

Resurgent Irish Immigration to the US in the 1980s and early 1990s: A Socio-demographic Profile¹

A.P. Lobo* and J.J. Salvo*

ABSTRACT

Irish immigration to the US has been motivated traditionally by a lack of employment opportunities at home. With the passage of the US Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, however, Irish immigrants were no longer explicitly favoured. Family reunification became the primary path of entry, which worked against the Irish who had lost their immediate generational link with US residents.

During the severe Irish recession of 1980-85 a resurgence in Irish outflows resulted in a large undocumented Irish population in the US. Most of this population was later legalized as a result of special legislation that targeted the Irish. There have been concerns in Ireland that the outflow in the 1980s, unlike prior flows, included a high proportion of skilled persons, leading some to characterize the outflow as a "new wave".

This article uses US immigration data to assess how the occupational characteristics of recent Irish immigrants compare with prior immigrant cohorts and also examines how Irish immigrants are incorporated into the US economy.

Recent Irish immigrants to the US spanned the occupational spectrum: accountants, engineers, nurses and other professionals found a booming job market in the most advanced sectors of the US economy, while less skilled immigrants found jobs in the informal economy. While the number of entering Irish professionals increased, flows of the less skilled increased even more dramatically, resulting in an overall decline in the occupational selectivity of Irish immigrants.

* Population Division, New York City Department of City Planning, New York.

The 1980-85 Irish recession has been followed by robust growth for more than a decade. Ireland is now experiencing a net inflow of persons, including many Irish professionals returning from the US. However, Ireland continues to experience a net outflow of the young and less skilled which may once again result in a large undocumented Irish presence in the US.

INTRODUCTION

The early twentieth century marked the tail end of the massive migration of Irish to the US that had originated with the Great Famine of the 1840s. These flows, which averaged 31,000 annually during the 1900-1915 period, were curtailed with the onset of World War I, but rose again in the 1920s, averaging 20,000 annually. Immigration quotas, instituted primarily to curtail flows from southern and eastern Europe, also reduced immigration from Ireland, especially during the late 1920s. Immigration was further restricted during the depression years of the 1930s for those without adequate funds or job prospects (Drudy, 1986), including from Ireland. Between 1932 and 1945, the average annual flow from Ireland to the US was less than 400. While numbers increased during the 1950s, the heyday of Irish immigration to the US seemed long past, a notion reinforced with the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act which did away with national origin quotas that had favoured Irish and other northern European immigrants and placed all countries on an equal footing. Family reunification became the primary path of entry to the US. With their large immigration quota withdrawn, the Irish were no longer assured of near-automatic entry into the US.

Irish immigration has been motivated traditionally by lack of employment opportunities at home. This applies to recent outflows from Ireland, following recession in the early 1980s. However, because the 1965 US law worked against the Irish who had lost their immediate generational link with US residents, many entered legally as tourists but stayed beyond the required departure date, thus becoming part of the undocumented population. By the late 1980s, a large proportion of the substantial "new Irish" population working illegally in the US had been legalized as a result of legislation passed by the US Congress.

This article examines the demographic characteristics and settlement patterns of Irish immigrants since the 1965 law went into effect, focusing closely on flows of the new Irish in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It also looks at the classes of admission of Irish immigrants, which refer to the specific provisions of immigration law used to gain entry to the US. Classes of admission are linked closely to the occupational background of entering immigrants (Lobo and Salvo, 1998; De Jong and Blair, 1994). There have been concerns in Ireland that emigration during the 1980s, unlike prior flows, included a high

proportion of skilled persons (Sexton, 1987), a qualitative change which has led many, including Irish political leaders, to characterize it as a “new wave” (Mac Laughlin, 1997a). On the other hand, others have shown that current world-wide flows to the US are not as selective as earlier immigrant cohorts (Lobo, 1993; Borjas, 1985). But is this true of Irish immigrants? This article assesses, separately for males and females, how the occupational characteristics of recent Irish immigrants compare with those of prior Irish immigrant cohorts, and how recent immigrants are incorporated into the US economy.

DATA SOURCES

This study uses the Annual Immigrant Tape files from the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for fiscal years 1972-1995.² These provide administrative statistics on legally admitted immigrants to the US. Information on immigrant flows prior to 1972 were obtained from INS published reports; however, these reports do not contain the detailed information that can be obtained from computer tape files.

A newly admitted legal immigrant arrives either from outside the US with a valid immigrant visa issued by the US Department of State in his home country (new arrival), or is already in the US in a temporary capacity and “adjusts” his status to that of an immigrant (adjustee). INS records do not always correctly distinguish between new arrivals and adjustees. Many of the undocumented Irish immigrants who won a visa in a visa lottery went back home to collect it, and were then classified “new” arrivals. Thus, it is impossible to determine how many undocumented immigrants were able to legalize their status. However, according to the US embassy in Ireland, as well as news reports in the ethnic Irish media in the US, most of the undocumented new Irish were legalized by 1994 (McGoldrick, 1993, 1994, 1995), and are thus included in these data. INS data are therefore a good source of information on the new Irish, both legal and (formerly) undocumented.

Information collected by the INS includes year and class of admission, country of birth, age, marital status, sex, area of intended residence, and current occupation. The occupation of an immigrant can have different reference points depending on the circumstances of immigration. For most newly arrived immigrants, occupational information is taken from their visa application and usually refers to occupation in the former country of residence. The occupation of adjustees usually refers to their current job in the US. For those entering under the employment preferences, their occupation refers to the job in the US for which the immigrant was allowed entry. Thus, INS occupational data do not consistently refer to the last job held back home, but these are the only data available for newly admitted legal immigrants.

