

# **County Galway Rural Resource Study**

## **Glinsk Summary**

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## County Galway Rural Resource Study

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 tÚdarás an-sásta go raibh sé ar a chumas cúnamh deontais a chur ar fáil. Tá an tÚdarás sásta fresin 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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John Whiriskey  
January 2005*

## **Acknowledgements**

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# **Glinsk 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 Glinsk as a community has adapted to change and to identify the challenges in maintaining Glinsk as a viable community and a desirable place to live.

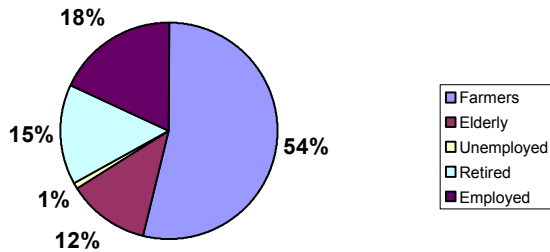
The Glinsk study is part of a wider County Galway study of rural development, which was prompted by major changes in EU Agricultural and Rural Development Policies. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is being widened increasingly to incorporate a view of the viability of the farm household and the 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**

Five distinct types of rural area in County Galway were identified by analysis of Census data. 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 areas. Glinsk was selected to represent the latter type of area, which accounts for much of Galway's farming areas. Five different types of households were identified and a random

sample selected from each type. The household types were; (i) farm households, (ii) elderly (>65 and living alone), (iii) retired households, (iv) unemployed and (v) working households but non-farm. From the 219 households comprising the ED's of Ballynakill and Toberroe a random sample of 104 were selected and surveyed in late 2002. Figure 1 shows the proportions of different household types identified from the elector register of the two EDs.

**Fig 1: Household Types in Glinsk**



It is clear that Glinsk is still a farming community with more than half of the households engaged in farming. Close on one fifth of households were economically active in occupations other than farming, while the remaining households were predominantly elderly persons living alone or retired households.

## Survey Results; The Economy

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

### Farm Structure and Incomes

Table 1 shows that the scale of farming is relatively small and drystock is the main farm enterprise.

**Table 1: Farming in Glinsk**

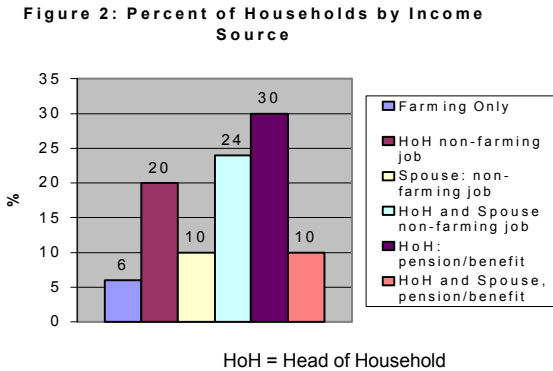
<b>Average Farm Size</b>	29 ha
<b>Predominant farm system: Suckling</b>	56%
<b>Other Systems: Cattle and/or Sheep</b>	28%
<b>Farm incomes &lt;€10,000</b>	55%
<b>€10,000&lt;€20,000</b>	36%
<b>Part-time Farming<sup>1</sup></b>	67%

<sup>1</sup> Operator and/or spouse have job.

Farm incomes were generally low. More than half of the farms returned less than €10,000 in 2002, and only 9% had incomes in excess of €20,000. It is not surprising that two-thirds of farmers and/or spouses supplemented their income with off-farm employment.

## Household Incomes

A summary of the income sources of all households is shown below in Figure 2.



While Glinck is a farming community just 6% of households depend on farming only. More than half of all households had an earned income. Forty percent of households had an income from a pension or other state transfer, many of those including farm households.

