

# DIVERSIFY!

volunteering  
ireland



VOLT network



志願者 - Εθελοντής - 지원자 - ökēntes - volontaire – freiwilliger  
volontario - voluntar - voluntário - ochotnik - vrijwilliger

Encouraging Cultural Diversity in Volunteering In Ireland

The VOLT network, which is a service of Volunteering Ireland, established a working group which seeks to encourage and facilitate cultural diversity and inclusion in volunteering.

The members of the working group are:

**Sara Bennett, Human Resources Officer – Amnesty International**  
**Deirdre Hough, Administrator – Volunteering Ireland**  
**Lorna Melody, Administrator (formerly) – Volunteering Ireland**  
**Muireann McGarry (formerly) National Volunteer Coordinator – Cheshire Ireland**  
**Nancy Nuñez, Training Service Manager – Volunteering Ireland**  
**Angela Walsh, Volunteer Development Manager - Barnardos**

The group carried out research with volunteer involving organisations and with foreign nationals living in Ireland who were interested in doing volunteer work. The research methodologies used were questionnaires and interviews. This research sought to identify the existing barriers and ascertain what resources could be created to facilitate the process of volunteering so that both foreign nationals and volunteer involving organisations could have a rewarding and mutually beneficial volunteering experience.

The result is this booklet which

- Provides profiles of the countries where many of the foreign nationals currently living in Ireland are from.
- Explores the meaning of volunteering in different cultures.
- Promotes the value of cultural diversity and volunteering.
- Provides practical information and strategies to overcome possible barriers to volunteer involvement.

## **Cultural Diversity**

Everyone is different. Some differences are visible whilst others are not. “Cultural diversity is the variety of human cultures in a specific region, the differences in ethnicity, language, nationality, or religion among various groups within a community, organisation, or nation.” ([wind.uwo.edu/sig/definition.asp](http://wind.uwo.edu/sig/definition.asp))

This booklet hopes to promote volunteering as a positive tool for social change and integration, and to assist in facilitating the process of volunteering for both organisations and volunteers. It will help anyone who works with volunteers to face the challenges that a more diverse volunteer force can bring to an organisation. An understanding of these challenges can then be used to reap the many benefits that such a volunteer force can bring.

**We would also like to thank the following who in some way assisted with this resource:**

Maps courtesy of [www.theodare.com/maps](http://www.theodare.com/maps), used with permission  
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## **Who Can Volunteer?**

All types of immigrants are able to volunteer – the work status of any person residing in Ireland is irrelevant to whether s/he can volunteer.

Asylum seekers, refugees and international students from non-EEA countries are allowed to volunteer. They are also allowed to receive reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred in the course of volunteering.

People who have refugee status, humanitarian protections or exceptional, indefinite or discretionary leave to remain, and their family members, are allowed to do any type of paid work as well as volunteer.

Asylum seekers are permitted to volunteer as soon as they arrive in the country. This includes people who are in the process of appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum.

## **Categories of Immigrants in Ireland**

### **Asylum Seekers**

Although the word "refugee" can be used as an umbrella term for all sorts of people who flee their home countries, in Ireland (and most industrialised countries) "refugees" are people who have been GRANTED refugee status, after going through the asylum process successfully. Asylum seekers are people who are in the asylum process but have not yet been granted refugee status. They are people who have come to Ireland, applied to the Irish government for refugee status, and are waiting for a determination on their asylum application.

### **EEA Nationals**

The European Economic Area consists of all EU member states as well as Norway, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. Citizens from these countries do not require a visa to work or study in Ireland.

### **Family member of a migrant or Irish national**

This category of immigrant either: has permission to remain in the State as the family member of a migrant who is legally resident in Ireland (see Migrant Worker) or: has permission to remain in the State as the family member of an Irish national

### **International Student**

International students have permission to remain in the State on the basis of a student visa. Students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) have the right to work in paid employment for 20 hours per week.

### **Migrant Worker**

Migrant workers are non-EEA nationals who have permission to remain in the State on the basis of an employment permit granted to his/her employer, or on the basis of a work visa or work authorisation granted directly to him/her. Holders of work authorisations have mobility within the labour market and may change employers; their spouses also have the right to work.

### **Non-economically active person**

Non-economically active people have permission to remain in the State but do not have permission or the financial need to enter employment or establish a business and do not need to rely on public funds. Non-economically active persons may become Irish citizens in three ways: naturalisation, post-nuptial citizenship or by descent. Persons who have been legally resident in Ireland for ten years and who have not applied for naturalisation may obtain a resident stamp giving them "permission to remain without condition as to time."

### **Person granted leave to remain on exceptional grounds**

This category of immigrant has permission to remain in the State temporarily at the discretion of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

### **Person residing in the State without permission**

This category of immigrant has entered the State under one of the following:

- Has entered the State without permission
- Has entered the State with permission for a specified period, but has remained on after that period without permission
- Has entered the State with permission, but has not registered with the Garda registration officer

### **Programme Refugees**

Certain groups of refugees are invited to the State by the government. These are known as programme refugees. Examples of programme refugees include the Hungarian refugees that came to Ireland in 1956, the Vietnamese and Chileans in the 1970s and people from the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Programme refugees have a clear set of rights that attach immediately upon their admittance to the country. These rights include the right to work, education, housing and social welfare.

### **Refugees**

Under the Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person, who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country. The international definition of a refugee is extended in Ireland to cover those who have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons related to their sexual orientation, gender or membership in a trade union. Those who have committed war crimes or serious non-political crimes are excluded from protection under the Refugee Convention. Economic migrants are also excluded from protection under the Refugee Convention.

### **Self-employed / business person**

Self-employed / business people have permission to remain in the State on the basis of a business permission granted to him/her.

### **Temporary Leave to Remain**

Temporary leave to remain is a discretionary form of relief in Ireland for which individuals can apply if their asylum application has been denied. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform may grant this form of relief pursuant to the Immigration Act 1999. In determining whether or not to grant an individual temporary leave to remain in Ireland, the Minister must take into account several personal considerations, including the age of the person, the duration of his or her residence in the State, the family and domestic situation, humanitarian considerations and any representations made by the applicant or other people on his or her behalf. Most EU countries have a complex system of alternative statuses that they grant to asylum seekers who do not fit into the refugee definition.

### **Sources:**

Amnesty International Irish Section website – <http://www.amnesty.ie>

Immigrant Council of Ireland – Handbook on Immigrants' Rights and Entitlements in Ireland

Tallaght Volunteer Bureau – Step By Step Guide Volunteering and Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment website – <http://www.entemp.ie>

## **Cultural diversity in volunteering**

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **Why consider cultural diversity in volunteering?**

There have been dramatic changes in Ireland over the last decade and we are now a multi-cultural society. Changes in the labour market, increasing migration and economic growth have made the country an attractive place to work and live. The Irish workforce today reflects a diversity of, ethnicity, culture, language, religious beliefs and experience. Community and voluntary groups are faced with the growth of an increasingly diverse society. Approaches that worked before may not be as useful now. Organisations that learn to harness this diversity will be more effective and competitive than those who don't.

#### **What is diversity?**

Diversity in volunteering means developing a varied team of volunteers that reflects the diversity of people in your community.

A diverse approach ensures that all people are welcomed and that difference is celebrated.

### **What are the advantages of encouraging diversity?**

Embracing diversity bring many organisational benefits such as;

- Organisations benefit from new approaches and fresh ideas generated by people from different backgrounds. This can also facilitate the creation of new volunteer roles.
- Clients benefit from the skills and experience of people with different cultural, educational and social backgrounds.
- Helps to ensure your work is relevant to, and impacts on, people from all areas of society.
- Presents a more welcoming face to volunteers, clients and the general public.
- Play a role in making society more inclusive.
- Creates a wider pool of volunteers.
- Comply with legislation.

### **My organisation would like to be inclusive – what can we do?**

Before we understand others we must acknowledge our own beliefs, perceptions, preconceptions and prejudices. Only when we understand our own value systems can we assess how these values affect our behaviour with other people.

### **How do I recruit for diversity?**

Consider your current volunteer pool and your methods of recruitment. Are you excluding particular groups or are particular groups approaching you that haven't in the past? Be clear about your motivation and ensure that everyone is committed. Commitment to diversity is required from everyone in the organisation and preparation of staff and volunteers is crucial. Consider involving staff/volunteers in the development of your diversity policy and where possible provide training on diversity issues.