IRISH IMMIGRATION IN THE POST-1965 PERIOD

While the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act allocated visas for persons with employment skills required in the US and for refugees, it made family reunification the primary path of entry. Since 1967, the first full fiscal year that the law was in effect, there have been three distinct phases of Irish immigration. During the initial years that the 1965 law was in effect, Irish immigration plummeted (Figure 1, page 274). The Irish could no longer count on a generous immigration quota and many did not have the family ties to qualify for an immigrant visa. During this first phase (1972 to 1977), immigration averaged less than 1,500 annually (Table 1, page 275).³ Part of the decline could be attributed to the booming Irish economy; indeed, during this period there was an overall net inflow into Ireland (primarily from Britain) – the first this century. Sixty-seven per cent (or an annual average 1,000 Irish immigrants) entered the US under the family reunification provisions of the 1965 law, while 27 per cent came in under the employment preferences. In 1976, in response to a deterioration in the US labour market for professionals, Congress stiffened requirements for immigrant professionals under the employment preferences. Fiscal year 1978, the first full year these provisions were in effect, marked the beginning of the second phase of post-1965 Irish immigration. This period, 1978-1986, was characterized by a further decline in both Irish flows and in the share of Irish immigrants entering under the employment preferences. During these years, the inflow was less than 1,200 annually and those entering under the employment preferences comprised only 21 per cent of the total flow. The depression years are the only comparable period when Irish immigration was lower in this century.

The Irish economy in the 1980s

High levels of unemployment have been the bane of the Irish economy. High aggregate fertility (which peaked in 1980) has seen a large number of young people entering the Irish labour force each year. Numbers have also surged because of a rise in female labour force participation. The failure of the Irish economy to generate enough jobs for these new entrants is the main “push” factor in Irish emigration. This problem was exacerbated during the 1980-85 recession when the number of employed declined by 76,000 while the total labour force grew by 58,000. As a result, unemployment rose from 7.3 per cent to 17.3 per cent (NESCS, 1993). A more robust economy between 1986 and 1990 recouped some of the earlier job losses: an additional 45,000 persons were employed, and though unemployment declined it was still relatively high at 13.7 per cent. While some of the decline in unemployment was due to job creation, most was a result of large-scale emigration, primarily to Britain and the US. Once again emigration mitigated high levels of unemployment in Ireland.

The sluggishness of the Irish economy in the early 1980s stood in contrast to a booming US economy. The US unemployment rate of 7.5 per cent in 1984 was less than one-half the Irish rate of 15.6 per cent; by 1988, US unemployment had declined to 5.5 per cent, one-third the Irish rate. These macroeconomic differences existed within a traditional context of Irish emigration in general, and Irish emigration to the US in particular. Migration was also sustained by strong networks which, according to Boyd (1989: 641), “connect migrants and nonmigrants across time and space. Once begun, migration flows often become self-sustaining, reflecting the establishment of networks of information, assistance and obligations which develop between migrants in the host society and friends and relatives in the sending area.” Earlier Irish immigrants sent word back home that work was available, and then helped those family numbers and friends who responded to adjust to life in the US. Many new Irish who learned of job openings brought in friends from Ireland to fill them (Corcoran, 1991). While unemployment in Ireland was an important factor that motivated people to leave, many who were employed in Ireland also emigrated, motivated by the opportunity for advancement in their careers. Some were low skilled, in dead-end jobs with bleak prospects who Corcoran (1996) labelled “disaffected adventurers”. Others were highly skilled professionals seeking to become players in the elite market of professionals headquartered in New York and Chicago. It was the presence of highly visible skilled professionals that led many observers in Ireland to characterize emigration in the 1980s as a new wave.

Recent changes in US immigration law

International flows are primarily a function of structural links – political, economic, social, or cultural – between nations (Salvo and Lobo, 1997). While US immigration law shapes the flow of legal immigrants, streams that cannot be accommodated under the numerical ceilings established by immigration law are labelled “illegal” or “undocumented”. In 1986, Congress sought to address the issue of undocumented immigrants residing in the US by passing the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). This law, which had strong backing from Latino groups, legalized undocumented immigrants who had continuously resided in the US since before January 1, 1982, and those employed as seasonal agricultural workers (Lobo et al., 1996). A total 2.8 million were legalized under IRCA, including over 2 million Mexicans. Because most of the new Irish entered the US after the January 1, 1982 cut-off date, only 1,400 could be legalized under IRCA. Nor could most of the new Irish qualify under family reunification provisions of US immigration law. The law’s emphasis on family reunification placed European groups at a disadvantage because by the mid-1980s most had lost their generational links with US residents. Many European ethnic groups lobbied to have this redressed, and in response, Congress created a number of visa lotteries, each of which was named

for a Congressman sponsoring the legislation. Referred to collectively as “diversity” visas, they were used by undocumented Irish to legalize their status.

