

County Galway Rural Resource Study

Clarinbridge Summary

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Teagasc wish to express its gratitude at the level of co-operation and partnership exhibited throughout the planning and conducting of this study.

Galway Rural Development contributed in a major way to the success of the study. Noel O'Meara, on secondment from Galway Rural Development, was the visible face of the study in each community. The results of the study will be used to focus programmes and schemes of LDSIP and NRDP within the county and to further foster relationships with the other organisations involved.

Galway County Council has been a key partner in the design and delivery of the study and their financial contribution is gratefully acknowledged. The outcomes of this study provide useful detail on which local authority partnerships actions can be based.

Cuireann Údarás na Gaeltachta fáilte roimh an tuarascáil seo agus tá an -sásta go raibh sé ar a chumas cúnamh deontais a chur ar fáil. Tá go bhfuil an suirbhé seo ag baint le Ceantar na nOileán i nGarumna i gConamara. Tá an tÚdarás buíoch do Chomhairle Ceantair na nOileán a thug cúnamh agus comhoibriú iomlán don obair seo.

The authors also wish to thank the partnership group Cumas who also contributed to the study. Teagasc is pleased to have led this study and appreciate that the results can be used to give further relevance to the programmes carried out by the agencies, not alone in Galway, but also in many other counties throughout the country.

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Clarinbridge Rural Development Study

Introduction

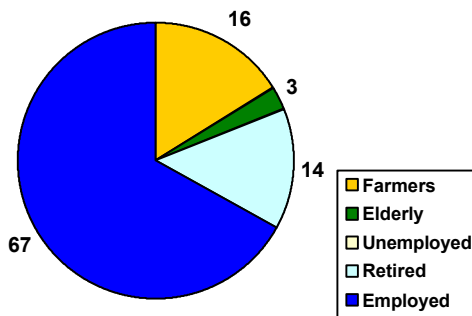
Many rural areas have experienced unprecedented change over the past decade in the structure of their economies and population. These changes require adjustments at the individual and household level but also in the way local agencies and services support rural communities. The purpose of this study was to examine how Clarinbridge as a community has adapted to change and to identify the challenges in maintaining Clarinbridge as a viable community and a desirable place to live. Up to about 15 years ago Clarinbridge was a typical rural village but has since undergone major change because of the expansion of Galway city.

The Clarinbridge study is part of a wider County Galway study of rural development, which was prompted by major changes in EU Agricultural and Rural Development policies. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is being widened increasingly to incorporate a view of the viability of the farm household and the broader rural community and its environment. EU and National policies clearly state their aims to maintain vibrant rural areas, which are connected to the mainstream of regional and national economies. However, it is less clear as to what specific measures are appropriate and how rural communities themselves can participate. In this study, the perspective was that sustaining a viable rural community was based on two aspects namely (i) a viable economy and (ii) a rural community demographically balanced and inclusive in an amenable environment.

Methods

Analysis of CSO/Census data identified five distinct types of rural area in County Galway. These were (i) a peri – urban area (mainly near Galway city), (ii) remote peripheral area (Connemara) (iii) areas with high forest cover and two farming type areas, (iv) representing the better land and (v) other farming area. Clarinbridge was selected to represent the peri-urban area, which is typical of many small villages within a 20 mile radius of Galway City. Five different types of households were identified as follows (i) farm households, (ii) elderly (>65 and living alone), (iii) retired households, (iv) unemployed and (v) working households non-farm. The different household types identified from the electoral register in Clarinbridge Electoral Division (ED) are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Household Types in Clarinbridge



From these figures it is clear that Clarinbridge is an area of high employment with a relatively small proportion of households not engaged in economic activity. In numerical terms agriculture is relatively unimportant in this community. From the 414 households, comprising the Clarinbridge ED, 106 were randomly selected. Those households were surveyed during November and December 2002.

Survey Results; The Rural Economy

A number of aspects of the economy were considered namely; (i) Farm structures and incomes; (ii) Sources of household income; (iii) Occupations and community patterns.

Farm structures and incomes

Table 1 outlines farm size and system of farming in Clarinbridge. The scale of farming was small and farming systems were mainly drystock. Fifty four percent of farmers were part-time. Sixty seven percent had farm incomes of less than €10,000 while a further 29% had farm incomes between €10,000 and €20,000.

