

# Making a Home in Ireland

Housing Experiences of Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian  
& Nigerian Migrants in Blanchardstown



Everyone has a right to a place they can call home



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& Nigerian Migrants in Blanchardstown

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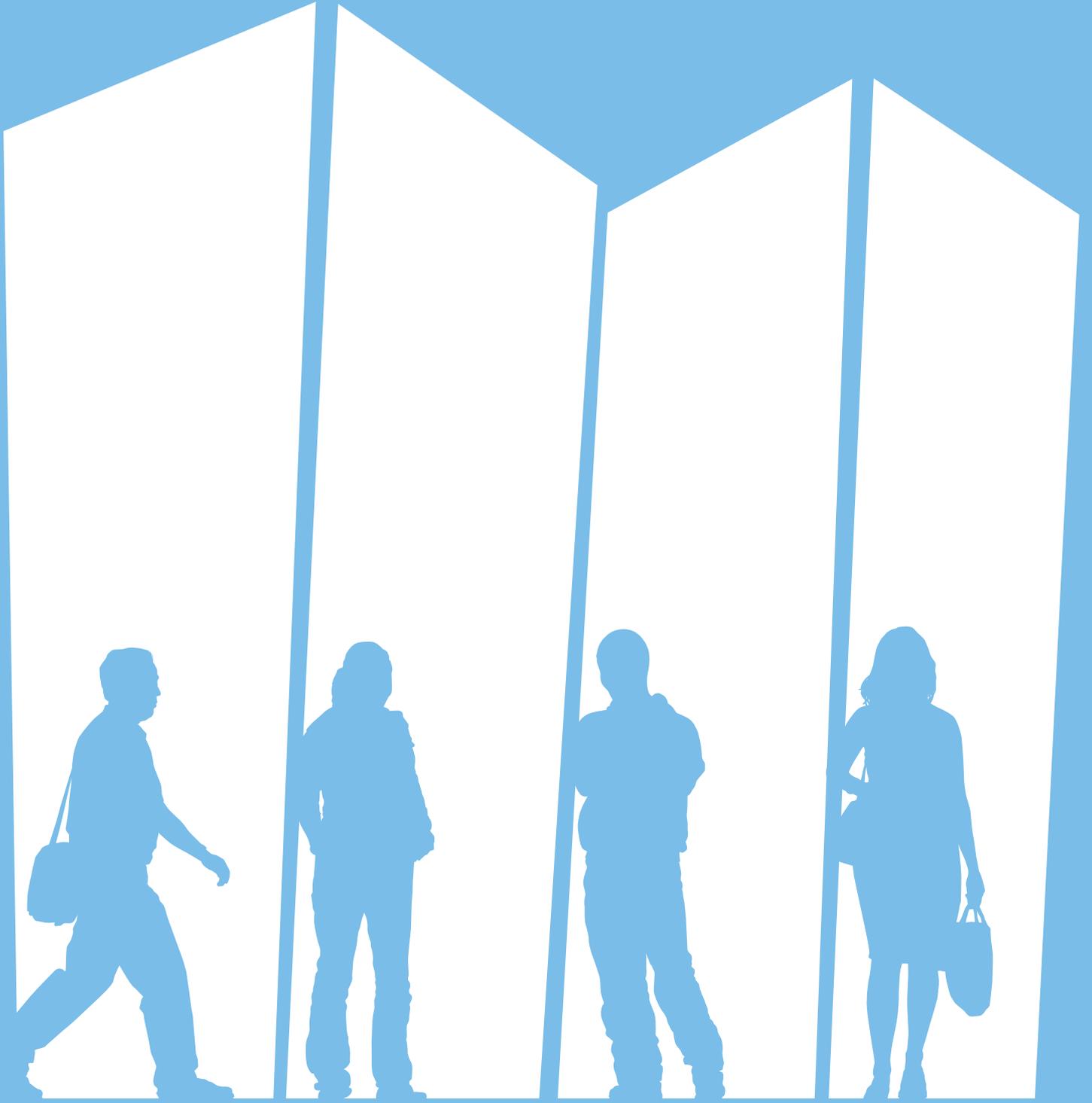
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*The participatory research approach used in this study is significant in that the findings are based on the actual 'lived' housing experiences of migrants*

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**Dr Jane Pillinger**

*Independent Researcher and Policy Advisor*

## **Foreword**

Central to a person's or family's sense of belonging to a community is whether or not they feel 'at home'. The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) and Focus Ireland have jointly commissioned this important research into the housing experiences of four migrant groups in Blanchardstown – Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian – to examine the central role appropriate housing plays in a migrant's ability to feel at home in Ireland. Blanchardstown, located in Fingal County Council, was chosen as a focus for the research because the 2006 Census showed it to have the fastest growing population in Ireland and that migrants accounted for almost 22 per cent of the population, twice the proportion of the State as a whole.

As this report goes to print, Ireland is facing a dire economic downturn, significantly increased unemployment and the prospect of a real reduction in our living standards. It is crucial that we continue to ensure that migrants feel part of our communities during these tough economic times and that promoting effective integration remains a priority. Social cohesion in Ireland, now and into the future, will depend on it.

'Making a Home in Ireland' highlights the fact that feeling at home means far more than having accommodation. Feeling at home for migrants means developing a sense of belonging and a sense of being acknowledged as a member of the diverse Irish community. Now that Ireland is facing a recession, it is time to work our way out of recession together. Some of the recent rhetoric in public discourse which has, at times, blamed migrants for our economic predicament, will not help foster the notion of being 'at home' for all members of our society.

Just as the quality of migrants' housing will influence their sense of being 'at home' in Ireland, so will other factors, such as access to and quality of a range of services, including health, education and transport. So too are matters relating to our immigration rules (and, in some cases, the lack of rules), our commitment to equality and our attitudes to racism, xenophobia and discrimination. All of these issues need to be considered holistically.

This report complements research published by the ICI last year, 'Getting On: From Migration to Integration – Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian Migrants' Experiences in Ireland'. These four migrant groups were chosen because they generally have different entry routes into Ireland,

with different legal status, different civic and political entitlements, different socio-cultural characteristics, and are differently racialised. The 'Getting On' research examines migrants' experiences of political, economic, social and cultural integration in Irish society.

'Making a Home in Ireland: Housing Experiences of Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian Migrants in Blanchardstown' like the 'Getting On' research, highlights the central importance migrants' immigration status has on their experience in Ireland, in this case, in terms of housing. This stands to reason. If a migrant has restrictions on their access to the labour market, their ability to secure good-quality housing will be affected by their income. Similarly, not knowing if, or for how long, a person or family can stay in Ireland will impact on their ability to plan for their future and their sense of belonging, or being at home.

The experiences of the four migrant groups varied considerably but the four groups relied much more heavily on the private rental market than the indigenous population. A number of the people interviewed raised serious issues relating to the quality of their housing, for example, problems with maintenance or damp in the accommodation itself, through to the attitudes of landlords. However, it is clear that overall the quality of migrants' housing, and their satisfaction with their accommodation, tend to improve over time.

'Making a Home in Ireland' makes a series of detailed recommendations to improve migrants' housing experiences. While these recommendations are designed to address the issues facing migrants' housing needs and experiences, and some are therefore specific to the requirements of migrants – such as the need for more accessible information – many would, if implemented, also provide real benefits for the community as a whole. For example, improving housing quality through better forms of inspection of privately rented accommodation would benefit everyone in the private rental market.

Focus Ireland has been calling for greater enforcement of housing standards regulations. Focus Ireland pointed out, in a submission to the Government last year, that more than 33,000 dwellings were inspected under existing regulations between 2002 and 2006, and 10,162 did not meet legal requirements, but only 79 legal actions were taken by local authorities.

The ICI and Focus Ireland would like to thank Dr Jane Pillinger for producing this invaluable research and, in particular, would like to thank the research participants whose generosity in sharing their experiences has given us a deeper insight into the issues facing migrants in Ireland today.

**Sr Stanislaus Kennedy**

*Founder and Life President of Focus Ireland  
Founder and Board Member of the Immigrant  
Council of Ireland*

## About Focus Ireland

Focus Ireland is a housing and homeless charity working to prevent people becoming, remaining or returning to homelessness through the provision of quality services, supported housing, research and advocacy. Founded in 1985 by Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy, Focus Ireland works with single adults, families and young people believing everyone has a right to a place they can call home which is safe, secure, affordable and appropriate to their needs.

## About the Immigrant Council of Ireland

The Immigrant Council of Ireland is a national, independent non-governmental organisation that promotes the rights of migrants through information, legal advice and strategic litigation, advocacy, lobbying, research and publications, as well as training work. The organisation was set up by Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy in 2001 in response to a need to support migrants coming to Ireland for purposes such as work, study, family reunification, self-employment or to visit.



Source: Blanchardstown Area Partnership (2008) Socio-Economic Profile of Blanchardstown

# Summary and Recommendations

## 1. Introduction

In this report the findings of a small-scale study of housing experiences and the 'housing careers' of migrants in the Blanchardstown area of Dublin are presented. The study has focused specifically on the experiences of migrants from Lithuania, Nigeria, India and China.

The objectives of the research were to highlight the similarities and differences of the housing experiences of four migrant communities, to show how housing is related to wider integration in society, and to make suggestions about how housing policy can be developed so that it facilitates the integration of migrant communities in Ireland.

The research was carried out using a number of methodologies, including a review of literature on housing and integration, an overview of local Census and other data on housing in the Blanchardstown area, and in-depth interviews carried out by Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese peer-researchers with forty migrants residing in Blanchardstown (ten from each of the four communities studied in the research).

The study was carried out in Blanchardstown, located in Fingal County Council. The County has experienced significant population growth in recent years, with foreign nationals accounting for nearly 22 per cent of all residents in Blanchardstown in 2006 (representing more than double the State average of 10 per cent)

## 2. Housing and integration

The relationship between housing and integration is particularly important as housing location and type can be factors that impact on access to services, local community facilities and social networks. This relationship is also affected by broader policies on migration and legal status, social inclusion, anti-poverty, anti-discrimination, income and employment.

In the context of the current recession, it is critically important that the integration of migrants remains a priority. While many short-term economic migrants have returned to their countries of origin, there are many migrants whose home is in Ireland. For this reason housing, access to local services, community supports and neighbourhood planning policies will continue to be vital for their long-term integration. Because many migrants work in sectors of the economy that have been affected by job losses, it is likely that the consequence of the economic downturn will

be particularly severe for some groups of migrants, which in turn will affect access to housing and integration.

Policies that aim to avoid segregation tend to be successful when they take into account anti-poverty and social inclusion measures, while measures to promote integration can benefit from migrant community and support networks. While government statements in recent years have raised concerns about the consequences of the segregation of migrant communities and the clustering of migrants in areas of low-cost housing, there is a need for some caution. This study has shown that people living in Blanchardstown chose to live in the area primarily because of affordability and proximity to work and, to a lesser extent, because of social networks. If there is evidence of clustering, then it needs to be understood in the context of the availability and affordability of housing. While programmes for the promotion of greater dispersal and mixed communities are generally viewed as helping to overcome clusters of deprivation, they can also work against integration if they do not fully take account of the reasons for and causes of migrants' housing pathways.

Housing, therefore, plays a key role in the integration matrix. This study has shown that integration is closely connected to language proficiency, access to local services, participation in local communities, and acceptance by local people. If these four determinants of integration are not in place, it will continue to be difficult for people to integrate fully. In turn, those people who are the most integrated are also those who feel that they are accepted and welcomed by local people.

## 3. Findings from the qualitative survey

The main findings from the qualitative survey of forty people from the Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese communities are summarised below:

### Patterns of housing

- Migrants from the Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese communities experienced different patterns of housing from those in the general Irish population. The survey found that the majority of interviewees were living in privately rented accommodation, while the home ownership was highest in the Indian community.
- Reasons for living in the Blanchardstown area were proximity to work, affordability of housing and knowing people in the area.

## People receiving rent allowance experienced significant problems in finding suitable and good quality accommodation.

### Housing conditions and housing quality

- A large number of respondents were living in shared accommodation and in some cases households were overcrowded. Overcrowding, combined with cost and other aspects of the quality of housing, were common reasons why people moved regularly in the privately rented sector.
- Sharing accommodation was closely related to the affordability of housing. The majority of respondents found housing to be very expensive and a large proportion of their incomes was spent on housing. Those in home ownership regularly let out rooms or shared with other families, while the highest rate of sharing occurred in the privately rented sector.
- Evidence from interviewees' housing pathways demonstrates that the quality of accommodation tends to improve the longer a person has been resident in Ireland. Newly arrived migrants experienced the worst living conditions, often sharing and moving regularly.

### Housing tenure and housing quality

- The poorest living conditions were found in the privately rented sector, where the quality of accommodation was rated as average or bad. Overcrowded living conditions, a lack of space, insecurity of tenure, damp housing, limited furnishings and landlords not carrying out repairs, were commonly reported by those in poor quality housing.
- Those living in owner-occupied housing, local authority housing, and in newly built premises to rent, experienced good housing conditions. This was particularly the case in the Indian community and to a lesser extent in the Nigerian community.
- People receiving rent allowance experienced significant problems in finding suitable and good quality accommodation. Several felt discriminated against by landlords and had to move regularly.

### Legal status and housing quality

- Legal status also impacted on access to good quality housing. For some interviewees, being undocumented meant that there was no possibility of complaining about housing conditions or of gaining access to local services. For others, acquiring legal status enabled them to access local authority rented accommodation or home ownership.

### Integration into the local community

- Interviewees stated that their level of integration into the local community was impeded by a lack of information, poor access to services, language difficulties, varying and long working hours, low pay, lack of acceptance by 'local' people, lack of community facilities and cultural differences. Access to local services and information was the greatest in the Nigerian community and the least in the Chinese community.
- The most important factors that people felt would facilitate integration into the local community included being able to speak the English language well, having better access to local services and information, improved community facilities, and acceptance by neighbours and the local community.

### Access to local services

- Some specific issues were raised in the interviews about access to local services, such as health care, schools, childcare, information and the local bus service. Some families had difficulty in finding school places for their children and in at least two cases children were attending schools outside Blanchardstown.

### The local neighbourhood

- Many of those interviewed did not feel safe in their local neighbourhood. Several had experienced theft or harassment, and in some cases local people were not found to be friendly or welcoming. In contrast some interviewees *did* find their local neighbours to be friendly and welcoming. A number of respondents stated that it was a positive experience to live in a multicultural neighbourhood.
- Many interviewees had aspirations for better quality accommodation, including better security of housing tenure and security in their local neighbourhood.

### Sense of home and belonging

- Interviewees' 'sense of home' and belonging were affected by legal status, the ability (or not) to make long-term plans, and housing conditions. Having a sense of home was also found to be closely linked to a sense of belonging and connection and, in turn, to integration. For some interviewees, 'home' was where their families lived in their countries of origin, while for others who planned to stay in the long-term, home was Blanchardstown.

## *Where people live and settle is important in determining the quality of their lives, their access to services, and their long-term integration*

- Several interviewees living in privately rented accommodation felt that their accommodation was not 'home', rather a place to live while they were working in Ireland. Those who felt they were the most integrated had the best sense of 'home'.

### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The research has found that where people live and settle is important in determining the quality of their lives, their access to services, and their long-term integration. A person's legal/migration status and the length of time they have been living in Ireland impact on housing choices, the tenure in which they live, and their long-term housing plans. Poor housing can lead to exclusion, overcrowding and poor health, while good housing is important to integration and a sense of 'home' and belonging. Housing policies play a key role in influencing patterns of settlement and housing provision, which can impact on segregation and clustering.

The research has shown that migrants from the Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese communities have had different patterns of housing from those experienced in the general Irish population. The majority of interviewees were living in privately rented accommodation. This was often of a poor quality, overcrowded, in a poor state of repair, with inadequate heating, furniture, fixtures and fittings. Insecurity of tenure and a lack of legal rights for tenants are found to negatively affect people's sense of housing security and long-term plans. People living on Rent Allowance experienced some of the most significant problems in finding suitable, long-term, good quality accommodation; this is an area where respondents felt they were discriminated against by landlords who were reluctant to rent to social welfare recipients.

Having access to good quality, sustainable and long-term housing options in the privately rented sector is therefore a key issue that needs to be addressed in policy-making and housing provision. In contrast, a number of migrants, particularly those living in owner-occupied housing and those in newly built premises to rent, experienced good housing conditions.

There is also evidence that some migrants experienced discrimination in housing (including discrimination by landlords, neighbours and the local community) and of higher levels of overcrowding, a greater risk of homelessness and a tendency to cluster in lower-cost areas of housing.

Knowledge of how the housing system works and the provision of information about rights, entitlements and responsibilities are also found to be major factors in the improved integration of migrants in housing. Neighbourhood planning, community development, and the integration of newly arrived migrants are all crucial to their long-term integration.

It is interesting to note that the survey found evidence from the housing pathways of interviewees that the quality of accommodation tends to improve the longer a person has been resident in Ireland. Newly arrived migrants experienced the worst living conditions, often sharing and moving regularly. This raises some important issues for policy-making and for the provision of information and assistance to newly arrived migrants in their settlement plans.

Another key issue raised is the way in which services are planned in local areas, particularly in regard to local transport, health and education services. The findings from this study show that poor access to services, a lack of access to information, and language difficulties were major factors affecting integration, combined with a lack of acceptance by local people, lack of community facilities and cultural differences.

Legal status and the ability to plan in the long-term have a significant impact on gaining access to good quality housing. This study has shown that being undocumented or having short-term permits work against integration, particularly as people in these situations are often reluctant to complain about housing conditions. For some people gaining legal status, or having EU citizenship (as in the case of the Lithuanian respondents), enabled them to access social and affordable housing, and home ownership. While some temporarily resident and recently arrived migrants were limited in their housing choices, a number of Indian people who had purchased their own houses did so in order to have access to secure and better quality housing.

Local community policing and improved local security are particularly important to migrant communities, especially where they are not fully accepted in their local communities. Better community awareness of the needs of migrant communities could also help improve integration. This can be found in the experiences of some respondents who felt more integrated because they were accepted by local people and were welcomed into local communities. Breaking down the isolation experienced by some migrants is closely allied to developing a sense of belonging and aiding integration, and could help to improve relations between local people and new arrivals.

## *Legal status and the ability to plan in the long-term have a significant impact on gaining access to good quality housing.*

Integration is also closely connected to people's sense of 'home' and belonging. If people are able to plan in the long term and create good quality homes for themselves and their families, they are more likely to feel that they belong. This is often not the case for people living in poorer quality and insecure privately rented housing. In this study a sense of 'home', combined with security and safety, was closely connected to the degree to which people participated in and felt integrated into their communities.

### 5. Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations that emerged from the research:

#### 1. Clusters not ghettos

- Recognition from policy-makers at a local and national level that clustering of migrant communities is positive, but active measures are required to prevent clusters from becoming ghettos.
- The Office for Social Inclusion needs to ensure that anti-poverty and social inclusion measures and policies address the rights of the most vulnerable migrants, including those working in exploitative and low-paid employment.
- The Minister for Integration needs to promote greater collaboration between government departments, local authorities, local area partnerships, local agencies and service providers in the development and implementation of migrant integration
- Local authorities in partnership with other key stakeholders should ensure that local migrant integration issues, such as neighbourhood planning, estate management, transport, community policing, housing, health, education, employment and access to community facilities, are fully integrated into all areas of local government policy and strategy.

#### 2. Mainstreaming migrant integration into housing policy

- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government should develop specific policies that mainstream the integration of migrants into all aspects of housing policy.
- Local authority Housing Action Plans and Homeless Action Plans should include specific measures to promote integration of migrants.

- Annual reports on integration of migrants into housing policy should be presented to Housing Strategic Policy Committees.

#### 3. Rights, Services & Standards

- Amendments are required to the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill to facilitate long-term residence rights for migrants, ensure that migrants and their families can be reunited, and that those migrants who are vulnerable to exploitation have opportunities to regularise their status if, through no fault of their own, they become undocumented.
- The National Employment Rights Agency (NERA) should enforce labour standards and the prevention of exploitation of migrant workers in the workplace.
- Local authority staff need training to accommodate ethnic diversity and opportunities for sharing and developing good practice approaches, and systems should be developed for collating data on ethnicity in housing allocations.
- Greater resources for local authority inspections in the private rented sector and for the enforcement of regulation of lettings should be made available.
- Measures should be taken to improve access to training and career opportunities for migrants by FÁS, and other training providers.
- No person should be denied access to emergency homelessness services on the grounds of HRC non-compliance.

