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An Irish Welcome? Changing Irish Attitudes to Immigrants and Immigration: The Role of Recession and Immigration

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Abstract: This paper investigates attitudes to immigrants in Ireland in the period 2002 to 2012 and the role of economic recession, the increase in immigration, and respondents' level of education on understanding changing attitudes. Attitudes to immigrants in Ireland became more negative as unemployment rose, but once we account for this, a higher proportion of immigrants was associated with more positive attitudes. Highly educated respondents (with third-level qualifications) report more favourable attitudes to immigrants than those with lower education. The attitudes of those with lower education were more responsive to economic conditions, meaning the gap in attitudes between high and low educated widened in recession.

I INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

Attitudes of the host country population are an important measure of the context for social integration. They affect immigrants' day-to-day experience in their host country, and how welcome they feel; attitudes and the attitudinal climate may also influence policymakers and policymaking. There is increasing interest in attitudes to immigrants throughout Europe, both in the research community and

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among politicians and policymakers. In some countries, such as the UK, immigration has become a contentious and highly salient social and political issue (Ford and Heath, 2014).

The scale of immigration after decades of emigration raises questions about Irish attitudes. Ireland had a long history of emigration throughout the twentieth century, and its self-image as a country is closely linked to emigration. Prior to the boom, which started in the early 1990s, there was very little non-Irish immigration, and few foreign-born ethnic or national minority groups in the population. In 2002 Turner found Irish attitudes to immigration to be among the most liberal in Europe (Turner, 2010). In light of the rapid increase in immigration, and recent financial and labour market crisis and subsequent emergence of recovery, we ask is this still the case? Is it true of cultural and economic concerns about immigration? Another important strand in the debate on attitudes to immigration concerns attitudes held by those with lower and higher education. To what extent are the attitudes of the lower educated more sensitive than those with higher education?

Given the difficulties of measuring attitudes to immigration, we use high-quality survey data – the *European Social Survey* – to examine changing attitudes in Ireland in a time of rapid immigration and boom to bust (2002-2012). This survey, which was designed to chart attitudes in Europe, combines many elements of best practice in the measurement of attitudes, and is the best source of data on the topic in Ireland. It is typically used in comparative perspective, though here we follow the recommendation of Ceobanu and Escandell (2010) in their review of comparative analyses of attitudes, that context is taken into account more thoroughly in analyses of attitudes in a single country.

By 2010 Turner and Cross found that attitudes in Ireland had become more negative (Turner and Cross, 2015). Denny and O'Grada (2013) also examine attitudes to immigration and xenophobia in Ireland but do so using different methods and with a different focus, which are discussed in more detail below. Building on the contributions of Denny and O'Grada (2013) and Turner and Cross (2015), this paper contributes to the literature in a number of ways. Firstly, by explicitly modelling macroeconomic conditions and the proportion of immigrants in the population, while controlling for changes in the composition of the population using regression modelling. Secondly, given debates in the international literature, we subsequently distinguish the change in perceived cultural threat from economic threat, two important but distinct components in attitudes to immigrants. Thirdly we explore how attitudes change according to level of education, and how groups' sensitivity to macroeconomic conditions and the size of the immigrant population differs. Ireland is an interesting case internationally, as it experienced a rapid increase in immigration followed by a sharp recession with severe labour market consequences.

The paper first considers in more detail the backdrop in Ireland – the rapid increase in immigration, and the boom and recession (Section II). Section III reviews previous literature and develops hypotheses regarding change in overall attitudes, perceived cultural and economic threat, and the role of education. Section IV discusses the measurement of attitudes and how we examine the hypotheses using statistical modelling. Section V presents the results on attitudes for the whole population, Section VI on how these attitudes differ by educational level. Section VII reflects on the paper's contribution, and the implications of the findings for the integration of immigrants in Ireland and the research on attitudes internationally.

II CHANGING IRELAND: IMMIGRATION AND THE ECONOMY

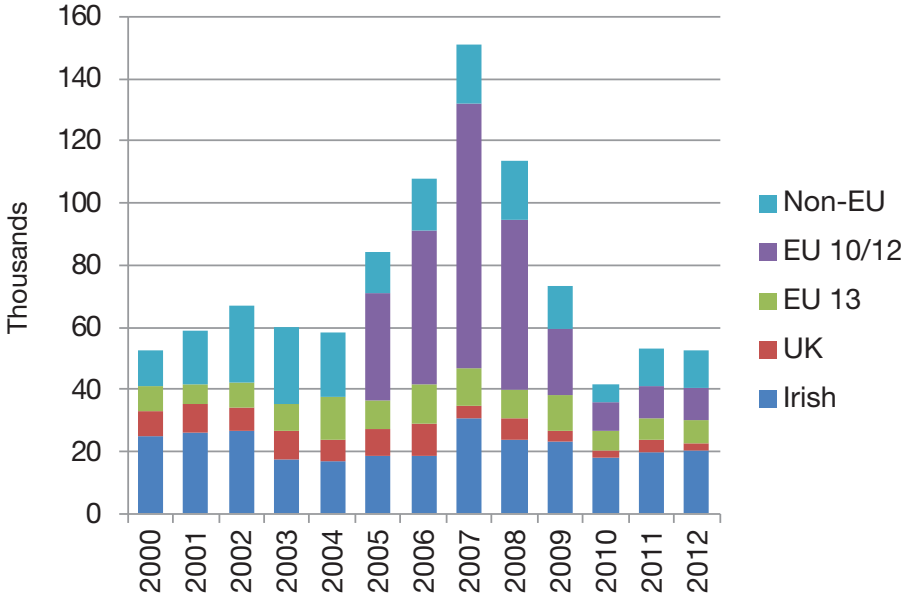
Ireland experienced a period of considerable change between 2000 and 2012, both in the size and demographics of the population, and in the labour market. Figure 1 presents overall immigration flows into Ireland between 2000 and 2012. Between 2004 and 2007 there was a sharp increase in immigrant inflows, due to the accession of the EU New Member States (NMS),[1] and a prosperous and attractive economy. Annual inflows were around 60,000 in 2002, and peaked at around 150,000 in 2007, falling to just under 42,000 in 2010, before increasing again in 2012 to 52,700 (CSO, 2013). This was in the context of very low immigration of non-Irish nationals, prior to this Ireland was historically a country of emigration (Hughes *et al*., 2007).

