

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REALITIES OF MIGRANT WOMEN

A Snapshot from County Longford

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Foreword

The purpose of this project was to provide a snapshot of the lived reality of economic inequalities in rural areas as expressed through the lens of migrant women. Together with partners Maynooth University, University of Galway and the National Women's Council, the project fulfilled its aim of delivering a co-creation process of research and analysis that culminated in a series of policy recommendations to support active participants of migrant women in the economic and social fabric of Longford and a wider aim of promoting equality and opportunity for migrant women in rural communities.

This was very much a collaborative project with the Longford Migrant Women's Group at its core. While we do not assert that the project findings speak for all migrant women living in rural communities across Ireland, we believe that the results highlight key issues faced by this diverse cohort and presents a series of recommendations for both policy and good practice.

We would like to thank the members of Longford Womens' Migrant Group and their Facilitator Karen Reilly for their commitment, honesty and courage in participating in this project.

Finally, we acknowledge the support of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and their commitment to ensuring that the voices of women in our communities can continue to be heard.

Longford Women's Link

Maynooth University

University of Galway

National Women's Council

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Research

Research Context:

The research focuses on the lived experiences of migrant women in rural areas, particularly concerning economic inequalities. It acknowledges the complex interplay of political, economic, cultural, and social factors, compounded by gender and ethnicity, which shape these realities. Gender-segregated employment opportunities, gender pay gaps, and the rural environment present structural barriers for migrant women, exacerbating their economic and social disadvantages upon relocation to rural communities. Limited employment opportunities, poor career progression, low pay and underemployment are key challenges.

Traditionally, policy responses to gender inequality have been reactive rather than proactive. However, this project aims to co-create gender and ethnicity-sensitive recommendations and outputs, empowering migrant women as active participants in decision-making processes. By addressing existing knowledge gaps in literature and policy formulation, the project hopes to build the capacity of migrant women to advocate for themselves and their communities.

Longford Migrant Women's Group

Longford Migrant Women's Group was established by Longford Women's Link in 2020 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. It had long been recognised that there was a specific need for this group and this need was never more apparent during the period of lockdown in Ireland when vital social supports were required in rural communities. A group of over twenty women began to meet online and the group expanded throughout the following months and as society emerged from lockdown into a post-pandemic era, the group remained together, planning a number of different projects and expanding their membership.

County Longford – Demographic Context

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In 2022 Longford recorded the highest average annual net inward migration in the State at 17 people per 1,000 of the population from 2016 to 2022 (CSO, 2022).

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Longford has experienced a notable increase of new communities in recent years. Co. Longford had a population of 46,751 in 2022 (23,302 were female and 23,449 were male) (CSO, 2022). In 2022 Longford recorded the highest average annual net inward migration in the State at 17 people per 1,000 of the population from 2016 to 2022 (CSO, 2022). Approximately 19.5% of the population were born overseas and 16.4% of the population are not of Irish nationality (CSO, 2022).

While some have seamlessly transitioned into the local fabric, individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds encounter significant barriers, including language limitations, literacy challenges, disabilities, economic hardships, and discrimination.

Women from minority ethnic backgrounds in rural communities

The Irish population has changed and been strengthened through immigration. The impact of globalisation and its associated mobility has introduced international migration to many rural areas and small towns in the global north, who previously had little history of in migration (Woods, M. 2018). Many migrants were attracted to Longford due to the (previously) affordable and available housing opportunities as well as the proximity to Dublin via rail. Women from a migrant background are a part of rural Ireland and their contribution to rural life is important from both an economic and cultural perspective. The specific experiences of migrant women in rural communities can be compounded by racism and discrimination, language barriers, legal status and precarious forms of employment. Their involvement in decision-making structures should be supported and enabled creating opportunities for participation and for their voices to be heard.

“ They have significant additional barriers including language and cultural issues; complex physical and mental health issues; the application process for international protection; high levels of income poverty and low levels of familial or other social networks. ”

Forced global migration and the displacement of people from their home countries due to war and persecution, is a current and increasing reality throughout the world. It is a reality which presents and will continue to present serious challenges for those with no choice but to leave their homes in search of asylum, safety and a secure future for themselves and their families. Asylum seeking, and refugee women and their families also form a significant part of the demographic profile of many rural towns and villages in Ireland. Many are women parenting alone, who have lost their partners and families in war zones. They have significant additional barriers including language and cultural issues; complex physical and mental health issues; the application process for international protection; high levels of income poverty and low levels of familial or other social networks. Women migrant workers in rural areas are often in unregulated and precarious employment experiencing low pay, poor working conditions, with precarious immigration status.

Many women from minority ethnic backgrounds work voluntarily in communities and contribute a great deal to community life in terms of both their skills from their country of origin and culturally. They were also working in essential services particularly in nursing homes, hospitals, as cleaners and shop assistants. Rural development programmes must recognise the distinct needs, experiences, contributions and situations of vulnerability faced by migrant women and girls.

1.2 Significance of the Project

The significance of this project is multifaceted, with implications that extend beyond academic inquiry. At its core, the research addresses critical knowledge gaps by delving into the economic inequalities experienced by migrant women in rural areas. By amplifying the voices and perspectives of these marginalised groups, particularly those from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the research empowers them and challenges prevailing stereotypes. Through a collaborative approach, the research aims to inform more effective interventions that address structural inequalities.

Moreover, by employing participatory research methodologies, the research not only involves migrant women in the co-production of knowledge, but also enhances their capacity and empowers them to understand and challenge structures that lead to their exclusion from decision-making structures. Ultimately, the research contributes to broader efforts aimed at advancing social justice and equality by advocating for the rights and well-being of migrant women in rural communities. By shedding light on their lived realities and advocating for change, the project strives to create more equitable and supportive environments where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive.

1.3 Approach to the Research

The approach to the research is characterised by a comprehensive and participatory methodology aimed at capturing the nuanced experiences of migrant women in rural areas. Grounded in principles of co-creation and inclusivity, the research methodology prioritises the voices and perspectives of the research participants. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted by an experienced interviewer, the research seeks to elicit rich narratives that reflect the diverse backgrounds and lived realities of migrant women. Additionally, the research adopts a collaborative framework, working closely with grassroots organisations like Longford Women's Link (LWL) to ensure community engagement and input throughout the research process.

The research methodology encompassed various stages, including data collection, analysis, and dissemination, each informed by a commitment to ethical and rigorous research practices. The research facilitated active participation from migrant women, empowering them to co-contribute to the generation of knowledge and the co-creation of solutions. Moreover, the research recognised the importance of context, situating the experiences of migrant women within broader socio-political and economic landscapes.

Furthermore, the research approach emphasises the translation of findings into actionable insights and tangible outcomes.

Chapter 2: Review of Policy Context and Literature

The premise of the literature review is that past and present political, economic, cultural and social orders, shaped in specific spatial contexts, have unequal consequences which are further compounded by gender and ethnicity. Longford Women's Link knows that the reality of the gender pay gap and lack of available work in rural areas mean that migrant women are

structurally disadvantaged upon arrival to rural communities which directly impacts their economic and social outcomes.

This short policy-focused literature review provided an evidence base against which the questions for the semi structured interviews with migrant women living in the Longford area were sense-checked. These interviews formed the basis of the case study methodology in which the lived experiences of migrant women in rural communities at risk of economic inequalities were captured.

The review does not set out to be academic for scholarly consumption. It focuses on reports, in the main, which provide robust data which in turn offer insights into the lives, challenges and outcomes for migrant women, in particularly in their experience of integrating, participating and being economically active in Irish rural settings. The literature search which preceded this literature review used a variety of relevant phrases and words to elicit relevant research. During the literature search specific areas became more evident in their frequency and relevance, crystallizing into themes which are explored in the different sections in this review. The themes - which can just as easily be described as barriers - which surfaced in the literature review were: low pay and precarious work, non-recognition of prior experience and educational qualifications, lack of childcare, specific issues facing migrant women entrepreneurs, the realities of working in the care economy, access to health and social care, mental health and finally discrimination and racism.

“ there is very little written in academic literature on either the social and economic quantum of the richness of emigrant women’s contribution to Ireland’s societal cohesion, rural regeneration, GDP, vibrancy of towns, villages and cities ”

While there is a substantial body of literature on migrant women globally the parameters for this review are limited to Europe. Obvious gaps in the literature became evident and these will be dealt with in the conclusion. Material searched has been evaluated against the objective for the study namely if it contributes to a deeper understanding of the economic inequality of migrant women in rural Irish settings, with different sections dealing with the individual themes which emerged.

It is striking that there is very little written in academic literature on either the social and economic quantum of the richness of emigrant women’s contribution to Ireland’s societal cohesion, rural regeneration, GDP, vibrancy of towns, villages and cities et al. The ways in which they contribute to the fabric of rural Ireland are myriad including both the economic and affective spheres, yet this is not very evident in the literature.

What is apparent is that the material sourced in this review speaks largely of the deficits migrant women encounter due to their ethnicity, gender, economic situation and at times their individual status to reside and work in Ireland. Their stories of success, whether economic, social, participatory are largely absent. Their economic precariousness and the barriers which impede their equity of access on many fronts are clearly visible and are dealt with in the below sections.

Overview of the Irish National Migration Integration Policy

As the focus of this review is migrant women's economic inequality the issue of national integration policy and practice is an important element as it is through employment that people integrate into their community and participate in the social and economic fabric of their place of residence.

This section provides a short overview of migration and integration policy and status in Ireland.¹ It ends with the identification of the cohort of women migrants least likely to assimilate, integrate and thrive economically.

