

*Council for Research and Development*

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**The Structure of Demographic Change in  
Ireland, 1995 to 2005**

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## Introduction

Demographic change consists of many factors, both internal and external to a country's territory. Internal factors of demographic change include natural increase and inter-regional migration. Within the population itself, changes can include larger numbers of older people or younger people, different occupational groups and varying numbers of ethnic and religious-based groups. Many of these factors are present in Ireland's recent demographic changes.

External factors of demographic change include the numbers of people entering and leaving the country, the reasons for which are largely out of its control given the nature of world trade and migratory patterns established elsewhere. The number of people wishing to enter a country's territory is determined by many more external factors than internal. Migration has been a defining feature of Ireland's demographic history.

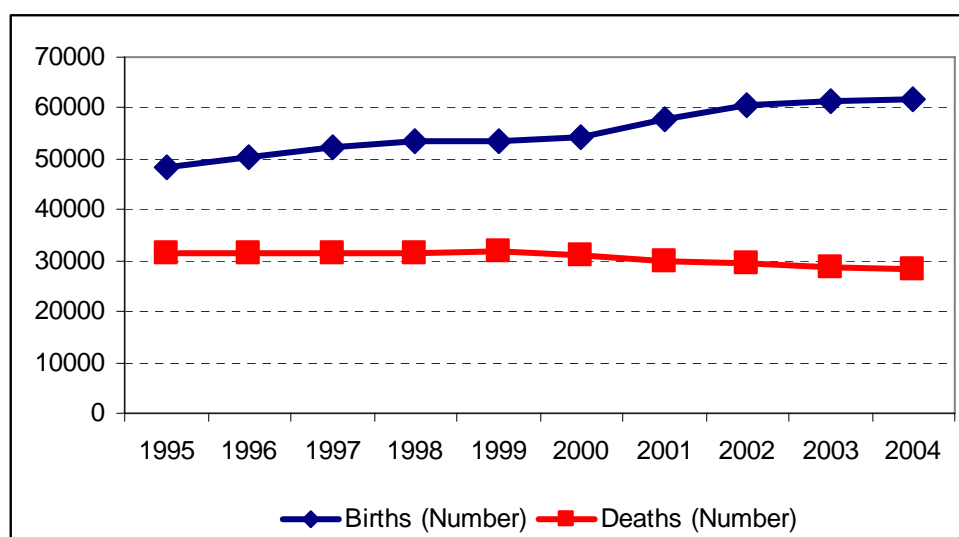
This report examines some of these defining features of the Republic of Ireland's demographic change in the period 1995 to 2005. Both inter-regional as well net migrations are studied as are the trends in the population's natural increase. As an example, population change in South Tipperary is outlined to detail rural to urban migration patterns across the same time period. Emphasis is placed on Ireland's ethnic minorities, in so far as these can yet be detailed. Some notable trends in Northern Ireland's population are also examined.

## Natural increase in Ireland's population 1995 – 2005

Ireland's demographic history has been historically characterised in a range of literature as aberrant in a European context. This has largely been due to high levels of fertility amongst its female population and steady if unspectacular population growth. A surplus in births over deaths means that a country's population increases naturally and is one of the factors in demographic change: the larger the difference between the two, the greater the increase in population in a country. During the inter-Censal period 1996 to 2002, the Republic's population increased by 8%. The population was 3,917,203 in 2002 and increased to an estimated 4,130,700 by 2005. In Northern Ireland, the population increased by 7% to 1,685,267 people in the period 1991 to 2001. Ireland's 2002 population stands at approximately 5.6million people.

In Figure 1 below, it can be seen how the numbers of births in the Republic of Ireland has been increasing steadily since 1995 and most particularly since 2000. At the same time the number of deaths has been decreasing since 2001.

**Figure 1 - number of births and number of deaths in the Republic of Ireland, 1995 to 2004.**  
Source: CSO.



Natural increase (births minus deaths) for the period then follows a distinct trend: increasing numbers of births and decreasing numbers of deaths. Table 1 below shows the trend in natural increase for the Republic over the period.

**Table 1- natural increase in the Republic of Ireland's population , 1995 to 2004.** Source: CSO.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Natural increase (births minus deaths)</b>	17,036	18,876	20,706	22,199	21,671	23,124	28,070	31,173	32,694	33,533

The average annual natural increase is 24,908 people. It is clear that the Republic of Ireland's rate of natural increase is contributing to a natural increase in population over the period being examined. Given the large increases since the last Census,

numbers of births over deaths cannot be the only factor in population increase. The other component of change is migration into and out of the country. These external factors are examined in more detail later in this paper.

