

A Survey of Irish Surnames 1992-97 (Draft)

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Origin of Surnames

A surname may be defined as an hereditary second or family name handed down from one generation to the next, and it can be distinguished from a first or personal name which refers only to an individual. There was no fixed beginning or end to the period during which surnames began to be used in Europe, the process being associated with social and economic development and the need to have a more reliable means of identifying individuals for taxation and other purposes. Neither were surnames adopted at the same time by all classes, and in general, the rich and powerful and urban dwellers assumed them first, while the poor and rural dwellers tended to be slower to adopt them.

The process of adopting surnames started earlier in some areas, while in others it started later and in some places continued even down to the 19th century. Hanks and Hodges have pointed out that while it was the norm in Europe in the 11th century that people were without surnames, by the 15th century it was the norm that they did possess them.¹ Yet there cannot be said to be an exact correlation between adoption of surnames and progressive development, as the Scandinavian countries were slow to adopt fixed second names and to this day most Icelanders do not have surnames.

Ireland by contrast was late in industrialising and urbanising, yet it was one of the earliest countries to adopt surnames, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, although hardly as early as the tenth century as it sometimes claimed. Edward MacLysaght, still our greatest authority on Irish surnames, has observed that as late as the seventeenth century there were still numbers of people among the lower orders in Ireland who did not use hereditary surnames.²

Surnames can best be understood firstly by dividing them into two main classes, monogenetic and polygenetic.³ Monogenetic surnames have a single origin from one individual or family, possible examples being Faherty or Asquith, while polygenetic surnames arose independently in different places and at different times, examples being Murphy or Smith. Surnames can be further divided into four broad classes, namely, those derived from ancestral personal names or patronymics, those derived from placenames or toponymics, occupational names derived from trade or status, and descriptive names referring to an individual's person or appearance.⁴

1 Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames*, Oxford 1989, page vii.

2 Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Families: Their Names, Arms and Origins*, 4th Edition, Dublin 1985, pages 15, 20.

3 Hanks and Hodges, *Dictionary of Surnames*, pages xvi-xvii.

4 A good mnemonic for the first two terms is 'monopoly', while the first letters of the four classes of surnames, ancestral, place, occupational and descriptive, spell 'APOD' (think of 'peas in a pod').

Surnames in Ireland

As was the case in other ancient societies, the inhabitants of Ireland in early times were known by one, personal name, eg, Art, Conn or Niall, as surnames had yet to evolve. It is true that the Irish had from a remote period a system of collective or 'people-names'. These names were used in the plural and referred to the whole population group, or probably more accurately, to its ruling dynastic elite or aristocracy. Examples of these people-names include the Uí Néill, descendants of the possibly mythical Niall of the Nine Hostages, the Uí Briúin, descendants of his brother Brian, and the Eóghanachta and Dál gCais, descendants of the probably mythical Eóghan Mór and Cormac Cas respectively. Woulfe has pointed out that many of these ancient names are similar in form to modern family names, and he cautioned against confusing them. Thus, for example, Muintear Ifearnáin is the ancient people-name of the O'Quins of Thomond and the family name of the O'Heffernans of Owney, while Clann Dálaigh is the people-name of the O'Donnells of Tirconnell and should not be taken as only referring to the surname Daly.⁵

Given the high profile of Irish 'clans', it is worthwhile that MacLysaght specifically stated that he avoided the term 'clan' in the Irish context, because 'its use might imply the existence in Ireland of a clan system like that so highly developed in Scotland, which in fact we never had in this country'. MacLysaght preferred instead to use the term 'sept', which he defined as a 'collective term describing a group of persons who, or whose immediate and known ancestors, bore a common surname and inhabited the same locality'.⁶

While feudalism did not develop in Ireland at the same pace as in the rest of Europe, nevertheless as society became more complex and population grew there must have arisen difficulties of identification, so that personal names were no longer sufficient and a further distinction became necessary. From an early period a system of temporary patronymics was in use, whereby Mac was fixed to the genitive case of the father's name, or Ua or Ó to that of the grandfather, eg, Cormac Mac Airt, Laoghaire Mac Néill, and so on. Yet these second names were not surnames in the modern sense of the term, in that they were not fixed or hereditary or common to all members of a family, and they ceased to be used when the individual so described died.

When this system of transient patronymics itself became insufficient, surnames began to evolve in the 11th and three centuries following. The patronymic began to become fixed and hereditary, not in a planned way, but by a process of gradual evolution. Keating and O'Curry claimed that surnames became fixed in Ireland as a result of an edict of King Brian Boru. However, both Woulfe and MacLysaght state that there is no basis for this claim. Indeed Brian himself did not adopt a surname, as it was only in his grandson's time that the surname Ó Briain or O'Brien first came into existence, 'Boru' or Bóruma being in fact a nickname meaning 'of the tributes'.

