisters in socialising or starting a relationship while still studying. Cultural differences manifested themselves in such a sensitive situation when the young migrant person in question was gay. When his father learnt about this, he expressed his anger at him and withdrew all support from him. *"...Are you exploiting your sexuality and exploiting my money"*. The young man showed remarkable understanding at explaining his Father's attitude by cultural differences: *"He offered me money to get cured... A completely different culture. I don't know if I can blame him."*

Research with migrant parents underlined that parents, in many cases, were concerned about a lack of respect, along with attitude, disciplinary and behavioural problems that were displayed by their children in Ireland. Their impression was that children in Ireland seem to have too many rights but not enough obligations, whereas their own rights and obligations seemed unclear. Some worried about their children taking drugs or drinking alcohol, and the nature of sex education in school.

(Mc Grath and Weidhaase, 2009)

Nonetheless, he still found it upsetting and it created much difficulty for him in completing his third level education, with his only support coming from his single mother.

Cultural differences became apparent in the young people's own relationships, too. Many men were in, or had been in, a relationship, a number of whom had been dating an Irish girl or a girl from another ethnic background to their own but others found this difficult to imagine happening to them. In their experience, it was the parents who were initially slow to accept that their child was in a **relationship with a person from a different cultural background**. *"...Like at the start my parents weren't too accepting of her..."* Others felt that the reason it is difficult for migrant men to find a partner among Irish girls is that it: *"is very hard these days to be honest... (girls) don't tend to go for people who are not Irish I think. I wouldn't really blame them because it might be parental thing as well...there is certain fear."* The young people themselves had to adjust, introducing each other to different aspects of their culture such as food, music and sense of humour and agreeing on a common approach to

household tasks. Often when **their children are born they have to revisit questions about identity** and cultural differences since the upbringing of children brings out underlying cultural differences among cross-cultural couples. An African interviewee, who lived in a de-facto relationship with his Irish girlfriend and had two children, decided to adjust to the more equal manner in which partners share housework and childrearing duties, which he claimed is different to a more conservative approach in his country of origin.

Accessing education

For many young migrant men and their parents, **educational opportunities** were a key attraction to Ireland. Many felt that education is well-resourced in Ireland and that there are many options to choose from for further study. Several respondents noted that they appreciate that education is free and that at third level they are financially supported through grants to cover their living expenses. There was some criticism; some respondents noted that their parents had difficulties finding a primary school for them.

Migrant students were found to be more likely to study in disadvantaged schools, designated as such through the Delivering Equality of Opportunity Scheme. A nationwide analysis of 9-year olds found that 23.5% of migrant children studied in DEIS urban primary school compared with 13.9% of those with Irish-born parents (Curry and Ward, 2011). Analysis of all post-primary schools also confirms this: 25% of non-Irish nationals studied in post-primary schools with DEIS status compared with 19% of Irish secondary school students (Department of Education, 2012). Residential patterns are clearly important but alone do not explain this: schools in close proximity often have a different share of migrant students (Department of Education, 2012 and 2014). Research in Galway found that about 10% of Irish children with Irish born parents did not get to their first choice school; the same group was about 18% among Irish born children with foreign born parents and foreign born children with Irish born parents; whereas for foreign born children with foreign born parents it was 20% (Ledwith and O'Reilly, 2015). Darmody argued that children in these schools do not fare as well academically, do not benefit from extra supports and are often subject to streaming processes. This represents systematic disadvantage for migrant children in Ireland.

Furthermore, several migrant men complained about **high fees in colleges** for certain students from outside the European Union. There was discussion about how some categories of people cannot qualify for lower/free fees and grants despite living in Ireland for a number of years: “Most of my friends who go to college from school, they get grants...But college for me is like, seven grand, like where I am going to get seven grand? ...I’ve been here 8 or 9 years nearly, but people like us, I don’t know if you know this but we have to live on a Visa...”, “I’m paying tax so I should be eligible for some kind of stuff...” They also pointed out that there is no standard student loan system, unlike in the United Kingdom, which makes the situation for those with less money but no access to grants difficult. It was argued that young people in this situation have no choice but to work full time for a year prior to college or “work crazy hours” while studying and sleep only about four hours every night. One person received assistance from St. Vincent De Paul. The biggest difficulty was faced by asylum seekers who are required to pay international fees but have no source of income. Similar situations can also occur for undocumented young migrants.

The MPower project by Migrants Rights Centre of Ireland in 2012 demonstrated the difficulties faced by children of migrant workers trapped by the shortcomings of the immigration and educational support system. Non-EU nationals may be required to pay higher fees despite living in Ireland for a number of years and they also had limited opportunity to qualify for citizenship until a few years ago. Recently introduced schemes let them acquire citizenship more easily and since 2013 if they acquire citizenship they can also change their fee status at third level. It is still argued that, as it is the policy elsewhere, residency and not citizenship should be the main criteria for qualifying for the free fee scheme and student grants in Ireland (MRCI, 2013)

Almost all of them regarded educational opportunities as one of the most important goals they had, because having a **good qualification is essential** if they want to aspire to jobs with decent pay or secure their employment. Some also believed that for a migrant having a good qualification is even more important since a person with “*a different skin colour is (to) be laid off (first)*” if they do not have a recognised qualification. Almost all of the interviewees said that they were studying or planning to **study for Bachelor, Master or Doctoral degrees** in various disciplines such as medicine, engineering, computer science, economics, finance, sport management, nursing or business administration. They believe that education will allow them to be successful in their disciplines and fulfil their career ambitions. There were some men who came to appreciate education later, towards the end of secondary school or even after beginning to work; but they also stressed the benefit of third level qualifications.

In 2009, interviews with teachers and youth workers highlighted the view that the curriculum is not flexible enough to meet educational needs of migrants who need to catch up or have particular issues such as language and religion. They also believed that there was a lack of information on the educational system of countries of origin and limited resources that would allow them to identify the specific needs of migrant students. They argued that an orientation programme, mentoring initiatives and group work are useful vehicles to aid integration of migrant students. They also noted the limited co-operation between schools and youth services or indeed other after-school activities (Mc Grath and Weidhaase, 2009)

Early experiences in school

It was agreed that language competence is an essential tool for integration both within and outside of the school system. Those who had a poor level of English struggled at the beginning: one person simply stated that they “*could not understand anything*”. Another person had to repeat a year. At the time his parents were not sure if his under-performance was linked to language problems or other reasons (e.g. potential learning difficulties), which was very stressful. Others highlighted that a lack of understanding of the English language made them feel anxious because they could not perform well at school and integrate with peers. It was felt that migrants have to be determined and do what they can to learn the language of the country, even if it is not an easy task: “*then you can go out and make friends and from then your friend can help you through this and that and he helps you to study also*”. It was often vocabulary and accent that created additional challenges; even those

The Trinity study in 2009 also noted that 15-18 year old migrants highly valued education, demonstrating strong ambitions and typically having family support for their ambitions in education.
(Gilligan et al, 2010)

who spoke English prior to their arrival in Ireland had to become accustomed to the usage of words and pronunciation.

