

# Unravelling the Migration Decision-Making Processes Underpinning Brazilian Migrants' Decisions to Move to Ireland

(Desvendando os processos de tomada de decisão migratória que sustentam as decisões dos migrantes brasileiros de se mudar para a Irlanda)

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors. Understanding the decision-making process behind migration requires an interdisciplinary approach encompassing theories and empirical studies from economics, sociology, geography, political science, and psychology. The empirical literature on migration decision-making highlights the complexity and multifaceted nature of migration. Economic incentives, social networks, policy frameworks, environmental factors, and psychological and behavioural factors play crucial roles in shaping migration decisions. Furthermore, intersecting factors such as gender, race, and class further complicate the migration process. Understanding these diverse influences requires an interdisciplinary approach and nuanced analysis, as migration is driven by a combination of individual, family, and broader structural factors.

Financial incentives, particularly wage differentials and employment opportunities are crucial determinants of migration. Neoclassical economic theory posits that individuals migrate to maximize their income and improve their financial well-being. Several studies have empirically supported this

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theory. For example, Harris and Todaro (1970) demonstrated that expected wage differentials between rural and urban areas significantly drive rural-urban migration. Similarly, Borjas (1987) found that immigrants move to countries where they can earn higher wages than their home countries. Human capital theory suggests that the potential return on investment in education and skills influences migration decisions. Migrants are more likely to move if they expect their skills to be better utilized and rewarded in the destination country. Chiswick (1978) showed that higher educational attainment increases the likelihood of international migration as individuals seek to optimize their human capital. Furthermore, Grogger and Hanson (2011) highlighted that skill matching and the demand for specific skills in the destination labour market play a crucial role in migration decisions.

Social networks significantly impact migration decision-making by providing information, financial assistance, and emotional support. Massey et al. (1993) emphasized that migrant networks reduce the costs and risks associated with migration, thus facilitating the migration process. Empirical studies by Munshi (2003) and McKenzie and Rapoport (2007) corroborate this, showing that established migrant networks increase the likelihood of subsequent migration by providing resources and support. Family and community ties also play a crucial role in the decision to migrate. Stark and Bloom (1985) introduced the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) theory, which posits that migration decisions are often made collectively by families rather than individuals. Families view migration as a strategy to diversify income sources and reduce risk. Empirical evidence from Taylor (1999) and de Haas (2010) supports this theory, showing that the broader family and community context influences migration decisions.

Government policies and regulations significantly shape migration flows. Immigration policies determine the legal channels for migration and the conditions under which migrants can enter and remain in the destination country. Beine, Docquier, and Özden (2011) found that restrictive immigration policies reduce migration volume, while more open policies encourage it. The empirical work of Ortega and Peri (2013) further highlights that immigration policies affect not only the quantity but also the quality of migrants, influencing the skill composition of migrant populations. Labour market policies in destination countries, such as minimum wage laws and employment protection regulations, also influence migration decisions. Ruhs and Martin (2008) found that labour market policies impact the attractiveness of the destination country for migrants. For example, countries with strong employment protection may deter low-skilled migrants, while those with flexible labour markets may attract them.

Environmental factors, including climate change and environmental degradation, are increasingly recognized as important drivers of migration. The literature on environmental migration highlights that adverse environmental conditions can lead individuals to migrate for safer and more sustainable living conditions. Studies by Black et al. (2011) and Hunter, Luna, and Norton (2015) provide empirical evidence that environmental stressors, such as droughts, floods, and sea-level rise, significantly influence migration decisions.

Migration decisions are also influenced by individuals' perceptions of risks and opportunities in the areas of origin and destination. Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory suggests that individuals weigh potential gains and losses differently when making uncertain decisions. Czaika and Vothknecht (2014) applied this theory to migration, finding that individuals' risk perceptions significantly influence their migration intentions and behaviours.

Cultural and identity factors also play a role in migration decisions. Migrants often seek destinations where they can maintain cultural ties and integrate more readily. Empirical studies by Dustmann (1996) and Constant and Zimmermann (2008) highlight that cultural proximity and shared identity with the destination country can facilitate migration and influence destination choice.

Gender dynamics critically influence migration decisions and experiences. Women and men often face different opportunities and constraints that shape their migration choices. Empirical studies by Donato et al. (2006) and Curran and Saguy (2001) reveal that gender-specific labour market opportunities, social norms, and family responsibilities significantly affect migration patterns. For example, the demand for domestic and care work in destination countries often influences female migration.

Race and class intersect with migration decisions, influencing who migrates and their experiences in the destination country. Studies by Massey and Denton (1993) and Portes and Zhou (1993) demonstrate that racial and class inequalities shape migration opportunities and outcomes. Migrants from marginalized racial and ethnic groups often face more significant barriers and discrimination, which influence their migration experiences and trajectories.

