



This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1

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Profile 1: Town and Country

Overview of the Western Region

Western Development Commission
May 2012

Summary

- In 2011, the total population of the Western Region was 820,880, an increase of 7.7% (58,545 people), slightly lower than the state average of 8.2%, (4,588,252).
- The share of the population living in the Western Region as a percentage of the state's population has declined from 30.7% in 1841 to 17.9% in 2011.
- Since 2006 the population of all Western counties has increased with the highest growth rate in County Galway (10.0%) and the lowest growth rate in Galway city (4.3%).
- Of the total population increase in the region, 54.6% was due to natural increase, while 45.4% was due to net migration. Net migration accounted for a larger share of total population growth in the Western Region than it did in the rest of the state (33%).
- All counties, except Galway County, had an annual birth rate below the national average while they all, except Galway city, had a higher than average death rate.
- Natural increase contributed the greater share of population growth in Clare, Galway, Mayo and Sligo while migration was a more important source of population growth in Roscommon, Leitrim and Donegal. These had among the highest average annual net migration rates in the country.
- In the Western Region, 49.9% of the population is male indicating that women outnumber men, similar to the picture nationally.
- Since 2006, all counties except for Galway city have seen a declining male share of the population. It is likely that emigration is a factor with male emigration particularly impacting on the gender profile.
- Counties Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon have the highest ratios of elderly population to that of working age (23%), indicating the older age profile of these counties. Galway city has a very low old age dependency ratio (12.6%), as a result of the very high numbers of working age in that city.
- The Western Region is particularly rural with 64.9% of its population living outside of towns with a population of 1,500 or more, compared with just 32.1% in the rest of the state. However the share of the population living in rural areas declined in all western counties between 2006 and 2011 and in the region as a whole it fell from 67% to 64.9%.
- Leitrim, Galway county, Roscommon, Donegal and Mayo had the highest share of rural dwellers of all counties in the state.
- A greater share of the Western Region's urban population lives in small towns, with 16.4% of the region's urban population living in towns of 1,500-2,999 people compared with 6% of the state's urban population living in such towns.

- There are 40 towns with populations greater than 1,500 in the Western Region, nine more than in 2006.
- The strongest population growth since 2006 was in medium-sized towns in the 3,000-4,999 size category. In general smaller towns (1,500-4,999 people) had greater population growth rates than the larger towns (5,000 or over).
- The gateway of Letterkenny surpassed the other North West gateway of Sligo in population terms in 2011.
- The average number of people living in households has been gradually declining, as part of the trend towards smaller families, and more people living alone. County Galway has the largest household size, an indicator of more families living there, while Leitrim, Sligo and Galway city all have the smallest average household size.
- Leitrim has the highest share of its elderly population (aged 65 years and over) living alone, (34.1%). Counties Roscommon and Mayo also have a relatively high share of its elderly population living alone with in excess of 30% each, compared to the national average of 27.7%.
- All counties have more elderly females than males living alone.
- The number of Irish speakers in the Western Region's Gaeltacht areas increased by +3.3%. As the population of the areas grew more strongly, the number of Irish speakers as a share of the total population declined from 69.9% to 68.5%. Galway County, the largest Gaeltacht area, had the highest growth.
- A considerably higher share of households in the Western Region lives in owner occupied houses without a loan or mortgage. This would partly be due to the region's older age profile and more rural nature. Mayo and Roscommon have the highest shares of this type of occupancy nationally. The region has a lower share of households in owner occupied homes with a loan or mortgage and a lower share renting.
- In the Western Region, 29.9% of all occupied homes have been built since 2001. This is greater than the proportion in the rest of the state and the share of newer homes in all western counties was higher than average. The total stock of housing in the Western Region increased by 14.9% since 2006, greater than the increase in the rest of the state (12.2%).
- In total there are 91,015 vacant housing units in the Western Region, a 17.1% increase since 2006 compared with a 5.3% increase in the rest of the state. The region's average vacancy rate is 22.8%, considerably higher than the average in the rest of the state (12.4%). Leitrim and Donegal have the highest vacancy rates in the country.
- In the Western Region 30.2% of all vacant dwellings are holiday homes, considerably higher than the rest of the state (16.1%). Holiday homes account for a very high share of all vacant dwellings in Donegal and Clare but low shares in Galway city and Roscommon.
- The pattern of fuel usage in central heating is very different in the Western Region and the rest of the state primarily because of the lack of access to natural gas across most of the region. Less than 5% of households in the Western Region use natural gas to heat their home compared with 40% in the rest of the state. This means the Western Region is far more reliant on other fuels, many with higher cost, as well as carbon emissions.
- In total 1.4% of households in the region use wood (including pellets) in their central heating, marginally higher than in the rest of the state. The highest usage of wood in the region was in rural Clare and rural Leitrim.

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1.0 Introduction

The first set of final results from the Census of Population 2011 was published on 29 March 2012. Preliminary Results had been released in June of the previous year and the Western Development Commission (WDC) prepared an overview report on these preliminary results.¹

The CSO report on the first set of final results contains a summary of Principal Demographic Results and is titled *'This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1'*. The report includes data on population, nationality, households, housing and diversity.² This was followed on 26 April by two further reports *'Profile 1: Town and Country'* and *'Population Classified by Area'* which provide detailed population figures for towns and rural areas, as well as migration data.

The WDC has analysed a selection of indicators from these results, focusing on those of most relevance to the Western Region and the WDC's work. The indicators include population, components of population change, gender, age, dependency ratios, rural and town populations, household size, elderly persons living alone, Irish language ability and frequency of use, housing occupancy, housing stock and vacancy rates and a new indicator on the fuel used in central heating.

Data is analysed for the seven county Western Region (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare) and the situation in the region is compared with that in the rest of the state (all other counties) and the state average. This report also maps some of these indicators at electoral division (ED) level using the WDC-AIRO Mapping Tool developed in conjunction with the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO).³

It is hoped that this analysis will of interest to local, regional and national policymakers, public representatives and other national and regional stakeholders. It will be available to download at <http://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/reports2012/>

¹ <http://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/reports-2011/>

² The report and data can be downloaded at <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/census2011thisisirelandpart1/>

³ The tool can be access at <http://www.wdc.ie/policy/wdc-airo-mapping-tool/>

2.0 Population

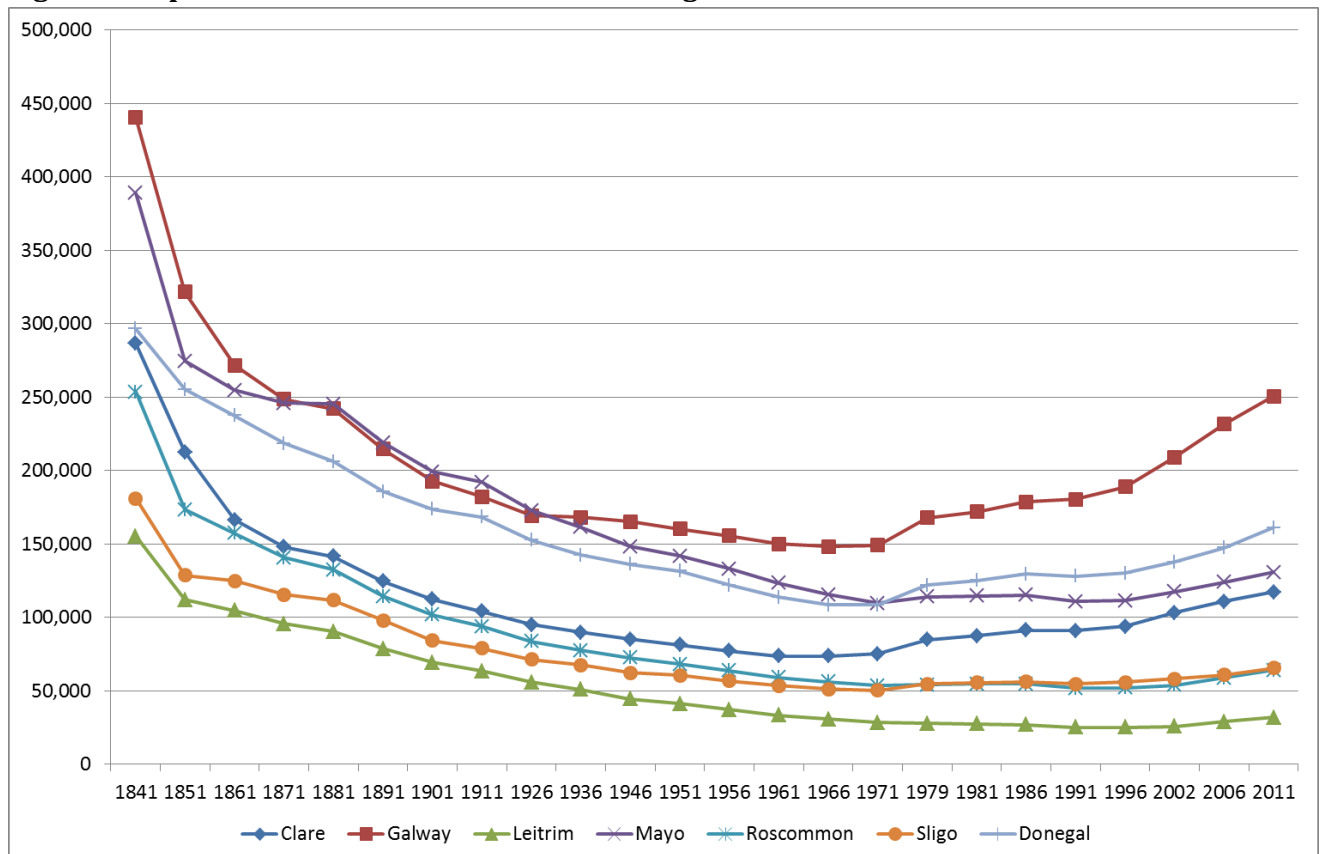
Population is a very important indicator, influencing various facets of economic and social activity which will be examined in further outputs from Census 2011. The focus of this paper is the situation in the Western Region as it pertains in 2011 as well as noting the more significant changes since 2006. It is worthwhile starting with a historical perspective which will put the more recent changes into broader context.

2.1 Population trends

The first Census for which full results are available was taken in 1841 and the population changes since then are evident from Figure 1 below. In 1841 the population of all counties was considerably higher than currently, but declined very rapidly in the decades following that initial census.

For most counties in the Western Region the decline in population was arrested in the mid-1960s with growth occurring thereafter. However, population decline in Leitrim continued until 2002. In the late 1980s some counties have seen slight dips in population (e.g. Donegal) but growth has recovered. Galway, the most populous county has recovered its population numbers to the 1871 level. Other counties (e.g. Donegal and Clare) are now recording population levels similar to that at turn of the century. In 2011, the total population of the Western Region was 820,880, an increase of 7.7% (58,545 people), slightly lower than the state average of 8.2%, (4,588,252).

Figure 1: Population of counties of the Western Region since 1841



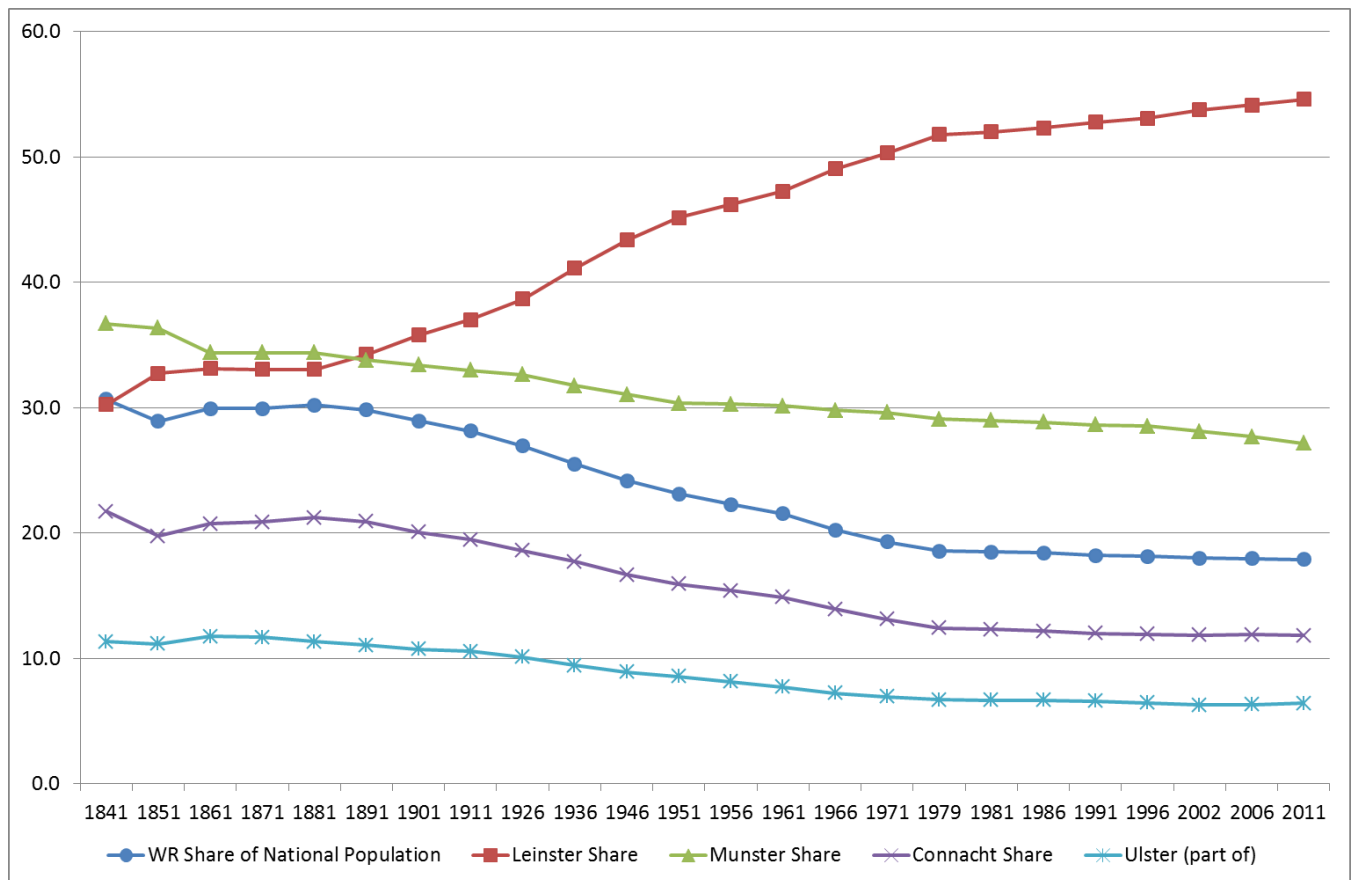
Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1*, Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD01&PLanguage=0>

Galway remains the largest county and its rate of growth has been stronger than the other counties indicating a widening gap between its population and that of the other counties in the region. The next largest county is Donegal which had overtaken Co. Mayo as the second largest county in the

Region in the early 1970s and has remained in that position since. Clare is the fourth most populous county of the seven Western counties and has retained that position. Although Roscommon had a considerably larger population than Sligo for most of the period since the first Census, Sligo is now marginally more populous and this gap has consistently narrowed since 2002.

Population growth trends over the longer term show the changing regional distribution of the State’s population. All provinces except Leinster have recorded a declining share of the total population (Figure 2). The Western Region share is also depicted in Figure 2 below and the rate of decline is similar to that of Connacht which has been more extreme than the other provinces. The share of population living in the Western Region as a percentage of the state’s population has declined from 30.7% in 1841 to 17.9% in 2011, a consistent declining share although the rate of decline has slowed in recent years (Figure 2 below).

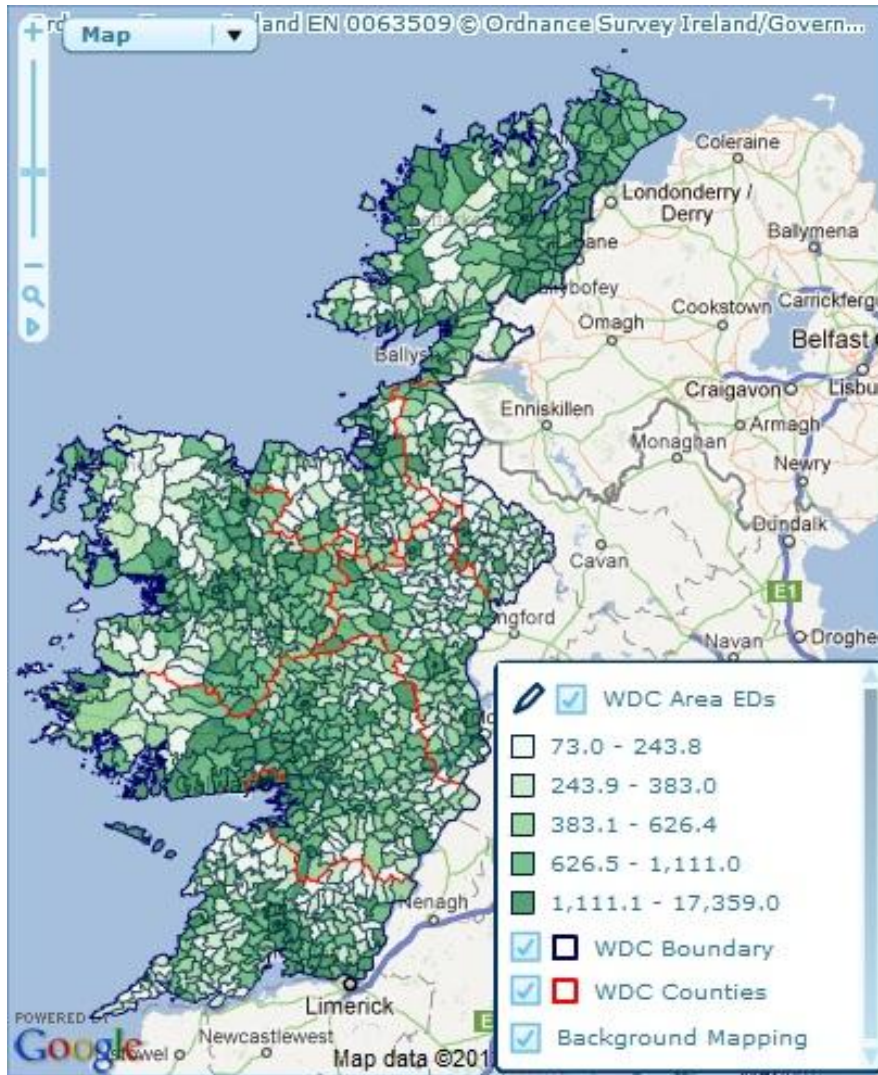
Figure 2: Percentage of the State population in the Western Region and in the Provinces since 1841



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1*, Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD01&PLanguage=0>

The total population of the Western Region was 820,880 in 2011 up from 762,335 in 2006, an increase of 58,545 people (7.7 %), slightly lower than the state average of 8.2%. Map 1 highlights the higher and lower population densities across the region. The darker green areas depict the more urbanised centres, while the paler EDs illustrate areas of low population density. These are particularly evident in north Mayo, south west Mayo and west Galway, east and north Clare, west Sligo, much of Leitrim and central and south west Donegal.