The first lottery programme, enacted in 1986, was aimed at countries “adversely affected” by the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. The State Department identified 36 countries that had experienced a decline in immigration after the passage of the Act. A total 5,000 visas (popularly called “Donnelly” visas, after the sponsor of the legislation, Congressman Brian Donnelly of Massachusetts) were made available to these adversely affected countries in each of fiscal years 1987 and 1988. Applicants were not required to have family ties or occupational skills in short supply in the US; the visas were distributed in the order in which applications were received. Partly as a result of the efforts of the Irish Immigration Reform Movement, founded in 1987 to lobby on behalf of undocumented Irish in the US, the Immigration Amendments of 1988 made an additional 15,000 Donnelly visas available for each of fiscal years 1989 and 1990; another 15,000 were made available to an existing pool of applicants under the 1986 programme. The Irish, well organized by the Irish Immigration Reform Movement, accounted for 35 per cent of all immigrants entering with Donnelly visas. By some estimates, nearly one-third of all Irish Donnelly visa recipients had been living illegally in the US (Corcoran, 1996). The Immigration Amendments of 1988 also created a new programme for natives of “underrepresented countries” (“Berman” visas). This broadly defined category included all but 13 countries that were eligible for a total 10,000 visas for each of fiscal years 1990 and 1991. The Irish were less successful here, accounting for just one per cent of those admitted to the US with Berman visas.

The idea of creating a pool of visas to diversify immigration became permanent in the Immigration Act of 1990. These visas were meant to sustain a diverse mix of immigrants, thereby redressing some of the perceived inequities in a system based on family reunification. Under the 1990 Act, during the transitional 1992-94 period, 40,000 visas were awarded annually on the basis of a lottery (“Morrison” visas). Forty per cent were reserved for the Irish, an indication of Irish political “clout”. Beginning in 1995, a pool of 55,000 was made available annually to nations from which immigration had been less than 50,000 over the previous 5 years, each nation limited to 7 per cent of the total pool. Ireland received no special allotment of these “Schumer” visas.

Due mainly to the diversity visas, annual Irish immigration averaged about 8,600 during 1985-1987, the highest in the post-World War II era (Table 1). The average 6,800 Irish immigrants entering under the diversity programme each year accounted for 79 per cent of the flow. The number entering under family reunification provisions and with employment visas also stood at a post-1965 high, but because of the overall increase in immigration, they accounted for only 15 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively, of the overall flow.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF IRISH IMMIGRATION POST-1965

New York State is the destination of most Irish immigrants (Table 2, page 275). One-third settled in New York during 1972-1977, less than one-quarter between 1978-86, but in the most recent period, the proportion rose again to one-third. Massachusetts and California are the other main destinations for Irish immigrants, but together absorb fewer than New York.

Since the search for economic opportunities has fuelled Irish immigration to the US, it is not surprising that Irish immigrants tend to be young. Interestingly, even during the 1970s, the only decade of net immigration into Ireland during this century, there was a net outflow of persons in the early labour force ages (Drudy, 1986). Seventy per cent of Irish immigrants to the US in 1972-77 were in their twenties and thirties (Table 3, page 276) as were 79 per cent during 1987-1995. These figures underestimate the youthfulness of the Irish flow as the ages of many undocumented Irish were recorded at the time they received a diversity visa, not when they first entered the US.

According to Kennedy (1973), emigration from Ireland has traditionally included a disproportionate share of females, since they were relatively more deprived than males. Moreover, the improved status of American and British women at the turn of the century, as measured by increases in their age-specific mortality rates, was not experienced by Irish women. However, during periods of war, when large numbers of males joined the British Army, the outflows of males from Ireland exceeded those of females. Another atypical period when males outnumbered females occurred in the 1950s, due to a dramatic decline in male agricultural employment in Ireland. In the years following the passage of the 1965 law, Irish emigration to the US continued to be dominated by females, the sex ratio in 1972-77 being 1,214 females per 1,000 males. The ratio for the entire 1978-1986 period was nearly even, although females outnumbered males until 1982, while the reverse was true for the remainder of the period. Males continued to outnumber females during the 1987-95 period, with the sex ratio being 810 females per 1,000 males, due, as in the 1950s, to lack of employment opportunities for males. Between 1981 and 1988, the number of employed females increased by 14,000, whereas the number of employed males declined by nearly 70,000 (NESC, 1991). These changes were related to growth in the service sector in manufacturing, which favoured female employment (Breathnach and Jackson, 1991). As in the 1950s, the disproportionate share of males leaving Ireland can be attributed to structural changes that left them relatively more disadvantaged than females.

Irish emigration has historically comprised mainly young, unmarried adults (Fitzpatrick, 1984). Kennedy (1973: 163) notes that "marriage effectively reduced the opportunity for emigration not only because one's spouse might

not want to emigrate, or because the cost of passage was higher for a family, but also because of a feeling that the risk of failure after emigration had best be borne alone". Moreover, emigration to the US also provided opportunity for marriage. The 1965 law had made family ties with US residents the primary path of entry, and gave the highest priority to those seeking to join a spouse in the US. As a result, by 1972-77, married immigrants comprised 44 per cent of the flow. During the years 1978-86, over 40 per cent of the legal Irish flow comprised persons seeking to join a spouse; married immigrants overall comprised 62 per cent of entering immigrants. With family reunification playing a minor role during 1987-95, and most Irish entering with diversity visas, the number of married Irish entrants declined to 30 per cent, and single entrants once again comprised a majority (69 per cent) of the flow.

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS

Immigration law in the post-war era was shaped by the McCarran-Walter Act which provided generous immigration quotas for northern European countries, including Ireland. Under this law, which was in effect during 1953-1965, 16 per cent of Irish immigrants were categorized *professional and executive* (data not shown). The initial impact of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was a dramatic increase in the occupational selectivity of Irish immigrants. Between 1972 and 1977, 45 per cent of those with an occupation were in *professional and executive positions* (Table 4, page 277).⁴ Over one-half of female immigrants were in *professional and executive* occupations compared with 40 per cent of male immigrants. About one-fifth of male immigrants were each in the skilled blue-collar *precision production, craft and repair* category and in the less skilled blue-collar cluster, *operators, fabricators, and labourers*. One-quarter of women were in *technical, sales and administrative support* positions and about one-fifth were in the low-end *service* occupations.