Natural increase in Northern Ireland's population is measured by the UK Census, carried out every 10 years. As can be seen from Table 2 below, the average annual natural increases in population are lower than in the Republic over approximately the same period – 8,696. The Republic's average annual natural increase as a percentage of 2001/02 population is higher than Northern Ireland's: 0.64 against 0.52. Average natural increase rates are higher in the Republic.

**Table 2 - summary of natural population increases and emigration for Northern Ireland, 1991 to 2001. Source: NISRA.**

<b>Population 2001</b>	1,685,267
	<b>1991-2001</b>
<b>Births registered</b>	238,372
<b>Deaths registered</b>	151,410
<b>Natural increase (births minus deaths)</b>	86,962
<b>Average annual natural increase</b>	8,696
<b>Change in population</b>	107,431
<b>Net movement outwards</b>	-20,469

### ***Inter-regional trends in population change 1996 – 2002***

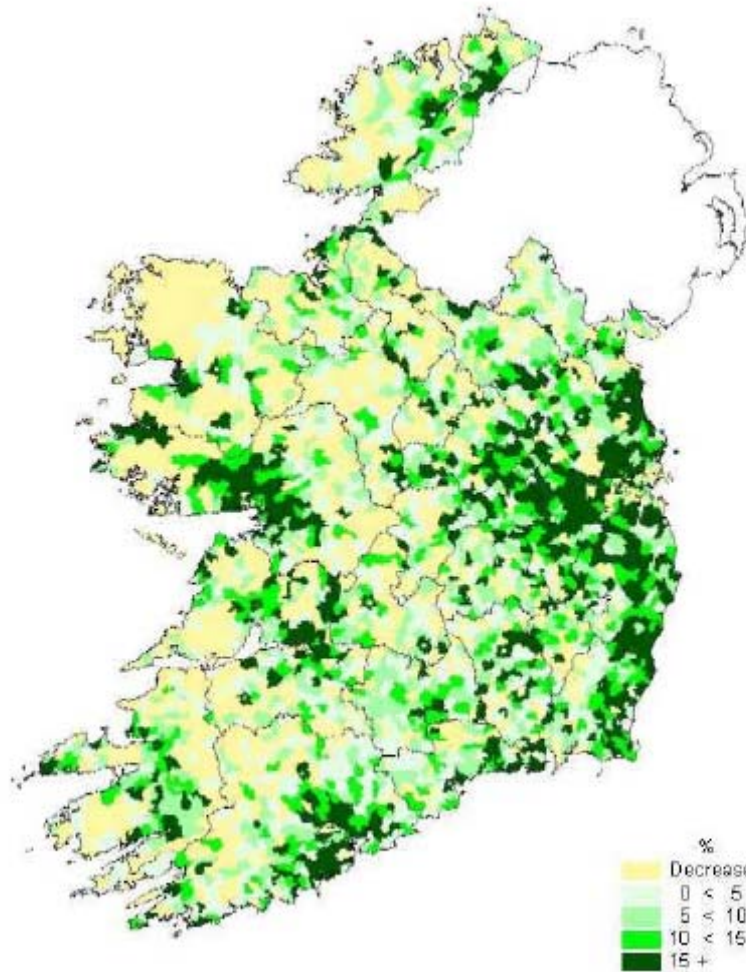
It is widely acknowledged that as a country's economy develops (modernises), population moves within that country from largely rural locations to urban and suburban areas. While we have seen that the Republic of Ireland's population has increased dramatically since the mid-1990s (perhaps by as much as 17%), the location of this population has also changed substantially. Every county and city but one (Cork city) has experienced an increase in its population since 1996. However, among the top ten population increasing counties and cities, eight are in and around the Dublin region; the remaining two are Cork county and Galway city. Average population increases in these ten is almost double the Republic's average - 14.5%. Table 3 below shows the patterns in population increases for these top ten counties and cities in the period 1996 to 2002.

