Why Are So Few Africans at Work in Ireland? Immigration Policy and Labour Market Disadvantage

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Abstract

This paper set out to explore why African immigrants have poor labour market outcomes in Ireland, with very low employment and exceptionally high unemployment rates. The analysis draws on data from the 2011 Census of Population to examine underlying differences of experience and of composition between different groups of immigrants. Controlling for individual characteristics of immigrants suggests that the labour market disadvantages suffered by Africans cannot be attributed to compositional differences: on average, Africans in Ireland are a relatively well-educated group concentrated in the prime working-age groups. The paper investigates an alternative explanation that suggests that some of the African disadvantage may be due to the policy of excluding asylum seekers from the labour market in the Direct Provision system. I create a novel measure of the risk of being exposed to the Irish asylum system by expressing the number of asylum seekers in the years prior to the 2011 Census as a proportion of the resident population from each country. These asylum risk variables are found to influence labour market outcomes, reducing employment chances and increasing unemployment odds. Moreover, their inclusion in the models also reduce the effects of belonging to the African and Asian immigrant groups, both of whom are heavily represented in the asylum system in Ireland. Even controlling for individual characteristics and the risk of exposure to the asylum system, there remains a substantial residual African disadvantage in both employment and unemployment, which may be due to discriminatory practices by employers.

Introduction

Employment is central to the process of economic integration and social inclusion. The OECD (2015, p. 79) notes that "Jobs are immigrants' chief source of income. Finding one is therefore fundamental to their becoming part of the host country's economic fabric". Employment leads to financial independence, it allows a person to contribute to society and avoid the risk of poverty and social exclusion in their host country. Through employment, immigrants can build networks, develop their language skills and increase participation in society. Job loss may be associated with poverty, psychological distress and more general social exclusion.

O'Connell and Kenny (2017) show that only about 40% of adult African nationals in Ireland are employed, far less than the average for Irish natives or for other immigrant groups. They also suffer much higher rates of unemployment than the national average. The pattern is similar in other European labour markets. This paper explores the underlying reasons for African disadvantage in the Irish labour market.

The analysis draws on a ten-percent sample of the Census of Ireland 2011 which provides data on a limited range of individual sociodemographic characteristics and migration related variables that may influence labour market outcomes. The paper also develops a novel approach to measuring potential participation in the asylum application system, and it attempts to estimate whether asylum applicants are disadvantaged in the Irish labour market.

Theoretical Framework

Previous research has generated a substantial body of evidence suggesting that immigrants tend to fare less well than natives in host-country labour markets. This is attributed to the tendency for immigrants to possess characteristics associated with lower productivity (including lack of familiarity with language and local networks, and possession of relevant human capital) and perhaps to information deficits or discriminatory behaviour on the part of employers. But there is also evidence of variation within immigrant populations, with some ethnic minorities showing higher unemployment and lower wages. Moreover, immigrants may experience lower

employment or wages than natives because they are less well integrated in host societies and economies and less likely to participate in the full range of rights in the labour market enjoyed by natives and citizens.

Early work by Chiswick (1978) showed that, upon arrival, foreign-born men earned substantially less than the native-born with similar characteristics in the US, but that their earnings increased more rapidly than native-born men as they acquired knowledge of the language and labour markets and acquired training relevant to jobs in the US. He also found variation in earnings by country of origin, and that aliens earned less than naturalized citizens, mainly because the latter, on average, had been in the US for shorter periods. Blackaby et al. (1997) found that foreign-born ethnic minorities in the UK had higher unemployment rates than UK-born minorities, but found no evidence that UK-born minorities fared worse than white UK-born individuals. Shields and Wheatley Price (2001) found that both white and non-white immigrants had a lower probability of being employed, compared to white UK-born individuals, and while the disadvantage decreased over time for white immigrants, it persisted among non-white immigrants. Dustmann et al. (2003) found that individuals of minority ethnic groups, particularly those from Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and Black African communities, were significantly less likely to be employed than the white native-born population in the UK, as were white individuals from former Eastern Bloc European countries. In their analysis of data on employees in Sweden, Arai and Vilhelmsson (2004) found large and significant differences in unemployment risks during the period 1992–1995. The unemployment risk for non-Europeans was twice the risk for natives, with the risk for European and Nordic groups lying between the two extremes. Other papers showing that labour market outcomes of immigrants varied by country of origin include Papademetriou and Terrazas (2010), who found that labour market outcomes in the United States varied by country of origin, and Sumption (2010) who found similar variation in the United Kingdom.

In Ireland, O'Connell and McGinnity (2008) found that non-nationals were significantly more likely to be unemployed than natives in Ireland in 2004, controlling for other factors such as age and education. Black Africans showed the highest rates of unemployment, but the unemployment risk was also higher for immigrants from non-English speaking countries. Barrett and Duffy (2008) found that immigrants in Ireland

were less likely to be in high-level occupations, that immigrants from the New Member States of the EU (NMS) had the lowest occupational attainment, and that there was little evidence of improved occupational attainment over time among the latter group. Kingston, O'Connell and Kelly (2013) showed both that the Black African national-ethnic group suffers particular labour market disadvantages and that this group is much more likely than either Irish natives or other immigrant groups to have experienced discrimination while looking for work. Black Africans were about 7 times more likely to report having experience discrimination while looking for work than their Irish counterparts, even when other influential factors were taken accounted for. Their experience of discrimination was far more severe than any other national-ethnic group, and while the overall rates of discrimination experienced by minority groups declined between 2004 and 2010 in Ireland, the high level of discrimination reported by Black Africans remained persistent. Michael (2015) documents a series of reports of racial abuse of people of African descent at work by customers or colleagues. Her accounts focus on employees experiencing abuse at the workplace, rather than to discrimination in access to employment, which is the principal focus of the present paper. Nevertheless, her analysis of Afrophobia points to broader problem of hostility and antipathy directed specifically at people who belong to the African diaspora in Ireland.

