

# **Census 2011**

## **The Irish Headlines**

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

Irish in Britain has today made initial comments on the headline Census figures released on 11 December, 2012 showing a decline in the Irish population since 2001.

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#### **DATE**

December 2012

#### **AUTHOR**

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**Summary of initial figures for Irish by country of Birth and Irish by ethnic group following publication of the second release of Census 2011 results for England and Wales.**

Irish in Britain chair, Dr Mary Tilki said: "Census reports so far released show a decline in the Irish populations of England and Wales. We will not be able to understand fully the nature of these changes until we have seen more detailed tables, cross tabulated by age bands which will be available in summer 2013."

"So far the figures seem in line with estimates that have been appearing for some time. They match what we know about our communities in England and Wales – older age profile and the way people of Irish heritage identified in Census 2001. In the Celtic tiger years, the numbers of young people migrating from Ireland did not match decline of the older population that arrived in large numbers through the 1950s and '60s."

"We need to emphasise that, despite this overall reduction of the population, the issues arising from the general health profile of the Irish – around cancers, dementia, limiting injuries, mental health, for example - must continue to be addressed. Some of the evidence for this will appear from the data on general health and limiting injuries, single- and two-pensioner households in the cross-tabulated details to be released in 2013."

"There may be a parallel decrease in these figures, depending on the size of age cohorts – but these issues (evidence for which is more highly – but not exclusively – dependent on health statistics rather than on the two health-related questions in the Census) will continue to be issues requiring address into the immediate future."

At first sight, declining Census numbers might suggest less need for community and welfare services and problems of finding adequate funding, but Jennie McShannon is adamant that nothing could be further from the truth. "All the studies and feedback from Irish advice centres show that we are looking at a mountain of problems that are not being addressed through mainstream services. The Irish government in particular is well aware of the situation on the ground."

"Community groups are constantly improving their service delivery, upgrading advice programmes and concentrating on maximising impact by focussing support where it is most needed. Finding new sources of funding is a constant battle and, until the economic situation is turned around, we will continue to struggle.

The Irish are not seeking special favours. Since arriving in this country, our community has contributed enormously. Like other ethnic groups the Irish continue to show high levels of need in a range of health and social care areas, like other ethnic groups we rely on the Census data to ensure those needs are profiled and met."

<b>Comparison of England &amp; Wales 'Country of Birth' numbers</b>			
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>difference</b>
Born Republic of Ireland	472,380	407,357	(-) 65,023
Born Northern Ireland	222,975	214,988	(-) 7,987
<b>TOTAL born in Ireland</b>	<b>695,355</b>	<b>622,345</b>	<b>(-) 73,010</b>

<b>Comparison of England &amp; Wales 'ethnic group' numbers</b>			
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>difference</b>
<b>TOTAL identifying as Irish</b>	<b>641,804</b>	<b>531,087</b>	<b>(-)110,717</b>

Irish in Britain have outlined some initial key factors that may influence overall numbers:

### **1) Mortality rate**

The principle reason for numerical decline of the Irish in England & Wales is the age profile of the community. Those migrants that arrived in the surge of an estimated 200,000 in the decade 1951-61 and remaining resident until the 2001 Census would mostly be aged 70 and over.

Irish in Britain and others have documented the poor health profile of the Irish population and persistence of community-specific health issues that contribute to an older population at greater risk of premature death. The Irish Traveller community is particularly vulnerable in this respect.

### **2) New Migration**

Migration from Ireland to England and Wales has been in decline in each decade since the 1971 Census. The overall decline of the Irish population reflected in the 2011 Census may mask the growing numbers of young people arriving from Ireland recently, particularly after the economic crisis in the latter years of the decade.

Irish Government figures show alarmingly high levels of outward migration. Statistics from the Central Statistics Office show that 87,100 people left Ireland in the last financial year (post Census) – almost 2% of the population. These figures are the highest since new records began in 1987. The age profile shows 41% were under 25 years old. Many of these were recent migrants returning to EU Accession countries but 53% were Irish citizens.

Professor Bronwen Walter, who played a leading role in compiling the first Commission for Racial Equality report on the Irish in Britain, said that the number of people leaving Ireland today is “far larger than in the previous huge outpourings of the 1950s and late 1980s”. She estimates that as many as 20,000 new migrants arrived in England and Wales between April 2011-2012.

While this most recent generation of migrants has the advantages of cheaper travel and on-line communication, experience suggests that many will settle permanently. Certainly, **it cannot be concluded that 2011 census figures demonstrate a permanent and irreversible decline of the Irish population.**

### **3) Ethnic group question**

Improvements in the construction of Census questions in 2011 will allow much more to be learned about the complex nature of the Irish community. The range of questions helps gauge consciousness of Irish identity beyond place of birth. The ethnic group question allows children and descents of Irish migrants to self-identify as Irish even if they were born in England and Wales. It is a subjective question. The next tranche of Census results to be released in summer 2013 will make it possible to get beneath the headlines and discover detailed information about the living circumstances and attitudes of the Irish in Britain.

Work done by Irish in Britain and others on the ‘How Irish Are You?’ Census awareness campaign played a major role in informing the community about the meaning of the ethnic group category and ‘ticking the Irish box’. We are grateful for all the volunteers, particularly young people that came forward to spread the word.

### **4) Irish passport holders**

The Census enables us to discover that in 2011 there were 409,065 people, normally resident in England and Wales owning an Irish Passport.

### **5) National identity**

When the figures are further examined, it will be possible to examine how the population of England and Wales understands mixtures and combinations of national identity. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has provided detailed information for England and Wales for English, Irish, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh.

### **6) Gypsy & Irish Traveller box**

Census 2011 was the first use of a specific Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic group question. ONS recognised the need for much more information to measure the extent of disadvantage experienced by this community. Census workers took special measures to address census awareness among a community with high rates of illiteracy and social isolation. On the day, 57,680 Gypsies and Irish Travellers ticked the box.

### **7) Black or mixed race Irish**

The decision to place Irish ethnicity exclusively in the “White” ethnic section was contested in the consultation around the exact wording. Irish in Britain is aware that number of Black and mixed race Irish is rising. It is frustrating that these members of our community are not being recognised.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There is no reason to doubt there are many more hundreds of thousands unrecognised Irish who would benefit from Irish services or enjoy celebrating our culture and sports. We know there are many who have lost touch. We always need to look out for those in our community who are most vulnerable.

Irish in Britain believes that the Irish community should take great pride that more than half-a-million people in England & Wales, regardless of their place of birth, have a strong identification with their own Irishness, we have to nurture that sense of belonging and harness that strength as Irish in Britain and a key part of the global Diaspora

IRISH IN BRITAIN will be releasing further comments on Census figures as analysis proceeds.

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The logo for Irish in Britain, featuring the text "Irish in Britain" in white on a green, rounded rectangular background.**HEAD OFFICE**

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