



WDC CEDRA RESEARCH REPORT

Section 3 Chapter 2

Rural Commuting and Employment in Towns

Western Development Commission

December 2013

1.0 Introduction

Any examination of the rural economy needs to understand the nature and extent of commuting from rural areas. The purpose of this research is to provide some sense of the scale of one of the more important rural-urban linkages; that of commuting to work, based on data from the most recent Census (2011). The particular focus here is on commuting from rural areas to work in urban areas. The analysis undertaken will help our understanding of the extent to which rural dwellers commute to and avail of employment in urban centres.

Much discussion of rural-urban linkages takes place in the absence of clear definitions of what is considered urban and rural and often in the absence of a quantitative evidence base. Of course there are issues regarding what constitutes rural areas and urban areas, and there is a case for several categories within each based on the 'degree' of rurality. For example, many would regard smaller towns as rural towns, rather than urban centres and there are differences between remote rural areas and those close to urban centres. This more nuanced categorisation is beyond the scope of this paper but is evident in some of the maps included. In providing a quantitative measure of the levels of rural commuting, some definitions of rural and urban are required and spatial areas need to be demarcated. The definitions used are discussed below.

1.1 Commuting and Employment

Commuting is an integral element of the operation of labour markets throughout the developed world. Across OECD countries there is net out commuting from rural regions indicating that generally there are more workers than jobs in rural regions¹. These rural urban and inter-regional labour market linkages are important in understanding the relationship between rural and urban areas and in understanding the importance of urban employment as an essential aspect of rural communities.

By its nature, commuting can be multi-directional. While commuting is often seen as predominantly from periphery to core or rural to urban, rural regions are employment destinations for commuters from urban centres. There are also strong rural to rural economic linkages which are important in sustaining rural communities². However the larger flows tend to be from rural to urban and the focus here is on rural commuting to towns. The definitions of rural and urban are subject to debate and are discussed below. The purpose of this paper is to explore some of these rural-urban links as well as quantifying the extent and nature of these flows.

1.2 Policy Implications

From a policy perspective an important consideration is the extent to which new jobs created are filled by the unemployed or underemployed or by changed commuting patterns. Employment growth in a given community will be accessed by both existing residents - rural dwellers, residents from adjoining areas (both urban and rural) and in some cases further afield. A study of rural commuting in North Carolina found that a greater number of urban

¹ Commuting: its importance for rural employment analysis. Schindegger, F. Krajasits, C. 1997.

² See for example Harris, S., Alasia, A., Bollman, R. *Rural Commuting: Its Relevance to Rural and Urban Labour Markets*, Statistics Canada, Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin, 2008.

jobs were filled by non-resident commuters, compared to rural areas where employment growth led to a greater reduction of out-commuting through employment taken up by rural residents. The study also suggests that urban employers draw their labour supply from a wider geographic area (including nearby rural areas) than do rural businesses³.

In terms of income generation and all that may flow from this, for example spending patterns, to the individual it may make little difference where a new enterprise is established and new employment is created as long as it is within reasonable and affordable commuting distance. This is discussed under the section on Travel to Work distance, below. From a wider economy perspective however the effects can be significant. Commuting for employment purposes also provides opportunities for other economic and social activity, such as shopping and leisure activities. Those rural dwellers who commute to work in urban areas can engage in additional economic activity there, which otherwise may have occurred in the rural area. This, while providing greater choice to the rural commuter, may involve a loss of income to the rural community in which the worker lives.

1.3 Recent Commuting Patterns

The total number of those commuting to work each day is a factor of the overall numbers at work as well as other factors such as car ownership and the availability of public transport services⁴. In 2011, 1.66 million workers indicated that they travelled to their work (excluding those working from home⁵), a decrease from 1.79 million in 2006, reflecting the fall in the number of persons in employment over the five year period.⁶

Apart from this recent contraction, the evidence within Ireland suggests that commuting has been increasing with a period of uninterrupted growth in the number of persons commuting to work between 1986 and 2006⁷. Commuting increased in the '90s and '00s in part arising out of increasing employment but also from increasing house prices which impacted on place of residence, though place of work may have remained the same. Additional factors supporting increased commuting include improvements to the road network and increasing car ownership. It is important to note that the definition of commuting used here refers to any mode of transport.

The focus of this paper is an examination of the extent to which commuting is a factor in supporting the economy of rural areas through employment of rural dwellers in towns, excluding the nine National Spatial Strategy (NSS) gateways. Rural dwellers who commute

³ Renkow, M. *Rural Employment Growth: Who Gets the Jobs?*, NC State Economist, Agriculture and Resource Economics, July/August 2002 North Carolina State University.

⁴ Over the last thirty years the use of cars has become increasingly prevalent. In 1981, 498,646 persons or 57 per cent of commuters either drove to work or were a passenger in a car. Thirty years later, this number had more than doubled to 1,136,615 persons, representing 69 per cent of commuters. This rise is despite the increase in public transport options available, CSO Census 2011.

⁵ A total of 83,326 persons indicated that they worked mainly at or from home in 2011, down from 105,706 (21%) since 2006.

⁶ There is also a category of worker with no fixed place of work or mobile workers. In 2011, over 148,000 workers indicated that they had no fixed place of work. This represented a 29 per cent decline from 2006. Over half (57%) of mobile workers were employees with a further 43 per cent self-employed. Mobile workers were typically male (78.6%) and almost three in ten mobile workers were in the construction industry.

⁷ CSO, Census 2011, Profile 10 – Door to door, p.7.

to work in gateways are examined in CEDRA Research Chapter Four, *Rural Commuting, Gateways and Foreign Direct Investment*, WDC, 2013. To what extent do rural dwellers commute to and avail of employment in towns? Analysis of rural employment patterns and rural employment opportunities generally must take account of those rural dwellers who commute from rural to urban and this is the focus of this chapter. The data analysed is focused on the numbers and profile of rural dwellers commuting to employment located in towns.

1.4 Employment policy

The national policy focus on jobs growth is focussed particularly on urban areas. Foreign direct investment, accounting for much of the recent employment creation, and state assisted employment generally, is increasingly concentrated in the gateways and to a lesser extent the hubs⁸. Current policy appears to contrast with the industrial policy of the 1960s and 1970s with wider regional dispersal of foreign manufacturing and this is discussed further in *Rural Commuting, Gateways and Foreign Direct Investment*, WDC, 2013. While there are some sectors with rural growth potential, for example tourism and agrifood, in the absence of policy interventions aimed at dispersing employment growth to all regions and areas, there is likely to be ever greater pressure on rural dwellers to commute to or migrate to take up jobs located in urban areas.

1.5 Employment in Towns

Previous research on small towns has highlighted their importance in supporting the rural economy. The WDC has highlighted the role of small towns within the predominantly rural Western Region⁹. In particular the WDC has noted the importance of public and private investment in these smaller towns to support economic development¹⁰. The National Spatial Strategy noted that in supporting development in the West *'the critical factor is underpinning sustainable development of strategically placed medium-sized towns to reinforce rural economies'*¹¹. More recently, the role of towns in supporting the rural economy has been examined and the role and performance of towns with populations of 3,000-5,000 in particular has been highlighted¹². The analysis on commuting in this chapter will help in understanding the role of towns in supporting the rural economy through employment opportunities across a range of sectors, in particular retail and locally traded services, public services and manufacturing.

Towns of varying sizes also support both indigenous and foreign state assisted employment. Though the evidence indicates an increasing concentration of foreign direct investment in Dublin and other large cities, smaller scale operations can and do successfully operate in towns. Examples of smaller centres which have been successful in increasing agency assisted employment over the last decade include Bantry/Clonakilty, Carrick-on-Shannon,

⁸ See Breathnach, P, *Spatial trends in employment in foreign firms in Ireland*, 2013, Chris van Egeraat, Proinnsias Breathnach & Declan Curran, *Gateways, hubs and regional specialisation in the National Spatial Strategy*, IPA Vol. 60, no.3 (2013).

⁹ The WDC Western Region comprises the five Connacht counties and Galway and Clare located on the West/NorthWest of Ireland.

¹⁰ WDC, *Jobs for Towns, Small and Medium-Sized Towns on Radial Routes in the Western Region*, 2003

¹¹ National Spatial Strategy, 2002, p.47.

¹² Dr. K Walsh and Brian Harvey *Employment and Social Inclusion in Rural Areas: A Fresh Start*, Pobal 2013.

Clonmel/Carrick-on-Suir and Mallow/Mitchelstown¹³. There are many examples of smaller companies operating and exporting successfully from outside the large centres and some from quite small centres. Many of these cite the available labour supply as a positive attribute of their more rural location, as staff loyalty tends to be higher¹⁴. There are examples too of companies locating in smaller towns but within commuting distance of a larger labour pool with similar skills base e.g. medical devices companies in Gort and Loughrea Co. Galway accessing the labour supply within the Galway city catchment¹⁵.