Discrimination may provide part of the explanation for the high unemployment rates among Africans participating in the labour force. Previous research also suggests that the severe disadvantages suffered by Black Africans may be due in part to the fact that many Black Africans in Ireland are refugees and would have spent an extended period of time excluded from the labour market, as asylum seekers in the direct provision system, leading to a scarring effect on their future employment prospects. However, it is also necessary to consider the low labour force participation rates among Africans and to examine their characteristics (including gender, education and household structure), and barriers to labour force participation associated with those characteristics.

The Irish Context
Ireland, historically a country of net emigration, experienced significant inward migration between the mid-1990s and 2008, during a period of rapid growth in the

economy and employment. The number of foreign residents increased from 6% of the total population in 2002 to 12.8% in 2008, before falling back to 12% in the wake of the economic crisis. Following EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 there was substantial immigration from the New Member States (NMS) so that by 2008, NMS nationals were the single largest group of immigrants, accounting for 5.5% of the total population. Nationals of the older EU states, including the UK, accounted for less than 4% of the population, and those form the rest of the world, accounted for another 3.5% (O'Connell and Joyce, 2013). So, about three quarters of all immigrants in the latter years of the last decade were Europeans, and mostly white, while about one in four were of more diverse nationality and ethnicity.

The Irish economy moved into a deep and prolonged recession in 2008, following two decades of rapid growth. The crisis was multi-dimensional, entailing the bursting of a property bubble; a banking collapse; contraction in economic activity (Gross National Product shrank by 3.5% in 2008 and almost 10% in 2009); state fiscal crisis; and mass unemployment (O'Connell, 2013). Total employment fell by 13% between the end of 2007 and 2011, but it fell by 21% among on-Irish nationals. The national unemployment rate increased from about 4% of the labour force in early 2007 to almost 15% at the end of 2012. In 2012 the unemployment rate was 14.5% among Irish nationals but 17.7% among non-Irish nationals. Unemployment varied between immigrant groups: UK nationals and those from the new EU Member States were particularly hard hit, with unemployment rates of about 20% in 2012; nationals of the older EU countries, with an unemployment rate of less than 9%, fared better than the indigenous labour force (Kingston et al, 2012). Economic collapse was accompanied by substantial migratory flows, but by a rather modest decline in the immigrant population because substantial outmigration of the non-national population was offset by substantial in-migration: those who had been displaced from the collapsing sectors/occupations appear to have been replaced by other with different, more marketable skills. As a result of these migrations, the non-national population declined by just 1 percentage point, from 13% to 12% between 2008 and 2012.

Data

The analysis draws on a ten-percent sample of the Census of Ireland 2011 collected by the Central Statistics Office[2]. The advantage of the Census sample is that is a large-scale database, and, as such, allows analysis of relatively small sub-population groups. The disadvantage of using the Census is that it collects a limited range of variables that can be employed to estimate the determinants of labour market outcomes. The Census data do include measures of labour market activity, including employment and unemployment, as well as age, sex, education marital status and number of own children resident in the household. The data also include a number of important migration-related variables, such as country of birth and nationality, decade of immigration to Ireland, and English language fluency. The Census sample thus allows us to examine labour market outcomes among Africans in Ireland in some detail and compare them with the experiences of other immigrant groups.

Table 1: Population by Region of Birthplace, 2011

	Number	Per cent
Ireland	3,745,350	82.5
UK	302,370	6.7
Old EU13[1]	60,670	1.3
New EU12[2]	218,880	4.8
Africa	55,750	1.2
Asia	79,990	1.8
Nth America, Australia, New Zealand	49,360	1.1
Rest	26,200	0.6
All	4,745,350	100.0

Source: Census of Population 2011, Minnesota Population Center: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.
Notes: 1. The old EU15 minus the UK and the ROI.
2. The new EU10 plus Bulgaria, Romania.

Table 1 shows the distribution of population by region of birthplace in 2011. Over 82% of the population of Ireland were born in Ireland. Almost 800,000, or 18% of the population were born abroad. The single largest group of immigrants come from the UK, over 302,000 or almost 7% of the total population. About 56,000 were born in Africa, just 1.2% of the population in 2011.

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[2] The data were accessed through the Minnesota Population Center. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2018. http://doi.org/10.18128/D020.V7.0.

Table 2 presents the rates of employment, unemployment and activity for those aged 15-64 years by region of birth recorded in Census 2011[3]. The employment rate is measured as the proportion of working adults in the working age population. The unemployment rate is the number unemployed expressed as a proportion of the labour force, which is the number employed plus unemployed. The rate of economic inactivity rate is the proportion of working age adults in the population who are not engaged in the labour force. On average, almost 58% of the working age population are employed, but there are important differences in employment and economic activity between immigrant groups. Europeans tend to show higher employment rates and lower inactivity rates, mainly because most of them came here to work. Non-Europeans tend to have lower employment rates, partly because many of these tend to be students. The African group stands out with an employment rate of only 44%, far lower than any other group of immigrants; and an unemployment rate of 35%, far higher than any other group. We can draw on the Census data to examine whether these striking discrepancies in are related to the characteristics of the African population in Ireland.

