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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Population change in the Republic of Ireland 1981-1991: trends and spatial patterns</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Cawley, Mary</td>
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Abstract
Demographic trends in the Republic of Ireland have gradually moved closer to Western European norms during the past two decades. Birth rates have continued to fall and internal migration flows have become diversified. External migration has continued to play an important role in population change, however, and in the most recent census period has contributed to net decline. Geographical patterns of change within the state reflect a concentration of growth in the environs of the larger centres of population.

Résumé
En République d’Irlande, les caractéristiques démographiques se sont progressivement rapprochées de celles d’Europe Occidentale pendant les deux dernières décennies. La baisse de la natalité s’est poursuivie et les flux migratoires internes se sont diversifiés. Néanmoins, les migrations internationales ont continué de jouer un rôle important dans l’évolution démographique et, durant la dernière période intercensitaire, le bilan migratoire a été négatif. Les changements de population à l’intérieur de la République se sont traduits géographiquement par une concentration de la croissance autour des plus grandes agglomérations.

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Galway, Ireland

Summary
Demographic trends in the Republic of Ireland have gradually moved closer to Western European norms during the past two decades. Birth rates have continued to fall and internal migration flows have become diversified. External migration has continued to play an important role in population change, however, and in the most recent census period has contributed to net decline. Geographical patterns of change within the state reflect a concentration of growth in the environs of the larger centres of population.

Key-words: Republic of Ireland, Population change, External migration, Internal migration.

Introduction
During the past two decades internal migration has assumed particular importance as a factor contributing to regional changes in population in the more developed urban economies of Western Europe (Findlay and White, 1986). Birth rates have reached low levels and inter-regional variations in natural increase have been reduced substantially. Net immigration has fallen significantly in the wake of reduced levels of economic growth following a series of recessions since the mid-1970s, although recent flows of refugees have helped compensate for decreases in the numbers of immigrant «guest workers» (Findlay, 1991). Counterurbanisation, involving population retention in and movement to more remote areas of the countryside, has become widespread (Champion, 1989). A general trend towards population decline in inner-city areas has emerged, associated with the suburbanisation of both public and private housing, although this has been offset in part by movement back to core areas associated with urban renewal schemes during the 1980s (De Smidt, 1989).

Since the early 1970s demographic patterns in the Republic of Ireland have gradually moved closer to those characteristic of the more developed urban economies. Birth rates and family size have followed a general downward trend; the former fell from 21.6 per 1,000 during the 1970s to 15.7 per 1,000 between 1986 and 1991 (Table 1). Internal migration flows have become diversified, notably in response to a policy of regional industrial development but associated also with the provision of increased access to third level technological and university education in ten new regional institutions since 1972 (Walsh, 1991). Limited decentralisation of civil service departments to regional cities and large towns, during the 1980s, has also helped to divert some movement away from Dublin, the capital city, which nevertheless remains the principal migration destination in the state (Cawley, 1991). Inner-area population decline has taken place in major cities and in some large towns, associated with slum clearance and the relocation of public housing tenants to new residential areas in urban fringe locations. Some evidence of counterurbanisation emerged also during the 1970s in more remote rural areas of traditional outmigration (Horner and Daultrey, 1980). Aspects of more traditional demographic patterns have persisted, however. Rates of natural increase in population, albeit declining, remain higher than European averages and continue to vary markedly within the state, reflecting past patterns of outmigration and more recent internal migration trends (Cawley, 1990; Eurostat, 1987). Most notably, external migration links continue to play a major role in population change. During the decade 1971-1981, net immigration of 3.2 per 1,000 per annum took place for the first time in over one hundred years and together with natural increase of 11.3 per 1,000 per annum contributed to an annual growth of 1.56 percent in the population of the state (Table 1). Net overseas migration commenced once more during the late 1970s and gathered momentum during the 1980s, notably during the second half of the decade, resulting in a loss of population of 0.5 percent between 1986 and 1991 (Table 1). Thus, over a period of two decades the Republic of Ireland moved from registering one of the highest growth rates in Western Europe to rates of low growth and, most recently, decline.

This paper traces the patterns of population change for the census years 1981-1986 and 1986-1991 by counties, the principal administrative divisions in the state. The relative contribution of natural increase and net migration to change is assessed. Sub-county patterns for 163 combined Rural and Urban Districts which include the five County Borough areas (major cities) of the state are then discussed. The implications of spatial variations in patterns of change for population distribu-
tion between urban and rural areas is noted. By way of introduction to the review of geographical variations in population change, broad demographic patterns and underlying economic trends are discussed briefly.