The process by which fixed surnames came into use in Ireland was thus as gradual and unplanned as elsewhere, in short, it was an evolutionary process in response to societal changes. In general, the named ancestors after whom the most distinguished Irish families were named flourished in the period from the middle of the 9th and the end of the 13th century. Another characteristic of Gaelic Irish surnames is that the great

5 Rev Patrick Woulfe, *Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall: Irish Names and Surnames*, Dublin 1923, pages 685-86.

6 MacLysaght, *Irish Families*, page 12.

majority are patronymic, that is, derived from named ancestors and prefixed by Ó or Mac, as surnames derived directly from places, occupations or nicknames are relatively uncommon. The polygenetic origin of a significant number of Gaelic surnames must also be kept in mind, so that for example Murphy, the most common surname in Ireland, derives from three distinct and unrelated Ó Murchadha septs which arose in Cork, Roscommon and Wexford, as well as from a fourth Mac Murchadha sept associated with Tyrone and later Armagh.

Anglicisation of Surnames

As is well-known, the Anglo-Norman invaders failed completely to subdue Gaelic Ireland, and indeed in some cases they themselves adopted Gaelic ways. The Statutes of Kilkenny were passed in 1366 in an effort to halt and reverse this process of Hibernicisation. One of the provisions required that every Englishman should use the English language, 'leaving off entirely the manner of naming used by the Irish'.⁷ A statute from the time of Edward IV a century later in 1465 was aimed at those Irish living among the English in the Pale, requiring them among other things to take 'an English surname of a town, as Sutton, Chester, Trim, Skreen, Cork, Kinsale, or a colour, as White, Black, Brown, or an art, as Smith or Carpenter, or an office, as Cook, Butler'.⁸

English administrators and planters during the Tudor period displayed particular hostility to the Irish use of 'Mac' and 'O' prefixes. Thus Edmund Spenser wrote in a work published in 1596, 'I also wish all the Os and the Macs which the heads of the septs have taken to their names to be utterly forbidden and extinguished'.⁹ Sir Richard Bingham wrote in a similar vein in the same year, regretting that Her Majesty's laws would no more be heard of among the Connaught people 'through the revival of the tyranny of the Macs and Os'.¹⁰ However, it is important to note that what was involved here was not opposition to Gaelic surnames as such, but to the practice of the heads of septs using their surnames as chiefly titles, for example, O'Neill, MacCarthy Mór, this being interpreted as a sign of rejection of English authority.

It was perhaps memory of the medieval legislation and the hostile comments of the Tudor period which gave rise to the belief that there existed English laws specifically forbidding the use of Mac and O. This was to have an embarrassing outcome when an Irish MP introduced in the House of Commons in 1898 an Irish surnames bill with a clause, 'All ancient statutes prohibiting the use of O or Mac before Irish surnames are hereby repealed'. The bill did not proceed when the Irish Attorney General reported that there was no statute or principle of common law 'to prevent a gentleman taking up the prefix O or Mac as frequently as he pleases and shedding it when he pleases'.¹¹ The late nineteenth century was a period of national revival, one accompanying trend being the readoption of O and Mac prefixes, although as will be shown below this was by no means general.

⁷ *Statutes and Ordinances and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland, King John to Henry V*, Dublin 1907, page 435.

⁸ *Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Ireland, First to the Twelfth Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, Dublin 1914, page 291.

⁹ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (Works, 10, page 215, complete).

¹⁰ Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Robert Cecil, 27 May 1596, *Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1592-96*, page 524.

¹¹ HCPP online, Hansard (complete).

Variants and Settlers

We should also take account of the surnames of successive waves of invaders and settlers which have become naturalised in this country over the centuries, for it is limiting to define Irish surnames as those of Gaelic origin only. Surnames of Norse origin are comparatively few in number, examples including Arthur and Harold. There is also a small number of surnames formed from Norse forenames adopted by the Irish, for example, Mac Amhlaoibh, anglicised McAuliffe, from Olaf. In contrast, surnames of Anglo-Norman origin are very numerous and many have become almost exclusively Irish, examples being Burke, Costello, Cusack, Dillon, Fitzgerald and so on. The plantations of the 16th and 17th centuries saw the introduction of many common English and Scottish surnames, such as Smith/Smyth, Brown(e), Murray, Wilson, Campbell, and so on. Smaller settlements, usually of refugees, have also left their mark in terms of surnames, for example, the Huguenot Boileau, La Touche and Le Fanu, and the German Palatine Bovenizer and Switzer.

