

## Returning Irish emigrants earn higher salaries

Gabrielle Monaghan

---

RECOMMEND?

---

A new study indicates Irish emigrants may ultimately be better off, being able to earn on average 7% more when they return to Ireland than those who stayed at home.

Analysis by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) of 42,000 workers reveals that those who spend at least a year of their career abroad earned more when they came home, regardless of their qualifications or experience. Returning emigrants, the institute concluded, enhance a country's "human capital" over the long term.

Mairead Fleming, a recruitment specialist from Brightwater who interviewed candidates for The Apprentice television series, agrees with the conclusion. "It makes sense that someone would be more attractive to an employer on their return than someone who stayed at the same level or had a gap in their CV," Fleming said. "Employers can now pick and choose who they want, and new skills and foreign experience are attractive."

The ESRI study showed the wage premium for those who spent part of their career abroad applied to both genders. A similar study by the institute in 2001 found only men were commanding higher earnings on their return.

The premium was even higher for those who worked further afield, with Irish workers returning from America and Canada commanding 11% more income every week, and those coming home from Australia and New Zealand generating 10% more than stay-at-home peers. Work experience in the UK added just 5% to earnings.

"People who go abroad for work are often perceived as highly motivated and prepared to take a risk, but not so much if they go to the UK, because it's not a hugely different experience," said Jean Goggin, one of the ESRI authors.

By 2006, 15% of the Irish workforce had worked abroad for at least a year. In the year to April 2009, emigration had risen 40% and immigration to Ireland slumped 31%, creating the first net emigration since 1995, according to the Central Statistics Office.