The economic context of population change
Migration overseas has for long served as a safety valve for controlling population numbers in Ireland. From the middle of the nineteenth century, following the catastrophic impact of the Great Famine of the 1840s, until 1961, net outmigration offset natural increase in population and contributed to a pattern of almost continuous decline. Rates of natural increase remained high throughout the 1960s and the 1970s but average family size decreased (Creton, 1991). A fall in net migration overseas during the first half of the 1960s contributed to modest population growth of 0.46 percent per annum, a rate which increased slightly during the following five years and then escalated to 1.56 percent per annum over the decade 1971-1981 (Table 1). Reduced overseas migration was due in large part to improved employment opportunities in the state associated with the success of a series of programmes for economic expansion applied from 1958 to 1973 (Johnson, 1981). The attraction of international investment to establish an export-oriented industrial base, through the provision of cash grants and tax concessions, formed an important element in this expansion. Industrial estates were established in eight major cities and towns and smaller-scale developments were pursued widely throughout the state. As dependence on internationally mobile capital and international markets increased the economy became particularly vulnerable to external economic trends as was readily apparent during periods of worldwide recession during the mid-1970s and the early 1980s (O’Farrell and Crouchley, 1983). Increased competition from imports from other countries of the European Community also contributed to the closure of some older established enterprises following accession to membership in 1973. Irish agriculture gained very considerably, initially, from membership of the EC through the increases in prices for farm produce that occurred. The farm processing sector was expanded also. Nevertheless, outmigration from farming continued as part of the restructuring process (Brunt, 1988).

During the late 1970s, partly because of generally depressed economic conditions internationally, but also because of a policy of borrowing overseas to expand public sector employment, the economy entered a period of deep recession (Breen et al., 1990). Outmigration from agriculture continued and losses in manufacturing industry took place, due to closures of uncompetitive enterprises (Central Statistics Office, 1985; 1988-89). Increases took place in service-sector employment, but these were inadequate to compensate for the losses which occurred. The unemployment rate from 6.9 percent of the workforce in 1979 to 18.5 percent in 1988 (Central Statistics Office, 1989). From the mid-1980s on large numbers of school leavers, who were entering the workforce for the first time, swelled the numbers of the unemployed. Many of these school leavers opted to migrate overseas in the absence of employment opportunities at home. Of an estimated 56,500 migrants who left the state between April 1987 and April 1988, almost 70 percent were aged 15-24 years (National Economic and Social Council, 1990).

The migrant destinations included Great Britain where demands for labour increased during the early 1980s, and the United States. Smaller numbers moved to Australia and Canada. Countries of the European Community, and particularly Germany, emerged as new destinations for more highly qualified migrants (King and Shuttleworth, 1988). It is estimated that a net loss of some 72,000 persons occurred through migration overseas between 1981 and 1986 and a net loss of some 136,500 between 1986 and 1991 (Central Statistics Office, 1987; 1991). During the first half of the decade migration loss was offset by natural increase of some 97,238 persons resulting in an annual increase in population of 0.56 percent; between 1986 and 1991, natural increase numbered 119,244 and a net decline in population of 0.1 percent per annum took place. This paper focuses on the joint influences of falling rates of natural increase and increasing rates of net outmigration in explaining patterns of population change within the state.

Patterns of population change by counties
There are 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland but one County, Tipperary, in the south midlands, consists of two separate administrative units, giving 27 census

### Table 1. Republic of Ireland: % change in population and components of change for selected census periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population (000s)</th>
<th>Inter-censal period</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>Average rate per 1,000</th>
<th>annual population Natural migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Births</td>
<td>Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2818.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2884.0</td>
<td>1961-66</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2978.2</td>
<td>1966-71</td>
<td>+3.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3443.4</td>
<td>1971-81</td>
<td>+15.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>3540.6</td>
<td>1981-86</td>
<td>+2.8</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3523.4</td>
<td>1986-91</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