The highly selective nature of Irish immigration during 1972-77 was related to the use of employment visas. Since many Irish had lost the generational links necessary to qualify for family reunification, they were forced to rely on the employment preferences. To be eligible for an employment visa, an immigrant had to possess skills in short supply in the US. Not surprisingly, over three-quarters of Irish immigrants in the employment preferences were in *professional and executive* occupations, compared with less than one-quarter of those entering under the family reunification provisions (data not shown). With employment visas accounting for 27 per cent of Irish entrants (Table 1), the Irish flow became highly selective during this period.

During 1978-1986, the share of *professionals and executives* among Irish immigrants remained relatively unchanged at 44 per cent, a consequence of the

continued important role of employment preferences. During this period, over one-fifth of all Irish immigrants entered with employment visas, more than three-quarters of whom being in *professional and executive* occupations (data not shown). The percentage of males and females in this occupational group converged in this period, 44 and 43 per cent respectively.

Between 1987-1995, the overall share of *professionals and executives* declined to 31 per cent (29 per cent for men and 33 per cent for women). While Immigrants in the employment preferences continued to be highly skilled, such visas accounted for only 5 per cent of all Irish immigrants during the period (Table 1). This decline in the share of employment preferences was primarily responsible for the fall in the overall share of *professionals and executives*. There were concomitant increases in other occupational categories. Males were more blue-collar, with 24 per cent in skilled *precision production, craft and repair* occupations and 16 per cent as less-skilled *operators, fabricators, and labourers*. The representation of women increased in *technical, sales and administrative support* occupations (35 per cent) and in *service* positions (28 per cent).

Occupational selectivity experienced in the initial years following the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act was accompanied by a decline in Irish immigration. While the decline was due to elimination of the generous Irish quota, and the absence of generational ties required for family reunification, increased occupational selectivity resulted from the heightened role of employment as a basis for Irish immigration. With the creation of the diversity visa programme, a path of entry was once again created for Irish immigrants. Nearly 8,600 entered annually between 1987-95, with diversity visas accounting for 79 per cent of the flow. The decline in occupational selectivity during this period can be traced to the reduced role of employment visas. However, while the percentage of those entering with *professional and executive* qualifications has declined, there has been a major increase in the number of Irish immigrants with these qualifications, given the overall increase in Irish immigration (Sexton, 1987; King and Shuttleworth, 1988). Indeed, the highly educated comprise a greater share of contemporary Irish emigration (to all destinations) than in the past (Shuttleworth, 1997). Mac Laughlin (1997a) notes that this new qualitative dimension has led many, including Irish political leaders, to characterize it as a “new wave”, although Mac Laughlin argues that this “‘emigrant aristocracy’ is not so significant as to allow for the gentrification of most recent emigration” (p.133). This certainly applies to recent Irish flows to the US. While there has been a major increase in the number of highly skilled Irish immigrants, the number of immigrants in less skilled occupations has increased even more dramatically, leading to a decline in the overall selectivity of Irish immigrants. The Irish flow to the US in the most recent period was the least selective, in occupational terms, since the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act went into effect.

INCORPORATION OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS INTO THE US ECONOMY

Irish immigration to the US in the most recent period has been motivated largely by the record number of jobs created in the booming US economy. Breathnach and Jackson (1991) explain the flow of professionals by focusing on Ireland's "peripheral" status in the current global economic system. This system, dominated by "core" economies, has engendered a new international division of labour, the outstanding feature of which is,

the location of labour-intensive activities in Third World countries where labour costs are particularly low. Meanwhile, the more knowledge-intensive activities are invariably retained within the advanced economies, and particularly in the home countries of the different multinational firms. These include research and development, management and marketing – by far the most highly-remunerative activities within the overall corporate system (p.5).

Mac Laughlin (1997b: 9) also argues that emigration is a "social response to structuring and restructuring processes operating at the levels of local and national society and at the level of the international economy". This restructuring, and the ensuing new international division of labour, has increased the need for high-end producer services (services produced primarily for firms) because of the "increased complexity of transactions" (Sassen, 1997). Producer services such as management consulting, finance, legal services, accounting, product development and design, and advertising are not only located in the advanced economies where transnational corporations are headquartered, but tend to be concentrated in their major cities. Sassen (1997) points out that the agglomeration of producer services in major cities has occurred despite new information technologies that could allow for their dispersal. She notes that the providers of complex and innovative services benefit immensely from the proximity of other specialized service providers. Thus, the new global economy has given rise to a disproportionate concentration of knowledge-intensive producer services in cities such as New York, Chicago and Boston, traditional immigrant gateways. For many Irish professionals, emigration to these cities has become part of a strategic career move. According to Wickham (1989), due to a lack of similar jobs in Ireland, many engineers seek work overseas in multinational corporations that have substantial resources invested in research and development in advanced economies such as the US. They are thus able to acquire skills that they would not be able to gain in Ireland. During 1987-95, an average 270 Irish engineers entered the US each year, 8 per cent of whom were females (Table 5, page 278). For many of these engineers, it was not the lack of a job in Ireland that motivated emigration, but the opportunity the US afforded to achieve their professional goals. The US also offers Irish medical personnel a challenging work environment in world-class medical institutions. The 1980s and early 1990s, peak years of Irish immigration, coincided with a severe

nursing shortage in New York and California, major destinations for Irish immigrants. During 1987-95, 290 Irish nurses, dieticians and therapists, mainly females, settled annually in the US.

