



Policy Briefing No. 12

Remote Working and Relocation

Evidence from the 2023 National Remote Working Survey

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Introduction

The WDC has been researching remote work in the context of regional and rural development for over two decades and some of this research is available [here](#). In 2019, before the pandemic, Government published [Remote Work in Ireland](#), which identified remote work as a policy tool to promote regional and rural development. It is only now however, due to the extensive remote working prompted by Covid-19, that we have considerable data on relocation enabled by remote working. This policy briefing presents new data and analyses specifically on relocation collected as part of the 2023 National Remote Working Survey, available [here](#).

National Remote Working Survey 2023

The WDC, in partnership with the University of Galway, have conducted annual national remote working surveys since the start of the pandemic. The previous national survey reports are available [here](#). Last year we published detailed data on the relocation patterns identified in the 2022 Survey, see [here](#).

The methodology of the 2023 Survey was similar to previous surveys. The survey is explicitly designed to capture employee views on remote working. Those whose work can be conducted fully remote or hybrid are the target respondents. As only some occupations are amenable to remote working, the survey findings are not intended to generalise to the entire working population.

It was an online survey with a self-selected sample and was open to those aged 18 years and over. The survey was conducted in September 2023. A total of 5,929 usable responses were received. Table 3 in the Appendix provides detail on the resident profile of survey responses.

Respondents were asked if they would consider relocating due to their experience of remote working since COVID-19. The responses for the last three years are presented in Table 1 below. There is a degree of consistency across the different relocation preferences over the three years suggesting a relatively stable pattern.

Table 1 Percentage of respondents indicating relocation preferences

Based on your experience of remote working would you consider relocating	2021	2022	2023
Would not consider relocating	52.9	52.5	52.1
Would consider relocating	24.3	21.6	19.0
May consider relocating	14.2	16.5	14.7
Already relocated within Ireland	8.2	9.3	13.7
Already relocated outside Ireland	0.3	0.2	0.5

The 2023 Survey was conducted in September 2023

The resident profile of respondents is presented in Table 3 in the Appendix. Over 5,900 responses were received

Over 14% of survey respondents say they have relocated since Covid-19 because they can work remotely

