



WDC Insights

*providing insights on key issues for  
the Western Region of Ireland*

# The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region

## Regional Sectoral Profile

July 2019

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## 1.0 Introduction

The [Western Development Commission](#) (WDC) is a state agency with responsibility for promoting the economic and social development of the Western Region of Ireland.<sup>1</sup> To effectively deliver this remit the WDC carries out detailed analysis of a range of socio-economic issues of relevance to the region to inform policy debate and formulation.

This is the latest in a series of 'Regional Sectoral Profiles' analysing the most recent employment data for the Western Region on specific economic sectors and identifying key policy issues.<sup>2</sup>

The two-page **WDC Insights: The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region** summarises the main points from this report. It is available [here](#)

### 1.1 Public Administration & Defence

The Public Administration & Defence sector plays a vital social and economic role in providing many public goods, services and supports to the Irish population and businesses. The main focus of this Regional Sectoral Profile however is not on the provision of public services, rather it considers the role of Public Administration & Defence as a key regional employer.

Public Administration & Defence includes all those working in the civil service, local authorities and state agencies, it also includes Gardaí, the coast guard and all branches of the defence forces. It does not include those working in Education<sup>3</sup>, Health & Care<sup>4</sup> or 'semi-state' companies e.g. ESB Networks, Bus Eireann, Irish Water.

Within the Western Region key employers in this sector would include the eight local authorities serving the region, offices of Government Departments (e.g. the pensions section of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in Sligo), state agencies (e.g. Road Safety Authority in Ballina), regional offices of national agencies (e.g. National HQ for Entrepreneurship and Regional Development of Enterprise Ireland in Shannon) as well as a number of army barracks (e.g. Finner Camp in Donegal) and of course Garda Stations across the region.

Public Administration & Defence plays a particularly important role in providing professional employment opportunities in areas with more limited private sector options. Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo have among the highest shares working in this sector in Ireland and it is particularly important for female employment. This sector plays an important role in the local economy with spending by public sector employees helping to support local services e.g. food service, retail, while stable public sector employment for one partner can help sustain household income e.g. during the period of large job losses from construction.

The moratorium on public sector recruitment from 2009 to 2015 had a major impact on the sector's employment role, as retiring public servants, as well as those leaving for other reasons, were not replaced and short-term contracts were ended.

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<sup>1</sup> Counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare.

<sup>2</sup> Previous Regional Sectoral Profiles are available here <https://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>

<sup>3</sup> See WDC (2019) [The Education Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile](#)

<sup>4</sup> See WDC (2018) [The Health & Care Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile](#)

Following a description of the data that will be used, Section 2 outlines the current employment situation of the Public Administration & Defence sector in the Western Region. Key policy issues are examined in Section 3.

## 1.2 Data Used

The Census is used to examine employment in Public Administration & Defence in the region.

**Census of Population:** The Census provides comprehensive data on employment by sector at both county and town level. No other data source provides this level of geographic breakdown. However there are a number of issues to bear in mind:

1. Most recent Census data is 2016.
2. Census data refers to where a person lives which may not be the same as where they work.<sup>5</sup> Data presented here on the number of people working in a sector in a specific county/town refers to the number of residents of that county/town working in the sector, even if they work elsewhere.
3. Census data does not give an indication of whether employment is full or part-time. Each person who works in the sector, regardless of how many hours per week they work, is counted the same.

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<sup>5</sup> See WDC (2018), [Travel to Work and Labour Catchments in the Western Region: A Profile of Seven Town Labour Catchments 2018](#), for an analysis of travel to work patterns in the region.

## 2.0 Employment in Public Administration & Defence

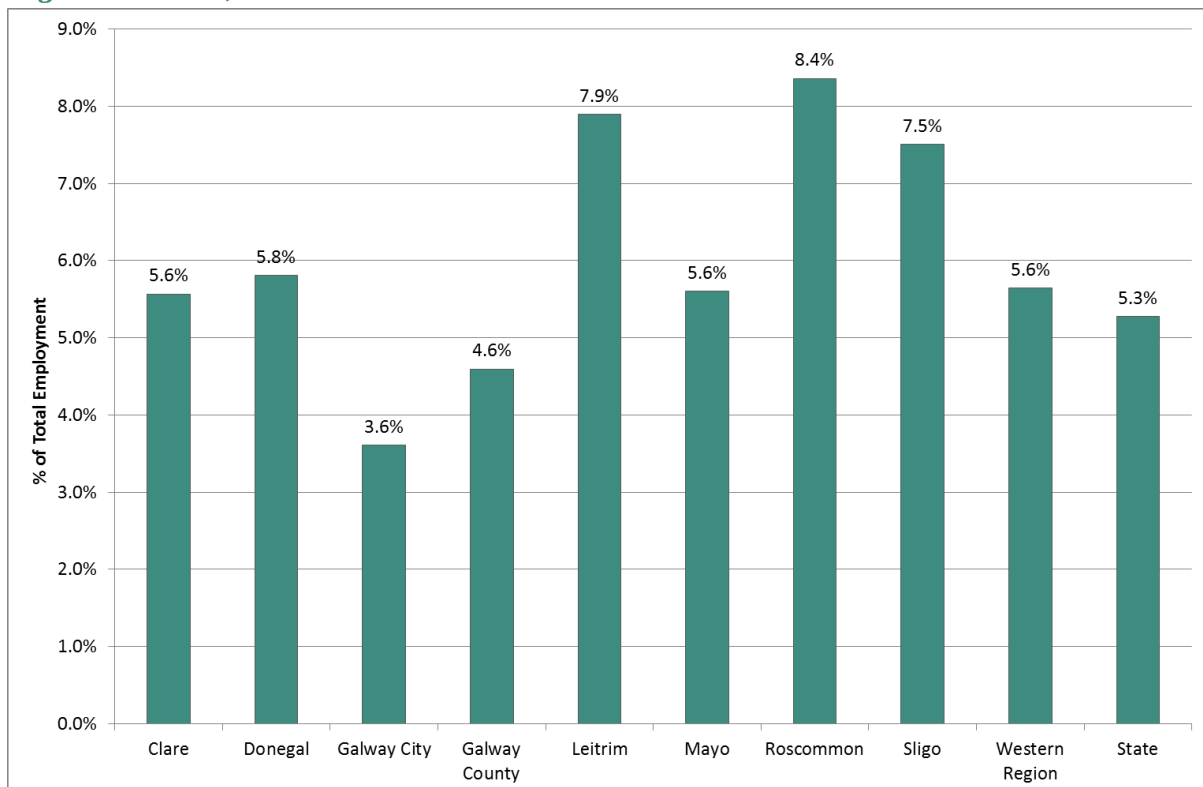
In this section we examine employment over time and by gender, as well as self-employment, in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region, western counties and towns. Employment in specific sub-sectors is also set out.

### 2.1 Employment in the Western Region and its counties 2016

According to Census 2016, 18,858 people were employed in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region. Of everyone working in Public Administration & Defence in Ireland, 17.8% of them live in the Western Region. In comparison, the region is home to 16.6% of total employment which means it accounts for a greater share of national Public Administration & Defence employment, than it does of total national employment.

Public Administration & Defence plays a somewhat greater role in the region's labour market than nationally (Fig. 1). In 2016 Public Administration & Defence accounted for 5.6% of total employment in the Western Region compared with 5.3% nationally.

**Fig. 1: Percentage of total employment in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state, 2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011

There is considerable variation across western counties in the relative importance of this sector to total employment. At 8.4% Roscommon has the highest share working in Public Administration & Defence in Ireland with Leitrim (7.9%) second highest and Sligo (7.5%) fourth highest in the state. Donegal is also in the top ten nationally. North Connacht and the North West clearly have very high reliance on the public sector in sustaining employment. In addition to Public Administration &

Defence, Sligo and Leitrim also have the highest shares in Ireland working in Health & Care<sup>6</sup> and Donegal has the highest share working in Education.<sup>7</sup>