It is vital for the genealogist to be aware of the possible variants of a surname, in order to avoid missing crucial entries during research. The first reason for variations in the spelling of Irish surnames is the fact that the bulk of them are of Gaelic origin, and their translation into English was not performed in a standardised manner. The process of anglicisation of surnames did not always proceed in a predictable or logical fashion, as is demonstrated in the case of the most common Irish surname, Ó Murchadha, for centuries now almost always appearing as Murphy. In the mid-seventeenth century more rational anglicisations such as Morrow, Morrogh and O'Murchoe were to be found with Murphy in County Wexford, but in time the latter form eclipsed the others.¹²

Throughout the period of anglicisation there was a tendency for Gaelic surnames to lose their O or Mac prefixes, while from the late nineteenth century onwards the national revival led to significant but not general resumption of prefixes, as will be shown below. Thus in the case of surnames such as O'Connor and MacMahon, it is prudent to search indexes and records for the forms Connor and Mahon also. Then there are surnames which have appeared under a wide variety of spellings, such as Ahearn/Ahearne/Ahern, Cavanagh/Kavanagh, (O)Donoghoe/Donoghue/Donohoe, Malloy/Molloy/Mulloy, and so on. Furthermore, there are those Gaelic surnames which have been both anglicised and assimilated to English surnames of similar sound or meaning, for example, (Mac)Brehon/Judge, Cuneen/Rabbit, (Mac)Gowan/Smith. Of course, surnames of settler origin have also been subject to variation, examples being Allison/Ellison, Carr/Kerr, Cockburn/Coburn. The prudent approach therefore is to search first under the received form of a surname, then under relevant variants.

Matheson's 1890 Survey

Over a century ago, the then Registrar General of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Sir Robert E Matheson, commenced his pioneering study of Irish surnames, the results of which he published in the early 1900s.¹³ Table 1 based on Matheson's listing shows that the ten principal surnames in Ireland in 1890 were Murphy, Kelly, Sullivan, Walsh, Smith, O'Brien, Byrne, Ryan, Connor, O'Neill. It is notable that with the exception of

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13 Robert E Matheson, *Varieties and Synonymes of Surnames and Christian Names in Ireland*, Dublin 1901, and *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland*, Dublin 1909, both reprinted as *Surnames in Ireland*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1982. AMEND

Smith, these are all surnames of Gaelic origin. The most common surname, Murphy, is of course polygenetic, referring to several unrelated septs formerly centered in Wexford, Cork-Kerry, Roscommon and Armagh-Tyrone. It is notable also that it is the numerous Munster and particularly Cork component which propels Murphy into the top position. Sullivan on the other hand is an apparently monogenetic surname, with an unusually high 90% of its bearers concentrated in Munster. Byrne is another example of a highly localised surname, with some 80% of its bearers concentrated in Leinster.

Table 1: Ten Most Common Surnames in Ireland 1890

Rank	Surname	Estimated Population 1890	% of Total Population	% by Province			
				Lei	Mun	Uls	Con
1	Murphy	62,600	1.29	34	44	14	8
2	Kelly	55,900	1.19	34	17	22	27
3	Sullivan	43,600	0.92	6	90	2	2
4	Walsh	41,700	0.89	25	42	6	27
5	Smith	33,700	0.71	31	8	55	6
6	O'Brien	33,400	0.71	21	58	11	10
7	Byrne	33,300	0.71	80	7	7	6
8	Ryan	32,000	0.68	25	66	2	7
9	Connor	31,200	0.66	26	37	16	21
10	O'Neill	29,100	0.62	31	27	35	7

Estimated population of Ireland 1890: 4.7 million.

Source: Matheson, *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland*.

Telephone Directories Survey

Using hardcopy and CD-ROM directories of telephone subscribers, the writer has been engaged in a survey of Irish surnames for some decades. Current online directories do not lend themselves to statistical analysis, indeed they are designed to facilitate only single searches for reasons of confidentiality and avoiding commercial abuse of information. It was decided therefore to fall back on available older material, specifically a CD-ROM version of the Irish telephone directory for 1997-98 (compiled 1997) and the hardcopy Northern Ireland telephone directory for 1993 (compiled 1992).¹⁴ An effort in the early 1990's to obtain data on Northern Ireland surnames in electronic format was met with a response to the effect that these were an integral part of the United Kingdom telephone directory database and could not be separated therefrom, hence the reliance on the hardcopy telephone directory. The present report is based on this telephone directory-based surnames survey, which involves no breach of privacy or confidentiality in that specific individuals are not identified. Statistics

¹⁴ Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory*, 1997/98, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland*, 1993.

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relating to the frequency and distribution of the hundred most common surnames appear in the appendices to the present report, and we will now deal with some of the main features of the data.

