A quantitative profile analysis of African immigrants in 21st Century Dublin*

By Abel Ugba

Department of Sociology
Trinity College Dublin

ugbaa@tcd.ie

*This is the first of a two-part report. The complete report, including analysis of views from the focus groups that I convened to discuss the results of this survey, will be published in autumn this year. All enquiries should be directed to the Mphil in Ethnic and Racial Studies, Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin.

Financial assistance from the ‘Know Racism’ campaign has made this project possible. Many thanks for its support.

May 2004
Introduction

Africans\(^1\) have been present in Ireland since the 18\(^{th}\) Century (McKeon, 1997; Smith and Mutwarasibo, 2000; Rolston and Shannon, 2002) although little is documented about their number, mission and activities. However, the available evidence suggests that among those Africans in 18\(^{th}\) Century Ireland were soldiers and drummers of the 29\(^{th}\) Army Regiment, which had set up a base in Dublin in 1757. There were also domestic servants who, as McKeon (1997) reported, were accused by the natives of taking away their jobs. She also acknowledged that a few of those earliest African migrants were very wealthy individuals and that they arrived in Ireland with a retinue of domestic servants and helpers. Rolston and Shannon’s (2002) account was mostly of freed slaves from America who came to Ireland in the 19\(^{th}\) Century to rally support for the abolitionist movement.

In 2004 it is easily discernable that an increased number of Africans are living and working in Ireland. In Dublin, Colourfully-attired African mothers with babies strapped to their backs in that uniquely African style can be seen in many areas while young men and women, many of them adorned in attractively braided hair and fashionable clothes walk the streets or huddle in front of ‘ethnic’ shops in the predominantly immigrant business enclaves of Parnell Street and Moore Street. Increasingly, many Africans can be seen at the wheels of Dublin buses, the state-owned transport company. In the Royal College of Surgeons and in other colleges, there is a visible increase in the number of Africans, confirming popular and official perception (www.hea.ie) that more African students have enrolled in universities in Ireland in recent times.

Khalid Koser (Koser, 2003) has used the term ‘new African diasporas’ to describe the new and more recent (mainly post Second World War) transatlantic migrations and settlement of black Africans in the West as distinct from and largely unrelated to the forced shipment of Africans to Europe and the Americas for the purpose of slavery. African migrant groups in Ireland fit Koser’s description of ‘new African diasporas’. In fact, it would be correct to regard them as the newer of the new

\(^1\) In this report, I have used the term ‘Africans’ to denote ‘colour’ or ‘black’ persons from Sub-Sahara Africa, including South Africa. I’m well aware that I have deployed the term un-problematically given the on-going
African diasporas, given that the large scale presence of Africans in Ireland is taking place almost half a century after African immigrants have established a larger presence in places like the United Kingdom and France. It is fitting therefore that any analysis of the situation of Africans in Ireland should recognise the larger, wider and different socio-political climate in which this migration is taking place. Different sets of factors are at work today and the reasons and routes of migration are as different as are the relationships African migrants maintain with their homelands.

There have been popular and mostly simplistic explanations (most of them propagated by anti-immigration groups and state officials) why increased number of Africans (and other migrant groups) has migrated to Ireland in recent years. Among them is the view that Ireland’s ‘lax’ immigration and citizenship policies and its ‘generous’ welfare system have made it a magnet for migrants from poorer non-EU countries. In the view of adherents to this line of reasoning, Ireland ought not be a migration destination for migrants from Africa because it lacks direct colonial ties to the continent and also because there are no direct flights from Ireland to countries in Africa. While Ireland may not have related with African countries as a colonial power, contacts between Africans and the Irish date back many centuries and have taken place through channels like trades, missionary activities, anti-slavery movements and when the Irish came to Africa as participants in the British colonial enterprise (Roston and Shannon, 2002; Ugba, 2003).

A critical analysis of the reasons more Africans have come to Ireland in recent years must take into account the historical, linguistic and political connections between Africa and Ireland and it must also focus on recent and current developments, not only in Ireland but also in African countries. The fact simply is that there are more voluntary and involuntary migrations out of Africa to different places these days than any other time, except perhaps during the slave trade. The social and political instability and natural disasters that have plagued much of Africa since the mid-1980s have contributed to this rise in outward migration. Many studies (Rotte and Volger, 1998; Marren, 2001; and Massey, 1988; Zlotnik, 2001) have shown that there is a high tendency for people to migrate from politically unstable, socially insecure and economically poor regions to more stable and
prosperous societies. According to Findley (2001), refugees originated from only eight African countries in the 1960s, mainly those governed by white minority governments. But by 1997, refugees were fleeing conflicts in 21 Sub-Saharan countries.

A less emphasised factor in most analyses of the increased presence of Africans in Ireland but one that has emerged as a strong factor in the course of my research is Ireland’s geographical proximity to the United Kingdom where there has been a larger and more settled population of Sub-Saharan Africans. Many African immigrants in Ireland at the beginning of the 21st Century had either lived in the UK, have friends/relatives there, travel there frequently or consume ethnic products, including newspapers and magazines, manufactured by or procured through Africans in the UK. Also, one must not underestimate the strength of the linguistic affinity between Ireland and many countries in Africa. This relationship, unofficial though it may be, has engendered in many English-speaking Africans the perception that it would be less difficult for them to realise their ambitions or fulfil their dreams in Ireland than in other non-English speaking European countries. Lastly, one cannot underestimate the impact of social networks and consequent chain migrations.

Until the 2002 census, most estimates of the total numbers of Africans in Ireland were haphazard and based mainly on asylum applications and work permits and student statistics. According to the census results, 20,981 people claiming nationality of an African country were living in Ireland in 2002 and more than one-third of this (or 8,969) were Nigerians while 4,185 came from South Africa (Census, 2002). While these figures represent the strongest official indication of the number of Africans in Ireland, they are most probably not a true reflection of the statistical strength of the community. For example, they do not include Africans who are also Irish citizens or those who are natives of European countries even though they are active members of African groups and organisations. Some participants in this research insinuated that many ‘undocumented’ Africans did not present themselves for enumeration during the census for fear of detection and possible deportation. However, the population estimates released in April 2003 (CSO, 2003) showed that
7 per cent (or 3,535) of the 50,500 immigrants who came into Ireland between April 2002 and April 2003 were nationals of African countries.

