



**February 9, 2023**

**To:** Ted Smyth  
**From:** Ben Sullivan and Ben Greenfield, Change Research  
**Re:** Irish Americans Identity and Values survey results

A poll from Change Research of 736 Irish American voters nationwide from January 24-28, 2023<sup>1</sup> shows:

### **Irish American Identity**

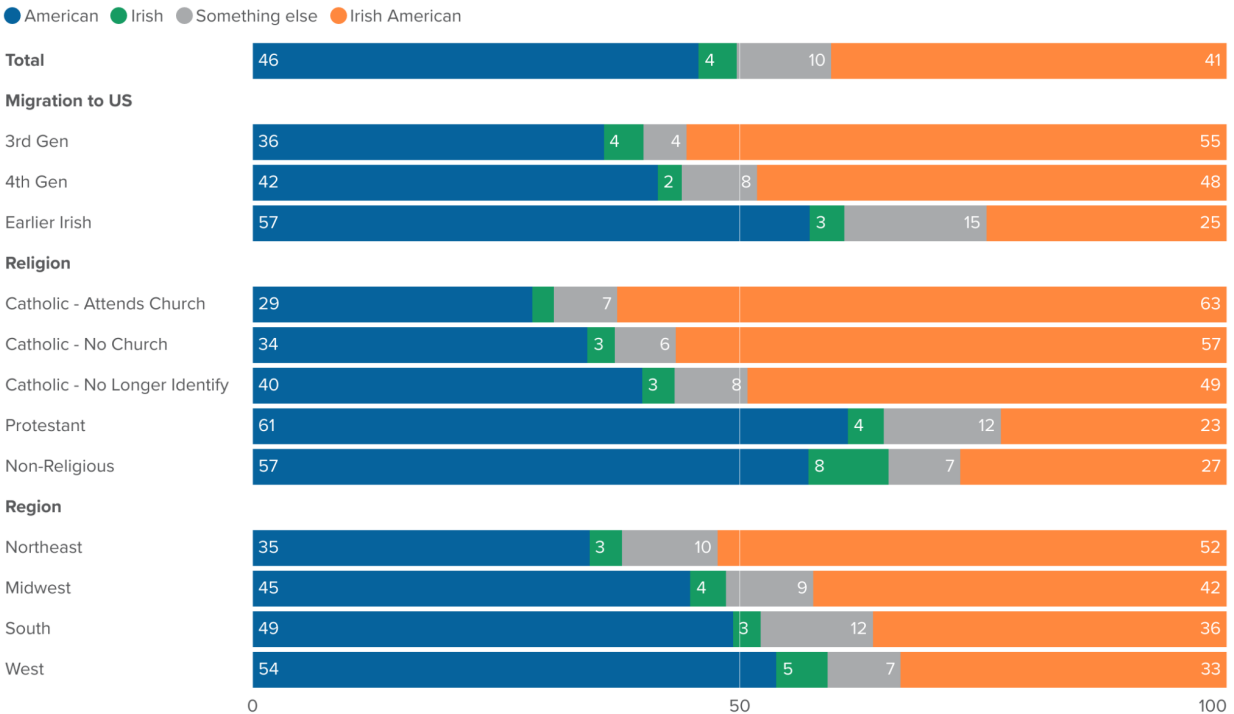
**The vast majority of Irish Americans’ ancestors emigrated from Ireland more than three generations ago.** More than three-quarters (77%) either have a great-grandparent who came from Ireland (37%) or an even earlier ancestor who came from Ireland (40%). Just 17% of Irish Americans have at least one grandparent who emigrated from Ireland, 5% have a parent who did, and only 1% themselves moved here from Ireland. Very few Irish Americans aged 65 and older have a parent who came from Ireland (5%).

**When asked to choose one from a list of descriptors, the plurality (46%) of respondents identify as American, with 41% identifying as Irish American.** Just 4% identify as Irish, and 10% pick something else. Men are more likely to identify as Irish American than women (45% vs. 36%), and more men identify as Irish American than American (45% vs. 39%). There are vast regional differences, as well. Those in the Northeast are far more likely to identify as Irish American than in any other region. This fits in with the Northeast’s reputation of having a large Irish American population and strong Irish ties. An outright majority (52%) of Northeast respondents identify as Irish American, far exceeding the 35% who identify as American. In all other regions, more respondents identify as American than Irish American, with the West being the most lopsided (54% American, 33% Irish American). Unsurprisingly, the more recent a person’s family emigrated from Ireland, the more they identify as “Irish American.” A majority (55%) of respondents who have a grandparent who moved from Ireland identify as “Irish American.” Almost half (48%) of respondents who have a great-grandparent who moved here identify as “Irish American,” and just 25% of people with earlier ancestors identify as “Irish American.”

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<sup>1</sup> Using its Dynamic Online Sampling Engine to attain a sample reflective of the electorate, Change Research polled 736 Irish American voters nationwide from January 24-28, 2023. The margin of error as traditionally calculated is 3.8%. Post-stratification weighting was performed on age, gender, region, and 2020 presidential vote. See full [methodology statement](#).

Which of the following comes closest to how you identify?



**Almost half (47%) either identify as Catholic or were raised Catholic:** 12% regularly attend church, 20% do not regularly attend church, and 15% were raised Catholic but no longer identify as Catholic. Young Irish Americans do not identify with Catholicism as much as their older counterparts: just 23% of those under the age of 35 identify as Catholic (an additional 17% of those under 35 were raised Catholic but no longer identify as such). Respondents who identify as Irish American are much more likely to be Catholic or raised Catholic than those who identify as American: 65% of “Irish Americans” are Catholic or were raised Catholic compared to 35% of “Americans.”