Table 1: Farming in Clarinbridge

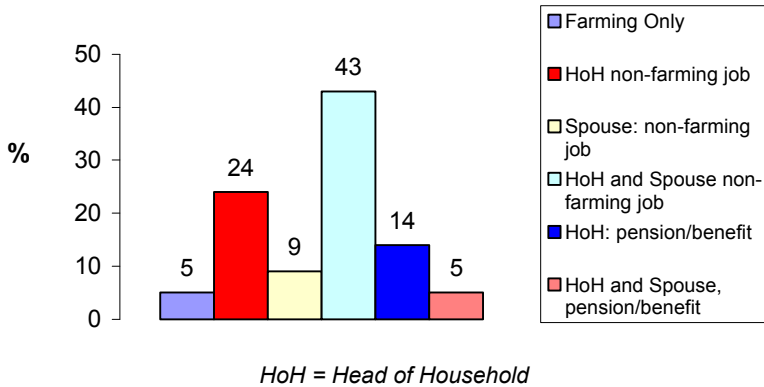
Average Farm Size		27 ha
Predominant farm system	Suckling	29%
Other Systems	Cattle and/or Sheep	37%
Farm incomes	<€10,000	67%
	€10,000<€20,000	25%
Part-time Farming¹		54%

¹ Operator and/or spouse have job.

Household Incomes

A summary of the income sources of all households is shown in Figure 2. In Clarinbridge 5% of households depended on farming only. Of all households in Clarinbridge 76% had a non farm job either through the head of the household, spouse or both having jobs. The percentage of households with a pension or benefit to sustain income was 19%.

Figure 2: Proportional Distribution of Households by Income Source

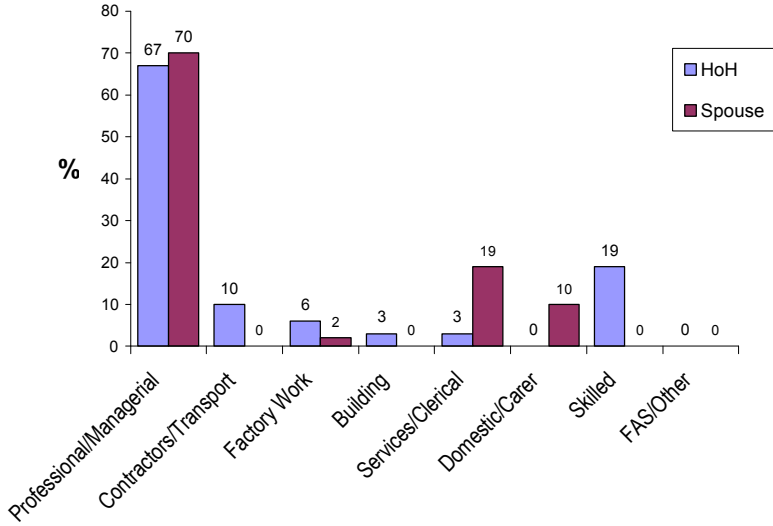


Occupational Structures

Information on the occupations of heads of households¹ and their spouses is presented in Figure 3. Some 70% of spouses at work had professional/managerial types of employment, as did 67% of heads of households. Heads of household had skilled occupations in 19% of cases while a further 10% worked in the area of transport and contracting. Of the spouses 19% worked in services/clerical employment while a further 10% worked in domestic and caring services.

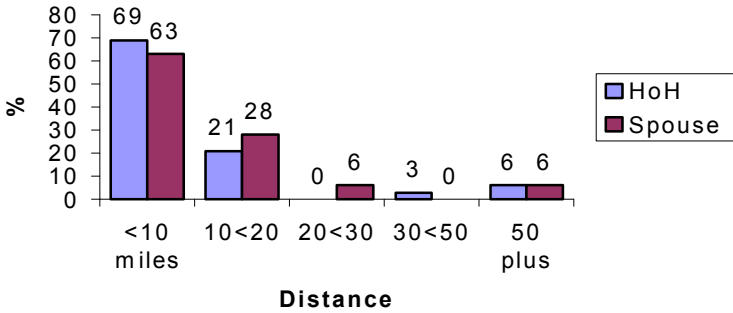
¹ In the survey heads of households were reported to be predominantly male

Figure 3: Occupations of Heads of Households and Spouses



As indicated in Figure 4 over 90% of heads of households and spouses worked within 20 miles from home, in the general Galway area. A very small percentage of people travelled more than 20 miles to work.