An analysis of work permit statistics and asylum applications would reveal that there has been a steady increase in the numbers of Africans coming into Ireland for these purposes in the past five or six years. However, official statistics can, for a variety of reasons, be notoriously unreliable for ascertaining the actual number of immigrants. In the specific case of asylum applications, the actual numbers are often distorted or exaggerated by multiple applications. Another reason, as David Styan (2003) explained, is that these statistics normally cover “only applications for asylum, not final decisions on status.” In other words, the fact of putting in an application does not guarantee permanent legal residency in the county. In Ireland, the rate at which asylum applications is rejected has been quite high, according to the Irish Refugee Council (www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie). On the other hand, the rejection of a formal application for asylum does not always transpire into cessation of residency for the applicant. Most categories of immigrants, including asylum seekers, have been known to seek legal, extra legal and sometimes illegal means to remain in the country when their formal rights to remain expire.

According to asylum statistics published by the ORAC, about one-third of persons who applied for political asylum in Ireland in 2002 and in 2001 were Nigerians while Zimbabweans were among the top five nationalities (ORAC, 2004). About 40% of the total 7,900 applications made in 2003 were by Nigerians. In the years before 2001, citizens of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to a lesser extent those from Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Angola and Liberia featured prominently on the asylum application lists. On work permits, more South Africans than nationalities of any other African countries have received permits to work in Ireland. A total of 2,273 were issued in 2002 (Dept of Trade and Enterprise, 2004) to citizens of South Africa. This increased to 2468 in 2003. The total permit issued to Nigerians in 2002 was 87 compared to the 84 that were issued in 2003. Other African countries whose citizens have received permits to work and reside in Ireland in the past three years include Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Gambia, Namibia, Niger, Lesotho, Malawi and a host of others.
The upward swing in the numbers of Africans has rejuvenated a ‘community’ that had been relatively dormant and invisible in many ways. Even now Africans in Dublin are still invisible in some ways, especially when there is no anti-social behaviours, which a few members of the media (or a section of the media) can report on. But the visibility I am referring to here is the increased economic, social and cultural activities of members of the African communities. Through participation in ‘ethnic’ businesses, African-led Pentecostal and indigenous churches, ethnic and national media and in the academia, Africans are asserting their presence in 21st Century Ireland and inviting the larger society to acknowledge, debate and cherish ‘difference’. Through these and other activities, they are also creating ‘safe’ spaces or spaces of refuge from the physical and psychological effects that adjusting to a new environment entail and also from the hostile and racist reactions that have greeted the larger scale presence of immigrants in Ireland.

**The purpose of this study**

In 2004, there is still a dearth of socio-scientific studies on the numbers and activities of Africans in Ireland. In recent times the studies conducted by Smith and Mutwarasibo (2000) and by Elisa Joy White (2002) have shed some light on aspects of the fast-growing African population in Ireland. While these and other studies (Komolafe, 2002) have deepened our understanding of Africans, they were largely exploratory and lacked basic socio-cultural data on members of the community. A project on the needs of African Asylum Seekers published by the African Refugee Network in 1999 focused exclusively on asylum seekers. Although many recent African immigrants to Ireland are asylum seekers, a large number are workers and students and relatives of established migrants.

The work published in 2001 by the Irish section of Amnesty International (2001) produced a large amount of data on the quantity and frequency of racist incidents perpetuated against immigrants and those from ethnic minority. The report succeeded in re-focussing public attention on the plight of immigrants due mainly to the large amount of statistics it produced and also because it was the first large-scale research of its kind. It major weakness was that it homogenised the experiences of diverse immigrant groups and did not attempt, for example, to distinguish the experiences of Africans from those of other ethnic minority groups.
It is important, for theoretical and practical reasons, to understand the circumstances in which modern-day African immigrants have arrived and settled in Ireland as well as document the strategies they have adopted to create their own safe and legitimate spaces. In other words, it is critically important to have essential and research-based data that would facilitate the composition of the story of the ‘new African diaspora’ in Ireland. This research is a contribution towards that goal. It is also my hope that data from this study will prove useful to individuals and groups who are keen to understand and relate with Africans in Ireland as well as to those charged with the responsibility of formulating and implementing policies aimed at facilitating the social and economic mobility of Africans and their ‘integration’ into the larger society. My hope is that the findings in this report will serve as necessary background information for students, researchers and academics who will in future conduct deeper and specific investigation of the African population in Ireland.

**Methodology**

This project covers Africans in the Greater Dublin Area and it is divided into two main phases:

Phase 1: A questionnaire survey of 182 respondents selected by non-Random sampling methods. The questionnaires were administered in the Greater Dublin Area between June and November 2002.

Phase 2: Focus group and email analyses of the results of the questionnaire survey. These were conducted between November 2003 and March 2004. In total, no fewer than 250 Africans from about 30 countries participated in this research either as respondents, advisers, field researchers or critics.

This report covers the first phase only. The full report, including in-depth analysis of opinions and views from the focus group and email discussions will be published in autumn 2004. The formulation of the questionnaires was preceded by a series of formal and informal consultation with individuals, mainly activist members of African-led groups. Their opinions and advice were useful in identifying the most salient issues and in shaping the final content of the questionnaire. A total of six field assistants (three men and three woman) took part in administering the questionnaires. Some of the field assistants and a few other persons took part in the pilot survey.
premises, private homes, places of worship and in restaurants. A few questionnaires (less than one percent) were returned by post but the others were completed on the spot, usually by the interviewees.

Summary of major findings

GENERAL
_ A total of 182 persons from 17 African countries participated in this survey. Eighteen nationalities are represented; the vast majority are citizens of African countries.
_ Of the 182 respondents, 50.8% were women and 49.2% were men.
_ The vast majority – more than 7 out 10 – were Christians while just over 26% were Muslims.