This article aims to contribute to this body of literature by exploring the complex decision-making processes that guide Brazilian migrants in moving to Ireland. It focuses on four key aspects: the actors involved in migration decision-making, family consent, types of migration, and migration interests. This article aims to enrich the existing scholarship on Brazilian migration to Ireland, particularly the literature on migration decision-making. By offering original empirical data and theoretical insights, it seeks to contribute

significantly to the literature on this topic. Ireland represents a new European frontier for Brazilians, who have historically migrated primarily to Portugal and other Western European countries (Evans et al., 2007; Torresan, 2012; Schrooten et al., 2016). Although Brazilian migration to Ireland is a relatively recent phenomenon compared to other European nations, the number of Brazilians in Ireland has grown significantly (CSO, 2022). The country is now home to Europe's 7th largest Brazilian community (MRE, 2023). Brazilian migration to Ireland is curious because, unlike Portugal and other European nations, Ireland lacks strong migration and colonial links with Brazil or historical familiarity with migrants from the region (Marrow, 2012).

The number of Brazilian nationals in Ireland has grown significantly since the beginning of the migratory flow (CSO, 2002, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2022). For instance, in 2002, there were only 1,232 Brazilian nationals in Ireland. By 2006, their number had grown to 4,720. Between the censuses of 2006 and 2011, the Brazilian population doubled in size, and its number stood at 8,704. The growth in the number of Brazilian nationals has continued, and in 2016, their number stood at 13,640. The number of Brazilians increased significantly in 2022 to 39,556. Moreover, since 2006, the Brazilian population has grown more than eight times.

Reflecting the arrival of different groups of immigrants in Ireland, research on Brazilian immigrants is only now emerging and primarily comprised of qualitative small-scale and mixed methods studies, except two large-scale studies (de Farias, 2022; Gouveia, 2015). Most of this body of academic research was carried out on Brazilian migration to Gort, a small town in County Galway, in the west of Ireland. These studies have focused on the determinants of both migration and return migration (de Farias, 2022); social capital and networks (McGrath, 2010; McGrath & Murray, 2009, 2011); integration (Leal, 2004; Healy, 2006, McKeown, 2015); ethnic identity (Sheringham, 2009, 2010); remittances (Meher, 2010), transnational religions (Meher, 2011; Sheringham, 2013) and rural cosmopolitanism (Woods, 2018). The Brazilian community of Gort is arguably the most famous case of Brazilian migration in Ireland, and over the years, it has been portrayed in both academia and the media (O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Mac Cormaic, 2008; Pereira, 2008; RTE, 2011; BBC, 2009). However, only a small number of studies have explicitly focused on Brazilian immigrants in Dublin (de Farias, 2024, 2012; Cawley, 2018, Dalsin, 2016; IOM, 2009), and just one study has examined Brazilians in Naas in County Kildare (Gouveia, 2015). To date, no study has explored the migration decision-making processes underpinning Brazilian migrants' decision to migrate to Ireland. This study aims to contribute to filling this empirical gap.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a brief theoretical and empirical literature review on the migration decision-making process. The subsequent empirical analysis begins with the methods and data description and ends with the description and interpretation of the results. The final section provides the study's final summary and implications.

## 2 MIGRATION DECISION-MAKING: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Decision-making is a universal concern among people seeking to migrate (Cairns, 2021). According to Baláž et al. (2016), migration decisions are complex, involving both economic and non-economic considerations, and are often made in conditions that depart significantly from the idealised information assumptions of many models (see DeJong and Fawcett, 1981; DeJong, 2000; Judson, 1990; Chi and Voss, 2005). Migration decisions are also multifaceted because migration has diversified into various forms, including work, education, training, lifestyle, and leisure (Cairns, 2021). According to DeJong and Gardner (2013: 2), the concept of decision-making “refers to the formation of an intention or disposition that results in a migration behaviour – the decision itself is sometimes conceptualized as composed of two parts: the decision to move or stay and the choice of one destination among various alternatives.” Cairns (2021) asserts that while decisions may be impulsive, a significant degree of premeditation is more likely considering the need to plan and make provision for departures and arrivals. In addition, people planning to migrate must accumulate sufficient social and economic capital before departure (Cairns, 2021).