Table 2: Employment, Unemployment and Economic Inactivity by Region of Birth, population aged 15-64 years

	Employment Rate, %	Unemployment Rate, %	Inactivity rate, %
Ireland	57.6	18.6	29.3
UK	55.9	21.2	29.1
Old EU13	65.1	11.7	26.2
New EU12	66.6	23.0	13.6
Africa	44.0	34.7	32.7
Asia	54.8	19.2	32.2
Nth America, Australia, New Zealand	55.2	14.1	35.8
Rest of World	52.0	27.1	28.6
All	57.8	19.3	28.4

Table 3 shows employment and unemployment by sex. The African disadvantage is evident for both men and women. About 50% of African males are employed, about 10 percentage points lower than the average employment rate. African women are even more disadvantaged: their employment rate, less than 38%, is 17 percentage points below the average female employment rate. The gender gap in employment is also

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[3] These rates are based on Principal Economic Status (PES) in the Census and differ somewhat from the ILO based measures typically used in the Labour Force Survey and in more widespread use. Thus, for example the PES-based unemployment rate has a somewhat looser definition of unemployment than the ILO concept, which entails active work search in the previous four weeks. Accordingly, the PES based unemployment rate in 2011, 19.3% is higher than the ILO rate of 14.6 in Q2 2011 from the Labour Force Survey.

higher among Africans. The average employment gap between men and women is about 6 percentage points, but the employment rate Among African women is 12 percentage points lower than that of African men. That gender gap is also found among immigrants form the residual 'Rest of World' group, but at substantially higher rates of employment.

Africans are also distinctive with respect to unemployment. In general, female unemployment is lower than male unemployment in Ireland. This is partly due to the impact of the Great Recession, which entailed far greater job-losses among men than women, mainly because the crisis centred on a property crisis that dominated the male dominated construction sector, although higher male than female unemployment rates has long been a feature of the Irish labour market, in contrast to other European countries (see, for example, O'Connell, 2001). Higher male unemployment rates prevail to a greater or lesser extent across all of the immigrant groups, with the notable exception of Africans, where the female unemployment rate, which is extraordinarily high at over 37%, exceeds the male rate of 33%. It might be noted that immigrant form the Rest of World, a very diverse grouping of countries of origin, also have high average unemployment, but with virtually no differences between men and women.

Table 3: Employment and Unemployment by Sex and Region of Birth, population aged 15-64 years

	Employment		Unemployment	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%
Ireland	60.3	54.9	22.6	13.7
UK	59.7	52.2	24.9	16.5
Old EU13	70.7	60.3	11.8	11.6
New EU12	70.1	63.0	24.0	21.9
Africa	50.2	37.8	32.9	36.9
Asia	58.6	50.6	21.1	16.7
N Amer, Aus & NZ	59.8	51.5	15.3	12.9
Rest of World	57.8	47.1	26.9	27.3
All	60.8	54.8	22.8	15.0

Some of the discrepancy between Africans and other immigrant groups might be due to compositional differences. This could occur, for instance, if there were substantial differences in the distribution of educational qualifications or ages, between the various immigrant groups.

Table 4: Educational Attainment by Region of Birth, population aged 15-64 years

	Lower Secondary or less, %	Upper Secondary %	Third Level %	Total
Ireland	32.2	37.8	30.0	100.0
UK	26.9	37.5	35.6	100.0
Old EU13	10.4	29.5	60.1	100.0
New EU12	14.1	56.5	29.4	100.0
Africa	16.0	39.3	44.7	100.0
Asia	13.2	26.4	60.4	100.0
Nth Amer, Aus & NZ	11.9	31.3	56.8	100.0
Rest of World	13.9	39.9	46.3	100.0
All	29.2	38.5	32.2	100.0

Table 4 shows highest level of educational attainment by region of birth. Ireland is distinctive in the educational profile of its immigrant population, which tends to have higher proportions than Irish natives with third level qualifications, and lower proportions with lower levels of education. Africans also follow this pattern, and there is little in Table 4 to suggest that African underemployment is related to education. About 16% of Africans had lower secondary education or less, compared to over 32% of Irish natives and 27% of those born in the UK, but, as we have seen in Table 2 above, both of these latter groups had much higher employment rates, and lower unemployment rates than Africans.   At the upper end of the educational distribution, Africans appear to be a relatively well-educated group: almost 45% of Africans had third level of education, compared with 30% of those born in Ireland, and 36% of those born in the UK. The proportion of Africans with higher education did fall well below the proportion of those from Asia and from the new settler countries of North America and Oceania with third level education, but both of these latter groups had comparatively low employment rates.

Part of these educational differences may relate to age, given patterns of educational expansion, younger people tend to have higher educational profiles, and most migrants are young.   Table 5 shows the distribution of age groups in each of the regions of birth.

Table 5: Age Group by Region of Birth

	15-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	Total %
Ireland	19.0	22.5	21.6	19.6	17.2	100.0
UK	15.9	13.6	29.9	26.8	13.8	100.0
Old EU13	22.1	33.6	25.8	11.7	6.8	100.0
New EU12	15.5	52.8	20.7	8.4	2.6	100.0
Africa	18.2	27.6	36.2	14.2	3.7	100.0
Asia	16.8	39.1	29.0	11.2	3.8	100.0
Nth Amer, Aus & NZ	26.8	18.8	24.3	19.3	10.7	100.0
Rest of World	15.6	35.3	28.5	14.8	5.8	100.0
All	18.6	24.4	22.8	19.0	15.2	100.0

There is nothing in the comparative data on age groups to account for the low employment rate among the African group. Almost 80% of Africans are in the prime working age-groups, 25-54 years, compared with just 64% of Irish-born and 71% of those born in the old EU member states, both of which groups have higher employment rates. Further analysis of Census data indicates that African women are more likely to have relatively large families: 27% of African-born women had 3 or more children in 2011, compared to about 14% of Irish-born and 16% of UK-born women. This could reduce the employment rate of African women, compared to their Irish-born counterparts. However, it would be unlikely that this could account for employment rate differences between males from the different population sub-groups.