Table 2 gives a listing of the ten most common surnames of Irish and Northern Irish telephone subscribers in the period 1992-97, with the tentatively estimated total population bearing each surname, and comparison with Matheson's 1890 ranking. It can be seen that there has been little significant change in relative ranking since the nineteenth century. Thus Murphy is still 1st and (O)Kelly still 2nd, and most of the other surnames have not altered their places significantly. Exceptions are (O)Connor, which is 4th today but 9th in Matheson, and Smith, 9th today and 5th in Matheson. The difference in the ranking of Smith is not really significant in terms of percentage of total population, but the lower ranking of (O)Connor by Matheson may be partly accounted for by his decision not to count the form Connors separately.

Table 2: Ten Most Common Surnames in Ireland 1992-97

Rank	1890 Rank	Surname	Estimated Population	% of Total Pop
1	1	Murphy	70,900	1.35
2	2	(O)Kelly	59,800	1.13
3	4	Walsh(e)	44,100	0.84
4	9	(O)Connor	43,000	0.81
5	3	(O)Sullivan	41,500	0.79
6	7	(O)Byrne	41,300	0.78
7	6	(O)Brien	39,700	0.75
8	8	Ryan	39,200	0.74
9	5	Smith/Smyth	38,800	0.74
10	10	(O)Neill	35,000	0.66

Estimated mean population of Ireland 1992-97: 5.3 million.

Sources: Matheson, *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland*; Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory, 1997/98*, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland, 1993*.

Regional Distribution

As well as studying the distribution of surnames nationally, it is useful to examine distribution locally. Table 3 shows the ten most common surnames within each telephone area, with the approximate provincial or county coverage indicated in each case. Unfortunately telephone areas do not exactly match and indeed cross historical provincial and county boundaries, and of course Northern Ireland is governed by a different administrative system (given the code '08' for convenience here). It can be

seen that while some surnames which predominate nationally can also be numerous locally, such as Murphy and Smith, others are numerous locally but are not at the top of the table nationally, for example, Whelan and Moore. Note also that surnames in Munster and Ulster tend to be more concentrated locally than those in other areas, for example, O'Sullivan and Wilson, with two-thirds and four-fifths concentrated in Munster and Northern Ireland respectively.

Table 3: Most Common Surnames by Telephone Area 1992-97

Rank, main surname form, estimated number of bearers and percentage of national total.

01 Greater Dublin

1 Byrne 20,600 (50%), 2 Murphy 17,700 (25%), 3 Kelly 17,300 (29%), 4 O'Brien 11,500 (29%), 5 Walsh 11,500 (26%), 6 Doyle 11,000 (42%), 7 O'Connor 10,700 (25%), 8 O'Reilly 10,300 (35%), 9 Ryan 10,200 (26%), 10 Smith 9,300 (24%).

04/05 Leinster/South Ulster

1 Murphy 17,700 (25%), 2 Byrne 13,600 (33%), 3 Kelly 12,600 (21%), 4 Walsh 11,900 (27%), 5 Ryan 11,000 (28%), 6 O'Reilly 10,900 (37%), 7 Doyle 9,900 (38%), 8 Smith 9,700 (25%), 9 Whelan 7,600 (43%), 10 O'Brien 9,500 (24%).

02/06 Munster

1 O'Sullivan 27,800 (67%), 2 Murphy 22,700 (32%), 3 O'Connor 17,200 (40%), 4 McCarthy 16,800 (64%), 5 Ryan 14,500 (37%), 6 O'Brien 13,900 (35%), 7 Walsh 11,000 (25%), 8 O'Mahony 9,400 (69%), 9 O'Connell 9,300 (52%), 10 O'Donovan 8,900 (73%).

07/09 Connacht/Donegal

1 Kelly 10,800 (18%), 2 Gallagher 9,700 (48%), 3 Doherty 8,100 (34%), 4 Walsh 7,100 (16%), 5 McLaughlin 6,500 (30%), 6 Burke 6,200 (27%), 7 O'Donnell 5,300 (36%), 8 Boyle 4,400 (34%), 9 O'Connor 4,300 (10%), 10 Sweeney 4,000 (30%).

08 Northern Ireland

1 Smith 15,500 (40%), 2 Wilson 14,700 (79%), 3 Johnston 14,400 (74%), 4 Campbell 13,400 (70%), 5 Thompson 12,300 (78%), 6 Brown 12,300 (50%), 7 Kelly 11,400 (19%), 8 O'Neill 11,200 (32%), 9 Moore 10,600 (51%), 10 Stewart 10,300 (77%).

Sources: Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory*, 1997/98, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland*, 1993.