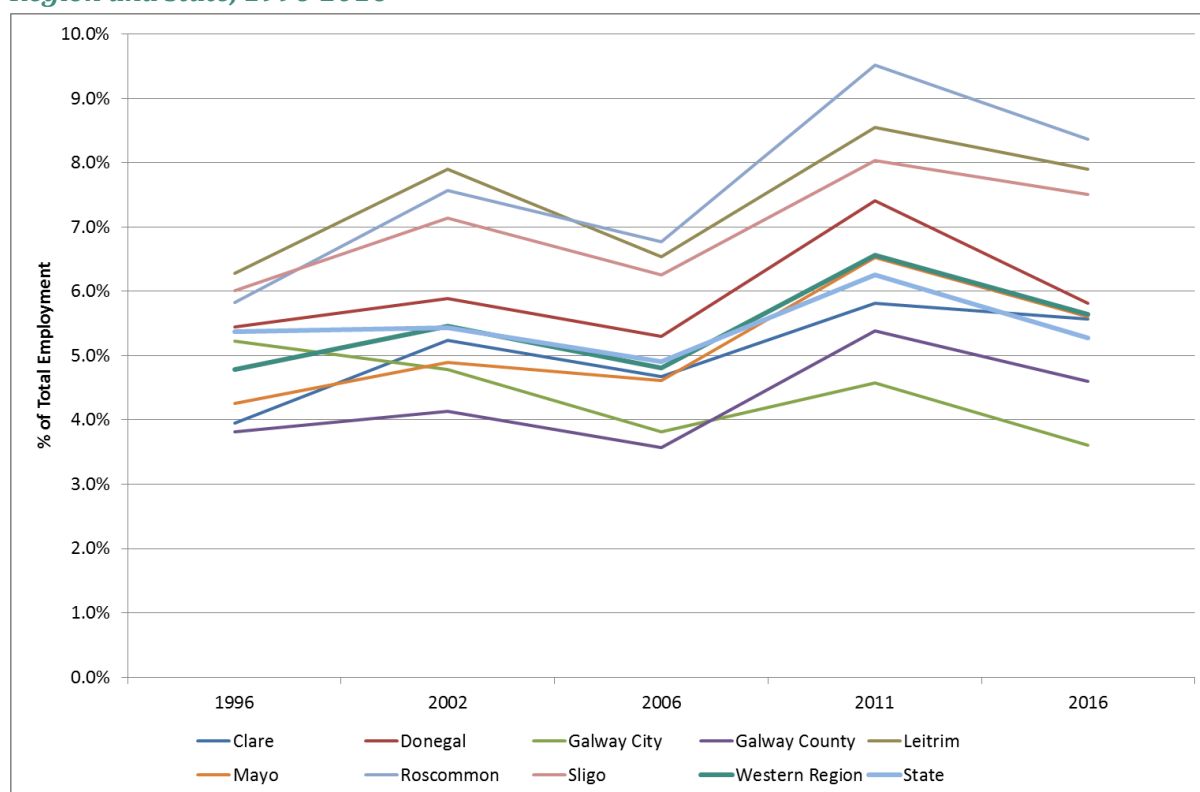
In contrast, at just 3.6% Galway City has the lowest share of its residents working in Public Administration & Defence in Ireland, with Galway County (4.6%) also in the bottom ten nationally. These are the only two areas in the region below the national average.

The significant role of Public Administration & Defence in the employment profile of most western counties is partly due to a lower level of activity in some other sectors e.g. financial, ICT<sup>8</sup>, professional services which leads to greater reliance on public sector employment, especially for professional careers in more rural areas. Similarly, greater economic and employment diversity around Galway reduces the sector's relative importance.

### 2.1.1 Trends in employment 1996-2016

The share of total employment accounted for by Public Administration & Defence fluctuated between 1996 and 2016 (Fig. 2). For every western county, except Galway (City and County), its share in 2016 was higher than two decades previously.

**Fig. 2: Percentage of total employment in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state, 1996-2016**



Source: CSO, *Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011*; CSO, *Census 2006: Volume 7 – Principal Economic Status and Industries 2006, Table C0713*; CSO, *Census 2002: Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries 2002, Table B0513*; CSO, *Census 1996: Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries, Table A0513*.

<sup>6</sup> See WDC (2018) [The Health & Care Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile](#)

<sup>7</sup> See WDC (2019) [The Education Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile](#)

<sup>8</sup> See WDC (2018) [Financial & ICT Services in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile](#)

Most areas followed a similar pattern, the share working in Public Administration & Defence rose during the late 1990s. Very strong economic and jobs growth in the early 2000s then reduced its relative importance, as there was massive expansion in other sectors e.g. construction. The recent recession however led to a very substantial increase in the employment role played by Public Administration & Defence as jobs in this sector were relatively stable compared with massive losses elsewhere in the economy. In all areas (except Galway City), 2011 was the peak in terms of the share of total employment accounted for by Public Administration & Defence reaching 9.5% in Roscommon, 8.5% in Leitrim and 8% in Sligo.

A certain level of jobs recovery in other sectors between 2011 and 2016 has reduced the relative importance of Public Administration & Defence, but it still remains at a higher level than 20 years previously.

Galway City has been an exception to his general trend. Except for 2011, Public Administration & Defence's share of total employment for Galway City residents has steadily declined from 5.2% in 1996 to 3.6% by 2016.

A sector's share of total employment is determined both by the number of people actually working in that sector and total employment levels in the economy. If the number working in the sector did not change but total employment grew or fell dramatically e.g. during the construction boom and bust, then its share of total employment would still change. The next section looks at changes in the actual number working in Public Administration & Defence.

### *2.1.2 Change in employment in the Western Region and its counties*

The number of people working in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region grew by 58.5% over the 1996-2016 period (Table 1). Over the same period the total number of people in employment in the region increased by 34.2%. The greater increase in employment in this sector, compared with overall employment, was driven both by expansion of this sector e.g. the range of responsibilities of local authorities, establishment of new state agencies, the opening of Castlerea prison and also by the relocation of some public and civil service offices from Dublin to locations in the region e.g. the Property Registration Authority (PRA) to Roscommon, offices of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to Sligo and Carrick-on-Shannon. Relocations to the region contributed to the greater increase in employment in this sector in the region (58.5%) compared with nationally (35.4%) between 1996 and 2016.

Roscommon, Clare, Galway County, Leitrim and Mayo all saw a 70+% increase in the numbers working in Public Administration & Defence over the twenty years. Galway City was the only area with a decline (-5%). It is likely that part of the growth in Galway County was due to some people moving from the city to surrounding towns in the county.

**Table 1: Number employed in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state, and percentage change 1996-2016 and 2011-2016**

County	Public Administration & Defence				Total Employment % Change 2011-2016
	1996	2016	% Change 1996-2016	% Change 2011-2016	
Clare	1,528	2,756	80.4%	3.9%	8.6%
Donegal	2,363	3,391	43.5%	-14.2%	9.5%
Galway City	1,328	1,262	-5.0%	-12.5%	10.8%
Galway County	1,927	3,452	79.1%	-7.3%	8.5%
Leitrim	574	1,005	75.1%	-1.8%	6.3%
Mayo	1,688	2,882	70.7%	-10.1%	4.8%
Roscommon	1,162	2,159	85.8%	-7.0%	5.9%
Sligo	1,329	1,951	46.8%	-4.5%	2.2%
<b>Western Region</b>	<b>11,899</b>	<b>18,858</b>	<b>58.5%</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>78,210</b>	<b>105,929</b>	<b>35.4%</b>	<b>-6.3%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>

Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011; CSO, Census 1996: Volume 5 - Principal Economic Status and Industries, Table A0513

Considering the more recent 2011 to 2016 period, the Western Region experienced a 7.4% decline in the number working in Public Administration & Defence, greater than the 6.3% decline nationally. In both cases the decline in this sector contrasted with jobs growth overall. This period was characterised by a moratorium on recruitment in the public sector, as well as the non-renewal of many temporary contracts.

Every western county, except Clare, saw a decline in this period. Donegal (-14.2%), Galway City (-12.5%) and Mayo (-10.1%) saw particularly large losses. One factor, especially for Donegal and Mayo, would have been large job losses in their respective local authorities which are significant employers given the large geographic area of the counties.

Section 2.2 examines employment in Public Administration & Defence sub-sectors which illustrates which elements of Public Administration & Defence drove change in different counties.

## 2.2 Employment in Public Administration & Defence sub-sectors

Census data on employment in Public Administration & Defence is sub-divided into three separate activities.<sup>9</sup> Just over 80% of this employment is in the 'Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities' sub-sector (Fig. 3) which equated to 15,200 people in the Western Region. The region is home to 18.2% of total employment in Ireland in this sub-sector, greater than its 16.6% share of total employment. It is unfortunate that this sub-sector is not disaggregated further to distinguish between employment in Government Departments, state agencies and local authorities.

'Public Order & Safety' (Gardaí, traffic wardens, coast guard) accounts for 13.9% (2,619 people) of total Public Administration & Defence employment in the region, somewhat higher than nationally (13.4%). The region is home to 18.5% of everyone in Ireland working in 'Public Order & Safety'.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix 1 provides detailed data for all three activities for all western counties.



'Defence forces' is the smallest sub-sector accounting for 5.5% (1,039 people) of employment in this sector in the region. The region only accounts for 12.8% of national 'Defence forces' employment, this is influenced by the concentration of such employment at The Curragh in Kildare and Hawlbowlne in Cork.

**Fig. 3: Percentage of total Public Administration & Defence employment in each sub-sector in Western Region and state, 2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011

Comparing counties, the presence of an army barracks obviously has a big influence on the share accounted for by the 'Defence forces'. Galway City (Dún Ui Mhaoilíosa (Renmore) Barracks), Roscommon (Custume Barracks, Athlone) and Donegal (Finner Camp) have the highest shares working in this sub-sector. The variation in the share in the 'Defence forces' influences the relative importance of both the other sub-sectors.

Sligo (85.8%), Leitrim (84.4%) and Clare (82%) have the highest shares in 'Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities'. The presence of a number of large Government Department offices in these counties e.g. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in Carrick-on-Shannon, the Motor Tax, Log Books and change of vehicle ownership section of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in Shannon, would influence this.

'Public Order & Safety', as a share of total Public Administration & Defence employment, is highest in Galway County (16.7%) and Mayo (16.6%). Both are large rural and coastal counties with dispersed populations, in the case of Galway County it would also include some people stationed in the city but living in the county.

### 2.2.1 Change in employment in Public Administration & Defence sub-sectors

There was a decline in the number working in each of the Public Administration & Defence sub-sectors between 2011 and 2016 (Table 2). At 16.5% the 'Defence forces' had the largest decline in the region, and also nationally (10.7%).

Both of the other two sub-sectors declined by just under 7%. In the case of 'Public Order & Safety' the region had less of a decline than nationally, whereas 'Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities' had a greater decline in the region showing greater contraction in the sector.

