



Language and migration in rural areas: Experiences of migrants and refugees with language learning and use in Ireland's rural communities

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UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Language and Migration in Rural Areas: Experiences of Migrants and Refugees with Language Learning and Use in Ireland's Rural Communities

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2024



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Thank you.



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Acronyms

| | |
|-------------|--|
| CEFR | – Common European Framework of Reference for languages |
| CIB | – Citizens Information Board |
| EMN | – European Migration Network |
| ESOL | – English for Speakers of Other Languages |
| ESRI | – Economic and Social Research Institute |
| ETB | – Education and Training Board |
| EU | – European Union |
| FET | – Further Education Training |
| FRC | – Family Resource Centre |
| GP | – General Practitioners |
| IOM | – International Organization for Migration |
| IPA | – International Protection Applicant |
| IRC | – Irish Research Council/Research Ireland |
| LDC | – Local Development Company |
| MPI | – Migration Policy Institute |
| PI | – Principal Investigator |
| TPD | – Temporary Protection Directive |
| VICO | – Rural Villages, Migration, and Intercultural Communication |

Executive Summary

Background

Ireland has become increasingly diverse in recent years as a consequence of high levels of immigration. Population changes have also been accompanied by linguistic diversity, and in 2022 there were 751,507 people who usually spoke a language other than English or Irish at home according to the CSO. However, the linguistic dimension of migration in Ireland is still understudied. In particular, there is limited understanding of migrants' experiences in rural areas. Ireland is one of the EU countries with the highest rate of migration into rural areas (JRC 2019): this comes with specific challenges linked to infrastructure and migrant integration; but also with opportunities in terms of cultural and economic vitality.

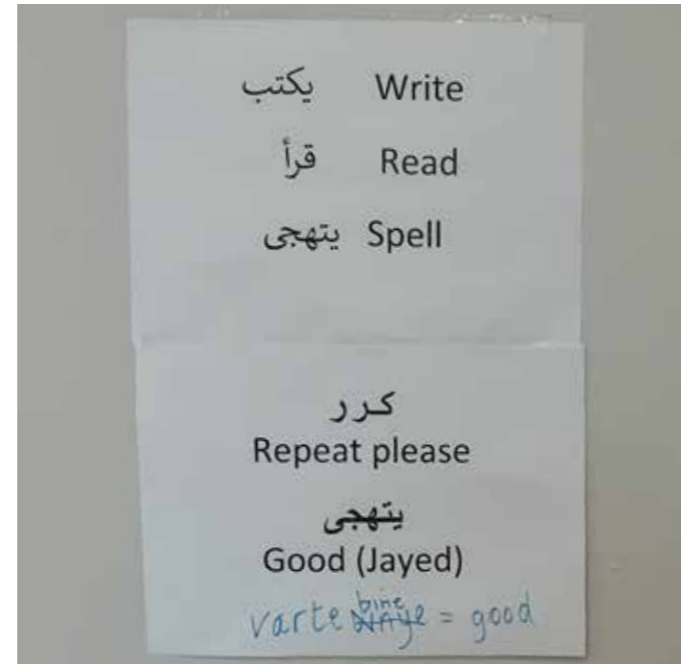
About the study

This report is part of a four-year (2022-2026) research project titled "Rural Villages, Migration, and Intercultural Communication" (VICO), funded under the Irish Research Council/Research Ireland Laureate Scheme (IRCLA/2022/3840). The VICO Project aims to understand the experience of migrants and refugees living in Ireland's rural communities, investigating:

- The linguistic background of migrants and refugees living in rural communities in Ireland and how they use different languages in their daily lives.
- Any obstacles and/or opportunities in learning English and/or Irish in the community.
- The availability of translation and interpreting for migrants in rural communities.
- Cultural or social activities where locals and migrants come together, and how they use languages in these activities.

The present report contributes to the first and second objectives in particular, presenting preliminary findings based on fieldwork, interviews, and focus groups conducted between March 2023 and June 2024 with 165 migrants in 11 different counties of Ireland.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping migrants' experiences. Proficiency in the language of the host country may bring benefits in terms of employment, education, access to services, family life, and political participation. Conversely, insufficient language skills, together with lack of resources (classes, translators, interpreters) may lead migrants towards social isolation, discrimination, marginalisation, and long-term dependency. In this research, we investigate the role of language in the lives of migrants living in rural communities across Ireland, and the challenges and opportunities related to the rural setting.



Findings

The findings that emerged from the study were divided in this report into six key themes. The following is a summary of the main findings from each theme.

- **Adaptability to the rural setting:** Findings showed that migration to rural areas may present positive experiences for migrants. However, adaptability to the rural setting is contingent on location (logistics, socio-economic opportunities, infrastructure), personal factors (whether the migrant had a choice in moving; and whether they migrated from a rural or urban context), and community (close-knit versus loose-knit).
- **Language learning and everyday language use:** Language has a social as well as an emotional dimension. Participants tended to measure their inclusion in the community by their ability to hold conversations in English with their neighbours, and by the frequency of such conversations. However, the various challenges highlighted by participants, especially in terms of language impacts on employment, demonstrate the importance of accessing English language education and developing language skills for their everyday lives. In a rural setting, this may prove more difficult due to availability of resources and infrastructure (including transportation). English classes play a crucial role in migrant integration not only for the skills that they offer, but by providing guidance and connections in the community.

There was an interest in the Irish language, especially when children were learning it in school; but few participants had taken up the study of the language. Translation and interpreting services appear to be limited and are often replaced with coping mechanisms such as non-professional interpreting from friends and family, or machine translation. These strategies involve risks, of which participants and other stakeholders are not always aware.

- **Family:** Multiple languages seem to hold a social and affective role in the lives of migrant families: participants with children showed pride in their children's ability to speak English, while expressing at the same time concern over the potential loss of the languages spoken by their parents.
- **Migrants' perceptions of community and well-being:** The community was an important aspect of the migrant experience in the rural setting. Members of the communities often got involved in the social and linguistic inclusion of migrants – either in a professional capacity as social workers and teachers, or as volunteers. The diverse experiences described in the interviews showed that, for several migrants, living in a rural community represented a positive experience. However, participants reported negative experiences in rural areas particularly when factors such as choice in the location, previous experience in rural settings, and adequate infrastructure (e.g. public transport) and employment opportunities were lacking.
- **Gender:** The study noted the difficulties mothers face in accessing English language education and developing their language skills. This gendered aspect of language development may not only have consequences for their educational and professional enhancement but also lead to more serious issues. Without language skills, women may develop a dependency on their spouse, leading to a lack of agency and difficulties in seeking help elsewhere, if needed.
- **Employment:** Language was perceived as a gateway to better employment, which was a pressing issue for many participants. Due to insufficient English language skills, many of the migrants in the study reported either being unemployed or in underemployment.