A Statistical Model of Employment Chances

Given that there are substantial compositional differences between the various regional groups in factors that may influence labour market outcome, it is useful to turn to a multivariate framework that allows to compare those outcomes while controlling for relevant covariates.

Table 6 shows the results of a logistic regression of employment, in which the dependent variable is coded 1 if the individual is employed, 0 if he or she is either unemployed or economically inactive. The multivariate analysis focuses on the population aged 25-64 years in order facilitate a comparison between immigrants and natives since immigrants tend to be concentrated in these age groups. Separate models

are estimated for males and females. The models show a similar pattern of regional differences as those in Table 2 above, and the goodness of fit statistics suggest that while there is substantial variation in employment across the regional groups, region of birth alone explains little of that variation.

Table 6: Logistic Regression of Employment Status, Population aged 25-64

Model 1	Male				Female				
	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio
UK	-0.08	*	0.03	0.021	0.93	-0.09	*	0.03	0.006	0.92
Old EU13	0.76	***	0.08	0.000	2.13	0.39	***	0.06	0.000	1.48
New EU12	0.28	***	0.04	0.000	1.32	0.26	***	0.04	0.000	1.30
Africa	-0.33	***	0.08	0.000	0.72	-0.63	***	0.08	0.000	0.53
Asia	-0.15	*	0.06	0.019	0.86	-0.09		0.06	0.159	0.92
Nth Am & Ocean	0.26		0.13	0.051	1.30	-0.03		0.11	0.784	0.97
Rest of World	-0.14		0.11	0.234	0.87	-0.24	*	0.10	0.014	0.79
Constant	0.85	***	0.01	0.000	2.35	0.51		0.01	0.000	1.67
-2 Log likelihood	125949.41					140211.30				
Cox & Snell R	0.002					0.002				
Nagelkerke R	0.003					0.002				
N of cases	103720					106212				

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.005$; *** $p < 0.001$

The odds of a male African-born immigrant being at work in 2011 was little more than two-thirds of those of a native-born Irish man, and the odds of an African woman being at work were just over half those of an Irish woman. Men and women from Asia and women from the Rest of the World group also showed lower employment rates than the Irish. Those from other EU countries, both 'Old' and 'New' had higher odds of being at work, and UK born residents were similar to Irish, as were those from North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Table 7 shows the results of adding a series of variables to capture individual characteristics (age, education, marital status, and presence of children), as well as two migration-related variables (English language fluency and a dummy variable to distinguish those who migrated to Ireland since 2001 from all others). Most of these covariates are influential. Among men, the odds of a married man being at work are more than twice those of a single man and the number of own children in the household also has a small positive effect on the probability of employment. Men in the 35-44

year age group are somewhat more likely than those in the 25-34 year age group to be employed, but the odds of employment of those aged over 60 years are only about half those of the younger age group. Education is particularly important: the odds of men with a third-level qualification being employed are more than 4 times those of men with less than lower-secondary education. Among women, the number of children has a strong negative impact on the probability of employment, marriage has a small positive effect, women in the older age groups are much less likely than their younger counterparts to be at work, and higher education has an even stronger effect on the relative odds of employment than it does among men.

Table 7: Logistic Regression of Employment Status, Population aged 25-64

Model 2	Male				Female				
	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio
UK	-0.31	***	0.04	0.000	0.73	-0.18	***	0.04	0.000	0.84
Old EU13	0.54	***	0.10	0.000	1.71	-0.05		0.08	0.528	0.95
New EU12	0.48	***	0.07	0.000	1.62	0.36	***	0.07	0.000	1.43
Africa	-0.89	***	0.09	0.000	0.41	-0.72	***	0.10	0.000	0.49
Asia	-0.65	***	0.08	0.000	0.52	-0.36	***	0.08	0.000	0.70
Nth Am & Ocean	-0.29	*	0.14	0.042	0.75	-0.54	***	0.12	0.000	0.59
Rest of World	-0.42	**	0.13	0.001	0.66	-0.44	***	0.11	0.000	0.65
Married	0.85	***	0.02	0.000	2.33	0.07	***	0.02	0.000	1.07
Number of children	0.04	***	0.01	0.000	1.05	-0.26	***	0.01	0.000	0.77
Age 35-44	0.16	***	0.02	0.000	1.18	0.00		0.02	0.977	1.00
Age 45-54	0.09	***	0.02	0.000	1.09	0.04	*	0.02	0.041	1.04
Age 55-64	-0.63	***	0.02	0.000	0.53	-0.86	***	0.02	0.000	0.42
2nd Level Education	0.71	***	0.02	0.000	2.03	0.82	***	0.02	0.000	2.27
3rd Level Education	1.46	***	0.02	0.000	4.30	1.68	***	0.02	0.000	5.35
English Very Well	0.61	***	0.06	0.000	1.84	0.68	***	0.06	0.000	1.98
English Well	0.35	***	0.06	0.000	1.42	0.40	***	0.06	0.000	1.49
Immig since 2001	-0.18	**	0.06	0.002	0.84	-0.33	***	0.05	0.000	0.72
Constant	-0.75	***	0.06	0.000	0.47	-0.54	***	0.06	0.000	0.58
-2 Log likelihood	113472.60					123650.29				
Cox & Snell R^2	0.115					0.146				
Nagelkerke R^2	0.163					0.199				
N of cases	103720					106212				

