



Post-school expectations and outcomes among migrant origin young people in Ireland

Frances McGinnity, Merike Darmody
& Emer Smyth
ESRI & TCD

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Introduction: immigrant optimism

- Third-level education is becoming increasingly important for achieving high-quality secure jobs
- Migrants often migrate to improve their life chances – and those of their children
- Migrant young people often have high aspirations and expectations of educational (and labour market) success....
- ...yet in spite of this optimism and their aspirations, in many countries, migrants may fail to achieve this (Salikutluk, 2016; Johnson and Rudophi, 2011) **‘the aspirations-achievement paradox’**

Our contribution

- We examine both the educational ***expectations*** of migrant-origin students at age 13 and 17 (building on Smyth, 2020 and Sprong and Devitt, GUI conference 2021)
- And their actual ***transitions***, using information from their participation in higher education at age 20
- We do this using a high-quality representative cohort study, *Growing Up in Ireland '98 cohort*, which follows children/young people from age 9 to age 20 (and beyond)
- We define migrant children as those with 2 migrant parents and compare them to children with Irish parents

The Irish context

- Immigrant profile: 180 origin countries, many national groups from English & non-English-speaking countries, many tertiary education. BUT: for some groups education not matched by jobs (McGinnity et al., 2020a)
- Poorer English language skills = lower quality jobs (McGinnity et al., 2020b)
- Active school choice (esp. at secondary school level); school admission policies reform (School Admissions Bill 2018).
- High retention, and take up of post-school education and training (DES, 2019)
- The dominance of higher education as a post-school pathway (Smyth, 2011)

Previous research – Background and Structural Factors

- **Social Class and Family Background**
 - Higher social class has been associated with higher aspirations (Berrington et al., 2016)
 - parents of minority ethnic children have more positive educational aspirations for their children (Berrington et al., 2016).
 - Despite high levels of education among some immigrant parents, they are more likely to reside in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and have lower incomes (McCloy et al., 2017); the situation in Ireland is mixed (Fahey et al., 2019)
- **Proficiency in the language of the settlement country**
 - For immigrants, language proficiency seems to matter more than cognitive ability for future aspirations (Boguslaw, 2017).
 - Poor host country language skills prevent direct entry to HE (Conway, 2010)

School characteristics

Schools are important sites for academic development and shaping the aspirations and expectations of young people.

- In OECD countries students with an immigrant background tend to perform worse in school than students without; related to schools/school policies (OECD, 2015)
- Students attending schools with a high migrant intake (50% or more) were less likely to finish school (Van Houtte and Stevens, 2010); but differences driven by SES context
- Ireland: many first-generation migrant children lag behind their native peers in literacy scores (if home language not English) but not in Science and Maths. (Darmody and Smyth, 2018 using GUI; Shiels et al 2016 using PISA data)
- Educational expectations are lower among students attending DEIS schools compared to non-DEIS schools (Nelis et al., 2021)
- In Ireland, immigrant students are more likely to attend schools serving disadvantaged communities (Byrne et al., 2010)

Research hypotheses

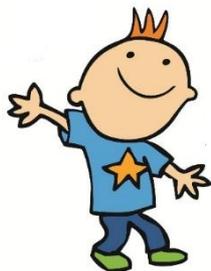
H1: Immigrant students in Ireland will have higher educational expectations than their native peers.

H2: Immigrant-origin students in Ireland will have lower progression rates to higher education in Ireland, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

H3: Higher (tertiary) education expectations and progression is influenced by various structural factors such as attending schools serving disadvantaged communities and those with high concentration of immigrant children.