1. Introduction

Language plays a key role in shaping migrants' experiences. It is considered "one of the most central aspects for migrants' inclusion by both the receiving society and migrants themselves" (Bauloz, Vathi and Acosta 2020, p. 174). Being able to speak the dominant language in a host country generally leads to greater opportunities in work, education, and inclusion within a community (De Costa 2010; Darwin and Norton 2015; Adserà and Pytliková 2016). Language proficiency may impact migrants' access to healthcare and health outcomes, family life, as well as political participation and civic engagement (Adserà and Pytliková 2016; Bauloz, Vathi and Acosta 2020; Erdocia 2023; Gil-Salmerón et al. 2021; Samkange-Zeeb et al. 2020). When migrants are perceived as non-native speakers, they very often end up being unemployed, or employed in jobs that do not match their skills and qualifications (Dovchin and Dryden 2021). And while translation services are vital in overcoming some of the challenges faced by migrants (Flynn 2023), they may not always be available or accessible (Gil-Salmerón et al. 2021) and/or be of substandard quality (Samkange-Zeeb et al. 2020). It is important to note that migrants generally are proficient in a number of languages when they arrive in a country, even if very often this expertise is not taken into account (Ciribuco 2020). Nevertheless, these languages keep being part of migrants' lives and are often passed on to children as heritage languages, which are very important for migrants' identities, traditions, and way of life (King 2016; Atobatele and Mouboua 2024).

In recent years, Ireland has become increasingly diverse, as a consequence of the high levels of immigration that it experienced (Loyal 2011; McGinnity et al. 2018a; McGinnity et al. 2018b). The latest census indicates that more than one in ten of the population are non-Irish citizens (CSO 2022a). In 2022, almost 632,000 non-Irish citizens were living in Ireland, making up 12% of the population (CSO 2022a). More recently, there has also been a sharp increase in the number of Ukrainian migrants in Ireland due to the war with Russia, with 107,406 arrivals registered by June 2024 (CSO 2024). Population changes have also been accompanied by linguistic diversity. The latest census revealed an increase of 23% of people who spoke a language other than English or Irish in their daily lives, in comparison to the 2016 census (CSO 2022b): 751,507 people usually spoke a language other than English or Irish at home. Polish has remained the most spoken foreign language, while the fastest growing language was Ukrainian, followed by Hindi, and Croatian (CSO 2022b). The number of those speaking Portuguese also doubled (CSO 2022b).

In October 2024, the European Migration Network (EMN) published a memo indicating that "in Ireland, there is a clear need for more detailed and better-quality data on migrants and their situation" (Potter and Murphy 2024). Recent research in Ireland has noted that language barriers compound migrants' adverse experiences. A report from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) found that Ukrainian TPD beneficiaries face challenges in accessing employment and education, because of a lack of English language skills and insufficient language support (Stapleton and Dalton 2024).



A report from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Syrians in Ireland also found language to be a considerable challenge, citing it as "the area of most significant concern overall" (Michael, Omid and Reynolds 2021, p. 41). The report found that language barriers had the most impact on employment, making it difficult to participate in the labour market, as well as accessing higher or further education (Michael, Omid and Reynolds 2021). Healthcare quality was also significantly impacted by language, as "access to interpreters is inconsistent and frequently falls below standards established in the Irish health system" (Michael, Omid and Reynolds 2021, p.41). Furthermore, a report from the Citizens Information Board (CIB) found that migrants who lacked English language skills or who did not have access to interpretation services were vulnerable (Norris et al. 2022). Insufficient knowledge of the language was a notable issue for migrants, identified as the main reason for which many were in jobs which they were overqualified for (Norris et al. 2022).

However, not only is the linguistic dimension of migration in Ireland still understudied (O'Connor and Ciribuco 2017), but there is also a dearth of research focusing specifically on migrants in rural areas. Ireland's Rural Development Strategy 2021-25 identifies a need to undertake research to inform the particular needs of several vulnerable groups, including "migrants and those of migrant origin living in rural areas" (Government of Ireland 2021, p. 59). The present study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap. Our report is based on findings from the Irish Research Council/Research Ireland (IRC) funded project "Rural Villages, Migration, and Intercultural Communication" (VICO). This report brings forth partial, preliminary findings from the project, based on fieldwork, interviews, and focus groups conducted between March 2023 and June 2024 with migrants in 11 different counties of Ireland. It is based on the experiences of 165 participants of 32 different nationalities that took part in the study. The report highlights some of the key challenges and opportunities for migrants in rural areas stemming from language learning and use.

Recommendations

Based on the data collected, the following recommendations may be suggested:

- **Development of mechanisms for consultation which include migrants and residents**
As the research underlines the importance of choice and agency in migrants' adaptability to rural settings, it would be important to build mechanisms for consultation between incoming migrants and local communities, that could detail needs, concerns, as well as common goals, and prepare both migrants and locals to cooperate for the development of the community.
- **Expansion of the provision of language training in English and Irish**
Participants were unanimous in expressing the need for more opportunities for English language education. Others also highlighted their desire for opportunities that could meet specific needs (professionals seeking to improve their employment status, individuals with childminding duties, etc.). In addition, there was a nascent interest in Irish, with migrants associating the language with their families' future in the country. This could be served by expanding Irish-language initiatives aimed at migrants.
- **Leveraging digital technologies**
The study found that several of the migrants living in rural areas made use of digital technologies as additional resources to help them develop their language skills. A greater use of technology by tutors and education providers could have the potential to reduce barriers in language acquisition, particularly for those that are in rural areas, by offering a combination of in-person and digital education.
- **Training of interpreters and service providers**
Interviews in the present study highlighted that, in rural areas, the provision of translation and interpreting is, sometimes, limited. More resources are needed to train, hire, and maintain professional translators and interpreters. It is, however, expected that, in areas with less linguistic diversity and more hard-to-reach locations, the availability of professionals will be limited; and that the population will resort to coping mechanisms such as ad-hoc translators or machine translation. It is important that, in such cases, both the migrant population and the service providers are informed of the risks associated with such coping mechanisms.
- **Encouraging the development of networks**
Many communities who became involved in this research were already implementing innovative and effective solutions to encourage the inclusion and participation of migrants in public life. More mechanisms for sharing good practices and challenges, and for pooling together resources and knowledge, would enable communities to implement more initiatives.
- **Work intergenerationally**
Children came up repeatedly in the study as a decisive factor in developing a sense of belonging, and in enhancing English language capacity in the family. Local stakeholders and actors should be encouraged to work intergenerationally as much as possible. Schools and youth centres could be used to encourage parents' participation in public life, by involving them in initiatives.

2. Migration in Rural Areas



Studies on migration have primarily centred on migration to cities and urban areas, with less attention paid to the experiences of migration to rural areas, small towns, and villages (Morén-Alegret and Wladyka 2020; Woods 2016; Patuzzi, Andriescu and Pietropolli 2020; Skaptadóttir et al. 2024). This is not necessarily due to the inexistence of migration to these areas, but rather that studies have tended to focus predominantly on migration to cities. In fact, increasing numbers of migrants are now arriving or starting their journey in the country of destination in smaller cities or rural areas (Loomans, Lennartz and Manting 2023). The realities of migration to rural areas, however, have been largely neglected, leading to a lack of information and an invisibility of data on migrants' lived experiences in the countryside (Woods 2016). Only more recently have studies begun to focus and emerge on migration to rural areas and small locations.