IMMIGRATION HISTORY AND STATUS
_ The overwhelming majority (85.9%) have been in Ireland for four years or less. Among those who have been here for one year or less, there are more women than men.
_ Over 60% said the original reason they came to Ireland was to seek political asylum, 17.6% came to study while 12.5% came to work.
_ More women than men said they came to seek asylum while more men said they came to study or to work.
_ On their current status, half of the respondents said they were asylum seekers or refugees. Although there were more male asylum seekers, the number of female refugees is slightly higher. 13.1% said there were Irish citizens, the majority of them female.

IDENTITY/IDENTIFICATION
_ More than 8 in 10 respondents (82.6%) want to be called an African man or woman and only 1 in 10 wants to be identified as a black man or woman.
_ The percentage of men who want to be called an African is slightly higher than that of women.
CHILDREN AND FAMILY

- Two-thirds of the respondents indicated they were single. The percentages of those who are single are higher among recent arrivals and it decreases dramatically among those who have been in Ireland for five years or more.
- Over 83% of married respondents have a spouse who is African. More men than women are married to a spouse who is not African. Of those who have non-African spouses, the majority are married to Irish men or women.
- Almost 40% of married respondents said their spouses live elsewhere, mostly in the countries they came from. There are more female respondents living without their spouse. Also, the percentage of those living without their spouse is higher among recent arrivals.
- Close to 30% of single respondents would like to marry an African. More women than men expressed a preference for an African spouse. About 15% want a spouse who is Irish. Another 15% want to marry a European while 16% want a spouse of the same faith. A sizeable 20% gave a range of other preferences.
- Just over 41% of respondents said they have a child/children, the majority of them were women. In total, 70 respondents had 155 children. Nearly 8 in 10 said their children live them.
- More than 7 in 10 said their child/children were born in Ireland. In total, there were 73 children born to 51 respondents in Ireland.
- Just over half of the respondents said their children were in school. The other half who said theirs were not in school said it was mostly because such children were below school age. In total, 36 respondents had 81 children in school. Nine in 10 said they were happy with the conditions of their children in school.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- Close to half (47.4%) of the total respondents indicated they had third-level education, one-third had second level and only 5.7% had primary. There are no significant differences in educational attainment between men and women. An overwhelming majority had their formal education in their own countries or in other parts of Africa.
- 40% of respondents said they have had problems with educational institutions and potential employers because of possessing a certificate not obtained in Ireland.
More than half of the respondents (54.7%) said they have not acquired additional qualifications since arriving in Ireland. The majority of them are among those who have been in Ireland for four years or less, although some who have been in Ireland for five to ten years are also represented.

The vast majority of those who have not received additional qualifications are asylum seekers and those who describe themselves as ‘immigrants’. The number of female who have had additional training is slightly higher than male.

**JOB/ECONOMIC STATUS**

Unemployment appears to be a big problem as more than seven in 10 respondents (71.1%) said they were ‘unemployed’, ‘full-time parents’, ‘students’ or ‘in-between jobs’. 22% described themselves as ‘employed’ while 6.9% said they were ‘self-employed’.

More than half of the ‘unemployed’ said it was because they had no ‘work permit’.

The vast majority (75%) of the self-employed are men while 91% of full-time parents are women.

One-third of those who are gainfully employed said they were on a net weekly income of between €351 and €500. About 38% earned between €200 and €350. Generally, male respondents earn higher than women.

**ACCOMMODATION**

There appears to be more respondents living in Dublin 7 than in any other postal district. And more respondents indicated they live in postal districts located on the Northside of Dublin than on the southside.

Three-quarters of the respondents live in hostels

Less than one in 10 own their houses or apartments

**HEALTH**

94% of respondents described their health either as ‘stable’ or ‘very stable’.

Similarly, 96% they or members of their family did not have any form of disability.

Equally, 85% of 157 respondents said they have access to a GP

About 60% said they communicate directly with the Health Board while about 40% do so through Community Welfare Officers
More than 73% described the relationship they have with the health boards as either ‘cordial’ or ‘very cordial’.

**SOCIAL RELATIONS/LEISURE**

About 40% of the respondents said they were members of a religious group while only 22% said they belonged to a national/ethnic association.

Among those who said they belonged to a religious group, there were more women.

One-third of the respondents believe their religious groups cared about them more than any other group. About 30% said anti-racism groups/NGOs.

About one-third also said they would consult their religious groups about problems in their family. 30% would consult friends.

7 in 10 respondents said they ‘very rarely’ or have ‘never’ visited an Irish pub. The majority of the 28% who said they visited pubs ‘very often’ or ‘often’ were men.

The majority of those who have ‘never visited’ or ‘visited rarely’ said visiting pub was not their preferred style of socialising.

**EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN DUBLIN**

Over 57% said they were ‘happy’ in Dublin while 22.8% said they were ‘very happy’, 18% were ‘neither happy nor unhappy’ while only 1.2% said they were ‘unhappy’.

The less than 1% who described themselves as ‘very unhappy’ were female asylum seekers who have been in Dublin for one year or less.

Among those who described themselves as ‘very happy’, many have Irish citizenship. All those who said they were ‘unhappy’ were refugees.

None of those who said they were ‘unhappy’ or ‘very unhappy’ was married.

The percentages of those who said they were ‘happy’ and ‘very happy’ are slightly higher among those who are married to non-African.

All those who described themselves as ‘unhappy’ or ‘very unhappy’ were in the younger age brackets (15 – 25 years) while all those who were 46 years or above described themselves as ‘happy’.
ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

_ 66% said they want to make Ireland their new home, even if a second home, about 8% said they don’t want to make Ireland their new home while 26% weren’t sure.

_ Of those who want to make Ireland their new home, 55% were women and the percentage is highest among those who have been in Ireland longest.

_ 77% of those who said they were refugees want to make Ireland their new home compared to 70% of those who said they were Irish citizens. The desire to make Ireland a new home is quite low among students (24%) and asylum seekers (55%).

_ Of those who are married, 80% want to make Ireland their new home compared to 48% of those who are single.

_ Half of the respondents said they believe that Africans in Dublin would some day be treated as equal citizens, 20.6% said that would never happen while 28.8% said they weren’t sure.