**Table 2: Percentage change in employment in Public Administration & Defence sub-sectors in Western Region and state, 2011-2016**

County	% Change in Public Administration & Defence 2011-2016			
	Defence forces	Public Order & Safety	Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities	Total
Clare	-7.6%	-6.6%	6.6%	3.9%
Donegal	-32.3%	-15.3%	-11.9%	-14.2%
Galway City	-5.9%	-31.0%	-10.8%	-12.5%
Galway County	-3.3%	2.5%	-9.5%	-7.3%
Leitrim	0.0%	-11.9%	-0.1%	-1.8%
Mayo	-15.4%	1.9%	-12.1%	-10.1%
Roscommon	-11.7%	-2.9%	-7.2%	-7.0%
Sligo	-31.6%	-15.8%	-1.3%	-4.5%
<b>Western Region</b>	<b>-16.5%</b>	<b>-6.9%</b>	<b>-6.8%</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>-10.7%</b>	<b>-8.9%</b>	<b>-5.4%</b>	<b>-6.3%</b>

Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011

Donegal (32.3%) and Sligo (31.6%) had the largest declines in 'Defence forces' employment and both are likely due to reduced numbers at Finner Camp.

For 'Public Order & Safety', only two counties saw an increase in numbers between 2011 and 2016, Galway County and Mayo (the two counties where it accounts for the highest share of employment, see Fig. 3). All other areas declined. Some of the 31% decline in Galway City may have been due to people stationed in the city moving to live in the county, but also points to reduced numbers of Gardaí in the city over this period. Sligo (15.8%) and Donegal (15.3%) also saw large falls in the number of people employed in 'Public Order & Safety'.

'Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities', by far the largest sub-sector, declined very substantially in Mayo (12.1%), Donegal (11.9%) and Galway City (10.8%). The moratorium on public sector recruitment with the non-replacement of retirees would have been a major factor, as would some rationalisation of state agencies and local authority structures and the non-renewal of many temporary / fixed-term contracts.

Clare was the only exception where employment in this sub-sector increased by 6.6%. It is not clear exactly why this occurred and was likely a combination of increased employment in Government, state agency and local authority offices in the county e.g. Enterprise Ireland's regional headquarters in Shannon, the Motor Tax division of the Department of Transport, as well as commuting to

Limerick and Galway cities as this data refers to residents of county Clare though they may work elsewhere.

### 2.3 Employment in western towns

In 2016 there were 40 urban centres with a population over 1,500 in the Western Region. The relative importance of Public Administration & Defence as an employer varies across these towns (Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that commuting is a particular issue when considering towns and this data refers to residents of the town.

At 11.4% (53 people) Lifford, the county town of Donegal, has the highest share of its total employment accounted for by Public Administration & Defence in the region. It is also the second highest share among the 200 towns and cities in Ireland (1,500+), exceeded only by Templemore. Lifford is an interesting example as it is the smallest of Donegal's towns (of 1,500+) but is the county town. It therefore hosts the main local authority offices<sup>11</sup> which play a relatively more important employment role in that town than they do in other county towns e.g. Ennis, which are also the largest economic centres in their county. There are potential regional and rural development benefits of locating administrative centres away from the main economic centres e.g. Canberra in Australia, both to support economic development in less developed areas and also to ease congestion and other pressures in larger urban centres with considerable private sector activity.

Strandhill in County Sligo (9.4%, 75 people) and Roscommon town (9.2%, 208 people) were next highest in the region and had the third and fourth highest shares working in Public Administration & Defence in Ireland, with Collooney (7.9%, 52 people) also in the top ten towns nationally. For both Strandhill and Collooney commuting to local authority and Government Department offices in Sligo town is a key factor. For Roscommon it would be both the local authority, the PRA and other offices. Other towns with high shares working in the sector include Boyle, Ballyshannon and Carrick-on-Shannon.

Except for Galway City and Ballina, the region's larger (10,000+) urban centres all have around 7% working in this sector, higher than the national average (5.3%). Many host local authority offices as well as offices of Government Departments and state agencies. The very low share in Galway City is due to its greater economic diversity which offers a wider range of alternative job options, it may also be that many who work in this sector in the city actually live in towns surrounding it e.g. Athenry.

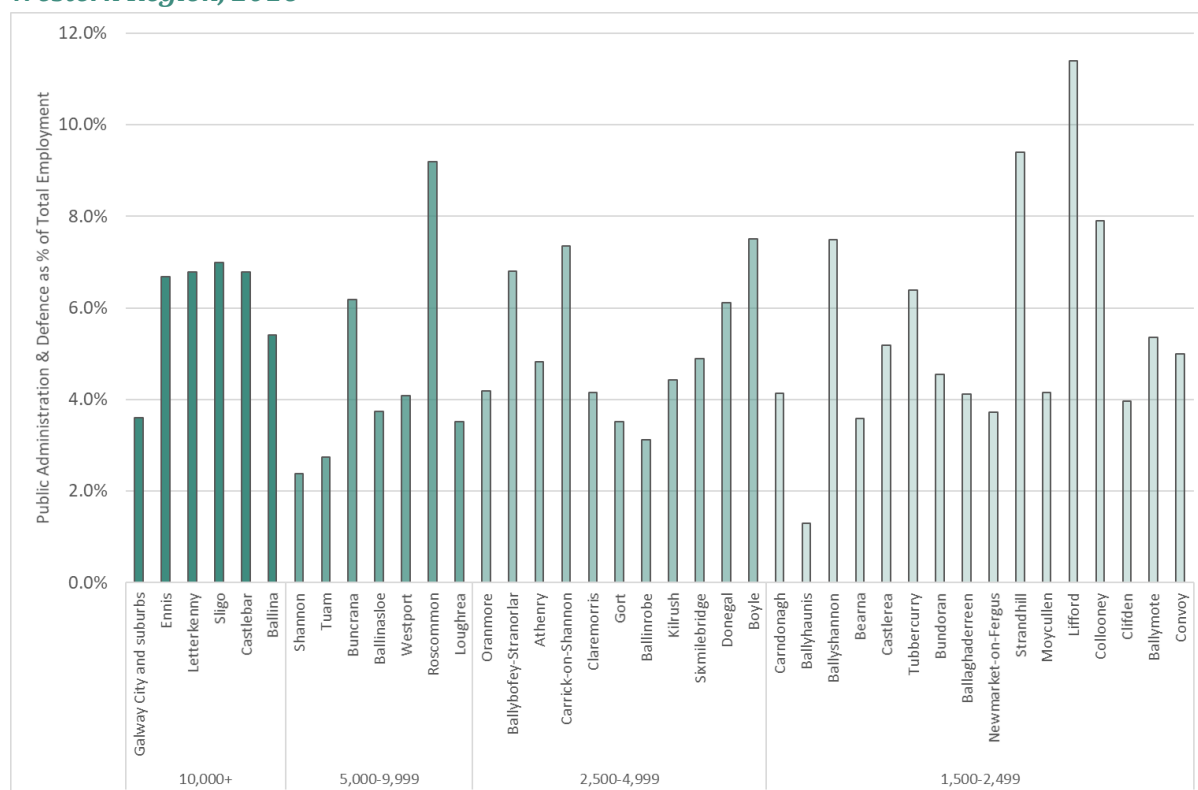
At just 1.3%, Ballyhaunis in County Mayo has the smallest share working in Public Administration & Defence of all towns in Ireland, partly due to the very high share of employment in the town in the Industry sector.

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 2 for more detailed data on Public Administration & Defence employment in towns.

<sup>11</sup> It is also possible that some people who work in the adjoining town of Strabane, which is also home to offices of Derry City and Strabane District Council, may live in Lifford.

**Fig. 4: Percentage of total employment in Public Administration & Defence in towns in the Western Region, 2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB030

### 2.3.1 Change in employment in western towns

There are 38 towns in the Western Region which had a population above 1,500 in both 2011 and 2016.<sup>12</sup> Of these, the vast majority (28 towns) experienced decline in the number of people working in Public Administration & Defence between 2011 and 2016, nine had an increase with one unchanged (Fig. 5).

Bearna (18.5%, +5 people) and Gort (15.8%, +6 people), both in County Galway, had the largest percentage increase possibly due to commuting to Galway City or Ennis, as several of the other towns which experienced growth are also commuter towns e.g. Strandhill, Sixmilebridge, Moycullen.