#### 4. Information & Consultation

- Local authorities, the Citizens Information Board, the Health Services Executive and other statutory agencies have key roles to play in working with and supporting local community groups, local area partnerships and NGOs working with migrants to source and provide information.
- Accessible information, translated into community languages, should be provided through the Citizens Information Board advocacy programme and the Citizens Information Centres.
- Local authorities and state agencies should facilitate regular consultation with migrant communities in order to identify needs and experiences, and to provide effective policy and service responses to these.

## *Clustering of migrant communities is positive, but active measures are required to prevent clusters from becoming ghettos.*

- Local communities should be resourced to participate in all aspects of the development and implementation of policy at a local and national level.
- Homeless services should collate data on migrants who are homeless and be resourced to provide the services that are required. The Homeless Agency has a key role to play, providing leadership in this area.
- A single, centralised electronic information resource should be developed to provide housing advice and support for migrants.

### **5. Scope for further research**

As this study has been exploratory, it has identified the need for additional research in the following areas:

- Research on the extent of homelessness in migrant communities, the development of appropriate provision of homeless services, and the provision of services that prevent homelessness.
- Research on the accommodation and living conditions of people living in direct provision centres, with a particular focus on how people access housing information and support when they leave reception centres.
- More detailed studies of other migrant communities living in Ireland, for example, the Polish and the Brazilian communities, including migrant communities living outside of Dublin.
- Further research on the role of neighbourhood planning in the integration of migrants and on the cohesion of communities that have large migrant populations.
- Research on the role of spatial planning and housing planning in order to respond effectively to the planning of services, and to avoid some of the problems associated with planning for schools and other services in the community that arise from the clustering of migrant communities.

# Chapter 01: Introduction

## Vadimus

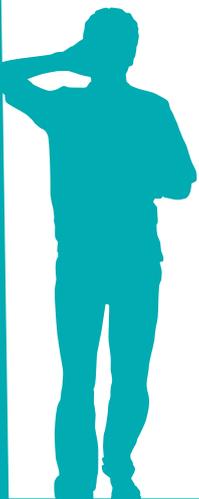
Vadimus is a Lithuanian man who arrived in Ireland nearly four years ago. He lives with his partner who works in a local shop. A few Lithuanian contacts helped him find a job in the construction sector.

At first he was moving regularly in shared accommodation, renting rooms from friends and in rented accommodation. After that his boss told him about an apartment he owned

in the Blanchardstown area where he subsequently moved to and has lived for the last three years. At the time he was particularly happy to move in as his job was in the same area. He shares with four other people and the apartment has three bedrooms; he is happy about the quality of the accommodation.

He lost his job recently and is now claiming Social Welfare to enable him to pay his bills, but not rent allowance. Due to his financial situation he is spending less time going out and socializing. He has never claimed rental tax credit and is aware that forms have to be filled in for this, but did not know where to go for information about housing if there was a problem.

He recently completed a security course through Blanchardstown Immigration Partnership Centre for which he gained a certificate, and is now looking for a new job. His long-term plans will depend on his employment situation. He is very happy in the area in which he lives and never thought about moving from there. He says that he may move somewhere else if his friends move but at the moment he is happy with his living situation.



# Chapter 01: Introduction

## 1.1 Background and objectives of the study

This report presents research carried out for the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) and Focus Ireland on the 'housing careers' and housing experiences of migrants in the Blanchardstown area of Dublin. This research has been exploratory in nature and provides a 'snapshot' of the housing experiences of a small number of migrants from Lithuania, Nigeria, India and China in order to help inform housing policy and research in Ireland.

Recent migration to Ireland has brought with it a range of challenges for statutory bodies and for housing policy, planning and management. Housing is essential in providing a starting point for future settlement and integration into Irish society, with the integration and housing experience of migrants dependent on social, cultural, economic and political considerations. There has been limited research to date identifying the impact of migration policy on the housing pathways of migrants living in Ireland. This report identifies housing pathways, housing careers and housing experiences of migrant communities, what affects decisions regarding their housing, how their housing experiences impact on access to other services, and the impact of migration in the communities in which migrants live.

Access to housing and other services are major factors influencing the integration and inclusion of new migrant communities in Ireland. Housing experiences and choices are affected by a variety of factors including access to resources, mobility in the labour market, decisions about whether migration is short-term or long-term, cultural factors, local authority housing policies, the structure of the housing market and access to financial institutions.

A variety of experiences, challenges and barriers face different migrant groups, including asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented and documented workers, skilled and lower skilled workers. Issues of legal status, decisions about whether migration is temporary or long-term, and a range of socio-economic and demographic factors can affect access to housing and other services. Although there are many shared experiences of migration in Ireland, it is clear that the population of migrants is heterogeneous. The experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, skilled workers, low-skilled workers, relatives joining family members and those migrating for work are affected by legal status, which in turn affects access to services, rights and entitlements. Similarly different concepts of the meaning of 'home' and the social role played

by housing can also affect migrants' housing pathways, settlement plans and experiences.

In Ireland, housing policy and provision are widely acknowledged as being of critical importance for the integration of new migrant communities and specific problems have been identified in a number of studies. These issues have been highlighted for the attention of the Minister for Integration and the proposed Taskforce on Integration. In particular, this is due to the fact that housing policies and settlement plans can also pose significant problems for and tensions in the provision of local services such as education and health.

## 1.2 Research objectives

The key objectives of the research study are to:

- Assess the impact of housing policies on housing choices, settlement, and residency plans.
- Highlight the differences between the various groups of migrants with regards to the experience of housing, including identified needs, problems and aspirations.
- Identify how housing experiences impact on the integration and social inclusion of the communities, and the barriers to integration and inequalities arising from existing housing policies and processes.
- Examine different housing experiences according to housing tenure, social, economic and cultural factors, as well as housing conditions and the risks of being out of home.
- Provide insights into the role of housing policies and patterns of settlement on the integration and inclusion of migrants from the Lithuanian, Chinese, Nigerian and Indian communities.
- Inform evidenced-based approaches to the development of housing supports, interventions and policy measures to promote access to housing for migrants, and generate public and political debate on the key issues identified from the research.

The rationale for choosing the Blanchardstown area as the geographical focus for the study is that there is significant clustering of various nationalities in this area, and Fingal County Council as a whole experienced the highest population growth (22.2 per cent) and largest increase in the number of private households in the State between 2002 and 2006.

*The research has been carried out using ethical and participatory research approaches.*

This research project builds on the findings of a major research piece commissioned by the ICI and undertaken by the Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative based at University College Dublin (UCD) entitled 'Getting On – From Migration to Integration' (2008). The UCD report highlighted once more the clear relationship between settlement patterns and migration pathways, and identified some key emerging issues around housing integration.

### 1.3 Research methodology

#### Ethical and participatory approaches

The research has been carried out using ethical and participatory research approaches. Interviews have been confidential, based on consent, and held with respect for the values and culture of the interviewees. The research process was participatory; members of the four communities were involved in the design and data gathering process. This was achieved through the appointment of peer researchers from each of the four communities and a representative Expert Advisory Group.

#### Review of literature

As well as undertaking qualitative research to document the housing careers of new migrant communities in the survey area, this research draws on literature from Ireland and other countries to highlight the links between poor housing and migration and the different policy approaches that can help to improve the role of housing in the integration of new migrant communities.

The review of literature involved the collation of existing primary and secondary research and data on the role of housing in the integration of migrants in Ireland. This included a review of relevant legislation, policies, processes and procedures in the area of housing and integration. The literature review also draws on research and research findings from other countries, as well as areas of learning and good practices in Europe on housing and homelessness, integration, access to services and service provision, the feminisation of migration, and other aspects of migration and housing policy. Relevant data has been collated and analysed (Census, local authority housing data, housing tenure data and other data sources such as the Quarterly National Household Survey) on the spatial distribution of the four communities in the survey area, housing tenure and other relevant data.

#### Qualitative research

Forty interviews, ten for each of the four communities surveyed, have been conducted. These reflect a sample of newly arrived migrants and those that have been living in Ireland for five years or more, and the diversity of the population regarding age, gender, marital and family status, language skills, educational background, housing tenure, employment and migration status. The qualitative research was based on one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The interviews used a combination of biographical methods on housing pathways and structured questions regarding the backgrounds of interviewees, their experiences of housing and housing careers, the neighbourhood/community they live in, social networks, and access to local services. The interviews were constructed in such a way that the interviewees were active participants in the research. The questionnaire was developed through participatory and ethical research methods, and with the involvement of community/peer-led researchers from the four communities who assisted with the drafting and piloting of the questionnaire, in contacting the potential interviewees, and in conducting the interviews.

In order to exemplify the diversity of experiences, specific problems and issues faced by new migrant communities, individual case studies have been drawn up. Case studies are a useful research tool to highlight the more detailed experiences and biographies of participants in the research. As well as an analysis of the similarities and differences between each community, the overall objective is to provide a comparative analysis.

#### Peer-led researchers

The development of the questionnaire and the interviews were carried out by a team of five peer-led researchers from the Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese communities. The peer-led researchers received research training and participated in the drawing up of the questionnaire, which helped to make the questions relevant to all of the four communities and also gave the peer researchers a sense of ownership of the interviews they carried out.

#### Research questions

The semi-structured questionnaire developed for the interviews with the four migrant communities and the consultations with key stakeholders were informed by the following research questions:

## What are the main policy outcomes that are needed to respond to the housing and integration needs of migrants?

- What is the impact of legal status and migration pathways on the housing choices and housing careers of migrants?
- How does the ethnic, cultural, demographic, educational and gender profile of the interviewees impact on access to and experiences of housing?
- How do existing housing policies and housing processes impact on different migrant communities, regarding integration, inclusion, settlement and community structure? Are there differences and/or similarities between the four communities?
- What is the impact of housing policies and housing processes on choices regarding housing location and housing tenure?
- What factors influence the housing search and location of housing?
- What are the actual experiences of migrants regarding access to housing, the nature and meaning of home, and of their integration into the local neighbourhood and community?
- How does access to housing impact on access to and the delivery of other services, such as health and education, to migrants, particularly newly-arrived migrants?
- What barriers, tensions and problems exist and how can these be informed by improved interventions and supports?
- What are the main policy outcomes that are needed to respond to the housing and integration needs of migrants?

The participatory research approach used in this study is significant in that the findings are based on the actual 'lived' housing experiences of new migrant communities, as well as input from relevant stakeholders and organisations.

### Kelly

Kelly is a Chinese woman who works as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant. She lives with her partner, but their child, who was born in Ireland, lives with her family in China.

Her husband works in the same restaurant with her as a chef. However, because he is undocumented, they cannot register as married in Ireland.

Kelly first came to Ireland on a student visa to learn English. She lives with her husband and work colleagues, totalling ten people in a house with three double bedrooms and one single. The rent is affordable as the owner of the Chinese restaurant pays a contribution towards it. This, however, means that they are locked into this housing situation and have difficulty in finding alternative accommodation.

However, she says that she is satisfied with the accommodation, even though there is not enough room to socialise. Her previous accommodation was of poor quality and the landlord did not fix a leaking bathroom.

She is planning to go back to China with her husband in a few years, because of their child. The reason their child did not stay in Ireland with them is because they did not have time to take care of the child due to their long working hours, and they want their child to learn Chinese at an early age.

## Chapter 02: New Communities, Integration & Housing: *Overview of Literature*

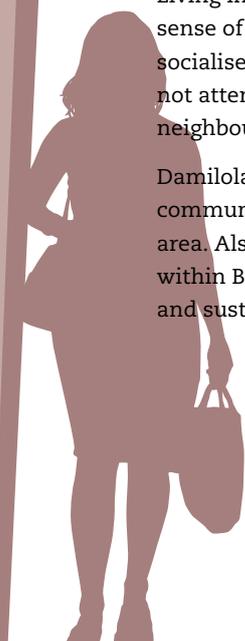
### Damilola

Damilola and her husband and their two children came to Ireland eight years ago as asylum seekers from Nigeria. She is a local authority tenant and is studying full-time. She plans to live permanently in Ireland. She lives in a three-bedroomed house in Mulhuddart, which she considers affordable, well-built and of good condition. However, she says that she sometimes does not feel safe in the neighbourhood.

She applied for local authority accommodation when she was living in her previous two-bedroomed apartment in Rialto. During this time she was struck off the local authority waiting list for two years, without being aware that this had happened. Her application was finally processed when she threatened to go to the Ombudsman. Today Damilola says that she is relaxed and happy because she does not live in fear of landlords anymore.

Living in the same area as people from a similar culture gives Damilola a sense of being 'at home'. However, she says that she does not have time to socialise due to the workload of her course and because her children are not attending schools locally. She has not found it easy to socialise in the neighbourhood.

Damilola has had positive experiences in accessing local services in the community but feels that healthcare services are not adequate for the area. Also she says that there is a lack of interconnectivity on the bus route within Blanchardstown. She says that this does not facilitate integration and sustainable living.



# Chapter 02: New Communities, Integration & Housing: Overview of Literature

## 2.1 Migration trends

Migration to Ireland has increased significantly during the last decade resulting in a country of greater ethnic diversity. While migration has brought many benefits to Ireland it does raise a number of important challenges, including that of integration and housing (Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative 2008).

While this study shows that there is a diversity of housing experiences and housing careers, housing plays a central role in the integration of migrants. Although there has been a substantial increase in skilled migration to Ireland, a significant number of migrants earn low incomes or have a low level of disposable income. While migrants in Ireland tend to have a higher participation rate in the labour market compared to Irish people (Barrett, Bergin and Duffy 2006), they also tend to work below their skills and qualification levels and are over-represented in lower-skilled jobs (Barrett and Duffy 2007).

The 2006 Census shows that immigration to Ireland has accounted for the majority of Ireland's recent population growth, with 420,000 foreign nationals living in Ireland in 2006 (compared to 224,000 in 2002) (CSO 2006). In the 2006 Census 12.6% of the population described themselves as in a category other than 'White Irish'. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimates that the annual contribution of migrants to the workforce doubled from 21,000 in 2004 to 48,000 in 2007. In addition, the Census identified around 25,000 international registered students (who have some rights to work while studying). In 2008 there was uncertainty about future migration flows, particularly with a downturn in the economy, and for this reason CSO population projections, which suggest that migration of up to 300,000 new migrants will take place between 2006 and 2016, may need revising.

The majority of migrants in Ireland are from the European Union (EU) (85%), 30% of whom are from the EU's new member states, whereas around 5% of all migrants to Ireland are refugees or asylum seekers. In 2006, there were 4,314 applications for refugee status, compared to 11,630 in 2002 (UNHCR 2006). At the end of 2006, 5,350 asylum seekers were being accommodated in direct provision awaiting a decision on their applications.

An expanding labour market and a booming economy have been the main reasons for the growth of migration to Ireland, with immigration representing the most significant factor in labour force growth (FÁS 2007). FÁS estimates that foreign

workers now account for 12% of the workforce, and more than half of the increase in jobs in 2006 (46,800 based on estimates from the CSO, quoted in FÁS, 2007). The largest concentration of workers from the EU's new member states (EU10) in 2006 was in the construction sector (23,600), with significant numbers in manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, retail and wholesale (FÁS, 2007). Data collected on PPS (Personal Public Service) numbers show that the inflow of EU10 migrants fell by 8% in 2006, and it is anticipated that this could represent a longer term slowdown as EU10 migrants return to their home countries where economies are improving and job opportunities are opening up.

## 2.2 Housing and social inclusion

Housing has become an important element of the discourse on migration and integration policy. There is substantial evidence to show that poor quality housing can work against integration and inadequate housing can negatively impact on the health and well-being of minority ethnic groups (Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative 2008, NESC 2006, IOM 2006, Pillinger 2007, NCCRI 2008).

Good housing provision as a determinant of the inclusion of migrants is a relatively recent objective in Ireland. In countries like the UK, which has a long history of immigration, studies have highlighted the importance of good quality housing, the need for measures to strengthen local communities and neighbourhoods, community development, improvements in services, and support for young families and young people, as essential for the inclusion of minority ethnic groups (Hudson *et al.*, 2007, Spencer *et al.*, 2007, Harrison 2005). For example, a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study (Page, 2006) on neighbourhood social regeneration found that poverty, worklessness, poor academic achievement, poor health and poor housing are inextricably linked. Crucial lessons exist for the way in which estate management policies can hinder or assist social regeneration. This points to the importance of multi-faceted policy responses and measures that are critical to addressing social problems and preventing long-term exclusion.

In recent years greater attention has been given to the social inclusion and integration of migrants (Ireland 2006; IOM 2006; NESC 2006; IOM 2006), while a recent study by the Immigrant Council of Ireland has highlighted the interconnectivity between the political, economic, cultural and social elements of integration (Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative 2008). Housing is viewed

## Housing has become an important element of the discourse on migration and integration policy.

as an essential starting point for future settlement and integration into Irish society (NCCRI 2008).

However, there is a diversity of experiences of migration in Ireland, which also affects integration. For some groups of migrants, access to rights and entitlements are conditional on immigration status, which in turn impacts on the factors that facilitate inclusion, such as work, housing, health and access to other services (Pillinger 2007, NESC 2006). Low pay, exploitation and poor working conditions contribute to the exclusion of some migrant workers, particularly those that are undocumented (Pillinger 2008; MCRI 2006; ICI 2005; NESC 2006; IOM 2006). Discrimination and racism impact negatively on inclusion, which often results in poor access to rights, information and services, for example, because of language barriers or because of a lack of understanding of a person's culture or religion. Duffy's (2007) analysis of the 2004 Quarterly National Household Survey found that nearly 7% of foreign nationals living in Ireland had experienced discrimination in obtaining housing or accommodation. McGinnity *et al.* (2006) found that 15% of migrants from outside the EU who were seeking private accommodation were denied access to it because of discrimination.

Although there is relatively limited data on migrants in Ireland, foreign nationals have higher rates of consistent poverty (13.1%) compared to Irish nationals (6.6%) (Office of Social Inclusion 2006). Some groups, for example, asylum seekers, are in an enforced state of poverty because the State denies them access to employment, while for others difficulties in finding employment or low wages account for consistent poverty. This is despite the fact that there is a higher employment rate amongst migrants (71% of non-Irish nationals, compared to 60% of Irish nationals) (CSO Quarter 3, 2006). In particular, female migrant workers experience higher levels of exclusion and poverty (IOM 2006; Pillinger 2007).

### 2.3 Policy measures on housing and integration

Integration is increasingly part of the language of policy-makers in Ireland regarding participation in society and cultural identity, mutual obligations, and active citizenship and interculturalism (Interdepartmental Working Group on the Integration of Refugees in Ireland 1999, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2005, Department of Education and Science 2000). There is some recognition that long-term planning for the integration and inclusion of

migrants needs to take place in order to avoid the exclusion and ghettoisation experienced by migrants in other countries.

Government policy on housing, found in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007a), states that the objective of housing policy is 'to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suitable to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice'. The needs of migrants are highlighted as part of a broad commitment to sustainable housing and communities with priorities to provide 'high quality, integrated sustainable communities, which reflect the needs of a modern, dynamic and multicultural society' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2007: 62).

The *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2007-2012* similarly places a high priority on quality housing as a key element of social inclusion in addressing the needs of people who are unable to meet their own housing needs and in building sustainable communities. One specific commitment set out in *Towards 2016* is to increasing social housing and measures to meet the housing needs of 60,000 new households between 2007 and 2009. Other specific policy developments concerning planning issues arising from greater cultural diversity include the *Development Plan Guidelines*, issued to planning authorities by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2007b).

Although issues concerning housing and the integration of migrants are relatively new in Ireland, the Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration, Asylum and Related Matters concluded that integration must be viewed as a two-way process which 'places certain duties and obligations on refugees and on the host society at both national and community level in order to create an environment in the host society which welcomes refugees as people who have something to contribute to society' (1999: 9).

Housing is highlighted as an issue for policy development in the *National Action Plan Against Racism 2005-2008 Planning for Diversity* which states that: 'Further consideration of how housing and related policy caters for diversity is required to inform future policy in this complex policy area' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005:126).

The *National Action Plan Against Racism* identifies a framework for the development of 'a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland...based on policies that

promote interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect' (2005: 27). Some specific recommendations are made in the area of housing, including the need for an intercultural dimension, measures to address housing inequalities, estate and housing management policies to combat racism, and the development of culturally diverse participation in the consultative processes on housing policy and provision.