divisions (Figure 1a). All counties save one, County Leitrim in the northwest, experienced population growth between 1981 and 1986, but at substantially lower levels than during the previous decade, reflecting the trend for the state as a whole (Horner et al., 1987). Considerable variation was apparent in growth rates within the state. Three counties adjoining County Dublin (Meath, Kildare and Wicklow), which form part of the extended commuting hinterland of Dublin County Borough, registered growth in excess of 1 percent per annum due to a combination of high rates of natural increase (in excess of 12 per 1,000 per annum) and population overspill from County Dublin (Figures 1b, 2a and 2c). By contrast, low rates of natural increase and high net outmigration resulted in growth of less than 0.5 percent per annum in ten counties, eight of which had a broad western, north western and south western distribution. These eight counties form part of the Underdeveloped Areas of Western Ireland, scheduled as such in 1952, in recognition of their small farm structures, poor land quality and relative absence of non-agricultural employment, features which persist notwithstanding remedial measures during the past four decades. Counties Dublin and Limerick differ in con-
Figure 2. Republic of Ireland: Average annual natural increase per 1,000 average population, (a) 1981-86, (b) 1986-91; Average annual net migration per 1,000 average population, (c) 1981-86, (d) 1986-91.
The remaining counties which registered growth of 1-2 percent per annum have a general southern and eastern distribution corresponding with areas of better quality land and either contain or are adjacent to large urban centres which function as key centres for education and training, and employment in industry and services (Gillmor, 1985; Horner et al., 1984). Natural increase was in the range 9-12 per 1,000, for the most part, and net migration losses were less than 5 per 1,000. Only three counties on the west coast (Donegal, Galway and Clare) registered similar patterns of change and they are among the few counties which recorded growth in employment in manufacturing industry over the years 1981-1986 (Central Statistics Office, 1985; 1988-89). County Clare was the only county, other than the three counties adjoining County Dublin, to register a net migration increase which is attributable to immigration to the Shannon Airport area and residential expansion from Limerick County Borough on its southeastern border.

The total population of the state fell by 0.5 percent between 1986 and 1991 due to a combination of reduced natural increase and increased net outmigration (Table 1). The pattern of decline was represented widely at a county level (Figure 1c). Population loss took place in 20 counties with the highest rate being experienced in County Leitrim (in excess of 1 percent per annum) followed by Counties Mayo, Roscommon, Longford and Tipperary which had emerged during the first half of the 1980s as areas of very low growth. A continued decline in the birth rate combined with enhanced rates of net outmigration were responsible (Figures 2b and 2d); In the case of County Leitrim deaths exceeded births for the first time.

Only seven counties recorded growth in population during the second half of the 1980s and only in Counties Kildare and Wicklow did the rate of growth exceed 0.5 percent per annum, reflecting natural increase between 9 and 12 per 1,000 and some of the lowest rates of net outmigration in the state (Figures 1c, 2b and 2d). Growth in County Meath, the third county which serves as an area of overspill for the greater Dublin area was lower due to the relatively higher net losses in population recorded. Three of the other counties where growth occurred (Dublin, Galway and Waterford) contain county boroughs and the fourth county, Kilkenny, receives residential immigration from Waterford County Borough. The remaining counties of the state registered losses of 0-0.5 percent per annum reflecting the inability of natural increase (of between 5 and 9 per 1,000) to offset migration losses of between 5 and 10 per 1,000).

The increases which occurred in rates of net outmigration during the second half of the 1980s are clearly of major importance in contributing to the widespread losses in population that occurred at a county level. Falling rates of natural increase contributed also. County Leitrim has reached a stage of natural decrease, and natural increase in a number of adjacent counties has fallen below 5 per 1,000 per annum. In the absence of renewed immigration on a significant scale, further declines in natural increase may be anticipated during the next inter-censal period throughout much of the re-
Rural and urban aspects of change

Data relating to natural increase and net migration are not readily available below county level for the Republic of Ireland. It is possible however, to gain some understanding of processes of population change at a sub-county level by using Rural Districts (RDs) as a basis for analysis. Fifty-two RDs contain Urban Districts within their boundaries and both sets of data are combined here by RD for purposes of plotting change.