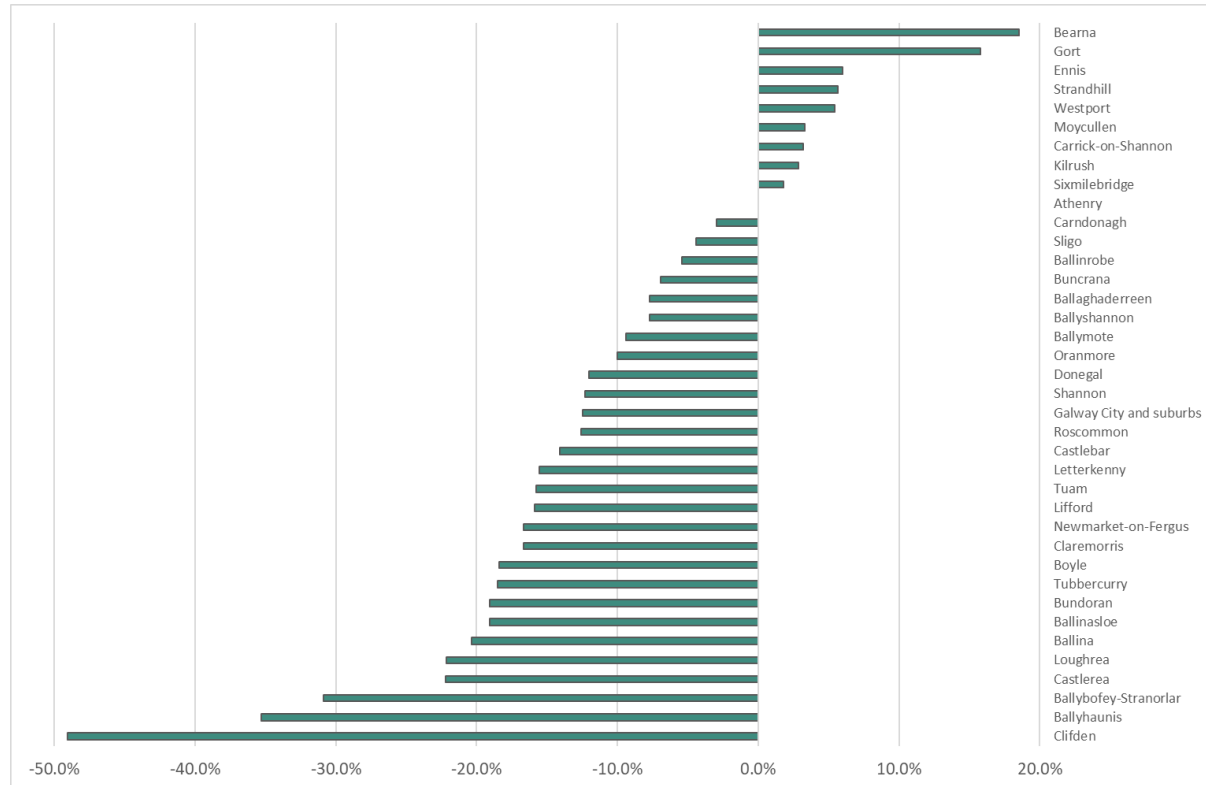
In absolute terms, Ennis (6%, +40 people) had the biggest increase in the number of residents working in the sector. This is likely the main reason why Clare was the only western county to experience growth in Public Administration & Defence employment between 2011 and 2016. Two other towns in the county – Kilrush and Sixmilebridge – also had growth.

Many more towns experienced a fall in Public Administration & Defence employment than growth however. Clifden had the largest decline (-49.1%, -26 people) and was also the town with the largest population decline of all western towns. This was partly due to the closure of a Direct Provision Centre in 2012 which would have also impacted on public sector employment. Ballyhaunis,

<sup>12</sup> Two towns with a population above 1,500 in 2011 (Portumna and Bunbeg-Derrybeg) dropped below in 2016. Two towns (Collooney and Convoy) rose above the 1,500 threshold in 2016. There were also town boundary changes between 2011 and 2016 for 15 of the 40 towns in the Western Region which has an impact when considering change over time. For most towns the impact was relatively minor, however there was a quite substantial change for Ballina.

Ballybofey-Stranorlar, Castlerea and Loughrea also experienced large declines. These are all medium-sized rural towns, at some distance from larger urban centres. The decline may indicate that the provision of some public services in these towns was reduced.

**Fig. 5: Percentage change in employment in Public Administration & Defence in towns in the Western Region, 2011-2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB030; CSO, Census 2011: Profile 3 – At Work, Table CD320.

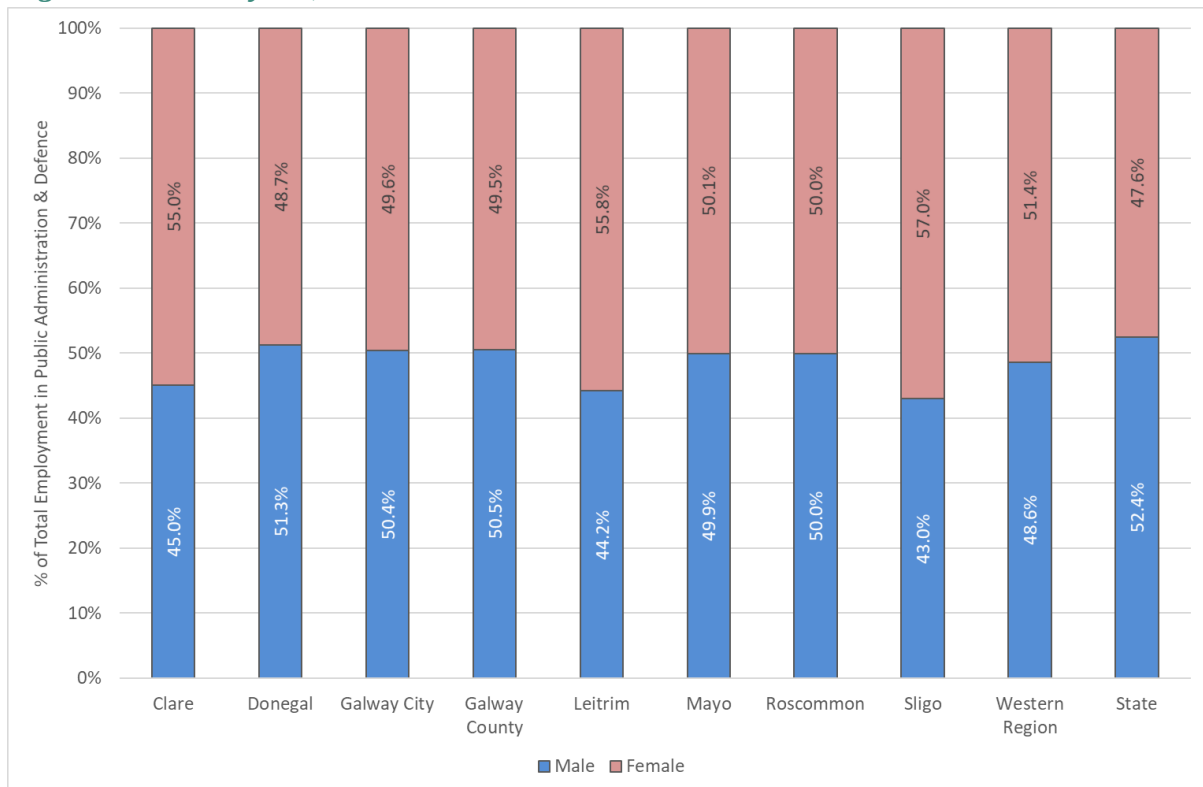
Note: In the case of Ballina, a significant town boundary change reduced its population and the actual decline in employment in this sector is likely less than it appears in Fig. 5.

## 2.4 Employment by gender

Overall, employment in Public Administration & Defence is very gender balanced. In the Western Region women account for a small majority (51.4%) (Fig. 6). This is in contrast to the state where there is a male majority (52.4%).

While information is not available for employment by gender in the sub-sectors, both the ‘Defence forces’ and ‘Public Order & Safety’ are likely to have a large male majority. Therefore, we can see that where these activities are more important, such as in Donegal and Galway City, there is a higher male share (51.3% and 50.4% respectively) while areas where these activities were less important such as Sligo and Leitrim, have a much stronger female majority (57% and 55.8%).

**Fig. 6: Percentage of total employment in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state by sex, 2016**

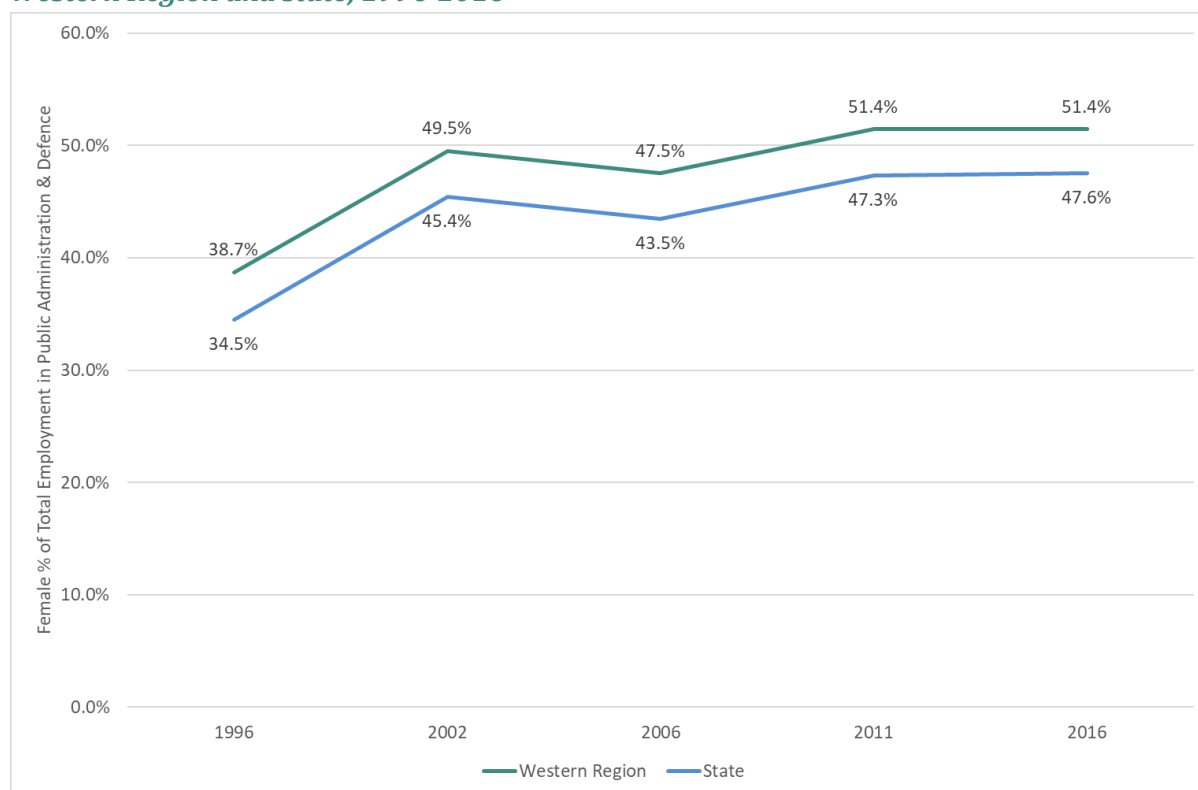


Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB027

The gender balance within the sector has altered over the past two decades. In 1996 women accounted for only 38.7% of all those working in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region, though still higher than nationally (34.5%) (Fig. 7). Clearly both the Gardaí and defence forces would have had extremely low female involvement at that time. There was also considerably lower female labour force participation and the legacy of the ban on married women working in the civil service would still have been felt.