In Europe, research dedicated to migration to rural and smaller areas, have focused on the Netherlands, Norway, UK, and Ireland (Jonitz, Schiller and Scholten 2024; Loomans, Lennartz and Manting 2023; Rye and Slettebak 2020; Lynnebakke 2021; Lynnebakke 2024; Villa 2019; Moore 2019). Studies in Ireland, specifically, have tended to explore specific rural towns like Gort (Rodrigues, O'Brien and Boland 2023; Rodrigues 2022; Cawley 2018; Maher and Cawley 2015; Woods 2018; Sheringham 2009; McGrath and Murray 2009; Healy 2006), which is home to a large Brazilian community; Ballyhaunis, (McGrath and McGarry 2014; Woods 2018), which is the most diverse municipality in the country (CSO 2022c), as well as Tullamore, Kilbeggan (Silva 2014; Silva 2016), Ennis, and Roscommon (Rodrigues, O'Brien and Boland 2023; Rodrigues 2022). The present report seeks to contribute more broadly to our understanding of migrants' experiences in different rural communities, across different regions of Ireland. The study had a specific focus on language, its challenges and opportunities, and its impact on the everyday lives of migrants in these areas.

3. Aims and Objectives

The VICO project is a four-year (2022-2026) sociolinguistic study funded by the IRC that seeks to understand the experience of migrants and refugees living in Ireland's rural communities. More specifically, the study investigates:

- The linguistic background of migrants and refugees living in rural communities in Ireland and how they use different languages in their daily lives.
- Any obstacles and/or opportunities in learning English and/or Irish in the community.
- The availability of translation and interpreting for migrants in rural communities.
- Cultural or social activities where locals and migrants come together, and how they use languages in these activities.



4. Methodology

The study employed a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups, to understand the experiences of migrants in rural areas with using different languages in their daily lives and with learning English and/or Irish in these areas. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used in the study. Interviews and focus groups were conducted between March 2023 and June 2024. They were then transcribed and underwent thematic analysis.

Fieldwork took place in 34 rural locations in 11 different counties in Ireland (Galway, Mayo, Waterford, Kerry, Cork, Kilkenny, Wexford, Clare, Tipperary, Carlow, and Limerick). These locations included villages, towns, and islands, some of which were also located in Irish speaking areas (Gaeltacht). Participants were initially contacted through different stakeholders such as family resource centres, migrant associations, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and Irish language planning offices. In some cases, events, such as Coffee Mornings, were held in partnership with stakeholders, allowing the opportunity for the researchers to talk to migrants about the study, answering any questions they had.



5. Participants

The research was open to male or female migrants over the age of 18, who were living in any rural area in Ireland, and whose first language was not English. The scope of the study was broad, welcoming the participation of migrants of any nationality, whether they were European Union (EU) citizens or non-EU citizens. It was also open to different types of migrants, with different immigration statuses and migration objectives. This included, for instance, high-skilled and low-skilled migrant workers, spouses of migrant workers, retirement migrants, migrant spouses of Irish or EU citizens, international students, refugees, and asylum seekers. The study also welcomed the participation of migrants irrespective of the length of time they had been living in a rural location. In this report we use “migrant” as an umbrella term, as defined in the IOM Glossary on Migration (IOM 2019), to refer to these different categories of human mobility. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and anonymous. In total, 165 participants of 32 different nationalities took part in the study.

The nationalities of participants are:

- Afghan
- Algerian
- Bangladeshi
- Brazilian
- Chinese
- Croatian
- Ethiopian
- Filipino
- French
- Georgian
- German
- Guinean
- Hungarian
- Indian
- Iranian
- Iraqi
- Italian
- Jordanian
- Kurdish
- Lithuanian
- Moldovan
- Moroccan
- Nigerian
- Palestinian
- Pakistani
- Papua New Guinean
- Polish
- Salvadoran
- Somali
- Syrian
- Ukrainian
- Venezuelan

Of these participants, 125 were female and 40 were male. All interviews and focus groups took place in person in the rural location where the participant resided in, worked in, or attended English courses in.