1. Consider how your organisation can be more welcoming.

- Are your volunteer leaflets in plain language?
- Are your policies clear and simple?
- How easy is it to access information about volunteering?
- Do staff know you are looking for volunteers?
- Is there a named person to deal with volunteer enquiries?
- Is it possible to have leaflets in more than one language?

2. If you are targeting a specific group try to become knowledgeable about them. Why has this group not been included? What are the group's beliefs, values and customs? Identify any specific characteristics that may affect participation but avoid concentration on one group at the exclusion of others.

3. Consider your current recruitment methods. Are they reaching a diverse volunteer pool? Consider where different groups might congregate (neighbourhood, church, recreation, shop)

What clubs / associations do they belong to? What newspapers/radio stations do they read / listen to?

4. Tailor the message. Consider what motivates the group. For example, the chance to meet new people, learn about Irish culture or to gain new skills. What are the group's main issues and concerns? Are there unique contributions that can be made by this group?

5. Use a variety of recruitment methods - posters, fliers, media, one to one contact, group presentations. Consider language. If possible use pictures / posters that reflect diversity.

6. Consider additional resources that may be required e.g. orientation/training /support costs.

### **We work with children and/or vulnerable clients. What can we do if volunteers cannot produce references/police checks?**

Sometimes volunteers who are refugees or who are seeking asylum have left their country of origin in very difficult circumstances and may not be able to provide references, or references may be difficult to check. Organisations who are working with vulnerable adults or children have strict vetting requirements and every effort should be made to ensure that all volunteers are suitable for their roles. This is a challenge for all organisations that have a duty of care to their service users and there is no simple answer.

All attempts should be made to get references and check credentials, whether by phone or letter. Additional guidelines regarding reference checks include:

- Explaining to the potential volunteer the vetting procedure and the reasons for it.
- References should be sought from people the applicant has been in contact with since arriving in Ireland. Referees from the country of origin should also be contacted if appropriate.

If it is not possible to check references, consider the following alternatives:

- Structure the development of volunteer roles in a way which builds up responsibility over a period of time and allows staff to get to know the volunteer.
- Consider alternative roles for volunteers.
- Consider one to one buddy/mentor/paired working/ supervision systems that reduce risks.
- Build in review/trial periods.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers participate in child protection training and that there are systems in place for staff, volunteers and service users to report potential problems and difficulties.

### **Useful resources.**

Our Duty to Care. The Principles of Good Practice for the protection of children and young people. Dept of Health Children First.: National guidelines for the protection and welfare of children. Department of Health & Children. 1999

### **Are asylum seekers allowed to volunteer?**

Yes, although they are not permitted to undertake paid employment, people seeking asylum in Ireland are allowed to work voluntarily and many seek to do so. They can be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the course of their work.

### **What if a service user does not want a non-Irish volunteer to work with them?**

There may be a number of reasons why someone would be uncomfortable with non-Irish volunteers and it is important to explore these reasons.

It may be due to prejudice, fear, worry about language, cultural differences or firmly entrenched attitudes.



- It is helpful if your organisation has a diversity policy and it is clear that your service is open to everyone and does not tolerate discrimination.
- Service users, staff and volunteers should be involved in the development of a diversity and/or equal opportunity policy.
- Diversity issues should be covered in volunteer training.
- Volunteers and service users should be helped to understand cultural issues.
- If language and/or cultural differences are an issue it may be helpful for a non-Irish volunteer to work with an Irish volunteer initially.
- It may be useful to provide some anti discrimination/anti racism training.
- It is important that newsletters/websites/other methods of communication reflect the diversity of the organisation and that success stories are publicised.
- Social events are a great way of breaking down barriers.

### **Possible barriers to Diversity**

- Attitudes, prejudices, stereotypes about particular groups.
- Fear of the unknown and a desire to maintain the status quo.
- Worries about costs, For example, training for both staff and volunteers.
- Additional costs of support.
- Lack of organisational commitment.

### **Sources:**

Equality and Diversity in the Workplace. National University Of Ireland, Galway. 2003.

Institute for Advanced Volunteer Management: Student handbook 2004.The Changing Demographics of Volunteering.

### **Cross - Cultural Communication**

Cross - cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimises misunderstandings and maximises your potential to create strong cross - cultural relationships.

The following tips can be used to start creating greater cross-cultural awareness:

#### **Slow Down**

Even when English is the common language in a cross-cultural situation, this does not mean you should speak at normal speed. Slow down, speak clearly and ensure your pronunciation is intelligible. Be prepared to paraphrase messages using different words to help communication.

#### **Separate Questions**

Try not to ask double questions such as, “Do you want to carry on or shall we stop here?” In a cross cultural situation only the first or second question may have been comprehended. Let your listener answer one question at a time.

#### **Avoid Negative Questions**

Many cross cultural communication misunderstandings have been caused by the use of negative questions and answers. In English we answer “yes” if the answer is affirmative and “no” if it is negative. In other cultures a “yes” or “no” may only be indicating whether the questioner is right or wrong. For example, the response to “Are you not coming?” may be ‘yes’, meaning “Yes, I am not coming.”

### **Take Turns**

Cross-cultural communication is improved by taking turns to talk, making a point and then listening to the response.

### **Be Supportive**

Effective cross-cultural communication is in essence about being comfortable. Giving encouragement to those with weak English gives them confidence, support and a trust in you. Be open and tolerant to different ways of expressing messages without jumping to conclusions or stereotyping.

### **Check Meanings**

When communicating across cultures never assume the other party has understood. Be an active listener. Summarise what has been said in order to verify it. This is a very effective way of ensuring accurate cross-cultural communication has taken place. If you’re not sure whether you’ve been understood - ask or write it down and check.

### **Avoid Slang**

Foreigners will not have a complete knowledge of slang, idioms and sayings. The danger is that the words will be understood but the meaning missed. Avoid using idioms, sayings, technical words or cultural expressions.

### **Naming systems**

As you will see from the country profiles section there are many different ways and reasons that names are given to people in different cultures. Names are the first thing we find out about people and are a part of everyone’s identity. It is important that we take time to get to know people’s names and pronounce them correctly. We should not encourage the practice of shortening or changing people’s name for others convenience.

Adapted from: Kwintessential & Guidelines for intercultural best practice NWICA Network

**The following is a series of fact sheet that were produced by Volunteering Ireland, it aims to inform and encourage potential volunteers from different cultures in their own language. Please feel free to make relevant amendments in the ‘alternatives’ section if it is not relevant to your area. The fact sheet is available in various languages and can be downloaded from [www.volunteeringireland.ie](http://www.volunteeringireland.ie)**

## **Volunteering in Ireland – Factsheet for potential volunteers**

Anyone can volunteer! It doesn’t matter whether you are young or old, male or female, able-bodied or disabled, in paid work or not, there is something you can do. Volunteering can be a rewarding experience. In Ireland volunteering means;

“The commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person’s own free will, without payment, except for the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.”

**Some of the positive benefits of volunteering may include:**

- Work experience for your CV (Curriculum Vitae)
- An opportunity to explore a career path
- Developing and learning new skills
- Making a difference/positive contribution
- Training
- The opportunity to do something you love
- Meeting new people
- Learning about Irish culture

**Volunteering will not give you:**

- Payment for work done
- Guaranteed references
- Promise of paid work or benefits in kind
- Guaranteed access to services
- Guaranteed crèche facilities
- English language lessons
- Formal education

**Before volunteering some of the things you might consider include:**

- Why do I want to volunteer? What do I hope to get out of the volunteering experience?
- What would I like to do? What I would not like to do? For example, work with people/ projects/offices/ social work/animals/ arts etc.
- What experience/skills can I bring to an organisation?
- Skills I would like/need to learn? Experiences I’d like to have?
- What time do I have available? (Think in terms of day, evenings, hours or project work).
- Where would I like to volunteer? (Consider travel time and means of travel)

Volunteering Ireland can assist you with this exercise.

If you’re interested in volunteering you can approach Volunteering Ireland or your local Volunteer Center. Many organisations recruit volunteers through volunteer centres as well as other means such as putting ads in public places etc.