According to Baláž et al. (2016: 36), existing migration research provides limited insights into many aspects of complex migration decision-making processes. Moreover, migration decision-making processes have been explored through migration theories (DeJong, 2000; Haug, 2008), theoretical decision-making models (DeJong and Gardner, 1981; DeJong, 2000; Chi and Voss, 2005; Bushin, 2009; Thompson, 2017; Baláž et al., 2016) and empirically (Tabor et al., 2015). Within this body of literature, there is considerable debate regarding the units of analysis for proper migration decision studies (Chi and Voss, 2005). Neoclassical (NE) migration theory, for instance, argues that individual and individual-level characteristics drive migration decisions (Chi and Voss, 2005). This model assumes that a cost-benefit approach underlies decision-making (Haug, 2008). NE also assumes that “human capital is a determining factor in migration decisions, as the qualification level correlates with the probability of finding a job and with

the wage level at the place of destination” (Haug, 2008: 587). On the other hand, the new economics of labour migration (NELM) argues that the family is the reasonable decision-making unit (Da Vanzo, 1981). NELM theorists such as Mincer (1978) have suggested that migration decision studies should be conducted at the family level rather than the individual level because it is the net family gain rather than net personal gain that drives migration of households (quoted in Chi and Voss, 2005: 13). Migration decision-making processes have also been explored through network frameworks. Network frameworks seek to explain the dynamics of migration decision-making in the process of pioneer and subsequent chain migration and the embedding of networks in migration systems (DeJong, 2000). Researchers have also explored migration decision-making processes through theoretical decision-making models. DeJong (2000), for instance, drew on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1988) to propose a migration decision-making model of planned behaviour. The theory, which comes from social psychology, states “that intention are the primary determinant of behaviour, and are a product of social norms – perceptions of what significant others think about the behaviour – and expectations that one will attain valued goals as a consequence of the behaviour” (DeJong, 2000: 309). In adapting and applying the theory of planned behaviour to migration decision-making, DeJong (1999; 2000) argues that the major proposition is that intentions to move are the primary determinant of migration behaviour along with direct behavioural constraints and facilitator factors – the primary one being prior migration behaviour. On the other hand, Chi and Voss (2005) propose a hierarchical regression approach to migration decision-making. They argued that while migration decision-making has long been studied using mover-stayer models (Blumen, Kogan and McCarthy, 1955) and standard regression models (Shaw, 1975), they are not well suited to small- and large-scale heterogeneities (migration propensities) (Chi and Voss, 2005: 11). Instead, they argue that the advantage of the hierarchical regression models is that: (1) it can include spatial analysis; (2) the variations across groups can be estimated; (3) the variations within and across groups and the reliability of the coefficients can be estimated; and (4) it combines both individual characteristics and aggregate-level characteristics in the model, thus allowing researchers to avoid both ecological and atomistic fallacies in the interpretation of results (Chi and Voss, 2005: 13). Another author, Bushin (2009), proposes a children-in-families approach to researching family migration decision-making. She argues that a children-in-families approach requires researchers to include children in their research frameworks and allow children to be active research participants. She further argued that using a children-in-families approach to researching family migration decision-making within a qualitative research

framework allows for exploring children's agency in making migration decisions (ibid.: 432). Moreover, she argues that this approach "enables the plurality of family contexts to be acknowledged, the perspectives of parents and children to be documented, and the possibility of children's agency in family contexts to be considered" in migration decisions (ibid.: 439). Her findings showed that in almost half of the families who participated in the study, children were either consulted or participated in the family migration decision-making process (ibid.: 439). Thompson (2017) proposed a geographical imagination approach that can account for the complexities of culture and place on migration decision-making processes. According to Thompson (2017: 79) geographical imaginations are the mental images people hold of different places and the people living there. Thompson argues that a geographical imagination approach can account for the impacts of culture and place on migration decision-making in four interlinked ways: "It is sensitive to the influence of geographical scales, to ideas of culture and place, to understandings of both home and away, and is able to account for non-migration" (ibid.: 78). He also pointed out that this approach is flexible and wide-reaching in nature and does not overlook the importance of economic, social, and political influences (ibid.). Finally, researchers have explored migration decision-making processes empirically. For instance, Tabor et al. (2015) explored the decision-making of skilled, self-selected migrants from the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa to migrate to New Zealand. The study showed that for nearly all participants, the initial step in the decision process was to assess whether or not to leave their country of origin. Nearly all participants considered where they would move to as the second major decision. Finally, after deciding where to move, migrants usually focused on selecting the right time to go (ibid.: 32-33).

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilised case study methods to analyse the decision-making processes underpinning Brazilian migrants' decisions to migrate to Ireland through the context of Anápolis, a mid-sized city of 386,923 habitants located in the Midwest state of Goiás in Brazil (IBGE, 2019), and of Gort, a small town of 2,800 habitants situated in County Galway, Ireland (CSO, 2016). This paper draws on data from a four-year research project on the determinants of

Brazilian migration from Anápolis in Goiás to Gort in County Galway, Ireland (de Farias, 2022). Even though this data was gathered over five years ago, it remains the only dataset of its kind. Thus, it provides an original and vital window into the Brazilian migrant experience in Ireland. The research fieldwork was conducted in Anápolis and Gort in May-September 2018. The study drew the sample from two central target populations: the entire current Brazilian population of Gort and the cohort of Brazilian returning migrants in Anápolis who previously lived in Ireland. The study recruited participants through three sampling techniques: convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling in both communities. Data collection was more accessible to implement in Gort due to its small population (approximately 2,994 people) and the clustering of the Brazilian community. On the other hand, data collection in Anápolis was more challenging due to the city's size (approximately 365,000 people) and its difficulties. In particular, the sample was comprised of 48 males (56.47%) and 37 females (43.53%). Participants were aged between 18-70 (average age 44 years). Among the sample, 18 were less than 35 years old, 40 were aged between 35 to 50, 22 were aged 51 to 60, and 5 were aged 61 to 70. The majority were mature people, middle-aged or older, a notable indicator of labour migration flows. Regarding marital status, 58 participants were married, 16 were single, 9 were separated or divorced, and 2 were cohabiting.