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.005$; *** $p < 0.001$

The migration-related variables are also important for employment chances. Compared to those who responded to the Census that they did not speak English well, or 'not at all, men and women who speak English very well are almost twice as likely to be employed. Those who have arrived in Ireland since 2001 are significantly less likely than those arrived before then, or were born in Ireland, to be employed.[4]

Even controlling for these covariates, Africans remain much less likely to be employed. If the African disadvantage in access to employment were due to their personal characteristics, such as their education, age or family structures, then we would expect that controlling for those characteristics, as in Tables 7, should increase the size of the African coefficient. In fact, however, those coefficients actually fall further, with the result that the odds of an African-born male being employed drops from more than two-thirds (.72) those of an Irish man in the unadjusted Model 1, to just over .4 in Model 2, which takes personal characteristics and migration-related factors into account. The odds-ratios of employment for female Africans also fall, from .53 in the unadjusted model to .49 after taking account of individual characteristics. Inclusion of these control variables does help to explain variation in employment chances, as indicated by the improvement in the goodness of fit statistics in Table 7, but they do not explain the scale of the employment discrepancy between Africans and native-born Irish.

Table 7 also shows that all groups from outside the European Union show significantly lower employment rates than Irish natives. This reflects the advantages enjoyed by EU nationals exercising rights of free movement and access to the Irish labour market. Within the EU, with the exception of UK-born immigrants, employment rates are significantly higher for both old, pre-enlargement, and new, post-enlargement, EU Member States for males and for the new EU Member States among women.

When we control for the admittedly limited set of variables that can be expected to influence labour market outcomes that are available in the Census, it is clear that Africans remain severely disadvantaged: they are much less likely to be employed than either native Irish or other immigrant groups. Asians also show poor labour market outcomes, although not to the same extent as Africans.

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[4] Unfortunately, the Census data, as released, do not provide a more detailed breakdown of more recent arrivals.

Previous research has suggested that some of the African disadvantage may be due either to discrimination or to the policy of excluding asylum seekers form the labour market in the Direct Provision system. Asylum seekers awaiting decisions on their applications for refugee status were denied the right to work in Ireland until the year 2018. Asylum seekers are accommodated collectively in Direct Provision centres and receive small allowances and are effectively excluded from participation in the Irish economy and society. Kingston, O'Connell and Kelly (2013) suggest that the severe disadvantages suffered by Black Africans may be due in part to the fact that many Black Africans in Ireland are refugees and would have spent an extended period of time excluded from the labour market, as asylum seekers in the direct provision system, leading to a scarring effect on their future employment prospects.

As it happens, Africans and Asians consistently feature in the list of 'top five' countries of origin among asylum applicants in the Irish system (see for example Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, 2010 and 2011). Unfortunately, the Census does not contain information on whether immigrants have ever claimed asylum in Ireland. However, one of the advantages of the Census is that it records information about specific country of origin for each individual.

The Eurostat database releases annual data on the number of asylum seekers in each EU country by country of citizenship. For the purposes of this analysis I have taken the average number of asylum seekers in Ireland for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 for each country of citizenship reported in the Eurostat database and matched it to the population by country of birth measured in Census 2011 to create an 'Asylum Population Ratio' indicator that measures the ratio of the number of asylum seekers from each country to the population from that country resident in Ireland in 2011. The Asylum:Population Ratio can be assigned to each individual in the Census. The Asylum:Population Ratio represents the inflow to the asylum system, averaged over three years, as a percentage of the stock of population from each country and is intended to capture the probability for each individual of experiencing the Direct Provision regime and thus of having been excluded from the labour market for an extended period of time in Ireland.

Table 8 shows the distribution of the Asylum:Population Ratio by region of birth and for selected countries for all persons and separately for men and women. The ratio reaches highs of almost 21% of men from Afghanistan and over 16% from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In general, the ratios are higher in respect of men than women, with the exception of Zimbabwe, where the ratio of female asylum-seekers to population is higher. It averages zero among those from Europe and North America, Australia and New Zealand, and measures 2.7% among Africans, 1.0% among Asians, and 1.4% among those from the Rest of the World.

Table 8: Ratio of Numbers Seeking Asylum 2008-2011 to Number in Population, by Region of Birth and Selected Countries and by Sex[1]

Region/Country of Birth	Persons	Men	Women
Ireland	0.0	0.0	0.0
UK	0.0	0.0	0.0
Old EU13	0.0	0.0	0.0
New EU12	0.0	0.0	0.0
Africa	2.7	3.1	2.3
Democratic Republic of Congo	14.6	16.2	13.3
Nigeria	3.3	3.7	3.0
Zimbabwe	2.8	2.4	3.2
Asia	1.0	1.4	0.5
Afghanistan	17.7	20.9	6.3
China	1.8	2.8	1.0
Pakistan	2.9	3.5	1.7
Nth America, Australia, New Zealand	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rest of World	1.4	1.9	1.0
All	0.1	0.1	0.1

1. The specific countries selected for illustrative purposes are those that consistently appear in the "top five" countries of origin of asylum applicants in Ireland between 2008 and 2011(Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, Statistics, 2009-2011.