**What to expect from the organisation:**

When approaching an organisation to do voluntary work you may be,

- Asked to complete an application form
- Asked to supply two referees
- Invited to an informal interview
- Asked to get Garda clearance (this may be required if you are working with children and/or vulnerable adults)
- Provided with training

Please note that not all organisations operate in the same way, some may be very structured in their procedures, while others may be quite informal. A perfect volunteering match occurs when both the volunteer's and the organisation's needs are met through involvement with each other.

### **Alternatives**

If you are not in a position to volunteer at the moment or you need to develop your language or general skills some options to consider are;

- Language classes

The Central Library at Dublin's ILAC Centre and other local libraries offer free services such as conversation exchanges to improve and practice language skills. These services have proven very popular and also help participants to learn about new cultures. The Open Learning Centre, at the ILAC has a wide range of courses available on a bookable basis. A signed certificate of course completion is offered to any user completing a minimum of 50 hours of study on computer or language self-learning courses offered by the City Library Service. This is also a free service.

For more information contact Central Library, ILAC Centre, Henry Street, Dublin 1. Phone (+353 1) 873 4333.

- Other options include evening classes, local social clubs, church/Local Societies and local sports clubs and other support organisations.

## Ireland



### Volunteering in Ireland

There are no official statistics on volunteering in Ireland yet but the most recent surveys state that between 17% (2003) and 33% (1999) of Irish people volunteer.

Compared to other European countries, Ireland's volunteering rate is average but membership of community and voluntary associations is above average.

Some 58% of people get involved in voluntary work because they are asked and 36% offer their services. 65% of people who don't volunteer say they would be willing to use some of their spare time for voluntary work and 72% of people are prepared to do something to improve the conditions of people in their local community.

According to the Oireachtas report on Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland, the monetary value of volunteering, using the average industrial wage of €13.09, was in the range of €382 million to €485 million

Historically, volunteering in Ireland has been associated with faith-based charitable organisations. Youth organisations involve a large number of volunteers in Ireland and sporting clubs are also a huge area of volunteer activity.

The Special Olympics in 2003 was a defining moment for volunteering in Ireland and the opportunity to build on the momentum created by the event remains. According to the most recent statistics, over a third of voluntary organisations have fewer volunteers than they require.

Over the last number of years, the pool of volunteers in Ireland has diversified. Volunteer-involving organisations have found that many people who want to volunteer are from diverse cultural backgrounds; some may be asylum seekers who are not legally permitted to work but who are allowed to volunteer.

### Sources

<sup>i</sup> National Committee on Volunteering, 2002, Tipping the Balance: report and recommendations to government on supporting and developing volunteering in Ireland.

Ruddle, Helen & Mulvihill, Ray, 1999, Reaching Out: charitable giving and volunteering in the Republic of Ireland – the 1997/98 Survey, National College of Ireland.

<sup>ii</sup> National Economic and Social Forum, 2003, The Policy Implications of Social Capital. Forum Report no. 28.

Gaskin, Katharine & Davis-Smith, Justin, 1995, A New Civic Europe? A study of the extent and role of volunteering, Volunteer Centre UK.

Powell, Fred & Guerin, Donal, 1997, Civil Society and Social Policy, University College Cork.

Ruddle, Helen & Donoghue, Freda, 1995, The Organisation of Volunteering: a study of Irish voluntary organisations in the social welfare area, National College of Ireland.

Powell, Fred & Guerin, Donal, 1997, Civil Society and Social Policy, University College Cork.

Houses of the Oireachtas – Joint, Sixth Report, January 2005. Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland, Committee on Arts, sport, Tourism, community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

## The Traveller Community (Ireland):



### Quick Facts

**Population:** According to the 2002 census there are 24,000 Travellers. Traveller organisations such as Pavee Point estimate the true figure at closer to 34,000. Many Travellers do not respond to the Census for various reasons.

**Major Languages:** Cant

**Life Expectancy:** At birth, male Travellers can expect to live 9.9 years less than settled men.

At birth, female Travellers can expect to live 11.9 years less than settled women.

### Brief Recent History

Travellers are an indigenous minority, who have as been part of Irish society for centuries. They have a long shared history and value system, which make them a distinct group and maintain their own language, customs and traditions. The distinctive Traveller lifestyle and culture, based on a nomadic tradition, sets them apart from the settled population.

Moving from one place to another has given rise to a distinct Traveller way of looking at the world. Nomadism is often described as a state of mind. Even where Travellers occupy houses they regard accommodation as essentially temporary in nature - as do other nomadic peoples around the world. A Traveller living in a house is still a Traveller - just as an Irish person living in Britain is still Irish.

The experience of Travellers in Ireland today can be described as one of social and cultural exclusion. The widespread denial of their cultural identity exacerbates this experience of exclusion. Travellers nomadic tradition is equated with vagrancy and thereby criminalized; Traveller crafts and Traveller language are not recognised; Travellers' values, beliefs and customs are dismissed or ignored in the Irish education system; the Traveller economy and work patterns are not acknowledged and if they are, are denigrated.

Travellers and Traveller culture have been marginalised and rejected over the centuries and this continues today. Accepting and celebrating Traveller identity and providing adequate resources for Traveller culture and heritage is a central element of any strategy to counter this situation and improve the circumstances of Travellers.

While Irish Travellers are native to Ireland, they have much in common with European Travellers and Gypsies. In addition to sharing a nomadic tradition and living in extended families, they also share a long history of persecution, rejection and social ostracism.

## **Volunteering and the Traveller community**

Brendan Ó'Caoláin, Coordinator of Pavee Point's Traveller Cultural Heritage Programme, says that members of the Traveller community volunteer within their community and outside it. For example some Travellers volunteered during the Special Olympics. Mr. O'Caoláin adds that formal volunteering doesn't exist as a cultural concept in the Traveller community. As Travellers generally live in extended families and have a very strong sense of community, there is a lot of informal voluntary activity within the community.

### **Practical Information**

Travellers inhabit two worlds - the settled world and the Traveller world. Traveller culture reflects this. Although little spoken today, an important part of Traveller heritage is their own language – “Cant” or “Gammon”, this is sometimes referred to by academics as "Shelta". This is a language mostly used by Travellers to speak with each other.

### **Useful contact:**

Pavee Point  
46 North Great Charles Street  
Dublin 1  
Telephone: (+353 1) 8780255  
Web: [www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)  
Email: [info@paveepoint.ie](mailto:info@paveepoint.ie)

### **Sources:**

Used with permission, Fact sheets – Pavee Point [www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)



## Afghanistan:



### Quick Facts

**Leader:** President Hamid Karzai

**Population:** 26 million (UN 2005)

**Major Languages:** Pashto, Dari (Afghan Persian)

**Major Religion:** Islam (Sunni Muslim 80%, Shi'a Muslim 19%)

**Life expectancy:** 43 years men, 43 years women (UN)

**Ethnic Groups:** Pashtun (42%), Tajik (27%), Hazara (9%), Uzbek (9%), Aimak (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baloch (2%), Other (4%).

### Brief Recent History

Afghanistan's history in the latter 20th century and at the beginning of this one has been extremely turbulent:

- A period of Soviet occupation ended with the withdrawal of the Red Army in 1989. It is estimated that one million Afghans were killed during the Soviet occupation from 1979 – 1989.
- In 1992, the Mujahideen - groups of Islamic Afghan fighters, took power. Under the Mujahideen groups, about half of the capital city, Kabul, was destroyed and tens of thousands of civilians were killed.
- Towards the end of 1994 the Taliban emerged to oppose the Mujahideen . The Taliban gained control of about 90% of the country.
- The Taliban brought some stability to Afghanistan but enforced extreme Islamic policies.
- Following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, the US called for the Taliban to stop harbouring Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Bin Laden is an Islamic fundamentalist and the primary founder of the Al-Qaeda network. The Taliban refused to hand him over, and the US and its allies began an air assault on the country. And with the help of the Afghan Northern Alliance troops they drove the Taliban from power.
- Elections were held in October 2004 and Hamid Karzai was appointed president. The President will serve a five-year term and will implement Afghanistan's new constitution.
- The country is still divided by ethnic, religious and tribal tensions and is plagued by wars between local militia and the re-emergence of the Taliban as a fighting force.