The research adopted a multi-method qualitative approach, including questionnaires, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations. The data collection first involved applying a questionnaire survey, which was carried out with 85 Brazilian migrants (48 men and 37 women) to elicit primary demographic and socio-economic data aimed to capture as far as possible the diversity of the Brazilian migrants in both research sites, about factors such as gender, age, education, Religion, region of origin, marital status, family composition, place of residency of family, types of migration, immigration status, time in Ireland, working status and sectors of employment.

This initial stage was followed by applying 85 in-depth semi-structured interviews (48 men and 37 women) to capture the decision-making processes underpinning Brazilian migrants' decisions to migrate to Ireland; this included asking fundamental questions relating to four aspects of the migration decision-making process: (a) actors (individual, family, community) involved, (b) family consent for migration, (c) types of migration (individual, familial), and (d) migration interests. These stages were complemented further by other ethnographic methods, including participant observation. The study used participant observation as both an instrument to build a richer understanding of the context in each community and as a data-collection strategy, with



the main emphasis on the former. The questionnaires and interviews were in Portuguese, the interviewee's and the researcher's native language. The researcher tape-recorded all the interviews and translated them into English. All first names used are pseudonyms to protect respondents' anonymity.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *4.1 Actor(s) involved in the migration decision-making process*

Table 1 presents the results of the analysis of data on the actors, that is, the individual, the family, or the community - involved in the migration decision-making process. Seven broad themes emerged from the data. The data indicate that 28 participants decided to migrate independently with their family's consent, of which 16 were male and 12 female; this is the case of 52-year-old **Heitor**, who, despite being married, decided to migrate on his own: "I made this decision on my own because I had no choice. I sold everything I had at the time to finance the trip; [...] I came with the face and courage, [...]." However, most of those in this category were more likely to be single, at least during their migration; this is the case of **Davi** (38, 13 years in Ireland): "I made the decision myself because I was single at the time, but I talked to my mother, and she supported me."; and **Benício** (31, 6 years in Ireland) "I had lived alone since I was eighteen, so it was easy for me to make that decision myself, but of course, I informed my parents about my decision to move to Ireland." **Davi** and **Benício** are married now and live permanently in Gort with their wives and children.

Others expressed the difficulty of hiding the decision to migrate from their parents; see, for instance, the experiences of **Matheus**(30, 1 year in Ireland): "It is difficult for you to hide something from the family. They were aware of my plans to leave Brazil. When the time came, they supported me, yes." Some returnee migrants in Anápolis who came to Ireland as children expressed the joy of returning to Ireland on their own a second time. **Benjamin**, aged 20, who returned to Gort in 2018 after spending ten years in Brazil, stated: "I made the decision myself; I had this conviction to return to Ireland from the first time we returned to Brazil, [...] I realized that I had become accustomed to life in Ireland."; and 25-year-old **Luíza**, who returned to Gort in 2016 after spending seven years in Brazil: "The first time I migrated in 2007, my parents made the decision. It was my own decision the second time, but they supported me."

Seventeen female participants discussed the decision to migrate with their husbands and family, representing around half of the overall female sample of 37 participants; this is the case of **Ana Clara**, a pioneer migrant

who moved to Ireland in early 2001, leaving behind her husband and two daughters. In her first attempt to enter Ireland, she was deported; however, a month later, she returned to Ireland: “Yes, I talked to my husband and my mother; they would be responsible for my daughters, but they supported me, yes, of course. [...]” Other female participants emphasized the importance of their families, especially those leaving children behind. For example, 48-year-old **Meire**, who lived in Ireland from 2003 to 2009, stated: “I discussed the idea with everyone, my mother, my husband, my siblings, especially with my parents because they would be responsible for taking care of our two children, so we had to have the approval of them.”; and 50-year-old **Melissa**, who lived in Ireland from 2007 to 2009: “It was a decision between him and me, and my mother, who was responsible for caring for my two daughters while we were in Ireland. [...], so I went quietly to Ireland because I knew my daughters were being cared for safely, that reassured me a lot.” Both **Meire** and **Melissa** came to Ireland to reunite with their spouses who had migrated to the country previously. In most cases, they could not bring their children to Ireland. **Júlia**, one of the few exceptions, managed to bring her daughter: “It was a decision discussed with my parents because they were responsible for taking care of my daughter in Brazil until I could adapt and get a job in Ireland. [...] Today, we live together here in Gort.”