Many valued English language support in school. Being able to attend English classes was appreciated because, as one migrant man put it, “*language is key to integration*”. Learning the language gave the young migrant the confidence to work on a volunteer basis in Oxfam and the civil defence, and found that the experience then further improved his English. Another man said that he arrived in Ireland illiterate and the special support to him was particularly valuable. Those who arrived **late in their teens had to work harder to catch up** with their peers. It was particularly challenging for those who were 18 and thus were not entitled to study at secondary school and receive the benefit of English language support: “*they did not know what to do with us*”. In one situation, voluntary organisations provided appropriate support to a young man when the government did not provide any.

Those who arrived in Ireland at the age of 5 or younger perform very similarly to Irish students while those who came at the age of 12 or older perform worse (OECD, 2010). Further analysis showed that children from non-English speaking background fell behind, especially in reading; A third of first generation migrants aged 15 from non-English speaking background got the worse scores in reading. Otherwise those speaking English at home tended to perform just as well as their native peers. Notably, preliminary findings from PISA 2012 shows that the gap is reduced between English and non-English speaking 15-year olds (Annual Integration Monitor 2011 and 2013, respectively). In the absence of tracking students it is difficult to conclude whether this is to do with better support or different composition of students, or other reasons, and if the positive trend can sustain.

It appeared that sometimes migrants are guided towards **lower level of classes** regardless of their level of knowledge. This was not always linked to language competence: one South African young man noted that a teacher refused to admit him to a higher level maths class⁴ on account of his recent arrival, while he felt that by looking at the exercises that he was able to solve them. He realised that he had already covered that area in South Africa and therefore felt confident in studying in the class. He said that he received a high mark but that just infuriated his teacher who wanted to prove his point. Going forward the teacher would often tease or even bully him by reprimanding him with certain sarcasm saying “*you would not do that in Africa*”. He left the class after 6 months. He nonetheless sat the higher level exam in mathematics and passed it. In contrast, one migrant man commented that teachers saw potential in him and helped him to succeed: “*I think teachers in secondary school saw the potential in me. They pushed me, like no, you have so much potential you are very smart, driven, we don’t want to see you just not end up anywhere in life*”.

⁴ Students may do certain subjects such as mathematics at higher and ordinary level, where higher level involves a more difficult curriculum.

A local study of secondary school children found that foreign born students were less likely to take higher level subjects, particularly in English and Maths (V. Ledwith, 2015). Earlier Lyons (2010) argued that less is expected of migrant children, and they are often directed toward less demanding educational goals due to their perceived 'deficiencies', particularly due to a perceived lack of ability in the language of instruction. Again, a broader level of data would be useful to confirm or refute such arguments.

Teaching style

Also emerging from the interviews was that the **Irish style of teaching** is different to their countries of origin, named a **more student centred approach**. It was commented by several migrants that, in their countries of origin, the education system places more emphasis on memorisation and students receive a larger amount of homework. Some were critical of the Irish education system saying it does not challenge students or bring out their full potential. . Others said the education system in their countries of origin leads to a broader education. However some interviewees praised Ireland for encouraging *"more freedom and less hatred towards school."* Many respondents were impressed by what they observed in Irish schools with regards to the approach to learning: *"in Ireland, I found the education system a bit lax so students can go on their own pace"*

One migrant also commented that the educational system in Ireland *"allows me to express myself and use my talents, to know better myself and my country"*. In general, interviewees believed that Irish schools and colleges offer an opportunity to learn creatively and critically: *"the Irish system helps students to focus on things other than purely remembering so you know critical thinking, things like that"*, *"In Ireland they create something for you to study and give you the freedom to learn what you want to learn not being forced to learn"*. Some respondents praised the Irish educational system for being more inclusive and *"practical"* due to many group assignments and projects.

A 2009 study with 15-18 olds highlighted that a lot of young migrants experienced educational systems that are centred upon traditional models of learning, discipline and authority. Therefore they were surprised at the more relaxed atmosphere in Irish schools. They often perceived the requirements to be easier in Irish schools. (Gilligan et al, 2010)

Several migrant men felt that the education system in Ireland was somewhat too liberal and does **not teach students to respect their elders** and be disciplined: *"[...] when you go to Nigerian school [...] they make you have the sense of respect for the elders. [...] They make you disciplined, they make you hardworking cos the system is a bit tougher there."* Also, unlike Ireland, it was noted that in some countries e.g. India, Nepal, and Bangladesh

unlike in Ireland **corporal punishment** is accepted and practiced: *"if you didn't do well you get punished so people really study so they don't get punished"* or teachers *"give hard punishment if you don't do homework [...] teacher is very hard in Bangladesh"*.

Third level education

Respondents noted the challenging transition from **secondary to third level education**. Firstly, some reported difficulty in evaluating their career options but a lack of adequate guidance and support. One respondent noted that his own ambition was to become a doctor, but that he was not encouraged to pursue this path by his career and guidance counsellor in school, though he decided to do so anyway. He noted that there was a pressing **need for role models from immigrant and minority backgrounds** to make the aspirations of young immigrants seem achievable. Career

counsellors like his own “*could have broken their spirit*”. Some also thought that more help should have been given in terms of selecting a third level course. They also felt that the Central Applications Office (CAO) system was restrictive and inflexible. Some participants or their friends felt **unprepared for their third level experience**. It requires a great level of independence, and support is not as directly available as it had been at secondary level. This lack of support was more acute for migrants who arrived late in the secondary school but were not categorised as international students by colleges (as they did not move to Ireland to study at third level. One person spoken to found that the sudden change of English language proficiency expected, combined with the lack of language support, was too much and dropped out. For those who had arrived in Ireland earlier, it was in third level education where they began to feel more confident, despite the challenges: “*University is more fun but is also more difficult than a primary school*”. International students were also quite positive about the support available through international student offices. The role of student societies emerged as important with many migrants joining student societies, including both international students and migrants who moved here earlier with their families. The societies worked as a platform for cultural expressions and a source of social support.

The Trinity research involving 15-18 year old migrants highlighted that in some cases teacher seemed to have misunderstood, failed to deal with or created awkward situation when responding to racism. (Gilligan et al, 2010)

It was noted that **tutors** in Ireland are well-qualified, friendly and **approachable**. One person said that it would not be possible in his country of origin to go out for a drink with an academic teacher. According to one respondent this is because in general Irish people “*are friendly, open, well-travelled, have seen the world and are not judgemental*”. He felt that “*the Irish don’t put people in a box*”. Some interviewees found teachers helpful and attentive: “*They made sure that students understand subjects and gave extra help – e.g. explain things after class or e-mail anything that student missed.*”

It seems that third level education gave a more positive experience in general and easier access to social circles. “*I really, really love college because in college there are people from all backgrounds. ... And you can easily make friends with anyone from your background*”. Several respondents admitted that there are many different activities available for students in third level education: “*there is so much stuff to do in college that you never ever get bored, there is clubs, societies of all kinds; like clubs for every single sport you name it and societies for nearly everything there*”. Friendships are made when working on group projects or assignments, or being involved in college societies e.g. organising events, fundraising or playing sports: “*we spend so many hours studying together that eventually we become friends and then we go out for a beer.*”

Negative experience in education

Young migrant males experienced a mixture of **prejudice, inappropriate remarks and favouritism from teachers**. Two respondents also talked about migrants’ students being marked down:

“They (lecturers) may think we are dumb but I see it. They don’t think we Blacks mix with a White people so when they mark them they don’t think we are gonna know, but I have White friends in the class and I have Irish friends in a class whereby when they get the mark they tell me. There is no point fighting the lecturer, I tried it before and noticed that the result is, they will bring your mark down

anyway (...) Some of them are brilliant, some of them even don't know what colour is, some of them see everyone as Irish and they just mark the way supposed to."

