



Brief to Western Development Commission

Demographic and Socio-economic Trends in the Western Region

WDC Analysis of Census 2006

December 2007

Demographic and Socio-economic Trends in the Western Region – WDC Analysis of Census 2006

1. Introduction

The publication, during 2007, of the complete set of data from Census 2006 by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) provides an important opportunity to identify the characteristics of the population in the Western Region, and to review recent trends. In this paper we draw on the census data to compile a profile of the region focusing on

- demography – population numbers and distribution, gender, age, household characteristics and migration;
- labour force and employment – industrial and occupational profile; and
- educational attainment and travel to work patterns.

2. Key Demographic Trends

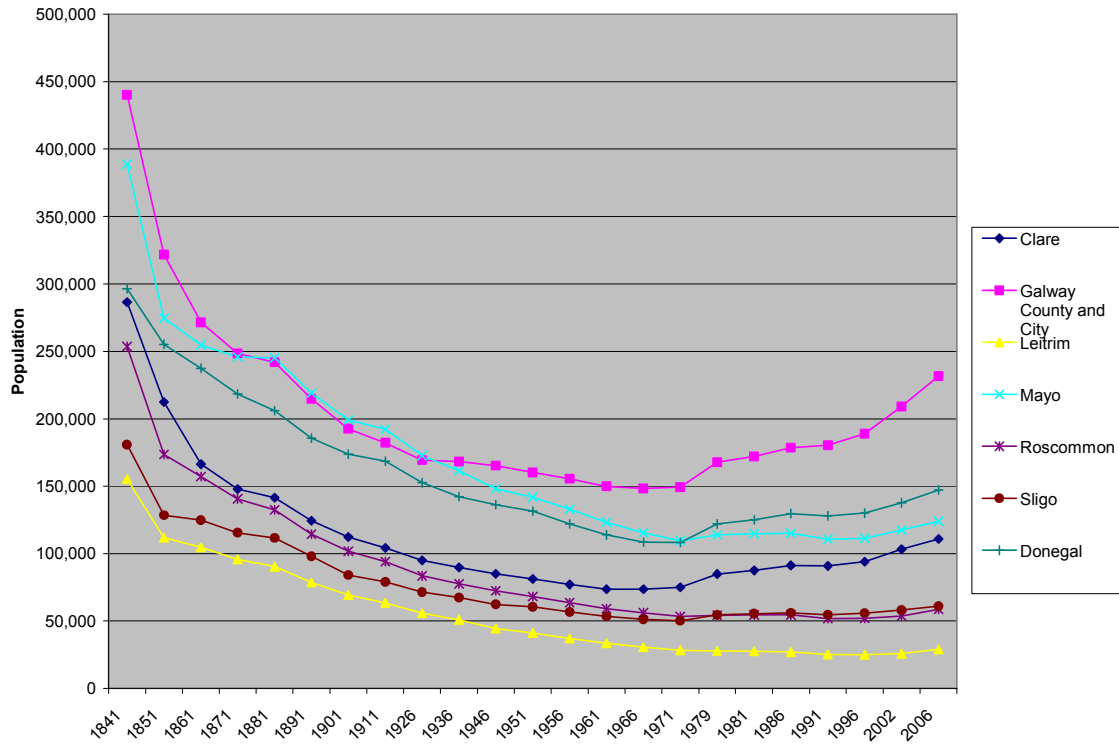
2.1 County data

In this section, changes in population over time for the Western Region are illustrated. The main focus is on county population changes, but information is also provided on the population of towns and their growth patterns.

While much of this paper examines the recent changes in population in the Western Region it is interesting to look back over time to the first Census of Population and to see the changes in population which have occurred since then.

The first census for which full results are available was carried out in 1841. At that time the total population of the counties of the Western Region was more than 2 million. As can be seen from Figure 2.1 overleaf, the population of all counties in 1841 was considerably higher than currently, but declined very rapidly in the decades following that initial census.

Figure 2.1 Population of counties in the Western Region at each census since 1841

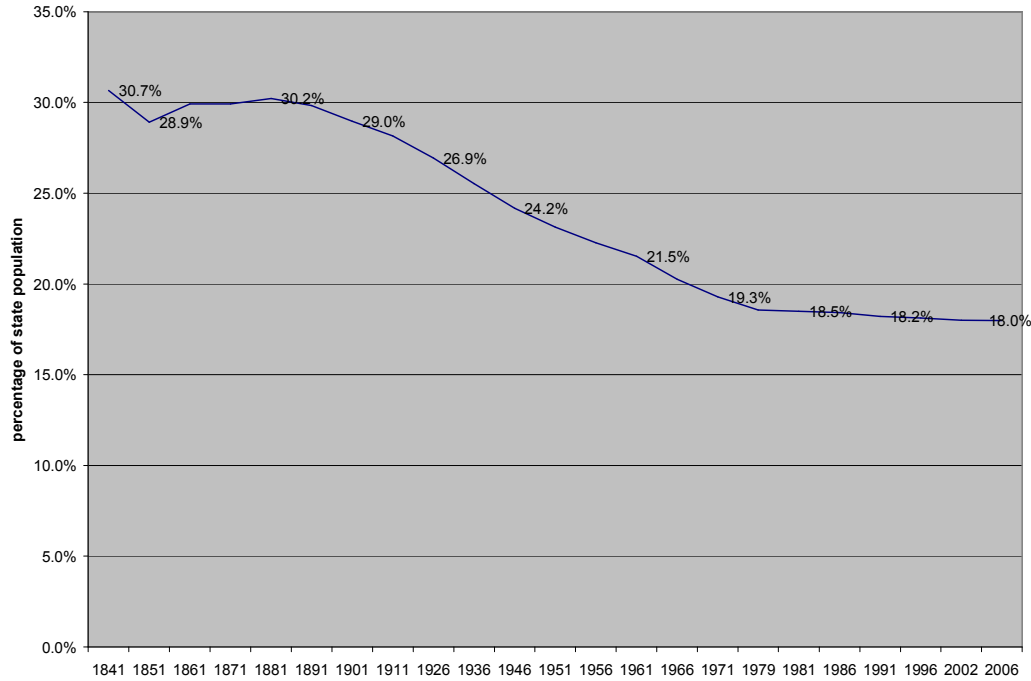


Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 2

The decline continued in most counties until the mid 1960s although in later years it became more gradual. The population of Leitrim continued to decline until 2002 when the first increase in more than 150 years was recorded. Galway’s population remains the largest and the gap is widening between its population and that of the other counties in the region. Although Roscommon had a considerably larger population than Sligo for most of the period since the first census, Sligo is now more populous though the gap narrowed between 2002 and 2006.

Although the population of all counties which now make up the Republic of Ireland declined rapidly throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, the decline in the Western Region was more extreme, and this is evidenced by the rapid fall in the proportion of the state's population living in the Western Region (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Percentage of the state population in the Western Region since 1841

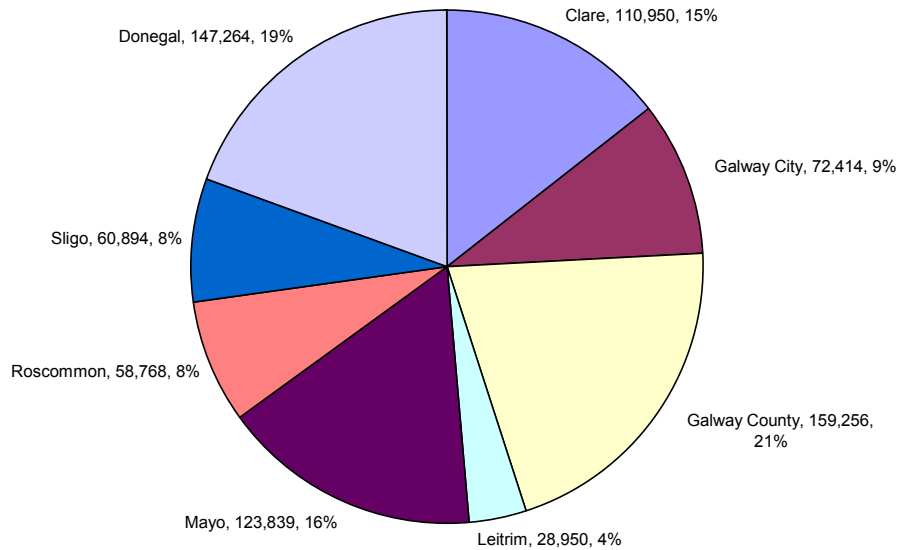


Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 2

In 1841 the seven western counties accounted for more than 30% of the population of the state. This proportion has been declining ever since, although the rate of decline has slowed in recent years. The Western Region now accounts for only 18% of the people living in the state.

The historic population change in the Western Region provides a background for many of the population patterns emerging in the 2006 census. The Western Region is made up of seven counties of varying size and population growth rates. This variation is illustrated in Figure 2.3. It is important to bear in mind the different sizes of the population in each county when looking at census data. In much of the data below, the populations of Galway city and county have been shown separately which serves to highlight the influence of Galway city in the region.