Usage of 'O' and 'Mac' Prefixes

Table 4 illustrates another characteristic of surnames of Gaelic origin, the use of the 'O' and 'Mac' prefixes. 'O' surnames tend to be found in the south of the country

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and 'Mac' surnames in the north, but there are exceptions, eg, MacCarthy in Munster and O'Neill in Ulster. It can be seen as well that the 'O' surnames display higher frequencies than the 'Mac' ones. Thus there are 6 'O' surnames in the top ten, while the 6 most numerous 'Mac' surnames range from 12th to 51st in position. Another interesting feature is the degree to which the 'O' and 'Mac' prefixes have been restored since the revival of interest in things Gaelic in the late nineteenth century. There has been a dramatic change in the case of O'Sullivan, with 86% not using the prefix in 1890 and 89% using it in the 1990s, while O'Brien and O'Neill register substantial increases. In contrast, over 90% of Kellys and Byrnes still do not use the prefix, MacCarthys and MacLaughlins have increased usage somewhat, Maguires and Magraths are a consistent 100% and MacMahons and MacKennas are relatively static.

Table 4: Use of 'O' and 'Mac' Prefixes in Ireland 1992-97 and 1890

Rank	Surname	% 1992-97		% 1890	
		Prefix	None	Prefix	None
2	(O)Kelly	3	97	1	99
4	(O)Connor	89	11	32	68
5	(O)Sullivan	89	11	14	86
6	(O)Byrne	5	95	1	99
7	(O)Brien	98	2	67	33
10	(O)Neill	92	8	63	37
12	(Mc)Carthy	97	3	85	15
19	(Mc)Laughlin	92	8	87	13
35	(Mc)Mahon	71	29	74	26
45	Maguire/McGuire	100	0	100	0
48	Magrath/McGrath	100	0	100	0
51	(Mc)Cormack	98	2	94	6

Sources: Matheson, *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland*; Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory*, 1997/98, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland*, 1993.

Gaelic Forms of Surnames

Some individuals have tended to use the Gaelic form of their surnames, particularly since the period of the national cultural revival in the late nineteenth century. Indeed in national schools after independence every child's name was translated into Irish, and the present writer recalls that he was known in school in the 1960s as Seán 'Bán' Ó Murchú, being distinguished by reference to his lighter coloured hair from another in the class of the same name who was known as Seán 'Dubh' Ó Murchú on account of his darker hair colour. Of course telephone directory analysis is

a good way to measure the percentage of those whose commitment to the use of the language extends to consistent use of the Gaelic form of their names. While the numbers of Gaelic surnames found in the directories are of interest they are so statistically low (less than 1%) that it was not considered necessary to include them in the main totals of surnames in English on which the greater part of the present survey is based.

It can be seen that occurrence of the Gaelic forms of surnames is most common in the greater Dublin area and along the western seaboard, where use of the language is strongest. The even lower occurrence of Gaelic forms of surnames in the Northern Ireland telephone directory may reflect political sensitivities surrounding national identity in that state, but it would be fair to say that the Peace Process has resulted in greater efforts to respect the culture of the North's Gaelic speakers. It should be noted that in Table 5 below it has been necessary sometimes to correct garbled versions of the Gaelic surnames in the directories, eg, by removing apostrophes after the 'Ó' prefix.

Table 5: Use of Gaelic Forms of Surnames in Ireland 1992-97

Surname, Gaelic/English	Total telephone entries	Main telephone area concentrations
Ó Murchú/Murphy	56	01 36%, 02/06 48%
Ó Ceallaigh/(O)Kelly	60	01 48%, 07/09 27%
Breathnach/Walsh	79	01 48%, 07/09 28%
Ó Conchubhair/(O)Connor	21	01 38%, 02/06 33%
Ó Súilleabháin/(O)Sullivan	58	01 29%, 02/06 54%
Ó Broin/(O)Byrne	55	01 73%
Ó Briain/(O)Brien	41	01 68%, 02/06 12%

Sources: Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory*, 1997/98, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland*, 1993.

Anglo-Norman Surnames

Given the historical prominence of families bearing Anglo-Norman surnames, these are perhaps not of such a high frequency as might be expected. It may be a surprise to find that, as shown in Table 6, there are only five pure Anglo-Norman surnames in the top hundred, the highest Burke and Fitzgerald being at 17 and 43 respectively, with a well known name such as Butler outside the top 100. It would be fair to conclude that the impact of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland has been disproportionate to their numbers. There are surnames such as Lynch and Martin which can be of Anglo-Norman origin, but most bearers will be found to be of different stock, in these two cases Gaelic and English respectively. While Burke is quite evenly distributed in all areas outside north-east Ulster, one half of the Fitzgeralds are concentrated in Munster.

Table 6: Most Common Anglo-Norman Surnames in Ireland 1992-97

Rank	Surname	Estimated Population	% of Total Pop
17	Burke	22,900	0.44
43	Fitzgerald	15,500	0.29
53	Power	13,600	0.26
72	Barry	11,400	0.22
89	Roche	9,600	0.18

Sources: Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory*, 1997/98, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland*, 1993.