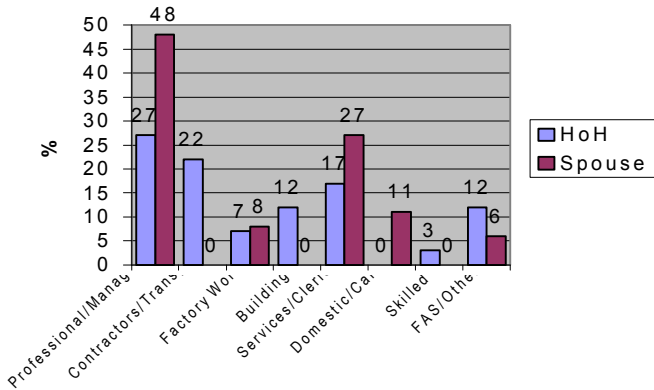
## Occupational Structures

Information on the occupational structures of heads of households<sup>1</sup> and their spouses are presented in Figure 3.

Almost half of the spouses at work had professional/managerial employment (48%), in the main teachers and nurses. By contrast heads of households had less skilled jobs such as agricultural contractors / drivers (22%), or working in the construction industry. Most at work were employees, but a small number (15%) of heads of households were self-employed. The occupational structure of spouses is reflected in their generally better educational and training profile. It is noteworthy that about three-quarters of spouses were employed in public service jobs.

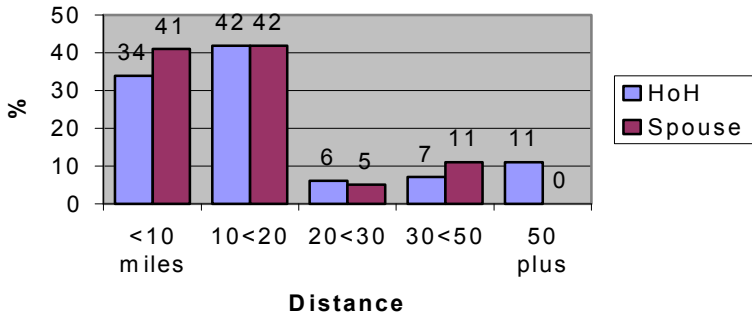
<sup>1</sup> In the survey heads of households were reported to be predominantly male

**Figure 3: % Occupations of Heads of Households and Spouses**



Information on the location of their work was obtained and the distances travelled to work are shown in Figure 4. Approximately one third of household heads and spouses worked in the Glinsk vicinity (<10 miles). Conversely one in five heads of households and one in ten spouses travelled 30 miles or more to work. The principal destinations were Roscommon town, Castlereagh (especially for spouses) and Glenamaddy. Private car was by far the most common mode of transport. Attitudes towards commuting were in general accepted as “a fact of life” but a small minority indicated it was not sustainable in the long run and affected family life.

**Fig 4: Distance to Place of Work**



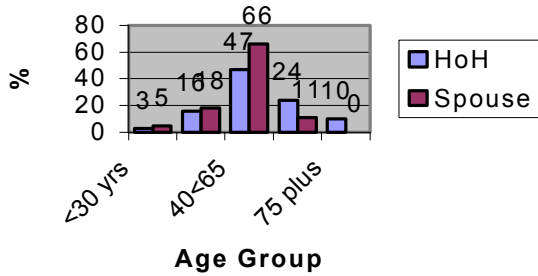
## Survey Results; The Rural Community

The main resource of any community is its people. The latest census of population (2002) shows that there was a total of 731 persons living in Glinsk in 2002, a decline (7%) since the previous census in 1996. This decline compares with a growth in the aggregate County population of 9%.

### Human Resource

Two aspects of the human resource in Glinsk were studied; namely the age profile and educational status of household heads and their spouses. The age profile is shown in Figure 5.