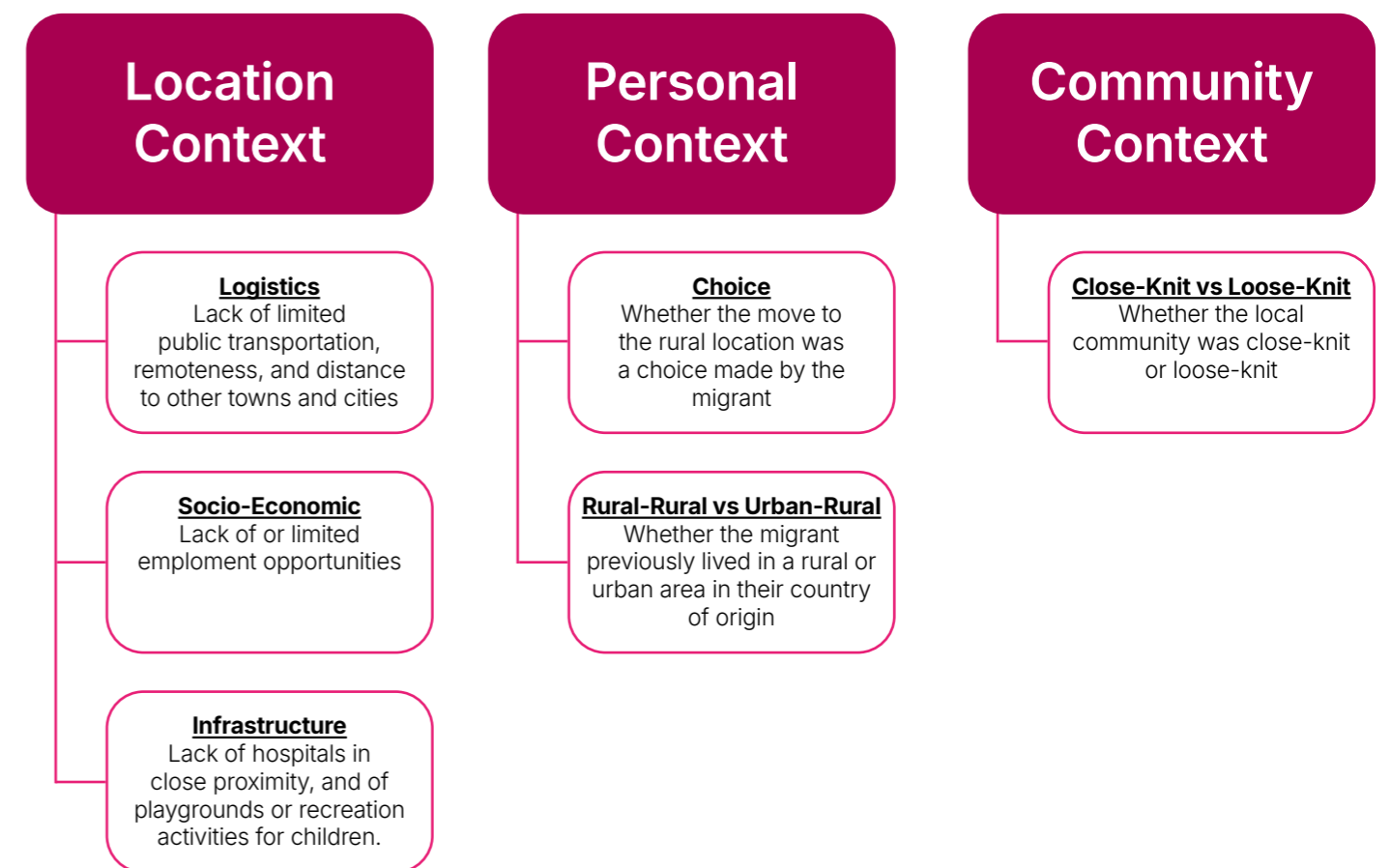
6. Findings

6.1 Adaptability to the rural setting

Previous studies (King 2018; Sánchez-Ayala 2012; Meier 2015; Phillips and Robinson 2015) have noted the importance of the geographical/spatial context in understanding migrants' experiences. Not only is human mobility a spatial phenomenon, but places are filled with social meanings and may play a key role in migrants' lived experiences (Sánchez-Ayala 2012). The VICO project not only focuses on the migrant experience with language, but also investigates

how certain locations or places, in this case rural locations, shape these experiences. The participants' responses with regards to living in rural settings or locations, therefore, demonstrated to be diverse, reflecting the multifaceted nature of their experiences. Based on participants' responses, the study identified a set of three key variables, each with its own set of sub-variables, that impacted migrants' experiences and ability to adapt to rural areas. The key variables included location, personal, and community contexts.

¹As a qualitative project, the study did not aim to be statistically representative. Please note that a disproportionate number of participants were Ukrainian nationals due to the current context of migration in Ireland, which has facilitated the migration of Ukrainians. Consequently, many of those who were taking English classes in rural areas were Ukrainian. Since many of the Ukrainians that migrated were women and children, a large number of participants that took part in the study were female.





With respect to the location context, the study revealed that aspects such as logistics, socio-economic opportunities, and infrastructure have tended to influence migrants' adaptability to the rural setting. The first aspect concerned a lack of or limited options for transportation, as well as how remote or distant the location was to other towns and cities. The second related to a lack/scarcity of opportunities for employment. The third was linked to the absence of hospitals in proximity, which was primarily a concern for those with small children or family members with an illness. It was also linked to a lack of, or limited options, for playgrounds or recreation activities for children. Though many participants evaluated positively their experience living in rural areas, they highlighted these factors as barriers or challenges to living there long-term.

Regarding the personal context, choice and rural-to-rural versus urban-to-rural migration were identified as essential factors. That is, adaptability was conditioned by whether moving to a rural location was a personal choice of the migrant or if the location was chosen for them, which was the case for some refugees, International Protection Applicants (IPAs), and Ukrainian beneficiaries of Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). Participants who had chosen to live in a specific rural setting often reported being happy in the location. Participants who did not feel that they had adapted well to the rural setting were generally IPAs who had had no input in the decisional process. However, the study also found that some participants who had not initially chosen the rural location also reported feelings of well-being when they felt a sense of community and inclusion. For those who had children, this was the case when

² European Union Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), and (for this report) the instance in which it was triggered on 24/02/2022 to aid people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

their children were happy, particularly in school. In addition, adaptability tended to be contingent upon whether the migrant had previously lived in a rural or urban area in their country of origin. The interviews indicate that, for those participants who had previously lived in large cities and urban areas, adapting to a small town or rural area in Ireland was often a challenge compared to those who had lived in a rural location in their country of origin.

Migrants' perceptions of the local community, whether close-knit or loose-knit, emerged as an additional factor influencing migrants' experiences in adapting to rural areas. The perception of a community as close-knit on the migrants' part depended on organised efforts to include and assist them (including many initiatives that will be discussed in Section 6.2) but also general perceptions of favorable attitudes. Communities which demonstrated to be close-knit in character seemed to facilitate adaptation in the rural area, offsetting problems related to location and choice, and generating a sense of well-being among them. More in-depth research is scheduled for phase 2 of the VICO project to investigate this aspect.

6.2 Language learning and everyday language use

6.2.1 English language education

Most participants in our study had attended an English language course in their area of residence: either in the town they lived in, or in a bigger town nearby. The study found that the availability of English classes, the level of English taught, and the method of delivery varied from county to county. It also depended heavily on the efforts of organisations at local level, and on resources available to them, in terms of space, personnel, time, and know-how. Participants reported attending classes provided by:

- Local Education and Training Boards (ETBs) (formal classes)
- Local support structures such as Family Resource Centres (FRCs) or Local Development Companies (LDCs) (informal conversation classes)
- Local co-ops or local groups of volunteers (informal conversation classes)

³ In this report, a "close-knit" community is referred to as a group of people in which everyone supports one another (Cambridge Dictionary 2024). It follows the definition described by Strahilevitz, in which "a close-knit group is a network in which power is broadly distributed and information pertinent to informal control circulates easily among network members. Typically, close-knit groups are made up of repeat players who can identify one another" (2003, p. 359)

⁴ This report follows the definition described by Strahilevitz of "loose-knit" community as "clusters of individuals among whom information pertinent to informal control does not circulate easily. These loose-knit groups are typically composed of members who do not expect to be repeat players or who are unable to gather accurate information about another member's reputation even if repeat-player interactions occur" (2003, pp. 359-360).

⁵ Education and Training Boards (ETBs) "are statutory education authorities with responsibility for education and training, youth and work and a range of other statutory functions". There are a total of 16 ETBs, and each is a statutory body with its own corporate status (ETBI 2024).

⁶ Family Resource Centres (FRCs) "are participative and empowering organisations that support families while building the capacity and leadership of local communities". FRCs are managed by local voluntary management committees (Family Resource Centre National Forum 2024).

⁷ Local Development Companies (LDCs) are "multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver community and rural development, labour market activation, social inclusion, climate action and social enterprise services. (...) LDCs are not-for-profit, volunteer-led organisations, who provide a national service through locally based services" (ILDN 2024).

These classes were free to students. Participants in some areas had access to more than one option when it came to learning English. For other participants, in more remote areas, options were drastically reduced. This is the case, for instance, of two offshore islands where the research was carried out, and where English classes were either not available, or were only provided online. As a result, depending on where the migrants were located, their opportunities and outcomes with regards to English language learning were significantly different. It is important to note that although the present research was open to all migrants, international students did not take part in the study. Therefore, the findings presented do not relate to those who studied in private English language schools.

The provision of English language teaching intensified especially after the arrival of large numbers of Ukrainian citizens in the communities since 2022. Some participants who had spent a longer time in the community recall that when they arrived, options were much more limited.