British Surnames in Ireland

As might be anticipated, the bulk of surnames in Ireland of British origin are concentrated in Ulster and Leinster, where of course most settlement from the neighbouring island has occurred. Where English surnames are found in large numbers outside north-east Ulster and Leinster, it will usually be the case that these are Anglicisations of Gaelic surnames, for example, Clark (Ó Cléirigh), Boyle (Ó Baoighill) and Collins (Ó Coileáin). There is also much scope for confusion between Irish and Scottish surnames of Gaelic origin, for example, O'Neill and McNeill or McCarthy and McCartney. While Smith can be an Anglicisation of the Gaelic Mac Gabhann (McGowan, 'son of the smith'), most Smiths are actually of British stock and concentrated in Ulster and Leinster. Bearing in mind that not all bearers will be of non-Irish stock, Table 7 lists the principal British surnames in Ireland.

Table 7: Most Common British Surnames in Ireland 1992-97

Rank	Surname	Estimated Population	% of Total Pop
9	Smith	38,800	0.74
14	Brown	24,600	0.47
15	Murray	24,300	0.46
22	Moore	20,800	0.39
24	Johnston	19,500	0.37
25	Campbell	19,200	0.36
27	Clarke	19,000	0.36
28	Wilson	18,500	0.35
29	Dunne	18,400	0.35
32	Martin	17,800	0.34

Sources: Telecom Éireann, *Irish Telephone Directory*, 1997/98, CD-ROM; British Telecom, *The Phone Book, Northern Ireland*, 1993.

Statistical Note
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Appendix 1: One Hundred Most Common Surnames in Ireland 1992-97

Rank	Surname (with % variants)	Estimated bearers	% national population	% 01	% 04/05	% 02/06	by Area 07/09	08	Avg Dev
1	Murphy	70,900	1.35	25	25	32	7	11	8.8
2	Kelly 97, O'Kelly 3	59,800	1.13	29	21	13	18	19	4.0
3	Walsh 94, Walshe 6	44,100	0.84	26	27	25	16	6	7.2
4	O'Connor 89, Connor 9, Connors 2	43,000	0.81	25	17	40	10	8	10.0
5	O'Sullivan 89, Sullivan 11	41,500	0.79	17	11	67	3	2	18.8
6	Byrne 95, O'Byrne 5	41,300	0.78	50	33	5	7	5	17.2
7	O'Brien 98, Brien 2	39,700	0.75	29	24	35	8	4	11.2
8	Ryan	39,200	0.74	26	28	37	7	2	12.4
9	Smith 52, Smyth 48	38,800	0.74	24	25	5	6	40	11.6
10	O'Neill 92, Neill 8	35,000	0.66	24	21	18	5	32	6.8
11	O'Reilly 61, Reilly 39	29,400	0.56	35	37	8	10	10	12.8
12	M(a)cCarthy 97, Carthy 3	26,200	0.50	21	11	64	3	1	18.0
13	Doyle	26,100	0.50	42	38	8	5	7	16.0
14	Brown 56, Browne 44	24,600	0.47	17	11	14	8	50	12.0
15	Murray	24,300	0.46	29	19	11	13	28	6.8
16	Doherty 85, O'Doherty 12, Dougherty 3	23,900	0.45	13	8	8	34	37	12.4
17	Burke 80, Bourke 20	22,900	0.44	23	21	22	27	7	5.2
18	Lynch	22,700	0.43	26	23	31	9	11	8.0
19	M(a)cLaughlin 51, M(a)cLoughlin 41, Loughlin 6, Laughlin 2	21,600	0.41	16	10	5	30	39	11.6
20	Quinn 99, Quin 1	21,500	0.41	22	15	11	15	37	7.6
21	Kennedy	21,200	0.40	24	21	18	10	27	4.8
22	Moore	20,800	0.39	20	15	8	6	51	12.4
23	Gallagher	20,100	0.38	16	8	6	48	22	12.0
24	Johnston 86, Johnson 12, Johnstone 2	19,500	0.37	10	8	4	4	74	21.6
25	Campbell	19,200	0.36	12	7	2	9	70	20.0
26	Brennan	19,100	0.36	30	33	10	17	10	9.2
27	Clarke 95, Clark 5	19,000	0.36	23	23	5	11	38	9.6
28	Wilson	18,500	0.35	8	6	3	4	79	23.6
29	Dunne 92, Dunn 8	18,400	0.35	40	39	7	5	9	9.0
30	Daly 99, O'Daly 1	18,200	0.35	27	21	35	9	8	9.2
31	O'Connell 88, Connell 12	18,000	0.34	21	15	52	9	3	13.2
32	Martin	17,800	0.34	20	18	7	8	47	10.8
33	Whelan 64, Phelan 36	17,700	0.33	38	43	12	4	3	16.4
34	Flynn 84, O'Flynn 16	17,400	0.33	25	25	27	17	6	6.8
35	M(a)cMahon 71, Mahon 29	17,300	0.33	27	22	25	9	17	5.6
36	Farrell 86, O'Farrell 14	17,100	0.32	39	34	8	11	8	13.2
37	Carroll 85, O'Carroll 15	17,000	0.32	32	31	25	8	4	11.2
38	Collins	16,300	0.31	21	11	44	10	14	10.0
39	Nolan 99, O'Nolan 1	16,300	0.31	39	37	14	7	3	14.4
40	Connolly	16,200	0.31	23	24	13	20	20	2.8
41	O'Donoghue 53, Donohoe 21, Donoghue 13, Donohue 8, O'Donohoe 3, O'Donohue 2	15,900	0.30	26	23	38	11	2	10.8
42	Thompson 97, Thomson 3	15,800	0.30	8	6	4	4	78	23.2
43	Fitzgerald	15,500	0.29	23	20	49	5	3	12.8
44	Hughes	15,400	0.29	23	18	4	11	44	10.8
45	Maguire 85, M(a)cGuire 15	15,400	0.29	28	21	7	11	33	8.8