_ The optimism was higher among female respondents. The optimism was lower among those who have been in Ireland longest

_ 7 in 10 respondents believe that the Government, NGOs and minority ethnic groups should work together to promote equality and interculturalism.

INTRODUCTION

A total of 182 respondents participated in this survey conducted in the Greater Dublin Area between June and August 2002. Encounters or meetings between respondents and the informants took place mostly in business premises, private homes, places of worship and offices. Six of the seven persons who administered the questionnaires were members of the African community. They received instructions from this researcher on how to approach respondents and how to administer the questionnaires. A few questionnaires were returned by post by respondents who were unable to complete it on the spot but most were completed in the presence of those who administered them. On the average, it took about 20 minutes to complete one questionnaire. Some of them (those who administered the questionnaires) had also taken part in the pilot study and their comments and criticisms were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Of the 182 total respondents, 179 came from 17 African countries. Three respondents did not indicate their countries of origin. Persons from Nigeria accounted for 57% of the total interview population, followed by Sierra Leone (8.9%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (4.5%). A total of 18 nationalities are represented in this survey. The respondents are mostly nationals of African countries with the exception of 10 Irish and one Swedish. At 56 percent of the total, Nigerians constituted the highest number of nationalities represented in the survey followed by nationalities of Sierra Leone at 8.2% those of the Democratic Republic of Congo at 3.3%.

Three correspondents did not also indicate their gender. Of the 179 who did, 88 (or 49.2%) were males and 91 or 50.8% were females.

Religious beliefs of respondents

Three correspondents did not also indicate their gender. Of the 179 who did, 88 (or 49.2%) were males and 91 or 50.8% were females.
There were more respondents who claimed ‘Christianity’ as their religion (73.2%) as against the 26.3% who indicated they were ‘Muslims’. Only one respondent indicated he was neither a Muslim nor a Christian while three respondents failed to indicate their religious beliefs. While there indeed may more African immigrants who are Christians than those who are Muslims, the ratio/categorisation reflected in this study may not reflect the reality. None of the six field researchers involved in this project is a Muslim. Christian field researchers were more likely to approach interviewees who are also Christians, perhaps members of their church, and that may partly explain the high percentage of Christian respondents.

The majority of respondents (46.9%) were in the 15 – 25 years age bracket. Those between 26 and 35 years were 29.1% and those between 36 and 45 years were 23.5%. Only one respondent indicated that he was either 46 years or above while three respondents failed to indicate their age. These findings are generally in line with the results of other studies (Lentin and Ugba, Forthcoming; Komolafe, 2002). When the ages of the respondents were compared along gender lines, there were more women in the younger age brackets.
FAMILY/CHILDREN

Just under 61% said they were single while 32.9% said they were married. One person failed to indicate his/her marital status. Although only 71 respondents said they were married, 72 indicated whether or not their spouse was also an African, which would probably mean that the respondent that had failed to indicate his or her marital status is in fact married.
Of the 72 married respondents, 60 (83.3%) said that their spouse was also an African while 12 (16.7%) said they were married to a non-African. A total of 110 respondents did not need to answer this question because they had already indicated that they were single. Only 8 persons of the 12 married to non-Africans indicated the nationalities of their spouse. Five were Irish, 2 British and one German.
Just over 62% indicated that they lived together with their spouse while 37.8% said their spouse lived in another location, mostly in their countries-of-origin. One respondent said his/her spouse lived in London and another said his/hers lived in Killarney (a town in Ireland). Many did not give the reason they live apart from their spouse but some of those who did said they were still hoping their spouse would join them, they wanted to be sure of a job or that their spouse were yet to get an entry visa.

Out of the respondents who said they were single, sixteen (or 14.3%) said they preferred an Irish spouse, the same number said they preferred a European while 30 (or 26.8%) indicated they preferred a fellow African.
The number of those who said they preferred someone of the same faith for a spouse was 18 or just over 16% while those who indicated a preference for someone from their ethnic group was 8%.
A sizeable 20.5% gave a range of other preferences which include: ‘whoever’, ‘as God will choose for me’ ‘person that would care and love me’ ‘anyone that comes my way’ ‘anybody I fall in love with’, African-European etc.

**CHILDREN**

A total of 100 (or 58.8%) of the 170 respondents who indicated whether they have children or not said they had none while 70 (or 41.2%) said they had. In total, the 70 respondents have 155 children. Respondents who said they had two children were 20 while the number who had a single child was 17.

![Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents with and without children.]

Twelve respondents indicated they had three children each, seven had four each, three had five each, two had six each and only one had seven children. The majority (78.1%) indicated that their children lived with them while 21.9% indicated theirs lived in a different location, mostly in the countries they came from. One respondent each indicated their child/children lived in England and in the United States. Many reasons were advanced by the respondents why their children lived in a different location. They ranged from inability to obtain an entry visa, ‘insecurity’, ‘no means to bring them over’, ‘uncertain residence status’ and others who simply said ‘family reasons’ or ‘personal reasons’.
Of the 72 respondents who indicated whether their children/child was born in Ireland, 51 (70.8%) said theirs were born in Ireland while 21 (or 29.2%) indicated theirs were not born here.

A total of 29 respondents indicated they had 1 child born in Ireland, 15 indicated 2 children, 2 indicated 3 children each and another 2 indicated 4 children each. In total, 73 children were born to 51 respondents in Ireland.

**CHILDREN IN SCHOOL**

A total of 70 respondents answered the question on their children’s educational status. Of this number, 36 (or 51.4%) said their children were in school while 34 (or
had 2 children each in school, 10 respondents had 1 child each, 6 respondents had 3 children, 4 had 4 children each and only 1 each had 5 and 6 children in school. In total, 36 respondents had 81 children in schools. In total, 36 respondents had 81 children in school. All those who indicated that their children were not in school said it was because the children were not yet of school age. Only one respondent said his/her child was not in school because he/she had not ‘settled down’ in the country. The majority of respondents, 37 of the 39 (94.9), said they were happy with the condition/treatment of their children/child in school. One of those who said he/she wasn’t happy with the condition of his/her child in school said it was because the children/child had complained of bullying in school.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Eighty-three (or 47.4%) of 175 respondents indicated they had third-level educational qualifications, 69 (or 39.4%) had attended secondary school while 10 had attended primary school. Seven respondents did not provide answers to this particular question or the answer they provided were not useable. Of the 13
respondents who indicated ‘other’ qualifications, the majority had some form of third level education or were engaged in a course leading to such qualifications.