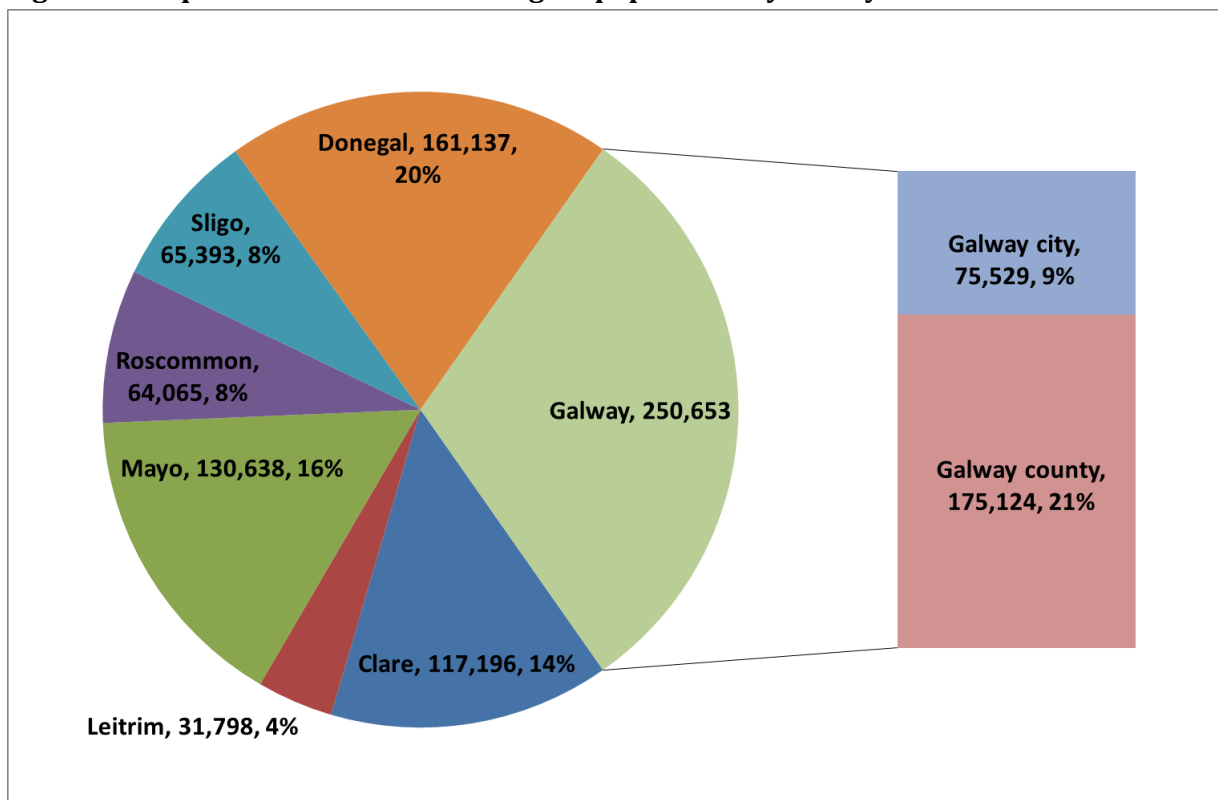
Map 1: Population of the Western Region by ED level, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1* from All-Island Research Observatory, Western Development Commission Mapping Module http://www.airo.ie/mapping-module/atlas/Western_Development_Commission/view

The Western Region is made up of seven counties ranging in size as illustrated in Figure 3. In much of the data presented the population of Galway city and county has been shown separately which allows for easier recognition of the influence of Galway city in the Region as well as noting differing trends between city and county.

Galway remains the largest county, even excluding the population of Galway city and since 2006, the population of the county grew at a much faster rate than the city, by 10% and 4.3% respectively. Donegal, Mayo and Clare are the other larger counties in the region, and Sligo and Roscommon (8% of the Western Region population each) and Leitrim (4%) are considerably smaller.

Figure 3: Proportion of the Western Region population by county 2011

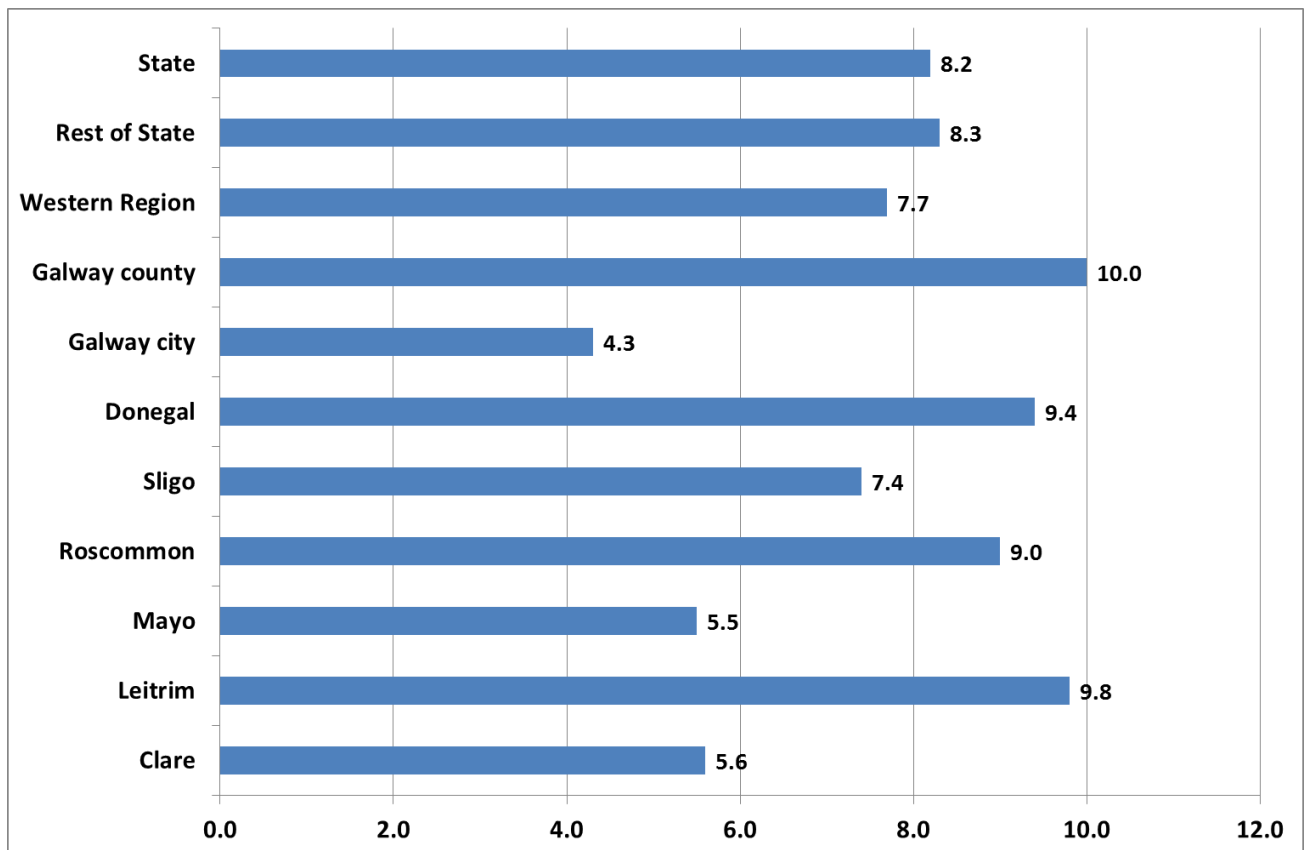
Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 3*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD04&PLanguage=0>

Since the last Census in 2006 the population of all counties has grown (Figure 4) with the highest growth rate in Galway (10.0%, 15,868 persons), which is higher than the state average of 8.2% and the Western Region average of 7.7% and significantly higher than the growth of the city (4.3%).

The other high growth rates occurred in Leitrim (9.8%, 2,848 persons), Donegal (9.4%, 13,873 persons) and Roscommon (9.0%) and this is similar to the trend evident between 2002 and 2006 where counties Leitrim, Galway and Roscommon experienced the highest growth rates.

Those counties with the lower growth rates; Mayo and Clare also had lower than average growth rates in the previous inter-censal period 2002 to 2006, suggesting an on-going trend in the relative performance of each of the counties. In the case of Sligo and Donegal, the growth rates in 2006-2011 were higher than they had been in the previous period 2002-2006.

Figure 4: Percentage population growth in the Western Region and State between 2006 and 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 3*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD04&PLanguage=0>

2.2 Components of population change

We now turn to the question of how much of the population growth can be attributed to natural increase (difference between births and deaths) and how much to migration. Of the total population increase in the region (58,545 people) 54.6% was due to natural increase, while 45.4% was due to net migration. Net migration accounted for a larger share of total population growth in the Western Region than it did in the rest of the state where migration was the cause of just 33% of total population growth.

From Table 1 it can be seen that the natural increase in the Western Region was 31,969 people. There were more births than deaths in every county giving them all a positive natural increase. However, the scale of this natural increase varied with only Galway County having an annual birth rate above the national average. In contrast all counties in the region, excluding Galway city, had higher than average death rates. In fact Leitrim and Mayo had among the highest death rates in the entire country. These higher death rates reflect the older age profile in these counties.

Table 1: Components of population change 2006 to 2011 and average annual rates of change per 1,000 of average population

	Pop. Change 2006-2011	Natural Increase (births minus deaths)	Total Estimated Net Migration ⁴	Avg. annual birth rates per 1,000 of avg. pop.	Avg. annual death rates per 1,000 of avg. pop.	Avg. annual estimated net migration rates per 1,000 of avg. pop.
Clare	6,246	5,009	1,237	15.7	6.9	2.2
Galway	18,983	12,284	6,699	16.3	6.1	5.6
<i>Galway City</i>	3,115	3,886	-771	14.2	3.7	-2.1
<i>Galway County</i>	15,868	8,398	7,470	17.2	7.2	8.9
Leitrim	2,848	1,117	1,731	15.8	8.5	11.4
Mayo	6,799	3,695	3,104	14.4	8.5	4.9
Roscommon	5,297	1,784	3,513	14.0	8.2	11.4
Sligo	4,499	2,425	2,074	15.0	7.3	6.6
Donegal	13,873	5,655	8,218	14.4	7.0	10.7
Western Region	58,545	31,969	26,576	-	-	-
Rest of State	289,859	194,143	95,716	-	-	-
State	348,404	226,112	122,292	16.6	6.4	5.5

Source: CSO, Census of Population 2011, Profile 1: Town and Country, Table 1. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CD104&PLanguage=0>

While in the 2002-2006 period net migration outweighed natural increase as a contributor to population growth in all counties, this was not the case in the 2006-2011 period. Natural increase contributed a greater share of population growth in Clare, Galway, Mayo and Sligo, indeed in Galway city net migration was negative.

Migration was a more important source of population growth in Roscommon, Leitrim and Donegal which had the highest average annual net migration rates in the region. Nationally these counties were exceeded only by Laois, Cavan and Longford.

2.3 Gender and population in the Western Region

The gender profile of the population of the Western Region is examined in this section. Table 2 below shows the proportion of the male population as a percentage of the population across each of the counties and the Western Region. It also identifies change since 2006.

⁴ Net migration refers to the difference between in-migration and out-migration. It would include migration to and from other counties within Ireland as well as abroad.

Table 2: Male percentage of the population in Western Region counties

	2006	2011
Clare	50.5	49.7
Galway City	48.1	48.3
Galway County	51.3	50.4
Leitrim	51.5	50.8
Mayo	50.6	50.1
Roscommon	51.4	50.5
Sligo	49.7	49.6
Donegal	50.2	50.0
Western Region	50.4	49.9
Rest of State	49.9	49.4
State	50.0	49.5

Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 3*. Data available at

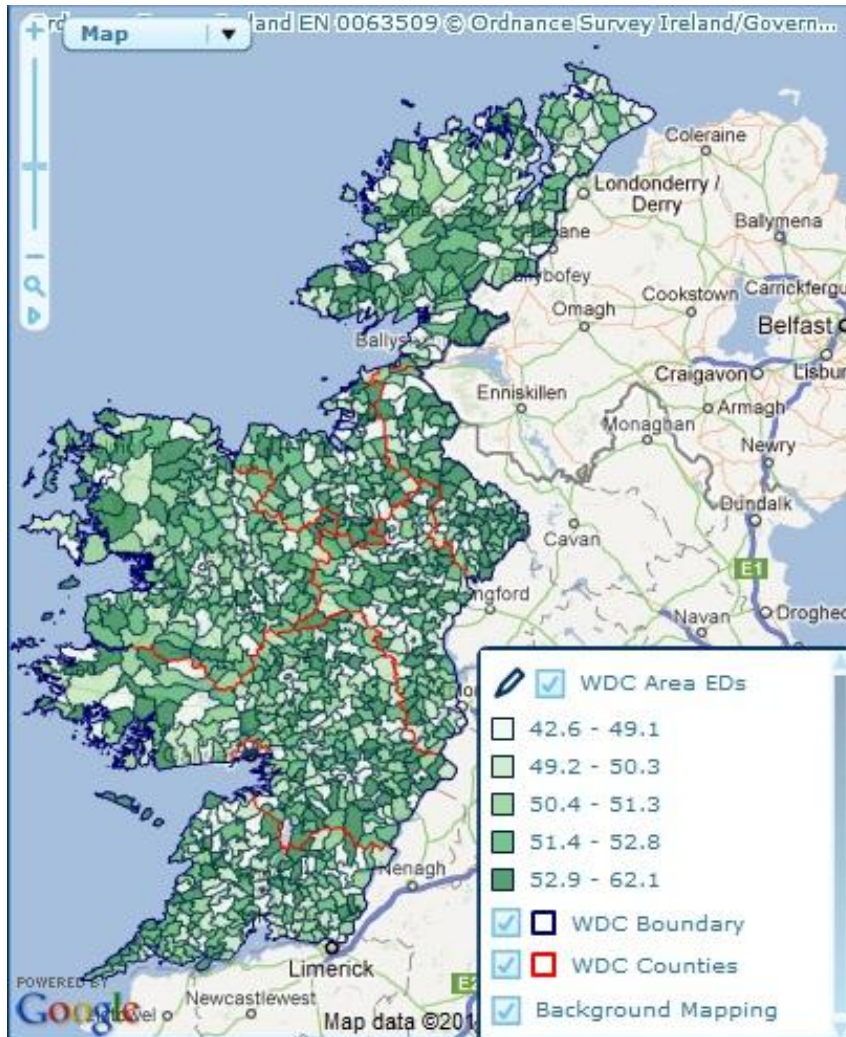
<http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD04&PLanguage=0>

For the entire Western Region, 49.9% of the population is male indicating that women outnumber men, similar to the picture nationally. However within the Western Region in 2011, in four of the counties (Co. Galway, Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon) males outnumber females.

In assessing changes since 2006, there is evidence of a decline in the male share of the population and a corresponding increase in the female share. Since 2006, all regions except for Galway city have seen a declining male share of the population. It is likely that emigration is a factor with male emigration impacting on the gender profile.

Gender composition can be associated with rurality and the two more rural counties; Leitrim and Roscommon have the highest proportions of male population. In contrast, the more urban areas tend to have a higher proportion of females and this is the case in Sligo, Clare and Galway city. These patterns are evident from Map 2 which shows the male share of the population across EDs in the Western Region.

Map 2: Male percentage of Total Population in the Western Region by ED level, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1* from All-Island Research Observatory, Western Development Commission Mapping Module http://www.airo.ie/mapping-module/atlas/Western_Development_Commission/view

The paler colour EDs are those with a lower share of the male population and these are dispersed throughout the region. There are some concentrations in the more rural areas and along the coasts which may be indicative of the longer life expectancy of women. The darker green in rural areas, showing a higher share of the male population reflects the agrarian pattern of employment.