Now, because there is Ukrainian, there is this kind of level. Like for example, I remember when I arrived, I wasn't a beginner and there is no class for my level, so at the beginning I wasn't at any class [...] I went to school in Galway but because I have to pay every day to attend the class and sometimes I miss my class. (F, Syria, Co. Galway)

Local organisations received increased funds to provide training for Ukrainian citizens following the TPD, including an allocation of €25 million for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) supports in 2023 (Stapleton and Dalton 2024, p. 51). This also benefited other migrants, since organisations could improve their offer of courses due to greater resources. In addition, volunteer groups arose or expanded in 2022, as part of a collective mobilisation in Irish society. Some conversation classes were explicitly aimed at Ukrainians only. Where there was already a speaking club in place, Ukrainian citizens were included in an existing network.

The location-related factors described above impacted migrants' ability to avail of English language education opportunities, their continuous engagement with the classes, and their satisfaction. In some rural areas, attending classes was challenging, as migrants often lived far from the location of the classes. Most do not own a car and relying on public transportation makes it more difficult for some participants to attend classes due to limited schedules and costs:



In the last hours of the class I was with lots of histories of missing the bus, sometime coming earlier, and the level was a little high also, and I found that it is a lot of pressure on me and also I can't learn very well because sometimes I miss the lesson. Sometimes I'm late, sometime I'm early should leave. (F, Afghanistan, Co. Clare)

However, in some cases, local organisations have been making efforts to reach migrants in logistically challenging locations, often with the teacher coming to them and teaching either in their local community centre or in the refugee accommodation. In a few instances, transportation is provided by the host of a refugee accommodation. These phenomena, however, are not consistent across the country and are limited to specific situations.

In terms of engagement, it is important to note that the promotion and recruitment of students for these classes varies from context to context, and from provider to provider. Sometimes, in refugee or TPD accommodation, there is an effort from hosts and/or community leaders to promote English classes among the residents. Other times, migrants learn about classes via word of mouth or social media. Some participants, as well as teachers, remark that there always remains a part of the migrant population that is hard to reach. It has not been possible to build an exhaustive list of reasons for not attending classes, but in addition to the challenges mentioned above, two important factors emerged from several interviews:

- Childminding duties - Especially for mothers (see Section 6.4), preventing them from attending classes at designated times.
- Lack of certainty about the future - In particular for IPAs and Ukrainian citizens who came through the TPD, who are unsure whether they will be allowed to stay in Ireland and/or whether they will want to.

Conversations with organisers have underlined that they are aware of some of these issues, and are working to solve them within the limit of their capacities and resources. However, very often in rural areas there may not be sufficient funding, personnel, or venues to accommodate all needs.

English classes appear to fulfil an important social function, building connections among migrants and with local communities. In most environments that we visited, the participants appeared at ease and familiar with the premises. They appeared to have established good relationships with their teachers, who often are mentioned as key individuals in their experience of the community. A participant from Co. Wexford remarked that their teacher often drives small groups of students to class, while a participant from Co. Kilkenny stated that their English teacher helped them find a job. It is due to this social dimension of teaching that all stakeholders we discussed with are reluctant to offer online classes unless the communities in question are particularly isolated (i.e. in offshore islands).

Some participants, especially those who are more eager to join the workforce and access jobs that fit their qualifications (see Section 6.5) lament that language classes are offered mostly at basic level, and perceive the lack of more advanced classes as an obstacle towards more satisfactory employment. Most participants expressed that they would have benefited from more hours of English language education per week.

6.2.2 Irish language learning

A total of 20 participants were based in Gaeltachtaí, particularly in Co. Galway (9), Co. Cork (9), and Co. Waterford (2). While all participants were aware of the Irish language and its role in society, there was a difference in attitude towards the language between migrants who lived in Gaeltacht areas and in other parts of the country. Migrants who lived in Gaeltacht areas were often more exposed to Irish, leading to an increased interest in studying the language. Some participants who are based in Gaeltachtaí reported that they used the Duolingo app to learn Irish, or that they had become curious about the language after having heard residents or colleagues speak it. Participants cited learning basic sentences and words in Irish through their colleagues, such as “slán”, “conas atá tú?”, and “dia duit”. Those who were not based in Gaeltacht areas tended to conceptualise the Irish language as an important part of Irish heritage, showing respect and admiration for it, especially when they reported a sentiment of gratitude towards Ireland. Not many of them however had decided to take up the study of Irish:

I have a lot of fascination to learn every aspect from this country, so their culture, their language. So, from this passion I want to learn Irish language as well. But I don't know where or either I will have this opportunity or not. (M, Bangladesh, Co. Wexford)

A recurrent theme, both in Gaeltacht areas and other parts of the country, is that children are decisive for their parents' interest in the Irish language. When asked about Irish in the interviews, the language comes up almost always in association to their children, as a subject that they take at school. A Filipino couple living in Co. Tipperary, for instance, decided to enroll their child in a Gaelscoil, even if they were doubtful initially (“at first we were like, we thought that ‘Gaelscoil’ or Irish schools are just for Irish people”), after speaking to a community worker. While very few participants (and mostly in Gaeltachtaí) had decided to take up the study of Irish, participants appeared more curious and motivated with respect to the language when their children were learning it, and sometimes using it in the house to a limited extent. They tended to see the study of Irish as part of the integration trajectories of their children, and by extension of their families.



6.2.3 Self-study and digital tools

Studying English is, for many individuals, an activity that is not confined to the classroom. Self-study is an option to complement available classes, and participants reported making wide use of digital and electronic resources to that effect:

One lessons, two lessons here with [TEACHER], and one lessons I make for myself. Just some apps and I use online resources for studying because I want to work in marketing, I have a degree in Ukraine, OK? But for this position, I must need English very high level, not like I speak now. (M, Ukraine, Co. Galway)

Participants mentioned a variety of apps that they used to expand their vocabulary and practice their pronunciation. The most common app was by far Duolingo, but other apps such as Cake, Falou, ELSA Speak, BBC, and Promova, were also mentioned.



Since Duolingo also offers a course in the Irish language, some participants used the app both for English and Irish. These apps are deemed useful for learning vocabulary and having a continuous exposition to the language, but the participants also recognised that after a very basic level they needed, in the word of a Croatian participant living in Co. Limerick, “an actual language setting” to be able to use “sentences that actually make sense”.

Some participants also mentioned that they watched films with subtitles in their first languages, looked for videos on YouTube, or made use of social media, such as Instagram, to learn new words. The pervasiveness of digital tools and apps testifies that in contexts, such as a rural area, where individuals may not have continuous contact with the language, technology can support the language learning practices of newcomers. At the same time, participants perceived digital tools as a complement to in-person learning, and remarked on the benefit of in-person classes, not only on their language proficiency but on their socialisation practices.