A total of 158 respondents indicated they attained their educational qualifications in their countries of origin or other parts of Africa while 42 attained them in Ireland, 6 indicated other parts of Europe while 1 said America. Only 153 of the 159 who said they got their qualifications outside of Ireland and Europe indicated whether they have had problems with employers and educational institutions because of possessing foreign qualifications. Of this number, 54 (or 40.0%) said they have had problems while 81 persons (or 60%) said they have had no problems.
A total of 79 (45.7%) respondents of 173 said they had acquired additional qualifications since arriving in Ireland, 94 (or 54.3%) said they had not acquired additional qualifications. An equal number of 73 respondents each said they had and had not acquired additional training even though it did not give them additional qualifications.

A gender analysis of respondents who indicated they have had additional training since arriving in Ireland revealed that more females (52%) have received additional training than men (47%).
The majority of respondents who said they had not acquired additional training since arriving in Ireland were asylum seekers and those who described themselves as ‘immigrants’. This is not surprising given that asylum seekers in Ireland are legally prohibited from acquiring formal education or training and most of the NGOs, especially those led by immigrants, that have taken up the task of providing training informally have in recent times encountered debilitating financial obstacles. The majority of additional training/qualifications are in computer or computer-related fields. Twenty respondents who had not acquired additional training/qualifications blamed their situation on ‘No Finance’, 19 said it was because they had ‘No legal Permit’, 11 said they were ‘Not Interested’ while 6 blamed ‘Language barrier’. A few gave more than one reason, mostly ‘No legal permit’ in addition to ‘No finance’ or ‘racial discrimination’ or ‘family reasons’.

Length of Residence in Dublin

One in two (51.1%) of the 178 respondents who answered the questions on length of residence in Dublin said they had been living here for between one and four years, 34.8% for less than one year and 14% for between 5 and 10 years.
Six persons did not indicate the reasons they came to Ireland originally but 106 (60.2%) of the 176 who did said they came to Ireland to seek political asylum while 31 (17.6%) indicated they came to study, 12.5% came to work and just over 7% percent came to join established relatives. Four respondents said they had come to Ireland originally to ‘change atmosphere’, ‘to help’ or ‘to visit’. More males indicated they came to Ireland to study, work or to join their relatives while more females indicated that the original reason they came to Ireland was to seek political asylum.

Twenty-three (13.1%) of the 175 respondents who indicated their present status said they were Irish citizens, 33.1% percent said they asylum seekers, 17.1% were refugees, 14.3% were students and another 17.1% simply said they ‘immigrants. There are more female respondents who are Irish citizens and more male asylum seekers.
Of 172 respondents who indicated their preferred identity/identification, 8 out of 10 (or 82.6%) said they preferred ‘African man/woman’ while 9.9% said they preferred ‘Black woman/man’. There are no significant gender differences in the preferred identities of the respondents. A small minority (5.8%) said they would rather be called ‘Immigrant’ while one respondent each desired to be identified as ‘Just me’, ‘Anyone’ and ‘Nigerian’.

**ECONOMIC STATUS**

**Employment status**
Less than one-third of the total respondents are gainfully employed. Of the 173 respondents who indicated their employment status, 38 (or 22%) said they were employed, 12 (or 6.9%) said they were self-employed and 57 (or 32.9%) said they were students. Forty-six (or 26.6%) said they were unemployed, 11 (or 6.4%) were full-time parents while 9 persons (or 5.2%) said they were in-between jobs. The number of those who gave reasons why they were unemployed was 74, against the 46 who had actually indicated they were 'unemployed'. This would suggest that some of those who had said they were 'in-between jobs', or 'students' or 'full-time parents' also answered this particular question. Of the 74 respondents, 42 (or 56.8%) said they were unemployed because they had 'no work permit', 4 (or 5.4%) blamed 'language incompetence', 12 (or 16.2%) were 'students' while 12 (or 16.2%) gave other reasons, ranging from those who said they have been unable to get a job, were contented to be full-time parents to those who have been unable to find a childminder.

Those who are self-employed span a variety of occupations, from hairdressing, dancing, accounting, fashion designing to law. The majority, 10 respondents out of 14, said they resorted to self-employment because of 'personal satisfaction/security' while three persons said it was because they couldn't find employers who would hire them. The jobs of those who are employed also span a variety of occupations – engineering, bus driving, translation, medical, catering, receptionist, administration etc. Eleven (or 28.9%) of the 38 'employed' respondents said they had difficulties securing their present or past jobs while 27 (or 71.1%) said they had no difficulties. The nature of difficulties were connected to the respondents' nationality, skin colour and possessing qualifications not obtained in Ireland. Just over 55% said their job is similar to the one they did in their country of origin while 44.6% said the jobs they do in Ireland was different to the one they did in their country of origin. They gave a variety of reasons why they have taken to a different job, ranging from 'no jobs in my line of study', 'restriction by law', 'to keep body and soul', 'God’s will' to 'couldn’t get an appropriate job'.

Only 26 respondents (self-employed and employed) gave an indication of their weekly earning. What appears to be a low response to this particular question can be explained by the fact that a total of 133 respondents had already indicated that
they were unemployed, in-between jobs, full-time students or full-time parents. It could also be that there was some reluctance on the part of those who are gainfully employed to disclose their earnings.

Among the respondents who indicated their net weekly earnings, 34.6% said between 200 and 350 euros, 33.3% between 351 and 500 euros and 11.1% said theirs was between 500 and 750 euros. Only 4.4% said they earned above 750 euros while 13.3% said their weekly income was below 200 euros. Generally, male respondents have a higher weekly income than female and all the respondents who said they earn over €750 weekly were men.

