

MirreM Data Collection – Country Context

IRELAND

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Instructions:

Reflecting on your deskwork and fieldwork, please provide a brief snapshot (1 – 3 pages in total) of the overall picture of irregular migration data in your country. For each question, please address stocks, flows and indicators (or indicate N/A).

Questions:

1. What is your overall assessment of the quality of irregular migration data in your country?

My overall assessment is that the quality of irregular migration data in Ireland is poor/inconsistent and that irregular migration data is provided in a piecemeal way. The “[urgent need](#)” to improve the quality of migration data in Ireland has been flagged by the IOM.

Regarding indicators of irregular migration, the Department of Justice has published reports with detailed data on particular indicators of irregular migration, namely asylum data and data on victims of human trafficking. They have also published [Eurostat Asylum – Plain English Documentation](#) to explain how they arrived at *some* asylum data provided to Eurostat.

Yet a substantial proportion of the data collected was provided through what can only be described as informal and/or ad hoc correspondence with Department of Justice officials. To elaborate with two examples the ESRI, which is the Irish National Contact Point for the EMN, has cited “correspondence with INIS” as a source in multiple instances in their reports and Department of Justice officials have responded to parliamentary questions with data that is not available on the Department of Justice website (INIS, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, is now known as Immigration Service Delivery (ISD)).

Further, a number of inconsistencies were identified as part of this data collection process. See, for example, the data on voluntary returns.

2. How is irregular migration data generally used in policy making?

Policymakers in Ireland appear to primarily rely on the work of CSOs to understand the scale, trends, and characteristics of unauthorised migration, in particular the MRCI. This was particularly apparent in the run-up to the 2022 Regularisation Scheme for long-term undocumented migrants and the introduction of the [reactivation employment permit](#) in 2011.

Though the ESRI publishes an annual migration and asylum report, there is nothing available from the Department of Justice which suggests that these reports are relied on for the purpose of policy making.

3. How did you go about the data collection process?

I took the following approach to the data collection process:

- Search publications available on the following websites:
 - the Department of Justice website
 - the ISD website
 - the IPO website.
- Search publications available on the ESRI website under 'Migration, Integration and Demography'. For the relevant data provided in said publications, pursued sources they cited (eg, Eurostat).
- Search engine research for any further data on specific estimates and/or indicators.

In relation to searching government department websites, the ISD updated its website in recent years, so it is possible that this data was previously available online. The ISD archive, ie, the content from the previous website, is password protected

The above approach was followed to collect data on both estimates and indicators.

4. Were there any specific difficulties you experienced during this process? How did you address them?

The first difficulties arose from the data provided directly from the 'Immigration in Ireland Annual Review'.

First, only Annual reviews for the years [2022 \(mid-year review\)](#), [2020](#), [2019](#), [2017](#) appear to be available online. Second, of the Annual reviews that could be obtained online, there is an inconsistency in terms of how comprehensive these reviews actually are. For example, Annual

Review 2019 provides a combined figure of EU Treaty Rights permissions refused *or* revoked, which is not provided in other Annual reviews.

Another difficulty is the fact that the data provided in parliamentary questions may not be available on the Department of Justice/ISD/IPO website. Therefore, while the data is technically speaking, “publicly available and electronically accessible with no permissions required”, it is very difficult to search for.

GNIB and the ISD operations are distinct. The GNIB manages registrations, deportations etc outside of Dublin, while the ISD manages registrations within Dublin, as well as dealing with applications that have been referred to them by local GNIB offices. The GNIB has its own database, which the ISD does not have access to (see [here](#) p 22).

5. What were the main gaps in the evidence base (i.e., unmet user needs) that emerged during your data collection process?

- In terms of gaps in the evidence base, the following data is unavailable -
 - Exits from Ireland.
 - Land crossings between Ireland and Northern Ireland.
(For more on this, see this [2021 IOM report](#), pgs 29 and 57). This is connected with the Common Travel Area (CTA), the free movement regime operated by Ireland and the UK which allows passport-free movement of Irish and British citizens within the CTA and across the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic.
 - Births into irregularity
- In terms of residence permissions issued, while data is provided to EUROSTAT on the valid immigration permissions issued, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department of Justice announced an automatic extension of all immigration permissions, to prevent “migrants with a provisional status or a reasonable claim to a provisional status” in Ireland from falling into irregularity. Extensions to this arrangement were [announced periodically](#) (9 times in total), and it concluded on 31st May 2022. In terms of migration data, there is no information available on how migration data was collected to address this exceptional arrangement in place from March 2020 until May 2022. Further, the 9 announcements have been taken down from the ISD website, where they were previously made available.