Ireland launched its first Migrant Integration Strategy in 2017 which ran until the end of 2021 and which was extended for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It covered EEA and non-EEA nationals, including economic migrants, refugees and those with legal status to remain in Ireland. The Programme for Government commits to the development of a successor to this strategy. An evaluation has been commissioned by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to evaluate the implementation of the expired strategy alongside the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and the National Strategy for Women and Girls. A consultation for the second Migrant Integration Strategy was planned for 2023 with publication expected in 2024.

The expired strategy formed the central policy framework to promote the integration of migrants across ten areas of public policy:

- Access to Citizenship
- Long Term Residency
- Access to Public Services and Social Inclusion
- Education
- Employment and Pathways to Work
- Health
- Integration in the Community
- Political Participation
- Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Combatting Racism and Xenophobia
- Volunteering
- Sport

It aimed to enhance diversity inclusion and equity for migrants in all areas of Irish society, focused on social inclusion measures, improved access to public services, address racism and xenophobia and support integration and social cohesion at a local level. There were eighty submissions made during the consultation phase for this strategy, with five face-to-face meetings with interested parties.

Analysis of the Migrant Integration Strategy

A mid-term review of the strategy was published in June 2019 by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration.² This review noted some challenges in the monitoring of progress as there was an absence of clearly defined milestones and baseline data and the evaluation was carried out in-house.

As far back as 2008 it was noted by the Immigrant Council of Ireland that a person's migration status plays a critical role in their ability to integrate, belong and participate.³

An ESRI report, published in June 2020, *Origin and Integration: A study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census*⁴ gives information on the level of integration which migrants achieve in Ireland through their access to employment. The findings concur with previous research regarding which cohorts of migrants are less likely to have work. The report lists characteristics which it identifies as risk factors for migrant unemployment, these were - being female, Black, having a low level of education, weak English language skills and being young.

Family reunification for non-EEA nationals is an important area of policy where Ireland diverges from the rest of Europe. This impacts the cohort of migrants coming to Ireland from non-EEA areas, while also impacting on the integration of migrants already resident here. An ESRI report from 2017 *Family reunification of non-EU nationals in Ireland*⁵ notes that in the EU this aspect of policy is governed under the Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22nd September 2003 except for Ireland, the UK and Denmark. It notes that for the rest of the EU first residence permits approved for family-related reasons is the largest category of permits while in Ireland it is the smallest category of granted permits. Of note is the lack of a legal entitlement to family unification by non-refugees, which occurred when the International Protection Act 2015 replaced the Refugee Act, which is a cause for concern for both NGOs and the UNHCR.

Another ESRI study, *Policy and Practice Targeting the Labour Market Integration of Non-EU Nationals in Ireland*⁶, published in 2019, gives a useful overview of the Irish migrant integration policy in the period 2014 -2019. This report was part of an EU-wide study conducted by the European Migrant Network. It used agreed metrics across all countries in the study to enhance comparability. The report examined labour migration policy relevant to non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals with a right to work, it did not include non-EEA students, graduates, asylum seekers and those covered in international protection policy. The methodology comprised a desk-top review, and a series of interviews with Government departments, agencies and also NGO actors working with migrants.

“ As far back as 2008 it was noted by the Immigrant Council of Ireland that a person’s migration status plays a critical role in their ability to integrate, belong and participate. ”

Of relevance for this literature review are the report’s findings on policy and practice in Ireland in the period studied. A key observation made is that Ireland followed a cross-departmental collective approach to implementing the Migrant Integration Strategy’s actions and that successful implementation of these actions varied hugely depending on the level of priority allocated by the individual Departments and agencies.

It found that varying levels of priority were allocated to the delivery of the actions across the actors, and that despite a requirement for local authorities to develop their own Migrant Integration Strategies, that few of the 33 local authorities had actually achieved this. The study found, unsurprisingly, that despite good work done by Quality and Qualifications Ireland the issue of low recognition of qualifications was identified as a key barrier to the uptake of appropriate employment. The lack of targeted skills development initiatives was also found to deter migrants from taking up work. The authors pointed to the fact that English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training programmes were being delivered by Education and Training

Boards (ETBs) in local responses to local demand but not as part of a national strategic recommendation.

Also of note is the divergence in views between the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration which stated that the overarching aim of the National Migration Strategy was to support the equitable provision of public services in order to achieve successful mainstreaming while the NGOs spoken to for the report found the focus on addressing specific skill shortages rather than an emphasis on strengthening integration and social inclusion measures to be disappointing. The NGOs consulted for this study identified poor career progression, low pay and underemployment as key challenges for the cohort in question. The absence of homelessness from the previous Migration Integration Strategy is also noted as a critical area which must be addressed in the new strategy.

Another article from 2021⁷ based on a review of integration policies in the Irish public sector found 'very limited efforts to develop appropriate immigrant integration policies'. These authors proposed the development of an immigrant integration policy based on a human-rights approach with specific policy measures to enable migrants to access housing, education, healthcare and work.

Deterioration in integration levels 1998 to 2019

Recent reports show that integration levels for migrants living in Ireland have deteriorated with migrant women faring worse than men in a variety of areas. An article from 2022 by Cross and Turner *Integration or exclusion? Assimilation of non-Irish nationals into the Irish labour market*⁸ points to the deterioration in the extent to which immigrants assimilated into the work force in the period 1998 to 2019. Variables studied were occupational level on arrival in Ireland, education, sector, union membership, home ownership and unemployment rates. Using national Labour Market Survey⁹ data the article shows that in 1998 immigrants experienced similar labour market conditions but by 2019 immigrants were disadvantaged compared to Irish nationals which suggests reduced assimilation.

The authors posit the increase in immigrants from Eastern European countries (EU 15-28) and outside the EU, a clear change from the previous trend where immigrants were mainly from the UK and the EU 15 Member States who shared similar cultural, linguistic and racial/ethnic attributes, as the reason for this shift. Immigrants from the EU 15-28 countries who have the right to travel and work in Ireland also have less English language proficiency. The authors find that immigrants from the newer EU 15-28 countries have had the least success in assimilating into Irish society. Research shows that these migrants are employed disproportionately in low pay low skill level work and need access to better language upskilling.

Summary

Having a job is a critical element in successful migrant integration and participation. This short discussion of the research reports identified various findings on the experience and outcomes of immigrants with regard to their ability to access paid employment in Ireland. Migrant women fare worse than their male migrant counterparts, who in turn have worse outcomes than the Irish population. Ireland's policy in relation to the family re-unification of non-EEA persons is also an area of concern which clearly impacts migrant women. Recommendations are made by a variety of stakeholders regarding future migrant integration policy and practice.

Evidence identifies the emerging cohort of migrants from the EU 15-28 group of countries as the group most disadvantaged and least likely to assimilate and progress. Given the volume of data

on how poorly migrant women fare in general, it is clear that migrant women from these countries are very vulnerable and in need of specific supports.

It is also noteworthy that all three relevant national strategies, the Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy expired in 2021. It is now time for a deeper specific focus on the needs of migrant women and girls to ensure that specific targeted measures are designed and delivered to support their inclusion and integration. It is hoped that the NGO guide, an output of this case study research, on economic inequalities experienced by migrant women living in rural areas in Ireland, will be a practical contribution which can contribute to evidence based policy making at a national level to improve the economic reality for migrant women in rural settings.

Migrant women's work and pay- the double disadvantage

There is a strong body of evidence from both international and national bodies which demonstrate that migrant women suffer a double wage penalty due to their gender and the fact that they are migrant workers. This section discusses the evidence on the level of disadvantage they experience regarding pay levels in comparison with migrant men and the native-born population.

Ireland is well served by a robust series of reports from the ESRI, jointly produced with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth ¹⁰ which monitor integration. The ESRI also monitors integration and equality and is the partner organisation which reports into the European Migrant Network.¹¹ In both series migrant women fare poorly in terms of the barriers they face in their efforts to integrate, gain language skills, access employment, earn an adequate income and have their prior experience and educational qualifications recognised.

Evidence on the migrant women pay gap in Ireland

The 2020 International Labour Organisation (ILO) report The migrant pay gap: Understanding wage differences between migrants and nationals¹², provides statistics which support the argument that migrant women experience a double disadvantage when they access the labour market as they are female and migrants. The report shows that the pay gap between male nationals and migrants in High Income Countries is estimated at 20.9% which is higher than the aggregate gender pay gap which is estimated at 16.2%.¹³

The report categorises Ireland as a High-Income Country and found that the migrant pay gap here is at 20.6 %, up from 19.2% in 2014/2015, based on the mean hourly wage. It found that Ireland has “significantly higher levels of unexplained pay gaps” and was ranked in 12th place out of the top 20 countries with regard to its migrant pay gap. It found the pay gap between male Irish nationals and women migrants was higher than the aggregate gender pay gap and that the mean hourly wage gap between migrant women and non-migrant women was at 26%.

The ESRI report Origin and Integration: A study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census previously cited, made similar findings to previous reports on the topic of migrant economic outcomes in Ireland. This report's findings concurred largely with previous research with regard to which migrants are less likely to have work. This report found that having a low level of education,

weak English language skills and being young, Black and female increased the risk of being unemployed.