### Culture and Traditions

**A third (33%) of respondents feel most connected to their Irish American heritage while with family, nearly twice as high as any other factor.** Almost one in five (18%) say a sense of social justice and responsibility for one another makes them feel most connected, with honesty and work ethic (14%), love of country (12%), and faith (8%) also making substantial numbers of Irish Americans feel connected to their heritage. More than a quarter (28%) of Catholics who attend church say they feel most connected to their Irish heritage through their faith.

**Irish Americans are most attracted to their Irish heritage through Irish history (33%) and Irish music (24%).** Smaller numbers are drawn to the culture through positive perceptions of Irish identity in the US (12%) and traveling through Ireland (11%). Interestingly, respondents whose families came to the US more recently are more drawn to the culture based on its positive perception in the US than respondents whose families have been in the US for more generations.

**Irish Americans meet other Irish Americans in numerous ways, most commonly when with family (40%), during cultural events and parades (29%), with friends (23%), and at the pub (21%).** Church (15%) is also a relatively common place for Irish Americans to meet other Irish Americans, particularly among Catholics who still attend church (this is the most common place for them at 50%).

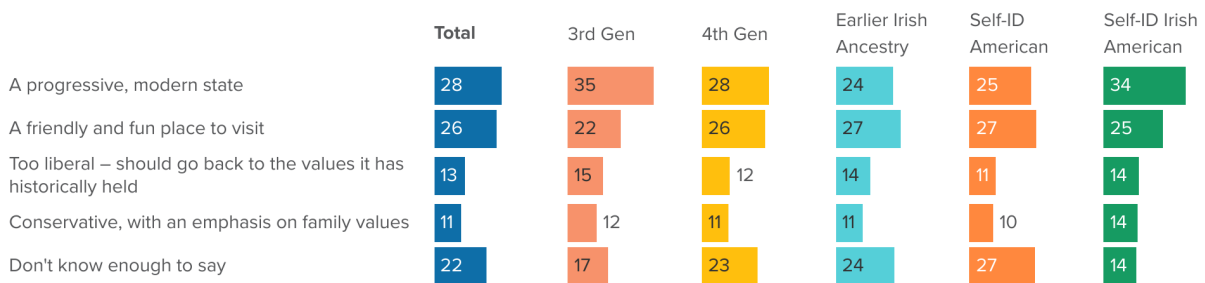
**Almost three quarters (72%) of Irish Americans are not members of any Irish group.** Online Irish groups are the most common organization Irish Americans are involved in (15%). No other group reaches 5%.

## Ireland Policies

**Irish Americans have two top priorities for US politicians to address in relation to Ireland:** support for a peaceful Irish unification (31%) and two-way trade and investment between Ireland and the US (29%). Support for the Good Friday Amendment, visas for new Irish immigrants, and visas for undocumented Irish immigrants are all in single digits. Those who identify as “Irish American” strongly favor support for Irish unification (40%), while those who identify as “American” favor two-way trade the most (32%). Notably, a sizable 20% of Irish Americans do not know enough about Ireland to have an opinion on this matter.

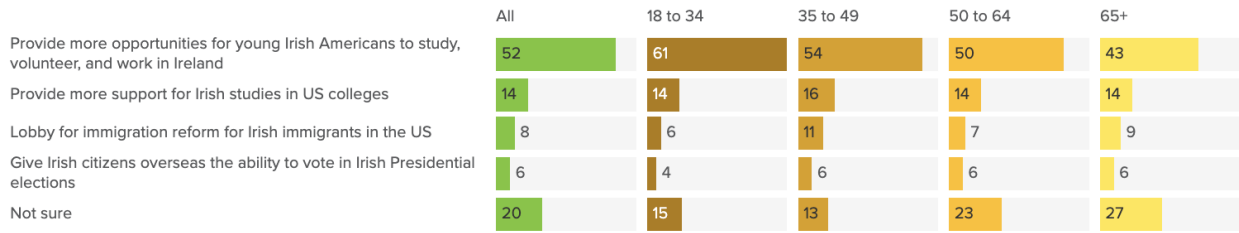
**Most Irish Americans see modern Ireland as either a progressive, modern state (28%) or a friendly and fun place to visit (26%).** Fewer see Ireland in purely political terms, with 13% believing it is too liberal and 11% saying it is a conservative country. Again, about one in five (22%) respondents do not know enough about Ireland to form an opinion. Catholics who attend church disproportionately believe that modern Ireland is too liberal (25%), compared to 17% of Catholics who do not attend church and just 3% of former Catholics.

Which of the following comes closest to your image of modern Ireland?



**A majority (52%) of respondents believe that providing more opportunities for young Irish Americans to study, volunteer, and work in Ireland is the best way to strengthen links between Irish Americans and Ireland.** Young Irish Americans are particularly enthusiastic about this policy (61%). Other policies do not get nearly the same level of support: providing more support for Irish studies in US colleges has the next highest support at 14%. Again, 20% of respondents do not know enough to form an opinion.

What can Ireland do to strengthen Irish American links with Ireland, particularly among the younger generation?



## Takeaways

Most Irish Americans have roots in America that go back several generations and have a strong association with America. Even so, they have a meaningful connection with their heritage, primarily through their family, their friends, Irish history, and aspects of Irish culture like music. Appealing to the connection Irish Americans feel to their Irish heritage through their family and Irish history, as well as emphasizing Irish studies, U.S.-Ireland trade, Irish studies, tourism, and enhanced relations between Ireland and the Irish diaspora in America can be an effective way to engage and mobilize Irish America.