Growing Up in Ireland, '98 Cohort

WAVE 1
Age 9



2007
(8,570)

WAVE 2
Age 13



2011
(7,400)

WAVE 3
Age 17/18



2015
(6,039)

WAVE 4
Age 20



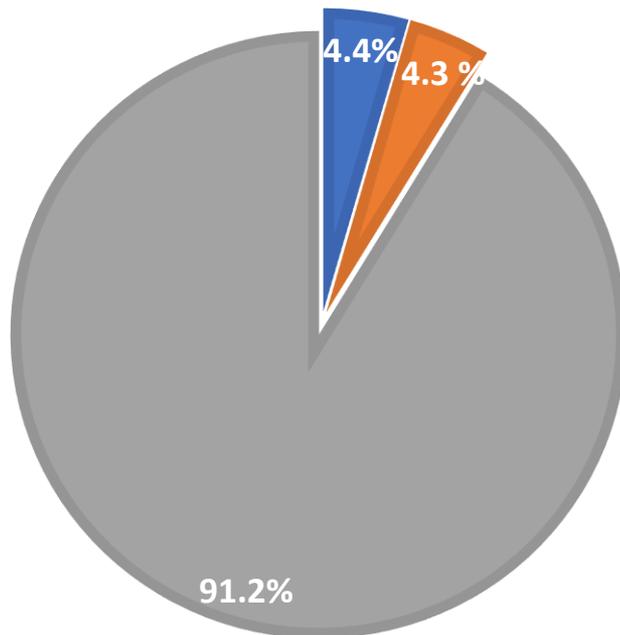
2018/2019
(5,190)

*Extensive Info on child/young person, family background,
School (college and work at age 20)*

Data and Methods

- **Migrant-origin** = both parents born abroad
- Distinguish migrant group by mothers' native language (English/not-English)
- **Outcomes:** Expectations at 17 (third-level v not)