They stressed that school and college serve as a place to **make friends and learn about Irish culture**. They appreciated the opportunity to present their cultures in the school but they also encountered forms of misrepresentation; an over emphasis on economic and political problems in Africa or incorrect representation of Muslims and Muslim faith. They were upset by people's ignorance about their culture, whether it is eating habits or behaviour towards parents and lack of tolerance towards different viewpoints.

Many interviewees admitted that they experienced **racism** in different forms at school, most frequently coming from peers in verbal form, e.g. shouting "*go back to your country*", name calling e.g. "*monkey*"/ "*Nigga*" and making jokes about skin colour or the country of origin of the respondents. One young Muslim man was told "*Muslim[s] are terrorists*", which he believes came from the media. He noted also that when the bomb squad was called to his school one student shouted out at him "*Do you have a bomb in your bag?*" **Physical forms of bullying** also occurred. For example, messing around with people's hair, "being jumped on" or placing pins on chairs. Those who experienced racism said they felt powerless to improve the situation themselves or with help of teachers. They said that often when incidents were reported to the teachers nothing was done to prevent it happening in the future. In most cases interviewees felt that **ignoring what happens and "brushing off" was the best strategy**. However, there was also an example given where a teacher suspended perpetrators for racism.

Not everyone was negative about their school experience. Several argued that local boys search for weakness and challenge migrant boys the same way as "*ginger kids gets picked on.*" They argued that if migrant boys are strong and avoid showing upset the bullying stops. It was also noted that when migrant students managed to build friendships with Irish peers it helped them avoid bullying and overcome language barriers. Some felt that when a school is very diverse, it is less likely that a dominant group will bully someone: "*there is a good percentage of Arabs, Africans, Asian and Irish; it's very mixed; there is no majority or minority in the school...they are kinda between different nationals but it's not really, it is not really in spite*".

A 2010 survey showed that 10-17 year old migrants were 6% more likely to suffer from bullying (29.4% vs. 23.7%; HSBC survey 2010, as quoted in State of the Children of the Nation, 2012). As for primary school children, it was shown that language makes a difference: those who sometimes or never spoke English experienced bullying more frequently than their Irish counterparts (Eivers, 2013). In 2010 the Teachers Union of Ireland commissioned a survey of 442 second and third level teachers in VEC and Community and Comprehensive Schools, as well as Colleges of Further Education and Third level institutions. 46% of post-primary school teachers reported that they were aware of racist incidents that had occurred in the past month

Friendships with people of different nationalities allowed interviewees to be exposed to diverse environments. It was also stated that in some cases young migrants perceived comments or behaviour as a form of bullying if it came from native boys but not if it came from within their own group. They said that building friendships reduced the likelihood of experiencing racial bullying and therefore interaction and socialising is vital. At secondary school, sport was a key activity in bringing

young people together from different migrant and native backgrounds, but it did not suit everyone. Youth activities and festivals provided an additional platform for building relationships and making friends. On the whole, it is clear that while building relationship is important, in the short-term racism needs be sanctioned and prevented. How **interaction can be facilitated between groups therefore emerges as a key point** from interviewing young migrant men.

A survey of secondary students in 2007 showed that no social distance was reported among 74% of students in relation Black Africans, 64% of students in relation to Muslims and East Europeans. Social distance was measured by responding to the question of having a neighbour, resident in the area, classmate or resident in the country from those groups. At the other end, 18% reported high or very high social distance from Muslims, 16% from East European and 9% from Black Africans. It was also observed that there was a higher polarisation of opinions in fifth class than in second class and that girls were more likely to report no social distance while boys more likely to report very high social distance; typically twice as many male than female students expressing negative attitude towards ethnic minorities (Tormey & Gleeson, 2014)

Gender differences

Respondents argued that there is a notable **difference between the way males and females are treated** at primary and secondary education in Ireland. They observed that school is much **harder for females** at this stage: *“there is a lot of pressure which women are under, especially young girls... When you are growing up you have to look certain way, behave in a certain way while trying to study ...If I go to school I wouldn't care what I wear or care who is looking at me in a certain way, I just need to focus. It's harder for them to focus, in a sense there is too much distractions, pressure on how they should be behaving. I think is harder for them than it is for us.”*

According to some respondents females are inclined to judge each other on their looks or behaviour. Moreover, females tend to fall into nationally grouped clusters whereas males tend to prioritise similarities in personality when forming a group. Some claimed that **males can be perceived as trouble-makers**. This tends to happen in schools or areas where there are also local boys causing trouble. There can also be rivalry between local and migrant boys: for the local boys, migrant *“girls are target, and boys are competitors”*. Interviewees claimed that there was no strong sign of gender difference at third level and they were surprised by the mix of genders in most courses.

Some interviewees commented that it is more difficult for migrant males to mingle with Irish people. One young migrant highlighted that it is very obvious to see that Black girls have more Irish friends and it's because girls are *“more open minded”*. Also, one young male noted that not only migrant females have more friends but it is easier for him to make friends with females than males.

Safety

Many migrant respondents positively acknowledged that **Ireland is safer than the country they came from**. This view was expressed particularly by migrants who came from war-torn areas but also by migrants from countries experiencing severe social instability, such as Venezuela. *“It was horrible there, I was always paranoid. The paranoia is gonna stay with me [for my] whole life. For instance when I'm on the street and I hear a motorbike I feel paranoid but is just a normal guy on the*

motorcycle.” Some still feel uneasy being alone and are paranoid that they are being watched. They said they enjoy the feeling of safety in Ireland and even though there are still some risks, they are small in comparison to those they would experience in their home country. *“There is a lot of terrorist attacks that time there. But here the worst security (issue) ...would probably be like being attacked at night but the chances of that is very similar to everyone else so I am as secure as most people would be here.”*

A number of men reported being subject to **property damage and threatening behaviour, even assaults**. Several talked about being attacked or *“jumped on”*. The prevalence of such experiences was highly **dependent upon the neighbourhood** they lived in: often migrant families first moved to parts of Dublin where housing was more accessible but social problems already existed. Those areas witnessed far more abusive incidents towards migrants than other areas that were perceived as safer: *“I haven’t had any problems so far”*. Festivals such as St. Patrick’s Day also increased the likelihood of abusive or racist incidents. They argued that while everyone *may* be subject to such incidents, migrants are more often targeted. In many cases the perpetrators are teenagers or children, which makes it difficult for young migrants to respond. Several talked about the recurring property damage they had suffered: *“I tried to ignore it but [I] could not ignore smashed windows at*