- It became apparent that the data collected by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) provided little insight into irregular migration in Ireland. The CSO does not ask questions relating to immigration status or the type of immigration permission they hold. For more on this, see this [2021 IOM report](#), pg 20.
- Though the Department of Justice provided data to Eurostat on ‘Third country nationals found to be illegally present’, the Department stated in the policy paper on the 2022 Regularisation of Long-Term Undocumented Migrants Scheme that “No official data exists on the number of undocumented persons in the State.”
- It was noted in a 2022 [Frontex report](#) that data on detections of irregular border-crossing by land, air sea are not available for Ireland (see page 57).
- Data on the 2022 regularisation scheme made publicly available in in a response to a parliamentary question only provided the number of applications refused, accepted or withdrawn and the nationalities of the applicants. But through the application form, the DOJ would have obtained the following information:
 - Employment sector (if in employment)
 - Age
 - Duration of stay in Ireland
 - Their immigration history

Though only long-term irregular migrants were eligible for the scheme, having access to this information could serve to be a valuable indicator of the irregular migrant population in Ireland. Applications are still being processed, so it may be the case that such data will be made available in the future.

6. Were there any meetings with producers or users of irregular migration estimates and indicators that you were unable to secure, but sense that endeavouring to do so in future may be worthwhile? If so, please provide contact information for this person/entity and explain why you think such detail would be helpful.

I would consider the following producers and users of irregular migration estimates and indicators to be worth contacting:

- Research and Data Analytics Unit in the Department of Justice, because they were responsible for producing the [Eurostat Asylum – Plain English Documentation](#). Their email address is ReportingAnalysisUnit@justice.ie.

Principal Officer for Research and Data Analytics at the DOJ is Gurchand Singh GurchandSingh@justice.ie

- Reporting and Analysis Unit (RAU), unit within ISD, does collaborate with the GNIB to some degree to carry out its own responsibilities, namely producing snapshot statistics for reporting to EUROSTAT. The RAU obtains data on residence permits at the end of each year from the GNIB, through the GNIB Information System. This data is transferred manually from the GNIB-IS to the Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration Programme (AISIP), the ISD's database (See [here](#) p 22).
- Cathal Doherty, cathal.doherty@csso.ie, Population and Migration Estimates statistician at the Irish Central Statistics Office. He took part in the MIrreM Ireland workshop and seems like he might be a good person to involve further. During the workshop he mentioned that there is increasing interest in the CSO in getting (more and better) data on irregular migration in Ireland.
- The MRCI. As mentioned in several tables on the stock estimates, the only document publicly available which outlines how the estimates on the irregular migrant population were reached is from 2014 (ie, the Ireland is Home report). The MRCI revised these estimates in 2020, but did not confirm if they adopted the same methodological approach, or adopted a different approach.
- Emma Quinn from the ESRI. This is because a substantial proportion of the data the ESRI cite in their reports come from “correspondence with INIS”. Emma may also be able to provide further information on the Migrant Integration Strategy Data Group (MISDG). The MISDG was mentioned in the [2021 IOM report](#), but there is very little information on this online. Emma Quinn may also be able to provide further information on the research conference “Documenting Irregular Migration” in Dublin. In the flow indicator ‘Dos Evaded’, data from a presentation at this conference is relied on. However, there is very little information about this Conference online.

7. Please point to an example of good practice estimating irregular migration and/or making use of estimates of irregular migration in policy-making that you came across. Why did you select this example?

- The use of MRCI's estimates of Ireland's irregular migrant population in rolling out the 2022 Regularisation Scheme, one of the most significant efforts to address irregular migration in Ireland ever undertaken.

- The ESRI recently established the Migrant Integration Strategy Data Group (MISDG) to improve collaboration among stakeholders on migration data (though not specifically irregular migration data).
- The [IOM shares best practices](#) on migration statistics with the CSO to improve the quality of the migration data in Ireland (pg 58).

Acronym	Name	Description
CSO	Central Statistics Office	-
DOJ	Department of Justice	-
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute	A leading independent research institute in Ireland.
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau	Responsible for registrations of immigration permissions, deportations and investigations into human trafficking. Under the auspices of the Department of Justice.
IPO	International Protection Office	Responsible for asylum cases. Under the auspices of the Department of Justice.
ISD (formerly known as INIS)	Immigration Service Delivery	Responsible for immigration matters more broadly. Under the auspices of the Department of Justice.
MRCI	Migrant Rights Centre Ireland	A leading migrant-rights CSO in Ireland.