The guiding hypothesis is that individuals from countries with higher Asylum Population Ratio values are more likely to have applied for asylum, to have spent time in the Direct Provision system and to have been excluded from the labour market in the years preceding the 2011 Census. There was a total of just under 5,900 asylum seekers accommodated in Direct Provision Centres in April 2011, 73% of whom were African and 20% Asian. The 4,800 Africans in Direct Provision represented about 10% of the

African population recorded in the Census in April 2011. The 1,187 Asians in DP represented less than 2% of Asian born residents in the Census. Accordingly, if the Asylum Population Ratio captures the effect of being at risk of experiencing the Direct Provision regime, we would expect that effect to be most pronounced among Africans and to a lesser extent, Asian, and to thus effect our estimated coefficients.

Table 9: Logistic Regression of Employment Status, Population aged 25-64
- Adding Asylum:Population Ratio

Model 3	Male					Female			
	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio
UK	-0.31	***	0.04	0.000	0.73	-0.18	***	0.04	0.000	0.84
Old EU13	0.54	***	0.10	0.000	1.71	-0.05		0.08	0.522	0.95
New EU12	0.48	***	0.07	0.000	1.62	0.36	***	0.07	0.000	1.43
Africa	-0.55	***	0.11	0.000	0.57	-0.54	***	0.12	0.000	0.58
Asia	-0.47	***	0.09	0.000	0.63	-0.32	***	0.08	0.000	0.73
Nth Am & Ocean	-0.29	*	0.14	0.043	0.75	-0.54	*	0.12	0.000	0.59
Rest of World	-0.21		0.14	0.130	0.81	-0.36	**	0.12	0.002	0.70
Married	0.85	***	0.02	0.000	2.33	0.07	***	0.02	0.000	1.07
Number of children	0.05	***	0.01	0.000	1.05	-0.26	***	0.01	0.000	0.77
Age 35-44	0.16	***	0.02	0.000	1.18	0.00		0.02	0.992	1.00
Age 45-54	0.08	***	0.02	0.000	1.09	0.04	*	0.02	0.042	1.04
Age 55-64	-0.63	***	0.02	0.000	0.53	-0.86	***	0.02	0.000	0.42
2nd Level Education	0.71	***	0.02	0.000	2.03	0.82	***	0.02	0.000	2.27
3rd Level Education	1.46	***	0.02	0.000	4.29	1.68	***	0.02	0.000	5.35
English Very Well	0.60	***	0.06	0.000	1.83	0.68	***	0.06	0.000	1.97
English Well	0.35	***	0.06	0.000	1.42	0.40	***	0.06	0.000	1.49
Immig since 2001	-0.18	**	0.06	0.002	0.84	-0.33	**	0.05	0.000	0.72
Asylum:Pop Ratio	-0.11	***	0.02	0.000	0.89	-0.09	*	0.03	0.013	0.92
Constant	-0.74	***	0.06	0.000	0.48	-0.54	***	0.06	0.000	0.59
-2 Log likelihood	113438.58					123643.94			
Cox & Snell R^2	0.115					0.146			
Nagelkerke R^2	0.164					0.199			
N of cases	103720					106212			

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.005$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 9 shows the effects of adding the Asylum:Population Ratio to the employment models reported in Table 7. As expected, the asylum variable has a strong negative impact on employment. The odds ratio suggests that, among women, a 1 percentage point increase in the Asylum:Population ratio would lead to a decline in their odds of

employment of about 8%. If we were to replace the interval level asylum variable with a dichotomous variable set at a high of 5%, a male from a country with such a high proportion of its citizens who were resident in Ireland seeking asylum would have half the employment chances of someone from a country with a lower asylum-seeker-to-population ratio.

Inclusion of the asylum ratio in the employment models also reduces the impact of region of birth and the effect is most pronounced among Africans and Asians, who together account for over 90% of asylum seekers in the Direct Provision system at the time of the 2011 Census. The odds ratio in respect of African-born males increased from .41 to .57, and among African females., from .49 to .58. We see a similar increase in the odds ratios among Asians, and those born in the Rest of World.

Some individuals included in the Census were in Direct Provision, and as such, were not permitted to access the Irish labour market. Many however, were not asylum seekers at the time of the 2011 Census, having been through the asylum system and achieved permission to stay in Ireland and participate in its labour market, or having entered Ireland with a different immigration status. The fact that the Asylum:Population ratio has a negative impact on employment chances, is consistent with the idea that Direct Provision has lasting negative effects on the employment prospects of asylum seekers in Ireland even after they have left Direct Provision, and that this is reflected in the poor labour market outcomes observed particularly among Africans, and, to a lesser extent, among Asians.

The Risk of Unemployment
This section outlines a similar analysis of the probability of unemployment, which restricts the comparison to the subset of the population who are active participants in the labour market: people who are either gainfully employed or actively seeking employment.

Table 10 presents logistic regression models for males and females respectively, with controls for personal characteristics and migration variables. Controlling for these factors, the odds of unemployment for African-born women was 3.6 times those of an Irish born women, far higher than any other groups considered. The odds of

unemployment for African men were about 2.5 times those of their Irish counterparts. Those born in the UK, Asia and the Rest of World, and among women, in North America, Australia and New Zealand, also showed elevated unemployment odds, but well below the African rates.

In other respects, these unemployment models reveal familiar patterns. Married people are less likely to be unemployed while the number of own children is associated with increased unemployment odds. Age groups older than the under 25 years reference group are less likely to be unemployed. Education has a strong impact reducing the chances of unemployment, so also does English language fluency. Relatively recently arrived women have higher odds of being unemployed.