In May 2008 the Minister for Integration launched 'Migration Nation', a Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management. The Minister launched the report by stating that Ireland can avoid the difficulties that other countries have faced by planning for integration through a mainstreaming approach to the delivery of services and thereby avoid the creation of 'parallel communities and urban ghettos', on the basis that: 'If core services such as employment, education, health and housing are delivered successfully and equitably to the new communities, then the chances of successful integration are greatly increased' (2008: 2).

The increasingly important focus on the social inclusion of minority ethnic groups can also be seen in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* (NAPinclusion) (2007) and the *National Development Plan 2007–2013: Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All*, which emphasise high-level goals for reducing poverty and social exclusion. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion acknowledges that migrants, amongst other disadvantaged groups, have not benefited equally from the booming economy and are at greater risk of poverty and exclusion. The integration of migrants is a high-level goal in the Plan, in which specific resources are identified for the provision of language support services in the education sector and for measures to improve access to other public services.

## 2.4 The role of housing in integration

In Ireland the importance of housing in the integration process has been highlighted in a number of studies (Humphries 2004, NCCRI 2008, Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative 2008, O'Connell 1999, Ní Chonaill, 2007). A number of housing charities have highlighted the needs of specific groups, such as the housing requirements of Bosnians (Clann Housing Association 1999) and refugees and asylum seekers (Humphries 2006). Studies in the UK similarly point to the critical role played by housing in the welfare and integration of new migrants (Perry 2007, Hickman, Crowley and Mai 2008).

A recent study for the Immigrant Council of Ireland (Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative 2008) provides valuable data on the integration of people from the four communities covered in this research study (Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese). In the study the social, political and cultural aspects of integration are examined and it was found that migration experiences influence integration experiences. The study recommends the need for comprehensive integration policies and procedures in order to sustain positive migration experiences. Specific issues are raised about housing and integration, and the report recommends improved access to low-cost housing and the regulation of the private housing sector in order to avoid social tensions.

The issue of housing for migrants needs to be urgently addressed. A striking proportion of migrants rent accommodation. This means that migrants are disproportionately affected by the limited legal protection offered to tenants. This also has implications for belonging, for the development of local networks and communities, and for the social cohesion of neighbourhoods where the bulk of housing stock is privately rented...In the current economic climate, with a predicted downturn in the housing market, the implications for tenants include the sale of property they live in and unregulated rent increases. (2008: 15)

On the basis of this research the Immigrant Council of Ireland has called for 'an effective, strategic housing policy, using a mix of public and affordable housing, combined with stricter regulation of the private rented sector' (2008:36).

Other studies have similarly identified problems of poor quality housing, the high cost of housing, and other barriers such as access to information and rights (Kelleher and Associates 2004, Pillinger 2007, Pillinger 2008, MRCI 2006). These studies have shown that shared accommodation with families and friends is commonplace in migrant households as a means of reducing living and household costs, and that planning for long-term housing options is often difficult because of short-term work permits, difficulties in renewing permits and vulnerability in the labour market (Pillinger 2008, MRCI 2007). These studies have shown how language and access to information can constitute major barriers for people accessing accommodation and information about housing.

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism's recent report on housing (NCCRI 2008) provides the first major national study of the challenges for housing and planners arising from migration in Ireland.

## Migration experiences influence integration experiences

The study was one of the commitments made under the *National Action Plan Against Racism*. The research shows that, although the growth of the housing market, including quality housing in the privately rented sector, has taken place alongside the growth of migration in Ireland, there remain a number of challenges for housing and planning policy. Poor quality housing and living in poorer quality neighbourhoods are shown to particularly affect older migrants, those not fully integrated into the labour market and those living in areas with high housing costs. The report argues that it is important to reduce the extent of low-income and stigmatised areas, and that strategies are needed to reduce the potential of ghettoisation. Although the report shows that the privately rented sector has been the most important provider of housing for recently arrived migrants, it identifies problems with overcrowding and poor quality accommodation in this sector.

NCCRI (2008) argues that it will be important to improve equality of access to social housing and owner occupation, particularly for those migrants and their families who plan to remain in Ireland in the long-term, which requires improved access to social housing, accessible information and more information sharing between local authorities and voluntary housing schemes. The lower levels of owner occupation are linked to limited access to credit and a lack of knowledge about the Irish banking system; while the banks are not always fully informed about migration and residency status rights in their decisions to grant mortgages or loans. Nevertheless, the report found that local authority affordable homes schemes have attracted significant take-up from migrant and minority communities. The report recommends that there is a need for central government and local authorities to build an intercultural dimension into housing and neighbourhood planning. This includes a holistic approach to the housing needs of migrant and minority communities, guidance for social and affordable housing providers, improved strategic planning by local authorities in order to avoid segregated neighbourhoods, and better information and supports for migrant and minority people seeking to improve their housing situation.

### Housing pathways of new migrant communities

Research on housing pathways has helped to inform this study, drawing on the pathways approach to understanding the meaning of home and housing careers (Clapham 2005, Pillinger 2007). Research shows that integration and income are the key factors affecting migrants' housing

careers (Abramsson *et al.*, 2002; FEANTSA 2002; Zetter *et al.*, 2006; Robinson, Reeve and Casey 2007). For example, Reeve and Casey's research on newly arrived migrants in Sheffield raises some key issues about immigration status and access to housing. Based on interviews with 39 migrants recently arrived in the UK, the study found that housing pathways and integration were affected by the legal status of recently arrived migrants, which in turn were affected by information and the contact zones of recently arrived migrants and the housing market. The links between housing market change and minority ethnic housing experiences have also been researched in relation to the housing pathways of newly arrived migrants. This shows how resources, priorities, perceptions and the identities of newly arrived migrants shape housing pathways (Robinson 2007).

### Perceptions of local people

A qualitative study of Irish people's views of migrants and their impact on the Blanchardstown area of Dublin (Ní Chonaill 2007) found evidence to support a theory of 'crisis racism', whereby migrants were constructed as the root cause of social problems in the areas of employment, housing and education, particularly where there was competition for scarce resources. In this sense migrants in general served as scapegoats, deflecting attention away from the State's failure to provide adequate resources in the area, particularly in social housing and the provision of basic services.

### Clustering, segregation and integration in housing

A key objective of many recent government statements on immigration and housing is that measures to reduce clustering, segregation and ghettoisation are crucial for the long-term integration of migrants in Ireland. However, it is important to note that there are distinctions that need to be made between 'clustering' and 'segregation'. The latter is a process that will work against the successful integration of migrants, while clustering can help migrants to integrate (CLIP 2007, Cheshire 2007).

NCCRI's (2008) study found that minority ethnic groups experience housing inequalities and are more likely to be geographically clustered in areas of disadvantage and poor housing quality. In the UK, research on clustering, segregation and integration in housing has pointed to the importance of integration (Coote 2006, Dwyer *et al.*, 2005, Markova and Bolack 2007, Phillips 2006). In Bradford, for example, the Pakistani community has experienced significant disadvantages and segregation in housing,

## *The need for measures to ensure that new migrants have access to practical information and that the accommodation of migrants be considered in the context of wider strategies on affordable housing*

evidenced through poor quality housing in inner city areas, poor health, high unemployment and educational underachievement (Alam & Husband 2006). Zetter *et al.*'s (2006) study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlighted the potential for tensions arising in communities between newcomers and established residents, where urban areas of high concentrations of ethnic communities are also areas of disadvantage, poverty, poor services and poor housing. The importance of effective measures to promote the integration of minority ethnic groups in the housing market is, therefore, closely tied to broader societal cohesion (Zetter *et al.*, 2006) and to the need for integration to be multifaceted so that it includes social policy, housing policy, labour market policy and immigration policy issues (Holt-Jenson, 2000; Harrison and Davis 2001).

The findings from the Cities for Local Integration Policy network (CLIP 2007) have highlighted the importance of anti-segregation policies in order to achieve more balanced neighbourhoods. High levels of segregation are seen to work against integration and therefore local policies should consider measures to spread social housing more widely and avoid the spatial concentration of low income earners and of migrants in particular. It is recommended that socio-economically and ethnically balanced neighbourhoods should be created. The report argues for a number of measures to improve the housing and integration of migrants in Europe, including partnership and cross-departmental cooperation to improve access to housing (including social and affordable housing) and improve housing conditions, better data and indicators for planning, measures for greater provision of information, new approaches to expand rented housing, renewal policies, and the involvement of residents and migrant groups.

In Berlin, for example, measures to reduce segregation and promote the integration of migrants (Commissioner for Integration and Migration 2006) have developed in response to high concentrations of migrants in city-centre districts and in housing estates on the outskirts of the city. These districts are the starting point for the newly arrived migrants with relatively low incomes, given the importance on arrival of access to cheap accommodation and social contacts. Problems such as unemployment, unhealthy living conditions, poor access to education and low levels of educational attainment, high crime rates, inappropriate housing and neglect of the public space tend to be more frequent in these neighbourhoods. Discrimination in the housing market has also made it difficult for migrants to rent housing in neighbourhoods with lower migrant

concentration. The main focus of Berlin's integration policy has been to enhance social cohesion, reduce ethnic polarisation and reduce segregation through anti-poverty measures and improved access to education, training and work. Through the 'Quarter Management Scheme', developed in areas of housing with special developmental needs and with a high proportion of migrants, the objective is to provide a forum for the coordination of services and local community development and involvement.

While geographic clustering can bring certain advantages, such as access to community support, evidence from the UK shows that minority ethnic households tend to live in areas where there are existing spatial concentrations of disadvantage (Harrison 2005). In particular, lower levels of home ownership, poorer housing conditions and difficulties in accessing social housing are common problems identified. Research across Europe has found that the most significant problems of housing quality and security are experienced in the privately rented sector, with evidence from several countries of private landlords discriminating against minority ethnic groups (Edgar *et al.*, 2004).

A number of studies have raised specific questions about the causation of and response to measures that aim to reduce segregation. Cheshire (2007) has examined the assumptions behind UK government policy, which aspires to actively promote 'mixed communities' and therefore reduce the intensity of social and spatial segregation. While significant resources are directed towards this objective, there is a lack of evidence to support the theory that making communities more heterogeneous necessarily increases the welfare of the inhabitants of these communities. Rather, it is argued that it is people's incomes that determine the character of the neighbourhood that they can afford to live in and that mixed community policies tend to divert efforts and resources away from tackling the underlying causes of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

While it is not disputed that people living in more deprived areas suffer poorer housing conditions, are less likely to be employed, have lower levels of education and are more likely to be victims of crime, it is difficult to establish any clear evidence that the characteristics of the neighbourhoods in which people live make their life chances worse, independently of what makes them poor in the first place. There may also be benefits accruing through community networks and from living in areas where the services available are tailored towards particular income groups or ethnic communities. Given the fact that there is little evidence to

## Research has evidenced the vulnerability of migrants to homelessness in Ireland

suggest that policies in developing 'mixed neighbourhoods' actually improve the lives of the poor, it is argued that resources may be better directed towards people-targeted policies, concentrated in the most disadvantaged areas (Cheshire 2007).

### Integration of newly arrived migrants

Measures to integrate newly arrived migrants are also important to integration. Edgar *et al's* (2004) study highlights the importance of three contexts of reception for new arrivals: climate of reception, institutional issues, and the levels of support migrants receive in the host country. Research on the relationships between new and established communities in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in Manchester and London found that poverty is a factor that can undermine neighbourhood relationships between migrants and British people (Hudson *et al.*, 2007). However, the findings showed that many new and established residents aspired to a sense of community, valued diversity and shared many of the same concerns about their areas. The research found that local tensions, sometimes racialised and often targeted at new migrants, were driven by struggles for resources and perceptions of unfairness.

### Community cohesion strategies

A key finding from Spencer *et al's* (2007) study on community cohesion strategies found that many migrants were unaware of their rights and entitlements, had no access to information when they arrived, and often lacked a sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. The study identified the need for measures to ensure that new migrants have access to practical information and that the accommodation of migrants be considered in the context of wider strategies on affordable housing. One study focusing on the South-East of England has explored how Eastern European immigration affects community cohesion, including their interaction with local long-term residents (Markova and Black 2007). The majority of those interviewed were in the UK to work, many felt a 'sense of belonging' to both the UK and their home country, and this sense of belonging to the neighbourhood in which they lived was positively affected by good housing, length of time in the UK, plans to stay and having their families living with them.

Housing experiences are also influenced by systems of housing and welfare provision. The NCCRI's (2008) study found that in countries (for example Sweden and the Netherlands) where there are relatively high levels of state support in social welfare, housing exclusion tends

to be lower than in countries such as the UK and Ireland where state support is low. Spatial segregation of minority ethnic communities is less likely to exist in countries where government intervention in the housing market is extensive.

Several studies have highlighted the information and language barriers that exist in accessing good quality housing (Kenna and MacNeela, 2004, Pillinger 2007, Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative 2008). NCCRI's (2008) study found that a lack of income and/or language difficulties, rather than racism or discrimination, were the main factors impacting on access to housing. The study found that minority ethnic households tended to live in close proximity to households of their own ethnic background, near their place of employment, and avoided living in older social housing estates due to an association with discrimination.

### Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning is important so that local community resources, using multi-faceted approaches, tackle social exclusion and multiple social disadvantages. Soft approaches to regeneration need to take place and be rooted in neighbourhood renewal (Page, 2006). For example, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's programme of research *Partnership Initiatives for Communities* is an example of how investment to tackle social exclusion is closely connected to social regeneration.

Neighbourhood planning is an important issue in sustaining communities in Ireland. Although there is a general perception in Ireland that the issue of clustering should be addressed, there are no specific mechanisms in place to alleviate the pressures on core public services. Some local authorities use their allocation policy to achieve a balanced geographical social mix, while others have begun to consider how neighbourhood planning and accommodation can be improved so as to take advantage of ethnic diversity (NCCRI 2008).

### Immigration and homelessness

Research has evidenced the vulnerability of migrants to homelessness in Ireland (Bergin and Lalor 2006, Pillinger 2006, Jordan 2006). This is borne out by studies in the UK (Harrison 2005) and across Europe (Edgar *et al.*, 2004).

Research commissioned by the Homeless Agency (Bergin and Lalor, 2006) found that a small and growing number of migrants from the new EU member states were experiencing homelessness in Dublin and availing of food and information services for the homeless. Many were homeless because of

income- and work-related problems, including exploitative work situations, poor information as to work opportunities and the high cost of living in Dublin in particular. A study by Threshold found that 15 per cent of clients did not have English as a first language and that a substantial number had experienced problems with overcrowding, problems associated with accommodation being tied to employment, as well as problems with the non-return of rent deposits and poor quality accommodation (Jordan, 2006:16). The Habitual Residency Condition (HRC)<sup>1</sup>, designed to restrict access to welfare benefits for all EU and EEA citizens in order to prevent 'welfare tourism', has meant that migrants who do not fulfil the conditions are unable to avail of homeless services, including services in a refuge for women who experience domestic violence. Reports of homelessness among migrants, including a high-profile story concerning a young Ukrainian worker who had her legs amputated after being found homeless and suffering from frostbite, underlines the association between migrants' social and working environment and their health status.

Some groups of migrants, particularly those from Eastern Europe and West Africa, are vulnerable to exploitation and insecurity in the labour market (ICTU 2007, MRCI 2007, Pillinger 2008, Edgar *et al.*, 2004). This means that they are often at risk to homelessness owing to low incomes or having an irregular and undocumented status. Across Europe undocumented migrants formed the majority of users of homeless services, many of whom only have access to emergency accommodation and basic support services, and have poor access to integration/resettlement and supported housing (Edgar *et al.*, 2004).

## 2.5 Housing tenure and housing conditions of migrants in Ireland

NESC's report on migration in Ireland (2006) found that the majority of newly arrived migrant workers are accommodated in the private rented sector, although an increasing number of migrants are taking out mortgages to buy their own homes. An analysis of the 2002 Census data for Dublin by Humphries (2006) found that over 70% of Irish-born Dublin residents reside in owner-occupied housing, compared to over 40% of Dublin residents born outside Ireland. This is in contrast to the privately rented sector where 9.4% of Irish-born residents of Dublin are in privately rented accommodation compared to 39.7% of residents born outside Ireland. When tenure is examined by nationality the discrepancy between Irish and non-Irish residents is much greater (78.7% of Irish residents in Dublin

reside in owner-occupied housing, compared to 8.6% of Nigerian residents). In the privately rented sector there are wide disparities by nationality (9% of Irish residents, compared to 60.8% of Romanian and 65.2% of Nigerian residents were in privately rented housing in 2002).

### Home ownership

Although there is a relatively small share of minority ethnic households in owner occupation in Ireland, this is likely to rise in the future (Duffy 2007, NESC 2006, NCCRI 2008). Duffy's (2007) study found that between 1995 and 2004 migrants had much lower rates of owner occupancy than Irish nationals, although the longer a migrant has been resident in Ireland the more likely they are to become homeowners. Some of the problems of access to this sector relate to the need to have credit and employment history when applying for a mortgage, a lack of understanding and knowledge of the mortgage and banking system, the fact that some migrants come from countries where renting is the norm, and the difficulties for those people working on short-term permits and in low-income sectors (Duffy 2007, Conroy and Bannan 2004, Pillinger 2007, NCCRI 2008). The majority of minority ethnic households tend to purchase housing at the lower end of the housing market.

Although there is limited data on the extent to which migration has been a driver of the housing boom in Ireland, 'anecdotal evidence from the housing industry is that an increasing number of non-Irish nationals are settling in Ireland on a permanent/semi-permanent basis and are buying property here' (Allied Irish Banks 2006:21). Data from the Irish Mortgage Corporation show that non-Irish house buyers are constituting an increasing proportion of those purchasing houses in Ireland. One in five house purchases since 2004 were made by non-Irish nationals (principally Asian, UK and other EU migrants) (Irish Mortgage Corporation, Finfacts, 2006).

### Privately rented housing

The majority of migrants live in privately rented accommodation, and in the last decade the expanding privately rented sector has met the increasing demand for short-term accommodation for minority ethnic groups. However, a combination of high rent levels, low-wages and social/cultural obligations to send remittances to countries of origin, can result in significant financial pressures on working migrants. For those living on social welfare payments, high rents often force people into poorer quality housing, by virtue of the relatively low level of these payments. NESC's

<sup>1</sup>Introduced under Section 17 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions Act) 2004 and Schedule 1 to the Act.

## *A small but not insignificant number of migrant workers live in accommodation that is provided by employers.*

(2006) study found that many migrants live in poor quality rented accommodation and that there are insufficient inspections of dwellings in this sector. NCCRI's (2008) case studies in Dundalk and Dublin City highlighted poor-quality private rented accommodation, which was often damp, lacked adequate heating and had cramped living conditions. In contrast, better quality accommodation was experienced in South Dublin and Ennis by virtue of a growth of newly built-to-let properties in these areas. Some migrants reported discrimination and reluctance on the part of landlords to let to rent-allowance claimants and people moving from direct provision.

### **Social Housing**

Although there have been problems for minority ethnic people in accessing social housing, they are likely to form a larger proportion of social housing tenants in the future. However, the current stock of social housing is considered to be inadequate for meeting the needs of large minority ethnic families (NCCRI 2008). In 2005, 15.2% of qualified applicants for social housing were foreign nationals (2005 Local Authority Housing Needs Assessment data). Local authorities do not collect systematic data on the allocations of social housing by ethnicity and therefore it is difficult to identify where challenges and barriers exist. As the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its third report on Ireland recommends, improved data collection can help to detect race discrimination:

Irish authorities should establish and implement a system of ethnic data collection to assess and redress any racial discrimination that may exist...and should ensure that data collection is carried out in full compliance with the Data Protection Act 2003. Further, the ECRI recommends that Irish authorities use data gathered in the 2006 census to garner information on the situation of ethnic minorities and non-nationals in various areas and identify possible problems of racial discrimination that may require further investigation. (ECRI 2007: 32)

The 2002 tri-annual assessment of housing need noted that 5% (2,700) of those households included in the local authority assessment of housing need were households who had obtained refugee status or had permission to remain in the State (DOELG, 2002:59).

There have been some concerns that the increase in demand for housing due to immigration has the potential to lengthen waiting lists for public social housing and for affordable housing, and places pressure on the supply of private

rented accommodation (NESC 2006). The Housing Needs Assessment for 2005 showed that the number of non-EU households on the waiting list for public social housing increased by less than 1,000 in the three-year period from 2,700 in 2002 to 3,664 in 2005. Another feature of the results of the Housing Needs Assessment in 2005 was the wider geographical dispersion of non-EU households who were listed on the housing lists in 2005 compared to 2002. For instance, 73% of the non-EU nationals on the waiting list in 2002 were concentrated in a City Council, Dublin authority or Kildare County Council, while this fell to 54% in 2005.