Nearly two-thirds (63.5%) have relocated from Dublin

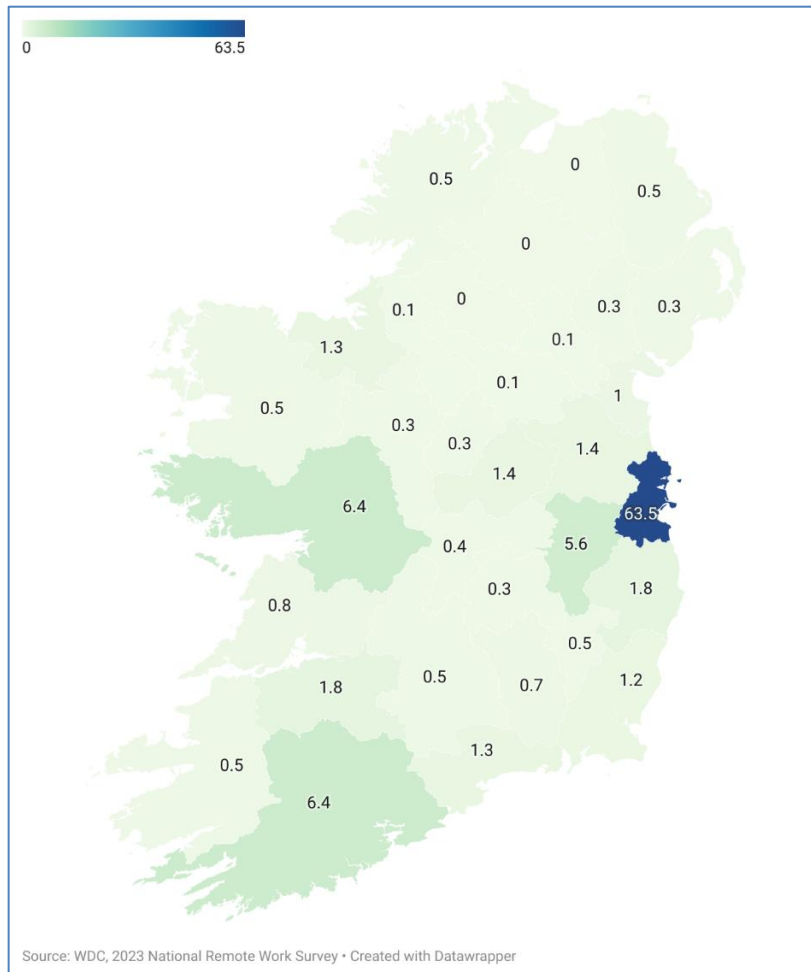
Counties Relocated From

Over 840 respondents (14.1%) reported that they have already relocated since COVID-19 because they can work remotely. Of these, just under 800 provided detail on relocation destination and various other socio-economic characteristics. A small number (29) reported that they had moved outside Ireland. The following is focused on those that have relocated within Ireland (N=768).

The county destinations **from** which respondents relocated is illustrated in Map 1 below and Table 1 in the Appendix. Nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of those who have already moved within Ireland relocated from Dublin. Just under 30% of survey respondents were resident in Dublin indicating its relative share of those who have relocated is high.

The more populous counties also experience higher numbers relocating, for example Cork and Galway (6.4% each), albeit much less than Dublin. While the focus of the survey was workers in Ireland, there were some responses from Northern Ireland as the maps and tables illustrate.

Map 1. Counties from which remote workers re-located



Source: 2023 Remote Working in Ireland Survey. University of Galway & WDC.

There was a fairly even gender split among those who have relocated

Those who have relocated are generally younger than the survey population. Over a third were aged under 34 years.

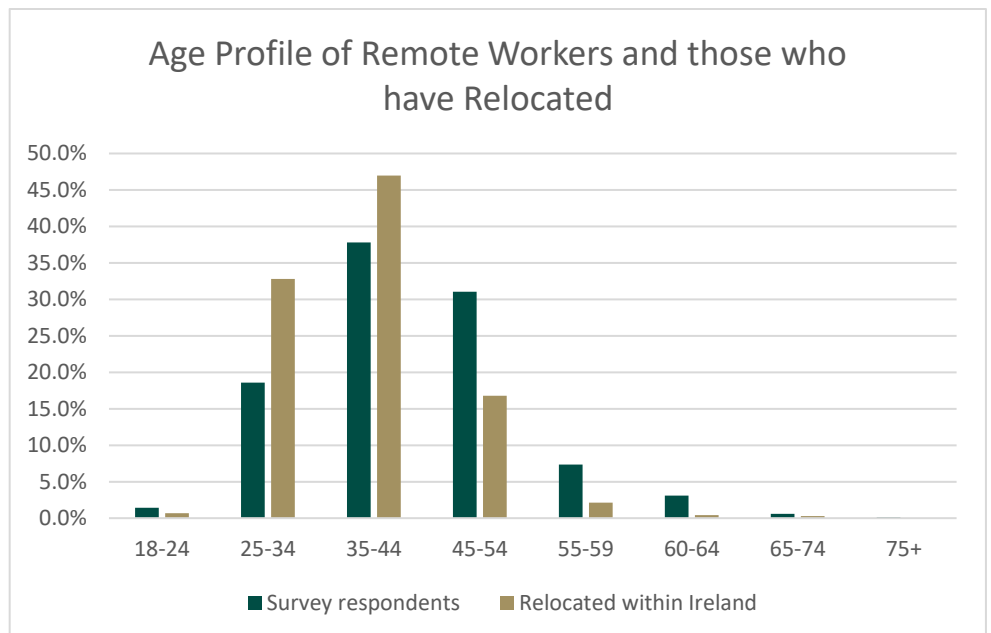
Those who have relocated have a higher level of formal education

Profile of those relocated

Over 14% (nearly 800 respondents), said they had relocated since Covid-19 because they can work remotely. Some of their characteristics are discussed below.