Figure 2.3 Proportion of the Western Region population in each county, 2006



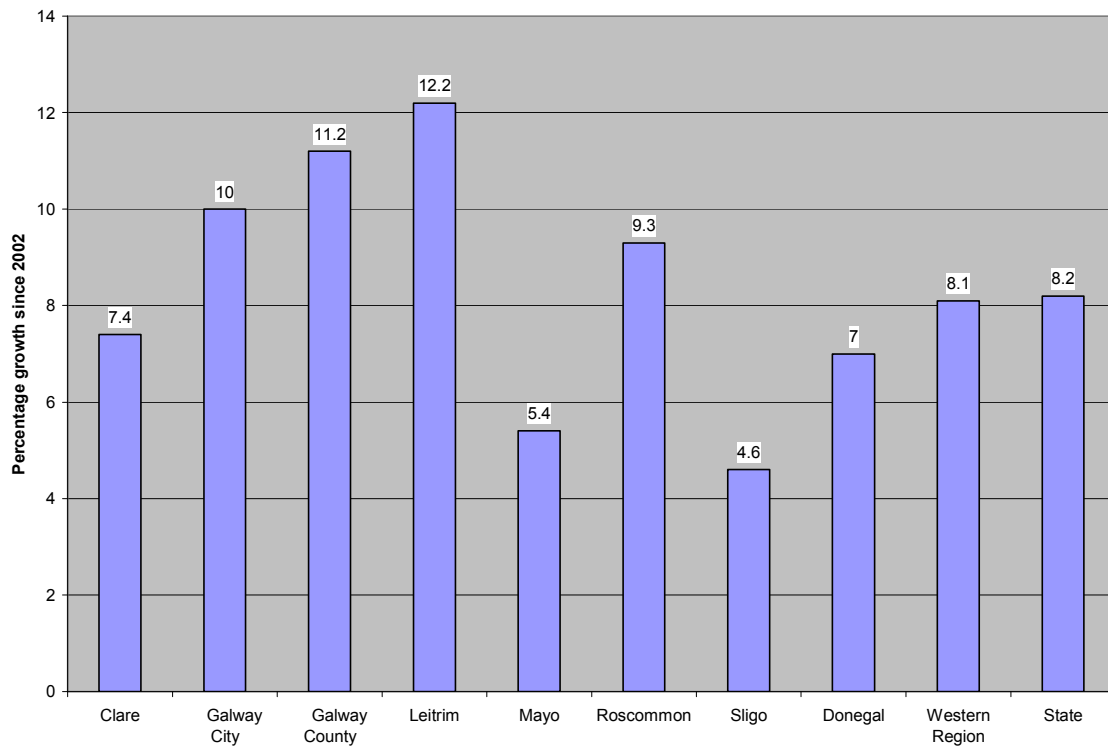
Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 4

Galway county (excluding Galway city) has the largest population of the Western Region counties. City and county together make up 30% of the region's population. Donegal, Mayo and Clare are the other larger counties in the region, and Sligo, Roscommon (8% of the Western Region population each) and Leitrim (4%) are considerably smaller. Galway city, which has been growing very rapidly in recent years accounts for 9% of the region's population.

The population of all the counties has grown in the four years since Census of Population 2002 (Figure 2.4) with the highest growth rate in Leitrim (12.2%), where, as mentioned previously, the long term decline in the population of Leitrim was at last reversed in 2002. Galway county also experienced rapid growth (11.2%), largely in the satellite towns around Galway city.

The lowest growth rate was in Sligo county (4.6%) which was considerably less than the state average growth rate of 8.2%. Mayo (5.4%), Clare (7.4%) and Donegal (7%) also grew more slowly than the state as a whole.

Figure 2.4 Percentage population growth in the Western Region and state between 2002 and 2006

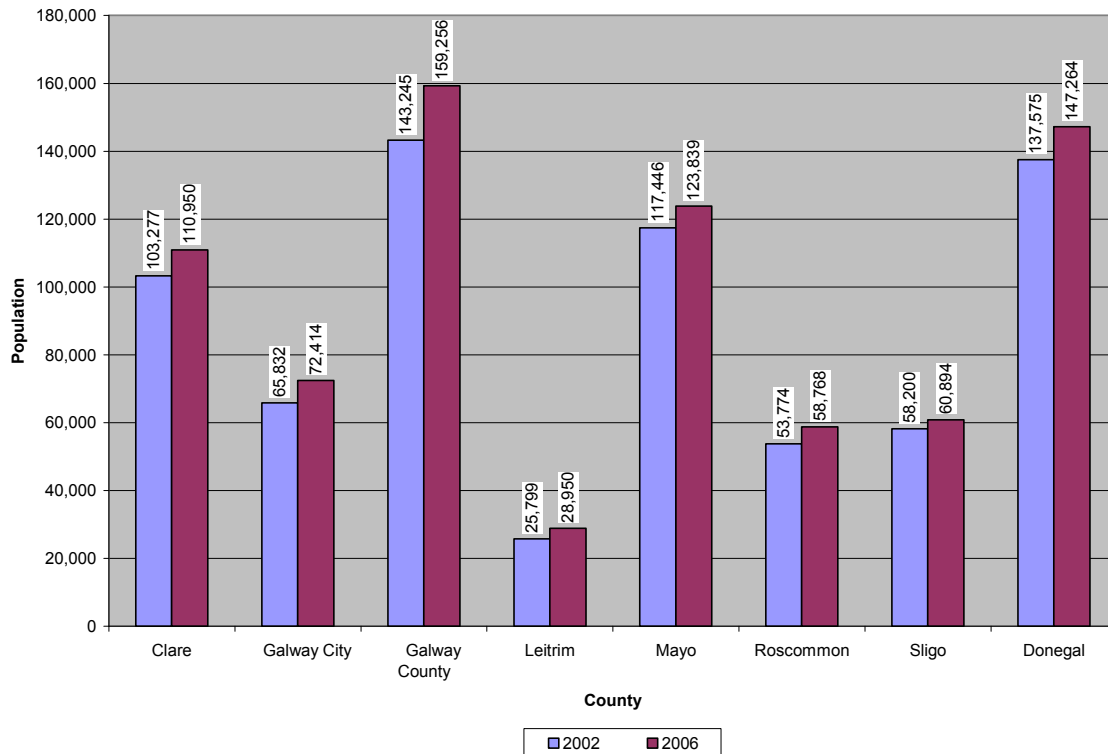


Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 4

The actual population in each of the counties in 2002 and 2006 is shown in Figure 2.5 below. The increase in population in county Galway was 16,011, while the population of Donegal grew by 9,689. As mentioned, Leitrim experienced a very high growth rate, with an actual population increase of 3,151.

The total population of the Western Region was 762,335 in 2006, compared to 705,148 in 2002, an increase of 57,187 people. This growth of 8.1% between 2002 and 2006 is almost exactly equivalent to the rate for the state as a whole (8.2%).

Figure 2.5 Population of counties in the Western Region in 2002 and 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 4

Much of the growth in population has been in and around the towns and cities of the Western Region. It is useful therefore to look at the population change in urban and rural areas of the Western Region. These will be examined in sections 2.3 and 2.4.

2.2 Components of Population Change

We have already seen that all western counties experienced growth in their populations between 2002 and 2006. We now turn to the question of how much of this can be attributed to natural increase and how much to migration.

Births, Deaths and Migration

From Table 2.1 it is apparent that, in each of the western counties over the four year period, there were more births than deaths, giving each county a positive natural increase. However, the scale of this natural increase varied across counties. Only two counties (Clare and Galway county) had birth rates above the national average, while all counties in the region, when Galway city is excluded, had higher death rates than the national average. In fact Leitrim and Mayo had the highest death rates in the entire country. These higher death rates reflect the older age profile in these counties.

Table 2.1 Components of population change 2002 to 2006 and average annual rates of change per 1,000 of average population

| | Pop. Change 2002-2006 | Natural Increase (births minus deaths) | Total Estimated Net Migration ¹ | Avg. annual birth rates per 1000 of avg. pop. | Avg. annual death rates per 1000 of avg. pop. | Avg. annual estimated net migration rates per 1000 of avg. pop. |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| Clare | 7,673 | 3,504 | 4,169 | 15.7 | 7.5 | 9.7 |
| Galway City and County | 22,593 | 6,996 | 15,597 | 14.9 | 7.0 | 17.7 |
| Galway City | 6,582 | 2,917 | 3,665 | 13.8 | 3.3 | 13.3 |
| Galway County | 16,011 | 4,079 | 11,932 | 15.4 | 8.7 | 19.7 |
| Leitrim | 3,151 | 210 | 2,941 | 12.9 | 11.0 | 26.9 |
| Mayo | 6,393 | 1,778 | 4,615 | 13.1 | 9.4 | 9.6 |
| Roscommon | 4,994 | 642 | 4,352 | 11.3 | 8.5 | 19.3 |
| Sligo | 2,694 | 1,138 | 1,556 | 12.9 | 8.2 | 6.5 |
| Donegal | 9,689 | 3,113 | 6,576 | 13.5 | 8.0 | 11.5 |
| Western Region | 57,187 | 17,381 | 39,806 | - | - | - |
| State | 322,645 | 131,314 | 191,331 | 15.0 | 7.0 | 11.7 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 4, Table 2 (Note: The data for the average annual rates (the final three columns) were incorrect in the original Census publication. This table contains the corrected figures.)

We can also see that in each county, net migration outweighed natural increase as a contributor to population growth. In absolute numbers, Galway and Donegal experienced the highest net migration. However, relative to population, Leitrim (26.9 per 1,000), Galway county (19.7 per 1,000) and Roscommon (19.3 per 1,000) experienced the highest rates of net migration.

This leads us to the question of how much of this migration is due to movements between Irish counties and how much is due to migration from overseas. The census does not

¹ Net migration refers to the difference between in-migration and out-migration. It would include migration to and from other counties within Ireland as well as abroad.

answer this question for the entire 2002-2006 period. However it does give us information about movements in the year directly prior to the Census of Population 2006.

The numbers and proportion of persons usually resident in each county classified by their usual residence a year previously are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Persons usually resident in each county and present in the state on census night 2006, classified by usual residence one year previously

| | Total usual residence one year previously | Same county | Elsewhere in State | Outside the State | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| | | | | Total outside State | UK | Western Europe | Eastern Europe | USA | Other |
| | No. | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Clare | 107,101 | 95.2 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 0.5 |
| Galway Co. and City | 222,400 | 94.3 | 2.2 | 3.5 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 1.3 | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| Leitrim | 28,279 | 93.5 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| Mayo | 119,718 | 95.8 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 0.8 | 0.1 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Roscommon | 57,390 | 94.1 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 0.9 | 0.1 | 1.2 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Sligo | 58,946 | 94.8 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 0.5 |
| Donegal | 142,636 | 96.7 | 0.9 | 2.4 | 1.4 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| Western Region | 736,470 | 95.1 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 0.8 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 0.5 |
| State | 4,111,333 | 94.9 | 2.1 | 3.0 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 1.3 | 0.1 | 0.6 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 4, Table 10

Clearly the vast majority of people, 95%, had been living in the same county in 2005 as they were in 2006. This varies slightly among the counties, and in the case of Leitrim only 93.5% of those living in the county in 2006 had been living there the previous year.

Those who were not living in the same county as a year previously, are divided between those who were living elsewhere in the state and those who were living outside the state. For the region as a whole, a higher proportion had lived outside the state (2.8%) in the previous year than had lived elsewhere within the state (2.0%). This was also the pattern for five of the western counties. Leitrim and Roscommon however did not follow the general trend with a higher proportion having moved from elsewhere in the state than from overseas.