### **Tied accommodation**

A small but not insignificant number of migrant workers live in accommodation that is provided by employers. While some employers provide helpful assistance in providing housing for newly arrived migrants, others are often tied into employer's accommodation for longer periods of time. NESC (2006) argues that this situation can work against integration and that poor language skills may persist, which could result in a vulnerability to homelessness if a person leaves their employment, and is exacerbated by the implementation of the Habitual Residency Condition.

### **Voluntary Housing**

NCCRI's (2008) study found a similar range of issues facing the voluntary housing sector as with the social housing sector, although there was an increasing number of nominations of minority ethnic families to voluntary housing associations by local authorities. This is partly explained by the need to achieve a social mix.

### **Affordable Housing Options**

NCCRI (2008) found that the development of affordable housing schemes by a number of local authorities has benefited a small number of minority ethnic households.

### **Rent Allowance and the Rental Assistance Scheme**

Since late 2004, local authorities have progressively been assuming responsibility for accommodating social welfare rent allowance recipients of eighteen months. An analysis of the 59,215 households in receipt of supplementary rent allowance in November 2005 indicated that 13,815, or almost 25% of recipients, were foreign nationals. Many of them are married or re-married, compared to a higher proportion of single females among the Irish recipients of rent allowance.

## *The current stock of social housing is considered to be inadequate for meeting the needs of large minority ethnic families*

The development of the Rental Assistance Scheme (RAS) by local authorities is generally viewed as a positive development in terms of securing better quality accommodation and choice in housing. Despite this, there still remains a low awareness of the scheme by landlords and concerns have been raised in terms of the financial implications for larger families and general access to information about the scheme for non-Irish nationals. Although the RAS scheme aims to improve the private rented sector, the scheme does not apply to asylum seekers or non-Irish nationals without a permanent status in Ireland. This could potentially exclude 11,900 non-EU recipients of Supplementary Welfare Allowance from participation in the scheme (Controller and Auditor General, 2006). In some areas, including Fingal County Council, there are significant problems in progressing the RAS scheme, which are discussed in the next chapter of this report.

### **2.6 Summary of the main factors affecting housing experiences and housing careers of new migrant communities**

From the extensive review of literature carried out for this study, it is clear that there is a range of factors that affect the housing experiences and housing careers of migrants. These include:

- Ethnic and national background; social class; education and occupational levels; language skills; legal status; long-term housing strategies and plans; social networks; systems of housing and welfare provision; length of time in the country; age at time of arrival; and experiences of racism and xenophobia.
  - Evidence from Ireland and other countries shows that migrants are more likely to rely on private sector housing, experience discrimination in housing (including discrimination by landlords, neighbours and the local community), have lower levels of access to owner occupation and social housing, and spend a higher proportion of their incomes on housing than the majority population. There is also evidence of higher levels of overcrowding, a greater risk of homelessness, and a tendency to clustering in lower-cost areas of housing.
  - Knowledge of how the housing system works and the provision of information about rights, entitlements and responsibilities are viewed as major issues for the improved integration of migrants in housing.
- Vulnerabilities, such as labour market disadvantage, domestic violence and low incomes, result in difficulties in accessing housing and in choice of location.
  - Gender and age are also factors that can result in different housing experiences. In particular, household experiences related to racism and ethnicity are often complex and overlap with disability, gender, sexuality, locality, class and age. Migrant women are also vulnerable to housing insecurity and homelessness, as they are at an increased risk of being exposed to domestic violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation.
  - Specific housing issues experienced by refugees and asylum seekers include the impact of direct provision on the successful integration of asylum seekers once they are granted refugee status. Once migrants leave the reception centres there is little assistance available to support them in successfully integrating and there is a reliance on privately rented accommodation amongst refugees who experience high rates of welfare dependency, low rates of labour market participation and the lack of alternative options.

## Chapter 03: Profile of the Survey Area

### Dinesh

Dinesh has been living in Ireland for three years and has a Spousal Visa. He came here to join his wife who is working in the health sector. They have three children all of whom were born in India. Dinesh is a qualified Lab Technician but he cannot obtain registration in Ireland, so he is currently working as a Sales Manager.

Dinesh and his family live in their own house in Blanchardstown, which they bought last year. The house has three bedrooms and is well-equipped and generally well maintained. However, he says that the house is of average quality, is too small, not well constructed, and there is a condensation problem in winter. He lives in the area as his job is nearby. He spends around 30 to 40 per cent of his income on the mortgage.

In his local neighbourhood Dinesh says that people are self-centered and stay within their own groups. Car theft is a big problem and he says that the Guards are not proactive in their approach. He would like better community policing, better health services at local level, and a round-the-clock pharmacy service. He is a member of the Ireland India Council and participates in various community events and festivals. He believes that community facilities and community centres are important for integration and should be given adequate funding.

He says that sometimes the local children bang on his door but not on their neighbour's door 'as we are different'. He socialises through work and home with his multi-ethnic circle of friends. However, he feels it is not easy to socialise with people in the local community as 'they are keeping minimum communication'.



# Chapter 03: Profile of the Survey Area

## 3.1 Population and housing trends in Fingal

Blanchardstown is located in Fingal County Council. The 2006 Census data showed a significant increase in the population in Fingal since 2002, making it Ireland's fastest growing county, representing 5.6% of the national population. The population of Fingal stands at just under 240,000, denoting a 43,597 population increase from 2002 (a growth rate of 22.2%). Fingal County Council is now providing services to almost 20,000 or 33% more households than it was in 2002. One in four persons in Fingal is either a small child under four years of age or is an adult who has recently moved into the area.

The 2006 Census also shows that Fingal is Ireland's youngest county, with an average age of 32.2 years, which is slightly higher than 2002, however, significantly younger than the national average of 35.6 years. The age-based figures show a sharp (37%) increase in children aged 0-4 years and a significant (20%) increase in children aged 5-9 years. Taken together this means that 16% of the population of Fingal is aged between 0-9 years, representing the largest proportion of children in the State. This growth in the population has led to specific problems in the provision of school places and childcare in the area, which have resulted in some children not gaining places in local schools. There was a slight drop in the number of young people aged 15-19 years since 2002; while all other age categories rose in number except for the over 85-year age group which fell by 18% from 2002.

The number of recorded 'Private Households' in Fingal grew by 19,530 from 2002 to 2006, which represents the biggest increase in the State. Household size has also changed dramatically; in 2002 the average Fingal household had 3.2 persons and this fell to 2.9 persons in 2006. This most likely results from a combination of increased availability of apartments and falling family size.

The type of housing among the 80,085 households is also recorded in the 2006 Census. The vast majority of houses are still detached (16,154), semi-detached (36,791) or terraced (15,119). There are still relatively small numbers of apartments (9,397) compared to Dublin City (43,140).

A survey of *Minority Ethnic Communities in Fingal* by the Fingal Development Board and Fingal County Council (2008) found significant cultural diversity in Fingal County. The survey found that minority ethnic residents tended to be younger than the overall population and that the majority planned to stay in the area in the future, with only 19%

planning to leave the area within the next two years. This was identified as an important issue for the future planning of services to ensure that services reflect the diversity of the population.

Overall, the survey found that minority ethnic respondents had similar experiences, attitudes and needs to those of the Council's settled white Irish customers as regards access to good quality services that meet their needs. However, minority ethnic respondents stated that the highest dissatisfaction was with housing services, which has implications for how minority ethnic communities access information and support in relation to housing. The survey found that there was considerable linguistic diversity in the County, with over 100 languages spoken. Although the majority of minority ethnic respondents stated that they were comfortable with English, the need for translating key County Council documents was identified. Finally, the survey found low levels of participation in local social and community groups and sporting clubs. The report of the survey makes a number of recommendations for improving access to services, enhancing community engagement and community participation, and for planning for the integration of minority ethnic communities in the long term.

## 3.2 Profile of Blanchardstown: population and housing trends

Blanchardstown is located nearly ten kilometres north-west of Dublin City in Fingal County Council. It is made up of eight Electoral Divisions (EDs), namely: Abbotstown, Blakestown, Coolmine, Corduff, Delwood, Mulhuddart, Roselawn and Tyrrelstown.

While the country overall has seen a significant rise in the population of migrants, there has been a particular clustering of migrant communities in the Blanchardstown area arising from job opportunities, affordability of housing, and proximity to Dublin and places of work. The area has also seen significant economic growth in recent years. In part this has been a result of employment growth in the service sector and the location of a number of high technology companies and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the area. This economic development has opened up new job opportunities in the service and technology sectors, many of which have been taken up by high-skilled as well as low-skilled migrant workers.

## The 2006 Census shows that 21.8% of the population in the Blanchardstown area were foreign nationals.

### Blanchardstown: Summary of socio-economic indicators

*The fastest growing area in the country – in four years the population has risen 24.7% to reach 63,120 persons.*

*Foreign nationals accounted for nearly 22% (13,620) of all residents, which is more than double the State average of 10%. Sixty-five per cent of the increase in Blanchardstown's population over the past four years comprises residents who indicated that they had a nationality other than Irish. Nigeria, Poland, and Lithuania were the top three countries of origin.*

*Rapid socio-economic and demographic change in the last five years, much of which has taken place because of a combination of economic development, employment growth and migration.*

*A young age profile: the pre-school population (0-3 years) of Blanchardstown rose 49% (1,794 children) since 2002.*

*A smaller proportion of older residents: 3.8% of its population is aged 65 and over, compared to 12.7% of the population of Dublin City Council, or a national average of 11%.*

*A trend towards smaller households, including an increase in single-parent households and single persons sharing a dwelling; household occupancy rates fell from 3.31 per household in 2002 to 3.1 in 2006, largely as a result of falling fertility rates.*

*Labour market participation rates for Blanchardstown rose from 69.1% in 2002 to 74.5% in 2006. Women's labour market participation rate increased to 66.1% of the workforce, compared to 83.0% for men.*

*Unemployment rose from 9.8% in 2002 to 11.1% of the labour force in 2006, a rate that is higher than the national average.*

**Source: Blanchardstown Area Partnership, 2008**

### Population of Blanchardstown

The 2006 Census shows that the population of Blanchardstown rose to 63,120 persons, representing a 24.7% increase since 2002. This compares to a rise in the population in 2006 of 5.7% and 8.2% respectively for Dublin and the State as a whole. As a result Blanchardstown has experienced the fastest rate of population growth in the country over this four-year period, based on electoral division boundaries. It is anticipated that the population of Blanchardstown will continue to grow for the foreseeable future due to significant local land banks which are available for house building, especially Abbotstown and parts of Blakestown around Hansfield (Blanchardstown Area Partnership 2008). Chart 1 provides a breakdown of the population living in the eight electoral divisions in 2006 that make up Blanchardstown.

The largest percentage increases in population occurred in Abbotstown (65.7%) and Blakestown (61.3%). This was largely the result of an increase of families with young children moving into newly constructed apartment complexes and housing estates in areas such as Castaheany and Ongar. In contrast, Tyrrelstown and Roselawn's populations actually fell by 5.7% and 10.4% respectively between 2002 and 2006.

The 2006 Census also shows that 21.8% (13,620) of the population in the Blanchardstown area were foreign nationals. This represents a higher level than the national average which was recorded as 9.4% in the 2006 Census. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the population by ethnic or cultural background in the Blanchardstown area.

Chart 2 shows the breakdown of the ethnic or cultural background of the population by each of the eight electoral divisions in Blanchardstown. This analysis of the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) data shows that 65% of the increase in Blanchardstown's population since 2002 is due to residents of a nationality other than Irish.

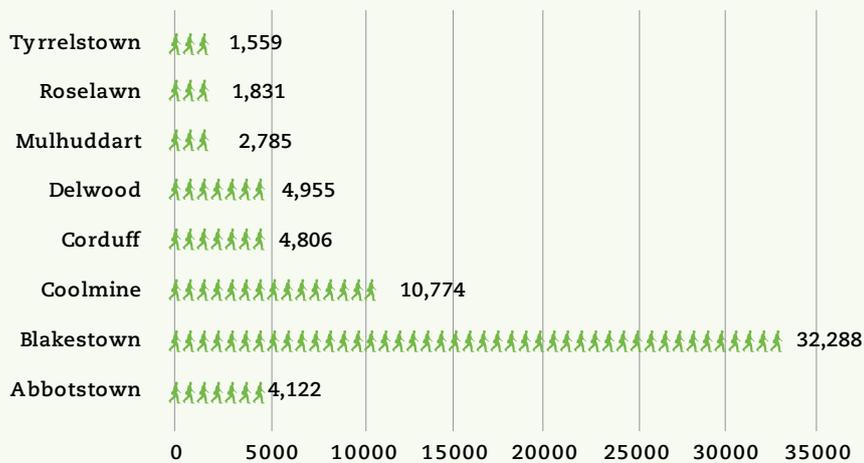
The largest groups of non-Irish residents in Blanchardstown in 2006 were Nigerian (1,822), Polish (1,261), Lithuanian (1,045) and British (954).

The largest number of foreign nationals (7,239) was living in the Blakestown electoral division in 2006, with 2,496 Black or Black Irish and 1,157 Asian or Asian Irish, compared to Tyrrelstown (300), Roselawn (159), Mulhuddart (868), Coolmine (2,078), Corduff (359), and Abbotstown (1,444).

The largest overall growth has taken place in the Abbotstown electoral division, where 35.6% of the population are foreign

65% of the increase in Blanchardstown's population since 2002 is due to residents of a nationality other than Irish.

Chart 1: Population of Electoral Divisions in the Blanchardstown Area



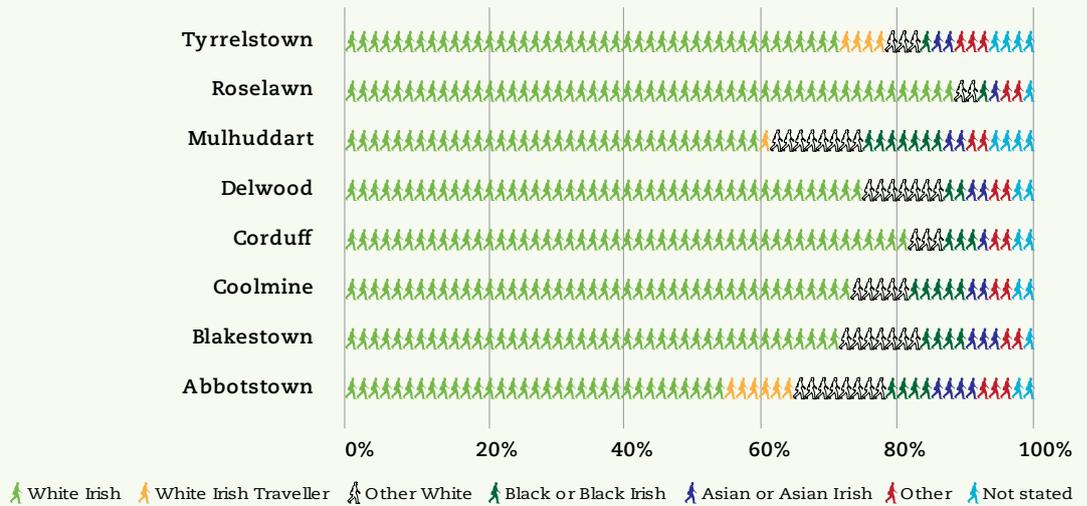
Source: BAP analysis of Small Area Population Statistics, Blanchardstown Area Partnership 2008

Table 1: Usually resident by ethnic or cultural background, 2006

Category	Thousands/Hundreds	%
White Irish	44,784	71
White Irish Traveller	467	0.7
Any other White background	6,942	11
Black or Black Irish	4,112	6.5
Asian or Asian Irish	2,324	3.7
Other including mixed background	1,644	2.6
Not Stated	2,340	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>62,613</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: CSO Census 2006

Chart 2: Usually resident population by Electoral Division by ethnic or cultural background, 2006



Source: BAP analysis of Small Area Population Statistics, Blanchardstown Area Partnership 2008

nationals and where the highest percentage of Asian or Asian Irish people reside, many of whom live in close proximity to their work in Connolly Hospital or IT industries in the area.

### Housing structure of Blanchardstown

Housing in Blanchardstown comprises a mix of tenures and housing types, including private and local authority housing estates built since the 1980s. In the last decade there has been a significant demand for housing in the area and a related expansion of new build private houses and apartments. Some areas still experience high levels of deprivation and unemployment and, in response to this, a RAPID programme (Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development), targeting specific disadvantaged neighbourhoods, has been established in Blanchardstown. This programme has also been as a response to service providers' need to address the rapid growth and increasing diversity of the population.

The 2006 Census shows that there were 20,408 permanent households in the Blanchardstown area. Chart 3 shows that owner occupation, with or without a mortgage, is the most common occupancy status (67%), followed by privately rented accommodation (13%), rental from a voluntary body (13%) and the local authority (9%).

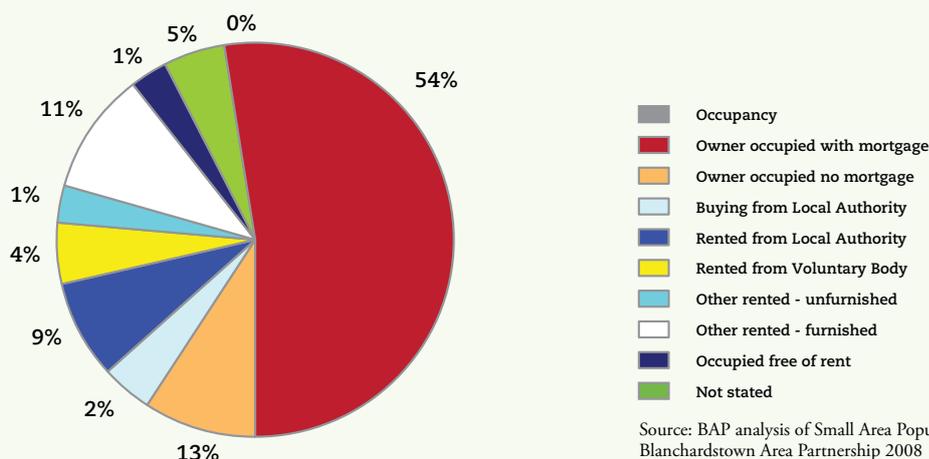
There has been a significant increase in new build in recent years and, between 2002 and 2006, an additional 5,134

premises were built. There was a decline in household size from 3.3 per household in 2002 to 3.1 in 2006. Smaller households are a reflection of a decline in traditional nuclear families, an increase in female and male single-parent households, and increasing numbers of single persons sharing a dwelling. The housing structure and mix have also changed in recent years with a shift towards higher density units, which in 2006 represented 13.6% of all private households in the Blanchardstown area, and a significant growth in the Abbotstown electoral division, where high density housing now represents 54% of all private households.

*Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and Part II of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002 specifies that local authorities will develop housing strategies with regard to estimating existing and future housing needs; ensure there is a mix of housing types to meet different types of households; introduce measures to address segregation between persons of different social backgrounds, and provide for social and affordable housing as part of land zoned for residential development.*

*Fingal County Council's Housing Strategy 2005-2011 provides for 42,500 additional housing units up to 2011, including 2,550 social housing units by the Local Authority/Voluntary Housing Sector; 1,200 shared*

Chart 3: Percentage of permanent private households by type of occupancy in Blanchardstown, 2006



Source: BAP analysis of Small Area Population Statistics, Blanchardstown Area Partnership 2008

*ownership/affordable housing units by Fingal County Council/Voluntary Housing Sector directly or through Public Private Partnership; 3,925 social/affordable units by developers, under the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2002; the reduction of the social housing demand over the period of the strategy; and a requirement that between 7.5% and 15% of units in new residential developments be social/affordable units.*

### The impact of the RAS scheme in Fingal County Council

Fingal County Council has recently introduced the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) for people receiving rent supplement and in need of long-term housing. The objective is that this will contribute to the provision of good quality long-term rented accommodation for people receiving rent supplement. Under the scheme the County Council sources suitable accommodation and pays rent directly to the landlord; RAS tenants pay rent directly to the Council, which is based on a local authority's differential rent scheme. However, there are restrictions on who can qualify for the scheme. People who qualify are those receiving a rent supplement under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme and who are on Fingal County Council's Housing

List. People with short-term needs will continue to receive rent supplement. It does not apply to asylum seekers or non-nationals who do not have leave to remain in the State permanently.