Ireland had the highest percentage increase in population between 2001 and 2011 in the EU (CSO, 2012a). Whilst inflows declined with the start of the recession in 2008, the growth in the proportion of non-Irish nationals continued, increasing from just under 6 per cent of the total population in 2002 to almost 13 per cent in 2008, before falling to 12 per cent in 2012. Overall the non-Irish population increased by 143 per cent between 2002 and 2011 (CSO, 2012a).

While some studies find the increase in size of the immigrant population salient for attitudes, others argue that it is the national/ethnic composition of the immigrants that really matters. Schneider (2008) found, for example, that the higher the percentage of non-Western immigrants, the higher the country's average level of perceived ethnic threat of immigration. Migration to Ireland was relatively homogenous and immigrant flows to date have been predominantly European; in 2011, 74 per cent of the non-Irish population was from Europe, and the bulk of the population increase was due to immigration from the EU's New Member States (Barrett and McGuinness, 2012). Polish immigrants are the largest migrant group in Ireland comprising nearly 23 per cent of the non-Irish population (CSO, 2012a).

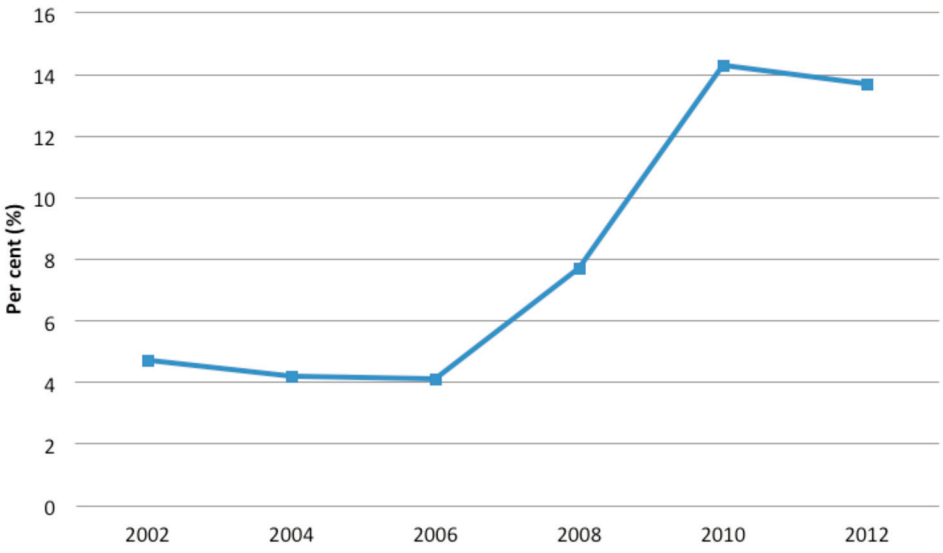
[1] EU New Member States (NMS) refers to States that acceded in 2004 and 2007: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Figure 1: Context: Immigration by National Group, 2000-2012



Source: CSO Annual Migration and Population Estimates.
Note: Prior to 2005 EU10/12 are included in the non-EU category.

Figure 2: Unemployment Rates (ILO), Ireland 2000-2012



Source: CSO QNHS Q4 2002-2012.

Polish people have a close ethnic affinity to Irish people and share similar cultural and particularly religious beliefs (Turner and Cross, 2015).

The period of 2000 to 2012 was one of dramatic change for the Irish economy, which weathered extreme peaks, subsequent troughs, and some recovery. Between 2000 and 2007, Ireland experienced extremely strong economic growth: construction boomed, standards of living were at an all-time high and the unemployment rate averaged at a modest 4.5 per cent per annum (see Figure 2). Real median household incomes adjusted for household size increased by 116 per cent between 1994 and 2007 (McGinnity *et al*., 2014). However, the global financial crisis and the collapse of the construction and banking sectors meant that the Irish economy entered a very deep recession in 2008.

Job losses were coupled with dramatic cuts in public expenditure and large tax increases. With the onset of recession, the level and rate of unemployment increased substantially. By the fourth quarter of 2010, 14 per cent of the labour force in Ireland was unemployed. The Irish economy began to grow in 2011; after three successive years of falling GDP, Ireland recorded a positive GDP growth rate in 2011 of 1.4 per cent, and unemployment rates began to decrease after 2010 as the economy showed signs of recovery (CSO, 2012b).

III THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, PREVIOUS LITERATURE AND EXPECTATIONS

Much of the empirical work on attitudes to immigrants is rooted in social identity theory. According to social identity theory, individuals compare their in-group with out-groups and selectively perceive mainly positively valued characteristics that are typical of the in-group, and mainly negatively valued characteristics that are typical of out-groups. In this way, people strive to achieve and preserve a positive social identity (Hewstone *et al*., 2002).

An extension of the social identity theory, ethnic conflict or competition theory offers further insights into how group relations and conflict might change over time, or vary across countries, by highlighting the role of context. Ethnic Competition theory is the idea that ethnic groups compete for scarce resources such as jobs, housing, power, cultural values (Blalock, 1967; Quillian, 1995).

There has been much interest in contextual factors at national level and how these influence individual attitudes, particularly in comparative research (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). The relative size of the subordinate group and the economic situation of the particular country can strongly influence the degree of prejudice expressed by dominant group members (Quillian, 1995). In studies using inter-group theory, actual competitive conditions have in the main been operationalised by two measures: economic conditions and minority group size (Meuleman *et al*., 2009).

One strand of the argument is that the more immigrants come to a country and settle, the more resistant the host population becomes (Schneider, 2008). Previous research has found that negative attitudes rise as immigration increases; Coenders and Scheepers (1998) found that among the indigenous Dutch population, support for ethnic discrimination, i.e. support for a disadvantageous treatment of ethnic minorities in the housing and labour market, is more widespread in times of high levels of ethnic immigration. However an increase in negative attitudes may be more closely related to a sharp increase in the flow of migrants, rather than the size of the actual flow (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998). Semyonov *et al*. (2006) found that in the early period of immigration alarmist fears may lead to a sharp rise in anti-foreigner perceived threat, but that over time these perceptions become more realistic and the sentiments towards outsiders, although negative, level off and become more stable. If the size of the immigrant inflow is associated with attitudes towards immigration, then we would expect a fall in openness to immigration in Ireland as the proportion of immigrants increased rapidly up to 2007, with attitudes perhaps stabilising or becoming more positive post-2008 when immigration flows decreased and the proportion of the foreign-born population remains stable (see Figure 1). Thus an increase in the proportion of non-Irish in the population would be associated with more negative attitudes to immigrants and immigration (Hypothesis 1).