### Reasons that Afghan people are likely to be in Ireland

Afghanistan has suffered from such chronic instability and conflict that its economy and infrastructure are in ruins and many of its people have been displaced.

## **Women's Rights in Afghanistan**

Concerns were expressed about women's rights in Afghanistan under the Taliban and it is not clear that the situation has significantly improved under the new government.

## **Volunteering in Afghanistan**

There is no culture of volunteering in Afghanistan according to Nasruddin Saljuqi, Director of the Afghan Community of Ireland. The extreme conflict of the last twenty-five years has meant that the freedom, opportunity and structures to facilitate positive participation in the wider community are not in place. Most activity takes place within the extended family.

Nasruddin Saljuqi believes that many Afghans living in Ireland would be interested in volunteering if they knew how to get involved. He volunteers himself and believes that the availability of information and training would reduce the barriers to volunteering for Afghans in Ireland.

## **Practical Information**

It is considered offensive to call an adult by their first name and is more respectful to refer to someone by their family name.

## **Useful contact**

The Afghan Community of Ireland

Telephone: (+353 1) 868 3577

Email: [afgcommunity@hotmail.com](mailto:afgcommunity@hotmail.com)

Web: <http://nasrudinsaljoqi.tripod.com>

## **Sources**

[www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)

[www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook)

[www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org)

[www.immigrantcouncil.ie](http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie)

Communication with Nasruddin Saljuqi of the Afghan Community of Ireland.

# Poland



## Quick Facts

**Location:** Eastern Europe, East of Germany and the Czech Republic

**Population:** 38,625,478 (July 2002)

**Capital City:** Warsaw

**Language:** Polish

**Religion:** Catholic 95% (majority religion), eastern Orthodox, Protestant & Other 5%

**Ethnic Groups:** Polish 97%, German 1.3%, Ukrainian 1%, Roma 0.7%

## Brief Recent History

There are currently more than 100,000 Poles working or living in Ireland.

Poland became a full member of the EU in 2004. After nearly 125 years of rule by either Austria, Prussia or Russia, Poland regained its independence in 1918 following the First World War but was overrun by Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II. The post-war Polish state was Communist-run and strongly influenced by the Soviet Union. Labour turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent trade union “solidarity”. It steadily became a political force and by 1990 had won both parliamentary elections and the presidency.

## Family

As Poland is a predominantly Catholic country, divorce is not as prevalent as in other European countries. The nuclear family has traditionally been close knit but in the past 10 years “official” marriage separation has increased and single parent families have increased.

## Childcare

Both the mother and father are seen as the primary carers of their children. Levels of unemployment are very high in Poland so whichever parent is lucky enough to get a job his / her parent will take care of the pre-school child. The rates of child benefit in Poland are very low in comparison to Ireland.

## Reasons that Polish people are likely to be in Ireland.

A very small minority of the Polish community in Ireland have been here since the Second World War and in the immediate years following 1945 as they were seeking a safer place to live. The vast majority of the approximately 100,000 Polish people now living in Ireland have arrived in Ireland for economic reasons.

Poland became a full member of the European Union on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004. Ireland was one of only three countries in the EU that granted full working rights to citizens of the new EU countries. As a direct consequence Ireland has the highest rate of Polish immigrants in comparison to any other EU country. The buoyant Irish economy has necessitated economic migration and statistics would suggest that thousands more Poles will come to work in Ireland in the next few years. It is important to note that:

- a) Many of the Polish people working in Ireland are in jobs that they are “over qualified” for, i.e. they are currently in jobs that have no relation to their qualifications or training. In most cases, they have not been able to secure employment relevant to their qualifications in Poland. In many cases, the wages they receive in Ireland in most sectors is far higher than the average wage in Poland.
- b) Many families have now come over to live in Ireland to be re-united with the initial immigrants.
- c) There are tens of thousands of Poles employed directly or indirectly in the Irish construction sector.
- d) There are many Poles that have come to Ireland unprepared, who have found it difficult to find employment and are thus living in very poor conditions. Some are homeless.

### **Volunteering in Poland**

Studies from 2002 concluded that 3 million Poles were active volunteers. In recent years increasing numbers of young Poles have become interested in volunteering. Their enthusiasm however is directed more at international volunteering as opposed to domestic volunteering in Poland.

The culture of volunteering in Poland is both structured and non-structured, but the intensity of structured volunteering is not as common as it is in Ireland. People of all ages volunteer, some people volunteer simply because they cannot find paid employment and volunteering provides them with work experience. Other Poles cannot afford the time to volunteer as they must work long hours to survive financially.

### **Poles Volunteering in Ireland**

There is some difference of opinion in the Polish community in Ireland as to whether or not Polish people would be willing to volunteer in Ireland. While some Poles are working long hours and commuting long distances to work and may not have time to volunteer, there is evidence that Polish people are interested and willing to volunteer in Ireland and there are Poles currently involved in volunteer work. Some Poles living in Ireland advised as Poles become more established in Ireland, they will become increasingly likely to volunteer

It was also felt that there would be a huge willingness to volunteer amongst those Poles who were university graduates but who were not working in their desired profession in Ireland. It was suggested that this group would be enthusiastic about volunteering roles which would help them to get practical experience for their desired careers.

It was also pointed out that not all of the Poles in Ireland have found jobs. Many Poles want to help their fellow citizens who are in a less fortunate economic position, being a volunteer with voluntary organisations would give them an opportunity to help.

#### **Sources:**

‘Greg’ Grzegorz Jastrzebski – Care Worker, Richmond Cheshire, Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Previously Greg worked as a volunteer at Richmond Cheshire.

[www.theodora.com](http://www.theodora.com)

Polish Embassy, 5 Ailesbury Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Polish Social & Cultural Association / Irish Polish Society, 20 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.

Polish Information & Culture Centre Ltd. 56 – 57 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1.

[www.europa.eu.int/youth/volunteering](http://www.europa.eu.int/youth/volunteering)

# Nigeria



## Quick Facts

**Location:** The Federal Republic of Nigeria is located on the West Coast of Africa.

**Population:** 130,000,000

**Land Area:** 924,000 Sq Km

**Capital City:** Abuju.

**Language:** Official Language is English.

**Ethnic Groups:** Over 250 ethnic groups, including Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Ijaw.

President: Olusegun Obasanjo

## Brief Recent History

Nigeria was under British colonial rule until it attained its independence in 1960 and has had a turbulent and often violent history since then. There have been bitter ethnic rivalries and a succession of military coups, regimes and dictatorships. There has been much concern nationally and internationally that the vast profits in oil have not benefited the native Ogoni people and they have suffered imprisonment and execution for demonstrating against the profits made by local elites and multinationals.

## Language

The official language of Nigeria is English but there are almost 200 languages and nearly five hundred different dialects. The three major languages are Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo. In communication voice tone is important. Yoruba people especially tend to use a high voice tone. While voices are often raised it does not necessarily mean that they are angry. Eye contact is particularly significant and eye-to-eye contact is considered inappropriate between younger and older people and is viewed as a sign of disrespect. Subtle messages can be conveyed through eye contact.

## Naming Systems

Naming systems vary depending on family traditions and ethnic origin. A child can be given many names by parents, grandparents, relatives or friends. The structure of the name consists of many traditional names followed by the Christian or Muslim name and lastly by the surname. The name used is a matter of personal choice and a person may be known by different names in different contexts. In Yoruba tradition the child is named on the 8<sup>th</sup> day and the name is not revealed to anyone until the naming ceremony. Naming varies in other parts of the country depending on traditions and religious beliefs of ethnic groups. A woman is usually addressed by her own first name, with reference to her relationship to her child or by her husband's name.

## Pregnancy and Childbirth

There are many superstitions surrounding pregnancy and women often are reluctant to tell of the pregnancy until it is very obvious for fear of losing the baby. There is a lot of fear surrounding the practice of voodoo and witchcraft and the festival of Halloween practised in Ireland would not be celebrated by Nigerians.

## **Childcare**

The mother is the primary carer of children but all of the extended family and community see the training of children to be good citizens as part of their responsibility. Corporal punishment of children is an accepted part of child rearing. It is not unusual for the mother to go to work and the extended family to care for the child while the mother is working.