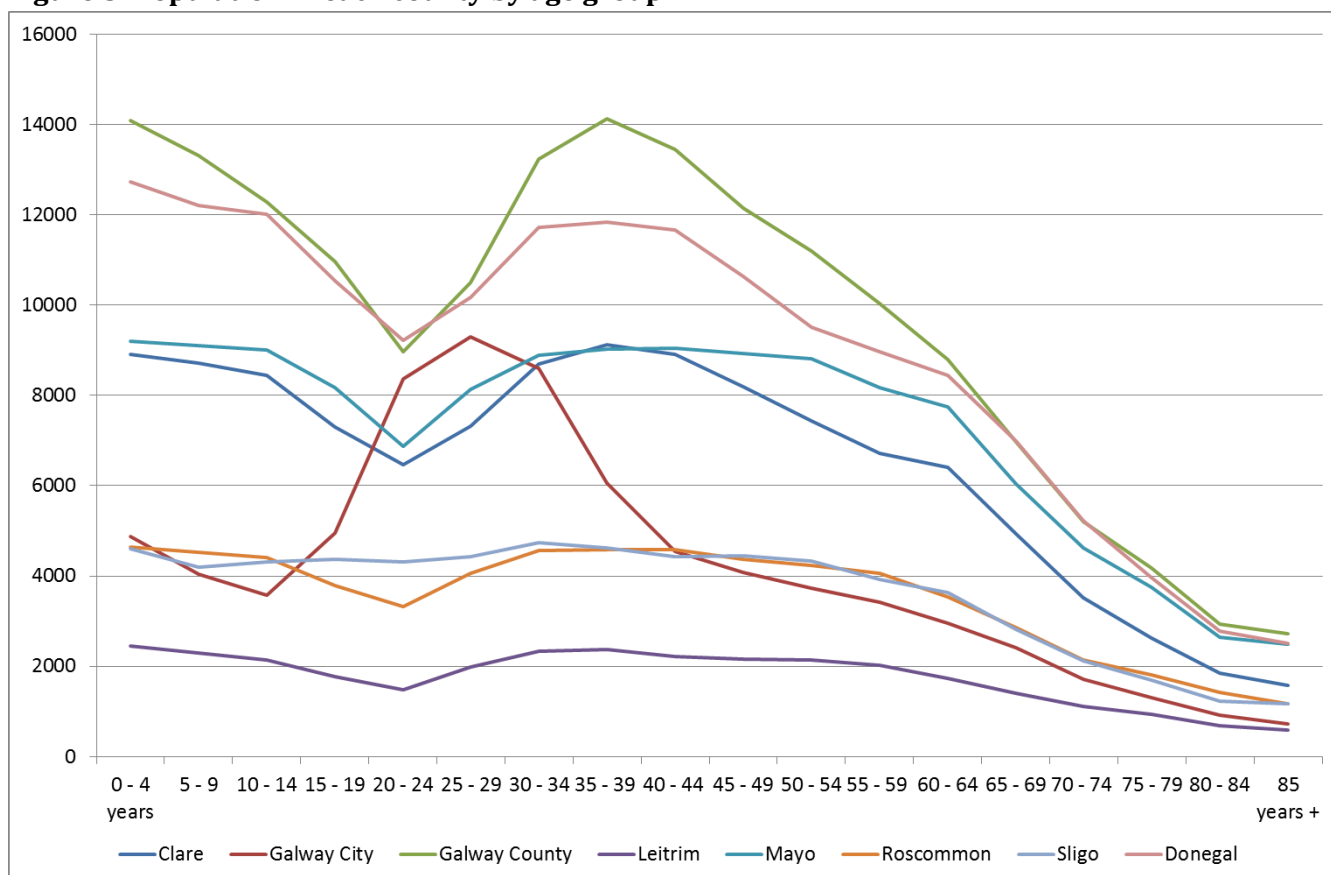
3.0 Age

The age profile of an area is an important indicator of potential employment and economic activity as well as an indicator of the demand for various services, for example childcare, education, elder and health care services.

3.1 Age profile

Figure 5 shows the age profile in each of the counties of the Western Region and the distribution of the population in each of these age groups. Most of the counties follow a similar trend corresponding to lifecycle choices. There are relatively high numbers in the lowest age categories as a result of an increased birth rate in the last few years. Apart from Galway city there are dips in populations aged in the late teens and early 20s, typically because of migration for education and training. This is followed by a recovery in the late 20s age group and beyond. Population generally peaks in the 30-39 years age group and all counties have fewer in age categories over 50 years. The main exception to the trend is in Galway city which shows a very stark population peak in the 25-29 years category, primarily because of the numbers of younger people living in Galway for third level education and employment opportunities.

Figure 5: Population in each county by age group



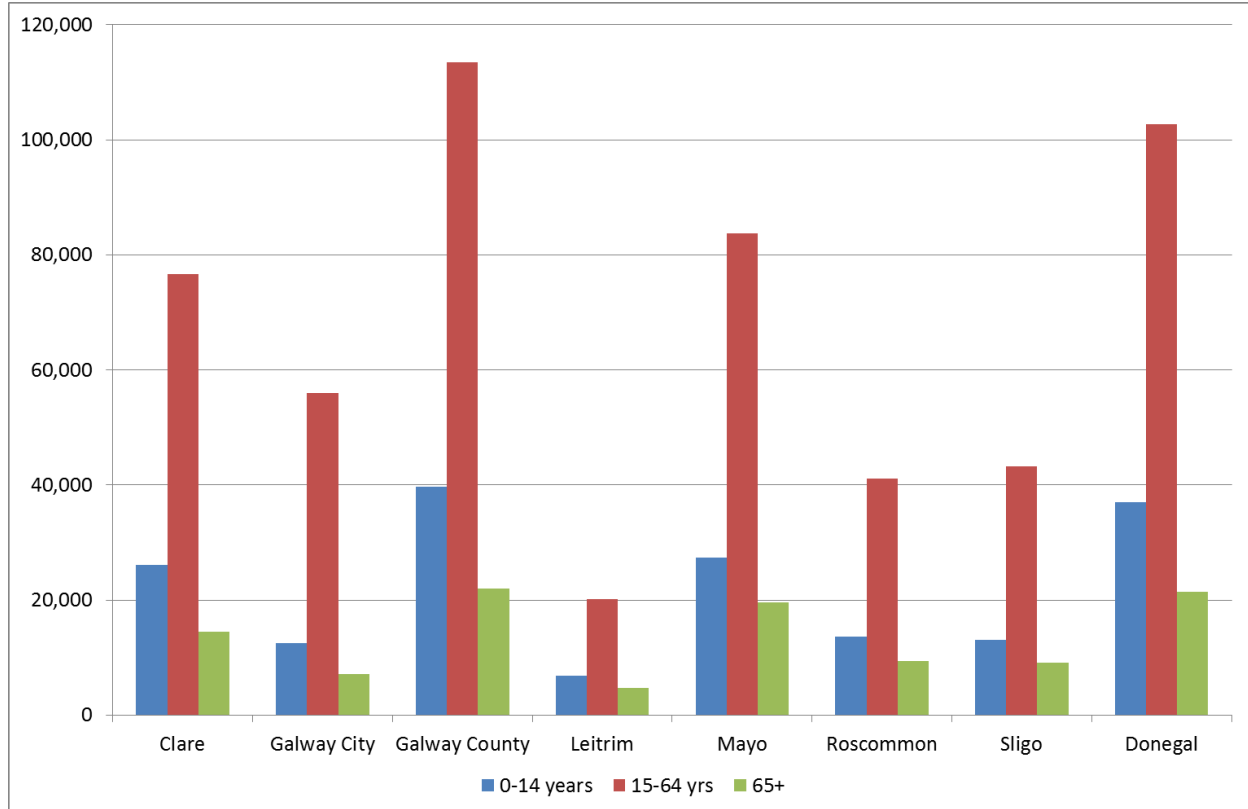
Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 6A*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD08&PLanguage=0>

3.2 Dependency

The age profile of a region can be classified according to ‘dependency’; that is classifying the population by working age (15-64 years) and non-working age (the young and old). Those in the ‘working-age’ category are an indicator of labour market activity and support those in the ‘dependent’ category.

Figure 6 shows the population in each of the counties split into the younger age category (less than 15, the population of working age category (15-64) and the older age category (65+). Each of the counties follow a similar pattern; those of working age outnumber those aged 14 years and under, and this group in turn, outnumbers the elderly (aged 65 and over).

Figure 6: Younger, working and older age categories by county 2011



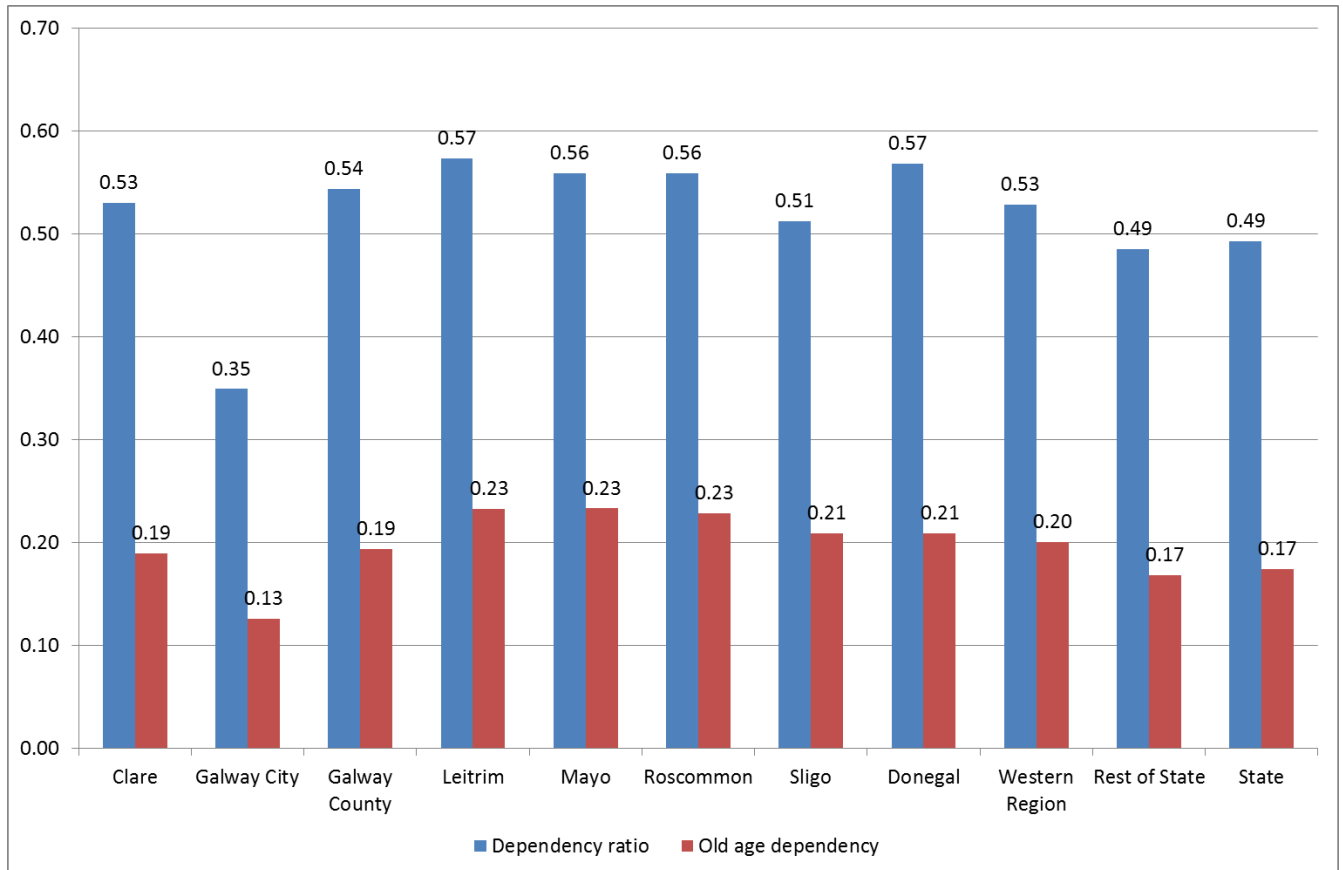
Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 6A*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD08&PLanguage=0>

It could be considered that the population in the 15-64 age group is in effect supporting the population in the other age groups. The ratio of the population in those 'dependent' age groups to those in the working age category is called the 'dependency ratio' and is shown in Figure 7 below. The chart also shows the old age dependency ratio which considers only those aged over 65 years as a proportion of the working age population. This gives an indication of the relative proportion of older people in a county.

The dependency ratio in the Western Region ranges from 0.35 in Galway city to 0.57 in counties Leitrim and Donegal. This compares to a dependency ratio of 0.49 in the state as a whole. The higher dependency in these counties is a result both of higher older age populations and also the migration of younger age groups for education or work.

The old age dependency ratio gives an indication of the relative importance of the older age groups in each county. Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon again have the highest ratios (23 per cent), but the relatively high number of young children in Donegal, which gave rise to a high dependency ratio, means there is a lower old age dependency ratio. Once again, Galway city shows a very low old age dependency ratio, as a result of the very high numbers of working age in that city.

Figure 7: Dependency ratios by county, region and State 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 6A*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD08&PLanguage=0>

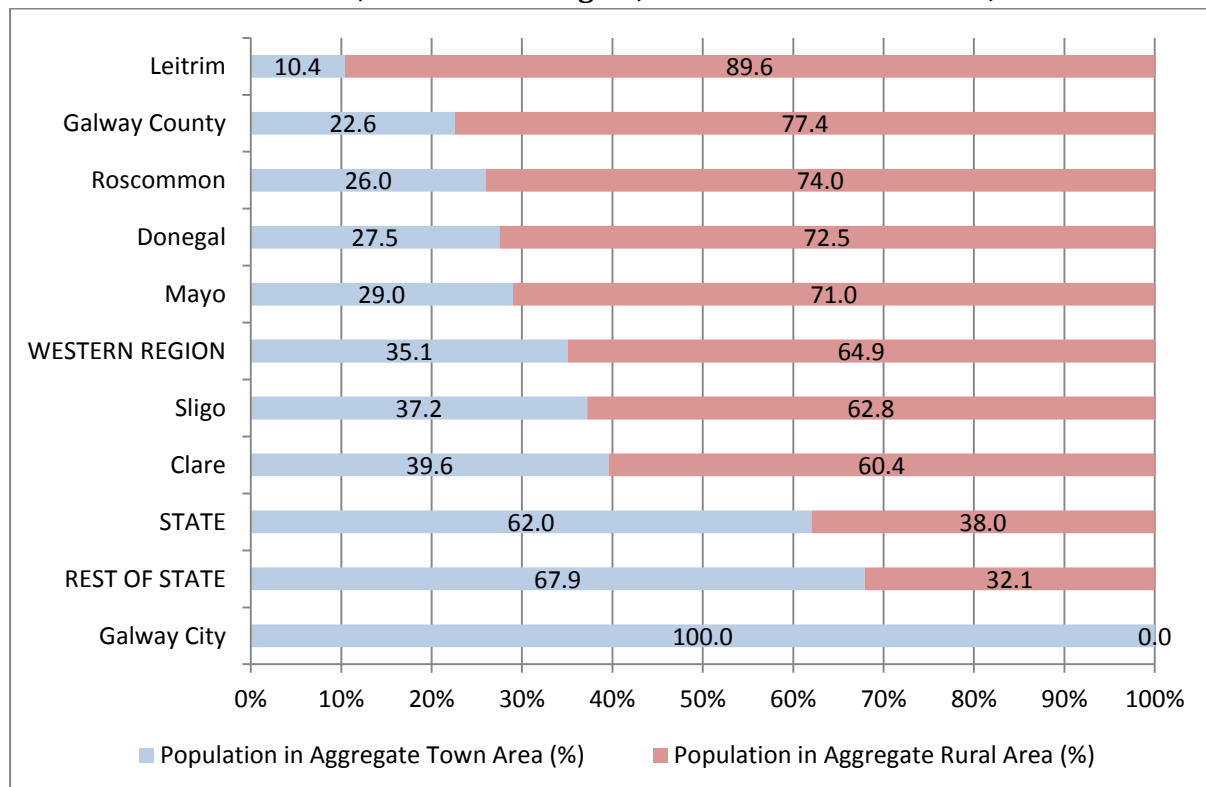
4.0 Rural and Urban

Having considered total population change, gender and age, we will now look at the details of population change in urban and rural parts of the region.

4.1 Rural population

The Western Region is particularly rural with 64.9% of its population living outside of towns of 1,500 population or more. Figure 8 illustrates the rurality of each of the counties in the region and compares them to the state and rest of the state. While 64.9% of people in the Western Region lived in rural areas, it was just 32.1% in the rest of the state.

Figure 8: Percentage of population living in Aggregate Rural Areas and Aggregate Town Areas in western counties, the Western Region, rest of the state and state, 2011

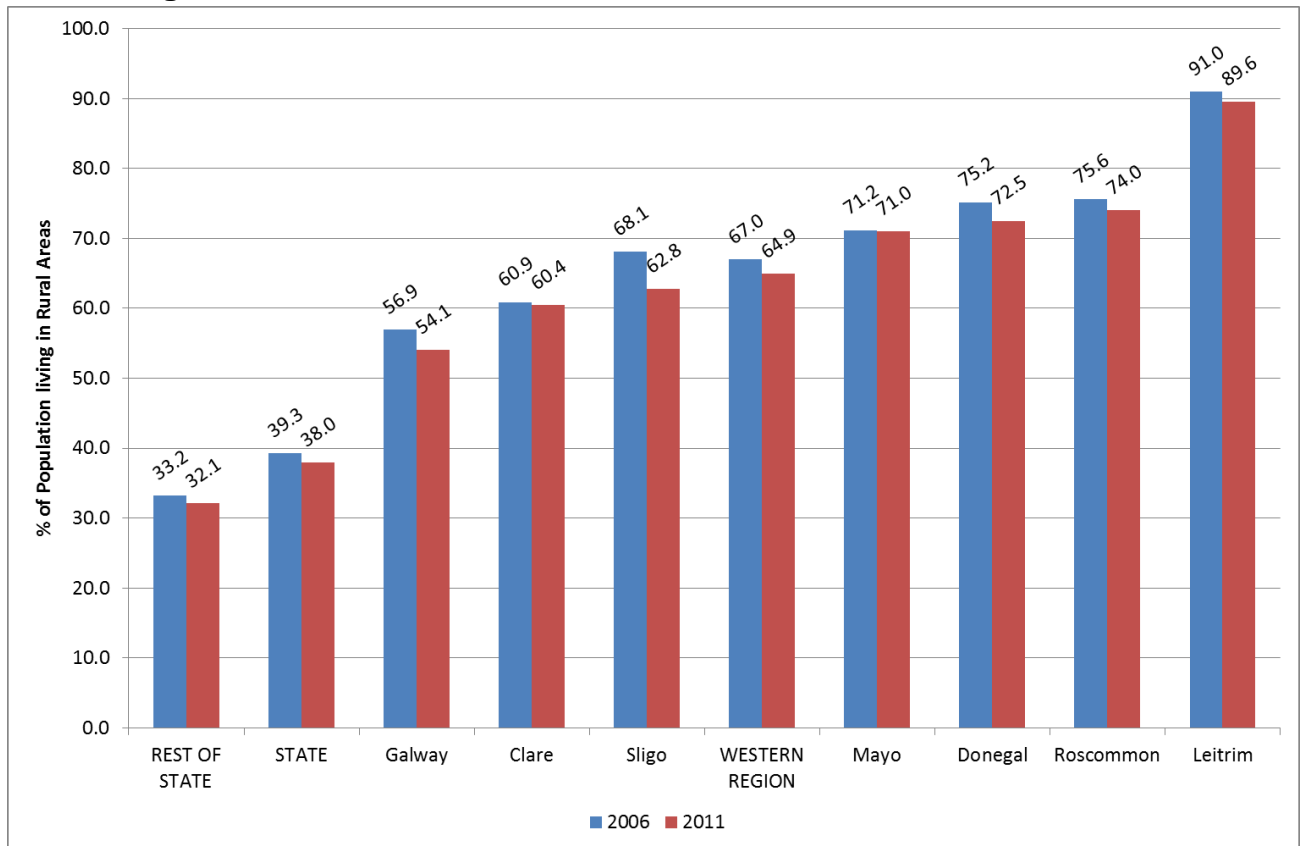


Source: CSO, *Census of Population 2011, Population Classified by Area, Table 3*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CD112&PLanguage=0>

The most rural county is, as expected, Leitrim, which has only one town with a population of more than 1,500, accounting for 10.4% of its total population. Galway county, Roscommon, Donegal and Mayo are also significantly rural. These five counties have the highest rural population of all counties in the state. In the region all counties have a higher share of their population living in rural areas than the state average.