A second key finding from the international literature is that as the economic position deteriorates and unemployment rises, perceived competition, especially for jobs, means attitudes to immigrants become more resistant (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998; Schneider, 2008). Some authors posit "dynamic ethnic conflict theory", stressing that it is change rather than level, i.e. increases in unemployment and immigration rather than the levels per se that affect attitudes (Meuleman *et al*., 2009). Countries could have a very large immigrant population, but if this is stable, attitudes will not change. Similarly, persistent poor economic conditions may not have as negative an effect as a sudden, sharp recession. If a rapid rise in unemployment is associated with attitudes to immigration, we would expect attitudes to become less liberal and openness to immigration to decline in 2008, with a further decline in 2010, and an increase in positive attitudes in 2012, to coincide with a growing economy (see Figure 2). Attitudes overall would be strongly related to the unemployment rate, with a high unemployment rate being associated with more negative attitudes (Hypothesis 2).

A third element in the argument about attitudes to immigrants relates to whether the threat is perceived as predominantly economic ('immigrants are taking our jobs') or cultural (threat to cultural values): ethnic group threat can be either. Taking the social identity perspective as a starting point, Bail (2008) proposes the idea that

there are actually multiple symbolic boundaries that are used in the construction of in-groups and out-groups: in some countries race has been replaced by religion, language, culture or human capital. In his analysis of 21 countries, Bail argues that in the new immigration countries of the European periphery (of which Ireland is one), immigration is relatively recent and the country homogeneous. Anti-racist discourse is unsophisticated relative to the European "core", and racial and religious stereotypes go unchallenged. By contrast in the "older" immigration countries of the European core, such as Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands, immigration has a longer (if different) history, and discourse about immigration has evolved over decades. As immigration becomes more permanent the host population becomes more concerned about their linguistic and/or cultural identity – the perceived cultural threat. This argument suggests that in Ireland, a new country of immigration, economic concerns will dominate over perceived cultural threat, and the economic threat will be more sensitive to the economic conditions than the perceived threat to culture (Hypothesis 3).

Attitudes to immigrants, like many social attitudes, are found to vary by education, with highly educated typically holding more liberal attitudes (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Mayda, 2006; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). What are the explanations for these differences? One argument is economic: the highly educated group are not competing for jobs with immigrants, have more financial and social resources, feel more secure and less "threatened" and this explains why their attitudes to immigrants are more positive. Indeed economic theory suggests that an episode of immigration will reduce the wages of workers already in the labour market who are most similar to the new arrivals (Blau and Mackie, 2016). Empirical evidence on the issue is mixed, particularly as potential wage and employment impacts created by immigration are difficult to measure. A recent paper by Borjas (2015) suggests that the large influx of low-skilled Cuban immigrants to Miami associated with the Mariel boatlift had a negative effect on the wages of high school dropouts in the area, but no effect on the wages of more highly educated groups. Manacroda *et al*. (2012) show that for the UK, most natives are unaffected by migration in terms of wage loss: immigration has primarily reduced the wages of previous immigrants, particularly recent ones. Summarising US research on the topic, where immigrants are predominantly low-skilled, Blau and Mackie (2017) conclude that in general, wage effects of immigration are very small. Those most influenced are prior immigrants, followed by high-school dropouts: employment effects on natives are very small. Barrett *et al*. (2011), assessing evidence on the issue for Ireland, do find a negative effect of immigration on wages when they base their skill cells on education, but a positive effect on wages when they use occupation as a measure for skill. This finding is possible, particularly given over-

education among migrants, but the authors conclude that strong conclusions about the impact on wages of the immigrant share in different skill groups in Ireland cannot be drawn.

A critique of this perspective is that views about immigration have very little to do with fears about labour market competition and economic security – instead positive attitudes are due to a "learned tolerance" (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007). Advantaged groups, like the highly educated, are expected to have lower levels of prejudice because they learn democratic norms, such as tolerance, through education, particularly third-level education. A body of work has found that the positive education effect is less influenced by economic competition, and more driven by multiple cultural and ideational mechanisms including differences in tolerance, ethnocentrism and sociotropic assessments, than exposure to competition from immigrants (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Card *et al*., 2012).

If economic concerns underlie attitudes, the low-educated might also feel more vulnerable to recession and we would see a divergence between low and highly educated attitudes to immigrants in recession (Hypothesis 4a). However, if the education gap in attitudes is based on "learned tolerance" rather than fears about competition, a competing hypothesis is that we might expect little change over time in the educational gap in attitudes (Hypothesis 4b). Of course we cannot rule out that social desirability plays a role in responses on attitudes to immigration. Whether this might influence the comparison between the high and low educated is discussed in more detail below.

What has other research on the topic found? Using decomposition methods, Denny and O'Grada (2013) find that in the early period, 2002-2006, people's increasing satisfaction with the economy largely accounts for a more positive attitude to immigrants in Ireland. In the period 2006-2012, peoples' falling satisfaction with the economy and more difficult economic circumstances explains most of the change in attitudes towards immigration. Hatton (2016) in an analysis of 20 European countries including Ireland in the period 2002-2012, finds very small shifts in opinion in Europe overall, though considerable country variation. In particular in countries with more severe experience of recession, like Ireland, shifts in opinion are more marked. A more unusual finding is a very weak link with unemployment and attitudes to immigration overall in Europe, at least in a model which includes the share of social benefits in GDP and share of immigrants in the population. The paper finds the effects are common across socio-economic groups, and there is little evidence of divergence in opinion. Hatton (2016) does not explicitly discuss cultural and economic threat and how these might play a different role in different countries. The country variation in this comparative paper does suggest that, as recommended by Ceobanu and Escandell (2010), there may be some merit in analysing attitudes of one country, particularly one with such an extreme experience of recession.

IV MEASURING AND MODELLING ATTITUDES USING THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY

Measuring attitudes to immigrants and immigration is challenging (Bond *et al*., 2010). One issue is that some public opinion surveys may record attitudes of a particular group of people, like young adults living in urban areas, but this may not be broadly representative of the population. This is an important limitation, as attitudes often vary depending on people's age, education, nationality, where they live and other characteristics.