1.6 Definitions – Rural, Urban (towns), Gateway

Rural

Within Ireland, there are a range of definitions of rural, ranging from the broadest; capturing all areas outside of the five main cities¹⁶, or all areas outside of the nine gateways and nine hubs designated in the NSS¹⁷; to narrower versions such as the OECD definition which classifies rural as areas with a population density of less than 150+ per sq km. This OECD definition may be more appropriate to countries with higher population densities as in Ireland, many smaller urban centres would be classified as rural. The CSO defines rural based on settlement size where settlements with a population of less than 1,500 and open countryside are classified as rural¹⁸. The CEDRA terms of reference acknowledge that

while the definitions of rural areas are varied, the Commission will adopt a holistic view of rural as being outside the main metropolitan areas. The Commission's remit recognises of course the relational nature of economic development and the interconnections between rural and urban areas¹⁹.

In choosing a definition, the purpose of the analysis is an important consideration. The focus of this research is rural dwellers and the extent and nature of rural commuting to urban centres. It is therefore important to capture as much commuting from rural areas as possible. On this basis, the narrower definition of rural using the CSO definition of areas less than 1,500 is used. This definition classifies more centres as urban and in the context of commuting, this is particularly important for parts of the country which have many smaller urban centres but lack a large urban centre, a feature of the West and North West in

¹³ Breathnach, P, *Spatial trends in employment in foreign firms in Ireland*, 2013.

¹⁴ A few examples available include CMS Peripherals in Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo, E&I Engineering, Burnfoot, Co. Donegal, Merenda Ltd, Manorhamilton Co. Leitrim, Lionbridge Technologies, Ballina, Co. Mayo (Telecommunications), McHale Engineering Limited, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, MeteoGroup, Ennis, Co. Clare (Software), Ansamed Limited, Boyle (Medical Devices). MBNA/Bank of America in Carrick-on-Shannon is an example of a large employer successfully sourcing labour supply from a relatively small town and wider hinterland. Many of the companies cite the good labour supply and strong work ethic as benefits of more rural locations. See www.wdc.ie and www.lookwest.ie.

¹⁵ For example CareFusion established medical devices manufacturing centre in 2011 in Gort, Co. Galway with the support of the IDA, now known as Natus Medical. Previous analysis of travel to work data has shown that the Galway city Travel to Work Area (TTWA) or labour catchment extends to the County Galway boundary and beyond. WDC *Travel to Work and Labour Catchments in the Western Region; A Profile of Seven Town Labour Catchments*, 2009.

¹⁶ The White Paper on Rural Development 1999.

¹⁷ Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

¹⁸ Research done by Dr. K Walsh and Brian Harvey *Employment and Social Inclusion in Rural Areas: A Fresh Start* used 3 categories based on settlement sizes of; > 5,000, 3,000 – 5,000 and less than 3,000. Pobal 2013.

¹⁹ <http://www.ruralireland.ie/index.php/remit>

particular. These smaller urban centres often play a more significant role than their size suggests²⁰.

Of course, rural areas differ and in the context of this paper a key difference is between those which are rural but proximate to urban centres and those rural areas that are remote rural, for example many parts of the west coast. These differences are evident in the commuting distances and journey times and the extent to which particularly remote areas are beyond the sphere of influence of gateways and towns and this is illustrated in some of the maps. In providing a quantitative measure of rural commuting, definitions and thresholds of rural and urban are required. Rural is defined as areas less than 1,500 and urban and gateways definitions are explained below. The gateways, urban (towns) and rural areas are shown in Map 1.

Urban

The urban category (towns with a population of 1,500 and above) is further divided into two categories, separating the gateways from the other urban centres (towns). This allows for an examination of rural commuting to gateways as well as to towns.

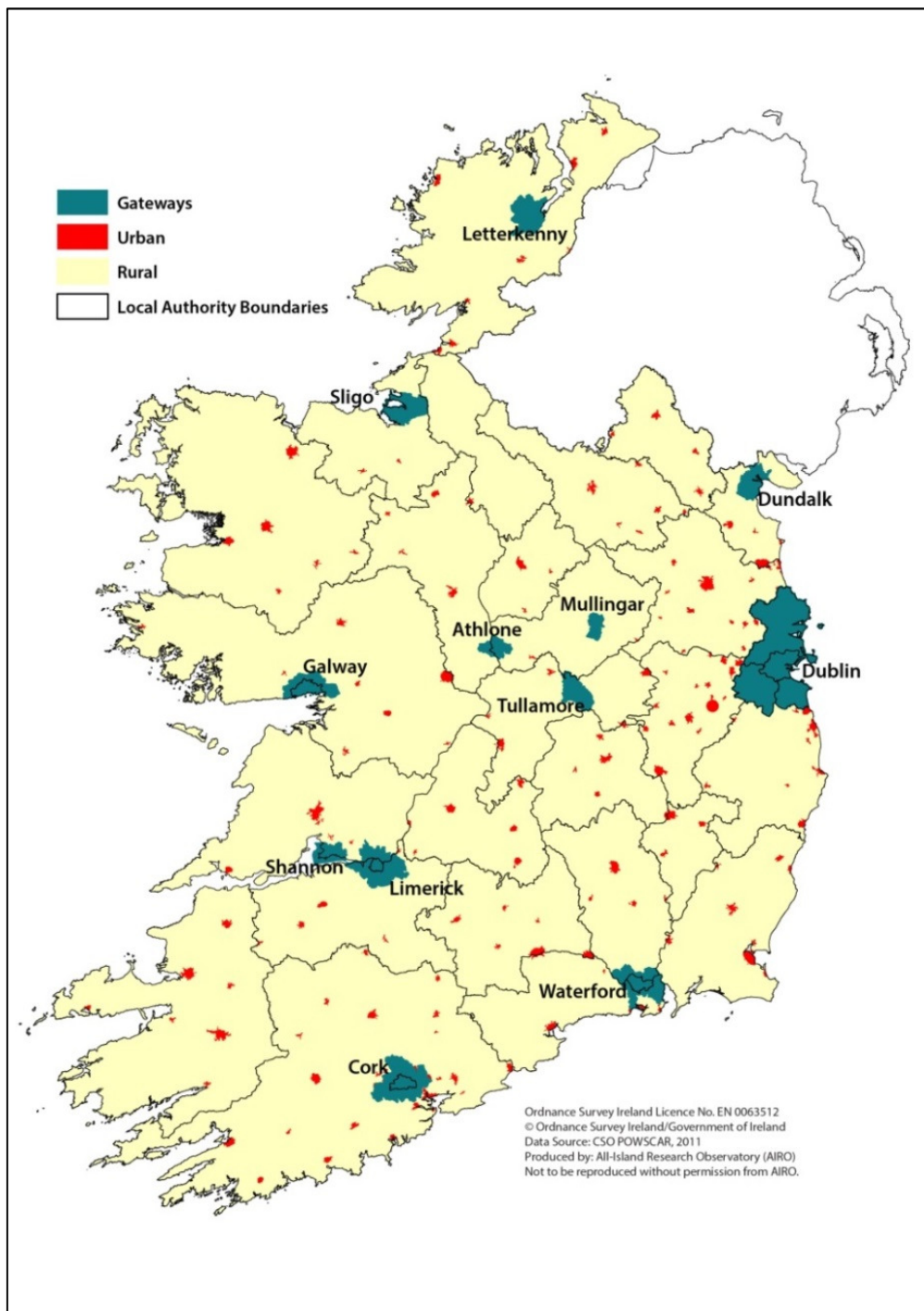
Gateway

The geography of gateways is defined as the legally defined boundaries of the gateways plus all electoral divisions (EDs) which adjoin these boundaries. This is more extensive than the normal gateway definition (of town plus environs) and will capture employment centres located on the outskirts of gateways²¹. Residents within these EDs are classified as urban dwellers.

²⁰ In contrast the OECD definition would categorise what are considered urban centres (albeit small ones) in rural regions as rural e.g Donegal town and many small towns in counties Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo. e.g. Ballinrobe, Ballaghderreen, Ballyhanuis, Tubbercurry and Castlerea.

²¹ This is also the definition used in the paper by Chris van Egeraat, Proinnsias Breathnach & Declan Curran, *Gateways, hubs and regional specialisation in the National Spatial Strategy, IPA Vol. 60, no.3 (2013)*.

