

RELATION BETWEEN LACK OF EDUCATION, UNEMPLOYMENT AND AGE
AMONGST MALES

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There are too many in unskilled occupations in Ireland. The object of the present chapter is to show that this is so, to try to discover the reasons for it and to make suggestions for its mitigation. This formulation will naturally lead us to some study of education and training.

In the three unskilled occupations of Table 1 there were 127,500 persons of whom 30,900 were out of work on Census date 18 April 1971, i.e. nearly a quarter. The 1971 Census was the last taken but suits our purpose well enough as representing the situation for a more or less normal modern date, i.e. well before the recent recession.

[Table 1]

Table 1 shows the enormous contrast as regards unemployment between the three unskilled occupations (nearly all males) and the rest of the labour-force, 24.3 compared with 3.4 per cent unemployed. Were it not for the male unskilled, Ireland could scarcely be said to have an unemployment problem at all, recalling that most experts think that, in Ireland's circumstances, 4 per cent unemployment might be regarded as "full employment". For gainfully occupied females alone the rate was 3.3 per cent.

By definition, unemployment is a condition that can happen only to employees, so it is natural to confine analysis to the employee class. Table 1 shows that the percentage of the "remainder" unemployed was 5.0 per cent, higher of course than the labour force 3.4 per cent but still in striking contrast with the 24.4 per cent for the unskilled. Of course the

Table 1. Number of persons gainfully occupied, employees and number out of work, 1971; three unskilled occupations, remainder gainfully occupied and total; totals for females; percentages

No. Occupation	Number (000)			No. out of work % of	
	Total	Employ-ees	Out of work	Total	Employees
204 Agricultural labourers	35.6	35.6	10.2	28.7	28.7
272 Labourers and unskilled workers (n.e.s.)	88.8	88.1	20.0	22.5	22.7
281 Dock labourers	3.1	3.1	0.7	22.6	22.6
Remainder gainfully occupied	992.0	674.9	33.8	3.4	5.0
Total gainfully occupied persons	1,119.5	801.7	64.7	5.8	8.1
Females, total	287.9	247.8	9.5	3.3	3.8

Source: Census of Population 1971, Vol. IV - Occupations, Table 11.

Note

The three occupations specified are those which at the Census are described as consisting exclusively of labourers or unskilled.

"remainder" employees contains many "unskilled" not so described at the Census. If the total could be purged of these we suspect that the rate of 5.0 per cent would be reduced: we shall try to attend to this aspect. It is well known that the skilled manual trades in Ireland experienced little unemployment in the past. They sedulously kept their numbers low, one device being long apprenticeships, confined sometimes to members of their own families. Pre-Famine when the vast majority of Irish workers were unskilled the wages of craftsmen were higher in Dublin than in London.

Obviously there are too many unskilled in Ireland, with effects of low wages and high unemployment. Wages cited always relate to people at work. With an average unemployment rate of one-quarter, a nominal wage of, say, £40 a week would amount in reality to only £30 a week on an annual an annual basis apart from unemployment pay.

In 1971 the number of employees (including unemployed) in the three unskilled jobs of Table 1 was 127,000. To reduce the labour force so that the unemployment rate amongst these would be 5 per cent, the unemployed should number only 5,000, leaving some 25,000 to be endowed with skills. This is a measure of the problem, as regards the three specific occupations of Table 1.

The question arises, would the 25,000, when trained, find work? We think they would. They would number only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the Irish work force and the process of absorption would be gradual. To the small extent required, employers would hire readymade skills, and so increase production when otherwise they would not hire people they would have to train. Emigration is also a possibility. A large part of the tragedy of emigration in the past was that it was predominantly of the unskilled. Under presentday condition "emigration", with its tragic associations for

Ireland, is a misnomer and should be dropped. Anyway, we consider that for all workpeople, work anywhere is better than chronic idleness at home.

If an unskilled occupation be one in which the worker with only a primary education can achieve on average full competence in a very short time (week, month?) then it is obvious that, as already remarked, the 675,000 employees in the "remainder" must contain several thousand unskilled (clerks numbered 84,000 and shop assistants 50,000. It is surmised that the male unskilled (as defined on a time-to-train basis) gainfully occupied employees could have numbered 200,000 out of a total of 554,000, or over one-third. This seems too many.