For the analysis of attitudes, this paper uses data that combine many elements of best practice in measuring attitudes: the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS is a biennial survey that was specially designed to measure and interpret aspects of public opinion, changes over time in people's values, and cultural changes in countrys' social, political and moral climate in 30 European countries. The first round was fielded in 2002/2003 and Round 6, using the latest available data, was fielded in 2011/2012.[2] The survey contains a core module that takes place every round and typically replicates questions, and a rotating module that changes each round.[3] The ESS is an academically driven interview based survey, with a standardised sampling methodology, uniform translation from the same questionnaire, and uniform execution of field work and file construction in all participating countries (Jowell *et al*., 2007). The survey is ideally suited to comparing attitudes over time and between countries, and allows us to examine the attitudes of the native population to migrants in a comparative framework. It is not longitudinal (i.e. it does not ask the same people about their attitudes in each year), but it provides rigorous representative, cross-national data about shifts in people's long-term perceptions and attitudes. The questions are carefully worded to ensure that they are balanced, and all questions are formulated so that they can be combined to create indices.[4]

- *"Would you say it is generally bad or good for country's economy that people come to live here from other countries?"* **00** Bad for the economy on a scale to **10** Good for the economy"
- *"Would you say that country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?"* **00** Cultural life undermined on a scale to **10** Cultural life enriched

[2] For more information on the survey see www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

[3] In 2002 there was a detailed module on attitudes to immigration (see Card *et al*., 2005, for a discussion of this module). This is not covered here as the focus is change over time and cross-national comparisons of more recent attitudes.

[4] Tests show that the scale has good internal consistency and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .84, suggesting that the scale is very reliable.

- *"Is country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?"* **00** Worse place to live on a scale to **10** Better place to live.

The term "immigrants" is not used in these questions, however we use this term in the research as it is a commonly identified term in Ireland for the non-Irish population. Some work in Ireland suggests people may have very different understandings from researchers as to what the term immigrant means (Byrne, 2014).

We focus on the responses of Irish citizens, the majority population, for most of the analyses, as used in Coenders *et al.* (2004). This is an important point in a country like Ireland, where the proportion of immigrants is changing over time. If non-citizens or those outside Ireland were included, i.e. the whole population, any observed changes might be due to changes in the proportion or national origin of migrants in the population.[5] Attitudes of non-Irish citizens to immigration are considerably more positive than those of the native population (see McGinnity *et al*., 2013).

Even in surveys that are representative of the population, responses to attitudinal questions can be subject to "social desirability bias", where respondents are reluctant to express attitudes or opinions that are seen as undesirable, for example expressing racist attitudes. Social desirability bias can be defined as the tendency a respondent might have to adjust their response so as to provide an answer that they feel fits with a perceived norm (Oberski *et al*., 2012). Responses can be sensitive to question wording, and even the position of the questions in the questionnaire (Blank *et al*., 2004). Best practice in the area uses carefully worded, balanced questions and combines items to form indices that measure a latent belief or attitude, thus overcoming some of the wording effects and increasing reliability. However, even with careful wording, some list experiments in the US have shown that social desirability bias tends to be more prevalent among middle class/higher educated respondents (Janus, 2010). Qualitative research on the response of Irish professionals to immigrants and immigration suggests that Irish professionals adopt a number of strategies to conform to norms of tolerance and anti-racism, while expressing more racist attitudes among trusted friends and peers. This means that analysis of attitudes might overestimate the gap between the high and low educated respondents. Highly educated respondents may not have learned tolerance, as Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) argue, but simply learned that they should not report their prejudice to others, or at least not in a survey setting. However this finding is contested: Heerwig and McCabe (2009), for example, find no evidence

[5] By 2012, the last year in which we analyse attitudes, a proportion of non-EU immigrants had acquired Irish citizenship. However, in a sample of this size, with circa 382 non-Irish nationals overall in 2012 (of whom 145 are UK nationals), the numbers would be too small to affect the results.

of systematic over-reporting of support for a black presidential candidate among respondents with high levels of education. In any case, this debate implies we need to be careful in interpreting the education gap in attitudes, but we argue that if social desirability bias remains constant over time, we should avoid most of the bias by focusing on how the gap in attitudes evolves over time, or responds to conditions.

We employ an ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression in order to estimate the influence of both national contextual variables while controlling for various demographic characteristics found by previous research to influence attitudes towards immigrants.[6] Individual characteristics are gender, employment status, age, achieved education level, urban vs. rural location and a measure of financial difficulties.[7] Descriptive statistics on all the control variables are presented in Appendix Table A1.[8] Overall 30 per cent of the sample has higher level educational qualifications; however this varies across age groups, with the older age groups having lower levels of tertiary education. The national contextual variables are the unemployment rate and the proportion of the population in Ireland who are foreign-born. The unemployment level variable records the quarterly unemployment rate of each round that respondents were interviewed in. In some rounds of the survey the data collection lasted a year or more. The quarterly unemployment rate is an ILO measure of the unemployed expressed as a percentage of the labour force, and is derived from the labour force survey the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), collected by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). A macro variable measuring the size of the foreign-born population in the survey quarter is included, this spans 18 quarters in total. These data are derived from the QNHS, which is reweighted based on the census to ensure accuracy. All foreign-born population proportions within the fieldwork timeframe are included; this ensures accuracy in the context of a rapidly increasing non-Irish population. Ethnicity is not included as standard in the QNHS, therefore it is not possible to test the ethnic composition of the foreign-born population.

We first model an "overall perceptions of immigration" scale, this scale is created by combining the three questions described above, namely the impact of immigration on the country's economy, whether a country's cultural life is undermined or enriched by immigrants, and do immigrants make country worse or better place to live. The scale varies from 0 to 10 with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes. We then split the questions to model cultural and economic threat

[6] Models are estimated using heteroscedasticity-consistent (robust) standard errors.

[7] The measure used to record financial difficulties is responses to the question on "feeling about household income these days" 1 "Living comfortably on current income" 2 "coping on present income" 3 "difficult on present income" 4 "very difficult on present income".

