

## Patients in Irish Psychiatric Hospitals in 1963— A Comparison with England and Wales

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### INTRODUCTION

The Department of Health carried out a complete census of the resident patient population of local authority and private psychiatric hospitals in the Republic of Ireland on 31 March, 1963. This paper analyses the Irish census returns and compares them with those of the similar psychiatric hospital census carried out in England and Wales on 31 December, 1963 (Brooke, 1967).

### THE DATA

There were 19,801 patients in Irish psychiatric hospitals on 31 March, 1963; 54.3 per cent of these were male and 45.7 per cent female, compared with 42.8 per cent male and 57.2 per cent female in the England and Wales psychiatric hospital population. Of the Irish patients 94.8 per cent were in local authority hospitals and the remaining 5.2 per cent were in private hospitals.

The residence or hospitalization rate per 100,000 of total population for Ireland was 747 for males and 657 for females, or 703 for both sexes. The residence figures for England and Wales (E. and W.) were for males 255 and for females 316, and for both sexes combined 286. Thus the Irish male rates were approximately three times and the female rates approximately twice, the E. and W. rates.

### DIAGNOSIS

The diagnostic categorization of resident patients is set out in Table I. The diagnostic classification used in the census was based on a modification of Part V of the International Classification of Diseases (seventh revision) comprising fifteen diagnostic categories. These

TABLE I  
*Ireland (all Hospitals) and England and Wales. Patients in residence 1963*  
Comparative proportions for four broad diagnostic groups

| Diagnosis               | Ireland |              | England and Wales |              |
|-------------------------|---------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
|                         | Numbers | Per-centages | Numbers           | Per-centages |
| Psychosis ..            | 15,768  | 79.7         | 113,220           | 85.2         |
| Neurosis ..             | 968     | 4.8          | 4,458             | 3.4          |
| Personality disorder .. | 306     | 1.6          | 3,383             | 2.6          |
| Mental deficiency ..    | 2,732   | 13.8         | 6,683             | 5.0          |
| Other conditions ..     | 27      | 0.1          | 5,096             | 3.8          |
| No disability ..        | —       | —            | 55                | 0.0          |
| Totals ..               | 19,801  | 100.0        | 132,895           | 100.0        |

categories have been reduced to six main groups by the author, as described in an earlier publication (Walsh, 1969). Similar conditions were in some instances given different diagnostic labels in Ireland and in E. and W.; thus mental deficiency (Ireland) and disorders of intelligence (E. and W.) are identical, as are personality disorder (Ireland) and disorder of character and behaviour (E. and W.). Wherever such a difference in diagnostic categorization arises, the Irish terms have been used exclusively.

Of Irish male patients 20.8 per cent were aged 65 and over, as against 26.8 per cent in E. and W.; for females the figures were 29.4 per cent and 47.9 per cent. A comparison with Denmark in 1962 (Juel-Nielsen and Strömngren, 1963) shows that 33 per cent of Denmark's male and 41 per cent of its female resident psychiatric hospital population was

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TABLE II  
Ireland and England and Wales, 1963. Age structure of resident population by sex.  
Percentages and rates per 100,000 of population

| Age                     |         | 0-14 | 15-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 75 and over | Not stated | Total |
|-------------------------|---------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|------------|-------|
| Males                   |         |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |             |            |       |
| Percentages             | Ireland | 0.8  | 5.0   | 12.7  | 18.9  | 20.8  | 21.0  | 14.0  | 6.8         | 0.2        | 100.0 |
|                         | E. & W. | 0.4  | 3.5   | 7.9   | 17.3  | 20.7  | 23.4  | 16.7  | 10.1        | —          | 100.0 |
| Rate/100,000 population | Ireland | 18   | 264   | 911   | 1,211 | 1,162 | 1,681 | 1,565 | 1,339       |            |       |
|                         | E. & W. | 0    | 55    | 156   | 317   | 395   | 516   | 655   | 847         |            |       |
| Females                 |         |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |             |            |       |
| Percentages             | Ireland | 0.6  | 3.6   | 8.5   | 15.5  | 20.6  | 21.5  | 17.7  | 11.7        | 0.1        | 100.0 |
|                         | E. & W. | 0.2  | 2.2   | 4.6   | 9.5   | 14.1  | 21.5  | 23.2  | 24.7        | —          | 100.0 |
| Rate/100,000 population | Ireland | 13   | 170   | 520   | 842   | 1,187 | 1,414 | 1,648 | 1,517       |            |       |
|                         | E. & W. | 0    | 49    | 124   | 228   | 341   | 553   | 813   | 1,400       |            |       |

over 65 years of age. Accordingly, it may be claimed that Ireland has not yet achieved a 'European' age-distribution of its resident population because of the high proportion of young patients in Irish hospitals.

For both sexes at all ages, Irish hospitalization rates are substantially greater than those of E. and W. This is illustrated in Table III where the ratios of hospitalization rates for Ireland to those of E. and W. are recorded for each age, sex and diagnostic grouping (omitting 'organic psychosis', data for which were not separately available by age for E. and W.).