“ Ireland as a High-Income Country and found that the migrant pay gap here is at 20.6 %, up from 19.2% in 2014/2015, based on the mean hourly wage ”

A report from The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland published in 2020 Access Progress Thrive Towards an Inclusive Labour Market in Ireland ¹⁴ found that while work is a key driver for migrant integration, participation and a route out of disadvantage, ethnicity continues to impact on migrants’ ability to access and progress in employment. This report complements others in the field and offers insights into the lives of 19 migrants working in different sectors, all with legal access to the labour market, focusing on their experience and progression in work. Those interviewed for this case study cited underemployment, lack of recognition of qualifications and experience from abroad, pay, conditions, lack of opportunities and social networks as barriers to making progress at work.

Discrimination both racial and gender was also noted by most of the participants as a challenge “to be put up with it”.¹⁵ The report concludes with solution-focused recommendations on interventions and supports across two domains: preparation and activation for work and progression, advancement and inclusive workplaces.

Specific barriers for migrant women in accessing work in Ireland

A recent collaboration between Rethink Ireland (previously titled the Social Innovation Fund Ireland), Bank of America and the Department of Rural and Community Development called the Women of Ireland Fund (supported by the Dormant Accounts Fund) has delivered research reports which seek to investigate the barriers which hinder women’s economic mobility in Ireland. The reports identified structural barriers which impede women from accessing economic mobility and offer a suite of solution-focused recommendations for a variety of policy actors.

The first report The Impact of Covid-19 on women’s economic mobility ¹⁷, published in July 2021, discusses how, in general, women’s working lives were negatively impacted by the additional domestic duties and increased care commitments (both child and elder care) which they carried out due to the closure of services due to the public health restrictions. The report found that the research participants experienced poorer mental health, higher levels of domestic violence and higher unemployment due to their increased caring responsibilities and difficulties getting and staying in work. The report speaks of a ‘shadow pandemic’ which had a disproportionate impact on these women’s employment status.

It names women from ethnic minorities and migrant women as two specific cohorts, along with lone parents, rural and transgender women and women living in Direct Provision as specific groups which were impacted badly in relation to their employment status during the pandemic.

It notes the Department of Social Protection's statement from May 2020 which stated that as the pandemic took hold the worst job losses were for young, migrant women.¹⁸

The report also noted the issue of underemployment referencing the numbers of women seeking asylum who worked in health and caring roles (both child and elder care) for which they were overqualified. The digital divide was also cited as a barrier to accessing work where the lack of laptops, lack of IT skills, poor digital literacy were issues which impeded these women from finding work.

In September 2022 the ESRI report "The Integration of Non-EU Migrant Women in Ireland"¹⁹ noted the lack of national policy targeted at this particular cohort. It stated that this group "may face a double disadvantage which relates to being both a woman and a migrant". It found that "Non-EU women are subject to immigration conditions and different employment rules to their EU counterparts, resulting in a more precarious residence status in the State".

A more recent ESRI report, from January 2023, Wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals in Ireland²⁰ found that in the period 2011 to 2018 migrant women earned 24% less than Irish women, 8% less than migrant men, 11% less than non-Irish male workers and 30% less than Irish males.

“Migrant women experienced poorer mental health, higher levels of domestic violence and higher unemployment due to their increased caring responsibilities and difficulties getting and staying in work”

The ESRI report Monitoring report on integration 2022²¹ on migrant integration and employment published in March 2023 found that migrants were more likely to work in less favourable conditions, be less likely than Irish workers to be in supervisory roles (27% and 33% respectively) and more likely to be engaged in shift work than Irish workers (28% compared to 16%). This series of reports examines how migrants compare to the Irish born population in four domains: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. The report found that on average migrant workers from Eastern Europe earned 40% less an hour than Irish workers in the period analysed. The authors identified the lack of recognition of qualifications from outside Ireland as a possible driver for this wage gap.

When comparing the work situations of migrant women and men, findings include the fact that migrant women are less likely than migrant men to be in supervisory roles, (26% versus 28% respectively), more likely to work for smaller companies (63% to 61%) and work less hours a week. It also found that women migrant workers were over-represented in the caring sector, with 50% of Asian migrant women and 37% of African migrant women working in the health and social care sector.

Regarding women migrant earnings specifically, the report found that migrant women were economically doubly disadvantaged by reason of their gender and ethnicity. The authors termed this "a double earnings penalty" for "being female and for being migrants". This report states that employment is a critical way for migrants to integrate and participate in the society they live and work in, and that elimination of barriers to employment for migrants is critical for their

health, well-being and sense of identity. It references some of the now expired Migrant Integration Strategy actions in particular:

- implementation of further education and training programmes to meet the specific needs of migrants (Action 39; responsibility of SOLAS and Education Training Boards)
- ensuring that programmes specific to unemployed migrants with language difficulties provide a language component (Action 40; responsibility of SOLAS and Education Training Boards)
- promotion of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) system in order to widely recognise vocational skills that have been accredited in other countries (Action 43; responsibility of QQI)
- proactive outreach and support to increase the number of persons with a migrant background working within all levels of the civil service and the wider public sector (Action 44; responsibility of the Public Appointments Service) and suggests that these must be fully implemented if the challenges facing migrant workers are to be addressed.

This report found that the percentage of migrants, in the 25 - 34 age group, with third level qualifications was higher at 67% than the Irish born population which was 56%. The risk of poverty was found to be higher for migrants, at 17%, than for the native born population which was 12%. Migrants were found to be more likely to experience housing affordability problems, at 29%, than 8% for the rest of the population, with 43% of migrants owning their own homes, compared to 77% of the Irish born population. The report ends with clear recommendations to examine the quality and pay rates of migrant workers.

Summary

A suite of reports discussed in this section converge on the truth that migrant women are doubly disadvantaged due to their gender and migration status. They earn disproportionately less than non migrant women, multiples less than non-migrant males, are over-represented in the informal poorly paid care sectors, experience poor or no recognition of their attained qualifications, have less favourable terms and conditions than other workers and work in less secure, precarious work. Given that all of the above reports signal the importance of employment as a means to integrate, assimilate and participate, the precariousness and inadequacy of women migrants' employment situation in Ireland is a serious cause for concern and needs specific policy attention with targeted measures.

Migrant women entrepreneurs - the triple disadvantage

There is an emerging theme in the academic literature on migrant women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship has the potential to be a driver for both integration and economic equality for migrant women living in rural Ireland, thereby supporting their families, generating business opportunities and contributing much needed prosperity and vitality in rural areas, there is little Irish literature on the topic to date. This is an important policy area as the volume and range of agencies (Local Development Companies, Local Authorities, Enterprise Offices, Rethink Ireland et al) which implement strategies and programmes focusing on enterprise supports is wide. As an example of the reach and scope of enterprise facing strategies and plans, all thirty-three Local Authorities in Ireland are currently engaged in an extensive consultation for their Local Economic and Community Plans. These strategies, plans and specific programmes must address the specific challenges and needs of migrant women, it is hoped that the forthcoming

NGO and stakeholder policy and implementation guide will contribute practical recommendations from migrant women themselves.

Given this absence of national level research on migrant women entrepreneurs, findings from the literature on migrant women entrepreneurs in Europe is discussed here as relevant.

The issue of migrant women entrepreneurs as a heterogeneous group first emerged over a decade ago. An example from the literature, dating from 2012 Opportunities or obstacles? Understanding the challenges faced by migrant women entrepreneurs²² notes the heterogeneous nature of women migrant entrepreneurs and the role their country of origin plays in their success, with those from developing countries experiencing more barriers. Factors such as culture, family, gender, human and social capital and institutional contexts are identified as either barriers or enablers. The article discusses the term 'triple disadvantage', first coined by Raijman and Smemyonov in 1997²³, which relates to those migrant women, already experiencing a double disadvantage by being both a migrant and a woman, who are additionally burdened by the fact that their country of origin is a developing one. The economic status, levels of education and the general status of women in developing countries all combine to create more challenges for women entrepreneurs who migrate to a new host country. The potential for social capital - the informal networks and links which migrant women make in their host countries, is viewed as having the capacity to be both a challenge and an enabler. The article concludes stating that informal networks are very important for this group as they are less likely to benefit from formal business networks. The important role that cultural norms - i.e. the beliefs, norms and traditions - play for this cohort is discussed and practical recommendations which host Governments should consider to counteract the barriers faced by this group including language tuition, acculturation classes, access to childcare, training on finance are offered. It also suggests the use of women-only supports to facilitate these women to operate within the cultural norms of their countries of origin.

More recent work in the field of migrant women entrepreneurs continues to affirm these earlier findings that the cohort is a varied one with complex needs and concurs with the finding that migrant women entrepreneurs from developing countries are the most disadvantaged group.

Migrant Women and Education

Challenges accessing training and education and issues with low or no recognition of prior experience and learning in host countries are identified as two strong themes in the literature which impact on migrant women's ability to access employment.

The theme of non-recognition of qualifications from outside Ireland appears in the ESRI 8th migrant integration and employment monitoring published in March 2023. This series of reports examines how migrants compare to the Irish born population in four domains: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. This latest report Monitoring report on integration 2022²⁵, jointly published with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, found that migrant women had an employment rate of 72% in 2022 compared to 68% for Irish women. This report specifically references migrants' high qualifications attainment and suggests that foreign qualifications are not recognised by Irish employers. The report ends with clear recommendation to examine the quality and pay rates of migrant workers and to improve employers' level of recognition of prior qualifications, in particular their awareness of the NARIC database. It also highlights the need for specific targeted supports to address the needs of refugees and proposes that this cohort should be

incorporated into the next Migrant Integration Strategy rather than in a separate policy context as a practical way to improve their integration.