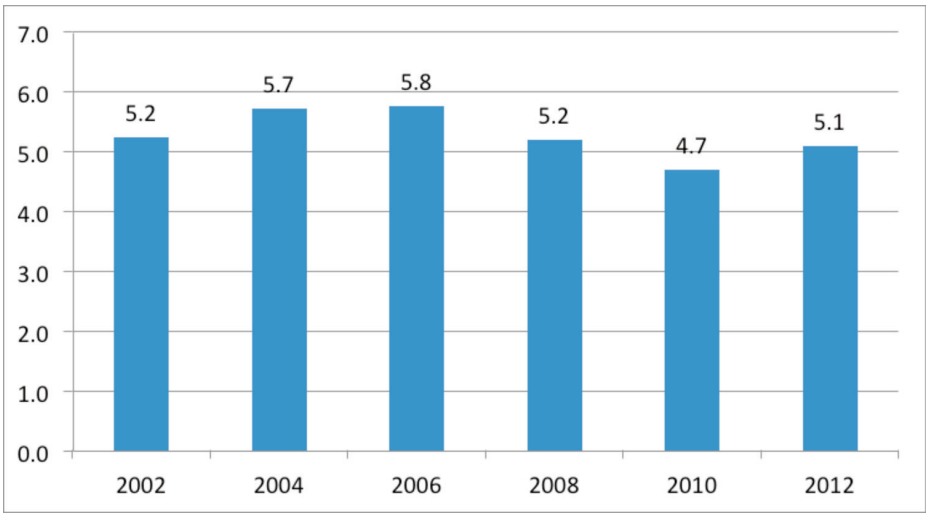
[8] A dummy recording immigrants' position on the left and right hand of the political scale was also tested, however rendered insignificant results and an overall smaller N of cases, results are available from authors on request.

separately (Table 2). Finally we interact education with the national context variables, to test whether these have different effects for the high and low educated respondents (Tables 3 and 4).

V ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION: CHANGE OVER TIME

An "overall perceptions of immigration" scale is created by combining the three questions into a single scale of perceptions of immigration. This is a scale of the combined questions above on the impact of immigration on the country's economy, whether a country's cultural life is undermined or enriched by immigrants, and whether immigrants make country a worse or better place to live, and calculates a mean score. Figure 3 presents the score for the index in each round.[9]

Figure 3: Changes in Attitudes to Immigration over Time



Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only.
Note: Results are weighted using the survey design weight.

Overall attitudes towards immigrants became more positive from 2002 to 2006, years of rising immigration. Attitudes peaked in 2006 and became more negative in 2008 and 2010, before becoming more positive again in 2012. Most responses are in the intermediate range. Statistical tests show that in the overall attitudes to

[9] Tests show that the scale has good internal consistency and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .84, suggesting that the scale is very reliable.

immigration scale, there were significant differences between all years when compared with 2012.[10]

Table 1 shows the results of an OLS model estimating the changing impact of the proportion of non-Irish, the unemployment rate and individual characteristics on perceptions of immigration in Ireland. Once the model controls for the national unemployment rate, the proportion of non-Irish in the population has a significantly positive, though small, influence on attitudes to immigration.[11] The higher the proportion of non-Irish in Ireland, the more positive attitudes become. This challenges the notion that the more immigrants that come to a country and settle, the more resistant the host population becomes (Schneider, 2008). Why is this? Some studies have found that the size of the immigrant group is inconsequential (Rustenbach, 2010), moreover some findings suggest that an increase in the migrant group size acts as a suppressor of perceived threat because of the intergroup contact it fosters (Schlueter and Wagner, 2008).

Another explanation is that, as immigration to Ireland has been predominantly European, attitudes are not related to the proportion of immigrants, as most of the immigrants coming to Ireland were culturally similar to the native population. Dustmann and Preston (2007) found strong evidence that racial or cultural prejudice is an important component to attitudes towards immigration; however, this is restricted to immigrant groups that are ethnically more distant from the majority population. Other research has found that it is not the size of the immigrant group but more conflated perceptions about the size of the immigrant group, which is often overestimated in countries hosting larger groups of culturally distinct non-EU migrants (Lahav, 2004). The finding may be partially explained by the lack of anti-immigrant rhetoric in Ireland and no prominent anti-immigrant elite, in particular there was no anti-immigration right-wing party in the period in Ireland to "persuade" the public that immigrants were a threat to culture (e.g. Ivarsflaten, 2005). Immigration is certainly not as politically salient in Ireland as in the UK, and anti-immigrant discourse is not present in the media, as in other countries. In addition, Denny and O'Grada (2013) find that those with more positive attitudes to gays and lesbians are also more pro-immigration, and suggest that the Irish have become more liberal and accepting of people from different backgrounds during the period.

[10] A one-way analysis of variance between groups was conducted to assess whether there were significant differences between Ireland's mean scores in different rounds. In order to assess where the differences between rounds lie, a Dunnett's two-tailed post hoc analysis test was conducted. In the overall attitudes to immigration scale, there were significant differences between all rounds compared with the 2012 round ($p=0.00$ in all cases).

[11] The model which includes the proportion foreign-born but not the unemployment rate is presented in Appendix Table A3. We prefer the model specification with the unemployment rate as there was such variation in the period and it is clearly related to attitudes.

Table 1: OLS Model of Changing Impact of Unemployment Rate, Proportion of Immigrants and Demographics on Perceptions of Immigration Scale

	Coeff.	*S.E.*
Macro indicators:		
Proportion Foreign-born	0.040***	0.013
Quarterly Unemployment rate	–0.069***	0.007
Individual characteristics:		
Ref: Male		
Female	–0.346***	0.040
Ref: Employed		
Unemployed	–0.173**	0.082
Not Active	0.042	0.049
Ref : Lower Secondary		
Upper Secondary/ PLC	0.470***	0.050
Tertiary	1.345***	0.051
Ref : Under 25		
Age 25-44	0.531	0.067
Age 45-64	0.199***	0.066
Age 65 plus	0.266***	0.072
Ref : Urban		
Rural	–0.122***	0.039
Financial Difficulties	–0.330***	0.027
Adjusted R Squared		0.119
N of cases		11,822

Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only; QNHS 2002-2012 for unemployment rate and proportion foreign-born. Note: All models estimated with robust standard errors.