There are more than 2,500 families in receipt of rent supplement in the Dublin 15 area, 67% of whom are foreign nationals. There are specific groups of foreign nationals that access rent supplement, particularly those from the Nigerian and Romanian communities. One of the difficulties in Fingal has been the slow rate at which cases for the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) are processed. People are unable to transfer from private rent supplement onto the RAS scheme until they have been assessed for this. According to the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, the rules for RAS impose a significant poverty trap in that clients of the Local Employment Service and the Partnership are unable to take up full-time work under the RAS scheme.

Although the scheme aims to improve the quality of privately rented accommodation, particularly for those residents that are most vulnerable, the implementation of the RAS scheme poses significant barriers for households seeking to improve their economic status by taking up paid employment.

### 3.3 Profile of Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese residents in Blanchardstown

This research is based on interviews with people from four communities: the Lithuanian, Nigerian, Indian and Chinese communities. There were 390 Indian people, 1,041 Lithuanian people, 1,799 Nigerian people and 281 Chinese people living in the eight electoral divisions of Blanchardstown in 2006 (CSO Census, 2006). Table 2 shows that of the 3,511 residents from the four communities living in the area, the majority, 44%, lived in privately-rented accommodation (1,445 furnished, 104 unfurnished), followed by 21% living in owner occupation (720 with a loan or mortgage, 27 without a loan or mortgage). A smaller number rented from the local authority (231, or 6.5%) or from a voluntary body (440 or 12.5%). This data shows that residents of the four communities tended to occupy different types of housing compared to the overall Blanchardstown population. The majority of residents from the four communities lived in privately rented accommodation, compared to a minority of the population overall. Twenty-one per cent of the residents from the four new communities, compared to 67% of the population overall, lived in owner-occupied accommodation.

Table 3 shows the type of dwelling that people from the Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian communities reside in. Fifty per cent lived in a semi-detached house (1,751) followed by 22.5% in a flat, apartment or bedsit (790).

#### Yemisi

Yemisi, her husband and her two-year old daughter came to Ireland from Nigeria in 2000 as asylum seekers. She later gave birth to two more children. She was granted leave to remain in the State based on her Irish-born child in 2001. Yemisi is now a single parent as her husband recently left her. She also recently became a local authority tenant, and she says the accommodation is in good condition. However, she feels that the county council needs to address issues like crime and litter which are a problem in the area. She does not feel that she and her family are safe in the neighbourhood.

Yemisi came to Blanchardstown initially because that was where the first house was allocated to her. Since then she has made new friends from other cultures, but they are mostly from outside Mulhuddart.

Yemisi does not feel integrated into her new community as her children still attend school in the area where she used to live. This has had a huge impact on her ability to integrate.

She is currently undertaking a FÁS course and therefore says she has little or no time to interact with people in the estate. She also feels the Irish people are generally not friendly and the young children in her estate are destructive.

She would like to feel accepted by the host community. Yemisi moved house three times before she secured her local authority house.

Stressing the lack of facilities in the area for young children, she says she feels secure and at home since she got the local authority house.

## Residents of the four communities tended to occupy different types of housing compared to the overall Blanchardstown population

Table 2: Usual residents in the Blanchardstown electoral divisions, classified by combined nationalities and nature of occupancy

Electoral Divisions (Blanchardstown)	Nature of Occupancy								
	Total	Owner occupied with loan or mortgage	Owner occupied without loan or mortgage	Being purchased from a Local Authority	Rented from a Local Authority	Rented from a Voluntary Body	Private rented un-furnished	Private rented furnished or part furnished	Occupied free of rent or not stated
Abbotstown	348	34	2	2	38	30	8	195	39
Blakestown	2,144	456	14	19	112	282	79	859	323
Coolmine	405	94	2	–	33	31	9	159	77
Corduff	154	54	2	2	15	34	–	39	8
Delwood	207	19	2	–	2	31	5	110	38
Mulhuddart	198	52	–	1	17	30	3	78	17
Roselawn	25	–	5	–	4	2	–	2	12
Tyrrelstown	30	11	–	2	10	–	–	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,511</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>1,445</b>	<b>518</b>

(Note: For reasons of confidentiality the CSO cannot classify these by community, instead a total figure for the four communities is provided.)

Source: Small Area Population Statistics, CSO Census, 2006

Table 3: Usual residents in the Blanchardstown electoral divisions, classified by combined nationalities and type of accommodation

Electoral Divisions (Blanchardstown)	Total	Detached house	Semi-detached house	Terraced house	Flat, apartment or bed-sit	Caravan, mobile or temporary structure (incl. not stated)
Abbotstown	348	19	37	51	216	25
Blakestown	2,144	150	1,183	276	367	168
Coolmine	405	20	223	39	88	35
Corduff	154	14	61	52	13	14
Delwood	207	9	93	12	78	15
Mulhuddart	198	15	127	26	23	7
Roselawn	25	2	17	2	4	–
Tyrrelstown	30	4	10	13	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,511</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>1,751</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>266</b>

(Note: For reasons of confidentiality the CSO cannot classify these by community, instead a total figure for the four communities is provided.)

Source: Small Area Population Statistics, CSO Census, 2006

## Chapter 04: Results of the qualitative study

Ben is from North China and is currently living with his wife and friends in an apartment in Blanchardstown. They pay €380 per month, and there are seven people in total living in the house. The house has one double room and two single rooms. He describes the apartment as overcrowded with inadequate space to socialise. However, he says that they are all busy working or studying which means that there is not much time for socialising anyway.

Ben says that he is happy to accept poorer conditions in his housing because the rent is affordable and the apartment is convenient to the shops. Prior to their current accommodation, Ben and his wife shared another house with friends.

They have one child, born under the IBC scheme. They had help from their local community centre and they have found local services to be friendly and helpful when their child was born. However, Ben is not aware of other services in the local area or where to go for information about services or immigration law. Ben and his wife don't really socialise as they don't have time, they usually need to work six days a week.

They also believe the major problem that hinders their integration into the local community is their different culture and language, as well as their anti-social and long working hours.

Ben



# Chapter 04: Results of the qualitative study

## 4.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the interviews that were carried out with 40 people living in the Blanchardstown area. It is important to emphasise that this is a small-scale survey, designed to be an exploratory piece of research, and for this reason it is not possible to generalise the situation of the four communities or of migrants in Ireland in general. However, the findings do point to some interesting facts about the experiences of migrants living in the Blanchardstown area.

## 4.2 Profile of interviewees

A total of forty residents living in the study sample area from the four communities were interviewed as part of this research (ten from each community). The sample included a range of persons with varying socio-economic characteristics including: age, gender, religion, family size, length of time in Ireland, language, type of employment, legal status, housing experiences and current living situations.

The majority of those interviewed were under the age of 45 years, while the Lithuanian and Chinese respondents had a younger age profile. Several of the interviewees had dependent children. One Chinese person interviewed was supporting her children who were living in China, while another had their child living with them. The children of one Indian family were living in India and were also being supporting financially by them. The proportion of interviewees who were married and living with their partners was highest amongst the Nigerian and Chinese communities, while people from the Lithuanian community were predominantly single, and people from the Indian community were equally distributed between single people and those living with their partners and children.

### Lithuanian participants

The seven men and three women interviewed from the Lithuanian community came to Ireland principally to work. The majority were under the age of 35 years. As EU citizens they did not require visas to work and have been able to live, work and study in Ireland without restrictions. The majority intended to return to their home country at some stage or were unsure of their plans, while two participants had long-term plans to stay in Ireland, by virtue of the fact that they had good jobs, had met partners in Ireland and had put in place long-term plans to enter into owner occupation. The majority were single people sharing accommodation with friends or others. All participants had been working full-time, although two participants who had been working in the construction industry had recently become unemployed.

### Nigerian participants

Of the ten participants interviewed, two came to Ireland originally as students over ten years ago. The remaining eight were initially asylum seekers or refugees. Eight of those interviewed lived as families while the remaining two were single people residing with others. Of the ten participants, two were naturalized Irish citizens, four were parents of Irish-citizen children with leave to remain based on the Irish Born Children (IBC) 2005 Scheme, one single male had refugee status, while the remaining three had Stamp 4 based on the IBC Scheme pre-2005. The majority of the participants were either in employment or undertaking training with a view to gaining employment. Two participants were local authority tenants, four were private rented tenants (three of whom are in receipt of rent allowance), and four were owner-occupiers, one of whom purchased his house under the local authority's affordable housing scheme.

### Indian participants

The ten Indian people interviewed were all between 26 and 45 years of age (six male and four female). Most of them have been residing in Ireland for between one and six years, and 40% cent came to Ireland for work purposes (visa status was either work visa or work permits). Five of the participants were either on a spousal visa or student visa, and one person was on leave to remain. The majority of interviewees were working in skilled jobs in the health and technology sectors. Six of the interviewees were living in Ireland with their families, and one person was living with her spouse but did not have children. Two of the students were single, and the person on leave to remain has a wife and children in India. Six of the interviewees were in full-time jobs, two of the spouses were unemployed and two students were working part-time. Four were living in owner-occupied accommodation, and six were living in rented accommodation (half of whom are sharing with their friends).

### Chinese participants

The Chinese people who were interviewed (six male and four female) were mainly between the ages of 26 and 35. Half were single and the others married. One interviewee had a child living in China whom she was supporting financially, while another interviewee had a child living with him and his wife in Ireland. Three of the participants were on working visas and seven were on international student visas. Those studying were also working either full-time or part-time. Around half of those interviewed were working

in skilled jobs in the technology sector, whilst others worked in lower skilled jobs principally in the service sector and in restaurants. Nine lived in private-rented accommodation and one in owner-occupation.

## Sunny

Originally from Nigeria, Sunny came to join his Nigerian wife and three children three years ago on a visitor's visa. He decided to stay when he saw how difficult it was for his wife to cope with three children and in her work as a care assistant. He currently has leave to remain based on the IBC 2005 Scheme, and has since had another child.

The family of six currently resides in a two-bedroom apartment and they are in receipt of rent allowance, which is set according to his spouse's monthly income. They have had difficulty renting adequate accommodation in the area because many landlords will not take tenants on rent allowance.

He does not feel it is important that people from a similar culture live in the same area. Sunny also does not feel part of his community because they are a low-income family. The family goes to the local cinema, the local church, the library and they socialise with people from different cultures.

It has been difficult to secure places for their children in the local schools and they have therefore had to bring their school-age children to the city centre everyday.

They are currently exploring other housing options through housing associations and the local authority. They would like to buy an affordable home.

Sunny does not have a sense of being at home in Ireland and says that he might go back to Nigeria in the future if things do not work out for him in Ireland.

## 4.3 Living and working in Ireland

In keeping with the general migration trends in Ireland, the majority of interviewees have been living in Ireland for less than five years. Only two people from the Nigerian community and one from the Chinese community had been living in Ireland for longer than ten years. The length of time living in Ireland, coupled with legal status, family relationships and economic considerations, were all factors that affected the housing choices and housing careers of those interviewed. Long-term plans, particularly in planning for home ownership or for access to local authority housing, were in turn affected by a sense of belonging, legal status, access to employment, and access to long-term housing. Whereas interviewees from the Nigerian community stated that they had come to live in Ireland permanently, a greater number of respondents from the other three communities had long-term plans to return to their countries of origin or were unsure at this stage as to what their plans would be.

- Four people interviewed from the *Lithuanian* community stated that they wanted to stay in Ireland in the long-term, while the others planned to return home at some stage. One interviewee stated that: 'I'm not planning to move back to Lithuania...not sure at this stage as have some plans about my career'. Another stated that: 'I plan to stay so long as it is possible. I have a good job and my partner is here. We have bought an apartment together'. The remaining six were either undecided or had plans to move back to Lithuania in the short term. As one person said: 'I'm thinking of moving back to Lithuania at end of this year', while another had a 'Plan to return to Lithuanian as starting a family'. One person stated that it 'Depends on situation. At moment all fine, will see how it will go'.
- The majority of *Nigerian* people interviewed stated that their long-term plans were to stay in Ireland, and for that reason their housing plans were correspondingly longer-term. This included aspirations for better housing security either through local authority rented accommodation or owner occupation. As one interviewee stated: 'My children are still young and I need to see them through their education', while another said: 'There are no obstacles to my long-term plans. I intend to live here permanently and return home on holidays'.
- Several *Indian* people had plans to return to India after a period of working in Ireland. For example, family connections were important to several respondents.

*Whereas interviewees from the Nigerian community stated that they had come to live in Ireland permanently, a greater number of respondents from the other three communities had long-term plans to return to their countries of origin or were unsure at this stage as to what their plans would be*

One said: 'Because my family is in India, if they don't come I may work here for ten years and then go back'. Another said: 'I miss my parents. They are old and I want to look after them. I want my children to grow up in Indian culture'. One person stated that she wanted to stay in Ireland because the: 'Quality of life is better and Irish people are friendly', while another said that: 'If I get a good job I may stay here. Otherwise I will go somewhere else for better visa status'. Even though the majority of Indian people planned to return to India at some stage, they still believed that purchasing a property in Ireland was a good option, particularly as this was seen as an investment, it gave housing security and also worked out less costly than renting equivalent accommodation.

- The majority of *Chinese* people only planned to stay temporarily in Ireland and for that reason private rental accommodation was their only housing option. Several people stated that they planned to work for between two and five years before returning to China. As one person stated: 'I will return to China after a few years' work experience'; whereas another said that: 'I plan to live here two more years depending on my husband's work'. Two people were undecided about their long-term plans, although one woman would like to live in Ireland in the long-term but realised that this would be difficult. She stated that: '[I] want to live here long-term but my legal status is as a student. I have a stable job but difficulty getting work permit'.

## Meera

Meera is a 33-year-old Indian woman who has been living in Ireland for five years. She first came to Ireland on a Spousal Visa to join her husband who is an IT professional. She would like to work if she was permitted under the Spousal Visa as she is an IT graduate.

Meera and her family have lived in Ongar village in a one-bedroom privately rented apartment for the last two and half years. It is close to her husband's place of work and is well equipped with all basic facilities but is too small for her family. She would like more space and a garden for the children.

She is aware of how to apply for a mortgage and tax relief and knows that a landlord has to be registered and currently is availing of rental tax credit. They may consider buying a house in Dublin in the future if house prices come down. Their previous accommodation was shared with other families in Blanchardstown and in the City Centre. When the lease on a previous rented house ended the landlord did not return the deposit, as she said the carpet was dirty.

Meera described home as a very important place and a shelter. She says: 'In India we live in a joint family house which is really good, here we have no support so feel you are all alone to do everything'. Meera feels safe, secure and welcome in her neighbourhood and it is near to her child's school and the local shops. She said it is important for her that other people from her ethnic background are living in the same area, which makes her feel more secure. They use Blanchardstown Library often and she said they have books on Indian festivals and cookery. She is very happy with the local school as it is multidenominational and they are accepting of different cultures.

*Short-term visas and the absence of long-term possibilities of gaining residence status were seen to impact on integration.*

#### 4.4 Legal status and reasons for coming to Ireland

Reasons for coming to Ireland also varied between the four communities. The majority of the Nigerian interviewees stated that they had come to Ireland as asylum seekers with a view to gaining refugee status and to remaining in Ireland in the long-term. This is in contrast to the Lithuanian interviewees, and a smaller number of the Indian and Chinese interviewees, who came to Ireland principally to work. A greater number of Chinese interviewees had come to Ireland to study compared to the other communities. Many of these Chinese people were also working part-time in order to finance their living expenses whilst studying. Several participants were restricted in their long-term plans because of the temporary nature of their permits and legal status. Short-term visas and the absence of long-term possibilities of gaining residence status were also seen to impact on integration.

Chart 4 shows that the legal status of interviewees also varied from one community to another. By virtue of EU membership Lithuanian interviewees held EU citizenship and could therefore live and work in Ireland without restriction. The Nigerian people interviewed were either Irish citizens, had leave to remain in the State, or were currently seeking residency status. In contrast, the Chinese and Indian people were more likely to be working or studying, although two interviewees from India held Spousal Visas which did not enable them to work. This is an important issue as greater access to work would help to improve migrants' housing careers and reduce the risks of vulnerability in the housing market. Several people interviewed had experienced a change of legal status from the time they first arrived in the country; this largely affected people from the Nigerian community who, having arrived in Ireland as asylum seekers, had their status changed after having an Irish-citizen child. One Chinese interviewee had acquired citizenship after living in Ireland for over ten years.

#### 4.5 Employment status

It is not surprising that high rates of employment were found in the Lithuanian, Indian and Chinese communities, given that their intentions in coming to Ireland were mainly to seek work. Chinese interviewees were for the most part combining part-time work with study. Eight people from the Lithuanian community worked full-time and two had recently become unemployed. Six people from the Nigerian community worked (four full-time and two part-time), eight

#### Tom

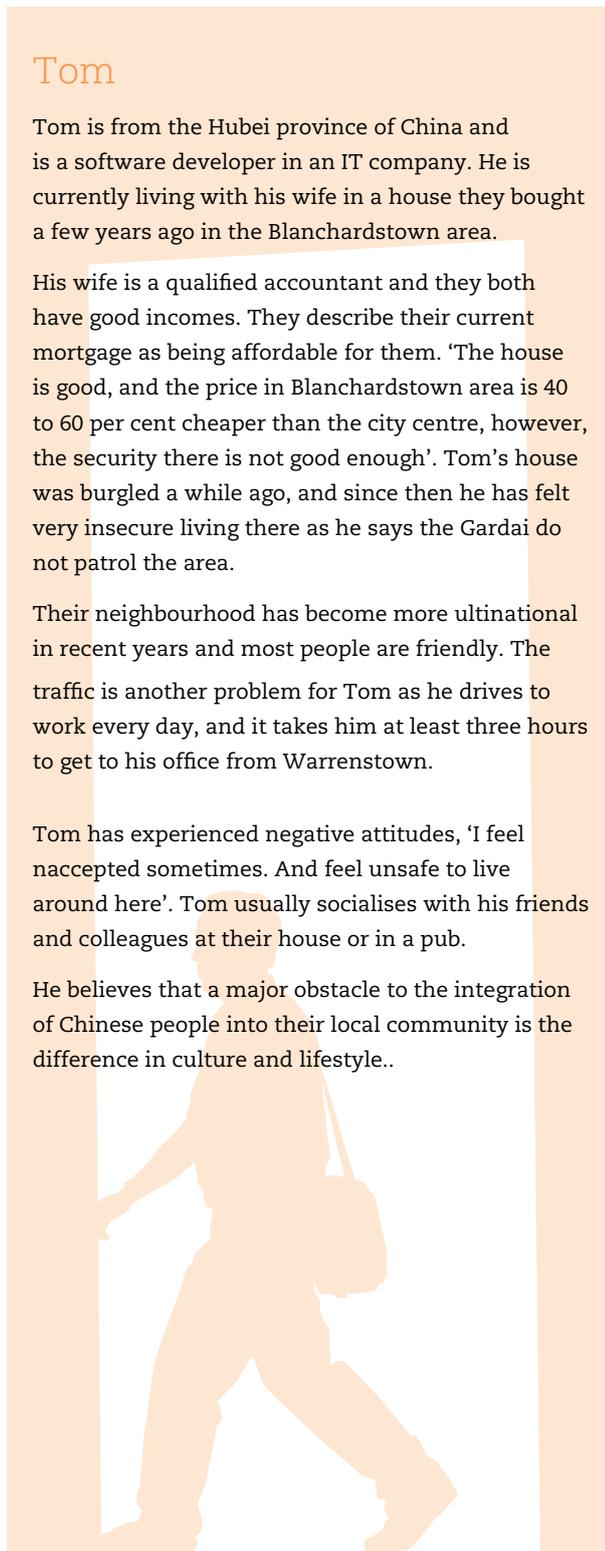
Tom is from the Hubei province of China and is a software developer in an IT company. He is currently living with his wife in a house they bought a few years ago in the Blanchardstown area.

His wife is a qualified accountant and they both have good incomes. They describe their current mortgage as being affordable for them. 'The house is good, and the price in Blanchardstown area is 40 to 60 per cent cheaper than the city centre, however, the security there is not good enough'. Tom's house was burgled a while ago, and since then he has felt very insecure living there as he says the Gardai do not patrol the area.

Their neighbourhood has become more multinational in recent years and most people are friendly. The traffic is another problem for Tom as he drives to work every day, and it takes him at least three hours to get to his office from Warrenstown.