Of those who had lived outside of the state in the previous year, Eastern Europe was the most common residence in both the Western Region (1.1%) and nationally (1.3%). This is also the case for six of the western counties. However in the case of Donegal, the UK accounted for the highest share. This is likely due to movements from Northern Ireland. The UK also accounted for a significant share in Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo. Beyond Europe, other countries were really only significant in the case of Galway.

Before turning from the issues of migration, it is interesting to consider the resident population in the Western Region by their country of birth. The current make up of the population reflects the migration trends that have been occurring over recent years.

According to the 2006 census, 83.9% of the population of the Western Region were born in the state which is in line with the national proportion of 85.3%. For residents of the region who were born in another country, the most common places of birth were England, Scotland and Wales, accounting for 7.7% of the region's population, while 2% were born in Northern Ireland. The figure for those born in England, Scotland and Wales was particularly high for Mayo and Donegal, where it was over 9%. Not surprisingly, the proportion of the population born in Northern Ireland was particularly high for Donegal where it was 6.7%. Poland and Other EU countries are the next most significant areas of origin of non-Irish born, accounting for 1.2% and 1.4% respectively.

2.3 Towns in the Western Region

Having considered the components of population change and migration patterns, we will now look at the details of population change in urban and rural parts of the region. There are two notable features of the Irish urban system: the dominance of a small number of relatively large towns (in relation to overall population distribution) and the very large number of small settlements. These features are particularly evident in the western counties, which have few large towns, but a significant number of small rural towns.

Towns of 5,000+ Population

There are twelve towns and cities with a population of more than 5,000 in the Western Region, with Galway city the largest of these (Table 2.3). The population of most of these towns increased since 2002, but there was considerable variation in the rate of growth. The fastest growing was Tuam (15.8%). Tuam is a dormitory town for Galway city which is a key explanation for its rapid growth.

Table 2.3 Population of towns 5,000 and over 2002 and 2006

| Town | Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2002 | Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2006 | Percentage change |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| | No. | No. | % |
| Galway City | 66,163 | 72,729 | 9.9 |
| 10,000 population and over | | | |
| Ennis | 22,051 | 24,253 | 10 |
| Sligo | 19,735 | 19,402 | -1.7 |
| Letterkenny | 15,231 | 17,586 | 15.5 |
| Castlebar | 11,371 | 11,891 | 4.6 |
| Ballina | 9,647 | 10,409 | 7.9 |
| 5,000 - 9,999 population | | | |
| Shannon | 8,561 | 9,222 | 7.7 |
| Tuam | 5,947 | 6,885 | 15.8 |
| Ballinasloe | 6,219 | 6,303 | 1.4 |
| Buncrana | 5,271 | 5,911 | 12.1 |
| Westport | 5,634 | 5,475 | -2.8 |
| Roscommon | 4,489 | 5,017 | 11.8 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 7

The population of the gateway town of Letterkenny, (which is a linked gateway to Derry) also grew by more than 15%. In contrast the other north west gateway town, Sligo, experienced a population decline. Much of the population growth in Sligo county was in the smaller towns in the vicinity of Sligo town, all of which are less than 1,500 in population. There was also a small decline in the population of Westport (since 2002), which had previously experienced very rapid growth.

Such population declines are sometimes associated with the boundary definitions for these towns, so that population gain outside existing town boundaries is not recorded as an increase in the town. In other cases losses can be associated with an older population structure hence higher mortality rates of residents. Further investigation would be required to understand the factors particular to each town which could explain more of the detail of the population changes.

Towns of 1,500-4,999 Population

The 18 smaller towns in the region (population 1,500 to 4,999) have, for the most part, experienced very rapid population growth (Table 2.4). Oranmore has had an exceptional increase in the four years to 2006, with the population more than doubling. Athenry grew by almost 50% and Gort by more than 53%. This very rapid growth relates to their role as dormitory towns for Galway city. Carrick-on-Shannon, which is the county town of Leitrim and is not dependent on any other town for its growth, had a remarkable population increase of more than 40%.

Table 2.4 Population of towns 1,500-4,999, 2002 and 2006

| Town | Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2002 | Total Population (including suburbs or environs) 2006 | Percentage change |
|---------------------------------|---|---|----------------------|
| | No. | No. | % |
| 3,000 - 4,999 population | | | |
| Loughrea | 4,004 | 4,532 | 13.2 |
| Ballybofey-Stranorlar | 3,603 | 4,176 | 15.9 |
| Oranmore | 1,692 | 3,513 | 107.6 |
| Athenry | 2,154 | 3,205 | 48.8 |
| Carrick-on-Shannon | 2,237 | 3,163 | 41.4 |
| 1,500 - 2,999 population | | | |
| Gort | 1,776 | 2,734 | 53.9 |
| Kilrush | 2,699 | 2,694 | -0.2 |
| Ballyshannon | 2,715 | 2,686 | -1.1 |
| Claremorris | 2,101 | 2,595 | 23.5 |
| Boyle | 2,205 | 2,522 | 14.4 |
| Donegal | 2,453 | 2,339 | -4.6 |
| Ballinrobe | 1,626 | 2,098 | 29.0 |
| Bundoran | 1,842 | 1,964 | 6.6 |
| Carndonagh | 1,673 | 1,923 | 14.9 |
| Castlerea | 1,788 | 1,873 | 4.8 |
| Ballaghaderreen | 1,416 | 1,720 | 21.5 |
| Ballyhaunis | 1,381 | 1,708 | 23.7 |
| Swinford | 1,497 | 1,502 | 0.3 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 7

Other towns, however, grew more slowly, or even experienced population decline. The overall population growth for the region was 8%. Of the 18 towns in this size category, three experienced population growth of less than 7% and three had actual population decline.

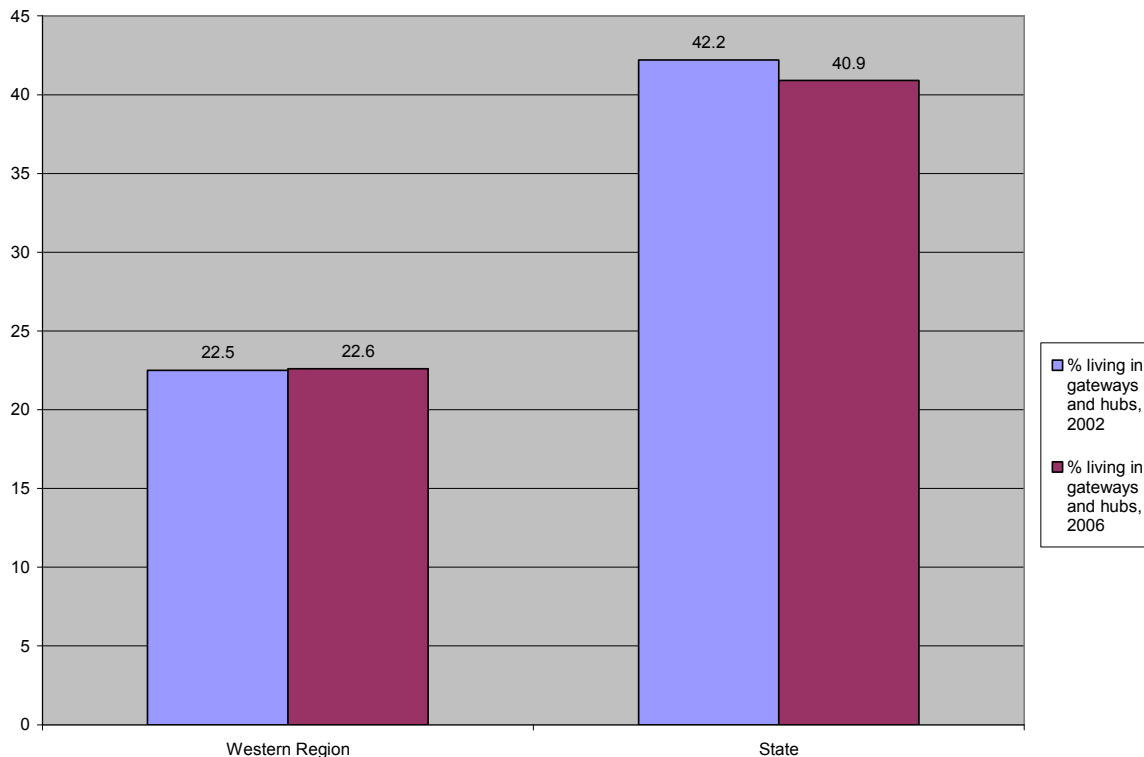
Clearly there is wide variation in the success of different towns in attracting population, and it is not always easy to explain the differences in growth. A better understanding of

the role of towns in our economy and the possible futures for this category of small towns would be helpful in tackling the difficulties that they may be experiencing.

Gateways and Hubs

Given the importance of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) as the government policy for balanced regional development and the focus on it in the National Development Plan 2007-2013, we will turn briefly to the population patterns in NSS designated gateways and hubs. The proportion of the population living in gateways and hubs in the Western Region and in the state is set out in Figure 2.6 below.