The share of the population living in rural areas in all counties declined between 2006 and 2011 (Figure 9). For the region as a whole the share fell from 67% to 64.9%. The decline would partly be influenced by some towns which were below 1,500 in 2006, and thus counted as rural, increasing to above 1,500 population. This would be a factor for Galway (Clifden, Bearna, Moycullen and Portumna), Sligo (Tubbercurry, Strandhill and Ballymote) and Donegal (Lifford and Bunbeg-Derrybeg) which are the counties that had the largest declines in their rural share (see section 4.2).

Figure 9: Percentage of population living in Aggregate Rural Areas in western counties, Western Region, rest of the state and state, 2006 and 2011



Source: CSO, Census of Population 2011, Population Classified by Area, Table 3. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CD112&PLanguage=0>

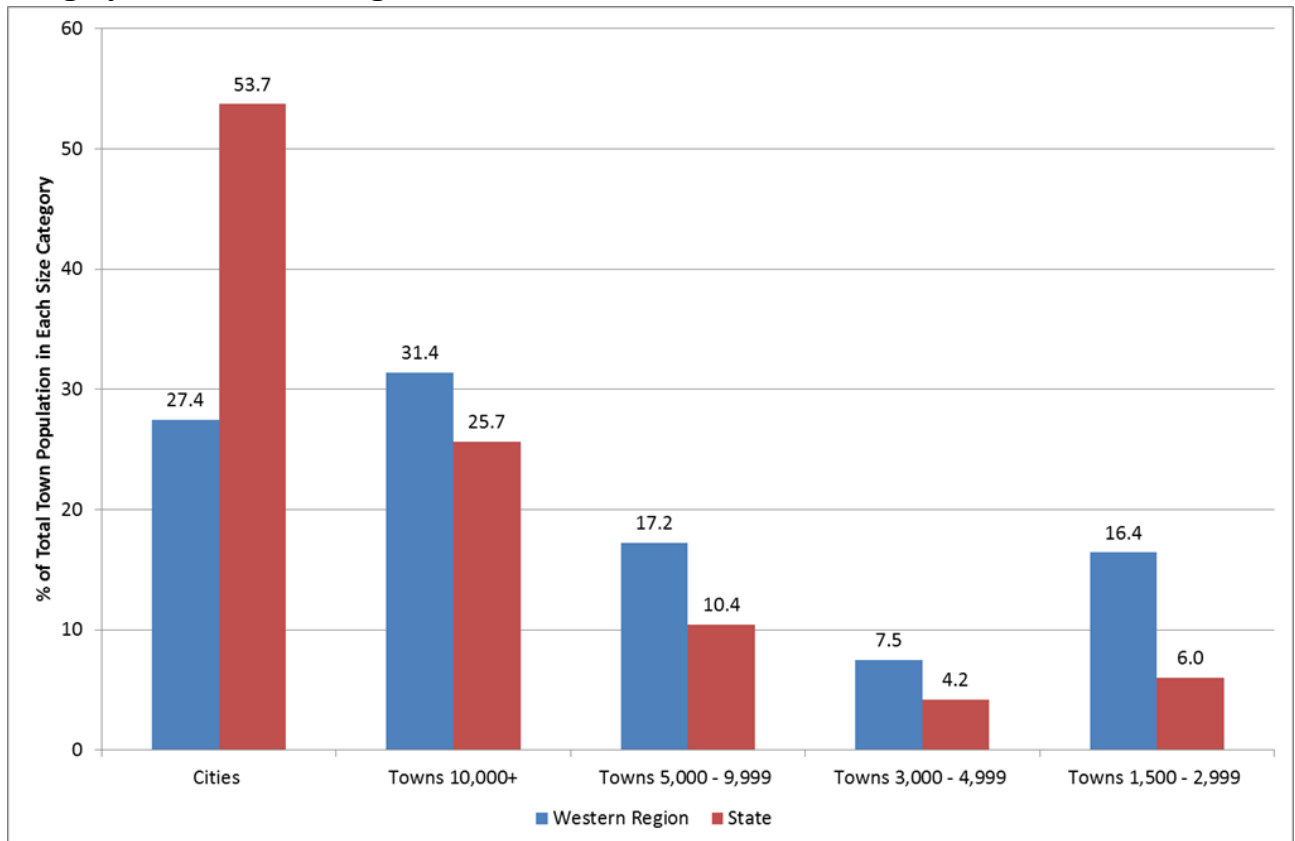
The pattern of increased urbanisation is part of a long term trend towards urbanisation throughout the country. Nationally the share of the population living in urban areas has increased from 58.1% in 1996 to 62% in 2011. In the region the increase has been slightly greater increasing from 28.7% to 35.1% over the same period. In spite of the increasing share living in urban areas, rural areas continue to be the dominant area type in the Western Region and will remain a defining feature of the region in coming years.

4.2 Towns and cities

There are two notable features of the Irish urban system: the dominance of a small number of cities and relatively large towns (in relation to overall population distribution) and the very large number of small settlements. These features are particularly evident in the western counties, which have few large towns, but a significant number of small rural towns. In total there are 40 towns in the Western Region with a population over 1,500 people.

Figure 10 shows how the urban population (everyone living in a town of 1,500 or more) is distributed across different town size categories. Over half the national urban population live in cities, however as the Western Region has only one city the share of its urban population living in a city is far lower (27.4%). As a consequence, a larger share of the region's urban population lives in each of the other town size categories. The difference is most striking for the smaller towns. In the Western Region 16.4% of the urban population lives in small towns (1,500-2,999) while nationally only 6% of the urban population lives in such towns. These are discussed further in section 4.2.2 below.

Figure 10: Percentage of the total Aggregate Town population living in each town size category in the Western Region and the state, 2011



Source: CSO, Census of Population 2011, Population Classified by Area, Table 7. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CD116&PLanguage=0>

4.2.1 Towns of 5,000+ population

There are thirteen towns and cities with a population of more than 5,000 in the Western Region, with Galway city the largest of these (Table 3). The population of all these towns increased since 2006, but there was considerable variation in the rate of growth. Average population growth for the Western Region as a whole was 7.7% for the period. Just under half of the towns (six) had population growth above the region's average.

The fastest growing was Tuam (19.7%) which was also the case in the 2002-2006 period. Tuam is a dormitory town for Galway city which is a key explanation for its rapid growth and it is also an NSS designated hub town. The towns of Bunrana, Roscommon and Loughrea also showed strong growth over the period.

Table 3: Population of towns in the Western Region 5,000 and over, 2006 and 2011

Town	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2006	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2011	Percentage change
	No.	No.	%
Galway City	72,729	76,778	5.6
All cities in State	1,448,852	1,528,960	5.5
10,000 population and over			
Ennis	24,253	25,360	4.6

Town	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2006	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2011	Percentage change
	No.	No.	%
Letterkenny	17,586	19,588	11.4
Sligo	19,402	19,452	0.3
Castlebar	11,891	12,318	3.6
Ballina	10,409	11,086	6.5
<i>All 10,000+ towns in Western Region</i>	<i>83,541</i>	<i>87,804</i>	<i>5.1</i>
<i>All 10,000+ towns in State</i>	<i>660,486</i>	<i>730,415</i>	<i>10.6</i>
5,000 – 9,999 population			
Shannon	9,222	9,673	4.9
Tuam	6,885	8,242	19.7
Buncrana	5,911	6,839	15.7
Ballinasloe	6,303	6,659	5.6
Westport	5,475	6,063	10.7
Roscommon	5,017	5,693	13.5
Loughrea	4,532	5,062	11.7
<i>All 5,000-9,999 towns in Western Region</i>	<i>43,345</i>	<i>48,231</i>	<i>11.3</i>
<i>All 5,000-9,999 towns in State</i>	<i>258,137</i>	<i>297,174</i>	<i>15.1</i>

Source: CSO, Census of Population 2011, Population Classified by Area, Table 7. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CD116&PLanguage=0>

Of the larger towns, the gateway town of Letterkenny, (which is a linked gateway to Derry) had the strongest growth (11.4%). The other North West gateway of Sligo in contrast had very low growth (0.3%) which means that Letterkenny has now surpassed Sligo in terms of population. Much of the population growth in Sligo county was in the smaller towns in the vicinity of Sligo town.

In terms of the size categories, Galway city had similar population growth to the average for all cities. For both other size categories average growth in the region was below the average in the state. For towns of 10,000 or more the average growth in the Western Region (5.1%) was less than half the average for this type of town nationally (10.6%).

Growth in towns of 5,000-9,999 in the region (11.3%) was also lower than the state average (15.1%) for such towns. This indicates that on average large and medium sized towns in the Western Region⁵ have not grown as strongly as similar sized towns elsewhere.

Population changes in towns are sometimes associated with the boundary definitions for these towns, so that population gain outside existing town boundaries is not recorded as an increase in the town. In other cases losses can be associated with an older population structure in some town centres. Further investigation would be required to understand the factors particular to each town

⁵ This category includes all the region's gateways and hubs other than Galway.

which could explain more of the detail of the population changes. This will be the subject of further analysis.

4.2.2 Towns of 1,500-4,999 population

Of the 27 smaller towns in the region (population 1,500 to 4,999) nine of them are new to the list, having passed the 1,500 threshold during the period.

Many of the towns in these size categories have experienced very rapid population growth (Table 4) with only six having growth (or in some cases decline) lower than the average for the Western Region. Sixmilebridge in Co Clare had the highest growth, with its population more than doubling. Clifden, Oranmore, Ballyhaunis, Carndonagh and Claremorris were the next strongest, all growing by over 30%. Meanwhile Ballinrobe, Moycullen, Carrick-on-Shannon and Ballymote all increased their population by over a quarter.

Two towns in the region, Ballyshannon and Gort, experienced population decline since 2006 while Kilrush's population was unchanged. This was in contrast to the previous inter-censal period when Gort experienced growth of 53%. The change is likely due to the departure of many of the migrants who moved to Gort during the 2002-2006 period.

Table 4: Population of towns in the Western Region 1,500-4,999, 2006 and 2011

Town	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2006	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2011	Percentage change
	No.	No.	%
3,000 – 4,999 population			
Ballybofey-Stranorlar	4,176	4,852	16.2
Oranmore	3,513	4,799	36.6
Carrick-on-Shannon	3,163	3,980	25.8
Athenry	3,205	3,950	23.2
Claremorris	2,595	3,412	31.5
<i>All 3,000-4,999 towns in Western Region</i>	<i>16,652</i>	<i>20,993</i>	<i>26.1</i>
<i>All 3,000-4,999 towns in State</i>	<i>100,776</i>	<i>119,705</i>	<i>18.8</i>
1,500 – 2,999 population			
Ballinrobe	2,098	2,704	28.9
Kilrush	2,694	2,695	0
Gort	2,734	2,644	-3.3
Donegal	2,339	2,607	11.5
Boyle	2,522	2,588	2.6
Carndonagh	1,923	2,534	31.8
Sixmilebridge	1,659	2,507	51.1
Ballyshannon	2,686	2,503	-6.8
Ballyhaunis	1,708	2,312	35.4
Bundoran	1,964	2,140	9.0
Clifden*	1,497	2,056	37.3

Town	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2006	Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2011	Percentage change
	No.	No.	%
Castlerea	1,873	1,985	6.0
Bearna*	0	1,878	..
Ballaghaderreen	1,720	1,822	5.9
Newmarket-on-Fergus	1,542	1,773	15.0
Tubbercurry*	1,421	1,747	22.9
Lifford*	1,448	1,658	14.5
Strandhill*	1,413	1,596	13.0
Moycullen*	1,237	1,559	26.0
Bunbeg-Derrybeg*	1,359	1,553	14.3
Ballymote*	1,229	1,539	25.2
Portumna*	1,377	1,530	11.1
<i>All 1,500-2,999 towns in Western Region</i>	<i>38,443</i>	<i>45,930</i>	<i>19.5</i>
<i>All 1,500-2,999 towns in State</i>	<i>138,315</i>	<i>170,628</i>	<i>23.4</i>

*New towns in the over 1,500 category

Source: CSO, Census of Population 2011, Population Classified by Area, Table 7. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CD116&PLanguage=0>

In terms of size categories, the category of 3,000-4,999 people was the only one⁶ where the region out-performed the state average – 26.1% compared with 18.8%. It was also the size category with the strongest population growth in the region. For the smallest category of towns, the region (19.5%) had lower average population growth than the state (23.4%).

What is clear is that in both the region and the state smaller towns (1,500-4,999 persons) grew more strongly than larger towns (5,000+).

⁶ Except for cities.

5.0 Households

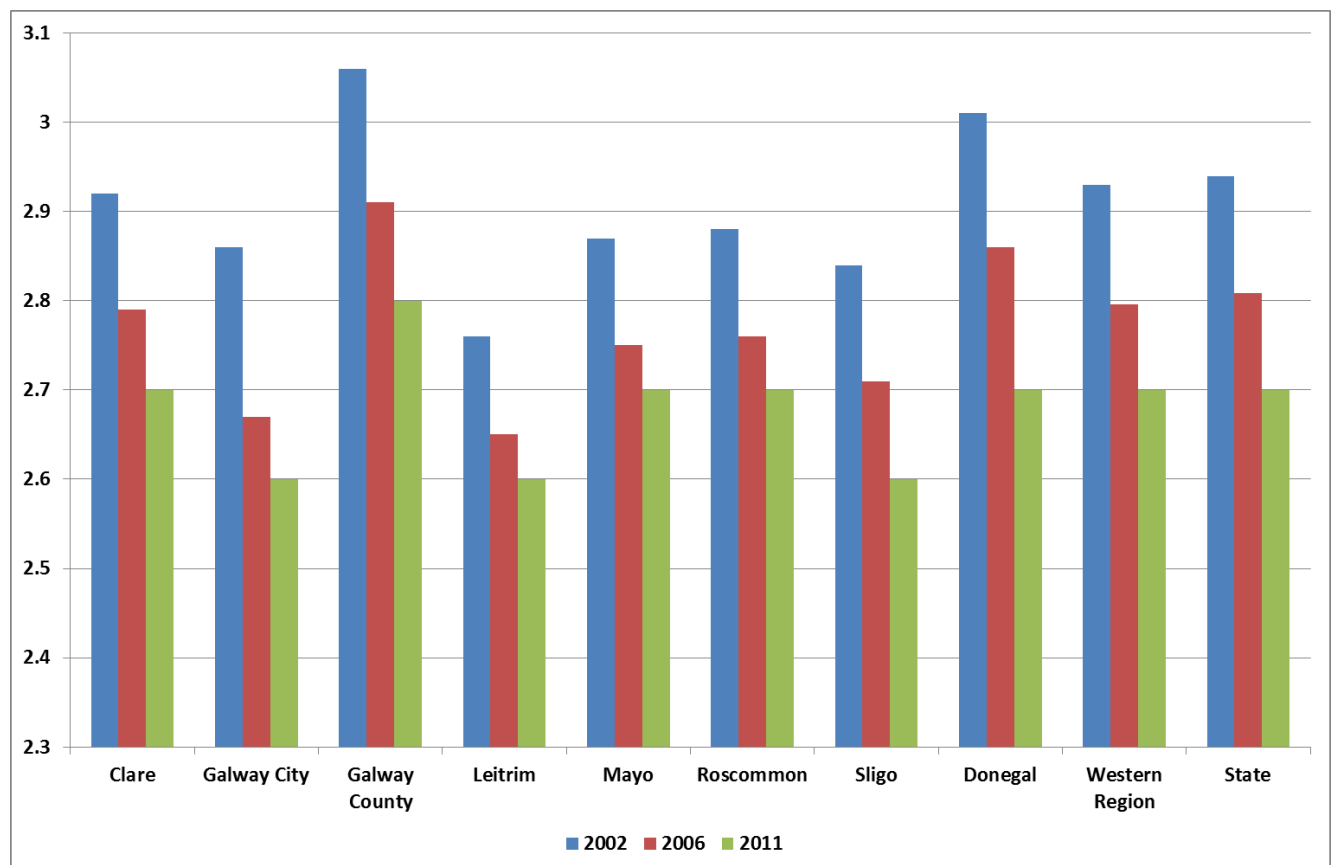
The following section examines data on household size and the elderly living alone.