Map 1. Employment Geography and commuting Context: Rural, Urban, Gateway



2.1 Commuting to Work in Ireland – the latest evidence

Place of residence

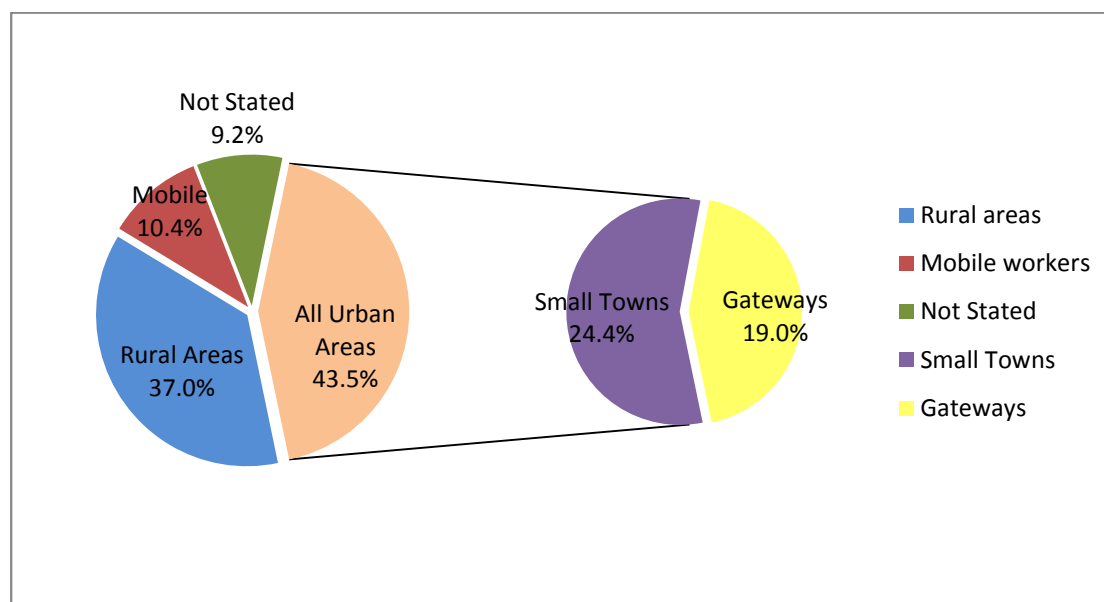
In 2011, there were 1.7 million (1,770,644) workers of which 35.5% (629,382) are categorised as rural dwellers. The working population defined as urban dwellers (including gateway dwellers) comprises 64.5% of the total (1,141,262)²². While over a third of all workers are located in rural areas, there is just over a fifth (21.3%) of all jobs located in rural areas, indicating that commuting is a factor in the employment of rural dwellers. The extent to which rural dwellers commute to work in towns and the profile of these workers is examined in the following sections.

3.1 Rural and Urban Dwellers Place of Work

Rural Dwellers

In 2011, there were 629,382 workers living in rural areas. Figure 1 below shows rural dwellers by place of work. The most significant employment destination for workers living in rural areas is urban areas with 43.5% (273,503) of these commuting to work in urban areas, of which 153,747 (24.4%) commute to towns and 119,756 (19%) commute to gateways. Over a third of all rural dwellers (37% - 232,587) worked in rural areas. The remainder is accounted for by the categories of mobile workers (10.4% = 65,515) and uncodeable or blanks (9.2% = 57,777) both of which are proportionately more prevalent in the rural residential population compared to those resident in urban areas²³. The classification is discussed further in the methodology section in the Appendix.

Figure 1 Rural Dwellers by Place of Work, 2011



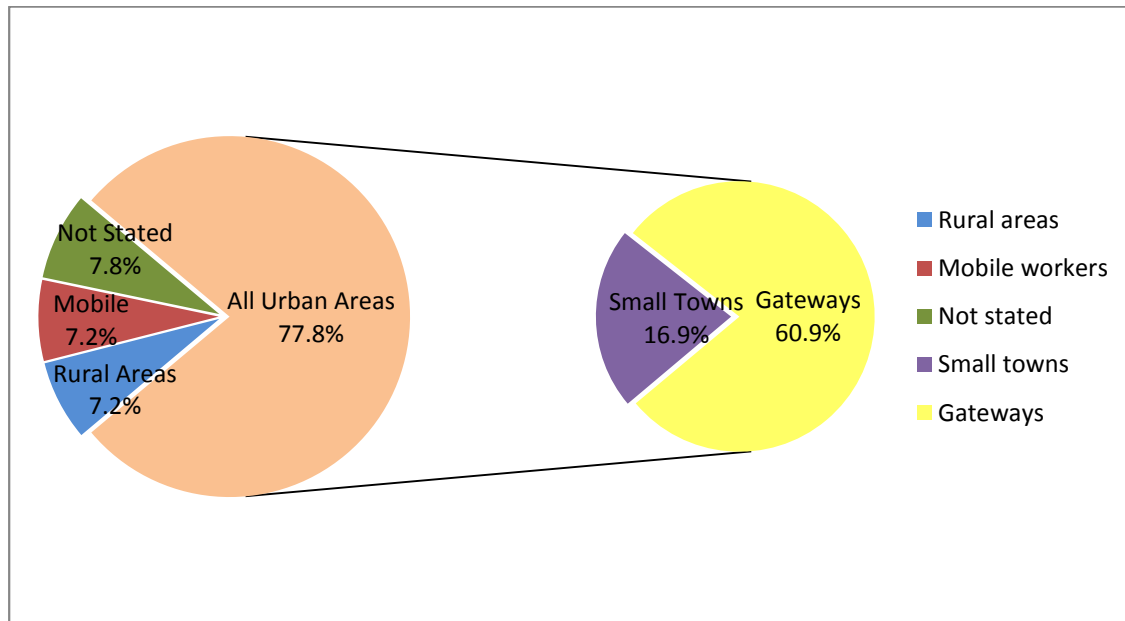
²² Of this urban population, 1.7% (29,227) reside in rural EDs within gateways as defined for this research. This is explained further in the methodology section.

²³ Among the urban resident population 7.8% (89,474) were categorised as blank and 7.2% (82,662) as mobile workers.

Urban Dwellers

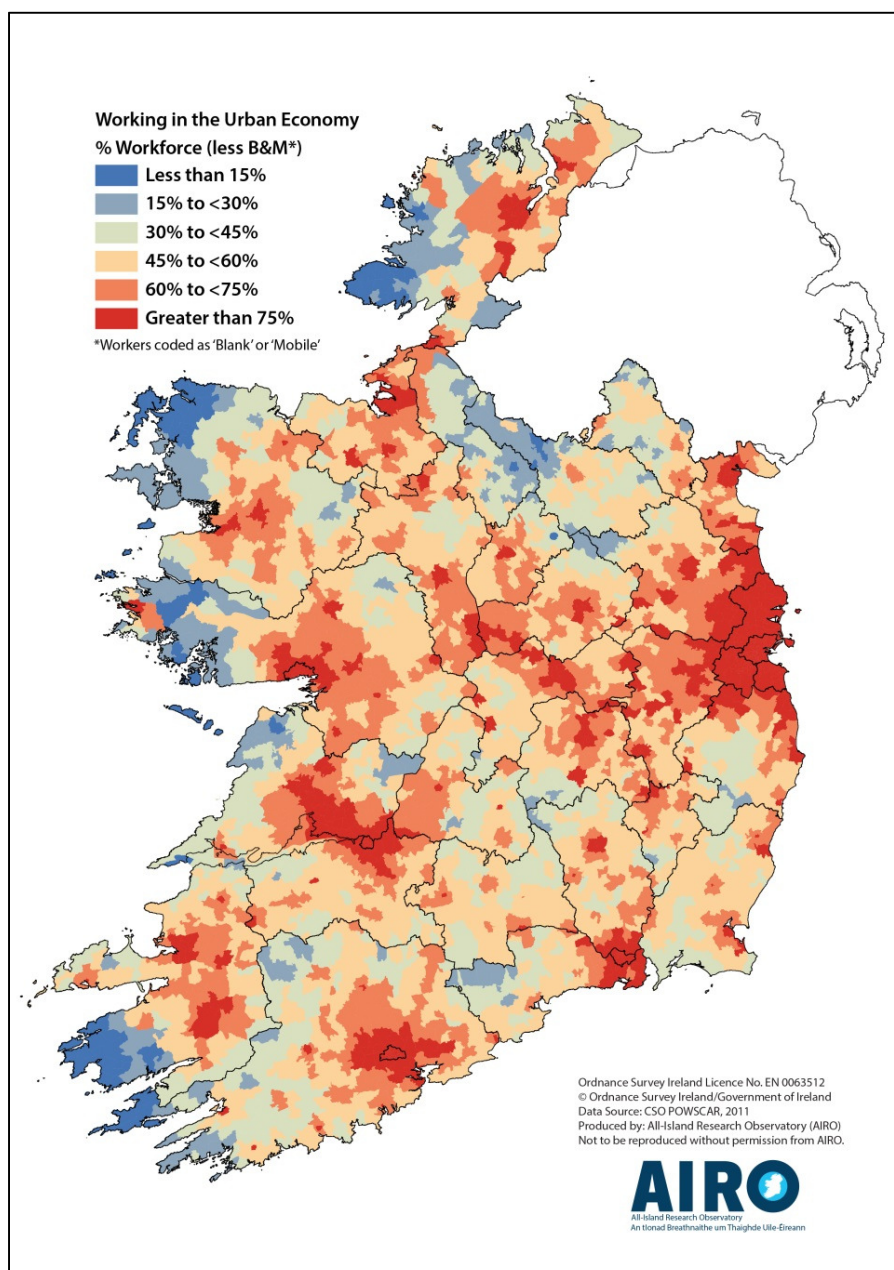
Urban dwellers, accounting for 1.14 million workers, mostly work in urban areas. Figure 2 below shows the place of work for all urban dwellers with 60.9% (694,856) working in gateways which highlights their significance as an employment destinations. A further 16.9% (192,644) of urban dwellers work in towns so that combined, urban centres are the place of work for 78% of urban dwellers. Of all urban dwellers, 7.2% (81,626) commute to work in rural locations to work, a not insignificant amount commuting from urban areas to rural areas to work. The remainder were classed as either mobile or blank.