Figure 2.6 Percentage of the population living in gateways and hubs in Western Region and State 2002, 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 7

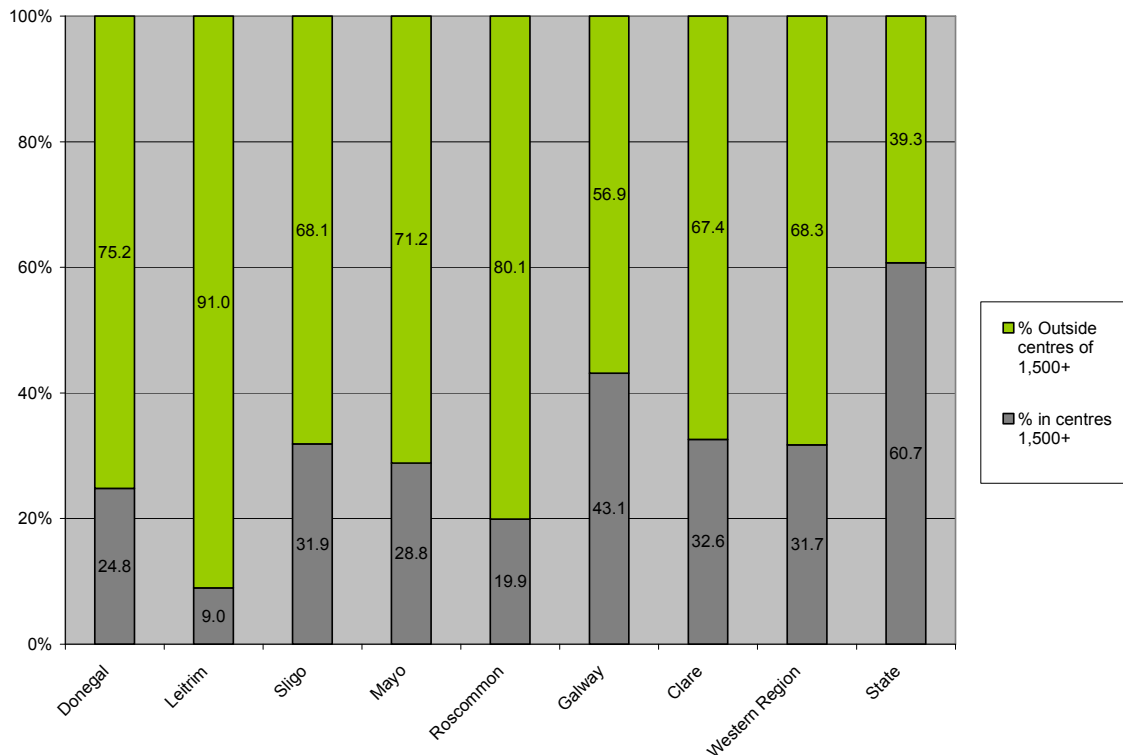
Not surprisingly, given the more rural nature of the Western Region compared to the state as a whole, a significantly lower proportion of the population lives in gateways and hubs in the Western Region than in the state. Although there was a very minor increase in the proportion living in gateways and hubs in the Western Region in the inter-censal period, it does not indicate that the gateways and hubs are acting as population magnets. This raises questions about their role as major growth drivers.

It should be noted that although the percentage of the population living in gateways and hubs in the state declined, there was an actual increase in the numbers of people living in these towns and cities. The decline in percentage occurs because of more rapid population growth outside the gateways and hubs.

2.4 Rurality, Population Density and Population Decline

The Western Region is particularly rural, with two-thirds of the population (68.3%) living outside of towns with a population of 1,500 or more. Figure 2.7 below illustrates the rurality of each of the counties in the Western Region and compares them to the state. The proportion of the state population living in rural areas (outside towns of 1,500+) is less than 40%.

Figure 2.7 Percentage of the Western Region population by county living in or outside centres of 1,500 or more, 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 7

The most rural county is, as expected, Leitrim, which has only one town with a population of more than 1,500, accounting for 9% of its total population. Roscommon is also significantly rural, with fewer than 20% of its people living in towns of 1,500 or more. In the region, apart from Galway, all of the counties have more than two-thirds of their population living in rural areas.

There has been some small change in the picture between 2002 and 2006. All of the counties, with the exception of Sligo, have shown small increases in their urban population. In Sligo, the main population increase occurred in the smaller towns in the immediate vicinity of Sligo town, but as none of these is larger than 1,500 their population would be classed as rural.

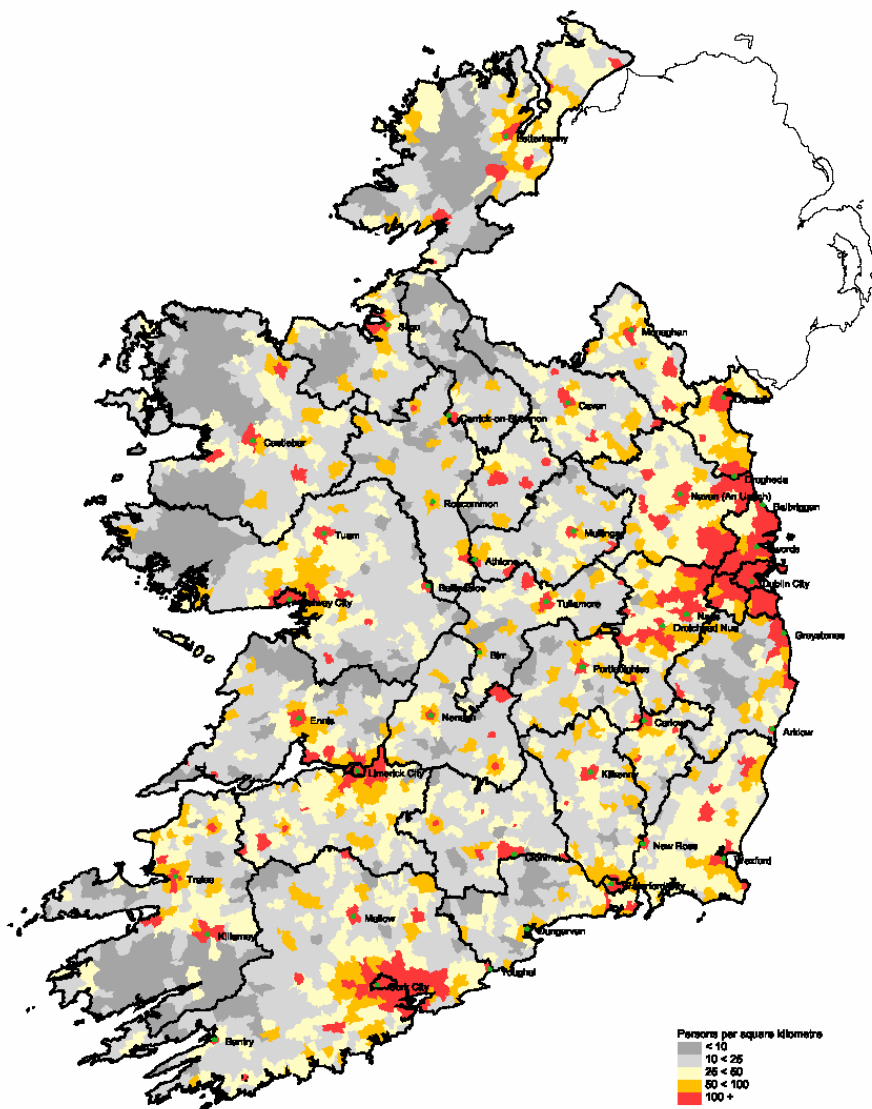
The pattern of increased urbanisation which occurred in the other counties is part of a long term slow trend towards urbanisation throughout the country. Rural areas have, however been able to hold their own and the trend is slow. The very rural nature of the Western Region is still striking and will remain a defining feature in coming years.

Population Density

There is significant variation in population density, both within and between counties, and in general those areas with the least dense population are remote and most vulnerable to further population decline and to further reduced population density. The population density throughout the country is illustrated in Figure 2.8 below.

Figure 2.8 Population Density of Electoral Divisions in Ireland, 2006

Figure 2 Population density of Electoral Divisions, 2006



Reproduced with the permission of the Ordnance Survey.

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume1, Figure 2

Towns and cities can be identified by the red and orange colours indicating high density, while the darkest grey areas, which tend to be quite remote, are those with the lowest population density. It is clear from the map that some of the sparsest population areas are in the Western Region.

There is an association of low population density with population decline. Areas of population decline are mainly in rural and remote areas particularly in west Galway, Mayo and Donegal.

The most rapid population growth has occurred in and proximate to towns and cities, but many rural areas have shown low levels of population growth. For areas experiencing population decline there is a pressing need to address their structural difficulties. In a time of prosperity, areas which cannot grow or maintain their populations are clearly very vulnerable.

2.5 Gender and Population in the Western Region

We now turn to look briefly at the population proportions of male and female for the Western Region. Table 2.5 below shows the male and female population as a percentage of the total population in each county.

Table 2.5 Male and female percentage of the population by Western Region county, 2006

| County | Male % of population | Female % of population |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Clare | 50.5 | 49.5 |
| Galway city | 48.1 | 51.9 |
| Galway county | 51.3 | 48.7 |
| Leitrim | 51.5 | 48.5 |
| Mayo | 50.6 | 49.4 |
| Roscommon | 51.4 | 48.6 |
| Sligo | 49.7 | 50.3 |
| Donegal | 50.2 | 49.8 |
| Western Region | 50.4 | 49.6 |
| State | 50.0 | 50.0 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 1, Table 1

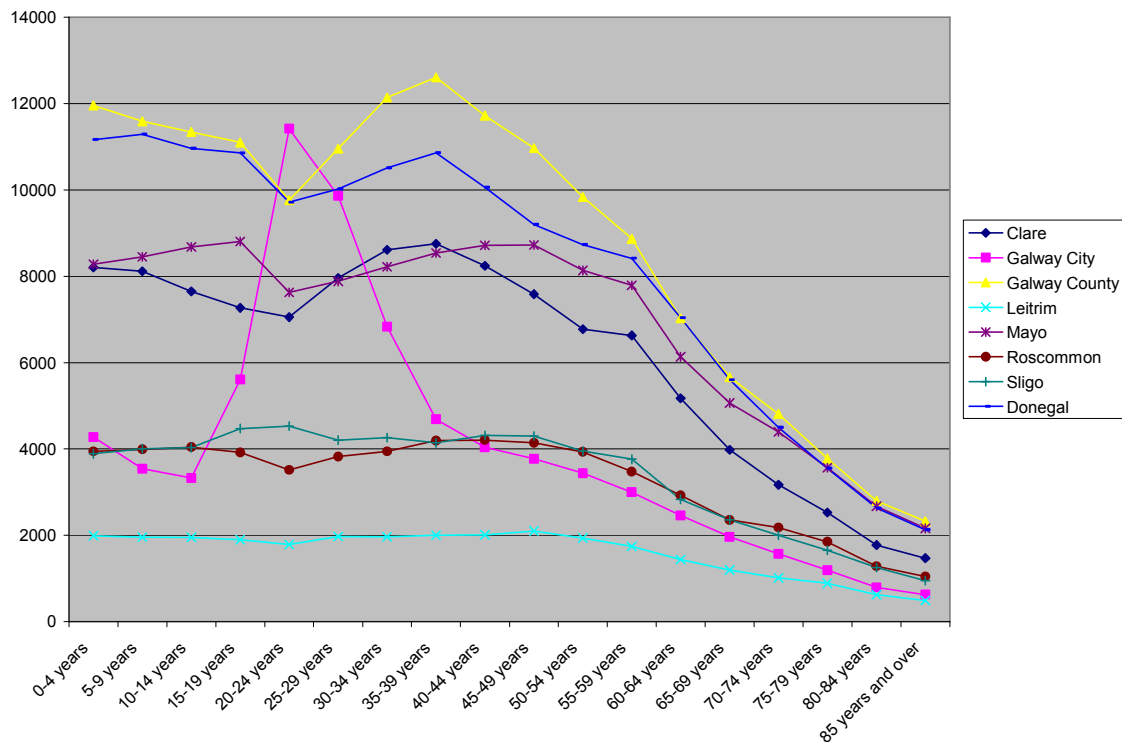
The gender make up of the population is closely associated with the level of rurality. Rural counties generally tend to have a higher proportion of males in the population whereas the more urban counties (Galway city and Sligo) are the only ones in the Western Region with a higher proportion of females than males. In contrast the most rural counties of Leitrim and Roscommon have the highest proportion of males.