According to 2010 survey 10-17 old migrants were 3% less likely to feel safe (HBSC, 2010). The Growing in Ireland study with parents of infants, even though they may not have had a child in the age group of 16-27, gives some indication about perceived safety of neighbourhoods. About 4 out of 5 agreed that it was safe for their children to play outside during the day; however non-Irish groups, with the exceptions of UK caregivers, were more likely to disagree with that statement (GUI Infant Cohort as analysed in Roeder et al, 2014). It is likely if targeted surveys were carried out in disadvantaged areas, higher proportion of migrants would report feeling unsafe or threatened

[my] home”. They believe that the young perpetrators are influenced by their parents and in some cases the parents themselves behaved in a threatening manner. For instance, one migrant youth was chased by a dog that had been deliberately released by his adult owner while shouting *“In this park we don’t want someone like you.”*

Many tried to avoid confrontation or play along: *“[t]hey were kids you don’t know [they were] walking around and slapping you. I laughed and went along with it... [That] make the situation easier than it is rather [than] making it more complicated.”* However, this approach was not always possible. One migrant told of this attack by a group of teenagers: *“One of them had a cigarette, it was lit and burnt on my neck. They just hit me on the ground and told me [that...] to get out of this country, they don’t want to see me again”*. Another recalled a situation where an eleven-year old child threatened him with a knife. He said the thing which scared him the most was the **lack of motive or reason for the attack**. The interviewees passionately argued for investment into their areas and for proper assistance to be provided for families experiencing problems. They noted that the lack of employment opportunities and existing drug problem increase the risk of young people developing anti-social or even criminal behaviour.

Even when no actual threat was experienced, **verbal abuse**, particularly name-calling, **was also common** and was experienced outside working class areas, too. This affected Africans: *“Niggers, get out of the country”* and people from the Indian sub-continent. Often the abusive term *“Paki”*, was

used even though migrants were not necessarily from Pakistan. *“They [my parents] were called Muslims and Pakistani and they are neither of them.”* A Vietnamese respondent stated that *“you can still be expecting people to be slapping you off based on where are you from or your skin colour.”* Many tried to “brush off” those experiences, ascribing them to ignorance: *“...hate to someone for being different than you is just ignorance.”* and sometimes the influence of alcohol *“I just ignore them and continue my way”,*

Some teenagers showed remarkable maturity in initiating relationships with their abusers: *“mix with people, get to know them, become friends so that [they] are gonna stop”*. This resulted in a reduction in abusive behaviour because their new friends watched out for them: However it was not always a feasible strategy.

Authorities

There were mixed opinions on how **authorities** engaged with migrants and how they responded to abusive incidents. Several young people had positive interactions with them and even emphasised the positive difference between authorities in Ireland and their home countries, *“Garda officers are the nicest cops in the world”*. Others held different views, however. In one of focus group discussion it was felt strongly by participants that the Gardaí take a non-confrontational approach and do not challenge local families whose children cause trouble in disadvantaged areas. One person referred to an incident where local teenagers smashed their friend’s car, and said their friend chased away the teens and then called the Gardaí. However the Gardaí responded by reprimanding the car-owner for chasing the teens.

Typically Gardaí find it is difficult to know who initiated an attack. Similarly, young Migrant men expressed the difficulty they face in knowing how to respond to incidents. In the seminar it was noted that when the Garda and youth service made a joint attempt to resolve problems by setting up local forums to discuss incidents this had better results than formal reporting incidents to the Gardaí. Also increasing Garda presence in some areas brought some success in reducing incidents.

Some migrant men also experienced outright **racist comments by officials** such as hearing *“go back to Africa”*. This was most typical in public spaces during gatherings: *“They say why is so many of your kind [here?], they even don’t say why there is so many Black, they say so many of your kind.”* One person, living in a working class area, talked about being questioned by the Gardaí when meeting friends. The Garda told his Irish friends to leave and then interrogated him and his African friend. *“I was really shocked: really, for nothing, they stopped us? But the really shocking thing was that they let the Irish guys go...”* Several others also felt that migrants, particularly visibly different migrants, are **seen as trouble-makers** and stopped, questioned or followed by Gardaí. There was some recognition that in some cases migrant youth, may contribute to the formulation of such views. One person mentioned that as a group they can get carried away and push boundaries too far: *“If we were just quiet and having good time, they would not be so much attention on us but sometimes we do make problems for ourselves. You cannot blame everything on Garda.”* In the seminar it was stressed that among migrant youth there is a group who is at risk of developing anti-social behaviour. This is especially true among those who are in limbo due to their migration status. Nevertheless, being perceived as trouble-makers seemed unfair to migrants and they felt it was not triggered by their provocative behaviour

There was a considerable level of **criticism directed towards immigration services**. Much of this was to do with the bureaucratic process including lack of clarity and long queuing outside the immigration office: *“There were 300 people in the queue”, “I had to queue from 3 in the morning”, “All the migrants are like kept basically like a herd.”* Others experienced unpleasant and even racist treatment by officials. Similar negative treatment was reported by social welfare officials: *“why you come here...they all be looking at your passport, and...Africa, that you know there is a certain problem there, the way they say things to you, also ‘you don’t have money in your country’, stuff like that.”* Young migrant men also experienced discriminatory treatment by security officials. Many were turned away from clubs with the excuse *“you are not regulars here”* or even more explicitly *“your kind is not allowed here”*.

According to young people, part of the problem is not **having migrants serving as Gardaí, teachers, judges and immigration officials**. The interviewees complained about lack of representation in the public sector, media and politics: *“There is no one you can relate to”* said one migrant man while another stated: *“You feel lost, that you have no sense of direction.”* They stressed how inclusion among public officials marks acceptance, and how public figures from migrant backgrounds could relate to immigrants. They also emphasised the need for **migrant politicians** to represent the migrant voice.

Many valued the positive change in the citizenship process and praised the Government and the former Minister for Justice for implementing that change. That change helped them to receive a secure status and feel accepted in Ireland: *“He thought outside the box [in a way that] that not many Irish politicians would {have done}...He passed the law that enabled people who has been here for five years, he enabled them to have Irish passport, which I think is brilliant.”* Some were passionate about active citizenship in order to give migrants a voice and counter emerging anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. Others were more sceptical about political participation and voting and showed little interest. One person talked about how his mother had felt accepted, by being encouraged by a local politician to vote, only to be subject to mocking by an officer present in the voting station who alluded to the problem of migrants casting their votes in elections.