Figure 2 Urban Dwellers by Place of Work, 2011



Map 2 below illustrates the distribution of all urban employment showing the proportion of the workforce in each electoral division (ED), employed in towns and gateways. The stronger the shade of red, the higher the share of the population working in towns and gateways, with deep red indicating in excess of 75% of the workforce employed there. The blue areas, dispersed along the West coast and throughout inland areas are those areas with less than 30% of the population working in towns or gateways and are the more rural parts of the country.

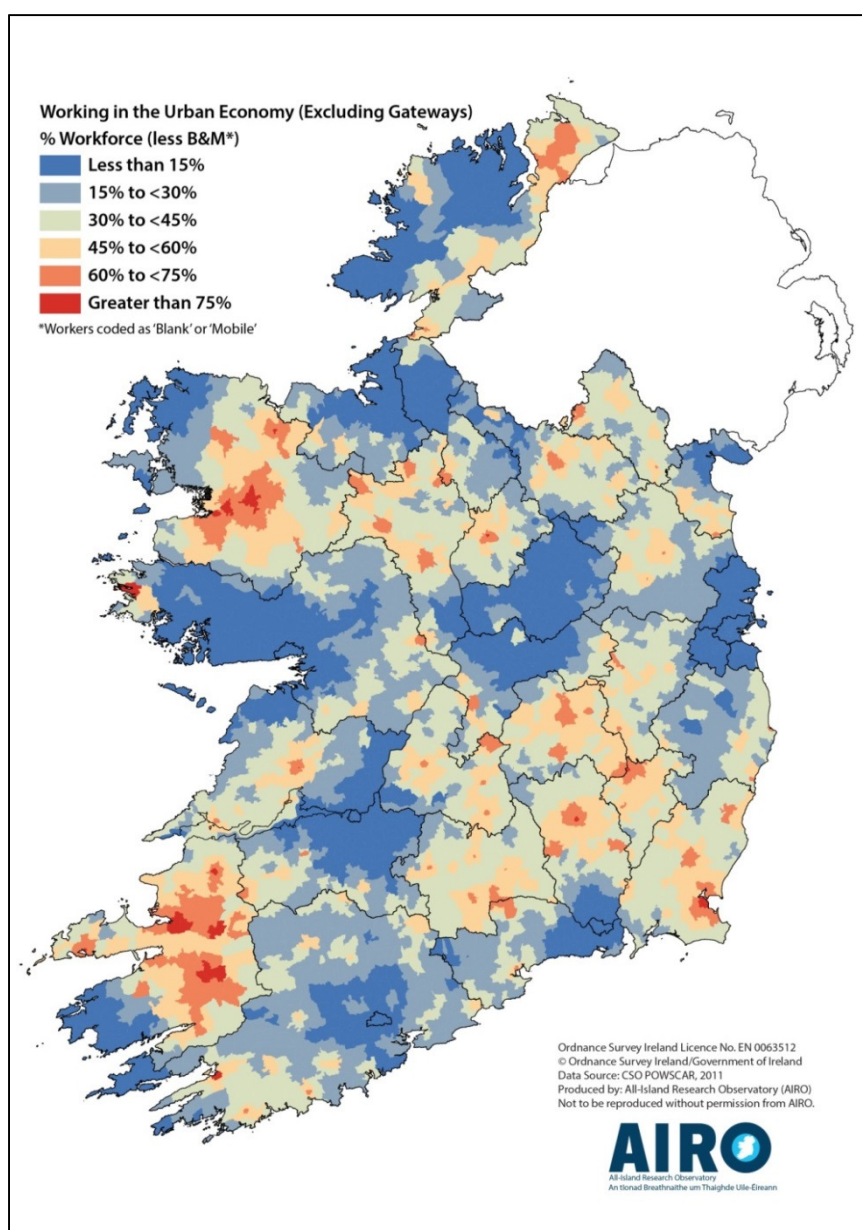
Map 2. Who works in the Urban Economy including Gateways, 2011



In contrast, Map 3 below illustrates the distribution of town based employment, excluding those employed in the gateways. This shows the proportion of the workforce in each electoral division (ED), working in towns and these towns are the focus of this paper. The stronger the shade of red, the higher the share of the population working there with deep

red indicating greater than 75% working in the towns. Many of the dark blue areas in and around the cities illustrate the importance of gateway employment. The rural regions are depicted in blue also and are the same as illustrated in Map 2, along the West coast and various inland areas. Map 3 shows the importance of towns in providing employment in many parts of the West, Midlands and the South-East.

**Map 3. Proportion of the workforce working in Towns
(population centres greater than 1,500 & excluding gateways), 2011**



In the following section we will examine the profile and labour market characteristics of those rural dwellers (N = 273,503) who commute to work in all urban areas, accounting for over 54% of all rural dwellers which provided a workplace location. In particular the focus will be on those rural dwellers commuting to work in the towns, depicted in red in Map 1, those population centres greater than 1,500 and excluding the gateways, (N=153,747), which comprises 30% of all rural dwellers who provided a workplace location.

3. 2 Rural Commuting to Urban Areas - Overview

3.2.1 Where do rural dwellers work?

Of the total working population living in rural areas which provided a workplace destination over half, 54% (273,503) commute to work in all urban areas (towns and gateways), indicating the importance of towns and gateways in sustaining the livelihoods of rural dwellers. Understanding this and supporting these employment patterns will remain vital to the economic wellbeing of rural areas. Therefore it is very important that the nature and extent of commuting to these centres is understood. Of course as discussed at the outset, some towns could be considered rural towns, but in the context of this commuting analysis the CSO threshold of population centres of 1,500 and above is used to define towns and centres less than that are defined as rural.

Towns²⁴ are the employment destination for just under a quarter (24.4% or 153,747) of all workers resident in rural areas. This accounts for 56% of all urban employment locations for rural residents, depicted in Figure 1. While the towns are more significant, gateways are nonetheless important employment locations for rural dwellers accounting for 19% of all employment destinations for rural dwellers (119,756 workers). The profile of these rural dwellers commuting to work in gateways is discussed in more detail in CEDRA research report, *Rural Commuting, Gateways and Foreign Direct Investment*, WDC, 2013.

In the following sections the labour market characteristics of rural commuters working in towns (N=153,747) are examined. The journey time to work, industry of employment and socio-economic group are presented. Following this there is an outline of personal labour market characteristics such as gender, age and education levels.

3.2.2 Travel to Work Journey Time

Commuting distance is an important aspect with shorter journey times more common than longer journeys. Mode of transport and quality of transport infrastructure as well as transport costs are relevant factors here. The question of what can be considered a daily commutable distance also arises, for example, the Croke Park Agreement between the Government and public sector unions considered a drive time of 45 kilometres acceptable. Elsewhere a radius of 60km has been used to measure the labour supply catchment for foreign direct investment²⁵. An important feature of shorter distance commuting is exurbanisation, where rural communities are located in fairly close proximity to urban areas. Some of these rural communities are migrants from urban areas and suburban employment can be as accessible to rural dwellers as to urban dwellers.