2.6 Age Profile of the Western Region

Figure 2.9 shows the age profile in each of the counties and the distribution of the population across age groups. Most of the counties follow a similar trend with relatively high numbers in the lowest age categories as a result of an increased birth rate in recent years.

Population peaks in the 35-39 years age group (or slightly later in a number of counties) and declines thereafter. The main exception to this pattern is in Galway city which shows a very spiked population peak in the 20-24 years category, because of the numbers of younger people living in Galway for third level education. Sligo, which is also a centre for third level education experiences a small increase in this age category. Other counties show fewer numbers in this age category as their young adults move elsewhere for third level education.

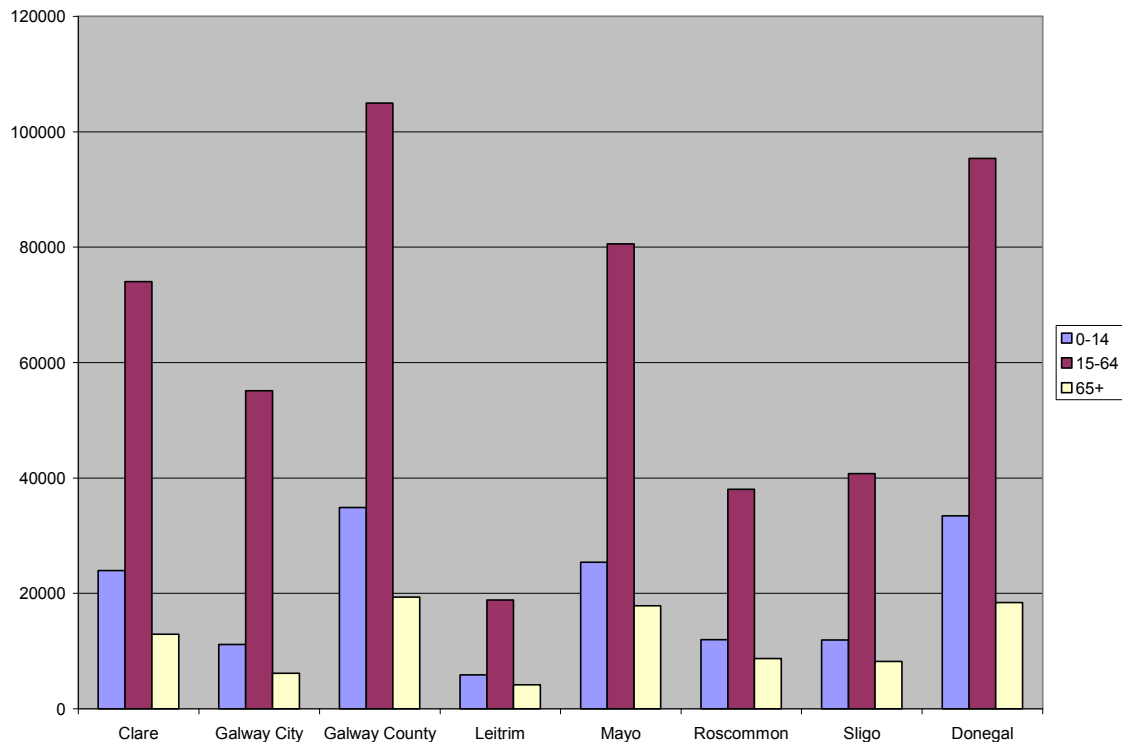
Figure 2.9 Population in each County by Age Group, 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 2, Table 3

The age profile of the population in each county is of interest because it indicates the numbers available to become part of the labour force, (those in the working age category of 15-64). It also indicates the proportion of the population who might be considered as being 'dependent'. Figure 2.10 shows the population in each of the counties split into the younger age category (less than 15 years), the potentially working age category (15-64 years) and the older age category (65+ years).

Figure 2.10 Age categories by Western Region county, 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 2, Table 3

It could be considered that the population in the 15-64 age group is in effect supporting the population in the other age groups. The ratio of the population in those ‘dependent’ age groups to those in the working age category is called the ‘dependency ratio’.

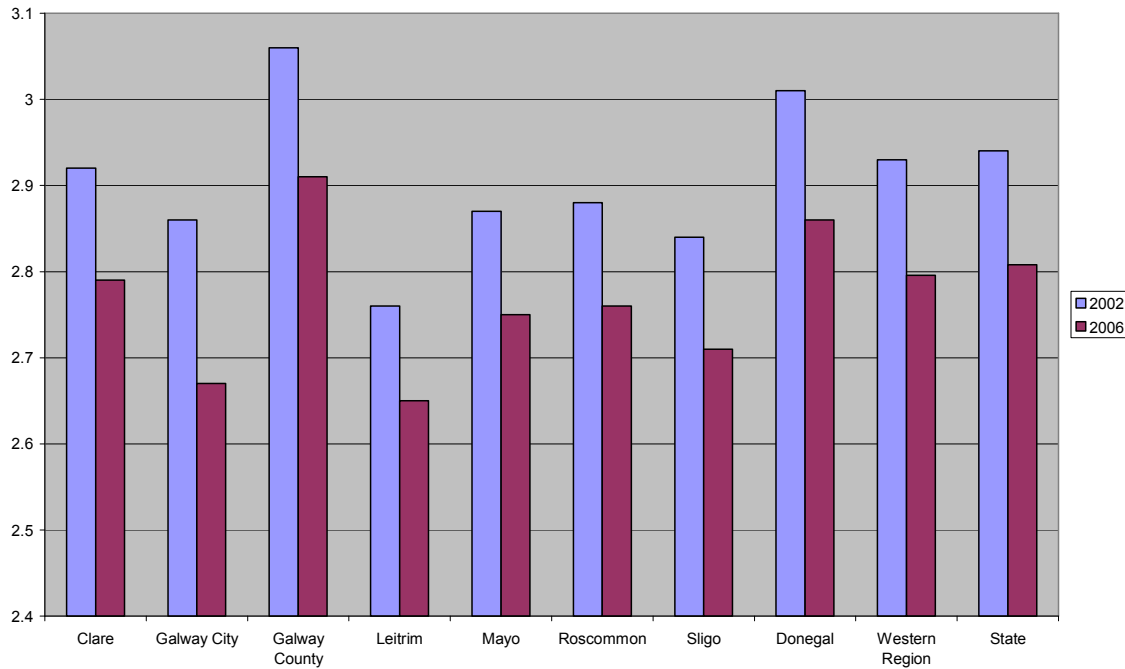
The dependency ratio in the Western Region varies from 0.31 in Galway city to 0.54 in counties Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Donegal. This compares to a dependency ratio of 0.46 in the state as a whole. The higher dependency in these counties is a result both of higher older age populations and also the out-migration of younger age groups for education or work.

2.7 Household Size

The average number of people living in a household (Figure 2.11) has been declining generally in recent times, as part of the trend towards smaller families, and more people living alone. The figure below shows the average household size for both census 2002 and 2006, and the change in that short period is quite striking.

Household size might have been expected to be smallest in cities, but there is no clear pattern. Galway city has an average household size of 2.67 but Leitrim, the most rural county has a slightly smaller average household size (2.65). In contrast, Galway county has the largest household size (2.91) and Donegal has a household size of 2.86. All of the other counties have a household size smaller than that in the rest of the state.

Figure 2.11 Average persons per private household by Western Region county, 2002 and 2006



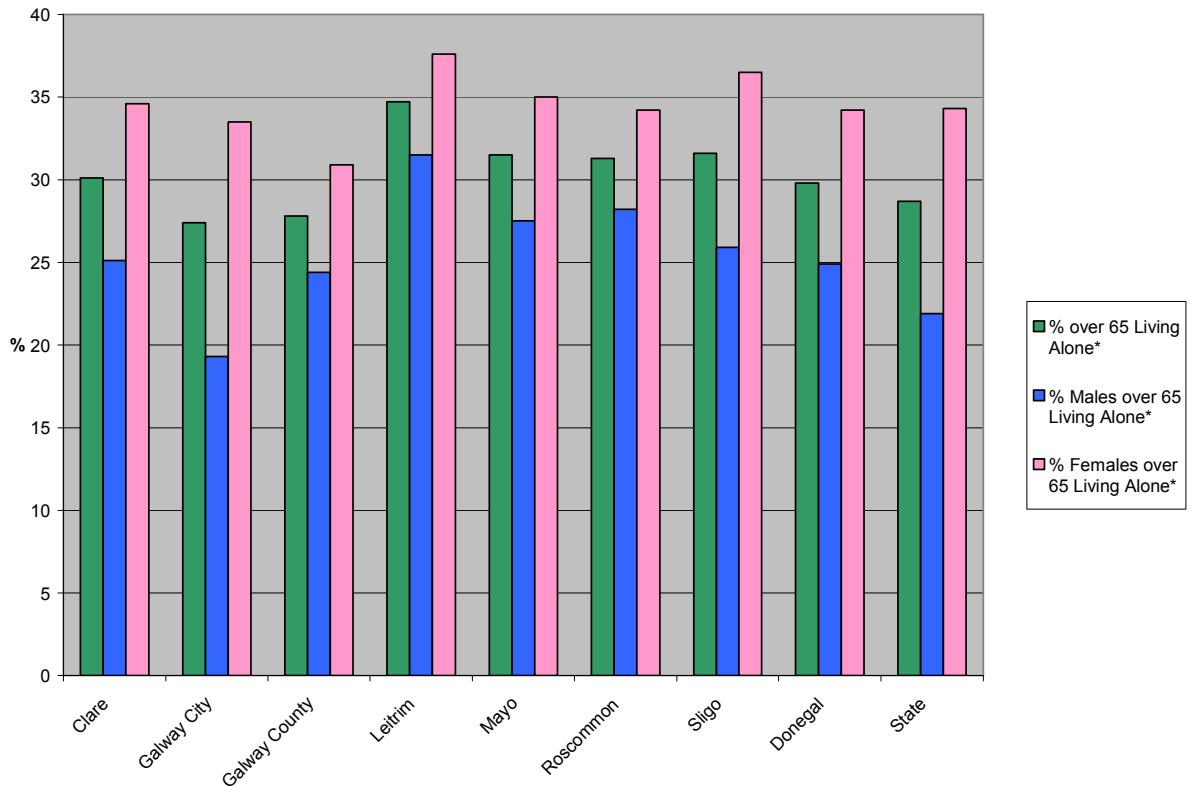
Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 3, Table 1

As the average household size declines, the cost of providing services to the population tends to increase, especially in areas of dispersed population. This is of particular interest to service providers in the local authorities and other public sector agencies.