5.1 Household size

The average number of people living in households (Figure 11) has been gradually declining, as part of the trend towards smaller families, and more people living alone. The figure below shows the average household size for each census 2002, 2006 and 2011 and the change in that short period is quite evident. Household size seems to be converging more and more to the national average. Four counties in the Western Region (Clare, Mayo, Roscommon and Donegal) now have the same as the State average (2.7 persons).

In contrast County Galway has the largest household size (2.8), an indicator of more families, and Leitrim, Sligo and Galway city all have the smallest average household size (2.6), which reflects the larger numbers living alone.

Figure 11: Average number of persons per private household by county, 2002, 2006 and 2011

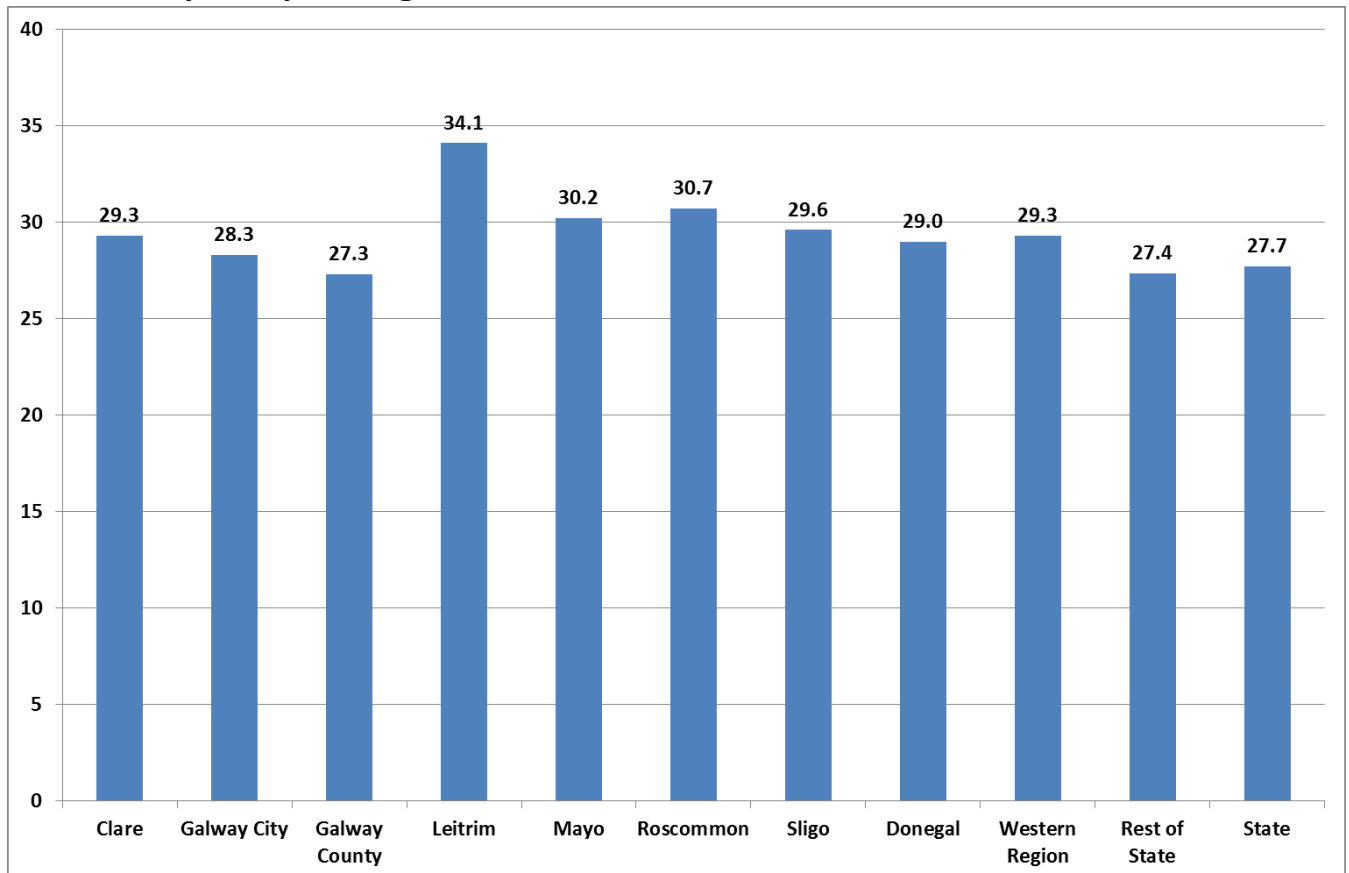


Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 9*. Data available at, <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD10&PLanguage=0>

5.2 Older people living alone

An ageing population and ever-reducing household size is likely to impact on the numbers of elderly living alone. This has important implications for public policy and service provision. The older population living alone is more vulnerable to isolation, especially if they lack private transport and there are implications for health, social services and transport. Figure 12 shows the share of older people who live alone.

Figure 12: Persons living alone over 65 as a percentage of Persons aged 65+ in private households by county and Region 2011

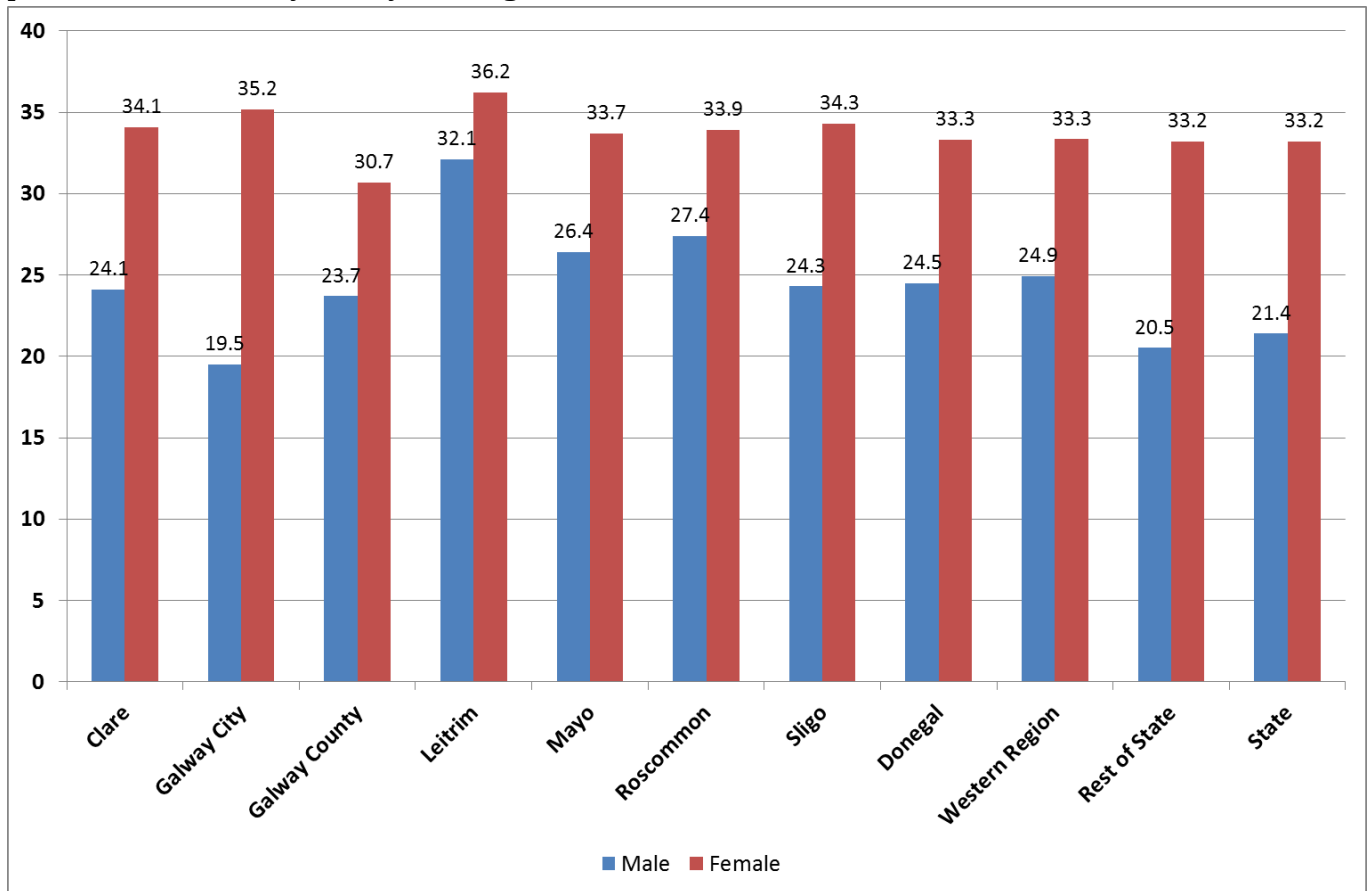


Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1*, Data available at, <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD16&PLanguage=0>

Leitrim has the highest proportion of its elderly population living alone, with in excess of a third (34.1%) of those over 65 years living alone. Counties Roscommon and Mayo also have relatively high proportions of elderly residents living alone with in excess of 30% each. Across the Western Region, only County Galway has a slightly lower than national average (27.3% and 27.7% respectively) proportion of elderly living alone. This is related to the larger household size in County Galway (Figure 8), indicative of a higher share of families living there.

In examining gender patterns as shown in Figure 13, there is significant variation in the proportion of men and women living alone, something which is mainly associated with the longer life expectancy of women. All counties have more elderly females than males living alone however in Galway city there is a considerably higher share of females living alone. The gender difference is not as stark across more rural areas such as Leitrim for example indicating a relatively higher share of male elderly likely to arise from the employment structure there with for example a heavier dependency on traditionally male employment sectors such as farming.

Figure 13: Males and Females living alone over 65 as a percentage of Persons aged 65+ in private households by county and Region 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1*, Data available at, <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD16&PLanguage=0>

6.0 The Irish Language

Data on use of the Irish language is included in the Principal Demographic Results. Data on Irish language usage and ability for every county⁷ is not included, so we cannot calculate the figures for the Western Region, however there is data on the Gaeltacht areas. The Western Region includes four Gaeltacht areas – Donegal, Galway city, Galway county and Mayo. Here we will examine two aspects of the Irish language – ability to speak Irish and frequency of usage.

Firstly it is interesting to note that almost 70% (54,010 people) of everyone in the country who spoke Irish on a daily basis (outside the education system) (77,185 people) did not live in Gaeltacht areas in 2011.

6.1 Ability to speak Irish

The total population of the Gaeltacht areas in the Western Region (aged 3 years or over) was 81,072 in 2011. This was 5.9% higher than in 2006, higher growth than in all Gaeltacht areas (5.2%).

The number of Irish speakers (3 years and over) living in the Gaeltacht areas of the Western Region was 54,777 (Table 5). While this also increased between 2006 and 2011 (+3.3%) it was less of an increase than that of the total population of these areas. The increase in the region was again slightly higher than in all Gaeltacht areas.

Table 5: Ability to speak Irish of population aged three years and over in Gaeltacht areas in the Western Region, 2006 and 2011

Gaeltacht Area	Irish Speakers (No.)	% Change Irish Speakers (%)	Irish Speakers as a % of Total*	
			2006	2011
	2011	2006-2011	2006	2011
Donegal	17,132	1.3	74.5	72.7
Galway city	7,123	3.6	50.7	49.8
Galway county	23,855	6.6	76.8	75.2
Mayo	6,667	-2.7	65.6	64.1
Western Region	54,777	3.3	69.9	68.5
All Gaeltacht Areas	66,238	3.1	70.8	69.5

Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 34*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD34&PLanguage=0>
*excluding not stated

In total 68.5% of those living in Gaeltacht areas in the Western Region were Irish speakers in 2011, down from 69.9% in 2006. In both years the share of Irish speakers in the Western Region Gaeltacht areas was about one percentage point below the average for all Gaeltacht areas.

Galway County is the largest Gaeltacht area in the region with Mayo the smallest. These were also the two areas with the best and worst growth performances respectively in the number of Irish speakers between 2006 and 2011.

The share of Irish speakers varies across the Gaeltacht areas in the region, ranging from just under half in the Galway city Gaeltacht to just over three-quarters in the Galway county Gaeltacht. All the Gaeltacht areas experienced a decline in their share of Irish speakers over the period.

⁷ This is due to be issued in October.

6.2 Frequency of speaking Irish

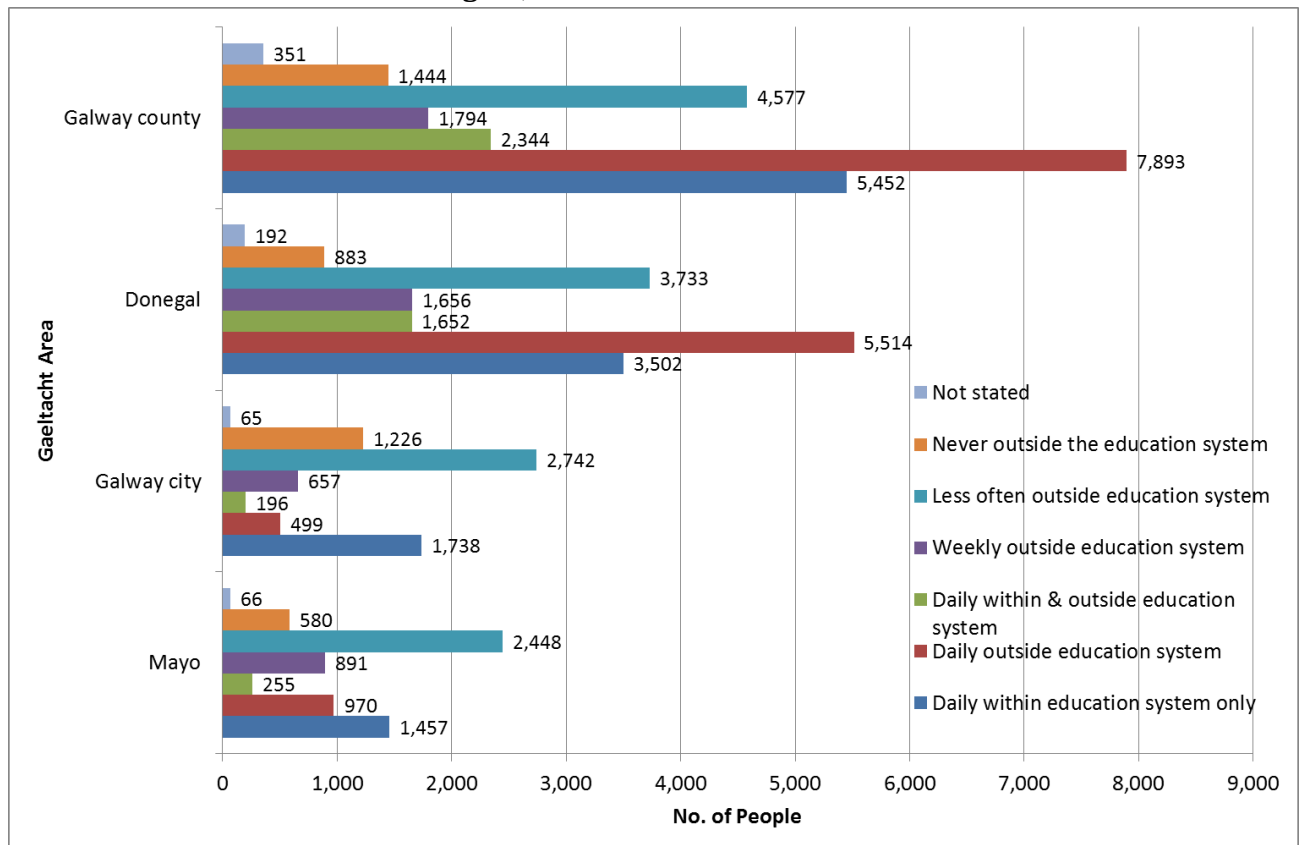
Probably of greater interest than people’s stated ability to speak Irish, is the frequency with which they speak it. Of particular interest are those who speak Irish on a daily basis outside of an education setting.

In total 14,876 Irish speakers in the Western Region’s Gaeltacht areas spoke Irish on a daily basis outside of education. This was a marginal increase (+0.9%) since 2006 and less of an increase than in all Gaeltacht areas (+1.5%). A further 4,447 people in the Western Region’s Gaeltacht areas spoke Irish daily both within and outside education which was a +11.1% increase since 2006. This was greater than the +9.4% growth in all Gaeltacht areas.

In the Galway County and Donegal Gaeltacht areas, people who speak Irish on a daily basis outside of education were the largest group among all Irish speakers (Figure 14). This was followed by those who speak it daily in education only and those who speak it less often than weekly.

In contrast in the smaller Gaeltachts of Galway City and Mayo the biggest group was those who speak Irish less often than weekly, followed by those speaking it daily within education only. In Galway City daily speakers outside of education were only the fifth largest category.

Figure 14: Irish speakers aged three years and over by frequency of speaking Irish in Gaeltacht areas in the Western Region, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 32*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD32&PLanguage=0>

7.0 Housing

In relation to housing, four aspects will be examined here – nature of occupancy, housing stock, vacancy rates and the fuel used for central heating.