Almost one-third of the total of 163 RDs registered population loss between 1981 and 1986. Their distribution tends to coincide with counties recording particularly low rates of growth in the north midlands in particular and in the south west (Figure 3a). It is apparent, however, that substantial areas of population loss at RD level occurred within counties which experienced growth approximating the national rate. Of particular importance in this regard are Counties Galway, Clare and Cork. In each case the increases which contributed to the overall growth were concentrated almost exclusively in the environs of a County Borough (CB) or other large urban centre, Galway CB, Limerick CB and the Shannon Airport complex in County Clare, and Cork CB. The importance of proximity to Dublin CB is apparent also in the distribution of population growth in the east of the state which registered low increases between 1981 and 1986 recorded losses over the next five years. The RDs where increases occurred tended to coincide with the pattern for 1981-1986 but the rates of growth were lower, with the exception of one RD in County Kildare. Consideration of change for the county borough areas and adjacent RDs which experienced above average rates of growth helps to elucidate these patterns further (Table 2). The latter are used as a surrogate for the suburbs of CBs because information relating to suburbs per se is not available for 1991 at the time of writing (1).

The pattern which emerges from disaggregating change by CBs and their extended suburbs is one of inner-area decline in the case of the larger CBs and suburban growth in all cases. Between 1981 and 1986, losses in population were most marked in Dublin and Limerick CBs at 7.7 and 7.3 percent, respectively, and less so in Cork CB where a loss of 2.3 percent occurred (Table 2). Waterford CB and Galway CB experienced growth of 2.7 percent and 9 percent, respectively, with the higher rate in the latter instance being explained by the population structure of the city but also by the availability of considerable areas of land for residential development within the city limits. High rates of growth were registered in all suburban areas and most notably in the suburbs of Dublin, Cork and Limerick CBs.

Dublin CB registered a lower rate of inner-area decline during the second half of the 1980s than during the first half, reflecting in part the impact of an urban renewal programme initiated in 1986 which includes residential as well as commercial property development (Department of the Environment, 1986). Considerable expansion of apartment and town house accommodation and training is even more apparent during the years 1986-91 at RD level (Figure 3b). Seventy-eight percent of all RDs (127) recorded a loss in population and the rates of loss for the most part exceeded those registered during the previous five years. Most districts in the interior of the state which registered low increases between 1981 and 1986 recorded losses over the next five years. The RDs where increases occurred tended to coincide with the pattern for 1981-1986 but the rates of growth were lower, with the exception of one RD in County Kildare. Consideration of change for the county borough areas and adjacent RDs which experienced above average rates of growth helps to elucidate these patterns further (Table 2). The latter are used as a surrogate for the suburbs of CBs because information relating to suburbs per se is not available for 1991 at the time of writing (1).

The association between population increase and proximity to the larger urban centres of employment, education and training is even more apparent during the years 1986-91 at RD level (Figure 3b). Seventy-eight percent of all RDs (127) recorded a loss in population and the rates of loss for the most part exceeded those registered during the previous five years. Most districts in the interior of the state which registered low increases between 1981 and 1986 recorded losses over the next five years. The RDs where increases occurred tended to coincide with the pattern for 1981-1986 but the rates of growth were lower, with the exception of one RD in County Kildare. Consideration of change for the county borough areas and adjacent RDs which experienced above average rates of growth helps to elucidate these patterns further (Table 2). The latter are used as a surrogate for the suburbs of CBs because information relating to suburbs per se is not available for 1991 at the time of writing (1).

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(1) The Rural Districts included as suburbs of County Boroughs are as follows: Dublin CB-remainder of County Dublin, Dunshaughlin RD, Celbridge No. 1 RD, Rathdown RD, Bray No. 2 RD, Cork CB-Cork RD, Cobh UD, Kinsale RD, Kinsale UD, Limerick CB-Limerick No. 1 RD, Mallow RD, Galway CB-Galway RD; Waterford CB-Waterford No. 1 RD, Waterford No. 2 RD.