Table 1 shows that the unemployment rate is negatively associated with attitudes: for each percentage point rise in the unemployment rate, the attitudinal index falls (that is, becomes more negative) by 0.085. This supports the labour market competition hypothesis (Hypothesis 2). Unemployment increased dramatically with the recession in Ireland, and rapidly increasing unemployment rates intensify the sense of economic threat among the native population and competition with immigrants over scarce resources such as jobs (Finseraas *et al*., 2014). The increase in negative attitudes in this timeframe aligns with "dynamic ethnic conflict theory", which posits that it is change in the phenomenon that influences attitudes, persistent poor economic conditions may not have as negative an effect on attitudes as a sudden, sharp recession (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998;

Meuleman *et al*., 2009). Some research has found a particularly strong association between economic conditions and attitudes to immigration when the proportion foreign-born is high (Finseraas *et al*., 2014). We do not find evidence for this in Ireland during this period, though the period is short.[12]

The model results show that females report significantly more negative attitudes towards immigration than males (Table 1). Previous studies have found that women are more opposed to immigrants than men (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007), though this is not always the case (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). We find that age has a significant effect on attitudes, with those aged 65 plus expressing more positive attitudes than the 18-24 age group. This is in contrast to previous findings that younger people display more tolerant/positive attitudes towards immigrants (Hughes *et al*., 2007). Part of the effect of age is explained by education: younger people in Ireland are much more likely to be highly educated. If we estimate the model without educational level, we find no difference between the youngest (18-24) and oldest (65 plus) age groups (see Appendix Table A2). Another possible explanation is that this could be due to the impact of the recession on younger age groups - young people have been disproportionately hit by very high unemployment rates, rising inactivity rates, and a decrease in disposable income compared to older age groups (Kelly *et al*., 2013). If we estimate the model without adding the national unemployment rate, the 45-64 age group do not differ in attitudes from the younger age group (see Appendix Table A3). This suggests that the impact of the downturn may have left younger people (at least those under 45) feeling more economically threatened by immigrants, compared to older age cohorts, though it would require further investigation.

Individuals who are unemployed report significantly more negative attitudes to immigration compared to those who are employed. This supports economic theories of labour market competition, which predict that negative attitudes to immigration are likely to be more pronounced for those who are most directly affected by the competition of migrant workers (Dustmann and Preston, 2004). The unemployed group may feel more threatened by immigration as they are in a more insecure economic position. Individuals experiencing financial difficulties also have more negative attitudes to immigration (see Table 1). It is useful to distinguish the impact of the national unemployment rate, as a socially salient indicator of the state of the economy, from individual unemployment. It is also crucial to control for individual unemployment as the unemployment rate changed so dramatically in the period.

As expected, education is strongly associated with attitudes towards immigrants, respondents with upper secondary/Post-Leaving Certificate level education report significantly more positive attitudes towards immigration than respondents with no formal/lower secondary level education. Furthermore respondents with tertiary level

[12] The interaction between unemployment rate and the proportion foreign-born is not significant. Results available from the authors on request.

education report even more positive attitudes towards immigration than the upper secondary group. In the next section we further investigate the relationship between education and attitudes in more depth.

The area a respondent lives in is influential on attitudes, with those living in rural areas reporting more negative attitudes towards immigration. Previous research suggests that overall opposition is more pronounced in rural areas than urban areas (Garcia and Davidson, 2013). This may be due to respondents in rural areas experiencing less intergroup contact; intergroup contact generally fosters more favourable attitudes towards immigrant groups (Allport, 1954). Natives often have more contact with and experience of migrant groups in urban areas; cities usually have more economic opportunity and therefore attract more immigrants looking for work (Markaki and Longhi, 2013). Consequently respondents in rural areas may have less contact with and/or experience of immigrant groups, and thus foster more negative attitudes. Negative attitudes in rural areas could also be related to economic conditions in rural areas as the recession in Ireland disproportionately affected rural areas. As a consequence rural areas suffered higher unemployment and poverty rates compared to urban areas (Walsh and Harvey, 2013). If attitudes are related to the economic context, then we would expect negative attitudes in areas that are suffering a disproportionate level of economic decline.

Our third hypothesis was concerned with whether cultural or economic threat was more responsive to national-level conditions. Do effects of quarterly unemployment and proportion of immigrants differ between cultural threat and economic threat? Table 2 presents model results for the two responses separately.

This argument suggests that in Ireland, a new country of immigration, economic concerns will dominate over perceived cultural threat, and the economic threat will be more sensitive to the economic conditions than the perceived threat to culture (Hypothesis 3). From Table 2, we see that quarterly unemployment has a significant negative association with the Irish population's responses to immigrants' contribution to the economy, as expected by Hypothesis 3. Once we account for the unemployment rate, the proportion of non-Irish in the population is associated with more positive feelings about immigrants' contribution to the economy. Irish immigration in this period was predominantly labour migration, and as the proportion of immigrants grew, their contribution was more positively evaluated.

The findings for the contribution to culture in Ireland are somewhat different. Perceptions of the contribution of immigrants to Irish culture is somewhat sensitive to the unemployment rate – attitudes become more negative as unemployment rises, though less so than perceptions of contribution to the economy (the coefficient is less than one-third of the size, see Table 2). These perceptions are not sensitive to the proportion of foreign-born. There is no positive association like in the

Table 2: OLS Model of Perceptions of Immigration Scale, Distinguishing Economic and Cultural Concerns

	Economic Threat		*Cultural Threat*	
	Coeff.	*S.E.*	*Coeff.*	*S.E.*
Macro indicators:				
Proportion Foreign-born	0.110***	0.151	0.007	0.015
Quarterly Unemployment	–0.143***	0.008	–0.036***	0.079
Individual characteristics:				
Ref: Male				
Female	–0.436***	0.046	–0.277***	0.046
Ref: Employed				
Unemployed	–0.206**	0.092	–0.128	0.094
Not Active	0.041	0.056	0.072	0.056
Ref: Lower Secondary				
Upper Secondary/PLC	0.438***	0.057	0.501***	0.058
Tertiary	1.263***	0.058	1.412***	0.058
Ref: Under 25				
Age 25-44	–0.000	0.077	0.162**	0.077
Age 45-64	0.202**	0.076	0.281***	0.076
Age 65 plus	0.330***	0.083	0.278***	0.083
Ref: Urban				
Rural	–0.136***	0.044	–0.153***	0.045
Financial Difficulties	–0.331***	0.030	–0.313***	0.031
Adjusted R Squared		0.1243		0.0880
N of Cases		11,637		11,539

Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only; QNHS 2002-2012 for unemployment rate and proportion foreign-born. Questions: "Would *you say it is generally bad or good for country's economy that people come to live here from other countries?*" "*Would you say that country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?*" Models estimated with robust standard errors.

contribution to the economy model where, as the proportion of immigrants rises, their contribution is more valued. Yet there is no negative effect either, where an increase in the proportion of migrants is seen as threat to culture, as found in other countries e.g. Finseraas *et al*. (2014). This may be related to Ireland's "position in the immigration cycle", where immigration is essentially a new phenomenon and the threat to culture has not yet emerged (Bail, 2008). Alternatively, as discussed earlier, the fact that a significant proportion of Irish immigrants are White Europeans, so not culturally distinct, may be part of the explanation.

