

## Retaining Migrant Nurses in Ireland II. Nurse Migration Project Policy Brief 3

### AUTHOR(S)

Niamh Humphries, Ruairi Brugha, Hannah McGee

### CITATION

Humphries, Niamh; Brugha, Ruairi; McGee, Hannah (2009): Retaining Migrant Nurses in Ireland II. Nurse Migration Project Policy Brief 3. Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Report.  
<https://doi.org/10.25419/rcsi.10776464.v1>

### DOI

[10.25419/rcsi.10776464.v1](https://doi.org/10.25419/rcsi.10776464.v1)

### LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

This work is made available under the above open licence by RCSI and has been printed from <https://repository.rcsi.com>. For more information please contact [repository@rcsi.com](mailto:repository@rcsi.com)

### URL

[https://repository.rcsi.com/articles/report/Retaining\\_Migrant\\_Nurses\\_in\\_Ireland\\_II\\_Nurse\\_Migration\\_Project\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_3/10776464/1](https://repository.rcsi.com/articles/report/Retaining_Migrant_Nurses_in_Ireland_II_Nurse_Migration_Project_Policy_Brief_3/10776464/1)



# Retaining Migrant Nurses in Ireland II

Nurse Migration Project Policy Brief 3: December 2009

## Migrant Nurse Retention

Active overseas recruitment efforts have attracted large numbers of migrant nurses into the Irish health system [1]. However, it will be Ireland's ability to *retain* these nurses that will determine the long-term effectiveness of this workforce strategy. This is a key consideration both for individual employers and at national policy level [2], given the extent of Ireland's reliance upon migrant nurses [1]. There is recognition internationally that poor support structures in the host country may encourage migrant nurses to seek employment elsewhere [2]. The challenge to retain these nurses takes place, as their recruitment did, in the context of intense global competition for nurses, which Kingma has called '*the international war for skills*' [3].

This policy brief, which presents findings on migrant nurse retention in Ireland, cautions against the assumption that migrant nurses are all here to stay. The findings point to the need to engage with them to better understand the dynamics of their migration and to identify the factors that might determine whether they stay or leave Ireland.

## Methods

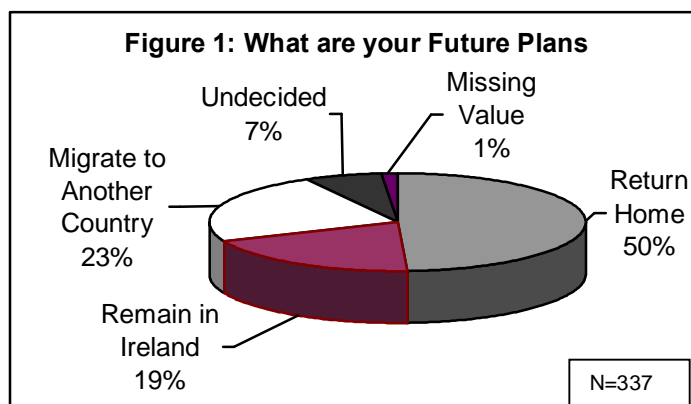
This policy brief presents the results of a recent survey of 337 migrant nurses in Ireland, undertaken between February and July 2009 by the Nurse Migration Project, RCSI. On behalf of the research team, the Irish Nursing Board forwarded self-completion postal questionnaires to a random sample of 1536 non-EU nurses on the Nursing Register. The postal survey achieved a response rate of 20% and a sample size of 309. A parallel sampling strategy to recruit respondents from 3 Dublin hospitals resulted in the recruitment of a further 28 respondents. The final quantitative data (N=337) were analysed using SPSS statistical software.

*'I am here almost ten years and up to now my status in Ireland is still uncertain. I fear that if the economy gets worse the Irish government will decide to send us all home. It's very hard to apply/approve for citizenship, unlike other countries'* (Respondent 121)

## Will they stay or will they go?

The survey findings support previous qualitative research findings from the Nurse Migration Project [4], i.e. that only 19% (65) of respondents were planning to remain in Ireland in and that citizenship and immigration procedures were key factors in determining whether migrant nurses would stay or leave Ireland.

*'As Ireland cannot offer us security in terms of our residency/immigration status, the economic downturn made us realise that there are more stability/security offered in other countries'* (Respondent 218)



## Verifications

A further indication that a significant number of Ireland's migrant nurses are considering onward migration comes from the Irish Nursing Board's verification data. When a nurse seeks to work in another country as a nurse, her Irish registration will be verified by the registration board of the country to which she hopes to migrate. Verification statistics, therefore, measure serious intent to migrate.