Older People Living Alone

Associated with the decline in average household size is an increase in the proportion of the older population living alone. This category is more vulnerable to ill health and could become socially isolated, especially if they lack private transport. It is also a key category for service providers, particularly in the health and voluntary sectors. Figure 2.12 shows the percentage of the population over 65 who are living alone in private households.

Figure 2.12 Percentage of persons 65+ who are living alone, by Western Region county, 2006



*as % of Persons aged 65+ in Private Households
 Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 3, Table 14

There are considerable differences between the sexes in the proportions living alone, which are mainly associated with the longer life expectancy of women. Again there does not seem to be any clear pattern associated with the more rural counties, in numbers of men and women living alone. Leitrim, the most predominantly rural county, has the highest numbers of older people living alone, but more detailed work would be required to understand the pattern in the region and to draw out the implications of the variations.

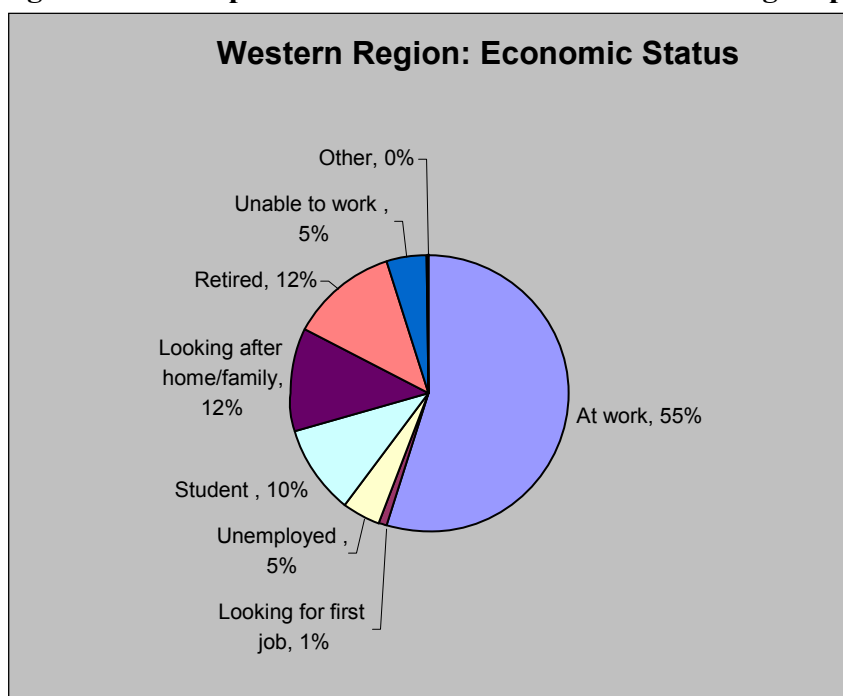
3. Employment and Work

We now turn to the area of economic status employment and work. The census provides information on the economic status of the population, categorising individuals according to whether they are working, unemployed, students, working in the home, or retired² on the night of the census.

3.1 Economic Status

According to Census 2006, 57% of the total population of the state were at work while 4% were categorised as unemployed³. In the Western Region, 55% of the total population was at work and 5% unemployed. Clare had the highest proportion at work (58%) while Mayo had the lowest (53%). The economic status of the population aged 15 and over in the Western Region is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Principal Economic Status of the Western Region population, 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 7, Table 6A

²This is different to the ILO classification system from which the usual measure of unemployment is derived. The Principal Economic Status classification used in the Census is based on a single question in which respondents are asked what is their usual situation with regard to employment and given the following response categories: At Work, Unemployed, Student, Engaged on home duties, Retired, Other. The 2006 Census does not collect any information based on the ILO definition. The ILO definition is used as the official definition of unemployment (see below).

³ This is not the official measure of unemployment. The official measure is based on the ILO definition namely those who, in the week before the survey, were without work and available for work within the next two weeks, and had taken specific steps, in the preceding four weeks, to find work.

3.2 Labour Force Participation

The labour force comprises the employed and the unemployed. The labour force participation rate is an important measure of the dynamism of an economy. The higher the labour force participation rate the higher the proportion of the population actively engaged in the labour market, either working or seeking work.

Labour force participation rates classified by gender are set out in Table 3.1. Nationally the total labour force participation rate is 62.5%, while in the Western Region it is 60.1%. For counties within the Western Region, Clare, Galway and Sligo have the highest participation rates while all the other counties have participation rates below 60%.

The national male labour force participation rate is 72.3%, which is 2.5 percentage points higher than that for the Western Region (69.8%). Within the Western Region, county Clare has a male labour force participation rate of 73.0%, while Donegal has the lowest rate at 67.5%.

Female labour force participation rates have increased in the last decade and much of total employment growth is as a result of this. The female labour force participation rate is 52.8% nationally, 50.3% in the Western Region. Like the situation of males, county Clare has the highest female labour force participation rate in the region (52.7%), while Roscommon, Mayo and Donegal have the lowest with 48.3%, 48.1% and 46.9% respectively.

Table 3.1. Male and Female Labour Force Participation Rates⁴ in Western Region counties, 2006

| County | Male | Female | All Persons |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Rate | Rate | Rate |
| Clare | 73.0 | 52.7 | 63.0 |
| Galway | 70.8 | 52.4 | 61.6 |
| Leitrim | 69.0 | 50.0 | 59.8 |
| Mayo | 68.5 | 48.1 | 58.4 |
| Roscommon | 68.9 | 48.3 | 58.9 |
| Sligo | 69.0 | 52.0 | 60.3 |
| Donegal | 67.5 | 46.9 | 57.2 |
| Western Region | 69.8 | 50.3 | 60.1 |
| State | 72.3 | 52.8 | 62.5 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 7, Table 8

⁴ The labour force participation rate is calculated by expressing the labour force (i.e. those at work, looking for first regular job, or unemployed) as a percentage of the total population aged 15 years and over.

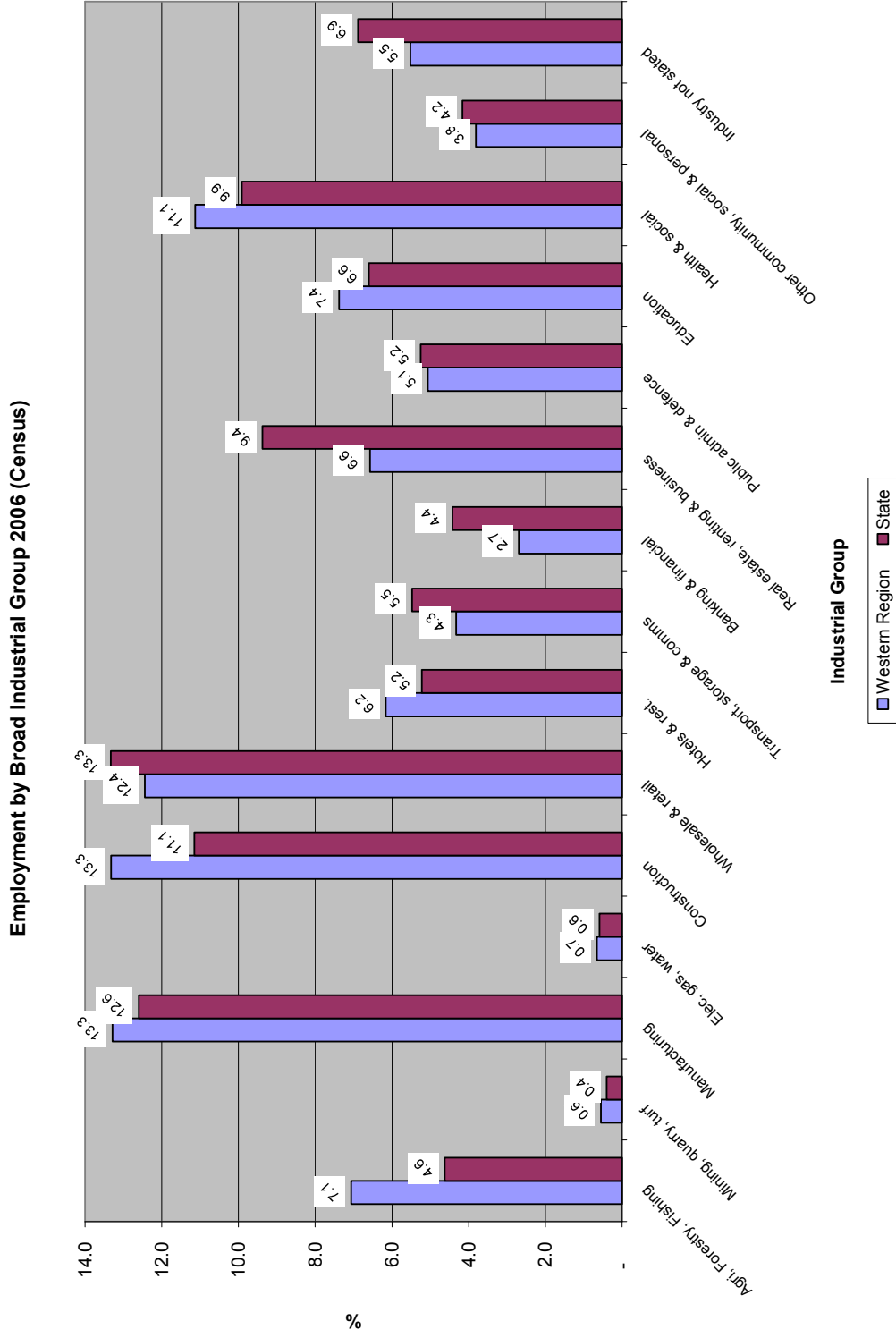
3.3 Population at Work by Industrial Sector

The population aged 15 years and over at work in the Western Region and the state classified by broad industrial group is shown in Figure 3.2 overleaf.