VI EDUCATION AND ATTITUDES: LEARNED TOLERANCE?

We now investigate the relationship between education level and the perceptions of immigration. Table 3 shows selected results of an OLS model estimating the relationship between attitudes and the effect of tertiary level education on attitudes over the time period in question.[13] Tertiary-level education is interacted with the quarterly unemployment rate and the proportion of foreign-born. The interaction terms in each case provide estimates of whether the effects differ for those with third-level education and those with Leaving Certificate qualifications or less.

It is well established that individuals with low educational credentials tend to hold more negative attitudes towards immigrants, and to be more sceptical towards liberal immigration policies than individuals with better education (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007). The results presented in Tables 1 and 2 show that in Ireland respondents with tertiary level education hold much more positive attitudes towards immigration, though as discussed above the size of the difference may be overestimated if the highly educated are more likely to report socially desirable attitudes. Table 3 shows the difference in attitudes of the tertiary educated towards changes in the foreign-born population, and in unemployment.

Table 3: OLS Model of Changing Impact of Education on Perceptions of Immigration Scale, Selected Covariates

Macro indicators:	*Coeff.*	*S.E.*
Proportion Foreign-born	0.041**	0.017
Quarterly Unemployment	–0.086***	0.009
Proportion Foreign-born* Tertiary	–0.003	0.026
Quarterly Unemployment* Tertiary	0.055***	0.014
Adjusted R Squared		0.121
N of Cases		11,821

Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only; QNHS 2002-2012 for unemployment rate and proportion foreign-born. Models also control for individual characteristics, results available from authors on request. Robust standard errors reported.

What is interesting is how the effect of unemployment and the proportion foreign-born differ for the high and low educated. The main effect of the unemployment rate is for the lower educated and is negatively associated with attitudes. However the coefficient for the interaction term (tertiary

[13] Full results are available from the authors on request.

education*unemployment rate) is positive, indicating that the attitudes of the highly educated are much less sensitive to changes in the unemployment rate than those with lower educational qualifications. This supports Hypothesis 4a that the education gap in attitudes will widen during recession and is consistent with the labour market competition theory, that the highly educated are less likely to be competing for jobs with immigrants, have more resources, feel more secure and less "threatened" by immigration (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mayda, 2006). We cannot rule out "learned tolerance" (Hypothesis 4b) but this notion is not clearly supported by the fact that high national unemployment during economic recession widens the gap in attitudes between those with higher and lower education.

Whilst it is not possible to measure social desirability bias within the ESS it is acknowledged that this may be a mechanism influencing the gap between the attitudes of the low and highly educated. We argue though that it does not undermine our finding that the education gap in attitudes increases over time.

The models in Table 4 distinguish economic and cultural threat, as in Table 2. Here the question is whether the patterns found in Table 3, that is a polarisation of attitudes in recession between the high and low educated, is found for attitudes to the economy and attitudes to culture. Table 4 shows that the perceptions of lower educated Irish citizens of the contribution of immigrants to the economy are clearly related to the unemployment rate (main effect of quarterly unemployment). Attitudes of the highly educated on immigrants' contribution to the economy are less sensitive to the unemployment rate, so a polarisation in attitudes between the high and low educated does occur. Attitudes to immigrants' contribution to the economy become more positive as the proportion of immigrants rises, but high and low educated respondents do not differ in this regard.

Table 4: OLS Model of Changing Impact of Education: Cultural and Economic Threat

	Economic Threat		*Cultural Threat*	
Macro indicators:	*Coeff.*	*S.E.*	*Coeff.*	*S.E.*
Proportion Foreign-born	0.115***	0.020	–0.002	0.020
Quarterly Unemployment	–0.162***	0.010	–0.047***	0.010
Proportion Foreign-born* Tertiary	–0.012	0.030	0.022	0.030
Quarterly Unemployment* Tertiary	0.060***	0.016	0.038**	0.016
Adjusted R Squared		0.1266		0.0897
N of Cases		11,637		11,539

Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only; QNHS 2002-2012 for unemployment rate and proportion foreign-born. Models also control for individual characteristics, results available from authors on request. Robust standard errors reported.

In terms of the contribution of immigrants to culture, higher unemployment is associated with more negative attitudes, though once again we see a smaller impact than for the contribution to the economy. The higher educated differ from the lower educated here, but the effect is only marginally significant. Neither the attitudes to cultural contribution of the highly educated nor those with lower education are sensitive to the proportion foreign-born. Therefore there is no evidence of an increased sense of cultural threat as the proportion of immigrants rises, either for the highly educated or their lower educated counterparts. Note of course that there is a very large gap between the attitudes of the high and low educated, with those holding third-level degrees much more positive in their attitudes to the contribution of immigrants to culture in Ireland.

VII CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper empirically investigates attitudes to immigrants in Ireland in the period 2002 to 2012 and in particular the role of economic recession, the increase in immigration, and respondents' level of education on understanding changing attitudes. The attitudinal climate is important as it frames the context for the integration and sense of belonging among immigrants. This analysis adds to the growing literature on attitudes towards immigrants as it provides a country-specific analysis. Ireland is a particularly interesting country to investigate attitudes to immigrants in this period as there was such a rapid increase in immigration followed by a deep economic recession.