Table 10: Logistic Regression of Unemployment Status, Population aged 25-64

Model 4	Males				Females				
	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio
UK	0.37	0.05	***	0.000	1.45	0.24	***	0.06	0.000	1.27
Old EU13	-0.56	0.12	***	0.000	0.57	-0.13		0.13	0.316	0.88
New EU12	-0.13	0.08		0.110	0.88	0.04		0.10	0.735	1.04
Africa	0.93	0.11	***	0.000	2.52	1.28	***	0.14	0.000	3.59
Asia	0.67	0.10	***	0.000	1.96	0.36	**	0.14	0.008	1.44
Nth Amer & Ocean	0.25	0.18		0.176	1.28	0.66	**	0.19	0.001	1.93
Rest of World	0.67	0.15	***	0.000	1.95	0.73	***	0.16	0.000	2.08
Married	-0.93	0.02	***	0.000	0.39	-0.60	***	0.03	0.000	0.55
Number of children	0.03	0.01	***	0.000	1.03	0.08	***	0.01	0.000	1.09
Age 35-44	-0.21	0.02	***	0.000	0.81	-0.23	***	0.03	0.000	0.80
Age 45-54	-0.34	0.03	***	0.000	0.71	-0.40	***	0.03	0.000	0.67
Age 55-64	-0.31	0.03	***	0.000	0.73	-0.26	***	0.04	0.000	0.77
2nd Level Education	-0.81	0.02	***	0.000	0.44	-0.93	***	0.03	0.000	0.40
3rd Level Education	-1.80	0.03	***	0.000	0.17	-1.85	***	0.03	0.000	0.16
English Very Well	-0.56	0.07	***	0.000	0.57	-0.83	***	0.08	0.000	0.44
English Well	-0.33	0.07	***	0.000	0.72	-0.46	***	0.08	0.000	0.63
Immig since 2001	0.10	0.07		0.136	1.11	0.33	***	0.09	0.000	1.38
Constant	0.50	0.07	***	0.000	1.64	0.14		0.09	0.101	1.15
-2 Log likelihood	82067.08					50770.65				
Cox & Snell R^2	0.095					0.062				
Nagelkerke R^2	0.150					0.118				
N of cases	91141					75716				

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.005$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 11 shows the effects of adding the Asylum:Population Ratio to Model 4 in Table 10. The asylum variable has a strong significant effect, raising the odds of unemployment: a percentage point increase in the asylum ratio leads to a 12% increase in the odds of unemployment. If we replace the interval level asylum variable with a dichotomous variable set at a high of 4%, a man from a country with such a high proportion of its citizens who were resident in Ireland seeking asylum would have 2.5 times the unemployment odds of a man from a country with a lower asylum-seeker-to-population ratio.

Table 11: Logistic Regression of Unemployment Status, Population aged 25-64
- Adding Asylum:Population Ratio

Model 5	Males				Females				
	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio	B		S.E.	Sig.	Odds Ratio
UK	0.37	0.05	***	0.000	1.45	0.24	***	0.06	0.000	1.27
Old EU13	-0.56	0.12	***	0.000	0.57	-0.13		0.13	0.327	0.88
New EU12	-0.13	0.08		0.120	0.88	0.04		0.10	0.703	1.04
Africa	0.60	0.13	***	0.000	1.82	1.01	***	0.17	0.000	2.76
Asia	0.49	0.11	***	0.000	1.64	0.32	*	0.14	0.022	1.37
Nth Am & Ocean	0.25	0.18		0.177	1.28	0.66	**	0.19	0.001	1.94
Rest of World	0.45	0.16	**	0.004	1.57	0.60	***	0.17	0.000	1.83
Married	-0.93	0.02	***	0.000	0.39	-0.60	***	0.03	0.000	0.55
Number of children	0.03	0.01	***	0.000	1.03	0.08	***	0.01	0.000	1.09
Age 35-44	-0.21	0.02	***	0.000	0.81	-0.22	***	0.03	0.000	0.80
Age 45-54	-0.34	0.03	***	0.000	0.71	-0.40	***	0.03	0.000	0.67
Age55-64	-0.31	0.03	***	0.000	0.73	-0.26	***	0.04	0.000	0.77
2nd Level Education	-0.81	0.02	***	0.000	0.44	-0.93	***	0.03	0.000	0.40
3rd Level Education	-1.80	0.03	***	0.000	0.17	-1.85	***	0.03	0.000	0.16
English Very Well	-0.56	0.07	***	0.000	0.57	-0.83	***	0.08	0.000	0.44
English Well	-0.33	0.07	***	0.000	0.72	-0.46	***	0.08	0.000	0.63
Immig since 2001	0.10	0.07		0.139	1.11	0.32	***	0.09	0.000	1.38
Asylum:Pop Ratio	0.11	0.02	***	0.000	1.12	0.12	*	0.04	0.009	1.12
Constant	0.49	0.07	***	0.000	1.64	0.14	***	0.09	0.106	1.15
-2 Log likelihood	82042.47					50763.71				
Cox & Snell R	0.095					0.062				
Nagelkerke R	0.150					0.118				
N of cases	91141					75716				