There was a fairly even gender split (50% female, 49% male) among those who have relocated though there was a higher share of females among the survey population (55% female, 45% male).

Those who have relocated are younger than the survey population. Over a third of all those who relocated were aged under 34 years (33.5%) and these comprise 20% of survey respondents. This pattern of a younger age profile among those who relocated was also evident in the 2022 survey.



There is a higher level of formal education among those who have relocated, compared to the survey population and the general population¹. 45.3% of those who have relocated have a masters or doctoral degree compared to 40.9% of the survey population². The gap between the two groups has narrowed compared to last year's survey. Both categories have much higher levels of formal education than the general population which in part reflects the profile of employment that is amenable to remote work.

¹ Among the survey population 41% indicated they had a masters or doctoral degree. Nationally 15% of those at work had a masters or doctoral degree (Census 2022).

² This corresponds to level 9 and 10 respectively on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Those who have relocated are less likely to have eldercare and childcare responsibilities

Those who have relocated are more likely to work in the private sector

Just two occupational groups; Professionals and Managers & Directors account for three quarters of those who have relocated

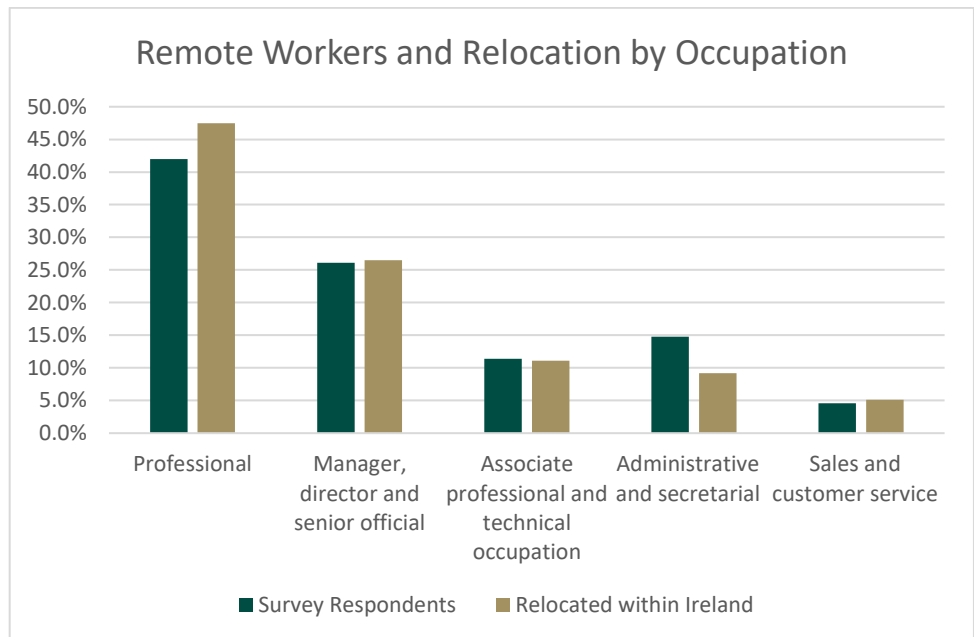
Respondents were asked had they eldercare and childcare responsibilities. A slightly lower proportion of those who relocated within Ireland had eldercare responsibilities (13.4%, compared to 16.5% of the survey population).

Those who relocated were also less likely to have dependent children; 60.6% of those who relocated did not have dependent children, in contrast to 47% of all respondents. Those with 2, 3 or 4 dependent children were also less likely to have relocated.

There is a slightly higher share of those with one dependent child who relocated, 16.5% of those who have relocated have one child compared to 15.7% of the survey population.