The female share grew substantially during the late 1990s and, following a slight decline in 2006, rose to 51.4% in 2011, remaining steady since. The female share has been higher in the region than nationally throughout the two decades.

**Fig. 7: Percentage of total employment in Public Administration & Defence that is female in Western Region and state, 1996-2016**



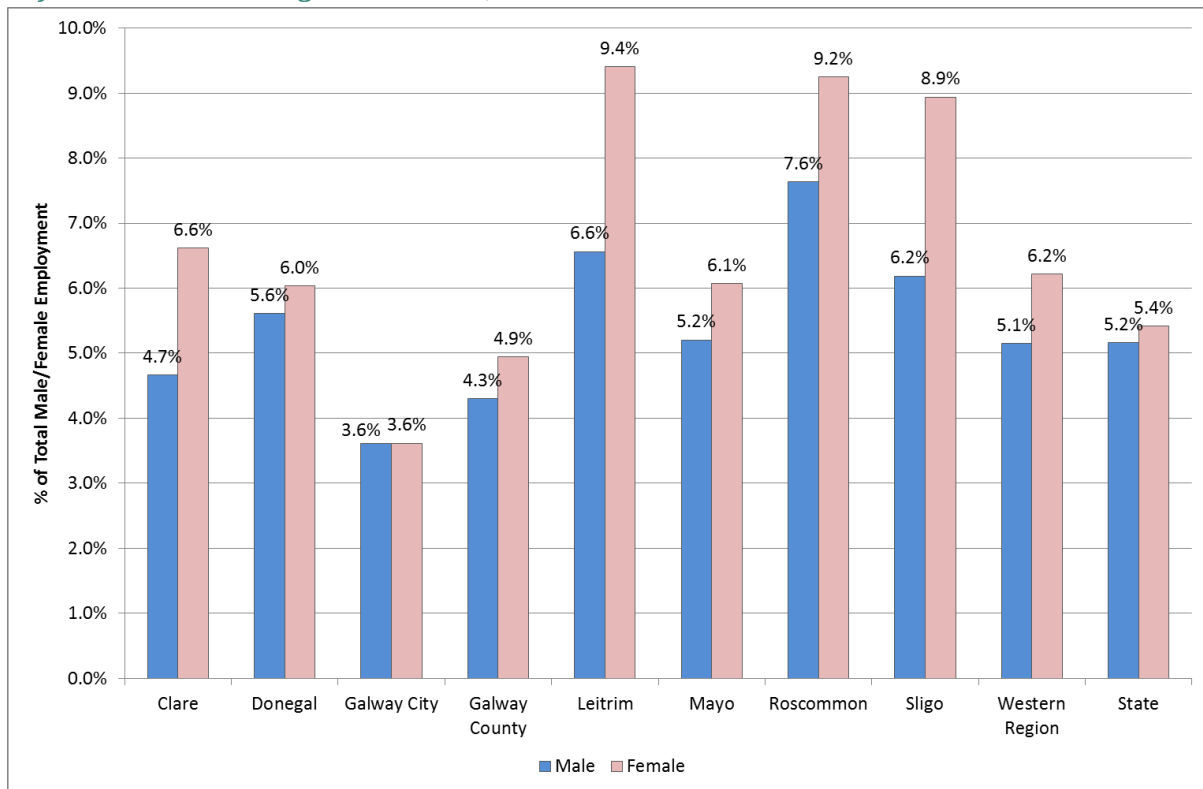
Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB027; CSO, Census 2006: Volume 7 – Principal Economic Status and Industries 2006, Table C0713; CSO, Census 2002: Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries 2002, Table B0513; CSO, Census 1996: Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries, Table A0513.

In terms of the sector’s relative importance to male and female employment (Fig. 8), 6.2% of all working women and 5.1% of all working men in the Western Region work in Public Administration & Defence. While the sector plays a notably more significant role in total female employment in the region than nationally (6.2% v 5.4%), its importance to male employment is the same.

In all areas (except Galway City) the sector accounts for a greater share of all women’s jobs than men’s. In Leitrim (9.4%), Roscommon (9.2%) and Sligo (8.9%) Public Administration & Defence plays a critical role in total female employment. More limited options for alternative professional career opportunities, particularly in more rural areas, increases the role of Public Administration & Defence in women’s employment in these counties. This is also reflected in the fact that Galway City and Galway County is where the sector plays its smallest role in total female employment with the greater diversity of female job opportunities reducing reliance on public sector employment.

For male employment, Roscommon (7.6%) is where Public Administration & Defence is most important by quite some margin. This may reflect the nature of some public sector employment in the county (e.g. Castlerea prison is likely to have a relatively high share of men employed) as well as fewer professional job opportunities for men in the county. Again, neighbouring Leitrim (6.6%) and Sligo (6.2%) is where it is next most important for men’s jobs, while it is least important in Galway, due to greater choice in job options.

**Fig. 8: Percentage of total male and female employment that is in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state, 2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011

The significance of Public Administration & Defence as an employer has changed over the past two decades for men and women (Fig. 9). In 1996, its share of total male employment in the Western Region (4.8%) was substantially lower than its share nationally (5.9%), this was partly influenced by the very large role played by Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing in total male employment in the region at that time (23.7% of men worked in this sector).

In both areas, Public Administration & Defence's share of all men's jobs declined to 2006 as Construction expanded substantially employing large numbers of men. With the recession and job losses in other sectors, the relative importance of Public Administration & Defence to men's jobs rose and then declined somewhat with the recovery. By 2016 it accounted for the same share in the region and nationally.

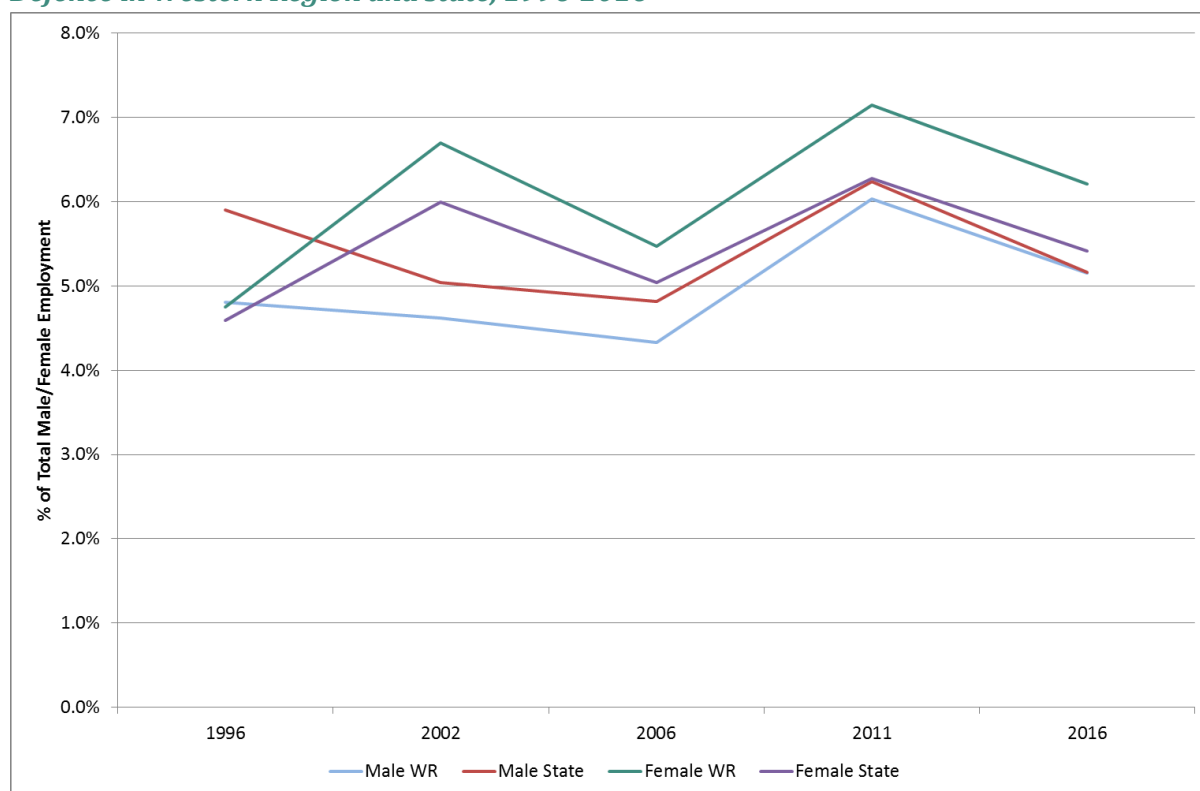
The pattern for female employment has been somewhat different. The sector always accounted for a larger share of women's jobs in the region than nationally but this gap has widened over the past two decades from 0.2 percentage points to 0.8 percentage points. Similar to men, the relative importance of Public Administration & Defence to female employment declined with the booming economy and jobs growth elsewhere in the economy during the early 2000s.