**ACCOMMODATION/GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD**

Rather than indicate the postal districts where they live, many respondents simply wrote ‘City Centre, North Dublin, South Dublin or Co. Dublin. Such general or non-specific answers have made it difficult to arrive at reliable statistics on this issue. However, it does appear that many of the respondents live on the North side of Dublin and in and around the City centre. Compared to 24 who indicated they live on the South/Southside/South Dublin, 34 indicated they live on the North/Northside/North Dublin. Dublin 7 where 19 respondents said they live is the postal code with the highest number of Africans.

A total of 32.8% of the respondents said they live in the part of Dublin where they were at the time of the survey because it was the only place they could find accommodation and 31% said they had no choice in the decision because the
government or the firm they work for sent them there. For 13.2%, their decision was motivated by ‘Cheaper rent’ while 5 respondents said it was because other Africans live there. Thirty-five other respondents gave a variety of reasons, ranging from ‘close to work’, ‘good neighbourhood’, ‘husband’s home’, ‘quiet and beautiful’, ‘it’s cool and not rough’, to ‘it is safer than Nigeria’.

Eighty-six respondents or 51.5% of the valid response to this particular question said they would still live in the same locality even if they had a choice to relocate while 48.5% said they wouldn’t live there, given the choice. Four respondents failed to indicate the type of accommodation they have but 63 (or 35.4%) of the 178 that did said they lived in hostels, 52 (or 29.2%) live in flats/apartments, 47 (or 26.4%) live in houses/bungalows and 13 (or 7.3%) live in Council houses/flats. Two respondents were renting a room in a flat while one lives in a farm house.

On house ownership, 16 (or 9.1%) of the 176 respondents who answered this question said they own the house or apartment they live in while 160 (or 90.9%) said they were not house owners. Six persons didn’t answer this question. Three of the 16 house owners said they had difficulties acquiring their house/apartment while 13 said it was not difficult. Fifty-nine respondents among those in rented accommodation said they had difficulties finding/renting their accommodation while 50 said they had no difficulties. Most of the difficulties mentioned by the respondents centred on ‘high rent’ and discrimination by the care-taker or landlord on grounds of colour/ethnicity.

The majority (78.5%) of the 102 who commented on the relationship with their landlord/care-taker described it as either ‘very cordial’ or ‘cordial’ and only 3 respondents said it was ‘hostile’ or ‘very hostile’. Nineteen (18.6%) said it was ‘neither cordial nor hostile’.

**HEALTH/ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

A total of 165 (or 94.1%) of the 175 respondents who indicated the state of their health said it was ‘stable’ or ‘very stable’ while only 3 said their health was very unstable. Similarly, 96.45% of 169 respondents said they and members of their family did not have any form of disability and 6 respondents or 3.6% said they or
members of their family have a form of disability. The disabilities mentioned by them include bi-polar disorder, asthma, development delay and polio. On whether, they were satisfied with their medical treatment, those with disability were split 50% apiece. Most of the complaints of those who said they weren’t satisfied with the treatment they are receiving centred on accommodation and ‘shabby treatment’.

A total of 134 respondents (or 85.4%) of the 157 who answered this question said they had a free access to a General Practitioner (GP) while 23 (14.6%) said they have no free access. The reason mostly given by those who said they have no free access to a GP is that they pay for access since they were employed have been deemed unqualified for a free medical card. Seventy-five (or 59.1%) of the 127 who said they had dealings with the Health Board (HB) indicated they deal directly with the Board while 52 (or 40.9%) said they do so through a Community Welfare Officer. A total of 97 respondents (or 73.5%) described the relationship with the health board as either ‘very cordial’ or ‘cordial’ while 8 (or 6.1%) said it was either ‘very hostile’ or ‘hostile’. Twenty-seven (or 20.5%) said it was ‘neither cordial nor hostile’.

**SOCIAL CONTACTS/GROUP AFFILIATIONS**

![Pie chart showing membership of religious groups and ethnic/national groups](image)

On membership of ethnic/national groups, 35 respondents (or 22%) of the 159 who answered this question said they belonged to a group while 124 (or 78.0%) said they did not belong to any group. A total of 62 respondents (or 38.3%) said they belonged to a religious group while 100 respondents (or 61.7%) said they didn’t belong to any religious group.
Females are more likely to belong to religious groups than males. Of those who acknowledged they were members of a religious group, 56% were female and 44% were male. Among the religious groups mentioned by the respondents are the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Christ Apostolic Church, Ahmadita Movement, Victory Church, Muslim Sisters Association and the Redeem Christian Church of God. Among the ethnic/national groups mentioned by the respondents are the Sierra Leone Community in Ireland, African Solidarity Centre, Congolese Solidarity Group, Akidwa and Sierra Leone-Ireland Partnership. The benefits of membership of religious groups mentioned by the respondents include ‘emotional’, material, divine blessings of God, cultural links, friendship, happiness, identity, social and cultural links, moral and social satisfaction, sense of belonging and social contacts with other women.

A total of 51 respondents (or 31.7%) of the 161 who answered this question said they met with other Africans in a formal setting apart from work ‘at least once a week’ while 73 (or 45.3%) said ‘occasionally’, 13 (or 8.1%) said ‘never’ and 12 (or 7.5%) said ‘once a month’. Twelve other respondents specified that their contacts with other Africans was ‘every day’, all the time ‘almost every day’ or ‘as many times as I want’. On contacts with Irish/other ethnic groups, 48 respondents (or 29.8%) of 161 said they meet Irish/other groups in a formal setting apart from work or office ‘every day/every other day’, 20 (or 12.4%) said ‘at least once a week’ while 54 (or 33.5%) said occasionally. Those who said ‘once a month’ were 17 (or 10.6%) while those who said ‘never’ were 22 (or 13.7%).
A total of 121 respondents (or 72.4%) described their visit to Irish pub as 'very rarely' or 'never' while 46 (or 27.6%) said they visited 'very often' or 'often'. A total of 15 persons did not respond to this question. Among those that visit Irish pubs rarely or who have never visited at all, 70 (or 61.9%) of the 113 valid response said it’s not their taste/lifestyle to visit pub, 11.5% said they don’t believe they would be welcomed there while 5.3% said they won’t understand the people at the pub. Among the variety of reasons given by 24 other respondents were: ‘I don’t drink or smoke’, ‘I hate the odour of cigarette’, ‘I’m a born-again Christian’, ‘I want a better feeling of belonging’ and I don’t associate with people that drink’. Men are more likely than women to frequent pubs.