In the most recent period (1987-95), over 625 Irish immigrants arrived annually in *executive, administrative, and managerial* positions, a third of whom were female. In the field of accountancy, according to Hanlon (1991) there are two distinct labour and business markets in Ireland. One consists of small- and medium-sized firms; the other is dominated by the "Big 6" international firms whose clients tend to be branches of international firms operating in Ireland. The Big 6 connection allows many Irish accountants to transfer to offices in core locations and gain experience in lucrative subfields concentrated in the core offices and often unavailable in peripheral locations. A spell working in these firms "is fast becoming the standard route to membership of a new global élite" (*The Economist*, 1997a). Hanlon (1991) points out that the emigration of Irish accountants in the 1980s was taking place when there was a shortage of accountants in Ireland. It was not lack of jobs that motivated the emigration of many accountants, but the experience and higher wages afforded by jobs in the core economies. Many accountants believed that when they returned, they would move up the hierarchy faster as a result of skills attained overseas. Even if some of these benefits are exaggerated, Hanlon (1997: 337) argues that it is the symbolism of the move that really counts, as it "communicates to one's superiors back in the periphery that one endorses the views of the core, i.e. industriousness, profitability, etc."

The concentration of high-end producer services in major US cities has in turn produced a large number of low-wage jobs. Many of these are in the informal economy where economic activity is usually unregulated. Sassen (1991) notes that the period immediately following World War II was marked by mass production and consumption of standardized products which facilitated unionization and dampened informal economic structures. However, since the late 1970s, enormous growth in the informal economy has seen demand for customized goods and services fuelled by the large number of persons employed in high-paying jobs in producer services (Sassen, 1994). Thus, economies dominated by producer services are "characterized by greater earnings and occupational dispersion, weak unions, and a growing share of unsheltered jobs in the lower-paying echelons, along with a growing share of high-income jobs" (Sassen, 1994: 116). Just as this has provided Irish professionals with ample job opportunities in major US cities, it has also accommodated Irish immigrants with more modest skills. Between 1987 and 1995, an average 900 skilled blue-collar Irish workers (included in the *precision production, craft and repair* category) entered the US annually, 5 per cent of whom were female. Many found jobs in the informal economy. In New York City, for example, businesses involved in renovating and remodelling residen-

tial apartments, which are legally required to hire high-price union labour, often hire cheaper non-union personnel instead (Sassen, 1991). Many of these cheaper, non-union workers are skilled Irish immigrants. Corcoran (1991) found that many Irish carpenters, masons and plasterers were able to find employment as a result of their English language proficiency, prized job skills, and their privileged position in ethnic hiring queues, often controlled by Irish and Irish-American power brokers, especially in construction. The construction industry was also home to less skilled blue-collar Irish workers, categorized as *operators, fabricators and labourers*. Over 650 entered annually in the 1987-95 period, 10 per cent of whom were female. Many found jobs as construction labourers and concrete workers. Unlike blue-collar occupations, the low-end *service* occupations were heavily (61 per cent) female. Many in these occupations work in the restaurant and bar trade as waiters, waitresses and bartenders, and as baby sitters/private home care workers (Corcoran, 1993; Almeida, 1992).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Irish economy has been unable to create enough jobs to keep pace with its rapidly expanding labour force, a result of high aggregate fertility and increased labour force participation of women. During the severe Irish recession of 1980-85, high levels of unemployment in what has been described as a "migration culture" (Shuttleworth, 1991) resulted in large numbers of persons leaving Ireland in search of job opportunities elsewhere, including the US. The presence of large numbers of skilled persons in these flows led some persons to characterize them as a new wave; others have argued that such an appellation overstates the case (Mac Laughlin, 1997a; Shuttleworth, 1997). This was indeed the case with respect to Irish emigration to the US: while the flows included an increasing number of persons with *professional and executive* occupations, numbers of less skilled increased even more dramatically, resulting in an overall decline in the occupational selectivity of Irish immigrants. The share of those in *professional and executive* occupations in the 1987-95 period was the lowest since the enactment of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

The Irish recession of 1980-1985 was followed by robust growth for more than a decade. By 1996, Ireland's GDP per head exceeded Britain's; its GNP is also likely to surpass Britain's in a few years (*The Economist*, 1997b). Moreover, in 1996 and 1997, there was a net inflow of persons, reminiscent of the 1970s (*Statistical Bulletin*, 1996, 1997). Many American multinationals with operations in Ireland have been hiring Irish professionals in the US for positions in Ireland, offering a challenging work environment and attractive compensation packages. For many professionals, temporary emigration from Ireland turned

out to be a strategic move that has been parlayed into higher paying jobs in Ireland. The skills acquired overseas by Irish professionals are now put to work in Ireland itself, providing the country with some return on its investment in education. In an editorial, *The Economist* (1997b: 16) noted:

Two things Ireland does show beyond a doubt. First, small countries on the fringe of rich trading areas can prosper mightily. The curse of the periphery is a myth. Second, “globalization”, taken at the flood, is the fastest course to wealth. What is most striking about Ireland’s new economy is how tightly it is linked to Europe and the world. If any country lends substance to the cliché that the global economy is an opportunity not a threat, it is Ireland.