Friendships

The topic of how difficult is to make new **friendships** elicited mixed views. On one side, young migrant men claimed that it is relatively **easy to make friends** and “fit in” with peers both Irish or different countries of origin. Friendship was often made in after-school activities such as sport, youth clubs, music activities and churches but several also found student societies to be a good place to make friends. One respondent saw Ireland to be a similarly diverse society to that of South Africa and therefore it was natural for him to build relationship with any group, *“as I did not see the difference people did not treat me differently”*. Some appreciated diverse environment which made them feel accomplished and at home: *“...it is something that I could never imagine in the wildest dream, living abroad in my own place with my girlfriend earning a huge pay; having friendships from around the world”* and *“all these people and characters coming around [...] make me feel at home.”*

It was also commented that having confidence is key to building friendship. One person adopted what he called an *“assimilation strategy”* when studying in a secondary school in Ballymun where he was the only Black person in the class. He joined in every activity and tried to imitate his classmates

so that he can “blend in”; “...basically I was White”. Another person also talked about having initially mainly White Irish friends. He was mocked by people saying that “he is acting White” as he always mixed with White people. He felt that this was the natural thing to do: he lives in Ireland and therefore needs to connect with Irish people, “this is good for the future as well”. Several young men living in deprived areas and experiencing assaults or property damage decided to reach out to local kids and build friendship. Although it was challenging, in most cases this tactic brought success. Such approaches suggest a strategic perspective by young migrants as well as a remarkable strength in character.

In somewhat contrast to this, a national survey in 2010 found that migrant teens were actually somewhat more likely to say that there are good places to spend their free time (58.1% vs. 51.4%). This may be connected to their concentration in Dublin and urban places. For instance, 67.3% of teenagers gave positive answer to the aforementioned question in Dublin compared with 43.9% in the MidWest, a more rural region (HBSC, 2010, as quoted in State of the Nation’s Children, 2012).

The Trinity study found that 15-18 year olds reported limited leisure activities outside schools, particularly in rural area.

(Gilligan, 2010).

In many cases friends served as a good information source especially for newcomers, offered accommodation if needed, or offered help in case of problems. Furthermore, in many respondents’ accounts, **friends eased the integration** process at school by helping to overcome the language barrier, helping with assignments or inviting for the chat which in consequence made young migrants feeling included and boosted their level of confidence.

Some claimed that Irish peers tend to have limited cultural understanding and would challenge migrant youth’s views without showing openness. Such situations concerned eating habits as well relationship towards parents but the underlying current was the lack of appreciation of different values and attitudes. One respondent noted that, he somehow felt pressured to commit to the behaviour of the members of the group he is socializing with, which made him feel uncomfortable: “If I hang out with them as individuals [Irish] ... I wouldn’t really move in groups with them as frequent cause I do feel kind of different ... and I have to get involved in the conversation I would kinda have to, you know, not be myself as much I have to kind of commit to their behaviour”. In those instances, **peer pressure** manifested itself very prominently. Also, one young male pointed out that making friends may be difficult at times because “people here is what you see is what you get; when they see you they study you” and immediately judge “without getting to know you or to understand the kind of person you are, [...] I’ve been called homosexual before because how approach people and how I get to understand people but that has changed and was only during the first year of my stay here”. The

Trinity study highlighted that 15-18 year old migrants valued friendships with local Irish young people and they also saw those friendship to be useful; nevertheless not all found it easy to build friendship with local young people. They identified cultural and language differences, difference in educational and life experience as well as attitude towards education, authority, religion and alcohol as key challenges in this process (Gilligan et al, 2010)

perception of him being “weird” or “different” diminished as soon as others had a chance to know him better. He decided not to change his way of being, instead he took some time to allow others to get to know him better and see his real personality.

Socializing and leisure activities

They were a few ways of socializing that resonated strongly among young migrant men; these were: visiting each other’s homes, cooking, playing various types of sports e.g. pool, soccer, basketball or cricket, getting involved in student societies. Several men enjoyed the Irish “communal” way of socializing e.g. through sport which made respondents feel like they were part of the community. However, some admitted that their **social life suffers** in Ireland: “it’s really small; it’s really quiet, it’s more like a place for older people.”

Others stressed that socialising with Irish or migrants from other backgrounds was difficult. There are challenges to face when trying to build cross-cultural bridges such as understanding language and humour. “I am one of the only young Black people in the class. Sometimes when Irish make people jokes, I don’t get it...Sometimes I just say ‘Ha’, three full stops.” Therefore, some migrant men felt that engaging people from the same ethnic group was often an easier option. Some Muslim migrant males said their Irish friends did not respect their approach to alcohol. One interviewee stressed that Irish culture is centred on going out to drink: “What they did last weekend, what they are going to do next weekend, Easter holidays, Christmas holidays. (...) Sometimes it is hard to fit in if you don’t drink, but all my friends, [they] know that I don’t drink.” However one migrant man said he found going for drinks for the first time to be a very interesting experience: “I got to experience the Irish culture as well, and I thought is not as bad as everyone make it”.

10-17 year old migrant respondents were 7% less likely than their native counterparts to do physical activities totalling 60 minutes per day at least 4 days a week (43.5% compared with 51.2%). They were however more likely to read a book (HBSC, 2010)

Most interviewees said there was little **socializing in the workplace**. They said they prefer to keep their work relationships professional. However some stressed that having great workmates made work nicer and less stressful. One interviewee said: “I had a Mauritian supervisor who was the most down to earth person I have ever come across and his fiancée at that time worked also there. I looked forward to going to because of them.”

Leisure activities revolved mainly around **playing sports**: soccer, pool, basketball, table tennis, badminton, swimming, running, walking and attending gym. Not all were happy with facilities arguing that only the main universities and some places in Dublin where good facilities exist; but many men took part in some sports. They also said that they **watch TV** in their leisure time, mostly channels or films from their countries of origin or well established American TV series or films. Several migrants complained that Irish TV channels do not offer much entertainment for youth and definitely lack cultural diversity. Some of the men commented that they like reading books and local newspapers to keep up to date with local news. Several noted **they spend some of their leisure time listening to the music or radio, playing the guitar or singing**. Few also talked about playing video games and spending time on their computers. Also, several enjoyed attending pubs or night clubs with their friends but there was certain level of criticism made in relation to excessive drinking.

Some expressed the wish to turn their leisure activities into profession e.g. playing football, video editing or shooting music videos.

Football was the most popular sport played by the interviewees'. **Playing football** was described as a **social activity** and as a way of mixing with other ethnic and social groups: *"We all play together on the big green on a multicultural soccer team."* It was also argued that sport is important for discouraging young people from partaking in anti-social and delinquent behaviour. One respondent paid gratitude to Sport Against Racism Ireland, (SARI), a charity which uses mainly soccer to bring young people from different backgrounds together. He has played 5-a-side football matches all around Europe. In 2012 he won the tournament with his team and he was selected as the best player. His experience motivated him to become a youth leader and now he coaches a girls' sport team. The main goal of this team was to involve Muslim women in soccer but they also attracted young women from a variety of backgrounds (other migrants and Irish), reflecting the theme "Diversity". They received funding from FIFA and Sony for the project. He explains that it is more difficult for migrant, especially Muslim, girls to enter sports: *"Their parents are not happy with them playing football at first, until they got used to it. They just want them to stay home and study, or just to clean (...)." He emphasised how passionate the girls now are about playing soccer.*

A number of respondents claimed that in certain local clubs, relatives and local children are selected for teams over migrant newcomers. One person said that despite being one of the best players in his team he was **not treated fairly**. He was often left on the bench or not be in the starting team. He added that his younger brother had a similar experience. He was constantly the last person to come on even though he had been a top scorer in the previous season. He said: *"they wasted his talent"*. He believed that the manager did not treat them fairly because they were not local. *"They put you on a reserve team if you are good... Most managers got sons, they say most managers have kids in the team, their kids, their nephews; it's a family thing... You are just strangers, you don't even know..."*. Another person also noted that his and his friends' talents are wasted. *"...sometimes I see that they are good enough to be playing in the league but we just don't try anymore. Like now for me it's too late 'cos I'm 20 now"*.