Its role in women's jobs increased sharply with the recession, even more so in the region than nationally, widening the gap. This indicates that there may have been greater private sector job losses among women in the region, increasing reliance on the public service. In 2011, 10.5% of all working women in Roscommon worked in Public Administration & Defence. While the sector's role in female employment declined in 2016, with the jobs recovery, the gap has remained with the



sector far more important to women’s jobs in the region than nationally.

**Fig. 9: Percentage of total male and female employment that is in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state, 1996-2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB027; CSO, Census 2006: Volume 7 – Principal Economic Status and Industries 2006, Table C0713; CSO, Census 2002: Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries 2002, Table B0513; CSO, Census 1996: Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries, Table A0513.

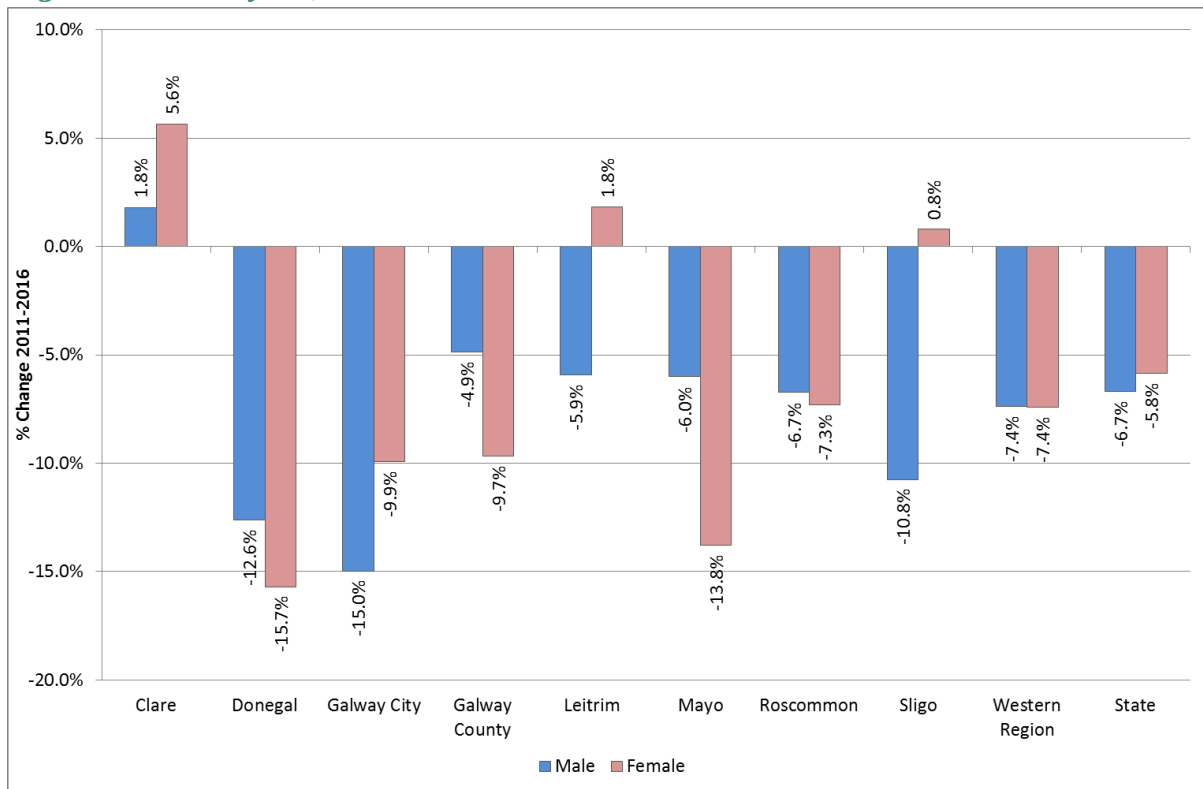
### 2.4.1 Change in employment by gender

The period 2011 to 2016 saw both male and female employment in Public Administration & Defence decline by 7.4% (Fig. 10). For both, this was a greater decline than nationally with the difference greater among women than men.

All western counties, except Clare, experienced a decline in male employment in Public Administration & Defence. Galway City (-15%), Donegal (-12.6%) and Sligo (-10.8%) saw particularly large falls in male employment. While data is not available on employment by gender for sub-sectors, Donegal and Sligo saw the largest overall falls in ‘Defence forces’ (see Table 2) while Galway City saw the largest decline in ‘Public Order & Safety’, two sub-sectors with greater male involvement.

Among women, Clare (5.6%), Leitrim (1.8%) and Sligo (0.8%) experienced an increase in the number of women working in Public Administration & Defence. This contributed to these three counties having the highest female shares of total employment in the sector (see Fig. 6). Donegal (-15.7%) and Mayo (-13.8%) saw extremely large declines, which contributed to their overall decline in this sector (see Table 1). As noted elsewhere, job losses at local authorities would have been a factor.

**Fig. 10: Percentage change in employment in Public Administration & Defence in Western Region and state by sex, 2011-2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EB027

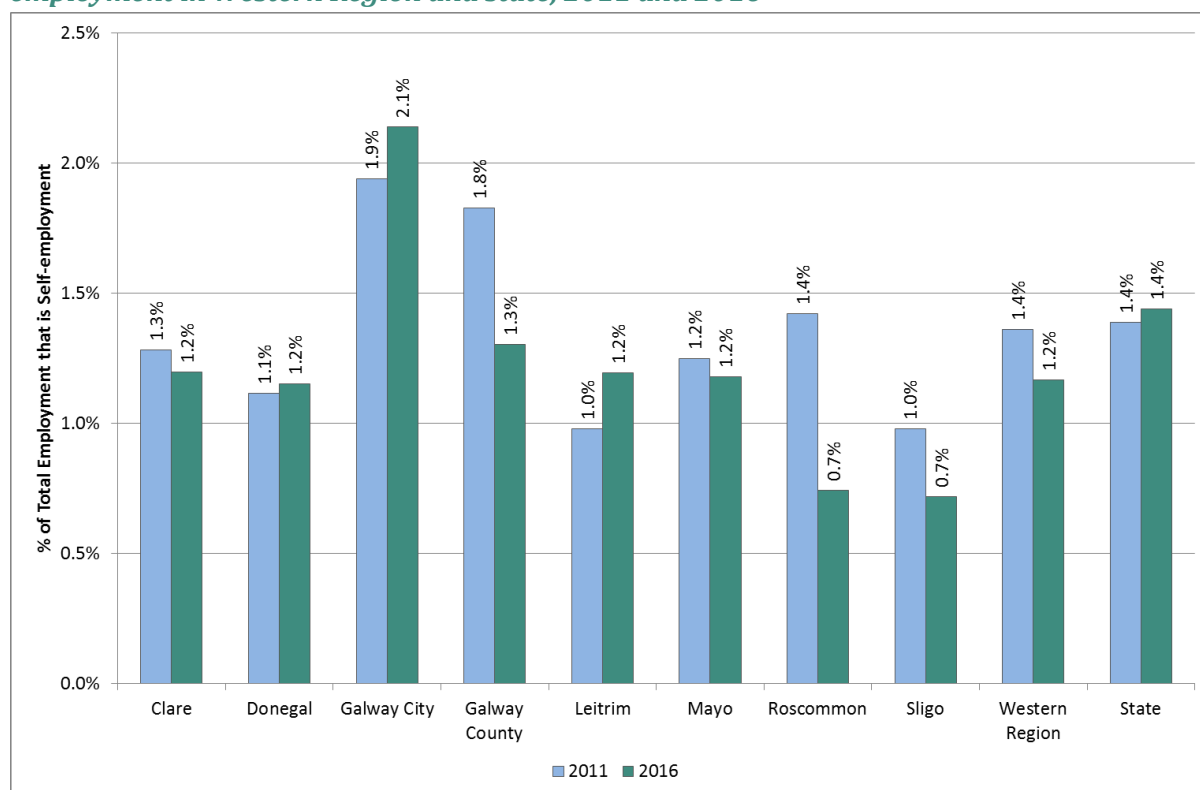
## 2.5 Self-employment in Public Administration & Defence

Of the 18,858 people working in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region, only 1.2% (220 people) are self-employed (employer or own account worker). Obviously this is a sector where self-employment is very rare and would largely take the form of self-employed contractors employed to work on specific tasks or projects. The Western Region is characterised by slightly lower self-employment in Public Administration & Defence than the national average (1.4%) (Fig. 11).

At 2.1%, Galway City had by far the highest level of self-employment in 2016, and it is also the area where this sector is least important in the overall employment profile (see Fig. 1). This may indicate that the public sector in the city has somewhat different characteristics to elsewhere in the region. In contrast, Roscommon and Sligo, where the sector is a very important employer, only 0.7% of employment is self-employment.

Between 2011 and 2016 the share of all employment that was self-employment decreased in the region from 1.4% to 1.2%. The share halved in Roscommon from 1.4% to 0.7%, and also declined in Galway County, Sligo, Mayo and Clare. All other counties saw an increase in the self-employed share. The change in the share was due to both changes in the actual number of self-employed and changes in the total number working in the sector.