The need for refugees and people within the International Protection system to access education, training and in particular language supports is discussed in an Aontas report from 2022 Lifelong Learning Participation in Ireland²⁶. This report identified the structural and policy barriers which impacted migrant women's ability to access education and training. These barriers resonate with other research studies, identifying the lack of transport and childcare, accessible ESOL classes and in particular the negative impact that the lack of national policy on the recognition of prior learning has on this cohort's access to and progression within education and training, and by default their ability to integrate socially and economically. The need for a trauma informed approach was also identified as desirable, while migrant women in the International Protection Programme named isolation and a fear of speaking out about their living circumstances as issues which impacted on their ability to access training and education.

This report points to the fact that the majority of people seeking International Protection in Ireland continue to be women and children and posits that the lack of statutory provided childcare and accessible (on-site) language classes for this group will continue to contribute to their low levels of access and progression to educational opportunities and training.

The lack of awareness of and recognition of prior experience and learning as an important theme impacting migrant women were also identified as barriers to getting employment in the 2020 Migrants Rights Centre Ireland report cited previously in this review.

“ educational experience emanates from their country of origin yet their dilemma is that they need to translate their experience, qualifications and expectations into those of their host country ”

The fact of economic stability overriding the desire to access education opportunities was discussed in a recent study which explored migrant women's experience of education in a rural location, in this case county Armagh²⁷. This study summarises previous research findings on how rural migration locations are less likely to provide work opportunities and offer less available support networks due to the lower density of people living in the area. This study examined English language classes and also migrant mothers' engagement with their children's primary schools. The importance of the English language classes as a key integration tool developing social and practical links with the local community was emphasised. The conclusion that migrants' educational experience emanates from their country of origin yet their dilemma is that they need to translate their experience, qualifications and expectations into those of their host country. The theme of social class also surfaced in this article which identified the different approaches taken by both professional women and those on lower wages to address the perceived deficits in how their educational attainments are perceived in the host country, with the former selecting private educational supports while the latter looked to community based interventions to support them.

The dominant concept in Europe of the male economic migrant and female dependent and how this disadvantages the cohort of non-EEA skilled women is discussed in the article Present but not counted: highly skilled migrant women in Belgium? ²⁸. This article discusses ongoing challenges for non-EEA women migrants with qualifications being disadvantaged by the policy blindspots of current EU migration and integration policy (the EU Single Permit Directive). The need for finer grained disaggregated data on the skills and education of migrating families and their lived experience is suggested.

Summary

The range of issues and challenges which impact on how migrant women access employment in their host countries is discussed. Various issues which block education being an enabler for integration for migrant women are offered ranging from EU and Irish national integration and migration law and policy, to the availability of local English language classes. The role of the dominant gender lens of the male migrant and also how social class plays a role in how migrant women negotiate their own responses to a lack of access to education are also mentioned.

Migrant women and the care economy

Migrant women make up the majority of care workers both in the informal and formal care economies across the world. The ESRI Monitoring report on integration 2022 states that women migrant workers were over-represented in the caring sector in Ireland with 50% of Asian migrant women and 37% of African migrant women working in the health and social care sector.

Migrant women working in the care economy in Europe.

In her *The Care Economy, Covid-19 Recovery and Gender Equality- A Summary Report* Professor Ursula Barry ²⁹ examined the gendered nature of care in selected European countries namely Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. The report analysed the impact of Covid-19 on the care sector and how much gender equality and care were factored into the EU Covid-10 Recovery Plan.

She posits that gender inequality is at the core of the care economy. She uses the European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) definition of care as both paid and unpaid caring work in the fields of health, education, long-term care, community and domestic settings. Data is provided which shows that women do more paid and unpaid caring work in all of the researched countries, with the EU average for involuntary part-time work due to caring commitments calculated at 28.4% for 2019, while in Ireland in 2019 this figure was 29.2%. She argues that if countries invested more in the care economy that this would provide a dividend in increased employment for women and increased social and economic well-being. She states that increased funding in care services would decrease women's involuntary caring duties and create potentially more spaces for women in education and work which she argues would be important for low pay, migrant and lone parent families.

This study shows that both Ireland and Spain had a higher dependency on migrant workers providing care in both long-term care and domestic settings. The author also notes that migrant women work in this sector where precarity and low pay prevail. She references the 2016 ILO report³⁰ which identifies the non-recognition of migrant women's qualifications which means that many are forced to stay in insecure and poorly paid roles. She states that migrant women make up a large percentage of care workers in both the paid and informal economies in the countries studied and that this cohort experienced severe difficulties staying in work and accommodation during the lock down measures.

Her study ends with the recommendation to place the care economy in a central location in the EU Covid-19 Recovery Plan with a clear objective to improve gender equality. She also recommends that Member States should develop protection for migrants working in both formal care and domestic care settings and that access to residency and citizenship need to be clearly delineated for this cohort.

Another report by this author *Feminisation of Poverty - lone parents, migrant women and older women*³¹ acknowledges the contribution that migrant women care workers are making in the countries they work in while living precarious vulnerable lives with little protection under the social welfare codes where they live.

Migrant women working in the care economy in Ireland

The second report in the Women of Ireland Fund series, published in March 2023, *Rocking the Cradle or Rocking the Boat?*³² comprised of a desk-based review and series of interviews with women from the same participating projects supported by the Women of Ireland Fund. This follow-on report focused on caring responsibilities and how this acts as a barrier to work for the women.

This report illustrates the specific pressures experienced by women in the Direct Provision system and the added barriers they face. The issues identified included relocation to rural areas where jobs are more scarce resulting in dependence on welfare payments, the pressures of supporting elderly family members to access health services and the challenges of engaging with health and social care professionals who lack cultural competency.

Specific challenges listed by the migrant women surveyed for this report who were working in either childcare or elder care settings included poor pay rates, lack of job security and progression, alongside a lack of societal acknowledgement of their caring work. The lack of recognition of qualifications from their countries of origin was raised again as an ongoing barrier to employment which continued to cause frustration.

Migrant women and childcare

An article, published by the ESRI in April 2023, *Childcare utilisation by migration background: Evidence from a nationally representative Irish cohort study*³³ examines the use of childcare in migrant households. The authors note the proven fact that access to high quality early years care and education is strongly related to better outcomes in a range of domains over the life cycle including health, education, economic, employment and participation.

The article shows that there are differences in how migrant families use childcare with those with no English less likely to use these services. The findings include the fact that migrant households were more likely to access formal childcare settings rather than informal childcare, with children from non-English speaking immigrant households less likely to be in either formal or informal childcare. This results in young children in non-English-speaking households missing out on the benefits which accrue from participating in creche and pre-school.

The article posits that the lack of access to childcare also makes it less likely for mothers in these households to be available to take up employment. The authors suggest that these findings point to other related issues such as low income and less availability of social and or familial supports.

It is worth noting that the data for this article was collected in 2010 and 2011 - a period of deep economic retrenchment, which could have impacted on the demand for childcare. It is also

important to note that there have been significant changes to both early years care and education policy and implementation since then. The article ends with a specific recommendation to offer additional support to immigrant households to ensure that children in these families access formal childcare to “reduce educational disparities”.

From the perspective of the childcare sector as an employer for migrant women, the theme of low pay for this cohort is again noted where a literature review of pay and conditions in the childcare sector by Early Childhood Ireland³⁴ found that expanding the pool of recruitment to students and migrant workers was a method used by some employers to address the high turnover rates in the sector. This approach was noted as a mechanism to keep wages low.

Migrant women’s access to health and mental health services

The level of access of migrant women to health and social care services is an expanding theme in academic literature. The theme of non-access to health and social care services, particularly during the Covid-19 public health restrictions, is also an emerging area of interest. A useful article reflective of this tranche of study examines how intersectional inequalities arising from gender, ethnicity and immigration status combine to prevent migrant women accessing health services.³⁵ Various studies examine the poorer access of migrant women to health care with one in particular³⁶ arguing that already existing inequalities of access to health care were augmented by the pandemic and suggests a further analysis of existing access barriers to health care to improve the poorer health outcomes of migrant women.

The European Network of Migrant Women’s 2021 report *Migrant Women’s Mental Health And Wellbeing*³⁷ addresses the critical role that mental health plays in migrant women’s journey to integration in their countries of residence. It discusses the need to address unresolved traumas as a necessary element in maintaining wellbeing and good mental health. The report comments on the low level of culturally specific mental health supports for migrant women.

A scoping review³⁸ on migrant health carried out in 2019 in Ireland also adds to the theme of migrant women’s health and access to health and social care services which is an area of growing interest. This review looked at eighty studies and found that the social determinants of health, public health readiness, communicable and non-communicable diseases and health screening were the topics studied. An absence of studies on collaborative partnerships, advocacy and human rights and improving health information systems was noted.

A qualitative study on Eastern European women’s experience of pregnancy in Ireland³⁹ found that this cohort faced many difficulties and challenges which they needed to navigate in their engagement with Irish maternity services. The ESRI *The Integration of non-EU migrant women in Ireland*⁴⁰ report states that the unmet medical needs for this cohort increased to 10% by 2019 up from 0.8% in 2016.

The absence of evidence and data about the prevalence of mental health difficulties among people from ethnic minority and migrant communities in Ireland is noted in the literature. Despite the fact that recommendation 61 of the national mental health national strategy states that the HSE should work to optimise the delivery of “diverse and culturally competent mental health supports throughout all services,”⁴¹ reports by ethnic minority mental health service users cite unconscious bias and stereotyping as barriers to appropriate care.

The voices of women in the Refugee Resettlement Programme and those living in Direct Provision were captured in the Akidwa 2020 report⁴². This report discusses the intersectionality

of gender, migration and health and the risk to poor mental health and how this theme can be missed by policy makers. This report makes a series of recommendations directed at health and social care professionals, voluntary organisations and national policy makers to improve services targeting migrant women.