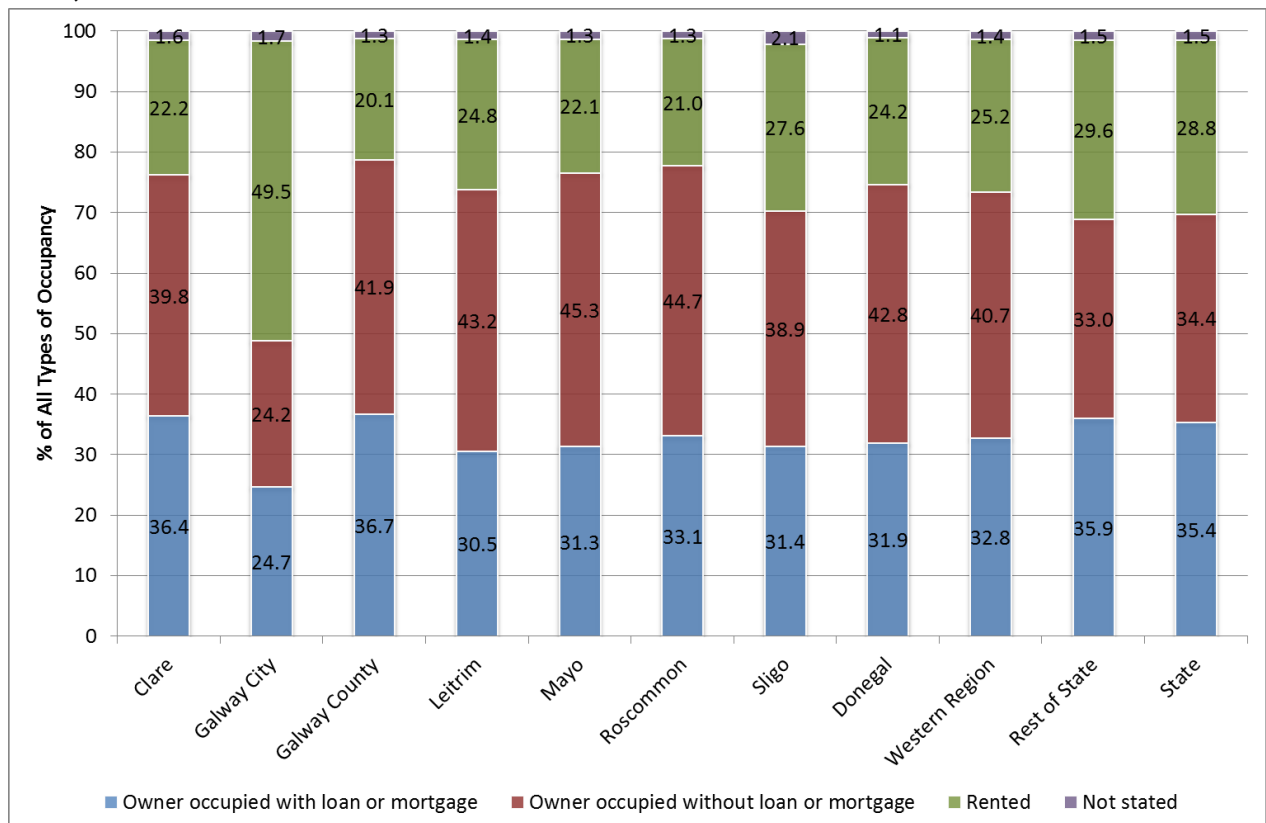
7.1 Nature of occupancy

In total there were 296,785 private households living in permanent housing units in the Western Region in 2011.⁸ The region accounted for 18% of private households nationally. The region experienced an increase of +12.6% in the number of households between 2006 and 2011, marginally higher than the increase in the rest of the state (+12.2%).

Given current issues in relation to mortgage arrears etc. it is useful to examine the type of occupancy of private households in the Western Region (Figure 15). This data relates to people’s homes and would not include details of any investment properties, it only relates to occupied housing units.

Firstly, comparing the region with the rest of the state we see that the region has a far higher share of households living in owner occupied houses without a loan or mortgage (40.7% compared with 33%). This would partly be due to the older age profile within the region, with people in older age groups more likely to own their home outright. It is also due to the more rural nature of the region as such ownership is more common in rural than urban areas (see below).

Figure 15: Nature of occupancy in western counties, Western Region, rest of the state and state, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 39*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD39&PLanguage=0>

⁸ A private household comprises either one person living alone or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address with common housekeeping arrangements e.g. sharing at least one meal a day or sharing a living room. A permanent housing unit would be a house, flat, apartment or bed-sit.

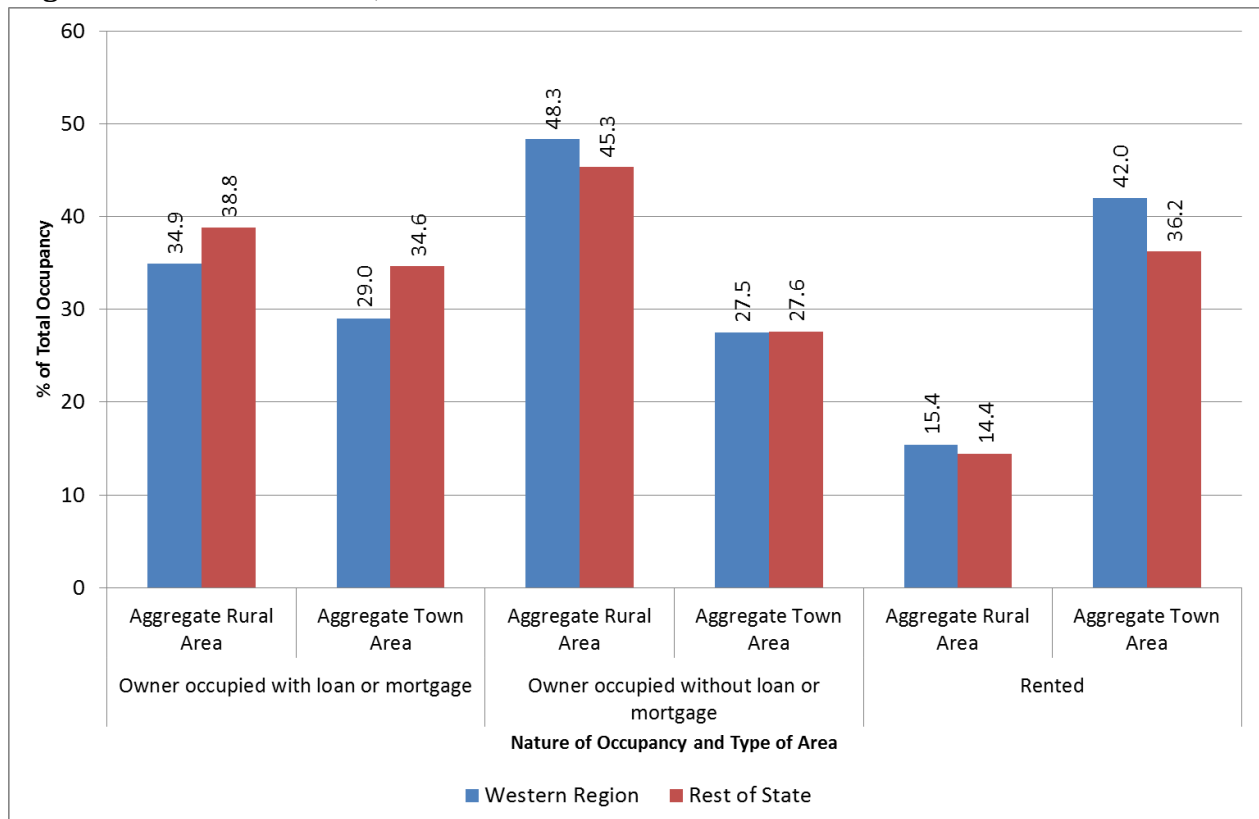
The region has a lower share of households in owner occupied homes with a loan or mortgage (32.8% compared with 35.9%). The region also has a notably lower share of households who are renting.

The nature of occupancy varies across counties. Galway city has quite a different pattern with about half of households renting their home and a low share owning their home outright. In contrast Mayo, Roscommon and Leitrim have the highest shares of households owning their home without a mortgage, again the link with the older age profile and greater rurality is clear. In fact Mayo and Roscommon have the highest shares in the country of households without a mortgage or loan.

The highest rates of home ownership with a mortgage or loan are in Galway County and Clare. These are considerably higher than the other counties and are above the average for the rest of the state. The younger age profile of these counties and the growth of commuter towns around Galway city and Limerick/Ennis are likely factors in this.

The nature of occupancy also differs between rural and urban areas, with higher rates of home ownership and lower renting among rural households (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Nature of occupancy in Aggregate Rural and Aggregate Town Areas in Western Region and rest of the state, 2011



*The figures for 'not stated' are not shown in the figure. They are equal to about 1.5%.

Source: CSO, This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 39. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD39&PLanguage=0>

The largest difference between rural and urban areas is the extent of home ownership without a mortgage or loan. This was considerably higher in rural areas than in urban areas in both the region and rest of the state. In fact rural areas in the Western Region are the source of the region's higher overall share of such ownership. The pattern of outright home ownership in urban areas is the same for the region and rest of the state.

Home ownership with a mortgage or loan is also higher in rural than urban areas, though the difference is not as great. Again the region has a lower share of such occupancy than the rest of the state in both rural and urban areas.

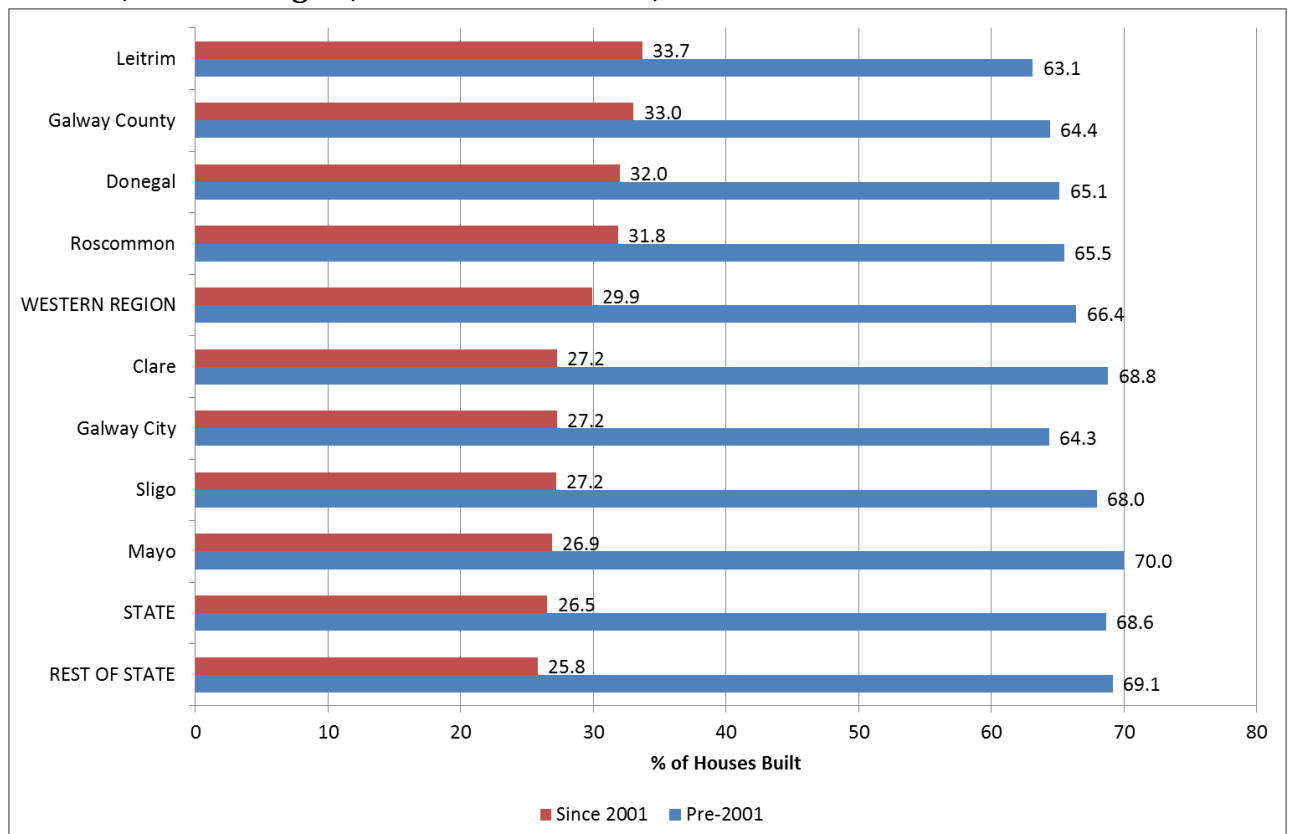
Renting is far more common in urban than rural areas. In the Western Region 42% of households living in urban areas are renting their home, a higher share than for households living in urban areas in the rest of the state (36.2%). This could be due to households in the region being more likely to rent in urban areas but more likely to purchase in rural areas. Indeed home ownership (with or without mortgage) among urban households in the Western Region is considerably lower than home ownership among urban households in the rest of the state (56.5% compared with 62.2%).

7.2 Year houses built

Given the extent of the building boom over the past decade, it is interesting to examine the proportion of households living in homes which have been built since 2001. This data is based on responses from households and therefore only includes **occupied homes**.

In the Western Region 29.9% of all occupied homes have been built since 2001 (Figure 17). This is greater than the proportion in the rest of the state (25.8%). While the share of newer homes varies considerably across counties in the region, they are all higher than the average in the rest of the state. The share is highest in Leitrim and Galway County.⁹

Figure 17: Share of occupied homes constructed before and since 2001 in western counties, Western Region, rest of state and state, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 39*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD39&PLanguage=0>

⁹ Four areas nationally have higher shares than Leitrim - Laois, Meath, Fingal and Longford.

7.3 Housing stock

The previous figures relate to households, we now turn to physical housing units (houses, apartments, bed-sits etc.) whether occupied or unoccupied.

In total the stock of housing in the Western Region is 399,260 housing units. This is an increase of 14.9% on 2006 (Table 6). This was greater than the increase in the rest of the state (+12.2%). Within the region the highest growth in the housing stock occurred in Donegal, Leitrim and Roscommon.

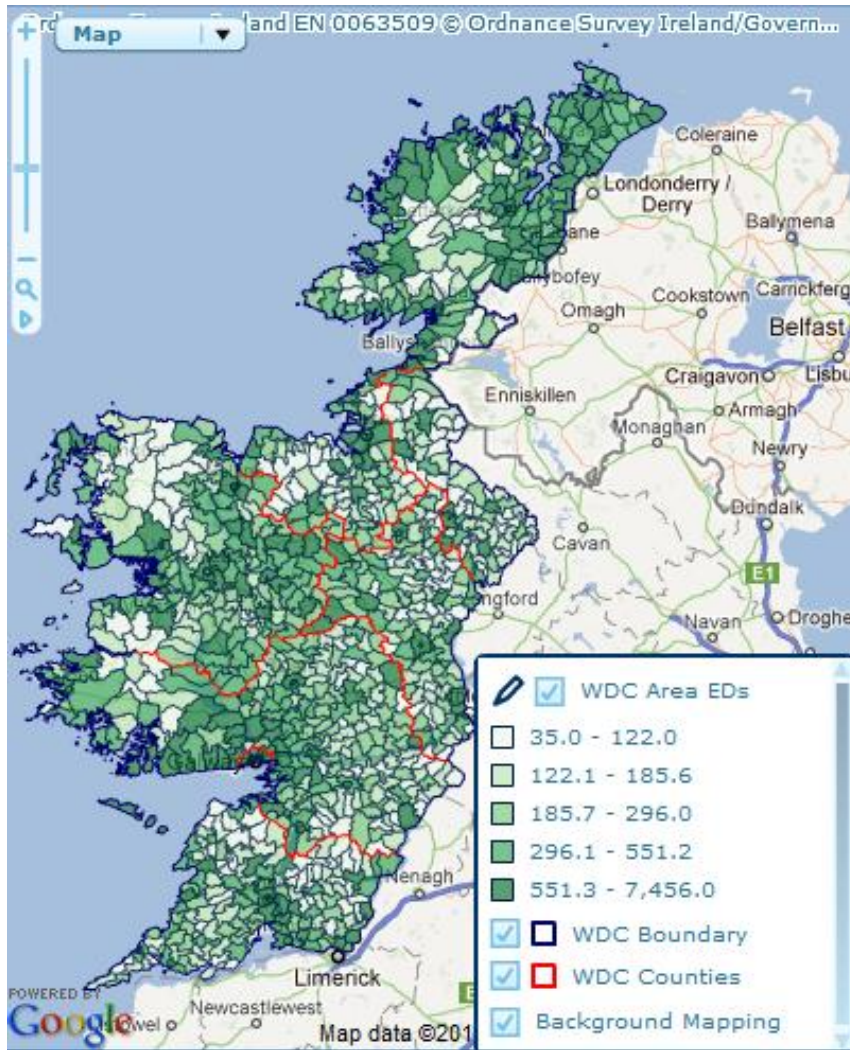
Table 6: Housing stock in the western counties, Western Region, rest of state and state, 2006-2011

	Housing Stock 2006 (No.)	Housing Stock 2011 (No.)	% Change in Housing Stock 2006-2011 (%)
Clare	48,834	55,616	13.9
Galway	98,326	111,177	13.1
<i>Galway City</i>	30,589	33,655	10.0
<i>Galway County</i>	67,737	77,522	14.4
Leitrim	15,282	18,128	18.6
Mayo	58,717	65,792	12.0
Roscommon	26,979	31,585	17.1
Sligo	28,751	33,044	14.9
Donegal	70,526	83,918	19.0
Western Region	347,415	399,260	14.9
Rest of State	1,422,198	1,595,585	12.2
State	1,769,613	1,994,845	12.7

Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 42*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD45&PLanguage=0>

The distribution of the region's housing stock (Map 3) shows concentrations around the larger urban centres, in some cases spreading for quite a distance as around Galway City and Castlebar. The concentration of housing in Donegal close to the border, and within commuting distance of Derry city and Letterkenny, is also very strong as is the concentration along the county's western coast, a good share of which are likely holiday homes, a similar pattern can be seen along the Galway coastline.