The spectacular growth of the Irish economy is attributable partly to large foreign investment, particularly from the US. *The Economist* (1997b: 24) notes that Ireland has established a “self-sustaining cluster of related firms sufficient to supply each other with services and to create a pool of suitably skilled labour”. This in turn attracts more foreign investment. The forces of agglomeration are at work not only in New York but also in Dublin. Sassen (1994) points out that this is also evident in other cities, whether they cater to regional, national or global markets; they differ only with respect to scale and level of complexity. But will Ireland be able to hold on to its highly skilled professionals? *The Economist* (1997b) notes that a global contraction in industries that Ireland is attracting, such as computers and financial services, could adversely affect its economy and once again result in net outflows. It is too early to tell whether the curse of the periphery is indeed a myth. Given that many Irish professionals who are now returning to Ireland have green cards or US citizenship, they will be in a position to emigrate once again from Ireland if conditions warrant. An important factor that may help the cycle of emigration and return is the marital status of these *professionals and executives*: nearly two-thirds who were admitted to the US in the most recent period were single. Since those who are single are generally more mobile, this group may be more likely to experience circular migration between Ireland and the US.

In marked contrast with the overall net inflow of persons into Ireland in 1996 and 1997 has been a continued net outflow of the young and less skilled (*Statistical Bulletin*, 1996, 1997). Despite robust growth in the past decade, the Irish economy has been unable to create enough jobs for its expanding labour force; long-term unemployment remains a problem. While many have argued that Ireland’s peripheral status is responsible for the growth in less skilled, labour-intensive jobs in the manufacturing sector (Breathnach and Jackson, 1991; Shuttleworth, 1991; Corcoran, 1993), not enough jobs have been created to absorb the unemployed. Interestingly, Sassen (1994) shows that in core economies there is a high proportion of low-end jobs *within* their most advanced sectors: nearly one-half of all jobs in producer services are relatively unskilled and low-paying. While such jobs have resulted in increasing income

inequality, they have also helped keep unemployment low, especially in the US. The lack of similar entry-level jobs in Ireland has resulted in large numbers of the less skilled persons leaving Ireland in search of job opportunities.

The US, however, no longer offers a legal avenue of entry for large numbers of Irish immigrants. As of 1995, the Irish are no longer eligible for a special allotment of diversity visas. Moreover, large backlogs exist for most family reunification visas, and employment visas are geared primarily towards the highly skilled. As a result, in 1995, legal Irish immigration declined by over two-thirds compared with the prior year, to 5,300. Moreover, a majority of these entrants had won a diversity visa the previous year, when 40 per cent of all diversity visas were reserved for the Irish. In 1996, the number of legal Irish immigrants fell to 1,731. If the Irish economy remains unable to produce enough entry-level jobs, there is likely to be continued net emigration of unskilled, and there may be a resurgence in undocumented flows to the US.

NOTES

1. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of City Planning.
2. INS data are tabulated by fiscal year, which begins October 1 of the prior calendar year and ends September 30. Prior to 1977, the fiscal year began July 1 and ended June 30. These data exclude formerly undocumented immigrants legalized by the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA).
3. For the entire 1967-1977 period, Irish flows averaged 1,790 annually. Under the McCarran-Walter Act, which was in effect from 1953 to 1965, Irish flows averaged 6,700 annually.
4. The first full year that the 1965 law was in effect was fiscal year 1967. Forty-one per cent of Irish immigrants admitted between 1967 and 1977 were *professionals and executives*.

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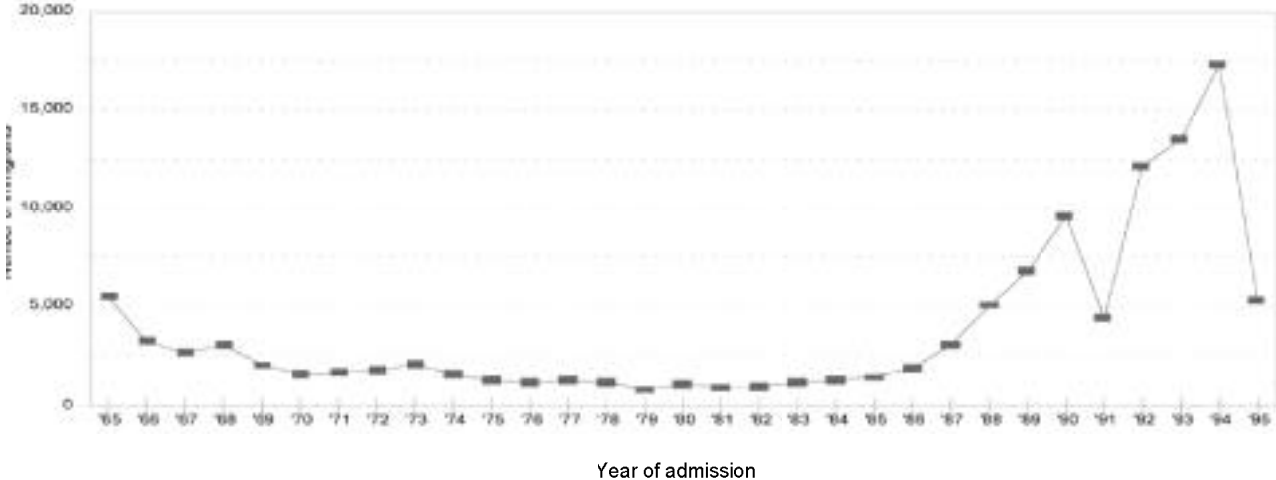
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FIGURE 1
IRISH IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES: 1965-1995



Source: Annual Reports of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1965-1971; and Annual Immigrant Tape Files, 1972-1995, US

TABLE 1
CLASS OF ADMISSION OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS
TO THE UNITED STATES: 1972-1995

Fiscal year	Total flow	Annual average flow	Class of admission (% distribution)			
			Family reunification	Employment	Diversity	All others
Total, 1972-95	96,933	3,997	26.7	8.7	63.1	1.6
1972-77	9,348	1,496	67.3	26.7	-	6.0
1978-86	10,394	1,155	75.6	20.6	-	3.8
1987-95	77,191	8,577	15.1	4.9	79.2	0.7

Source: Annual Immigrant Tape Files, 1972-1995, US Immigration and Naturalization Service.