6.2.4 Translation and interpreting

The availability of translation and interpreting services varied greatly by language and by setting. Some languages demonstrated to be better serviced because of the numerical relevance of the communities, or of their perceived vulnerability: especially if that community was highly represented in the asylum system. Ukrainian participants, especially TPD beneficiaries, were more likely than others to have availed of the services of professional interpreters. Examples include Intreo centres and hospitals, especially in the context of a pre-booked surgery or treatment. Participants from Afghanistan or from Arabic-speaking countries were also relatively likely to have availed of an interpreter or translator. However, speakers of other languages did not report to have had the same type of access to such services.

Experiences with professional interpreters varied. There were limited complaints from participants, although some reported negative experiences when authorities hired interpreters who were proficient in different variants of their language. This was the case, for instance, of an Afghan participant (different variety of Farsi) and an Algerian participant (different variety of Arabic). The great majority of participants never availed of the services of a professional translator or interpreter. This is not to say that translation has not been a necessity in their lives, but rather that they have addressed this necessity with the help of non-professional, ad-hoc translators.

Non-professional translators and interpreters are very often trusted members of the participant’s personal networks, especially family.

Two weeks ago, I need to go to GP because I wasn't registered GP and they take my daughter. I said "come with me and please help me" and she helped because myself I don't think I resolve something. Because I don't understand every time Irish people and this medical term medical, I say. (F, Ukraine, Co. Kilkenny)

Every time I need to do anything where I need to speak a lot, I bring my son or my husband. So, even in the shop if I have to say "hey, I am going to pay by card", that is quite basic but still. If I need to go to the doctor, anything, I am always bringing my husband, my son. (F, Brazil, Co. Wexford)

In cases in which there were a sizeable community of speakers of a specific language, some individuals who were considered more proficient or confident in English often provided translation services to other members of the community. This practice is quite common around the world, and has been widely studied in a variety of contexts (Angelelli 2010; Pöchhacker and Kadric 2014). Non-professional translation often stems out of a genuine desire to help a loved one or the community, but it presents risks in terms of accuracy, biases, and privacy: the non-professional translator is neither trained nor bound by a code of conduct.



Despite such risks, the practice appeared to be common among General Practitioners (GPs) and public offices in rural areas across Ireland. Participants reported signs in GP offices that asked patients to bring someone who could speak English to their appointments. Other participants received the same request by phone, when signing up for their GP.

Machine Translation tools such as Google Translate are very commonly used by these ad-hoc translators, by the patients themselves, and by doctors. Many participants reported using Google Translate on the spot, often not for complete texts but for words or phrases that they could not understand. While Machine Translation technology has greatly improved in the last decade, there are still risks associated with its use when its output is not checked by a person who is proficient in the language and/or has received translator training. Some participants remarked on the risks by relating misunderstandings that happened in their daily lives. Other participants noted that Google Translate did not work well when used in informal conversations, when slang or dialects were involved.

6.3 Family

6.3.1 Cultural identity and multilingualism

Family was a recurring theme mentioned by the participants, in terms of adapting to the rural location, of integration into the local community, and in relation to language. It was an aspect of key importance for the participants, impacting their everyday experiences. Family, more specifically children, was one of the determinants of migrants' adaptation to rural areas, as parents often reported being happy in the location when their children were happy. On the other hand, upon reflecting on everyday language use, whether within or outside the home, the topic of family was again at the centre of participants' concerns.

Children played a key role in participants' linguistic practices. Children tended to have higher levels of proficiency in English (and Irish) than the parents. There was often a sense of pride in the fact that their children were growing up as English speakers. However, all participants who lived with children stressed the importance of passing on their home language to their children. Although they regarded this situation positively, at the same time, they were uneasy with their children losing their connection to their country of origin and to family members who stayed behind. Many parents talked about reinforcing their own first language with the children at home, especially since they knew they would speak only in English once outside of the home. They describe multilingual households, with children often mixing English and their parents' languages, or replying in English when spoken to in the heritage language:



Now they're talking mixed Persian and English, but I really don't want to. I want to talk with them in Persian because I don't want they are forgot their own language because. They should know their own language because their grandfathers, grandmothers are in Afghanistan and lots of family we have in Afghanistan. If they don't know the Persian, they will be a lot of distance between them. (F, Afghanistan, Co. Clare)

Mostly I'll be speaking Chinese to my son and my parents. They're here to help me with the baby. Because it's a language we all think it's very difficult for kids to pick up in the later stage of their life. So, we try to speak as much as we could inside the house. (F, China, Co. Cork)

Many participants reported that they often learned new words or expressions in English and Irish from their children, especially when assisting them with homework. In addition, several participants mentioned that their children often helped with informal translations, which was one of the most evident consequences of their English proficiency. Children were often asked to translate informally for their parents in contexts such as a GP office, or a shop. However, as underlined in Section 6.2, non-professional interpreting comes with risks, which are intensified when it is a child who acts as an interpreter. Research has shown that children translating for their parents in healthcare settings can experience stress out of this disproportionate responsibility (Antonini 2016). Moreover, there is a risk that they will be exposed to delicate and potentially impactful information (e.g., if their parent has a serious condition).

My eldest is 10 years old, he grew up in the Philippines. [...] So, he used to have a background of Tagalog language as well as English. We talked to him in Tagalog, but he replied back in English inside the house. But my little one is pure English. We can speak to him English and Tagalog, but he reply English. We just want to, we like to exercise Tagalog language inside the house because when they go out of the house, they will all speak in English. (M&F, Philippines, Co. Tipperary)

6.3.2 Language use inside and outside of the home



Interviews underlined how, very often, there is a significant demarcation between linguistic practices inside and outside of the home. Participants often spoke languages from their background at home, while English was more commonly spoken in the classroom, in the workplace, in the street, and on social occasions.

Every day where I'm at my home with my family, my wife, my daughter, I used to speak in Bengali. What is my native language. What is their native language as well. But while I come out with friends, with authorities, with management, with the staff of there, with my neighbours, with drivers, everywhere, here it's a country of English language. So, I speak with him in English. And here some of my friends who are from India and Pakistan so I usually I speak with them in Urdu and Hindi. (M, Bangladesh, Co. Wexford)

In a relatively circumscribed community, such as a rural area, the difference between linguistic practices in the house and outside of the house may become even more marked. This is because the migrant family may not have access to a significant community of speakers of their home language in the neighbourhood (as it happens in certain neighbourhoods of major cities, inhabited by certain communities). In some cases, participants may be the only speakers of a specific language in the area where they live. This does not apply to all settings, however, as some towns and villages, despite their small size, may host significant communities of speakers of a specific language (Rodrigues 2022).

A particular case is that of Ukrainian TPD beneficiaries who are often hosted in hotels, B&Bs, deregistered nursing homes, or similar structures where they live together in close quarters with other Ukrainians. According to an estimate, on 31 December 2023 58,007 of the 74,912 Ukrainian beneficiaries of the TPD lived in similar accommodations (Stapleton and Dalton 2024, p. 31). In these accommodations, participants' linguistic practices were notably dominated by Ukrainian and Russian, with residents preferring the latter or the former depending on what part of Ukraine they originated from. English was brought in from the outside, often by a "key" person such as a social worker or hotel staff. Residents often negotiated everyday issues – meals, heating, etc - with the managers of their accommodation, and often there was no other way than to do it in English, with the more proficient residents acting as mediators. There are, as indicated in Section 6.2, English language classes or similar opportunities (language cafés, conversation groups), and sometimes the community organises transportation to these from the TPD accommodations.