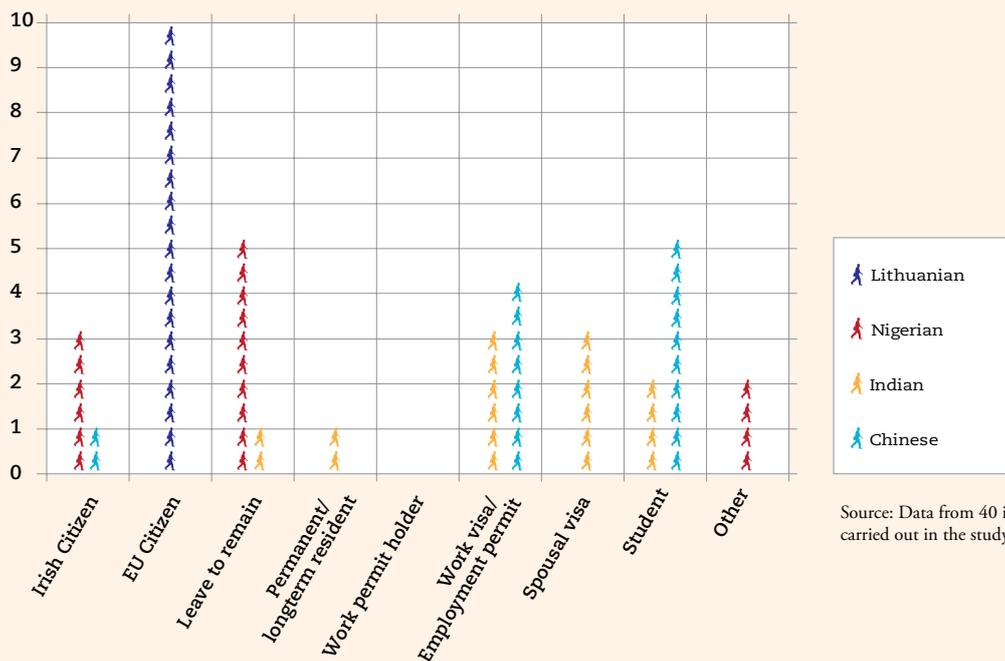
Tom has experienced negative attitudes, 'I feel not accepted sometimes. And feel unsafe to live around here'. Tom usually socialises with his friends and colleagues at their house or in a pub.

He believes that a major obstacle to the integration of Chinese people into their local community is the difference in culture and lifestyle..



A total of forty residents living in the study sample area from the four communities were interviewed as part of this research (ten from each community)

Chart 4: Current legal status



Source: Data from 40 interviews carried out in the study

people from the Indian community worked (six full-time and two part-time), and seven people from the Chinese community worked (four full-time and three part-time).

The majority have a contract of employment; one person from the Chinese community stated that they did not have a contract of employment; only one person from the Nigerian community stated that they were a permanent employee; while one person from the Chinese community and one person from the Nigerian community were self-employed.

The majority of the interviewees' partners were also working in a full-time or part-time capacity. This was deemed necessary in order to contribute to household incomes. In one case a woman authorised to work in the State was unable to register her marriage to her husband who was undocumented:

The reason I am still single in legal form is because my husband is undocumented in Ireland so we couldn't register but did have ceremony for wedding in Ireland. We work in same restaurant together.

The interviewees from the four communities worked in a variety of sectors. Indian people were principally working in

the health, sales and information technology sectors, largely as skilled workers. Some Chinese people were working in high skilled jobs in information technology and others in low skilled jobs in restaurants. Lithuanians were working in managerial jobs, construction, hotels and restaurants, as well as finance. Nigerian people were represented in lower numbers in managerial and executive jobs.

#### 4.6 Reasons for living in the area

When asked their reasons for living in the area, interviewees gave a variety of responses, the most significant of which were employment in the area, knowing people in the locality and affordability. Chart 5 shows that for the Lithuanian community in particular affordability, followed by proximity to employment, were the main factors influencing their decision to live in the area. Nigerian people principally stated it was because they knew people in the vicinity. Half of the respondents from the Indian and Chinese communities lived in the area because of proximity to their employment, and affordability. As one respondent stated: 'The house is cheaper by 40-50 per cent than a city-centre house', while another said: 'My wife's work is nearby. We were living in Newbridge, my work was near and she was travelling a lot'.

One Nigerian respondent stated:

I came to Dublin in 2002 and I was placed in a reception centre. During the two weeks I was there I came to Blanchardstown to visit someone I knew when I was in Nigeria. For me it was love at first sight to behold the newness of the buildings. I went back to the reception facility the following day to discover I was scheduled to be taken to a hostel in Mayo. I opted out of the hostel and went back to stay with friend in Waterville and started looking for housing. Fortunately I got a house within a week at Waterville and stayed in the same house till 2006 when the owner sold it.

## 4.7 Housing experiences and housing careers

There are significant variations from one community to another as to their housing experiences and housing careers. These variations are determined by factors such as housing tenure and type of dwelling, living situations, and the quality and affordability of accommodation.

### Housing tenure and type of dwelling

Chart 6 illustrates the housing tenure interviewees were living in when they were interviewed. The majority of interviewees were living in privately rented accommodation, while a smaller number had bought their own houses. Only two respondents were living in local authority rented accommodation.

Those respondents who had bought their own houses lived in the best quality accommodation and were also more likely to feel integrated into the local community.

As one Indian participant stated:

Myself and my husband bought our own place and then another two-bedroom apartment in Ongar village for investment purpose, which is rented at present. Now we are proud owner of two houses. I feel safe, secure and welcome in...neighbourhood, and it is a nice community, the children mix very well with each other, and there are different cultures.

There was a significant degree of difference between the type of dwellings interviewees from the four communities lived in. Seven Nigerian, six Chinese, five Lithuanian and five Indian respondents lived in houses. While fewer Nigerian people lived in flats or apartments, this was a more common form of dwelling amongst the other communities.

Chart 7 illustrates the large proportion of interviewees sharing accommodation. While no one lived alone, seven

Lithuanian and eight Chinese interviewees shared with friends or other people, and three Lithuanian people lived with their partners. The Nigerian and Indian interviewees were more likely to be living with their partners and children and, in the case of three Nigerian lone parents, with their children. Lithuanian and Chinese interviewees tended to share accommodation to a greater degree than Indian and Nigerian interviewees.

### Joe

Joe has a Diploma from China, and prior to coming to Ireland he worked in the railway system, but has been unable to get a comparable job in Ireland.

Joe is worried that his English is not good enough to follow a degree programme and as a result he has been studying at a language school, taking foundation classes, since he first came to Ireland. He has started looking for a college place, but has not yet decided which subject he should study. In the meanwhile Joe had been working full-time in a factory, but he lost his job because he was on a Student Visa.

He is currently working part-time in the city centre and is still looking for a full-time job. Joe's previous job was located in Blanchardstown and that is why he is currently living in the area.

Joe lives in the living room because it is cheap. He says that the sound proofing in the house is terrible and he has little space of his own. Joe is interested in politics and integration and he is open to non-Chinese culture.

Chart 5: Reasons for living in the area

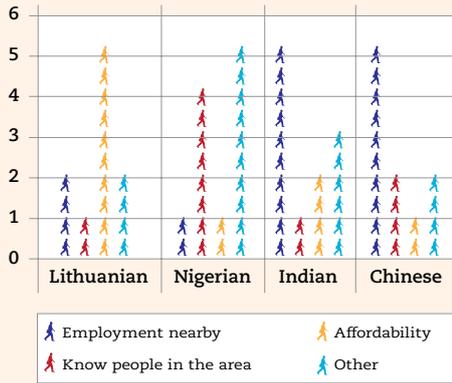


Chart 6: Housing tenure

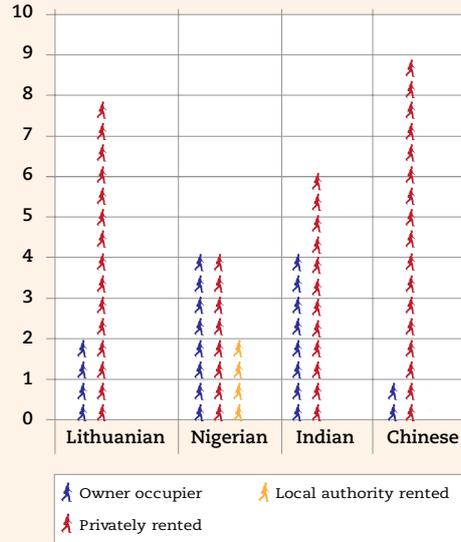


Chart 7: Living Situation

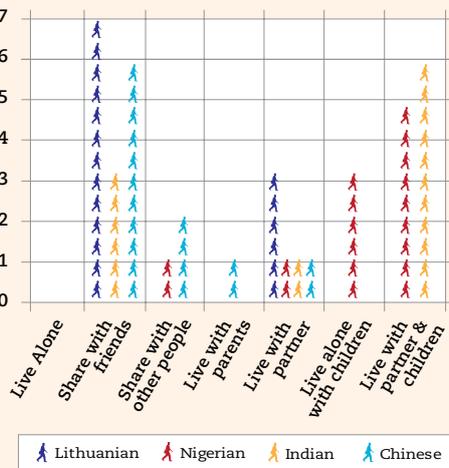


Chart 8: Proportion of income spent on housing

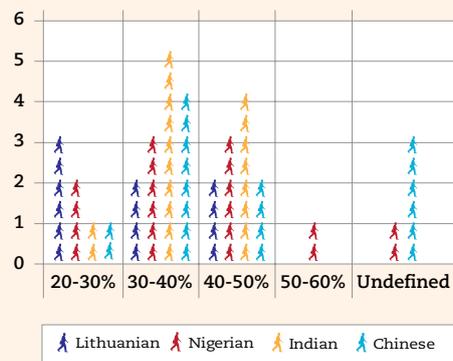
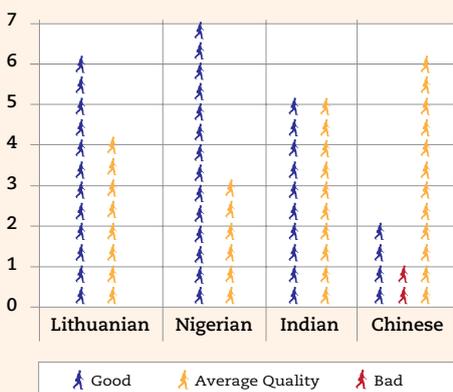


Chart 9: Quality of current accommodation



Source for all charts on this page:  
Data from 40 interviews carried out in the study

## *Affordability was one of the principal reasons that people lived in Blanchardstown*

### **Length of time in accommodation**

The majority of interviewees had been in their current accommodation for less than two years. In the case of some interviewees, moving from one accommodation to another had been a regular experience, particularly during their first year in Ireland. Sometimes regular moving was necessitated by a change of landlord, selling of properties, increased rent or leases not being renewed. In particular, three families from the Nigerian community had moved every year and had found it difficult to get good quality rented accommodation because they were on rent allowance. These families felt that they were being discriminated against by landlords who preferred not to take tenants on Rent Allowance.

### **Affordability of housing**

The affordability of housing is an issue raised by a significant number of interviewees. In fact affordability was one of the principal reasons that people lived in Blanchardstown, and was a major factor in the large number of people in shared accommodation. However, many interviewees still found their accommodation expensive. While the incomes of the Indian people interviewed fully covered their living expenses, this was not the experience of the other three communities, with only approximately half of these interviewees stating that their incomes covered their living expenses. Chart 8 illustrates that the proportion of income spent on housing is relatively high and varies between the four communities. The majority of interviewees were spending between one-third and one-half of their incomes on housing, with the highest proportion found in the Indian community, where owner-occupation rates are also the highest

### **Current living conditions**

There were also variations in the living conditions and facilities experienced by interviewees. On the whole people were satisfied with their living conditions although, in the case of several Lithuanian and Chinese interviewees, overcrowding and a lack of private space were identified as problems. The most significant problems with poor housing quality and living conditions were found in the privately rented sector. Several interviewees highlighted difficulties they had with landlords, for example, repairs not being carried out, landlords holding the key and coming into the house unannounced, rent increases, and a lack of decent furniture and fixtures. As one Chinese person stated, the landlord is often not the person that they had rented the property from: 'Secondary landlord looks for rent in middle of night and insists he gets it then and there'.

Living conditions, expressed as a set of indicators established in the project, are illustrated in Table 4. Overall the best living conditions were experienced by Indian respondents, while the worst living conditions were experienced by Chinese respondents.

The majority of respondents had separate sitting rooms in their accommodation, central heating, hot and cold water every day, facilities to cook a hot meal daily, an adequate bathroom and access to parking. However, fewer respondents from the Lithuanian and Chinese communities experienced good living conditions, including having a separate sitting room, central heating, cooking facilities, an adequate kitchen and bathroom. In some cases, even where a separate sitting room existed in their accommodation, this often doubled up as a bedroom. In the Chinese community several people were renting from second landlords, which presented problems for them, particularly in getting repairs carried out. A lack of housing security, poor quality living conditions and having to move accommodation regularly were common experiences for people on low incomes and those claiming Rent Allowance.

Some experiences of overcrowding were identified during the survey, and overcrowding was closely connected to affordability of housing. The number of people living in the accommodation of interviewees varied from one community to another (for Lithuanian respondents the average household size was 4 people; for Nigerian respondents it was 3.5 people; for Indian respondents it was 5 people; and for Chinese respondents it was 6 people). It was a typical experience for Chinese people to share. In one case there were ten people sharing a three-bedroom house, in two cases seven people shared a two-bedroom house, and in one case six people shared a three-bedroom house. In two cases the living room doubled up as an additional bedroom. Lithuanian people were also likely to be in shared accommodation with friends, while Indian people tended to share with other families. Nigerian people were more likely to be living with their partners and children, while in two cases rooms were let out to help with the payment of bills.

Overall, interviewees rated the quality of their accommodation as good or of average quality. Chart 9 shows that the proportion of those rating accommodation as good was highest in the Nigerian community and average quality accommodation was correspondingly rated highest in the Chinese community. Only one respondent rated their accommodation as bad in terms of quality. Most people stated that their current accommodation was of a better quality than their previous accommodation.

## Overcrowding and a lack of private space were identified as problems

Table 4: Living conditions and facilities

	Lithuanian	Nigerian	Indian	Chinese
Separate sitting room	7	8	10	8
Central heating	7	9	9	6
Adequate kitchen	7	9	10	7
Hot and cold water every day	10	9	10	7
Facilities to cook a hot meal every day	7	9	10	7
Adequate bathroom	7	7	10	7
Access to parking	7	9	9	7

### Binoy

Binoy is a 28-year-old Indian man who has been living in Ireland for three years and, for the past two of those, has been living in the Blanchardstown area with his wife.

He first came to Ireland on a student visa for post-graduate study and after completing this he married an Indian woman who was working in Ireland. Currently Binoy is on a Spousal Visa, which makes it difficult for him to work. Binoy chose to come to Ireland as his sister and her family were living in this country. Since then, they have lived with his sister's family, consisting of six people in a three-bedroom house. He said that if he can get a job here he may stay, otherwise he will go to another country in order to develop his career.

The house is well equipped with all modern amenities. He does not know how to apply for a mortgage, mortgage tax relief, social housing or rental tax credit. He says that he feels safe, secure and welcome in his local neighbourhood. He likes the area because it is very quiet. He believes that acceptance by the local community is the most important factor in becoming integrated. He has never voted in an election and he does not know who his local elected representatives are. For socialisation he does not go to a local pub or local sports club and, as he is unable to work in Ireland, he socialises through his home with other Indian friends and family. Binoy does not access local

friends and family. Binoy does not access local services except the library and local transport.

Before moving to his current accommodation, Binoy lived in a one-bedroom studio apartment in the city centre for one year, which he shared with three other friends. He described it as bad quality accommodation, with an unsafe external environment. One of his friends was physically attacked when he was living there. Binoy describes home as where his family lives. He says that his overall experience in Ireland has been good.

Listed below are some examples from the survey of how housing quality varied within each of the communities and between the four communities:

- In the *Lithuanian* community several respondents stated that their accommodation was of an average quality. As one respondent said: 'It's an old house which needs refurbishing; new furniture, décor etc. Very medium quality'. Other respondents were satisfied with the quality of the accommodation. One person stated that he had a 'Large four bed house with really spacious sitting room and kitchen. Nice back garden. Modern furniture'; and another said that her accommodation was 'Very large and spacious house with a back garden. Done up nicely'.
- In the *Nigerian* community housing conditions often related to a lack of space. As one respondent stated: 'The house is getting smaller because family growing'; while another said: 'The accommodation lacks any sort of space for storage. The second room is rather small'.

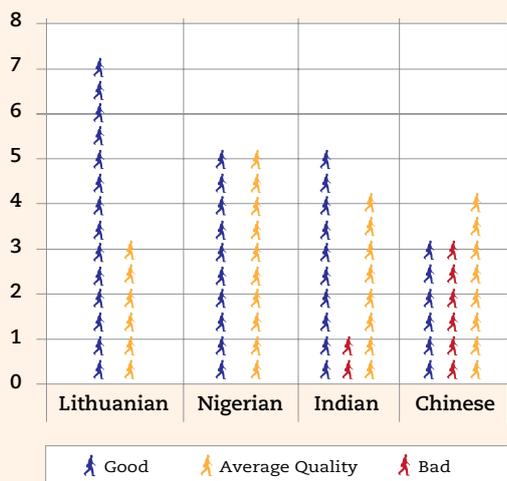
- In the *Indian* community various factors affected housing quality. For example, one respondent said that ‘The size of house not good. Construction of house not very good. Most of time in winter I am facing condensation problem’. Another said that the ‘Condition of house is not good. No repairing done’. Several respondents who had bought their own homes were very satisfied with the quality of their accommodation. As one respondent stated: ‘Spacious and interior decoration very good as my wife has done interior designing course’, while another said that: ‘Compared to India, less spacious. For Ireland it is good’.
- In the *Chinese* community significant problems existed with the quality of accommodation, a principal factor being overcrowding and a lack of space. Two people were sleeping in the living room and bedrooms were shared. For example, one person stated that: ‘The living condition is better than previous house, the furniture is fine but too many people living there. I don’t have enough space and usually only stay in own bedroom. There is no separate sitting room and no place to socialise’. Another person said that he was: ‘Not satisfied. Too old, damp, bad quality, not enough furniture, but landlord quite good’. Several people had difficulties in getting landlords to fix problems: ‘The landlord is Irish. House is old and average quality. The roof and floor leak...landlord has done some work but it is not fixed yet’. In the case of one participant, the landlord had not given her back the deposit: ‘I think the agency took advantage as we are Chinese, they thought we won’t argue with them for the deposit, and they can keep it, but they are wrong’. This respondent was hoping to get a better job, ‘then we could find a better house with quality conditions’.
- *Lithuanian* people were generally happy with the quality of their previous accommodation. For example, one person ‘Was renting for almost four years and was happy with quality’; while another said: ‘I previously lived in Swords (sharing a room) then in Rialto, close to city centre. Very happy with the quality and standard of both properties’.
- *Nigerian* people had both positive and negative experiences of their previous accommodation. For one person ‘It was private rented and landlord did not care about maintaining the house’; while for another accommodation was ‘Good. Brand new well-built house. Bad though as no central heating, bad neighbourhood. I rented and later purchased’. Another person stated that: ‘The environment was good, but unfortunately was an apartment without facility for garden. Also it is not spacious enough for whole family’; and another commented that: ‘It was very spacious unlike current accommodation. It also has a store under the stairs. The furnishings were poor quality compared to present house’.
- Respondents from the *Indian* community were generally happy with the quality of their previous accommodation, although some did experience poorer quality accommodation. As one person stated: ‘The size and construction were not great’; while another said ‘It was similar to my current rented accommodation’. In one case ‘It was an apartment in basement, but it was very old. There was no central heating’; and in another ‘It was too old and was not maintained properly’.
- In the *Chinese* community experiences of previous accommodation were mixed. For example, two people stated that their previous accommodation was better. The first said that it ‘Was better and bigger... environment was also better, newer and more secure with larger kitchen but kitchen fan not strong enough’; while the second stated that: ‘Previous house in Tallaght better condition. Shared with landlord. Paid €400 per month including bills. Landlord took care of everything and house clean. Current rent is €380 not including bills. Current landlord too controlling and living conditions not as good’. However, most respondents had lived in worse quality accommodation: ‘Previous was worse, living with other people and in living room. Because we had a child it wasn’t enough’. Another person stated that: ‘Previous house worse. It was old and landlord mean. Not enough furniture’.