Figure 4: Distance to Place of Work



Survey Results; The Rural Community

There is a vibrant community development association in the Clarinbridge area and this grouping has an objective to integrate the new residents, in this fast growing community, with the native population. The latest census of 2002 showed that there was a total of 2,081 persons living in the Clarinbridge ED which is an increase of 24.5% over the 1996 figures. This population increase fuelled by the fast growing population of Galway city, compares with the overall growth of population in the county of 9%.

Human Resources

Two aspects of the human resource in Clarinbridge were studied; namely the age profile and educational status of household heads and their spouses. The age profile, shown in Figure 5, revealed that most heads of households and spouses were aged between 40 and 64 years. Only 17% of heads of household were 65 or over as compared with 9% of spouses. Conversely less than one-fifth of household heads were 40 years or younger with one quarter of spouses in the category. In general spouses (mainly female) were younger than household heads.

Figure 5: Age Profile of HoHs and Spouses

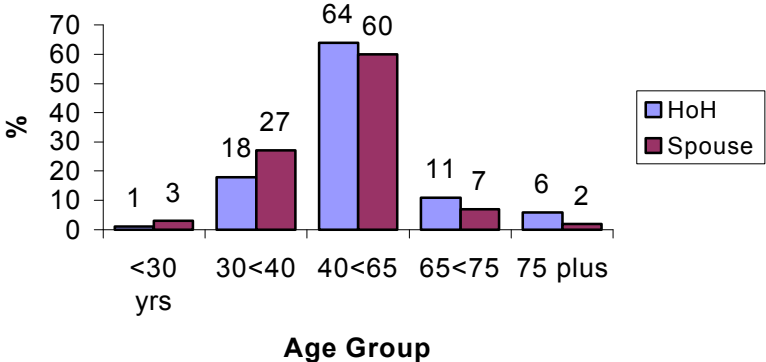
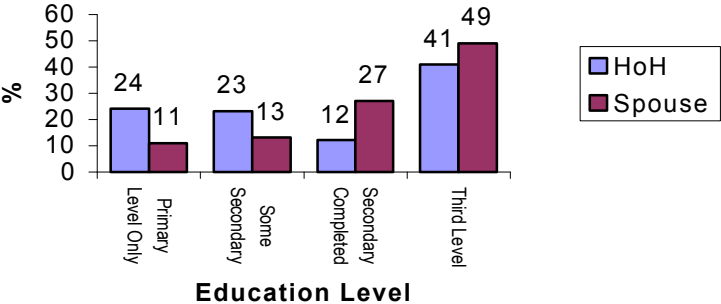


Figure 6 presents the profile of the highest educational level achieved by both household heads and spouses. Twenty four percent of household heads had primary level only while only 11% of spouses had this minimal level. Spouses had a higher educational level than the heads of households in that 27% had completed secondary level education and almost half had third level standard. On the other hand 12% of heads had completed secondary level and 41% had a third level.

Figure 6: Educational Profile of HoHs and Spouses



Local Agencies and Services

An important aspect of community vitality concerns the use of and satisfaction with local agencies serving different community constituents. Figure 7 indicates the level of use of selected agencies in the community. The local agencies most in demand in the area were the health services (47%), local schools (39%), County Council (24%) and Dept. of Agriculture (10%). The satisfaction level was generally good (Table 2) except that some concern was expressed towards the County Council and Department of Agriculture.

Figure 7: Percentage Household Use of Selected Services

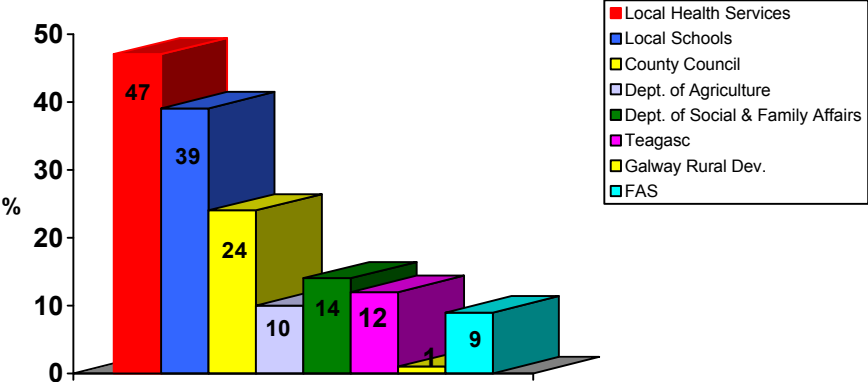


Table 2: Percent Level of Satisfaction with Agencies

Agency	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Don't Know	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Local Health Services	26	30	22	22	0	100
Local Schools	45	40	12	3	0	100
County Council	2	27	27	43	0	100
Dept. of Agriculture	9	38	24	29	0	100
Dept. Social & Family Affairs	9	61	16	15	0	100
Teagasc	5	67	22	6	0	100
FAS	41	36	6	18	0	100

Access to services and leisure activities are an important dimension of community life. Information on the satisfaction level of households on a range of services and leisure activities is summarised in Table 3. The satisfaction level was generally good except with banks, facilities for youth activity, public transport, childcare facilities and security for the elderly.

