



# Irish Abroad Unit



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Report of Irish in Asia Diaspora Survey

### Introduction

Over March and April 2018, the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade conducted an online survey of the Irish diaspora in Asia. The aims of this survey were:

- to better understand the profile of Irish communities in Asia;
- to better understand their engagement with Irish Embassies and Consulates;
- to ascertain their level of knowledge of the Government's diaspora engagement work; and
- to better identify their needs so as to feed into future priorities for diaspora engagement initiatives in the region.

A total of 785 respondents took part in this survey and the information and feedback received is being followed up on by Units across the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

In 2018 the Department will also launch a whole-of-Government Asia-Pacific Strategy which will provide a framework to strengthen our engagement with this important region in the years ahead. In line with 'Global Ireland - Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025,' the Government will also seek to expand our presence in the Asia-Pacific region, including through the establishment of a new flagship Ireland House in Tokyo and through greater engagement with Irish business and Irish alumni networks in the region.

### 1. Baseline Data

The basic breakdown of respondents was 68% male and 31% female and the age profile was spread evenly across the different age ranges. 15% of respondents indicated that they were dual nationals and 93% indicated they hold a valid Irish passport.

There was good distribution (10-40 responses) across the range of countries in Asia, with a high level of response (>100) from the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions (23%), from Mainland China (17%) and from South Korea (14%). The next highest in terms of response was Singapore (11%).

13% of respondents had been in their country of residence for less than a year with 36% being there for between 1 and 5 years, 33% for between 5 and 10 years and 18% being there for more than 15 years. The majority (61%) were aged between 21 and 29 when they left Ireland.

35% of respondents indicated that they left Ireland to "develop or further my career" followed by 23% who moved "for a lifestyle change." 18% of respondents left to seek employment and were unemployed in Ireland. 36% of respondents had children, (under 18) resident abroad with them.

#### Note and Context:

*This baseline data is broadly in line with Department estimates and response rates seemed to correlate to the size and established nature of Irish diaspora communities in the region, i.e. the bigger the Irish*



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*community the more responses we received. The difference in the amount of time spent in a country and the reason for leaving Ireland also reflects the nature of the Irish communities in different countries across the region. In this regard some communities are more “transitory” than others and are made up of waves of cohorts of often young Irish people. Conversely some communities are more established and are made up of people with families and who stay for longer. These trends are also reflected in the work and education analysis (below).*

## **2. Work and Education**

88% of respondents had at least a University degree with 46% having at least a Master’s degree.

Respondents were generally evenly spread across the different employment sectors and there were only two sectors that stood out, the 31% who indicated that they worked in the “Education” field and the 11% who indicated that they worked in “Finance.”

### Note and Context:

*The rate of third level education is high and is above the average for the population in Ireland.*

*While Irish people clearly work in a wide variety of jobs in Asia the significant numbers working in “education” and “finance” clearly reflect the different types of Irish communities and emigrants that are in Asia. Compared with those working in “education,” on average those working in “finance” had been in Asia longer, were more likely to have children and were less likely to return to Ireland in the next five years.*

## **3. Communications and Media**

73% of respondents use Facebook followed by 64% who use LinkedIn, 38% who use Instagram and 29% who use Twitter. A significant proportion also used messaging services like WhatsApp and local equivalents like WeChat.

75% of respondents read Irish newspapers/publications online to keep up with Irish current affairs while 69% keep up to date through family and friends and 59% used social media.

### Note and Context:

*It’s clear that Irish people in Asia use a variety of media to stay in touch with home and with each other and that they take keeping up to date on the latest developments in Ireland seriously. This reflects positively on the Department’s expansion of the use social media as a public diplomacy tool. It also supports Irish Abroad Unit’s development of the [Global Irish Hub](#) website and the development of diaspora specific resources like the [Global Irish Newsletter](#), [Global Irish Communications Handbook](#) and the [Global Irish Diaspora Directory](#).*

## **4. Irish Community**

78% of respondents indicated that there was an active Irish community in their area and 58% of respondents said that they were involved in some way in their local Irish community with 16% saying they were “very involved.” 20% indicated that they were not involved in their local Irish community.



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In terms of involvement, 39% of respondents were a member of business or professional network, 31% were members of a GAA club and 12% were a member of an Irish cultural or arts group. 37% said they were not a member of any Irish organisation or group.