Studies in Irish Genealogy and Heraldry

Rank	Surname (with % variants)	Estimated bearers	% national population	% 01	% 04/05	% by Area 02/06	Area 07/09	08	Avg Dev
46	O'Donnell 98, Donnell 2 (est)	14,600	0.28	17	13	21	36	13	6.8
47	White 81, Whyte 19	14,500	0.28	23	20	18	8	31	5.6
48	M(a)cGrath 99, Magrath 1	14,500	0.28	23	24	22	11	20	3.6
49	Duffy 99, O'Duffy 1	14,300	0.27	27	28	3	24	18	7.6
50	Kavanagh 93, Cavanagh 7	14,100	0.27	43	34	9	9	5	14.8
51	M(a)cCormack 64, M(a)cCormick 34, Cormack 2	13,900	0.26	21	24	8	12	35	8.0
52	O'Mahony 75, Mahony 14, O'Mahoney 7, Mahoney 4	13,700	0.26	15	12	69	3	1	19.6
53	Power	13,600	0.26	21	52	21	3	3	13.6
54	O'Callaghan 70, Callaghan 30	13,600	0.26	20	13	47	11	9	10.8
55	Stewart 91, Stuart 9	13,400	0.25	10	5	3	5	77	22.8
56	Sweeney 74, M(a)cSweeney 26	13,200	0.25	21	10	31	30	8	8.8
57	Boyle 83, O'Boyle 17	13,100	0.25	16	11	6	34	33	10.8
58	O'Shea 98, Shea 2	13,000	0.25	18	17	61	3	1	16.4
59	Brady	12,900	0.25	38	37	3	9	13	14.0
60	Fitzpatrick 96, Patrick 4	12,700	0.24	30	31	13	6	20	8.4
61	Healy	12,600	0.24	24	15	41	17	3	10.0
62	Donnelly	12,400	0.23	23	15	6	6	50	13.2
63	O'Donovan 76, Donovan 24	12,200	0.23	15	8	73	3	1	21.2
64	O'Leary 99, Leary 1	12,100	0.23	20	15	61	3	1	16.4
65	M(a)cKenna 93, Kenna 7	12,100	0.23	22	31	8	4	35	11.2
66	Hayes	12,100	0.23	20	19	46	3	12	10.4
67	Robinson	12,000	0.23	12	6	2	5	75	22.0
68	Graham	12,000	0.23	10	7	3	3	77	22.8
69	Kenny	11,800	0.22	36	26	12	20	6	8.8
70	Keane 99, O'Keane 1	11,800	0.22	24	14	35	26	1	10.0
71	Cunningham	11,500	0.22	18	15	12	19	36	6.4
72	Barry	11,400	0.22	21	17	53	4	5	13.6
73	Moran	11,300	0.21	29	20	11	34	6	9.2
74	Kane 59, O'Kane 41	11,300	0.21	21	11	2	6	60	16.4
75	Casey	11,200	0.21	21	22	37	11	9	8.0
76	M(a)cDonnell 97, Donnell 3 (est)	10,800	0.21	35	20	11	17	17	6.0
77	Hamilton	10,600	0.20	8	5	2	5	80	24.0
78	Keogh 65, Kehoe 31, McKeogh 4	10,500	0.20	42	41	11	4	2	17.2
79	Foley	10,500	0.20	22	26	41	8	3	11.6
80	Buckley	10,400	0.20	18	11	63	4	4	17.2
81	O'Keefe 95, O'Keefe 5	10,400	0.20	20	22	54	2	2	14.4
82	Ward	10,100	0.19	28	19	7	23	23	5.6
83	M(a)cDonald 95, Donald 5	10,000	0.19	25	28	3	4	40	13.2
84	Mullan 46, Mullen 41, Mullin 12, O'Mullan 1	10,000	0.19	18	13	3	13	53	13.2
85	Reid 96, Read 2, Reed 2	10,000	0.19	22	10	3	4	61	17.2
86	M(a)cCann	9,900	0.19	21	10	2	7	60	16.4
87	Curran	9,900	0.19	21	22	12	16	29	4.8
88	Scott	9,600	0.18	11	6	3	7	73	21.2
89	Roche	9,600	0.18	26	34	33	6	1	13.2
90	Maher	9,500	0.18	35	44	15	5	1	15.6
91	Griffin 98, Griffen 2	9,500	0.18	21	13	47	13	6	11.2
92	Bell	9,500	0.18	9	6	2	2	81	24.4
93	Sheehan 85, Sheahan 15	9,500	0.18	17	12	68	2	1	19.2
94	O'Dwyer 64, Dwyer 36	9,500	0.18	26	32	35	6	1	13.2
95	Moloney 73, Maloney 23, Molony 4	9,400	0.18	23	17	45	14	1	11.2