Map 3: Housing stock by electoral division across the Western Region, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1* from All-Island Research Observatory, Western Development Commission Mapping Module http://www.airo.ie/mapping-module/atlas/Western_Development_Commission/view

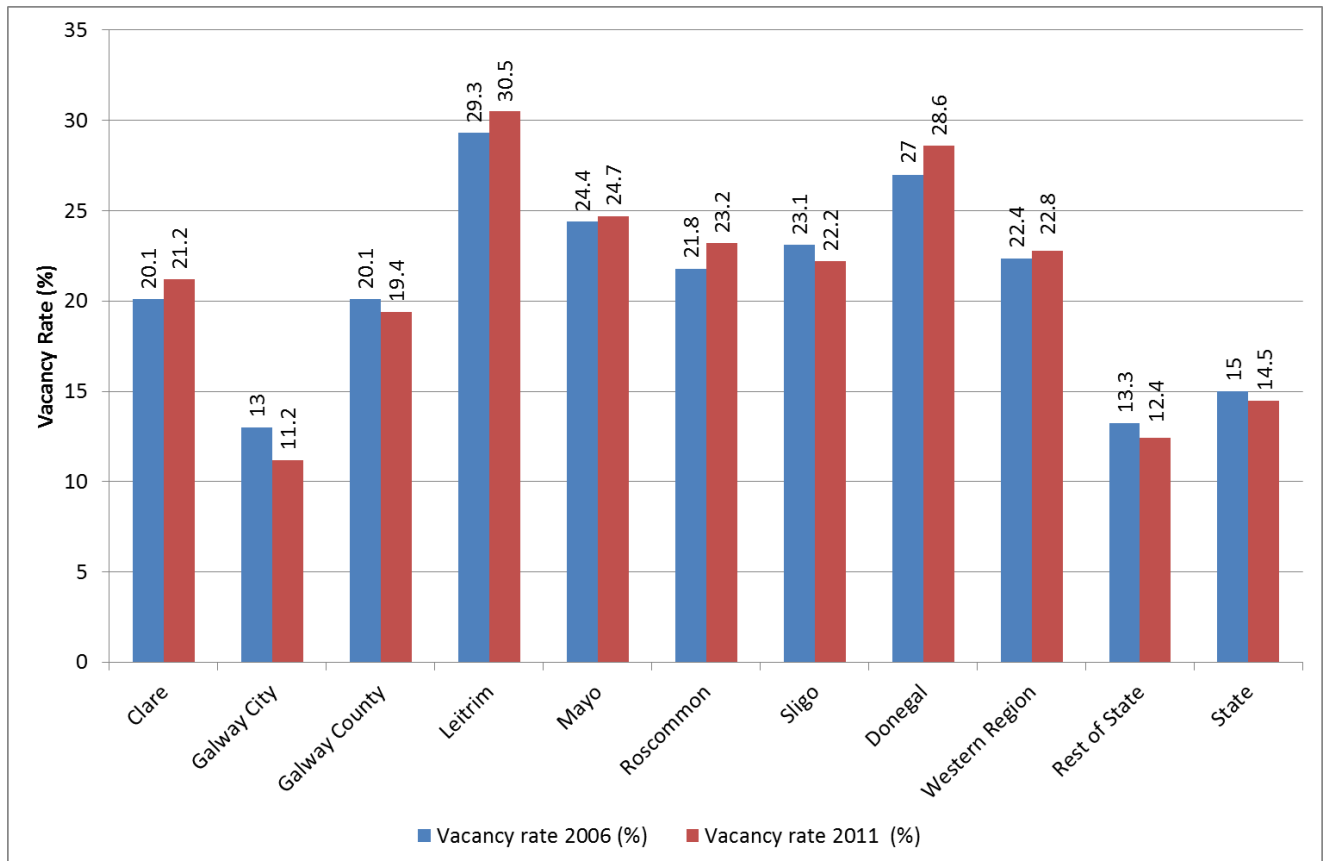
7.4 Vacant dwellings

In total there are 91,015 vacant housing units in the Western Region.¹⁰ This includes vacant houses, flats and holiday homes. This was an increase of +17.1% since 2006 compared with a +5.3% increase in the rest of the state. An increase in the number of unoccupied houses can be due to increasing supply and/or slower population growth/population decline.

The vacancy rate measures the share of the housing stock in each county that is vacant. The average vacancy rate in the Western Region is 22.8%, marginally higher than in 2006 (Figure 18). This is considerably higher than the average vacancy rate in the rest of the state (12.4%), which in fact declined since 2006.

¹⁰ This excludes houses that were unoccupied on Census night as the owners were temporarily absent.

Figure 18: Vacancy rates in western counties, Western Region, rest of state and state, 2006 and 2011



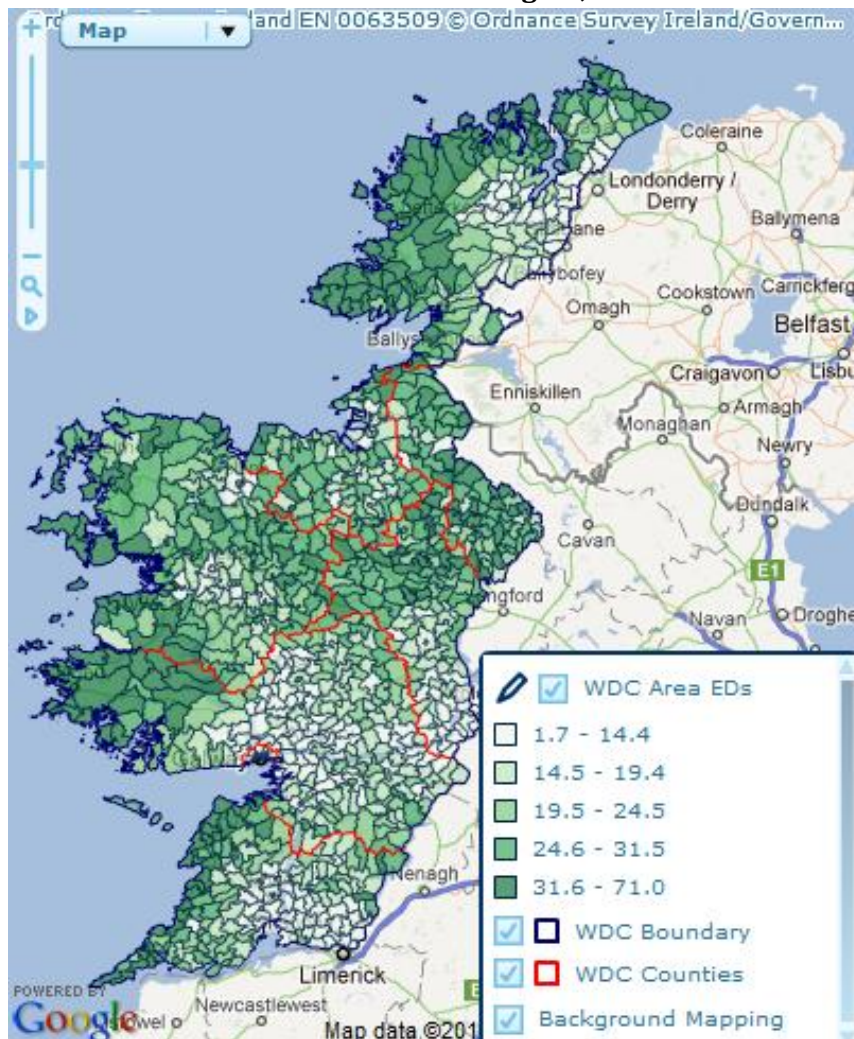
Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 42*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD45&PLanguage=0>

Most counties in the Western Region experienced an increase in their vacancy rates between 2006 and 2011. Galway City and County and Sligo however had lower vacancy rates in 2011 than in 2006.

Leitrim, Donegal and Mayo had the highest vacancy rates in the region, while Galway city had the lowest. At a national level, Leitrim and Donegal have the highest vacancy rates in the country.

Map 4 shows the vacancy rate at electrical division level across the Western Region. This shows a very strong spatial pattern with the highest vacancy rates concentrated along the western seaboard, clearly influenced by holiday homes, and in an area of Leitrim, north Roscommon and east Mayo influenced by the area of the Rural Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme.

Map 4: Vacancy rates (share of the housing stock that is unoccupied) at electoral division level in the Western Region, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1* from All-Island Research Observatory, Western Development Commission Mapping Module
http://www.airo.ie/mapping-module/atlas/Western_Development_Commission/view

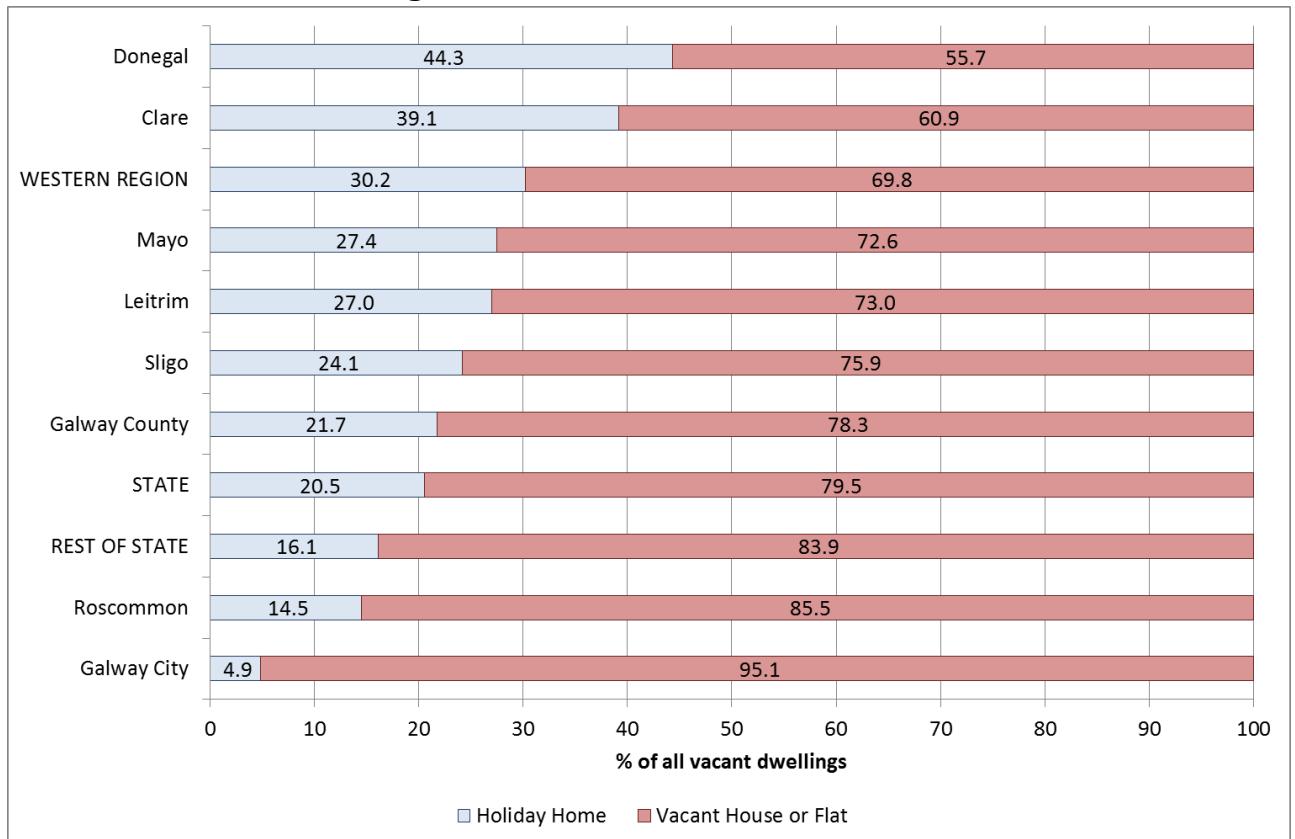
7.5 Holiday homes

The data distinguishes between vacant houses/flats and holiday homes.

In total for the Western Region 30.2% of all vacant dwellings are holiday homes (Figure 19). This is considerably higher than the rest of the state (16.1%). Holiday homes account for a very high share of all vacant dwellings in Donegal (second highest nationally¹¹) and also in Clare. In contrast they account for under 5% of vacant dwellings in Galway City and only 14.5% of empty dwellings in Roscommon.

¹¹ Wexford is the highest.

Figure 19: Share of all vacant dwellings that are holiday homes and houses/flats in western counties, Western Region, rest of state and state, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 42*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD45&PLanguage=0>

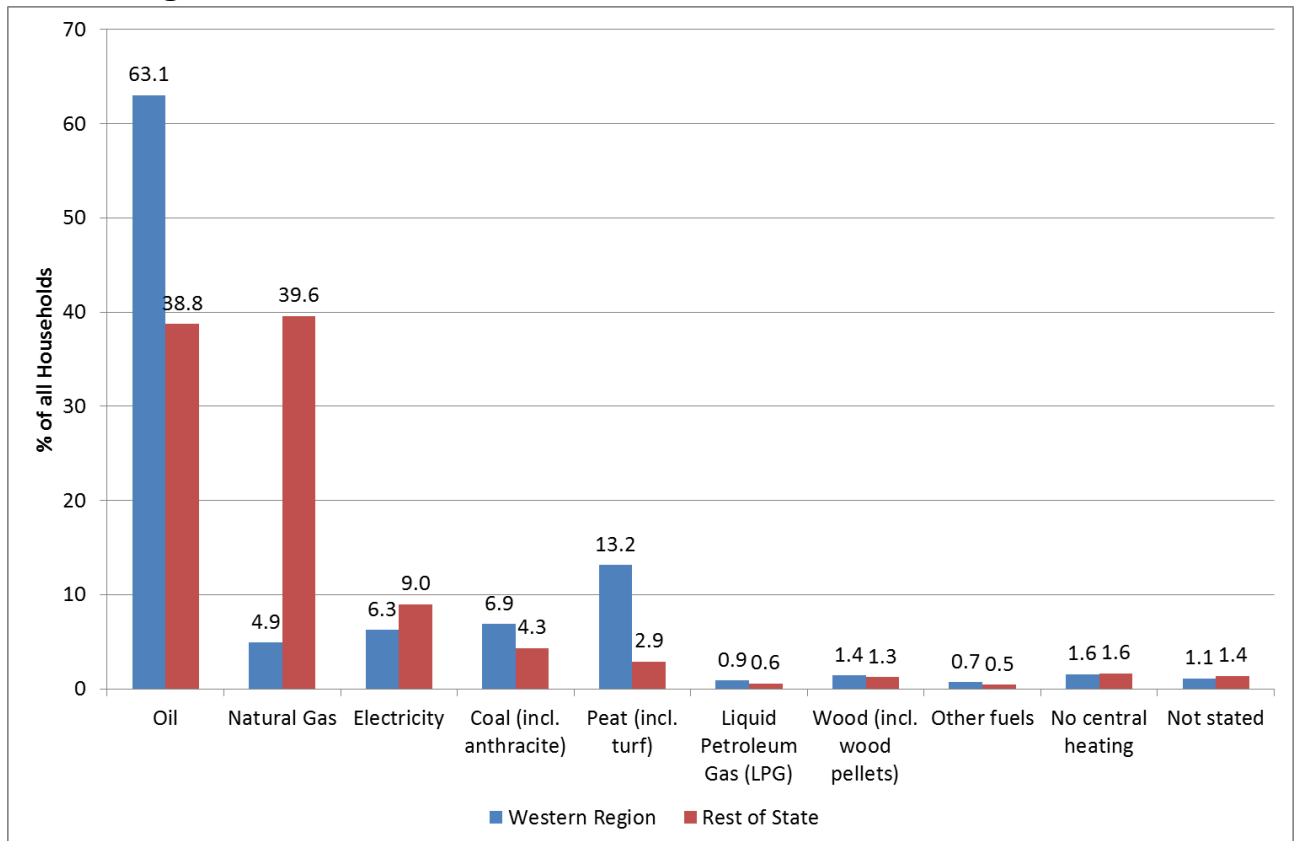
7.6 Central heating fuel

For the first time in Census 2011 people were asked what fuel they used in their central heating. In 2008 the WDC proposed the inclusion of such a question in our submission to the consultation on Census 2011. Given the WDC's work on wood energy and natural gas, as well as the growing importance of carbon emission and carbon charge issues, this data is of particular interest and is examined in some detail here.¹²

The pattern of fuel usage in central heating is very different in the Western Region and the rest of the state (Figure 20). This is primarily due to the lack of access to natural gas across most of the region. Less than 5% of households in the Western Region use natural gas to heat their home compared with 40% in the rest of the state. It is likely that, low as this figure is, that it actually overestimates natural gas usage in the Western Region as a number of households in counties where no natural gas is available stated that they used natural gas. It is likely that these households actually use LPG. As this was a new question in Census 2011 there may have been some confusion among respondents.

¹² This data relates to households and therefore refers to occupied homes rather than the full housing stock.

