

Abstract

Relying on the methodology developed in Trajtenberg, Shiff and Melamed (2006), we identify a rather comprehensive list of over 6,000 Israeli inventors that have patented in the US. These inventors represent the backbone of innovation in Israel, and the driving force of its flagship High Tech sector. We examine up close detailed information on these inventors, including their "fertility" and "importance" in terms of the number of US patents registered in their name as well as qualitative indicators of those patents, in comparison to the universe of patenting inventors (about 1.8 million). We then focus on their mobility, both across assignees (employers) and geographical locations, within and outside Israel. One of the interesting questions in this respect is the determinants and consequences of mobility: who tends to move, and what happens to the quality of innovations following a move? We find that Israeli inventors are much more mobile than others, and that there is an association between quality and mobility, but we cannot determine at this stage causal links. Using ancillary data on first names, we find that aside from the 6,000 inventors based in Israel, there are another 2,000 that engage in innovation outside Israel, primarily in the US. This is one further manifestation of the brain drain that has been identified also in academia.

JEL: O30, C81, C88

Key words: Patents, inventors, mobility.