The paper found that once we control for economic conditions, there is firstly a positive impact of the proportion of immigrants on overall attitudes to immigration in Ireland. As the proportion foreign-born increased in the population, attitudes became more positive. This was not quite consistent with our expectation that as the proportion of immigrants increased, negative attitudes would increase too (Quillian, 1995). Why do attitudes towards immigrants not become more negative with the increase of the immigrant flow? We note that some authors have found that an increase in the proportion of foreign-born increases social contact between immigrants and natives. We also speculate, echoing Turner and Cross (2015) that the fact that most immigrants to Ireland in the period were White Europeans may also explain why attitudes became more positive. Furthermore the fact that immigration did not become deeply politicised during the recession may also contribute towards more positive attitudes of the general public, compared with countries where right-wing parties adopt a strong anti-immigrant stance.

Secondly we find that the rise in unemployment levels coincides with a rise in negative attitudes towards immigrants, as the economic position deteriorates attitudes become more negative. The higher the unemployment rate, which varied

considerably during the period in question, the more negative were attitudes to immigrants, lending support for our second hypothesis that economic conditions may influence attitudes towards immigrants. This finding supports the theory that that as the economic position deteriorates and unemployment rises, perceived competition, especially for jobs, means attitudes to immigrants become more resistant.

Thirdly, distinguishing attitudes to immigrants' contribution to the economy compared to attitudes to culture, we find a positive effect of the proportion of non-Irish in the population on Irish citizens' attitudes to immigrants' contribution to the economy. We find a stronger negative effect of the unemployment rate on attitudes to immigrants' contribution to the economy. On attitudes to culture, we find no effect of the proportion of non-Irish on cultural values, and a smaller (negative) effect of the unemployment rate. We speculate this may be because Ireland does not have a long tradition of immigration or significant ethnic/national minorities, perhaps this means that the threat to culture has not yet become sensitive to the number of immigrants. Or perhaps because the majority of immigrants to Ireland are mainly White Europeans and they do not differ so radically in terms of culture and ethnicity from the native Irish population that they may not be perceived as a cultural threat.

Fourthly, we find that the overall attitudes of lower educated respondents are more vulnerable to recession. This mirrors previous findings that the impact of unemployment on economic concerns is bigger for those with low education, and smaller for those with high education (Finseraas *et al*., 2014). Even in 2002 the reported attitudes of the highly educated were much more positive than the low educated, but during recession we see a polarisation in attitudes between these groups. We speculate that this is because the highly educated are less likely to be competing with immigrants for jobs and other resources and therefore feel less "threatened" by immigration in recession. The polarisation in attitudes of the low and high educated groups is much more marked in terms of views of immigrants' contribution to the economy than for their contribution to cultural life.

Probably the biggest weakness in the attitudinal data we have utilised is that it pitches very broad questions on attitudes to immigrants, and does not ask questions about attitudes to specific national or ethnic groups. Other research suggests that national-ethnic groups differ in their experience in a host country: for example the experience of discrimination in a range of life domains is much higher for African migrants than for East Europeans (McGinnity *et al*., 2012; Kingston *et al*., 2015). As discussed there may be an element of social desirability bias in all of the responses, so attitudes may seem more positive than in reality they are.

How does Ireland compare internationally? In their analysis of changes in attitudes across 12 European countries between 2002 and 2010, Turner and Cross (2015) show that Irish attitudes became negative more rapidly after the onset of

recession than in other countries (Turner and Cross, 2015). However the sensitivity to macroeconomic conditions may mean that as the economy recovers, attitudes may become more positive. This is not to rule out the importance of other factors that have been found to influence the attitudinal climate, in particular the role of public and political debates. And while related to socio-cultural integration, the attitudes of the host population are only one component of the broader context for immigrant integration, and there may be many other challenges for migrants to face.

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APPENDIX

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics, Pooled Data 2002-2012

Gender	*%*	*N*
Male	46	5,589
Female	54	6,565
Age		
Age 15-24	16.7	2,024
Age 25-44	32.4	3,936
Age 45-64	33.9	4,126
Age 65+	16.1	1,962
Location		
Urban	53.6	6,492
Rural	46.4	5,636
Education		
No Formal/Lower	39.6	4,816
Upper Sec/PLC	29.4	3,568
Tertiary	30.3	3,687
Lab Mkt		
Employed	44.6	5,417
Unemployed	7.7	942
Not Active	46.7	5,705
Financial Status		
Living comfortably	34.2	4,160
Coping	44.5	5,403
Difficult	14.3	1,732
Very difficult	5.3	644
Quarterly Unemp Rate (Mean), 2002-2012	9.3	12,154
Foreign-Born (Mean), 2002-2012	10.3	12,154

Source: ESS 2002-2012. Ireland.

Table A2: OLS Model of Perceptions of Immigration with and without Education

	Coeff.	*S.E.*	*Coeff.*	*S.E.*
Individual characteristics:				
Ref: Male				
Female	–0.263***	0.416	–0.342***	0.041
Ref: Employed				
Unemployed	–0.477***	0.083	–0.291***	0.081
Not Active	–0.175***	0.049	0.025	0.049
Ref: Lower Secondary				
Upper Secondary/ PLC			0.390***	0.050
Tertiary			1.297***	0.050
Ref: Under 25				
Age 25-44	0.221***	0.067	0.034	0.067
Age 45-64	0.121	0.066	0.163**	0.066
Age 65 plus	0.020	0.071	0.180**	0.072
Ref: Urban				
Rural	–0.191***	0.040	–0.121***	0.039
Financial Difficulties	–0.518***	0.026	–0.406***	0.026
Adjusted R Squared		0.056		0.106
N of Cases		11,826		11,824

Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only.

Table A3: OLS Model of Perceptions of Immigration without Quarterly Unemployment

	Coeff.	*S.E.*
Macro indicators:		
Proportion Foreign-born	–0.062***	0.008
Individual characteristics:		
Ref: Male		
Female	–0.346***	0.040
Ref: Employed		
Unemployed	–0.233**	0.081
Not Active	0.039	0.049
Ref: Lower Secondary		
Upper Secondary/ PLC	0.428***	0.050
Tertiary	1.333***	0.051
Ref: Under 25		
Age 25-44	0.052	0.669
Age 45-64	0.184**	0.664
Age 65 plus	0.231***	0.072
Ref: Urban		
Rural	–0.120***	0.039
Finance	–0.378***	0.008
Adjusted R Squared		0.1108
N of Cases		11,823

Source: ESS 2002-2012, Irish citizens only.