Asked which group cares most about them, about one-third (or 32.9%) of 158
said ‘my ethnic group’, 11% said ‘Gardai/other state bodies’ while 20 named a varieties of other bodies like the African Solidarity Centre, close friends, myself, my agent and my boss and Social Welfare/Dept of Justice. On who/which group they would consult should they have problems in their family, 50 respondents (or 31.6%) of the total of 158 who answered this question said ‘my religious group’, 48 (or 30.4%) said ‘Friends’, 25 (or 15.8 %) said ‘my ethnic group’ while 17 (or 9.3%) said the ‘Gardai’. Eighteen respondents mentioned a variety of other bodies or groups while others simply said ‘my God’, ‘social welfare’, ‘ourselves’, ‘dialogue with my family’.

Happy in Dublin?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unhappy</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither happy nor unhappy</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very happy</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As asked if they are happy living in Dublin, 137 respondents (80.1%) of the 171 who answered this question described themselves as ‘very happy’ or ‘happy’, 3 (or 1.8%) as ‘very unhappy’ or ‘unhappy’ while 31 (18.1%) said they were ‘Neither happy nor unhappy’. 
Some of the reasons given by those who said they were ‘unhappy’ or ‘very unhappy’ range from ‘Treatment accorded to asylum seekers generally’, ‘feeling like a prisoner in my own home’, ‘the weather’, ‘not allowed to work’, ‘racial discrimination’, ‘no residency’ and ‘treatment from Irish people’.
Asked if they hope to make Ireland their new home, even if a second home, 110 or (65.9%) of the 167 respondents who answered this question said yes while 13 (or 7.8%) said they weren’t sure. The number of respondent who said they were ‘not sure’ was 44 (or 26.3%).

Eighty-six respondents (or 50.6%) of the total of 170 who answered this question said they believed that Africans in Dublin would someday be regarded as equal citizens, 35 (or 20.6%) said they didn’t believe Africans would be equal citizens while 49 (or 28.8%) said they were ‘not sure’. Among those who said they believe it, 22 (or 21.4%) of the 103 who answered the question predicted it would take about five years, 28 (or 27.2%) said it would take about 10 years, 9 (8.7%) said 15 years or more while 44 (42.7%) said they ‘don’t know’.
As asked who/which bodies has responsibilities for promoting equality and interculturalism, 118 respondents (or 69.4%) said ‘Govt, NGOs and ethnic groups working together’, 40 (or 23.5%) said ‘Govt/govt agencies’, 9 (or 5.3%) said ‘Ethnic groups and their members’, and 2 (or 1.2%) said NGOs.
Bibliography


McKeon, Barbara. 1997. Africans in Ireland in the 18th Century; African Expression, No. 4 Autumn


Appendix - Sample questionnaire

Africans in Dublin: Questionnaire

1 Personal details:

1.1 Country of Origin: __________________________

1.2 Nationality: __________________________

1.3 Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

1.4 Ethnic Group: __________________________

1.5 Mother Tongue: __________________________

1.6 Are you □ A Christian? □ A Muslim? □ Others (specify) __________________________

1.7 What age are you 15-25 yrs ☐ 26 - 35 ☐ 36 - 45 ☐ 46 and above ☐

1.8 Profession: __________________________

1.9 How long have you been living in Dublin Under 1y ☐ 1-4 ☐ 5-10 ☐ Over 10yrs ☐

1.10 Which identification do you prefer? An African ☐ A Blackman/Woman ☐ An immigrant ☐ Others (specify) __________________________

1.11 What was the original reason you came to Ireland? To work ☐ To seek asylum ☐ To study ☐ To join spouse/relatives ☐ Others (specify) __________________________

1.12 What is your present status? Irish Citizen ☐ Asylum seeker ☐ Refugee ☐ Student ☐ Immigrant ☐ Others (specify) __________________________

2 Social Status

2.1 Marital Status: Married ☐ Single ☐ (Please proceed to Q2.7 if you are single)

2.2 If married, is your spouse also an African? Yes ☐ No ☐
2.3 If no, where is he/she from? (Specify country) ________________________________

2.4 Does your wife/husband live with you in Dublin? Yes □ No □

2.5 If no, where does he/she live? ___________________________________________________

2.6 Why does he/she live there? ______________________________________________________

2.7 If single, who would you like to marry?
An Irish □ An African □ A European □ Person of the same faith □ Person from my ethnic group □
Others specify ________________________________________________________________

2.8 What is the reason for your choice? ________________________________________________

2.9 Do you have children? Yes □ No □ (If no, proceed to Q3.1 please)

2.10 If yes, how many? ________________________________

2.11 Do your children live here with you? Yes □ No □

2.12 If yes, how many? ________________________________

2.13 If no, where do they (he/she) live? ________________________________________________

2.14 Why do they (he/she) live there? __________________________________________________

2.15 Were any of your children born here? Yes □ No □

2.16 If yes, how many? ________________________________

2.17 Are any of your children here in school? Yes □ No □

2.18 If yes, how many? ________________________________

2.19 If no, why? ___________________________________________________________________

2.20 Are you happy with their (his/her) condition/treatment in school? Yes □ No □

2.21 If no, what are you unhappy about? ________________________________________________

___________________________________________

3 Educational/professional attainment:
3.1 What level of formal education have you attained?
- Primary
- Secondary
- Third-level
- Others specify ____________________________

3.2 Where did you attain your formal education?
- My home-country
- Other parts of Africa
- Ireland
- Europe
- America
- Elsewhere

3.3 Have you had difficulties with employers/colleges because you have foreign qualifications?
- Yes
- No

3.4 Have you had additional qualifications since you arrived in Ireland?
- Yes
- No

3.5 Have you had any form of training even if you have no certificate to show for it?
- Yes
- No

3.6 If you answered yes to Q3.4 or Q3.5, what qualifications/training did you get?
______________________________

3.7 If you answered no, what factors stopped you getting additional qualifications/training?
- No finance
- Language Barrier
- No legal permit
- Not interested
- Others(specify) ____________________________