## **Reasons that Nigerians are likely to be in Ireland.**

Nigeria is still a country in turmoil although it is under civilian rule. Ethnic rivalries and tensions continue, it has severe economic difficulties and political arrests, ill treatment and even executions continue. Sharia (Islamic) law prevails in some states in Nigeria and the severe physical punishments meted out by Sharia law for offences such as theft, gambling and sexual offences has contributed to circumstances which cause many people to leave the country. Many Nigerians in Ireland are seeking asylum and pursuing refugee status. Female genital mutilation is widely practised as this is generally regarded as male circumcision would be in Western traditions.

## **Volunteering in Nigeria.**

In Nigeria people have large extended families and everyone in the family and community look out for each other. In the past people would assist neighbours with tasks on the land and would move from farm to farm. Some volunteering is faith based whereby church members volunteer to help other church members experiencing difficulty or partake in church activities. Some volunteering focuses on preaching the gospel and trying to get more church members. The formal structures around volunteering that are common in Ireland would be unusual for Nigeria.

## **Religion**

Muslims are predominantly in the north while Christians are to the south. As people move freely in Nigeria, both Muslims and Christians are found throughout the country. Nigerians have zeal and passion for religion. Most Nigerians in Ireland would be Christians of different denominations.

## **Sources:**

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<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ni.html>

<http://www.motherlandnigeria.com/>

[http://www.nopa.net/president\\_obasanjo/](http://www.nopa.net/president_obasanjo/)

# China



## Quick Facts

**Leader:** President Hu Jintao. **Ruling party:** Communist Party of China (CPC).

**Population:** 1.3 billion. (male 51.5% Female 48.5%)

**Land Area:** 9.6 million square kilometers

**Capital:** Beijing.

**Major Languages:** The Han people have their own spoken and written languages, namely Chinese. Mandarin Chinese is the official and most commonly used language in China, with Cantonese Chinese the second most common. All China's 55 minority peoples have their own languages except the Hui and Manchu who use Chinese.

**Major Religions:** Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and folk religion.

**Ethnic Group:** 56 nationalities. Han nationality is the largest one (85%)

## Brief Recent History

After World War II, the Communists under MAO Zedong established an autocratic socialist system that, while ensuring China's sovereignty, imposed strict controls over everyday life and cost the lives of tens of millions of people. The Communist Party is still the sole party in power in China. Founded in 1921, the Communist Party of China (CPC) established the People's Republic of China in 1949 through years of armed struggle. After 1978, Mao's successor DENG Xiaoping and other leaders focused on market-oriented economic development and by 2000 output had quadrupled. In 1979, China instituted a guiding policy of "reform and opening to the outside world" and since then the focus has shifted to modernisation and greater links with the West. For much of the population, living standards have improved dramatically and the room for personal choice has expanded, yet political controls remain tight.

## Introductions

Unlike Westerners, Chinese people do not usually greet people who they have not been introduced to or are not familiar with. It would seem odd if a person would offer a "Hi" or "Hello" when passing on the street. It is also standard practice to have a name card or business card to give to people when introduced. Handshakes are not customary among Chinese for first meetings. Conversation topics also differ from that of English speakers. It is not impolite to ask about a person's job, annual salary, marital/dating status, or age. In fact, these issues, which Westerners may find uncomfortable for discussion, are very typical. On the other hand, questions about family tend to be deflected or avoided.

## Naming Systems

While equality between male and females is promoted in China, family names tend to be along patriarchal lines. Chinese names are given in the reverse of Western names. The surname is said first, and then the given name. Professional, social, and family titles always follow the name as well. The titles Doctor, Master, Professor, or Teacher would follow the surname or full name.

## **Family**

Family planning has been promoted as one of the basic state policies in China. The policy combines government guidance with voluntary compliance by citizens. Policies are devised by government in relation to population control and Chinese couples are restricted to having one child. Children are therefore very precious in China and as an “only child” they are the focus of the extended family.

### **The Concept of Face**

The concept of "saving face" or "losing face" originates from China. Certain behaviours or actions are done in an effort to save face or to not cause another to lose face. Often, "face" is given or lost in accordance to rules of etiquette or respect. Therefore it is important to follow customs and understand polite behaviour in order to avoid causing someone else to lose "face". Always accept a gift when offered (this principle does not extend to bribery), even if you normally refuse the gift. Always attend formal functions when invited, and bring a gift.

### **Chinese New Years/Spring Festival**

Chinese New Years is by far the most well-known Chinese holiday, and also the most significant to Chinese culture. Also known as The Spring Festival, observation of the holiday actually begins the day before the beginning of the Lunar Year. The mode of celebration varies from province to province different areas have their own specific traditions. Most businesses close and time is spent paying formal visits to friends. Visitors bring a gift (generally a box of chocolate, nuts, or a tin of cookies) and are given a gift of greater value by the hosts. Married couples give little red packet envelopes to children and unmarried friends when greeted with a phrase wishing them prosperity in the New Year.

### **Volunteering in China.**

Volunteering in China is very different to the West. There is an expectation that all students will give their services for the good of the community and to not do so would be frowned upon. The culture in China promotes obedience and young people will do what they see as their duty.

### **Why Chinese people come to Ireland.**

According to Summy Wong of the Bray Citizens Information Centre the largest group of Chinese people coming to Ireland is students, followed by well-educated, skilled professionals and then by those who have work permits. The freedom of the West is an attractive enticement for young people as well as educational and career opportunities. There is a large community of second and third generation Chinese Irish living in Ireland.

### **Sources**

<http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/welcome.html>

<http://www.asterius.com/china/>

<http://www.chinapage.com/history1.html>

<http://www.chinaembassy.ie>



## The Roma Community:



### Quick Facts

**Population:** 12 -15 million living world wide

**Major Languages:** Roma & language of the country of origin. The Roma language is derived from Sanskrit and so has numerous basic elements in common with Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi – the languages of Northern India.

During the long co-existence of the Roma language with other languages, influences have been reciprocal. After 1,000 years of migrations along different paths and in different times the language has split into branches and continues to do so, giving birth to a large number of dialects.

### Brief Recent History of Roma Community

The Roma are an ethnic group whose origins are predominantly from Eastern and Central Europe, they have a strong traditional orientation to nomadism.

Although the Roma share a common lineage their migrations over the centuries to many different countries have produced numerous distinct communities as particular groups established roots in various countries and regions.

Reports carried out by international bodies such as the Council of Europe, UN High Commission for Human Rights show that the dominant experience of the Roma community throughout Europe has been one of persecution, exclusion and rejection.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE 2000) report prepared by the High Commissioner on National Minorities states that official policies towards Roma have included enslavement, containment, extermination and forced assimilation. The worst example was the extermination of Roma and Sinti by Nazi Germany. An estimated 250,000 to 500,000 million Roma and Sinti were exterminated in the Holocaust. The report goes on to say that in more recent years Roma have been treated as de facto aliens and inherent outlaws in several countries.

The Roma community in Ireland come from at least four principal countries Romania, the Czech Republic, Poland and Bulgaria.

### Reasons why the Roma community are likely to be in Ireland

The OSCE (The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe - 2000) report states that the Roma are still widely perceived and treated as outsiders in many countries where they have centuries-old roots whereas migration is very often a defence against external aggression and discrimination and a means of securing a livelihood.

This report also stresses that Roma who are now in Western Europe have fled their countries to escape social conflict and violent confrontations between majority populations and the Roma.

## **Volunteering and the Roma community**

Voluntary activity within the Roma community occurs within families and the community. There is a very strong sense of community where members help each other out. In the life of Roma everything revolves around the extended family – the basic unit in Roma society. The family is the economic unit in which work is carried out and the educational unit where children learn and feel safe. Ion Zatreanu from the Roma Support Group states that while the Roma community is interested in doing volunteer work in the wider community in Ireland, they have experienced difficulty in getting opportunities to do so.

## **Practical cultural information**

In common with some other minority ethnic groups in Ireland direct eye contact with people outside of the extended family and friendship circles for Roma, particularly for people in authority is not a common practice.