More employees in the private sector have relocated compared to those in the public or charity sectors. Nearly three quarters (73.9%) of those who relocated within Ireland are in the private sector. This was also disproportionately higher than the share of survey respondents in the private sector (63.9%). Over a fifth (22.6%) of those who relocated were in the public sector (lower than their share of total respondents – 31.8%).

Those who have relocated are concentrated among a few occupational groups. Nearly half of all those who have relocated are within the professional occupational group – 47.5% and these comprise 42% of the survey population.



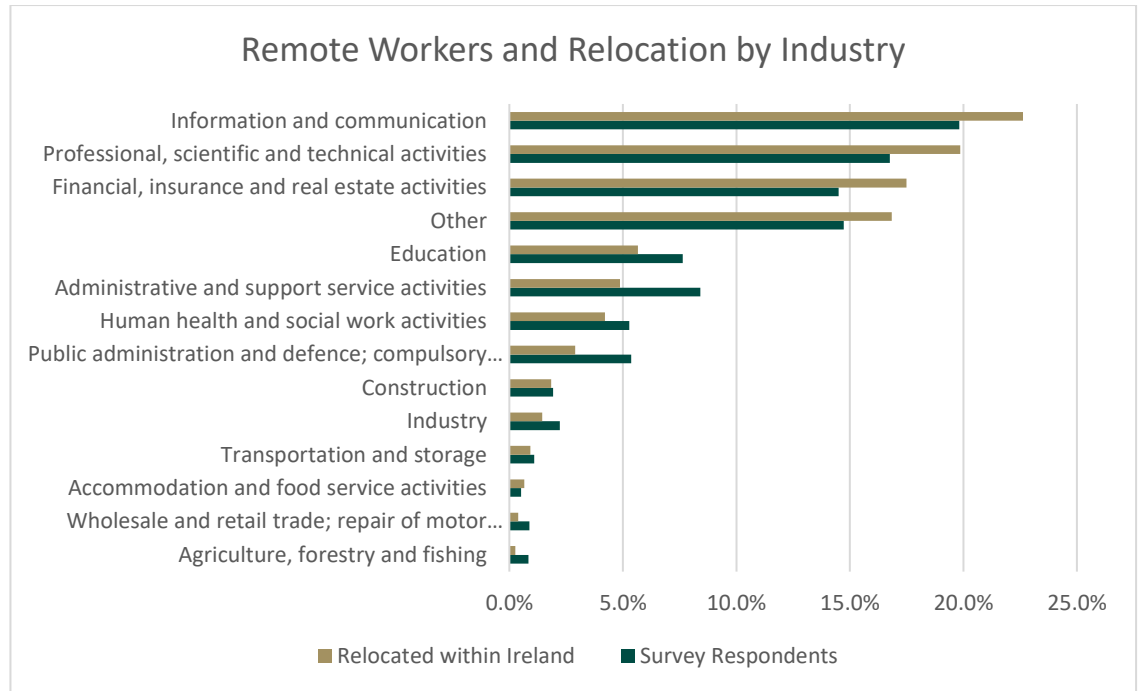
Similarly remote work is concentrated in some industry groups. Three of fourteen categories account for over half (51%) of those who have relocated, namely Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (22.6%), Professional, Scientific and Technical activities (19.9%), Financial, Insurance and real estate activities (17.5%).

These three industrial categories account for 60% of those who have relocated within Ireland since Covid-19 because roles there are more suited to remote work. Each of these and the 'Other' category, have a higher share within the relocated population compared to the survey population. All other industries are underrepresented among those who relocated compared to the survey population.