Examining the travel time for rural dwellers working in towns, shows the extent to which rural dwellers commute shorter or longer distances and the extent of the towns' travel catchments. The most common drivetime for rural dwellers working in towns is 15-30 minutes with 42% of rural dwellers commuting to towns with this journey time, see Figure 3 below. The next most common journey time, for nearly one quarter (23.9%) of rural dwellers working in towns, is 5-15 minutes. Over 65% of rural dwellers working in towns

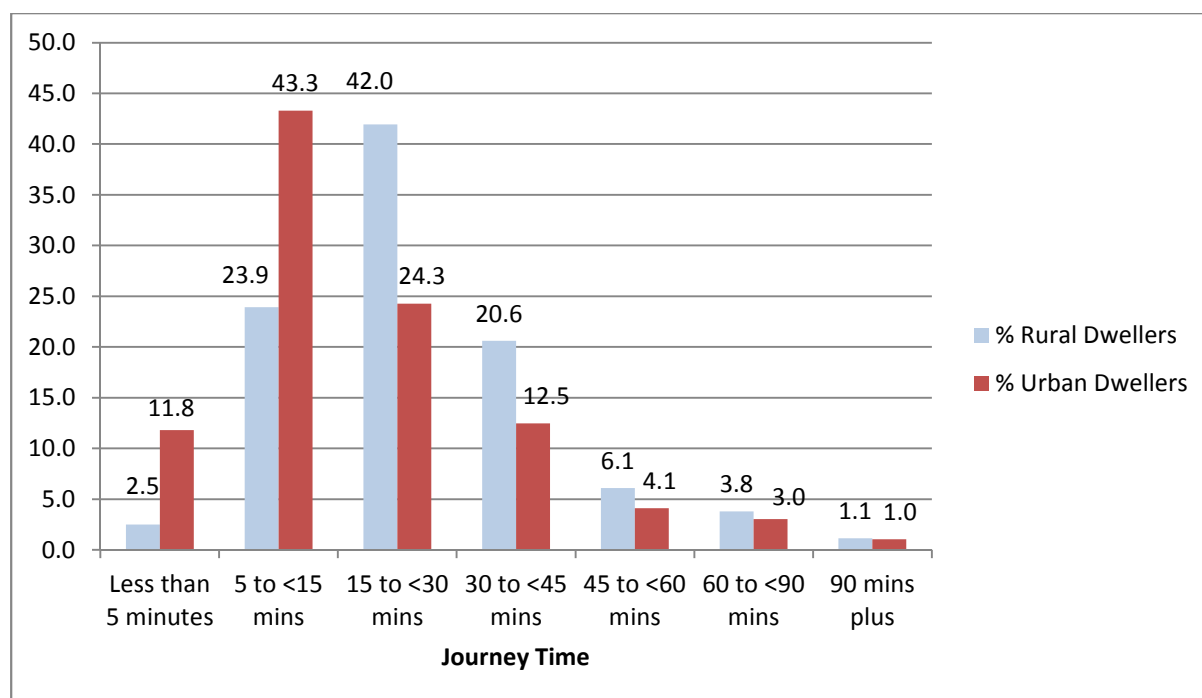
²⁴ Centres greater than +1,500 and excluding gateways.

²⁵IDA presentation to SPACEial North West Data Workshop, November 2012.

have a journey time of 30 minutes or less. A further fifth (20.6%) of rural dwellers commuting to work in towns have a drive time of 30-45 minutes to work. This indicates that close to 90% (89%) of rural dwellers employed in towns are within a 45 minute drive time catchment.

Though there is a higher proportion of urban dwellers working in towns with shorter journey times, as would be expected, (79.4% of urban dwellers have a travel time of 30 minutes or less compared to 68.4% of rural dwellers), comparing those who travel longer distances, the travel time of urban and rural dwellers is not too dissimilar (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Travel time for those rural and urban dwellers who work in towns



3.2.3 What Industry Sectors do rural dwellers work in?

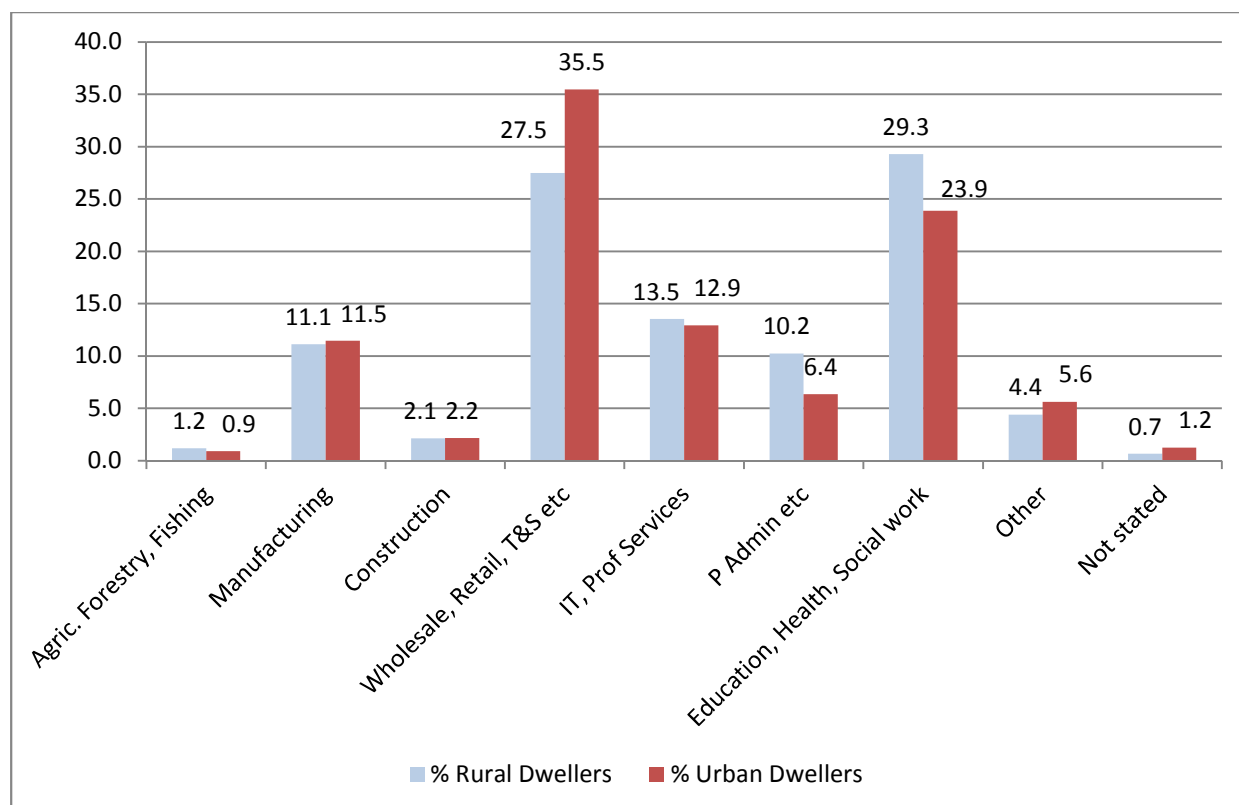
In this section the industry profile of rural dwellers is examined. The sectoral profile of those rural dwellers who commute to work in towns is examined to ascertain whether there is a difference in industry profile between those rural dwellers who commute to work in towns and urban dwellers working in towns.

Figure 4 below shows the share of employment by industry sector of those working in towns, classified by urban and rural dwellers. For both urban and rural dwellers the most important sectors are Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities, followed by Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities sector.

Examining rural dwellers who commute to work in towns, the Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities sector is the most important employment sector accounting for nearly 30% (29.3%) of the total. This is higher than the share of urban dwellers engaged in these positions (23.9%). The next most important employment sector is the broad sector of

Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities to which 27.5% of all rural dwellers who commute to work in towns are engaged in. The third most important sector is Information and Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, administration and support service activities comprising 13.5% of all rural dwellers who work in towns.

Figure 4 Employment by industry for those rural and urban dwellers who work in towns



Rural and urban differences

Comparing the industrial profile of rural dwellers and urban dwellers working in towns, it is evident that rural dwellers are represented disproportionately higher in three sectors, namely the predominantly public sectors of Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities and Public Administration and Defence; as well as IT, Professional Services (Figure 4). These three sectors, which combined account for over 53% (81,523) of employment of rural dwellers in towns are very important to the employment situation of many rural dwellers.

Conversely rural dwellers working in towns have a lower representation than urban dwellers in two broad sectors; Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities and Other. A possible factor may be that a higher share of urban dwellers could be engaged as owner managers within these sectors and are living proximate to their businesses.

Future employment potential

In supporting rural employment and specifically employment located in towns that rural dwellers commute to, industrial policy needs to be cognisant of the different sectors and different policy responses needed. Is there employment growth potential in those sectors which rural dwellers are employed in? For example, of the three most important sectors for rural commuters, the first is predominantly public sector employment and so government policy determining the location of these jobs is very important. The recent cuts to public sector employment along with the incentivised early retirement schemes for public sector workers are likely to have a disproportionate effect on those centres where this employment is concentrated. The sectors of Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities are generally private sector activities and while government policies can have an effect, the influence in determining the location and extent of these jobs will be less than that for public sector employment.

Other important sectors such as Information and Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, administration and support service activities and Manufacturing, mining and quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water supply and Waste Management are impacted by Government policies to varying degrees. In particular ICT and Manufacturing sectors are heavily influenced by Government policy through for example the state agencies including the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and Enterprise Ireland (EI). Apart from supporting the growth of these sectors, over the last decade the locational impact of foreign direct investment has been concentrated in the large cities²⁶.