Table 2. Republic of Ireland: County Boroughs and suburbs, population and % change 1981-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Borough</th>
<th>Population(000s) 1981</th>
<th>Population(000s) 1986</th>
<th>Population(000s) 1991</th>
<th>% change 1981-86</th>
<th>% change 1986-91</th>
<th>% of total population 1981</th>
<th>% of total population 1986</th>
<th>% of total population 1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin CB</td>
<td>544.8</td>
<td>502.7</td>
<td>477.7</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>537.2</td>
<td>612.5</td>
<td>650.0</td>
<td>+14.0</td>
<td>+6.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork CB</td>
<td>136.3</td>
<td>133.3</td>
<td>127.0</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>-4.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>+14.4</td>
<td>+8.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick CB</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>-7.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>+19.3</td>
<td>+9.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway CB</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>+9.0</td>
<td>+7.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>+9.5</td>
<td>+6.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford CB</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>+7.4</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: As in Table 1. For definition of 'suburbs' see Note 1.
tion has taken place also within Dublin CB in recent years. The rate of loss doubled in Cork CB and increased slightly in Limerick CB; Cork, however, recorded a lower rate than either of the other two areas. Galway and Waterford CBs continued to register growth but at slightly lower levels than during the previous decade. Suburban growth continued at lower rates in all instances and particularly so in the case of the suburbs of Waterford where it equalled 0.9 percent, reflecting disimproving economic conditions in that city during the later 1980s. Because of the relatively large populations resident in the CBs and their associated suburbs and continued growth in the latter at rates substantially higher than the national average during the 1980s, the combined areas have increased their share of the national total population marginally over time from 44.2 percent in 1981 to 45.3 percent in 1991 (Table 2). The proportionate increase has been highest in the case of Dublin.

Information is not available, at the time of writing, relating to population change in urban areas other than CBs. During the first half of the 1980s, however, some medium-size and smaller towns, which has been areas of growth during the 1970s experienced population loss in suburban as well as inner areas (Cawley, 1989). Continued net outmigration on a widespread level during the years 1986-1991 and patterns of decline at RD level, including RDs which contain towns within their boundaries, suggest that some towns have again lost population. The exceptions are likely to be towns which have retained or attracted employment, as for example locations which have been the recipients of decentralised civil service employment or where new investment has taken place in industry or services.

Conclusion

During the 1970s it appeared that demographic trends in the Republic of Ireland were moving closer to patterns characteristic of other countries of Western Europe. The birth rate remained relatively high by comparison with European averages but was falling. Some evidence of counterurbanisation was apparent in remote rural localities although many such places continued to lose population. Inner-city decline had commenced in Dublin, the capital city, and in a number of large towns although this was more than compensated for by suburban growth. Population retention and in-migration associated with a policy of regional industrial development contributed to high rates of growth at an aggregate level. Outmigration overseas was reduced and net inmigration of returning emigrants and non-nationals took place for the first time during the twentieth century.

The effects of international recession from the mid-1970s on were particularly severe because of dependence on overseas investment and on export markets. The closure of old-established uncompetitive enterprises coupled with the large numbers of young people entering the workforce found expression in increased levels of unemployment and renewed net migration overseas by the late 1970s. This trend continued into the first half of the 1980s and accelerated during the second half of the decade when it was represented in every county of the state. Losses through internal migration took place also associated with educational-related movement within the state.

Overall, the most important factor influencing population growth at a county and RD level during the 1980s was the presence of a county borough or other large town where the structure of the population ensured continued growth through natural increase even during a period of considerable outmigration. Many smaller towns lost population during the first half of the decade and probably during the second half also, when losses were widespread throughout the state. Inner city decline took place in the three largest County Boroughs, Dublin, Cork and Limerick during both census periods, most notably in Dublin and Limerick. These losses were more than outweighed by growth in the adjoining areas. Galway and Waterford, the two smaller CBs, experienced both inner-city and suburban growth throughout the decade but at lower levels during the second half.

At an aggregate level, the reduced growth and incipient decline in population recorded in the Republic of Ireland during the 1980s approach trends represented more widely throughout Western Europe. The underlying contributory factors differ, however. With the exception of County Leitrim, low population growth during the first half of the 1980s and decline during the second half resulted from outmigration rather than natural decrease: birth rates, although declining, remain higher than in most other Western European countries. Counterurbanisation was also weakly represented in the Republic of Ireland during the 1980s. Some rural localities gained population through the return of emigrants and counterculture migration but, although culturally significant at a local level, the numbers of migrants involved were relatively low and their impact on the redistribution of population within the state was minimal. With the exception of individual towns which, because of specific local employment conditions were able to retain population, the largest gains were made by the major county boroughs whose traditional administrative and other service functions are being supplemented by more modern technologically-based services. This latter phenomenon reflects a trend that is emerging in other European countries. In a recent review of patterns of population change within Western and Northern Europe, Illeris (1990) demonstrates that the greatest gains are once again being made by the larger centres of population in Britain, the Nordic countries and The Netherlands.

REFERENCES