Unfortunately, we speak only Ukrainian or Russian, and we live in hotel and our manager should speak in only English and we speak about something for English, sure, but sometimes he speak Irish, but we nothing understand, unfortunately. (F, Ukraine, Co. Galway)

Most of the study participants used English when outside the home. Situations in which English was used included the classroom, the post office, and supermarkets. Across interviews, participants reported several brief interactions in the streets of the towns where they lived. Participants often noted that the rural setting facilitated conversations with members of the community. However, such interactions may be limited to small talk, which leaves little room for both improving their English and, most importantly, developing strong connections. A Syrian woman living in Co. Galway noted: "Hello, or like this, cannot improve your English because you use same terms every day." Some migrants also report a sense of inadequacy when they leave safe spaces, such as the classroom, and must deal with the different varieties of English spoken by people in the street, with varying accents and registers.

6.4 Migrants' perceptions of community and well-being



When asked during interviews, about their thoughts on the rural location they were residing at, whether it made it easier or more difficult for newcomers to adapt in contrast to cities, a significant number of participants replied positively. In addition, when asked regarding their experience with speaking their native language within the rural community, nearly all participants mentioned they never had negative reactions from locals. Many felt safe and more included in rural areas. There were reports that smaller communities were better for everyday language practice, as locals had more patience to repeat or explain words and expressions. Some also noted the lower costs of accommodation in contrast to cities. Moreover, interviews demonstrated the importance of social and cultural activities as opportunities for engagement and inclusion of migrants in the local community, as well as for everyday practice of the English language. Migrants mentioned engaging in activities such as sports, volunteer work, church, mother and baby groups, among others.

If you come here with like a family and kids, I think it's better for you because your kids can communicate with another kids. You can go to the library or like in a party, some party together, but in a big city it's a real big harder, it's worse. (F, Ukraine, Co. Clare)

In my opinion, [RURAL AREA] is good for, for new people. [...] I thank God, the people are very friendly. They have time to chat with you. But in the city, a big city? No one they are coming, they are chatting. [...] No chatting, alone. Yeah, no conversation. Here, rural areas I think are a little bit good for people, for migrant people like my people...like me. I can talk with them. I can find friends for myself. Goes for my conversation. I can go to the shop by my own. (F, Afghanistan, Co. Limerick)

However, as mentioned in Section 6.1, migrants' adaptability to the rural setting was also contingent on other factors. Besides local community, factors such as choice, logistics, infrastructure, and employment played a role in their experience in the rural areas. Migrants' experiences with the community also varied depending on the rural setting per se, as some communities were more close-knit than others. When some variables such as lack of public transportation and remoteness of the location the migrant lived in were present, participants responded negatively.

I think it [RURAL AREA] makes it difficult because when I arrived in Ireland and moved to [TOWN NAME] and after a while I got very, I got depression because always I was lonely and there was nothing to do. (F, Afghanistan, Co. Limerick)

My children is small. Here I have six children. [...] Three of them are studying in a school. In [PLACE NAME]. So, as a father, my job is from the morning starting to drop them in the school and then collecting back, collecting them back. So, all my days is going to drop and collect the children because of lack of the facility for the public transportation. [...] You think that when I'm living here in a rural area like this, so how can I work? (M, Afghanistan, Co. Wexford)

6.5 Gender

The study noted the difficulties mothers face in accessing English language education and developing their language skills. Mothers with small children reported having a hard time accessing classes and training due to childcare responsibilities, even when educational opportunities were available.

I want more learn English class and we have here class every Thursday at 10 to 12, but it's hard for mom with a small baby because baby can't sit two hours and we don't have support. This I start to Christmas, I every Thursday can go. It was in the library near the hotel and my kid's waiting and my daughter played in the library, but it was really hard because you can't concentrate and your kid is like playing shouting and crying and for another person in the class, it's not good. They can't concentrate for study. [...] My daughter, she know that it will be too hard hours and she don't like come to the class. [...] I really need support with my daughter. [...] I'm here alone and it's very hard for study language for study, some profession you and for working. [...] I don't have place and I don't have people who can carry my daughter. But I spoke with Tusla organisation and they told me that it's not just my problem, it's problem in Ireland. And we need change like reform because a lot mom with children like have a place and have chance go to the job. But because of the kids they can't do this. (F, Ukraine, Co. Clare)

Such a challenge was also observed during interviews with couples. When faced with the decision as to who would stay home to take care of the children, the mother was often the one to stay behind. While spouses had the opportunity to develop language skills through everyday interaction in their workplace or by attending English language education, the mothers lagged behind. This gendered aspect of language development may not only have consequences for their educational and professional enhancement but also lead to more serious issues. Without language skills, they may not be able to effectively communicate when something goes wrong or how to seek help. They may also develop a dependency on their spouse, leading to a lack of agency. A very small number of participants discussed cases of gender-based violence that they had experienced in the past. While domestic violence was not a specific focus of this study, we recognise that the gendered facet of language development may be a factor of vulnerability in such cases, especially if combined with isolation and a lack of wider support networks:

We always depend of my husband, he decide what to do, where we go to. [...] And because we couldn't get any information from anywhere. House only my place. And because my son, he was sick from when he was one years old. He was sick. That is why I was carrying him all the time. That is why I didn't go out. (F, Nationality and County of residence omitted)

The lack of language skills for victims of abuse was already mentioned as an aggravating factor in a 2020 report, focused on the Midlands, by Tusla and Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services (Tusla 2020).



6.6 Employment

Although many participants regarded their experience living in rural areas positively, employment was often mentioned as a concern for them. Limited employment opportunities in rural settings were cited as a barrier towards living in the location for the long term. This was also compounded by a lack of or limited public transportation, which made, for many, having a car (and a driver's licence) a necessary condition for work. For participants, learning English was seen as a gateway to employment and, subsequently, to inclusion in Ireland. However, due to insufficient English language skills, many of the migrants in the study reported either being unemployed or in underemployment. Participants, who often had years of professional experience and qualifications, faced difficulties in finding employment because of the language. This situation was further exacerbated when accessing English language classes was a challenge for them. Underemployment was especially evident in the study among Ukrainian and Afghan participants, who were often highly skilled but were unable to work in their professions due to language barriers.

I am financial economist [...] and I worked 10 years in big oil company. [...] I want work maybe cleaner. Yes. Yes, it's normal because I'm an immigrant now in this country.. [...] And I have lots of experience I can do, I can help. Some office or something with my skills. [...] There is no opportunity just because of my language. (F, Ukraine, Co. Mayo)

Now I am looking for a job and I am, give many resumes, interviews, CVs. I send many CVs and sometimes they employers call me and I have problem to speak by phone with them and I talking please write me but not everybody wants write. They, "you don't understand, it's your problem!". (M, Ukraine, Co. Galway)

In a crisis context such as the one following the war in Ukraine, organisations prioritised basic levels of English that would allow individuals to start their lives in Ireland. While some participants mentioned having the option to pursue higher levels of English classes in the rural location they lived in, in other rural areas participants had to settle with only the basic level of English classes which was offered to them. In some of these cases, migrants wishing to improve their language skills sought to take part in other types of educational and professional training, such as IT skills or accounting. In addition to affecting migrants' access to employment, insufficient knowledge of the language may also have impacts on their everyday experiences with work, making them vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and bullying in the workplace., discrimination, and bullying in the workplace.