**Table 3 - the Republic of Ireland's top ten county and city areas by highest percentage changes in population, 1996 to 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>Persons 2002</b>	<b>Percentage Change 1996 - 2002</b>
<b>Meath</b>	134,005	22.1
<b>Kildare</b>	163,944	21.4
<b>Fingal</b>	196,413	17.1
<b>Galway City</b>	65,832	15
<b>Westmeath</b>	71,858	13.5
<b>Wexford</b>	116,596	11.7
<b>Wicklow</b>	114,676	11.7
<b>Laois</b>	58,774	11
<b>Cork County</b>	324,767	10.7
<b>Carlow</b>	46,014	10.6

The next ten counties and cities are also within range of major urban areas and have an average population growth in excess of 8%. It is clear from the map provided below that rates of population change in the Republic's areas are greatest in the hinterlands of the cities, the major peri-urban conurbation of Dublin and the east coast. In the map that follows the darker the colour, the higher the percentage increase in the population change from 1996 to 2002. It can be expected that the upcoming Census in April (whose initial results will be available in July) will show an accelerated concentration of population in the east coast and the urban areas on the south and west coasts.

**Map 1 - Percentage change in population in the Republic of Ireland by electoral division, 1996 to 2002. Source: CSO.**



Increases in the areas around other regional towns will also be evident. Towns such as Tralee, Ennis and Carlow will see high percentage increases of population from the next Census. Interestingly, Dublin city had increases of just short of 3% for the inter-Censal period and Cork city has shown a population *decrease* of over 3% for the same timeframe. It is evident that a flight to a suburban and peri-urban hinterland is taking place.

## **Population change in South Tipperary 1996 - 2002**

To examine this trend toward the towns and cities in more detail, the data for the South Tipperary County Council area are examined. For Census purposes, South Tipperary has ten major districts and 98 minor districts (electoral divisions or EDs), which do not correspond directly to Catholic parishes. These 10 major districts are examined in more detail in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 - South Tipperary's major districts by population and the percentage of change in population, 1996 - 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>Persons 2002</b>	<b>Percentage Change in population 1996-2002</b>
<b>Clonmel Borough</b>	15,739	3.4
<b>Cashel rural area</b>	14,647	5.6
<b>Tipperary No. 1 rural area</b>	12,287	4.1
<b>Clogheen rural area</b>	11,277	7.7
<b>Slievardagh rural area</b>	5,562	-0.9
<b>Carrick-on-Suir Town</b>	5,542	7.2
<b>Clonmel No. 1 rural area</b>	5,334	12.0
<b>Tipperary Town</b>	4,546	-2.0
<b>Cashel Town</b>	2,403	2.4
<b>Carrick-on-Suir No. 1 rural area</b>	1,784	9.6

As can be seen, percentage change in these areas is generally above national (8%) and county (4.8%) averages but are not the areas with the highest percentage changes in South Tipperary. Table 5 below shows the ten highest increases in population in the county.

**Table 5 - South Tipperary's minor districts (EDs) by percentage change in population 1996 - 2002 and number of persons, 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>Persons 2002</b>	<b>Percentage Change in population 1996- 2002</b>
<b>Ballyclerahan</b>	655	81.4
<b>Mortlestown</b>	870	69.6
<b>Colman</b>	362	26.6
<b>Carrickbeg Urban</b>	1,229	22.4
<b>Lisonagh</b>	580	22.1
<b>Ballysheehan</b>	448	21.1
<b>Carrick-on-Suir Rural</b>	485	20.3
<b>Clonmel East Urban</b>	4,121	17.2
<b>Clonmel Rural (part)</b>	3,108	16.5

While many of these areas are starting from a low base in 1996, the percentage increases are at least double the national average and sometimes almost ten times, in the case of Ballyclerahan. Population growth rates are also high around the Carrick and Clonmel areas, as is evident from both tables 4 and 5. Table 6 below shows the ten most populous areas in South Tipperary and their population growth rates for the period 1996 to 2002. While the most populous areas are not coterminous with areas of



high population growth, the areas around Clonmel and Clogheen have seen high rates of inter-Censal population growth.

**Table 6 - South Tipperary's most populous districts 2002 by number of persons and percentage change in population, 1996 - 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>Persons 2002</b>	<b>Percentage Change in population 1996- 2002</b>
<b>Clonmel Borough</b>	15,739	3.4
<b>Cashel rural area</b>	14,647	5.6
<b>Tipperary No. 1 rural area</b>	12,287	4.1
<b>Clogheen rural area</b>	11,277	7.7
<b>Clonmel West Urban</b>	6,530	-10.9
<b>Slievardagh rural area</b>	5,562	-0.9
<b>Carrick-on-Suir Town</b>	5,542	7.2
<b>Clonmel No. 1 rural area</b>	5,334	12.0
<b>Tipperary Town</b>	4,546	-2.0

Examining the natural increases in South Tipperary's population during the period 1996 to 2002, we can see that its percentage increases are far above the national increases for births. There was a 23.3% increase in the number of births inter-Censally. The natural increase recorded during this period was almost 60%.