There have been changes in the classification of the unskilled in the last three Censuses but as far as we can judge, group no. 272 for 1971 in Table 1 corresponds to what Geary and Hughes* termed Depressed Occupations (DO) for 1961 and 1966. The reader is reminded that between 1961 and 1971 something like an industrial revolution took place in Ireland.

[Table 2]

Table 2 brings the Geary-Hughes Table 8 analysis to the latest census year, 1971. The persistence of the close to 90,000 in the three DOs will be noted, as well as the unemployment rate, exceeding 20 per cent. We may add that 88 per cent amongst DO males in 1966 finished their education at the primary level, compared with 46 per cent amongst non-agricultural males generally.

Amongst the large group of male unskilled that we term depressed occupations there was therefore a high unemployment rate and a high proportion who finished their formal education at primary level. Does this mean that

* R. C. Geary and J. G. Hughes: "Certain Aspects of Non-Agricultural Unemployment in Ireland, ESRI Paper No. 52, 1970.

Table 2. Number of persons gainfully occupied in depressed occupations and other non-agricultural occupations, with number and percentage unemployed, 1961, 1966 and 1971

	Gainfully occupied (GO)			Unemployed (U)			U per cent of GO		
	1961	1966	1971	1961	1966	1971	1961	1966	1971
Total DOs	89.7	90.3	88.8	21.0	18.9	20.0	23.4	21.0	22.5
Other employees	518.8	602.9	661.7	23.1	23.0	32.8	4.5	3.8	5.0
Total employees	608.6	693.2	750.5	44.1	41.9	52.8	7.3	6.0	7.0

Basic sources: CP 1961, Vol. III; CP 1966, Vol. IV; CP 1971, Vol IV

Note

In 1966 depressed occupations consisted of the following three groups: (i) builders', bricklayers', plasterers', masons' labourers (ii) contractors' labourers, road labourers and navvies (iii) labourers and unskilled workers, (n.e.s.). In 1971 depressed occupations were taken as the content of the single Code No. 272 "Labourers and unskilled workers (n.e.s.)".

there is a significant relationship between level of education and unemployment.

To investigate, a table was prepared showing for each specific occupation in 1966, males only, (i) percentage who finished formal education at primary (X_1) (ii) percentage unemployed (X_2) and (iii) percentage under 30 years of age (X_3); (iii) was added because of the marked relation on average between age and level of education. There are 176 occupations, omitting agricultural occupations and a few others which, of their nature were non-employee.

Regression of X_2 on ($X_1 X_3$) was as follows:-

$$X_{2c} = 0.0710 + 0.0824 X_1 + 0.0002 X_3 \quad R^2 = .3490$$

(0.11) (9.49) (0.02)

t - values in brackets. The correlation coefficients are

	Significance
r (12) = .5908	$P \ll .001$
r (23) = .1010	$P > .1$
r (31) = .1694	$.05 < P < .1$

There is a strong relationship between unemployment and level of education, a weak relation, if any, between education and occupation age and no perceptible relation between unemployment and occupation age. Nor need we concern ourselves with r (31), except to remark that the positive sign is perverse: there must have been something in the nature of the occupations to counteract the negative defect expected from age alone.

The interestingly large value of r (12) is not trivial, though DOs were included in the computation. Despite the fact that DOs probably contain the majority of unskilled males (with high percentages primary and unemployed), in calculation r (12) was unweighted, so that the pairs of values for the DOs were accorded exactly the same importance as the other pairs in the large total of 176.

The answer to the question propounded above is emphatic. There is a strong relationship between percentage of males who finished their formal education at primary level and percentage unemployed, occupations being the units of inquiry. One way to reduce the unemployment rate is to improve the training and education of people generally.