“ **reports by ethnic minority mental health service users cite unconscious bias and stereotyping as barriers to appropriate care** ”

In 2021 Mental Health Reform, the Irish NGO coalition for improved mental health in Ireland, published its Ethnic Minorities and Mental Health, Revised guidelines for mental health services and staff on working with people from ethnic minority communities.⁴³ This guide, published in partnership with the Mental Health Commission, makes a series of recommendations to both improve cultural competence in the health and social care mental health services and also to improve access to and the experience of ethnic minority mental health service users. A Cultural Competency Toolkit⁴⁴, a practical document for staff working in mental health services was also produced in 2021 by this NGO. This guide is aimed at all mental health workers who provide services to people from ethnic minority communities, from primary to specialist mental health services and supports to support them to provide culturally sensitive and informed services.

A report Embedding Women’s Mental Health in Sharing the Vision ⁴⁵ prepared by the specialist group on women’s mental health to support the implementation of Sharing the Vision, the national mental health strategy, makes specific recommendations in relation to migrant women to improve quality of access by migrant women to appropriate services, mental health advocacy, trauma informed services et al.

Summary

Evidence from Europe shows that mental health is poorer in ethnic minority and migrant communities, with the ESRI and NGOs providing evidence showing a similar outcome for this group in Ireland. Feedback from migrant women on their lived experience of struggling to access mental health services in Ireland is also discussed. Despite recent policy and practical recommendations from both the statutory and voluntary sectors to improve access and cultural competence in Irish mental health services, there is much progress yet to be made to ensure that health and social care services are culturally competent to meet the needs of migrant women service users.

Migrant women - discrimination, racism and gender-based violence

Racism and discrimination are endemic barriers to integration and participation. A report from 2008 Enabling Equality: Migrant Women in Rural Ireland by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland identifies the complex dynamics of this ongoing challenge which migrant women continue to experience.⁴⁶

The ESRI Annual Report on Migration and Asylum: Ireland 2021 ⁴⁷ offers a full analysis on the progress in migration and asylum policy and implementation.

The ESRI report *The Integration of non-EU migrant women in Ireland* launched in September 2022⁴⁸ show how EU and non-EU migrant women are treated differently and states that the different employment rules and immigration conditions lead to a more precarious status for the latter group. The report continues the theme of ‘double disadvantage’ when describing the situation of being a woman and a migrant from a non-EU country.

The Irish Network against Racism 2022⁴⁹ report reveals the increase in racist abuse and discrimination experienced by people from ethnic and migrant minorities in Ireland. There were 600 reports received from the public about racism in 2022 up from 404 in 2021, with 223 criminal incidents recorded, 190 reports of discrimination, 136 on racist hate speech, with explicit racist language used in 51% of criminal incidents all perpetrated against a wide range of ethnic minority and migrant groups. The report confirms the continued existence of racist incidents which have increased in 2023 and cites the anti-migration responses to the location of people in the international protection system and the geopolitical upheaval in Ukraine as factors in this rise.

While the systemic approach to combatting racism is welcomed in the new National Action Plan against Racism, launched in March 2023, which also includes the establishment of a new Special Rapporteur on racism, NGOs - in particular the National Women’s Council of Ireland, stress the intersection of racism with sexism which impacts women migrants very negatively.

The Immigrant Council of Ireland reported a 12% increase in domestic violence cases reported by migrant women to November 2021 compared with 2020, attributing the increase to the economic and social stresses brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A recent article *Exclusion, Minimization, Inaction: A Critical Review Of Ireland's Policy Response to gender-based violence as it affects migrant women*⁵⁰ provides a critical review of Ireland’s policy response to gender-based violence as it impacts migrant women. The authors identify areas of policy which they show indicate policy failure due to exclusion, minimisation and/or inaction. This article references the ‘ethnic hierarchy’ and notes the fact that none of 139 actions in the now expired National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020: *Creating a Better Society for All* directly dealt with migrant issues. The article notes the absence of specific gender-based violence in vulnerable cohorts of women which include migrant women. The lack of an intersectional gender lens is identified as a barrier to addressing gender-based violence against migrant women.

Conclusion and summary of literature findings

While it is clear that access to employment is a key factor for successful integration and participation, the evidence shows the stark reality for migrant women living in Ireland and the extent of their struggles to access appropriate supports and services - not just in the world of employment.

The section on discrimination, racism and gender-based violence was included as the facts cited cannot but impact on migrant women’s level of well-being, confidence and motivation to be resilient, seek work and become economically active. It points to the need for strategies, policies and programmes to be mindful of and address this important and negative element of daily life for this group. To date national policy, in particular the Migrant Integration Strategy has not delivered better outcomes for this group. Recent, and forthcoming strategies must have more specific and targeted measures to support migrant women tackle the barriers they encounter.

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This group’s experience and outcomes over a range of areas - employment, education, integration levels, work sectors, their access and utilisation of health and mental health services are poorer than for other population cohorts in Ireland

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This review sought to explore migrant women’s economic situation in Ireland. The review surfaced strong evidence, from a range of robust sources, notably the ESRI, which clearly shows that migrant women are a disadvantaged cohort whose needs are not being met by national policy and programmes in Ireland. This group’s experience and outcomes over a range of areas - employment, education, integration levels, work sectors, their access and utilisation of health and mental health services are poorer than for other population cohorts in Ireland. These outcomes are compounded by the group’s experience of discrimination, racism and gender-based violence. Their struggles converge to make integration, access to employment and other critical services - notably education - harder than for other cohorts. In particular the Rethink Ireland National Women’s Council’s report⁵¹, previously cited here, encapsulates the intersecting challenges which conspire to make it more difficult for migrant women to integrate, thrive and participate in their communities. The findings of this report include the authentic voices of the migrant women themselves, mirroring and confirming what the formal monitoring reports, particularly the ESRI series, continue to state.

While it is the case that migrant women contribute positively to the communities they live in, whether rural or urban, this valuing and recognition of their contribution is not yet evident in the Irish literature.

This gap speaks loudly of what must be done to better support this group to reach their economic, social and personal potential to contribute meaningfully in Irish society.

This project therefore contributes at a practical and policy level to improving migrant women’s access to economic equality. Improving this group’s access to work will facilitate migrant women’s potential to actualise their potential and the recommendations withing will support them in their journey to equality of outcomes.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Approach to Analysis

The focus of this project aims to inform rural policy development by recognising the unique needs and vulnerabilities of migrant women in rural Ireland as expressed by migrant women living in rural Ireland. Through a co-creative and inclusive process, we investigated economic inequality implications for migrant women in Longford, focusing on housing, employment, income, and caring responsibilities. Our objectives included making specific policy recommendations to support their inclusion, as well as recommending a series of good practices for civil society organisations to enhance migrant women's participation in local decision-making. This methodology seeks to empower migrant women and contribute to their integration within rural communities. This research has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics Committee.

This qualitative participatory user-centred study emphasises in-depth interviews, focus groups and stakeholder engagement to gather rich insights into the lives of migrant women. Interviews with migrant women were conducted either face-to-face at Longford Women's Link or remotely via MS Teams, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. A semi-structured interview guide covering various aspects of migrant women's experiences, including employment, family life, housing, cultural barriers, childcare, support networks, quality of life, healthcare options, immigration status, experiences of inequality, and consequences of economic inequality was used to conduct the interviews.

Participants volunteered from the Longford Migrant Women's Group at Longford Women's Link. Invitations were sent via email, emphasising voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage. Written and verbal consent was obtained from participants prior to each interview. Focus groups were conducted to present findings and discuss issues, future pathways, and policy development. These workshops involved key target groups and representatives of migrant women to ensure their involvement in co-creating strategies and policy recommendations.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse interview data, focusing on identifying patterns, themes, and connections within the data. Codes were organised into potential themes based on similarities and relationships, and findings will be contextualised within existing literature and policy framework. The analysis process involved data familiarisation, initial coding, theme development, review, refinement, and finalisation. Through rigorous analysis, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of migrant women in rural Ireland, contributing to informed decision-making and policy development. Results will be disseminated through various publications, policy briefs, and presentations to stakeholders. Efforts will be made to ensure findings reach relevant audiences, facilitating positive change and improved support for migrant women in rural communities. Table 1 below presents an overview of respondents' background information.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' Background Information in Ireland

Interviewee	Country of origin	Qualifications	Sector of employment	Length of time in Ireland
A	Poland	BA in Economics	Manufacturing, Quality Control	Since 2005

B	Lithuania	Master's in Psychology	Healthcare, Nursing	Since 2004
C	Czech Republic	Master's in Education	Teaching, Special Needs Education	Since 2008
D	Portugal	Bachelor's in Business Management	Business Administration, Customer Service	Since 2008
E	Brazil	Bachelor's in Tourism Management	Hospitality, Hotel Management	Since 2009
F	Philippines	Bachelor's in Nursing	Healthcare, Nursing	Since 2001
G	China	Master's in International Relations	Hospitality, Sales	Since 2001
H	Nigeria	Master's in Digital Media, BS in Agricultural Science	Web Development, Supermarket	Since 2018
I	Libya	Pharmacist	Volunteering, Translation, Guidance	Since 2008
J	Romania	Bachelor's in Civil Engineering	Construction, Engineering	Since 2007
K	Pakistan	Bachelor's in Computer Science	Information Technology, Software Development	Since 2006
M	India	Master's in Computer Applications	Information Technology, Software Development	Since 2005

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 The Women's Voices

As outlined earlier in the report, the project includes a sample of migrant women based in Longford and the findings presented below represent the general experiences of this group.