### Quality of previous accommodation

Chart 10 shows that the quality of previous accommodation had been worse for three Chinese people, and one Indian person rated previous accommodation as bad. Fewer people rated their previous accommodation as good or average in the Chinese community than in their current accommodation. Only half of the Nigerian interviewees rated their previous accommodation as good. This comparison between the quality of current and previous accommodation does suggest, in the case of the forty people interviewed, that the quality of accommodation has improved in the recent past.

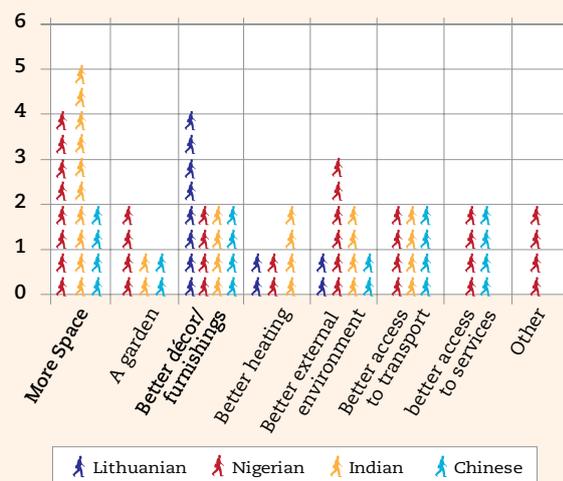
## Most people stated that their current accommodation was of a better quality than their previous accommodation

Chart 10: Quality of previous accommodation



Source: Data from 40 interviews carried out in the study

Chart 11: What would improve the quality of your accommodation?



Source: Data from 40 interviews carried out in the study

Another respondent stated that the ‘House was old, with collapsing furniture. Fridge was very old because landlord saving money, same with furniture...bad environment with bad construction’. Rent increases were not uncommon and as one person stated: ‘Before that we lived for three years [in rented accommodation] but rental was steep, increasing from €1,100 to €1,400 and landlord didn’t care about living conditions, furniture or when washing machine broke. We had to buy a second-hand one ourselves’.

Interviewees were asked what would improve the quality of their current accommodation. A large number of responses referred to the external environment and security in the local neighbourhood, while a range of aspirations included improved housing quality with better heating and control of damp, better furniture and more space.

Chart 11 shows that more space was an issue for Nigerian and Indian respondents, while better internal décor was important for Lithuanian respondents. Issues such as having a garden, better heating and a better external environment were highlighted by interviewees from each community. For some people their quality of accommodation was also related to a need for better access to local services and transport.

A large number of interviewees had aspirations for better accommodation and believed that having access to owner occupation or local authority rented housing were the main ways in which accommodation could be improved. As one

Nigerian respondent said:

I would love my home to be large and spacious. I would love quality furnishing and real indoor plants. I would love it to be located in a relatively quiet and exclusive area but not too far from the main road and shopping centre. I am also very mindful of who my neighbours are. I would love to live with decent people who have paid jobs/professions. With a family size of five I’d love to live in a four-bedroom house/flat. I look forward to being able to afford one in the next two years at most.

- One *Lithuanian* respondent stated that: ‘I would like more up-to-date décor. Not happy about thin walls – can hear others in other rooms’; while another said that: ‘During winter months the ground floor is always cold. Needs to be heated a lot but then it’s too hot upstairs’.
- While *Nigerian* respondents were generally happy with their accommodation, a better environment, more space and improvements in local facilities were a priority for them. Issues identified included the need for better street cleaning, having a place that is closer to school and children’s playgrounds, and access to health care facilities locally.
- In the *Indian* community, respondents raised issues of the need for better security and policing, better built housing and larger rooms. One respondent living in an apartment with her family stated: ‘There is no lift. We

live on third floor. Alarm system is not working. We would prefer to have dishwasher’.

- *Chinese* respondents raised a range of issues regarding improvements they would like to see, including the need for more space, security in the neighbourhood and the general quality of accommodation. One stated that: ‘We have two people living in the living room and kitchen very small, table small too so no place to socialise’. Another said: ‘Need more space, too many people; better heating system for water; the kitchen uses electricity not gas and need gas for Chinese cooking’, while another said: ‘Enough room for family. Not enough furniture. House not well built, not warm and heating on more to keep house dry’.

## Kartik

Kartik is a 28-year-old Indian student, on a Student Visa, who has lived in Ireland for three and half years. He misses his family and says that he has plans to return to India this year. He is single, and works part-time as a sales assistant.

Kartik has been living in a three-bedroom rented apartment in Blanchardstown for one and a half years which he shares with friends. Officially the lease is signed by only three people but six people are living there because he says the rent is so expensive. He spends around 40 per cent of his income on housing. The apartment is well equipped with all basic facilities but he says that the accommodation is of average quality as no repairs have been carried out in a long time. He is availing of rental tax credit and knows that his landlord has to be registered with the revenue.

He says that people in his neighbourhood do not know each other and he believes that it is important that Indian people live in the area as he socialises with Indian as well as Irish people.

He visited his GP recently for health problems and he was very satisfied with the service. To access local information he uses the Internet at home. He uses the local bus service, which he says should be better. His previous accommodation was a two-bedroom apartment in the city centre which he shared with five other people, but the landlord did not fix problems when they arose and the rent was too high. Kartik describes home as being in India.

## 4.8 Knowledge of housing policies and regulations

There were wide differences between the interviewees in their knowledge of housing policies and regulations. Table 5 shows that interviewees, generally, had a relatively low level of knowledge of the housing system in Ireland

### Owner occupation

The level of awareness on how to make an application for a mortgage varied, with a total of 20 people out of the 40 respondents having knowledge of this process. While there was a relatively good level of awareness amongst the Indian, Nigerian and Lithuanian communities, this was very low in the Chinese community. One Lithuanian respondent stated: ‘I was trying to get a mortgage a few years ago. Myself and my girlfriend were approved for 100 per cent mortgage but the amount was too low to purchase at the time’. One Nigerian interviewee stated that: ‘I really want to buy a house. Tried both mortgage and affordable housing but am on a Stamp 2, not Stamp 4 so have no access to these’. Six Indian people were aware of how to apply for mortgage tax relief, while not one Chinese interviewee knew about this provision.

### Local authority, housing association and affordable housing

Lower levels of awareness existed about the procedures for applying for local authority housing and housing association housing. A total of sixteen out of the forty respondents knew how to apply for local authority housing, while only nine knew how to apply for social housing with a housing association, and eleven knew how to apply for local authority affordable housing. The majority of Indian and Chinese interviewees did not know how to apply for these types of housing.

### Privately rented accommodation

Specific knowledge of housing policies and regulations related to the privately rented sector were also captured in interviews, and the findings are illustrated in Table 6 below. Nine respondents out of forty were aware of the requirement for landlords to register. This low level of awareness was also reflected in the numbers who knew if their landlord was registered, and of their eligibility for Rental Tax Credit.

Although there was a general lack of awareness of Rental Tax Credit, those that were aware of it did not always avail of it. According to one Indian respondent: ‘I never claimed

*A large number of interviewees had aspirations for better accommodation and believed that having access to owner occupation or local authority rented housing were the main ways in which accommodation could be improved*

Table 5: Knowledge of the housing system

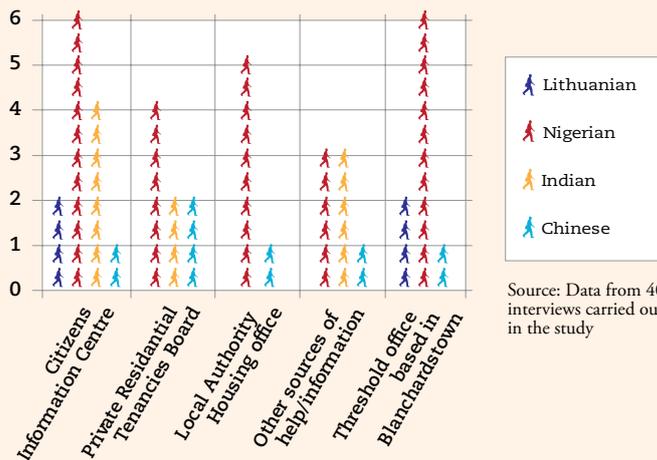
	Lithuanian	Nigerian	Indian	Chinese
<b>How to apply for a mortgage?</b>				
Yes	5	7	6	2
No	2	3	4	7
Undefined	3	0	0	1
<b>How to apply for local authority housing?</b>				
Yes	4	9	1	2
No	3	1	9	8
Undefined	3	0	0	0
<b>How to apply for social housing provided by a housing association?</b>				
Yes	4	4	0	1
No	6	5	10	9
Undefined	0	1	0	0
<b>How to apply for local authority affordable housing?</b>				
Yes	4	5	2	0
No	6	4	6	9
Undefined	0	1	2	1
<b>How to apply for mortgage tax relief?</b>				
Yes	5	4	6	0
No	5	6	3	9
Undefined	0	0	1	1

Table 6: Number of people who stated that they are aware of policies and regulations in the privately rented sector

	Lithuanian	Nigerian	Indian	Chinese
Aware landlord has to be registered	3	2	3	1
Landlord is registered	3	2	3	0
Aware can avail of rental tax credit	2	2	4	2

## Interviewees, generally, had a relatively low level of knowledge of the housing system in Ireland

Chart 12 Respondents' knowledge of where they can source information on housing



Source: Data from 40 interviews carried out in the study

rental tax credit, but am aware of it and some forms need to be filled but never got to it'. Of the Chinese respondents, there was a low level of knowledge, as one respondent stated: 'Don't know if landlord is registered. Have asked for tax credit from landlord but he rejected. Said he will reduce rental instead'; while another stated that: 'I don't know who primary landlord is so can't get tax credit'

Of the people interviewed, six living in rented accommodation were in receipt of Rent Allowance. These experienced some of the most significant problems in relation to housing security. As one Nigerian respondent stated:

The landlords they just won't take you if you are on Rent Allowance. I have lived in three different places where the landlord would not renew the lease, each time I had to move and start all over again. With three children this is very hard. I believe that they discriminate against anyone on Rent Allowance.

Knowledge of where people can turn to if they need advice about their housing is generally low. Only one person in the Lithuanian community, three in the Chinese community and five in the Indian community knew where they could find advice, in contrast to eight people from the Nigerian community. This higher level of awareness of information sources in the Nigerian community is related to a number of factors. Nigerian people see themselves as being in Ireland permanently and therefore invest more time in sourcing information. Furthermore, several of the Nigerian people interviewed had gained refugee status and are entitled to rent allowance and can apply for local authority housing. As one respondent stated:

I am here to live permanently, this is my home and I have made it my business to integrate and find out what I am entitled to. Now I am training to be a social worker and I want to make sure that there is security for my family in the future.

Chart 12 illustrates how interviewees' knowledge of where to source specific housing information varied. Overall Nigerian people made much better use of housing information services than the other communities, while knowledge of information sources was lowest in respondents from the Chinese community, followed by the Lithuanian community

The fact that most people were not aware of where they could go for help if they had problems with their housing is an indication of the extent to which they can effectively integrate. This is particularly an issue as this research has found that some migrants living in Ireland experience bad housing conditions and poor access to good quality housing. Several interviewees stated that they would go to a solicitor if they had problems with their landlord, whereas others would not know where to turn. If there are problems one Chinese man said that he: 'Doesn't want to waste time or get in trouble so would just find a new place'.

## 4.9 The local neighbourhood

The interviews also covered a range of issues regarding the local neighbourhood and community, access to local services, and people's own sense of their integration locally. Respondents rated these issues as very significant to their sense of home, their integration and general sense of belonging.

- A large number of respondents raised the issue of safety and security in their local neighbourhoods. The highest level of insecurity was reported by the *Nigerian* and *Chinese* communities, which included lack of acceptance by local people, harassment from young people, and a perception of a lack of community policing to address anti-social behaviour, crime and car theft.
- Several *Lithuanian* people commented on lack of security, particularly at night. One person stated: 'I wouldn't recommend walking in evenings as D15 not safest part of Dublin'; while another said that she 'Feels safe during day. Wouldn't walk on own in evening as it doesn't feel safe enough'.
- According to one *Nigerian* respondent: 'It is very rough', while another stated that 'The Irish people are not friendly and their young children are destructive'. Another said she felt insecure as 'Sometimes strangers knock on your door or teenagers sit on our wall'.
- *Indian* respondents stated that 'Car theft is a big problem', and 'It is not secure here'.
- In the *Chinese* community several respondents stated that their houses had been broken into, cars vandalised or bicycles stolen. As one respondent stated: 'I felt safe until car windows smashed recently when were home, but have lived here for three years with no problems'. Another had been burgled: 'My house windows broken and house robbed'; while another had experienced theft: 'My housemate had his bicycle stole but he didn't report it because he has no papers'.

There were mixed responses to the extent to which respondents felt that they were welcomed into the area.

- In some areas of Blanchardstown there has been significant new housing development and population growth. As one *Lithuanian* interviewee stated: 'Everyone is new in the area and some people are still moving in. Met the neighbours from downstairs', while another said that he 'Never felt...treated or spoken to differently'.

- Several *Nigerian* people stated that they were treated differently and spoke about experiences of racism and not feeling welcome. One Nigerian interviewee stated that he did not feel that he was treated differently: 'I feel I am treated as equally as everyone else and have not ever had any problems in this area'.
- People from the *Indian* community had a variety of experiences, including one respondent who said that: 'People are friendly but mostly keep to themselves except when you happen to meet them on the street'. Another in contrast said 'People are self-centred making their own gang'. A positive experience was identified by one Indian interviewee living in a multi-cultural neighbourhood: 'Multi-cultural, they are all Indian, Irish, Polish families. All are owner occupied houses'.
- There was less of a sense of connection and welcome amongst the *Chinese* community: 'I have never met anybody'. Others stated that: 'The building is not nice, people are not friendly' and 'We don't know because we have no connection with them, maybe it's because of our working hours', while another stated that: 'Different culture, different country and don't really communicate with each other'.

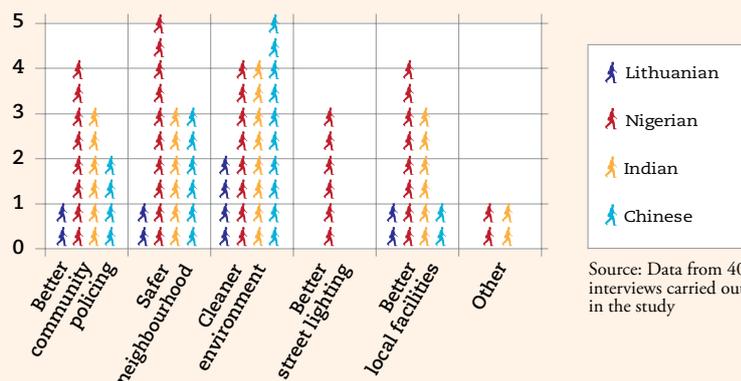
There was a variety of responses to the question 'What do you like about the local neighbourhood in which you live?' This ranged from proximity to work and therefore short travelling time, newness of the accommodation in the area, quiet and settled neighbourhood, local amenities, proximity to shops and schools, and the fact that the area is a settled area with lots of families. It is interesting to note that several people stated that they enjoyed living in a multi-cultural community. Positive comments were also made by some respondents about the friendliness of local people and the local environment. As one respondent stated: 'I feel very at home here, and very welcomed in my local community. My neighbours are very friendly'. A higher rate of positive responses was evident from people living in owner occupation and local authority rented accommodation, while the lowest level of positive responses came from people living in privately rented accommodation.

Responses varied in terms of what people did not like about the neighbourhood in which they lived. Again these ranged from a sense of insecurity, a lack of friendliness, and problems associated with heavy traffic:

- As one *Lithuanian* respondent stated: 'I don't think it safe enough in evening. Good few Lithuanian living

The fact that most people were not aware of where they could go for help if they had problems with their housing is an indication of the extent to which they can effectively integrate

Chart 13: Suggested improvements for local neighbourhood



in area and I try not to have anything to do with them to avoid problems’, while another said that the most important issue is that ‘The neighbourhood is not safe’.

- *Nigerian* respondents were critical of the problems of policing and security, lack of facilities and public services, including childcare and bus services, as well as the problems of traffic congestion: ‘They are building more houses with no facilities...tea-time traffic is terrible’.
- For *Indian* people, the area is seen as ‘a bit rough’, ‘not safe’, ‘sometimes gangs are coming round and the Gardai are not pro-active’, and for one resident the lack of a ‘local bank in Clonee and Ongan villages [means] we have to travel to Blanchardstown’.
- For *Chinese* people negative aspects of the local neighbourhood in which they live include: it is ‘too noisy’, ‘trouble with drinkers and children’, and ‘bad traffic’.

In response to the question ‘What would you do to improve your local neighbourhood?’, interviewees placed a strong emphasis on better community policing, the need for a safer neighbourhood, a cleaner local environment, and improved public services, particularly bus services (see Chart 13). Better street lighting and local facilities were also rated as important by some respondents. Nigerian respondents highlighted safety issues as a priority, while higher numbers of Chinese people stated that there was a need for a cleaner environment. One Indian respondent stated that she would like to see ‘Better health services at local level and round-the-clock pharmacy services’. Nevertheless, several people stated that they were happy with where they lived and would not want to change anything.

## Linus

Linus is a Lithuanian man who arrived in Ireland five years ago on a work permit to work at a petrol station, where he was recently promoted to manager. He lives close to where he works. At first he found it very hard to understand the Dublin accent. He got married last year in Lithuania to his long-term girlfriend and they then bought a two-bedroom apartment. He is very happy with the quality of his housing. Before buying the apartment he lived in private rented accommodation and was happy with the quality of that previous accommodation also.

He is satisfied with all aspects of his life in Dublin – his lifestyle, job and the area in which he lives. The neighbourhood consists of a lot of new build properties and all the residents are new, so there has not been much opportunity of meeting them. He does not believe that it is important to have people from his own ethnic background living in his neighbourhood. He socialises mainly with Lithuanian friends and a few friends through work, and he has not been involved in local community activities. He believes that speaking English is very important for integration.

He has not accessed many services and uses health services in Lithuania when he returns on holiday. He uses the Internet to access information. He is thinking of selling the apartment in September and moving back to Lithuania by the end of this year. He would like to settle down close to his family and have children.

## 4.10 Integration into the local community

### Contact with migrant groups or networks

Interviewees stated that they had relatively little contact with migrant groups or networks. None of the Chinese or Lithuanian people interviewed had had any contact with them, while three Nigerian people and seven Indian people had been in touch with migrant groups or networks. The relatively high level of participation by Indian people was explained by one interviewee as a reflection of the good networks that generally exist in the Indian community in Ireland.

### Local community integration

The extent to which respondents felt that they were a part of their local community was relatively low, although this varied between the four communities. Indian respondents identified the highest rate of belonging in their community, followed by the Lithuanians and Nigerians. However, no respondents from the Chinese community stated that they felt part of their local community.

- One *Lithuanian* respondent stated that he felt part of the local community: 'I feel very integrated and don't feel anything different from other locals'.
- In the *Nigerian* community one respondent stated that: 'Everybody keeps to themselves so there really isn't any personal contact with neighbours', while another said that there is 'Not much community-based activity to participate in'. Another said: 'We have a residence association meeting and we share ideas on how to improve environment'.
- In the *Indian* community respondents' views were mixed: 'I attend and participate [in] various community events and festivals'; while for another there was 'Not much interaction between people'.
- *Chinese* respondents felt much less part of their local community than other groups. As one respondent stated: 'I don't feel integrated in local community, maybe because of different culture and language and poor English', while for another: 'No contact, no information and no activities...no community...no such thing'.

### Acceptance by local people

A small number of respondents stated that they had been

treated differently because of their culture or race, with some stating that they had experienced direct discrimination in their local community. One Lithuanian interviewee, two Nigerian, two Indian and two Chinese interviewees had experienced being treated differently in their local community.

While being treated differently was rated fairly low by the respondents, there was a general sense of being different in the community and that acceptance was at a low level.