## **Useful contact:**

Ion Zatreanu  
Education Officer  
Roma Support Group  
Email: romacomunity@yahoo.com  
Web: www.romasupport.ie

## **Sources**

Roma in Ireland – an Initial Needs Analysis (2002) Roma Support Group, Pavee Point in association with FAS Asylum Seekers Unit at the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism ([www.nccri.ie](http://www.nccri.ie))  
The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2000  
[www.osce.org/documents/hcnm/2000/03/241\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/hcnm/2000/03/241_en.pdf)  
[www.romasupport.ie](http://www.romasupport.ie) and Ion Zatreanu - Roma Support Group in Ireland, Dublin  
European Roma Rights Centre  
[http://www.errc.org/Archivum\\_index.php](http://www.errc.org/Archivum_index.php)

# Somalia



## Quick Facts

**Leader:** President Abduallahi Yusuf (*de jure*)

**Population:** 10.7 million *Source: UN, 2005*

**Major Languages:** Somali (official), Arabic, English, Italian, Bajuni, Bravanese

**Major Religion:** Islam (Sunni Muslim 98%)

**Life expectancy:** 45 years men, 48 years women

**Ethnic Groups:** Somali (85%), Bantu (14%), Other (1%)

## Brief Recent History

Somalia's history since independence in 1960 has been extremely turbulent. The country had no effective ruling government between 1991 and 2000 and the situation in the country remains unstable.

In 1920, a British protectorate and an Italian protectorate occupied what is now Somalia. The British ruled the entire area after 1941, with Italy returning in 1950 to serve as United Nations trustee for its former territory. In 1960, Britain and Italy granted independence to their respective sectors, enabling the two to join as the Republic of Somalia on July 1, 1960.

On 15 October 1969, President Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke was assassinated and the army seized power, dissolving the legislature and arresting all government leaders. Major General Mohamed Siad Barre became president of a renamed Somali Democratic Republic.

President Siad Barre fled the country in late January 1991. His departure left Somalia in the hands of a number of clan-based guerrilla groups. Also in that year, a breakaway nation, the Somaliland Republic, proclaimed its independence. Since then, several warlords have set up their own mini-states, notably in Puntland and Jubaland. Although internationally unrecognised, these states have been peaceful and stable.

Beginning in 1993, a two-year UN humanitarian effort (primarily in the south) was able to alleviate famine conditions, but the UN withdrew Operation United Shield on March 3, 1995, having suffered significant casualties and order had still not been restored.

In August 2000, a parliament convened and elected Somalia's first government in nearly a decade. After its first year in office, the new government still controlled only 10% of the country, and in August 2003, its mandate expired. It had, however, made advances for a country starting over: a national police force and army are in place and half of the 20,000 militias roaming the country have been demobilized.

On October 2004, a Transitional Federal Government, led by President Abdullahi Yusuf (leader of Puntland) and Prime Minister Ali Muhammad Ghedi, was elected in Nairobi, Kenya after two years of negotiations sponsored by the international community and hosted by the regional authority on peace and development. The government, which includes several leading warlords, remains in exile in Kenya for security reasons and controls about 10% of the country.

Somalia was one of the many countries devastated by the tsunami which struck the Indian Ocean coast following the December 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake, destroying entire villages and killing an estimated 300 people.

### **Reason that Somali people are likely to be in Ireland**

One of the primary reasons that Somali people are in Ireland is for safety and stability. In 2004, refugees continued to flee from faction fighting, kidnappings, threats to human rights defenders and other abuses. There is a lack of basic social services in Somalia due to the weak rule of law. In addition, violence and armed conflict continue, particularly in south and central Somalia. At present, there are Somalis in Ireland from major tribes such as the Darod and the Hawiye, as well as minority tribes like the Bravanese and the Bajuni. Most Somali people live in Dublin but there are many others who live in other parts of the country, usually due to the Government's dispersal programme for the accommodation of asylum seekers.

### **Women's Rights in Somalia**

Somalia has been described as having "overwhelmingly patriarchal" culture. There are indications, however, that the situation for women may be changing. For example, while it remains unimplemented, the Transitional Federal Charter prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and national origin. The Somaliland Constitution also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and national origin. In 2004, several women's groups in Mogadishu and other places around the country actively promoted equal rights for women and advocated the inclusion of women in responsible government positions.

Women have suffered disproportionately in the civil war since 1991 and in the strife that has followed. Societal discrimination and violence against women continue to be serious problems. Rape has been commonly committed in the course of inter-clan conflicts, by both the police and militia groups. Laws prohibiting rape exist; however, they generally are not enforced. There are no laws that specifically address domestic violence or spousal rape. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a widespread practice.

### **Culture and Volunteering in Somalia**

Somali society is organised into clan families, which range from 100,000 to over one million in size. Almost all Somalis are Sunni Muslims and Islam is vitally important to the Somali sense of national identity. Many of the Somali social norms come from their religion. For example, men shake hands only with men, and women shake hands with women. Many Somali women cover their heads and bodies with a hijab when they are in public. In addition, Somalis abstain from pork, gambling, and alcohol, and receiving or paying any form of interest. Muslims generally congregate on Friday afternoons for a sermon and group prayer. Islam and poetry have been described as the twin pillars of Somali culture; facility with language is highly valued. Somalis deeply value the family with the strength of family ties providing a safety net in times of need and suffering.

Approximately 60% of the Somali population is nomadic, so volunteering in Somali society would not be defined in the same way as it is in Ireland and the West generally. In the cities, there are locally-based NGOs working with women and children in particular, on issues including the environment, housing for street children, addressing the needs of those with disabilities and promoting economic independence for women. The United Nations is active in promoting volunteering for and with these organisations. For security reasons, however, it has not been possible to promote the culture of volunteering throughout the country as a whole.

**Useful contacts:**

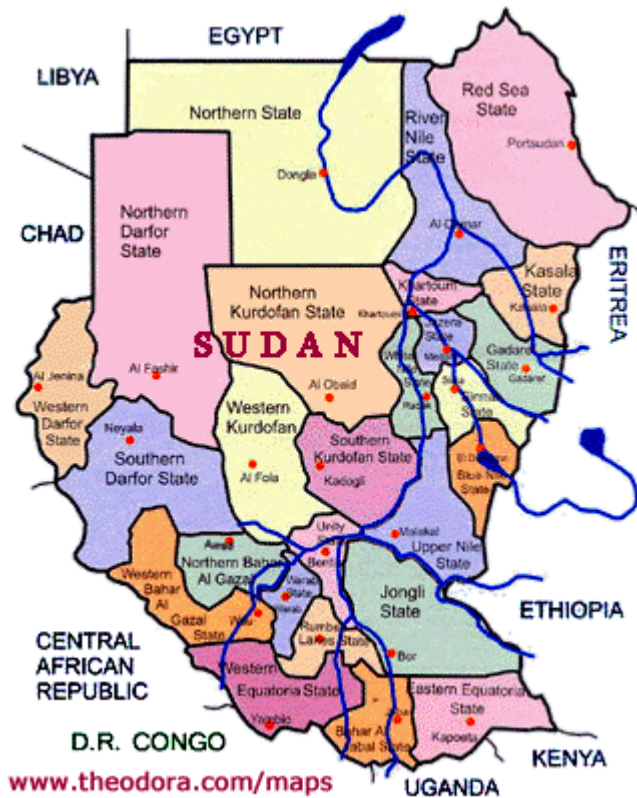
Irish Somali Bajuni Association (IBSA)  
35 Stoneybatter  
Dublin 7  
Telephone: (+353 1) 658 8625  
Email: [ibsa\\_2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ibsa_2004@yahoo.co.uk)  
Web: [www.freewebs.com/irishbajunisomaliassociation/](http://www.freewebs.com/irishbajunisomaliassociation/)

African Solidarity Centre  
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Rathmines  
Dublin 6  
Phone: (+353 1) 865 6951  
Email: [africacentre@eircom.net](mailto:africacentre@eircom.net)

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Special thanks to Mubarak Kabib and Qasim Abdul

# Sudan



## Quick Facts

**Leader:** President Lt-General Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir.

**Main exports:** Crude oil, raw cotton, peanuts, sesame, sugar.

**Monetary unit:** Dinar.

**People:** 31.1 million (36% urban). People per square kilometre 12 (Britain 238).

**Culture:** Just over 50% are Arab; of many ethnic groups in the south the largest is the Dinka. In the south are 400,000 refugees from neighbouring nations.