In comparing the profile of employment in the Western Region and the state, some general observations can be made. Proportionately more workers are employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing, and manufacturing and construction sectors in the region compared to the national average. Employment in hotels and restaurants, education, and health and social work is also proportionately higher in the region than in the state, and these latter three sectors are also those dominated by female employment.

Those sectors which are underrepresented in employment terms in the Western Region include transport, storage and telecommunications, banking and finance, and the real estate, renting and business sector.

Figure 3.2 Employment by Broad Industrial Group 2006



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 7, Table 13

Since 2002 there has been an overall employment increase in the Western Region of 52,656 or 18.9%, up from 277,219 persons in 2002 to 329,875 in 2006. The relative importance of some sectors changed over the period. For example employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing declined from 9.3% in 2002 to 7.1% in 2006. Employment in manufacturing declined from 15.7% of those at work in 2002 to 13.3% in 2006. Conversely employment in construction increased from 10.5% in 2002 to 13.3% in 2006. These patterns are similar to those observed nationally.

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps there has been an increase in the proportion employed in hotels and restaurants from 5.9% in 2002 to 6.2% in 2006 within the Western Region. The other notable change has been the increase in the proportion of those employed in health and social work rising from 9.9% of the workforce in 2002 to 11.1% of a considerably larger workforce in 2006.

Trends in Male Employment

The proportions of males aged 15 years and over employed in two broad industrial groups: agriculture, forestry and fishing, and construction are shown in Table 3.2 below. The combined total engaged in these two industrial groups as a proportion of all males employed is summarised in the last two columns.

Table 3.2 Males aged 15 years and over at work by broad industrial group 2006

| County | % Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing | | % Construction | | % of total in these sectors | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| | 2002 | 2006 | 2002 | 2006 | 2002 | 2006 |
| Clare | 14.2 | 10.0 | 15.3 | 19.4 | 29.5 | 29.4 |
| Galway City | 1.2 | 1.1 | 10.5 | 14.6 | 11.7 | 15.7 |
| Galway Co | 17.4 | 12.9 | 18.8 | 23.7 | 36.2 | 36.5 |
| Leitrim | 19.6 | 14.4 | 18.0 | 25.4 | 37.6 | 39.8 |
| Mayo | 17.4 | 13.7 | 19.2 | 24.3 | 36.6 | 38.0 |
| Roscommon | 19.5 | 15.5 | 17.4 | 22.7 | 36.9 | 38.2 |
| Sligo | 13.2 | 10.9 | 14.7 | 20.0 | 27.9 | 30.9 |
| Donegal | 13.2 | 10.8 | 18.2 | 23.9 | 31.4 | 34.7 |
| Western Region | 14.6 | 11.2 | 17.0 | 22.0 | 31.6 | 33.2 |
| State | 9.3 | 7.2 | 14.7 | 18.4 | 24.0 | 25.6 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 7, Table 13

In each of the counties and in the state, the proportion of males engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing declined considerably between 2002 and 2006. Over the same period the proportion of males employed in construction increased considerably in all counties and offset the losses in agriculture in all counties apart from Clare. More importantly, as the last column demonstrates, in some counties (Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon), close to 40% of male employment is in these two sectors combined, both of which are vulnerable and likely to contract.

3.4 Growth in Occupations 2002-2006

Table 3.3 shows that between 2002 and 2006 there has been significant growth in the labour force nationally, within the Western Region and in each county in the Western Region. The labour force grew by 16.8% nationally and by 17.4% within the Western Region (52,972 persons).

Within the Western Region, the counties with the highest labour force growth were Leitrim (25.9%), Galway (22.2%) and Roscommon (20.1%). Counties Sligo and Donegal had the lowest growth rates (12.4% and 13.6% respectively).

Table 3.3 Percentage Change in All Occupations 2002-2006

| | All Occupations | All Occupations | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Geographic Area | 2002 | 2006 | % Change |
| Clare | 46,702 | 54,077 | 15.8 |
| Galway City | 30,827 | 37,129 | 20.4 |
| Galway County | 61,837 | 75,582 | 22.2 |
| Leitrim | 10,819 | 13,617 | 25.9 |
| Mayo | 49,396 | 56,743 | 14.9 |
| Roscommon | 22,655 | 27,214 | 20.1 |
| Sligo | 25,947 | 29,160 | 12.4 |
| Donegal | 56,302 | 63,935 | 13.6 |
| Western Region | 304,485 | 357,457 | 17.4 |
| State | 1,779,786 | 2,080,126 | 16.9 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 8, Table 2A

The distribution of persons by occupational group in the seven western counties, the Western Region and the state in 2006 is shown in Table 3.4 and in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.4 Persons aged 15 years and over in the labour force, classified by broad occupational group, 2006

| County | Occupational Group | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Farming, fishing & forestry workers | Mfrg workers | Bldg. & constr. workers | Clerical, managing & govt workers | Comm. & transport workers | Sales & commerce workers | Profsnl. technical & health workers | Services workers | Other workers (incl. not stated) |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Clare | 6.0 | 13.3 | 9.1 | 15.7 | 5.3 | 11.9 | 15.5 | 10.8 | 11.2 |
| Galway City | 0.5 | 10.9 | 6.4 | 14.6 | 4.1 | 14.2 | 21.4 | 12.7 | 13.3 |
| Galway Co | 8.0 | 13.2 | 12.0 | 13.8 | 4.5 | 11.0 | 17.0 | 9.6 | 9.7 |
| Leitrim | 8.7 | 11.7 | 13.1 | 15.6 | 4.5 | 10.7 | 14.7 | 12.5 | 7.5 |
| Mayo | 8.8 | 13.4 | 12.1 | 12.9 | 4.4 | 11.8 | 14.8 | 11.6 | 8.9 |
| Roscommon | 9.7 | 12.3 | 11.7 | 15.4 | 5.4 | 12.0 | 14.8 | 10.8 | 6.8 |
| Sligo | 6.1 | 11.5 | 9.1 | 15.9 | 4.8 | 12.1 | 18.0 | 12.3 | 8.8 |
| Donegal | 6.2 | 12.9 | 12.2 | 13.2 | 4.9 | 11.8 | 14.7 | 13.1 | 9.3 |
| Western Region | 6.7 | 12.7 | 10.8 | 14.3 | 4.7 | 11.9 | 16.3 | 11.5 | 9.7 |
| State | 4.2 | 11.6 | 8.7 | 17.3 | 5.4 | 13.5 | 16.2 | 10.7 | 10.9 |

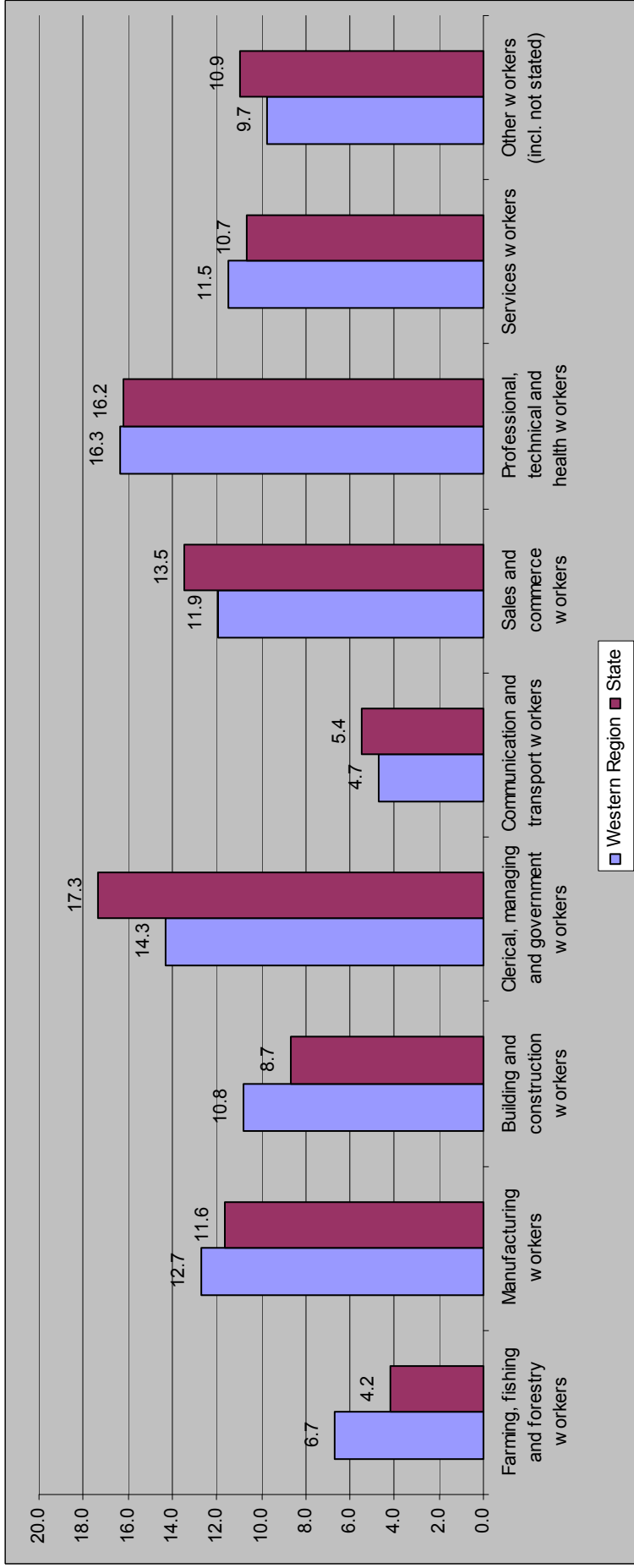
Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 8, Table 2A

Within the state the largest occupational group is the clerical, managing and government group accounting for 17.3% of all workers. The second largest occupational group in the state consists of professional, technical and health workers (16.2%). In the Western Region this order is reversed with the largest group, the professional, technical and health workers accounting for 16.3% of the total and the second largest occupational group is the clerical, managing and government group (14.3%).