As possibly having some interest we conclude this section by arraying leading individual occupations in descending order of magnitude of the three variables

X₁: Leading occupations in classification in descending order of percentage who finished their education at primary level, number GO and percentage, males, 1966

1966			
Code No. of occ.		No. G. O. in occ. (000) %	
102	Dock labourers	4.0	91
115	Drivers of horse-drawn goods vehicles	0.4	90
014	Coal miners	1.0	90
016	Turf workers	3.2	89
148	Office cleaners	0.7	89
092	Builders' etc labourers	18.3	88
099,100	Labourers and unskilled workers (n.es)	71.5	88
120	Messengers	3.2	83
114	Lorry drivers' helpers	4.2	83
095	Boiler firemen and stockers	1.5	82
021	Smiths and forgemen	1.5	82
096	Crane and hoist operators	0.6	81
097	Operators of earth moving etc machinery	2.5	81
049	Boot, shoe repairers, makers (not factory)	1.5	81
023	"Others" in metal manufacture	1.1	80
015	"Other" mine and quarry workers	0.6	80

X₂: Leading occupations in classification in descending order of percentage unemployed, number GO and percentage, males, 1966

1966 Code No. of occ.		No. G.O. in % occ. (000)	
099,100	Labourers and unskilled workers (n.e.s.)	71.5	21.9
092	Builders' etc labourers	18.3	18.1
014	Coal miners	1.0	18.0
102	Dock Labourers	4.0	16.4
049	Boot shoe repairers, makers (not factory)	1.5	14.8
016	Turf workers	3.2	14.3
104	Sailors, dock, engine room ratings	1.9	12.5
158	Bookmakers and clerks	0.6	10.9
087	Bricklayers	1.8	10.8
094	"Other" painters, decorators	6.8	10.4
146	Kitchen hands	0.5	10.2
088	Masons, stonecutters	1.8	10.1
073	"Other" makers of food	0.7	10.0
089	Plasterers	3.6	10.0
069	Makers of sugar and chocolate confectionery etc.	1.0	9.9
180	Actors etc.	1.1	9.8
021	Smiths, forgemen	1.5	9.6
033	Plumbers, gasfitters	3.5	9.6

X_3 : Leading occupations in classification in descending order of percentage aged under 30 years, number GO and percentage, males, 1966

1966 Code no. of occ.		No. G.O. in occ. (000)	%
170	Probationer nurse	0.1	100
028	Assemblers (electrical, radio, television)	0.7	75
062	Sewers, embroiders and machinists	0.3	73
043	Goldsmiths, silversmiths, jewellery makers	0.5	71
114	Lorry drivers' helpers	4.2	69
018	Glass formers, finishers, decorators	0.9	68
120	Messengers	3.2	68
145	Cooks	1.7	68
187	Draughtsmen	1.2	67
144	Walters	1.7	66
083	Workers in plastics	0.5	65
056	Weavers	1.6	65
146	Kitchen hands	0.5	63
063	Knife and machine cutters	0.7	61
150	Laundryworkers, dry cleaners etc.	1.2	61
054	Spinners, doublers, winders, reelers	0.9	61
040	"Other" fitters and mechanics	2.7	61
132	Barmen	5.2	60
065	Sack and canvas goods makers	0.1	60
060	"Other" textile workers	1.5	60
188	Technical and related workers (n. e. s.)	2.8	60
131	Shop assistants	19.1	60

The high X_1 (primary education) list consists mainly of occupations easily learned i. e. unskilled by the foregoing definition but some, one would think are skilled, e.g. 021, 096, 097, 049, or perhaps we have to be reminded that book learning is not necessary for the attainment of some skills. Of course, occupations, identically described, may conceal a mixture of skills. One notes the several building occupations in the high X_2 (unemployment) list

and is also reminded that the figures relate only to 1966 Census data, though the large percentage for occupation 092 never changes very much. The high X_3 (under 30) lists contains only one large occupation 131 - shop assistants. Several of the heads are, of their nature, "young": i.e. one would expect many of their members to move up in the occupational hierarchy as they grew older. One does not discern much skill in the list. Still, three or four heads hint at newer occupations, i.e. those that in future may employ more people.

We have lists the 176 occupations finally ordered by magnitude for all three classifications and will be glad to send photos to inquirers for £1 a copy.

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