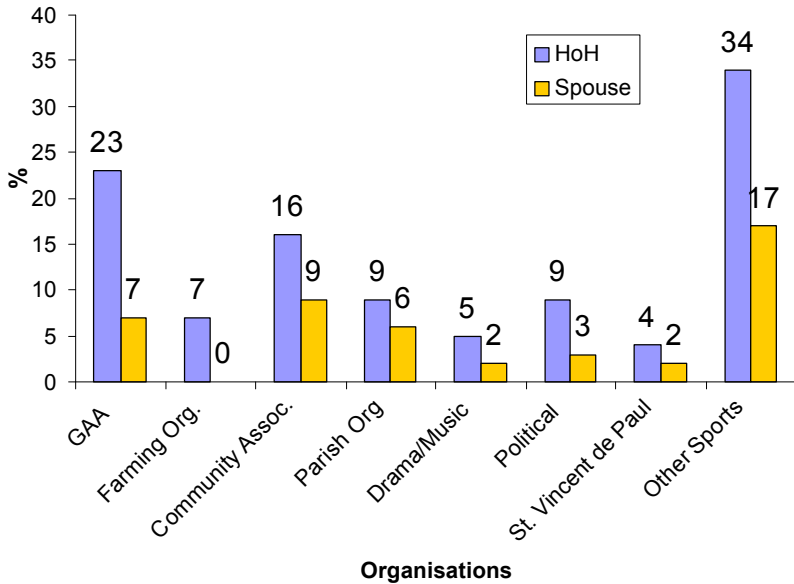
Table 3: Household Satisfaction with local services and amenities

Service/Amenity	Excellent/Good	Satisfactory	Poor
	%	%	%
Shopping	71	16	12
Education	79	9	3
Leisure Activities	51	21	27
Churches	79	13	5
Post Office	80	10	11
Bank	51	14	33
Activities for Youth	42	23	31
Security for Elderly	26	18	42
Access to jobs	69	17	10
Water Supply	59	16	25
Public Transport	47	13	37
Childcare Facilities	30	21	31

Community Participation

A crucial dimension of a viable community is the level of formal and informal social contact. A measure of formal participation was taken as the level of involvement in voluntary organisations in the area. As outlined in Figure 8, membership of the GAA (23% of the heads of households) and of other sporting bodies (34% by heads of households) were of major significance.

Figure 8: Head of Household & Spouse Membership in Local Organisations



Informal social contacts were examined by way of examining the regular social activities of respondents. Across all household types (Table 4) visiting friends/relatives or having them visit was the main activity identified. Going for a drink and going to matches on a regular basis were also important activities in the peri-urban area.

Table 4: Activities engaged in once a week or more by household types

Household Type	Visiting friends %	Have friends visit %	Go for a drink %	Go to a match %	Card Playing %
Farmers	38	49	50	12	8
Elderly	40	70	30	20	0
Retired	41	45	36	0	23
Employed	56	68	50	16	12

Attachment to Own Place

The responses to a number of attitude statements are indicative of how people feel about their community and gives an impression of people's satisfaction with their own area. These are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Level of agreement with attitude statements about the area

Attitude Statement	% Agreement
The longer I live here the more I feel I belong	88
If I was in trouble most people would go out of their way to help me	86
Most people in the community can be trusted	84
Young people can have a better way of life if they remain in the area	59

Apart from some concern for young people remaining in the area, the attitudes expressed are an endorsement of the positive feeling generally held by Clarinbridge residents.