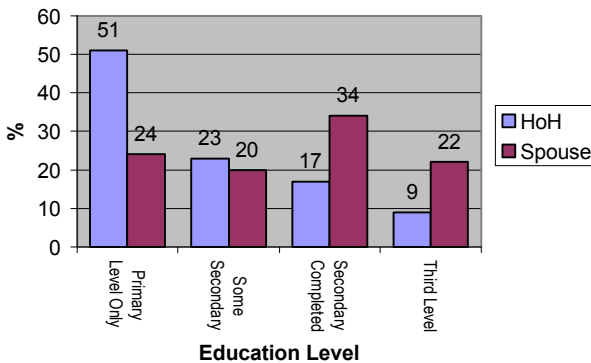
**Fig 5: Age Profile of HoHs and Spouses**



One-third of household heads were 65 or more as compared with 11% of spouses. Conversely less than one-fifth of household heads were 40 years or younger with slightly more spouses in the category. In general spouses were younger than household heads.

The highest educational level achieved by both household heads and spouses are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Educational Profile of HoHs and Spouses**

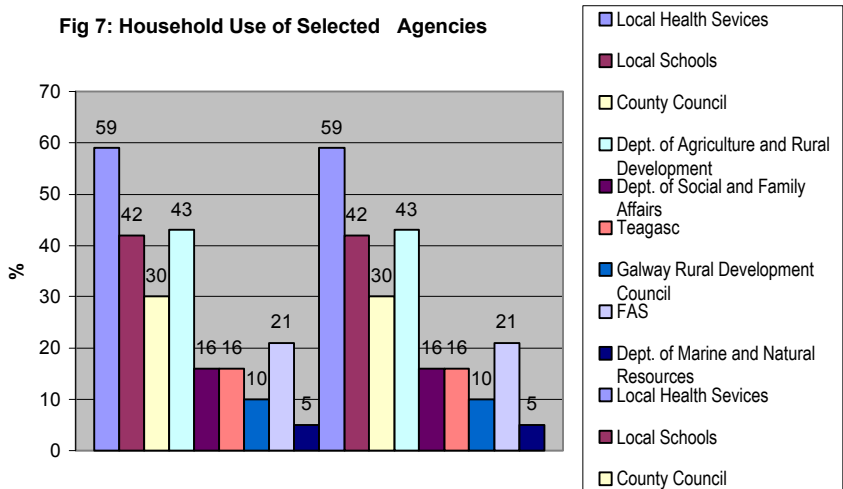


More than half of household heads had primary level only and this was associated with the farming sector. Spouses had higher educational levels; 22% having achieved third-level standard.

### Local Services and Agencies

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 were the health services, local schools and Dept. of Agriculture. The high usage of the health services was likely due to the relatively high proportion of elderly and retired households in the community. Similarly the high contact level with the Dept. of Agriculture is due to the high proportion of farm households. Contact with the schools was occasioned by the presence of children in the household. In general the services of these agencies were readily available to all household types and user satisfaction was overall adequate to good.

**Fig 7: Household Use of Selected Agencies**



Apart from the state agencies, consumer services are another important dimension of community well being. Information on the satisfaction of households on a range of services is summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Household Satisfaction with local services**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Excellent/Good %</b>	<b>Satisfactory %</b>	<b>Poor %</b>	<b>All %</b>
<b>Shopping</b>	57	32	11	100
<b>Leisure Activities</b>	31	29	40	100
<b>Churches</b>	90	10	0	100
<b>Post Office</b>	90	9	1	100
<b>Bank</b>	37	32	31	100
<b>Activities for Youth</b>	17	38	45	100
<b>Security for Elderly</b>	43	38	19	100
<b>Access to jobs</b>	11	20	69	100
<b>Water Supply</b>	34	8	57	100
<b>Public Transport</b>	2	6	92	100
<b>Childcare Facilities</b>	2	22	76	100

Clearly there are major differences between different services in the satisfaction of households. In particular there were very high levels of dissatisfaction in the community in (1) the provision of public transport, (2) childcare facilities, (3) access to jobs, (4) water supplies and (5) leisure facilities and youth activities.