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 65%; Christian 6%. Various traditional African Religions

**Life Expectancy:** 54 years (men), 57 years women

**Language:** Arabic is the official language but the non-Arab population speaks over 100 distinct languages.

## Brief Recent History

Sudan is Africa's largest country; it is also one of the most diverse countries, home to deserts, mountain ranges, swamps and rain forests. Officially Britain and Egypt shared sovereignty over Sudan for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Sudan gained its independence in 1956.

The government elected at independence (1956) was overthrown by a military junta in 1958. The second democratic government lasted from 1965 till 1969. Ja'far Numeiri's military government ruled from then until 1985. The third democratic regime lasted until the coup of 1989, which brought the military government of General Bashir to power.

The one dominant theme throughout this period, and the factor which lies at the heart of the country's predicament, is the relationship of the country's southern provinces to the northern heartland. The north, while ethnically diverse, is predominantly Muslim and Arab (at least in culture) and aligned with the wider Arab world. The south is mainly non-Muslim and includes a relatively small Christian population and a larger number of people who practice traditional African religions.

The conflict between North and South that turned into civil war in the early 1960s was not brought to an end until recently, with the signing of peace agreement in Nairobi, Kenya in January 2005. This war has killed over two million people and displaced five million others.

## Reason that Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers are likely to be in Ireland

The continuing new conflict in the western region of Darfur has displaced many Sudanese people and forced many to seek refuge in neighbouring Chad and other countries.

## **Volunteering in Sudan**

According to Dier Tong from Sudan (Africa Solidarity Centre), volunteering in Sudan happens on a community level, it's very informal and less structured than in Ireland. Churches and mosques are involved in and encourage volunteer work.

## **Sudanese Culture**

The ritual of hospitality is as important in the Sudan as it is in other Arab and African countries. While there is a measure of similarity in all the Arab and African countries, each has its unique characteristics. For example, no other country prepares coffee as the Sudanese do, and if this country acquired culinary fame, it is for its Jebena (coffee). The Sudanese fry their coffee beans in a special pot over charcoal and then grind it with cloves and certain spices. They steep it in hot water and serve it lovingly in tiny coffee cups after straining it through a special tresh grass sieve.

## **Useful Contact:**

Africa Solidarity Centre  
9c Lower Abbey Street  
Dublin 1  
Telephone: (+353 1) 865 6951  
Email: [info@afriacentre.ie](mailto:info@afriacentre.ie)  
Web: [www.afriacente.ie](http://www.afriacente.ie)

## **Resources:**

Thank you to Dier Tong of the Africa Solidarity Centre  
Taken from: [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org)  
<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/pcmr/ethnicities/sudanese.shtml>  
<http://www.knowledgenews.net/>

# Philippines



## Quick Facts

**Location:** South Eastern Asia, archipelago between the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea.

**Population:** 84,525,639 (July 2002)

**Capital City:** Manila

**Languages:** Two official languages Filipino (Tagalog) and English & 8 major dialects.

**Religion:** Catholic 83% (majority religion), Protestant 9%, Muslim 5%, Other 3%

**Ethnic Groups:** Christian Malay 91.5%, Muslim Malay 4%, Chinese 1.5%, Other 3%

**President:** Gloria Macapagal – Arroyo

## Brief Recent History

The Philippines attained its independence from the US on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1946, after the Japanese occupation of World War II. The 21- year rule of Ferdinand Marcos ended in 1986 when he was forced into exile. Since Marcos's removal, the Philippines has had two electoral presidential transitions. The current President is Gloria Macapagal – Arroyo.

## Family

The Philippines is a predominantly Catholic country and divorce is not widespread. The nuclear family is tightly linked. Whilst the man is traditionally the “breadwinner” the prevailing culture is that the wife looks after household finances. The Filipinos interviewed, pointed out that many of the Filipinos in Ireland who have given birth have sent their children back to the extended family in the Philippines who will look after the child until the mother / father return from Ireland, once they have saved enough money for their future in the Philippines. Many Filipino families in Ireland find the cost of childcare prohibitive here.

## Religion

Catholicism is the overwhelming majority religion in the Philippines. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the majority of Filipinos in Ireland will be Catholic, whether they actively practice their faith or not.

## Reasons that Filipino people are likely to be in Ireland.

There are about 10,000 Filipinos living in Ireland. The vast majority have arrived in Ireland for economic reasons and are predominantly employed in the healthcare sector. The difficulties experienced in the Irish health system and the challenges recruiting and retaining Irish nurses led



to a concerted effort to internationally recruit highly qualified Filipino nurses, who now account for 13.5% of the Irish nursing population.

There is a high rate of unemployment in the Philippines; the country is still recovering from the fallout from the Asian financial crisis in 1998. About 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. The Filipino economy is endeavouring to move towards more deregulation and privatisation to bolster its economic growth but this will take many years.

There was a higher rate of Filipino migration into Ireland prior to the enlargement of Europe in 2004. Employers are now required to recruit from these new member EU countries before seeking visas for Filipino workers.

Some families have now come over to live in Ireland to be united with the “breadwinner”. It is important however to note that many Filipino families find it difficult to be reunited as there are strict visa conditions. Most Filipinos working here send a significant percentage of their salary back to the Philippines and the majority would have the long-term aim of returning to the Philippines.

### **Volunteering in the Philippines**

Most volunteering that takes place in the Philippines is unstructured and local in character. Generally speaking volunteering would tend to be more informal and spontaneous in the Philippines than in Ireland.

### **Filipinos Volunteering in Ireland**

As many Filipinos in Ireland are working full time or undertaking demanding shift work in the healthcare sector it is likely that some do not have the time to commit to volunteering. However those we spoke to, that did have the time available said they would be interested in volunteering.

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### **Sources:**

Cathy O'Mahony (nee Majabague), Grand Canal Dock, Dublin 4.

Jenebeth Cepres, Care Worker, Richmond Cheshire, Monkstown, Co.Dublin.

Philippine Information Centre & Philippine Irish Consul, 8 Georgian Village, Dublin 15.

## South Africa



### Quick Facts

**Leader:** President Thabo Mbeki

**Population:** 44.3 million *Source: UN, 2005*

**Major Languages:** Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, Ndebele, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda

**Major Religions:** Christianity (75%), traditional animistic (24%), others (1%)

**Life expectancy:** 43 years (male), 43 years (female)

**Ethnic Groups:** African/Black (79%), White (9.6%), Coloured (8.9%), Asian (2.5%) *Source: South African Census 2001*

### Brief Recent History

Following a series of colonial wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century between the British, Dutch and Germans, South Africa became an independent dominion of the United Kingdom in 1910 and gained full independence as the Republic of South Africa in 1961.

A brief outline of recent South African history:

- After World War II, the white descendants of the European settlers were able to maintain their rule by implementing the policies that would become known collectively as apartheid, a series of harsh laws segregating the country along racial lines.
- Apartheid became increasingly controversial in the late 20th century, leading to widespread sanctions and divestment abroad and growing unrest and oppression by the National Party within South Africa. The power sharing between the British and Dutch ended in the 1940's when the Afrikaners (Dutch descendants) won an overpowering majority. Apartheid was introduced as a means to control the economic and social system in the state. It was aimed at maintaining white domination, extending racial separation and creating a sustainable supply of cheap labour. Racial discrimination was institutionalised and affected every aspect of social life.
- In 1990, after a long period of resistance, strikes, marches, protests, sabotage, and terrorism by various anti-apartheid movements, most notably the African National Congress (ANC), the National Party government took the first step towards negotiating itself out of power when it lifted the ban on the African National Congress and other left-wing political organisations, and released ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison after 27 years.
- Apartheid legislation was gradually removed from the statute books, and the first multi-racial elections were held in 1994. The ANC won by an overwhelming majority, and has been in power ever since.

- Approximately 21.5% of the South African population were estimated to be HIV positive in 2004. The government has recently, after much delay, devoted substantial resources to fighting the epidemic.