**Table 7 - South Tipperary's births, deaths & natural increase 1991 to 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>1996</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>Percentage increase</b>
<b>Number of Births since last Census (Number)</b>	4,879	6,016	23.3
<b>Number of Deaths since last Census (Number)</b>	3,779	4,263	12.8
<b>Natural Increase since last Census (Number)</b>	1,100	1,753	59.4

It is clear that there is both a high rate of natural increase in and a move toward the urban areas of South Tipperary over the period under examination.

## Migration into and out of Ireland 1995 – 2005

One of the defining features of Ireland's demographic change in the last decade has been the large increases in all forms of human migration. While emigration has not completely disappeared the reasons for mass emigration have changed. At the same time, several significant 'pull' factors have made Ireland a desirable destination for people from almost 170 countries worldwide. The reasons for these social, cultural and economic phenomena have been catalogued in detail elsewhere. What are examined here are the broad trends for the Republic as a whole. Some note is also taken of migratory trends for Northern Ireland.

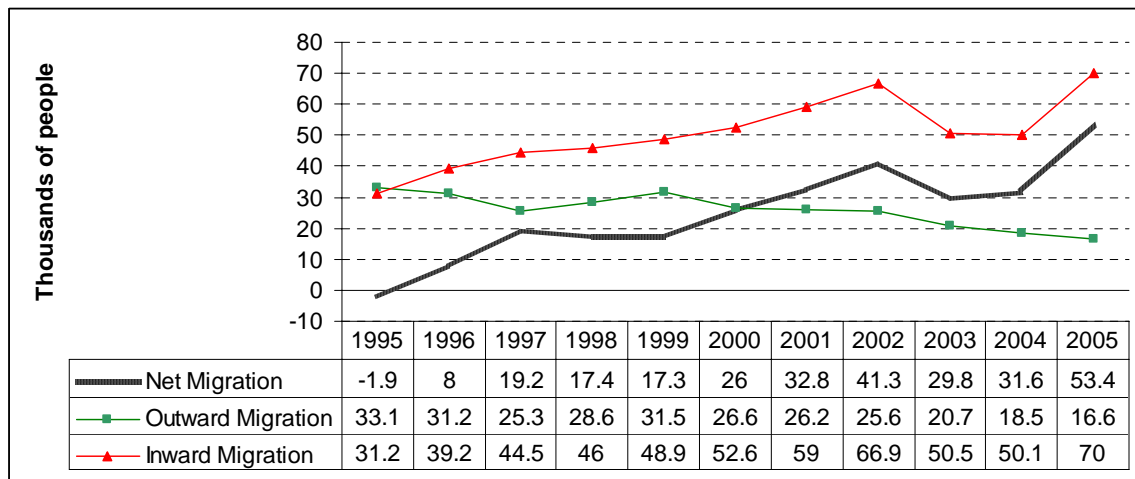
The table below shows the some general data on migration over three Censuses. This gives a sense of how fundamental the change in the numbers of migrants arriving in Ireland has been over a 15 year period. Between 1991 and 1996, net migration (those immigrating minus those emigrating) stood at 8,302 people over the period. In the subsequent 5 to 6 year period until 2002, 153,881 more people came to the country than left it. This is an increase of over 1,700% over the 15 years. It is clear that the pace of increases in net migration quickened considerably in the inter-Censal period 1996 to 2002. The average annual rate of net migration has increased over 13 times during the period from 1996 to 2002.

**Table 8 - Net migration to the Republic of Ireland and average annual rate of net migration, 1991 to 2002. Source: CSO.**

	1996	2002
<b>Net Migration since last Census (Number)</b>	8,302	153,881
<b>Average Annual Rate of Net Migration since last Census (Avg Annual Rate per 1000)</b>	0.5	6.8

Looking at the data for the second half of the 1990s in more detail, it is very clear that in-migration has contributed far more to population change than has natural increase. Figure 2 below demonstrates the detailed annual migration data for the period under examination – figures are in thousands of people.

