

2.0 Profile of County Limerick

County Limerick, situated in the Mid-West of Ireland, dates back to the year 1210 when King John of England set up the first 12 Irish counties, of which Limerick was one. The County itself comprises an area of approximately 2,735 square kilometres and contains 119 civil (i.e. pre-Reformation) parishes, 58 ecclesiastical parishes, 136 electoral divisions, 1,938 townlands, 5 local government electoral areas and 2 Dáil constituencies, East and West Limerick.

POPULATION AND POPULATION MOVEMENT

The total population in County Limerick was 121,281 (Census 2002), which showed an increase of 7.3% since 1996 and it is projected to increase to over 135,000 by 2011. There has been a trend of continued movement of population from the West, South and East of the County towards an area within an approximate 30 kilometre radius of Limerick City. Approximately one quarter of the total population resides in the environs of Limerick City with only two county towns, Newcastlewest and Abbeyfeale having a population in excess of 1,500. Otherwise, County Limerick is predominantly rural with 71% of the population living in centres below 1,500 and 57% living in centres below 200. This has implications for the provision of key infrastructure and the delivery of public and private services.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Shannon and Kerry Airport are located close to Limerick County and provide transatlantic, european and domestic flights. County Limerick has one passenger railway station in Castleconnell (Nenagh to Limerick) with the nearest Dublin/Cork/Kerry rail links in Limerick City and Limerick Junction (Tipperary) and Charleville, Co. Cork.

The County has 136km of national primary roads, 58km of national secondary roads, 468km of regional roads and 2,925km of local roads. A number of major road projects are currently underway or at planning stage. In terms of water infrastructure, a total of 57 water and sewage schemes have been identified as being required or in need of improvement.

EMPLOYMENT

In 2002, the largest employment sector in County Limerick was the tertiary (services) sector employing 70%, compared to the secondary (manufacturing etc.) sector employing 21% and the primary (agriculture, etc.) sector employing 9% which is showing a continuous decline. In 2002, County Limerick had an unemployment rate of 4.3%, which was lower than the State unemployment rate of 5.7%.

TOURISM

The tourism product and infrastructure in County Limerick has improved in recent times and some of the main visitor attractions in the County are The Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Curraghchase Forest Park, Desmond Castle and Adare Heritage Centre.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Limerick County Council has one landfill in operation at Gortadroma in the West of the County. Limerick County Council provides recycling facilities throughout the County with 49 recycling centres and new Household Waste Recycling Centers in Newcastle West and Kilmallock. The total quantity of waste recycled in Limerick County in 2003 was 893 tonnes.

CULTURE, SPORT & RECREATION

There is an extensive network of libraries in County Limerick and a diversity of arts activity ranging from artists in schools to street theatre festivals. The sports infrastructure is generally strong throughout the County but some minor sports have infrastructural needs.

SOCIAL SITUATION

There are 116 primary schools, 21 second level schools, the University of Limerick in the County and two other third level institutions in the City. There is a lack of childcare provision especially in rural areas and childcare provision is particularly poor for children under a year old.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

In 2002, the labour force was 54,265 of which 50,666 were employed and 3,599 were unemployed. The overall employment participation rate in County Limerick in 2002 was 93% of the labour force. The level of relative deprivation in County Limerick in 2002 was 5.0, which was better than the national score of 2.2 and the Mid-West average of 1.9.

In the 2002 Census the population of County Limerick aged over 65 years was almost 11% or 12,776 persons. Of this 5,805 persons were living alone, 64% female and 36% male.

Limerick County Council has provided accommodation to 195 traveller families by 2003. The town of Rathkeale is unique in Ireland

and according to the 2002 Census up to 30% of the population within the town is estimated as being from the travelling community. In general, buoyancy in the national economy which has resulted in higher levels of employment together with smaller family units are impacting positively on the quality of life in County Limerick.

MAP OF COUNTY LIMERICK