Participation in higher education by or at 20
- **Logistic regression modelling** adding migrant groups (M1); then family background (M2); school characteristics; prior expectations and grades (M4) (AMEs)

Measurement: migrant origin and controls (GUI '98 cohort at age 20)



- Migrant English-speaking
- Migrant non-English speaking
- Irish origin

Family factors

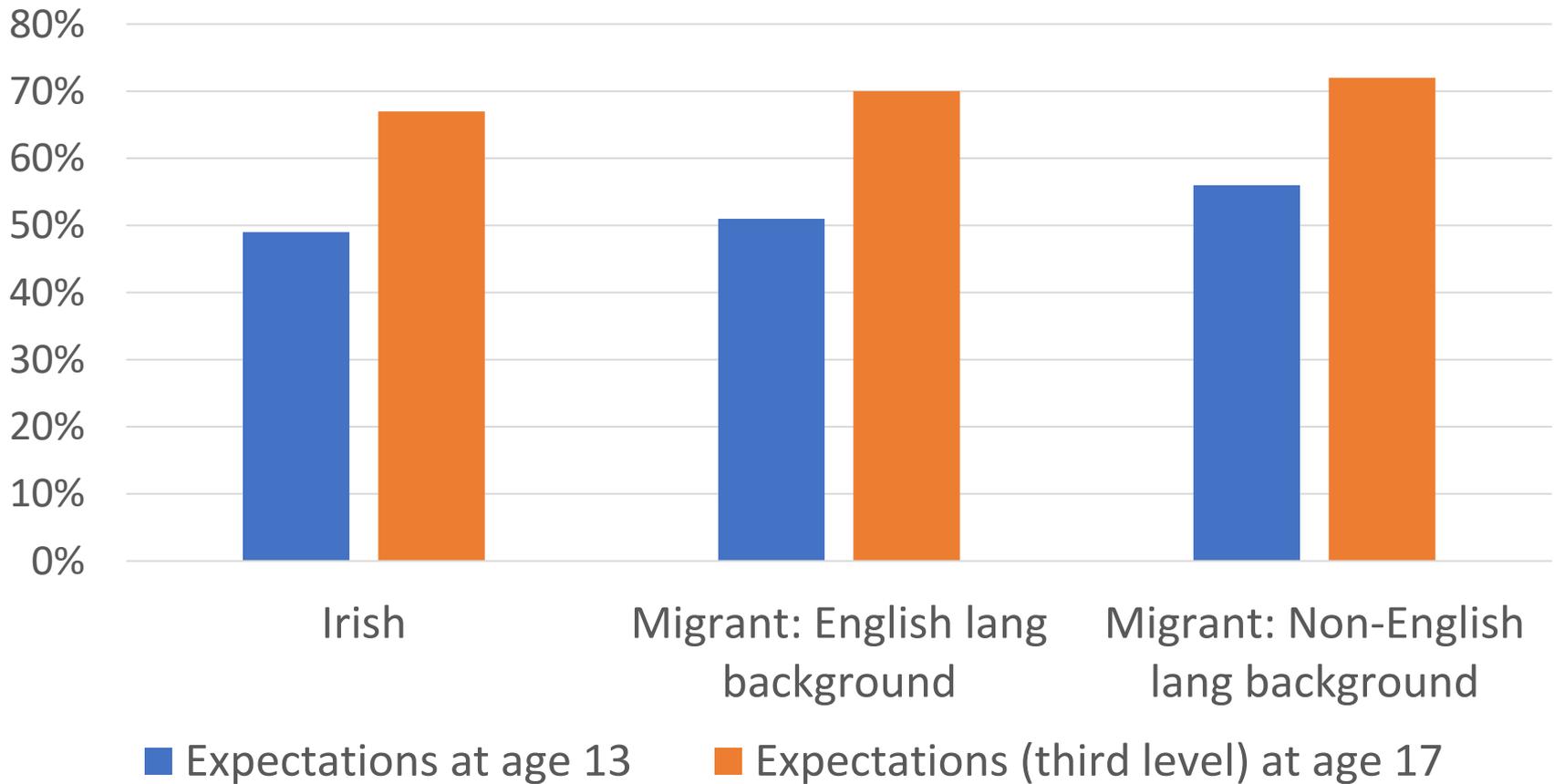
Mother's education
Household income
1 parent or 2?
Urban/rural
SEN*