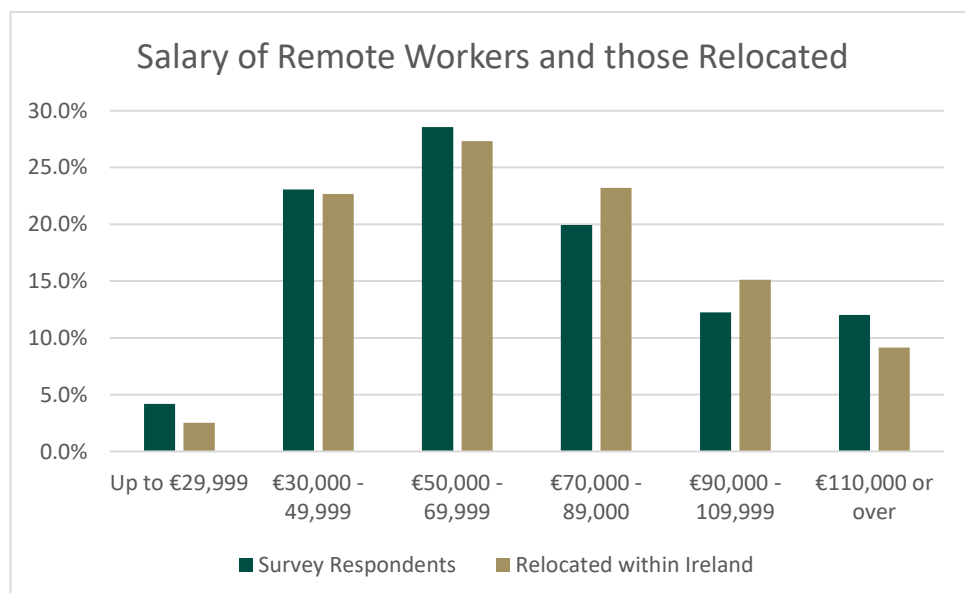
Relocation is concentrated among 3 of 14 industry groups, Information and Communication Technologies, Professional and Financial Insurance & Real Estate

These three account for 60% of those who have already relocated

Those who have relocated generally earn more than the survey population



Those who have relocated generally earn more than the survey population, who in turn have a higher income profile than the general working population. Nearly 40% of those who have relocated earn between €70K and €109K, in contrast to 32% of the survey population. Those in the highest income bracket (€110K+) are slightly underrepresented among those who have relocated.





Over the past two years there is a degree of consistency in both the destinations to which remote workers have relocated to and their socio-economic characteristics

For those with suitable occupations, remote work has enabled relocation

The frequency with which workers need to attend the workplace is likely to influence the distance to which people will relocate to

A goal of Project Ireland's National Planning Framework is to support greater population growth in centres outside the GDA. To support this, a range of employment opportunities including remote are needed.

Policy Conclusions

This briefing provides further analysis from the 2023 National Remote Working Survey focused on remote workers who have relocated. A comparison of those who relocated in the 2022 and 2023 surveys illustrates a degree of consistency in the destinations to which they relocate and their socio-economic characteristics. In both years, Cork, Galway and Kildare were the top three counties people relocated to. This year, three of the Western Region counties were in the top 5 relocation destinations. In 2022, four Western Region counties were in the top five, see [here](#).

Those who relocated have a somewhat different socio-economic profile to that of the survey population. They are generally younger and are less likely to have dependent children than the survey population. They have a higher level of formal education and are more likely to be employed in the private sector. They have relatively higher salaries which should bring additional spend to the local economy but may have wider impacts on regional house and rental prices.

Those who have relocated are concentrated among the professional, associate professional and managerial occupations. They are also concentrated in a few sectors – over half are employed in three of 14 sectors; Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Professional, Scientific and Technical activities, and Financial, Insurance and real estate activities.

For those with suitable occupations, remote work has enabled relocation. The drivers for why relocate and to where are less clear. For those relocating from urban centres to more regional and rural locations, quality of life and an aspiration to return to where people grew up can be factors. The relative price of housing and accommodation are also likely to be factors.

For those working hybrid, the frequency with which workers need to attend the workplace is likely to influence the distance from which people will relocate to. This may partly explain relocation in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) – Kildare was the third most popular county for relocation in 2023. In 2021, the counties and regions on the West coast featured more than counties around the Greater Dublin Area, this was when Government guidance on remote working (full-time) was still in force.