Some interviewees were subjected to more explicit **racism**. One migrant man said that he was not allowed to play at a local club because he was black: *"So I went there and the manager looked at me in a very strange way, it looked like he was saying you are not welcome here, we don't want someone of your kind. Because I have that confidence I said I want to join the club, the manager said no, no, no we are currently full and I can see on the board like more players are welcome, you can register. I find it really strange. ... I felt very bad that day. I realize if I was Irish that day I definitely get there but what I can do I have to move on"*. One interviewee remarked that **talented migrant kids need to go to England if they want to be successful**. Another man agreed saying that other countries give opportunities to migrant players and even offer citizenship to them. He cited the example of one young player who moved from Ireland to Spain to play soccer. He said this player will probably receive citizenship and may play for the national team. Though it is difficult to verify such claims, the strong perception of favouritism in some local clubs deserves further attention.

Active membership in students activities and volunteering

Several young people got involved in **student societies**, with some taking a prominent role in running activities. They felt these groups allowed them to express themselves and build friendships. Many took part (not solely) in societies that were connected to their countries of origin. These groups offered participants a way to stay connected to their heritage and provided a forum for cultural expression. Group work in colleges also enabled young male migrants to make friends with students from different backgrounds.

Several young people volunteered for youth services or clubs where they took on roles like supervising children during sport summer camps, teaching music or collecting money on the street. They stressed that **volunteering** improves a person's well-being. They said it is an opportunity to meet new people and it looks impressive to potential employers: *"it's also good for your CV if employers looked you volunteered it kinda tells them that what kind of person you are, you're more mature, you are more helping, you will be more focused, more responsible as well"*. One interviewee also noted that volunteering can **support integration in the community**. He said that by volunteering, other adults in the community saw him as responsible role model for children. This helped combat negative stereotypes. *"I got the opportunity to mix with the little ones, they are usually the small ones that, you know, they just say: 'you little nigga'. You just don't know what to expect to hear from them (...) then it was more like' I remember you were teaching me drums yesterday"*. One respondent, however, noted that he had tried volunteering but did not understand the concept and did not enjoy it at all: *"I've tried, I don't know the whole thing about the volunteering. ... I like to work for money. I've tried to volunteer in Church and youth centre. I've not really done much volunteering because I don't like it."*

It was shown that between 2007 and 2012 the 15-24 age groups witnessed a faster increase in unemployment than 35-54 age groups, holding constant other characteristics such as family status and educational level. (Mc Ginnity et al, 2014). Pathways to Work: The Implementation of the EU Council Recommendation for a Youth Guarantee (2013) endeavours to "ensure that all younger people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming

Access to employment

Several young male migrants said they enjoyed their **jobs**. Some found the recruitment process straightforward and fair during all stages: e.g. CV submission, case study test and face to face interviews. Some respondents also felt their experience and qualifications are recognised and appreciated. One even believed that having an "international background" was seen as advantageous by some employers, who saw immigrants as having a "strong work ethic".

On the other hand, many migrant men were frustrated by the **difficulty in finding employment and felt the full brunt of recession**. Respondents agreed that lower-skilled part-time jobs are especially difficult to find. This **affected many young people**. They stressed that *"young people don't have enough opportunities to get experience in the work place"*. They also found the method of applying for jobs unproductive. Some migrants had sent over 50 CVs and had not received so much as one

automated acknowledgement email. Many found visiting potential places of employment or cold calling was equally ineffective. One respondent did note however that his sense of determination finally brought success. He repeatedly visited the places he wanted to work until he was offered a job. In general, respondents felt that opportunities for young people were very limited. When asked about the support offered by employment and social welfare services, they argued that jobseekers often do not gain anything from these services and that at these services officers just “sit on the money instead of trying to find a job”. Some were very critical of the system, which, in their views, was not productive. One said that people as young as fifteen-years old can receive money but are not supported and motivated. They argued there should be more work placement opportunities with proper assistance.

When analysing the overall discrimination in Ireland, McGinnity et al. (2012) found that people of Black ethnicity are almost four times more likely to report experiencing discrimination in a range of areas (looking for work, at workplace, transport, housing, education, in shops, restaurants and pubs) than White Irish people and over five times more likely than White Irish people to report serious discrimination to researchers, even controlling for different factors (e.g. age, educational level and social class). They concluded that discrimination for Black ethnic groups had risen since 2004.

Although several thought the current labour market creates difficulty for all young people, some believed that access to work is particularly difficult for young migrants. They said this is because **favouritism** plays a strong role in the labour market in Ireland. The importance of “who you know”, as opposed to qualifications and experience, is vital in securing employment. It was noted that even if the vacancy was officially advertised, it was already unofficially filled by a person known to the employer. One man thought that the smaller the city the greater the favouritism towards family members and friends: “This place is more racist, it’s a very Irish place where sport is segregated to the Irish people, even jobs”. [...] “It’s a very small and segregated place, it’s the little jobs that those they are gonna give to their own people and their friends”.

A few respondents from Dublin also stressed the existence of nepotism there. A strong perception was that Irish employers often do not welcome non-Irish nationals and would even prefer to employ less qualified Irish national: “I think they don’t really want to give us jobs” or “they probably throw his CV in the bin”. Some gave the examples of shops where there is no diversity and their chance of securing a job is almost zero: “it can be a waste of time to bring CV”. “He is like... we are not hiring. You have just seen the sign ‘hiring’ you are like can I leave it with the manager? They are like the manager not in. Can you give it to the manager? But you know that they he is just going to throw it in the bin.” They also added that some **migration statuses** may either completely cut migrants off from any chance of employment (asylum seekers) or limits their working hours (student visa). This can lead to frustration and limit their ambitions.

One respondent experienced **explicit form of racism** in applying for a job when the manager told him: “we don’t hire Black people here”. Another young migrant male decided to change his name and to his surprise he secured six job interviews by Anglicizing his name. Several respondents felt that often they are not given a fair chance by Irish people and they have to put extra effort to achieve their goals. Some noted that, when a company needs to make an employee redundant, in most cases this will be a migrant. This became more prevalent with the economic recession “With

my skin colour working in all-Irish place, I'm prone to think that I'm 70% more likely to be laid off than an Irish despite how hard I work, despite how many efforts I put in to a job."

