

# The long-run impact of historical shocks on the decision to migrate: Evidence from the Irish Migration\*

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## Abstract

This study investigates how negative historical shocks can explain migration in the long-run. We construct a unique dataset based on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish Census data and a selection of the Ellis Island Administrative Records which allow us to test whether the Great Irish Famine (1845-1850), one of the most lethal starvation in history, has shaped the decision of migrating to the USA in the following 70 years. We control for several set of individual and geographical characteristics and we find that the Irish Famine was an important significant driver of individuals' migration choices. Instrumental variable analysis based on the exogenous spread of the potato blight provides consistent results.

**Key words:** mass migration, negative shock, long-run impact, Great Famine.

**JEL classification codes:** F22, N33, N93.

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