TABLE 2
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES
BY STATE OF INTENDED RESIDENCE: 1972-1995

Fiscal year	Annual average flow	State of intended residence (% distribution)					
		NY	MA	CA	NJ	IL	Other states
Total, 1972-95	3,997	32.0	15.0	13.2	6.7	5.8	27.3
1972-77	1,496	33.4	12.1	10.1	5.9	7.7	30.9
1978-86	1,155	23.4	8.5	15.1	5.6	6.0	41.5
1987-95	8,577	33.0	16.2	13.4	7.0	5.5	24.9

Note: NY New York
MA Massachusetts
CA California
NJ New Jersey
IL Illinois

Source: Annual Immigrant Tape Files, 1972-1995, US Immigration and Naturalization Service.

TABLE 3
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES: 1972-1995

Fiscal year	Annual average flow	Age (% distribution)				Median age	Sex ratio*	Marital status		
		0-19	20-29	30-39	40+			Single	Married	Other
Total, 1972-95	3,997	12.3	57.2	20.1	10.5	26	861	63.4	34.4	2.2
1972-77	1,496	14.1	52.7	17.7	15.6	26	1,214	53.3	44.0	2.7
1978-86	1,155	14.9	42.3	25.2	17.6	28	1,001	31.1	61.7	7.2
1987-95	8,577	11.7	59.7	19.7	8.9	26	810	69.0	29.6	1.4

* Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1,000 males.

Source: Annual Immigrant Tape Files, 1972-1995, US Immigration and Naturalization Service.

TABLE 4
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES BY SEX: 1972-1995

Fiscal year	Annual average flow with an occupation	Major occupational groups (% distribution)					Service
		Professional & executive	Technical, sales & administrative support	Precision production craft & repair	Operators, fabricators & laborers	Farming, forestry & fishing	
Total, 1972-95	2,743	33.1	21.7	14.2	10.8	2.3	17.8
1972-77	932	45.1	15.2	12.1	11.9	2.6	13.2
1978-86	622	44.0	17.5	12.3	10.5	2.2	13.5
1987-95	6,120	30.7	22.9	14.7	10.7	2.3	18.7
Males, 1972-95	1,607	31.5	13.6	23.0	16.4	3.6	11.9
1972-77	504	40.0	7.2	20.9	18.9	4.6	8.3
1978-86	385	44.3	10.1	18.3	14.4	3.2	9.7
1987-95	3,595	29.3	14.6	23.7	16.4	3.6	12.5
Females, 1972-1995	1,136	35.4	33.2	1.9	2.8	0.5	26.2
1972-77	428	51.1	24.6	1.6	3.6	0.2	18.9
1978-86	238	43.4	29.5	2.6	4.2	0.5	19.8
1987-95	2,525	32.8	34.6	1.8	2.6	0.5	27.6

Source: Annual Immigrant Tape Files, 1972-1995, US Immigration and Naturalization Service.

TABLE 5
SEX COMPOSITION OF MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES
OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES: 1972-1995

	1972-77		1978-86		1987-95	
	Annual average flow	Percent female	Annual average flow	Percent female	Annual average flow	Percent female
TOTAL	1,496	54.8	1,097	50.0	8,577	44.8
With an occupation	932	45.9	622	38.2	6,120	41.3
Professional and executive	420	52.0	274	37.7	1,880	44.0
Engineers	12	5.3	27	4.9	273	8.2
Mathematical and computer scientists	2	14.3	5	20.0	45	33.0
Natural scientists	5	35.5	5	14.9	47	38.1
Physicians and other health diagnosing occupations*	36	15.0	15	33.1	71	34.0
Registered nurses, dieticians and therapists	139	97.2	44	94.1	289	91.5
Teachers	38	64.6	31	56.6	248	65.1
Artists, writers, entertainers and athletes	21	27.1	19	30.4	179	41.0
Executives, administrators and managers	56	21.0	80	21.2	626	33.0
Other professionals	109	29.8	48	28.8	102	42.1
Technical, sales and administrative support	141	74.4	109	64.3	1,399	62.5
Technicians	16	41.0	16	31.0	210	25.5
Sales	20	42.2	24	36.9	291	41.2
Administrative support	105	85.8	69	81.4	898	78.0
Precision production, craft and repair	112	6.1	76	8.1	898	5.2
Operators, fabricators and labourers	111	13.7	65	15.3	656	10.1
Farming, forestry and fishing	24	3.3	14	8.9	141	9.4
Service	123	65.9	84	55.7	1,146	60.8
Homemaker	239	100.0	174	98.4	355	99.0
Unemployed	74	43.8	89	40.8	299	48.8
Students	171	45.9	164	48.7	1,669	45.2
Not reported	80	53.2	48	49.9	133	45.8

* Includes among others, chiropractors, dentists, optometrists, pharmacists, podiatrists and veterinarians.