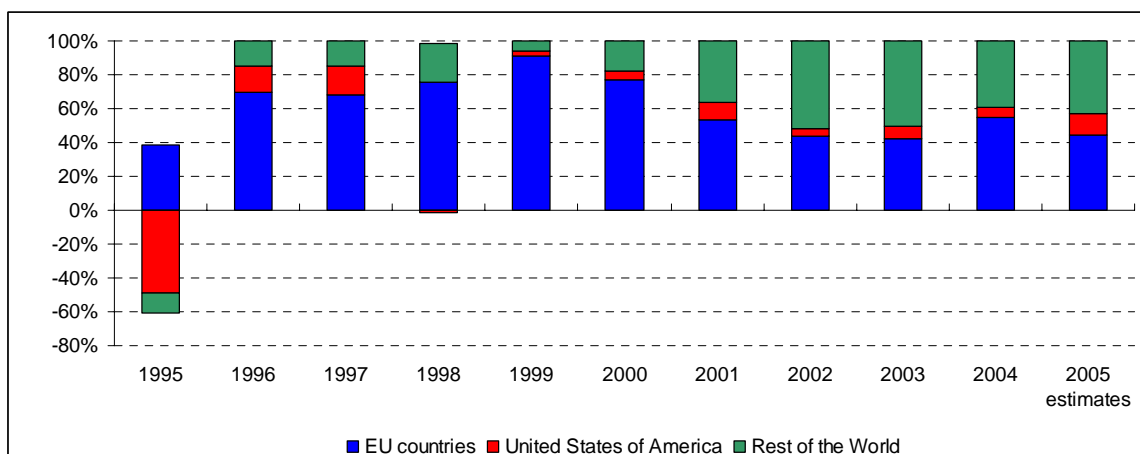
**Figure 2 - numbers of people in inward and outward migration in the Republic of Ireland, 1995 to 2005. Source: CSO.**



As the black shaded line demonstrates, net migration has been increasing steadily since the mid-1990s. This has been due to both a decline in the numbers leaving the country and many more numbers entering, in increasingly larger numbers. The year to 1996 in particular was crucial as the numbers migrating outward has never surpassed those migrating inward since. It is clear that the significant ‘pull’ factors of a wealth-generating economy are at play from this time. Migration inward reached a peak in 2002 where almost 67,000 people came into the Republic of Ireland. Recent evidence from AIB Bank and the Economic and Social Research Institute supports this trend in inward migration, albeit with emphasis on the 2004 EU accession countries.

The origin of these migrants is not known in great detail but figure 3 below gives a general idea where these numbers came from. It is clear, despite anecdotal and journalistic efforts that the majority of those who have come to Ireland in the last decade are from wealthier European countries and the US.

**Figure 3 - origin of immigrants into the Republic of Ireland, 1995 to 2005 (est.). Source: CSO.**



Between 1996 (when net immigration commenced) and 2000, the vast majority of people immigrating to the Republic were from EU countries (between 60 and 90%). The United States accounted for a consistent 2-4% of the total across the period. It is

only from 2001, when the numbers migrating inward were slowing anyway, that the rest of the world (including China, India and South Africa, for example) accounts for anything above 10% of the total.

While ethnicity was not collected in the 2002 Census (it will be in this April's Census), the religious affiliation of the country's population can provide an ambiguous proxy for ethnicity. As Table 9 below shows, the religious composition of the population in the Republic in 2002 was overwhelmingly Christian (98.5%) and more particularly Catholic (88.4%). Merely half of one percent was affiliated to Islam, a further 0.3% to the Orthodox churches.

**Table 9 - Religious affiliation of the population resident in Ireland, 2002. Source: CSO.**

<b>Roman Catholic</b>	<b>Church of Ireland (incl. Protestant)</b>	<b>Other Christian religion</b>	<b>Presbyterian</b>	<b>Muslim (Islamic)</b>	<b>Orthodox</b>	<b>Methodist</b>	<b>Other stated religions</b>
88.4	3.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.3	1.0

Note: the remaining 5.5% are of no religion and not stated

To get a sense of the areas of the country with the larger numbers of ethnic minorities, Table 10 below shows the counties and cities where the percentage of Muslim residents reside. It is evident that the vast majority of Muslims (as an ambiguous proxy for ethnic minority) are living in the areas in around the country's major urban and suburban areas.