In some cases, however, the family was unhappy with the decision to migrate to Ireland, especially grandparents who were left behind looking after children; this is the case of 32-year-old **Catarina**, who left her 2-month-old son with her mother: “It was a decision between my husband and me, at the time he migrated I could not go because I was pregnant when my son completed two months I went, it was the most difficult decision of my life, my mother took care of him for me, but she was not very happy, [...]”; and 46-year-old **Elisa**, who left her 3 children with her mother. Here is what she said about the discussion within the family of the decision to migrate: “It was discussed with my husband, but at the time my mother did not want me to migrate, [...] my mother did not want me to go because she would be alone taking care of three children would be difficult for her.” Others who were very close to their mothers had difficulties making the migration decision and convincing them that it was necessary. However, over time, they won them over; this is the case of 53-year-old **Ana Luíza**: “My mother did not much agree with the idea because we are very close, [...]. She was very sad, but as time passed, she got used to the idea, [...]”

Fifteen male participants discussed the decision to migrate to Ireland with their wives only, while another 12 discussed it with their wives and family; this was the case of 62-year-old **Antônio**: “I made that decision with my wife, even sick she agreed, without her permission, I would not

have gone.”; and 41-year-old **Pedro**: “Yes, it was shared and I discussed the decision with my wife.” Others could not consult children because they were too small: “I consulted my wife at all times I migrated and returned, my daughters not because they were too small.” [**Lorenzo**, 55, married]. Some participants put their wives through the conjecture of the decision to migrate more than once; this was the case of **Miguel**: “I talked to my wife, I told her, I am going back to Ireland, one more time to see what is going to happen, and she supported me, [...]”; **Enzo**: “On both the times I migrated, the decision was discussed with my wife.” and **Lucca**: “Both times, the decision was made between my wife and me.”

For those with tiny and young children, deciding to come to Ireland was more difficult; this is the case of **Gabriel**, 42 years old, who arrived in Ireland in 2002: “It was decided between my wife and me. It was difficult because my daughter was 45 days old when I first came to Ireland.”; and 40-year-old **Emanuel**: “It was not an easy decision, the wife agreed; it was difficult for me because my daughter was only eight months old when I first went to Ireland.” Others who went through a previous migration experience alone decided to bring their whole family; this is the case of 43-year-old **João Miguel**: “Yes, on both occasions, the decision was discussed between my wife and me [...]. However, in 2008, it was more difficult because I migrated alone [...]. To avoid this, in 2016, we also decided to bring the whole family to Gort.”

Other participants discussed the decision to migrate to Ireland with their wives and families. The case of 43-year-old **Théo** illustrates this: “This was a decision discussed one hundred percent with the family; coming to Ireland was a strategy for our family. It was a decision discussed between me, my wife, and my two teenage children, so much so that my eldest son decided to stay in Brazil, and we had to respect his decision.” A similar case is of that 52-year-old **Cauã**: “It was a decision discussed with the family, I talked to my wife, she agreed to stay with my children alone and then I went, but in general, my whole family agreed, but it is not easy to leave your wife and children behind you suffer a lot.” In some other cases, the family agreed, but they were worried: “It was discussed with my wife, everyone in my family was worried, we did not know anything about Ireland, or how it would be when I got there, and we went in the dark.” [**João**, 49, married]

A further 6 participants indicated that they decided independently with no family consent, of which 3 were male and 3 were female; this was the case of 30-year-old divorced **Maria Eduarda**: “It was not a consensus, it was a war in my family because my mother would not accept it, my father would not accept it, my part of my family nobody accepted, [...], as I was already 18, so I went anyway. [...]”; and 50-year-old **Samuel**, explained: “I made

this decision myself because, at the time, I had no one, no longer had my parents, but I communicated to family members before coming to Ireland.” Old parents who depended on their children were reluctant to give consent; this was the case of 51-year-old **Livia**: “It was not a shared decision with the family, especially my parents, because they did not want me to leave Brazil, not to stay away from them, they were of age so to be left without a person to give support would be difficult, but they adapted well, I go on vacation every year.” In a similar case, an old mother thought that her son would not be able to get through this process: “I always wanted to leave Brazil, from a very young age, my whole family knew of my dream. My family did not want me to go, especially my mother; they said I was crazy and that I would not be able to live in Ireland.” [**Gustavo**, 45]. Finally, **Manuela** did not get her family’s consent. On the contrary, they tried to stop her from migrating to Ireland as they were afraid that she would fall into prostitution, and they also did not trust her friend: “I made this decision on my own, I informed my family only a week before the trip, they tried until the last moment to stop me from traveling, but since I was 21 years old it was not possible. [...]”