Manufacturing occupations account for the third largest occupational group within the Western Region at 12.7%, a decrease in share from 2002 (13.5%). Nationally manufacturing occupations account for 11.6% of the total (down from 12.5% in 2002). The Western Region has proportionally fewer in sales and commerce occupations than nationally, 11.9% versus 13.5%. Conversely the region has a higher proportion of building and construction workers, 10.8% (up from 9.4% in 2002). Nationally the share in building and construction occupations was 8.7% in 2006, (up from 7.6% in 2002).

Within the Western Region, 6.7% of the labour force is classified as in farming, fishing and forestry occupations, higher than the national figure of 4.2%. However, both locations experienced a decline from the 2002 shares of 8.7% and 5.3% respectively.

Figure 3.3 Persons classified by broad occupational group, 2006.



Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 8, Table 2A

4. Education and Qualifications

Clearly the educational level of the population is a correlate of the labour force and occupational profile of a region or country and is an important indicator of its level of development. The educational attainment of the population is not only related to current levels of development but is also an important driver of future growth.

There are a number of interesting trends evident from Table 4.1 which summarises the highest level of education attained by the population aged 15 years and over who have completed full-time education for 2002 and 2006.

Table 4.1 Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over, who have finished full-time education, by the highest level of education completed, 2000 and 2006

| | Primary (incl. no formal education) | | Secondary | | Third level Non-degree | | Third level Degree or higher | | Not Stated | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| | 2002 | 2006 | 2002 | 2006 | 2002 | 2006 | 2002 | 2006 | 2002 | 2006 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Clare | 20.3 | 16.5 | 51.3 | 50.2 | 9.7 | 11.1 | 13.4 | 16.4 | 5.2 | 5.8 |
| Galway City and County | 22.1 | 18.2 | 46.4 | 46.0 | 10.0 | 11.1 | 16.5 | 20.7 | 4.9 | 4.0 |
| Galway City | 12.6 | 10.9 | 42.9 | 41.6 | 13.0 | 12.4 | 25.2 | 30.1 | 6.3 | 5.0 |
| Galway County | 26.2 | 21.3 | 48.0 | 47.8 | 8.7 | 10.5 | 12.8 | 16.8 | 4.3 | 3.6 |
| Leitrim | 27.2 | 22.0 | 49.3 | 49.7 | 8.2 | 10.8 | 10.1 | 13.8 | 5.2 | 3.8 |
| Mayo | 28.5 | 24.0 | 49.2 | 49.9 | 7.8 | 9.4 | 10.6 | 12.8 | 3.9 | 43.9 |
| Roscommon | 26.8 | 21.3 | 52.3 | 52.8 | 7.8 | 10.0 | 9.9 | 12.7 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| Sligo | 22.5 | 19.2 | 48.5 | 48.6 | 10.0 | 11.7 | 13.1 | 16.1 | 5.8 | 4.5 |
| Donegal | 32.2 | 28.9 | 45.8 | 46.0 | 7.8 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 12.5 | 4.6 | 3.3 |
| Western Region | 25.5 | 21.4 | 48.2 | 48.1 | 8.9 | 10.4 | 12.7 | 15.9 | 4.7 | 4.1 |
| State | 21.1 | 18.0 | 49.2 | 48.3 | 9.5 | 10.6 | 15.1 | 18.5 | 5.1 | 4.6 |

Source: Census of Population 2002, Volumr7 Table 3; Census of Population 2006 Volume 10 Table 5

Starting with those who have at most a primary or no formal education, we can see that all counties of the region have experienced a decline in this category between 2002 and 2006. This decline has been quite substantial in just four years with the proportion for the region as a whole falling from 25.5% to 21.4%. The decline is not surprising given changes in the age and occupational profile of the region. Despite this, however, the Western Region still has a higher proportion of people with very low levels of education than the state – 21.4% compared with 18%. In fact in Donegal, 28.9% of those whose education has ceased, have a primary education only.

The figures for those who have a secondary level education only, have remained relatively unchanged between 2002 and 2006 and are similar in the region and nationally at around 48%.

The proportions of those with a third level degree or non-degree have increased in all counties in the region since 2002. In the Western Region 10.4% have a third level non-degree with 15.9% holding a third level degree. Despite the growth however, we can see that the region still lags behind the state where the shares are 10.6% and 18.5% respectively. Closing this gap in higher education will need to be a key priority for the region's future development.

The dual impact of third level institutions and high-skill industries is evident with Galway city, Galway county, Sligo and Clare having the highest shares of degree-holders. The impact of third level institutions however is not consistent as Mayo, with its GMIT campus, has a lower share with third level education than either Leitrim or Roscommon which do not have third level institutes.

5. Travel to Work

Finally, we provide a short analysis of travel to work data from the census which were published in November. Together with a much larger data set on place of work, these will provide the basis for the WDC's current project on travel to work areas in the region. The results of this study will be available in 2008.

Analysis of the means of travel to work show that, in the Western Region, proportionately more people use private cars as either drivers or passengers than the national average. Since 2002, the proportion driving to work in the Western Region has increased from 57.9% to 61.0%. More people in the Western Region drive to work by means of van or lorry than the state average, 10.4% compared to 7.4%. In the Western Region in 2006, a higher proportion used lorries or vans than in 2002; this probably reflects in part the increase in construction employment in the region.

Just 2.1% of those in the Western Region used bus, minibus or coaches to travel to work. This is much less than the national average (6.1%) and reflects the relative lack of public transport in the region. The proportion in the Western Region using this means has actually declined from 2.3% in 2002.

Distance Travelled

As is shown in Table 5.1, 24% of people in the Western Region travelled a distance of up to 5 kilometres to work in 2006. This compares with 23.4% nationally. In terms of long distance commuting, proportionally more people in the Western Region drive more than 15 kilometres to work. Combining the categories, 30.8% of the population of the Western Region travel in excess of 15 kilometres to work, while nationally the figure is 28.2%.

Within the Western Region some counties have an even greater share of their populations commuting in excess of 15 kilometres, for example Leitrim (37.2%), Clare (33%) and Roscommon (32.8%).

Table 5.1 Percentage of persons at work aged 15 years and over, classified by county of usual residence and distance travelled to work, 2006

| County/Region | Kilometres | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 0 - 4 | 5 - 9 | 10 - 14 | 15+ |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Donegal | 26.0 | 13.3 | 10.7 | 28.8 |
| Sligo | 27.0 | 15.3 | 10.1 | 26.9 |
| Leitrim | 18.0 | 11.3 | 10.5 | 37.2 |
| Roscommon | 19.3 | 14.2 | 12.0 | 32.8 |
| Mayo | 24.9 | 12.3 | 10.1 | 29.9 |
| Galway Co. & City | 24.5 | 14.2 | 9.7 | 30.9 |
| Clare | 21.9 | 12.8 | 9.8 | 33.0 |
| Western Region | 24.0 | 13.5 | 10.2 | 30.8 |
| State | 23.4 | 15.4 | 11.5 | 28.2 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume 12, Table 10.

Note: Excludes Not Stated and therefore row totals do not sum 100.

Time Taken to Travel to Work

Generally, people in the Western Region take less time to travel to work than the national average (Table 5.2). So, 63.3% of those living in the Western Region take less than half an hour to get to work compared to 54.6% nationally. At the other end of the spectrum, 6.3% of those living in the Western Region take over an hour to get to work, while nationally the corresponding figure is 10.4%.

Although not included in this table, analysis of 2002 data shows that travel times have increased since 2002, with 4.8% of those in the Western Region having journeys in excess of 1 hour then compared with 6.3% in 2006. Nationally there has also been an increase from 9.4% in 2002 to 10.4% in 2006.

Table 5.2 Percentage of total persons, at work aged 15 years and over (excluding those who work mainly at or from home), classified by County of usual residence and time taken to travel to work, 2006

| County | Travel Time | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | < ¼ hour | ¼ hour - < ½ hour | ½ hour - < ¾ hour | ¾ hour - < 1 hour | 1 hour - < 1½ hours | 1½ hours and over |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Donegal | 40.3 | 27.6 | 12.3 | 4.1 | 3.3 | 1.9 |
| Sligo | 36.3 | 33.3 | 13.4 | 3.5 | 2.2 | 1.2 |
| Leitrim | 31.5 | 28.3 | 17.6 | 4.8 | 3.8 | 2.4 |
| Mayo | 37.8 | 27.4 | 12.6 | 4.3 | 4.8 | 1.9 |
| Roscommon | 35.3 | 29.3 | 13.6 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 2.7 |
| Galway Co. and City | 28.3 | 29.9 | 18.0 | 6.3 | 5.4 | 1.8 |
| Clare | 30.9 | 28.2 | 17.9 | 5.9 | 4.4 | 1.5 |
| Western Region | 34.1 | 29.2 | 15.0 | 4.9 | 4.4 | 1.9 |
| State | 26.3 | 28.3 | 17.7 | 7.0 | 7.3 | 3.1 |

Source: Census of Population 2006, Volume12, Table 14.

Note: Excludes Not Stated and therefore row totals do not sum 100.

Concluding Comment

In general terms, the analyses of the data from the 2006 Census in this report show many positive trends and a welcome continuation of the reversal of years of decline. While this is very encouraging, the patterns of change also pose significant development challenges for the region, particularly its predominantly rural character, and the industrial and occupational mix. More detailed analysis will be undertaken by the WDC in 2008 in order to get a more complete picture of some of the trends we have described here, particularly in regard to rural-urban differences, travel to work patterns and associated labour market catchments.

WDC Policy Team
December 2007