4 Economic status

4.1 Are you
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Full-time parent
- In between job

4.2 If unemployed, why
- No work permit
- Language incompetence
- Disabled/unable
- In college/school
- Others(specify) ____________________________

4.3 If self-employed, what sort of business are you operating?
______________________________
4.4 If self-employed, why did you choose to work for yourself?
Personal satisfaction/security □ Couldn't find an employer □ Gives higher income □
Others(specify) □

4.5 If you are employed, what do you...

4.6 Did you have any difficulty getting this job?
Yes □ No □

4.7 If yes, what is the nature of the difficulty?

4.8 Is the job you do now similar to the profession you had in your home-country?
Yes □ No □

4.9 If no, why are you doing a different thing now?

4.10 For the employed and self-employed, what is your net weekly income range?
Under 200 euros □ 200 - 350 euros □ 351 - 500 euros □ 500 - 750 euros □ Above 750 euros □

5 Accommodation
5.1 In which part of the Greater Dublin do you live?

5.2 Why have you chosen to live there?
Cheaper rent □ It's the only place I could □ Sent there by govt/firm □ Because other Africans live □
Others(specify) □

5.3 If you had a choice would you live there?
Yes □ No □

5.4 You live in
A flat/apartment □ A house/bungalow □ A hostel □ Council apartment/house □
Others(specify) □

5.5 Do you own your house or flat/apartment?
Yes □ No □

5.6 If you own your house, was it difficult to buy/acquire it?
Yes □ No □
5.7 If yes, specify the nature of the difficulty

5.6 If you don't own your house, did you find it difficult to rent it?  Yes ☐ No ☐

5.7 If yes, specify the nature of the difficulty

5.8 If you are renting, how would you describe the relationship between you and your landlord/caretaker?
Very Cordial ☐ Cordial ☐ Neither Cordial nor Hostile ☐ Hostile ☐ Very Hostile ☐

6 Health Status

6.1 How would you describe your health and that of your family members?
Stable ☐ Very stable ☐ Neither stable nor unstable ☐ Very unstable ☐

6.2 Do you or any one in the family have a physical/mental disability?  Yes ☐ No ☐

6.4 If no, what are you unhappy about?

6.3 If yes, are you happy with the treatment you/the person is receiving?  Yes ☐ No ☐

6.4 If yes, please, specify

6.5 Do you/your family members have free and unrestricted access to a GP?  Yes ☐ No ☐

6.6 If no, please explain

6.8 If you’ve a medical card, how do you communicate with the health board?  Direct ☐ Comm. welfare officer ☐

6.9 How would you describe your relationship with the health board?
Very Cordial ☐ Cordial ☐ Neither Cordial nor Hostile ☐ Hostile ☐ Very Hostile ☐

7 Social contact and group affiliation
7.1 Are you a member of any ethnic/national group?  
Yes ☐  No ☐

7.2 Are you a member of any religious group?  
Yes ☐  No ☐

7.3 If you answered yes to the two questions above, list the group(s) you belong to  

7.4 What benefits, if any, do you derive from your membership of this group(s)?  

7.5 How often do you meet with other Africans in a FORMAL group setting apart from work/office?  
At least once a week ☐  Once a month ☐  Occasionally ☐  Never ☐  Others(specify) ☐

7.6 How often do you meet with Irish/other ethnic groups in a FORMAL group setting, apart from work/office?  
Every day/Every other day ☐  At least once a week ☐  Once a month ☐  Occasionally ☐  Never ☐

7.7 Where would you often go for leisure/entertainment?  
(You can tick many options)  
Visit Irish/non-African friends ☐  Visit an Irish pub/disco ☐  Visit zoo/park ☐  Visit a fellow African ☐  Others(specify) ☐

7.8 How often do you visit an Irish pub?  
Very often ☐  Often ☐  Very Rarely ☐  never ☐

7.9 If you answered ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ in Q7.8, why are you not motivated to visit an Irish pub?  
Don’t believe I’ll be welcomed ☐  It’s not my style/taste ☐  I won’t understand the people ☐  Others(specify) ☐

7.10 Which group or institution in Ireland do you think cares most about you?  
My religious group ☐  NGOs/Anti-racism group ☐  My ethnic group ☐  Gardai/other state body ☐  Others(specify) ☐

7.11 If you were to consult an outsider about problems in your family, where would you go?
8 Challenges/joys of living in Dublin

8.1 What is your greatest worry about your life in Dublin? 
(Mark 1, 2, 3 where 1 is most and 5 the least)

Insecurity and fear of racially-motivated attack/discrimination

Lack of valid residence/work permit

Lack of access to education/training

Lack of access to good healthcare

Others (specify)

8.2 What, to you, is the most wonderful thing about living in Dublin?

8.3 What single event or thing brings the greatest joy to your daily life in Dublin?

8.4 Are you happy living in Dublin?

Very happy  Happy  Neither happy nor unhappy  Unhappy  Very Unhappy

8.5 If 'unhappy' or 'very unhappy', what are you most unhappy about?

9 Aspiration for the future

9.1 Do you plan to make Ireland your new home, even if it's a second home? Yes  No  Not sure

9.2 What things would most improve your life in Dublin?
(Mark 1, 2, 3 where 1 is most and 5 the least)

More contacts with other Africans

More contacts with natives/other ethnic groups

Better and more education/training opportunities

Better protection from racism/discrimination
9.3 Do you believe Africans in Dublin would someday be regarded as equal citizens?  
[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Not sure

9.4 If yes, how long do you think this would take?  
[ ] In about 5 years  [ ] 10 years  [ ] 15 years or more  [ ] Don't know

9.5 Who do you think has the responsibility to promote equality and Interculturalism?  
[ ] The Government/Government agencies  
[ ] Ethnic groups and their members  
[ ] The Government, NGOs and the ethnic groups working together  
[ ] Others (specify)  

A million thanks for answering these questions and for supporting this project