Five other female participants discussed the decision only with their husbands. For example, 37-year-old **Helena**, who migrated with her children to join her in Ireland in 2004, stated: “The decision was discussed between me and my husband, he had migrated a year earlier.”; and also, the cases of 31-year-old **Maria Luíza**, who came to support her husband: “It was a decision made more by my husband than by me, if it were not for him I would not have migrated no, but I decided to come to support him, besides two is better than one, to put our project to buy a house in Brazil in practice.”; and **Beatriz**: “No, just me and my husband, I communicated to my mother at the last moment when my decision was already made. My mother is a very good person, you know, she said so, it will make you happy, it’s okay for you, go with God, God bless, she is that way, [...]” Like **Beatriz**, most had the blessing and consent of their families despite deciding with their husbands only.

Finally, parents’ decisions with family consent to bring their children to Ireland counted for 5 participants. Some children could consent; this is the case of 26-year-old **Arthur**, who came to Ireland as a teenager: “It was a decision made between the family, between my father and my mother first. After the decision was made, they informed me and I agreed to come, I knew that with a better education I could help my parents more in the future.” Interestingly, none mentioned discussing or seeking the consent of community members or acquaintances; this was also the case among returnees in the origin region of Anápolis.

**Table 1:** Actor(s) involved in the migration decision-making progress.

Decision patterns among participant(s)	Participant(s)		Total
	Host community	Origin community	
Own decision (with family consent)	14 (16%)	14 (16%)	28
Discussed with husband + family	5 (5%)	12 (14%)	17
Discussed with wife (only)	12 (14%)	3 (3%)	15
Discussed with wife + family	3 (3%)	9 (10%)	12
Own decision (with no family consent)	6 (7%)	-	6
Discussed with husband (only)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	5
Parents decision (with consent)	5 (5%)	-	5
Discussed with community members or acquaintances	-	-	-

Source: Authors' own construct

#### 4.2 Family consent for migration

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of data on family consent given to participant's decision to migrate to Ireland. The data only relates to family (including wives/spouses and children) and parental consent, not migrant consent. Discussion around migrant consent is often related to temporary labour migration programs, which use consent-based justifications for restricted social entitlements of temporary migrant workers (see Boese and Macdonald, 2017 for a broader discussion). Four broad themes emerged from the analysis. The results indicate that 67 participants had the support of their families, of which 43 were male and 24 were female. A further 9 participants indicated that their families disagreed, of which 6 were female and 3 males. Six participants indicated that only part of the family agreed with their decision to migrate, all of which were females. As we can see from the two last examples, female participants were less likely to have family consent than males. Surprisingly, only 3 respondents did not ask for or seek family approval before migrating.

Moreover, the great majority of the participants had the consent of their families regarding the decision to migrate to Ireland. This finding is in line with the new economics of labour migration. NELM theorists such as Mincer (1978) have suggested that migration decision studies should be conducted

at the family level rather than the individual level because it is the net family gain rather than net personal gain that drives household migration (quoted in Chi and Voss, 2005: 13). A critical insight of NELM is that migration decisions are not made by isolated individual actors (as assumed by NE), but by larger units of related people, typically families or households, but sometimes communities too (Stark and Bloom, 1985). Unlike individuals, households can control risks to their economic well-being by diversifying the allocation of household resources (Massey et al., 1993).

**Table 2:** Family consent for migration.

Family support patterns	Participant(s)		Total
	Host community	Origin community	
Family agreed	33 (38%)	34 (40%)	67
Family did not agree	8 (9%)	1 (1%)	9
Part of the family agreed	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	6
Did not ask	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	3

Source: Authors own construct

### 4.3 Types of migration (individual, familial.)

Table 3 presents the results of the data analysis on the types of migration among the participants, that is, individual or familial. The data give insights into whether individuals migrated to Ireland alone or whether their families or part of the family also migrated. Thirty-eight participants reported that their families also migrated to Ireland. A further 22 participants, of whom 9 were male and 13 were female, reported that only part of their close family migrated to Ireland. Another 18 participants, of whom 17 were male and 1 was female, indicated that they migrated to Ireland alone. Finally, 8 participants reported that they only had relatives in Ireland. Moreover, male participants were more likely to migrate alone or have only part of their families in Ireland.