4.1.1 Qualifications and Recruitment

The respondents had a diverse range of qualifications and experiences, reflecting their unique backgrounds and paths to migration in Ireland. Respondents A, B, and C, originating from Bulgaria, India, and Nigeria respectively, have backgrounds in various fields such as accounting, software engineering, and education. They obtained their qualifications in their home countries and subsequently sought employment opportunities in Ireland, either through direct recruitment or by leveraging their skills and experience to secure jobs in their respective fields.

Respondents D, E, and F, hailing from Romania, South Africa, and Latvia, bring expertise in sectors like finance, marketing, and social work. They navigated the recruitment process in Ireland, utilizing their qualifications and experiences to access job opportunities in diverse industries, including financial services, marketing agencies, and social welfare organizations. Respondents G, H, and I, from Brazil, Poland, and China respectively, hold qualifications in areas such as architecture, engineering, and finance. They successfully transitioned into the Irish job market, leveraging their educational backgrounds and professional skills to secure employment in sectors like construction, engineering, and finance.

Finally, respondents J to M, originating from various countries including Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Libya, and Nigeria, possess qualifications ranging from nursing and digital media to pharmacy and development studies. Despite facing challenges such as accreditation and language barriers, they demonstrated resilience and determination, pursuing further education, seeking employment opportunities, and contributing to their communities in Ireland through various avenues, including volunteer work and community engagement. Table 2 presents the education and training experiences of the sample before and after migrating to Ireland.

Table 2: Education and Training Experiences of Migrant Women

Arrived to Ireland with	Post-arrival
Basic education from home country	Business management
Social work	Health and safety
MA Teaching English as foreign language	Health and fitness
MA Marketing	Office procedures
Kitchen/hospitality	Tenancy course when receiving housing

Childcare previously & in Ireland: level 5&6	LWL Courses
Engineering and logistical management	Business/Accounting
Nutritionist	SNE
Digital Media Masters 4.5yr Griffith college	Hair extensions
BS in Agricultural science	Security
Hairdressing	Train The Trainer
Cooking	Courses taken in Leadership
Music academy. Diploma / Degree	HR
English through university & private tuition	English
Honours degree in development studies	Childcare
Masters in Gender social assistance and development	

4.1.2 Barriers and Biases in Employment

An ESRI report, published in June 2020, *Origin and Integration: A study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census* gives insights into the level of integration which migrants achieve in Ireland through their access to employment. The findings concur with previous research regarding which cohorts of migrants are less likely to have work. The report lists characteristics which it identifies as risk factors for migrant unemployment, these were - being female, black, having a low level of education, weak English language skills and being young.¹

The lack of awareness of and recognition of prior experience and learning as an important theme impacting migrant women were also identified as barriers to getting employment.

The respondents shared poignant experiences reflecting barriers and biases they encountered in employment. Their narratives shed light on the challenges faced by migrants in various

¹ 4 McGinnity, F, Privalko, I, Fahey, É, Enright, S, O'Brien, D, (2020). *Origin and integration: a study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census*. ESRI.

[Origin and integration: a study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census | ESRI](#)

aspects of the job market, including language barriers, discrimination, cultural differences, and limitations imposed by immigration status.

Respondent A highlighted the significant hurdle posed by language proficiency: "I applied for numerous jobs, but most required fluency in English, which I lacked. Despite my qualifications, I struggled to communicate effectively in job interviews."

Respondent B discussed age discrimination: "I faced rejections from multiple employers, seemingly due to my age. Despite my experience and skills, I felt overlooked because of stereotypes associated with older workers."

Respondent C shared insights into cultural bias: "Coming from a different cultural background, I found it challenging to navigate the Irish job market, where networks and connections play a crucial role. My qualifications were often overlooked in favour of candidates with local experience."

Respondent D described language barriers as a significant impediment: *"My limited proficiency in English made it difficult to find employment. Many job postings required fluent English speakers, leaving me with few opportunities despite my qualifications."*

Respondent E recounted her struggles with bias against migrants: *"I sensed reluctance from employers to consider candidates with foreign qualifications or experience. Despite my credentials, I faced scepticism and doubts about my ability to adapt to the workplace."*

Respondent F highlighted the challenges faced by refugees: *"As a refugee, I encountered scepticism and mistrust from potential employers. Despite my qualifications and experience, my refugee status seemed to overshadow my skills."*

“ Their narratives shed light on the challenges faced by migrants in various aspects of the job market, including language barriers, discrimination, cultural differences, and limitations imposed by immigration status ”

Respondent G discussed the limitations imposed by immigration status: *"My immigration status restricted my access to certain job opportunities. Despite my willingness and ability to work, I faced barriers due to visa restrictions."*

Respondent H shared insights into the complexities of navigating the job market as a migrant: *"The uncertainty surrounding my immigration status made it challenging to plan for the future. I felt trapped in a cycle of temporary jobs, unable to pursue long-term career goals."*

Respondent I described the need for additional qualifications: *"Despite my qualifications from abroad, I realised that I needed to obtain Irish certifications to be competitive in the job market. It was a daunting process, requiring time and resources."*

Respondent J discussed the lack of recognition for foreign qualifications: *"Employers often undervalued my education and experience obtained overseas. Despite meeting the job requirements, I encountered scepticism about the equivalence of my qualifications."*

These quotations provide a glimpse into the varied experiences of migrants navigating the job market in Ireland. From language barriers to discrimination and limitations imposed by immigration status, the challenges faced by these individuals underscore the need for inclusive employment practices and support systems to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Another ESRI study, *Policy and Practice Targeting the Labour Market Integration of Non-EU Nationals in Ireland*⁶, published in 2019, gives a useful overview of the Irish migrant integration policy in the period 2014 -2019. The study found, unsurprisingly, that despite good work done by Quality and Qualifications Ireland the issue of low recognition of qualifications was identified as a key barrier to the uptake of appropriate employment. The lack of targeted skills development initiatives was also found to deter migrants from taking up work. The authors pointed to the fact that English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training programmes were being delivered by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in local responses to local demand but not as part of a national strategic recommendation.²

Housing:

Migrants were found to be more likely to experience housing affordability problems, at 29%, 8% more than the rest of the population, with 43% of migrants owning their own homes, compared to 77% of the Irish born population.³

Housing proves to be a significant factor in choosing Longford and rural areas due to high prices elsewhere and limited options. While some migrants own homes or are in the process of purchasing property, landlords sometimes exploit demand by increasing rental rates, while others offer exceptional support. Location becomes crucial for those facing discrimination, with central areas not always ideal. Several migrants, like a Ukrainian refugee and her son, live in hotels temporarily. While most rent privately with or without support, a few receive full housing assistance. Bills are managed, sometimes through overtime or vital support, though understanding how to access financial supports can be confusing. Technology and service coverage including broadband quality can vary from area to area, impacting access to work and education. Despite challenges, most feel a sense of belonging, though some struggle to fit in immediately, hoping for change.

Transport:

Transport remains problematic, with reliance on cars due to limited public transportation options, impacting work and socialising.

Public transport limitations affect work and social life, though investment in rural transport has increased through the local link service. Car ownership is common in rural areas although most respondents do not own or have access to a car, though some choose walking or cycling due to costs. High transport costs hinder many in relation to access to employment, work and

^{2 6} Arnold, S, Quinn, E, Groarke, S, McGinnty, F, Durst C (2019). *Policy and Practice Targeting the Labour Market Integration of Non-EU Nationals in Ireland*. ESRI. <https://doi.org/10.26504/rs89>

³ McGinnty,F, Sprong,S., Quinn,E., Laurence,J., Murphy,K., Curristan,S. *Monitoring report on integration 2022*. ESRI. https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/JR3_1.pdf

education, pushing some to choose cycling even where segregated cycling lanes are not provided.

Most express a strong desire to work, with volunteerism and diverse employment options in common. Previous experience is utilised or new opportunities embraced, like security or starting a new business offering Language teaching, beauty services, childcare, and nursing offered employment opportunities for some within the group , with one respondent retired but active in voluntary work.

Income:

Migrant women earn disproportionately less than non migrant women, multiples less than non-migrant males, are over-represented in the informal poorly paid care sectors, experience poor or no recognition of their attained qualifications, have less favourable terms and conditions than other workers and work in less secure, precarious work. Given that all of the above reports signal the importance of employment as a means to integrate, assimilate and participate, the precariousness and inadequacy of women migrants' employment situation in Ireland is a serious cause for concern and needs specific policy attention with targeted measures.

The pay gap between male Irish nationals and women migrants was higher than the aggregate gender pay gap and that the mean hourly wage gap between migrant women and non-migrant women was at 26%.⁴

Income details are limited but highlight diverse employment opportunities, from retail to childcare and language teaching. Volunteering is common, enhancing skills and employability. Recognition of foreign qualifications is needed, along with basic IT skills training and cooking courses. Education levels vary, with a need for both advanced and basic English training. Training in engaging with migrants, women, and human rights issues is essential for peer support and political activism. Overall, the group boasts an impressive range of education and skills, pre and post migration.