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.005$; *** $p < 0.001$

The risk of being an asylum seeker in Ireland substantially increases your risk of being unemployed. The impact of the Asylum:Population ratio on unemployment is particularly instructive. If an individual is in Direct Provision, and cannot therefore participate in the labour market, they can neither be employed no unemployed. The negative effect of the Asylum:Population ratio thus does not refer to current residents in Direct Provision, but relates to the those with a high risk of being or having been an asylum seeker. This is consistent with the proposition that the Direct Provision system has scarring effects on the future employment prospects of its residents. However, given that the Asylum:Population represents the risk of, rather exposure to, the Direct Provision system, it is likely that the measure understates the true impact of that system on unemployment among asylum seekers in Ireland. Introduction of the Asylum:Population Ratio also reduces the estimated effects of birthplace. Among African-born women, the odds of unemployment drop from 3.6 to 2.8 times those of Irish-born women. Among African men, the corresponding drop is from 2.5 to 1.8 times the odds of an Irish-born man. We also see reductions in the effects of being born in Asia and the Rest of the World. These results suggest that part of the excessively high unemployment observed among Africans can be accounted for by their risk of having been exposed to the asylum application system in Ireland, and the scarring effect of having been excluded from access to the labour market for an extended period. However, even accounting for the impact of the Asylum system, and controlling for a range of individual characteristics that can influence labour market outcomes, there nevertheless remains a substantial 'unexplained' African disadvantage, one that is particularly severe among women. This unexplained residual points to other aspects of the African experience in the labour market, such as racism and discrimination, that have been identified in previous research (Kingston et al, 2015; Michael, 2015), but whose impact cannot be investigated using Census data.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore why African immigrants have poor labour market outcomes in Ireland, with very low employment and exceptionally high unemployment rates. The analysis draws on a 10% sample of the 2011 Census of Population, which

provides us with an unusually large data set to examine underlying differences of experience and of composition between different groups of immigrants.

The data were used to address two broad explanations for why Africans might fare so poorly in the Irish labour market. The first explanation relates to the composition of the African-born in population: the idea that the distribution of factors that influence employment and unemployment may be unfavourable for the African group relative to Irish natives and or other immigrant groups. Thus, for example, if Africans as a group tended to be less educated or older than other groups then this might help to explain why they display lower employment and higher unemployment. In fact, however, I found that Africans are a relatively well-educated group and are concentrated in the prime working age groups. When I included a range of individual characteristics and migration-related variables in the employment and unemployment models, I found that the disadvantages associated with belonging to the African immigrant group intensified. This suggests that if African immigrants had a less favourable profile than they do, then their membership of the African group would have led to even lower unemployment and higher employment than observed. Thus, for example, if African-born women shared the same characteristics as Irish-born women, in terms of age, marital status, number of children, education, and fluency in English, their odds of unemployment would be three-and-a-half times that of their Irish counterparts. I found similar increases in employment and unemployment penalties among Asian immigrants when I controlled for personal characteristics and conclude that such characteristics do not provide an explanation for why Africans and to an extent Asians, but not other immigrant groups, fare poorly in the Irish labour market.

I then turned to an alternative explanation that seeks to take account of the experience of at least some African and Asian immigrants in Ireland. Previous research has suggested that some of the African disadvantage may be due to the policy of excluding asylum seekers from the labour market in the Direct Provision system. While the Census does not record whether immigrants have ever claimed asylum in Ireland, it does record information about specific country of origin. I used this to assign values to each individual in the Census measuring the ratio of the average number of asylum applicants from their country of origin to the total population from that country measured in Census 2011. Both employment and unemployment models were then

estimated models to assess whether this Asylum:Population ratio was associated with labour market outcomes in Ireland. The analyses show that these asylum risk variables do influence labour market outcomes, reducing employment chances and increasing unemployment odds. Moreover, their inclusion in the models also reduce the effects of belonging to the African and Asian immigrant groups. The Aslyum:Population ratio is designed to capture the risk of experiencing the Direct Provision regime and thus of having been excluded from the labour market for an extended period of time in Ireland. I found that their inclusion in the employment and unemployment models had the most pronounced among Africans and Asians, who together account for over 90% of asylum seekers in the Direct Provision system at the time of the 2011 Census. These results are consistent with the idea that Direct Provision has lasting negative effects on the employment prospects of asylum seekers in Ireland, and that this is reflected in the poor labour market outcomes observed particularly among Africans, and, to a lesser extent, among Asians.

In May 2017, a Burmese man who had spent eight years in Direct Provision won his appeal against the legal ban preventing him from working, with the Supreme Court determining that, in an international protection system with no temporal limits as to when the application process will be concluded, an absolute prohibition on the right to work for persons in the protection process is contrary to the right to seek employment under the Constitution. The Court adjourned consideration of its Order for six months to enable the State to consider its response. An intergovernmental taskforce recommended that the best option available to the State to comply with the judgement would be to opt into the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU) which lays down standards for the reception of international protection applicants.[5] In June 2018 the Government announced that asylum seekers would be allowed to work from nine months after their application for asylum is lodged if they have not received a decision on their case. Hopefully, this may help to bring to an end a grudging approach to the treatment of asylum seekers seeking protection in Ireland, a policy stance that this paper demonstrates has had lasting negative impacts on their labour market prospects.

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[5] - Department of Justice and Equality, November 2017:
http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Access_To_Work_for_International_Protection_Applicants

My models have not accounted for all of the African disadvantage. Even after we take account of individual characteristics, migration related variables and the risk of having participated in the asylum system, Africans still stand out as disadvantaged in the Irish labour market: African women are only about two-thirds as likely to be at work, and more than twice as likely to be unemployed, as their Irish counterparts, and African men also suffer lower employment and higher unemployment rates. In this they differ from other immigrant groups when the range of influential factors are controlled for. In seeking to account for this remaining unexplained African disadvantage we can take note of the previous research findings that Black Africans in Ireland are a great deal more likely than any other immigrant groups to report having experienced discrimination while looking for work (Kingston et al., 2013; Kingston et al, 2015). This would suggest that the disadvantages experienced by Africans in the Irish labour market appear to be due to a combination of restrictive policies the part of the state and discriminatory practices on the part of employers.

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