Figure 20: Percentage of each type of fuel used in central heating by households in the Western Region and rest of state, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 40*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD41&PLanguage=0>

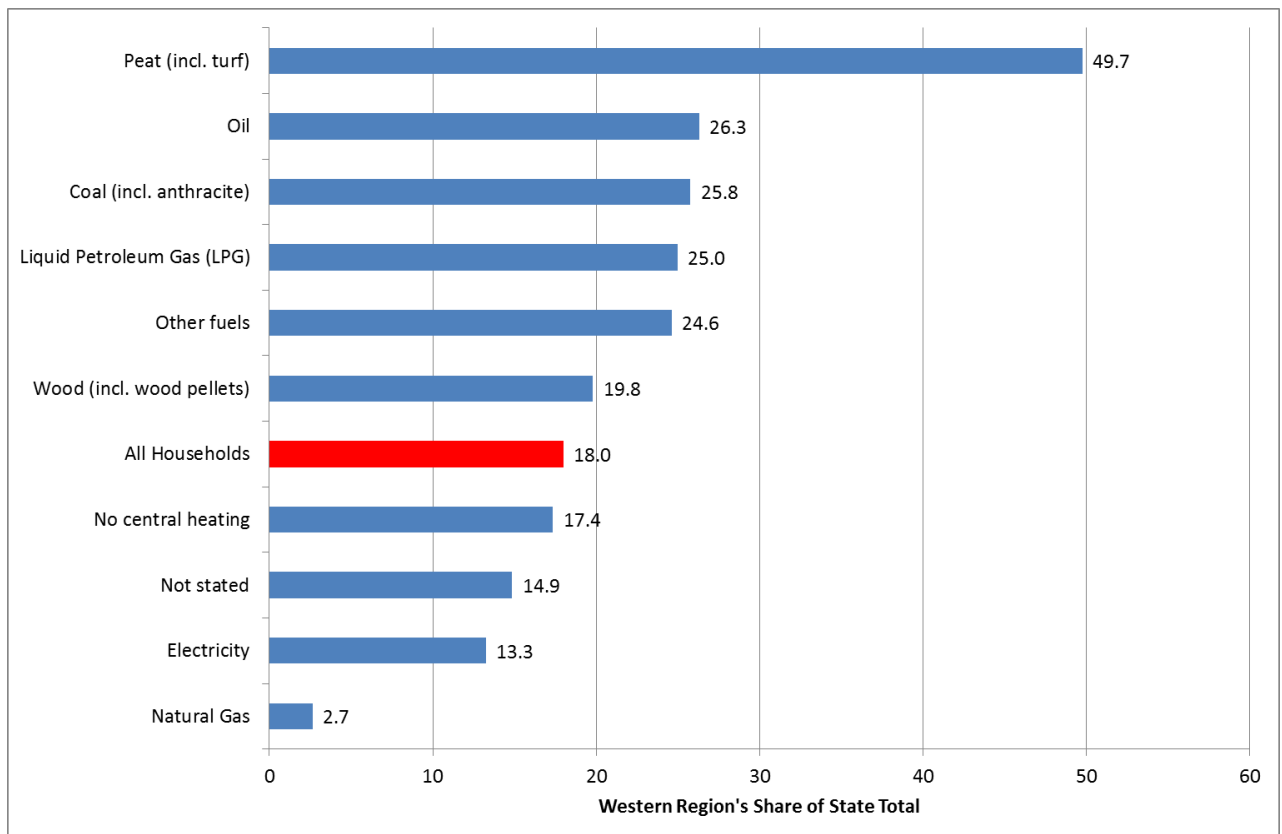
Lack of access to natural gas makes the Western Region far more reliant on other fuels, many which have higher carbon emissions. Oil is used by 63.1% of households, 13.2% use peat and 6.9% use coal – all far higher shares than in the rest of the state. The very high reliance on oil makes households in the region particularly vulnerable to rising oil prices.

In total 1.4% of households in the region use wood (including pellets) in their central heating, marginally higher than in the rest of the state.

These patterns can be seen even more dramatically by considering the Western Region's share of all households in the state using particular fuels (Figure 21). In total 18% of all households in the country are in the Western Region, but almost half of all households nationally who use peat in their central heating are in the region. The region is home to about a quarter of households using oil, coal, LPG or other fuels. The region also has a higher share using wood. In contrast only 2.7% of all households using natural gas live in the region.

This pattern has implications for households living in the Western Region in terms of carbon emissions and also the level of carbon charges and the cost of living.

Figure 21: Western Region's share of all households in the state using each fuel type, 2011



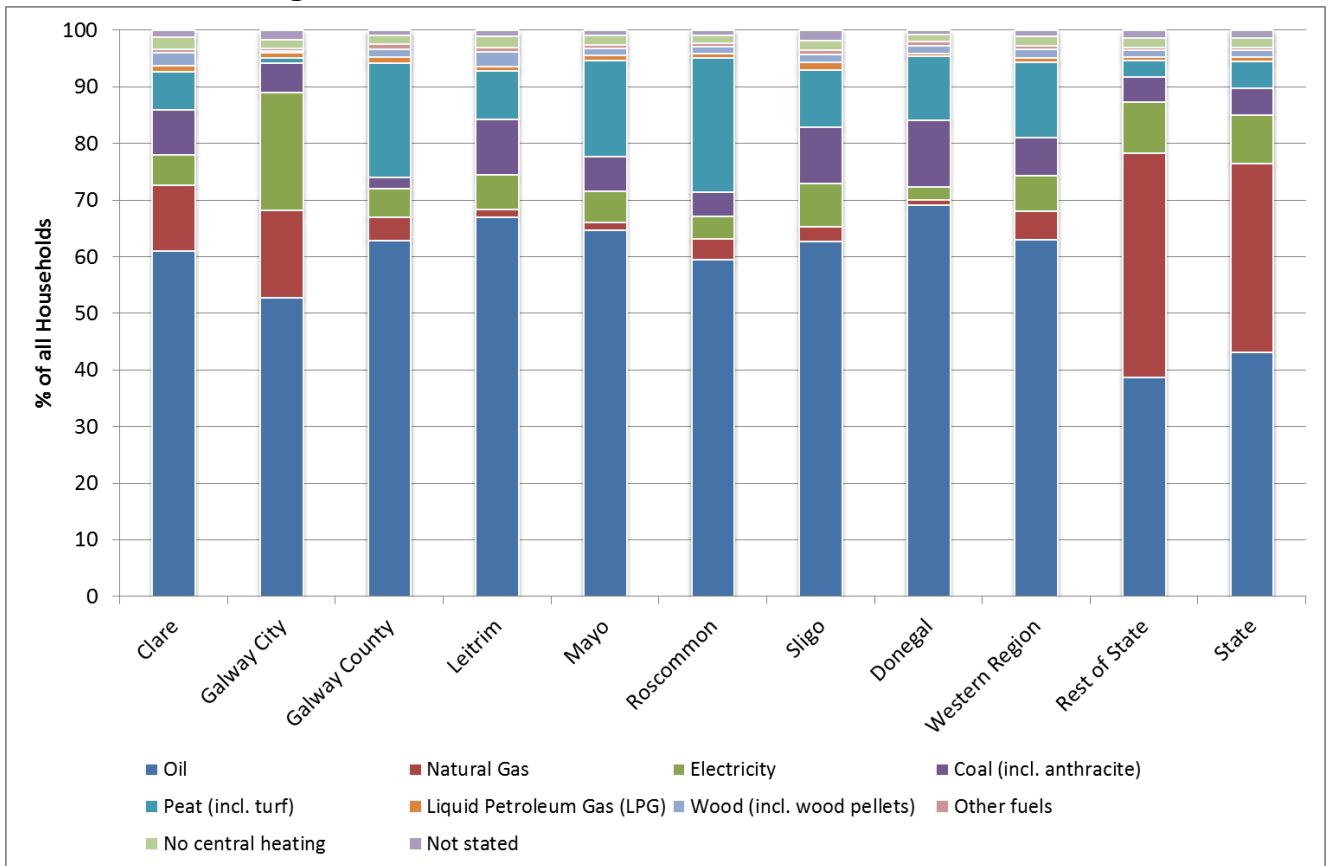
Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 40*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD41&PLanguage=0>

The counties of the region differ in the mix of fuels used in central heating (Figure 22). Oil is the dominant fuel across all counties and is above the rest of state average for them all. The use of natural gas in areas where it is available, in Clare and Galway City, is clear though the rates are still considerably lower than the rest of state average. As can be seen a number of households in Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo stated they used natural gas although none is available in those counties, these most likely use LPG. While natural gas is available in a small area of Roscommon, close to Athlone, it is also likely that the number stating natural gas in the county is also an overestimate.

There is also high usage of electricity in Galway city which may be linked to the higher share of apartments. The heavy reliance on peat in Roscommon and Galway County also stands out, indeed Roscommon has the second highest use of peat of all counties.¹³

¹³ Offaly is the highest.

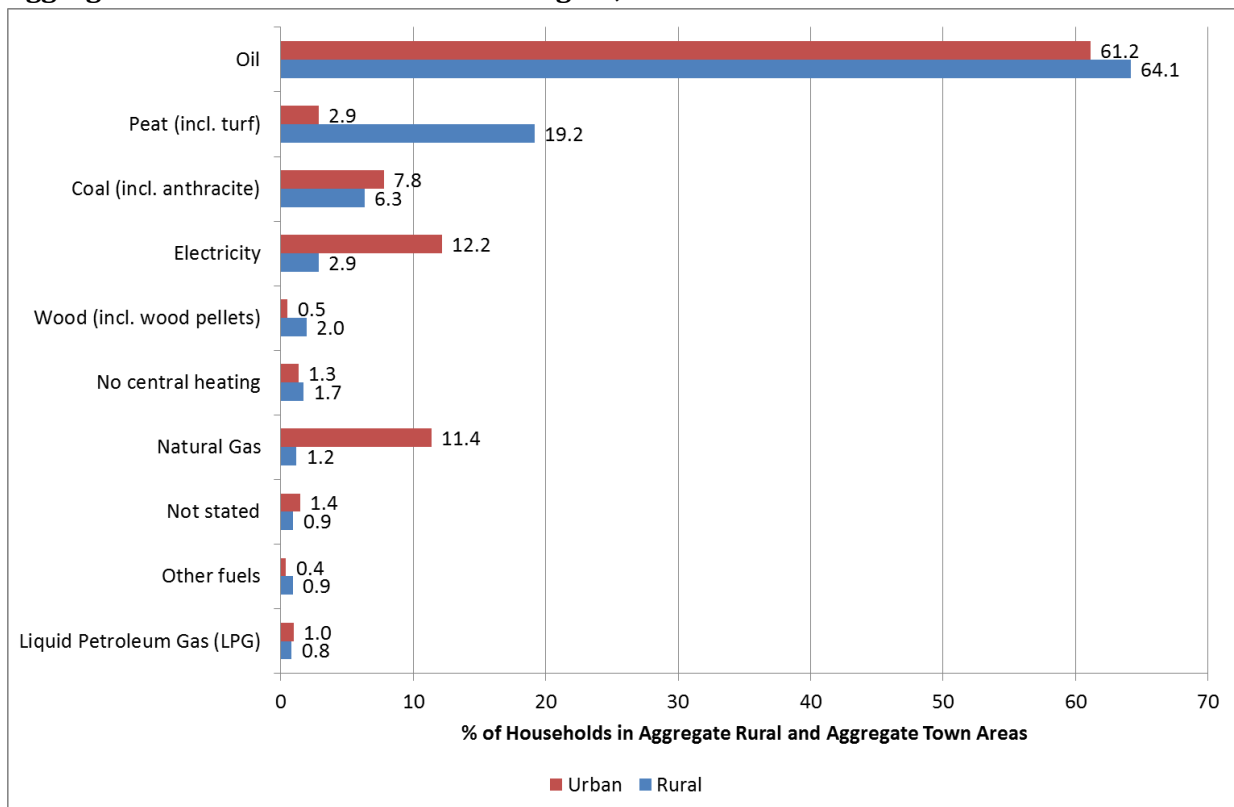
Figure 22: Percentage of each fuel type used in central heating by households in western counties, Western Region, rest of state and state, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 40*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD41&PLanguage=0>

There are notable urban/rural differences in fuel usage (Figure 23). In the Western Region peat is used to power central heating in almost a fifth of all rural households, but only by 3% of urban households. Electricity meanwhile is far more common in urban areas. Given its availability natural gas is also far more common in urban areas, being used by 11.4% of urban households but only 1.2% of rural. Oil however is the dominant fuel source for both urban and rural households.

Figure 23: Percentage of households using each fuel type in Aggregate Rural Areas and Aggregate Town Areas in the Western Region, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 40*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD41&PLanguage=0>

7.6.1 Wood usage

Given the WDC's work in the area of wood energy, albeit RASLRES's focus on commercial rather than domestic usage, it is useful to look in some detail at the use of wood in central heating.

In total just over 4,200 households in the Western Region use wood, which would include wood pellets, in their central heating (Table 7). The largest number of households was in Galway, Clare and Donegal. Wood fuel as a share of all types of fuel was highest in Leitrim and Clare, and least important in Galway city. Nationally the rate of wood usage in Leitrim was only exceeded in the counties of the South East.

This reflects a general pattern where wood is a more important fuel source in rural than urban areas. Overall in the region 2% of rural households used it compared with 0.5% of urban households. The share in rural areas in the region however was considerably lower than the share in the rest of the state (3.5%). In contrast the urban share in the region was higher.

The highest usage of wood of all areas in the region was in rural Clare (3.3%) and rural Leitrim (2.9%). Wood energy has been actively promoted in county Clare for quite some time through the Clare Wood Energy project.

Table 7: Number and percentage of all households using wood (including wood pellets) in central heating in Aggregate Rural Areas, Aggregate Town Areas and All Areas in western counties, Western Region, rest of state and state, 2011

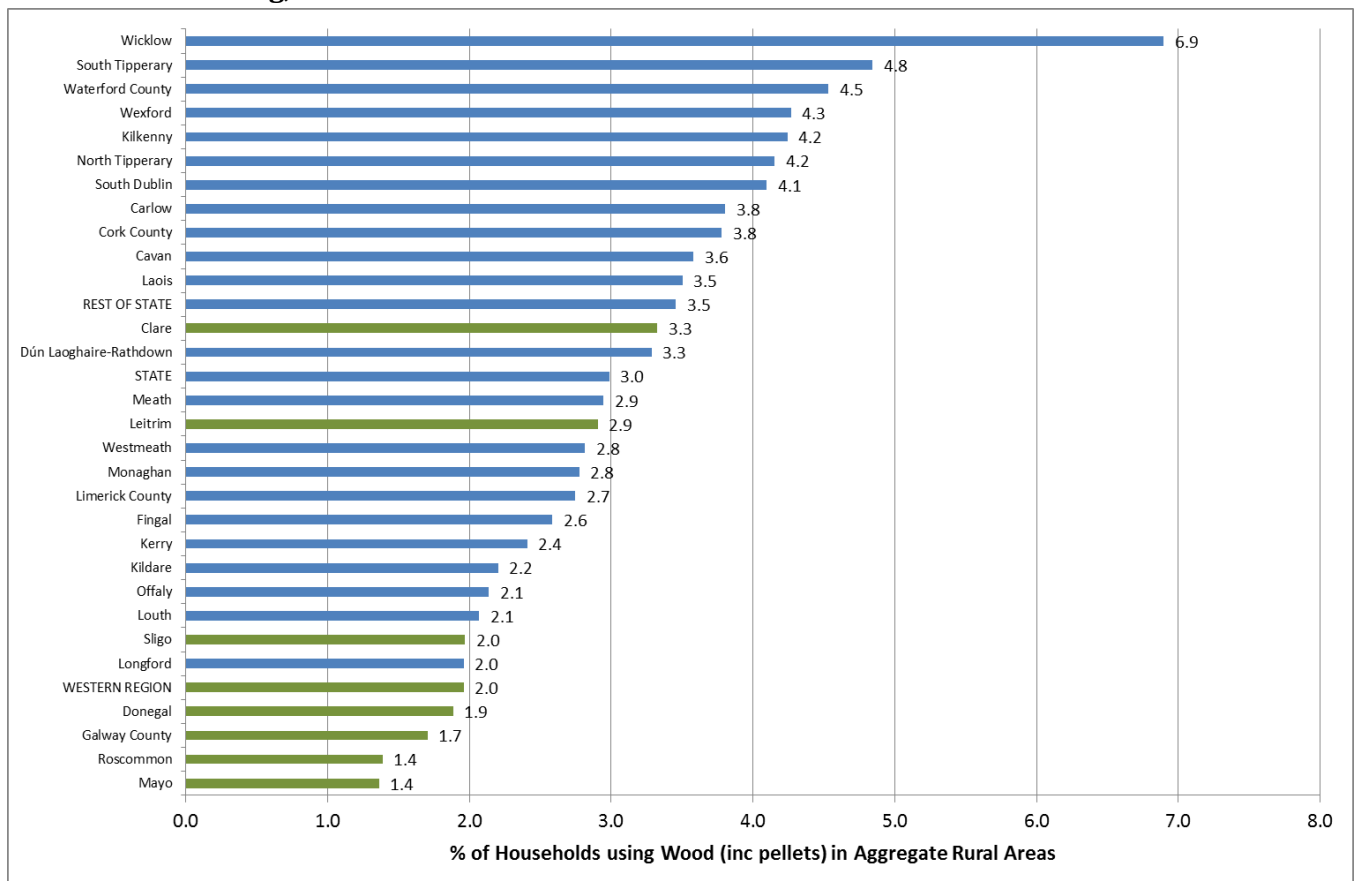
Area	Aggregate Rural Area		Aggregate Town Area		All Areas	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
Clare	829	3.3	105	0.6	934	2.2
Galway	782	1.7	179	0.4	961	1.1
<i>Galway City</i>	109	0.4	109	0.4
<i>Galway County</i>	782	1.7	70	0.5	852	1.4
Leitrim	317	2.9	8	0.6	325	2.7
Mayo	457	1.4	74	0.5	531	1.1
Roscommon	238	1.4	45	0.7	283	1.2
Sligo	293	2.0	60	0.6	353	1.4
Donegal	769	1.9	80	0.5	849	1.5
Western Region	3,685	2.0	551	0.5	4,236	1.4
Rest of State	14,219	3.5	2,940	0.3	17,159	1.3
State	17,904	3.0	3,491	0.3	21,395	1.3

Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 40*. Data available at

<http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD41&PLanguage=0>

If compared nationally however, wood usage in rural areas of the western counties is among the lowest (Figure 24). The western counties are marked in green and rural parts of Mayo, Roscommon, Galway County and Donegal have the lowest rates of wood usage among all rural areas nationally. Clare is the only county in the region above the national average for rural areas. The extent of peat usage in rural parts of many western counties may influence the uptake of wood. From Figure 19 we can see that Clare and Leitrim have the lowest shares of peat usage and rural areas of these counties have the highest rates of wood usage.

Figure 24: Share of households in Aggregate Rural Areas of all counties that use wood in their central heating, 2011



Source: CSO, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1, Table 40*. Data available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD41&PLanguage=0>

The WDC will be undertaking further analysis of the final Census 2011 results as they become available during 2012. If you have any queries in relation to any of the data contained in this report please contact Deirdre Frost, Policy Analyst deirdrefrost@wdc.ie or Pauline White, Policy Analyst paulinewhite@wdc.ie.