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Some emphasised the double standards that exist. On one side, they were accused of abusing the State's social system and on the other hand, it is claimed by some Irish people they *"steal their jobs"*. *"You are coming here to take our jobs, our girls...First of all, this is not taking. You apply the same time as I apply. That means I have something above you to be chosen. (...) people really need to be educated."* Some experienced change in attitudes. When applying in person for a job, one migrant African man received an outright and racist rejection. However he later succeeded in getting the same job through an online application. He discovered that his manager was the person who had rejected him so inappropriately. Now they have good relationship. Others believed that it is incorrect to state that Irish people are always favoured. Rather certain **stereotypes exist** that inform preferences of employers. One man gave the example that some employers would hire certain Asian people for retail positions as they were believed to be hard-working and compliant.

Respondents stressed that discrimination existed primarily in lower-skilled employment and not in **higher skilled opportunities. Therefore good qualifications help migrants to succeed.** However one man had a different experience. Despite having a Master's Degree and demonstrating great work experience he failed to secure a promotion in his workplace. What particularly upset him was that the successful candidate had lower qualifications than him. In one instance, he got an e-mail saying that he was unsuccessful even though he had only discussed the possibility of applying for the position with his supervisor and had not yet applied. They asked him about his religion in the interview, which he found very inappropriate.

In spite of challenges, many migrant men **remain ambitious.** Though one African man argued that there is a risk of migrants limiting their goals on account of discriminations, another person passionately stated *"You can do anything that you want."* His view was that through persistence migrants can succeed even in the face of challenges. It was felt that thinking back of the hard situation their friends or families go through in their countries of origin gives them strength to persevere in Ireland. Still despite those ambitions and determination, migrant men still had doubts about whether they could succeed in Ireland and many entertained the possibility of migrating again to secure better opportunities.

Treatment at the workplace

Interviewees said they were **treated equally** at work by their managers and workmates, both Irish and non-Irish: *“I had a Mauritian supervisor who was the most down to earth person I have ever come across and his fiancée at that time worked also there. I looked forward to go to because of them.”* Some respondents said they felt a **sense of camaraderie with other migrants** and highly valued the diversity in their workforce. They also noted certain benefits to their employment. Firstly, in some jobs they learnt how to communicate effectively and become more confident in front of large audiences. Secondly, work experience taught some respondents how to be responsible and organised. Thirdly, the employment gave them financial independence and stability which consequently made their future goals more achievable. Some could afford to buy desired goods and help relatives in need.

There was some **frustration** at the workplace; one of the respondents explained that his supervisors were *“uneducated [and] unprepared”*. He admitted that that on one occasion there was a motivational training delivered by his Irish manager, which was full of spelling mistakes: *“... he spelt colleague like college and so on”*. *“We were looking at each other like: this guy is a moron, he doesn’t know what he is doing. That happens a lot because they know that you need the job, that you need the money so they will give you hell; they used to pressure us a lot. We didn’t feel it was fair, we used to work extra hours; it was horrible working conditions.”*

The Labour Force Survey showed that young people are heavily affected by recession but non-Irish youth even more (32.8% vs. 25.9%; Annual Integration Monitor 2013).

Other respondents experienced racism at work from their supervisors and colleagues. One migrant man said that when he was late, he was sanctioned but when his Irish colleague was late he was not. Another man said: *“Once I was working in a shop and this was probably the most challenging thing I ever had to deal with, the supervisor was **extremely racist** [... something had to be changed at the till] and the remark that woman give was absolutely disgusting, it was so shocking. Two weeks after that experience he was “laid off for some strange reason”. It was claimed that there had been no improvement in his performance during the probation period, “which I know there was a lie and everyone in the store can testify that [...] and I feel that was because of racism”. Some respondents claimed that racism can be expressed in indirect way: “They don’t make comments but you go into work and the next thing someone is gonna tell you go wash the plate and Hoover. The last time I checked that wasn’t part of my job. I don’t say to them because I’m a student I just want to make money and survive.”*

Racism was also experienced from **customers and the public**. One young migrant said that he is sometimes verbally abused by random passers-by when he does *“charity on the street”* e.g. *“a nigga”* or *“go back to your country”*. He said that the best way to cope with verbal abuse is to *“brush it off.”* Another migrant man working as a waiter was sometimes told by customers that they did not want to be served by a visibly different person. He decided not to report these incidents to his manager in order to avoid any potential problems. Instead he calls his Polish workmates to serve these customers. It is important to add that some men also had positive experiences to tell.

Young male migrants noted that there is a difference in how **females and males are treated at work**. One respondent commented that females in general are favoured in Irish society: *“Irish population, (...) they leave the girls alone. They don’t trawl them too much, they don’t pay attention to much, they don’t hassle them too much compare to the males.”* Some argued that females are trusted more and they put much more effort into work. Migrant *“women tend to get jobs easier cause they work really hard”*. Also according to some, being a male reduces chances of getting a job in nursing, child care and retail.

Ambitions

Most migrant men are ambitious. Many interviewees talked about wanting **professional careers** in information technology and economics or careers as doctors, engineers, scientists. Others wanted to be entrepreneurs. A few cited media and sport and fashion as the fields they want to succeed in. Some admitted that they would love to work as a pilot or astronaut but understood that they had to select a more realistic career. There was a feeling that sometimes their ambitions and the ambitions held by their parents were not supported by the school. It is difficult to see whether they were overly ambitious or whether they lacked assistance and guidance. This is an area that deserves attention.

Parents’ expectations seem to have been influenced by their countries of origin. Those preferences were at times in conflict with what young people wished and often did not reflect opportunities in Ireland. This suggests that they would benefit from **a better understanding of career paths** in Ireland. On the other hand, one person stressed his desire to help his mother open up a business.

A number of young people showed flexibility as to where they could realise their ambitions. It seemed the younger generation could **see themselves moving to another country**. They mentioned UK, US, Canada and Middle East, where *“everyone gets a job but everyone is busy”*. This opinion is not dissimilar to what one would expect to hear from young Irish people. This indicates that the economic situation in Ireland is still a worry for ambitious migrant men. *“I would see America having better opportunities for engineers or any job and more diverse culture, even more than in Ireland.”* One man said that in today’s labour market there are no guaranteed jobs even for people with a PhD. However overall, the majority of those young migrant men felt that they could achieve their dreams by doing something that they like.