Table III shows high ratios in young age-groups, especially in the two diagnostic groups of 'personality disorder and mental deficiency'

and 'schizophrenia', while the ratios for neurosis are high in the older age-groups. It has already been noted that mental deficiency constitutes almost 15 per cent of the Irish hospitalization rate, and that alcoholism, for males, is the major contributor to the high first admission rate for personality disorder, although alcoholism's contribution to the hospitalization rate is small because the alcoholic's length of stay is short (Walsh). The high schizophrenic ratio is a most interesting finding, and complements high Irish schizophrenic first admission ratios relative to those of E. and W. (Walsh and Walsh, 1970). The high ratios of neurotic hospitalization rates in the older age-groups is also noteworthy.

TABLE III  
Ratios of Irish hospitalization rates to those of England and Wales in 1963 by age-group and diagnosis

| Age group                                     | 15-24 |     | 25-34 |      | 35-44 |     | 45-54 |     | 55-64 |     | 65-74 |     | 75 and over |     |
|---|-------|-----|-------|------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------------|-----|
|   | M     | F   | M     | F    | M     | F   | M     | F   | M     | F   | M     | F   | M           | F   |
| <i>Diagnosis</i>                              |       |     |       |      |       |     |       |     |       |     |       |     |             |     |
| Schizophrenia ..                              | 3.9   | 3.9 | 8.9   | 4.7  | 3.7   | 3.7 | 2.8   | 3.5 | 3.3   | 2.5 | 2.8   | 2.1 | 2.3         | 0.8 |
| Neurosis ..                                   | 1.4   | 1.3 | 2.2   | 1.4  | 3.8   | 2.3 | 5.3   | 5.3 | 6.7   | 6.9 | 6.4   | 6.9 | 3.9         | 7.4 |
| Manic depressive psychosis ..                 | 1.3   | 1.2 | 2.5   | 1.6  | 3.7   | 2.4 | 3.7   | 2.9 | 4.0   | 2.6 | 2.9   | 1.9 | 2.1         | 1.3 |
| Personality disorder and mental deficiency .. | 9.4   | 6.9 | 13.1  | 10.9 | 11.9  | 8.2 | 4.8   | 6.7 | 5.0   | 3.4 | 2.4   | 2.8 | 1.6         | 2.5 |
| All diagnoses ..                              | 4.8   | 3.5 | 5.9   | 4.2  | 3.8   | 3.7 | 3.2   | 3.5 | 3.3   | 2.6 | 2.2   | 2.0 | 1.6         | 1.1 |

**THE EFFECT OF IRELAND'S ABNORMAL DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE**

It is necessary to investigate the effect of Ireland's abnormal age and marital status structure on the Irish hospitalization rate. Accordingly, direct age standardization was carried out by applying Irish age-specific rates to the total population of E. and W., and indirect marital status standardization by applying Ireland's crude marital status rates to the E. and W. population aged 15 and over. Lastly, the combined effects of the Irish population's age and marital status distribution were simultaneously removed by indirect standardization on E. and W. rates for the total population aged 15 and over. The results of these standardizations are presented in Table IV.

Considerable reductions on crude rates are evident in all standardizations—the greatest being the age and marital status standardized male rate, which is 55 per cent lower than the crude male rate.

Crude and age-standardized rates for the various marital status categories are presented in Table V. Standardization was indirect and carried out by applying the E. and W. age-specific rates by marital status to the Irish population.

**TABLE IV**  
*Ireland (all hospitals) 1963*  
*Crude and standardized hospitalization rates by sex*

|  | Males | Females |
|--|-------|---------|
| Crude rates per 100,000 total population .. .. .                               | 747   | 657     |
| Age standardized rates per 100,000 total population ..                         | 826   | 757     |
| Crude rates per 100,000 population aged 15 and over ..                         | 1,085 | 940     |
| Marital status standardized rates per 100,000 aged 15 and over .. .. .         | 703   | 692     |
| Age and marital status standardized rates per 100,000 aged 15 and over .. .. . | 477   | 711     |

The very high hospitalization rates of the single in Ireland are now seen to be largely the consequence of the abnormally old age of that group.

It has been shown (Walsh and Walsh, 1970) that Ireland's abnormal demographic structure is as germane to the problem of the high first admission rates to Irish psychiatric hospitals as it is to that of the high Irish hospitalization rates discussed in this paper.

**TABLE V**  
*Ireland and England and Wales 1963*  
*Crude and age standardized hospitalization rates per 100,000 of population aged 15 and over by sex and marital status*

|   | Single | Male Married | Widowed | Single | Female Married | Widowed |
|---|--------|--------------|---------|--------|----------------|---------|
| Crude rates per 100,000 population aged 15 and over .. .. .             | 1,976  | 230          | 441     | 1,814  | 310            | 664     |
| Age standardized rates per 100,000 population aged 15 and over .. .. .  | 486    | 193          | 451     | 743    | 301            | 689     |
| England and Wales rates per 100,000 population aged 15 and over .. .. . | 353    | 110          | 497     | 356    | 158            | 625     |

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(Received 6 July 1970)