- In 2008, verifications were sought on behalf of 1885 nurses from India and 261 nurses from the Philippines [5].
- This represents 20% of the total number of non-EU nurses newly registered 2000 – 2008.
- If these nurses were to emigrate (as is their intention), it would represent a **significant loss** to the Irish health system, as the number exceeds the annual number of nurse graduates in Ireland.

*'I'm happy and contented in my workplace and being in Ireland at the moment but my immigration status will make me have a second thought about staying here longer' (Respondent 178)*

## Why Stay or Go?

Although 91% (306) of respondents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with life in Ireland, 74% (251) of respondents agreed that the economic recession had had an impact on their satisfaction with life in Ireland.

Overall, respondents cited a wealth of factors that would influence their decision to stay or leave Ireland, the top 5 of which are presented in fig. 2. Of the top 5 reasons to leave Ireland, three could be considered push factors and none relate directly to the Irish health system [6]. Of the top 5 reasons to stay in Ireland, three relate to employment conditions and two . citizenship/residency concerns and job security . indicate a more general desire for stability.

Figure 2: Top 5 Reasons to Stay/Leave Ireland (N= 337)

What would encourage you to <u>leave</u> Ireland	What would encourage you to <u>stay</u> in Ireland
1. Uncertainty Residency/Citizenship (52%)	1. If we get residency/citizenship (60%)
2. Recession Ireland (36%)	2. Salary levels (41%)
3. Career Opportunities Overseas (33%)	3. Job Security (39%)
4. To Retire (24%)	4. Career Opportunities (25%)
5. No family reunification opportunity (22%)	5. Other Reasons (8.6%)

## Uncertainty and Instability

Although 80% (269) of respondents hold permanent posts within the Irish health system, few have security in terms of their immigration status.

- Only 7% (23) of survey respondents had acquired Irish citizenship, although 42% (143) have been in Ireland since 2000/2
- 8% (28) have become long-term residents
- 15% (52) have applied for either residency or citizenship.

*'The 'recession' has made us question ourselves: how long is the country going to need us? Being on a working visa only renewable every 2 years we are unsure of security and stability here' (Respondent 222).*

## Conclusions

- Both our survey and the verification statistics suggest that **a significant proportion of Ireland's migrant workforce have actively considered onward emigration**. Two points are important to make in this regard:
  - (1) Health workforce planning projections for Ireland suggest an **ongoing need for migrant nurses** [7].
  - (2) The number of **verification requests submitted on behalf of from migrant nurses in 2008 exceeds the annual number of nursing graduates in Ireland**.
- Health workforce planners need to carefully consider the implications of the potential loss of significant numbers of migrant nurses from the Irish health system.

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank all of the migrant nurses who took part in the research. They would also like to thank the Irish Nursing Board for assisting in the distribution of the survey and for providing the registration and verification data contained within this policy brief. Thanks also to the Health Research Board for funding this project under grant number RP/2006/222.

## References

1. Humphries, N., R. Brugha, and H. McGee, Overseas Nurse Recruitment: Ireland as an illustration of the Dynamic Nature of Nurse Migration. *Health Policy*. 2008. 87 (2).
2. Alexis, O., Diversity and Equality. Recruiting and Retaining Overseas Ethnic Minority Nurses in the NHS. *Nursing Management* 2002. 9(5).
3. Kingma, M., *Nurses on the Move: Migration and the Global Health Care Economy*. 2006, London: ILR Press.
4. Humphries, N., R. Brugha, and H. McGee, *'I Won't Be Staying Here for Long'. A Qualitative Study on the Retention of Migrant Nurses in Ireland*. *Human Resources for Health* 2009. 7(66).
5. Irish Nursing Board, unpublished statistics.
6. Padarath, A., et al., *Health Personnel In Southern Africa: Confronting Maldistribution and Brain Drain* in Equinet Discussion Paper Number 3. 2004, Regional Network for Equity in Health in Southern Africa (EQUINET) Health Systems Trust (South Africa) and MEDACT (UK).
7. FAS, *A Quantitative Tool for Workforce Planning in Healthcare: Example Simulations*. 2009, FAS & Expert Group on Future Skills Needs: Dublin

## For More Information

The Nurse Migration Project is a HRB funded project (2006 to 2009) which involves both qualitative and quantitative surveys of migrant nurses. It is led by Dr. Niamh Humphries, Professor Ruairí Brugha and Professor Hannah McGee, Division of Population Health Sciences, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Further information available from Dr. Humphries: [nhumphries@rcsi.ie](mailto:nhumphries@rcsi.ie) or at <http://tinyurl.com/NiamhHumphries>. Further research updates will be released and disseminated in future Policy Briefs.