The location of new employment opportunities will be influenced by the extent to which the current pattern towards concentration in gateways and, increasingly to just a few gateways, will continue or whether there will be more proactive policies to ensure more dispersed employment creation in a wider range of towns. It is clear that urban employment across a range of industry sectors is vital in sustaining rural communities. Government employment policy as well as policies supporting access to employment for example through transport services and infrastructure, childcare supports and broadband infrastructure will be critical to ensuring that this important aspect of rural income generation is maintained.

3.2.4 Which Socio-Economic groups do rural dwellers belong to?

In this section the socio-economic profile is examined, comparing the profile of rural dwellers working in rural areas with those commuting to work in towns and compared to those urban dwellers working in towns.

The socio-economic group is determined by occupation and employment status and aims to classify on the basis of comparable skill and educational levels²⁷. This is also a useful indicator of the type of employment and skills available and is particularly informative when compared to the national socio-economic structure.

²⁶ For example, Breathnach, P, *Spatial trends in employment in foreign firms in Ireland*, 2013 and Chris van Egeraat, Proinnsias Breathnach & Declan Curran, *Gateways, hubs and regional specialisation in the National Spatial Strategy*, IPA Vol. 60, no.3 (2013).

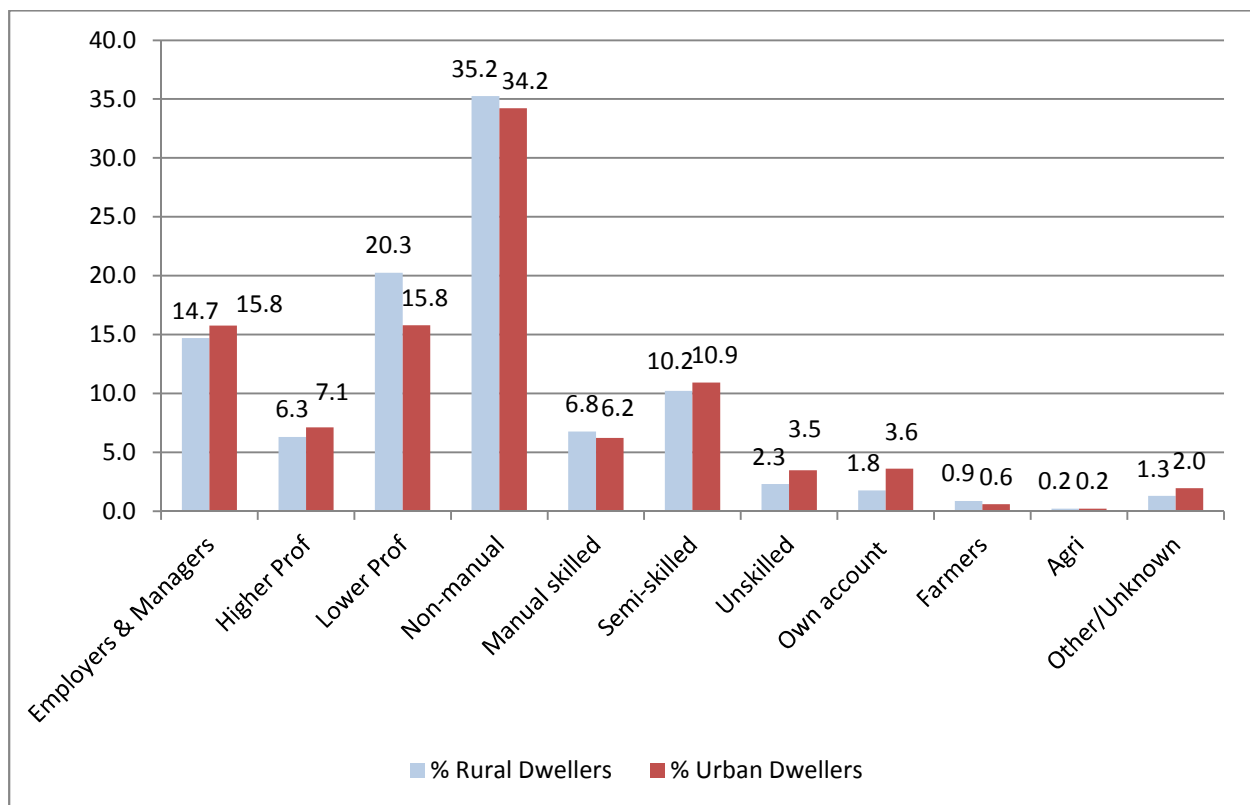
²⁷ The socio-economic group is reported here in place of the occupational classification which was not included in the POWSCAR dataset for confidentiality reasons.

Rural and urban dwellers who work in towns

Figure 5 below shows the share of employment by socio-economic group for those rural and urban dwellers who work in towns. The largest socio-economic group is non-manual occupations, accounting for 35.2% of all rural dwellers who work in towns, slightly higher than those urban dwellers working in towns (34.2%). This is much higher than the share of the national population engaged in non-manual occupations (26.2%) indicating a particular concentration of this type of occupation in towns.

The next most significant socio-economic group for both urban and rural dwellers working in towns is lower professionals accounting for 20.3% and 15.8% respectively. This compares with 15.5% of all workers nationally and indicates that proportionately more rural dwellers are engaged in lower professional occupations than urban dwellers working in the town or the population generally.

Figure 5 Employment by socio-economic group, rural and urban dwellers who work in towns



Employers and managers are the third most important socio-economic group accounting for 14.7% of all rural dwellers commuting to work in towns. 15.8% of urban dwellers working in towns are in this socio-economic group and this is the same share nationally. This is consistent with the industrial profile described in the previous section and suggests that the higher proportion of urban dwellers engaged as employers and managers are most likely working in the Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service sectors. The semi-skilled category is the fourth most significant socio-economic group accounting for 10.2% of all rural dwellers commuting to towns followed by the skilled manual category, comprising 6.8% of rural dwellers working in towns, similar to the share of

higher professionals accounting for 6.3% of rural dwellers commuting to work in towns, less than the share nationally of 8%.

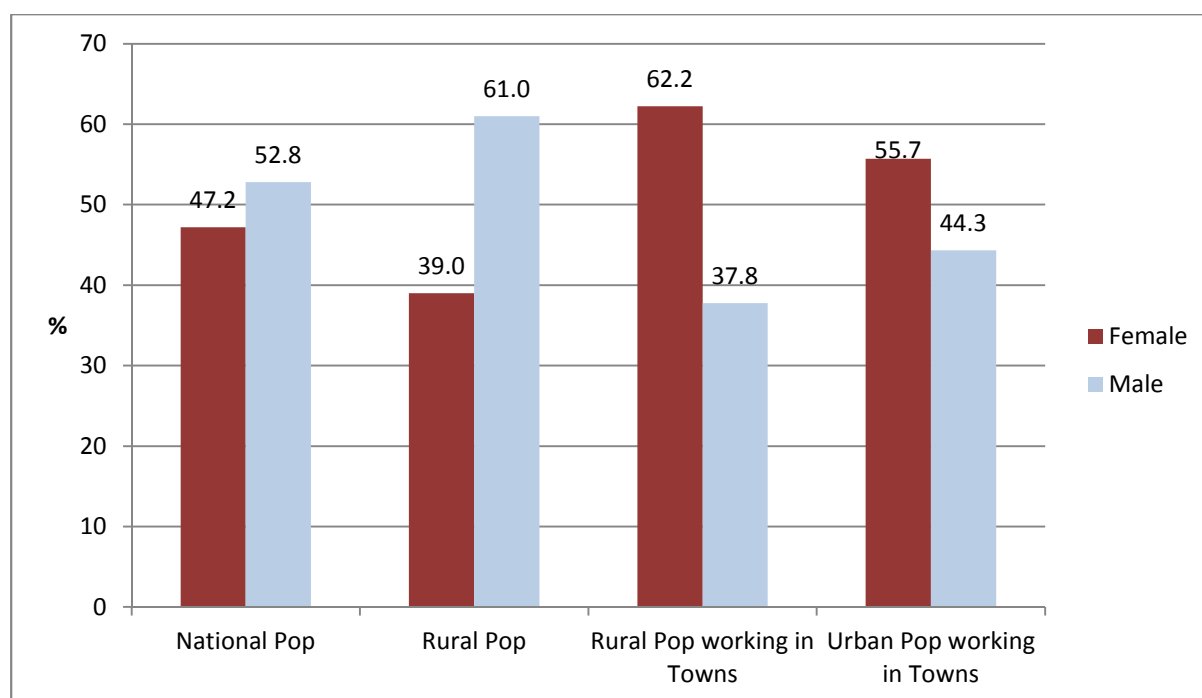
Rural dwellers form an important part of the workforce of towns. In general their socio-economic characteristics are not radically different to that contained in the urban based population but they do reflect the education and skill base as well as the employment opportunities available in towns such as non-manual, lower professional and employers and managers. Ensuring a high rate of educational participation up to third level and beyond as well as ensuring that continuing and professional development and off the job training opportunities are widely available and accessible to rural dwellers will be important in ensuring a skilled rural workforce which can avail of new employment opportunities.