Caring

Migrant women make up the majority of care workers both in the informal and formal care economies across the world. The ESRI Monitoring report on integration 2022 states that women migrant workers were over-represented in the caring sector in Ireland with 50% of Asian migrant women and 37% of African migrant women working in the health and social care sector. Specific challenges listed by the migrant women working in either childcare or elder care settings included poor pay rates, lack of job security and progression, alongside a lack of societal acknowledgement of their caring work. The lack of recognition of qualifications from their countries of origin was raised again as an ongoing barrier to employment.⁵

⁴ Amo-Agyei, S. (2020). *The migrant pay gap: Understanding wage differences between migrants and nationals*. International Labour Organisation. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_763798.pdf

⁵ Rethink Ireland. National Women's Council of Ireland. (2023). *Rocking the cradle or rocking the boat – women's economic mobility and the role of care in Ireland*. <https://rethinkireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-Womens-Economic-Mobility.pdf>

Caring is a significant expense for many migrants, compounded by the absence of familial support often available in their home countries. The availability, cost, and requirements of caring services in Longford were crucial factors influencing the decision to reside there. Initially, many encountered difficulties in accessing suitable care.

Respondents emphasised that while childcare is generally accessible if affordable, finding suitable time slots to accommodate essential activities like work and education can be challenging. Mutual reliance on childcare workers and other parents often fosters strong friendships and support networks within communities.

Information about available services and application processes is essential but can be daunting to navigate amidst other new requirements. While schooling is generally positive, some educators' authoritarian approaches have caused issues, particularly for migrant teenagers who may already be grappling with the challenges of adolescence in a new environment. 6

Wellbeing & Health

Migrant women face numerous challenges in maintaining their wellbeing and accessing healthcare services. The level of access of migrant women to health and social care services continues to be a challenge alongside the need for more cultural competency, gender and trauma informed approaches.

Challenges include securing basic essentials, managing finances, accessing suitable healthcare, and addressing mental health needs. Many find solace in simple pleasures and quiet time amidst their busy lives, but the lack of mental health support can exacerbate their struggles.

Isolation and difficulty in making friends are common experiences, particularly for migrant women and mothers in rural areas. However, organisations like LWL play a vital role in providing support, education, and resilience skills building opportunities. Professional and social networks developed through these interactions are essential for many migrants but may not be equally accessible to all.

Discrimination

Discrimination manifests in various forms for many migrants, impacting employment opportunities, education, healthcare, and public services. Obviously cultural differences can lead to difficulties in communication and it became evident throughout the project that increased cultural competency within organisations would greatly alleviate some of these difficulties. involve extreme abuse and negative behaviour.

Instances of discrimination span from job interviews and school environments to interactions with healthcare providers and public services. Moreover, Longford's cultural landscape is marked by tensions between the Traveller community and migrants of Muslim origin, with more supports required for communities to interact and create spaces for dialogue and integration.

In conclusion, addressing barriers and biases in employment, healthcare, and social integration is imperative for creating an inclusive environment for migrants in Longford and beyond. Efforts

⁶ *Perceptions of immigrant parental engagement in primary schools in Ireland*, Chapter 8 in Halleli Pinson, Nihad Bunar, and Dymna Devine (Eds.), *Research Handbook on Migration and Education*, Edward Elgar. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839106361.00013>

to promote education, support networks, and cultural understanding are vital for fostering a welcoming and equitable community for all who call Longford home.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a strong body of evidence from both international and national bodies which demonstrate that migrant women suffer a double wage penalty due to their gender and ethnic status.⁷ This is exacerbated further in rural areas where there are fewer economic opportunities, lower wages and poor access to public transport and other services.

Throughout the project, it became increasingly evident that the label of migrant posed a number of issues. For the women they felt it stripped them of their own unique identity, for the research team it became evident that the migrant label masked the diversity and heterogeneity of the women in the group, thereby making other barriers invisible. Although a small sample the group still had x number of nationalities each with very distinct cultural traditions. These individual circumstances brought separate issues for each group.

It's evident that effective communication and language proficiency are crucial for migrants before and upon arrival in a new country. Setting up essential services like roaming for communication and not solely relying on mobile phones for translation can significantly ease the transition process. As highlighted by respondent G), basic English proficiency is vital for the initial days, serving as the foundation for integration into the new society. Encouraging newcomers to prioritise learning English, as suggested by respondent (F), can greatly enhance their ability to access training and employment opportunities, ultimately facilitating their settlement process.

Furthermore, seeking assistance and asking for help are consistently emphasised as essential steps for migrants. Despite the inclination to rely on online sources, the importance of reaching out for guidance and support cannot be overstated. Respondent (B) underscores the kindness and helpfulness of people encountered along the way, indicating a willingness within communities to assist newcomers. Establishing connections with organisations like LWL, as highlighted by respondent (H), can provide invaluable support networks, empowering migrants to navigate challenges more confidently. Therefore, promoting a culture of seeking assistance early upon arrival, as emphasised by respondents (E) and (I), can ensure that newcomers receive timely support to address their needs effectively.

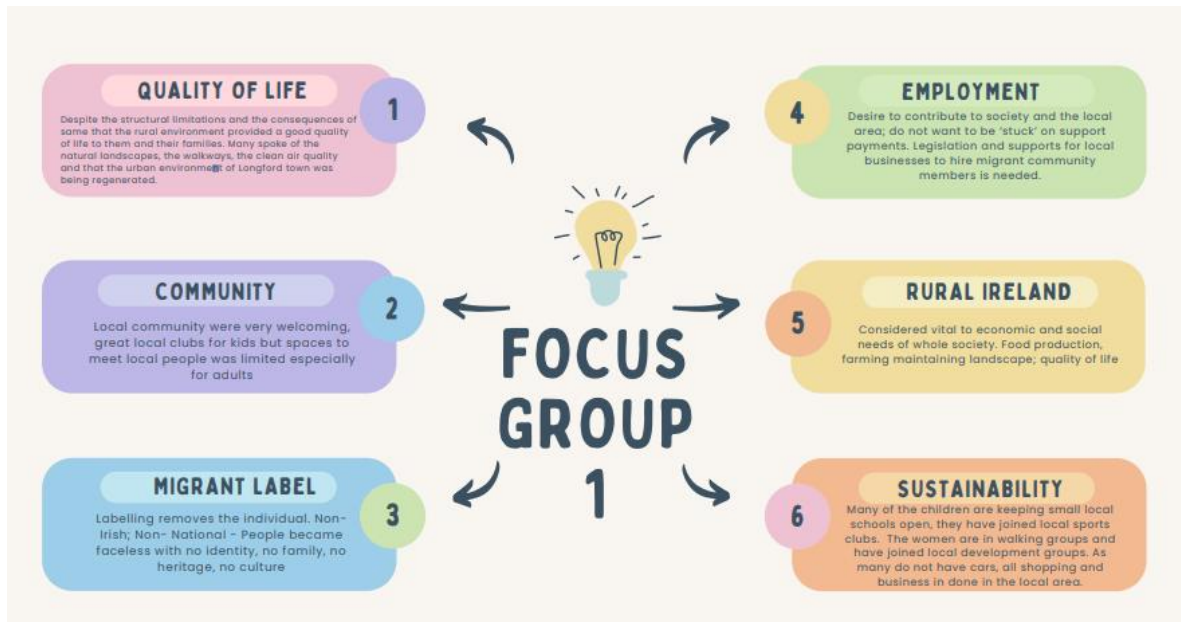
Focus Groups

The reason d'être of this project was to spotlight the need to support migrant women to have equal opportunity for a good quality of life in rural Ireland. It is widely accepted that access to financial resources is fundamental to survival and building supports to sustain oneself, therefore the approach was to capture the lived reality and experiences of migrant women as they live and in some cases are just surviving economic inequalities. In doing this the project also aimed to shift the narrative of migrant women presented in data as women with issues, as opposed to women that encounter issues. This nuanced narrative was identified within the transcripts as something intangible that fed into stigma and prejudice that manifests within

⁷ Amo-Agyei, S. (2020). *The migrant pay gap: Understanding wage differences between migrants and nationals*. International Labour Organisation. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_763798.pdf

communities and generates hostility toward most migrant communities. To achieve this, in addition to individual interview, two focus groups were held with the women involved in the research.

The first focus group sought to explore the findings from the interviews and to explore wider discussions on the role of migrants in the sustainability of rural Ireland. The key areas are presented below.



A question raised by one lady led to a group consensus that the labelling of 'migrant' is one of the root causes in barriers to migrant women's equal opportunity. "when do you stop being a migrant? She expanded on this noting that "my child was born in Ireland, but he is called a Migrant. How many generations will it be before my children are Irish?". While barriers to employment did identify prejudices when hiring the women during the individual interviews it had not been framed in the context of this wider 'migrant brushing'. This ignited a discussion and process of unpacking what the women considered 'migrant' to mean and how its use and social construct has developed a language, a discourse, a plethora of negative connotations and assumptions that grow from being labelled a 'migrant'. They also felt that this new discourse denied them the space to celebrate their identity of which they are immensely proud.

It is imperative to note that all of the participants wanted to contribute to society and their local community. These women were acutely aware of the challenges rural areas face and that the sustainability of many services and local shops hinged on attracting new people to an area. They expressed the numerous benefits of living in rural Ireland and that most of the barriers that they faced were systemic and structural. While there are societal challenges many felt that if structural improvements were made that support migrant women and if government structures and agencies were more accessible that society would respond in kind.

The second focus group aimed to empower the group, to give them some agency over the findings and any recommendations that were put forward. To achieve this a design thinking methodology was employed. Design thinking is a methodology which provides a solution-based approach to solving problems. This method was chosen as it is useful when used to tackle complex problems as it serves to understand the human needs involved, reframe the problem using a human centred lens and allows numerous ideas to emerge from brainstorming

sessions, resulting in a co-created set of outcomes that solidify participants issues while also transforming them into starting points or foundation blocks to build solutions.