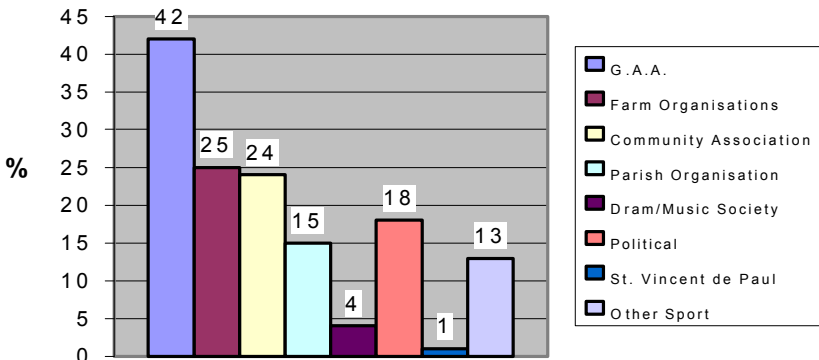
While these deficiencies were highlighted the potential for local communities to intervene is more challenging. With the possible exception of job creation it is not beyond the capacity of a vibrant community to tackle some of these issues. Local effort suitably supported by public agencies could be effective.

## Community Participation

A crucial dimension of a viable community is the level of participation in both 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 was the main involvement of the heads of households in local organisations. Membership of farm organisations was relatively high for farmers and involvement in community organisations was also substantial.

**Fig 8: Head of Household membership in local organisations**



Informal social contacts such as visiting friends, going to a match or the pub were examined. Across all households types visiting friends/relatives or having them visit was the main activity identified (Table 3).

**Table 3: Activities engaged once a week or more by household types:**

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Visiting friends %</b>	<b>Having friends visit %</b>	<b>Go for a drink %</b>	<b>Go to a match %</b>
<b>Farmers</b>	44	69	50	28
<b>Elderly</b>	46	85	15	15
<b>Retired</b>	25	88	37	0
<b>Employed</b>	76	18	59	47

For the elderly and retired having friends or relatives visit was a major social activity and this contrasted with employed households who tended to do the visiting. Going for a drink was mostly associated with the economically active households, the employed and farmers but was not an option often taken by the elderly who lived alone. Other 'spare time' activities such as night classes, going to play cards and going to the cinema/theatre were past-times seldom engaged by any of the households.

### **Attachment to Own Place**

The attitudes and sentiments of households about the place in which they live were also examined. The responses to a number of attitude statements are indicative of how people feel about their community; these are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Agreement with Attitude Statements**

<b>Attitude Statement</b>	<b>% Agreement</b>
The longer I live here the more I feel I belong.	100
If I was in trouble most people would go out of their way to help me.	98
Most people in the community can be trusted.	100
Young people can have a better way of life if they remain in the area.	47

Apart from some concern for young people remaining in the area, the attitudes expressed are an endorsement of the positive feeling generally held by the Glinsk community. In a similar way householders were asked how safe they felt about living in their community (Table 5).

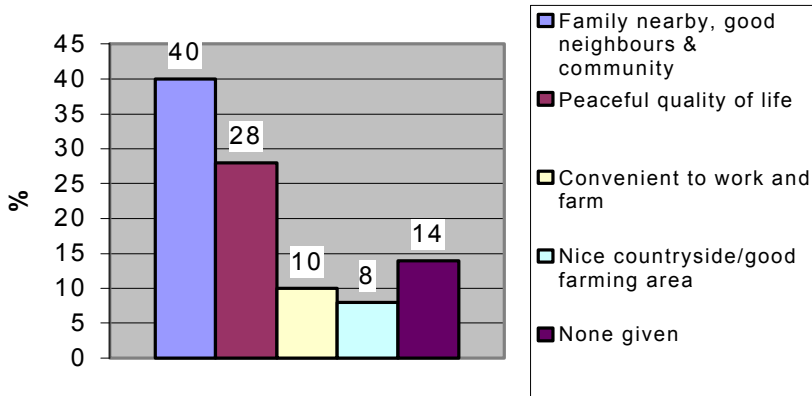
**Table 5: Feeling safe in selected circumstances**

<b>CIRCUMSTANCE</b>	<b>% feeling safe</b>
To leave the door unlocked if you were going out for an hour or so	31
Walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark if you were alone	67
Being alone at home at night	90
Safe from crime and violence in the community	97

Households generally feel secure about their safety in most circumstances. This security extends across all household types though elderly persons had more concern about walking alone after dark.