**Fig. 11: Percentage of total employment in Public Administration & Defence that is self-employment in Western Region and state, 2011 and 2016**



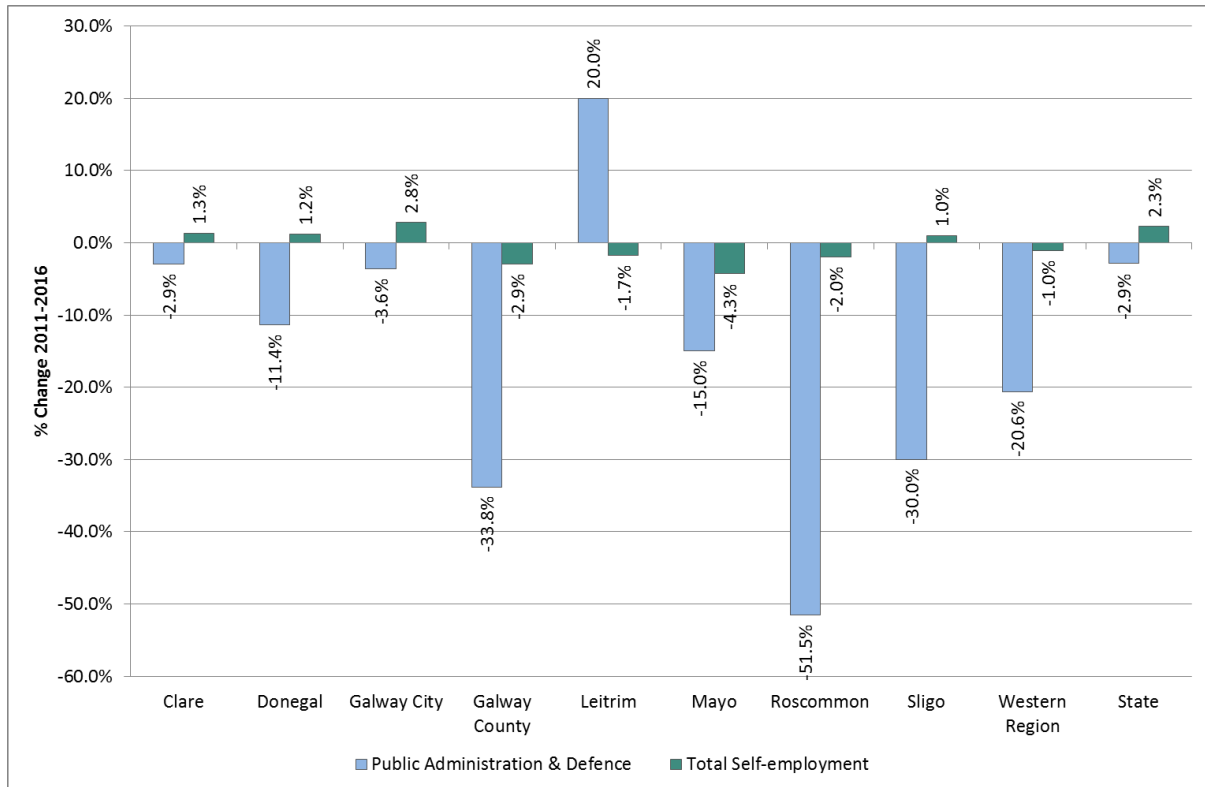
Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB033. Special run from CSO.

### 2.5.1 Change in self-employment

In the Western Region, the number of people working in Public Administration & Defence who were self-employed declined by 20.6% between 2011 and 2016 (Fig. 12). This compares with 1% decline in total self-employment over the same period, indicating that self-employment in Public Administration & Defence declined considerably more strongly than in other sectors. Some of the self-employment in 2011 likely resulted from the moratorium on recruitment which led to some roles being filled by self-employed contractors. People may have been employed on a short term basis or for a specific project (e.g. an EU funded project) and then ceased employment.

In every county, except Leitrim, self-employment in Public Administration & Defence performed worse than total self-employment. Roscommon (-51.5%), Galway County (-33.8%) and Sligo (-30%) had the largest percentage declines in the number of self-employed though it must be recalled that the numbers involved are small (e.g. the decline in Roscommon was from 33 people to 16). Leitrim (20%) was the only area with an increase.

**Fig. 12: Percentage change in self-employment in Public Administration & Defence sector and self-employment in total employment in Western Region and state, 2011-2016**



Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB033. Special run from CSO.

### 3.0 Key Policy Issues for the Western Region's Public Administration & Defence Sector

Public Administration & Defence plays an important employment role in the Western Region. Some of the key issues for the sector are discussed below.

#### Higher reliance on public sector employment in the Western Region

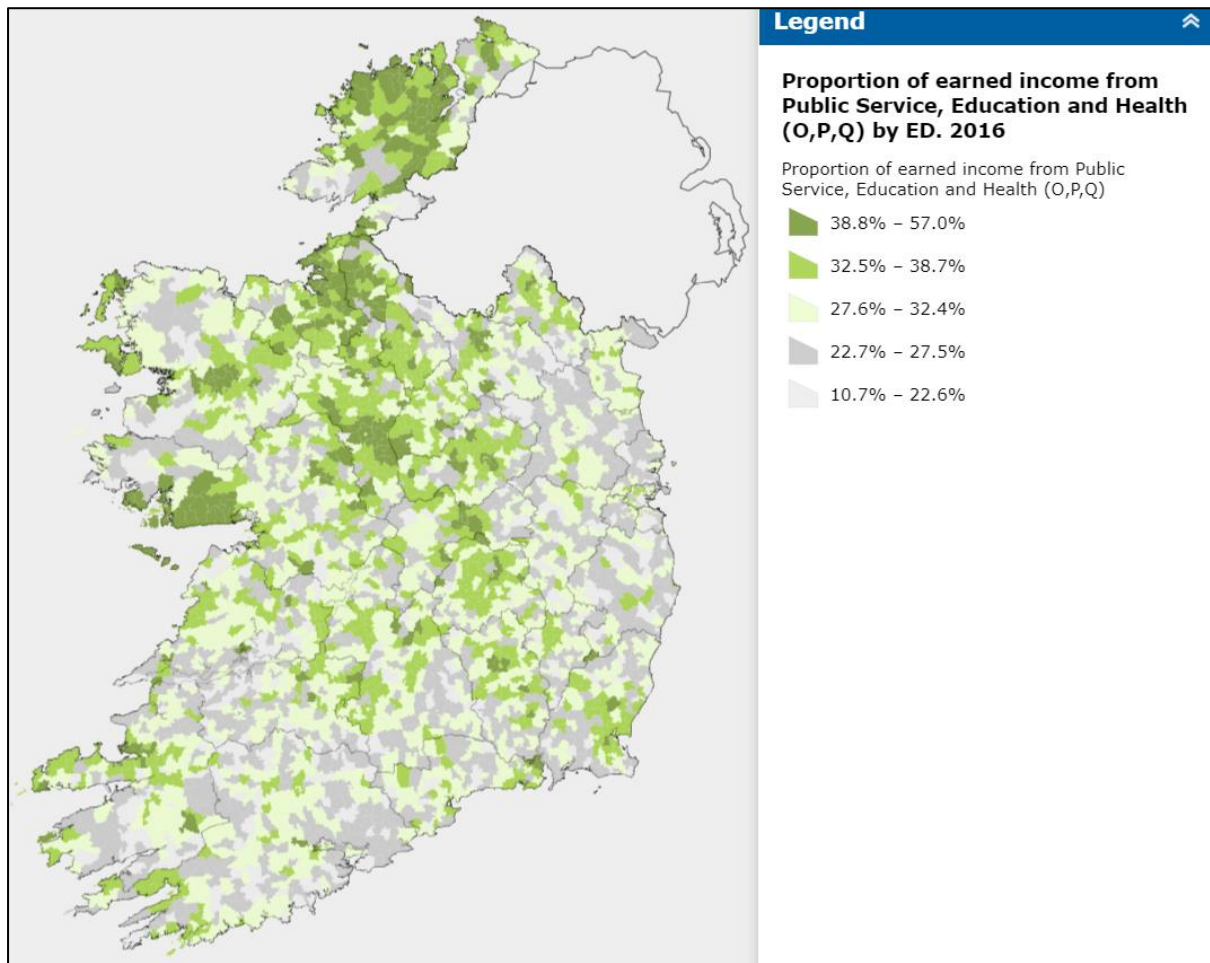
Public Administration & Defence is a slightly more significant employer in the Western Region than nationally (5.6% of total employment v 5.3%). To an even greater degree this is also the case for the two other predominantly public sectors of Health & Care (12.6% v 11.1%) and Education (9.7% v 8.8%). The three primary public sectors of employment jointly account for 28% of all jobs in the Western Region (24% in the state). The public sector is therefore a more important source of job opportunities in the region than elsewhere.

This is also reflected in income earned. Recent analysis by the CSO of geographical income patterns in 2016<sup>13</sup> found that 41.7% of earned income by employees living in Sligo came from Public Administration & Defence, Education and Health & Care combined, the highest share in Ireland, followed by Leitrim (37.8%) and Donegal (37.8%). The spatial pattern is very vividly illustrated by Fig. 13 which shows the percentage of earned income coming from these three sectors combined at Electoral Division (ED) level. This higher reliance means that developments, such as the moratorium on recruitment in the public sector from 2009 to 2015, had a greater economic and employment impact in the region.