The following sections examine the personal labour market characteristics such as gender, age and education.

3.2.5 Gender

Nationally 52.8% of the working population is male. Considering rural dwellers only, the gender profile of the working population rises to 55.5% male. Of those rural dwellers working in rural jobs, the male share rises again, to 61%, displayed in Figure 6 below. This highlights the continuing importance of some rurally based sectors, traditionally perceived male sectors such as agriculture.

Figure 6 Employment by gender for those rural and urban dwellers who work in towns



Gender profile of rural dwellers commuting to towns

Though women comprise just 44.5% of working rural dwellers, a significant majority (62.2%, N= 95,692) of those rural dwellers working in towns are female. Female rural dwellers

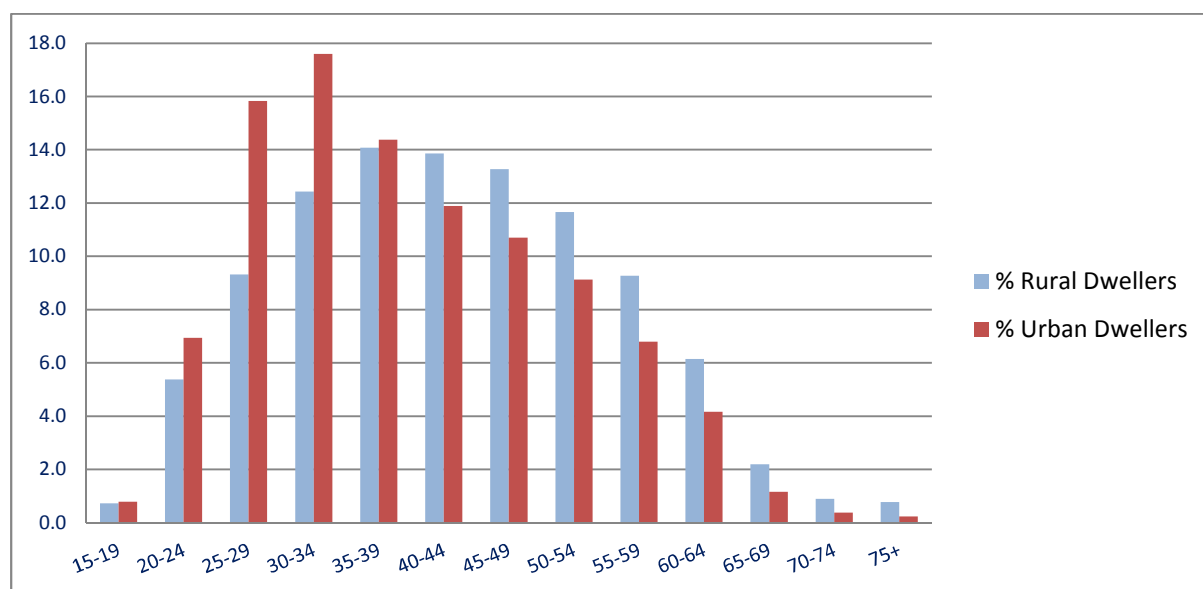
commuting to towns outnumber their male counterparts by a factor of 1.6²⁸. That women comprise just 44.5% of working rural dwellers but account for 62.2% of all rural dwellers commuting to work in towns illustrates the importance of town based employment for the rural female labour force as well the importance of town based employment as a source of income generation for rural dwellers.

There is a higher share of female rural dwellers working in towns compared to female urban dwellers working in towns (62.2% and 55.7% respectively) again highlighting the particular importance of town based employment for the rural based female workforce.

3.2.6 Age

Comparing the rural and urban working population, the urban population is younger with a higher share in each age category under the age of 40 years. Over the age of 40 years, the share of rural dwellers in each age category exceeds that of urban dwellers, shown in figure 7 below.

Figure 7 Age profile of all working urban and rural dwellers, 2011



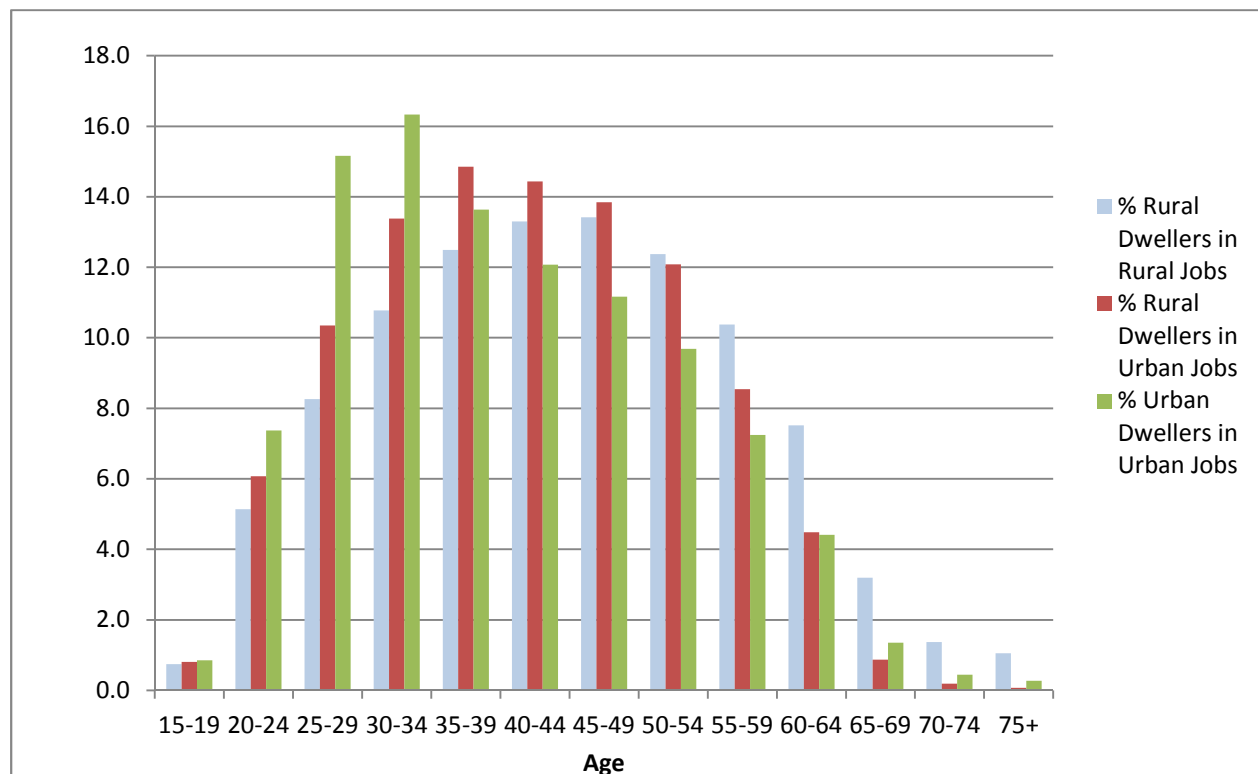
Age by Place of Work

The age of the workforce also varies by place of work. Over a third (36%) of rural dwellers is aged over 50 years compared with just over a quarter (26.3%) of those rural dwellers commuting to towns (see Figure 8 below). At the younger age spectrum, there is a lower share of rural dwellers aged under 34 years employed in rural areas (24.9%), than rural dwellers commuting to towns (31.7% aged under 34 years). The age profile of rural dwellers working in rural jobs only is even older, with just 24.9% aged 34 years or younger.

²⁸ (95,692 and 58,055 respectively).

Focussing on those working in towns, the age profile of rural workers commuting to towns is older than the age of urban dwellers employed in towns (Figure 8). For example 69.4% of rural dwellers working in towns are aged 35 years and over compared to 60.2% of urban dwellers working in towns. The largest age cohort among rural dwellers commuting to work in towns is in the 35-39 age group containing 14.9% of rural dwellers. The largest age cohort among the urban dwellers working in towns is in the 30-34 age group (16.3%).

Figure 8 Employment by age for rural and urban dwellers and place of work



It is clear therefore that the age profile of those rural dwellers who commute to work in towns is younger than the rural dwellers who work in rural areas, but is generally older than urban dwellers who work in towns, the exception being the share engaged in the 65+ category, possibly indicating mobility factors.