Source: Annual Immigrant Tape Files, 1972-1995, US Immigration and Naturalization Service.

RESURGENCE DE LA MIGRATION IRLANDAISE
VERS LES ÉTATS-UNIS AU COURS DES ANNÉES 80 ET AU DÉBUT
DES ANNÉES 90 : UN PROFIL SOCIO-DÉMOGRAPHIQUE

La migration irlandaise vers les États-Unis a eu traditionnellement pour cause le manque de possibilités d'emploi dans le pays d'origine. Depuis l'adoption de la loi américaine de 1965 sur l'immigration et la nationalité, les immigrants irlandais ne jouissent toutefois plus d'un régime de faveur explicite. La réunification des familles est devenue le principal motif invoquée pour entrer aux États-Unis, ce qui défavorisait les Irlandais dont la génération avait perdu tout contact immédiat avec des résidents américains.

Pendant la profonde récession de 1980-85 en Irlande, une résurgence de l'émigration depuis ce pays s'est traduite par la présence aux États-Unis de nombreux Irlandais sans papiers. Leur situation a été régularisée par la suite dans la plupart des cas, en vertu de dispositions législatives spéciales visant les Irlandais. L'Irlande s'est toutefois préoccupée du fait que l'émigration des années 80, à la différence des mouvements précédents, comprenait une forte proportion de personnes qualifiées, incitant certains à donner à ces sorties le nom de "nouvelle vague".

Les auteurs de l'article se fondent sur des données américaines concernant l'immigration pour comparer les attributs professionnels des immigrants irlandais récemment arrivés et ceux de cohortes antérieures; ils examinent aussi la façon dont les immigrants irlandais s'intègrent à l'économie des États-Unis.

Les immigrants irlandais récemment arrivés aux États-Unis couvrent toute la gamme possible des professions: comptables, ingénieurs, personnel infirmier et autres cadres ont trouvé un marché de l'emploi en pleine expansion dans les secteurs les plus avancés de l'économie américaine, tandis que les immigrants moins qualifiés ont trouvé du travail dans l'économie non structurée. Si le nombre de cadres irlandais arrivant aux États-Unis augmentait, celui des personnes moins qualifiées a fait un bond encore plus considérable, progression qui s'est traduite par une diminution globale de la sélectivité professionnelle chez les immigrants irlandais.

La récession de 1980-85 en Irlande a été suivie d'une forte croissance pendant plus de dix ans. Le pays enregistre actuellement des entrées nettes de personnes, dont de nombreux cadres irlandais rentrant des États-Unis. L'Irlande continue toutefois à enregistrer des sorties nettes chez les jeunes et les personnes moins qualifiées, ce qui pourrait une fois de plus se traduire par la présence de nombreux Irlandais en situation irrégulière aux États-Unis.

RESURGIMIENTO DE LA INMIGRACIÓN IRLANDESA A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS EN LOS AÑOS OCHENTA Y PRINCIPIOS DE LOS NOVENTA: UN PERFIL SOCIODEMOGRÁFICO

Tradicionalmente la inmigración irlandesa a los Estados Unidos obedecía a la falta de oportunidades de empleo en el propio país. Pero al aprobarse en 1965 la Ley estadounidense sobre inmigración y nacionalidad, los inmigrantes irlandeses ya no quedaban explícitamente favorecidos. La reunificación familiar llegó a ser la principal puerta de entrada, lo cual era contrario a los irlandeses que habían perdido sus vínculos generacionales inmediatos con residentes en los Estados Unidos.

Durante la grave recesión irlandesa de 1980 a 1985 resurgieron los flujos de irlandeses, lo que dio lugar a la existencia de una importante población de irlandeses indocumentados en los Estados Unidos. La mayor parte de esta población se legalizó ulteriormente a raíz de una legislación especial dirigida concretamente a los irlandeses. Preocupaba en Irlanda la posibilidad de que en los flujos de los años ochenta, a diferencia de lo que sucedió con flujos anteriores, figurase una importante proporción de personas calificadas, posibilidad que condujo a algunos autores a caracterizar este flujo como una “nueva ola”.

Este artículo utiliza ciertos datos de la inmigración a los Estados Unidos para comparar las características profesionales de los inmigrantes irlandeses recientes con cohortes anteriores y examina además cómo se incorporan a la economía estadounidense los inmigrantes irlandeses.

Los recientes inmigrantes irlandeses a los Estados Unidos presentan un amplio espectro profesional: contables, ingenieros, enfermeras y otros profesionales hallan un mercado laboral en expansión en la mayor parte de los sectores avanzados de la economía estadounidense, mientras que otros inmigrantes menos calificados encuentran su empleo en la economía no estructurada. Si bien es cierto que el número de profesionales irlandeses ingresados ha aumentado, lo han hecho de forma aún más espectacular los flujos de trabajadores menos calificados, de forma que en general ha bajado la selectividad profesional de los inmigrantes irlandeses.

La recesión irlandesa de 1980-85 fue seguida de un vigoroso crecimiento que duró más de un decenio. En la actualidad en Irlanda entran más personas que salen, entre ellas numerosos profesionales irlandeses que regresan de los Estados Unidos. De todas formas, Irlanda sigue experimentando un flujo de salida neto de jóvenes y de trabajadores menos calificados que una vez más pueden incrementar la presencia de irlandeses indocumentados en los Estados Unidos.