

# Pole toppers! And one in eight of us is non-Irish

POLES top the poll among the more than 500,000 non-Irish people living here, new figures have shown.

The economic crash saw the number of foreign nationals dip by 1.6% from 544,357 in 2011 to 535,475 at the last census in April 2016.

Poles make up the largest immigrant group at 122,515, followed by the British at 103,113, then Lithuanians 36,552, Romanians on 29,186 and Latvians with 19,933. Poles overtook the British as the largest immigrant group between the 2006 and 2011 censuses.

In 2006, there were 112,000 UK nationals and 63,000 Polish. But the number of Poles almost

By **Christian McCashin**

doubled in the five years to 2011 to 122,585, making them the largest group.

Brazilians were the largest group of non-EU immigrants at 13,640 and the sixth group overall. Brazilians were also the youngest group of immigrants with an average age of just under 30, compared with the State's average of 37 and three months. The two oldest populations were British, with an average age of 46 and eight months, and Germans, 40 and six months.

Immigrant Council of Ireland chief Brian Killoran said: 'The Census data released shows

what we already know, Ireland is a vibrant, diverse country with approx one in eight of us coming from a migrant background. It's time we saw proactive efforts at a political level promoting integration and ensuring key policies relating to health, education, social protection, are taking this new statistical information on board to ensure everyone in Ireland is being treated fairly.

Almost 40,000 British – 41% – had an Irish partner, compared to only 4% of the Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian nationals.

UK nationals had the lowest labour force participation rate at under 60% largely due to 19% being retired people.

# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# Wise words of our kind little rebel

**Y**ESTERDAY, we returned to a familiar haunt: Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin. Shortly after he was born, our seven-year-old had surgery there for a hernia. As the operation was not successful, it required a second intervention immediately following the first.

It was a fraught time for us as parents, and we still shudder at the prospect of more surgery.

Yet that is what we now face: a third operation for a second hernia. But, as regular readers will know, our youngest is no longer a fragile infant.

This is the child whose domestic destruction would cause even the Incredible Hulk to wince. He is the very one who yanked our blinds and curtains off the wall, and who thinks it acceptable to play with golf clubs inside the house. What was once a sanctuary has been turned into a war zone.

And now, not content with having brought ruin to our home, he has decided to let loose on the garden. Recently, I noticed large chunks missing from the hedges. Confusion gave way to clarity when I spotted him belting a poor bush with some class of an iron rod.

Despite his promises to stop being so destructive, it seems this little boy simply can't help himself. I was mowing the lawn recently when, to my shock and terror, shards of stone started ricocheting through the air. One of them came perilously close to my eye; another struck a window.

Buried in the grass were dozens of small stones. As they met the blades of the mower, they shattered into smithereens and took flight. When confronted, he simply inquired: 'What do you mean there were stones all over the grass?'

When I showed him the devastation, he sheepishly said: 'Oh, yes, I forgot I did that. I didn't mean any harm. I'm so sorry'. The truth is, he never means any harm.

This is simply one little boy discovering his world through innocent play. That it causes his father untold nightmares does not detract from the fact that there is nothing malicious behind the destruction. Unlike his brothers, he sees the whole world as one big playground. We were, of course, quite sure that his hyperactivity had caused yet another hernia. You see,

he is addicted to athletics – something he likes to show off by doing the splits. Let me simply put it like this: it is not for the fainthearted.

Seemingly, however, athletic activity is not at all harmful for his condition. Neither did it cause it, although, if you saw him perform the splits, you wouldn't be convinced. According to the physicians, it is very common for a child to have a recurrence.

Of course, since hearing that athletics are allowed, he has upped the ante by contorting his body in ways which defy all decency.

When we object that he might break a bone, rupture a muscle or dislocate his hip, he quickly responds: 'But the doctor says it is good for my hernia!'

How can any parent cope with such antics? Quite easily because this same little boy is a most gentle, kind and loving child. There are even times when his sensitivity would bring you to tears.

The other day, for example, he was invited to a friend's birthday party. The only problem was that it clashed with his older brother's party. This is how he responded to the dilemma: 'Family matters more than anything. I'm going to our party.'

Then, that same evening, as we sat eating dinner, he spontaneously said something that broke our hearts. It was something so selfless and touching that even his brothers were rendered speechless: 'If any of us die, I hope it is me because I wouldn't like to live without any of you.'

**F**LOWERS will grow again, hedges can be mended, and curtains can be replaced. There is nothing inside or out that can't be fixed. So long as the ones you love are healthy and happy, life is truly wonderful.

Our little athlete will soon return to hospital for his procedure.

In the meantime, who knows what devastation awaits the Dooley abode. It seems I am destined to fire-fight my way through parenthood.

But isn't it a small price to pay when you are blessed with someone so caring and sensitive? He may break everything, but what does it matter when he can so readily lift your heart.

As Leonard Cohen says: 'There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.'

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