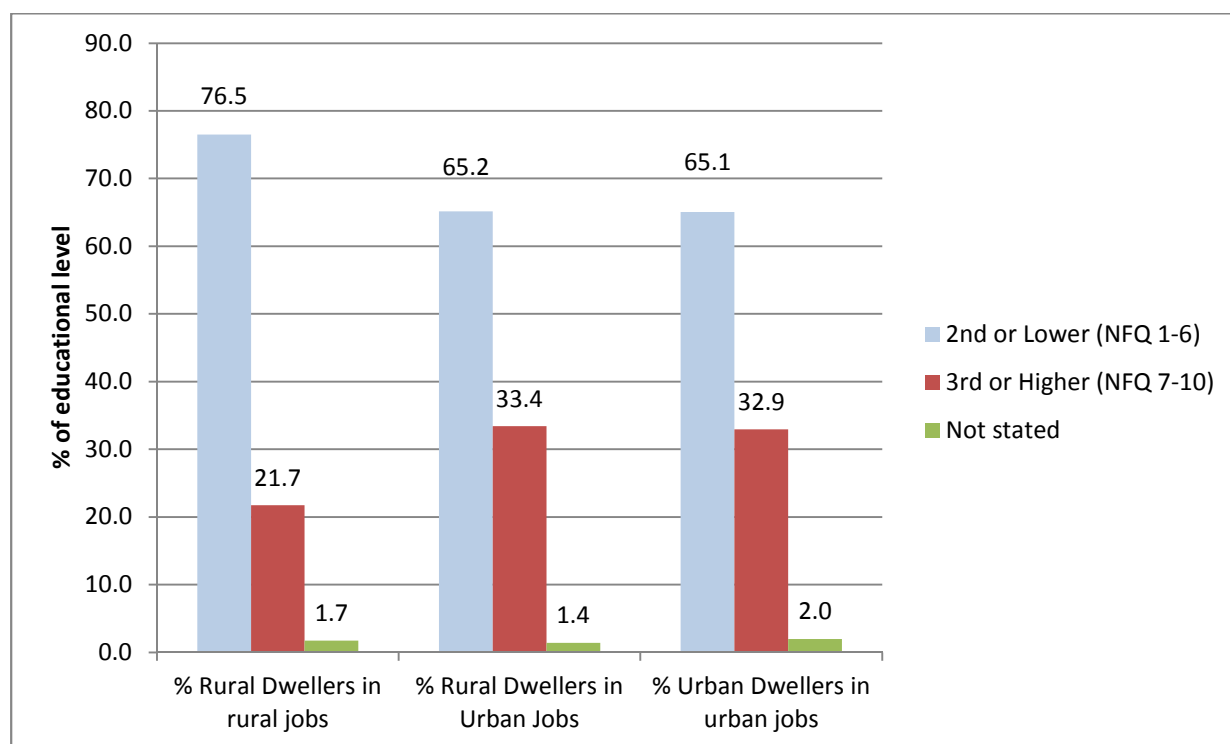
The age profile differences can reflect a variety of factors apart from the greater availability of employment opportunities in urban areas. Generally the age profile in rural areas is older than that of urban areas. At the younger age spectrum, many rural dwellers leave rural areas to participate in third level education. A related factor is the differing education levels of the workforce where the age of entry into the workforce for those with a degree or higher are necessarily older than those without. Other factors are sectoral employment differences, where agriculture will account for a high share of older persons working in rural areas. This difference in age profile may also reflect issues such as transport access and mobility of the younger workforce in rural areas.

3.2.7 Education

Just over a third (34.8%) of the total working population have completed third level education or higher. However just 27.3 per cent of rural dwellers have completed third level or higher. An even lower share of rural dwellers engaged in rural jobs has third level education (21.7%), as shown in Figure 9.

Of those rural dwellers commuting to work in towns, the share with a third level education rises to 33.4% (Figure 9), just lower than the national average (34.8%). Examining the educational profile of all those working in towns, there is a strong degree of similarity in educational levels whether workers are rural or urban dwellers. A slightly higher share of rural dwellers working in towns (33.4%) has a third level education or higher, compared to 32.9% of urban dwellers working in towns. Unfortunately, no further detail on educational levels or specific subject areas is available from the dataset.

Figure 9. Education level for rural and urban dwellers and place of work



4.0 Summary

- Towns are the employment destination for just under a quarter (24.4% or 153,747) of all workers resident in rural areas.
- Most rural dwellers who commute to work in towns live within a 30 minute drive time and close to 90% of rural dwellers employed in towns are within a 45 minute drive time.
- Rural dwellers working in towns have a higher representation in three sectors, the predominantly public sectors of Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities (30%) and Public Administration and Defence as well as Information Technology (IT) and Professional Services. These three sectors, which combined account for over 53% (81,523) of employment of rural dwellers in towns, are very important to the employment situation of many rural dwellers.
- The largest socio-economic group is non-manual occupations, accounting for 35.2% of all rural dwellers who work in towns.
- Proportionately more rural dwellers are engaged in lower professional occupations than urban dwellers working in the town or the population generally.
- Women comprise just 44.5% of working rural dwellers but 62.2% of all rural dwellers commuting to work in towns. Town based employment is very important to the rural female labour force.
- The age profile of those rural dwellers who commute to work in towns is younger than the rural dwellers who work in rural areas, but is generally older than urban dwellers who work in towns.
- Over a third (33.4%) of rural dwellers commuting to work in towns have a third level education or higher, slightly higher than the rate for urban dwellers working in towns.

5.0 Conclusions

This analysis on commuting highlights the role of towns in supporting the rural economy through employment opportunities across a range of sectors in particular, retail and locally traded services, public services and manufacturing. Rural dwellers commuting to towns are more likely to be female, younger, educated, engaged in lower professional and non-manual occupations, often within the public sector and living within a 30 minute drive time.

In supporting employment and specifically employment located in towns that rural dwellers commute to, industrial and employment policy needs to be cognisant of the different sectors and different policy responses needed. For example, of the three most important sectors for rural commuters, the first is predominantly public sector employment and so government policy determining the location of these jobs is very important. The sectors of Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities are generally private sector activities and while government policies can have an

effect, the influence in determining the location and extent of these jobs will be less than that for public sector employment. Towns of varying sizes also support both indigenous and foreign state assisted employment and there are many examples of towns which have been successful in increasing agency assisted employment over the last decade. Policy needs to support this employment growth in towns.

Some research on commuting and employment creation has found that in urban areas, more jobs were filled by non-resident commuters, whereas in cases of employment creation in rural areas, there was a greater reduction of out-commuting as rural dwellers took up the new opportunities there. This suggests that job opportunities in rural areas will be availed of by rural dwellers and policies to support the rural economy should include supports for this.

Government employment policy for towns as well as policies supporting access to employment for example through transport services and infrastructure, childcare supports and broadband infrastructure will be critical to ensuring that rural dwellers can continue to access town based employment and that this important aspect of rural income generation is maintained.

Appendix

Methodology

The data analysis is based on the Census of Population 2011, Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records (POWSCAR). Several methodological issues are explained below.

Place of residence

In 2011, there were 1.7 million (1,770,644) workers of which 35.5% (629,382) are categorised as rural dwellers. The working population defined as urban dwellers (including gateway dwellers) comprises 64.5% of the total (1,141,262).

Of this urban population, 1.7% (29,227) reside in rural EDs within gateways as defined for this research where gateways and hubs constitute the legally defined boundaries of the urban centres in question plus all EDs that that adjoin these boundaries. This is more extensive than normal (town + environs) definition and will capture firms on the outskirts of urban centres. For those rural dwellers originally classified as rural but located within the gateway are reclassified as urban dwellers. The same reclassification occurs for place of work which if located in rural EDs within the definition of gateways is recoded to gateway places of work.

Place of work

Workers with 'no fixed place of work' (including blanks and mobile place of work) have been excluded which removes 295,428 workers from the analysis leaving a population of 1.475 million workers. Those working from home are categorised according to their place of residence; either rural, urban or gateway. This has a greater impact on the numbers working in rural areas, reflecting the greater proportion working 'from home' in the agricultural sector.

After removing blanks and mobiles and re-assigning those who work at or mainly from home to their place of residence, the total number of workplace destinations examined is 1,475,216 of which the proportion working in rural areas (rural jobs) accounts for 21.3% (314,213) of the total. Urban jobs (both gateway and towns) account for 78.7% of all jobs of which 55.2% (814,612) are in gateways, and 23.5% (346,391) are employed in the towns.

Students who work part time are not included in the analysis.

Classifications

Industry	Socio-economic group
1=Agriculture, forestry and fishing	A=Employers and managers
2=Manufacturing, mining and quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water supply and Waste Management	B=Higher professional
	C=Lower professional
3=Construction	D=Non-manual
4=Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service Activities	E=Manual skilled
	F=Semi-skilled
5=Information and Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, administration and support service activities	G=Unskilled
	H=Own account workers
6=Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	I=Farmers
7=Education, Human Health and Social Work Activities	J=Agricultural workers
8=Other Service Activities	Z=All others gainfully occupied and unknown