School factors

DEIS (disadvantaged)
Concentration migrants

Note: Ethnicity could not be added due to correlation

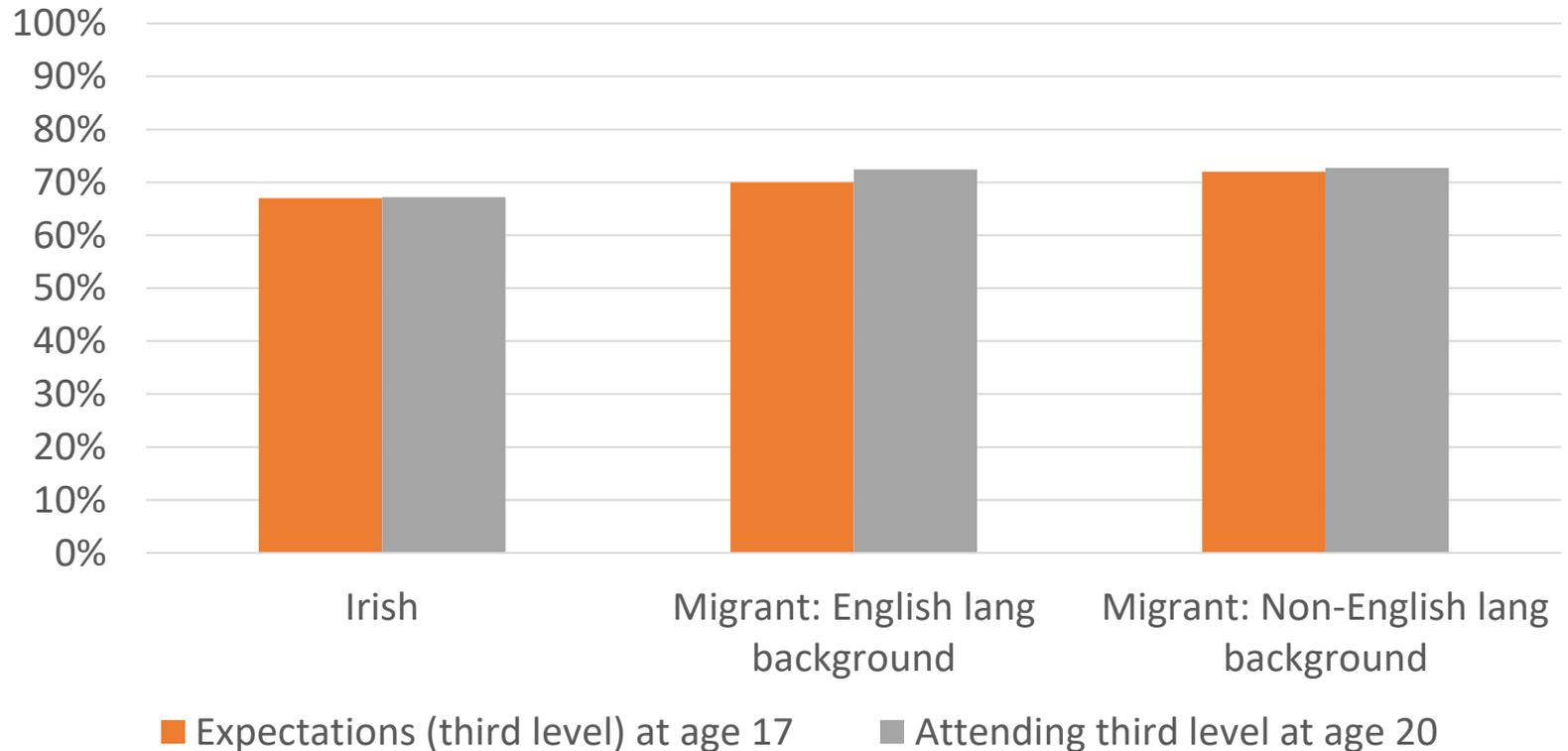
Expectations to go on to higher education at age 13 and age 17