Family migration was the most significant type, as most participants reported that their families or part of their families also migrated to Ireland. However, individual migration, i.e., individuals migrating alone, is also significant. Family migration is a general concept covering: 1) family reunification of spouse, parent, children, and other relatives; 2) family formation or new marriage of a migrant with permanent residents or citizens; or 3) family accompanying a family member entering at the same time as

a primary migrant (IOM, 2019: 71 adapted from IOM, 2015: 33). Family reunification refer to the right of non-nationals to enter into and reside in a country where their family members reside lawfully or of which they have the nationality to preserve the family unit (IOM, 2019: 72). Family unit refers to a family's right to live together and, as a fundamental unit of society, to receive respect, protection, assistance and support (IOM, 2019: 72). Arguably, family related migration has become the major source of new immigration to most Western receiving countries as family reunification has become the leading legal mode of entry into Europe today (Baizán et al., 2014; Baizán et al., 2012). However, the legislation in Ireland does not provide an explicit legal right to family reunification or to reside in the state based on existing family relationships (Strik et al., 2013; Arnold and Quinn, 2017). Family reunification in Ireland operates on the basis of ministerial discretion in all cases (Arnold and Quinn, 2017).

The participants' demographic data further support the finding that family migration is the most significant type among Brazilian migrants in Gort. The data showed that most participants were mature, middle-aged, or older, a notable indicator of labour migration flows. The data also showed that regarding marital status, 58 (out of 85) participants were married, 16 were single, 9 were separated or divorced, and 2 were cohabiting. Regarding family composition, 71 participants reported they have children, although family sizes overall were small, with a total of 152 children, an average of 2.14 children per family. Twenty-two participants declared they had children born abroad (outside Brazil); 28 were born abroad. Of these, 25 were born in Ireland, while 3 children were born in Portugal. Moreover, data show that most participants are more likely to be mature, married, and have children.

Previous empirical studies have also found evidence of family migration among Brazilian migrants in Gort. Healy (2006), for instance, found that the intention was generally to stay for a short time and return to Brazil with the money saved, but many settled permanently. From the initial six people, the numbers grew in volume so that, by 2016, almost 13.26% of the population of Gort were Brazilians (CSO, 2016). Similarly, McGrath (2010: 152) found that while men who had initially migrated alone or with other men (leaving their families behind) tended to socialize together at the beginning of the immigration cycle, this often changed over time with the arrival of wives and children after several years. Although Brazilian migrants in Gort are more likely to be married and practice family migration, Brazilians nationwide are most likely to be single, showing a similar pattern to Spanish, Italian, and French nationals (CSO, 2016). Moreover, of the 13,640 nationals, 8,265 were single (60.59%), 4,273 were married (31.32%), and 509 were separated or divorced (3.73%) (CSO, 2016).

**Table 3:** Families and family members participating in the migration process.

Family migration patterns	Participant(s)		Total
	Host community	Origin community	
Family migrated	25 (29%)	13 (15%)	38
Part of the family migrated only	9 (10%)	13 (15%)	22
Family did not migrate	11 (12%)	7 (8%)	18
Relatives migrated only	1 (1%)	7 (8%)	8

Source: Authors own construct

#### 4.4 Migration interests driving migration

Table 4 presents the results of the analysis of data on the migration interests (personal, family, and professional) that underpin participants' decisions to migrate to Ireland. Interestingly, 40 participants said they were pursuing personal and family interests when migrating to Ireland, of which 23 were male and 17 female. A further 22 participants said they were pursuing personal interests only, of which 12 were male and 10 were female. Another 21 participants said they were pursuing family interests only, of which 10 were male and 11 were female. Finally, only 2 participants said they were pursuing professional and religious interests.

Moreover, female participants were more likely to migrate for family reasons, whereas male participants were more likely to migrate for personal reasons. However, these differences may be attributed to the slight discrepancy in the number of male and female participants in the overall sample, with 48 and 37, respectively.

**Table 4:** Participant's interests underpinning migration.

Theme(s) emerged	Participant(s)		Total
	Host community	Origin community	
Both (personal and family) interest	12 (14%)	28 (32%)	40
Personal interest only	15 (17%)	7 (8%)	22
Family interest only	16 (18%)	5 (5%)	21
Professional/religion interest	2 (2%)	-	2

Source: Authors own construct



## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article explored the complex decision-making processes that guide Brazilian migrants in moving to Ireland, focusing on four key aspects: the actors involved in migration decision-making, family consent, types of migration, and migration interests. The study is based on a four-year research project by de Farias (2022), which examines the migration patterns from Anápolis in Goiás, Brazil, to Gort, Ireland. The participants' accounts provided insights into the complexity of the decision-making processes underpinning their migration to Ireland. Of the 85 participants, 28 decided to migrate independently but still sought their family's consent. Among female participants, 17 discussed their migration plans with their husbands and extended family, while 15 male participants primarily consulted with their wives. Additionally, 12 male participants involved their wives and broader family in decision-making.

These findings demonstrate that migration decisions were primarily made by households, not individuals, and family consent was sought and given in most cases, thus supporting New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) insights. The decision to migrate was strongly influenced by family dynamics, particularly concerning the care of those left behind. In some cases, the burden of care fell on the shoulders of the elderly, highlighting the intergenerational, gender, and care relationships within families. This finding supports previous research. According to Castles et al. (2014), migration is rarely a case of a single individual rationally deciding to migrate to improve their own life. More frequently, migration is a collective decision taken by families and sometimes by entire households or communities (de Haan et al., 2000; McDowell and de Haan, 1997).