The positive sentiments and feelings about Glinsk were endorsed in that 98% of householders stated they liked living in the area. The main advantages of living in the area are shown in Figure 9.

**Fig 9: Advantages of living in Glinsk**



The traditional sentiments of placing high values on neighbours and the community are clear and provide some understanding of the attraction and meaning a rural environment has for its inhabitants. In the Glinsk area it seems that the community rather than economic criteria were the important factors in deciding to live and remain in the locality and explains to a degree why commuting, even long distances was not considered in negative terms.

## Conclusions

Glinsk is a small rural community in North East Galway and is typical of much the farming area in the county. Composed of 219 households scattered in the electoral divisions of Ballynakill and Toberroe it has recently experienced some decline in population. It is a farming community with more than half of the households involved in farming but most have other incomes such as off-farm jobs.

Just 6% of all households depend on farming only as a source of income. More than half of households have incomes from non-farm employment while pensions/welfare payments are an important source of income in 40% of them. In general farms are relatively small, engaged mostly in drystock enterprises and farm incomes are low. Those at work in non-farming jobs generally have unskilled occupations, especially household heads. Conversely almost half of spouses had professional or managerial jobs, most of them in the public service. The high educational status of spouses corresponds with their occupational structure.

While the contribution of farming to the economy is diminishing its importance to households and the community is much wider. For farm families the farm home is a place to live and the farm is a security and an asset cherished by many. For the community, farm families provide an anchor and continuity for rural society. In this regard the prominence ascribed to the farm household in sustaining and promoting rural development in the Salzburg conference<sup>2</sup> is revealing. Instead of treating farming as a separate sector it is important to integrate it into the wider rural development process as an essential element of adaptation and change.

In community terms the survey identified many positive aspects. With regard to the main agencies servicing the community access was readily available and in general satisfaction was good. With respect to local services a number of provisions were

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<sup>2</sup> Fischler, F. (20003) Closing remarks of European Conference on Rural Development, Salzburg, Austria.

very inadequate especially public transport, childcare facilities, access to jobs, water supplies and leisure facilities for youth. In terms of local voluntary organizations the role of the GAA was most prominent while visiting friends or having friends visit was the main informal social activity. In general the survey found a strong sense of attachment and positive sentiments among households towards their own place where living close to family, having good neighbours and an agreeable community were especially valued. People were generally contented with their lives in Glinsk and felt safe from violence and crime in their community and in their homes.

Access to local jobs was identified as the most critical issue and perhaps the most difficult to resolve. While EU and National policies extol the need of rural development to maintain viable rural areas, the policy measures available to small communities seem less amenable in practical terms. In the County Galway development plan "Working Together"<sup>3</sup> many of those issues are recognised and especially the need to strengthen the economics of rural villages and rural areas. In particular the provision of suitable information and communications technology, such as broadband, is essential to provide working opportunities for highly skilled young residents who are so vital for the well being of rural communities.

A level of acceptance of commuting to work was expressed but the long run sustainability of driving long distances each day is doubtful. Easier access to hubs of employment is vital to sustain a viable population and in particular better roads must be a priority. Clearly this implies major expenditure and priorities must be identified.

A major deficiency in Glinsk is the absence of a public transport system. This is a problem in many rural areas and is particularly problematic for the elderly and retired population, now accounting for a quarter of the households in Glinsk. Rural transport initiatives have been successful in other areas and may also prove effective in Glinsk. Water quality is a problem that affects some rural households badly. Community effort to alleviate such problems needs to be incorporated into the overall county strategy to promote rural development. The Glinsk population is an ageing one, many of them living in isolated rural environments. Their future health and

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<sup>3</sup> Galway County Development Board (2002) Working Together, Shaping our Strategy, Galway County Development Board, Galway.

retirement needs is another issue which has community implications. This is another area where strong community initiative could be backed by the involvement of state supports and agencies.