Several supported or wanted to support their families back in their countries of origin. They also expressed a desire to **help the countries they were from, in terms of** contributing to their development and assisting in tackling their problems. Often but not always those who had an African background wished to *“build a better Africa, to give back the opportunities they had received in Ireland”*. One expressed his desire to become a surgeon, return home and inspire young people in his country of origin. There was even a desire to contribute something to the world’s progression. One person said that his dream is to *“advance the human race physically...To make us stronger, faster...to become more intelligent as species.”*

Recommendations

Education

- Stronger efforts need to be made to assess the progress of children from migrant backgrounds, particularly those with non-English speaking backgrounds. Decision on English language provision should be based on the results of such evaluation. A longitudinal study and recording the home language of students sitting Junior and Leaving Certificate exams would go a long way towards achieving this.
- After-school support is needed to enable migrant children from non-English speaking backgrounds to catch up with their peers. Funding should be provided for existing best practices to become the national standard, including providing services to non-English speaking youth who are over 18th but need to complete their secondary schooling.
- Information events, based on resources, should be delivered to migrant parents on educational pathways, with supported by the National Parents' Council. The Pathways to Parental Leadership resource, dedicated to the involvement of migrant parent in schools, can be drawn upon in schools.
- It is also important that funding of career guidance services in schools is restored and within that there is sufficient information on the specific circumstances (backgrounds, entitlements) of migrant youth.
- Department of Education should work with colleges to examine ways to attract more migrants to teacher training courses and assist qualified teachers in registering with the Teaching Council. Efforts by St. Patrick/DCU and Froebel College of Education/Maynooth to recruit more migrant trainee teacher should be further developed and replicated in partnership with migrant organisations.
- Leadership and mentoring initiatives with the participation of young migrant volunteers should be implemented to motivate and support migrant students. Similarly, special peer support initiatives within third level and further education colleges should be explored to assist migrant students, particularly those with language problems.
- Residency should be the deciding factor when deciding upon student grants and free fees rather than nationality. The planned introduction of free fees for asylum seekers needs to be implemented.
- Teacher training should place more emphasis on developing teacher's intercultural competence to enable them to communicate effectively with students from different cultural backgrounds. Such competence should also help them to facilitate interactions between cultural groups within the classroom and recognise and address racism. Such methods would use group work and peer support mechanisms as well as guided discussions to focus on exploring the impact of migration on the well-being of youth including such themes as feeling uprooted, cultural shock, language differences, family separation and issues related to migration status.

- Further efforts need to be made to diversify the curriculum to ensure good representation of different cultures and languages including exploring the experiences relating to countries of origin. This will allow students to develop a more complex view of different cultures, challenge their stereotypes and benefit from studying in a multilingual environment. The new Junior Cycle Reform and the Transition Year programme offer excellent opportunities to mainstream voluntary programmes such as Yellow Flag and Show Racism the Red Card.
- The abolishment of waiting lists needs to be a priority to address clustering of migrant students, in addition to capping the past pupil criteria and also continuing to build schools where there is a growing primary school population. Development of joint programmes that involves students and their parents visiting neighbouring schools would help interaction and tackle negative stereotypes.
- Evaluation of students' experiences in schools and colleges should include a question on discrimination.

Community, youth and sport

- A nationwide seminar should be organised to examine approaches by schools, youth, and community and sport organisations in exploring inter-cultural issues, addressing racism and raising awareness of the specific needs of young migrants. This will support plans where local organisations are required to show evidence of how they have adapted their services to meet the needs of minorities, including migrants. It is important that participation is incentivised and resourced as in the past the level of involvement of organisations and clubs has varied.
- Resources focusing on the needs of migrant children and youth need to be collected into one accessible repository to be used by youth, community and social workers, as well as teachers. Within that there also needs to be information and support relating to particular groups such as LGBT migrant young people or Roma, with involvement from BelongTo and Pavee Point.
- Youth, sport and community organisations should continue to implement and map their outreach to migrants but also develop joint projects with migrant community groups, churches and ethnic minority youth groups in their places. As mentioned below, family conferences can offer a joint platform that schools, youth services and clubs, migrant organisations and other services would be partners of. A central element is to implement recruitment drives for volunteers from migrant backgrounds and cross-learning among youth, sport and community organisations as well as Volunteer Centres should be facilitated.
- There should be a dedicated person in all local councils to engage with minority groups that would be mandated to work with youth, sport and community organisations and groups. Furthermore, community grants by local councils and government departments and funding by the Sport Partnership should be partially dependent on showing how organisations and clubs make genuine efforts in reaching minorities including ethnic minorities. External audits of clubs/organisations to identify any underlying problems such as alleged favouritism would be beneficial to implement.

- Diversity and anti-racism training should be provided for sport clubs and organisations to help them achieve positive interaction among cultural groups and respond to racial bullying.
- Investment in regeneration and education and community programmes targeting deprived areas remains necessary. Such efforts can draw on evaluated good programmes and should have an aspect of bringing different cultural groups together.

Authorities

- Diversity and anti-racism training should be extended to all departments of an Garda Síochána to ensure a whole organisational approach to diversity. Promoting the work of ethnic liaison/LGBT officers both within Garda and in the wider community such as youth organizations, Tusla and migrant groups and organisations as well churches remains important. Initiatives such as racism-free neighbourhood in Canal Communities, the ethnic policing forum in the North-Inner City and door-to-door visits in Ringsend area could be evaluated and promoted as pilot programmes.
- Racial harassment by minors needs to be tackled with a further examination of the partnership between youth services and the Garda. Such measures will use learning from Garda Diversion programmes and good practices adopted elsewhere, implementing elements of restorative justice. A quick first response must be taken to reassure victims that they are being listened to and supported. Migrants may become perpetrators in some cases and responses (such as diversion programmes) need to take account of their specific circumstances and involve parents and community groups together with agencies to tackle root causes.
- Complaint mechanisms must be accessible for children and young people who may experience discrimination in engaging with public services. The follow-up on those complaints should be communicated to them and their parents.

Immigration and asylum

- Comprehensive reform of the immigration registration system is long overdue. The introduction of an appointment-based system for re-entry visas should be extended to other forms of registrations. It is important that once the system is introduced that its impact is kept under review.
- It is necessary to introduce immigration registration for children under the age of 16.
- Statutory permanent residence status should be adopted and that should be available for children under the age of 16.
- Family reunification should be legislated for with a view to introducing a transparent system with clear and fair conditions and only necessary discretions.
- It is essential that the current review of the asylum system leads to not only a speedier and more transparent decision-making process but to minimising institutional living for asylum seeker families.

- A regularisation scheme for undocumented non-EU migrants with clear conditions should be introduced.

Employment support and training

- Vocational courses with an English language component should be more widely available for English learners aged 18 older (such opportunity exist in some colleges such as Ballsbridge College of Further Education). In the same vein, those who are unemployed learn English in further education colleges through the support of Back to Education Allowance should be able to take up a training course at Level 5 without losing their payments.
- Targeted employment support initiatives are needed to help vulnerable groups such as Roma access employment.
- There is a continuous need to ensure that cases of discrimination are reported and employers, particularly in small businesses, should take part in training initiatives supported by Irish Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- Just like others entering the job market, migrant men need training and education opportunities to prepare them for viable career options. The Youth Guarantee framework shows promising signs; however, work placement and training opportunities could be broadened further.

General

- It is critical that the new national integration strategy results in effective collaboration between departments and agencies to ensure it will have an impact at local level.
- At local level, there needs to be a multi-agency platform to discuss migrant youth issues. One approach could be to appoint and resource the local authority to convene a forum; but the mandate should be given from higher level.

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