Concerning the types of migrations, the study found that 38 participants informed that their families had also migrated to Ireland. A further 22 participants informed that only part of their close family migrated to Ireland. Another 18 participants indicated that they migrated to Ireland alone. Finally, 8 participants reported that they only had relatives in Ireland. Moreover, male participants were more likely to migrate alone or have only part of their families in Ireland. Regarding migration interests, the study found that 40 participants said they were pursuing both personal and family interests when migrating to Ireland. A further 22 participants said they were pursuing personal interests only. Another 21 participants, said they were pursuing family interests only. Finally, only 2 participants said they were pursuing professional and religious interests. Moreover, female participants were more likely to migrate for family reasons, whereas male participants were more likely to migrate for personal reasons.

This study's focus on the migration decision-making processes of Brazilian migrants from Anápolis in Goiás and Gort in County Galway, Ireland, is of utmost importance. It provides specific insights into the motivations and considerations of these communities, thereby making a valuable original contribution to the literature on migration decision-making. However, it's important to note that the study's focus on these two specific regions represents a limitation. Extending this research to encompass other regions of Ireland would provide a more comprehensive understanding of Brazilian migration patterns. Due to time and financial constraints, this broader approach was not feasible within the scope of this study.

Future research must strive for a more comprehensive understanding of Brazilian migration to Ireland. This can be achieved by including a more representative sample of the Brazilian community across Ireland, incorporating migrants from diverse towns and regions. Additionally, examining the impact of Irish government migration policies and labour market regulations on migration decisions could provide valuable insights, not only for Brazilian migrants but also for other migrant groups. Future research should also aim to include more comparative studies to understand the similarities and differences in migration decision-making processes among various migrant groups. For instance, comparing the migration decision-making processes of Brazilian migrants with those of other nationalities migrating to Ireland could highlight unique and common factors influencing these decisions. Such comparative research would also contribute significantly to the broader literature on migration decision-making and policy development.

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the complex decision-making processes that guide Brazilian migrants in their choice to move to Ireland, focusing on four key aspects: the actors involved in migration decision-making, family consent, types of migration, and migration interests. The study is based on a four-year research project by de Farias (2022), which examines the migration patterns from Anápolis in Goiás, Brazil, to Gort, Ireland. The research employs a multi-method qualitative approach, incorporating questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations with 85 Brazilian migrants—48 men and 37 women. The findings underscore the central role of households, rather than individuals, in making migration decisions. This collective decision-making process often involved seeking and obtaining family consent, consistent with the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory. The study reveals that the decision to migrate was not just an individual choice but was heavily influenced by family and community contexts. This influence was particularly strong concerning the care of family members left behind, suggesting that migration decisions are deeply embedded in the social and familial structures of the migrants, thus supporting the New Economics of Labour Migration theory. These findings offer valuable insights into the collective nature of migration decisions and the importance of familial consent and support in the migration process.

**Key words:** Migration Decision-Making; Brazilian Migrants; Ireland; Gort; Anápolis; Goiás.

## RESUMO

Este artigo explora os complexos processos de tomada de decisão que orientam os migrantes brasileiros em sua escolha de se mudar para a Irlanda, com foco em quatro aspectos principais: os atores envolvidos na tomada de decisão de migração, consentimento familiar, tipos de migração e interesses migratórios. O estudo é baseado em um projeto de pesquisa de quatro anos de Farias (2022), que examina os padrões de migração de Anápolis em Goiás, Brasil, para Gort, Irlanda. A pesquisa emprega uma abordagem qualitativa multimétodo, incorporando questionários, entrevistas semiestruturadas e observações participantes com 85 migrantes brasileiros — 48 homens e 37 mulheres. As descobertas ressaltam o papel central das famílias, em vez de indivíduos, na tomada de decisões de migração. Esse processo coletivo de tomada de decisão frequentemente envolvia a busca e obtenção de consentimento familiar, consistente com a teoria da Nova Economia da Migração. O estudo revela que a decisão de migrar não foi apenas uma escolha individual, mas foi fortemente influenciada pelos contextos familiares e comunitários. Essa influência foi particularmente forte em relação ao cuidado de familiares deixados para trás, sugerindo que as decisões de migração estão profundamente enraizadas nas estruturas sociais e familiares dos migrantes, apoiando assim a teoria da Nova Economia da Migração. Essas descobertas oferecem insights valiosos sobre a natureza coletiva das decisões de migração e a importância do consentimento e apoio familiar no processo de migração.

**Palavras-chave:** Tomada de Decisão Migratória; Migrantes Brasileiros; Irlanda; Gort; Anápolis; Goiás.