The focus groups not only verified findings and identified actionable solutions but one participant noted that it was the first time that she felt like she was breaking the migrant circle of entrapment and that identifying where action can be taken to support women on their journey to having a good quality of life might mean that other migrant women will have a more positive experience and that they have equal opportunity to harness opportunities within society. Policy recommendations were also discussed in this focus group session which have been incorporated into the overall findings and analysis.

5.1 Recommendations for Policymakers

Tailored Information and Services:

Develop and disseminate culturally specific information for migrant women in rural areas.

Use the knowledge and willingness of older individuals in rural communities to provide assistance to migrants.

“
Despite the inclination to rely on online sources, the importance of reaching out for guidance and support cannot be overstated
”

Ensure mental health services are trauma-informed and culturally sensitive.

Quotation: "More information generally but women and rural location specific and pitched for serving different cultures." - Respondents' feedback

Youth and Family Support:

Provide more support and services tailored to teenagers and families in rural migrant communities.

Invest in community-based supports and community development programmes for women that are inclusive and accessible to women from a migrant background.

Quotation: "*More teenager support and services.*" - Respondents' feedback

Cultural Focus:

Offer specialised support for specific cultural groups, such as Pakistani and Syrian women, considering the unique challenges they face in adjusting to rural life.

Quotation: "*Specific focus on culture: Pakistani women and Syrian examples of huge culture shift and unique needs.*" - Respondents' feedback

Networking and Communication:

Develop and connect with existing community networks, such as the Asian African WhatsApp group, to provide support and resources to migrant women.

Expand outreach beyond urban centres to engage with rural migrant communities effectively.

Quotation: *"Similar needed in Rural areas. Focused on particular groups."* - Respondents' feedback

Resource Accessibility:

Ensure targeted IT resources are available to migrant women, along with basic essentials.

Establish physical centres where migrants can access support services, socialise, and participate in community activities.

Quotation: *"Targeted IT resources created not just services."* - Respondents' feedback

Language and Education:

Enhance language assistance programs and streamline services to avoid duplication.

Provide translation services from airports to public offices and essential services.

Expand educational opportunities and streamline delivery of services like LWL to meet the diverse needs of migrant women.

Quotation: *"More assistance with language: way taught and content."* - Respondents' feedback

Financial and Employment Support:

Offer financial advice tailored to the specific needs of migrant women.

Begin to address economic disparities by examining the prevalence of migrant women in low paid sectors.

Consider how supports for increased cost of living and investment in public services might provide meaningful support to migrant women.

Quotation: *"Encourage working with incentives and tax breaks rather than restrict it and make overtime and extra hours unattractive."* - Respondents' feedback

Peer Support and Empowerment:

Facilitate peer support networks and encourage the sharing of experiences and knowledge among migrant women.

Establish a National Migrant Women In Rural Areas Support Network?

Empower migrant women through education, training, and opportunities for leadership and community engagement.

Quotation: *"Development of the LWL type approach as it's perfect with migrant contribution considered and used."* - Respondents' feedback

Healthcare Access:

Improve access to healthcare by providing culturally sensitive medical services and ensuring specialists visit rural areas e.g. drop-in health clinic for migrants once a month. Offer

educational advice on national health surveillance programmes such as breast check and cervical screening. Additionally, ensure that migrant women are made aware of their right to request access to a female doctor or Nurse for intimate procedures where cultural beliefs may be prohibitive to the disclosure of medical issues in the presence of a male practitioner.

Quotation: *"Health service and medical service advice specific to cultural groups."* - Respondents' feedback

Policy Changes:

Enhance information provision on PPS and visa processes, along with access to secure housing and employment rights.

Advocate for policies that address the unique challenges faced by migrant women in rural areas, including issues related to housing, employment, and integration including in Longford Community and Economic Plan

Gender and ethnic disaggregated data included and captured to inform planning and decision making in Longford.

Strengthen integration and social inclusion measures.

Quotation: *"PPS / Visa process basic information, but also what stage in the process each are at, made available and the expected time period for the entire process."* - Respondents' feedback

Further Recommendations:

Support for Caregiving Responsibilities: Implement initiatives to alleviate the stress associated with caring for elderly parents overseas or living with them in rural Longford. This could include providing access to counselling services for emotional support, establishing support groups for caregivers, and exploring options for respite care.

Childcare Accessibility and Affordability: Address the high cost and limited availability of childcare facilities by advocating for increased government funding for childcare services and expanding the number of creche places in rural areas. Additionally, explore innovative solutions such as mobile childcare services or shared childcare arrangements within migrant communities.

Cultural Integration and Identity: Develop programs and resources to support migrant women in navigating cultural differences and encouraging a sense of belonging in their new community. This could involve cultural awareness training for local organisations and schools, facilitating multicultural events and exchanges, and providing opportunities for migrants to share their experiences and traditions and to meet potential employers.

Access to Informed Resources: Create accessible and culturally sensitive resources to assist migrant women in accessing essential services and support networks. This could include developing a mobile app with information on local resources, organising presentations and workshops delivered by facilitators from diverse backgrounds, and ensuring that service providers are trained in trauma-informed care and cultural competency.

Engagement with Local Policies and Organisations: Advocate for the inclusion of migrant voices in local policy-making processes including local migrant integration strategy and ensure that

policies and programmes are responsive to the needs of migrant communities. Collaborate with local organisations who are rooted in the community such as LWL, FRCs, the Chamber of Commerce and Local Enterprise Office to promote economic opportunities for migrant women and facilitate their integration into the local economy.

Networking and Social Support: Establish networking opportunities and social events specifically tailored to migrant women, particularly those who lack family support and networks. This could involve organising community gatherings, support groups, or mentorship programs to foster connections and mutual support among migrant women.

Streamlined Immigration Procedures: Advocate for simplified and transparent immigration procedures to facilitate the integration of migrant women into the community. This could include providing guidance and support for navigating immigration processes, ensuring timely processing of applications, and addressing any barriers or challenges faced by migrants during the immigration process.

Recognition of Migrant Contributions:

Recognise and celebrate the skills, experiences, and contributions of migrant women to the local economy and community. This could involve highlighting success stories of migrant entrepreneurs, promoting diversity and inclusion in local businesses, and creating opportunities for migrant women to showcase their talents and expertise.

5.2 Recommendations for Employers

Financial and Employment Support:

Offer financial advice tailored to the specific needs of migrant women.

Provide incentives and tax breaks to encourage employment and address economic disparities.

Develop measures to tackle the gender pay gap and examine the quality and pay rates of migrant workers and to improve employers' level of recognition of prior qualifications.

Quotation: *"Encourage working with incentives and tax breaks rather than restrict it and make overtime and extra hours unattractive."* - Respondents' feedback

Language and Education:

Enhance language assistance programs and streamline services to avoid duplication.

Provide translation services from airports to public offices and essential services.

Expand educational opportunities and streamline delivery of services like LWL to meet the diverse needs of migrant women.

Quotation: *"More assistance with language: way taught and content."* - Respondents' feedback

Healthcare Access:

Improve access to healthcare by providing culturally sensitive medical services and ensuring specialists visit rural areas.

Quotation: *"Health service and medical service advice specific to cultural groups."* - Respondents' feedback

5.3 Concluding Remarks

It is now time for a deeper specific focus on the needs of migrant women and girls to ensure that specific targeted measures are designed and delivered to support their inclusion and integration.

Approaching access to finance and job opportunity through the lens of the lived experience of migrant women has revealed the complexity of the issue. There are structural and societal barriers that act as barriers to employment regardless of whether a job vacancy exists. Access to finance can either facilitate or hinder integration and social mobility. Individuals and communities with limited financial resources may find it challenging to access education, credit, build assets, or invest in opportunities that could improve their socio-economic status. This points to other findings in rural studies which highlight that no one solution will suffice. The broader issue of gender in the context of access to employment in rural areas has not been included as a focus here but is part of the issue for migrant women. Addressing these complex interplays requires comprehensive strategies that go beyond merely increasing access to finance. Efforts should encompass policy interventions, regulatory reforms, financial education initiatives, and targeted support programs at a local level through organisations like Longford Womens Link aimed at addressing the root causes of social issues and promoting inclusive economic development.

It is hoped that this can contribute to evidence based policy making at a national level to improve the economic reality for migrant women in rural settings.

“ Advocate for the inclusion of migrant voices in local policy-making processes including local migrant integration strategy and ensure that policies and programmes are responsive to the needs of migrant communities

”

Future migrants coming to Ireland would greatly benefit from comprehensive pre-arrival information regarding how systems operate in the country. This includes practical guidance on setting up essential services such as mobile communication and roaming, as well as clear instructions on accessing public services like healthcare and social welfare. Focusing on the importance of Basic English proficiency and providing resources for language learning would also facilitate smoother integration into Irish society. Additionally, encouraging newcomers to seek assistance early upon arrival, whether from locals, government services, or established support organisations, can ensure timely support to navigate any challenges they may encounter. By equipping migrants with knowledge of how systems work and fostering a culture of seeking help, policymakers and service providers can enhance the overall settlement experience for newcomers in Ireland. This could be complemented with support from established migrant communities who could be ideally placed as peers to help newly arrived

migrants to Ireland and onward to rural communities to navigate the systems and processes with greater ease.

Further research, using an intersectional approach, on a county wide basis to engage with the many diverse migrant communities including but not limited to the Roma and Ukrainian communities who have made Longford their home is needed. The role that Longford Womens Link demonstrates the importance of locally based centres dedicated to women's equality in providing the space and resources for this group to come together.

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