**Table 10 - Top ten counties and cities in the Republic of Ireland for percentage of population affiliated to the Muslim faith, 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>Muslim (Islamic)</b>	<b>Percentage of the population</b>
Fingal	2231	1.1
South Dublin	2386	1.0
Galway City	642	1.0
Dublin City	4265	0.9
Waterford City	322	0.7
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	1250	0.7
Louth	577	0.6
Sligo	277	0.5
Cork City	545	0.4
Kerry	554	0.4

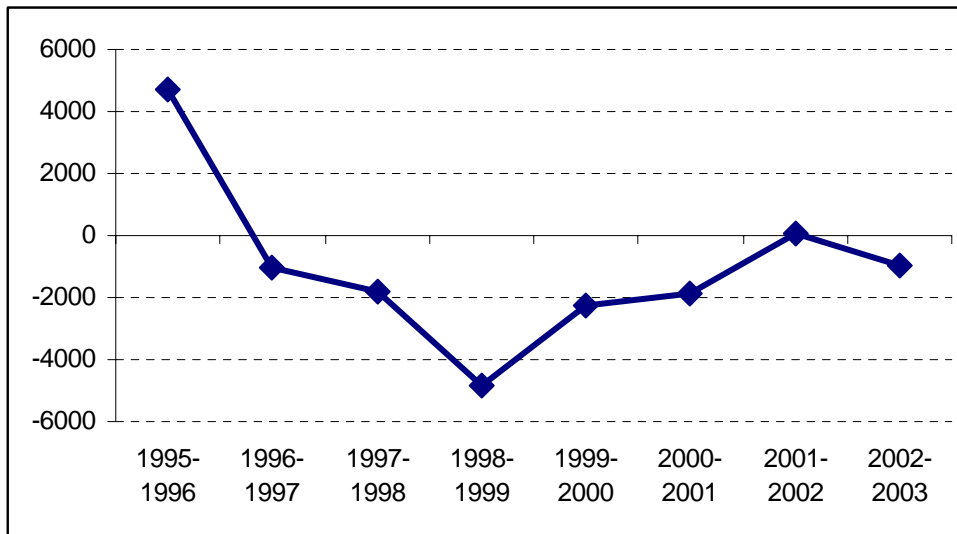
From mid-2006 we ought to know where Ireland’s ethnic minorities live in greatest numbers. From Table 11 below we can see that while the numbers affiliated to the Catholic Church in the State as a whole has declined since the early 1990s, the decrease is slower in some parts of the country, in particular in the example here of Tipperary.

**Table 11 - Percentage of the populations of the State and Tipperary affiliated to the Catholic faith, 2002. Source: CSO.**

	<b>Catholic</b>	
<b>State</b>	1991	91.6
	2002	88.4
<b>Tipperary</b>	1991	94.6
	2002	92.5

Finally, migration in Northern Ireland over the period of 1995 to 2003 is examined. It can be seen below that Northern Ireland has experienced net emigration every year since 1995 which would indicate that more people are migrating outward than inward. There are more people leaving Northern Ireland than are arriving, hence the decline in net migration over the period. It is unclear from the data the destination of those who are emigrating. It might be speculated that the success of the Republic’s economy during this time frame may be a significant ‘push’ factor from NI.

Figure 4 - net migration in Northern Ireland, 1995 to 2003. Source: NISRA



## Conclusion

In summary therefore, the recent surge in the population of the Republic of Ireland can be explained by two key factors, with one more dominant than the other. Natural increase (the number of births minus deaths) accounts for a smaller and smaller percentage of total population growth. This is not because there are fewer babies being born. As the data compiled has shown, Ireland's death rates are declining steadily in line with trends noted elsewhere in western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, the birth rate is continuing to grow, particularly after 2000. The net natural increase is contributing to the Republic's growing population. Although the Irish population as a whole is getting older there is little to suggest that the number of births will decline dramatically in the next ten or fifteen years.

Since the mid-1990s, in excess of 270,000 people have come to live in Ireland, as we have seen, mostly from the other countries of the EU and the United States. While the evidence is as yet scant, the ethnic composition of the population resident in Ireland remains largely of European origin. It is as yet unclear where Ireland's ethnic minority populations live but speculation that a process of 'ghettoisation' has or is occurring would appear to be ill-founded. Recent data have suggested that as much as 9% of the *labour force* is non-Irish nationals (not to be confused with Irish ethnic minorities). We might assume for present purposes that the percentage of the population of non-Irish nationals is slightly higher than this again: perhaps as high as 12%. The Republic's population will probably exceed 4,100,000 people following the next Census, the highest it has been since the mid-1860s. There may be almost 400,000 non-Irish nationals and members of ethnic minority groups living in the Republic arising from the next Census.

Irish population growth is therefore characterised mostly by migration inward rather than natural increase and, as we have seen, concentrated in the suburban and peri-urban areas of the country. A continuing inter-regional trend of migration toward the east coast and eastern midlands will be evident following the next Census.