A goal of Project Ireland's [National Planning Framework](#) is to support greater population growth in centres other than Dublin and the GDA. To support this, government needs to ensure that there is a range of diverse employment opportunities, including those which can be remote, to attract and retain workers to regional centres. There are other policies needed to support remote and hybrid working such as quality sustainable transport and infrastructure supporting regional development which align with Government policy and need delivery.

The WDC will continue to examine these issues in subsequent surveys and analyses and is conducting detailed analyses of Census 2022 POWSCAR data examining travel to work patterns and labour catchments. These and other CSO data will provide additional insights into the relocation patterns outlined here.

Appendix

Table 1 (Map 1) Which county did you relocate from?

Total Count N=765	Percentage	Number
Dublin	63.5	486
Cork	6.4	49
Galway	6.4	49
Kildare	5.6	43
Limerick	1.8	14
Wicklow	1.8	14
Meath	1.4	11
Westmeath	1.4	11
Sligo	1.3	10
Waterford	1.2	10
Wexford	1.2	9
Louth	1.0	8
Clare	0.8	6
Kilkenny	0.7	5
Antrim	0.5	4
Carlow	0.5	4
Donegal	0.5	4
Kerry	0.5	4
Mayo	0.5	4
Tipperary	0.5	4
Offaly	0.4	3
Armagh	0.3	2
Down	0.3	2
Laois	0.3	2
Longford	0.3	2
Roscommon	0.3	2
Cavan	0.1	1
Leitrim	0.1	1
Monaghan	0.1	1
Derry	0.0	0
Fermanagh	0.0	0
Tyrone	0.0	0

Source: 2023 Remote Working in Ireland Survey. University of Galway and WDC.

Table 2 (Map 2) Which county did you relocate to?

Total Count N=748	Percentage	Number
Cork	10.4	78
Galway	10.0	75
Kildare	6.7	50
Mayo	5.6	42
Donegal	5.2	39
Wexford	5.1	38
Sligo	4.8	36
Dublin	4.4	33
Wicklow	4.4	33
Meath	4.3	32
Kerry	4.1	31
Westmeath	3.7	28
Clare	3.1	23
Offaly	3.1	23
Roscommon	3.1	23
Tipperary	3.1	23
Laois	2.4	18
Limerick	2.3	17
Cavan	2.1	16
Waterford	2.1	16
Louth	2.0	15
Longford	1.7	13
Kilkenny	1.5	11
Leitrim	1.3	10
Monaghan	1.3	10
Carlow	1.2	9
Down	0.3	2
Armagh	0.1	1
Derry	0.1	1
Fermanagh	0.1	1
Tyrone	0.1	1
Antrim	0.0	0

Source: 2023 Remote Working in Ireland Survey. University of Galway and WDC.

Table 3 Resident Profile of Survey Repondents

Total Count N = 5,929	Percentage	Number
Dublin	29.41	1744
Galway	10.39	616
Cork	9.75	578
Kildare	6.09	361
Meath	4.03	239
Wicklow	3.69	219
Limerick	3.09	183
Mayo	3.00	178
Donegal	2.59	153
Clare	2.56	152
Kerry	2.18	129
Wexford	2.10	124
Sligo	2.02	120
Louth	1.95	115
Tipperary	1.92	114
Waterford	1.90	112
Westmeath	1.88	111
Offaly	1.60	95
Roscommon	1.51	89
Laois	1.37	81
Kilkenny	1.26	75
Cavan	0.91	54
Leitrim	0.65	38
Carlow	0.62	37
Longford	0.57	34
Monaghan	0.52	31
Down	0.14	8
Fermanagh	0.07	4
Derry	0.05	3
Tyrone	0.05	3
Armagh	0.04	2
Antrim	0.04	2
Outside of Ireland	2.01	119

Source: 2023 Remote Working in Ireland Survey. University of Galway and WDC.
Figures may not sum due to rounding.

WDC reports on publications on Remote Work are all available on
<https://westerndevelopment.ie/policy/policy-areas/remote-work/>

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