Irish Surnames

Rank	Surname (with % variants)	Estimated bearers	% national population	01	04/05	02/06	07/09	08	Avge Dev
96	Magee 66, M(a)cGee 34	9,300	0.18	14	13	3	16	54	13.6
97	Higgins 96, O'Higgins 4	9,300	0.18	24	14	16	26	20	4.0
98	M(a)cKeown 74, M(a)cKeon 21, Keown 5	9,200	0.18	15	13	3	7	62	16.8
99	Cullen	9,200	0.18	41	33	4	10	12	13.6
100	Lyons	9,200	0.17	25	15	27	19	14	4.8

Sources: *Irish Telephone Directory 1997/98*, CD-ROM, and *Phone Book, Northern Ireland, 1993*

Appendix 2: Surnames in Alphabetical Order with Rank

Refers to Appendix 1; O and Mac surnames indexed under first letter after prefix

Barry 72	Duffy 49	Maher 90
Bell 92	Dunn(e) 29	(Mc)Mahon 35
(O)Boyle 57	(O)Dwyer 94	(O)Mahony/Mahoney 52
Brady 59	(O)Farrell 36	Martin 32
Brennan 26	Fitzgerald 43	McCarthy 12
(O)Brien 7	Fitzpatrick 60	Moloney/Maloney 95
Brown(e) 14	(O)Flynn 34	Moore 22
Buckley 80	Foley 79	Moran 73
Burke/Bourke 17	Gallagher 23	Mullan/Mullen 84
(O)Byrne 6	Magee/McGee 96	Murphy 1
(O)Callaghan 54	Graham 68	Murray 15
Campbell 25	(Mc)Grath 48	(O)Neill 10
(Mc)Cann 86	Griffin 91	Nolan 39
Carroll 37	Maguire/McGuire 45	Phelan – see Whelan
Casey 75	Hamilton 77	Power 53
Cavanagh – see Kavanagh	Hayes 66	Quinn 20
Clark(e) 27	Healy 61	Reid/Read 85
Collins 38	Higgins 97	(O)Reilly 11
(O)Connell 31	Hughes 44	Robinson 67
Connolly 40	Johns(t)on 24	Roche 89
(O)Connor 4	(O)Kane 74	Ryan 8
(Mc)Cormack/Cormick 51	Kavanagh/Cavanagh 50	Scott 88
Cullen 99	Keane 70	(O)Shea 58
Cunningham 71	(O)Kee(f)fe 81	Sheehan/Sheahan 93
Curran 87	(O)Kelly 2	Smith/Smyth 9
Daly 30	(Mc)Kenna 65	Stewart/Stuart 55
(O)Doherty 16	Kennedy 21	(O)Sullivan 5
(Mc)Donald 83	Kenny 69	(Mc)Sweeney 56
(Mc)Donnell 76	Keogh/Kehoe 78	Thom(p)son 42
(O)Donnell 46	(Mc)Keown/Keon 98	Walsh(e) 3
Donnelly 62	(Mc)Laughlin/Loughlin 19	Ward 82
(O)Donoghue/Donohoe 41	(O)Leary 64	Whelan/Phelan 33
(O)Donovan 63	Lynch 18	White/Whyte 47
Doyle 13	Lyons 100	Wilson 28