



June 2026

Welcome to the WDC Insights Quarterly Newsletter. At the Western Development Commission, the Policy Analysis team examines key regional data to improve our understanding of the current situation and emerging trends in the seven-county Western Region. This newsletter brings together our most recent Insights on economic, social, and demographic issues affecting the Region.

This edition highlights our new report, ***Community Connections, Global Relationships***, on the extent and nature of the diaspora engagement happening in the region. We also **look back to 1926** and see how the population and where we live has changed. Finally, for those of you interested in the details, we take a look at **a six way classification of urban and rural areas** and what it tells us about the Western Region.

Whether you are interested in connecting with our diaspora, the changing history of our region, or the detail of how we understand rurality in the Western Region, these Insights aim to help readers understand the challenges and opportunities facing the Western Region.

See below for more about each of these topics.

Connected Communities, Global Relationships

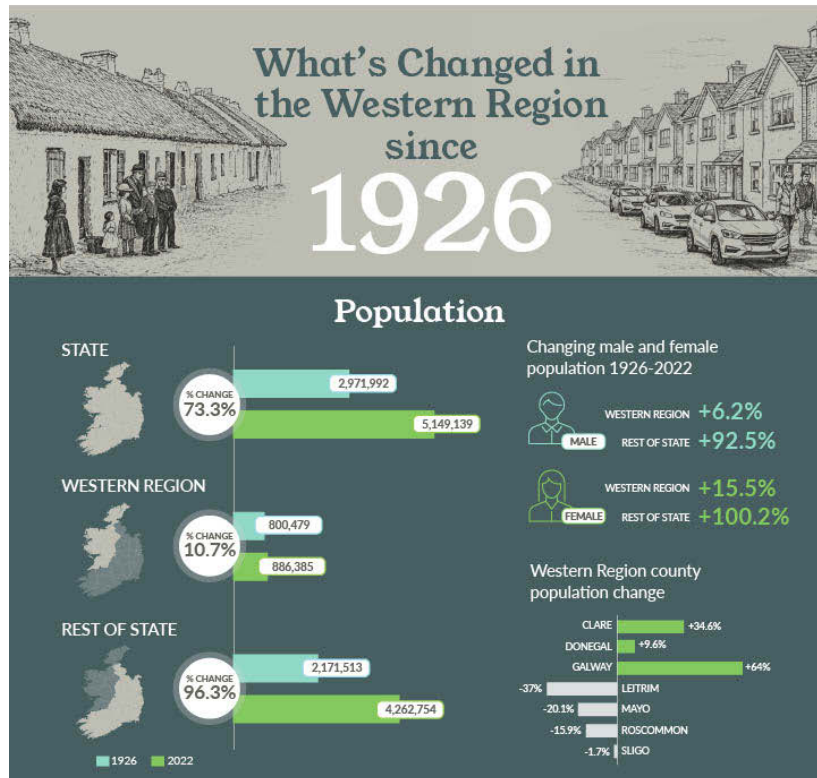


June saw the launch of the WDC research report ***Community Connections, Global Relationships*** which focuses on diaspora engagement in the West and Northwest of Ireland and which was led by Dr Aisling Moroney.

This research, the first of its kind, provides real insight into the extent and nature of the diaspora engagement currently taking place, the key challenges, the success stories and good practices, and the kind of supports which would enable this valuable work to be done more effectively and sustainably. A strong theme of the research is the further potential to form, maintain and build mutually beneficial relationships with the many people who live elsewhere but whose roots in or sense of the connection to the region remain strong.

You can read the full Research Report, the Executive Summary, or any of the nine individual case studies from across the region. Alternatively, you can watch the webinar recorded on 2 June, in which the findings are presented and subsequently discussed by a panel of experts.

[Explore the Findings](#)

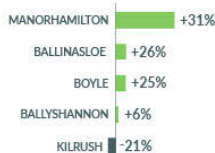


Town Development since 1926

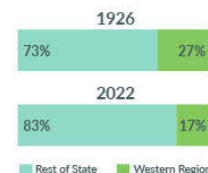
Five Western Region towns which have grown **most**



Five Western Region towns which have grown **least**



Share of State Population



Rest of State is the 19 counties outside the Western Region
Read more about changes since 1926 [here](#)
Data from CSO and own calculations



To celebrate the centenary of the first national census, we published an [infographic](#) showing some of the population changes in the Western Region since 1926. We also published a WDC Insights article examining the data in more detail, focusing on population change, the numbers of men and women in the Western Region (the seven counties under the WDC remit: Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo), along with an examination of changes in town sizes since 1926.

[Read the Full Article](#)

Classifying Rural and Urban in the Western Region



Defining rurality is never ending quest, but the CSO has recently published '*Urban and Rural Life in Ireland*', which uses a six-way urban/rural classification to examine social and economic characteristics of life in Ireland. The classification breaks *Urban* into three different types and *Rural* into three different types.

We have published two articles on this topic. The first, available [here](#), discusses the classification method used by the CSO and how the Western Region population is categorised, including the importance of understanding the basis for classification when using them for policy making.

In the second article, available [here](#), we examine these classifications at county level and explore the differences between the seven Western Region counties. The article addresses a number of key questions, including: In which counties are cities and urban areas most significant? Which town type is most important? And how do the three rural categories vary across the seven counties?



The **WDC Policy Analysis Team**, left to right Frances Hague, Dr Helen McHenry and Dr Aisling Moroney. You can read more about the policy team and follow our work at

<https://westerndevelopment.ie/policy/>