In a similar way householders were asked how safe they felt about living in their community. As can be seen in Table 6, households generally felt secure about their safety in most circumstances. This feeling of security extended

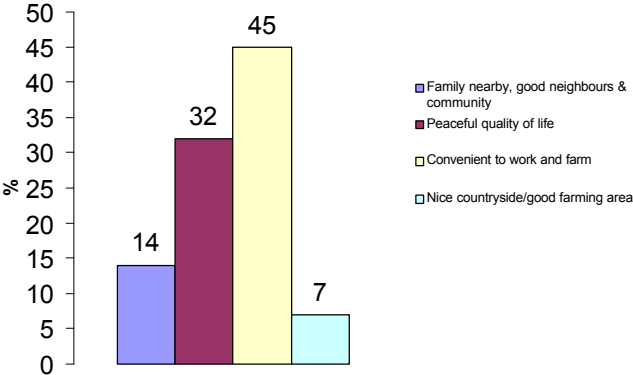
across all household types though elderly persons have more concern about walking alone after dark.

Table 6: Respondents feeling of safety in selected circumstances

CIRCUMSTANCE	% feeling safe
To leave the door unlocked if you were going out for an hour or so	46
Walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark if you were alone	73
Being alone at home at night	89
Safe from crime and violence in the community	92

The positive sentiments and feelings about Clarinbridge were endorsed in that 99% of householders stated they liked living in the area. The main advantages of living in the area are shown in Figure 9. Convenience to work was the major advantage seen while the traditional sentiments of placing high values on neighbours and the community were not as strong as in the traditional rural communities. In Clarinbridge it is clear that the good quality of life offered and convenience to work were of major importance to residents.

Fig 9: Advantages of living in Clarinbridge



Thirty percent of householders had been living in the Clarinbridge area for a short time (1-10 years) and a quarter had lived there for between 10 and 20 years. This reflects a new community rather than an indigenous population more usually found in other rural areas. A majority of those new households were employed. The views of respondents to recent changes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Views of respondents on how recent changes have affected Clarinbridge

Recent Changes Impact	%
Improved quality of life/better incomes	28%
Improved services for elderly	8%
A rejuvenated Community	3%
Area overdeveloped	21%

Clarinbridge is a rapidly expanding community and it is interesting that 28% of households felt that the quality of life and incomes had improved in the community in recent times. On the other hand 21% of households felt that the area was now over developed.

The disadvantages perceived to living in Clarinbridge were poor public transport (19%), poor roads (15%), poor water quality (12%) and poor amenities (10%).

Conclusions

It is evident from the study that Clarinbridge is not a typical rural area but displays all the characteristics of a peri-urban hinterland of Galway city. The local economy no longer reflects an agricultural community but has a prosperity, which is dependent on paid employment and self employed businesses.

The nature of that employment for the most part is well paid professional and managerial occupations, based mainly in Galway city and the Clarinbridge hinterland itself. The proximity of Galway city, as the main economic hub in the region is playing an important part in the areas viability.

Householders were aware of the changes taking place in their area, Recent changes in the provision of services for example were seen to be positive, however specific issues such as over development and congestion problems are a concern.

The Economy

In the typology analysis Clarinbridge was identified as a peri-urban area typical of many rural areas in close proximity to Galway city. It has an increasing population base, relatively low unemployment and a highly educated workforce.

With regard to farming, which accounted for just 16% of all households farm scale was small and farm incomes low. Most farm households however had another source of income such as off farm employment, pensions or welfare payments.

Over two thirds of households in Clarinbridge were gainfully employed in non-farm occupations.

The Community

There was a high level of contact with the agencies such as the health services, schools the County Council. Agencies such as the Department of Social Community & Family Affairs and Teagasc were cited as being excellent while there was some concern about the County Council and the Department of Agriculture. All categories of householder had a relatively high level of informal social contact, mainly visiting friends or going for a drink. General observations noted that new residents to the area still felt a certain amount of detachment and were unaware of local and community associations.

Balanced Demographic Structures

Overall it is evident that the demographic structure of Clarinbridge is vibrant. In general the head of households and their spouses are relatively young. Nearly half of the heads of household are 50 years or younger. In the context of an increasing population there is likely to be increased demand for improved education, child care, health and community services as well as better infrastructure. Another aspect to demographic balance is the relatively high skills and education levels across all household types. Clearly the better educated and younger people are remaining or more likely moving to Clarinbridge for better paid employment within a short distance of Galway city.

The Rural Environment

The perception of residents of their locality as a place to live and their satisfaction with their lives in the rural area is an important dimension. In Clarinbridge practically all respondents indicated that they liked living there. Nearly half of all householders stated that the convenience and proximity to work followed by a good quality of life were the main advantages. The study also showed that there was generally quite a positive attitude among residents to Clarinbridge and in the main people felt safe in their homes.