- One *Nigerian* respondent stated that he had been treated differently on many occasions 'because of my skin colour', while another said: 'When you are walking sometimes you see people of other cultures and they will walk on other side of road'.
- Responses from *Indian* people indicated that there was a low level of acceptance, in one case: 'Children bang on our doors, but not on Irish people's doors', while in another 'Abusive language by youngsters in surrounding area many times because of my colour'.
- Some *Chinese* respondents also experienced a lack of acceptance. For example: 'I got complaints at work because English not good and client said he wanted to speak to someone with good English and native speaker – actually my English is good enough to communicate'. Another said that: 'When we take the bus we were waiting but bus didn't stop but buses stop for Irish when they are waiting'; while another said that: 'I was hit whilst exercising in park; children called me 'Chink' and some people have thrown stones'.

### Voting

Registering to vote and participation in elections is an important indicator of integration. However, the survey found that even though EU and non-EU residents have a right to vote in local elections in Ireland, there was a low level of registration for voting and participation in voting in local elections. None of the Lithuanian interviewees, three of the Nigerian and two of the Indian interviewees had voted in local elections. Two Nigerians who voted in the last general election were able to do so because they had citizenship. There was also a low level of knowledge of locally elected representatives and local TDs. No Chinese interviewees knew who their locally elected representatives or local TD were, two Lithuanian respondents knew who their locally elected representatives were and only one knew who their local TD was. Nigerian and Indian interviewees had a much higher awareness of who their local elected representatives and TDs were.

*Interviewees placed a strong emphasis on better community policing, the need for a safer neighbourhood, a cleaner local environment, and improved public services, particularly bus services*

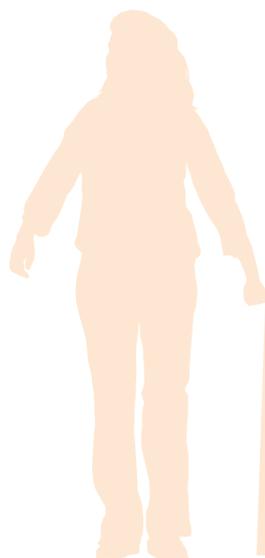
## Jessica

Jessica is from Beijing and is currently working in an IT company as a software developer. She graduated with a Masters in Computer Science. Her husband graduated in the same college with her, and works in an IT company outside of Dublin. They both have good incomes.

She and her husband share a house with two other colleagues. Jessica is satisfied with her current house which is new, of a good quality and convenient for shopping and work. She uses the local gym and cinema, and socialises in the city centre or at home with friends.

In her previous house in Warrenstown, she paid €330 for a small single room, not including bills. But she did not feel safe in that area and the house was very overcrowded. In her current accommodation she feels that her landlord does not treat her with respect. Her landlord always visits the house without giving notice.

She would like to be better integrated into the local community and would like to have more information about services in Blanchardstown. In addition, she would like to see an improvement in the overall environment where the house is located.



## Factors influencing integration into the local community

When asked what factors people felt would positively influence integration into their local communities, the majority of respondents stated that language was the most important, followed by acceptance by local people, knowing neighbours and socialising with people locally. Some respondents felt that it would be helpful to have local community facilities and more community resources, while others stated that a greater acceptance of different cultures was necessary.

As one Chinese respondent stated:

Sometimes, we feel unwelcome either at work or from the neighbour, it may be because we spent loads of time on working, and don't have time to communicate with them, and when we on work, some clients take account of our nationality, and unsatisfied our service. I don't think we are integrate well in the local community, the first reason is we don't have time to socialize, and the second reason is the language and the different culture and background, it make us feel isolate some times.

A Lithuanian respondent stated that:

I think the person himself has to express interest and effort to be integrated first of all – you have to meet and talk to people locally – using local facilities helps with this. If there were no local facilities then it would be very difficult to integrate.

An Indian respondent stated that:

Integration in Ireland is a political term. Some people and agencies discuss this because of their own needs. But in reality Irish people at community level are themselves not ready for integration.

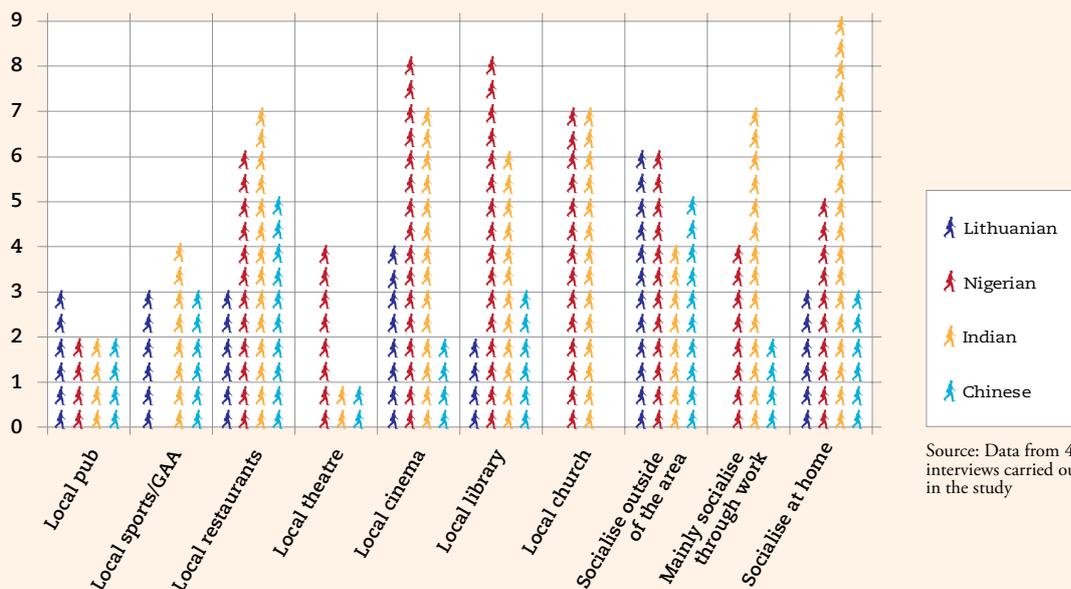
## Social and community life

The research also highlights how people socialise in their local communities and whether they participate in local community and social activities. Participation in the local community is an important element of local integration, and is reflected in the fact that a significant number of respondents felt that they were not integrated into their local communities.

One Chinese respondent stated that:

I don't feel either welcome or unwelcome from my neighbour, it may because we don't have too much communicate from each other, but most of them are friendly. I think the major problem for me to integrate into local

Chart 14: Places where respondents socialise



Source: Data from 40 interviews carried out in the study

community is the different life style with local people, and the different culture, we usually socialise indoor rather than outdoor activities.

Chart 14 shows that, on the whole, people stated that they tend to socialise at home or with work colleagues. The majority of Indian people interviewed socialised through home. There was also a high level of usage of local cinema and library for social activities amongst the Nigerian and Indian communities. For these two communities the local church was also an important place of social contact; whereas for all communities there was a low level of socialising through the local pub or through local sports/GAA. The Lithuanian respondents stated that they went to the local cinema, local Lithuanian coffee shop or socialised at home. As one Lithuanian interviewee stated: 'I work too hard to socialise and do odd hours. I come home to have a rest'.

Interestingly, there was a mixture of socialising by the interviewees within their ethnic communities but also with Irish people.

When asked where people socialised, the Chinese respondents, followed by Indian and Lithuanian respondents, were more likely to socialise in their own communities, while the majority of Nigerian people interviewed socialised in their own communities as well as with Irish people.

However, there was a relatively low level of positive response to how easy it is for the interviewees to socialise with local people in their communities. Five Nigerian people, followed by four Lithuanian and four Indian people found it easy to socialise, whereas only one Chinese person stated that it was easy to socialise with local people. One Lithuanian respondent stated that he had 'met a few nice people that [he is] good friends with', while another two did not socialise in the local area. One Nigerian respondent stated that local people 'don't reply when I greet them', while another stated that 'it is a very quiet community and people keep to themselves'. One Indian respondent said: 'Only keeping minimum communication', while, for two families, socialising with the neighbours and meals together were a common pattern of socialising. Chinese people stated that they rarely socialised with local people: 'Maybe my English is not good enough to integrate into local community'; 'Not easily accepted by locals'; 'There is no overlapping with Irish, even after work...culture difference is the reason'.

## Participation in the local community is an important element of local integration

### Aman

Aman is a 33-year-old Indian married man who has been living in Ireland for six years. He works as an IT professional and enjoys working and living in Ireland. He believes that Irish people are very friendly and that the quality of life is better in Ireland than in India.

He previously worked for a large firm in India and he came to Ireland to take up a consulting job on a Working Visa, and recently set up his own company. He now has permanent residency under the IBC scheme.

Aman and his family are living in the Blanchardstown area in a three-bedroom house that they purchased just over a year ago. The house is semi-detached, well equipped and has all the facilities they need. There are four members in the house including two children.

They live in the area because it is close to where his wife works. He said he feels safe, secure and welcome in his neighbourhood, which is largely made up of owner-occupied houses. Aman described his present accommodation as a happy family house. Previously he rented a three-bedroom house in Newbridge, which he was satisfied with.

According to Aman, language and acceptance by the local community are essential for integration. He has used local health services, a local crèche for his child, and the library, and is satisfied with them.

His older daughter will be going to school next year, and he has applied for a place for her in five different schools.

### 4.11 Access to local services

The research also examined how respondents access local services and their perceptions of the quality of the services that they access. Table 7 shows that, overall, respondents had a low level of participation in key public services in the last year, with the most widely accessed service being health care, usually the local GP. In total, twenty-seven people out of the forty respondents had accessed local health care. One Lithuanian respondent had been 'Really disappointed with the GP service. Was advised to go home and have some coca-cola, never went back'. Other respondents were happy with health services, although delays in waiting times for treatment, poor customer service at reception, and high costs of health care were issues raised. Another Lithuanian respondent stated that:

I have used local health services and there has been no problem...I had an operation last year [on the public health system] and this was fine...but the medication was more expensive, as it is in Lithuania...My only problem was that last year I needed to find a dentist but he was booked up for a week.

Although only approximately a quarter of the forty respondents stated that they had accessed local authority services, generally they were happy with these services. Those living in local authority rented accommodation were happy with the response from Fingal County Council if repairs were needed and several respondents stated that the Council had been very helpful. A large number of respondents had used the local library, whilst the majority had Internet access at home.

Two Nigerian and two Indian families experienced difficulties in getting places for their children in local schools. One parent had applied unsuccessfully to five schools. These difficulties affected integration for two families, as their children were educated outside of the area in schools close to where they had previously lived. Proximity to local schools was identified as a key service by parents in the research. Once in local schools, parents were generally happy with the quality of the education received and, in the case of one Indian family, attending a non-denominational school was a positive experience. Childcare was also an issue for parents with pre-school children. Several Indian respondents had experienced difficulty in accessing local childcare or childminding services, while one Chinese parent had found local childcare to be too expensive and often fully booked.

*Although only approximately a quarter of the forty respondents stated that they had accessed local authority services, generally they were happy with these services*

Table 7: Services that have been accessed in the last year

	Lithuanian	Nigerian	Indian	Chinese
Health services	6	9	7	5
Local authority services	1	4	4	2
Library and internet services	5	8	8	2
Childcare services	0	4	3	0
Education/training	6	7	7	1
Transport	5	6	10	6
Local community groups	1	1	2	2
Sports facilities	5	1	3	4
Local shops	8	7	10	6
Information services	1	5	3	0

As one Indian parent stated:

When we moved to Blanchardstown in 2004, we found it hard for our older son to gain admission to a nearby good school, so for two and half years my son had to travel to the school he had attended when we were living in Monkstown, until he completed his primary education. My children now go to the local Educate Together School, which I really like as they don't impose one particular religion on all children.

Twenty-one respondents were undertaking local education and training courses, full-time or part-time. Several Nigerian people had accessed a job club or training services through Blanchardstown Area Partnership, while Indian people were more likely to be engaged in work-related training. Several Chinese people attended language schools or training courses related to their work outside of the Blanchardstown area. There were also different levels of participation in local sports facilities between the four communities, with thirteen respondents stating that they used these services. Lithuanian respondents were more likely to participate in the local gym, soccer or basketball than the other communities.

The majority of respondents used local shops and a large number used the Blanchardstown Shopping Centre for their shopping, which met most of their needs. In some areas, for example Ongar, there were few shops and the absence of a Chinese shop meant that most people from the Chinese community bought their food in Dublin city centre.

Only six of the people interviewed used local community facilities or participated in local community groups, and several respondents stated that they either did not know about local community facilities or that no local community facilities existed for them. For several people, the local

church or place of worship was the focus of their main local community participation and social networks.

One of the main complaints about local services was the bus service, which a large number of respondents stated was of poor quality, unpredictable and infrequent. As one respondent stated: 'Waiting for a bus is very hopeless and frustrating'; another said 'Buses are not on time and the wait is too long'. A further respondent said that: 'Traffic bad morning and evening on the bus'. Only three bus users were satisfied with the service, compared to 22 who were dissatisfied with the service. As another respondent stated: 'There are no problems with the neighbourhood as such, it's just that it's a long way from the centre of Dublin, and there are limits to the public transport which makes things difficult sometimes'.

Regarding access to information about local services, the majority of interviewees used the Internet to access information, followed by information provided through friends and local networks. There was also a high level of usage of the local library by respondents. Two Chinese people stated that they did not know how to access local information services. One person stated that: 'We don't have too much information about local services'; another stated that 'I don't know service centres exist in the area'; while another stated that: 'There is not enough information about how to access services...this is the major reason why we can't integrate in the local community'. One person had used Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) services locally which 'was a good and positive experience', while another who had recently become unemployed had a positive experience with the local FÁS service.

## *Where people live and settle is important in determining the quality of their life, their access to services, and their long-term integration*

### 4.12 Sense of 'home'

The interviews explored with participants the importance of 'home' and belonging. This is of particular interest as a sense of 'home' can affect long-term plans as well as integration. The sense of 'home' was found to be most important for those interviewees who were planning to stay in Ireland long-term, coupled with those that were also raising dependent children. A sense of 'home' was highest in the Nigerian and Indian communities and this is expressed in the case of one Nigerian interviewee:

For me my home is important to determining my level of physical, mental, psychological and spiritual peace and well-being. The place I live will determine whether I sleep peacefully at night or whether I have nightmares. It determines whether I consider my life to be worth living or not.

For one Indian participant:

The meaning of home for me: it is a place where me and my family can live with full freedom.

Another Indian participant said that she missed her parents and life back home:

I would like to go back to India after few years and it will help my children to learn more about Indian culture. For me the meaning of home is that home is in India, same culture, relatives, all religious ceremonies, marriages, same language. But we do feel this is second home as we have our own house and settled here with children, we can watch here our Indian TV channels. Culturally we still live an Indian life, eat pure Indian vegetarian home-made food.

Several participants spoke about the importance of 'home' in providing security, as in the case of one Indian interviewee: 'Home means a sense of security'. In the case of the majority of Chinese and Lithuanian interviewees, who were not planning to stay on in Ireland in the long-term, 'home' was defined as being their country of origin. Many did not view their current accommodation as 'home', rather a place to live. This is particularly important because in these two communities there are higher rates of shared accommodation and overcrowding, and many live in privately rented accommodation compared to the other two communities.

### 4.13 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the importance of housing in the integration of minority ethnic communities in Ireland. Variations in housing quality, security of tenure, safety and security in the local neighbourhood, access to information and local services differ between and within the four communities. While participants were generally happy with their access to local services, many lacked access to information about housing policies and regulations governing privately rented accommodation or local authority housing services.

The study has found that where people live and settle is important in determining the quality of their life, their access to services, and their long-term integration. A person's legal/migration status and the length of time they have been living in Ireland impacts on housing choices, the tenure in which they live, and their long-term housing plans. Poor housing can lead to exclusion, overcrowding and poor health, while good housing is important to integration and a sense of 'home' and belonging. Housing policies play a key role in influencing patterns of settlement and housing provision, which can impact on segregation and clustering.

It is clear that housing quality and security of tenure within the privately rented sector is an issue for some migrants. Overcrowding, lack of repairs and insecurity of tenure are not uncommon experiences for participants, particularly from the Chinese community. While many people expressed satisfaction with their housing, some participants did state that they were not in a position to change their current situation, for example, for fear of loss of a tenancy or because of affordability, and for that reason their acceptance of their current housing situations has to be viewed as due to a lack of housing choices and options. People living on Rent Allowance experienced some of the most significant problems in finding suitable, long-term, good quality accommodation; this is an area where respondents felt they were discriminated against by landlords who were reluctant to rent to social welfare recipients.

Having access to good quality, sustainable and long-term housing options in the privately rented sector is therefore a key issue that needs to be addressed in policy and housing provision. In contrast, a number of migrants, particularly those living in owner occupied housing and those living in newly built premises to rent, experienced good housing conditions.

## *A sense of 'home' can affect long-term plans as well as integration*

The research also shows that the way in which people integrate and their sense of belonging and 'home' are also affected by the local neighbourhood and their perception of whether they feel welcomed and included in the area. These are closely connected to the provision of local community facilities, including accessible information and services. While a large number of respondents were happy living in the area, some did not feel welcome or experienced a sense of hostility/distance from local people. However, a significant number of participants had positive experiences in their local communities, knew their neighbours and felt welcomed.

Knowledge of how the housing system works and the provision of information about rights, entitlements and responsibilities are also found to be major issues for the improved integration of migrants in housing. Neighbourhood planning, community development, and the integration of newly arrived migrants are all crucial to their long-term inclusion.

It is interesting to note that the survey found evidence from the housing pathways of interviewees that the quality of accommodation tends to improve the longer a person has been resident in Ireland. Newly arrived migrants experienced the worst living conditions, often sharing and moving regularly. This raises some important issues for informing policy and for the provision of information and assistance to newly arrived migrants in their settlement plans.

Another key issue raised is the way in which services are planned in local areas, particularly local transport, health and education services. The findings from this study show that poor access to services, a lack of access to information, and language difficulties were major factors affecting integration, combined with a lack of acceptance by local people, lack of community facilities and cultural differences.

Legal status and the ability to plan in the long-term are significant factors in acquiring good quality housing. This study has shown that being undocumented or having short-term permits work against integration, particularly as people in these situations are often reluctant to complain about housing conditions. For some people gaining legal status, or having EU citizenship (as in the case of Lithuanian respondents), enabled them to access social and affordable housing, and home ownership. While some temporarily resident migrants were limited in their housing choices, a number of Indian people who had purchased their own houses did so in order to have access to secure and better quality housing.

Local community policing and improved local security are particularly important to migrant communities, especially

where they are not fully accepted in their local communities. Better community awareness of the needs of migrant communities could also help improve integration. This can be found in the experiences of some respondents who felt more integrated because they were accepted by local people and were welcomed into local communities. Breaking down the isolation experienced by some migrants is closely connected to improving a sense of belonging and assisting integration, and this could also help to improve connections between local people and new arrivals.

Integration is also closely connected to people's sense of 'home' and belonging. If people are able to plan in the long term and create good quality homes for themselves and their families, they are more likely to feel that they belong. This is often not the case for people living in poorer quality and insecure privately rented housing. In this study a sense of 'home', together with a feeling of security and safety, was closely associated with the extent to which people participated in and felt integrated into their communities.

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## Segun

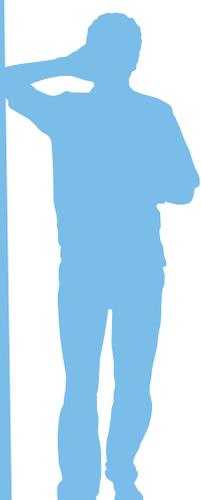
Segun and his wife came to Ireland five years ago from Nigeria as asylum seekers. They have three children who were born in Ireland. Segun works in transport services, while his wife works in the health sector.

Having lived previously in a two-bedroom apartment in the same neighbourhood, Segun bought his three-bedroom home about ten months ago under the local authority's affordable housing scheme. Prior to that Segun experienced difficulties in obtaining a loan to purchase a house in the area, as the banks took into account the expiry of their residency when processing the mortgage application. He stated that the banks should be made aware that residency is automatically renewed and that this should not be a barrier to taking out a loan.

He is happy with his home and the area is close to local amenities and services, such as the Ongar village shopping centre and bus service. His mortgage costs €1,300 per month, which amounts to 20-30 per cent of the family's monthly income. The cost of childcare for his two younger children who are not in school comes to the same amount.

He maintains that it is important that people from the same culture live around him as this gives him a sense of security. Segun said he has friends from Nigeria living in his estate, and he also socialises with Irish people within and outside his area.

Segun feels that home means security for his children and stability for his family. He says that he feels at home in Ireland.



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