One of the reasons I left [COMPANY] was I see the way they are treating the Brazilians in bad conditions, [...] at work, you know, like near the slave. Just too much. Too long hours too hard, faster, faster, faster. [...] I was there for a while and I was learning English every single day so I knew[...] the way he was talking specific, [...] he was one of the boss, so I could see the way he was talking to people. And even like the person he was smiling and call him not nice names, you know what I mean, doing the work. I thought it was really hard to see. (F, Brazil, Co. Galway)



Conclusion

The present report seeks to contribute to our understanding of migrants' experiences in different rural communities, across different regions of Ireland. The study had a specific focus on language and its impact on the everyday lives of migrants in these areas. The report underlined some of the challenges and opportunities faced by migrants in rural areas.

Language, as shown in the data, permeates many aspects of the migrant experience. It was perceived as a gateway to better employment, which was a pressing issue for many participants. In addition, language manifested for participants an emotional dimension. This was reflected in the words of participants used as they gauged their inclusion in the community by their ability to hold conversations in English with their neighbours, and by the frequency of such conversations. Limitations in translation and interpreting, as well as impacts of language on women and mothers were also noted. Such facets demonstrate the importance of accessing English language education and developing language skills for their everyday lives. Moreover, multiple languages seem to hold a social and affective role in the lives of migrant families: participants with children showed pride in their children's ability to speak English, while expressing at the same time concern over the potential loss of the languages spoken by their parents.

The community was also an important aspect of the migrant experience in the rural setting. Members of the communities often got involved in the social and linguistic inclusion of migrants – either in a professional capacity as social workers and teachers, or as volunteers. The diverse experiences described in the interviews showed that, for several migrants, living in a rural community represented a positive experience. However, participants reported negative experiences in rural areas particularly when factors such as choice in the location, previous experience in rural settings, and adequate infrastructure and employment were lacking.

Please note that experiences of racism and discrimination were not mentioned by the participants in this study. We recognise that racism is an issue in Ireland (Michael, Reynolds and Omid 2022), however, the study was not specifically designed to investigate racism. Some questions in the interview script related to a very specific type of discrimination, i.e. language discrimination ("how do people react when you speak your home language in public?") and could have resulted in reports of racist incidents. This was not the case, as no participant reported being mistreated for speaking languages other than English.

A report from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) found that migration to small and rural communities does hold promise on different levels, with the potential to result in a "triple-win" scenario (Patuzzi, Andriescu and Pietropolli 2020):

- For migrants (better integration outcomes)
- For receiving communities (population growth and economic revitalisation)
- For destination-country governments (fulfilling protection quotas in a more effective way)

However, this "triple win" outcome is not guaranteed (Patuzzi, Andriescu and Pietropolli 2020). The findings in our own research showed that migration to rural areas may present positive experiences for migrants. However, adaptability to the rural setting is contingent on location, personal, and community contexts.



Recommendations

Based on the data collected, the following recommendations may be suggested:

- **Development of mechanisms for consultation which include migrants and residents**
Research conducted in several rural communities in Europe (Patuzzi, Andriescu and Pietropolli 2020) underlined that the resettlement of refugees in a rural community may be more successful when the community is consulted before hand. Our own research underscores that choice and agency are important factors influencing successful inclusion into a rural setting. Migrants' adaptability was conditioned by whether moving to a rural location was a personal choice or if the location was chosen for them. Fair and inclusive mechanisms for consultation including different stakeholders and built around concrete issues (i.e., housing, healthcare, primary schools) may help to prepare both established community members and newcomers to live with each other and develop common goals.
- **Expansion of the provision of language training in English and Irish**
Participants were unanimous in expressing the need for more opportunities for English language education, with many migrants mentioning they felt like they were not having enough hours of classes available to them. Others also highlighted their desire for opportunities that could meet specific needs (professionals, individuals with childminding duties, etc.). Migrants were particularly concerned about the provision of language education that would provide more advanced levels of English as well as language training designed for specific professional contexts. Whereas this necessity is sometimes addressed through by some Further Education Training (FET) courses, the need is still perceived, particularly for highly trained individuals, who are at risk of underemployment due to insufficient language proficiency. As for the Irish language, though not considered important for employment purposes, it did prompt interest among migrants, especially when they saw themselves and their children having a future in Ireland. Irish language initiatives could, thus, be expanded in order to accommodate the potential needs of this (already multilingual) population, improving the reach of Ireland's first national language.
- **Leveraging digital technologies**
The study found that several of the migrants living in rural areas made use of digital technologies as additional resources to help them develop their language skills. Smartphone-based language learning and digital practices seemed to be already occurring spontaneously among migrants and refugees in these areas. A greater use of technology by tutors and education providers could have the potential to reduce barriers in language acquisition, particularly for those that are in rural areas, small towns, and villages, by offering a combination of in-person and digital education, or the option of fully online classes.
- **Training of interpreters and service providers**
Interviews in the present study highlighted that, in rural areas, the provision of translation and interpreting is, sometimes, limited. These interviews have also provided information on rural-based migrants' coping strategies when translation is absent. More resources are needed to train, hire, and maintain professional translators and interpreters. It is, however, expected that, in areas with less linguistic diversity and more hard-to-reach locations, the availability of professional translators/interpreters will be limited; and that the population will resort to coping mechanisms such as ad-hoc translators or machine translation. It is important that, in such cases, both the migrant population and the service providers are informed of the risks associated with such coping mechanisms. Medical personnel in particular should receive training on the risks of relying on machine translation. They should also be discouraged to resort to ad-hoc interpreters who may become responsible for mistreatment, or become victims of unnecessary stress (if children).
- **Encouraging the development of networks**
Many communities who became involved in this research were already implementing innovative and effective solutions to encourage the inclusion and participation of migrants in public life. While some organisations already have their networks and their mechanisms for knowledge sharing, often information is not shared across towns and counties, because they fall outside of such remit. Given that a great part of Ireland consists of small towns and rural areas that are becoming increasingly diverse, the creation of networks should be encouraged. More mechanisms for sharing good practices and challenges, and for pooling together resources and knowledge, would enable communities to implement more initiatives.
- **Work intergenerationally**
While the study was limited to adult participants, these were often parents of young children – and children came up repeatedly as a decisive factor in developing a sense of belonging, and in enhancing English language capacity in the family. Local stakeholders and actors should be encouraged to work intergenerationally as much as possible. Schools and youth centres could be used to encourage parents' participation in public life, by involving them in initiatives.



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