Factors linked to expectations at 17 (model results)

- Lower expectations: SEN, lone parent households
- Higher expectations: higher income, mother's education
- School effects?
 - DEIS schools lower (even after accounting for family background)
 - High migrant concentration in school – lower expectations
- Prior expectations (at 13) also linked to expectations

Expectations at age 17 and actual progression to third-level at 20

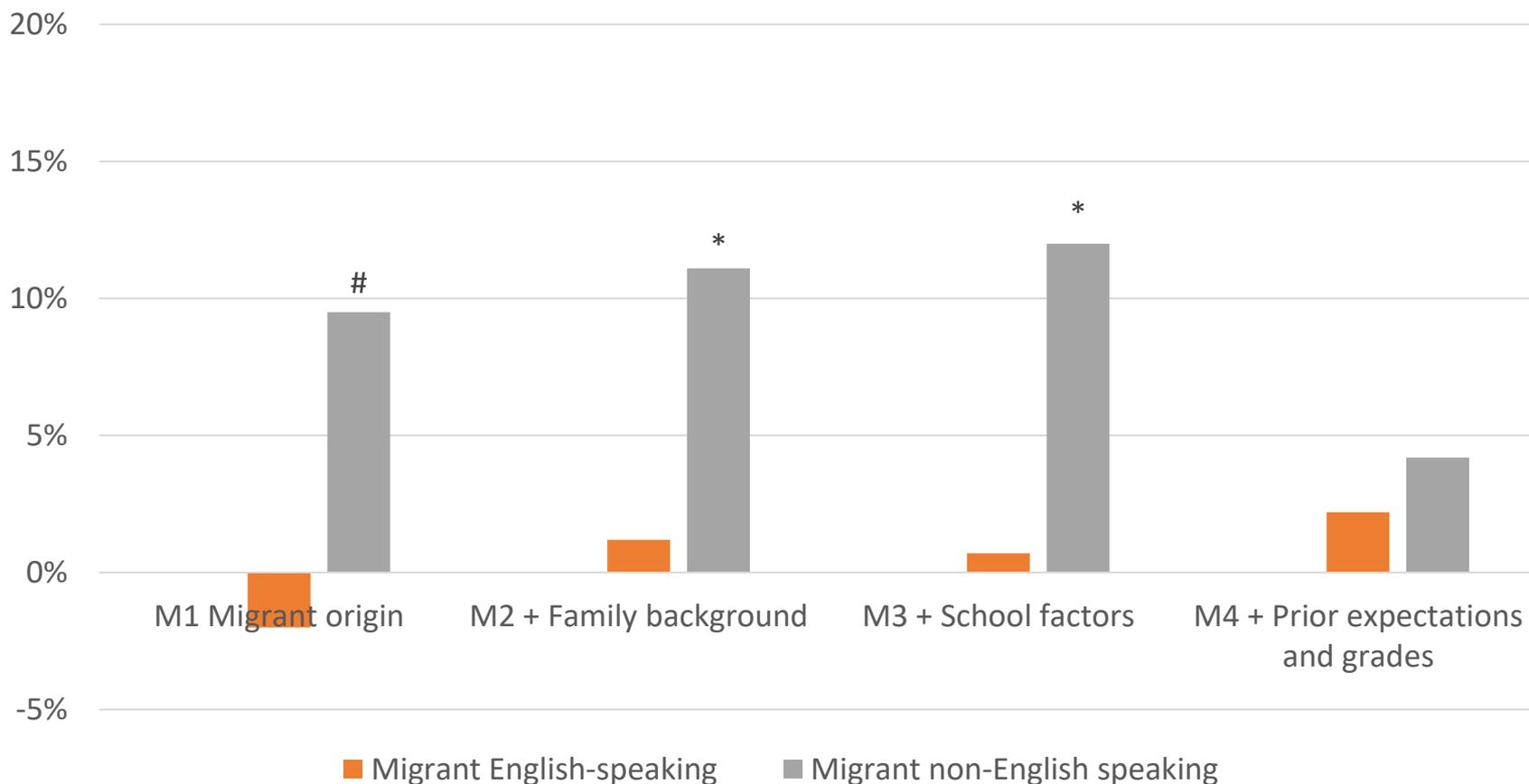


Source: GUI Cohort '98 Wave 3 (age 17) and Wave 4 (age 20), weighted by longitudinal weight.
Notes: N of cases=4,729.

Factors linked to progression to third level

- Model 2: SEN, lone parent family - lower progression
- Higher income and especially education - higher rates of progression to third level
- Model 3: DEIS schools - lower progression (after family background controls)
- No effect of migrant concentration in school on progression
- Model 4 Prior expectations and Leaving Certificate achievement very closely related

Model 2 Probability of being in third-level at age 20 [compared to Irish, AMEs]



Note: Logistic regression model (AMEs). Note: N of cases 4,729. * $p < .05$, # $p < .10$.

Limitations and avenues for future research

- No (migrant) refresher sample in GUI so migrant families who came since 2007 not sampled
- And migration is dynamic – patterns may be different for subsequent cohorts.
- That said, recent research with younger cohort ('08) suggest migrant children catch up quickly between age 3 and 9 (Darmody et al., 2022)
- We also don't know whether they stay in third-level, or drop out – though future GUI cohorts can reveal this...

Key Messages

- Expectations are high at 17 among migrants and Irish origin alike
- Progression rates to third-level education are also very high among all three groups
- No evidence of an ‘aspirations-achievement’ paradox for this cohort of migrant-origin young people in Ireland
- DEIS Schools – lower expectation and lower progression, even after controls for family resources
- But concentration of migrants does not affect progression

Thanks for listening – comments welcome

This is part of a book project: ‘Post-school pathways of migrant-origin youth in Europe’ Emer Smyth and Merike Darmody [Eds.]

Chapters on the Netherlands, Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Ireland. Some focus on education transitions, others on the labour market.

Email for further questions on the paper: fran.mcginnity@esri.ie

For further questions on the book: Merike.Darmody@esri.ie