## Note and Context:

*Throughout the survey responses it was very clear the role of GAA clubs and professional/business networks was very important in supporting all Irish communities across Asia.*

*Since 2013, through the [Global Games Development Fund](#), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the GAA have provided funding for developmental projects in GAA clubs overseas, including in Asia. This Fund provides financial support specifically for projects and initiatives that increase or improve opportunities for the Irish Diaspora and other communities abroad to play Gaelic Games, thereby strengthening Irish networks and Irish identity internationally, nurturing a sense of Irish community and creating important links between the global Irish and their local communities.*

*From supporting 14 projects in 2013, the Global Games Development Fund has grown to contribute funding to 59 different projects across the globe for 2017. Some projects are one-off events, others have activities lasting the course of a year. In 2017 the Department contributed €135,000 to the GAA for the Global Games Development Fund, this amount being matched by the GAA to complete the budget for the year.*

*Asian Clubs funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade include:*

- |   |                             |    |                                    |
|---|-----------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Beijing GAA (China)         | 8  | Orang Éire (Malaysia)              |
| 2 | Cairde Khmer (Cambodia)     | 9  | Saigon Gael (Vietnam)              |
| 3 | Daegu Fianna (South Korea)  | 10 | Seoul Gaels (South Korea)          |
| 4 | Hong Kong GAA (China)       | 11 | Shanghai GAA (China)               |
| 5 | Laochra Busan (South Korea) | 12 | Singapore Gaelic Lions (Singapore) |
| 6 | Manila GAA (Philippines)    | 13 | Suzhou Éire Óg (China)             |
| 7 | Ningbo GAA (China)          | 14 | Viet Celts (Vietnam)               |

*The survey results also show the importance of Irish Embassies and Consulates in supporting and promoting Irish cultural and social organisations. While much is done during the St. Patrick's Day period, Irish Embassies and Consulates also support organisations year-round and also financially through the [Emigrant Support Programme](#) (see below).*

## **5. Engagement with our Embassies and Consulates**

79% of respondents were registered or in contact with their local Irish Embassy or Consulate. A majority (56%) have also used the passport services of their local Mission within the last three years and between 6% and 15% had also used Embassy/Consulate services for services such as consular assistance, Foreign Births Registration and authenticating documents.



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## Note and Context:

*Respondents particularly welcomed the movement of more services online.*

## **6. Government's Diaspora Policy**

Only 16% of survey respondents were aware of the Government's diaspora policy and only 12% were aware of the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP).

When asked what type of support or engagement they would like to see from the diaspora policy or ESP a significant proportion of responses recommended increased support for local Irish associations, particularly GAA clubs.

## Note and Context:

*Since 2004 funding has been provided under the [Emigrant Support Programme](#) (ESP) to non-profit organisations and projects to support Irish communities overseas and to facilitate the development of more strategic links between Ireland and the global Irish.*

*Since its establishment, €160 million has been disbursed through the ESP to Irish organisations worldwide. The allocation for the Emigrant Support Programme in 2018 is €11.59 million. This allocation has been maintained at this level since 2012. In 2018 there were applications from 490 projects from 319 organisations with requests for funding totalling approximately €22 million. These are currently being assessed by the Irish Abroad Unit.*

*The emphasis of the Emigrant Support Programme is on supporting culturally sensitive, frontline welfare services, targeted at the most vulnerable members of our overseas communities. In addition support is also provided to a number of community and heritage projects, which foster a greater sense of Irish identity, as well as strategic capital projects for these communities. Funding is also provided for projects which support business or other networks.*

*In addition to the GAA clubs that the Department funds (see above), organisations in Asia funded by the Emigrant Support Programme in recent years include:*

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | <i>Cultúr Club Hong Kong</i>               | 6 | <i>Irish Network Japan</i>              |
| 2 | <i>Farmleigh Fellowship (Singapore)</i>    | 7 | <i>Irish Society of Korea</i>           |
| 3 | <i>Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce</i>   | 8 | <i>Le Cheile (China)</i>                |
| 4 | <i>Irish Chamber of Commerce China</i>     | 9 | <i>Malaysian Irish Business Network</i> |
| 5 | <i>Irish Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong</i> |   |   |

## **7. Returning to Ireland**

30% of respondents are considering returning to Ireland in the next 5 years, 32% are not and 38% don't know. The main reasons cited for moving back are "friends and family" at 61% followed by "professional reasons, "want children to be educated in Ireland" and " want children to grow up in Ireland" all at approximately 25%



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Note and Context:

*Supporting returning emigrants is a key priority of the Minister of State for the Diaspora, Ciaran Cannon T.D. and of the Government. Over the last decade the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has provided over €4 million to Irish organisations that provide assistance to returning Irish emigrants.*

*In 2017 Minister of State Cannon also launched the [‘Back for Business’](#) mentoring programme. Research suggests that time spent living abroad improves capacity to succeed in creating and growing businesses. At the same time, returning emigrants face challenges unique to them in setting up a business. The Back for Business programme sought to reduce these challenges by supporting returning emigrants, who are in the early phase of establishing their business, with tailored advice and supports. The first 45 participants concluded the programme in May 2018 and the programme will be run again later in the year.*

*In 2017 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also commissioned Indecon Economic Consultants to write a report on addressing challenges faced by returning Irish emigrants. This report has now been published and has made thirty targeted recommendations. Government Departments are now taking forward the recommendations and the Government is coordinating the response to reduce the challenges that emigrants face in returning to Ireland.*

**ENDS**

**Irish Abroad Unit  
July 2018**