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<sup>13</sup> CSO (2019), [Geographical Profiles of Income in Ireland 2016](#)

**Fig. 13: Proportion of earned income from Public Administration & Defence, Education and Health & Care combined, 2016**



Source: CSO, (2019), *Geographical Profiles of Income in Ireland 2016*, Map 6.8

### Providing professional career opportunities in smaller towns and more rural areas

Public Administration & Defence plays a critical role in providing professional career opportunities, including in more rural areas and smaller towns where there may be fewer alternatives. North Connacht and the North West, which is the more rural part of the Western Region, has particularly high reliance on the sector with Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo in the top four counties in Ireland in terms of this sector’s share of total jobs and Lifford, Strandhill and Roscommon town in the top four towns. Sligo and Leitrim, as well as Donegal, also have among the highest shares of residents working in Health & Care and Education.

More limited private sector job options in these areas increases reliance on Public Administration & Defence employment. It also increases the sector’s economic impact on the local economy with spending by public sector employees helping to sustain local services e.g. food service, retail, in smaller towns. The proportion of total earned income coming from public sector employment (see Fig. 13) very clearly shows its importance to local economies.

While the main focus for Public Administration & Defence policy must be on the provision of quality public goods and services, the sector’s parallel role as a provider of jobs, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas, should also be a factor in policy decisions on the location of public sector

employment.

### **Important role in female employment**

Public Administration & Defence is a more important source of female employment in the region compared with nationally (6.2% of total female employment v 5.1%). The gap has widened over the past two decades indicating that women's employment in the region has become increasingly dependent on this sector compared with elsewhere. This was particularly the case during the recent recession when reliance on the sector increased more in the region and the gap has remained.

Public Administration & Defence is particularly important for women's jobs in more rural counties with around 9% of women in Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo working in the sector. As two of the sub-sectors (Defence forces and Public Order & Safety) are quite male dominated, this clearly illustrates the significance of the civil/public service to women's employment in these areas. In contrast, only 3.6% of women in Galway City work in Public Administration & Defence which illustrates that greater diversity in private sector job options reduces reliance on the public sector.

Women's employment in this sector may also help maintain the viability of household income, particularly during a recession when there are large private sector job losses e.g. in construction. Future trends in public sector employment will have a greater impact on female than male employment levels.

### **Contribution to achieving regional and rural development**

The location of Public Administration & Defence employment is a key policy tool at the disposal of Government to achieve regional and rural development. A study commissioned by the WDC<sup>14</sup> estimated the economic impact of the relocation of two Government offices to Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim and Tubbercurry, Co Sligo. For every four jobs relocated to Carrick-on-Shannon one additional job was created in the local economy and for Tubbercurry, every six jobs relocated added one additional local job. Equally the loss of public sector employment in a town, such as the closure of the Tubbercurry office or the closure of a library or courthouse, will have a negative impact. The smaller the location, the greater the impact is likely to be.

While the 'decentralisation' plan announced in 2003 received much criticism, the relocation of public sector offices and employment from Dublin (which is facing massive traffic and housing pressures) to other locations continues to have considerable potential both to stimulate development in these locations as well as to ease pressures on the capital. Additionally, lessons have been learned from earlier experiences of relocations which can inform any new moves, while technology and work practices have also evolved hugely to facilitate more dispersed working locations.

The Government, national and local, can play a very clear and direct role in stimulating regional development through location decisions for public sector jobs. This investment is in the direct control of Government and therefore easier to align with the national regional development objectives contained in the National Planning Framework (NPF) than private sector investment. Location decisions for public sector investment, or divestment, have a significant impact and it is

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<sup>14</sup> WDC (2008), [Moving West: An Exploratory Study of the Social and Economic Effects of the Relocation of Public Sector Offices to Towns in the Western Region](#)

important for the Government to lead by example in helping to achieve regional and rural job creation and development.



## 4.0 Conclusion

Public Administration & Defence is a more important source of jobs in the Western Region than nationally and as employment is quite widely distributed, it helps to sustain the regional and rural economy. It plays a particularly important role in providing professional career opportunities in more rural areas, where there may be fewer alternatives and is a key employment sector for women.

All western counties (except Galway City) have a higher than average share working in this sector, with Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo having particularly high reliance. Developments within this sector such as the moratorium on public sector recruitment as well as the relocation or closure of public sector offices or barracks can have particularly large impacts on more rural areas or smaller towns. The location of public sector employment is a key policy tool available to the Government to help implement the objectives of the National Planning Framework.

Download **The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile** and **WDC Insights: The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region** [here](#)

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**Appendix 1: Population aged 15 years and over by detailed industrial group in the Public Administration & Defence sector NACE Rev 2 in Western Region 2011 and 2016**

Detailed industrial group	Clare			Donegal			Galway City		
	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change
Defence activities	92	85	-7.6%	359	243	-32.3%	170	160	-5.9%
Public order & safety activities	441	412	-6.6%	465	394	-15.3%	168	116	-31.0%
Public administration compulsory social security activities	2,120	2,259	6.6%	3,126	2,754	-11.9%	1,105	986	-10.8%
<b>Total Public Administration &amp; Defence</b>	<b>2,653</b>	<b>2,756</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3,950</b>	<b>3,391</b>	<b>-14.2%</b>	<b>1,443</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>-12.5%</b>

Detailed industrial group	Galway County			Leitrim			Mayo		
	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change
Defence activities	210	203	-3.3%	31	31	0.0%	65	55	-15.4%
Public order & safety activities	562	576	2.5%	143	126	-11.9%	469	478	1.9%
Public administration compulsory social security activities	2,952	2,673	-9.5%	849	848	-0.1%	2,671	2,349	-12.1%
<b>Total Public Administration &amp; Defence</b>	<b>3,724</b>	<b>3,452</b>	<b>-7.3%</b>	<b>1,023</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>-1.8%</b>	<b>3,205</b>	<b>2,882</b>	<b>-10.1%</b>

Detailed industrial group	Roscommon			Sligo			Western Region		
	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change	2011	2016	% Change
Defence activities	223	197	-11.7%	95	65	-31.6%	1,245	1,039	-16.5%
Public order & safety activities	313	304	-2.9%	253	213	-15.8%	2,814	2,619	-6.9%
Public administration compulsory social security activities	1,786	1,658	-7.2%	1,695	1,673	-1.3%	16,304	15,200	-6.8%
<b>Total Public Administration &amp; Defence</b>	<b>2,322</b>	<b>2,159</b>	<b>-7.0%</b>	<b>2,043</b>	<b>1,951</b>	<b>-4.5%</b>	<b>20,363</b>	<b>18,858</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>

Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011

## Appendix 2: Population aged 15 years and over employed in the Public Administration & Defence sector in western towns 2011 and 2016

Towns	2011		2016		% Change 2011-2016
	No. Employed	% of Total Employment	No. Employed	% of Total Employment	
Galway City and suburbs	1,466	4.6%	1,283	3.6%	-12.5%
Ennis	666	6.7%	706	6.7%	6.0%
Letterkenny	623	8.6%	526	6.8%	-15.6%
Sligo	522	7.4%	499	7.0%	-4.4%
Castlebar	383	8.1%	329	6.8%	-14.1%
Ballina	246	6.3%	196	5.4%	-20.3%
Shannon	114	2.9%	100	2.4%	-12.3%
Tuam	108	3.6%	91	2.7%	-15.7%
Buncrana	159	7.7%	148	6.2%	-6.9%
Ballinasloe	105	4.7%	85	3.7%	-19.0%
Westport	110	4.4%	116	4.1%	5.5%
Roscommon	238	11.3%	208	9.2%	-12.6%
Loughrea	104	5.3%	81	3.5%	-22.1%
Oranmore	120	4.8%	108	4.2%	-10.0%
Ballybofey-Stranorlar	162	10.6%	112	6.8%	-30.9%
Athenry	92	5.5%	92	4.8%	0.0%
Carrick-on-Shannon	125	7.5%	129	7.4%	3.2%
Claremorris	78	5.6%	65	4.1%	-16.7%
Gort	38	3.6%	44	3.5%	15.8%
Ballinrobe	37	3.4%	35	3.1%	-5.4%
Kilrush	35	4.3%	36	4.4%	2.9%
Sixmilebridge	56	5.4%	57	4.9%	1.8%
Donegal	75	7.5%	66	6.1%	-12.0%
Boyle	76	9.0%	62	7.5%	-18.4%
Carndonagh	34	5.3%	33	4.1%	-2.9%
Ballyhaunis	17	2.1%	11	1.3%	-35.3%
Ballyshannon	65	8.3%	60	7.5%	-7.7%
Bearna	27	3.3%	32	3.6%	18.5%
Castlerea	45	7.0%	35	5.2%	-22.2%
Tubbercurry	54	8.1%	44	6.4%	-18.5%
Bundoran	42	6.0%	34	4.6%	-19.0%
Ballaghaderreen	26	4.9%	24	4.1%	-7.7%
Newmarket-on-Fergus	36	4.9%	30	3.7%	-16.7%
Strandhill	71	9.6%	75	9.4%	5.6%
Moycullen	30	4.2%	31	4.1%	3.3%
Lifford	63	14.5%	53	11.4%	-15.9%
Collooney	N/A	N/A	52	7.9%	N/A
Clifden	53	5.9%	27	4.0%	-49.1%
Ballymote	32	5.8%	29	5.4%	-9.4%
Convoy	N/A	N/A	24	5.0%	N/A

Source: CSO, Census 2016: Profile 11 – Employment, Occupations and Industry, Table EB030