### **Reasons that South African people are likely to be in Ireland**

Although South Africa is a country rich in natural resources and developed in comparison to its continental neighbours, it has an extremely high level of unemployment (40%) and correspondingly high levels of poverty. This is being addressed through the re-training of marginalised groups and redressing of past imbalances through the transitional process that started in the early 1990s. As the rate of this process has been slow due to a number of factors, however, some South African people choose to emigrate. Ireland has been the destination for many due to its rapidly expanding economy and increased labour needs.

### **Women's Rights in South Africa**

Discrimination against women remains a serious problem despite equal rights under family law and property law with regard to inheritance, divorce, and custody of children, and equal legal rights under the judicial system. On the positive side, South Africa ranks seventh in the world in terms of women parliamentary representatives (25%), while the South African constitution and the government under the ANC have entrenched gender equality as a key political value.

### **Volunteering in South Africa**

Volunteering is not a norm within South African culture in the same way it is in Ireland.

South Africa is culturally diverse and many South African cultures are not focused, as Western society is, on the self-sustaining individual. The collective orientation places the community and not the individual at the centre of daily life and spare time and resources are regularly contributed to others not in a way that would classify as volunteering but still contributing towards a general good without any form of payment.

Historically, the majority of the population have been involved in high levels of political activism, especially through trade unions. Thus activism is not a foreign notion to South African society, but action followed an immediate problem and was on a mass scale.

When South Africans do volunteer the motivations are varied. Most students either volunteer to meet a postgraduate programme requirement, to gain work experience or to network and make contacts for future reference. Many elderly people volunteer to pass spare time.

With that in mind, volunteering is still difficult for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. South African NGOs, although often subsidized by foreign capital, are extremely under-funded. As a result volunteers are responsible in most cases for their own transport and communication costs. This causes significant problems for potential volunteers.

### **Useful contacts**

South African Club: [www.southafricanclub.org](http://www.southafricanclub.org)

Integrating Ireland c/o Comhlámh Telephone: 01 478 3490 E-mail: [info@integratingireland.ie](mailto:info@integratingireland.ie)

### **Sources**

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The CIA World Factbook: South Africa <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sf.html>

# Ukraine



## Quick Facts

**Leader:** Viktor Yushchenko

**Population:** 47.8 million (UN, 2005)

**Major Languages:** Ukrainian (official), Russian

**Major Religion:** Christianity (mainly different forms of Orthodoxy)

**Life Expectancy:** 65 years (men), 75 years (women) (UN)

**Ethnic Groups:** Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%

## Brief Recent History:

Ukraine gained independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Western Ukraine has close historical ties with Europe and has traditionally been the most nationalist part of the country. Russian influence is stronger in the east of the country where significant numbers of the population are Russian or speak Russian as their first language.

Ukraine was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922. In the early 1930s Stalin's programme of enforced agricultural collectivisation gave way to a huge famine in Ukraine, which is estimated to have led to the deaths of between three and six million people. The 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster also had a huge impact on the country; 8% of its territory was contaminated and millions suffered as a result.

Since independence in 1991, the country has undergone a turbulent changeover both economically and politically. Since 2000, there has been some economic growth but Russia remains the country's largest individual trading partner and it relies heavily on Russia for vital services such as gas supplies.

The current president, Viktor Yushchenko, is regarded by the Western media as a liberal reformer who says he aims to see Ukraine integrated in the EU. His election followed the Orange Revolution of 2004 when Yushchenko supporters took to the streets to protest against a rigged election, the subsequent rerun saw him sworn in as president in early 2005. Economic growth has slowed and prices have risen in the last years as Ukraine tries to move towards economic and political stability.

## Reason that Ukrainian Migrants are likely to be in Ireland:

As Ukraine is not a member-state of the EU, most Ukrainians living in Ireland have obtained work visas and are so-called economic migrants. There is also a minority of Ukrainians in Ireland seeking asylum or that have received refugee status.

## Volunteering in Ukraine:

In part due to the lack of economic prosperity, it appears that formal volunteering is not widespread in Ukraine. Volunteers are more likely to work informally in their community or in the extended family. Having said this, there is, for example, a long-standing scouting tradition and the popularity of sports such as soccer mean that, as in many other European countries, there is a significant volunteer force involved in organising amateur sports.

**Sources:** [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk) [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook) [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org) [www.immigrantcouncil.ie](http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie)

# Romania



## Quick Facts

**Leader:** Traian Basescu

**Population:** 22,329,977 (est 2005)

**Capital:** Bucharest

**Major Language:** Romanian (official)

**Major Religions:** Romanian Orthodox (86.8%), Roman Catholic (4.5%), Protestant (3.7%), Pentecostal (1.5%), Greek-Catholic-Uniate (0.9%)

**Life expectancy:** 45 years men, 48 years women

**Ethnic Groups:** Romanian (89.5%), Hungarian (6.6%), Roma (2.5%), Ukrainian (.3%), German (.3%), Russian (.2%), Turkish & Tatar (.2%) Other (.4%) (Census 2002)

## Brief Recent History

Soviet occupation following World War II led to the formation of a communist Peoples' Republic in 1947. In 1965 Ceaușescu became head of the Communist Party, and in 1967 became head of state. In 1972, Ceaușescu introduced a program of systemisation. This began with a program of demolition, resettlement, and construction in the countryside, but concluded with an attempt to reshape the country's capital. In the 1980s, over one fifth of central Bucharest, including many historic buildings and churches, was demolished in order to rebuild the city in Ceaușescu's own style. Ceaușescu borrowed heavily from the West to finance economic development programs, but the loans devastated the country's financial situation.

Ceaușescu decided to eliminate Romania's foreign debts, and in the 1980's he ordered the export of much of the country's agricultural produce in order to repay its debts. This resulted in shortages within Romania itself, with food rationing, and heating, gas and electricity blackouts becoming part of everyday life. Between 1980 and 1989, there was a steady decrease in the standard of living, especially the availability of food and general goods in shops. The explanation given was that Romania's debt was being paid and that it would only be for a short time. Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena in the meantime built a personal fortune estimated at millions of dollars.

Elena established several repressive programs to increase Romania's birth-rate, resulting in large numbers of children being surrendered for adoption.

The revolution of December 1989 saw the fall of communism in Romania and the emergence of a democratic state. Romanians were finally allowed to express what they really felt and were free to move within and outside the country. They became owners of property, a market economy and greater dealings with the west began to take place. The economy, however, was in shambles and despite ownership of land, people possessed little else.

### **Reason that Romanians are likely to be in Ireland**

Most Romanian people are in Ireland for economic reasons. The minimum monthly wage in Romania is set at €97.07, compared with €1326.00 in Ireland. In 2004 the unemployment rate in Romania was 6.3%, while in Ireland, the rate was 4.3%.

### **Women's Rights in Romania**

Violence against women has continued to be a serious problem in Romania. According to a 2002 UN survey at least 82% of women have been abused verbally, physically or sexually.

Discrimination in the workplace is evident. There is a higher incidence of unemployment among women than there is among men. Few women hold influential posts in the private sector. A study in 2002 showed that a woman's average wage was approximately 75% of the average earned by men. There are few resources available to women to deal with economic discrimination. While maternity leave is an entitlement under Romanian law, many employers avoid paying benefits by hiring women without a contract. Some employers refuse to employ women at all. Trafficking in women and girls continues to be a problem in Romania. The country has been identified as both a source and transit country. The Government has increased efforts against the problem by forming a human trafficking task force within the police force.

### **Volunteering in Romania**

Voluntary activity in Romania has become more prominent in recent years with the creation of the Romanian National Volunteering Network in 2001. By 2003 there were eleven volunteering groups participating in the initiative. In 2002 in order to raise awareness and facilitate and support new organisations the Pro Vobis Volunteering Group initiated National Volunteering Week which takes place every spring. Voluntary activity in Romania includes a written contract between the volunteer and the host organisation. This is in accordance with the Volunteering Law 2001.

### **Useful contact**

Romania Society of Ireland, 90 Meath Street, Dublin 8  
Telephone: (+353 1) 453 6098 Facsimile: (+353 1) 454 0746  
Web: [www.romaniansociety.ie](http://www.romaniansociety.ie)

### **Sources**

US Department of State, Country report on Human Rights and Labour (2004)  
Women's Reproductive Rights in Romania: A Shadow Report (Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy New York) 2000 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/romania>

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